

VOL. 15 | DECEMBER 2024

# ARTS & CULTURE

## WINTER EDITION



**A GIRL'S STORY,  
ANNIE ERNAUX**

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**VIRGINIA WOOLF:  
A ROOM OF ONE'S  
OWN**

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**THE BECHDEL TEST**

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**WITCHCRAFT,  
SUPERSTITIONS AND  
OTHER SHENANIGANS**

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**AWARENESS  
RECOMMENDATIONS**



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## 02 A Girl's Story, Annie Ernaux

*"Another deeply felt, fearlessly honest exploration of female desire, shame, and intellectual passion from the incomparable Annie Ernaux.", Sigrid Nunez.*

## 06 Virginia Woolf: A Room of One's Own

*"The room and the money are two factors that go hand in hand. (...) However, besides material necessities, they are also symbols for independence and creative freedom."*

## 09 The Bechdel Test

Also known as the Bechdel-Wallace test, is a measure of the representation of women in film and other fiction.

## 11 Witchcraft, Superstitions and Other Shenanigans

*"Have you ever been in the process of expressing a thought and realized, had you been born three to four centuries before, you'd be immediately sentenced to burning at the stake?"*

## 17 Awareness Recommendations

Are you thinking about the next album, book, podcast, series or movie you need to feed your addiction? NAC helps you to find it!





PH: THE GUARDIAN / PAUL HOSEFROS



*"At the time I also considered myself a lowly, abject woman. I was afraid, as I said, that it was precisely my female nature that kept me from bringing the pen as close as possible to the pain I wanted to express. For a woman who has something to say, does it really take a miracle – I said to myself – to dissolve the margins within which nature has enclosed her and shower herself in her own words to the world?"*

— Elena Ferrante, *In the Margins: On the Pleasures of Reading and Writing*

## EDITORIAL

The Arts and Culture magazine is the result of the search for a creative outlet within our school's community. In an experiment, this semester's team decided to implement a theme, so as to gather diversified angles on a specific issue.

So, this edition of the Arts & Culture magazine is about everything female.

The choice of the theme is related to the increasing mediatic scrutiny of the issue of gender discrimination, either on the topic of violence against women, gender pay gap or cultural biases. Taking a different angle, we want to ponder on the thematic of the female experience and its expression in the artistic medium.

In this issue's magazine, Catarina Franco writes a review article on Annie Ernaux's *A Girl's Story*, which ends up merging into a reflection on the intricacies of womanhood.

Still with books, Mafalda Carvalho's essay on *A Room of One's Own*, by Virginia Woolf invites us to reflect on the well-known proposition "A woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction".

Following this, we have a research piece on the ancient roots of today's superstitions, much interconnected with folklore. Throughout the article, Matilde Lopes comedically makes the point that much of the superstitions we indulge in nowadays could make up a good reason for a conviction a few centuries ago, specially if you were to be a woman.

The team brings back the viral Bechel Test, in a fun piece written by Mafalda. Are your favorite films feminist? We invite you to find out!

To finish off, we have a regular feature, the cultural recommendations, this time around written by Marta Nascimento.

Thank you for reading us, and welcome to the fifteenth edition of the Arts & Culture magazine.



ANNIE ERNAUX, NOBEL PRIZE OF LITERATURE 2022

## A GIRL'S STORY, ANNIE ERNAUX

BY MARIA CATARINA FRANCO

### Intro

This review aims to delve into the book *A Girl's Story* and the writing of Annie Ernaux, one of the most prominent voices in contemporary literature. I believe that it is never inconvenient to emphasize that an opinion piece inherently reflects the perspective of its author, respecting the essence imposed by the nature of such writing. This review does not substitute the reading of the book, so I encourage you to read it yourself; if you have not, I warn you that spoilers are ahead. If you wish to read it in its full form, preserving and respecting the aesthetic the author envisioned in its raw and true version, I urge you to skip to the conclusion, where I state my opinion without diminishing the novel's true intentions with the narrowing lenses of my biased interpretation. For those continuing, I'll delve into the novel's themes, narrative style, and significance.

### Author

Annie Ernaux is a French writer and the 2022 Nobel Prize in Literature laureate, recognized "for the courage and clinical acuity with which she uncovers the roots, estrangements and collective restraints of personal memory". Born into a working-class family in Yvetot, Ernaux pursued literature, eventually earning a degree in modern literature and teaching for many years. Her literary journey began in 1974, and she soon shifted from fiction to autobiographical narratives. Her work, deeply intertwined with sociology, offers a raw and unflinching look at the self. Ernaux is also known for her political activism, supporting movements such as the Yellow Vests and expressing solidarity with women's rights movements in Iran.





