

THE VIRIDIAN

THE VIRIDIAN

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THE VIRIDIAN

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A NOTE FROM OUR EDITOR

Dear readers,

Happy new year! On behalf of *The Viridian*, I'd like to wish you all a prosperous 2026, full of health and happiness! The first edition we are publishing this year, '*Identities*', is an important one. Who are we? What makes us who we are? Why are we the way we are?

In September 2025, our team evolved into its current form, as we gained several new members after saying goodbye to the founding team in June of that year. The identity of this magazine changed significantly, as we introduced new columnists, new designers, and new media managers, and began making *The Viridian* our own.

Identity isn't something we just obtain one day; instead, it's layered, questioned, moulded, and often incomplete. Identity permeates in how we see ourselves, how others see us, and how those two perceptions of us collide with each other. For me, identity isn't just limited to who we are now, but includes who we will be remembered as. Oftentimes, it can be difficult to keep sight of these elements that make us individuals due to a multitude of factors, ranging from the pressures of academic life to personal struggles. Yet, it's imperative that we still make time to do the things that make our soul happy, for the benefit of our health and identity.

As students, we spend a lot of time trying to navigate the world around us that is shaping us, and ultimately, hoping to find the answer to the question, "**Who am I?**" *The Viridian* exists to give space to students' voices. This edition celebrates all of our team members' individuality and underscores what connects us. In exploring the concept of identity, we are reminded that difference does not subsume creativity – it fuels it.

We hope that this edition of *The Viridian* makes you reflect, question, and recognise parts of yourselves and your personalities. Identity is not about having all the answers, but about having the courage to keep asking questions. In asking those questions, we begin to understand not only who we are, but how our values, choices, and voices shape the world around us. To close this edition's editorial piece, I'd like to leave you all with a quote from one of my biggest inspirations, Dr Jane Goodall, from her and Douglas Abrahms' book, *The Book of Hope: A Survival Guide for Trying Times*:

"What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make."

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BOOK CORNER



WRITTEN BY
ANNA PAVLOWITCH

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Identities, one of the most common and ever relevant themes of literature. Books in themselves are the ultimate reflection of human experience, an opportunity to delve into the most intricate aspects of mankind, a stamp of the author's life released into the world. Identity is a fluid concept with the potential to take infinite different forms, as can be seen through the books I have chosen for this month's recommendations.



'WE ARE DISPLACED' **BY MALALA YOUSAFZAI**

"I imagine this is true for all refugees—the paradox of being grateful for a new life that is based on the painful loss of an old one."

Identity is something unique to each person, something we are born with, an integral cog in the cycle of life. So how can something so personal, a natural part of oneself, still be so harshly stripped away? In this powerful bestseller, Nobel Peace Prize Winner and activist Malala Yousafzai shares not only her own story of displacement, but also the stories of some of the incredible girls she has met on her journey. She exposes the heart-wrenching reality behind the statistics we read about every day about the millions of people displaced worldwide. 'We are Displaced' brings to life Malala's childhood and her displacement in Pakistan, as well as the stories of other refugees, such as María, who fled her family farm following her father's murder by militants, Najla, who fled an ISIS attack on her community, Ajida, who fled genocide in Myanmar with her husband and children. This book acts as a poignant and essential reminder that each and every one of these individuals is not simply part of an impressive number for people to see on the news and gawk at; they each have their own story, their own experience of everything they know and love, their hopes and dreams being mercilessly taken away from them by war and conflict.

'THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY' **BY OSCAR WILDE**

"Nowadays people know the price of everything and the value of nothing."

"Experience is merely the name men give to their mistakes."

How can one talk about the concept of identity in literature without referring to the man who felt that his was expendable? When his friend Basil creates a portrait of him, Dorian Gray becomes enthralled by his own exquisitely painted appearance. Realising that his good looks were finite and wanting to forever remain as he was in the painting, Dorian exchanges his soul for eternal youth and beauty. Enticed by the habits of his friend, Lord Henry Wotton, he is drawn into corruption as he leads a double life of greed and indulgence. Dorian still maintains however, an appearance of purity, of the innocence of youth, while his portrait is the only thing that bears sign of his sins. Any sense of malice or regret is automatically translated onto the canvas. Reading this book, I found myself increasingly aggravated by Dorian's vanity, Lord Henry's misogyny, their utter lack of remorse. And that is precisely how I know Wilde has achieved his purpose. Do, however, prepare yourself for ten pages straight of Dorian Gray droning on about carpets and expensive fabrics; his avarice knows no bounds. Bear with his greed until the end—it's worth the wait.

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'THE SILENT PATIENT'
BY ALEX
MICHAELIDES

"Somehow grasping at vanishing snowflakes is like grasping at happiness: an act of possession that instantly gives way to nothing."



