



Diamonds in the Rough
A Literary Magazine

Vol. 2 No. 1

Editor: Dr. Melissa Knox-Raab

Welcome to the first 2020 issue of *Diamonds in the Rough*.

This issue showcases the talents of Marlene Bechtold, Elisavet, Cihan Evran, Jolanda Friedrich, Steven, Svenja Krautwald, Kyra Meyer, and Eva Schumann. These first-year students have been trained to follow an idea, to defend their beliefs, to write so that it remains possible for a reader to disagree, and to put their opinions first, not last.

Our issue explores the personal as well as the political. Covering urban sketching, the perfect Döner, poetry, writing as a help toward making life choices, and magical worlds, our authors also respond to the world of COVID-19, the Black Lives Matter movement, and the costs of taking any side in politics.

Starting with this issue, the magazine offers a Pandemic Journal. All are invited to contribute for as long as we're coping with COVID.

July 2020

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Knox-Raab, Melissa

How to Invent a (New-ish) Magic System

By Eva Schumann

Magic is something that turns up in everyone's life sooner or later. After all, who didn't pretend at some point in their life to be able to make something 'magically' disappear? But nowadays magic has also become a common feature in story books, which are usually classified as 'fantasy'. As a consequence, a multitude of different magic systems is known to avid readers and determined researchers. The system from the 'Harry Potter' novels might be the best-known with its wands, spells, and potions. "Now why should I try and write a new one? There are so many already!" you might say. It's a valid opinion, but there are three points arguing against that. For one, if you were to just imitate a magic system already existing in another story you would essentially steal the work of someone else. But there is also the interplay of a magic system and the rest of a story to consider. A society, for example, would be under completely different influences depending on how easy or difficult doing magic is. Thus, depending on what kind of story you want to tell, none of the already existing magic systems might fit. In addition to this you should not forget: All these systems have their moments, but some are inconsistent in their logic, going beyond the 'magic is not real so this could never work that way' argument. If you see the arguments above as valid, these points to help you build your own magic system might just be what you are looking for.

All points I raise here are equally important for your system to work, but without considering what magic in your world is capable of none of them would matter. And the options are almost endless: magic might be used to make things change their colour, or make things grow at an incredible speed. But maybe it can go beyond that and completely turn one thing into another. Also consider that 'magic' might just be used to influence chemistry, electricity and mechanics.

Another thing to think about is how wielding magic works: The feature most people would recognize as casting magic is saying a spell. Here you should consider if it is, for one thing, necessary to say the incantation out loud or if there might be ways around that. It could after all be possible that one needs to inscribe the spell into a special material, or it won't work. Second, if the words used are in your everyday language or if potential magic users need to learn a new language instead. The existing systems usually have them study an ancient

language, like in Christopher Paolini's 'Inheritance' series. But also consider making the spells utter nonsense that just serve to distract the non-wizards from the true secret behind casting... whatever that may be in your system. Third, think about additional requirements for a spell: In the 'Harry Potter'-series a wand and a corresponding wand movement is necessary for a spell to work correctly, at least for most wizards. Wizards in the 'Dragonlance' novels on the other hand require spell components like herbs or fur in addition to the incantation for the intended result. You could also make certain clothing articles like belts or robes a requirement for successful casting; the possibilities are endless.

Another aspect of a magic system is the way someone gains the ability to use magic: almost every system requires the magic wielders to either have been born with at least some talent for magic or to have made a deal with a supernatural being. These deals usually require a sacrifice, for example servitude to this supernatural being, for the ability to use magic; in my experience, however, they are uncommon. But don't let this detain you from making such an exchange of power necessary, as the aforementioned sacrifice holds much potential: 'sacrifice' could mean that you need to kill a loved one, but you might also need to sacrifice a body part or exchange for example your sight for the ability to cast magic. On the other hand, you could also make magic a skill you can learn just like reading or carpentry.

The last point is how you might differentiate between different kinds of magic. It is entirely up to you as the creator to define what you like as 'field of magical study', however, to make this abstract concept understandable, let's have a look at some of the fields in 'Harry Potter': Transfiguration, Charms and Potions are three of the classes in Hogwarts. Transfiguration is a magic field that is focussed on changing one thing into another thing, while Charms aims to change properties of an object (for example to change its colour). Potions instead is a field of magic that combines magical ingredients to create substances with new magical properties. All of these fields are magical in nature, but each has their own possibilities and limitations. In this system it is possible to use different fields to achieve the same goal, for example to make something fly: a transfiguration spell would probably result in changing the object into something with wings, a charm would add the wings to the object or even make it fly on its own, and a potion would need to somehow come into direct contact to work as intended (if such a potion even exists). Even though this system makes it possible to achieve the same goal with different methods, the same does not need to be true for your system. And do not forget to think about what happens when incompatible magic fields interact with each other.