## Plot

The book opens with a brief yet powerful reflection on submission- obliterating one's identity, in order to perform in someone else's story, a narrative beyond one's control or full understanding. It explores the unsettling choice of secretly designating a "Master" and carving every aspect of oneself in the faint hope of approval. This stark portrayal of a toxic relationship serves as the perfect entry point to the novel, immediately drawing the reader in with questions about the dynamics and insights that shaped the author's perspective, hooking you to the pages.

The book then shifts to a narration of a young woman in her early twenties, that was brought up in a religious background in Yvetot. Annie Ernaux revisits the summer of 1958, when she worked as a holiday camp instructor—the first time she experienced true independence. Eager to experience the world, since the age of 13 she has “dreamed” of boys, but does not know how to

approach them. With high hopes, she envisions this summer as the triumphant beginning of her own emancipation.

However, her experiences at the camp fall short of her expectations. The narrative details her first night spent with a man, an older counsellor, and what was merely a brief, unsatisfying sexual encounter is transformed in Annie's mind into a full-blown romance.

As she begins exploring her sexuality, her reputation quickly suffers. Convinced that she is happy, it becomes obvious to the reader that this phase of reckless behaviour is merely an “obedience to what was happening,” marked by a profound sense of emptiness.

After returning home, she is desolated and determined to reshape herself into the girl she thinks the boy she loves would admire. To cope with the “nothingness” that looms until the next summer camp reunion, she drowns herself into a self-enforced conversion of her entire being, adopting strict diets and developing an eating disorder that will plague her for years.

The story continues with her studies in Rouen and a year as an au pair in London in 1960, where she decides to “make a literary being of myself, someone who lives as if her experiences were to be written down someday.”

The book concludes with a sense of completion and understanding, giving the opening reflection new depth:

***“It is the absence of meaning in what one lives, at the moment one lives it, which multiplies the possibilities of writing.”***



## Themes

Annie Ernaux's *A Girl's Story* explores the intricate relationship between memory, identity, and the persistence of self across time.

*"I too wanted to forget that girl. Really forget her, that is, stop yearning to write about her. Stop thinking that I have to write about this girl and her desire and madness, her idiocy and pride, her hunger and her blood that ceased to flow. I have never managed to do so."*

*This summer continues to haunt the author almost 50 years later. As she recounts these events, Ernaux grapples with the dichotomy of dissociating herself from the "girl of '58" for accuracy and integrating parts of her past into the woman she is today: "I am not constructing a fictional character but deconstructing the girl I was."*

*The novel also scrutinizes the societal constraints placed on female sexuality, particularly how young women internalize these expectations. Ernaux's early experiences with men reveal her struggle to balance her desires with external judgments, feeling both pride in her desirability and discomfort with the labels society imposes on her.*

She frames "a girl's shame" as both a personal emotion and a product of societal pressures, depicting the challenge of reconciling her sexuality with restrictive norms. This theme resonates with the universal struggle of young women searching for freedom and self-definition while navigating a web of conflicting standards.

*"She has received the answer to her question, the one asked by most girls of her time: How am I supposed to conduct myself? With freedom."*

Additionally, Ernaux examines internalized misogyny with female relationships and their roles in reinforcing or challenging these social norms. Relationships between women become a dual space of support and judgment, where woman can serve both allies and enforcers of societal expectations. Ernaux's exploration of these dynamics reveal the complex emotional landscape young women navigate as they seek self-affirmation in a world that often pits them against each other. Her relationship with food, was also addressed. The lack of control and self-worth tied to physical appearance. Strict diets and eating disorders emerge as part of her attempt to align with both personal and societal ideals.

## Style and Opinion

The intimate nature of Ernaux's writing pulls readers into the labyrinth of memory alongside her, as if both author and audience are simultaneously deciphering the complexities of the past. Her narrative is less about presenting answers and more about embracing the uncertainties and raw emotions that come with reflection. She does not try to transcend the power of the memories; she accepts the well that time put between her and herself from the past, yet she attempts to have glimpses of comprehension by impersonating and possessing her past self: "I am her ghost, I inhabit her vanished being".

She realizes that, when she writes, she cannot predict what will unfold, as the journey of remembering and seeking meaning leads her into unexpected places and conclusions. This is what makes the process so unique—readers become part of a deeply personal and cathartic experience of recollection.

"I do not know what this piece of writing is. Even the thing I was pursuing by writing this book has dissolved."

