CARNIVAL

THE ISIS TT23

Contents

Cover by Ellie Moriuchi and Louis Rush

Editors' Letter

We knew we wanted to have fun with *The Isis* in Trinity Term, which is always the best time to be in Oxford, especially for exam-free second years like us. The seriousness of the libraries and Exam Schools is discarded for punting, partying, and lying on lawns – which are no less crucial to the student's education. What we're interested in is the importance of these silly and unserious things: what really goes on when we have fun? This has been a central impulse of *The Isis* itself since its foundation. "We have no politics and fewer principles," announced our founder, Mostyn Turtle Pigott – itself a principle, of course. Again, after the war, Beverley Nichols wrote that "it is to sing of Oxford that *The Isis* appears once more, to reflect its every tendency, to echo its laughter and – well, to do the other thing". We've got no idea what the other thing is, but we want to echo its laughter – and question it. 'Playtime', 'Daydream', 'Superstition': over hot chocolate in Blackwell's, we brainstormed all the most fun words we knew until we hit upon 'Carnival'.

The carnival encapsulates the principle that letting loose and running riot is important social work. As Mikhail Bakhtin immortalised in *Rabelais and His World*, the carnival is an anarchic act, which turns political hierarchies upside down: dressing up in masks and extravagant costumes, drunken feasts and circuses, crowning a new king for the day to preside over the banquet "for laughter's sake". For a few days, the people "built a second world and a second life outside officialdom". It was a parody of the extra-carnival life, a "world inside out". This is an impulse that exists across the world, from Mardi Gras to Día de los Muertos, Chinese New Year to Oktoberfest, Notting Hill Carnival to Oxford's May Day. *The Isis* invites readers and writers to join in this spirit: to turn things on their head and see them anew, to have a good time and wonder what it all means.

The pieces in this issue approach the carnival spirit from all sides. There are literal carnivals, from May Day ('Sing a Song of Springtime') to Saint-Saëns' animals ('"Method in his Hee-Haw"'). There are dramatic monologues and playscripts – dip into 'Anna Ivanovna, 1739' or 'ORLANDO II (A CLOSET DRAMA)' for a taste of the extravagant revels within. There are essays about what it means to have fun, from the board game ('Monopoly Men') to the comic novel ('*Baccano!* Or, the Art of Living Forever'), and there are pieces which are carnival items in themselves – the Ferris wheel of 'fair play' or the choose-your-own-adventure game our Features team have made for you ('Night(mare) at the Carnival'). We hope you enjoy!

We can't thank enough the 60-strong team who've made *The Isis* this term (catch them in their carnivalesque glory in New College gardens at the back of the magazine!), and all the writers whose work lies before you – it's been a complete joy from beginning to end. A special shout-out to the Creative team who've put this beautiful issue together, especially to Louis and Ellie, our lovely Creative Leaders. And finally to our heroic deputy editors, Manon, Eva, Zoe, and Coco: we love you! From our Art Soirée, Literary Salon and Garden Party, to the beautiful new Tarot postcard and Wheel of Fortune poster, this term has been gloriously carnivalesque from beginning to end. Thank you all for making it so much fun, and thank you for picking up the magazine: please have as much fun with it as we've had!

Clemmie & Antara xxx

A RETURN TO THE EAST CAPE IN MARCH

by Max Marks
Art by Poppy Williams

un-curl yourself, beginning at the edge,
then moving slowly inward, breath and sinew.
the world has not been kind this winter, tied
you up in small sharp endings and beginnings

(much like fallow coloured glass you pick from tidepools on the eastern coast –
you try to hug the jagged edges smooth but, little one, you cannot be the sea).

i'll start from the beginning.

on days like this your father stood the tallest,
held a roughened hand against his brow;
grey eyes set in wrinkles drawn by sunlight,
listened to the storms roll slowly in.
told you softly on the drive to east cape
there's nothing like the cold to make a man –
he made it sound like you both shared a secret!
passed to yours from that long-roughened hand.
you know that he was right, at least, he meant it
but not the way he thought he did, and when
he stopped to buy you cola on the way back,
he couldn't see the cold come creeping in.

i've always had a dip in my chest.

(shy moon smiles down –
dog barks next door)

when you and oscar stole your mother's wine,
you hid it by the passionflower fence;
it stained your lips and stayed there like a scar,
and you both pricked your elbows on the thorns.
but nothing ever seemed so safely reckless!
you dropped your bikes and ran to meet the dusk,
wheels still spinning gently by the roadside –
left there like the orange peel you tossed.

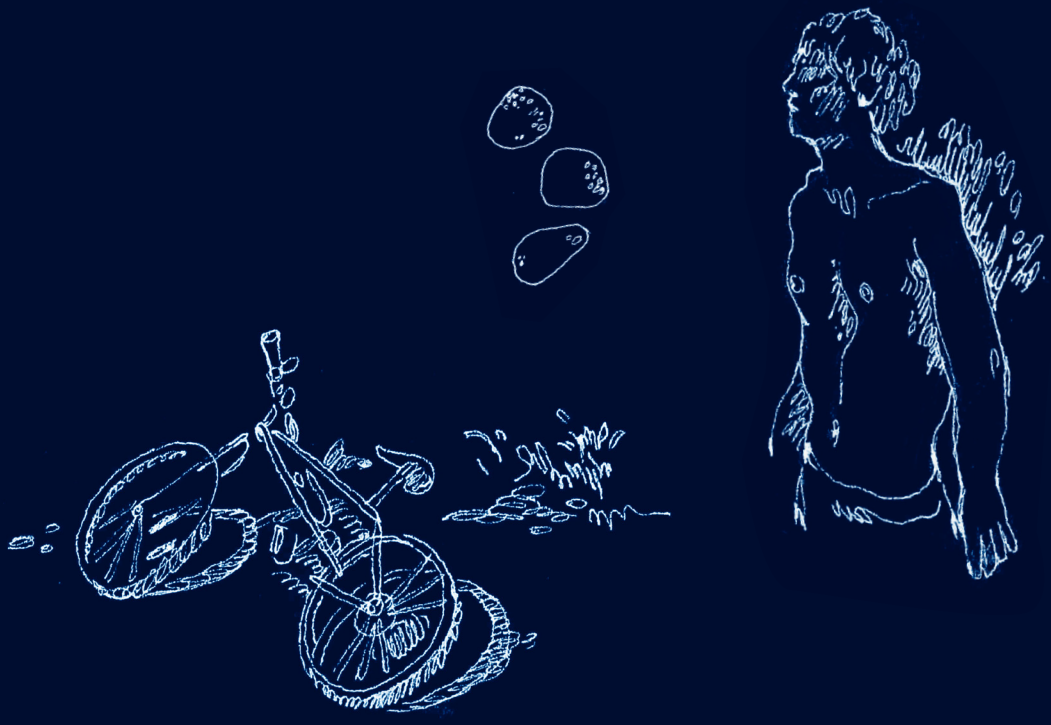
i've always had a dip in my chest. no, don't touch it, i hate it.
why?
i don't know. it's ugly.
it's completely fine. you're not ugly. you know that, i know you do.

now i turn to face you. the quiet smile in the dimness of that double bed.
now, here, twenty. both of us, but you're older, just a bit. one month and a day –

apart together / apart

you fumble over your words (i used to love it when you did that but now it feels different). now you're doing it again. you're fumbling over me, too, in one drawn out struggle to let all of it go –

so here i am back on the east cape
in march



AUBREY BEARDSLEY'S

The myth of the doomed artist has grown stale. Talented figures from Vincent Van Gogh to Kurt Cobain have been forced into the template of the depressed and tragic hero, and the circumstances of their death overshadow their own talent and output. But people deserve to be defined by more than just their tragedy. Aubrey Beardsley's life holds all the trappings of this tired trope. Always sickly, the Victorian artist's tuberculosis led to his death at the age of 25. Yet in his work, we discover instead an anarchic, black-inked world, free from the dreary, gendered roles of European art. Beardsley's prolific seven-year career throws all conventions into disarray – whether moral or artistic. His fin-de-siècle muses are women, men, and everyone in between – all as transgressive and grotesque as each other.

My first encounter with Beardsley was his 1893 illustrations for Oscar Wilde's *Salomé*. A play too scandalous to be performed in Britain, *Salomé* was instead published in book form alongside Beardsley's fevered black inks. It would have been easy for the artist to have been carried by Wilde's decadent words, sprinkling in a few elaborate illustrations to bolster the text. But Beardsley, perhaps knowing that his days were numbered, created his own wild vision: detailed inks brim with energy on the page, more similar to a modern-day graphic novel or political cartoon than to his Art Nouveau contemporaries. Quitting his job as an insurance clerk to work as an illustrator, he was spurred on by his own artistic will, freed from the establishment. One can see this powerful spirit within the artist's daring lines, proving a refreshing break from centuries of prescriptive Realism.

Beardsley's black-ink style evolves from a blend of legacies from far beyond his own grey England. His illustrations draw from Ancient Greek vases and Japanese Edo erotic woodblock prints, and the swirling lines of Salomé's peacock-emblazoned skirt are a proud geometric homage. Thankfully, his work distinguishes itself from hackneyed Victorian Orientalism. In an artistic landscape swarming with simple appropriation and pastiche, Beardsley stands out. Where contemporary Neoclassical painters took an orthodox approach to representing foreign lands, Beardsley did not force Western expectations of proportion or perspective onto the Eastern graphic style: he examined the unique painterly and graphic techniques of other cultures.

He delved headfirst into a Japanese-inspired, two-dimensional approach. Huge blocks of black and white space create the illusion of shadow, feeling minimalistic and modern. Salomé is transformed into a looming, androgynous figure, swathed in darkness. Her wild grimace resembles a Japanese kabuki actor. Through Beardsley's eyes, the most archetypal biblical temptress is given intimidating agency. Rather than a tantalising sexual object, Beardsley's Salomé is an unafraid and dominant force on the page. Much like the artist himself, the figures are unconcerned with passivity or politeness. His unorthodox entry into the art world, and knowledge of the shortness of his own life, gave him a radical perspective upon which to draw.

His stylised vision for *Salomé* not only reforms the past but caricatures the contemporary. The

SATIRIC GRIN

by Thalia Roythorn-Bellamy

illustrator's humorous, defiant spirit can be seen in a sly, reoccurring motif. From a grinning court jester to the face of a nosy moon, the artist snuck in Wilde's own face – not in respectful tribute, but playful mockery. Here is an artist unafraid of any mannered convention. Beardsley takes no one, not even his patrons, too seriously. Undermining the reductive image of the tragic artist, Beardsley was no navel gazer, but instead a sharp satirist.

Freed from the restrictions of polite society by his impending death, he used his unique outsider perspective to create a hypnotic, inky world. He brings as much ungraceful freedom to the contemporary woman as he did for the mythological Salomé. He dares to diverge from idealised femininity within his art. His infamous *Yellow Book* publication encapsulates his carefree and decadent attitude. The first issue's cover depicts a firmly gloved and hatted and seemingly proper young lady, curiously picking at the licentious books on display, while the stern old shopkeeper glares on disapprovingly in the background. Beardsley's message is clear: in his new, ink-lined world, desire is universal, and most certainly is not limited to men.

Beardsley is not beholden to any tradition, not least the trappings of the classical nude. Nudes are posed and restricted. They are designed to fulfil some remote, distant ideal, or to act as simple titillation for the male viewer. Consider one of the most famous nudes in Western art: Botticelli's stilted Venus. Despite her godly status, the subject coyly covers her breasts. She is undeniably passive. But, whether clothed or not, Beardsley's female figures are active, bold and unmannered, strutting dismissively away in long flowing robes, glaring imperiously down at the viewer with not a hint of submission. Compared to his contemporaries, and even many modern representations of the nude, Beardsley's work seems a breath of fresh air, offering proof of possibilities beyond submissive femininity for women in art. Gone are the vulnerable sickly muses that a lesser artist might have clung to in the face of Beardsley's tragic circumstance. He rejects victimhood, in his art and life.

There is a humorous and defiant cynicism within Beardsley's art. He deconstructs every single facet of Victorian womanhood, be it artistic or moral. His caricaturist eye removes motherhood from its idealist trappings. This is seen most clearly in his reoccurring motif of the enraged foetus. Beardsley's sly illustration, *Incipit Vita Nova*, defies the archetypal ideal of the mother and child. The mother grins mockingly, her lips horrifically pursed at her offspring. The unborn foetus's eyes stare out imperiously from the pages while it pens its first diatribe: *Incipit Vita Nova* – 'here begins the new life'. In an era of growing scientific knowledge, he uses the creature's fleshy, anatomical corporeality to powerful effect. He tears down the virtuous myth of motherhood, in exchange for its grisly reality.

His images relish in the undeniably shocking and graphic, and his figures celebrate taboo. Beardsley's disconnect from polite society was not a point of shame, but pride. His status as an outsider gave him

absolute freedom in his subject matter. His most grotesque illustration, titled *Birth from the Calf of the Leg*, disfigures the idea of a holy womb, as Beardsley humorously replaces it with a swollen calf – the foetus peering its head out from just above a wrinkled, misshapen foot. There is no romance in the image, no adulation for the glory of life. The newly born child frowns despondently as its head is roughly pulled from the open slit of the calf. In Beardsley's deconstruction of birth, we undoubtedly see the forebearers of modern art. His grotesque mothers are precursors to Louise Bourgeois's arching, sculptural spiders, whose twisted bellies are filled with marble eggs. Beardsley's drawings are a landscape for his own musings on mortality. His sensibility brings a deeper psychological edge to black-ink art, at a time when it was still viewed as a popular, 'lower' mass- market art form.

Every boundary of the Victorian artistic establishment is pushed. Inspired by the Pre-Raphaelites, an artistic movement predating his own work by a few decades, the echoes of Millais and Rossetti's willowy, androgynous figures are easy to find in Beardsley's inks. Yet where Rossetti cloaked his androgynes in tasteful, flowing shifts, Beardsley confronts the viewer with starkly naked representations of the hermaphroditic form. He blatantly challenges the very notion of gendered bodies with this recurring motif. Beardsley was freed from the heterosexual convention of marriage which hung over his contemporaries, since he was expected to die young. Divorced from society's expectations, he was able to explore new philosophies of sex and gender. His close friend, Marc-André Raffalovich, pioneered a theory of 'unisexuality'. The French poet spoke of love beyond heterosexuality, liberated from shame.

Beardsley's illustration for Raffalovich's T*he Mirror of Love* captures this new ideal. The artist withholds his typical caricaturing, mischievous style, instead depicting the central hermaphroditic figure with earnestness and dignity. With their angelic wings, inked with painstaking detail, and their body surrounded by arching elegant foliage, the image glorifies them as a saint-like individual. Beardsley had learned to see far beyond the simple boundaries of sex, anticipating a far more fluid future.

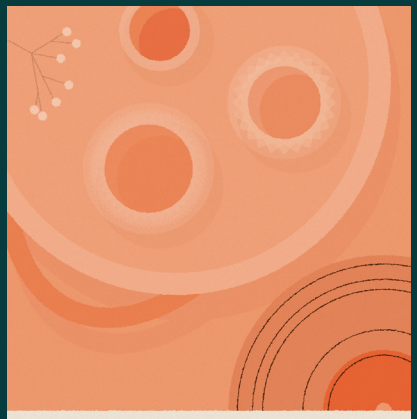
Whether naked or drenched in his dark black inks, whether male, female or somewhere in between, Aubrey Beardsley's tall, creeping figures speak to an androgyny beyond the unreachable ideal of the Pre-Raphaelites. He plays upon gender prescriptions with radical subversion and a wry helping of humour. His art is populated not by rigid ideals, but instead by vivid expressions and beings with agency. Perhaps Beardsley was able to foresee a far more entertaining future, beyond the dull confines of male and female. It is no coincidence that, in Susan Sontag's landmark 1964 *Notes on Camp*, she deemed Aubrey Beardsley's drawings "part of the canon of camp". Over a hundred years later, his illustrations remain daringly subversive and playfully counterculture.

Despite his early death, Beardsley demolishes the tragedy of the fatalistic artist. He grappled with and broke down the artistic constraints regurgitated by his contemporaries. His tuberculosis and separation from mainstream society allowed him to see beyond social expectations. His illustrations brim with mannerless freedom, yet, regardless of the subject matter, this bold style was always laced with humour. No doubt, he drew with a satiric grin across his face. ▮

Art by Faye Song and Federica Pescini

322 C

242 C



163 C

Pantone 151

I raise a glass of Aldi malbec to the patchwork
tapestry that threads me back to you. To learning
to read in your womb and spell to the beat

of 'Back to Black' over tarot for tea – served
at the dining table (that cornerstone of Facebook
Marketplace couture) you scoured from ash

to mauve-matte; clashing plum under
placemats while we contort a sofa
up the stairs. With floors torn from

under feet, we retreat to walls warmed
in fuchsia – to Kahlo constellations, to *The Three Ages of Woman* poised in the kiss of your gold-leaf phase.

And she revels in the ruby of no place
like our kitchen at 3am. Tonight, we'll splash
John Denver over this salt-worn town

amidst drowned, suspended
hours, and watch emerald threaten
to unpick the bricks you bound.

