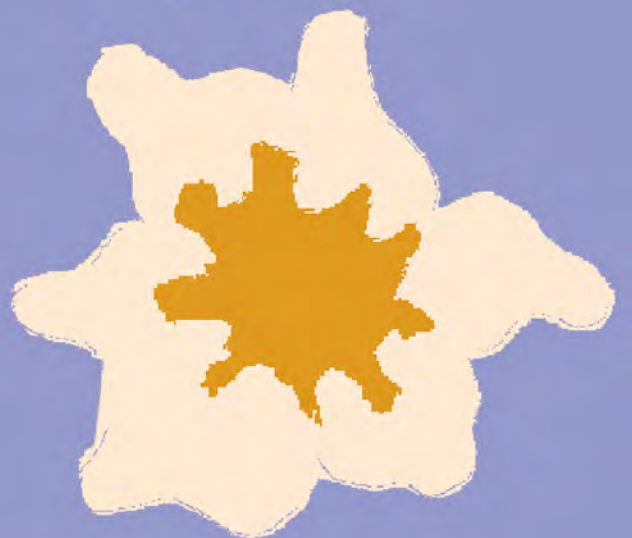
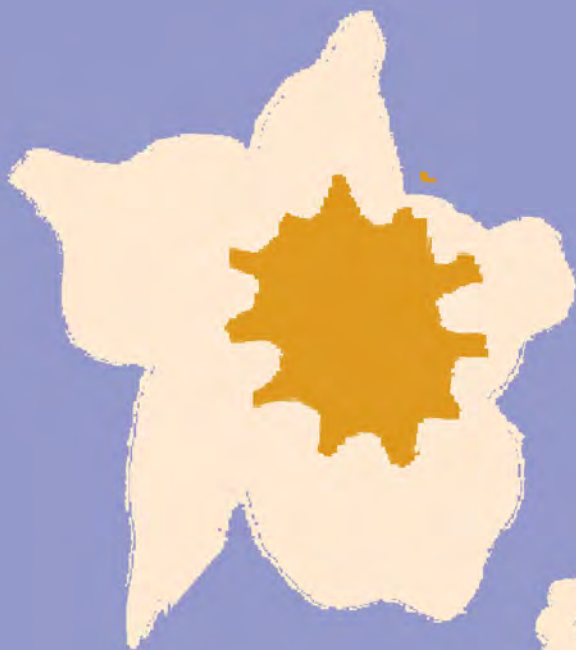


DUWA

Ashes to Ashes



Editors' Note

Mirroring this year's ever shifting trends, political forecasts and news cycles, this edition of GUM brings us into our existential crisis era. We've been pissed off, we've been indulgent and delirious and now, well, we are pondering our place in the universe aren't we? A good bit of existential dread combined with a healthy dose of nihilism, and a sprinkle of re-birth, we find ourselves at a crossroads. There's so much to be done in our short but wide lives, but does it all just feel like it's been done before? We will try to stave off any Mary Oliver, John Green style prose, but man, the end of an era really does feel like something serious.

With Ashes to Ashes we embrace the questions that govern human existence, and influence our very point specific, this exact minute in the globe's rotation, lives that are so full of weirdness. What does it mean to truly connect with nature? Will Facebook become our means of visiting our loved ones graves? Should we all cop a MetaBirkin? These questions, as silly as they are in turn revealing about the conditions of our lives, today, yesterday, and tomorrow, (needling towards a little Kung Fu Panda reference here), are all within these pages.

As always, many thanks to the extensive and excellent GUM team, without you we would be mere star dust. To all the writers, artists, editors, designers, and managers, we are so lucky to share this moment with you all and to be able to create something so sweet together. To our readers, breathe deep, act slow, and relax into some deep meditation.

Lots of love,

Ava and Conal

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Nepo-babies: *shifting the focus*

“Creativity is not thought of as something inherited, something one can pay for. We like to believe that it comes purely from a source of distinct, intrinsic talent”



WORDS
Marlow Elliott Fortnum
(he/him)

Features

GUM

Summer 23



Nepotism seems to be a word on everybody's lips these days; we have become acutely aware how often nepo-babies occupy magazine covers, star in blockbuster films, and walk the runways. As a direct opposition to the meritocracy we are led to believe we live in, the issue serves as a constant reminder that the world is not a fair one. But why, and when does it bother us so much?

When Rupert Murdoch's children were handed control over his media empire, I think it is safe to say that there was little reaction or controversy. In the business world, and other monetary-focused industries, nepotism rules, as it always has done, and we are neither surprised nor particularly affronted by the privileges afforded to those born to these rich and “successful” parents. This seems to be a different conversation; one focused on class, privilege, and wealth disparity. The headlines that scream outrage seem to stem primarily from concerns about the issue's prevalence in the public/celebrity sphere and the creative industry. In regards to celebrity culture, it is a world surrounded with its own set of issues and I'm not too concerned about how we can subject more people to its superficiality. Although that may not be everyone's opinion, I think the battle against nepotism is hard fought in an industry in which names, image, and status are its primary components.

However, when we do start to focus on the issue within the creative industry, I don't think too much blame can be placed on the nepo-babies themselves. Although their privileged position is something they should not be allowed to forget, can you blame them for taking the opportunities presented to them? I'm sure that I can speak for anyone involved in music/acting/art and say that if I was offered a major opportunity by my parents or family I would take it, it is a competitive industry and knowing people within it, is sadly part of the game. With all this being said, what is it about nepotism within the world's creative industries that rubs us the wrong way?

A figurehead for this topic, Lily-Rose Depp responded to the subject by denying its role in her life, sparking controversy, when she stated that ‘the internet seems to care a lot about that kind of stuff .. nothing is going to get you the part except for being right for the part’. While her viewpoint does indicate a fair amount of naivety regarding her privilege, she raises two interesting points.

Firstly, that the internet, and popular society, seems strangely obsessed with the issue - as I have mentioned before. And secondly, perhaps the reason why we believe that: creativity is not thought of as something inherited, something one can pay for.

We like to believe that it comes purely from a source of distinct, intrinsic, talent, that whoever is gifted one of these rare and sought-after roles, did it based purely on their own merit, they were “right for the part”. Seeing someone like Jaden Smith cast on to our TV screens, therefore, perhaps reminds us that this is not always the case. This is, of course, exaggerated when one of these nepo-babies delivers a bad acting performance or a shoddy album, and we understand that it may not have seen the light of day had they not had their distinctive last names.

An infamous example of this is the casting of Sofia Coppola in *The Godfather Part III*, where critics responded with outcry at a performance they believed to cripple the film. Both she and her father (the director Francis Ford Coppola, who was responsible for her getting the role) claimed that she was simply a last minute replacement for a sick Winona Ryder.

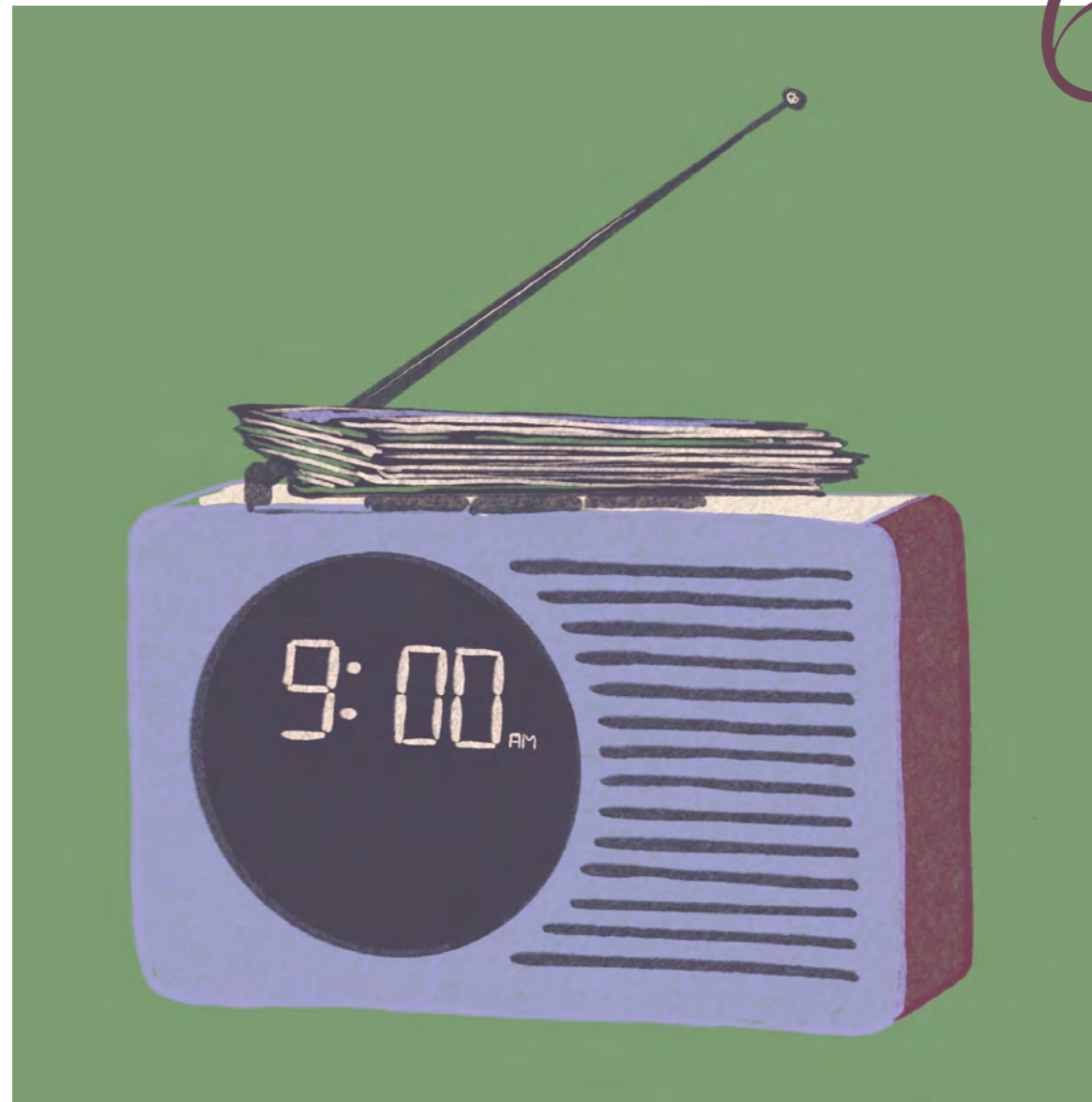
Although this may be true, the act of employing her still denied the part to someone who may have used it to establish an acting career. The fact that Sofia went on to largely abandon her acting dreams, and yet have a successful career as a filmmaker, highlights a worrying fact: for a nepo-baby this incident is merely a blip on the road to some type of success, while for the unknown actors who would have clamoured for this opportunity, it is a chance at stardom wasted.

