

# THE JOURNAL OF THE **CORE CURRICULUM**



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# THE JOURNAL OF THE CORE CURRICULUM

THE ANNUAL LITERARY JOURNAL  
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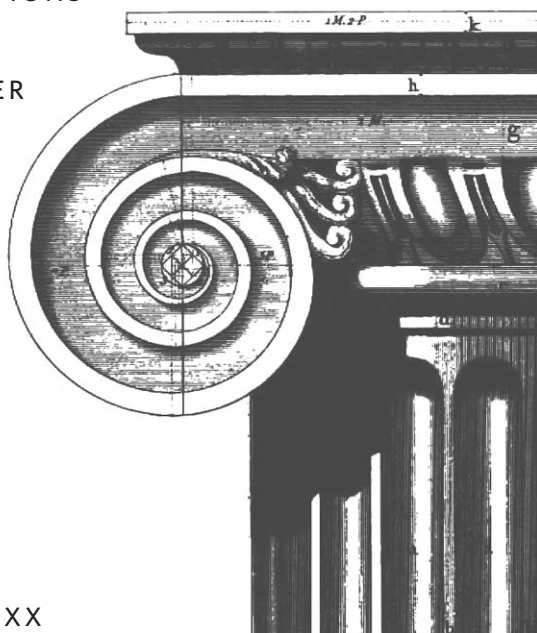
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On the cover: "Saint John" by Odilon Redon, charcoal over pastel (1892)

The editors wish to dedicate this issue  
of the Core Journal to professors

John Finnerty  
Sassan Tabatabai  
Karen Warkentin  
and James Wood

in acknowledgment & gratitude for their years  
of passionate teaching in the Core.

\*

I listened, motionless and still;  
And, as I mounted up the hill,  
The music in my heart I bore,  
Long after it was heard no more.

from "*The Solitary Reaper*" by *William Wordsworth*

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# Editor's Note

Perhaps the most compelling strength of the Core Curriculum is its ability to show students the enduring harmony between the past and present, the continued relevance of great texts throughout the ages. The Core endeavors to emphasize the power of one person's thoughts or actions in one particular moment in time, and in this, it endows its students with extensive knowledge of the human experience. People live, laugh, love, lose, lament, and long in every age; and while the contextual aspects of their activities are undoubtedly significant, the universality of feeling that they invoke transcends any perspective, framework, or background.

Dante, Machiavelli, Montaigne: all were writers whose historical and cultural contexts—political and religious turmoil, exile, and the era of identity, respectively—significantly shaped their works. The Core Curriculum is one which utilizes such great texts as bases or tools for delving into the present: despite context, the works of Core ultimately serve to surpass the boundaries of a lifetime, to span the border between life and death through their permanence. Think also of the works within this issue as statements made by people in specific contexts. In their sharing, the works may serve the same purpose as any of the great works that Core examines. The Core Curriculum instills in its students a will to create, to surpass such boundaries; it ultimately “crown[s] and miter[s]” them over themselves.

This twentieth volume of *The Journal of the Core Curriculum* would not have been possible without the support of the staff and faculty. I am grateful particularly to our advisor, Prof. Tabatabai, for providing us with the opportunity and constant aid. Thank you also to Zachary Bos, to whom we editors are indebted for his patience, commitment, and general guidance. I offer as well my profuse thanks to my fellow editors, whose hard work and dedication I admire and appreciate. Their company made the work behind the publication of this issue both enjoyable and tremendously gratifying.

—Jen Zimmerman  
Editor, Spring 2011





"Le Morne" Mountain, Mauritius, by Guyomar Pillai

# Instructions on How to Build a Universe

DANIEL HUDON

**W**e're not talking about building some quaint little microcosm. We're talking about building a top-of-the-line big-ass universe—with exploding stars, black holes, and things that go bump in the night. If you're thinking that it's been done, or that one universe is enough, think again. At the moment, a mysterious force called dark energy is tearing the universe apart, and in as little as ten billion years there might be nothing left but black holes. Nothing to see in any direction in the sky at night!

While it's possible that black holes could be portals into other hitherto unknown universes, Stephen Hawking isn't betting on it, and you shouldn't either. So, with the fate of our universe in jeopardy and you with time and energy to spare, there's no time like the present to begin building a new universe.

Consider first the type of universe you'd like to build. Be decisive. Don't spend half a lifetime thinking about whether you want a universe of nothing but purple daisies or iridescent soap bubbles—just build one that works. Stick to the obvious: your main choices are finite and infinite.

If your goal is to construct an infinite universe before you die, you probably should have started by now. The time frame for building such a behemoth could very well be eternal, so you've really got your work cut out for yourself. If you're not yet dissuaded, be sure to will these instructions to your progeny (and their progeny) who can continue your legacy. Nobody

wants to see a half-built universe.

Building a finite universe, on the other hand, should not be seen as a project for people who can't handle infinity. A finite universe is perfectly respectable, and its successful completion would make any artist proud. You can hold your head up. One thing to be aware of, however, is that like massive dead stars, civilizations and houses of cards, finite universes tend to collapse. This can be avoided in two ways: (i) by making it infinite (see above) or (ii) by making it expand (see below).

Contrary to what you might think, the best way to create a finite universe is to begin with nothing. Creating something out of nothing—let alone an entire burbling universe—is not a matter to be trifled with, so tread carefully. Exploit the fact that in physics, empty space contains miniscule energy fluctuations that pop into and out of existence. If conditions are right, these can expand to cosmic proportions, ultimately creating galaxies, stars, and planets with purple daisies. Unfortunately, the right conditions might depend on using string theory, the latest eleven-dimensional “theory of everything” which, it's safe to say, absolutely no one understands. Just create a positive, nurturing environment and hope for the best.

You can generate some empty space by forcing all the air out of a balloon and then stretching the balloon, making sure that no air molecules sneak back in. No one knows how wide the balloon needs to be stretched for energy fluctuations in the empty space inside to do their thing. Pretend you're Christo, stretch it across the country and see what happens. If the space inside the balloon begins expanding, stand clear because there's a reason astronomers called the Big Bang big. If it doesn't expand, seed the inner surface of the balloon with yeast. Who knows? It could work. (According to string theory, you may also need to clear the space out of the space, so that you truly start with nothing. Good luck with that.)

Note that an expanding universe in the middle of the country could very well be a threat to civilization as we know it, so investigate channeling it into other dimensions until you're ready to show it off. Ask a string theorist if you need help, they are always itching to feel useful.

An expanding universe should be able to take care of itself, but you have a couple of things to watch out for. If it expands too fast, matter—forming

out of the energy fluctuations—won't have time to clump and you'll never evolve stars, planets, plants or people to water them. Similarly, if it expands too slowly, then gravity will gain the upper hand and re-collapse your universe before you reach your next birthday. Why our universe exists in the middle of these extremes is a big-ass cosmic mystery whose solution is best left to the experts. Whatever you do, aim for a cosmic expansion rate, also known as the Hubble constant, in the Goldilocks range—you can fine tune on the fly if necessary.

Make sure, too, that your universe has its own laws of physics. Keep them hidden so that any future scientists who evolve in your universe can have the joy of discovering them. Everybody loves a good mystery.

Finally, as it expands and cools, your universe should convert energy into matter and in no time you should have stars alighting out of the primordial gas. This is a good sign. Your universe is underway. Congratulations.

But before you go onto projects like building galaxies, say, or managing a hotel with an infinite number of rooms, factor some advertising into your budget so that people can actually see the wonders of your universe. If you just broadcast the existence of your newly invented universe to all and sundry, people will likely see you as a crackpot, so we don't recommend that. Instead, try the poetic approach, e. e. cummings-style. Whisper to your companion, "Listen, there's a hell of a good universe next door; let's go." Worry about where exactly "next door" is when the time comes.

You should also decide if you actually want anyone to know about your universe. There's a lot to be said for having your own secret universe. Those people you see on the bus smiling while listening to their headphones? They're probably smiling about their own secret universes too.



Windows near the sea, Mauritius, by Guyomar Pillai

# Gilgamesh and the Quest for Immortality

MEGAN ILNITZKI

In the great Mesopotamian epic *Gilgamesh*, the titular king and founder of the city of Uruk, witnesses the death of his closest companion, Enkidu, and becomes fearful of his own mortality. The anxiety over his own inevitable demise motivates Gilgamesh to embark upon a quest in search of immortality that takes him to the farthest ends of the Earth. At the end of the epic, Gilgamesh journeys back to Uruk under the impression that he had failed in his quest, as he had not obtained physical immortality. But as King Gilgamesh approaches his beloved city, however, he sees Uruk from an entirely new perspective, and he realizes that the piece of himself that lies within the very brickwork and fortification of the city is his immortality. Gilgamesh's journey therefore ends successfully as he understands that the legacy of his city will transcend the mortal boundaries of life and death.

At the start of his quest, Gilgamesh is overcome with grief over Enkidu's death and is terrified at the thought of his own downfall. He decides that he will find Utnapishtim, who knows how to escape death, "the dangers of the journey notwithstanding" (IX: 48). Gilgamesh's lack of concern for the perils before him on the journey illustrates the true depth of his fear, which seems to supersede his logical human reasoning: the thing he fears more than any obstacle in life is death itself. Gilgamesh proceeds, frightened yet resolute, as he reaches the mountain of Mashu. A set of Twin Dragon Scorpion Beings stand guard over the mountain, and they warn Gilgamesh of the dangers of the path through Mashu. The Twin Dragon Scorpion Beings tell the king

that no man is able to survive passing through the twelve leagues of darkness. Although “his body seized in terror,” Gilgamesh retorts, “This is the way that Gilgamesh must go, weeping and fearful, struggling to keep breathing, whether in heart or cold, companionless” (IX: 50-51). Despite the natural, physical response of his mortal senses, Gilgamesh remains determined to cross the perilous path in order to escape death. He advances through the leagues of darkness, “companionless, weeping and fearful,” and he continues his journey through the twelve separate leagues in much the same state (IX: 52).

Gilgamesh finally emerges from the darkness into the lush gardens blossoming with color and riches that “had yielded for the delight and pleasure of kings” (IX: 53). Gilgamesh ignores the luscious treasures, too blinded by his lofty quest for immortality to stop and enjoy the Eden-like garden. He continues on his journey, ignorant of the marvels that he is passing, and he focuses on the sea. On the shore of the ocean, Gilgamesh encounters Siduri, a woman who serves as the tavern keeper. When Gilgamesh explains the purpose of his quest to her, she replies, “The life of a man is short. Only the gods can live forever.” She tries to persuade Gilgamesh to indulge in dancing and drink (X: 57). Siduri represents all of the temptations that life offers, and she undoubtedly encourages the indulgence in those temptations because life is short. Gilgamesh, however, is still too consumed by his burning desire to become immortal; thus, he abstains from anything she offers and proceeds on his journey across the sea of death.

Gilgamesh crosses the waters of death with Urshànabi, and on the opposite shore, he meets an old man, who happens to be the disguised Utnapishtim. Utnapishtim offers him words of wisdom: “Time after time the river has risen and flooded. The insect leaves the cocoon to live but a minute.” He adds that the gods “established that there is life and death. The day of death is set, though not made known” (X: 64). Utnapishtim’s words to Gilgamesh emphasize the cyclical nature of time and life: everything that is born eventually dies, and the moment of death remains a mystery to all living things. Initially, Gilgamesh does not see the knowledge in these words; he is still too focused on trying to achieve immortality. Sensing this, Utnapishtim reveals himself, and he tells Gilgamesh the story of the flood and his granting

of eternal life.

Swayed by his wife, who recognizes the hard journey that Gilgamesh has undergone, Utnapishtim discloses a secret about a plant that can return youth to old men, and Gilgamesh returns on his way home to Uruk, satisfied that he has something to show for his quest. Before he arrives at Uruk, a serpent steals the plant. Gilgamesh laments, “What I found was a sign telling me to abandon the journey and what it was I sought for” (XI: 81). Gilgamesh finally accepts his mortality and abandons his quest. As Gilgamesh approaches Uruk, he says, “Study the brickwork, study the fortification; climb the great ancient staircase to the terrace; study how its made; from the terrace see the planted and fallow fields, the ponds and orchards” as a means to “measure Uruk, the city of Gilgamesh” (XI: 81-82). Thus the journey comes full circle, as the same passage that the unnamed narrator said in the beginning of the epic is repeated at the end. When he looks upon the greatness of his city, Gilgamesh comes to terms with his mortality, but he also realizes that his immortality lies in the very foundation of the city he created. He understands that his beautiful city of Uruk is a reflection of himself, and he realizes that immortality lies not within the preservation of his physical body, but within the legacy of his city.

\*

References to the text throughout this essay are to *Gilgamesh: A New Rendering in English Verse* by David Ferry (New York: FSG, 1992)



CHRISTINE GAMBLE

# On Anachronism

For you, O Ages Past, O History,  
I mourn, and yearn, and reach back how I may.  
To live and illumine your mystery—  
For that I would disown the modern day.

By that which yet endures, I know your call;  
See traces of your reach for me as well.  
Your voice, obscured by Time's imposing wall,  
Sounds as the distant echo of a bell.

And yet, to you, the world that was before,  
In reaching back I am in vain employed.  
In reaching forth to me you are no more,  
For by your mere approach you were destroyed.

By Time cleaved both together and apart—  
How cruel to know with mind, but not with heart.



"Down the Line" by Neel Dhanesha, 2010

# “I Can Feel the City Breathing”

*Looking at Urban Poetry Through a Hip-Hop Lens*

JAMES SHAPIRO

The lyrics of contemporary hip-hop performance can be as beautiful as traditional written poetry. A careful reading of Blake’s “London” and Wordsworth’s “Composed upon Westminster Bridge” reveals thematic parallels to the song “Respiration” by Mos Def, Talib Kweli, and Common. The comparison of these three works demonstrates the fact that great art can be produced through any medium. While varying in tone and mood, each is a reflection on life in the city; the three poetic works represent the beauty, the struggle, and the pain of urban existence. An examination of other urban poems from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries shows that in many ways, “Respiration” continues poetic traditions that began with the English Romantics, developed through the Victorian Era, and surfaced in America through Whitman and other poets. Hip-hop is, in some manner, the modern day reincarnation of the street ballads and “gallows literature” of late Victorian England. Much like hip-hop, this Victorian “gallows literature” was created by the lower class. It dealt with crime, murder, and the struggles of the poor in the city. For such reasons, it was innovative and original, yet dismissed, derided, and not recognized as having any artistic merit. Ellen L. O’Brien discusses the tone of Victorian poetry in *Crime in Verse: the Poetics of Murder in the Victorian Era*.

Like their working-class authors and audiences, these slum-dwelling ballads are demoralized and disempowered, criminalized and ghettoized, silenced and suppressed. Marked by the class hierarchies of urban geography, they appear tainted by the vulgar technologies of mass production. In them, the voices of the murderous poor flowed forth in badly composed songs, creating a flood of cheap commodities, defying respectable mores, and threatening public safety. [29]

In this passage, O'Brien could easily be describing present-day rappers rather than Victorian street bards. Due to class prejudice—and racism in the case of hip-hop artists—both groups are almost categorically disregarded as artists. O'Brien describes the ways in which the street ballads were, in fact, artistically and sociologically important:

...these songs of crime developed a remarkably public poetics, which, merging singsong rhythms, bloody excess, and sentimental rhetoric with case details and topical reference, produced unexpectedly complex commentaries on the meanings of murderous transgression and capital punishment. [40]

Like hip-hop, the street ballads were a representation of the grim realities of the lower-class urban existence. In many ways the spiritual successor of English street ballads, quality hip-hop has transcended the level of artistic achievement that they attained and, in that regard, has more in common with the Romantics and other classic poetry.

Poetry dealing with the city is defined in large part by two important conceptual distinctions: the distinction between man and nature and the distinction between the city and nature. Both of these are represented in “Respiration.” John H. Johnston describes the rise of these ideas during the Romantic period in *The Poet and the City*:

The rise of the new subjective attitude toward nature (foreshadowed by Cowper) had drastically altered the relationship between man and nature in the eighteenth century, wherein nature was viewed as an objectively separate entity. The subject of the Romantic nature poem (“Tintern Abbey,”

for instance) is not so much nature itself as the emotional or spiritual relationship between man and nature, or between man and society. In this relationship the poet's inner experience of beauty or harmony is the dynamizing principle: the external, prosaic, themeless world of city and factory—certainly devoid of beauty and harmony—cannot generate poetic experience unless this world operates as a special factor in the formation of the poet's inner life or exists simply as a point of negative reference with respect to the poet's much more important experience of nature. [87]

In the era that Johnston discusses, the city as it is thought of in a contemporary context was a relatively new development. Wordsworth, Blake, Cowper and others had experienced life before the true onset of urbanization and industrial revolution, whereas modern poets like Mos Def, Kweli, or Amy Lowell have only known the fully urbanized world into which they were born. Therefore, the idea that Johnston discusses at the end of the above passage is turned on its head: the city is the familiar, “dynamizing principle,” and nature instead assumes the role of an external point of reference. Instead of fearing the future threat that the city poses to nature, modern urban poetry often laments the loss of nature that the city has already caused. In other words, the poets of the nineteenth century tended to view the city from an outsider's perspective, while more modern poets tend to discuss it from the inside looking out. A notable exception is William Blake, whose stunningly bleak “London” was written from the perspective of a hardened urban denizen.

