

The
MANTELPIECE

Issue 7

Literary Magazine

January 2024





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a surprising history*



Vera Design

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Vera Design was established on the foundation of a jewellery line by Guðbjartur Þorleifsson, who has designed a large variety of jewellery in the last 70 years. His design has roots in Icelandic history and Vera Design's team is proud to build on his tradition.

We aim to design timeless and unique pieces of jewelry that can be passed down through generations.

Vera Design's jewellery is sold in 24 stores in Iceland and one in the Faroe Islands and on their website www.veradesign.is from where it is shipped worldwide.



www.themantelpiece.org

Contributors

Lillian Heimisdottir is a writer and poet residing in Barcelona.

Eleanor Jiménez is a writer from Barcelona ([web](#)).

Karys Rhea is a writer of absurdist short stories.

Angelique Fawns is a Canadian journalist and speculative fiction writer. You can find her work in EQMM, DreamForge, Third Flatiron anthologies, to name a few ([web](#)).

Michael Loyd Gray earned a MFA in English in 1996 from Western Michigan University. He is the author of six published novels ([web](#)).

Maria D.R. is an Indonesian fiction writer and greeting card designer ([web](#)).

Karen Heuler's stories have appeared in over 120 literary and speculative publications. Her latest novel, *The Splendid City*, came out from Angry Robot Books in 2022 and her newest collection, *A Slice of the Dark*, was published last November by Fairwood Press ([web](#)).

Morgan Bazilian is a professor of thermal physics, and a poet.

Ellen Rowland is the author of two collections of haiku/senryu. Her writing has appeared in numerous literary journals and in several poetry anthologies. Her debut collection of full-length poems, *No Small Thing*, was recently published by Fernwood Press. She lives off the grid with her family on an island in Greece ([web](#)).

Erik N. Patel is a writer and digital nomad ([web](#)).

Sandra Balteanu is a writer and translator from Romania ([web](#)).

Hector Jean Fournier is a food writer from Marseille.

Heimir Steinarsson is an Icelandic typographer and linguist.

Coverphoto: Anya Hess / Adobe Stock

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Embracing Hope in the Dawn of 2024

Reflecting on a Year of Turbulence and Anticipating a Future of Renewal

As we stand on the cusp of 2024, it is customary to reflect on the year that has passed—a year marked by tumultuous events and transformative changes. In a world rattled by the echoes of wars, the palpable threat of climate change, and the rapid evolution of the global economy under the influence of artificial intelligence, it's easy to view the past year as a period of unprecedented challenge. Yet, as we turn the page to a new year, it's crucial to find the seeds of hope and resilience that lie beneath these trials.

The year 2023 was, undeniably, a difficult year. Wars waged around the globe, reminding us of the fragile nature of peace and the human cost of conflict. These conflicts, occurring in various regions, have not only led to immediate human suffering but have also contributed to a sense of global instability. The images and stories emanating from these zones of conflict have often been heart-wrenching, serving as a stark reminder of the work that still needs to be done to build a more peaceful and cooperative world.

The events of the past year have cast a glaring spotlight on the delicate tapestry of our global community. Conflicts across different regions have inflicted deep wounds, leading to loss, suffering, and displacement on a scale that is both heart-wrenching and eye-opening. These conflicts have starkly highlighted the critical need for peace, diplomacy, and a deeper understanding among nations. As we cross the threshold into 2024, there's a palpable, collective aspiration

for solutions that nurture unity and accord. There's a burgeoning hope that this new year will usher in an era of healing, mending the fractures of the past, and weaving a narrative of reconciliation and togetherness.

In parallel, we have witnessed the relentless march of climate change. Its impacts are no longer abstract predictions but lived realities for millions. Unprecedented weather events, from scorching heatwaves to devastating floods, have

“And now let us welcome the new year, full of things that have never been.”

become more frequent and intense, underscoring the urgent need for concerted global action. This environmental crisis has also brought to the forefront discussions about sustainability, resilience, and our collective responsibility to the planet.

Another defining feature of the past year has been the rapid changes in the global economy, spurred in large part by the rise of artificial intelligence. This technological revolution has brought about significant transformations in how we work, communicate, and interact with the world around us. While AI has opened up new possibilities and efficiencies, it has also raised important questions about the future of work, ethics

in technology, and the balance between progress and humanity.

Yet, despite these challenges, there is room for optimism as we look to 2024. The difficulties of the past year have also been a testament to the resilience and adaptability of the human spirit. Communities have come together in the face of adversity, showing that cooperation and solidarity can prevail even in the darkest of times. Innovations in technology, while disruptive, also offer solutions to some of our most pressing problems, from healthcare to environmental conservation.

As we welcome the new year, it is with a sense of cautious hope. The lessons learned from the hardships of 2023 can guide us in building a more stable, sustainable, and compassionate world. It is an opportunity to redefine our priorities, to focus not just on economic growth but on the well-being of our communities and the health of our planet.

The year 2024 stands before us not just as another year, but as a canvas of possibilities. It is a chance to mend what has been broken, to build bridges where there are walls, and to forge a path that leads to a brighter, more inclusive future. Let us embrace this new year with an open heart and a renewed commitment to making the world a better place for all.

In the words of poet Rainer Maria Rilke, “And now let us welcome the new year, full of things that have never been.” Let 2024 be a year of healing, growth, and hope—a year where we come together to create a world that is kinder, wiser, and more resilient.

Happy New Year. □ L.H.

The Future of Reading

Navigating the New Literacy Landscape

Eleanor Jiménez



In a world awash with screens, the act of reading is undergoing a transformation as profound as the invention of the printing press. Once a solitary interaction between a reader and a page, reading has evolved into a dynamic activity that engages various technologies, formats, and senses. This essay explores the multifaceted future of reading, contemplating how emerging technologies, changing cultural practices, and new forms of literacy will shape the way we engage with the written word.

The Digital Revolution: E-books and Beyond

The rise of digital reading has shifted the literary landscape. E-books and e-readers initially mirrored the traditional reading experience in a digital format, but they have since begun to transcend it, offering features like adjustable fonts, instant dictionary access, and cloud-based libraries. The digital revolution has also democratized access to books, breaking down the physical and economic barriers that once kept literature out of reach for many. Yet, as we move further into the digital age, questions arise about the impact of screen reading on comprehension, retention, and the deep reading necessary for complex texts. This section explores these changes and challenges, considering what they mean for the future of reading.

The potential for interactive and immersive reading experiences is one of the most exciting prospects of future reading. Augmented and virtual reality technologies could transform the act of reading into a multisensory journey, placing readers inside the story. This section speculates on the possibilities and pitfalls of these

technologies, questioning how they might alter our understanding of narrative and our role as readers.

The Resurgence of Audiobooks and the Oral Tradition

Audiobooks, which were once relegated to a small segment of the market, have surged in popularity, transforming the landscape of literary consumption and prompting a reevaluation of the traditional concept of “reading.” This remarkable resurgence not only broadens the scope of how we interact with texts but also rekindles our connection to the ancient oral tradition of storytelling—a practice as old as humanity itself. Engaging with literature through listening rather than visual reading activates different cognitive pathways and emotional responses, offering a distinct and immersive experience.

As we delve deeper into the world of audiobooks, we encounter a medium that is both a continuation of and a departure from traditional reading. The spoken word, with its nuances of tone, pace, and inflection, adds layers of interpretation and emotional depth to the narrative, creating a rich, multi-dimensional experience that transcends the page. This auditory form of storytelling can evoke a unique sense of intimacy and immediacy, drawing listeners into the narrative in a profoundly personal way.

However, the rise of audiobooks also raises intriguing questions about the future of literacy and narrative comprehension. How does listening to a story differ from reading it in terms of cognitive engagement, memory retention, and imaginative involvement? What does this shift mean for the way stories are written and performed? As more people turn to audiobooks for convenience and accessibility, understanding these differences becomes crucial.

Furthermore, the explosion of audiobooks has significant cultural implications. It democratizes access to literature, making books available to those who may have barriers to traditional reading, such as visual impairments or dyslexia. It also fits seamlessly into the fast-paced, multitasking lifestyle of modern society, allowing people to engage with literature while on the move.

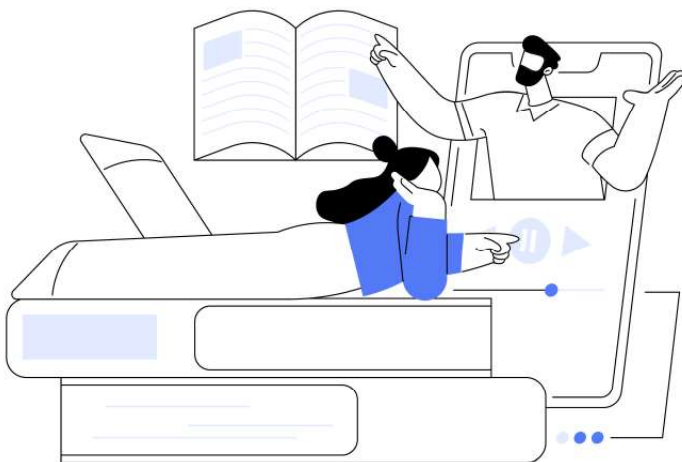
This part of the essay delves into these multifaceted implications, exploring how the rise of audiobooks is reshaping our understanding of storytelling, the ways in which we connect with literature, and the very nature of narrative consumption. As we consider the future of reading, it’s clear that audiobooks hold a

prominent place, offering an alternative pathway to the world of stories that is both ancient and distinctly modern.

Social Reading and the Global Book Club

The advent of the internet has revolutionized many aspects of our lives, not least among them the way we engage with literature. It has given birth to dynamic, expansive communities of readers from all corners of the globe who gather in digital spaces to share, discuss, and dissect books in a manner that was unimaginable a few decades ago. Social media platforms, literary blogs, forums, and online book clubs have not only democratized literary critique but have also fostered a sense of global camaraderie among readers. They've turned what is often a solitary activity into a shared, communal experience, enriching the reading process with diverse perspectives and insights.

These virtual communities offer spaces where enthusiasts can converge over shared interests, transcending geographical and cultural boundaries. On platforms like Goodreads, Twitter, and countless personal blogs, readers can engage with authors, participate in discussions, and access a wide range of reviews and analyses. This has profound implications for how literary tastes are formed and changed, how books are marketed and received, and even how authors interact with their audience.



Moreover, the rise of these online communities has led to the democratization of literary criticism. Once the purview of a select few academics and journalists, book reviewing and discussion have now been opened up to anyone with an internet connection and a passion for literature. This shift has led to a more inclusive range of perspectives and has challenged the traditional gatekeepers of literary prestige.

