

NOVA Times

March 2023

11th Edition

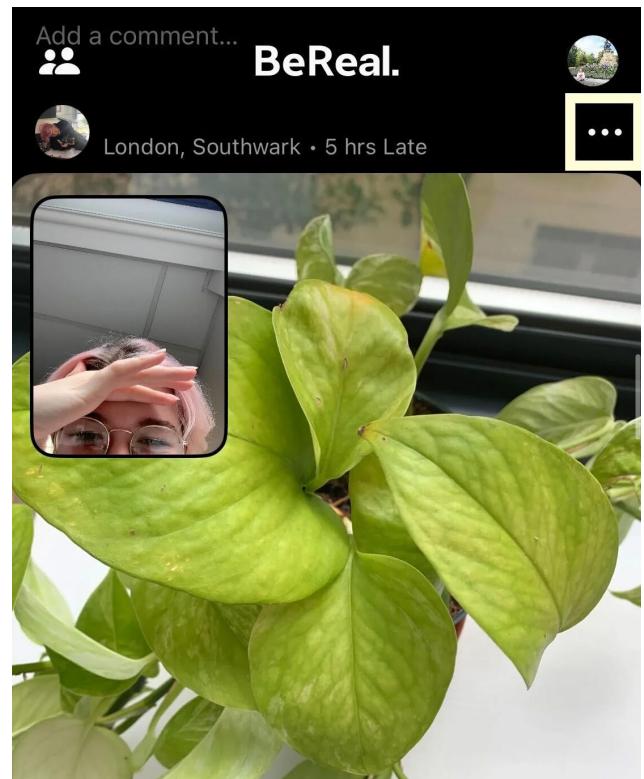
BeReal: Are You Really Being Real?

By Biljana Loparski

BeReal is a new social media app that promotes authenticity and rejects the common practice of altering one's appearance with filters and editing tools. The app prompts users to post a picture once a day when a notification with a two-minute timer goes off, and the photo must be a combination of an unedited picture of oneself and anything in front of them.

The app aims to be an antidote to social media fakery by encouraging users to be real and in the moment. However, over time, the pressure to take interesting and exciting pictures has caused some users to lose sight of the app's original intent. Some only post when they have something exciting to share, which defeats the purpose of the app.

The point of *BeReal* is to enjoy capturing and sharing real moments, no matter how mundane they may be. The app serves as a reminder that not everything in life is supposed to be exciting, and it's okay to show your authentic self without feeling the need to impress others.



Courtesy of Gemma Riles via TrustedReviews

The Sympathetic Serial Killer: Media's New Obsession

By Kalina Gocevska

The recent release of "Dahmer - Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story" on Netflix has reignited the discussion around why some viewers are drawn to true-crime shows featuring real-life serial killers. Despite the graphic violence depicted on screen, some viewers still express sympathy and admiration for the killers, which may be partly attributed to the attractiveness of the actors portraying them, as well as the sympathetic portrayal of the characters' backstories.

However, the issue goes deeper than just aesthetics and storytelling. Many of the viewers of true-crime shows are women, despite the fact that most serial killers have targeted women. This suggests that patriarchal conditioning may play a role in excusing the violent behavior of men and placing responsibility for prevention on others.

The article cautions against forgetting that these killers made a choice to commit heinous crimes with real-life consequences and calls for a separation between the fictional portrayal and the real-life events.

Mahsa Amini: Government Against Its People

By Kasija Sentic-Gaber

Protests in Iran against oppressive hijab laws have escalated into full-scale human rights revolts that have proliferated across the country, despite the government's attempts to silence the movement through censorship and violence. The protests were sparked by the fatal beating of Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old in custody for not wearing her hijab properly.

Update From The Student Council

By Vedrana Serafimovska-Miloshevska and Galena Kuzmanovska

The student-council elections had a high turnout and a successful fundraiser was held. The council is addressing student concerns, including the possibility of an open campus, but acknowledges the infeasibility of some ideas. The success of the Council depends on student engagement and communication of concerns.

Table of Contents

Contents

- Updates from the Student Council – Page 4
- Orce Nikolov vs. NOVA International Schools – Page 4
- Mahsa Amini: Government Against Its People – Page 5
- Communal Biodiversity Gardening: Promoting Sustainable Agriculture on a Local Scale – Page 7
- Venice Will Start Charging an Entrance Fee – Page 8
- Civilizational Revolution: The Line Project – Page 8
- BeReal: Are You Really Being Real? – Page 10
- “Women in the Music Industry Deserve an Apology” – Page 11
- The Loss of Original Identity Through Micro Labels, Trends, and Niches – Page 12
- The Sympathetic Serial Killer: Media’s New Obsession – Page 13
- How Trends Influence Society – Page 14
- “Take a Bath, You Stink of Dragon” – Page 15

Info Section

About Us:

NOVA Times is a student-run newspaper that allows NOVA high-school students to express themselves in the field of journalism.

If you would like to write for NOVA Times or raise a technical question, please contact lp14699@nova.edu.mk. If you would like to respond to a particular newspaper piece, write a letter to the editor by using the same email addresses.

- Editor-in-chief: Luka Pavikjevikj
- Editor for this edition: Teodora Risteska-Daskalovski
- Designer: Stefan Nikolaj
- Writers: Vedrana Serafimovska-Miloshevska, Galena Kuzmanovska, Snezhana Tuneska, Kasija Sentic-Gaber, Sara Tomeska, Marija Krsteska, Jovana Vasilisa Jovanovikj
- Opinion contributors for this issue: Biljana Loparski, Teodora Risteska-Daskalovski, Jeta Nuhiu, Kalina Gocevska, Anastasija Milojkovska

Our gratitude goes to Ms. Iva Mickovska for her generous support for this publication.

ARTISTIC SUSTAINABILITY COLLAGE

Magnify the city's environmental awareness with YOUR art!

Make an eco-themed drawing and have it be featured in the collage

choose
your
colors

WE'LL
BE
YOUR
PEACE
COME ALONG



Follows a green, blue, or white color palette

Uses at least one recycled material

No larger than an A4 paper

LEARN MORE
and SUBMIT
on the
google
form!

News from NOVA

Updates from the Student Council

By Vedrana Serafimovska-Miloshevska and Galena Kuzmanovska

NOVA as an established school values the Student Council, and it is considered respectable and admirable to hold a position in it. As a community, the turnout rate at the election for this year's Student Council was 63.44% (236 votes). This shows that more than half of the students, who were not directly part of the nominations and candidates, showed enough care to take time and choose their representatives.