Along with the threat to nature, the city poses dangers to both spirituality and morality. The city is often associated with depravity and impiety, and Blake's “London” communicates this association powerfully. Michael O'Neill and Charles Mahoney, editors of *Romantic Poetry: An Annotated Anthology*, write that “London’ detects in the wrongs it apprehends evidence both of wasted potential and of a system of interlocking and inhumane institutions” (37). This idea is also seen in “Respiration,” as Mos Def and Kweli assert the existence of a unique moral code, entirely opposed to conventional standards, to fit the kill-or-be-killed environment of the city.

*I Can Feel the City Breathing:  
Personification of the Urban Environment*

Ascribing human traits and features to the city is a common technique in poetry dealing with the urban setting. This reflects the strong connection that people often feel to the city in which they live. The city can seem to take on a personality of its own, to become a living and breathing entity. To some, the city is a caring, loving friend, and to others, a cold and vicious enemy.

Personification is the main motif present in “Respiration.” The title itself is a reference to the words spoken by Mos Def in the refrain: “I can’t take it, y’all—I can feel the city breathin’ / chest heavin’, against the flesh of the evening...sighed before it died like the last train leavin’.” In this case, as in all uses of personification, the technique creates a close, personal relationship with the city, for better or for worse.

Personification is also a major element of Wordsworth’s “Composed upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802.” Wordsworth’s tone, however, is quite different from those of both Mos Def and William Blake. While “Respiration” and “London” are both melancholy reflections on urban alienation and plight, “Composed upon Westminster Bridge” seems to be an ode to the glorious splendor and beauty of London. Wordsworth personifies not only the city but the river running through it and the sun overlooking it, similar to the way that Mos Def personifies the moon in “Respiration.” This seems to suggest that nature and the city are one and the same, or perhaps that the latter is merely an extension of the former. This stands in stark contrast to the prevailing sentiment of the period and to the perspective presented in “Respiration,” which seems to create a clear dichotomy between nature and the distinctly unnatural cityscape. As William Cowper writes in “The Task,” “God made the country, and man made the town.” Though the city lives and breathes, it is given those personifying qualities in “Respiration” more to represent the people living in it and to be used as a metaphor for its decaying, dying state. Mos Def and Kweli’s New York City doesn’t have the “mighty heart” that Wordsworth ascribes to London; rather, the heart is

weak and failing. The city is not glorious or splendid but cold and alienating. Mos Def and Kweli feel that urban civilization as it is now known may be coming to an end. The aforementioned line from the refrain suggests this idea, as does the final line of Kweli's verse, in which he refers to New York as the "Roman Empire State." In this line, Kweli implies that New York will fall just as the once-glorious Roman Empire did.

There may exist a double meaning in Wordsworth's "Composed upon Westminster Bridge"—an ulterior motive for his use of personification and hyperbole beyond the description of the city's beauty. Because he is discussing London in the early morning, before the industrial pendulums of the city have been set in motion, there is a level of irony in describing its tranquility, as it will be noisy and bustling in a mere matter of hours. The air will no longer be "smokeless" or "bright and glimmering." The emphasis that Wordsworth puts on the stillness and tranquility of the city in the morning is a veiled commentary on the encroachment of the Industrial Revolution, which was turning London into a smog-filled and overcrowded industrial metropolis. It is conceivable that Wordsworth did intend this subliminal meaning on some level. The use of hyperbole is excessive, highlighting the fact that this moment of calm and beauty is extremely rare in the city: "Earth has not any thing to show more fair... Never did the sun more beautifully steep / Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm deep!" *Romantic Poetry: An Annotated Anthology* includes a journal entry from Wordsworth's wife, Dorothy, that is believed to describe the scene about which Wordsworth wrote the poem to illustrate this point:

'The city, St. Paul's, with the river and a multitude of little boats, made a most beautiful sight as we crossed Westminster Bridge. The houses were not overhung by their cloud of smoke and they were spread out endlessly, yet the sun shone so brightly, with such a pure sight, that there was even something like the purity of one of Nature's own great spectacles.' As this entry suggests, the poem depends upon contrasts and commingling – between the civic scene at dawn, caught at an uncharacteristic moment of 'calm' (1.11), and the beauty associated with the natural world bathed in the sun's 'first splendor' (1.10). The poem does not just describe; its final

exclamations record the impact of the sight on the poet's imagination, which conceives of the houses as 'asleep' (1.13) and brings the dead metaphor of London as the heart of the country to startling life. [161]

While Wordsworth gives London the life and beauty of nature, he is very conscious—as is Dorothy in her journal entry—of the fact that this is a rare and fleeting moment, and thus he feels lucky to have seen it and is compelled to capture it through verse.

“Respiration” is also very reminiscent of a more recent poem, “New York at Night,” by early twentieth century American poet Amy Lowell. Lowell, like Mos Def and Kweli, creates a clear division between the natural world and the city that man has maimed nature to create:

A near horizon whose sharp jags  
Cut brutally into a sky  
Of leaden heaviness, and crags  
Of houses lift their masonry  
Ugly and foul, and chimneys lie...

Lowell forcefully expresses her disdain for the cityscape and its imposition on nature. She finds that the city robs nature of its beauty. It is possible that the sky represents spirituality, as it clearly does in “Respiration,” which would mean that the city also harms the spiritual realm by replacing that which God or a higher power has created. As Mos Def does in “Respiration,” Lowell gives life to the city in “New York at Night” by ascribing to it the human trait of breathing:

... And snort, outlined against the gray  
Of lowhung cloud. I hear the sigh  
The goaded city gives, not day  
Nor night can ease her heart, her anguished labours stay.  
Below, straight streets, monotonous,  
From north and south, from east and west,  
Stretch glittering; and luminous



New York City sighs in distress and struggles to breathe in both “New York at Night” and “Respiration.” (It is very possible that Mos Def and Kweli were influenced by the Amy Lowell poem. The duo is obviously literate; the song “Thieves in the Night,” which follows “Respiration” on the Black Star album, has an interpolation of a Toni Morrison passage from *The Bluest Eye* as its chorus.) It is quite clear from Lowell’s choice of words—“joyless,” “monotonous,” “anguished”—that she seeks to paint a dark, bleak picture of life in the city. She describes a city weighed down by the hectic activity within; this weight is not even lifted when night falls. The intent of the personification of the city in this poem is to be to invoke the reader’s sympathy, as it is easier for one to feel sympathy for something if it is given human qualities.

### *Urban Plight: Destitution and Despair in the City*

The city has always been home to the poorest of the poor. The ghettos and tenements of urban centers are, both historically and presently, the homes of the greatest concentrations of impoverished and oppressed people. Returning again to “London,” one can see that Blake captures the pain and suffering present in the city very powerfully. He hears the despair of “every cry of every man, / every infant’s cry of fear, / in every voice, in every ban.” Blake shows his bitter disillusionment with the city and with inequality throughout the poem. In *The London Muse*, William B. Thesling writes that in “Holy Thursday,”

The speaker sees little hope for the “land of poverty”—“bleak and bare” and plagued by “eternal inter.” Although the poet’s use of the surrealistic detail of the “cold and usurous hand” that hypocritically throws a few crumbs to the “Babes reduc’d to misery” effectively presents the problem, he offers few solutions to urban suffering.

Thesling says that Blake offers no solution to the problem of poverty because he cannot possibly see one and has a very bleak vision of the future.

Blake relates the horrid moral depravity that he sees in the city through the discussion of the Harlot and through his insinuation that the next generation of Londoners is already doomed just as the child of a diseased prostitute would be. The next generation will be born into strife and impurity, tainted from birth. This is an extremely dark outlook on the future.

The economic struggles that plague residents—mainly minorities—of the inner-city are strong themes of “Respiration.” One of the most compelling ways that Mos Def laments the inequality rampant in city life is by questioning the very morality of our society. He juxtaposes the lifestyles of white-collar Wall Street workers with common street criminals and hustlers, prompting us to wonder if either group is more virtuous than the other, or if both are just thieves under different labels:

We New York the narcotics, draped in metal and fiber optics  
Where mercenaries is paid to trade hot stock tips for profits  
Thirsty criminals pick pockets  
Hard knuckles on the second-hands of workin’ class watches  
Sky scrapers is colossus, the cost of livin’ is preposterous  
Stay alive, you play or die, no options  
No Batman and Robin, can’t tell between the cops and robbers  
They both partners, they all heartless, with no conscience

Mos Def’s commentary is more prescient than ever following the recent collapse of Wall Street, the Madoff scandal, and so forth, now that the extent of the dishonesty and thievery perpetrated by white-collar criminals is known. As Mos Def suggests, upper-class criminals are no better morally than pickpockets on the streets; they are only more educated. Then, in an intricate and complex metaphor, he refers to the blue-collar workers of the city as “hard knuckles on the second-hands of working watches.” The “hard knuckles” are those of the work-weary lower class, toughened by lives of hard labor. They are faceless masses, merely cogs in the huge industrial machine that powers the city. Admittedly, the word “industrial” is probably overused in this context, as modern day America actually has very little real industry left. Nonetheless, Mos Def’s commentary is rooted in the industrial tradition

of city life and is just as poignant in regards to the menial service jobs that poor urbanites work almost exclusively. These are just as necessary to the existence of the city as the industrial jobs of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He is highlighting the irony in that those people who are most essential to the city's survival are the ones who are most injured by society.

Mos Def's reference to Batman and Robin, which recalls the earlier reference to New York as "Gotham," indicts police corruption and expresses those doubts regarding the criminal justice system that are widely held in inner-city America. There is "no Batman and Robin," he says, indicating that there are no gallant fighters for justice in the real world: he says that he "can't tell between the cops and the robbers, / they both partners, they all heartless, with no conscience." He uses the word "colossus" to describe New York's skyscrapers as a metaphor for the "preposterously" high cost of living in the city, which implies that inner-city residents often have no choice but to enter into a life of crime just to survive:

My eagle talons stay sharpened, like city lights stay throbbin'  
 You either make a way or stay sobbin'  
 The shiny apple is bruised but sweet,  
 and if you choose to eat, you could lose your teeth  
 Many crews retreat, nightly news repeat  
 who got shot down or locked down  
 Spotlight the savages, [*gunshots in background*] NASDAQ averages  
 My narrative, rose to explain this existence  
 Amidst the harbor lights which remain in the distance

The first line of this section is an obvious yet brilliant reference to the "Big Apple" metaphor for New York City. For the poor and alienated, New York is a deadly paradox; as aforementioned, one must turn to crime to survive, yet the entrance into the criminal life is likely to lead to death or imprisonment. The overexposure of minority crime in the media is commented on in the next lines, and Mos Def also addresses the irony of violent acts that gain the perpetrator fame, denoting a cycle of encouragement, violence, and reward. An attempt to assassinate the president will land a person on the

cover of *Newsweek* or *Time*. The discussion of the stock market and accompanying inquiry into our society's moral standards are recalled, but this time stockbrokers are juxtaposed against murderers instead of thieves.

Talib Kweli brings back the themes of poverty, inequality, and injustice within the inner-city in full force. "Breathin' in deep city breaths, sittin' on shitty steps / We stoop to new lows, hell froze the night the city slept," he begins, toying with the "porch monkey" stereotype that is commonly associated with inner-city blacks. "The beast walk the beats," Kweli says, calling police evil. "Beast" is a term interchangeable with "devil," which is a moniker used for white people in Black Muslim ideology, a set of beliefs that has always had a strong influence on rap music. I am not sure to what degree, if any, Mos Def and Kweli actually follow the tenets of the Nation of Islam, but they are surely familiar with them, and in much of their music there is a decided expression of black empowerment.

Picking up on the deadly paradox that Mos Def discusses, Kweli asserts that there is an alternative set of morals and societal norms that exists in the inner-city: "It's a paradox we call reality, / so keepin' it real will make you a casualty of abnormal normality." What is horrifying and unimaginable in most of society—crime, violence, and inequality—is normal and routine in the inner-city. "Killers are born naturally like Mickey and Mallory," Kweli continues, referring to the Oliver Stone film *Natural Born Killers*, "not knowin' the ways will get you capped like an NBA salary." The immoral and unnatural ways of the inner-city breeds killers; a failure to understand the alternative moral code that exists within the city may lead to one's death.

### *God, Spirituality and Metropolis: Reconciling the City with a Higher Power*

The city can seem an utterly godless and soulless place. The city-dweller finds himself surrounded by machinery, towering structures, constant noise, smog, poverty and all the other elements that make up urban infrastructure.

He finds himself removed from nature and from any evidence of the divine. All that he sees is man-made creation. The disillusionment with faith that results from a disconnection with nature was a very real dilemma during the Industrial Revolution of the nineteenth century, as the city grew more crowded, polluted, and cold. Poets and authors alike struggled to find a place for spirituality in this new world. Henry David Thoreau fled the growing urbanity for a life in the wilderness, exploits which he detailed in the book *Walden*. Thoreau felt that the Industrial Revolution and urbanization were interfering with his ability to live spiritually and, ultimately, to be human. It seems almost laughable now to consider how much more developed and vast the urban sprawl of today's America is in comparison to the industrialization that Thoreau felt he needed to escape.

In the very first line of "Respiration," Mos Def acknowledges the presence of a spiritual realm, a cosmic order presiding over the city:

The new moon rode high in the crown of the metropolis  
 Shining, like 'who on top of this?'  
 People was tusslin', arguin' and bustlin'  
 Gangsters of Gotham hardcore hustlin'

Mos Def seems to render the concerns of the city-dwellers insignificant in comparison to the divine forces at work over their heads. His next few lines comment on the struggle to understand the world through the lens of the city. He seems to suggest that the realities of city life are difficult to verbalize, but rather that they are *felt* in a visceral sense.

I'm wrestlin' with words and ideas  
 My ears is picky, seekin what will transmit,  
 that scribes can apply to transcript (yo yo yo yo)  
 This ain't no time where the usual is suitable,  
 Tonight alive, let's describe the inscrutable

This section seems to be expressing a frustration with the absurdity and insanity of city life, which makes it difficult to describe in words. The "usual"

emotions and descriptors are not substantial enough to explain the unique condition of the metropolis (and perhaps Mos Def means this specifically in relation to his native New York City). He is attempting to “describe the inscrutable” and is conscious of the fact that he will not truly be able to capture the essence of the city in his verse. In perhaps the most powerful line of “Respiration,” Talib Kweli laments his own loss of faith, which seems to have been caused by what he has witnessed in the city:

“Look in the skies for God, what you see besides the smog, / Is broken dreams flying away on the wings of the obscene.” Mos Def poignantly illustrates the disillusionment with faith that comes from living the jaded inner-city existence. In an environment that is so inorganic and unnatural, the presence of a higher spiritual power seems unlikely and difficult to even imagine. He can only see smog in the sky from the industrial behemoth that man has imposed on a once peaceful landscape. The smog literally impedes his ability to see the sky, and it is also a metaphor for the corruption and perversion of nature brought on by city life, as it obscures his vision of the world. In his inability to see God or a spiritual order, Mos Def is reminded instead of the “broken dreams” of poor inner-city inhabitants who never really had a chance. This sentiment contrasts Mos Def’s earlier reference to a cosmic order visible in the night sky in the form of a “smiling” moon looking down on the metropolis. We see that the upward gaze into the sky, searching for spirituality and for peace of mind, is an important motif in the song. It also appears in the chorus:

So much on my mind that I can’t recline  
Blastin’ holes through the night ‘til she bled sunshine  
Breathe in, inhale vapors from bright stars that shine  
Breathe out, weed smoke retrace the skyline...

This section emphasizes the stresses of city life and discusses the ways in which they take a toll on the mental state of the city-dweller. Mos Def alludes to the prevalence of violence in the inner-city by saying that he spent sleepless nights “blastin’ holes through the night ‘til she bled sunshine.” The phrase “inhale vapors from bright stars that shine” is ironic, as in the city one

cannot see the stars at night but instead can only see the city lights that “stay throbbin’.” Once again, reference is made to gazing up at the sky, trying desperately and futilely to experience something spiritual, something natural, something outside of the oppressive existence of city life. Seeing the bright city lights instead of stars reminds Mos Def once more of the unnatural world in which he lives, and he becomes conscious of the “vapors” he breathes in from the polluted city air. Additionally, “vapors” refer to smoking marijuana, as the line that follows this reads: “Breathe out, weed smoke retrace the skyline.” The “bright stars that shine” could be the “cherries,” or burning ends, of marijuana cigarettes. By smoking marijuana, a natural substance, Mos Def hopes to mentally escape the city—to cast off its “mind-forg’d manacles”—if only for a short period of time and to allow his thoughts to explore the much sought after celestial realms.

Later, Kweli discusses the journalistic responsibility that rappers commonly feel they have to “report” on the plight of inner-city life, mainly because they feel that no one else will. Indeed, in the introduction to the Black Star album, Mos Def refers to himself and Kweli as “real-life documentarians.” “Some cats be emceein’ to illustrate what we be seein’,” says Kweli. “It’s hard to be a spiritual being when shit is shakin’ what you believe in.” This line communicates once again the absurdity and apparent contradiction of spirituality in the city.

In “London,” Blake takes on a similar tone regarding spirituality and religion. He seems to also suggest that spiritual concerns are absurd in the context of city life:

How the Chimney-sweeper’s cry  
Every blackning church appalls;  
And the hapless Soldier’s sigh  
Run in blood down Palace walls.

