

# THE McGill Daily

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## WOMEN'S HISTORY SPECIAL ISSUE

McGill DAILY *le délit*  
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**3** EDITORIAL  
· Highlighting McGill Alumnae

**4** NEWS  
· Good People: Girls Who Code  
· Interview with Luca Léry Moffat, McGill Alum at the *Kyiv Independent*

**7** CULTURE  
· *Love Story*: Carolyn Besset  
· Local Artist Cinzia's New EP  
· *Hamnet* Review  
· Fanfiction  
· Post-creds

**11** COMMENTARY  
· The Infinite Scroll  
· International Women's Day Protests  
· Iran & Democracy

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# Spotlighting Powerful McGill Alumnae

In honour of our International Women's History special issue, *The McGill Daily* has highlighted six influential McGill alumnae who have flourished in their respective fields.

## Sciences/Applied Sciences: Jennifer Sidey-Gibbons

Originally from Calgary, Alberta, Canadian Space Agency (CSA) astronaut Jennifer, "Jenni" Sidey-Gibbons graduated from McGill with honours in mechanical engineering with the class of 2011. She went on to earn a PhD in engineering from the University of Cambridge where she then became an assistant professor. Subsequently, she was selected by the CSA as the third-ever woman to join the ranks of their astronaut candidates, completing her training in 2020. Currently, she is a backup crew member on the Artemis II lunar flyby mission. Gibbons has also acted as ground communicator on a number of International Space Station spacewalks and has mentored astronaut candidates.

## Fine Arts: Sheree Spencer

Born in Toronto to parents of Barbadian descent, stage director and producer Sheree Spencer, attended McGill's Schulich School of Music with a minor in Drama Performance from the Faculty of Arts. After graduating with her BA in 2012, she freelanced as a stage performer, featured in productions at the Vancouver Opera and the Toronto Fringe Festival. She also went on to earn accolades such as TD Emerging Producer of Toronto Fringe 2016 as well as international recognition for her direction of the opera *Plaything*. Spencer has since relocated to New York to take up the position of a Mellon Producing Fellow with Beth Morrison Projects, where she continues to produce and direct new works.

## Politics & Activism: Emmanuella Lambropoulos

Sitting one row from the back and four seats in from the aisle in the House of Commons chamber, Emmanuella Lambropoulos has represented the constituency of Saint-Laurent since 2017. Growing up in Saint-Laurent's Greek community, she graduated from McGill University in 2013 and was president of the university's Hellenic Students' Association. She then moved on to a short career in education, working in the local Saint-Laurent school district. Having volunteered with Stéphane Dion, who represented Saint-Laurent from 1996 to 2017, Lambropoulos reported that she's always been interested in politics. After canvassing door-to-door every day for weeks, she won the Liberal nomination and ultimately a seat in an upset over a seasoned provincial politician, Yolande James.

## Sports: Sylvia Sweeney

An induction to the McGill Athletics Hall of Fame in 2021 is only the latest accolade in Sylvia Sweeney's decorated basketball career. Not only playing for McGill, Concordia, and Laurentian, she joined the

Canadian national team in 1974 and played in two Olympic games. As a native Montrealer, she studied classical piano performance at McGill University from 1973 to 1975. In 2017, she was appointed a Member of the Order of Canada, the highest honour a civilian can receive. In 1994, Sweeney was inducted into the Canadian Basketball Hall of Fame. Every year since then, the Hall recognizes a female university player with the Sylvia Sweeney award for outstanding achievement on and off the court. After her time in basketball, she began a second career in television, commenting on sports and current affairs and then moving into production. Passionate across disciplines, Sweeney also founded the international ArtsGames competition to celebrate the arts.

## Media: Allya Davidson

Amidst an ever-evolving media landscape, Emmy-winning journalist and producer Allya Davidson, an alumna of *The McGill Daily*, still believes in the power of investigative reporting. Graduating from McGill in 2009 with a degree in cultural studies and world religions, the Mississauga-born Davidson earned a master's in broadcast journalism from the City St George's, University of London. She went on to produce documentaries for global networks such as VICE, PBS Frontline, and ABC Australia. Davidson is now the first Black executive producer of CBC's *The Fifth Estate*, a weekly program that airs investigative documentaries on Canadian and international issues. Davidson also mentors young BIPOC journalists through the Canadian Association of Journalists. Trail-blazing and accomplished, Davidson points to her time at McGill as foundational: "At McGill I learned to live, work with and understand people who were from all over the world, from different backgrounds and religions. I had always been a nerd interested in the world around me, and McGill proved that there were and are thousands of people like me."

## Business: Ritika Dutt

Recognized by Forbes in their 2020 30 Under 30 list for Law & Policy, Ritika Dutt co-founded Botler AI in 2017 to help victims of sexual harassment better understand their rights. Born in India and raised in Hong Kong and Singapore, Dutt moved to Montreal to attend McGill and graduated in 2013. Soon after, an experience with a stalker left her scared and confused. "The more I researched about sexual harassment," Dutt told *McGill News*, "I realized there were many women, and men, like me, who didn't know their legal rights in these situations." Partly inspired by her circumstance and the rise of the #MeToo movement, Dutt co-created Botler AI, which analyzes user reports for free and predicts whether they constitute sexual harassment. It also indicates which laws may have been broken and generates a report that can be sent to the respective authorities. In 2021, the Canadian government invested in Botler to help produce the Pan-Canadian Triage System for Sexual Harassment, Misconduct & Violence. Relaying her belief to CTV News that there is an "urgent, vital need for an easy, accessible solution that empowers individuals to seek justice on their own terms," Dutt continues to lead Botler as its CEO.

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# Rewriting the Code: McGill Students Break Barriers in Computer Science

Student-run organization Girls Who Code seeks to empower women and gender-diverse students in computer science and related fields.

**Enid Kohler**  
Staff Writer

**G**ood People is a bi-weekly column highlighting McGill students doing community-oriented work on and around campus. Because it's important to celebrate good people doing good things.

In 2026, Deloitte predicts that women will make up less than 30 per cent of the global technology workforce, given that they are consistently underrepresented in academic programs in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). What is more, women make up only 25 per cent of tech positions on a global scale, as reported by Forbes and the National Center for Women and Information Technology.

Girls Who Code confronts gender disparity in STEM by making the field inclusive and accessible for women and gender-diverse people. With an eye towards breaking gender barriers, the organization offers computer science lessons and mentorship for elementary and high school students across Montreal. It also runs hackathons for university students, networking events, and workshops.

The *Daily* spoke with Girls Who Code executives Jenna Cacchione and Virginia Ceccatelli, U3 students studying Computer Science and Economics at McGill. We talked about the creative side to coding, imposter syndrome, and why young girls and gender-diverse students belong in the computer science field.

*This interview has been edited for clarity and conciseness.*

**Enid Kohler for The McGill Daily (MD):** How did you get involved in Girls Who Code, and why?

**Virginia Ceccatelli (VC):** I was never really exposed to coding in high school. It wasn't really a subject that was taught, and I always thought it was scary as a field and very masculine. When I started my studies in International Relations in university, I got a bit of exposure to Python and R and had so much

fun with it, so I transferred into Computer Science. I want to give girls the opportunity to get into coding and see that it's a creative process as well.

**Jenna Cacchione (JC):** Similar to Virginia, I did my first year in [another program, Economics,] and then I switched into Computer Science. My high school didn't have anything computer related...Had I had a program like this, maybe I would have switched into CS a little bit earlier. I really just wanted to give back [by giving] other girls that same opportunity.

**VC:** CS really is like learning a language. Like any language, the more you speak it and the earlier you're exposed to it, it's so much easier to pick it up.

**MD:** That's a really good comparison. For those who aren't familiar with your organization, can you pitch Girls Who Code in a few sentences?

**VC:** [Girls Who Code] a way to make coding fun and creative, and to change the narrative that [coding] is anything relegated to the masculine sphere. We give back to young girls [by seeing] them learn every week. It's really rewarding.

**JC:** [Coding] can be really daunting. Sometimes I look at my computer screen and I'm like, 'oh my God, what am I even doing?' For younger girls especially, it can be super intimidating, especially since it's a male-dominated field. I hope our facilitators can act as big sisters to our students.

**MD:** Why is it important that young girls and gender-diverse students have access to a program like Girls Who Code?

**VC:** In general, the CS field is massively male-dominated. Most role models in the industry are guys. So for us, it's really to show girls that they can do it; it's not that hard. For guys, this message is something they might have been told growing up, and for girls, it's not necessarily the narrative.

