

MIRRORS



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MIRRORS

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Via: Unsplash.com

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UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF:
TEACHER OANA ANDONE & TEACHER ANDREEA JIJIE

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MIRRORS

Soul blots

DESTINY

BY ANDREEA TELEAGĂ

Once upon a time, there was a young man with mesmerizing green eyes who fell from the most beautiful star in the sky. He was full of emotions, being a sum of all existing thoughts and perspectives. He was metaphysical and desolate.

He made his own way in search of his destiny, irrationally hoping that he would find the one who would vanquish the past, to show him that immortality is not so aching. But the green-eyed prince did not know that Earth was nothing like the endless realms of Heaven. The story carried him through the darkest of kingdoms. However, He did not lose his emotions and quintessence, but he had to disguise them, for fright of being harmed.

Centuries had passed and the young man still wandered through foreign lands, keeping his own heart imprisoned. In despair and looking for an escape, he looked for the first time at the sky from where he had come: His riveting eyes met Hers and thus their souls wanted to touch. But He was dazed and ignorant and She was cold and dead-hearted. The boy's heart was voiceless because he only taught it to express itself in hidden feelings, and She was chaotic with the hope that He would understand her depth. Two extremes attracted each other, without achieving a complete fusion. The desire was burning.

He struggled to hold her close.

She was falling into the void. Endlessly.

Unbeknownst to each other.

In the end, the girl had to move on in search of her own destiny.

She died, for she did not understand his words, and the boy rose again into the stars, where he would remain until the end of the unceasing story.

The young man with the green eyes was writing to her from the stars so beautifully that he was sure that She would return, only to find him dancing senselessly with the moon. The girl no longer looked at the stars, but she was utterly devoted to Him: -You are omnipresent within my being.

Thus, the green-eyed boy lives his immortality through Her, and the girl has locked Him in thoughts passed through time and space. They could not hold onto their silence, to know it better, to hear it more clearly.

Emotion met reason, in a destiny divided into two infinities.

And they remained dependent on each other, far away, in two defeated worlds.

Suck at writing poetry

BY ANDREEA TELEAGĂ

when it's all over, I want to melt away in your warmth.
even though I wouldn't know who I am or have become.
I need you to work on me as gravity, to glue back together the bits falling.
I want you to remember me.

I don't wanna feed from the shadows you leave behind.
show me that we can fit into this world even though we were made for another. show me I am
more than all the sorrow and remorse I carry on my shoulders.
finally feeling something that gives me tingles in my heart, without any thinking of letting it go so soon.
Let me feel your scars so I cannot feel mine.



By Bianca Baciu

I REALLY DON'T LIKE THIS

BY RAREȘ MANCEA

I really, truly don't. Something about having to do this as a job just turns my stomach upside down. Makes me want to puke. Having to torture beings for a living, seeing them scream, trying to escape their chains, but to no avail. They just have to sit there while my co-workers try to "help them" with their sharp, otherworldly objects. I feel like a coward that I can't speak up about what's actually going on in these places..... But I also enjoy it, somehow... I know it makes me sick and twisted, and I know that what we're doing here shouldn't happen. These animals were not supposed to be here in this situation, but seeing them waiting for me, makes me happy in a way. I know that they aren't going to enjoy what I'm about to do to them, but I keep telling myself it's for the better. Frankly, I can't imagine what these animals could be feeling: to be taken by your closest friend, your caretaker, in a place where others like you are chained, shaved and sprayed on with weird substances by people you've never seen before. And everyone acts like it's alright for some godforsaken reason. Still, I better stop writing and grab my scissors. A new client arrived.

IT'S HARD BEING A DOG GROOMER.



By Andreea Teleagă
Antonia Budeanu

好きと言わせたい

BY DIMITRIE DAMIAN

Giles Maxtible, born 1849, was a genius, and nobody gave a damn.

All the signs were there; he could only speak at the age of five, acquired his reading skills through self discipline and, at 10 years, not even a week before he finished all the major works of Shakespeare in record time, promptly asked his mother "Why is my biological perspective of the world subjective, given that my mental one tends to be objective?" His mother told him, tenderly and lovingly, to kindly shut his festering gob, finish his porridge and then do something normal, like playing croquet, or going out with his chums, or basically something which distracted him from his thoughts which, in her opinion, produced just things that were weirder than a Morris dancing ferret.

Quite predictably, Giles had no friends. As our story unfolds, he is 17, and the views he holds about people in general haven't changed since he first began to observe his relatives and colleagues at school: a bunch of mediocre, stupidly dangerous, absent-minded simpletons.

***THE TITLE IS TAKEN FROM THE TITLE TRACK OF IZ*ONE'S JAPANESE DEBUT SINGLE. THE LATIN FORM OF THE PHRASE IS SUKI TO IWASETAI; TRANSLATED, IT WOULD MEAN "I'LL MAKE YOU SAY YOU LOVE ME".**

He regarded all the individuals around him as nothing more than a means through which he can increase his understanding of human behaviour, and as such always looked upon them with the eyes of a scientist that looks at a specimen through the microscope's lens. So far, his findings led him to mostly pray that there was some sort of intelligent life somewhere up in space, because this species was contradicting all known forms of logic, which, surprisingly, was also devised by its members. However, now, the existence of this whole perception is under serious threat, as our beloved main character (or else...) has been inflicted with that which is the most dangerous and frustrating disease a boy can ever develop: a crush.

好きと言わせたい

Her name is Marion Marie Dalton, and we will skip a lengthy and rather tiring description of her looks and moral characteristics, because it suffices to say that in young Giles' eyes she is the epitome of perfection. This girl is the daughter of Mr. Dalton, who is a childhood friend of Mr. Maxtible, the father, and the two families are used to spending summer at the latter's manor, located in the pleasant rural landscape of Godalming, near Surrey. The first time he truly fell for her was in the summer in which he was 14 years old. After that, he had two more summers in which he failed to confess his feelings for her. His overthinking was the problem, not only because he would lose a most sincere friendship, but might also receive the wrath of the Daltons and roars of mocking laughter from his own family. In about 80% of the letters he wrote to her he hinted more or less explicitly at the fire which was burning his heart and boiling his blood. So he finally decided. This summer he will confess his feelings to her face to face. But he will do it in such a way that would infatuate her so much with him, she won't even be able to think of the letters "n" and "o" and mix them in such a way as to depress him for life.

For a couple of weeks, Giles had been reading about Faraday's findings concerning the nature of static electricity. But his train of thought never truly left the station until he stumbled upon an article which speculated that this energy could be used in order to achieve time travel. Or, better said, TIME TRAVEL!!!!!!

The theory that followed included an awful lot of mirrors, and, even to someone with Giles' genius, failed to make some sort of sense. But the main reasoning that static electricity could be used in order to visit times past and possibly realms of the future stuck with him, and tormented him many nights after that, except on those when he was dreaming of the taste of Marion's lip gloss.

And after a lot of hours spent obsessing over this problem, he finally came down with this reasoning: he must take an old cupboard, mend it, fix a mirror in it, then brush it over with a coating made of a lot of chemical substances (he simply felt that this made sense, but why exactly he couldn't explain), and afterwards he would place in it a medallion that had been in his mother's family since the time of good queen Bes. After that, he would wire up this entire concoction to a powerful source of electricity, usher Marion in, close the door behind them and off they'll go! The functioning principle of this time machine was one that probably would have made any respectable scientist lose faith in all creation. And it was as follows:

好きと言わせたい

Given that time is dynamic, and as such moves, all the things which it affects, either biological or material, must follow its movement. But the copper wires that are wrapped around the cupboard will accumulate so much static energy in them, that they will be able to exert some kind of inertia over time, and as such, the cupboard will stop following its kinetic trend. However, with time being so powerful, the machine will not be able to put up a lot of resistance for too long. And this is where the medallion comes in. Being in the exact heart of this astounding vehicle, it will draw it to a point closer to the jewel's creation, and as such the cupboard will rejoin the flow of time somewhere in the time of William Shakespeare (whom Marion simply adored). There was no going back however, but Giles didn't care: they will go from 16th century Godalming to London, meet the Bard, have a chat with him over a pint, and then he and Marion could go somewhere, marry, and finally settle down as a perfectly normal Tudor family, and quite possibly (though his Victorian upbringing prevented him from contemplating the subject too much) become long lost ancestors of Giles' family. It was in all respects more than a plan, it was a master plan. Giles chose to solidly ignore the fact that its foundation was laid upon complete scientific fallacies, and was, by extension, apart from the mirror bit, completely bonkers

And so, after a lot of preparation, the day on which the Daltons would arrive at the Maxtible manor finally came.

