Creative Writing, Creative Memoirs, NOT in July, as we are in the Chaos of having sold and moving from Washington house

to be permanently on the Patuxent. PO Box 298, Broomes island MD 20615. But I've found so many interesting articles, memoirs poems, that I want to send all this batch to you now--

Then Creative Writing/Memoirs on the Second Wednesday, 8 August, 2-4, at CalvArt Gallery, NOT at Calvert Library, Prince Frederick, because this is the season the kids rule the Library. So print out and bring 6-8 copies of 500+- of your memoir, fiction, non-fiction, even a poem or two.

T.S. Eliot

SONG

If space and time, as sages say,
Are things which cannot be,
The fly that lives a single day
Has lived as long as we.
But let us live while yet we may,
While love and life are free,
For time is time, and runs away,
Though sages disagree.

The flowers I sent thee when the dew
Was trembling on the vine,
Were withered ere the wild bee flew
To suck the eglantine.
But let us haste to pluck anew
Nor mourn to see them pine,
And though the flowers of love be few
Yet let them be divine.

[published in Harvard

Asia's Illegal Wildlife Trade Makes Tigers a Farm-to-Table Meal By RACHEL NUWER NYTimes JUNE 5, 2017

BOKEO PROVINCE, Laos — The tiger paced back and forth in its cage, groaning mournfully. A second big cat slept soundly in the corner, while a third stared blankly at the bars.Next to this cage was another containing three more tigers, and after that three more cages: a line of small pens, each holding at least one cat. Most likely, none had long to live.

The tigers were property of the Kings Romans Group, which operates a casino here, along with hotels, a shooting range, a cockfighting and bullfighting ring, a Chinatown-themed shopping center, this shabby zoo.

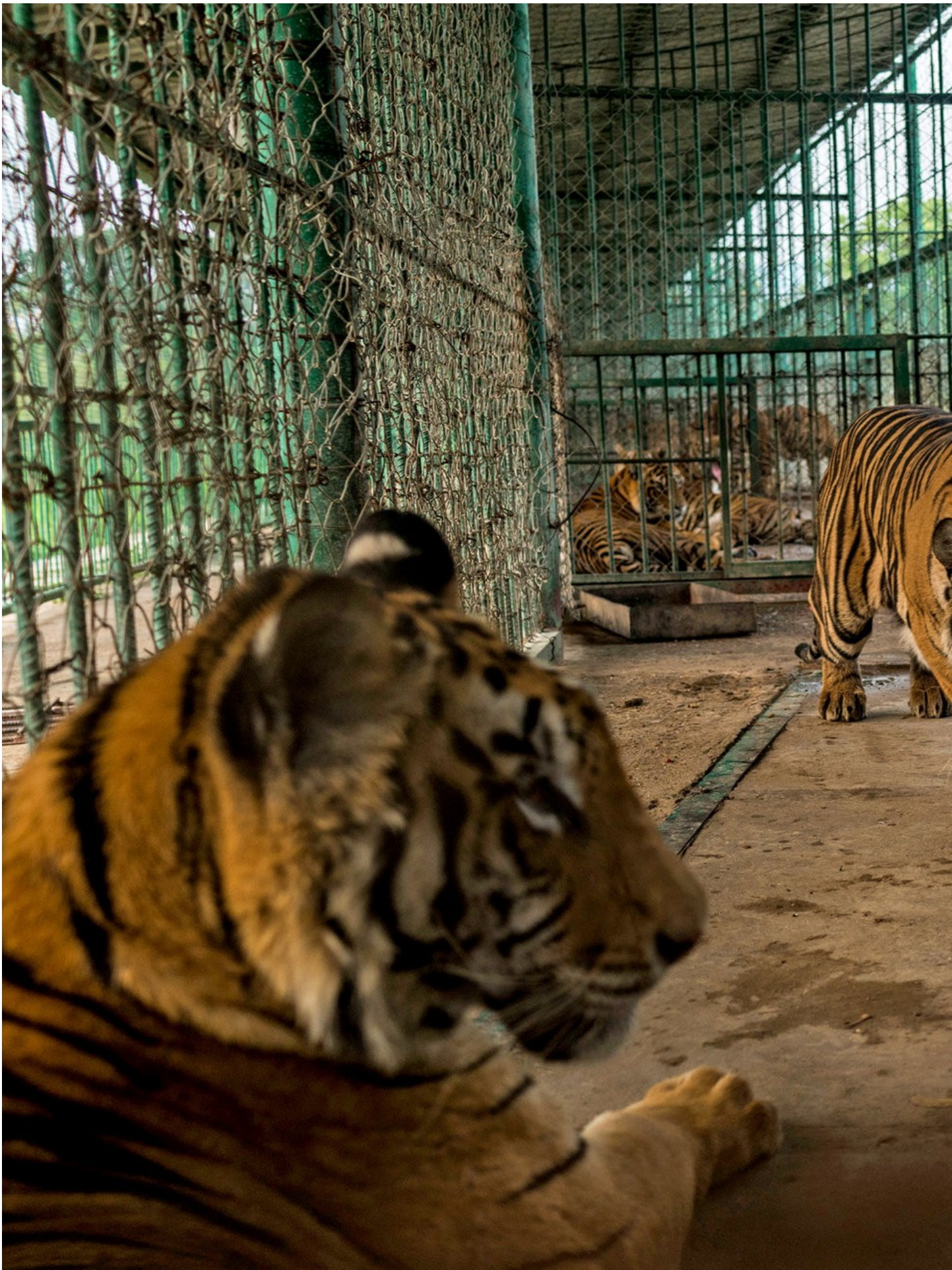
Ten years ago, the Hong Kong-based company signed a lease with the Laotian government to develop this 12-square-mile plot in northwestern Bokeo Province, just across the Mekong River from Thailand. It's called the Golden Triangle Special Economic Zone.

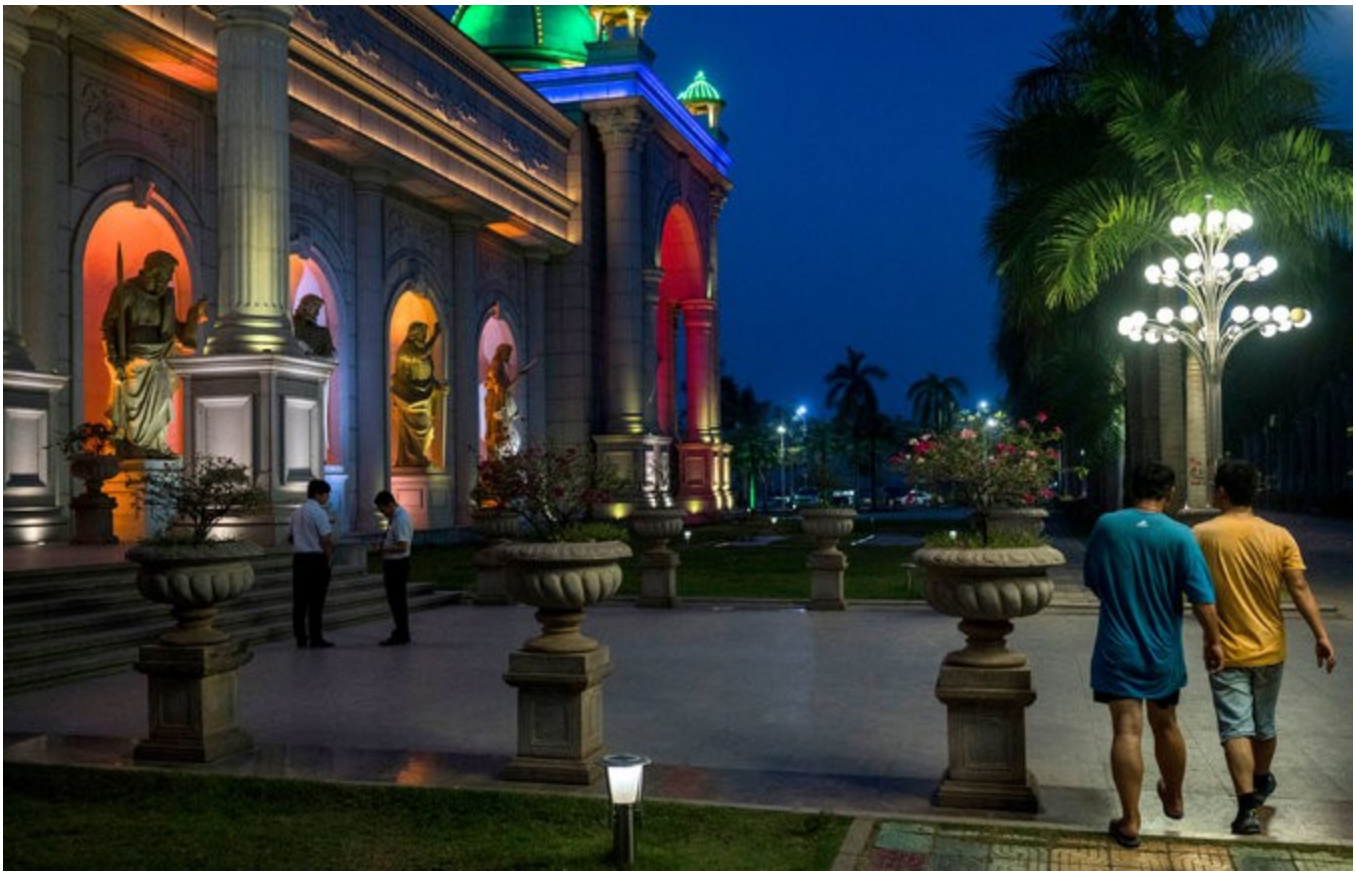
Most businesses in the duty-free complex are owned and staffed by Chinese citizens and patronized by a predominantly Chinese clientele. Many are drawn here by the promise of vices not as easily found back home, including products made from exotic animals like tigers.

Conservationists maintain that this zoo is actually a farm raising animals for slaughter, and that it plays a significant role in perpetuating the illegal wildlife trade, swapping tigers with similar operations in Thailand and illegally butchering animals for their bones, meat and parts.

Tigers, bears, snakes and countless other species, many endangered, are held on farms throughout Southeast Asia. Operators illegally capture animals in the wild and then pass them off as captive-bred, or breed the animals on site and illegally sell them into the trade. These facilities are part of a contraband industry whose profitability by some estimates is surpassed only by the global trade in drugs and arms, and by human trafficking.

Few tourists were present at Kings Romans during a recent visit. The ghost-town feel was reinforced by boarded-up shops, half-finished construction sites and posters advertising events that had long since come and gone.But restaurants at Kings Romans still offered expensive plates of bear paw, pangolin (an endangered scaly mammal) and sautéed tiger meat, which can be paired with tiger wine, a grain-based concoction in which the cats' penises, bones or entire skeletons are soaked for months.

