

LOVE IN THE TIME OF COVID

Volume 5 No. 2

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A Word from the Editor

Dear Reader, you might at first believe a magazine on the topic of love, romance, or relationships is an amalgamation of wishy-washy lovey-dovey bull cr*p written by hopeless romantics with nothing much more to say than "love is great", and who would blame you? But, within our magazine, you will find that this is simply not the case.

What makes this magazine different is that it is produced in the age of Covid, a time where we can all say that, at some point, we felt 'love-starved'. Be it the longing for our partner's touch, the company of friends, or merely the faces of family members whom we missed dearly; All of us missed some form of 'love'. The loss of contact with the outside world made us realise and appreciate what we once had taken for granted.

Thus, comes forth the birth of this magazine. It is an artistic exploration into the themes of romance and love within literature, fueled by the very loss of it in the real world. In lockdowns 1.0 and 2.0, many of us turned to reading as a form of escapism from the dystopian world lurking outside our doors. Alternatively, some of us remained 6ft away from our books, at all times! Nevertheless, this literary magazine is made with everyone in mind, from the devout book connoisseur to the extremely casual reader. So, even if you haven't read a single book since your GCSEs, we can guarantee that there is something to pique your interest.

The production of this literary magazine is a labour of love, where our team's full commitment made this possible, so thank you for your dedication every step of the way, and thank you, dear readers, for choosing to read Love in the Time of Covid.

Feel free to scour the pages and find something to fall in love with (we know you will).

- Dionne Goodman.

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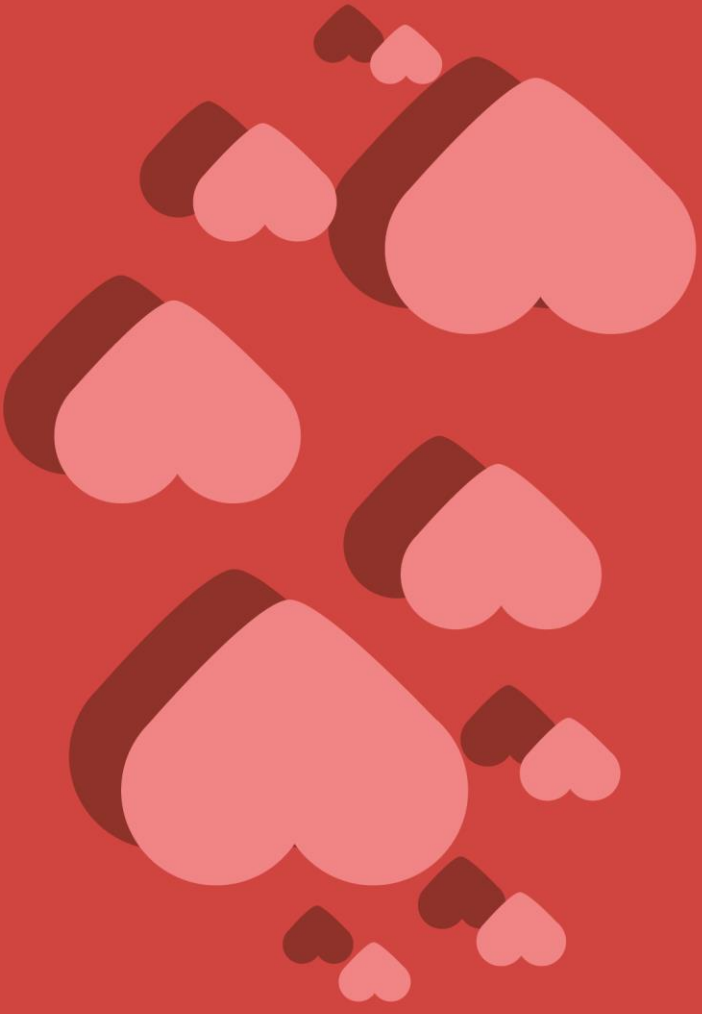
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**Darker side
of Romance**

FALLING FATALLY

Abiba Grant

Does death give more value and substance to the love characters share?

Jeanne Safer once said "It is a certainty that there will be a shattering involuntary separation. Death is the abandonment caused not by betrayal but by fidelity." For centuries humans have romanticised dying for love in fiction and reality. What we deem 'The greatest love stories' are always marked by the grim reaper from history's Cleopatra & Mark Antony to Hazel & Augustus in the Fault in our stars. Focusing on two classics, *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Great Gatsby* we will explore relationships and if their fatal finales is why we regard them as significant?

Just under 500 years later in the age of Tinder, snapchat and Love Island I think it's safe to say romance has changed considerably since The Shakespearian era. Yet, we still idolise the relationship of teen lovers Romeo and Juliet. Well throughout time relationships are always riddled with interferences, betrayals, and uncertainty which we see in the play.



In the beginning Romeo is simping after Rosaline who'll 'not be hit With Cupid's arrow' while Juliet's parents intend to marry her off to some guy called Paris: 'A gentleman...with honourable parts Proportion'd as one's heart would wish a man' so neither are living their best life. Not to mention their families have more beef than a butchers. However, their proceeding love is stronger than all these obstacles and the audience repeatedly watch them choose one another to cement their devotion to another.

On the other hand, it is important to remember the play takes place over just 4 days (still longer than some celebrity marriages nowadays, Britney Spears we're looking at you) and that Juliet is 13 and Romeo is only a few years older. These elements are vital because though they are the immortal 'star crossed lovers' we never see if that love can stand the test of time.

What happens if Romeo, the Petrarchan lover, finds another girl that can 'teach the torches to burn bright.' or Juliet realises she still feels some type of way about her 'beautiful tyrant' husband killing her cousin. All this in addition to the fact they are literally children. I am sure many of you at that age wanted to marry Jacob from Twilight or Buffy the vampire slayer, **but** our tastes change as we reach adulthood, so it's highly unlikely the same wouldn't have happened to Romeo and Juliet, I mean being the killer of her cousin probably gets boring after 16.

I think we revere this couple so much because they call out to the hopeless romantic in all of us. They die in love meaning that love can't ever be changed, diminished, or become tainted by the complications it would have encountered in life.

Death stops the possibility of them ever falling out of love therefore their love is infinite and that is something we all crave regardless of the era. With today's society this is even more prominent with phones making cheating effortless, the law-making divorce easy and the internet giving access to a world of sex without emotion.

Alternatively, in *The Great Gatsby* we encounter a more realistic love

because this navigates real world issues that can destroy a relationship like, the passage of time, class, and money. Yet unlike the previous relationship the love between Daisy and Gatsby isn't equal in a number of ways. This couple is the 1920's version of Gossip Girl's Dan and Serena; she's old money he's new, she moves on from their past he can't help but hold on (to the point it's a bit creepy).

But most importantly is Gatsby's love for Daisy is unconditional and idealistic coupled with his 'romantic readiness such as I[Nick] have never found in any other person'. Which means he would do anything for her. Whereas, a woman living in a patriarchal society, who's best option is to be a 'beautiful little fool', and therefore Daisy doesn't have the luxury to put caution to the wind, her choices centre

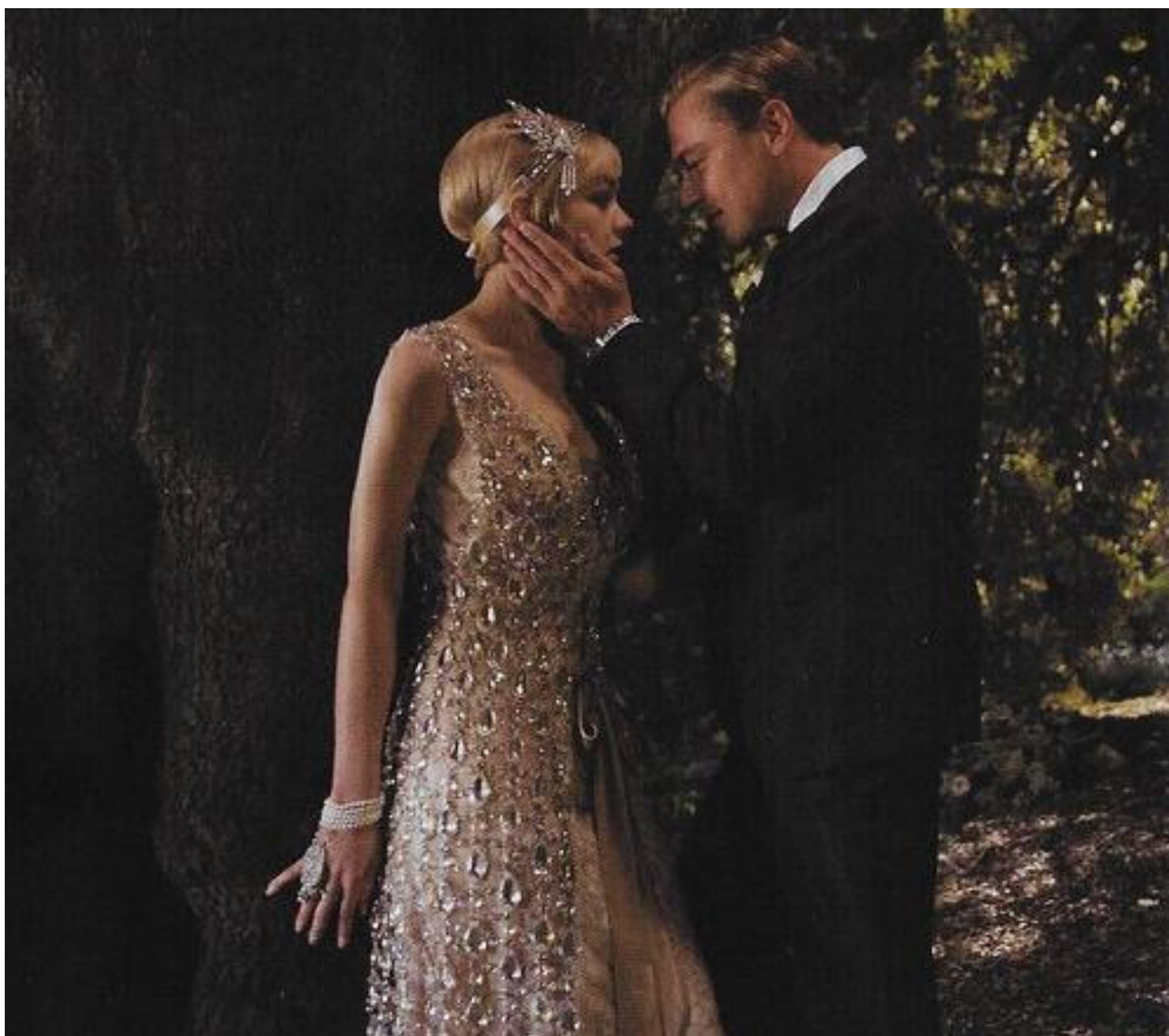
maintaining a secure life of luxury and not love. Daisy's affections are more calculating and analytical, though she does seem to harbour genuine fondness for Gatsby (even after he ghosts her), she chooses a more lucrative option of Tom who's 'family were enormously wealthy' even though he is a certified f**k-boy.

When reunited with Gatsby, Daisy is done with Tom's cheating and yearns for a wild passionate affair of her own. Daisy gains that from Gatsby and his extravagant gestures. But as she has already proven once their love lacked endurance and while Gatsby wants to 'repeat the past' Daisy wants some no strings attached fun and when it becomes too real declares Gatsby 'wants too much' and flees. Although Daisy

lacks loyalty, the couple are still considered one of the greats.

Like Romeo and Juliet, I think this is because of Gatsby's premature demise: right till the end he loved Daisy even covering for her killing Myrtle (Spoiler Alert!). The 'greatness' both Nick and the reader see in him is his unyielding faithfulness to his lover even when she chooses the 'supercilious', 'arrogant' and straight up violent Tom. Over time maybe Gatsby could have moved on, but death prevents this option rendering his boundless love everlasting. Love like that is almost impossible to come by and somewhere deep down we all want a partner who will love us no matter what, despite our fuckups and flaws. In the end, Daisy was ultimately (and literally) Gatsby's ride or die and his death fortifies that till the end of time.

So, in short yes, the couples we venerate the most are the ones death touches because with this touch they become timeless and therefore unable to change. And as writer Milan Kundera said, 'At the end of true love is death, and only the love that ends in death is love'.



OUR DYSTOPIAN REALITY

Leah Slinn



It's funny isn't it, how we don't realise what we have until it's gone? How the simple act of giving a friend a hug can be so dearly craved when it is no longer allowed. A lockdown spent away from annoying siblings, and you'll never complain about them again... okay, maybe not never. Despite how difficult the time of Covid has been for so many in terms of being separated from loved ones, we're lucky it didn't

Protagonists in Margaret Atwood's, *The Handmaid's Tale*, William Shakespeare's, *Romeo and Juliet* and George Orwell's, *1984*, all present the dilemmas of love in the world of literature. While the worlds created within these novels are fictional, it is not impossible to imagine our own becoming something similar to this after living through the pandemic that warped our perception of reality. We have previously seen totalitarian governments rule and dictators grow all around the globe, for example, Nazi Germany or even more recent historical events such as Afghanistan or North Korea. Just because it is not happening on our doorstep, does not mean it is entirely a work of fiction. Reading allows us to discover new worlds of imagination and comfort but also ones of apprehension and fear. This is definitely something I craved, snuggling up with some calming music and a new world to explore. But what happens when the words on the page become real? Using books as escapism during lockdown also allow us to reflect and remain grateful for the maintenance of our world and the ability to return to the love we all missed.

Novels such as *The Handmaid's Tale*, and *1984* feature societies completely different to the one we live in today.

