

Our streets Now Presents:

# OUR WORDS

LITERARY MAGAZINE



New Year's issue - Volume 2





## Our Streets Now

Our Streets Now is a campaign demanding the right of women, girls and marginalised genders to be safe in public spaces. How it has started? Two sisters, 15 and 21, spoke about how they experience the world as young women. About feeling afraid walking home at night. About being harassed in their school uniform. About how their lives were restricted by the fear of harassment. Channelling this anger into change, they decided to start a petition. Hundreds of women, girls and marginalised genders went online to share their stories of being insulted, followed and assaulted on the streets of Britain. Soon enough, thousands of voices were joining the Our Streets Now movement, tired of harassment being a 'normal' part of growing up a girl. Our Streets Now became a community determined to challenge the myths and taboos stopping this topic from being discussed and challenged, out in the open.

**#CRIMENOT  
COMPLIMENT**

*Join the  
movement  
now!*





# HELLO FROM THE EDITOR

Dear reader,

In this issue, we explore the theme of **ethics**. We have two articles, two short stories and one book review. Our writers discuss the effects of continuing a male-dominated field of Philosophy, the human-Nature relationship and its ethical implications, the key concerns regarding digital human rights, the freedom in deconstructing from norms imposed on us, and the patriarchal bias when listening to stories/experiences of gender-based violence.

This issue is my last issue as a lead editor. I had the pleasure of being the lead editor for 23 issues (including this one) and seeing this magazine grow. I enjoyed every minute of it, working with illustrators, writers, editors, and designer and seeing their immense creativity and desire to raise awareness for crucial social and cultural issues. I learned a lot from exchanging with them. I want to thank them all for their support and you, as a reader, for taking an interest in the work we have been doing. It means a lot to me! I especially want to thank Alice Jackson, the magazine's designer, with whom I have been working together since the first issue.

The magazine will continue with a new lead editor, whom I welcome. Looking forward to reading the upcoming issues.

**Renata Guimarães Naso**  
Lead Editor



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## trigger warnings

This issue covers some sensitive topics and may be triggering for some readers.

Each article will be marked with a specific TW and we advise readers to seek support if needed. Go to:

<https://www.ourstreetsnow.org/support>



# A PRODUCT OF ITS TIME: HISTORICAL PHILOSOPHY AND SYSTEMS OF PATRIARCHY

The “dead white men” perception of philosophy stems from centuries of denied access to education and male bias within the discipline. This article analyses the systems that philosophers have historically supported and maintained in structural oppression, focusing on the conditions under which Mary Wollstonecraft penned *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, and analyses the dominant patriarchal philosophy of neoliberalism today.

Written by WILLIAM WALDEN

Illustration by YUMI KOIZUMI  
(@kotsu\_kotsu\_kotsu)

“I may be allowed to doubt whether woman was created for man” – Mary Wollstonecraft

The field of Philosophy has subsisted as a white, male enterprise for centuries. Although some strides towards inclusion are now being taken, there’s no escaping the fact that most foundational and influential texts are written from a patriarchal perspective. The power imbalances that have systematically elevated and authoritatively amplified male voices are intrinsically woven into the fabric of the writings of many of our most celebrated thinkers. Historically through exclusion, dismissal, and a lack of available adequate education, women’s contributions have been largely relegated to the footnotes of the ethical philosophical canon. From rights and virtues to justice and punishment, the privileged masculine voice through which ethical thought is narrated continues to directly affect our ability to effectively address the ethical climate in which all men, women, and gender non-subscribing individuals must navigate. >>



>> The road to equal education opportunity has been long and arduous. When contextualised in the history of philosophical thought, the limited educational emancipation of women has been a very recent affair. In the UK, for instance, the *Sex Discrimination Act*, which attempts to outlaw sex discrimination in education, was instituted as late as 1972. Further afield, *Action Aid* reports that educational gender inequality is still a serious issue in as many as 40% of countries worldwide.<sup>(2)</sup> As a result, many of the source texts that are studied and analysed in Philosophy lecture halls come from centuries before women were provided with any semblance of equality. It is easy for contemporary philosophers to dismiss the power of misogyny and prejudice in antiquated literature as being a “product of its time”. However, in doing this, the historical power of Philosophy and language to shape worldviews and legitimise bias and injustice is denied. Philosophy has, time and time again, been the precursor to revolution and systemic change.

## meet the writer

William Walden is an English writer living in Northern Ireland. A Law student and Philosophy and Politics graduate, his writing focuses on Sociology, Philosophy, and Feminism. Outside of academia, he plays bass guitar for a band and has been featured on British, Irish, and American television.

From the Enlightenment to post-Nietzschean Nazism, the ethical writings of a given period have been shown not to be a mere passive commentary but an active influence on attitude and legislation.

For instance, in *Emile, or, on Education* (1762), the philosopher and revolutionary Jean-Jacques Rousseau asserted that the extent of women’s education should be merely to foster their natural caring ability as mothers and wives.<sup>(3)</sup> Similarly, David Hume, who fathered the Scottish Enlightenment and heavily influenced the British classical liberal ethos, wrote of the importance of chastity and modesty in women, that it is important for women only to have one sexual partner at a time to ensure a cohesive family unit, but that men should not share this responsibility.<sup>(4)</sup> Women were not granted equal educational opportunity in France until the turn of the 20th century, and the debate over sexual freedom and liberation continues to this day. It is, therefore, not reductive to recognise the role played by these philosophers in perpetuating an oppressive ethic of male dominance, but integral to understanding the formation and sustention of systemic patriarchy.

Contextualising early feminist writing against this backdrop makes it clear the momentous task faced by writers to interject egalitarian philosophies into the ethic of the time. This was certainly the case for Mary Wollstonecraft, who challenged the male dominant narrative of the time in several seminal works advocating equality between the sexes and education for women, including *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters: With Reflections on Female Conduct, in the More Important Duties of Life* (1787) and *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman with Strictures on Moral and Political Subjects* (1792). >>



>> Wollstonecraft believed fundamentally that women should have the means to attain their own self-recognition externally from men and that equal education would be paradigmatic of a cultivated society of heart, mind and body.(5) She promoted moral change as a precursor to political action and advocated this whilst using multiple techniques such as sensibility and rationalism, the latter being predominantly seen as a male-exclusive literary exercise. In blending the traditional masculinity associated with rationalism with the sensibility typically employed by female writers, Wollstonecraft revolutionised feminist writing, the very wording and frameworks used to justify and strengthen patriarchal structures being used to advocate equality.

Many of Wollstonecraft's contemporaries advocated tradition and monarchical rule as the ideal foundation for societal organisation, including Edmund Burke, to which *A Vindication* was partially directed criticism. Burke wrote that to provide equality through the dismissal of traditional power dynamics would surmount to "playing God" and allow men to "behave like devils".(6) In contrast to this, Wollstonecraft appealed to sex equilibrium long before any legal precedent was set. "There are rights that men inherit at their birth, as rational creatures, who were raised above the brute creation by their improvable faculties; and that, in receiving these, not from their forefathers but from God, prescription can never undermine natural rights".(7) Wollstonecraft also touched on forward-thinking intersectional themes at various points of her writing, such as her declaration that slavery of Black bodies constitutes a "hellish yoke", and that there is solidarity in the coping mechanisms that minoritised individuals employ when navigating hostile systemic power structures.(8)