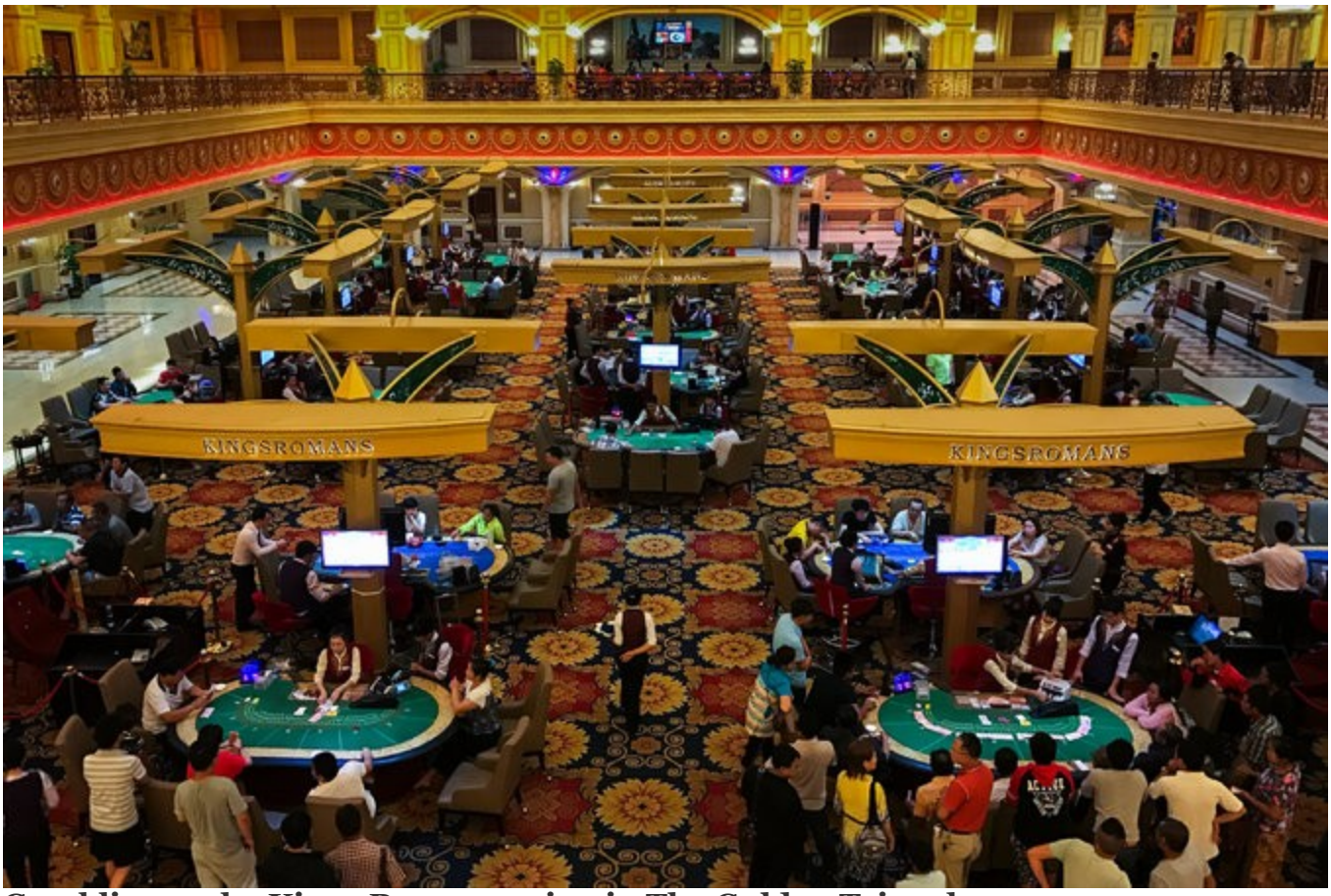




The front of a casino that is part of the Kings Romans Casino complex in Laos.CreditAdam Dean for The New York Times

When a group of foreigners showed up at the God of Wealth, Kings Romans' fanciest restaurant, the suspicious proprietor told their translator, "You can eat here, but do not ask for the special jungle menu" — the menu offering wildlife options. Nevertheless, the staff offered tiger wine for $20 a shot glass, and served a bear's paw to patrons at a nearby table. In May, a photographer for The New York Times who visited the restaurant was offered plates of tiger meat for $45. Nearby, half a dozen jewelry and pharmaceutical shops displayed exorbitantly priced tiger teeth and claws, as well as rhino-horn carvings and shavings, elephant skin and ivory.

"The place is just a mess," said Debbie Banks, of the nonprofit Environmental Investigation Agency in London. "Pretty much anything goes." In 2015, Ms. Banks and her colleagues, along with the nonprofit group Education for Nature-Vietnam, reported that meals, medicine and jewelry made from numerous protected species — including tigers, leopards, rhinoceroses, bears and elephants — were openly sold in the special economic zone. Their documentation spurred the Laotian government to raid some businesses here and to burn a few tiger skins on television. But Ms. Banks said little had changed since that "cosmetic effort."

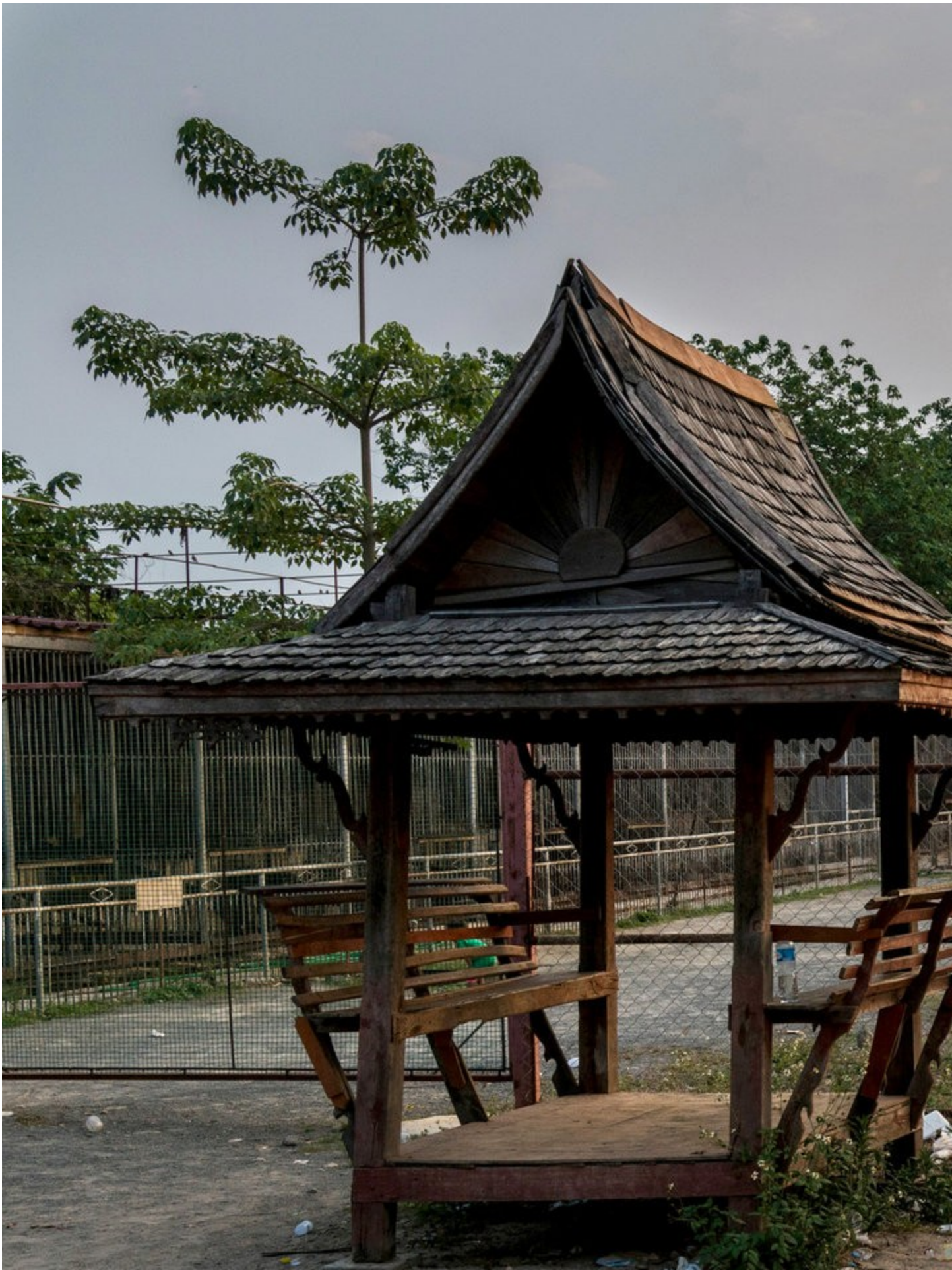


Gambling at the Kings Roman casino in The Golden Triangle, Laos. CreditAdam Dean for The New York Times

Like the rest of the complex, the Kings Romans zoo was largely deserted save for animals kept in cages. A woman and her young daughter wandered in to look at the bears. Many showed signs of captivity-induced stress, including uncontrolled headbanging. Staff members were nowhere to be found.

Approximately 700 tigers live on farms in Laos. Thousands more are believed to be kept throughout Southeast Asia, and an additional 5,000 to 6,000 are housed in over 200 breeding centers in China. Fewer than 4,000 of the big cats remain in the wild; farmed tigers now far outnumber total wild populations.

At an international conference on the endangered species trade last fall, Laotian government officials acknowledged a growing problem with wildlife farms and committed themselves to closing down the country's tiger farms. So far, little has changed. One source who works closely with the government, who asked not to be named for fear of reprisals, said that some Laotian politicians remained deeply involved in the farms and that the country's forestry department lacked the authority to shut them down.



An entrance to the zoo holding tigers, bears, deer, monkeys and peacocks, a part of the Chinese-owned Kings Romans casino complex.CreditAdam Dean for The New York Times

Representative Ed Royce, Republican of California and chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, has singled out Laos as an international hub for illegal wildlife trafficking, saying in 2015 it was "quite clear officials are profiting." Laotian government officials did not respond to repeated requests for comment.

According to the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species, or Cites, a treaty to which China and all Southeast Asian nations are signers, tigers are to be bred only for conservation — not for their parts, and not on a commercial scale that does not benefit wild tigers.

"Farming tigers for trade confuses consumers and stimulates demand," said Grace Ge Gabriel, Asia regional director of the International Fund for Animal Welfare. "The increased market demand for tiger parts also fuels poaching of tigers in the wild, because wildlife consumers prefer animals caught in the wild."

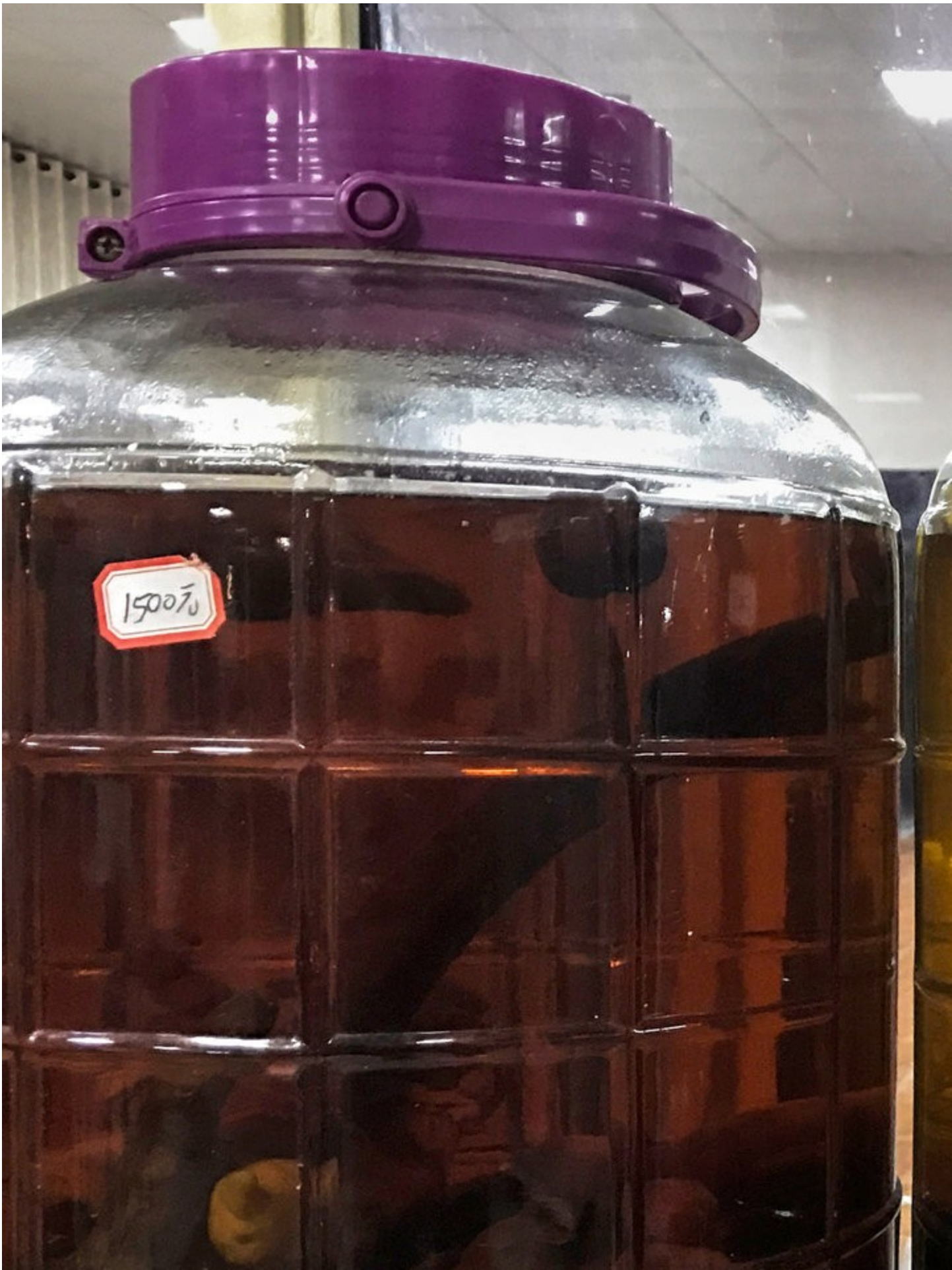
In Laos and several other Asian countries, conservationists have compiled ample evidence that many zoos and farms serve as fronts for commercial breeding.

