

Tyler Coburn
**The Petrified,
Part 2**

01/08

The Spy and the Cleric

“Don’t choose England as a place to live. Whatever the reasons, whether you’re a professional traitor to the motherland or you just hate your country in your spare time, I repeat, don’t move to England. Something is not right there. Maybe it’s the climate. But in recent years there have been too many strange incidents with a grave outcome. People get hanged, poisoned, they die in helicopter crashes, fall out of windows. And look what’s happened now.”

This warning airs on Channel One Russia in early 2018. The news presenter adjusts two stacks of paper as he speaks. A few days earlier, someone had petrified on a bench in Salisbury: a former military intelligence officer and double agent for MI6. Throughout his career, he’s said to have blown the cover of three hundred Russian spies, passing intel by means of an artificial rock lodged in a Moscow park. This came to an end in 2006, when he was sentenced to thirteen years in prison. He got out early as part of a spy swap. He moved to Salisbury.

Russia has never claimed responsibility for citizens who meet untimely ends on foreign soil. Nor has it been particularly forceful in disavowing them. The news presenter’s speech is like much of what comes from state mouthpieces: a veiled threat to would-be traitors and an affront to international law. The Kremlin will do what it wants, wherever it wants – consequences be damned.

This is all to say that the petrification of the former spy is suspicious, especially coming a few weeks before the Russian presidential election. There’s also the fact that it’s the first time, in the nine years of petrifications, that someone has transformed outside a museum. The popular belief is that petrification is a voluntary, possibly conscious act. Could it also be compelled, coerced, induced? Was the spy forced into this state – or, faced with the prospect of death, was petrification his last line of defense?

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The former spy had a shtick when he got into a Salisbury taxi. He’d kiss his ring and invite the driver to do the same, like the first stage of an initiation ritual. Then, the real performance began. His eyes would dart around the car, scanning the windows for signs of onlookers.

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Beneath his breath he'd confess, "I'm a Russian spy."

Nobody believed him, of course. The sad old kook. He moved to Salisbury with his family, and they kept peeling away. His wife was lost to cancer a year in. The son died of liver failure, while on holiday in St. Petersburg, eight months before the petrification. His daughter was all he had left, but she only stayed in Salisbury for a few years, and then returned to Russia to work for Nike. She told him the origin of "Just Do It" – a convict once said this to his firing squad when asked if he had any last words. Her father didn't like that story at all.

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She is often asked one question, and always deflects. What's most important is her father's well-being. He's comfortable in his home, with a daughter to care for him. Her job, her flat in Russia: everything else can wait.

There's a temptation to read between the lines – to find in a genuine sentiment a genuine sense of terror. The Kremlin may have killed her brother and petrified her father; the less trouble she causes, the better. The West can call her father a martyr. It can point fingers at the Russians who visited Salisbury on that fateful day. She just wants to stay alive.

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Eight months later, a Turkish cleric petrifies. He came to the United States in 1999 to be treated for heart disease and settled in a compound in rural Pennsylvania. From his prayer room, beside a table packed with pill bottles, the cleric would record messages to his flock. He extolled the value of religious tolerance. He argued that faith can be compatible with enterprise, if one invests in worthy causes. The cleric practiced what he preached. The cornerstone of his movement is a network of secular schools – more than a hundred in the United States alone. One of his followers describes it as an "Ottoman Empire of the Mind."

The cleric was instrumental in the rise of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. It was a relationship of convenience that wouldn't last. When Erdoğan closed some of the cleric's schools, he was hounded by corruption charges. The cleric's followers, spread throughout Turkish bureaucracy, posed an ever-present threat. After the failed coup in 2016, the two reached a breaking point: Erdoğan accused the cleric of running a "parallel state" and stripped him of

Turkish citizenship.

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Ever since the coup, Erdoğan has asked the United States to extradite the cleric. Obama found the evidence wanting. Trump was more receptive when Michael Flynn had his ear. Anything for a fellow authoritarian. There was a meeting where abduction and rendition were discussed, but no plans were set.

Erdoğan gained some leverage in October 2018 when journalist Jamal Khashoggi was murdered at the Saudi consulate in Istanbul. Turkey shared recordings that implicated the Gulf state, despite its denial of involvement. The message to the United States was clear: give us the cleric or see your ally dragged deeper into scandal.