As a woman reading this, I couldn't help but reflect on my own younger self and find echoes of my journey in the experiences Ernaux describes. Even if events were different, I was taken into an inner journey alongside the author. It felt like being in a room with four different people—the author, the girl of '58, my younger self, and me today—blending together to make sense of our shared experiences as women. We were angry, rebellious, resigned, overwhelmed, exhilarated, heartbroken, and ashamed, all together. We confronted how certain dynamics from our youth shaped our sense of self and our acceptance of sexuality, and how we navigated societal expectations along the way.

Even though I am consciously indulging in the mistake of compromising by oversimplifying the complexity of this book, I would describe it as a feminist work—though not in a deliberate, self-conscious way. Instead, it offers an honest, impartial account of a girl's story and a woman's efforts to understanding her, accepting to live with her intrinsically, in a heartfelt self-reconciliation.

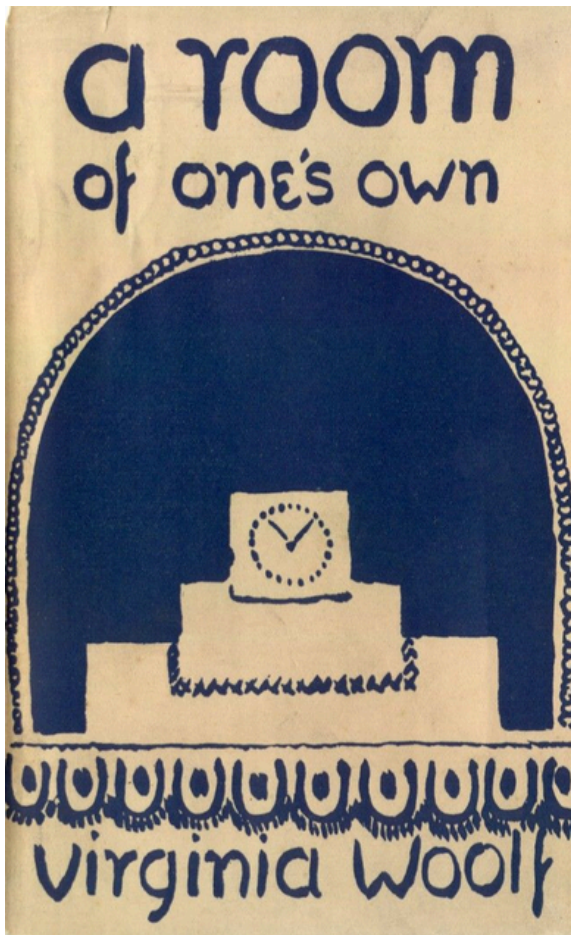


## Conclusion

As I suspect that, throughout this review, my admiration for the author and love for the book did not come by unnoticed, and as I am aware that flattery is bearable only until its tiring, I will, once again, entertain my tendency to impair my analysis by simplifying.

I've heard that there are two simple metrics to tell if a book truly resonated with you: how much you underlined (for those of us that are not afraid to stain the book with your own notes), and how many people you felt compelled to recommend it to or lend it out. By both of these measures, *A Girl's Story* was an undoubtedly a resounding success. It's a book that lingers long after you've turned the final page, inviting self-reflection and discussion—a testament to the power of Annie Ernaux's storytelling.





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## VIRGINIA WOOLF: A ROOM OF ONE'S OWN

BY MAFALDA CARVALHO

Virginia Woolf published *A Room of One's Own* in 1929. A forward-thinking feminist her whole life, Woolf wrote many books, mostly novels, that tackled the issue of women in society. However, *A Room of One's Own* is not a novel, but an essay. The book presents itself as a written version of the speech Woolf was asked to give in front of students from Newnham and Girton College, some of the women's colleges at the University of Cambridge. The lectures took place in October of 1928, the same year women were given equal voting rights as men in the United Kingdom. However, equal voting rights was just one step in the fight for equal rights and treatment of women and men in society.

When invited to give the lectures, Woolf was told she should focus on the theme of "Women and Fiction". The beginning of the book follows the author's process of interpreting this premise and deciding what to talk about. After meditating on the question, Virginia Woolf arrives at the following proposition: "A woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction", which served as the pillar for her lectures and subsequent book. This simple proposition contains in itself an extremely political and revolutionary notion of the position of women in society. The room and the money are two factors that go hand in hand. A woman needs to have money to be able to have a space for herself, a separate room, within her house, or not, with a door and a lock. However, besides material necessities, they are also symbols for independence and creative freedom.

In order to explain her theory, Woolf delves deeply into the historical stance of women in society. She explores how women have been historically excluded from arts and education. She famously presents the hypothetical story of Shakespear's sister Judith, a young woman just as talented as her brother, and just as interested in learning about and pursuing a life in the artistic world. However, unlike her male counterpart, Judith is prohibited from attending school or taking part in plays. The systematic repression of her wish to explore and be recognized for her brilliant artistic capacities lead Judith to suicide. Despite being a hypothetical story set in Elizabethan England, this example portrays the reality of many young women, who, up until the nineteenth century, were excluded from education and from the arts.

