

# MIRRORS



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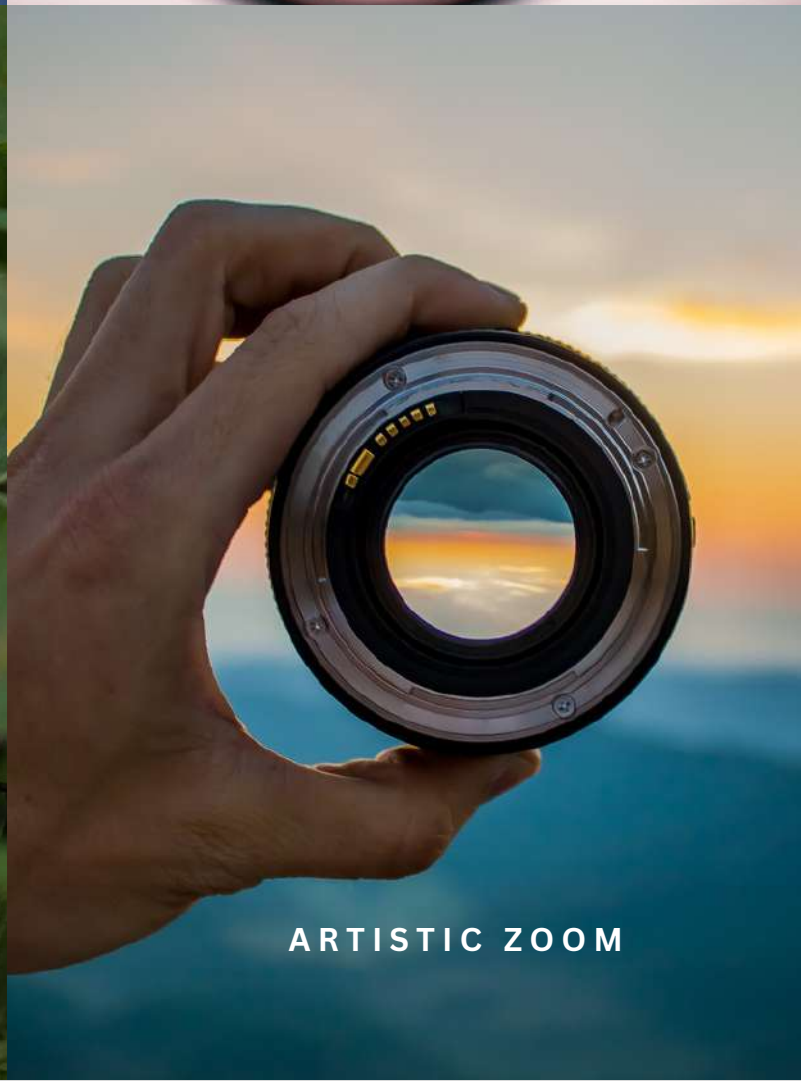
SOUL BLOTS



REFLECTIONS



FROM THE HEART



ARTISTIC ZOOM

MIRRORS

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## Editor's Note

To speak is human, to write divine!

Oana Andone

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As a person who lives much of her life in the company of teenagers (and enjoying every minute of it), I have often thought how adolescence is on one hand a sweet time of self-discovery and on the other hand an age of bitter transformation. Whether cheerful or morose, teenagers need an opportunity to open their inner universe towards the outer world and make themselves known. Here is how writing (and publishing their works in a magazine) may serve this purpose.

Writing is an act of creation and catharsis which provides an outlet for teenagers to express their thoughts, emotions and ideas. It allows them to explore their inner thoughts and feelings, thus leading to increased self-awareness. Moreover, writing offers an avenue for creativity on which teenagers can explore various genres, such as fiction, poetry and non-fiction, to unleash their imagination. Finally, it may be a therapeutic way for teenagers to process and cope with difficult emotions and experiences. Keeping a journal or writing poetry can help them work through challenging situations.

The process of writing requires teenagers to organize their thoughts, analyse information and present arguments or ideas logically. This can enhance critical thinking and problem-

solving skills, meanwhile honing valuable expertise that can be useful in academics and future careers.

Finally, on a deeply personal level, writing allows teenagers to make their voices heard, express their opinions, and advocate for any causes they care about. Seeing their work published in a school magazine can boost teenagers' self-confidence and self-esteem. It validates their efforts and abilities, encouraging them to continue writing.

Putting thoughts on paper is a useful tool to empower students to be active and engaged, to connect with others who share similar interests or experiences. Furthermore, it may serve as a means to document personal experiences, memories, and achievements. Last but not least, the products of writing can be precious sources for reflection and reminiscing later in life.

Writing for a school magazine is a multifaceted opportunity for teenagers to grow academically, creatively, and personally. It allows them to hone their writing skills, become active contributors to their school community, and gain valuable experiences that can benefit them in various aspects of their lives, both now and in the future.

## Editor's Note

# Motivation is a choice

Andreea Jijie

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In the dynamic world of education, the concept of motivation has always been a subject of debate. Motivation has often been perceived as a mysterious force influenced by teachers, parents or external circumstances. However, motivation is, in fact, an internal choice that individuals make based on their mindset, goals and attitudes. Students have the power to shape their motivation, turning it into a driving force that propels them toward academic excellence and personal growth, therefore motivation is seen as a choice that students make every day.

While external rewards can provide a temporary boost, true and enduring motivation often stems from within. Intrinsic motivation, driven by a genuine interest in the subject matter or a passion for learning is a powerful force. Students can actively choose to connect their studies to their personal interests, making the learning process more enjoyable and meaningful. Even in the face of challenging circumstances or external pressure, students possess the ability to choose their mindset and approach to learning. This realization places the focus of control within the hands of the students themselves, empowering them to actively shape their educational experiences.

The modern student faces a lot of challenges, from the demands of a rapidly changing job market to the pressures of social media and peer comparisons. In this complex landscape, fostering resilience emerges as a key motivational tool. Resilient students view challenges as opportunities to enhance their skills and understanding. When students recognize their ability to overcome obstacles and view learning as a journey rather than a destination, motivation becomes a natural product of their empowered mindset.

Motivation is not a fleeting emotion, but a conscious choice that students make every day. By adopting a growth mindset, setting clear goals, cultivating a positive learning environment and embracing intrinsic motivation, students can actively shape their educational journey. The power to stay motivated lies within and when students recognize this, they unlock the door to a world of academic success and personal growth. So, the next time you feel your motivation has decreased, remember: the choice is yours to make! As Matthew Reilly said: "You didn't come this far just to come this far".



# SOUL BLOTS



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# Who Are You?

Liviu Mihalache

“Who are you?” the pretenders ask.

“I’m not sure yet. Could you perhaps tell me?”

“You’re your parents’ child in a world full of kids , your country amongst numerous other countries, a person in this world trying to find their purpose among an infinite number of people trying to find their purpose.”

“That’s unfortunate... Who am I then?”

“What do you mean who you are? You didn’t hear a word from what I just said? To put it simply, so it’s easy to understand, you’re just another blade of grass on a disgustingly large field.”

This is the conversation I had with my dad when I was 10 years old and discovering the world. The answer he gave me was not quite as specific as I expected or wanted it to be. When people asked me who I was I used to start pacing, rewinding images in my mind, even though I couldn’t quite distinguish any or express them into words. I still struggle with this.

