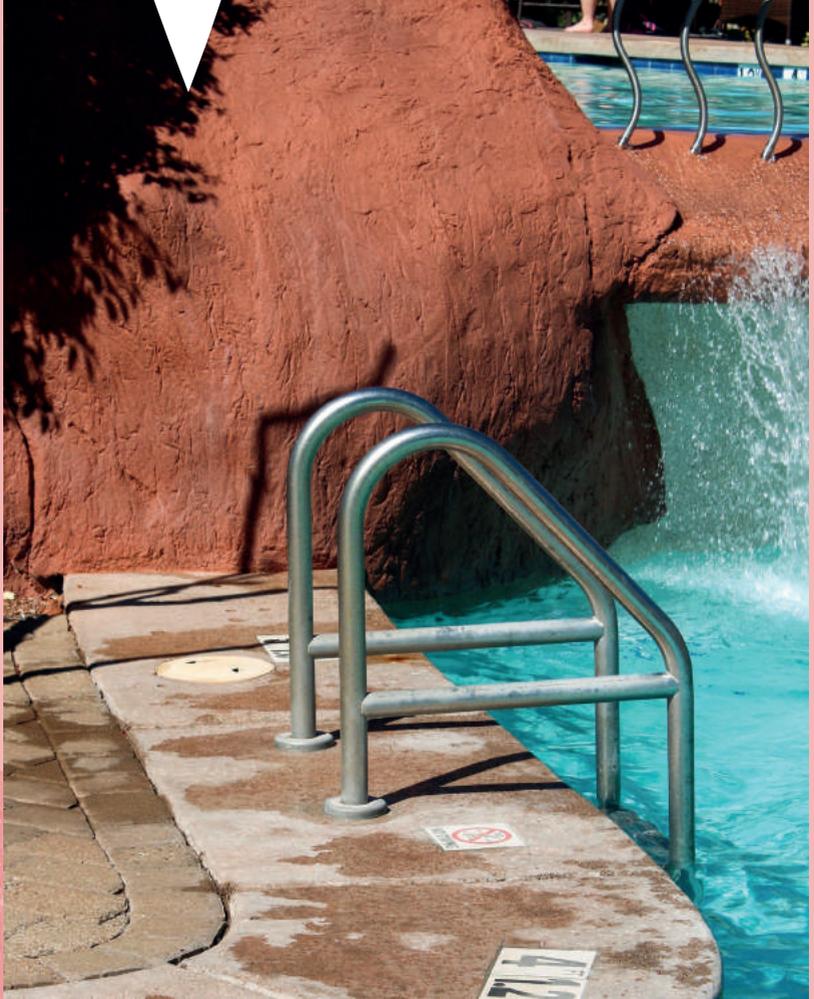


SAVAGE



CEMENT

ISSUE #11

An outsider in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, John the Savage observes the world around him with eyes informed by the works of Shakespeare. Like John, SAVAGE Journal looks to art, literature and philosophy to enrich our perception of modern life.

"Listen, I beg of you",
cried the SAVAGE...
"Lend me your ears."

Cover image—
TARA MONJAZEB
Untitled

savageonline.co.uk
@savagejournal

EDITORS' NOTE

We wanted this issue to be weighty. We wanted to think about things that are solid, stable. Things bonded and established, whether that is a good or a bad thing. We took inspiration from the giant concrete blocks that feel overwhelming, but also grounding in a city that is constantly changing. Urban space can be difficult to inhabit, especially when you're young and always on the move. We want to provide a space to articulate those difficulties, but also to celebrate them, and consider those things which make the city vital and joyful too.

Cities run all the way through this issue. How Paris, with its compact centre and sprawling banlieues, can mould or dissolve an adolescent identity is central to **Shanti Giovanetti-Singh's** reflection on Celine Sciamma's *Girlhood*. **Sophia Cano** considers New York and its portrayal on film across the decades, lending itself to narratives of disenfranchisement, violence, and hardship. **Gabriela Fowler** traces her trajectory from the warm streets of Sydney, Australia to the gleaming damp of London, finding home in novels which are as much steeped in those two cities as the places themselves. Cement has looked at how difficult it is to fix yourself in a space as huge and heavy as a city, but where everything is somehow still changing wherever you look.

Whether it is fixed or fluid, Cement of-

fers contemplations of identity. We are at an odd cross-roads, with the rise of identity politics coinciding with an understanding that identity is unstable. **Georgia Good** asks what danger might arise if we begin to ignore our foundations and become lone fish in this sea of identity, whilst **Daisy Avis-Ward's** questions if we can ever move past our roots at all — are our brains hardwired in our youth? **Zane Khan** considers the struggle for the children of immigrants to declare a personal identity when faced with conflicting cultures and an anxiety to feel a sense of belonging. And with 46% of UK students experiencing loneliness at university, the desire to belong is also reflected in *Our Voices*, sharing personal testimonies of feelings of isolation.

But beyond the personal picture, what happens to collective understandings of identity? **Sophie Cundall** takes an optimistic view, looking at the increasing acceptance of LGBTQI+ identities in schools. **Anna Lamche** explores the impact of disease on communities, how anxiety and prejudice can fracture and divide us, but may also provide insight into what unites us. Division and separation also come to the forefront in **Tomi Hafferty's** reflection on Hernan Zin's *Born in Syria*, challenging the idea of absolute borders and appealing to empathy and humanity in the face of struggle and suffering.

We hope that this edition provides some solidarity in navigating a world in

which meaning and identity are slippery and the cities we live in are vast and contradictory. We thank all our contributors, editors, curators and designers for their hard work, and hope that reading Cement is as eclectic and rewarding an experience as bringing it together has been.

With love,
Simran, Alice,
 and **Selma**

KIMBERLEY BEACH
 The Architect



CONTENTS

	Editor's Note	
	Table of Contents	
READ	Jago Lynch—As Gods	4
FILM	Sophia Cano—Concrete Jungle	6
MUSIC	Hannah Galbraith—Keys to the City	9
ART	Anna Mladensteva—Immaterial Consumption	11
LITERATURE	Gabriella Fowler—Where The Heart Is	14
	OUR VOICES	17
READ	Ivy Gao—The Bad Thing	22
FILM	Shanti Giovanetti-Singh—Girlz n the Hood	23
OUR THOUGHTS	Sophie Cundall—Inequality Is Not an Option	25
LITERATURE	Emily Grant—Shifting Selves	28
THEATRE	Zane Khan— <i>East is East</i> and the Establishment of British Asian Theatre	30
READ	Dawid Akala—Set	32
MUSIC	Daisy Avis-Ward—Music: A Neurological Wormhole	34
THEATRE	Thea Rickard—Been There, Done That	36
OUR THOUGHTS	Georgia Good—What are the Roots That Clutch?	38
READ	Florence Wildblood—03/20/20, 214 to parliament hill, kings' cross	40
LITERATURE	Selma Rezgui—Ecstasy and Ekphrasis	41
ART	Isabella Jakobsen—Concrete Block Living	44
THEATRE	Roni Mevorach—Such Stuff as Dreams are Made From	46
LOOK	Jean Watt & Hannah Gorlizki—Interview with Jacob Fisk	48
MUSIC	Daniel Jacobson—The Bottom of Everything	50
ART	Yoshiyuki Ishikawa—Ceci N'est Pas Un Banc	52
OUR THOUGHTS	Anna Lamche—Notes from an Outbreak	55
FILM	Tomi Haffety— <i>Born in Syria</i> and The Inescapable Border	57
READ	Benjamin Campbell—Caedo	59

AS GODS

READ

JAGO LYNCH

Southwark. All slake and silt.

Striplings stuck Thameside sit
Splitting solid air to unscale mermaids.

A pair part the dust and
Slide together.

That first touch
Like a measured abseil,
Until the rope falls away
and they
Crack atoms under tablelight.

In a small room their naked bodies set
Like cement —

Grey-white
Footprinted.
Cleaved and
Jigsawed —

Later - though when she cannot know -
They'll cleave again,
Their eyes from each other.
Does she dare look
At his rotting body?

She did once!



SOPHIA LOURDES-KNIGHT
Untitled

CONCRETE JUNGLE

SOPHIA CANO contemplates New York City in film

Whether or not you have visited New York City, it is easy to feel as though you know it intimately – the steam, the grit, the smells and sounds. New York is both an inaccessible fantasyland of Hollywood glamour, and a familiar face all at once, due, in part, to its overwhelming presence in the cinematic canon. By focusing on three genres which have come to feel at home in New York City – crime drama, Wall Street satire and disaster films – we can learn a lot about people’s feelings and preconceptions about life in a big city.

The city is lonely, often maddeningly so. This sentiment is reflected heavily in Martin Scorsese films, *Taxi Driver* (1976) and *The King of Comedy* (1982) – and later echoed in Todd Phillips’ *Joker* (2019). In these crime films featuring neurotic male protagonists at the helm, the city is depicted as heaving with people and yet our main characters are achingly alone, exacerbating their mental illness and respective obsessions to a violent extent. They sit in cramped apartments talking emphatically to imaginary audiences – the unhinged Travis Bickle of *Taxi Driver* angrily threatens his own reflection in the mirror, ‘You talking to me?’. However, these depictions of the isolation in the city are sometimes deemed to be a little too real, with many news outlets speculating that *Joker* protagonist Arthur

Fleck’s violent rejection of the society that failed him may inspire other young men to replicate his actions. The fact that characters such as Arthur Fleck are seen as reflections of real people shows that these films are often not treated simply as films, but as windows into the grim realities of city life.

The city is consumerism embodied. New York is a figurehead for the American Dream and a global centre for economic commerce, making it susceptible to the preconception that it is a place full of money-obsessed people. Mary Harron’s *American Psycho* (2000) provides an extreme representation of the horrors of rampant consumerism in New York by interspersing the protagonist Patrick Bateman’s shallow, expensive lifestyle with acts of literal ‘horror’ – namely, violent, cold-blooded murder. Satire and horror are interlaced into scenes of gruesome murder in order to ridicule the real-life urban professionals that Bateman represents. Their New York ‘yuppie’ lifestyle of excessive wealth is clearly satirised: Bateman and his Wall Street co-workers flaunt their near-identical business cards with pompous arrogance and obsess over getting a reservation at New York’s most exclusive restaurant, ‘Dorsia’, to a laughable extent. Similarly, in Martin Scorsese’s *The Wolf of Wall Street* (2013), this lifestyle is condemned as corrupt stockbroker Jordan Belfort’s dizzying hedonism and relentless greed lead to his eventual downfall. Films

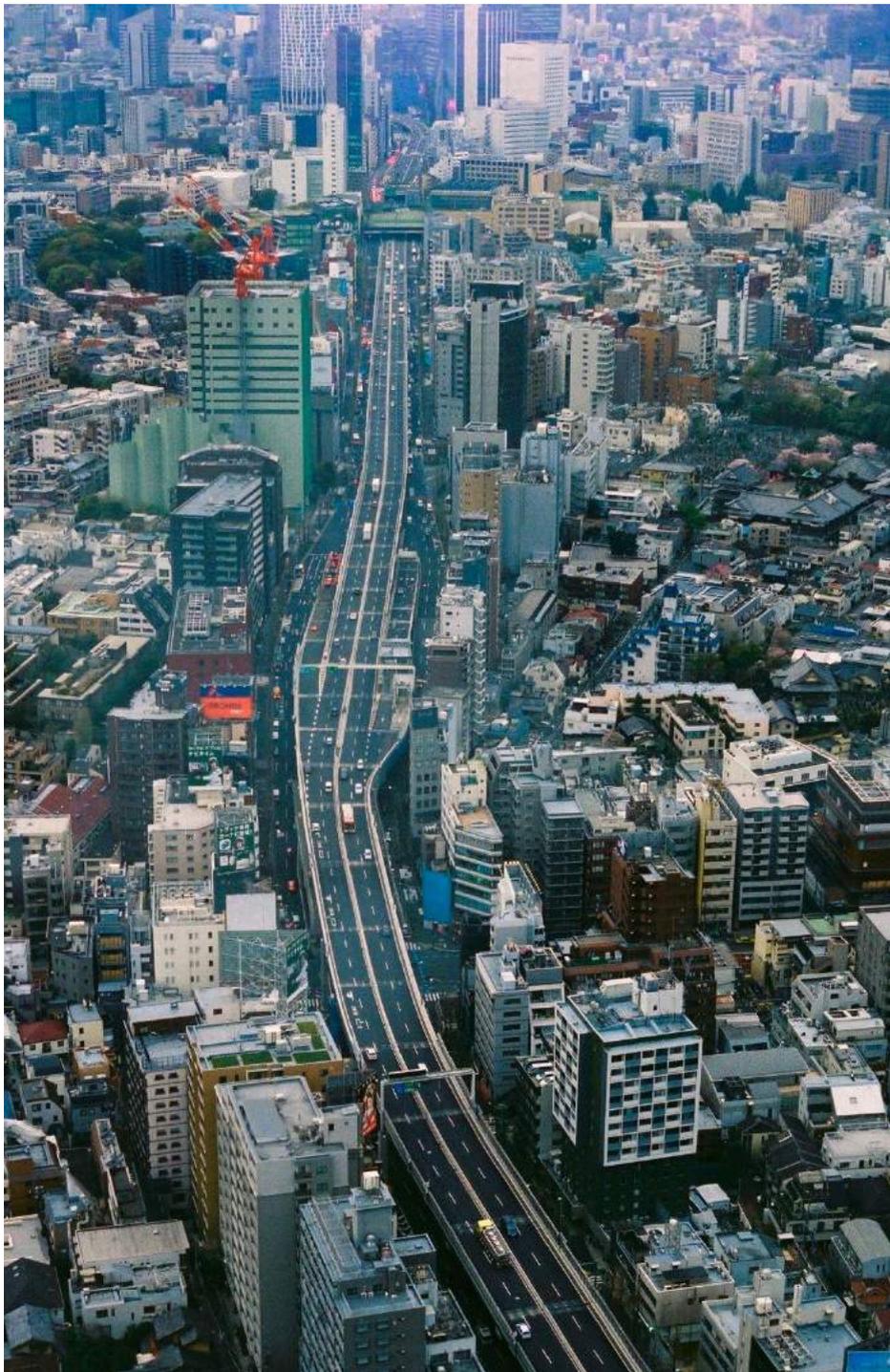
FILM

such as these use New York City’s Wall Street as a backdrop for scenes of excessive wealth and portray the city as a breeding ground for decadent immorality.