Wollstonecraft faced widespread opposition at the time of her writing and in the years following her death. Her lifestyle was described as 'pernicious' and exemplary of 'Jacobin morality' following the publication of a posthumous biography by her widowed husband, William Godwin.(9) These accusations of immorality were founded on personal characteristics, such as her sexuality and mental health, as opposed to in response to her philosophy, which was largely sidelined. This has been a recurring theme for women throughout philosophical history. Commentary and overt criticism of women's private lives often affect their legacy in a way that men seem immune to. For instance, Simone De Beauvoir's open relationship seems to have been far more affecting on her public perception than Michel Foucault's neo-colonial sexual exploitation of children in Tunisia on his.(10) Similarly, Elizabeth Anscombe's reputation as Ludwig Wittgenstein's butch, masculine-presenting translator and compiler often supersedes her ground-breaking work on ethics and theology.(11) >>

## book recommendation

**TITLE** The Feminist Papers:  
A Vindication of the Rights  
of Women

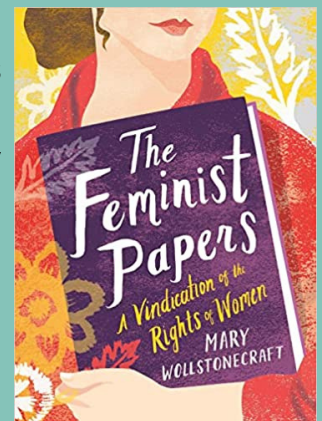
**AUTHOR** Mary  
Wollstonecraft

**PUBLISHER** Gibbs Smith

**YEAR** 2019

**LANGUAGE** English

**GENRE** Philosophy





>> Where the bigotry and biases of male philosophers are often accepted or even celebrated, the personal life of female philosophers is regularly interrogated in a far more critical way, even by experts and scholars.

Wollstonecraft, amongst other feminist philosophers, was presented with the challenge of increased personal scrutiny under a systemic patriarchal worldview that promoted and encouraged their docility. When attempting to broadcast their ideas, women in the modern political climate are faced with a similar bind. The neoliberal ethic, which became the dominant Western ideology in the 1980s, claims to promote independence, private ownership and 'natural order' as ends to which society should orient itself.

There is a fundamental illusion of freedom that comes from this philosophy, wherein capital is the dominant vessel for mobility and self-actualisation. In an economy of a historically sustained male-dominated industry, where men, particularly white men, are routinely elevated to positions of power and influence, an ethic that promotes free commerce and non-market intervention necessarily includes reduced societal influence and mobility for women, particularly those of minoritised backgrounds, and stifles the feminine voice in global politics and ethics. The natural order promoted by neoliberals is only natural in the sense that it presents historical and systemic injustice as inevitable. In reference to this, Mark Fisher famously wrote that to dismantle this, "emancipatory politics must always destroy the appearance of a 'natural order', must reveal what is presented as necessary and inevitable to be a mere contingency, just as it must make what was previously deemed to be impossible seem attainable".(12)

Modern capitalism is unique in its ability to project itself as the solution to the problems it causes, but it does not have to be inevitable, and it is not natural. Women and minoritised voices are restricted under the current system not through any positive means of legislation or action but through subtle structural reinforcement of antiquated power hierarchies. In much the same way that the dominant patriarchal philosophy of the 18th century elevated the bigotry of male philosophers to the pinnacle of reason and intellect, today's philosophy promotes the self-made businessman, ignoring all the historical and cultural apparatus that causes an unlevel playing field from the start. The fight for equality is far from over, and the first battleground is theoretical. A social ethic of compassion and a re-examining of our troubled cultural history is undoubtedly the first step. ●



# Filling our 21st-century spiritual void with another account of nature-healing in literature

Is it possible for us to relate to nature without projecting ourselves onto it? Our writer reviews *The Outrun*, and problematises the ethical use of nature for our inner peace.

Written by EVIE NICHOLS

**TW** alcoholism.

The idea that nature holds restorative power arrived in the UK with the Romantic poets. Wordsworth saw nature as a balm to human suffering, writing in *Tintern Abbey* how “the heavy and the weary weight / Of all this unintelligible world / Is lightened” upon contemplating nature.<sup>(1)</sup> In *Ode on Melancholy*, Keats encourages the melancholic to “glut thy sorrow on a morning rose”: to pour their despair out into nature.<sup>(2)</sup> Romantic poetry, often written in response to increasing industrialisation, is rich with references to the healing power of nature.

Fast forward 200 years, and we find ourselves surrounded by this very same sentiment, albeit in different forms. Every day, Instagram posts present modern-day rehashes of Romantic ideals, with pictures of waterfalls accompanied by captions along the lines of: “get lost in nature and you will find yourself. #nature #FindYourself.” Although Wordsworth may be turning in his grave at this cringe-worthiness, these Romantic sentiments clearly strike a chord with many people. The rise of ecotherapy (sometimes referred to as “green exercise” or “green care”) reflects how the mental health and wellness industries have caught on to our enduring search for nature-healing.

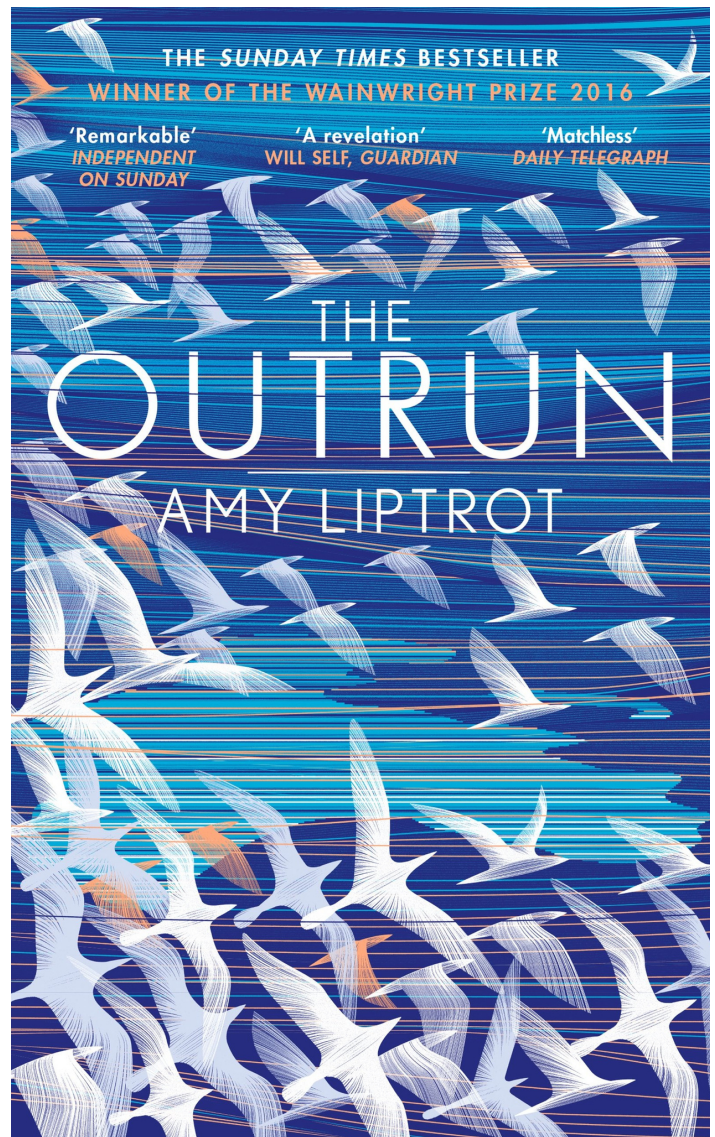
“Nature cure,” the new subgenre of fiction popularised by Richard Mabey’s *Nature Cure* in 2005, fits neatly into this ecotherapy trend.<sup>(3)</sup> Its general narrative is perhaps predictable – a suffering person discovers the healing power of nature – and *The Outrun* adheres to it closely. The latter is autobiographical: first-time author, Amy Liptrot, relates her struggle with and recovery from severe alcohol addiction. Despite its clichéd storyline, *The Outrun* is hard to criticise for being trite. As a memoir, it describes its author’s authentic experiences – this can’t be merely run-of-the-mill literary fiction; it’s someone’s life. >>



>> There's also much more to *The Outrun* than its predictable narrative arc. Carried by Liptrot's self-aware, stripped-down prose, this book guides its reader down into the badlands of addiction and out through the other side to the craggy cliffs of Orkney. But I'm jumping ahead.

