Inside the 29 January edition

Saudi Arabia's age of anxiety; cold welcome for Europe's new refugees; Freud comes back into fashion

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Few places are as contradictory as Saudi Arabia. A staunch Middle Eastern ally of the US and the west, but also the birthplace of 15 of the 19 hijackers who committed the 9/11 attacks. A place where unimaginable wealth rubs up against grinding poverty, and where medieval religious punishments take place beneath the cover of glittering cityscapes.

But as oil revenues plunge and Middle East security deteriorates, Saudi Arabia is at crossroads. The Guardian's Middle East editor Ian Black has filed a series of dispatches from Riyadh, asking whether the ruling al-Saud family is willing or able to meet the growing demands of the Islamic kingdom's people. That's our cover story this week, and you can read much more in our special reports inside the issue.

Europe has had a generally mild winter so far this year, but temperatures plummeted last weekend, highlighting the plight of thousands of refugees continuing to travel north. As the EU agonises over border controls, the Observer's Tracy McVeigh finds bleak conditions and little hope in the freezing refugee camps of Serbia.

We visit Flint, Michigan, where a water pollution crisis is ruining the lives of thousands of families. From China, the imprisonment of a young legal assistant illustrates a new severity in the government's crackdown on human rights. And there's lighter news from Japan, which has been celebrating its first international sumo wrestling champion for several years.

Then the Observer's Ed Vulliamy visits Peru, where the liberal values of a largely indigenous community seem to be set against a nation drifting towards the right.

It was a busy week in UK news, where a judge-led inquiry concluded that Vladimir Putin "probably" ordered the 2006 killing of the former Russian spy Alexander Litvinenko in London. There's also a report from Aberdeen, once the oil boom town of Britain, where food bank use is rocketing.

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The Italian prime minister Matteo Renzi writes on our Comment pages about the simplification of Italy's political processes, and how he hopes the EU can follow suit. In Finance, Larry Elliott considers the economic implications of a fourth industrial revolution for the world.

In our long read Review section, Oliver Burkeman settles back on the couch and charts a revival for Freudian psychoanalysis. We catch up with the new lives of Ukrainian refugees, insect farmers in Ghana, and as an antidote to all that grit there's a Le Monde homage to the colour pink, which is apparently back in fashion.

Discovery looks at truth and fiction around healthy eating practices, while Books considers how our first culinary tastes are formed. Culture meets the young French fashion designer

Olivier Rousteing, and we hear of a digital reboot for the long-running children's TV show Sesame Street.