I started slowly and painfully but surely to learn that who you are is what you love, what you cherish the most in life. You are the experiences you’ve picked up along the way. You are who you choose to be everyday. You are what you want to be to other people and how you treat them on a daily basis. With that said, this is who I am:


I am from a faith forgotten land,  
Laying in my bed of roses  
I’m the pasts that intertwined  
And the alleys full of roaches.

I’m the moon on late nights out  
And the chapters of my story that I chose to rip out  
And the land yearning for water during devastating drought.

I’m the speakers blasting acid rock in my uncle’s room  
And the daisies in my mind when they start to bloom.

PHOTOGRAPH FROM UNSPLASH.COM





I'm my little lover's helper  
Their sacred national treasure  
I'm the blood falling from the skies  
And yesterday's scent of wine...

I'm the friends who broke my heart,  
I'm the battles that I've always fought,  
I'm my mind's tomb of sadness  
Slowly fading into madness...

Did I answer the question? Quite, probably, surely not, but that's who I am. This is what is of the utmost importance to me. Six years later, I finally understood who I am. The battles and adventures that I've been on have brought me here today, with a quill in my hand, answering a question that many of us were asked by either someone else or even ourselves, at some point, at least once. I am the hardships of my past and present that I've honourably overcome. I am the people I cherish the most and what I choose to spend my energy on. There is one more thing I need to know before I start a new volume in the series of books of my life, which I plan on sharing with the world also:

“Dear reader, who are you?”

PHOTOGRAPH FROM UNSPLASH.COM



# REFLECTIONS



PHOTOGRAPH FROM PEXELS.COM





# The Tale of Colours

Ioana Zaharia

PHOTOGRAPH FROM UNSPLASH.COM

Never thought something so apparently insignificant would get to me, but here I am and I'm even writing about it. Don't worry though, it is not as deep as it sounds right now, but it does make for an interesting story. To break the suspense, I will go straight to the point.

It all begins with my worsening eyesight. About a year and a half ago I was prescribed vision glasses, which, frankly, I have not worn since, despite my mother 'reminding' me day and night to do so (I'm writing this between apostrophes because sometimes the 'reminding' sounds more like a threat). Somehow, I always manage to keep my cool and tell her exactly what she wants to hear (my entire life is at risk otherwise), but without actually making the effort of putting on my glasses. Well, well, well, I believe all of this must have gotten to my subconscious mind some way, because one night I had a dream I thought I would never wake up from: I could no longer see colour as a result of not wearing my glasses. Everyone who knows me will understand what I mean when I say I was deeply devastated. I'd rather not see at all, than see the world in grey.

Fast forward a few days (I needed some time to recover from such a traumatic experience), I became so

eager to find out what colour really is and what makes us see it, this being one aspect with a tremendous impact on our lives, day by day. You've probably figured by now how big of a colour maniac I am, so imagine my shock when I discovered that colour isn't real.

One way or another, it all comes back to what some of the first philosophers, Plato and Aristotle, believed: our senses are unreliable. And what I found out is a perfect example, because colour is merely a special effect created by our brains. I'll be as clear as I can: light is a kind of wave and colour is related to the kind of light frequency an object reflects.

Light perception happens in the retina, which covers the back of the eyeball and where we can find two types of light detecting cells - cones and rods. Cones are the ones responsible for colour perception and there are 3 types of such detectors, that roughly correspond to the colours red, green and blue. When we identify a certain hue, the correspondent cone sends a signal to the brain.

It might sound slightly confusing at first because there are far more colours than that, but let's take optimism and joy as an example - by that I mean yellow.



We don't have a specific cone for this colour but because it is somewhere in between and green, both red and green cones send signals to the brain and, therefore, we picture yellow.

In the dark, the rod cells take over. But because we only have one kind of rods, the only type of signal that can be sent is 'light' or 'no light'. This is why light is extremely important - the crucial ingredient in any colour's recipe.

This being said, colour is a mental perception. Which brings me back to what I mentioned a few paragraphs ago, about colour having an enormous influence on us, as human beings: our actions, our choices, our moods. In more official terms, what we call colour psychology. And, don't worry, I'm not going to go too much into detail because it's easier for everyone to just go on Google and look up what each hue evokes, but something Google might not tell you unless you do a bit more research on the topic is that context plays a big part in colour interpretation. For instance, if a mother witnessed her child almost getting run over by a yellow car, the chances of her associating this colour with extreme happiness any longer are rather low. Depending on how intense the trauma is, she might even get flashes of the event every time she sees the colour yellow.

That is a particular case, of course, however, there are different ways of understanding colour even depending on culture. Let's take orange this time: positivity, warmth, abundance, right? If you come from a western or eastern culture that is in fact right. Middle easterners, on the other hand, see orange as the

colour of mourning and loss, while in India it is a sacred colour.

Hindu monks wear orange robes because it is the colour of fire and impurities are burned in the fire. For Buddhist monks the purpose of wearing such an attire is somewhat different: they view it as a way of deindividualization so that they can pay full attention to their real purpose, regarding spirituality.

So many ways of interpreting a single colour (clearly)... Still, before I switch to something less orange, I must mention one more category of individuals famous for their bright orange clothes - jumpsuits, to be precise and that is the inmates of the U.S. Federal maximum-security penitentiaries. Just like for Buddhist monks, the uniform is designed 'to limit personal expression'. It is also meant to warn anyone that the wearer might cross paths with, he is dangerous.

Then, there's pink: love, kindness... Well, not in Switzerland because they use it to pain jail cell walls. Supposedly, some researchers proved that the colour pink has calming effects and is believed to reduce feelings of anger. Thus, really aggressive inmates get to spend quality time between the walls of 'Baker-Miller Pink' cells.

Thereupon, colour is a never-ending story and it does have quite an impactful role no matter how you look at it. But, to finish up my story on a bright note, not wearing your glasses could make your vision worse, but it will definitely not make you see the world in black and white.



# What No One Knows

Denisa-Elena Crețu

**“I cannot escape death, but at least I can escape the fear of it.”- Epictetus**

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Death is one of the subjects that people find difficult to open up about. There are poems, novels, stories, songs or even paintings that portray death, but we rarely get to see how each one of us perceives it or we rarely find ourselves talking about whether we are afraid of it or not. Ever since I watched Makoto Shinkai's movies, which deals with the themes of loss, loneliness, death or time, I have been struck by the idea that humans tend to hide so many perspectives on different subjects, out of fear, especially subjects as death or loss. Therefore, I have tried to find answers to the question: Why are we so afraid of talking about death?

To begin with, I believe that human nature is so mysterious that we might never find out what everyone of us feels and sees the world like. Still, talking to different persons, I have found myself answering my question in different ways. The first idea that came to my mind was that people don't want to talk about death, because it makes them recognize its existence. I am pretty sure you already knew this, but what strikes my curiosity is why are we afraid of recognizing death if we see it everywhere these days? Why are we afraid of talking about something we see on the news, in stories, even in our families?

Meditating on this matter, I became keen on the fact that even though death is so present around us, we know nothing about it and that is what scares us the most. Death is sometimes seen as a person, a scary entity dressed in black with a scythe. In other people's minds, death is an invisible person, one which we will never be able to see.