As this year's Co-Presidents, Vedrana and I have begun leading the meetings, and have collected a decent amount of members which have been actively contributing during discussions. While the amount of people is not necessarily important, the eagerness to engage in talks and help the school become better is a needed mutual belief and wish.

As of November 8, we've had only 3 meetings, and have already held our first fundraiser for Halloween. The money raised will go towards the Children's Oncology Center, and the cookies and muffins were all Halloween-themed.

The first meeting consisted of introductions, and the attendance rules (normal members can miss up to 5 meetings without an excuse before being removed from the council, and members with roles can miss up to 3). We have also discussed the continuation of our social media management team and website team, which will soon begin uploading and promoting what the Student Council is doing.

The second meeting revolved around the planning of the fundraiser, as members of the Council received the opportunity to volunteer themselves and their time. Some of the students volunteered to bake brownies and other sweets, some of them volunteered to take photographs of the fundraiser, and others dedicated time toward selling the baked goods and advertising the bake sale. We also considered

various organizations we could donate to, before deciding on the Oncology Clinic, in the spirit of breast cancer awareness month.

The third meeting was regarding the main part of Vedrana's and my campaign, open campus. While no direct conversation has been had with the administration as of yet, we began talking about the benefits of being able to exit campus and having independent time to do what we choose. The members could actively contribute to the discussion and include their perspectives, but no matter what, this issue was going to be addressed by a higher authority. This is simply due to the fact that it was the key component of us being chosen for our positions, and no matter what, we promised that we would try our best to convey the thoughts of the student body to the administration.

Throughout these meetings, we've also talked about other problems the students have, whether those are with teachers, classes, or some of the school's rules. While some of those issues can be discussed with a higher authority, some of them are simple and can be solved by mentioning and addressing them. Similarly, some students who have had individual issues can give advice to each other and solve their problems.

I believe that while the Student Council has had troubles in the past, with articles being published regarding their efficiency and

authority, it is not completely up to the students who achieve roles in it. While most of the blame can be thrown at the presidents and grade representatives, it is also commonly blamed on the administration. The administration, while recognizing the authority that the SC has, cannot completely eradicate any concerns the students have. While the SC can definitely address the problems and wishes of the students, they can only attempt to help the community, but if the higher authorities deem that "solution" to be unnecessary or impossible to implement, there can be no blame. Not all things the students wish to add to the community are actually beneficial, and it is important to look at both the positive and negative sides of an issue before communicating it with the Council and then the responsible committees of the school. It is also crucial to understand that some ideas are unrealistic and will not be allowed for valid reasons.

While we wish to create a positive change in the school community, it cannot be done without the students. If people never address concerns to us or their respected grade representatives, we cannot reciprocate the information and relay those concerns to the administration. We need to act as a whole, rather than facing problems individually, and never being happy with our surroundings.

Orce Nikolov vs. NOVA International Schools

By Snezhana Tuneska

Just like the white-collar amateur boxing match between KSI vs Logan Paul, imagine if we put the high schools Orce Nikolov and NOVA International Schools in a boxing ring. Who would throw the

first uppercut, or maybe knock-out? Which fighter would have the higher score at the end of the fight, and which school will be pronounced as the winner?

Let's start with nit-picking Orce

News from NOVA

Nikolov. As an ex "Орцашка", I can confidently say that the number of hours spent studying drastically changed when I transferred to NOVA. I honestly don't know how I managed to have a social life, go to athletics practices every day, and also to have straight A's in all 14 subjects. I doubt that the number of sheep in a random village, that I learned, will ever become useful in everyday life. You have to be kidding if you think my grade in sociology depended on how much I learned. My grades in the majority of the subjects depended entirely on the mood the professor was in. I remember learning entire texts, essays, and a ton of synonyms by heart. We were like robots reciting a poem. Although I love complaining about how overwhelmed I felt in Orce, the truth is, it was manageable. Besides the complex personalities of the professors, the rules were far

from strict. All you had to do was tell the professor that your head hurts, and next you would be in Marvel drinking your macchiato. Things like this also made my social life much better. The bonds and memories you make with your friends when you skip Ethics, stay for life.

Now, let me complain about NOVA. Throughout these three months I've been a student at NOVA, I've mostly felt excited, but at times unimpressed. The praised IB Diploma Program is less intimidating than I've imagined. The fewer subjects aspect of learning at Nova, is a thing everyone adores. My friends from Orce are fascinated by the lockers, the campus, the cafeteria, all these fancy things, but how do I explain to them that the closed campus feels like a literal prison. And on top of paying a lot of money to study at NOVA, you are forced to buy overpriced breakfast

in the "fancy-shmancy" cafeteria. Another thing that surprised me was the niceness of the teachers. At the beginning of the school year, I was absolutely sure that the teachers were faking their loveliness. Finding out they weren't in fact paid to act welcoming, really took me by surprise.

It's definitely not cupcakes and rainbows in either of these two schools, but sadly I'm too biased to decide who knocked-out who in the boxing ring. These two schools put up quite a fight. Orce taught me work ethic, NOVA is giving me more opportunities than ever. From my experience, it mostly depends on the person to decide whether they like learning in a public or a private school more. I don't know about you, but I'm most definitely reserving a ringside seat if this boxing match ever happens.

International News

Mahsa Amini: Government Against Its People

By Kasija Sentic-Gaber

Iranians are continuing with the protests against their Government. Kicked off as resistance to the oppressive hijab laws following the death of Mahsa Amini, the protests soon escalated into full-scale human rights revolts that proliferated across the country. The 22-year-old died in a hospital in Tehran on September 16 while in the custody of Iran's 'so-called' morality police, three days after allegedly violating the country's dress code by not wearing her hijab properly. All statements and accusations made by Amini's family were denied by the Iranian Government and the Forensic Organization, which claim her death was due to a previous medical condition, not police

brutality.

The first of many protests against the imposition of the hijab was on March 8, 1979, when women marched the streets urging "freedom in the choice of clothes." After failing in getting heard, hijabs became part of the Iranian legislation and mandatory for all women in Iran (even non-Muslims and tourists) in April 1983. Women continued to protest publicly, yet their cases were isolated and their voices ignored. Since 1990, breaking the hijab law has been considered a criminal offense. The Government shows no intention of backing down and abrogating these laws despite the fact it has never experienced resistance on this scale.