In the face of all the intense pain and suffering that Blake sees in London, he cannot imagine turning to the empty comforts of religion. The mere sight of a church “appalls” him. In the previous stanza, Blake refers to the “mind-forg’d manacles” that he feels life in the city imposes on him. He seems to

say that the city deranges people and makes them feel imprisoned. This is a spiritual and existential crisis reminiscent of the sleepless city nights that Mos Def describes, as he remains “wrestling with words and ideas,” trying desperately to grasp and explain the nature of his existence within the vast metropolis of New York City.

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Street artist, Dublin, Ireland, by Guyomar Pillai

SAM WILDMAN

## Souls

I keep three little yellow mechanical pencils in my backpack  
and two good pens I feel guilty uncapping.  
The whole box cost twelve dollars.  
One-hundred, seventy-two pages of drawings in two thin black notebooks;  
thin lines on cheap recycled paper, smudged and uncertain.  
Midnight-black thoughts crossing over themselves.  
The product of an imagination that flits from place to place:  
a goldfish with a jet engine.  
Schoolwork has no place in a brain of pictures.

In my backpack, I kept my soul—  
a slippery, indistinct creature,  
bastard child of squid and chameleon.  
Scrawled on a dog-eared page:  
“This is Sam’s Soul.”  
But on a windy winter day  
it flew out of an empty pocket  
and took flight over the sidewalk.  
Twisting through the air like a wounded paper airplane.

Was it collected by a thoughtful passer-by?  
Recycled?  
Nobody thought to return it to its owner.  
Maybe a piece of my soul  
lives in my backpack  
in those little black notebooks  
of cheap recycled paper.

# Civil Society and Political Participation:

*Thinking about Tocqueville in America Today*

MARGARITA DIAZ

In *Democracy in America*, Alexis de Tocqueville acutely observes the prevalence of civil associations in American society through his travels within and study of the United States in the early nineteenth century. As opposed to the conditions in Europe at the time, where one would have seen “some great lord” at “the head of a new enterprise,” Tocqueville encountered groups of “all ages, all conditions, and all minds” at the helm of undertakings both “immense and very small” in the United States (Tocqueville 211). The French writer theorizes that participation in civil associations paved the way for the success of American democratic political associations, and vice versa. Today, studies assert that the United States is experiencing a decline on both these fronts. In his article “Bowling Alone,” author Robert Putnam discusses an erosion of social connectedness in contemporary America, while Thomas E. Patterson notes that the United States has experienced a documented drop in voter turnout and political interest in his book *The Vanishing Voter*. This contemporary data, which indicates the mutual decline of democratic participation and “social capital,” neatly concurs with Tocqueville’s theory of a reciprocal relationship between civil and political associations.

In *Democracy in America*, Tocqueville declares the existence of “a natural

and perhaps necessary relationship” between associations, specifically in regard to democratic participation and civil society (215). He establishes that civil associations are a result of the “equality of conditions” inherent in a democracy (214) Equality renders individual citizens “independent and weak,” and unlike a lord in an aristocratic society, in which a member of the upper class can easily command the action of his dependents, a single man in a democracy cannot “oblige his fellows to lend him their support” (212). Therefore, when citizens conceive of a “sentiment or an idea that they want to realize in the world, they seek out one another and...join together” (214). As people join together on the basis of these “common affairs,” the likelihood of the same men to congregate on the basis of greater affairs such as politics increases. Tocqueville also supports the reverse sentiment, the capacity of the political association to facilitate, “develop and improve” the civil association (215). In many instances, the civil association tends to be small and requires some form of investment from the individual, and, as a result, those who unite to this end for the first time are tentative and afraid of “paying dearly for the experience” (216). In contrast, politics in a democracy allow for “immense associations” that motivate “a great number of men to a common action” with no monetary risk (216). By way of the far-reaching affairs of politics, individuals who participate in political associations expose themselves to the worth and advantages of associations in general, which inevitably garners interest in forming associations for smaller-scale affairs in civil society. Within such reasoning, Tocqueville concludes that civil society associations and political associations maintain a mutual relationship by stimulating one another and that “there cannot be civil associations in a country where the political association is prohibited” (217).

This relationship makes itself evident in modern American society, as both civil associations and political associations have equally declined in interest and participation. In his 1995 article, “Bowling Alone,” Robert Putnam observes “striking evidence... that the vibrancy of American civil society has notably declined over the past several decades” (Putnam 64). Examples of this diminishing vibrancy include organizations such as the League of Women Voters (whose membership has decreased by 42 percent since 1969), the Parent-Teacher Association (which once boasted around 12 million

members in 1964 and hit an all-time low in 1982 with about five million) and the Boy Scouts (with a decline of about 26 percent since 1960). Putnam also addresses the decline of Americans' propensity to gather for recreational activities, stating that "more Americans are bowling today than ever before, but bowling in organized leagues has plummeted in the last decade or so" (Putnam 69). The data blatantly reveals that the once thriving interest and participation in American civil society—defined by Putnam as "social capital"—has diminished remarkably. Along with this decline in civil society participation, a widely acknowledged decline in democratic participation has occurred over the past several decades. In *The Vanishing Voter*, Thomas Patterson describes the period from 1960 to 2000 as "the longest ebb in [voter] turnout in the nation's history" (Patterson 4). Patterson's data indicate a shrinking electorate, with statistics showing a mere 51 percent of American adults heading to the polls in the 2000 election, a "far cry" from the "63 percent turnout for the Kennedy-Nixon race of 1960" (Patterson 4). Additionally, fewer people are inclined toward political activism, as rallies and presidential debates receive dwindling media attention, while the number of people volunteering for and/or contributing financially to political campaigns has diminished by about half. Surely, this simultaneous decline of civil society associations and political associations is relevant; that both entities have plummeted in a similar fashion and within the same time period implies the existence of a relationship between the two.

The contemporary data demonstrate that Tocqueville accurately measured the relationship between civil and political society in America. However, although his analysis of civil and political activity in early nineteenth century Americans proves relevant to the present day, the relationship he observed between these two seems to have reversed. As fewer people choose to participate in elections every four years, what is the likelihood of a young woman choosing to become a member of an organization such as the League of Women Voters? On the flip-side, if a father does not show interest in joining his local Parent-Teacher Association, what is likelihood of the same man showing interest in an initiative that concerns funding for local public education? Due to the fact that contemporary Americans are less likely to organize into groups on the level of civil society, they are less likely to come

together and participate in the major affairs of democracy, and vice-versa: because Americans have become increasingly uninterested in democratic participation, they fear making the investment needed to join a smaller social organization. Tocqueville posited that the success of either entity relies upon and is stimulated by the success of the other, and this current, mutual decline of both “social capital” and political interest seems to confirm his idea.

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Aeneas portrayed as he carries his father Anchises on his back during their flight from Troy. His son Iulus is carrying one of the family's *penatēs*, or hearth idols.

Sculpture in marble, in the Grand Parterre of the Mirabell Gardens in Salzburg, Austria, by Ottavio Mosto, 1690. From a photo by Prof. Kyna Hamill, July 2010.

ZACHARY BOS

# To a Philosopher

for S.K.S.

On my way to meet you for a celebratory drink  
on your birthday, when the train stops to pick up  
more passengers, handfuls of fiber-glass fine snow

blow in through the open doors. The wind is coming  
toward us, perpendicular to the tracks, so when I look  
into the oncoming powder it seems as if the world

is advancing at me: the tiny icy monads attracted  
by my attention, winter flies drawn to the train light,  
the plenum swerving along Lucretian lines toward  
the unknowable end their prime mover has in mind.

Every book to you is a lattice nailed lightly over  
the mouth of a bottomless well. You look always  
through the grid into the dark, promising depths,

through the double grin of each pair of lunulae  
into the lacunae their smiles attempt to conceal.  
Is this how philosophers see? Points of illumination.

You feel the constant torque between the visible  
and the known, the true and written and spoken,  
every page full of blank space where asterisks  
glower like the lit animal eyes of constellations.



# An interview with classicist Stephen Esposito

INTERVIEWER: HANNAH FRANKE

*Stephen Esposito is an Associate Professor and Director of Undergraduate Studies in the Department of Classical Studies. He is a Senior Editor of the Greek Drama Series for Focus Press and the founding editor of the forthcoming series, The Oxford Greek and Latin College Commentaries. Esposito has worked with Core since its inception. Hannah Franke interviewed him in his campus office in April 2011.*

## **How did you get involved in the Core Curriculum?**

I've been involved since the very beginning, over 20 years ago. I love what *you* love about Core—that it stretches you. Its breadth of subject matter stretches me as a person and as a scholar beyond my world of Classics; it covers a broad span of time and of places, of people and of teaching styles.

## **Do you feel like you learn from the students in your classes?**

I learn a lot from my students! Especially in CC101 when we're reading the Bible, and I have many Jewish students who grew up speaking or reading Hebrew. A few years ago, I asked the question: Is there any textual evidence here that Yahweh is a loving god? One of my students, Rafi Spitzer, gave this answer: "Yes, in the Jewish community we speak of God's *covenantal* love."

I had never heard that expression, that God loves his people through covenants, like the one He made with Noah. This insight from one of my students opened up the Torah in a new way for me. It was lovely.

### **There are so many languages demonstrated through the texts and students in the Core Curriculum**

That's another one of the beauties of Core. You learn from your students and from your colleagues, both in faculty discussions and in the large lectures. I love the large lectures where I learn new teaching styles and new approaches that are quite revelatory—stuff that I wouldn't otherwise know. So it's a great learning experience even for the faculty. Of all the courses I've taught at BU, Core Humanities is where I've learned the most, by far. I teach my Greek courses, and I learn every time, to be sure, but not in the exponential way that I have done in Core..

### **How did you decide to major in the Classics?**

I had a great teacher named William Arrowsmith. Our Classics Department library is named after him. He was my professor at Johns Hopkins where I did my graduate work, and he just loved this stuff. He conveyed that love to me. When I heard this guy, I said to him, "I want to be doing what you're doing, buddy. How do I do it?" And he drew up a roadmap. So, that's the power of teaching, that's the power of persuasion, the power of passion: people loving what they do. That's his picture up there on the wall—he passed away twenty years ago. After I had finished my work as his student, we were separated for some years when our paths went different ways, but then he and I both ended up at BU and we became best friends. He called me up one morning—I was on my way to school, and he lived in Jamaica Plain—and he told me to drop by because he'd made me some homemade bread. So I went over and he had left the door open and I walked in, and there he was on the floor. He had had a massive heart attack in the fifteen minutes it had taken me to get over to his house. I remember him fondly, and the greatest gift he ever gave me was his passion for teaching, in particular for teaching

the classics. So it's the power of teachers. If you've had a good teacher then you know what I'm talking about. And you can imagine a good teacher who could change the direction of your life, who was so on fire with this passion that you say to yourself, "This is what I want to do." It almost makes me cry to think about Arrowsmith because I loved him so much. It was a very hard way to find him at the end. Anyway, his passion got me into Classics. I have never had a single regret. This is what I want to do for the rest of my life.

**You chose a great profession, then.**

Yes, I did. It's quite wonderful. I have great colleagues here in the Core. Professor Eckel and I are best friends, and I've learned a lot from him about Buddhism. We often travel together to various Core conferences and wherever we go we make time to visit the museums. We head straight to the Asian section to look at the Buddhas. It's not a world that I know much about; that's his expertise. Then, after that, I return the favor and we go to the Greek part of the museum!

**So do you travel a lot?**

I do, though I used to travel more. Eight years ago I met a gal, we got married, and now have a three-year-old girl, so we've traveled less since Rhiannon arrived. But in a year or so, we'll start going back to Greece. I love the whole Mediterranean world—Greece, Turkey, Italy—and I want her to be a part of that. So she will be soon.

**You just recently published a new translation, with commentary, of Sophocles' *Ajax*, in an anthology of three Greek tragedies called *Odysseus at Troy*, which is now used in CC101. What else are you doing, scholarship-wise?**

I'm the founding editor of a forthcoming new series for Oxford University Press, called *The Oxford Greek and Latin College Commentaries*. Over the next five years I'll be overseeing the publication of thirty volumes consisting of

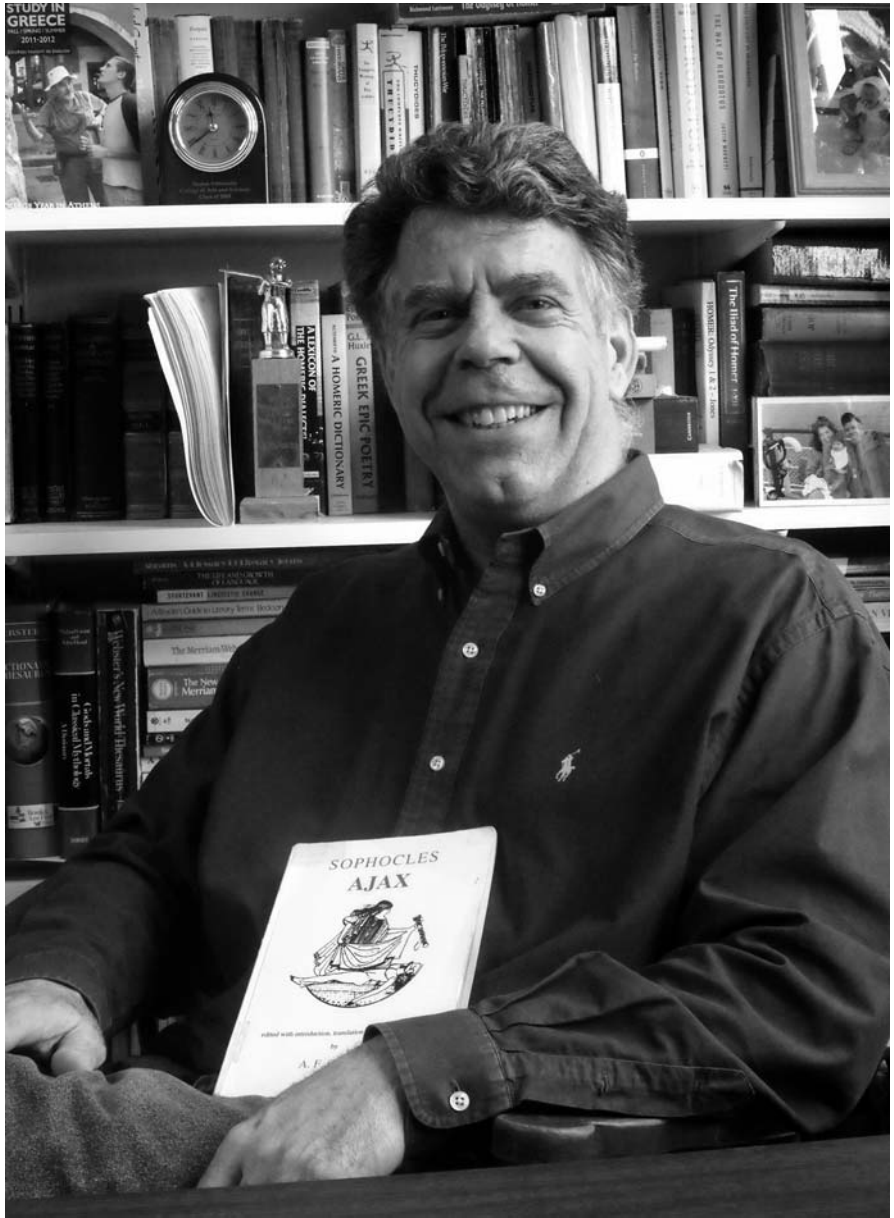


Photo of Prof. Stephen Esposito by Hannah Franke, 2011

the kind of commentary you would want at hand if you were reading Sophocles' *Ajax* in ancient Greek. Currently I'm working on a New Testament reader with BU Theology professor Jenny Knust, and also a volume of selections from the greatest historian of the ancient world, Thucydides, who wrote *The History of the Peloponnesian War*. I'm doing that with my Classics colleague Jay Samons. So the Oxford undertaking is very exciting. I will also continue to do translations of Greek tragedy for Focus Press.

**Many Core students went together to see the adaptation of *Ajax* at the A.R.T., directed by Sarah Benson. Did you see it?**

I did, I saw it several times, and it was very interesting. I also saw the *Theatre of War* group perform it at the A.R.T. in Cambridge. The *Theatre of War* people do not present the play itself but rather a reading of certain parts of the play. Their primary audiences are military. They have been hired by the Pentagon to do productions at bases around the world. The idea behind it all is to give attention to the very high suicide rate in the U.S. military, which is now almost one a day. The Pentagon came up with the interesting idea of hiring a theatre company to perform various ancient Greek plays whose focus was war. Obviously a play about suicide, like Sophocles' *Ajax*, gets to the heart of things. The *Theatre of War* actors present a reading for about an hour, and then the soldiers in the audience talk about their experiences and how the play readings tapped into those experiences. The idea is to let warriors talk about issues like post-traumatic stress and to do so in a conducive and cathartic context. That's one way of looking at *Ajax*, the second greatest Greek warrior after Achilles—that he's suffering from post-traumatic stress. When you kill people, especially at close range, it does something to your head. Through *Ajax* these modern warriors can see themselves. It's pretty amazing that 2,500 years after Sophocles first produced his play in Athens, the Pentagon wants our soldiers to experience the powerful therapeutic effect of this ancient play.

