



SAVAGE

JOURNAL

ISSUE #12

ORIGINS



Illustration by Lois Burton

SAVAGE journal
issue #12
origins

savageline.co.uk
[@savagelinejournal](https://twitter.com/savagejournal)

Cover art: Laurie Milton-Jefferies, Untitled

editors' note

This year, we saw everything grind to a sudden halt. COVID-19 put an abrupt pause to our daily routines and everyday interactions, sending many of us back to our childhood homes – a place of our own origins. It was, for many, a time of clarity: provoking us to reflect on what we have and what we don't, who we are and who we've been, and, importantly, who we want to become.

Whilst the pandemic has prompted some of us to look back painfully towards a past that we miss, it has also encouraged us to reconsider our present, ensuring we appreciate what is so often overlooked. Isabelle Osborne does the former, lamenting the closure of theatres in her article which celebrates the beauty of this art form. Meanwhile, Izzy Davies leans towards the latter, contemplating how the COVID-19 lockdown disrupted our daily routines and acted as the root of a nationwide embrace of bread-baking. Also drawing on the struggles of recent months, Samantha Lo considers how she has learnt to value happiness by reading Camus in these strange and uncertain times.

Origins are our ancestral beginnings. They apply to us all, occupying the space between forgotten time where new and unexpected phenomena surface. Origins signify the act and the place of creation. Turning to Genesis, the site of our biblical origins, Dawid Akala considers how religious texts have informed the literary canon, colouring the way in which we read all future texts. While contemplating her travels to sites of Jewish tragedy and displacement, Francesca Kurlansky considers her own origins and traces back her Jewish heritage.

Reflecting on ideas of personal and cultural origins, an interview with Greek-Cypriot artist Loukis Menelaou explores how the conflicts and borders of his hometown inform his art. In a similar vein, Lydia De Matos sumptuously examines the life and childhood of French director Jaques Demy, as represented in Agnes Varda's phenomenal biopic *Jacquot de Nantes*. In Our Voices, testimonies by various UCL students contemplate what 'home' means to them, considering questions of family, nationality and identity.

winter 2020

Origins can be attributed to both individuals and collectives; they can arise from a single thought, action or emotion, or a momentous wave of collective dissent. In her interview with Selina Robertson, the founder of Club Des Femmes, Helena Wacko turns her gaze towards the origins of queer feminist film collectives, tracing the history of the Rio Cinema in Hackney. Considering questions surrounding inclusion and exclusion in the art world, Cristina Libri discusses the pioneering Black non-binary artist Zanele Muholi, whose work tackles the long-overdue creation of a space for Black queer creativity. Also contemplating the exclusivity of the art world, Will Ferreira Dyke explores the bravery and 'Big Dick Energy' inherent in all art students at the humble beginnings of their artistic career. Art is a place of perpetual renewal, as new genres, movements and forms of expression originate time and time again. Casting her eye to the stage, Erin Croasdale analyses the rise of the Jukebox musical, which has given way to theatrical classics such as *Mamma Mia*. In light of the disco genre's origins in Black, Latinx and LGBTQ+ communities, Daisy Avis-Ward discusses the prejudices inherent in the Disco Sucks movement. Genres can also 'originate' in the private sphere; Tom Wheatley contemplates such ideas in his discussion of the origins of his own personal journey with mindfulness music.

We hope that this edition encourages you to look backwards. To cast your minds far beyond yourselves, and consider that which came before you in awe, speculation, or perhaps sobriety. More importantly, we encourage you to gaze towards the future, and, despite the adversities of this year, to consider what new origins you are formulating.

*With love,
Olivia, Sophia and Shanti*



our thoughts

music

art
&
design

literature

film

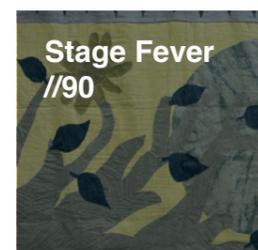
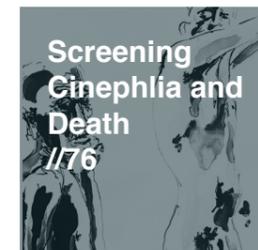
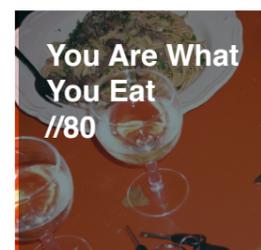
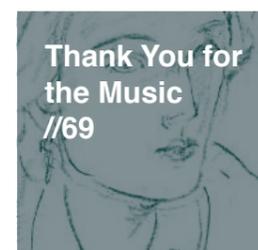
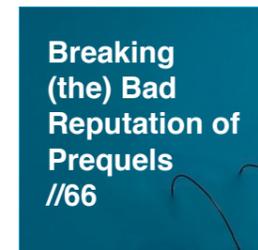
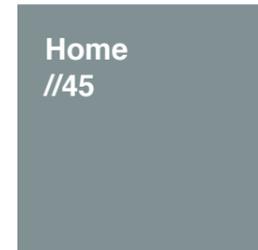
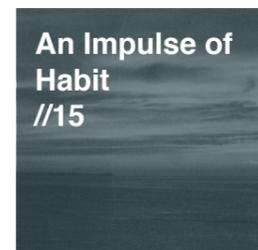
theatre

read

listen

look

our voices



children of ghosts

FRANCESCA KURLANSKY contemplates her Jewish heritage.

Thousands of years ago, my ancestors wandered through a desert. Six years ago, I walked there myself, lost as they were. The ancient rocks that we both touched somehow connected us over millennia. The desert dust thinly layered on my skin became part of me, just as it had become part of them. The front of my boots were scuffed white by the sand, just as theirs were on their journey.

Jews are a people of the book. Our selves are excavated from our holy texts – sacred interpretations by generations of Rabbis wrestling with the pages. We are dedicated to study, to debate, and to justice. To be Jewish is to be part of what came before, and to reiterate it.

I am following in the footsteps of Rachel, Sarah, Leah and Rebecca, and those of Ruth Bader Ginsberg, Hannah Senesh, and Judith Butler. I owe myself to lesbian Rabbis, to the young Jews I communed with and prayed with, and to teenage stargazing in a cold English field at Jewish summer camp.

It was a hot summer's day, and I was on a bright European street, friends in tow. In Lithuania and Latvia, we searched for a piece of ourselves that we did not know was missing. Walking the streets, we felt an echo of the presence of our people: thriving, bustling, making kneidlach for Shabbos dinner, and kugel for Shabbos day; trading, learning, teaching, joking, speaking our mother tongue. We heard intonations we recognised inside words we did not understand.

Walking through Vilnius and Riga, I saw myself as a daring secret. The museums commemorating World War II focused on the Nazi occupation's effects on the local population, with no reference to the complicity of Latvians and Lithuanians in the desecration of their Jewish communities. I felt like I was floating through the streets, invisible, forgotten; we felt like the children of ghosts left with no walls to haunt. We sought out content that explicitly referenced the Holocaust. We traipsed through harrowing accounts of systematic murder, book burning, and rape. We watched as locals threw beer cans into the skeleton of a synagogue, burned down with people praying inside.

We went here to discover our origins, but when we arrived, we had to reconstruct them. We pieced together the fragments ourselves. In preparation for the trip, I read Yaffa Eliach's *There Once Was a World*, a 900-year history of the Lithuanian village, once a Shtetl, Eishyshok. Once a predominantly Jewish population, there is now not a single known Jew left in Eishyshok, with all but a few murdered by the SS.

As part of the trip, we visited forests on the outskirts of the cities, where atrocities had occurred. Huge pines towered above us with very little view of the sky, and passersby chattered on their phones and walked their dogs; the normality of the place was chilling.

Children laughed and skipped where whole Shtetls were taken and shot. The souls of our ancestors resided in these trees, in mass graves they dug and climbed into with their own children. Forests like these show up intermittently in my dreams. In forests like these, I dream that I am my ancestors – that I am hiding behind trees, hoping not to be shot.

There was a lake in one of these forests, where we spent the day reading about Eishyshok and drinking beers. We laughed, we sang, we prayed, and all the while I felt the stirring of my ancestors' souls. Once again, 'Yerushalayim' – the Hebrew word for Jerusalem – was whispered through the trees; once again, the sound of Jewish voices mixed with those of the locals.

“The souls of our ancestors resided in these trees, in mass graves they dug and climbed into with their own children.”

I returned from Lithuania and Latvia a changed Jew. I was moved that I had never uttered a sentence in Yiddish, since most native Yiddish speakers were either murdered or too scared to continue speaking it. I was dismayed that I'd never read their books or plays, because they were never translated into English or were burned by the Nazis. I resolved to live more Jewishly, more Yiddishe, and to ensure that the legacy of my ancestors was not lost.

Because what other response is appropriate when there is such a disruption in the narrative of a people, when something so violent occurs that a collective sense of personhood is fractured? For years, generations have felt the reverberations of this fracture in the loss of our mother tongues. Many of us have stared at what have become foreign letters on a page. There is a profound dissonance in what the symbols mean to us, and what they meant to our ancestors. There are grandparents who, with great sorrow, have taken the decision to eradicate their culture, to speak a new language, and to never light the Shabbos candles again. They are consumed by a need to blend in, to go unnoticed. In light of this, it becomes clear what I must do.



Art: Anna Baumgart, Wearing Oupa

zanele muholi in the wake of the us election

CHRISTINA LIBRI discusses the pioneering practice of artist Zanele Muholi, whose work is integral to the long-overdue creation of a space for Black queer subjectivity.

‘The historical narrative that dominates discussions of Black female sexuality does not address even the possibility of a Black lesbian sexuality, or of a lesbian or queer subject’

- Evelyn M Hammons, 2000

Had it not been for the second national lockdown this month, Tate would have been revealing a major retrospective that is particularly fitting to the current socio-political climate: Zanele Muholi.

South African artist Zanele Muholi provokes questions and debate surrounding the space for Black queer representation within visual art. In the wake of the tumultuous US election, which has powerfully shone a light on Black representation within US politics, Muholi’s work has become more striking and important than ever. What can it tell us about where we are now?

The election of Kamala Harris as vice-president has broken boundaries in terms of what it means to have power in the US. But this is not the end-point of the conversation; it is only the beginning. Muholi’s art challenges and strikingly sits outside of current narratives surrounding Black representation in Western media. In *Miss Lesbian I* (2009), the first photograph in the *Miss (Black) Lesbian* series, Muholi uses their body as a canvas to confront the exclusivity of race and representation in visual art, the media or in politics: there is no space for a Black, queer, creative subjectivity.

This piece, upon first glance, scrambled my mind; the more you look, the more there is to uncover. Is it satire? Is it an act of self-celebration? Is it an appropriation? By placing themselves within a barren environment, Muholi confines an act of performance that appropriates the American flag, symbolising freedom and liberty, to this uncomfortable, unidentified space.

Their stance is rigid and unsettling, their hands unnaturally placed on their hips and one leg in front of the other, not to mention the extremely tight and restrictive bodysuit.

But in doing this, Muholi powerfully indicates to spectators where the place for Black queer creatives is in today’s socio-political climate; quite literally, it is nowhere. They stand in what looks like an abandoned warehouse, a fake wall behind them, on a begrimed floor with a half-broken empty chair. This half-broken empty chair, mundane as it may seem, to me illustrates a loneliness, a lack of anyone there with them, and a lack of anyone else like them.

Muholi not only pokes fun at the exclusivity of pageantry through the tiara on their head and the mocking sash that labels them ‘Black lesbian’, but satirises the very standard of femininity and womanhood that pervades Western media. In the canon of Western art history, representations of the Black female body are unbecoming, to say the least. They are either non-existent or covered up from head to toe, if not entirely excluded from images: either this, or they are fetishised in a kind of animalistic, savage embodiment (if you have any doubts, one need not look further than representations by artists such as Gauguin, Picasso, and Manet).



So when Muholi poses the Black LGBTQ+ body in this way – exposed, vulnerable, in a tight bodysuit bearing the American flag – they problematise pre-constructed notions of sexuality, gender identity and Blackness. Through embodying this stereotype, they are in themselves able to enter into a new negotiation; this act of performance allows Muholi to subscribe to mainstream narratives while poking fun at them.

Muholi as an individual has certainly found a space within the art world, having seen great international success in recent years. Nevertheless, as an archetype of the Black queer South African visual artist, Muholi has had to create an entirely novel space within art, one that critiques standardised artistic categories but within itself forges a new one. They create a socio-politically transgressive realm in art, contesting ideas of place and identity.

Tate has thus taken on a great responsibility in the decision to exhibit Muholi's work. Excited as I am to go and see it, where does it leave us? In a time in which the end of a Trump presidency is at last in sight, can we finally find an appropriate place for artists like Muholi to be represented in mainstream media, and adequately do them justice in such representations? Muholi's work, particularly in *Miss Lesbian I* (2009), must become our mirror, strikingly pointing out our shortcomings in terms of diverse representation.

We can only hope that this new era of American politics with a Black woman at its core can facilitate a safe space for a Black, queer subjectivity. Until then, however, we must look to and praise the uniqueness of Muholi's work in pioneering a new, unfamiliar space in art. I very much hope the Tate will give it the importance it deserves.

an impulse of habit

A Poem By YOSHIMI KATO.

on a crowded platform, to
visit my mother's mother:
"Petals on a wet, black bough."
Except this is not Paris,

where petals cluster.
Here: yellow tape, lines
for each coach door, parallel
to the white dragon on wheels—

のぞみ17
Bound for 名古屋

Of all poets, why think of
the Pygmalion
who spoke not my other voice,
left no footprint on the soils

from which he reaps the roots
for his ideal form?

He manipulates
words as modern images
of disarray. Works not here,

where haiku captures,
and tanka is harmony
of tones, not stresses.
Writing in my first voice
of a native memory:

A time for harvest
Golden yūzu laden with
The fall of sunshine

失敗作。
Atalanta, Eve, Icarus,
Ovid, Ulysses
clamour in their alphabet
for the space I try to carve

for my mother tongue.
He invades when I try to
bear the here and now,
without the looming iamb.
A toil I undertake, for

列にお並びください!

watashi ni kakeru kotoba wa gaikokugo.

Quote from an Ezra Pound poem:
"In a Station of the Metro"



Art: Amira Fritz, Papa: Alle von Denen



Art: Amira Fritz, Mama: Alle von Denen

how he came to be

HARRY SMITH contemplates Tom Rosenthal's music career.

Tom Rosenthal is a London-based piano-playing singer-songwriter who has, at the time of writing, one million, six hundred and eighty-five thousand, three hundred and ninety-six monthly Spotify listeners. In a human language: that is 1,685,396.

You would call Tom Rosenthal a singer-songwriter (and you would be right), and you would call his music piano-acoustic-pop-that-doesn't-take-itself-too-seriously. For reference, his 2011 debut album *Keep A Private Room Behind A Shop* includes such tracks as 'Toby Carr's Difficult Relationship With Tuna', 'Karl Marx in the Bath', and 'Pingu in the Igloo'. Broadly speaking, they only get weirder. I think possibly the silliest of his library, and definitely one of my favourites, is 'Watermelon', in which he sings the word 'watermelon' fifty-three times.

The reason I am talking to you today about Mr Tom Rosenthal is that I think he has rather unique origins in the music industry. Indeed, identifying musicians with similar career journeys is challenging.

Tom Rosenthal began his career on YouTube, writing songs for himself and for his other UK-based YouTuber friends, including Myles Wheeler ('itsamemyleo'), Adrian Bliss and Ryan O'Connor (previously 'pleasantryan'). The latter is important in the origin story of my relationship with Tom Rosenthal.

Picture the scene: it is 2013, I still have a Bieber-flick, and I am walking home with my next-door neighbour when she tells me the big news – Tom Rosenthal has done a song for a pleasantryan video titled Lonelier Than You! None of these words mean anything to me, but I do watch such adjacent YouTubers as OMFGItsJackAndDean, TomSka and danisnotonfire, so I delve into the music, and am not disappointed.