While there is always the option that nothing happens, I think that unintended results are much more interesting in all aspects.

I could continue now to raise points for you to consider like 'how are wizards seen by the rest of the population' or 'why are magic users (not) subject to the Law'. I could also raise points like 'does the magical population have a different life expectancy' or 'does using different types of magic (if such a difference exists in your system) affect social standing'. However, these questions will lead you to answers concerning the society of your world and thus do not have a place in an essay on the magic system itself.

The City in Paper and Ink

By Jolanda Friedrich

Sometimes, when I walk through the city, I notice the oddest things. A near-circular balcony, cat stickers on a window that seem to look down on the pedestrians and judge them, an impressively crooked streetlamp. When I see these things, I fish out my worn-out sketchbook and the ballpoint pen that is always at the bottom of my bag and sketch my discovery. The resulting drawings do not have to look pretty or be very intricate. As it turns out, the sketch of a crooked lamppost may, under the right conditions, resemble cooked spaghetti. But that is of no consequence, because the practice of urban sketching does not aim at perfectly recreating the real world or creating a masterpiece; its focus is on regaining an awareness of the world that you live in and usually tune out as background noise. Urban sketching is one way to return to that awareness. When you look for motifs to sketch, you can feel like a tourist in an unknown land who gazes in awe at the smallest of details instead of the stranger in your own lives that you often become.

The first step to start urban sketching is to buy the necessary tools. The great thing about urban sketching is that only very few tools are needed, only a small, sturdy sketchbook that fits inside a bag and a pen. Technically, any pen is fine, but I would recommend one that is waterproof. I know that not everyone is as clumsy as I am. Drops of tea appear on my sketchbook as soon as I so much as lift a mug, but it is very frustrating when sketches get smudged due to rain or tea accidents.

The next step is to find something to draw. There are no limits, but in my experience, it is best to start with objects or places you are already familiar with. There are things that you may feel like you know like the back of your hand, such as the view from your window. But some people never observe the back of their hand or reflect that even such a frequently observed surface can yield new material.

In fact, a common exercise for art students is to draw the back of their hand without looking at it. You may look at your hand every day, but you rarely take the time to consciously observe it. And the same goes for the view from your window. Thus, a good way to get started is to go to your window and pick a tree or a streetlamp as your first motif.

Once you have chosen what to draw, take your time to observe it. Think about how its height compares to that of surrounding houses or other trees, how the light bounces off it. Only then you should take out your sketchbook and start on the actual drawing. And even while you sketch, make sure to constantly observe your chosen object. My art teacher used to tell me that when drawing from nature, my eyes should be on the object seventy percent of the time and on the paper only for the remaining thirty. In urban sketching, you should always keep that in mind.

The most frightening part of the actual sketch tends to be the first line. The paper is still white and pristine, and it feels like any line on it would only dirty the page. A good way to not get scared off by a blank page is to add a random line or to test your pen. You can also add a horizon line for better orientation. Especially when you draw architecture, the horizon is a very helpful guideline. When you have the first line, subsequent lines will be a lot easier. You can always improve on a sketch that you help but you cannot learn from a blank piece of paper. There are even things that you can only learn and understand when you draw them several times. It took me numerous attempts to figure out how roof tiles are shaped and overlap. I only learned that by trying different ways to draw them.

The next step is to pin down the big base shapes. Buildings may look like cubes; the crown of a tree may be vaguely circular. The “sketch” part of urban sketching entails that not many details are needed. They should be done quickly, carelessly, sometimes recklessly. You can leave out eighty percent of the details and your brain will still be able to recognise an object. Instead of putting pressure on yourself to include every detail, you should remember that art is always abstraction. Even a photograph does not accurately depict reality because it is two dimensional and some details are thus inevitably lost. Thus, you do not need to worry about perfection. You should simply be proud of yourself when you finish a sketch because that means that you have learned something about your surroundings. You have also exercised your brain. When you draw from the real world, you observe, constantly compare sizes and scales, coordinate hand movements and prioritise certain details over others. Regardless of the outcome of your sketches, the effort that you put into them is always worth it.