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Apart from this physical prohibition, Virginia Woolf also explores how women have been excluded from contributing to the development of literary standards. The lack of female writings up until the seventeenth and eighteenth century, meant that when women started writing, their style was not appreciated, and even despised, as it differed from the male-dominated norm. According to Woolf, patriarchy's grip on literature had led women to stray away from their natural writing styles, as they tried to conform, which the author believes contradicted the purpose of artistic expression. Additionally, Woolf also explores how some female authors experienced great frustration as a result of these limitations, and how it affected their writing. She believes this was the case of Charlotte Bronte. Consumed by anger against patriarchal norms, Bronte expressed her frustration through her writing, which Virginia Woolf believes affected the quality and universality of her works, thus not allowing her to fulfill her potential, nor achieve as much success and recognition as she could have.

One additional argument the author makes is that women have always suffered from poverty more strongly than men. Throughout history, women's poverty and economic dependence on men have been key barriers to their autonomy and creative potential, not allowing them to have money, nor a room of their own. Until the Married Women's Property Act of 1870, all of women's material possessions, even one's they earned with their work, belonged legally to their husbands or fathers. Women were fully dependent on male figures in their life for survival, which clearly imposed limitations on their freedom to create art, keeping them from creating the "room of their own". Without economic security and personal space, women were left without the resources to nurture their talents, perpetuating a cycle of exclusion from the literary and artistic fields.



Virginia Woolf dedicates the last chapters of the book to an exploration of writing, in light of the reality of the dynamics between men and women, in her day and age. Woolf observes that men's need to assert superiority over women became more pronounced as women began advocating for and gaining a stronger stance in public and intellectual life. To maintain dominance, men often portrayed women as intellectually inferior and dismissed their work. This meant that some men's writing, too, became constrained by their need to uphold this dominance, as they were writing from a narrow, competitive viewpoint rather than an open exploration of ideas. Woolf introduces the concept of the "androgynous mind" as a necessary state for the free expression and flow of ideas. She encourages writers to balance masculine and feminine qualities and transcend the need to write competitively or defensively. She believed that only by adopting this balanced perspective can both men and women create freely, producing richer, more nuanced literature that reflects a broader, more universal, human experience.

Going back to the initial proposition, “A woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction”, this idea comprises an immense symbolism and an extremely revolutionary notion of women’s role in society. Woolf’s call for financial independence and personal space reflects a demand for liberation from the social constraints that historically kept women away from education and artistic freedom. Her critique of patriarchal standards and her vision of the androgynous mind pioneered a new era and a new approach to creativity, one that transcended restrictive gender norms.

Today, Woolf’s vision of a world where everyone, regardless of gender, can fully explore their intellectual and artistic potential remains as relevant and inspiring as it was in 1929. Her arguments in *A Room of One’s Own* remind us of the continuous need to advocate for equal opportunities for creative freedom, and breaking down harmful stereotypes, so as to allow for all voices to be heard and valued.







## THE BECHDEL TEST

BY MAFALDA CARVALHO

If you have ever wondered whether there's a fun and easy way to tell whether a film or television series can be considered feminist, you may look no further. Put forward by American cartoonist Alison Bechdel, the Bechdel test is one of the best-known simple indicators of the representation of women in the media. In order to pass the test, a film or series must respond to the following three requisites:

- There must be a scene with at least two named female characters in it
- The women must have a conversation
- This conversation must be about any topic other than men

At the time, the test came to expose the common misrepresentation of women in the media. Women often appeared in films and TV shows simply as an accessory to men, their characters being left extremely underdeveloped, and stripped out of agency in the evolution of the plot. On the other hand, it also showed some interesting finds, especially some old movies one would never guess were feminist, and according to Bechdel, they are.

**FILMS THAT SURPRISINGLY FAIL THE BECHDEL TEST****Marriage Story (2019)**

Noah Baumbach's masterpiece deserves praise for its in-depth analysis of both male and female characters. However, Scarlett Johansson's character is delving so deeply into the issues of her marriage that she does not talk about anything but men! There's an extremely meaningful scene where Laura Dern's character talks about the role of women and mothers in society. However, this is a monologue, and not a conversation!

**Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind (2004)**

This indie cult film undeniably challenges all the stereotypes of romance movies. However, in the eyes of the Bechdel Test, it is not the most feminist, as it fails to portray a conversation between two female characters about anything other than men.

