UP AND AWAY

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EDITORS' NOTE

SPRING 2022

While our last issue, 'Get Real', called on tangible realities as starting points, 'Up and Away' inverts this. For Issue 15, we were drawn to themes of ascension and departure, lifting up off the ground of 'Get Real' - escaping from rigidities of the everyday, transgressing boundaries between established modes of creativity, and changing surroundings to incite new inspiration. 'Up and Away' invites thoughts about transportation, and what has the power to move us, physically, emotionally, and beyond. It asks us to consider what we're moving on from, and what is left behind.

Contemporary modes of genre blurring have progressed so much that new categories of art, music and film have emerged as stand-alone entities. Izzy Davies explores the origins of hyperpop, a genre that pushes traditional pop music to its hyperkinetic limit through heavy layering of textural sound, embracing the glitch that emerges as a by-product. Summer Chiuh questions NFTs, locating them within the history of conceptual art practice and the ever-expanding digital realm, their significance alighting from a fragile point in between. Emily Pujol Manca speaks with Slade artist Marcos Wolodarsky Newhall about his painting practice, the artist lifting stills from cinema and repurposing them on the canvas in order to generate new meaning.

Through paradoxical moves inward, art can equally incite immaterial transcendence, occurring within our own consciousness. Miriam Zeghlache considers how language can express the alternative realities of dreams, from *Metamorphoses* to Emily Brontë; Genevieve Morgan considers the transpersonal, tracing equivalent transcendence in poetic accounts of love. Thomas Coleman discusses the profoundly reflective, confronting qualities of Francis Bacon's work, which compels us to grapple with the twisted psyche of our own humanity. This issue's poems, by George Dennis, Artemis Babazadeh-Gitiforoz, and Harry Speirs, enact similar provocations - implying how, through experimental, impressionistic and evocative poetic modes, new aesthetic epistemologies might be possible, beyond the realm of functional prose.

The directionality implied in this theme has a social dimension with which our contributors engaged. Both Sheng Ying's discussion of Adam McKay's *Don't Look Up* and Eshka Chuck's wider meditation on astronomical narratives take the act of literally looking up - to the stars - as a means to call out harmful social paradigms: popular resistance to scientific truth, and colonial dialectics, respectively. Hanna Bernard echoes their calls for reform, in an account of initiatives to move up and away from endemic street harassment, and the culture of misogyny to which it belongs.

'Up and Away' might, alternatively, recall legacy, persona and fame: it asks us to consider what a person leaves behind, and the impact of one life's work on another. Isobel Knight traces Andy Warhol's notion of fame, and his coterie of 'superstars', into the internet era, showing how his Factory's ideas of immortality - sensationalised, arbitrary, surreal - resonate deeply today. Musing on her personal crisis of productivity as she ends her adolescence, Regina Co takes solace in the encouragement of musical theatre greats Stephen Sondheim and Jonathan Larson: 'you have a future, meanwhile, be proud'. Kimi Zarate-Smith speaks to emerging singer-songwriter Natanya Popoola about taking control of legacy, creative freedom, and what being signed would mean as she progresses further as an artist.

'Up and Away' invites a turn inward and outward at once - toward new facets of our consciousness, or entry into new dimensions; toward reimaginings of language, art or genre, and the foundations on which those are built; toward new modes of thinking, free from a constrained or damaging past, and interrogations of that inheritance. The words enact ascension, beyond what we know or where we are, and equally offer new perspectives from which we can gaze down on where we started. Their manifestations and interpretations in this issue are deeply varied, in exciting and unexpected ways - yet they share, at their core, an attention to movement, to dynamic and enlightening directionalities. We hope that, one way or another, they move you too.

With love,

Jean, Ruby and Georgia

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Beach by Stela Kostomaj

NATANYA POPOOLA

AN INTERVIEW

NATANYA POPOOLA is a singer-songwriter from London. Sonically, Natanya's songs have a rich and soulful quality, with tender, poetic lyrics communicating heartbreak, empathy, and a reckoning with her emergence into adult life, all set over gracious chord progressions and soothing beats. KIMI ZARATE-SMITH chats to Natanya about how she has found establishing herself as an artist.

Did anything in particular lead to you pursuing music? Who inspired you early on, and now?

I grew up in quite a musical home. I had a father who was obsessed with Motown and Stevie Wonder, and a mother who was obsessed with funk from the 1980s. There was a sense of 'old' music growing up around the house. I've always geared myself to search for interesting music without it coming straight to me - it's always been my special interest so, when I discovered Logic, I found a method through which to harness the power from that interest and create something out of it.

These inspirations definitely stayed put as musical foundations; I still listen to Motown, old soul, jazz and funk. Recently I've been getting into Cleo Soul, quite soft Solange-esque music. I've also been listening to some kind of hybrid indie music, which I never really got deep into until now. I've always been a kind of hip-hop, RnB kind of person.

Where is your music situated in terms of genre — do you find yourself sticking to neo-soul, jazz, RnB, or are you more inclined to transcend genre and create a sound that isn't specific or categorised?

I would call myself a soul musician, but I don't think of my music as particularly defined by a genre. I have such an eclectic pool of influences to choose from. It gets to a point where I could dip into something more soul-esque, or a bit more indie, and tap into that flow. I don't like to be bound by genre, which a lot of Black artists are - I think it's important to dip your toe into as many sounds as possible so that people don't box you in.

How do you ensure that your music stays purposeful?

No matter what sound I choose, it's always to do with something deep and gravitational within my life. Music is a very personal way to share the depths of myself with the world so that they listen.

When I'm writing and making music, I'm literally trying to tell the story of my life in my head, in real-time. I'm communicating feelings of confusion, of growing up and being an adult, learning how to hold my own, discussing family, spiritual growth, relationships with people, and love. That's the shit that I'm trying to send out to the world.

Though not central to your work as an artist, is there anything beneficial, or maybe disadvantageous, about management, labels, and the music industry as a whole in this current landscape?

The concept of management as an artist is daunting. A third party has to validate a lot of the decisions for you. It fluctuates, in the same way my relationship with music can change overnight. There were times when people found me. There were times when I needed a bit of a push career-wise, so I'd seek out managers. The managers I have now are knowledgeable and great people. They found me, after hearing my song on a Spotify Discover Weekly playlist, and said they'd love to manage me. I thought their vision was great, and now we're working together.

Are there virtues to being unsigned, and is self-releasing something you want to stick to?

I don't necessarily dream of staying as an independent artist. What I want is creative control over what I release. Being nineteen, I'm learning so much about myself. As I speak now, there are so many realisations that affect the way I write, sing, the way I create, and approach music in general.

Being unsigned gives you a lot of creative freedom. If you go to a major label as no one and you beg them to give you a chance, and they somehow decide that they will, they'll take a lot of your money and they'll create something out of you when really you should be creating something out of yourself first. It's important to show labels that there are people who would love to hear what you are bringing out musically and that your music is worth something. At this point, being unsigned allows me to do this so that at a later point, I can still make the music I want to make, if I'm signed or not. I can express myself, and the label can be like, 'oh yeah, I get you', because everyone else fucks with it too.

I want that creative freedom for right now, so being unsigned works for me. But in ten years, I don't want to have fallen in love with this art, but never passed this level.

—

INTERVIEW by
KIMI ZARATE-SMITH

THE ROLE OF IN SOCIAL ACTIVISM THEATRE

HANNA BERNARD considers the possibilities of theatre to empower audiences towards social activism.

Can theatre influence social activism? If the answer is yes, through what means? These questions are rather controversial. Often, it is difficult to envision a source of entertainment as a potential means of galvanising individuals around societal issues.

It would be extremely reductionist, however, to conceive theatre as a source of entertainment singularly. There are innumerable examples that showcase performance's role in social activism. The phenomenon is not new: since the nineteenth century and the rise of the realist movement, theatre has, through different means, been used by dramaturges to pass social messages to their audience. From the beginning of the twentieth century, theatre has experienced a cultural democratisation, evolving from a privilege of the wealthy to a broadened audience, in turn leading playwrights to increasingly explore controversial social themes.

Henrik Ibsen, for example, did so with *A Doll's House*, first performed in 1879. With his play, Ibsen undermined the implicit censorship of his time and fought against the gender inequalities of both the private and the public spheres. Through his production, therefore, Ibsen advocated for the agency of women. Bertolt Brecht is one of the most influential dramaturges who envisaged theatre as a potential tool for social activism. As a Marxist, he wanted his spectators to think about and question the capitalist world they lived in. To do so, he created the genre 'Epic Theatre' which, contrary to classical theatre, did not draw a tidy plot, but rather confronted the audience with unresolved issues and existential questions. Brecht's innovations famously included the breaking of the fourth wall, serving to emotionally disengage the spectator. Through this genre, Brecht has inspired many dramaturges to create theatre with the purpose of undoing a repressive system.

Le Montagnard by Bastien Catteau

One of the main dramaturges who inherited Brecht's drive is Augusto Boal. This Brazilian activist was exiled to Argentina in the 1960s because his theatre was thought to represent a dissenting voice, and was therefore considered a threat to the new Brazilian junta regime. Boal's social theatre was markedly anti-establishment with its innovative notion of 'spect-actor': the audience were empowered and encouraged to stop performances, offer suggestions to the actors about how to carry out their roles, and even, if needed, join the stage to make explicit their suggestions. Through this alternative way of considering theatre, Boal counteracted the various oppressive social realities Brazil was experiencing, in which individuals were silenced. Boal harnessed and made political the human desire to possess creative freedom. In his words 'to speak is to take power' which makes theatre a 'weapon for liberation'.

Many activists, such as Turkish actor and director Memet Ali Alabora, see theatre as a platform through which to question 'who can express [themselves]?' In 2012, Alabora directed the play *Mi Minör* in Turkey, which told the story of a fictional country where 'despite being a democracy, everything [was] decided by the President'. Considered a plot to topple the government, the play was banned, and Alabora was exiled. The strong reaction of the Turkish government to the play underlines both an acknowledgement of its own tyranny, and a severe fear of uprising, confirming the substantial impact theatre can have on social activism.

Even though from our perspective theatre tends to be considered a source of entertainment first and foremost, we need to remind ourselves that theatre is, in certain circumstances, one of the few ways in which one can make their voice heard in repressive environments. Plays can represent a considerable risk for dramaturges, as the power of their words can, in many countries, lead them to exile or the death penalty. If theatre is unlikely to launch a social movement on its own, it is likely to bring people together around a social issue, who in turn, will be empowered to initiate change.

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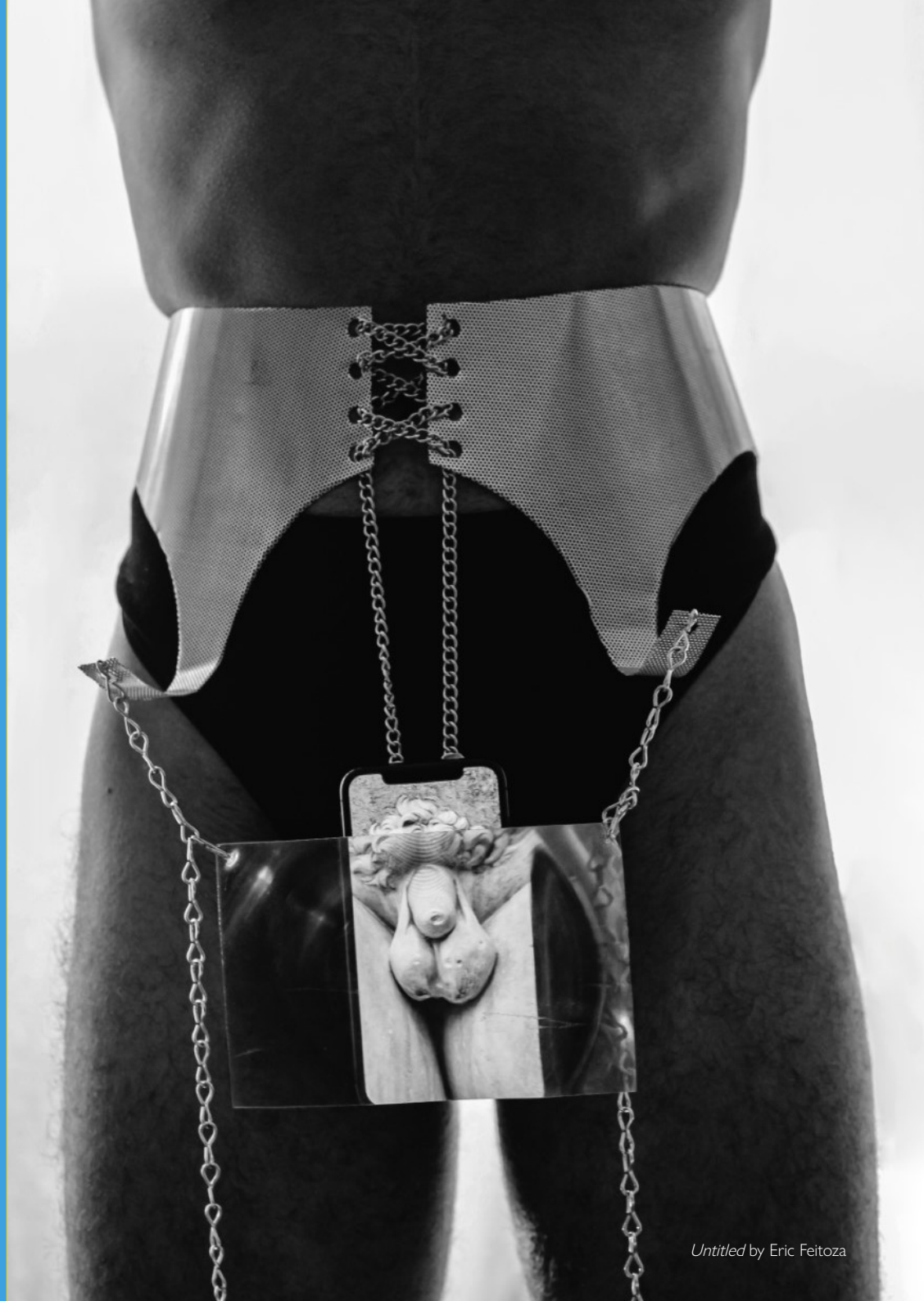
ARTICLE by
HANNA BERNARD



Untitled by Eric Feitoza

FRANCIS BACON, MAN AND BEAST

THOMAS COLEMAN considers the torment, hedonism and fragility of Francis Bacon's painterly practice.