The book opens with a memorable scene on the runway of Orkney's Kirkwall airport in Scotland. A man and a woman are pushed towards each other in wheelchairs. The woman is cradling a newborn baby, and the man is in a straitjacket. The woman is Liptrot's mother, the man her father. He has been sectioned under the Mental Health Act following her early birth.<sup>(4)</sup> On the island of Orkney, the crashing of waves and ceaseless buffeting of wind forms the backdrop to Liptrot's upbringing. The island's extreme weather mirrors her father's behaviour, who swings in and out of manic states. As a teenager, Liptrot walks from their family farm to a slab of rock at the top of a cliff, "headphones on, dressed up and frustrated, looking out to the horizon, wanting to escape."

Of course, the horizon the teenage Liptrot yearns for ends up less promising than she had hoped. After getting fired from a cleaning job, she buys a one-way ticket to London, trading sea cliffs for skyscrapers. At first, London is brimming with hedonistic possibility: there's a "manic freshness" in the air, and Liptrot and her friends are "overgrown children... searching headlong for a good time." This is where Liptrot's prose is at its most powerful. In a wonderful passage, Liptrot writes of a long summer afternoon spent with friends at London Fields, moving with the sun across the park while swigging fizzy wine as "limbs and sun cream and honey and ants" coalesce. Like the Romantic poets, Liptrot seeks the extremes of sensation.



Later in the novel, they are to be found atop cliffs, her hair streaming in the wind, but in London, she pursues these heightened states at 2 AM on the dancefloor or whilst sipping the dregs of another bottle of wine in her empty apartment. Wandering the streets as the sun rises, Liptrot compares London to a drug that she wants to "rub into my skin" and "inhale." She wants more and more, higher and higher sensations until she eventually forfeits control.

Throughout the book, Liptrot conceives of beautiful juxtapositions between Hackney and Orkney. >>

>> One particularly tall tower is analogous to St John's Head on Hoy, while the aircraft warning lights on tower tops are like lighthouses on the island. There is a sense of discordance, a clash, between her internal environment – which reflects Orkney – and the bustling, grimy city around her. Liptrot longs for cliffs and clean air. She perceives a “quietly vibrating sense of loss and disturbance,” falling back on the imagery of her childhood to describe herself “dangerously suspended high above crashing waves.” This is a book about the boundaries between the internal and the external. Liptrot writes how the wind and waves of Orkney are a part of her, forming her inner environment. We are reminded of a thin, permeable membrane between the internal and the external. Liptrot's alcohol addiction burns a gaping hole through this membrane, through which the waves and gales from her upbringing seep through to churn inside her along with the alcohol. Passing back through the membrane – from internal to external – these forces obliterate her life in London. Liptrot loses her boyfriend as well as numerous jobs, friends and homes as her life is increasingly gripped in the clutches of addiction.

After completing a 90-day rehab course, she ends up “washed back” on Orkney, “like the inevitable tide.” It's on the Orcadian islands that her slow journey to recovery truly begins. Liptrot puts all of her energy into learning about her external environment. Each subsequent chapter focuses on an aspect of the natural world: geology, underwater life, birds, etc. She orientates herself towards recovery by mapping out the natural world. Liptrot sees the outer landscape as a reflection of her inner self. The island geology, fauna, flora and weather mirror her inner journey and self-narrative.

## meet our author

Evie is in her third year of university, studying History and French. She believes that public sexual harassment (PSH) reflects something deeply wrong with our society – it must be stopped!

Strings of metaphors and similes link stretches of nature writing to her struggle with addiction; for example, “I had worn my brakes down, like the action of waves on rock, so much that they could never be repaired,” and “[my] injuries and hurts” are “like scars in the coastline, continually worn away.” Some of these metaphors are effective, but others seem contrived.

For this reader, it began to feel as if the writing was following a formula, a simple step-by-step guide: 1) build up a section of nature writing leading to a metaphor 2) using this metaphor, link the natural world to the inner self. >>



>> You could say that reading this book became like watching waves crashing on the shore: sometimes captivating but often repetitive. Oh no. As you can see, it's difficult not to fall back on these similes and metaphors; however, I wonder if such language reflects a problematic view of the relationship between humans and nature.

Just like for the Romantic poets, Liptrot is very much at the centre of her relationship with nature. The natural world's value lies in its healing power; it does not exist independently of its use to humans. Nature is conceived of as a service provider, soothing our ills and reflecting our egos back at us. The tendency to conflate the inner self with the outer landscape is most exemplified toward the end of the book, wherein the natural world shifts from being a mirror for Liptrot to being one and the same with her. She writes how "the islands' headlands rise above the sea, like my limbs in the bathtub, my freckles are famous landmarks and my tears rivers."

How can we relate to nature without projecting ourselves onto it? Mabey, the writer of *Nature Cure*, argues that there are other, less egoistic ways to connect to nature.<sup>(5)</sup> "We need to rethink where we stand in relation to all these other organisms and what the transactions are between us," he argues. Yet perhaps, as Richard Smyth argues in an excellent essay, it's impossible to disentangle nature from our experience of it.<sup>(6)</sup> We cannot appreciate it without reference to ourselves because to experience it, we have to be a part of it.

Although the winds and waves of Orkney provide therapy in *The Outrun*, they refuse to be harnessed for energy by humans. On the island of Papay, the wind turbine is, ironically, blown down.

## book information

**TITLE** The Outrun  
**AUTHOR** Amy Liptrot  
**PUBLISHER** Canongate  
**YEAR** 2015  
**LANGUAGE** English  
**GENRE** Non-Fiction

The wave-energy devices off mainland Orkney are "overcome by the very tugs and flows of the waves, currents and winds they were meant to harness." These images present an opportunity to explore the ambiguities embedded in our relationship with nature: it is not possible to totally harness nature; nature can exist independently from our touch. Yet Liptrot takes the opportunity to contemplate further her inner self: "Like the electricity devices," she writes, "I'm trying to find the right way to harness the powers and achieve my aims without being destroyed by the very energy I desire."

Whether *The Outrun* strikes you as self-absorbed and contrived or poetic and moving will depend on your predisposition. Regardless, Liptrot's debut is a thought-provoking and well-written book that contains several lovely sections of prose and some interesting psychological insights. It will surely appeal to anyone looking for a dose of "nature-as-medicine." ●

# DIGITAL HUMAN RIGHTS: ARE WE THERE YET?

Human rights in the digital age are highly debated. The internet has become an integral part of our lives, but there are concerns about how personal data is being used, shared, and stored. Governments worldwide have introduced new legislation to address these issues. Nevertheless, are they effective?

Written by ASHLEY MANGTANI

Illustration by LACUNNA  
(@la\_cunna)

**TW data privacy, online safety, digital abuse (e.g., cyberbullying, doxing, and harassment).**

Paying attention to human rights in today's digital world is more crucial than ever. With billions of dollars being pumped into Web3(1), the Metaverse(2), and the fourth industrial revolution(3) (Industry 4.0 or digital revolution) on the horizon, we are in the midst of a technological revolution that has significant implications for the future of our online safety. The digital revolution is driven by data and technology, which have the potential to both empower and disempower individuals in extraordinary ways. As such, it is up to companies and governments to ensure that citizens' freedom of expression and privacy rights are respected as technology advances. This means establishing legal frameworks for online activities and monitoring the actions against online abuse.