Today it was the day on which Giles was finally going to confess his feelings to the fairy like Marion, and the time at which he was going to tell her would have been 327 years ago. After finally finishing a typical English breakfast, and waving goodbye to his parents who left for the train station in order to greet their visitors, he headed in the basement to his laboratory, in order to make the final preparations. He will kickstart the process, and, when the time machine will begin to fade, he would abruptly cut the power so as to avoid losing his creation for good.

Pushing open the door to the laboratory, the usual assortment of glassy things greeted him. Giles' father was quite wealthy, and as such supported his sons' scientific interests wholeheartedly. Apart from the wide range of equipment, there was also a cupboard filed with the most revolting things existent. The air inside the room was musty with the smell of the chemical cocktail that the genius used in order to "paint" his machine. Although he hadn't officially gotten around to scientifically naming this astounding brew yet, there was a part inside him which considered that the broad range of expletives that the housemaid uttered when her nose stumbled upon the odor were a serious candidate. Before he could start the test, he picked up his mother's medallion from a table and placed it inside the cupboard, closing its doors shut.

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As he edged excitedly towards a control panel (of sorts), he briefly recounted the legend behind the blue gem inside the medallion. The traveler who originally sold it to one of Giles' mother's ancestors told him or her to be cautious, because the gem was coming from a temple, and was said to contain the soul of a monster... the usual gist, basically. Some extra words which allowed that putrid ordinary salesman to demand a higher price from the people who would buy this sort of thing. With a sigh through which Giles expressed his frustration at the inherent stupidity of human beings, he flicked a control switch, and electricity began to flow.

At first, everything was going according to plan. The stream of energy was constant, and the ammeters' needles were going high for happiness. Giles watched with mounting impatience. Any moment now, he will receive the conformation that his labors were not in vain when the capsule will begin to fade. He also was paying close attention to the object, as losing it would have been as foolish as the way in which Richard the Lionheart died [google that up in order to understand:)]. However, something very odd began to happen. Rather than being pumped out of the generator, the energy suddenly felt as though it were sucked out of the source. Smoke and a stench of something burning began to fill the laboratory, and the various measuring equipments were acting all haywire. Giles began to panic, and looked from the dashboard to the time machine, only to see the latter literally engulfed in cascades of static electrical discharges. Feeling some sort of climax was imminent, Giles glided under a table that seemed safe and ducked.

First there was silence. Then there was an explosion. Then silence again.

After a minute of sincere efforts of mustering some sort of courage, Giles' head peered anxiously over the table. As with most things in life, it wasn't as bad as it seemed. The main source of power was burned to a crisp, so that meant 14 slaps at the back of the neck for sure from his parents, but otherwise nothing seemed to be damaged. And then he realized that the thing which blew up was his would-be time machine. His beloved invention lay scattered in smithereens on the floor. The mirror was broken, and he couldn't see the medallion either. Upon thinking of the state in which it probably must have been, he decided to add any number between 50 and 104 to the previous figure, which made him pat the back of his head nervously. But it was only after the thought of a hospital which was the English equivalent of the modern-day Fundeni one left his mind that he realized that, quite possibly, his troubles were not over yet.

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In the exact spot where the modified cabinet stood, there was now a light blue semi-transparent figure made out of electricity. It had an anthropomorphic form, save for the extra four hands and two legs. It was all dressed in an Asiatic attire. *The spirit of the monster!* realized Giles, and backed away in horror. A growl-like electrical crackle was heard, and the creature spoke with a metallic voice:

“Long have I waited.... imprisoned in this endless...” No, that won’t do at all! People just won’t listen to you nowadays if you’re being overdramatic! I know! How about “FREEEEEDOOOOM...!” Nope! Far too Scottish! Well, I’ll come up with something, eventually! Wait a tick... this is not the dreaded temple in which I was imprisoned! Where am I? And who are YOU??’

And with that he turned to Giles. Although the obvious temporal and cultural differences prevented him from realizing that, the face of the figure was, apart from the shark’s teeth, the Asiatic make-up job and the long hair tided in a way that would’ve earned the stylist responsible all the awards and all the contempt of the industry, was the absolute spitting image of soldier, philosopher and university student Ștefan Gheorghidui.

‘Why did you release me from my eternal prison? So that I were to become your slave!?’

‘Not at all, my dear sir!’ stuttered Giles. ‘I merely built a time machine with which I wanted to impress this young lady for whom I have feelings, but it blew up! Releasing you was a side effect!’

‘Oh, I see! Mistake or not, I remain deeply grateful to you! Pray, what be thy name, my savior?’

‘Giles, of the Maxtible family!’

‘What!? Giles... G... impress a girl... Mr G!! You maggot! You will never steal my Ela!! I shall eradicate every living cell from your body for your impudence!!’

好きと言わせたい



By Andreea Teleagă

TO BE CONCLUDED...

Just as Giles was about to articulate one of those heartfelt 'I beg your pardon?'s, the creature pointed one of its arms at him. Predicting what it wanted to do next, Giles took a magnifying glass from a table and managed to deflect a bolt of lighting, which hit the apparition back, sending him in a kind of silly spin around the laboratory. Before Giles could embark on a Pulp Fictionesque monologue about miracles, he had to take cover once again, as the creature glided menacingly in his direction, all six hands aimed at his throat. He bowed down almost instantly, and the creature missed him, going up the stairs further into his house. The boy stood up, closed the door to the laboratory and locked it three times. He put his back against it, sank to his knees and sighed. He could've died, but he didn't! That was one great kick up the grim crone's old backside from him, he realized! Any moment now, the phantom will just disappear through an open window, and his home would be safe again. Only it didn't.

After the adrenaline levels inside Giles started to decrease, he finally heard the crashing and shattering noises coming up from the drawing room. Knowing that he brought this upon his family, he knew he was the one who had to stop the pandemonium. He unlocked the door, and started to walk nervously up the stairs. He expected to find the house in an unbelievable mess, but he was still going to approach the situation calmly and with dignity. But there was going to be bloodshed if that demented electropath even made a single scratch on Mr. Tiddles the teddy bear.

STARLESS NIGHT

BY ANASTASIA CIUNTU

We knew this was a black hole
But you still played your role
And now here we are
Driving in your car
No one talks
Or asks to leave
Do we love each other?
No..
At least I do not think
But the feeling that I get
When you hold my hand
It makes me feel safe
And I know it's bad
That we can't leave this place
It's dark and cold
At least you make it livable
But for how long?
Cause I'm still small and stupid
But when I get up
I'll be ready to fight
And for now,
Let's just stay like this
In our forever moment.
Let's never forget the starless night
When it all started
Because that, my Nemesis
Was the beginning of the end.

A SUPERPOWER OR A CURSE?

BY AMALIA ARVINTE

What kind of trade is that? Losing your hearing but gaining a superpower no one else possesses? I swore I'd never trust witches and their treacheries ever again, for they are so deceptive. My life has changed so much after that cursed day. Now I can see things others can't even envisage, but I am not able to hear anything. My wife's voice no longer reaches my ears, music can't delight me as it has done before, communicating with other people is a real burden. And what did I get instead? Seeing through others' soul. Literally.

Now I see the pain in homeless people's eyes, how they wish they had a home, how they endure every single harsh night and endless day by themselves. I see the desperation the girl from the supermarket deals with because she lost her parents and now she's at the mercy of some strangers. I also notice how that random guy from the bus station copes with an eating disorder but is too afraid to ask for help because he is supposed to be strong and manage by himself. Then there is the police woman I meet every day when commuting to my workplace and she's got cancer.