In 2016, Tiger Temple in Thailand made headlines when monks there were accused of abusing tigers and selling them into the illegal wildlife trade. Eventually, 40 dead cubs were discovered in a freezer, along with pelts and other wildlife products. Temple representatives said that the bodies and parts did not prove wrongdoing.

Thailand has some 1,450 tigers in captivity, the majority of which are kept at popular attractions like Tiger Temple, where tourists pay to take photographs and play with cubs and young adults. When the tigers reach sexual maturity and can no longer be handled safely, they often disappear, sold on the black market for up to $50,000, according to Karl Ammann, a Kenya-based investigative filmmaker who is making a documentary about the tiger farming industry.

Conservationists also have accused tiger farms in China — two of which are supported by government investment — of illegal activity.

Chinese law permits some tiger skins to be traded legally, although tiger bone has been banned since 1993. But in 2013 Ms. Banks of the Environmental Investigation Agency and her colleagues found that farms were stockpiling tiger bones to make wine and that skins from wild tigers were sold as being from captive-bred tigers.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At the center, a jar of tiger bone wine for sale at the New Tender Fish Restaurant, which also served tiger meat and pangolin.

After inquiries from The Times, Meng Xianlin, executive director-general of the Chinese Cites management authority, declined to be interviewed. Other Chinese officials did not respond to repeated interview requests.

Past violators often re-enter the wildlife farming business. Construction has already begun on a zoo next door to Tiger Temple. Officials in Vietnam recently granted permission for the wife of Pham Van Tuan, a twice-convicted tiger trafficker, to import 24 tigers from the Czech Republic "for conservation purposes."

Vuong Tien Manh, deputy director of Vietnam's Cites management authority, said in an email that Vietnam had seized a number of frozen tigers and tiger bones over the past five years, most of which were suspected to have originated from Laos. He added that Vietnam's policies did not permit commercial breeding of tigers, but the country has some 130 tigers in captivity. All tiger farms are strictly monitored, Mr. Manh said, no matter who the owners are.

Though tigers are the most contentious of Asia's farmed wildlife, they are by no means the only species caught up in the industry.

An estimated 10,000 bears are legally kept on Chinese farms for their bile, an ingredient in traditional medicine that is collected through a tube permanently implanted in the animals' gall bladders, or through a hole in their abdomens.

Countless other species — crocodiles, porcupines, pythons, deer and more — are also farmed throughout China and Southeast Asia. Some proponents, including government officials, believe that such facilities should be legal and encouraged, arguing that they relieve pressure to hunt wild animals by satiating demand with captive-bred animals.

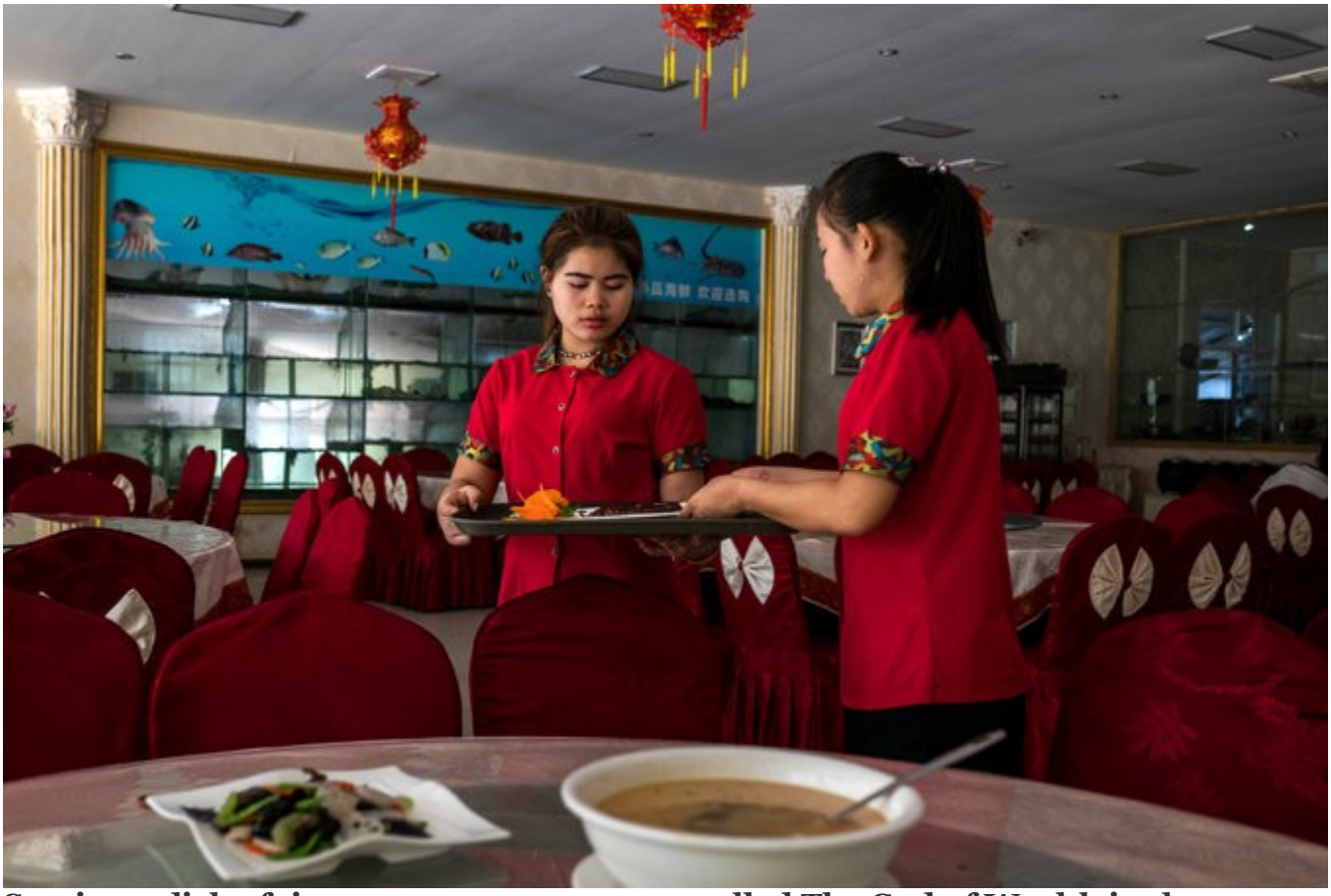
Others say there is no evidence to back this assertion. "I can't think of any species in Southeast Asia that benefits from commercial captive breeding," said Chris Shepherd, the Southeast Asia regional director for Traffic, a nonprofit wildlife trade-monitoring group.

Scott Roberton, the director of counter-wildlife trafficking at the Wildlife Conservation Society's Asia program, added that the risks associated with legalizing trade in farmed tigers and other endangered species are the same as those associated for decades with the ivory trade.

"Legal trade stimulates demand, confuses law enforcement efforts, and opens a huge opportunity for laundering illegal products, which is why ivory markets are now being closed globally…There just isn't the capacity

within these countries to manage a legal trade in a watertight way," Dr. Roberton said.

"Laundering" of animals as farmed that were actually caught in the wild is a frequent practice. In Chengdu, China, one-third of 285 bears rescued from bile farms and now living at a rehabilitation center run by Animals Asia, a nonprofit group, are missing limbs, a sign that they were caught in the wild by snares.



Serving a dish of tiger meat at a restaurant called The God of Wealth in the Golden Triangle, Laos.CreditAdam Dean for The New York Times