Lastly, remember that Rome was not built in a day. You may be frustrated by how bad your sketches are at first but ask yourself: do you expect yourself to be able to play an instrument after just one lesson? Art takes time and practice. Urban sketching has the big advantage that, unlike an instrument, you can take your sketchbook everywhere to practice. You can sketch in

a short break or while waiting for a bus or train. The latter tends to lead me to particularly interesting realisations about people and their behaviour in urban environments. It seems like people do not really know what to do with themselves or how to deal with strangers when forced to wait for the same train. The resulting awkwardness will never be dull to draw. At some point, most artists find a location or situation that they like to draw, and an urban environment offers an overabundance of them. Some people love bridges, others like libraries or a tram stop. To find interesting locations, all you need to do is to walk through the world with your eyes wide open and your sketchbook within reach.

Why Influencers Need to Speak Up

By Kyra Meyer

In recent events, it has become very clear that our society is easily divided by racism, especially against black people. There are victims, allies, racists and the people who think it's best not to "get too political" and to stay neutral, keeping their Instagram page light and pretty. The silence of some big influencers is deafening to me.

The reason as to why it is important to speak up as an influencer, now more than ever, is because social media is where we can be heard and where we can fight for what is right. So many people rely on Instagram and Twitter to get information about the protests, police activity and ways to join the Black Lives Matter movement. If more influencers talk about it, more people will be ready to educate themselves. It doesn't matter if it's reading books or watching documentaries about the topic; all influencers have to do is promote it.

All the influencers who I saw speaking up, doesn't matter what skin color, were promoting black owned fashion and beauty brands like FUBU and Savage X Fenty. This is a way for them to promote black people, stand with black people and still put out their usual content. They acknowledged that a lot of the fashion trends many people profit from originated in the black community, namely gold hoops, chunky jewelry, nail art and streetwear. We see these trends everywhere we go, not only on social media but also in movies and in real life. Moreover, influencers who say they don't want to "get political" are most likely hypocritical because most of them have talked about animal rights or veganism at one point, which are considered political topics too. But as soon as it's about black lives they have stayed quiet.

Since I'm black and I follow a lot of people on Instagram who look like me and have gone through the same things, my Instagram feed is filled with posts about racial injustice and people speaking up about it. However, I worry that some people, who aren't black or brown, don't follow these people and think it's okay to not care about racial issues and engage with them, because the influencers they follow stay quiet. I don't want to say that everyone who isn't black doesn't talk about racial issues, by now most people do. However, there are some people who have a lot of influence, but still decide to stay quiet and that's the issue. An influencer who admits to not knowing enough about the topic to speak up should find out

more; the problem of not speaking up concerns everyone, influencers of all colors and backgrounds.

Recently, I talked to one of my black friends who lives in the US and she said that “nothing changes until you make people uncomfortable” and I agree. I know that it might take the guts for someone to talk about uncomfortable topics. However, staying out of politics is a privilege, because so many of us can’t stay out of it simply because of our skin color. People who don’t speak up are upholding the oppressive norms and taking up space that is needed to fight for collective liberation; not speaking up is like saying “let’s pretend nothing is happening; your pain doesn’t matter to us“. Making people “feel comfortable and keeping the peace” is only for their own convenience, so they don’t have to think about the horrible things that happen in the world since they aren’t happening to them directly. However, they should affect them emotionally just as much they affect me, as a black woman, because black people are still people.

I follow a Chinese girl living in America on Instagram who talked about how she lost many followers ever since she started posting about the systemic racism against black and brown people and white privilege. She said that she isn’t primarily sad about the dropping numbers in her account, but more about the fact that so many people are not ready to step into the conversation about racism and their own privilege. This made me realize that it doesn’t matter whether influencers lose followers, deals with brands or sponsorships, because what does it matter if innocent people’s lives are on the line? If it had only been black people talking about what happened to George Floyd, his murderer wouldn’t have been charged at all even though it was filmed. This shows that all the influencers, celebrities, brands, and protestants who stood up, did make a difference.

Furthermore, racism and racial injustice aren’t just hot-button issues to care about this week or next month. The killings of unarmed black people like George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and Ahmaud Arbery aren’t new. The Black Lives Matter movement started in 2013, so everyone has had at least seven years to get educated, to stand up, to show me and everyone else that black lives matter to them. Speaking up is about showing solidarity to the people suffering at the hands of police brutality and staying quiet only fuels this suffering.

When I hear the term “influencer”, I think of a person who wants to have a positive impact on someone’s life, who wants to be someone that people, no matter what age, can look up to. There is nothing “too political” or “too sensitive” about saying that black lives matter,

because black lives are human lives. 2020 is a year that had to happen for people to finally wake up and find their voices. Everyone who is silent right now is part of the problem.