But the impact of these communities extends beyond just discussion and critique. They also play a vital role in reader education and advocacy, promoting literacy and a love for reading in a broader sense. Through online book clubs and reading challenges, individuals are encouraged to step outside their literary comfort zones, discovering new genres and authors they might not have encountered otherwise.



Furthermore, these communities often act as support systems, providing a sense of belonging and connection for individuals who might otherwise feel isolated in their literary interests. For many, these groups offer not just recommendations and discourse, but also companionship and validation.

This part of the essay delves deeper into the multifaceted impact of these online literary communities. It explores how they've changed the landscape of reading and discussing literature, the way they've influenced the industry, and their potential future evolution. As we consider the trajectory of these communities, we're prompted to reflect on the broader implications for cultural exchange, literary diversity, and the collective experience of reading in the digital age. In examining these vibrant networks, we gain insight into not only where reading has been but also where it's going, as these communities continue to grow and evolve in an ever-more connected world.

Despite the digital tide, print books have shown remarkable resilience, buoyed by a sense of nostalgia and the tactile pleasure they offer. This section reflects on the enduring appeal of print and considers how the roles of print and digital reading might continue to coexist and complement each other.

Literacy in the Future: New Forms and Challenges

As reading evolves, so too does the concept of literacy. Future literacy will likely encompass not just the ability to read text, but also to navigate hyperlinks, understand multimedia content, and critically evaluate information from multiple sources. This part of the essay contemplates the evolving definitions of literacy and the educational, societal, and ethical implications of these changes.

The future of reading is not a replacement of old habits but an expansion of possibilities. It encompasses everything from the persistence of traditional print to the advent of immersive, interactive experiences. As we navigate this new landscape, our challenge is to embrace the opportunities these changes offer while preserving the deep engagement and critical thinking that have always been at the heart of reading. In this evolving narrative, our love for stories remains a constant, guiding us through the changing chapters of how we read. □

Krenshaw and Gage Exchange Text Messages

Karys Rhea

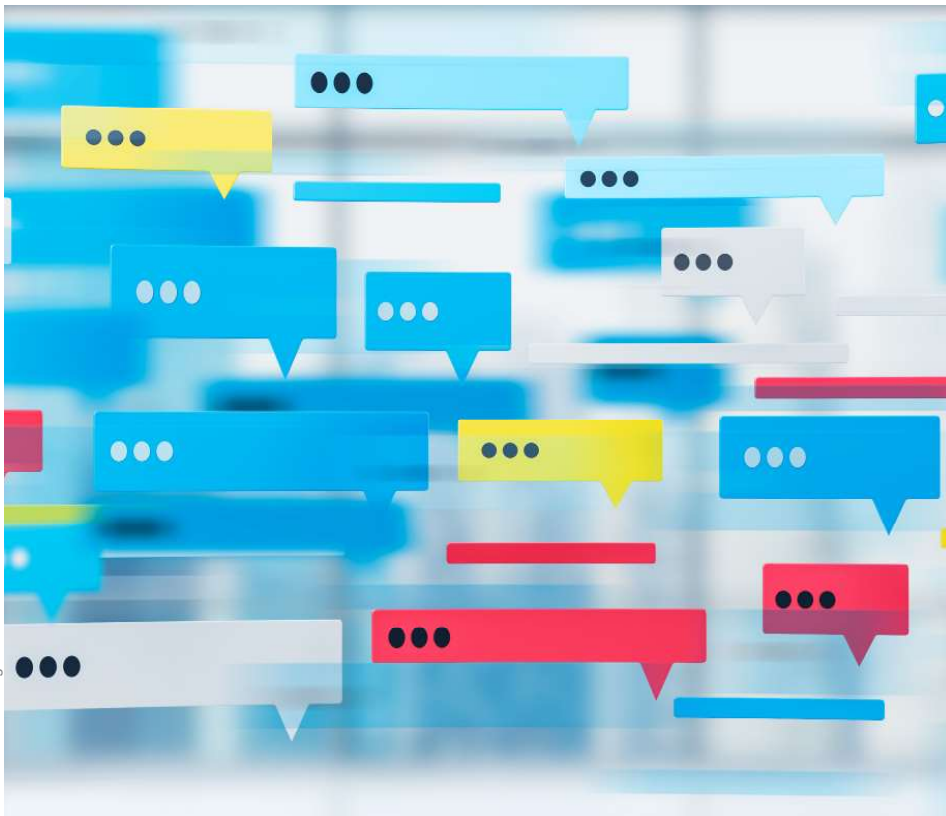


Illustration: ImageFlow / Adobe Stock

Krenshaw woke up and was surprised to see three voice-text messages from Gage on her phone. Apparently, he had sent them the day before. How had she missed them?

She and Gage met about a week prior on a dating app. They went on one in-person date together and, on paper, Gage checked several boxes -- most of the important ones, anyway. He was fun, successful, relatively attractive, Jewish, pro-Israel, and looking for a serious relationship that would eventually lead to marriage, kids, and the whole family shebang.

But Krenshaw had reservations about Gage. He had a particularly loud speaking voice that reminded her a little bit of bro culture. And she was finding it difficult to generate a strong physical attraction to him right off the bat. Still, she was willing to try again. After all, they had only gone on one

date, and Gage was a delightful guy. She was looking forward to getting to know him better.

Since their date, Gage had been checking in with Krenshaw regularly. But the following weekend, Krenshaw received an out-of-the-blue text from him that said he didn't think they were a "good match." Krenshaw was mildly disappointed and, at the same time, curiously intrigued. She wanted to know more. What had led to his decision to end things with her? Krenshaw wasn't sure if they were compatible herself -- perhaps he sensed her ambiguity and wanted to preemptively protect himself? Krenshaw had no idea.

She replied to his text, asking if they could talk about it over the phone. Hours went by, then days. No response from Gage. Krenshaw assumed at this point he had ghosted her. But now, two days later,

Krenshaw was listening to three text-recordings from him. They were a little hard to make out, and Krenshaw decided to call him up instead of trying to decipher them.

She dialed his number. A girl picked up. "Hi, it's Krenshaw," said Krenshaw. "Is Gage there?"

"Gage is still waking up, and he's actually with Landen right now."

Who's Landen?

"And why are you stalking him anyway?" asked the girl. "You show up at his building and knock on every single door looking for him? Not cool..."

Krenshaw should have been insulted by the false accusations, but she sort-of liked this girl, who she assumed was either a close friend or relative of Gage's. Krenshaw imagined she was one of those overweight girls with beautiful skin and a lovely face.

"I'm a little confused why you would say I'm 'stalking' Gage," Krenshaw calmly replied. "I never showed up at his apartment. That's some crazy high school shit. All I did was send him few text messages. I heard from him early today, so I wanted to follow up with a phone call."

"Oh!" remarked the girl, seemingly satisfied with Krenshaw's explanation. "Gage!!!" the girl called out. "You got Krenshaw on the phone!!!"

"Krenshaw!!" Krenshaw heard gage shout in the background.

After some banter and shuffling around, he came to the phone. "What's up girl???"

Krenshaw was a little peeved by his nonchalance. "Ummm...what's up is that you just randomly ended things with me after one date, which I respect...but I thought we potentially had a connection and just wanted to have a proper discussion about it."

But before Gage could respond, Krenshaw realized she had to feed her cat and was already late for her friend's birthday party.

Getting closure with Gage would have to wait. □

At Macron-Point Dutch Artifact Repatriation

Maria D.R.



Illustration Maria D.R.

Collage made in Canva with stock images and clipart depicting Muhammad Yamin, Emmanuel Macron, and a mountain of skulls publicly demanding the return of stolen dutch artifacts as the world looks on upon outgoing Dutch PM Rutte.

By the 6th of December, it was plain to see that the Repatriation exhibit was already on its way out of the National Art Gallery. The vibrant decor backing the five repatriated statues in every photo-shoot I've seen were long gone, and their new circular arrangement meant that my gaze couldn't help but wander away from those exquisitely defined stone deities lovingly adorned in holy symbols and arrayed with other famous if much smaller figures. Instead, after the first few rounds of photos, I found myself staring

straight into their perfectly smooth backs time and time again, a constant reminder of the time unscrupulous stonemasons had dispassionately separated these gods from the temple walls built in their name.

It may have been entirely unintentional, but nothing set the tone for an exhibit about our stolen history better than staring at once sacred reliefs forcibly transfigured into secular and saleable sculptures, that were now *finally* presented back to something resembling their original audience, who can't help

but look upon their deific forms and... take little selfies with them in their t-shirts and jeans, while dispassionately listening to their tour guide explain why the particular strain of syncretic hindu-buddhism some of our ancestors believed just made them *different* and not you know, evil as most of us have been taught to instinctively believe.

And perhaps I had simply misread the intent of the organizers, but when we entered an exhibition taglined "Silent witnesses to Nusantara Civilization" I had expected to

see high art for the most part, a painting there, a keris or two here, and maybe a few more sculptures around the place. An expansive celebration of the accomplishments and high culture and civilization of our great ancestors as it were, now recovered from the colonizers who had stolen and hid them away.

But what I saw instead were sometimes cramped, somberly lit rooms with mostly black walls that, save for the Macron wall (we'll get back to this later) and a picture of the outgoing Dutch PM Rutte handing over a symbolic golden keris to Jokowi, were adorned with nothing but the shadows of revolutionaries from each age, and a sobering historical reminder of *exactly* how each artifact or set of artifacts were taken from the homes and cold dead hands of their original owners.

And within these rooms were by and large the every-day stuff of kings. Sure there was the nearly complete set of Diponegoro regalia, now equipped with the recent addition of a keris that even the tour guide hesitated to describe as the *genuine* article without mentioning the experts who disagreed, and the brilliantly gleaming gem-set and gold encrusted handle of the Keris Puputan of Klungkung was there to *completely* distract me from the long note above it that doubtlessly must have explained its proper and gruesome use. But what really struck me was the relative mundanity of all the... stuff that was put on display or mentioned.

Beaded children's sandals, practically *plain* by today's gaudy standards, sat on a glass covered pedestal by itself. Two plates were set up on display, dull but apparently golden, likely stolen for its material worth alone, along with golden and gold decorated window coverings, and the *many, many* rings and other miscellaneous pieces of jewelry that were part of the same collection. The Dutch's greed, it seemed, could not be contained by something as simple as a nail, or deterred by something as *base* as morality. After all, the buyer simply does not need to know that the gleaming keris he held in his hands was pilfered from the still cooling guts of the last man or woman to commit ritual suicide if it would negatively affect the price.

