

By Lou Lechte

Hate is senseless; Hate is a feeling; Hate is felt. I wrote the following poem the day my seams were torn apart, the day I felt the senselessness of hate.



– Lou

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Was Hitler Insecure About His Penis?

by Pablo Ruiz Delgado

In their book *Hitler's Last Day: Minute by Minute*, historians Jonathan Mayo and Emma Craigie argue Hitler likely suffered from a condition called 'Hypospadias'. It afflicted him throughout his teenage years and essentially left him with a micro-penis, or as the authors call it, "an extremely small manhood". And he's not the only fascist with a small manhood.

Back home in Spain, it's common for people to make fun of Franco – the guy who won the Spanish Civil War and then headed a brutal fascist dictatorship for 40 years – for being very short and having a cartoonishly high-pitched voice. Throughout his rule, he was referred to as *El Caudillo*, quite literally 'The Chieftain', but his persona wasn't nearly as conventionally masculine as that title might suggest. Isn't it kind of funny to think that Hitler's and Franco's brutal dictatorships may have just been an attempt at overcompensating for their insecurities?

It may sound like a joke, but I believe I can make a compelling case that fascist ideas fundamentally emanate from male sexual insecurity. To be clear, by 'fascism' I'm not referring to the specific ideologies of fascist governments in the 20th century. As political thinker and Italian partisan Umberto Eco argues in his essay *Ur-Fascism*, fascism is not only extremely varied, but also "inherently irrational, contradictory and incoherent". Therefore, fascist ideology cannot be concretely defined by a set of beliefs.

“If we want to stop the rise of the far-right, we all – man or not, fascist or not – have to eradicate the toxic expectation that 'true' men should be strong, powerful, and dominant.

Only by looking at the underlying principles, attitudes, and tendencies that fascists display can we get a good grasp of who and what can be categorised as 'fascist'. Under this definition, the governments led by traditional fascists like Hitler and Franco, as well as those of contemporary far-right authoritarians like Viktor Orbán and Donald Trump, would fall under the category of fascism – not because they necessarily believe the exact same things, but because they follow the same basic principles and display the same basic tendencies.

One such principle, in the words of Umberto Eco, is *Machismo*, or a cult of traditional masculinity. According to the author, many features common in all fascist movements can be reduced to men (and especially young men) attempting to become society's ideal of a 'manly' man. Authoritarianism, extreme traditionalism, contempt for the poor and weak, exclusion of an 'outgroup', embracing violence and warfare, as well as many other such features, ultimately boil down to men's need to feel strong, powerful, and dominant. Similarly, fascists' rejection of modernity, equality, and social progress can be explained by men's fear of losing their traditionally dominant role in society. Though this explanation might seem simplistic at first, it becomes quite compel-

ling upon taking a closer look at the many manifestations of fascism.

First, let's take a look at the 20th century. Researchers like Laurie Marhoefer and Simon Strick argue that the rise of fascist movements, both in Italy and Germany, was characterised by the considerable involvement of young men in those movements. The Nazi Party used to be a small group of radicals at the fringes of German politics, until it began to increasingly appeal to young men who felt emasculated by the (relatively) progressive politics of the Weimar Republic. The Nazis promulgated narratives of triumph and heroism that resonated with young German men, who then flocked to join the Nazi Party and helped it rise to prominence in German politics.

Our society is one that dooms men to sexual insecurity. As they grow up and try to figure out who they are and where they belong, they will fall for the lure of fascism.

“The case of Mussolini's 'Brown Shirts' was quite similar. The Brown Shirts were the armed militias of the Italian fascist movement. They killed thousands of civilians and spread terror through the country, which helped Mussolini cement his power. And not unlike the Nazis, these were mainly composed of young men trying to prove their masculinity by engaging in violent acts of 'heroism' to 'root out' communism. Fascist ideas were produced and reproduced because of insecure men who felt threatened by change. Fascism spread through Italy and Germany because it claimed to have a solution to the sexual woes of half the population.

If we now shift our focus to the current day, we can see a similar picture. A quick look at polls reveals that one of the main demographics that supports far-right parties is men aged 18 to 26, even when the candidate is a woman (like Marine Le Pen or Georgia Meloni). Almost every major far-right altercation in the past few years – like the Charlottesville protests in the U.S., the Independence Day march in Poland, or the Golden Dawn demonstrations in Greece – has been formed and led by young men.

Anecdotally, I have interacted with many far-righters during my life (mainly in my posh-ass high school and on the Internet), and it always astonished me how much sexual insecurity every single one of them exudes – especially when you hear them rant against feminism or LGBT rights. It is crystal clear to me that young men's fascist opinions come not from some ideological conviction they have, but from their need to feel conventionally masculine and be seen as such by others.

Though it'd be easy to blame these people for taking the side of the fascists, we must not forget the kind of society that we were all raised in. Ours is a fundamentally patriarchal society, one which creates a hierarchy where men stand atop, women are subjugated, and anyone who

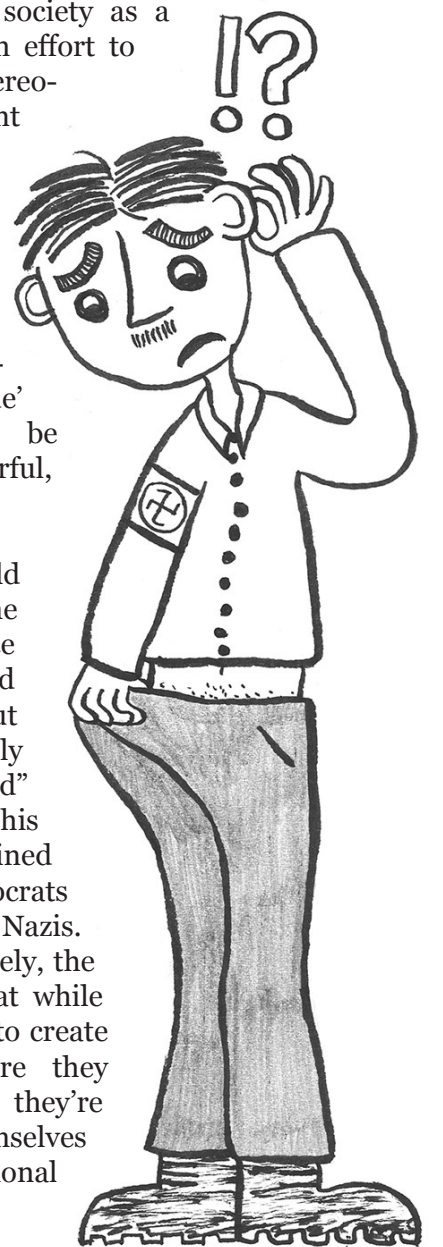
doesn't conform to traditional gender norms is looked down upon. Our society is one that raises men to believe they must strive for unattainable standards of physical superiority and emotional repression. Our society is one that dooms men to sexual insecurity. As they grow up and try to figure out who they are and where they belong, they will fall for the lure of fascism.

All of this is even more worrisome if we look at recent statistics by the American General Social Survey in 2022. According to their report, "loneliness among young men has increased dramatically over the past decade", with almost 50% of men aged 18 to 26 reporting they were still virgins, and over 60% reporting they'd had no meaningful romantic relationships. If men become lonelier and thus more insecure about their masculinity, the rise of modern fascism is only going to worsen.

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This is not to say that it's other people's responsibility to 'cuddle' or 'fix' men's self-esteem problems. Men who vote for Orbán or Trump ought work on themselves and get their shit together. But this can't truly happen before society as a whole makes an effort to undo gender stereotypes. If we want to stop the rise of the far-right, we all – man or not, fascist or not – have to eradicate the toxic expectation that 'true' men should be strong, powerful, and dominant.

I wish we could go back in time and convince Hitler that he'd feel better about his "extremely small manhood" if he dealt with his issues and joined the Social Democrats instead of the Nazis. Because ultimately, the sad irony is that while fascist men try to create a society where they are in power, they're sentencing themselves to a life of emotional misery.



In Defense of Optimism

by Jasmine Yi Carder

Over the last couple of years, and especially after moving to UCU, I have noticed that much of the discourse between my peers is negative. There's a considerable amount of negativity present in discussions on topics ranging anywhere from personal well-being to the general social climate. At first, being a part of a community which didn't shy away from dark aspects of life, filled me with a sense of pride. I was proud of being capable of talking about difficult topics that older generations and other groups brush under the rug. I was proud of my peers for having the social backbone to criticise structures larger than themselves.

“It is important to talk about the ways the world has let us down, but we can't let that consume us.

However, this sense of pride was followed by concern stemming from the sheer amount of negativity I heard. One time, I was in a group of writers who had all written something for a prompt regarding family. When asked to share, every single person began with the preface: “Sorry, this is really depressing.” While working on the first editions of *The Boomerang*, as well as *Scoperang*, I experienced something similar. At least two-thirds of the submissions were about heartbreak, depression, violence, or discrimination. I'm glad there are spaces where people can share their difficulties, and they have every right to do so. Even so, I couldn't help but think, are we all okay? Is this healthy? I had a suspicion that the answer was simply: no.

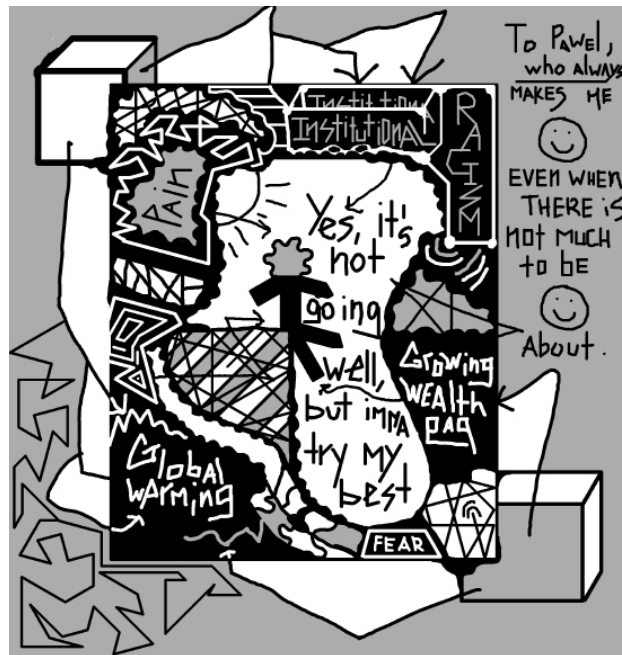
At the same time, I started paying attention to something I have always participated in, which is casual pessimism or even nihilism regarding the future. There are the typical gen z quips about not living past thirty due to the climate crisis. There are the jokes with girl friends about the possibility of being dumped in a river by an unruly Tinder date. Then, there's the teasing about liberal arts students ending up unemployed, living in a cardboard box south of a bridge. These jokes provide a collective comfort, but they also reflect the fact that many young people see the world as a harsh, cruel place in which little can be done. We laugh about it, but we could also cry.