Neither Left nor Right

By Elisavet

Politics is a dangerous game, not only because it plays with power and superiority, but because it puts us in positions that expose our morality and our beliefs. Politics forces us to pick a side and constantly argue with whomever disagrees. Years of obsessing over politics taught me that no matter which political side you are on, the selfishness of its representatives will always outdo its final goals. No president, no politician, and no political side cares solemnly about jobs, peace and equality for the sake of people, but for the sake of money, power, and entitlement.

During my early teenage years, I was sure of the political side I wanted to support. I believed in equality amongst all people, I was a part of the LGBT community, and I stood up for democracy. I identified as a liberal, a Democrat, and a part of the left-wing community.

When the Orlando Pulse nightclub shooting happened in 2016, I spent weeks trying to digest the reality of the event. Terrorism that targeted the gay community was neither rare nor new, so I was accustomed to feeling hated and attacked as a bisexual girl. What frustrated me was the fact that a place where the gay community felt safe and protected had been violated, destroyed, and turned into a mass murder chamber. I realised how unsafe we, as parts of the LGBT were, and that the world would always carry people, who would never accept us.

None of my friends seemed to be as badly affected as I was by the incident. Very few people in my school had heard about the Orlando shooting. Both students and teachers chose to ignore the importance of the event, and did not care to talk about what had happened.

Whenever I tried to mention the incident, and how such occurrences affect all of us, people would shrug and change the topic. I swore to myself that I would play my part in politics so that such tragedies would never happen again. I wanted the problems and challenges of the gay community to become significant to everyone. I knew that the only way to spread awareness was to be an active part of the left-wing community, the liberals, the good people who despised and never excused hate crimes.

In 2016, shortly after the Orlando shooting, Donald Trump was elected the president of the United States. I felt devastated and I grew fearful of what the future of politics would turn out

to be with Trump as president of one of the most influential countries in the world. I did not know much about Trump. I had only heard about a few of his controversial sayings such as, “grab her by the pussy”, or “let’s build a wall and make Mexico pay for it.” He did not sound like a man I wanted to support. He was on the opposite part of the political spectrum that I believed in. He was so far right, and I was so far left. I saw him as the ultimate enemy, the representative of those who hated people like me, women, homosexuals, immigrants, disabled individuals. I was scared that with Trump in power, terrorists and hateful people would feel encouraged to continue committing hate crimes against minorities. And I remembered that I had sworn to never allow another Orlando shooting to happen again. I thought to myself, “Now it’s the time that we, the left, should fight stronger than ever to defeat the evil man and the right-wing Republicans.”

A year passed by, and in 2017 another violent incident took place in Chicago, one that made me reevaluate the political side which I had been supporting. On January 3rd, it was reported on the news that a mentally ill, white 18-year-old boy, was kidnapped and tortured for hours by four black youths. The boy was tied up, beaten, gagged. A piece of his skull was removed with a knife. The four youths who tortured him uploaded a 30-minute long video on Facebook, showcasing the torturing, and yelling “F* Trump!”, and “F* white people.” On the news, bits of the video were shown and I remember feeling sick to my stomach. Seeing the boy having the skin of his head ripped off, and being pulled by the neck as though he was just a sack of meat, sent shivers down my spine. What surprised me was that many people from the left-wing community ignored the incident, others justified and excused it as a revenge in the name of slavery. It was hard to believe that people from my peaceful and united community would justify violence of any kind, and say “this is what you get because of your hateful white race.”

The Chicago incident was a turning point for me. I discovered the ugly side of radical politics and I recognised the hypocrisy within the left-wing community. I was always ready to stand up for minorities, fight for equality and justice as well as recognise the mistakes of the past. However, seeing my community justify a hate crime, because “whites deserve it,” threw me off. Quite frankly, the hate repelled me.

I was exposed to a whole new side of the left-wing. I came across hundreds of feminists believing that “all men were trash” and ought to vanish from earth, that the future is only female, and that men have no problems of their own. I thought to myself how contradictory

such beliefs were to feminism, and what the message of the movement primarily was, equality amongst all genders. These hateful feminists did not care about equality; they cared about power and being superior to the male gender. I was caught off guard when I came to the realization that politics was not about our silly messages in favour of peace, but about power. Politics was a battlefield and all about who comes on top, and who stays at the bottom defeated.