**MD:** You mentioned that the Computer Science space is predominantly male-dominated.



**Girls Who Code Executives Virginia Ceccatelli (left) and Jenna Cacchione (right). Image Courtesy of Virginia Ceccatelli and Jenna Cacchione.**

In your own professional and/or academic experiences, what kind of patterns have you observed in terms of female representation and inclusivity?

**VC:** I'm not working in the field yet, but through research projects, I've found that you have to prove yourself more. If you're in a room that has seven guys and two girls, the two girls have to prove that they know what they're talking about, that they can actually do everything that everyone else can. I feel like there's this constant voice that's second guessing my abilities as a girl coder.

**JC:** I have to agree. I also find imposter syndrome is very much there. Exactly what you said, if you're sitting at a table with a bunch of men, and you're the only two girls, I sometimes feel like, 'I don't belong here.' It's a mental challenge. Like, 'no, I've put in the work. I do belong here.'

**MD:** On that note, what do you hope students will take away from the program beyond practical coding skills?

**JC:** I hope that students realize

that it's okay to ask for help. Sometimes you do need guidance. I had tons of [it], and I was very lucky to have had mentors who were part of Girls Who Code. I hope that [these girls are] able to ask for help and possibly find a mentor later on in their academic career.

**MD:** Do you have a favorite memory of your work with Girls Who Code?

**VC:** In my year of being a facilitator for Girls Who Code, I taught at the same high school and a lot of the girls stayed the entire year. In the beginning, they were shy about asking questions, but it was really nice to see them gradually gain so much confidence.

**JC:** I like the fact that our whole executive team is going through the same thing: we're all looking for internships, we're all studying pretty much the same classes. It's nice to have that community.

**MD:** The theme of this column is "good people doing good things." In the context of your work with Girls Who Code, what does being a "good person" mean to you?

**JC:** To me, being a good person means giving back and helping younger girls. Acknowledging that I didn't have the guidance or knowledge that I do now, and then giving it to the next person.

**VC:** Instead of resenting the system and having to stretch myself to catch up to get to where I am now, I can give these girls what I wish I had. Being a good person also means sticking together as girls and by helping girls realize that they can do it if they want to. There's nothing stopping them.

Learn more about Girls Who Code and opportunities to get involved on Instagram, @girlswhocodemcgill, or through their website, girlswhocode.ssmu.ca

*End note: If you know good people doing good things who you would like to see featured in this column, email news@mcgilldaily.com.*

# Reporting in a Warzone

## A conversation with McGill alumnus and journalist Luca Léry Moffat

**Eva Marriot-Fabre & Sena Ho**  
Visuals Editor & Managing Editor

On March 11, Professor Maria Popova coordinated a Zoom call with Luca Léry Moffat, an economics reporter for *The Kyiv Independent*, for her Politics of East Central Europe class. The students convened to ask Moffat about his experiences working in Ukraine and his perspective on the present state of the Russo-Ukrainian war. Moffat graduated from McGill in 2022 with a BA in economics and Russian. *The McGill Daily* had the opportunity to conduct an extended interview with him, particularly about the role of journalism in the war.

*This interview has been edited for clarity and conciseness.*

**The McGill Daily (MD):** After graduating from McGill and entering the workforce, you didn't originally anticipate becoming a journalist. In what ways did your education at McGill and prior experience in economic research prepare you to become a journalist?

**Luca Léry Moffat (LLM):** To maybe give you a bit of background, in my third or fourth year, I got really into economics. I was doing a different major, did ECON 416 that was about topics in economic development, and sort of fell in love with it and decided to switch to the honours program. By the end of my third year, going into my fourth year, I was pretty set on applying for economic research. As I said in the lecture, I applied to a bunch of different pre-docs; most of which were very academic.

Then, of course, I went on to get this job at a think tank. It was a kind of pre-doc as a research

analyst, but it was at a think tank, so [it was] less academically focused. Policy is a bit different from academia. It's more about being a messenger between academia and policymakers. So, as an economist, I was reading lots of academic stuff, policy papers, and then trying to communicate it clearly to another audience.

I think it was actually during my first job when I picked up a lot of the skills that I needed in journalism: the ability to read a lot, synthesize that information, spin a story, figure out what the most important story is, and what the key messages you want to get across are. Something else I got from my first job was a network. So, I started building a network in Brussels, and those people have become invaluable in [my] pivoting to journalism because being a journalist is basically knowing lots of people and getting them to tell you stuff. I mean, that's literally all it is — anyone could do it.

I would say that one thing that I got from McGill in the economics program was the ability to use data. I think that has given me a real edge in my journalistic career because not many people can make a graph. Data visualization is something which journalism is really shifting towards. People don't have [long] attention spans anymore, so we like to see pretty graphs and pictures while scrolling through these interactive articles. The ability to code and knowing how to use an Excel spreadsheet was very attractive to prospective employers. I'd say that's something I got from McGill which really helped me.

**MD:** You mentioned that you were also a graduate of POLI 331. With regards to knowledge concerning Ukraine, Russia, and

their histories, what piqued your interest in Eastern European affairs during your undergraduate degree or even when working in economic research?

**LLM:** I was talking to Professor Popova about this — I loved my time at McGill. I had amazing professors, learned so much, and got a really good quality of education. Having said that, I feel as though I was taught economics and Russian both quite badly. I don't think that's McGill's fault, I think that's just education in the West.

On the economic side, you learn all of this economic theory which comes from the 1970s and 80s. But you don't really look at finance at all even though finance has, over the last 40-50 years, become such a crucial part of the economic system. International financial flows have real ramifications for the economy, whereas that's not integrated into a lot of the economic models that we study. On the Russian side, we were studying all of this literature without looking at it through the lens of colonialism. I think in the West, the idea that Russia is an empire is sort of a bit of an odd one when you're first confronted with it. But actually, it's one of the last standing empires from this massive period of colonialism. The US still exists, but many of the others have kind of disintegrated, or are now a shell of their former selves. I would study Russian literature and I remember studying, for example, *A Hero of Our Time* by [Mikhail] Lermontov, and at no point did I stop to consider, "Why is there this Russian guy in the Caucasus? What is he doing there?" Well, of course, it was part of this expansion of the Russian Empire. So, that's just something which I've sort of reflected on since leaving McGill.

In terms of what piques my interest in Eastern European affairs, I think it was classes like POLI 331 or HIST 226, which were about the Balkans, Greece, and Turkey throughout the 20th century. What I found so interesting about it was how it's really complicated — borders changed all the time throughout the 20th century, and people moved. After World War I, borders moved and people stayed where they were. After World War II, borders pretty much stayed where they were and people moved. There's so much packed into European history, which is really

difficult to unearth because it's complicated. The Russian, poli-sci, and history classes I took at McGill started to shed a light on that, or even just scratched the surface of those really complicated events. And it left me hungry for more.

**MD:** During the Zoom call, you mentioned that you often feel conflicted as the journalistic field often emphasizes objectivity and neutrality, while the reporting you do and the publication you work for are staunchly supportive of Ukraine's sovereignty. How do you

**MD:** To my knowledge, you are proficient in Russian and currently learning Ukrainian. What has the process of learning the Ukrainian language been like for you, and what is it like to report for a primarily English-language newspaper when English is not the official language of Ukraine?

**LLM:** First of all, learning Russian [at McGill] was amazing because I had incredible professors. I have to shout out Maria Ivanova, I think she's still there, as well as Daniel Pratt, and a few others.

“Freedom of the press is a key tenet of a democratic, rules-based, sovereign state.”

- Luca Léry Moffat

navigate this conflict and adhere to journalistic integrity while fighting for a cause you feel so strongly about?

**LLM:** I find no trouble navigating it whatsoever because I think many things can be true at the same time. I'm staunchly supportive of Ukraine. I believe the facts clearly show that Ukraine is in a war for its own existence, that this is a war for two competing visions of society: one is dictatorship, and one is democracy and liberal values, and I am more partial to the latter.

At the same time, I believe that Ukraine has a lot of work to do when it comes to implementing certain reforms. Some articles I've written have been sharply critical of the government. In other articles, I have been less critical or even praised the government. I'm not writing op-eds. I'm a reporter, so I'm interviewing people, I'm putting in their quotes, and I'm telling the story. I [will] always try to tell a story that I believe is factually accurate and where I've quoted people in the way that they would want to be quoted.

At the end of the day, Ukraine is fighting for a future where it's a democracy and it has its own sovereignty. Freedom of the press is a key tenet of a democratic, rules-based, sovereign state. So I think as a reporter, it makes complete sense that I'm writing articles which [can be] more critical of the government.

Having had a series of other language teachers since who weren't so good, it made me appreciate how incredible [my McGill ones] were. At McGill, the quality of education in the Russian department was really phenomenal. I'm really nostalgic about it.