Despite the unfairness of this aspect of the industry, actual talent, I think, does play a large role. While it is not surprising that the child of an actor might share the traits that helped raise their family to stardom, what they gain most importantly from their upbringing, is cultural capital. Being surrounded by, and having consistent access to, opportunities within a given field is a resource that cannot be overlooked. This, however, seems to be an issue that can be dealt with. Recently I went to see the London-based jazz band Ezra Collective, and during their performance drummer Femi Koleoso took time out of the show to talk about the origins of their group. He acknowledged the massive influence of Tomorrow's Warriors, an organisation that promotes and provides education on jazz music, an art form often seen as elitist. Organisations such as this one can provide the experiences and facilities that can aid young creatives in pursuing these careers. The value of providing this type of access to creativity cannot be overstated and contributes to the battle against the experienced nepo-babies that have an unfair advantage.

Rather than tackling the issue head on, and attempting to get in between children and parents who, despite their privilege, are looking out for each other as most families would, creating alternative methods of developing cultural capital could perhaps be a more apt response. Although this doesn't confront the problems caused by biased casting directors and producers, increased funding in the arts could be an initial step to even the playing field a little. In a world in which schemes like Rishi Sunak's mandatory maths A-Level continually undermine the arts, we need to establish their worth, not only as a method of opposition to nepotism but also through the rich cultural and personal experience they can provide.

Asides to Asides

Existentialism and the Death of an Analogue Life:



Seeking material comfort in an increasingly digital culture

Features

GUM

For my birthday this year, I bought myself an alarm radio. I want to make clear that I am no technophobe. Rather, newly 23 and feeling paradoxically less like an adult than ever before, I was compelled instead by melancholic nostalgia. Missing the refuge of my childhood, I sought its soundtrack: the tinny acoustics of a portable radio. Reminiscing being 5 or 6 and crawling into my parents' bed on weekend mornings as they listened to the musings of a BBC Radio 6 DJ; snow days spent at the kitchen table, eating toast and jam whilst I willed the local station to announce my school's closure – the radio held a consoling presence that I hadn't truly appreciated at the time. Reverting to this technology has brought me a lot of joy. Admittedly, with the first few uses, I lacked trust: I would set an alarm on my iPhone in tandem. However, my radio soon became my most reliable possession. A call which gradually increases in volume, I wake now to the sound of music.

Simply, and perhaps indulgently, this little box serves a singular purpose: to wake me up. Unlike the screen of my iPhone which, for an array of tasks, I tap countless times a day, I press the buttons on my radio usually just once; to turn it off before I head out to work or university. Needless to say, none of this is groundbreaking. My radio won't help me during a power outage or apocalypse, and it certainly hasn't functioned as a gateway towards a less smartphone-dependent lifestyle either. However, relatedly, there exists a worthy reflection on the material items that take up space in our lives. In his book *The Beauty of Everyday Things*, Yanagi Soetsu champions the practical: '[Mingei] is devoted to healthy utilitarian purposes. It is, in fact, our most trusty and reliable companion throughout our daily lives. Essentially, it is easy to use and ready at hand, [...] provides a sense of ease and comfort, and the more we use it, the more it intimately becomes a part of our lives'. More explicitly interested in modest, handcrafted objects, Yanagi hardly would have considered the mass-produced hunk of plastic that is my radio to be Mingei (indeed, I wonder what he'd make of its faux pine veneer). However, compare it to my iPhone which, despite my reluctance to upgrade, will be replaced, made unusable by an array of forces that benefit from its disposability. Contrastingly sturdy and relatively easy to fix, my radio may well take up a physical presence for the remainder of my life. A steadfast companion, having an object to anchor myself to as I take on life's early mornings feels radically comforting.

There is no doubt that our boundaries of self and belonging can be grounded in materiality – but where

does that leave us in an increasingly digital age?

We no longer require so many objects to function sufficiently and, moreover, the objects we now rely upon have simplified our individual output and engagement with the world. Digitalised, our existences are, in many ways, compacted; on a material scale, we become less palpable.

Take the calendar diary. Formed not just by being filled with schedules and reminders, an analog diary becomes representative of our daily lives through the process by which we do so. For instance, variations in handwriting or ink might suggest chronology, urgency, or importance; encompassing doodles and shopping lists (or, antithetically, their scratching out) may signify the corresponding mood to a particular date. Deceivably simple because of its ease of ability, the analog diary can be endowed with considerable complexity and meaning. As Yanagi has addressed, the pinnacle of expression is the human hand: 'From its natural movements are born all manner of beautiful things. No machine, no matter how powerful, can match its freedom of movement. [...] Without it, beauty would not exist'. Indeed, streamlined to fit a certain format on the calendar app of our laptops and phones, all individuality is stripped from the logging of daily interactions and pilgrimages. Unable to mediate expressions of self to the same extent as analog processes, I wonder, is the potential originality and creativity of the everyday stunted by digitalism? If yes, are our existences resultantly less physically evident and meaningful?

Just as meditating on everyday actions and procedures is a privilege, so is embracing the tactile ways of interacting with the world without digital filters. Digitalism is complex, and I need not explain how digitisation can make our lives easier – a testament to technology's usefulness is the reliance humanity has developed upon it during the COVID-19 pandemic and the resultant expedition of attempts to digitise processes and information. Furthermore, considering how the digital preservation of cultural and heritage archives makes them more widely accessible, I will admit that it is short sighted to mourn expressions of existences whilst blaming digitalism. Utilising materiality to confirm to myself (and indeed others) that I exist, perhaps a more worthy reflection is that resurrecting an analog lifestyle is inherently self-centred. Feeling swallowed up by passage of time, why else would I feel the need to make my existence materially evident – to keep a bookshelf of the books I love and dog-ear their pages, to print my photographs and collect postcards, to own a clock radio?

'There is no doubt that our boundaries of self and belonging can be grounded in materiality – but where does that leave us in an increasingly digital age?'

Asides to Asides

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WORDS
meg gray (she/her)

ARTWORK
Katie Stewart (they/them)



Breaking Gran's Traditions

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Asides to Asides

Culture

Summer '23

WORDS *Evie Hylands* (she/her)

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My Gran was dismayed the first time I spoke honestly with her about religion. She was convinced I had become yet another by-product of my mother's raging atheist mentality. I first started to question faith, not just hers but every kind, arguing with the other children at the local Sunday school that there was no way Jesus could have fit that many fish in his pockets. As my mother had decided early on that she would not drag me to our local parish every single Sunday, I used to embarrass Gran by my lack of knowledge of hymns and synchronised prayers.

She would tie my hair in tight pigtails and dress me in frilly little dresses that she loved. Once ready to show me off to her friends, she would parade me around the golf club so they would tell her how pretty I looked. In those same days, I would perform my stilted and unpractised hymns in exchange for dessert.

Growing up queer was confusing at the best of times. Honestly, it was something I denied for most of my life. Upon reflection, I don't think I fully understood it until I was older. To this day, it is something that my grandmother still does not know. The church told my grandmother that I would make for a perfect mother with the perfect husband who could make me some perfect children...the ultimate happy family. That was something I never wanted and it took me years to finally tell her I did not want to be part of her practice anymore because the church did not align with my values. Subsequently, it has become a sore topic of discussion between us. We now tend to stick to safe subjects like baking or the life achievements of my many, many cousins. Every year she still tries to drag me to go to her church and every year I still tell her no.

I was around 15 when I finally told her I did not want to go anymore, when I realised that the homophobia that was present in the church was something I could not tolerate anymore.

When everyone else went to church, I started to spend my Sundays how I wanted. My Gran tried everything to get me to go, bribing me with new outfits, books, and promises that I would be allowed to have my favourite dinner (seafood pasta). I miss the time that I used to spend on a Sunday with my Gran, and I understand that the time I have left with her is fleeting, but it felt so liberating to stop pretending. I gained a new sense of autonomy when I simply stopped tolerating underlying comments about gay nephews, and stopped pretending to smile when a jab was made at the expense of the queer community. I no longer had to exhaust myself by correcting people every other minute for the use of the slur. The way I was able to disengage, ridding myself of feeling drained and frustrated every Sunday, was beautiful.

'The way I was able to disengage, ridding myself of feeling drained and frustrated every Sunday, was beautiful.'

