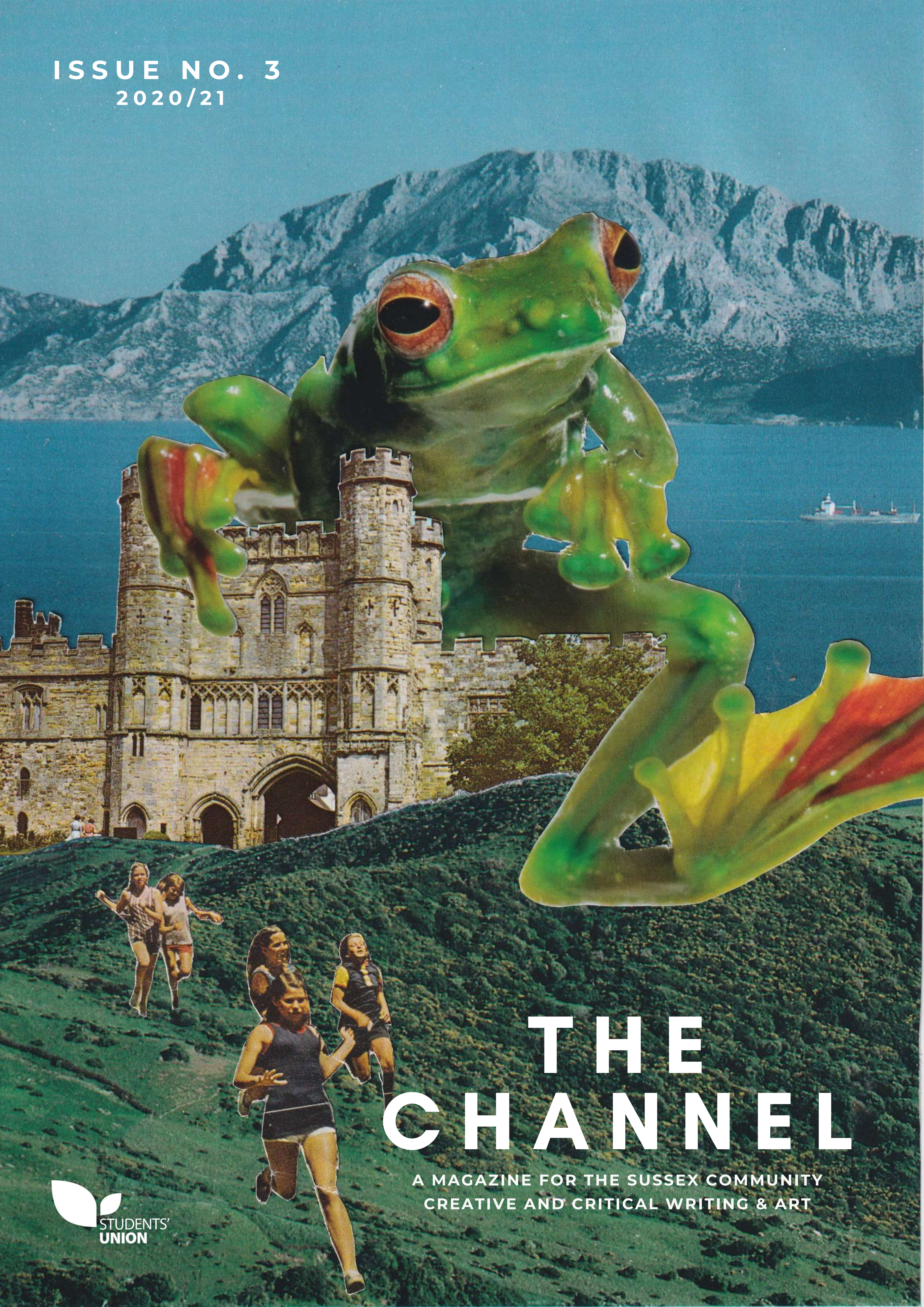


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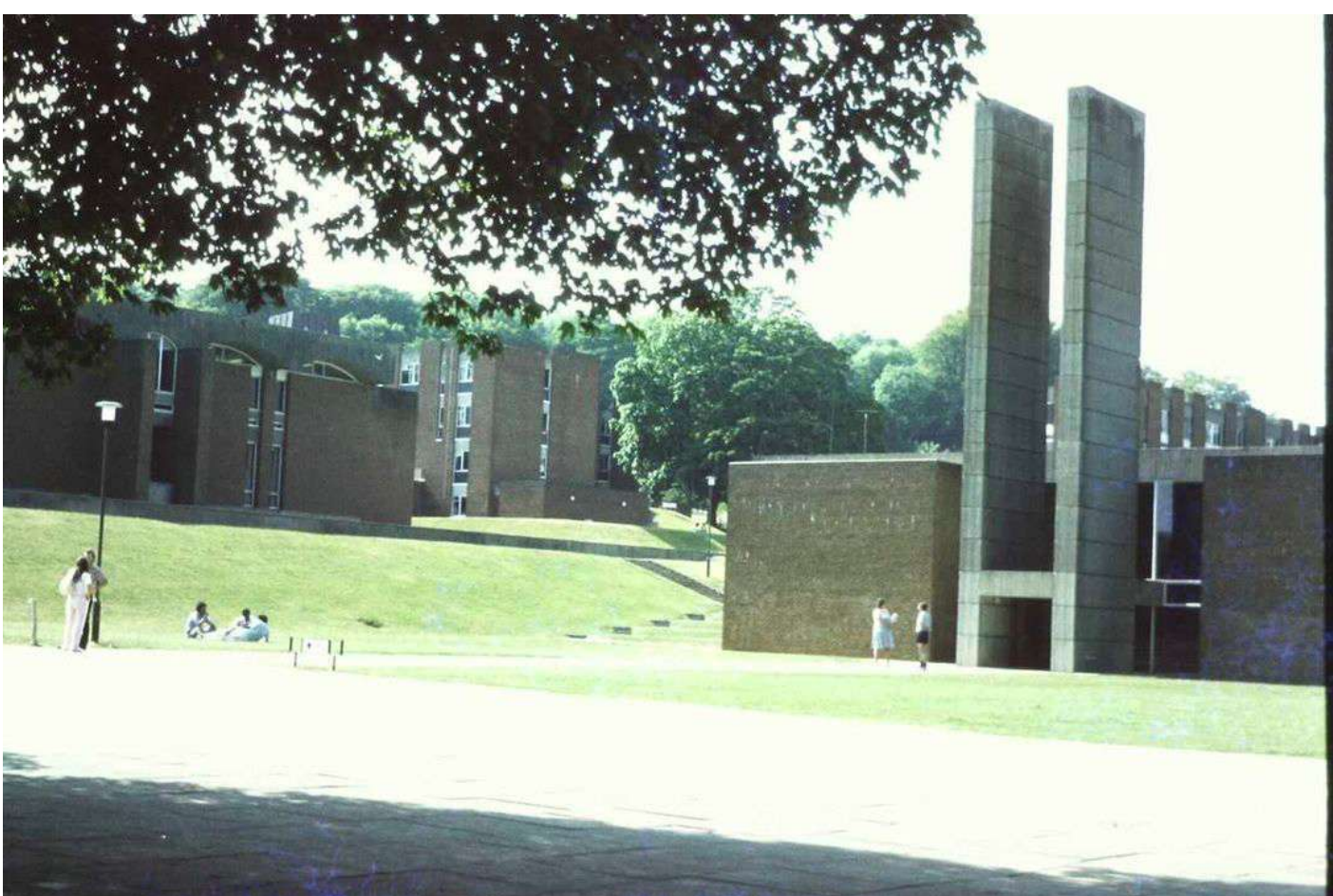
THE CHANNEL

A MAGAZINE FOR THE SUSSEX COMMUNITY
CREATIVE AND CRITICAL WRITING & ART



I S S U E N O . 3

ON THE COVER: ARTWORK BY CHARLOTTE GRAY
ON THE LEFT: PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOHN TURNER



What's in a human being that makes us keep going?

Life for the last year has been reimagined as a fight for social connectivity - a battle to hug, to travel, to celebrate, to rave, to cherish what was once taken for granted. And despite it all, one might argue that all human beings possess a certain 'will to life' or a will to create space and more for oneself in this world.

When home becomes the confines of rented habitat and outside becomes a screen, the next space to turn to is the more curious internal space. The mind and self become sites of exploration - of zealous intrigue and ruthless investigation; a place to learn and unlearn and learn again - a place to renovate, to decorate, to treasure.

The discovery of self involves the expression of self, which is often facilitated through art. Armed with perspective we face the idea of new connections, new life and redesigned selves, there has been an explosion of individual creativity throughout this year.

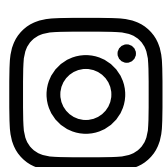
And now the world slowly recovers. The word 'normal' no longer a buzzword thrown about in socially-distanced small talk suggests maybe we have forgotten what that used to be. Perhaps it is time to challenge and redefine the boundaries of normality.

This issue of The Channel is delighted in bringing together the newly birthed self expression-isms that follow themes of bold fragility, the desire to free ourselves from the modern technological world and the passionate stubborn race towards love.

[THIS FILM BELONGED TO JOHN TURNER WHO WAS SUSSEX ALUMNI GRADUATING IN 1985]



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@thechannel_sus



@thechannel_sus

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FAST FASHION AND GREENWASHING: WHO IS TO BLAME?

BY ANNA KIFF

“Fast fashion – like any other fast consumer good, is marketed to make us feel we need it because we are not enough, and by having it we will be better – but it is a vicious cycle. We are enough.”