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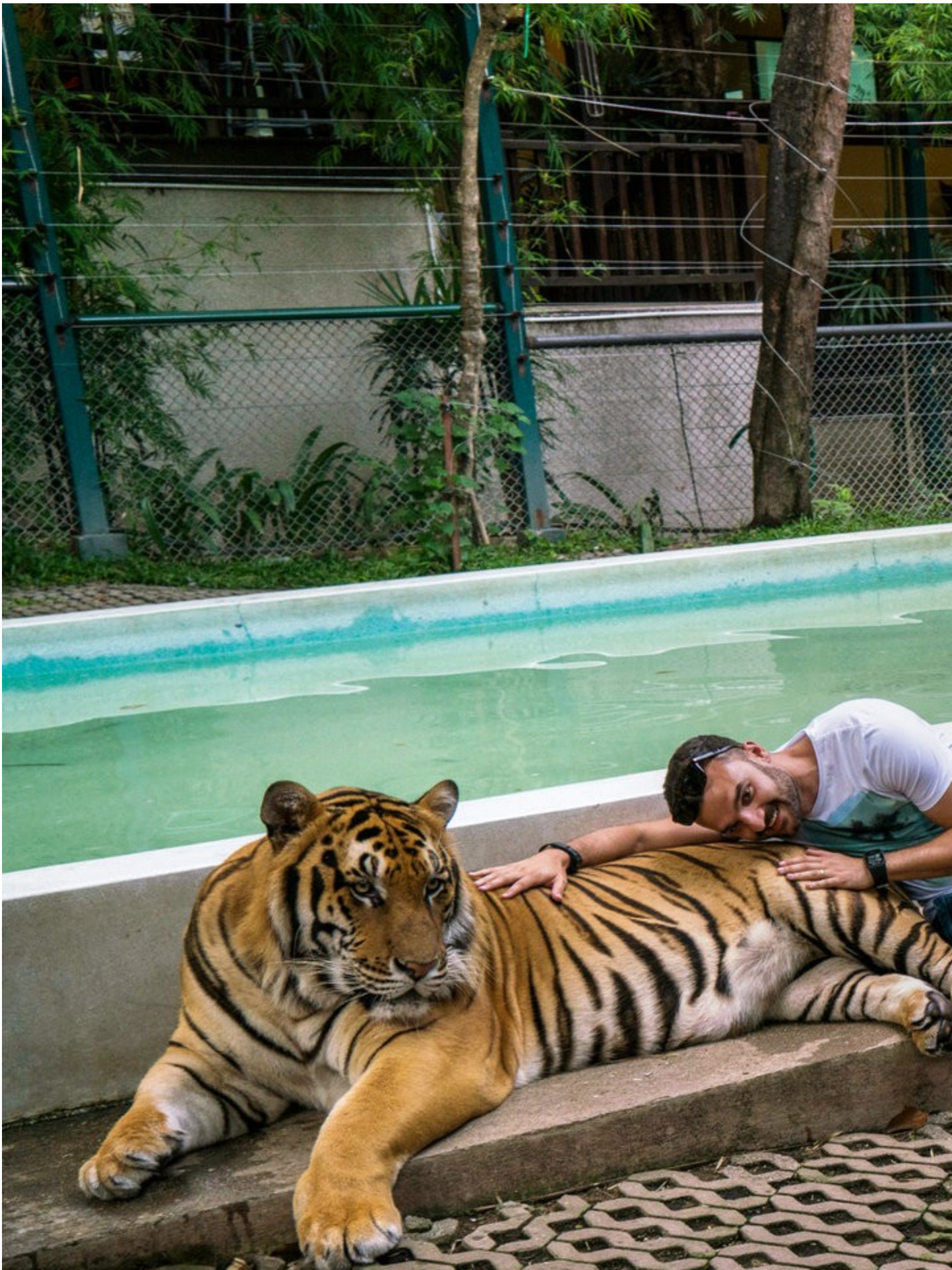
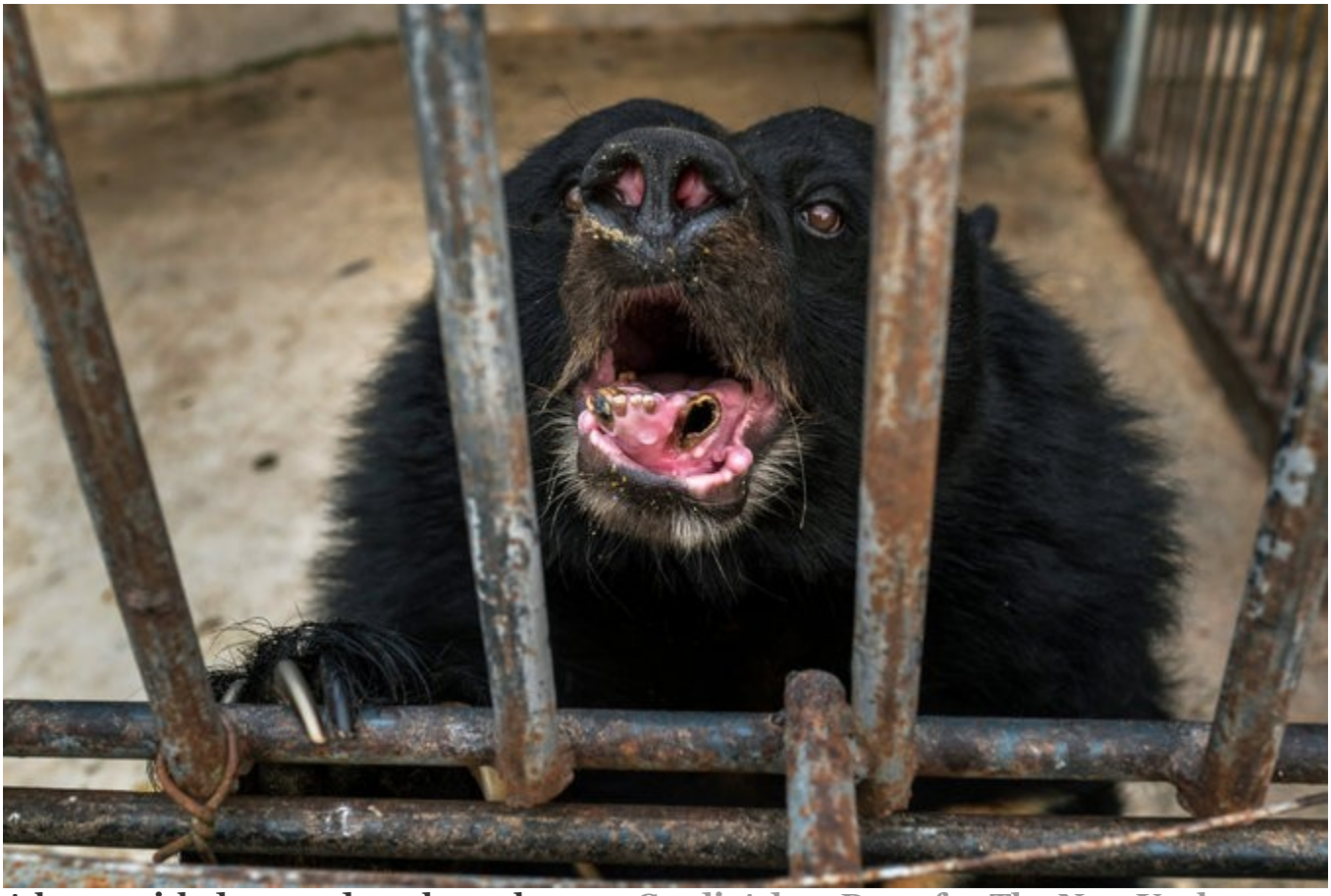
The pet trade is also a problem. Indonesia annually exports over four million reptiles and small mammals labeled captive-bred — including



Tourists pose with tigers in an enclosure at Tiger World in Chiang Mai, Thailand, in May. CreditAdam Dean for The New York Times



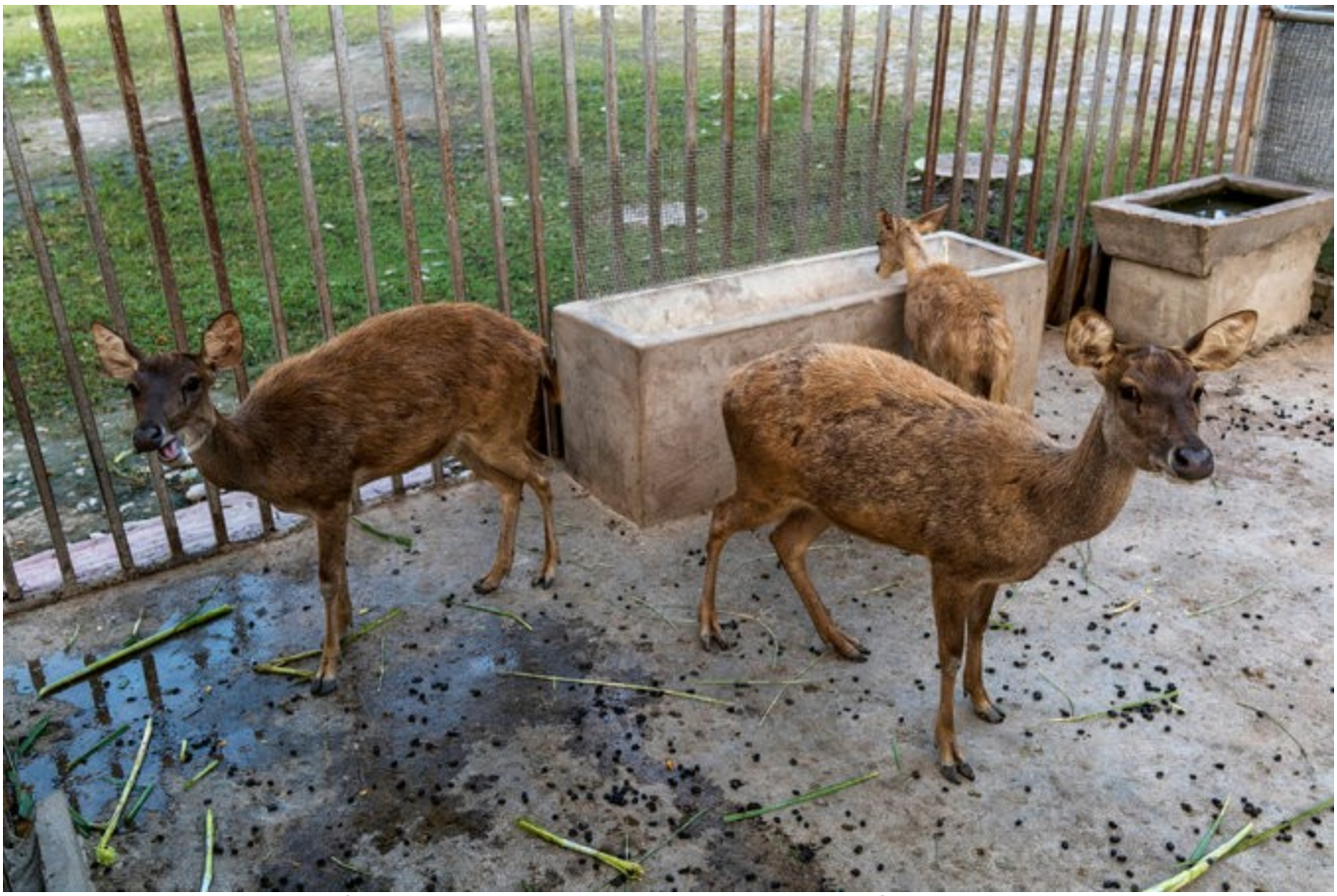
A bear, with damaged teeth, at the zoo. CreditAdam Dean for The New York Times

thousands shipped weekly to the United States. But virtually all are caught in the wild, according to Dr. Shepherd. "I've been to almost every reptile farm in Indonesia, and none have breeding facilities," he said. "Wildlife dealers are running circles around everyone. It's a joke."

Though modern wildlife farming emerged in the 1990s and has only grown in popularity, wild populations of farmed species have continued to plummet, Dr. Shepherd said. Tigers, for example, are effectively extinct in Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam, while just seven to 50 remain in the wild in China.

"No matter how many tigers are farmed, we still have wild tigers getting killed," he said.

Heeding these arguments, Laotian government representatives attending a major Cites meeting last September announced their intention to end tiger farming in their country.



Deer at the zoo. CreditAdam Dean for The New York Times

International nongovernmental organizations are advising Laotian authorities on how to carry through with that announcement, but there has been no progress to date.

In April, Vietnamese reporters discovered a tiger farm in Laos on a main highway near the center of Lak Sao, a town near the border with Vietnam. Conservationists later confirmed that it might hold an additional 200 animals.

“There are some countries in Southeast Asia that are equipped to combat criminal networks, and some that are still struggling,” said Giovanni Broussard, Southeast Asia regional coordinator for the Global Program for Combating Wildlife and Forest Crime of the United Nations Office on Drug and Crime. “Laos,” he said, “is in the category of those that are still struggling.”

Though most tiger farms in Laos do not allow visitors, conservationists fear that owners will simply shift to a model embraced in Thailand, in which petting zoos serve as a front for illegal trade.

Even if the authorities move forward with shutting down the farms, what to do with the country’s 700-plus captive tigers is a challenge. Euthanizing

them would bring unwanted media attention, but releasing them into the wild is not an option. There's not much prey, and the tigers lack survival skills and have no fear of humans.

Yet keeping them is a burden; it costs thousands of dollars a year to feed a single tiger, Ms. Banks said, and tigers can live up to 20 years.

In 2002, Vietnam faced a similar dilemma when it made bear farming and bile sales illegal. Fifteen years later, around 1,200 bears still live with their original owners.

Many are kept in horrific conditions — in cages scarcely larger than their bodies, suffering from rampant disease and lacking adequate food and water — and their bile continues to be collected illegally.

Animals Asia runs a rehabilitation center near Hanoi that houses 160 bears rescued from the trade, but the center has permission to keep only 200 animals. Even if that cap were eliminated, however, the group lacks the funds and space to care for all of Vietnam's remaining captive bears.

"Obviously, we can't do this all ourselves," said Tuan Bendixsen, Animals Asia's Vietnam director. "The government must take responsibility for their wildlife."

As Laos ponders how to responsibly close its tiger farms, China is moving in the opposite direction. Since 1992, it has been petitioning Cites to permit trade in farmed tiger products.