I spent my time doing other things instead. Every Sunday I would explore new coffee shops, read books, and go on new walks by myself. I spent time getting to know myself - perhaps because it finally gave me the space to consider who I was. It was hard to let go of, and I know that it is something that still upsets my Gran.

There were consequences too, other than the promise of eternal damnation, of course. I was ostracised from the "omnibenevolent" church community, and disinvented to dinners, bake sales, and community gatherings. Though I faced familial tension, for my personal growth it was a wholly worthwhile experience that I would do again in a heartbeat. To my Gran, I will forever be her queer, hippie grand-daughter who does not come to church - the odd one out in the family. I do often miss the time I got to spend getting dressed up and fussed over by my Gran but her dotting eyes are waylaid by religion. If I wanted to relax into the comfort of her love, it would have been at the expense of my identity.

ARTWORK *Ruby O'Hare* (she/her)

THE PERFECT HAT-TRICK:

WORDS
Jack Harrison
(he/him)



ARTWORK
Louis Managh
(he/him)

IO

Celtic, Rangers, and the Death of Sectarianism

GUM

Culture

To say Scotland has a “troubled” history with sectarianism is an understatement. The religious divide between Catholics and Protestants, and subsequently Celtic and Rangers supporters, dominates cultural perceptions of Scotland, and Glasgow in particular. As the city’s graffiti makes clear, sectarianism in Glasgow is more about religious conflict than it is about religious difference. The centuries of hatred between Catholics and Protestants has long been the predominant form of oppositional expression between The Old Firm. But, it hasn’t always been this way.

The clubs first met in a friendly match in 1888 to welcome Celtic, Glasgow’s newest team, to the wonders of Scottish football: the Celts came out victorious to the tune of 5-2. Unlike Celtic, whose roots are embedded in Catholicism, Rangers hadn’t been christened, so to speak. Their association with Protestantism took shape after settlers from Belfast sought employment in the industrial heart of Glasgow. Before you could express religious bigotry towards others from the comfort of your desk chair you had to go to church, work, or the football. The influx of supporters from both denominations generated an overarching culture based on religious segregation.

The coinciding post-War depression gave birth to Glasgow’s notorious razor gangs, with many being cut down sectarian lines. The ensuing violence tore through the city and has festered ever since. While religious based violence still remains in certain pockets of the club’s supporters, recently things have felt a bit off.

It feels as though sectarianism in Scottish football is dying. While this is long overdue, it signals a shift in both Scotland’s footballing and political landscapes. According to the 2011 census, close to 2,000,000 Scots reported having no religion. This mirrors the rise of secularism across Europe, as the continent increasingly moves away from faith-based religion. The latest report on sectarianism in Glasgow also indicates that sectarian violence has been in decline since the 2010s. We are beginning to see the clarion of sectarianism lose its tune in the terraces of Scotland’s football stadiums; its presence in the historic rivalry has taken a pew for different forms of cultural opposition and, fundamentally, sporting success.

Domestic and European achievement takes up much of the aggression directed towards the clubs. Rangers’s liquidation in 2012 and their relegation to Scottish football’s fourth tier helped Celtic go on to win the league 8 times consecutively, securing a quadruple-treble in the process.

However, Rangers’s league win in 2021, their 55th overall compared to Celtic’s 52, stopped Celtic achieving the coveted 10-in-a-row. Rangers made their way to a Europa League Final the following year, as talismans were gripped far tighter than any God-fearing fan would care to admit, which saw them crash out on penalties.

Ideologically, Celtic are perceived as a socialistic, anti-monarchic, and socially progressive club while Rangers are aligned with a conservative, pro-union, traditional mindset. However inaccurate this may be for substantial amounts of supporters, the two clubs typify an ideological divide in Scotland.

The political cleavages between Celtic and Rangers have been particularly visible in recent years. Look no further back than the death of Queen Elizabeth II. In lieu of thoughts and prayers, Celtic’s ultras group, The Green Brigade, hung out a banner reading: ‘FUCK THE CROWN’. Rangers opted for a more traditional approach with the Queen’s shaded silhouette over a Union Jack.

Remembrance Day services conducted at Ibrox typically involve cannons, soldiers, and stands being transformed into memorials adorned with poppies.

Celtic fans recently celebrated the day against Ross County in their usual fashion by singing “The Sam Song”, a song that celebrates the missiles used against British troops during the Troubles in the 1980s, and holding a particularly vocal minute’s silence. Thankfully, the political stigmata seem to be healing, wound by wound.

‘It’s unlikely that sectarianism will die out in Scotland. For many, it gives this rivalry a sense of purpose.’

The All Under One Banner movement has played its part in bridging the ideological divide between Glasgow’s giants, with supporters marching together in favour of Scottish Independence. The group Rangers Fans for Change have heralded a step in the right direction in advocating for class solidarity and an end to the sectarian divide between the two clubs: they released a statement last year denouncing the singing of “Billy Boys” for its strident anti-Catholic lyrics, and the song’s association with the eponymous fascist Billy Fullerton. There is, unsurprisingly, backlash against any sort of unity between supporters of such adversarial clubs, but this is tied to an identity of old and we should welcome whatever this strange form of peaceful hatred is.

It’s unlikely that sectarianism will die out in Scotland. For many, it gives this rivalry a sense of purpose. But, I prefer shouting about which club is better on and off the pitch over which religious sect deserves the right to live. Now, let’s bow our heads and pray it stays this way.

III

Illustration: Louis Managh

GET *naked*

“Hang loose” is an attitude rarely used when approaching the body.

WORDS *Chloe (Joe) Rabbino (she/her)*

ARTWORK *Sophie Aicken (she/her)*

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Ninety minutes spent naked in front of a circle of strangers provided me with more inner peace than any meditation or yoga class. As numerous eyes shuffled about my form, pencil markings on paper made me feel permanent. Within a life drawing class, documenting the naked body requires the same approach as used with any other inanimate object. No longer a measure of morality, the body acquiesces to its inherent form: a figure of shapes, shadows and angles. It becomes, in a way, like a bowl of fruit or an earthen landscape, not beautiful by measurement or force, but beautiful and worthy just because.

When the class finished, I instinctively scurried to the side to clothe myself. I felt the need to be discreet as I got dressed. These strangers had just seen and documented every inch of me, yet the ding of a timer transported me back to a world where my nudity was unacceptable. Physically, nothing had changed. I was the same person, in the same room, with the same people. However, I was no longer protected by the “art form” of being nude for a life-drawing gig. That two second ding of the timer reminded me that I was just naked, and it was 7pm, and where the fuck are my clothes, and holy shit I’m naked and everyone is looking at me. I thought posing for this class would free me. It did, but only for the 90 minutes where my nudity was acceptable.

Growing up in Miami, Florida, the presence of fat on my body was wildly objected to. Year-round bikini season promoted the annihilation of anything other than a “bikini-bod”. This led to my full-fledged embrace of one-piece swimming costumes and years of body dysmorphia. Common to individuals all over the world, the feeling of “a right way to be” was etched into my brain. I had built up so much shame around having a body and felt so apologetic that it wasn’t “perfect”. At 18, I turned to art modelling because I wanted to prove to myself that if I stood naked for 90 minutes in front of 50 strangers, the world would continue to turn.

We are taught that our dimensions measure our worth. Yet, in a life drawing class, the body is simply a shape. Rolls and dimples add character. As someone who frequents these sessions as a drawer too, I recognise that bodies that are traditionally marginalised by society are my favourites to draw. They are the shapes that feel real and tell stories that I want to document. Society and capitalism have forced the images of perky breasts and hourglass shapes into my mind with every ad and clothing website, reinforcing the trendy body-type of the present time period. It feels glorious to drain those images out, and fill my mind up again with the diverse images of real people.

After my nudy-judy moment, I questioned how I could take the expansive perspective adopted in life drawing classes and implement it in daily life? How do we free ourselves, without it being some loud performance of liberating activism? Do we get to just be naked?

Asides to Asides

I want to be quietly naked. Not a shout in your face, holy cow, look she’s naked, naked. I want to experience nudity and think ‘oh yeah, they’re naked’. Just because I have these beliefs does not mean I can just as easily abdicate myself from the fear that someone might yell ‘yuck’ when I undress. I’m still fist-fighting my prior fears of getting nude in front of my peers; soothing myself with the mantra ‘if they haven’t seen it before, it is about time they do’. I no longer view my nudity as a decision or a rejection. I simply let myself get naked.



‘That two second ding of the timer reminded me that I was just naked, and it was 7pm, and where the fuck are my clothes, and holy shit I’m naked and everyone is looking at me.’

OLD WOMEN A 14 MOTTS BURN



WORDS *Eric Glen (she/her)*

ARTWORK *Magdalena Kosut (she/her)*

Politics

GUM

Summer 23

Asides to Asides

Coined in the 1970s by New York psychologist Herbert Freudenberger, the first acknowledgement of ‘burnout’ seemed, aptly, to come at a time of soaring inflation and political upheaval. It is no wonder, then, that the term has become a buzzword of today. Freshly permeating headlines after the shock resignations of Jacinda Ardern and Nicola Sturgeon, there is a sense that this all-consuming exhaustion pilfers even those we assumed to be beyond its reach. A uniquely human struggle, these latest convalescents invoke a paradoxically contested yet prima facie observation: perhaps, as Sturgeon asserts, a politician really is just a ‘human being’. I wager it is precisely because of this perception of non-humanity, perpetuated by forces both internal and external, that politicians are predisposed to burnout. Coupled with the ultimate responsibility for a country, and in the face of daily misogynistic vitriol, burnout seems a contractual clause for female political leaders.