Data gathering is already underway on a massive scale. More aspects of our daily lives are being digitally recorded, stored, used, and misused regularly. Businesses are gaining significant insight into our online behaviour. Website cookies steal our data, hidden algorithms decide what content we see and don't see, and surveillance devices are becoming increasingly sophisticated. Legal ramifications may come into play in the future, but companies now have free reign to harvest our data. >>



>> Privacy is being violated in ways that would have been unimaginable just a few decades ago. As our world digitises at an ever-increasing pace, we must protect our human rights, ensuring that our data is secure and that we control how it is used. It also means being aware of how companies and governments may infringe on our rights and taking action to hold them accountable.

As the digital revolution continues, technology will be used more frequently for positive and unpleasant purposes. States and businesses are presently employing data-driven technologies to identify possible security risks, including at borders and in criminal justice processes. AI systems analyse people's physical and mental features, determine their suitability for work, and predict their likelihood of committing crimes. People's profiles, "scores," and "ranks" may be used to determine their eligibility for health care, insurance, and financial services.(4) Algorithms often reflect and amplify the same inequalities that exist in society, exacerbating real-world disparities.

AI systems lack the nuance to accurately capture human experience and need, which can have dangerous consequences – particularly for those who already face discrimination. Digital platforms and AI create centres of power and control, which pose risks to human rights if left unchecked. For example, there are a variety of recruitment strategies that systematically disadvantage women.(5) Also, systems have been created to categorise Black people as more likely to commit crimes.(6) Predictive policing techniques result in over-policing in disadvantaged or marginalised-populated regions.(7)

The digital revolution is a significant global human rights concern, and its indisputable advantages do not outweigh its obvious dangers. That being said, it is still possible to take steps to protect our rights in the digital age. Digital technology offers us a world of opportunity regarding human rights and development. We can connect with people across the globe more efficiently than ever, empower and inform them, and use cutting-edge methods like encrypted communications, satellite imagery, and data streams to defend human rights directly. >>

## book recommendation

**TITLE** The Birth Of Digital Human Rights

**AUTHOR** Rebekah Dowd

**PUBLISHER** Springer Nature Switzerland

**YEAR** 2021

**LANGUAGE** English

**GENRE** Non-fiction



>> For example, we can use open-source technology to collect evidence of human rights abuses, monitor potential violations of international law, and track and report on the situation in difficult-to-access areas. We can also use digital tools to create safer spaces for civil society organisations and activists working to improve their communities, support refugees fleeing conflict or natural disasters with better access to vital services, and provide digital literacy programs for marginalised or impoverished people.

We can even use artificial intelligence (AI) to predict and prevent human rights violations by analysing large amounts of data and spotting patterns.(8) For example, AI can help identify potential discrimination cases using demographic data and other indicators or detect suspicious behaviour around the world that could be linked to human rights violations.

Additionally, AI can be used to monitor compliance with laws and regulations related to human rights, such as labour laws or environmental standards. Furthermore, AI could reinforce existing human rights efforts. For instance, AI-based systems could monitor global news sources for evidence of human rights abuses and send notifications to relevant officials. AI can also detect and flag potential violations of international law, such as the use of child soldiers or cases of torture and extrajudicial killings.(9)

We cannot afford to consider cyberspace and AI as an uncontrolled human rights black hole. In 2016, the *UN General Assembly and the Human Rights Council* stated in their resolutions that the right to privacy, data protection, freedom of expression, non-discrimination, and equality are fundamental human rights in cyberspace and AI. >>

## meet the writer

Ashley is a technical writer from the UK who specialises in new and emerging technologies, digital transformation, and the metaverse. He is the editor-in-chief of digital-adoption.com and is the content lead for Multiverse Labs in Singapore (Named one of the most promising tech companies in Singapore by KPMG-HSBC).

>> Unfortunately, many people's experience with the modern internet is harassment, trolling, intimidation and othering. Freedom of expression is often used as an excuse for online abuse and intimidation, meaning that people can say anything they want online without regard to the effect it may have on others. Online threats, intimidation, and bullying can lead to non-virtual-world targeting, harassment, assault, and murder. Anyone "other" will face an increased risk of harm if we do not act now—particularly minoritised individuals, such as women and immigrants. The most deadly case linked social media posts to the Rohingya community in Myanmar before mass killings and rapes occurred in 2017.<sup>(10)</sup> After human rights investigators looked into *Facebook*, they found that its algorithmically-driven news feed had helped spread hate speech which caused incitement to violence.

The individuals most negatively impacted are those on the outskirts of society. The only way to truly empower these people and give them a chance to enforce their rights is by viewing them as individual holders of liberties who can seek legal recourse for any violations they experience. Our data is being monetised, politicised, and psychologised. We are not only being monitored and classified but also influenced. Digital processes are now having an impact on us as well as serving our needs. It's appropriate to be very concerned about how big data, AI, and other digital technologies influence our lives and society.

We are also right to highlight the issue of individuals who work in the digital sector, frequently in low-pay or contract employment, losing all of the benefits that come with secure employment.

They must exercise their fundamental rights, including joining unions and strikes. This may help limit corporate abuses in some instances. The principles of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* drive us back to equality, inalienable rights, and dignity. Everyone has the right to a life free from discrimination in liberty, health, political participation, privacy, and a fair trial. We must ensure that every computer-driven process or AI system satisfies fundamental principles such as openness, fairness, accountability, oversight, and remedy.

Online speech and use is a critical human rights issue currently being overregulated by dozens of countries. According to *Access Now*, the number of internet shutdowns worldwide increased threefold in just two years. In 2016, there were 75 recorded shutdowns, while in 2018, 196 shutdowns were reported in 25 US states. This limits what citizens can access and curbs free speech and political activity under false pretences of fighting hate or extremism. Nine US states currently use defamation as a weapon to character assassinate human rights defenders and civil society organisations. They destroy reputations with smear campaigns to hunt down and intimidate critics seen as a threat.

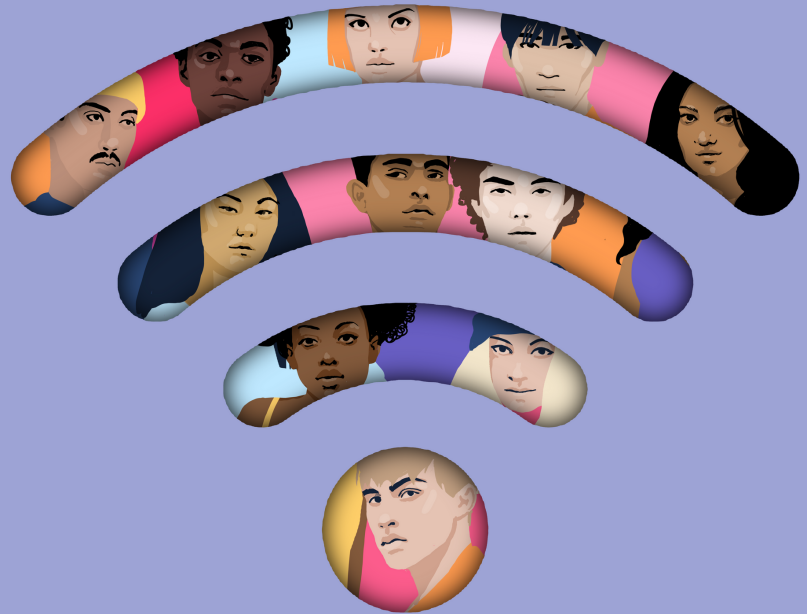
Many countries also use legal restrictions on online activities to oppress journalists, activists, and political dissidents. In 2019, the government of Turkey attempted to criminalise online speech through its "Internet Security Law" and has since arrested thousands for posting content critical of the government. In China, authorities have cracked down on social media accounts and banned using virtual private networks (VPNs) that allow people to access websites censored by the government. The country has also built powerful censorship mechanisms into its major social media platforms, like WeChat, Weibo, and QQ. >>



>> Defamation loopholes leave us at risk of under and over-regulation, with privacy more endangered now than ever. Data misuse could lead to devastating outcomes for privacy, security, and democracy. It can silence dissenting voices and bury the truth under fake news. In other words, what happens with data could significantly impact entire countries and continents. Not only does this have major privacy implications, but it also raises ethical questions about the data's misuse and voters' manipulation, something we've seen in past events such as the 2016 US presidential election, UK's 2016 Brexit referendum, and polls taken in Brazil and Kenya in the same year.(11)

The media has a responsibility to expose these abuses of power. However, often data misuse is so subtle that it goes undetected. It's important to be vigilant and scrutinise every piece of information we consume. This means researching the source and verifying its accuracy before believing any news stories or claims. As individuals, we can also take basic steps to protect ourselves from data misuse. The media and technology companies have to be more transparent about their policies and practices so that people can make informed decisions regarding sharing personal data.