Her family has no clue about that, she's terrified of letting them behind with no warning but goes on with her life this way. The little boy who despises the scar tracing his little nose takes a look at himself in the mirror and tears start to make their appearance. The second-year college boy living down the street doubts he is going to make it as a doctor because his parents put him down. My neighbour worries about his numerous debts and the possibility he'll be evicted. Dozens of highschool girls feel unworthy and unlovable because of nowday's standards. And I can go on like that forever, because I can see through every mask people hide themselves behind.

I am bound to feeling their misery and experiencing their pain. Night after night, nightmares disturb my sleep and remind me everyone has got their own battles, as quiet and invisible as they seem to be. Now I cannot hear their words, but their pent up concerns and struggles. Those they have told no one about. I wanted to be powerful, I got a curse instead. But that made me come to the realization that we rush into making a first impression about persons we meet. We easily assume the wrong and attribute fake personality traits without thinking twice. I feel like we should stop judging others by what we see first, stop assuming whatever thoughts cross our minds at the first glance, but rather strive and understand each other. Because we are all inhabitants of this gorgeous Earth. Just because I am a man doesn't mean I can't have emotions and feel compassionate for those around me.

So next time you see someone that seems to have a perfect life, fight the urge to label them and open your eyes a little wider. The world would be a better place.

There is a beast in each and every one of us

BY MARA GRAUR

In the darkened night the forest echoes quietly, a faint whispering of little feet, indicating of the wildlife running afoot in the underbrush. The sky, with nary a star in sight, is veiled behind a thick layer of greying haze. The moon stands proud amongst its mattress of stormy clouds, glowing akin to a farreaching guiding light. With the sharp tang of ozone in the air, the night spells to be a tumultuous one.

The lone lake, mirroring the sadness of the sky, stands within the stilling air of the clearing. It's quiet. The kind of quiet that resonates inside your heart, sending shivers of tension coiling down your spine. It's serpentine, in a way, the strain of the hushing space. Anticipatory — most definitely — and waiting for the unknowing prey to come crawling.

But not tonight. No, tonight it is not the time of the hunt. It's too dark for the quarry to abscond out of their hiding holes and prowl around for sustenance. Yet, tonight is special nonetheless. For hanging ribbons are tied around the branches of the maple trees, soft yellows and light blues and the occasional blinding red. Wreaths of flowers decorate the sturdy barks of the towering trees, gracefully splitting away in twisted flowery vines that wind around the hanging branches.

The clearing, engulfed in darkness as it was, was decorated for grand festivities. The only oversight, perhaps, was the tardive guests. Perhaps not for long, as flickering candle lights glimmered under the blanket of nightly dimness.

Dressed in snow white dresses that flowed like water along their bodies, the creatures that resembled women walked barefoot among the foliage, blades of grass leaving phantom touches along the seemingly never-ending mailings of their dresses. Some, appearing younger than the rest, converged in the middle of this "procession", carried along woven baskets filled with fruit of all kinds. As the younger ones were ushered forward by their older counterparts, a few of the women began to twirl around, moving across the clearing with fluid grace, bodies guided by invisible strings through flamboyant movements and over-the-top pirouettes.

There was laughter ringing in the air as flaming candle wicks were placed along the invisible lines separating this hidden heaven from the rest of the forest. While other women danced in circles with varying degrees of intense rhythms, some sat quietly at the roots of massive trees, braiding one another's flowing hair.

Should one look at this scene from the outside, they would notice something unnatural about the beauty of the women. How their bone structure was too sharp, eyes too clear and big, their hair shining in the dark as if the sun was imbued in their tresses. Their skin glowed ethereally, pale and luminescent under the dim rays of moonlight, with a certain transparency to its appearance. The way they moved, sometimes too graceful and suave, other times telegraphed and stilted — it all belied the existence of beautiful, yet strange women.

But humans would never believe in the existence of other beings besides themselves on this earth. It was the firm security, the assured confidence in the fact that they alone stood at the top of the food chain and that others—those creatures who struggled to survive, laboured day after day—were beneath their worry. They didn't realize. They didn't even notice, that they themselves were not the hunter, but the hunted. The meek prey that wandered Underhill, in the domain of creatures beyond their power.

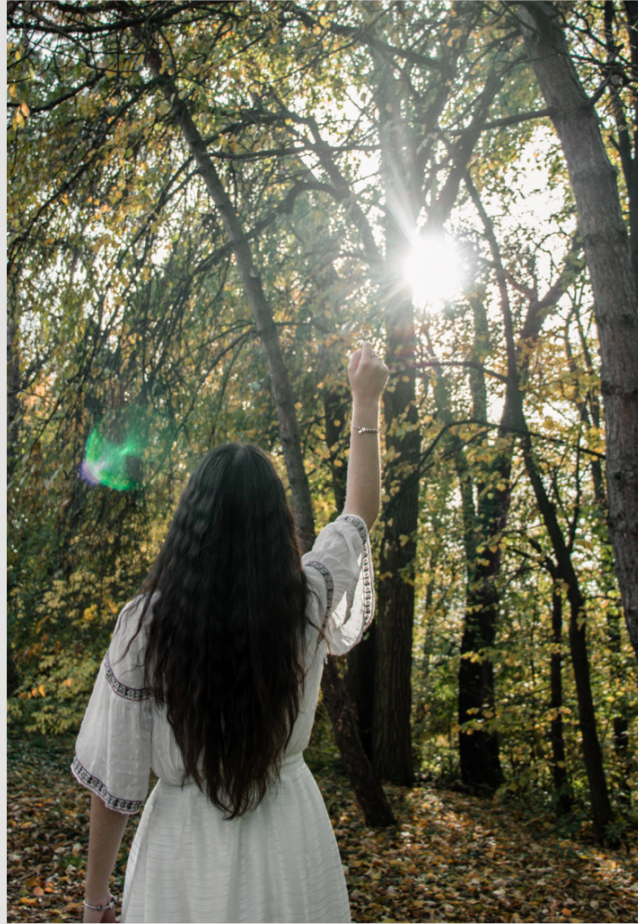
The beings of fae and faeries alike care not for the wellbeing of mortals, their mere ease a simple afterthought during their deathless lives. To them, the lives of ordinary creatures is nothing but a blink, a mere moment to their longevity.

These women are beautiful beasts, hidden behind lovely smiles and gentle eyes and some of them may have love a human, once, in their existence. They might have been faithful companions, trustworthy allies, even devoted lovers, but those of their kind are fundamentally different. The beings of fae are cruel and though they never lie, for the very magic that sustains them prohibits it, they tie their prey in wordy knots, in confusion and in misconceptions. There is a saying that the people of old once said- you can love a monster, it can even love you back, but that doesn't change its nature.

And yet, that is purely the perspective of a human. But humans are biased, they allow emotions to rule them and often make disastrous decisions. But humans, no matter how much something bothers them, they ignore. They choose to drape themselves in silks woven of obliviousness, blinding themselves to the mysteries surrounding them.

That's the problem with humans. They just sit around, hoping that someone will fix things. But no-one will. No-one cares. The universe is infinite and chaotic and cold. It takes and takes and takes and never gives. It's greedy and unsatisfied, much like the beings that it houses.

A beast hidden by beauty. Beauty hidden by a beastly appearance. A great man once said, "There are no beautiful surfaces without a terrible depth." (Friedrich Nietzsche) And so, perhaps the fae are simply human nature at its most honest and humans are the fae at their falsest. The dichotomy is there, but they might not be so different after all.



Their skin glowed ethereally, pale and luminescent under the dim rays of moonlight, with a certain transparency to its appearance.

ANTONIA BUDEANU
ANA-MARIA PASLARU



There was laughter ringing in the air as flaming candle wicks were placed along the invisible lines separating this hidden heaven from the rest of the forest. While other women danced in circles with varying degrees of intense rhythms, some sat quietly at the roots of massive trees, braiding one another's flowing hair.



