

Death is a natural process and everyone will experience it one day. However, not everyone has experienced death for the deceased or family members of the deceased.

A group of ARU medical students have worked closely with the deceased

Halloween was on his way. Autumn leaves had just landed under the maple tree precisely a few days ago.

Tiny beige twigs hugged and pinched my toes. "Ah!" I complained in pain, putting my hands over my mouth. A faint voice echoed in my ears, "Shhhhhh! The witch might hear!"

Her enchanted magic was about to take my senses

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Because I was shipping a whole pack of play-doh along with the kusudama, it turned out to be a relatively heavy package, which meant it cost more than I expected to ship. I remember walking out of

The Annual of
ARU's Student
Magazine

Edition 4

Welcome

This is the fourth edition annual of The Ruskin Journal magazine. The articles featured in this magazine were written by the students of Anglia Ruskin University as well as some talented external writers. All of the content included here was published on our website during the 2020-21 academic year or after the cut-off date of our last published annual (May, 2020).

We reserve the right to publish all of the content provided in this annual, which was pre-approved by all interviewees, companies, artists, and individuals concerned.

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This publication was designed by Maria Sofia Meirelles.

The logo was designed by Blessing Raimi and was later refreshed by Joshua Dowding.

Find us online at ruskinjournal.com, by searching “Ruskin Journal” or by scanning the QR code on the back of this annual.



The Executive Team:



Ciéra Cree

President & Editor-In-Chief 2020/21



Maria Sofia Meirelles

Graphic Designer 2020/21

From the website:

Hello from The Ruskin Journal – *the* student magazine for Anglia Ruskin University. The Journal – colloquially termed *The R.J.* – is an outlet for aspiring writers, creators and journalists to come together to share their ideas with our readers. Try your hand at reporting current affairs, reviewing books, shows or movies, celebrating sporting successes, lifestyle reporting, cultural analysis, photography and illustration, or anything else that you are passionate about.

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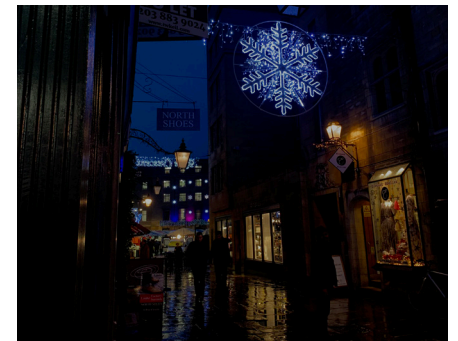
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Contextualisation: Cambridge Photography

Taken by: Tejasvi Ganjoo



Face-to-Face: Memory & the Impact of Physical Meeting

Written by: Ciéra Cree & Lorenzo Barba



Featured Image: Joshua Ness on Unsplash

Have you ever sat down and thought to yourself “how many people have I come into some form of contact with over my lifetime?”. It’s fascinating. We pass by people every day in places such as streets and school hallways, but if we truly tested ourselves, how many of their names and faces could we still pass through our minds?

I decided to conduct an experiment to collect primary data on this idea, whilst Lorenzo tested out the same exercise in order to gather some secondary data.

To test my memory, I gave myself the ambitious target of attempting

to name 500 people that I have come into contact with throughout my life so far. These people could be anyone, permitted that I had seen them in-person, that they were alive and that they were not related to me in any way. 500 was an unquestionably large target, but when testing a hypothesis like this, shooting high to test my limits felt like a better approach than to stay within my comfort zone.

My sole resource for this experiment was a simple document to record my list. I was not allowed to use my phone to check my contacts, and I was not allowed to

use the internet to assist me in any possible way.

I personally found that the best way for me to begin this task was to split my list into numerous headings. This made it easier to keep track of who I had already named as well as to get my mind to shift into a particular time period. These headings were then split into sub-headings, creating further specificity for what initially was a very broad task. The breakdown of my list went as follows:

- Primary School

Primary School Friends
Primary School Teachers
Primary School Miscellaneous

- High School

High School Friend Group
High School Tutor Group
High School Teachers
High School English Class
High School Miscellaneous

- Sixth Form

Sixth Form Students
Sixth Form Teachers

- University

University Pals
Indian Society
Media Studies Class

University Lecturers
University Miscellaneous

- Poetry People (People I met over my gap year)

- Random People

The Results

Primary School

I started with primary school in this experiment because it’s the furthest back that I can remember. I’m unable to remember anyone from pre-school that didn’t, in years to come, join me at primary school. I didn’t find remembering people for this section overly difficult, likely because the primary school that I attended was the one local to where I live, but I did find that there were chances of potential overlap due to many students of that school going on to the same high school that I studied in.

In total, over an hour and a half, 58 of the people that I listed were within one of the primary school subheadings. I found that recalling the names of staff and more prominent village members, such as the church reverend and village

magazine editors, was relatively easy, seeing as in primary school there tended to be fewer adult figures to remember.

High School

Jumping into the high school section, I immediately speculated that this would be one of the two main contenders, with university being the other. Upon joining high school at the tender age of 11, I was introduced to many new school subjects which, in turn, resulted in having a much larger assortment of teachers than before. When I started there, my memory would have been better developed as well, possibly explaining how 95 of those that I listed held a connection towards high school. 37 of these 95 people were teachers and members of staff which I believe could be the case because, as a student, these were people that I had to see on a frequent basis and, therefore, I needed to remember their names. I included 'High School English Class' as a separate subheading as I seem to have a more vivid memory of that class' seating arrangement. This is likely due to the fact that English was my favourite subject.

Sixth Form

At sixth form, in comparison to high school, the number of teachers you have depletes significantly as you study fewer subjects. This had an apparent impact on my results, causing the sixth form subheadings collectively to only total 38 people. During sixth form, I wasn't as talkative as I am at university, which I feel will have somewhat contributed to this outcome as well.

University

I may have fewer teachers at university than I did back in high school, but I engage in a lot more extracurricular activities, such as societies. Living on campus, prior to lockdown, provided various opportunities to go out with friends, to attend events, and to meet new people. 76 out of the 84 people that came to mind when making my list were people that I had met from around campus, with the others consisting of my lecturers. I did not find this surprising, and I know that I would be able to recognise many other people who I either do not know by name or that just happened to slip my mind during this study.

Poetry People & Random People

These last two categories were reserved for people that I had met over my gap year while pursuing poetry, and for everyday people that I had come to know such as taxi drivers and hairdressers. Together, the two of these categories totalled 27 people.

Thoughts & Reflections

When I was writing down the name of each person as I remembered them, the way that they connected to my memory seemed to arise with it as well. For instance, when writing down the name of a girl I rarely spoke to in high school Geography class, my mind instantly thought "oh, she was friends with the other girl who I talked to more in class who was on the sports team". It was interesting to see how my mind automatically made these associations and did its best to instinctively fill in any gaps.

The order in which I seemed to remember the names of these people was something that I also tried to make a note of. This was made easier because I categorised my list, but it was also insightful

to see the patterns that my memory was going through in order to translate what I wanted to say onto the document's page. For example, when listing people that I know from university, my mind was quicker in making connections to other people that those I listed knew mutually. This would be the case due to the fact that I study there currently and have come into contact with those people more recently.

There were definitely people that came into my mind in a more prominent way, and I found that the people who did were the ones that I had more of a feeling attached to. People who had a notable impact on my life, for better or for worse, and people that I cared about a lot or remained in frequent touch with tended to surface before those who remained more in the background. That being said, remembering people that I didn't talk to often, who shared some classes with me, was not too difficult either as our timetables often coincided.