Fury among the people of Iran

Photos and videos of the latest Iran protests have been going viral on social media platforms and news outlets for 60 days now. Daily news coverage shows women setting their headscarves on fire, chanting "Death to the dictator" - the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, schoolgirls taking their scarves off and doing the peace sign, women cutting or shaving their hair as a moving form of protest and expression of their anger.

Even public figures from Iran have taken a stand in the fight against this repressive regime. Iranian actress Taraneh Alidoosti posted a photo on her Instagram account (with a following of 7.9M) where she had no

International News



Courtesy of Taymaz Valley via Flickr

hijab, with a sign in her hands that read the slogan of the movement - "Woman. Life. Freedom". In the soccer match against the United Arab Emirates, after scoring a goal Saeed Piramoon celebrated by imitating the act of cutting hair - what has become a symbol of the movement. Many other athletes (mainly women) have quit their national teams in protest against the government and its measures.

Government statutes

As this has brought nothing but detrimental outcomes for the Iranian government, they have done everything in their power to silence these people while attempting to minimize their unjust acts. One of their first courses of action was creating disruptions and limitations to the Internet and phone services, which would prevent citizens from sharing testimonies. Censorship was coupled with official denial, which of course did not work as they intended it to. Not only is

information still reaching the world, but this disruption and cut-off of the Internet has created many problems in other industries such as food and medicine. Apart from limiting the public from disclosing the truth, the police have arrested over 20 journalists (both Iranian and foreigners (BBC, CNN)) and have proscribed the rest from reporting on the issue. As all credible platforms - such as news outlets and independent media - are obstructed from sharing any information, there is no way to know how many casualties there are. The U.N. Human Rights Office acknowledges that the numbers are blurry because of the restrictions, but estimates around 76 deaths. However, human rights groups claim that the number is much higher, with a significant number of protesters detained.

International reactions

Various countries around the globe have reacted to the issue

by organizing protests of their own and showing support for the people of Iran. Italy, Germany, and France have marched on their streets while the US has taken it upon itself to try and grant the citizens access to (sharing) information online. The U.N. has reacted to the sentencing of innocent protestors to death, their Human Rights Council experts stated "[we] urge Iranian authorities to stop using the death penalty as a tool to squash protests and reiterate our call to immediately release all protesters who have been arbitrarily deprived of their liberty for the sole reason of exercising their legitimate rights to freedom of opinion and expression, association and peaceful assembly and for their actions to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms through peaceful means". But, will this stop Iranian authorities from sentencing 15000 people to death?

International News

Communal Biodiversity Gardening: Promoting Sustainable Agriculture on a Local Scale

By Sara Tomeska

Introduction

When talking about the food chain pyramid, we ultimately conclude that we are supreme. However, by following through with our destructive tendencies, there won't be a pyramid at all. We cannot continue to destroy the pillar of our existence: the diversity of living things on our planet. Loss of biodiversity is at exponential loss, especially in urban areas. While an attempt in changing global legislation calls for joint efforts, there are little things you can do to help: and the ideal one is partaking in community biodiversity gardening. Not only is this pastime therapeutic, but results are soon evident in front of your eyes.

Biodiversity Gardening

Biodiversity gardening is planting native plants and enriching the space with rocks, wood, and other materials, thus, making an environment for organisms to thrive. With this method, you tackle two birds with one stone, as it also calls for a sustainable way to diminish our organic waste. This is done by using compost as soil for your garden. Next time you peel vegetables or have table scraps, use them to enrich the soil instead of throwing them away. Compost soil brings forth a healthier, faster-developing, and more sustainable garden by enriching it with necessary nutrients and suppressing pests. According to the United States Environmental Protection Agency, over 50% of the waste produced is compostable. Data shows that at least 20% of it is composed of food scraps alone. If composting is practiced permanently, a home for species like butterflies, worms, and bees will be created.



Courtesy photo

Promoting Sustainable Agriculture

When thinking at a wider scale, if the majority of large companies utilize this strategy, it would be a massive advancement in the waste crisis. Biodiversity gardening helps you connect to nature and provides you with fresh products. However, many might be concerned that they don't have a place to create a garden. A solution that I feel would provide optimal results is community gardens, as demonstrated by New York City, which, in recent years, has become very involved in this practice. Community gardens are pieces of land operated individually or collectively in order to grow fresh products sustainably. An increase in participation in the few existing communal gardens will likely spark initiative to create a larger number at a local scale.

Health and community benefits

Additionally, this is a great way to boost health, establish stronger communities, clean up the environment, and gain access to

fresh products. Research has shown that community gardens can boost fruit and vegetable consumption, lower body mass index, improve diet-related chronic disease, and promote physical activity. Since they can promote good health and community involvement, social ties are crucial to the wellness of individuals in a given community. Social connections can be made and a stronger sense of community is created through community gardens. These ties enable residents to feel comfortable in their surroundings, minimize crime and empower themselves.

Starting small

To increase biodiversity globally, we must start at a local level, utilizing a strategy that promotes our own well-being alongside the restoration of diversity in nature. Promoting sustainable agriculture has never been more vital than now. If our society sees initiative, communal biodiversity gardening will eventually become the norm and greatly help out society.

International News

Venice Will Start Charging an Entrance Fee

By Marija Krsteska

Venice is known as one of the most alluring cities in the world. Making it one of the biggest tourist attractions. No one blames people for wanting to visit Venice, who wouldn't?

For starters, the city itself is made up of more than 100 islands and has canals instead of streets. Being situated in the third most visited country in 2022, Italy, the city is full of beautiful tourist attractions. This all seems harmless, but it is a lot more dangerous than one might think. Due to millions of tourists visiting

Venice every year, many landmarks and cultural manifestations have been ruined due to over-tourism. In 2019, Venice reached a crisis point welcoming 30 million tourists, 80% of which visited just for the day. This has overwhelmed the city with pollution, especially since the whole city is on water. Therefore, Venice has decided to charge tourists for their entry into the city starting January 16, 2023. This fee will be between €3 and €10 and the profits will go towards sustaining the city. If one stays in Venice just for the day, the fee would be €10.

However, if you decide to stay for a few days, the fee would be €6 or even €3 during off-season. In order to enter Venice, you would need to book the entry through a QR code and a website that is yet to be developed.

Once this news spread, many other cities and countries considered implementing this rule to reduce waste and pollution in their region produced by over-tourism. This may be a new way of functioning and may even help with global warming and waste overall!