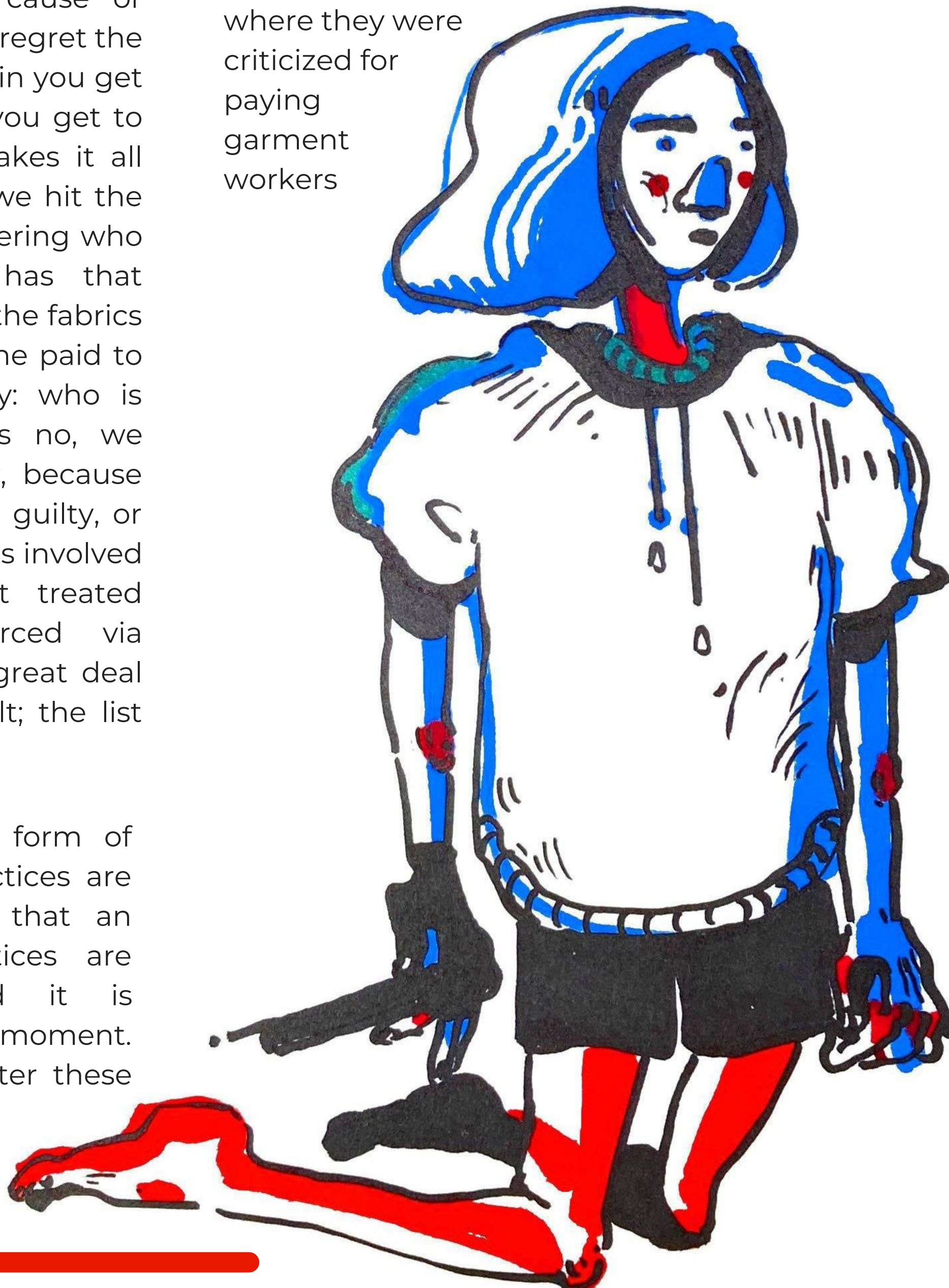
– Neliana Fuenmayor

We have all been there, scrolling through ASOS late at night with no cause or purpose. Making orders that you regret the next day, but the rush of serotonin you get when the package arrives and you get to wear something brand new makes it all seem worth it. However, when we hit the buy button, are we really considering who makes our clothes? Where has that jumper come from, where were the fabrics sourced, how much was someone paid to make it, and most importantly: who is profiting? The short answer is no, we aren't. We don't *want* to know, because the results usually make us feel guilty, or ashamed, as a majority of workers involved with large corporations aren't treated fairly, the fabrics are sourced via unsustainable methods, and a great deal of waste is produced as a result; the list only goes on.

Greenwashing is defined as a form of marketing in which 'green' practices are used to persuade the public that an organisation's aims and practices are environmentally friendly, and it is especially popular at the moment. Alongside this, companies bolster these approaches with claims of fair and ethical working conditions.

example of this was in 2014, when Volkswagen was accused of cheating their emissions goals, by rigging 11 million cars across the world with devices that would alter the total emissions from the so called “clean diesel” cars. We see greenwashing in the fashion industry as well, with different brands creating more sustainable clothing lines, such as H&M Conscious, and the ASOS Responsible edit. Despite using words like ‘eco-friendly’, ‘sustainable’ and ‘ethical’, these brands are still guilty of not doing what they claim. Curiously Conscious found that ASOS admits to using only 34% of sustainably-sourced fibres and only provide a basic level of supply chain transparency. Boohoo, a company that is “committed to empowering all” was exposed in a large scandal from 2020

where they were criticized for paying garment workers



£3.50 an hour whilst working in their Leicester warehouse – which is an illegal wage in the UK. Moreover, both co-founders were still paid £1.3 million each in the last financial year. As well as this, Love Island influencer Amber Gill signed a contract worth £1 million with Miss Pap (owned by Boohoo) at the end of 2019 which drove sales for the brand to over £1 billion for the first time in the brands history.

This rise in influencer culture is another huge driving force in the fast fashion industry. It is clear that the most popular influencers are those that promote style; what to wear, how to wear it, and where to get the best deals for it.

This rising fascination with reality-stars-come-celebrities is a golden opportunity for companies considering the demographic these influencers have. Young girls who are watching and listening intently are exposed to many promoted products, this socialises girls into buying into a lifestyle in an attempt to emulate these influencers. And yet, people still buy from them. Why? Because it's cheap, affordable, and easy to access.

“

...the Ellen MacArthur Foundation found that textile production produces an estimated 1.2 billion tonnes of CO2e per year. To put that into perspective, it's more than a year's worth of international flights and maritime shipping combined.

”

It's no real secret that the fast fashion industry is a huge contender in our current tackle against climate change; the Ellen MacArthur Foundation found that textile production produces an estimated 1.2 billion tonnes of CO2e per year. To put that into perspective, it's more than a year's worth of international flights and maritime shipping combined. Regardless, fast

fashion is constantly on the rise around the world with the increased market presence of huge online “fast fashion e-tailors” such as Shein, Zaful, and FashionNova. At the time of writing (February 2021), Shein are boasting on their website that 662 new products have been released today, despite claiming in the social responsibility section of the website (which is difficult to locate) that they produce limited quantities of new products, unless they become popular; so, 100 versions of each size, for 662 new products a day, with a claim of no forced labour? There is something unnatural about those numbers. This, combined with the ever-growing haul culture on social media, makes buying almost hundreds of items from these online stores more and more normalised in modern day society, with more people suffering and more corporations profiting. However, for some people, these brands are all they can afford; buying from more ‘ethical’ organisations is typically more expensive and therefore unattainable to people without as much expendable income, as well as the accessibility issue of often not being able to obtain clothes from an ethical brand above a size 14. So, what can we as individuals do to help this?

Completely halting shopping habits is not the answer; no one is going to (or wants to) do it -but reducing them is definitely a start. Online influencers such as Lauren Bravado, the writer of *How to Break Up with Fast Fashion*, and Sophie Benson, a lecturer and journalist with a focus on sustainable fashion, have been encouraging and teaching their followers about reducing shopping habits, learning to appreciate the clothes we already have, and to shop more sustainably. There are many useful and educational resources that people can use and research when looking further into the effects of fast fashion. A personal favourite is the Fashion Revolution's Transparency Index, where every year 250 worldwide brands are investigated and ranked based on how

much they disclose about their social and environmental practices, policies and impacts. For example, in the 2020 Index the top scorer in the reviewed brands was H&M, with a 182.5 out of a possible 250 points available, whilst brands like Tom Ford scored 0% due to not disclosing anything about their environmental practices. However, it is still important to note that H&M is not the most eco-friendly brand, this resource only points out that it discloses the most about its practices.

Following the advice of climate-positive influencers mentioned, like Lauren Bravado, is a great start; learning to love the wardrobe we already have and not letting the newest trend take over. A great way to carry on shopping, whilst considering your carbon footprint, can be by using reselling sites, such as the ever-growing Depop. Users can sign up and display their own clothes which they no longer wear for sale, this has led to a large growth in the reselling of “vintage” style clothes via the app, and has influenced fashion trends towards a more sustainable path as a result. Another example is online clothes rental HURR, where you can pay to have an item of clothing for a certain amount of time before returning it for someone else to rent. The rise in popularity in these new ways of shopping is helping to encourage more sustainable ways of getting your next fashion fix in moderation.

“

...the most important thing we can do as consumers is to hold these corporations to account.