Famous artist Alicia Berenson's life is seemingly perfect. That is, until she kills her husband. Six years later, she still refuses to speak a single word. This brings her story into public view, casting Alicia into notoriety while she remains silent, hidden away with only the Grove, a secure forensic unit in North London, to call her home. Theo Faber is a criminal psychotherapist who has long been fascinated by Alicia's case. He thus resolves to get her to speak again, to 'fix' her as a way to mend his own brokenness, to fill the void which has been consuming him his entire life. 'The Silent Patient' explores how trauma dictates self-perception for both Alicia and Theo, as their identity is reshaped to fit the mould created by layers of secrets and psychological wounds. As is the case with any true psychological thriller, this book had me gripped from premise to resolution. I dare not reveal any more; looks like you'll just have to read it.



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MORBID MYSTERIES



WRITTEN BY
LOUISA LIAPIS

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In the later months of an abnormally bleak summer, amidst following a seemingly entranced dog through a course Massachusetts forest, a young girl discovered the decaying corpse of an unidentifiable woman situated face-down on half a beach towel, a pair of jeans and a blue bandana neatly folded and placed under her head; the sole characteristics defining the woman were her auburn hair and the pink polish on her toes. Footprints were found leading to the corpse teeming with insects while an unknown vehicle's tire imprints were spotted less than 50 meters from the body.



The perplexing and devastating nature of this case rendered authorities stunned, igniting mass research. Police indefatigably looked through every missing-person report and cars that had been made by the time of death, yet none aligned, and investigators failed to find further evidence. Throughout the mid to late 1970s and early 80s, the police received a manifold of hints to assist them with the case; one woman admitting to having witnessed her father strangling another woman in Massachusetts, while a man watching the infamous movie 'Jaws' had claimed that he noticed an extra wearing jeans and a blue bandana in a scene shot mere kilometres away from where the victim was ultimately found. Although intriguing, these leads did not particularly contribute to identifying the woman as the details did not match with the case's or were perceived as **"Too far-fetched."**

As technology became more advanced, the victim's remains were exhumed for the final time in 2013. It had previously been dug up for DNA and blood samples, though not much was discerned from these tests. Her bones were sent to a lab in 2022, where they were used to create a DNA profile, enabling the authorities to find some other distant relatives and eventually her, **Ruth Marie Terry**.

Ruth Marie Terry was born into poverty, lacking the presence of a biological mother who had died young. This forced her father and stepmother to raise her and her siblings, contributing to a harsh upbringing. After a failed marriage, Terry left her hometown, hoping for a wider range of opportunities than the ones that could be offered in her town, though her aspirations were put to a halt as just a year later, she gave birth to her son whom she was compelled to put up for adoption due to her financial position. Soon after, Terry allowed her superintendent to legally adopt her child in exchange for money which assisted her in improving her economic state, then moving to California where she met her second husband.

Mere months after their marriage, her husband, Guy Rockwell Muldavin, travelled to Tennessee to inform Terry's family that she had gone missing, leading her brother to hiring a private investigator who declared Terry had willingly sold her possessions and fled the state so as to join a religious cult, but this was before the connection between the corpse found and missing woman was made.

Ultimately, Police declared that Terry's husband was her killer, due to his extensive criminal activity in the past. Two years after Muldavin's second marriage, he attempted to flee the city after his wife and her daughter went missing but was eventually arrested as he refused to give a testimony on their disappearance. Over the years, Muldavin became a chief suspect in several murders, with authorities even finding some evidence, but not enough to correlate him to the crimes, so he wasn't arrested. Terry's family admitted that Muldavin presented 'possessive' behaviour over her, and they addressed the odd fluctuations in her actions when she was around him. Her sister-in-law even noticed that after Terry's death, Muldavin briefly informed her family of her disappearance, stating he was unaware of her whereabouts before leaving the Tennessee home. Although Muldavin had died years before due to illness, he was officially deemed Ruth Marie Terry's murderer in 2022.

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VIDEO ARCHIVES



WRITTEN BY
NOAH NATHANAEL AND
SIMOMA MITSU

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I'm back. Did you miss me? During my one-month hiatus, I: Visited London, amused. Left London - not amused. Found out how expensive final exams are - still not amused. Rediscovered my new celebrity crush, Fran Lebowitz. Attempted to sleep for a full day. Failed. Read half of Clarice Lispector's discography. As per this month's theme, found an identity outside of 'Economics by day, Mathematics by night'. And watched exactly one (1) movie.



'THE PANIC IN NEEDLE PARK' (1971) - DIR. JERRY SCHATZBERG:

God help Bobby and Helen.

Your classic boy-meets-girl, except 'boy' is a heroin addict, and 'girl' is homeless. Set against the backdrop of New York in the 70s, this film mastered by Joan Didion unveils the lows, and lower lows, of romance under the influence. Through these characters, we see the inescapable hunger for a fix run parallel to the undying desire to connect. They take drugs with the intent to get high, just like they love with the intention of feeling loved - how selfish (joke). Your form, your speech, your structure is shown to alter, sometimes decay, by emulating the character of that which you love, whether that be a person or a drug, making this story one of survival so raw it's almost primal. Basically, heroin is just a gateway drug to being in love. So, what's the remedy? Rehab? Priesthood? Addiction strips you of your morals, which is why I can't view this film as being grounded in any moralistic way, so instead I'll go against it. The one thing dating show contestants and heroin addicts have in common is the unknown intention behind what they choose to consume. I reject the notion as being unduly vigorous.