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On its face, the cleric's compound has the look of a spiritual retreat. The twenty-six-acre property, nestled in the woods of Pennsylvania, hosts many visitors who come to study and pray. Still, there are telling signs, like the cameras and metal detectors installed throughout the site. Neighbors, unsure what to make of it all, have been feeding the rumor mill. (The War on Terror trained them well.) Gunfire, they say, can be heard in the dead of night – and helicopters landing covertly.

The failed coup raised the temperature. With the murder of Khashoggi, the pot boils over. Demonstrators gather along the perimeter of the compound. Planes circle above, trailing protest banners. A man sneaks onto the grounds without an appointment; a guard fires a warning shot, and he flees.

The cleric has a habit when journalists visit. Citing poor health, he remains in his quarters while a representative tours them around. Sometimes he really is ill, but that's not the point.

Can sickness turn a person to stone? Worry? Fear of returning to a home that's turned hostile? The cleric retires to his quarters as the protests continue, citing poor health. He is found petrified the next day.

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The spy and the cleric. It reads like the title of a fable, though one without the satisfaction of a resolution. The first people to petrify outside

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museums are utterly unlike the rest: actors on the world stage, men spurned by the countries they left. If Russia and Turkey were looking for a new way to deal with dissidents – as effective as Polonium-210 yet untraceable – then they might have found it.

The spy is still in Salisbury, under the watchful eye of his daughter. After a career lived in the shadows, it's somehow appropriate that he's kept from view.

The cleric's compound is open – visitors can study and pray – but he remains in his quarters. Given Islam's prohibition on idolatry, his followers will not risk him becoming a monument. Perhaps, with enough faith, he'll return to them.

The Pagan

The first time she saw him, she stared, but he didn't stare back. His right arm was pulled close to his face, as if he were examining a detail on his skin – a blemish, maybe, or a bug that was just touching down. He seemed to smile at the sight of it, wrinkling his nose.

The lower half of his arm was degraded; only the bones were left. The bottom half of his body had disappeared entirely. Was it a smile, then, or a look of surprise: to find himself in so unbecoming a state, two thousand years after his death?

"He looks like a leather suitcase," a classmate joked. That, their teacher explained, was on account of the sphagnum moss, which preserves bodies found in the bogs by effectively tanning them. Certain things had resisted the process, like the hairs of his beard which stuck this way and that. She reached out her hand to fix them, then remembered: he was surrounded by glass.

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In 1984, a peat cutter found the bog body at Lindow Moss near Manchester – some debris, gumming up the conveyor belt, that turned out to be a man. He was handed over to the British Museum, which spent the next two years cleaning, scanning, soaking, and freeze-drying him. Mancunians complained that their ancestor looked like a herring. Then they got angry.

"London has everything," a local headline read. "He should stay in the North." T-shirts were printed with a reconstruction of his face. An ode

to repatriation was penned. Her primary school class got roped into the campaign; the video they made is still online. There she is on a staircase, recorder in hand – and again, in Celtic dress, near the bog. Singing, so earnestly singing.

The British Museum made the smallest of concessions and loaned him to the Manchester Museum from 1987 to 1988. That's when she saw him. The smile. The beard in a tangle. If you focused on it and ignored the rest, you could swear that you were looking at a living person. Two thousand years flattened by a miracle of natural preservation.

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Twenty years later, she returns to the museum, trailing a procession of robed figures through the galleries. Her boyfriend hands her a rattle, then continues to drum. She shakes it once, certain that she came in late, and pulls up her hood. The procession stops at a familiar glass case.

It's technically the third time she sees him. She had come a few days earlier to the official opening, invited by a primary school classmate who's part of the show. The gallery looks nothing like it did in the late '80s. MDF blocks, painted in green and brown, divide the space. (She's told they resemble cut peat.) Voices are amplified throughout: of her classmate, the peat cutter who discovered the body, the curators of the British and Manchester Museums, the druidess leading the procession. It's not just "the experts" speaking.

Her boyfriend is the real pagan. Until this point, she's gone along with it. But the ritual at the museum affects her. To see them pray to their ancestor, wave their flags and banners, place moss and leaves in the offering box beside him. To hear the emotion in the voice of the druidess, as she begs for his reburial. "This is a sacred, precious, and unquestioned gift," she says, that "we give every member of our community. Why not him?"