I was mulling over this, when a New York Times article popped up on my daily page: “The Self-Destructive Effects of Progressive Sadness” by David Brooks. Brooks started by saying: “The American dream is a sham, climate change is so unstoppable, systemic racism is eternal. Making catastrophic pronouncements became a way to display that you were woke to the brutalities of American life.” The article aggressively called out the pessimistic atmosphere of young liberals in the US. It felt like a personal attack on me, as well as everyone I know. Despite the practices we all engage in being called into question by Brooks, it was hard to be defensive upon reading his conclusion: “The mindset didn't increase people's sense of agency; it decreased it.” Pessimism isn't just seeing only the worst of the world. It strips us of the ability to have hope

that it can change.

“Optimism is not looking at the world and finding it faultless. The flawed nature of the world is why we need optimism.

Brooks wasn't the only one to raise his concerns. As it turns out, there's an entire discourse in academics and journalism about an increase in depression, pessimism, and nihilism within youths, liberal populations, and the West at large. After falling head-first into this rabbit hole, I figured out two explanations for my peers' pessimism. The first backed up Brooks' point: the idea that leftists are generally more prone to pessimism than conservatives. Many essays and journals on the topic put forward the point that leftists could be more pessimistic in comparison to conservatives because conservatives are more



likely to invest in families and other communities like churches, as well as similar activities linked to general happiness. They are also more likely to find security in the status quo rather than feel trapped or threatened by it. Then there are the traits of leftists themselves. Most of the literature I read indicated that leftists are less likely to be happy with the present because they find the world more multifaceted and therefore less stable, and are more sensitive to aggression or threats. Several articles stated that there is a leftist tendency to undermine the individual agency and rather think of structural causes or luck as the driving force behind all events. Overall, the research suggested that there is a correlation between our political leanings and pessimism.

Another explanation for pessimism is concerned with the state of the world in general. Research from Boston College found that a steady rise in self-reported depression in youths all over the United States corresponded with the election of Donald Trump. The same paper pointed out that similar increases in depression and anxiety occurred in other times of upheaval, such as 9/11 and the Great Depression. Aside from mental health there were also decreases in certainty about the future and trust in prevailing struc-

tures. Similarly, research from Erasmus University Rotterdam found that out of 23 European countries, in 15 of them, the majority of citizens labeled themselves as pessimistic. In this study pessimism was linked with beliefs in the rise of socioeconomic vulnerability, supranationalization, and corruption, among others. These studies contribute to the idea that our communal pessimism is largely a response to global uncertainty.

While this research was interesting, my primary response was, “No shit Sherlock.” Multimillion-dollar studies are certainly not needed for anyone to understand that the world is an imperfect and uncertain place or that the awareness of it leads to pessimism. This is something that most of my peers grapple with everyday. I live on a campus full of beautiful, bright, passionate people and at least a third of them seem resigned to the idea that most aspects of life are, and always will be, bad.

This generation is in the process of growing into a world that is full of horrible realities. As research confirmed, we have every reason to be pessimistic. However, the literature and common sense agree that pessimism is not a healthy or constructive mindset to nurture. We shouldn't be okay, let alone enthusiastic, about our pessimism. It is important to talk about the ways the world has let us down, but we can't let that consume us.

I hesitated writing this article because I don't want to invalidate different outlooks on the world or suggest that negative feelings and experiences should be censored. The reason why I took this risk is because I want to give hope to my peers, no matter how brash it may be. I hope that as much as we acknowledge the bad in the world, we also celebrate the good in equal measure. I hope that while we understand the bad aspects of the world, we will never stop believing that it will get better if we fight for it. Optimism is not looking at the world and finding it faultless. The flawed nature of the world is why we need optimism.

I know that many people are not lucky enough to find themselves in circumstances that foster optimism. I am also probably largely ignorant of the infinite ways in which people are suffering. Regardless, I plead that we should all try our best to be optimistic. We should try to see the good because the horrible things make life look meaningless even though it's not. We should try to speak positively because it gives us the opportunity to provide comfort to those who need it. Hope is a much more powerful form of motivation than anger or resignation. We should try to absorb all of the positivity we can because we owe it to ourselves to find joy in our life. In the end, it's the only one we'll ever have. These are not new ideas and it's not my place to say that everyone should be a ray of sunshine 24/7. Life can be a bitch. Things can feel overwhelming and pointless. Nevertheless, I implore us all to try, against logic and reason, to be more optimistic.

A Cosmic Dance

The Mystical Implications of Subatomic Physics

by Mila Frattini

Illustration © Fritjof Capra



The dichotomy between philosophy and physics is considered to be a well-known fact: the first deals with the abstract and the internal, while the latter with the material and the visible. This belief stems from years of teaching classical physics, rooted in infallible laws and all-encompassing theories, as well as the overbearing dominance of Western philosophy. However, the scope of both fields expands beyond that.

“Quantum physics shows that at the most fundamental level, the behaviors and properties of the building blocks of nature escape human rationalizations, and imply a universal web beyond what our senses can comprehend.

Fritjof Capra's publication *The Tao of Physics: An Exploration of the Parallels between Modern Physics and Eastern Mysticism* was published in 1975 in alignment with the growing discoveries of quantum theory and relativity theory, as well as the radical shift they brought. Quantum physics has roots in a series of experimental observations of atoms which didn't make sense in the context of classical physics. These observations could only be explained by new laws in the form of mathematical equations that encapsulate the probabilistic nature of quantum objects, rather than absolute descriptions of existence like the

laws of classical physics. Subatomic particles do not exist, but rather show 'tendencies to exist', and atomic events do not certainly occur at a time, but rather show 'tendencies to occur'. Central concepts such as wave-particle duality, entanglement, the uncertainty principle, and superposition cannot be visualized or precisely observed. In Heisenberg's words, "What we observe is not nature itself, but nature exposed to our method of questioning." Quantum physics shows that at the most fundamental level, the behaviors and properties of the building blocks of nature escape human rationalizations, and imply a universal web beyond what our senses can comprehend.

So, how does philosophy fit into the picture? Western philosophy doesn't. For most of its course, it has relied on the discriminations, abstractions, and classifications of the intellect, which have repeatedly defined humans and reality through contrasts and symbols. This isn't to say that this branch of philosophy hasn't been helpful or significant; such explorations do have fundamental applications in everyday questions. They have developed methods for critical thinking, and aided multiple other fields in their advancements. Yet, when discussing the 'ultimate reality', which is what Capra defines as the knowledge he explores in his book, we cannot use it as a tool. This is why the author turns to Eastern mysticism, introducing it through the core Buddhist notion that the direct experience of undivided, undifferentiated, indeterminate reality, must transcend both intellectual thinking and sensory perception. According to *The Upanishads*, the philosophical-religious texts of Hinduism, demonstrations cannot be the ultimate form of knowledge because: "There the eye goes not; Speech goes not, nor the mind. We understand not how one would teach it."

The impossibility of precise, individual measurement or detection in quantum theory reveals that reality cannot be decomposed into independent units. Nature shows us that our physical world consists of dynamic patterns which

are integral parts of an inseparable network of interactions; particles are endlessly created and destroyed in a continual variation of energy patterns. The stable structures which build up the material world stem from these interactions. And a human's interpretation, the presence of an observer, is the final link. Properties of any atomic object can only be understood in terms of the object's relation to the observer, making us a single, essential strand in the chain of life. Despite the variety of patterns composing the dance, they fall into set categories, and yield a great deal of order. Three massive particles, a massless one, and a set of perpetual transformations and interactions are the basis.

“Capra claims that the relationship between the two is not forged out of necessity, but proves their essentiality: "Physicists do not need mysticism, and mystics do not need physics, but humanity needs both."

Mysticism teaches the same notion of the physical "continual cosmic dance of energy", as Capra writes. Lamas, spiritual leaders of the Tibetan Buddhist community, refer to themselves as 'masters of sound' in accordance with their view that all things are an aggregation of atoms that dance, each one singing its song. In their movement they produce sounds, which change with their rhythm, and to know you must listen. The similarity with modern physics is striking because each sound is a wave with a specific frequency, and particles (the equivalent of the old concept of atoms) are also waves with frequencies proportional to their energies. Field theory, then, does prove that each particle 'sings its song'. In Hinduism, the dancing god Shiva represents the endless cycle of life-death alternation. His ceaseless dance embodies the fleeting nature ('maya') of the manifold forms: they are created and dissolved, like an electron excited by a photon to a higher, quantised energy inevitably dropping back down to its ground state.

It is incredible how modern physics, starting from a series of discoveries in the early 19th century, echoes the far East philosophies, which around the 5th century BCE, 24 hundred years earlier, describe a similar world accessed through deep meditation. Physicists did not interest themselves with Eastern philosophies until the link was made evident by their own discoveries, thus, the two fields of knowledge owe nothing to each other, nor do they need the other to be considered reliable. Which makes their alignment even more significant. Two parallel ramifications of human knowledge, recognised as opposite by many, turn out to be perfectly harmonious. Thus, Capra claims that the relationship between the two is not forged out of necessity, but proves their essentiality: "Physicists do not need mysticism, and mystics do not need physics, but humanity needs both."

The Trans Bigot

by Lachlan Eckardt

For years now, I have been a cis-passing trans man, and I love it. I love it because, finally, my being trans became the least relevant part of my life. I no longer have overly negative feelings towards being trans. After years of trying to be comfortable in my body and my identity, I was exhausted due to being so consumed by this aspect of my life. Like many other trans people, I went through a transition that took years, years filled with hard conversations, raw emotions, overcoming stigmas, and continuously having to stand up for yourself against seemingly endless obstacles and opinions of people that claimed to 'know better'. All in all, it wasn't fun at best and deeply depressing and lonely at worst. Even with friends and family to support you, being the only trans person in miles of distance is a lonely experience. Although my transition wasn't easy, it was probably one of the easiest in the trans community. I had, and still have, supportive friends and family, my medical procedures were and are covered entirely by health insurance, it was easy to change my official documents, and I wasn't even bullied in school.

