

OCTOBER 17/18 2020

FT Weekend Magazine



WILL AMERICA TEAR ITSELF APART?

EDWARD LUCE ON A LOOMING CONSTITUTIONAL CRISIS



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-
- 5 Simon Kuper**
What Leavers and Remainers really think now
 - 6 Inventory**
Aloe Blacc, singer
 - 8 Robert Shrimsley**
Retraining ad was perfectly en pointe
 - 8 Letters**
 - 10 Tech World**
What would you pay for a brush with celebrity?
 - 12 Undercover Economist**
How to win at auction theory
-
- 14 America on the brink**
The controversy over Donald Trump's Supreme Court pick and the possibility of a contested election result could light the fuse that leads to a full-blown constitutional crisis.
Edward Luce reports
-
- 22 Interview: Arsène Wenger**
For 22 years, he managed Arsenal, transforming both the club and British football. How has the Frenchman adapted to life after leadership?
By Simon Kuper
-
- 28 A family drama**
When she was a child, photographer *Diana Markosian* left post-Soviet Russia with her mother and brother. Only 20 years later did she learn the full story behind their migration
-
- 34 Viva la tortilla**
For all its simplicity, the Spanish *tortilla de patata* is a thing of beauty, the ultimate comfort food – and the subject of a timely new book.
By Tim Hayward
 - 38 Honey & Co**
Chicken meatballs in grape sauce
 - 41 Jancis Robinson**
Award-winning British winemaker Emma Rice
 - 43 Nicholas Lander**
Myrtle, London
 - 44 Fantasy Dinner**
The FT's work and careers columnist *Emma Jacobs* on her dream meal
-
- 45 Games**
 - 46 Gillian Tett**
The joy of a virtual trip to truffle country



DIANA MARKOSIAN

'For my mother, Santa Barbara represented a dream, and she was inspired to find a way to get there'

Diana Markosian, p28



'I still miss the intensity of the weekends. My life was on grass'

Arsène Wenger, p22



'At this time of year, you can find obscure and interesting grapes even in British supermarkets'

Honey & Co, p38

Issue number 892 • Online ft.com/magazine • FT Weekend Magazine is printed by the Walstead Group in the UK and published by The Financial Times Ltd, Bracken House, 1 Friday Street, London EC4M 9BT © The Financial Times Ltd 2020 • No part of this magazine may be reproduced in any form without the prior express permission of the publisher

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A different perspective

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SIMON KUPER

OPENING SHOT

What Leavers and Remainers really think now



What do Britons think about Brexit now, as trade talks between the UK and EU approach their climax? I watched focus groups from around the country discussing Brexit on Zoom (when their WiFi signals worked) in June and July, and I read several hundred pages of their transcripts.

The groups were organised by UK in a Changing Europe, a research group based at King's College London, and NatCen, an independent social research agency. The participants were middle- and upper-income earners because the project aimed to understand "Comfortable Leavers", the single largest segment of Brexit voters. Leavers and Remainers were usually separated, to encourage frank speech. Independently, another NGO sent me transcripts of its focus groups. My conclusion: anxious though most Britons are, they are still probably underestimating Brexit's impact.

The pandemic has slashed people's emotional investment in Brexit. Hardly anyone is following the technical, depressing trade talks. Both Remainers and Leavers want to patch up the family row - literally, as the other side usually includes their relatives. This divide has turned out to be weaker than the American red-blue split: God isn't involved, few Britons had strong views on Europe before 2016 and there are no militias to fight this one out. People who made strong statements in the focus groups often immediately apologised: "I'll get off my soapbox now."

Almost all polls show that most Britons now think Brexit was a mistake - by a 48-39 margin in a survey by YouGov this month. Many Leavers in the focus groups have indeed become Brexit-sceptics. Though they distrust media reports, they pay attention to their personal experiences and those of friends and family. For instance, a Leaver in eastern England told his group he lost a German company as a client because of Brexit. "Don't you think we've shot ourselves in the foot?" a south-eastern Leaver asked his fellows.

Leavers expressed little confidence in the government's ability to handle Brexit. Most have reverted to their pre-Brexit distrust of government. The one hope they still cherish is that the UK will benefit from sending less money to Brussels.

The targets of Leavers' praise and anger surprised me. None of them attacked elitist Remainers. Many Leavers lauded European countries for their national pride or their childcare. They complained about the EU, but also wanted Britain to leave on good terms and keep co-operating with other countries rather than (in the words of a south-western Leaver) do "its own thing and yah boo sucks to everyone else".

The bogeyman for Leavers is the benefit scrounger. People repeatedly echoed an age-old

tabloid theme: immigrants come to Britain to live off its sumptuous state benefits. But Leavers were equally concerned about home-grown scroungers. "The English are feral," lamented one woman in the West Midlands. "If you stubbed your toe, you got Disability Living Allowance for the rest of your life, and you don't go to work."

Leavers wondered why few young Britons had replaced immigrants as fruit pickers. Did youngsters nowadays just want to be vloggers and "influencers"? These complaints sounded more like generational incomprehension than generational conflict. Still, in Leaver rhetoric, disgust about contemporary Britain often overshadowed pride. It's a disgust that Brexiter politicians cannot admit to publicly.

'The pandemic has slashed emotional investment in Brexit. Hardly anyone is following the technical trade talks'

Remainers, too, expressed national despair. Some apologise for Brexit when meeting Europeans. Many now describe themselves as "European", feeling that Brexiters have usurped British identity. A West Yorkshireman said he considered the Union Jack a Brexiter symbol, and wouldn't fly it. A West Midlands Remainer said, to widespread agreement, that he felt ashamed: "Ashamed by the decisions we've made. Ashamed by how insular we are. Ashamed by how we've handled this whole Covid thing." There's little sign of Brexit restoring national self-confidence.

Remainers haven't discovered any upsides to Brexit. They now associate trade deals with Donald Trump and his chlorinated chickens. However, they have abandoned the fight. One woman intended to "make the best of a very, very bad job". Some Remainers have switched passions to a cause that has risen in prominence since: climate.

Both sides share certain hopes: above all, a return of power from Brussels and Westminster to Britain's regions. "Take back control", for many voters, means localism. People also yearn for a rebirth of British manufacturing, perhaps supported by state aid and "Buy British" campaigns.

As the West Midlands Remainers wrapped up their session, one man urged, "We should retain our sense of humour." "We're going to need it," a woman replied. We certainly will. Two years ago, the choice was between soft Brexit (which usually meant staying in the EU single market) and hard Brexit (leaving the single market with some sort of deal). Now it's more brutal: between hard Brexit and no deal at New Year. Brexit could totter back to life in 2021, terrifying an exhausted country. **FT**

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INVENTORY ALOE BLACC, SINGER

‘My mentors were records – Bill Withers, Stevie Wonder, Aretha Franklin’

Platinum-selling singer Aloe Blacc, 41, draws on influences from salsa, merengue and cumbia in his fusion of soul, folk, R&B and pop. “Wake Me Up”, which he wrote with Swedish DJ Avicii, topped charts globally. His other international hits include “I Need a Dollar” and “The Man”.

What was your childhood or earliest ambition?

To be a neuroscientist.

Private school or state school?

University or straight into work?

Laguna Hills High School. I got a full tuition scholarship to the University of Southern California.

Who was or still is your mentor?

I’ve had micro-mentors over the years. In high school, I was part of a programme called Lead [Leadership Education and Development] - a gentleman called Harold Haskins founded it and helped many students along their path. I had an internship at Ernst & Young, where Jerome Thode and Willard Woods guided me through the corporate experience. When I got into music as a full-time career, my mentors were records - Bill Withers, Stevie Wonder, Aretha Franklin... they wouldn’t have known they were my mentors!

How physically fit are you?

Quite fit. I try and eat very healthily.

Ambition or talent: which matters more to success?

It depends on your definition.

If we’re talking financial success: ambition matters more. If we’re talking about spiritual and personal, internal success: [it’s] talent.

How politically committed are you?

Very. I’m lucky enough to live in a democracy, lucky enough to have the right to vote for my ideals, lucky enough to voice my opinion to encourage others to believe what I believe, so it’s important to me to be consistent with the rights I’ve been given - especially as so many people before me worked so hard to get these rights. I feel it’s an obligation to be political. Politics is part of the culture and if you’re not engaging in the culture, ultimately you’re a drain on the system - you’re not part of the community.

What would you like to own that you don’t currently possess?

A certain kind of estate, a certain kind of property, maybe in a few years after I make a little more money and can justify it. I’m pretty

good at tempering my needs and my wants.

What’s your biggest extravagance?

The amount of time I spend on music. I don’t really splurge on anything else. Time is such a valuable thing. I only devote it to family and friends and the projects I’m working on.

In what place are you happiest?

At home with my family, for sure.

What ambitions do you still have?

To create a company that allows other artists to realise their dreams in the marketplace and become hugely successful. To create a company that uses technology in useful ways for humanity. And I’d like to get involved in fashion.

What drives you on?

The more that I do in music, I earn a certain respect and social capital, so I’m ready to engage in activism, in philanthropy - people are listening. If continuing to do music helps me have a place in the public sphere, then I can help create positive transformation.

What is the greatest achievement of your life so far?

A healthy and happy family.

What do you find most irritating in other people?

Probably self-centredness.

If your 20-year-old self could see you now, what would he think?

“What took you so long?” And:

“That’s it? That’s all you’ve done?”

He was very ambitious and focused.

Which object that you’ve lost do you wish you still had?

My dad is so handy - he’s a plumber, carpenter, electrician. One year he built a workman’s desk and, on a move when he was away, we got rid of this desk - it really upset him. I should never have let it go.

What is the greatest challenge of our time?

The existential threat of climate change.

Do you believe in an afterlife?

I entertain that anything and everything is possible.

If you had to rate your satisfaction with your life so far, out of 10, what would you score?

Pretty much 10. I’ve got nothing to complain about in my life. Outside of my life, there are a lot of things I can complain about and those are the ones I want to work on - I want to be a change agent. **FTI**

Interview by Hester Lacey.

Aloe Blacc’s fifth studio album “All Love Everything” is out now

PRADA

LUNA ROSSA

CARBON



CARBON



ROBERT SHRIMSLEY

THE NATIONAL CONVERSATION

Retraining ad was perfectly en pointe

This is what is wrong with this country. The government puts out an ad encouraging ballet dancers to retrain as cyber-security experts and everyone jumps down its throat. Admittedly, the timing is not ideal. Targeting performing artists at the precise moment their entire industry is being shut down does seem a little thoughtless but the motivation was all good.

In case you have not seen the ad, it featured a young woman sitting on a bench, seemingly preparing for a ballet class. “Fatima’s next job could be in cyber. (she just doesn’t know it yet)” runs the text, above the slogan “Rethink. Reskill. Reboot”.

One could take a positive view of the ad, which is not only defying gender stereotypes but encouraging people to think of other paths. While Fatima may indeed be committed to a career of bunions and stress fractures, it is possible she simply dances for pleasure in her spare time. If Fatima is truly the next Darcey Bussell then she should stick with it, but the odds are she isn’t, in which case she might quite like to be a cyber-security expert. It feels like a growth industry.

It is also just possible that the ad was not meant to be taken entirely literally and was merely meant to be an eye-catching appeal to a youthful demographic, but that degree of nuance may be asking too much of Twitter’s artistic community. Incidentally, I’d wonder about the commitment of anyone who thought they wanted to be a ballerina but switched into software after seeing an advert on the Tube.

Anyway, Twitter naturally exploded with messages like “Dance, Fatima, dance”, “Follow your dreams” and “Get your bots off our ballerinas” (OK, I made that last one up). In fairness, this is an industry hurting badly and with too much time on its hands. You have to



ILLUSTRATION BY LUCAS VARELA

wonder if they would have been so angry had Fatima been a Morris dancer. But it touched a nerve with those who cannot imagine anything so lowly as an office job.

Faced with the fury of the codpiece crowd, the culture secretary Oliver Dowden exited stage left, declaring the advert “crass”. After “Rethink. Reskill. Reboot” apparently comes Retreat. It was, he said, not something specifically authorised by the department but had been created by a sorcerer to trick a beautiful young dancer into a life of computing. Tragically, Fatima has already fallen under his spell and now spends her days repelling DDoS attacks, reverting to her dancing form only in the hours of darkness.

But while all this attracted ire, where was the fuss about the earlier campaign encouraging cyber-security experts to retrain as ballet dancers? That campaign, with the slogan “Plié. Pirouette. Pas de deux”, featuring a young guy with a laptop and the text “Kevin’s next job could be at Covent Garden”, attracted a lot less controversy, although the phrase “#Firewalls not Flic-flacs” did trend briefly on Twitter at about 2.40am. The ad was subsequently withdrawn after it led to an exodus of staff from

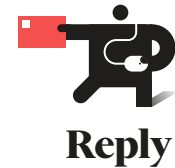
GCHQ who were last seen glissé-ing out of the office in the direction of Cheltenham High Street.

It is interesting that while we are meant to be outraged at the crime of offering artists help to pursue less exotic careers, we would think nothing of encouraging those in more traditional roles to throw them up and “follow their dreams”. (Obviously, anything so grubby as working in technology cannot be classified as a dream.)

On the other hand, it might make a great TV series, the dancing cyber cop. In episode one, she joins a company heading to Russia to find the mysterious hacker believed to be working for Vladimir Putin on a mission to subvert western dance. Alternatively, she might just be a cyber investigator who dances in her spare time since it is well known that all TV detectives need a niche hobby.