New York is regarded as a symbol of Western civilisation and progress, beloved worldwide as a hub of culture and modernity. Why is it then, that we as audience members love to watch it crumble? Much like the Romantic era art and literature which depicted ‘the sublime’ – conceptualised by Edmund Burke as awe-inspiring scenes which cause feelings of astonishment and terror – disaster films set in New York cause feelings of horror-struck amazement in the viewer as they watch the city get destroyed before their eyes.

Films such as John Carpenter’s *Escape from New York* (1981) and Roland Emmerich’s *Independence Day* (1996) provide us with a terrifying yet satisfying juxtaposition between our idea of New York as a perfectly ordered city of grids and their depictions of the city dissolved into chaos and mass-destruction. New York’s iconic monuments have huge symbolic significance, such as the Statue of Liberty’s heavy associations with freedom, traditionally a symbol of hope to oncoming immigrants. So, when it is seen destroyed – such as in Matt Reeve’s *Cloverfield* (2008) when Lady Liberty’s decapitated head can be seen crashing into the street – these scenes have a particularly emotive response. Perhaps audiences’ willingness to see New York City destroyed time and time again is testament to Burke’s exaltation of the sublime as the cause of the ‘most powerful of passions’, proving that to this day the most dangerous and terrifying scenes are the ones we as a society find most beautiful.

Crime drama, Wall Street satire and disaster: these genres have become embedded in our ideas of New York City, and in our preconceptions of cities in their entirety. Perhaps it is true: cities are isolating, maddening and consumerist, and though they are havens of culture, we love to see them in ruins. Herein lies the beauty of New York – through these pessimistic works of cinema, it allows itself to be deprecated, holding a mirror up to itself and candidly displaying its ugly flaws.



HANNAH GORLIZKI
Untitled

KEYS

TO

MUSIC

THE

CITY

HANNAH GALBRAITH reviews Dean Blunt's new album, a discordant sketch of London.

'In the city, in the city, in the city': spoken in a deep East London drawl, these words, like an incantation, open '419/Nervous Freestyle' from Babyfather's album 419. Sirens, car engines, conversations and lovers' disputes: the sounds of London are so palpable throughout the album that the 'city' need not be named. At times harsh and violent - like the machine gun fire which tears through '419/Nervous Freestyle' - and other times playful, such as when Babyfather pleads 'No more parties in E8, please girl no more parties in E8' on 'Sting Freestyle'. 419 conjures a shapeshifting, sardonic portrait of London.

The album sounds like the trailing end of a night out — in a version of London never wholly familiar. Babyfather fragments and subverts the sounds of the city, mingling the industrial sounds of grime with elements of hip-hop, dub, R&B, rock and punk. Genre, however, isn't something Babyfather, also known as Dean Blunt, commits to, as he explains in an NPR interview: 'It's just that I consume, and I get really put off by people that are too conscious of genre.' This 'consum[ption]' - of the

music, people and sounds of the city — lies at the core of Babyfather's ethos: a repurposing and reshaping of his environment into undefinable musical forms.

While its sound is ever-shifting, *419* is unmistakably rooted in London sub-culture and underground music. Although never quite celebratory — Dean Blunt's aversion to national pride prevents it — the album does reveal a genuine investment in, and complicated love for, London. Babyfather features elaborate characters throughout the album, who speak on pride, partying, love and violence. Audio clips of arguments and conversation often interrupt the tracks, disrupting yet at the same time defining the album's flow. It's not an easy listen — 'Pressure', for example, unfolds over discordant static, but the album's polyphony feels honest, reflecting the emotional discordancy of austerity Britain. As Dean Blunt once said of his music, 'Whether it's 'good', it's not the point, it's the truth.'

However, any suspicion that Dean Blunt is being sincere should be immediately distrusted. He is a musician notorious for deception and obscurity, elevating artifice to art — such as the 2016

exhibition he curated which featured a single framed stock photo accompanied by a soundtrack of piercing white noise. Similarly, *419* is cloaked in layers of satire, starting with the cover art: a large stack of money on top of a Nike shoe box. The photo seems to have been taken on a phone in a darkened room — an ironically low-budget display of wealth, perhaps mocking the hubris of a stereotypical grime artist, a persona he adopts and parodies throughout *419*. The earlier Babyfather album cover, *BBF: Hosted By DJ Escrow*, instead features a Union Jack-covered hoverboard overlooking a corporate, glassy London skyline as its cover art. This sense of dystopian unreality informs the music: dark and industrial with a veneer of drama, expressed through soaring strings and harps. In a *CRACK Magazine* interview between Dean Blunt and the musician GAIKA, the two lament the city's decline:

G: [...] London is dystopian now!
There's cameras everywhere!
I'm not making it up.

DB: It's the end of the world,
really man.

While Dean Blunt's real relationship to London cannot be ascertained through the layers of performance and irony in his work, the tension we hear in the music implies a complex, fluid view of the city. In one interview, he expresses admiration for the UK music scene: 'I am really, really into sounds of the UK and I'm really into the darkness and the moodiness of it that no one else can do.' In another interview, his relationship with Britain is one of detachment: "I'm not British. I'm not British at all." Indeed, Dean Blunt isn't tied down to any one place — he's worked in

Berlin, Moscow and Atlanta, among other cities. His mercurial presence exists largely in the digital, rather than physical, world. He drops anonymous albums on Youtube or Soundcloud, like his latest release, *ZUSHI*, before dematerialising again.

Despite Babyfather's insistence that his music has no commitment to a particular place or theme, London remains embedded in his musical voice and artistic method. Distorted and reimagined, 'the city' reverberates through Dean Blunt's discography, which he leaves the listener to decrypt. On the track 'War Report', Dean Blunt raps: 'I'm not an idiot, but I ain't got the keys to the city yet'. The listener feels a similar sense of alienation. Dean Blunt ultimately withholds the 'keys to the city' — giving us only a glimpse of his London through the music.



CHRISTINA-SHELAGH MONGELLI
Digital Fossil Series: Glas...screens

(IM) MATERIAL

ART **CONSUMPTION**

ANNA MLADENSTEVA explores why we are ignoring the growing problem of tech-waste.

Land, once seen as an arena for impressive urban projects, now brims with decaying remnants of our technological waste. Cement has been used in early 20th century modernist architecture, as well as for paving in the urban setting; however, its material composition has rarely been subject to decomposition. Chemical compounds such as alumina and silica are used in cement

mining in the forms of sand and clay — materials also essential for making the glass used in smartphones. While smartphone screens offer a vastly immaterial experience, cement results in spaces of imposing physical presence. Take, for example, Le Corbusier's 1928 Villa Savoye, which used reinforced concrete to guide human presence through ramps and supporting col-

umns, his work manipulating concrete's imposing materiality. Why is there such a dissonance between the urban space and cyberspace, when they are facilitated by the same materials? Partly, I believe that this stems from an inability to face the way we approach technological waste.

Cement has proven to be a frequent witness to consumers in architectural and urban settings. When industry itself became a valid artistic institution — as exemplified by the German Bauhaus movement and their collaborations with the general electricity company AEG — the status of the viewer as a consumer was solidified. When this encounter is exported onto the consumption of digital art, and more specifically net art, the material witness is overshadowed by the virtual one. Artists working with digital media often play with the idea of immateriality — churning forms that have an outline but no body due to glitching, or articulating the assumption that their artistic process is secondary to the concrete materiality of the physical artwork. Dylan Bernard, known as Dylan de Topecka or @sirnard on Instagram, is one such net artist, whose art we consume through the technological interface of a smartphone. Clothed behind it is the seemingly (im) material reservoir in the form of a wide area network — the Internet — that in reality consists of ventilated, aluminium server racks.

This reservoir, coupled with the physical absence of materials and witnesses, is spat out onto Topecka's Instagram grid. The artist rejects the inefficiency of the physical gallery space in favour of Instagram's standardised software and clean-cut white borders. Even the actual moment of discovery is

contained within a monotonous scroll, broken apart at times by the dregs of advertising algorithms. What is contained within the digital frame are psychedelic landscapes, often reworked from existing videos or sampled from pop culture. {VISION}×20×20×{VISION} (2020) is a looped twenty-second clip that disfigures the artist's own face by superimposing a scaled down version of his cropped head, the background composed by repetition of the central image. What would normally be a portrait therefore becomes a ghostly composition, with the viewer left searching for any remnants of a recognisable physical entity. The original audio of the artist saying '2020 vision' is distorted to the point of resembling pulsating vibrations rather than clear syntax.

The alienating landscapes and algorithms of Instagram restrict consumption, as advertising technologies transform the viewer from consumer into product. Cookies, as enticing as they sound, are clothed under semi-mandatory terms and conditions that collect and eventually sell heaps of personal data, turning immaterial consumption habits into a marketable commodity for advertisers. The onscreen image, too, intrinsically lacks any materiality, able to totally disappear in a single click.

This immateriality is taken for granted, and eventually manifests in the technological landfills that are plotted globally. The fact that only 20% of e-waste is recycled on average begs us to reconsider our immaterial analysis. How can something so immaterial generate a total of \$62.5 billion worth of value in its afterlife? General technological illiteracy overlooks the processing demands that we contribute to by loading Instagram posts, and the presence of

physical servers fulfilling that demand that are plotted on land and sea. How can we dispose of something that we never really consumed? There is widespread ignorance of our alarming disposal. Topecka's art attempts to articulate the ambiguous position of the contemporary digital viewer through a mismatch of audio and visual not-quite commodities.

We ought to conceptualise Topecka's psychedelic landscapes as not immaterial or transcendent but as a malfunctioning, glitching waste apparatus that aches to resurrect the early 20th century status of the consumer. Cement has long been challenged by more sustainable methods of mining, yet when its composition reappears in the silica and alumina of smartphone technology it is dismissed. Let us instead imagine Le Corbusier entering digital space and laying his reinforced concrete there, marrying cement and smartphones in a material love affair. We must then embrace our role as a consumer so that we can soberly face our disposal habits.

TW: fascism, Nazism, anti-Semitism

SAVAGE would like to note that Le Corbusier has been accused of supporting Italian Fascism and Nazism and expressing anti-Semitic views in private correspondence. While these facts were not directly relevant to the article, we believe them too important not to mention.

WHERE THE HEART IS LITERATURE

GABRIELA FOWLER charts her move across the world, the particular loneliness of London, and finding glimmers of home between the pages of a book

There's a specific kind of loneliness that characterises moving to the other side of the world. Door-to-door, the solitary journey took just over thirty-three hours. From a sun-drenched Sydney lane, with cement so hot it burns your post-beach bare feet, to the glistening wet rush of English streets, icy and isolating. My only companion was a well-worn copy of Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*, which had taken me to London countless times in my mind.

For my parents, the thirty-three hours would have seen two lunches, two breakfasts, one dinner. Chopping vegetables, washing salad leaves, mixing garlic and lemon juice and olive oil. The sizzle of salmon in a pan. Consumed together, cleaned up, the familiar hum of the dishwasher as they turned off the

lights at night.

The hum that I became familiar with was that of the A380. Qantas flight QF1 Sydney to London, also known as the Kangaroo Route. From the air, my neighbourhood was reduced to a tiny toy town, a blue-grey smudge of cement and glass that quickly disappeared. My sustenance consisted of plastic cups of orange juice, tiny packages of cheese and biscuits and two sleeping pills. All tumbled around mercilessly in my body as I hurtled through space and time far away from everything I called home.

It takes a while for your mind and your heart to catch up to your body. It's an untethered feeling, a floating around, not quite here, not quite there. Jetlag, initially, but it lingers past the first bleary-eyed week. Your phone becomes the only concrete link to your previous life. Rolling over in the morning, squinting half-awake at a screen filled with a day's worth of notifications. Messages organising a dusk swim at the beach that's now 17,000 kilometres away. A midnight missed call from a boy who doesn't realise you're as far from his bed as you could possibly be. Then, within a few hours, silence. Everyone says goodnight, just as your day begins.

One day I was particularly struck with how alone I was. I'd overslept, missing the brief communicative window I'd come to rely on. Instead of plunging into friends' Instagram stories of backyard cricket and afternoon beers, I leant into the loneliness. I turned my phone off, shoving it to the bottom of my bag, and wandered around my new neighbourhood. Of course, before long, I found myself in a bookshop.

The smell of freshly bound pages and

the excitement of new stories is the same no matter where you are in the world. By chance, I picked up Trent Dalton's *Boy Swallows Universe*, and the words on the book jacket stood out starkly, "The best Australian novel in more than a decade." My homesickness made me purchase it immediately. On impulse at the checkout, I bought a copy of a picture book that was receiving rave reviews, then made my way to Regent's Park.

The clouds had cleared, and it was one of those sparkling, crisp afternoons in London that tricks you into thinking that spring is just around the corner. I devoured the novel hungrily, soaking up the references to beaches I knew, to words that were met with laughter whenever I uttered them to new European acquaintances. The sun warmed my face, and I closed my eyes, pretending I was on Bribie Island, eating fish and chips. Yet instead of feeling closer to home, it made me feel even further away.

I closed the novel and turned to the picture book, Charlie Mackesy's *The Boy, The Mole, The Fox and The Horse*. I flipped open to a random page. There was a watercolour illustration of a boy sitting on a tree branch, looking out at a park not unlike the one that lay before me. He was seated between a fox and a mole.

The words on the page hit me hard:

"Sometimes I feel lost," said the boy.
"Me too," said the mole, "but we love you, and love brings you home."

I turned my phone on to take a photo of the page, thinking I'd send it to two friends I'd made on my second day

in London. I didn't expect to see any messages, as it was still hours until my Sydney life would stir with the new day. But two notifications lit up, texts from the new friends I'd been thinking of. Turns out, they'd been thinking of me too.

In *Boy Swallows Universe*, Slim Halliday, an infamous Aussie criminal who escapes from gaol says, "reading is the greatest escape there is." But if you've already made your great escape, sometimes you don't need to be taken anywhere else. Sometimes you need to stay here, to be grounded in the present and to realise that before long, you won't need any book to bring you home.