I finally saw how angry everyone was. I saw that the idea of achieving global peace and equality was just a disguise. The real goal was to fight one another, see who is right, and make the opponents suffer. I had been angry as well. I wanted to see justice in the world, for anyone and everyone, who had been treated unfairly and their rights had been stripped away. Yet I never wanted to make my opponents suffer, nor did I care about myself being “right”, and the other side being “wrong.” I cared about “what” was right, instead of feeding my pride and ego by belittling others of the opposite side of the political spectrum. I always believed in educating the ignorant, spending time to spread awareness, discuss peacefully, encourage dialogue, not tear each other down, because our political views were different.

I decided to start talking to right-wing conservatives and Republicans. I wanted to test the waters and find out what kind of people my “opponents” were. Were they all monsters who hated women, hated the LGBT, hated people who were not white, hated religions other than Christianity, and worshipped Trump? No, they were not, they were ordinary people, many of them middle class, people of colour, as well as members of the LGBT community. I had multiple discussions with conservatives, and I was always listened to carefully. Although we could not always agree to disagree, I was never shut down nor was I belittled for my different opinions. The acceptance and respect I had received from the right-wing conservatives made me identify as a conservative as well for quite some time. In all honesty, none of my beliefs were “conservative”, but I could not go back to supporting the left and all its contradictions.

Now in my early adulthood, I have made the decision to not involve myself in any specific side of the political spectrum. I have my own system of beliefs and morals. I am the one who defines my morality and acts upon it. I still am and will always be someone who supports equality for all, someone who cares about the issues of all genders, and supports democracy. But I also believe that with equality and equal treatment, negative matters will also arise, and we all as equals should endure them and face the same consequences.

Politics is a dangerous game, although interesting to observe; it becomes a lot more complex, once you pick a side to support and defend. The expectations grow as you slowly see yourself being surrounded by people, who are either this or that, and if you find logic in both, you will also be called a bigot by both. I see no point in revenge. I cannot understand the idea of repeating the brutality from past ignorant white men, in order to send a message, when our purpose is peace and equality amongst all. I have tried to understand the anger and the sadness that people went through, and still go through, because of ignorance and racism. I will stand and defend them as much as I can. However, I cannot pretend that the way to healing is through violence, nor through revenge in search for superiority and power. I only hope that one day the goal of politics will be to unite us all, fight injustice for all, and bring peace to every individual.

The German Government and Corona

By Steven

The CDU and SPD in Berlin, Germany's current two reigning parties have handled the Corona Crisis both well and badly thus far. They handled the crisis well in that they shut meeting places, such as playgrounds, restaurants, schools and many other places for four weeks. The probability of infecting other people was low because Germany's citizens were only allowed to interact in restricted places. Neither were they allowed to meet with more than one person in public. The German government limited interactions to no more than one other person in public. This ban, including the restriction to enter certain places has been beneficial because the rate of infection has decreased in Germany since March. When the virus was detected in Heinzberg, the German government reacted fast. That prevented the high infection rates seen in Italy, Spain or the USA. In this regard, the German state has done a good job and payed attention to the safety and health of Germany's citizens.

Unfortunately, some people in Germany died of Covid-19, like in other countries in the world. 1/3 of the dead people in general were in homes for the elderly. Nearly all of the other 2/3 had had an illness before they were infected or were older than 60 years old. This shows that these patients-at-risks can easily die of the virus. Only have a few people who were not risk patients died of Corona. We only know this fact since the government in Berlin has collaborated well with virologists.

The small number of dead people who were not at-risk is due to the fact that the CDU and SPD have always paid attention to the doctor's suggestions, like a safety distance of 1.5 meters. Therefore, not as many people have died so far as in Italy or Spain. If Merkel and her cabinet had not listened to the doctors and reacted fast, the rate of infected people would probably be higher. In comparison to the USA, Germany has done a decent job. There are more than 350,000 infected people in New York State alone. These are approximately 150,000 people more in one state than in total in Germany. Since Trump does not pay attention to doctors and believes that someone can probably cure the virus by injecting disinfectants, the rate of infections is as high as it is now in the USA.

However, the CDU and SPD in Berlin have not dealt with the pandemic well in every regard. They neglected some of the destitute. They neglected, the homeless, those who rely on “Die Tafel” for meals and have little access to medical care. Because of COVID-19, the organization shut many of their halls, so those people had to buy food from grocery stores. In this case, the state should have intervened and allowed “Die Tafel” to leave all their halls open. Since some of the people who depend on “Die Tafel” had to spend money in grocery stores, they struggled with paying their rent for their apartment. If the lockdown had gone longer, i.e. leaving “Die Tafel’s” halls and public places shut, a property owner could have thrown some of these destitute out of their apartment. Then, they would have been in a worse situation than they were during the lockdown. As far as I know, this has not happened so far, and “Die Tafel” has re-opened many of their halls because the number of infected people has decreased.