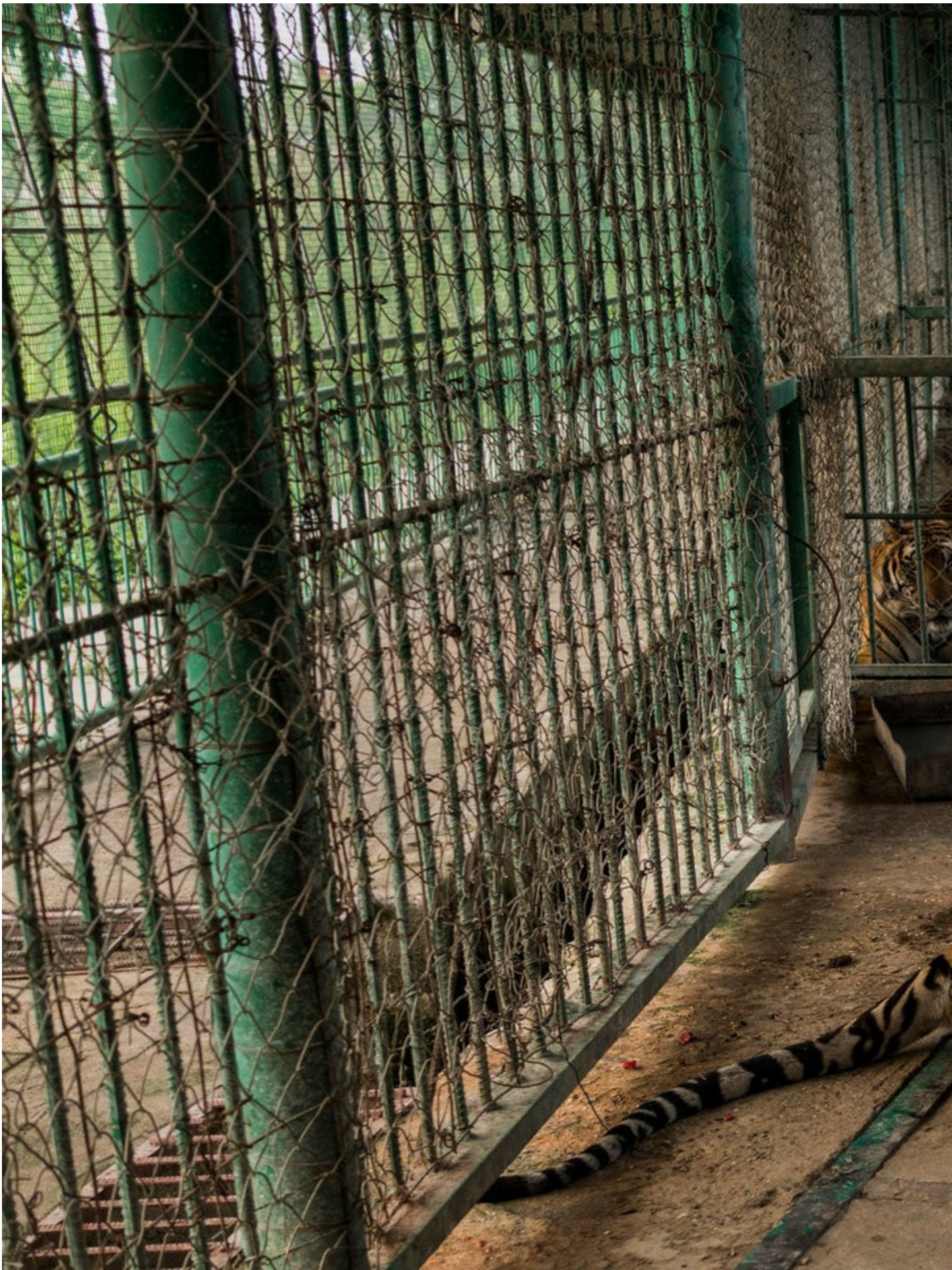
When Chinese representatives lobbied for this change once again at the most recent Cites meeting, the proposal was turned down.

Conservationists believe that international pressure may be crucial to persuading Asian governments to close tiger, bear and other wildlife farms, but that strategy's effectiveness is compromised by an awkward fact: An estimated 5,000 tigers are held in backyards, petting zoos and even truck stops across the United States.

While those animals are predominantly kept as pets, they compromise negotiations with other countries on this issue, said Leigh Henry, a senior policy adviser at the World Wildlife Fund.

"When fingers are pointed at China about their tiger farms, they tend to point the finger back at the U.S. and say, 'They have as many tigers as we have, why are you not criticizing them? The priority is closing the tiger farms in Asia," Ms. Henry said, "but the U.S. needs to set a strong standard, and that starts with cleaning up the situation in our own backyard." A version of this article appears in print on June 6, 2017, on Page D1 of the New

York edition with the headline: Animal Farms. Order Reprints| Today's Paper|Subscribe



Serenade by Djuna Barnes

Three paces down the shore, low sounds the lute,
The better that my longing you may know;
I'm not asking you to come,
But—can't you go?

Three words, "I love you," and the whole is said—
The greatness of it throbs from sun to sun;
I'm not asking you to walk,
But—can't you run?

Three paces in the moonlight's glow I stand,
And here within the twilight beats my heart.
I'm not asking you to finish,
But—to start.

The Mummies' Medical Secrets? They're Perfectly Preserved

Mummified bodies in a crypt in Lithuania are teaching scientists about health and disease among people who lived long ago. Scientists have studied the mummies to gain insights into the lives of people in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries and the diseases they suffered.

By NICHOLAS ST. FLEURJUNE 2, 2017

Hundreds of skeletons have lain scattered around a crypt beneath a church in Vilnius, Lithuania, for centuries. But 23 of these remains are unlike the rest: Flesh wraps their bones, clothes cover their skin, and organs still fill their insides. They are mummies, and since they were recovered about five years ago, scientists have investigated their secrets, seeking insights into the lives of people in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries and the diseases they suffered. "They are so well preserved that they almost look alive," said Dario Piombino-Mascali, an anthropologist from Italy who has studied the mummies since 2011.

Recently, Dr. Piombino-Mascali and his colleagues have uncovered remnants of the smallpox virus in one of the mummies, gaining new insights into the origins of a deadly scourge that killed an estimated 300 million people in the 20th century alone.

The work follows on their earlier discoveries: signs of rickets, osteoarthritis and intestinal parasites in the mummies. And they are not the only researchers unearthing new findings from the bodies of the long dead but well preserved.

The study of mummified remains in other parts of the world has yielded historical perspective on the spread of deadly diseases and damaging

medical conditions, from heart disease in pre-Columbian Americans to various strains of tuberculosis in 19th-century Europeans.

By understanding how long these diseases have been around and mapping them historically, scientists can better tackle them today. "Most people don't realize you can learn about modern medicine from ancient mummies," said Dr. Frank Rühli, head of the Swiss Mummy Project at the University of Zurich in Switzerland, who is studying the internal organs of Iranian and Egyptian mummies. "These historic patient records are like a box of candy for us."

In the heart of Vilnius, Lithuania's Dominican Church of the Holy Spirit is a bright masterpiece of Late Baroque architecture. But it hides something darker.

Inside, an altar stands behind a large wooden platform where people kneel and pray. Beneath this is a stone staircase so narrow it can admit only one person at a time. Researchers liken it to an entrance to a secret lair: The steps descend to a dark and dusty underworld. A black metal gate leads to the labyrinthine chambers that house the corpses. Once, there were body parts piled into a pyramid on the floor and stacked on shelves that reached to the ceiling.

For most of their history, the corpses were preserved intact: Cool temperatures and ventilation in the underground chamber had caused them to undergo spontaneous mummification.

Occupied by Napoleon, then the Nazis, it was the Soviet occupation of Lithuania that brought about a drastic change in the mummies' fate. In the 1960s, a forensic scientist named Juozas Albinas Markulis became one of the first to study the mummies. He wanted to know whether there were victims from World War II mixed in among the 17th-, 18th- and 19th-century corpses. (Oddly, Dr. Markulis is better known to Lithuanians not as a scientist but as a former spy who, while posing as a leader of the Lithuanian resistance, lured others into Soviet ambushes.)

Dr. Markulis and his students at Vilnius University identified 500 bodies in the crypt, of which about 200 had been mummified. In 1962, government officials inspected the crypt and ordered that the mummies be sealed behind glass, fearful that infected bodies might start an epidemic. They called it the Chamber of Death. Soon a glass wall was erected, but it stopped the airflow and made the environment too humid and caused the mummies to decay. Dr. Markulis tried to save them, but his pleas were ignored by the Lithuanian government. The site was soon closed and remained unstudied until anthropologists returned to the chamber in 2004.

“Most people don’t realize you can learn about modern medicine from ancient mummies,” said Dr. Frank Rühli, head of the Swiss Mummy Project at the University of Zurich.CreditKiril Cachovski of the Lithuanian Mummy Project, 2015

From 2008 to 2011, researchers began inspecting and extracting the mummies from the crypt. Of the 200 studied by Dr. Markulis, who died in 1987, only 23 remained intact.But while Dr. Markulis sought to uncover the identities of the mummies, Dr. Piombino-Mascali and his colleagues focused on how they lived.

Looking at the remains, Dr. Piombino-Mascali identified several with dental decay and gum disease, as well as arthritis and bone deformities. To further investigate their health issues, he performed C.T. scans on the seven best-preserved mummies.

One obese man once had arthritis in his spine, pelvis and both knees, a fractured rib on his right side and an enlarged thyroid gland, which might have been caused by goiter. An obese woman had a benign tumor in her lower back. Both had suffered from clogged arteries, a health problem usually associated with modern diets.

“It was very strange,” Dr. Piombino-Mascali said of the examinations, “because we were not feeling as if they were just objects of cultural and archaeological interest. It was a feeling like they were with us willing to do a checkup for their medical conditions.”

The researchers sent samples from a 17th century mummified child to a colleague in Canada, who uncovered remnants of variola virus that causes smallpox, which once ravaged most of the world. By sequencing the virus, the team has gained insight into the origins of the deadly scourge.

“There was no evidence on any remains that would suggest a smallpox infection, so the presence of variola virus was very surprising,” said Ana Duggan, a biologist from McMaster University who worked with Dr. Piombino-Mascali. “It’s the oldest complete genome that we have of variola virus.”