No friends, no family, no freedom of speech and no free thought. Made to live monotonous lives as laid out by the ruling, commanders party. While the dystopian narrative settings are somewhat similar, Offred and Winston use love in different ways. Offred manipulates love to gain her knowledge of Gilead and tries to figure out a way she can leave. 'Staring at the magazine, as he dangled it before me like fish bait, I wanted it. I wanted it with a force that made the ends of my fingers ache', shows that both the Commander and Offred know how to play one another. The Commander knows that if he 'baits' Offred like this, she will be more likely to do what he wants and form a relationship with him. On the other



Offred knows that if she gives into this trap, it'll progress until she gets what she needs. This reflects upon our society and how we are indoctrinated by government games. We go into a lockdown as they bait us with rewards such as walks in the park or sitting outside the pub to keep us in check. The difference, however, is what do we do? Whilst some chose to fight against what the Government dictated, most of us followed blindly. Perhaps we are more like the other Handmaids when we ought to be more like Offred.

Opposingly to Offred, Winston falls in love despite the strict laws and decides not to care about what may happen to him. 'In this game that we're playing, we can't win. Some kinds of failure are better than other kinds, that's all'. He believes being captured by the Thought Police is inevitable and therefore why limit yourself by sticking to the rules of The Party. Winston is old enough to remember life before The Party took over, therefore he believes that his instincts will lead him to be caught either way. It could be suggested that he views living a secluded life is as much of a loss as being captured and so must choose which he would prefer - continue living to societal standards or feel love again before he dies. Have we not had this experience through Covid? Staying away from loved ones seemed just as bad as getting caught and thus, fined, so why not meet up in secret?

Romeo and Juliet is a different story. The restrictions they must face do not stem from a dystopian world or societal control like our pandemic, but from their warring families forbid their love for one another. 'From ancient grudge break to new mutiny, where civil blood makes civil hands unclean.' This is a conflict that -evidently- does not stop to think of the consequences of forbidden love, until both children are willing to sacrifice their lives. It embodies a rivalry that denies Romeo and Juliet from ever having a regular relationship, or one in which their love will ever be accepted.

Despite their love and relationship being forbidden by both families and friends, they risk everything to get married. Once this plan falls apart, neither character fears the consequences of death as they cannot bare to live in a world without each other. 'Here's to my love!' and "...there rust and let me die' are the last words of both characters. While I'm sure this was not the case for many people during the multiple lockdowns, sacrifices were made by hundreds of thousands of people all around the world, showing just how significant love truly is.

Yes, we were not stripped of our identities and told we could neither show nor feel love. But the conditions we faced during the global pandemic does not differ far from the dystopian worlds crafted within these novels. A global pandemic inviting vulnerability into the lives of millions over the world. Any cruel person or party could have taken advantage to make a claim to power. While rules were not as drastic as those in the lives of the characters within these novels, we made it too easy to be controlled; abiding to what we were told by the government, staying indoors, and working from home, not seeing friends and family. Does this go to show that if it were to happen again, we may find ourselves living in a dystopian novel? Stripping back who we are, completing tedious tasks day in and day out to feel that we still have a purpose? Regardless of whether these types of settings are read about in books or seen on the screen, they are not completely fiction. Countries and cities all over the world have seen totalitarian rule over their lives and we should not think that this could not happen to us too.

So, what has Covid taught us? That love is not guaranteed to us. It doesn't matter that it's an abstract feeling, something that cannot be touched and therefore seemingly, cannot be taken away. Nothing can be promised and thus, nothing should be taken for granted. Not the quick hugs given to friends, or the conversations had with teachers, not even the persistent complaining from your mum that you haven't cleaned your room. Perhaps we should treat love as it is forbidden, so we are that much more desperate to keep it within our lives.



TWISTED TALES

Amy Senechal

Once upon a time, in a land far far away, the tales and stories that you once read as a child are not all as they seem ...

In this article, I will be analysing the collection of short stories from *The Bloody Chamber* written by Angela Carter. Within her ingenious creation, Carter is able to completely transform these traditional tales that we have grown up with. Specifically, Carter twists these tales by deconstructing the core elements of what characterises them.

The Darker side of life has always fascinated me, as delving deeper into the origins of stories often uncovers the legends that lie behind them. This is why it may or may not surprise you that the innocent bedtime stories we all know and love are actually inundated with eerie backstories. These twisted tales are definitely not something suitable for innocent minds unless you want to give that poor child a nightmare!

When reading the spectacular short stories of *The Bloody Chamber*, one which truly stood out from the rest was, *The Snow Child*. Albeit the smallest, tucked away just filling two pages out of the whole collection, it is impossible to ignore. Unfortunately, there is no magic mirror nor any dwarfs, poisoned apples or even a happy ending. However, it is evident that Carter has derived this story from the childhood favourite, *Snow White*.

Through dominant themes of jealousy, Carter explores the aspects of male power, critiques gender roles and adds a heavy dose of horror to create a sense of impending doom. Carter repeatedly uses an array of different literary devices to foreshadow the horrific ending of this tale. For example, the Count's wish is embellished with the simile 'red as blood' which suggests danger and foreshadows the girl's doomed fate.



Additionally, Carter references the black of a raven's feather, a bird often associated with death. Furthermore, the rose, a flower with thorns, is beautiful and dangerous; it perhaps represents the femme fatale characterisation of the Countess. The Count is able to handle the rose freely and gives it to his wife but 'It bites!' she exclaims. As a final line, this adds

a level of complexity to the story's conclusion establishing an ambiguity that has us wondering if she is refusing the rose, knowing what it can do, or if she has fallen victim to its teeth herself.

Existing on two pages alone, this story of Carter's is a condensed, tightened version of the tale that, in its brevity, denies the reader any space to look away from the horrors that unfold. Following in the fairy tale tradition, *The Snow Child* contains only what is relevant to the narrative and drives the plot forward. Carter's symbols are presented in the same sophisticated layers expected in these tales; she continually subverts assumptions and destabilises the story. Such narrative decisions invite the readers to be co-creators in the experience. We can read our own meaning into the events we encounter whilst never taking our eyes off the hidden meanings within the lines of the text. In doing so, I believe Carter, in turn creates a very good horror story, while still having the ability to shed light onto important societal problems that are still relevant today.



LADY OF LOVE

Cerys Easey



What's more ravishing and heart-pounding than a good love story? A great love story that shouldn't even be happening.

Think of *Romeo and Juliet*, making heart-shaped eyes at each other despite their family rivalry. It's wrong yet deliciously sinister! Yet the most forbidden of all forbidden love stories is the one between Lady Constance Chatterley, the lady of the manor and her rugged gamekeeper Mellors.

Taking a blowtorch to the rigid social barriers of the 1920s, Constance betrays not only her husband but her class.

This is more than a story of adultery - the affair represents a challenge to all the conventions and expectations women and

relationships of the time, and if you add to that the rustic, tree-filled settings of their encounters, it's no wonder this is the stuff of forbidden fantasies (Quite literally having sexual encounters in the woodland); escaping her house for the woods **'was her one refuge, her sanctuary'**.

The sexual advances appear opaque through Lawrence's writing especially for a censored writing society. During the first sex scene between Mellors and Connie, physical descriptions show off the passionate love, 'the peace on earth of her soft quiescent body'. However, a 1960 court case over the alleged obscenity of Lawrence's original novel prompted the Chatterley trial, which helped pave the way for the sexual revolution in the UK.

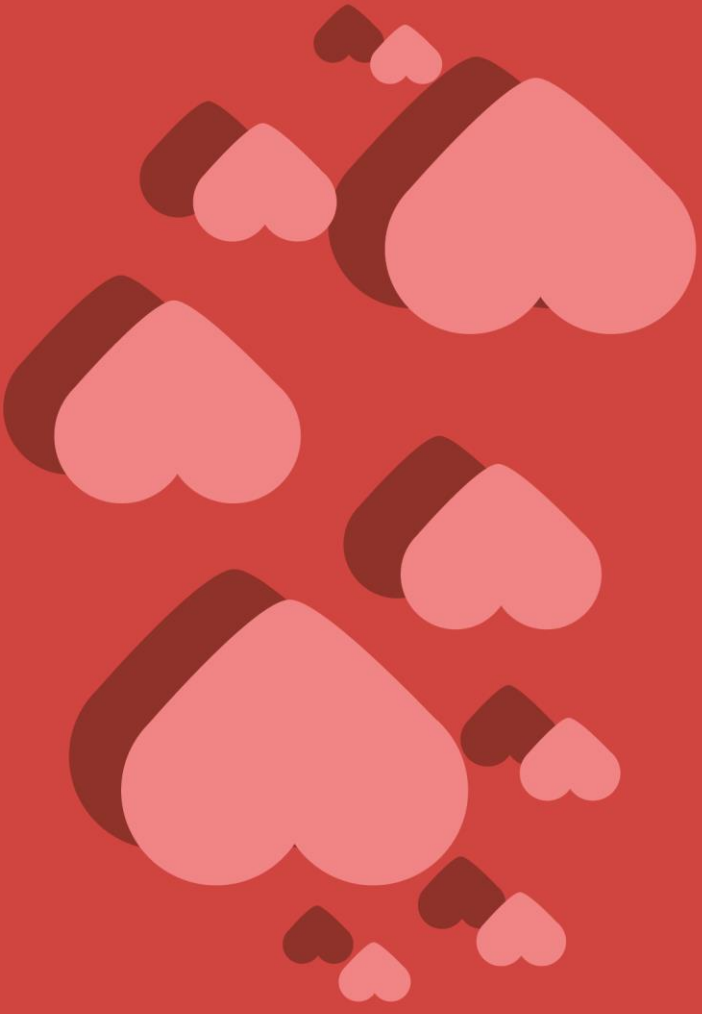
If you swoon too much and sigh too much, it can start to feel gushy (and that is not sexy).

This reimagined version of Lady Chatterley's Lover sets its central love story in a world that's gritty and so real that you can feel it.

Lady Chatterley follows Mellors, a hard-working man in a world he can't compete with. Mellors isn't just some sexy bit of rough around the edges guy - the sort of from a cheesy romantic fantasy, he fulfils all the expectations of his character.

However, in this version the husband Clifford Chatterley is not a cartoon image of a snobby, posh, and clueless cuckold. Instead, it's a complicated portrait of a war hero still recovering from the traumas of the trenches and overcoming tremendous obstacles. He is handsome and gallant, therefore making the love triangle of Clifford, Constance, and Mellors all the more intense and moving, because of the sympathy we feel for him.





Creative Corner

UNTITLED

By Dionne Goodman

There's something about love, the way it engulfs
you,
making you feel small and cosy.
Something about its lingering fleeting
movements,
Miniscule moments made magnificent in a tidal
wave of rose-pinks
and in a hurricane of grey blues, magnificent,
magnified creations.
Hand-picked from God's own apple tree.

Creation and destruction in the name of *Love*,
Love for the sake of *Love*.



The love she deserved

By Abiba Grant

Just a kick ,
Just a punch,
It's just how he shows his love.
Hide the bruise,
Grin through the pain,
Just wait until he says sorry again.
An eternal kiss,
destined lovers reunite,
as long as he loves me, I know I'll fine.

Broken rib,
Bloody nose,
He cried this time too, even bought me a rose.
Heal up;
reset again,
He's been so caring that now we're engaged .
Binding vows,
unbreakable bond,
Now 2 becomes 3, our love forever strong.

Cracked skull,
Black eye,
But it was all my fault, he had every right.
Devoted father,
Faithful partner,
It's love's young dream, but I always find a way to
make life harder.
Four tender years,
Passion like fire,
Fates red string grows ever tighter.

Fair sleeping beauty
Draped crimson red,
His screams break the silence, forever
engraved in our child's head.
Cerulean lips,
Unblinking eyes
He's sorry for what he did, but no reset
this time .
Heaven's Angel,
Seraph of adore,
I know you loved me truly,
so who was I to ask for more.