A further reason why the German government has not always reacted well is that the government reopened too many public spaces at the same time. This increases the risk of infections. Within two weeks, barbershops, playgrounds, schools and gyms opened with restrictions, but they opened again. Children can go to a playground, and five people from two different families can meet in public. As all these places are open again, there are many people on the street again, and this within a short period. This fast development cannot be controlled everywhere at the same time. Police and safety guards cannot check everywhere at the same time if people stick to the 1.5 meters safety distance. Despite the fact that Christian Drosten emphasized the importance of this distance several times, there are some people in my hometown who ignore this distance. Hence, the risk of infections has increased within a short period. This is why the German state should not have reopened as many places as it did. It would have been better if the German state had reopened less places at once and if the state had watched if the rate of infections will de- or increase.

In the end, it is difficult to say whether the German government has handled the Covid-19 pandemic well or not thus far. I think that Germany has done quite well so far because there are fewer rates of infections than in other countries. We will see within the next few months, how the current rates of infections will develop, and what further decisions CDU and SPD will make.

A Native Turk's Guide to Döner

By Cihan Evran

It is no coincidence that Döner is the go-to fast food in all around Europe. Whenever you are hungover or have had too much to drink it is the first fast food people go to. Under such circumstances your palate will not differentiate between savoury flavours of some great delicious delicacy when alcohol looms over your taste buds like a dark shadow. Or worse, you're outside of Turkey longing for a properly prepared Döner, but the so-called "Döner" you are served looks like a malignant cancer cell. The path to a great Döner is arduous, but worthy. This is how I prefer my Döner to be prepared as all the other European variants lacks everything that Turkish Döner has.

Firstly, let us start with the meat. It is impossible to call Döner 'Döner' unless it is made from veal, or lamb or chicken meat. Any vegetarian option is not considered Döner and will under no circumstances, regardless of the spices and marinates one could use, taste like the real Döner. You should be able to see fat dripping and smell the gamey odour that comes off from that gorgeous looking meat, spinning on a large skewer turning prettier with each circle it completes around the burners. The meat should come from Turkey, preferably on the Black Sea region, where the weather is ideally cold in winter, warm and rainy in summer, and where the wind carries the sea air to the mountains, where cattle graze on green grass.

You must always use an expensive cut of meat. It is an absolute sin to my Turkish eyes to see minced meat in Döner. And a blasphemy to my mouth. You should always use lean pieces of meat which have been pre-beaten and cut to the perfect shape. People do not pay to eat Sloppy Joe when they come to a Turkish restaurant. In order to get the real thing, start by acquiring thirty kilos of leg of lamb and then debone them using a long thin flexible knife and get rid of any pieces that you would not eat. The reason why you are employing that particular knife has to do with the fact that the cuts made with such a blade will follow the meat around the bone and not stick into the bone. Secondly, it is imperative that you should clean the meat thoroughly. You would not want any filth that may later alter the taste of Döner and more importantly your health. Thirdly, after you clean off all dirt start cutting the meat into no more one cm thick pieces. This is important as, the thinner the layers the more delicious will they taste. This will also be more economical in terms of grilling time. Fourthly, before doing

anything else you should let the meat soak in a milk bath at least for 2 days which will reduce the toxins and improve the flavour.

For the milk bath you will need salt, white pepper and grated onions, mineral water and naturally milk, preferably obtained from a farm. You should not use dark pepper as it will darken the meat which is not what we are after. The third ingredient is a mixture of spices, which are secret to each Döner maker and the region where the Döner is made, but as I am kind enough, I will share some of the generic spices with you. You will need Turkish red pepper, paprika, coriander, oregano, rosemary, allspice, and garlic powder. This process is a must, since the marriage between the milk and the spices will tenderize the meat even further and give it a distinctive taste. The longer they remain together, the more beautiful they become. However, you should not overdo the spices since we want to take a bite into a delicious piece of meat and not into a wood. Döner meat is supposed to resemble an autumn leave and taste a bit gamey.