Once you approach love with intention, every thought becomes filtered, and every interaction is hesitant. You tell me I'm expected to share a part of my soul with someone, become a part of them, then shouldn't love be the one thing I accept passively? A relationship isn't an instrument you can tune; it's a mechanism which will heal. It's alive. It breathes through you. I just think of the lack of love in somebody's life to define its pursuit as intentional, and somewhere in that definition you restrict it, confining the word of love to the mercy of another. Most people disconnect themselves from these facts and in turn, the system responsible for suspending love to a space reserved only for the faint of heart today is run by a mob of media-trained androids who frequent bacchanals and praise Nick Lachey as their Lover Supreme. To be honest, I'm a bit ashamed of that last joke, but shame is an underexplored emotion, and I try to exploit it any chance I get. After viewing this story, its touch will remain in your thoughts absolutely. The writing in this film flows fluently through the screen and the visuals are so stunning even Stevie Wonder could appreciate them.

That's it. That was my jeremiad. See you all in March.

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'LA HAINE' (1995) - DIR. MATHIEU KASSOVITZ:

Welcome, readers, to 2026, and happy new year from me and Noah! In a blur of holiday celebrations, the realization that my last Christmas as a child had ended hit me unexpectedly. I remembered that 2026 is the year my classmates and I will be turning 18 therefore “Officially,” entering adulthood... I found that this brief moment of epiphany really fit with this edition’s topic of identity which is why I wanted to select a more serious film that explores this multifaceted theme as well as capturing directionless teenage angst. Instantly, I thought of none other than Mathieu Kassovitz’s ‘La Haine’.

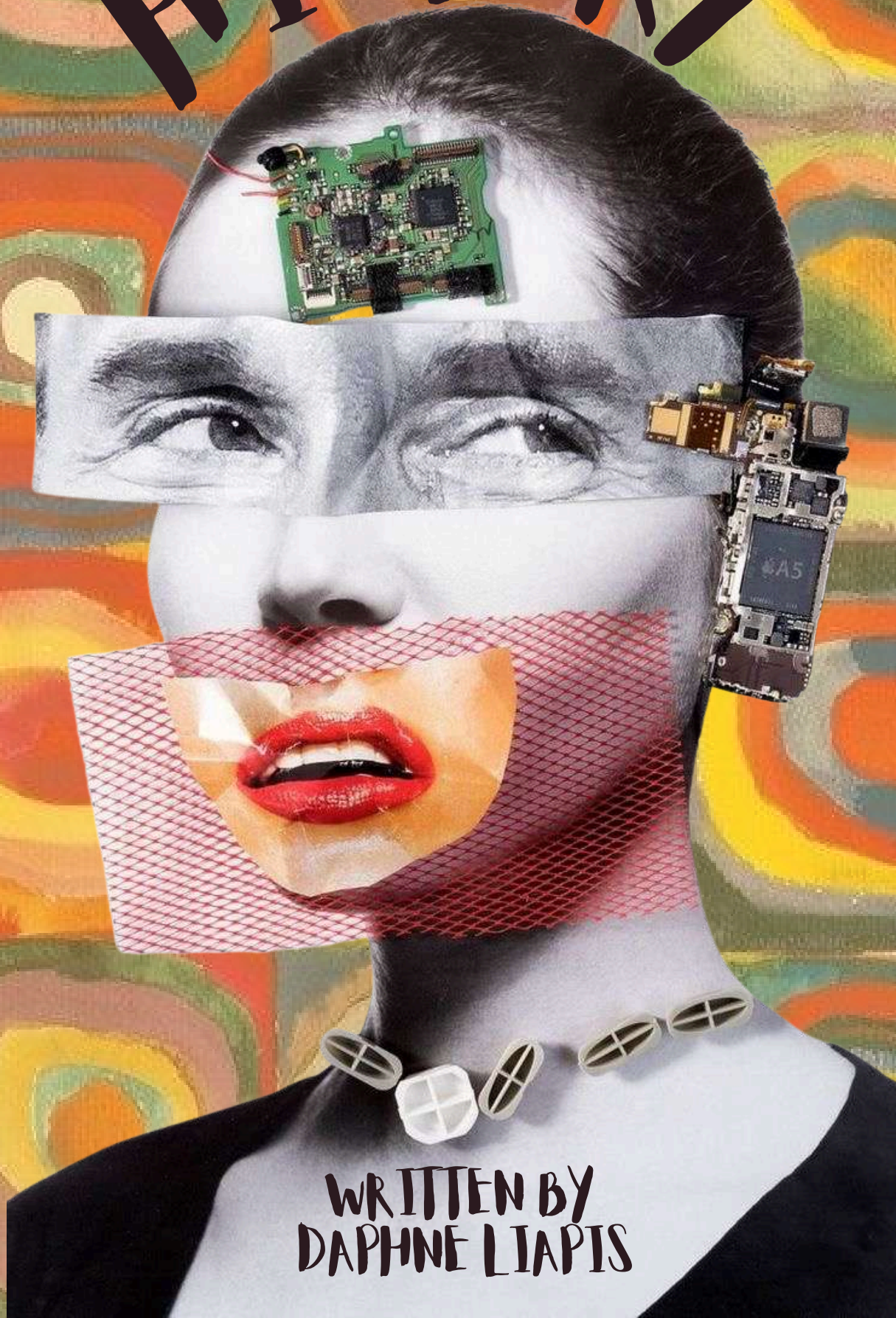
“I feel like an ant lost in an intergalactic space”