I immersed myself in his then recently released third album, *Who's That In The Fog?*, the videos for which showcase some truly wonderful animation and stop-motion. I was astounded by the sheer fun and occasional bleak truth inherent in the songs, but also their brevity. You will rarely find a Tom Rosenthal track that exceeds three-and-a-half minutes – his shortest track, 'Myriad of Troubles in the Old Blue Sea', clocks in at just 1:06.

What is also astounding about Tom Rosenthal as a musician is his sheer body of work; in a ten-year online career, he has released a whopping 145 tracks. This number includes eleven tracks from the cover album of reclusive artist Edith Whiskers, who has recently come to notoriety on TikTok. Her artist bio on Spotify explains, 'Some have compared her voice to Tom Rosenthal, but she maintains she's got a far superior tone,' and that 'Rumour has it she is already preparing her outfit for the GRAMMYS'.

It was a mere nine years into his music career that Tom decided to begin gigging, which was met with unsurprising glee from his colossal cult following. In March 2019, he kicked off his Europe tour with three nights at St. Pancras Old Church with his new band, consisting of a singing cellist and singing guitarist who accompanied him while he sang at his piano. The initial tour had eighteen nights in eight different countries and he now has thirteen shows planned for 2021, travel-restrictions permitting.

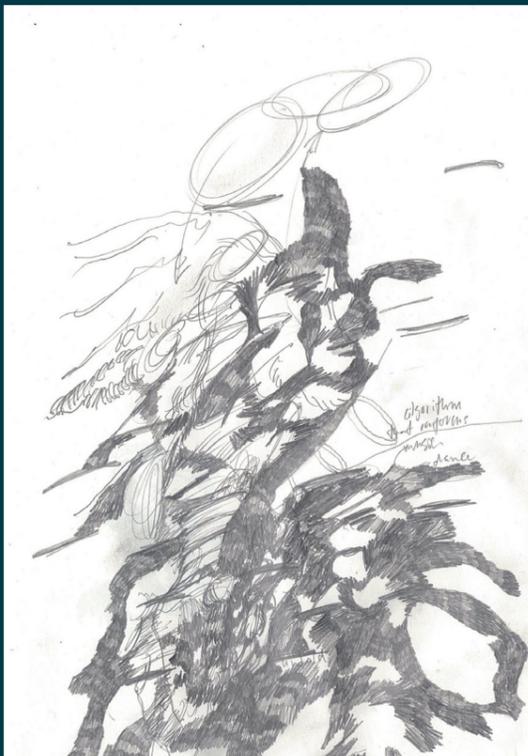
I had the great fortune of attending a practice gig three weeks before the opening nights of his Summer 2019 tour because I am a friend of the aforementioned singing cellist. It was a truly gratifying experience to see some music that is very dear to me played in the intimate basement of a nice pub in Hampstead, and to meet the man behind the music I had listened to for over five years.

Tom is a genuine man who does not take himself too seriously and likes putting faces to a potentially very faceless following. When he seems to have saturated all of the cuteness from his two daughters, he often turns to crowdsourcing footage for his music videos, which serves only to make it one of the most wholesome Internet communities available.

I think the reason that Tom Rosenthal is so universally beloved by his followers is that he is a very normal, very weird guy. He does not pretend to be anything he is not, he gets his young daughters to help him write songs and sell merchandise, and he makes fun of Melania Trump and Jeff Bezos in song. Also, because he recorded a sombre rendition of Destiny's Child's 'Bootylicious'. That too.

Tom Rosenthal strikes me as a musician who has come a very long way and become very successful without really changing what he does. This is not to say his music has not developed, but he has transformed from a relatively unknown musician, to featuring in Vodafone adverts and publishing a book written by his four-year-old.

And yet, he is still making idiosyncratic songs for YouTube about fruit, carbohydrates and men with funny names.



Art: Jake Walker, Untitled

queering the screen

HELENA WACKO explores the origins of queer feminist film collectives in London by speaking to Selina Robertson, founder of Club des Femmes.

'We wanted to create a space where queer feminist cinema could be shared and discussed with friends,' begins Selina Robertson, a film programmer and writer. In 2007, Robertson joined forces with the filmmaker Sarah Wood to ensure that queer feminist cinema was given the attention it deserved. The result: Club des Femmes – a queer feminist film curatorial collective. Since then, the project (expanding to include So Mayer, Jenny Clarke and Alex Thiele) has undertaken ambitious collaborations with the ICO and the BFI.

Club des Femmes is by no means the first collective of its kind in London. An elided history of pioneering queer feminists' film programming and curation in 80s East London is being uncovered by Selina, as part of her PhD research at Birkbeck. Hackney, a hive of diversity, was a hotspot for the fight against Thatcherism, the National Front, and a powerful source of community activism striving for working class rights, feminism and racial equality. This tumultuous period in Britain gave birth to radical creative work and initiatives committed to overcoming hierarchical power structures – and, inspired by the women's liberation movement, a group of female filmmakers, artists and activists, set out to do precisely this at the Rio Cinema.

The Women's Media Resource Project (WMRP) was formed in 1983, with the intention of 'creating an alternative to male-defined cultural propaganda'. With it, a radical space of imagination opened for women to create and partake in audiovisual media. The WMRP was a prime example of how alternative forms of creative production and collective engagement pushed against lack of representation in existing institutions. The WMRP's overarching purpose – to educate women, level the playing field and increase the presence of women in a male-dominated industry – was largely informed by the feminist tenet 'the personal is political'.

Specifically, the WMRP aimed to draw in minority groups, hosting women-only film screenings and workshops in video and sound. Perhaps the most ambitious venture of the project was undertaken in 1987, when they co-organised the First National Women's Video Festival, an event which spanned seven days and multiple venues across London. Despite its success, this pioneering festival – which displayed submissions from lesbian, queer and female creatives – took place only once.

The Rio Women's Cinema initiative, set in motion in the early 1980s, likewise sought to explore the relationship between feminist ideas and film. Informed by ideas of collaboration and representation, this second female-led project at the Rio viewed film and film-programming as a powerful tool for social and cultural change. Through film screenings and discussions, issues such as equal pay, abortion rights, violence against women, as well as questions of language, representation and women's omission from the canon of film history were explored. In doing so, the collective took an active stance against sexism, homophobia, racism and fascism. 'Women came to the Rio from beyond Hackney to watch historical and contemporary films by women and participate in feminist debates,' explains Selina. By linking films and ideas of change, the group incited critical conversations which fuelled the radical culture of Hackney in the '80s.

These grassroots initiatives at the Rio, along with others, such as Sound Kitchen (the first 16-track women-only recording studio in the cinema's basement), carved out a remarkable collective environment for queer and female creators and audiences alike. Not only did they break conventions and create a special space for audiences back in the '80s, but the initiatives also set the stage for future audiences and curators. 'We are standing on the shoulders of these pioneering female initiatives', Selina says of Club des Femmes, drawing several links between it and the former collectives. She especially notes the similar foundational principles, centering around a circular, rather than hierarchical structure of collaboration, and creating an open space to explore intersectional feminist discourse. Not only does the spirit of the queer feminist collectives continue, their legacy of inclusive and diverse audiences still carries on at the Rio today. The cinema remains a central actor, providing local communities with a stake in culture and vibrant politics.

'Acknowledging the history of lesbian film collectives and the importance of intersectional feminist film curation and programming in the 80s is crucial if we are to understand why we have the queer feminist film culture we have today'

Selina asserts. As part of her PhD, she has collected an oral and visual history of this time, and even brought back original collective members, along with new audiences for a queer feminist screening at the Rio in early 2020. The result was an exploration of the shared memory of the collective's origins, wherein the connection between the history of '80s queer feminist cinema and its contemporary iteration was made. Ultimately, Selina concludes:

'Queer feminist programming and curation continues to push back against the hegemony of our normative film culture, and by carrying on creating alternative, affordable, and open spaces we keep cinema culture radical and intersectional, including the politics that come with it.'



ORIGINS

FILM



ORIGINS

FILM

Art: Marcos Wolodarsky Newhall, Untitled

interview: bleached nights

EVA COULIBALY-WILLIS chatted with DJs **HASAN, DAN** and **ROD**, founders of **BLEACHED NIGHTS**, to talk events in the era of **COVID**, working together, and a return of the community club scene in London.

At 6pm on a Monday evening, rain is hammering against the windows of Let It Roll Records. In the middle of the UK's second lockdown, the streets of Kentish Town are deserted. Inside, Dan and Hasan wrestle with cables, plugging in turntables, an intimidating-looking mixer, and a hefty UV light. They form two of the DJs who have just founded Bleached Nights, alongside Rod and Nico, preparing for volume seven of their weekly livestream, of which I am tonight's guest DJ. 'Feel free to take pictures of our scatty setup,' Hasan tells me. Scatty it is indeed – the broadcasting arrangement comprises an iPhone 5 precariously sellotaped atop a pile of record crates – but they're getting used to it.



Hosting events in the era of COVID is tough, but interestingly, a complete reset of the club scene has opened up opportunities for the Bleached team that didn't exist before. Pre-pandemic, Dan, Rod and Hasan worked together on Synergy, the treasured club night hosted by UCL's Electronic Music Society at Corsica Studios. 'We knew from that that we could work together,' says Hasan. 'Dan would organise the DJs, I'd do the marketing, while Rod was creating the artwork. I've always said that was the best part of my uni experience, so I'm happy that I don't have to leave that behind.' But before, aspirations of forging their own way onto the scene seemed near-delusional in a world monopolised by London's mega-clubs like Fabric, Printworks, Village Underground, and E1. 'They're always gonna get the biggest artists, and pay them the most,' Hasan tells me. 'You'd continue to go to big nights, big nights, big nights. But they just started to feel really commercial. I know that's a buzzword,' he adds. But Dan agrees: 'It always was. The production value's worth it, but it just seems so theatrical.'

Instead, the boys want to build up a community of local DJs, creating a more intimate experience. 'We just want to make a good night,' Dan remarks. 'It doesn't have to be about big names. Hopefully, we'll be able to give small artists a chance to be heard.'

Now they can put their own spin on things, orienting their events around their favourite electronic genres, from slow, marching techno to bouncing breakbeats, all the way up to high-energy, 200BPM footwork. 'It's nice to have more control over it, though it leaves the door open for more problems. But that's the fun part!'

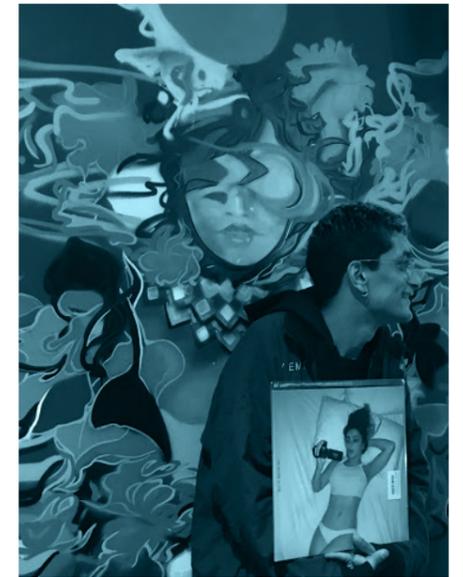
The trio is lucky to have found in Let it Roll Records a physical space to which Bleached can be rooted, something not all promoters can lay claim to at the best of times. 'We could always stream from home, but we're glad this is allowed in lockdown. It gives us a sense of reality, doesn't it?', Dan tells me as we flip through record crates. At the southern end of Kentish Town Road, Let It Roll serves coffee in the daytime. It's a welcoming space, with a comforting scent of the vinyl sleeves, old and new, which are displayed floor to ceiling. Out the back is the garden, recently redecorated with festoon lighting and local artworks. Even the junk-filled basement (despite its ceiling being a hazard for anyone taller than 5'8") would make an ideal space for a post-pandemic event. 'Everyone's gonna be gagging for a party when this is over [sic],' Hasan says, his eyes gleaming with excitement. 'People already have a sense that there's something going on here. There are always people passing who'll be like "ooh, this looks funky."'

In lockdown, Bleached is confined to live-streaming. But 'that way, people have something to watch, and we have a small platform when we come back,' Dan explains. Having a weekly slot also gives them an opportunity to experiment as DJs. At 7 pm, Bleached Nights goes live, and viewers begin to tune in. Mixing on Traktor DJMs, Hasan plays around blending familiar pop melodies with breakbeats and plenty of juicy bass. Later, Dan takes over with his signature techno, before delivering some hardcore heaters. Following my guest mix, graphic designer Rod arrives to change up the vibe completely, mesmerising us with a slow and hypnotic 110BPM set.

The group's enthusiasm fills me with optimism for what the post-corona party scene might look like. Big-budget, theatrical club extravaganzas might be a thing of the past for now, but from over here, I sense something special is about to emerge.

Tune in to Bleached Nights on Twitch every Monday at 19:00 GMT.

Twitch/Facebook/Instagram/Soundcloud @bleachedclub @bleachednights





a corruption of the mind

SOPHIA CANO explores Plato's condemnation of ancient Greek poetic performances and contemplates its relevance to the morality and censorship of contemporary mass media.

Poetry in ancient Greece was one of the most popular forms of entertainment of the age. Often dramatised with musical accompaniments, and performed to crowds of tens of thousands, it was arguably one of the earliest forms of what we now call 'theatre'. In his seminal Socratic dialogue, the Republic, Plato outlines one of his most controversial arguments to date. Condemning the poetry of his time for corrupting audiences by fostering immoral behaviours, he proposes that all such poetry should be banned in the conception of his ideal city.

Art: Sophie Lourdes Knight, The Knot

In Book III, Plato poses a familiar question: won't somebody please think of the children? In discussions of how best to educate the men of his ideal city, he concludes that poetry which instils a fear of death must be banished, for fear that young boys will grow up to be 'sensitive and soft'. Plato goes on to condemn the dramatic expressions of emotion for which Homeric epics and tragedies are so well known. Plato fears that such unrestrained expressions of human emotion that encourage 'womanly' and therefore 'inferior' behaviour will surely make a bad impression on young boys; he cites Achilles weeping and lamenting in Homer's epic *The Iliad* as a prime example of a bad role model in dramatic storytelling. Plato further expands on this idea of emotional men in tragedy being 'womanly' – and therefore conducting themselves in a 'shameful' manner – in Book X. Plato argues that though we derive pleasure from a stirring performance of unfiltered grief, any self-respecting man would refrain from conducting himself in this so-called manner of a 'woman' in his own life, and would instead aspire to remain 'calm and enduring' as would be the so-called conduct of a man. This leads Plato to conclude that poetry is a corrupting force which encourages immoral behaviour, and therefore has no place in his ideal city.

Setting aside Plato's misguided and heavily misogynistic understanding of the 'appropriate' behaviour for a man, the crux of the issue remains thought-provoking, even today: what is the role of theatre and other forms of mass media in moralising and educating audiences – particularly, younger generations?

It is clear that Plato's primary concern here is the way in which these performances shaped the morals of a society; Plato feared that they would negatively influence youths through the normalisation of certain actions and traits. It is tempting to disregard Plato's arguments as 'ancient history', irrelevant to the modern-day – many have dismissed his arguments as too authoritarian and severe, having no place in contemporary, democratic societies such as our own.

However, these poetic performances which so troubled Plato were arguably the precursor to the mass media of our current day, which (much like ancient Athenian poetry did) transmits cultural ideas of what is normal, acceptable and desirable through film, television, advertising and more. It is, therefore, naïve to assume that Plato's ideas are irrelevant to our own times; rather, they have been adapted in line with our own equivalent to the ancient Greek poetic performance.

