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MAGAZINE

A MAGAZINE OF CRITICAL THINKING
AND IDEAS FOR CHANGE

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Nº 158

02 2019–03 2019

Nuclear Normalisation

John Hinkson

The Murray–Darling

Stefano de Pieri

Beyond Brexit

Gerry Simpson

Guy Rundle

Existential Threat

David Spratt

Developing the North

Shannyn Palmer

Australia Day, 1950s bohemia, British media and New Imperialism, climate change, poetry

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Please provide a brief biographical note.

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Arena Magazine encourages ideas and critical discussion about developments in contemporary social life, culture and politics. Elements of Arena's editorial approach come from the left tradition, but the usefulness of the left/right distinction

is questioned in the context of the rise of techno-scientific capitalism, and its global management in the neoliberal state. How we are constructed as new subjects, and how we are pointed towards more abstract relations generally, comes to the fore for

both critique and visioning how life might be lived differently. Arena Magazine is committed to publishing critical thinking from a broad range of perspectives, and to discussing and building our options for the future.

Unfolding Projects

Gali Weiss

Afghan and Australian Artists' Books Collaborations

Unfolding Projects began as an intuitive gesture in identification with women in a country experiencing a conflict in which our own country, Australia, was involved. The project has been a vehicle for exchanges between Australian women artists and women acquiring literacy skills in the Organisation for Promoting Afghan Women's Capabilities (OPAWC) vocational centre in Kabul. The Afghan women are attempting against all odds to gain an elementary education within an environment of conflict, poverty and patriarchal authority. Currently in its second series, the project invites Afghan women to interact with imagery created by the Australian artists, using their recently acquired literacy skills. Although in the beginning it was not intentionally political art, its very act cannot be otherwise. The sharing of marks on paper is in itself a political act revealing a political intent: *Afghan women, be strong; we stand in solidarity with you.*

In 2010 a collective of fourteen Australian women artists that I coordinated created fifty-three concertina-style artists' books of imagery from each artist's current practice. In partnership with the Support Association for Women in Afghanistan,

the books were delivered to the vocational centre in Kabul, where Afghan women wrote their stories and thoughts in response to the imagery.

Of these fifty-three books, thirty-six were returned and these were acquired by the State Library of Queensland, where they are housed in its artists' books collection. Each book, initially a completed artist's book that held its own, was augmented by the direct mark of the Afghan woman's hand in beautiful Arabic script, resulting in another source of visual imagery that implied new meanings. These layered readings were multiplied further when the Afghan stories were translated, and as their meaning was perceived in relation to the imagery.

The general intent of the project was to exhibit the artwork in Australia to raise public awareness. It was possible that the books would be sold to raise funds for ongoing projects. The artistic intent, however, was to take part in a process of support and dialogue with Afghan women who wanted to be literate. It was a manoeuvre that said, *You are not alone.*

A second *Unfolding Projects* was recently completed on handkerchiefs and will be included in the exhibition *Beyond the Veil, Artlife* for the World Gallery at the Venice Biennale 2019. **a**

←←←

Unfolding Projects

Gali Weiss

Cali Weiss is an artist living and working in Melbourne. Her arts practice has centered on notions of presence and dualities in the form of drawing installations, animation and the artist's book. She has worked extensively as an artist with community organisations and has lectured in visual arts at Deakin University.