Anyway, in a torrid economy we should all be open to retraining and encouraging people to look at alternative careers. Ballet dancers as cyber experts; footballers as investment bankers; journalists as politicians (or is it possible to take this idea too far?). **FT**

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 @robertshrimsley



Re “Mukesh Ambani: the relentless rise of Asia’s richest man” (October 10/11). While many will have reservations about Ambani’s methods (as I do), you cannot fault his group’s management. To be successful financially, he needs to take advantage of the gift horses he gets given. Reliance knows how to do that very well in a difficult business and cultural environment. **Smallworld** via FT.com

@Will_Tanner October 8
 Terrific @FT long read on the government’s plans to reform the civil service. The biggest challenge will not be tearing down dysfunctional bits of the system but building institutions that endure

As Tim Harford’s column (“Lockdown sceptics v zero-Covid: who’s got it right?”, October 10/11) points out, the problem of Covid requires some level of admission that there are downsides to all approaches, a methodology for trading off those downsides versus upsides, a bit of fuzzy logic since the precise impact of any one measure is not known. But those things require a sophistication of thought that eludes our political leaders. **Gatorade** via FT.com

Re “Why you should buy South African wine” (October 10/11). South African wine is incredible value for money, but it is massively under-imported in Europe. You almost have to know what you want to buy and track importers across the continent, and hope they are importing the cuvée you prefer. **LostInTranslation** via FT.com

Re Gillian Tett’s column (“What can we learn from the things we fear the most?”, October 10/11). It is depressing that in a time where we have better living standards, healthcare and opportunities than ever before, we are more afraid than ever. How have we allowed this to happen to us? **Misandrism** via FT.com

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Quiz answers The link was words (or letters) that can be followed by “bomb”. 1. Bouncing Back 2. Four-star/leaded petrol 3. Elizabeth Smart 4. The Great Stink 5. “Smoke Gets in Your Eyes” 6. Time 7. H 8. Flying squad (Sweeney Todd) 9. Cherry (Black forest gâteau) 10. Mills & Boon **Picture quiz** Rhod Gilbert + David Sullivan = Gilbert and Sullivan

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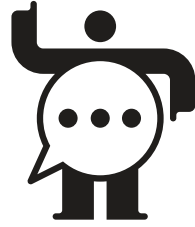
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TECH WORLD



BY ELAINE MOORE

What would you pay for a brush with celebrity?

If you had thousands of dollars going spare this summer, then swaggering ex-*Entourage* star Jeremy Piven had a proposal for you. As a recent addition to Cameo, the platform that lets famous-ish faces set their own price for a few minutes of access, the actor was offering 10-minute one-on-one video chats for \$15,000.

Are there enough fans of Piven with the money to buy this service? It seems unlikely. The video chat has since been replaced with the offer of a pre-recorded video message for a few hundred dollars. A preview shows the actor sitting in a room with a French bulldog on his lap telling viewers that he joined Cameo because “we are the stars of our own lives”. This, of course, makes little sense. If we were all stars, there would be no one left to spend money on celebrity Cameo videos. But off-the-cuff remarks are common on Cameo. Dim lighting and blurred backgrounds in other videos suggest many celebrities do minimal prep before hitting record.

Still, the platform keeps gaining popularity. There are now almost 40,000 celebrities offering to make personalised videos. The surfeit means that rates keep falling. This is bad news for the stars who signed up early, who now find themselves competing with better-known faces. It is, however, good news for Cameo. The more celebrities it can persuade to join, the more fans will visit. Between February and April, Cameo doubled the number of celebrities making videos.

Like video app TikTok, Cameo is one of a handful of platforms that are benefiting from the suspension

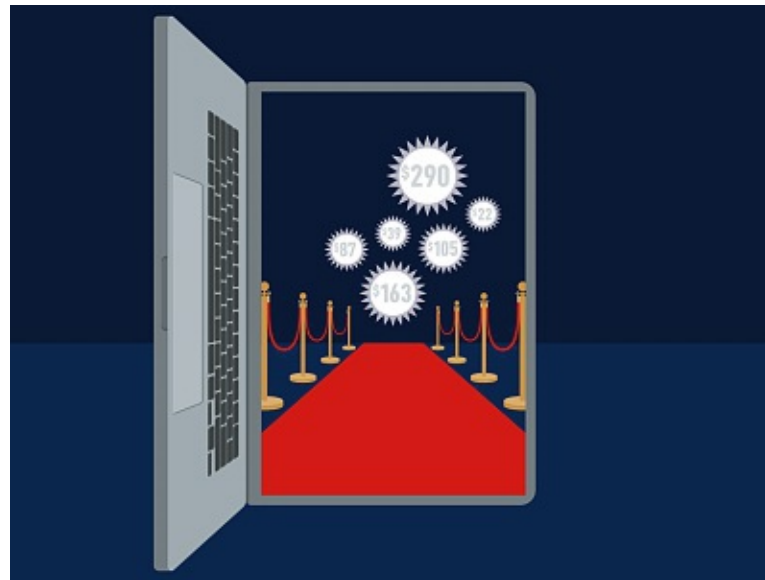


ILLUSTRATION BY PÂTÉ

of normality this year. With events cancelled and in-person meetings difficult, Patreon and OnlyFans have also reported an upswing of users. Patreon, valued at \$1.2bn, helps podcasters, writers and other creatives to raise money directly from supporters. OnlyFans offers a similar platform for risqué content.

Social media’s relentless removal of cultural gatekeepers is not over yet. Twitter and Instagram encouraged well-known faces to engage more directly with their fans and offer insights into their private lives without agents, publicists and the media getting in the way. Cameo lets them set a price for an even more personal interaction, taking a cut from the payments made. A recent *New Yorker* article suggested it was “part of a broader cultural shift” towards greater access to celebrities.

‘It is a giddy prospect to be able to hire a celebrity’s services directly – like role-playing a cigar-puffing Hollywood studio head’

The platform’s definition of celebrity is, naturally, stretched taut. Fans of reality TV and American sport will see a lot of familiar faces. Everyone else will struggle, though the pandemic has led better-known faces with time on their hands to sign up. So, some of the most successful celebrities are not even people. I paid \$30 for a zoo to take a video of a baby sloth eating a banana as a birthday message for a bemused, but pleased, friend.

If you do recognise someone on the app, it is a giddy prospect to be able to hire their services directly – like role-playing a cigar-puffing Hollywood studio head. But the pricing is still a work in progress. Many pre-recorded videos cost less than \$100. Piven’s vast fee is rare. Perhaps he did not really expect a lot of people to pay \$15,000 for a quick chat online. Cameo is more than a way for celebrities to make some extra cash during the pandemic; it is also a way for them to publicise their self-perceived value. As social media has expanded access to stars, it has also changed the economics of their fame.

In a recent YouTube documentary, the Noughties tabloid princess Paris Hilton described the frenetic paparazzi fights that used to surround her. In those pre-Instagram years, photos of Hilton could fetch up to \$1m. Knowing that they could become rich with a single shot, photographers would brawl with one another on the street. Now that Hilton posts her own photos for free, the scrum of paparazzi has mostly been replaced with fans holding up smartphones to get pictures with her for their own social-media accounts.

For celebrities such as Hilton, social media has changed the way their fame is priced. A post marked with #ad is worth the fee paid by the brand minus the loss of irritated followers. But regular posts are still part of an intangible relationship-building exercise with fans that could one day yield advertising. Cameo simply makes the value of this interaction explicit.

Once, it was up to talent agencies, PRs and publishers to set a price on fame. Cameo, Patreon and other sites allow people to pick their own rates and see if fans agree. Social media has allowed the public closer access to celebrity. It makes sense that the public should now get to decide exactly what that access is worth. **FT**

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Elaine Moore is the FT’s deputy Lex editor

ELIZABETH HARROD & STEVEN MCRAE, SOLOIST & PRINCIPAL, THE ROYAL BALLET



SAVOIR

EXTRAORDINARY BEDS

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If you and I were to bid against each other in a charity auction for, say, dinner with Princess Marie of Denmark, little would have to be explained about how the details of the auction work. One of us values the prospect more, would pay more and would win.

But if you and I were bidding against each other for the joint value of the cash in our wallets, the auction becomes far more intriguing. I know only what is in my wallet and you know only what is in yours. Each of us should take a keen interest in what the other is willing to pay, since it is a clear signal of the value of the prize.

The charity auction for an evening with Princess Marie would be described by an economist as a private value auction. I have my own idea of its value, you have yours, and the only question is whose value, and thus whose bid, is higher.

The wallet auction is known as a common value auction. The cash in the wallets is worth the same to each of us. To add to the intrigue, each of us has a piece of the puzzle but neither of us know everything about the true value.

This is a hint of the complexities involved in the ostensibly simple process of running an auction, or bidding in one. Auctions date back a long time. Almost two and a half thousand years ago, the historian Herodotus described men bidding for the most attractive wives in Babylon. Auctions also appear in Edward Gibbon's *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, as well as in Samuel Pepys's diaries.

Presumably, the auction is almost as old as the marketplace itself. It was no doubt invented many times over in markets when some buyer offered to pay four denarii per jar for fresh honey and the man next to him said, "Don't settle for that price - I'll give you five."

The economist William Vickrey shared a Nobel memorial prize in 1996 in part for his foundational work on the theory of auctions. But Vickrey's work covers only private value auctions. While elegant to the point of beauty, it does not give economists the tools to analyse the complex, practical auction design problems that real world settings require.

Into the breach stepped Robert Wilson, who analysed the common value case, and his former student Paul Milgrom, who broadened the analysis to auctions with a mix of private and common values. It is just one element of the work for which the Stanford professors



TIM HARFORD

THE UNDERCOVER ECONOMIST



How to win at auction theory

'A well-designed auction forces bidders to reveal the truth about their own estimate of the prize's value. It is quite a trick'

were this week awarded the 2020 Nobel memorial prize in economic sciences "for improvements to auction theory and inventions of new auction formats".

Paul Klemperer, a leading auction theorist at Oxford university, says even that Nobel citation is hardly praise enough. "These were not just 'improvements'. Robert Wilson is the father of practical auction design," he says, "and Paul Milgrom could easily have won a second Nobel prize for his work on the economics of information."

Beyond the beauty of auction theory, the reason this matters is that governments have turned to auctions over the past few decades to allocate resources including rights for logging, mineral exploration and the use of particular frequencies of radio spectrum for television or mobile phones. The alternative - handing out the resources cheaply to whoever spins the most plausible story - offers some conveniences to both buyers and politicians but is hardly in the public interest.

A well-designed auction forces bidders to reveal the truth about their own estimate of the prize's value. At the same time, the auction shares that information with the

other bidders. And it sets the price accordingly. It is quite a trick.

But, in practice, it is a difficult trick to get right. In the 1990s, the US federal government turned to auction theorists - Milgrom and Wilson prominent among them - for advice on auctioning radio-spectrum rights. "The theory that we had in place had only a little bit to do with the problems that they actually faced," Milgrom recalled in an interview in 2007. "But the proposals that were being made by the government were proposals that we were perfectly capable of analysing the flaws in and improving."

The basic challenge with radio-spectrum auctions is that many prizes are on offer, and bidders desire only certain combinations. A TV company might want the right to use Band A or Band B but not both. Or the right to broadcast in the east of England, but only if they also had the right to broadcast in the west. Such combinatorial auctions are formidably challenging to design, but Milgrom and Wilson got to work.

Joshua Gans, a former student of Milgrom's who is now a professor at the University of Toronto, praises both men for their practicality. Their theoretical work is impressive, he said, "but they realised that when the world got too complex, they shouldn't adhere to proving strict theorems".

Auctions continue to be used to allocate scarce resources, and there is ample room to use them in future - for example, allocating the rights to fly to hub airports or to emit carbon dioxide, deciding which environmental projects should receive subsidies or providing central bank loans to the banking system in times of stress.

Spectrum auctions have already raised many billions of dollars across the world; Milgrom, Wilson and another auction designer, Preston McAfee, were awarded a Golden Goose Award in 2014 - the award celebrates apparently obscure research that yields large social benefits.

And it is not just governments who use auctions. Every time you type a search term into Google, the advertisements you see alongside the results are there because they won a complex auction. Auctions helped to allocate the infrastructure on which the internet runs. Now they help to allocate our attention. **FT**

Tim Harford's new book is "How to Make the World Add Up"

Knight

Frank

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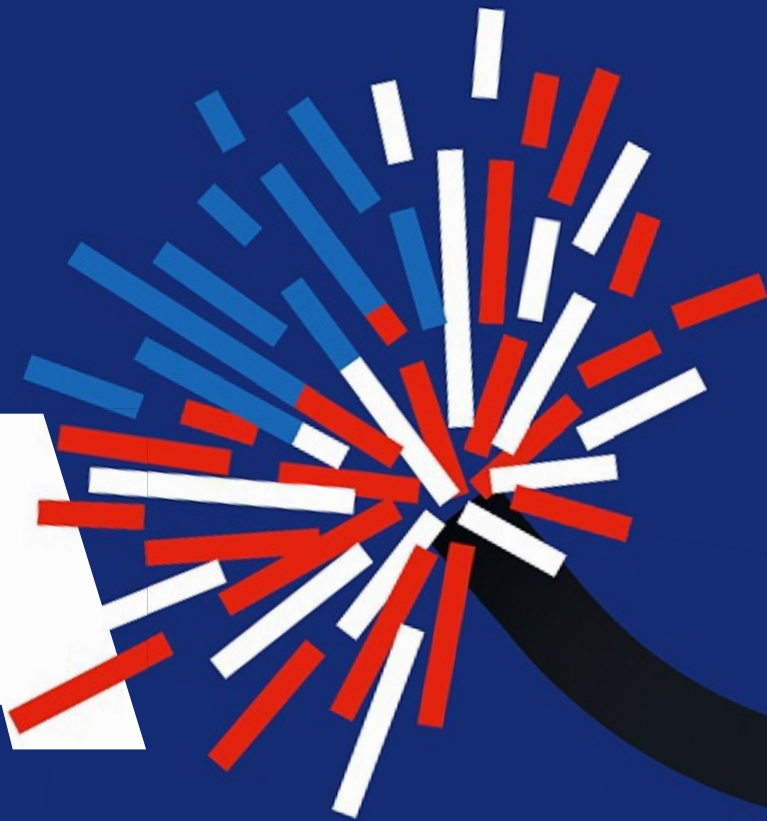
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CAN AMERICAN STAY TOGETHER

The US constitution has long been treated as a sacred document. But the controversy over Donald Trump's Supreme Court pick and the possibility of a contested election result could light the fuse that leads to a full-blown constitutional crisis. *Edward Luce* reports on what happens then. Illustration by *Miguel Montaner*

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HER?





t the start of each academic year, Rosa Brooks asks her freshmen students what they think of the US constitution. Almost all express pride that – at 233 years of age – America has by far the world’s oldest constitution. Brooks, a professor at Georgetown Law School in Washington DC, then asks: “Presumably you think it would also be great if our surgeons worked off the oldest neurological manuals, or if our ships steered by the oldest navigational charts?” The question usually stumps her students. What, she probes, is so special about the oldness of a document as opposed to its usefulness? Clear answers are rarely forthcoming.