But hundreds of years of brutal colonial oppression and at least two post independence treaty violations later; here we are with a lot of our stuff back. And I; with my rose tinted glasses set in through the full force of post war Dutch propaganda and self reinvention as a moral, diplomatic, and peaceful folk; strode into the last room expecting perhaps to see another word of apology, or mutual thanks for taking another step forward to true forgiveness and reconciliation, but instead I saw a mural of Emmanuel bloody Macron.

In a story told in five or six panels; on the opposite side of a room also containing a movie I didn't have enough time on the guid-

ed tour to watch; there was a mural depicting the story of Indonesia's struggle to recover its own history. With roundabout three panels on one wall featuring Muhammad Yamin (a national hero who demanded the return of the Java man fossils which as far as I know have yet to be returned, my favorite part of the Trouw and Aljazeera coverage of the most recent demand is a Naturalis Biodiversity Center spokesperson quoted as condescendingly noting "We understand the Indonesia claim. But the question is also: Where can the collection be safely stored, accessed and researched? I think I know the answer,"¹ in reference to the demand of a country their people stopped shaking down for financial support in the 1960s²) and an artifact my brother described as 'The Majapahit equivalent of the book of kings' during a conference held to *finally* recognize our independence; before it smash cut to yes, again! Emmanuel Macron! Who shows up because he publicly announced France's desire to return the artifacts looted from its own former African colonies back in 2017, which the exhibition's organizers *explicitly thanks him for*³, as it helped to provide the additional diplomatic peer pressure needed to move the Dutch into action.

Yes! After 78 years of independence, after so many of their colonial and revolution era crimes have been paraded and announced for all to see, what finally got the Dutch government to start giving us our stuff back for the first time in decades, what had prevented me from needing a passport, visa and an expensive plane ticket to view the works and artifacts left behind by my own ancestors. It wasn't something as pure as the goodness of the Dutch government and people's own hearts, or as pragmatic as the hard work of our tireless diplomatic corp, but a *completely unrelated Frenchman* stepping into the conversation and committing to the bit just enough to make them look bad if they didn't follow suit.

And we *still* don't have all of them back! Aside from the fossils there must be hundreds if not thousands of miscellaneous artifacts⁴ still out there, lingering in private collections, or hidden away in someone's closet, if not locked away deep in Dutch government held museums and art galleries.

And *this*, this is normally where I wish I could say that we'll be getting them all back piece by piece, that this is just one step among many, that we can expect more 'goodhearted' cooperation from the Dutch in the future. That we're long past the murky 2010s reparations era where they vaguely admitted to wrongdoing, but would appeal⁵ the living daylight out of any attempt to hold their government to justice, until it all grew too embarrassing and they offered an out of court settlement of 5K euro a head if you somehow still had documents from 70 years

ago conclusively proving your relation to an illegally murdered victim⁶ (and according to a BBC Indonesia interview with Irwan Lubis, a lawyer who has covered these cases before, these documents apparently include birth certificates that they were accused of systematically denying to Indonesians anyway).

Except Geert Wilders (think a Dutch Nigel Farage) is still a likely replacement for the retiring Dutch PM after the PVV's surprise election victory⁷, and as far as I can tell without going too deep into researching the Dutch Far Right, if anything he'd probably call the previous administration blinded fools and demand everything back if he thought he could get away with it, rightful spoils of war and all that. And what would the Indonesian government do about it? Not a damn thing probably, not if it'd impact trade with our biggest European importer (Based off of 2021 OEC world data⁸). In the end of the day our people's history remains as it always has been, important and valuable, until it gets in the way of making money.

And I know that many in the West, and in the 'shining European center of justice, mediation, and equality' that is Netherlands specifically, would like to think that these were just growing pains, an unfortunate side effect of their mission to civilize. But after spending an hour sorting through the knick knacks they stole from our ancestor's bodies and homes, and staring upon statues of the gods they stole and told us not to worship, I can't help but feel like we've all been robbed. □

1 Source: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/10/21/indonesia-seeks-return-of-looted-artefacts-from-netherlands>

2 Source: Kahin, George McTurman (1961) [1952]. Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press. Or rather the Wikipedia Article on the Dutch-Indonesian Round Table Conference citing it.

3 My brother was friends with the organizers, I should have asked them to take a picture of it as guests were not allowed to take photographs within the premises.

4 Source: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/10/21/indonesia-seeks-return-of-looted-artefacts-from-netherlands> again, citing the existence of a list of 40,000 artifacts demanded.

5 Source: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-12-09/yaseman-war-crime-case-dutch-army-indonesia-1940s/10551594>

6 Source: <https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/indonesia-54631766> translated into English in the following link <https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/indonesia-54631766> Notably this offer only stood for two years

7 While the PVV does not hold a ruling majority, they hold enough seats personally that either every other party needs to negotiate them into a binding contract/agreement ala the last ruling coalition (which took 271 days despite prior history of working together) or they need to work around them entirely and somehow create a functioning coalition reaching across the aisle to drum them out, either way the VVD is likely to coalition with a party defined partly by the promise of driving them out of government. Source: <https://www.dutchnews.nl/2021/12/dutch-coalition-deal-agreed-271-days-after-the-general-election/>

8 Source: <https://oec.world/en/profile/country/idn> (I cannot afford to pay for latest data)

This One Time at Band Camp

Angelique Fawns



Illustration: MG / Adobe Stock

Present Day:

I was glued to the television in my hotel room, a chilled glass of wine forgotten. My jaw dropped when I heard my long-lost friend's name. How did they identify the bodies so quickly?

The mud wasn't dry on my shoes yet.

My diesel-soaked fingers fumbled turning up the volume with the remote, and I scowled noticing how the gas had ruined my manicure.

"The victims pulled out of a fully-engulfed house fire earlier this evening have been identified. Durke Moon and his wife Rochelle Digby were reportedly home alone when the fire broke out. The Atlanta arts community

is in shock. Maestro Moon was the popular conductor of the Georgian Philharmonic Orchestra, and his wife Digby played as his first chair flute."

The young journalist's cheeks reddened as she strained to be heard over the spray of the firehose. I almost felt sorry for her, seeing her shoulders hunched up against the January chill. She was backlit by the last licks of flame sparking from the charred mansion.

When the camera panned, I could see a few Atlanta suburbanites gathered on the sidewalk in housecoats. Smoke curled up into the moonlight and there was a dusting of snow on the ground.

Without taking my eyes off the TV, I grabbed my glass of wine and gulped it down like water. The oaky aftertaste lingered in my mouth, almost as satisfying as revenge.

Rochelle Digby was my childhood best friend and she taught me a thing or two about revenge.

Ten Years Ago:

Rochelle was Queen Bee in high school and I worshipped her. We met in music class because the violin players always sat beside the woodwinds. Fast friends since junior year, I could never say 'no' to her.

I remember that day well. The day I should have said "No."

Rochelle had finished her flute solo and turned to me, "Are you going to Band Camp? Come with me, it'll be lit."

"What? Hang out with a bunch of dorks singing Kumbaya? No thanks." I rubbed my chin, sore from battling with my violin.

"Come on Angela, it might not hurt you to sing Kumbaya. It can't be any worse than your violin playing." She tapped her flute on my knee.

"Exactly. I suck."

"You don't suck, but you are a freaking home body. You need to get out a bit. I'm not taking 'no' for an answer."

So, I agreed to go to the Boone River Music Camp for our senior year. A 200-acre educational center in North Carolina.

My crappy violin playing did get better over the week. But, that's not what I liked most about Band Camp. There were some seriously cute guys there. I couldn't flirt myself, but I enjoyed watching everyone else find their mates. Like the muscular oboe player and the sweet-faced trumpet player.

On the second-to-last evening, Rochelle and I sat with a group around a bonfire. The moon was glowing behind the trees and the smell of pine was intoxicating.

“So, anyone here you’d like to strum your G-string?” I asked as we toasted S’mores.

“Really, Angela?” she said, taking a bite of chocolate.

“Seriously. I’d let the drummer bang me all night long.”

I dipped my stick closer to the fire, trying for the perfect shade of brown. I liked the oboe player better, but I couldn’t think of a witty oboe joke.

“Like you’ve even been kissed yet.”

“Good point. But neither have you.”

“I plan to marry my music. Besides, I saw my mom treated like a pinata by my dad,” Rochelle stabbed at the dirt with her stick.

I slowly licked my own crusty marshmallow, cooked just perfectly.

“I’d sure like to be that marshmallow,” a burly teenage boy with bad acne said. Jack, percussion. I’d seen him slouching by the cymbal.

He was sitting on the other side of the fire, pinching and squeezing Kyla, a pale clarinet player.

I dropped my snack into the dirt, feeling queasy. Jack licked his lips and winked at me. My stomach did another lurch.

Rochelle leaned over and picked up a rock.

“What did you say to my friend?”

“I said I’d... sure... like... to... be... that... marshmallow.” He shifted his gaze to Rochelle.

The fire seemed to intensify, giving Jack a red halo. The flames reflected in his pupils and the shadows playing on his face grew menacing. The rest of the kids stopped chatting. Even the frogs and crickets were silent.

“Let it go, he was just joking. Like I was with you.” I grabbed Rochelle’s arm. The one with the rock.

Jack spit into the bonfire, the saliva a gooey stream through the air. When it landed, it dried with a hiss in the pit.

“That guy wasn’t joking. Why should he get away with being a sleaze ball?” Rochelle kept her eyes glued on the leering percussionist.

“Look, the universe will take care of him.”

“Call me the universe.”

Rochelle wrenched her arm from my grip and fired the rock across the fire-pit. It narrowly missed Jack’s forehead knocking off his ball cap.

He rocked back on the bench. “Bitch.”

Picking up his hat, he dragged Kyla into the forest with him.

“That guy is headed straight for juvie,” Rochelle said. She methodically ate some more chocolate.

“What if you’d taken out that guy’s eyeball? You’d be the one in juvie.”

Rochelle got up off the bench, “Think of all the time I’d have to write my opera behind bars.”

I followed her back to the dorm. Kyla returned an hour later and went immediately to her cot. Her thin shoulders shook as she sobbed quietly into her pillow.

The other girls didn’t seem to notice. Either sleeping, reading, or giggling among themselves. Except Rochelle. She had her arms folded over her chest and was watching intently.

I got up from my bed, “Kyla, can I help?”

She waved me away.

“What happened? Did Jack do something?”