Civilizational Revolution: The Line Project

By Galena Kuzmanovska

Schools today have classes like Individuals & Societies, which give insight into the social aspect of history. Students have opportunities to learn about dystopian societies, famous revolutions which have occurred, and various other movements which have caused some kind of innovative modernization (either socially, politically, economically, or in technology). Whether we have simply learned about the facts of the time periods or the events, or read novels regarding false utopias or dystopias, we have always been warned about the world reaching a state in which all individuals are controlled and monitored. Is this exactly what is going to happen?

Saudi Arabia's new proposed project, "The Line", is built with the slogan of it being the future of urban living. It is presented to the world as a civilizational revolution, and the information provided showcases this piece of architecture as a utopian opportunity for living. The plan offers space and homes to around

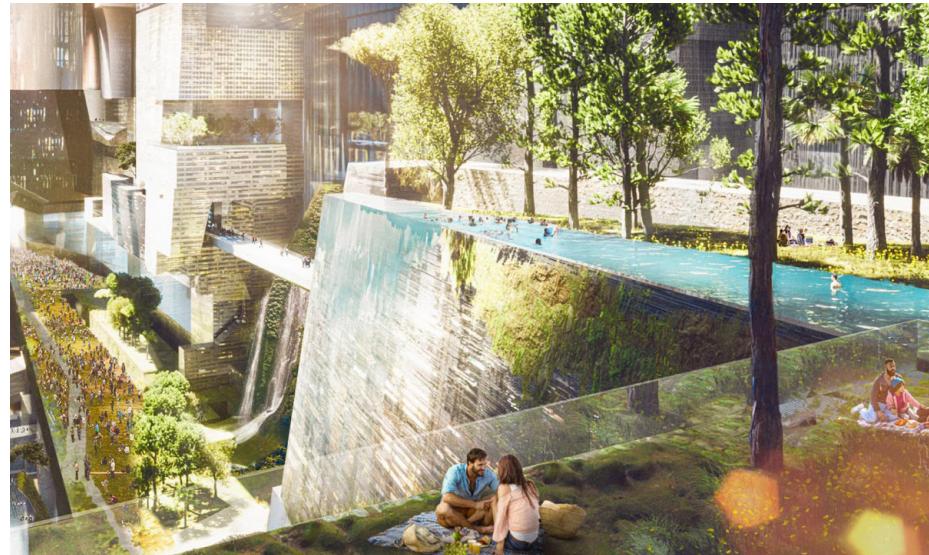


Photo courtesy of Neom.com

9 million people, with the land used being 500 meters above sea level, 170 kilometers long, but only 200 meters wide. The 2030 vision project is predicted to cost around \$500 billion, stimulate 380 thousand jobs, and add \$48 billion to Saudi Arabia's GDP.

There are several aspects of this design that intrigue people, as it has certainly caught the eye of the

media. While attention is sure to be on a large project such as this one, it has sparked lots of interest between teenagers and adults alike, all discussing the possible positives and negatives of it.

The official website has four separate sections, which are the key components of the project's advertisement:

- **Unparalleled access to**

International News



Photo courtesy of Neom.com

nature. 95% of the design's land is preserved for nature, and individuals living in The Line will have uninterrupted access to all of the natural beauty. The architecture shows multiple levels of open spaces, with diverse plant life and agricultural additions. There is also a surrounding landscape of mountains and sky, and with the reduced infrastructure footprint, this view is accessible to all.

- Clean air for everyone.** The elimination of carbon-intensive infrastructure is one of the positive sides of this project, as there will be no cars or roads in The Line. The industries and operations will also run on 100% renewable energy, with the addition of all diverse plant life and natural resources purifying the air quality in the "city".

- More time to spend with loved ones.** Due to the area of the space, and the elimination of cars as transport, everything is meant to be reachable with a 5-minute walk. Furthermore, the project will consist of a public transport network, which will offer a full journey from one to the other side with a total travel time of 20 minutes. There is also AI which will create automated services. With everything being close together it will

create more opportunities for family and friends to see each other spontaneously.

- A perfect climate all year round.** "The environment has been carefully designed to allow for an optimal balance of sunlight, shade, and natural ventilation." The climate is estimated to be optimal throughout the whole year, with the ensuring of a microclimatic space. The environmental variables allow the climate to stay steady and enhance the experience of those living there, especially with the implementation of heating and cooling services powered by renewable energy.

The main hope for this project is to focus on the health and well-being of citizens who choose to

live there, rather than putting the most money into infrastructure. This is aided by the purified air, which minimizes the risk of diseases caused by pollution, and the elimination of cars, as there will be fewer traffic accidents and no risk of other vehicle crashes.

Additionally, the project predicts to produce more business opportunities and to have 380,000 jobs generated by 2030. The city is promoted to be cognizant of the needs of the citizens, with humans being the center of focus (rather than technology, which is claimed to be the focus of other "traditional" cities). On top of this, there will be fewer expenses going toward car insurance, fuel, and parking. With the commutes being predicted to take 20 minutes, (maximum, if traveling from the beginning to the end of the city) citizens will have much higher disposable incomes and will be able to manage their time more efficiently.

This project is meant to bring about great change to the future and to the sustainability of the world as we know it. Stipulations are being made that this design, if successful, will inspire more cities like this, therefore changing our lives and our surroundings. While it may not be the best plan, it is certainly taking action to offer a safe community, and if it truly acts as a human-focused opportunity to life, it will definitely spark similar innovations and creations.



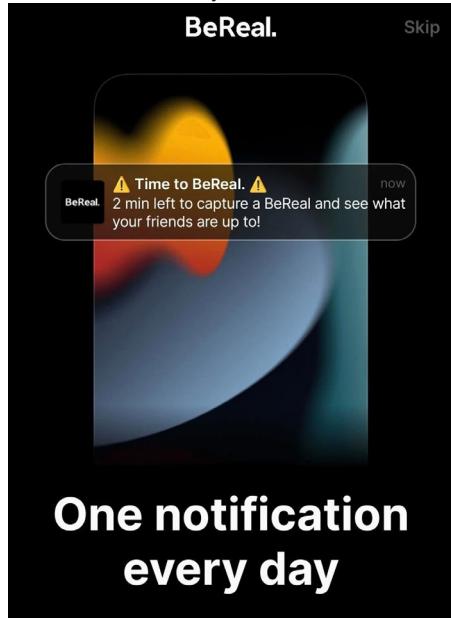
Photos courtesy of Neom.com

Opinion

BeReal: Are You Really Being Real?