Until recently, Brooks’ line of inquiry was confined to mildly subversive corners of academia. Americans have always revered their constitution like a quasi-religious set of commandments handed down from Mount Sinai. In reality, much of it was a messy, though ingenious, compromise between the slave states and the non-slave-owning states. America’s famous separation of powers between the legislature (Congress), the executive (the presidency) and the judiciary (the Supreme Court) was a sophisticated design to check the power of one branch of government against another. The goal was to prevent the return of kingly absolutism rather than create a mass democracy. “Ambition must be made to counteract ambition,” wrote James Madison, one of the key founding fathers.

The court quickly turned into the lofty arbiter of what was permissible under the constitution. The great 20th-century jurist Felix Frankfurter mocked the perception of justices on the Supreme Court on which he served as “impersonal vehicles of revealed truth”. William Taft, a former president and chief justice, described the US judiciary in general as “high-priest[s] in the temple of justice”.

The court remains the least disrespected among America’s three branches, though America’s veneration for it has been waning over the past generation.

Since Donald Trump took office, however, the US left’s hostility to conservative constitutionalism is growing sharply. Trump’s pact with the Christian right has resulted in two new Supreme Court justices and a third is in the pipeline. Trump’s actions have also shattered faith in the idea of checks and balances. From the president’s refusal to reveal his tax returns or to resolve conflicts over his family business to his blanket denial of co-operation with congressional oversight, the separation of powers has acted as scant check on Trump’s actions. As America’s first branch of government, Congress supposedly has the power to hold the presidency to account through investigation, hearings, demanding documents and ultimately impeachment. In practice, however, that power is no longer much of a check. Trump seems to view Capitol Hill as an irritating mosquito. “Trump treats subpoenas like toilet paper,” says one senior congressional staffer. “There is almost nothing we can do about it.”

The conservative-tilted Supreme Court has not been much help. Joe Biden, Trump’s presidential opponent, was almost the sole candidate during the

Democratic primary debates to say he would not pack the court by expanding its number of judges from nine to, say, 11 or 15. This would shrink conservatives to a minority. Now even Biden, an old-style traditionalist, sounds non-committal.

Last month, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, the nation’s most revered liberal justice, died from cancer aged 87. That created a vacancy that Trump immediately proposed to fill with Amy Coney Barrett, a religious conservative who, barring her gender, is Ginsburg’s opposite in almost every way. Ginsburg did more to advance women’s rights than any other figure in modern US history. Barrett, as a member of People of Praise, a charismatic Catholic organisation, belongs to a group that explicitly believes in the traditional family hierarchy with women in a subordinate role (belied, of course, by her own meteoric career).

Barrett’s near-certain confirmation opens up the prospect of a Supreme Court slanted six to three in favour of conservatives – an unassailable majority that could undo many of the gains in civil rights over the past few decades. Among these could be *Roe v Wade*, the 1973 ruling that enshrined the right to abortion; *Obergefell v Hodges*, the 2015 ruling that legalised gay marriage; the existence of many federal regulatory agencies (potentially including the US Federal Reserve); and the removal of remaining limits on gun ownership. A six-three court, in other words, could dramatically boost the conservative movement’s counter-revolution against post-1960s America. “This would be a court that would be far more bold about advancing Christian values – and religious ideas of how society should be ordered,” says Eric Posner, a professor at the University of Chicago Law School. It could help break already wavering liberal tolerance for the constitution.

Barrett’s nomination is overshadowed only by the presidential election. On the eve of what polls suggest could be a clear Biden victory, her confirmation by a Republican Senate would rob with the legal hand what voters look poised to bestow on Democrats with the political. As it stands, Barrett’s confirmation is likely to be hurried through the Senate the week before the election – a breathtaking move when liberals are already livid about the anti-democratic direction of America’s judiciary. The controversy could light the fuse that ends in a full-blown crisis over America’s founding creed. “I think it’s hard to overstate how shocking this move is,” says Norman Ornstein, a leading scholar of US politics at the American Enterprise Institute. “Barrett’s confirmation would escalate the already existing nuclear arms race between liberals and conservatives. It cannot end in a good place.”

What then can be done to avert a US constitutional meltdown? The distressing answer is very little. The simplest step would be to amend the constitution to



The first page of the original copy of the US constitution from 1787

‘TRUMP TREATS SUBPOENAS LIKE TOILET PAPER. THERE IS ALMOST NOTHING WE CAN DO ABOUT IT’

Senior congressional staffer



Donald Trump (right) faces his presidential opponent Joe Biden in last month's TV debate moderated by Fox News host Chris Wallace

make America more democratic. But amendments require approval by three-quarters of America's 50 states and two-thirds of each chamber of Congress – an impossibility in today's polarised climate. Apart from a trivial amendment over congressional salaries, the last memorable one was passed in 1971, when America's 26th amendment reduced the voting age to 18. The last serious one was the 25th amendment in 1965, which enabled a US president to be removed because of incapacity. Critics of Trump have made recitation of "25th" into something of a chant because of his alleged mental instability.

Top of any liberal wish list of future amendments would be to scrap the electoral college, which gives disproportionate sway to smaller rural conservative states, such as North Dakota, over the larger liberal ones like California. Twice in the past 20 years a US president has won election having lost the popular vote – George W Bush in 2000 and Trump in 2016. "Only once in the 44 elections between 1824 and 1996 was it clear a winning presidential candidate lost the popular vote," says Ornstein. "Now it's turning into a feature of the system." If the polls tighten in the coming two weeks, Trump could pull off that feat again. There is almost no chance of him winning the popular vote on November 3 – he trails Biden too heavily. It is possible that he could win the electoral college again. Should he contest results in any of the swing states, as Bush did in Florida in 2000, the outcome could once again be settled by conservative judges. That is what happened in Florida when the Supreme Court voted by five-four to halt the recount, effectively awarding the presidency to Bush. Should Barrett have donned her robes, that would mean a third of the court – including John Roberts, the chief justice, and Brett Kavanaugh, who joined in 2018 – had worked as legal aides on Bush's 2000 campaign.

The spectre of another "judicial selection" to settle the US presidency has intensified efforts among constitutional apostates – a growing minority in the US's legal faculties – to overhaul America's founding document, or even start from scratch. One such dissenter, Sanford Levinson at the University of Texas Law School, says that the failure to change America's constitution – either by replacing it with a document fit for the 21st century, or by doing away with a written constitution altogether – will result in one of three outcomes. ▶

'AMY CONEY BARRETT'S CONFIRMATION WOULD ESCALATE THE NUCLEAR ARMS RACE BETWEEN LIBERALS AND CONSERVATIVES'

Norman Ornstein, leading scholar of US politics



Amy Coney Barrett, Trump's nominee for the Supreme Court, in Washington this month



Donald Trump supporters outside the Walter Reed military hospital where the president was being treated this month after being diagnosed with coronavirus

The first is the break-up of America. This year there has been a flurry of books with titles such as *American Secession* and *Divided We Fall*. The two largest putative new countries often mentioned would be Cascadia, which would include the West Coast states, notably northern California, and the mountain west, and the older idea of the Republic of Texas, which would incorporate much of the south and midwest. “Americans are used to thinking of secession as a violent act because of the civil war,” says Levinson. “But you have plenty of examples around the world of peaceful divorce, including Scotland’s possible departure from the UK, the split of the Slovaks from the Czechs in the 1990s and Norway from Sweden in 1905.” A minor hitch is that most scholars believe the constitution forbids secession, which is why America went to war with itself over slavery.

Levinson’s second outcome is civil war. Much of the blame for America’s 1861-65 civil war came from the notorious 1857 Dred Scott ruling, which said that black Americans could not be treated as citizens even if they lived in non-slave states. Black people, including Scott, a slave who claimed he had been freed after moving from Missouri to Illinois, where slavery was illegal, “are not included, and were not intended to be included, under the word ‘citizens’ in the constitution”, wrote Roger Taney, the chief justice. Taney was unfortunately correct. America’s founding fathers expressly denied citizenship to slaves. For the sole purpose of appeasing the thinly populated slave states, the constitution defined a slave as three-fifths of a human being, thus granting the south more congressional representation than warranted by the number of its white male citizens. Hence the reputed quip from Stokely Carmichael, the 1960s black power radical, who referred to America’s “Constitu” – he could only get three-fifths of the way through the word.

Abraham Lincoln, in some ways America’s greatest founding father even though he was born years after independence, was the man who won the civil war against the south. He frequently referred to the fact that the constitution denied citizenship to slaves. Lincoln, in other words, effectively declared war on the US constitution. The Supreme Court also played a notorious role

‘CHANGE IN AMERICA HAS USUALLY COME FROM BREAKING THE CONSTITUTION RATHER THAN ADHERING TO IT’

Sanford Levinson, legal scholar



Barack Obama greets Ruth Bader Ginsburg at the State of the Union in January 2011



Socially distanced Joe Biden supporters at a campaign event featuring the presidential candidate's wife Jill in Minneapolis, Minnesota, this month

in enshrining the Jim Crow segregation of the south in its 1896 Plessy v Ferguson ruling, which did so much to undo the results of Lincoln's civil war victory. "Change in America has usually come from breaking the constitution rather than adhering to it - up to and including war," says Levinson. "Not many constitutional scholars talk about that."

Levinson's third option, which he considers the most likely, is that America falls victim neither to secession nor to war. It simply drifts into becoming the "sick man of the west", a 21st-century version of the once-mighty Ottoman empire, which gradually descended during the 18th and 19th century into sclerosis. In this story, which is arguably under way, America grudgingly reconciles itself to the fact that renewal is not possible. Rather than providing a blueprint for modern reforms, its constitution acts as an ever more entrenched roadblock to change. Like the grand viziers of Istanbul, Washington's elected and berobed elites comfortably acclimatise to a system that services their personal needs. Dynamism unconsciously morphs into stasis. A country that prided itself on its political radicalism turns inwards into a form of ancestor-worship known as "originalism" - the legal doctrine that the country's limits are defined by the words of America's founding fathers or the intended meaning behind their words.

"Originalism is a bit like the Protestant Reformation," says Eric Posner. "You have to go back to the original text and read it literally." In reality, Posner adds, originalists simply read whatever they like into the constitution. A historical reading of America's first amendment, which guarantees free speech, would tell you that it was explicitly meant to prevent the government from closing down subversive publications in feverish 1790s America. Somehow that text has been reread into a right for corporations to spend unlimited money on elections. Likewise, a contextual understanding of the second amendment, which enshrines the right to bear arms, makes it clear that its 1790s drafters meant organised militias. Again, originalists have extracted radically different interpretations. Now the second amendment is taken to mean that Americans can carry concealed arms into shopping malls and churches, or keep small armouries designed for the battlefield in their basement. Neither interpretation of either amendment was mainstream half a century ago. Yet it is as hard today, as

then, to read the actual words and match the interpretations of the originalists. "In some respects, originalism is just a fig leaf for making up what you want to make up, just like you can find whatever you like from the Bible," says Posner. "Originalism is a licence to be creative."

Among many others, Barrett is a devotee of originalism. Her mentor, Antonin Scalia, who served on the Supreme Court for three decades, was the jurist who did most to advance the doctrine, which is sometimes called "textualism". Almost none of the challenges America faces - global warming, becoming a minority-majority society, producing vaccines at speed, high-tech competition with China - could have been foreseen by the founding fathers. It was precisely in anticipation of the unforeseeable that Thomas Jefferson, the most poetic of America's founders, recommended the US change its constitution every generation. "Imagine you are sitting in a room and you're trying to figure out how to solve some 21st-century challenge we face," says Brooks. "Then someone bursts in and says, 'Hey, I've got the answer. I've found this document written in the late-18th century when America only had four million people, most of whom were farmers.' Do you really think they would have a clue?"

In the immediate future, the country faces two radically divergent forks. The first is a slow-burn constitutional crisis, which begins with a Biden victory. Even if he defeats Trump by a landslide, Biden's plans would run into almost immediate judicial difficulties. One of these would be a heavily conservative Supreme Court that is likely at some point to strike down the "individual mandate" that obliges everyone to buy health insurance under Obamacare. Indeed, the Supreme Court is due to hear a challenge to Obamacare the week after the election. No vaguely affordable US public healthcare coverage could work without compulsory insurance. Biden would also face a Senate that could block his legislation, as it did for the last six out of eight years of Barack Obama's presidency. Even if the Democrats regained control of the Senate by winning more than 50 seats next month, Biden would still need a filibuster-proof supermajority of 60 to pass serious legislation. There are usually a few Democrats who switch to ►

'AMERICA WAS DESIGNED TO BE A REPUBLIC, NOT A DEMOCRACY. BY DESIGN, CHANGE IS HARD TO BRING ABOUT'

John Yoo, professor of law



Trump waves to supporters outside Walter Reed hospital this month

◀ join Republicans on key votes, often including Joe Manchin of West Virginia and California's Dianne Feinstein.