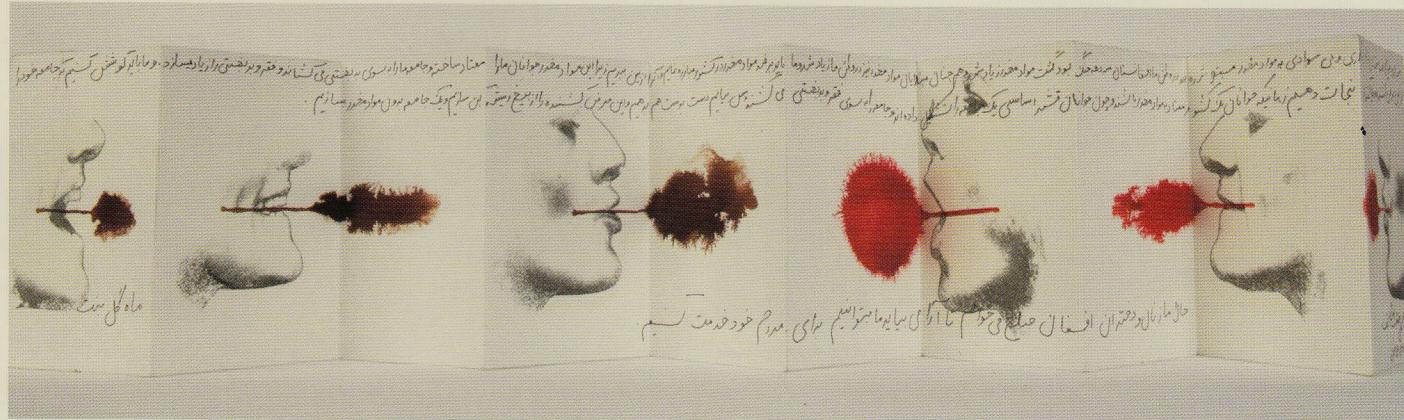
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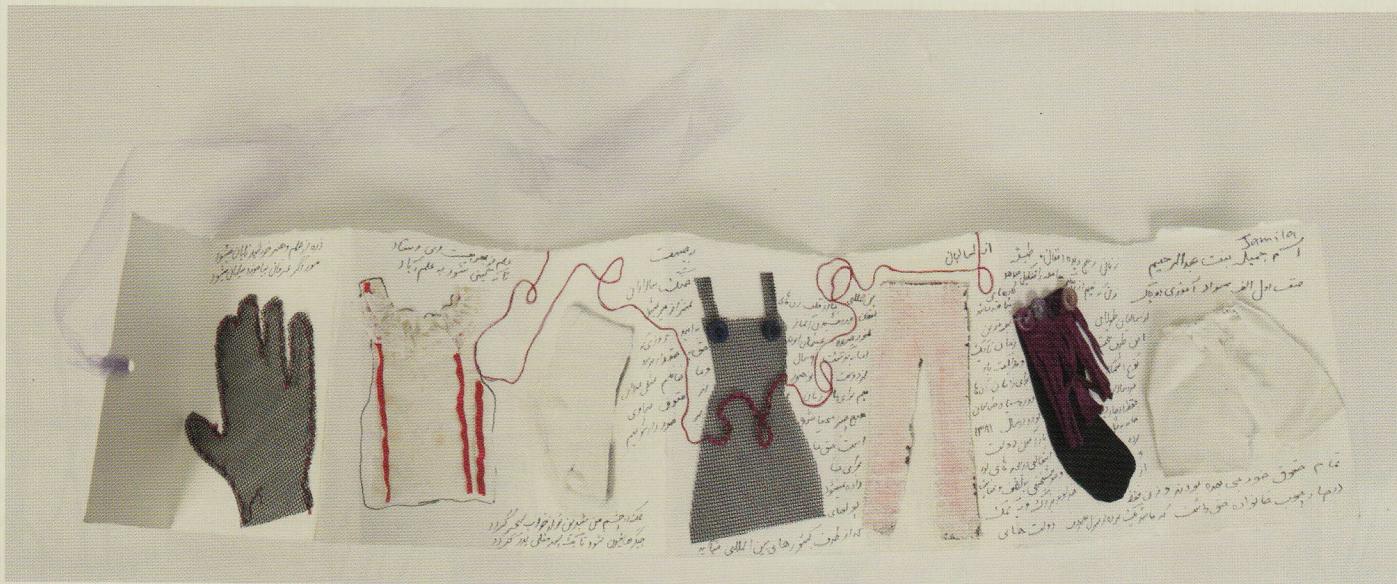
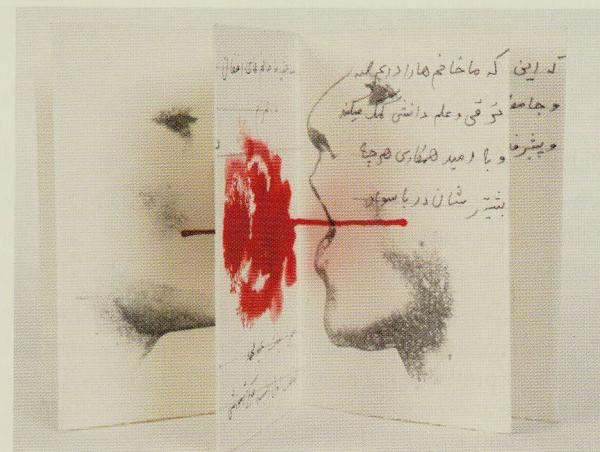
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Gali Weiss and Mah Gul

A lot of people in Afghanistan have become drug addicts because of unemployment and illiteracy. In our country there were three decades of war, and drug use increased and drug addicts also increased. We must fight against drug addiction in our country and put an end to it because it makes our young people addicts and takes our society towards misfortune, and poverty will increase. We must try to save our country from this deadly problem. When the young people of a country, who are the most important people of a country, become addicts, poverty and all other problems increase in that country. We should not let this happen.