Though ivy creeps, you keep
your incense lit. Spill wine
and refuse to be snuffed out.

And so, when I return to pack and find speckled
skirting boards – *151* on bone – I recall
you painting our landing orange at a whim

in jeans now tinted tangerine,
no dust sheets in sight.

by Nicole Gibbons

Art by Dowon Jung

Sing a Song of Springtime

by Gabriel Blackwell

Outside the club, my date's face begins to flush when it meets the early morning chill of the smoking area. She doesn't light a cigarette but instead stands with her head up to the sky, scraping her fingers along the edge of the metal barrier.

"What are you going to be doing next year?" she asks me. Her voice is clean and slurs with only the slightest suggestion that she has been drinking. I tug at the hem of my top and we don't make eye contact.
"You know," she says, "after winter, after spring. The next time summer starts again, where will you be?"

As the fresh air suddenly becomes noticeable, I draw my arms around myself and smile.

"Oh, on tour, probably," I say. "International popstar. My hip rotations are pretty acclaimed, actually."
"So I've heard," she says, now moving her head so that her eyes meet mine.
"You've heard?"
"Yes, you told me about your dancing twice already."

She laughs and shuffles herself along the barrier, closer towards the restaurant that neighbours the club. By this stage of the night, the polite tolerance of our earlier interactions has given way to a tone of tired honesty.

It was, perhaps, too ambitious of me to expect a whole night spent with the stranger I recruited online to run entirely smoothly.

Now, I glance up to the line of the rooftops across the street. A thin trail of cool light has just begun to push its way above the tiles. A trio of birds drops down onto a TV aerial.

"It's May," I announce, almost as an attempt at grandeur.

My date checks her phone. "It's been May for over four hours," she says, carefully tracing the cracks in the pavement with the edge of her trainer. We stand in silence until she smiles and looks at me.
"Show me then," she says as she pulls her finger through the ends of her hair. "Your famous moves, let me get a good look."

I can tell by a twitch in her eyebrows that I must look despondent, and yet she makes her way towards the door to the dance floor nonetheless.
"Come on," she says. "It's what the pagans would do."

*

Once a year, when April trips into May and the leaves turn green again, the pagan gods roll from their beds and descend on the city. For the night, everything is wired to those ancient, natural rhythms of birdsong and breeze, and we students jump at the chance to tie ourselves to such a beat. The month changes and we stay up to see it do so – we dance and sing and fall in love as the sun comes up on summer. And when it's up, and the choir on the tower has sung songs of the season, then the crowds really gather. Bells ring out and children squeal and men in feathered hats skip through the streets with handkerchiefs. Music born before our time floats from instruments not built of our world. There are tired eyes and pints you can buy at 6am. For that hour, the city is a garden and, when the clouds separate, the sun breaks the new day alive. Before that day, though, there is the choir, and before the choir there is the night.

My night began with the hope of love in the car park of a pub. My date and I had agreed to meet in our best springtime finery and so, when I greeted a girl dressed only in a black vest and jeans, I felt slightly disappointed. Not believing in any of that pagan nonsense, she told me these were her springtime clothes, an outfit planned practically around our night's activities. From noting the helpful stretch of denim to commending the stain-proof quality of her top, my date spoke with the precision of an adamant non-believer. Each drink she sank was done as part of a plan to ensure the perfect level of drunkenness for clubbing, and her fingers were never far from checking her phone for the time. She was a rationalist, holidaying for the night in the land of illogical romance, and I, dressed all in white, played my part well. I spoke of the darkening sky and the new blossoms in the trees, and my date smiled with a bemused hesitancy, betraying her unease at having agreed to pass the night with a stranger. Behind our table, gathered around some kind of rudimentary stringed instrument, sat an odd gaggle of men and women. Each member of this circle sported a straggly haircut and, while teeth looked to be a rare commodity, they smiled broadly as they talked and drank. Every so often, someone would make their way towards the strings of the boxy instrument, plucking out a folksy tune for the others to sing. The words they sang were soft and of the season, praising the warm

sun or green trees, and as I peered over at them, this merry band seemed to sway as one. The sight was so happy that even my date seemed warmed by the light trickle of the music, and when one of the singers passed us, a man draped in blue fabric, she asked him for the song that had just been played. Leaning in conspiratorially, the man whispered: "Why, dear, that was 'Sing a Song of Springtime'. It's one of my favourites."

In the dull light of my sitting room, hoping to score some cheap alcohol before the clubbing began, my date sat with the kind of wide-eyed awkwardness that comes with such a brisk introduction to a new environment. Friends had begun to gather and, having rejected the offer of my housemate's 'special' (vodka and pink lemonade with a salted rim), my date did not appear to be integrating herself too readily. Nor was she enthusiastic about her role in subsequent drinking games: when passed the 'king cup', she took to it with polite sips rather than the vigorous chug expected. Despite this incongruity, there was an alluring quality to her obviously dejected countenance, to a person so absolutely spurning efforts at social connection. Against sweet drinks and bad music, she floated above our vain attempts at revelry with a silent discernment, not interested in entertaining the fantasy that this nightlong piss-up had any pagan basis.

As my friends readied themselves with last-minute touch-ups, my date appeared ready to sit the night out in the kitchen. Speaking slowly and sipping from her glass, she was not the image of springtime bliss I had hoped for. Instead, this was all lethargy beside a sink full of washing up. I assured her that once we hit the dance floor, and once she saw my moves, the May Day spirits would be upon her with joy and light and a replenished sense of youth. She looked unimpressed. She reminded me there was little connection between pagan ritual and the electric blue concoction she was swilling, and that we shouldn't kid ourselves about the spiritual capacity of clubbing. I still smiled though, and coaxed my date into grabbing her coat – you see, reader, any excuse to dance will suffice.

The club, unfortunately, only compounded my date's concerns. Although it is not difficult to imagine a high priestess getting down to the DJ's techno beats, the state of the club's clientele spoke to something far less druidic. While some dancers stood awkwardly at the side of the room, refreshing their unchanging phone screens, others jittered behind glazed expressions that could only be explained as narcotically influenced. These were not the revels of the common man, happily energised by his desire to dance, but a scene more self-conscious, and in this way more modern. My date and I danced, pleased that the thud of music was saving us from making conversation. She glanced around and then looked at me as if to say she had been right. And she had, for in a black room under the boiling glare of strobe, the rural traditions of May Day melted into an oily mess. Even outside, on the street lined by supermarkets and takeaways, those traditions were crushed under the weight of dropped cups and cigarette butts. It was a far cry from May Queens and country dancing and, as my date and I passed the hours between smoking area and dance floor, the only thing that felt natural was our conviction to make it until morning.

*

It's later now, and after promising to show my date the ritual of dance she's requested, I check my watch to find it's almost time to hear the choir. It seems that the club hasn't noticed this, however, because only now has its music become really wonderful. It suddenly pulses with a pace that seems to surround everyone in the room, the rise of each beat peaking

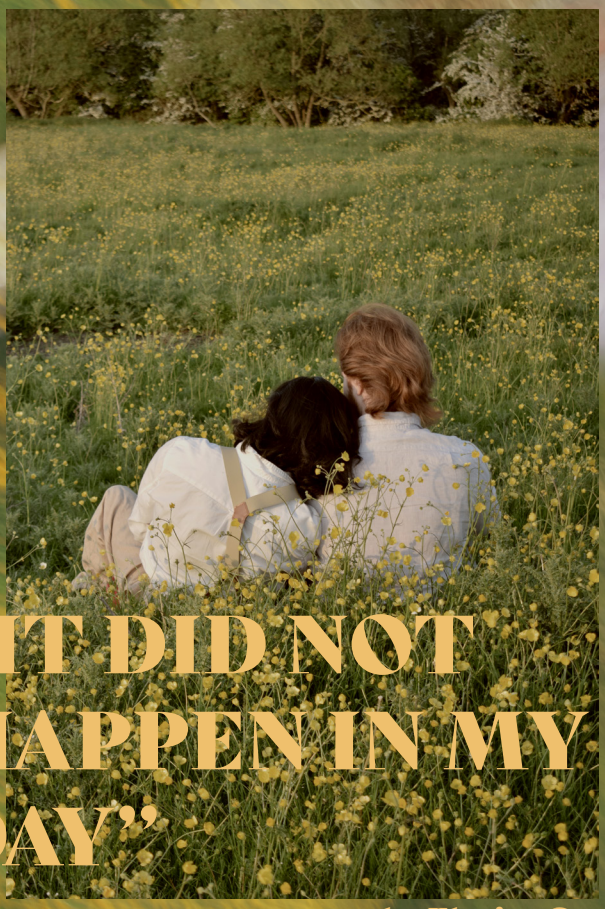
with a fresh kind of urgency. Gone are the gormless faces and in their place stands a crowd moving as one enraptured body. Each dancer is a limb, thrashing within the rhythms the music sets down, and my date has been caught up too. She rocks wildly and without thinking, and when I turn to tell her that we should be off, she is pulled into the mass of movement. Those natural rhythms have finally surged up and my date is gone. With no easy way to penetrate the crowd, I turn away, only to find myself abruptly lifted onto the shoulders of a particularly energetic dancer. He is frenetic yet stable, and from this bird's-eye the whole knotty scene spreads out beneath me. There are wriggling hips and couples embracing and tight trios skipping in circles. There is a figure standing stock-still and arms raised high and a girl pawing, open-mouthed, at a boy who looks uninterested. And in the middle of it all is my date, madly mouthing along to the lyricless tune. Finding my feet once again, I pull my way towards her, insistent that it is time we escaped, that it is time to see the choir. She doesn't respond though, doesn't even register me. No, she is committedly riding a different tempo, and when I lean in, I can hear the words she is babbling. "Sing a song of springtime," she repeats, over and over. And it is clear that is all she intends to do.

Now alone, I trudge towards the city, wrapped into another flurry of people. Daylight has streaked its way across the sky, revealing faces both fresh and haggard, and when I come to a stop beneath the tower, the entire road feels alive. Although few are speaking louder than a murmur, the rich overlapping of voices builds up to a noise that, when underscored by the club's echoes in my ear, sounds tuneful. Perhaps it is this tunefulness that the pagans celebrated, this overwhelming crush of light and people on an early summer morning. I'm not sure, but when I think about my date's question, about her interest in where I would be next May, the crush is all I consider.

I cannot say what a year will do but I know that it will do it, that it will churn through itself and bring me along for the ride. Whether it is joyful or bleak, that is uncertain – all I know is that next May, the next time this morning comes, the light will move through the city at the exact same rate and at the exact same time. And the city will also be full of people, and the people will make noise, and the noise will be as bright as the air around the tower when the choir begins to sing and all us pagan revellers look up. ▮

Photography by InChan Yang

“IT DID NOT HAP



“IT DID NOT HAPPEN IN MY DAY”

by Flavius Covaci
Art by Lauren Cooper

You say, as if young soldiers in
each other’s bayonets, as if
full of hetero-regrets – the virile
etiquette. As if Roma romance
of erasure dissipated Jewish
Aviator glasses did not hide the

of a leather-wearing thug to the
his fedora aside to taste crime; as
did not seek relief in a younger
neighbour a climax-baked carrot

her firm thighs s*h*a*k*e
for us again! I say count every
bringing a black death that did
of the cuck? Think of park benc
of a dimly lit

b a c k
a l l e y

con
(the true second coming). When
Reduced! Subdued! Benumbed!
to set up tent between
please! we’ve been around –
beneath the m
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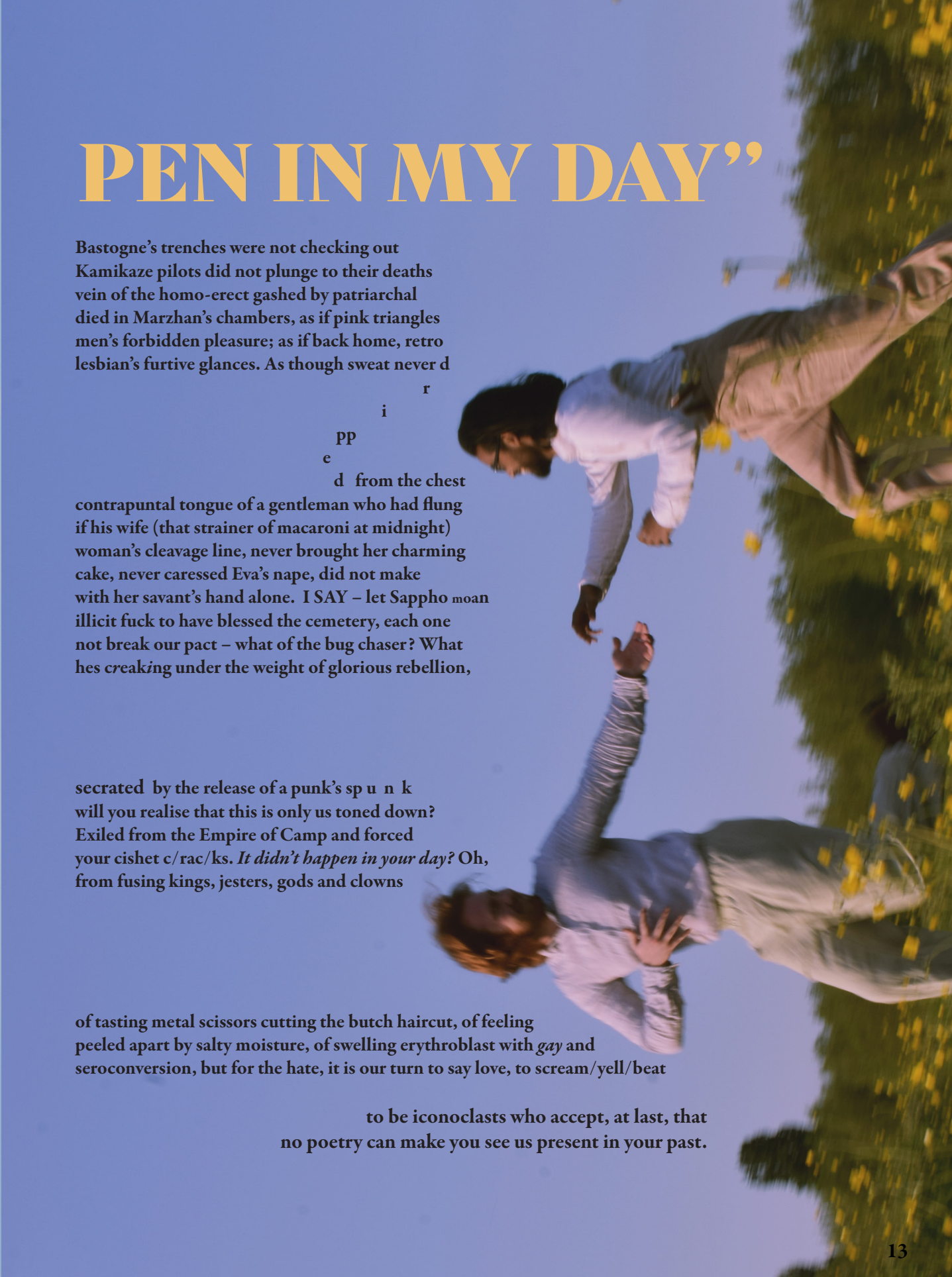
to the delicious moment of now:
the Drag Queen’s nipple tape
making them pay, not for
scream/explode/rebel –

PEN IN MY DAY”



Bastogne’s trenches were not checking out
Kamikaze pilots did not plunge to their deaths
vein of the homo-erect gashed by patriarchal
died in Marzhan’s chambers, as if pink triangles
men’s forbidden pleasure; as if back home, retro
lesbian’s furtive glances. As though sweat never d
r
i
pp
e
d from the chest
contrapuntal tongue of a gentleman who had flung
if his wife (that strainer of macaroni at midnight)
woman’s cleavage line, never brought her charming
cake, never caressed Eva’s nape, did not make
with her savant’s hand alone. I SAY – let Sappho moan
illicit fuck to have blessed the cemetery, each one
not break our pact – what of the bug chaser? What
hes *c*reak*i*ng under the weight of glorious rebellion,

secrated by the release of a punk’s sp u n k
will you realise that this is only us toned down?
Exiled from the Empire of Camp and forced
your cishet c/rac/ks. *It didn’t happen in your day?* Oh,
from fusing kings, jesters, gods and clowns

of tasting metal scissors cutting the butch haircut, of feeling
peeled apart by salty moisture, of swelling erythroblast with *gay* and
seroconversion, but for the hate, it is our turn to say love, to scream/yell/beat

to be iconoclasts who accept, at last, that
no poetry can make you see us present in your past.