There is something hauntingly reflective that confronts you when entering a Francis Bacon exhibition. The current retrospective of his work at the Royal Academy of Arts draws attention to the blurred boundary between human and animal behaviour his works explore in particular: these paintings are mostly large scale depictions of twisted and strained bodies, writhing in pain or bellowing in anger. Bacon grew up around animals, his father a breeder of racehorses. He observed animals in the wild twice on safari in the 1950s, perhaps making him more sensitive to this connection. Bacon's perception of the human condition is defined by the abstraction of animals in raw, physical and violent forms - some have suggested that this may reflect the psychological effects of his father's abusive behaviour. Bacon said of humankind, 'we are meat, we are all potential carcasses'. Perhaps more surprising is the unspoken power of eliciting human emotions that arises from these depictions of corporeal animal subjects, embodying the carnal and violent potential that exists within humans. With a mirror held up to the grotesque side of humanity, it is no wonder that there is a sense of latent discomfort when you walk in - this is art that moves you.

Study for Chimpanzee by Francis Bacon

Far from one-dimensional or sensationalist, Bacon's work captures the pensive and sentient quality of animals. *Study for Chimpanzee* (1957) stands apart from most of the works in the room for its bright pink background. Upon closer inspection, a monkey is perched on a wooden box, serenely looking out into the deep and layered abyss of colour. Bacon purposely contrasts the greyish-blues of the monkey to the background, grounding and centring the chimpanzee in a fixed position on the box while simultaneously portraying a muted sense of calm. The painting is refreshingly distinct from the feral, contorted confrontations of other monkeys beside it. It feels as though we are invited to take a seat beside the monkey to observe the blur.

Bacon's works also have a hedonistic side. Perhaps they come across so powerfully because of the unapologetic freedom with which he applies paint to the canvas. This liberated style reveals itself in his honest and sensual paintings of Henrietta Moraes. She had an enigmatic and dissolute lifestyle and was a regular in underground hubs of literary and artistic bohemia where she met Francis Bacon. Her character was effervescent, direct, somewhat amoral but simultaneously warm and good-hearted, providing Bacon with an exciting subject. There is a thrilling and vivacious humanity to his paintings of her, and simultaneously a distorted bodilessness which captures the complexity of her psyche.

Despite being bold commentaries on the human condition, Bacon often constructs his paintings using boundaries and divisions, creating a sense of tension between the tormented figures and the rigid spatial forms they occupy. The background lines and roped off area which make up his *Study after Velázquez's Portrait of Pope Innocent X* (1953) combine to remind the audience of their viewing experience; concomitantly, Bacon uses these gestural marks to create cage-like structures which trap the subjects inside. The vague definition of these lines imposes a versatile order on the shifting chaos underneath. The viewer's own sense of physical space is distorted as the undefined perspective places us both within and outside of the rope. Bacon's treatment of subjects such as mortality and sexuality through his triptychs can be viewed as meditations on emotional response. Each panel offers a different perspective to his theme, while still remaining closely connected. This sense of uncertainty is particularly compelling when considering his *Black Triptychs* (1972/4), which capture the heartbreak of the suicide of George Dyer, Bacon's lover and model, in 1971. The pair had a relationship fraught with extremely dysfunctional habits, one which blurred pain and pleasure both self-administered as well as by the other. In the obscurity and the darkness of these works, the slumped fleshy figure is weighed down by inescapable realities: loss, guilt and fragile life. Even studying the progression of the bullfights, from the triptych, *Miroir de la Tauromachie* (1969), an erotically charged fight for survival and preserved mortality is replaced, after Bacon's reflections, by a dejected, remorseful tone. After the action and fighting is over, Bacon's final *Triptych* (1987), depicts the bull on its own with its head downturned, shying away from the violence which previously defined it, and the injuries hanging like butchered meat, without spectators to glorify the pain. This disappointment and shame and, perhaps, melancholic grief Bacon captures seems akin to a projection of the subsiding endorphins after deriving sadomasochistic pleasure.

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ARTICLE by
THOMAS COLEMAN

ON SAMPLING:
SOUND COLLAGES

The Clown by Nicky Harrington and Eric Feitoza

ARIANA RAZAVI discusses the way in which sampling as a method of music production can both transcend and create lineages between boundaries of genre.

Sampling is one of the most interesting and outright forms of re-contextualisation in music-making and production. The practice consists of lifting a portion of a piece of music and placing it in a different, new composition. Though the sampling process brings about legal, ethical, and political questions, it also carries fascinating social and contextual implications: a fragment of the piece is picked out of its original context, manipulated, and rearranged into a different setting to create an altered listening experience from that which was originally intended. A sound collage, if you will.

Often the sampled section is repurposed by way of dissection and integration. To create a sound more relevant to the new context in which the sample has been placed, an artist or producer might layer, equalise, repitch, loop, speed up or slow down the sample. The use of a sample is not an accidental match. Artists seek out specific sounds to elevate their track. Especially in a world pre-internet, artists had to be committed to trolling through singles, EPs, albums that came before, all to find the perfect musical match for their new creation.

One example of sampling's widespread implementation, influence and potential, is in hip-hop. 1980s hip-hop was born out of sampling. The sounds of soul, rare groove, jazz, and funk music, as well as folk and rock music were refashioned by producers and DJs, creating a diversity of sounds responsible for the innovative nature of the genre, distinct to its contemporary genre. Funk-artist James Brown's drum breaks, for example, were sampled time and again within the New York hip-hop scene alone, each time creating a completely different-sounding and unique piece.

Sampling facilitated the emergence of new genres, whilst continually referencing their musical predecessors. It is transcendental

as a musical technique in that it stretches the boundaries of genre beyond culture and demographic. In this way, sampling has the power to make a political statement, one of recognising the trailblazers who came before in what is both a powerful homage and, in my opinion, a display of gratitude.

The collage-like quality of sampling goes beyond sound and applies to culture as much as it does sonic texture. In this way, it holds further political power, and has the ability to create sub-identities through cross-genre sampling. Consider Cut Killer's sampling of both Édith Piaf and KRS-One in Mathieu Kassovitz's 1995 film *La Haine*. The blending of two different social realities through their music creates a distinct audience that can relate to both of these worlds, allowing for new social and political subcultures to emerge.

Aside from hip-hop, a less mainstream form of sampling is the re-interpretation of classical music, which has had a profound influence on the contemporary rock of today, despite often being seen as very distant from the music consumed by the masses. We can imagine this at the level of musical theory, but we can also see (or hear) it vividly through sampling. For example, the melody of Billy Joel's *This Night* (1984) is taken from Beethoven's *Sonata Pathetique* (1798). The classical influence is unmistakable, despite being vastly different pieces of music, situated in entirely separate contexts. Sampling creates a relationship between the two timeframes and alludes to the timelessness of classical music: our appreciation of more 'antiquated' genres can allow us to become better appreciators of more contemporary genres as well.

Tracks can also be re-sampled, which can take the original sound even further from its initial context. As the sample is 'passed on' between tracks, the original intent or concept behind its use is completely refigured. There are points where the sample is manipulated so far that it could be considered as a complete abstraction of the original. It takes on a new sound that can hardly be recognised, yet the cultural mark of the sample is still left. Perhaps sampling is more about the act itself than the actual sonic impact it has on a song.

By crossing the borders of genre, a single melody, like that of Beethoven, can encompass and remain relevant to several different social realities. In part this is due to the way we conceive of certain genres (classical music now often being seen as a sign of the social and intellectual 'elite'). Two people from entirely different and sometimes contrasting socio-economic backgrounds would both recognise it, but associate it with an entirely different artist and piece. Another indication of the transcendental power of sampling.

So, the next time you think you recognise a part of a song from another place, make note of it. It may have a far richer history than you think.

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ARTICLE by
ARIANA RAZAVI

Dancer by Isidore Bishop-Sauve

THE GENIUS OF *DON'T LOOK UP*

NG SHENG YING analyses *Don't Look Up*, and how it satirises the absurdity of today's political and media landscape, in the denial of scientific truths.

Adam McKay's *Don't Look Up* (2021) is a deeply political film made very apolitically – without political rhetoric, aggressive verbal tussle and all the formalities of political lobbying. When considering artistic media, tone, content and genre, *Don't Look Up* is a film about serious content made in a profoundly unserious form. It is ingenious; we need more art made with such acute expression. It attempts to nudge you out of a slumber, and awaken you to the ugliest of truths and the urgency of issues without outright disturbing or angering you. It will make you chuckle uncontrollably at every punchline, and stupefy you at its ability to immerse the viewer in all the political issues it refers to. McKay's perfectly crafted satire gets one thinking about the place of scientific truth in our political, economic and social institutions today, especially scientific truth pertaining to the climate crisis.

Don't Look Up is a satirical take on our political and media institutions. It parodies our reality and ultimately seeks to expose how scientific, authoritative and factual claims go unheard amidst the excessive noise found in mass media. The film's main concern is how laughably difficult it is to have scientific information disseminated, let alone understood. It depicts, with startling clarity, how scientists are not only responsible for unearthing scientific breakthroughs, but also articulating them in a way which is simplified, jargon-free and palatable for public comprehension. Such technical information gets lost in the babble of social media, and is seen as less appealing compared to the usual entertaining, sensationalist celebrity gossip which front our news sites every day.

The film follows Dr Randall Mindy (Leonardo DiCaprio), a bespectacled, bookish, bearded scientist, clearly a seasoned professional in the scientific community, and doctoral candidate Kate Dibiasky (Jennifer Lawrence), a precocious young astronomer, in their discovery of a comet the size of Mount Everest hurtling towards Earth at alarming speeds. The comet, on impact, will have the power of a hundred Hiroshima bombs, and is expected to wipe out every person who walks the Earth. McKay establishes the premise of the film with startling clarity - there is no shred of doubt that a large object headed towards earth is capable of destroying all life. The public's staggering delay in fully understanding the sheer gravity of the situation is, on one level, hysterical. The dilly-dallying of self-serving politicians who only care about how well they do in the next mid-term and what policies will serve as good PR is anxiety-inducing. Viewers are swept along with the ironies and rhythm that McKay elegantly engineers, reimagining the film's apocalyptic reality to a spine-tingling extent, even including in the script certain events that start to unfold in real time - such as Covid-19 plunging the world into claustraphobic self-isolation - so much so that Cate Blanchett, who plays the shallow talk show host Brie Evantee, calls McKay 'psychic'.

In an attempt to capture his own 'burgeoning terror' about the climate crisis and how society considers it as the 'fourth or fifth story' on the news or even denies it altogether, McKay criticises the folly of climate deniers by staging an extreme view of a world that has gone over its head. *Don't Look Up* is a tonal masterpiece. Aided by absolutely spot-on comedic timing and execution by a solid A-list cast, McKay walked a precarious satirical tightrope and succeeded, exemplifying filmic mastery. While the film begins as an examination of how we respond to important news on a global level, it also acutely scrutinises the failures of bureaucracy, red tape and top-down communication. The urgency of McKay's story lies in its humanity and clarity. It also reveals the insurmountable handicap that is an individual's ability to effect change on a grand scale. The reality is that, for change to truly occur, a real movement must occur within every one of us. The beauty of humanity is that we are more similar than we think, and McKay models this in *Don't Look Up* beautifully - in the face of such a common threat, we can work together, we can become one big alliance. Suddenly, all hostility between us can dissolve, and the goodness of humanity can make a momentous return.

Don't Look Up is rife with allusions to our failures to heed early warnings of Covid-19, by the likes of Anthony Fauci, and to how climate scientists continue going unheard. What occurred to me is that, sometimes, it doesn't take dizzying philosophising, boring facts and figures or impenetrable scientific jargon to nudge you to start taking steps to do your part in a cause - but instead, a well-engineered joke examining real world issues, and in doing so, starting to reverse systemic problems on Earth.

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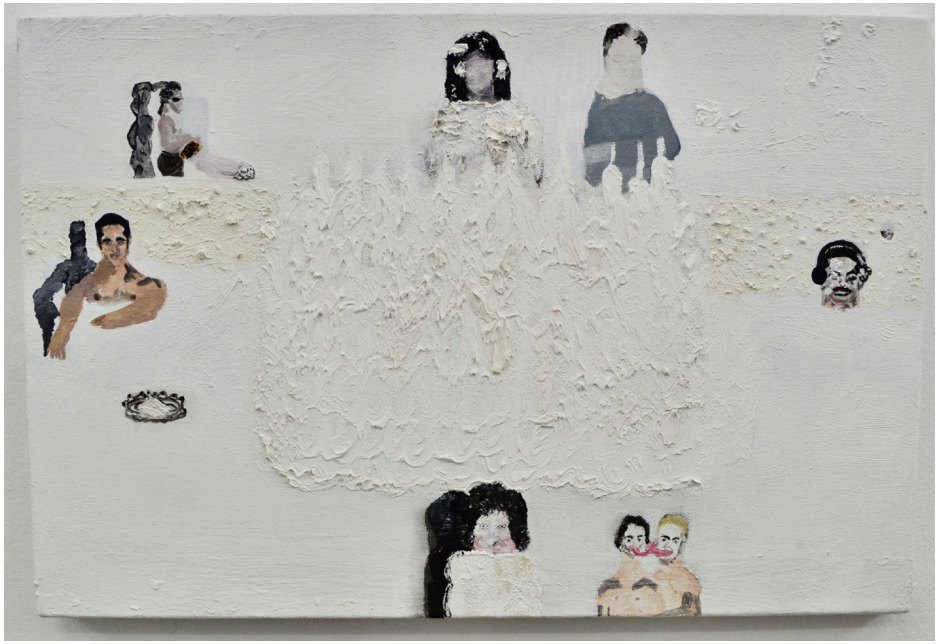
ARTICLE by
NG SHENG YING

Returning to Roots in Andreades' *Brown Girls*

EVIE ROBINSON considers how Daphne Palasi Andreades' debut novel portrays the collective consciousness of women in Queens, New York.