We the women and girls of Afghanistan want peace to be able to serve our people and our country.

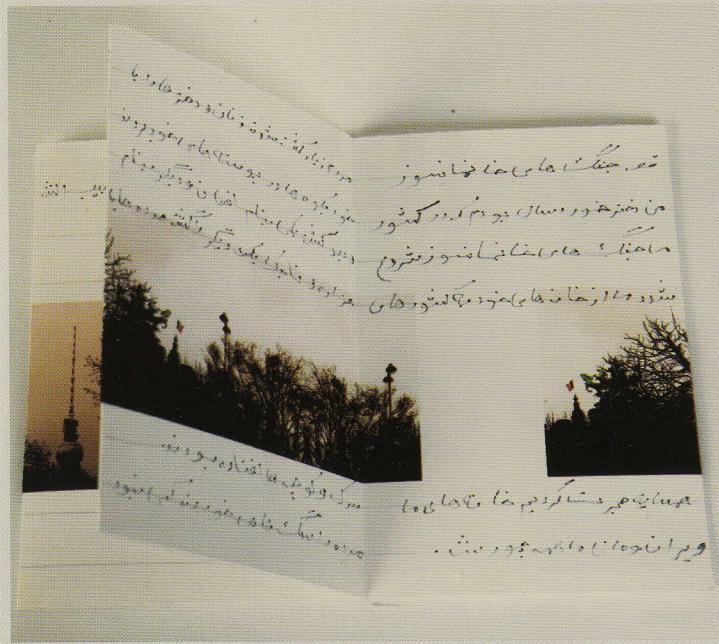


Ann Riggs and Jamila

The persecuted Afghan women, that compose half of the society, have spent their lives for years within the walls of their houses under the oppression of patriarchy and have been deprived of all their rightful rights. Women have only had the right to engage with the household works within the walls of the family, and have been deprived of the opportunities available outside the house, such as freedom of speech, education and training. Women who live in villages and in the countryside particularly suffer in this respect: in the villages a woman is like a slave for a man; if she raises her voice she will be silenced. Later, in 1381 [AD

2001], when the transitional government came to power with the help of international friends, it brought happiness in the hearts of Afghan women.

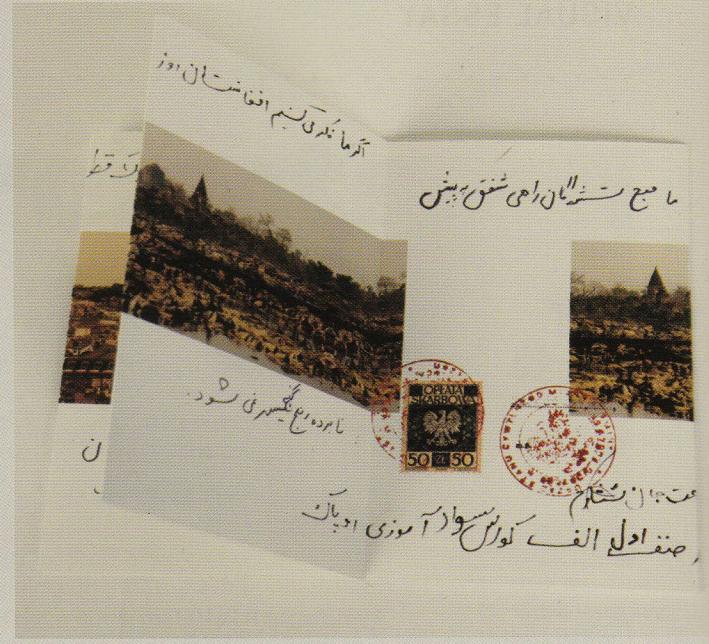
But after nine years of support from our international friends, nothing has been provided for us, the women of Afghanistan. Our rights are not given to us, the money received from international countries does not come to us, and it goes to the pockets of the warlords. We hope that we can get our rights one day and that women will be equal in their rights to men.