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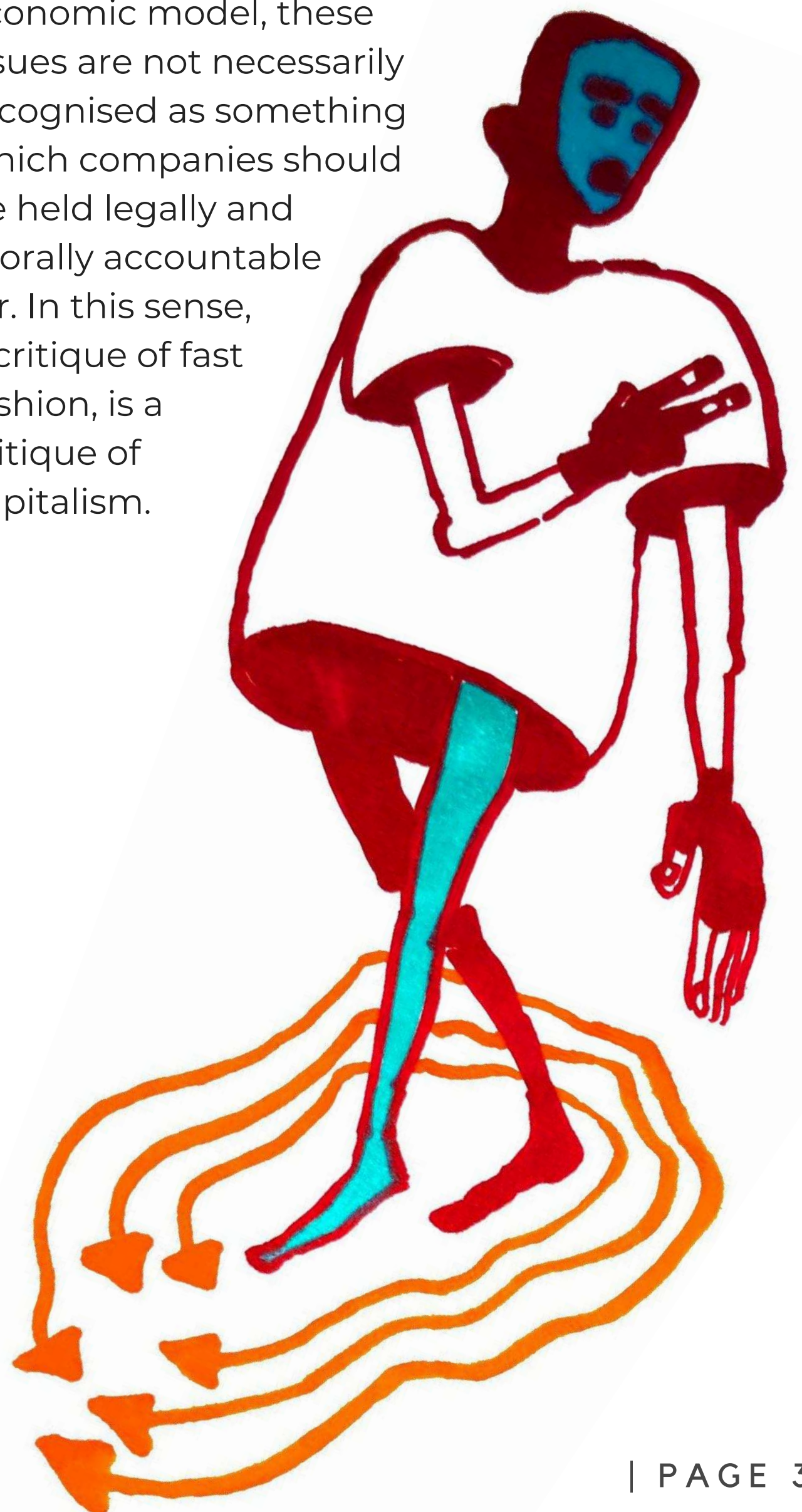
I would argue that the most important thing we can do as consumers is to hold these corporations to account. The global Fashion Revolution movement started a huge social media message with the hashtag, #WhoMadeMyClothes, which consumers can use to effectively call-out brands and corporations who aren't

“

...a critique of fast fashion, is a critique of capitalism.

”

publishing their supply chains, paying their employees fair wages, or protecting their garment workers' rights. Holding these companies to account on a mass scale is the best effort we as individuals can make to bring greater transparency and encouragement to change their ethical standing and enforce real practical change. This, however, undoubtedly raises the question: can you have ethical consumption under capitalism? This seems, and in some ways is, impossible, as capitalism involves private ownership, with the needs of production only existing to turn a profit, whilst oppression, destruction and exploitation are not factored into the economic model, these issues are not necessarily recognised as something which companies should be held legally and morally accountable for. In this sense, a critique of fast fashion, is a critique of capitalism.





PRESTON PARK

BY JESSIE HANCOX

ARTWORK BY LIYAAN KHOSO
POLARIODS BY ANNA KIFF

Our landscape is changing. I walk through my local park, observing how most benches are occupied by soggy bottoms. Mind, it's deep in January. High fog and mist disguise the view of houses piled on top of one another, leaving us suspended in a private cloud. Still, lonely people sit, looking. Trying to seem preoccupied, avoiding the eyes of passers-by's yet yearning to be seen. Mothers with prams stand, not quite two metres apart, eager to talk about the strangeness of new motherhood. Their babies anxiously wrestle in blankets, unaccustomed to the steady flow of passing strangers. Their world, as yet, has been kept to the house.

Beyond, below the dip of the slight incline of the park, the sterile white marquees of the testing centre stand. A bubble of noxious air, so close to where children kick a ball with ease, parents eager for them to spend their energy. Two ladies promise to meet again soon, apologising for the brief encounter, rushed in a time of absent happenings. Only the dogs cocking their legs and shitting neat little turds seem unselfconscious, unaware of position, of proximity.

Winter always goes on for too long. It drags cold winds and sleet across our landscapes in long strokes. The dark nights pass over into too much of the day. And yet here we all convene, in woolly hats and scarfs, greedily drinking in the water-soaked grass and sporadic tufts of mud with tired eyes. Perhaps we are all waiting upon a promise, be that of warmer days, or from our distant government. A promise that may permit our lives to be as they were before, as though the consolidating breath of spring could renew us.



Preston



Preston Park 1/20

THE STRIKE

BY GRAHAM LEPAGE

The empty space the strike allowed: to read and yes, to write, is this odd gift, odd gift, for I rejoice in my slow, soft morning bed the ponderous, contemplative tea cup brimming with sweet and milky tea.

I know I ought to grind my teeth, to care that class is canceled yet again, I ought to storm and rage, demanding money back.

Instead I sit and think in my library booth perusing books by Marx, Fanon, Sun Tzu: "War is the greatest affair of the state, the basis of life and death."

The day is passing in pages. I learn of war and ask what happens to the poor. Odd gift, the empty day, the quiet building of books I ready myself to write by reading more.



ARTWORK BY LOUISA PRICE



HOSTILE



ENVIROMENT

BY HAYAT SHEHAB



She pulls herself up to wrap an arm around your neck, see-sawing rose-petal feet into your thigh as you breathe in the baked-milk breath. You're close enough to count the frail buds of baby-girl teeth, hopelessly new and gleaming like gravestones.

Forget-me-not fingers sweep past your ear and tug at your beard, twirling bristles as metal spires burn and whistle above you. Tightening your grasp, you lean into the hollow of the old sofa as the earth shakes, rattling the wooden blinds. Somewhere else, somebody screams, but here the only sound that fills your ears is the rolling ripple of Aya, laughing.

"Jet or mortar?" you ask, because this is your part in the game.

She pauses, tilts her head, smiles.

"A mortar, Baba, a mortar shell!"

You've taught her well, and though she may be too young for school or war, she's never been too young to play.

"Bravo, *habibti*," you say, pulling her into your chest as another one crackles and flips into a nearby street, while her glee cascades between echo and wall, and she dances another drum-roll on your lap, her earth.

Then, without warning, a curtain of quiet thuds into the room, and you release her from your metal grip, letting her drop beside you on the sofa, but she hasn't stopped examining your face, and in her eyes, there's a familiar flutter of light. You pull back, but she reaches up to cradle your cheek with her soft seeking palm, watching you until you look away. This is the face she wears when she wants you to know.

She knows.

No.

You are her protector. This is your game.

Though you can't save her three-year-old life from the unpredictability of the sky. It will fall. Soon. But you will, for now, spare her from the futility of fear, whatever the final score. It is a simple choice that a father must bear.

You are thirty-two, but your life is already behind you and this is your truth. This is all you can do. This game you've played since she fine-tuned her eyes to sound—to bells and rattles, spinning lights and ribbons, walls flayed into ground.

It must have started that night, when her mama, Farrah, laughed and touched your lips goodbye while the Shabiha pounded the door. She'd planted her last kiss on Aya's sleeping brow, tearless and asking only this.

Don't let this break her.

You've caught Aya's brown eyes watching that door when she thinks you can't see her. *Mama's in Damascus, taking care of your grandparents*, you would have said if she'd asked, but she hasn't, and you're grateful for that. Such are the lies you're ready to tell because there are things she mustn't know, that the sword was mightier than her mama's pen, and that she's never coming back.

But there are truths she will learn in time—that Farrah means joy, and that you have always kept your promise.

On quieter nights, you tell her bed-time stories that you unpick from the scrapheaps of your past, distilling your memories, so she doesn't forget all the things she's never known—like the ancient olive trees that once sheltered your street or the wooden carts that rattled past your building at dusk, dripping rose syrup, not corpses, onto pavements. You describe the buttery sweetness of pistachio and mulberry ice-cream that you craved after hours of playing hide and seek with your twin sisters, Jana and Leyla, on the sunny banks of the Orontes river. Proudly, you explain that Orontes, Al-'Aasi in Arabic, means "the Rebel." The only river in Syria to run north instead of south, before reaching the sea. And you think to yourself that you, like Idlib's river, are choosing to invert the floods of Aya's reality.