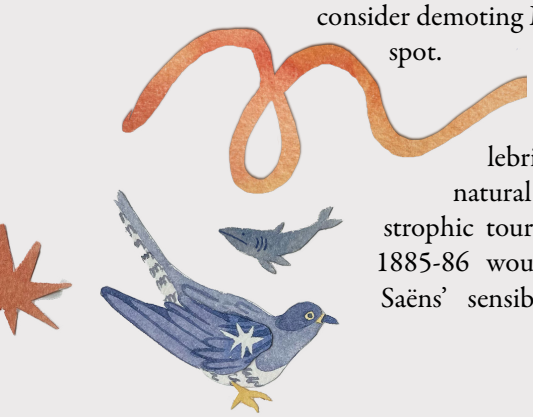
"Method in his Hee-Haw": Camille Saints-Saëns and The Carnival of the Animals

by Isaac Wighton

A century of modernism did no great service to Camille Saint-Saëns. Ask a group to name anything the French composer did, and you could be met with blank faces. Or, that is, knee-jerk cries of *"The Carnival of the Animals!"*

This would have shocked his contemporaries. Born in 1835, Saint-Saëns was quick to charm Paris's musicologists. He was admitted to the Conservatoire, the country's foremost musical academy, aged 13, and his early career was punctuated with glittering endorsements from Europe's musical heavyweights. Franz Liszt, the legendary Hungarian composer, was his most notable fan. After listening to Saint-Saëns play in 1858, the virtuoso pianist said that the young Camille was the finest organist in the world.

The critics loved him too. Harold C. Schonberg, the long-time music commentator for the *New York Times*, suggested in a 1969 article that he was "the most remarkable child prodigy in history". He would have known that this took quite the risk: few consider demoting Mozart from top spot.



Given this celebrity, it was only natural that a catastrophic tour of Germany in 1885-86 would shake Saint-Saëns' sensibilities. He had been famously critical of Wagner, the heartthrob of German Romanticism, and Wagner's adoring fans showed the Frenchman their discontent with this by walking out of his concerts. Reeling, Saint-Saëns sat down to compose again in a remote Austrian town and from this self-imposed exile emerged a blithe tapestry of musical satire. *The Carnival of the Animals* is a riotous half-hour. Elephants, royal lions, and wild jackasses are given life, and cavort about the piece's fourteen movements. A whimsical jaunt through the animal kingdom, this self-titled "grand zoologic fantasy" is a wonderful insight into an unshackled musical imagination. The first public audience adored it. Fusty music students aside, people still do. Yet it was never performed during his lifetime – Saint-Saëns banned it.

Why so obdurate? A dogmatic commitment to principles is one answer. Instrumental clarity, thoughtful phrasing, and delicacy of harmony made music beautiful for the unwavering Saint-Saëns. The great sin in opera composition, for example, was an orchestra doing too much, or too loudly. It was possible, in Saint-Saëns's world, to overembellish art. Unsurprisingly, *The Carnival*, boisterous in its volume and farcical in its subject matter, was just too much.

Yet he loved writing it. His publishers expected him to add another conventional symphony to his canon – he wrote back that he was caught up with *The Carnival* instead. It was simply "such fun". He understood, however, that it was to be relegated to performance behind private Parisian doors. Saint-

Saëns' devotees had come to expect works like his 1877 opera, *Samson and Delilah* (based on the biblical tale of the same name) or his pieces for voice of the 1860s. Here, Saint-Saëns is tightly regulated by his veneration of tradition and bows to the long-established models of prominent 18th century composers like George Friedrich Handel. There was a well-established convention for this form of composition. It was through these uncontroversial endeavours that Saint-Saëns became one of the most influential players in French music at the turn of the 20th century. You did not risk that mantle for a piece about kangaroos.

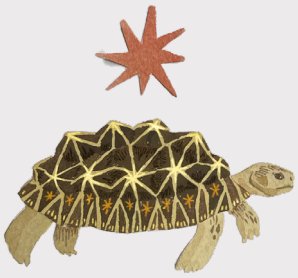
Saint-Saëns was no reactionary. He was undeniably brusque – Igor Stravinsky, the Russian modernist, remembered him as a "sharp little man" – but he was not un-progressive. A very public feud with German Romantic composers in the late 1870s over their conservatism and a liberal use of Egyptian motifs in his fifth piano concerto (1896) makes it obvious that Saint-Saëns was not hostile to modernisation. He just had an undying credo that there was an upper bound to noise and disorder. Two violins mimicking a donkey's bray may have fallen on the wrong side of this line.

In his will, Saint-Saëns allowed for performances of *The Carnival* after his death. The piece was quickly picked up by European orchestras and, such is the allure of the carnivalesque, its posthumous reception was spectacular. *Le Figaro* reported that one "cannot describe the cries of admiring joy let loose by an enthusiastic public" after its first performance in 1922. It was no flash in the pan. Nearly a decade later, the programme notes of a performance by the New York Philharmonic orchestra observed the "never-failing delight of audiences" all around the world. These audiences did not think that the humour was lowbrow, or that it compromised the seriousness of the artist's task. Indeed, they may have needed it. The post-Depression American public had little to laugh about. But they laughed at 'The Elephant'.

These audiences loved its irony. To them, the inversion of 'Gallop infernal' – an unmistakably fast-paced number from an 1858 opera – to a much more ponderous pace for the 'Tortoise' movement was not cheap, it was hysterical. Nor was the use of thematic material from a Mendelssohn scherzo originally written for fairies but transposed down to the double bass for the 'Elephant' lowbrow. It was comic genius. The last movement, 'Fossils', incorporates motifs from the classical repertoire. Here, 'Twinkle, Twinkle', 'Au clair de la lune' and other fossils of the musical canon all romp through Saint-Saëns' own original harmony. Saint-Saëns himself enjoyed the burlesque. The problem was that he wasn't *known* for burlesque.

But people rarely care what artists think of their own work. In the 1940s, Columbia Records saw in *The Carnival* a chance to capitalise on the universal comedy of a mammalian circus. They were unfussed that Saint-Saëns thought it puerile. Thinking that a recording of spoken word to accompany the music would be a popular and jocular addition to Saint-Saëns' score, they recruited the American humourist Ogden Nash. It didn't take long before Noel Coward became involved as narrator to punctuate the original music with Nash's wholly unserious rhyme. All 14 musical movements, from 'The Swan' to 'The Aquarium', were recited alongside Nash's instantly recognisable pun-like couplets. Think "The Kangaroo can jump incredible / He has to jump because he's edible".

Nash clearly had a penchant for animal verses before *The Carnival*: "I don't mind eels / Except as meals / And the ways they feels." Or even better: "If called by a panther / Don't anther." But a love for



the zoological only goes so far. It is nice to think that the music, too, may have charmed the prolific lyricist. After all, in *The Carnival*'s playfulness with form, parody of canon, or maximisation of fun, he must have seen himself. Nash's poem 'Song of the Open Road', for example, takes aim at the oft-quoted "I think I shall never see / a poem as lovely as a tree" from the Roman Catholic poet Joyce Kilmer's 1913 work 'Trees'. Substituting billboards for trees leaves Nash with the pithy observation that "Indeed, unless the billboards fall / I'll never see a tree at all". It is unsurprising that their work fits together so well: Ogden and Camille both saw something very funny in taking aim at the archaic.

Their difference, of course, was that Nash thought humour to be a respectable end goal. His rhyme, irregular metre, and zany malapropisms are endlessly clever. But it was more important that they were funny. The author that penned "A bit of talcum / is always walcum" in his 'Reflection on Babies' was not overly concerned with the sobriety of his reputation. Even though Saint-Saëns gleefully recognised the humour in his work, it had to be more than just "Si amusant!" For him, and many composers of his generation, the aesthetic of careful harmony still reigned supreme. For all the merriment that hopping kangaroos deliver, it threatened to shift focus away from this guiding principle. Funniness itself was not a sufficiently serious endeavour.

Schonberg's 1969 article is right to call for a resurrection of Saint-Saëns' under-appreciated canon. But in the claim that he "is largely represented by the wrong pieces", he is wrong. The story of *The Carnival* is the encapsulation of Saint-Saëns. Capable of mirthful musical satire but wedded to a maxim of 'nothing too much'; Saint-Saëns knew he was funny but thought there were more important things to be. That Nash did not, is perhaps why their combination works so well. For many, ironic twists on the work of French composer Hector Berlioz mean little or just are not particularly charming. There is, however, a more accessible, universal humour that Nash's humour teases out. His rhyme "But I think, wherever a lion is/ I'd rather be somewhere else" reminds that there is something unapologetically funny about classically trained musicians playing a piece about big cats.

The Frenchman was not alone in disapproving the work for which he is known. Franz Kafka insisted upon the destruction of *The Trial*, Anthony Burgess lamented the popularity of *A Clockwork Orange*, and at one point, Leo Tolstoy even threw *War and Peace* to the wolves. Burgess spurned his most famous novel because the gratuitous sex and violence of the film adaptation misrepresented his personal philosophy as an author. It was this that Saint-Saëns feared. Yet he knew that artists have slim windows in which to safeguard their reputation. While Saint-Saëns did all he could to protect his legacy in his lifetime, he would have known that allowing for performances of *The Carnival of the Animals* after his death meant it was beyond his control. We are lucky that artists do not always get to choose what they are remembered for.

Saint-Saëns once imperiously declared that "few people understand art." But Nash understood that *The Carnival* was meant to be funny. The enduring success of both the original score and mid-century poetry speaks to the ageless allure of this playfulness. Haughty Parisian musicologists were delighted by the carnivalesque just as millennial audiences revel in Nash and Coward's verse. The carnivalesque, clearly, is timeless. ▮

Shoot What Moves

by Marianne Doherty

"Fire chews the heads of our paintbrushes,
burns the parts of us it touches

then eats our bedsheets up in flashes
and reduces our books to ashes.

It comes from laughter, and it catches
on your soft tongue, leaves your breath noxious,

since this is hell. You're a young French film actress
who fell from a cliff and onto a mattress.

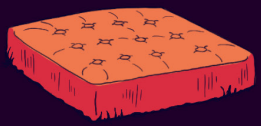
Watching felt good until we got nauseous:
you, spread like a bug. What killed you was softness.

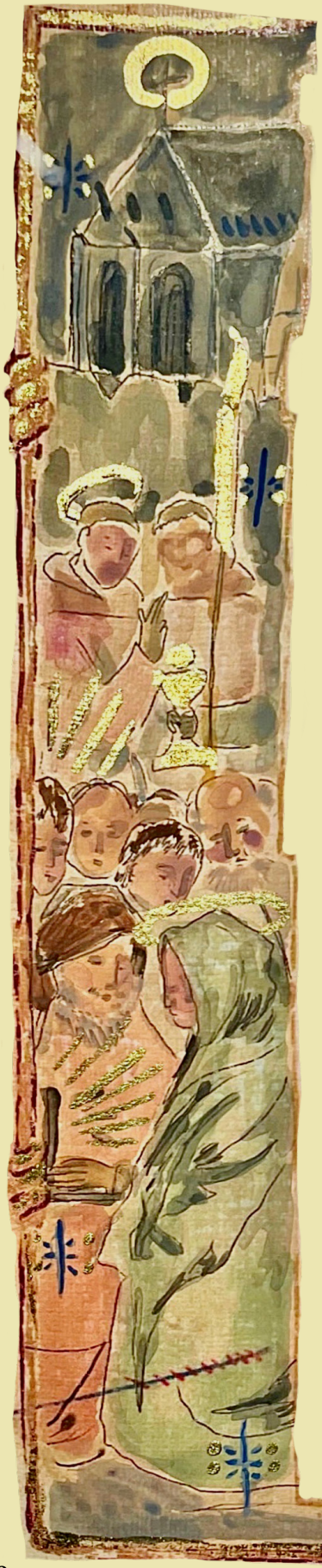
You laughed as you fell, and should have been cautious,
but shouldn't we all? Here, you'll be an actress,

and you'll play yourself, without any artifice.
We haven't got props, because that's what hell is

anyway, it's you.
We shoot what moves, and won't spare you bastards."

Art by Isabel Otterburn-Milner





The Brides of Christ:
The Parasocial Desires of the Mystics

by Connie Higgins

"Often when the sisters were talking to each other they would say, with sighs that showed their feelings: 'If only he would return. If only we could enjoy his company once more. If only we could gaze upon him [...] Through these yearnings for the man, they often stimulated each other's desire".

You'd be forgiven, reading the above, for wondering whether the mandate of *The Isis* had evolved to include calls for transcripts from the aftermath of a One Direction meet-and-greet. Fear not: this publication has yet to stray from its serious journalistic niche, and its contents remain strictly erudite. The quotation has been taken from *The Life of Christina of Markyate*, a 12th century biography detailing the story of an English anchoress. Written by a monk at St Albans who put pen to paper after conducting interviews with Christina and her sister Margaret, the work tells of the numerous mystic visions Christina is said to have had over her life. For the most part, they involve her romantic relationship with Jesus Christ. Just as particularly enthusiastic Paul Mescal fans have been known to don an "I love my Irish boyfriend" t-shirt, Christina fashioned herself as Christ's 'spouse', informing her colleagues of how they had eloped the night before her wedding to another man. All nuns are, by virtue of their virginal devotion to the Church, known figuratively as 'brides of Christ', but a few women throughout medieval and early modern Europe began to take this role literally. Christina was just one of many whose visions contained romantic involvement with Christ.

To imagine people engaged in intimate relationships with Christ – imaginary or otherwise – is, in this day and age, perplexing. And yet, perhaps the phenomenon is not as alien as it first seems. Parasocial relationships abound in any society. Nowadays, sites like Wattpad are swarming with stories where Your/Name (a term helpfully coined so wistful readers could insert themselves into a narrative) is involved in a tempestuous romance with a celebrity figure. "Married for three years, Y/N and Scarlett Johansson's marriage is tested", reads the abstract of one Wattpad story; "Obama and Y/N falling in love", another. Such texts could be seen as the modern iterations of the visions of a mystic like Christina: in both cases, a one-sided fixation develops into a full-blown romantic narrative. Celebrity fanfiction captures the essence of the visions of those mystics who saw themselves as literal Brides of Christ and thus can help us to understand the source of this seemingly bizarre phenomenon.

This kind of adoration, regardless of its context, is often tinged with eroticism. Wattpad famously differs from other fanfiction sites in its refusal to censor sexual content, so maybe the fact that research for this article led me to a description of national treasure Mary Berry telling Y/N that she wanted to "put on her oven mitts" and show him her "special glaze" should not have come as so great a shock. For one reason or another, no Bride of Christ was quite so bawdy, yet their visions are by no means devoid of erotic impulse. Despite his holiness, Christina of Markyate speaks of Christ as a form of sexual temptation. The monk reports that, after a visit Christ paid to Christina and Margaret, they felt that "if their virginal modesty had allowed, they would have asked him to stay". Christ serves a dual function in the text: he is at once hallowed and heartthrob-like. As in much modern-day celebrity fanfiction, a remote and unattainable figure is inserted into romantic frameworks and is thus rendered tangible. Literary scholar Elizabeth Spearing has written that Christina's flight to Christ on the eve of her wedding resembles a literary 'romantic elopement': pursued on horseback, she makes a treacherous escape from her husband-to-be.

By contrast, the story of Benedetta Carlini is truly unique. In 1599, at the age of nine, Benedetta was brought to a group of ascetic Catholic women living in Pescia. Her life was thenceforth dedicated to religious service, her passion for Christ anything but meagre. Her story has been credited with "demolishing the line between the sacred and the profane": during her life, she became not only a Bride of Christ but also the centre of one of the most scandalous investigations in the history of the Catholic Church.

Just like Christina, Benedetta told her fellow nuns that she was betrothed to Christ. She organised a lavish wedding ceremony for herself, demanding gifts and baskets of flowers, and announced that no one but her would be permitted to see Jesus. Alas, Benedetta's claims turned out to be false. Her profession that she had given up meat as an expression of her physical purity was disproved when she was found smuggling salami and mortadella into her room. Similarly, investigating nuns spotted her making a star out of gold foil and sticking it onto her head before exclaiming to the convent that her beloved had left it there to mark where he had planted a tender kiss. The investigation ultimately led to the most shocking discovery of all: although she had not been engaged in a romantic relationship with Jesus, she had been conducting a two-year-long affair with a young nun named Bartolomea. The records of the case do not shy away from detail: "when Bartolomea came over", they reveal, "Benedetta would seize her by the arm and throw her forcefully on the bed. Embracing her, she would place her under herself and kiss her as if she were a man [...] and she would stir on top of her so much that both of them corrupted themselves". She was kept in solitary confinement for the rest of her life.