By Biljana Loparski

A new wave of social media apps has recently surfaced to compete against Instagram and TikTok. Some of these apps aim to appear as authentic as possible, going against the beliefs of other social media where you can alter your appearance to your liking. Changing our appearance with filters and editing allows us to be someone we are not, which is a lot comforting for many users. Putting filters and editing tools on every app has become a necessity; however, the new sensation called *BeReal* is entirely different.



Courtesy of Gemma Riles via TrustedReviews

BeReal's Concept: Posting Unedited Pictures to Encourage Authenticity

The main goal of this app is to have the users post a picture once a day when a notification with a two-minute timer goes off. The picture you post is actually two pictures simultaneously. One is a completely unedited picture of yourself, and the other is anything in front of you. This way, the users are being real and in the moment. Users can also post a late BeReal; however, their friends will get a notification revealing that the

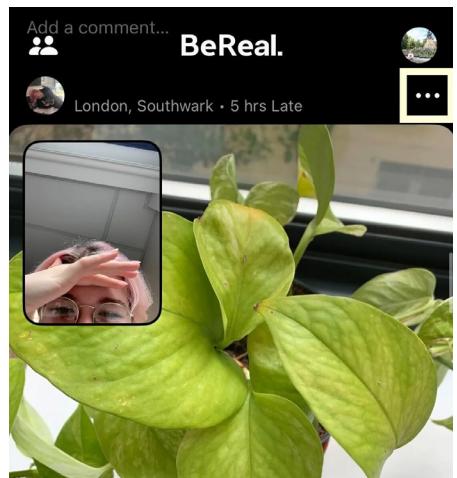
BeReal is posted late. To make the app and the experience even more authentic, your friends can see how many times you've done a retake on your BeReal. This way of working makes the app an antidote to all social media fakery.

BeReal's Popularity: From Novelty to Tedium

The reason why *BeReal* has become so popular is that its concept is entirely new to our generation. The app skyrocketed in popularity over the summer, when all of our BeReals were us on vacation, with friends, while enjoying summer. However, over time BeReals have become slightly boring. Most of them are your friends eating lunch, in bed, watching a movie, or working on their laptops. Sometimes a notification goes off while you're asleep, so after you wake up, you rush to do something less embarrassing so you can take the BeReal. Where does this unnecessary pressure come from? This is why the authenticity of the app quickly became tedious. From pressure, people started posting BeReals only when something interesting and worth showing was happening to them throughout the day. This is most common on the weekends when a notification comes early in the day; most people will take the *BeReal* at night when they're out. That way, they have a fun and interesting BeReal instead of a boring one. This completely defeats the whole purpose of the app, which is to be real and in the moment.

BeReal's Challenge: Balancing Authenticity with Social Pressure

Although many think this ruins the concept, there's another approach to the whole app. Essentially, to be real, you need to wait for an



Courtesy of Gemma Riles via TrustedReviews

unexpected notification on your phone to tell you that it's time to be real. Which inherently takes you out of the moment that you are actually being real. Taking you out of the moment makes you focus on capturing it so you can share it with your friends. Everyone's mindset is what you're capturing needs to be as interesting as possible so that you don't appear boring. The whole purpose of the app is to show that not everything you're doing is supposed to be fun and exciting and that you are not to impress others by how you look or what you're doing but to show your real and authentic self at the moment, to show how real life is.

My advice for the app is just to enjoy it. There is no point in feeling under pressure to take an interesting picture. The truth is that the app takes you out of the moment; however, the point is to enjoy whatever it is that you are capturing. It doesn't matter whether the picture you are posting is you in bed, you eating lunch, or with your friends on the beach. What matters is that you enjoy showing your real and authentic self, no matter how you look or what you're doing.

The views expressed in this article do not necessarily reflect the editorial policy of NOVA Times. If you want to reply to an article, write an email to lp14699@nova.edu.mk.

Opinion

"Women in the Music Industry Deserve an Apology"

By Teodora Risteska-Daskalovski

"When everyone believes you. What's that like?" Women in the music industry have suffered. Since the dawn of time, the industry's misogyny has criticized women for everything and anything. Their clothes, their lyrics, their performances, and their experiences. Having to prove that their lyrics are their own, that they are not washed up and boring for not completely changing their identity each time they release an album. Or maybe being called "the problem" because they write their music based on previous relationships that have impacted them. Everything that women in the music industry do is inspected under a microscope and criticized to the biggest extent. We have just let that be.

In the year 2020 during the first stages of quarantine, Dua Lipa, Selena Gomez, Taylor Swift, Megan Thee Stallion, Ariana Grande, and so many more artists released albums that explored so many different aspects of the music industry. One thing that all of these albums had in common was at least one song directly or indirectly responded to the sexism that they have experienced. They have been speaking up regarding this topic for years upon years but this hasn't seemed to stop the constant attacks that they face. It's incredible how in the 21st century where the world claims to be ever so accepting and fair to all, women still have to fight to prove their worth, and take up space. Based on a study done by Spotify with more than 5 million subscribers, male users listened to 94.2% male artists, mostly non from the pop genre. It is well known that women and non-binary artists mostly dominate the indie, pop, and indie-rock genres which are evidently avoided by most men. I believe that

this is so because of deep-rooted sexism. Men are taught from an early age to avoid emotions and not express themselves. Women on the other hand are allowed to feel and nurture their emotions. This skill leads to an unbelievable strength when it comes to lyrical songwriting and expressive performances. Thus pop is deemed feminine while rock and rap are deemed masculine genres. Due to this sexist framework, even male pop artists such as Harry Styles and Shawn Mendes are deemed feminine and have mostly female-dominated audiences.

Another example of how society doesn't let women in the music industry take up their own space is female rappers. Whenever a new female rapper starts rising through the ranks they are scrutinized on whether they have a distinct identity in comparison to other female rappers. This is not the case with new male rappers. When Cardi B first became popular, she was instantly shot down and compared to Nicki Minaj. This led to fans hating on both of them. Women rappers are constantly being compared to each other or if not to male rappers in the industry. "Oh she's the female version of Jay-Z". It's as if women are not allowed to have their own identities and are just versions of men. Male rappers do not face such problems, they are allowed to have their own style and identity and are not compared in that sense with female rappers or made to compete with each other. Nicki Minaj, one of the biggest names in the rap genre has said it herself: "You never know how much is too much – too much emotion, too much vulnerability, too much power. Everyone wants me to be something different. Women in the industry are judged more. If you speak up for yourself,

you're a bitch. If you party too much, you're a whore. Men don't get called these things."