The past is now dust because the rebellious air that once carried the music of Farrah's words won't ever be written into the transcripts of history. It is dust because your sisters are hiding in paper-thin tents on forgotten lands in Lebanon. You miss them, but you can't remember the tint of their eyes or the lullaby of their laughter because those too have been pounded to dust.

It comes again, a slow hum at first, but as it grows, she stands, her fingers digging butter and steel blows into your skin.

"jet, jet!" she squeals, pedalling feet, ready to play.

She's right.

You smile and pull her close.

"Clever girl."

Together, your ears trace the buzz of a spiralling jet. Above the crumbling ceiling and a canopy of cloud, a young man, wooden and blind with mercenary syllables, wants



to finish the job so he can go home to his brown-eyed girl in Moscow or Tehran.
His hand pulls a lever, flooding the air with bone and thunder.

But Aya doesn't play his game. She has chosen yours, your gift—the reconfiguration of sound.

The jet passes and you wait in another storm of silence, watching her body curl into the dark. You check for the right number of legs, fingers, toes, just as you and Farrah did the day she was born. You exhale. She is whole.

You look up to the sky to thank or cry or curse, but there's only darkness there now, and you've forgotten how to pray.

But there's still time.

Months later, you sit in a cold, neon-white room, your feet dripping oceans on a foreign floor. Aya's small head rises and falls in time with your heartbeat as a black-suited woman slashes into the meat of your history. Across a barren desk, she fires question after question, but you're tired of words and the point of their hollow shells, so you study the wall behind her.

"Please focus, Mr. Saleem," she says, blinking in a language you don't understand.

"I need you to explain why you chose to leave Syria with your daughter."

You turn to the interpreter sitting between you. His eyes are fire and stone as he stumbles on the word 'chose.' His smile is an apology, its burden untranslatable.

Before turning back to the woman, he whispers words of his own—don't give up, it's almost over. This is hard for a reason.

Then he drops his voice and speaks slowly, pausing between words to be sure you understand.

Hostile. Environment.

You smile and nod. Yes, you understand.

The eyes of the woman flash and burn from you to him.

But then she turns her gaze to the prison-grey blanket twittering in your arms, and the room softens with chimes like church bells, ringing from your heart space.

She flicks open a tired yellow file and raises her pen.

You're ready for this, holding Aya in as the slick tip of a blue biro whistles and spins.

BY OLIVIA WEBSTER



BY LIYAAN KHOSO



BY LIYAAN KHOSO



lovers pt.2

BY SOPHIE JAYE

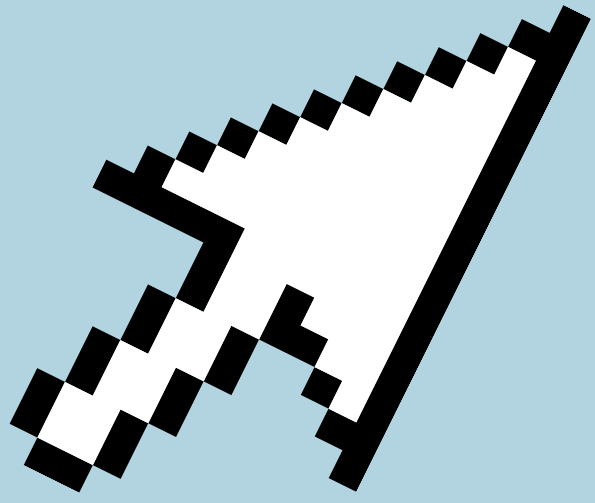
Would you stay?
 A precious dime within the spark I
 find.
 If everything was right,
 but bittersweet and frightful.
 If I could trust,
 the love we stow away.
 If I believed you,
 more than a figure of my mind,
 the burning between the thighs.
 Was it all a mere lie?

BY OLIVIA WEBSTER



ARTWORK BY
IZZY WOODWARD

Izzy Woodward X



INTERNET ADDICTION

BY LIYAAN KHOSO

As a child I would read copious amounts of whatever I could find. There was that reliable, endless stream of novels documenting the fictitious lives of the so-called 'Wakefield Twins'. There was the one trilogy about dragons and dragon riders where each book weighed a hefty 500-2000 pages (many of the words thrown away on made-up languages that I learnt by heart). There were even books reimagining the lives and perspectives of the Tudors; that's how I became familiar with the Anne Boleyn six-finger myth. Luckily for me, children who read frequently tend to score higher on cognitive tests and have increased ability to use expressive language.

Then came along the new thing: Facebook. There was an age restriction, I recall, you had to be 13. A restriction which I triumphantly ignored. Suddenly, I was spending hours on a game through Facebook called 'Sorority Life'. I was making extra Facebook accounts so that when my 'lives' and 'money' ran out on my main account, I could log into

another and keep playing, then switch back and forth all day. If I had had a bank account, I would've run it dry on that game. I looked up hacks, cheats, how to get unlimited this, unlimited that. So, when Playdom announced the shock deletion of the game in January 2014, I, along with many other users, was angry. Change.org petitions were started which gained so much traction that Playdom had to put out an official response and coordinate refunding people for their VIP subscriptions, and for unused rewards that hard earned money had been spent on. What had made a simple game on Facebook so powerful and influential, that people would sign petitions about it? That people would spend days, stay up into the night, to keep playing? What had made it so addictive?

In 2011, the Federal Trade Commission found that users' data was being illegally harvested by Playdom Inc. to third party game developers. This gave them a lot of data to work with when designing games and social

Please bring the Sorority Life game back. Nothing else compares to this game. 

✦ by *Lisa DeVore* February 14, 2014 at 7:14 pm

Reply

 11  0  Rate This 

Is there no way we can get SL back ... even in a more limited format? I miss chatting with my house, dressing my barbies and trying to obtain new glam. Hated the fighting. Some of my sisters are really, really sad you made the decision to pull the game & do not find your other games a good substitute. We would greatly appreciate it if you took the time to look at the comments and responded with a return of the game.

✦ by *Linda Boland Smith* February 14, 2014 at 9:05 pm

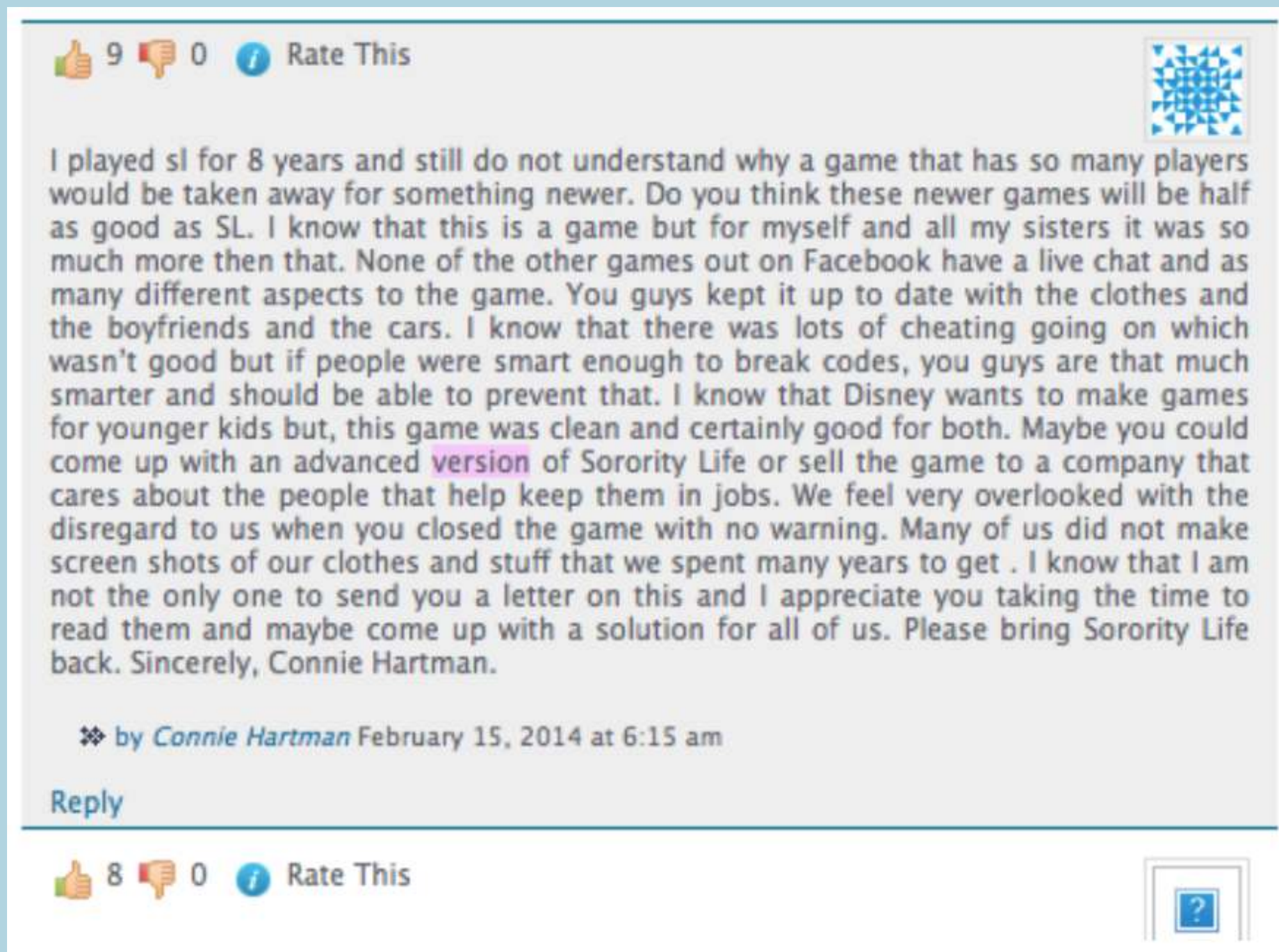
Reply

 12  0  Rate This 

PLEASE BRING GAME BACK SL ...Many of us devoted years of support for the game. We miss it terribly. 😞 GINGERY GIN

✦ by *Virginia Sara Weatherford* February 15, 2014 at 5:38 am

Reply



media to appeal, attract and addict human beings of all ages. Thus, Sorority Life was created, which simultaneously held the attention of young children, like me, and middle-aged men and women.