Data is power, and as we all know, with great power comes great responsibility. Too often, we see people in power misuse said authority and the same goes for those who handle vast amounts of data. That's why it's essential to have an international human rights framework that establishes clear guidelines about what is acceptable behaviour regarding digital data - something that has already been established and agreed upon by various nations. >>



"Our data is being monetised, politicised, and psychologised. We are not only being monitored and classified but also influenced."

>> It is a common misconception that human rights and ethical approaches are at odds with one another. In reality, they can work hand in hand to create a stronger foundation for both humans and technology. The World Economic Forum's recent publication on responsible use of technology clarifies that we get much better results when human rights reinforce ethics and vice versa.(12)

We should remember that when we restrict social media, we decide what people may say and see in a world where it has become a powerful platform for public debate and public life. As a result, our measures must be well-designed. If regulation is required, we should focus on platform behaviours rather than opinion-based rules. The most valuable responses are working together, adopting best practices, and analysing the vast results of national regulatory systems and any unforeseen consequences. Inclusivity is the key to successful social media regulation. Platforms should ensure that everyone, regardless of their language, ethnicity, gender identity, or other social identities, has equal opportunities to participate in public discourse. Feeding AI algorithms with inclusive data mean teaching them to recognise and respect our differences. At the same time, governments must ensure that citizens can access reliable information on social media and that platforms take responsibility for their content.

With human rights as a guide, we can protect people's dignity and guard against abuses with a framework encompassing ethical principles, obligations, and responsibilities for states and businesses, free speech guarantees, and explicit protections from hate speech.

It means governments must swiftly and resolutely respond with policies that include a duty to safeguard all civil rights and social, cultural, and economic rights. It implies that technology firms are taking a leadership role in their corporate practices. It means allowing individuals to decide how their personal data is used. It ensures that disadvantaged and impoverished minoritised individuals can access remedies when their data is misused or subjected to discriminatory judgments due to automated decision-making processes. It also involves performing human rights impact assessments at every stage of the development and use of AI systems. This is a crucial area where businesses and researchers can demonstrate care and leadership. ●

# THE RIGHT SIDE

Written by SALMA AHMED

Illustration by SOPHIE MCTEAR  
(@sophiemcteardesign)

TW mentions of homophobia.

**Sarah is faced with a hard decision when she has to choose between the rigid morals of her religious group or her best friend, Amelia.**

"I'm gay," Amelia said as she looked at everything inside her room. Everything except my own eyes.

I sat there dumbfounded and silent. Perhaps there was a look of disgust as well. One that I socially inherited, which seeped deeply into my thoughts. I can no longer recognise when I'm using this "disgust" as an expression. I have become used to what society wants me to think whenever I perceive a "gay" person, and now, I can't let go of this disgust even when this "gay" person is my friend.

"Sarah?" She asked, afraid and worried about my unusual silence. My disgust made her fear my reaction, and I feared it too.

I tried to erase the expression off my face and rushed to hug my childhood friend as her eyes glistened slowly. Usually, I would be seconds away from murdering when I saw her tear up. My anger was like murdering anyone who caused this fearful and pained look to appear inside Amelia's eyes. I thought that I was a hypocrite for being the one who made her cry and also the one who promised to always be there for her.

The homophobia sewed through my thoughts and prevented me from realising that I was causing her to have these feelings. Now I was in my room, alone. It still felt like yesterday, like Amelia was with me. The look she gave me was still in my mind, along with my (and theirs) homophobia.

"Did I mess up?" I asked myself, and I hated how I couldn't decide how precisely I messed up. Did I mess up because I didn't out her to our society yet? After all, this is what was expected from me as a straight person who follows the heterosexual norm. There was a pang of guilt passed on to me, making me believe that I was wrong for protecting a homosexual - a sinner, as they would say. >>



>> The morals I was taught are embedded in homophobia, so deeply rooted to the point where it was encouraged if I, the straight and normal person, harmed whoever looked queer or identified as one. Or did I mess up because I'm now forsaking the moral values I convinced myself that I have? I always thought that I was a kind and supportive friend. I always told Amelia, "I will always be here for you." These are the moral values that I decided to have. How could they be good values if I excluded someone and treated them differently just because their sexuality was different?

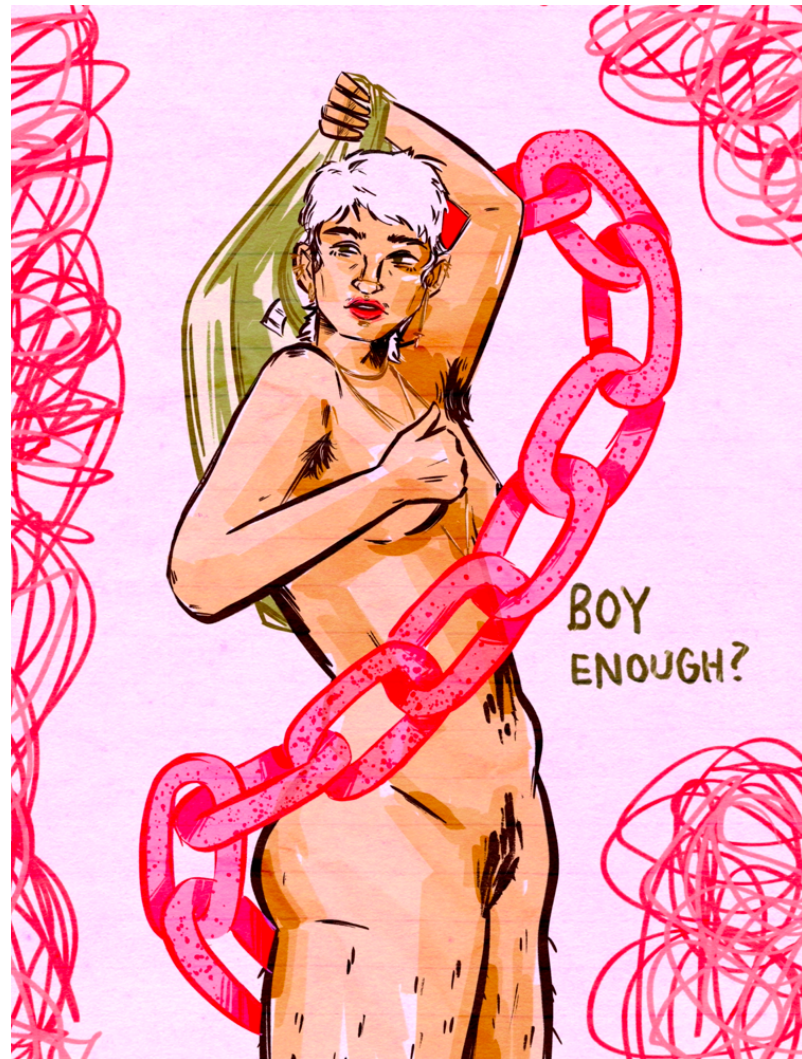
Amelia is still the same person.