Whilst two nuns conducting a secret affair was deemed a little too far, beyond official Church dogma the line be-

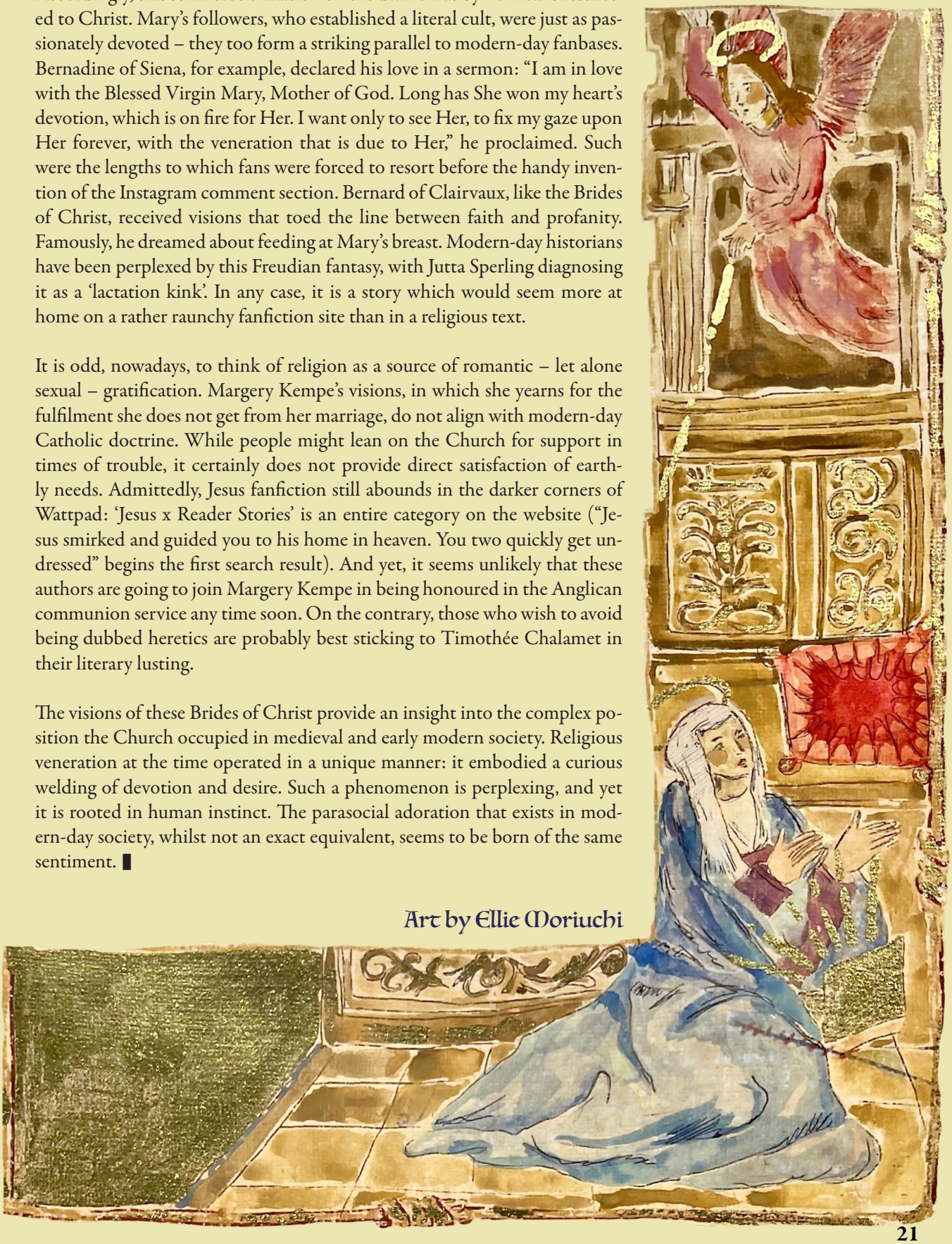
tween sexual and divine was more blurred than one might expect. Exploring the works of medieval mystics, the theologian Werner Jeanrond has written that "the mystical discourse of love thus shows that the erotic and the sacred need not be understood in terms of radical opposition". The experiences of these literal Brides of Christ give us some insight into this complicated relationship between eroticism and sanctity. In an attempt to resolve the tension between Church-mandated chastity and their natural human desire, they channelled their otherwise illicit lust through the divine, thus purifying their passion and removing sin from their longing. Margery Kempe, for example, describes the "many comforts, both spiritual comforts and bodily comforts" that comprised her relationship with Jesus, and recalls his declaration to her: "you may boldly, when you are in bed, take me to you as your wedded husband". As is often the case with celebrity fanfiction, involvement in fantasies with idolised figures serves as a form of escapism and provides the author with a second, private life, removed from the monotony of reality. In this way, Margery created two lives for herself: in one, she was the wife of John Kempe and the mother of his fourteen children; in another, she was living in ecstasy with the heavenly Father.

Why, though, did these religious figures slip so naturally into people's romantic and sexual consciousness? For one thing, it is worth considering the omnipresence the Church had at the time – it was an all-absorbing body, from which it was virtually impossible to maintain any separation. As a result, religious figures were present in all aspects of life: events involving them shaped people's calendars, ethics, and daily routine. It is only natural that figures to whom people were constantly exposed should permeate every part of worshippers' psyches, including sexual and romantic impulses. The most obvious reason for this eroticism, then, is ubiquity. Sacred figures occupied a space that is now filled by celebrities. The kind of worship extended to contemporary celebrities, while evidently not religious in nature, has a lot in common with religious veneration: celebrities are frequently referred to as 'idols', 'icons', even 'gods' and 'goddesses'. Just as people might once have flocked to see a lock of Christ's hair, so too now are guitar picks touched by Keith Richards sold for thousands of pounds. It makes sense, therefore, to view holy figures as the closest people would have got to having a celebrity crush. The instinct to worship pervades all cultures. Perhaps the same could be said of the instinct to fantasise about the object of that worship.

Accordingly, this semi-erotic fixation on the divine was by no means restricted to Christ. Mary's followers, who established a literal cult, were just as passionately devoted – they too form a striking parallel to modern-day fanbases. Bernadine of Siena, for example, declared his love in a sermon: "I am in love with the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God. Long has She won my heart's devotion, which is on fire for Her. I want only to see Her, to fix my gaze upon Her forever, with the veneration that is due to Her," he proclaimed. Such were the lengths to which fans were forced to resort before the handy invention of the Instagram comment section. Bernard of Clairvaux, like the Brides of Christ, received visions that toed the line between faith and profanity. Famously, he dreamed about feeding at Mary's breast. Modern-day historians have been perplexed by this Freudian fantasy, with Jutta Sperling diagnosing it as a 'lactation kink'. In any case, it is a story which would seem more at home on a rather raunchy fanfiction site than in a religious text.

It is odd, nowadays, to think of religion as a source of romantic – let alone sexual – gratification. Margery Kempe's visions, in which she yearns for the fulfilment she does not get from her marriage, do not align with modern-day Catholic doctrine. While people might lean on the Church for support in times of trouble, it certainly does not provide direct satisfaction of earthly needs. Admittedly, Jesus fanfiction still abounds in the darker corners of Wattpad: 'Jesus x Reader Stories' is an entire category on the website ("Jesus smirked and guided you to his home in heaven. You two quickly get undressed" begins the first search result). And yet, it seems unlikely that these authors are going to join Margery Kempe in being honoured in the Anglican communion service any time soon. On the contrary, those who wish to avoid being dubbed heretics are probably best sticking to Timothée Chalamet in their literary lusting.

The visions of these Brides of Christ provide an insight into the complex position the Church occupied in medieval and early modern society. Religious veneration at the time operated in a unique manner: it embodied a curious welding of devotion and desire. Such a phenomenon is perplexing, and yet it is rooted in human instinct. The parasocial adoration that exists in modern-day society, whilst not an exact equivalent, seems to be born of the same sentiment. ▮



Art by Ellie Moriuchi

ORLANDO II
(A CLOSET DRAMA)

DRAMATIS PERSONAE:

Orlando II
The Dancer
Petulantia, Goddess of Outrageous Behaviour
Susan

ACT I

SCENE I.

The garden is purple tonight. Bruised by long rains and heaving, now, a sigh of relief as the leather flowers nod their heads against the wall, blushing pink in the hush. They watch intently as you and I hurry to meet the dusk. Rain still glints off the low-hanging fruit – do you see it? The oranges aren't ripe quite yet. We can still smell the oil of their blossoms.

Enter Orlando II *and* The Dancer. Orlando II *drops into a garden chair by the gazebo while* The Dancer *keeps an awkward distance, standing a few paces further back.*

Orlando II: It feels like a terribly pedestrian evening.

The Dancer *clears her throat and shifts from one foot to the other. Her sequined red costume rustles as she moves.*

Orlando II: What is it? Have I offended you?
The Dancer: Not at all. Boredom isn't a complaint I often get.
Orlando II: Ah. Well. You haven't performed yet – I'm sure we'll all come round when you do. I've heard great things.
The Dancer: We?
Orlando II: Oh, yes. We're very excited, of course. I suppose you're used to it.

The Dancer *blinks and looks cautiously around. There is no one by the gazebo apart from her and* Orlando II, *stiffly adjusting their head within the enormous ruff surrounding it. She does not look entirely*

confused – disappointed, maybe. Don't worry. She can't see us. We're not here in the way she is.

Orlando II, *however, lets their gaze linger on us. A smile plays around the corner of their lip. They turn back to face* The Dancer.

Orlando II: Are you? Used to it?
The Dancer: I'm not sure.

Uncomfortable pause.

The Dancer: I think it's a beautiful evening.
Orlando II: Yes, that's it. I think you're right. So very pretty I can barely stand to be here.
The Dancer: You would prefer it to be ugly?
Orlando II: That's not what I said.

The Dancer *flinches.* Orlando II*'s tone has become suddenly sharp. They lean haughtily back, as far as the stiffness of their suit will allow and pro duce a meerschaum pipe from an embroidered pocket. They light it with a match and puff blue smoke into the gathering gloom.*

Orlando II: No, you've misunderstood me. I shouldn't be surprised. That avenue of fountains, neatly lined in trees – I suppose you would like it. How each poplar (so proudly and perfectly pruned) stands sentinel over unbroken curtains of water, murmuring over veined marble without respite – the grotesquery of it all! Honeysuckle on the gazebo (painted baby blue), air sweeter than sugarcane. How lovely. A monarch butterfly settling in to sleep on the foxgloves!

Outraged, Orlando II *pulls out a machete that has until now been concealed beneath the table (I forgot to mention there is a garden table just beside them – small, round, with a little mosaic set in the top) and launches it angrily in the general direction of a nearby flowerbed. There comes a loud* thwack! *And a few dozy butterflies rise from the decapitated foxgloves.*

Orlando II: To answer your question, I would prefer things to happen. Wouldn't you? Don't you like it when things happen?
The Dancer: I'm sure you're right.

Orlando II: Don't be sure. Be interesting! Do something. Right now. Do something right now, make something happen.

The two stare at one another for a few long moments. Very slowly, The Dancer *begins to hop in a circle on one leg. Her face seems faraway, almost bored, like she could be thinking about John Locke or auto-erotic asphyxiation. Either way,* Orlando II *is unmoved.*

Orlando II: A dance. How original.

The Dancer *stops and looks slightly sheepish. Maybe even sad. There is another prolonged silence, this one even more uncomfortable than the previous.*

The Dancer: I can juggle.
Orlando II: Please don't.

SCENE II.

Music is playing in the garden. We have moved, followed them deeper, away from the walls, into a paved courtyard at its heart. Thick ribbons of dark silk are draped from the boughs of a looming, wary oak. The sky has settled into night. There is warm, low, flicker ing light with no apparent source, and tobacco smoke has replaced the smell of orange blos soms. The air feels thick and blue, and Orlando II *is dancing with the haze, cackling, holding four margaritas in two hands. Bright toadstools grow in between the paving stones. When* Orlando II *steps on them, they release a low muttering noise followed by an insolent bang.*

Orlando II: I'm quite sure I'm in love with you.

For a moment, it seems they are talking to themselves. Then, silently, gracefully, The Dancer *unfurls from beneath the oak's boughs. She clings to one of the silk ribbons, flick ering in and out of sight between bushels of foliage. At first, she seems to take no note of this, and swings onward, to and fro, between existence and abstraction.*

The Dancer: You don't know the first thing about me.

She has a form again now, but moments later it melts once more into halfness – hidden by shadows or perhaps never entirely there in the first place. I can't quite tell. Orlando II *picks four toadstools and drops one into each margarita, then downs the glasses in suc cession.*

Orlando II: No, of course I don't. That's the only way anyone can ever really be loved.
The Dancer: If you really loved me I think you'd offer me a drink.

Orlando II: Would you like a drink?
The Dancer: No. I'm performing.

> Orlando II *seems unperturbed. As though coaxing her,* Orlando II b*egins to sing. They are neither in tune nor in time with the music, but that does not stop them. The sizzling of cicadas in the underbrush swells with their voice and* The Dancer *twirls faster, both less and more corporeal than ever.* Orlando II *begins to climb the oak, inches closer, reaches for the silks as* The Dancer *moves ever faster, pausing only once to sip from a margarita she has hidden deftly in one of the oak's hollows. We crane our necks to see the sky through gaps in the branches; there is the mosaic from the garden table, tiled into the stars – do you see it?*

ACT II

SCENE I.

> *Embers glow softly in the long grass. We have wandered down a narrow mossy path, not far, still just in sight of the courtyard. Here the dark is clearer, cooler, and the tessellated sky reaches far over the shrubbery to meet the garden wall someplace we cannot see. The music is quiet, but it has not died. From a grove of rotting apples drifts the tentative pluck ing of strings.*
>
> *Enter* Petulantia, Goddess of Outrageous Behaviour, *to find* Orlando II *and* The Dancer *lying half-naked in a bed of blue poppies which smell like Clorox. They are not touching; in fact, they keep a careful separation from one another. She does not approach them at first but watches from a distance. Just like we do. We are just like her, except we are not gods – or maybe it's the other way around, and she is just like us but with an inflated sense of self-importance.*

Orlando II: You were certainly a sight to behold.
The Dancer: I thought you didn't like beautiful things.
Orlando II: I didn't say you were beautiful.

> *A firefly buzzes inquisitively close to* Orlando II*'s face. They catch and swallow it.*

Orlando II: Pretty. Ugly. All of it is just as pointless as my loving you. All that exists, all that is *worthy* of existence, is –

> Petulantia, G.O.B., *glides towards them holding in one hand a lit candle and in the other a globuscruciger, gold and bright pink. She hovers before the pair, who acknowledge her with nothing but a curt nod each.*

Petulantia, G.O.B.: Am I intruding?

Orlando II: Of course not. We were just about to sing another song.
Petulantia, G.O.B.: Make it a good one.

> Petulantia, G.O.B., *lands noiselessly in the grass between the two and lets go of her candle, which continues to hover beside her.* Orlando II *offers a handful of bright toad stools.* The Dancer *and* Petulantia, G.O.B., *take one each and swallow them without chewing. Muffled banging noises come from their stomachs and their eyes bulge for a moment;* The Dancer *breaks out into a high soprano while* Petulantia, G.O.B., *produces a low, shuddering wail.* Orlando II *opens their mouth to let a flock of patterned moths escape.*

Petulantia, G.O.B.: Oh, to be the knife that cleaves the world's flesh! To sever those troublesome bonds which leave us fettered to sense... the living are useless pedants.
Orlando II: But what does it all mean? To cut or stitch together – to kiss or kill, to love or leave, to breathe or burst –
Petulantia, G.O.B.: Shut the fuck up.

Petulantia, G.O.B., *claws at her pink orb and it opens, producing a vibrator. With a yowl of glee, she turns it on and plunges it into the soil. A crashing set of drums now accompanies the guitar strings. The entire garden shudders a sigh of adoration.*
Enter Susan, *wearing a leopard-print dressing gown and grey furry slippers. The slippers have ears. Her hair is wrapped tightly in red plastic curlers and she is smoking a menthol. Her face is impassive, but her posture brings an air of irritation with it.*

Orlando II: Hello. Who are you?

Susan: Susan Fenwick. From down the road.

Orlando II: A pleasure. I'm Orlando. Would you like a drink?