“ *These habits are becoming increasingly accepted and common, even being thought of as normal. They are not.* ”

In Playdom Inc.’s pursuit of data, I was just a single contributor to a large set of data. However, to me, Sorority Life set the precedent for an adolescence characterized by searching for games that would replicate the euphoric feeling ‘Sorority Life’ gave me. I slipped through Kim K’s game, relishing in the slow, unrealistic climb up the ‘A-list’ to fame, and spent some summers on an iPad playing ‘Campus Life’ constantly redecorating, adding to the large house and recruiting sisters left, right and center.

Finally, I switched to the more monotonous world of Tetris. I found myself playing non-stop during whatever feel-good episode of cheesy sitcoms that was fashionable to binge through at the time. Friends. How I Met Your Mother. New Girl. How I Met Your

Mother plus Tetris and a cup of steaming black tea was the most efficient way to kill a bad mood. On calls with friends and family I would still be playing Tetris, mindlessly blocking in pieces. Before bed, my mind would naturally run in Tetris patterns, simulating the game to lull me to sleep.

Not long after the first lockdown began, I discovered Bejeweled. The How I Met Your Mother crawled out of the archives, as did the Harry Potters, and eventually, on some of the darker days, I even gave a stab at the Narnia movies. Late night Facetimes and phone calls were accompanied by the obsessive matching. If I wasn’t on a phone call playing bejeweled, I was watching something whilst playing bejeweled, and if I wasn’t playing bejeweled, I was switching between Instagram and Snapchat, both of which provided an infinite supply of partially satisfying social connections.

Once I was able to escape back into a somewhat normal life I deleted Bejeweled, with relief. It was during this normal life, with somewhat in-person activities, that I discovered what is known as ‘Internet Addiction’. According to the UK internet addiction rehabilitation information pages, it has been shown to shrink several regions of

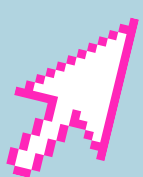
the brain. Addicted brains neurocircuitry is fundamentally different, as they are no longer motivationally driven, but addictively driven.

I set the screen time limits and goals, tried to focus on more concrete hobbies and savor things in physical realities rather than in technological ones. Watched movies only every now and then. I was doing well.

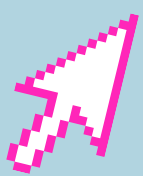
In December, during the 10-day quarantine period back home I redownloaded Bejeweled, repeating the same cycle.

Some friends of mine can't get to sleep without putting on YouTube quietly in the background. Others can't go to a social gathering without checking their phones every few moments in bursts of paranoia or just as a mindless habit. When attempting to study, hours and hours can be accidentally lost flipping in and out of different apps. Some go on internet shopping sprees although they are deep into overdrafts, writhing under the pressure of the inevitable student debt. These habits are becoming increasingly accepted and common, even being thought of as normal. They are not.

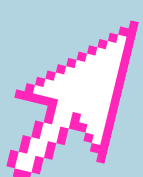
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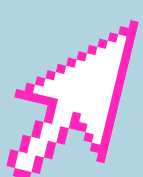


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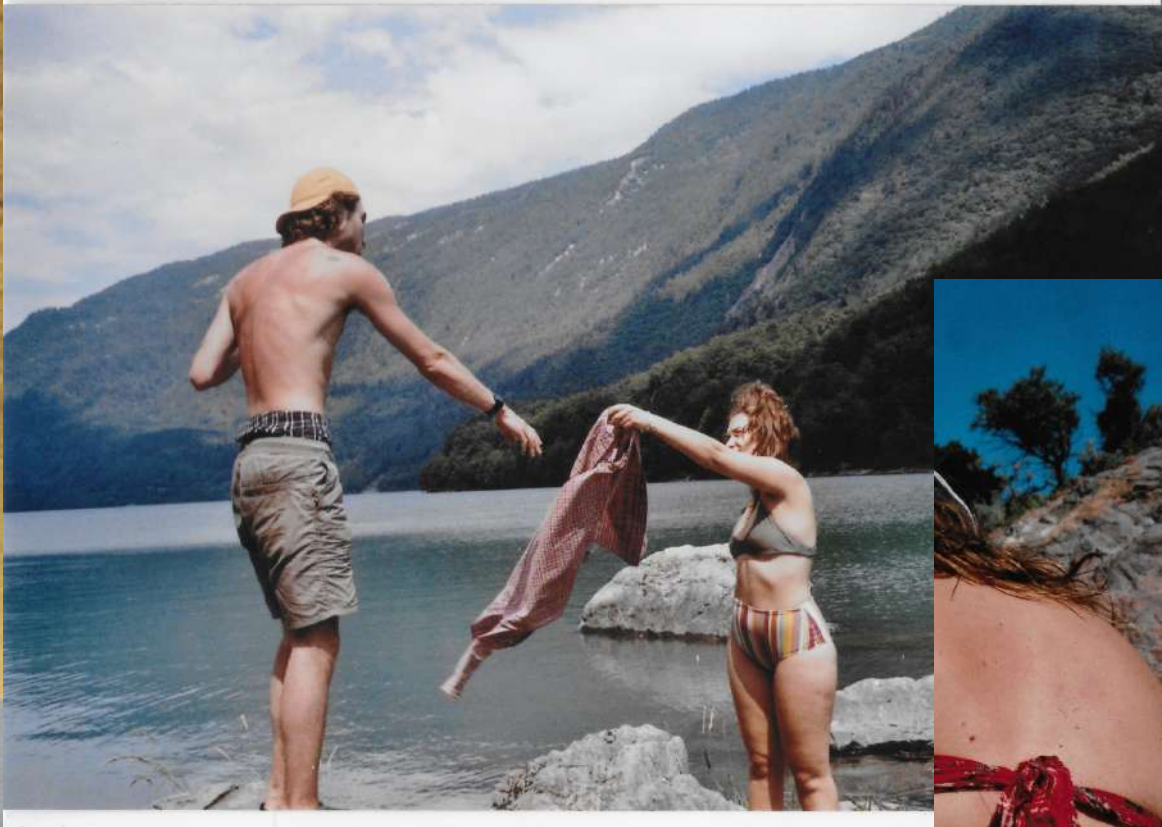
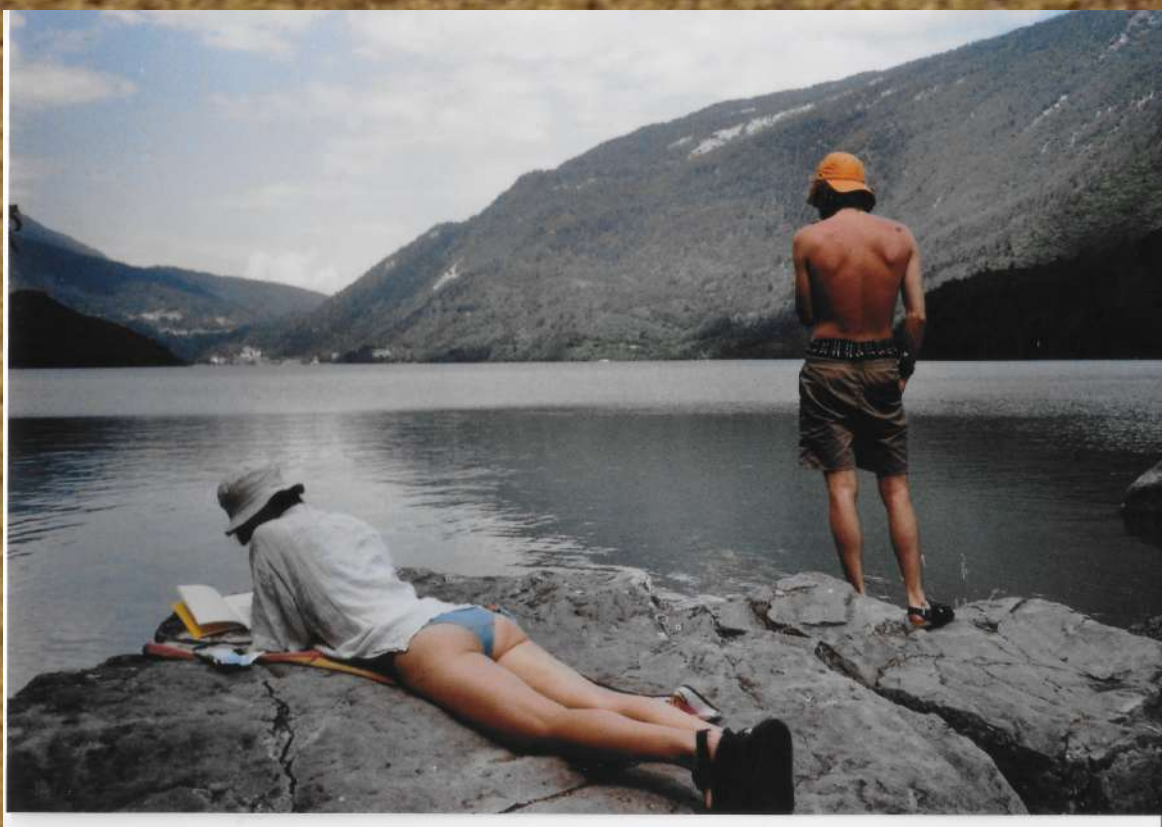
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PHOTOGRAPHY
SARA FERSKO

summer of love.

