\*HED: TK   
\*BYLINE: By Dylan Hicks

With a conspiratorial and shamelessly mendacious scoundrel entering the White House and significant segments of the body politic displaying a mixture of paranoid skepticism and childish gullibility, it’s a good time to hone your skills at separating truth from lies, sense from nonsense. This edition of our quarterly puzzles-and-games column lets you do that in three formats; what might feel like procrastination is actually good citizenship.

Part One tests your comprehension of a few languages that use the Roman alphabet and are in some cases taught and occasionally learned in American high schools. In textbook style we’ve provided a narrative backdrop:

Before accepting a sinecure with the family firm, Hunter embarks on his grand tour. Garrulous but essentially monoglot,[[1]](#endnote-1) his conversations during his travels often leave him confused, particularly when he’s faced with faux amis, words that resemble English words but aren’t in fact cognates. Without using a machine translation service such as Google Translate,[[2]](#endnote-2) help Hunter match the five numbered sentences with their accurate lettered translations.

1. Dopo la baruffa, ho cercato il consiglio d’un avvocato.
2. Mit nur zehn Euro in seiner Windjacke ist er zu arm, um Kaution zu bezahlen.
3. A pesar de algunos reveses iniciales, la empresa fue un gran éxito.
4. Eu pretendo assistir ao desfile do meu telhado.
5. J’ai passé une journée épuisante avec mon ancien professeur.
6. Down to his last ten euros, he at last throws caution to the wind.
7. Her demurral cut me like a paring knife through an avocado.
8. With only ten euros in his windbreaker, he is too poor to pay bail.
9. I took an epic vacation with my elderly professor.
10. The algorithm underwent many revisions but failed to impress the chief executive.
11. The beruffled consul was an advocate for the legalization of marijuana.
12. I spent an exhausting day with my former professor.
13. He pretended to help with the filing but only created more work.
14. The empress reveled in cheers as she passed through the main exit.
15. After the tussle, I sought advice from a lawyer.
16. The pretentious assistant desecrated the temple.
17. Despite some initial setbacks, the enterprise was a great success.
18. After scaling the granite crag too incautiously, he amputated his arm with Zen-like calm.
19. I intend to watch the parade from my rooftop.
20. I passed the exam despite the doddering lecturer’s incoherent rambling.

Part Two—more sense-from-nonsense sorting—asks you to return an anagram to its source title or name. As in our past puzzles in this vein, the anagrams of course find a home for each letter in the original name or title, but in terms of punctuation they take liberties of excision and interpolation. An anagram might contain a comma, colon, apostrophe, or some other mark not found in the original name or title, or original punctuation might be missing. “Dylan’s Gym Ode,” for instance, would be an acceptable anagram for My Golden Days. In short, getting hung up on punctuation will, for once, get you nowhere, or, as Samuel Butler had it, Erewhon. In each case a colon separates the clue (left) from the anagram. An cinchy example:

For sophisticates, this Lloyd Webber musical might stir unpleasant memories: Acts

The answer there would be *Cats*. The clues below both point to the answer and attempt, just for fun and with many contortions of logic, to contextualize the anagram.

1. Seventies Watts-filmed indie classic reworked as holiday heartwarmer: Is Helper Elf OK?
2. Elliott memoir edited into art-song setting of *Anna Karenina:* Sad rail death lieder
3. Former CIA operative strolls down spooky tree-lined path: Vampire Allée
4. Restoration of Botticelli masterpiece uncovers exclamation about increased frequency of gently hit baseballs: Oh, this bunt fever!
5. Popular Italian communist, active from the late sixties through the mideighties, opts for hands-off approach with the church: Ne’er curb religion
6. Darkly erotic novella by French man of letters falls into hands of useless clairvoyant: Yoyo theft seer
7. Belgian novelist imagines political satirist O’Rourke in compromising position with stamp collector: P. J. on a supine philateist
8. In acclaimed third-season episode of this long-running sitcom, Schneider considers writing an oratorio, then changes course: Nay, a motet idea!
9. Nicks hit lends title to recent coming-of-age movie before getting scrambled into folksy sales advice: Gee, soften the vendee
10. Michigan advocate for letting citizens use public funds to pay for parochial-school tuition winds down with reality show about ag-biz brothers: TV Seed Boys

Finally, we have fifteen real and imagined musical acts, and fifteen possible songs, compositions, tracks, etc. More than five of the acts, and more than five of the songs, exist, though in several cases we didn’t know it till we started googling. As far as our inexhaustive discographical research has determined, though, in only five instances can a numbered performer be paired with a lettered song or composition to name a recording that was commercially issued, though perhaps not widely distributed, before [INSERT PUB DATE—ORIGINAL PROJECTIONS WAS EARLY FEB. OF ’17]. This chronological stipulation blocks entrants from gaming the system by hastily writing, producing, and issueing recordings that would retroactively realize our make-believe hits and misses after the publication of this puzzle contest. We acknowledge the slim but plausible chance that, in making up names and titles, we’ve stumbled on other existing, professionally issued recordings. Just prove it and we’ll accept those answers as well. In any case, you only need to submit five pairings and can format the answers in any clear way: “31. ee,” for instance, or “31=ee,” or you could spell out the artists and titles.

Oh, and in this third section of the puzzle, there’s a chance to earn bonus points! Pick one of the artist-and-composition combinations that doesn’t exist in the real world, and write no more than 100 words about this unhearable recording: a short passage of Borgesian scholarship, dialogue from the recording session, a capsule review, lyrics, a diary entry about hearing the song in the drugstore, whatever strikes you, provided the connection to the imagined recording isn’t too elusive. Our favorite submission will earn its author two bonus points and be published along with the puzzle’s answers. Bon chance!

1. The Other Knee
2. Jimmy Penrow and His Georgia Bootleggers
3. Aconitum
4. Queen Lisa Lee
5. Phable
6. Anna Brundage
7. The Artie McCall Trio
8. The Basement Wall
9. The Hightops
10. Harlon Sands
11. Sergeant Coleslaw and the Architects of Groove
12. Mighty Tiger
13. Muhal Richard Abrams
14. Desk
15. The Dubs
16. Don’t Ask Me to Be Lonely
17. Fresh Wind
18. When Peonies Bloom in Winter
19. Fafca
20. Plaid Oscillator
21. Troubles Coming In
22. May I Help You (Find Someone to Love)?
23. I’m a Pioneer
24. Can’t Stay at Home
25. Jackal of Gehenna
26. Going, Going
27. No Shorts
28. Distension (Jazz Step Mix)
29. I’m Not That Slow
30. Barry’s Thing

1. Except for some poorly remembered college Spanish, I’m monoglot myself, so thanks to Luisa Brandão, Lizzie Davis, John Domini, Matthias Heimann, Justin Morse, Sean Smuda, and Erika Stevens for checking and often correcting my translations. Any mistakes, of course, are mine. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Of course we can’t control how you come up with the answers. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)