It's the beauty of the novel that allows a writer to play with ideas of consciousness. We're often greeted with the first or third person upon our entry to a novel - the personal and introspective 'I', or the omnipresence of a narrator who describes the various 'theys' in the story. But what Daphne Palasi Andreades gave me, in her debut novel *Brown Girls* (2022), was something entirely different. Andreades' novel relays the experience of many Women of Colour raised in Queens, New York - particularly the joys, heartbreaks and complexities of growing up in biracial



Cake by Ben Raz

neighbourhoods and friendship groups. It's a book that explores so many pertinent issues, in an experimental, lyrical and almost poetic style, making for a moving reading experience that feels truly unique. Andreades' crafting of perspective adds to this sense: she transports us through a number of heads, minds and hearts, her narrator communicating solely through the use of 'we'. It seems to somehow describe both the individual and collective, in the exact same moment. It speaks to ideas of racism - every individual fights their own battles, with their own stories to tell, and many are united in their sharing of collective experience, obstacles, and barriers. Moments like sitting with friends in a college English class, the curriculum devoid of any representation, evoke this - 'we don't look like anybody in these books. And nobody looks like us'. Choosing this kind of perspective is an astonishingly poignant statement from an Author of Colour herself.

Frequently referred to as 'the dregs of Queens', the first section of the novel unfolds within the girls' childhood place of residence. It is a neighbourhood frequently slandered by the American media, its central road dubbed the 'Boulevard of Death'. They move through their teenage years, socialising at local restaurants and choosing teenage loves sandwiched between major life decisions and moments of tragedy. As the novel moves across a series of locations, we catch a glimpse of all the possible outcomes for the women at its heart - the high schools and colleges they attend, the areas they settle in, the places they travel to abroad - or the schools they never graduate from, the homes of the partners they decide to leave, the jobs they quit, once idolised and now unfulfilling. The writing exhibits a sense of movement, as if with the turn of each page, we are propelled into the future, always in motion towards the next stage of life. Queens is a place that the women within it are keen to escape, at the first chance they get. But they recognise, upon returning for the opening of a photography exhibition towards the end of the novel, the subconscious pull of their homes:

'This time around, however, we find that we aren't repelled by the noise, the chaos, in the way we once were. The dregs of Queens, this place we so desperately dreamt of leaving. But who would've thought we'd long to return?'

Queens is a place at the core of this collective. It is the place that is always returned to - the centre of evolution for this community of women. It becomes the scene for Andreades to focus on another generation; motherhood is a major theme in *Brown Girls*. In a chapter entitled 'Our Not-Reflections', the female protagonists, looking cleverly placing their daughters on the periphery of these encounters, in a dream-like sequence, as they become witness to the things that influenced their own upbringing - 'resilient, strong, determined our mothers carved out homes of their own. This, too, is in our blood'.

Later, when these daughters have daughters of their own, they trace back their origins in the same way as their mothers:

'Images flash through our minds: the dregs of Queens, our old block where the lone tree is now gone, the sidewalk smoothed over. Roots hidden, yet biding time to burst forth once again. Do they know that everything that's part of us is also part of them? To our children who have not yet been to our hometown, we promise: One day, we'll take you there.'

Organic, poetic, freeing: these are just some of the words that come to mind when I attempt to describe Andreades' masterpiece of a debut. It is a novel that transported me away to a different world, through the eyes of another. Yet, it is also grounded in the present. Andreades' lyrical writing combines rich and poetic descriptions of daydreams and childhood fun with the realities facing People of Colour today. If you read any debut novel in 2022, make it this one.

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ARTICLE by
EVIE ROBINSON

Untitled by Mahika Gautam

A LAYOVER OF HER OWN

A prose piece by REGINA CO.

She's on the last leg of her eighteen, nineteen, twenty hour flight from Ninoy Aquino International Airport to London Heathrow. Opening her window, all she can see are thick beds of clouds. It looks like morning. Somehow, she catches the eye of a flight attendant, who asks her if she needs anything. Flustered by the sudden attention, the girl-woman tells the flight attendant that she's alright.

It's the accent change that she notices first. In that time and space from one airport to another, she's shed her skin. Her consonants are more pronounced now, her vowels rounder. It's in how her hands move more gracefully. Yet it's also deeper than that.

She now tells people to pronounce her name correctly, instead of letting others get away with whatever they wanted to call her, like she used to do. She has become the kind of girl-woman who suddenly finds herself smiling as she walks under the autumn-painted trees of Bloomsbury. She's always laughed loudly, but now she finds that there are others who match her volume. The girl-woman even breathes sighs of relief when talking to friends, something that never happened to her before. Most of all, she feels like she's finally getting what she always thought she deserved. She wants more.

The girl-woman wants to believe that she likes her new self. She laid the foundations for this self over the past few months, in this existence bookended by long-haul flights. Reflecting on the next stage of her self-construction, she marvels at the fact that she can choose how to build a self that she is happy to present to others. She did not always have this choice.

She remembers who she was not too long ago. Haunted by the traumatic ramifications of a fresh start that was stolen from her, the girl was trapped by side-eyes in classrooms and sudden silences whenever she walked past a conversation. Her smiles, her laughter, her words were always twisted into double meanings. Though she was not completely faultless, she always knew that she never deserved what she went through. Six, seven, eight years.

The girl-woman's pulse quickens when she sees a Facebook post or hears a song that reminds her of who she was surrounded by and where she used to be. She becomes more aware of her breath, now, sometimes starts picking at her fingernails. It's not that she never reconciled with her past: her past never reconciled with her. When it came to deciding where to spend the next three, four, five years of her life, the girl chose a place where she could have absolute freedom and choice.

Now, she's here. On the last four, three, two hours of this flight from Dubai to London, the girl-woman stares at her third breakfast. She had lugaw, a Filipino congee, on her first flight to Dubai from Manila. She finished that breakfast quickly, only to realise how it would be a long while until she could have real Filipino food again. The occasional chicken adobo or arroz caldo are all she could properly make in her London flat; supermarkets don't really sell ingredients for anything else. She's now staring at sausages and mash. The girl-woman sighs longingly. She'll miss home again. Even now, after noticing the accent change, the girl-woman thinks about how much she loves her language. How Filipino words sound like tender music when spoken, each word amplifying the thought, emotion or idea connected to it more than English ever could. But her first language was English.

The girl-woman finishes her meal and walks to the bathroom. There's something homey about this A380, tinged by the nostalgia of summer holidays of what felt like centuries ago. She misses it: the pre-pandemic era when she and her family took long-haul vacations. Perhaps there was something about those journeys that prepared her for these next two, three, four years of her life. Her father taught her to stretch and walk about the plane a little bit to avoid her joints going too stiff from cabin pressure. Her mother told her to decide when she would sleep on the flights, so that her jet lag wouldn't be as bad when she landed. She's flying alone now, her family left behind. Eighteen, nineteen, twenty years old in a few months. Somehow on this plane, she felt all of who she was, is and will be, existing in a liminal space.

For now, she's in between. Manila, Dubai, London; girl, girl-woman, woman. Mid-air. A layover of her own. But the pilot announces that the plane will be landing soon, and it's time to get ready.

—

PROSE PIECE by
REGINA CO

ENDING STREET HARRASSMENT :
NEW VOICES SPEAKING OUT

HANNA BERNARD sheds light on worldwide initiatives aiming to end street harassment, considering their efficacy and potential.

Worldwide, 80% of women endure at least frequent street harassment, 45% feel that they cannot go alone to public spaces, and 50% have to cross the street and find alternate routes to their destinations to avoid harassment (according to data gathered by Holly Kearl, for her nonprofit organisation Stop Street Harassment). The pervasiveness of the problem has catalysed several different initiatives worldwide attempting to reduce the prevalence of street harassment, with mixed results.

In the last decade, women have been rising up across the world, in efforts to change the narrative. One example is Cheer Up Luv, created in 2017 by Eliza Hatch, a London-based photojournalist.

Cheer Up Luv takes a stand against street harassment, which Hatch considers 'a constant in [her] life'. The name of her project emerged from a recurrent pick-up line with which she had been approached, once too many times. She says 'the number of times I have been told to 'cheer up' by a strange man is countless, and it never gets any more acceptable'. The project began on a small scale, by asking women in her surroundings if they had street harassment experiences that they would agree to share. This first step revealed that not only did her female friends all have stories of harassment, but that her male friends were completely oblivious to the extent of the situation, a perfect illustration of the lack of awareness surrounding the issue. Hatch then put women in the foreground, through a combination of photographs and testimonies, published on her website, Cheerupluv.com. When asked whether she had any trouble finding participants, she answered that most women she asked sent her at least three stories to pick from. The project quickly expanded as more women reached out to her, asking to participate. Cheer Up Luv achieved the major goal of 'creating a wider support network for... women and a solidarity between them', giving a voice to women and allowing them, through the photographs, to present themselves as more than victims of sexual street harassment.

Associations worldwide have undertaken various responses to street harassment. Like Hatch's, many of these initiatives focus on sharing testimonies, such as

Gamblers by Erna Mist

The Everyday Sexism Project, which provides an online safe space where victims can share their experience and discuss with individuals who have undergone similar experiences.

But talking is not enough, and in the face of inactive higher authorities, individual, action-based initiatives have also been sparked. With Covid having starkly heightened the frequency of instances of street harassment, the girls of Maryfield College in Dublin took the matter into their own hands. They began by interviewing a range of a hundred young women under the age of twenty, and discovered that some 60% said they had been the subject of catcalling – such as whistling, jeering or sexual comments – during the previous week. They then established a twofold plan of action. On one hand, increasing the space dedicated to combatting street harassment in the education system, and on the other, lobbying TDs (the Irish equivalent of MPs) to consider laws such as France's 2018 anti-street harassment law.

While this initiative is laudable, the law itself has proven ineffective. A year after it was voted in, police data showed that the results were more symbolic than effective, with only 731 fines distributed in the French territory for 'sexist outrages', primarily given in cases of perpetrators caught in the act. This led feminist groups to fear that the small number of verbalisations may become the official data used to quantify the phenomenon, playing down the scale of the problem.

This goes hand in hand with the fact that in France, 66% of women responding to a survey by the feminist group Nous Toutes have reported a poor reception when trying to file a complaint for street harassment at the police station. And there is no shortage of stories like these in the news, such as the recent condemnations of the misogynistic culture rooted deep within London's Metropolitan Police Service.

Women have consistently risen up for the protection of their rights, to overcome the pervasive inequalities that remain in our society. Until now, many of these initiatives have achieved the important first steps of placing the issue in the foreground, giving a voice to the victims and changing the narrative. Yet most of the solutions explored involve the victim taking action: few are institutional, and if they are, they often have a frail impact on real life situations. We must now shift focus, to make both the institutions and the norms of our society evolve, to permanently do away with street harassment, and the culture to which it belongs.

—

ARTICLE by
HANNA BERNARD

Untitled by Victor Saint Bris

RECASTING REALITY

BRYAN WANG considers the effects of drug use on artistic production.

Four centuries ago, René Descartes called into question the reliability of sensory perception: how much information can we realistically attain about the physical world through our senses? This scepticism of our external reality has since seeped into our psyches, such ideas being increasingly propagated in popular culture. *The Matrix* (1999), for one, pushed philosophical ideas about the unreality of our world into the mainstream. These increasingly blurred lines between truth and falsity, and reality and illusion, have spurred a look inward by many people.

Unlike those of the romantic and realist traditions, many artists today are rejecting external reality in favour of interpreting the world through the medium of self and the subconscious. To understand the world, then, we must first understand ourselves. Where exactly are artists leading us?

It strikes me that there is an increasing dissonance reverberating throughout the world today, an increasing sense of untethered-ness exacerbated by over-rapid technological progress. In *The Extreme Self* (2021), co-authored by the acclaimed curator Hans Ulrich Obrist, it is said that we have changed the meaning of ourselves: what if our physical bodies are now only one piece of our human existence? What if, as Marshall McLuhan stated in the 1960s, 'the global village is populated with 'discarnate' human beings who no longer exist as physical presences', people nothing more than images or information patterns? And what if this version of you is the only one that matters anymore?

This sense of unreality has been said to be enhanced through the use of drugs, which alter our internal reality so much that it looks and feels as if our external reality is also shifting. While one may think that feelings are abstract or metaphysical, the experience of a high can make one realise their own biology and physicality. Are our thoughts and feelings about the world then merely biological constructs?

Such a shift in vision causes us to question ourselves and our reality. If our reality can be so easily altered by *altering our minds*, what exactly does this reality constitute? The use of drugs is therefore significant artistically because it invites and inspires artists to capture and express the world around them through enhancing their experience of self. The universe is reimagined with the individual at its centre rather than just as part, and artistic expression increasingly seeks to capture the self in its many manifestations.

Salvador Dali has alluded to the use of drugs, and the influence of hallucination is visible throughout surrealist art. Dali employed a variety of creative techniques that would unlock his unconscious, such as sitting in a chair and holding a spoon above the plate and dozing off; as he fell asleep, the spoon would drop onto the plate, making a noise that woke him in time to jot down the surreal images he saw in his dreams.

In particular, the psychedelic movement in the 1960s spurred artistic styles heavily influenced by hallucination. Op Art, for instance, is a style of abstraction that relies on geometric shapes, lines and colour juxtapositions to create optical illusions for the viewer. The Op Art movement was driven by artists who rejected objective interpretation and were interested in investigating various perceptual effects. Its influence can be seen even today on artists such as Yayoi Kusama and her world of 'polka dots'. Other influential designers such as Wes Wilson and Viktor Moscoso borrowed from and reconceptualised Pop Art in their graphic designs, utilising opposing and 'moving' vibrant colours to create a psychedelic effect.

Beginning in the 1970s, a distinct subset of artists began seeking to illustrate the creative and spiritual worlds they had imagined during psychedelic experiences. Alex and Allyson Grey, who met on an acid trip in 1976, have spearheaded the Visionary Art movement, which is based on the premise that art is a manifestation of the divine within, the movement 'encourag[ing] the development of our inner sight', Alex Grey has written. 'To find the visionary realm, we use the intuitive inner eye: [t]he eye of contemplation; the eye of the soul. All the inspiring ideas we have as artists originate here' (2020).

Existential questions continue to seep into art and in return, themes and styles of psychedelia, along with the direct effects of taking psychedelics, continue to shape our understanding of the world. What does the universe really entail? Could it, just like so much of art today, be unknowable and indistinguishable? The limits of our worlds seem to be blurring into a hallucinogenic haze.

—

ARTICLE by
BRYAN WANG

CHILDREN AND ART:
SONDHEIM, LARSON AND LEGACY

REGINA CO considers the impact of contemporary musical theatre greats, Stephen Sondheim and Jonathan Larson.