Consider, for example, the banning of theatre in England, 1642, condemned as indulgently sexual and unserious by the Puritans. Or, similarly, the strict theatre censorship laws in 19th-century England, which led to the suppression and banning of plays such as Oscar Wilde's *Salome* (1891) and George Bernard Shaw's *Mrs Warren's Profession* (1893), due to sexual subject matters that were deemed 'vulgar' and morally objectionable. Were the fears of the Puritan Parliament and the Lord Chamberlain who vetoed these plays not comparable to Plato's fears that 'immoral' behaviours of characters in performances could lead audiences to imitate such behaviour? Examples from more recent years are equally applicable; consider also the highly debated arguments on the correlation between children playing violent video games and enacting real-world violence. It is also worth noting that the censorship of media to specifically protect children is considered perfectly acceptable in our contemporary society, with the existence of film and game ratings, the watershed after 9pm on British televisions, and family-friendly 'radio edits' of songs on the radio. Could these laws not be considered a watered-down version of the state-censorship of the arts proposed by Plato?

The jury is still out on how much responsibility mass media platforms have to produce content that is morally appropriate for children, and indeed whether media can be 'immoral' at all. While some would take a stance comparable to Plato and argue that artists and creators have a responsibility to make content that would not be 'corrupting' to any young, innocent ears that stumble upon it, others argue that it is the job of parents alone to protect their children from inappropriate media. Whether or not you agree with Plato's controversial theory, it is surely the case that the ancient thinker had more relevance to our own day than we perhaps give him credit.

In light of the rocketing number of coronavirus cases and the subsequent lockdown policies across the globe, many have turned to literature as an escape from the current distress of the real world. It is, therefore, deeply paradoxical that in these peculiar times, Albert Camus' *The Plague* - a novel published in 1947 about an uncontrollable pestilence that spread throughout the French Algerian town of Oran - has received a resurgence of attention and praise from the literary community. In Camus' *The Plague*, the daily lives of the townspeople of Oran are suddenly disrupted as they are forced to quarantine, and suffer from a lack of hygiene supplies; all things that very much resonate with us in the coronavirus era. However, despite being a harrowing tale which revolves around torture and death, an optimistic reading of the novel might suggest that Camus' novel highlights the importance of love. Although sometimes overlooked in times of normalcy, love is one of the foundations of happiness, and a profoundly important quality. In *The Plague*, Camus teaches us how to appreciate the blessings which we often fail to acknowledge in ordinary circumstances. These lessons, I believe, seem exceptionally valuable in the current Covid-19 context.

camus' cure

SAMANTHA LO considers what Camus' *The Plague* can teach us about our response to COVID-19.

The Plague offers a touching illustration of how love – romantic or communal – manifests itself in trying times. In a description of the townspeople's lives, prior to the epidemic, Camus writes that:

'Men and women either consume each other rapidly in what is called the act of love, or else enter into a long-lasting, shared routine.'

Even if two people choose to settle with each other, they resign themselves to a 'routine', a relationship which lacks both purpose and sincerity. With the arrival of the plague, however, inhabitants of Oran are given an opportunity to come to terms with their genuine feelings. Married for years but never entirely 'sure the marriage was all that could have been desired', Dr Castel and his wife come to the startling realisation that they cannot live apart after being separated for a few days due to the lockdown. Perhaps it is this 'ruthless' epidemic that enables the couple to register the importance of their partner, and truly understand what it means to love another.

The plague not only awakens the characters' depth of feelings for their loved ones, but also inspires a kind of selfless love for the community. A good example is Raymond Rambert, a journalist who, despite only visiting Oran to research his upcoming article, finds himself imprisoned in an unfamiliar town when the city shuts its gates. He begins to relentlessly contact the local authorities and even underground smugglers in a desperate attempt to return to his wife in Paris. When he finally manages to confirm an escape plan, however, he decides to stay and assist Dr Rieux in fighting the plague, conceding that 'if he went away, he would feel ashamed of himself'.

By placing the good of the community above his personal desires, Rambert shows an innate kindness towards the residents of Oran, for people with whom he has not the slightest connection. Instead of glorifying Rambert's self-sacrifice, Camus employs humble language to depict the subtly heroic actions of the journalist, showing how – as clichéd as this might sound – it is in turbulent times that the brilliance of humanity shines through.

However, to recognise the true origins of our happiness in the time of a pandemic does not mean that we are forgetting those who are in pain. Camus portrays the aftermath of the epidemic, in which some characters are not fortunate enough to see their loved ones after the city reopens its gates. Even for those who pull through, Camus comments that this outcome 'could not be one of a final victory'.



Art: Annice Fell, Cocoon

Whilst listening to the cries of joy rising from the town, Dr Rieux realises that such happiness is 'always imperiled', and that a fatal disease must rise again some time in the future. Camus' sinister remarks are not a prophecy of the coronavirus pandemic, or any other epidemics that followed the novel's publication. Rather, they are reminders that happiness, although possible even in hopeless circumstances, is temporary. Perhaps the best way to come to terms with this unsettling fact, then, is to try to appreciate the present moment and make every day count.

Writing this article in my dorm room, I feel gratitude for being healthy and safe and for having friends to reunite with once the pandemic winds down. These are things in life that I have always taken for granted, and it takes watching the mounting death toll on the news and having to eat delivery food alone to recognise how blessed I have been. COVID-19 has allowed me to appreciate the origins of my happiness, in the same way that the plague in Camus' Oran taught its citizens what love is.

the first last day

A prose piece by ROSA APPIGNANESI.

In the beginning, she was afraid of all the time that was unaccounted for. We have invented ways to remind each other of our existence, opened a third eye that could be held in the palm of the hand and turned inwards. Unblinking, obsessive, we participate in our own voyeurism. She felt that to be alone and unmarked in the Now is time that dies with you. She is scared of the mortality of this uncounted time, unprepared to leave without a trace when it is Now, and Now we are gazing upon this generation's sunset...

There are moments, though, where we cannot escape from its anonymity. There's one over there, from this morning, when she was staring at the metal chair by her window and her open camel coat was spread over it, looking as if it had the broken limbs of a cubist nude. There's the one after that, when she grabbed it by the arm to put it on and three grey moths flew up like dust. And she called them those hungry butterflies that know all about dismembering as she stuck her little finger through a new hole in the lining, and felt pleased that she can be poetic even under the fruitless circumstance of the lonely morning hour. She remembered holding it by its waist and queuing for twenty minutes in the last-minute panic before all the shops close. She turned the plastic card over in her palm, traced her fingers over the name, eventually typed out the PIN... And the thought was all luminous and clear as only brave new thoughts can be: I can have whatever I want. If I want this, it is that which I will have.

She pulled the belt on her coat closed with two hands and looked at herself in it, then she locked her apartment and took the stairs to street level. She plucked gazes like grapes from the bunch; four today as she walked to work, one more than yesterday, one less than the day before. The picture of her coffee was a little blurred. Thirty-seven people saw it in the first minute with two expressing jealousy. She would be mapping the nonchalance of that blurred macchiato onto her future glass of wine. Round and round goes the aesthetic of 'the woman who doesn't care.' She worked, but she'd rather not talk about that. Her colleagues spoke about getting locked down, about going back to New Zealand or Canada, but she'd rather not think about that.

Thomas messaged her so she went to him. She had met him on an app. He took pictures of her on an analogue camera which he scanned and uploaded onto a blog. His parents paid half his rent 'so he didn't have to be a sell-out' and could 'focus on his art'. She watched the lights that swam in the darkness from his window, high up on the fourth floor. Like an eye on a flame, she couldn't stop looking. 'You going back to London when the shit hits the fan or what?', he called.

Can't remember what she said... She could see him cutting lines on a glossed photography book, the type that is left on the coffee-tables of co-working spaces in Shoreditch. She had leafed through it before, waiting for him to return from work. It had lots of women's bodies tied in exquisite knots; suspended, gorgeous, pale and bound. The book was called Tying the Knot: photographic meditations on Kinbaku. When he came in half an hour later, he had said, 'the artistry is just amazing, don't you think?' and took it from her hands. Her first thought was that he must masturbate to it, but in reality, the book had barely been touched. Some pages had been stuck together as she turned them. It made her realise the sort of man he wanted to be, and she despised him for it. He handed her a rolled up 20 and she took the line that cut across the model's torso. Oh, true apothecary! Thy drugs are quick, she thought. 'That's Shakespeare, right?' he said. The lines were blurring between many things, so she lay back and said nothing. 'You should know I only sleep with intelligent women.' He added. Sleep with. What a coy, stupid phrase. They took off her clothes and he photographed her from a high angle. Then he touched her body with broken hands. She took photos to upload of the flame-like view, tied the belt of her coat, and left. You can have whatever you want, the thought said, all luminous and clear. The world was changing. And this... her first last day.

disco demolition night

DAISY AVIS-WARD deconstructs the misconceptions around the so-called 'Death of Disco'.

Chicago 1979. Donna Summer's 'Love to Love You Baby' punctuates the 79-degree heat with 16 minutes of sultry vocals and reverberating basslines. *Saturday Night Fever* has mutated into a plague as John Travolta's tight white flares and gyrating hips adorn every teenage girl's bedroom walls. With mirror balls, 3-piece suits and a 'four to floor' tempo, from 1970-1979 disco took over the world; it became the language of the weekend.

Yet the version of disco that has become cemented in our cultural knowledge is the Woolworths disco of fancy dress, garish hippie prints and too-loud hen parties. It is a faint memory of its birthplace in the NYC clubs, a place of respite for Black, Latinx and LGBTQ+ folks to dance, love, and come together.

Disco was the first genre to put openly gay, Black artists like Nile Rogers and Sylvester in the Top 100. Then, seemingly overnight, America went from disco-obsession to disco-rejection. Chicago, July 12th 1979, Disco Demolition Night: forever known as the day that disco died.

The 1970s saw rock music and disco exist in West Side Story-style opposition. Rock was disco's antithesis, and fans quickly branded it a threat to the genre's supremacy – and in some ways, it was. The media had popularised a 'widespread perception that disco was taking over'. WKTU, New York's first all-disco radio station, became the most popular station in the country after switching from rock – with others following suit. American magazines began to cover the 'disco phenomenon', seeking to explain disco to a predominantly white, straight, male audience. With headlines like The Village Voice's 'The Dialectics of Disco: Gay Music Goes Straight', the media painted a narrative which echoed the general political discourse: homosexuality was a plague, spreading clandestinely through America, and disco was the soundtrack. The retaliation to this was the rallying cry, 'Disco Sucks', emblazoned on t-shirts and chanted by crowds. The epithet 'sucks' is no coincidence either, connecting disco to being both overtly sexual and gay. The story of disco is not one of a sudden change of heart, it is of a mounting opposition to a genre which celebrated the marginalised.

Now back to Demolition Night. 70 thousand people flock to Chicago's Comiskey Park to attend the event organised by Steve Dahl, a rock DJ who was fired when his station went disco. Instead of going home, having a cry and sticking on some Led Zeppelin, it became Dahl's mission to destroy the 'disease' that was disco. For just 98 cents and a disco record, you could watch the White Sox game and see Dahl blow up some vinyl. A pretty sweet night out, I know. But people didn't just show up with disco records; Chaka Khan, the Isley Brothers and Parliament vinyls were thrown in too. This wasn't just about disco, it was about what disco represented to many: Black culture in the mainstream. In the words of Dahl himself, 'It's not so much the music that I dislike, it's actually the culture.'

Dahl's 'harmless stunt' fuelled a near-immediate rejection of disco in the media. A string of copycat DJs imitated Dahl's antics, devoting whole sets to dragging needles across Boney M. records. The entertainment market may have been oversaturated with disco, but the violent discontent suggested it was more than just the music. By 1980, the Disco Sucks juggernaut had steamrolled the genre out of the charts. There wasn't a procession or a funeral, but the death of disco was solemnly felt.

To those in the scene, though, disco never really died – it just went underground. Emerging from disco's ashes, in the city of its supposed death, came early house music such as Frankie Knuckles' raw disco edits, Jackmaster, Derrick May and Italo house. Disco paved the way for techno, house and synthpop with producers sampling, extending and mixing from disco tracks. They still do today. Listen for cowbells on Dua Lipa's *Future Nostalgia* and g-funk guitar in Daft Punk's *Random Access Memories*. Even the first hip-hop track in the billboard top 100, The Sugarhill Gang's 'Rapper's Delight', was a literal homage to disco with a sample from Chic's 'Good Times'.

'Disco Sucks' was more than just an ironic t-shirt; it was a thinly veiled homophobic slur justified by the right to cultural critique. It was two words expressing the desire to remove LGBTQ+, Black and Latinx culture from view. And though demolition night never killed disco, it distorted its legacy. Our cultural memory has leached onto cheesy hits and *Saturday Night Fever* – a whitewashed, controlled, heteronormative falsehood of disco. Disco was about euphoria and freedom; for many, it was a rare space for authentic expression. So, whilst you may cringe at your mum 'grooving' round the kitchen to Gloria Gaynor, please, think of a more creative insult than 'it sucks'.

the baking pandemic

IZZY DAVIES explores why home bread-making took off in the UK's first lockdown.

In the UK's first COVID-19 lockdown, flour flew off the supermarket shelves and our social media pages filled with home-baked loaves. Unlike flour, pre-baked loaves never suffered from such shortages, suggesting that the British public were not after bread, but were craving the act of baking. One of the most popular loaves attempted was the slow-fermented sourdough, a favourite of middle-class brunch eateries everywhere. But what were the origins of this newfound obsession?

By June 2020, over a quarter of the English population was furloughed, creating nationwide waiting and uncertainty, comparable to the 2009 recession. Working at this time, anthropologist Bruce O'Neill found that exclusion from the workplace isolated people from society, and from the possibility of forming social relationships. Social scientists have tried to theorise these experiences of chronic waiting, arguing that when the experience of everyday life declines radically, the painful predictability of everyday activities weighs on the individual as a 'burden'. During lockdown, baking bread helped fight these feelings of drift, as people tried to stay positive despite the daunting stretch of time spent in isolation.

These feelings of boredom can manifest as active, dynamic processes. Martin Frederiksen, an anthropologist studying young, unemployed men in the Republic of Georgia, found these men gave themselves tasks to break 'time loops' and create structure while waiting for employment. Baking, particularly sourdough, offers this structure. It requires various check-ins throughout the day, as well as the week spent cultivating and feeding the starter. The loaf requires time, troubleshooting and persistence to ensure an edible outcome – it is far too easy to create a dense, dry or sticky loaf. The baking process, then, creates structure in the seemingly endless loop of lockdown.



Desire for structure is well-documented in studies of waiting: in informal work among the retired in Romania, for example; in community-based work among unemployed people in slums in Mumbai; and in volunteering among asylum seekers in Ireland, where people use volunteering both to escape the tedium of waiting and to assimilate themselves into Irish society. This desire to socially integrate recalls another reason why people turn to making bread: its longstanding associations of care and sociality.

Bread is a core part of the Euro-American diet. It is ancient and longstanding – there is archaeological evidence of the preparation of bread over 14,000 years ago. We may fondly remember primary school packed lunch sandwiches, with crusts lovingly cut off for the fussy among us – a clear example of care manifested through preparing and sharing bread. There is evidently a longstanding association between bread, sustenance and care – perhaps it's no wonder people are so inclined to bake during times of upheaval and isolation.

UCL professor Daniel Miller coined a theory of food-shopping as a form of 'lovemaking' – enabling us to express love and care through the consideration of people's likes and needs, and giving accordingly. Understanding the baking and sharing of sourdough in this way – as a means of producing and manifesting social ties through care – reveals it as a method of creating kinship. Sourdough is unique in how it is passed around by many people, potentially over many years, through a living starter. If uncared for, the starter will die, and so will the years of care and community within it. This is reminiscent of Kula exchange rites, where ancient shell jewellery is passed around the Trobriand Islands in Papua New Guinea. Both rituals create and embody a social chain, as they are passed around and exchanged through society. It is common to send a finished loaf back to the giver of one's starter, creating a reciprocal exchange of gifts, as well as expanding a web of social connections to friends, family, and neighbours.