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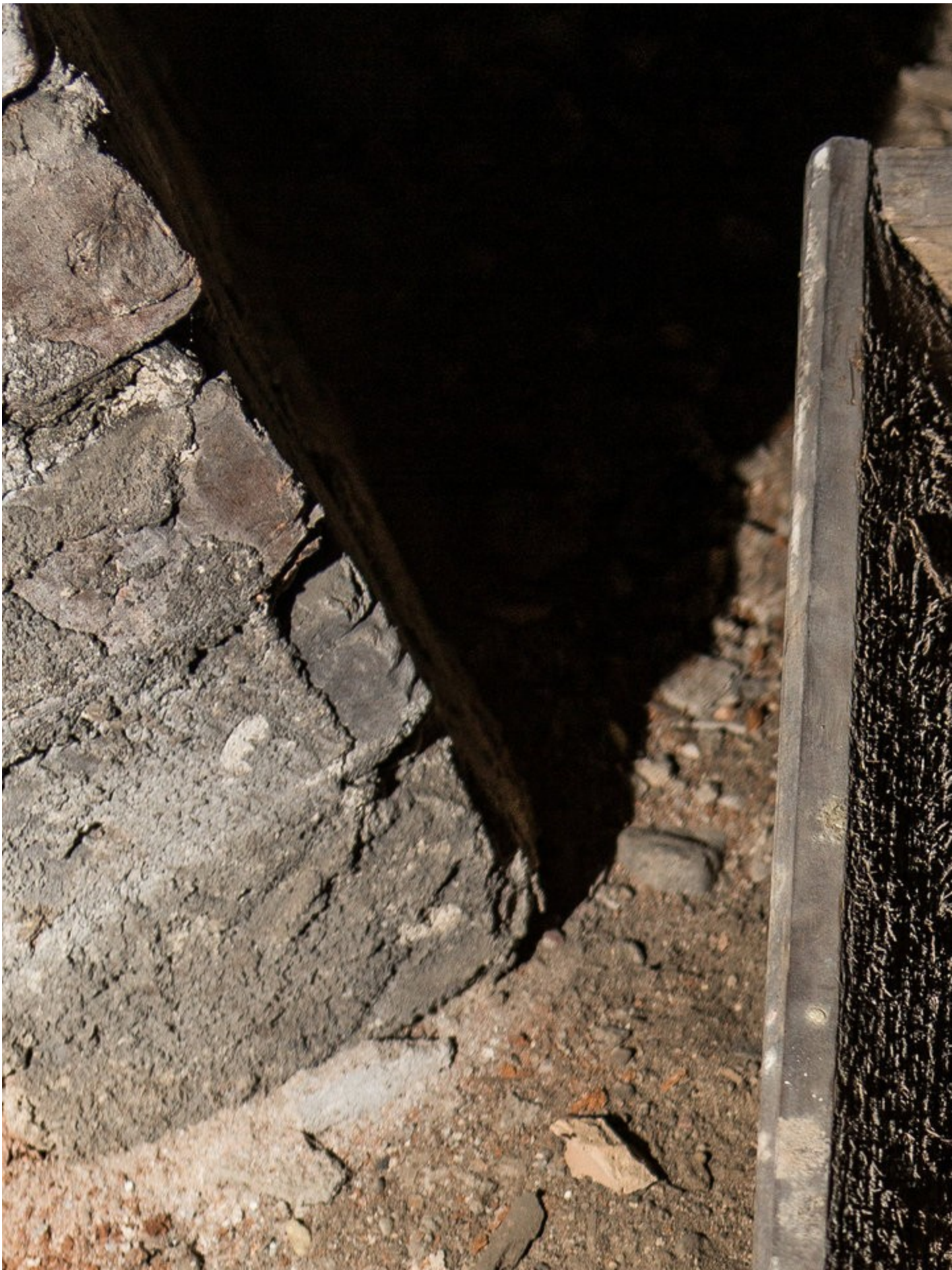
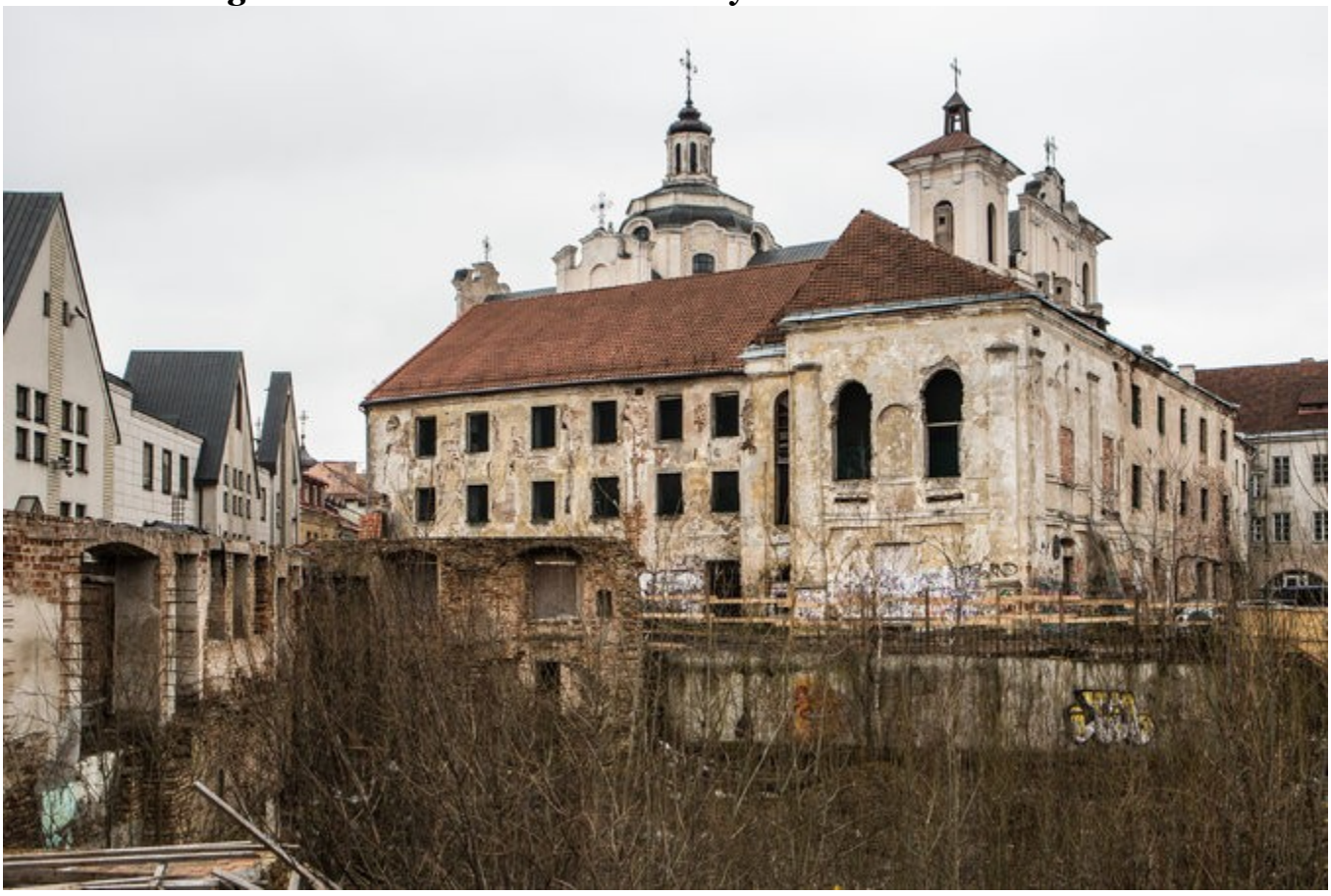
She said the ancient DNA has helped them map out the timeline of smallpox. Historical accounts from Eygpt, China and India had suggested that smallpox had infected humans for thousands of years. But by comparing the 17th century strain with modern variola samples, they found



Among the mummified bodies, the researchers found remnants of variola virus, which causes smallpox.CreditKiril Cachovski of the Lithuanian Mummy Project, 201
the strains shared a common ancestor that emerged between 1530 and 1654. Their finding suggests that the deadliest kinds of smallpox may have evolved much more recently than realized.
The discovery in the Lithuanian crypt is one of the latest in a long line of important medical findings that have used intensive analysis of mummified to show how diseases connect modern humans to the experiences of our forebears.
In 2013 a team led by Dr. Randall C. Thompson, a cardiologist at St. Luke's Mid America Heart Institute in Kansas City, Mo., performed C.T. scans on 130 mummies from ancient Egypt and pre-Columbian Peru, as well as those of Native Americans in the Southwest and the Unangan people of the Aleutian Islands.
He and his colleagues discovered that more than a third of the mummies had some form of atherosclerosis, or hardening of the arteries, which can lead to heart disease. The affected mummies came from various geographical regions and lived over a span of more than 4,000 years — a reminder that heart troubles have long been prevalent and are not simply the result of modern diets. "We found that heart disease is older than Moses," he said. "This disease was present and not hard to find all over the world covering a wide swath of human history."



Cases of atherosclerosis and tuberculosis were found among mummies in the church crypt, offering insights into the health problems of the upper class in 18th- and 19th-century Vilnius.CreditKiril Cachovski of the Lithuanian Mummy Project, 2015

Using burial markings on the tombs, they identified their oldest case of coronary heart disease in Ahmose-Meritamun, an Egyptian princess who lived from 1550 to 1580 B.C. and was in her 40s when she died. The oldest example of clogged arteries they found belonged to an Egyptian mummy from around 2,000 B.C.

Dr. Mark Pallen, a professor of microbial genomics at the University of Warwick, made similar findings in 2015 while studying tuberculosis in mummies found in a Hungarian crypt with more than 200 bodies.

He and his team had extracted tuberculosis bacteria DNA from the lungs of eight 200-year-old mummies, discovering that ancient people could get multiple strains of the bacteria throughout their lifetimes.They used a technique known as metagenomics sequencing, which had not been previously used on mummified corpses. It allowed the researchers to extract microbial DNA directly rather than having to grow the bacteria on a plate.

Because of its success in mummies, he had used the technique with mucus samples from people to get DNA from tuberculosis bacteria. "In this case, the dead did instruct the living," Dr. Pallen said.

Back in Lithuania, Dr. Piombino-Mascali said cases of both atherosclerosis and tuberculosis had been found among mummies in the church crypt. The findings offered evidence that even the upper class in 18th- and 19th-century Vilnius experienced chronic health problems, including those related to poor nutrition.

But most important to Dr. Piombino-Mascali, the mummies now are sharing their stories.

"That crypt was a witness to all of the historical faces of Vilnius," Dr. Piombino-Mascali said. "But now it's finally given back to the city. The stories belong to Lithuania and especially the Lithuanian people."

An Effect of Climate Change You Could Really Lose Sleep Over

Trilobites By JUSTIN GILLIS MAY 26, 2017

Global warming caused by human emissions of greenhouse gases is having clear effects in the physical world: more heat waves, heavier rainstorms and higher sea levels, to cite a few.

In recent years, though, social scientists have been wrestling with a murkier question: What will climate change mean for human welfare?

Forecasts in this realm are tricky, necessarily based on a long chain of assumptions. Scientific papers have predicted effects as varied as a greater spread of tropical diseases, fewer deaths from cold weather and more from hot weather, and even bumpier rides on airplanes.

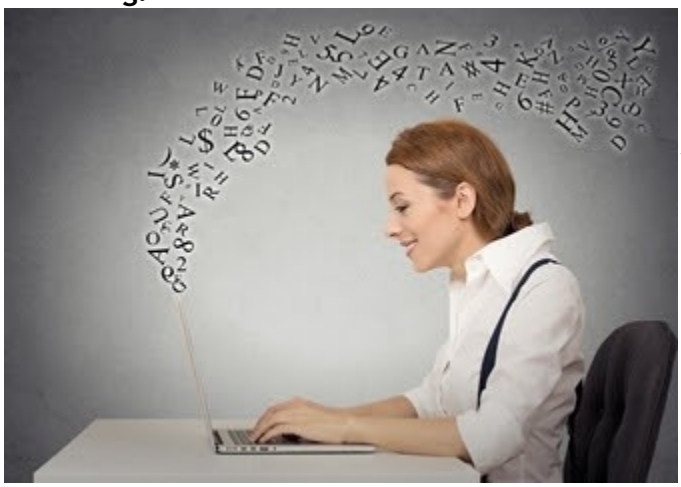
Now comes another entry in this literature: a prediction that in a hotter world, people will get less sleep.

People sleep in a park during hot weather in Dhaka, Bangladesh. CreditAbir Abdullah/European Pressphoto Agency

Jepson June 5, 2017

3 Keys to Getting Out of the Writing Blahs

Writing can be exhilarating, terrifying, agonizing, and blissful. sometimes, be a drag.



Day after day of hacking away at our novels, churning out short works, or battling our various writing demons can be depleting, and just plain boring.

I'm not talking about major blocks here, or panic attacks, or real depression. I'm talking about the numbing sense of exhaustion that can sometimes come from the tedium of a regular writing practice. The days when we stare at our pages and think, *I'd rather be doing almost anything else*.

What I call the writing blahs can come on unexpectedly, and be surprisingly difficult to deal with. They can send us away from the page, cutting into precious writing time. They can even derail our writing for weeks. That's why taking the blahs in stride is not a good idea. It's better to take concrete steps to beat them when they first set in, than to let them grow into something worse.

Refreshing is about making your writing new again. The blahs often set in when we're doing a lot of the same work—when we're in the middle of a long manuscript that seems to be taking an eternity, or doing the same kind of writing in the same way over and over.

Refreshing is all about change. It's simple. Pick something and change it. For example: Write something totally different for a while. Switch genres. Try a style that isn't usual for you. Experiment. Write in a different mode: switch from keyboard to pen or the other way around, or try dictating your work. Switch around your writing schedule. Always write first thing in the morning? Try writing after dinner. Always write just before bedtime? Take a half hour after lunch instead.

One of the best ways we can refresh is to change the place we write. Psychologists have found that habits are often associated with specific places. The more you sit in the same chair at the same desk feeling distracted and lethargic, the more your brain links that chair and desk to your distraction and lethargy. Changing where you write breaks that connection. If you write at home, head for your favorite café or park or

library. Even changing rooms in your house can help. Break the pattern.

Recharging is about getting your energy back.

Writing takes huge amounts of mental energy. Part of the writing blahs is simple mental fatigue. There are many things you can do to get that energy going again. One of the most important things you can do is to pay attention to your body's needs. Check your diet. Too much caffeine, alcohol, sugar, carbs, and many other factors can make you mentally sluggish. Hydration is important here, too. Make sure you're getting enough exercise. Get enough sunlight. Get enough sleep.
Once the body is taken care of, turn your attention to your mind. Practice mindfulness through meditation, yoga, tai chi, or take some of these tips from Mindful.org Set up daily rituals that help create energy. This post at Buddhaimonia goes into some helpful ideas.