**How do you think the addition of *Ajax* has been beneficial for CC101?**

It's a tender matter to bring up suicide to eighteen-year-olds because they're

on the cusp of a whole new world, in the tender rite of passage from girls to women, boys to men. I think it's a bold and brave move on the part of the Core to present to eighteen-year-olds a play that is somewhat frightening, but, for all its sadness, so illuminating and uplifting. We could pretend the students at Boston University don't think about suicide, but we'd be fooling ourselves. There's a way in which we, the Core faculty, by asking our students to read this play, are doing the same thing that the *Theatre of War* people are doing for the U.S. military; after all, many of those soldiers are only eighteen years old. So we're creating a forum for our young people to talk openly and honestly about a difficult issue. And that is what education is all about.

**Do you think Ajax's actions were justified? Did they 'undo' his nobility?**

No, I don't think they undid anything at all. I don't think Ajax had much of a choice. He lived in a world where military honor was everything. I think it's very important not to see Ajax as a madman. Ajax is like the soldier coming home from Afghanistan. In the case of Ajax his sense of military honor is so high, yet he has been brought so low by a bad thing he did to regain honor that was unjustly stripped from him. Ajax should have gotten the armor of Achilles as a reward for his great valor. A conspiracy, so he thinks, led by his arch-enemy Odysseus, stripped him of that honor. In revenge he tries to kill them but is driven mad by Athena and thus his attempt at revenge is thwarted. He ends up killing cattle instead of his enemy. Worst of all, the whole army saw what he did. So he comes out on stage, and we see him lying on the ground, covered in the blood of cattle. The once great warrior is now a pathetic man. So what should he do? What would we want? Would we want Ajax to die like a lion rather than live like a dog? Certainly; and that's what he wants. So, on the one hand, his suicide is an act of courage, a desperate attempt to keep his honor. On the other hand, it's an act of deep sadness because he will leave his wife Tecmessa alone, perhaps to be taken captive, and he will leave his son without a father. One of the play's greatest sadnesses is that Tecmessa, despite her best efforts, can't break through the tough skin, the male machismo, that Ajax has had to develop to survive in war. Ajax has a kind of psychological armor that comes with killing people,



and she can't pierce it. He faces the same kind of post-traumatic stress disorder that fills our Veterans' Hospitals. But amazingly, after his suicide, Ajax is rehabilitated in the second half of the play. So we see the fall of Ajax, but we also see his rising. His body is buried by Odysseus, his fiercest enemy, against all odds. So he dies but then his honor is restored in a most unexpected way. That's really quite beautiful; it's a lesson to us all. At one point, after he's been betrayed, Ajax says this: "To most men the harbor of friendship is treacherous and untrustworthy." What he's realized, in being betrayed by his friends, is that friends and enemies come and go; the world is constantly changing and nothing is ever a certainty. That's a hard lesson. Sadly, because war has so hardened him, Ajax is unable to activate that lesson into his own life in such a way that he could carry on. So Tecmessa and his son will suffer tremendously as a result. And that's just what happens to many of our veterans. The pain of war and its harsh memories becomes overwhelming and they take their lives. And then the wife and kid are left alone.

**If you could have dinner with Ajax, what would you ask him?**

I would probably ask him if he loved Tecmessa; and if he loved her, I'd ask him why that wasn't enough to help him through his dark time. Is there anything that could have saved him from his deep shame?

**Is this your favorite text?**

Well, I certainly love a lot of texts, and *Ajax* is a text that deeply moves me. I don't know if I would call this my all-time favorite text, but it's surely near the top of the list. I'm writing a book on *Oedipus the King*, and that's also a favorite text. They both deal with the theme of knowledge and the difficulty of recognizing that things constantly change. Even your best friend will not always be your best friend, and that can be a really painful lesson. But that's the nature of things and Sophocles looks at life with a frightening clarity. There are no rosy glasses here. But when you see life as it is rather than as what you think it should be, then you're able to enjoy it more. That's one of the great gifts of theater.

STVDY·THE  
  
BRICKWORK  
STVDY·THE  
  
FORTIFICATION



MEENAKSHI IYER

## Canto XXXI

*A Missing Canto from Purgatorio*

I looked upon her with eyes wondering,  
 She was, no doubt, my dear Beatrice.  
 Yet what was once a gaze full and loving,

Is now a look as cold and sharp as ice.  
 “Art thou still so numb to see me before you?  
 Where is thy effrontery? Come roll the dice,

Try your luck, but I will not bid you *adieu*.  
 I am ordained to lead you from realms of pain;  
 Like an earthworm emerging for morning dew,

So shall you bask in the glory of His reign.”  
 Then those eyes turned that instant to glowing orbs,  
 Tears spread o’er her gold cheeks like a thin membrane.

I wished to cradle her pain into me,  
 So bold, so proud a visage should not hold it,  
 For mortal weakness was too mean for her glory.

Reaching for her with each strand of mortal flesh,  
 Lips parted I hungrily reached for hers,  
 Yet once more her entire being was ice afresh.

“Am I not permitted to feel those ruby myrrhs?  
Those lips as sweet as fresh pomegranates?  
Since you left me to be one of His daughters

Each touch you left burns on me, an eternal wound.  
Your look so cold now burns too with displeasure,  
The Love we had—is it in you, so drowned?”

Her snowy gaze dissolved and turned to ardour,  
Those wet lashes curled with all light in the world.  
She gently spoke like a monk from a cloister:

“So lost in all your sensory visions, love?  
Am I not more than these eyes, lips, and this frame you see?  
You thirst for my passion’s kiss, yet those wounds are

Self-inflicted by your lust for physicality.  
See these tears? They are shed for you; just as Christ  
Spilt the blood of his heart to save the lost souls,

My heart shall pour for your soul that has been enticed.  
As grassy fields beckon the newborn foals,  
So has the flesh taken command over you.

Your crusader, I shall save you from Inferno’s coals.”  
Bewildered, bemused, an infant lost in  
These words that rose like riddles in her nightingale’s

Voice, only fanned my zealous grapple to spin  
Her into my yearning arms so that I might feel  
That silk-spun hair, tender skin, and finally,

Exchange our hearts so that touching love may heal.  
 “In your being a thousand Venuses sit,  
 No diamond was ever cut to such perfection.

Fairer than Cleopatra unfurled from her carpet,  
 Why must you resist me so as I suffer?”  
 Suddenly she clasped her sweet lips to mine,

Holding me for eternity in this my anchor;  
 She chimed gently in my head words of light.  
 “Every moment I have begged Him for you,

Every lifetime without you is like being  
 Underwater with lungs screaming, muscles askew.  
 Yet know this: I crave not your mind, not

Your body. What I feel is not mere desire;  
 It is that pure Love you seem to have forgotten.  
 The Love that makes this osculation filled with

His divine grace; we are His creations  
 And our intimacy is no secret myth  
 To Him. Look beyond this tender feeling

Into the secret spaces of my spirit,  
 Find His light and begin meditating.  
 My flesh, your flesh, my soul, your soul;

Flesh is the vessel, soul is His creation.  
 My spirit embrace and that heated lust control.”  
 With that our physical beings parted, yet

As the Sun is inexplicably drawn to  
Earth, we were joined in spiritual duet.  
No mortal or godly flesh even compared

To the vision of Beatrice as I saw her now.  
Like a bushel in lightening flames ensnared,  
She pierced my previous longing and desire,

So that they were satiated, not by  
Her corporeal form, but by His fire.  
Now I witnessed her soul's form in blinding white.

It rose as a dove, its wings cooling my passion,  
Segregating darkness and light at twilight.  
Now I understood her power, His power.

Mingling like two crystal streams into a  
Fountain of true, Delphic love, I felt lighter.  
The gravity of physical attachment

Dissolved, as beads of sweat dripped down to Hell,  
I was born anew for Beatrice, that Serpent  
Of desire cast off I looked up at her:

“Now am I worthy of your Love, now am  
I worthy of His Love, now am I  
Worthy to offer up my Love free from sin.”



"The Weeping Rock," Souillac, Mauritius, by Guyomar Pillai

# “Twere to consider too curiously”:

*An imagined session of the monthly Core Book Club*

REENAT SINAY

Tom: So! What did we think of *Paradise Lost*?

Jesse: I enjoyed it very much, but I was conflicted as to who is the real hero of the book: Satan or G-d? I found myself oddly sympathetic towards Satan, which seems counterintuitive.

T: I felt the same. Satan is very charismatic and persuasive in his arguments, especially in the beginning. It's hard to tell if Milton meant him to be sympathized with, or if Satan's persuasiveness is meant to emphasize the danger of being seduced by his rhetoric.

J: There is a moment when he's looking down on Eden and considering repentance, but then decides against it, acknowledging, “Never can true reconciliation grow where wounds of deadly hate have pierc'd so deep” (IV.98-99). His vulnerability makes it easy to relate to him, but the reaffirmation of his decision to do evil eventually forces you to recognize that he really is wicked. He's so blinded by his pride and vanity, that he doesn't feel true remorse. He's stubborn, really.

Sandra: That reminds me of the speech we looked at last month in *Hamlet*, where Claudius thinks about repenting, but recognizes he isn't truly sorry. At that moment Hamlet decides against killing him because he seems to be in prayer, but Claudius admits to himself, "My words fly up, my thoughts remain below" (III.iii.97).

T: That's an interesting comparison. Do you notice any other similarities between Claudius and Satan?

S: Well, there are many commonalities. They both have an overwhelming desire to be in power and never second best. Claudius kills his own brother to gain power, and Satan is pushed to attack G-d because G-d will not share his tyrannical power and then replaces him with his Son.

J: There is also the correlation between Hamlet, Claudius, Satan, and poisonous snakes. The ghost of King Hamlet tells his son that "a serpent stung [him]" when Claudius killed him by pouring poison in his ear; this is a literal interpretation of the serpent as Satan incarnate, who leads Eve to her fall by speaking poisonous words in her ear. (I.v.36)

T: Coming back to the danger of words, what is the connection between the two works? It seems to me that Hamlet is the most skilled in the use of language out of the three characters.

S: Claudius and Satan both use skillful language to manipulate others and inspire confidence in their rule. Hamlet uses puns and wit both to amuse himself, to confound others, and to convince others that he is mad while he contemplates how to fulfill his father's wishes of revenge on Claudius.

T: I actually find that there are many parallels between Satan and Hamlet, more so than between Satan and Claudius. Their joint mission is to exact revenge, although they have very different ways of going about it.

J: Personally, I find Hamlet's hesitation in killing Claudius frustrating. He

commented continuously on others' abilities to properly emote or to take action, while remaining paralyzed himself. After meeting young Fortinbras on his way to conquer an insignificant piece of Poland with a large army, Hamlet is frustrated that, despite his legitimate reasons to wage war against Claudius, he has done nothing. He resolves, "My thoughts be bloody, or be nothing worth"(IV.v.66). Notice that he doesn't say "my deeds be bloody." He doesn't actually take action until he is forced to the brink by his mother's death and the knowledge that he will soon be dead as well.

T: He only hesitates because he wants to be rational and to think things through, to make sure he is doing the right thing. Also, he's never had to do anything of the sort before. He seems innocent and gullible, especially as described by Claudius as "most generous and free from all contriving" (IV.vii.135) when he assures Laertes that Hamlet won't suspect foul play with the foils before the duel.

J: I disagree. His chronic and seemingly naïve over-analysis sharply contrasts with his occasional impulsive and violent actions. He ends up causing more strife than he needs to. He kills Polonius without even checking who is behind the curtain first, taking away Ophelia and Laertes's father, just as he was deprived. He then proceeds to hide the body in a disrespectful way, confusing my initial image of him as a hero.

S: This is what makes Hamlet such a great character! He's always hinting that he has a secret, but never tells, which makes me feel like there is a lot more to him than we are privy to. He's mysterious and we're continually left with questions as to his thought and actions. His complexity is intriguing.

J: I prefer the direct approach of Satan. He masks nothing and proudly exhibits his disdain for G-d. Satan lacks the elements of self-loathing and uncertainty that Hamlet has, and he is the confident, unashamed creature of action that Hamlet wishes to be.

T: Yet they are both rebels in their own way. Hamlet rebels against Claudius



and Gertrude and the rottenness into which his country has degenerated through his growing cynicism, his rash actions, and his feigned madness. Satan rebels against G-d by choosing to do evil and by disrupting G-d's creations, and he finds success in his temptation of Eve.

S: True, but while Hamlet is the hero of the play, Satan is not the true hero of *Paradise Lost*. It is almost as if Milton wants to deceive us in the beginning by humanizing Satan, just as Satan deceives humankind. But it becomes apparent towards the end that Adam is the true hero. As Satan sinks deeper into evil acts, he becomes less competent and loses many of his brilliant qualities that were present in the beginning. All semblance of his earlier greatness fades when he returns to Pandemonium after his great feat to the "sound of public scorn" (X.508) and his transformation into an actual serpent.

J: How can Adam be the hero when he makes the worst mistake of all? He purposely falls from Paradise after he loses Eve. Satan tricked Eve into her demise, but Adam ate the fruit "as of choice to incur divine displeasure for her sake, or Death" (IX.992-993).

S: It's really quite romantic—a great love story. I found it incredibly tragic that Adam sacrificed himself, in a way, to be with Eve, who doesn't seem to love him as much as he loves her. His decision only serves to highlight Eve's manipulation of Adam, and it argues that women are the downfall of man, that they are deceptive and weak. I find it very misogynistic.

J: Not nearly as misogynistic as *Hamlet*, with its portrayal of Gertrude as a lustful, weak, vain woman and of Ophelia as a sweet but fragile puppet of her brother and father. Hamlet's conclusion that "frailty, thy name is woman," (I.ii.146) as a result of his mother's incestuous marriage to his murderous uncle shortly after his father's death, sets the tone for the women for the rest of the play. Ophelia ruins her relationship with Hamlet because Polonius wants her to test Hamlet's love for her, rather than support him during a time of turmoil. Eve, on the other hand, was still under the misconception that the fruit was harmless and possibly even beneficial, as the

serpent convinced her, and she decided to share it with her partner. He freely took it even despite knowing he was disobeying G-d. That is a worse sin.

T: But are Adam and Eve really free? Milton is raising the question of free will versus G-d's omniscience: do Adam and Eve really possess free will if G-d already knows what will happen?

S: G-d strongly advocates freedom, even insists upon it, and is proud to have given humanity free will. It allows for genuine faith, loyalty, and love because it is a choice and not inherent. G-d argues, "Not free, what proof could they have giv'n sincere of true allegiance, constant Faith or Love?" (III.103-104) G-d knows that the choice that Adam and Eve make to eat the fruit, whatever their reasons, ultimately leads to their fall, so the Son volunteers to sacrifice himself for their redemption. People can choose to do what they want, but G-d's omniscience means He knows what they will do before they do it. It does not mean that He controls their actions; He just acts accordingly.

J: Considering that G-d knows everything, it means He knew that Satan would trick Eve when He kicked Satan out of Heaven. If He hadn't done that, then man would not have fallen. He set them up for failure.

T: Are you saying that G-d purposely wants Adam and Eve to fall so that He can redeem them? Isn't that a notion of predestination?

S: I disagree. G-d is the measure of justice and is therefore *required* to punish when necessary. He makes the rules and then must follow them. Though He knew Satan would betray Him, He is obligated to send him to Hell.

J: What if G-d created man only to be a constant source of frustration for Satan? If you think about it, He only created Earth and humans *after* the fall of Satan and the other angels, knowing that Satan would plan to corrupt them. Maybe it was a subtle way to get back at Satan, to keep him busy but never satisfied. Satan will never actually succeed in corrupting *all* of humanity, because G-d and His Son will redeem those who deserve it. The situation

amounts to a never-ending torture for Satan and his constituents.

S: I believe G-d made human beings because He loves them. Maybe He wanted to replace the disappointment of Lucifer with something imperfect, but perhaps more loveable and satisfying in the end.

T: It's possible, but I think the point is that G-d values freedom in His creations. Although this can lead to ruin for some, it allows for the most sincere faith, love, and loyalty. We can never really know His motives for anything.

J: We are just *left* with all of these questions, then? Milton's portrayal of Heaven, Hell, Earth, and the characters that reside in these realms, brings the scriptures vividly to life, but not in the way I expected. Now, I'm not sure what to think. Milton's turned my perception of G-d and Satan, Adam and Eve on its head! As it turns out, Adam is just as much at fault as Eve, and Satan's persistence and courage as he rebels against G-d is blasphemously admirable. Milton and his Satan made me temporarily doubt G-d's goodness.

T: Like *Paradise Lost*, our fascination with *Hamlet* lies in Shakespeare's ability to develop complex characters that leave us at the end with just as many questions as we had at the beginning of the play. The play and Prince Hamlet are both enigmatic blends of action and inaction, certainty and uncertainty.

J: To me, *Hamlet* is like a love story gone awry. Everything that we can imagine was once good in Denmark is now perverted, including Hamlet's relationships with Ophelia, his mother, and his friends, with the exception of Horatio. His sheltered world is shattered by his father's murder and his mother's marriage to his uncle, much like Satan's world was shattered as he entered an alternate reality. The feelings of strife, rage, anxiety, and desire for revenge are palpable in both works, but are manifested by the characters in different ways.