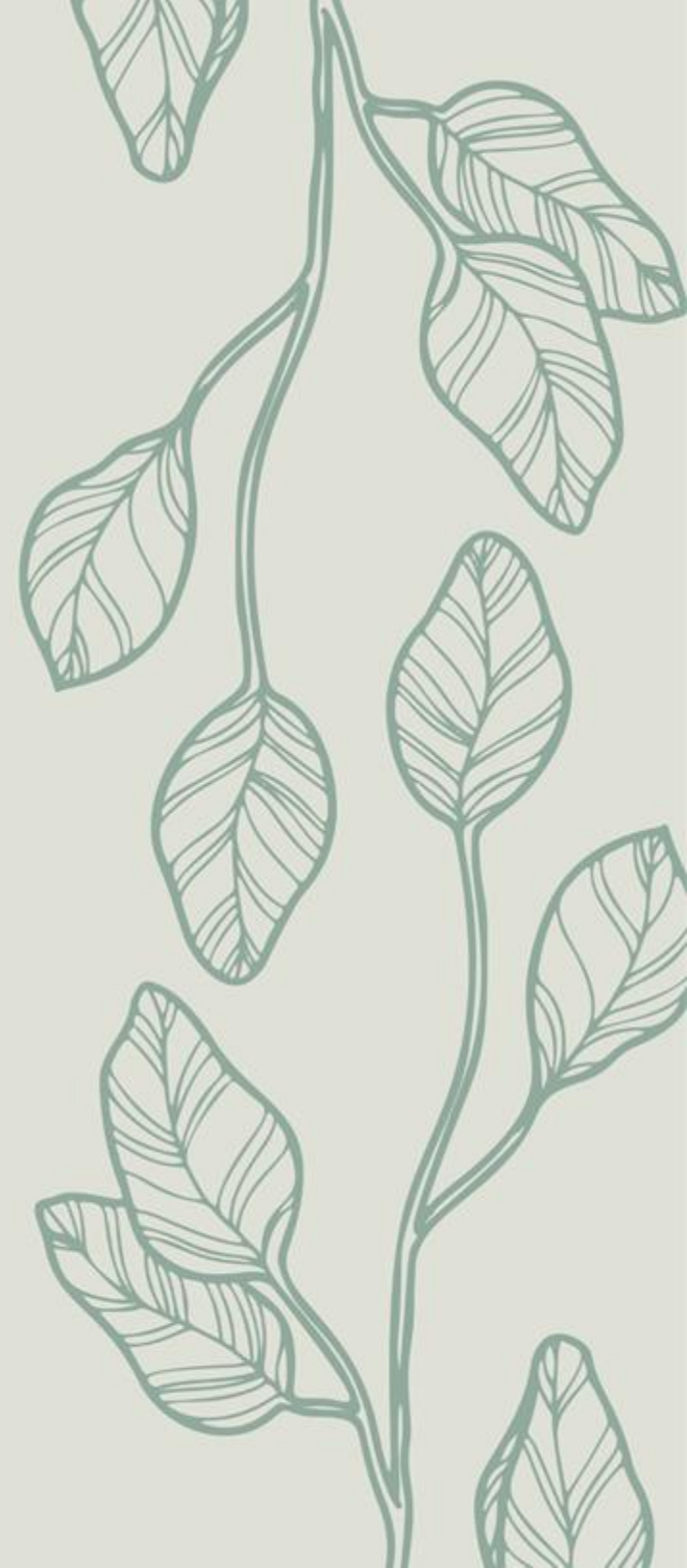
To forgive and forget

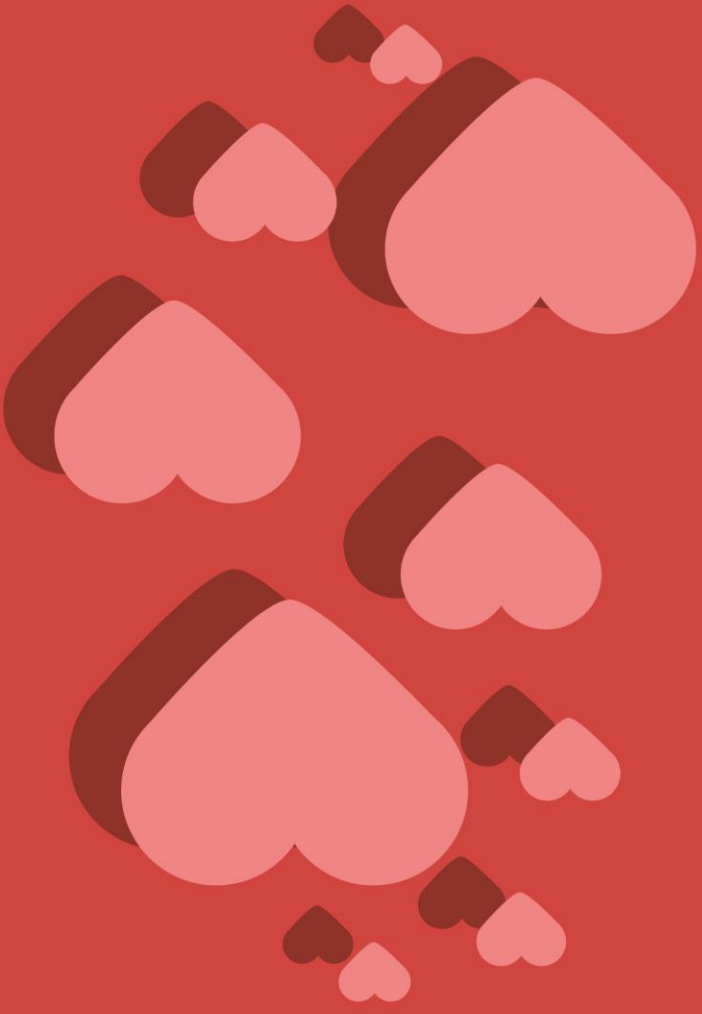
by Georgia Baker

My love,
You have robbed me of both my heart and mind.
I want to do with you as spring does to the blossom trees,
to wrap my life around your soul.

I crave a life so filled with your love, but old ways do not open new doors;
Why I continue to give you a piece of my soul I do not know,
As to love you is to try and breathe under water.

You mean so much to me, yet I do not care.
It is easy to fall in love with but hard to feel loved by someone who is not there;
Yet despite all my struggles I am still learning to fall in love with my own solitude.





Personal Accounts

A LITTLE LIFE A LONG REVIEW

Dionne Goodman

TW!: please note that this article contains themes that could be distressing, such as, Rape, Child-sexual abuse, Trafficking, Domestic abuse, Drug abuse, Ableism, Self-Harm and Suicide.

'Things get broken, and sometimes they get repaired, and in most cases, you realize that no matter what gets damaged, life rearranges itself to compensate for your loss, sometimes wonderfully.' – Hanya Yanagihara

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If you are looking for a literary classic that is of the likes of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* or Dr. Seuss' *The Cat in the Hat*, you are sadly looking in the wrong place.

Hanya Yanagihara's *A Little Life* is a heart-breaking tale surrounding the lives of four young men living in New York city and their lifelong struggles; JB, a struggling black artist whose chosen medium is working with black hair, turns to drugs as a means of coping with being isolated from his friends' success; Willem a devastatingly handsome unfound actor whose past and family relationships shadow his life in surprising and unexpected ways; Malcolm a well-off architect who comes from a stable and entirely loving family struggles with defining his sexuality at a young age and Jude, an entirely loveable orphan with a gut-wrenching past that is sure to make you throw-up all your Chinese takeaway into the Wetherspoons' toilet and ruin perfectly good mascara over, and over and over again.



Yanagihara's ethereal way of transcribing traumatic and extremely harrowing events onto a page has its own unique way of leaving a lasting mark on our hearts in a fashion that is much more painful and permanent than any tattoo could ever be.

What I particularly both hate and love about this book is its dedication to make you fall in love with each of the characters (especially within the first hundred or so pages); for example, 50 pages or so in I adored Willem, his charisma and love for his late brother had captivated my sympathies un-yielding as there was nothing he could go on to do that would make me hate him (... well maybe one thing). But, unlike some other characters who we begin to love and eventually grow to hate (we're looking at you JB) Willem continues to grow from his mistakes and always regains his status as an elite friend.

Hanya Yanagihara purposely and quite cruelly uses the first few-hundred pages in order to eventually break our hearts with what is coming next.

This is true in particular for Willem and Jude stand out amongst the four of the friends, both are sweet-centred and care deeply for their friends, often putting their needs above their own. It is quite impossible to not adore them and when they eventually start dating, we grow to love them even more together. Even though their relationship has its struggles; mainly because of the self-harm Jude inflicts upon himself because of a traumatic past with being sexually and physically abused as well as being trafficked from a young age. This is a fact which he chooses not to share with any of the friends (including Willem) because he finds it hard to bring up his past without feeling as if he is a burden on them. Willem does something particularly fucked-up and eventually regains his senses and runs back to Jude in order to patch up their relationship (which they do) with Willem now knowing about Jude's past, they continue in a non-sexual relationship, and everything is perfect.

Until... yes people until...

Hanya Yanagihara is one cruel mistress, and with every small victory our happiness is soon to be stripped bare by tragedy;

Willem dies, you heard it here first people, in a car crash along with Malcolm, leaving Jude alone in this world with one friend (JB) who he does not talk to anymore. His happy life is destroyed, and he only has the one stable relationship with his adoptive-father Harold (who does not know of Jude's past) and Jude continues to live on for three more years, eventually turning to suicide and taking his own life.

The novel finishes with a narration from Harold reading Jude's suicide note, a heart-breaking turn in the novel as we watch Jude's father figure who unconditionally loved Jude learn of his son's traumatic past and his feelings. Harold specifically learns **WHY** Jude kept his past under-wraps, even from the people who loved him most. And we the audience learn that even during these three years and at the point of his death, Jude feels like a burden to others and believes he owes them an apology for his past.

Jude is a character that has always felt guilty for his past as a victim, making it hard for us the reader to not adore him in his final moments and want more than anything else to comfort him and keep him safe from the cruel world that has always sought to take everything good away from him;

'There were times when the pressure to achieve happiness felt almost oppressive, as if happiness were something that everyone should and could attain, and that any sort of compromise in its pursuit was somehow your fault.'

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A Little Life overall is a book about love, all kinds of love from familiar to platonic to romantic; A book that shows a faceted view on relationships, from the good to the evil, and how they impact us as people. With that being said, *A Little Life* is not a book that I would easily recommend, and perhaps I never will, no matter

how the beautifully robust the writing of Yanagihara persuades me so, I will not willingly put another soul through the heartbreak that I experienced whilst reading this book.

If you have been affected by any of the fore-mentioned topics or know of anyone who is at risk, please seek or urge them to seek professional help.

If you or another have attempted suicide/self-harm please contact **911** immediately, If you or another have been raped/sexually abused please either contact or urge to contact **911** immediately and if you or another is at risk of self-harm/suicide or causing harm to others call **111**.

If you need help within a domestic abuse situation, please call 0808 2000 247

If you know of someone or are currently being trafficked, please call 0800 818 3733 (confidential) or 1-888-373-3888.

If you are a child, please call 0800 1111 if you need to talk (if it is occurring self-harm, suicide, domestic abuse, sexual abuse or trafficking please call the appropriate helplines).

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If you need any professional help or wish to seek advice regarding your own health, please contact your GP.

Mental Health Helplines

Samaritans: 116 123 <https://www.samaritans.org>

SANEline: 0808 164 0123

The National Suicide Prevention Helpline UK: 0800 689 5652

Childline: 0800 1111

LGBT+ specific helplines

Switchboard: 0300 330 0630

TOXIC LOVE

Jodine Samuels

True love is something that we all chase as it has become synonymous with happiness. Whether this love is a platonic or romantic type of love, everyone wants to be loved, to be happy. However, this idealised view of love has toxic roots that have been planted in the media that we consume. The concept that love equates to personal happiness can be deemed as toxic as we should be able to find happiness in ourselves before someone else enters our life. Regardless of its negative implications, this is still a strong idea that has been consciously and subconsciously held due to our media consumption. We can see this same concept take place in old classic literature, showing that this is not a new thing.

We can see how love has been shaped when we look at Disney movies; this is a foundation to many people's use of media as it is something we've engaged with from a young age. The way that true love has been portrayed in Disney movies however is a toxic representation of love. We can see this through the plethora of stories that have been told. In *The Little Mermaid*, Ariel chooses to sacrifice her voice to be with the prince. There is also a recurrence of kissing princesses in their sleep, which is known as the 'true loves kiss'. This is also apparent when Belle chooses to stay with a kidnapper, holding her hostage and falls in love with him. Similarly, Aladdin lies to Jasmine throughout most of the film.



This is what we have watched first hand as children, therefore this is our first representation of true love. Catherine M. Roach claims that 'to define and live the good life, how to achieve happiness and fulfilment, American pop culture's resounding answer is through the narrative of romance, sex, and love.'



So, from this, we can see that we need what could be said to be a toxic representation of love to achieve happiness and fulfilment, and this leads to many dangers.

What then defines a healthy relationship?

Having a healthy relationship should be the route to true love. So, it is important that we can understand what traits a healthy relationship objectively has. These would be things such as respect, equality, compassion, trust, and consent. It is said that 'Healthy relationships should make you feel good about yourself and your partner.' These things are unfortunately not present in our Disney representations. But this is not just apparent in Disney films and fairy-tale stories. We can also see this in classic literature, such as *Wuthering Heights*.

'I am Heathcliff!'

Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* presents us with an interesting dynamic between Heathcliff and Cathy. Cathy displays differing ideas towards both Linton and Heathcliff through the way she speaks about them. Linton is spoken of as though she doesn't see a future with him. She refers to him as 'foliage in the woods,' that 'time will change it'. We can see from this that her feelings are inevitable to change when it comes to Linton. However, when we look at how she speaks about Heathcliff, there is an undercurrent of toxicity. This is shown where Cathy says, 'Nelly, I am Heathcliff! He's always, always in my mind: not as a pleasure, any more than I am always a pleasure to myself, but as my own being.' Cathy has lost her individuality and feels as though she is Heathcliff. This possessive

perception of love does not have the traits of respect, consent or equality. This is because Cathy truly sees Heathcliff as her 'own being'. Whilst Cathy shows ideas of permanence through linking her love for Heathcliff to 'eternal rocks beneath' and explains the naturalness of love through the comparisons to 'rocks', 'foliage', 'woods', 'trees' and 'lights,' we cannot disguise the toxicity with the passion and intense love dynamics as this relationship is not a healthy one. In the wider text, we can also see this apparent toxicity through Heathcliff's need for revenge and Cathy's selfishness. This shows the common recurring ideas of how toxic love has been promoted under the idea of it being passionate and true love.

This toxic nature has been picked up from readers without realising and they too see it as an example of love, this can lead to dangers.