French sociologist Marcel Mauss described Kula rings as 'gifts', and sourdough is no different. It too forms alliances between us, perhaps more effectively now as we are physically isolated from one another. Baking and sharing bread stem from the basic human urge to connect with others; they are the perfect way to reintegrate into local communities. The origins of these acts are wrapped up in notions of self and communal care, gifting, and sociality. As Aimée Bryan remarks in an interview with Positive.News, 'bread is about care and support... It's days of work they're handing over to you. It means a lot'.



Our Voices Home

Our Voices is a space for students at UCL to write freely about their experiences, sharing realities that are overlooked, stigmatised, or misunderstood. We hope to provide a platform where students are able to tell their stories and be heard, drawing attention to issues that many of us face, despite perhaps feeling alone. In sharing these testimonies, we aim to raise awareness, and help foster an environment of understanding, solidarity, and support at UCL. For this edition, we have reached out to students to share their feelings about 'home'.

With the UK undergoing a second national lockdown at the time of this edition's writing and production, the concept of 'home' has been on our minds now more than ever. Home should always be a place of comfort, a safe harbour of rest and repose. Traditionally, a home provides shelter from the external stresses of the outside world, a sphere in which indolence is celebrated, hailed and encouraged. Yet this year, as we found ourselves confined to our homes, this space has sometimes felt suffocating, numbing and inescapable. For the many UCL students moving to London from elsewhere in the world, 'home' is an evolving phenomena, or sometimes 'home' once meant a certain place, and now means somewhere else. The question of, 'where is your home?' can cause some to look back in wistful nostalgia, and others to recoil with nervous uncertainty. Some may see home as a static, unchangeable place from their past, whilst others regard it as something they have chosen, a space to which they have paved the way themselves. We hope these testimonies inspire you to contemplate your own home – where is home for you? Who occupies that space which you call 'home'? Is home one place, or many? Perhaps home for you is not a matter of location at all, but an intuitive, imagined space occupied by memories, culture or family.

I remember sitting by the windows as the time tick-tocked its way towards my impending departure, watching the planes soar across the sky like monochromatic comets searching for new planets – and I remember thinking how strange it was that, like in a dream, everyone I knew was leaving the city and dissipating across the world, many of us about to create time capsules within time capsules, back in the places we grew up in.

After a few dozen times of being asked, 'Are you currently back home?', an automatic 'Yes' began to tumble out in my habitual haze – but if you can hear the slight hesitation or see my fingers pause from typing, it's not because I don't know where I am, or that I'm not grateful that I have a place to stay in. It's just that home to me is not only a location, but a condition of comfort; one that's as transient and fleeting as the flicker of each lived moment. Being embraced, held and made space for is being home, but the doors swing open and shut each and every day, leaving me unstable even with two feet on the ground.

I keep searching for somewhere to belong to – in the areas I live, in the people I meet, in the body I inhabit. Some days, I find myself in a gulf of cold silence, a spectre in a haunted house, passing through the walls and hearing disembodied voices sundered from their living, breathing entities. The people next to me are far away; the people far away are even further. Other days, I materialise into being when we gravitate towards each other or pixelate ourselves through invisible wires, eyes crinkling up behind hidden smiles as we remember that we're orbiting around the same sun.

Maybe we'll always oscillate between being vacuous and whole; maybe the search for some kind of solace never goes away. Still, I'll light the lamps, lay the table, and open the doors at each new place. And I'll hold on to those moments when we can be together, letting the smoke rise from a small fire that we tend side-by-side, knowing we've found a place to settle, even if it's just for the night.

Nicole Fan



Artist Louise Bourgeois famously claimed: 'We are all prisoners to our memories.' Much of what affects us in the present is thanks to the layers of what has happened in the past. The inherited conditions that we are born into exist primarily within our family dynamic and the place of our birth. We come to know ourselves through these structures.

'We grasp at symbols, talismans, triggers of association to what's forever gone.' Chris Hraus in I Love Dick

My Home is my memories and the symbols that trigger them. When I go home to the US, I often try to think of how I can take home with me. Can I carry home in my back pocket?

I had a childhood filled with all the lightness a child could ever wish for. A childhood full of campfires, and firework lit skies, of fireflies in mason jars, and of the lightness, the brilliance of my parents' love for one another and their children.

Home will always be where my parents are. Prior to my conception, they built me a Home. They didn't realize they were doing this. In fact, this Home was built for them prior to their births as well.

We often categorize ourselves and others by our 'Homes'. When meeting new people, one of the first questions is almost always, 'Where are you from?' However, instead of describing our personal perception of home, we often respond with a place on a map. Our personal histories and narratives are embedded into these geological places.

Folkways are the usages, manners, customs, and morals that are practised unconsciously in every culture. We all inherit a cultural collective memory. We try to 'decode' this cultural memory as a way to understand ourselves. There is often an aching sense of physical separation from our birthplace. This leads to distance having the power to create feelings of nostalgia, anxiety, and loss. Do we romanticise our birthplaces or homes in an effort to preserve them in our minds and memories? Is this romanticism really about the past or is it more about the present? Is it a way to escape our present?

Meg Klosterman



Having grown up as an expat in Dubai, I've always experienced a nervous feeling when someone asks me a question along the lines of 'where are you from?' or 'where is home?'. My brain frantically attempts to figure out the best course of action: do I say where I was born, what about where I was raised, or do they mean where my parents are originally from? Sometimes I'll reply 'I don't know' with a laugh, which in turn earns me some questionable looks. There is just no straightforward answer, I normally have to end up explaining my whole life story to someone who simply wanted to categorise me into a geographical box. I am what is referred to as a third culture kid: someone who was raised in a culture different from that of their parents or of their native country. Nationality has always been such a confusing algorithm for me.

One thing I am often asked is if I speak Arabic, or better so 'Dubain'. Aside from being able to count to 10, I cannot speak the language of a place where I have lived for 12 years – you would understand if you sat through the same Arabic lessons I did at school. As a British expat going to an international school, it is hard to become well versed with Arab culture. I never experienced a typical Arab lifestyle.

Nevertheless, living in Dubai, a cultural melting pot, has given me the amazing privilege of experiencing and living within an array of various cultures and customs. It is strange to think that I belong to so many places, but at the same time not one place properly. Despite my insatiable desire for a home which is constant, I think the notion of a physical location equating to a 'home' is expiring. The ambiguity derived from my supposed identity crisis has added to my sense of self, allowing me to easily adapt to new situations.

Rianne Shah



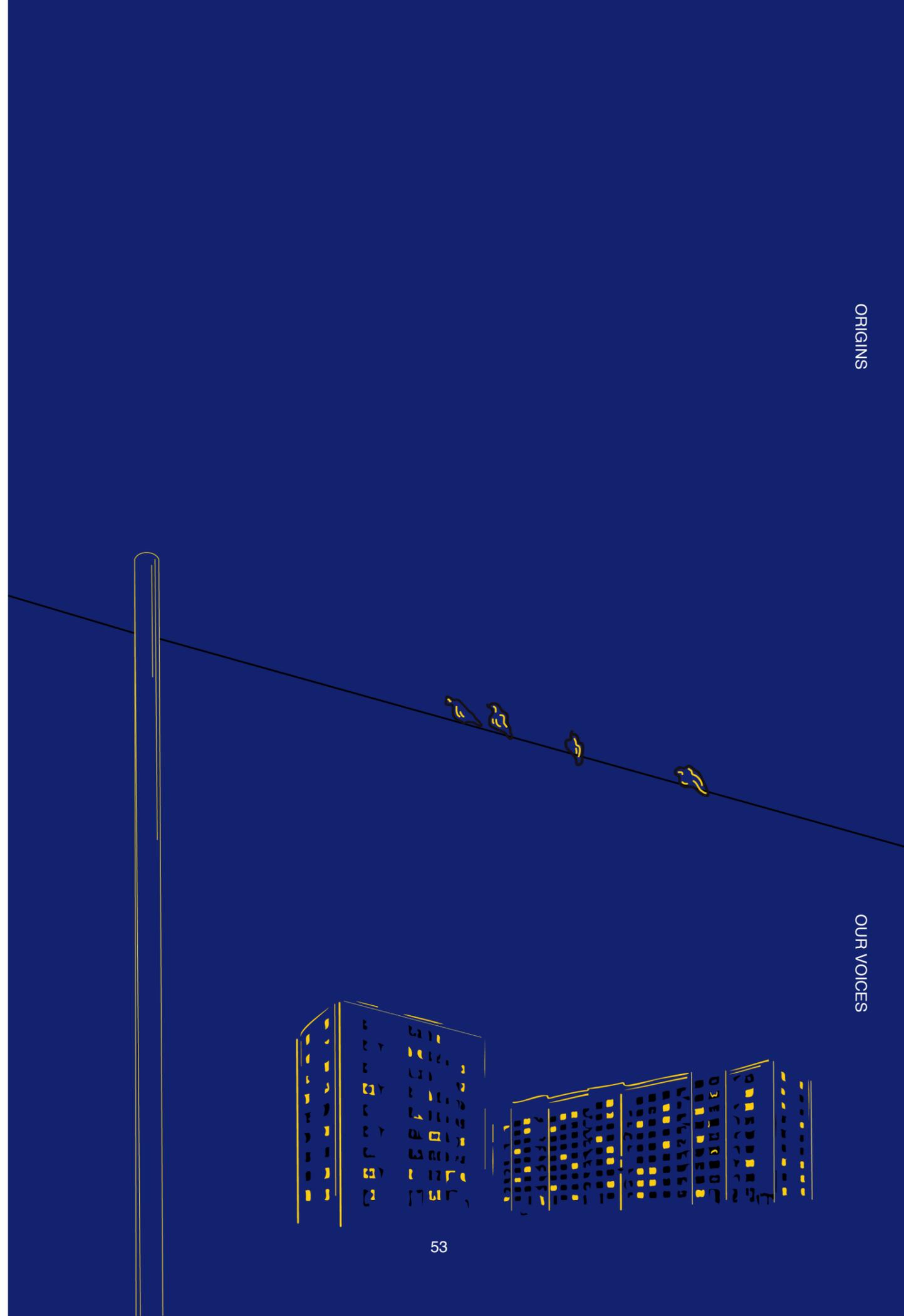
When I think of Romania, it's a waltz. A tide clawing at the sand, back and forth, back and forth. Finding no answers, looking for none. My home country repels me and tugs me back at the same time. It's difficult for me to accept my Romanian heritage, which comes as no surprise. I've always had trouble accepting parts of myself – my attraction to girls, my innate shyness, my too-feminine breasts.

I know the ashy streets near Piața Romană by heart. The crumbling 19th-century buildings with paint flaking off, the tattoo parlours tucked between second-hand shops, the reek of urine on the sidewalk. I know the streets where nobody respects the speed limit and the busy boulevards that glow under Christmas lights from the 1st of December. There's that McDonald's where teens vomit in the bathroom after clubbing in the Old Town. There's the tiny art gallery on Bulevardul Magheru, on the ground floor of a Communist apartment block which will likely crumble at the next earthquake. Chewing gum on the sidewalk. Women in colourful skirts selling flowers for two lei in the subway station. Pigeons perched on overhead cables.

I haven't stepped foot in the subway in almost a year. I imagine I'd still know the way – a muscle memory trained by taking the same route home every day after high school. I remember the pastry store we used to stop at, and how the pastry would flake onto our jackets or cling to the edge of our lips. I remember the spots on the sidewalk that would frost over in January. We'd hold onto each other so we wouldn't fall.

There's an untranslatable noun in Romanian that describes the feeling of missing someone – or, in my case, an entire city. Dor. 'Mi-e dor de tine,' you would say. 'I've got dor for you.' Before I moved to London, I didn't understand how you could love something and decide to leave it all the same. But I do now. Love just transforms into dor. It never really fades.

Cristina Arama





I'm used to the concept of 'home': the place where one grows up, where their family and friends are. As someone who lived in the same small town for 18 years, that was my home too; but it was a home I wanted to escape.

While I was still home, I used to sing my lungs out to lyrics like 'we've gotta get out of this place if it's the last thing we ever do', 'don't look back into the sun', 'run rabbit run', like there was something bigger and better waiting for me, outside my comfort zone; because of that, I was not happy at home. I was living tinted-visioned, wanting to escape from home (not to be misconstrued with wanting to get away from my family and friends, because I never did).

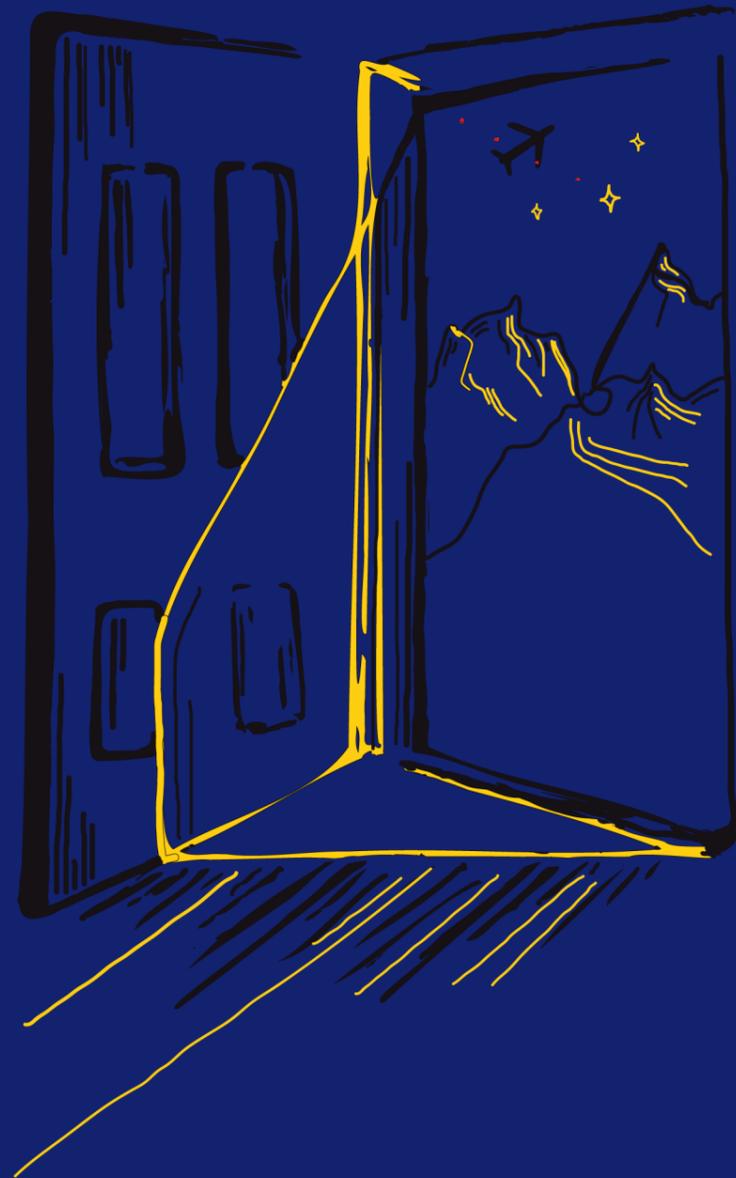
Beginning with 2020 onward, I was still not happy at all at home: stress from final exams and just the idea of leaving my town behind didn't seem so right anymore, since I was actually doing it. Was I ready to leave it all behind?

I remember, before leaving, looking through pictures of my best friends and I and crying in my room. In my head, I thought I would miss the people, but actually I was crying because I was leaving behind the times we had, when we had no worries and we were free.