“ *I thought being trans was a safeguard against bigotry. Turns out that is not always true.*

Despite my relatively smooth transition, it consumed so much time and energy between the ages of 13 and 19. That is, six years out of a period of time that already requires figuring out so many things unrelated to being trans. Being trans on top of all of that was honestly incredibly exhausting. Since I had my top surgery when I was 17, I began feeling free. I could go swimming again, do more sports, and be me without feeling different. My hormone therapy that had started 2 years prior had also worked wonders, and I finally passed as a cis man physically. The tight grip being trans had on my life finally started to loosen. Ever since I found my current partner and stopped dating, my transness (read: genitals) has become absolutely no one else's business. With dating over, there is no reason anymore why anyone who isn't my doctor would need to know that I was trans. Since 2019, I have been free. Finally.

That was until I got to UCU. Suddenly, there was a trans community, people whom perhaps I could finally relate to. Until, to my dismay, I found I couldn't relate to them at all. And that seriously confused me. This was a community still fighting, it still had obstacles to overcome in the oh-so-progressive Netherlands. For reasons I still have to reflect

on more, I didn't believe these struggles to be as relevant as they were portrayed. I began feeling like an ignorant bigot, but how could that be? *I'm trans myself, I can't be transphobic. Surely, they must be exaggerating?* Or so I thought.

“ *I'm done with my struggle, but that doesn't mean there are no struggles left to overcome. We might all be trans, but we don't necessarily face the same struggles. I know that now.*

For reasons I am finally beginning to unbury from within myself, I became frustrated with all the issues trans people on campus raised. I mean, I am trans and never had any problems here; *get over it!* It is hard to write this, but I assumed my being trans gave me some sort of exclusive insight into trans struggles. Apparently, I couldn't imagine there being trans struggles I couldn't relate to. I cringe writing this as I finally know how incredibly ignorant I was. White, well-off, cis-passing male I am. How painfully obvious our mistakes sometimes are in retrospect.

Just because I realize my mistake, doesn't mean everything is fine now. Admitting is only the first step, what it takes is actual change. Still, a sense of fight-or-flight takes hold of me when trans issues are raised. *Why do they have to bring back these struggles? Why can't they be happy with how things are right now? I'm trans, and I'm doing okay. Get over it! I'm finally free, don't bring these things back. I finally got out. Please, just let me live my life in peace.*

What do I do differently now? I try to stop myself, not from feeling my emotions but from taking them as reliable indicators of what is true. I don't want to go back to fighting, but that doesn't mean others are done. I'm done with my struggle, but that doesn't mean there are no struggles left to overcome. We might all be trans, but we don't necessarily face the same struggles. I know that now.

I still have to come to terms with having become a bigot against trans people despite being trans myself. I thought being trans was a safeguard against bigotry. Turns out that is not always true. Your emotions might be real, but that doesn't have to mean they show you the truth. I hope that my mistakes can be someone else's warning or lesson or at least shed some more light on what life is like as a trans person and the struggles we face. The bottom line for me is that I guess I'll always be trans, whether I like it or not.



Illustration © Ilia Verstruete

The Bizarre World of Ballet

by Alicja Anna Chojnacka

Trigger warning: this article includes mentions of body shaming.

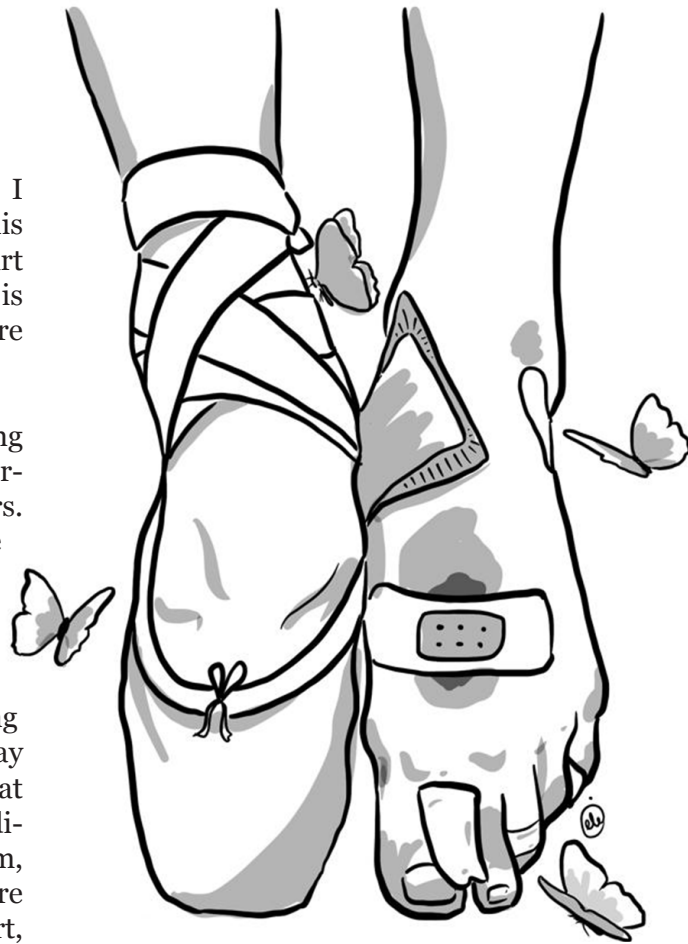
Before saying anything else on the topic, I wanted to start off with a little disclaimer. This article does not intend to criticise ballet as an art form, or take away from its beauty. Its purpose is to raise awareness about awful practices that are still in place in some (or most) dance schools.

Every time people find out that I've been doing ballet since I was a kid, they ask for any interesting stories I might've gathered over the years. It took many shocked faces for me to realise that most people are clueless about the often jarring reality of dance schools. I wanted to single out ballet because while other dance styles have implemented changes in order to fit in with the current expectations, ballet, being a classical form of dance, has often gotten away with keeping up awful practices by claiming that they're trying to preserve its long-standing tradition. It's true that ballet is a very strict art form, and it values its beautiful heritage. But, where should we draw the line between preserving art, and preserving abusive teaching methods for the sake of tradition? Despite my immense appreciation for ballet, and everyone who's capable of doing it professionally, some things need to change.

Of course, there are some exceptions. Movements and positions typical of classical dance are unnatural for the human body. Therefore, they usually have a negative effect on joints and muscles. Pointe shoes will always destroy your feet because you're not supposed to be standing on the tips of your toes. That cannot be changed without completely changing the style of ballet. It's also understandable that all performances require extensive practice beforehand, but it shouldn't be acceptable to exploit the dancers' bodies until their breaking points. Young dancers should not be desensitised to their peers fainting due to exhaustion during rehearsals.

"If I had to choose between a skinny and a talented girl, I'd choose the skinny one. At least she looks good" - this is a direct quote from the headmaster of my ballet school.

At 8 years old, when I started ballet, I was seeking out movies and other media about dance in hopes of observing something I was passionate about. It turned out that most of them are not suitable for children, because they touch upon very heavy issues. I was shocked to discover that nearly all movies about ballet were R rated. There's generally a lot of negative stereotypes about ballet schools, and it didn't take me or my friends long to understand why. I'm here to tell you that most, if not all, nasty stereotypes you've probably heard about ballet are at least partially true. That is not based on my experience alone, and is not exclusive to the school I attended. Every dancer I've ever asked has at least similar experiences as me. There are things that seem widely accepted in the ballet world, no matter the country or school.



First of all, yes it's true, ballet teachers (most of them) are mean. And I'm not only talking about the typical yell-in-your-face mean. I mean teachers who see no problem with humiliating children as young as 10, making sure they have a low enough self-esteem to be afraid of them and crave their approval. Once this mentality is established in the students, there's no length they would not go to in order to stand out from the group. Teachers also create a highly competitive atmosphere; they expect nothing short of perfection and even encourage behaviour that drags your peers down. And it's very hard to have compassion for someone you are constantly compared to.

"But, where should we draw the line between preserving art, and preserving abusive teaching methods for the sake of tradition?"

And the body shaming? Relentless. Most of the teachers lack the decency to be subtle about it. The ballet standard for 'skinny enough' is often severely underweight. In a discipline that requires so much physical effort, it's a recipe for disaster. The headmaster of my school would put the skinniest girls, who usually hadn't gone through puberty yet, in front of the whole school to congratulate them on their looks. Only the other girls knew that they were often so weak from malnutrition that they were barely standing, but still smiling wide, happy to be singled out. Comments like: 'suck in your stomach I can see your dinner!' were present on a daily basis.

"If I had to choose between a skinny and a talented girl, I'd choose the skinny one. At least she looks good" - this is a direct quote from the headmaster of my ballet school. Is there a more effective way to diminish someone's worth than to criticise their looks? One of my friends was told to stop eating three days before the show to 'look nicer on stage'. In the changing rooms of the theatre, you'd get told off for eating anything that wasn't dry bread and juice. We were 13.

Looking back on it, all the girls in my class were skinny, or even thin, in the eyes of the rest of society. But skinny is not *skinny enough* for ballet. People with a completely healthy weight would have 'issues with appearance' written on their diplomas. That was a 'subtle' way of saying that while you might be good, you're not good enough until you're as thin as possible.

In ballet, anything natural about human bodies is unacceptable. Children as young as 12 are told to wax their entire bodies because, now brace yourselves, their 50 year old male teachers are uncomfortable with their leg hair being visible under the white tights. Going through puberty and getting boobs was nothing short of a tragedy. Nobody wanted to see a curvy feminine body on the stage.

Even though body shaming is a major issue within the ballet world, it is certainly not the only one. Ballet is anything but inclusive and diverse. Ballet shoes and pointes are almost exclusively made in the lightest shade of beige, offering little to no options for people of colour. Everyone in school is required to look identical. The same slicked-back hairstyle, leotard, and the same ugly and incredibly unflattering, as well as impractical, white tights. Some girls would be yelled at for their curly hair sticking out of their tight bun.

"Ballet is the world we knew: we were so used to it that none of us would bat an eyelash. We didn't know it could look any other way."