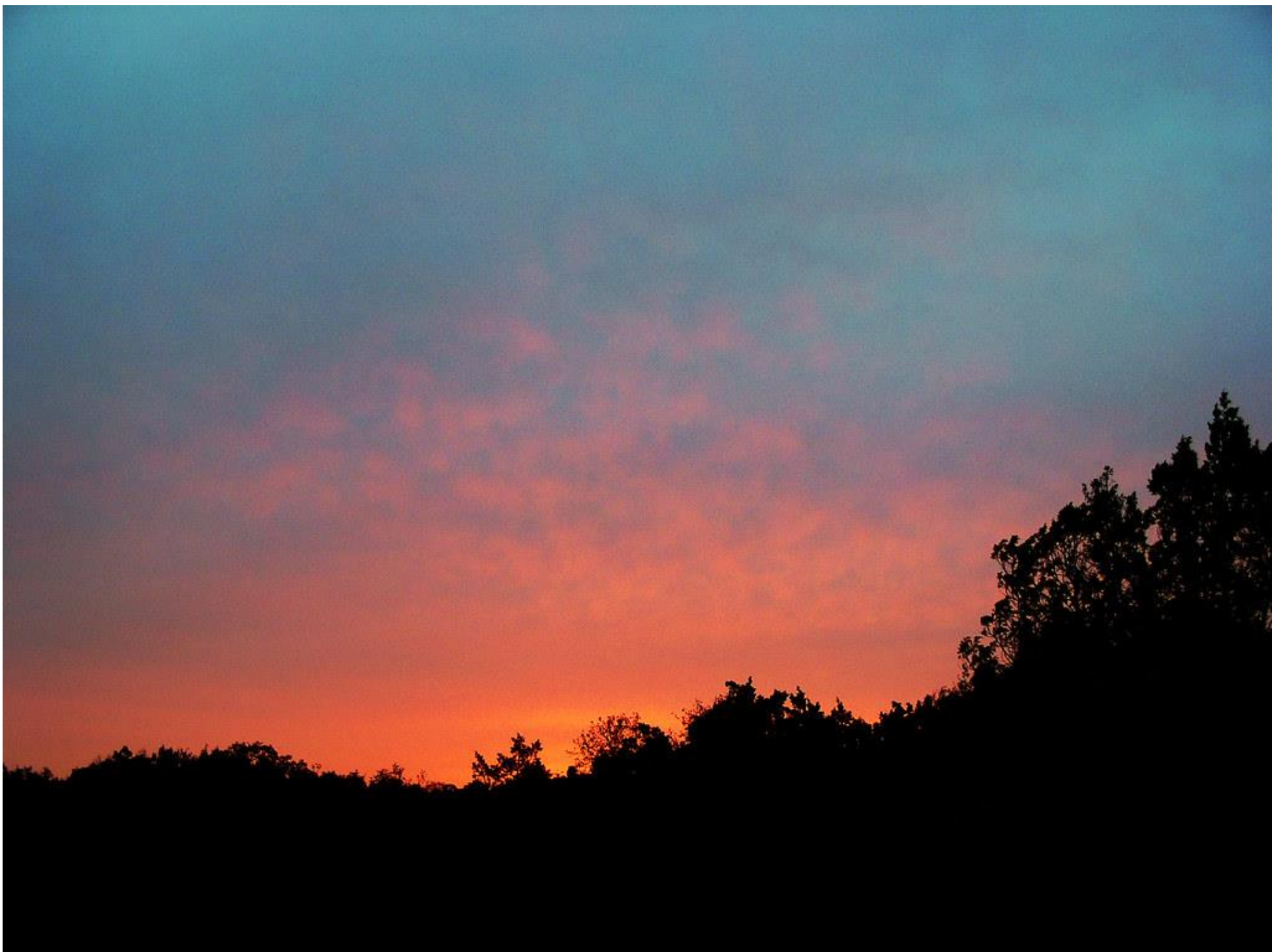
We can see this through interpretations of the texts such as Kate Bush's song 'Wuthering Heights.' In the song, which is written from the point of view of Cathy, we can see these same toxic possessive traits such as, 'you had a temper like my jealousy,' 'How could you leave me when I needed to possess you,' 'My only master'. These lyrics, whilst displaying passion are also displaying toxic possessive traits. They lack consent, respect, and equality which we have already established are objective to make a relationship healthy.

Romanticizing toxic love

These same unhealthy representations of true love are displayed across modern media we grasp to this day. The people we look at as true lovers and what we idolise as a relationship we want ourselves to find happiness are inherently unhealthy and show such toxic traits. Films such as Twilight where we have Bella and Edward; we can see how Bella gives herself up completely for Edward showing this lack of equality for each other as she places Edward above herself. It is also shown in Grease where Danny shows how he has little respect for Sandy. For example, there is a lack of consent. This shows the coercive behaviour towards sex and his misogynistic traits. She also must change herself to become appealing to Danny showing a lack of equality, once again.

The Notebook also has the same obsessive traits and verbal abuse between the protagonists Noah and Allie. Noah also uses suicide as a threat, demonstrating his lack of respect and compassion. These love stories that most of us who take in media has seen, all show the same examples of toxic love that we romanticise. This is dangerous because we may stay in abusive situations for happiness because that is what true love looks like to us.

Whilst stories frequently have something go wrong to create an engaging plot, there is a clear direction of a narrative surrounding true love. It is inherently toxic and can be a cause for people who aspire to have a 'Wuthering Heights' type of passionate love, that consumes themselves and their lover. This can lead to many dangers like staying in abusive, toxic relationships because that is what love is... from what we have seen. However, love is meant to be an enjoyable experience – an idea that is unfortunately, rarely promoted and understood.



FINDING LOVE WITHIN OURSELVES

Georgia Baker



How does John Keats' (one of the most studied romantic poets) work compare to today's understanding of love? By looking back throughout history, I will evaluate how the love we have for ourselves as women has changed through time.

Using *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*, a medieval love ballad as an example, I will explore how Keats introduces the idea of 'the perfect Woman.' He wishes for the love of a woman he has created using elements he deems as perfect to him. Although, the language we use to express love nowadays in relationships may differ from the past, the idea of 'the perfect woman' remains. With social media being such a big part of our lives, there is more pressure especially for women to look, dress and act a certain way in order to appeal to men. Using Instagram as an example, it is more common for a woman to post pictures which are filtered or edited than to post au-natural. Some women even take it further than filters and feel as though its necessary to have fillers, Botox, and surgery to enhance/change elements of themselves they could feel most Insecure about. However, it is not just social media alone that puts pressure on us women to look a certain way.



Modern day Hip-Hop and rap music explicitly exploits women's body images throughout their lyrics and shames those who do not meet today's beauty standards e.g., a curvy body, small nose, big lips, nails painted and a nice smile and teeth. The list goes on and on,

making it almost impossible for women to feel like they belong in such a strict beauty standard.

However, when covid -19 struck, being locked inside and having an endless amount of time on our hands it definitely gave us all a chance to get to know ourselves personally in a way we might not had time to in the past. With that being said, having nowhere to go meant the need for hair, makeup and a pretty outfit was out the window and lounging around all day in our 'comfies' and bare skin became the new trend. The use of social media also came in to play, social media influencers were taking a break from the full glam side of things and really interacting with how their feelings during difficult times and instead took into action posting more natural pictures and videos opposed to their usual high maintenance content. Whilst this was being pursued, a lot more women were able to connect with content creators they once felt threatened by, by sharing similar content and not feeling as pressured to look a certain way in order to impress others, therefore feeling more comfortable in their own skin and finding a love for themselves they may not have felt previously.

Although it seems that the idea of being perfect still reminds to some degree today, the pressure is slowly releasing. There is now more diversity in what can be considered beautiful. Taking raw videos/pictures of our bodies demonstrating acne and cellulite shows others that these qualities are nothing to be ashamed of and having clear perfect skin all the time is not in fact a reality.



Even advertising for feminine products and clothing are creating the individual beauty of all kinds of women. For example, a recent Dove advert shows a range of women from different ages, race, and body types as well as clothing brands such as I Saw it First and Pretty Little Thing now having curve, petite, and plus size options when shopping.

Overall, the idea that a woman must be of a certain standard in order to be sexy is slowly coming to an end, and the concept of accepting all women for who they are is finally making a small but glorious break though.

SEEKING LOVE IN A GLOBAL PANDEMIC

Ophelia Snow



Love manifests in many different forms – friendships, romantic partners, family, pets. When a global pandemic prevents most avenues of accessing these forms of love, it is hard to remember the powerful force it possesses. For me, reading romantic, prolific novels such as *Bridget Jones's Diary* really brought me back in touch with the expressions of love that Covid-19 took away from us, even helping me to better understand my own relationships with peers, friends, family, and lovers.

Just before the announcement of a national lockdown due to the Covid-19 outbreak, I was spending my gap-year in Cairns, Australia, and having a tremendous time travelling, meeting new people, and creating memories in one of the most scenic places on earth. After the stress of my A-levels, I truly believed I needed a break from academia and full-time work, therefore I postponed university, packed my bags, and intended to have a year of well-needed rest and adventure. I certainly did not expect that no sooner than I had left, I would be returning to England, amid a global pandemic, unemployed and isolated from all my peers and friends.

Bridget Jones's Diary was the first book I read in lockdown and since finishing school. The stress of completing exams, sticking to rigid reading routines, and working consistently made me neglect my love of reading for pleasure. In lockdown, I found that I had little to do. I had suddenly become detached and isolated from society, outside relationships, activities, and hobbies. Reading became the perfect solution to the unbearable monotony which the national lockdown had created. Reading became for me a form of escapism, but also reconnection, to a world now forbidden and plagued with fear, uncertainty, and loneliness.

Bridget Jones's Diary was so special to me during lockdown as I could escape to a world within the novel that looked like my own, an imperfect yet fantastic series of unfortunate and fortunate events. Although the life I once knew was on pause due to restrictions, the novel

immerse myself in the characters which reflected my own circle of friends and peers so uncannily. Even rereading *Bridget Jones's Diary* for the umpteenth time, this romcom never fails to reduce me to tears. In school, we are taught that reading academic literature is essential, and although this is true, any literature that can move you in a humanistic way is good literature. *Bridget Jones's Diary* appeals to me through its chaotic, unapologetic, and honest energy that remains a constant theme throughout the whole novel. The talk of big knickers, seedy affairs, foul-mouthed friends, and sexually questionable bosses in the most relatable manner, kept me connected to a world of absurdity and mundanity which I took for granted and missed entirely. The likes of which novelists such as Charlotte Brontë, in my view, simply cannot replicate for the typical millennial.

Whenever anyone asks me, 'what book would you recommend to a stranger?', the answer is always *Bridget Jones's Diary*. This novel could move rock, and its popularity remains celebrated today for good reason. I owe Helen Fielding thanks for crafting such a fantastic book that homed a nostalgia for a world forgotten in lockdown. With that, I'll leave you with Bridget perfectly summarising my experience of lockdown with these sentimental words... 'Oh, God, I'm so lonely. An entire weekend stretching ahead with no one to love or have fun with. Anyway, I don't care. I've got a lovely, steamed ginger pudding from M&S to put in the microwave.'



LOCKDOWN MEMOIRS

Leah Slinn

January 2020.

I was moving out. 17 years old and packing my bags the day after New Year because my safe space, my home, was no longer mine. I was a child who believed in fairy tales because I could relate to the main characters. In this case, Cinderella and I were looking far too similar. At least I found my escape and moved in with my aunty and uncle while my step-father's reign continued in my childhood home. I didn't understand at first why I was moving out as opposed to him. He loved it though, waving goodbye from the castle as I threw my bags in the boot and drove away from the gates.

My stay was supposed to last a couple weeks, a month at a stretch. Exam season had begun and I was in a new, healthy environment. My grades were going up, my enthusiasm to learn had clawed itself into the light and I had a feeling of absolute contentment. In terms of academics anyway. Socially I was exhausted, my best friend thought I hated her and my boyfriend at the time, well I think I hated him... rather, I should have. He was the type of guy who refused to accept that people can be better than him, whether academically or morally. Despite being someone who was finally reaching my full potential, I was not celebrated but seen as competition.

Mocks were over, I got A*s in my coursework, I was rehearsing for a dance show and planning my 18th birthday. My life was nowhere near perfect but definitely a big step away from where it could have been.

March 2020.

The UK was joining the rest of the world in a lockdown. 'Don't worry though, it'll only be for three weeks, then life will go back to normal'. I watched every news conference. Then, just as I feared, exams were cancelled. My birthday was cancelled. Prom was cancelled. My teachers were emailing saying what a pleasure the last few years had been but this was goodbye. The air felt thin and tears were streaming from my eyes. I spent the next two weeks in bed. Wallowing in self-pity and trying to recuperate from the chaos. Finally I realised maybe this is a blessing in disguise. I have always been someone who has kept going, and going, and going with no rest, no breaks for air between everything life throws my way. I had the time to do whatever I wanted without feeling guilty because I'm not studying or with friends.

While others were using this time to learn new skills or get into shape, I sat at the table completing 1,000 piece puzzles and snuggled up with a fluffy blanket and a bowl of popcorn every night. For me, lockdown wasn't about doing 100 new things to build some kind of resume so I was bright and shiny when we came out on the other side. It was about giving myself time to do nothing but heal. I didn't learn how to cook but I started eating three meals a day. I didn't learn a new language but I reached out to my best friend and built on us. I didn't party with strangers on my 18th but I sat in the garden with my mum and sister on the opposite end, in the sun and enjoyed spending time with my family.

I wasn't surrounded by the vicious cycle of overworking, undereating and insomnia. I was happy on my stroll to healing. Having strawberries in my cereal, cuddles with the dog, walks that lead to nowhere, drives in the countryside, claims that I am the one and only jigsaw master, cutting a fringe, tying back said fringe, bike rides, watering the plants and on and on and on. It sounds like the simplest list of things and it is just that. Things you'd expect to do regularly, maybe even everyday, but it's a list of things you don't appreciate until it's all you can do. That's what I came out of lockdown with, an admiration for gestures I had come to see as a chore but actually became reasons as to why I got out of bed in the morning.