Now, three months since I left, I don't miss my 'home' as much as I thought I would. After escaping the mandatory welcome-to-the-UK quarantine and getting rid of 'stranger in a strange land' syndrome, I actually feel at home, even 2000 miles away from my hometown (although UK settlement paperwork might have also helped with that).

Of course, I miss my family and friends, but we know each other by now like the back of our hands. I'm never alone; they are with me wherever I go. Therefore, my 'home' is not a person, nor a place, it's a feeling I can experience even far, far away from my actual home. As long as I am safe and free and loved, I'm 'home'!

L.X.



Illustrations by Helena Spicer

the creation of adam

GEORGIA GOOD considers Michelangelo's *The Creation of Adam*, exploring why such depictions of divine creation are so enduring in an increasingly post-theistic world.

Early in the sixteenth century, Michelangelo went to Rome. Four years later, he had completed an epic cosmology, at once vivid, exalted, palpable and heroic, that spans across the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. It plays out above our heads, with *The Creation of Adam* (c.1508–1512) at its heart. *The Creation* is an icon of the Christian creation story.

Today, we live increasingly in a post-Christian, post-theistic world. We look to science to explain our origins, to evolution and the Big Bang. Even believers are less and less likely to cite the Genesis story as literal truth. Yet *The Creation of Adam* is etched into popular culture; it is one of the most recognised, replicated paintings of all time. So if we've rejected Abrahamic aetiology, why is the Creation so enduring? If God never reached out to Adam as Michelangelo's does – if neither ever existed – why does it still captivate?

Art: Joy C Martindale, Here Comes the Sun

The answer is in the hands. At the centre of the fresco, the hands of God and Adam are outstretched, their fingers almost, but not quite, touching. This is a highly ambiguous act: are they reaching out or letting go? Does Michelangelo capture man's first-ever breath, or the moment just before it all begins, suspending the pair forever in a kind of divine non finito? It seems as though Adam is alive and awake, meaning God's work is done, so He should now be moving away. Yet instinctively, we assume they are reaching towards each other. This could speak to our own religious impulse – our desire for spiritual meaning, purpose and fulfilment, enduring even in a scientific age. The need for meaningful contact – even just the touch of another hand – may be stronger than ever in an alienating modern world. As modern viewers, we may be retreating from God – so why do we feel ourselves willing the pair to touch? Perhaps, after all, we are still unsure of what we want.

Typically, God's creative power is evoked by his *digitus paternae dexteræ*, the finger with which he passes life into his creation. Yet in *The Creation*, the space between their fingers is equally charged. Less than an inch across, this space is delicate, yet monumental; electric, yet enigmatic. We are drawn to it. We are still trying to define it, and to let it define us: to tell us who we are, how we came to be, what there was before us.

We cannot deny *The Creation of Adam* in the way we can deny its inspiration. We may reject the reality of theological narratives, but we cannot dismiss their aesthetic legacies; these are the fabric of the human story, our all-encompassing, tangible, variegated roots. *The Creation* may not shed light on our spiritual origins, but it does speak to how our spiritual searching is inextricable from art. *The Creation* is part of a story that reaches beyond the Sistine Chapel, beyond Rome and Catholicism and the fresco tradition, across time and space and encompassing all human beginnings. Like Michelangelo's God, artists not only create, but communicate – they instruct, moralise, philosophise. They shape our identities, our values and hierarchies. We need only look to Harmonia Rosales' *Creation of God* (2017) to see their power to do so. Here, the artist 'flips Michelangelo's script', sublimely reimagining *Creation* with Black female bodies. Just as Michelangelo recreates the Genesis story, his own version is recreated. Our origins – artistic, existential, human – are fluid, ever-evolving. They exist in the negative, the just-beyond-reach: the space between the hands.

Even the secular eye can see this, if only metaphorically. If it distils all humanity into Adam and anthropomorphises philosophy as God, *The Creation* becomes universal; it articulates our greatest metaphysical questions. It speaks to our insatiable curiosity, to know our origins and ourselves. Even the classically idealised Adam reaches for something beyond himself, for something transcendent.

In other elements of *The Creation*, we can trace the creation of God, as well as ourselves. The angelic figures and robes from which He emerges recall an anatomically accurate brain (or possibly a uterus): God, it seems, comes from us. Indeed, Michelangelo's God is accessible, humanised, within reach. *The Creation* is radical: it literally levels Adam and God, placing them on the same pictorial plane. Breaking tradition, God is not elevated, and neither figure is standing on earth. Both are horizontal, suspended, exposed and equal. We are invited to compare their bodies, to see how they mirror each other. We are led to consider the synonymy of man and God. Both, after all, are creators. Just as God forms Adam from the earth, Michelangelo conjures both Adam and his God. Now revered, with this work a place of artistic as well as religious pilgrimage, Michelangelo himself is deified – as an artist, and a creator figure.

the origins of the weird and the eerie

ALEX HEWITT explores the unsettling racism at the heart of H.P. Lovecraft's 'weird' tales.

The Weird and the Eerie by Mark Fisher is a brilliant essay that has played on my mind ever since I first read it. It is the kind of literary criticism that creates a 'before and after' effect, changing the way you interact with the world, and I have found myself boring many a partygoer and date with my discordant ramblings on Fisher's wonderfully original work.

In the broadest possible strokes, Fisher defines the 'weird' and the 'eerie' as distinct but interrelated aesthetics that disrupt the hierarchies 'which we have up until now used to make sense of the world.' Fisher suggests that this disruption (which can be caused by anything from time travel to a 'weird' encounter with an alien, undead, or non-human force) allows us 'to see the inside from the perspective of the outside.' This inversion of perspective is, to me, the most compelling aspect of the 'weird' and 'eerie' and it provides an invaluable tool to explore everything from posthumanism to the ecological humanities to queer theory.

Fisher discusses a range of artists but he credits H. P. Lovecraft as the originator of the 'weird', suggesting that his work introduced a specifically 'weird' form of ontological dread and epistemic breakdown to the horror, sci-fi, and pulp genres. This makes sense, Lovecraft was an incredibly influential writer. But it's here that Fisher's text misses the mark most egregiously. Because, throughout his discussion of Lovecraft's obsessive fixation with 'the outside' and his pantheon of Cubist monstrosities, Fisher fails to make any mention of the author's virulent racism.

To be clear, there is no argument to be made for separating the art from the artist with Lovecraft. To do so would create a woefully incomplete understanding of his work. Racism and a crippling fear of miscegenation are integral to Lovecraft's version of the 'weird' aesthetic and he frequently employs the language of white supremacy to describe his narrator's 'weird' encounters. One need only look at Lovecraft's poem 'On the Creation of N****s' or his description of an increasingly multicultural New York in 'The Horror of Red Hook' as 'a babel of sound and filth' to understand the centrality of racism to his writing. And the coextensive nature of Lovecraft's racism and his fiction's 'weirdness' makes Fisher's failure to engage with the former all the more puzzling.

Combined with the fact that all nineteen of the artists that *The Weird and the Eerie* primarily discusses are white, this means that Fisher renders a painfully lopsided and incomplete image of the aesthetics he seeks to define. I mean this not only in the sense that the aesthetics' racist potentialities are effaced but also in the sense that the perspectives offered by people of colour have obvious relevance to the topic. If the 'weird' and the 'eerie' are fundamentally about otherness and the outside looking inward, then why would you not consider the work of people who, as a result of colonialism and white supremacy, have been symbolically assigned that position of alterity by dominant cultural forms?

Take Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, for example, whose titular character is one of the most succinct examples of the 'weird' ever created. Or Carmen Maria Machado's *Her Body and Other Parties* (admittedly published a few months after *The Weird and the Eerie*), which is overflowing with fascinating permutations of the 'weird.'

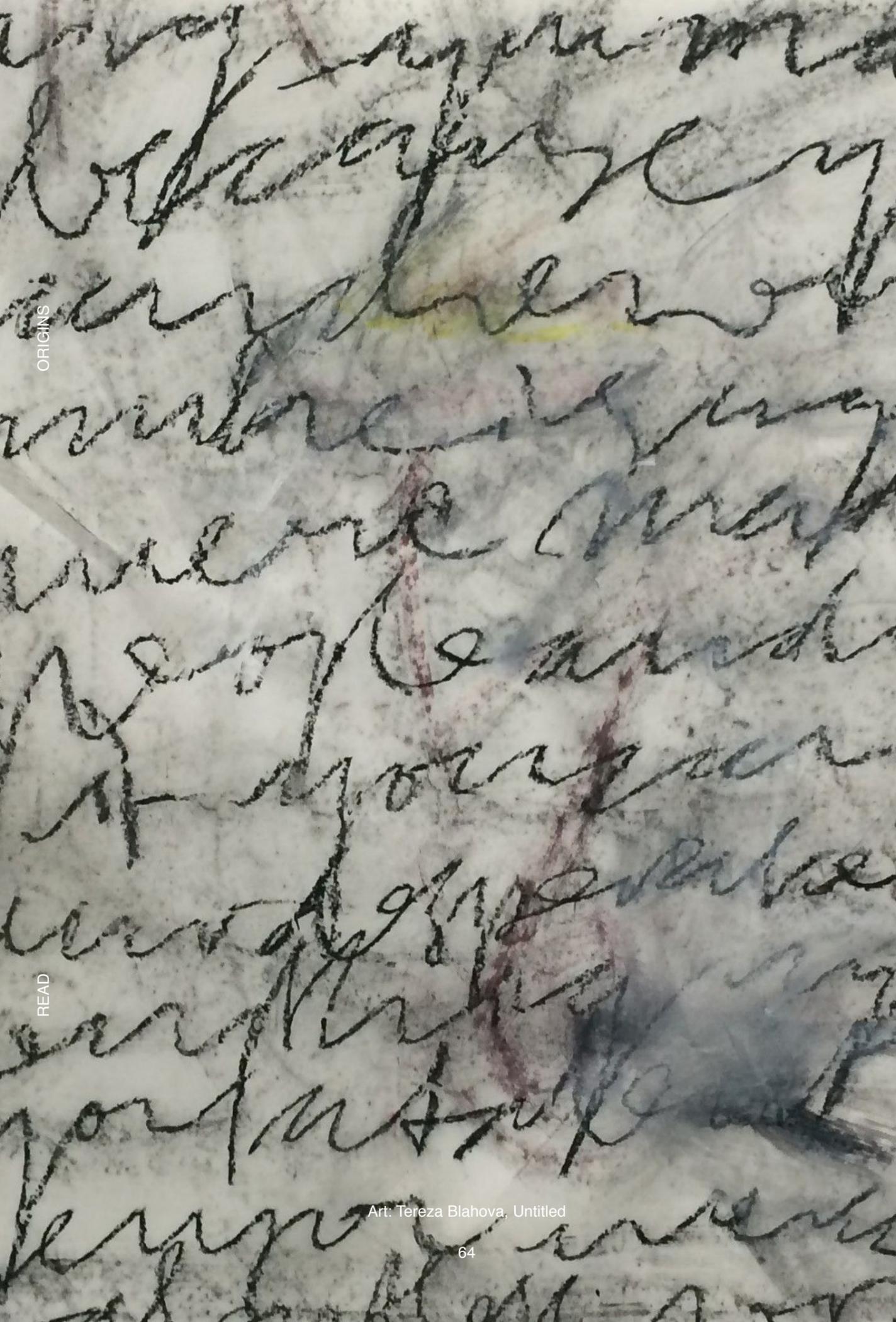
Elsewhere, Ted Chiang has written some of the most brilliantly 'weird' and 'eerie' tales of recent times; perhaps the best of which is his beautiful *Story of Your Life*. In both Chiang's story and *Arrival*, Denis Villeneuve's incredible film adaptation, the narrator is employed to translate the semasiographic language of a recently arrived group of Lovecraftian aliens. As she begins to decipher their language, her linear perception of time starts to completely unravel; an event that Chiang wonderfully mirrors in the story's fragmented form.

In a more direct example, Lovecraft received a makeover this year in Misha Green's television series, *Lovecraft Country*. Centring on a group of Black protagonists, *Lovecraft Country* manages to simultaneously pay homage to and parody Lovecraft's work, intermingling his classic tropes with the more mundane – but no less terrifying – horrors of police brutality and segregation. This interrogation of Lovecraft's racist legacy, aside from being immensely enjoyable, offers a new vision of the 'weird', one that highlights the bewildering otherness of the white supremacist worldview from which the aesthetic originates.

So whilst Fisher's delineation of the 'weird' and 'eerie' remains useful, it can only function as a deeply flawed primer. And as the aesthetics continue to evolve, we can reach for examples of the 'weird' and 'eerie' that transgress the racist limitations of the modes' origins.



Art: Dyveke Bredsdorff, *The Rim*



Art: Tereza Blahova, Untitled

from stars

A poem by CARLA BELLOCH ARANGO.

Take an atom, any atom in the universe, and trace its origins back to the stars.

We're haunted by the echoes of our own fires burning in the night sky;

what we call anger is just the brutal aftershock of our birth.

Wonder no more at the harsh beating of your heart, the tension in your chest, the heat within your soul.

We are all products of explosions, what else could one expect?

You clench your teeth together, and galaxies collide.

Scrape your bloodied knuckles against the edge of the world, and watch constellations spin out of reach overhead.

You feel your rage could rip stars off their perches in the heavens, disturb their orbits and propel cosmos into chaos.

That flame inside you could reduce asteroids to dust.

It's the butterfly effect:

every act of violence is but a ripple of a supernova, and that's why the taste of iron lingers in our blood.

But if we are born from stardust, then we must not forget that from the savage blasts we came from we created stories, and guides, and beacons to light the way.

breaking (the) bad reputation of prequels

MIKOŁAJ GÓRLIKOWSKI explores the phenomenon of prequels, focusing on the spin-off to *Breaking Bad*, *Better Call Saul*.



Art: Louise Oates, Untitled

Prequels are a tricky format to get right. It really is a double-edged sword; you create them for people who acclaimed your previous work but who expect something that will feel not only equally brilliant or even better, but simultaneously fresh and familiar. Some prequels are controversial, others are universally hated. It is very rare that prequels are praised, especially when they provide origin stories for great shows.

Whilst this prejudice towards prequels is not always unwarranted, it is a shame that they have been tainted by such a bad reputation. Conceptually, it seems counterintuitive to go backwards, rather than forwards in time. But if we look more closely, origin stories not only open up new opportunities for storytelling, but can also reveal how the past is treated in the fiction we create.

Luckily, we don't have to solely talk in the abstract, as there is a prequel so excellent, not mentioning it would be a dirty move worthy of its protagonist.

Better Call Saul is the origin story of the infamous lawyer Saul Goodman, one of the supporting characters of *Breaking Bad*, the legendary 2008 TV drama about a chemistry teacher turned New Mexico's deadliest drug lord. Besides redeeming prequels as a genre, *Better Call Saul* also sheds light on what makes them so entertaining and captivating.

From a creative standpoint, one of the most difficult aspects of making a spin-off is the constant balancing act between creating a story which is both fresh and familiar. How does one work out this conundrum? Try *Better Call Saul*. *Breaking Bad* was a show about drug-dealing, murder, and illegal empires. In its prequel, we are welcomed by fluorescent-lit, early 2000s office spaces and sleek law firms, which completely subverts our expectations. The creators Vince Gilligan and Peter Gould, however, don't fully abandon their roots. Through Saul, they address many of the themes prevalent in the original show. The temptation and danger of untapped potential, forfeiture of morals and decency in the name of fulfilling one's ambitions; it's all there. In this way, *Better Call Saul* achieves novelty through its dramatic aesthetic changes, whilst not letting us forget that it is a descendant of *Breaking Bad*, rephrasing the predecessor's theme of character transformation in yet another unlikely setting.