The process of learning Ukrainian started when I arrived here on the 17th of April, exactly 11 months ago. When I first arrived, I figured that my Russian would be reasonably helpful, even though I understood that people were speaking less Russian nowadays because they're being invaded by Russia and also wanting to put [the] Ukrainian [language] into the limelight. Kyiv used to be a very Russian-speaking city up until the full-scale invasion in 2022, but has [now] massively pivoted to Ukrainian. You still hear Russian around quite a lot, but out of respect I wanted to learn Ukrainian. For me, it was very clear that a lot of people didn't want to be spoken to in Russian. As a way of just being respectful, I wanted to learn Ukrainian.

What I think the most crucial element of learning any language is completely immersing yourself. It's been very humbling because learning a language from scratch is not easy. Ukrainian is a very difficult language. It's massively helped me to have such a good quality of education at McGill on the Russian side of things because they're both Slavic languages. Even though they're very different, lots of the grammar is the same,

“I believe the facts clearly show that Ukraine is in a war for its own existence, that this is a war for two competing visions of society: one is dictatorship, and one is democracy and liberal values, and I am more partial to the latter.”

- Luca Léry Moffat

“What was always clear to me but really crystallized when I arrived in Ukraine was that this war is happening because of Russia's intent to erase Ukrainian statehood, erase the Ukrainian language, and to absorb Ukraine as part of Russia.”

- Luca Léry Moffat

[and] lots of the endings are sort of similar. Not having to start from scratch on the grammar side has been really helpful.

**MD:** How have you perceived reporting from journalists in Ukraine on the Russo-Ukrainian war to be different from reporting published by Western media?

**LLM:** I'm thinking of a time when I went back to the UK last summer, and we had a big gathering [with] a bunch of McGill alumni. I brought back a bunch of caps with the Ukrainian flag on them to give to some friends. Someone said, “Oh, you're the one who's working as a journalist in Ukraine,” and made a joke about not being neutral [in the war] because of my friends who had these caps on. I think there is a desire amongst some reporters, and a desire in the public rhetoric of the West, to [believe] that this war is political and that you can be neutral in it.



Courtesy of *The Kyiv Independent*

What was always clear to me but really crystallized when I arrived in Ukraine was that this war is happening because of Russia's intent to erase Ukrainian statehood, erase the Ukrainian language, and to absorb Ukraine as part of Russia. Putin has some really peculiar

historical fantasies which all mainstream historians reject entirely: that Ukraine isn't a real place and that it's the Bolsheviks' fault that Ukraine exists. The reality is that Ukraine is a real place. It has people who really care about their country, [and] demonstrably so because

there are 900,000 people in the army. There are hundreds of thousands who have been injured or have died defending their country. There are so many Ukrainian civil society activists who care about their language. You see Ukrainian flags everywhere. People have backpacks with Ukrainian ribbons.

Ukrainian society is complicated. There are lots of different perspectives within the country. But I'm actually rather impressed by the homogeneity in supporting Ukraine, [and] not wanting [it] to be part of Russia, especially in a country that has a long history of entanglement with Russia. Given everything that I've just said, it's pretty easy to define this war as a genocidal war because it is an attempt to erase a nation. And that is the definition of genocide.

In the Western media, this is not always made explicit. I think it

should be made explicit. This is essentially an anachronistic empire. If you know anything about history, you can see this [repeating]. I mean, it rings throughout the ages. If you look at recent history, you can see Georgia in 2008, which Russia invaded. You can see Crimea in 2014. You can see interference in Ukrainian elections in 2004 [and] 2005 (the Orange Revolution).

Western media sometimes doesn't always do a good job of portraying that. But for me, those are the facts and a journalist's job is to report the facts. And it's very difficult for me to see it from any other perspective. I love hearing other people's views, even if I find them abhorrent sometimes. I really enjoy trying to understand where people come from. For me, it's so clear that the facts are [that] this is an imperialistic, genocidal war.

“The reality that Ukraine is a real place. It has people who really care about their country [and] demonstrably so because there are 900,000 people in the army. There are hundreds of thousands who have been injured or have died defending their country.”

- Luca Léry Moffat

# Another doomed *Love Story*: The American Media & Carolyn Bessette

FX's new show puts an iconic couple under a new lens

**Lily Tasson**  
Culture Contributor

It's Friday, July 16, 1999. A blonde woman is at a nail appointment, while paparazzi gather outside the salon. Incessantly snapping pictures, they call out her name. Her nails have been painted a vibrant red, but she second-guesses the decision, asking the beautician for something safer: a nude shade. Sunglasses on, she leaves, swarmed by shouts and camera flashes. This is Carolyn Bessette-Kennedy on the last day of her life.

The above vignette forms the opening scene from *Love Story*: John F. Kennedy Jr. & Carolyn Bessette, FX's newest show that has quickly become a sensation. Speaking to the public's enduring infatuation with the couple, it is now the platform's most watched limited series to date, just a month after its release. The limited series tells the story of America's reluctant "it couple" of the 1990s. *Love Story* curates the details of Kennedy Jr. and Bessette's notoriously guarded relationship. Drawing from friends' anecdotes and media footage we see Bessette

of fiction and reality, it's easy to believe the iconic couple's real relationship is finally being revealed. The chemistry between the two leads (Sarah Pidgeon and Paul Anthony Kelly), close-up shots, warm lighting, and the "behind closed doors" setting develops a captivating intimacy. After watching the first few episodes of the show I had a feeling of hollowness I couldn't place. Only to discover, I was mourning the couple's death, over 25 years later.

The intense public investment which *Love Story* depends on and re-evokes was significant to Kennedy Jr. and Bessette's relationship. The public's adoration and collective grief for his father as well as a life in front of the cameras made John F. Kennedy Jr. America's son, as well as its most coveted bachelor. Any woman Kennedy Jr. dated was held to high standards by the public. The same went for Bessette, who was put under intense scrutiny by the media. She had claimed the man who belonged to America, and these were the consequences.

Having never been in the public

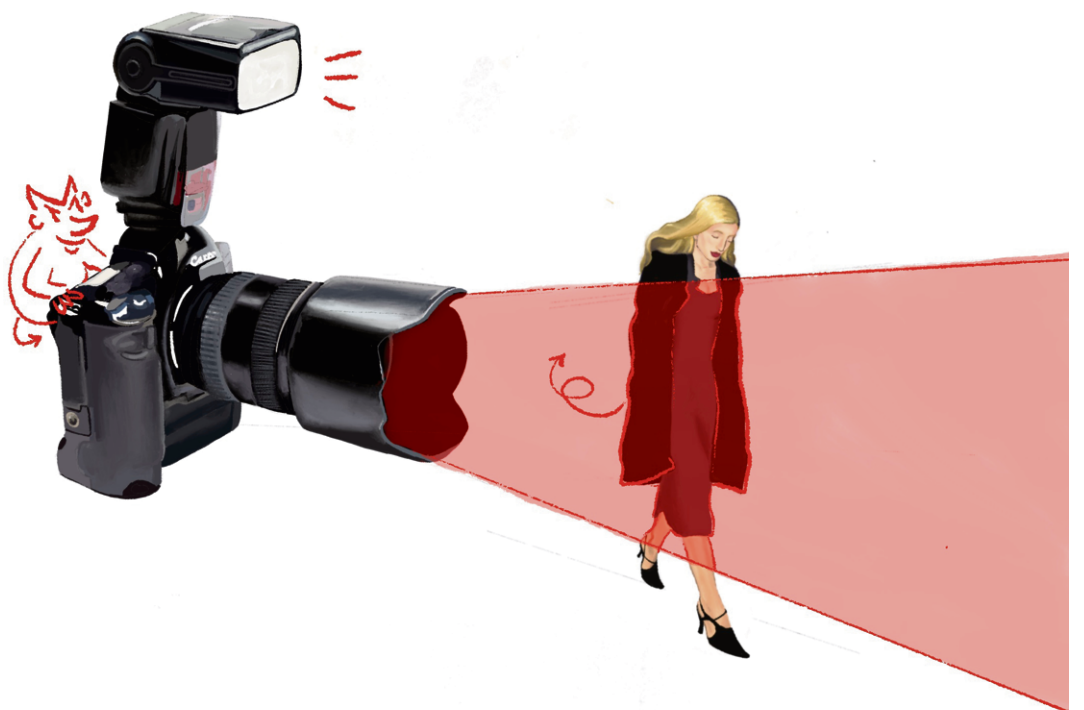
Despite providing narrative form and an empathetic lens, the show can be deemed as no less invasive than the '90s tabloids it scrutinizes.

fitting Kennedy Jr. for a suit in the Calvin Klein show room, to a proposal on a boat at Martha's vineyard, or a fight in Battery Park where Kennedy Jr. pulled off Bessette's ring. This collage of moments is depicted in the show, with certain shots taking on the grainy quality and square framing of a '90s era camera, making the restaging obvious of a moment captured by the press. Other production choices appeal to cultural memory, such as the costuming. The show's crew went through pains to source archival pieces from Yohji Yamamoto and specific items like a green Valentino coat to evoke the image of Bessette's looks, as seen in paparazzi images.