"I found it surprising how difficult it could be just to simply write the name of someone who's been attributed to some of my less fond memories in life (writing the

name of my high school bully, for instance, slightly took me off guard), but equally writing the name of someone who's been responsible for many positive memories such as my best friend I met at university made me smile almost uncontrollably. My takeaway from this experiment was that while you're bound to meet some toxic people throughout your walk of life, you're also equally bound to come across some truly lovely, inspiring people which to me makes every negative person you encounter that much more worth the pain you will have had to endure.” – Lorenzo Barba (Secondary Data)

Why did I conduct this experiment?

In total, in just under an hour and a half, I had managed to list 302 people that I knew from memory. I wanted to undergo this experiment because, right now, amid COVID-19 and social distancing, we have been discouraged to socialise with people face-to-face, and I thought that taking the time to recount how many people I could remember would create an interesting investigation.

“I didn't get nearly as high as 302, but I found that upon listing the first few names, I got strong memories and emotional reactions surrounding them. It's really

interesting to wonder how long it's been since I've crossed the minds of some of the people on this list. It's harrowing but also beautiful how easy and quick it can be to make a permanent impact on someone's life, be it positive or negative.” – Lorenzo Barba (Secondary Data)

We are fortunate today to have technology that enables us to stay in touch face-to-face regardless of distance. However, my hope after this pandemic is that we will all treasure face-to-face interactions more than we did before. Talking to people and going out was something that we just did; it was a part of our everyday lives, so there wasn't much of a second thought about it. Now though, the return of our physically present social lives is something that vast numbers of us are longing for.

I would like you to take a moment to think about all of the people that come to mind when you think back through the different stages of your life. The people who sat with you in class who you didn't really talk to, that old friend you had when you were 6, or the kind postman that always smiled at you as he delivered the post.

We have encountered so many

people in our lives, and we will go on to encounter many more. While there may be no way of knowing who remembers us after-the-fact, it is in our capability to do our best to be memorable to those we encounter in positive ways. So, the next time that you meet someone that seems kind but remains in the background of your life, why not ask them out for a coffee? Who knows, that initial face-to-face engagement could lead to greater things.

Hobbies in Lockdown

Written by: Lily Brown



Featured Image: Konstantin Dyadyun on Unsplash

The lockdown has meant many of us have more time to fill when we would usually be commuting into university and socialising with friends. As well as bingeing Netflix series' and attending hundreds of Zoom quizzes, I've taken up some new hobbies and revisited some old ones, to fill some of the time.

Knitting

I first learnt to knit when I was about 12 years old. My grandmother taught me how to cast on, and how to do a basic knit stitch, and I knitted a scarf for my toy dog. For years I didn't knit at all, but a couple of years ago I decided to try again. I bought

a book with some projects for beginners and watched a couple of YouTube videos to remind me of what I had learnt years before.

What you will need:

- Knitting needles
- Wool
- Scissors
- Knitting pattern

There are plenty of free knitting patterns available online, or you can purchase them from sites like Etsy. I've recently started knitting squares to make a blanket for one of my friends who is having a baby later in the year, and I tried knitting a hat which actually turned out much bigger than I had

intended! In time, I would love to be able to knit my own jumpers for winter, so ... I think I'm going to keep practicing!



Pictured: An example of Lily's knitting.

Embroidery

Embroidery is something I have wanted to try for years. My Pinterest feed is filled with pictures of beautiful embroidery projects and ideas for customising your own clothes with flowers, bees, hearts and more. Up until this point, I have never had the time to dedicate to learning embroidery, so I thought lockdown might be the perfect opportunity for me to give it a try.

What you will need:

- Embroidery hoop
- Fabric
- Embroidery needles
- Embroidery thread
- Scissors
- Pencils or water erasable pen for tracing or drawing your chosen design

To get started, I ordered an embroidery hoop, some plain fabric, and some embroidery thread from Amazon, and downloaded an easy PDF stencil for beginners with some instructions on how to get started. From there, I practiced some of the easier stitches including the running stitch, back stitch, chain stitch, satin stitch, and french knots. I love that you can make something beautiful and effective just using these basic stitches.

After a couple of practice projects, I embroidered a 'home sweet home' design for my mum who was overjoyed to receive such a personal gift. For me, embroidery is a great way to relax and de-stress as once you get the hang of the stitches you can just sit in front of the television and work on your projects. There are loads of great ideas on Pinterest for beginners, and plenty of YouTube videos that introduce you to the basic stitches, and offer some great tips.



Pictured: An example of Lily's embroidery.

Baking

I've always been a huge fan of the Great British Bake Off, but I've never been much of a baker myself. My speciality at university used to be a banana cake that you could make in the microwave in 8 minutes!

During this lockdown, I've made a few more banana cakes (baked in the oven this time!) adding in chocolate and blueberries to mix up the recipe a bit. I used the BBC Good Food 'Brilliant Banana Loaf' recipe but I used melted chocolate as icing instead of icing sugar, water, and banana chips. I also tried the Aldi recipe for 'Blueberry and Banana Cake' and they were both well received. Banana cake

or bread is a fantastic way to use up old bananas and reduce food waste. I love having a cup of tea and a piece of banana cake in the afternoon to reward myself for getting some work done in the morning.

When I was struggling to find flour, I bought a couple of packet mixes for Galaxy cookies and a Betty Crocker mix for a Victoria Sponge cake with ready made buttercream icing. Even if, like me, you aren't a natural baker, there are still ways to whip up some tasty treats during lockdown.

What you will need:

- Recipe
- Ingredients
- Mixing bowl
- Kitchen scales
- Wooden spoon
- Baking tin or tray



Couch to 5k

I have always wanted to get into running and do more exercise in general. I've attempted the Couch to 5k programme a couple of times over the years, but I've never been able to reach the end. Being allowed to leave the house for exercise gave me the push I needed to start again and to try and finish the course. I'm currently on week four and I am still finding it difficult, but I'm looking forward to reaching the 5k mark!

It has also been nice finding new routes to run and taking the time to admire the countryside and wildlife that I hadn't noticed before.

What you will need:

- An appropriate Couch to 5k app
- Running trainers



While there is no pressure to be productive during lockdown, I have found that these hobbies have helped me to relax and keep my mind off of everything that's been going on. What have you been up to?

Body Images: Lily Brown and Ev on Unsplash

‘A Court of Thorns and Roses’ by Sarah J. Maas (2015) – Book Series Review

Written by: Soyeenka Mishra



Featured Image: Soyeenka Mishra

“To the stars that listen – and dreams that are answered.”

I first read this series sometime around September 2018 and immediately fell in love with it. I’d bought it for the hype and picked it up to read because the covers were pretty (I like to judge books by their covers sometimes), and the titles were intriguing. That being said, I have absolutely no regrets about it. What instantly roped me in was the rich vocabulary used by Maas, evident from the very first paragraph of the first book. It got progressively better as the plot proceeded forward.

The world-building was done very efficiently with no major loopholes and the character descriptions were amazing.

It started off as a *Beauty and the Beast* retelling and bloomed into a vast world of exhilarating adventures. It has the perfect blend of fantasy, action, adventure, comedy, and romance. As someone who devours fantasy novels and loves to be introduced to new worlds, this series felt like I’d hit the jackpot. It used some existing fairy-tale creatures, but gave new attributes to them; for example, Faeries can lie, and iron doesn’t have any

effect on them whatsoever, but it also introduces a whole lot of new creatures as well. Add that to the various mysteries that need to be unravelled, the need to break ancient curses, and save the world; lo and behold, you’ve got my complete, unadulterated attention, and more!