Everyone in my religious community was raised in an environment filled with hate. At least I was able to see the truth. The hatred they spread shouldn't be part of their religious teaching. They say that God loves us and always will always. But if God loves us, why do they say that God hates those like Amelia? My religious community told me that such learnings should be ignored when facing someone defying our morals. For them, homosexuals challenge our morals — those who are like Amelia.

I could not bring myself to say that God hated Amelia.

"Like Amelia? Really?" I found myself whispering harshly to no one but myself as my frustration was now shifting to me and the way I was thinking of my close friend. I didn't even realise that my mind quickly took her out of this beloved world to a world filled with darkness and devils, which was the only place for homosexuals as directed by our church and families.

Since an early age, the church and my family have taught me to be a good human.



They told me, and others, never to harm someone and to forgive rather than avenge. They talked about God's kindness and his love for us. But their words and teachings did not stop at God's love. No.

Along with these values about love and forgiveness, they taught me to harm those who have "sinned." They said it was okay to inflict pain upon those who weren't "straight." And suddenly, they convinced me that God's love no longer exists regarding homosexuals. I wasn't the only one to who they said these words.

They called all of this hatred "morals"; our morals. But what about my own morals? >>

>> If I wanted to be true to myself, I wouldn't comply with morals that I didn't believe in. Their morals are based on lies. Lies like "God will always love you," but then they don't finish the sentence; they continue saying, "but God will hate you if you were homosexual". How can they mix hate with love? Deep down, I knew that this was not right. I did not want to hate anyone. If I followed their morals, then I would hate others like Amelia.

What about Amelia? Why did something like who she chose to love be the end of her? Or be the end of our friendship? Even if I did not end our bond, I did not want to imagine the harm they would inflict upon her. I did not want to ask myself if she would only be an outcast or if they would do so much more than that. When they "warned us" about the fate of homosexuals, they talked about how they should be treated. They talked about killing homosexuals, torturing them, bullying them, and so much more. Will God love them if they do that to fellow humans?

## meet the writer

Salma is a 21-year-old writer. She is a third-year college student majoring in English, trying to balance her life as a student and writer.

I still remember the few members of our community who dared to come out as queer and how everyone reacted. The first thing that their families did was kick them out in the streets. It's curious how only now my mind reminded me of how Amelia never showed joy when we, and everyone else, looked at those banished from our society. We looked with disgust and hate. We looked at those "sinners" as the reason behind everything terrible happening in our lives. We were happy to express our hatred. Joyful even. We believed that if we were joyful, it meant that we were true Christians whom God would love. Everyone was cheerful except Amelia.

I was with everyone. I was happy, just like them, because I believed that it was the right thing to do. Now I have to choose if I will remain in the same place or allow myself to form my own thoughts and opinions. Our parents told us that we were free, but we never realised that our freedom weighs nothing. No one is free if they are put in a room and said that their freedom exists only inside it. I never had the opportunity to think for myself. Anything that went against the religion I was taught was denied. They knew that if we used our minds and allowed ourselves the freedom to think, then not all of us would follow their words. Also, if I dared to change my mind, to form my own thoughts, then I would be treated with the same hate directed at those that our religious community deemed to be different.

My religious community tolerate rapists, murderers, and even paedophiles as long as these people claim that they have found their way back to God and Christianity. What kind of ethics is this? They could do the same thing a thousand times and then return and say, "I repented," and they would be forgiven. But they said that queer people couldn't be religious and would never be forgiven by God for choosing a different sexuality. >>

>> "I was never free," I realised, staring at Amelia's gaze. Her eyes became enough for me to start removing the metal locks that were covering my mind. I never had the privilege to form my own thoughts away from their homophobia. But with Amelia's look taking a permanent place inside my mind, I found my thoughts wandering outside of their hate. They strayed into a foreign world where their hypocrisy reflects off every surface. The hypocrisy of hating people for their feelings and identity while claiming that our "morals" represent how "kind" we are.

*"Always accept other people's differences," my dad said to my sister and me as he and mom sat us down to discuss what our actions should be like.*

*"BUT that doesn't include the differences of those who abandoned God to choose sin," my mom firmly said as she pointed her finger at both of us, and my father nodded in agreement.*

*"Only accept those whom God accepts", was my father's last sentence before the conversation ended.*

I scoffed.

As I shook off this memory, I asked myself: "Who gave us the right to decide whom God will accept?" Because the kindness they portrayed God to have would never be accompanied by the amount of hate, they inflict upon queer people.

"Do you think this is fair?" Amelia asked me while we were at her house watching, along with the entire neighbourhood, as Mr Gary's son was kicked out and yelled at with every new piece of his "sinful" hidden clothes that were thrown at him.

The questioning tone in her voice made me think of saying "maybe", but then her father interrupted our conversation and said loudly and in a threatening way to Amelia: "It is more than fair. He betrayed God and his family as well." >>

## book recommendation

**TITLE** Alice Walker

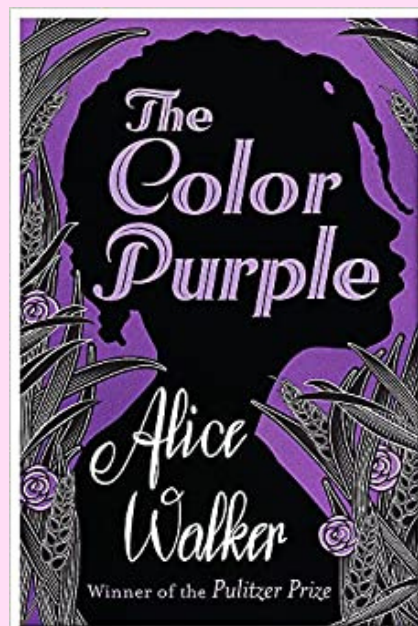
**AUTHOR** The Colour Purple

**PUBLISHER** W&N

**YEAR** 2014

**LANGUAGE** English

**GENRE** Fiction





>> "Thank God this isn't one of our kids," her mom continued.

I found myself replacing my "maybe" with "they deserve it."

Again, I noticed how I ignored the pain inside Amelia's eyes at that time. I rejected her since the beginning, and I never observed.

"Now that I notice it, will I reject her again?" I thought.

I started to see this world of hypocrisy had me as one of its inhabitants because when Amelia told me that she... that she is gay, I was still trying to remove the disgust inside me since it was never my own to carry. She asked me if I would accept her if she were different.

I said, "Of course. This is one of my beliefs, after all. You know that I believe in accepting others" I now recognise that the slight smile covering her face when I said "my" was hopeful. She was optimistic that since I used the word "my", I would not view her like how our community would view her.

"Would you keep it a secret?" Amelia asked me.

"Of course, I would". I said that respecting others' privacy was part of "our morals." Her smile dropped when she heard "our." She knew this meant I would be like them: homophobic and dangerous.

The hypocrisy of my words started to become more apparent to me, and as I further realised the truth and my newfound freedom to form my own thoughts, the difference between my morals and theirs started to appear as well.

**"“I was never free,” I realised, staring at Amelia’s gaze. Her eyes became enough for me to start removing the metal locks that were covering my mind. I never had the privilege to form my own thoughts away from their homophobia. But with Amelia’s look taking a permanent place inside my mind, I found my thoughts wandering outside of their hate.”**

I wasn't like them. I only followed them, and now I have to decide whether I want to be with them or with my best friend and my own definition of ethics. I could lose Amelia and out her. But the idea of winning their support didn't seem like a win. Choosing the side of hypocrisy will never be like choosing the winning side.