Running instantly into these red lights would present Biden with several temptations, all of which are technically legal. These would include abolishing the Senate filibuster so that bills could be passed by a simple 51 majority. It could also entail "packing the states" by awarding statehood to the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and possibly the American Virgin Islands. Since each state gets two senators regardless of population, that would add six reliably Democratic seats to Biden's column. Democrats could also "pack the court", either by expanding the size of the Supreme Court and filling the newly minted robes with reliably liberal justices or by imposing term limits on sitting justices. At the moment, Supreme Court justices can serve for life. At 48, Barrett could be shaping America's future for the next 40 years. Nowhere in the US constitution does it specify the Supreme Court should consist of nine judges. Before the civil war, its size fluctuated between six and 10.

Though Biden is temperamentally wedded to tradition, reality may force him to act radically. Even Obama, who barely mentioned constitutional reform when he was president, now supports abolition of the Senate filibuster. Conservatives would naturally be appalled at any one of these changes, let alone all three. "All of these changes supported by the left are supposed to make America more democratic," says John Yoo, a professor of law at Berkeley who was a close ally of Dick Cheney, the former vice-president. "They overlook the fact that America was designed to be a republic, not a democracy. By design, change is hard to bring about. The founders deliberately built in protections against the tyranny of the majority."

Yoo adds an ingenious argument from the conservative point of view. "Brexit would not have been possible with the US constitution," he says. "America's system prevents sweeping changes with 51 per cent of the population." Under the US constitution, of course, Britain would have been prevented from joining the EU in the first place. Earlier this month, Mike Lee, a Republican senator from Utah, said it even more baldly: "We're not a democracy. The word 'democracy' appears nowhere in the constitution." Like Chief Justice Taney's view of slaves in 1857, Lee was correct. If the founding fathers were wrong about slavery, and indeed about women (who were also denied the franchise), might they also have been wrong about democracy?

Other conservatives view the left's agitation against the system as un-American - a serious charge in a country where traditionally it is adherence to creed, rather than ancestry, that qualifies you for membership. "The essence of the problem is that liberals hate the constitution and conservatives revere it," says Richard Porter, a leading corporate lawyer, who also serves on the Republican

National Committee. "If you start packing the Supreme Court with your own people, then you will turn it into a super-legislature rather than a body that upholds the rule of law. What would be the difference then between America and Venezuela?" Change should be hard, adds Porter. The Senate was meant, in George Washington's words, to play saucer to the House of Representatives' hot tea. It was where public passions would cool off.

It might be a little unfair, however, to compare Joe Biden with Venezuela's president Nicolás Maduro, or Viktor Orbán, Hungary's leader, who has also bent his country's judiciary to his will. The Democratic hope would be to align the judicial system with US majority opinion on issues such as healthcare, abortion, environmental regulation and gun control - or at least to dilute the Supreme Court's veto over the actions of elected officials. "Clear and settled majorities of Americans support these reforms, yet somehow the system keeps frustrating their will," says Aziz Huq at the University of Chicago Law School. Orbán's express aim, meanwhile, has been to create an "illiberal democracy", which bears an uncanny resemblance to authoritarianism.

A better parallel comes from American history - Franklin Delano Roosevelt's infamous 1937 effort to pack the courts. His attempt to expand the US Supreme Court came after it had struck down most of the key pieces of the New Deal in his first term. He was elected amid the Great Depression. In 1933, he inherited a strongly conservative Supreme Court - dubbed "nine old men in kimonos". The year before FDR was elected, 100,000 Americans applied for jobs in the Soviet Union. History records that Roosevelt's scheme backfired. The bill foundered. Yet from then on, the Supreme Court dramatically changed its stance. Its nine justices ceased to strike down New Deal legislation. "The stitch in time that saved nine," as the saying went. If that episode carries any resonance, Biden could chasten today's Supreme Court simply by threatening to pack it. Joseph Stalin, the Soviet dictator, once asked, "How many divisions does the Pope have?" after Winston Churchill advised him to take heed of the Vatican's views. Like the Vatican, the power of America's Supreme Court ultimately rests on its moral legitimacy.

The second fork in the road is an explosive constitutional crisis triggered by a contested election outcome next month. Last year, Rosa Brooks set up a group called the Transition Integrity Project that carried out "war games" exercises about possible outcomes to a disputed election. One such scenario involves Trump winning the electoral college while losing the popular vote to Biden by 52-47 per cent. The election takes place amid a low turnout because of voter suppression - the closure of polling stations in urban minority precincts, for example - and Covid-19 fears prevent others from turning up to vote in person. The outcome quickly degenerates into an impasse in which, it turns out, Trump holds almost all the cards. Uniquely to the US, the country's constitution keeps the incumbent in power for a full 11 weeks between election day and the inauguration of the next president. Like so much else in any constitutional democracy, the system ultimately survives because of behavioural codes rather than law. Rules are a confidence trick. If enough people refuse to follow them, they cannot be enforced. "The great secret about the US constitution is that it relies on public acceptance," says Huq. "Without legitimacy, nothing can last for long."

In contrast to, say, Jimmy Carter in 1980 or George HW Bush in 1992, Trump shows no signs of abiding by an antiquated honour system that says the incumbent should respect the rules of the game. In Brooks's range of scenarios, only



'Scene at the Signing of the Constitution' by Howard Chandler Christy (1940)



Biden at a campaign event in Grand Rapids, Michigan, this month

'HISTORY SHOULD TEACH US THAT NOTHING LASTS FOR EVER'

Rosa Brooks, professor of law

one - a Biden landslide - does not lead to American conflagration. Though the exercises included liberals and conservatives (and also myself), Brooks has been accused in the Trumpian media of plotting a "Democratic coup", which has led to a torrent of menacing emails. Such threats are nothing new for public figures in today's America. I know of one Washington-based journalist who has temporarily had to move their family into a hotel on the advice of the FBI. Last week, the FBI uncovered an advanced plot by members of a rightwing militia to kidnap Gretchen Whitmer, Michigan's Democratic governor. "This is probably the most polarised American climate since the build-up to 1860," says Preet Bharara, a former Democratic US attorney for the southern district of New York. "My bet is the system will survive intact. But if Trump contests next month's election, I might change my mind."

Trump's broader pandemic record, and the operatic way in which he responded to his own Covid-19 diagnosis, has lessened the spectre of such a breakdown. Biden's poll lead has edged closer to double digits. The chances are that this dog will not bark - or at least not yet. Even if America descends into street hostilities next month, the odds are the Supreme Court would not want to stick its head above the parapet. "I would be hugely surprised if the Supreme

Court would take such a risk with its legitimacy," says Jeffrey Rosen, head of the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia, the city where the founding fathers hammered out the document. "They would not want to jeopardise their position." Rosen points out that traffic to his centre has skyrocketed in the past year - the NCC is now the third most-visited museum website in America. This reflects the country's heightened awareness over what is at stake. "Interest in the constitution is off the charts," Rosen says.

Let's suppose that the likelier outcome next month is a Biden victory - and a slow-burn US constitutional crisis, rather than imminent breakdown. For how long can it slowly burn before it flares? "If the system is the same in 2030 as it is now, America will start to fall apart," says Ornstein. He points out that within 20 years, 30 per cent of the US will elect 70 of its 100 senators. Levinson adds: "The US Senate is an affirmative-action programme for white, rural, Christian conservatives, who have an increasingly powerful veto over America." Posner says: "We are likely to see a judicial expansion of religious restrictions dressed up as freedom in the language of originalism." Brooks says: "Are we, as a country, able to debate whether we can change our furniture? Or has our constitution become a secular religion - too sacralised even to go there? History should teach us that nothing lasts for ever."

It could be, as Levinson suggests, that America - and Washington in particular - will simply accommodate itself, Ottoman-style, to tenured stagnation but without the seraglios. It is probably worth heeding a historical warning from Kemal Atatürk, the Turkish nationalist who delivered the death blow in 1922 to the long era of the Ottoman sultans. "The evils which had sapped the nation's strength had all been wrought in the name of religion," Atatürk said. Or, to paraphrase distilled wisdom from almost any civilisation, whether it be in the Levant or North America, and all points east and west: "If things cannot bend, eventually they will break." Is America capable of bending? **FT**

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Edward Luce is the FT's US national editor

'I WAS NOT COMPLETELY NORMAL'

Did Arsène Wenger get the balance right between being a football manager and being a person? “I got it completely wrong,” he laughs. “I would not advise anybody to lead the same life. Sometimes I think what kind of human being I might be, because to be obsessed like that and sacrifice everything - I was not completely normal. It was a completely unbalanced life.”

Wenger, 70, hasn't yet mastered the trick of putting his laptop on a pile of books, so his familiar aquiline features peer down on me from Zoom. He has kept quiet since his ousting as Arsenal manager in 2018, after 22 years in the job. Now he is unleashed. His new memoir, *My Life in Red and White*, takes us from his childhood in the Alsatian village of Duttlenheim to his current estrangement from Arsenal - a lifetime spent thinking about football, management and what it takes out of you.

Duttlenheim made Wenger. He was raised there only a few years after the village's return to France. Hitler had annexed the perennially contested Alsace in 1940, and the men of Duttlenheim had been conscripted into his army.

Wenger's book glosses over the topic in less than a paragraph but when I ask about it, he answers. “My father did fight for the Germans on the Russian front. My mother told me [that] when he came back, he was 42kg... between life and death, [he] was in hospital for months.” How did the war's legacy affect Wenger, the youngest of three children? “In my

For more than 20 years, Arsène Wenger lived and breathed the job of managing Arsenal, transforming both the club and British football. How has he adapted to life after leadership and, at 70, could he still return?

By *Simon Kuper*

Portraits by *Ilyes Griyeb*

family, we didn't speak a lot about the war. It was like a banned subject. I was not educated in that environment at all.”

His parents ran the village bistro, La Croix d'Or, while his workaholic father also had an auto-parts business. They had worked non-stop since they were 14. “We were a family without my having any understanding of what that word meant,” Wenger writes. “We never ate together and we talked very little.” There were no books at home in the rue du Général de Gaulle.

He grew up in the bistro, among adults, watching the local farmers argue, laugh, lie, get drunk and sometimes brawl. Duttlenheimers at the time still spoke the Alsatian German dialect. Wenger learnt French at school. The main topic of bistro conversation was football, especially on Wednesday evenings, when the village club held its selection meetings.

Wenger muses about his life choice: “Is it the fact that I grew up only in a football environment? As a young kid, I was just listening and thinking, ‘That is the only thing that matters, basically, because people talk only about that.’”

Duttlenheim also connected him with Germany. He didn't inherit any hatred. “I was curious to see why should people be different on the other side of the Rhine. On top of that, on the football front, they were quite good at the time, the Germans, better than the French.”

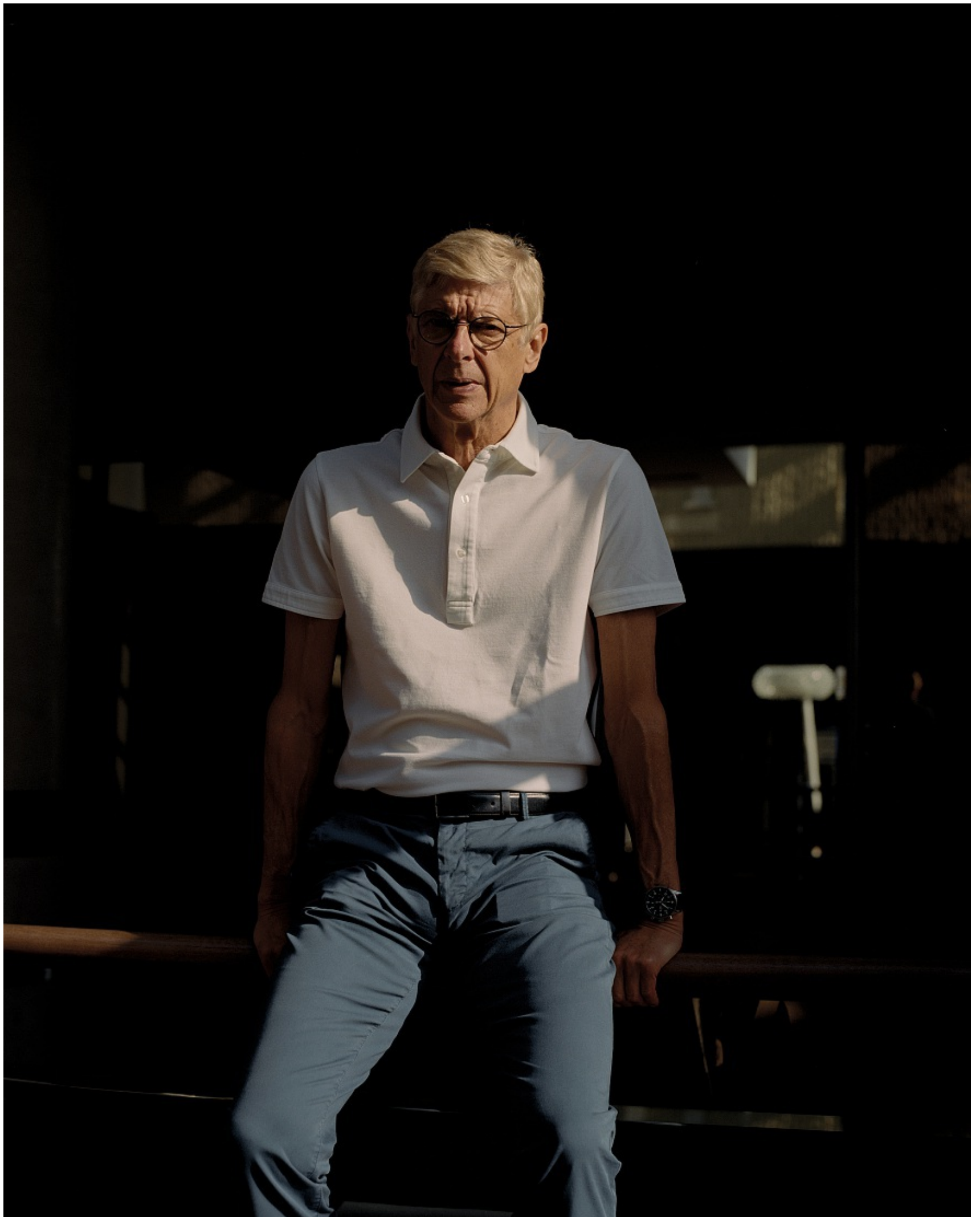
He rose to become a journeyman player, usually a reserve, with Alsace's biggest club, Racing Strasbourg. All through his career he was hampered by his poor technique, acquired on Duttlenheim's bumpy village ground without a trainer.

