



THE BUSINESS ROMANTIC SOCIETY PRESENTS

The Business Romantic Library

SYLVAIN CHAVEAU

The Black Book of Capitalism



Sylvain Chaveau is a French electronic music artist, and this 2000 work of his celebrates noir-esque meditations that draw from eclectic styles. The album's title is inspired by *Le Livre noir du capitalisme* (*The Black Book of Capitalism*), a book that was published in France in 1998 in reaction to *The Black Book of Communism* (1997) and featured critical essays on capitalism from various writers. Is it the perfect sound track for reflection on your professional life and on the capitalist system as a whole.

JONI MITCHELL

A Case of You



With its enigmatic lyrics and lofty chords, this is perhaps the greatest love song ever written. "A Case of You" is pragmatic, bittersweet, even sarcastic, but still full of longing. The cover version by U.K. electroswoner James Blake is not bad either.

THE BLACK DOG

Music for Real Airports



Referencing Brian Eno's legendary *Music for Airports* from 1978, a classic of the ambient music genre, British electronica trio Black Dog captures the sorrows of the businessman as a frequent flier with this 2010 album. It is the sound track for off-and on-hours during airport layovers, the quintessential physical and emotional no-man's-land. Tracks range from "Terminal EMA," "DISinformation Desk," "Passport Control," "Wait Behind This Line," to "Empty Seat Calculations," "Strip Light Hate," "Future Delay Thinking," "Lounge," "Delay 9," to "Sleep Deprivation 1" and "Sleep Deprivation 2," "He Knows," to, finally, "Business Car Park 9."

ARNOLD SCHOENBERG

Transfigured Night



Inspired by the poem of the same name by modernist German poet Richard Dehmel, this string sextet describes the dark secret a woman shares with her lover during a nightly walk: she carries the child of another man. Schoenberg's composition stretches the boundaries of late romanticism and transgresses into chromatic territory. The work was controversial not only because of some sexually explicit lyrics, but also because it featured a "nonexistent," unclassified chord, the mysterious "inverted ninth chord." Schoenberg commented: "And thus [the work] cannot be performed since one cannot perform that which does not exist."

F. SCOTT FITZGERALD

The Great Gatsby



Fitzgerald's classic is a character study of a man who accumulates material wealth and social influence in a quest to find the love of his life. The novel pinpoints the allure and perils of success, the power of illusion, and the danger of losing oneself. Gatsby's enterprise is romance, and his means are those of a con artist. In the end, he fails, but his dream remains "incorruptible."

JULIO CORTÁZAR

*Manuscrito hallado
en un bolsillo*



This story by the legendary Argentinian writer is the mother of all "missed connection" stories. It recounts the fate of a man possessed by the memory of a woman he once spotted on a train. He spends the rest of his life chasing after her, haunted by a feeling of perpetual yearning.

LESZEK KOLAKOWSKI

In Praise of Inconsistency



In this 1992 essay, Polish philosopher Leszek Kolakowski heralds inconsistency as a basic human right and insists on the essentially unquantifiable nature of human beings. In fact, he believes that inconsistency is vital to the moral integrity of societies: "Total consistency is tantamount in practice to fanaticism, while inconsistency is the source of tolerance." Thus, he concludes: "Humanity has survived only thanks to inconsistency."

LESLIE JAMISON

Defense of Saccharin(e)



Leslie Jamison's essay dissects sentimentality as our "sweetest fear," in fact her own fear of sentimentality—"the luxury of an emotion without paying for it" (Oscar Wilde)—as the lurking revelation that life without "saccharine" might not be as sweet as desired. She reveals the banality of kitsch as the horror of our own banality, our fear that we are not at all distinct from one another but rather feel the same universal feelings, like Pavlov's dogs. And yet, examining the world of artificial sweeteners, "honeymoons," lattes with "too much cream," affectionate names such as "sweetie" and "honey," trashy romances and other tearjerkers, Jamison insists on the "faith that there is something profound in the single note of honey itself."

HERMAN MELVILLE

Moby-Dick



The monomaniacal Captain Ahab becomes entirely absorbed by a single mission: the hunt for Moby-Dick, the "big white whale," to take revenge for the leg it once took from him. Abandoning all reason, Ahab slowly lets go of his humanity, the ability to relate to mankind and empathize with fellow beings. This Great American Novel depicts the dark side of the romantic, the danger of losing oneself in a quest to capture the transcendent: "It is not down on any map; true places never are."

JONATHAN FRANZEN

*Commencement Speech, Kenyon
College, 2011*



Franzen talks about the alienation of our selves in a time when technology makes everything and everybody familiar to us. He criticizes the "techno-consumerist world" the graduates would be inheriting and wants us to commit to commitment, to engage in the messiness of loving, not just liking. He knows all too well what it means to have skin in the game: "I had to find out the hard way what a messy business commitment is. The first thing we jettisoned was theory. My soon-to-be wife once memorably remarked after an unhappy scene in bed, 'You can't deconstruct and undress at the same time.'"

ECLIPSE

(directed by Michelangelo Antonioni)



Set against the backdrop of the industrialist Rome of 1962, this seminal film by Italian director Michelangelo Antonioni is a poemlike meditation on the “modern malaise”: the complications of finding love in the age of a rationalized and mechanized market society. It tells the story of a young woman and her affair with a stockbroker who is more fixated on material status than romantic pleasures. Their relationship ends one day, quietly, when neither of them shows up to a date.

LOST IN TRANSLATION

(directed by Sofia Coppola)



Sofia Coppola’s film translates Antonioni’s themes of alienation and disconnection to the information age. A washed-up actor meets a young woman at the Park Hyatt hotel in Tokyo, and the two begin a relationship that is romantic without ever becoming physical. They are lost in translation, literally and metaphorically; in a hectic, über-consumerist society, this very limbo is the only space remaining for true emotions. As in every good love story, the end remains open: when the two “lovers” part ways, he whispers something into her ear that is eclipsed by the noise of urban Tokyo. To date, amid much speculation, even the best lip readers have not been able to detect what he told her.

ROMAN HOLIDAY

(directed by William Wyler)



This 1953 film is the mother of all romantic comedies and a congenial riff on almost all of the Rules of Enchantment. A foreign correspondent (Gregory Peck) meets an incognito princess (Audrey Hepburn) who has run away from the golden cage of her royal life. He spends a cheerful day with her in Rome, hoping to sell the biggest tabloid story of his life. Inevitably, they fall in love, and he eventually gives up on his plan, forgoing money for romance (and ultimately unfulfillment). The final scene, a press conference at the Palazzo Colonna, is unexpected and subtle: “Rome, by all means, Rome,” the princess whispers in violation of diplomatic protocol when she’s asked about her favorite city on this trip. The movie denies both the couple and the viewers a fairy-tale happy ending—and the correspondent walks slowly out of the palazzo, all alone.

THE LAST TYCOON

(directed by Elia Kazan)



Elia Kazan’s 1976 movie, based on an unfinished novel by F. Scott Fitzgerald inspired by the life of legendary Hollywood producer Irving Thalberg, recounts the fall and rise of a larger-than-life movie mogul (Robert De Niro). His power erodes when he, the man in total control, falls in love with a young woman. The movie includes the famous scene in which De Niro schools a budding screenwriter with a theatrical background about “making pictures” by enacting a movie scene in his office. At the end, he walks alone into a dark and quiet production hall, like Gregory Peck walked out of the palazzo in *Roman Holiday*.

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