I guess it’s odd to call ‘La Haine’ a coming-of-age film, given the title simply means “Hate,” but truthfully, that’s what is felt like to me. Fast-paced and exhilarating, this movie takes us through a tense 24 hours in the life of three young men living in the marginalized banlieue of Paris. Although Saïd, Hubert, and Vinz all come from different ethnic backgrounds (Arab, black, and Jewish), they are all grouped together and labelled “Troublemakers.” The violently hateful clashes amongst these young men with policemen reveal the severe tensions that prevail within these neglected communities while exploring their struggle of asserting and fighting for their political and national identity. Other than facing profound racism, all three boys struggle with ways of proving their male identity as well. ‘La Haine’ so vividly depicts the lack of role models present in these young men’s lives as they vivaciously feed off toxic masculinity to survive. What the three boys have taught me is that despite their tough, impenetrable exteriors, the truth is that young people are merely in desperate search for an identity and their place in the world.

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HISTORY



WRITTEN BY
DAPHNE LIAPIS

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THE 'ORIGINAL' FEMINISTS

By definition, feminism is the advocacy of human rights based on equality of the sexes.

Feminism was an idea illustrated throughout history, in many forms, going as back as the French Revolution, where unrest sparked women to protest for their own rights. However, it was in the early 20th century when everything changed with the formation of suffragettes.

The suffragettes were a group made up of women who fought for women's rights through protests, property damage, and hunger strikes. Their aim was to establish a female identity, which was equal to men's; the suffragettes wanted to allow them to have a vote in parliament. It started in the United Kingdom, to get women to be heard, but this idea spread on a global scale, and in 1914, the international alliance of women was established by women from the UK, the United States of America, and many other countries. **The UK, created a group called Women's Social and political Union (WSPU)**, and was led by **Emmeline Pankhurst**, who emphasized the need for women's right to vote, through boisterous demonstrations, and breaking windows. This global organization crated networks and shared strategies that would be used to emphasize the need for women to vote. This was known as **first wave feminism**, since it focused on women's rights in government and was the first real voice that women had to express their opinions.



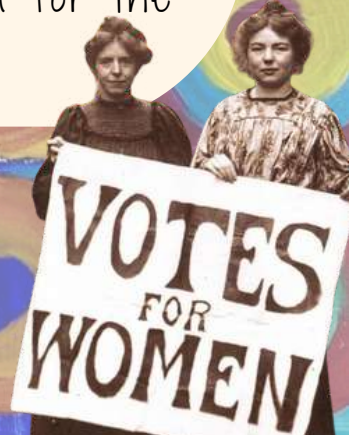
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A few decades later, in the 1960s, women fought for issues beyond voting, such as social equalities and reproductive rights. In these years, women made it their goal to ensure the economic stability for women at work, as the pay was a huge issue faced by women during that time. There was a large pay gap between the salary that men received to the one that women received. What's more, in the workplace, women faced crude and sexist comments – this movement allowed women to fight for women's rights in professional settings. This was known as **second wave feminism**, due to the fact they stopped merely focusing on voting for women and expanded their scope, focusing on other elements of society in which women were not involved in enough in order to influence male-dominated industries to not only allow women to work, but to also give them the same benefits.

Third wave feminism was an idea which emerged a little before the turn of the century, and it promoted women's sexual freedom, allowing them to liberate themselves through makeup and clothing. In this period, women dressed up in more provocative clothes and makeup signalling an imminent sexual positivity and expression of their selves. In addition to this, women started speaking up about sexual harassment, which paved the way for the movements which rose in the early 2000s, which allowed women to express their tragic stories and talk about the events they went through regarding sexual abuse.

Some people, believe that we are now in what is called **fourth wave feminism**. This movement revolves around women feeling more comfortable sharing their views or stories on sexual harassment and empowering women to have a voice in society. Many women use platforms, such as YouTube, to talk about their experiences, and this has allowed many younger viewers, to learn about the tremendous physical and mental effects that sexual violence can have on people.

Today, although noticeable progress has been made with women's rights, there is still some way to go to reach what feminism is trying to achieve. It is imperative not to forget how people in the past fought for their rights, as it not only brings hope, but it also fosters a sense of optimism for the future.