Moreover, in some cultures or religions, death is seen not as a curse, but as a blessing, as the last stage your soul goes through. There are so many ways of portraying death and these should mean that we know so much about it, but in fact, we know nothing. Not having knowledge, not knowing how to deal with this thing, fear strikes inevitably. It is not death itself that scares us, but the mystery behind it. It is not the process of dying that scares us, but the unknown that comes after it.





Death is like a room where the light has been cut off, a room full of darkness, where you don't know what your next step will lead you to. I could even compare this situation with one that we find ourselves caught up in in our everyday life. When you're supposed to do a debate at school, but you know nothing about the subjects of the debate, how do you feel? Aren't you self-conscious? Don't you think that you won't be able to make a good impression or build good arguments? Doesn't fear strike you because you think you will fail? Just as not having knowledge in a debate makes us insecure, so does the idea of death: an event which we realise will happen, but one which we know absolutely nothing about.

Therefore, I think that in this situation, it is not our actual fear of death that keeps us from talking about it, but the realization that this subject is like a completely empty box. And what do we do with this box? We put it in the back of our room. It is a box which we'll use someday, but one which we definitely don't want to use now.



Moreover, remembering some of the times I have dealt with the death of dear ones, I realized that people might be reluctant about debating the idea of death not only because they have a lack of knowledge, but also because it makes them remember that they have lost someone. I myself am a person who is afraid of death and a person who doesn't talk about it often.

However, I have a passion for philosophy, so I have no problem in debating subjects humans have yet to discover things about. Therefore, my fear of death doesn't come from the lack of knowledge I have about it, but from the realisation that loss can hit at any moment, taking any person I love away from me.

While I was researching this subject, I have found out that psychologists say that humans tend to suppress anything that they don't have the courage to face, even the idea of possibly losing someone. To me, that explains why a lot of us feel shivers when someone mentions the word „death“ or when jokes are made on this matter, especially if you have dealt with loss at a certain time in your life.



Loss is a very hard process to go through and it's something which my mom used to say that you never heal from. You may move on with time, you may find peace, but the pain that you feel whenever a person who you lost is mentioned can never be cured. This experience can shape people's lives in different ways, but for many it is a turning point in their life, a moment in which they realise how painful death is and how much loneliness it brings, therefore developing a fear of it.

Moreover, for these people, talking freely about death is quite hard. The memory of losing someone and the realization that they could go through that again, anytime, makes them become reserved about debating this matter. For people who are not afraid of death, it is quite hard to understand this and some of them even say that those people do not "face reality". What they do not realise is that, actually, those people have been hit too hard by reality and for them, trying to forget what happened or might happen again, is a way to heal themselves. Not talking about what hurts them, not hearing ideas about a process they have already been through, is one mechanism that helps people move on or stay sane.

If I were to make a comparison, I would say that the memories of losing someone are like a letter in a bottle, one which we let freely flow on the sea, because we are afraid of what it may say. It is much easier to not read what is inside the letter, to just let it go and forget that it ever existed in the first place. Even though we might do that, the letter will never actually disappear, but it will have a journey of its own and

the ideas of it will never fade, just like our memories.

To end my essay, I would like to highlight the fact that we are all very different beings and how we perceive certain concepts is unique. Death may be scary for some people and for others not. However, at the end of the day, no one knows for sure what death is. While meditating on this matter and writing this text, I have come to the conclusion that no matter how much debated, some things will never be understood by us. And that is the fascinating part of our world: the fact that we will always have something to search an answer for or something that will keep us awake in the middle of the night. Death and loss will always be subjects hard to talk about, for all the reasons I have mentioned.

However, we all have, deep inside, a portrayal of death, an image, a sound, anything that makes us imagine what it looks like, what it feels like or what it sounds like. We don't have to open up about it, if not wanted. We don't have to search endlessly for answers about it, if not wanted. We don't have to keep thinking about it rather than suppress it, if not wanted .

What we have to realise is that death comes inevitably, for every human being. Whether we fear it or not, we will all experience the same process. Nevertheless, we don't have to see it in such a dark and fearful way. That is because, at the end of the day, not even one of us knows whether death is just the end of what we have now, or the start of something else...







# Is artistic censorship a problem?

Ingrid-Melisa Beşleagă

## Art Should Comfort the Disturbed and Disturb the Comfortable

When I first heard this quote by Cesar A. Cruz a couple of years ago, I didn't think much of it. Not that I wouldn't care about art, but it just sounded like old news. To me, it was quite obvious, and it still is that art, in all of its varying forms, is a means of free expression for the artist. The feelings and emotions that it evokes within us, "good" or "bad", are sometimes just a byproduct, sometimes the artist's goal, but always an inevitable response.

Psychologically speaking, there is no such thing as positive or negative emotions, so why then, do we find ourselves criticising a naked body in a painting, banning outstanding books from libraries, or changing a musician's lyrics for their "friendlier" counterparts, because we don't like the way they make us feel? Why do we judge and punish artists? Why do we censor art?

This is not, by any means, a recent issue. For centuries, paintings, sculptures, and literary works have been altered, banned altogether or worse, destroyed, in fear of a political subversion, or the "corruption of morals", or for the sake of some religious beliefs. Some famous examples of censorship include: "Adventures of Huckleberry Finn"- one of Mark Twain's

greatest works, a 19th century classic; To Kill a Mockingbird, yet another literary masterpiece; not even James Joyce's "Ulysses" escaped society's outrage. Not to mention paintings such as Michelangelo's "The Last Judgement" or Édouard Manet's "Olympia", which were even banned from museums.

I can give you an even more recent and personal example: in the beginning of the previous school year we studied Mircea Eliade's "Maitreyi". Although greeted with surprise when it was first published, the cultural shock it caused was the most benevolent. At that time, such an exotic and intriguing story piqued the people's curiosity and interest, it was a novelty for Romanian literature. But now? Just mention the age difference between Allan and the girl, and the last thing you'll see before getting knocked out is a chair flying right towards you. "He's a paedophile", "She's only 16", "It's not love, it's an obsession", is what you might hear from 21st-century's generation. It's what I heard from some of my classmates, who were quick to point out the lack of political correctness within the book and the protagonist's "sick" behaviour, while completely ignoring the temporal and cultural factors which make the

book a literary masterpiece. While completely ignoring the fact that it's literature, that it's fictional, and regardless of what they'll feel, the author is free to create whatever he wants, because it's his work, and he has no obligation to make it appealing to everyone.

Of course, it's not just them. Public leaders, organizations and private groups worldwide, which censor artistic works because they are "vulgar", "inappropriate", "immoral", basically because they don't fit within a politically fair set of beliefs, are also the ones who preach, ironically enough, that everyone has the right to freedom of speech and expression. Does that, somehow, exclude art? Well, it should not! Because, just like the way you're free to dislike chocolate ice cream, an artist is free to write about racism, is free to paint a woman's breasts, is free to sing or rap about their country's flawed laws. Does that mean you are also free to dislike said artworks? Yes! Does that mean they are objectively foul and they deserve to be censored and banned? Absolutely not! Art is not some kind of science, art is not an exact replica of real life. Art is there to intrigue, art is there to inspire, art is an artist's language! And as cliché as it sounds, it still remains true.

Research has shown art has influenced society since forever and it affects the fundamental sense of self. Censoring it because we're too prude for it, or we feel enraged or disgusted by it, is turning a blind eye to a part of ourselves that, inherently, makes us human. Humanity is prone to misery and art is there to remind us that. It's there to frighten us, to revolt us, to sadden us- isn't all of this also part of being human? Just as my Romanian teacher said as a response to my classmates' remarks: "Literature cannot be made out of happiness." And I'm sure she'd say the same about other kinds of art too.