ANTONIA BUDEANU
ANA MARIA PASLARU

My dear Moon,

Long time no see, right? You know me the best, you are probably wondering what made me take the pen and pour these words on a random, wrinkled piece of paper found on my bedside table. Well, I needed something to discharge the emotional burden I have been keeping.

I have never been too outspoken regarding the love I feel for you. I have always preferred to consider that my actions are enough for you to be aware of the impact you had on my life. However, now that I am physically unable to tell you everything this letter holds, I would like, first of all, to apologize for not offering you the magnificence of hearing even a plain "I love you" as often as you deserved to hear it. If I could turn back time, I would let these words trail off without any hesitation at any opportunity.

The rain is not the same anymore. It used to feel like thousands of sparks embracing our bodies as witnesses of every single slow, passional dance in this modest neighborhood of Crete. When that characteristic rectangular smile of yours would be sketching on your face even from the most apparently insignificant thing I would say, our otherwise almost dead, wilted neighborhood would magically come to life, would magically turn into the keeper of our hearts. Now, when it keeps only one heart instead of two, the rain has totally lost its charm. It's still an embrace, but a rather more pitiful one that stopped gaining any reaction from me apart from sorrowful tears. And stopping them from falling doesn't get any easier no matter how much time passes. I have gone through the phase of denial, where I would still hear your contagious, pure laugh and that would be the only sound I would want to hear for the rest of my life as if I still didn't realize that I can't retrieve it from the tragedy which it has been swallowed by. This ethereal sound became just a memory trapped inside the abyss my own mind dangerously, yet irreversibly grows as.

DOES THIS LETTER EVEN DESERVE A TITLE?

BY INGRYD RADU



By Raza Maira

Then, the phase of hate. Self-hate, for even allowing everything to happen. For not being there to at least try saving you from the disaster. I was under the impression that it's my fault and no one else's, that I should be the one responsible for you, such a mesmerizing being, passing into non-existence and turning into, simply, the past. Painful. To even slightly refer to you as "the past".

Then, the hate towards myself shifted into an unexplainably strong hate towards you. Yeah, you, the one that in my eyes, would never be to blame for anything. I hated you so damn much for leaving me behind into this cloud of smoke, clueless and forced to carry on like nothing happened. Forced to wear a mask day by day, despite how obnoxious, how repulsive I would find the situation. Forced to put on an unnatural façade in front of the others just to hide the atrocious catastrophe happening inside. However, it was not your choice. Definitely. It took me ages to come to terms with the fact that I lost you and it was no one's choice, but...the destiny's? Quite an irony, since each time you would bring destiny up, it would be in an optimistic manner.

Then, the phase of moving on. Actually...not so much. I should probably call it "trying to move on". Or "struggling to move on". "Struggling" is a better word given the reality I live in. The grief has begun a long time ago, yet it doesn't seem to cease anytime soon. Is my letter a part of the process? Probably. Is it enough to solve everything though? Surely not.

No one is capable of filling this void, of healing the painful metaphorical bruises my soul must endure. It will never be about someone else.

I would say without exaggeration that it's gradually more painful each matter I come across that reminds me of you. The car lights are not the same anymore. The mint tea is not the same anymore. This entire apartment is not the same anymore. The smell of coffee is not the same anymore. The taste of apple pie is not the same anymore. It's all drowning in bitterness.

But one thing never changed and never will.

Κάθε φορά που νιώθω μοναξιά, κοιτάζω το φεγγάρι. Και κάθε φορά που κοιτάζω το φεγγάρι, μπορώ μόνο να σκέφτομαι εσένα.

Unconditional love,

*Your
Dandelion*

The devil's eyes
 The angels eyes by dawn
 A starry night above the clouds

Hating the simple touch
 Painful scars around the wrist
 A tottering crown
 The Red Queen
 She just started dancing a waltz
 By herself
 The fire breaks out

At her feet
 Sadly
 But there's only joy
 A late game
 It's what they play
 War and peace
 In the city of Delft
 Blue as my porcelain
 Fragile

The queen steps slowly
 Over broken shards
 Without knowing
 That ever broken shard has its purpose

The Phoenix
 Reborn
 But
 Not in this kingdom
 The venom is in he blood already

Late!
 Too late..
 Both kingdoms know that the will return in hell
 Persephone

Lilith
 The chosen crown
 By this time and day
 We are born in myths
 The sweetest comeback
 In chains we are hold
 peacefully

PERSEPHONE

BY DENISA MUNTIANU



By Mara Mangalagiu

MIRRORS

From the heart

The future

BY IRINA SCRIPNIC

This year is my last year of high school. It is a weird feeling because even though I have always dreamt of going to college and escaping school life, I feel scared for my future and what would come next.

The ending of high school will bring an end to a lot of things. These days will never come back again and all the fun we had, soon will be called the unforgettable memories of school life, which I will miss the most. We all want school to be over until that one day comes when all of us will be standing in alphabetical order in a cap and gown with the people we have watched grow up and the people who have watched us grow up, realizing that some of those people we will never see again. Honestly, it's scary, that this experience will end some day and will turn into memories. It's scary what the future will reserve for us, what we all will do with our lives, the failure is scary, detaching so quickly from this environment and stepping into another stage of life.

I always used to think that I was not going to miss school, teachers and that college would be more fun and useful, but being right now in this position, in the senior year, is so stressful, because all you can think about is your future, making the right decision, getting good grades at exams and so on. The senior year hits you when "have a great summer" turns into "have a great future and life". You get a really strange feeling when you're about to leave a place. As if you were not only to miss the people you love but you'll miss the person you are now at this time and this place because you'll never be this way ever again. But you are excited for the person you are swimming towards and look forward to the new you that awaits in the distance.

To sum up, it is weird how we start to cherish the moment when we realize it's going to end. Appreciate the moment you've been given and the people you've been given to spend it with because no matter how beautiful or tragic a moment is, it always ends. Enjoy the little time left you have in your hometown because soon you'll be using a GPS everywhere you go but most of all enjoy the little time you have left with your best friends because soon it all will be over.



By Bianca Prisăcaru

Throughout my life I wanted to find a hobby, something to occupy my time, to be passionate about and to make me happy even when I'm sad, but I never found it. That changed in the spring of 2020 when the pandemic came and we were all in quarantine. Having the whole day free, sitting at home, I started looking for an occupation, therefore I started looking on the internet for simple cake recipes, especially for beginners. I continued to bake almost every day in quarantine until I realized that this is something I really enjoy; I have continued to do so ever since, trying more and more recipes.

At this point I managed to bake from pancakes and simple sponge cakes to soufflés, birthday cakes, lava cakes, cinnamon rolls, American pies etc. This is how I spend my free time, writing new recipes in my recipe book and later on putting them into practice.

The art of baking

BY CORINA BAHRIN

The banal passion that started 2 and a half years ago has now turned into a dream career idea. Besides higher studies and the courses that I want to follow after high school, a dream come true would be to open my own bakery and to take a specialized baking course.

I think that it's important to make room for your passions in life and to try to create something of off them if any opportunities come along the way. Don't waste your life on things you don't like just because it's successful and you are told to do it. Find your safe place, safe person or activity and take advantage of it; it's better to try and fail than live the rest of your life with the regret that you have never made what makes you feel happy and fulfilled.

HIGH SCHOOL IS ENDING

BY PAULA ROMAN

I am amazed that these four years of high school are coming to an end. If you'd asked me beforehand, I'd say this would go on forever. I dreamed of going to this high school when I was still in middle school.

It was a huge accomplishment for me to be admitted to this high school. Since then, my story as a junior has begun, and I have had an excellent first year. Even though lockdown came about so suddenly, I was still able to participate in several interesting things. To lose out on so much of this experience, which only comes around once and is so fleeting, was, however, such a disappointment. Yet, this time allowed for a lot of personal growth for all of us. I'm not going to deny, there have also been difficult times. But, I believe that I was fortunate to be in this class with so many wonderful teachers who cared about us as individuals rather than simply the subject matter.