With the series' clever blending

eye, Carolyn Bessette was different from all of the women Kennedy Jr. had previously dated. When the show begins, Kennedy Jr. is still dating actress Daryl Hannah. Hannah is adept at handling the paparazzi, as she poses for a few good pictures to get them to go away. This juxtaposes Bessette, who refuses to give any of herself away to the media. She's the perfect enigma. Her style is the epitome of minimalism. There are only two clips of her voice that circulate online, each under two seconds long. Her attitude defied the public's insistence on a stake in her relationship. The tabloids called her an "ice queen."

As the couple's relationship got more serious, so too did the American public's investment. In



**Annabelle Premont** | Staff Illustrator

*Love Story*, Bessette and Kennedy Jr. are swarmed and harassed by reporters who block the entrance to their apartment upon their return from their honeymoon. A few days later, the couple's car is climbed on and surrounded by photographers, making them unable to drive away. More and more tabloids speculate about Bessette, commonly circulating rumours about a pregnancy based on her appearance. As a result of the intense media attention on the couple, the scope of Bessette's world becomes smaller. She quit her job as publicist at Calvin Klein, and began to limit public appearances. *Love Story* imagines the press as anxiety-inducing for Bessette, with close-up shots of her fidgeting hands and slowed camera flashes across her worried face.

This is referenced in the show's opening. Bessette is first seen being hounded by the media and nervously conforming her appearance to their expectations. Meanwhile, Kennedy Jr. is introduced on his way out of the offices of his magazine *George*. In contrast to Bessette, he confidently strides down the halls, undisturbed; followed only by his assistant. This immediately establishes the couple's differing relationship with the media,

showing it as particularly crippling for Bessette.

The aggression of the media in *Love Story* is particularly striking. In another scene, Carolyn is pushed into a car door by a mob of reporters. If this is how *Love Story* sees the American media of the '90s, then how does it see itself? This is a fine line for the show to walk. The vicious portrayal of the media invites recognition of *Love Story* itself as equally aggressive and intrusive. Not to mention, with questionable ethics. Despite providing narrative form and an empathetic lens, the show can be deemed as no less invasive than the '90s tabloids it scrutinizes.

*Love Story* dramatizes the inner lives of a couple who were notoriously private, undoubtedly adding to the appeal. Its main character is Carolyn Bessette, a woman who never gave a public interview. However, the show often aligns the viewer with Bessette to develop pathos, focusing on her hesitation and nerves as she meets the Kennedy family and faces the paparazzi for the first time. Viewers are invited to identify with Bessette's position as an outsider to the life of America's royalty. "They feel like they know us," says Jackie Kennedy in the show. Her and

Kennedy Jr. sit in her apartment, reflecting on their relationship with the American public. Her statement is immediately uncanny, the show's staging of this intimate conversation giving it a self-reflexive resonance.

A similar moment speaks to me. In the show's seventh episode, "Obsession", Bessette opens up to Kennedy Jr. about her struggles with media attention, admitting that it was much harder to handle than she had thought. Overcome with heaving sobs in Kennedy Jr.'s arms, Bessette relinquishes her strong exterior. It is one of the most heart-breaking and vulnerable moments of the show. As their apartment buzzer sounds, she cries out: "They won't leave us alone."

As a result of the intense media attention...the scope of Bessette's world becomes smaller.

# The Wax Talk

## Cinzia & The Eclipse shares her thoughts on her newest EP

**Youma El Halabi**  
Culture Editor

**C**harm, talent, and emotion; that is what comes to mind when one thinks about local musician Cinzia, professionally known as Cinzia & The Eclipse.

The artist was born and raised in Montreal Nord's vibrant community, which played a role in developing her narrative voice early on, writing intimate and cinematic songs straight from the heart. Armed with unbreakable determination and a pure love for music, Cinzia has amassed a dedicated following, as well as strong streaming numbers throughout the years. She has performed at major festivals including Festivoix, Ottawa Bluesfest, Festival sur le Canal, and St. Roch X. Most recently, she performed at Cafe Campus on March 3.

In late 2025, Cinzia released "When I Think About Us," followed by "Runner" — both tracks included in the newly released EP, *The Wax*, which was released on March 20, 2026.

"When I Think About Us" kicks off *The Wax* with an upbeat tune reminiscing on a love that never could be, in spite of its greatness. On the other hand, "Runner" is a slow

introspection of the writer's unhealthy attachment to emotionally unavailable partners. Both singles paved the way for "Thread," the latest single Cinzia released before sharing her completed EP.

The *Daily* spoke with Cinzia about *The Wax*, why "Thread" means so much to her, and what the listener should look out for while listening to her work.

*This interview has been edited for clarity and conciseness.*

**Youma El Halabi for The McGill Daily (MD):** How did the idea of your new EP come to be? Why "*The Wax*"?

**Cinzia:** Most of what I do with Cinzia & The Eclipse is based on the magic of the moon and her cycle. The waxing crescent actually begins this Friday so I thought [it would be] a perfect time to take her beauty and [immortalize] it within the music that we're sharing.

**MD:** How did you decide that "Thread" would be the lead single?

**Cinzia:** "Thread" is the song that means [more] to me than anything I've ever written for myself. There was something extremely cathartic and therapeutic about writing

[about] how I really fell to my knees at one point and would've done absolutely anything for the person I love. I know people say that, but in that last relationship I really understood what it meant to love someone unconditionally. I saw every scar, every crack, every ounce of heart, hurt, beauty and ugly of this person, even the parts he thought he was hiding, and I have to admit I loved this person. I would've quite honestly walked through fire if it came to it. So when we wrote "Thread," I didn't even know I was writing about myself and that relationship. I really thought I was just writing a cute little song until I started to piece the lyrics together and be like, "Ohhh, she was me!!"

**MD:** What was the people's response to "Thread," and what are your thoughts on their reactions?

**Cinzia:** People locked in, which was really incredible. I had people messaging me in tears because of the chorus, which honestly fills me with gratitude because that chorus is truly a beg. You're begging for someone to stay, that you'll become whatever they want. I think the music driving those words and the repetitions really captures the anxious state of mind you end up in when you're

so in love and begging someone to stay.

**MD:** You've put out several EPs throughout the years, and I'm guessing with each one there was a unique process that was followed. What was it like for *The Wax* during production?

**Cinzia:** To be honest, I was a pain in the ass with this EP. I've become really confident in the sound and elements that I want in my music. These songs have evolved into exactly what I want them to be. In the past, I've had a little more of a pop sound, but it never spoke to me as an artist, even though everything [producers] Markybeats and Luca did with those songs is absolutely everything. It's always a great pleasure to work with friends because they understand me without me having to explain [my vision] too deeply, so I'm really grateful for their talent and friendship.

**MD:** Describe your writing process from inspiration to creating a song.

**Cinzia:** I don't know if I have a process. I think it's just being real, getting in a room, having real conversations and spinning that into cool lyrics and melodies. That's the beauty of the arts in my opinion.

You're kind of spinning something out of nothing, something you just pulled out of a subconscious place. I think the more in tune you are with yourself and the universe, the easier it is to tap into songwriting and connect with people. We're in a hub where all thoughts and experiences cross over. That's why songs can become so relatable! We're all living some of the same experiences.

**MD:** What do you hope people get from the album?

**Cinzia:** Some closure, maybe some spells they can repeat and chant. I hope people have fun with it and get whatever they need at the time they hear it.

**MD:** What is your favourite part about performing your new songs versus your old ones?

**Cinzia:** I'm an impulsive person, so doing anything new will always be where a lot of my excitement lies. I also think these songs are the most real and honest I've been, so it's nice to be able to play music that truly resonates with me as a human.

*The Wax* is available for listening on all platforms. Cinzia & The Eclipse will resume touring on April 26.

# Review: *Hamnet*, The Retelling of a Lost Figure

## A classic told through a shadowed figure

**Chiara Sainz Lipscomb**  
Culture Contributor

**I** watched *Hamnet* a little later than most — and it surprised me far more than I expected. I anticipated another William Shakespeare bio-pic, with the great man at its centre. Surprisingly, what I found was something more radical and affecting: a loose adaptation that stays, determinedly, with Shakespeare's wife Anne Hathaway — here called Agnes. History has long referenced her as a footnote. Meanwhile, this film places her at the centre of the frame.