A study done by Pew Research shows the word "honest" was used two times more when talking about men than with women. Society believes that men are more honest than women. This can be seen in a well-known example of Taylor Swift's feud with Kanye West. At the mere age of 17, Taylor had her mic taken away by Kanye who didn't believe that she deserved the best music video award. This scandal died down until Kanye West released his single "Famous" where with a misogynistic line refers to Taylor. The whole problem escalated into messy Twitter argument and a release of phone calls that reveals Taylor had been telling the truth the whole time. This scandal as worthless as it seems has a much bigger role in gender issues. It poses the question of why men's side of the story is the one that is listened to and believed more. Another example involving Swift is when in 2017 she won a lawsuit for sexual assault, earning 1\$. In 2013, Taylor was groped at a meet and greet, the lawsuit lasted for 4 years even though there were seven witnesses and a photo of the moment. "What happens when you get raped, and it's your word against his?" Taylor commented.

It's clear that women deserve an apology, from men, from their audience, and from society. Misogyny is a problem that has deep roots in every industry and it's important to fight against it. Therefore, men, stream pop female artists, and everyone, think twice about who you support :)

The views expressed in this article do not necessarily reflect the editorial policy of NOVA Times. If you want to reply to an article, write an email to lp14699@nova.edu.mk.

Opinion

The Loss of Original Identity Through Micro Labels, Trends, and Niches

By Jeta Nuhu

The Rise of the Internet Self-expression Revolution

For the last couple of years, the internet has been undergoing a new era or revolution of self-expression. The general norm went from showing a curated and perfect version of yourself to the so-called 'quirky' and 'relatable' desired persona for many people. There was a shift in pop culture, when showing the 'authentic' version of yourself was associated with a subjective flawless being. This new trend on the internet, especially amongst Gen Z, was dissecting the way people presented themselves in most intricate detail. The term aesthetic was gaining more and more recognition and meaning, as people were putting more and more weight to it. Eventually the lines between aesthetic and actual ideology started blurring. Essentially, the stereotypical traits of a certain group of people, started becoming the manner in which they view themselves, and the way they want to be perceived.

The Emergence of Femcel Aesthetic

A concrete example of this is the rise of the 'Femcel'. Femcel, in 2022, is the slang term for someone who revolves their identity around female superiority. This term originates from the term incel, which in turn means an 'involuntary celibate', and having hatred for the opposite sex, but the modern Femcel has so much more complexities. They are interested in the aesthetics of toxic sadness. This community normalizes terms like 'manipulative' or 'gaslighting', and makes them feel comfortable and familiar instead. The Femcel derives from a lot of particular popular culture moments, like films, artists, novels, albums,

celebrities, etc. More specifically, it derives from other pre-existing micro-niches on the internet, such as Coquette or Femme Fatale aesthetic.

Exploring Micro-niches and Aesthetics

Coquette is a relatively new term, relating to innocence and manipulation going hand in hand as the ideal; the visual of pastels and candy colors, all from lace blouses to corsets to knee-high socks and Mary Jane heels. On the other hand, the Femme Fatale is an older term, meaning mysterious, intelligent, and single-handedly disastrous. The core of the Femme Fatale is dark hues of reds and blacks, and dominating female literary characters that are "maneaters". Both of these groups stand for similar beliefs. The Tumblr aesthetic can also be considered a part of this. The app had its peak in the early 2010s, and it made a collage of different styles that later on developed into different groups. Although, the stereotypes of the app are found very controversial today, keeping in mind that some groups making different mental illnesses 'aesthetic', were promoting them.

Literary Sources

The staple of all these groups range from reciting David Fincher's *Gone Girl* cool girl speech, to overly-romanticizing literary works like Nabokov's *Lolita*, to strictly making artists like Lana Del Rey and Fiona Apple the face of their aesthetic. That being said, Tumblr is also where a lot of trends that are now popular on the internet originated. Some honorable mentions include dark or light academia, cottagecore, and even autumn aesthetic.

Hyper-fixation with Being Unique

Regardless of aesthetic one is a part of, there is a hyper-fixation with being unique. If that is the case, a lot of the time it results in extremism of that specific niche. For example, the trend of extreme minimalism that we saw with the Clean Girl aesthetic on the internet, and in recent months, extreme maximalism suddenly taking its place.

The Limitations of Labeling

Fear of the ordinary drives communities like these to create even smaller communities. So, does it have an end? The pressure of creating labels for every possible style or personality type a person might have puts us in unnecessary boxes that we have to fit into. Self expression is, obviously, individualistic. That's why it's self expression. Giving a name to everything indirectly limits people to a set of approaches they can take to it, therefore contradicting the term itself. With more labels and division, every trend or style would be a reinvention of some pre-existing ones. Ultimately, how would we progress and move forward as individuals, if there is a continuous lack of original thoughts, ideas, and opinions?

Opinion

The Sympathetic Serial Killer: Media's New Obsession

By Kalina Gocevska

This September, as autumn was slowly rolling in, and people were anticipating the eerie festivities of Halloween, Netflix released their latest true-crime blockbuster "Dahmer - Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story". This gruesome depiction of Dahmer's crimes, complete with excruciatingly detailed, and often gratuitous, gut-churning images of violence and gore was met with hordes of adoration directed towards the killer responsible for the murder (and dismemberment) of 17 young men.