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THE FASHION FIX



WRITTEN BY
NEFELI VASSILOU

Your Guide to Not Being Basic: Learn to Reflect your Identity

Fashion is supposed to represent who you are. Since the dawn of time, we've been told: **"Our appearance is the first thing people see,"** and whether we like to admit it or not, this is true. Your appearance is the first thing people see, and people will inevitably make assumptions about you based on it. While I can't control what your face looks like, I can help with what your outfits look like. Instead of sporting the same t-shirt in different colours, or whatever 'TikTok Uniform' is currently trending, find your own identity in your clothes. Learn how to reflect who you are through what you're wearing. Stop mimicking what everyone else wears. Why would you want to be like everyone else? So, let your closet give outsiders a glimpse into who you are, what you stand for, and what your personality is like. The good stuff.

There have been many notions on the internet lately claiming that **"Personal style is dead,"** and in many ways it is. With increasing accessibility to new technology, and our expanding ability to pump out clothes faster, fast-fashion and microtrends were born. As a result, our originality and authenticity have been hanging on by a thread in the face of algorithms, shepherding us all into wearing the same microtrends. This doesn't make personal style "Dead," per se, it just makes our pursuit of it harder. It's hard not to buy something these days without intentionally or unintentionally giving into a trend, but it is possible. The point is to take inspiration from the internet, without basing your entire wardrobe on current trends. Buy items because you like them. Whether you enjoy the feel of a material, the way it sits on your body, or the silhouette, let the reason you buy an item be your own, not the internet's.

Developing your personal style doesn't have to be complicated. The thought of it may seem daunting and tedious at first, so before you start huffing and puffing, let me put you at ease: it's not a difficult task and the result is extremely rewarding. However, it will take time and effort; yes, I know, patience – this may be a foreign concept to those of you with a fried attention span (me included).

These are some tips to help you in your journey:

Use Pinterest as a Mood Board

Pinterest is undisputably one of the greatest creations of mankind, and it just so happens to be a great place to go when seeking inspiration. Scroll in the app for as long as you want and save outfits you like on a Pinterest board. The next time you need some outfit inspiration, you can use the images you saved as a starting point. Using Pinterest as inspiration will help you build a wardrobe that reflects you. Eventually, you'll manage to build a concrete idea of what your style is, and you won't even need the inspiration.

Step Outside of your Comfort Zone

While finding your personal style, it's important to remind yourself that clothes and fashion are supposed to be fun. You can play around and try new things. Don't fear something new. Worst case scenario, you try something you don't love. So what? You're just one step closer to finding what you do like. Personal style is ultimately a form of self-expression, so it doesn't have to be perfect or taken too seriously. Dare I say, **"It's not that deep bro."**

Evaluate the Clothes you Wear Daily

Over the course of several months, buy pieces strategically. Identify the key pieces you can see yourself wearing for years, regardless of the trends that come and go. As your style is evolving, it's also important to re-evaluate the pieces you currently have in your arsenal. Do you no longer wear those pants because they don't fit, or because you don't like them anymore? Were you once buying pieces you thought were timeless that now don't fit your style? In either case, you've gained valuable information that you take with you.

Curate a Wish List to Curb Impulse Purchases

This is a lifesaver. Instead of immediately adding a clothing item to your cart, add it to a wish list and wait two months. In the meantime, think about your closet and the gaps in it. If after these two months you still are set on buying the item and think it could work in your closet, do it. This prevents any impulse purchases you'll later regret.

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PSYCHOLOGY

WRITTEN BY
EVELINA CHRISTOFOROU AND
MAYA NATHANAEL

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PSYCHOLOGY OF IDENTITY

HAPPY NEW YEAR! ENJOY!

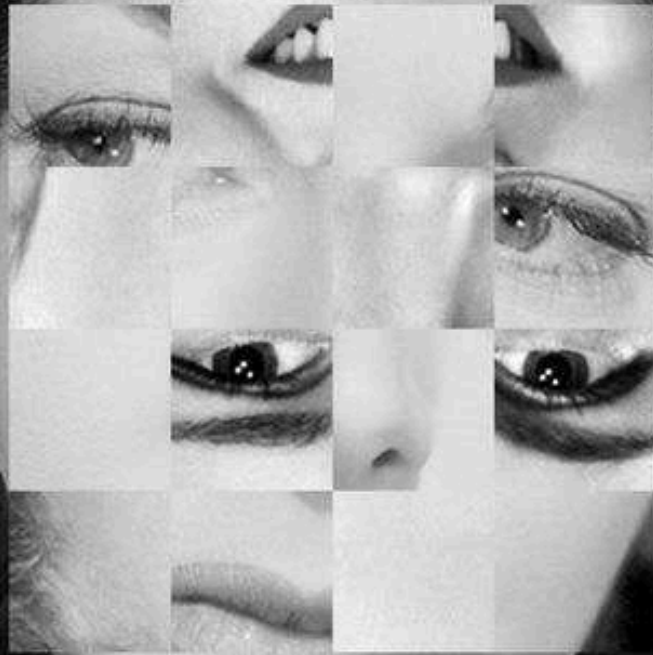
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Clues:

1. A person's sense of who they are
2. Freud's term for the mediating part of the mind
3. Your overall sense of who you are
4. Being true to yourself
5. Core guiding principles
6. Ideas you hold to be true
7. Ability to make your own choices
8. Your Overall sense of worth
9. How you picture yourself
10. Your full understanding of yourself
11. Mental framework for organizing information
12. What drives your actions
13. Your personal life story
14. Your consistent behavior patterns
15. A social position with expectations
16. Shared norms shaping identity
17. Where you believe control comes from
18. Becoming your unique self
19. Feeling like the same person across time
20. Ability to notice internal states

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A DIP IN THOUGHT



WRITTEN BY
FATIMA SANJAKDAR

NEW YEAR, NEW YOU

Counting down the seconds to New Year, you hope that as the clock strikes 12, you'll finally get around to doing all the things you said you'd do yesterday. The essay you said you'd write, the closet you said you'd organize, and the bad habit you said you'd give up. So as the year changes, the question is: will you change?

In the same way that our education, upbringing and families contribute to forming our characters, a change of environment would, likewise, also yield a similar change in an individual. Throughout human history, our intrinsic ability to adapt has proven to be our mechanism for survival. However, the millions of years it took for us, as a species, to change is overlooked, and instead self-development is marketed as a quick fix for your latest existential crisis, which can be solved by purchasing a specific product, picking up a new hobby, or reading a self-help book. The truth is that implementing meaningful change in our lives can only stem from honest self-reflection.

The lack of belief in a greater power implies that humans do not have a predetermined path or essence; this belief has been adopted by the Existentialist Philosophy and refined by the father of this school of thought, Satre. Of course, our capacity to make choices isn't simply a theory, but neuroscientists also have proven that neuroplasticity demonstrates our ability to change, because of our experiences. Nonetheless, the extent to which we can claim "**New year, new me,**" is complicated and fraught with scientific implications. Researchers believe that some personality and character traits are influenced by our genetics, specifically those which indicate a genetic predisposition to mental illness. Nonetheless, the same researchers conducting these studies insist that life itself is a transformative experience, and that peoples' character flaws are not their fate but instead a starting point for improvement. So, there is some scientific basis behind Satre's claim that "**We are our choices.**"

One of the most influential stories about the human nature is found in Buddhist scripture, where the analogy of a chariot is used to symbolize that a human isn't a whole, but instead comprised of different, changing parts. Buddhism emphasizes the inevitability of change and coins the teaching of Anatta: no permanent self. This goes beyond just the ability to change, instead depicting identity as a label for the series of evolutions a person will experience in their life. Moreover, Anatta is the belief that when you change different aspects of yourself, such as how the wheel, the seat and the shaft of a chariot are changed, you will no longer be the same person and the chariot (if you choose to use that as an eco-friendly alternative to cars in 2026) won't be the same chariot either.

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On the other hand, Abrahamic religions would counter this representation of an individual and instead attach sentiment to the human experience by teaching followers that every human is born with a soul. Similarly, many religious people believe humans will never experience a spiritual death, since the soul, the essence of a person, is separate from their body and will outlive their physical vessel. Nevertheless, those who believe they have a soul are not exempt from decision-making. Instead, many religions, such as Christianity, believe that humans will be partially judged based on our good deeds and, infamously, on our sins. In fact, change is a core belief in Christianity, since it is believed that we are born imperfect but can be accepted into the faith through our actions.

The Achilles Heel of the human nature is our impatience, which is further wounded by the dizzying speed of the world around us. During this time of year, the flux of empty resolutions is devoid of any constructive change since real change starts with reflection and determination, not a countdown. So instead of being destructive, enter 2026 with positivity, gratitude, and conscientiousness. There is no time sooner than now to do everything you want to do and be everything you want to be. As Satre said:

*"There may be more beautiful times,
but this one is ours."*

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BETWEEN THE SCOREBOARDS

WRITTEN BY
ROHAN STYLIANOS DUBEY

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IDENTITY ON THE FIELD

There are various features a person's identity could include. Whether a person is funny, charismatic, cocky or rude these are all things that make up for a person identity. However, there is also another thing that should not make up a part of a person's identity and that is race and ethnicity. Unfortunately, in the world of sport, an athlete is often judged on their skin tone rather than their personality and skills. This is a burden on some athletes, being stuck with a generalised identity for the rest of their lives, but some athletes have come to terms with it, and have risen to greater heights.



JESSE OWENS (TRACK AND FIELD)

Jesse Owens' athletic career was extraordinary, both before and after the 1936 Olympics. While competing for Ohio State University, he dominated collegiate track and field, famously setting or tying four world records in less than an hour at the 1935 Big Ten Championships, an achievement often called the greatest day in track and field history. He excelled in the sprints and the long jump, showcasing versatility and consistency at the highest level of competition, which is something very rare amongst athletes at the time.

At the 1936 Berlin Olympics, Jesse Owens delivered one of the most remarkable performances in sports history. Competing in Nazi Germany, he won four gold medals in the 100 meters, 200 meters, long jump, and 4x100 relay, directly going against Adolf Hitler's claims of Aryan racial superiority. Owens' calm excellence on the world stage made his victories more than athletic achievements, they became a powerful statement against racism and a lasting symbol of courage and equality.