I recently reread the entire series to get over a reading slump, and boy did it work! Always trust an S.J.M. series to solve all of your problems, I say. Though as much as I enjoyed the series the first-time round, I must say, the joy of reading it all a second time was enormous. Now, if it was due to the fact that I already knew what was going to happen next or that my level of comprehension had increased over the last two years, I don’t know. But it was an awesome

feeling to finally note all of the subtle foreshadowing hundreds of pages before certain events took place, and just the sheer pleasure of sinking into a familiar world that I already loved, but one that I could now *appreciate* on a different level.

I will include just a single spoiler. As a masochistic reader who loves to torture herself by actively seeking out spoilers, let me say something to all readers who ship Feylin: I’ve got a *Feylin*, and y’all are going to be sorely disappointed in the second book. Because, hello, do you even know the author? It’s your mistake in the first place to assume that the first love interest is going to be the same by the endgame. Choosing your OTP from the very first (sometimes even second or third) book of an SJM series is a bad, bad idea for your heart; always remember that.



As a whole, the series has got diverse representation as well as brave and courageous characters that don't let the demons of their past dictate their present and future. It also has plenty of strange creatures that end up playing important roles in the plot, and characters that will make you gush over them for all of eternity. Not to forget about the breath-taking visuals and nail-biting experiences either.

It had me roaring with laughter, cackling like a witch, shrieking like a banshee, crying like my world had ended, among others in random moments; to a point, my parents were genuinely concerned about my sanity. Now, I *am* known to break into a fit of giggles at certain funny moments, but this series roped me into its world so thoroughly, I became no more than a slave at the hands of the book. I'd have added a few more details and thoughts to this section but doing so would mean dropping a lot of spoilers. Rest assured, it's good.

So basically, what I've been trying to convey from the very beginning is that you should stop whatever it is that you're doing and get started on this incredible series which I'm more than positive will *completely*

change your life. By the end, you will be a new person with a good bounty of trauma due to the deaths and the wars, and pining over the characters who will spend the rest of their lives longing for a Rhysand of their own, but I promise it is all worth it.

Body Images: Soyeenka Mishra

My Inspiration: Rowan Windham

Written by: Yahan Xie



Featured Image: Joshua Earle on Unsplash

Rowan was born with a condition called Shwachman-Diamond's Syndrome and it affects many parts of the body including the bone marrow, skeletal system, pancreas, and numerous others that I'm forgetting about right now. He went through so much in such a short amount of time.

He spent a third of his life in the hospital and also underwent almost 100 surgeries. Even with everything that he went through, he still loved every day of his life. "I love my life!" were the last words he said before he was intubated for the last time. Not a day went by that he didn't say "I love my life!", and he

truly meant it. He was my rock on many of my darkest days. I still remember how whenever I hit a new low, I thought, "If Rowan will be ok, then I'll be ok." I always wore my "Rally for Rowan" shirts on hard days as a reminder to keep going even when life is hard. I still do that sometimes. I wore it once underneath another shirt when I ran a tough mudder at camp one summer since I didn't want to get it dirty, but I still wanted to bring Rowan along to keep me going since I didn't want to do it. It turned out to be an amazing experience and I'm so glad that I did it.



There are so many things that I love about Rowan. I remember being immediately drawn to his story after reading about the amazing bond that he had with Jalene, one of his young friends that he met while in the hospital. Throughout the 20 months that I've known his story, I've learned that we had several things in common. We both shared a deep passion for our faith and we both loved art, cooking, and theatre. I was thrilled to find out that we had been in some of the same shows before, along with the fact that he had been in some shows that I've always dreamed of being cast in, such as Shrek Jr. I also found out later that he always wanted to learn the violin, an instrument which I've been playing for the past 6 years. Ever since I came to know Rowan's story, I always dreamed about making it down to Texas someday to meet him in person to talk about all of the stuff that we had in common, to teach him violin, and to thank him for all that God has done through him. It still hurts knowing that that chance will never come. I still have goals of making it down



to Texas one day, I just have a different itinerary this time around.

Rowan's amazing faith deeply inspired me. I remember when he was just about to leave for Seattle around this time last year. He and his mom were talking about what was going to happen in the coming months.



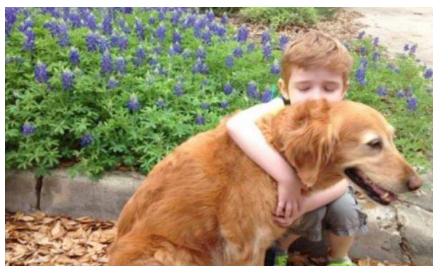
He said, "I'm 100% sure that I want to get the transplant. Even if there was only a 50/50 chance it would work, there's a 100% chance it won't work...if I don't take the chance. And with God, I feel like it's a 100% chance I will make it through this. I'd rather take the chance of it working, and the risk of it not working...even if there's a chance of death...because I trust my life with God."

He also said, "I'll be ok either way" to refer to how he knew he'd be ok even if he did go to Heaven because of how amazing a place it is. Copying that dialogue over now still makes me lose my breath at how amazing his words are. He truly was wise beyond his years.

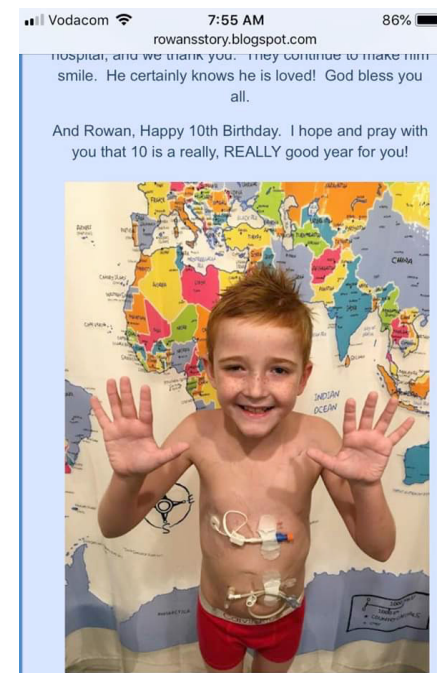
Another thing that I loved about Rowan was his selflessness. He never only focused on himself. Someone else who also loved him recently posted to Facebook about a dream that she had. In the dream, Rowan kept having to move hospital rooms to make room for other patients. But he didn't mind. He was more concerned about the person who needed the room than he was with himself. The dream has been hard for me to forget. There is no doubt that that's something he would have actually done if he ever found himself in that situation. When he was younger, an organization called Kidd's Kids had arranged a trip to Disney World for him and his family. Like any kid, Rowan really enjoyed the trip. But unlike most kids, the question he had asked his mom when the trip ended wasn't, "When can we go again?". Instead, he was more concerned about the question, "What can I do so more kids can go next year?".



Plans for a lemonade stand came together relatively quickly. Rowan's fundraiser soon became an annual thing which quickly expanded. Overall, he raised nearly \$15,000 for Kidd's Kids. He also greatly cared for his friends and their families. He was very close with two of his friend's mommas, Jalene and Adrian's moms, and I'm sure that there were many others as well. Around this time last year, he was working on a memorial garden to honor Jalene. I still remember following the progress on it through his mom's blog. I could tell that he had put a lot of time, effort, and love into the project. It came out to be really amazing.