The date is the 11th of February 2022. I have an idea for an *Era Journal* article about the legacies of Jonathan Larson and Stephen Sondheim that I have spent the last 72 hours of my life writing and rewriting and rewriting. This is my third attempt to write this piece. I have ended up in a similar position to *Tick, Tick… Boom!*'s Jon. In just under a month, I will be twenty-years-old. Older than Stephen Sondheim when he was being mentored by Oscar Hammerstein (writer of *The Sound of Music* (1965), *The King and I* (1956) and *Carousel* (1945), to name but a few). Older than Jonathan Larson when he was forging his university theatre career as an actor and singer - he would start writing musicals a year later. Older than Lin-Manuel Miranda, who began writing *In the Heights* (2021) in his second year of university. In less than four weeks, my teenage years will be over forever. And what exactly do I have to show for myself? I did not want to write anything lacklustre.

I thought of writing about Larson and Sondheim's uncanny resemblance in their legacies. Both composers have revolutionised musical theatre by contemporising the genre for their audiences. Both composers have written musicals about the portrait of the artist as a young man: Sondheim with *Sunday in the Park with George* (1983) and Larson with *Tick, Tick… Boom!* (2001). Both composers have pushed the boundaries for representation onstage. I also thought of writing about the artistic lineage of Hammerstein, Sondheim, Larson and, now, Miranda.

But I could not make this piece work in a way that felt genuine or personal. Then, I remembered a piece of advice that *Tick, Tick… Boom!* gives to its audience: 'write about what you know'.

It is 2022. People are surrounded by grief, threat, fatigue, disease. We have lost family members and friends to the pandemic. We know people who have developed chronic conditions because of this virus. Artists are being starved, literally and creatively. People are suffering and the powers that be do not seem to care. We are losing time with our loved ones. Our time is being wasted. Our time is running out. The time keeps ticking.

Tick. Tick.

It is also an era when hate and war seem to make more sense than love and creation. Young people today are caught in the crossfire of illogical divides that can only ever really be blamed on the inaction of the generations above us. We are kept on the fringes of power and change. It often feels like the only thing that we can do during these times is to dream. Of peace and quiet and open air. Of a time and place for us. Somewhere.

And I think that is what it means to partake in the legacies of Larson and Sondheim.

It is to live as if there is no day but today, as if it is our time, our turn coming through.

It is to blaze a trail when the well-worn path seems safe and inviting, to be made of flecks of light.

It is to let anything we do come from us and give others more to see, to find glory in a song that rings true.

It is to crowd somebody with love and force somebody to care. It is to measure in love.

Hamlet by Erna Mist

It is a joint legacy of artistic persistence. It is a defiance of the norm.

Towards the end of the film *Tick, Tick… Boom!,* Jonathan Larson sits in his dilapidated flat. He has faced yet another rejection, aggravating his just-after-quarter-life crisis. As he looks over some of the ideas for his next project, a message comes on the receiver.

'Jon? Steve Sondheim here. Rosa gave me this number. I hope it's okay to call you... I didn't get a chance to speak with you after your reading, but I just wanted to say it was really good. Congratulations. I'd love to get together and talk to you about it, if you have any interest. No pressure. The main thing, though, is that it's first-rate work and it has a future. And so do you. I'll call you later with some thoughts if that's okay. Meanwhile, be proud'.

Two weeks after the Netflix release of *Tick, Tick… Boom!* (2021), Stephen Sondheim passed away at the age of ninety-one. In what was supposed to be a minor, even unintended, cameo appearance, Sondheim himself leaves an important message to the audience. Although the musical has always been a celebration of two legacies, I feel that Sondheim's last message, combined with the posthumous triumph of Larson's work, has become particularly poignant at this time. You can make first-rate work. You have a future. Meanwhile, be proud.

Stephen Sondheim (March 22, 1930 – November 26, 2021)

Jonathan Larson (February 4, 1960 – January 25, 1996)

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ARTICLE by
REGINA CO

Max's Torso by Georgia Jones

A TRILOGY OF TRANSCENDENCE: LOSS AND COMMUNICATION IN NICK CAVE'S RECENT ALBUMS

GEORGIA SCHEERHOUT discusses the recent releases of Nick Cave, reflecting on themes of grief and vulnerability in his work.

In 2015, Nick Cave and his band members, the Bad Seeds, were halfway through the recording of what eventually became 2016's *Skeleton Tree* when Cave's fifteen-year-old son tragically passed away. The release of this album a year after Arthur's death came to mark a seminal turning point in the direction of Cave's music: not only is the album lyrically haunted by Cave's grief, but musically, *Skeleton Tree* combines sparse, ethereal harmonies and loops punctuated by jarring string arrangements, as well as Cave's muted, hollow vocals. The album communicates a profound sense of emptiness contained in the musical arrangement.

A lyrical theme of unanswered speech recurs throughout: Cave's frequent 'calling' receives no answer but the whine of feedback. The 'skeleton trees' which populate the album's title track are a depiction of sparseness, loss and loneliness that make the album a difficult listen. The expansive landscape Cave both lyrically describes and musically inhabits becomes a tragic symbol of Cave as a father and songwriter, neither able to communicate with his child nor his audience. Cave, through his grief, still manages to create something darkly sublime. The artist transforms musical expression into a vessel for his own incommunicable loss. He searches for something which remains unfound, his literal loss translated into a figurative cavity which darkens the soundscape of the record.

Released three years later in 2019, *Ghosteen* constitutes a complete revolution of sound for the Bad Seeds. No longer is there the raucous, post-punk wildness of Nick Cave's early career, or even the bleak, mournful violins of *Skeleton Tree*. Instead, *Ghosteen* electronifies Cave's loss, mixing sweeping orchestration with analogue synthesisers to create something wholly new and often joyful. The sparse percussion throughout the album gives it a floating sense of movement and transience, of communication with something beyond, and perhaps makes it the Bad Seed's most experimental record.

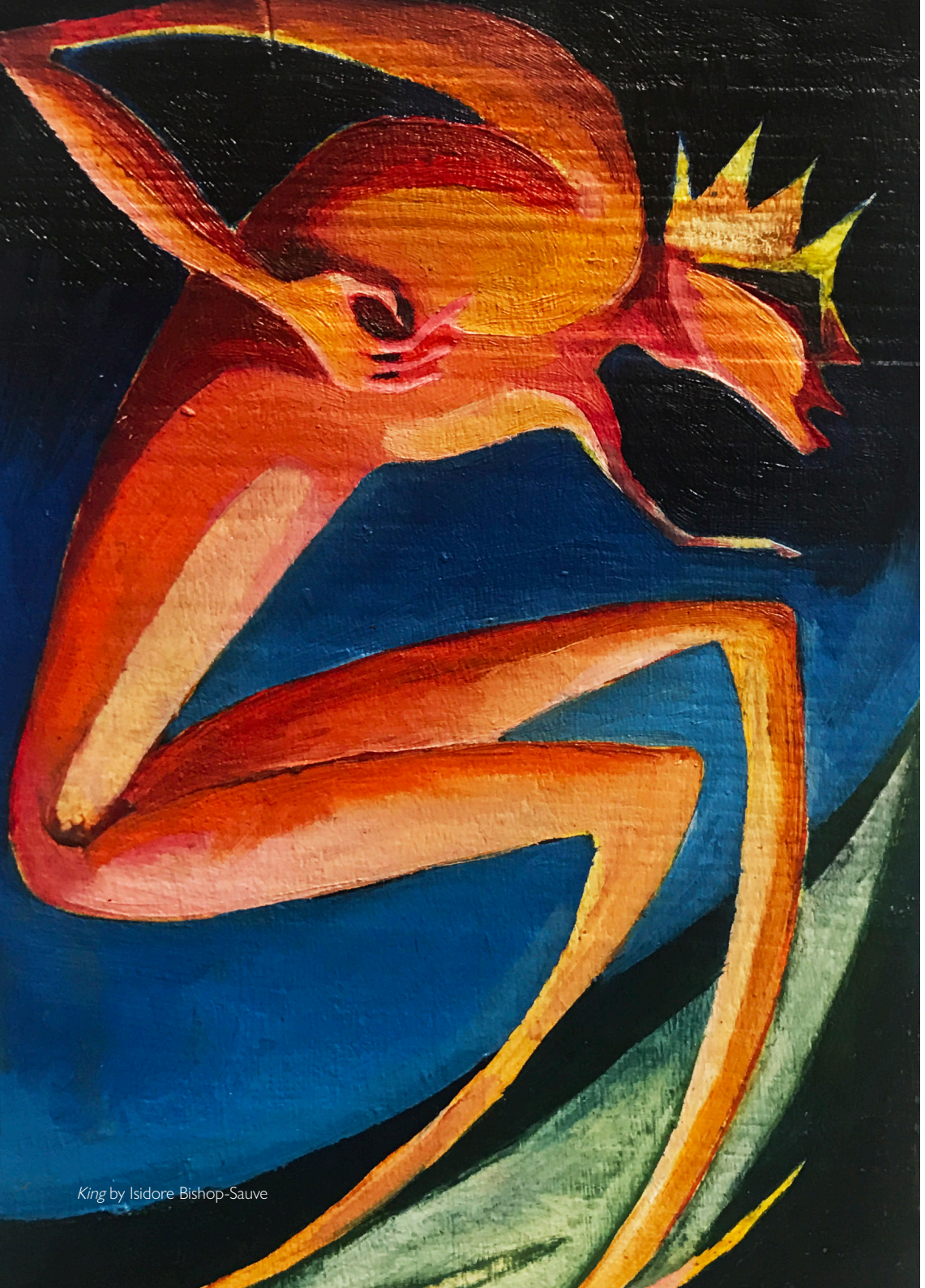
The sense of the sublime in *Ghosteen* moves through the lyrics, in which Cave rediscovers joyous communion with the ghost of his teenage child, and is further reflected in the ambient looping. The repetition of 'I am beside you' in 'Ghosteen Speaks' gives voice to what is lost. Here, Cave finally receives a reply to his unanswered calling. The title track is twelve minutes of abundant instrumentation; the little percussion used throughout the record creates a sense of mutability and movement, of Cave as freed from the oppressive solitude of *Skeleton Tree*. Yet, there remains a darkness. 'Hollywood' is the story of a solitary figure moving from one place to another in silence, continuing the *Skeleton Tree* theme of loss but with a sense of destination that comes with the closing of the song. Cave describes this double album as split between the 'children' songs of the first half and 'their parents' in the second. We see these two corresponding sides communicate and correlate with each other in a moving suggestion of the transcendent bond between Cave and his 'found' child.

CARNAGE presents perhaps the biggest departure from this running theme of loss and grief. Released in 2021 and written and produced throughout the majority of 2020, *CARNAGE* is undoubtedly a product of lockdown. It is part meditation on loneliness and stasis, and part compelling political polemic. Its single biggest achievement, however, is its mixture of potent percussive synth loops and the sweeping movement of grand string arrangements. Cave as a songwriter, perhaps even as a man, has undoubtedly changed since his initial outpouring of grief on *Skeleton Tree*. Death still haunts the apocalyptic, biblical lyrics of *CARNAGE*, however, the album culminates in the beautiful, gentle grandeur of 'Balcony Man', a meditation on finding transcendence within the mundane. Cave, of course, retains his ineffable darkness, but *CARNAGE* brings a wondrous sense of humanity and tenderness that reverberates throughout the entire record.

We follow Cave through these albums towards a philosophical realisation of our mortality, the tragic beauty of our own finitude. Immortality is perhaps the central reason for our psychological desire to create and reproduce ourselves, both through art and through children. Cave, however, takes us with him towards a sense of our own selves as wonderfully vulnerable and finite. Everything dies, Cave tells us - you, me, him, the planet, our art and our surroundings, our parents and our children - and so we should, through each other, do our best to live.

—

ARTICLE by
GEORGIA SCHEERHOUT



King by Isidore Bishop-Sauve

[IM]MORTAL DREAMS

THROUGH TIME

MIRIAM ZEGHLACHE ponders the reality of dreams through poetry.

'In the name of these confines of fear,

In the name of this vast abyss and your realm of infinite silence.'

When we think of dreams, we often imagine dimensions free from the restraints and obstacles that we face when awake - where we can say and feel what we like, without repercussions. Dreams, however, also reflect the 'real' world, in many ways, with all its suffering: a universal conception that, in ancient as well as modern poetry, often involves ideas of death and human mortality. Yet in many poetic works, mortality in dreams represents not the literal end of a life, but the evolution of one's self, the letting go of the past's constraints, and the freedom that this entails.

In Ovid's 'Orpheus and Eurydice', in *Metamorphoses* (8 AD), Orpheus descends into the underworld to recover Eurydice, his wife, from an environment best described, in his own pleadings to Hades (quoted above) as a surreal nightmare. Enclosed in the 'confines' of fear, darkness and

silence, Orpheus enters a world where anything is possible, and the rules that exist in the land of the living do not apply. Yet here, reminders of the fleeting nature of human life are constant, and culminate in Eurydice being forced back there. If I were to interpret Ovid's underworld as a land of nightmare, dreams would be the only domain in which the worlds of the living and the dead could interact. In dreams, we exist in a liminal space, allowing us to come face to face with our condition. In fact, according to Hesiod's *Theogony* (c.730-700 BC), Hypnos (god of sleep) is the brother of Thanatos (god of death), both children of Nyx (night): according to Greek myth, these concepts are linked even through divine genealogy.

While dreams might speak to the frailty and temporality of the human condition, they could also represent its intrinsic immortality. Sigmund Freud, for example, explains that death occurs in dreams often as a memory of a real death in a person's past, using the example of his patient, who dreamt that as children, her 'brothers, sisters, and cousins... all grew wings, flew away and disappeared', whereby she 'was led by the same chain of thought as the peoples of antiquity to picture the soul as having butterfly's wings.' Flight, with its connotations of freedom, when used in the context of metaphorical death, or ending, may represent the individual's very inability to die; the core traits, minds and passions which define us might render our individuality infinitely alive. Dreams, as immersions within our subconsciousness, thus confirm not just our individuality, but also the immortal nature of this individuality. We change and evolve, losing parts of ourselves in the process, but it is through this very process that our identities are forged and immortalised.

Fast-forwarding from antiquity into the nineteenth century, in Emily Brontë's *A Daydream* (1846), the speaker ponders the nature of the changing seasons, how nothing stays the same. Within this dream-state, they hear voices:

'Thou wouldst rejoice for those that live,

Because *they live to die.'*

The music ceased; the noonday dream,

Like dream of night, withdrew'

In the poem, life changes in the way that spring transitions to summer. Though these transitions are bittersweet, they are natural. Our lives change, and so do we, because though our identities and beliefs 'live to die', they also die to live; change is good, because rather than destroying our sense of self, it confirms it. Mortality in this poem, ironically, allows for ultimate immortality.