“I don’t want to talk about it,” she said into the pillow.

Rochelle shook her head when I climbed back into my cot. “Jack needs to be taught a lesson.”

“Jack needs some serious therapy.” I kept my voice low.

We both tucked under our covers and went to sleep.

In the morning Kyla wasn’t there.

Rochelle went to ask the counsellor about it and returned with a grim set to her jaw. “They’re saying she got sick and her parents came and got her.”

Camp went on with one less woodwind.

A group of us went on a nature hike after band practice. I made sure to wear extra sunscreen, the day was so sunny and warm. Ferns tickled our ankles and I relished stretching the violin kinks out of my arms and neck. Chickadees sang as we tromped along the steep ridge of an escarpment. The view was astonishing. Thick craggy rocks plummeting down to a boiling river 400 feet below.

Rochelle and I were lagging. The rest of the group had gone around the bend and were heading back through the trees to camp. Everyone except Jack. He’d ducked behind a tree to relieve himself. Rather than run to join the group, he zipped up and ambled back to us. He pointed at Rochelle.

“Aren’t you the salty bitch by the fire? I know what you need,” he said, leering into Rochelle’s face.

As if the weather gods could sense the tension in the air, clouds passed over the sun and shade darkened the afternoon.

“What did you do to Kyla?” Rochelle asked Jack. Her voice sent shivers down my spine.

“Nothing she didn’t want,” Jack said, circling her like a hyena on the hunt.

I held my breath while Rochelle slowly circled with him, always keeping her eyes on his. Jack on the outside, Rochelle the center. He reached forward and flicked a strand of her curly hair.

“You probably want the same,” he said, jerking his hand back when Rochelle snapped her teeth.

My friend seemed to grow several inches as she took a step toward Jack. He retreated, uncertainly in his eyes. The heel of his runner caught on a rock as he stepped backward. He lost his balance. As he pinwheeled his arms, Rochelle pushed him. Both hands were on his wide chest. Towards the escarpment. Already off balance, Jack went over the edge. His mouth an ‘O’ of surprise, his eyes wide in disbelief, his big sneakers kicked a final clod of dirt as the earth gave way.

“Rochelle! What did you do?” I fell to my knees and crawled to the edge of the cliff.

His body was cartwheeling down the steep incline. Jack didn’t scream, just one surprised grunt. I heard, even more than saw, his head hit a red rock.

A sick single crack.

Like a rag doll, he tumbled the rest of the way, his body disappearing into the river below.

Rochelle didn’t bother to look over the edge. “Removed a bad stanza.”

The sun came out from the clouds and she squinted at me, a calm smile playing on her lips. I listened, but couldn’t hear any screaming. Only chickadees and lovelorn frogs.

“What’re we going to do? We have to tell someone! He slipped right? You can’t tell anyone you pushed him. Oh my god, you pushed him.” I could hear the hysteria in my own voice.

“We aren’t going to do anything. The world is a more harmonious place without him in it.”

“He could have changed, become a better person!”

“Doubtful. Tell Kyla that.”

“What if someone saw?” I was hyperventilating.

“No one saw. The universe gave us an opportunity and I took it. It’s got our backs. The song is called justice.”

When Jack wasn't present at head count that night, they sent out a search party. When the police and dogs arrived the next day, they found his body. There wasn't even an investigation. The official cause of death was hiking accident. The rest of us were sent home.

High school wrapped up a few weeks later and I quit the violin for good. Rochelle went off to the University of Georgia to pursue a music degree. Band Camp did help with her application. I was accepted to Harvard for their Psychology program. I'd learned I was more interested in anger management and victim counselling than I was music.

Present Day:

I didn't see Rochelle in person again for another ten years, but we did exchange the occasional text. That doesn't mean she didn't stay an important part of my life. I was still shy, but the world of social media let me live vicariously through her adventures. My life was boring. My job as a virtual psychotherapist could be done from home.

Sitting in my studio apartment in Boston, I crept her Facebook page. There were posts when she snagged Atlanta's most eligible bachelor. Selfies from fund-raisers and charity events. Her thick dark hair impeccably styled, designer dresses, her trademark huge smile.

But more recently?

She hadn't posted anything new for a year. I'd seen her husband in the gossip rags, but he was either alone, or had a nubile protege hanging off his arm.

What had happened to Rochelle?

The International Conference for Psychoanalysis was in Atlanta that January, and I decided to attend. I needed my "Rochelle" fix and it was worth kicking my inner introvert in the ass. After driving straight for seventeen hours, I crashed in my hotel room, attended a few seminars, then called my old friend in the afternoon. The day was cool, the promise of snow and the smell of dying pansies in the air.

"Rochelle! It's Angela. I'm in town. What time is wine o'clock?" I said when she picked up her cell phone.

"Now's not a good time," she said.

Her voice was dull. Not the sparkly, fierce Rochelle I remembered.

"It's always a good time for chardonnay. It's been a minute or two since we've seen

each other. Hey, we can get drunk and sing Kumbaya."

There was a moment of silence on the other end.

"Okay," she said weakly. "Tea maybe, not wine. I live at 1256 Bremner Boulevard."

"Make it a twisted tea! I'm on the way."

The house was a Mc-Mansion on a street of homes where the landscaping alone cost more than my annual salary. A white Range Rover was in her driveway.

I knocked and she cracked the door an inch. Her pixie face was covered with sunglasses.

"Come in." She moved away, not even opening the door for me.

I let myself in, took off my boots, and followed her into the living room. Expensive leather furniture. All white. The curtains were drawn and the only light came from the lit wood fireplace and one Tiffany lamp. Dressed in a flowing mauve caftan, Rochelle limped to a chair by the flickering hearth.

"Did you give up music for bull riding?" I tried to joke.

She shrugged. "That's one way of putting it."

"Do you wear your sunglasses at night too?" I asked, sitting in the twin wingback chair next to hers.

She gave a harsh bark. "Me and Cory Hart. Musical has-beens who wear sunglasses."

She took them off. Even through the concealer I could see the black eye.

I gritted my teeth.

"The infamous Durke Moon. Full-time musical genius, part-time wife beater?" "You make a deal with the devil..." She gave a little laugh that turned to a wince. "I think most famous conductors must be narcissists."

"Why don't you hit him in the face with a rock? Maybe your aim is better now."

"I'm just so tired all the time." Rochelle sighed, her shoulders slumped. "And I'm fresh out of rocks."

"So, leave him already."

"He's my boss and my husband. I leave him, I lose everything. All I ever wanted to do is play music. And I am. I'm *totally* living my dream, thanks universe." She gave a dry sarcastic cough.

"Oh, Rochelle, what can I do for you?"

"You're a therapist. Maybe you can help him keep his fists to himself."

I knelt in front of her and grabbed her hands "If I've learned one thing from my practice, violent offenders don't rehabilitate well." Her elegant fingers were cold.

Fire used to burn through every vein of Rochelle. This version was just a husk. Passion colored my words. "Come back to Boston with me. I'm single and have lots of room in my apartment. Remind you of the fierce bitch you used to be."

She pulled away, staring into the fire. "It was nice seeing you, Angela. But you have to go now."

I was dismissed. But I'd grown a spine since high school. "Look, I think the Boston Symphony Orchestra is always looking for good flute players."

Rochelle's light brown eyes bore into mine. I thought I saw a flicker of hope in their dull depths.

"Maybe just a visit," she said in a small voice.

Relief tickled my nerves. There was a vestige of my old friend still burning in there.

She got up and put Mozart's Requiem in D Minor on the stereo. "I need some motivation. At least when music hits me, it doesn't hurt."

I pressed while I had the advantage. "Pack your bag, before the bastard gets home!"

Damn. I could see in her eyes, I pushed too hard. Her hands flew to her cheeks.

"No. I need to get organized and I don't need you flapping around me. Get your car. I'll be ready when you get back."

I forced myself to back down. "Are you sure?"

"I got this." She winked, a bit of the old Queen Bee returning. "Even the maniac Maestro should understand a woman visiting her best friend for a week."

I smiled, relieved. This was a more comfortable dynamic. She was the leader, and I was the follower. I drove back to my hotel and grabbed my things.

I hummed to myself as I drove back to her house. Cory Hart's *Never Surrender*.

A Jaguar FX sports car was in the driveway next to the Range Rover. I gulped down nausea as I rushed up the interlocking stone and banged on the door. No one answered, but it was unlocked so I let myself in. Mozart crescendoed through the hall.

"Rochelle?"

No answer. The fire was still roaring in the living room, but the wingback chairs were empty. I climbed the stairs.

"Anyone home? Rochelle?"

I saw the blood on the floor before I entered the bedroom. Rochelle was splayed on the rug; her mauve caftan stained a dark purple

To School

Morgan Bazilian

from the neck to her waist. I collapsed beside her with a sob.

There was a suitcase on the bed, half of it filled with underwear, sweaters, and linen pants. More clothes were scattered on the floor, also stained from the puddle of blood. The thick flow was coming from Rochelle's head. A conductor's wand had been jammed deep into her ear.

I was about to call 9-1-1 when I remembered the Jaguar in the driveway. I checked Rochelle's pulse. Nothing. She was dead. I had enough medical training to know that.

I forced my shaking legs to walk out of the bedroom. The next room was filled with dark furniture and book shelves. A grey-haired man in a tuxedo and bow tie was passed out on a couch. A bottle of bourbon lay on the floor beside him. The Mozart piece from the stereo soared and swelled, reaching its climax.

Durke Moon snored along with it.

I bit my lip, staring at him, until my own blood trickled down my chin. The virtuoso didn't wake up.

"I guess the universe might be telling me something," I said aloud in the quiet room.

Durke Moon still didn't stir.

I went downstairs and pulled the batteries out of the smoke alarm. A metal poker was hanging by the hearth. My eyes fell on the fireplace. Acting quickly, I rolled a few burning logs out of the fireplace and pushed them over to the wall. They left black trails of ember on the carpet.

The thick, brocade curtains went up quickly.

The heat built up in the house and my cheeks radiated red from the inferno. The sheer intensity of the fire drove me out of the house, giving me little time to think about my actions.

The posh street was empty. I paused, listening for screaming.

For the Maestro to wake up and save himself.

I heard nothing. Nothing but the growing roar of flame.

I got back into my car and turned on the stereo. Classical music. Grimacing, I changed the station to something rock and cranked the volume. Electric guitar filled the sedan.

I imagined a younger Rochelle giving me a thumbs up. She'd been right all along at Band Camp.

The world is a more harmonious place without some people in it. □

The short drive to middle school
Creates a quiet space
Eyes straight ahead
His musical taste.