I remember when school first started, I wanted to send Rowan something as he was going through his first transplant, so I asked his mom what his favorite colors were and I made him a kusudama. His mom sent me a picture after it arrived, and it also made a few appearances in pictures that have been shared to his mom's blog which is sweet. Because I was shipping a whole pack of play-doh along with the kusudama, it turned out to be a relatively heavy package, which meant it cost more than I expected to ship. I remember walking out of the post office at my school, not so concerned about the shipping price like I usually am when stuff costs more than I expected. I then realized that it didn't remotely matter to me at that moment. I just wanted Rowan to feel loved and like he could still be a kid despite everything that he was going through.



Unfortunately, because of what Rowan means to me, that has made having to let him go very difficult. I know what grief is like. It has crept into my life on many occasions after I've had to outlive so many of my biggest inspirations. Yet having to live with a Rowan-sized hole in my heart is hands-down the hardest thing that I've had to ever walk through. The pain has lessened with time, but it hasn't disappeared completely.

So to wrap up, I guess, I'm sure you can tell what an amazing boy Rowan is and always will be. And I hope that you'll be able to understand why he means so much to me.

Body Images: Photos of Rowan have been provided by his family

5 games with their own Outbreaks that you should really Break Out

Written by: Joseph Jones



Featured Image: Igor Karimov on Unsplash

We all know that the world is going through a... rough patch; sometimes people may want to get away from it and escape into a new world which, of course, is a destination often provided by that of video games.

In this article I am proposing to you 5 games that relate to our current days on a whole different level. Each listed game, detailed in no particular order, takes on a different approach to its own pandemic, whether in story, gameplay or world building.

1 - Resident Evil 2 (remake)



The first game to have made it onto my list is the 2019 remake of *'Resident Evil 2'*. This survival horror game was developed and published by "Capcom" and it is a remake of the 1996 game of the same name.

The game takes place in 'Raccoon City' and it offers the possibility to choose between two characters - Claire Redfield or Leon S. Kennedy - which play in a set of stories that coincide with each other during a sudden zombie outbreak that has completely swallowed the city.

Even though there is an overarching storyline from the first game, Capcom has done a good job of making this game stand alone. It may be a sequel but it's a separate incident in a new location, involving fresh characters with their own goals. So, even though it's generally a good idea to start a game from the beginning, this can be played without the knowledge of the previous one while still being a fantastic ride.

The game is available on PlayStation 4, Xbox One and Windows.

2 - The Last Of Us



Next up is a PlayStation (PS) exclusive title, *'The Last Of Us'* for the PS3 (or, alternatively, you can play the remastered version on PS4 if you prefer). This 2013 survival horror game was developed by 'Naughty Dog' and published with 'Sony Interactive Entertainment'.

The game is set in The United States after a fungal plague has caused an apocalypse, devastating the country. The narrative follows two survivors, Joel and Ellie, as they try to survive and travel west through the country to find a possible cure to save what's left of humanity.

'Naughty Dog' has done an amazing job with the story; crafting an atmosphere that creates a sense of bleakness and desperation in the face of tragic events beyond our control, whilst simultaneously showcasing that nature prospers, remaining as a blooming point of beauty within the remnants of the world that we have lost.

The game is available on PlayStation 3, and PlayStation 4 (remastered only).

3 - Dishonoured



For the next entry we have the 2012 action-adventure stealth game *'Dishonoured'* by game developer 'Arkane Studios' and publisher

'Bethesda Softworks'.

The story of *Dishonoured* is set in the plague-infested city of 'Dunwall'. Your character is 'Corvo Attano', the bodyguard of the Empress of the Isles. He is being sent by the Empress across the isles to find help with the plague that festers in her streets. Unfortunately, 'Corvo' returns and gives the Empress the devastating news that no one will help. After having the revelation that she and her people are on their own, the Empress is suddenly attacked, and even though 'Corvo' fought off the assassins he was unable to save her. The man is then framed for her murder as well as the kidnapping of her daughter, 'Princess Emily'.

Whilst he is waiting for his execution, he is visited by a mysterious being who grants him extraordinary powers: from there on he sets out to get revenge, to find 'Emily' and to prove his innocence.

The world that the game takes place in is rich in lore and history, and it shows elements of careful craftsmanship which truly create complexities. For instance, the game illustrates differences in class, ideologies and even personalities of

the city, and each different district consists of selectively chosen architecture.

The city itself was influenced by London and Edenborough, drawing further inspiration from Gothic, Art Nouveau, Victorian, Victorian (Jacobean revival), Industrial and Nazi architecture. On top of that, there are added notes from steampunk, but with the world being maintained on 'whale-oil', fans have dubbed the game 'whalepunk'. There is so much to read in-between the lines, but it doesn't feel needed or forced upon you, so you can enjoy the game in its simplest form too, as just a classic revenge story with supernatural elements.

The game features a chaotic system that responds to how you conduct yourself on missions and in 'Dunwall', the louder and more chaotic you are, the more guards will appear later on. The more citizens become oppressed and the worse the plague gets, the quieter and the more peaceful the city is.

The game is available on PlayStation 3, Xbox 360, Microsoft Windows, PlayStation 4 and Xbox One.

4 - Prototype



This next game is the 2009 action-adventure game 'Prototype', developed by "Radical Entertainment and published by Activision Blizzard".

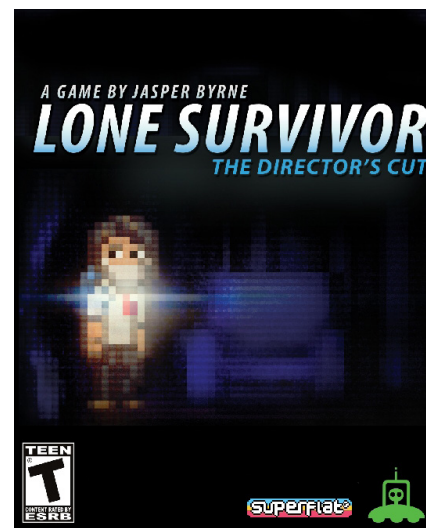
The game is set in a pandemic-ridden New York City full of mutants and military forces who are out looking for blood. We play as "Alex J. Mercer", who suddenly wakes up in what appears to be a morgue inside of a research facility basement. After his escape, he realises that he has no memories and that he's acquired inhuman abilities. For some reason he has become New York City's public enemy number one. Now he needs to figure who he is and what exactly

he has become.

Overall Prototype is a fun, third person sandbox style game. If blazing around in a chaotic power-trip with your extraordinary powers sounds appealing, then this playthrough could be the one for you.

The game is available on Microsoft Windows, PlayStation 3, PlayStation 4, Xbox One and Xbox 360.

5 - Lone Survivor



For the final entry on my list we have 'Lone survivor', a 2012 independent survival horror video game by developer "Superflat Games" and publishers "Superflat Games, Curve Digital, and Limited Run Games".

In the game we take control of an unnamed young man wearing a surgical mask. He became isolated in his apartment building after a strange virus decimated his known world and began turning people into hyper-aggressive mutants.

'Lone survivor' was a very fun experience for me; its pixel art contrasted against the horror aspect to create a raw ominous atmosphere and a sense of claustrophobia that I was not expecting. The isolation I experienced in the game was harrowing and, as a fan of atmospheric horror in games, I was left feeling more than satisfied.

The game is available on Microsoft Windows, MacOS, Linux, PlayStation 3, PlayStation Vita, PlayStation 4 and Wii U.