S: Satan's vulnerability was endearing, but I was drawn more to Hamlet's impenetrability. His angst and turmoil are so relatable as he becomes wrapped

up in the situation. His actions unintentionally lead to the destruction of those close to him. He is over-emotional and unable to control his feelings. One can sympathize with his many imperfections, however, as his feigned madness and true anxiety are not his own doing; he was pushed by Claudius's actions and the ghost's plea for revenge.

T: That says a lot about the strength to reject temptations. Most of the characters in each work failed to resist such urges.

S: But it depends on their actions afterward. When Adam and Eve were expelled from Paradise, it was a lesson in the necessity of faith and obedience, but it led to something arguably greater than their life together in Eden. It ultimately allowed for the rise of humanity.

J: Classical epics are usually nationalistic, but Milton's is the story of the origin of all mankind and that which makes us human. His ability to humanize such lofty characters as Satan, G-d, Adam, and Eve makes the scriptures much more personal. I was deceived and then disappointed by Satan, disappointed in and then reassured of man. It was an emotional roller coaster. Its lasting effect on me, however, is the reassertion of G-d's goodness in His power, justice, and mercy, and of Satan's evil inferiority, as well as the hope of humankind.

T: There are many uncanny parallels between *Hamlet* and *Paradise Lost*, and both raise many questions; the works cause one to question oneself and the beliefs one might have previously held in respect to human capacity. Both evaluate women's roles; each has a universality of feeling in the depth of emotion of their characters, themes of going against what is "right," and the consequences of those actions. Thank you everybody for coming; this was an enlightening session. See you at next month's book club meeting.

SANITY MAY  
BE  
MADNESS, BUT THE  
MADDEST OF  
ALL IS TO SEE  
LIFE AS IT IS  
AND NOT AS IT  
SHOULD BE

JENNIFER FORMICHELLI

*from* The Tao of Henry

1.

The dog who can be called is not this dog.

Calling: he moves further away.

Not calling: he remains where he is.

Empty of anxiety: perceive Henry's face.

Full of anxiety: watch Henry's tail.

These have the same source, but different directions.

Call him again, and again and again.

Why he won't come: is a mystery.

6.

The Hound Dog Never Stops.  
He is called the Henry Dog.  
*Shush over here stay on the path please boy*

The entrance to the Woods  
Is root of his earth and heaven

Endless flow  
Of inexhaustible energy.  
*Sigh*

7.

Patience is short, anger enduring.  
I thought Ace whistles were the best.

Long and enduring  
But they do not make him heed.

Therefore the Owner  
Steps back, and remains there,  
Waits around, and gets cold.

No thing to do,  
He finally appears.



Henry on the beach, Gloucester, by Prof. Jennifer Formichelli, 2010



# The Nature of Anomie

KEITA DECARLO

*It would be possible to describe everything scientifically, but it would make no sense; it would be without meaning, as if you described a Beethoven symphony as a variation of wave pressure. —Albert Einstein*

Durkheim's *Suicide* stands as one of the classic case studies of the nineteenth century, as it established the burgeoning discipline of sociology into a legitimate social science. In his work, Durkheim seeks to demonstrate the primacy of positivism in the analysis of society by turning suicide—one of the most seemingly individual and subjective acts—into an effect caused by objective social factors. However, Durkheim did not simply seek to create a positivist method to scientifically analyze society: rather, he sought to actively reform society and to create a moral philosophy utilizing his new positivist method espoused in *Suicide*. Central to this ethics is the idea of *anomie*, Durkheim's term for the pathogenic deregulation of a cohesive society—an idea he actively sought to eliminate within the context of his positivist sociology. However, due to the inherently humanistic and individualist nature of *anomie*, Durkheim inevitably violates his positivist method by breaching its limits and venturing into the metaphysical realm with his creation of a subjective assumption based on individual thought. This becomes evident when his anomic theories are reduced to their foundations, best seen in his writings on anomic suicide in his sociological study. A remedy to this problem may be found in the integration of these two realms of thought, espoused by the ethical theory of Jean-Marie Guyau.

Durkheim grappled with the problem of *anomie* in nearly all of his works, and the definition of this concept has changed over time. In *The Division of Labor in Society*, Durkheim writes of an “organic solidarity” formed when specialized individuals from a modernized society become interdependent and socially cohesive. However, “abnormal forms” of specialization can disrupt the “body of rules” that regulate such solidarity; this “structural and normative pathology” (Marks 330) is the state of *anomie*. As a solution to the societal problem of *anomie*, Durkheim writes of social “gatekeepers” who are chosen by society to mediate and “articulate” it (338). In *Moral Education* and in *Professional Ethics*, Durkheim identifies two such gatekeepers: teachers and democratic politicians (Marks 346, 342).

It is in *Suicide* that Durkheim first attempts to fully tackle the social aspect of *anomie* by elaborating on anomic suicide. As it is usually interpreted in Durkheimian sociology, *anomie* is the functionalist normlessness and deregulation of limitless human desires. Durkheim illuminates the nature of *anomie* by separating it into two aspects—temporary and chronic. Temporary *anomie* encompasses regulatory factors in society and is caused primarily by transient “disturbances in the collective order” (Durkheim 267) that weaken these factors and disrupt the life of the individual to the point of suicide. He gives two examples in the domestic and economic sectors. Domestic *anomie* can arise with the collapse of marriage, which has a regulatory influence that disappears with divorce; the dissolution of a marriage “creates a disruption in the family which affects the survivor,” who “is not adapted to the new situation which has been created” (284) and thus becomes more likely to commit suicide. Additionally, economic *anomie* shows that this regulatory change can be negative, as with the economic crisis in Vienna in 1873 (262), or positive, as with the increased economic prosperity of Italy following its unification under Emmanuel in 1870 (264).

However, temporary *anomie* is only a symptom of a larger problem—a problem that becomes evident only when these regulatory factors weaken in “occasional outbursts and in the form of acute crises.” (279) This is called chronic *anomie*. Referred to as the “disease of the infinite,” (299) chronic *anomie* is the primal source of tension in Durkheim’s work. It is important to note how he comes to this conclusion. Durkheim first states that “no living

person can be happy...unless his needs are sufficiently well adjusted to his means” (269). He reasons further that “human intelligence is more aware [than that of the animal] and can suggest better conditions which appear as desirable ends and inspire activity,” and because the “functioning of individual life does not demand that it should stop here rather than there,” human sensibility becomes a “bottomless abyss that nothing can fill” (270). Durkheim then describes that which he deems to be the essence of *anomie*: “If nothing comes from outside to restrict it, it can only be a source of torment for itself. Unlimited desires are, by definition, impossible to satisfy and it is with good reason that insatiability is considered a sign of morbidity” (270). Durkheim even goes so far as to state:

True, it has been said that it is in the nature of human activity to advance endlessly and to seek goals that it can never attain. But it is impossible to conceive how such an indeterminate state can be reconciled with the conditions of mental life any more than with the demands of physical life... [man] must still feel that these efforts are not in vain and that he is advancing as he walks. (271)

For Durkheim, infinite desires cannot ever be satisfied by finite resources. Such satisfaction is “impossible,” and the only result is infinite suffering in the form of “torment” and “morbidity.” Without “restrictions” and without a “regulatory force...[that] can only be moral” and “must necessarily come from some source outside the individual” (272), only suicide can result. Durkheim applies this chronic *anomie* to the world of trade and industry, in which religion once had a “moderating influence on the masters” (279), creating subordination to higher powers and serving as a limit to man’s limitless desires. However, Durkheim claims that in modernizing French society ideologies like those touted by “orthodox economists and extreme socialists” (279) have taken precedence. Those which become the norm are societies that “deny government any ability to subordinate other organs of society and to make them converge towards an end that is higher than they are...[having] as their only or main objective that of prospering industrially” (280). This new “human nature to be constantly discontented, to keep pressing

forward without pause or rest, towards an indeterminate goal” becomes “so well established that society has got used to them and is accustomed to consider them as normal” (282). Such people are most vulnerable when they reach their physical, finite limits, and thus this is “where [*anomie*] makes most victims” (282), as seen with the explosion of suicide rates. In Durkheim’s eyes, this is the “pathogen,” the “disease” of *anomie*.

This perspective on *anomie* begins to straddle the disciplines of sociology and moral philosophy. For Durkheim, the nature of *anomie* is as much an ethical as it is a social issue. When an alternative to functionalist *anomie* is considered, as some scholars suggest is more accurate to the true perspective of Durkheim regarding *anomie* (Mestrovic and Brown 1985), this nature becomes even more evident. Linguistically, *anomie* is defined as “sin,” not in the sense of a mere “transgression of norms or divine law,” but the “voluntary or involuntary...defilement, moral pollution, and the profaning of the sacred, in short, on variations of *sacrilège*” (83), essentially being without the grace of God. Durkheim offers only one synonym to *anomie* in *Suicide*, the French term *dérèglement* (Durkheim 277). The term is often translated in the functionalist vein of “normlessness” or “deregulation,” and indeed Robin Buss translates it as “disorganization” in much the same vein. However, *dérèglement* is more accurately translated to the morally-connotative “derangement” when considering its Latin etymology (Mestrovic and Brown 83). Durkheim’s use of religious terms like “sacrilege” (Durkheim 280) when describing the process of regulatory breakdown in the business world and his use of the phrase “disease of the infinite” both lend credence to such a theory. And indeed, that the moral aspect of *anomie* is evident even when seen from a functionalist analysis of *anomie* as mere deregulation marks the undeniable moral aspect of Durkheimian anomic theory.

By this point, Durkheim has made too many bold statements to have an infallible argument for the objective rationalization of his supposedly positivist sociology and moral philosophy. Ignoring conventional criticism like the ecological fallacy, the greatest issue in regard to Durkheimian anomic theory is an epistemological one. When his theory is reduced to its fundamentals, one sees as an *a priori* fact that an “unslakable thirst is a perpetually renewed source of suffering” (270), which can only lead to suicide. This is

essentially the origin of the social factor, the *sui generis* of *anomie*, and it is important to come back to this point. It is from this knowledge that Durkheim can claim to have the objective basis to label *anomie* as a disease, as an amoral plague. However, this “knowledge” is, what some may argue, simply a mental mindset. Durkheim doesn’t *know* that limitless desires can only result in suffering; he simply assumes this because he is not aware of any other possibility. Because Durkheim has so strongly been an advocate of positivism, his metaphysical faculties have perhaps atrophied. Does limitless desire only result in limitless suffering? Must man constantly face the fear of suicide when an acute “crisis” inevitably arises from living a limitless desire?

The French existentialist movement of the WWII and post-war period seeks to answer that question, and the French *piéd noir* writer Albert Camus offers a solution to what can be seen as a philosophical counterpoint to Durkheim in his 1942 essay, “The Myth of Sisyphus”: The first question that Camus raises is that of suicide, writing that it is the “one truly serious philosophical problem” (Camus 3). Camus outlines a philosophical *anomie* which he labels the “Absurd;” for Camus, there exist only two certainties: “[his] appetite for the absolute and for unity” and “the impossibility of reducing this world to a rational and reasonable principle.” Like Durkheim, Camus claims that these cannot be reconciled (51). However, for Camus, suicide cannot be an option. The Absurd “lies in neither of the elements compared [but] born of their confrontation. . . that the Absurd is not in man nor in the world, but in their presence together” (30). For Camus, this philosophical *anomie* exists purely within the mind of the individual. Although it requires the interaction and subsequent conflict of two components, it only arises when the individual desires the “absolute.” It is a product of conscious thought and will cease to exist with the death of the individual. It is important to note that this conflict will never, in any absolute sense, provide the existential purpose or meaning that is so desired by the individual, and it will inevitably end in death. However, as a result of this conflict, a dynamic equilibrium is reached. Durkheim’s *anomie* is one-sided; the infinite variable is individual physical desire, and, as society is physically finite, the individual is eventually doomed to “morbidity” and “suffering.” But for Camus, the nature of the infinite individual desire changes from a physical to an intellectual, epistemological one, and thus a



Windmill, Mauritius, by Guyomar Pillai

second infinite variable arises—that of the infinitely unknowable universe. The constant conflict between these two infinite variables, Camus’s philosophical *anomie*, is the only sure truth that exists for him. A philosopher like Camus, whose only desire is truth, cannot run away from the only truth he has ever come to realize. And because this truth exists, if only for a transient period, with and only with one’s own existence, an alternative to suicide thus arises. Camus states, “Thus I draw from the Absurd three consequences, which are my revolt, my freedom, and my passion. By the mere activity of consciousness I transform into a rule of life what was an invitation to death, and I refuse suicide” (64). Revolt is the continuous struggle between man’s limitless desire and the indifferent universe; he becomes free because he no longer searches for an absolute meaning. Now that the hope for absolute meaning and a better future is abandoned, he can embrace the limitless passion that enables him to live his life fully and happily.

Whether one agrees or disagrees with this metaphysical analysis of *anomie* is irrelevant. Durkheimian positivism cannot adequately tackle this realm of epistemology, and in that same vein, this alternative renders Durkheim’s knowledge of the origin of *anomie* subjective. However, there can be reconciliation between the Durkheimian positivism and this existentialist metaphysics through the ethical theory of the French philosopher and sociologist Jean-Marie Guyau. Although Durkheim is often credited with first introducing the concept of *anomie* into sociology, Guyau previously borrowed the originally Greek term to illustrate the contemporary milieu of a modernizing France. He uses the word to almost celebrate the decline of an external regulatory force like religion as an opportunity for the rise of the “progressive individualization of morality and moral rules” (Orru 503). Guyau may be using the term *anomie* ironically, considering its connotation as a perversion of religion; Orru claims that in his *Sketch of a Morality without Obligation or Sanction*, Guyau notes the *anomie* of “how the dogmatic religion of ancient times has given way to the religion of doubt, skepticism, and positive knowledge” and that “reality is now interpreted by empirical observation rather than by mythical explanations” (505). For Guyau, this work seeks to “assess the importance, the extent, but also the *limits* of an *exclusively scientific* morality” (503). Guyau points out that “idealists made the mistake

of identifying their speculations with the real world [and] positivists made the mistake of identifying what they see with what should be” (506), instead advocating for the integration of both disciplines to create a form of moral philosophy that holds the greatest strength. Perhaps he described it best when he said, “If two men think in a different way, all the better; they are closer to the truth than if they would both think the same way.”

While these three thinkers wrote in response to a rapidly modernizing French society, their theories may hold even more relevance in postmodernist society, in which the modernist seeds of dissent faced by these thinkers have fully erupted into the nihilism that has become nearly ubiquitous. It would appear that the problem of *anomie* has become an even more pressing issue today than it was a hundred years ago, as various regulatory factors that society once had have now deteriorated. In such a context, the moral systems that social thinkers like Durkheim espoused may be outdated—they may be remnants of the nostalgia felt for bygone halcyon days. The decline of such rigid moral philosophy is appropriate for contemporary society, for to live in the society that exists today, one must have a balance between these two poles of thought. Although empiricism may offer one the skeptical eye with which to observe the physical world, metaphysics provides the spirit to comprehend and appreciate this realm.

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GUYOMAR PILLAI

# La valse qui s'endort

Retiens quelques temps  
la larme qui  
scintille.

Oublie un instant  
le silence qui  
se couche.

Respire le parfum de  
la rose qui  
se fane.

Reprends ma fine main,  
frêle branche qui  
frémit.

Fredonne avec moi le  
refrain qui  
s'éteint.

Retraçons les pas de  
la valse qui  
s'endort.

Trinquons à notre histoire  
d'Amour qui  
s'achève.

TRANSLATED BY THE AUTHOR

# The Waltz That Falls Asleep

Hold back a few moments  
the tear that  
scintillates.

Forget for an instant  
the silence that  
falls.

Inhale the fragrance  
of the rose  
that wilts.

Retake my slender hand,  
frail branch that  
trembles.

Hum with me the  
refrain that  
fades away.

Retrace with me the steps of  
the waltz that  
falls asleep.

Let us drink to our tale  
of love which  
now ends.

# Reading Shakespeare and Milton through the Poetry of Eliot

MEENAKSHI IYER

The language of Shakespeare and Milton—whilst beautiful in its complexity—has, through various generations, alienated the modern reader from their works. Much of Shakespeare and Milton's literature is still discussed and understood today, but it is no secret that the themes they brought to the literary world have been reinterpreted by generations of writers. One of the most influential literary figures in the twentieth century was T. S. Eliot. Not only is he noted for his volumes of socially illuminating poetry and plays, but he is also celebrated for his essays that offer unique literary criticisms. Eliot's criticisms reveal that he was not, in fact, the greatest admirer of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* or of Milton's *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*. Yet is it possible that any writer can escape the literary tradition that was established by Shakespeare and Milton? The themes that they aroused have almost become universals in literature: their influence cannot ultimately be eluded. Although Eliot's criticisms cannot be ignored, by setting aside some of the bias he had against these two stalwarts of literature, one can find insightful connections between Eliot's poetry and the characters of Hamlet and Satan. Both of these characters are incredibly captivating because they have such relatable qualities, and it is part of the genius of Shakespeare and Milton to impress upon these characters the very identifiable aspects of humanity.