MOZA ALMATROOSHI
The Journey to Salsabeel





TARA MONJAZEB
Idaho Cabin

OUR

VOICES

Our Voices is a space for students at UCL to write freely about their experiences. We aim to provide a platform where students can tell their stories and be heard, drawing attention to issues many of us face, despite perhaps feeling alone. In sharing these testimonies, we aim to raise awareness and help foster an environment of openness, understanding, and support at UCL. For this edition, we have reached out to students to share their experiences of loneliness: positive, negative, ambivalent, whatever they may be.

Many people at university experience loneliness. The largest survey of loneliness to date found that 40% of 16 to 24-year olds often feel lonely, more than any other age group.¹ Young renters who feel a weaker sense of belonging to their neighbourhood are even more likely to feel lonely.²

Loneliness can be in isolation or surrounded by others; a cause for depression and a driver of creativity.

1 BBC Radio 4 and Wellcome Trust, 2018. 'Loneliness Experiment'.

2 Office for National Statistics, 2018. 'Loneliness - What characteristics and circumstances are associated with feeling lonely?'

As students in a busy city with constant access to social media, loneliness can take a particular shape. While it is different for everyone, it can often be a source of shame – particularly when it feels like a failure to achieve the elusive 'university experience'. Olivia Laing wrote that "So much of the pain of loneliness is to do with concealment, with being compelled to hide vulnerability".³ Our hope is to draw attention to the prevalence of loneliness, and to provide a platform to share our vulnerabilities. We may be surprised how many others feel the same.

3 Olivia Laing, 2016. 'The Lonely City'.

Enitsirhc had the habit of saying 'see you' to people he knew he would never see again. He saw this as a problem that he had trouble solving, but then again saw himself as the problem for seeing this as a problem, or for that matter, found a problem with finding a problem about finding a problem. But why did he want to find a problem in the first place? What was he trying to solve?

Mind loops like these were not uncommon for Enitsirhc. Like peeling an onion with no core, Enitsirhc's emotional

charges were unending as he got such-bad words out of his mouth. As a result, Enitsirhc found himself combing through the recesses of cyberspace, releasing thoughts on all of social media. But such foolish outpourings simply went unnoticed and floated adrift on the internet waters.

His outpourings were like messages cast out in individual bottles – all intimate and personal. Sometimes, Enitsirhc could no longer suppress his desire to connect that he would be seen in his room furiously punching letters on his keyboard. Like playing a piano, Enitsirhc darted his fingers dexterously across the keyboard surface. His paragraphs were like specific melodies; they retained his moods and anxieties.

On angry days, Enitsirhc's posts would appear something like this:

I shall assassinate with my strength, power, and hatred for LIFE! Life, I will never understand. I will never be satisfied. I am so greedy and I will smash them all. I want to DO something NOW-OOWWWWWWW SMASHHHHHH IT ALL. what am I blabbering about????!?!?!?

On days when he had no one to share his brimming energy with, his posts might look like this:

BURNING THOROUGH THE SKYYYYY TWO HUNDRED DEGREEES THAT'S WHY THEY CALL ME MISTER FAREN-HEIIIEEGHGHGHGHT I WANNA MAKE ASSUPERSONIC MANOUTTA YUYOIU!!! DON'T STOP ME NOWWWW

These intense emotional experiences are not to be faced alone. Fortunately, there are remedies, and relying on the silent viewership of cyberfriends are

one of the quickest and easiest ways to self-soothe.

Just like Enitsirhc, I yearned to connect with people in real time, but it was only people's lives that I was connected to. It broke my heart when I caught myself doing nothing but busily poking my nose into people's lives, digging and scavenging through every crevice of social media. And when I multiplied this sad feeling with the millions of people furiously posting, swiping and tapping on their screens right now, my heart wrenched.

I could slip off cyberspace, and I'll slip off the pages of everyone's lives. With the quiet flick of a switch, out, out! I shall simply cease.

CHRISTINE

It is possible to feel lonely even in a crowded room, in a loud group. Every strobe-lit club I visited in Fresher's Week may as well have been an empty building. Desperate to feel involved and like I fit in, I found myself rocketing from drinking minimally to joining with every round of shots possible. It felt like the only way to build a friendship was over drinking games and vomiting in the middle of the night, and so I just tagged along with that pattern.

It took a toll, unsurprisingly. If the loneliness and desperation of wanting to be part of something was bad during the nights out, the next morning was always horrifically worse. In our delicate states, we were subdued, not able

or willing to speak to each other, and without the buffer of vodka and gin, we faded into being seven strangers with very little in common other than sharing a kitchen.

I have not spoken to my first-year flat-mates since I moved out of halls. I will like their Instagram posts, I will smile and nod in recognition if we pass each other around campus, but it is rare to even indulge in small talk, let alone venture into a real conversation. Anything that resembled closeness was built on a hollow foundation of empty bottles, and quickly collapsed as soon as we packed up our rooms and left.

I don't think that at the time I knew I was lonely. I thought that this is what having friends is like as an adult, as a university student. It is drinking all night and being silent all day, clinging to toxic relationships, just to avoid feeling entirely untethered from the world, lost in a new and too-big city. Learning that friends who are only friends when you are blind drunk are not actually very good friends was an uncomfortable revelation. I wish I could go back to my eighteen-year old self and shake her. I wish I could tell her over and over again: This is not what having friends feels like.

ANONYMOUS

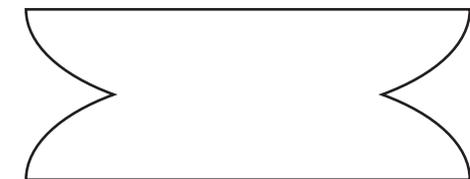


Have you ever stopped being friends with someone but you still have to see them regularly? Maybe they did something or you did something, or

you just drifted apart. It's not particularly frosty or even awkward between you, but it's just not what it used to be. Pretty normal, especially as you come towards the end of your time at uni. But it's strange... you can see them talking to someone else but you don't feel like you can go over and join in anymore. Maybe you sit on your own or stand in the corner. And at first, it's excruciating and you want to run away and hide.

Everyone said uni would be the best time of your life. It has been great, and sometimes it's been amazing. But I've found there is also a lot of getting used to spending time by yourself, despite being surrounded by so many people. No one ever really told you that at the open day... But it's not so bad, really. I think learning to be okay even when you're alone is what 'learning how to be independent' really means (and everyone does tell you you'll become more independent). And hey, maybe it's good that uni had plenty of lonely downs as well as ups – I don't really want the best bit of my life to be over by the time I'm 21...

IMOGEN



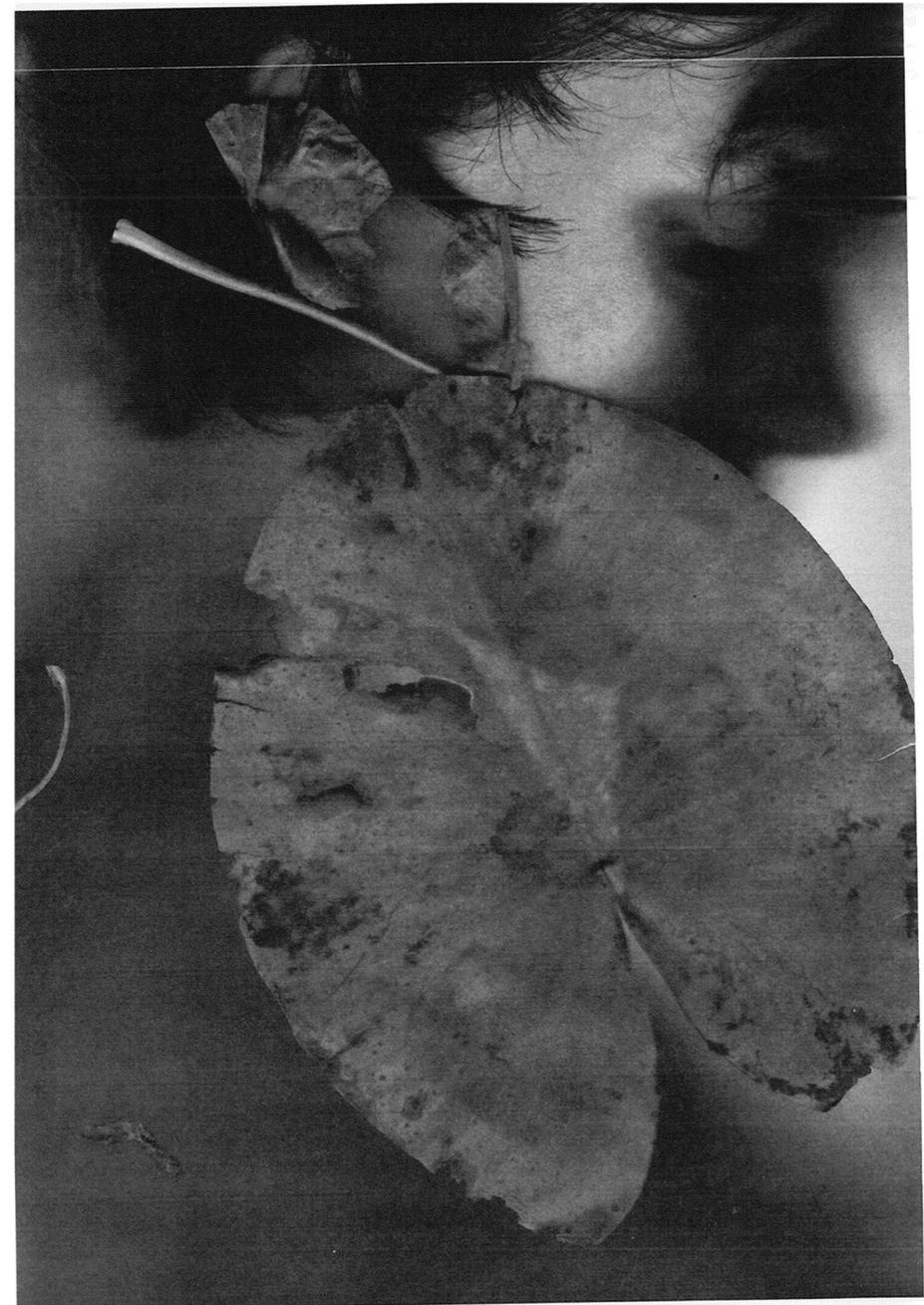
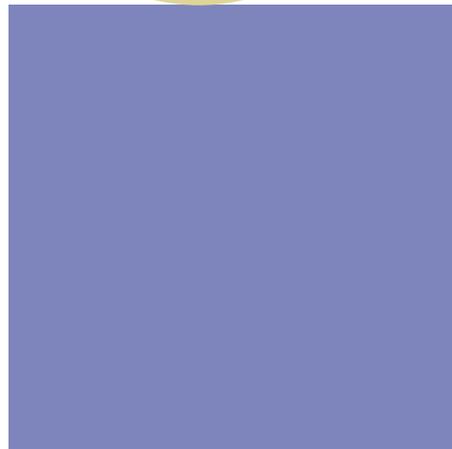
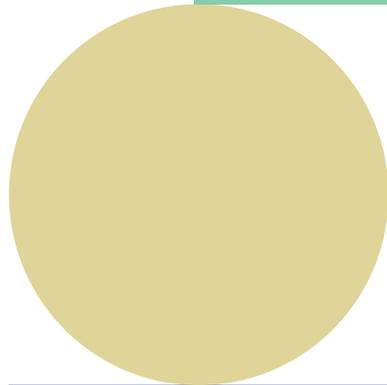
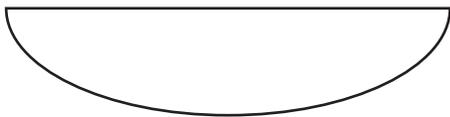
I only feel lonely in the afternoons.

I am incapable of spending an afternoon alone in my flat without feeling crushed by the weight of the world and my own inadequacy. I have no idea why this is. The morning is kind to me. I wake up, I make tea. If I have somewhere to go, I go there. If I have something to do, I do it. The world often seems bright and full

of possibility and I feel like a person in it who can stride out into the city or settle at my desk and do important things that will make a difference.

After 2pm the afternoon appears, and every time I am surprised by how vast it is, how empty. I become anxious and lethargic. In the afternoon, my head begins to throb. It is worse in winter, when the weakening light heralds this dreaded time of day and traps me in my gloom. If I am at home in the afternoon I try and do the things that make the mornings. I make tea, I try to read. Sometimes I can catch myself before I get to a point of no return and make plans, go for a walk. This helps. Often I don't think to do this until it's too late, and I'm stuck. In the afternoons I become convinced that I am the worst person in the world. I know this is not true, lots of people are worse than me, but in the afternoons I can't see it. Because of my conviction, I am unable to work or create or even consume. I can't read or watch a film because I am distracted by the fog of the afternoon – I feel hounded by it. I can't bear 4pm, it's been going on for so long and there's so much of it left to go. Thankfully not every afternoon is like this. It is the particular afternoons when I have nowhere to go and nothing to do, usually the grey ones, and the good thing about them is that they end. And I don't feel so lonely in the evenings.

ANONYMOUS



RHONA EVE CLEWS

Untitled

THE BAD THING

READ

IVY GAO

there is something awful about how
simple tiredness
can feel like the bad thing

you can run
until the gleam of exertion streaking
across smooth muscle
burns life into the white sky

lurid lights and holy fire
can stretch your every optic nerve
into taut relief

but wear yourself out, slacken your gaze,
catch the stillness of a morning chill,

and oh, oh, there it is:

a shade flitting across the sun,
a black whisper from the crypt —

lifting, dispersed in the daylight,

but still there, hovering at the fringes
of every breath

for you can bustle on, hustle on,
intoxicate yourself on gulps
of prayer-bells and skylight

but at any moment
the bad thing will peer over your head, crawl
over your shoulder,
sink its sepulchral sighs
deep into your bones

(it follows you to the end)

GIRLZ n the HOOD

FILM

SHANTI GIOVANNETTI-SINGH discusses fluid identities
in Celine Sciamma's *Girlhood*

A young girl with braids washes dishes at home. A stylish teenager swishes her weave, lip-gloss and necklace gleaming. A glamorous woman in a platinum wig delivers a package to an exclusive house party. A figure plays FIFA on a couch, sporting trackies and cornrows. This is the story of 'Marieme'. This is the story of *Girlhood*.

Céline Sciamma's *Girlhood* dazzled audiences when it premiered at Cannes in 2014. Sultry and unapologetically raw, it showcases the reality of growing up in the concrete jungle of Paris' banlieue. Following *Water Lilies* (2007) and *Tomboy* (2011), *Girlhood* is the final installment in Sciamma's so-called 'Trilogy of Youth'. In these films, Sciamma navigates the meandering river of identity, as her protagonists grapple with the turbulent tides of adolescence.