Ballet teachers would go to great lengths to humiliate some people to use them as a lesson for others. They could afford to do so because, at the end of the day, there was nobody to hold them accountable. All the parents who raised their concerns were quickly turned away with 'that's just ballet!'. One of my teachers said that we should be grateful she's not putting a lighter under our leg to force us to lift it higher. Another teacher sat on my back while we were doing the splits, to force me to stretch more. My pulled muscles hurt for weeks.

It might seem ridiculous that dancers accept this sort of treatment. In reality, the teachers make their pupils believe that if they fail at ballet, that's literally the end of their life. Only about 3 percent of the people at the school will become professional dancers. Half of them will have to stop due to injury. And the rest should be more than happy to pursue other career paths. It's also not easy to tell what's acceptable for a grown-up to say when you're a kid. Ballet is the world we knew: we were so used to it that none of us would bat an eyelash. We didn't know it could look any other way.

I still have a lot of hope for the dance world. Hopefully, the abusive structures will soon come to light, and teachers will be held accountable for their actions. It's a pity that such a beautiful art form has such a dark reality behind it.

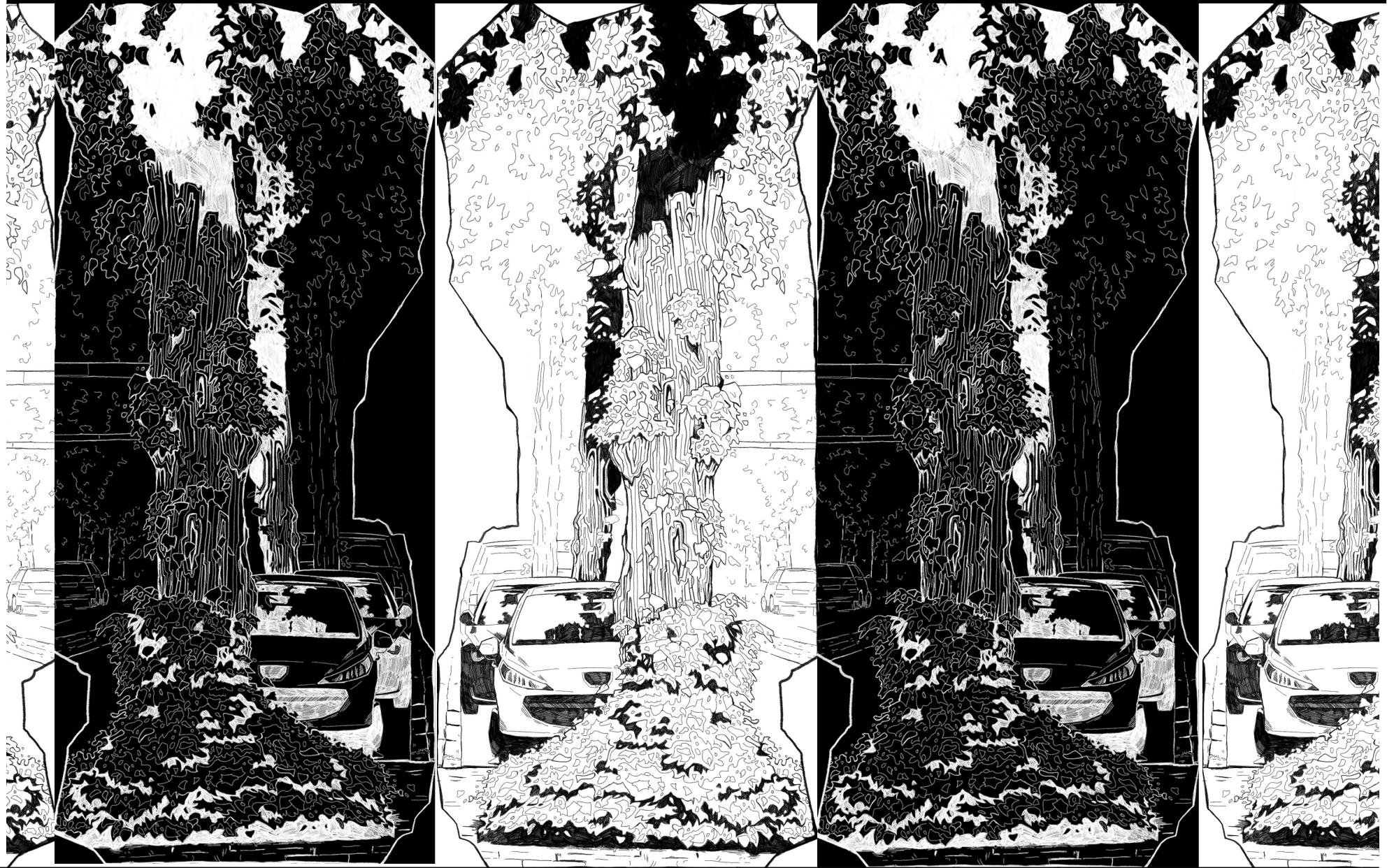


Illustration © Søren Carmony-Hendriks

Movie Monster Summer Surprises

by Alejandra Monerri Revuelta



I don't know about you, but for the first week of summer, all I will be doing is moving out of my room. That'll be the only highlight. If that's you too, do not despair, I have two movie recommendations that will make you think so much it will fill up your time (and more).

The Swimmers

Two sisters. One film based on a true story. Yusra and Sarah Mardini are sisters living in Damascus. With their father as coach, both are talented swimmers, training to become professionals. But when the civil war in Syria reaches their home in 2015, the sisters are forced to flee the country, and leave their family behind. They travel to Lebanon, then Turkey, and pay a lot of money to be smuggled into Greece.

However, somewhere in the Aegean Sea, the engine fails, and as the only ones who know how to swim, the two sisters jump into the water, pulling the boat to the Greek shore. Eventually, they end up in Germany. Sarah, remembering her father's words, goes on the hunt for a club the two can swim for. Once she finds it, Sarah is determined to make it to the 2016 Rio Olympics, while Yusra loses her passion for the sport, and

finds a new ambition.

“ *These movies made me cry. One is inspirational and shows you how far you can come with talent and hard work, while the other is about the tragic loss of an opportunity to become great because of wrong choices.*

The film is a beautiful portrayal of the very real story of the two sisters. It's intense, and the beginning is difficult to watch, but it's definitely worth it.

I, Tonya

She, Tonya Harding, is an ice-skater. In 1991, she was the first American female athlete to perform the triple axel in competition successfully, but in 1994, she was not allowed to compete anymore. What happened? She was revolutionary because she proved time and time again that women's ice-skating was not only about artistry, but that like the men's category, it could also be about athleticism. However, her

personal life – which included being raised in a family that was struggling financially, and being in a toxic relationship at that time – lead her to run into some problems with her rival Nancy Kerrigan.

Harding and Kerrigan were both talented and excellent skaters, yet had striking differences. Harding was a more 'masculine' skater, focusing on doing jumps attributed more to men's skating (such as the triple axel). Kerrigan was a more feminine skater, focused on looking pretty and artistic while skating. This rivalry was just like any other, until it wasn't anymore. It turns out that Harding's toxic boyfriend assaulted Kerrigan, and to this day, it's unknown whether or not Harding could've agreed to it (maybe even asked him to do it), or if she had no idea about his plan. After being banned from skating, she turned her focus to boxing instead, and found better people to be in relationships with.

These movies made me cry. One is inspirational and shows you how far you can come with talent and hard work, while the other is about the tragic loss of an opportunity to become great because of wrong choices. Happy summer, everyone!

Katrina's Playlist

by Katrina Joy Funk



Happy June music-lovers!

I hope you're all enjoying spending time outside, lying in the grass, listening to your favorite summer tunes on a portable speaker while competing for musical superiority with the group of friends blasting their music just a few feet away. One of the perks of living on an international campus is that you're exposed to music from all over the world. Even if you don't know exactly what the singer is saying, certain songs just resonate on an emotional and physical level. Maybe you do your best to learn the words, pulling up a questionably translated version on Google Translate, or maybe you're content to fake it, singing along by making sounds that are just similar enough to the words. I've always felt that the French language lends itself very well to songs, and during the break between Spring and Summer semester, I found myself in Brittany, France.

The week before I left for France, I had been completely absorbed in a new podcast I'd discovered called You Must Remember This (this is my unofficial plug for this podcast, I tell literally everyone I know about it, so give it a listen). It

gives fascinating and insanely in-depth accounts of the forgotten histories of Hollywood's first century. This podcast covers everything from the Mason Murders to MTV. Anyway, all this to say I had recently finished a YMRT series on the life of Jean Seberg, an American actress who became an icon of French 'New Wave' cinema during the 1950s and '60s. Needless to say, after listening, though my body may have been in Utrecht, my head was in 1960s Paris.

“ *Society as a whole longs for the past because it's something just out of our reach, something we can romanticize but never truly experience.*

In the French countryside, I kept up a steady stream of 1960s and '70s French chanson music whenever I had the aux. The dulcet tones of Jaques Brel and Christophe rang out, carried on the early evening breeze. Recently, I've seen somewhat of a resurgence of retro French songs, repurposed and praised for their auras of nostalgia, sophistication, and romance (we've all seen the TikToks showing a hunt

for the best croissant in Paris or an aesthetic shot of a train arriving at a metro station set to a version *Aline*). It's easy to see the appeal. I think society as a whole, both consciously and subconsciously, longs for the past – styles and music from the 60s, 70s, and 80s are seemingly perineally en vogue. Perhaps because it was a simpler time, but perhaps because it's something just out of our reach, something we can romanticize but never truly experience. So as I did during the brief time I was lucky enough to spend in France, starting my day with a croissant, a coffee, and a crooning of Françoise Hardy, I encourage you to romanticize your daily activities, whatever that looks like. And a soundtrack always helps.

Recommended listening:

Le Sud by Nino Ferrer

Et si Tu N'existais Pas by Joe Dassin

Aline by Christophe (the version by Jarvis Cocker is also great)

Capri C'est Fini by Hervé Vilard

Tous les Garçons et les Filles by Françoise Hardy

Settling it over a cup of tea

by Pieter Dolmans



Let me preface this with something a lot of people (but not everyone) knows, since I get nervous talking about it: I'm a trans girl... or at least something like that. This makes my part in the DramaCo play *A Midsummer Night's Dream* extra interesting. It is the part of Francis Flute, a male actor who plays the role of a girl named Thisbe in the play *Pyramus and Thisbe*, which is performed within the play. Are you still following? In short, I'm a trans woman, pretending to be a man, pretending to be a woman.