Dylan Thomas' *Fern Hill* (1945), though not directly discussing dreams, also touches on this. The speaker wonders at their past life, and how quickly the years have gone by:

'Nor that riding to sleep

I should hear him fly with the high fields

And wake to the farm forever fled from the childless land

[...]

Time held me green and dying

Though I sang in my chains like the sea'

The narrator encounters a death in their sleep: the death of their youth. Although they were 'dying' in Time's grasp, they 'sang' within it (Time is the 'him' in the lines quoted above). In dreams, flight, song, and the freedom that they entail are closely linked to ideas of death: through letting go of our past and living in the present, we are given the space to fly.

Faced with society's demands for us to conform and mould our identities to certain ideals, dreams can be the space where we can be whoever we want. Yet perhaps this isn't enough: couldn't we be whoever we want outside of this liminal space, as well as within it? Perhaps, it is only by breaking free of Eurydice and Orpheus' 'realm of infinite silence', that we can make our voices resound.

—

ARTICLE by
MIRIAM ZEGHLACHE

EDIFICE STILL by Tarzan Kingofthejungle

SPACE: 'THE FINAL FRONTIER'?

ESHKA CHUCK reflects on science fiction's astronomical narratives, and their implicit connections to colonial paradigms.

A frontier, for the OED, is 'a line or border separating two countries. The extreme limit of settled land beyond which lies wilderness, especially in reference to the Western US before Pacific Settlement'. Is it not sad that one of the most iconic quotes from our popular culture of space so grandly appeals to histories of colonialism, racism, and war? Can we not, even amidst the star-filled emptiness, envision more than conflict, oppression, and suffering?

Words carry history within them – we cannot escape their contexts and associations. 'Frontier' derives from a French term meaning 'borderland'. It would be naïve to pretend that borders have not historically meant objectifying 'others' into, at the least, 'not us', and more commonly, into enemies of war, there to be conquered. 'Frontier' has acquired new meanings in the centuries since, but it is borne of, and still burdened with, a history of conflict. When we ponder exploration beyond Earth's atmosphere, do we really wish to think of ourselves as advancing a border? Of being at the edge of 'civilisation'? When white Europeans considered the North American continent in these terms, the result was murder, torture, rape, theft, and the near erasure of peoples and cultures.

Star Trek (The Original Series, 1966-69), quoted in the title, is supposedly one of the more aspirational visions of space – if one would consider a military-esque space force aspirational, patrolling the galaxy in armed ships and crewed by its dominant species, looking for more worlds to subsume into its government. We have stories of the stars that literally have the word 'war' in their names. And even of those that don't, how many still involve conflict, and suffering?

Star Wars (1977-2022). *The Expanse* (2011-2021). *Dune* (1965). *Avatar* (2009). *Ender's Game* (1985). *Pebble in the Sky* (1950). *Doctor Who* (1963-2022). *The Orville* (2017-2022). *Battlestar Galactica* (1978-79). I could name many more. How worthy of space are these visions – visions that turn it into yet more battlegrounds for humans to fight out differences, driven by greed, bigotry, and self-glory? It is difficult to understand why these narratives so charismatically capture our imaginations. I doubt that a story that glorifies earthbound international war would today be the subject of such an ardent following – and yet interplanetary conquest and violence gets a free pass.

They are cautionary tales, perhaps. But surely, then, we should be fearful of such stories. No one who has read *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) sees it as a future to aspire to, much less an instruction manual for how our realities should play out. Why, then, are we not equally disturbed by *Dune* (1965), a future in which indigenous people and their planet are systematically oppressed and used as means to galactic-conquering ends by a feudal white autocracy?

If not cautionary tales, then perhaps these narratives are social commentaries. But where is the commentary? In *Gravity* (2013), the fringes of the Earth's atmosphere are rendered an inaccessible wasteland as a result of political muscle-flexing and international isolationism. Instead of commenting on the terrifying potential fallout of the Cold War ethos of space exploration, we are handed a ninety-minute action-adventure where the only real commentary (as far as I can tell) is that it would be useful if the Chinese provided English labels on their spacecraft controls.

The reason we keep telling these stories of space and become so engrossed by them, then, is not because they are cautionary tales or social commentaries. It is because we don't spend enough time critiquing our fictions, questioning the messages we're really being sold – messages that glorify familiar earthly horrors. It is not an excuse for us to turn off our critical, skeptical brains, just because a story is set in an unfamiliar place. Stories can be harmful – they only become less harmful when we consider and contemplate their messages. No one would consider *Tintin*

in the Congo (1931) a harmless adventure story – we see it as a hopelessly racist piece of propaganda to excuse Belgian imperialism. We would be even more horrified if someone, having read it, thought it was just an adventure tale. Not being critical, not assessing, is what allows biases and bigotry to bloom unchecked.

We need to stop looking at stories of space with that starry-eyed wonder that gives a free pass to the glorification of morally reprehensible acts. Space narratives should be subject to the same scrutiny as any other genre. We should call out dubious narratives predicated on racism, imperialism, slavery, abuse, and war. If we don't do that, or can't be bothered to, we really shouldn't bother reaching up to the emptiness for our stories at all. There are plenty of frontiers on Earth.

—

ARTICLE by
ESHKA CHUCK

Were Butterflies Burning That Day Too by Anthony Cho Chit On

A FUGUE FROM NEW YORK

A poem by ARTEMIS BABAZADEH-GITIFOROZ.

Cut out the sky
Not the buildings
Cut out the sky
So each falling slice
Not the buildings
Suits the timbre
So from up there
Of the metal tunnels
Between glass panels
Transporting
And glass bodies
Falling faces
The monologue of shoes
Of dropping octaves
Beating pavements
Dressed in the costume,
Can be seen
Pressed against a white sky,
In the many greys
Of the city.
Of the city.
And I think if a cacophony could draw
It would make a city to
Make my frown
A lot thicker.
I wonder
What if,
All those hanging heads
Cut out the sky
Burning under that blank terrace,
So I can peep
Were born with tears of laughter.
Between glass floorboards of phalluses
My childhood is full of foxes
At the mosaic of shiny silverfish
Bare your teeth!
Murals weaving crowds
And laugh with me!
That I can barely see a face in.
How straight that tail stands
A childhood was full of foxes!
I see how fresh the air
Murals weaving gardens
Of your chuckle is;
Bare your chuckle!
You know how to have a good time,
So I can see my face,
Bare your teeth!
And howl with me!
And howl with me!
I think I'll let my body sink
With anyone howling under that blank terrace
So I'll sit with another
To draw a city
My scissors couldn't cut the morning overcast
Slow enough
And we had wanted to walk that morning
To be born with tears of laughter.
'Stand by the lake I'll take a photo'
Strike a pose!
'Stupid pose, you look like a bozo'
For a freezing city of smoke.
'And? I look amazing, bozo'
Halt the movement!
'How cold do you think the water is?'
Someone is about to make a joke.
'I'll pay for lunch if you punch the ice'
I'm sure pigeons and rats
Chuckle
Keep their hands warm
'I'm gonna slip'
Chatting the way they do.
'It can't be that cold can it?'
Halt the movement!
Chuckle
They are about to howl.
'Just do it already!'
And the city watched in awe
Chuckle
As the foxes cried tears of laughter.
HOWL.

—

POEM by
ARTEMIS BABAZADEH-GITIFOROZ

The Magic of Feeling in Film (And Why It Might Disappear)

MATTEA CARBERRY considers escapism through film, and how the homogenisation of popular culture may threaten it.

For many people, film serves as an escape from reality. This explains, perhaps, why Marvel films are so immensely popular at the moment. Generally, when we think of escapism, we envision stories with surrealist elements, distanced from the real world. Yet for me, the best films are the ones which bear affinities to our most human emotions, while simultaneously enveloping us in a new world which casts such feelings in a fresh light.

In *The Art of Fiction* (1983), John Gardner argues that a writer must 'present… concrete images drawn from a careful observation of how people behave, and he must render the connections between moments, the exact gestures, facial expressions, or turns of speech that, within any given scene, move human beings from emotion to emotion, from one instant in time to the next'. Though Gardner's primary concern is with literature, this can equally apply to film. If a film's characters and their interactions with one another don't feel real, then the film usually will not have as much of an impact. What really makes an escapist film is not the subject matter of the plot, but the realness that it's able to capture, creating a space where we can transcend our present reality and inhabit the emotional currents of another.

I Walk Around Moscow (*Я шагаю по Москве*, 1964), directed by Georgiy Daneliya, is a prime example of a film which does not bear any particularly surrealist elements – yet for me, it is still an escapist film. The meandering plot centres around a small group of young people as they wander the streets of an idealised Moscow. Its ability to capture the feeling of being young and enjoying life, despite not wielding any certainty over the future, is what catapults us into this world. Whether it's a sentiment we currently bear, once bore, or will bear, its nostalgic energy is one which allures, drawing us beyond our present reality so that we may experience this one. Even if we know the feeling, we have not experienced it like this.

Amélie (2001), directed by Jean-Pierre Jeunet, similarly evokes this enchanting effect. Since it is highly stylised, it appears to have more surrealist storytelling elements, yet these stylistic devices effectively communicate the very real themes and feelings that the film sets forth. For instance, Amélie starts crying in one scene, prompting her body to morph into water, which crashes to the floor. These absurdist elements highlight the isolation she feels for being quirky, and the ensuing sadness that this causes. While the visual style certainly transports us into a different visual reality, it's these very human themes of loneliness, and the journey towards feeling comfortable in one's skin, that allows us to fully escape our reality and inhabit hers.

Yet even though there is a diverse array of films which offer escape, many people primarily watch what's popular, rather than experiencing new worlds that could be just as satisfying, if not more so. Part of this imbalance

is attributable to the nature of popular culture: the general pull of consuming popular trends keeps us feeling relevant in social situations. Prioritising less popular or obscure films may be perceived – consciously or subconsciously – as bearing a net-zero social profit.

The Marvel franchise is the most glaring example of films which are dominating popular culture: their new releases always seem to be more widely watched, compared to the films released alongside them. I am not saying that people should not watch Marvel films, or films like them, but I do think there is an issue when film, or art in general, becomes homogenised. Arguably, Marvel films follow predictable, action-packed plotlines, which are told in the same style and with similar effects.

The nature of art is that it's creative; it concerns the production of something new. The homogenisation of art inherently stops such inventiveness. This is apparent in Disney's monopoly over the film industry, its key aim being profit, not the output of art. Marvel Entertainment (owned by Disney) is the best example of this: it releases film after film, driven by reliably bankable plot lines. These movies sell, have been selling, and will continue to sell. Yet if film becomes so predictable and regimented, does it feel special anymore, and can it offer escape?

There is nothing wrong with finding comfort in these movies, but that should not limit us and the future of film. One of the greatest things about art is the invigoration of stumbling upon something new, and the joy of sharing it with others. We ought not to confine ourselves to what is popular, but search all the corners of the world for those films that make us cry, dance, scream, and perhaps above all, forget who and where we are.

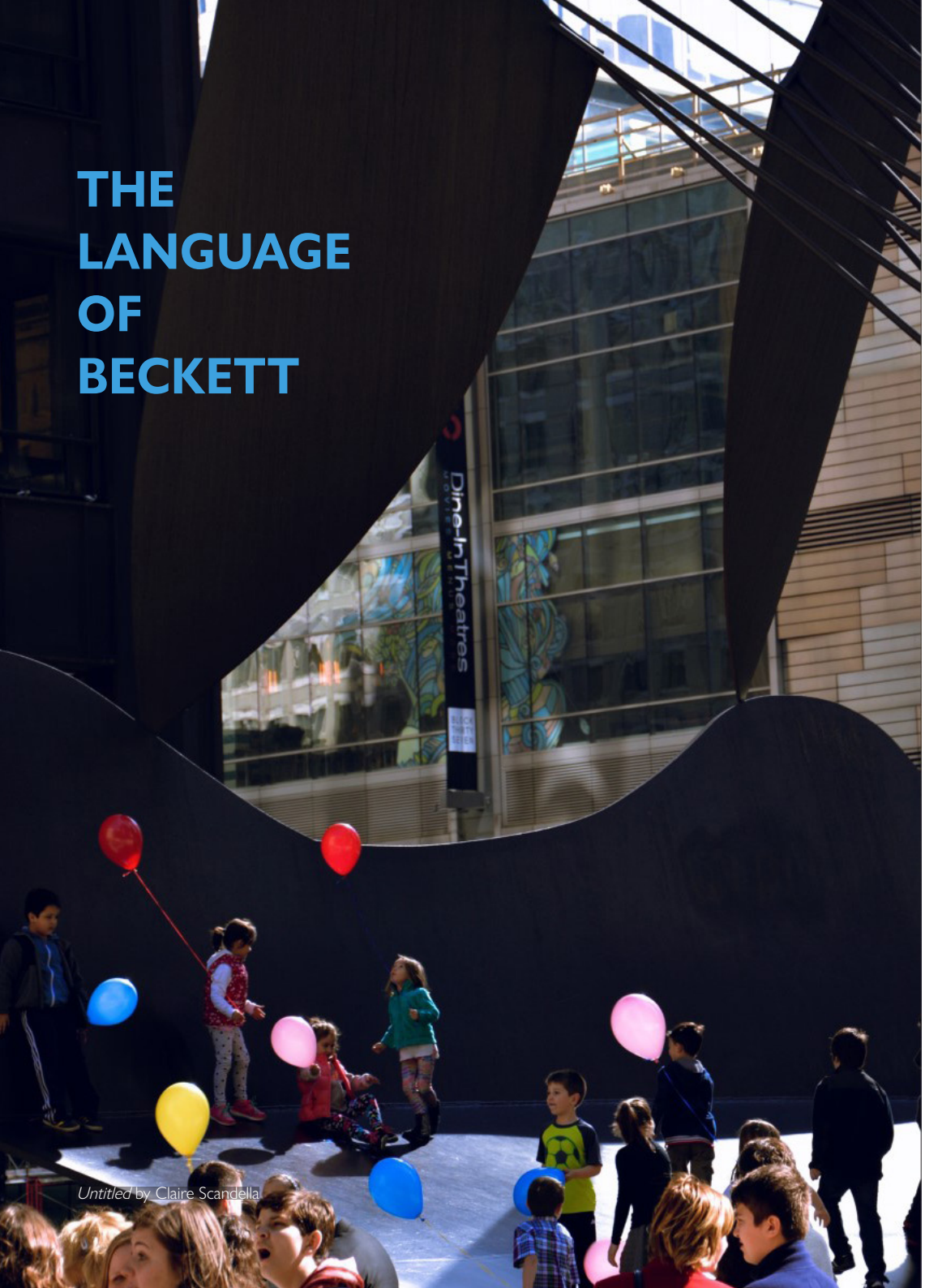
—

ARTICLE by
MATTEA CARBERRY

The Elephant Kiss by Yeon Ju

Look Ahead! by YunJu Tsai

THE LANGUAGE OF BECKETT



Untitled by Claire Scandella

LEO STAATSMANN considers the fragility of language in *Waiting for Godot* (1953).