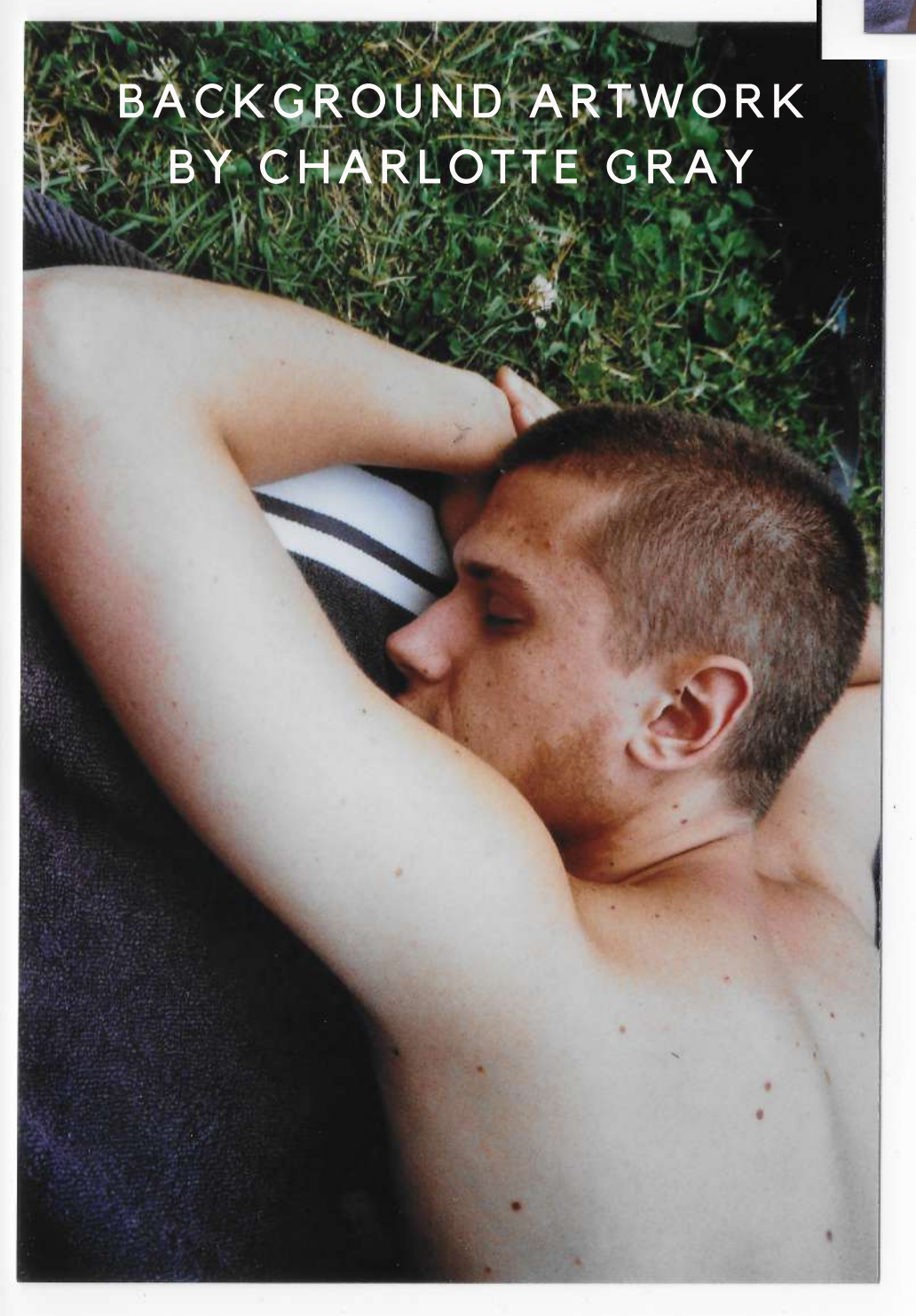
- a social phenomenon in 1967 where almost 100,000 joined to celebrate love. A symbol of free-spiritedness, togetherness and passion, the Summer of Love represents a hope beyond all hopes and human bonding despite hardship. In the same spirit after a turbulent year, The Channel brings to you the Summer of Love 2021.