“ *So much of gender is just personality traits that we happened to have shoved into categories, and all those personality traits can still exist without being forced on people by assigning them genders.*

The point of this 'play within the play' is that it's performed quite badly, leading to several funny moments. One of the comedic elements, as was explained to me during the rehearsal process, was Flute trying to play a woman but

being too masculine to pull it off. I had trouble with this at first. As someone who experiences a lot of gender dysphoria because of not being 'convincing' as a woman (because my ever-so-nebulously undefined 'masculine' traits are showing), such a situation did not strike me as particularly amusing. But I think I've found a way to make it work.

I had to stop picturing Flute as a man and Thisbe as a woman. I figured there must have been some set of traits behind that 'manhood' and 'womanhood' that was the driving force behind the joke, and that it should be possible to isolate those traits from their gendered associations. To me, it seems that the joke is based on nothing more than the contrast of the elegance of Thisbe being portrayed by the blunt and clumsy Flute. Nothing male or female about it. What helped with this was the alien setting of the play, half Ancient Greece, half fairy tale, making it easier to imagine that the problems of our daily lives, like the patriarchy, gender roles, and the inevitable heat death of the universe, don't exist there.

This made me think of gender abolitionism, the idea that it is not just gender-based discrimination, but gender in general that society should be rid of. A new question came to mind: in such a world without gender, could the Flute-playing-Thisbe joke still exist? Although the basis of the joke would be removed, I still think that the answer is yes. Because the characters of Flute and Thisbe can be stripped of their gender and yet remain the same just by describing them with the adjectives clumsy and elegant, respectively. So much of gender is just personality traits that we happened to have shoved into categories, and all those personality traits can still exist without being forced on people by assigning them genders.

So the final question I came to was: if the function of gender is removed, then what about the words 'masculine' and 'feminine'? If no gender is assigned at birth, and gender isn't being constantly reaffirmed, do those words need to be gendered? Could they exist in a genderless world? I'm really not sure of the answer, but as a trans girl who gets envious of women who present masculine, I have a personal stake in believing they can.

Jasmine's Book Nook

Klara and the Sun

by Jasmine Yi Carder



Welcome to my new literary column. My friends are officially sick of my going on and on about books so I've decided to annoy you all instead. I hope you enjoy!

I went into my reading of *Klara and the Sun* by Kazuo Ishiguro very excited. I've already read one of the Nobel laureate's many works, *Never Let Me Go*, which sent me into a fit of violent sobs in the middle of the night when I stayed up to finish it. Like *Never Let Me Go*, *Klara and the Sun* is one of Ishiguro's science fiction novels. It's set in an unidentified city in the United States and focuses around our narrator Klara. She's an 'Automated Friend', a form of AI that was created for the sole purpose of keeping kids company. She is naturally curious and perceptive when it comes to spotting human emotions although she has no experiences of her own to give her observations context. The book starts as she sits in her storefront window, the closest she's ever been to the outside world, and watches people go by. We follow Klara from the

store out into the wider world as she meets new people and gains new experiences. Although Klara comes to understand some of what she witnesses, she lacks a depth of awareness that keeps many of the books deeper threads just below the surface of narration. It's Klara's voice, her care for others, and her longing to understand what is difficult for even humans to fully fathom that really sets this book apart.

At the risk of saying too much I would like to warn anyone who sees "science fiction" and expects *Ex Machina* or *2001: A Space Odyssey* that you won't find that here. Ishiguro focuses on mundane lives that are set in a world that's slightly (but meaningfully) different from ours. I think his greatest skill as a writer is the ability to keep the science fiction mundane. Like many authors before him, he realized that there is often more intimacy, more space to delve into the complex ideas within the corners of one person's everyday life. By focusing on what Klara observes we see a new perspective on

what it means to be human. The added mastery of Ishiguro is that by focusing on one set of characters, he gets to tease the reader with breadcrumbs of what the science fiction world that they live in is actually like. In other words, you'll have to finish the book to fully understand what it's even about. This may sound silly to some people, but trust me, Ishiguro knows what he's doing.

This is a book that I would highly recommend. I personally prefer *Never Let Me Go*, but I will definitely read *Klara and the Sun* again, and I've already lent it out to a friend. The prose feels crisp and clear while the plot pulls on your imagination and heartstrings in all the right ways. It's not the best book for those fond of loud or fast plots. But, if you decide to pick it up I can guarantee it'll give you a lot to think about. A perfect summer read.

Loco LogiCo

When Grammar Fails: Garden-Path Sentences

by Kate Grossenbacher on behalf of LogiCo



"The old man the boat" is a grammatically correct sentence. So is "the horse raced past the barn fell", as well as "the man who hunts ducks out on weekends". These are all examples of 'garden-path' sentences, where a grammatically correct sentence will be initially interpreted incorrectly. The name of this linguistic phenomenon is also taken from the phrase *to lead someone down the garden path*, meaning to deceive or trick someone. These sentences do indeed trick or deceive: "the old man the boat" doesn't make any sense – at least at first glance. The error most people make here is to interpret 'old' to be an adjective and 'man' to be a noun. The next step would be to say that this sentence simply doesn't make sense because there is no verb, and as we all know, each sentence must have a verb. But in this case, 'man' is our verb and 'old' is a noun. To clarify this sentence, we could say 'the old *people* man the boat', or 'the old *are those who* man the boat'. Even without this clarification, this sentence is still grammatically correct.

The same is true of the other sentences: 'the horse raced past the barn fell' could be re-written as 'the horse *that was* raced past the barn fell' – the verb 'raced' is being used as a

past participle. 'The man who hunts ducks out on weekends' doesn't describe a man who hunts ducks, rather a 'man who hunts *tends to duck* out on weekends'.

Another fun related linguistic trope is antanaglasia, where you repeat the same word but in different contexts. For example (and this one is also a garden path sentence): 'time flies like an arrow; fruit flies like a banana'. 'Flies' is used first as a verb and then as a noun, and 'like' is first used as a preposition and then as a verb. Or of course, the classic 'Buffalo buffalo Buffalo buffalo buffalo Buffalo buffalo' is a grammatically correct sentence that uses Buffalo in three contexts. First, 'Buffalo' as an adjective, referring to a native of Buffalo, New York; 'buffalo' as a noun, referring to the animal; and 'buffalo' the verb, meaning to bully or intimidate. If we break down this sentence, we can get: 'Buffalo buffalo buffalo', or buffalos from Buffalo buffalo. Then, if these Buffalo buffalo were to bully other buffalo from Buffalo, we get 'Buffalo buffalo buffalo Buffalo buffalo'. Now, if a third set of Buffalo buffalo were to also bully, or buffalo, this second group of Buffalo buffalo, we get: 'Buffalo buffalo, that Buffalo buffalo buffalo, also buffalo Buffalo buffalo'. Removing

any pronouns, the relative clause becomes a reduced relative clause and becomes: 'Buffalo buffalo Buffalo buffalo buffalo buffalo Buffalo buffalo'. Now that the word 'buffalo' has lost all meaning, we see that we have a grammatically correct sentence!

Linguistically these are fascinating little sentences, but they also have greater sociological implications behind them. For instance, a lot of these garden-path sentences have been used to test artificial intelligence. There's also the question of clarity when dealing with syntactic ambiguity. I've been told many times to speak "proper English", or that the rules of grammar exist for a reason. This reason is assumed to be for clarity – without grammar, sentences just don't make any sense, and understanding the meaning of things is important! But these garden-path sentences illustrate that grammar, while helpful, is not the end all and be all. Just because grammar rules exist does not mean that grammatically correct sentences are perfectly understandable. Grammar is arbitrary, and colloquialisms are just as, if not more, understandable.

© LogiCo

Fools		James Cameron film		Lady - ---, Poker Face singer		Lose water	
Wander, digress							
Date stamp on a letter		Avoids		Annoy		Puerto ---, Caribbean island	
Language spoken in Bangkok					Hard to accomplish		Radiated
Area							
Hyphen	Hawaiian greeting		Sent by				
				Leans		Ballroom dance, --- doble	
Be gloomy		Explode like a volcano					
				Cereal grass			
Barks		Blood- sucking insect					
				Piece of turf			

SWEDISH CROSSWORD

Scoperang's
Crossword
Solutions

Across

- 1. Fungi
- 2. Cacophony
- 3. Jabberwocky
- 5. Narwal
- 7. Kerfuffle
- 8. Diagon Alley

Down

- 1. Flabbergasted
- 4. Cabbage
- 6. Macaroni

Hidden Solution:
STRANGE

7	9	4	5	2	1	6	3	8
8	2	3	7	6	4	9	1	5
5	6	1	8	9	3	2	4	7
3	5	2	4	7	9	8	6	1
4	8	9	1	5	6	7	2	3
1	7	6	3	8	2	5	9	4
2	1	5	9	4	8	3	7	6
9	3	8	6	1	7	4	5	2
6	4	7	2	3	5	1	8	9

Scoperang's Sudoku
Solutions

SUDOKU

6						4	1	3
	9	5					2	
	4	3		7	1	9		
				3	7			2
7			6			3	9	1
			2	8				6
5	6		9					
	1	9		2				
	2	4			3			