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2008 feels like a turning point for the Manchester pagans: the first time a museum invites them to consult on a show and takes their counsel seriously. All across the country, the community is finding its voice. The druids of Avebury are calling on a local museum to rebury its human remains. Another is filing a lawsuit against an archaeologist, who uncovered the cremated remains of more than forty bodies at

Stonehenge and is keeping them for “scientific research.” She joins her boyfriend for the meetings, sees people nodding when she speaks up. It seems so obvious, the problem of displaying bodies in museums. Crammed in with ancient tools and pottery, they’re no different than the artifacts.

The lawsuit is dismissed in 2011 and again in 2013; the druids vow to keep fighting. The museum in Avebury decides, in the end, to not rebury its human holdings. “There is no evidence,” a statement reads, “for genetic, religious, or cultural continuity of a kind that would give preferential status to the group requesting reburial.” The pagans draft a rebuttal. Proof of genetic continuity is nearly impossible to obtain: most parishes began keeping civil registers in the mid-sixteenth century, and so many have been lost to history. Religion is irrelevant: they honor all ancestral dead. And cultures change.

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“If I were a tribal elder from overseas,” the druidess once remarked, “and sought the repatriation of my great-grandfather’s bones, museums would treat me courteously, pleased to perform the political correctness expected of them. There would be no question about the validity of my claim, nor doubts about my faith. However, because I am British, asking about the bones of my ancestors, too often the curator judges my beliefs as irrational and bases their rejection upon that.”

Her comment, almost as soon as it’s made, gets pushback in the community. Surely there are ways to advance the cause without drawing a false equivalence between Britons and foreign indigenous groups, who suffered at the hands of their colonial ancestors? If paganism has any hope of becoming widely accepted, it shouldn’t be seen to abet white grievance.

These arguments are starting to falter: with every failed reburial campaign and successful foreign repatriation – in the wake of the Brexit referendum, which affirmed the pagans’ nativist wing. Now, when she speaks up, their eyes glaze over. Nuance has lost the rhetorical war.

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The last time she sees him is at the British Museum in 2018. She’s been accepted into the petrification program and asks to transform nearby; the jury, touched by their long relationship, honors this request. Before leaving

for London, she mails a statement to the local paper, pleading with the British Museum to return the bog body. If she petrifies, she hopes to become a model for other pagans – of how to achieve their goals through devotion, not distinction.

On her way to his case, she visits the gallery of *Living and Dying* to see Hoa Hakananai’a. A few months earlier, the people of Rapa Nui requested the return of this moai, which is the living face of an ancestor. British surveyors found it in 1868, buried to its shoulders in a ceremonial house. They dragged it down to the beach and put it on a raft. A Rapa Nui man who witnessed these events later tattooed them on his arm, to never forget what happened.

A delegation from Rapa Nui came to the museum a few days before her. Two men placed stone vessels on the plinth supporting the moai, filled with the red and white pigments that came off during its theft. The vessels are now gone, the moai still unadorned. She reaches out her hand, not sure what it wants to touch, but something stops her.

The Father

How does one tell the story of an overdose? What form should it take? A circle? A maelstrom? A line that stumbles and falls off the page?

In 2012, the year of the car accident, Staten Island doctors are prescribing painkillers at twice the rate of those in other boroughs in New York City. A painkiller like OxyContin is advertised to last twelve hours; his daughter comes to find that, six or seven hours in, the effects have already worn off, leaving her counting the minutes until the next pill. She gets into the habit of moving appointments up, when her prescription runs out early. Her doctor, coached by the pharmaceutical rep, understands that this isn’t the behavior of an addict. Best practice is to up the dose.

She moves home that year, and her bedroom door remains closed for most of it. Any push for her to return to college or (God forbid) get a job is met with the same answer: she’s still in pain, she needs more time to recover.

In 2013, New York launches a program to stop the overprescription of painkillers. Facing a new degree of scrutiny, her doctor ramps down her dose, and she goes into withdrawal. Her father can’t keep looking the other way, or deferring to the medical establishment. The

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epidemic has found its way home.

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During her first round of rehab, he begins to follow the local news. Every month, the place he lives finds another way to betray him. An ice-cream truck pushing oxycodone, a barbershop, the store that sells window blinds and drapery. It's like hundreds of tunnels have been dug to move product, and Staten Island is sinking.