After storing the meat in the refrigerator for two days we can finally start stacking them up onto the roasting skewer. As the more culinary seasoned among you would imagine, we start by stacking the meat from bottom to top, growing thicker with each layer. That is, by the time you are done stacking the meat up, you should have a vase looking pile of meat which looks thin at the bottom and thick on the top. Before we begin stacking them up we will need another ingredient which is unfortunately forbidden thanks to the ministry of health in Europe but a non-omittable element in the making of proper Döner. Namely, the rendered fat from a sheep's tail. This particular fat gives meat such a flavour that you would think you could devour that giant pile of meat all by yourself. This should not come as a surprise since anyone who knows his way around a kitchen would know that the most delicious cuts of meat come from the fatty parts of an animal. Each time you stack 5 pieces of meat on top of another you stack one piece of the above-mentioned fat into the skewer and repeat the process until such time you have reached the top. There you will want to take a second, and look at that beauty before we cherish it with more rendered lamb fat and some vegetables. You will want this because as the fat cooks at the top, all the lovely juices will keep flowing downwards to the meat, which makes the meat taste even more exquisite. After you have fired up your griller you will want to place the meat onto the segment where skewer will start automatically rotating around the burners. For this you will need helping hands. Because all you have worked for up until this point could fall into pieces with a reckless blink of an eye. So, place that thing of beauty onto the griller and let time to do the work. You should not put the heat to

the highest. Imagine as if you are cooking a stew and it has to simmer for the perfect consistency and taste. It is same procedure with Döner. You have to find the perfect balance and let it continuously rotate around the burners and cook evenly on every side. After the meat is perfectly crisped on the outside, we start cutting the outer layer of the meat. The first thing you will notice will be the inner layers, which are by this point still pink. But this is natural since with every circle the skewer makes, the meat will get crisp and maintain its juices, hence making every serving of Döner equally tasty.

Döner is served best in a bed of Turkish bread. Unlike the preconceived notions of many foreigners, the Turkish bread resembles more of French baguette, which is thicker in size but shorter in length. That is the perfect vessel in which the meat and its juices can be delivered into your mouth. Where Pita and other bread forms crumbles and loses their form promptly, the Turkish bread will keep its form and texture, thus making it ideal not only for Döner but also for other sandwiches style dishes. You should first start cutting the bread in half and respectively slice it from the middle, making a deep cut, but not so deep as to disintegrate the bread. Then you dunk the inside of the bread into the meat on the skewer, so that the bread soaks up some of the fat and therefore the flavour. Subsequently, you start placing the meat into the bread, followed by salad and chips. And it is done. This is how many Turks eat their Döner in Turkey. Nothing more, nothing less. I know how Döner in Germany is butchered as commercial producers here load it up with all kinds of sauces and salads which eventually destroys the overall taste of the meat, making the dish exhausting and unpleasant experience. So, have a go at my version of Döner. I promise it will be an experience you will not soon forget or regret.

Why I Write

By Svenja Krautwald

The ability to form letters into words into sentences which create a different sphere for the reader to explore and get lost in has always fascinated me. I have always admired authors who were able to pull me into their stories, leaving my body physically present while my mind was completely immersed in their creations. The term ‘to get lost in a book’ applied to me 100%. If a story was good and engaging, it had the power to make me forget everything around me. The recreation of that feeling is the main motivation for me to write for others because I as well want to be able to evoke emotion in other people. However, there is also another reason for me to write which enables me to reflect on different situations as well as my psychological condition.

When I was five, my older brother entered primary school and I was so fascinated with the things he learned that I started to teach myself how to read and write. That way, I was able to read stories independently as my mother did not need to read them to me anymore. The more I read, the higher my fascination with reading and words in general became. I devoured book after book, fighting alongside brave warriors or falling in love with prince charming. My mind was and still is very imaginative, I believe that is why books have such a strong impact on me. I am able to wholly enter a story and imagine everything in my head as a fully developed world. I love how simple words on a page of paper are able to elicit vivid images in my mind. One could say that I produce my own movies in my head whenever I read a book. Because reading was a form of such enjoyable entertainment for me, I often neglected the real world as the book stories were so much more interesting than my own life. As I got older, my own life became more demanding and time-consuming which made it hard to read that much. This was difficult for me to process as I generally belong to those people who like to think and operate in a romantically artistic inspired way, which makes it hard to follow logical or rational choices sometimes. That means I often do not see the obvious solution to a problem but like to imagine many other scenarios that could potentially happen if I were to be the protagonist of a book. The child that loved to escape into different realities was no more; it had to mature into a functioning adult with no room for extra vivid imagination. It got to a point where I even stopped reading altogether.