My son messes with his hair
Checks the mirror for stuff in his braces
Straightens his hoodie
And, sometimes, talks.

He begins with very little things
"I like this beat"
"Look at that cool GTR"
"Thought it would be warmer."

He moves to bigger things
Asking about the speed of light or racism or Mars
Thinking about his place in the world
Amidst so much noise and insecurity.

Amidst so much beauty
He can still see the lovely and the simple
But now it is fuzzy or masked often
Like there are two worlds.

Finders, Keepers

Michael Loyd Gray



Illustration: adimas / Adobe Stock

Shiner got it in his head to swing by the Crater of Diamonds. There was a sign for it after Arkadelphia, and it was right on our way because we weren't really going anywhere specific. We didn't have a clue about specifics, maybe New Orleans for a while, but for now we'd decided to see what the diamond place was about. We were low on cash, as usual, and needed a way to score.

When we got there, just outside Murfreesboro, it was like a family day at the diamond park. Lots of noisy kids and barking dogs ran loose. Some tour buses

with old folks using canes and walkers drove up and unloaded. There were pickups with Confederate flags on the bumpers. Good old boys in faded coveralls. They'd all come out to see if they could strike it rich. Light rain fell that morning. I heard somebody say the rain loosened the soil to help reveal diamonds.

We listened to a park guy drone on about how old the place was, when the first diamonds were found, how to go about it in the huge field we're all about to get set loose in. That's where the diamonds are if there are any today. I was skeptical. I

reckoned that if it was so damn easy, we'd all be rich.

"Finders, keepers, folks," the park guy said cheerfully. "Have at it."

The crowd buzzed like a gazillion bees huddled together.

"I'm going to find me a diamond, sure as shit," Shiner said, rubbing his hands together.

I worried that his .44 magnum was tucked into his waist, as usual. I leaned in close and whispered.

"Now, you wouldn't be packing that big cannon, are you, Shiner, out here with all these fine folks?"

He frowned and walked off, glancing back.

"Left it in the truck, Hap," he said. "You don't need no damn cannon to dig for diamonds."

We dug in this humungous plowed field the park kept for the good tourists to chase their dreams. Nearby, some kid's dog took a dump. It left a steamy load and the stink washed over us in a breeze.

"That ain't right," I said.

"Maybe no diamonds over there," Shiner said, chuckling. "But be my guest."

We rooted around in that field, like so many others of all ages. I saw an old lady with blue hair helped down off her walker, to her hands and knees, so she could dig the earth like a dog looking for a bone. She went at it with both hands.

"That your grandma over there, Hap?" Shiner said, his own hands busy uprooting and sifting soil.

"Fuck you, Shiner."

"Yeah? Fuck me? You won't be so damn smart once I get my diamond."

Eerie Vision

Lillian Heimisdóttir

The autumn day was grey and overcast.
No bright and sunny ray lit up the land
and somehow everything seemed lost and dead.

I wandered lonesome through the desolate
and barren landscape till I came upon
a shaggy hill with thin and crooked trees
that swayed like drunken figures in the wind.

And here I stopped and marvelled at the scene
that played out like a dance before my eyes.
It looked like something straight out of a dream;
a vision from a strange and daunting world.

And while I watched the sight, it came to me
that nature, in her many varied ways,
has always known how to communicate
with those who meet her with an open mind
and listen carefully to her advice.

I stood there for a while but then I turned
around and went immediately back home.

I have since then oft thought about the scene
and wondered what it possibly could mean.

For in my troubled mind, the crooked trees
are dancing wildly in the howling wind,
and sending enigmatic messages
that I will likely never understand.

I left Shiner to it and got a Coke at a
concession stand. The park guy stopped by.

“Your buddy’s hard at it, friend.”

“He’s a believer, I reckon.”

“Ain’t you?”

I shrugged but smiled.

“All I’ve seen so far is some dog shit.”

“Roses live among thorns,” he said,
walking off with a smile.

I got a couple hot dogs and Cokes and
we ate there in a row, folks all around
digging like crazed, busy beavers. But
everybody avoided where that dog took its
dump. After we ate, Shiner went over there
and rooted around. He waved.

“No, thanks,” I said. “I’m good right
here.”

“Your loss,” he said.

“Your dog shit.”

He flipped me the bird and dug.
Furiously. I imagined him digging his own
grave. Maybe mine, too. We’d been one
step ahead of the law now for so long that I
reminded myself luck eventually runs out.

Then Shiner waved again. He was
excited, holding something up in a hand.

“No, thanks,” I said. “But keep all the
dog turds you like.”

He tromped over, staring at his hand.
There was something yellow in it, with
jagged edges. Maybe the size of a marble.

“Well, I’ll be go to hell,” the park guy
said. “You’ve got a winner there, fella.”

“It’s real?” Shiner said. “A diamond?”

“Yep. It’s your lucky day. You got some
money there once a jeweler’s done with it.”

We drove off, Shiner back to doing the
driving, still no specific direction in mind.
New Orleans was still an option.

“Maybe Baton Rouge first,” Shiner said.
“We’ll find a jeweler there and see what’s
what.”

After a few miles, I said, “Damn, Shiner.
Looks like we’ve done gone straight.”

“Don’t be too sure about that.”

I remembered the park guy said the
diamond field lies over a dead volcano.
I glanced at Shiner. His volcano still
rumbles, deep down inside him, the lava
percolating.

It was just a matter of time. □

Holiday Hangover

A Guide to Surviving the Festive Aftermath

Erik N. Patel

As the last strains of “Auld Lang Syne” dissolve into the brisk air of January, a universal awakening occurs across the globe: the Holiday Hangover. This isn’t just about the pulsating aftermath of celebratory toasts, but rather the awakening to a new year brimming with resolutions, often concocted in a state of excessive optimism or under the influence of festive spirits. Let’s embark on a journey through this challenging landscape with your unofficial survival guide.

What once stood as a beacon of holiday cheer has transformed into a needle-shedding behemoth, a mere ghost of its once resplendent, festive self. Tread carefully around this fallen titan of Yuletide joy. This tree, once adorned with lights and baubles, now stands as a stark reminder of time’s relentless march and the transient nature of happiness. Here’s a pro tip for tackling this daunting task: arm yourself with last year’s Christmas gift, the one that was too outrageous to wear in public - yes, that garishly knitted sweater from Aunt Edna.

Don it as a suit of armor and bravely embark on the mission to dismantle the decorations. As you carefully remove each ornament, reflect on the memories they hold, the laughter they’ve witnessed. Keep an eye out for that elusive ornament, the one that’s an expert in hide-and-seek, mysteriously disappearing each year only to resurface when

least expected. Retrieving it earns you not just bonus points, but a small victory in the grand scheme of post-holiday cleanup. This ritual, though tinged with a hint of melancholy, is also a time for remembrance and renewal, as you bid farewell to the season and welcome the possibilities of a new year.



Recall the ambitious list you enthusiastically penned down? The one with aspirations like “Run a marathon,” “Master a new language,” or “Pen that long-awaited novel”?

It’s time to view these not as steadfast resolutions etched in stone but as friendly, non-binding recommendations. Initiate this journey by tempering your expectations to more manageable levels. Start with baby steps – maybe consider that brisk walk to the fridge as your

initial foray into exercise? That counts, doesn’t it? Let the marathon training take a backseat for now.

As for acquiring linguistic prowess, remember, Rome wasn’t built in a day, and neither is language mastery. Duolingo’s green owl can afford to be a bit patient; maybe start with learning a word a day instead of an entire language by February. It’s the small victories that lead to big achievements.

Now, about that novel - the magnum opus of your dreams. Sure, the idea of crafting a literary masterpiece is enthralling, but it’s also daunting. Begin by setting a foundation. Reading this article, for instance, is an exercise in absorbing narrative structure and style. Then, perhaps, move on to jotting down ideas or crafting short stories. Let these be the building blocks for your novel. As you navigate through these smaller, less intimidating tasks, you’ll find yourself inching closer to your goals, albeit at a more realistic and less overwhelming pace. Remember, every grand endeavor starts with a single, small step – or in this case, a word.

Embark on a daring expedition into the uncharted territories of your refrigerator. This isn’t just a simple foray; it’s akin to navigating a culinary minefield. Each shelf and drawer holds remnants of festive feasts past, now transformed into questionable relics of their former glory. That Christmas pudding, once the

Six Tanka

Ellen Rowland

centerpiece of your holiday table, now bears an uncanny resemblance to a science experiment gone awry, its texture and form defying the natural laws of desserts.

As you delve deeper, you'll encounter leftovers that have taken on a life of their own. The roasted potatoes are now a shadow of their former crispy selves, and the turkey slices have begun a mysterious metamorphosis. These remnants of festive indulgence are no longer just food; they've become participants in a high-stakes game of chicken with your digestive system.

Deciding to consume them is not a mere act of eating; it's a bold declaration of courage. With each bite, you're not just satiating hunger; you're challenging the very limits of culinary safety and testing the resilience of your stomach. This is a test of both bravery and gastronomic fortitude, a battle of wills between man and leftovers. The refrigerator, once a haven of deliciousness, is now a labyrinth of potential gastronomical perils, each Tupperware and foil-wrapped mystery offering a new challenge to your senses and stomach. Proceed with caution, for this is no ordinary meal; it's an adventure on a plate.

Brace yourself. Armed with receipts and a steely resolve, join the hordes of like-minded individuals in the annual pilgrimage to return unwanted gifts. It's a battle of wills, a test of patience. Remember, that "thoughtful" sweater from your cousin might just be next year's perfect re-gift.

Finally, accept the chaos. The New Year doesn't magically reset life. The dishes are still there, the work emails keep coming, and yes, your neighbor still plays the accordion at odd hours. Embrace the imperfection, the madness, the beauty of the everyday. The Holiday Hangover is not just a time for recovery, but for reflection and a bit of self-mockery. As we pack away the glitter and tinsel, let's remember to laugh at the absurdity of it all. Here's to surviving the festive aftermath, one satirical step at a time. □

When did you begin
leaving your side of the bed
in the grey stillness
to stumble into the arms
of a different sun each day?