Christine Willcocks and Anita

School is my mother,
The pen is my sword,
Education is my strength,
The book is my friend.

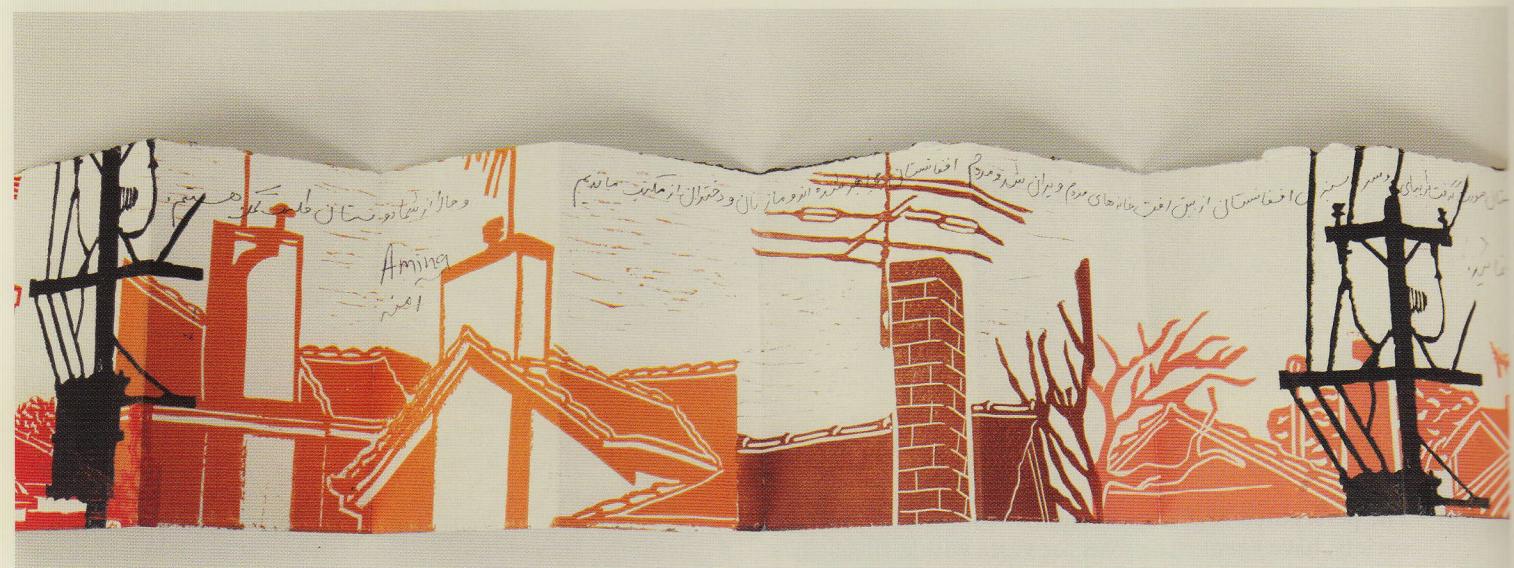
The devastating story of war: I was a young girl when the destructive war began in my land and we migrated to a neighbouring country. Our homes were left in ruins. There was a massacre and people were escaping to the mountains, carrying women and girls on their back. People were killing each other, one in the name of Afghan, another in the name of Hazara or Tajik. Many lost their lives while trying to bury the already slaughtered. Girls were killed and hanged in wells.



Christine Willcocks and Basira

We, having passed the night, have become homeless.
We, having waited for the morning, are following the dawn.
If we think that Afghanistan is being invaded by other countries, we the young people will never let that happen. We will save our country to the last drop of blood; this country belongs to the Afghans.

Your love is my pride, oh my homeland!
For you, I'll give my life, oh my homeland! You can't earn a treasure without hardships. Earning belongs to the one who works hard.
Homeland! Your good name is Afghanistan, your air is cheerful and your scenery lovely. Your terrain invigorates the hearts.
The subject of our love is your soil.



Annelise Scott and Amina

Our country, Afghanistan, was green when there was no war. Afghanistan had trees full of fruits and also trees without fruits. When war broke out in Afghanistan, all the greenery of Afghanistan was destroyed, houses were destroyed, people of Afghanistan became refugees and we, the women and girls,

could not go to school. For our progress in education we need your help. We hope that for better education you will help us and cooperate with us.