> Susan *wrinkles her nose in obvious disdain and takes a long drag of her menthol.*

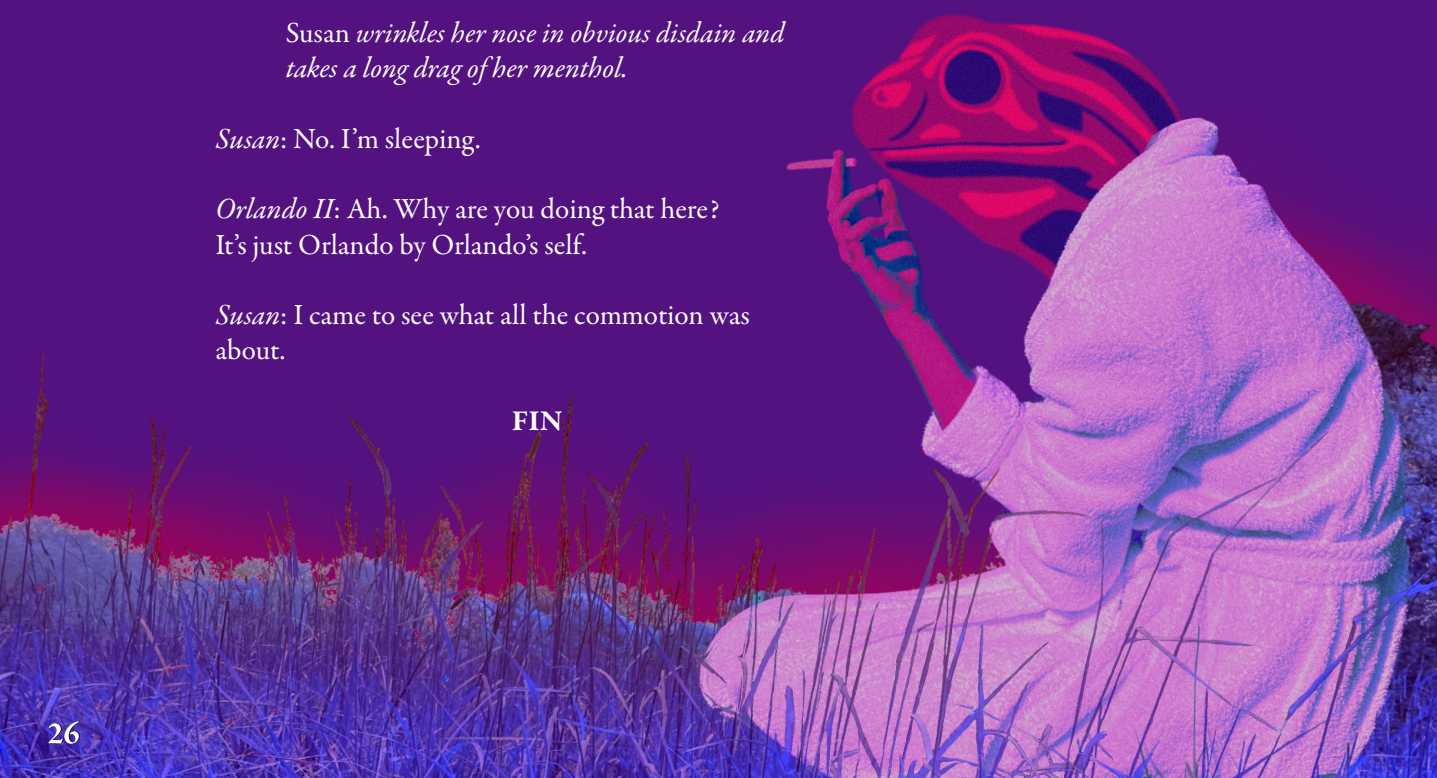
Susan: No. I'm sleeping.

Orlando II: Ah. Why are you doing that here?
It's just Orlando by Orlando's self.

Susan: I came to see what all the commotion was about.

FIN

by Max Marks
Art by Isabel Otterburn-Milner and Cleo Scott



COMMENT SECTION DREAM

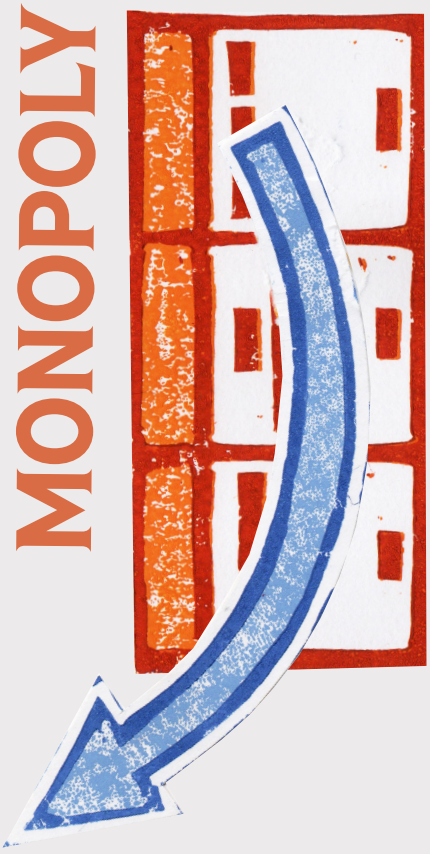
Top Ten Ghosts 800–1500 AD:	damn it must b lonely
Robot Fail Compilation:	now all this stuff is so scary tho
Central Plains Four Day Drive Route:	Where did all the bison go
Redox reactions EXPLAINED:	I dont get it, im sorry
Live! Baby Sea Turtles Hatch:	u remember ur just one
Inside Kirsten Dunst's Hollywood Home:	room, room so beautiful
Physicist Explains Lasers in 5 Layers of Difficulty:	Light is so cool
Landslide (Fleetwood Mac Cover):	even in this changing season
MASSIVE Fish Alert:	Huge news
Hydraulic Press VS Pool Noodle & More!:	if an ice cube
Slip Away (Official Music Video):	sliiip awayyy tearrr aparrrrrrt
Ambient Binaural Beats 4D Audio Meditation:	Then, you can Just Listen...
Yu-Gi-Oh Where To Set Infinite Impermanence:	lol game the system
Pre-Algebra 1: Counting:	I can't cancel out my heart

BY SHAW WORTH

ART BY CLEO SCOTT

MONOPOLY MEN

by Charlie Mackintosh



"You have won second prize in a beauty contest. Collect £10."

Sadly, I have never received a letter like this in the post. Nor have I ever even entered a beauty contest (allowing me to maintain that the prospect of a mere second place is outrageous). I have, however, been the recipient of this fateful message countless times in the game Monopoly, in which it is one of the more memorable 'Community Chest' cards.

Monopoly is the third most sold board game in the world, no mean feat given the constant presence of board games in different forms and across different societies throughout time. Indeed, board games can be found in every corner of the globe – a whole planet of house rules and family arguments, peacocking in victory and sulking in defeat. It is easy to dismiss board games as a frivolity, a distraction for children, an activity for when the whole family is around with nothing to do. But frivolities rarely survive for millennia, adapting to ever-changing circumstances and cultural norms. Although their effects are subconscious, the reason board games continue to command our attention with the same rapture as they did the Babylonians is because they model our real lives, the events, social forces, and motivations of the world around us. They are, almost without exception, entertaining microcosms of our complex world, whether in the world of business (Monopoly) or world politics (chess and Go). They demonstrate the need for board games to reflect the world around us and adapt to the impermanence of society.

Monopoly is the most obvious example of the importance of real-life relatability to a board game's success. The story of Monopoly is, perhaps unsurprisingly, one of capitalism. The game's predecessor, 'The Landlord's Game', was invented by Georgist-feminist Lizzie Magie in 1903. Magie was a devout follower of the economic teachings of Henry George, a man famous for his proposed 'land tax'. She despaired at the levels of wealth inequality in the United States, a phenomenon she attributed to the value of real estate and the ability of those with property to accrue vast wealth through their monopolistic hold over it. As a response, Magie developed a game to demonstrate this socially damaging phenomenon. She devised two sets of rules, one anti-monopolistic and one monopolistic. Under the former rule set, players were rewarded whenever anyone generated wealth, and the game was won when the poorest participant had doubled their starting cash. The latter rule set is more familiar: income is received only by the landlord, and the game is won when one player has generated enough wealth to bankrupt everyone else. The rule sets were designed to highlight the benefits of a 'single tax' ¬¬– it was intended to be less of a game and more of an educational criticism of the turn of 20th-century American capitalism. Alas, it is no secret

which one of these rule sets is familiar today. 'The Landlord's Game' became Monopoly.

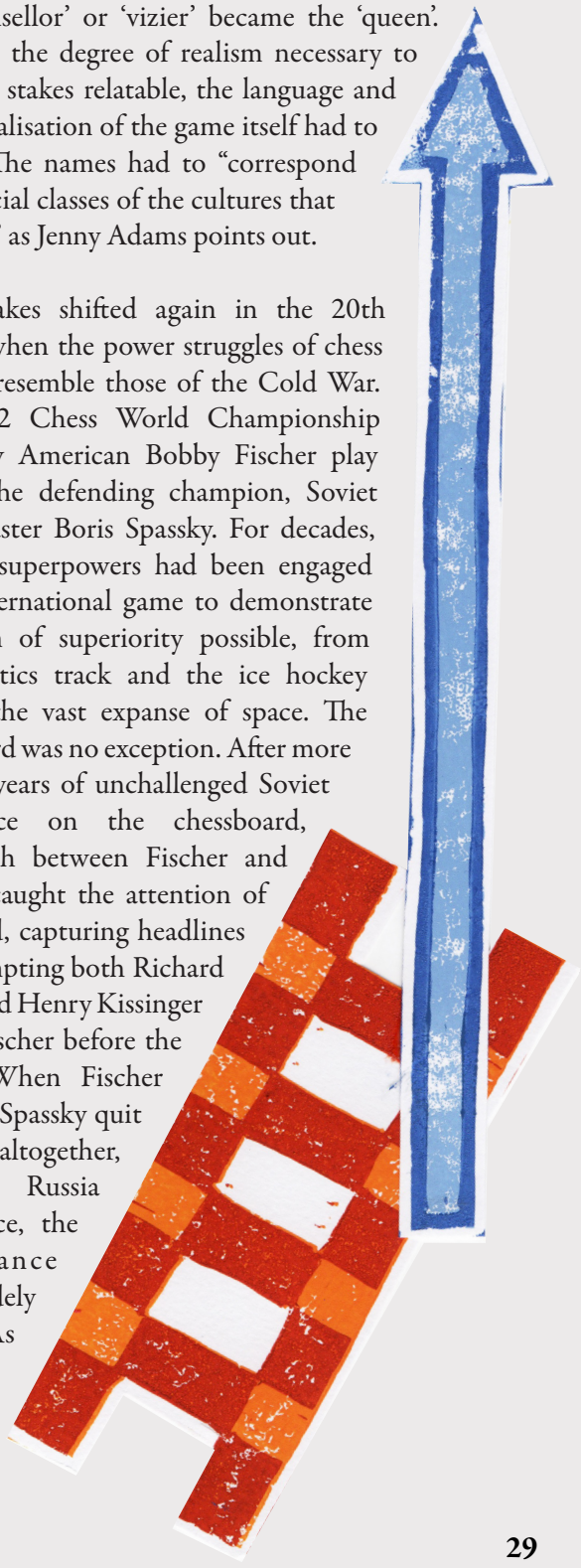
Magie mainly played her game with friends, sharing the few copies she made. By the early 1930s, the game had a small cult following across the United States, and it eventually found its way into the hands of Charles Darrow. Darrow designed much of the game's iconic symbology – he also dealt the final blow to Magie's original intent of the game. All references to the 'anti-monopolist' rule set were abandoned. People much preferred the high-stakes competition of the monopolistic rule set ¬– they loved the simulation of wealth generation, the facsimile of capitalism. With the Great Depression leaving millions unemployed and cutting the disposable incomes of middle-class America, Monopoly offered a cheap pastime – a pastime that simulated wealth and a capitalist system in which one could actually win. Sales soared and by 1936, the Monopoly Man, officially known as 'Rich Uncle Pennybags', was added to the design, set to gloat in opulence above Lizzie Magie's dream of a better tomorrow.

Since 1936, Monopoly's popularity has only grown. Over 300 million copies of the game have been sold, generating billions of dollars, and causing countless family arguments. Monopoly won because it was real; the 'Landlord's Game' lost because it was not. The story of Monopoly is the story of capitalism, a story in which everyone is a character. Why else would such a thing as 'Christ Church Monopoly' be commercially available?

Monopoly's global popularity is eclipsed by only one game: chess. The black and white behemoth of Twitch streamers and Central Park hustlers, chess's reflection of the world is less obvious at first. It reflects a more instinctive force – that of survival. 'Destroy or be destroyed' is the essential principle of chess, a game won by seizing upon advantageous 'trades' of pieces; its longevity and popularity show our subconscious desire for outlets for competitive survival instincts.

Most historians believe that chess originated in the Indian game of chaturanga, which spread westwards around the turn of the First Millennium AD. As it entered Christian Europe, the game changed to reflect the society around it: elephants became 'bishops', horses became 'knights', and the 'counsellor' or 'vizier' became the 'queen'. To retain the degree of realism necessary to make the stakes relatable, the language and conceptualisation of the game itself had to change. The names had to "correspond to the social classes of the cultures that played it," as Jenny Adams points out.

These stakes shifted again in the 20th century when the power struggles of chess came to resemble those of the Cold War. The 1972 Chess World Championship Final saw American Bobby Fischer play against the defending champion, Soviet Grandmaster Boris Spassky. For decades, the two superpowers had been engaged in an international game to demonstrate any form of superiority possible, from the athletics track and the ice hockey rink to the vast expanse of space. The chessboard was no exception. After more than 20 years of unchallenged Soviet dominance on the chessboard, the match between Fischer and Spassky caught the attention of the world, capturing headlines and prompting both Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger to call Fischer before the match. When Fischer won and Spassky quit chess altogether, fleeing Russia for France, the significance was widely noted. As Soviet



grandmaster and World Champion Garry Kasparov explained, the match fit "ideologically into the context of the Cold War era: a lone American genius challenges the Soviet chess machine and defeats it". Known as the Match of the Century, it boosted American morale enormously during the Cold War: a small but emotionally crucial move towards checkmate. Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino argue that "the fundamental mechanic at the core of chess is that it formalises conflict into a binary opposition between polarised teams." As such, it is well-suited to such vicious soft-power struggles. The match inspired the ABBA-authored musical *Chess*, as well as the hit Netflix show *The Queen's Gambit*, only two modern instances of a Western cultural obsession with the game.

Chess, however, is not the only game which reflects conflict: in fact, it is often remarked that "if chess is a battle, then Go is a war." Relatively unknown in the West, Go is an ancient Chinese game of strategy, historically considered one of the four essential arts for Chinese scholars and aristocrats. Go is an abstract game. Rather than anthropomorphic pieces dancing around a chequered board, Go is played using stones which are placed on the intersections of an orthogonally lined board. The aim of the game is to capture 'territory' so that your opponent no longer wishes to place down any more stones, for fear that they will be taken. Rather than the political battles between knights and bishops, Go reflects the grand planning of a general who positions forces to reinforce territory and rob their opponents of options. The real-world analogy here is glaringly obvious. So obvious, in fact, that for millennia it has played a central role in the training of military leaders in China, Korea, and Japan, to such an extent that Tokugawa Ieyasu appointed a Minister for Go in Shogunate Japan.

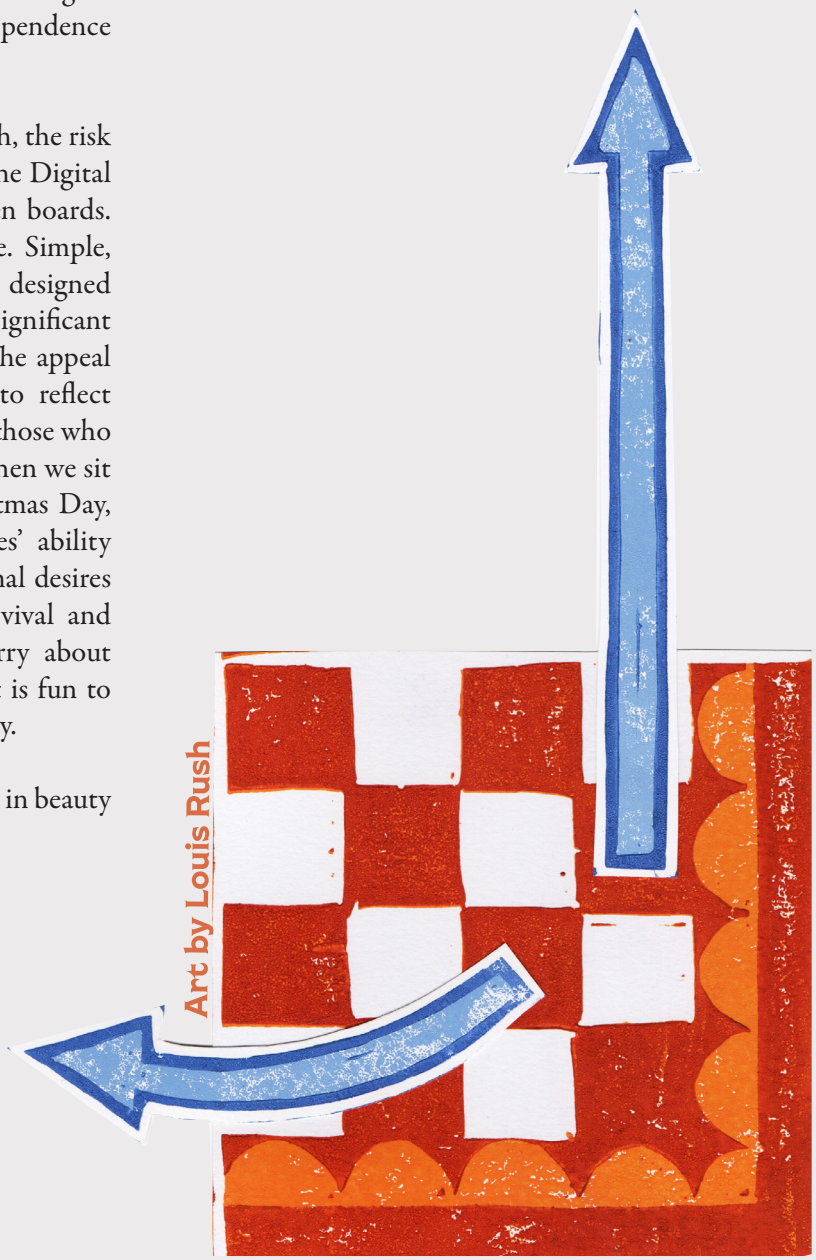
Go has an interesting contemporary story to tell, however. As befits a depiction of war, Go is an incredibly complicated game. In fact, the number of theoretically possible configurations of a Go board are estimated to exceed 2.1×10^{170}, a number far greater than the same figure for chess; higher even than the number of atoms in the observable universe. For decades, Go was a game of fascination to computer scientists. In 1997, IBM's Deep Blue beat Garry Kasparov at chess, marking the first time a computer programme had beaten a chess world champion in tournament conditions. The idea of a computer ever beating a 9-Dan Go player remained a white whale for AI developers. Almost two decades after Deep Blue's victory, in March 2016 DeepMind's AlphaGo finally defeated 9-Dan professional Go player Lee Sedol 4-1, a milestone event in the development of artificial intelligence. In both chess and Go, the idea of a human emerging victorious over artificial intelligence ever again is unfathomable. Indeed, computer-generated models of ideal games and strategies are now used by professional players to train. Gone are the days of studying historical grand masters for moments of genius -– why bother when a computer can instantaneously compare millions of possible moves for you?