Perhaps that was what inspired his choice of vocation. In 1974, he graduated in economics from Strasbourg University, but he was always going to be a coach. He'd drive to Germany to watch matches from the warm-up onwards, sometimes getting home at 5am.

For a man from a backwater, the connection with Europe's strongest football country provided life-long learning. In 2008, I hosted a discussion between Wenger and Bayern Munich's then manager Ottmar Hitzfeld at a sponsors' evening in Switzerland. During each break, Wenger pumped Hitzfeld for information in near-perfect German. How many kilometres did Bayern's central midfielders run per game? How physically strong was Bayern's winger Franck Ribéry? (He once deposited a 100kg club doctor in a washbasin for a lark, replied Hitzfeld.) At press conferences, Wenger could look tense, upright and grim but among football men in their natural habitat - five-star-hotel bars - he switched on his bistro skills of humour, storytelling and mimicry.

What did he take from German football? “I would say it shaped my career, the fact that the Germans had always a desire to play. It's not, ‘Give the initiative to the opponent and only use the weakness of the opponent.’ They take initiative to express themselves as a team.” This became Wenger's personal ideology: winning with style. He says: “The teams who remain in history are the teams who played with style. Football has to be transformed into art. The basic is winning, but you need a bigger ambition than that.”

Like many Alsations, Wenger thought of himself as a European. ▶





◀ Yearning to discover the world beyond Duttlenheim, he spent a month in Hungary in 1974 to see how a communist regime functioned. He recalls: “I came back during my football holidays and was convinced that they would collapse.” Four years after Hungary, aged 29, he went to Cambridge to learn the English he knew he would need in his coaching career. He recalls, “I worked hard those three weeks,” which, coming from him, is saying something.

He worked hard at coaching too. At the French club Nancy, after losing a game just before Christmas, he managed to drag himself to his parents on Christmas Eve, but otherwise spent the three-week holiday break suffering alone at home. He made his name in seven years at Monaco. One New Year’s Day during his time there, he flew on a whim from Turkey (where he’d been watching football) to London to catch Arsenal vs Norwich. In the stands, he got a light for his cigarette from a woman who turned out to be friends with the wife of David Dein, Arsenal’s vice-chairman. That evening he was invited to the Deins’ home, where he impressed by acting out *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* in a game of charades. Wenger and Dein became friends, which meant they talked football. Wenger moved from Monaco to a job in Japan, and one day in 1996 an Arsenal delegation flew in to ask him to become the fourth foreign manager in the history of top-flight English football.

Wenger landed in the insular English game like a visitor from the future. He became one of the great ideas-spreaders who have shaped European football, in the tradition of

Wenger in 1985, when he was coaching Nancy



Béla Guttmann, Johan Cruyff, Arrigo Sacchi and, later, Pep Guardiola and Jürgen Klopp. He understood nutrition, was already using statistics to evaluate players and, above all, he knew the foreign transfer market. He rescued the young Frenchmen Patrick Vieira and Thierry Henry from the benches of Italian clubs and discovered the teenagers Nicolas Anelka and Cesc Fàbregas.

Wenger had the rare gift of making adult footballers better. He explains: “You have to develop the fundamental quality of each player. None of us has all the qualities, but you have one dominant quality and that can help us to make a life, earn a living.” Once he’d identified that quality in a player, he invested years in helping him develop it (not always successfully; some of his protégés had to be discarded when they couldn’t make the grade even after repeated chances in Arsenal’s first team).

His great success story was the young Henry, a pretty but ineffectual winger. Wenger told him he was a striker. “Coach, I don’t score goals,” protested Henry. He became the highest scorer in Arsenal’s history. Wenger turned the French defender Emmanuel Petit into a World Cup-winning midfielder. He persuaded his hard-drinking English defenders that by changing their diets, they could play far into their thirties and with more style than they had ever imagined they had in them.

He tells me: “When you go up to the top, top level, it’s the individual player who makes the difference, who makes you win the game. We as managers take a lot of credit that maybe we do not always deserve.”

He believes that great footballers usually only reveal themselves

around age 25. At that point, “the top, top, top players separate from the rest. These are the players who have something more, in the consistency of their motivation. And money has not too much [of] an influence on them. They have this intrinsic motivation that pushes them to get as far as they can. It’s not many of them.” These players, he observes in the book, are perennially dissatisfied with themselves and lead “difficult, unrewarding, monotonous lives... ruled by performance and repetitive daily rituals”.

If the best players are self-driven, then how much of the manager’s job is motivation? “It is overrated,” he replies. “If you have every week to motivate players to be performing on Saturday, forget it. If they don’t want it, leave them at home, you’ll waste your time. You’re not there to motivate players who don’t want it. Globally, players at that level are motivated.” He believes the manager’s task is to create a “performance culture” that pushes players to ask themselves “the fundamental questions: how can I get better? Have I achieved my full potential? What can I do to get there?”

How much do players even care who the manager is? “Everybody finds in the manager the quality he wants. Sometimes it’s communications, sometimes it’s more a technical aspect, sometimes a more tactical aspect.”

Wenger lived 22 years in London, but felt as if he “lived in Arsenal” instead. He writes: “The idea of taking holidays, having a good time, never occurred to me, or hardly ever.” He’d rise at 5.30am, spend days at the training ground and evenings imbibing televised matches from around the world in

From left to right: Wenger as a player for Strasbourg in 1978; as Monaco manager, lifting the Coupe de France in 1991; signing Thierry Henry for Arsenal, 1999; on the centre spot of the Emirates Stadium during construction in 2005; celebrating Arsenal's double in 1998



his modest suburban house. When his only child Léa was born in 1997, he admits: "I was probably too busy with my work to realise that this was a blessing." He now says he has regrets, but he never considered putting football second.

His Arsenal won three English league titles in his first eight seasons, including two league-and-cup Doubles. In 2004 his "Invincibles" became champions undefeated, playing some of the most brilliant attacking football ever seen in England to that point. That season, he was probably the most feted manager in the game. But it turned out to be the last league title he ever won.

In the book he inveighs against the "winning at all costs" attitude. Hang on, I say, he often looked like a winning-at-all-costs guy, lambasting referees and once reportedly grappling in the players' tunnel with his arch-rival and soulmate, Manchester United's Alex Ferguson. "It's true," he allows. "It's a contradiction that I have in myself: I was a very bad loser."

The hardest defeat was the Champions League final against Barcelona in Paris in 2006. His goalkeeper Jens Lehmann was sent off early, but late in the second half Arsenal were leading 1-0. Then Henry missed a one-on-one against the goalkeeper and Barça scored twice.

Wenger reflects: "With 13 minutes to go, we were on top of it. Maybe I could have played with three centre-backs in the end and hope that we get away with it. I thought it very unfair and frustrating. You know, when we won 5-0 or 7-0 I went back home and I thought, 'What kind of mistake did I make?' When I lost 2-1 in the Champions League final, of course I go home and

think, 'What could I have done differently?'" He hasn't been able to watch the game again.

In 2007, I sat a row in front of him in the stands in Athens watching the Milan-Liverpool final. While Milan's players collected their winners' medals, Wenger thumped his hands together grimly and exclaimed, "You see, you only need an ordinary team to win the Champions League." A keen mathematician, he understood that success in a knockout competition is largely a random walk. He never got lucky.

His reign at Arsenal petered out. Did he get left behind, as pioneers do, once other clubs discovered data, nutrition and the international transfer market? He laughs angrily: "We live in a job where you're always judged to be a winner or not. But I think what happened is financially we built the stadium and we had less resources."

The Emirates Stadium is Wenger's most tangible legacy, not just to Arsenal but to London. He redrew the map of the city. The Emirates' capacity of 60,000 is 22,000 more than Arsenal's old ground, Highbury. Arsenal have consistently filled it since the beginning, generating the largest average crowds in London's football history, but they borrowed most of the £430m that the move cost and spent Wenger's last decade in power repaying it.

Meanwhile, oil-rich owners like Roman Abramovich at Chelsea and Abu Dhabi's ruling family at Manchester City poured money into Arsenal's rivals. This stung Wenger: in a very French way, he found it unfair that money ("financial doping", he called it) could win

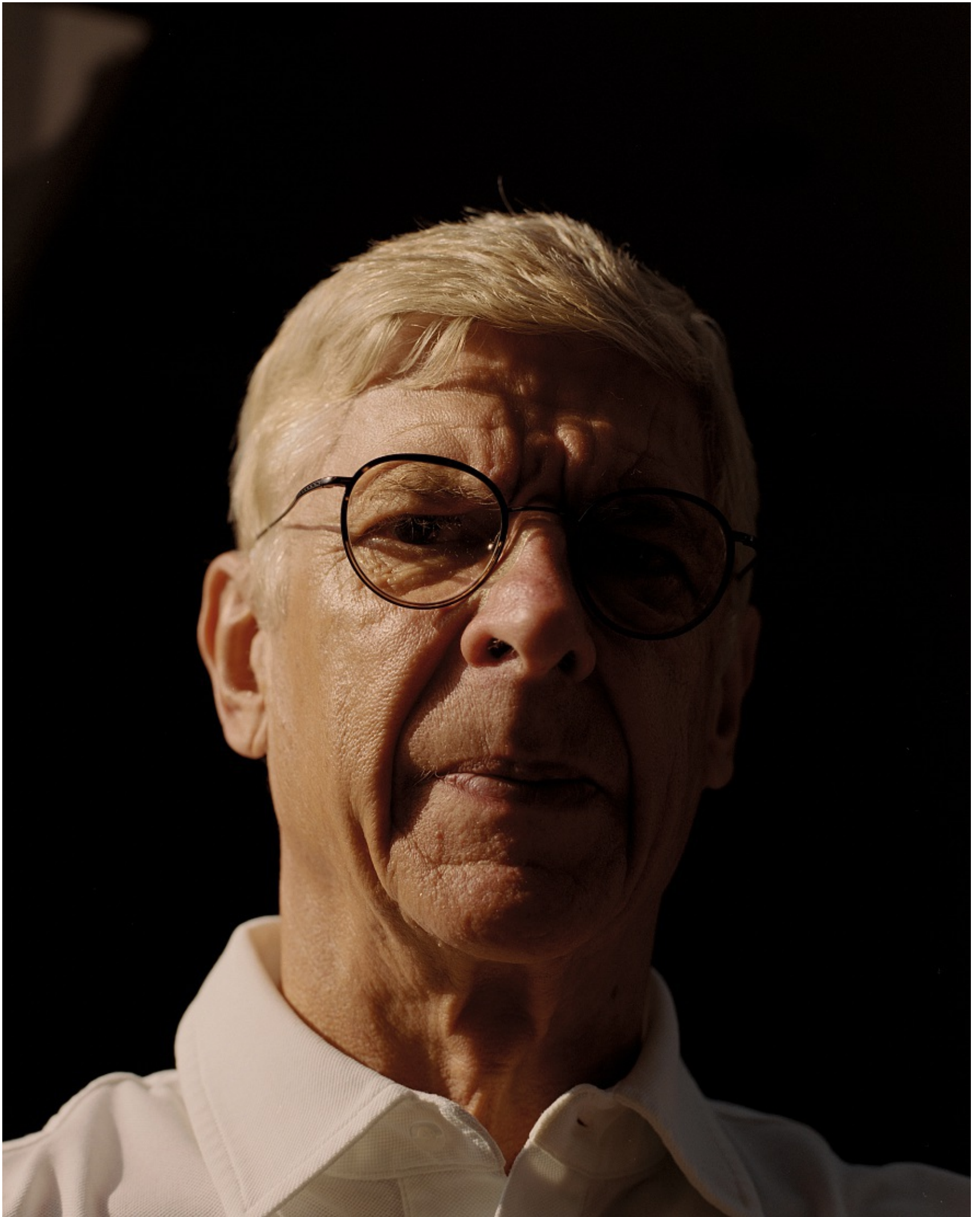
'IT'S THE INDIVIDUAL PLAYER WHO MAKES THE DIFFERENCE... WE AS MANAGERS TAKE A LOT OF CREDIT THAT MAYBE WE DO NOT ALWAYS DESERVE'

football matches. Arsenal could no longer afford the best players, especially given Wenger's proclivity for austerity. With hindsight, his grand plan didn't work out: though the Emirates is now almost paid off, it hasn't returned Arsenal to the top, partly because rival clubs have built new stadiums too.

Wenger took a lot of abuse during the downhill years. Fans would chant, "Spend some fucking money!" Yet he always felt he had the best job in football. Whereas higher-achieving peers such as José Mourinho were mere short-term contractors, responsible only for first-team results, the Alsatian was the last manager in Europe who ran a big club single-handedly. He made every major decision himself. It was intellectually thrilling. Even as a hard-pressed coach in his late sixties, he looked fortysomething and had the energy of a 30-year-old.