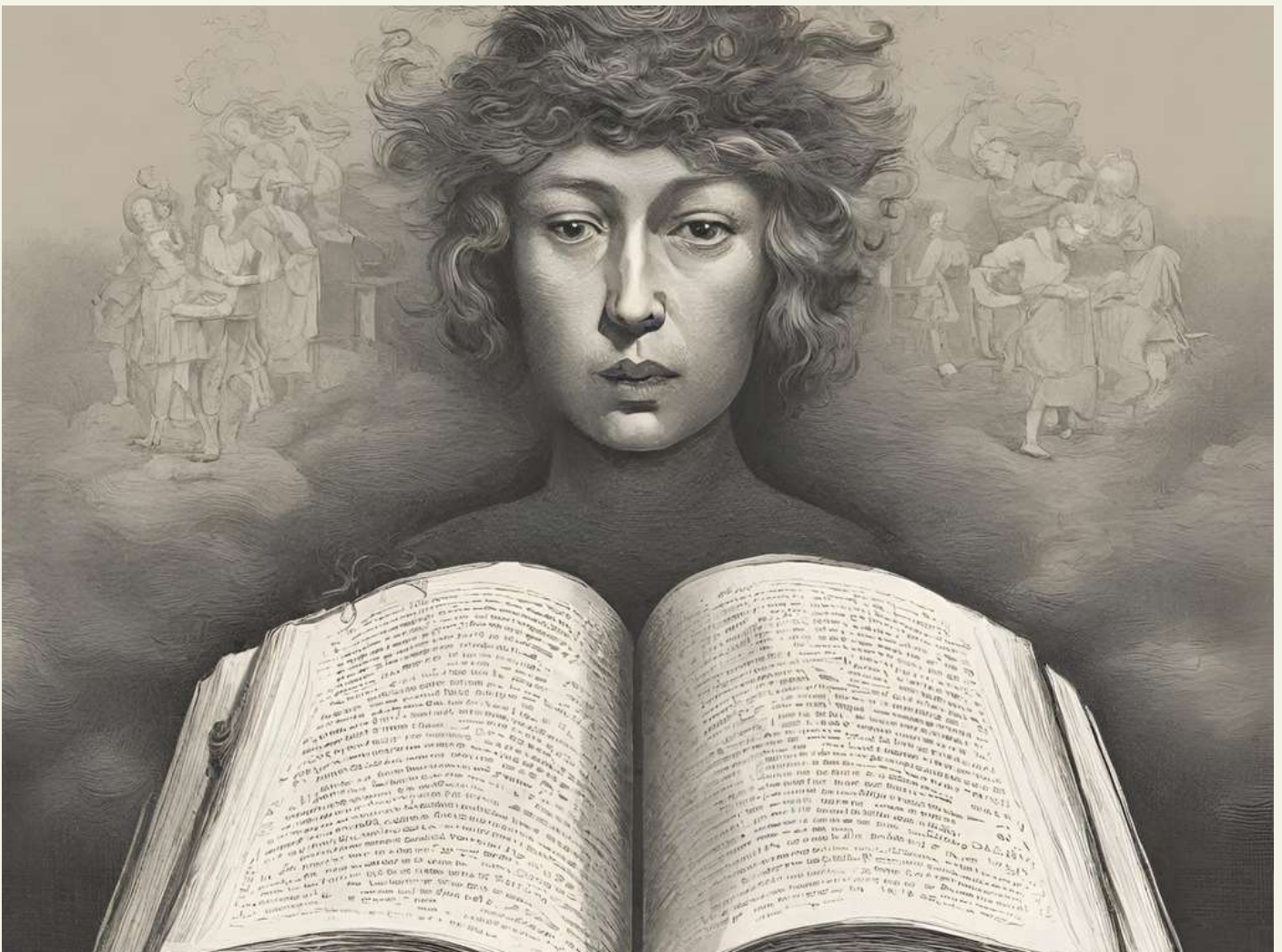
Sure, art can be cheerful and make you content, but I bet you'd spend way more time staring at a disturbing picture or text, because it would actually make you contemplate more. It will elicit within you feelings and thoughts you wouldn't normally enjoy having, but as much as you'd hate to admit it, that's exactly how art achieves its purpose: it stirs up some kind of reaction. It doesn't have to be a pleasant one, a politically correct one, a religious one, a moral one. It just has to be there. And because art is subjective, there is no definitive answer to what counts as "right" and "wrong".





One man's trash is another man's treasure: what one might find ugly and vulgar, someone else might find comforting and beautiful. Censoring what the majority sees as trash, completely denies the minority's right to see it as treasure. And it's sad that it's 2023 and some people still think that censoring art is for the greater good, and that they actually demonstrate virtue and wisdom by doing so, when it's in fact the complete opposite.

In the end, art is a creative form of expression. It is an artist's key to escaping the cage of social and political conformity. Art is there to make us feel, to remind us that we are human, whether we like it or not. Imposing any kind of rules on artists, telling them what they should create or not, censoring and banning their works, deprives art of its inherent and original purpose. Learning to embrace the parts of ourselves that don't comply with societal laws is the first step to understanding art and artists, and why they're so vital in our lives. And maybe this way we'll also learn that it's alright, and even quite beneficial, to escape reality through art every once in a while and see it not as an incriminating image of our shadow, but as a golden opportunity to reflect upon it, and censor the urge to censor.



**FROM**

**THE**



**HEART**



# What kind of music do you listen to?

Elena-Daria Neculăiță

“So... What kind of music do you listen to?” Am I the only one that feels lost and their brain gets stuck all of a sudden when getting asked this basic, yet complex question? I would tend to think that I’m certainly not.

As I’m writing down my thoughts, I can’t help but wonder if there’s anything wrong with listening to multiple genres of music. I was always under the impression that your personality is shaped by your music preferences. I’ve struggled to form a proper and accurate playlist that could fit, let’s say, my “criteria”. However, I would end up changing half or even the whole playlist once in a while. Every time I tried listening to other styles in music, I had this sense of betrayal. Betraying my personality, my genre that was meant for me.

Maybe the reason why I swung in all these hectic thoughts and directions was that I didn’t really understand the “core” of music. Maybe I wasn’t mature enough to envision music as something that lives through me, within me. Something that represents a part of my self-being.

The moment of realization was the moment when I finally grasped the complexity of music, as I was looking into all the genres of music that can be heard. From pop to rock, from hip hop to electronic music or even from classical music to jazz. With time I jumped into so many different genres and subgenres of music that I can’t even remember them all!

I can listen to alternative rock for hours and then switch immediately to something jazzier, blues and so on and so forth. But coming back to my question, is there something wrong with having more than one style of music to listen to?

According to specialists, a person who likes many different genres of music is typically someone who is passionate in their enthusiasm for life and intellectually curious. That person surely has an active mind. Phew, what a relief! And all that overthinking for nothing! In fact, there is a study of the psychological factors behind peoples’ different music preferences called psychology of music preferences. This study shows how music may be correlated with our personality.