This was definitely no straight process and once I realized what I lost because I was so focused on succeeding in being an adult, I desperately tried to change back. I was left in a panic because I thought an essential part of my personality was lost. Here it is important to mention that I do not say that adults do not read, I am just saying that reading for me was connected to freedom and no responsibilities, a condition which changed once I grew up because I suddenly had to be very responsible. The fact that it is healthy to develop constantly and adapt to new situations was disregarded because I refused to let this part of my life go without fighting for it to stay for good. That means I had to establish a way of bringing back reading into my life without forcing it to feel unnatural. At this point, writing entered the picture. I have never kept a journal, but when I started writing about how I felt and what thoughts rotated inside my head, it became easier to define what I really wanted and also who I wanted to be. Writing really helped me to contemplate life and the changes I made. I also realized that the process of writing is able to improve my problem-solving skills as I developed a new feeling of self-reflection. As of right now, writing is a very selfish act to me and directly influences mostly myself. I use it as an outlet for thoughts and ideas as well as creative imagination.

When I took up writing it would have never imagined how the simple act of writing down thoughts and feelings is able to offer alternative perspectives to certain situations. I am very proud to say that through writing, I was able to healthily integrate reading into my life again. I still get lost in books and let my thoughts wander, but I am also able to manage adult life satisfactorily. I also realized that I need to read in order to balance and stabilize my mind, which was a relieving discovery as life in general definitely became a whole lot brighter, and I am grateful for that. The struggle of growing up became more bearable when I found this outlet for my thoughts I did not know I needed before. This made me realize that the human mind is way more complex than I will ever be able to fathom, but through writing I am able to take tiny steps into a direction of understanding and accepting my innate concerns.

Poetry

To S.

By Marlene Bechtold

Today marks 5 years that you are gone
I wonder if we would still be friends or if we would have grown apart
We probably would have
But you would have graduated
You would have started a job you like
You would have met someone
And I wish I could see you doing that from far away
instead of standing in front of your grave on this day every year,
telling you the same stories over and over and feeling 17 again instead of 22
and realizing that we grew up without you.

25/01/18 – 5.23pm

By Marlene Bechtold

It is a shame
we are wasting our time
on money, business meetings
and traffic
while the world is slowly dying
and time is not real
success is just illusion
to make us believe
this world was made for us
to conquer.

Pandemic Journal

Essen, July 2020

By Melissa Knox-Raab

1. Five minutes of CNN Covid coverage makes me feel like running into the bathroom and following Sanjay Gupta's method: scrubbing the backs of my hands, between fingers, grabbing and twisting soapsuddy thumbs, and pushing the tap off with my elbow. I know I'm here, where the curve's flat as a pancake, but American statistics make me feel like the virus can vault through the TV screen and get me.

2. Right now, I'm thinking of a John Donne poem:

When my grave is broke ope again

Some second guest to entertain . . .

New York used refrigerated trucks. In Donne's day, they just dug up a grave and dumped in another customer.

3. When Miranda Bailey, chief of surgery at Gray-Sloan Memorial Hospital on Grey's Anatomy gives a patient a dangerous bug, the fault lies in the cheaper brand of latex gloves the hospital had ordered in a misguided effort to save money.
4. The governor of Florida now claims there's plenty of PPE around. Meanwhile, medical professionals end up, at best, like Miranda Bailey: with a shrink who prescribes anti-anxiety pills.
5. In a stuffy office today—windows were closed—I asked the lawyers to wear masks. I was wearing a mask. One of them pulled her mask off her chin and covered up, all the while complaining, “it's really hard to understand you when you're wearing a mask.”

The other— hawk-nosed, shock of white hair flopping intentionally—stared right through me. Maskless, he held forth like a winner at Toastmaster’s International throwing in a few words about the new alliance with the Rotary Club. He spoke for forty-five minutes.

6. Richard Quest, his signature rasp still intact, described the symptoms he keeps asking his doctors about. The breathlessness. The weakness. The pain. Now that he’s been cured for weeks, when will these symptoms stop coming and going? “We don’t know, Richard,” say his doctors.

7. When I went to the gym yesterday, the nice bearded trainer, the one who doesn’t follow the rules, let me in a whole twelve minutes early. There were only three people in the gym, whose capacity, when we all stick to designated areas on the floor marked with yellow tape, is seven. When the two people who enforce the rules are around— “No, you can’t go in for another four and a half minutes!”—everyone’s stuck breathing on each other in a grubby foyer right in front of the (spacious, windows-wide-open) gym.

8. The form I was trying to get the lawyers to help with is, according to them, “really complicated.” This is Germany.

9. The nice lady behind me in the Edeka line inquired where I’d gotten my plastic face shield. Turning to answer, I forgot about social distancing. Good thing that thin, impregnable plastic stood between me and a friendly conversation.