Help us, friends.



Christine Willcocks and Nazifa

You were awake all nights, my mother
You cradled me till the afternoon, my mother
You sang me a lullaby until I fell asleep, my mother
You sang me a lullaby and rocked me so softly, my mother
You always observed and cared for me, my mother
You fully prepared me while I was going to school, my mother
You did not eat or sleep, my mother
You took care of my health, my mother
While I felt ill or restless.

Education is everything.

Education is a torch, education is the light of life

Education is the beauty, education is the elegance of life.

Ignorance in life is always pain and sorrow

Education is pleasure and joy of life

Education shows you what is legal and illegal

Education is the guide and instructor for life.

Let's learn it from the core of our heart

Education is a need of life

Let's all love education

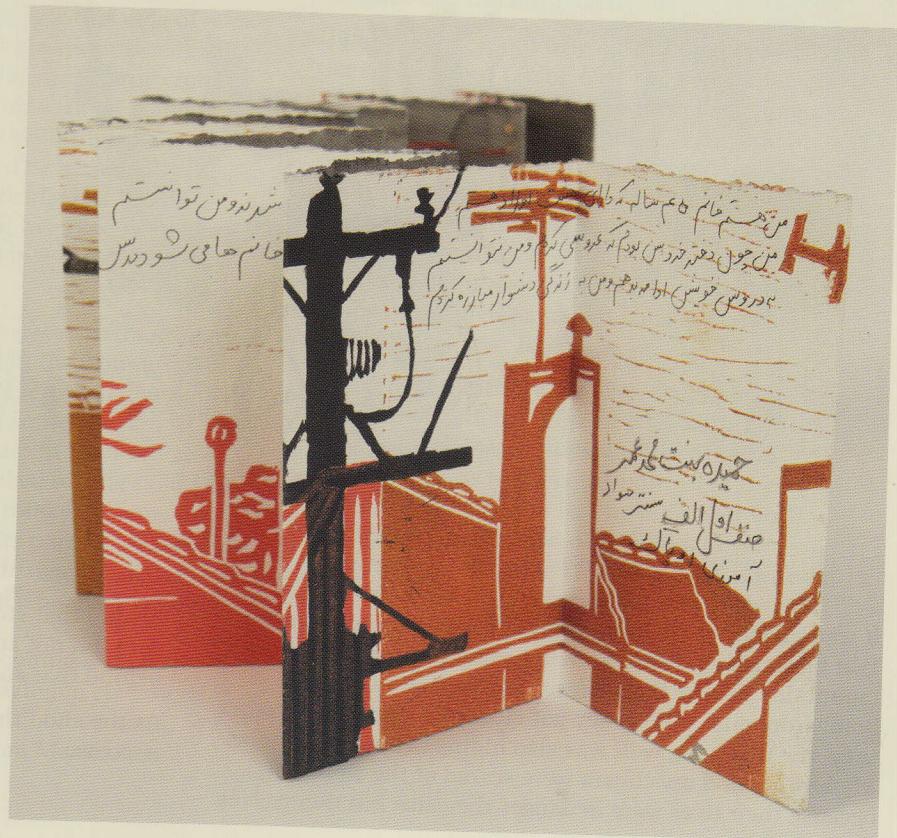
If education dies, life will not survive