Chess and Go were the first fields where AI decisively conquered humanity, where computing

power overwhelmed human resourcefulness. But while board games might have been the first pieces to fall to AI, they are certainly not the last: daily, we see how AI encroaches upon our most human abilities. It seems that, in the realm of board games, humans no longer reign supreme. But does it matter? After all, for all their socio-political implications, we play games to have fun. From medieval intrigue to the Cold War and now to the Digital Age, these games continue to reflect the world around us, all played out on an 8x8 chequered board. Perhaps, if they model age-old human instincts, they can continue to celebrate them in the face of AI and challenge us to imagine how we can retain imagination and independence in an increasingly AI-driven world.

Medieval intrigue, the Wall Street Crash, the risk of thermonuclear war, and the rise of the Digital Age, all played out on foldable wooden boards. That is the history of the board game. Simple, genial, and seemingly trivial activities designed to distract and entertain us, rendered significant by the manner in which they do so. The appeal of board games lies in their ability to reflect society and the fundamental desires of those who dwell within it. Without realising it, when we sit down to play a family game on Christmas Day, our enjoyment comes from the games' ability to provide an outlet for our more primal desires for competition and cooperation, survival and destruction – without having to worry about social sensitivities. We do so because it is fun to retreat into a simplified version of reality.

Except, in my reality, I do not win prizes in beauty contests. ▮



Art by Louis Rush

Anna Ivanovna, 1739

by Marianne Doherty

I woke hot the night
my palace melted.
The ice yielded up strange consistencies:
sluiced out jam, trickled blood.
I had made no provisions for the water;
the Neva took it.
The jesters came out shaking
their bells for joy.
The elephants trumpeted home.
The cannons liquified.

I was sick of –
sick of WAITING
you know? For some big event. For some unlooked-for joy,
for which I was looking. So I made it.

The children liked it. Its frozen soul was right,
they saw that.
They like me.
I like them.
(That would have been nice).

YES, my ICE PALACE was a FAILURE.
Flowing under dark bridges, the Neva
speaks for St Petersburg,
glitters cold censure.

It was a DISAPPOINTMENT.
The jesters were NOT FUNNY
AND DID NOT WANT TO BE MARRIED!
Which is a SIN.

At my OWN wedding,
my uncle's dwarves JUMPED out of a pie (HILARIOUS!).
They DANCED (EXQUISITE!) and KISSED (INSPIRING!) and MIMED
a MARRIAGE (THEMATIC!).

That great man CLAPPED me on the shoulder
(for SUCH WAS my relation with PETER the GREAT,
who LOVED and admired me as his heir!).
OH they can say what they LIKE about MY FATHER
but BLOOD WILL OUT.

He pointed at the squattest,
ugliest, female dwarf
and breathed beer into my ear.
He said nothing. What's a gesture? Nothing.
But I understood, and cried a little into my sleeve.

Perhaps I look like a PIG.
Perhaps I am hard, even, to look at.
But I am an EMPRESS.
I am THEIR Empress.

An empress is like a virginity:
you ONLY get ONE.
(LAUGH!)

Biron speaks to me softly as if I were some IDIOT.
He says *there is rebellion to the east.*
I say:
LET THEM DIE!
thereby solving it.
He knits his beautiful brows (NOBLE like CATERPILLARS!)
Knits them like
you're an idiot *your father: the idiot.*

What CARE I for BEAUTY? An Empress DOES NOT NEED IT.
But I wanted to solve it for him.
I did not want him to think that I am PORCINE.
I resolved to give the churlish people something GREAT AND ICY.
A WINTER AMUSEMENT
TO SOLVE ALL ETHNIC TENSIONS.

Although I gave them a MAGNIFICENT wedding,
and PERMITTED them to sleep
in my BELOVED ICE PALACE
the jesters FAILED ME.
They shivered as though
I would hurt them;
my palace would hurt them.
They ripped at each other's skin,
though my palace is FUNNY?

In 1739, Anna Ivanovna of Russia held a carnival to celebrate the forced marriage of two of her jesters. She had them spend their wedding night in an ice palace. When Anna Ivanovna was married as a teenager, her uncle commissioned a similar parody marriage between little people.

Art by Federica Pescini

Fantastically Gruesome:
Violence in Female-Led Indie Horror

by Ayla Samson
Photography by Lauren Cooper

Screaming victims and topless corpses – historically, the women of horror films were nothing more than objects to torture, terrify, and kill. However, recent indie cinema has seen several complex female protagonist-turned-monsters take centre stage. In Prano Bailey-Bond's *Censor* (2018) and Ti West's *Pearl* (2022), two such women, Enid and Pearl, find themselves at the intersection of fantasy and violence. They unleash twisted images of female empowerment, confronting audiences with complex issues of spectatorship, gender, and morality.

The cinema is a fantastical space, providing viewers with the opportunity to be transported into other worlds: a doorway to the inaccessible and impossible. However, it is the fantasies of heterosexual men that Western film typically caters to. In her seminal work *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, Laura Mulvey describes the normative social framework for fantasy and desire in cinema, a framework in which women are perpetual objects, and men perpetual subjects. This is evident in the films that Enid, the titular centre of Bailey-Bond's *Censor*, watches at work. The controversial, gruesome, straight-to-VHS video nasties of Thatcher's Britain uneasily provide the soundtrack to her 9-to-5. Her ability to passively discuss the assaulting, killing, and eye-gouging of innocent women in these films speaks to a wider truth about cinema in our culture – female bodies are at the disposal of male fantasies, no matter how dark and twisted they may be.

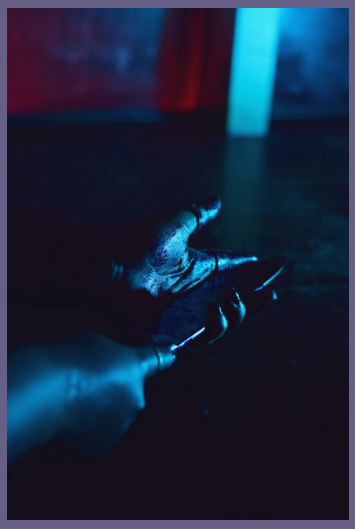
Of course, there are representations of female fantasy in mainstream cinema. A prime influence of *Pearl* comes in the form of the technicolour classic, *The Wizard of Oz*. Dorothy's journey is perfectly 'carnivalesque,' as Mikhail Bakhtin defines it in *Rabelais and His World*. He recognises that certain spaces act as a contained deviation, providing a temporary disruption of normal social order. Oz provides Dorothy with a wondrous space full of fairies, munchkins and talking tin men. While her time there is exciting, the intense unpredictability of her experience ultimately allows her to appreciate and long for her mundane Kansas life.

However, *Pearl*'s subversive use of the settings and images of *The Wizard of Oz* speaks to the aspects of female fantasy that are missing from this film and the Western canon more broadly. The tension rises halfway through *Pearl*. The protagonist, left to work on her loveless family farm without her husband, dances with a scarecrow she finds on her way home from the pictures. Yet what begins as an expression of loneliness and longing for the escape of *Oz*'s Dorothy, soon takes an uncomfortable turn as Pearl begins to masturbate with the scarecrow.

The wholesome image of Dorothy befriending the scarecrow becomes perverted in *Pearl* through a disturbing juxtaposition. The scarecrow remains inanimate, rendering Pearl's dance unsettling and Dorothy's joyful. As Pearl's actions become sexual, we, as viewers, are troubled by this strange act of lust. The similarities between Dorothy's and Pearl's stories make their differences even more noticeable. In this light, we may note that whereas Dorothy's fantastical experiences are innocent and childlike, Pearl's encompass mature sexual desires. The discomfort we feel while watching the scarecrow scene stems from the abnormality of the sexual act. However, comparing these two scenes speaks to a wider discomfort with the taboo surrounding female desire in Western cinema and society. The fantasy we observe feels tainted the moment our protagonist becomes the sexual aggressor rather than a sexual object.

The scarecrow scene reflects the underlying disruptive tendencies of *Pearl* and *Censor* in relation to the norms of gender, fantasy, and viewership in cinema. In each film, the central characters find themselves in oppressive, joyless environments. Enid brushes up against growing moral panic surrounding the

video nasties while living in the wake of her own personal horror: the disappearance of her sister. Pearl, stuck on her parents' farm, facing her mother's sternness, and tasked with caring for her paralysed father, finds her opportunities for escape dwindling – it is in these harsh social conditions that each woman turns to murder. Otherwise powerless, they claim agency through violence, making themselves heard by instilling fear. For Enid, film is a part of her mundanity, the excitement drained by the bureaucratic context in which she encounters it. Pearl, in contrast, finds in film the summation of her chorus girl dreams and her lust for the handsome local projectionist. However, as Pearl tries to make her cinematic fantasies a reality, Enid finds her nightmarish past eerily replicated in a film, catalysing two murderous downward spirals. When the boundary between cinema and reality blurs, carnivalesque disruption spills out into the world.



These films are ultimately forms of entertainment, and even if we are scared, their violence serves as the fulfilment of a promise made to us as we sit down to watch a horror movie. Despite the screaming and bloodshed, this is ultimately what we came for. The tension between terror and entertainment is an unsettling feature of the experience; our horror is as much at our own enjoyment as it is at the women themselves. Unable to rely on cinema for a controlled distortion of social order, these women claim the power to upturn patriarchal control through violence. This violence provides a carnivalesque fantasy for viewers, especially women. We are captivated by their beauty turning to monstrosity. No longer limited by the need to play into the desire of the male gaze, they become active agents to be feared rather than passive objects to be admired. They disrupt not only the social order of their worlds, but also the relationship between us and themselves, demanding to be seen differently. Through these women, we experience a femininity that is powerful in its grotesqueness. We shudder at their brutality but smile at their dominance.

The instability of the division between cinema and life prevents us from observing the violence on screen as wholly separate from us – these films refuse to offer an escapist fantasy. Nowhere is this clearer than in the unsettling final shots of each film. *Censor* ends with Enid, dressed as a side character in a horror film whilst covered in blood, echoing a fictitious film's VHS case. She smiles back at us. The colours and background flit between the idealised, illusory version of her reunited family and the true horror of her actions. She has killed innocent people and kidnapped the actress she believes to be her sister. Similarly, the end credits of *Pearl* roll over the face of the protagonist as she unblinkingly forces a smile, tears welling in her eyes. Each closing image perfectly encapsulates the tensions both characters have struggled with throughout. Their fantasy of who they want to be is brought into stark, disquieting contrast with the horror of what they are. As they gaze upon us, we become the direct object of the fear-inducing, monstrous femininity that we've witnessed.

In these films' final moments, the protagonists' gazes make us, as viewers, painfully aware of our own observational role. We are reminded that our engagement in the wondrous violence on screen speaks to a subconscious of our own. Even if this brutality remains for us a temporary diversion from the world where women are passive creatures, the very fact that we look to experience this realm of 'female aggression' is unnerving.

These films dare us to revel in their subversive violence but prevent us from becoming the complacent, objectifying viewers of the past. The women of *Censor* and *Pearl* look at us, their audience, and remind us that we, in our viewing, have given them the power they desire. We are their fantasy as much as they are ours. ▮

Lamentations of a Bacchant in Menopause

by Isabella Diaz Pascual
Art by Isabel Otterburn-Milner

Venues for orgies are low in demand
Since the Cadmean press last shut us down
Dionysus has turned grapes to Pinot Noir
And belladonna to bumps.
This week's sacrifices are speed-laced
Though we heralds of the Bacchae proclaim:
10/10 CHEETAH HAZE 3.5GS ONLY THE BEST!!
What Theban dynasties thundered against
Now enjoyed on a day in late April
Against a backdrop of tracksuited minors
Or Berghain buzzcuts
Or as a nightcap for old husbands
Anointing their freckled baldness
I miss when we would crack them open
The screaming skulls of kings
Kinder surprise, fingers dipping like soldiers.

I even miss the bacchanalia
Of a quiet hot-womb pulsing
And the burn of chilli sweat
When Demeter would pump me with helium,
Till I'd swell to gibbon size
And float

Then, all ripe, I'd burst
Spill my guts out into swimming pools and shower floors
There is blood in the water
To make daytrippers shriek
I have clotted every ladies' room

Flushed dithyrambs down sewer pipes
Or into that mysterious realm
Where poo goes on a plane
I have inked red-letters onto 100% cotton
(And this to my mother's dismay)
And still I had so much left to say

When you publish in blood
How the agony
Thrills!
Sucks you dry
Knocks you black
Crescents back
So you writhe like game
In the grip of your girlhood
Before you return to nothing.

Now I am tired
And kindling poorly;
The orgies came rehearsed, then desultory
– who comes best at room temperature?
My bones crack like air pockets
Between the knuckles of a tyrant
Engaged in baritonal dialogues,
Cricking as I revel like

U — U — U —

And observe my wet entrails.
Signs of drought, croak the augurs,
The maenad breathes again:
I have bartered all my blood
And in silence, reap ends.

BACCANO! Or, the Art of Living Forever

by Cici Zhang

When Ryohgo Narita was asked to give a name to his series of light novels (which would later be called *Baccano!*), he raised an eyebrow. Years of experience meant nothing to an author who just wanted to have a bit of fun: *just name it something nonsensical*. The implicit humour: *it is not as if the story itself makes any sense.*

His later series *Durarara!!* sees the same enthusiasm for nonsensical names. Speculation persists: perhaps the onomatopoeia in *durarara* resembles the revving of a motorcycle engine – or is it a deliberate punning on *Dullahan*, the headless rider around whom the stories evolve? No matter. Nonsense, after all, is nonsense. And Narita delights in excess.

The term *light novel* is a *wasei-eigo*: an English term coined in the Japanese language. Though contemporary light novels are often published in volumes, they are sometimes serialized monthly within anthology journals. It would be best to compare such a medium to the fiction columns of a Western pulp magazine. Though light novels primarily target high school and middle school students, readership is widespread – these stories are whetted and polished to capture a mainstream audience. The publishing schedule is tight. During a successful year, authors could be asked to produce one novel per month. The process calls to mind how instalments of Dickens were originally published in serials. Tropes of damsels and villains are turned on their heads; every chapter is sure to end on a cliff-hanger if only to bring an inexorably curious reader back for more. Light novels lack the esteem of published paperbacks and the full visual artistry of manga, but the medium is influential precisely because it allows for the wildest, wackiest narratives to sell.

Into this turbulent industry, *Baccano!* is born.

The term *baccano* brings to mind *bacchanal*, tracing its etymology back to the Latin *bacchanalia*, and to Bacchus, the Greek god of wine and intoxication. *Bacchanal* has inhabited various definitions since its coinage. Originally associated with dances, songs, and festivals in honour of Bacchus, it went on to mean an act of indulging in alcohol, of riotous drinking, roistering, an occasion of drunken revelry, an orgy. The idea of a *ruckus* – a row, a brawl, a riot, an occasion of commotion – encapsulates the soul of Narita's novels. His characters are not crafted to deliver philosophical insight or offer eloquent, meaningful monologues. They are crafted to make noise.

The *Baccano!* novels depict a New York drawn from the movies. The air is honeyed with jazz, the streets flood with girls donning pearls and peacock feathers and skinny, black-strapped dresses, and men who carry Glocks and pocketknives. This is a world filled with innocence and decadence, with farce and tragedy. An alchemist tempts Fate by calling the Devil. A homunculus spars – or dances – with a mobster. A boy with a tattooed cheek and a girl with scarred

arms rob some cargo and find a family. A solipsistic cutthroat falls in love with an assassin. A young girl trawls the waters of the Hudson River in search of an undead brother. Three mafioso families prepare for war as the local tabloid savours a potential story.

Keeping company with the characters of *Baccano!* is like sitting in a restaurant with a hundred tables and trying to listen to every single conversation at once. Making conversation would mean having to shout over the din of everyone else's voices. Every character has a story to tell, and they couldn't care less about whether their voices overlap.