Girlhood focuses on the various metamorphoses of Marieme/Vic (Karidja Touré), a young girl attempting to cement her identity. Much like cement, Marieme's notion of selfhood begins amorphously, susceptible to manipulation. In *Girlhood*, Sciamma often tempts us into thinking that Marieme/Vic's identity is solidified, fixed into actualisation, but this is never the case. As soon as the protagonist settles into a role, an ascending electronic beat reaches a crescendo, and the screen

crashes into darkness. As the images resurface, our eyes are held transfixed on a swiftly moving feminine form. Fluid and malleable, Sciamma's construction of Marieme is never ossified, as she is repeatedly regenerated into a different persona.

At the start of the film, Marieme is a timid and muted character, awaiting definition. This is encapsulated by the room that she shares with her younger sister. Whilst the sister's side is richly embellished with posters and decorations, Marieme's side is blank, dominated by a muted blue. At this stage, Marieme's identity, much like the stark minimalism of her room, is desperately yearning for a splash of colour, painted by the hands of fortune.

Marieme's first change of identity takes the form of an electric blue: the colour of the walls from which a confident teenager emerges, before hounding a girl for €10. This transformation occurs shortly after a meeting with her teacher, in which Marieme is informed that her grades are too low for her to continue onto sixth-form. Expelled from the sanctuary of the school gates, Marieme is rapidly intercepted by a gang of three girls: Lady (Assa Sylla), Fily (Marietou Toure), and Adiatou (Lindsay Karamoh). Modelled on the real Parisian gang, the Tokyo Girls, the trio in *Girlhood* are a force to be reckoned with. These girls spend their days

in shopping malls, dancing, shoplifting and getting into brawls. Their ferocity, however, is paired with a potent love for the other members of the group. When she is with them, Marieme is invincible, asserting her dominance over everyone, even her abusive brother. In a seminal moment, Lady gives Marieme a necklace, embellished with the word 'Vic', short for 'Victory'. This gift is a token of belonging, a golden medal of identity. No longer is she the quivering school-girl Marieme, she is Vic, victorious over all.

Unfortunately, this is not where Marieme's character is fixed. After sleeping with her boyfriend Ismael (Idrissa Diabate), Marieme is branded a 'slut' and her family leave her with little choice but to flee from her home. Alone and vulnerable, Marieme is lured towards Abou, a notorious dealer and pimp. The young, carefree Vic is gone, replaced by a troubled and nameless figure. At work she is a cliché of a sex worker, dripping with sensuality. At home, she becomes a nondescript androgynous individual. Desperately seeking to evade the sexualisation associated with being female, the protagonist binds their breasts and wears their hair in tight cornrows. At this stage Marieme's character is by no means concrete, but defined by liminality, fluid like unset cement.

Similarly to *Water Lilies* and *Tomboy*, gender and female sexuality are pertinent themes in *Girlhood*. Throughout *Girlhood*, the consequences of sexual awakening are presented as being deeply harmful. At the beginning of the film, after noticing her pubescent sister's newly developed breasts, Marieme warns her not to let their brother notice. At the climax of the film, when

the effervescent Vic is at the height of her power, it is sexual intimacy which brings her downfall. This is because, in *Girlhood*, sexuality is intrinsically linked to male dominance. This is why the renouncement of her sexuality brings Marieme emancipation at the end. Standing in profile, overlooking Paris, awaiting her next transformation, she is immune to the male gaze.

Through the constant fluctuations of Marieme/Vic's identity, Sciamma is able to free her protagonist from the Madonna/Whore complex which is so pervasive in *Banlieue* films. Marieme is able to resist both the roles of Abou's 'whore' and Ismael's 'housewife'. The only place in which she will endure unchanged is the viewers' consciousness, where she will exist forever.

FEIYI WEN

Untitled, from wood, water, rock



OUR

THOUGHTS

INEQUALITY IS

NEVER AN OPTION

SOPHIE CUNDALL on cementing LGBTQI+ inclusive curriculums

On the 26th November 2019, a court ruling ordered a protest group pushing homophobic vitriol at the gates of Anderton Park Primary School to take their protests elsewhere, or face further legal action. This was the end of a harrowing legal battle fought by the school's headteacher Sarah Hewitt-Clarkson and her incredibly resilient body of teachers, after an adverse reaction to new laws which make LGBTQI+ inclusive education a requirement in schools. That barely any of the so-called 'activists' actually had children at that school was arguably the most jarring news to emerge from the frontline of these protests. The debate that followed exposed an undercurrent of homophobia built on misconceptions and misunderstanding that have long simmered below the surface of society.

From accusing the school of teaching masturbation and paedophilia, to calling Hewitt-Clarkson a 'she-devil', the protestors — at moments a crowd of 300-strong - frothed with homophobic fury rarely given voice in modern Britain. Teachers had to take time off because of stress, and when I met Hewitt-Clarkson she described the

experience as 'soul-crushing'. Whether protestors agreed or disagreed with inclusivity, harassing teaching staff to the point of threatening their health had no benefit for the students they were supposedly protecting.

The irony is, though, that to suggest that an LGBTQI+ inclusive curriculum will indoctrinate children to a so-called 'gay agenda' is not only blisteringly homophobic, but overlooks broad societal shifts that have already taken place. Turn on the TV and you'll see Graham Norton or Sandy Toksvig, put in your AirPods and you might listen to Janelle Monae, Sam Smith or Troy Sivan. Check Instagram and maybe you'll double tap a post by Munroe Bergdorf. Wander down the street, and your neighbour may be gay and married. LGBTQI+ people are more visible than ever before, and schools are one of the final frontiers for overt representation and inclusion. To suggest that schools are the only way children would be 'exposed' to the gay community is demonstrably false. Worse, it reduces queerness to something to suppress in case it is 'caught'. LGBTQI+ excellence and role models are but a click away.

The protests, then, stemmed from unfounded fears, misconceptions and

misunderstandings, leading to aggressive, personal attacks on a courageous school for whom, put simply and beautifully by Hewitt-Clarkson, 'inequality was never an option'. Really, these protests come too late — we cannot be shoved back into the closet.

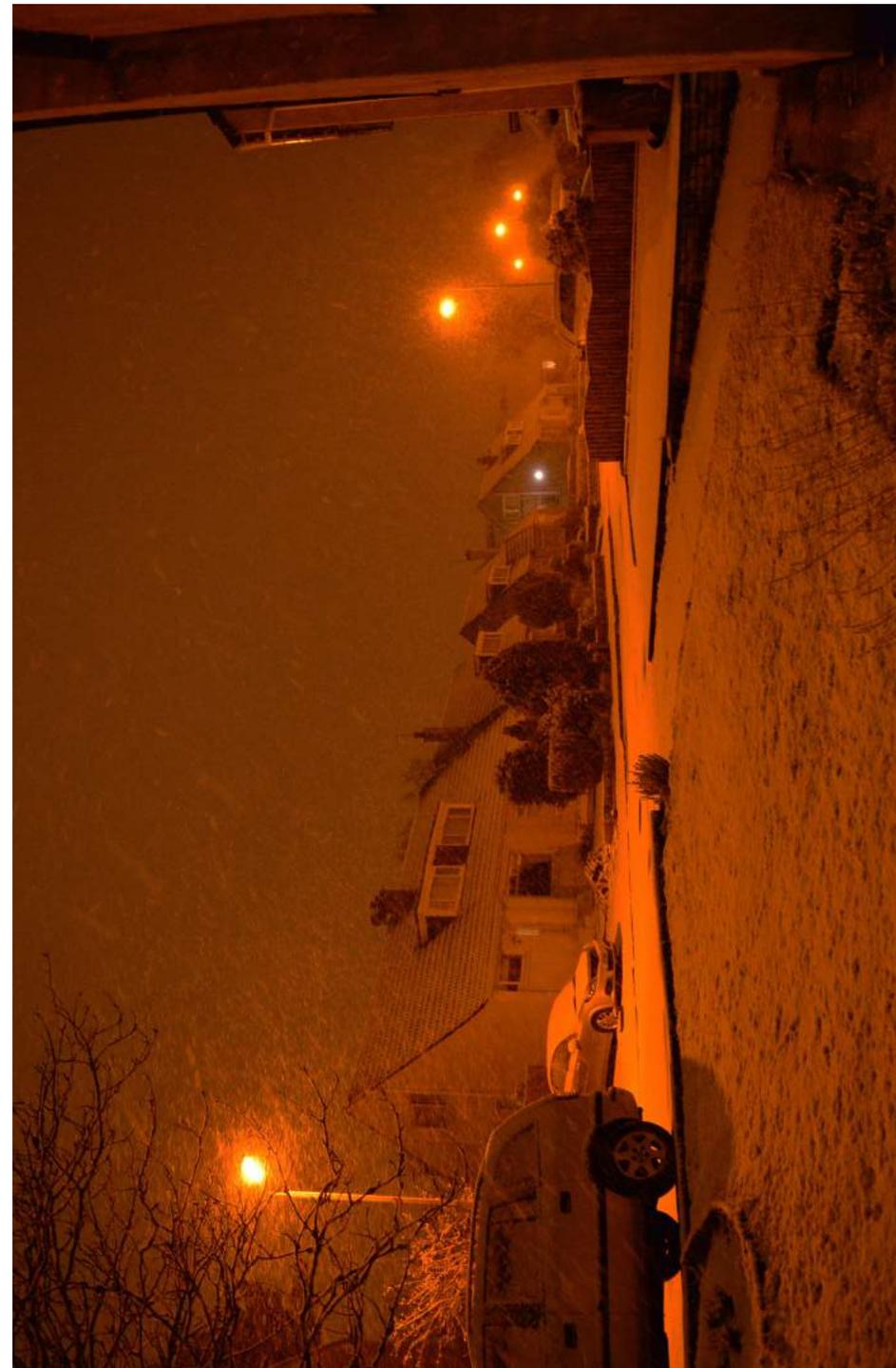
I think, too often in news coverage of this controversy, the wrong people were given space to contribute. Their role was purely to antagonise. The 'debate' has therefore been contorted into a convoluted and unethical discussion framing LGBTQI+ identity as a 'choice', something to hide: an agenda of sorts. This has inhibited coverage of the excellent work other schools and charities have already done to make 'radical' inclusivity a standard part of the school environment.

Working for the charity Just Like Us, I have seen the alternative face of this discussion. I have stood up in front of school groups, accompanied by other ambassadors, as we have told our stories and educated crowds on basic terminology. We have discussed what homophobic, transphobic and biphobic bullying might look like, and how to stop it. For many LGBTQI+ people, the idea of returning to a school environment where 9/10 of us experienced daily homophobic remarks strikes fear into our hearts. This, combined with recent media storms, might suggest that the work of charities such as Just Like Us is often met with reactionary homophobia. The reality, however, is usually something quite different.

In working with children of all ages, it's been heartening to see firsthand how much work has been done. Already, we have begun paving the way towards queer-friendlier school communities

and curriculums. We ask the children we work with to write manifestos explaining how they might make their schools more welcoming for LGBTQI+ people. Often their answers reduce you to tears. Highlights include 'spread love', 'do a speech like I Have A Dream for LGBTQI+ people', 'be nicer', and, rather hilariously 'get rid of / fight homophobic people'. When we tell young people it is their school, and they can make the difference, they do not shrug it off, or roll their eyes: they engage in passionate discussions about how best to make a difference.

It would be naive to suggest that this journey is complete. We still have a long way to go. But, as someone on the ground, I believe, contrary to what the Daily Mail would have us think, we have made and are making progress. I believe the protesters are too late. Like Hewitt-Clarkson and her superhero team of teachers, I think we are moving towards a society for which 'inequality is never an option'. The fight continues, but our work is finally making a visible difference.



ANNIE METZGER
Untitled

SHIFTING

LITERATURE

SELVES

EMILY GRANT asks whether identity can be fixed in Virginia Woolf's swirling, polyphonous *The Waves*

I first read Virginia Woolf's *The Waves* five years ago. The theme of identity shifting upon a seabed of self was fixed in my mind upon initial reading. The novel crested onto the literary scene in 1931. Its position in the inter-war years accords with its central concern of defining and redefining self and positioning identity in an increasingly uncertain world. This startlingly unique piece is arguably Woolf's most daring experiment with polyphony. Woolf seeks to both define and defy boundaries of the self as she styles the voices of the six characters which permeate the novel.

The tale traces the shifting identities of a group of friends and encourages us to question the degree to which they are connected by their shared past and long-lasting bonds. Jinny does not seek to cement her identity like the rest of the group. Her sense of solidarity is instead derived from her embracing an exuberantly changeable self, confidently resisting containment. Unlike Jinny, Rhoda is left permanently questing after a self which is never pinpointed. Neville secures stability by intertwining his sense of self with Percival, but this is subsequently shaken when Percival dies. Woolf explores how shifts of identity can trigger either a sense of release or restless anxiety.

Identity is arguably constituted by both our sense of inner being and how we position ourselves in the world. Fixity is thus derived from a sense of clarity and control. Louis secures such a sense of solidity by suspending time: "Now let me try," said Louis, "before we rise, before we go to tea, to fix the moment in one effort of supreme endeavour. This shall endure. We are parting; some to tea; some to nets; I to show my essay to Mr Barker. This will endure. [...] my shattered mind is pieced together by some sudden perception." Louis' repetition speaks of an effort to resist time's passage. Louis thus maroons himself on an island off the mainland of time, carving himself space to secure solidity. Pausing enables him to harden his sediment of self as he discerns connections through cracks of being, drawing himself together in a moment of insight.

Whereas Louis gathers segments of self in a suspended moment, Susan shapes her identity over years. When in her teens, she defines herself thus: 'I am the seasons, [...] January, May, November; the mud, the mist, the dawn. I cannot be tossed about, or float gently, or mix with other people. Yet now, leaning here till the gate prints my arm, I feel the weight that has formed itself in my side. Something has formed, at school, in Switzerland, some hard thing.' Her identity is thus grounded in identifica-

tion with nature and is textured by the character of multiple seasons. Perhaps paradoxically, she becomes conscious of her inability to integrate herself into society at the same time as her awareness of solid identity burgeons. Thus, a past self is recognized, allowing identity to be shaped into a new present self. Susan's identity morphs again when she later redefines herself, placing her identity as a mother at the core of her being: 'I am no longer January, May or any other season, but all spun to a fine thread round the cradle'. Woolf's novel is thus a space in which echoes travel, exemplifying how identities can be re-examined and shifted to suit circumstance. A sense of continuity that incorporates change is therefore fashioned.