Lend me the feather
you found in the woods that day
lend me your wide eyes
woven bird's nest, berry ink
tell me how geese call your name

Cloud of butterflies
juice-stained wings flutter and darn
knitting mulberries
so ripe, they fall to the ground
where bees caress their bruises

I have added birds
to the long list my soul keeps
of every creature
I could possibly become
all song and humming feathers

How they look like leaves
swaying in the morning breeze
but they are monarchs
golden origami wings
folding and unfolding light

Cold waves lap the shore
pulling back the smallest shells
tumbling them in glints
particles of memory
so old, they must be remade

More Than Just Vampires

Transylvania between Myth and Modern Times

Sandra Balteanu



Photo: Fotocoon / Adobe Stock

September 20th

It's 8:00 in the morning; the early autumn sun gently peeks through the branches of trees shedding their summer coat. Eager to avoid the challenges of traveling with a four-year-old and a one-year-old, we set out on a mini-vacation across Transylvania, tracing a "U" on the map. We stay in one of the charming cities each night, aiming to explore without exhausting ourselves. The weather is perfect, the sky is clear, and the summer heat has faded. Our

first stop is Sibiu, where we'll spend the first night. Fortunately, the city offers numerous accommodation options. We chose a small, quiet guesthouse on the outskirts, complete with a ground-floor restaurant. Next, we head to Cluj, planning to visit Salina Turda before looping south. Stops include a day in Sighișoara and another in Brașov before heading back home.

Transylvania, a highly touristy region in Romania, boasts breathtaking landscapes, medieval architecture, and charming villages. The medieval fortresses and Western European

civilization blend seamlessly. The region's cuisine is renowned and diverse. Historically, Transylvania held significance, being the core of the unified Dacian state led by the legendary Burebista. Today, it's often said to represent the educated part of Romania, with locals taking pride in their heritage.

To reach Sibiu from Râmnicu Vâlcea, we traverse the Olt Valley, a renowned route in Europe. Olt River winds through hills and mountains, creating a rarely beautiful gorge surrounded by wild forests and lush fields. Despite potential traffic delays, the morning drive allows us to appreciate the still-green forests adorned with autumn colors.

Arriving in Sibiu, we settle into the charming guesthouse and enjoy a rich breakfast. The plan includes exploring the historic center, one of the most beautiful and extensive in the country. Sibiu is nestled in the southern part of Transylvania, surrounded by the Făgăraș, Cindrel, and Lotru Mountains. The city's cultural richness is evident in its well-preserved old buildings, wide cobblestone streets, and vibrant atmosphere.

Walking through the streets toward the Central Square, surrounded by century-old restored buildings, we savor the cultural diversity and harmonious coexistence. Sibiu, also known as Hermannstadt, hosts cultural events like the Jazz Festival and the International Theatre Festival, offering a lively atmosphere. You can spend half of the day here trying chocolate doughnuts, langos, multicolored ice cream, or the famous Transylvanian puddings. Initially documented in 1191, the city has evolved into a significant economic center with a blend of cultures. Our visit includes a trip to the zoo, as Sibiu promises engaging

activities for families. Sibiu, also known as Hermannstadt, hosts a harmonious blend of cultures despite its predominantly Romanian population. The city, attested in 1191, evolved slowly throughout history, establishing itself as an important economic center during the medieval period, bustling with various guilds.

A beautiful legend surrounds the city's founding, attributing it to a German named Hermann, who arrived with a Saxon colony. When the King of Hungary visited, Hermann asked permission to build a fortress on an area as large as a bull's hide. Confused but approving, the king witnessed Hermann cleverly outlining the city's boundaries using strips of the bull's hide.

Near Sibiu and within the city are other tourist attractions such as the Brukenthal Museum, the Museum of Natural History, the Castle of the Fairies, and Dumbrava Sibiului Park. However, our focus is on visiting the zoo for the delight of the little ones before retiring to the guesthouse for dinner and preparing for the journey to Cluj and Salina Turda the following day.

September 21st

Like Sibiu, Cluj-Napoca is an ancient city, possibly the oldest in Romania, founded around 124 AD. Historically significant, it has always been one of Romania's largest and most important cities, surrounded by mountains, plains, and hills, showcasing a rich and diverse landscape. The journey from Sibiu to Cluj takes about two hours, facilitated by the highway. We stay at a well-known modern hotel and head to our target for this region—Salina Turda.

Carved underground in the salt deposits left by the ancient sea's evaporation, Salina Turda is a spectacular attraction. One of the largest salt mines in Europe, it sits at the intersection of history, legends, and everyday life. Offering recreational opportunities in a health-friendly environment, stepping inside this time-frozen castle is an awe-inspiring experience. The immense, impressive halls are bustling with people and the unbridled joy of children. Despite the crowds, the variety of activities ensures you never feel overwhelmed. A giant underground

Ferris wheel, the world's largest, offers a breathtaking view of the entire salt mine. Bowling, mini-golf, basketball, sports fields, and a children's play area provide entertainment. There are also restaurants and an amphitheater hosting concerts and shows.

The city of Turda, like many in Transylvania, is steeped in history and surrounded by a beautiful landscape. Near the salt mine, numerous cottages offer souvenirs and Transylvanian treats. We opted to explore the small town and visit the tomb of the great ruler, Mihai Viteazul.

September 22nd

The road from Cluj to Sighișoara proved easier than expected, perhaps because we stuck to the morning schedule. The weather remains pleasant and warm but not stifling, and the outside air begins to reflect the colors and aromas of autumn. Despite the early awakening of the children, the journey is smooth, and moans accompany us almost the entire way.



Photo: alexanderuhrin / Adobe Stock

Salina Turda is a spectacular attraction in Cluj County. The underground salt mines are described as hidden gems that are absolutely worth the visit.



The City of Sighisoara, located in Mures County, is one of the last inhabited medieval citadel in Europe. Sighisoara is an important tourist attraction from Romania, especially in the July, when the Medieval Festival takes place.

Sighisoara is an elegant gem nestled in the heart of Transylvania, the only continuously inhabited medieval citadel in Europe. It's a delight for history and antiquity lovers and a charm for any tourist. Upon entering the city, you're greeted by a myriad of colors, cleanliness, and the serenity of its people. The cobblestone streets, the quiet surroundings, the old houses, and the architecture with German influences spark your imagination and enchant your eyes.

There are many tourist attractions in Sighisoara, but we chose first to explore the Scholar's Stairs, a covered wooden staircase built in 1654 to facilitate children's access to school. Climbing these steps feels like being transported back in time to the medieval period, landing on its best and most beautiful days. At the top of the hill stands the Clock Tower, which is 64 meters high and is said to be the most accurate clock in the country. Residents and tourists alike synchronize their watches to it. From the small park near the tower, the entire city unfolds before your eyes, with its lively streets, well-kept houses, lush green forests, and diligently cultivated fields. There are also the Blacksmiths' and Cobblers' Towers.

Sighisoara was once an important crafts center with 14 towers, one for each guild; now, only nine remain. Descending the hill, we stroll through the beautiful town. Traditional restaurants, charming terraces, and numerous souvenir shops line the streets as the locals skillfully leverage the city's fame.

In the 15th century, Vlad Ţepeş, widely known as Dracula, was born here. The Vlad Dracul House, now a restaurant, is said to be where the ruler lived during his childhood. At the entrance to the city, coming from Sibiu, there's still a tower where legend has it a pasha, who intended to attack Sighisoara, ended up buried with his elephant.

Another legend surrounds the Clock Tower's decoration. Residents heard of a giant somewhere, crafting golden globes, so they set out to find him. The giant built a splendid all-gold globe and placed it atop the tower, saying it would remain there until a clever and tall young man could reach and touch it. If that happened, the residents would have to give the golden globe to the young man.

The nearby villages are as picturesque and charming as the small town, offering exceptional landscapes. We decided to explore these places and spend the rest of the day in nature, heading towards Braşov tomorrow. We checked into one of the many hotels in the center of Sighisoara, converted from a medieval house. The people are welcoming, and the Transylvanian cuisine never disappoints.

September 23rd

Today marks the fourth day of our journey, and as usual, we woke up early and set off for Braşov. We arrive around 11:00 in the morning after a brief stop to grab some coffee. It's the perfect time for a stroll through this charming city. Braşov is centrally located, surrounded by the Southern Carpathians, offering a picturesque landscape. It's a top tourist destination in the country, both in summer and winter. Founded in 1211 by the Teutonic Knights to defend the Hungarian kingdom's border, it was later colonized by Saxons from other regions of Transylvania. This history is reflected in the Baroque and Gothic

influences on the buildings, especially in the beautiful, colorful, clean, and elegant central area.

Braşov blends the modern with the old, the Western with the Eastern, and this is most evident in gastronomy. The numerous restaurants and terraces in the old town offer a variety of traditional Romanian delights and fine dining options. The Black Church, standing somewhat somber and threatening amid this lively chaos, gets its name from the 1689 fire that blackened its walls. However, its interior is well-preserved. In the center is the First Romanian School Museum, located in the courtyard of St. Nicholas Church, where the first Romanian printing press was established in 1556. The multitude of documents and rare books here ignite the imagination of any bibliophile.

There are many beautiful things to see in Braşov, including Poiana Braşov, famous among winter sports enthusiasts but equally beautiful to visit in summer. Near Braşov, there's the Râşnov Fortress and Dino Park Braşov, a dream for any child, which we plan to visit after lunch. Talking to the waiter who served our meal, we learned that numerous legends and superstitions surround Braşov. In the center, where Boulevardul Eroilor is now located, it's said that 400 years ago, there was a lake called the Witches' Lake.

During those times, women involved in preparing remedies and more were suspected of being witches. The fear of these women was immense, believing they could subjugate any man with just a glance, being in league with Satan. The suspected women were brought in chains to the edge of this lake, weights were tied to their feet, and they were thrown into the lake. In the 19th century, the lake was drained to build the boulevard, and in 1989, a memorial was erected to honor the Revolution's Heroes. However, superstition says that the monument was actually erected to ward off the evil spirits of the witches who were killed, returning to Earth on Saint Andrew's night to seek revenge on those who killed and tormented them.

Tomorrow morning, we will head to Bran Castle, our last destination in this vacation, another place filled with history and legends.



Photo: mayrd / Adobe Stock

Bran Castle, southwest of Braşov, is commonly referred to as Dracula's Castle. It is marketed to tourists as the home of the title character in Bram Stoker's Dracula, even though there is no evidence that Stoker knew anything about its existence.

September 24th

“We must have been asleep; otherwise, if I had been awake, I would certainly have noticed the approach to so remarkable a place. In the gloom, the castle courtyard looked even larger, and as certain dark ways led from it under great round arches, it seemed to lead everywhere. I could not see it by daylight, so we lost a good deal of the effect. When the carriage stopped, the driver jumped down and held out his hand to assist me to alight.