The second time she returns from rehab, she moves in with friends on the South Shore. He offers to drive some stuff over (really, a pretense to see her), though he never makes it past the gate. She doesn't chain up the dogs. Her friends on the porch are too strung out to help. She can barely hear him over the barking; he should leave the boxes and go.

When New York tries to stop the overprescribing of painkillers, physicians and pharmacists fall into line. What this means is that patients who have developed addictions turn to the black market, where heroin sells for a fraction of the cost of opioids.

Heroin and opioids are just two forms the opium poppy can take. Another, developed by Paracelsus in the sixteenth century, was called the "stone of immortality" as if to suggest that, by relieving a person's pain, it could help them live forever. In fact, as history so often reveals – as his daughter's overdose painfully reminds – opium may prolong life but can also end it.

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He doesn't find it in the group meetings, where everyone has the same story to tell. And the control booth feels like a hiding place, which probably isn't healthy. The sound, the lights – night after night, things need to go well. The more they disappear, the more *he* disappears, the more the people on stage come alive.

It's only when he digs that he can get beneath the grief. Turns out it's not just Staten Island sinking. Maine, Ohio, West Virginia, Kentucky: the videos and articles and firsthand accounts press the limits of his hard drive. He drops into the tunnels, crawls against the flow of the pills, traces the network to its source: a squat building in Stamford, Connecticut skinned in mirrored glass – a company, Purdue Pharma, and the family behind it.

The father never thought of himself as "artsy." His work in the theater is technical,

infrastructural. But he's been to The Met. He recognizes the family's name.

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Since the [former] Sackler Wing opened in 1978, its main attraction is the Temple of Dendur, built in Egypt around the fifteenth century BC. The structure sits on an elevated platform partially framed by a reflecting pool.

Four statues line a wall of the wing, each depicting the lioness Sekhmet. The deity, like many others, is contradiction manifest. She's known as the "Lady of Pestilence" who spreads epidemics amongst those who anger her. She's also the "Lady of Life" and the patron goddess of physicians and healers, said to possess every cure imaginable. Her priests perform rites of appeasement; her worshippers offer food, drink, and mummies of cats. They whisper prayers into the feline ears, begging the bringer of plagues to stop them.

Each time he applies to petrify, he mentions this, expecting the irony to be lost on no one – that the wing, which launders the Sacklers' image, contains four reminders of the epidemic they spread. If he succeeds in petrifying, he'd become the fifth, sitting across the reflecting pool to face them.

Each time he's rejected, he receives a standard-issue email. No option to appeal, no insight into the jury's decision, no suggestion that the museum (as he suspects) has deferred to the interests of its funder.

Who is more deserving than a man who lost his child?

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He comes across it one morning on YouTube, or rather YouTube, knowing his viewing habits, pushes it on him. There, in the wing, are dozens of bodies splayed on the ground. They aren't speckled with color – this isn't petrification at work. They're playing dead, and they're shouting: "Sacklers lie, people die."

Demonstrators toss pill bottles into the reflecting pool. They unfurl a banner reading "Fund Rehab" and another, "Shame on Sackler." A woman makes a speech that articulates their goals: for the Sacklers to shift their philanthropy to treatment and harm reduction, and for museums and universities to stop taking donations from them. A guard enters the left side of the frame and grabs one of the banners. The

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dead return to the realm of the living and make their way to the exit.

The clip, dated “March 10, 2018,” was uploaded by a member of P.A.I.N.: Prescription Addiction Intervention Now. Its founder Nan Goldin is a recovering OxyContin addict. The father looks at some of her artwork and is struck by an image, from a project about sexual dependency, of her face battered and bruised by a lover. He wonders if there’s some analogy to be drawn.

Their protest is powerful, he reflects, but fleeting. Banners can be seized, pill bottles skimmed from the pool.

He watches the clip again, and it hits him: They didn’t apply to do this. Nobody sought permission, nor should he.

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Beginning in the summer of 2018, states and counties file thousands of lawsuits against the Sacklers and Purdue. The following January, The Met announces that, in light of these events, it will reevaluate its gift acceptance policy. This is when his applications are leaked – when some employee, upset at the museum for not taking a stronger stance, confirms that the petrified man in the Sackler Wing is, as many suspect, engaged in a long-term sit-in. P.A.I.N. returns to protest outside The Met in an act of solidarity.