- Concept by Sara Sohail

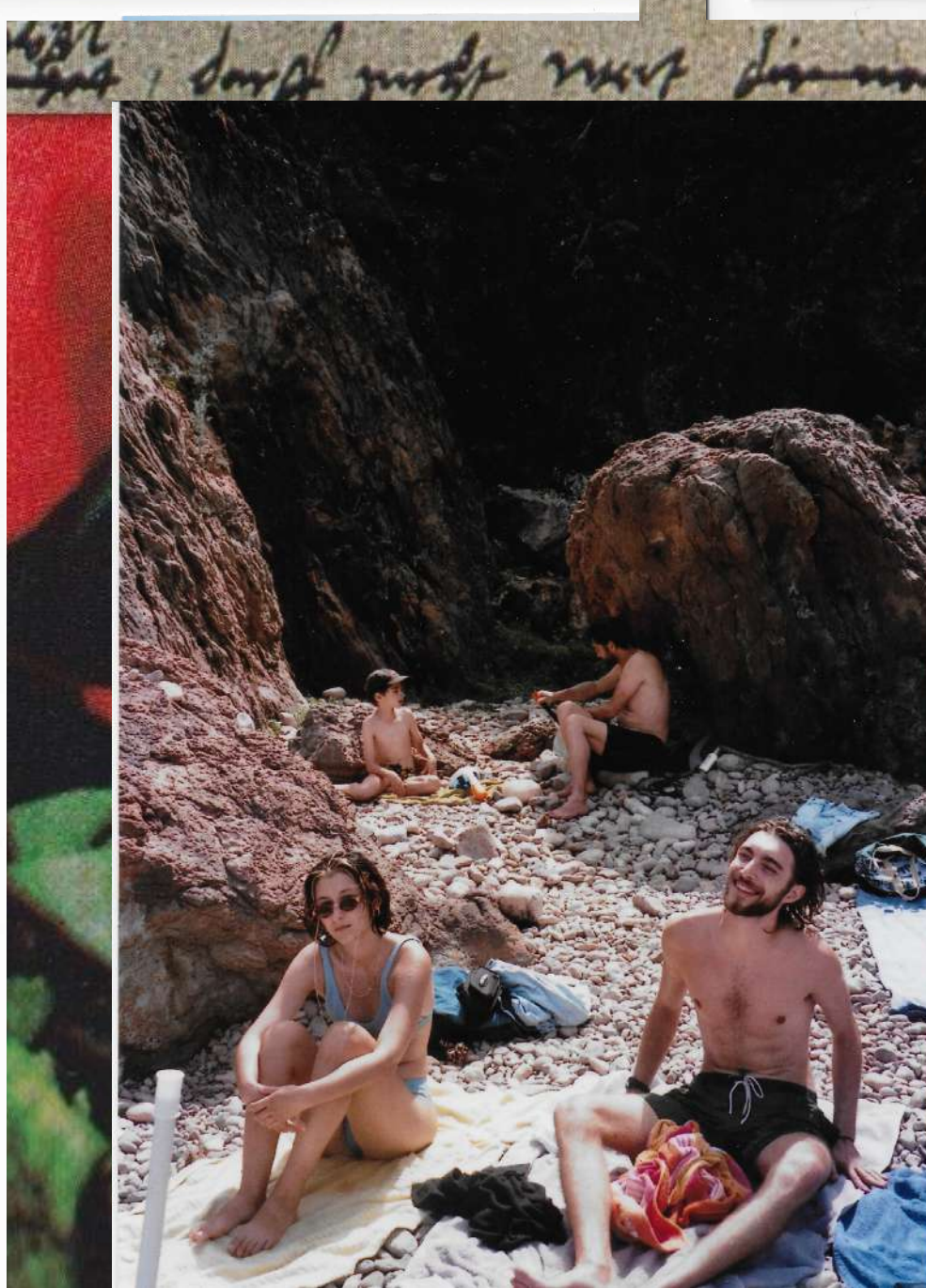




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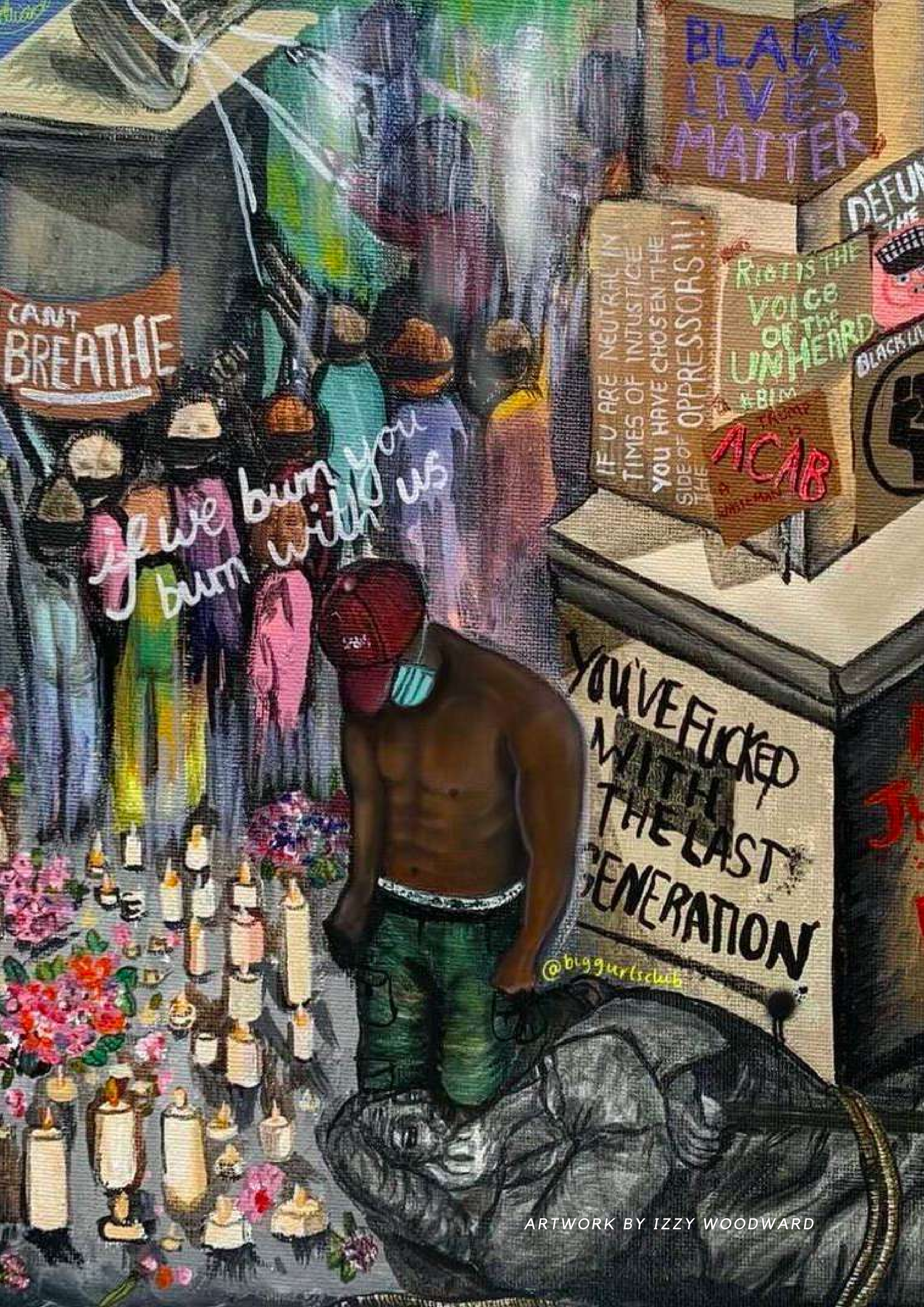
BACKGROUND ARTWORK BY CHARLOTTE GRAY





VENTUS

A wild dance, led by thin thread
The setting sun, bathes in red
Fly to the mood, fall hither and yon
Whatever you do, the child holds on
Pushed by his breath, onto his track
You touch the clouds on Aeolus' back
I watch you twirl and dream of flight
A rebellious creature, you little Kite.



I CAN'T BREATHE

BLACK LIVES MATTER

IF U ARE NEUTRAL IN TIMES OF INJUSTICE YOU HAVE CHOSEN THE SIDE OF OPPRESSORS!!!

RIOT IS THE VOICE OF THE UNHEARD

ACAB

DEFUND THE POLICE

BLACK LIVES MATTER

If we burn you burn with us

YOU'VE FUCKED WITH THE LAST GENERATION

@bigguertsclub

ARTWORK BY IZZY WOODWARD

ARE WE ADDICTED TO TRAUMA PORN?

BY HOPE EVANS

Social media's age of Clickbait Creators and WhatsApp Warriors has raised a population of visual consumers riddled with attention fatigue; unable to handle incoming distractions while focusing on one task, and addicted to the momentary highs that shock-value tactics offer as relief. By this, I mean moments that remind us, as consumers, of, or, perhaps sadistically, *confirm* our humanity and emotional capacity. Modern life, and its 24-hour bad-news-cycle of information overload, has come with the bitter aftertaste of passivity. Naturally, there is now some intrigue in anything that breaks this trance: the sensationalised, the dramatized, the visual spectacle. This fix comes in the form of trauma porn: 'the perverse fascination with other people's misfortune.' (Chloé Meley)

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Modern life, and its 24-hour bad-news-cycle of information overload, has come with the bitter aftertaste of passivity.

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The nicotine, the addictive aspect, of trauma porn lies in its ability to cloak the darkest parts of humanity with its greatest: the instinct for survival and being reminded of your own aliveness and freedom by seeing others lack or lose it. To explain, this article broadly divides trauma porn into three categories: tragedy, catastrophe and car-crash violence.

Tragedy allows humans to be vulnerable, and with trauma porn, both subject and spectator are given access to a vulnerability that has become a commodity. From plays to poetry, music to film, industries have capitalised on the curiosity that surrounds sadness. Tragedy trauma porn is so ingrained in British culture, that the practise of virtue signalling has become a second nature celebration, from 'save-a-life-in-Africa' ads of a child drinking from dirty water rivers played between TV sitcoms, the perverted spectacle of Comic Relief as a knock-off 'I'm a Celebrity, Get Me Out of Here,' to the annual worship of the 'Do They Know it's Christmas' single. As media consumers, there is an addiction in watching and knowing others are suffering. Perhaps to confirm and find comfort in that 'we', as observers, are not *them*. This virtue signalling includes these surface-level fixes to absolve guilt on the spectators' part, rather than truly remedy the tragedy experienced by the subject.

Catastrophe is the epitome of sensationalised, dramatized reality – it's what apocalyptic blockbuster thrillers are made of, mimicking pornographic climatic extremes which make trauma exciting. There is an addictive quality to the highs of real-life catastrophe; we watch it unfold on the same screens as breaking news live-from-the-scene-journalism. We are sold the same storylines through fiction and fantasy. There is a market – whole industries – that profit from creating consumers that *fantasise* about catastrophe, so when it happens in real-life, everyday people are given a chance to play their part in something greater than themselves. There's no need to even go as far back as the 'where were you on 9/11' question to understand this. We are living the post-apocalyptic plot of the global pandemic, as brought to our screens by Contagion (2011), and we can't talk about anything else as it's not just that we can't believe it - we can't believe it's happening

to us. The audiences of catastrophic fiction are offered the unique chance to live these extraordinary circumstances: the question of 'what would you do?' in alternative universes becomes a reality, a chance to place personal anecdotes in a collective experience. It excites us as it is both rare and deeply ours.

Catastrophe is a story to tell and trauma porn is how you tell that story.

Car-crash violence is the spectacle of trauma we can't help but watch; the grossly human curiosity that leads our eyes to wonder over disaster, to see something they shouldn't. There is something perversely sadistic in watching someone die, and yet, the whole world watched, shared and reposted 8 minutes and 46 seconds of George Floyd's murder. And yes, without that, the momentum and global magnitude of protests and calls for justice would never have been nearly as significant or widespread, but it spread *because we're* addicted to the unspoken fascination humans have with gore, with commotion, with driving past a car crash. Pictures and videos of trauma are intimate, evocative and have the capacity to traumatise the viewer in deeply invasive ways; they are weapons, they play into our compulsive consumption of shock-value visual information, while reproducing traumatised spectators who identify with the victim: this could've been, could still be you. In the same light that Alan Kurdi's candidly photographed death was front page news, trauma porn *sells*, it intrigues those who will never identify with it and threatens those who do – either way something is ignited deep in our humanity and we can't help but look, even if it's out of the corner of an eye.

Catastrophe is a story to tell and trauma porn is how you tell that story.

With this a new world has been created and human connectivity has been redefined. Perspective is no longer experienced in real-time through the singular lens of our immediate reality; this new world is a kaleidoscope of human experiences projected through the lens of a virtual reality created in and through social media.

...people are trained, designed and moulded into consumers beyond the material world to also be consumers of a parallel virtual reality, one that thrives on its addictive nature.

The human experience is deeply emotional. As equally as we find connectivity in sharing happiness, joy, life, we also find it in sharing shock, horror, sorrow - trauma. The phenomenon of trauma porn is nothing too far departed from the life before social media: tragedy, catastrophe and the curiosity in a car-crash has always existed and has been felt by generations long before us. Perhaps as a primal instinct. The pornographic element is new; the increased, digital access, the repetitiveness. The volume and magnitude of it all. Trauma porn is no different to any other addiction. It is important to acknowledge the role personal habits play in these narratives in order to initiate recovery. There must be a deeply critical reflection of how to see ourselves and others through fatality and misfortune, to be uncomfortably honest and consciously transparent with media creation and consumption, and to monitor, reconsider and question how these two realities collide. In this new world, people are trained, designed and moulded into consumers beyond the material world to also be consumers of a parallel virtual reality, one that *thrives* on its addictive nature.

the view from the hill.

BY LARA MAYR

Twenty-three minutes.