Let's now discuss how the journey itself was. I had to study a lot, but I also tried to enjoy myself as much as I could because I knew these times never come back. I was able to discern what needed my attention the most, and I ignored the dull stuff. I went a little too far with skipping school at times, but at the end of the day, I don't regret what I did. When it comes to my classmates, I'd say that despite the times when I wished I wasn't supposed to see them, every once in a while we managed to form bonds. Because we mature into adults during high school and go through various stages where our behaviour changes significantly, high school is considerably different from middle school. I think that because of this, we have been getting along better over the past year and have come to a point in our lives where we can be understanding and tolerant of one another.

Overall, I am pleased with my experience as a high school student, and I am confident that I will remember those years joyfully. I am now looking forward to experiencing college life, despite my slight fear of what the future may bring.

HOPES FOR THE FUTURE

BY DARIA PÎRLOG

Graduation time is full of questions like, "What's next?" "Where are you going to college?" "What are you going to study?" "Are you moving somewhere?"

While these questions are all well-intentioned, some might feel an unconscious pressure to have the right answers, have a detailed plan or at least a sense of direction. But the truth is, sometimes you don't have everything sorted out yet, which often leads to stress.

Since I started my last year of high school, I have been pretty anxious about life after graduation. Upon high school graduation, we are propelled into a whole new world loaded with possibilities and a great number of unknowns, which might scare some of us. I don't think many of my classmates are in this situation, but if you are reading this and find yourself in this situation I hope this short article will help you.

The end of high school marks the end of a chapter of our lives, but, at the same, the beginning of a new one. Even though I am fearful and I constantly worry about what I am going to do in the future and if I will be able to cope with the challenges that adulthood brings, I am certain that I will always find a solution and so will you, if you are similarly concerned.

Despite all of the fears that I have for the upcoming exams, I am trying to make the most of it and to enjoy all the time I have left with the people that I am close with, because time flies and soon we will have to part ways for an indefinite amount of time.

All in all, even though we have to remain on top of our priorities, such as our final exams and college application, we should not forget to live and have fun this year

MIRRORS



Reflections

Why I love unlikeable characters

BY AMALIA TALPALARIU

I must admit, I had a terribly tough time deciding on a topic for this piece. The reason for that is because I was constantly disregarding all ideas. None of the movies I've seen throughout my life felt interesting enough for me to fully dive into, no moment in history particularly stood out enough to put into writing and no body of work seemed deserving of being the one topic I picked. Nothing felt right. But one topic kept coming back, stronger each time: my favorite TV shows. Because this idea almost plagued me, I had to ask myself why this stuck with me and nothing else did. And then I realized, they are all about awful people.

I am a relatively non-committal person when it comes to insignificant things like favorites, it always feels unfair, but the one show I shamelessly have been calling my all-time favorite ever since I first discovered it back in middle school has been BoJack Horseman. The show, a bright and colorful adult animation starring anthropomorphic animals, centers around the titular character, a now washed up Hollywood actor who has fallen into a sad loop of addiction and depression. However, the show is not so much about his path back to happiness and success, but rather the consequences of his actions and how they affect those around him, as well as himself. Up until the last season, BoJack is on a constant downward spiral, fueled by trauma and regret. Despite the at times difficult to endure scenes the shows has put forward in its 6 seasons, I have not seen a single show tackle painful topics such as loss, depression, trauma and anxiety quite as well as this silly cartoon, all through the eyes of narcissistic, self-destructive, bitter, self-loathing Bojack Horseman.

unlikeable characters
make us feel seen.

Another TV show I absolutely adore is Succession. HBO's drama follows the Roy family, which is at the helms of global multi-media conglomerate Waystar RoyCo. So naturally, the shows is about extremely rich individuals and, when mixed with their lust for power and a poor relationship with their father, the Roy children turn out to be less than good-natured. Kendall, the second eldest son, is obsessed with getting their father's approval, desire that leads him to make bad decision after bad decision. He is also clearly insecure and tries covering it with excess, be it his language or actions. Siobhan, the only daughter, is extremely cunning, calculated and definitely self-absorbed, unafraid to turn her back on family if need be. Roman, the youngest, is the textbook immature younger sibling, rude and spoiled. The dynamic of these characters is fascinating and, when paired with the show's brilliantly written dialogue, these characters become overwhelmingly compelling.

unlikeable characters are
complex.

These shows are just two of my favorites that coincidentally happens to showcase this kind of character but there are many more like them, such as Breaking Bad, Game of Thrones or Peaky Blinders just to name a few. All of these shows may range in setting, format or plot, but one aspect is constant throughout all of them. They are all highly praised and loved among both critics and audiences alike and I believe the reason for that is evident.

unlikeable characters
are entertaining.

Part-time jobs

BY DARIA MELINTE

A part time job represents a really important step in life for a student. It represents responsibility and seriousness and most people say that having a part time job as a teenager is really helpful for them and their future jobs.

First of all, having a part time job can help students to gain work experience on account of the fact that they will understand what working for your own money feels like. Their work experience will help them be not only serious and mature, but also dedicated, persevering and self-confident. Gaining work experience should give them an understanding of the work environment and what employers expect from their workers. In addition, it makes students prepared to discuss with potential employers during interviews for their future job.

Secondly, part time jobs teach students how to manage their time. Having a part time job in the summer vacation is quite simple, but having it while studying can be very hard to manage. A part time job makes one more productive and organized. Students stop wasting their time on their phone so that can learn for school and sleep enough.

Taking everything into consideration, I believe gaining work experience is the most important way students can benefit from, due to the fact that it prepares them for their future at a young age and teaches them how to manage life.

WATER SYMBOLISM IN CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

BY ELENA ANGHELUȚĂ

Water is an omnipresent element, rich in meanings, so what is its meaning in Dostoevsky's works? To start off, water tends to be a metaphor for cleansing, rebirth, life, metamorphosis and freedom. Water symbolically aids those doing positive acts while it is rejected by wicked men. In many religions the element also stands for purity and fertility and it represents the flow of life through its many forms and, within the constant movement of its flow, there is a representation of a natural driving force with tremendous power.

Rivers embody both the concepts of rebirth and healing, a prime example of this is seen in Shakespear's Macbeth where Lady Macbeth attempts, in a state of despair, to wash an invisible bloodstain in order to cleanse herself of her inner torment and guilt.

In Dostoevsky's work we see water as the metaphor for rebirth and regeneration in both positive and negative aspects, this in accordance with the characters alignments. In positively denoted characters, water is a companion and indicates vital forces. For example, when Raskolnikov awakes from one of his first fainting episodes, another person has brought him water, a glass filled with a yellow-ish water which symbolises his guilt, clouded state of mind, which stands for the impurity stained upon his conscious self. Even if this case displays Raskolnikov's impurity, the act of bringing him water is an attempt towards encouraging redemption, a chance for him to come clean, to wash away his own wretchedness, a reviving cocktail.

Later on, Razumihin is also seen attempting to bring his friend water and tea wishing for him to restore health and repent. Water is then a major element connecting Raskolnikov to other characters, and his constant refusal of it, despite being surrounded by the element, displays a disgust with himself and a refusal of any redemption by closing in on himself.

In negatively connotated characters, water is perceived as a source of terror, as seen in Svidrigailov, a depraved man who is afraid of salvation. That is shown notably through his phobia of water; I quote "Never in my life could I stand water, not even on a landscape painting". Despite him helping Sonia's family, not only was he unfaithful to his wife, but he also molested several young girls, ultimately making him a largely negatively coded character, that is important to keep in mind when one analyses his experience with water in contrast to Raskolnikov.

Svidrigailov states that he cannot even tolerate water in paintings. The way in which he rejects water reflects his nature and relation to himself, by cutting off water he simultaneously rejects changing his ways, rejects redemption.

In "Crime and punishment" we can also contrast the hot and dusty city (corresponding to the main characters murky mindset) and 'greenness and the freshness' of Petersburg islands which clearly awaken something within him by resurrecting aspects of himself he had buried deep within him. This greenness actually had the opposing effect on the negative characters by repelling them.