Again, I could not but notice his prodigious strength. His hand actually seemed like a steel vice that could have crushed mine if he had chosen. Then he took out my traps and placed them on the ground beside me as I stood close to a great door, old and studded with large iron nails, and set in a projecting doorway of massive stone. I could see even in the dim light that the stone was massively carved but that the carving had been much worn by time and weather.”

So begins Chapter 2 of Bram Stoker's wonderful novel, Dracula. He places his narrative right here, in the heart of Transylvania, portraying the story of an old count, master of a medieval castle, and a vampire at the same time. Bram Stoker drew inspiration from the history of Vlad the Impaler, ruler of Wallachia between 1456-1462 and 1467. Vlad was also known as Vlad Dracul, and this name was derived from his membership in the Order of the Dragon, a kind of crusader order. Unfortunately, due to political and social pressure, his short reign was marked by a great deal of violence, leading to the creation of many superstitions, legends, and frightening stories around him, much like Bram Stoker's Dracula, though entirely untrue. The legend of Dracula has become famous worldwide, but the Transylvanians, far from feeling offended by the unflattering reputation of an otherwise just ruler, have used it to their advantage in tourism, applying the principle of “there is no negative publicity.”



The Central Square in Brasov City, in the evening. The city is surrounded by the Southern Carpathian mountain range and is part of the historical region of Transylvania.

Bran Castle is surrounded by a multitude of stalls, restaurants, and shops, stuffed to the brim with toys, magnets, clothes, and all sorts of other knick-knacks bearing Dracula's emblem. Romanians, being resourceful, have capitalized on the fame that Bram Stoker brought to the country. Like in the novel, the locals are hospitable but not as frightened and spiritual as those in the story.

The castle rises menacingly, practically on the edge of a chasm, in the extraordinary landscape surrounding it, at the entrance to the Rucăr-Bran pass, guarded by the Pietra Craiului and Bucegi Mountains. It is about 30 km from Braşov, a quick drive if the road is not overly congested. The castle is undoubtedly one of Romania's most famous tourist attractions and perhaps in Europe. Its beauty is overwhelming, although it is crowded almost any time of the year. Once you have entered the long and dark corridors of the castle, you forget what time it is; you

are surrounded by history, spirituality, and something dark that seems to float in the air, indescribable in words.

One of the castle's main attractions is the secret passage that soldiers used in case the fortress was attacked to climb to the top of the castle and throw stones and hot pitch at the invaders. The castle has retained its medieval spirit and the beauty specific to that period in a truly unique way. It feels like, at any moment, you might encounter a medieval lady, a knight, or even Vlad the Impaler himself. Visiting the castle takes up quite a bit of time; there is also an exhibition of medieval torture instruments. Bran certainly offers a unique feeling, breaking you out of the ordinary; it is as if you were looking through a magical portal back in time.

The building was constructed between 1200 and 1300. It was initially endowed as a military unit but was later transformed

into a castle. In 1920, the City Council of Braşov gifted it to Queen Marie to recognize her contribution to the Great Union. She left it as an inheritance to her favorite daughter, Princess Ileana, and in 1948, it was nationalized. Since 1993, it has entered the tourist circuit.

Our little vacation has come to an end, and soon, we will head home. Fortunately, we only have about three hours to drive to Râmnicu Vâlcea, but we'll make a small stop at the local restaurants for a meal before hitting the road. Although we thought we knew so much about Transylvania, the days spent here have changed our opinion, especially about Transylvanians, whom other inhabitants of the country, especially us Oltenians, regard with suspicion. It is said that Transylvanians are very slow and proud. Well, they are certainly not the fastest people on Earth and are proud, but of unparalleled hospitality, hardworking, and cheerful, so let's say we can overlook the sin of pride.

Romanians are a superstitious nation, perhaps more than religious, and here, superstitions are part of everyday life. We learned that Transylvanians protect the harvest with eggshells from Easter. In Romania, it is customary to dye eggs red for Easter (but more recently in other colors). Transylvanians keep the eggshells and mix them with wheat and other seeds to be planted in the ground, thus believing that the crop will be protected and abundant. Another sinister custom is that, when raising a house, a chicken is sacrificed, and its blood is poured into the ground where the door of the dwelling will be. Sometimes, the head of the chicken is also buried here. Food from the bird's body is prepared for the craftsmen working in the house.

I know my country is beautiful, and among Romanians, there is a saying with which I have never agreed because I believe there are so many wonders in this world that you should taste a bit of everything: thus, Romanians say that you should not go to visit other countries before seeing the most important places in your own country.

We discovered that Romania is actually so rich in magnificent landscapes, wildness, spirituality, culture, and folklore that a lifetime is insufficient to explore everything that is worth seeing here. □

Who Ordered This Future?

Karen Heuler



Illustration: Jasper W / Adobe Stock

Once Upon a Time, the future looked pretty good. When I was a kid, I was promised we would fly around town on jetpacks or walk on moving sidewalks when I grew up. We would have colonies on the moon as well as underwater cities. Our households would be automatic, although still containing a busy woman in an apron.

Of course, not everyone believed. My father, for one, said there would never be cars that rode on air because the people who made tires wouldn't allow it. And while there were marvelous predictions by the time of the 1964 Worlds Fair, about being able to see people and talk to them on

phones at the same time, the popular joke was that women wouldn't go for it because they wouldn't want to be caught without makeup and with their hair in rollers. How silly we women always are!

But what really happened in the future, besides lattes on every corner, is that transportation and agriculture changed the world, and not in the way we anticipated. Roads and cars crushed nature at the same time it made the world—and cheap goods—ordinary. Not only ordinary, but without value. We use a thing and toss it, morphing every aspect of our lives into garbage, replacing so much that used to be alive.

When I was a child and my uncle drove me from Brooklyn to Ohio, we had to make frequent stops to clear insects off the windshield. I drive part of the same route often, and there are no insects. People prefer a world without insects (and consequently without birds, butterflies, etc.). Any insect—and, really, nature—is dirty. *The Ladies Home Journal* in 1900 predicted the end of all mosquitoes and flies, partially abetted by the end of all horses, which they expected to be replaced by machines.

And the way the world eats beef, destroys rainforests and prairies to raise beef, and destroys millions of tons of beef (animals) polluted by the way we farm and kill and move beef—well, that was not anyone's predictions a century ago, but it's the natural outcome of making everything abundant, corporate, and without consequence.

We can now eat exotic and out-of-season fruits and vegetables any time we want, despite the impact that this kind of transportation has on the air quality, and despite how much of this food ends up wasted and valueless. We do not give our excess to the poor; we toss it.

But futures always think that the changes that are inevitable will be the changes we need. When I was in high school and college, a lot of good things started—the civil rights era was gaining momentum, with water cannons spraying marchers and dogs set on them, but an outpouring of determination ended strict, legal segregation, though it persists in a different way now. The calls for equal pay and the Equal Rights Amendment back then seemed incontrovertible and yet we're still waiting for the ERA.

As the sixties crept on, a lot of us marched for the end of a controversial war, for civil rights, rallying for feminism, starting Earth Day. A little of this made it into TV (and let's face it, TV is a good barometer for life). But that was mostly on the news. Those of us who were young and marching thought we were changing the world. Well, some of that optimism may have been because we were so stoned. Change seemed easy and obvious. It was just a question of getting "them" to see what we saw.

But, back to food. We had narrow ranges of vegetables and fruit because we weren't burning up the ozone layer to get more interesting, more diverse foods from around the world. We didn't yet have the Great Pacific Garbage Patch (the largest is now twice the size of Texas). It's true that we were limited in the kinds of foods we had, and there were vegetables I would never experience until I was an adult, but in fact, this was and still is kinder to the environment. Eating locally was essentially true back then, and along with that came a limited selection. Would I go back to that? Not happily.

Along with all those new vegetables and fruits that the future brought us there was shipping and cardboard boxes and Styrofoam peanuts, and then Styrofoam clamshells for all the takeout that required all those extraordinary shipments. Garbage was not really something we worried about then, and to be honest, not enough people worry about it now. We make small gains, like outlawing Styrofoam in a few cities, but we let all our runoff get into the groundwater.

The people in my generation blamed my parents' generation for all the social evils we saw as we marched for peace, for civil rights, for women's rights, and a greener earth. People of this generation blame my generation for destroying everything and for electing Trump (forgetting, for instance, that Trump lost the popular vote and that Boomers were significantly outnumbered by the other generations). And maybe they didn't bother to vote themselves.

What we didn't see was that things would change, but never enough, and

the racism/sexism/classism that was challenged would morph into another shade of racism/sexism/classism, and that we would destroy the earth. When I was young, we thought we could save it.

I don't know that we'll ever get flying cars. I see an article about it occasionally. But we did get videophones and an almost comic obsession with what's being written on them. I often text people to ask if I can phone them.

We got laws about women and race and free speech that I'm watching being destroyed by people of all generations, IN this generation. When I march now, I see women my age marching in numbers more often than I see younger women. They're there, just not enough of them. I want to see more activists, people who care about the principles rather than about their own experiences. I am grateful for the great protests that have come in response to racism and sexism, but there will, obviously, be more prejudice and shootings, and not done by my generation either. Quit the generation blame game.

What the future actually brought was the conviction that everyone else needed to sacrifice something, but not us. The thing the future brought was seeing immigrants attacked, when most of us aren't even native. The thing the future brought us was more wars in more places, more decimation, more bad news. I don't see police turning fire hoses on civil rights protesters on TV these days, as I did when I was a child. Instead, I see school shootings, stadium shootings, synagogue and church shootings, I see innocent people shot by police as well as by criminals. I see bullies in control and determined to pick and choose the laws that benefit them. I didn't know, back in the late sixties, that the future would destroy the world, for money.

Of course by now, we should have had colonies on Mars—or at least the moon. Space travel unexpectedly turned out to be expensive, and there were other things that required money (war, mostly; and disasters).

The internet is the biggest everyday difference in my life from 50 years ago. I didn't know then just how much I needed

to know from minute to minute. Back then, I wrote down my questions and went to the library, and libraries didn't all contain the same amount of information. When my local branch lacked enough info, I went to a larger library, and so on. Information was fragmented. Pursuing it required effort; you earned it. I prefer Googling.

There were no tweets. There were headlines, sure, and they could be aggressive ("Ford to City: Drop Dead"—the president denying NYC aid in its bankruptcy) but not this ever-present sense that many people view antagonism as a sign of strength.

In those 50 years, nations have come and gone, catastrophic events have become common, the innocent, who have always suffered, have suffered in higher and higher numbers. The times when we thought the world would be better, when we would be amazed by science, that it would solve our problems instead of adding to them—what will people think, 50 years from now, about the delusions we had, about the things we didn't see, about how, in fact, it was so easy not to see?