For clarity, "Shakespeare" will be used in reference to playwright William Shakespeare, William to the husband and Agnes will be referred to by her first name.

Inspired by Maggie O'Farrell's novel of by the same name, co-written and directed by Chloe Zhao, the film carries arrives carrying considerable weight. After receiving the Oscar for Best Actress for her role as Agnes Shakespeare, Jessie Buckley is all over the media. Critics have described her performance as "devastating" and called it a "radically feminine take on Shakespeare's family life" — both of

which are true. As Buckley said herself, the role offered her a chance to counter a common narrative about the playwright's wife — that she had "kept [Shakespeare] back from his genius" — and instead to "give the full landscape of what it is to be a woman." Despite an impressive performance from Paul Mescal as William Shakespeare, I am of the opinion that Buckley steals the show.

Set in 16th-century Warwickshire, the story follows Agnes' navigation of child loss, the shifting dynamics between parents, and both Agnes and William's journeys traversing their grief, as William writes the play *Hamlet*, the play, about their deceased sonboy. The film opens with a breathtaking shot: a dense forest canopy, an overhead camera slowly tracking down through the foliage to find Agnes positioned at the base, in a fetal position, alluding to Mother Nature. In this, motherhood immediately takes centre stage.

The costume design sustains this theme throughout the film. She is dressed almost entirely in red, set starkly against the dark greens of the forest and the navy blues of Shakespeare and the children. Colours in the film have symbolic messaging: the bedroom covers shift

from orange to blue after Hamnet's death, signifying the turn from familial joy to grief; and the boy himself wears both orange and blue in the scenes before he dies, subtly distinguishing him from his siblings. When Agnes appears in red again at the final reconciliation, it reads as something quietly triumphant. The cinematography by Łukasz Żal reinforces her centrality at every turn — from prolonged close-ups on her face, to wide shots that place her at the centre of the frame while William Shakespeare recedes behind her.

When William Shakespeare decides to move to London, Zhao makes a poignant directorial decision to keep the camera, and thus the story, with the family that stayed behind, framing Agnes' encouragement as a genuine, costly sacrifice, rather than a passive acceptance.

The two birthing scenes are extraordinary in their contrast. The first has Agnes alone in the forest, gripping the roots of a tree in her red dress, giving life as Mother Nature does: in solitude, and in pain. The second, set at home, is stripped of any musical score, the silence making it almost unbearable.

The film's treatment of

motherhood is among its most striking qualities. The solidarity between women across generations receives equal care in its portrayal: Agnes' stepmother's support during the birth of the twins, the quiet "you can and you will," and the flashbacks of Agnes as a child having lost losing her own mother to childbirth. Her cry "I want my mum" is one of the rawest lines in the film. Shakespeare's absence at the moment of Hamnet's death is handled with the same weight: the later line, "you should've been there," lands with quiet devastation.

Furthermore, Jacobi Jupe, who plays young Hamnet, deserves serious recognition. The farewell scene between Hamnet and Shakespeare is shot with remarkable composition: an expansive wide angle shot that almost divides the frame between them, both turning back to look at each other laughing, unwilling to leave after saying goodbye.

Hamnet's death scene devastated the entire cinema. It is rendered with an almost expressionistic, poetic quality: the boy walking away into death, surrounded by painted trees that echo the forest of the movie's opening scene, the circle of his life quietly closing. The line "I'll be

brave," delivered with tears barely held back, by candlelight and with Max Richter's score beneath it, is the film's emotional peak.

There are moments that feel overly indulgent. The close-up staging of the "To be or not to be" soliloquy, although brilliantly performed by Mescal, disrupts the narrative momentum and feels like a gesture toward theatre enthusiasts rather than something the film has earned. It felt like an attempt to anchor this loose adaptation back to canonical Shakespeare. The final scene also overstays its welcome, the sustained violins drawing out emotion that has already been fully brought out.

As Peter Bradshaw has noted for *The Guardian*, "on one level, the narrative is a fallacious misreading," relying heavily on a name coincidence that could be simply that. But he is equally right that it represents a "thrilling act of creative audacity, reaching back through the centuries to embrace Shakespeare and Agnes as human beings." That is the film's genuine achievement. It is a story about grief, parenthood and ultimately the unheard characters behind one of the most recognized plays ever written.

# The Gentrification of Online Fandom Spaces

## How publishing corporations are ruining fanfiction

**Héloïse Durning**  
Le Delit News Editor

Over the past few years, fandoms have become increasingly visible in mainstream media: memes, tropes, art, even novel-length transformative works — fanfiction — have reached wider audiences. Although social media has played a significant role in this visibility, major publishing companies offering book deals to popular fanfiction authors have irreparably upset the system. You might have heard about the recently published novel *Alchemised*, a reworked version of a Draco Malfoy/Hermione Granger fanfiction written by SenLinYu on fanfiction site Archive Of Our Own (AO3). Earlier this month, an auction for the *All The Young Dudes*, one of the most read fanfictions on AO3 with 19 million views and counting, took place at the annual London Book Fair, where the fanfiction, now under the new name *Wolf Boy*, was put up for sale. It is rumoured to have scored a 7-figure deal.

Make no mistake, fanfiction has always existed in mainstream spaces. More romance novels than you might think are actually Rey/Kylo Ren fanfiction disguised by unsubtle name changes and superficial editing. *Fifty Shades of Grey* started off as a *Twilight* fanfiction. Even the Game Changers series (you might know it better as the books from which *Heated Rivalry* was adapted) is rumoured to have been a “stucky hockey au” [Marvel fanfiction of Steve Rogers and Bucky Barnes]. The current problem comes from the shift away from bottom-up decision-making to top-down, from authors deciding to monetize their work to publishing corporations asking for it. Most of all, the problem is the visibility that comes with it, which opens up fandoms to potential outside threats, like angry authors or toxic internet users.

### Capitalism...

The best thing about fanfiction is that it is a gift from the author to the reader. The first unspoken rule when entering online fandom communities is to respect and appreciate the work that is done. Fanfiction authors write for free in their own time, during their very (infamously so) busy lives. Maybe the story is bad, and the grammar non-existent; there might be no punctuation, or capital letters every three words, but it was written by someone who was passionate and experimenting, and it is frowned upon to criticize them for it.

To someone who has only experienced mainstream online

spaces, smaller fandoms can be extremely welcoming. There is a reason for that, (weirdos sticking together if you want to be sappy, but, from a more cynical and realistic point of view): compensation — or the lack thereof. The basis for most of the discourse opposing disparaging comments is that fanfiction writing is a hobby shared out of the goodness of one’s heart. No one owes anyone anything, and one only needs to be kind in return. Yet now, a precedent has been set; money has entered the equation. If once is happenstance and twice a coincidence, it only needs to happen again for money to become enemy action, to become a pattern. And who knows how this new business model will impact the community’s ethos of mutual respect.

But, why are publishing companies picking up fanfiction? The answer — it might surprise you — is also money. Fanfiction, even scrubbed of every trace of the original world and characters, still offers the enormous advantage of a built-in audience, thus guaranteeing automatic return on investment. Fans familiar with the work will buy it, and people, morbidly curious, having heard of the story and its origins by word of mouth, will want to get a glimpse.

### A risk for the Harry Potter fandom

It is a truth universally acknowledged that if the original author can no longer maintain plausible deniability about fandom activity, bad things happen. Although a lot of authors, such as George R. R. Martin, operate under a kind of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy regarding fanfiction, others like Anne Rice are not so kind. The author of *Interview with the Vampire* is infamous in fandom circles for threatening to sue fanfiction writers and going so far as to send a cease-and-desist letter to Fanfiction.net, asking them to remove everything related to her work.

The risk of dragging *Harry Potter* fan-created content into the mainstream is that it might force a confrontation with the author. As of yet, there have been no such incidents, but how long will that peace last? There has rarely been a fandom with so much genuine, blinding hatred for the original author as the Harry Potter fandom. Most of the time, hate geared towards the original creators of works comes from disappointment with the source material: the ending of *Game of Thrones*, the blatant queer-baiting in Netflix’s *Wednesday*, or *Veronica Mars*’ entire fourth season. People hate the

directors for the choices they made. Meanwhile, *Harry Potter* fans hate J.K. Rowling for personal and political reasons, and that hatred runs deep.