Like Susan, Bernard conceptualizes his identity as compartmentalized. He ponders: 'What am I? I ask. This? No, I am that. [...] then it becomes clear that I am not one and simple, but complex and many. Bernard, in public, bubbles in private'. However, unlike Susan, his multifaceted self resides under a mask of continuity. Near the close of the novel, Bernard expands his view to incorporate a self which is an amalgamation of several people. He says: 'And now I ask, "Who am I?" I have been talking of Bernard, Neville, Jinny, Susan, Rhoda and Louis. Am I all of them? Am I one and distinct? I do not know. We sat here together. But now Percival is dead, and Rhoda is dead; we are divided; we are not here. Yet I cannot find any obstacle separating us. There is no division between me and them. As I talked I felt "I am you." This difference we make so much of, this identity we so fervently cherish, was overcome.' *The Waves* thus celebrates individual difference whilst delineating a move towards

transcending limited notions of self. Woolf explores how individuals define the boundaries of their being and thus anchor their sense of self. Perhaps it is only when multiplicity is embraced and change is faced that a cemented self can be constructed, capable of weathering the storms of life.

ROSA HOROWITZ
Untitled



EAST IS EAST

The Establishment of British Asian theatre

ZANE KHAN discusses *East is East* and how it represents the struggles of the South Asian Diaspora

East is East, a play written by Ayub Khan-Din and first performed in Birmingham in 1996, established and heightened the awareness of British Asian theatre. Set in Salford in 1971, the play touched the hearts of the masses as it concerned an issue that plagues us all: the question of biculturalism and the conflicts that arise between first and second-generation immigrants. The play is hilarious, yet also poignant and tragic. The struggles of cultural assimilation for the Pakistani immigrant father of the play, George Khan, are also faced by his British wife and his mixed-race children.

Britain in the early 1970's was in the midst of a cultural crisis. Many white Britons felt that the influx of Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Indian immigrants would be the catalyst of the destruction of 'British culture'. Figures like Enoch Powell were revered as soothsayers; those who saw the impending doom caused by the perceived invasion of South Asians. Three years after he had made the infamous Rivers of Blood speech, Enoch Powell addressed immigration in the Carshalton and Banstead young Conservatives club in Surrey. Powell exclaimed how local areas had been 'changed, their na-

tive places turned into foreign lands, and themselves displaced as if by a systematic colonisation'. There was constant focus on how the presence of immigrants had supposedly caused the 'natives' to suffer. Fascist parties such as the National Front latched onto this idea, blaming their woes and turmoil on those immigrants adapting to a nation far different from their own. Nahid Afrose Kabir discusses in *Young British Muslims* how the rhetoric from seminal figures like Powell was a direct cause of the increase in xenophobic attacks towards Pakistanis in the late 1960s and 1970s. There was a culture of perceiving Pakistani immigrants as a threat towards the social fabric of Britain; a threat which far-right extremists felt they had the 'duty' to eradicate.

These were terrifying times and are often forgotten in the study of Postcolonial British history. However, Ayub Khan-Din shifts the point of view in *East is East*. Instead of looking at how immigration affected native Britons, Din made the decision to explore how the divisive landscape of Britain in the 1970's affected immigrants and their families. The play is driven by dramatic tension; the tension between a father and his children; the father's desire for his children to follow the same customs he was raised with in British India. However, what one begins

to understand is that the anxiety of cultural eradication from the father has little impact when his children have no concept of their 'homeland.' In Act Two, Scene One, George tells his religious son Maneer, 'You see puther, this country not like our peoples. Your mother is good woman, but she not understand'. George wants his children to marry Pakistani women and adopt the honourable life he perceives to be absent in English culture. George, though, married a white Briton. He thus struggles to be accepted within both British and Pakistani communities. George is an outsider, and that is the tragedy of the tale. His internal crises also belong to his children. The ambivalence of identity is also seen when Tariq exclaims to Maneer 'We're English!' This defiant stance is countered by Maneer who calmly tells his brother 'We are not Anglo-Indian. Not Eurasian. Not English.' This simple scene encapsulates the anxiety of the children of immigrants. A lifestyle survey conducted by BBC Asian Network in 2018 indicated that 32% of British Pakistanis felt that their nationality is the core ideal behind their identity. The remaining 68% did not. *East is East* beautifully demonstrates how the reclamation of identity for immigrants and their children will always be impeded with the fear of not belonging to the society around them.

Din's drama was a huge success, played out to sold-out houses in Birmingham, Sheffield, Salford, Bristol and London. The sheer popularity of *East is East* cemented British Asian Theatre within the mainstream canon of the arts. The public's desire to see the struggles of the diaspora following the mass immigration of South Asians to England in the 1960's illustrates that British Asian theatre has the ability to

convey the pain and torment suffered from the other side of the coin. Much of the discourse surrounding immigration comes from those who are discontented by what they perceive as a cultural colonisation of their beloved country. Din showed how the disillusionment and internal confusion was greater for those immigrants who came to this country; who suffered through the social isolation placed on them by their surrounding communities and also saw a cultural divide form between themselves and their British children. The legacy of such a divide is still felt in the present day.

Dawid Akala

‘All wrong,’ the dentist says, waving the x-ray in my face. He pinches it with his fingers like a pair of used underwear. ‘There are still cavities under the fillings,’ he says. ‘Whoever did this didn’t know what they were doing.’

I thought as much—the memory of it is acute. Ten years old. The sharpest image, the most electric—that of the dental curing light erupting from under my nose. I had convinced myself I could feel the resin hardening in my molars—it made me feel nauseous. And now, it turns out, it was all wrong.

I look at the black-and-white image—the dense framework of my head. It lacks the soft coating—the skin, the lids—the rubbery add-ons. Who knew that white was the hardest colour?

‘All eight?’ I ask. ‘All eight are fucked?’

‘Frankie!’ That’s Aunt Mel. She sits in the corner of the office, reading an old issue of National Geographic. Don’t mind her.

‘Yes, all eight,’ the dentist says. ‘They’ll have to be re-done.’

The smell intensifies again. With it, the growling drills in neighbouring offices. Startled moans. These walls are paper thin.

Usually, to handle the dentist’s office, my thoughts dawdle back to the house—the dust and the cheap porcelain—my room. The thoughts touch everything they can get their hands on—the stretched-out, wool jumper thrown over the bed, the toys scattered

on splintering floorboards (perks of sharing a room with a little cousin), the dying fiddle-leaf fig, the sheets, the handles, the surfaces. But as much as I want to be there, the dentist says it’s all wrong. I’m back to the acrylic, the clove oil, the antiseptic.

I speak before I think. It’s like those brain impulses they’ve discovered—the ones that precede conscious decisions, calling free will into question. I turn to Aunt Mel. ‘This is all your fault.’

‘Excuse me?’ she says. The magazine drops in her lap.

‘You’re the one who let Dad take me to that deadbeat dentist in Brussels even though Uncle Raf told you he was a phoney!’ I jump off the bed, hitting my head on the lamp. ‘All because he was willing to do the work for less than two thousand. Sara’s dad’s a dentist—he charges two-and-a-half grand per piece!’

‘What a load of —’ Aunt Mel rolls her eyes. ‘Sara’s dad does implants!’

The dentist interjects, asks us to sit outside for a moment.

Enamel is the hardest tissue in the body. That’s what the poster in the waiting room claims.

‘Have you decided about the flight yet?’ Aunt Mel asks.

‘Not now,’ I say.

‘Has Alex said anything?’

Again, not now, but I don’t repeat myself.

She clicks her heels together and looks away. Perhaps she reads the poster, too. Perhaps her eyes are also tracing the path of the inferior alveolar nerve. Anything’s better than plotting the coordinates of my anger.

Here’s the deal. I had a place at university. A good one as well. In London. Alex, too. And this dental check? Just a once-over before we headed off. I’ve

already done the blood tests for my liver and kidneys. They’re fine. A little beat-up but fine. We were going. The two of us. (Does it count as going back if you’ve been gone for eight years?)

‘You’re such a hot-head,’ Aunt Mel says. ‘Isn’t that what Alex told you on Thursday?’

‘Don’t.’

I don’t want to talk about Thursday. The beer-stained letter, my belongings in a box, doors slamming, a hole in the wall.

Aunt Mel mentions my father. My mother, too, but mostly my father—her brother. Almost a decade I’ve been out here—almost a decade since I last saw them. Don’t take it personally, but I don’t want to talk about them, either. Maybe you understand. I’ve always wondered whether it’s just me or there’s a particular kind of hidden trauma everyone chooses to keep unspoken—a masked callous, a bedrock beneath the silt. Yes, I’m sure we’ve all been hardened.

‘You should call them,’ she says. I’m too surprised to retort. ‘They should have the dental bills from back then,’ she continues. ‘From before you moved in with us.’

So, I do. I let Aunt Mel hold fort in the waiting room and leave to call Elisha and Nigel. My parents.

I step out onto the pavement, a street held tightly between two blocks. Its atmosphere, its frayed edges, are guarded from the sun by the tall, surrounding concrete. Air here is stiller, darker, warmer. I feel as though I am in a moist cave—the soft kind, offering respite to lost mountaineers. This thin street is a quiet fissure in the mortar—made just for me.

I look up at the buildings. I think this town wants to be mine. Its grey windows like satellites—like the moon

following your car as a child.

I shouldn’t be surprised when they don’t pick up the phone.

It’s funny—I can’t even retrace the meanders of my own jaw. I remember now—don’t they use dental records to identify human remains—victims of long-forgotten crimes, now resurfaced from some shallow grave?

I know I’ve been presented with a choice. There’s a university here in Rotterdam, too.

I’m about to go back inside when a jagged noise—a rattle from behind the corner—juts into the delicate fabric of the street. There are words, too, but they sound too deep to be voices at first, grumbling and seismic. I wait. Just as they become human, they emerge into view. Two workmen pushing a cement mixer.

The machine is on. I stare into its spiralling hull. The sludge inside—in perpetual motion—endless possibility—without form.

The dentist invites us back—I’m back in that chair in no time. He assesses the damage once again and says he can get started today.

‘Is it an emergency?’ I ask.

‘Not exactly,’ he says. ‘But I wouldn’t wait too long.’

‘That’s fine. I have time. Next month maybe.’

Aunt Mel and I head back. We stop at the library to take out some books. Back home, I find that my cousin isn’t back from school yet, and the room is quiet, its scattered pieces undisturbed. I sink into the ripped armchair.

I’m tired, and my blood feels emulsified. There is a part of me—a soul, splashing inside a container—raging against this thickening. But I think that if I stay still for just a little while longer, it’ll pass right by.

MUSIC:

MUSIC

A Neurological Wormhole

DAISY AVIS-WARD looks at why we all still feel connected to the (sometimes embarrassing) sounds of our youth

Shuffle all. ‘Norgaard’ by the Vaccines. I let it play through and I know all the words. Suddenly I’m 14 again. I remember hearing it, sat on the tube, the tinny sound from my dad’s iPod occasionally overpowered by the noise of carriages dragging themselves along the sides of tunnels. Buzzing guitars and upbeat rhythms repeat in my head long after the 1 minute 38 is over. I can say now that it isn’t the most original song, nor is it the most complex—I’m not going to queue it at a party. It was one of The Vaccine’s biggest singles from their 2011 album, *What did you expect from the Vaccines?* I play the album all the way through and I think about giving my BBM pin to a boy I liked and rolling loose cigarettes.

Music has a powerful hold over our memories: a song can flood our minds with waves of nostalgia, blurred memories and mixed emotions. Our music taste changes constantly and yet the songs we loved as a teenager stand clear in our minds, defiant against a sea of overlapping genres and albums we’ve since come to love.

Nostalgia, it comes from the Greek, literally meaning a desire to return home. It is a wistful yearning for the happiness of a former place or time. Music nostalgia is not just a cultural phenom-

enon, it is a neurological command. The heightened emotions of our youth cling to the songs we loved and plant themselves deep within our memories. This tumultuous period of confused identities and uncertain desires is tied to the background music of these years.

How we process music is intrinsically tied to emotion. When listening to music, our brain’s pleasure circuit becomes flooded with dopamine, serotonin and oxytocin. The same circuit lights up when you fall in love, eat fatty foods or take drugs. Each time we jab our fingers on the worn-out rewind button of the CD player, we indulge our brain in a kind of neurochemical bliss. And the more we like the song, the more pleasure our brains experience. The neurotransmitters begin to chase this feeling as it does cocaine, until eventually we overindulge and move on. In short, we may as well give up the love and drugs in favour of a really good 4/4 beat.

Aside from this neurological reasoning, these songs become so important because they are intertwined with the creation of our identities. Memory storage is not linear, nor is it consistent, rather it increases during periods of dramatic change in the self. A phenomenon known as the ‘reminiscence bump’ refers to the enhanced recollection of events that occurred during our adolescence and early adulthood. During these years, we experience many

things for the first time, we start to make life-changing decisions, as well as begin to mould our political and cultural views. Music ties these moments to who we are now: it creates a personal narrative. While our opinions, friends or home may have changed, the music that was associated with our youth still ties us to that self.

Music also has an incredible capacity to regulate our emotions, something a 15-year-old hasn’t quite figured out how to do yet. Accordingly, those moments of intense euphoria or sadness were often accompanied by music. Music works like an emotional regulator, but one unique to the person. In my case, Royal Blood when I was angry, Band of Horses when I was sad and Pulp when I was happy — one big cliché of teenage angst, I know. During moments of sadness, these songs trigger the release of prolactin, the same is released when children are comforted by their mothers. These songs mirror your emotional state. This is why the playlist ‘Songs to cry to at 1am’ on Spotify has thousands of followers; it is an acknowledgment of the universality of these emotions. What makes you feel a bit better is the comfort of knowing it isn’t just you, and this won’t last forever.

Sadly, the only conclusion to all this research is that you’ll probably never love another song the same way you loved the music of your youth. As we get older, our taste matures, allowing us to appreciate the more complex beauty of music. And yet no matter old we are, music has a powerful ability to transport us right back to the uncertainty, the excitement, and the unalloyed passion of adolescence. These songs are a neurological wormhole into the emotions and experiences of our youth.