The thing we have learned to do, as the internet and TV make atrocities visible—the thing we have always been good at, is how quickly we can turn away. We just now do it globally as well as locally. There was a time when people believed that televising wars would end them. That was during the Vietnam War. But in fact, if a war doesn't get good ratings, it doesn't play but it will still go on. And there's always another, more interesting war to grab its audience. We are not disgusted by wars that we don't have to watch. Now we can have wars wage on for decades, even with our own soldiers at stake—and if our own soldiers are not at stake, there's very little to keep our interest.

So my final conviction is that the future gives us nothing, because we don't improve. We don't get more concerned, less self-righteous and self-indulgent; if anything, we get worse, because it's possible to get worse.

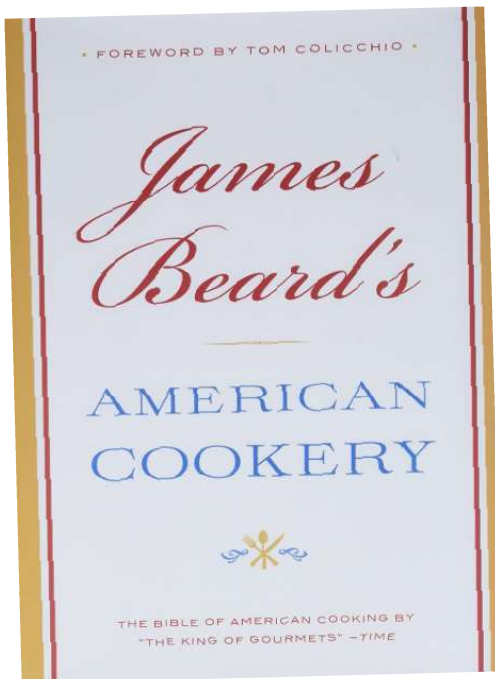
I hope I'm wrong, but whether the future destroys us or we destroy the future, it will come down to the same thing. □

Culinary Creators

People Who Shaped the Modern Gastronomical Landscape

Hector Jean Fournier

In the tapestry of culinary literature, where the threads of flavor and narrative entwine, the lives of chefs often read as vividly as the most captivating novels. These culinary biographers, both chefs and writers, weave stories of passion, innovation, and resilience into every dish they create. This article delves into the lives of a few such remarkable individuals, exploring how their personal histories have shaped their culinary philosophies and, in turn, the literary world's depiction of food and cooking.



The French Chef in America

Julia Child is perhaps one of the most beloved figures in the culinary world. Her seminal work, “Mastering the Art of French Cooking,” and her television show,

“The French Chef,” brought the intricacies of French cuisine into the American mainstream. Child’s approachable demeanor and infectious enthusiasm demystified gourmet cooking, making it accessible to the masses. Her journey from a casual cook to a culinary icon is a testament to her enduring influence and the power of sharing food knowledge with a sprinkle of joy.

The Literary Chef

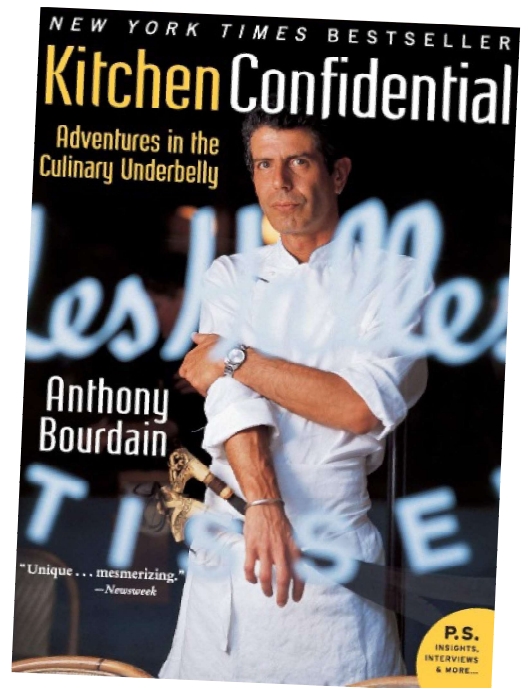
No culinary biography is complete without the mention of Anthony Bourdain. A chef with a flair for words, Bourdain captured the gritty, authentic side of the culinary world in his book “Kitchen Confidential”. His narrative wasn’t just about food but the real-life experiences of those who create it. Bourdain traveled the world, using food as a lens to explore cultures and human connections. His honest and often raw storytelling reshaped how we perceive the culinary industry and the people within it.

The Dean of American Cookery

James Beard’s influence on American cuisine is undeniable. Known as the “Dean of American Cookery,” Beard was an advocate for a distinct American culinary identity. Through his numerous cookbooks and cooking school, Beard championed the use of fresh, local ingredients and simple, yet delicious cooking techniques. His legacy continues through the James Beard Foundation, which not only honors culinary excellence but also fosters a more sustainable food culture.

The Poet of the Palate

Mary Frances Kennedy Fisher was a preeminent food writer whose prose elevated the discussion of food to a literary art. M.F.K. Fisher saw eating as one of the “arts of life” and explored this in her writing, combining personal narratives with gastronomical musings. Her books, such as “The Art of Eating,” are considered classics, offering insight not just into food, but the joys and sorrows of life itself.



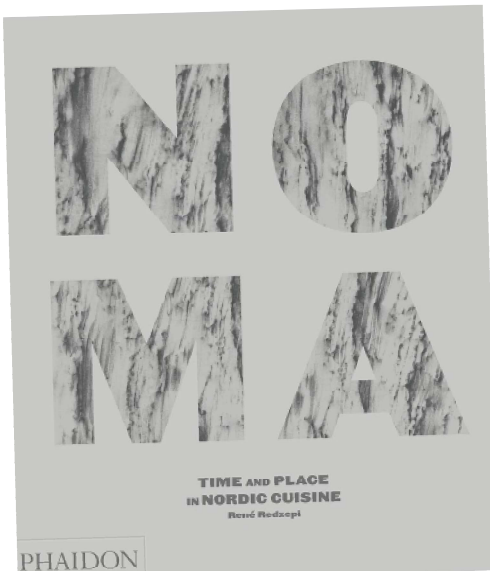
The Avant-Garde Chef

Ferran Adrià, often associated with the revolutionary culinary movement of molecular gastronomy, transformed his restaurant, El Bulli, into a hub of culinary innovation. Adrià’s approach to cooking as a form of artistic and scientific inquiry pushed the boundaries of what food could

be. His relentless pursuit of the new and the novel has made him one of the most influential chefs of our time, inspiring a generation of cooks to think of the kitchen as a laboratory of possibilities.

The Forager Chef

René Redzepi, the Danish chef and co-owner of Noma in Copenhagen, has been a revolutionary figure in the culinary world. His commitment to local, seasonal, and foraged ingredients has redefined Nordic cuisine and inspired a new generation of chefs to look closely at their food environments. Redzepi's approach is not just about cooking but about connecting with the landscape and culture, making Noma a beacon of innovation in the culinary arts.



The Mother of Farm-to-Table

Alice Waters is an American chef, restaurateur, and food activist, best known for her restaurant Chez Panisse in Berkeley, California. Opened in 1971, Chez Panisse was a pioneer in the farm-to-table movement, emphasizing organic, locally-grown ingredients. Waters has been a vocal advocate for school lunch reform and sustainable agriculture, believing that good, clean, and fair food should be a right, not a privilege.

The Chef of Humanity

José Andrés is a Spanish-American chef and the founder of World Central

Kitchen, a non-profit devoted to providing meals in the wake of natural disasters. Beyond his innovative culinary practices, Andrés has emerged as a humanitarian, using his skills and resources to feed millions in disaster zones around the world. His approach to food is deeply connected to his belief in its power to heal and bring people together.

American Southern Cooking

Edna Lewis, often referred to as the Grande Dame of Southern Cooking, brought the traditions of the South to the broader American culinary conversation. Through her cookbooks and advocacy, she celebrated the seasonal rhythms and farm-fresh ingredients of traditional Southern dishes, while also highlighting the rich cultural history behind them. Lewis's work has been instrumental in preserving and honoring the legacy of Southern cuisine.

The Modernist Maestro

Massimo Bottura, the Italian chef behind the renowned Osteria Francescana in Modena, Italy, is known for his avant-garde approach to Italian cuisine. Bottura's dishes are deeply rooted in Italian tradition yet are expressed in new, innovative ways, often incorporating art and philosophy. His commitment to fighting food waste through his non-profit organization, Food for Soul, has also marked him as a leading figure in the social gastronomy movement.

The Vegetal Virtuoso

Yotam Ottolenghi, an Israeli-English chef, has transformed how many view vegetarian cuisine. His London-based delis and cookbooks emphasize vibrant, flavor-packed, and unapologetically bold dishes that celebrate vegetables. Ottolenghi's work is a testament to the power of culinary diversity, drawing from his Middle Eastern background and global influences.

The Narrative Plate

The stories of these culinary giants are not just about food. They are about challenges faced, innovations made,

and the relentless pursuit of something greater than the sum of their ingredients. Each chef's journey adds a unique flavor to the vast and varied world of culinary literature, reminding us that behind every dish is a story, and behind every story is a person whose life experiences, philosophy, and passion are infused into the food they create.



Each of these chefs brings a unique perspective to the culinary world, not only in their cooking but in their philosophic approach to food's role in culture, society, and the environment. Their biographies offer a rich feast of inspirations, challenges, and triumphs, adding depth and flavor to the ongoing story of food and those who dedicate their lives to understanding its potential.

In reading their biographies, we are reminded that food is more than sustenance; it is a narrative in itself, a form of expression that is as personal as it is universal. These chefs and writers remind us that to engage with food is to engage with culture, history, and personal identity. Their stories continue to inspire not just new recipes but new ways of thinking about and experiencing the world around us. As we turn each page of their culinary biographies, we savor the rich, complex flavors of their legacies, forever imprinted on the culinary world. □

Horoscope

Heimir Steinarsson

What's in the stars for you today?

Are things about to go your way?

Will you enjoy prosperity
or are you bound for misery?

Because of Venus retrograde
the Universe will cast a shade
on everything you do today
and not a thing will go your way.

So now is surely not the time
to try to shift the paradigm
by doing something bold and new;
your actions could endanger you.

Abide where it is safe and warm
to keep away from any harm.

In fact, it's best you stay in bed
and pull the sheets over your head.





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