Prequels are a unique spectacle, because of their structure and their key feature: we know how they end. By definition, origin stories trace a character's transformation into someone we already recognise. Watching such a story unfold feels like being a foreteller; this can be a blessing or a curse. Sometimes we know that the fate of a prequel's character is sealed. Then, their ambition, dynamism or moral struggle become heartbreakingly fatalistic in the face of unavoidable destiny. This is the case in *Better Call Saul*, where we know what is going to happen to the titular protagonist. Soon, the saturated colours that are now iconic of the prequel will turn cold and bleak, as the world will contort, wail and finally break, break bad.

A prequel is therefore often more reflective, unrushed and nuanced than its predecessor. Origin stories are a genre that can break conventions: trite questions like 'who did it?' or 'who will die?' no longer apply. Alternatively, there is more room for subtlety; *Better Call Saul* illustrates the poetry of being bored in a retail store or the sheer frustration of having your coffee cup be too large for the cup-holder in your car. It honours the beauty of ordinary life that had no place in *Breaking Bad*, a show characterised by its intensity and brutality. Enjoying prequels uncovers a hopeful truth about us as viewers: we don't only seek excitement and conclusion in storytelling. Instead, we are ready to sometimes stop and think — reflect on the nature of the inevitable, find meaning in the slight movement of a high-heel, or a forlorn smile.

Finally, origin stories are compelling perhaps because they are unmatched in addressing a very important part of our lives – the past. It is the past that shapes us. It is the past that might feel bitter or serene. Ultimately, stories always imitate life, what it means to be human. The desire to explore the origins of the heroes of our tales is a sign that we want to bring them closer to us and closer to life. Prequels are still an emerging trend and who knows what kind of narratives will take such a form in the future. But one thing is certain: origin stories exemplify our continuing attempts to bridge the gap between fiction and the audience, by acknowledging how everyone is a product of their own past, and that there exists a place where it all started – one's origins.

thank you for the music

ERIN CROASDALE explores the origin of jukebox musicals and the reasons for their lasting popularity.

Just over a year ago, the cast of *& Juliet* workshopped the show's soundtrack to a rather apathetic crowd in Manchester's Trafford Centre's food court. The idea of pop tracks such as Katy Perry's 'Roar' and Backstreet Boys' 'Larger Than Life' being slotted into a musical bemused me. 'Why didn't they just write new and original songs?', I initially remarked, skeptical of the play and its premise. So, when I went to see it performed at London's Shaftesbury Theatre a few months later, I was pleasantly surprised, not only by how much I enjoyed it, but also by the seamless placement of Max Martin-penned pop songs into a Shakespearian narrative. The critics appeared to be equally impressed, with the musical receiving a mighty nine Olivier award nominations, and winning three on the night, including 'Best Actress in a Musical'.

& Juliet's success shows the continuing popularity of jukebox musicals. This genre refers to productions which use pop songs, rather than an original score, for their soundtrack. The ubiquitous nature of jukebox musicals today means that you can probably pick an influential band out of thin air and presume that a musical using their songs will have, at some point or another, been featured on the West End or Broadway. But what are the origins of this genre?

Compared to other types of musicals, the phenomenon of the jukebox genre is relatively new, having only appeared on the stage over the past twenty years. Its origins can be found in the most successful jukebox musical of all time; the one that will come to mind first. That's right, *Mamma Mia*. The show, centred around ABBA's greatest hits, debuted in 1999 and after 20 years has become the West End's seventh longest running show, grossing \$4 billion worldwide. Even outside of the world of theatre, *Mamma Mia* is beloved; its 2008 film adaptation with a star-studded Hollywood cast was a box office smash, despite some of its main stars lacking musical skills.

Although a couple of disco-inspired jukebox musicals graced the West End in the late nineties, it was *Mamma Mia* that catapulted the genre into the spotlight, causing the traditional musical format to be challenged. Unsurprisingly, entering into the 21st century, many producers sought to replicate the jukebox model. Although some ideas did not exactly live up to the success of the ABBA inspired hit (the Spice Girls inspired *Viva Forever!* (2012) made a £5 million loss), others have helped to firmly cement the jukebox musical genre as a West End staple. *We Will Rock You*, for example, spent twelve years at London's Dominion Theatre, with a storyline accompanied by the hits of Queen.

While many jukebox musicals follow the *Mamma Mia* model of creating a fictional plot, or adapting a recognised theatrical storyline in the case of *& Juliet*, others take the music of a singer or band and use it to tell the true story of their life. We can see the origins of this type of jukebox musical in the hit show *Jersey Boys*, which dramatises the career of 1960s group The Four Seasons. This autobiographical style has continued to flourish in recent years, with the musicals being written about the singers Carole King and Tina Turner, using their own music as the score.

The easy appeal of the genre to the mass market is key to its continuing success today. Everyone can name a few ABBA songs, and most of us have probably heard the pop hits featured in *& Juliet* on the radio. The element of familiarity attracts audiences and ensures that at least some loyal fans of the singer or band will come along to see the musical open. Tickets are sold and fans are won over by the music, regardless of the storyline. It's a win-win for both the producer and the humble audience.



The origins of the jukebox musical can be found in the success of *Mamma Mia*, a play which still dominates the genre today. Many jukebox musicals based on songs by the likes of Madness, Whitney Houston and Take That have been and gone while *Mamma Mia* has continued to reign. *& Juliet* may be a rival for the time being, but with two film adaptations and an immersive experience in the O2 Arena, there is no doubt that *Mamma Mia* will continue to thrive as the longest running jukebox musical. Is it the luscious Greek island setting, or the strong female protagonists that have led to *Mamma Mia*'s success? Maybe, but most of all, it's those wonderfully catchy ABBA songs that make us go and see the show again and again, revolutionising a whole new kind of musical genre.

Art: Yage Guo, Untitled

interview: loukis menelaou

LOUKIS MENELAOU graduated from the Bartlett's Architecture BSc this year. He is currently working as a design researcher and artist assistant. JEAN WATT spoke to him about his work *Oceans Apart*, which was featured in our January 2020 exhibition.

JW: Oceans Apart is an exploration of your identity as Greek-Cypriot. Can you talk about your motivations behind making this work?

LM: *Oceans Apart* is a piece that investigates the relationship between borders and identity. The war between Turkey and Cyprus in 1974 left an island divided into two very distinct areas. Inland, the two areas are divided by a buffer zone and a set of two walls. Polarizing beliefs and opinions have widened the gulf between both sides, and as the years pass, it becomes more difficult to create a connection between the two. The sea around it however knows no boundaries. The fact that Cyprus is an island creates an interesting 'counter-argument' to the borders created within land.

The piece in the gallery is designed in the same way. Entering from two different sides you witness the same film. The folds of the piece, informed by the ebb and flow of the ocean, strategically reveal and conceal moments of the film to create two different narratives. With this piece, however, you are encouraged to walk around it, witness both sides and become an outsider; in a way you are swimming in the sea around the island, hoping to create moments of reflection and reconsideration.



JW: How else do ideas of identity and origins come up in other areas of your art (or architectural) practice?

LM: As an architecture student, I think there is an interesting correlation between space and borders. A lot of my research work focuses on the Cypriot problem and identity. I have worked on a collection of paintings to express my complicated relationship with my hometown of Nicosia. Beyond that, my written work as an architecture student talked about opulence and frivolous entertainment as a defence mechanism towards the atrocities of war. In a way, I think I always work with a subconsciously embedded fascination towards polarities. North vs. South, Turkish vs. Greek, Ocean vs. Land.

JW: There is an interesting relationship in this work between the personal and the political. Do you feel this is an important tension for you?

LM: Growing up in Cyprus has let me develop a unique understanding of my own (confused) identity. I think this is true for most Cypriots. When you grow up in a town, where the physical borders are drawn for you, with concrete walls (a political decision), it is quite difficult to not be personally fazed by it. Again, it comes back to the idea of polarities. I think that is what fascinates me the most. The tension that lies between two polarities. And in a way, the personal and political can be viewed as two polar opposites when, in reality, they are both sides of the same coin, especially in a country like Cyprus.





JW: How do you feel the form of your work relates to its meaning? You speak about the folding of the piece creating a physical as well as a symbolic conversation.

LM: For me, the surface that the video was projected on was probably the most important element of the piece. You have the two-dimensional time-based video and the three-dimensional space-based surface. It was important to have a singular developable shape as a surface, so that the folds and the plane itself creates the boundaries and moments of reveal. The transparency and materiality of the surface were also important. I chose paper because one layer of it allows light to shine through, whereas two layers of it completely blocks the light. This allowed me to play with this idea of revealing and concealing. The piece is also informed by its context. More than anything, it is a spatial piece, designed to be viewed from multiple angles. In the SAVAGE exhibition, it was placed inside a room facing both sides of its thresholds. This allowed for two possible scenarios of viewing the film for the first time.

JW: You are developing this work for an exhibition in July, can you talk more about this?

LM: I am excited to be working on the development of this work with gallery and collective, Endrosia, in the old walled city of Nicosia, Cyprus. The new piece will be informed by the layout and context of the gallery. This is a particularly important exhibition for me, as the piece is created in the town I grew up in. I am hoping that it will resonate with the people that view it and their own personal experience of growing up in Cyprus.

*You can find Loukis' work at:
www.loukismenelaou.com*

screening cinophilia and death

LYDIA DE MATOS examines the intersections of cinophilia, mortality, and memories of youth in Agnès Varda's *Jacquot de Nantes*.

Cinema is an art of futile preservation. Through it, all those fleeting things lost to time – youth, life, context, feeling, specificity in all its forms – are given the possibility of continued existence. Three years ago, to watch Agnès Varda examine heart-shaped potatoes in *The Gleaners and I* (2000) was simply to watch Agnès Varda examine heart-shaped potatoes. Now, after her death, it is akin to witnessing a resurrection. Our relationship remains unchanged: between us a screen, I the regarder and she the regarded. Yet, it is my knowledge of her death that infuses this act of watching with a certain deeply melancholic joy. For those who knew her intimately, this melancholy is assuredly even deeper. Cinema may well be an art of preservation, but its ability to endow the dead with some qualities of the living cannot bestow total solace upon the mourner, cannot erase their grief. Hence the futility of the preservation, hence the witnessing of something akin to a resurrection.

Varda's *Jacquot de Nantes* (1991) is a film borne from the anticipation of death. Not the general phenomenon, but one death in particular; that of Varda's husband, Jacques Demy. Having become too ill to direct himself, Varda realised her husband's dream project – a retelling of his childhood and the birth of his love for cinema – for him. In *Time Passing: Modernity and Nostalgia*, Sylviane Agacinski writes:

The anticipation of death has two possible effects: melancholy, which withdraws any present from us in advance and, conversely, love for finite things or beings, all the more intense since it is hopeless.

Jacquot de Nantes is a heart-wrenching embodiment of the latter of these effects. The film is elegiac, endlessly intimate in its attempt to document not only Demy's childhood memories, but Varda's love for him also. More or less marking Varda's directorial transition from fiction to documentary, *Jacquot de Nantes* sits on neither side of the admittedly hazy line, but squarely on the line itself. Footage of the real Demy – of him speaking, of him writing, close-ups of his greying hair, his liver-spotted skin, his still-sparkling eyes – is interspersed between the recreations of his memories. Thus, the film functions as a desperate attempt at the impossible: to find a way to say goodbye while doing everything in one's power to prolong the other's existence beyond their death.

Cinephilia defines the film twofold. Not only does *Jacquot de Nantes* chronicle beginnings of the young Demy's growing obsessive adoration for cinema, but the way in which his childhood frequently inspired his future filmmaking also, with Varda intercutting sequences from her husband's filmography into the narrative. The viewer becomes privy to the way in which a certain exchange between a customer and Demy's mechanic father is almost identical to a line he wrote for *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg* (1964), and to the influence of an eccentric aunt on Jeanne Moreau's character in *La Baie des Anges* (1963). Through these moments, *Jacquot de Nantes* enlivens our own cinephilic pasts, reminding us of the first time we watched a Demy, or indeed highlighting the distinct absence of his career in our spectatorial histories. Perhaps then, the film is defined by cinophilia threefold.

However, *Jacquot de Nantes* is characterised by mortality as much as by cinephilia. The two become inextricably linked; inevitably, as love for cinema grows, as a filmic career is built upon and artistic talent nourished, life draws towards its close. Of course, mortality will not cease to draw ever nearer, no matter how a life is spent – I doubt death cares if I spend my time watching films, or walking, or doing nothing at all – but Demy dedicated his life to cinephilia, and so, made it his life's undoing.

Concerning his appearance in a photograph, Barthes writes:

the photograph [...] represents that very subtle moment when [...] I am neither subject nor object but a subject who feels he is becoming an object: I then experience a micro-version of death (or parenthesis): I am truly becoming a specter.

With her cinematic elegy, Varda places a parenthesis around Demy's life, creating a micro-version of his death that precedes the anticipated one which compelled Jacquot de Nantes' production. This parenthetical micro-death actively works in opposition to his real death, suggestive of a certain filmic immortality. The cinematic medium is thus given the power to transcend the bounds of human mortality. Early in the film, a young Demy scrapes the frames from a treasured strip of celluloid in order to make a film of his own. Varda thus acknowledges the medium's fallibility by showing the way in which celluloid in particular can be so easily destroyed, and therefore acknowledges the ever-present possibility of an end to that filmic immortality. It is acknowledged happily, with that love for finite things, ever more intense for its hopelessness.



Art: Sandra Engardt, Untitled

you are what you eat

ORIGINS

SHANTI GIOVANNETTI-SINGH
explores how food can be used to
both reject and embrace cultural
heritage and racial origins.

'I don't like curry.' These were the words I grew accustomed to uttering, through gritted teeth and reddening cheeks, as I avoided the looks of shock and disbelief. 'But, but you're...' they would begin, thrust into a panicked flurry, as they reanalysed my olive skin as Middle-Eastern, or perhaps South American. 'Is it the spice? Do you not like chillies?' some would inquire, determined to understand my bewildering comment. 'No', I would reply, telling them how much I adored spicy food. Emphasising my more palatable food origins, I would explain that *spaghetti all'arrabiata* was my favourite food, as well as *'nduja* sausages. These foods were exotic, but not exoticised; foreign, but rooted in familiarity.

Food is one of the most tangible ways of engaging with both your own culture and that of others. It is through gastronomy that most people first encounter a different nation; food allows us to widen our cultural horizons, without the costs of flying, or the tedium of travel times. Each dish tells a unique story, with the flavours, smells and textures of a meal speaking volumes about its history, culture and origins.

Although the ubiquity of world cuisine can promote multiculturalism, it can also foreground cultural differences; gastronomy can bitterly emphasise the chasm between one nation and another. As easily as food can be used to celebrate a culture, it can be weaponised, forming the basis of racial slurs and negative stereotypes. Food can be dirty, invasive, sloppy – the flavours become as sullied as the peoples they represent. Rather than admiring it for its aromatic flavour, xenophobes can rebrand *tikka masala* as a pungent invasion of the British palate, its flavour entering your mouth like the 'swarms' of migrants entering the country. Whilst some cuisines bask in their chicness, others lurk in the shadowy corners of shame, vilified by the public eye.

OUR THOUGHTS

Consciously or not, food has always been closely connected to my cultural identity; the attitude I held towards my racial origins was firmly reflected on my plate. Born in the UK to a white Italian father and an Indian-South-African mother, the dishes that made up my childhood gave 'melting pot' a whole new layer of meaning. Whilst neither of my parents are native to England (indeed, I can count the times that we had a Sunday roast at home on one hand), from an early age I understood the difference between being a white, European immigrant, and of being... the other kind. Whilst my Italianness was often a source of intrigue, a heritage flavoured by Sicilian lemon blossom and emerald olive trees, I often felt weighed down by my Indianness – it could feel almost oppressive, like the over-pungent aromas of a curry house.