Which is why Catfish and the Bottlemen, The Vaccines and every indie rock anthem from 2012-2015 feels inseparable from who I am now, even though I’ll always switch to private mode before playing it.

GRAHAM CLEMMIE

Breaking free - a rebirth. (If only I could)



BEEN THERE,

DONE THAT

THEA RICKARD considers the problem with prescriptive theatre

You are fifteen, impressionable, and probably pretend to like The Smiths. You leap as far as your worn doc martens will allow you at the news that an edgy and exciting theatre company is coming to town. You eagerly buy a ticket and forget the expense of inaccessible theatre aimed towards the middle class by listening to Pulp's Common People on your headphones as you head to your seat in the pit. Curtain up. Kneehigh Theatre is performing a modern adaptation of the 12th century romance Tristan and Iseult. Emma Rice directs a tragic tale of love and loss, interwoven with song, dance, puppetry and cross-dressing. The main character 'Whitehands' seizes the audience throughout the performance. It ends with a startling monologue which reveals her secret love for Tristan and her part in preventing his happiness. Curtain down. That was like nothing you have ever seen before!

The next time, you are seventeen. You read an Angela Carter book and believe you are sexually liberated. You have a nose ring. Much has changed,

but your love for theatre remains cemented. Whilst perusing the 'what's on' section of your local theatre over your smashed avocado on rye bread, you notice that Kneehigh are coming back to a theatre near you. Eagerly, you chomp down the rest of your breakfast, down your orange juice (not from concentrate), and quickly book tickets to Kneehigh's latest production The Tin Drum. You read on the company website that they occasionally run community outreach programmes, which is enough to justify spending the money you rightfully earned babysitting for your mum's posh friend Cathy on a ticket. Curtain up. A fourteen-inch tall puppet, operated by a woman with a short fringe and a man with a face tattoo, is banging a drum in the middle of the stage. A chorus of people in combat boots occupy the various levels of the performance space, whilst marching to the drum beat and singing an ominous song in a minor key. The post-apocalyptic play depicts the devastating effects of war by adapting Gunter Grass' novel The Tin Drum and interweaving song, dance, puppetry and cross-dressing. Curtain down. That was like nothing you have ever seen before! Almost.

Dazed and bewildered you exit the theatre. You pensively roll a cigarette and contemplate the play you have just seen. You hear the gasps of excitement

from other people as they leave the theatre, but for some reason you feel unsettled. You have just witnessed a fresh, exciting piece of theatre with an incredibly talented cast. So why did you not enjoy it? You read a review of the show describing it as 'energetic but aimless'. Perhaps that was it: perhaps the story was not good enough. But the feeling in the pit of your stomach tells you otherwise. You feel sad. It is a similar feeling to the one you have when you find out someone has cheated on you. Then, you have a thought. In a moment of curiosity, you do a quick google. Shock. Dismay. After a few seconds of scrolling, you find that Kneehigh actually have a website called 'The Kneehigh Cookbook'. This contains a plethora of resources detailing past shows and common conventions which are used in each performance. This is it. The illusion you have been holding onto since you were fifteen suddenly shatters. You felt like you had been cheated on, because you had. It becomes quickly apparent that Kneehigh reduce certain theatrical conventions, such as music and dance, to a foundational level in each production. They simply prescribe the same conventions to all of their shows. This prescriptive 'tool kit' creates a cultish feeling about Kneehigh which could be fashionable and hip, if it were not for the fact that each of their shows may as well be the same. Brecht displays the genius ways in which one can use placards and other stylised methods of making political points. Yet, if they are not paired with current political messages, conventions alone can make a piece stagnant. This is why you were so disappointed after seeing the second production by Kneehigh. It felt as though the company had already created a mould out of concrete, disguised as a unique brand, to excuse the

reproduction of very similar theatre.

Now, you are a world-wise, educated university student. Slightly embittered by living in London, you want nothing more than the freshness and vivacity of the theatre. Sat in your dingy flat, you contemplate what you might like to see while surfing the internet. Suddenly, an advert for Kneehigh's newest production Ubu flashes up on your sticky computer screen. But you simply close it. What would be the point? You have seen it all before.



LUCA VANELLO
Untitled

TW: racism, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism

SAVAGE would like to note that the lead singer of The Smiths, Morrissey, has been accused of expressing racist, Islamophobic, and anti-Semitic views, and vocally supporting EDL founder Tommy Robinson. While these facts were not directly relevant to the article, we believe them too important not to mention.

WHAT ARE THE

ROOTS THAT CLUTCH?

OUR

THOUGHTS

GEORGIA GOOD looks into the possible dangers in the rise in fluid thinking

Cement is unyielding solidity. It is, metaphorically, a form of permanent objectivity: fundamentalist Christian doctrine, Victorian gender roles, strict moral utilitarianism. It is a worldview that insists everything is set in stone, labelled, defined by innate, immutable truths.

This worldview is, in some ways, in decline. It is threatened by a rise in fluidity, subjectivity, and transience - wherever we turn, boundaries are dissolving, labels hold less weight, and the individual usurps the universal. Catalysed by postwar disillusionment and existential doubt, this is broadly a twentieth and twenty-first century phenomenon. It signifies modernity itself, and shapes every plane of our existence. (It's worth noting, though, that this is not universally true. Even as the liberal worldview breaks down boundaries, paradoxically, both the left and right embrace identity politics; this is an age in which we rush to self-categorisation - terms like 'black woman' or 'straight white man' carry unprecedented meaning and power.)

Subjectivity shapes how we see ourselves. Morality is increasingly relative: there are no absolute moral truths. Instead, moral values are cultural-

ly dependent. Religious authority is challenged, and within religious thought, there is a new emphasis on interpretation, metaphor, and the personal spiritual experience: the claim that Jesus walked on water isn't literally true, for example, but represents his role in connecting us to God. Gender isn't an innate identity, but a performative act, or a social construct. Labels for sexuality are increasingly fluid, or abandoned altogether. As individualism rises, human experience becomes highly personal, not collective. There are eight billion ways of seeing the world, and eight billion versions of the truth. 'Truth' is no longer external and objective, but relative, even non-existent: post-truth politics are on the rise, embraced by the media and often accepted by the public.

This is all a reaction to cement-like modes of thought. The danger of 'cement', in this sense, is the potential for oppression: sexist gender stereotypes, toxic heteronormativity, moral and cultural imperialism, to name a few. Racism, prejudice and exclusion in the name of tradition, and countless forms of tyranny under authoritarianism. The list goes on.

If a tendency towards objectivity can

be dangerous, then, the same must be asked of relativity. Does it break down the barriers between us, or shore them up? The less we're categorised, grouped and divided, in theory, the closer we're brought together. Dissolving restrictive, constructed boundaries should allow us both freedom and unity. There must be truth in this.

Yet if we value subjectivity over everything, if we believe in our own personal experience more than anything else, we isolate ourselves. This is, after all, the 'age of loneliness'. The more we construct our own identities, values and perception of the world, the more we risk rootlessness. A solipsistic sense of alienation emerges. We can never reach each other's consciousness, and in our attempts, even language can fall short. Wittgenstein's 'beetle in a box' comes to mind: each of us has our own perspective, but we can never really share it; in using language, we can only describe what no one else can see. Language itself becomes meaningless in the public context. How can we connect, if nothing unites us? A rise in fluidity and relativity means a loss of *Lebenswelt*: a 'world in common', self-evident and experienced by all, which is necessarily meaningful, and enables collective existence. Instead, we are isolated from each other, and left in a state of increasing scepticism, always on the brink of nihilism - whether moral, ideological, or existential. How, after all, can there be meaning in anything, if definitions are fluid, and truth as we know it isn't real? How can the concept of beauty exist, for example, if we reject all conventional, cultural assumptions about it? Inclusivity is good, but widening the box to include everyone, it seems, renders the concept meaningless. The loss of tradition and

solidity, as Arendt claimed, can lead to a loss of shared meaning - a gateway to losing all meaning, full-stop. The risks, in practical terms, can be political too. As the global left condemns borders and pursues freedom, it can have the reverse effect - clearing the way for a unified, absolutist right wing, with clear foundations, to consolidate its hold on power.

As a worldview, then, 'cement' may not be outdated after all. Freedom, in any sense, is crucial — but to enjoy it, we must be on solid ground. Like our societies, our existence, ideologies and mindsets require foundations, and objectivity fulfils this role. Social and intellectual progress depend on a degree of security, stability and certainty — to build, we must build upon something. To achieve this, we shouldn't return to oppression; instead, we should embrace the paradox. Objectivity and subjectivity are equally vital. We must ask if they can coexist, and try to find out how they can.

03/20/20,

READ

214, parliament hill to kings cross

FLORENCE WILDBLOOD

sandy eyes — the kind of eyes that come
with rolling, sweating in the blue hours
when the window towers, stained-glass with unflinching beams, and leaves
the breeze
is slowly combing.

a headache that's affronted by the day, by the tearing apart of curtains in
another room, by brash and glinting mint, and a sunrise dose of citrus and
carbohydrates.

i've been here for hours,
the winter sun was no surprise — i saw it forming; i saw the low clouds
piece it all together.
but i had forgotten, soft hair knotting on the window,
royal college street, and last night's bulbs still bright, and how the cyclists
whistle under silver.



GRZEGORZ STEFANSKI
Untitled

ECSTASY

&

EKPHRASIS

LITERATURE

SELMA REZGUI explores modes of
translation and its influence on
literature

I thought about translation for the first time when, aged 17, I read Albert Camus's *The Outsider*. Instead of skipping past the introduction, I stopped to read the translator's note. In it, Sandra Smith describes her difficulty in translating the french 'maman.' 'Mother' seemed too formal, 'mum' or 'mummy' ridiculous. She eventually rendered the novel's arresting opening line: 'my mother died today. Or maybe yesterday. I don't know.' For some reason, this caught my attention and stuck in my mind. While this might not be the most ground-breaking example, this small translatory wrinkle which Smith encountered and resolved suddenly made me realise that translation is conscious, skilled, and creative. The translator's voice is as much a part of a translated text as the author's.

Since then, it's become clear to me that translation has creative and radical potential, breaking open literary borders and opening the canon to international and multilingual literatures. Far from being formulaic or neutral, translation from one language into another is inevitably an act of interpretation, of creation, of experimentation. In Antonia Lloyd Jones's glorious translation of Olga Tokarczuk's *Drive Your Plow over the Bones of the Dead*, she capitalises

wildly, and audaciously translates back into English the narrator Janina and her companion Dizzy's polish translations of William Blake. 'I travel'd through a Land of Men' becomes 'Over human lands I wandered', moving into the trochaic verse to which Polish is better suited, and followed by a lengthy description of Janina and Dizzy's brainstorming and the resulting verse. 'wind[ing their] ideas together, ... like a game of logic, a complicated form of scrabble.'

Despite these more recent experiments in translation, the discipline has a longer history as something with artistic significance, to be thought about carefully and executed responsibly. Language and its meaning are often understood as solid things, with concrete significance. It is something made of building blocks, words, which come together to form sentences, walls, complex structures of prose and poetry. In his essay 'The Task of the Translator', Walter Benjamin takes up this imagery and applies it to the translation act. He uses an image of a wall and an arcade: translated sentences are walls, which obscure the original meaning of the source. Isolated words can be arranged to form 'arcades', which allow meaning to shine through. He argues for a kind of literal translation in which words and syntax are carried over from the source language; the glow of its meaning shining through

the arcades will take care of itself. While I think that this method of translation would produce a crude and largely unintelligible result, it does raise interesting questions about what Benjamin calls the 'urelement' of language – the fundamental constituent of meaning. Is it the word, the suffix, the phrase, the isolated letter? According to Benjamin the word is the atom of language, the smallest particle of language which carries meaning. More recent writers and translators like Yoko Tawada, a German Japanese poet, essayist, and writer of short fiction, go further and explode the word to focus on letters as independent carriers of meaning.

Translation has potential far beyond so-called interlingual translation, that is, translation from one language to another. You could consider paraphrasing or re-inscribing text within one language a form of translation, termed intralingual. Interpretation between different mediums is also increasingly recognised as a form of translation, especially within literary texts. Here we get into heady territory – is everything translation? Are the words I speak translated from my amorphous and non-verbal thoughts?

One of my favourite unconventional ways to understand translation comes from opening up its definition like this. Ekphrasis, or image to text translation consists of detailed description or evocation of visual art in literature, and creates some of the most breath-taking passages I have come across. 'Ode on a Grecian Urn', perennially on school curriculums but rarely acknowledged as ekphrasis, is a great example. Keats breathlessly asks—

What men or gods are these?
What maidens loth?
What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?
What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?

Wild ecstasy indeed! Keats's poem produces a rush of enthusiasm and light-headedness at the vase's ancient and intricate beauty, but there is a wealth of more contemporary work in which ekphrasis is more reserved, quietly but deftly cementing an image in the reader's imagination. Anne Sexton's ekphrastic poem 'The Starry Night', which describes Vincent van Gogh's painting of the same name, begins:

The town does not exist
except where one black-haired
tree slips
up like a drowned woman into
the hot sky.

Vividly painting the soft pointed form of the tree being sucked into the whorls of the boiling sky onto the back of her reader's eyelids, Sexton translates van Gogh's oil on canvas into words on page, and picture in mind. She mediates between two artistic languages and in doing so elevates them both.

Whether or not Sexton and Keats would have thought themselves to be participating in acts of translation, the way these two poems transpose an image into text is an act of interpreting meaning which I would certainly describe as such. Translation is architecture - building walls and arcades, it is sculpture and deconstruction, and techniques like ekphrasis show just how far it can go in influencing art and, potentially, standing alone as art itself.

TW: rape

SAVAGE would like to note that one or more of the figures mentioned in this article have been accused of abuse, assault, or misconduct. While these facts were not directly relevant to the article, we believe them too important not to mention. Van Gogh has been accused of raping a young woman who sat for paintings for him.

LIUYEER HONG
mixed-media installation



CONCRETE

ART

BLOCK

LIVING

ISABELLA JAKOBSEN contemplates socialist architecture in Hungary.