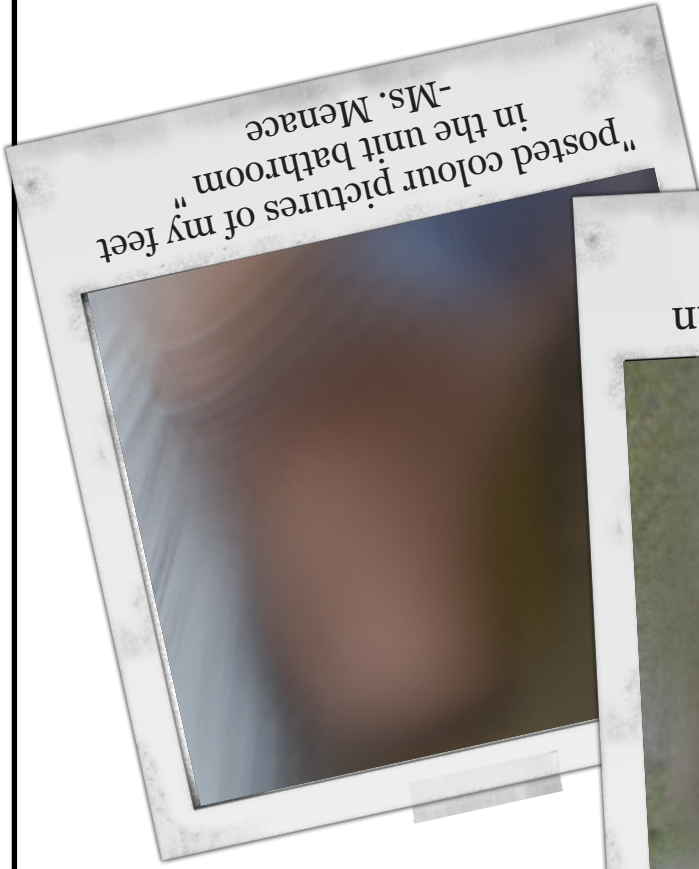
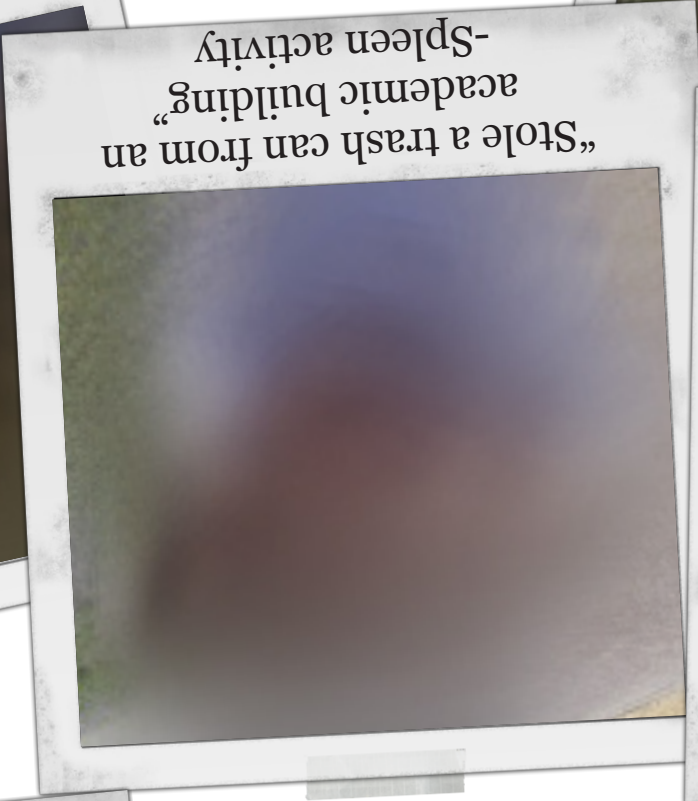
WORD SEARCH

G	U	I	D	E	B	O	O	K	N	D	A	Y	P
W	N	A	E	V	I	E	L	G	F	I	P	O	T
J	Z	A	L	H	O	T	A	R	E	M	A	C	C
K	L	Q	A	N	H	E	S	C	A	D	R	R	O
E	M	T	Y	O	I	N	E	R	H	O	T	S	T
C	S	L	S	M	R	B	I	U	R	P	M	H	T
F	I	T	I	N	E	R	A	R	Y	G	E	R	A
N	E	X	O	C	T	O	E	T	I	A	N	D	G
L	I	R	S	P	R	B	Y	N	L	R	T	K	E
A	N	I	R	U	O	B	Y	R	E	N	E	C	S
F	S	G	C	Y	P	V	R	O	T	E	U	A	A
R	U	S	E	U	S	E	E	O	I	P	C	S	C
D	R	A	C	T	S	O	P	R	C	D	I	K	T
E	A	T	L	N	A	T	C	T	K	H	S	C	I
M	N	U	R	I	P	W	O	E	E	V	U	U	U
G	C	N	E	L	C	I	A	M	T	R	D	R	S
H	E	J	O	U	R	N	E	Y	S	A	K	I	E

APARTMENT	HOSTEL	TICKETS
BEACH	INSURANCE	TRAIN
BROCHURE	ITINERARY	
CAMERA	JOURNEY	
COTTAGE	PASSPORT	
CUSTOMS	POSTCARD	
DELAY	RUCKSACK	
FERRY	SCENERY	
GETAWAY	STOPOVER	
GUIDEBOOK	SUITCASE	

6 QUAD QUERIES

“What is the most ‘illegal’ thing you’ve done at UCU?”



THESE PSEUDONYMS
HAVE BEEN FABRICATED
TO PROTECT THE
IDENTITIES OF THESE
CRIMINALS

BLACKOUT 5

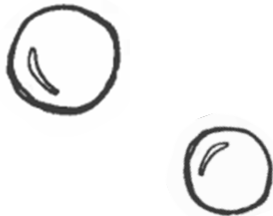
requirements”, “Maarten Diederix”, or “the GA”. Trust me, try getting out of here some-
times, it feels refreshing.

A friend of mine who’s also taking a ‘Liberal Arts & Sciences’ Bachelor’s (in English, at Utrecht University) occasionally has classes in Adam Smith. She scoffed when I asked about her opinion on UCU, right after hearing about the pressure everyone faces during exams. Her response was simply “it radiates something I’d personally rather not be a part of.” If anyone were to ask me whether they should come to study here or not, I would tell them that – entangled in an excellent education – a monoculture monster full of opportunity will welcome you with open arms. Meanwhile, less gated-commu-
nity-like alternatives exist that are equally, if not *more*, fulfilling in terms of sacrificing mental health and personality. For your own sake, please wake up from this High School Musical daydream. Start to see UCU as an outsider a bit. Or don’t, but at least you’ve read this now, and cannot say you weren’t warned about the big bad world out there. Deuces!

“The label University College Utrecht carries a whiff of pompousness and ignorance everywhere but “on campus”



Unfortunately, the universe that UCU finds itself in is full of racists, misogynists, trans-phobes, polluters, capitalist pigs and human rights violators. Just remember that the campus culture you so avidly identify with is technically a political stance that you may need to defend in the future, and not every-body has had the privilege of experiencing these shared “good” values as normalcy for a couple of years. When you graduate, you cannot simply assume you are intellectually superior and therefore correct. A prestigious piece of paper may not mean anything in another context. Plus, ‘UCU Confes-sions’ will not be at your disposal to secretly vocalise your disagreements. My goal here is to warn you ahead of time that you should know where you stand, what you like, and who you are, *separately* from your UCU existence. Because no matter how much this may mean to you right now, it is temporary as fuck in the end.



Dear everyone,

It’s insane to me that just a few weeks ago I was getting excited for warmer weather, but all I can do now is sit in front of my shitty Blokker-branded aircooler all day to avoid melting. Worse still, this time of year means that – for better and for worse – we must say goodbye to all our graduates. Some will be ecstatic about the prospects of leaving UCU; others will be terrified or crying their eyes out; but at the end of the day, you all made it through three (maybe more) years of this uni, and that’s no small feat. I’d argue you’ve owed a medal of sacrifice from the king himself.

The Boomerang board must also part ways with Ida, our Art and PR Manager who recently graduated. Thank you, Ida, for all your hard work, your emotional support, your funny stoner jokes, and just for being a great friend. In her stead, we welcome Alejandra, who has vowed to usure in a new age of photography for *The Boomerang*. I have to admit, I’m looking forward to it. And as always, thank you to everyone who submitted articles and illustrations to this edition!

This time around, I especially want to thank all the extremely brave trans people who’ve had the courage to open up about their hardships and experiences in this edition. For as long as the struggle for queer acceptance on this campus lasts, *The Boomerang* will continue to be an open platform to raise your voice and speak freely. I’ll leave you now to enjoy the edition. Just watch out – the black ink on the Blackout pages has a tendency to smudge all over clothes.

Kind regards,
Pablo

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Boomerang uses wind energy printers



The Boomerang is a periodical newspaper.
This is the fourth edition of the academic

assimilation. Admittedly, this is not entirely our fault, partly also a manifestation of our embeddedness in the Dutch political climate. But still, ever since arriving here I've felt uncontrollable pangs of hesitation – an “ick” if you will – towards the status quo. Why do we normalise getting good grades and maintaining a flourishing social life while a localised invisible tornado rampages everybody's mental health? Upon first impression, everyone here has cool, slightly alternative clothes, a fascinating backstory, and knows so much about global social issues and activism. However, after a couple of weeks, this style and intellect melts together into an amalgamation of seemingly identical identities.

“You should know where you stand, what you like, and who you are, separately from your UCU existence.”

Of course, it's not like I am not guilty of participating in this collective parroting about progressive idealism and the occasional cult-like campus tradition myself. But don't you think we're all reinforcing a weirdly warped version of real life? In my opinion, it is defeating to claim that this university promotes the acceptance of all sorts of people, when if you're too “basic”, “old-fashioned” or “right-leaning”, you certainly do not fit in. And now you may be thinking: *who cares, you ungrateful, anonymous, almost-alumnus? Get over your dissatisfaction and move on, it works well for me.* Well, bear with me. If I were you, I would not get too accustomed to the comfort of having your neighbours mirror your belief systems. If you've ever heard of the dangers of confirmation bias, you'd understand why.