HOW TO TOUCH THE CLOUDS

BY IOANA CIAUȘU

In the latest years I have always felt this giant hole in my stomach whenever I thought about how fast the time flies. We all hear from our parents: "Life goes by so quickly, live it and make it worth it!", but honestly there are only a few people in this world that I believe have actually done that.

Therefore in this composition I want to tell you a story that will certainly inspire you and will teach you how to fulfill that incredible wish of making every second matter!

This is the story of Zachary Sobiech known by the most as Zach, the member of the impactful band called "A Firm Handshake". He was an incredible songwriter and musician and had knew a great success since his early beginning in music.

What is most unbelievable about Zach's story is that he had been diagnosed with Osteosarcoma, a bone cancer, at the early age of 14 . Cancer is a disease that affects a lot of children and we all heard emotional stories about it but what makes Zach's so special it's the way he chose to live his life, despite his condition.

His family described him as one of the kindest and most empathetic people, but that's usually what family says anyways, the difference is that he was capable to show the whole world that. From the beginning of his diagnosis Zach found refuge in music, he started writing songs about his deepest feelings going through all of it and was always showing everyone around him them so he could transmit his words to the others without having to talk about the obvious and hurtful truth. During his treatment he underwent 10 surgeries and 24 rounds of chemotherapy. Judging by now we can easily say that he is a fighter but in 2012 when his family and him were informed that his tumor had been cured, after a second closer look, the doctors discovered that the cancer had touched his lungs making them collapse slowly.

That's when they found out that he was terminal, and that he only had 6 months to a year to live.

Now let's just put ourselves in his shoes and think: What would you do if you found out tomorrow you probably have six more months on this earth?

For him the answer was putting his music out there for everyone to hear and make sure his voice was heard. He formed a band with his best friend Sammy, and wrote this unbelievable song called "Clouds" about his battle with cancer, a song that he entitled as a goodbye and a sign of closure from him to the people that were the closest to him. He posted it on YouTube in December 2012, and went viral hitting 3 million views by May. In his last months he signed with one of the most famous record labels and got to perform his song to huge audiences, he achieved one of his biggest dreams and made his short life an inspiration for the others.

He also founded a charity called "The Zach Sobiech Osteosarcoma Fund" at Children's Cancer Research Fund, to help in researching a cure for cancer. In September 2015, the fund reached \$2 million.

After his death, In May 2013 when he was only 18, his single "Clouds" had been charted on the Billboard Hot 100, eventually becoming a hit also in the UK, Canada and France.

Thinking about his mom and being in her situation, her son's success definitely helped her reconnect with art and which made it easier to live with the tragedy since Laura Sobiech wrote a memoir about Zach's life with the title of "Fly a little higher: How God Answered a Mom's Small Prayer in a Big Way".

In conclusion, the most inspirational message Zachary David Sobiech gave us is that we all need to stop assuming we will have another day to chase our dreams and make our lives remarkable, especially when we are teenagers! He also declared in an interview that teenagers usually behave like they are invincible, "not the Superhero kind of invincible" but just the fact that we live every day so sure that we will get another one confirms Zach's affirmation! In his last days of living due to cancer, he declared that he needed to make people happy and that is truly what he accomplished, his song is now one of the greatest, most sensible and unforgettable legacy while it is also a way of giving his family and love one's a way of remembering him!

PART-TIME JOBS FOR TEENAGERS – GOOD OR BAD?

BY ALEXIA BEJENARIU

Students, from all times, have a desire to be independent and earn their own money. This feeling of autonomy usually takes them to part-time jobs which help them dream to make a living. But what are the real benefits of a part-time job and why they choose to take it?

To begin with, part-time jobs help students to cover their academic expenses. It is regularly accepted that most students choose to leave home for college and they take a part-time job for paying their studies. For example, if a 20-year old man goes for a medical school in another city, he's unable to cover all the costs with his parents' money because the fees are high. So, he will take a job in order to earn enough money for college. By doing this, he will remain in school and, also, gain some pocket money besides the money for studies.

Secondly, students will definitely learn to manage time if they get tired at a part-time job. In order to keep up with the school and, meanwhile, go to work, they will have to make a strict schedule which will help them to do both tasks. For instance, if a medical school student wants to make his project for Biology class and also his work program starts in the afternoon, he has to divide time responsibly in order to begin his school tasks after job. As a result, every student who succeeds in organizing time for all tasks that he has will become mature and will understand how precious time is in every day life.

To sum up, part-time jobs have a lot of benefits for every student who decides to get hired. I truly believe that part-time jobs are very good choices for teenagers to earn some money.

DIANA, PRINCESS OF WALES

BY BIANCA BULBUCANU

Today, I will present you the life of that one celebrity that I look up to and truly admire for her way of being, expressing herself and for what she succeeded to achieve: Princess Diana.

Diana Frances Spencer, known worldwide as Diana, Princess of Wales was one of the few iconic people of the eighties and nineties. She succeeded through her charisma, kindness and friendliness to win over the hearts of the British citizens, in this way gaining the nickname of Diana, Princess of Hearts. Additionally, throughout her life as a royal, she showed full support towards charity work that involved, at first, children and elderly and then AIDS patients. She was also seen by the public as an outstanding political figure, as a role model mother, as one of the luckiest females since she got married with Prince Charles. Nevertheless, her personal life, which got to be extremely publicized, was far from perfect as anyone might expect. Let's dive deep in!

To start off, Diana was born into the British nobility in 1961 and she wasn't really in the spotlight until the age of 19 when she got the Prince's attention, Charles III, the eldest son of Queen Elizabeth II. This is the moment her life started to change, from blending into the background to being the center of attention, both for the press and the nobility. As any other teenager of her age, she truly believed in the possibility of living a love story and from her perspective, back then, she thought that Charles could offer her that and even more. Little did she know the unhappiness that he was going to bring her afterwards. On the other hand, the prince was at the age of 29 which meant that he ought to find himself a wife and quickly. So it happened that both of them saw in each other the perfect match according to their specific needs and in 1981 they got married at St. Paul's Cathedral. Needless to say that the wedding was more than a simple one. With thousands of citizens watching them from outside the church and from their TV screens at home, we can affirm with certainty that the wedding was overwhelming, especially for the princess. Shortly after their wedding, Prince William was born, followed by Prince Harry 2 years later.

After a couple of years into the marriage, the age gap was extremely noticeable and the misunderstandings between the couple started surfacing. The Princess wasn't on good terms with Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip, which didn't bring her much peace. Her personality was of such nature that she couldn't help but be nice with the population and greet them with every single chance she had, an action known to not be worthy of a queen. Despite being criticized by the royal family and nobility, she reaches the hearts of the people by also conducting several charity works and speaking up about women's rights, a point that proves her modern mindset and high intelligence. Camilla Parker Bowles was the cause of the beginning of the end of the marriage.

In May 1992, all of these affairs between the prince and the mistress, and many other details about Diana's personal life in connection with the royal family were exposed with the publication of Andrew Morton's book, "Diana: Her True Story". In fact, the princess was the one who informed the publisher with regards to all the information contained in that book and perhaps this represents the greatest reason for her "downfall". I truly believe that Diana was not only neglected but she also wanted to feel heard. In a world where men can do whatever they please and women have to step aside or look the other way, she wanted to prove that she has a voice, she had power and that power mattered quite a lot if it got to the point of destroying the royal family's perfect image. In this interview that she offered to the publisher of the book she also mentioned that she never wanted to become a queen and that she wouldn't be one in the future due to the precarious connection between her and the queen mother. Finally, in 1996 Diana and Charles got their official divorce signed which led to both of them being free from one another.

This gave Diana the freedom that she deserved during the 15 years of marriage with her unfaithful partner. Being able to go wherever and with whomever she wanted without having to explain herself in front of anybody made her more powerful, confident and independent than she has ever been before.

However, the life of Princess Diana was cut short in 1997, when she got in a car accident. Whether the action was premeditated by Queen Elizabeth or was pure coincidence is something speculative. For the British citizens, the news of the princess's death came as a shock, the majority blaming the mother queen for the tremendous tragedy. From my perspective, I do think that her fate was unfair and that she didn't deserve this horrendous ending, especially if we analyze the things she had to put up with.