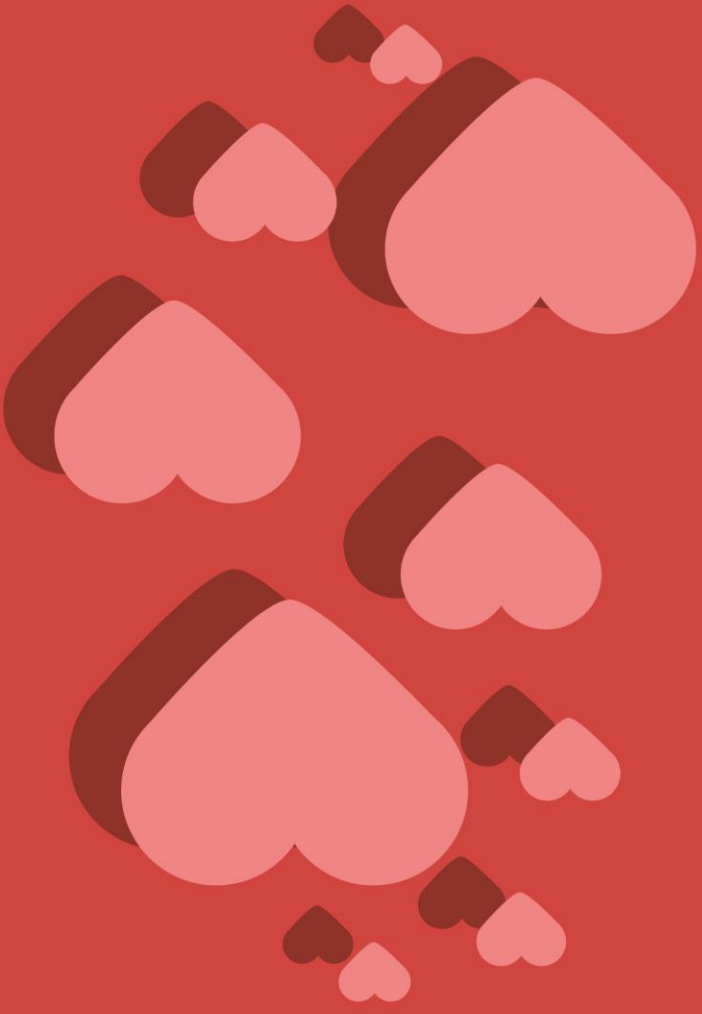
July 2020

I moved back home. Lockdown was lifting and there was a light at the end of the tunnel. I had spent 6 months living with my aunty and uncle, learning to love life again. My step-father had been banished from the castle and I was ready to walk back through the gates. While I never saw it as a competition in the way he did, I'd like to think I won. He had the chance to reflect, see what he was doing wrong and make it up to his family but he wasn't able to. I left as one person and came back as another, healthy, happy and unburdened; that's the real win.

I started going on picnics rather than to the pub. Went on walks every day, finding new places to explore. I went back to dance and to work surrounding myself with new and familiar faces. Lockdown gave me a fresh start, an opportunity to become better, healthier. The lessons learnt are some that will stay with me for a long time.

Of course, life has hit me with some pretty big kickers since then but, that's a story for another time.





Tinder Profiles

*Literary Tinder...the
new dating site for
book lovers!*

We've all done it, read a book and fell absolutely and hopeless in love with one character. Good or bad, something about them makes them stand out from the rest and leaves a print on your heart. Read through some of our best characters profiles, be wary of the red flags though!



MrsBeautifulLittleFool1920

Bio: I'm cute and innocent like my name except when I drink, I can get a little crazy. I've been everywhere and seen everything and done everything so hit me up if you can give me something new and I love the chase

Passions: Money, beautiful shirts, cool guys, being loved, getting away with murder

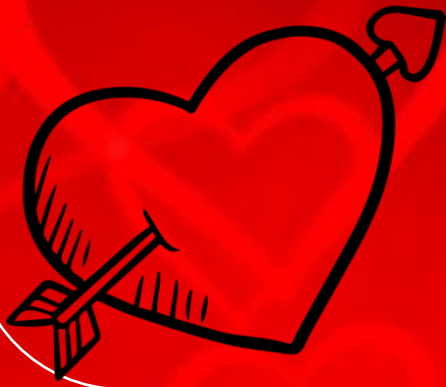
Name: Daisy Buchanan

Age: 26

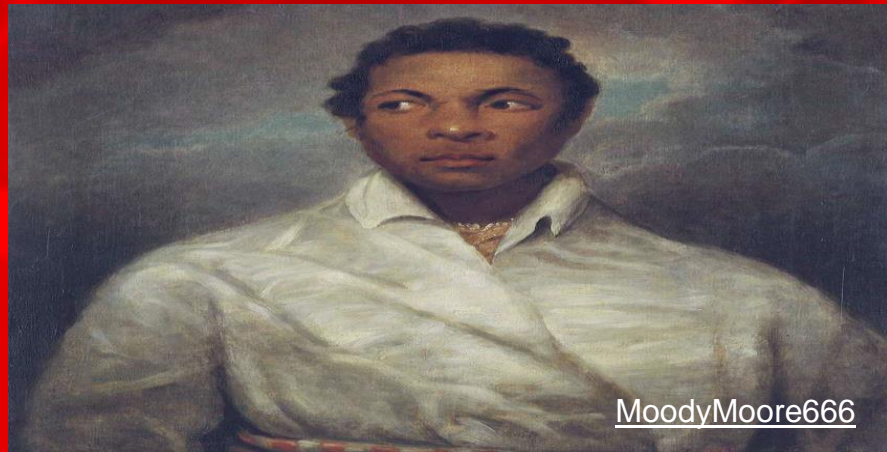
Location: East Egg

Anthem: Jesus Take the Wheel – Carrie Underwood

Sexuality: Pansexual
(anyone who loves me)



Check out our newest heartthrob, Othello. Many women have fallen at the feet of our famous tyrant (we won't mention Desdemona....), and for good reason too! He is handsome, strong, passionate and a leader. Although unsure of his current location, Othello could offer it all for true love. Othello is looking for a sweetheart who is entirely loyal and very convincing.



MoodyMoore666

Bio: Strong-willed, fun-loving guy. Just looking for my strong partner to conquer the world with. Also do a bit of amateur poetry on the side 'of my whole course of love, what drugs, what charms, / What conjuration and what mighty magic' (A1.S3) (91-92)

Name: Othello

Age: 55 (still vibing like it's my 20s)

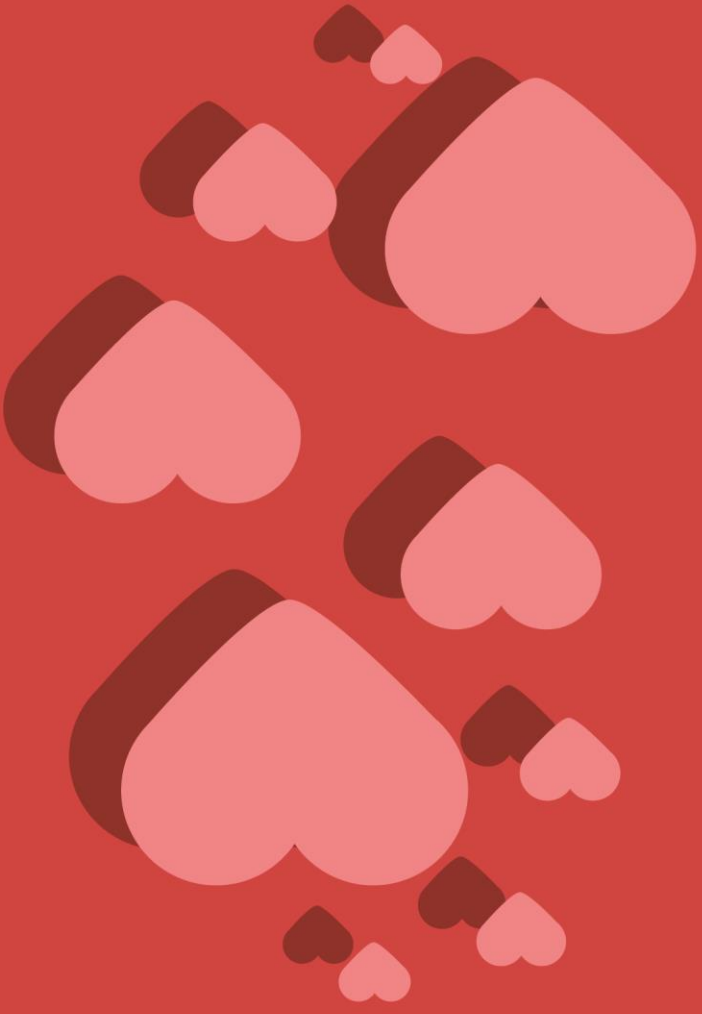
Location: Currently in-between locations

Anthem: Jealous Guy – John Lennon

Sexuality – It's complicated, mostly straight but slightly curious

Passions:

Saving islands, overthinking (my one flaw), being the coolest general, being in LOVE, plotting revenge with my besties



Modern Adaptations

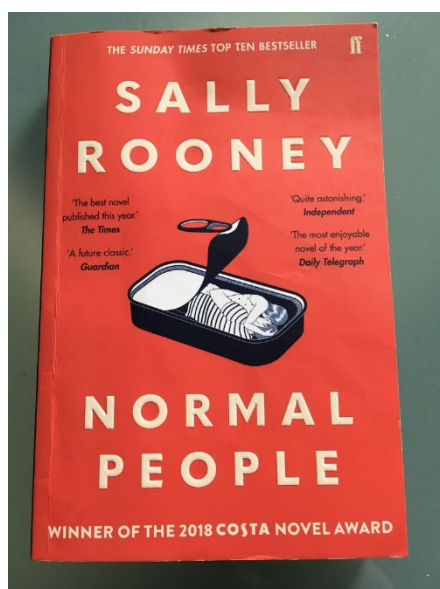
FROM TURNING PAGES TO TV CHANNELS: THE EXPLOITIVE NATURE OF LOVE IN SALLY ROONEY'S *NORMAL PEOPLE*

Ella Greenwood

What is normal when it comes to modern love? Can love in fact be called normal in any sense?

Sally Rooney's 2018 bestseller *Normal People* explores the anguish and unrelenting emotion that comes with the complexity of navigating modern love. This coming-of-age novel beautifully encompasses the innocence of young relationships tainted by contemporary expectation and miscommunication. Her story follows Connell Waldron and Marianne Sheridan, two Irish teens, supposedly on two very different paths who collide with unexpected eloquence. However, the 2020 series adaptation of the novel ignores the darker features of unhealthy love that Rooney presents. Despite the TV series perfectly capturing the reality of growing up in a world that has become disconnected from the naturalness of conventional love, it overlooks the concerning narrative of sexual exploitation that encompasses the relationships in Rooney's novel.

Beginning a somewhat unconventional but common love affair in secret, the couple face peer-pressure and social expectation that, in their eyes, prohibits the acceptance of a 'normal' relationship in which they could openly be together. It takes the entire novel for both characters to admit their true feelings for one another. But



regardless of Connell finally admitting 'that was kind of a perfect time in my life, to be honest. I don't think I was ever really happy before then', we, as readers, cannot and should not ignore his mistreatment of Marianne throughout the book. Yes, they are young, yes, they do not make the right decisions, yes, they learn and grow as intelligent and aspiring adults. However, the TV adaptation, in my eyes, fails to portray the problem with Connell's misuse of his best friend's affection to his own advantage.

Marianne and Connell acknowledge the overwhelming comfort and security they share in one another's arms. But we learn that the chemistry between the two school students is tainted by the unhealthy reality of sexual exploitation and ownership. Marianne knows that 'Connell always gets what he wants, and then feels sorry for himself when what he wants doesn't make him happy'. Unknowingly, Connell seeks out Marianne as an escape and source of comfort during the uncontrollable moments in his life. She acts as an anchor to ground and support him. Knowing herself that

'she would have lain on the ground and let him walk all over her body if he wanted, he knew that' which conveys to readers the damaging reality of exploitive love. The passion Marianne has for Connell acts as the destructive force that manipulates her and her devotion to him in the novel. Her strong-will and undesirable personality masks a frightened and submissive side as Connell holds 'effortless tyranny over someone who seems, to other people, so invulnerable'. Therefore, Marianne's shame in the novel stems from her willingness to be rendered helpless in the face of love, but when it comes to Connell she does not act on this knowledge. She chose to leave her abusive relationship with Lukas, questioning 'Is the world such an evil place, the love should be indistinguishable from the basest and most abusive forms of violence in which Marianne can conceptualise the inhumanity that fuels love, but we do not see the paralleled recollection in the emotional torment she endures from Connell. Rooney successfully captures the demise of innocence and natural companionship at the hands of sexual exploitation, ultimately highlighting a twisted modern necessity to seek comfort in damaging and unhealthy relationships.

But why does this warped concept of love engulf two otherwise normal Irish teenagers?

To put it in its simplest form, love floods every aspect of life, from school playgrounds, to representation of love in *Normal People*. This realisation conceals a larger modern-day dilemma; fear of expression.

Development of the contemporary world means that love is expected to be found by swiping left and right

on dating apps or hiding behind the glow of a phone screen in the hope that genuine emotion can be found in a monotone text message. The anxiety created from this disassociation of expression leaves Connell and Marianne speechless in their attempts to voice natural emotion. Traditional displays of affection have become extinct, destroyed by peer pressure and social constructs of gender expectation. Despite finally addressing the connection they share; their social climate prohibits them from acting on these feelings. Therefore, both are left to navigate the frustrations and pain of modern day alone and at the consequence of their own mental health and sanity, trapped in a perpetual loop of damaging anxiety and hurtful disassociation.



ROMANCE OR GROOMING? IN DAPHNE DU MAURIER'S *REBECCA*

Harvey Douglas



Love in literature is not always the romantic, dreamy, and glossy version it is presented as in such things as Disney movies, this is especially true for cinematic depictions of classical texts.