After his Olympic triumphs, Owens struggled to find stable opportunities in professional sports due to segregation and limited sponsorships for black athletes. He raced against horses, motorcycles, and other novelty acts to earn a living, which highlighted how little respect even the most decorated Black athletes received at the time. Later in life, Owens worked as a public speaker, sports ambassador, and advocate for youth and education. Although he faced racism throughout much of his career, his legacy grew over time, and he was eventually honoured as a pioneer whose achievements reshaped athletics and challenged racist beliefs worldwide.



PETER WESTBROOK (FENCING)

Peter Westbrook is a groundbreaking American fencer who changed both the sport and who gets to participate in it. He first discovered fencing as a teenager in New York City through community programs. He quickly took to sabre, showing natural speed, skill, and determination. Fencing was not easy for him to access, especially because it was mostly a sport for wealthy, white athletes. From the start, Westbrook stood out not only for his talent but also for being one of the few Black athletes in elite fencing.

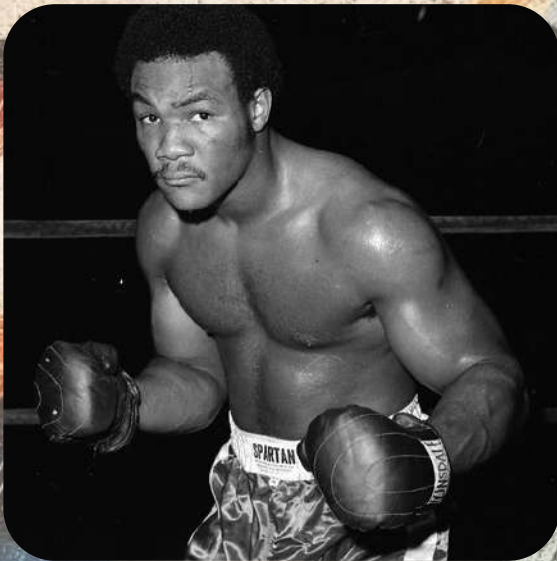
As he moved up in the sport, Westbrook faced racism and exclusion. He often felt underestimated by coaches and officials, isolated at competitions, and had to prove over and over that he belonged. He also had limited access to the best training and support, and success did not always bring respect. Despite these challenges, he became a six-time Olympian and won a bronze medal in sabre at the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics. His struggles inspired him to create change. Through the Peter Westbrook Foundation, he works to give young people from underserved communities opportunities, mentorship, and support so that future black and other minority fencers can succeed in a sport that once excluded them.

SIGNIFICANT SPORTING EVENTS THAT HAPPENED IN JANUARY

January 5, 1968 – George Foreman Wins Gold: George Foreman won the gold medal in heavyweight boxing at the 1968 Olympic trials in the U.S. (qualifiers leading up to the Olympics).

January 26, 2004 – Australian Open Begins: The start of the first Grand Slam of the tennis season, historically leading to major upsets and landmark wins.

January 12, 1995 – Michael Jordan Returns from Retirement: Jordan returned to the Chicago Bulls in March, but January 1995 saw him preparing for one of the most dramatic comebacks in NBA history, dominating pre-season and team practices.



As an Indian-Cypriot fencer myself, I have and am inspired by the likes of Peter Westbrook for facing the odds and succeeding in what is a predominantly white sport. I encourage all athletes of colour to get inspired by such athletes and never let in to the racism that many have allowed to ruin their careers and to never feel as though your ethnicity or skin tone is a burden. Thank you all for reading and I wish you all a happy 2026!

THE VIRIDIAN

THE ARTS



WRITTEN BY
MARILIA EVANGELOU

THE VIRIDIAN

THE ART OF CHOOSING YOURSELF

HAPPY NEW YEAR! It is my biggest pleasure to welcome you to the Arts Column for yet another year! Now, as the glitter and confetti slowly fall to the ground and the excitement of welcoming a new year starts to fade away, we are left with something far more important, the opportunity to re-invent ourselves. January is a month full of choices; it's when questions feel more important than answers, and when identity is not about labels, but exploration. Through art, we are often offered different versions of ourselves, some more tempting than others, revealing truths we might have missed during any other period of our lives. In this edition, we will explore how art challenges the idea of perfection, inviting us into "Other worlds," and allowing us to confront all the versions of ourselves and to choose what we carry forward from each version. Creativity gives us the freedom to unapologetically build our identity, and that is the art of choosing yourself.

BUTTONS FOR EYES: IDENTITY BEHIND THE OTHER DOOR



Recently, the theme of Identities came to life through an immersive experience created by our school's Backstage Club: a Coraline-inspired escape room that blurred the line between reality and imagination.