Sailing through life with my dark hair and amber skin surrounded by a sea of golden locks, I began to regard my Indian origins as an inexorable reminder of my difference, a 'uniqueness' I neither sought nor valued. In a class full of Sophies and Sarahs, I was the girl with the strange, unpronounceable name. Constantly reminded of how I differed from my classmates, I contorted my palate into conformity, ensuring my diet aligned with that of 'the English'. Adamant in my hatred of curry, I refused plate after plate of lovingly made *biryani* and *samosas*. I adored 'British food', like cottage pies and yorkshire puddings, 'safe' dishes eaten at school or my friends' houses. Retreating into the homogeneity of bland and inconspicuous food, I could distance myself from my racial origins, and attempt to escape the snide comments of smelling like curry.

No matter how fervently I resisted these stereotypes, the comments continued, regardless of how much or how little Indian food I consumed. Remarks about curry punctuated my childhood, innuendos about naan-bread my teenage years. It is not, however, just the prejudice of these racial slurs which makes them so hurtful, but also their ignorance, and refusal to acknowledge my full racial origins as a South-African Indian. My mother's family have lived in South Africa for over a century, and little is known about them before they were brought from India as indentured labourers in the colonial period. Denied conclusive information about their country of origin, my South African family have forged a connection with a forbidden past through food, making Indian delicacies such as *patra* and *roti*, as well as specifically South-African-Indian dishes. For them, food was a way of connecting with a distant past, of solidifying cultural origins in spite of their diaspora.

Now, for me too, food is a form of healing, a form of reconnection with an identity I sought to suppress for many years. Learning from Jamie Oliver and Yotam Ottolenghi how to cook the dishes I never allowed my mother to make me, I am being reintroduced to the delights of a cuisine that I denied myself for too long.

ORIGINS

OUR THOUGHTS



ORIGINS

ORIGINS

OUR THOUGHTS

OUR THOUGHTS

the looking-glass

A prose piece by YALENA CHOTHIA.

‘The spectacle is at the same time the mirage of self in the mirror of things.’

– Time and Narrative, Ricoeur

‘It is the Other whom one must love as oneself if one does not desire to idolise and hate the Other in the depths of the underground.’

– Resurrection from the Underground, Girard

That evening whilst walking back from the fields we had begun to see everything from the perspective of the eternal. We had been young girls at the cusp of female individuation, happy to have divined in its leisure. After all, it was there that we had been conscripted into happiness. Then we looked back and saw the sadness that saturated all things. We stood under that oak tree for a little while longer than usual, our faces pressed against the damp trunk with moss sitting in the winding crevices of its bark. We then returned Home.

At some point in time after this had happened, we had planted the seed of disaffection in our Hearts. Deterioration blossomed inside of us, and once again we began to see the desolation in immaculate places. That Thing would visit us often and remind us with its cruel, delicate giggle, “You are not Human... Tiny, little objects you are – strangely pathetic, too!” It never did leave us, nor had it announced its arrival – that Thing simply rose and settled amidst the twilight of confusion in our Minds.

We listened – what else could we do? We carried the mark of our inhumanity in our viscera, that slow-burning fever of desire and shame. Desire for what exactly? This we cannot say, but my, don’t you think all desire is appetite? What’s your pleasure...? What satiates you...? That foreign finger inside one’s mouth, its detached curiosity prodding at a still, diffident tongue and exploring the sharp edges of one’s Teeth.

In leaving us to desire what we were exempt from, that Thing had driven us to a despair over that which could not be realised. We retreated to that Place within ourselves and my, wasn’t it nice! Yet we would always return completely unalloyed, knowing that which we could not have – that human connection, affection... the dissolution of our life into that of the Other – was precisely what was keeping us alive in pursuit of a dead Hope. We began to deny this Other the right to unhappiness, “Here, take my Hand or choke on your bliss and extravagance in language! Your every sadness a depression, and every grievance a Trauma – and my, whatever happened to nervousness!” we had said in our exasperation.

And those little games we played together! Digging our nails into concrete Flesh to see who would break first. Piercing into each other at the neck, lacerating and unstitching ourselves to find that Lacking inside of us. Of course, after thorough examination (we had made sure to inspect the marrow of our bones, too) we had not found This. An embarrassment began to flower inside of us and we would remember those past selves that had tried to salvage the remnants of a life to share with others. That permanent, historicised feeling of stupidity would grow like lichen in between the fractures of our Mind. Once again, we found ourselves at that Place (we didn’t mean to go there, we promise!) – completely within ourselves, left alone to answer one’s self to their self.



After tiring of This, we sat down quite still, terrified of everything. Still, we were not cowards. We were terrified of everything, but we were not cowards. Which is why we chose to break through and into that Looking-Glass world. That world from which we had been set apart and could only look inside, from the vantage of our Outsideness.

It was a painful journey but still, we crawled through. Shards of the broken Looking-Glass remain inside us and that dull ache does not fade – should that foreign finger gently poke at Those areas, we are sure it would hurt us terribly. But finally! We were re-initiated into Reality. Our Hearts were received happily and how glad we became, our strangeness finally known!

We shared our lives in the Other once again.

Art: Cherry Song, Butterfly Lovers

art students have big dick energy

WILL FERREIRA DYKE considers the temperament of art students, commending the courageousness of those at the humble beginnings of their art career.

Art students have 'Big Dick Energy' (BDE). Fact. Such a thought originated whilst I sat aimlessly in Tavistock Square having one of the copious free Pret coffees I have consumed over the last month; a form of post-Pret clarity, if you will (though unconsciously I am sure I have always known this). This so-called 'BDE' is literally visualised by artist Louise Bourgeois in a 1982 photograph captured by Robert Mapplethorpe. The artist holds *Fillette* (1968), a hefty latex phallus, cradling it under her arm as if it were a fresh baguette she has just nabbed from a Parisian boulangerie. This image is perfect. Beyond the 23-inch phallic sculpture, Bourgeois' nonchalance and rye smile create an aura of artistic power. Bourgeois carries this BDE both in her arms and in her persona; it seems to me this offhanded authority, this manner of insouciance despite the high stakes of their industry, is a given for all art school alumni to possess.

One should note that this phallic metaphor has nothing to do with the supposition of masculine artistic genius, as argued against by Linda Nochlin in her famous text 'Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?'. I am not writing to assume the 'golden nugget' of artistic genius is bound to the penis in any way – though, historically, if you observe works from the Western canon, art scholars and critics seem to think otherwise. I purely frame this train of thought around 'Big Dick Energy' because I find it simultaneously stupid and spectacular. Gloriously inappropriate, but gravely appropriate also.

Back to me, Bloomsbury park bench, brew in hand, surrounded by a sea of mesmerising lycra-wearing performers fearlessly moving their bodies, interacting with the environment in awe-inspiring ways. I came to realise that these ballsy, balletic students were from RADA. It was their carelessness, their enviable ability to move and make sound regardless of those around, that I found myself fixating on. The freedom of these individuals, at the origins of their career, to behave in such a way, in a central London square of all places, was incredible. These creatives asserted their bodies unabashedly, altering this rigid public space into a private mobile auditorium. What these magical, yet arguably mental, performers did for me was to legitimise the bollocks needed to be so self-exposing.

Such energy is not limited to performance, but rather applicable to all creative outlets. Everyone has an opinion, and ever-increasingly, people feel entitled to share theirs (whether that be comments on an Instagram post or in an article in a UCL arts and culture magazine). Hence, to open yourself and your artistic ventures up and out to the public openly invites criticism, scrutiny, the possibility of a bitter judgement. To be so self-assured in one's practice is surely greatly exhausting. Arguably, it would be easier to give up, succumb to our capitalist economy, slave over an Economics degree, put on a suit and take that J.P Morgan graduate scheme.

The financial uncertainty of the creative industries makes choosing the field of work a courageous task. The livelihood of an arts graduate is not typically a smooth-sailing one, consisting of inevitable peaks and troughs. The precariousness of the creative pound, however, makes the decision to become an art student less of a leap of faith than it does a leap, or should I say depletion, of parental income.



Here I find such inequality uncomfortable, as arts education then only caters for those with the biggest wallets, which quite literally 'affords' them the luxury of developing their artistic self. Many students have to work countless jobs and take out numerous loans simply to supply the materials for their course. To dedicate oneself to a craft and to master an arguably niche expertise is a bold move; mastering the art of pottery, tap dance or weaving is a noble and courageous venture, an investment of both economy and time. That being said, having the ability to study a degree out of pure love, one that isn't necessarily guaranteed to make you money, is an extreme privilege – much like having a prick in Western art history.

As students, we are forced to make a decision very early on in terms of what we want to do beyond the confines of the schooling system. To actively choose to further one's inventive, poetic and aesthetic potential takes an almighty abundance of BDE. The origins of which, for me, lie in those supporting and inspiring these students: art teachers. Reflecting back on my schooling-years, I can remember thinking these educators were the most remarkable members of staff, not quite Bourgeois' Big Dick Energy, but nonetheless pretty well-endowed. These pedagogues promote a future generation's creative prowess, imbuing their students with the BDE they surely possess.

Art: Nada Elkalaawy, A foot in both camps



Art: Oscar Crabb, Untitled

stage fever

ISABELLE OSBORNE explores how the COVID-19 pandemic will create a new future for theatre.

The theatre industry was born out of a desire to escape to the monotony of everyday life and step into a world outside of our own. Entering the auditorium, we forget about our lives for just a few hours and soak up the bright lights, the costumes, the comedy, the tragedy. Theatre embodies the collective experience where strangers are united by their love of drama, music, dance and performance.

But in the midst of a global pandemic, this sense of unity is displaced, disturbed, discarded. The escapism that a trip to the theatre has offered since its inception in Ancient Greece is now in question - the doors to another world closed momentarily – or perhaps forever.

To survive what could be years of long-term damage, the theatre industry must undergo a transformation, rebirth of sorts. The dawn of a new era of theatre is upon us: how do we navigate the world of theatre when a virus prohibits social contact and eliminates the beloved shared experience that the industry thrives upon?

By very definition, adaptation is part of the foundation of the theatre industry; plays and musicals are adapted and interpreted by different producers, directors, actors and actresses. Now a new sense of adaptation is necessary, as the world continues to face the uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic. Theatres across the world are being forced to adapt to new ways of operating and, by extension, surviving.

And adapted they have. Being unable to welcome a live audience, the initial reaction was to stream performances, as was so admirably achieved by The National Theatre and their weekly YouTube showcase. But, for all the admiration, there was a sense of despair, as the unique quality of the theatrical experience was lost. When Andrew Lloyd Webber claimed that theatre productions are 'not like cinema, you can't just open the building', his words resonate with the idea that the theatre is not just a building to be opened and closed, but an experience that the audience are immersed in.

The theatre is not just a physical location in which you watch a performance. Theatre online may be comfortable and convenient but streaming a production takes away the unique and wondrous theatre experience; where is the atmosphere, the buzz of anticipation, the chatter of the audience, the tuning violins in the orchestra pit, the ice cream stalls in the interval, the mile long cues for the ladies bathroom? How can you truly enter another world when you are caught between the world you live in and the world on your screen, with only your dog to share the moment with?

When considering where theatre will fit into this world of 2-metre distances and 40-second handwashing, we can look to the interim between the first and second lockdowns in England, when theatres were permitted to open. Whilst offering a new wave of hope amongst theatre lovers and workers alike that the future of the industry was not as bleak as before, there were still adaptations taken to ensure the safety of the audience. Face masks, reduced capacity and socially distanced seating were essential if the show was to go on. Now, we have the buzz of the auditorium... but what about the sense of community?

Extra legroom and personal space may be a significant bonus, but the unique adventure of going to the theatre is now reduced to a detached, isolated experience as audience members are physically divided from one another. As irritating as the rustle of sweet wrappers from your neighbour and the screaming baby in the row behind may be, it is a fundamental part of the collective experience theatre brings. The whole dynamic of the theatre rests upon the energy of the audience, one that is absorbed in the music and drama as one unit; at reduced capacity, the theatrical experience becomes a disheartening affair.

In a world where seat prices are soaring, the theatre becomes a somewhat mechanical experience: last-minute cheap tickets cease to exist and forward planning is essential. Having to plan your trip months in advance with the added fear that the show may be cancelled has replaced the spontaneity of turning up at the door five minutes before curtain call to see if there is a ticket going spare.

And then the second lockdown hit, and the theatre doors were once again slammed firmly shut. Shows that were expected to reopen were postponed, opening nights replaced by closed curtains. The industry's experience in recent months has been described as 'devastating and catastrophic'; they have traversed the slope of the pandemic, only to have their unique experience shattered by continued infection control measures and risk of permanent closure should lockdowns be repeatedly initiated.

Theatre originated in a collective experience, and before the pandemic acted as a reminder that we are not alone. Can the theatre become a place of unity once again?

interview: artefacts

**SEB PERERA-SLATER interviews
Bristol music collective ARTEFACTS.**

Bristol's murky history resurfaced this year amid the Black Lives Matter protests. Edward Colston's long-anticipated plunging gripped headlines in June as protestors demonstrated enough was enough. The city, built on the profits of tobacco and slave trading, continues to reconcile its past.



Illustration by Sophie Scott

Despite its dark origins, Bristol is now known for its celebrated bohemian culture, driven by its music scene. Windrush brought reggae to the city and with it – sound systems. After the 1980 St Paul’s riot, Bristol police stopped confiscating music equipment. The underground scene has since metamorphosed from earlier periods of punk, reggae and trip-hop. Currently, dubstep, DnB and other genres nurture the coveted Bristol bass scene, inhabiting its sound systems.

Like the city, my encounter with the Bristol sound system was unique. Last year, SAVAGE’s own Kayan Patel and I rode west for Artefacts 01 at Take 5 Cafe in Stokes Croft to sample the collective’s original Bristol flavour.

Recently, I caught up with Artefacts’ Hugo, Nick and Finn to discuss music and the city.

SEB PERERA-SLATER: How did you meet?

NICK: We had similar interests and all went on the same nights out; we congregated through music. Living near each other was a big aspect of it. We were in the same block of halls – Hiatt Baker in Bristol.

HUGO: Three of us lived in the same flat and another three lived in the flat above.

SBS: What are your influences?

N: If you want a store in Bristol, Idle Hands. Big up them! They’re a sick record store.

H: We buy too many records from there.

N: With music, the group splits between electro-techno influences and the bassier side – but we bring it all together. Label-wise, I’d say Bandulu, Deep Medi. Juan Forté’s a cool label. Artists: Commodo, Bengal Sound and Khan – [who] we had booked but we had to cancel because of Corona.

FINN: Just to add: Livity Sound – a Bristol label; Hesse Audio, three guys who met in uni and put out sick music constantly.

H: Me and Finn also rinse Ilian Tapes. Not Bristol, but they draw a lot from here. Dubstep unified us though.

N: Yeah, it was a new genre for us at the time and it doesn’t exist hugely outside of Bristol.

H: We were caught in the middle of a dubstep resurgence. There were all these sick nights with massive sound systems we just got drawn to.

N: It’s a hard genre to dislike in the right place at the right time.

SBS: Tell me about Artefacts 01.

N: With the venue you get a bare room. You’ve got to rent the sound system, equipment, decorate the space. Most of the money from ticket sales went towards the sound system. I guess it was stressful. Probably didn’t get to enjoy it as much as those who attended it did.

F: All we wanted to do was put on a party for our mates, something really intimate. The turnout surprised us, so many people we didn’t know. We didn’t think it would sell out.

H: It was a long time in the making. We used to have big parties in halls, so we had some experience, but it was a step up.

N: We spent two months arguing over a bloody name.

F: It wasn’t even us who came up with the name, it was my housemate.

H: She picked it because she does archaeology. She said ‘You should call it this’ and we thought it sounded sick.

N: Once we had the name, we went to Take 5 to book a date and just started planning it from there.

SBS: And your Subtle Radio show?