Throughout history, the number of female leaders around the world has remained perpetually 10% below the number of their male counterparts. Constructed within this gulf is a patriarchal definition of global leadership. Traditionally, to be a global leader was to embody the man, and to be a man was to be resiliently undeterred by feebler emotions. Though this men-don’t-cry narrative is fading in society, it seems to still play in blindingly high definition on the global political stage. There is an insurmountable expectation that global leaders ought to maintain a traditionally ‘masculine’ capacity to emotionally endure every pressure of the role. Failing to do so would be to appear vulnerable, and thus unsuited to global power. However, though it seems frustratingly obvious, this extra-human emotional endurance is really just a monstrous lack of empathy. For aspiring female leaders, this expectation posits an ultimatum: to observe or defy the patriarchal mode of leadership. To observe it is to perpetuate a model that prioritises ego over empathy (see, Boris Johnson’s limping last months of tenure), though to defy it is to defy tradition. Thus, those leaders who reject patriarchal norms, in an effort to maintain humility and humanity, are faced with the pressure to prove their strength despite their assumed vulnerability.

For female leaders, merely their gender places them under a microscope for scrutiny. With politics dominated by men, female leadership is still very much in its pioneering stages. The women who successfully traverse the patriarchal boundaries of politics are defined, even then, by their gender. As the ‘Youngest Female Global Leader’ or ‘First Female First Minister’, they are immediately set apart from their male colleagues, and consequently situated for comparison from the beginning. Female leaders are interrogated as a woman first, and a politician second.

The intensity of criticism ranges from perpetuated sexist stereotypes - such as BBC’s ‘Can Women Have it All?’ headline following Ardern’s resignation - to violently misogynistic threats of rape. Indeed, research pub-

lished by the Fawcett Society found that 93% of female MPs said online abuse had a negative impact on them, while 73% said it discouraged them from raising issues on social media.

This misogyny is replicated within parliament, as noted in a 2022 parliamentary report by the Women and Equalities Committee which describes a ‘culture of bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct’ within the House of Commons. These compressive forces of misogyny construct an environment primed for the premature burnout of female politicians before their male colleagues. Too often, they are ignored in discussions of female burnout in politics, which instead posit a conflict between global leadership and motherhood.

To suggest female burnout is entirely the consequence of a necessarily antagonistic relationship between leadership and motherhood is pure bioessentialism, blaming the woman for her own burnout. It goes without saying these discussions do not question the capacity for men to be both leaders and fathers, because they immediately assign mothers the primary caregiving role. As such, the capacity for men to ‘have it all’ - that is, a marriage, successful career, a couple of affairs and eight (?) distant children - goes unquestioned, while a woman’s personal life is cited alongside every critique of her governing abilities, and each critique implicitly clutches to the traditional patriarchal model of leadership, constructed on an invulnerable ego.

To subvert the traditional ideal of leadership is not simply a matter of more female representation, but of the reformation of the political and media environment in which this model flourishes. It would be futile to encourage more women to enter a ‘boys club’ that perpetuates a culture of misogyny. Even if women were not discouraged from entering parliament, if she has any desire to be a mother, the system places an end date on her career at the point of an inevitable burnout. This fate of burnout is not so entrenched within male politicians, because the parliamentary system was, and still is, constructed for them.

‘Compressive forces of misogyny construct an environment primed for the premature burnout of female politicians before their male colleagues.’

: The demise of the female leader

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THIS LAND IS NOT YOUR LAND, THIS LAND IS NOT MY LAND.

Politics

Summer 23

‘No one knows the mountain completely who has not slept on it’ – Nan Shepherd (1977)

ARTWORK *Joanna Stawnicka (she/her)*



WORDS *Esther Weisselberg (she/her)*

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GUM

Asides to Asides

Until thousands of protesters gathered together on Stall Moor in Dartmoor in January 2023, I had no idea that wild camping in England was mostly illegal. The protest objected to landowner and hedge fund manager Alexander Darwall’s successful court case against the Dartmoor National Park Authority, overturning its previous policy which allowed individuals a right of access to walk, camp, and exist on Dartmoor without having to ask permission first.

Most wild land in Scotland is open-access. The Scottish Outdoors Access Code allows for activities such as hillwalking and camping provided that people do not damage the land they are accessing. Furthermore, core paths, in Scotland, must cater for everyone, including those with disabilities.

English land is not shared to the same degree. According to British campaigner and researcher, Guy Shrubsole, ‘land is inherently scarce.’ Only about 5% of English land is owned by householders; 18% is in the control of large companies; 30% belongs to the landed gentry. The rest is either owned by charities, the crown, the Church of England, or unaccounted for; 10% is open access. These statistics are increasingly hard to examine as, not only did George Osborne take it upon himself to try to privatise the Land Registry (which ‘details the ownership of 83% of England’s green and pleasant land’), but 17% of the details in the Land Registry are unknown even to parliament. Although the Tory government (rather typically) made a U-Turn on the Land Registry privatisation, following it meeting much opposition, it truly emphasises the murky state of the laws governing land ownership, not to mention the fact that many British estates earned their wealth and status from the slave trade.

It is clear that we do not own the land we walk across, but it can often feel like walking into a divisive bubble when we try to go against it. The Dartmoor protest featured a giant puppet of the “Old Crockern”, a mythical figure in Devon folklore. The right to access land is important to me, but some protest movements can be alienating.

The appearance of the Old Crockern on Dartmoor was an obvious example of protest movements preaching to the converted; the large artistic display posing a distraction from the real issue at hand.

Why is it necessary to experience the “great outdoors”? Studies show that being outside improves your sleep, immune system, and mental health. Children who experience more time outdoors develop more ‘self-confidence, independence, and self esteem’, becoming ‘aware of limits, boundaries, and challenges in their play’. Rural open space provides us freedom to our movement and to our voices in a way that urban living cannot. In her book *The Living Mountain* (1977), Scottish writer, Anna “Nan” Shepherd, describes that, when surrounded by nature, she is ‘emptied of preoccupation, there is nothing between me and the earth and sky’.

Being outside also reminds us of the importance of keeping our natural landscapes natural. Shepherd explains that ‘no one knows the mountain completely who has not slept on it’, emphasising the important link between personal experiences of the natural environment and reactions to the growing ecological crisis.

In the name of ‘protecting Dartmoor’s environment’, the moors can no longer be accessed without permission. Instead of allowing families and other groups to camp on the land, Darwall now uses it for elitist sports such as hunting and shooting. Perhaps a better, more protective, use of this land would have been rewilding. A progressive form of conservation, rewilding helps repair and regenerate damaged ecosystems by reintroducing, and sustaining, wildlife populations that have decreased as a result of man’s actions. Often brushed off as merely a romantic idea, this process has brought diverse vegetation, moose, beavers, and golden eagles back to Scottish land.

Why is it necessary for British people to have legal access to British land? Cheap campsites are accessible, and asking farmers for permission to stay on their land is always a possibility. However, by staying on someone else’s land, responsibility often seems to absolve itself. During an online conversation with Right to Roam, the environmental activist group, writer Robert McFarlane suggested an interesting link between responsibility and permission. He proposed that asking for permission to camp on a farmer’s, or campsite owner’s, land ‘insights a sense that someone else is looking over your shoulder and that someone else has the responsibility to take care of this place, even to clear up after you’. McFarlane suggested the idea that collective stewardship, instead of relying on landowners, may make the land be more likely to be left the way it was found.

In a discussion on the BBC Breakfast show, Right to Roam campaigner, Amy-Jane Beer, was asked whether individuals should continue to illegally wild camp in England. She responded by imploring the listeners to live as they would if it were possible to wildcamp everywhere, whether that be using the privilege we have of legally wildcamping in Scotland, or setting a good example while wildcamping in England - perhaps even camping on Darwall’s land.

Until three years ago, I thought that trespassing would result in an arrest-on-the-spot. I was wrong. The worst that can happen is that you’ll be asked to move on. So go ahead, frolic in nature, and use the privilege we have of land access (for now) here in Scotland.

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Will Alastair Campbell

Politics

A spectre is haunting Britain: that of New Labour. Under Keir Starmer's leadership, the party is returning closer to the centre-ground, with the hopes of wooing back a middle class increasingly feeling the sharp edge of Tory policies. To people of voting age in the late 90s (or to political junkies of any age), this story will have a familiar ring to it. Achievable or not, Labour dreams of the ground-shaking electoral victory that resulted from Tony Blair's campaign in 1997. The time seems ripe, then, to reflect on its main architect: Alastair Campbell.

The fact that *The Thick of It*'s Malcolm Tucker - one of the greatest and most well-known characters in British political satire - was not-so-subtly based on Campbell aptly illustrates the magnitude of the man's shadow over politics. Infamous for his abrasiveness and ruthless efficiency, Campbell was key in orchestrating the largest electoral landslide in the history of British politics. Journalist Peter Hitchens claimed in a recent interview that he is 'genuinely sure that Campbell was the executive Prime Minister for the first years of New Labour'. Campbell himself claims in his diaries that he was the "nexus" of New Labour, and that ministers frequently deferred to him in decision making. This echoes popular opinion about Campbell, seen as the power behind the throne.

'By many accounts, he was a forceful, acerbic (and allegedly, sometimes violent) Machiavellian, capable of manipulating the media and public perceptions, whilst enforcing discipline in the name of attaining and maintaining power for the Labour Party.'