We may be living in uncertain times right now, but I hope that these recommendations have potentially offered you a game that could help to fill your time.

Body Images: Resident Evil 2 from Instant Gaming

The Last of Us, Dishonored, Prototype and Lone Survivor from their Wikipedia Pages

'Last Lullaby - For Life' (Poetry)

Written by: Anushka Dey



Featured Image: Jackson David on Unsplash

What kind of a miracle you are, oh! Architect of my fate
 It's the greatest unsolved mystery to me till this date
 Gallant you are my unsung warrior
 A shield from all ordeals, you are my saviour
 How do you mould your affection with your fortitude
 Would I be breathing, without your solicitude?
 Inspire me your words, "Pay no heed, society will frown
 you are unique my darling, I believe you will never let me
 down."

Your amusement, your delight
 Better than a thousand suns shining bright

Through the maze of life, you were my guide
 Darkness or light, you were by my side

You sank and drowned, but pushed me ashore
 Left me broken and alone to explore
 It is hard to part when you are so dear
 To my heart you are so near

Arms to rest on so strong, yet so tender and kind
 Where else on earth would I ever be able to find?

Your touch, your embrace so tight
 Better than a thousand suns shining bright

You ask me to take it easy
 How can one do that, when it is driving them crazy?
 Force me not to see you depart
 For it will tear my heart apart

Bid me not farewell, sing me a lullaby
 Before you leave me or say me goodbye
 Your absence won't be acknowledged in sleep
 The harsh reality through my veins will not seep

Your visage, when you kiss me goodnight
 Better than a thousand suns shining bright

You cannot leave me behind, take me along
 Because you are the composer, I am the song
 Our bonding will stay forever this way
 It will just tighten today, tomorrow and everyday

With your warmth and presence divine
 My world will again shimmer and shine
 Even beyond the grave, on your lap my head will lie
 Because love is eternal, it will never die

Your smile, the seraphic sight
 Better than a thousand suns shining bright

ARU Students Working with the Deceased during COVID-19

Written by: Pat Lok



Featured Image: Ciéra Cree (Mill Road Cemetery)

Disclaimer: This article talks about death and discusses how the deceased are taken care of after sadly not surviving COVID-19. If this is something that you may find triggering, please turn over. This article was approved by The Student's Union because the work undergone by these three ARU Medical Students is incredible and their stories deserve to be told.

Death is a natural process and everyone will experience it one

day. However, not everyone has experience working for the deceased and/or family members of the deceased. A group of ARU medical students have worked closely with the deceased and the dying during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, ensuring that they have a dignified death.

A volunteer at a hospital mortuary, an employee at a gravestone memorial service and a carer at a care home share their experience in working with the deceased and the families of the deceased.

Volunteering at the mortuary

An ARU medical student, who would like to stay anonymous, volunteered at a mortuary in a hospital during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Our medical school put out a call for volunteers to work in a mortuary as the short-staffed mortuary was overwhelmed with work. My role entailed checking the details of the deceased when they arrived into the mortuary and when being collected by funeral homes, sanitising the bodies and storing them appropriately.

It was very busy during the height of the pandemic as there were a lot of patients coming into the mortuary from the hospital and the community. I enjoyed being a useful pair of hands when there were very limited staff.

From working in the mortuary, I learned the importance of checking at least 3 points of identification of the deceased and strategies to ensure that the job did not get too difficult emotionally.

It was interesting to see the work done by the mortuary technicians and the things that doctors in the hospital could do to make their job easier (for example, making

sure that there were 2 hospital name bands on a patient as often these were missing as well as not wrapping several strips of tape around the deceased patients legs or head as this is unnecessary and disrespectful). I will put these things into practice whilst I am training to be a doctor.

Having work experience in a mortuary is quite rare for a medical student and it has been a really valuable experience volunteering there. I have learned a lot.”

Working at a company that provides a gravestone memorial service

Amir is a medical student who was working at a company that provides a gravestone memorial service, predominantly for BAME groups during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“I help a business that takes orders from cemeteries to design and produce gravestones, predominantly for the BAME community. We would take their information such as name, date of death, islamic day of death according to the lunar calendar, and age of death. We would then also take private requests such as if they want special symbols or the stone to be made in a particular colour or shape.

COVID has completely altered our workload; normally in a year we get roughly 1000 orders from this cemetery, but between the end of February to April we received 560 orders, half of the annual order in just a few months. We had to work efficiently, so the work was split between my dad and I – I would deal with the administrative side of things and my dad would liaise with the cemetery stone supplier.

You take your health for granted until something happens to you. One case particularly stuck in my mind; we had a client who lost 3 family members in the past year, two during COVID times, and it's sad to know that something unfortunate happened to the same person 3 times in such a short space of time. It really puts life into perspective.

I have never attended a Muslim funeral, though I do visit cemeteries with my dad quite often. I did so even as a child, just checking out the work that we put into making the cemetery stones and to be reassured that the person could rest in peace.

I think that this experience will help me as a medical student and later on as a doctor. I am now used to talking with people who are grieving and this experience also emphasised the importance of being empathetic when there are situations in

which you can't overly help.

I would personally say that the government should take responsibility in the way that they dealt with the pandemic. A lot of these people weren't particularly old – there were a significant number of middle-aged people – and a lot of the deaths could have been prevented. Lockdown happened during the beginning of March but it should have been started sooner.”

Working at a care home

Pat is a medical student and the author of this article, who worked at a care home during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has thrown a spanner into the delivery of our medical education as our medical placements are suspended and the end of year exams are becoming online exams. As a medical student I felt quite helpless in the sense that I wasn't qualified to help people during this time, and moving back home meant that I couldn't help out at the hospitals where I had placements.

In the end I found a job where I work as a bank carer at a care home near my house.

It's quite scary to see the virus taking its effects in real time; every sick elderly resident follows a similar pattern: they

first stop eating, they have repeated bouts of diarrhoea and episodes of confusion which are followed by a deteriorating condition and, eventually, death. Shortly after the local outbreak, all carers had to don PPE when carrying out personal care and we had to keep maintaining social distancing whenever we could. However, it's impossible to do that as a carer. Most residents at the care home have a certain degree of immobility which require carers to assist them to carry out activities of daily living (e.g - washing and eating). The fact that we are wearing PPE when we carry out personal care is a scary experience for the elderly, especially for people living with dementia.

Weekly GP visits to the care home are replaced by a FaceTime call, where the nurse would hold the phone showing different pressure sores, rashes and other medical complaints of residents that need attending.

Reflecting on this experience, I have deep admiration for carers across the country and I believe that they deserve better pay and working conditions. In addition, isolating elderly residents in their rooms to limit the probability of virus transmission, in my opinion, may not be the best method of intervention as prolonged loneliness is also detrimental to one's health. The pandemic has highlighted the devastating consequences of a chronically neglected

social care system; rapid changes need to be made in order to prevent history from repeating itself.

Death should not be a taboo to talk about; if you're interested in exploring the topics around death, there are groups across the country called Death Cafe where people in the community come together to have tea and hold discussions about death.”

If you have lost someone close to you during the pandemic, NHS Support Services are available to offer some assistance. The Wellbeing Team is also available for ARU students if you need someone to talk to during these difficult times. To arrange an appointment please get in touch with them at: wellbeing@aru.ac.uk

You matter and are deeply loved. Please all take care of yourselves.