But now he reflects: "The job like I did it, or Ferguson did it, has disappeared. Because the clubs' structure has changed. Today, transfers are so big that negotiations are not any more in the hands of the manager or the coaches [but] in the hands of people who are specialised in that. So the structure has inflated. The human side is more difficult, you have more people to manage. The science has developed, the team around the manager has developed tremendously. He has problems to manage the egos not only inside the team but outside."

He recalls that in his early years at Arsenal, board meetings were "quite democratic", with debates between people who owned 15 or 20 per cent of the shares. In 2011, the American entrepreneur Stan Kroenke emerged as Arsenal's majority ►





This page (from left): Arsenal celebrate winning the league at the home of north London rivals Tottenham, April 2004. They finished the league season unbeaten; shaking hands with his arch-rival Alex Ferguson, the Manchester United manager, in 2012

◀ shareholder. He has since bought full control. Today, observes Wenger, almost all big English clubs are foreign-owned. “In the vote England made for Brexit, I read personally a desire for people to gain back their sovereignty. But it’s funny because nobody spoke about football, which has lost completely sovereignty on its own decisions.”

Arsenal finally asked him to leave in May 2018. “I wasn’t ready to go,” he admits in the book. “Arsenal was a matter of life and death to me and, without it, there were some very lonely, very painful moments.” He has never been back to the Emirates to watch a game. He says: “Today I have no contact with any deciders in the club at all, so I feel maybe it’s better I continue like that.”

Does he hurt that Arsenal don’t seem to want him around? “Look, errrr, ‘hurt’. I built the training centre, I contributed highly to build the stadium and when you do that, you imagine you come back and live for ever at the club. But life is not like that. It’s a new era and maybe people feel comfortable when I’m not there.” The implication is that even his former player Mikel Arteta, now Arsenal’s manager, has not sought out his advice. Still, Wenger writes that under Arteta, “these values, this spirit, this style that was characteristic of the club can once again come to the fore”. This reads like a jab at Wenger’s immediate, short-lived successor Unai Emery.

Coronavirus permitting, Wenger now moves between London, Paris and Zurich, where he works as Fifa’s head of global football development, charged with spreading good coaching worldwide. Many

‘I’VE NOT ENOUGH COURAGE AT THE MOMENT TO SEE THAT THAT WORLD IS DEFINITELY OVER FOR ME’

children in Africa and elsewhere still grow up uncoached, as he did in Duttlenheim.

Is it hard to cope with civilian life after decades of big-match adrenaline? “Yes it is. The boring side of daily life is not exciting for anybody. I still miss the intensity of the weekends. My life was on grass. On the other side, I think, ‘Look, I’ve given enough.’”

He still wakes at 5.30am and checks that evening’s match schedule before putting in his ritual 90 minutes in the gym. But he spends more time now with friends and with his daughter, who is finishing her doctorate in neuroscience at Cambridge. He watches films and reads. “At the moment I’m finishing *Sapiens* [by Yuval Noah Harari]. I read more articles than books, specialised articles on managing people, on motivation, on team spirit.” He gives talks on management at business conferences. Above all, he continues his life-long study of football.

“In the last 10 years, the main evolution has been physical,” he diagnoses. “We have gone for real athletes and, from the day where everybody could measure the physical performance, all players who could not perform physically well were kicked out of the game.”

Isn’t that sad? A player as gifted as Arsenal’s Mesut Özil, signed by Wenger in 2013, has become unwanted because he cannot cope with today’s frenzied pressing game. “Yes, it has killed some artists,” agrees Wenger. “Today, football goes at 200 miles an hour, so you have to show first that you can go on the train. Once you’re on the train, you can express your talent but if you cannot get on the train, you don’t play.

“I think it has uniformised a bit too much the way to play. Today you have two kinds of play. Teams defend very high [near the opponents’ goal], or very deep [near their own goal]. Basically, the [manager’s] speech is always the same, ‘Let’s win the ball back as quickly as possible and try to kill on the break.’ Everybody presses on the first ball from the keeper. It has emphasised chain-defending to close balls down. And it has killed a little bit the creativity.”

He writes of rejecting “countless proposals” to return to management. Yet he hasn’t ruled it out, has he? He laughs at himself: “I’ve not enough courage at the moment to see that world is definitely over for me. So I leave a little bit my space open to not completely kill what I lived for.”

How does a workaholic deal with reaching his seventies? “You forget how old you are. There is only one solution, you will see that later: until the last day of your life, fight and forget about all the rest, do your job. Don’t think too much, because that doesn’t help. As long as we live, we have to do something. Love, create and work, and don’t consider too much the time that you have in front of you. Nobody knows.”

Does he feel 70? “Not at all. I still play football, official games. My next game is on November 9. I must say honestly, I cannot play every three days.”

Does he never think, “It’s only a game”? He laughs at himself again: “No. That is absolutely fascinating. Last night I watched Tottenham versus Chelsea in the Carabao Cup. I went to bed, I think, ‘I missed some things.’ It’s like I see the first game every time.” **FT**

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Simon Kuper is an FT columnist





‘For a split second, nothing had been taken from me: I had everyone back’

When she was a child, *Diana Markosian* left post-Soviet Russia with her mother and brother for a new life in Santa Barbara, California. Only 20 years later did she learn the full story behind their migration. In a bid to understand the sacrifices that her family had made, the film-maker and writer turned to art, casting actors to recreate her childhood



Previous page: a recreated family holiday to Palm Springs. Clockwise from above: 'Santa Barbara' was the first American soap to be broadcast in post-Soviet Russia; an actor plays Markosian's stepfather Eli; bread lines in Moscow



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hen I was seven years old, my mother woke me up in the middle of the night. She told me we were going on a trip. I didn't know it would be the last time I'd see my home, my country and my father.

I was born in Moscow, where my parents had emigrated from Armenia. My mother was an economist, and my father an engineer. When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, so did our family. We became desperate overnight.

My father started selling homemade Barbie dresses on the black market and painting nesting dolls for tourists on Red Square. We hardly saw him. My mother helped with the business and took care of me and my brother. At night, the three of us waited for my father and watched Boris Yeltsin talk about the country's future.

And then: *Santa Barbara*.

It was the first American soap opera to be broadcast in post-Soviet Russia. Full of sunlit palm trees and wealthy Californians, it was an escape for the millions of newly poor and jobless.

What I didn't know was how much the show would influence my life. For my mother, *Santa Barbara* represented a dream, and she was inspired to find a way to get there. She placed a classified ad through a local agency, which was translated for newspapers in the US: "*I am a young woman from Moscow, and would like to meet a kind man, who can show me America.*" In return, she received letters from dozens of men. One of them was from *Santa Barbara*. At 35, my mother took my brother and me to America. I was seven. It was only two decades later that she revealed the deeper story of how she managed to leave her country.

It happened overnight. We boarded a flight to America and arrived in California in October 1996. My mother held a photo of the man we would meet: he was handsome and in his fifties. At the airport a much older, chubby retiree appeared, wearing a navy-blue windbreaker, jeans and white New Balance sneakers. This was Eli.

Together, we left the airport and drove in his 1995 white Camaro, headed towards the town we had dreamt of seeing: *Santa Barbara*. I don't remember much of the drive, as I was sleeping. My mother recalls Eli looking at her in awe: "You're so young," he said. When I woke up, it was dark outside and we were in his home. My brother and I had never seen anything like it. In Moscow, we had one bed for four people. Here, each room was bigger than the next. Moving through them, we counted ▶

Dearest Svetlana,

My name is Eli. I live in Santa Barbara, California. I know that must seem awfully far away for you, but I assure you it's very worth your while to consider my humble letter. It's like a fairy tale land.

I was so moved by your letter and photo. I can tell you have lived a difficult life by the sadness in your eyes. I know you and your children have suffered.

But I saw something more - a joy behind the sadness that moved me so greatly. It's a joy I would love to bring out. After all, every fairy tale land needs a princess.

It would be my honor to be your prince. I actually live on a high plateau overlooking the ocean, surrounded by avocado farms. Almost like a castle. It's a beautiful place to raise children, Santa Barbara, and life here is peaceful and idyllic.

~~I've lived and worked hard~~

I am a pretty shy person myself, but I have worked hard all my life. Now I like to laugh and find joy in all I do. And I would love to share that joy with you.

I hope you will respond. Until then, stay strong. Have faith. You will find the life you seek.

Sincerely,
Eli



I didn't know how much 'Santa Barbara' would influence my life. It represented a dream for my mother, she was inspired to find a way to get there

Clockwise from above:
Eli's home and the Californian landscape felt foreign to Markosian; a letter Eli wrote to Svetlana mentions how

idyllic he found life in Santa Barbara; a reimagining of the family's first breakfast in America; the film version of Svetlana and Eli



I began to see my mother as a woman who had the courage to change the cards we were dealt, and to make the ultimate sacrifice to give us more



◀ the TVs. In the bathroom, we found my mother, crying. “This isn’t our home,” she said. “We are going back to Russia.” My brother told her that she could go back, but this would be his home.

We stayed. My real father and our life in Russia slowly faded. We hardly spoke Armenian or Russian at home. My mother changed her name from Svetlana to “Lana”, a name Eli could pronounce. Though she had a PhD, she went back to school and took a job selling ties at a department store. We became American, with Eli as our guide. He took us to our first restaurant, taught my mother how to drive and led us on road trips to places we had only seen on TV. When our family had nothing, Eli became everything. My mother married him within a year and I learnt to call him Dad.

Two decades after we arrived in America, my mother revealed the truth about how she met Eli. When I was a little girl, she had told me that he was a family friend who would help us. At 27, I was now reading his letters and learning things about my mother I had never known. I was beginning to see her as a woman who had the courage to change the cards we were dealt, and to make the ultimate sacrifice to give us more.

As a way of understanding her, I leaned towards art. I collaborated with a *Santa Barbara* writer to create a script for a short film and book; cast a set of actors to play my family; and travelled to my childhood homes in Armenia, Moscow and California to reimagine our departure from Russia and arrival in America.

Below: the real-life Markosian with her mother and brother in Santa Barbara





From far left: Eli and Svetlana wed; scenes from the film and book recreate the family's life in Santa Barbara. This page from top: a family holiday; Ana Imnadze plays Svetlana; Eli and Svetlana's marriage lasted for eight years



The casting process took nearly a year. I auditioned 384 women to play my mother, before meeting the woman who could fill the shoes of Svetlana. The shoots started in Santa Barbara, with a set built to look like our Soviet apartment. As I continued to build the story, I travelled back to Armenia with the cast, to the actual apartment I grew up in, to re-enact the last argument I remember my parents having. Suddenly, I saw my family and myself in the individuals who were playing us. And for a split second, nothing had been taken from me: I had everyone back. It was my seventh birthday. My dad hadn't been home in a month and here they were fighting. It felt real in a way I could never have imagined.

I never knew that the episodes of *Santa Barbara* we watched in

Moscow were reruns. By the time we saw it, the show had already been cancelled in the US. It lasted for eight years - the same number my mom stayed with Eli. He eventually became like my own father: a part of the past.

Memory is a wonderful thing, until you're confronting it, and then it becomes real. That's what this project has been: a time machine of sorts, which has allowed me to remember a part of my childhood I had forgotten. It's now a story. One that I've crafted, controlled and, essentially, relived. **TV**

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"Diana Markosian: Santa Barbara" will be published by Aperture in November (\$65). Markosian will be in conversation with Shoair Mavlian on October 21 as part of Photoworks Festival, photoworks.org.uk



VIVA LA TORTILLA

For all its simplicity, the Spanish *tortilla de patatas* is a thing of beauty, the ultimate comfort food – and the subject of a timely new photobook created by *Joseph Fox* and *Lizzie Frost*. *Tim Hayward* reports

There is enormous fashionable interest in the food of Spain – the cradle of modernist haute cuisine, its chefs raised to minor godhead, San Sebastián a place of pilgrimage and a seemingly worldwide obsession with tapas-style eating. But for art director *Lizzie Frost* and photographer *Joseph Fox*, the country revealed another, more interesting story.

In any culture that consumes animal products, an egg is likely to be among the earliest solid food you ever eat. Simple, nourishing and delivered by the chicken in a state of purity, it is the ideal first food. Even its texture, which can be infinitely varied from liquid to solid, is perfect for weaning. Unsurprisingly, it is a rare person who doesn't have deep-rooted, elemental memories of comforting childhood egg dishes. Many food writers have waxed poetic about the elegance ►









“HERE IS
EGG, POTATO
AND OIL,
MADE WITH
ALL THE LOVE
THAT CAN
BE GIVEN”



◀ and refinement of the omelettes of France, but the Spanish *tortilla de patatas* affects one at an entirely deeper level.

Containing just eggs, potato and oil, it combines three very available ingredients in a way that probably made most sense to the people who first harvested or collected them. The potatoes are confited long and slow in the oil. (Many cooks would flash fry the potato to stop it getting greasy, but the oil is vital to a working body, a nourishing fat that needs to be absorbed with not a drop wasted.) The eggs must be fresh and cooked until barely set. The outer skin must be mottled with brownness, toughened a little and straining to contain the rich, almost custardy interior.

But it's not just the food that speaks to you from this book. The interiors, ranging from the

seediest of bars to smarter establishments, lend a diverse context to each slice of tortilla - while the rigorous simplicity, the utter similarity of each piece, implies unity. Any cheffy pretension is transcended. No matter the place, the room or the furnishings, here is egg, potato and oil made with all the love and care that can be given.

“**Having recently moved to Spain,**” says Fox, “we thought it would be interesting to take advantage of our outsiders’ perspective. We found the familiar and unassuming interiors of these small neighbourhood bars, built from a worn patchwork of tile, marble and wood veneer, a way to immerse ourselves in the life of Madrid and to observe the eating patterns and rituals of our new neighbours.” For Frost and Fox, their

almost obsessive documentation of the *tortilla de patatas* became their route into a new culture.