'Vladimir: Say something!

Estragon: I'm trying!

[Long silence]'

The play *En attendant Godot* (*Waiting for Godot*), written by Samuel Beckett, was first staged in Paris in 1953. Vladimir ('Didi') and Estragon ('Gogo') wait for Godot in two acts, representing two days, but he never comes. Instead, they meet Pozzo, Lucky, and a boy who brings the message of Godot's delay. A popular interpretation of this play emphasises its references to the monotonous and existential experiences of everyday life during the Second World War and Beckett's experience in the resistance. Besides these biographical approaches, I will shed light on Beckett's use of the important tool of repetition. Repetition on the level of content, especially in dialogue, functions as an index, pointing to the power and limits of language and reason, and secondly to something beyond that.

With his play in two acts, Beckett presents a realm in between, difficult to define or to locate, in which 'nothing happens twice', as famously described by critic Vivian Mercies (1956). The first sentence of the play, 'Nothing to be done', uttered by Estragon, introduces the paradigm of the following, which can be characterised as an ambience of meaninglessness and boredom: the protagonists are waiting for Godot.

The déjà vu structure of the play, on a level of dramaturgy, estranges the audience from the presence of the first act and its immersion. Instead, its arbitrariness becomes clear. One could anticipate an endless repetition of similar days (or acts) after noticing the repetitive manner of the second act, which seems to be one of many similar days (or acts).

On a level of language, Vladimir and Estragon have problems understanding each other: 'I don't understand a word you're saying', yet continue speaking. Their plaintive parlando style conveys a mood of uncertainty and meaninglessness. There are many pauses between the mostly short utterances of the characters. Their usage of language implies a strangeness to the intended meaning. They repeat some words and split them into syllables:

'Vladimir: Tied?

Estragon: Ti-ed'

The split and redundancy reveal the materiality of the words, and thus violate the unity of signifier and signified (according to principles of semiotics). The immediate process of *meaning something* gets deconstructed by the emergence of the material in this process: the phonemes, sounds, or printed marks become

visible, instead of their *meaning* dominating. Another example is the play with homophonic names:

'Estragon: [Pretending to search.] Bozzo… . Botto…

Vladimir: [Ditto.] Pozzo… Pozzo…

Potto: PPPOZZZO!

Estragon: Ah pozzo… let me see… Pozzo… .

Vladimir: Is it Pozzo or Bozzo?'

Again, the words lose their initial meaningful purpose, becoming mere sounds in an empty space, or simply printed marks. These are assaults against the grounding, the stability of language itself, and the essential infrastructure of reason. Didi and Gogo are stuck between the usage of language as habit, filling the silence and the real process of symbolising, which could *mean* something beyond the unchanging of a habit, which can touch or move. 'But habit is a great deadener', as Vladimir says, and a few moments later: 'I can't go on! [Pause.]'. He speaks as a subject seemingly conscious about what he said. But in the next moment, he is uncertain, asking himself the comedic question of 'What have I said?'. This part stands characteristically for the potential alienation of language, the strangeness of ourselves, the otherness within the subject.

Language is something we learn over time, providing a system for communication. Contrarily, Beckett uses repetition of language to alienate. The audience is lifted up, out of the matrix of language. The stylistic devices of repetition have the effect of alienating the audience from language as a medium that conveys meaning. Language becomes material, arbitrary and a moment of non-identicality arises between signifying sound and signified meaning. This is the moment that enables Beckett to point to the 'unsayable', something beyond language. Estragon and Vladimir, as Steven Connor has put it in his book *Samuel Beckett: Repetition, Theory and Text* (1988), repeat themselves: 'quote themselves, or it might perhaps be felt, their language begins to quote them'. The unrepresentable logical form itself - language - emerges and becomes an agent. Beckett succeeds in presenting the slipperiness and artificiality of representation and meaning within and through language.

But just as Estragon tries to follow Vladimir's imperative to 'Say something' as quoted in the first sentence, Beckett tries to answer a question about the maker's possibilities:

'The expression that there is nothing to express, nothing with which to express, nothing from which to express, no power to express, no desire to express, together with the obligation to express' (1968).

—

ARTICLE by
LEO STAATSMANN

GIVING CINEMATIC LIFE TO COMIC PRINT

ZOE LEWIS investigates the role of nostalgia in the success of Marvel and DC films, where they differ, and where they fall short.

The iconic debate: DC or Marvel? DC was first published in 1937, and Marvel emerged only five years later, in 1942. With both boasting a library of at least seven thousand characters, the icons of Iron Man, Batman, Captain America, and Superman have illustrated childhood dreams for decades. The Marvel Cinematic Universe, including the Avengers, only started in 2008 with *Iron Man*, whilst iterations of DC comics have piqued and troughed over the years.

Batman (1966) centred its focus on the novelty of a cinematic universe inspired by a comic one. With the 1960s filming context aside, the costumes of the dynamic duo Batman and Robin are laughable. While the film stayed true to its comic roots, it perhaps took this novelty a little too far, with costuming directly paralleling Batman comics of 1939. On the other hand, cinematic comic productions of the twenty-first century often allow available technology to damage the integrity of the film: *Venom* (2018) and *Venom 2* (2021) shine in spectacle and comedy, for example, but fall short in characterisation and plot.

So, what makes a good comic movie? For me, what separates the likes of *The Dark Knight* (2008) and *Iron Man* (2008) from their earliest 1960s counterparts is their focus on making the superhuman more human. At times, the gimmick of a cinematic universe causes these films to stray from the attraction of inner emotional conflict that writers such as Stan Lee were so good at. But why, if both the Marvel and DC universes take inspiration from such excellent source bases, is there such a stark difference in their commercial success? *Avengers: Endgame* (2019), for example, produced twice the box office revenue, at over $2.7 billion, of DC's most successful film *Aquaman* (2018).

The main difference between DC and Marvel is nostalgia. Marvel's appeal to recent nostalgia is what makes its films so successful. This is rooted in dynamic relationships, such as siblings (Thor and Loki) or quasi-father-son (Spider-Man and Iron Man). The carefully crafted release schedule of the earliest films culminated in the first iteration of *Avengers* (2012), which provided a basis for viewers to feel nostalgia. The famous Avengers shot is repeated in all three movies that followed, whilst their own stories are knitted into the plotline every time the team bands together again. The best example of this is the strained relationships shown between main Marvel characters in *Captain America: Civil War* (2016), and their continuity through to *Avengers: Infinity War* (2018).

DC has been less successful in this. *Suicide Squad* (2016) woefully disappointed, whilst *Batman v. Superman: Dawn of Justice* (2016) simply didn't make sense. Ben Affleck's Batman failed to capture the genuine anger of Christian Bale's version, whilst *Wonder Woman* (2017) did nothing for female empowerment. Henry Cavill's Superman is fine, but lacks the character flaws that make Avengers movies so effective.

Aquaman (2018) primarily earned popularity due to its lead Jason Momoa's comedic charm, and the popularity he garnered from his feature in *Game of Thrones* (2011). Whilst the earliest DC movies *Batman* and *Superman* found their comedy in overt stand-up, Marvel struggled to find its feet at first. The original *Thor* (2011) and *Captain America* (2011) suffered from being far too serious. *Guardians of the Galaxy* (2014) struggles to integrate into the broader cinematic universe, but the dynamics between the Guardians find their champion in comedic timing.

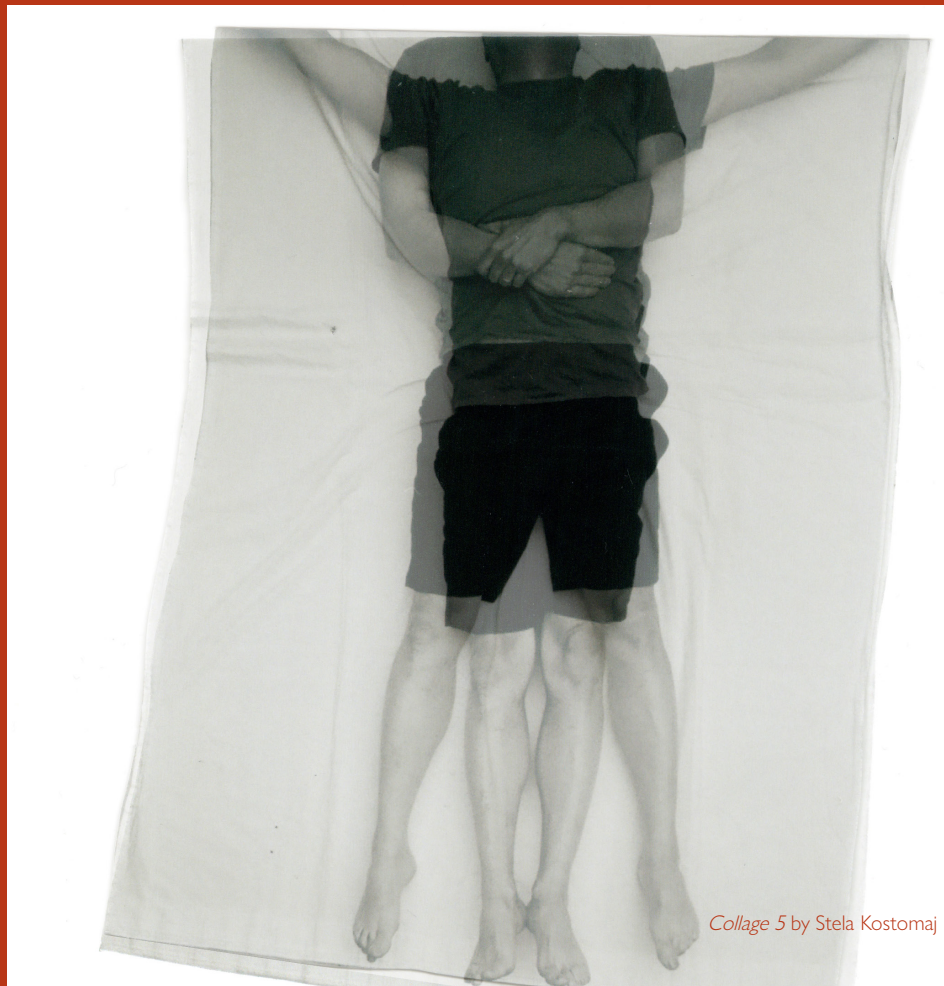
The power of comics no longer lies in the heroes, however, so much as in the villains. There would be no jeopardy in *Endgame* had the audience not understood every character's motivations, after half of the universe's entire population had been wiped out, an event known as 'the blip'. The greatness of Thanos lies in his sick and twisted motivations. He is comparable to Heath Ledger's Joker, regarding a carefully reasoned evil shared by both.

Even better are those heroes in whom the audience recognises a streak of evil. *Spider-Man: No Way Home* (2021) expertly deals with the nostalgia and cross-movie links I so love. Tom Holland's naïve, innocent Spiderman was close to committing brutal murder until 2002 Spiderman Toby Maguire stepped in after defeating the Goblin. The trope of high intensity revenge incited by the loss of a loved one was perfected in *Batman Begins* (2005). Christian Bale's Bruce Wayne goes to great lengths to avenge his most-loved one when interrogating Scarecrow, enmeshed in Christopher Nolan's melancholic cinematography. The reason that Holland's Spiderman could avenge his Aunt May, meanwhile, is purely the deeply nostalgic roots of the Spiderman connection, which brings him to a better understanding of who he is and who he is not.

Marvel movies are more commercially successful because they appeal to nostalgia. But this doesn't necessarily make them better movies: that lies in the heroes themselves.

—

ARTICLE by
ZOE LEWIS



Collage 5 by Stela Kostomaj

MARCOS WOLODARSKY NEWHALL

AN INTERVIEW

Untitled by Marcos Wolodarsky Newhall

Final-year Slade painter MARCOS WOLODARSKY NEWHALL considers his works to be ghostly objects. Drawing inspiration from film stills, he looks for compositions he can recreate in his practice. Marcos questions the interiority of painting, his work always aware of what it is not. His recent paintings, depicting figures with their eyes closed, reflect this ambition: the artist likes the idea that there is something inaccessible to the viewer in his imagery, something inaccessible even to the artist. EMILY PUJOL MANCA talks to Marcos about the perception he has of his own painting and his various artistic influences.

You describe why you no longer draw or paint from your own imagination, but rather look to things that are real, or perhaps observed. Why is it so important for your work to be tied to something *real*?

The themes I was interested in before the pandemic ran dry during lockdown. People used to say my paintings seemed mythical or biblical, but I had never wanted them to be seen like this. I wanted things to feel more real. I needed to affirm that the world around me - that seemed so distant - still existed. By describing objects more realistically, I feel my paintings acquire a different tone – they reach a different register of emotions that my stylised works, perhaps, do not.

The way paintings exist in the world, as objects that are bound to their material and economic role, has been making me think a lot about what is suitable to be represented in this medium.

If you see paintings as essentially fulfilling a material role, what do you feel your role as an artist is?

When I started painting images from films, I did so simply because I liked them. But by putting them on canvas, the images became something different.