In the animated adaptation of *Baccano!*, director Takahiro Omori plays with storytelling with this same vivid fluidity. In the spirit of Christopher Nolan's *Memento* or Bryan Singer's *The Usual Suspects*, the non-linear timeline leaves us dizzy until we relent beneath its momentum. Previously separate narratives converge as satisfyingly as they do in Quentin Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction*, and a similar aesthetic exploitation of graphic violence gives the anime a gruesome, volatile beauty that twists your stomach as it turns your head. Omori concocts a heady cocktail of spilt blood and severed fingers that would make Martin Scorsese or Brian de Palma proud, transforming the savage atmospheric setting from page to screen without losing its marvellous intricacy.

Indeed, in Narita's novels, the setting is almost a character in itself. *Durarara!!* creates a similar effect. Ikebukuro, a district neighbourhood in Tokyo, becomes the epicentre of terror and rapture as the characters' lives collide. The colours of the characters' headspaces are mapped onto the cityscape that surrounds them. The faces of strangers are blurred, vending machines and streetlamps are uprooted, a yellowish sunset bleeds across blue skies like egg yolk seeping from a broken bowl. *Durarara!!* captures the claustrophobic familiarity of a metropolitan neighbourhood where you cannot move without elbowing those around you, where a thousand voices scream into the void of an internet chatroom, and where a single action drastically changes the lives of those who stumble into your vicinity. As the characters learn to navigate the urban panorama around them, they are bound to one another by the obscenity of their mutual terrain, drawn into a tangled knot of love and resentment by an inescapable sense of place.

The *Baccano!* novels harness a polyphony of voices. Its enormous cast of characters gives way to a diverse myriad of stories and backstories, plots and subplots. Reality is splintered, fragments of narrative tossed to the skies like a handful of confetti. We observe how the chronicles knot a paradoxical *ouroboros* of narrative threads, creating a space wherein stories can go on forever. In this ruckus, every character has a story to tell. Everybody has a place to spit their words into the golden cup.

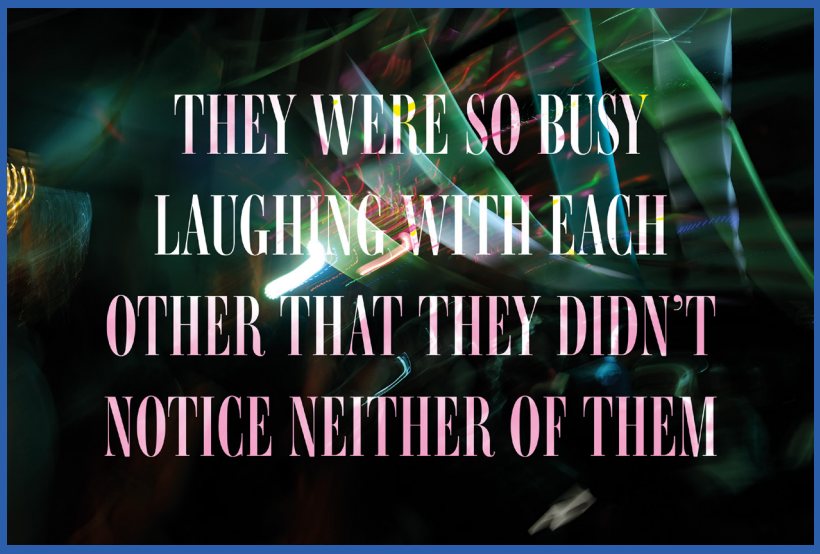
In *Baccano!*'s anime adaptation, Omori creates a frame narrative. The separate storylines are being knotted and unravelled by Gustav St. Germain,

vice president of the tabloid *Daily Days*, and his assistant, Carol. As the pair try to make sense of the local fiasco, they observe the events across multiple temporalities as if from an omnipotent perspective. Their positions as journalists mirror our positions as viewers. Stories are buried within other stories, observed through different eyes and reimagined by different minds, to create a cycle where past and present feed from each other. Even as the present action takes place, it is being retold. The actions that unfurl are being re-enacted on multiple planes of existence, caught between memory and immediacy, between reality and imagination. This off-kilter sense of unreality questions the relationship between action and observer. Despite being immersed in the verisimilitude of the conflict, we become hyper-aware of how the conflict is being fictionalized as we speak.

Narita wants to entertain. He wants to give us a good story. *Baccano!* celebrates the power of fiction as the stories become aware of the marvel and glamour they carry. The stories themselves are eager to be told.

At the centre of *Baccano!* is an eccentric pair of thieves, Isaac and Miria. He is a loud-mouthed, burly young man with too many boisterous ideas, and she a slender, wide-eyed girl whose laughter can wake an entire city. They laugh over the most ludicrous of self-made jokes. They sob over the most trivial of sorrows they see. Every sentence that comes out of their mouths emerges with an exclamation mark. They are senseless, heedless, deluded, inane. They are audacious, carefree, and outrageously compassionate. They are always accepting, always companionable – their cuffs stained with blood, their hair musky with gun smoke, their arms opened wide to pull you into their mad, insatiable world. They dress in Halloween costumes to rob a bank. They steal watches in an attempt to steal time, steal chocolate in an attempt to starve children, and steal a museum's front door in an attempt to stop anyone from entering. They are walking hazards to society, and they manage, somehow, to make everyone around them preposterously happy. They are brimming, overflowing with impudence, seething with commotion.

They are so stupid. They were so busy laughing with each other that they didn't notice that neither of them had aged past twenty until they were eighty years old. For over a hundred years, they had no idea that they were going to live forever, because the idea of their own mortality never crossed their minds. William Blake said it best when he penned 'The Fly':



"So I am a happy fly,
Whilst I live, and until I die."

If an awareness of mortality brings us one step closer to death, then Miria and Isaac are more alive than the rest of us could ever be. *Baccano!* encapsulates Blake's wistfulness beneath its rough, bloodied surface. Our summer's play – *to dance, and drink and sing, 'til some blind hand should brush my wing* – is as vulnerable as it is wonderful. To be happy flies until we die, to be unaware of one's mortality is to live forever.

And it is satisfying that the central theme of *Baccano!* is immortality. For Narita's characters are not only able to heal from bullet wounds and eviscerated stomachs – they are also able to live again and again in the ruthless animations of our minds. They live on the threshold of a reader's consciousness. The root of immortality is not only an elixir concocted out of man's whim and a demon's callousness. Immortality is an orchestra, a raw, raging chorus of characters who want to project their voices, their stories, as loudly as they can.

Narita's spirit seduces us into the ludicrous, the absurd. We love his nonsensical stories. We lose ourselves in the mosaics of narrative, in the flavours of fiction until all colour and melody blur together. We must drink and laugh and be stupid. This is our cabaret, our bacchanal. We must exult in the nonsensical, the carnivalesque, the fever of life.

Living and reliving the stories of *Baccano!* always recalls the wisdom of Miria and Isaac, for no pair of fools have ever enthused me more. I want to dance, too. I want to feel the hot blood thrumming beneath my skin, to open up a vein and trust that it will invariably heal. I want to laugh so much, to be so stupid that I forget I was never meant to live forever.

So get out there and make some noise. Make the biggest, loudest *ruckus* possible.

How else do you plan on living forever? ▮

Art by InChan Yang and Dowon Jung

fair play

by Keng Yu Lai

Art by Faye Song

come one, come all, get gravity on your side. lift.

let go.

take a seat. flung about like a blade of grass in the wind –catharsis – yet always with an anchor residing in your stomach. rooted in resignation.

when did paper crowns stop being enough? and when did the tapestry of joy turn to gold? deflective. too soft, too easily impressed upon. may your dreams be wrapped in bubbles.

a kaleidoscope of perspectives warped – accelerating the inevitable. got it?

it's safe. scheming, you swerve. but sandwiched between rubber buffers you're invincible: the confidence of a kid taking on the world with an army of toys – until pretence grinds to a halt.

surprises surround, you're safely enclosed. in shadow, a party awaits, thrill-wrapped – peekaboo!

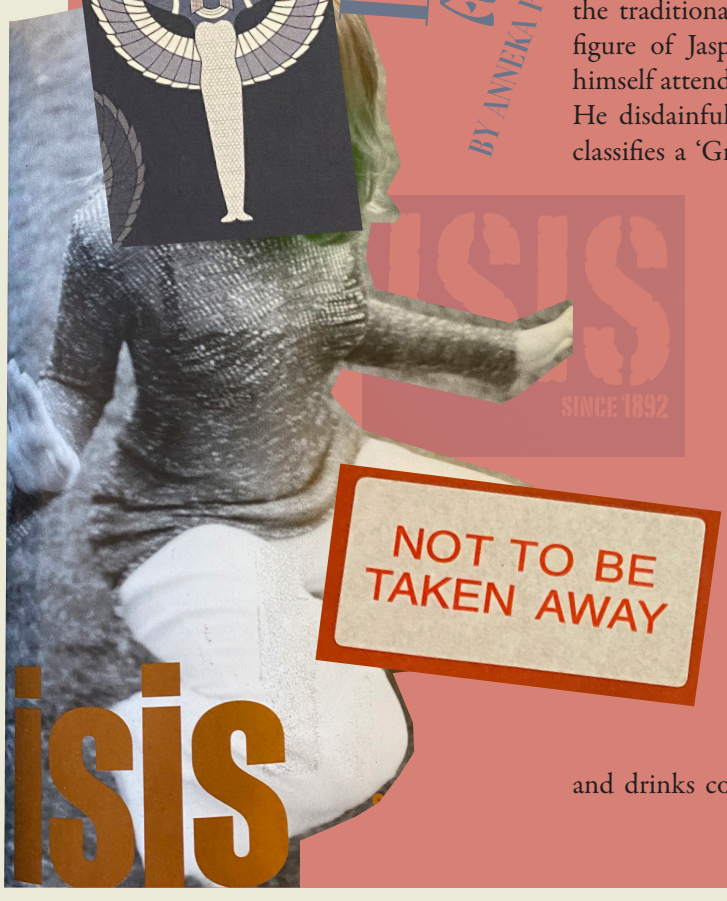
you said i reminded you of yourself. spinning on the spot wedded to the idea of progress. what if i told you that spinning makes things swirl and converge? coherence.

shoot your shot. never try, never know. bend your knees, flick your wrist. is theory true to practice?

it took a lot of convincing. you couldn't see the point in being forced to admire your surroundings – only efficiency matters. refused to appear insignificant to the frolicking crowds. so i drew you in with the sky, promised you elevation. besides isn't life a series of routines? breathe in. breathe out.

IN BAD STANDING:
A disorderly history of The Isis

BY ANNIKA PINK



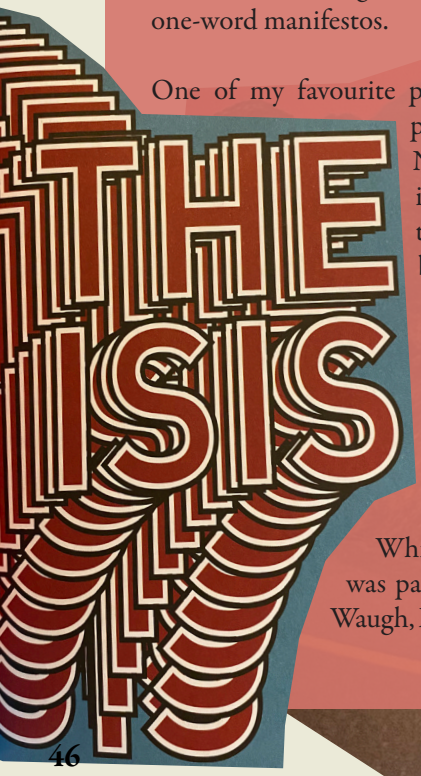
Come bankruptcy, come bans, *The Isis* refuses to take itself or others too seriously. Though once, supposedly, we were a magazine of Note, considered in Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited* as a publication that Serious Undergraduates with Prospects read, we advise the reader to leaf through our pages with caution.

The archives, kept somewhat ironically in the Oxford Union, preserve a disorderly history of the lives of Oxford students from the magazine's inception in 1892 to the present. I like to think that this alternative manual to the University Handbook reflects the wilful defiance of many students to be subsumed by the University's conservative, even at times medieval, approach to education. Or the mantra that one must graduate with a Spouse, Blue, or First – reminiscent of the opening of *Pride and Prejudice*. Though the Oxford student remains a stereotype which seeps into the present, the archives show it to be an ultimately untenable image. Despite the essay crises and several world-changing epochs, for generations the students who wrote and edited *The Isis* playfully took head-on what they saw to be outdated, repressive or ridiculous social codes.

Brideshead Revisited, the archetypal 'Oxford novel', satirises the traditional expectations of the University through the figure of Jasper, the protagonist Charles' cousin. Waugh himself attended Oxford in the 1920s and wrote for *The Isis*. He disdainfully tells Charles, in what Waugh irreverently classifies a 'Great Remonstrance', to dress "as you would in a country house"; since "your present get-up seems an unhappy compromise between the correct wear for a theatrical party at Maidenhead and a glee-singing competition in a garden suburb". Luckily for us, such an outfit would probably fit in well with the sartorial choices spotted on a pilgrimage to the Rad Cam, gowns at collections, and especially at an editorial meeting of *The Isis*.

Advice in *The Isis* itself for the undergraduate ranges from the whimsical to the acerbic. Ironically, in *Brideshead Revisited*, Sebastian, the aesthete par excellence, complains to Charles that the well-to-do undergrad "joins the League of Nations Union, and reads the *Isis* every week, and drinks coffee in the morning at the Cadena café, and

smokes a great pipe and plays hockey and goes out to tea on Boar's Hill and to lectures at Keble, and rides a bicycle with a little tray full of note-books and drinks cocoa in the evening and discusses sex seriously". Here, *The Isis* is lumped together accusatorily with all the activities of the Enlightened Student, a perfect individual, an intellectual even, who engages with all the most fashionable pastimes – foremost among them coffee, politics, smoking, and university sport. Though a century may have passed since Waugh's time at Oxford, and the Cadena replaced with (multiple) Prets, much of Sebastian's vision has stood the test of time. Yet, as a student, Waugh used *The Isis* to satirise the up-and-coming figures of his day. In a 1923 article written under his pseudonym 'Scaramel', Waugh condemns the figure of the Union hack, a caricature who would probably have been praised by Jasper: "Jeremy was in my house at school; he has what would be known in North Oxford as 'personality.' That is to say he is rather stupid, thoroughly well satisfied with himself, and acutely ambitious. Jeremy purposes to be President of the Union." Though those of us who have been exiled to a college's OX2 annexe may find Waugh's geographical delineations hurtful, he pointedly takes issue here with the Union's traditional domination by public schools and unceasing cycle of election campaigns. It's hard to know what Waugh would have thought about the one-word manifestos.



One of my favourite pieces in the archives is a poem written by Beverley Nichols in 1919. I think it sums up much about the prevailing tension between conservatism and nonconformism at the University. This seemingly age-old battleground recurringly bled into the pages of *The Isis*, where it was played out with ink (and good humour). While at Oxford, Nichols was part of a social set including Waugh, Harold Acton, and Graham Greene. He went on to write over sixty books, being lauded as one of the 'Bright Young Things' of the 1920s. Notably, he also wrote and produced the first post-war edition of *The Isis* entirely on his own. This is formidably impressive since 'lay-in' takes a team of editors each term over twenty hours at our current dank office by Folly Bridge (the perfect set for the long-suffering student writer). It's clear that we stand on the shoulders of giants. The poem is titled 'The Sad Story of the Young Gentleman from M-rt-n', and is accompanied by a series of illustrations:

'I will wear Cubist
Trousers,'
He said.
I will make Oxford beautiful.
I will make the High
Hectic,
And the Corn
Crimson,' he said.
'I *will* wear Cubist
Trousers.'

However, the Philistines
Who were not
Beautiful
Beset him.

'We will not have Cubist
Trousers,' they said.
'It is not nice to wear Cubist
Trousers,'
They said.
'They are affected.
Let us de-
Bag him.'
And they de-
Bagged him.
This is what always happens at Oxford
When one tries
To be
Decorative.

We *will* wear Cubist trousers.

Every time I read this poem, the Cubist trousers remind me of Malvolio's yellow stockings in *Twelfth*

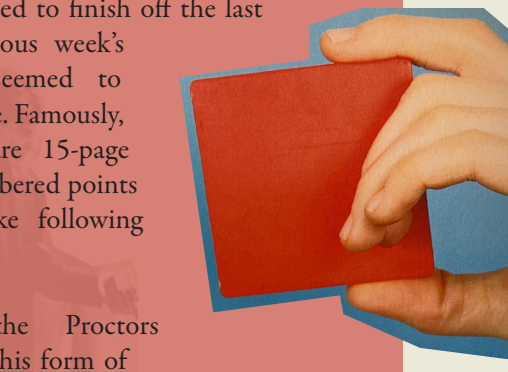
Night, which subject him to humiliation from the other characters of the play and mark him as an outcast. Here though, while Nichols resents the University's censure, remarking "This is what always happens at Oxford/When one tries/To be/Decorative", he remains unfazed by it, using the Merton student's enforced conformity as a call to arms and asserting to readers in the final line, "We *will* wear Cubist trousers". The *Isis* reader, it seems, should never be afraid of a garish print – and they don't keep off the grass either.