The truth of these claims aside, Campbell was indisputably a sharp political operator, who 'intimidated the entire Westminster press corps' into line in a way which few have replicated. By many accounts, he was a forceful, acerbic (and allegedly, sometimes violent) Machiavellian, capable of manipulating the media and public perceptions, whilst enforcing discipline in the name of attaining and maintaining power for the Labour Party. Along with his colleague Peter Mandelson, he was defined in the British popular imagination as the figure of the spin doctor: that shadowy person who works behind the scenes, subtly manipulating public perceptions of the government via the media.

My mum - who is from a working-class area of Glasgow and had her first child in 1997 - has often told me about the relief and the hope she felt that her daughter wouldn't, she thought, be born into a country run by Tories who held people like her in ruthless and cold contempt. Today, however, opinions on Campbell vary widely. The man who won an election on the personality of another is now enjoyed by some as a personality himself - on TV, podcasts, and magazine interviews. For others, he is no more than an unscrupulous spin doctor who hammered the final nails into the coffin of Old Labour. After his Machiavellianism went as far as justifying a war on allegedly doctored evidence, to many he became the picture of an unpunished and unrepentant war criminal, with the blood of hundreds of thousands on his hands.

"fuck the fuck off"?

Summer '23

In more general terms, we might ask what influence his *modus operandi* has had on the political landscape of the country. In 2008, Michael Howard accused Campbell on *Newsnight* of being personally responsible for forever lowering the tone of political and public life in the UK. Certainly, we have seen shades of the type of political appearance he pioneered - or more accurately its photographic-negative - in Boris Johnson's blustering, unconcerned, pseudo-Churchillian public persona (to say nothing of his own background in print media). We see this more insidiously, too, in Nigel Farage's "down the pub", politically-incorrect appeal. But where Campbell supposedly had a 'fixation with the daily firefight with the media' over individual headlines, it certainly appeared in the Johnson-era that the ex-PM was able to ignore the constant media backlash, confident in the strength of his own personality-cult. Similarly, it is reasonable to draw a connection between the degradation of public trust in the New Labour government's honesty - through instances like the Iraq "dodgy dossier" - and so-called "post-truth" politics, which saw its most succinct distillation in Britain in Michael Gove's now infamous claim that 'people in this country have had enough of experts'.

Regardless of the controversies which dog his legacy, the current Labour leadership seem primed to salvage what they can of the master of spin methods, as we see Starmer cosyng up to the right-wing print press in the hope that they will open the way into Downing Street for him, as they did for Blair. Whether this strategy will pay off the same way in a post-internet age, and without the help of a morally grey political machine such as Campbell, is yet to be determined.

WORDS *Callum Sneddon*
(he/him)

Asides to Asides

GROWING COLOURS:

In Conversation with
Lily Garget

Location:
Lily's home in rural Angus

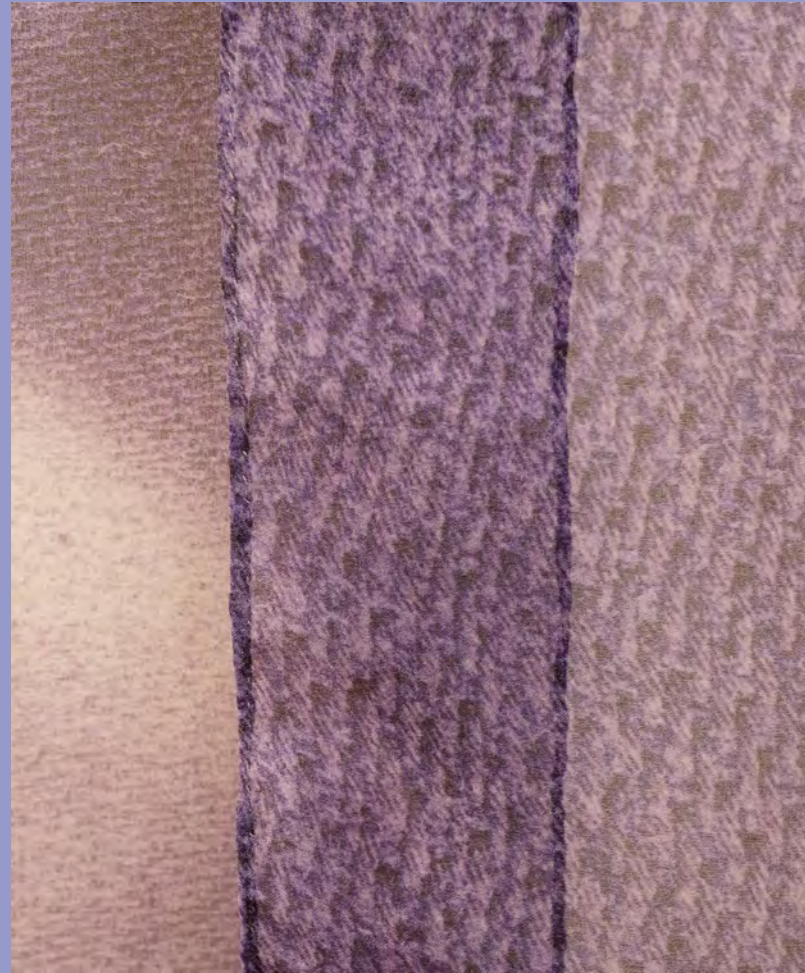
Artist: Lily Garget
Photography: Joanna Stawnicka
Interview: Eliza Hart

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GUM







Lily Garget is a Scottish sculptor and textiles artist based between Glasgow and Angus. Lily graduated from Glasgow School of Art in 2022.

Could you describe who you are and tell us a little bit about your practice?

I'm a visual artist from Angus. In my work, I focus on imprinting ephemeral parts of the landscape into natural materials through hands-on, process-led techniques. I make natural dyes from forest foraged materials like berries, flora, and bark, and food waste like onion skins. When I'm not in the kitchen dyeing silks and wools, I'm often in Suffolk bending metal and welding with my dad. Over the past 3 years, he's taught me how to fabricate chairs, benches, and arches, and we even turned an old tank into a log burner.

How has graduate life treated you since studying Sculpture and Environmental art at GSA?

I was lucky to secure a job working with Hospitalfield in Arbroath before graduating, which was a great experience. Throughout the end of my degree, I was working with ANAM Creative to secure funding for projects this year, and we are starting to hire other young people now which is so exciting!

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What was your experience like at GSA?

The Sculpture course at GSA was extremely self-led, I felt at the start quite lost with this, but I always knew I had an overarching atmosphere I wanted to create with my work, and the four years at GSA helped me refine how to present it. My fourth year was when I really felt confident in my work and the decisions I made around degree show helped me understand how the varying aspects of my practice fitted together.

What roles do sustainability and the natural environment play in your practice?

The inspiration for my work so far is rooted in the landscape

of Angus; I've tried to capture the seasonality of the place, the shapes of the horizon, and the ever-changing colours. The technique of creating natural dyes is temperamental and extremely variable and mimics the natural environment in this way. By turning outwards the colours of the landscape and imprinting them into fabrics in expansive and immersive works, I bind myself to the place and time in which I'm creating the work. Within my metal work practice, I create functional works such as chairs and benches which bring people together to create shared memories within a landscape. In a gallery setting, they offer stillness within the work and invite conversation between viewers.



GUM

You're based between Glasgow, Angus, and Suffolk, how does location affect your practice? Could you describe your workspace?

When I'm in Glasgow I focus on creating works that I can make within my flat, often knitting or weaving. I go home to Angus to dye fabric; it's where I gather inspiration and dye materials, and keep all my big metal pots for heating dyes! I find the stillness of the glens and the surrounding countryside a big part of creating this work. When I can visit my dad in Suffolk, usually a few times a year, I can work in the barn and learn more skills from him. My practice ebbs and flows throughout the year depending on where I'm based but I find the difference in techniques allows me to continue to question how and why I am binding certain materials together.

How do you stay motivated to keep making and overcoming the creative block?

Coming out of uni has really helped me find my own rhythm with making work, allowing me to work to my own deadlines and explore different materials when it feels natural. It's always hard to overcome creative blocks, but remembering that making work only leads to making more work has always helped me; any idea you have is worth getting out, even just to get to the next one - if that makes sense. Being outside is the biggest help to overcoming any creative blocks I have.

Who are your biggest influences?

My work is hugely influenced by family, my gran was an artist who endlessly encouraged me to investigate materials. My mum has always collected parts of the landscape and growing up around these found objects combined with her career in soft furnishings has definitely filtered into the way I work now. Learning welding and metalwork skills from my dad has helped me understand how critical well-made, precise work is, and the experience of knowledge being passed down has greatly influenced the presentation of my work in which I try to communicate how the work is made as part of the resolved work, allowing the viewer a greater understanding of the work as a whole.

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Could you tell us a little bit about ANAM Creative?

I've been working with ANAM Creative since 2021, and in the past year, Ben Deans, Brèagha Charlton, Michiel Turner and I have established ANAM Creative as a community interest company with the aim of creating paid opportunities for emerging artists and musicians in Glasgow through collaborative, process-driven projects. For the past year, we've been running events at The Old Hairdressers and also house gigs at secret locations across the city, platforming new musicians and artists. Our aim with these events has been to blend together varying music genres in one night and create a warm and generous community within the audience. In December we received Creative Scotland funding and this year we are running two three-month-long projects, hiring in a total of 14 young creatives and paying them at Scottish Artist Union Rates. The projects will focus on collaborative work between the artists and musicians, based on briefs about the Scottish environment, allowing them to develop professionally while creating lasting connections with other creatives.

There's a lack of paid work for creatives across Scotland and we hope by providing these types of opportunities we can instill confidence in the next generation of creatives in the value of their work. All our events and opportunities are posted on our website and through our Instagram @anam__creative.