H: Through lockdown, we did a mix series on SoundCloud, which got a good reception. We quite enjoyed mixing in that way. I saw Subtle were advertising for new residencies, so I emailed them with our SoundCloud link, told them our story. We got an email a month later out of the blue offering two trial shows, now we have a residency.

N: We just had a producer we work with called Lofty on, and me under the alias Grofta.

SBS: What makes Bristol unique?

N: There’s more of a community feel in the crowd. With the dubstep scene, you’ll go out and meet the same people, even a lot of the producers. Bristol’s got a very friendly spirit.

H: There’s not that many clubs. It’s more compact.

N: London has too many people, it gets diluted out. Bristol has as good of an availability of music, but it’s more concentrated.

SBS: What are your plans?

N: We will do something soon, but the situation changes so frequently now. We had an event planned but we pulled the plug on it when half our team ended up self-isolating.

H: We’re waiting till it gets a bit closer to normal before returning.

F: Also, we want to release music and start a label once we’re ready.

Listen to Artefacts on Soundcloud @artefactsbristol.



original readings, original writings

DAWID AKALA contemplates how religious texts have influenced the Western canon.

The first book I read cover-to-cover was an illustrated children's version of the Bible. I read it many times over; as soon as I arrived at the last page, I flipped back to the first and started again. Aged six, this was my original reading experience – religious doctrine, translated for kids. Can those beginnings tell me anything now, at twenty-four, about how I read and write?

Art: Tara Monjazebe, Canyon

Any writer, on some level, seeks to create something original – a story that readers will deem fresh and innovative. On the other hand, since the word hints at origins, it points at something older – an earlier, archetypal form, already in existence and perhaps repeated many times over. Tracing the roots of the term original, we find one of its first uses in 1393, in a Middle English poem by John Gower, *Confessio Amantis* ('The Lover's Confession'):

*'The grete Senne original,
Which every man in general
Upon his berthe hath envenymed [...]*

Gower references the original sin; that is, the theological concept of a tendency towards evil, innate – envenomed – in all human beings, inherited after the Fall of Man. Reading my little Bible, the first episode I always encountered was naturally the story of Adam and Eve. I remember how disappointed I was, how grave their mistake felt, how I couldn't quite shake off its irreversibility.

Once I graduated to reading the real Bible, I returned to the story in Genesis – still its magic and horror didn't fade. I later learnt this story has captivated writers for centuries. John Milton, for instance, famously evokes 'the completing of the mortal sin original' in his major epic *Paradise Lost*.

The Fall of Man is the first independent reading I remember truly responding to. Has every book I've read since then been a continuation of that first pang: an eternal return? My readings now may well hold a trace of that initiatory experience; it's long been recognised that much of the ideology of Western literature has its roots in the Bible.

The most explicit Biblical theme within modern writing is perhaps the blurred distinction between life and death. On the one hand, it is the revenant hero or saviour: Harry Potter glimpsing the afterlife, or Aslan rising from the dead in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. In *The Two Towers*, J.R.R. Tolkien describes Gandalf the Grey's return from death as Gandalf the White:

'They all gazed at him. His hair was white as snow in the sunshine; and gleaming white was his robe; the eyes under his deep brows were bright, piercing [...] Between wonder, joy, and fear they stood and found no words to say.'

In Matthew 28, we find the story of Jesus' resurrection:

'There was a violent earthquake (...) His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.'

The parallels of blinding light, snow similes, and people watching in awe are striking – both Tolkien and Saint Matthew show us resurrection as a sacred event.

On the other hand, rising from the dead breeds stories of the macabre. As a child, for instance, I could hardly appreciate Jesus' benevolence in breathing life back into Lazarus when the gruesome detail in John 11 was far more pressing:

'Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb [...] "Take away the stone," he said. "But, Lord," said Martha, the sister of the dead man, "by this time there is a bad odour, for he has been there four days."'

It was a thing of horror fiction – the same chilling twist on resurrection I later found in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and H.P. Lovecraft's 'Herbert West—Reanimator'.

Is that what makes for good, truly original writing? Should authors look for patterns in early literature and put their own spin on them? The answer is far from simple, as tapping into these prototypic narratives is often subconscious – for both the reader and the writer.

Furthermore, while the Bible may be most significant in the Western canon, it isn't singular in its obsessions. We find motifs such as the flood myth not only in the Bible but in other ancient texts, such as the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, the Hindu Brahmana scriptures, or Ovid's *Metamorphosis*. We can therefore go beyond a Christocentric view in preference to something more encompassing – for example, Carl Jung's concept of the collective unconscious. Jung suggests these recurring narratives are encoded – *envenomed* – in the psyche of human beings as a whole. We subconsciously return to them time and time again, without effort. I see it as a consolation to writers; it might be impossible to write something unoriginal.

mindfulness and me

TOM WHEATLEY looks at his journey with mindfulness music during lockdown.

The announcement of a second national lockdown was accompanied by a perverse nostalgia; it felt as if I had just gotten my shoes and socks back on, only for Boris to phone and cancel at the last minute.

So, what now?

Well, while we can no longer enjoy the social and cultural fruits of the city, we are still expected to continue working in our rooms, with each cumbersome group-call and dry e-mail exchange acting as the fuel with which we burn ourselves out. Even before lockdown, many people felt overworked, and the yardstick with which we measured our happiness was eerily resembling a productivity quota. It is no surprise, therefore, that the practice of mindfulness has seen a staggering surge in popularity this year. While, for many, it is simply a temporary substitute for their other pandemic-prohibited stress outlets, for many others – myself included – mindfulness is becoming a critical and permanent part of the daily routine. I know 'mindfulness' can be an intimidatingly abstract term, and the prospect of rigid, mental administration likely scares away many potential beneficiaries. However, this article won't become some 'Headspace' sponsored preach about scheduled meditation; in my experience, mindfulness is something you can approach however you like. It certainly will not make me any friends down at the monastery, then, to reveal that music has been my cognitive weapon of choice.

Mindfulness is all about acknowledging what you are sensing in the present moment. The idea is to put space between yourself and what you are feeling so you can rationalise some of your emotional responses to the outside world – the mental equivalent of the awkward arms-length grip long-sighted people employ to read their phone. For many, it is incredibly useful: it breaks up the day, and helps keep unnecessary anxiety from boiling over. This modern mindfulness framework is borrowed from Eastern religious customs and is traditionally practised in silence, so as to cultivate mental space and focus on each of your senses.

This more traditional method is what I tried in the initial lockdown of 2020, but it just did not click – sitting in the quiet alone with my thoughts felt aimless and rather jarring, as if I had just turned up the volume on all of the lockdown-induced anxieties that had me sitting there in the first place. This experience drove me to soften the silence with some music, and to an almost poetically dramatic effect: music and mindfulness appeared to be ideologically compatible in a really engaging way.

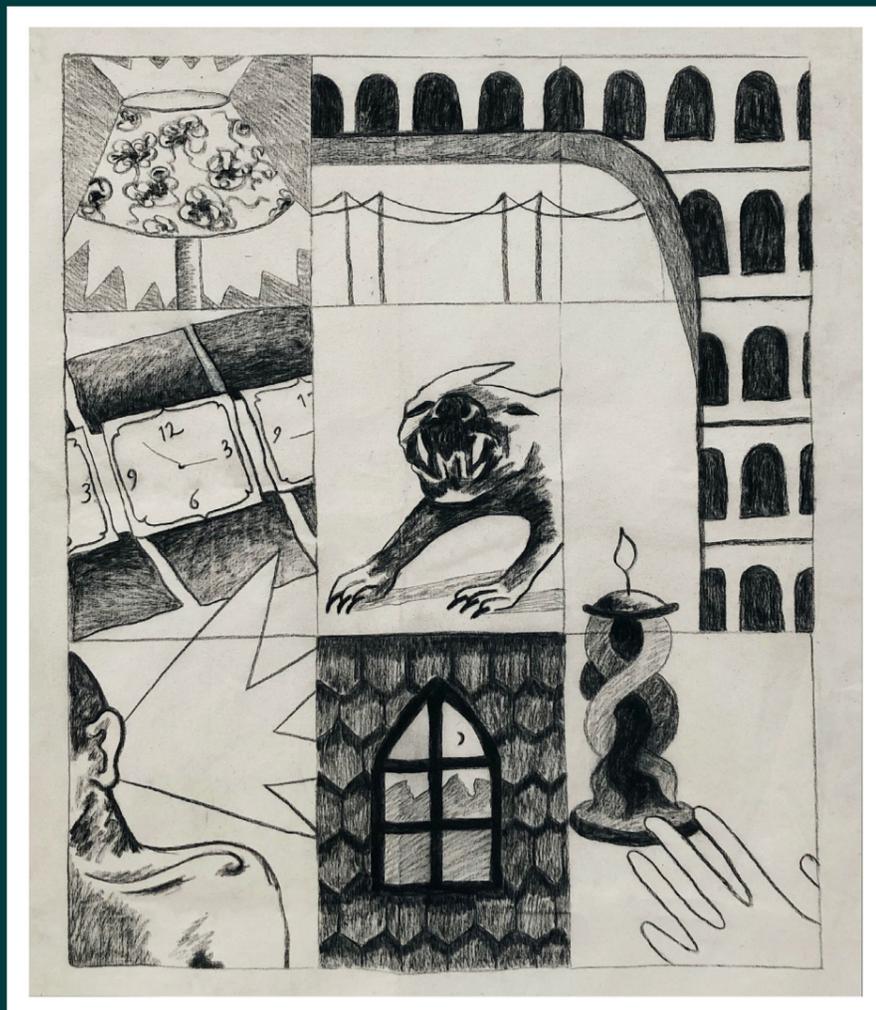
It is no secret that music can be relaxing and disarming, but mindfulness and music are linked in a far more inherent way. The relationship strikes me as the kind between an idea and a language. So many people attempt mindfulness at some point, and, like with anything we do not understand, promptly put it down thereafter. But mindfulness is not inherently difficult to understand; for me, it was the conventional format that was as good as illegible. After all, the simplest of things can feel impossible when presented in a different language; when I was sitting in the quietude of my room those first times, I was effectively asking obnoxiously for directions in a land where no one understood me.

Music can act as a medium through which you can access the core ideas of mindfulness, and it gives you many points of entry. For example, when I am in a particularly agitated or low mood, listening to comparably brooding music can help almost expel the mood, in the same way that focusing on your senses separates you from your emotions. Beyond this, music can help you tap into feelings you would struggle to access with words, like a metaphor. More intricately, there is some impressively contemplative and cavernously spacious music that acts well as a framework for broader reflective thinking.



Musicians such as Nils Frahm, Adam Bryanbaum Wiltzie and Björk have created some truly cerebral soundscapes that invite you to explore the harmonic, rhythmic and tonal relationships between notes, all of which are analogous to some of the relationships we see between our senses and our emotional reactions. This mindful exploration of the parameters of music has been around forever; Pythagoras was thought to have performed 'soul-adjustments', tinkering empirically with harmony to elicit and facilitate emotions, and Plato described music as being able to 'soften' and make 'workable' the mind. All these people have acknowledged the innate, mathematical relationship music has with our bodies and emotions which continues to be explored today in music therapy, mindfulness and even EDM.

Inevitably, there are other mediums to mindfulness in writing, dancing, drawing and beyond, all of which dirty the blank canvas of your mind so you are not starting from scratch. Regardless of the avenue you take, mindfulness is a practice I would recommend to anyone, with or without a pandemic.



Art: Sophie Lourdes Knight, In Spirit

a spotless mind with a spot

A poem by SERMILA ISPARTALIGIL.

A devouring, curious child
 Mesmerised by the brightness of the sun
 Longingly stares at the vast sphere of light
 Hoping to perceive where its boundless roads are leading to.

These roads bend to become the curves of his magnetic sculptures,
 The tails of the letters he brings into life,
 And traces left by his enchanted ink.

The smallest of differences in his sight and the rest of the world's,
 The everlasting shadow that was given to him by the sun
 Stays on the shattered shelves of his unmatched mind.

He travels on the back of his cat that has the heart of a horse,
 Seeking the things that cannot be taught,
 Following melodies that cannot be heard,
 Creating voiceless figures that cannot be silenced.

Not needing any other soul,
 Not needing the salt of the earth,
 He sucks all of his madness through his thumb,
 Making his mind a womb for the greatest deluges ever seen.

Finding within himself a god that doesn't need to be worshipped,
 He walks towards the sun,
 To hold the mother of madness once more.
 He walks towards the sun,
 To hear his first rattle toy once more.
 He walks towards the sun,
 Towards the origins of the spot of a spotless mind.

Meet the committee



Olivia Daley
She/her

President

Kayan Patel
He/him

Treasurer/
Events
Manager

Sophia Cano
She/her

Co-Editor
in Chief

**Shanti
Giovannetti-
Singh**
She/her

Co-Editor
in Chief

**Cristina
Arama**
She/her

Welfare &
Inclusion
Officer

Georgia Good
She/her

Our Thoughts
Editor

Sara White
She/her

Our Thoughts
Sub-Editor

Phyllis Akalin
She/her

Film Editor

Sofia Bennett
She/her

Film
Sub-Editor

**Rose
Gabbertas**
She/her

Literature
Editor

**Vivienne
Ainger**
She/her

Literature
Sub-Editor

**Daisy Pollock-
Gray**
She/her

Music Editor

**Isabelle
Osborne**
She/her

Music
Sub-Editor

Zane Khan
He/him

Theatre Editor

**Erin
Croasdale**
She/her

Theatre
Sub-Editor

**Ruby
Anderson**
She/her

Art & Design
Editor

Yasmin Ozkan
She/her

Art & Design
Sub-Editor

**Shelby
de Rond**
She/her

Read Curator

Alaa Majed
They/she

Read
Co-Curator

Jean Watt
She/her

Look Curator

**Kira
Wainstein**
She/her

Look
Co-Curator

**Katie
McClung**
She/her

Listen Curator

**Eva Coulibaly-
Willis**
She/her

Listen Co-
Curator

**Sandra
Engardt**
She/her

Creative
Director

Helena Spicer
She/her

Graphic
Designer

Lois Burton
She/her

Graphic
Designer

Shivaani Iyer
She/her

Graphic
Designer

**Georgia
Adamson**
She/her

Graphic
Designer

contributors

FRANCESCA KURLANSKY // CHRISTINA LIBRI // YOSHIMI KATO // HARRY SMITH // HELENA WACKO // EVA COULIBALY-WILLIS // SOPHIA CANO // SAMANTHA LO // ROSA APPIGNANESI // DAISY AVIS-WARD // IZZY DAVIES // NICOLE FAN // MEG KLOSTERMAN // RIANNE SHAH // CRISTINA ARAMA // L.X. // GEORGIA GOOD // ALEX HEWITT // CARLA BELLOCH ARANGO // MIKOŁAJ GÓRLIKOWSKI // ERIN CROASDALE // JEAN WATT // LYDIA DE MATOS // SHANTI GIOVANNETTI-SINGH // YALENA CHOTHIA // WILL FERREIRA DYKE // ISABELLE OSBORNE // SEB PERERA-SLATER // DAWID AKALA // TOM WHEATLEY // SERMILA ISPARTALIGIL

LAURIE MILTON-JEfferIES // LOIS BURTON // ANNA BAUMGART // AMIRA FRITZ // JAKE WALKER // MARCOS WOŁODARSKY NEWHALL // SOPHIE LOURDES KNIGHT // ANNICE FELL // HELENA SPICER // JOY C MARTINDALE // DYVEKE BREDSORFF // TEREZA BLAHOVA // LOUISE OATES // YAGE GUO // LOUKIS MENELAOU // SANDRA ENGARDT // GEORGE MILLS // CHERRY SONG // NADA ELKALAAWY // OSCAR CRABB // SOPHIE SCOTT // TARA MONJAZEB // JEAN WATT



ORIGINS



ISSUE #12