J.K. Rowling’s views about the LGBTQ+ community are very problematic, and if there is one thing to know about fandom, it is that it is queer. Writing fanfiction is not just teenage girls shipping male characters. It’s marginalized audiences reappropriating symbols and characters. It’s incorporating queer themes into originally cis heterosexual media, creating trans plotlines, and discussing internalized homophobia, intersectionality, and the intricacies of consent. Rowling has, historically and with great emphasis, denigrated such social issues. It raises concerns about her potential reaction to an army of fans who curse the ground she walks on. Will she continue to close her eyes and allow fandom communities to operate? That seems like a best-case scenario, but far from the only one. Rowling can decide to co-opt the more supportive and ‘acceptable’ branches of the movement, or even retaliate and wreak destruction on a scale only permissible to billionaires like herself.

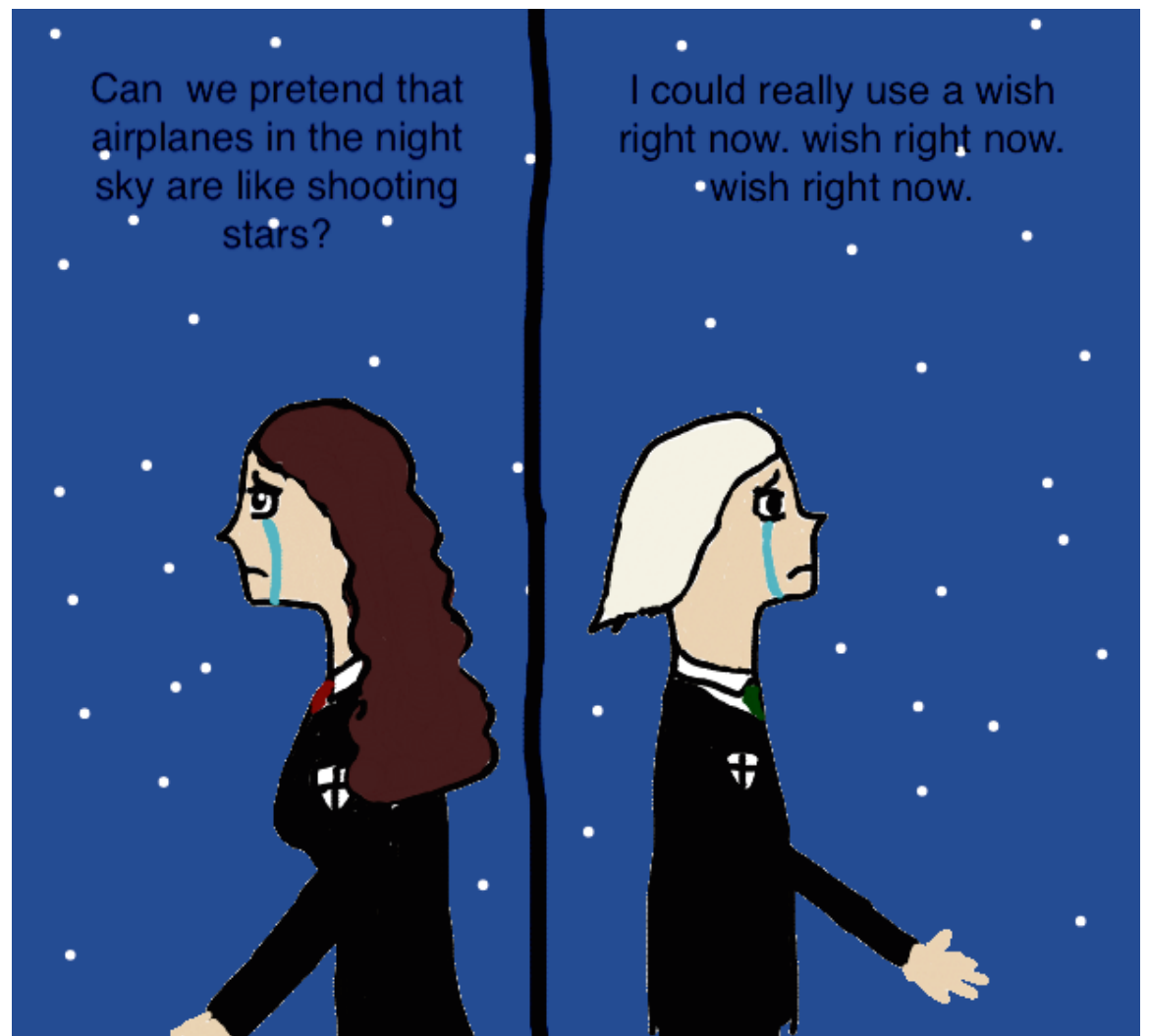
### Outsiders looking in

Original content creators, authors, and directors are not the only threat that heightened visibility brings to fandom. A more insidious, though no less dangerous one is judgmental internet users who feel entitled to fandom spaces, and refuse to adapt to these spaces’ rules and culture despite having chosen to enter them. Fandom spaces are being forcefully gentrified by individuals who refuse to interact with the more alternative parts of the community. Most people know that fandom is weird, but they don’t really understand it. How are you supposed to explain “Dead Dove, Do Not Eat” to someone who’s never heard of it before? People might like the cute couples or the hot, slightly-but-not-too-problematic relationships, but they might not necessarily be prepared for works that go beyond what is usually socially acceptable.

This is not new: it is happening — and has been for a while — to the fandom and LGBTQ+ communities as a whole. Who is the most relevant? The most marketable? Such debates arise as people discuss the inclusion (or exclusion) of more marginalized

sub-groups. Hence, internal hierarchies are created and certain groups deemed ‘other’ by the broader community and audience. In queer circles, underground practices like BDSM get slapped with the label of “sexually deviant” and are excluded from some queer spaces they’d historically been a part of.

Fandoms — fanfiction maybe especially — are close to such subcultures and might face the same progressive sanitisation if shoved to the center stage. When something exists as a subculture, it is easy for it to be more diverse because everyone is equally threatened by the public majority. In recent times, fandoms have grown more visible and attractive; yet only certain facets of them are deemed appropriate to the mainstream public. This can have a negative impact on its internal dynamics, based on trust and respect, as newcomers become influenced by public discourse or are simply ignorant of the community’s culture. Hence, safe spaces previously designed for marginalized communities to exist and thrive are gentrified, becoming another pawn from which capitalist entities can profit.



Parker Russell | Multimedia Editor

# TVM Reveals the First Issue of *Post-Credits Magazine*

A new platform for creative film interpretation.

**Charley Tamagno**  
Copy Editor

On February 24, Gerts Bar sparked with blue streamers and star cutouts. Students crowded around the semi-circle of the bar dressed in the classic David Lynch uniform: a black suit, white button-down, all paired with a black tie. Others recreated the iconic looks of his characters, such as Laura Palmer in *Twin Peaks* and Sue Blue from *Inland Empire*. Set to the tune of a McGill student band and followed by a DJ set, at first glance, the Student Television at McGill (TVM)'s *Post-Credits Magazine* launch appeared half-costume party and half-creative meetup. Which, indeed, it was.

Anya Kasuri, TVM President and *Post-Credits* Editor-in-Chief, attended the event dressed in a sparkling gown and touted the magazine's sole physical copy. The magazine, which she co-founded alongside TVM's graphics coordinator, Sascha Siddiqui, encourages authors to thoughtfully analyze their favourite films. Kasuri is in her third year, studying International Development with a double minor in Political Science and World Cinemas.

In an interview with *The McGill Daily*, Kasuri says, "Film is the medium that influences our everyday character and aspirations." Not only does it influence you, it allows you to

"Critiquing film is a social activity, an intellectual engagement, and at its core is a self-assessment of your values and beliefs..."

- Anya Kasuri

understand yourself: "Critiquing film is a social activity, an intellectual engagement, and at its core, is a self-assessment of your values and beliefs...the meaning you derive from it can be really telling of your character too."

Her favourite part of the magazine is the graphics: "[Unlike writing, graphics] provide visuals to cinema...to perfectly complement the [article's] argument. Sascha [Siddiqui], our graphics coordinator, did an incredible job bridging the gap ... When I saw the final [magazine] it was her creativity that grounded the writing back to its roots — an appreciation of cinema."

"Films should always be critically analyzed this way. I feel like that's a value that I've derived from my film classes, particularly with Professor Ara Osterweil," she replied when asked about the vision behind the magazine. "The process of watching and experiencing a film is not only viewing it, then going home and going to sleep. It's about watching it with your friends, watching other people, reacting, [and] hearing everyone's reactions in the crowd. Afterward, [the experience is about] discussing it as you understand it — because when you come out of a movie, you're not going to know exactly what you have to say; it's not a fully fleshed-out thought. When you spend time discussing it, you learn more about it."