Although the relationship between music preferences and personality has remained a controversial topic due to its variability of results, music has to do, more or less, with the Big Five personality traits: openness to experience, conscientiousness, extroversion, agreeableness and neuroticism. Each and every trait has their own characteristics. For instance, a neurotic person is more likely to listen to intense music such as alternative or heavy metal, while an agreeable individual prefers upbeat and conventional music.



Of all the traits, openness to experience has been shown to have the greatest effect upon genre preference

In general, those who fit in this category prefer classical, jazz or blues music as well as rebellious music.

More briefly, listening to more than one genre of music is more than great! It tells that you have deep respect for music, for people and cultures, you understand the importance of lyrics and of the emotion projected in the music and you value the fact that music can bring people together.

Admittedly, can too much music be a bad thing? Experts don't formally recognize music causing a mental health diagnosis. Thus, we cannot talk about a "music addiction" but still, that doesn't mean music habits can sometimes become problematic. For instance, music can distract you from important tasks, such as doing your homework, lectures or meetings at work.

But since music was never a negative topic to talk about, I would like to end my so-called essay by saying music has to be truly felt in order to be heard. Listen to whatever song transmits a genuine emotion or feeling, whether it's pop or rock, hip-hop or classical. Just feel it. Can you?



# Dust

Alexandra Popescu

The dictionary defines dust as "fine, dry powder consisting of tiny particles of earth or waste matter lying on the ground or on surfaces or carried in the air", but most of the time dust is perceived by the same person in many different ways, depending on the stage of life they are in.

Looking at the thicker and thicker layer of dust that settles on toys, you realize how quickly childhood passes, but also how few memorable moments there are. Thus, in one way or another, some experiences will always be dusted over, and their memory will remain somewhere far away in our minds, where many details will be lost. Even when we return to a place where we have spent a large part of our lives and notice all the things that are still in harmony, but on which the dust has settled, we realize how easy it often is to give up a certain part of life, leaving all the things we consider important apart. So, it is the dust that often indicates a sense of nostalgia. In the relentless pursuit of the stars, we all forget that time is not ours and never will be, no matter how much we wish.

No one will ever know how long he has to live, to love, or how many joys he has left, realizing perhaps one day that the dust is settling on the things he wanted the most (too often in vain): on the house of his grandparents, on the school he went to, on the park where he ran as a child, but also on the career he longed for, or on the material possessions that lie idle. We all sometimes feel, in difficult moments



in life, that our eyes are blurred and we look as if through dust.

In these moments we need to take a deep breath and think about how important every moment and every stage of life is, but also how lucky we are to have people who love us and share their affection with us every day. It is the unique feeling we need to be truly happy about. Together we can move mountains, and by showing each other as much love and devotion as we can, we are making the dust return to the solid body from which it has disintegrated.

We live in a bizarre world where we can launch rockets to and from anywhere, we can create robots, we can transmit information online in just a second, but we cannot stop the dust settling. We find it impossible to befriend and fail to look at the people we meet with friendly eyes. We also spend more time on electronic devices rather than making physical connections with the people around us. We say we want to change the world, but we are incapable of changing ourselves and struggling to keep the dust off our souls. It seems more important to us to dust things off than to dust off our relationships.

Dust, like our lives, has a normal course that we all have to accept. I often meet old people who tell me that in their moments of meditation they realize how much joy they could have experienced and missed, or how much kindness they could have shown to others and did not. I understand from their confessions that they could have been very different people; unfortunately, time is no longer on their side. Too many of them have belatedly realized that true values are those of the soul and not the material ones on which the dust settles.

Heavy clouds of dust are now floating not far from us. It covers people, houses, buildings. It covers a country. But most painfully, it covers the bluest possible sky. What do I want?! That this dust may be washed away by the rains of an unseen hand. But I also wish that the dust would be carried by the same wind and whip the eyes of those who look with hatred. Because this dust carries the ashes of those who no longer live, and, for them, only a serene beyond can bring the unlive time here, now.





# A Different Summer

Maria Gafita

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Have you ever wondered what it is like to get out of your comfort zone and do something you would never do? Well, this happened to me during the summer of 2023.

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Everything began when I started doing office hours to apply to a university abroad. After some meetings my consultant and I started doing research for opportunities outside the country. At first, I browsed through my possibilities without feeling or thinking anything, but as we started to choose one that fitted my needs and which appealed to me I felt something weird. In the beginning, I didn't pay attention to this strange and quite new feeling inside me and I believe that wasn't the best idea I had.

When I applied for five summer schools, abroad and in Romania, I didn't expect to be accepted or to receive a scholarship. For me, it was a, "No", firm and blunt. There was no way I could have pulled it off. But, when on my trip to Paris with my mother, I received emails from them, one rejected me and I was quite sad and then, unexpectedly, three messages with congratulations and a scholarship offer appeared and I started crying right there, in my small hotel room in Paris. And that was the moment my whole journey began.

The hardest part about leaving was getting out of the country as an underage kid. In Romania, there is only one airline that offers flight attendants who can accompany children under eighteen, and most of the flights are from Bucharest. The week before my leaving was the most stressful one, not only for me but also for my parents who needed to make arrangements for me to go abroad at sixteen. To my honest surprise, the luggage wasn't a problem for me and not even the thing that I was going to be there alone in a new city.



The trip to Bucharest was with my father, we traveled all night and we had to stay at the airport for three more hours until we were going to say our last goodbye. The flight seemed long and not very cozy, but, finally, I managed to arrive in Madrid, my new home for the next two weeks.

When I arrived at the accommodation, the administrator was so friendly and open it made me immediately feel at home. Even though he didn't know English well, we understood each other and communicated very well the whole time I spent there. The first thing I did after putting all of my things in order and eating something, was to sleep. When I woke up from my deep and comfortable sleep, I put on some clothes and went for a walk to get to know the surroundings, it was me and Google Maps, alone. I can say, from the bottom of my heart, that it was the most wonderful walk I had ever had. Walking alone, in a different city, away from my parents and friends, with all types of people around me and only with my thoughts accompanying me, was like a movie. I went with the underground for the first time in Madrid, I bought my first ever iced acai and just enjoyed every second, every step I took, and everything I saw around me.

In the evening, right before I went to bed, I got to finally meet my roommate. She was a sweet and easy-to-talk-to girl from Turkey. We immediately clicked and I knew I was going to have the best time of my life. The next day was Sunday, therefore we had enough time to get to know each other and also get to know the city. When we went to breakfast, we met another Romanian girl from Galati, who always had a smile on her face and knew how to make your day shine, and right there we created a long-lasting bond that we didn't even know about. I believe that making small talk on the streets of Madrid and exploring every corner together was the best idea we had because in that way, deep down, we knew the next two weeks were going to be the three of us against the world.

On Monday, our summer courses began. It was weird, mainly because most of the people in my class were from Spain or Latin America, even though the course was in English. During the introductions, my soul smiled widely- I knew I was in the right place.

My course was about fashion design which I had wanted to explore for a long time and during those two weeks I had the opportunity to explore every corner, every hidden little thing and I was exhilarated. The professors not only taught us about the different career prospects this field had, but we also created our first and most authentic outfits. At the base were old Zara clothes which we chopped, sewed, and chopped again, glued, and invented all types of mechanisms for this outfit to come to life.