Present day movie depictions of novels are romanticizing strong topics such as grooming. Hollywood is currently and undoubtedly making millions through praising this harrowing element from novels in the plots of many films.

Romanticizing means to make something, or someone seem romantic, to treat the focus as ideal or perfect and grooming refers to the process by which an offender prepares a (typically younger) victim for sexually abusive behaviour; often done through the use of certain factors such as; personal living situations, education, status or financial background to take advantage of a person for sexual gain.

These film's attempt to romanticize grooming by decreasing the appearance of an age gap from the story or even filtering out certain plot details, themes, or storylines from the original text. An obvious and recent example of this specific Hollywood romanticization through the adaptation of a classic novel is the 2020 film adaptation of Daphne Du Maurier's *Rebecca*. This is a classic gothic thriller as a novel; however, **this modern-day cinematic version is just another wishy-washy romantic portrayal of**

the original novel. The film clearly includes a lot more sexually explicit scenes, compared to the novel which rarely explores sex between the characters and on the rare occasions that it does, the author merely alludes to sex rather than explicitly stating what is happening.

Du Maurier's *Rebecca* goes as far as to suggest that the couple (Mr and Mrs De Winter) do not consummate their marriage, let alone have sex in Monte Carlo before the proposal.

In the novel, there are several disturbing scenes, which unsurprisingly do not make an appearance in the adaptation as they would simply be too odd for the audience and would certainly take away the so-called romantic stylistics of the movie depiction.

Such scenes include Mrs De Winter being spoken down to by her husband much like a father disciplining his child:

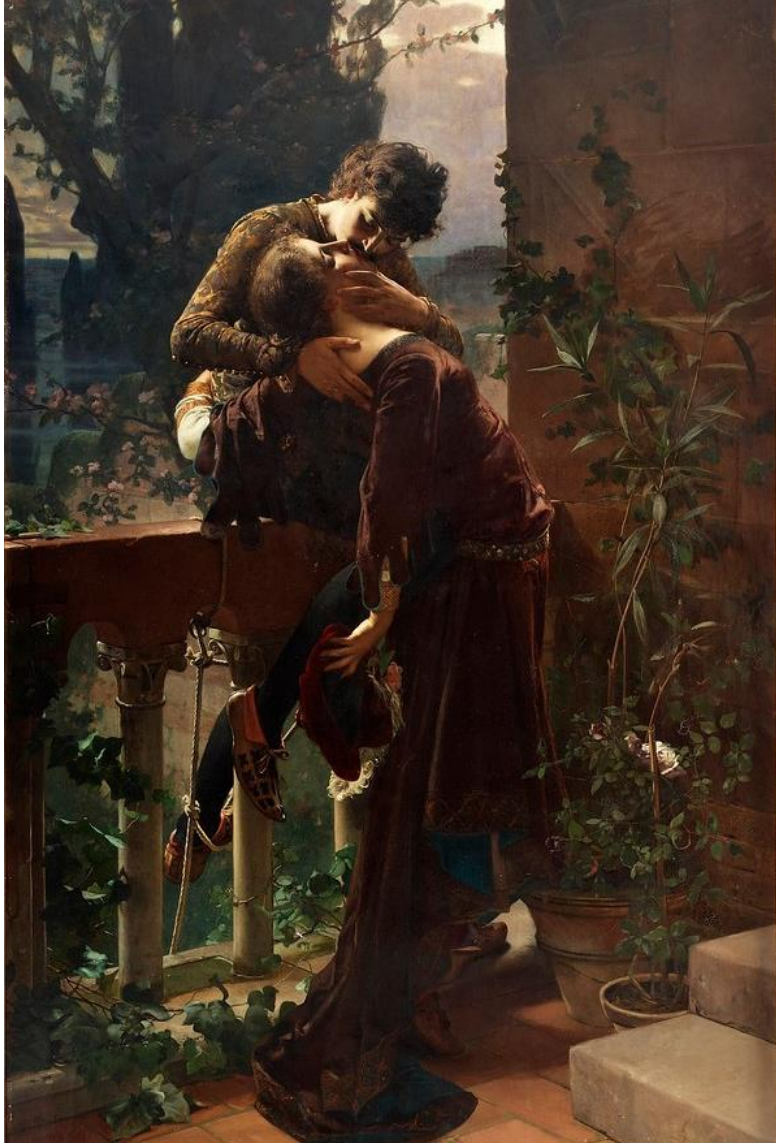
“Listen, my sweet. When you were a little girl, were you ever forbidden to read certain books, and did your father put those books under lock and key?” “Yes,” I said. “Well, then. A husband is not so very different from a father after all.” (*Rebecca*, Daphne Du Maurier),

their relationship has a parent daughter like appearance in which he states that it is her innocence and purity that he is attracted.

When Mrs De Winter has any form of lust or sexual desire Max De Winter becomes disgusted and aggravated demanding her to stop her impure thoughts. He states that her face and appearance changes into a form which he does not like when she is having these thoughts, and anyone who has watched the film can see that this is clearly quite the contrary to what we have seen within the movie, where Mrs De Winter expresses sexual desire and Max De Winter **is** attracted to this reciprocating the same desires, however this is when they first meet and it is only after they've returned to Manderley and 'settled' into married life that their movie and their sex life grinds to a halt.



**LOVE STORY THAT TRAVELS
THROUGH TIME: IS SAM
LEVINSON'S *EUPHORIA* A
REFERENCE TO *ROMEO AND JULIET*
Georgia Stevenson**



The cult-like popularity of the first season of HBO's *Euphoria* left Season 2 highly anticipated, with social media hype doubling viewership to over 13 million. *Euphoria* could be seen in the number one spot for trending on Twitter after every new Season 2 episode aired, making audience opinions easy to find. The artistic and modern directing style leaves a lot up for interpretation, which encouraged a wave of fan theories and predictions as to how the wild storyline would unravel.

Craig Mathieson for *The Age* sums up the newest season: 'The new episodes still pinball between the bombastic and the solemn, between understanding and exploitation, and that is its uncompromising identity.' The show focuses on a group of teenagers trying to navigate their transition into adulthood as they explore drugs, relationships and sexuality. The show is unpredictable- as is life at that age- however, is this story more familiar than we realise?

A popular theory during the release of Season 2 is that the main characters Rue and Jules are somewhat a representation of Shakespeare's *Romeo & Juliet*, and the evidence is quite compelling. A TikTok user 'Hahahadbss' discussed this theory in their post: 'Someone said that Rue and Jules are parallels to Romeo and Juliet...honestly, it's not that far fetched.' The main character of the show, Rue experiences an on-again, off-again relationship with her counterpart, Jules, however their sporadic relationship isn't the only similarity fans have noticed.

The pair are portrayed to juxtapose each other in a way that is similar to the Shakespearean star-crossed lovers. Season 2 opens with Rue singing along to a Tupac song, when immediately after the camera switches to a shot of Jules with a Biggie song playing in the background. This is seen to be a reference to the epic rivalry of the 90's between the two rappers, paralleling the rivalry between Romeo and Juliet's feuding family. A more obvious clue is seen when Jules dresses up as an angel for Halloween, the exact costume that Clare Danes (who plays Juliet) wears in Baz Luhrmann's film adaptation of the play. Rue is also dressed similarly to Leonardo DiCaprio's portrayal of Romeo, who wears a suit. Jules ends up in a pool, like Juliet in the play, and even recites a line from Act II: 'Although I joy in thee, I have no joy of this contract tonight. It is too rash, too unadvised, too sudden'.

This theory is completely justifiable; Shakespeare was- and still is- a huge influence on contemporary works. Successful modern authors are still retelling his stories, for example Toni Morrison writing *Desdemona* as a female led ode to *Othello*. Shakespeare has even started to penetrate children's cartoon films, with Kelly Asbury's *Gnomeo & Juliet* becoming a huge box office hit. It is not a reach for Sam Levinson, a filmmaker notorious for his artistic symbolism, to include a reference to Shakespeare somewhere in his works.

The highly anticipated finale of Season 2, however, left fans disappointed. Rue and Jules' relationship was left untied- like many existing plotlines. Brian Lowry explains in his review for *CNN*: 'It was, as usual, a lot, though the episode did close on a quieter note, with Zendaya's Rue exchanging an embrace with Jules (Hunter Schafer), before seemingly leaving that relationship behind. At least for now.'

This raises the question: was the seemingly complex and highly orchestrated symbolism all a coincidence? Are fans of *Euphoria* so desperate for the show to have a higher meaning that they conjure up these exciting plotlines all to be let down by the producers? The second season ultimately received deflated reviews as a result of huge build ups in the plot which unravelled to anticlimactic (or completely missing) resolutions. In my opinion, *Euphoria* is a result of modern works catering towards the highly dramatic and fast paced plotlines which generate a larger viewership, rather than exploring deeper meanings which gives the piece some substance. The show does not have to relate to canonical texts such as *Romeo & Juliet* to be considered successful, however untied plotlines and disappointing resolutions are unlikely to make Sam Levinson be considered the new Shakespeare.

JANE EYRE DIARY

Ellie Naylor

January 3rd 1847

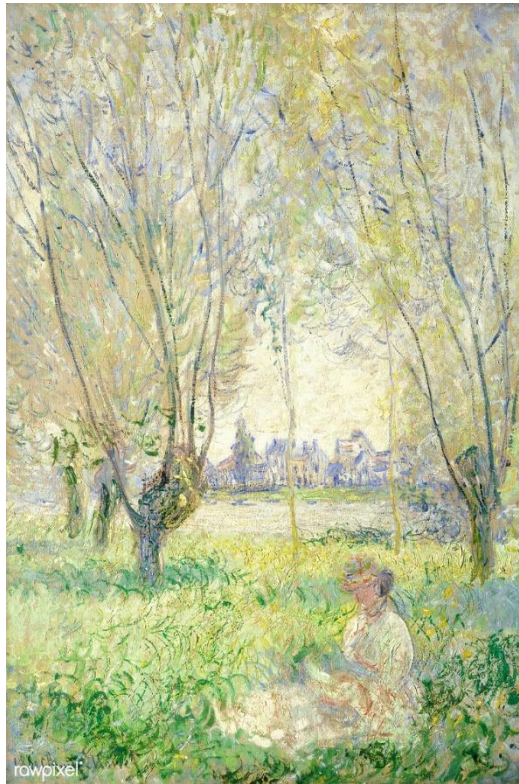
Dear Diary,

I don't know where to begin. My head is in a complete mess currently. I've been at Thornfield Hall for all of 2 months and my life has changed tremendously. The kindness and warmth of this place has opened my eyes to the possibility's life has to offer, even Mr. Rochester (gloomy as he is) appears to be making a considerable effort with me now. Spring is fast approaching, 'the blue sky and halcyon sunshine of the genial spring weather' calls to me. The isolation of my past life seems to be that of a dream or a memory that happened to someone else.

March 21st 1847

Dear Diary,

I can't help but let my mind wonder as I continue to work with the little Miss Adele. Mr. Rochester dominates my brain. Every time I am alone with my thoughts, I cannot control myself, he is perhaps the most extraordinary person I have happened to meet. I am choosing to write to help organize my thoughts as I have no one in this world to confide in. Of course, there is Mrs. Fairfax and the young Sophie, however I feel it is simple impossible to speak of such matters to other servants of the house. I know it is quite impossible to have a life with Mr. Rochester but still I let myself dream of this man. I know everyone speaks fondly of him within the House, I remember Mrs. Fairfax first telling me of his 'fine voice' and from then it is all I think about. Although he is kind and considerate, he still seems distant from me. I



know I should not begin to think above my station, so I am determined this next week to put these fantasies behind me.

April 24th 1847

Dear diary,

I am in a state of restlessness. Sleep alludes me as I appear to be haunted by unwanted thoughts. I am pledged an unwanted spirit in the house. Late at night I can hear things. Unsettling things. Feet brushing against the floor outside in the hall, heavy breathing from the house, and worst of all, nails tearing down the outside of my door. I do not know if I am becoming delusional or just being hysterical. I dare not tell a soul for fear of being claimed insane. As I linger in bed I 'listen for the movements of the wild beast'. I just hope this madness will soon come to an end.