**Breakfast at Tiffany's (1961)**

Not uncommon for a 60s film, Audrey Hepburn's rise to fame piece, once again, did not include a conversation between two female characters whose topic was not men.

**FILMS THAT SURPRISINGLY PASS THE BECHDEL TEST****Goodfellas (1990)**

Martin Scorsese is undoubtedly a master of filmmaking. Although his films usually explore more male-dominated realities, namely the mob, in *Goodfellas*, two female characters manage to exchange a few words about using a baby to smuggle drugs.

**Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs (1937)**

A 1937 feminist film is an interesting find. In one of the first Disney movies ever, Snow White has a conversation with the Queen, disguised as an Old Lady, where the latter convinces Snow White to eat the poisoned apple. This counts as a conversation that is not about men!

**More than half of the Fast and Furious Franchise**

Although never very deep, female characters manage to have a conversation, at least once, in most films, be it about another female character's death, pregnancy or an exchange of insults while beating each other.

It must be noted that the Bechdel Test is a simple indicator. Its findings do not provide a holistic understanding of the representation of women in the media. This topic is not something that can be simplified in three questions. As the examples above showed, it is easy to pass the test without exactly embodying the values of feminism. One important thing the Bechdel forgets is, for example, the women behind the screen, in the screenwriting and film directing industries, which still nowadays, are very male-dominated fields. Additionally, the Bechdel test does not convey any information about other misrepresented groups, such as the LGBTQ+ community, which are also important to consider. However, this does not mean we cannot have fun applying the Bechdel Test and checking which films and series pass or fail!





# WITCHCRAFT, SUPERSTITIONS AND OTHER SHENANIGANS

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BY MATILDE LOPES

Have you ever been in the process of expressing a thought and realized, had you been born three to four centuries before, you'd be immediately sentenced to burning at the stake? No? It wouldn't have mattered your gender – even though women were more prone to be of the dark arts. Still, no?

You've probably got your history lesson wrong. That's fine. It might be the Halloween spirit, or the pure injustice of the cruel acts practiced back then that still haunts the living who did, in fact, get their facts straight. But today I'm feeling like sharing with you a list of common practices you probably still do, that would very likely have been considered witchery – and, therefore, convicted you to a gruesome death.

Let's begin.

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## Witchcraft and the European witch hunt – a brief historical overview

Some of the earliest records of witchcraft date back to 1750 BC, during the Old Babylonian Empire. On the Code of Hammurabi, the oldest code of laws in the world, it is specifically stated:

“If a man has put a spell upon another man and has not justified himself, he upon whom the spell is laid shall go to the holy river. He shall plunge into the holy river, and if the holy river overcomes him, he who wove the spell upon him shall take to himself his house. If the holy river makes that man to be innocent, and has saved him, he who laid the spell upon him shall be put to death. He who plunged into the holy river shall take to himself the house of him who wove the spell upon him.”

Confusing, but a record.

Practices of magic and divine arts remained a regional folk belief, specially to Europeans, until the late 1400's, when writings documenting the existence of such “witches” – reported in the words of the Arabic, Egyptian, Jewish and Romani worlds – were “rediscovered” by westerns. The new way of thinking of the Renaissance era, along with a new-found curiosity for what could be learned, collided with the Church and its beliefs, and witchcraft practitioners would be accused of heresy – if one believes in “superstitions” of any sorts, one is very likely not worshipping God as one should.



The distaste the Church held against these practitioners, combined with still very raw and rudimental knowledge of the world all around – and the science behind it – paved the way towards the mass hysteria of the witch hunt that bloomed around the XVI century. Plagues, cholera outbreaks, the Little Ice Age and the Great Comet of 1528, along with other unexplained natural disasters made for a very convincing case against the occult, which led to panic and the need to do something about it – exterminate the perpetrators.

Although previous records had stated quite clearly that witchery was a unisex craft, things took a turn for the worse as women started being targeted and killed – along with any sense of feminism we could hope they might've had.

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The hunting varied from country to country, from both genders being persecuted in Salem during the infamous witch trials, to southern Europe, where women were mainly victimized, all the way up to Iceland, where men took the spotlight. Even so, the mass casualty was feminine.