"Accept everyone despite their differences."

"Keep others' secrets." >>

>> I whispered as I looked at pictures of Amelia and me. She didn't seem to me as someone who didn't deserve my kindness; if I followed their beliefs, I would see Amelia as someone who deserved harm. She wasn't someone who deserved such treatment, and she wasn't someone who didn't deserve my love.

What I needed to do was clear.

I stood in front of Amelia's house, waiting for someone to answer the door.

I knocked three times to tell Amelia I was behind the door; it was our signal. I heard rushed footsteps from inside her house, and I knew they were Amelia's footsteps. She always ran to the door when she knew I was behind it. It warmed my heart to know that even though she was probably afraid I would out her, she still rushed to meet me. She was the same Amelia I always knew.

I realised that she anticipated my visit, but for the wrong reasons. She opened the door and looked over her shoulder at the inside of the house. She feared that her parents were near.

"Please don't tell them." The terror inside her eyes, my best friend's eyes, made me confident that I was doing the right thing.

"I won't," I said, smiling, but Amelia's fear prevented her from registering my reply and expression.

"I will do anything you--- what? You won't?"

"Yeah." She started to smile at my answer, but doubt and fear were still apparent in her eyes, and I couldn't blame her. I could only blame myself for making her go through the fear of me outing her.

"Why? You know now who I really am."

"So what? You are still the same Amelia who will always be here for me." At that, she smiled brightly. No doubt and no fear. "And I'm still the same Sarah who will beat you at *Among Us*."

She shoved me softly and laughed while shouting, "never."

As I ran after her to her room, I knew that her sexuality didn't change her, as they said. It certainly didn't change my OWN ethics. Not theirs. I will no longer follow their beliefs because I know they will never be on the right side. ●



# THE STORY OF MEDUSA

Written by ASHA ASKOOLAM

Illustration by GEMMA FRECKLES  
(@gemmafreckles)

**TW** rape, assault, violence, victim  
blaming, depression.

There are two versions of what happened to Medusa. The first is that she was raped and cursed by Athena with gorgons for hair. The second is that she and Poseidon fell in love. Readings of the first version in current times believe that Athena gave Medusa the gift of gorgons to protect her from men ever hurting her again. The ending is still the same: the ownership was placed on Medusa, and the man escaped without consequences.

There are two versions of Medusa's tale. What you believe is up to you, but the answer is always the same. The first version is as follows. Medusa was a beautiful maiden, a high priestess to Athena and had undertaken a vow of chastity, dedicating her life to the goddess. She was known across the land to all men for her beauty, her luscious golden Brunette hair against dewy, warm tawny skin and ocean blue eyes. Medusa paid them no mind, preferring to spend her time within the temple, reading or weaving. She had a love for the arts, music and literature – for what other use was there to time than to educate oneself?

"He's back again," Euphemia said, shaking her head, "he just won't leave."

Medusa rolled her eyes, looking down at the painting she was working on, "I have told him repeatedly that I am not interested. I have devoted my life to the goddess."

Euphemia's blue eyes twinkled in the dawning sunlight, her honey skin glowing as the rays kissed her cheeks. "He is very handsome though," she giggled, playing with the hem of her long, flowy dress, the cream complimenting her sweet hue. >>





>> "Yes, handsome and a persistent annoyance," Medusa nodded, "he cannot sway me. He only brings sin and worries. I cannot go back on my promise."

It happened one dark, cold night. Medusa was the last priestess in the temple before she returned to her quarters. The cold air nipped at her skin through the tall pillars that reached the sky. The darkness shrouded the temple in a worrying shadow, and through that mist, he stepped into the temple. His long hair whipped around him much like the waves in controlled, haphazardly. His eyes were a piercing grey, with flecks of blue that made his smile appear all the more sinister.

"You have been ignoring my calls, my lady," a voice said. Medusa turned, picking up some books that had been left on the floor.

Her heart dropped in her chest, and the feeling of dread washed over her. Stepping away from him, she cast her gaze to the floor, wanting nothing to do with him.

"I am sorry, my lord," she said, her voice echoing around them against the marble walls. "I have been busy with my duties."

Poseidon laughed, reaching forward to stroke her cheek, "I hope you do not mean to turn me away tonight, for I will not leave."

Medusa drew away from him, "I cannot please you. My life has been dedicated to the goddess Athena, and I do not want to go back on my promise."

## "For as long as history describes, women have always been blamed for the actions of men."

The storm outside grew stronger, and Medusa knew that her fate had been sealed at that moment. Poseidon's sickly smile changed to something darker. It made her stomach turn. Known to be one of the most vengeful gods when insulted, she had been warned to do what she could to keep him happy if he ever appeared. It never seemed like her happiness mattered. The expectation on her by the gods, by society, was only ever to please him, but this was something she could not grant him.

"You do not have a choice, beautiful one," Poseidon laughed darkly, pushing her against the wall, "I have chosen you to be mine. You should be flattered."

No one heard her screams. No one came to help. That night brought fear and pain for Medusa as Poseidon took something from her. His rough hands explored her skin. The feeling was foreign and stung as a bow and arrow had pierced her. Where he kissed her, it felt like fire running along her body as her clothes were ripped from her. The blood she drew from his body, trying to fight him off her as he took pleasure from her body, a joy that only he felt, did not save her from the searing terror that flooded her body.

The only sound she heard that night were her tears and his cruel laugh as he forced himself on her. >>



>> If she had been a woman who wanted to have an intimate relationship with a man, she would have wanted someone kind, gentle, and caring for her. But the only thing she felt was fear and anger, as something she had vowed never to give away was ripped away from her, as her power and voice were stripped from her. As meaningless as her “no” was to him or the clothes upon her body, it did not matter that he raped her in a sacred temple. Her voice and her freedom to choose did not matter. For when the storm passed, and he left her sobbing in the cold, Athena cursed her, with gorgons upon her head, a constant reminder that what happened to her would always, by society, be considered *her fault*.

There are two readings of this ending. The first is that Athena cursed Medusa and stripped her of her beauty, effectively blaming her for Poseidon’s violent act. The second is that Athena gave her the gift of gorgons to protect her from men ever hurting her again. The ending is still the same whether the first or second reading is accurate. The accountability lay on Medusa, and she was blamed or pushed to protect herself rather than the man being punished.

The second version of this tale is that Medusa fell in love with Poseidon. Star-crossed lovers that stumbled upon one another, who were doomed to fail from the beginning. Why? Medusa had taken a vow of celibacy, but love had no bounds. It creeps up on you in moments you never expected, and they meet as if it was written to be.

It was summer’s day when Medusa was shopping in the town by the Athenian Acropolis. The hustle and bustle around her was always something she enjoyed. >>