May 14th 1847

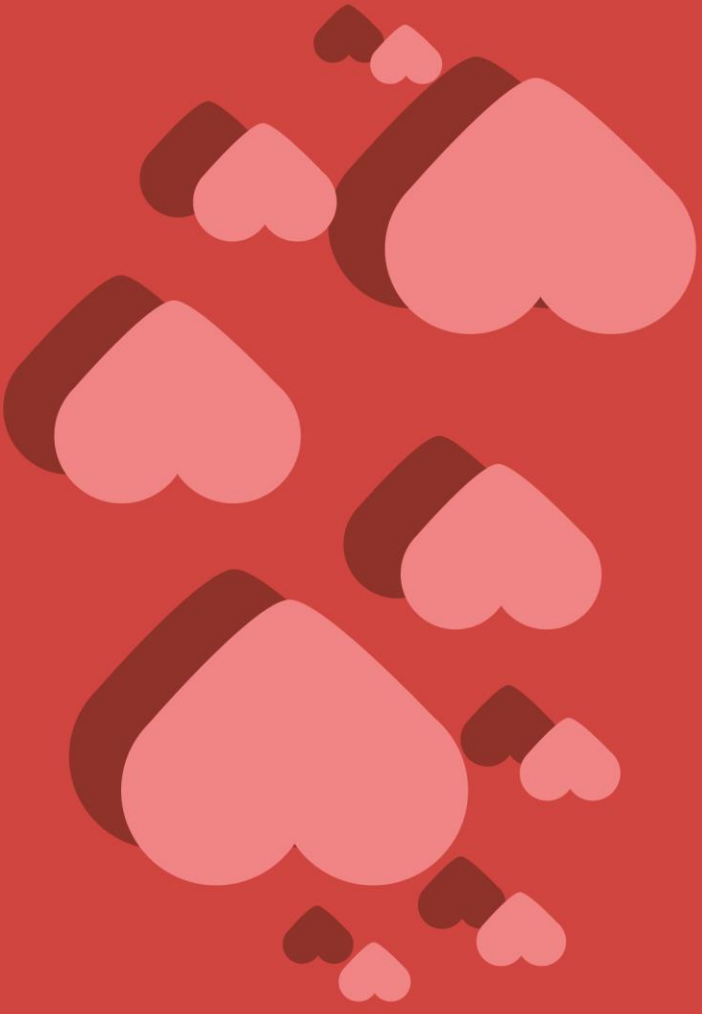
Dear Diary,

I cannot begin to explain what has happened to me during the past few days. All my worst fears became a reality last night; I was awoken by a blazing fire. I cannot remove the image out of my head. I do not fully remember how it happened. My darling Mr. Rochester would surely have perished in the blazing inferno if fear had not woken me. The gratitude of the whole house is overwhelming; but most importantly it has opened Rochester's eyes fully to me. Midst the whirlwind of a week after saving my love from a cruel coffin he proposed to me! I cannot begin to put into words how overcome I am with delight. The next chapter of my life is soon to begin and I could not be more joyful than I am right in this moment.

June 11th 1847

Dear Diary,

Everything is broken. Everything is destroyed. Everything is lost. Thornfield is no longer my home and I have left, in search of a new life. I, a young naive girl, who has been told I am 'over-excited' have been deceived by those closest around me. Those I once thought friends. I now understand the truth of the strange occurrences of my once Home. Mr. Rochester believed that I would not question the truth when it is so plain that the truth is being hidden from me. My once beloved Edward is already married. Married to Bertha, who has been kept in the attic for numerous years now. Bertha is insane, that I cannot deny, but I refuse to be deceived by someone who I was prepared to give my heart and soul to. I cannot articulate the pain I endure as time seems to slip past me. I can only hold on to my faith that there is more in this world for me. That a brighter future awaits, one in which I hope to find peace with my troubling past.



**Call on
Cupid**



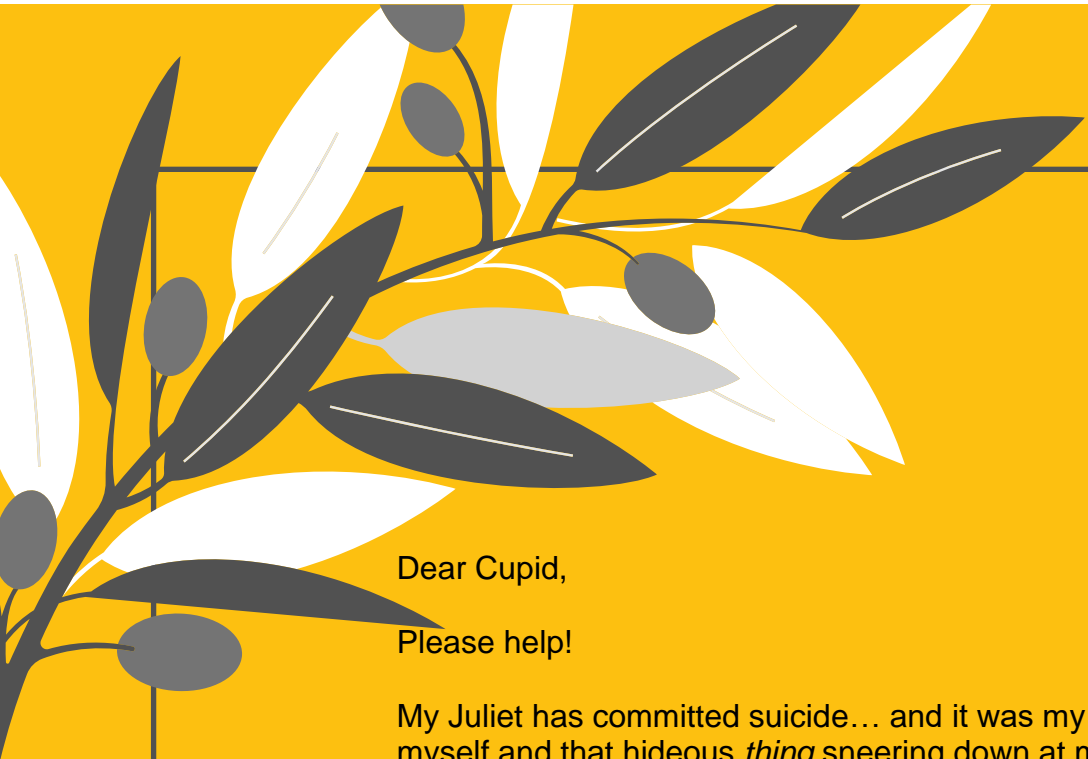
Mansion on the Coast,
123 Lovers Hill
Cornwall,
TR9 3ER
14th July 1932

Dear Cupid,

I don't know where to start. My new marriage seems to be falling apart around me. I met my husband in France, who is 20 years my senior, and fell head over heels in love with him. I couldn't have been happier on our honeymoon, but since we've come home things don't seem right. I think he's hiding things from me. I know he's grieving from his past wife's sudden death, but I don't understand why he is being so secretive. I just want him to open up to me, but I just feel like I'm hitting a brick wall. Everywhere I look in my new home her presence is still here; I feel like I'm trying to fit shoes far too big for me to take on. I want him to trust me with everything but every time I try to get him to open up, he just shuts me down. Any advice would be greatly appreciated, this marriage is my only lifeline, I need this to work out.

R

By Ellie Naylor



Behind the mirror in the attic,
152 Hertford Street,
London
E1 SW7

Oct 31st 1893

Dear Cupid,

Please help!

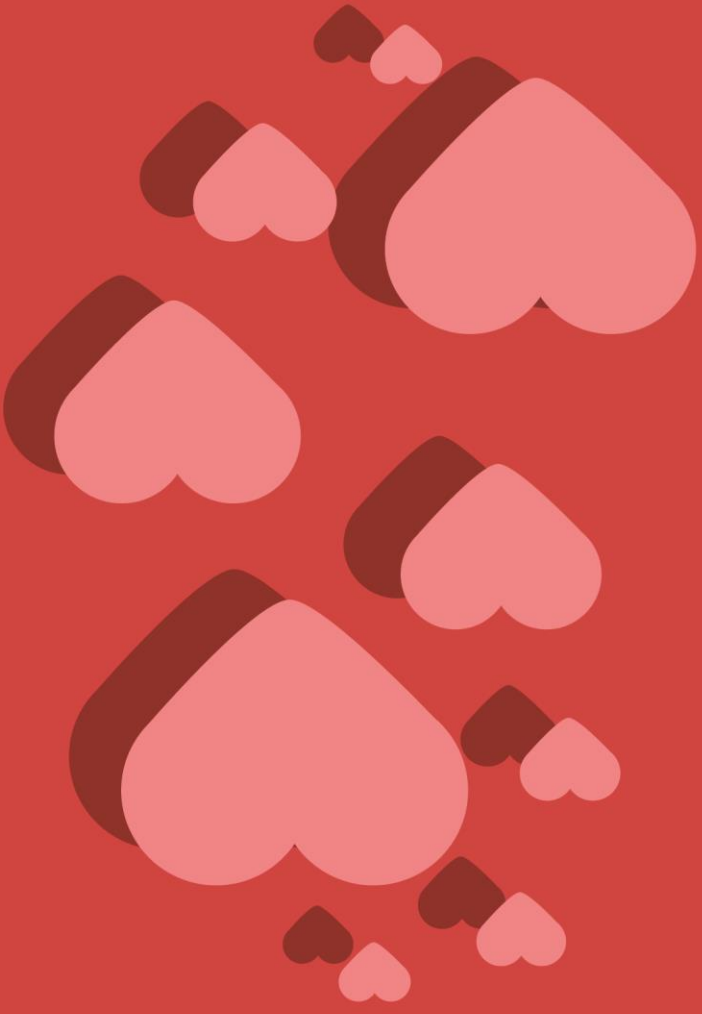
My Juliet has committed suicide... and it was my fault, OH GOD. I don't know how I'll live with myself and that hideous *thing* sneering down at me, that *Thing* with its freshly red hand, murdered her as surely as if I had cut her little throat, I'll be caught red handed ha-ha... that's what I'll be, a Murderer! That's what they'll think of me! oh God, I'm ruined. WHY ME!? I'm too young and beautiful for this. Way too young and beautiful. At least... no one will know, it's not MY hand that is stained it is the portraits, there is no blood on ME, this painting takes on my ageing visage and all my guilt and sin. Cupid - does this mean I am free from my guilt?

Who am I kidding of course it does, it is not my fault after all that she took her own life. I know you'll agree Cupid, I can start again... start over, anyone would be lucky to have me. I am free from this, HA! It is not by my hand that she died, I can live on in the shadow of that *Thing* and live freely from shame and guilt and most importantly time! Free to live out my impulses, as I don't want to be at the mercy of my emotions.

So... I guess I should ask for your advice, that's the point of this contraption... know of any good operas?

Yours insincerely,
G.

By Dionne Goodman



Love and Evolution

HEARTBREAKING, ASTONISHING, CONTROVERSIAL: BALDWIN

Ellie Naylor

James Baldwin as one of the greatest writers of the 20th century has impacted the world of literature by incorporating his own experiences of being a Black, Gay man in a particularly prejudicial era of American history. Baldwin's position in society is so unique to its time that we the reader can't help but feel compelled in his work.

Baldwin's biographer Eddie Glaude simply describes the man he came to know Jimmy' as a 'misfit'. His position as an outcast in a white heteronormative society is key to understanding his work; As Baldwin faced prejudice from some of the black community for being an openly gay man, his unique stance as a dually discriminated American citizen means we can feel Baldwin's isolation within his work (possibly even more now-a-days).

Homophobic attitudes were at an all-time high in America, during the 20th century due to a lack of understanding and religious standpoints. However, in France, one of the most progressive LGBT countries in the world, all sodomy laws were repealed in 1791 during the French Revolution. So, this leads us onto *Giovanni's Room*, Baldwin's second novel set in 1950's France. Published in 1956, grants us a unique personal perspective on homosexuality at the time. This novel was one of the first of its kind to go into mainstream literature. Therefore, opening doors into the psychological position of a member of the LGBTQ+ in up-and-coming literature. The text gave an explicit depiction of a homosexual relationship while also highlighting the struggles an individual had to go through.



Experiences of a gay man in these trying times can be demonstrated within the opening line of the novel, quote by Walt Whitman:

'I am man; I suffered, I was there'.

This quote fashion an innate connection to Baldwin's own personal thoughts and feelings, indicating his own personal voice this acts as a prelude for the topics explored within this novel. Similar parallels can be drawn between Baldwin's personal voice and the main-protagonist David; For example, the absent father figure appears to weigh heavily on the plot, with David's father heavily on the

plot, with David's father we later find out is an alcoholic. This relationship is consistently presented as being exasperated within the plot and is shown to weigh heavily on the protagonist's mind. This relationship is perhaps as prominent as it is within the novel because Baldwin himself never knew his biological father; and therefore, the absence and

separation between father and son is an insight into Baldwin's personal life and therefore becomes a thought-provoking factor within the novel.

But why is this important? What else does Baldwin's experience have to teach us?

Baldwin's text is so revolutionary because of its outstanding ability to withstand the test of time as a text that connects us to messages of social change sixty-years down the line.

Giovanni's Room was published during a time of strife for both the LGBT and Black communities; these communities in the 1950's were directly affected by prejudices created by the AIDS epidemic which meant that already fore-standing opinions on Gay persons we're further ostracised by a largely religious American society. Therefore, Public opinion on homosexual relationships or any relationship which were deemed to stray from the 'normal' standard,

, i.e., containing a man and a woman (both cisgender), was still heavily condemned.

However, the 1950's was also the start of change for the gay rights movement. In 1950 Harry Hay founded the Mattachine Foundation, one of the first gay rights groups; a gay rights group that sort to improve the lives of gay men, which inspired many other gay rights groups to form as one of the first gay rights groups to exist within America. As the countries second gay publication, 'The Mattachine Review', allowed for there to be more representation of Homosexuality within literature and the media.

This era also saw the beginning of the rise of the AIDs epidemic that swept over the world. It is crucial to understand how throughout this epidemic black gay men were met with some particularly harsh discrimination (find a real-life example of a black gay man being discriminated for being black (possibly by someone in the LGBT community to show there was hatred and discrimination even within the community).

Despite of the discrimination aimed towards Black gay men and the LGBT community; the gay rights movement continued swiftly into the 1960's, where the state of Illinois was the first state to abolish anti-sodomy laws in 1961 (decriminalizing homosexuality). The action that Illinois had taken in removing such laws began the important discussion of changing attitudes nationwide. Meaning that, Baldwin publishes his novel amid this social and political change, smack bang in the middle of it in fact, just as Baldwin was.

The opening chapter is telling for the tone of the novel; It opens on the last day of the text and starts with David where there appears to be a looming darkness in the exposition, 'I watch my reflection in the darkening gleam [...] into a daker past'. Baldwin almost sets the novel up to present a homosexual lifestyle to have this melancholic tint to it. Suggesting that Baldwin by no means intended to glamorize the life of an openly homosexual man. Even with Paris as the backdrop for his novel and as the epicentre of LGBTQ+ rights. Even with Paris at his feet David's world slowly begins to decay and disintegrate. This is first established in David's internal monologue. Baldwin visually places you in David's shoes through his internal monologue and he leads us though David's emotional breakdown towards a better understand of the vulnerability of our character.