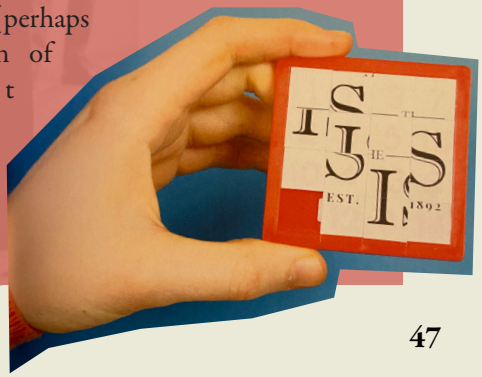
Few were safe from Nichols' razor-sharp declamations – not even the paper's readership. Another piece from the young writer concerns the standards of student submissions to the magazine during his tenure. He satirises the figure of the young student poet, the wannabe Shelley, complaining, "Why is it that people are incapable of writing anything except in metre? Why must they burst into song when talking about the Broad, and try their hand at triolets when they talk about the Turl? Why can they not write to us in a letter beginning 'Dear Sir' and ending 'Yours sincerely', instead of starting with 'Heavenly Muse', and ending with 'The scarlet panoplies of Hell'?" What can a modern-day reader take away from this? This seems to suggest that while sartorial experimentation is always a matter for admiration, bad poetry is unforgivable. While beginning a verse with "Heavenly Muse" should still be avoided at all costs, with the arrival of *The Isis*' open mic poetry night, a termly event that has gained great cultural traction amongst the student body, wannabe student poets should know that these days, we're not too fussed about critical merit.

After the Second World War, *The Isis* editors took up the baton of their predecessors, taking aim at the University's teaching style with fearlessness. The opening editorial forcefully declares: "We must point out that the future is not a bright one for a university that contains so many tutors who cannot teach, so many lecturers who read a paper, and so many intellectuals without learning". Yet, arguably, *The Isis* reached its zenith in the 60s when, with Paul Foot as editor, it began to review university lectures under the pseudonym 'Spartacus' with the aim of pushing lecture reform.

Spartacus took issue with the absence of dialectic from lectures, writing "academic argument should be public – there is something infinitely depressing about the man who goes up to a lecturer to come to his own private arrangement about Truth." So far, so good. Those of us who have witnessed someone bashfully scuttle up to a lecturer to ask a question probably even agree. In the next edition, the paper took this one step further, reviewing five individual lecturers. The writing is akin to a blow-by-blow breakdown of a sporting match. One lecturer's method is criticised: "titbits from the history of philosophy do not constitute an argument in a lecture"; of another's style "it is to be hoped that [redacted] will speak a little more slowly". A Dante lecturer does not escape lightly: "There is no atmosphere of intellectual excitement [...] the *Comedy* is made to appear domestic and comfortable rather than divine and epic". Ouch. Spartacus argues that the 'monologue' be halved so that students can ask questions instead; the lecturer "might be forced to select her points, but at the moment, as she says when she is unable to finish her schedule before the end of the hour, 'you can read it in the notes'." It's hard not to find these reviews funny: they appeal to a universal student experience which stands the test of time. For instance, just last week I went to a lecture where the Professor decided that they actually wanted to finish off the last half of the previous week's lecture, which seemed to interest them more. Famously, their handouts are 15-page novellas with numbered points which they dislike following chronologically.

Unfortunately, the Proctors didn't appreciate this form of self-expression (perhaps too much a sign of independent thinking) and banned the reviews, a





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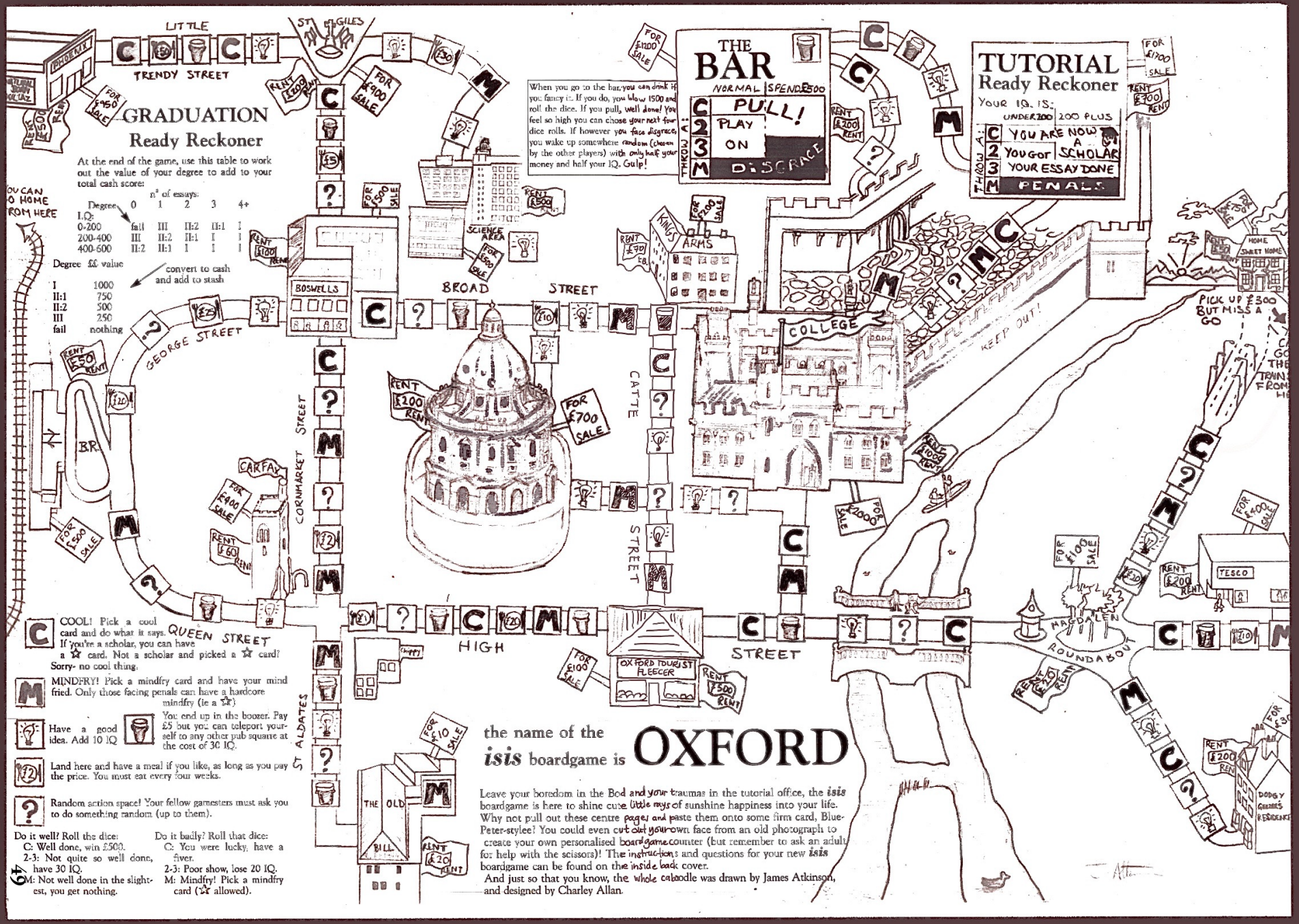
punishment which was picked up by the national press. *Punch* magazine satirised the Proctors' summons of Foot. The next edition of *The Isis* gleefully printed "CENSORED by the PROCTORS" in large black letters across the page where the reviews had been. The following editorial, titled, "Summoned by Bulls" reflected on the media storm. "The *Isis* office has gone up in flames in the last week. There hasn't been anything like it since the good old days of the Official Secrets Act. Reporters, broadcasters, tele-cameras [...] have poured over us [...] The ban was total, unconditional. On NO ACCOUNT were we to publish any more reviews of individual lectures. That was the first and last command, delivered, I gathered, from the Sinai of Trinity – the great Vice-Chancellor himself." Bravely, Foot openly objected to the Proctors on every single point in print. The Letters section of the magazine cheerfully printed fictional excerpts such as "Sir, I'd never have done it when I was a Proctor (ex-Proctor)" alongside a quote from the Vice-Chancellor: "We don't regard 'Isis' as all that important here". Though the Proctors had ultimately stopped the reviews, it seemed rather Pyrrhic for their reputation as a sanctum of free speech. Foot later went on to be an editor at the *Private Eye*.

This wasn't the first time *The Isis*' defiance had brought it to national attention. In 1947, the editors printed the paper during the fuel crisis with a treadle-operated press. Supposedly, after being expressly forbidden to distribute the papers by a phone call from Emmanuel Shinwell (the minister at the time), Gwyl Owen (the editor) could only report that while he had gone for a pint at The Bear, all the papers had disappeared, only to be found on sale in colleges the next day...

The Vice-Chancellor may be right. *The Isis* may not be important. But I am not sure that has ever been *The Isis*' intent – it was a fear that certainly never stopped past students writing. Some would even argue that it pushed them to write even more daringly, to overstep the line even further. In 1919, *The Isis* offered in its editorial that "it is to sing of Oxford that the *Isis* appears once more, to reflect its every tendency, to echo its laughter", setting the paper up as a mirror to all Oxford's joy and individualism. The papers themselves read like marginalia left by students on books in college libraries – scribbles which reach through the years to offer wisdom or provocation. Amongst them it is hard not to feel inclined to wear one's Cubist trousers. ▮

COLLAGE BY LOUIS RUSH


LITTLE TRENDY STREET
ST MIGGILES
PHOENIX
GRADUATION
Ready Reckoner
At the end of the game, use this table to work out the value of your degree to add to your total cash score:
n° of essays:
Degree 0 1 2 3 4+
I.Q:
0-200 fail III II:2 II:1 I
200-400 III II:2 II:1 I I
400-600 II:2 II:1 I I I
Degree £ value
I 1000
II:1 750
II:2 500
III 250
fail nothing
convert to cash and add to stash
THE BAR
NORMAL SPEND £500
PULL! PLAY ON DISGRACE
When you go to the bar, you can drink if you fancy it. If you do, you blow £500 and roll the dice. If you pull, well done! You feel so high you can chose your next four dice rolls. If however you face disgrace, you wake up somewhere random (chosen by the other players) with only half your money and half your IQ. Gulp!
TUTORIAL
Ready Reckoner
YOUR IQ IS:
UNDER 200 200 PLUS
C YOU ARE NOW A SCHOLAR
2 YOU GOT YOUR ESSAY DONE
3
M PENALTY
THROW A:
BOSWELLS
SCIENCE AREA
KINGS ARMS
BROAD STREET
GEORGE STREET
CORNMARKET STREET
CATTE STREET
HIGH STREET
QUEEN STREET
ST ALDATES
CARFAX
COLLEGE
KEEP OUT!
OXFORD TOURIST FLEECER
THE OLD BILL
MAGDALEN ROUNDABOUT
TESCO
HOME SWEET HOME
DODGY GARDENS RESIDENCE
PICK UP £300 BUT MISS A GO
YOU CAN GO HOME FROM HERE
C COOL! Pick a cool card and do what it says. If you're a scholar, you can have a ☆ card. Not a scholar and picked a ☆ card? Sorry- no cool thing.
M MINDFRY! Pick a mindfry card and have your mind fried. Only those facing penals can have a hardcore mindfry (ie a ☆)
Have a good idea. Add 10 IQ
You end up in the boozer. Pay £5 but you can teleport yourself to any other pub square at the cost of 30 IQ.
Land here and have a meal if you like, as long as you pay the price. You must eat every four weeks.
Random action space! Your fellow gamesters must ask you to do something random (up to them).
Do it well? Roll the dice:
C: Well done, win £500.
2-3: Not quite so well done, have 30 IQ.
M: Not well done in the slightest, you get nothing.
Do it badly? Roll that dice:
C: You were lucky, have a fiver.
2-3: Poor show, lose 20 IQ.
M: Mindfry! Pick a mindfry card (☆ allowed).
the name of the isis boardgame is OXFORD
Leave your boredom in the Bod and your traumas in the tutorial office, the isis boardgame is here to shine cute little rays of sunshine happiness into your life. Why not pull out these centre pages and paste them onto some firm card, Blue-Peter-stylee? You could even cut out your own face from an old photograph to create your own personalised boardgame counter (but remember to ask an adult for help with the scissors)! The instructions and questions for your new isis boardgame can be found on the inside back cover.
And just so that you know, the whole caboodle was drawn by James Atkinson, and designed by Charley Allan.

Night(mare) at the Carnival

choose your own adventure

by the Features Team
Art by Dowon Jung

You wake up and check the time – you should've left hours ago. It's already dark outside. Donning your carnival garb, you head into college to find your friends. But through the crashing music, thick crowds and flashing lights, you can't see anyone you recognise...

Entering the Provost's garden, you run into a clown. You try to chat, but she's not the small-talking sort. In fact, she's started crying. You try to tell her that she's literally paid not to do this, but she is undeterred.

Before you can properly get into things with the clown, your overbearing guardian spots you, and whisks you away. He scolds you for fraternising with the staff. Eager to swindle you out of your massive inheritance, he fakes your death and has you sent to the King's Bench Debtors' Prison.

The clown is actually the college's Provost and she's experiencing 5th week blues. You invite her for a cup of tea, but she tells you that your bags have been packed and that you've been rusticated against your will. Now you are the one crying.

You head towards the Main Stage, hoping to find your friends there. Instead, you find a crowd of your tutors jigging to Miriam Margolyes playing the bagpipes. She offers to teach you how to play.

You politely refuse and make your way over to a tray of deep purple cocktails. After taking a sip you feel yourself shrinking. A small, white rabbit leads you down the St Aldates sewer into a room full of Union hacks demanding coffee. You run.

You begin to play – and they begin to dance! The Caledonian Society joins you on stage, as a very Scottish rave begins. A raging porter tries to shut it down.

Behind bars, you are radicalised by your cellmate (a seedy PPEist), and marshal a group of prisoners into a guerrilla theatre troupe. Your stirring Brecht productions soon have the whole prison in a revolutionary mood…

Alas, Big Brother discovers your activities and subjects you to the Ludovico technique! You now cannot read a single word of *The Isis* without becoming nauseous.

You and your actors stage a prison coup and take control. You have the PPEist assassinated with an ice-pick and become a highly autocratic prison governor.

An anonymous benefactor has you released from Debtors' Prison, whereupon you head to London to make your fortune and find a wife.

You pen your story and release it in serialised form over the next few decades. Hollywood calls your name!

You make a fortune as a merchant and become mayor four times. But your delicate wife gets the chills and dies young.

You cry and cry until the sheer volume of tears transforms into a thick flowing river, which transports you directly to the DJ booth of the Atik cheese floor.

In the platonic equivalent of a one-night stand, you spill intimate details of your life and family history to a stranger you have just encountered on the dance floor.

As a *Grease* medley booms overhead, you lock eyes with a beautiful rowing captain. You get married – what a story for the wedding!

No longer bound by the rules of the university, you take to the Bodleian with a pack of Stabilo Pastel Highlighters. You take pause before the Magna Carta…

You spot the manuscript copy of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*. Trembling, you phone your boss, Miranda Priestly. You get to keep your PA job – for now.

With a swift stroke, you pen "*Isis* was here!" in lurid pink. After a brief copy edit, you add "*The*".

The hacks catch you and force you into indentured coffee labour. The only thing they give you for sustenance are the unsold Union art fair cupcakes.

You fall madly in love with a particularly monomaniacal Union hack, and develop a special latte heart for them. They love it so much, they make it their presidential campaign logo.

You become a master barista and eventually concoct a brew so potent that everyone in the Union collectively gives up coke.

Being so small and petite, you find yourself growing cold. You are now in the Bridge smoking area. Shivering performatively, you ask a tall, dark stranger for his jacket…

"Here, I don't have a jacket, but I do have a scholar's gown. You know, it's actually not that hard to get one." You get the ick and leave.

He performs a mating ritual with his jacket that can only be likened to that of a Bird of Paradise, but in the process he catches the zip in your eye. Your eye needs urgent medical attention, and you head to the JR. The night is well and truly over.

You give in and the party fades away. Little does the Porter know, you have the key to the Cathedral. You and the organ scholar duet until dawn.

Dawn breaks, and the night fades. You steal the college cat. It feels like the start of a Disney film.

Having consumed all of the port in the cellar, the organ scholar's fallen asleep. The Chaplain appears and forces you to sing the Ascension Day songs on the college roof.

Fuck the man! Exercising your right – nay, duty – to civil disobedience, the crowd riots against the oppressive arm of college governance.

The board of governors is wildly enthusiastic. They appoint you as their chair and you move into the Provost's Lodge immediately.

It's been years since the revolution. Society prospers under your leadership, though factionalism threatens to tear your Eden apart. Time will tell.

Photography by Coco Cottam

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The Isis
CARNIVAL TT23
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