The Role of Attractive Actors

With viewers rushing to social media platforms to express their sympathy for the cold-blooded murderer, this fictionalized portrayal of Dahmer quickly joined the ranks of notorious killers like Ted Bundy and Marylin Manson who have their very own fanbases, as one of the most beloved monsters in the world. However, there is one significant detail that separates these criminals from other praised fictional murderers, say, Joe Goldberg from Netflix's "You": they and the blood on their hands are completely real. Why, then are viewers still so willing to empathize with them, when they know the extensive list of crimes shown on screen are based on equally, or even more disturbing real-life counterparts? Well, one needn't look further than the cast list of their favorite true-crime show to notice that most of these murderers are played by renowned Hollywood heartthrobs, from Evan Peters to Zac Effron, all of which have accumulated a loyal following that admires them for their charming personalities and conventionally attractive looks. So, audiences subconsciously carry this preconception of the actors even when they are shown

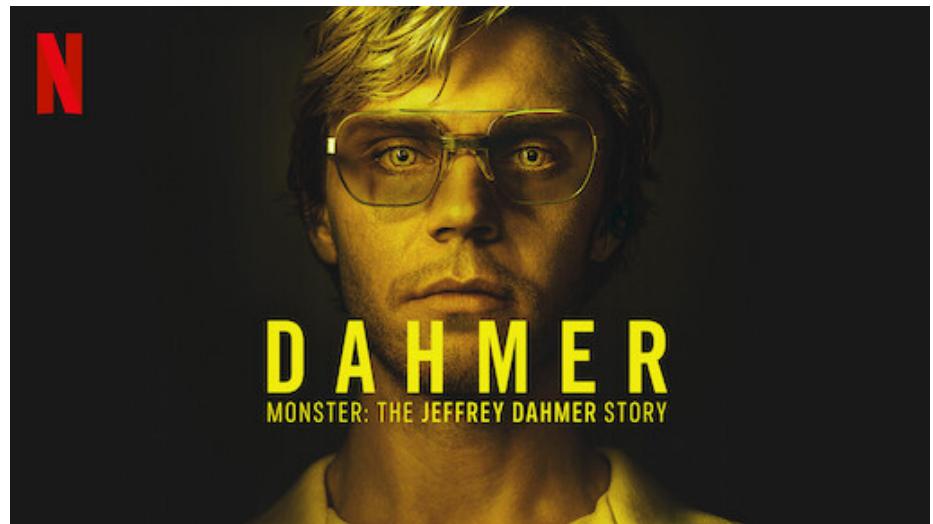


Photo courtesy of Netflix.com

having violent outbursts on screen and seek excuses or justifications for their cruel behavior. There's even a scientific explanation for this phenomenon, a concept that psychologists have dubbed "beauty premium", explaining that attractive people are often considered more virtuous or valuable before their personality even comes into consideration.

The Influence of Script and Cinematography

However, the appearance of the actors is not the only factor that contributes to the mass romanticization of serial killers. The script, cinematography, and of course, acting, all combine to create the perfect conditions in which the characters are given a sympathetic portrayal, evoking pity in viewers. Perhaps the killer had childhood trauma or a lifelong struggle with mental illness that not only explains their deranged actions but almost makes the graphic violence seem like a natural progression of their suffering. Something that could have been prevented had there only been someone to help them cope. When writing a fictional killer this is understandable, as it gives a certain depth and realism to the

character, provided audiences understand that what they are viewing is just film or TV, but things become more complicated if a real murderer is given a tragic backstory to justify their actions. There is always the possibility that on the other side of the screen sits a family member of one of the victims, watching the killer receive more compassion than their loved one who met a horrifying, painful end.

Patriarchal Conditioning and the Perception of Male Serial Killers

It is important to note that not all viewers of true-crime media end up with a romanticized perception of the killers, and it is, in fact, dependent on the demographic of the audience. Surveys show that true-crime audiences are predominantly made up of women, particularly young adults, and this is also true for those groups of people who consider themselves fans of serial killers. This notion brings forth another discussion, though, because many serial killers were explicitly violent towards women, for example, Ted Bundy, yet are still adored by a concerning number of people. It is possible that this sympathy extended by

Opinion

audiences to serial killers is a result of patriarchal conditioning which excuses the cruel and dangerous behavior of men, and places the responsibility on others to help them or prevent them from turning to violence. When a serial killer is shown going through extreme inner turmoil and haunting circumstances, all through the masterful lens of some director's camera, we forget that their actions were, in fact, a choice with real consequences, and not merely an inevitable crescendo of their accumulated trauma.

The Need for Separating Reality from Fiction

All things considered, there's no definitive explanation for

our fascination and infatuation with serial killers and their on-screen depictions. It's a perfect concoction of deliberate casting choices, human psychology, and social circumstances, but even so, the morality of such wide adoration of these individuals is questionable at best. Audiences need to create a separation between the character on screen written for TV and played by a trained actor, and their real counterpart who committed irredeemable crimes, because such obsessions have been known to transcend the fourth wall and reflect in reality. Serial killers and mass shooters, among others, have accumulated fanbases without there being a single film or TV show about them. Murderers

have evaded charges due to public favor. Victims' families are forced to endure time and time again exploitative recreations of the deaths of their loved ones, just to open social media to floods of sympathy - not for them, but for the killers responsible. It would be a daunting demand to ask for the very concept of true-crime media to be altered, but we must at the very least remember that our sympathies should lie not with the twisted "heroes" of these stories, but the people who suffered at their hands.

The views expressed in this article do not necessarily reflect the editorial policy of NOVA Times. If you want to reply to an article, write an email to lp14699@nova.edu.mk.

How Trends Influence Society

By Anastasija Milojkova

Humans' Innate Sociality and Its Significance

Humans are innately social, and we are not unique in that aspect juxtaposed to other animals. We exhibit broader attributes of our sociality with primitive species, though our bearing is also convoluted and substantial for the fettle of our existence. Regardless of the significance of socialization, little about the brain mechanisms that govern it, is known.

Furthermore, we are constantly looking for the things that give us a sense of belonging, that degree of contempt where we believe our lives have value or significance. This can even be observed in Maslow's hierarchy of needs, the psychologist placed it only above psychological and safety needs. The mind is the brain of action, and everyone discovers happiness by belonging to a collective, and a big part of that is following the present societal norms. So it would make one wonder what effect might that have on the individual. How do trends influence society?

Trends and Their Influence on Society

When a group of individuals invite you to participate, that is social acceptance and its dichotomy includes actions ranging from callousness to exclusion. This relates to having a sense of community and being a portion of something comparable to completeness. According to Baumeister and Larry, this has two components: frequent proper social interaction and solid connections, and only with both can a human feel satisfied. Individuals, therefore, encounter a variety of bad feelings when that is not possible, as well as problems with their self-worth, poor performance, and a great deal more. Gaining a decent image is a strong motivator for multitudes of acts prompted by reputation-based choices. Subcultures are also known as a sort of "caste" of people with shared interests. Humans want to be a member of a minimum of one since they are aware of the abundance of

such groups. This is where trends emerge, and tribalism develops as a sense of cohesion that makes people follow the lead of others.