We can only imagine what a victory the success of this novel would have been like for the LGBTQ+ community of the time. A novel where a young man goes off to discover himself in France allowing his sexuality to finally be free in the captivating city of Paris. Our character David soon finds himself engulfed in the nightlife and us alongside him.

However, the most shocking thing was the reception of James Baldwin's novel, is perhaps what makes it so intriguing. Baldwin himself a black gay man knew he would never be able to write about a fellow black gay man, it likely would not have been published at the time due to discrimination aimed at communities. So, the importance of his work Baldwin changed his narrative to a white American to swing publication favor. From this move Baldwin was temporary shunned by black writers and activists as they felt was a 'traitor' for not using his voice to represent his community.

Reading this novel for the first time in lockdown emersed me, perhaps it was Baldwin's ability to transport us into another time and place while we were in isolation. Or possibly it was the harrowing heartbreak allows us to experience falling in love again in our rooms. Either way Baldwin has a spectacular ability to transcend time and still be socially relevant to the youth of the 2020's with a particular importance of his writing being its ability to help us digest hardship as well as being an important text that shaped literature of the 20th century.



THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LOVE AND TRANSFORMATION WITHIN CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE AND DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Rachel Brennan

Where do we see the relationship between love and transformation within contemporary literature?

Within Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*, a 1982 epistolary novel, sisterly love enables the character Celie to be transformed from a patriarchally oppressed woman, into a strong woman who encapsulates feminist agency with the ability to transcend the confines of misogyny. Before Celie experiences sisterly love with Sofia, her language reflects how she understands women as inferior in society. For example, when Sofia defends herself against Harpo, Celie encourages him to physically assault Sofia more and then says 'they're fighting like two mens' when Sofia fights back. This demonstrates how foreign it is for Celie to see a woman defend themselves.

The novel opens with a threat from Alphonso, silencing Celie after she is raped, depriving her the right to speak to anyone about the attack except God, whom she communicates with in the form of letters. This instantly conveys how she adheres to the sexual hegemony, voiceless to her mother. Conversely, we see the dramatic transformation of Celie's silenced character when she experiences sisterly love with Sofia and romantic love with Shug.

Sofia tells Celie of the patriarchal abuse she suffered at home, and how sisterly love was a feminist tool to keep her and her sisters strong; 'all the girls stick together'. This rebellion begins to invigorate feminist strength onto Celie, transforming her character. Celie finds herself sharing her abuse story with Sofia too, which is disobedient to what Alphonso instructed. This exemplifies Celie's transformation from silenced, to attaining a voice through the aid of sisterly love.

Shug teaches Celie to be empowered by her sexuality and sexual identity; this is significant for Celie as the sexual abuse she suffered made her view herself as dirty. Making love to Shug is rebellious and contends with what men in her life have ever encouraged – it enables her to feel pleasure for herself rather than satisfying a man. The love she experiences with Shug transforms Celie from hating her body, to enjoying her body.

We also see the vehicles which are used to express love, undergoing transformation throughout the novel. Celie is forced out of her home into an abusive marriage with 'Mr-', where she cannot see her sister Nettie again. She is oblivious throughout the novel whether Nettie is even alive, yet later discovers Nettie is alive and has been raising her children. Celie makes this discovery through the letters Nettie had written to her.

Celie responds, expressing her love for her sister through the form of letter-writing. Despite the distance, their sisterly love is transformed from unattainable, to attainable through the epistolary aid of letter-writing to each other. Letters enabled the sisters to communicate their love for each other through the medium of written discourse. This brings me onto my next topic, love which is transformed from being 'face to face' and physically attainable, to love which suffers the challenges of distance, in an era of 'social distancing'.



Where do we see the relationship between love and transformation within relationships during the COVID-19 Pandemic?

Much like Nettie and Celie who loved each other from a distance, due to the restrictions implemented worldwide intended to prevent the spread of this airborne virus, people all around the world who loved each other were forced to love from a distance. The expression of love was transformed from a physical, in person interaction, into a non-physical, online interaction for those who did not live with the people they loved.

We are informed that 'physical touch is a key aspect of intimacy, a fundamental human need, crucial in maintaining and developing intimacy within close relationships' whereas restrictions on social interactions 'severely restricted the number and range of people with whom physical affection was possible'. For those who did not live together amid the pandemic; platonic lovers, familial lovers, and romantic lovers – these people endured an immense transformation within their relationships. People were deprived of human touch and their relationships were starved of the expression of love through physical expression.

The Covid-19 pandemic transformed people's ability to express love through physical interaction such as hugging and kissing, to being completely unable with restrictions such as the 'two metre rule' in place and the lockdowns which urged people to stay at home, away from others.

This starvation for human touch and physical interaction thus resulted in loneliness, yet as Boris Johnson put it, 'the wizardry of technology' enabled people to make video calls, text messages, phone calls, play games and communicate with each other. Technology transformed lovers from feeling lonely and apart, to being able to express their love and experience togetherness in a non-physical way.

Within Walker's novel, we see the characters Nettie and Celie who utilise letter-writing which builds the communicative bridge, overcoming the physical, geographical obstacles which restrained their love. Their restrained love is transformed into a state of unrestraint through the medium of letters. Likewise, throughout the pandemic, lovers who had access to technology were able to transform their restrained love, into attainable love, through the medium of technology.

THE WORLD'S WIFE Lauren Gill

I turned to this collection during the first lockdown of 2020 when there was still a lot of uncertainty. I think that lockdown definitely gave us all a chance to re-evaluate the relationships we have with other people (regardless of their nature). We have come a long way from times when marriage was not an option for women if it is what their families desired for them. Whilst marriage is still a very common and economised relationship, we have certainly shown an evolution of sorts in how relationships are formed, maintained and also ended. Around 42% of marriages end in divorce currently.

Carol Ann Duffy takes us on an adventure around the world, providing a new perspective on some of the wives of the world's most renowned men, like Mrs Darwin, or even the mythological character of Medusa who I have come to know as a fantastic example of a woman scorned. But first, the character who opens this collection is Little Red Riding Hood with the poem 'Little Red Cap'.



Rather than retelling the story that we have grown up with, Duffy forges a relationship between the Wolf and Red. Red allows herself to be led 'deep into the woods, / away from home, to a dark tangled thorny place'. In this sense, marriage could be 'the dark tangled thorny place' that Duffy creates within the world of her poetry. We could then see the role of the wife as almost alien to the world that we know as a child, this institutional relationship being confusing and relatively confining.

The role of the wife and marriage was historically initiated as a trade, the female body becoming an object that men could sell for a pretty penny. However, Little Red Riding Hood allows this relationship between herself and the wolf to happen in order to exact her revenge on the beast that killed her grandmother. So, we could view Red as a modern woman, pursuing a relationship to benefit herself rather than a man.

The shorter poem 'Mrs Darwin' reads as a funny anecdote. Mrs Darwin says that 'something about that Chimpanzee over there reminds me of / you.' Duffy gives us a glimpse into the relationship between Charles Darwin and his wife. Whilst this poem is shorter than some of the others in this collection, I find that it reminds me of the relationship between my own parents, making fun of each other and enjoying each other's company. Obviously, Duffy is suggesting that Mrs Darwin's observation fuelled Darwin's theory of evolution and we could see this as an example of a



Medusa has become a monster through this relationship, becoming 'foul mouthed now, foul tongued, / yellow fanged.' When in an unhealthy relationship, we can become monstrous versions of ourselves. This type of relationship does not necessarily have to be romantic either.

The role of the wife is something that retained a central position concerning the conversation about women and marriage. Within 'Mrs Icarus' Duffy once again takes on a satirical stance, creating an almost universally applicable scenario that most could relate to. She recounts:

I'm not the first or the last
to stand on a hillock
watching the man she married
prove to the world
he's a total, utter, absolute, Grade A
pillock.

Duffy manipulates the myth of Icarus' ambition and uses it to heighten the role of an exasperated woman. Duffy however, places 'Mrs Icarus' in a contemporary space, allowing a woman that otherwise would have no voice from her time period an inner monologue, observing her husband's ambition and internally calling him out for being an idiot.

supportive relationship in which Charles was able to develop his life-altering theory. On the other hand, we could see this as Duffy presenting another woman in an unhappy relationship that made a snide comment about the man she is married to.

'Medusa' is the poem that resonated with me the most as I have always been interested in Greek Mythology. Duffy creates relationship between Medusa and Poseidon and presents a different angle to us. Within the world of Duffy's poetry, Medusa and Poseidon are in a romantic relationship that has 'soured' and rotted through Poseidon's adulterous nature.

In most relationships, we sometimes have to watch our partners make a fool of themselves or just unintentionally screw up.

The final poem of this collection leaves a lot of food for thought. Firstly, the title 'Demeter' has some interesting connections regarding mythology; Demeter is the goddess of the harvest, so we could see Duffy as positioning Demeter as *the World's Wife*.

She could be the ultimate representation of the role of the wife, mirroring the life cycle of romantic relationships from beginning to end. Within this poem, Demeter is not defined or overruled by a husband, but instead she is defined by her role as a mother which could be viewed as her defiance against the cultural expectations of a woman.

Without her daughter Demeter is left in a 'cold stone room', but as soon as her daughter returns to her, 'the air softened and warmed as she moved,

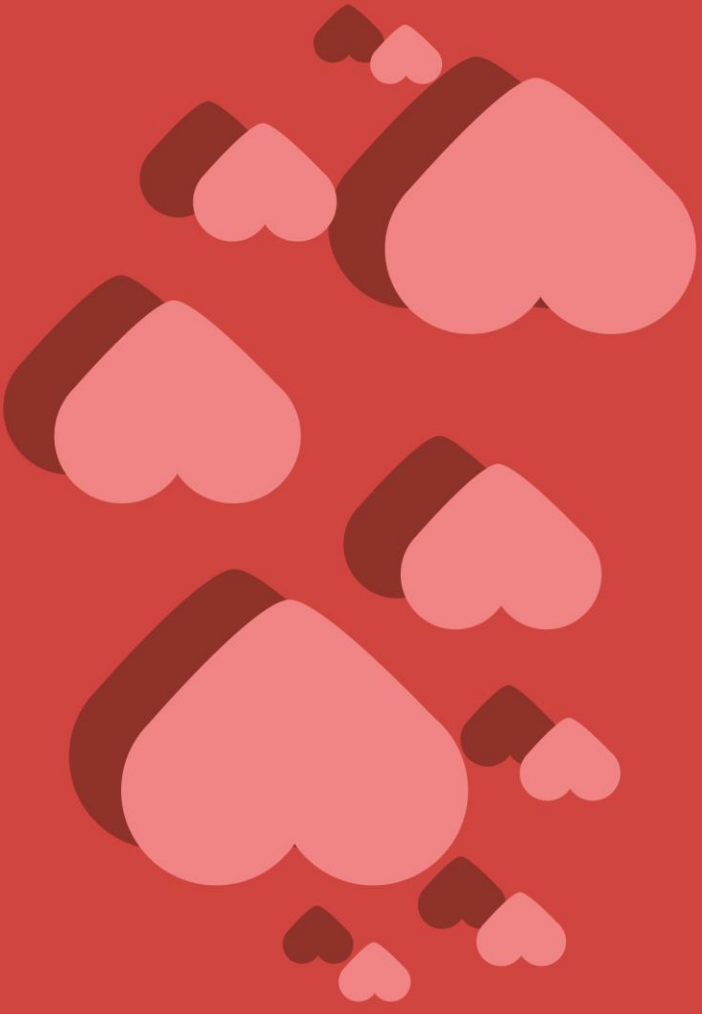
the blue sky smiling, none too soon,

with the small shy mouth of a new moon.' Persephone's return promises new life and growth for Demeter, her relationship with her daughter proving to be an incredibly strong bond that renews her marriage to the world, allowing it to once again flourish.

The seasonal changes are, according to myths, influenced by Demeter's sense of loss when her daughter resides with her husband in the underworld. Maybe Duffy chose to focus on Demeter's role in

Persephone's marriage to illustrate the varying dynamics of relationships as they are not always smooth sailing.

Duffy gives us an insight to various relationships within her collection, allowing us to see the potential of what marriages can become. The poems I have focused on primarily give voice to fictional women whose stories have been passed down and overshadowed throughout history. Duffy breaks this cycle and has instead created a satirical collection that is incredibly relatable; we have all been in relationships with people that have infuriated us or have even brought out the worst in us. Furthermore, Duffy moves past the boundaries of how marriage is perceived as an institution, highlighting that not all relationships are healthy and permanent.



Tinder Profiles



MontagueLover1597

Bio: I'm devoted, even my friends will tell you that! I usually want the things I am not supposed to have. I am passionate and maybe a little bit impulsive. I would literally die for the woman I love! In fact, 'with love's light wings did I o'er-perch these walls; For stony limits cannot hold love out...' (II,2,915.)

Passions: loving, gate-crashing parties, being a wingman to my best friends, money

Name: Romeo Montague

Age: 17

Location: Verona

Anthem: Love Story – Taylor Swift

Sexuality - Homosexual



Estherbunny19

Bio: I am a young, eccentric writer looking for some harmless, no-strings attached fun. I, at times, can be slightly morbid, so someone with a light sense of humour would be a bonus

Passions: Writing of course, intimacy of any kind, communist spies – don't ask..., embellishing the truth – but never lying! American pop culture.

Name: Esther Greenwood

Age: 19

Location: New York City

Anthem: Teen Idle – Marina

Sexuality: Strictly straight