The Hungarian word ‘lakótelep’ — the English, ‘microdistrict’, or the Russian, ‘микрорайон’ (микрорайон) — refers to the Soviet architectural ideal of a large residential complex comprised of multi storey apartment blocks, surrounded by all the amenities one could ever need, including playgrounds, schools and shops. My mother’s family lived in one such complex from the 1960s until the early 2000s, and many hundreds of thousands of Hungarians today still live in these concrete structures left over from the Soviet era.

Take, for example, the largest micro-district in Budapest, Fűredi Street Estate, which still housed almost 60 000 people as late as 2001. Looking at these microdistricts today, parallels can be drawn between their architectural style — often referred to as ‘socialist modernism’ — and the socialist ideologies of the Soviets. The greyed tones of the buildings do nothing to promote unnecessary flourish and extravagance, while the uniformity of their facades reinforce ideas of solidarity and simplicity. The boxy windows lined up neatly in a row recall to my mind the rows of

schoolchildren wearing red neckerchiefs of my mother’s childhood years.

However, for all their apparent monotony and dullness, these ‘lakótelepek’ hold a vitality under the surface which is only revealed once you step inside. Whenever I enter one of these apartment blocks, I am struck by the deep sense of community that they generate; for example, I am always surprised by how many people know one another. Last year, on a visit to my great aunt, my grandfather stopped to talk to someone on the first floor — a kind, tall woman dressed in pink, who said she knew me when I was a child. Her flat had the exact same layout as that of my aunt’s one floor above it, but personal touches set them apart: a variety of potted plants lining the windowsill, and an array of brightly coloured carpets and sofas. Perhaps what I mean to say here is to never judge a book by its cover. The media — in the West, especially — portrays an image of Soviet Eastern European architecture as a symbol of a joyless and sinister totalitarian regime, but the reality of everyday Hungarian life under the Soviets was much less dystopian. That is not to say that life in the Eastern Bloc was without strict surveillance and control, communist chants and propaganda, but rather that life goes on; that was simply what life was like for them, and so it was normal.

When I ask my mother about growing up in a communist country, most of the stories she tells me are about awkward school dances, or not being allowed to go to a concert — universal teenage experiences.

The microdistrict my mother lived in with her family during the ‘70s and ‘80s — where my grandparents continued to live until the early 2000s — is in the 16th district of Budapest, in the suburbs. Its name translates roughly to ‘Lacy Common’, which, as a little girl, always reminded me of the Hungarian name for Sleeping Beauty, ‘Lace Rose’. I still have memories of the place, fond though rather fragmented: the blue-green pattern of the sofa-bed; the family dog — a black Spaniel; the proximity of voices due to the small size of the flat; going to the nearby toy-shop with my grandma.

Nowadays, when you drive past these microdistricts, the apartment blocks often have huge advertisement billboards on them — a gesture that jabs at their original socialist context. Many of them have been repainted in bright colours in an attempt to diversify the grey-beige concrete, but my favourite buildings are the simple grey concrete blocks with terraces inlaid with different coloured glass panels: yellow-ochre, cherry red, sky blue. Their honest simplicity is comforting, and the colours familiar: I will always associate the ochre glass in particular with my mother’s childhood home.

While these microdistricts are everywhere in the suburbs of the city, much less remains from the socialist era in central Budapest itself. In the city centre, socialist modernist apartment blocks are interspersed with the more ornate architectural styles of the

Gothic Revival and Vienna Secession (Art Nouveau). These come together to create a rather charming patchwork of architectural styles.

It’s important that we try to stop filtering Eastern Bloc architecture through an ideological lens. Members of western society often consider the Soviet era with a judgemental, moralising attitude due to its associations with cruelty and dictatorship, and these negative connotations seep into our perception of all cultural aspects of the era, including its architecture. I would argue that it is much more productive to embrace socialist modernism, with its concrete minimalism and functionality, into our cultural patrimony — not just in Hungary but also elsewhere in Europe. Diversity need not mean dissonance, let it instead mean harmony.

SUCH STUFF AS DREAMS

THEATRE

ARE MADE ON

'Anyone can cook!' Well, anyone can act too...

RONI MEVORACH considers what theatre is and can be

After standing over a pot of burnt pasta (yes, it's possible) for the third time in a week, I came to the realisation that the famous Ratatouille quote is unfortunately easier said than done. It seems that it takes quite a bit more talent and skill to become a master chef than the childhood-favourite film suggests. If it doesn't come naturally, then it doesn't come naturally! Gusteau was right about one thing though – no matter who we are, we can all create a little bit of magic. It does not matter if you are a rat, a struggling student, or even a millionaire, you can still be a part of this: anyone can act.

Because, what is acting? What is theatre? What comes to mind when we ask ourselves the question: what do we talk about when we talk about theatre? Unfortunately, many of us would say our initial thoughts are the West End, Broadway, grand buildings, expensive tickets, stalls, circles, boxes, rich and famous actors...

At first glance, theatre is connected to what is physical and concrete, and thus to our materialist, consumerist world. In his book, Empty Space, Peter Brook refers to this commercial, profit-making attitude as 'deadly theatre'- it is uninter-

esting because all creativity is sapped from it. Not everyone can afford this type of theatre; not everyone will have the luxury of paying extortionate quantities of money to watch a show in a grand 19th Century building. It is even in the theatres' names – Her Majesty's Theatre, Palace Theatre, Duke of York's Theatre. These theatres were evidently built for the cream of the crop; for the richest members of society. Names make a real difference and these names clearly exclude the 99%. So, if you do not have a spare £100 lying around to buy a ticket to see smash hits like Hamilton or The Book of Mormon, then you are not allowed to experience the joys of this luxurious, exclusive bubble. You are forbidden from entering into an alternate world and letting go of your worldly troubles. But is this what theatre really is, or is it all a lie? In fact, lying is exactly what theatre is. 'Authentic' theatre is in the lying, the pretending, and the storytelling. And we would be lying if we did not admit that we all lie at least once a day. Another lie already, see! In fact, theatre happens all the time, every hour of every single day. When we tell our friends that we are on our way but actually we are still in bed – that is theatre! When we pretend to sound really smart in seminars by using big words – that is theatre! When we call our mum and tell her how

well we are doing – that is theatre! In fact, we are lied to between 10-200 times a day, and university students are often the culprits. So far, though, this is not sounding too positive, maybe we should stick to those £100 tickets after all. But this is not it – theatre goes even further. It is also the shows you created with your siblings when you were younger; the shows you create with your friends now that you are older; the bedtime stories that sent you to sleep. From a young age, our minds and imaginations are filled with fantasy lands and fairytales. We dream about stories and 'pretend' worlds. We create shows and alternate universes for ourselves in our sleep.

Indeed, theatre is 'such stuff as dreams are made on'. It is a lot more abstract and dynamic than a stiff, old building or a certain ticket price. We cannot define it concretely and we should not do it the disservice of solely linking it with wealth and materialism. The most exciting theatre comes from within, and from the identities we create for ourselves through performance. The person we act as in public is often quite different from who we are when we are alone. We create a show everyday while we try to present the best version of ourselves. Is it not true that we are constantly pretending to be someone slightly different to who we really are? And that is the brilliance of theatre! Anyone can be who they want to be and anyone can act.

Theatre is performance, it is putting on a show, whether it be upstairs in a pub, or in our bedroom. It is not about fancy buildings with fancy names, profit, or fame. Theatre is in the everyday. It is subconscious and it is not limited to a paid performance. We are all brilliant actors in our own right – we can be our own agents. Anyone can tell their individual story and create their own magic, no matter who they are or where they come from. Perhaps, without realising it, we all carry a little bit of Gusteau with us every day.

JACOB FISK
Proposal



INTERVIEW with

JACOB

LOOK

FISK

The Look team interviews Jacob Fisk, a multimedia artist who works with themes of isolation, comfort, the built environment and the body

Describe your work in three words.

Intimate, earthy, monochromatic.

What inspires you to create?

I spend a lot of time navigating the landscape: walking around and soaking it in visually. I seek materials such as wood, metal, stone and concrete to bring to the studio to rework. This process has become a habit. It feels right to be using what's found, and to be navigating the physical landscape to retrieve material. It is organic. The work is informed by the discovery and then the material helps me to determine how it should be used. Often through deconstructing and then reconstructing simple forms much more exciting things can be created. The angular and rigid can become fluid and organic. The materials' familiarity to those entering into the work is vital as it allows for people to reevaluate these material through seeing it in another way. Once they have finished observing, the person takes away a small shift in perspective on how they experience those materials when they're inevitably seen again in the urban everyday. Things like palette timber, paving slabs or earth, the detritus of many construction sites. I'm also incredibly inspired by nature and I am still working out what it means to be making work which feels organic in the

centre of London. I am most inspired by material properties within my immediate surroundings.

How do you think your work relates to the theme of cement?

Both metaphorically and physically my work is intertwined with cement. A series of works titled 'excavation' were made exclusively from aerated cement blocks. I carved into them and extracted organic shapes from within the rigid perimeters of the form. Lots of my research is into the ways in which cement is used in construction and the ways in which buildings can work without the material.

On a metaphorical level, the work speaks to ideas of permanence and impenetrability. As well as this I'm thinking about how concrete language can do the same things of evoking physical spaces or sensation. I once read that in language, 'Concrete means that there is an image, something that can be seen, heard, tasted or touched.'

What are you working on at the moment?

In the work I'm creating at the moment I'm using a process known as earth



casting to pour large mortar (a mix of cement and sand) tiles into the earth itself after compressing and carving it out with my hands. The material then solidifies and creates a beautiful replica of the earth's surface and the nuances of the hands marks. These are then removed from the hole and I clean the dirt from the surface. I'm working out how these surfaces become something the body engages with: thinking about walls and floors. The material is like the glue that fills all the gaps and sticks everything else together in the built environment. These works are also a way for me to explore image making and drawing and using the tile's surfaces to have a continuous image, composed of these smaller elements. I'm excited to take a material so permanent, inherently artificial and flat, and then try to create something textured and seemingly grown, creating a sense of intrigue and fascination in the material to those who would otherwise pass it by.

I'm also working on a collection of works with a view to my degree show. There's a small drawing called 'interior' which I'm in the process of printing onto scaffolding debris netting. I've been making a series of drawings for a 'handbook' that are just parts of hands or fingers and arms as they engage with objects but fully isolated. There is no context or object in their possession, they palpably hold and engage with invisible forms. I was really interested to see how they would communicate when just the gesture and the hand was captured alone. I also want to question how ambiguous the hand can become, when devoid of content the forms can begin to seem non bodily. What can a person decipher from just a gesture? To truly see something you have to ignore its feeling and to truly feel something you have to ignore it visually.

Jake will be showing his work in the Slade undergraduate degree show from the 21st-28th May.



THE BOTTOM OF EVERYTHING

MUSIC

What Music, and I, Have Learnt From Air Disasters

DANIEL JACOBSON explores what air disasters can teach us about life and its surprises

I'm hesitant to declare an "obsession" with plane crashes, lest this conjures images of J.G. Ballard, but growing up I have undoubtedly paid attention to them. My interest in air disasters stems from the TV documentary series *Air Crash Investigation*, in which flight-related disasters are recounted and investigated. The program does offer a skewed narrative on aviation, which happens to be one of the safest forms of transport. However, by discussing the errors which lead to these disasters, as well as their rarity, the show highlights the scale, and often inevitability, of the subsequent tragedy.

Aviation disasters have displayed a tendency to take the lives of many beloved musicians very early, from Otis Redding at 26 to Aaliyah at 22. They have carried a powerful meaning for musicians, prompting them to reflect on themes such as the ephemeral and fragile nature of our existence, fear of dying and the love of life which this inspires. Many musicians have chosen to embrace these readings, creating songs which are not only beautifully

poignant, but also display the capacity to shed light on the human condition.

This is encapsulated by what became known as *The Day The Music Died*, when a single air disaster took the lives of Ritchie Valens, Buddy Holly, and J.P. "The Big Bopper" Richardson (aged 17, 22, and 28, respectively). The day has been immortalised by Don McLean's 'American Pie'. He sings in equal parts with nostalgia for his youth as a "lonely teenage broncin' buck", and despair at what the United States had become by 1971. McLean traces America's downfall during the 1960's back to *The Day The Music Died*, imbuing the song with the uneasy question of what music would sound like — and, incidentally, what the world would look like — if these great musicians had not died that day.

My first real encounter with the significance of air crashes in music was the song 'Flight 22', a highlight from Kali Uchis' breath-taking 2018 debut album, *Isolation*. The song is a reference to Piedmont Airlines Flight 22, which crashed in 1967 following a mid-air collision over Henderson, North Carolina, killing 82 people. Uchis uses the crash as a metaphor for a doomed

relationship, her dedication to her love leaving her unfazed by its inevitable demise, singing 'Nowhere in this world can compare, boy that's the truth, to wherever we're going on Flight 22'. The song is written in a 6/8 time signature, typical of lullabies, with Uchis' vocals literally soaring over meticulously crafted harmonies. The love story ends in the dying moments of the song by way of a key change and a lone trumpet, with Uchis acknowledging her fate: 'and baby we're not gonna make it/At least I'm going down with you/Our baggage might just be too full on Flight 22'.

A plane crash also provided the perfect setting for the Bright Eyes song 'At the Bottom of Everything', the opening track from their 2005 album *I'm Wide Awake, It's Morning*. The song begins with a peculiar story of a woman on a plane about to crash into the ocean.

The album as a whole is grounded by Conor Oberst, the lead singer, grappling with a sense of detachment far in advance of a world where we are supposedly 'as connected as ever', and the plane crash is presented as the woman's trigger for seeking out interaction and comfort from a stranger. If anything, *I'm Wide Awake, It's Morning*, is a call for us to reaffirm our loves and eliminate what doesn't matter, and an impending plane crash is the perfect setting for this to begin.

There is a common theme at the centre of almost every air disaster featured in *Air Crash Investigation*, and that is that, when dealing with a catastrophe of their magnitude, it is rarely caused by one single factor. The vast majority of incidents occurred due to a devastating combination of poor weather conditions, technical failure, human error,



TARA MONJAZEB
Out of Nowhere

both avoidable and unavoidable, and sheer bad luck.