Recommitting is about remembering why you are writing. It's about renewing your dedication to the writing life.

Recommitting is the third, and in some ways the most important step you can take to get yourself out of the writing blahs.

Recommitting is like renewing your wedding vows. Restating the basic commitment you made to your spouse is a reaffirmation of your devotion. It is an outward sign of the decision you have made to stand by, support, love, and cherish that one human being.

Recommitting to your writing similarly reaffirms your dedication to your work. When you recommit, you bring yourself back to the fundamental purpose of your writing. You are saying, *I choose this*.

You don't have to wait for the writing blahs to hit before you take charge. Even if you're humming along like a well-oiled machine, keep yourself going by refreshing, recharging, and recommiting on a regular basis. It will keep your writing active and energized.

Citadel of our best names—angsty Zooey & chatty Zarathustra,
wee Zaccheus & mighty Zorro. (Zebediah, of course, would place among them.)

Experiment in endings (A-Z), as in "where the A ends up," the crooked path
an A could take toward some arrival's gate (*zig-zag*).
Or *Z-pack*: superhero strength contained in capsules.

Like the 7, crossed or uncrossed, mustachioed or not,
the Z with its dashing good looks & flaming androgyny, its
cursive tail & tiger purr.

That Z, its maze of contradictions, shape-shifter & fortress of finality:
N's topsy-turvy cousin, S's more callous sidekick,

The stuff of caped-crusader skirmishes: *ZAP! & ZOOM!*

Enabler of interjections (think *Wowie Zowie!* think *Zoinks!*)
Symphonic doppelgänger shadowing *xylophone* & *disguise*.

The verbage of bees, buzzing all day in a hive.

***Zeta* or *zed*, its dialectical relatives, or the numeral 3,**
Z's bodacious brother on its mother's side.

Ambiguous, flirtatious, & worth 10 points on the Scrabble board,
Z turns out to be quite the catch—*zany, zesty*, & remarkably
well-read.

But despite its zeal, Z can also communicate quietly, eloquent as an ideogram.
It's raining, it's pouring, the old man is snoring…

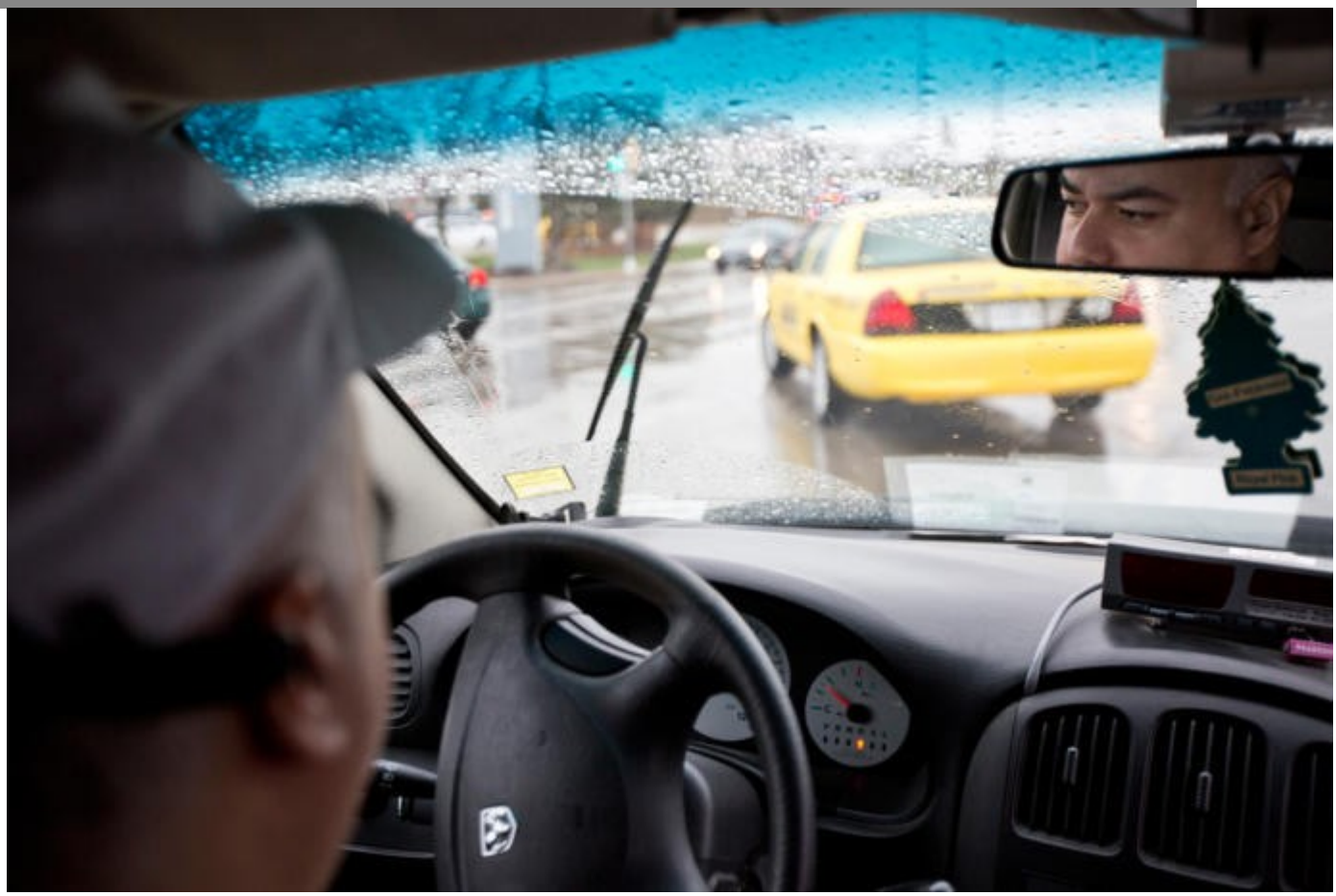
How do we know? Just look at the rocket of Zs rising out of his mouth.

"The first poem I ever published was a meditation on the letter Y. I'd been wanting to write about individual letters for some time, but it wasn't until I saw an exhibit of Harold Edgerton's images at a Pittsburgh gallery that I knew how I wanted my letter-poems to feel. Edgerton used strobe flash photography to capture balloons in the process of bursting, milk in the process of splashing, and perhaps most famously, a bullet slicing through a playing card. To my mind, he captured how a seemingly singular object or event—the balloon that burst, the milk that splashed—was many things at once, many textures and colors and motions—the way that words are to me, and letters, and sounds. Eventually, I hope to write a poem for every letter of the alphabet, but not being a big stickler for linearity, I decided to write 'Z' now."
—Julie Marie Wade

NO LONGER DRIVING A CAB, A SYRIAN WRITER IN AMERICA FOCUSSES ON HIS FICTION

By Mythili G. Rao

May 8, 2017



Osama Alomar drove a cab for years after leaving Syria for the U.S. But for now, at least, he's writing full time. PHOTOGRAPH BY NATHAN WEBER / NYT / REDUX

In 2014, Osama Alomar was working as a cab driver in Chicago when he learned that the suburb of Zamalka, just outside the heart of Syria's capital, Damascus, had been destroyed by the fighting that continues to ravage his country. The apartment house that Alomar had lived in for five years before leaving for the United States, and everything in it—his furniture, clothing, guitar, and, most painfully, his library of old and rare books, including volumes he'd inherited from his father and

grandfather—had been reduced to rubble. “I’m homesick, but I cannot go back,” he told me recently. “I would be homeless.”

Before he left Syria, in 2008, Alomar’s fiction and poetry had been published in four collections; he’d won literary prizes and had his work broadcast on the BBC. Now his entire personal archive was lost. “All my published poems, stories, interviews I had done in journals and magazines. Everything. I was completely shocked to learn that it was all gone,” he said. Also lost were the manuscripts of several writing projects in progress, including a completed autobiographical novel, called “The Jagged Years.”

The plan had been to establish himself as a writer in the United States, but it took Alomar six years to get a collection of his stories published in translation. “From the outside looking in—from a country like Syria—America looks like Heaven,” Alomar said. After he arrived, the relentless economic pressure startled him. He had not expected to encounter so much poverty and homelessness. “People have to work almost day and night to make their living,” he said. “It’s not easy at all. Everybody has to wake up early, too early, to work all day long.”

He saw them every morning, clutching their coffee, waiting for the El before dawn at the Rosemont station, the busiest transit station outside Chicago city limits. Alomar spent nine- and ten-hour days

driving his cab; he typically arrived at the station by 5 or 6 A.M. to receive passengers. In the car, he kept an English-Arabic dictionary, a thesaurus, a few reference books, some American fiction, and a favorite edition of the work of Kahlil Gibran. Sometimes, his translator, C. J. Collins, rode around with him, too. While they waited for the next fare, they'd work on translating Alomar's work into English. Line by line, they discussed grammar, idioms, tone, style. The result of their efforts, a collection titled "Fullblood Arabian," was published by New Directions, in 2014. Lydia Davis wrote a preface. Alomar sold about eighty-five copies directly to passengers in his cab.

In April, New Directions published a second collection, "The Teeth of the Comb and Other Stories." Like "Fullblood Arabian," it features a selection of stories that Collins translated from Alomar's three Arabic collections. These are very short stories—they might be called flash fiction in the U.S., but in the Middle East they are known as *al-qissa al-qasira jiddan*. There, the genre has a rich, ancient history, and, in recent decades, repression and unrest have brought the style back into fashion. Very short stories can be published and circulated quickly; their political critique is often sharp but also oblique enough to evade censorship. Collins told me that there's a "kind of Arabic literature that wins international prizes and gets translated quickly into English but that doesn't reflect the popular literature." By contrast, he said, "Osama's work comes from the

popular tradition. Even though his stuff gets billed as experimental over here, it was designed to have a popular appeal in the Arab world." Collins first encountered Alomar's writing in 2006, while on a Fulbright in Syria. "I heard his stories spoken out loud before I actually read them," he said. "These things were going viral in the age before viral videos." Collins was supposed to be doing doctoral research on the history of French influence in the Middle East, but he discovered that Damascus's literary scene interested him more than his dissertation topic did. He began attending a monthly literary salon held in the home of the feminist activist and writer Sahar Abu Harb. That's where he met and befriended Alomar.

The short story is a "critical genre in Syrian literature," Hanadi Al-Samman, a professor of modern Arabic literature at the University of Virginia, told me. In "Literature from the 'Axis of Evil,' " an anthology compiled by Words Without Borders, Al-Samman explains that "Syria's literary tradition has been greatly intertwined with its political background." After the rise of the Baathist Party, in 1963, newspapers, books, media, and film became heavily censored. "In the face of threats of persecution or imprisonment," according to Al-Samman, Syrian writers "had to make a choice between living a life of artistic freedom in exile . . . or resorting to subversive modes of expression that seemingly comply with the authoritarian police state while undermining and questioning

the legitimacy of its rule through subtle literary techniques." Alomar, in a sense, chose both. Though he never mentions specific countries or heads of state by name—more than one of his Syrian writer friends who dared to do so were tortured or went missing—many of his stories are overtly political. One titled "Free Elections" is, in English, just more than thirty words long: "When the slaves reelected their executioner entirely of their own accord and without any pressure from anyone, I understood that it was still very early to be talking about democracy and human dignity." Another, titled "A Handkerchief of Freedom," reads even more like a fable: "The dictator sneezed. He pulled Freedom from his pants pocket and blew his nose. Then he threw her away in the wastebasket."

Other stories are more opaque. Animals—dogs, horses, and wolves—take on leading roles, as do all manner of inanimate objects. Clocks shout slogans, lightning taunts thunder, flutes envy cannons, days of the week bicker. A story titled "A Flag of Surrender" could be about many things, both political and personal: "A thorn daringly pierced a jasmine petal and felt proud. She didn't realize that in so doing she had become a flag of surrender."