'All The Bright Places' (2020)

- Film Review

Written by: Ciéra Cree



Featured Image: Screenshot from the film by Ciéra Cree

Over the lockdown period caused as a result of COVID-19, I gradually noticed myself making time to watch films. The title *All The Bright Places*, similarly to the instance of what happened when I stumbled across *To All The Boys I've Loved Before* on Netflix, seemed somehow familiar. So I decided to hit play.

At this point the only things which I knew about the film were that it was under two hours long and that one of its subgenres was romance. Now, however, I know a bit more: the story was initially published in 2015 in the form of a novel by Jennifer Niven, and it won awards

including Goodreads Choice Awards Best Young Adult Fiction.

Warning: This review contains spoilers.

Disclaimer: Although not overtly detailed within the review, this film deals with topics such as depression and suicide.

'All The Bright Places' tells the story of a young student, Violet Markey (Elle Fanning), and the internal struggles that she faces. Within moments of starting the film, a viewer can detect her introverted

nature and that she seems to be a person who does all she can to maintain the division of her internal dialogue from merging with her external world. She is quiet, glum and irritable; opening up to others is far from her forte.



Pictured: Violet & Finch standing in one of the "surprise wander" locations.

To those who don't know her, Violet's nature may seem rather cold and although throughout the scenes we learn that she does indeed have friends, she tends to attempt to outcast herself - that is, until she meets Finch.

Theodore Finch (Justice Smith), in my opinion, was a great character and the film really wouldn't have been the same without him. Yes, I suppose that is easy to say considering that he's one of the two mains in the script, but his multidimensional characterisation provided such a beautiful addition

to the plot.

Finch met Violet on what would have been her belated sister's nineteenth birthday. He was out on a run around the streets when he came across her standing on the ledge of the bridge where the car crash that tied her siblings fate occurred. Despite being in a bad way, she still urged him to go home.

On the surface, to some viewers, this story as a whole could be broken down very simply: a young girl is grieving the death of her sister, she meets a boy and the boy makes her feel happy. On one hand this deconstruction isn't untrue but if you're looking for something a bit deeper then I encourage you to stay tuned.



Pictured: A medium close-up on Violet's expression in the car.

The camerawork used during shots of Violet when she speaks to Finch is thoughtful and, on this end, it definitely didn't go unnoticed or unappreciated. For example, when she is opening up to Finch in his car on the way to visit one of their many future "bright places", the focus lingers on her face for what would normally be an uncomfortable amount of time. We are sutured into a medium close-up, as if we are positioned beside her, while we wait to see if she can muster up the words to describe how she feels. In a sense those shots, to me, shared somewhat of a resemblance to ones within horror where psychoacoustics are present to create anticipation or suspended disbelief. Especially since Violet showed blatant understandable fear about entering the vehicle, the line delays worked well to throw the viewers thoughts around, in turn assisting to anchor their attention onto what she did go on to say.

Additionally Finch's persistence is a strong element of the film to explore. Why did Violet, a girl whom he previously did not know, and her happiness mean so much to him? And, in relation to this, what spark did he see in her that no one else had?



Pictured: Finch spacing out in a cafe while accompanied by Violet & her friends.

I adore the way that this film holds a polysemic nature, as well as the fact that deeper meanings can be deciphered. No lie, as a watch it has made me think, which I believe is something that art should aspire to do. The tale caused me to ponder the impact of selflessness and how easy it is for people to assume that others have it easier than themselves. It's nothing new when I say that there is no way that we can know what others are going through but the ways in which the film, largely through Finch, chooses to emphasise Violet's good qualities is inspiring.

From how she dressed and spoke to her sense of humour and facial expressions, Violet very much felt like her own person in this film as opposed to someone who was

only seen as sad and struggling. And Finch: from beginning to end his quirky mannerisms, upbeat tempo and infectious desire for spontaneity remained evident, which is all the more powerful once we eventually learn why and what he is willing to go through to place warmth in someone else's heart.

*Body Images: Screenshots from the film
by Ciéra Cree*

'The Man In The Mirror' (Poetry)

Written by: Anushka Dey



Featured Image: Alex Lopez on Unsplash

When I look into the mirror
I wonder how little it knows
How little of the man that is me it shows

Does it know I limp not due to my old age?
Does it know I was never a bird to be kept in a cage?
That I was crazy about mountaineering
And on one such unfortunate trek
I fell and broke my leg. Thank heavens! Not my neck.

Oh! How much knowledge it does lack
It doesn't know the stories of the scars on my back
It is unaware that I was a wildlife photographer by
profession
It wasn't only 'fill-bell' occupation but my addiction
and passion

Yes, it can show the wrinkles underneath my eyes
But does it know the wisdom and experiences behind
them lies?

Then all my thoughts were cut-off as the neighbourhood
children come yelling
"Grandpa! Grandpa! It's time for storytelling."

With one last look at the mirror I feel pity
Not for the children, thinking they will too be crumbled
of old age as they grow
But for the mirror for how little it knows
How little of the actuality it shows

A Witch's Midnight Whisper

Written by: Nusrat Ahmed



Featured Image: Joanna Kosinska on Unsplash

On that day a massive, sinful wind was blowing outside. The universe seemed angry. A black crow started staring at me with his wicked sense of eyes; his immoral wings gave me a strange, foreshadowing feeling.

I observed the forest as I tiptoed towards a small green hut, before suddenly seeing an old witch. She was making an emerald green potion for someone, with a mischievous expression on her visage.

The fictional witch started reciting her melancholy poem, sparking imagery in my mind. It was a cold, chilly October; Halloween was on his way. Autumn leaves had just landed under the maple tree precisely a few days ago.

Tiny beige twigs hugged and pinched my toes. "Ah!" I complained in pain, putting my hands over my mouth. A faint voice echoed in my ears, "*Shhhhh! The witch might hear!*".

Her enchanted magic wand took my senses away. It was

so pleasant to watch her from a distance; her hypothetical sweet scent cured my illness and parted unpleasant situations that were hovering throughout my head.

Upon my curing she was left exhausted, doomed with the maddening curse of being sinful yet simultaneously equipped with an aura of healing. Sometimes I think of her now still, and about the little hut in the forest. I wonder what she is doing and how it would feel for her if she were to also have the chance to experience the imagination taking you to another world.

Saying Goodbye to 2020

Written by: Cristina Ionita



Featured Image: Amy Shamblen on Unsplash

I'm currently sitting in my room, debating whether to take down the Christmas decorations or if I should start a new episode of Queen Sono on Netflix. On Spotify comes 'Vivir Mi Vida' by Marc Anthony, and I remember the last time that I listened to this song – January 2020.

I was back in Romania, meeting the two new members of my family – my cousin's wife and nephew. I had high hopes for the year. I was seeing my family growing and my parents surprised me with a family trip to Austria. Walking down the streets of Vienna, I couldn't help but marvel at the never ending

streets, the beauty of the old buildings and the strong German accent. I felt grateful for being able to see such beauty, for being with my parents again and for enjoying a cup of coffee at Cafe Europe – one of the busiest and delightful cafes in Vienna.

If only I knew what 2020 would prepare for us... I'd probably take a whisky.

Two months later I was checking my inbox and I found a very strange email starting like this: 'Someone has anonymously recommended you for the Rep Election 2020! [...]'.
I

I remember being very confused as I had no idea who wrote that nomination (it was very nicely written and made me feel very good about myself, I'm not going to lie) and why they would see me as suitable for such a position. After pondering the idea and coming up with the worst scenarios – having to deliver a speech in front of students, creating a video with me speaking to students, not being able to commit to this on top of my studies and my work – I decided to do it. I wrote my manifesto, attended all of the meetings, ran around the campus to put up posters (it was dreadful to see my face on almost every wall) and tried my best to show people who I am.