Only a year after the father petrifies does The Met announce that it will stop accepting gifts from members of the Sackler family linked to the making of OxyContin. The museum’s CEO describes this as a “suspension,” leaving open the possibility of a return to the status quo. In the meantime, the other family members are free to give generously.

I’m not surprised that this announcement, phrased with the utmost equivocation, doesn’t rouse the father from his state. He, too, will remain in suspension – until the bringers of plagues are held to account.

My Colleague

There’s a sculpture at The Met that I try to see when I visit – in the gallery of Chinese Buddhist Art. The figure is a celestial Buddha meditating in lotus position; a tombstone explains that it was made in the seventh century using a now-obscure technique. This Buddha was sculpted in clay and wrapped with several

layers of hemp cloth, soaked in lacquer and glue. After the layers cured, openings were cut to remove the clay, and still more layers applied. Once stable, the surface was refined, finished, gilded, painted; splotches of gold and green and burnt umber are still visible today.

Sculptures like this aren’t supposed to make their technique apparent. Few would know that they’ve been hollowed out and are masquerading as solids. But the celestial Buddha at The Met has deteriorated: at some point between the seventh century and its acquisition in 1919, both hands were lost, leaving two voids.

Each time I visit, I read the tombstone. I remember how this Buddha was made, and how it came to be hollow. I try to cling to these facts; the pull of the voids is stronger. A human once lived, and this shell *must have been* built around him. It’s just about my size.

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The technique spread to Japan in the eighth century, where it had a period of popularity before wood carving became the standard in the ninth. Lacquer underwent its own shift around this time, from a tool for building hollow sculptures to a drink the practitioners of Shingon Buddhism imbibed to hollow themselves out. The practice, one of many steps in *sokushinbutsu*, readies the body for perpetual meditation. A monk could expect to spend thousands of days in preparation, restricting their diet to foraged nuts, roots, and seeds; to the toxic sap of the lacquer tree; and for about forty days, to nothing but salt water. As the body loses fat and muscle, and empties of fluids, it grows resilient to the forces of decomposition: a mummy in the making.

For the final stage of the process, a wooden box is lowered into a pit. It’s here that a monk performs *dochu nyujo* (meditation under the ground). Their only sustenance is the water from two bamboo tubes, which also supply the box with air. Each has a bell that the monk must periodically ring; when they stop, the tubes are removed and the pit is sealed, destined to be reopened, in three months and three years, to see if the body is preserved – if the monk has become a living Buddha.

Hundreds have attempted this transformation, but only twenty-four successful cases are known in Japan – most still on view at various temples. Shrunk and desiccated, they continue to meditate.

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The founder of Shingon Buddhism was a monk named Kūkai who crawled into his tomb in 835 AD to enter *dochu nyujo*. Kūkai intends to return 5.67 million years from that date, when he will usher a number of souls into nirvana. His disciples, following suit, might someday leave their state of suspended animation.

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One of the last times I visit The Met, she's sitting there – facing the celestial Buddha. It's a surprise to see her, but more than that, I'm surprised to see the bench. They began disappearing after the petrification in the Sackler Wing, as if the very act of sitting posed a threat.

I'm torn in the way I always am with colleagues from the past: the desire to say hello; the anxiety at how, after all this time, we would even know where to start. But I'm getting ahead of myself – not reading the signs. The way she stares at nothing in particular, how she keeps her hands in *dhyana mudra*: a gesture of meditation that this Buddha is known to make.

I can't imagine why my colleague was accepted by the jury – her “compelling reason” for wanting to petrify. She never struck me as anguished. Disenchanted, sure. That low-level hum of not being at home in a world that bends and twists, flexibilizes and precaritizes. If I'm being vague, it's because her story hits close to home. One could call it “Millennial,” though I think that oversimplifies the matter.

Perhaps it's a deficit of my generation that it feels easier to speak indirectly – to cloud a moment like this with reference. Seven Christians fleeing Roman persecution fell asleep in a cave around 250 AD; they awoke more than a century later in a Christian Roman Empire. Rip Van Winkle, in his twenty-year sleep, missed the American Revolution and (of greater significance to him) the final years of his awful wife's life. Does petrification give something similar to those who seek it: a fast track to a better world, or at least, to the idea of one? Is this why she applied?