Dream dinner party guests?

Fiona Apple, Carrie Bradshaw, Zadie Smith, Mary Oliver.

What's next for you?

In the coming months, I'll be working with ANAM Creative, creating mosaics with Joanne Dawson, and going on the Wild Islands residency with Sail Britain.

Advice for a person looking to broaden their creativity or looking to pursue an artistic practice?

Trying new methods is a great way to broaden your understanding of materials. Easier said than done but consistently creating work is a really important part of feeling confident in your artistic practice - this can take so many forms! Don't criticize work before you've made it.

Where can we find more of your work?

I post most of my work on my Instagram @lilygarget. I'm hosting an exhibition in July at the Glasgow New Society space in the West End, and next year I'll be at the New Contemporaries show at the Royal Scottish Academy in Edinburgh.

STYLING

STYLING



The Aesthetics of the Female Breakdown

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Style & Beauty

GUM

WORDS *Hannah Parkinson (she/her)*

ARTWORK *Lizzie Eidson (she/her)*

Summer 23

Female “hysteria” has cropped up in medical journals dating back to 2000 BC - medical professionals perpetuating the belief that women were ‘biologically weak and flawed’ for this ‘hysterical behaviour’. As women, we are so often branded “hysterical”: ‘It’s just their time of the month’, says the age-old dismissal of our emotions.

Jumping forward 4 millenia, women are still demonised for their emotions. It is far too easy to romanticise misery. ‘Britney shaved her head and all we did was call her crazy’, sings MARINA in her 2021 album, referencing Britney Spears’ meltdown which will live in the archives of tabloids forevermore. Similarly came the public breakdown of former child star Lindsey Lohan during the noughties, who was criticised as her mugshot was plastered across the front page of practically every media outlet around the world.

Both Britney and Lindsey suffered following their very public struggles. There is a tendency for tabloids to swoop like vultures once a celebrity exhibits behaviour that can be exploited, mocked and picked apart. Sadly, it seems to be female celebrities who suffer disproportionately. Very recently, paparazzi shots of Cara Delevigne after Burning Man surfaced, and tabloids jumped upon them. Isn’t it time to stop demonising celebrities for their mistakes, addictions, and mental health issues? There is a

‘It appears the “sad-girl” is not just a state of mind, but a state of being.’

stigma surrounding the very public nature of the celebrity breakdown, and a tendency to treat their lives and suffering as public domain.

But in light of the recent fascination with Y2K fashion and culture, these representations of female breakdowns are frequently passed off as “iconic” pop-culture moments. The influence of this aesthetic now spans across all platforms and facets of modern media. It appears the “sad-girl” is not just a state of mind, but a state of being.

Simultaneously, social media has seen a series of trends reclaiming this messy, grungy, far-from-perfect look, branded the “sad girl aesthetic”. Much like Lohan’s infamous mugshot, a 2020 TikTok craze saw thousands posting their own fabricated “mugshot” images.

Even the elite of the fashion world are preying on this commodification of misery, with Gucci, Schiaparelli, and Dior shows all featuring the grungy, “sad-girl” aesthetic. Gucci’s Fall 2020 show spotlighted models with ever-so-purposeful black mascara tears running down their faces, perpetuating this “sad-girl” image further into high-culture.

There is undeniably a sense of catharsis to be found in this. In reducing the pressure to present a “perfect” im-

age online, we begin to reject the desire for unattainable perfection. Here the era of the “sad girl”, heralded by teenage girls online, comes into play. We’ve all done it. We’re in the middle of crying, snap a photo, and the tears live on forever in the annals of our camera-rolls, private stories and chats with trusted confidantes. There is a certain refreshing vulnerability, a realness, to this trend.

The influence of teenage girls in their bedrooms creating these trends back on 2014 Tumblr (think Effy Stonem, Lana del Rey Ultraviolence era, black and white posts) is apparent. But this romanticising of the depressive female image equally raises challenging questions when we consider the implication of looking for ‘femininity in sickness’. Is it right that we are constantly defining ourselves by these ever-evolving cultural indicators that tell the world who we are and how we feel? Perhaps this tendency to aestheticise our misery represents a wider cataclysmic shift towards our growing desire to categorise ourselves by aesthetics, phrases, and subcultures?

An essay by Rayne Fisher-Quann articulates this beautifully. As Fisher-Quann puts it: ‘One girl on your TikTok feed might be a self-described Joan Didion/Eve Babitz/marlboro reds/straight-cut levis/Fleabag-girl (this means she has depression)’. She then considers how other mental illnesses are aestheticized into subcultures which validate one’s own personal suffering by the types of me-

dia they identify with. She writes: ‘If i can compare myself to just the right amount of things — place myself at the nexus of enough edgy, vaguely feminist media properties — will that eventually start to feel like actualization?’ In today’s era of late-stage Capitalism, to exist is to consume, and to be consumed. We are marketable products, even commodifying our own suffering. As Fisher-Quann puts it, ‘We consume so much, now, that perhaps we don’t know what it means to exist as something unsellable.’

As our perfectly curated instagram aesthetics so often cater to the male gaze, perhaps the “sad girl” trend becomes an opportunity to reject expectations of perfection. Women existing for themselves, understood by other women, is a beautiful thing. Reclaiming our emotions and, in doing so, validating each other’s experiences, creates a culture of solidarity and acceptance. By rejecting the beauty standard in favour of curated chaos, we embrace femininity in all its forms.

In a society which historically lobotomised the hysterical woman, the “sad girl” is finally allowed her moment. Whether you choose to participate - to trauma dump sad girl insta poetry across your feeds or listen to Mitski on loop - we can herald the female breakdown as more than a “sad girl aesthetic”, but as a space in which female emotion is not demonised, but revered.

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Asides to Asides

'Quick, let me grab

WORDS Maeve Gorman (she/her)



ARTWORK Lewis Aitken (he/him)

Style & Beauty

my MetaBirkin'

GUM

Recently I have been hearing the phrase 'That's so meta' everywhere. From indie boys at art shows to Chicken Shop Date (thanks Matty Healy), it's a very current buzzword. 'Meta' is something that is self-referential, and shows 'awareness of itself or its genre'. The 21st face of 'meta' is the metaverse: "A (hypothetical) virtual reality environment in which users interact with one another's avatars and their surroundings in an immersive way". The metaverse offers non-fungible tokens (NFTs) which are units of data certifying a digital asset and traded using cryptocurrency (that's my tech knowledge exhausted).

The fashion industry is never one to be left behind, with brands including Dolce & Gabbana, Nike and Zara having already established a presence in the metaverse. But what exactly does the metaverse mean for the fashion world?

Enter Meta Birkins. In November 2021 Artist and NFT creator Mason Rothschild created digital renderings of the iconic Hermes Birkin bag (which can sell for anywhere between \$10,000 and \$2 million) and sold over \$1 million worth of NFTs. Hermes sued for trademark infringement. At the beginning of February in a case that established if trademarks could hold up in the metaverse, a jury awarded Hermes \$133,000 in damages. Rothschild reacted to the verdict stating, 'I'm not cre-

'At first, to me, this whole thing seems a bit silly, intangible, and dystopian. I was quick to dismiss it. But the metaverse holds the potential to make real and positive change to the fashion world.'

ating or selling fake Birkin bags. I'm creating artworks that depict imaginary, fur-covered Birkin bags. This use of fur imbues the work with a critique of the animal cruelty endemic in the production of the classic leather bag. Rothschild's virtual work didn't have quite the same environmental impact.

This whole saga raises important questions about the future of fashion. Could the metaverse solve problems of sustainability in fashion? Could it break down the access barriers to an exclusive world for up-and-coming designers? And most importantly, what could it mean for our own self-expression?

First, a run-down of fashion history in the metaverse. In 2018, AI influencers like Lil Miquela burst on to the scene giving us a glimpse of what was to come. John Galliano's 2018 Margiela shows featured models wearing headphones and with phones strapped to their ankles, a precursor of the fashion x metaverse collab. With the COVID-19 pandemic, everything rapidly accelerated. Virtual fitting rooms were launched by Gucci and Louis Vuitton, and in 2021 Balenciaga (circa its relevant days) collaborated with Fortnite TO. In March 2022, Decentraland (a 3D virtual platform) launched the first Metaverse Fashion Week, and it's making a return

this year.

No 21st century fashion story would be complete without a cameo from fashion's favourite nepo-baby, Bella Hadid. In May 2022, she launched an NFT platform, CY-B3LLA, which includes 11,111 NFTs of Bella herself. Hadid knows what she's doing when it comes to fashion, and her involvement signals that she believes the metaverse is the next big thing. Even if you don't subscribe to the prophecies of Hadid, investment bank Morgan Stanley predicts that the virtual fashion industry could be worth more than \$55 billion by 2030 (honestly, what is going on?).

At first, to me, this whole thing seems a bit silly, intangible, and apocalyptic. I was quick to dismiss it. But the metaverse holds the potential to make real and positive change to the fashion world. Fashion is an industry with a well-documented environmental impact. The metaverse could help reduce waste as brands could test trial products on their virtual platforms and see the response before rolling them out in a mass, physical form.

The fashion and metaverse story has a human side too. Ukrainian designers, Bevza, Gudu and Ienki Ienki all showcased their work at Paris Fashion Week (Spring/Summer 2022) and the garments were later made available through an NFT marketplace. When their manufacturing and creative process was disrupted by the

outbreak of war, the metaverse allowed for adaptation. Without materials, access, and art school, the metaverse provides a space for unbounded creativity and design.