I don't know specifically what my role is as an artist. I think it changes every time I do something new. I would like for my paintings, especially these

Untitled by Marcos Wolodarsky Newhall

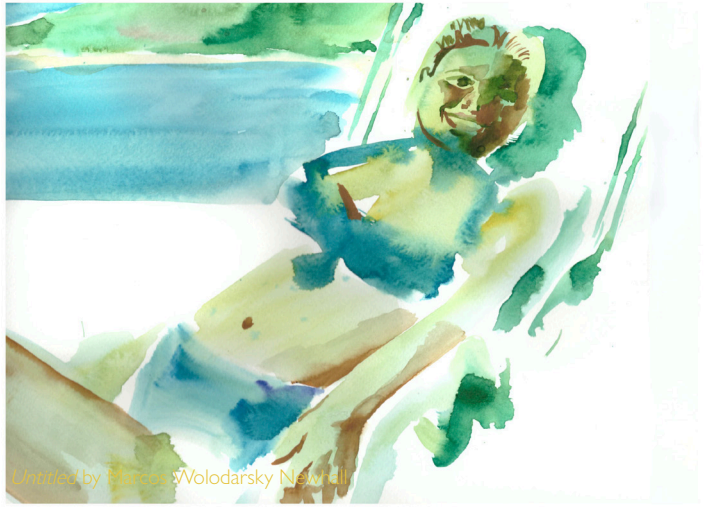
newer ones, to be ambiguous – enticing you in and then spitting you back out. As if you had suddenly become aware of the painting as an object, rather than as a window or portal into something else. The attention then subtly is redirected back into the real world, and not deeper into the painting or the painter.

Could you talk more about your use of film and popular media as a source of inspiration?

I like the fact I haven't made the images myself. I like playing with context and authorship, sort of like when you listen to a song that samples others, generating new meanings from repurposed material. For example, I have been painting a film still of a beach from the ending of *Plein Soleil* (1960). Seen in the movie it is simply the final tableau on which the film ends, but by making it into a painting it aligns it within a different history and context, making you see it differently.

I've noticed you take great inspiration from the summer landscapes of the South of France. What draws you to this context?

For me, the South of France is a region that has both perfect landscapes and an incredible history, featured in the works of painters like Picasso and Matisse who were based there. Painting these landscapes also allows me to escape from the awful weather in London, making me feel I'm somewhere else. I have been taking a lot of images from French movies from the 1960s set in the South of France. The technicolor makes things look so good. On the other hand, I think I paint them because I'm jealous of the life they represent. Snoozing on a late summer morning, having breakfast on a balcony overlooking the sea, or on the beach. You cannot always have the things you want, but, sometimes, painting them makes it feel like you are closer to having them.



Untitled by Marcos Wolodarsky Newhall

Untitled by Marcos Wolodarsky Newhall

Can you talk us through the creative process behind one of your latest works?

My *Plein Soleil* inspired work is my first time working on a canvas this big. Much like *The Talented Mr Ripley* (1999), *Plein Soleil* is an adaptation of Patricia Highsmith's 1955 novel. I left it unfinished; I liked that, because the process of making is laid bare. You are invited, as it were, directly into the studio, into the artist's shoes, the eyes behind my own. You are then made aware of the decisions involved in a painting. But I also think the unfinishedness points to something getting in the way of finishing – the artist deciding (or maybe forgetting?) to finish a painting. A lot of the scenes that I have been painting stem from people on holiday. I like the idea that maybe I had better things to do (or not to do).

If you'd like to see more from Marcos, check him out on Instagram @marcoswolodarsky

—

INTERVIEW by
EMILY PUJOL MANCA

The Silent Launch of Love

GENEVIEVE MORGAN considers love's internal quality, in light of Robert Browning's *Meeting at Night*.

Love motions silently and traverses widely, in a secret language only intelligible to those sharing it. Great minds know love's silent exterior: Beethoven wrote to his 'immortal beloved' that 'there are moments when I find that speech is nothing at all'. Aristotle understood that the process is entirely interior, that 'love is composed of a single soul inhabiting two bodies'. Greatest of all, Robert Browning breathes this idea in *Meeting at Night* (1845): a twelve-line narrative poem in which someone travels through a gloomy night to meet their lover.

It contains no elaborate, romantic language; the lexis is seemingly dull, with much repetition. Even the imagery is dark and depressing. This poem, at first glance, is ostensibly melancholy and joyless - but when considered more closely, it is one of the most beautiful odysseys of romance. For me, this poem is the essence of love, the essence of being taken up and away.

Browning constructs his description of landscape to initially appear desolate, but when analysed further, this comes to signify immense passion. Through the sepulchral connotations of colours in the first line ('grey sea', 'long black land'), the start of the poem inhabits a bleak landscape. Yet this indicates the speaker's willingness to venture out, in spite of the ominous darkness: in showing his indifference to the melancholy weather, he performs a romantic act. Browning also rejects the use of pathetic fallacy, defying expectation, and implying that his feelings are too strong to abide by conventions. This is extended by the description of the 'startled little waves', which initially may read as a lack of enthusiasm for life, the speaker belittling something as powerful as the ocean. This depressed tone is inverted, however, by the context of the whole poem, as Browning actually depicts the sea as vulnerable and intimidated to emphasise the speaker's feeling of powerful love. These paradoxical descriptions of the landscape function to exemplify the depth of the speaker's emotions, and announce an overwhelming degree of passion.

Furthermore, *Meeting at Night* does not care for the use of traditional features of love poetry which a reader might expect. Instead of giving us a sonnet, a form in which deep emotions like love are typically expounded, we get an ABCCBA rhyme scheme - an unusual choice. Only upon deeper reflection will they see that the pattern replicates the journey expatiated in the poem's words, the lovers moving concurrently from opposite directions to meet in the middle. The mirroring of the ABC and CBA represents the relationship's perfect harmony, and the mutual feelings of love, as they both make the same journey. This rhyme scheme, then, is designed to show the quiet, hidden nature of love.

In the title, the absence of a preposition before 'meeting' denies it status as a discriminated occasion which, by its specificity, would heighten the romance of the poem by separating it from an ordinary event. Browning instead chooses to place the word on its own, to imply that the poem is based on one of many instances, giving it a sense of being something mechanical and uninspired. Yet this is another paradox, demonstrating the secret language of love: the idea of routine meetings between lovers actually strengthens the romance in the poem as it conveys their commitment to one another.

Films make us believe that love looks a certain way: a kiss, a gift, an exchange of glances. But the thing about love is that only its manifestations are visible. When we see laughter, smiles and affection between two people, we are seeing the branches of a tree that has roots hidden beneath the ground. Only the branches are large and grand; the feeling itself is unseen. Only the results of love are romantic and loud; the launch itself is silent.

—

ARTICLE by
GENEVIEVE MORGAN

Dusty Cloth by Noorain Inam

THE BROADCASTER

A poem by GEORGE DENNIS.

Words loose in the landscape of

radio,
Words that slip through the cracks in the
ceiling:

Find me –
I seek those seductive rhythms
in the push of the bridge,
I invite you to catch my eye.

Beirut, Cairo, Benghazi

We were there in the sun and could not talk
for the heat.
When it set she took me down a cobblestone
causeway,
We met cobblestone people.

You are listening
to the unending trickle
of stream
And the way the band may choose to play.
Synth pinch, Synth pinch.

Never mind –
The quality of the leather.
Do you like how it feels upon your skin?
Do you like –
Crisp mornings in the park, I like,
The creak when we meet on the landing.

That afternoon we were collecting apples for
the press,
Apple day we called it.
A boy had fallen in the orchard
An ambulance was called for his leg.
My hands were sticky with the juice.
I had never seen so many apples.

And we all sang together.
'Listen to the pipes…'
Behind the plaster.
Hear that they ache.
Think of the money you spend.

Do you ache in the morning?
Do your teeth ache?
Do you ache for me?

—

POEM by
GEORGE DENNIS

[UN]ORIGINALITY + [IM]PERMANENCE:

THE ISSUE OF NFTS AND ART IN A DIGITAL GENESIS

SUMMER CHIUH considers concepts of immateriality, authorship and durability in relation to NFTs.

By now, it is likely that anyone with social media has encountered the concept of NFTs (non-fungible tokens). You might have chanced upon memes about 'right-clicking', or, perhaps more likely, you may have seen the tremendous backlash against them. While their current cultural power is undeniable, approaching NFTs from an art historical lens raises the question of novelty, durability, and what it means to be 'immaterial'.

NFTs are digital ledgers, or blockchains, which contain a unique hash that marks the ownership of the work, as well as all its purchasing history. The work is not stored on the blockchain, but rather can only be accessed via a link to it. In essence, an NFT acts as a digital receipt; the artwork is under the intellectual property of the artist, not the buyer. Many online were dumbfounded by such a concept, but the separation between a physical work and its idea is not new. Thomas Flynn's essay 'NFTs in Art Historical Context' (2021) introduces the conceptualists of the 1960s as a prime example of dematerialisation, where art manifested as ideas without a permanent physical form. Sol LeWitt, for example, executed wall paintings using a set of precise instructions he issued to helpers. Anyone with his directions can recreate the paintings. LeWitt's work disrupts the institutional fetishisation of authenticity and originality; the work *relies* on the replicability of information as intangible ideas, deriving its artistic status from the instructions rather than the paintings. Such ideology spread also to performance art, all the way to the dot.net artists of the early 2000s.

Thus, we begin to see how NFTs fit into a pre-established practice of dematerialisation in art history. But unlike their predecessors who used immateriality to challenge institutional value systems, NFTs have succumbed to these institutional trappings. Online, one does not have to look far to see how defensive owners can get over people sharing their images, and many projects provide exclusive perks (like website memberships) for those who own an NFT. This elitism is synonymous with the art market and establishment. There is a great irony in calling these items 'immaterial' when their value lies in the concept of material scarcity. There is something deeply insidious in restricting and monetising the access of web-based objects, something which twenty years ago was seen as a powerful attribute for making art truly accessible. Immateriality, with all its potential for the fair dissemination and the empowerment of artists, has instead been overrun by tech opportunism and the desire for exclusivity.

What, then, about the claim that blockchain renders art to be virtually indestructible? While it is difficult to tamper with data on a blockchain itself, this bold assumption ignores how the actual works are ultimately at the mercy of the websites that house them. This allows anyone technologically proficient enough to anonymously manipulate source files with shocking ease, something artist Neitherconfirm has already proven. Last March, this crypto artist pulled a stunt on his Opensea marketplace by swapping out images of his paintings with pictures of Persian rugs. His public listings and the owners of his NFTs were all impacted, yet all he had to do was click a simple 'edit' button courtesy of Opensea's website itself.

Immateriality is not synonymous with indestructibility and, in the long term, the digital nature of NFTs will also leave them vulnerable to technological

Folded by Johara Meyer

obsoletion. The shortening lifespan of websites (with an average of two years and six months since 2020), poses a serious threat to the existence of NFTs, just as a fire poses a threat to a canvas. The internet is inherently malleable and impermanent, so when the appeal of NFTs comes from their 'digital genesis', as Flynn writes, what happens when NFTs begin to fizzle out? If the art market were to lose interest, the incentive to maintain the websites housing these works may be lost, leaving hundreds, even thousands of NFTs affected with link rot (where links lead to expired or deleted pages), reduced to receipts for websites lost in time.

The novelty of NFTs is due to their explosive popularity on scales previously unseen, a result of social media. The idea of making NFTs for money sounds financially appealing to an artist, but what happens in the long term when the technologies it relies on become defunct? Although this thought is alarming, it is an important question that hinges on the future of art and the state of information in our increasingly 'immaterial' world. Like clouds, they are bound to shift, change, and eventually evaporate into nothingness.

—

ARTICLE by
SUMMER CHIUH

barbican by Johara Meyer

THE GOLF BALL

A poem by HARRY SPEIRS.

Roll!
Started this veteran golf ball,
away - hid amongst castles - watch out - a
million holes.
Yet to every new kingdom created they'd say:
the sand will still crumble
the tides on its way.
To carry this golf ball among seashells,
an oyster you toss in your palm -
a flash of his eyes,
the pearly array.

Stop!
Slower - slower - your head for the rough
sat at the table once
clubbed by your work,
gently soothed by our grandma.
A visionary rugged
with a memory so soft,
folding a napkin -
out in the garden,
a mind up the loft.

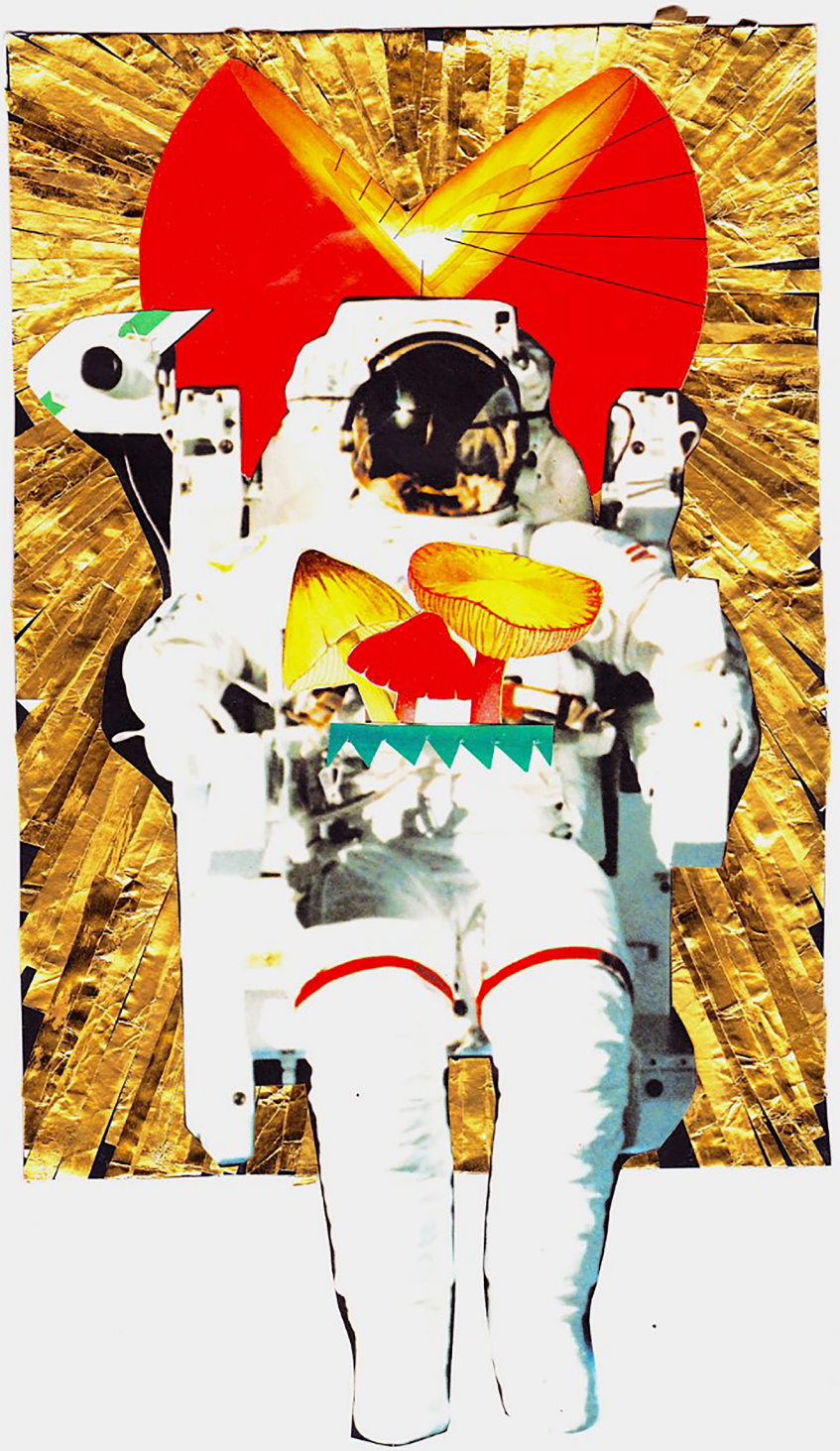
Missing!
Tell me where you have gone -
I searched your old cottage,
the house lights were on.
To the shore we made haste,
spent years on the beach
for a glimpse of that wrinkled old face.
Thought - bottled - I found you!
Thought - powdered - it's him.
Thought, on the dawn of each morning
the dust filled visions would dim.
Just broken glass at my bedside,
a crystal mirror to see
my face tricked by lies.