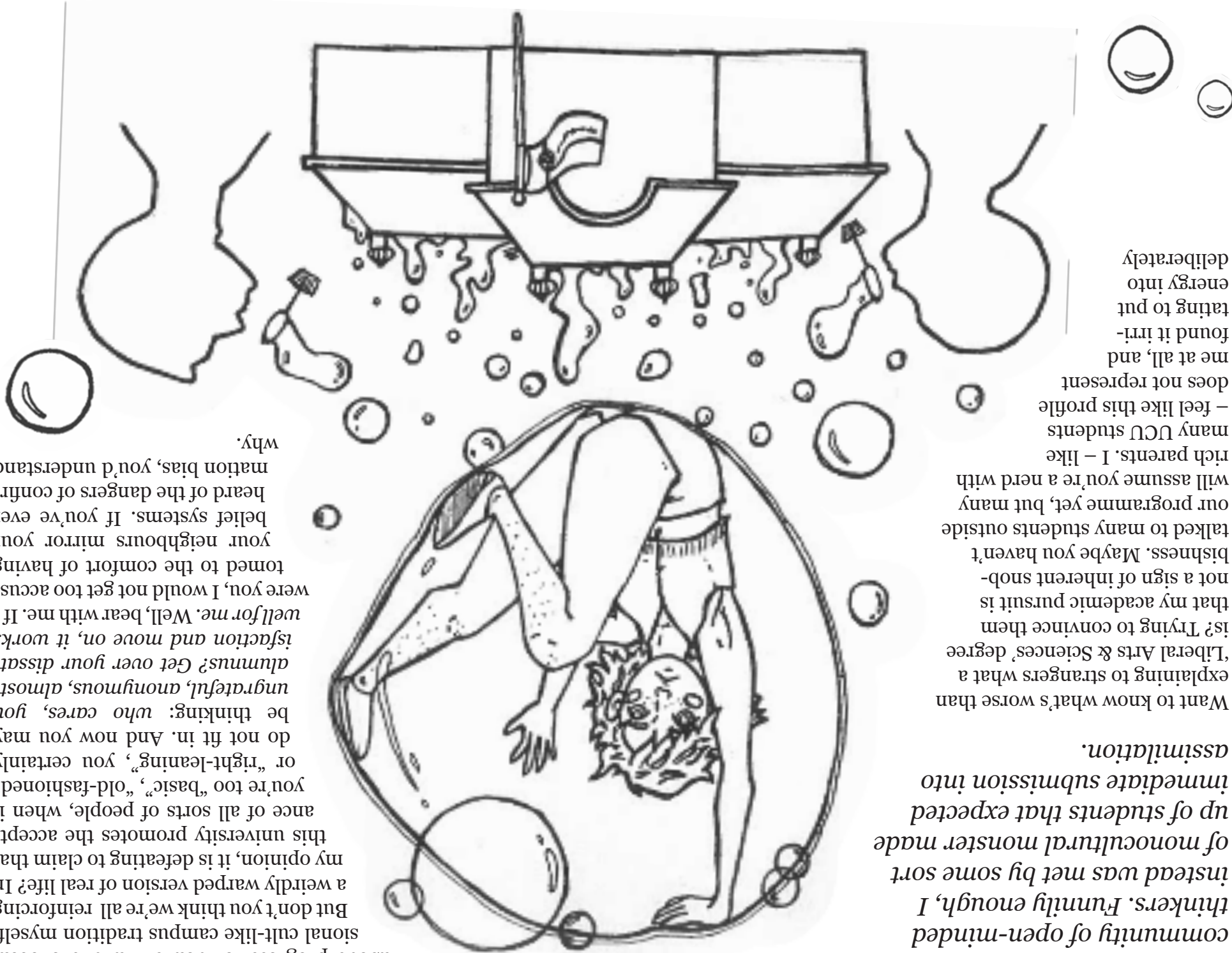
“If I were you, I would not get too accustomed to the comfort of having your neighbours mirror your belief systems.”

I applied to this university model because it was marketed as fostering a diverse community of open-minded thinkers. Funny enough, I instead was met by some sort of monocultural monster made up of students that expected immediate submission into

We all refer to this institution as the city's “University College”, “international campus”, our “uni”, or even “home”. After spending almost three years here, this rhetoric helped me realise that a lot of people forget about where UCU actually is: Utrecht. Because the other way around, our presence does not go unnoticed. Did you know that our idealistically progressive, beautiful little lives of hard work and imagined social status do not reflect reality outside those school gates? That the label *University College Utrecht* carries a whiff of pomposness and ignorance everywhere but “on campus”? Allow me to enlighten you on this microscopic phenomenon from an etic perspective. I learned a lot of this after immersing myself in the city and going off-campus, as well as collecting “other” views on us. Mind you, my reporting is based on anecdotal personal experiences only, so I recommend interpreting this article with a pinch of salt.

“I applied to this university model because it was marketed as fostering a diverse community of open-minded thinkers. Funny enough, I instead was met by some sort of monocultural monster made up of students that expected immediate submission into assimilation.”

Want to know what's worse than explaining to strangers what a ‘Liberal Arts & Sciences’ degree is? Trying to convince them that my academic pursuit is not a sign of inherent snob-bishness. Maybe you haven't talked to many students outside our programme yet, but many will assume you're a nerd with rich parents. I – like many UCU students – feel like this profile does not represent me at all, and found it irritating to put energy into deliberately



It Will Get More Than Better

by Anonymous

I have a long, dramatic, and well-planned suicide note/plan on my laptop titled "HOMWORK," like some porn folder from the early 2000s. But it's still there simply because I forgot about it.

For over 5 years, I have dealt with known mental illnesses and have been in denial of having such illnesses. In what I thought was a horrible little life, one thing remained constant: hating my existence. My pain wasn't

constant, but it was just enough for me to think, "I don't want to exist." Throughout these years, the reasons changed. Maybe my thought patterns were spiral-ing negatively, or perhaps I truly felt like I was nothing. Maybe this pain, this inability to get up without wanting to cry and collapse, the complete lack of social drive, academic drive, life drive, was enough. To be honest, I don't really remember what I used to think; I just know the pain was overwhelming.

“You will need help, you will

need to talk to a profes-sional, but most impor-tantly, you need to appre-ciate the smallest things you are able to do in this rough state, even just the basics.

I came to UCU at the peak of the introduction to my mental illness. I hurt people, and I severely hurt myself.

During this time, I had a final, solid, organized, and coherent plan to kill myself. I gave myself a month after setting this plan, just to try one last time. At the end of this month, I would "be allowed." I could barely get out of bed during this time, but I did it every day for this last month (with the exception of a few days), one last push. During this time, I was put on small amounts of medication. I thought I would go out trying, expecting it to fail like the many times before.

I started off small, taking vitamins every morning (Vitamin D, fuck the Dutch weather).

After a week, I was able to brush my teeth and shower again.

I then started eating three meals a day.

I found contentment in my small, basic, but still present routine.

“I no longer desire happiness; it isn't good enough for me. I demand euphoria. – (Calvin and Hobbes)

My own (new) grounding technique is to try and find beauty in whatever scene is in front of me. If I can do that, I can find beauty in my life even when it is collapsing all around me (which it has, even since my improvement, but I'm still happy).

I consistently heard from my friends (to whom I disclosed a small amount) "it will get better". I hated this. But the truth is, what else can happen?

If you are at that awful point, where else can it go? UCU has a lot of mentally ill people, and I am neither a writer nor a poet, and I cannot give you a perfect step-by-step WIKIHOW to improve, but you always can. There is no personalized guide to improvement, I found my method, I worked hard and continue to do so.

“I started meas-uring my

improvement not by a set goal, but by how far I had come. I had come far enough to reach a point of seeing another option.

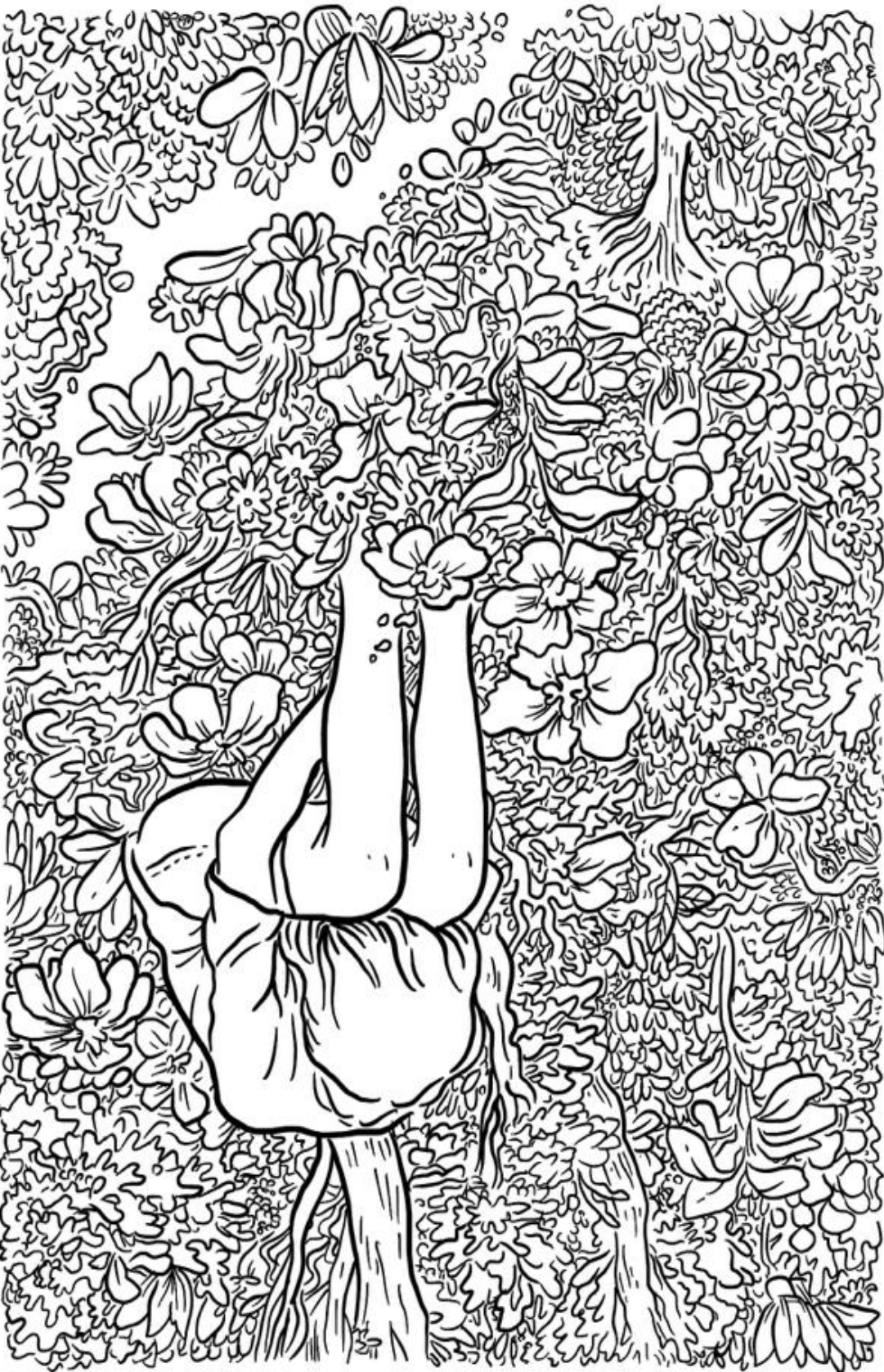
I might relapse, statistically I will, but that won't prevent me from being ready and from enjoying the time in front of me now. There are so many places I will go and so many people I will love and treat much better than before. I do not want to sound like yet another spokesperson for mental health advocacy, so I won't. If you are suffering from a mental illness, *tough*. You will need help, you will need to talk to a professional, but most importantly, you need to appreciate the smallest things you are able to do in this rough state, even just the basics. Just because you didn't finish your 3 to 4-thousand-word essays before the deadline doesn't mean you are not getting better.