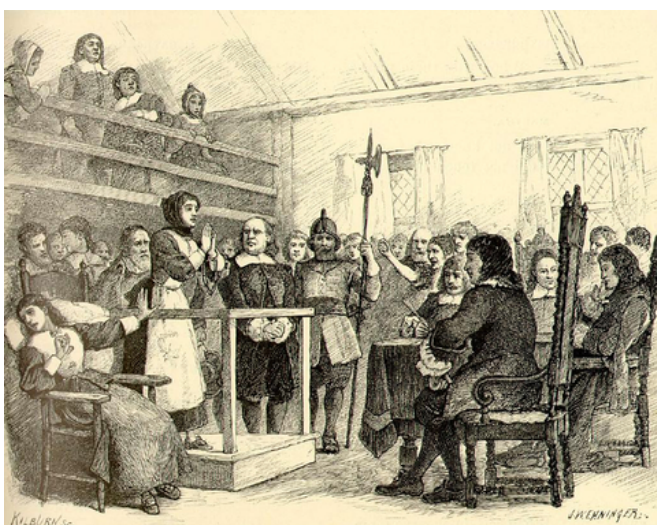
A few books had also been published over the years, which spurred the attention of non-church courts. The Church actually debunked some of the accusations and condemned the recommended guidelines for witch-hunting offered in some of these writings, calling them unethical.

We all know what happened after. A few centuries of unjustified spilt blood later, the craziness of the Inquisition ended, around the 1700's. The question that remains is: what legacy did our "magical" ancestors leave behind?

### The legacy

For years, people all around had to be extremely careful with what they did and said. Not getting along with your neighbors might've been a life-or-death situation back in the medieval ages.

Here are some actions and beliefs – that are still very common among us, contemporaries – that might've been life-threatening back in the day.



### Cloves of garlic

The usage of garlic dates back from the Egyptians, who thought it bestowed strength. They would consume large quantities of garlic (and onions, but we'll get there) and use it in ceremonies and rituals, as they believed it offered protection against evil spirits and promoted endurance and well-being. Its medicinal properties contributed to the importance that Egyptians gave them, with workers consuming garlic daily to promote vitality and durability, and even pharaohs being found with cloves inside their tombs

Its protective properties, both medicinal and spiritual, were adopted throughout the centuries, all around the world. From the Greeks to the Romans, who would give them to soldiers before battle, to balancing yang – the masculine, positive energy – accordingly to Asian philosophies, garlic was pretty much everywhere.

It made its way into European folklore through myths, whose origins are tricky to track down. It contains, however, and undoubtedly, Christian elements, as it entails the departure of Satan from the Garden of Eden. It is said that upon his expulsion, he left two footprints: where his right foot touched the earth, sprouted onions, and garlic from his left. Different cultures then took these plants and turned them into symbols. Eastern Europeans took garlic as a symbol of protection, as it sprouted from the left foot – left derives from the Latin sinister, which can also mean evil. Other cultures view garlic consumption as something negative in the spiritual sense, but we Europeans made it into a talisman to ward off the evil eye.

Today, many people still use garlic as a symbol of protection. Some even say that one should carry a clove of garlic with them – if it decays, which is uncommon, it may mean someone has got ill intentions set towards you.

### Knocking on wood

Even if you have never done it, you've probably heard the expression "knocking on wood" as a way to ward off whatever bad thought has just occurred to you – or to originate good luck.

The habit dates back to ancient pagan cultures, like the Celts, who believe there were spirits residing within certain trees. They had a special bond with nature, as their spirituality teaches that respect shall be given to everything around. In this sense, the habit of knocking on a tree might've been attributed to two things: calling for luck or showing gratitude for their Divine forces.

As time went on, this quirk spread to Southeast Europe, where it is said to have been associated with the cross of Christ, as per Christians' usual way of finding a connection between folklore and religion. These origins, however, are merely speculated, as I couldn't find any feasible evidence of this apart from theories.

What we can say, for sure, is that, to this day, people still knock on wood. as to avoid twisted fates. I don't think there's a spirit inside my wooden dresser, but I'll still knuckle it thrice every time I almost jinx something – you never know.



### Crossing fingers for luck

There are two main theories as to where crossing finger for luck came from:

The first one resides on an old pre-Christian pagan belief of the power of protection and symbolism of the cross, as a way to mark down and hold a wish until it became true. Firstly, the tradition consisted in a person crossing their index finger over someone else's to express hope in the coming true of a wish. Later, it evolved into crossing one's index finger over the other index finger, in a way to hold one's own wishes, which ultimately came down to the gesture we know today, of crossing the index and middle finger of the same hand.

The second theory revolves around the persecution of Christians for their beliefs, as it was common in the early days of Christianity. To recognize and be recognized by fellow practitioners in a world where they were still captured for their "heretical" faiths, it is said that they would make an L shape with their thumb and index finger, join thumbs and then cross index fingers – *Ishtys*, the Greek symbol of a fish and one of the oldest symbols of Christianity – when meeting.

This habit passed through the centuries to today's time, where people – me included – still cross their fingers when making a wish or hoping for some good news.



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## Warding off the evil eye

The evil eye is a glance that's believed to induce ill and even death upon whom it falls. Tales of its existence have haunted civilizations after civilizations, from Greece to Rome, in Jewish, Islamic, Buddhist and Hindu traditions.