An impatient sigh escaped him as he put away his phone. His mother had urged him to leave a half hour early and, eager to leave, he had not rejected this proposal. But now that he was here, he'd remembered how boring and lifeless the train station was, and regretted his decision. The clock facing the platform wasn't working, so he had quickly established a routine of taking out and putting away his phone at every passing minute. Checking the time was better than staring at the little town he desperately wanted to leave.

It was a quaint little town, scarcely bigger than a village that had sprawled too far away from the church it had originally been built around. It was placed neatly in-between several lush green hills. Soft brown lines cut through this otherwise undisturbed picture, trails and paths that led up the hills and out of sight. The town exuded an old charm, highlighted by the hourly ringing of the church bells. Though clearly notable throughout the whole valley, they merged with the chattering of birds, the rustling of leaves and the occasional rattling of a train in the distance to create a sound almost inaudible to the inhabitants.

Twenty-one minutes.

He turned around, facing the wall of the station building to avoid being blinded by the strangely intense evening sun. It reflected on the church spire, sending beautiful orange rays across the town and its surroundings. Every tree, flower, and blade of grass was glowing, but he was uninterested. The view from the hill was already stored far away in a designated corner of his mind.

Footsteps. People chattering, doors slamming, people coming closer, another door opening and now a man and a woman were stepping out onto the platform. Two familiar pairs of eyes looked straight at him, two minds searched for a recollection of him, mouths distorted into a smile, all within seconds of him realising what was happening. His hand tightened its grip around his suitcase handle.

'How lovely meeting you here! Your mother said you were leaving, but we thought it wouldn't be for another month. It's a bit early for university, isn't it?' the woman pointed at his suitcases, still smiling.

What did they care? They had only to watch him leave, admire his courage and use it to distract themselves from their own pitiful lives. But instead, their eyes seemed to look beyond these thoughts, spotting the tight grip he maintained on his suitcase handle, the nervous dance of his feet, the softness of his voice when he answered. A summer course, that was why he was leaving early.

The woman clapped her hands together whilst her husband nodded approvingly.

'That's quite something, one of us out there in the big city.'

One of us? The words jumped around in his head. They moved him. Belonging had never been that easy. A rush of warmth passed through his body, barely visible on the outside if not except for his flushed cheeks. But the words came too late. His body might still be among them, but his mind had long left behind the need to be seen.

He felt a familiar feeling return. The pleasurable warmth turned into heat, burning his insides, culminating inside his stomach. Not one twitch gave this change away, but he felt himself retreat. A short, sharp smile, the corners of his mouth raised just enough as to not seem impertinent. He took out his phone again.

Eleven minutes.

'Ah now, would you look at that! Our little town is beautiful, isn't it? I don't think I could ever bring myself to leave this place.'

He raised his head, ready to disagree, but the rage that had been boiling inside his stomach was immediately extinguished by the sight of the couple.

Both of them had turned towards the hill. The now setting sun was bathing their figures in golden light and, motionless like statues, they were staring down at their home, his hand resting on her shoulder. In their eyes, he saw a different town, a town very much unlike the one he was about to leave. The smallness of it was no longer restrictive but freeing, the scenery no longer unfulfilling but something to be marvelled at. Instead of strangers, he saw a community. Their eyes were full of the potential he'd never noticed - had chosen not to notice. He was no different from them, but he had made himself different.

The scene in front of him unlocked a wave of scents, impressions, sounds and feelings. Memories he had stored away long ago. He saw the empty seat next to his desk at school, the empty afternoons he spent roaming around the vast fields surrounding the village. He heard the other children's screams of excitement as they were playing a game together on the sports field. Had he gone up to them, would they have let him join in?

Suddenly he felt hot tears on his face, found himself yearning once more for things to be different. Cold words coming from confused faces encircled him, reminding him of the endless solitude he had learned to find in their company, the ceaseless noise inside his head.

The former burning rage in his stomach was replaced by a cold lump of coal. With it a thought, a message, filled with disappointment, anger, hurt, and despair. When facing this town, did they not desire to see a different town, at the bottom of a different hill, with different paths, filled with different people? The coal dug deeper into his body until it reached a familiar revelation.

He was the one who wanted to experience a different town, the very same town that the couple was experiencing.

'Oh, that should be our train, right? Are you on this one as well?' the woman asked, turning around to face him, breaking the horrid spell at last.

No, still six minutes left. Don't answer. You will not be able to, not with that trembling lip, just shake your head.

'Well then, it was nice to see you again before you're off. Don't forget about us! Come visit soon, won't you?'

The approaching train drowned out the last part of her speech. The screeching and rattling provided a welcome excuse for him not to answer. The couple waved at him once they had got on the train. Quite without his doing, he lifted his hand to reciprocate.

The train slowly started its departure from the station. Don't look, don't look, it echoed in his head, leave, leave. He turned around sharply and went back to observing the broken clock.

Another rattling sound, quickly approaching. His train was early, but why would he mind? He wanted to leave, could not wait to get out of here. He wanted adventure, chaos, he wanted to always feel as excited as he did right now, facing his train, tears swelling up in his eyes – oh the dust, the bloody dust – and then the train stopped and the doors opened and people got off, one, two, three, five, nine, so many, and they were looking at the view, laughing and smiling and pointing behind him. But he was only focused on the train. Shaking with excitement, he heaved his suitcases into the carriage.

'Look,' he heard someone say, 'someone's leaving'. Someone wished him good luck, but he did not know whom, did not recognise them.

The lights on the train were still off, the glimmer of the outside world the only source of light.

Where to sit, where to sit? Oh, there are still people outside, better avoid them. Don't look out of the window. Put your suitcases away. Take out your headphones. Check your tickets again. Don't look out of the window.

A whistle. A jolt. Departure.

He wobbled in his seat as the train made its way forward. Would no one else get on? He lifted his eyes from his phone and let them drift to the now deserted station. Slowly, his eyes continued to the other side, passing the seat in front of him, then turning to the border of the window. The train picked up speed, soon it would be too late. Panic washed over him, just a few seconds left. He lifted his eyes to face the familiar darkness.

He knew every house, every tree, knew where every path led to. He knew every car, on the road into the village, coming from the station, one by one. He knew the people inside and what they were talking about: 'Oh, today we saw him leave, yes at the station. Where's he off to? Do you think he knows?'

For the first time, he saw it, a tiny speck of nothingness, not yet inhabited, in the heart of the village, free for him to occupy and define.

The lights came on. The picture of the village was overpowered by his own reflection, sparkling eyes, sparkling cheeks, trembling in harmony with the train. His eyes moved around frantically, searching for the village. He spotted a sign: 'Break window in case of emergency' and yes, yes, this was an emergency. He couldn't see the village any more, he couldn't hear the people anymore. But the train was still moving, still moving him further away, even though everything was turning blurry.



BY LOLA AWODERU



INSECURITIES PROJECT

TATIANA X. HASLA

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The use of modern-day technology and social media is in constant increase, and with this, the pressure to fit into what our society identifies as “the perfect body”. With her project Insecurities, the young Brighton based photographer, Tatiana X. Haslam, questions the definitions of beauty by capturing individuals’ greatest physical insecurities. With a mass photographic production, focusing on young adult’s body parts, there is a long-lengthed exposition of how everyone, no matter how confident they are, has a self-perceived imperfection. With this, Haslam hopes to encourage the acceptance and love towards them, especially as it is these features which tend to make us unique from everyone else.

With the influence of Nadav Kander’s and Annette Messager’s work, Haslam depicts her subjects through limited frames and monochrome high contrasts, effectively creating abstract representations. With this, she does not only present said body parts with beauty but also tactfully manages to anonymise her subjects. Insecurities are the body parts we least wish to be seen, therefore, in order to protect her participants, the practitioner removes any form of their identification, while displaying a more objective point of view as they could belong to anyone. This is emphasised by the fact that the individual representations are untitled and, therefore, open up the opportunity of projection and reflection to the public.





A Doctor Once Told Me:

BY SARAH GILL

Your father is in the shape of a t-shirt –
And maybe that won't make much sense
To you right now
But I don't mean one of those stiff, freshly ironed
Sort with lines creased into the sleeves
Or one of those with the new shop smell.
He's the one that was worn a million times in
The 80's
But now spends its days crumpled and
Squashed at the back of some drawers


Laying in crowded solitude and confinement
Between nineteen other t-shirts that can
Endure England's stormy winds far more frequently.

He's the kind of desperate to be worn one last time
Or at least provoke some sort of nostalgia
For the 'good old days'
When he watched Queen on Live Aid
Breathlessly blaring all the parts to Bohemian
Rhapsody, oblivious to Freddie's
Creeping death;
Looks like ignorance is truly bliss.

He's the kind of t-shirt covered in small holes
That you know you'll have to throw
Away soon, but keep hold of for as long as
The threads remain strong
Because even if there's no more space in those drawers,
There is always space in your heart.

Your father is in the shape of a t-shirt –
Hollow, worn-in, but loved.
Maybe that won't make much sense to you
Right now
But please be patient when it does.





The photograph in the background was taken by Sussex alumni John Alexander Turner (1931-2005) during his time at Sussex before graduating in 1985 with a Master of Arts in education as a mature student. He came to education late in life and had always studied privately before leaving school at 14 and having a lifetime of ill health. His granddaughter, Izzy Woodward, now studies politics at Sussex.

A photograph of a person lying on their back on a large, light-colored rock ledge. The person is wearing a light blue long-sleeved shirt, beige trousers, and brown shoes. The background consists of dark, layered rock formations and a glimpse of the sea to the right. The overall mood is serene and contemplative.

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