Today, thanks to cameras in phones and the ubiquity of food bloggers, we have become used to a particular aesthetic. Food - spectacular or everyday - is shot, perfect and appetising yet, more often than not, deracinated. Frost and Fox’s book fascinates because both the pictures and the idea behind their collection restore connection. It’s a beautiful work but it also portrays something more: how the things we love to eat - which tap into our universal human needs for nourishment, love and comfort - unite us, when so much of the consumerist panoply of fine dining divides. **FT**

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tim.hayward@ft.com; [@TimHayward](#); “Gracias por su Visita” is available from terranova.com; €18



Honey & Co Recipes



Grape balls of fire

Photographs by Patricia Niven

This August found us exhausted and confused like everyone else. In search of diversion, we headed east one sunny day to the hip side of town. There, we rang the bell of a nondescript little door off Arnold Circus and entered the alternative universe that is Rochelle Canteen. Behind the brick walls exists a mini Eden. There is a lawn bordered with colourful blooms and fruit trees, a path leading to a pergola covered in vines and a white-washed room with tables and chairs in dappled light. It feels like a place where only good things can happen - it almost doesn't matter what the food is like... But like everything else, it is simple and superb.

Our fellow diners are beautiful and chic in a very east London way: many boilersuits in earth-tone linen, Birkenstock-clad feet and heavy plastic spectacles worn in earnest. And everyone is drinking something that glows like strawberry jelly. We order a glass - fruity and fresh, crisp, tannic, a bit chalky. What is it? A Cantabrian grape called Gaglioppo, our waitress says. We ask for another glass - it is lunch after all.

Among the dappled light, beautiful food and drink, plants and people, it is easy to forget the upheaval of the past few months and the uncertainty ahead, and to simply enjoy the discovery of a new variety of grape.

While many of us might know at least 10 wine grape varieties, when it comes to the ones you eat, the choice tends to be between red and white, a great injustice to this wonderful fruit. At this time of year, you can find obscure and interesting table grapes even in British supermarkets.

This dish works well with any type. Before cooking, try them to see how sweet they are and adjust the acidity accordingly. We use chicken for the meatball mix - but pork or veal would be just as good. We've added ricotta for a gentle, dumpling-like bite, a creamy richness and a delicate tang that goes so well with the sweet and sour glaze and the popping grapes. Serve with a chilled glass of Gaglioppo. **FT**

By Itamar Srulovich. Recipe by Sarit Packer

Chicken and ricotta meatballs in sweet and sour grape sauce

To make 12 balls to feed three to four

For the meatballs

- 750g minced chicken
- 125g ricotta
- 20g grated Parmesan
- 1 egg
- 1 small bunch parsley, finely chopped (20g)
- 1 small bunch mint, finely chopped (20g)
- 1 clove of garlic, peeled and minced
- 1 tsp ground ginger
- 1 tsp ground fennel
- ½ tsp freshly ground black pepper
- Zest of 1 lemon
- 1 tsp salt
- 50g fresh breadcrumbs (from plain white bread)
- Olive oil for shaping

For the cooking

- 2 tbs olive oil
- 2 large banana shallots, peeled and cut into thick rings, or baby shallots (about 200g), peeled and halved
- 200g red grapes
- Juice of 1 lemon
- 2 tbs red wine vinegar
- 1 tbs sugar

Serving suggestions

- Fresh Greek yoghurt
- A few fresh mint leaves

1 — Mix the ingredients for the meatballs into a uniform mass. With some oil on your palms, shape the mix into 12 balls (about 80g each). Pop them on a roasting tray with a little space between each one and cover. Chill in the fridge for a minimum of 30 minutes and up to 24 hours.

2 — When you are ready to cook, heat your oven to 200C (fan assist). Put the chicken balls in the oven to firm up and colour for 25 minutes.

3 — Start making the sauce. In a large frying pan heat the olive oil, add the shallots and sauté for three to four minutes until they just start to colour. Add the grapes, toss for a minute, then add the lemon juice, vinegar and sugar. Remove from the heat.

4 — Carefully lift the meatballs into the frying pan and use a spoon to sauté them with the glaze that has formed. Heat for another three to four minutes until the grapes start to explode and the meatballs are shiny. Serve immediately with some fresh yoghurt and mint leaves.



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THE NEW AGENDA

Jancis Robinson Wine

Britain's winning ways

All over southern England, and as far north as Yorkshire, the 2020 grape harvest is under way, rather earlier than usual with notably small bunches of good-quality grapes being the most common report. The UK is a bona fide wine producer these days with sales of 5.5 million bottles last year, an extraordinary 70 per cent more than in 2018.

Every year, WineGB, the generic body representing producers, gives out awards for the best wines. This year's were announced last month and the supreme champion was a 2014 sparkling wine from Hattingley Valley in Hampshire, which is run by 45-year-old Emma Rice. It is based on a blend of the best of the three Champagne grapes - Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Pinot Meunier - fermented and aged in oak barrels as a still wine before having yeast and sugar added to provoke a second fermentation in bottle. It was aged for 52 months on the lees of that second fermentation before being disgorged and given a dosage of 4 g/l.

Rice has been in her position for 12 years. Nowadays she makes between 300,000 and 500,000 bottles of sparkling and still wine a year, depending on the UK's exceedingly variable weather. She had little relevant experience when she was hired, however. To be fair, not many people had much experience of making fine English wine in 2008. The Canadian couple Cherie Spriggs and Brad Greatrix, subsequently responsible for Nyetimber's excellent record, had only just arrived. Ian Kellett was still experimenting with Champagne grapes at Hambledon, south of Hattingley. The vines on Gusbourne Estate in Kent were only just beginning to bear fruit.

Meanwhile, Sussex neighbours Ridgeview and Bolney Estate counted as old-timers, yet even their quality aspirations stretched back only as far as 1995 - the



As imagined by Leon Edler



year, incidentally, when Peter Hall made his first sparkling wine at Breaky Bottom just south of Glyndebourne.

That year, Rice was working for family friend Barry Phillips at his particularly wine-focused White Horse Inn and restaurant in Sussex. It was a dinner to celebrate Phillips's 25 years there - attended, as it happens by wine author Hugh Johnson, the late Michael Broadbent of Christie's and me - that lit the wine flame for her. She had graduated from serving sandwiches in the pub as a schoolgirl to the restaurant section and her job that night included pouring the aperitif, a double magnum of Krug 1979. Phillips told

'The UK is a bona fide wine producer these days with sales of 5.5 million bottles last year'

her that if any was left, she could sample it. Rice made very sure that it was she who emptied the bottle and was blown away by it.

The result was that she did not pursue her studies in catering management but went to work for the quirky wine retailer Oddbins, then in a vineyard in New Zealand and later as personal assistant to the late Hilary Gibbs of Domaine Direct, a specialist UK burgundy importer. In 2000, she applied successfully to be managing editor of Hugh Johnson's annual *Pocket Wine Book* for publishers Mitchell Beazley. Johnson remembers her "ever-smiling face" in the Canary Wharf offices and describes her today as "one of our first division winemakers and a great ambassador for the whole exciting business".

While editing Johnson's hugely popular book (12 million copies sold worldwide), she noticed that Plumpton College in Sussex was offering courses in winemaking ▶

2020 WineGB award-winners

Top Sparkling Trophy and Supreme Champion Award

- Hattingley Valley, Kings Cuvée 2014

Top Still Wine Trophy

- Chapel Down, Kit's Coty Chardonnay 2017

Newcomer of the Year

- Black Chalk Winery

Boutique Producer of the Year

- Sugrue South Downs

Winery of the Year

- Wiston Estate

BEST REGIONAL WINES

Wales

- White Castle Vineyard Sparkling White Wine 2017

West

- Sharpham Bacchus Stop Ferment 2019

Thames & Chilterns

- Harrow & Hope Blanc de Noirs 2015

Midlands & North

- Laneberg Bacchus 2019

East Anglia

- Tuffon Hall Vineyard Pinot Rosé Beatrice 2019

South-east (joint winners)

- Ashling Park Estate Ashling Park Cuvée NV
- Chapel Down Kit's Coty Coeur de Cuvée 2014

Wessex

- Hattingley Valley Kings Cuvée 2014

The best place to buy English wine is usually direct from the producer but specialist retailers include greatbritishwine.com, theenglishwinecollection.co.uk, grapebritannia.co.uk and waitrosecellar.com



◀ and she set off there in 2003. Undaunted by the fact that she had failed science at school, she graduated in 2006 with a BSc in viticulture and oenology.

Armed with her degree, Rice got a job making wine at the respected Cuvaision winery in Napa Valley, which she loved. Really keen winemakers like to alternate hemispheres in order to cram two vintages into a year: in 2008, Rice went to work at Tamar Ridge in Tasmania. When she returned to England shortly afterwards, she met the City lawyer Simon Robinson, who had decided to plant vines near his home in Hampshire and to turn a nearby chicken farm into a winery.

Robinson asked the men who planted his vines if they knew anyone who might help design the winery and make the wine. They recommended Rice, having known her from Plumpton. Today, Rice acknowledges what a rare opportunity she was given. Very few winemakers get to design their own wineries from scratch. Even fewer are involved in designing the labels.

The Hattingley Valley winery is one of the neatest and most spacious I have seen. On the sunny September day that I went, even the wood for a bonfire had been arranged with painstaking care. Hattingley has so much winemaking capacity that it makes up to 30 labels of wine apart from its own; Rice was off the next day to inspect four vineyards in Essex and Kent, some of them new to her.

Only a tiny proportion of the many Brits who have decided recently to plant vines are prepared to invest in building their own winery as well. Presumably, such a busy contract-winemaking operation was not the original intention for Hattingley, so I asked Rice how it had become so important. "Because Simon can't say no," she said with a broad smile.

Contract winemaking swelled to about 40 per cent of her responsibilities until the giant harvest of 2018 came along and now the aim is to reduce it to 25 per cent. Rice seemed unfazed by a harvest workload that involves so many elements in a string of ridiculously long days. It being just before harvest, her happy, mostly male team were mainly tinkering with equipment - the grape presses, used for such a short time each year, need tender loving care in September.

As summers warm up, Rice, like so many English wine producers, is making more and more still wine. I'm a particular fan of Hattingley Valley Still Rosé - floral, delicate, persistent - based on the Pinot Noir that is so widely planted in the UK because it's a champagne grape.

She is also in charge of the picking team. The most striking statistic I heard during my visit was that a typical Romanian worker will pick up to six times more in a day than a British one. At least some Brits now know what to do with them once picked. **FT**

More columns at ft.com/jancis-robinson

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CLASSIC CUVEE

Restaurant Insider

Nicholas Lander



MYRTLE CHEF/PROPRIETOR ANNA HAUGH; IRISH CARLINGFORD OYSTERS WITH LEMON AND DILL. PHOTOGRAPHS BY CARLA BARBER

Myrtle, London

I was leaving Myrtle just as it was closing at 3.30pm, when I witnessed an example of true Irish hospitality. A couple approached chef/proprietor Anna Haugh to ask if her restaurant, just off the King's Road in London, was still open for lunch as nowhere else seemed to be. "Of course," Haugh said. "Come on in." Having been seated and made to feel welcome, they ordered two large gin and tonics. And then, I presume, they were converted to Haugh's distinctly refined but friendly style of cooking.

Haugh was born in Dublin almost 40 years ago. She spent the formative years of her career working with chefs such as Derry Clarke and Mary McEvoy at L'Ecrivain in the city. Later, she moved to London and worked under chefs Shane Osborn at Pied à Terre and Philip Howard at The Square among others. She dreamed of opening her own restaurant.

The Myrtle site had been abandoned when Haugh first saw it in 2018. She jumped at it and poured her savings into the conversion. "It's my restaurant," she says, "and that's very

important to me and, I hope, to my customers."

Myrtle is not without its challenges - the kitchen, for example, is in the basement, down a steep flight of stairs. But such challenges have led Haugh to make innovations. One appears in the form of a brown paper bag filled with her delicious soda-and-treacle bread alongside a pat of freshly churned butter on a small piece of marble. The bread is not only irresistible but comes in an unusual cylindrical shape.

"It was just before opening," Haugh explains, "and I was about to prepare the first tasting menu when I realised that I didn't have any baking tins and that I really didn't have any spare cash. So I used some clean baked-bean tins and, when the bread was ready, I just sliced it. The marble that we use to serve our butter and our petits fours on was left over from the bar top that my brother-in-law made and then cut up into smaller pieces."

The menu is Irish. On the left, there is a tasting menu with dishes from seven Irish counties. On the right, à la carte. Two of the first courses were exceptional, perfectly expressing both a sense



'Haugh's friendly style of Irish cooking seems simple but involves a lot of preparation'

Myrtle
1A Langton Street
London SW10 0JL
020 7352 2411
myrtlerestaurant.com
Starters: £11-£13
Mains: £26-£33
Seven-course tasting menu: £75

of place and Haugh's technique, which seems simple but involves a lot of preparation in the kitchen.

The first was Irish Carlingford oysters with lemon and dill. These plump beauties are washed briefly - "I hate finding a piece of grit in an oyster," says Haugh - and topped with a three-day marinade of lemon zest and the house vinegar.

The second was Clonakilty black pudding. This exceptional dish is made from beef rather than pork, cooked and mixed with a light chicken mousse and egg whites, before being encased in butter and wrapped in "potato spaghetti". The result of the two-day process is comfort food of the highest quality.

The main courses presented different attractions. There was the smoked-mackerel chowder with the crusted hake; the Dingle pie, a smaller version of a Cornish pasty, with the lamb; and the mashed potato and carrot with the simple but hugely popular dish of bacon rolled in cabbage leaves and served with an unctuous parsley sauce. Alongside all this, we enjoyed an extremely well-seasoned dish of colcannon, the Irish combination of mashed potato and cabbage.

Fun is an essential ingredient for Haugh and she provides it in the desserts: a burnt cream came up flaming from the kitchen; a chocolate mousse was enlivened by a Guinness sponge and Carrageen moss, a seaweed.