In *Hamlet*, his fear of mortality is very prevalent, and this question of life or death is one that Shakespeare expounds upon extensively in the protagonist's soliloquies. Eliot examines this theme in his poem, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," in which the main character is obsessed with his physical ageing and by his fear of death. In Satan's soliloquies, Milton is preoccupied with the question of which realm he belongs in, of the purpose of his existence. Satan seems to be conflicted as to whether he should act out on his revenge, and it is almost as if he needs to commit an act of pure evil to find meaning in his existence in Hell. This idea of needing to commit any act, whether good or bad, to give value to an individual's existence is a theme found in Eliot's poem "The Hollow Men." Here Eliot discusses the disturbing stalemate of men who are neither good nor bad; they simply exist awaiting their judgement in the afterlife. There is nothing to suggest that these poems by Eliot were directly influenced by these characters created by Shakespeare and Milton, but there is no denying that somewhere in Eliot's subconscious he was shaped as a writer by them. Joseph Maddrey says that Eliot was "intimidated by Shakespeare's legacy... to the point that he could not respond to the playwright's work in an unbiased way" (Maddrey 40). Although there may not be a direct influential correlation between Eliot's poems and the protagonists Hamlet and Satan, his poems in their more contemporary context can help readers to see how the literary themes of the past are still applicable to today's society. Thus, a comparison of Shakespeare and Milton's works—as guided by the critiques of T.S. Eliot—may serve to bridge the gap between past and present literary generations and to help illuminate the depth of insight that all these literary figures have offered.

Both Hamlet and Prufrock are characters of indecision, but they also share this irrational fear of death. Hamlet's fear of death is more spiritual, whilst Prufrock is obsessed with his digressing physical appearance and a corporeal fear of death. Hamlet seems to at moments want nothing more than death: "O that this too too sullied flesh would melt, / Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew" (I.2.131-2). At other times, he expresses his fear of "what dreams may come / When we have shuffled off this mortal coil" (III.1.66-7). The language Hamlet employs expresses his disregard for his physical body, as it is "sullied" and like the mere "coil" a snake leaves when shedding

its skin. Shakespeare's bestial reference opposes the generally held view of man being above other creatures, and it is as though Hamlet is not concerned with the death of his corporeal form, but more with that of his thoughts or "dreams." Eliot's Prufrock, however, says, "I grow old... I grow old," which seems to echo this unspoken concern of aging leading to death. Yet, this concern is masked by Prufrock himself, who instead focuses on how he "shall wear the bottoms" of his "trousers rolled." Also, when Prufrock speaks of seeing his head being "brought in upon a platter," his main concern is how others will see how his head has "(grown slightly bald)." Prufrock seems to ignore the spiritual fear of death with physical observations of one who is nearing death. Hamlet is more valiant in that he is able to express that his primary fear is not with his "flesh" but with what will happen to his soul after death. Prufrock is a classic milquetoast, unable to own up to what it really is about death that concerns him. Thus, he chooses to focus on the superficialities surrounding the imminence of death.

In fact, Eliot does make a direct reference to *Hamlet* in "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock:" Prufrock says, "No! I am not Prince Hamlet," as he does not envisage himself as a Hamlet figure. Instead, he compares himself to an "attendant lord," who is in fact Polonius in *Hamlet*. Prufrock says that he will have "high sentence" like Polonius, who is known for stringing together superfluous sentences to make a simple point. He will be "ridiculous" and, "at times, the Fool;" the capitalisation of the "Fool" indicates that Prufrock is alluding to another character. In *Hamlet*, however, there are no living fools, only the dead Yorick. Thus, Prufrock once more returns to the sinister matter of death. Hamlet's description of Yorick's corpse is quite disturbing; it is "grinning" (V.1.189) at him because it is fleshless; yet Hamlet envisages where "hung those lips" (V.1.185). This seems to indicate that some part of Hamlet is afraid of the physical degeneration associated with death, just as is Prufrock. Firstly, Prufrock likens himself to Polonius, who is the first character to meet his untimely demise in Shakespeare's play; he may be insinuating a fear of premature death. Prufrock also says he is "Almost" the "Fool," indicating that though he is not quite in the afterlife as Yorick is, he sees flickers of the "grinning" image looking back at him.

Prufrock is juxtaposed with the giant of achievers, Michelangelo, and

Eliot does this to make Prufrock painfully aware of his insignificance in society. Lines 35-6, the description of women who “come and go / Talking of Michelangelo”, seems meant to demean the value of Michelangelo, who has been reduced to tea-time chatter. For Prufrock, this casual referencing begs the question as to what the value is of *his* life. Prufrock keeps repeating, “There will be time,” like a pedantic mantra for his life; the saying serves to delay not only his need to live his life, and it continues throughout the poem like a count down to his death. When he wishes in line 80 to “Have the strength to force the moment to its crisis,” he could be alluding to his desire to end his own life; however, the spectre of the “eternal Footman” prevents him from being able to do so. Hamlet sees a similar spectre in the ghost of his deceased father, who represents the overwhelming figure for Hamlet as Michelangelo does for Prufrock. The protagonist sees his father, King Hamlet, compared to Claudius as a “Hyperion to a satyr” (Hamlet I.2.140); thus, Hamlet deifies his father by making him not only a figure of authority but also a figure to match. After meeting with the ghost of King Hamlet, Hamlet makes a resolve that his father’s “commandment” of revenge “alone shall live / Within the book and volume” of his “brain” (I.5.102-3). Thus, Hamlet becomes increasingly consumed with his mission for revenge and knows that it will result in his death as well. It is this certainty of his own death which makes him “pigeon-livered” and lacking “gall” (II.2.574), and despite his more intellectual fear of death, he in the end admits to being a coward like Prufrock: “To wonder, ‘Do I dare? and, ‘Do I dare?’”

Hamlet and Prufrock both question the value of life; Hamlet says, “For who would bear the whips and scorns of time” (III.1.70). For Hamlet, life seems to be this never-ending torment, and for Prufrock, the meaningless actions of daily life beg the question, “Would it have been worth it, after all.” Hamlet views life as an endless sea of difficulties, whilst to Prufrock it seems that the tediousness of life is in its sterility and lack of anything substantial. In a sense, it is the anticipation of death for both characters that really makes them fear their mortality. Hamlet anticipates his act of revenge on Claudius as something that will bring about his own death; therefore, he delays the murder. Prufrock sees that death is the end result of life, and his lack of living seems to be his way of stagnating life and thus preventing its end. However,

Eliot leaves the reader wondering if death comes about only when the body ceases to exist, or if in fact Prufrock is dead when “human voices wake us, and we drown.” This idea of sleep and death being synonymous is also echoed in Hamlet: “To die, to sleep – / To sleep – perchance to dream” (III.1.64-5). If death is akin to sleep, and since we dream in sleep, the conclusion that we dream too in death makes the bitter finality of death less forbidding, and more attractive. Therefore, both Hamlet and Prufrock, it may be argued, fear their mortality in two senses—the fear of the physical degeneration and spiritual ambiguity after death. There is also the fear of death whilst living, once they have been awoken from the unconscious realm of sleep. Hamlet questions whether it is better to “grunt and sweat under a weary life” (III.1.76) than to experience the “undiscovered country” (III.1.77) that is death. However, the only ominous thing about death is the “dread” (III.1.76) of what it entails whilst living in reality. The fear of mortality to which both Hamlet and Prufrock are victims is not necessarily only about the fear of life after death, but to an extent, it involves the fear of mortality during life.

The various realms of life and death, Heaven, Earth, and Hell are all featured in *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*. The protagonist, Satan, is in a state of turmoil: he does not know in which realm he belongs. In the poem “The Hollow Men,” Eliot confronts the reader with this homogenous body of men who are lost to the world and any other realm. They are in a constant state of limbo, deciding to be neither good nor evil, but simply existing. Their fate could be likened to that of the souls in Dante’s *Inferno* before entering the gates of Hell. In *Hamlet*, this notion of the meaning of existence has been introduced, in which Hamlet questions the value of life. Shakespeare creates a tension between the realms of life and death with the presence of the ghost, the consequent death of all the characters, and the hope of attaining an afterlife in Heaven after being purged of one’s sins. Hamlet believes that his father has been immortalised in Heaven, when in fact King Hamlet clearly states that he must give himself up to “sulphurous and tormenting flames” (I.5.5), which indicates his descent to Hell. When Hamlet calls upon the various hosts of Heaven and Hell after hearing his father’s treacherous story, he also asks if he should “couple hell” (I.5.93) and acknowledges all the various realms known to man. He often creates a bridge between the world



Alma Bridge, Paris, France, by Guyomar Pillai

beyond and Earth: “When churchyards yawn, and hell itself breathes out / Contagion to this world” (III.2.396-7). In this passage, there is a physical link between the realms of Earth and Hell and a religious link that is also echoed in how Hamlet is “Prompted to... revenge by heaven and hell” (II.2.582). He is urged to seek revenge by the “devil” (II.2.597) spirit of his father, representing Hell, but he is moved to right the injustice his villainous uncle inflicted due to his Christian morality, representing Heaven. For Hamlet, his fear of mortality is also attributed to an anxiety as to which realm he will eventually belong. Evidently Earth is comparable to Hell in *Hamlet*, which is noted infamously early on in the play by Marcellus: “Something is rotten in the state of Denmark” (I.4.90). Thus, naturally Hamlet would desire to be in Heaven, the realm in which he thinks his father belongs; however, his constant delay in murdering Claudius is due to his fear of being condemned to Hell. At the end of the play, Horatio hints that Hamlet does find refuge in Heaven after all his turmoil: “Good night, sweet Prince, / And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest” (V.2.353-4).

Satan has a similar voyage through the realms of Heaven, Hell, and



Earth. He does not quite belong in Hell because he is not of the baser elements as the "Spirits beneath" (Milton IV.83), and he has yet redeemable qualities of good. Whilst Earth is seductively beautiful, Satan does not feel he belongs there either, as it is too much like Heaven and it reminds him of how he wishes to be God's realm. Yet, once again he finds himself unable to accept an existence in Heaven, because he does not wish to exist there, either, "unless by mast'ring Heav'n's Supreme" (IX.125). Thus, Satan is confronted by the issue of needing to find meaning in his existence in order to place himself in one of these realms. Milton makes it such that Satan needs to defy all feelings of goodness and remorse in order to really find his place in Hell and "make a Heav'n" (I.255) of it. By acting out his vengeance against God, by corrupting His creation, Satan commits to being evil and thus is able to accept his existence in Hell. Since Satan decides to define his existence with a bold act, he defies the curse of the 'Hollow Men' in Eliot's poem. In contrast to Satan, who takes action, the hollow men are trapped in their own stagnated world. As Baudelaire said, "It is better, in a paradoxical way, to do evil than do nothing: at least we exist" (Drew 377).

In Satan's four soliloquies, he goes through an inner conflict as he contemplates his situation and weighs out the sides of the various realms in which he might dwell. In "The Hollow Men," Eliot takes the reader through the men's existence in their "dead land" or their "twilight kingdom." The "twilight kingdom" is the in-between place for the hollow men; they are neither dead nor in existence—they are gathered there, and "whisper," wearing "deliberate disguises" to remain "meaningless" and to go unnoticed as "rats' feet over broken glass." The imagery Eliot uses is unusually straightforward in comparison to the volume of his work, which is usually riddled with curious hidden meanings. In a sense, the simplicity and arid nature of the poem's structure reflects its contents. There is no imagery to be found, and the poem is not marked by a lack of decisiveness. In comparison, Milton makes Satan a literary figure to be reckoned with; he is passionate about the injustices inflicted on him, despite his bewilderment as to which realm he should now exist within. After wondering if there is any "place / Left for Repentance" or for "Pardon" (Milton IV.80), he comes to the realisation that there can be no "true reconciliation... / Where wounds of deadly hate have

pierc'd so deep" (IV.98-9). Satan indulges his strong emotions so fully that in comparison to the hollow men, who do not wish to be remembered as "Violent souls" but rather "As the hollow men / The stuffed men," he stands out as embracing his malice. Due to the strength in his character and his individualism, he is able to make choices as to how he wants to live, whilst the hollow men are left aimless in the "twilight kingdom." Also, Milton's Satan is practically three-dimensional in comparison to the hollow men; he battles with inward "torments" whilst outwardly he must display an act for his minions who "adore" him on the "Throne of Hell" (IV.88-89). The hollow men "grope together / And avoid speech" (lines 58-9) out of a fear to act. The hollow men prefer to remain infantile and ignorant than to face reality as they recite the winding nursery rhyme, "*Here we go round the prickly pear*" (line 68). Yet Satan does not only come to terms with dealing with the purpose of his existence: he also begins to dictate the fate of others. Satan says, "Hell shall unfold, / To entertain you two...to receive / Your numerous offspring" (IV.381-2, 384-5). Satan predicts how the destruction of the harmony in the Garden of Eden will lead to mankind becoming his hapless victim. He has realised that "only in destroying I find ease / To my relentless thoughts" (IX.129-130); this violent act of destruction and the desire to "spite" (IX.178) everything God has created is the course of existence that Satan decides upon in order that he may belong in Hell. Even Hamlet *questions* what the value is to a man's life if he is "but to sleep and feed" (Hamlet IV.4.36), which would reduce him to an animalistic level. Hamlet resolves in his last soliloquy that his existence from thenceforth would be driven by his "thoughts to be bloody, or be nothing worth!" (IV.4.66). However, Hamlet resolves only in his thoughts, not his deeds, to be this way; he has therefore, even in the final moment, failed to really solidify the revenge. Satan, however, recovers his purpose when he is distracted by the beauty of Eve. Without delay he does "not let pass" the "Occasion which now smiles" to "ruin" God's creation (Milton IX.479-80, 493). Rather, he resolves to actually act. The only feeling the hollow men are assigned is "hope" (line 66); yet "it is only the empty men who put their hopes so high, omitting any action" (Drew 97). The nouns Eliot lists—"reality," "emotion," "desire"—seem to suggest that the hollow men exist as abstractions *between* the "Between" and

the “And” of life. They don’t partake in the actions at the end of the lines, but are like phantoms drifting between and not quite achieving full presence. The refrain repeated in lines 77 and 91, “*For Thine is the Kingdom,*” is an emblem of their wish to obtain release from a stagnant existence and to receive salvation in Heaven, but the nature of their inertia does not allow them to. Paradoxically, Milton’s Satan wishes to “in one day” destroy “What he the *Almighty* styl’d, six Nights and Days” (IX.136-7) and to thus conquer Hell, which “compels” him “To do what else though damnd I should abhor” (IV.391-2). Therefore, despite his inner turmoil, after he is cast out from Heaven, Satan’s strong nature and determination to make something of himself and to seek out his revenge lead him to be Milton’s hero in his epics. The hollow men stand in contrast to this; Eliot’s poem could be taken as representing mankind in the modern era after industrialisation, after their fall from grace that was brought about, ironically, by Satan, who is anything but a hollow man.

Eliot creates a character in Prufrock, comparable in aspects, to Hamlet, and in the hollow men, he creates an antithetical comparison to Satan. Particularly, in “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” Eliot has a direct literary link to *Hamlet*, indicating that there are definitely elements of Shakespeare’s famous protagonist in Prufrock. “The Hollow Men,” however, was an indirect comparison to Satan from Milton’s epics, but it served to show how Milton had devised his character and moulded him into the decisive hero. On this point, Hamlet and Satan differ, as Hamlet is characterised by his infamous indecisiveness, whilst Satan is evidently a character of action who is determined to carry out his revenge without hesitation. In a sense, this difference is caused by the fact that Satan is not human and not divine, either, yet he exists as a character in the realm of mystical powers beyond mankind. As a man, Hamlet is subject to humanity’s weaknesses, as is Eliot’s Prufrock. The hollow men, however, are like Satan, caught in between realms, but they are not able to find a base for their existences as Satan does in Hell because they lack all the qualities that Satan has to define his existence. Even Hamlet defies the inertia of the curse of the hollow men by finally striking

of the hollow men at times, as he continuously delays committing the murder of Claudius. Satan's claim to the heroic status can be solidified by a comparison to Prufrock, too: he is anything but the milquetoast that Prufrock is, and his only concern is physical power, not physical appearance. Thus, all of these literary characters and their authors can be analysed on to another to discover more of the literary depth and genius they have to offer. Eliot may have in his time criticised Milton and Shakespeare, but arguably his criticism was largely due to the frustration he felt under the weight of the literature they had created. For generations to come, Prufrock shall be acknowledged as the Hamlet of modern literature, and individuals will seek to hold Satan up to or above the standard of literary creatures like the hollow men. Whether Eliot would have desired it or not, he is inextricably tied to Milton and Shakespeare, and all three of these authors' works will illuminate the knowledge of the literary world past, present, and future.