Musicians have shown that aviation disasters can be irresistible metaphors. Air safety is essentially a certainty, which means that disasters are representative of holes which must be fixed quickly. The main lesson I have taken from these incidents is that large problems in my life — from crumbling friendships to academic uncertainty — are endemic of many smaller concerns, all of which should be acknowledged in order to understand the problem properly. To paraphrase the filmmaker Noah Baumbach, 'if your car breaks down, you're suddenly interested in how the car works', and art possesses a stunning capacity to shed light on life in a way that is deeply, and personally, intuitive.



YOSHIYUKI ISHIKAWA examines the material politics of **Hostile Architecture**

ART

Camden Bench,
Great Queen Street
Image by author

TW: domestic violence

SAVAGE would like to note that one or more of the figures mentioned in this article have been accused of abuse, assault, or misconduct. While these facts were not directly relevant to the article, we believe them too important not to mention. Don McLean plead guilty to domestic violence assault and other related crimes.



If you happened to walk from Holborn to Covent Garden tube station, you may well find yourself on Great Queen Street. As you pass by the grand façade of Freemasons Hall, you will find yourself in an open space surrounded by a series of jarring, unfamiliar concrete blocks. Sit down and relax if you dare — the cold concrete surface is perhaps the least comfortable seat you could imagine — and you may feel like leaving as soon as possible.

They call it the Camden Bench. Weighing in at 1765 kilograms, and 2.7 metres long, the bench is made from aggregate concrete reinforced by an internal galvanised steel frame and, complete with an anti-graffiti finish. Great Queen Street is home to four of these benches, exemplifying the Camden Bench's signature design: rigidly geometrical concrete blocks, often resembling the contours of Brutalist architecture. So unusual is the design that it does not automatically appear to be a bench to a passer-by; unlike a normal bench with arms and legs, the space below it is filled with hard concrete and the uneven surface is largely unappealing.

Street furniture design company Factory Furniture were commissioned by Camden Borough Council in 2010 to design a series of benches for Great Queen Street aimed at deterring the antisocial behaviour and vandalism that 'plague city centre benches'. The Camden Bench, according to Factory Furniture, is designed in such a way that ensures safety, with the concrete block stopping thieves from accessing bags from behind, as well as leaving no crevices in which to stash drugs. Cleanliness is also upheld, with the specially

treated concrete surface designed to repel dirt and vandalism and a lack of corners in which litter could be stuffed. This is all intended to create a 'more inclusive' public space. Youth culture seems particularly targeted in the bench's design; for example, with the hard concrete surface and jagged edges repelling skateboarding. Another prominent — and controversial — feature of the bench is its uneven surface, deliberately preventing a homeless person from lying down on it.

By installing the Camden Bench, the borough council practices a mode of landscape politics known as 'hostile architecture'.

Dean Harvey, a co-founder of Factory Furniture, said that 'hostile architecture is where architectural elements and the public realm are used to control human behaviour'. A well-known example would be the 'anti-homeless spikes' installed in front of many buildings around London in 2014, to great public outcry. A piece of hostile architecture represents three elements; its creator, its target group, and a behaviour. The Camden Bench is an eloquent example: the creators of the bench were acutely aware of the rough sleepers who rely on public benches in order to sleep, as well as various criminal activities which occurred in the area. So, they target rough sleepers, loiterers and youths, all of whom are considered undesirable in public spaces. The authority of Camden Council uses the benches to enforce their idea of the ideal citizen who behaves properly and does not wish to be exposed to such unsightly behaviours.

Is the Camden Bench just a bench? No, it is not. What, then, can we do with the Camden Bench? Nothing but sit.

The simplicity of its use is enabled only through that which it actively prevents. The bench can be seen as an 'anti-object', defined by what it is not.

The Camden Bench is a material embodiment of the urban politics that wills to have complete control over people's behaviour. This is realised not through intervention or lawful punishment, but through the design of the urban landscape in such a way that citizens are physically limited to perform certain behaviours. The materiality of the bench — its rough and uninviting concrete surface — is the physical representation of such political will. Through its sheer existence, the Camden Bench manifests agency over its users as the materialised authority of behavioural control.

In 2014, The Guardian documented a group of youths who attempted to prove that they could still skateboard on the Camden Bench — one ended up injured in the process, further exemplifying the bench's hostile design. Such rebellious engagement with objects is an integral part of the ecology of hostile architecture: fellow humans fighting for the claim to spatial liberty. What is left for us to do in a world of exclusion except to rebel?

TARA MONJAZEB
Chaise



THOUGHTS OUR NOTES ON AN OUTBREAK

ANNA LAMCHE takes the long view of COVID-19

Late one Tuesday night I catch the tube home. Several people, I notice, are wearing masks: bike masks, dust masks, masks in soft medical-grade blue. There's something quietly unsettling in this sight, as though the bleached and clinical world of doctors and hospitals has been grafted onto civilian life. For a brief and surreal moment I imagine a future in which every one of us sat in that carriage wears a biohazard suit. Caught silent in our own protective, isolated bubbles, we avoid eye contact as usual. I blink and I'm back in the moment. One woman adjusts her mask to take a bite of her sandwich.

There is something in these masks I shrink from instinctively. They form yet another barrier between people in a world already riven by bitter divides. With the nascent outbreak of COVID-19, the protective impulse is a natural one. But, unless you're wrapped up in a specialised respirator, these masks do little to ward off disease, says Dr. William Schaffner of Vanderbilt University. The typical mask isn't so different from the posies people carried during the Great Visitation of 1665, or the other-worldly, beaklike projections that Plague

doctors strapped to their faces in Early Modern Europe.

On the 23rd of January, the lockdown in Wuhan began. 'Since then', Wang Xiuying writes for the London Review of Books, 'misinformation and disinformation have dominated Chinese lives'. City officials, seeking to avoid panic, were reluctant to declare a state of emergency. Wi Wenliang, an ophthalmologist, was reprimanded for mooted the possibility of an imminent outbreak of COVID-19. The police rebuked him for 'making false statements that disturbed the public order'. Li later contracted the virus, and, on the 6th of February, news of his death was broadcast across China. Only, the news was false: he was still on life-support. He died the next day, and his death was reported a second time over.

During epidemics, stories of misinformation are common. In Albert Camus' *La Peste*, an outbreak of disease is predicted, but the municipal government's response is too slow. 'Many concessions had been made to a desire not to alarm the public', writes Camus; he could just as easily have been talking of Wuhan as Algeria's Oran. China's opaque, commercialised brand of communism further complicates the

situation: rigorous state censorship clouds waters already muddied. As in Daniel Defoe's *Journal*, 'all was kept very private'. One day, writes Xiuying, it's announced that children run a lower risk of infection. The next, pregnant women and children are reported to be the most vulnerable. First the disease can't survive outside the body; then it's announced that the virus can remain active on hard surfaces for up to five days. The truth, slippery at the best of times, proves difficult to grasp ahold of.

While some meticulously compile statistics, rumours and conspiracy theories flourish online. This is a common feature of stories dealing with disease. Defoe, narrating the Great Visitation of 1665, simultaneously gathers statistics while taking note of the rumours that flourish faster than the disease itself. The same happens today. The BBC reports that the global death toll of Coronavirus has hit 3000. Meanwhile, The Sun publishes its lurid headlines: **'KILLER BUG SPREADS ACROSS THE WORLD AT UNCONTROLLABLE PACE'**. Prejudice is cemented, disguising itself as legitimate concern. Angela Hui, in her article for Gal-Dem, recounts how a fellow passenger on the tube changed seats after muttering 'errr... not sitting next to coronavirus'. These kinds of bigoted outbursts are symptomatic of a global disease that's been incubating far longer than COVID-19. Populism is just another kind of infection.

Disease fractures communities. But it also serves as a reminder of what we have in common. In Wuhan, amidst the chaos of a hospital ward, a young man is photographed reading *The Origins of Political Order*. On TikTok, trending videos depict life under quarantine; in

the absence of more immediate distractions, creativity is part of survival. Families find themselves spending more time together: with workplaces shut, writes Xiuying, 'notoriously absent Chinese fathers have been forced to stay home' and spend their days with their children. In *La Peste*, too, it is these fleeting glimpses of humanity that prove the most touching. Two friends slip through the city boundaries to swim in the sea; quarantined men and women dream tenderly of their absent lovers; people volunteer with a 'quiet courage' to help the sick. During the Florentine plague of 1629, records are kept of two sisters dancing joyously in a hospital. In Boccaccio's *Decameron*, ten young people gather and invent stories to while away the time under quarantine. Disease brings out the best and worst in people, but, as Camus writes, 'there are more things to admire in men than to despise'.

FILM

BORN IN SYRIA

The first five minutes of Hernàn Zin's 2016 documentary *Born in Syria* are a painful snapshot of the unjustifiable human tragedies taking place at international borders. Documenting the perspectives of seven children as they endure the journey from Syria to the EU, *Born in Syria* follows Zin's intimate 2014 *Born in Gaza* documentary with the same theme of highlighting the severity of the refugee crisis and challenging the idea of absolute borders. Uncertain of their citizenship, of where they will sleep that night, and of what could befall them at the next crossing, these children are never free of the tremendous power of territorial borders.

From Lesbos to Brussels, each child tells a different story of migration and the stresses inflicted on them, highlighting the counter-intuitive reality that comes with crossing borders and expecting life after the crossing to be the easiest part. With a million migrants attempting to cross the European border in 2015, the refugee crisis has worsened as the war persists. As a result, *Born in Syria* emphasises that the refugee crisis should be viewed as a humanitarian crisis instead of statistics which can be manipulated for political gain.

and the Inescapable Border

TOMI HAFFETY examines the implications of hard borders in the EU and Middle East in light of Hernan Zin's documentary *Born in Syria*

Marwan is the first child to be introduced. Walking seven hours to reach the Serbian border, the thirteen-year-old experiences hunger and injuries before he even makes it to receiving his papers. Although Marwan's is one of the more positive stories, it is obvious that every step of his journey is made more difficult by nations imposing barriers on the refugees themselves. They are monitored, screened and surveilled in a way that relocates the borders onto the very people whose mobilities are being restricted. The simple moments of Marwan's journey are amplified in this moving documentary, such as the first time he sees snow after reaching Belgium. A moving sequence of him watching snowfall is contrasted with extracts from a speech of Jean Claude Juncker's which describes Europe as a 'place of hope', a statement which seems contradictory from previous scenes of the mistreatment of migrants inside of Europe's borders. Plagued by memories of the Syrian war, Marwan's thoughts evoke the traumas faced by child refugees which are ignored by the policy makers who view refugees as a swarm to be kept at bay.

Arguably the most powerful scene is halfway through the film when Zin uses a collection of stills to capture the hopelessness of the Idomeni Camp

on the Greek/Macedonian border. Concentrating on the bleak fate of so many migrants, this scene exposes the powerlessness of the children who have been uprooted from their homes, friends and sense of familiarity because of a war they have no part in. This tragedy is perfectly embodied in the grey hue of the two-minute cut. Another story is Mohammed's, also thirteen years old and a resident of Idomeni. He hopes to be reunited with his mother, who he has not seen in ten months, as she undergoes cancer treatment in Germany. His story proves to be more harrowing than the others, as it portrays the cruel separation of families across Europe, facilitated by the rigidity of absolute borders and a nation's ability to exclude those who were born on the wrong side of a politically marked territory. Enduring the endless wait for aid, citizenship and news from his mother, Mohammed and his family remain stuck in a state of stagnation in the desolate camp while politicians exert territoriality as they debate the future of millions of migrants' lives. EU regulations changed in 2016 so that instead of receiving refugee status for three years, migrants would receive only one year of protection. The frustrations of obtaining citizenship under the revised rules are depicted in the story of Jihan, a teenage girl who has arrived in Berlin with her father in order to attempt to secure visas for their family living in Lebanon. It is later revealed that Jihan's attempts proved unsuccessful, and she is once again separated from her family by both political limitations and the physical border. Through showing Jihan's story, Zin presents a rebuttal to the nationalist argument that countries should be tightening their borders since he accurately portrays the near impossibility of refugees obtaining citizenship.

Until a crisis of this scale occurs, the idea of political belonging is something easily overlooked if one is fortunate enough to hold a secure citizenship. However, this documentary encourages a fundamental re-examining of what it means to live without that security. The seven children in this film are just seven in a population of millions who experience the uncertainty of forced migration. This microcosmic documentary offers a crucial perspective on the refugee crisis, the fate of borders and the urgent need for empathy for those who are desperately seeking safety from situations boundlessly more powerful than they are.

ANNIE METZGER
Untitled



CAEDŌ

READ

BENJAMIN CAMPBELL

An unobstructed sky once stretched above this land, and dragonflies caressed the standing pools that cut mirror-like, a portal from stars to silt, while ever-folding earth churned upon itself underfoot. Here. This spot of ground used to know the language of change, the grammar of dead things, of shifting, of dreams. Here we relished the morning dew that drenched us in a kind of grace.

Now a council estate stands in its place. The stone, so smug and uniform, is poured into our bones to force us to conform. Cement men send us bills for keeping up the cells, hoping to use that word as its first Latin verb against us: "I cut, I hew, I kill."

What they cannot know is how we'll make our fingers grow, now breaking green through pallid stone, returning roots back to our own, regenerating words once sown, cementing our touch, bone to bone.



TARA MONJAZEB
Untitled

TEAM



- President –**
Simran Divatia
- Treasurer / Events –**
Hassan Sherif
- Editor in Chief –**
Alice Devoy
- Senior Editor –**
Selma Rezgui
- Welfare officer –**
Ines Georgis
- Marketing Manager –**
Soma Sara
- Our thoughts editor –**
Anna Lamche
- Our thoughts sub editor –**
Georgia Good
- Film editor –**
Arthur Greene
- Film sub-editor –**
Olivia Daley
- Literature editor –**
Shanti Giovannetti-Singh
- Literature sub-editor –**
Maya Sall
- Music editor –**
Thomas Cury
- Music sub-editor –**
Nilo Jan
- Theatre editor –**
Sophie Cundall
- Theatre sub-editor –**
Roni Mevorach
- Art & Design editor –**
Sophia Cano
- Read curator –**
Sarah Ang
- Read co-curator –**
Shelby de Rond
- Look curator –**
Hannah Gorlizki
- Look co-curator –**
Jean Watt
- Listen curator –**
Nat Jones
- Listen co-curator –**
Seb Perera-Slater
- Creative director –**
Sam White
- Graphic designers –**
Yiyi Zhang,
Zlata Mechetina,
Esther Chang,
Moé Atsaduma

V