*ARTISTIC*



*zoom*



# The Journal of Happiness

Ana Maria Chistol



I've never read such an outstandingly truthful book as the "Journal of Happiness" by Nicolae Steinhardt is. Exposing the breathtaking story of the author in the communist period, you cannot fail to vividly experience the fulfilment, purity and joy he discovered in the least expected place, namely prison.

The main theme of the book is faith in God, done in the simplest way by the most simple but joyous priest in prison through the Sacrament of Baptism and from which faith, happiness and certainty of His existence flow. It largely emphasizes and supports the positive effect it can have once integrated with into one's life.

What I especially loved about this book is the extremely clear way in which it was written. Because it respects the form of a diary, each chapter introduces and treats real problems of conscience in a very warm, almost personal manner. The issues ,however, do not remain unanswered but are explained in a specifically direct way (not harsh but rather funny and intelligent) so that everyone can understand. Even for the most inverted readers who need solid arguments, examples and facts, the author has a rich culture at hand with thought-provoking and stimulating comparisons between what is ephemeral and what is essential to live life in sheer joy.

Even for the most inverted readers who need solid arguments, examples and facts, the author has a rich culture at hand with thought-provoking and stimulating comparisons between what is ephemeral and what is essential to live life in sheer joy.

Also, after the first few pages you feel like you've entered an extremely safe space full of painful but meaningful experiences that can hit home. If I were to make one criticism about the book, it would be that it has no more than 400 pages; that's how compelling and powerful the ideas are! The last two phrases are envisaging the whole book and they sound like this: "Only being a Christian, happiness visits me - despite all rationality-strange thing. Because greater happiness is to give than to receive."

I wholeheartedly recommend it to be read by anyone open to understand the concept of happiness and how simple and decipherable it actually is. You'll certainly develop an attachment, and you'll more certainly not be disappointed by it.



# East of Eden

Denisa-Elena Crețu

Even though *East of Eden* was published in 1952 it has never lost the spark that the first readers felt while reading it. Written by John Steinbeck, winner of the Nobel Prize, the book brings to life the story of two families, the Trasks and the Hamiltons, along with their interwoven stories. *East of Eden* has been named a classic and it has shaped modern literature. Even so, it is my wish to present what the book brings about to any reader that might be interested in it, but it is not quite sure whether to read it or not.

The main theme of the book is the conflict between good and evil, illustrated in the life of two generations of brothers who resemble Cain and Abel. What is striking about the book is exactly the completely gripping plot the author presents. John Steinbeck follows the four brothers in different times of their lives and makes them become absolute reincarnations of the twins of the Bible. The extremely absorbing and stimulating plot makes the reader mesmerized and it gives him a number of details with which the ending might be discovered. *East of Eden* ultimately creates one question in everyone's mind: Can Cain and Abel's story be changed?

Furthermore, reading this book, you cannot fail to be completely taken aback by the compelling combination of the thought-provoking plot just presented and the absolutely riveting and

convincing characters. Both the protagonist, Adam and Cathy, the main antagonist, are extremely complex and astounding persons. John Steinbeck's totally moving writing gives the readers a look into every character's psychology and past, but it also explains, in a realistic manner, every choice they make. Throughout the book, all of Steinbeck's characters show, through their complexity, how both good and evil are found in everyday lives.

If I were to make one criticism of the book, it would be that it has some incredibly long and sometimes of no effect descriptions of side characters who don't bring anything to the storyline or philosophy of the book. Even if they are rarely met in the book, I truly believe that these passages could have been taken out, in order to make sure the readers will not find the book absolutely contrived or over the top, if they come across them.

To sum up, my view of *East of Eden* is that it is a book which every teenager, or even grown-up should read. John Steinbeck wrote this book because he wanted the world to understand both the evil and the good's perspective. Sometimes, it is hard for us to see why a person did a certain thing. We are absorbed by our own perspectives that we don't empathize with one another and we consider, too many times, our opinion to be the only one right. Thus, if you're looking for a book which can change your perspective on the persons around you, on religion, mythology or even yourself, *East of Eden* is the one.



# Bittersweet Complexity of Oscar and the Lady in Pink

Ingrid-Melisa Beşleagă

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It's been quite a while since I've read a book so utterly fascinating, yet seemingly easy to grasp, like "Oscar and the Lady in Pink" by Franco-Belgian contemporary author Éric-Emmanuel Schmitt. Published in 2002, the novel is one of Schmitt's best selling and most widely known books, and it was even adapted into a theater production, a year later.

The story is presented in the form of fourteen letters that 10 year old Oscar, who suffers from leukemia, addresses to God, as Mamie-Rose (the Lady in Pink), a retired nurse, suggests. Raised in an atheist family, the boy initially doubts that God could help him, and so the tone of his letters sounds quite nonconforming throughout the whole book, being unfazed by the concept of the divine.

Despite being a kid, with the innocence and even naivety that are to be expected from him, he is still exceptionally and surprisingly philosophical, having thought-provoking perspectives on life. That's exactly what makes him so loveable and interesting as a character: his self awareness and blunt nature that set him apart from other kids his age, while still being a convincing 10 year old by being unable to control his emotions and acting irrationally. And it's this astonishing, and at the same time comic, duality of his that leaves you with a bittersweet taste after figuring out the double meaning of his words, that subtly foreshadow his fate.


What is more, Oscar's relationship to Mamie-Rose is another aspect of Schmitt's book which wraps it in warmth. Her character represents the sage archetype, guiding the boy through his toughest times, being his mother figure. Her childlike mask that she puts on to protect Oscar, yet still taking him seriously and trusting him, is the main reason why he feels so close to her. Their emotional bond sets the exceptionally intriguing tone of the novel, as Mamie-Rose's wisdom and spirituality are slowly passed down to Oscar.

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The phrase "good things come in small packages" is the best way to describe "Oscar and the Lady in Pink". Don't let the small number of pages or the apparently simple writing style deceive you – this book is full of truly profound and emotional messages. I highly recommend it to anyone who wants to be left with a sad smile while reading, and to those who could learn from Oscar how not to let their shortcomings drag them down, and instead give their own lives a meaning.

# Wuthering Heights

Ioana Zaharia



Wuthering Heights by Emily Brontë is a captivating and timeless novel with an everlasting success, despite the fact that it was first published almost two centuries ago. The action is set in the English countryside which in itself is already an advantage in many readers' eyes.

The story begins with a man named Mr. Lockwood, who will become the narrator of the Earnshaw family's intricate and gruelling history. Although the first few chapters might be slightly confusing, in almost no time the twisted plot becomes incredibly absorbing.

What is memorable about the book is the way Emily Brontë chooses her main characters. The writer manages to build extremely elaborate personalities with complex backgrounds in seemingly few pages. Nevertheless, this is what many criticize about the book, as the protagonist's moral values are rather exasperating. Therefore, it is fair to say this is a matter of preference.

When it comes to the writing, there are many aspects that can be touched upon. For the most part, the action is medium to slow-paced and driven by the characters. The storytelling is dark, yet exceptionally moving.

It might not be categorized as a "relaxing read" (given that the entire book is food for thought), but "Wuthering Heights" is a marvellous novel, definitely worth reading, at least for the sake of its renown, if not for anything else.



# Abraxas- In Two Worlds

Alexandra Popescu

Among the writers at this year's FILIT festival a great participant is Bogdan Alexandru-Stanescu, author of *Abraxas*, one of the greatest achievements in Romanian literature in recent years. The story is set in Bucharest over two decades, covering the years before, during and after the 1989 revolution.