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BRIAN JORGENSEN

# Waspish Joe

*Each Spring, Core and Classics collaborate under the supervision of Prof. Stephanie Nelson to produce a bawdy reading of one of the classic comedies of Aristophanes. This year's show was The Wasps, which takes place during the Peloponnesian Wars in a brief period of peace. The main character, Lovecleon, is an old man devoted to the demagogue Cleon, a warmonger and preacher of harsh measures in times of threat. Lovecleon's friends, who make up the Chorus, are Wasps, old men who sing that in their youth they fought in the Persian Wars of liberation; now their occupation and addiction is jury service (paid) and condemnation. Lovecleon's son, Loathecleon, tries to cure his father of his addictions. The play ends with old Lovecleon breaking free of all restraints and decorum, and dancing furiously the old-time Crab Dance. For the past few years, faculty blues band Fish Worship has opened the show, entertaining the crowd with classic songs as well as original compositions like Prof. Jorgensen's "Waspish Joe."*

(Mode: Mixolydian with accidentals)

I am a mean old soldier from the Persian Wars  
 My boredom or my poverty, I scarce know which is worse  
 I guess what we were fighting for is easy to forget  
 Those boys we lost at Salamis, I hear their voices yet

There's few of us to still discuss our days of oar and spear  
 This is no time for weakness, as Cleon makes so clear  
 Perversion, fraud, collusion, graft, they stink up everything  
 I and a hive of brother wasps still have kept our stings

I woke up last midnight, crying to Apollo  
 Oh god of healing, make us kind, but all that rang hollow  
 They're devious and guilty, and such is all my glee  
 To mete out death and punishment, like Cleon would decree

Everywhere I look about, there's evidence of crime  
 My microwave lies to me about temperature and time  
 My blender has lost its teeth, no longer can puree  
 I do as Cleon bids us do, go and condemn for pay

My children want what's best for me, it's more than I can bear  
 The outcome is more and more and more extended care  
 The jokes I tell, the songs I love, they don't like their sound  
 Play some old-time music, and I'll dance them into the ground

(To the tune of "Old Joe Clark")

*Chorus:*

Round and round Waspish Joe  
 Round and round I say  
 I'd travel about ten thousand miles  
 To see you dance all day

Go hip-hop down to Hades  
 Unplug your techno-bore  
 When I do my buck-dance  
 You're all gonna flee the floor

I can do that crab-dance  
 Like you've never seen  
 Sideways like a politician  
 Hop like a jumping bean


*Chorus: Round and round &c.*

They say that I can't forn-u-cate  
 Spear drags on the ground  
 But put me in the jury box  
 I'll give a stiff thumbs-down

JOIN US FOR  
A DRAMATIC  
READING OF

BY ARISTOPHANES

# THE WASPS



**FRI. APRIL 8, 2011 5-8 PM** FREE PIZZA: 5 PM!  
FISH WORSHIP: 5:30 PM!  
PLAY BEGINS: 6 PM!

**STONE B-50**

**THE PLOT: LOATHCLEON TRIES TO SAVE LOVECLEON (THE BELOVED FACULTY!) FROM A DIRE OBSESSION WITH BECOMING DEAN; A CHORUS OF WASPS DELIVERS STINGING COMMENTARY. SPONSORED BY CLASSICS AND THE CORE CURRICULUM. FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC.**

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Show poster for this spring's Aristophanes reading. Designed by Zachary Bos.

Trying to give me comfort  
Like I'm less than chipper  
Rye whiskey and a flute-girl  
And I'm again a nipper

Try to lock me in a ward  
Where they control the keys  
Rise up the chimney just like smoke  
Ooze through the walls like cheese  
*Chorus: Round and round &c.*

Waspish Joe dancing  
Where ocean meets the land  
Out come all those blue crabs  
And little crusta-ce-ans

Hop light, hop light, Waspish Joe  
Toes up to the moon  
All those claws and crooked legs  
Poseidon coming soon  
*Chorus: Round and round &c.*

Cleon is the people's man  
A walrus with a dream  
He'll tell you lies and sympathize  
Statistics make him cream

Professor Henderson translates  
Each raunchy thing they say  
Professor Nelson and the actors  
Soon here comes the play  
*Chorus: Round and round &c.*



HANNAH FRANKE

# Muse


My torturous fate solely seduces.  
Muse, but never mate.  
Dragged ashore, escaped from destiny,  
To love each wounded scar.

Desire taunts curiosity, whilst love encumbers mine.  
Seven years kept prisoner on the isle of endless past,  
Each sensual diversion masks the drifting time.  
Each embrace marks my eternal days,


Devotion flits from his somber eyes  
Spirituality melting by the hour  
Our interrupted unison ensnared in glances,  
Past this pleading stare.

My hands built your vessel and fed your bones.  
My fingertips launched the ship.  
Yet I am left the sole prisoner.  
Entrapped in immortality.

Poison eradicates flesh, though this hand is not of flesh.  
Fire purges bone, though this hand is not of bone.  
I remain the true prisoner.  
Muse, but never mate.



AWAIT NO FVRTHER  
SIGN FROM ME.  
YOUR WILL IS  
FREE, ERECT, AND  
WHOLE. TO ACT  
AGAINST THAT WILL  
WOULD BE TO ERR.  
THEREFORE,  
I CROWN AND  
MITER YOU OVER  
YOURSELF.



# Imagining Reality

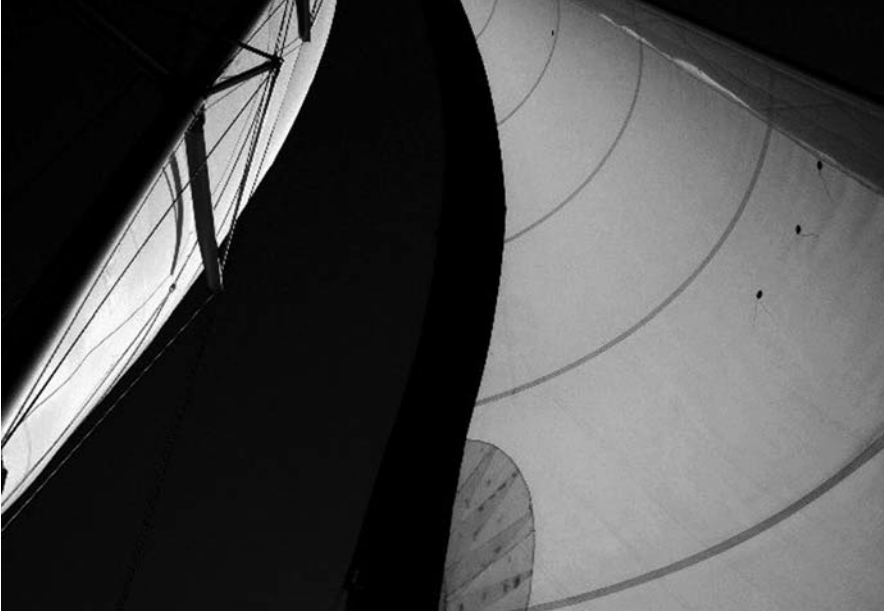
LINCOLN BLISS

**D**uring the Renaissance, some philosophers began to reinterpret common conceptions of the human mind's operation within the physical realm it perceived as reality. Discarding the mythological theories of the Dark Ages, these thinkers sought not only to expand the human bank of knowledge, but to also consider what it meant for humans to know anything at all. In particular, Descartes and Montaigne even aimed to reconstruct the meaning of existence in reality from its foundation. Both thinkers wanted to strip themselves of all preconceptions, or "the artifices," of public life, and to portray themselves as "entire and wholly naked." But such a basic breakdown of the very essence of their beings confused the border between their thinking minds and the physical existence of the objects surrounding them. How did the human imagination, or the mind's ability to create organic images within itself, relate to reality, or the world of matter that it perceived? In response to this question, Montaigne and Descartes had to explain such fundamental issues as what was real and what was imaginary. They came to the consensus that human imagination is not distinct from reality, but rather, it is based on ideas found in the physical realm. A synthesis of the ideas of both Montaigne and Descartes reveals, however, that not only is imagination dependent on reality, but that reality is in turn defined by the human imagination.

Descartes and Montaigne agree that reality comprises the images of the human imagination, but even this basic theory blurs the line between reality

and imagination. Descartes argues that every idea or image in the human mind has a source in reality: "There must be at least as much reality in the total efficient cause as in its effect, for whence can the effect derive its reality, if not from its cause?" Therefore, images in the human mind must have causes that are more real. However bizarre imagined creatures may be, the mind "cannot give them wholly new shapes and natures, but only invent some particular mixture composed of parts of various animals." These creatures must still be defined by qualities such as color, size, and texture, which the mind must derive from real objects. A dream, or imagined reality, is therefore only a composite of existent qualities by the imagination. Montaigne supports this definition with his explanation of the causes of human action: "Our ordinary practice is to follow the inclinations of our appetite." Montaigne explains that the human mind functions according to its desire for substances of reality; in this way, reality controls the mind. From this evidence, Descartes asserts that "there are no conclusive indications by which waking life can be distinguished from sleep." Therefore, although it is established that the images of reality produce those of the imagination, this fact in turn makes the imagination more real than if imagined images were innate to the mind. It is thus challenging to distinguish reality from imagination, as reality bears all the qualities of imagination but we label those images that seem to be generated by the mind as imagined.

Although Montaigne and Descartes's definitions of reality support the claim that reality defines imagination, they also hint at a separate basis for reality within the imagined realm. Montaigne claims that reality is anchored in the body: he "would urge that care be taken to choose a guide with a well-made rather than a well-filled head." Further establishing his confidence in the strength of the physically real body over mental and imaginary prowess, Montaigne describes imagination as an activity that occurs in the absence of real, physical labor: "Unless you keep [your minds] busy with some definite subject, they will throw themselves in disorder in the vague field of imagination." Descartes supplements Montaigne's confidence in reality by asserting that the "ideas which exist outside" of the mind and "represent substances are undoubtedly something more, and contain in themselves more objective reality, or rather, participate in a higher degree of being or perfection." Thus,



Catamaran sails, Mauritius, by Guyomar Pillai

although Descartes agrees with Montaigne that substances existing in reality have more perfection in their existence than their imaginary representations, he sees that reality is also only as much as it perceived by the human mind. In support, Montaigne advises: “Let him be taught above all to surrender and throw down his arms before truth as soon as he perceive it.” Although Montaigne sees human perception as being the judge of reality, Descartes is much more skeptical of human perception. Nevertheless, Descartes and Montaigne’s definitions of that which is real suggest that reality may exist only as it is perceived by the human mind.

Moreover, reality must exist only in the mind, for human thought is all that can be determined to certainly exist. In the process of his effort to destroy all of his previously held beliefs, Descartes begins to consider what made him a human being, what quality or substance existed within him without which he would not exist. Descartes determines that he was “not this assemblage of

members which is called the human body, not a wind, a flame, a breath, a vapor, or anything at all that I can imagine and picture to myself.” By saying this, Descartes asserts that any physically real or substantial aspect of himself is not the essence of his being. Instead, he determined that “thought is an attribute that belongs to me; it alone is inseparable from my nature.” If thought, as Descartes says, is all that can exist without doubt, then the perceptions of reality that the human mind formulates are, likewise, the only versions of reality that are certain to exist. Thus, that which one perceives as reality would not exist without the ability to imagine oneself within that reality. Montaigne supports this vision of reality when he claims that “he whose imagination was fuller and more extensive embraced the universe as his city.” Therefore, the universe as a real entity is created as one imagines it, or in the eye of the beholder. In response, Descartes may have recalled that images fashioned by our imaginations must have causes that contain an equal or greater degree of reality; therefore, they must first exist in reality. This response, however, does not take into account an infinite variation that exists within the faculty of perception and how this variety coalesces in the realm of reality. This depends on the human ability to perceive.

Descartes’s distrust of the faculty of perception does not debunk the concept that reality only exists as defined by the imagination, but rather, his skepticism reinforces it; in order to comprehend reality despite the imperfection of human perception, the mind relies on imagination. Descartes derives his distrust of the senses from his perception of the substance of wax. First, he observes that “it is hard and cold; it can easily be touched; and if you knock on it, it will give out some sound.” Through these perceptions, Descartes claims that his mind knows the qualities of wax; however, he realizes that his senses deceive him: “I bring it close to the fire. It becomes liquid; it grows hot; one can hardly touch it; and although it is knocked upon, it will give out no sound.” From these observations, Descartes claims that his senses have deceived his mind into believing it understood the essence of wax, when, in fact, it did not. Comprehension of reality must then depend on the imagination.

When viewing an object from different angles and distances, we sense that each different view of the object presents a different object, as from

different perspectives, the object looks starkly dissimilar. Descartes says that this difference in perspective is proof of our senses' deception. But despite all these disparate images of the object, which Descartes states have been internalized by the faculty of perception, there is still a single idea, whole and distinct, of that object in the mind. Even Descartes states that "there are some more simple and universal concepts which are true and existent, from the mixture of which all these images of things are formed in our minds." In spite of the mind's infinitely variable perception of a single building, a single idea of the building exists in the imagination.

Montaigne's discussion of human perception reveals the infinite ability of the human mind to imagine from perception and therefore proves that imagination dictates reality. Montaigne discusses perception in his vision of the cannibal nation in the New World, as he attempts to understand a people who perceive reality in a very different manner from his fellow Frenchmen: "Truly here are real savages by our standards; for either they must be thoroughly so, or we must be; there is an amazing difference between their character and ours." Therefore, according to Montaigne, human perception is limited by the standards of one's own culture. He writes that "it seems we have no other test of truth than the example of the opinions and customs of the country we live in." If someone's perception is compromised by their culture, then there is an infinite number of dispositions a person might attain according to their own peculiarly flawed perception. By this judgment, it would be rare to discover another being whose definition of reality aligned with one's own: "So we may well call these people barbarians, in respect to the rules of reason, but not in respect to ourselves, who surpass them in every kind of barbarity." Montaigne's example of the cannibals shows that one person's perception of reality can never be assumed to exist for another. This is because the perceiver is compromised by his or her own limited perception, and therefore one sees any others as not existing in his or her definition of reality. A person will not act according to another's definition of reality, claims Montaigne: "I restrain my actions according to others, but I extend them only according to myself." Therefore, only one's own perception can determine reality, and no perception of reality can be certainly determined as common among people. If such a variety of perceptions of reality exists, and humans

only act according to their own perceptions, then such a variety could never coalesce into a single, clear, distinct reality. Therefore, reality can only exist as it is imagined in one's own mind.

The assumption that the matter we perceive as inseparable from the self is nothing but a creation of our imagination lies in utter contrast with our deepest-rooted convictions and most assured beliefs. But this assertion is far from a call to lunacy, and it is not a debasement of reality. Indeed, Descartes clarifies that humanity is not a collection of thought adrift in an infinite void, but rather, he states, "I have a distinct idea of body in so far as it is only an extended being which does not think." In considering a total demolition of what our perception tells us is real and what we innately believe is true, the imagination is forced to reconstruct the reality at our fingertips, as if all were dreamed. We reconsider the forms of objects that now lie scattered around us, for those objects may be the silhouettes of ideas lost somewhere in the infinite annals of our perception, faint traces of images which construct the reality we accept as truth. We have no choice but to accept the fact that the reality we perceive is as much a product of imagination as of perception. Instead we exist, but only as we imagine.

## SOURCES

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ALEXIS VALDOVINOS

## Expresiones sin fin

Los deseos de una generación secretas  
Tú y yo descubrimos mundos eternos  
Ambos andamos sin dirección, sin metas  
Escribo palabras vacías de emoción, faltas vos

Un idioma no basta describir belleza nocturna  
Al amanecer, provees sonrisas que alumbra vida oscura  
Ciego, sigo una estrella rumbo al cielo  
Labios combinando, luz del beso nueva cuna

Juntos siempre, primordial tu felicidad  
Piedras rompen el dulce silencio  
Paladar inútil al recitar inmutabilidad  
Letras luchan, fallan, un martirio

Horizontes abren, soles queman ídolos  
Falseta un amor inexistente, boca cerrada  
Inundada, encarcelada demonios nos circulan  
Coraje sin temor desaparece, pálida tu faceta

Pasión sin intelecto, un abismo hunde almas  
Temible el juicio del Único Ser, consiente  
Me abrazas, cariño une una última vez  
Vida extinguida, adelante tu frío filtra mi pesar

TRANSLATED BY THE AUTHOR

## Endless Expressions

The desires of an entire generation kept secret  
 You and I discover eternal worlds  
 We endeavor, lacking both goals and direction  
 Words empty of all emotion, I write sans you

One solitary language fails to depict nightly beauty  
 Dawn approaches, and gifting smiles brighten my darkened life  
 I'm blinded, chasing a star en route to heaven  
 Soon lips touch, a caressed cradle; a radiant flash

Together forever, happiness our one true goal  
 Yet stones pierce the sweet stillness  
 Tongues unable to proclaim change  
 Letters strive but fail, an arduous collapse

Horizons unfold and strike false idols  
 A plastic inexistent love, lips closed  
 Immersed and chained, demons encircle us  
 My ardent bravery emerges at sighting your face pale

Passionate but absent reason, the chasm that traps souls  
 Fearsome is the justice of the Sole Being  
 Mindful you embrace me, a final tender fondness unites us  
 Extinguished life, your frigidness embodies my sorrow

# A Croquet Match

CHARLOTTE HOGAN

The scene: it is 1776, in a field somewhere in England, with many sheep surrounding. Mr. Hobbes and Mr. Locke are busy at croquet, and are discussing the news that the colonist “Americans” have sent a Declaration of Independence to King George III.

*Hobbes:* I daresay! Those *Americans!* What *nerve* they have claiming to be their own country! They have not a single right in performing such a preposterous act against our King! A King, by nature, has ultimate control! “God Himself, by the mouth of Samuel, sayeth: . . . ‘you shall be his servants.’ . . . Here is confirmed the right that sovereigns have, both to the *militia* and to all *judicature*, in which is contained as absolute [a] power as one man can possibly transfer to another” (XX.16).