The escape room invited us into an unsettling yet captivating world. Much like the story of 'Coraline' itself, the space reflected a distorted version of reality, one that appeared exciting and perfect at first glance, with the use of carefully crafted props and set, all handmade by the members of the club themselves, along with their teachers. However, the space quickly revealed something fake and ominous beneath the surface. Through beautifully designed lighting, sound, and puzzles, they managed to transform our humble classroom, Drama 1, into an experience that felt alive, drawing players directly into Coraline's journey.

At its core, the story of Coraline is about identity. The "Other World," represents the temptation of becoming someone else, someone more admired, more comfortable in their skin, more "Perfect." However, as Coraline learns, sacrificing authenticity for perfection comes at a cost. The escape room captured this idea magnificently, forcing participants to navigate uncertainty, make choices, and question what real and what was merely an illusion. In doing so, it mirrored the process of self-discovery many of us experience in our own lives.

What made this project especially powerful was the role of the Backstage Club as creators of identity-driven art. Often unseen artists are responsible for building the environments that shape how stories are experienced, whether in film, theatre even escape rooms. In this project, students became world-builders, using their creativity, collaboration skills and practical skills to express complex ideas about control, freedom, and selfhood through the most widely-understanding, innocent, and fun way possible.

By stepping into Coraline's world, participants were encouraged to reflect on our own sense of self and the versions of ourselves we choose to embrace or reject. Through this escape room, the Backstage Club showed that sometimes, understanding who we are begins by daring to step into the unknown and finding your own way back, and with whatever is left, re-shaping the identity you develop, because that is the strongest part of who you are.



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STUDENT SPOTLIGHT



WRITTEN BY
RAMAN VASIUK

How Failure Shapes our Identity More than Success Does

The common idea of failure as a student often comes from **bad grades, a tough time studying, disappointment over the inability to meet certain expectations, be it personal or those of teachers or parents, as well as generally finding it difficult to enjoy a subject and most importantly, progress in it.** This is not helped by seeing others succeed, as comparison of your progress with that of others always results in you looking down at yourself and therefore shaping the idea that you will never climb the ladder as high as others do. Failure can happen beyond school as well, be it with any personal matter, trying something new and eventually realising that it's harder than expected, or failing at a sport outside of school; there are countless other examples, but each share something common – you blame yourself and consider yourself a failure for not reaching a certain level. Slowly, constant blame for failing becomes the default image you have of yourself, which gradually destroys self-esteem, determination and hope for a better future. Daily, you cannot help but keep reminding yourself of how perfect things would have been had you succeeded in that test, in that sport, in that hobby. However, a core truth that we tend to miss is that failure shapes who we become so much more than success does.

Failure reveals your character and your attitude towards whatever it is that you are doing. Setbacks undoubtedly create endless pressure to perform, and each one fosters reflection and a constant adjustment of your methods to ensure you get that ball rolling next time you attempt something. What most of us tend to miss is that setbacks must be framed as the moment where identity starts moving and shifting, instead of constantly being bound to our comfort zones. When someone doesn't meet certain standards, significant traits of that person are revealed, which success can never show. Failure takes the 'mask' off a person and exposes their reaction and behaviour under pressure, whether they quit or adapt, as well as what they value when success is no longer guaranteed. Challenging times result in the building of your character and identity in the long run, because if you truly want to achieve something, it's imperative that you gradually change the view that you have on failure and see it as evidence of your growth, because no change or progress can be made unless you set discipline and determination over comfort. Failure centralises your mind on exactly what you must do to a greater degree next time to fix that mistake, or to do more of something in less time, or to communicate something better to a friend, and by having these ideas endlessly run in our minds, we really focus on what matters for our vision of success in absolutely anything.



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Nevertheless, I must acknowledge that success also fundamentally shapes identity, but in a limited way. From personal experience, one of my most memorable moments in the last term of school was my, personally, long-awaited success in the last couple of tests of the term. When I received the test results I finally saw, on paper, that all my doubts and fear of failure that I had glued in my mind were wrong, and that was a huge personal win for me. It was a massive validation, that despite the struggles, I managed to come out with success at a crucial moment in the term. However, the fundamental truth is that I would not have managed to succeed without the lessons I have learned in the previous months, which were filled with attempts to transform my identity and mindset to accept failure and see it as a stepping stone for success, instead of constantly dreading it. I set new priorities, developed stronger resilience, and changed my approach to studying, which directly links to identity development. Of course, identity development can apply absolutely anywhere, be it relationships, sports, personal ambitions – a never-ending list.

In conclusion, **failure is an essential puzzle piece entailed in every person's identity development**, exposing us to situations where a positive outcome is not guaranteed, where we delve into the unknown, having to act decisively in tough situations that we may have never faced before. Nonetheless, such situations reveal our true selves not only on a personal level, but also to our surrounding social circle, forcing us to show our intelligence and adaptability in uncertain times. As the renowned physicist Stephen Hawking highlights, "Intelligence is the ability to adapt to change," which I believe greatly emphasises that true intelligence and identity is less about knowledge and more about flexibility, mental agility, and the capacity to learn and adjust thinking in evolving circumstances, which is precisely what failure sparks more than success ever will.

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Stay tuned for our edition, out soon!**



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