The novel is made up of the main story of the House of Lions and the stories of the eleven apartments, which the reader is introduced to through the eyes of Michi Lucescu, the main character. *Abraxas* is thus a novel about the human condition as it is, about the fear we feel every day, but also about the idea that we are living without a purpose in life.

What is striking about this book is the way it draws the reader into the Bucharest of the past, through all those street names with important historical value. The story is not at all predictable; on the contrary, it is completely absorbing and keeps the reader curious throughout.

Although the characters are uniquely constructed, they represent human categories from the time of communism in Romania. Ralu is the aggressive and domineering mother, Pishi Mu is the overdressed grandmother who visits regularly, and Sergiu is the adoptive and opportunistic father. The characters are absolutely gripping and very well constructed by the author.

On the other hand, the novel is difficult to read because of the extremely long sentences. Things are told in great detail, sometimes even where it is not really necessary. Unfortunately, this can cause many readers to put the book down without getting to the ending, which is absolutely important to the whole story.

In conclusion, I whole-heartedly recommend this book to anyone who has lived under communism or wants to know more about that period in Romania. It cleverly contrasts two time periods through extremely realistic characters that capture the essence of those times.



# From Book to Movie

Maria Gafita

In recent years, many books have become well-known movies because of the success they had on paper. “The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes”, written by Suzanne Colling was put on screen on the 18th of November 2023 and it has been a huge crowd-puller. Therefore, which one is worth your time, the book or the movie?

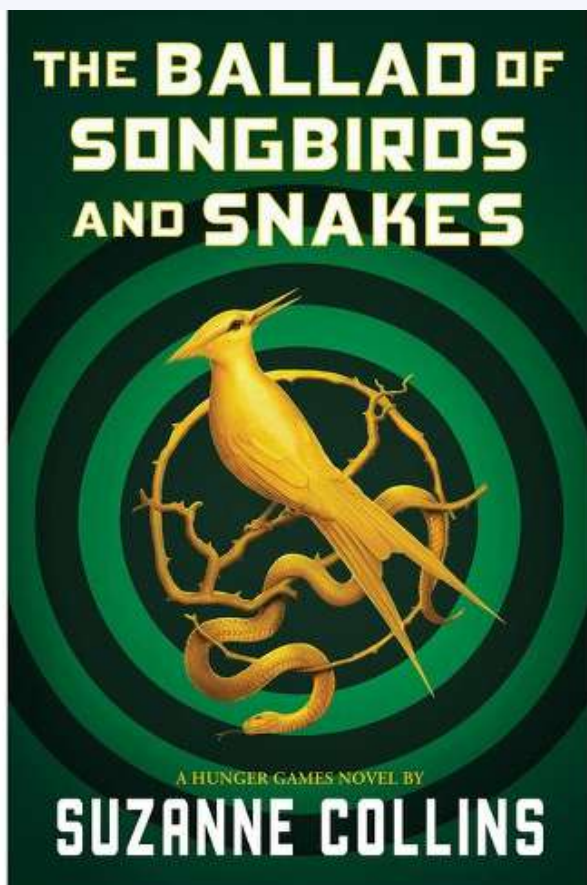
Both of them are from the Hunger Games series, so the outline of the events is the same. The story is about the past of Coriolanus Snow, who is going to become the president of Panem years later. The beginning is quite shallow, but when the rules of the 10th annual Hunger Games are announced and the main male character meets the female



heroine, Lucy Gray, everything becomes engrooving. Astoundingly, the movie follows the original chain of events in an exceptional manner, besides others that do not have anything in common with the books.

Many people would expect the plot to be in the middle of the story, but Suzanne Collins chose to turn the reader's whole world upside down. At first, it may seem that the plot is a classic romance and not spectacular at all, but when the world takes a surprising turn and becomes extremely complicated and breathtaking, people are on the edge of their seats.

Creating a new character from scratch is difficult work, but what about when you have to think about their past after their present self was seen? The writer





shapes Coriolanus' character in an impressive manner and we can see his incredible development over the pages and scenes, creating an exceptional image only for it to be destroyed at the end. Lucy Gray is the total opposite of him, her clothes defining her positive energy, despite her past from which she formed her resilient character and the power to see the glass half full through her singing. In the movie, people can discover the depth of their story through the powerful performance each actor does. Seeing the heartfelt emotions right in front of you creates a better picture of what the characters actually feel.

Comparing the writing of the book and the performance in the movie is extremely hard because both deserve the same amount of congratulations. The writing slowly introduces you into this new world which is opening right before your eyes. The surroundings start to seem known and each character's development can be seen as the pages are turned. The movie immediately connects the public to the emotions the main character feels and to his tragic childhood.

The natural acting and the exceptionally original script give the viewers a more defined concept of what is happening. In the movie and the book, the relationships between the male and female characters play an important part because without them the magnificent writing, script, and acting would all be in vain.

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Taking all into account, they complement each other, both in the story of Coriolanus and Lucy and in the outline of the world, leaving an impressive impact on the public and giving people the chance to know the characters better than if there was only one of them." The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes" by Suzanne Collins is well worth your time and money, both book and movie.





"Life is like a box of chocolates; you never know what you're gonna get."

This iconic line from "Forrest Gump" encapsulates the essence of the 1994 comedy-drama, which has solidified its place as an all-time classic. The film is directed by Robert Zemeckis and written by Eric Roth and it's based on the novel of the same name by Winston Groom. Later on, the movie became known as being culturally and historically significant.

The movie is centered around the life experience of a slow-witted, but tender-hearted man in the 20th-century United States. Forrest Gump, the main character, finds himself in the right place at the right time, accidentally becoming a participant in great historical events. This tends to underline the irony of life while transmitting a moral of integrity and simple goodness.

What is remarkable about the film is the message conveyed to the public. The movie is a profound modern fable, it shows us that while there are a lot of morals that define us, being upright and kind is fundamental. What is so charismatic and noteworthy about Gump is his downright sense of doing the right thing, no matter the situation or the people in it. When it comes to the performance I have to point out how natural this role seems to Tom Hanks, making the character convincing.

He fully immerses himself in the character, portraying Forrest with a childlike innocence, honesty and sincerity.

Hanks effectively conveys the complexities of a man with a low IQ navigating a world filled with various challenges. His performance is both heartwarming and humorous, and it allows the audience to connect with Forrest on a deep emotional level.

Much of the humour in "Forrest Gump" is based on the naive nature of the protagonist, he takes things in a literal sense and does not understand a lot of the things around him. This way he gets into all sorts of comical situations that he is not aware of. These moments of unintentional humour, combined with Forrest's genuine and unfiltered reactions, provide a refreshing and endearing form of comedy that resonates with audiences.

I would strongly advise anyone to watch "Forrest Gump" because it is a stirring and iconic film that combines humour and drama with a touch of history to make a truly memorable cinematic experience. Whether you are searching for a feel-good movie or a provoking story, "Forrest Gump" has something for everyone.



# Dorian Gray the Movie

Roxana Ciobanu



Delving into Oscar Wilde's timeless tale of vanity, morality and corrupting influence, Oliver Parker's movie "Dorian Gray" successfully captures the essence of the novel "The Picture of Dorian Gray".