The key difference, for Kasuri, between short- and long-form analysis lies in its depth: "[Long-form analysis] offers full fledged evaluations of films' formal elements: cinematography, mise en scene, visual tone, colour palette, acting, narrative — being able to evaluate that in a longer form analysis lets you see each film individually...and its directors' vision apart from one another because you get into the depths of each films' elements' meaning[s]." To conclude: "It's a better, more engaging, intellectual, and educational alternative to short-form media."

However, she notes that many people forget the core of analysis: what the film wants to be.

"A lot of people misjudge pieces of media by applying the same expectations to all [of them]. It's important to judge a film based on what it's striving to be...they all have different standards of their visual language, their pacing, their acting, their sets,"

she said Kasuri. I encountered Elena Degas at a bar table next to the DJ booth, listening intently to the live band. As TVM's music composer, she wanted to "provide insight from a musical perspective." Writing to the *Daily*, she highlighted how the score was integral to the story: "*Sinners* was by far the film that impacted me most from the last year, and I

felt that it was special in the way that the score/music was so integral to the story and the conversations that were happening around the film."

Degas got her start in film scoring when she watched *Euphoria* in 2019. The music was what made her love the show; she found that it could tell a poignant story on its own.

Her favourite part of the article she wrote for *Post-Credits* was her analysis of the use of blues at the centre of *Sinners*. It gives the viewer insight into the film's characters and their struggles. Especially the song "Pick Poor Robin Clean," demonstrates the turn from oppressed to oppressor in Remmick, an Irishman. It opens up a "space for a larger conversation about the history of predominately Black genres of music and how they've evolved and continue to live on today."

From her article: "It is Student initiatives like *Post-Credits Magazine* are working to allow student film lovers to think critically about the art they are passionate about."

immediately following [the surreal montage] scene when the people in the juke joint are faced with the vampires, who dauntingly perform an upbeat, folk-inspired rendition of 'Pick Poor Robin Clean' for the group." The song is "a blues song that [embodies] someone trying to survive by picking apart and taking everything they can from a dead robin."

For Degas, "this jolly folk rendition exemplifies the white vampires' inability to engage empathetically and thoughtfully with the community they are attempting to infiltrate, and recalls a common pattern in genres such as blues and jazz, in which white musicians have historically appropriated and overshadowed Black artists." Remmick's positionality is especially striking because of his Irish heritage and experience with colonialism. His desire to completely consume the music is shaped by a selfish desire to preserve it the way he was unable to with his own heritage. However, in doing so, he reproduces colonial violence, with music becoming a tangible symbol of culture.

TVM has allowed Degas to explore her passion for the soundscape of a movie: "Film is now one of the main cornerstones of my life, I have found a huge love for making music for films at TVM, and have found a great community of other film-lovers here; I now plan on attending film school next year for sound design in hopes of a career in film audio/music!"

McGill's distinct lack of a creative arts programme is no secret. However, student initiatives like *Post-Credits Magazine* are working to allow student film lovers to think critically about the art they are passionate about.

TVM will be hosting its largest event of the year, *FOKUS Film Festival* on Thursday, March 26 at Cinema Du Parc. For more information, visit TVM at [tvmtelevision.com](http://tvmtelevision.com) or [@tvmtelevision](https://www.instagram.com/tvmtelevision) on Instagram.



Courtesy of Isabelle Lim

# Second-Class Citizens

The growing cost of being a woman in Quebec

**Helena de Cruz Da Costa Barros**

Commentary Contributor

Every year, March 8 serves as a benchmark to gauge the causes that women are fighting for, a moment to reflect on the progress of last year's concerns, and on the wave of new ones that have since emerged. This year, indignation towards legislative amendments in the province dominated demonstrations in Montreal and Quebec City, with thousands of participants protesting recent changes including threats to religious freedoms, reductions in women's access to healthcare services, and narrow immigration policies.

A notable point of contention is the government's ongoing pursuit of secularism. While in 2019, Bill 21 initially banned public service workers, like teachers, from wearing religious symbols in the workplace, last October, Bill 94 went a step further, prohibiting school staff, volunteers, and students from doing the same. According to CBC, the Quebec government intends to "defend equality between men and women," though the bill can often carry out

the opposite effect. Dolores Chew, a member of Women of Diverse Origins, the group who organized the march, explained that "women who wear hijabs are going to lose employment, making them economically dependent." Thus, instead of reversing the effect of patriarchal power dynamics, measures like these reinforce them. The consequences of Bill 94, which encourages women to choose between faith and involvement in civil society, are already evident. In January, the Riverside Elementary School in Montreal banned Sabaah Khan, a mother who had volunteered at the library for 8 years, for wearing a hijab due to its compliance with Bill 94. Furthermore, the new secular proposal of Bill 9 expands the current restrictions on religious attire to subsidized daycares and private schools, in addition to banning prayer spaces and religious foods in public institutions.

Another central issue among protesters is women's access to healthcare. Funding and staff shortages have led to the temporary closure of obstetrics clinics across the province. In the last few months, several women have had to travel hours to give birth due to a lack of professionals or clinics near them,

particularly in the Gaspésie region in eastern Quebec. As reported by CBC, a member of the Parti Québécois and a health critic, Joël Arseneau, denounced the government's idleness, which treats women in the Gaspé like "second class citizens." Those without access to public health insurance face even more obstacles, since the community groups that are meant to help them also face severe funding drawbacks from the provincial government. Moreover, intimate partner violence reports in Quebec tripled from 2015 to 2024. The rise in reports throughout the decade might not only reflect the quantity of cases, but also an increase in women reporting violence to the police. In the first three weeks of 2026, at least four men killed women in a context of intimate partner violence in Quebec. Additionally, women's shelters are in demand now more than ever, with the housing crisis and limited access to the appropriate resources women need to leave dangerous situations.

Furthermore, the stricter immigration policies in the last few years have created an especially precarious environment for female immigrants. Filipino protester Deann Nardo, from Migrant

Quebec, claims women of colour who immigrate to Quebec are more vulnerable to "exploitation and abuse," both at home and in the workplace. These women are more than 20 per cent more likely than men to arrive in Canada with spousal status. They are put in precarious situations where the right of many immigrant women to remain in the country depends on their partner's employment. This systemic economic dependence binds them to their partners resulting in not only a lack of self-sufficiency, but also a difficulty in leaving a patriarchal household. While open work permits were a gateway into finding employment, now, with greater restrictions on the eligibility of spouses and dependents, financial autonomy for immigrant women seems even further away.

The provincial instability mirrors a broader concern. On a global scale, the ascension of the far-right threatens the security of women's rights. "There's a rise in anti-feminist discourse," says Anne-Valérie Lemieux-Breton, the coordinator of the social services group Regroupement des Groupes de Femmes de la Capitale-Nationale. Québec Solidaire (QS) leader Ruba Ghazal highlights how

hateful comments online targeting female public figures discourage many women from continuing to share their views online. She partly attributes targeted online harassment to "a rise in misogynistic and masculinist discourse, even in schools." Montreal-based author, India Desjardins, shared a recent comment in which she was targeted on one of her posts: "You're a crazy bitch. Go get help." Ghazal defends the importance of not trivializing such violence, as well as the need for a service that addresses the issue and helps victims feel safer. The QS leader claims "There is a lot of work to be done to educate and raise awareness among the population."

International Women's Month is here not just as an opportunity to celebrate all that women have conquered over centuries of oppression. It's a reminder that systemic barriers against equality perpetually rig the game, and that women of colour constantly find themselves in a lose-lose. In this political climate, women like protester, Mathilde Leduc, are fearful that "the rights that we had will disappear over time." Though standing tall March after March is a tiresome battle, we're still standing, as resistance is imperative so that no woman is left behind.

# The Emotional Whiplash of Infinite Scroll

Apathy and psychological exhaustion in the face of short-form content

**Maria Hamdaoui**

Commentary Contributor

One moment, an influencer is showing their skincare routine on TikTok.

The next, you are watching footage of bombings in Gaza.

This is the strange paradoxical rhythm of social media. Images of war, famine, and political violence appear alongside memes, fashion content, and pop culture gossip. Tragedy and entertainment converge into the same continuous stream of content.

For many people, especially students who receive most of their news through platforms like TikTok, Instagram, or X, the juxtaposition of global tragedy and everyday entertainment creates a kind of emotional whiplash. We move instantly from witnessing human suffering to something else entirely, without the time to process what we have just seen. In previous generations, exposure to global tragedy was slower and more mediated. Encountering global tragedy often requires dedicated time and attention—whether through reading a full article or watching a news segment—because understanding and emotionally processing such events cannot happen instantaneously. Social

media breaks this experience into fragments: war footage appears between vacation photos and makeup tutorials, exposing users to global suffering in brief moments, squeezed between other content competing for attention. The infinite scroll collapses the distance between the catastrophic and the mundane.