## book recommendation

**TITLE** Medusa

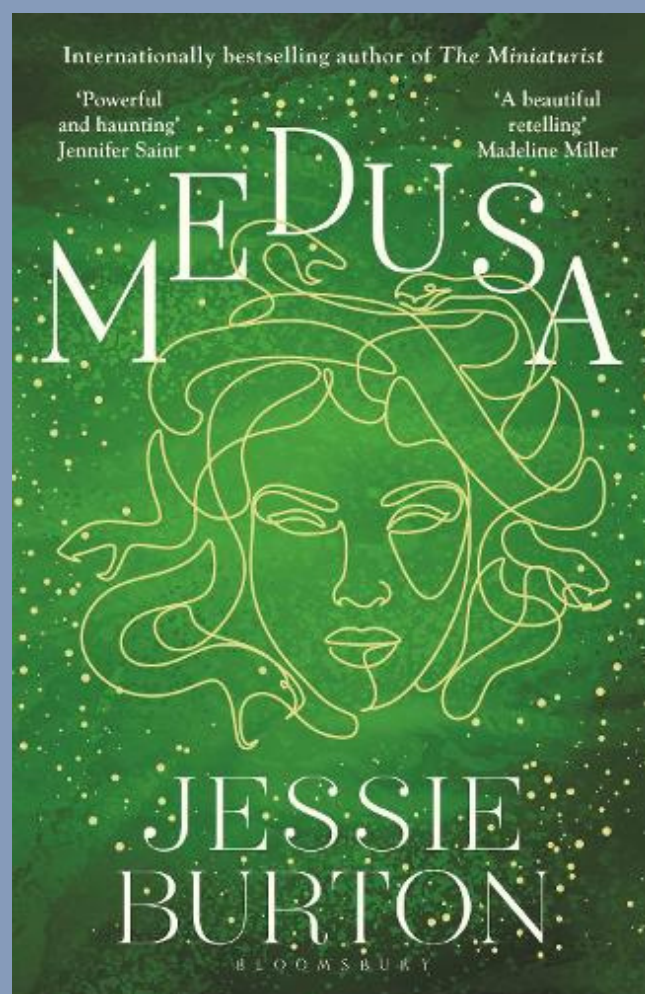
**AUTHOR** Jessie Burton

**PUBLISHER** Bloomsbury Publishing PLC

**YEAR** 2023

**LANGUAGE** English

**GENRE** Fiction



>> She was looking for new robes to wear for the coming festival when her eyes caught a pair of grey-blue ones shrouded in sunlight. He stood in the market, dressed beautifully as if from royalty, a scarf about his neck and face so she could only see his eyes. Medusa felt a tug as if something was pulling her to him. She followed him through the crowd, to a break in the trees around them, wondering who he was.

When he turned to her, his scarf dropped, and she saw his face. Her heart stopped in her chest. Never in her life did she think she would be lucky enough to see one of the great gods or goddesses she worshipped. Bowing her head, she cast her eyes down, breath caught in her throat. For a brief moment, she felt as though he had come closer. The whisper of his hand cupping her cheek seemed so real, but when she looked up, he had disappeared.

Weeks passed, and she looked for him each day, hoping they might get the chance to speak, but he never reappeared. Her heart grew heavy, and she turned herself to work, finding joy and solace in the maidens around her. It was one autumn afternoon when she saw him again: he visited the temple and asked if he could spend an hour with her.

"Do you know how to weave?" she asked him as they sat upon the temple's steps. Poseidon was a gentleman around her, but she knew he had a temper; a fiery passion burned with him, and she felt drawn to it.

"No, I do not," he shook his head.

They spent many days and weeks after that weaving, reading and talking.

He took an interest in the literature she enjoyed and in the hobbies she had, and she loved hearing of his war stories, the heroes he had helped and the quests he had been on. Their friendship developed into a deep bond. Whenever she felt scared at night, she called for him and like a comforting wave, he would come and hold her until her nightmares left her alone.

"My love," Poseidon whispered one night, holding Medusa against his body as she dozed. It was the most contact they had. He hadn't even kissed her in all the time they had spent together. He knew that she worried about her vow and about the stress that caused her to feel this way for a man, a god, that she could not have, not entirely.

She looked up at him, eyes sleepy and full of love, "yes?"

The tears in his eyes made her worry, causing her to sit up and cup his face. He could not look at her; her heart felt heavy, a dull ache pounding in his chest.

"I know the toll this has taken on you," he said sadly, "you should be free within the vow you took, and I have distracted you from your duties. I do not think...it is best if we see each other anymore. And I despise that, for I want you all the time. The time we have spent together means so much to me. You are so special to me. You are my world."

Poseidon meant every word. People either feared or revered him. Medusa saw the light in him that others did not. She saw past his fiery temperament, past the rumours and stories, and held his heart delicately in her hands. He could not imagine a world without her, but if it would make her life easier, he would do so for her sake. >>



>> Medusa's eyes mirrored his. She might never be able to describe the pain she felt, "please do not leave me. Please, stay. I...have fallen for you. I love you dearly."

Her whole life, Medusa never knew if people wanted to be near her for her beauty or her mind. She knew that Poseidon wanted her for who she was. He loved the sound of her laugh, the way her smile brightened her face, the way she spoke of life and literature and how vital her values were to her.

Poseidon held her to his chest, leaving kisses on her cheeks and neck before finding her lips. The kiss was chaste and sweet. It felt like the sunlight that danced across his skin the first time he saw her; warm, comforting, home. Medusa pressed her body to his, wanting to feel as much of him as she could and have this memory ingrained inside her head for as long as her mind would allow.

"I love you too," he whispered against her lips when they pulled back from each other. It was sad and heartbreaking, for she knew she would need to decide what she wanted tomorrow. And she knew it would always be him. Under the moonlight, they made love. He mapped her body with kisses and whispered comforting words as their bodies melted into one another, unsure of where he ended and she began. At that moment, Medusa only felt love, pleasure and light.

But in the morning, that was ripped away from her when the goddess Athena cursed her, despite her saying she would break her vow. As she sobbed, Poseidon held her to his body, but he could not look at her, for he would turn to stone. The gorgons around her head hid in his chest, wanting nothing more than to disappear into his warmth.

"I am so sorry, my love," he whispered, kissing her forehead, wanting to look at her and see her smile, but he kept his eyes closed. "I will try to fix this. We will reverse this, I promise. I will never leave you. This is all my fault."

And yet, no matter how much he tried or how much Medusa prayed, the world had turned against her, and Athena did not come to her aid.

"You must leave me," Medusa said weeks later with her back to Poseidon. She had moved out of the temple and into a small house, away from the town and everyone.

"No!" Poseidon said, watching as her shoulders shook, unable to contain her cries, for he always did. "I will not. I will stay and take care of you."

"You cannot look at me, you cannot be with me, I will only hurt you," Medusa cried, hugging herself, "I will hold you back no longer."

It was the first time they argued that night out of fear and heartbreak. Tears flowed from her eyes, and Poseidon's voice shook as he spoke, unable to bring her comfort as he had before. There was a distance between them that he crossed to hold her to his chest, even as she told him to leave, to forget her. Their mingled sorrows pooled around them, evidence of their love's strength.

"I will never leave you," he promised, "not ever. I will be here, even if you do not wish to see me. I made a vow to always look after you. And I always will."

In the months and years that followed, Poseidon came to see her every day after that day, but she turned him away each day. >>

>> Still, he came and never left, leaving her books, food and things she liked. The day Theseus murdered her, Poseidon raged a never-ending storm. His cries and screams were heard across the land and heavens. He retreated to the ocean, a broken man and the seas were never the same again.

So, dear reader, I ask you, do the different versions of the tale change the moral of the story? I'll give you a hint, no, it does not because the burden is still on women. Whether or not Athena cursed or gifted Medusa, the blame was placed on Medusa's shoulders, and it was up to her to protect herself. If the second version is accurate, and Medusa did love Poseidon, she is still villainised rather than him. For as long as history describes, women have always been blamed for the actions of men. ●

**"Whether or not Athena cursed or gifted Medusa, the blame was placed on Medusa's shoulders, and it was up to her to protect herself. If the second version is accurate, and Medusa did love Poseidon, she is still villainised rather than him."**

## meet the writer

Asha is a writer with a Bachelor's degree in English Literature and Creative Writing and a Master's degree in Creative Writing. She has a background in content writing, having written for her campus' paper Smoke Magazine and edited the English Society's blog. She enjoys discovering new worlds and magical places for people to escape to. "Everyone has a story, and as long as you're willing to listen, you'll find the one meant for you".



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<https://www.ourstreetsnow.org/our-words>

**Instagram:** @ourwords\_osn

### Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/ourwordsbookclub/>

**Email:** [osnourwords@outlook.com](mailto:osnourwords@outlook.com)