I also chose to talk about Diana's life because, from my standpoint, she represents my model in life of how to be a good person regardless of your surroundings. Additionally, she had the strength to face the truth and say it out loud without fearing of the consequences, which proves courage and an attribute that I wish to achieve in life. Moreover, I truly admire her fashion style and I recognize myself in her friendly and spontaneous behaviour. I chose her because of her open minded perspective and due to the fact that she supported the woman rights, another aspect that goes hand in hand with my beliefs. Overall, she is an important figure that I usually look up to and she represents an intriguing topic for me. All of the information above was gathered through several documentaries from Netflix and I also did some online research regarding the exact years of each event that took place in her life. I will forever be a Diana fan and the fascination regarding her life won't disappear too soon either.

NEURODIVERSITY

BY ILINCA LEAHU



What is neurodiversity?

Neurodiversity describes the idea that people experience and interact with the world around them in many different ways; there is no "right" way of thinking, learning, and behaving, and differences are not viewed as deficits. Judy Singer, a sociologist who has autism, started using the term "neurodiversity" in the late 1990s. It mostly refers to people who have autism, ADHD, dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia, dysgraphia and Tourette syndrome.

The world vs Neurodivergent people

It is a well-known fact that the world is not really that kind to neurodivergent people or to disabled people in general. There are two types of people: the ones who pity them and think they can't do anything on their own (especially thinking on their own) and the ones who don't believe that autism, ADHD, dyslexia (or others learning disabilities) do not exist and neurodivergent people are just faking it for attention.

Neurodiversity in women

Since the majority of research on neurodevelopmental conditions like autism and ADHD has been focused on boys and men, women are often overlooked. Misdiagnosed as anxious, depressed, or simply “sensitive,” many women don’t learn about their neurological differences until they are adults. For every woman diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), roughly 3 to 6 men are diagnosed (UCL, 2018). It is also estimated that the most common age for women to be diagnosed with ADHD is late 30s to early 40s, compared to aged 7 for boys. For centuries, women have grappled to live in a biased world. Consequently they’ve developed a natural ability to fit in or mask any seemingly ‘socially unacceptable’ traits. Conditions like autism and ADHD present differently in girls, and the symptoms can often be much more subtle and easier to miss – particularly if, as is often the case, less behavioral problems are apparent. Women that do externalize their needs are also more likely to be diagnosed with a mental health condition than a neurodivergent condition. This lack of childhood diagnosis in women means it is likely thousands remain undiagnosed, and it is only with increased awareness online and amongst peers that many are beginning to self-identify and seek diagnosis in adulthood.

What actually is autism?

Everyone knows what autism is but the autism that most people know about is based just on stereotypes: speaking in monotone, having obsessions, not being able to differentiate right from wrong, usually say the wrong thing at the wrong time, socially awkward, lack humor and empathy and sometimes (often by the media) being a super genius. Most of the time autistic people have a sensitivity to loud noises, bright lights, strong smells, gooey textures or even physical touch, all of them having a potential in creating anxiety and making them overwhelmed. A big number of autistic people struggle with expressing emotion, resulting the stereotype of not having empathy. The emotions that a neurodivergent person feels are different from a neurotypical person because they are intensified. Living in an ableist world, they feel the need mask their emotions to be able to adapt.

What actually is ADHD?

ADHD stands for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, although not everyone has the hyperactivity part. While some think of it as an inability to focus, that is not entirely true. In fact, the ability to hyper-focus is one of the many skills associated with ADHD, along with strong 3D visual skills, problem solving abilities, passion and enthusiasm. ADHD is a condition that affects the way people react to and process the information that enters the brain. People with ADHD often struggle doing daily tasks which for neurotypicals seem easy. For example taking care of themselves, or organize things, respect a schedule, start or finish certain tasks or assignments.

What actually is dyslexia?

When most people think of dyslexia they think of seeing letter and words backwards. The truth is people with dyslexia see things the same way as everyone else, they just read things slowly. The brain is divided into two hemispheres: left hemisphere is in charge of language and, ultimately, reading, while the right typically handles spatial activities. FRMI studies have found that people with dyslexia rely more on the right hemisphere and the frontal lobe, this means when they read a word it takes a longer trip through their brain and can get delayed in the frontal lobe. Studies also show that one in five people has dyslexia.

Conclusion

What would happen if the world viewed neurodevelopmental differences like ADHD, autism, and learning disabilities differently? If everyone noticed the strengths that can come from these differences first, instead of the challenges? People with ADHD have high levels of spontaneity, courage, and empathy. They can hyper-focus on certain tasks. Those with autism pay attention to complex details, have good memories, and show certain "specialty" skills. Experts think this can be an asset in certain jobs, such as computer programming or music. As noted by one researcher, Wolfgang Mozart had strong music memory and absolute pitch. People with dyslexia can perceive certain kinds of visual information better than those without the condition.

THE FUTURE

BY MATEI POPA

At this point in our life all the focus is on the future. Everybody wants to know if you took up driving, what you are going to do next, which college you will choose and consequently what job you will have. Sometimes all I think about is my future and I get alienated from reality.

You probably expect me to now talk about how hard it is to deal with this pressure and how stressed I am, but I'm not going to. Truth is I got used with this pressure and in the last couple of months I started developing my ability to stay calm under any circumstances, which comes in handy. I know what I'm up against, I know how hard I need to work in order to have the future that I desire, I know that the person who puts the most pressure on myself is the one in the mirror and I know that right now I'm not good enough. All this becomes motivation for myself. My objective for the future is simple: to become the version of myself that I need to become in order to achieve my goals.

It's not the longest of articles but it shows where I'm standing right now which is exactly what I wanted. This is just the beginning, I still have a long road ahead and I'm determined to follow it. I hope my future self will one day come back to this text and read it with a smile on his face. And to him I say: I'm sure we made it.

MIRRORS



Artistic zoom

Via: [Unsplash.com](https://unsplash.com)

A SHORT HISTORY OF EASTWEST'S SAMPLE LIBRARIES

BY RAREȘ BARBU

DESCRIPTION OF EASTWEST

EastWest is probably one of the oldest producers of sample CDs and virtual instruments, being founded in 1988 by Doug Rogers. The company is known for creating top-notch sample libraries in collaboration with Nick Pheonix, the owner of the company Quantum Leap, such as "Symphonic Orchestra", "Hollywood Orchestra", "Symphonic Choirs", "Hollywood Choirs", Storm Drum trilogy, "Ra", "Silk", and many others. EastWest has won over 120 international industry awards since the foundation of the company. Now that we made a general presentation of EastWest, let's dive into the history of its sample libraries, focusing on the more important ones.

THE BEGINNING

Doug Rogers, after forming the company, created the very first commercial drum samples collection, followed by a sequel co-produced with Bob Clearmountain, "Bob Clearmountain Drums CD1". It was so successful, that a new industry was born. Rogers and Clearmountain produced subsequent releases that won many awards. In 1991, Rogers released the first collection to include midi-driven drum loops, which enabled users to adjust each loop tempo in their sequencer without adjusting pitch or decreasing quality. As the sampling technology improved, Rogers released the "Ultimate Piano Collection" in 1995, the first multi-velocity sampled piano collection, which received many industry awards. In 1997 Rogers partnered with Nemesys to create the GigaSampler software and instrument collections, which pioneered the use of "streaming from hard drive technology", a technical breakthrough without which, the high-quality virtual instruments of today would not be possible.