The film starts right when, Dorian Gray, a naïve young British man that is introduced into the bourgeois community, has a portrait done by a skillful painter. Thus, the plot reveals its compelling nature when our protagonist is struck by the frightening realization that his angelic beauty will fade away with time, and the portrait will slowly turn into a burdening reminder. The viewer is challenged to a thought-provoking game of morals as Dorian Gray falls into a whirlpool of corruption, sin and temptation, gambling his soul to the devil in exchange for his unweathering youth.

What is striking about the film are the stunning visuals, enhanced by the rich wardrobe and extravagant sets that remain loyal to the Victorian aesthetic. Such visuals strengthen the verisimilitude of the script, powerfully delivered in dramatic scenes by the actors.

Actually, the talented actor Ben Barnes perfectly portrays our protagonist through his manners and looks. Moreover, despite being a 2009 movie, it does not fail to provide spine-chilling special effects during the most crucial scenes.

As far as the classical novel is concerned, I find the movie to be overlooking the book's profoundness. In a hurry to cover the action-packed plot, most characters lack their original complex personalities and are shallowly developed, while Dorian Gray is reduced to a man of carnal pleasures and taboos, unlike the book character that is trapped in a Narcissus type of dilemma. It is true that the movie attempts to appear insightful, but only manages to graze the tip of the philosophical iceberg that the book is.

If you are a passionate reader or enjoyed Oscar Wilde's "The Picture of Dorian Gray", I highly recommend you to watch the adapted movie "Dorian Gray" since, despite covering only some of the novel's spirit, it certainly gives life to Dorian and his portrait.



## Le Monde De Demain

Gabriela Elena Coman

After the birth of hip-hop culture in the US, many people from other countries wanted to embrace this movement as well, and France was no exception. The biographic mini-series “Le Monde De Demain” directed by Katell Quillévéré, Hélier Cisterne and David Elkaïm tells an absolutely breathtaking story about the emergence of this astounding and powerful culture in the heart of France. Released in 2022 and set in the 80s and early 90s, in the suburbs of Paris, in Saint-Denis, the mini-series introduces charming characters that represent and recognize this movement.

The mini-series follows the lives of a youth that opposes the typical way of living by expressing themselves through all the forms of art of the hip-hop culture: breakdance, graffiti, fashion and music. The characters, especially the main characters, Didier Morville, a teen that lives with his abusive father, Bruno Lopes, a boy who has a straight path, at first, in his career as a football star and Daniel, a future deejay who is marked by hip-hop music on his trip to San Francisco, go through a lot of hardships and trouble to support this cultural revolution.

The script is completely realistic and it makes the watchers feel like they are in the 80s, with the characters. The incredibly magnificent acting and cinematography also give a sense of authenticity.

Totally impressive places for filming were chosen, with walls full of graffiti and dirty-looking streets that portray in a convincing manner how people lived at that time. The environment is an important aspect in this mini-series and it speaks volumes about the social problems in France, for example the big discrepancy between the rich and poor illustrated extremely accurately by the actors. Therefore, the audience gets the chance to see a perspective of the French society back then.

What is interesting is what an important role hip-hop plays in the growth of the characters and the way it gives the youth a lot of courage to show off their talents. Even with all the social problems, the young generation sees in hip-hop an escape from the unfortunate everyday life, as well as a cultural reset.

Le Monde De Demain is a mini-series that I whole-heartedly recommend to anyone who is interested in hip-hop and enjoys watching biographical films. This series helped me learn something new about France, a revolutionary and complex country. It also made me discover artists and songs I have never heard of before. “Le Monde De Demain” has an absorbing plot, which sends out a meaningful message and I believe is well-worth watching.





Elena-Daria Neculăiță

Seinfeld is an American television sitcom that enjoyed great success in the 90s and which still remains one of the most emblematic comedy shows of all time. The TV show is set mainly in the apartment of the main character and depicts the story of a group of friends that live a chaotic, yet regular life together in New York City among unpredictable or even trivial situations.

The sitcom follows the life of Jerry Seinfeld, a stand-up comedian that, once he moves in his new apartment, he eventually encounters Elaine, Kramer and George that, later on, will represent his sensational group of friends. Their relationship is based on regular events that can happen constantly in each and everyone's living.

One of the best things about this show is the way the cast performs. The acting is incredibly natural and dynamic, as it manages to astound its audience. The script is also an excellent element of the show that builds such an actual and accurate image of today's society, by revealing basic day-to-day stories such as small talks, failed relationships, marriages, working life or even situations like waiting on line or searching for a lost item.

In addition to that, what is striking about this sitcom are the characters and their development. The directors have managed to create incredibly believable and convincing characters that portray, in an exceptionally humorous manner, human typologies living in their "habitat", forming what we call a modern society. Apart from the side-splitting humour, the soundtrack is also totally stimulating, leading to an exaggeration of the plot.

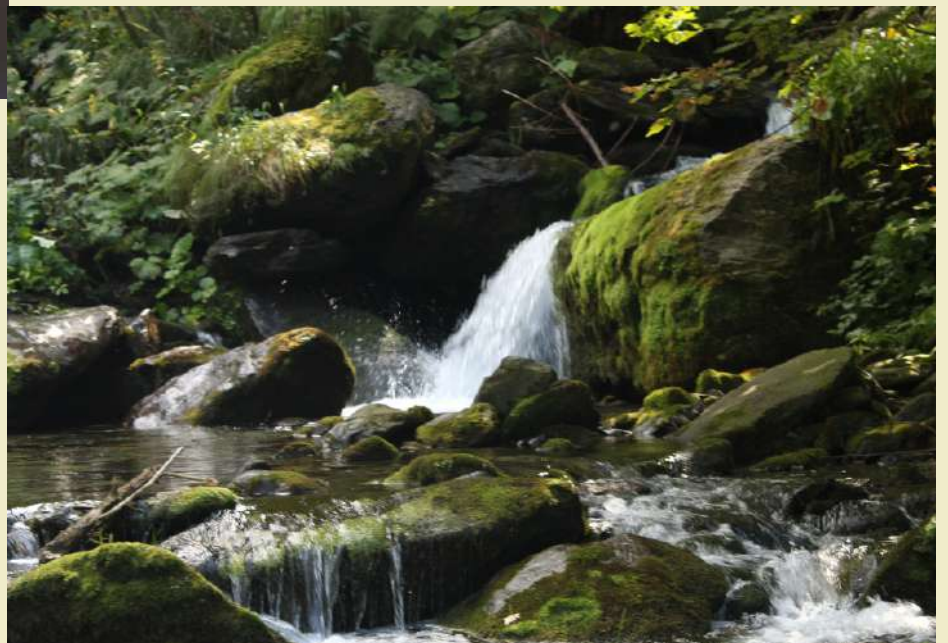
Even though the producer himself, Jerry Seinfeld, described his sitcom as a "show about nothing", Seinfeld is a TV show that should not be missed. It cleverly combines humour with fantastic ways of perceiving daily life's events and situations that are relatable to everyone. That is the reason why I recommend it to anyone who loves great comedy movies.

# Landscapes as True Emotions

Teresa Natalia Pintilie



Through my photos I want to convey a feeling rather than the clear image of an object or event. The colours, the vibration, the angle are all components of an experience that, through photography, can be accessed again and again. Although the world around us changes, the photographs remain the same.







**Teresa Natalia Pintilie**

**Landscapes as  
True Emotions**





MIRRORS

PHOTO FROM PEXELS.COM