This constant exposure to suffering can be psychologically exhausting. Seeing repeated images of violence, starvation, or destruction, even from afar, can create feelings of anxiety, helplessness, or emotional fatigue. Some psychologists refer to this as secondary or vicarious trauma: the emotional toll of witnessing suffering indirectly through media.

However, social media introduces an additional layer to this experience. The problem is not only that we see these images but rather how we see them. Online feeds offer no pause, no transition, and no context. The emotional system is forced to switch rapidly between empathy, shock, amusement, and indifference.

Over time, this can create a dangerous form of desensitization. When atrocity appears constantly in the feed, it risks becoming just another form of content. The brain begins to protect itself by dulling its response. The images are still

disturbing, but they begin to blur together. What once felt shocking starts to feel like the norm.

There is also an emotional tension many users experience: the discomfort of scrolling past suffering. A video shows a starving child, a destroyed city, or grieving families. We watch for a few seconds, perhaps feel a surge of sadness or anger, and then we move on. Then, another post appears. Another video. Another distraction. Features like infinite scroll and algorithmically curated feeds encourage us to continue scrolling, even when what we have seen deserves attention and reflection.

This dynamic raises an unsettling question: are we truly empathizing with suffering, or simply observing it?

Critic Susan Sontag once wrote in her book, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, about how images of war can transform violence into spectacle. When suffering is repeatedly photographed and circulated, it risks becoming something viewers observe rather than something they meaningfully engage with. Social media intensifies this problem. The platforms that deliver these images are designed to maximize engagement and attention, not reflection.

None of this means people should ignore global events or stop paying attention to injustice. The circulation of

images from conflict zones has also played an important role in raising awareness and documenting human rights violations. Many of the world's most urgent stories now reach global audiences precisely because ordinary people share them online.

Nonetheless, it is worth questioning how the structure of social media feeds and shapes our emotional relationship to these events. When tragedy appears alongside entertainment, when catastrophe becomes part of the same endless scroll as memes and lifestyle content, our sense of empathy becomes

harder to sustain.

We are more informed than ever before. Yet at the same time, we are often overwhelmed, exhausted, and unsure how to respond.

The problem is not that we see the world's suffering. The problem is that the platforms through which we see it rarely allow us the space to feel it.



Nikhila Shanker | Visuals Editor

# Iran Is Not Dealt A Fair Hand When It Comes to Democracy

Hope dwindles for regime change and improved conditions

**Golnar Saegh**  
Multimedia Editor

On February 28, the US and Israel launched a joint airstrike attack on Iran, killing many high-ranking government officials including Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Iran quickly retaliated in a series of missile and drone strikes against Israel and US allies in the region. The war has since turned into a chaotic global conflict; political leaders stand divided, the energy market has stalled, the Gulf states suffer damage from the unprecedented attack, and Trump speaks exclusively in contradictory terms about his next move.

Meanwhile, the Iranian government maintains a near-total internet blackout throughout the country, which renders it difficult to determine how the war is affecting Iranians on the inside of the conflict. *The Daily* was able to get in contact with a factory manager in Iran, to recount his experiences and share his thoughts from the first week of the conflict.

"[On the morning of Monday March 2], a very, very loud sound – caused by a bomb or missile – jolted me out of bed, waking me up," he writes. "I froze, and did not immediately go to check on the factory until about 15 minutes

later. In the factory, about 80 per cent of the windows facing the explosion were broken...The factory yard was full of bomb or missile fragments, full of large metal pieces, full of various parts including vision cameras, full of crushed rubble...broken glass covered my desk."

"I think if [the explosion] had happened during working hours, we would have had at least 10-20 people injured...the distance between the explosion and our factory was about 100 meters."

In the following week, Saeed cancelled work for his employees, although he went to the factory every day.

"Every day and night – at 10 p.m. or 3 a.m. or 8 a.m. etc., generally at different times – I heard a sound like an airplane or a missile. With my previous knowledge, I tried to take shelter quickly, so that if something happened, I wouldn't get hurt. It sounded about two to four times every day."

Once work resumed for Saeed's employees, the sentiment amid the factory was one of unrest and paranoia. "There was worry in their eyes. A few of them had turned their feelings of worry into anger or chaos. Inadvertently, their words disturbed their coworkers and caused them to

grow anxious as well. Seeing the state of the situation, I decided to call off work until further notice and send everyone home."

"Some people decided to stay, to help clean up the rubble...at 9 a.m. we started replacing the broken windows. At noon, there was another explosion and the windows broke again."

Such destruction and paranoia is characteristic of war. As the conflict drags on, Iranians – both within the country and in the diaspora – become increasingly disillusioned with the foreign powers who came to their "aid." Hope dwindles for regime change and improved conditions once the war is over.

On the other hand, the majority of Iranians express discontent with the current regime, and have grown desperate for an alternative. "The ordinary people have lived without any peace or prosperity for 47 years. They are tired; they are unhappy," Saeed tells us. "But they have found that whenever they protest, they face severe crackdowns and bloodshed, while the government remains untouched. I think more than 85 per cent of the people are against the government."

Time and time again, mass protests against the regime have been met with violent retaliation. The most recent wave of protests in January and February of this year have been

recorded as the deadliest wave of crackdowns in Iran's modern history, with many estimates of fatalities exceeding 30,000.

This is why the assassination of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on February 28 had such a profound effect on Iranians: after decades of protests that rendered thousands dead while harbouring no real change, hope is in scarce supply. The sudden death of the regime's most important figurehead gives a despairing population a tangible source of hope to latch on to. The overwhelming sentiment seemed to be that Khamenei's death had freed the people of Iran, and put a definitive end to their suffering.

However, liberation did not immediately follow Khamenei's death. In fact, what Iran saw instead of democracy was its antithesis: Ali Khamenei's son, Mojtaba Khamenei, was appointed by Iran's Assembly of Experts as his replacement; and the Islamic regime, although weakened, remains in power.

Weakened in terms of state apparatus, but not in spirit; since the beginning of "Operation Epic Fury," the Iranian government has doubled down on its repressive measures and intimidation tactics. On state television, one presenter threatened that "every single" dissident will be pursued, and they will "make [their] mothers mourn." The chief of police claimed that anyone who takes to the streets against the regime "[will not be seen] as a protester or something else; we will see them as the enemy and do with them what we do with the enemy." Some Iranians profess that, in spite of the current airstrikes, they are still more afraid of their own government than outside forces.

Their fear is not unfounded; the Islamic regime has routinely imprisoned, tortured, and killed those who it deems a threat to its hegemony. Systemic violence is intrinsic to the government's state apparatus.

It is true that the US-Israeli attack is an illegal one, and the continual erosion of international law is deeply concerning. It is also true that American intervention in the Middle East, such as the "war on terror" in Afghanistan and the 2003 Iraqi invasion, has an egregious track record. The US' meddling has often resulted in lengthy, drawn-out conflicts that destabilize governments and

devastate local populations. However, the present alternative for Iran – complete withdrawal of US and Iraqi forces from the region, leaving the people's fate in the hands of the Islamic regime – isn't awfully alluring either. It is likely that as soon as foreign attacks cease to be a threat, the Iranian government will carry out mass imprisonments and executions of its internal "enemies."

One option touted enthusiastically by the diaspora is the return of the exiled crowned prince, Reza Pahlavi. Although Pahlavi has a sizeable support base in the Iranian diaspora, and perhaps has some backing in Iran, his competency for the role is questionable. Saeed has his reservations regarding the exiled prince: "A person who has only talked and lived in luxury for 47 years wouldn't be willing to come to Iran even if they give him the country with both hands. In my opinion, the percentage of people's desire for Reza Pahlavi...is not even between 5 and 15 per cent."

In Saeed's view, Reza Pahlavi is a troublesome candidate; "Having a father as the Shah is not proof of sensibility and wisdom. If your father was wise and sensible, the events of 1979 would not have taken place. [The Shah] also had in his mind a great delusion, and wanted not only Iran, but the entire world under his feet; a delusional dream of power and global domination. Like Mohammad Reza Shah, [Reza Pahlavi] is our Trump who wants to rule the world."

When the most viable "democratic" alternative Iran sees for itself is a relic of an archaic autocratic dynasty, it is clear that Iran is not dealt a fair hand when it comes to democracy. Grievances and suffering have compounded over decades of living under oppressive rule, resulting in progressively lower expectations and standards for change. Even when people continue fighting for a "democratic" alternative, what they come to accept as "democracy" becomes more lenient.

What results is a nation in which war sparks celebration, and the most viable form of democracy is the return of monarchy. After 47 years of violence and bloodshed, war is peace and freedom is slavery.