The Pros and Cons of Following Trends

Many factors support the idea that trends can be beneficial in the world. Fashion in our modern society is frequently ever-evolving, and as a result, many things might be considered stylish. This means that everyone is free to try different ways of expressing themselves and making an image in that process. In addition to what has already been said, some trends may lead to the development of beneficial pastimes like reading and healthy habits like exercising. An illustration would be the TikTok hashtag booktok, which recommends books in every genre, from fantasy to contemporary, and encourages reading as an astute activity. Additionally, from a broad perspective, it aids organizations across all industries in finding their bearings. It offers new chances,

Opinion

creates a marketing spectrum, helps leaders keep up and demonstrate they are not fearful of change, and aids in anticipating the future.

Things in vogue might also be bad and have downsides to them as well. The most prevalent specimen of this is the dangerous internet challenges. Social media platforms usually award outrageous decisions, and the more scandalous something is, the more attention it gathers. People yet to be in their twenties are more susceptible to falling into this type of algorithm attention-seeking trap since their prefrontal cortex responsible for rationality is not fully developed. Besides this, even adults might make the mistake of participating

since they do not know of the danger. Most people know about the tide pod challenge, and because people are unaware the substance inside it can cause burns to the throat it caused eight deaths in 2016. Some other examples of these types of trends include the 48-hour missing challenge, the boiling water challenge, the salt and ice challenge, the cinnamon challenge, and the fire challenge.

The way that society and its members behave in everyday life is significantly shaped by trends. They now form a component of the requirements that people need to meet to join a particular group. This reality might be applied in ways that would not necessarily benefit the target audience. Many things

can be argued over, including whether the circumstance will encourage people to become an authentic group with a sense of belonging or whether it will push them into unsafe or uncomfortable situations in the pursuit of fame. In my experience as a person that grew up in the modern age I would have to say I cannot imagine a world without trends and it is unavoidable that while they might leave different imprints on the person following them, society as a whole has become a mere product of these general directions of change.

The views expressed in this article do not necessarily reflect the editorial policy of NOVA Times. If you want to reply to an article, write an email to lp14699@nova.edu.mk.

Arts Featurette

"Take a Bath, You Stink of Dragon"

By Jovana Vasilisa Jovanovikj

Welcome back to Westeros! The lovely deranged dynasty of the dragon-riding Targaryen is up, front, and center in the new series *House of the Dragon*, a prequel to *Game of Thrones*. Unlike the previous series where the Targaryen dynasty was dethroned and exiled in Essos where Daenerys slowly rebuilt up the might of her family, this prequel shows the Targaryens at the peak of their power in Westeros.

Of course, Targaryens wouldn't be Targaryens without initiating a bloody civil war among themselves, dragons included. Really, who thought it was a good idea to give the Targaryens overgrown flying fire-breathing lizards to control? It would be like giving nuclear weapons to the presidents and prime ministers of the 21st-century world ... Let's not go there.

Watching the series, it is "a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma" (thanks Winston) how Targaryens lasted centuries without eradicating each other and making the whole family extinct. This is exactly the essence of the series *House of the Dragon*.

If the viewers were excited about the fast-paced show, packed with action, duels, battles, dragon fights, and wars, then the first season of the prequel is rather disappointing. Of course, the typical Westerosi fashion of court intrigue, skullduggery, scheming, plotting, backstabbing, poisoning, betrayal, and assassinations are ever-present and at the very forefront of this season. One of the best-known quotes from Westeros is that when a Targaryen is born the gods flip a coin to determine if the person turns out great or

mad (or both). After watching both *Game of Thrones* and *House of the Dragon* it appears that the mad side of the coin is the default option for the gods.

The first season of the series revolved around the fate of King Viserys who is the most atypical Targaryen in the whole World of Ice and Fire, sequels and prequels included. He is almost a normal person consumed by his hobby of building old Valyria with protologos. The King turns out to be a good man but a weak monarch and an ineffective leader. The plot erupts when King Viserys names his eldest child Rhaenyra heir to the Iron Throne. Unfortunately, most of the lords are against his decision as he has a son, Aegon II, born to his second wife Alicent (who used to be Rhaenyra's friend but turned into her mortal enemy

Arts Featurette

- very confusing). Thus, two opposing sides tactically position themselves to claim the Throne for their respective favorites. On one side, the Blacks follow Rhaenyra, and, on the other side, the Greens follow Aegon (more precisely his mother Alicent and his grandfather Otto Hightower). Throughout the ten episodes of the first season, it seems that everyone is waiting for the death of King Viserys and the beginning of the civil war. So instead of digging deep into the unfolding events, season one is just a prequel to a prequel. It sets the backstory and gives reasons about the motivation of the key players of the Game of Thrones, this one happening about two centuries before the original one. Hence, the physical deterioration of the body of the King throughout the season reflects the state of his kingdom - something is rotten in the state of Westeros. With the death of the King, Alicent and Otto usurp Rhaenyra's throne

and crown Aegon II as king. In her ancestral seat Dragonstone, where Targaryens originally gained their foothold in Westeros and in whose caves they still breed their dragons, Rhaenyra convenes a war council, with the help of her uncle/husband Daemon (the Targaryens would really make Oedipus and his cursed brood blush) and her children, tries to fight for her throne.

Though this show has a much bigger balance between powerful men and mighty women than *Game of Thrones*, it is still a long way from women's liberation. Whereas in the original *Game of Thrones*, we got tired of seeing women downgraded as prostitutes and a succession of cunning queens fighting for their son's thrones. In the prequel, the first queen Aemma undergoes quite a vivid and memorable cesarean without any anesthesia, her successor Alicent is basically a victim of child trafficking by her father, and on top of it, Raenyra suffers a vivid miscarriage in the

last episode. Does George R.R. Martin ever plan to cut the women of Westeros some slack and give them a break? I don't want to go full-on feminist but it is a bit too much to exploit and objectivize the women even in a completely made-up and invented epic world such as Westeros.

To avenge the killing of her dragon, Daenerys razes King's Landing and turns the greatest city of Westeros into ashes. One wonders which heinous monstrosity Rhaenyra would undertake to avenge her secondborn (who was "accidentally" killed by his uncle's dragon ... oops). So, in this series besides being their masters, Targaryen also became dragons' diet. "Take a bath, you stink of dragon", King Viserys scolds Rhaenyra at the very beginning of the series. The stench of dragon, blood, and ashes is ever present in the air as the action truly yearns to progress in the next season.