We drank a bottle of Chianti Classico 2017 from Isole e Olena (£64) and I paid a bill of £275 for four.

Myrtle is named after the late Myrtle Allen, the determined chef who did so much to promote Irish food. Like Allen, Haugh has a smile to light up any dining room. Also like Allen, she looks unlikely to brook too much disagreement. But she is concerned about Brexit. Naturally, her menu is based on ingredients sourced from the Republic of Ireland - such as cheese, pork belly, seaweed, flour and smoked fish, as well as numerous spirits, plus an ice wine from Killahora in County Cork. The associated paperwork has started already arriving. "But I am a born optimist," she says, "and I know we will overcome this." **FT**

More columns at ft.com/lander



EMMA'S GUESTS, FROM LEFT: ERIC JACOBS, VALERIE HOBSON, ROGER STERLING, OTIS REDDING, STANLEY SPENCER

FANTASY DINNER PARTY

EMMA JACOBS

The FT's work and careers columnist gets dressed up for a summer's night of grilled prawns, champagne and Otis

find holding a dinner party - fantasy or otherwise - a bit agonising. The idea of preparing a guest list, second-guessing the dynamics and then steering a group discussion feels too much like work. It also spins me into giddy anxiety. I can't help but think of Beverly's complaint to her husband in the play *Abigail's Party*: "We're not here to hold conversations, we are here to enjoy ourselves."

So instead of organised fun, my preference is for a casual gathering: messy and slightly chaotic, the opposite of the sterility of these Covid times.

While dinner is informal, I have been so starved of occasion over the past few months that I crave the ritual of getting dressed up. I want to try on multiple outfits in front of the mirror and discard them on the bed. Out are work-from-home

uniforms of elasticated waists and scraped back hair. In are lipstick, lashings of mascara and perfume. This evening is definitely set post-mask. It is sultry and summery and we sit out on a huge lawn under a vast expanse of sky, an antidote to lockdown claustrophobia.

If I am vague about certain details, it is because someone else is seeing to them. I like someone who is more knowledgeable than me to choose the gastronomic delights, for example. I have zero responsibility except for being an excellent guest.

It is an evening of two parts. The first is a pre-dinner drink with my dad, **Eric Jacobs**, a journalist, who died 17 years ago. Even though I know he is very dead, a tiny part of me imagines him to be somewhere in the ether, keeping an eye on my life while also monitoring the news - my abiding memory of him is sitting in an armchair reading newspapers. When a big news event happens, I sometimes think it's a shame he missed it. I would like to know what he makes of the madness of 2020. We drink a crisp champagne (I could google a sophisticated vintage but who am I kidding, I wouldn't be able to tell the difference) and catch up.

Inevitably, the pandemic has made me think a great deal about love and grief - so I'm letting my eight-year-old son hand out peanuts and olives (my fantasy, my rules), which allows him to meet my dad. I often wonder how it's possible that two of the people I have loved the most never overlapped - it seems inconceivable. For a while, I just sit

'God knows what the British artist Stanley Spencer makes of shallow ad man Roger Sterling'

back in the evening sun and watch the two of them bond over a shared sense of mischief.

Then the other guests start to arrive and my son is spirited away. The dynamic is probably going to be a nightmare, but by this point, I've had a dirty martini (courtesy of our bartender, the Savoy's Harry Craddock, who is fixing everyone a drink) so I no longer care. On the table are garlicky dips, tapenade and olive oil with fresh crusty bread - in fact, there will be a constant supply, warm from the oven.

First is **Valerie Hobson**. The actress starred in *Bride of Frankenstein* (1935) and as Estella in David Lean's *Great Expectations* (1946) before marrying the Conservative MP John Profumo, who went on to become the secretary of state for war. I wonder what it was like to give up her acting life and then see her husband's own career end with his affair with 19-year-old Christine Keeler, which sparked a national crisis. After a couple of drinks, I hope she might be tempted to talk about sticking by her husband's side and how they coped after his spectacular fall from grace, doing charitable work in the East End of London. So many politicians and celebrities who fail publicly try to claw their way back into the public eye. I want to know whether she made peace with a quieter life. Did she think about leaving him?

There is no grand plan tonight. I want a chef from a family-run Mediterranean restaurant. I don't care who it is - just that the food tastes of a hazy summer holiday. They will oversee the seafood, serving plates piled with grilled king prawns dripping with melted butter.

For social lubrication, I've decided to invite the hideously shallow advertising boss **Roger Sterling** from TV drama *Mad Men*. A good night out requires a frisson and he has some of the best lines in television. Plus he keeps everyone's glasses full, imploring us to "have a drink. It'll make me look younger." He pours rosé for the table - and keeps the vodka for himself.

God knows what the British artist **Stanley Spencer** makes of him. But then the 20th-century painter was hardly conventional himself. I think that Spencer's depictions of biblical scenes from everyday village life in Berkshire would qualify him to capture these times: a mix of life and death themes with the parochial.

At some point we move on from prawns to squid with garlicky olive oil, salad and yet more chunks of bread. After a long pause with even more wine, we gorge on almond tart with crème fraîche and cream.

Finally **Otis Redding**, my fifth guest, is persuaded to perform *Otis Blue*. Perhaps even with new material - his life and career were so short. As Bob Weir, member of the rock group Grateful Dead, once said of him: "I was pretty sure that I'd seen God on stage." He is so mesmerising, I don't even notice my dad has made an English goodbye. **FT**

Games



A Round on the Links

by James Walton



All the answers here are linked in some way. Once you've spotted the link, any you didn't know the first time around should become easier.

1. In the TV series *I'm Alan Partridge* (above), what was the title of Alan's autobiography?
2. The sale of which fuel (right) was banned in Britain on Jan 12000?
3. Who wrote the novel *By Grand Central Station I Sat Down and Wept*?

4. What name is given to the event in central London in the summer of 1858 that led to the building of new sewers?

5. Which American standard begins, "They asked me how I knew/ My true love was true"?
6. What is America's longest-running weekly news magazine?
7. Which member of the band Steps was born Ian Watkins?
8. The Sweeney – as in the branch of the

Metropolitan Police – is Cockney rhyming slang for what?

9. What fruit is used in making the dessert whose German name is *Schwarzwälder Kirschtorte*?

10. The chief editor of which publishing imprint once suggested that its books "could take the place of Valium"?



The Picture Round

by James Walton

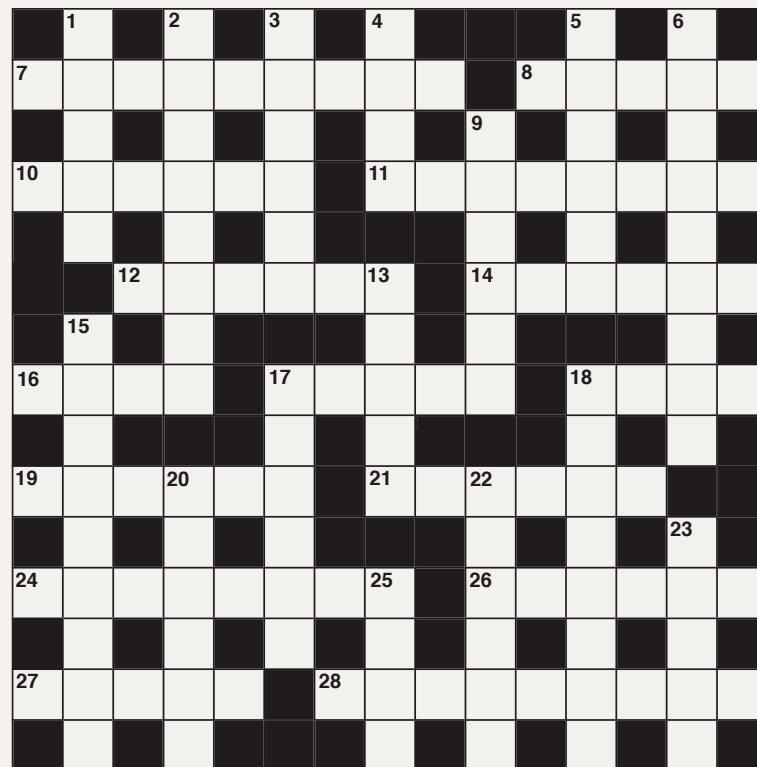
Who or what do these pictures add up to?



Answers page 8

The Crossword

No 510. Set by Aldhelm



The Across clues are straightforward, while the Down clues are cryptic.

ACROSS

- 7 Evaluation (9)
- 8 Extract from a song's words (5)
- 10 Mayhem, chaos (6)
- 11 Tiny amount of money (8)
- 12 Deer's horn (6)
- 14 Scatter, banish (6)
- 16 Travel document (4)
- 17 Give rise to (5)
- 18 Female relative (4)
- 19 Food for livestock (6)
- 21 Badge, symbol (6)
- 24 Alone, solitary (8)
- 26 Academy (6)
- 27 Join as one (5)
- 28 'And' symbol (9)

DOWN

- 1 Dispatch drug (5)
- 2 Tunes up around long, thin place (3, 5)
- 3 Gloomy face includes some moroseness, initially (6)
- 4 Complain about odd bits of rope (4)
- 5 Somehow pays second pursuing second-rate skirt (6)
- 6 Criminal's crime's reformed by social worker (9)
- 9 When climbing, say, spots heavy fare (6)
- 13 Run out and get through wake (5)
- 15 Car's recalibrated in miles, getting out endlessly (9)
- 17 Scoundrel scoffed at cleric (6)

- 18 Around start of engagement, that's my different gemstone (8)
- 20 Thin old instrument I'd put up first (6)
- 22 One's group follow black dog (6)
- 23 Aristocrat's to be of some importance (5)
- 25 Ditch politician following leaders of Democratic Unionists (4)

Solution to Crossword No 509





GILLIAN TETT

PARTING SHOT

The joy of a virtual trip to truffle country

Is it possible to stumble upon joy in these troubled times? It's certainly a challenge as new lockdowns loom in parts of Europe, political angst hangs over America and economic gloom spreads.

Last week, however, I did experience some merry moments: I went with friends to a festival screening of a new documentary (made by a group that includes an acquaintance of mine) about the unlikely topic of truffle hunting.

This was not a normal - that is to say pre-Covid-19 - screening. In New York state, where I live, movie theatres are shut. The same is true in much of Europe, leaving cinema chains everywhere facing the threat of bankruptcy.

Instead, it was arranged as a drive-in. We parked our cars in a field where a gigantic screen had been erected, watched the film through our windscreens and listened to the soundtrack on the car speakers. Forbidden to leave our vehicles, we could only toot our horns to show approval.

Still, it seemed to me that the event displayed the cheering ability of human beings to adapt to new circumstances - and reinforced what a joy it is to go out for an evening to experience art with friends, even if they are confined to a car nearby. I fervently hope that more cultural centres stage similar outdoor events across Europe and the US, particularly as long, dark evenings engulf the northern hemisphere.

The occasion also illustrated something else: the importance of finding ways to widen our lens on the world. One effect of a pandemic is to cause our cognitive horizons to collapse: we inevitably become obsessed with events taking place in our own "backyard", since that is often all we can physically experience.

One way to counter the psychological effects of lockdown is through making mental journeys - by travelling in our minds (whether through screens or books) to snoop around other worlds. A potential blessing of the current coronavirus saga is that it is occurring at a moment in history when we are more able to do this via films, television and other forms of media.

The documentary I saw last week, *The Truffle Hunters*, is a case in point. Before I watched it, I knew little about the truffle business. All was revealed as the film followed a small community of old men and their dogs foraging for truffles in the ancient oak forests of Piedmont in Italy. Watching it was both mesmerising and uplifting.

Michael Dweck, who co-directed and co-produced the film with Gregory Kershaw, spent a year talking with locals before he could begin to locate the truffle hunters - and another two years filming them. "It was hard to win their trust because the hunters have their secrets and they are fourth or fifth generation," he explains.

Dweck is interested in communities that are rich in tradition and close to nature but his depiction of the truffle hunters is startling, not least

because it raises other questions about what creates "value" in our existence.

White truffles are one of the most expensive food items in the world. They currently cost about \$4,000 a pound but their price fluctuates wildly; they can sell for as much as \$10,000 a pound following poor weather. Their high price demonstrates the power of the law of supply and demand: white truffles are impossible to cultivate and their natural habitat is shrinking. It also reinforces the potency of cultural signalling - or, as the economist and sociologist Thorstein Veblen once

'While the fungi's elite buyers often seem bored and joyless, the old men foraging for them are passionate about their craft'

pointed out, how elites like to embrace rare fancies to demonstrate their elevated status.

Yet one irony of *The Truffle Hunters* is that the elites who buy these highly priced fungi often seem bored and joyless, while the old men who are foraging in the woods are so passionate about their craft they insist on doing it well into their eighties, despite others begging them to stop.

This is not because they are reaping fat monetary rewards. One outrageous detail that emerges about the truffle business is that most of the profits get skimmed off by middlemen - leaving some of the hunters understandably railing against capitalist greed. Nonetheless, they clearly love their dogs, their community and their forests and take great pride in what they do.

Maybe this is romantic whimsy on the part of the film-makers. But I prefer to see it as a sign that "wealth" is not just about having a well-stocked bank account or owning expensive consumer items; it also involves being able to take delight in our work, surroundings, families and whatever passions we have. It is easier to do this when we have the privilege of material blessings - but they are not sufficient in themselves.

To paraphrase a line by Wordsworth, wealth also comes from having the ability to be surprised by joy. Whenever I smell a whiff of truffle, I will try to remember the hunters' passion for their craft. And as the Covid-19 strictures drag on and on, I urge everyone to seek out documentaries that can offer a window into someone else's life. The world of expensive delicacies is fascinating but there are numerous other ones out there - which we can still savour from our all-too-familiar homes. **FT**

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