The metaverse, too, can be a place of joy, freedom, and self-expression. Last year, three drag artists Tia Kofi, Blu Hydrangea and Adam All, collaborated with three designers to present 'Queens of the Metaverse', a metaverse drag show. The looks were accessed using one of Meta's headsets. In an interview with Dazed, Tia Kofi stated, 'As queer people, it's really important for us to occupy these spaces. The Metaverse is literally pointing towards the future! It's our time.' Queer visibility, expression and freedom becomes just as important in the metaverse as in our social reality. It offers an outlet for this limitless, beautiful queer expression.

So, I am a begrudging convert to the idea of meta fashion becoming more mainstream. It's not all NFTs, crypto and billionaires. It offers a genuine creative and expressive space. I'm not going to get Roblox yet, but I am excited for what is to come.

A Facebook

Science & Technology

Facebook recently reminded me that it was the birthday of a loved one who had recently passed away. It was a cruel joke, in its own right: no one thinks about what to do with the accounts of the deceased. Put them on private? Delete them like they never existed? Leave it as it is? Unfriend them? Facebook does not care; Facebook does not know. The notification will show up on your phone without mercy.

I had a conversation a few years ago with a family member that told me how morbid he thought social media was making memorialisation. It is obviously painful losing someone you love and we already put our whole lives on Facebook, so why would our deaths be different? It is not unusual to publish a post trying to put in a paragraph or two how much this person meant to you, how much you're going to miss them, and how heart-wrenching it is to imagine a world in which you are facing it all without this person, now gone.

And your friends, family, and co-workers (and people who you have added as "friends" because you shared a seminar in first-year of university or because they sold you a sofa once) will scroll down their timeline, read some of your most personal and intimate words and see a few pictures, a few memories that you cherished and wanted to capture and share. They might press "like" (do you really like this?) or even a "heart", and, if they can spare a few seconds, they might even comment 'I'm very sorry for your loss'. The worst part is that it probably is genuine, but it feels pretend and disillusioned. You are alone in your house, with your phone in your hands and no comment will change that.

Remembrance sites and posts about loss make me feel very emotional, but at the same time totally detached from the concept of death. It's difficult to express the immanence of existing and suddenly leaving an absence, because you cannot ever leave the Internet; on the Internet you live forever. Online, there are so many profiles, and so much information, that it won't be as obvious that you're gone. There's not an empty seat at the dinner table. Business as usual; people are scrolling again.

At some point, around 2100, we will probably all be inactive profiles on Facebook. It could be because we abandoned it in 2050 for another better social media (is it even possible to create a good one?), because we got tired of always being online, or simply because we died. It is eerie to imagine billions of Facebook profiles vacant, inactive, belonging to dead people who will never post again. Some type of digital liminal space. And let us not forget the waste that comes from this.

'At some point, around 2100, we will probably all be inactive profiles on Facebook'

We seem to forget that the Internet is not an immaterial project that translates from our laptops to "the web". Our data is stored and powered by giant computers and servers that occupy kilometres and kilometres of territory. They are powered through depleting the energetic resources that are already limited. Our profiles will be caskets not only of our online personas, but also of the Earth.

However, I do have to say that I find some comfort in graveyards, even digital ones. Somewhere, someone may come across your name and know who you are or maybe just know that you're a stranger who wrote something funny, or meaningful, or stupid, or weird, or incredibly frustrating. They will know you were there, and you existed. That you had a life, just like them in the future. We all want to be remembered forever, right?

GUM

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Summer 23

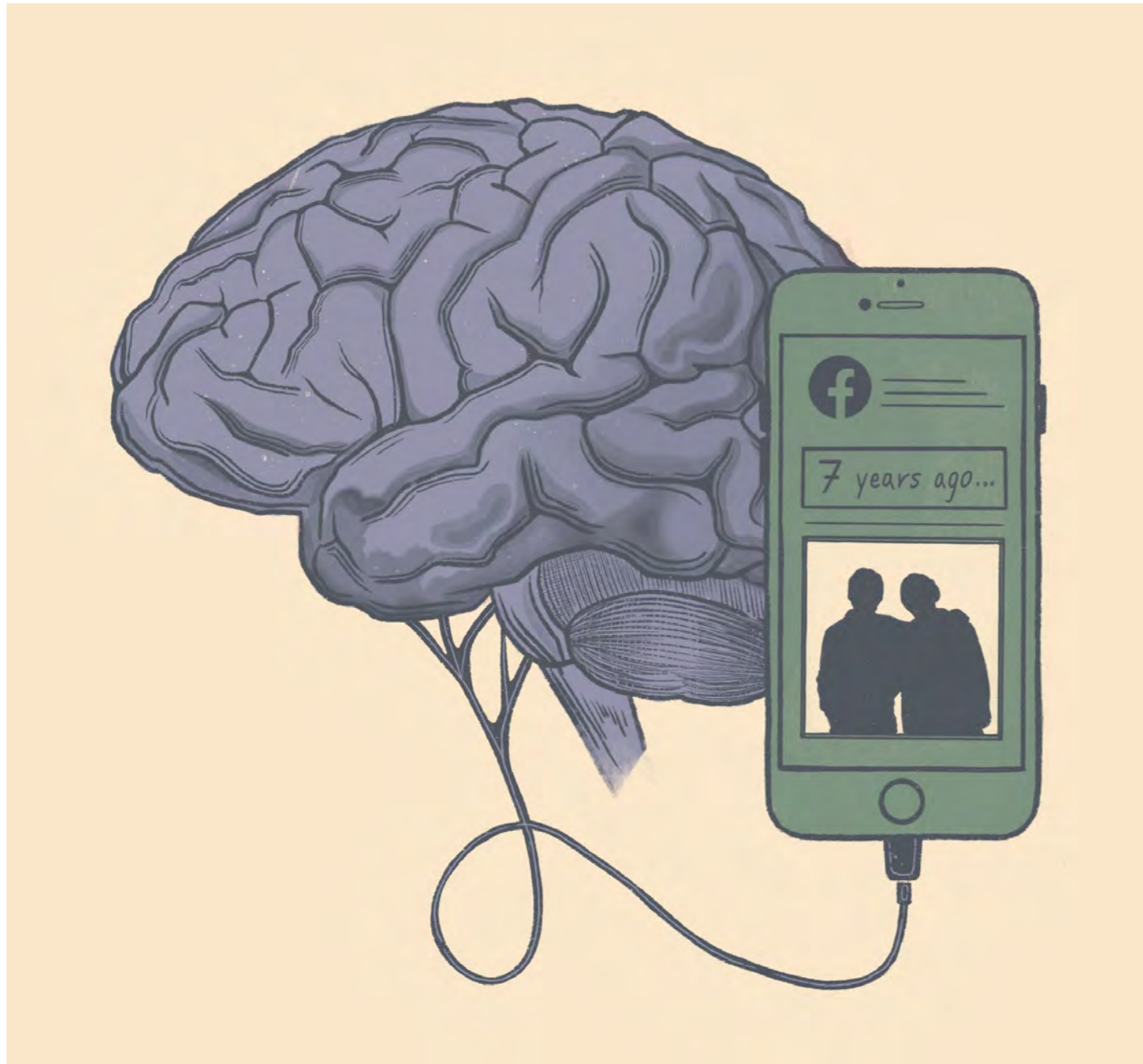
Asides to Asides

WORDS *Eva Lopez-Lopez (she/they)*



ARTWORK *Rory McMillan (he/him)*

Graveyard

ARTWORK *Magdalena Kosut (she/her)*

'We are not allowed to forget — four years ago today: you were on the beach, you had better hair, that person was still alive, you were in love with that person.'

'This perfume,' a reviewer writes on *Fragrantia*, 'reminds me of the Oyster Bar in 2008 and my dead ex-boyfriend.' The perfume is *L'air de Rien*, designed by Jane Birkin to smell like her brother's skin. The combination of the musky perfume on human skin has a death-like smell. It reminds people of past lives. Another woman writes that when she wears it she is 'in' her grandfather's house, with the white shutters and the dust. The connection between scent and memory is well documented. Our sense of smell allows us to travel back so quickly (Glasgow smells like batter, grass, honey). However, alongside sensory information, we have a new way of remembering.

Digital Amnesia

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Nora Ephron wrote, in *I Remember Nothing*, that she had once been curious about technology: 'I became a champion of e-mails and blogs - I found them romantic.' As her memory faded, she wrote: 'I used to think my problem was that my disk was full; now I'm forced to conclude that the opposite is true: it's becoming empty.' Researcher Tony Schwartz argues that this is what technology does to our memory. He likens tech-overload to a glass of water, constantly being filled. The water that's just entered spills out over the top. The new memory never makes its way to the bottom of the glass.

It would seem that technology helps our memory, acting as an external hard drive; a second brain. In fact, we are not allowed to forget — four years ago today: you were on the beach, you had better hair, that person was still alive, you were in love with that person. All stored in the iPhone under the function 'Memories', the horribly painful photos are mixed in with the meaningless: receipt, sunset, screenshot. However, a 2014 study found that you are less likely to remember an event if you have captured it on camera. In the same way that you are less likely to store information that you know you can readily access online, a phenomenon called "the Google effect". To misquote Einstein: 'Never memorise something that you can look up'. The problem, of course, is that everything is available online.

You are also less likely to remember clearly if you were not paying full attention at the time. Famously, tech is excellent at capturing our gaze. Oliver Hardt, a psychologist and memory researcher, explains that humans need to be attentive to their environments. 'Our attention can shift rapidly around and when it does, everything else that was being attended to stops, which is why we can't multitask. When we focus on something, it's a survival mechanism: you're in the savannah or the jungle and you hear a branch cracking, you give your total attention to that... Now, 30,000 years later, we're here with that exact brain. The notification sound is the twig snapping. As Nora put it, between her and technology: 'I've erected a wall to protect myself from most of it. On the other side of that wall are many things, ping-pong.'