During the election week (the third week of March) I was meant to travel to Amsterdam with my class for a study field trip. After day dreaming about the trip for 3 months, and almost starting to pack, the university cancelled the trip due to the pandemic. On the same week I was meant to celebrate my 21st birthday. One day before my birthday, the university sent out an email advising students to go home. I

was heartbroken. I booked a one-way ticket to Romania and I had less than 24 hours to pack my belongings and leave the studio I was living in with my best friend.

On the flight to Romania my laptop broke down. After landing I had to quarantine at my friend's house for 2 weeks. We spent our days writing assignments, trying to understand what was happening around us and being checked by the police at the most horrendous hours (7 in the morning – which was 5 am in the UK).

I stayed in Romania from the 20th of March until the last day of July. It was lovely to see my family, to see my nephew growing, to laugh with my grandma about her sneaking around in her youth, to speak my own language and to connect with old friends. But I felt that I had to come back. I had to return to Cambridge and restart my life.

I spent weeks trying to find a new place to live and I was worried about my studies. My final year was going to be nothing like how I imagined it. I finally managed to find a house, and thankfully my housemates are the best

people on Earth.

I started working again, but everything felt so forced, so unsteady. Since returning to campus I've met lovely people that have helped me to see the bigger picture, that made me laugh at 2AM in the Open Access Area as I was writing my assignments half asleep. As Christmas was approaching I knew that there was no chance to visit my family, but I spent it with my new family – my housemates.

And here I am now, thinking about how 2020 showed me how strong and resilient I am.

2020 was about us. It was about the ways that we connect to each other from afar. It was about caring about other people in the same way which you should care about yourself. It was about appreciating every single moment you're breathing. It was about believing and having hope.

Saying that the last year was tough would be an understatement. However, it was also the year that I learned to bake cheesecake, that I played the piano for the first time, that I had

dinner surrounded by people that brighten even my darkest moods.

I'm grateful for the lessons that I have learned and for the special moments shared with amazing people. I'm grateful for living in 2020, not just surviving.

Tottenham Hotspur: Road To A Trophy?

Written by: Lorenzo Barba



Featured Image: Ferdinand Stöhr on Unsplash

It has been 13 years since Tottenham (also known as Spurs) have last won a trophy. 13 years of disappointment, semi final upsets and supporters not wanting to go into work out of the fear of being socially outcast by their coworkers. However, this might be about to change. Spurs have recently made it into the Carabao Cup Final. It is here where they will play against Manchester City at Wembley Stadium on **April 25th, 2021**.

Opening Round: A Win Without Playing?

Admittedly, their cup campaign

started out with a helping of luck as Tottenham's first opponent of five, Leyton Orient, pulled out of the game due to COVID related reasons. This meant that Tottenham were awarded a win automatically, and were therefore able to advance into the next tournament round immediately. This also meant that the team were far more rested for the next round against their arch rivals, Chelsea. While Tottenham had a very lucky break with this result, a win is a win as the saying goes.

Round Of 16: London Rivals Crumble Against Spurs

We move onto the next round! Chelsea were always going to be difficult opponents to face. They are notorious for dumping Spurs out of tournaments by beating them, admittedly, in a rather humiliating fashion. And with Chelsea scoring the opening goal in this tie, it was beginning to look like much of the same. However, this game was going to be very different indeed as a late equaliser from Argentinian player, Erik Lamela, saw Spurs level the tie and take it to penalty shootouts. It was at this stage of the competition where Tottenham proved themselves as serious competitors, proceeding into the quarter finals.

Quarter Final: Tottenham Cruise Past Championship Opponents

On the surface Tottenham's next opponents, championship side Stoke City, seemed like easy pickings. But if there's one thing that Tottenham learned from their loss against League 2 team Colchester United, it was that nobody could be underestimated in this tournament. Nerve wracking

penalty shootouts were not a requirement in this tie as things went according to plan. Shots from Gareth Bale, Ben Davies and Harry Kane saw Spurs cruise past their opponents 3-1, leapfrogging them into the semi finals.

Semi Final: Easy Pickings To Advance To The Final

Onto the semi finals. Spurs were to face championship side Brentford FC. Spurs had somewhat lucked out in this cup run, facing just 1 Premier League team and receiving an automatic win in the opening round. Nonetheless, the team still had a job to do in this semi final tie and they were determined to do it to reach the final. A comfortable win with goals from Moussa Sissoko, Heung-Min Son and a goal taken away from Brentford due to Video Assistant referee (VAR) had Spurs leading 2-0 with just 20 minutes left to play. To add to Tottenham's dominating performance Joshua Da Silva, midfielder for Brentford, received a straight red card for a serious foul. This made their job to see out their 2-0 lead all the more easy as Spurs cruised to the final with style. Tottenham, at this point, are now only one game away from winning

the Carabao cup.



Pictured: Heung-Min Son celebrating after scoring against Brentford.

Final: First Trophy In 13 Years Or Much Of The Same?

The opponents for the tie are fellow Premier League side and current holders of the trophy, Manchester City. On paper, much like the game against Chelsea, Tottenham appear to be the underdogs in this competition. While Spurs have struggled to win silverware since winning their last trophy in 2008, Man City have done well to win a variety of trophies, including the domestic treble in 2018 consisting of the Carabao cup, FA Cup, and the Premier League. Just last season they took home the Carabao cup, defending their title as well as

the Community Shield at the beginning of the season.

While this won't be an easy task, the circumstances of a cup final on neutral territory (Wembley Stadium) means that anything could happen and Tottenham should not be underestimated in this tie.

Body Image: Getty Image piece via The Independent

Thoughts of a Final Year Student

Written by: Cristina Ionita



Featured Image: MD Duran on Unsplash

It has been three years since I started my journey at ARU, and I can already feel the end approaching. It makes me both sad and nervous to think about my future as a graduate, and I know that I'm not the only one floating this boat.

It's difficult for me to picture myself outside of my studies, outside of the classrooms and the library in which I spent countless hours. Even though I have had several part-time jobs since high school, becoming a full-time employee feels simply odd. I've spent the last seven years of my life studying tourism and dreaming about travelling. I thought that by

now, I would think about what to pack when I move to Washington. You see, for four years, I pictured myself getting an internship at National Geographic at their headquarters in D.C. I worked hard to improve my writing skills and tried my best to immerse myself in travelling experiences. I don't even want to think about how much money I spent buying travel magazines and how many hours of sleep I lost over travelling videos on Youtube. However, my dream came to an end when I found out that they don't accept European applications. I felt crushed, betrayed and lost. What was I supposed to do now? I had no plan B (silly, I know.). For three

months, I felt I had no purpose, no direction. I was horrified to think about my future.

Then I picked myself up. After a meeting with the Employability Bureau and revising my skills, I decided to start a career in Events Management. I persuaded my boss to let me organise an event we had planned for the winter (2020), and I was excited to embrace the hectic and thrilling life of an event planner. Then the pandemic started, so no more events. I was lost once again. I kept wondering - 'Why me?'. Why was it that every time I thought that I had things figured out, something came and took it all away?