Found him!
Pointing - Mum - Dad - look,
look in the sky.
That big round golf ball,
smiling to us -
but why, it's the moon they'd reply,
With heads hanging down to trudge back
inside.

Still!
I saw him - up there - not too far,
Won't you believe me?
He's up there, watching, throned amongst
stars.

—

POEM by
HARRY SPEIRS



Voyager by Isidore Bishop-Sauve

HYPERPOP:
EMBRACING THE GLITCH

IZZY DAVIES considers the ways in which hyperpop transcends the limitations of traditional binaries, dichotomies, and rules in music.

Hyperpop is a notoriously hard to define genre. It's a constantly evolving, fairly new category, yet simultaneously one that prides itself on being an eco-system-like artist and listener community rather than adhering to a simple genre classification. Hyperpop is all about genre bending, blending, and remixing – it pushes pop to its extremity through pitched-up, sugary sweet vocals and dance-pop hooks and beats, but also draws influence from a huge range of musical styles: emo and mumble rap, jungle, dubstep, metal, and industrial music, as well as more experimental sound design. Hyperpop's cutesy electronic sounds are often distorted by a darker, experimental noise from its characteristic overblown bass and mechanical sound effects, summed up best by Glenn McDonald as an 'ebullient electro-maximalism'.

The term 'hyperpop' was first applied to experimental music collective PC Music in 2013. British producer A.G. Cook, working alongside artists like SOPHIE, Hannah Diamond, and Kane West, began rapidly uploading experimental tracks to Soundcloud. In *P.C. Music Volume 1* (2015), every element was manipulated and hyped up to its logical extremity; the EP walked a fine line between sincerity and parody.

While earlier mainstream artists such as Grimes, M.I.A., and Crystal Castles could be seen as forerunners to the hyperpop sound, it was undoubtedly the inclusive, online space and DIY internet music aesthetic that was key to its formation, hyperpop an undeniably post-internet phenomena. P.C. Music and hyperpop de-commercialised music and pushed back against the more serious bass and dubstep-dominated UK music scene at the time. Talking about the characteristics of P.C. Music, A.G. Cook explains, 'everyone has a laptop or an iPad or something. It's the folk instrument of our era – it's just everywhere'.

It's impossible to talk about hyperpop without talking about queerness and the concept of 'camp'. From its outset, hyperpop's origins as anti-mainstream-club created an ethos that was embracing of LGBTQ+ listeners, while its post-internet backdrop provided an important platform for marginalised identities to express themselves. You've also got the music itself - hyperpop's sonic and visual aesthetics lean into and exaggerate the tackiness of the modern world; it's undoubtedly camp. You could even argue that hyperpop represents a queering of pop – rejecting its traditional boundaries and reinterpreting it through new, constantly evolving lenses.

And then, of course, there is SOPHIE, the sparkling, transformational visionary of hyperpop. Her debut album *Oil of Every Pearl's Un-Insides* (2018) explored her feelings about gender and bodily identity through its dance-pop melodies, chopped up ultra-feminine vocals, as well as an embrace of glitch and white noise. SOPHIE famously made many of her own sounds, using frequency modulation synthesis to create artificial versions of real-world sounds. In 'Lemonade', 'Vyzee', and 'Bipp' (all 2015), she blends synthesised loops, drums, and melodies to create the illusion of the ascending pitch made when bubbles pop. Speaking in a 2014 interview with *The Guardian*, SOPHIE explained, 'My primary concern is, what's the most sonically exciting thing I can imagine? Then I try to make that'.

'I'm always trying to encapsulate how we, as emotional beings, interact with the world and the machines and the technology around us… they're not antithetical or mutually exclusive', SOPHIE explained to *Interview Magazine* in October 2017. SOPHIE's words call to mind the work of Donna Harraway, whose *Cyborg Manifesto* (1985) uses the figure of the human-machine cyborg to examine and reject the traditional dichotomies that have been so taken for granted in popular and academic discourse. The need for divides between mind and body, for instance, are no longer relevant. Instead, we should embrace a cyborg-like dualism, drawing value from the confusion and ambiguity occurring at borders of seemingly bounded categories. The work of 'Glitch Feminists', such as Legacy Russell, builds on many of these ideas: Russell's work conceives the glitch not as an error to function, bur rather reimagining the glitch as a vehicle for performing and transforming the self across infinite spaces in the real and digital world. Hyperpop songs bridge these worlds: take, for instance, the 'immaterial girls [and] boys' in SOPHIE's euphoric dance hit 'Immaterial' (2018). SOPHIE's bubbly synths and ecstatic, autotuned vocals celebrate the fantasy of transcending material constraints to create and recreate ourselves as whatever we want to be.

The world of hyperpop embraces the glitch not just through its affinity for heavily layered noise but through its ethos of blurring and reinventing the boundaries between mainstream and experimental; real and digital; physical and imagined worlds and identities. The genre moves beyond the limitations of traditional binaries, dichotomies, and rules, embracing the glitches and pushing aesthetic and sonic elements until they get to and beyond their logical hyperkinetic conclusion.

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ARTICLE by
IZZY DAVIES

15 MINUTES OF FAME:

WARHOL'S SUPERSTARS

ISOBEL KNIGHT considers Andy Warhol's conceptions of fame, in light of today's celebrity culture.

'In the future, everyone will be famous for fifteen minutes': today, Andy Warhol's prophecy rings true, in a world of hit tweets and instant TikTok celebrity. Yet the case of his 'superstars' – his glamourous and troubled muses who accompanied him to parties, inspired his art and starred in his experimental films – is far more nuanced, raising questions about who leaves a mark on a culture, and who fades into insignificance.

Warhol changed fame forever; he made it a standalone concept independent of other factors. In the past, fame was viewed as a deserved by-product of some extraordinary talent, whilst today, we increasingly hear that someone is famous simply for being famous. Celebrities like Kim Kardashian are constantly criticised for being famous for no reason, and their influence is seen as harmful and

Stretch Hand by Stela Kostomaj

insidious. Fame is now something to aspire to for its own sake; many young people wish to become influencers or vloggers. Although people have always been famous for factors outside of their control (for example, the British royal family, who have an enormous celebrity status with no real meritocratic foundation), never before have people cared so unashamedly about those who don't really do anything of note.

The idea of a self-fulfilling prophecy is perhaps the key to being famous; if someone believes they're a superstar and they act like one, then who's to say they're not? Arguably a modern-day equivalent is Anna Sorokin, the infamous scammer whose story is now immortalised through various forms of media, including the hit Netflix show *Inventing Anna* (2022). She mastered the concept of 'fake it until you make it'; her staunch self-confidence and scheming intelligence is what helped her fool high-society New York. Fame is often more about shock value and drama than any tangible talent – scandal sells, and always has done. Warhol spotlights this in his mural *Thirteen Most Wanted Men* (1964): by using the same silkscreen technique to portray the NYPD's most wanted criminals as for Hollywood icons such as Marilyn Monroe, he transformed mugshots into artistic portraits, propelling criminal legacies toward celebrity status. Infamy and fame appear to be one and the same; history does not preserve legacies on the basis of righteousness.

Perhaps it is human nature to care about celebrity culture, regardless of who it is or what they're doing. The idea of Warhol dubbing his friends and associates 'superstars' without any real evidence for this claim doesn't seem a hugely foreign concept in our society, when fame can seem so arbitrary. And yet, whilst everyone may get their fifteen minutes in the limelight, not everyone's fifteen minutes are of equal significance. Take Edie Sedgwick, perhaps the most iconic of Warhol's muses, whose legacy lives on long after her death – her signature look remains an inspiration throughout the fashion world, her biography is still sold today, and her story is retold in the biopic *Factory Girl* (2006). While she lived up to the word 'superstar', many others simply faded into invisibility - superstars of the 1960s New York nightlife scene, perhaps, but not superstars anymore. Ingrid Superstar is an example, who developed a drug problem and disappeared from her apartment in 1986, with very little about her life known today. This disparity raises the question: is the sign of true stardom the legacy left behind? Or is fifteen minutes enough?

Although not all of the superstars made their mark on history, the scene at Warhol's Factory certainly did. It was the epicentre of 1960s bohemian New York, representing a new generation of artists and socialites unafraid to push boundaries and shock middle-class America. It's easy to glamorise – a world of art, parties, and hedonism, where everyone gets their fifteen minutes of fame, particularly those normally rejected by the mainstream. Candy Darling, another of the superstars who remains well-known today, was a transgender actress who Warhol cast in his films at a time when transgender people were discriminated against both by law and throughout society. The stringent social boundaries of 1960s America didn't exist in the Factory or in Warhol's films; drug use, homosexuality and S&M were not treated as taboos but as central themes to his work. Warhol's legacy is the most influential of all - he allowed those normally pushed to the sidelines to come to the forefront, laying foundations for the culture we see today.

Warhol's impact on modern celebrity culture is impossible to deny; it seems his superstars paved the way for today's incessant desire to be known and adored. Though the legacies of the individual superstars vary, as a collective, they changed the face of Western society, both for better and for worse. And that lasts far longer than fifteen minutes.

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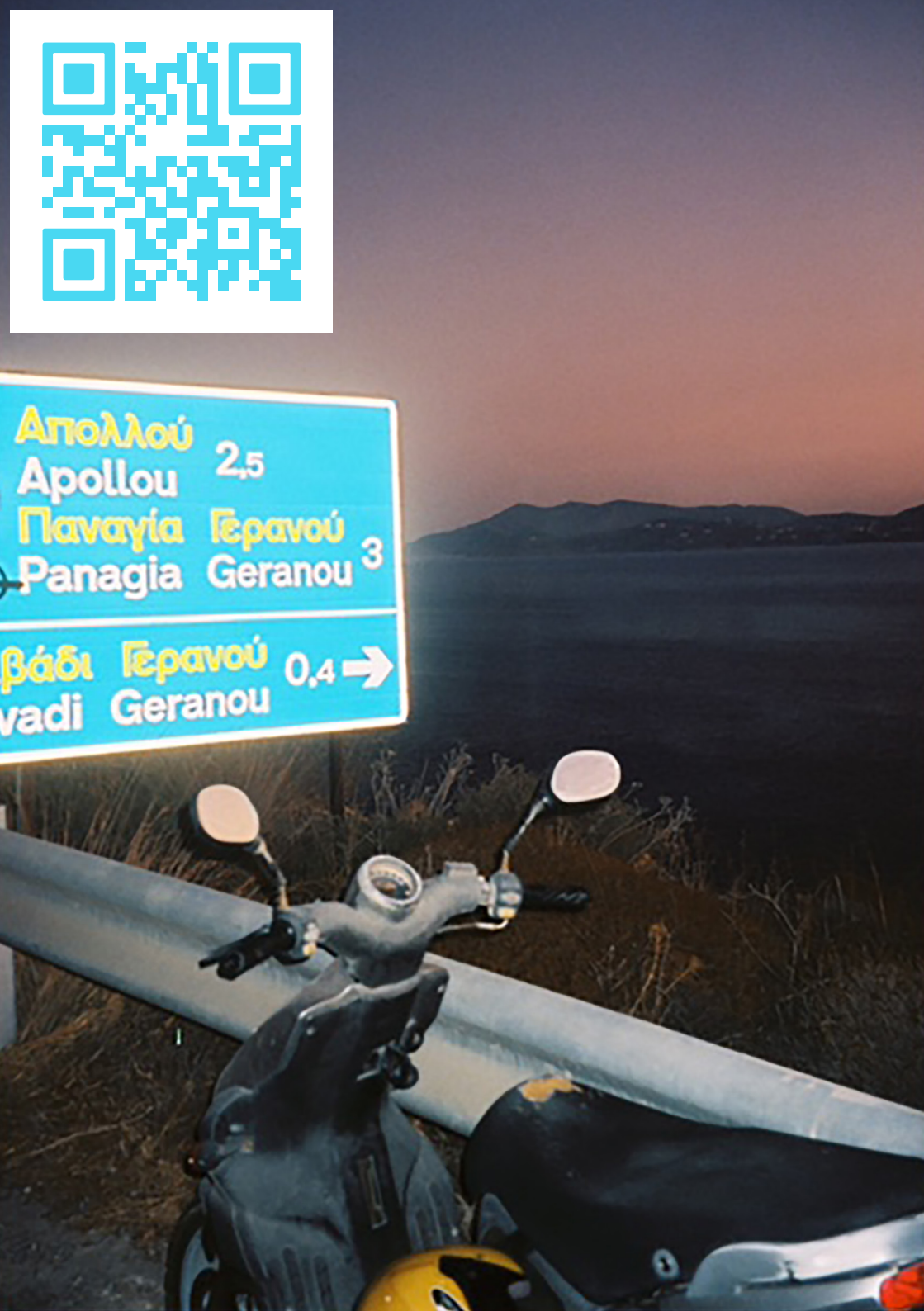
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