In the early era of Facebook, a trending machine poll found that 18-35-year-olds had become more forgetful than seniors. Culturally, it's romantic to lose your memory— from Anastasia, to *Random Harvest*, to the trope in the telenovela — but only if you get it back. Digital amnesia offers no return. The research suggests that the more we rely on technology, the less memories we will store into the mind's "filling system". As Nicolas Carr writes: 'When facts and experiences enter our long term memory, we are able to weave them into the complex ideas that give richness to our thought.' Without them, what we think can only ever be shallow. The photo slideshow, the interrupting notification — remember last Christmas, that bowl of pasta, that double rainbow, takes us further and further away from your grandfather's house, from the Oyster bar. One day this will all be a hazy nothing.

THE XXXORCIST



All I could think about was my mother. I know she can see me reaching beyond the grave, and running my hands over the indented wood, reminiscent of the haunted floors of my childhood home. She doesn't understand why I won't listen to her anymore, but I'm telling her that the same thing that happened to her won't happen to me. People will still see me.

I know where to begin, but I am finding courage in the confines of my flat on the scratchy carpet of my room. I suppose that's the nature of this isn't it.

It's dark and every 99 cent candle I own is lit and casting shadows on my peeling walls. There's a tap dripping in my kitchen but I'm too lazy to go fix it right now.

I place my fingers on the gentle heart of the pointer, and I cannot tell if I am meant to be doing this alone. If a ghost comes to possess me it can only help my life, I think. Do you think people who have a lot going for them are touching ouija boards alone?

I suppose it can only make me funnier. If I tell someone your mother sucks cocks in Hell! people might receive it as a bit.

Ha ha funny, she's doing the possession scene from THE EXORCIST, right?

I am beginning to feel like I am not alone anymore. Which would be quite a beautiful sentiment if this was under typical circumstances.

I call out:

'Is there anyone in this room with me that would like to communicate?'

'Is there someone here with me now? If you are, can you drag the pointer to YES?'

My fingers are slowly pulled to the edge of the board, and it's become so cold that it feels like I've been pushed against a cement floor in the dead of winter.

...Y E S

My brain is thumping through every decision and I can't make out how fast my heart is beating. I am starting to second guess the whole possession bit.

I wait a few beats until I can muster something again:

'Can I ask you something?'

The message is delayed by a few seconds suspended in Hell, and my fingers are gently guided again:

I S T H A T N O T T H E P
O I N T

“...Oh alright.”
S O R R Y...

P R O C E E D

I scramble for a question and the only thing that shoots to my mind is this:

'...Can you see me when I... tou-' I stop my whisper after my hand races to find the two very powerful letters of:

U M

'Oh... wow. Do you watch...'

G O O D B Y E

'Wait! Wait! I'm sorry I didn't mean to make things weird. I'd like to ask you one more question, and that's it, I'll leave you alone.'

.....O K

No damage is irreparable.

'Do you know when I'll die?'

There's no response but my ears begin to ring.

My candles are going out one by one, and they're getting closer to me.

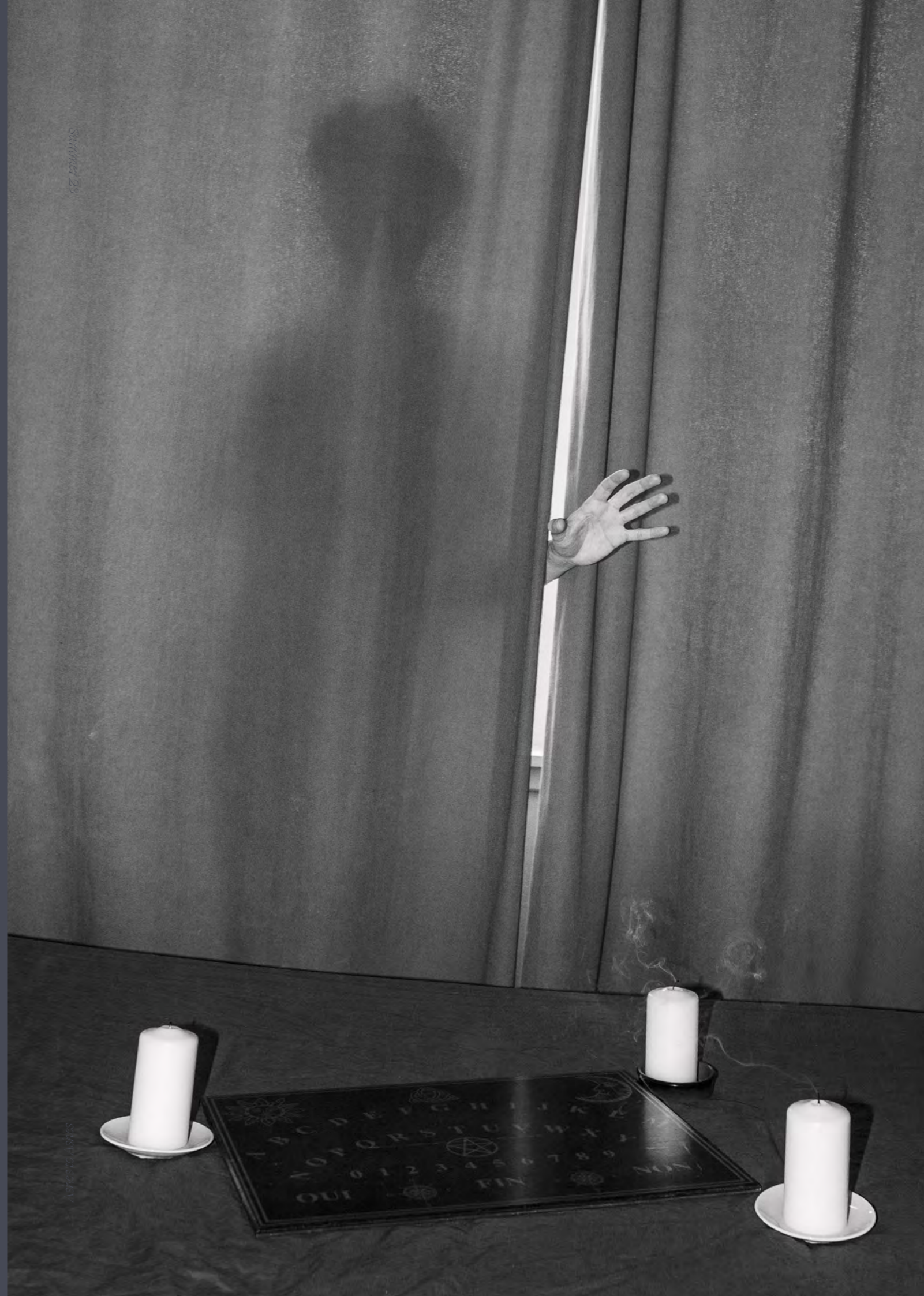
I realize the tap has stopped dripping and my focus is pulled to something centimeters away from my right ear.

'goodbye'

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Memento mori

My partner has a habit of tracing the fine lines on my face. 'I know exactly what you're going to look like when you're older,' They say, drawing their fingertips over my forehead. 'I can see it.' Sat together in the morning, through the steam curling slow off my tea mug, my partner looks into my face and finds the skull behind it. Memento mori.

I like the English translation of memento mori. Remember you must die. It makes it sound almost like a chore, something that easily slips the mind, something called after you as you rush out the front door. Remember your coat. Remember you have to return that book to the library. Remember you must die. Your keys! This is where I find death at its most comfortable: somewhere between 'wash sheets' and 'post letter' on the to-do list, or tumbled into the mass of hand balm, lanyards, earphone wires and expired subway tickets at the bottom of a bag. Reminders and reenactments of death rush in with the crowd unsorted, shoulder-to-shoulder with infancy, paternity, hunger, and seasons with no rope or frame for distinction. The light that gleams on the skull's brow is a perfect curl of silver, but I see first the museum light where it lays in the paint. The rich black cradled like treacle in a vacated socket, the droop of a delicately wilting flower, the crook of the skeleton's beckoning finger: these depictions of memento mori are beautiful, but there is an interpretation gap, the space between me and the canvas held open by the rope which is bridged by the call through the door. Remember! I can look upon the dense macabre, but it's the sudden stab of pain down my left side that makes me sweat. You must remember to change the water and dispose of the dead blooms in the vase.

Buy milk!

Death is mundanity and enacts itself in the seams of the day. Memento mori is daybreak and nightfall, the fail of my arm the day after climbing and the leap of my heart as my body disobeys me and gives to gravity that's never felt so undeniable before.

And what of life? Memento vivere? It's in the ache of my feet after walking the gallery, the pull of muscle away from bone when I fall, and the bruising that follows. Remember, you are an organic thing that heals. Remember to buy cream. Remember, there's a birthday next week so buy a card (and sign it from the two of us.) Remember, your favourite tea is on sale so buy a couple boxes. Remember your umbrella.

Bread! I forgot bread! And where is the difference? Is Hogmanay about the year past or the year to come? Are funerals about the dead or the drunk? I cannot see a frame, or light on the paint. Sat together in the morning, over the tea mugs and olive bread on the table, my partner looks at me and remembers to die. They see where my cheeks will one day cave, the flesh that will go. And they say, 'I can see you in your old age,' I drink my tea.

'Remember to buy tomatoes.'

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