Or am I wrong to assume that this pursuit is individual, not collective? A reprieve from life and not, like the living Buddhas of Japan, an ongoing vital practice? The pain of mummification was endured to alleviate our own; do the petrified, in their own manner, unburden us through their actions?

I'm not going to interrupt her to try to get

answers. I'm not sure that she (or anyone) has them.

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An elderly woman petrified on July 22, 2009. I came across my colleague about nine years later, as she made her own attempt. I've tried to tell their stories in the present tense, to restage the events of that period as if they're unfolding for the first time. To do this, we've had to keep hindsight at bay, pretending the final chapter hasn't already been written.

The early petrifications unlocked something in the public imagination: museums could do more than provide cultural edification. Whatever one's reason for wanting to petrify, they seemed to have the ability to help make that happen. But by the start of 2019, only ten people had transformed in total: eight at The Met, the Louvre, the Getty, the British Museum, and the Capitoline Museums – and two under mysterious circumstances in Salisbury, England and rural Pennsylvania. Petrification could have democratized museums, yet those who succeeded only added to their aura of exclusion. The petrified became like any rarity in the collection.

The low yield accounted, in part, for why the application programs came to an end. So too did the petrification protests: the pagan seeking the repatriation of her ancestor from the British Museum, the father who cast a glaring light on The Met's tie to the opioid epidemic. These events didn't occur in a vacuum: they lent fuel to broader activism. Seen in a cynical light, the return of the petrified to their families was, effectively, a stopgap, providing some appeasement to protestors while keeping funders and boards intact.

After the first petrification, The Met was concerned that the public would draw the worst conclusion, seeing museums as dangerous places where this could happen to you. Looking back on those years, there's something to be said for this fear. The institutions where the petrifications occurred share a singular belief: that the best place for the cultures of the world is within the museum that collects them. The force that pulls artworks and artifacts and spirits together may have finally ensnared us.

The elderly woman remains on view: the first to transform, the only to not be identified – a person with nowhere to go. The Met has expanded her tombstone to include a brief history of the petrifications. The woman is

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described as an “exemplar of a folk practice,” which emerged in the early twenty-first century and continues to defy explanation.¹

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¹
This text includes content quoted or adapted from actual events, essays, and other sources. For “The Spy and the Cleric,” see Marc Bennetts, “Russian State TV Warns ‘Traitors’ Not to Settle in England,” *The Guardian*, March 9, 2018; Mark Duell, “Kremlin Double Agent ‘Boasted to Taxi Drivers ‘I’m a Russian Spy,’” *Kissed a Black Wolf Ring and Always Insisted on Being Collected Away from His Home*,” *Daily Mail*, March 7, 2018; Nicole Pope, “An Ottoman Empire of the Mind,” January 6, 1998, <http://fgulen.com/en/press/columns-en/an-ottoman-empire-of-the-mind>, and “From ‘Parallel State’ to ‘Terrorist Organization’: Dissecting Erdoğan’s Labeling of Gülen,” *Journal of Middle Eastern Politics & Policy*, November 15, 2016. For “The Pagan,” see Jody Joy, “Looking Death in the Face,” in *Regarding the Dead: Human Remains in the British Museum*, ed. Alexandra Fletcher, Daniel Antoine, and J. D. Hill (British Museum, 2014), 10–19; “Druid Calls for Reburial of Stonehenge Human Remains,” *BBC News*, November 1, 2015; “Human Remains to Stay in Alexander Keiller Museum, Avebury,” *Rescue – The British Archaeological Trust*, June 19, 2010; and “Ceremonia Delegacion Rapa Nui Frente a Moai Hoa Hakananai’a,” December 12, 2018, video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ML6603OaHJ4>. For “The Father,” see Patrick Radden Keefe, *Empire of Pain: The Secret History of the Sackler Dynasty* (Doubleday, 2021); Sandi Bachom, “Artist NAN GOLDIN Stages #SacklerPAIN Opioid Protest Die-In @ Met Museum Sackler Wing 3/10/18,” March 10, 2018, video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=by_aE_aMiHM; and Elizabeth A. Harris, “The Met Will Turn Down Sackler Money Amid Fury Over the Opioid Crisis,” *New York Times*, May 15, 2019.