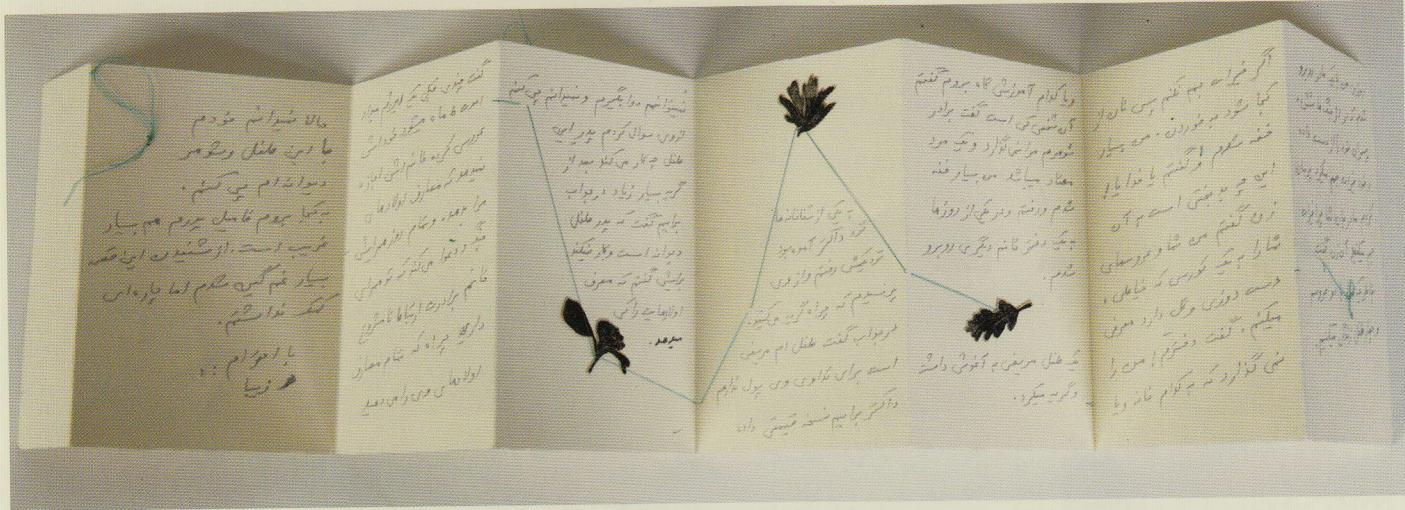
Save us from the ignorance of life.

Annelise Scott and Jamila

Long live Afghanistan,
Death to the enemies!

We want the equality of rights for men and women. When the Taliban came to Afghanistan and took over Ghazni province, we migrated to Pakistan and from there we came to Kabul. As we were refugees, we didn't have food and clothes and we were without shelter. A lot of people were killed in these wars; a lot of them remained in prisons. Their children were without a future and were always waiting for the day they would return to their homeland. When we went to our villages, we had neither tree, nor home, nor water. But still, the foreign friends helped our country; otherwise, we wouldn't have had anything to eat. After that people started to work. Gradually working began and people could go to school to study. In schools, there were no teachers. Gradually refugees returned, and the people from the UNESCO literacy centre came. We could not study there. We came to Kabul and came to the SPAWC literacy centre. We started getting lessons from good teachers. We can read and write letters. We want these courses to continue and like people like us, and our countrymen, literate.





Marian Crawford and Zeyba

One day I saw a mother who had lost her six sons in the war and was begging. I asked her, 'Why do you beg?', and she said, 'Because I live with my two daughters-in-law and four children. If I don't beg, who will feed them?' I became very depressed and said, 'Oh God! What misfortune is this?' I told that woman, 'I will introduce you and your daughters-in-law to a sewing course' but she said, 'I am not allowed to go to any place.' I asked, 'Who does not allow you that?' and she said, 'My husband's brother; he is an addict.' I became very depressed and left.

I saw another woman another day who had a sick child in her arms and was crying. She had come to see a doctor. I went to her and asked her, 'Why are you crying?' and she said, 'My baby is sick and I have no money for his treatment to buy the expensive medication.' I asked her what the father of the child does and she said that he is mentally ill and doesn't work. I asked her, 'Who pays for your children's expenses?' and she said, 'One of my in-laws used to help me, but six months ago he got married, and now his wife does not let him help with my children's expenses. His wife says to him, "You have an illegitimate relationship with your brother's wife. That's why you give her money". I don't know



now what to do with my child and my sick husband. Where should I go? My father's family is also very poor.'

This story made me very sad, but I couldn't help.



Di Ellis and Zahida

It was a day in winter. Russians had attacked our country. War began. My brother with my cousin went to the mountains to save their lives from the Russian bombardments. When they got close to a big block of stone they saw that a big wolf was also hiding behind that stone. My brother and my cousin were scared of the wolf, but because their lives were in danger they also hid themselves

behind that stone from the Russian bombs. Surprisingly, the wolf did not attack them. Instead it stayed along with them behind that stone.

At the end I thank all the friends who help us and wish them success.



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Geoff Sharp, Founding Editor, 1963–2015

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Joining Up Energy Policy

Hugh Saddler

Venezuela

Carlos Eduardo Morreo

Round the Bend Cooperative

John Roberts

The Handmaid's Tale

Sashi Nair

VISUAL ESSAY:

Unfolding Projects

Gali Weiss and cooperative

Cryptic crossword, entrepreneurs, archaeology and deep-time Australia, Aboriginal Protectors