THE START OF THE THE EASTWEST/QUANTUM LEAP COLLABORATION

In 2003 he co-produced with Nick Phoenix the first surround sound virtual orchestra, "Symphonic Orchestra" (124GB), which was so ambitious, like many of their libraries, that it cost over a million dollars to make. In 2006, they made a choir library to complement "Symphonic Orchestra", "Symphonic Choirs" (40GB), which was a revolutionary library. You could make the choir sing anything you wanted, thanks to the WorldBuilder technology. This was followed in 2007 with "Pianos" (282GB), one of the most detailed virtual piano collections ever produced, in surround sound. Some other libraries worth mentioning that were made in that decade are "Ra" (2004), an ethnic library that covers instruments from various regions, such as East Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Europe, "Silk" (2009), another ethnic library containing instruments from three regions, China, India, Persia and last, but not least, "Stormdrum 2" (2007), the sequel of "Stormdrum 1", which focuses on ethnic percussion, pulses, and hits for action sequences

THE HOLLYWOOD ERA

EastWest had again created some incredible sample libraries in the 2010s, most specifically, the Hollywood Orchestra Series, the successor of "Symphonic Orchestra". Together with Nick Phoenix, Doug Rogers created a huge orchestral library, made out of four parts: strings (2010), brass (2011), woodwinds (2013), and percussion (2014). It was made for composers who wanted to make high-quality compositions, that sound like the soundtracks from Hollywood movies. The size of this collection was huge, having exactly 680GB of content. Later, they created three libraries to complement the "Hollywood Orchestra": Hollywood Solo Harp (2015), Hollywood Solo Cello (2015), and Hollywood Solo Violin (2016). In 2017, EastWest released another great library to complement the Hollywood Orchestra Series: "Hollywood Choirs" (59GB). Like "Symphonic Choirs", it has the WorldBuilder technology, with which musicians can make their choral arrangements sing anything they want and it also has better quality regarding the sound. Other great libraries from that decade are "Stormdrum 3" (2013), the successor of "Stormdrum 2", which contains a large amount of ethnic percussion for epic tracks, "Voices of the Empire" (2019), a solo vocal library, excellent for musicians who want some haunting, exotic, and mercilessly passionate vocals in their tracks, regardless of genre and "Ministry of Rock 2" (2011), which contains a collection of guitars, basses, and drums for rock and metal compositions..

THE OPUS ERA

Before 2021, Play was the engine that powered the EastWest libraries, but in that year, the company released Opus, a new engine superior to Play, with more features, better optimization, and more. The Hollywood Orchestra Series has been updated for the Opus engine, weighting now almost one terabyte, having new features and newly recorded samples. In 2022, EastWest released a huge synth library, "Forbidden Planet" (54GB), which has over 645 sounds to choose from (Arpeggiator, Bass, Drones, FX, Leads, Pads, Poly Synths).

CONCLUSION

EastWest has created, in three decades, some amazing virtual instruments and sample packs that have revolutionized the way companies make sample libraries. EastWest has also raised the bar multiple times when it comes to the quality of the virtual instruments and the technological part of music softwares.

Perfect Blue

Review

BY DARIUS OPREA

Satoshi Kon's debut film turned iconic cult classic delves disturbingly deep into themes of duality, the celebrity and the online persona.

The movie, based on a novel by Yoshikazu Takeuchi of the same name, follows Mima Kirigoe Japanese pop idol who decides to retire from her idol group in order to pursue an acting career. As she becomes a victim of stalking from an obsessed fan unhappy with her recent career change, gruesome murders begin to occur around her causing her to go down a mental spiral, resulting in her grip on reality to become looser and looser as things go from bad to worse.

To begin with, the main theme of the movie is duality, more specifically the duality between Mima's persona as a celebrity and her real self. As Mima's mental state gets worsens throughout the movie she begins to be tormented and taunted by an "evil" version of her, which takes the form of her idol persona, which begins to mock and ridicule her career change. This aspect drives the movie into a sort of uncanny valley, the viewer never really getting an answer to what's real and what's not, similarly to say the movie Black Swan.



By Teodora Crăciuleanu

The animation and cinematography are absolutely delightful. Kon puts the right amount of both innocent and weird into his character design making the world of Perfect Blue feel real but at the same time slightly off. Due to the movie taking place in a realistic setting background music is fairly minimal throughout the movie (aside from 2 big j-pop songs presented at the beginning of the movie in Mima's last concert with her idol band). However, that doesn't mean that it's soundtrack can't evoke emotion from the viewer, a perfect example would be the track "Virtual Mima", which is played at a pivotal moment where Mima is suffering a distressing mental breakdown, the humming vocals of the track coupled with the angelic sounds create an unsettling dissonance bringing the viewer in a state of an unease.

The movie also explores the female perspective in the entertainment industry (in more than one way). Although Satoshi Kon stated the it wasn't his intention to "reveal any behind-the-scene secrets of the entertainment industry" looking at Mima's treatment as the movie progresses, he undoubtedly does at least touch on how draining and damaging to the psyche the female experience in this industry can be. A parallel I would like to draw (again) is between this movie and Black Swan, which similarly to Perfect Blue isn't necessarily a critique on the ballet world but does feature some aspects which put it in an "unflattering" light to say the least.

In the end, Perfect Blue is a surprisingly relevant psychological thriller, featuring some mind-bending scenes (which probably served as inspiration for movies like "Black Swan"), tackling themes of duality and stardom in a way which had never been done through the animated medium before on such a big scale. Despite all the praise I've given to the movie I also have to say that it does relay it's message in a very graphic way so I'm issuing a content warning for violence, gore, sexual violence and extremely realistic depiction of stalking for anyone interested in watching.

NOVEL REVIEW

"A GAME OF THRONES"

BY GEORGE R. R. MARTIN

BY ȘTEFAN SPIRIDON

George R. R. Martin's novel, *A Game of Thrones*, is the first in a monumental series about a fictional land in which the seasons shift between periods of endless summer and winter. The story begins with the kingdom of Winterfell facing both external and internal dangers. Beyond its borders, the cold is returning and across the Narrow Sea, a dragon prince is scheming to win back his lost kingdom and the eggs of supposedly long extinct dragons are beginning to hatch. Within Winterfell itself, war soon erupts when the king is murdered by a family grasping for unlawful power.

The writing style in the first book is a combination between historical fiction and fantasy. This type of writing style is used by authors who pick up separate incidents in history and try to link them up with other wars or events, by utilizing numerous elements of fantasy. George R. R. Martin used borrowed plots from "The War of The Roses" , "Imperial Rome" to create his masterpiece.

The greatest compliment that I could pay to the first novel is that there is not a character who feels "wasted" because every single person in the book is unforgettable. Certain characters also have an abnormal ability to get under your skin, especially the villains. Yet there was also a drawback that reduced the overall quality of the book - the concept of narration which involved a lot of description about the characters.

I would wholeheartedly recommend this novel to every reader not because of its success, but for the plot and for its easily attachable characters.

TRITONE, THE DEVIL'S INTERVAL



BY RAREȘ BARBU

As the British musicologist John Deathridge said, "music lives deep within us, in the marrow of our evolutionary bones, tapping into this very primitive system which identifies emotion on the basis of a violation of expectancy." What he meant by this quote is that when we hear certain combinations of sounds, our brains will associate them with being either soothing or creepy. When we plot those sounds on sheet music, we find one of the most dissonant, yet intriguing, combinations, that can be called an augmented 4th or diminished 5th but isn't quite either one. It is better known by the medieval name, "the devil's tritone". It is said that this interval was banned in the Middle Ages because it might summon Lucifer if the sequence was played.

The reality is less amazing than you might expect. James Bennett writes at WQXR, "To the chagrin of many a musician wanting to tap into a badass rebel streak in music's DNA, there aren't any records to suggest any rogue medieval composers took a hike to Perdition after using this spooky, devilish interval." In other words, nobody got killed, tortured over some musical interval. But the association with the devil is historical. In the 18th century, the tritone acquired the name *diabolus in musica*, or "the devil in music," part of a mnemonic: "Mi contra fa est diabolus in musica" or "mi against fa is the devil in music." The "diabolic" nature of the tritone comes from the difficulty of singing it, not from some superstition.

The tritone is not something malefic, or diabolic, it is a "dependent" chord, one characteristic of tension. We may not register it consciously, but it primes our brains with anxious expectations. "The reason it's unsettling is that it's ambiguous, unresolved," says Gerald Moshell, Professor of Music at Trinity College in Hartford, Conn.

