



## ARTS AND LITERATURE & NATURE (ALAN)

The ALAN section presents a diverse group of contributors and genres in this issue. John McLennan, a Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist, discusses “Apache,” a movie in the Spanish language about the life of Carlos Tevez, an Argentine soccer player. McLennan weighs in on whether there is a tendency towards oversimplification of the social experiences of protagonists. Natalie Rosa, a psychiatry resident, in her review, “Maintenance Phase: Deconstructing Diet Culture,” provides insight into a podcast series in which the podcasters challenge various long-held beliefs and concepts on weight and diet culture.

Finally, a psychology student, Tatiana Samuels, presents an overview of the book “The Perks of Being a Wallflower.” Samuels takes the reader on a journey of discovery: things are not always as they seem, and mental health, both in outward expression and individual experiences, cannot be boxed into a simplistic singular narrative.

### “Apache: The Life of Carlos Tevez”, a Netflix Original

#### **Recommended by John D. McLennan**

My wife and I are always in search of decent movies set in Latin America. “Apache: The Life of Carlos Tevez” fit that bill. Netflix describes it as a “gritty” dramatization of the life of Carlos Tevez. Not being a follower of soccer (or rather fútbol), I had not previously heard of him, but now understand him to be quite an accomplished footballer. He grew up in a tough neighbourhood in Argentina, the community of “Ejército de Los Andes” (aka “Fuerte Apache”), a central focus of this eight-part series. I was particularly taken with the movie’s ability to weave together aspects of the complex social contexts in which Carlos was imbedded, including his immediate family, his extended family, the challenging community in which he grew up, as well as the developmental levels of soccer in Argentina through which he and his family had to navigate. I was impressed by the terrific acting by the many characters in the series. Despite a central focus on Carlos, we get enough of a glimpse into the lives of several others in Fuerte Apache to consider

how their social contexts have shaped their lives. I do not know the accuracy of the dramatizations, and I wondered if a few of the many graphic scenes of violence in the latter episodes may have been replaced with more of the rich family interactions captured in earlier episodes. The day-to-day moments captured between some of the more extreme events, gave the series a sense of authenticity that is less often seen in some of the American films of the same genre which tend to present more black and white scenarios, at times almost preachy in their storyline, as to how the underdog overcomes great obstacles, with good and evil clearly demarcated. Apache far exceeds those stereotypic presentations, and I would highly recommend it. Check out the trailer at: <https://www.netflix.com/ca/title/81106517>

John D. McLennan is a child psychiatrist based in Calgary and married to a fluent Spanish speaker.

### **Maintenance Phase: Deconstructing Diet Culture**

#### **Recommended by Dr. Natalie Raso**

“Maintenance Phase” is an independent podcast that critically analyzes diet culture, the burgeoning wellness industry, and much of what we have been taught about the relationship between weight and health.

Hosts Aubrey Gordon and Michael Hobbes, writer, and journalist, respectively, take a methodological and epidemiological approach to critically examining topics that have shaped the dominant medical and cultural perspectives about nutrition, diet, and health. Using primary sources as a starting point, Hobbes and Gordon tackle assumptions that guide weight-related medical advice.

For example, they review the history of the body-mass-index (BMI), tracing how its origins as a means of establishing population norms of typical weights in the 1800s led to its current use as an index of “ideal” weight. In another episode they take on the surprisingly complex relationship between caloric intake and weight loss, by presenting leading critiques of the “calories in, calories out” paradigm (such

as the 2022 work of Hall et al. in *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* [1], among others). This type of nutritional and diet knowledge is often presented as fact within medicine, and it has been both unsettling and illuminating to understand how little evidence underpins the advice that physicians are trained to repeat.

A main theme of the show is unpacking how marketing has shaped both cultural and medical perceptions of weight and health. They propose that much of the current “wellness” movement is a repackaged version of what corporations have previously sold as “diets.” Framing wellness as an “uncontroversial way to talk about health” (Gordon) has in many ways perpetuated the same dangerous sentiments that continue to encourage disordered eating and disturbed body image among young people.

The show explores how the hypothesis of the negative linear relationship between obesity and health (newsflash, not necessarily true!) has driven the cultural construct of “the obesity epidemic.” This has led to the inadvertent sequelae of anti-fat bias in nearly every aspect of society including medicine, and to the development of school and public health curricula that may perpetuate the kind of habits that too often lead to disordered eating.

Gordon and Hobbes frequently return to the impacts of diet culture on mental health, drawing on Gordon’s skilful and balanced knowledge of medicine, the healthcare system and psychiatry, often in context of her lived experiences of fat-phobia. The hosts maintain an intersectional lens to their analyses, paying close attention to how anti-fat bias interacts with race, queerness, gender and ability to further widen social disparities. They are also fantastic podcast hosts, and you will enjoy moments of humour and levity while you take it all in.

You can listen to their (non-sponsored, commercial-free) podcast through your preferred streaming platform, or at <https://www.maintenancephase.com/>.

Hall KD, Farooqi IS, Friedman JM, Klein S, Loos RJ, Mangelndorf DJ, et al. The energy balance model of obesity: Beyond calories in, calories out. *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*. 2022;115(5):1243–54.

Dr. Natalie Raso is a PGY6 Child & Adolescent Psychiatry Subspecialty Resident at McMaster University.

## The Perks of Being a Wallflower

### **Recommended by Tatiana Helena Samuel**

“The Perks of Being a Wallflower”, a book written by Stephen Chbosky, and now a major motion picture, depicts all the ups and downs of a teenage boy’s life. Throughout the novel, we read the letters that Charlie, the main character, pens to a friend whom we do not know the identity, but he seems to have a good relationship with. While reading the many detailed letters, we get the sense that Charlie has some mental health issues, yet it is not clear if that is the case until we arrive to the final pages of the book. Several debates have been made across the years around Charlie’s condition because the character appears to portray aspects of several different mental health disorders. Many readers of the book think that the character may have autism which I considered at first given early onset of difficulties, however, after reading the book a second time I noticed that the character could be suffering from other diagnoses such as PTSD or depression due to certain events that has happened in the young man’s life. None the less, this book is and forever will be one of my favourites thanks to the way the author wrote Charlie’s story. Charlie still had a life and comrades, and he was still able to be happy even with his mental health struggles which is a true portrayal of people’s psychological stability that we don’t see enough in the media.

Tatiana Helena Samuel is a 2<sup>nd</sup> year psychology student at the Université de Moncton