In Medieval Europe, the cast of such glances, or even the slightest accusation, could – and probably would – be considered witchcraft. The concept of evil eye, and, thus, malice, was usually related to envy of one's prosperity and beauty, although there could be other motives for someone to take enough distaste in you to cast such a thing. Back then, people would take innumerable measures to protect themselves from this so feared attack – the use of talismans, hand gestures and prayers.

The widely known symbol of protection from the evil eye might be the Greek Eye. The fear of the Evil Eye dates back from at least the 6th century, the Classical Era of Ancient Greece, and it spread to the rest of Europe, with Greece being at its intellectual peak at the time. As eyes were believed to be “a source of deadly rays that could bring harm to others”, the charm that intends to keep it away is also an eye with the color of the sky – light blue to symbolize truth and give it a direction and dark blue to symbolize water, a universal solvent.

Today, people use the Greek Eye in bracelets, necklaces, or even as charms around the house or behind their front doors. Many are unaware of its meaning and think it's merely a beautiful souvenir, but I can assure you that if you've ever gone to your 100% non-superstitious, atheist, science-believer uncle's house and he had one of these facing the doorway, he knows what he's doing (and he might be a little more apprehensive of the unknown than he leads on).



When speaking of evil eye, what would've gotten you accused of witchcraft wouldn't have been the intention to ward off the evil eye, but the allegation of casting it upon others. One compliment to the wrong person, on meaningless loop-sided look, and you might've been in serious trouble – especially if you were an older woman having a really bad day.

Most of these beliefs were – and still are – nought but pure folklore and superstition. Some come from magical tales, others from the fear of the unexplainable, but they all have one thing in common – mentioned or done at the wrong time, accompanied by pre-existing suspicion and a pair of two equal chromosomes, could very well earn you a place at the stake.

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If we look around, there are still so many things we do that come from superstitions, and others that we simply can't explain, that have been passed down from generation to generation – one great example is my grandmother's prayer to Saint Anthony of Padua (Santo António) for finding lost things. I have never been able to wrap my mind around it, but truth be it, if she gets the prayer right, it'll show up in the most obvious place; if she stutters or forgets the prayer, all is doomed – I'm never getting my lost belonging back.

All these superstitions circle back to our ancestors, what they believed in and the history they made. Women had, and still have, a great role in this – you've never heard a man be called a witch, let's be honest. Therefore, it's important to remember our past, the girls that perished due to absurd claims and what we still hold of that time, as contemporaries, in our culture.

Is it witchcraft? I can't say.

What I can say, however, is that reality is what you make of it.

*Or is it?*







# AWARENESS RECOMMENDATIONS

BY MARTA NASCIMENTO

## Movie

### 8 Women (8 femmes)



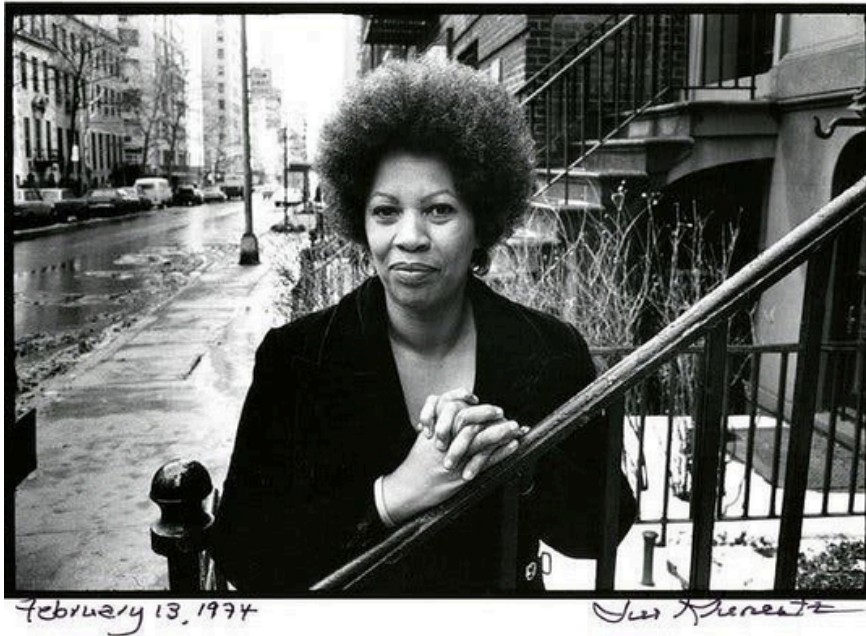
*8 Women* is a French-Italian comedy-mystery-musical directed by François Ozon and released in 2002. It is based on Robert Thomas' 1958 play of the same name. Even though I listed three different genres, the film is uncategorizable and unique. At the center of the plot is a murder mystery at closed doors. Indeed, the plot starts when, in the 1950s, a family gathers for Christmas in an isolated French mansion only to find Marcel, the family's patriarch, murdered in his bedroom. The only suspects are the eight women present in the house: Marcel's wife, estranged sister, mother-in-law, sister-in-law, his two daughters, his cook and his housemaid. As the women confront each other, the murder mystery takes a backseat, and outrageous family secrets, relationships and twisted stories are revealed amid dark, comical and extremely melodramatic scenes and colorful cinematography and costumes. Throughout the movie, each of the women, who have very distinct and almost stereotypical personalities, breaks into a musical number that represents her character, adding to the somewhat absurdness of the film, but also to the depth of the characters. What truly makes this movie is the panoply of actors used. In fact, each of the eight women is brilliantly played by an iconic French actress, including Catherine Deneuve, who plays the wife, Fanny Ardant, the sister and Isabelle Huppert, the sister-in-law. *8 Women* is one of a kind. It is witty, sometimes satirical, dark, funny and definitely worth the watch.