On the phone, Alomar quickly rattled off his topics of choice to me: "human dignity, human rights, happiness, success, failure, equality, inequality, tolerance." Given how essential both brevity

and ambiguity are to his style, translation can be particularly difficult. "There's not a lot of room to get a single word wrong," Collins said. Despite their punchiness and precision, the stories can make for challenging reading as well. "You can't tune out for a moment," Collins told me. "You have to catch every word."

Alomar lives in Pittsburgh now, through a yearlong residency funded by the Pittsburgh City of Asylum program. (After abandoning his doctoral studies, Collins became a librarian and settled in Canada.) He finally has time to rest, to think, and, of course, to write—on his own terms. "I'm not like an employee at my desk," he said. "I write where I want. In my bed. Outside. In the park. In a café."

But the freedom and peace of mind that he thought he might find in the U.S. when he left Syria, all those years ago, still eludes him. "When I woke up on the morning of November 9th and found out the results of the election, I felt like I had traveled backwards hundreds of years," Alomar wrote in a short essay published in *Sampsonia Way* magazine, a publication of the City of Asylum program, shortly after the election. "Is the future walking with firm footsteps towards the dark corridors of the past, holding high the banner of intolerance and hate?"
After nearly a decade in the U.S., Alomar has yet to write fiction set in this country. "I couldn't write a word about my experience as a cab

driver," he told me. "Maybe because I hated it so much, I couldn't get any inspiration." After his year in Pittsburgh, his plans aren't certain. For now, he's working on a novel about the Syrian War.

Collins, for his part, does not romanticize Alomar's time as a cab driver, but he does think back on the long hours they spent in the car with a certain fondness. "It's kind of an amazing thing and an exciting thing, to be able to take the work of an author you admire and sit with the author and ask him, 'What did you mean here, what's that word about?' He's so clearly, totally dedicated to his craft. I haven't been around many people like that." Still, watching Alomar's career up close has been sobering. "It's been an eye-opener, seeing just how few people make a living as writers," Collins said. "I hope he'll find something more nourishing and valorizing than driving a taxicab."

Mythili G. Rao is a producer at WNYC, where she is a 2016 Editorial Fellow at On the Media.

A Poet's Bicoastal Conjurings, From Garden State to Golden Gate: August Kleinzahler

By JEFF GORDINIER NYTimes **JUNE 30, 2017**

BEFORE DAWN ON BLUFF ROAD
Selected New Jersey Poems

HOLLYHOCKS IN THE FOG
Selected San Francisco Poems
By August Kleinzahler
148 pp. Farrar, Straus & Giroux. $25.

The poems of August Kleinzahler are weathered. You can interpret that in a couple of ways. There is weather in them, yes — wind in the trees, fog curling through the streets, sudden storms. Temperamentally urban, a resident of San Francisco who grew up in the part of New Jersey that's across the George Washington Bridge from Manhattan, Kleinzahler can't exactly be categorized as a nature poet, but he does have a fine-tuned sensitivity to seasonal and barometric fluctuations. Consider this passage from "Closing It Down on the Palisades," one of his numerous musings on a Garden State state of mind: "Early yet for the cicadas, / their gathering rush and ebb. / Too cool, / the sun not high enough."

But Kleinzahler's work is weathered in a different way, as well: His poems bear the markings of age, of hard-won experience. Like characters in a Cassavetes film, the people who drift through his stanzas can be found looking over their shoulders at life. Bathed in fluorescent light at supermarkets and liquor stores and Chinese takeout counters, they cling to the rattle of romanticism despite the grinding passage of time and the growing abundance of evidence that the old world is collapsing around them. As Kleinzahler writes in "Warm Night in February":

It smells of summer out,
she said
in Safeway's parking lot,
tilting her head up
to reach more air.

When they do catch a whiff, though, what they often smell is industrial vapor. Kleinzahler could be the poet laureate of American pollution, singing in "Before Dawn on Bluff Road" of:

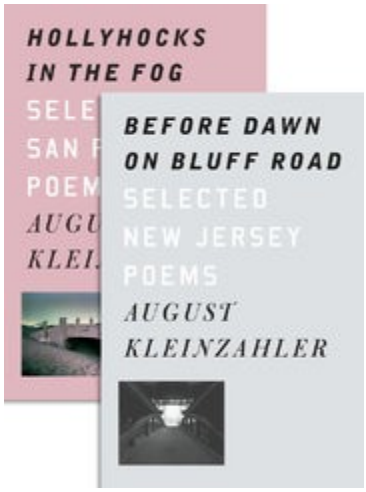
the chemical ghost of old factories,
the rotted piers and warehouses:
lye, pig fat, copra from Lever Bros.,
formaldehyde from the coffee plant,

dyes, unimaginable solvents —
a soup of polymers, oxides

Nature and its opposite are stuck with each other in Kleinzahler's body of work. He's swooning over dogwood blossoms a beat or two before he's calling forth the "bleak perfume / of benzene." Follow your nose. Over here you find the fragrance of eucalyptus, and a few pages away, in "The Single Gentleman's Chow Mein," you catch the scent of apartment-invading ants and the poison that's meant to halt their march: "They have a smell, of that I'm certain, / a formic aroma, / that gathers around them in the heat / of their frenzy." All of it brings Kleinzahler back home — the stink of garlic in "Where Galluccio Lived," the urine and mold in "Disappointment," the chlorine of a pool in "The Swimmer," whatever's pumping out of the smokestacks of those factories, "the aroma / almost comforting by now."

In fact, the concept of home could be viewed as the framing device for this captivating collection of poems, which comes packaged as two books in one. Venture in from one side and you get a series of poems set in one home, New Jersey; flip it over and you're in San Francisco, where "smoke blows in from the sea, sea / smoke, ghost vapor / of lost frigates, sunken destroyers." So precise are Kleinzahler's regional descriptions that a newcomer would be able to separate the East Coast poems from the West Coast poems without being told which are which. Too many poets these days seem to be allergic to a sense of place, as though rooting their work in a region would somehow shackle it to the mundane. But that quality of being grounded in parts of the country — places where there's a specificity to the way the light hits your eyes and the air hits your nostrils — is one of the things that make Kleinzahler's poetry so appealing.

Photo



The San Francisco half of the book begins with a poem, "Hollyhocks in the Fog," that could only be set in the Bay Area. At first it appears to be a poem about fog itself, but in the second stanza a scene cuts through the mist: As the sun goes down on the Pacific, buses are pulling in from Silicon Valley, ferrying employees from a Google-like company (Kleinzahler calls it *Information*) to the neighborhoods where they live. The brains of the search-engine drones are filled with a different type of fog, or maybe a new kind of pollution:

Perhaps they're exhausted, overwhelmed by it all:
spidering the endless keywords, web pages,
appetite feeding on itself:
frantic genealogists, like swarms of killer bees.
The countless, urgent inquiries

Regardless of which coast he's on, Kleinzahler is wary of these new ways of being and working and thinking. He hauls around a full but cranky heart, and the finest moments in his poetry are the weathered ones, the melancholic lines in which he's peering through the fog to examine his past. In "A History of Western Music: Chapter 29," he pays tribute to the memory of Thom Gunn (another poet transplanted to the Bay Area from elsewhere) by altering the lyrics of Johnny Mercer's "I Thought About You" (popularized by Frank Sinatra in the 1950s) into an elegy. In "Watching Young Couples With an Old Girlfriend on Sunday Morning," Kleinzahler recalls "the drunkenness, beast savor, and remorse," comparing passion to "a darkness that got loose, a frenzy."

For those readers who have grown skeptical of contemporary poetry that's marked by antiseptic detachment and cute-geek deadpan posturing, the beast savor of Kleinzahler's work serves as a vigorous antidote. This is the poetry of a messy and hungry and odorous life. (In a perfect world, someone would enlist Jack Nicholson — another Jersey guy who went out to California — to recite the poems for an audiobook.) Rays of tenderness break through the bluster, though, and when they do, their beauty is unmistakable. In "Family Album," Kleinzahler goes back to New Jersey, where "no one is left here who knows me anymore," and by the time he reaches the closing two lines, his home might just feel like your home, everyone's home, accessible only in memory:

Warm grass and dragonflies —
O my heart.

This from an old writer-friend in Canada, Katherine Govier

http://mailchi.mp/govier/m039llyud6?e=e733fadae4

**** Postcard #37, From Canmore:**
When We Were Young

One night when my mother was about eighty-five she gathered us – the daughters, their partners, a few of the grandchildren who happened to be in town – and got us to sit in the dusty pink upholstered chairs and on the flowered sofa in the living room. She stood in front of the fireplace facing us. She loved speeches. She wanted us to know about all the jobs my father had held in his life. She wanted to pass on the list before it was too late, before she forgot. She would never have admitted, however, that time was getting short. Although she died at ninety-five she was not old. Old was not in her lexicon. She began to recite.

Butcher's delivery boy. Drugstore delivery boy. Sparkie at a logging camp. (The sparkie's job is to make sure any spark from a machine or a cigarette is put out before it starts a fire. Grave digger.

Grave digger? Mostly for babies, Dad said. That was in the depression when he was at university and couldn't get a job in Vancouver and he'd gone up the coast to Powell River where things were even worse.

Roofer. The other guy was an older man, he said. He liked to do the back slope of the roof because it was out of sight and he could drink and fall asleep. Dad worked on the front where the owner could see him.

Barrel-washer at an oil refinery, logger, lab assistant. On it went. It humbled us, sipping wine in the house that was built in the sixties and is now considered "mid-century modern". The list went on to the jobs we knew about. Modest as ever, Mum failed to mention her own jobs, which were traditional, ongoing and had included, when the youngest of us was six, going back to school and becoming a teacher of Canadian literature.

I am not standing in front of the fireplace but sitting in front of my computer screen. It is the last day of Canada being 149. Are we getting old? Surely not, but it does get harder to remember the past. Before they are forgotten I want to list the jobs people in my family had, going back to Confederation.

A widow of fifty with five children was the first to come here. She left a couple of them in England but the others she brought, because otherwise, how could they make a life? I'm not sure how she survived. Then farmers. Failed farmers. Bachelor farmers. Farmers who moved to the States. A ship's carpenter in Parry Sound, a job which led to death at forty from rheumatic fever. Legacy jobs, I think you'd call them. Do people do them any more?

Another widow, teaching "difficult" children who could not fit in the school system, for a dollar a year per student. Music teacher. Clerk in a general store. Owner of a general store on the prairies. Mayor of Eyebrow, Saskatchewan. Bankrupted owner of a general store. Station master on the Canadian Pacific Railroad, a runaway from the United States. School teacher, again. Lots of school teachers, the only job a woman could get.

Moving on a generation or two: importer of fabrics, nanny, cook and housekeeper for four orphan siblings who came from Yorkshire. Landlady. Menswear salesman. Carpenter. House-builder. Soldier. Reporter. City editor. Hat store owner.

On again, another generation, as the family joins the seated classes. Professor. Civil servant. Again teachers, writers, engineers, artists.

All that work from the beginning, jobs done with blood, sweat, tears and the firm belief in "getting ahead". This week I heard a dozen immigrant women talk about why they came to Canada. Some were running away from conflict and poverty, but most were running to this country to find freedom and an education for their children. The particulars are different; the need is the same.

It is fashionable to say we are all immigrants. We are not. The people who immigrate are immigrants. They alone go through the shattering and transformative experience. In years past they took generations to get comfortable. The status of immigrant is not something bequeathed. What is bequeathed is this other thing, which is not without its challenges, this responsibility to cherish and improve the country they helped to build.

All of the reviews in this book were originally published in our magazine. The reviews in this book are updated to reflect any changes that have occurred within the company since the original review took place. This is an important and time-consuming project.

This year, like last year, I saw an increase of traditional publishers starting a vanity imprint. I must emphasize that I am only reviewing the traditional publishing arm of any company and not the vanity-publishing arm. I do not recommend working with a vanity publisher.

If a traditional publisher tries to redirect you to the vanity arm of the same company, please do not be redirected, and also report it to us (support@authorspublish.com), and we will update their review to include an explicit warning about the practice.

— Emily Harstone

Here are the link options:
The 2017 Guide to Manuscript Publishers (Free)
The 2017 Guide to Manuscript Publishers ($8.99 Kindle Edition)