One afternoon, before the world started spinning due to the pandemic, I met a wonderful businessman - Professor Alan Barrel - at a society event. During the event, we talked about wealth, thriving economies and helping developing countries. He shared his ambitious work in Latvia, Bulgaria and Brazil, and discussed how he helps them to grow entrepreneurial mindsets as well as their skills. Without thinking, I asked him if he believed whether this could happen in my country - Romania.

I will forever remember his reply - 'Let's meet for a coffee and see what we can do'. Two weeks later, I met him at the Costa Coffee on campus, and we started speaking about what we could do to organise an entrepreneurship venture camp in Romania. Despite our progress, we had to pause our work as the pandemic hit Romania quite hard.

No venture camp. No events. At that point, I only had my studies and my part-time job as a barista. The future seemed quite dull.

But in September 2020, the Money Festival gained traction. The Money Festival is a project dedicated to bringing financial literacy to students while empowering them to make sustainable choices. Organising that online event brought me new experience and the chance to learn new skills. Two weeks ago, Professor Alan Barrel offered me an internship position at one of his companies to help him organise online lectures and workshops for universities and businesses about business innovation. My knowledge about business innovation is limited, as I have spent my academic years studying tourism. However, I have transferable skills

that I can use, some experience as an event planner and a strong desire to learn.

Why am I telling you this long story that looks like a maze? To show you that despite things not turning out the way that you planned them to, there is space for hope. I used to get upset so much over the things that didn't go the way I wanted them to that I didn't see unintended opportunities which were right in front of me.

You don't need to reinvent the wheel to be employable. You might not even desire to become an employee, but to start your own business. No matter what you choose, look for what you're good at, what sets your soul on fire. I promise you will find your purpose, your people. If you don't know where to start on this self-discovery journey, talk to your friends. Have a deep chat with your friends about what they think is special about you. What topics make your eyes shine? Where do they see you in 3 years?

If there is one thing that I have learned on this journey, it is that sometimes you need to let go of what you want because the universe knows what your heart needs.

'Conversations with Friends' (2017) by Sally Rooney - Book Review

Written by: Lily Brown



Featured Image: Emily Rudolph on Unsplash

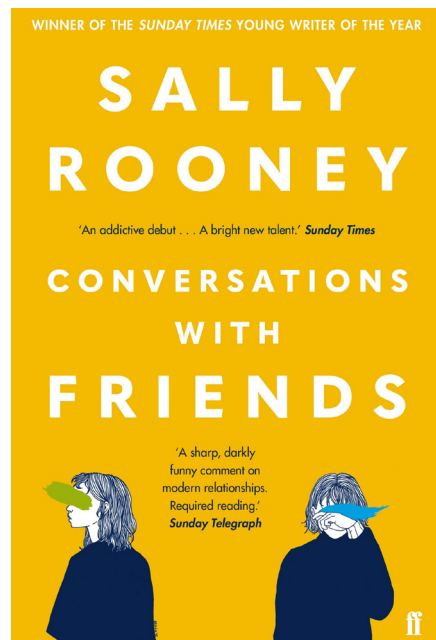
I finally got around to reading Sally Rooney's debut novel *Conversations with Friends* last month. I had read *Normal People* in 2019 for a book club meeting and loved it, my appreciation for the characters growing deeper when watching the excellent adaptation by the BBC last year. I didn't know whether I wanted to read *Conversations with Friends* and risk it not living up to the same level of perfection.

Disclaimer: Although not detailed in the review, this book deals with sensitive topics such as self harm.

This review will also contain spoilers.

Conversations with Friends centres on Frances, a 21-year-old student, and her friend and ex-girlfriend Bobbi, who end up befriending Melissa, a journalist writing a profile on their performance poetry. The plot progresses when Frances and Melissa's actor-husband, Nick, becomes involved in an affair which continues during a holiday they all take to France together. I find Rooney's writing style compelling, her books taking me only days to read whereas others would take weeks. While I didn't

quite connect with the characters of Frances, Bobbi, Nick and Melissa in the same way that I did with Marianne and Connell, the way their lives became entangled was intriguing even if some of the plot points seemed improbable at times. As with *Normal People*, I found the inclusion of the university setting to be an interesting addition to the novel, with Frances using the library as a space for introspection.



Front cover image of 'Conversations with Friends' by Sarah Rooney (2017).

I've read some criticism of Rooney's work with reviewers saying that they find her characters

unlikeable and, therefore, the books unenjoyable. However, I feel that the way Rooney is able to depict real characters complete with flaws who are also able to identify these flaws in themselves is an admirable complexity. There are times when the characters might do or say something which they regret or behave in ways that they later wish to rectify. While not exactly pretty, these moments make up parts of all of our lives and it's valuable to see them represented among the book's pages. It also makes it harder to fit the characters into particular boxes with none of the characters fitting the hero or villain tropes perfectly.

While it would be easy to feel sorry for Melissa, Rooney reveals that she too, has been unfaithful in the past and Bobbi tells Frances that she and Melissa shared a kiss. Bobbi is portrayed as an overbearing figure at times, dominating conversations and alienating others with her opinions. As narrator, it is Frances' thoughts and feelings we receive the most access to and her attitudes to various aspects of her life can seem confusing and misguided at times. When people ask her about future career options, she responds ambivalently as though she doesn't

regard these considerations as urgent or pressing in any way. This is in stark contrast to other characters, including Philip, who works with Frances as an intern at a literary agency during the summer.

Another thing that I find striking is Rooney's interweaving of important topics into her writing. There are mentions of self-harming, alcohol abuse and chronic illnesses among others in *Conversations with Friends*, and while some of these topics are dealt with in more depth than others, their appearance in the novel may help readers to feel that they are not alone when going through similar situations. I found Frances' endometriosis diagnosis particularly moving as she reckons with the implications of potentially not being able to have children, highlighted by her meeting Nick's beloved niece. Endometriosis can go undiagnosed for years, so I think it's important to include it here to raise awareness and to explain the effects that it can have on people.

Many of these issues have no conclusion. Frances' relationship with her father continues to worsen and his health deteriorates towards

the end of the novel. The ending of the novel also leaves open a number of possibilities for Frances, Bobbi, Melissa and Nick. Frances has started getting closer to Bobbi again, although Bobbi makes it clear that she is not her girlfriend, and in the very last words of the novel Frances makes an impulsive decision to reunite with Nick. This ending indicates that nothing is final, that relationships we thought were over can be reignited and that we can move past the mistakes that we make, to make more, different mistakes while we continue to find our way.

The Journal

The Ruskin Journal was founded in March 2017 by Elle Haywood and Hanushka Karnani.

It all started in a small café in Cambridge, where the two would-be founders had a discussion about the gap in the university's media scene for an online student newspaper. A few months later, the two submitted a proposal, for what would become The Ruskin Journal, to the Students' Union and the ALSS Department, and to their delight, it was given the immediate go-ahead.

To date, the Journal has had well over a hundred members, including writers, photographers, illustrators, designers, as well as committee members from other societies. The website has attracted over 30,000 total views in that time, including upward of 15,000 unique visitors from around the world, as well as countless engagements through social media.

We won *Best New Society* at the 2018 Students' Union Awards, we were shortlisted for *Society of the Year* for 2017 and 2018, we won the *Bronze Award* from the Clubs and Societies Recognition Scheme (2019-20), and we were shortlisted for the *Collaboration Award* by the 2020 National Societies & Volunteering Awards (NSVAs) committee.

Visit our website for more information.

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Finally, the Journal would like to thank our friends and writers for their love and support throughout this year. We really don't know where we would be without you.



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