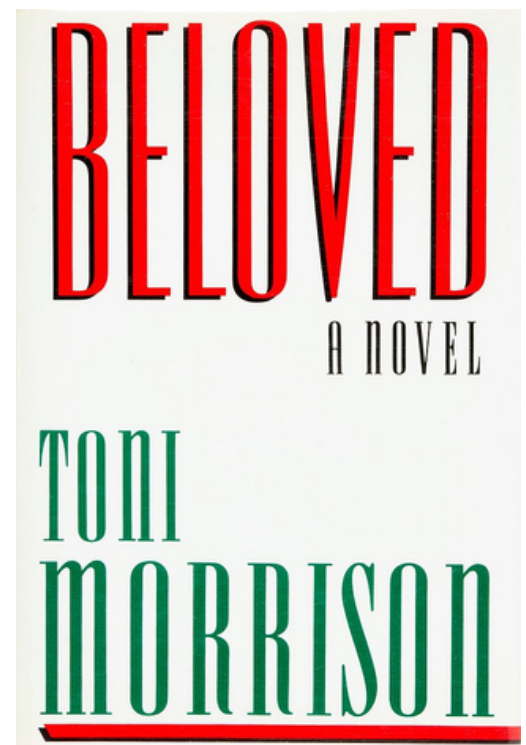
## Book

### Beloved by Toni Morrison

Toni Morrison, who was born in 1931 in Ohio and died in 2019 in New York, is considered one of the greatest contemporary American writers and was the first African American woman to win the Nobel Prize in Literature. Morrison is known for her poetic and raw prose as well as her nuanced discussion of race in America, putting black experiences and identities at the forefront of her work, in particular the experiences of black women.



Without giving away too much of the plot, *Beloved*, published in 1987, tells the complicated story of Sethe, whose story is based on the life of Margaret Garner, and her loved ones. Sethe was born a slave but managed to escape, however, 18 years later, she is still haunted by the memories of her past as well as the ghost of the baby daughter she had to kill to spare her from a life of slavery and whose tombstone reads “Beloved”. *Beloved* explores the consequences and legacy of slavery on the human psyche and the intricacy of intergenerational trauma, highlighted by changes in tense from past to present, but also by changes in perspective, from character to character. It is graphic and disturbing but also lyrical. It also depicts the theme of love and its redeeming power: Sethe demonstrates unwavering love as a mother, a lover, and even towards her community, who ostracized her. “Love is or it ain’t. Thin love ain’t love at all.”, she says. The novel is considered a classic and one of the most powerful depictions of slavery.



## Album

### Love Deluxe by Sade

Sade are an English band formed in 1992 and named after their lead singer, Sade Adu. Their popularity came from their distinctive and unique sound mixing soul, jazz, pop and R&B and from Sade Adu's iconic and hypnotizing voice. *Love Deluxe* is Sade's fourth album and, although it doesn't stray away from their signature sound, it is a world of its own. The 9 tracks go together harmoniously and tell a story of love, desire and heartache, among other themes. In an interview about the album, the lead singer explained the title: "The idea that it (love)'s one of the few luxury things you can't buy." Some of Sade's most memorable songs are in this album, including "No ordinary love", a song about total devotion to someone, "Like a tattoo", a song about pain and scars, inspired by a the war stories of a veteran the lead singer met, "Kiss of Life", about life-changing love and "Pearls", about the struggle of Somali women, but the production, vocals and songwriting are perfect throughout the entire project.





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