I always want to be better, to make up for my mistakes, to improve where I can and appreciate what I have. But from where I stand now, it didn't get better; it got way more than that. When you have been surrounded by smog, the world seems that bit more colourful when the smog fades.

Three days before my planned attempt, I remember thinking I just wanted to be a better person, and I was beginning to be. I started meas-uring my improvement not by a set goal, but by how far I had come. I had come far enough to reach a point of seeing another option.

I no longer desire happiness; it isn't good enough for me. I demand euphoria. – (Calvin and Hobbes)

Illustration © Ella Neuwenhuijsen



The Price of Admission: Do we need to rethink the labour of our committees?

by Anonymous

also does day-long events during open days, Introweek, long bar nights or the dance show, everybody else at that event is also working the entire time. Introweek parents are at the Introweek events all day because they *love* being a parent. FocusCo members are there because they *love* taking photos. The Boomerang *loves* publishing newspapers, Hermes *loves* sports, ArtsCo *loves* art. None ask for compensation for the work they put in. FocusCo's entitlement to be compensated for every picture they take feels unbalanced.

All committees work on the basis of volunteering, and joining a committee comes with spending your time on that committee voluntarily. Legally, the UCSA committees aren't allowed to receive any payment or compensation, majority reply with this: "It's a lot of work without being paid". The sentiment expressed here is not laziness — far from it. It is a realistic assessment of what your time is worth and an understanding that many students need to make their ends meet. It is a luxury to be able to work shifts for no pay. You can only be in several committees, performing hours upon hours of unpaid labour, if you have the luxury of not actually having to work for your money. For many who require additional financial means to get by, this option doesn't exist.

“It is admirable how dedicated students are to creating an experience to share with other students. However, this dedication has to be something you can afford.”

This is not meant to be a rant against FocusCo, but merely an example to illustrate the more important point. The distribution of rewards and labour among the student body is unequal and random. Why does a Student Ambassador Coordinator get paid more than a Student Council member? Why does FocusCo demand compensation for doing exactly what their committee is meant to do when BarCo bartenders only receive a free drink an hour for giving up so much of their time? How do we make sure that students from lower economic backgrounds can pay the entrance ticket to campus social life, while simultaneously keeping up the spirit of the voluntary contribution that makes UCU so unique? I have no answers, and only provide an incentive to think beyond the model of committees we currently use. Perhaps, we should look expectantly to the new UCSA board for a revision of how we incentivize voluntary involvement and reward hard work. Yet, for a more balanced, equal, and diversely active student body, I am positive that something needs to change.

festival, it was a more sincere show of support than if they'd been paid for it. This excitement Introweek, long bar nights or the dance show, everybody else at that event is also working the entire time. Introweek parents are at the Introweek events all day because they *love* being a parent. FocusCo members are there because they *love* taking photos. The Boomerang *loves* publishing newspapers, Hermes *loves* sports, ArtsCo *loves* art. None ask for compensation for the work they put in. FocusCo's entitlement to be compensated for every picture they take feels unbalanced.

When asking students who didn't become bartenders or chiefs over their 3 years of UCU about *why* they didn't do so, a vast majority reply with this: "It's a lot of work without being paid". The sentiment expressed here is not laziness — far from it. It is a realistic assessment of what your time is worth and an understanding that many students need to make their ends meet. It is a luxury to be able to work shifts for no pay. You can only be in several committees, performing hours upon hours of unpaid labour, if you have the luxury of not actually having to work for your money. For many who require additional financial means to get by, this option doesn't exist.

This means there is a high price of admission into the inner circle of UCU's social life. While we and do extensive work for campus life, we don't consider that most of those who have to have an off-campus job aren't choosing to be a 'campus ghost' — they are doing it out of necessity.

However, on the flip side, there is a sense of entitlement in feeling that your volunteering should be worth money. FocusCo asks for compensation for taking photos in a 10-minute board photoshoot. The kind of compensation they expect is usually free entry to an event or free drinks, though lately they've gotten increasingly demanding in this regard (like wine or baked goods). However, DanceCo teachers put together near-professional classes every week and get no compensation of sorts. While FocusCo undoubtedly works very hard and

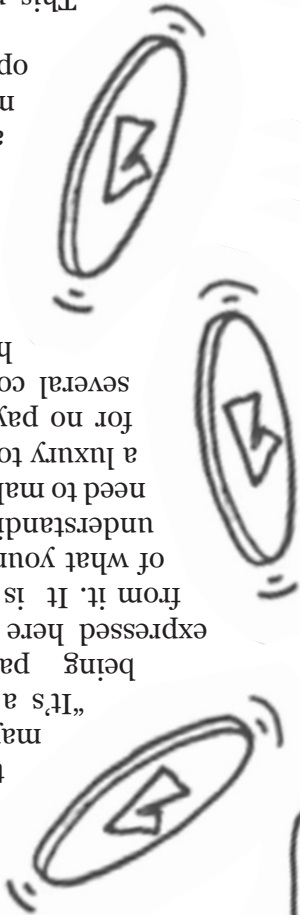
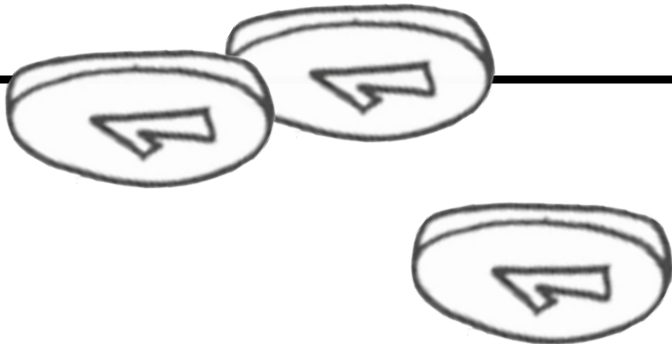
As many of us attended Lustrum, the heat made it obvious who was the backbone of these three event-packed days: BarCo and their drinks. The chiefs — unmistakable in their black, heat-attracting shirts — stood outside handling lines upon lines of alumni, staff, and students from lunch until late at night. When the last event ended, the desperate cries of overheated alumni echoed over campus, "So, where can we get drinks?".

While watching the chiefs working during Lustrum, there was no visible difference between them and the people working in the food trucks. However, there is one critical difference: the workers at the food trucks get paid for their labour, and students aren't. When students expressed sympathy for the man at the pizza truck for working next to a hot stone oven, he joked, "This is my job, at least it pays!". All the students, whether it be MusicCo performing, BarCo mixing drinks, or the Student Ambassadors giving tours, were not paid in the same way. While their labour was equally exhausting, it was undeniably free.

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Now, there is nothing inherently wrong with unpaid labour. In fact, it is commendable that students are willing to volunteer their time to contribute to an event like Lustrum or the QueerCo festival. When committees gathered together to support trans rights at the QueerCo

Illustration © Alejandra Monerri Reuella





What's in Clocktower?

by Anonymous

“The building holds many eerie treasures, which seem to care not about the ticking of time. An exhibition, formal archive, or investigation into the peculiarities of this building ought to be done sooner rather than later.”

There is an abandoned monument at the helm of our campus. The iconic Cantecleer, or Clocktower building, has been in a state of neglect for over a decade now. This space has been squatted for a time, and now only gets clandestine visits. It contains an eerie interior with art works on the walls and floors, some with slogans beckoning to the military history of the building. ‘He wasn’t a Hitler boy’ is written along the staircase. There are rooms that were used as cells to hold disobedient soldiers here, or so I am told. This space is not only one of spectacular spectrality, but also of temporal beauty. The monument still houses our functioning clock, under which lies a carpet of dead flies, surrounding the intricate timekeeping mechanisms. Apart from a bird nest and some spiders, only the ringing of the bells remind you that you yourself are not a ghost here. Written under the clock faces are military proverbs like ‘Zit op Tijd’ (Be on Time), ‘Tijd Slijt’ (Time is fleeting), or ‘Rust Roest’ (Resting Rusts). These are words from the military commissioners who ordered the tower constructed, their biblical tenets feeling positively archaic now. All the signs, some more concrete than others, are asking us to give it some attention.

With campus relocation seeming increasingly unlikely, expensive, and impractical, surely the time to re-imagine and campaign for the reclamation of the Clocktower is now.

“We should all want to put an end to the building’s emptiness. It is unjustifiable for the university to allow this to continue. It seems this building is a metaphor for our academic environment which refuses to embrace the radical education needed to survive the twenty-first century.”

Just like our academic buildings, Clocktower has three floors. The large vaulted ceiling could make for a great campus café, perhaps student-run like our bar, but with a focus on creating a day-time environment – one which is absent in all other public spaces on campus. Or perhaps a shared library for pleasure reading, a record player, a plant nursery or an art studio – there is room for all of this just on the top floor. Perhaps as a science student you’ve wished there was a lab space on campus, one which

could be used to carry out simple experiments and conduct research in an interdisciplinary setting. This could be made possible on the large second floor. The bottom floor is currently in use (by whom I cannot say), as a storage space for bedding and miscellaneous items. Perhaps this could be used to create a dance studio, or as performance space given how in demand these rooms are in Dining Hall. UCU could even bring back their once-loved academic choreography classes. We could also house offices for staff, meeting rooms, music rooms.

While what will become of Clocktower in the next few years remains unknown, I do know that we all could envision how to reclaim it. It’s about time to do so, whether or not all our dreams come true or not. We should all want to put an end to the building’s emptiness. It is unjustifiable for the university to allow this to continue. It seems this building is a metaphor for our academic environment which refuses to embrace the radical education needed to survive the twenty-first century. If they can remain passive on issues as blatant as these, it is no wonder our demands for transformational education often see little more than acknowledgment from those higher up. It’s time to demand more, this building could be our collective space for change.

Reach out to the new @ucn.cloctower on Instagram if you have any ideas or questions.