*Locke:* I say, there, Thomas, what makes you think the Americans, as strange and savage as they are, are so wrong in claiming some grievances against the His Majesty the King? Why should a King not be confronted when he is acting unfairly? After all, a ruler needs “the consent of the society, over which no body can have a power to make laws, but by their own consent, and by authority received from them” (XI.134). How then, can someone be loyal to a king who makes laws that are not authorized by society?

*Locke swings and sends a ball straight through the third metal loop. Hobbes steps up to take a stroke.*

*Hobbes:* Well, I understand that “so unlimited a power [as Sovereign power] may [incite] many evil consequences, [but] the consequences of the want of it, which is perpetual war of every man against his neighbour, are much worse” (XX.18). The Americans will soon find out that complete chaos and Anarchy will follow their folly decision to break away. Hah! If they can even do that!

*His ball flies through the fourth loop. Locke looks puzzled.*

*Locke:* We “ought, in the first place, to distinguish between the *dissolution of the society* and the *dissolution of the government*” (XIX.211). Society and the Sovereign are entirely different entities. Replacing King George’s rule is not related to degradation of society, rather, the degradation of the relationship *between* society and government. Anarchy must not necessarily ensue, as the laws of society hold true no matter the type of Sovereign.

*Locke pauses a moment to send his ball through the fourth hoop—it settles just beyond Hobbes’—before resuming his speech.*

They sent His Majesty such a long list of grievances, you know, that if they are found to have some just cause, they should be given a chance. Perhaps they could use their prior complaints to instate a more suitable governing body than the monarchy we currently use.

*Hobbes:* Long list of grievances, foey! (*He knocks his ball through the next hoop.*)

Men will find anything to blame for their troubles. It never even occurred to them that *they* could be at fault for their misfortunes! “All men are by nature provided of notable multiplying glasses (that is their passions and self love), through which every little payment appeareth a great grievance” (XVII.20). Surely you have seen your neighbors and friends react similarly to slight inconveniences. What His Majesty has done to the Americans is not nearly as bad as having no government at all to protect our property!

*Locke:* I do quite agree that people can think their own predicaments are much worse than any others, if their trust is betrayed just a few times, I have not much sympathy, as “great mistakes in the ruling part, many wrong and inconvenient laws, and all the slips of human fragility will be born of the people without mutiny or murmur. But [if] a long train of abuses, prevarications and artifices, all tending the same way, make the design visible to the people, and they cannot but feel what they lie under, and see whither they are going,” it is quite appropriate to dismiss the present ruler (XIX.225). The Americans, indeed, have gotten much abuse that we have not seen here in England, the King being very secretive.

As for property, that is precisely the reason we’ve agreed to the social contract, and ultimately “why [we] choose and authorize a legislative, that there be laws made, and rules set, as guards and fences to the properties of all members of society”(XIX.222). This is why I don’t believe the Americans will resort to Anarchy. We simply need government! Life without it would be an impossible struggle. On this point we agree.

*Hobbes:* You’ve sent my ball halfway to Spain! (*grumbling*) Indeed, the state of nature would be quite a terrible thing. Yet, I just don’t understand why, after going to all the trouble to formulate a government to make laws and to protect our property, anyone on Earth would want to give that up.”

*With soft cries of ‘shoo, shoo’, Hobbes nudges away a small flock of sheep that had approached his ball with some curiosity. He hits again, and his ball lands yet closer to the playing area near the stake.*

*Locke:* “Which is best for mankind, that the people should always be exposed to the boundless will of tyranny, or that the rulers should be sometimes liable to be opposed?” (XIX.229) In fact, I believe such an opposition to be quite healthy.

As for creating the best kind of Government that will not be subject to all sorts of resistance, it would probably be wise to formulate one that perfects

itself over time, with rulers that make laws “only for the good of the society, as it ought not to be arbitrary and at pleasure, so it ought to be exercised by established and promulgated laws; that both the people may know their duty, and be safe and secure within their bounds, and not to be tempted, by the power they have in their hands, to employ it to such purposes” (XI.137).

*As if to drive home his point, he once again strikes his ball, which hits the stake with a ‘whack’. He has won the game. Hobbes catches up with him and offers his handshake of congratulations.*

*Hobbes: “Wheresoever you break off the chain of a man’s discourse, you leave him in a presumption of it will or it will not be, or it has been or it has not been. All of which is opinion” (VII.2).*

John, how I would like to believe that my own opinion is the truth of the matter. I cannot bring myself to believe such a thing, however, as you have offered a clear solution to my misjudgment that the dissolving of government would result in Anarchy.

*Locke: (patting his partner’s shoulder) Thomas, my good friend, this has been an excellent game of croquet, and I am glad that my reasoning has struck a chord in your thoughts. Shall we play again? Next time, I would very much like to discuss the difference between a monarch and a tyranny.”*

*Fin*

## SOURCES

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Locke, John. *Second Treatise of Government*. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1980.

ONE OUGHT NOT, <sup>OF</sup> COURSE,  
 TO CALL IT VIRTU  
 TO MASSACRE ONE'S  
 FELLOW CITIZENS,  
 TO BETRAY ONE'S  
 FRIENDS, TO BREAK  
 ONE'S WORD, TO BE  
 WITHOUT <sup>OR</sup>  
 MERCY RELIGION.  
 BY SUCH MEANS ONE CAN  
 ACQUIRE POWER  
 BUT NOT GLORY.

JULIA CHEN

## An Ode to Toast

Shall I compare thee to a French baguette?  
No—thou art more crunchy and modest,

I feel a bliss which warms my heart's couchette  
when I see your crispy crust, the purest.  
Shall I lather you with marmalade sweet?  
Or pair you with a cup of Earl Grey?

Your familiar taste is a cozy retreat,  
a slice of home that keeps hunger at bay.  
I adore your versatility, with cinnamon and butter,  
charm unequaled by sourdough or dinner roll,  
*mon amour*, O! How my heart doth flutter,  
my breakfast of choice beyond earthly control.

If only more appreciative eyes could see  
your bastion of carbohydrate complexity.



# I Think, Therefore, I'm Not, *or*, The Bureaucrat

MICHAEL FERRON

I was born into relatively fortunate circumstances that have absolutely no impact on my story, and thus the reader will forgive me for excluding them. Suffice to say that I was a decent student but still surprised when I found myself admitted to the University of Boston, to which I had only applied at the insistence of Great-Aunt Helen. It was through her that I had learned of my acceptance, after the Dean of Admissions let it slip at an extravagant alumni gala that she had funded. Sadly, it was shortly thereafter that she departed this life, incidentally on the same day that I received my financial aid letter for a full-ride. However, after the reading of the will, in which everything was left to her two parrots—much to the disappointment of both the family and the University—I received a second letter, stating that due to changed circumstances my aid had been reduced to \$188.91. The loan application process was rushed and frantic, and collateral was hard to come by, there being few things in this world as valuable as an education nowadays. I half-jokingly offered up my soul, which resulted in an extensive inquiry, but the University determined that it alone would not suffice. It was finally settled that the collateral should be my soul, the souls of my yet unborn children, my parents' home, my yet-unpurchased home, and the yet-unpurchased homes of my unborn children.

Unfortunately, my troubles with registration did not end there. Having

my heart set upon philosophy, I declared my major on the very first day of school, and I believed all to be well. Yet, when it came time to register for the next semester's classes, one of which was open only to philosophy majors, I was unable to do so. After spending a full weekend making inquiries, visiting different offices, and in general making myself a nuisance, I came to the heart of the problem: it was my responsibility to register with my department separate from registering with the University. I had an angry word or two with the department head on the matter, as she had caused me so much trouble when she likely could have gotten a list of all the philosophy students at the university via e-mail, but in my anger I missed the simple explanation that she gave me. Namely, if philosophers had to think along the lines of common sense like the rest of the world, they would fail to develop their evermore complex and intricate ways of thinking, and so it followed that it made no sense for a philosopher to use common sense. Although I initially missed the point—and even now its intricacies escape me—I found later on that this rejection of common sense was a common theme among philosophers, stretching back to Aristotle, Plato, and Socrates. This had ramifications for my financial aid as well, as apparently philosophy majors qualify for more need-based aid than others; in the meantime, the bank devalued the yet unpurchased houses that were my collateral. The result was that while my aid was doubled, my somewhat larger loans were halved until I was forced to sign over several internal organs to cover the difference. My new aid came in the form of work-study, and I was assigned to the financial aid office due to my numerous experiences with them in my first semester.

I hardly had the job for a month before I almost lost it for disciplinary reasons. Due to the extensive reading list assigned by my philosophy professors, I found that I hardly had time to eat, and as a result would fill up a water bottle and take a banana from the dining hall to have in lecture. I thought nothing of it until I returned to my dorm one day to find it being searched by the police on the grounds that I had been witnessed violating Public Health Code MAGL-271-NO-941-8675309 subsection Zulu, which prohibited the filling of any personal container with water from a fountain or dispensary intended for public use. I had the scandalous bottle on me at that very moment, and in my fright I excused myself to the bathroom, where

I disposed of the evidence in the trash. As it happened, this was not wise. The next day I was hauled in before a judicial review board, having been turned in by the janitor. Here I faced a double charge, for in addition to subsection Zulu, disposing of trash besides paper towels in the bathroom was forbidden by university policy. When I inquired as to the reason, I was met with incredulous stares, and after a moment of stunned silence I was told that I was in no position to question policy at that moment. After I pleaded my case, the University decided that my expulsion was unnecessary, but that all of my aid, including work-study, should be caught. However, fears of the R7B9 virus (colloquially referred to as sheep flu or hoof-in-arse disease) caused the University to forbid any students or staff from being on campus grounds who had so much as the sniffles, meaning they were severely understaffed. Finding that they could not afford to remove me from work-study, I was given a strict verbal reprimand and returned to work immediately.

It was there that I met a good friend of mine, Christof Connors, known as ChrisCon to his friends. He was one of the largest men I had ever seen, although he too was a freshman. I learned that his build was a result of his extensive training in hockey, which he played for the University. He came to me claiming that there must have been a mistake with his aid package, as he had received a full-ride with two well-off parents and a seven-figure home, but his roommate received less than half of the total tuition with one parent struggling to make ends meet in their rented apartment. I looked into it extensively, but even with all the formulas that we used to distribute aid, I came to a dead-end in little time. I met my new friend over lunch to inform him that I could only find that his situation was due to an exception to an exception to an obscure rule involving hockey players, the wording of which evaded my understanding. He thanked me for my effort, and never once have I missed one of his games.

ChrisCon was not the only acquaintance I made at college. Although I had never had much luck with women at home, my second semester at college changed all that. While taking a course in metaphisico-theologico-cosomology—which previously had a popular nigological component that was dropped for sounding like a bad word—I met the lovely Yvonne Harran,



"Xiā" by Kalani Hoe McDaniel, 2010

a sociology major taking the class as part of an seven-credit overload in order to graduate in three years. While she was stressed to the breaking point, she was not allowed the four years most of us require for a degree due to financial constraints. I learned this early on in rushed conversations over quick meals between her many classes. While I'm not quite proud of it, I took a look into her account at work and discovered that some of her aid had been accidentally moved into a different account on several different occasions, in fact, until I finally tracked it down in the dean's paycheck. I brought this to his attention, and after a lengthy conversation on the matter, we managed to fix the problem. I agreed to take on extra hours for looking into a personal affair during business hours, which coincidentally happened to be nearly all the time Yvonne and I usually spent together between classes. To be honest, I was glad to have more work-study, as the government had sus-

pending my federal loans pending an extensive background check under the Safe Americans Act for associating someone with a Middle-Eastern-sounding last name. The suspension was made permanent when it was found that I had given to a charity that sent food to poor villages in Jordan, which used a trucking company that had once employed the second cousin of a suspected terrorist.

It soon became apparent that I was now in the position of having to graduate early for financial reasons. Rushing to finish my requirements, I enrolled in the Central Curriculum during my sophomore year, which would satisfy nearly all of them. Professor d'Introdacqua, whose name I never could pronounce, taught the social philosophy of scientific literature. He was one of the greatest professors I have ever had. The man covered a vast amount of material in the course of a single semester, ranging from Marxist implications of the early writings of Ptolemy, to the rise of rationalism in Galileo's *Dialogue*, ending with empiricism and a discussion of existentialism in Durkheim. Our professor often spoke his mind about the course, saying that while the information we learned was valuable, the magnitude of the material we had to cover would not allow us nearly enough time to learn it. We were promised a thorough review lecture on the true nature of all the books we had read, but unfortunately, budgeting issues forced the well-liked and respected professor from us, under the "first hired, first fired" policy that the University had from its inception. Without the lecture, we were left to fend for ourselves around review time, and I foolishly studied the underlying meanings of the texts we had examined. It would have been much more prudent to have looked at the little details in our books, as I lost many points for not knowing the name of Odysseus's dog and the exact wording a professor had used to describe the Tao in lecture.

In this way my sophomore year ended, and after an uneventful summer I attempted to return for my junior year, which was to be my last. Yet, even now, misfortune pursued me relentlessly, and due to the status of my federal loans, I was forced to go through the private sector to ensure I had both tuition and housing for the year to come. I filed with my local bank about a week or so after school let out for the summer. In September, when I tried to return to school, I was surprised to find that my loan had not yet been received

by the school. I immediately called the bank and was told that it was because of my lack of credit history (spending within my means meant I never needed a loan or credit card), and it wouldn't take more than a week to finish. Three weeks later, my parents refused to continue putting me up in a hotel, and the school would not yet allow me in. A call to the bank revealed that my loan had been finished for some time and that it was waiting for the school to call them for my confirmation code, which would finally grant me admittance. Overjoyed, I called the school to inform them, only to find that they did not ever contact a private organization directly, as part of university regulations. In five minutes I had the bank on the phone again, but this time I was told that the bank could not initiate contact with the school due to laws set up to protect customers' privacy. Further, they could not, despite my request, give me the confirmation code to give to the school, lest I be someone else trying to steal my identity. I offered them all manner of information to prove that I really was myself—social security number, driver's license number, date of birth, mother's childhood address—succeeding only in convincing them that I really was an identify thief. Inquiries were made, certificates checked, and a general hubbub ensued until it was determined that I could not be me, trying so hard as I was to seem it, and, as no one else claimed to be me, it was determined that I did not exist.

It is true that for some months I did not realize the great fortune that had come my way (insofar as fortune can come to one who does not exist). Yet, by degrees it dawned upon me: had I not proven the great philosopher Descartes wrong by being a thinking being that did not exist? I thought, and yet I was not. I immediately set about working on my thesis, and after presenting myself to a number of my professors and proving that I could indeed think by answering their numerous questions, I showed them the records (for everything had been very well-documented) which proved my nonexistence. The revelation sent waves through the philosophical community, and although I had not graduated, an exception was made for me, and I was given an honorary doctorate. I have since accepted a prestigious position at Carraway University in New Haven teaching graduate-level philosophy at the tender age of twenty-one, for which I have to thank my local bank for showing me my nonexistence.

SAM WILDMAN

# Bookshelf

All poetry is about death.  
What poet has not  
looked at his complete work,  
admiring the cunning thing he has wrought?  
Art is never for its own sake.  
If it were we would be satisfied  
with this process of blind luck.  
We do not cage our words  
—in these fixed things—  
as a semi-reflective act of spite.

Accepting our one chance to leave a mark:  
trace a burnt offering to the muses.  
If we did not care  
where our fragile ideas landed  
we would let them travel free  
with a sharp exhalation.  
A million dandelion seeds  
carried at the whims of the wind  
to die on the hot pavement,  
or be choked out by heavier kernels.

No: it is not enough to bring a smile  
by telling our stories once,  
to be remembered and repeated;  
a new account of Creation told in each.  
A book is made of sturdier stuff,  
built to outlast the author.  
Pretentious little god,  
carving his own headstone with a pen.  
Shouting to be remembered  
in a vertical graveyard.



## Anatomy of a Dream

DAVID GREEN

**T**he headaches started several years ago. Then the ringing in my ears. Then the spells. Desperate for a remedy, I tried everything. Pills and palliatives. But only one thing seemed to work. Lying on my back in the dark, I placed the palms of my hands in the hollows of my temples and pressed. For the first few years, this was all it took; after several minutes, I could release my grip and fall asleep free of the pain that had plagued me during the day. But as the years went by, the pain worsened, and I needed to apply more and more pressure to feel the same relief I had felt before. Until one night nothing worked. I lay on my back, placed my hands on the sides of my head, and pressed. The pain not only persisted, but grew worse. Adjusting my palms to the best position, I pressed harder. Geometric patterns flush with deep crimsons swirled before my eyes. I continued to apply more pressure until suddenly I heard a crack and felt a pain like a bolt of lightning race down the length of my skull. I reached up and found the bones tilting against each other the way great sheets of ice might clash in a northern sea. To relieve the pressure on the skin that covered them, I took a penknife from the drawer in the nightstand and made a long incision down the length of the fissure. Blood streamed over my eyes and nose and converged at the point of my chin. I leaned over the edge of the bed and collected the drops in a glass on the floor. When the dripping had all but stopped, I wiped my chin and sat back against the headboard. Taking the knife again, I gently flayed the bones, peeling back strips of my scalp that fell limply over my ears. Then



"Huābiān" by Kalani Hoe McDaniel, 2010

I inserted my right index finger beneath the bone on one side of the opening, and pressed my thumb against it on the outside until I was able to break off a chip. And then another. Some came away cleanly, following the coronal and sagittal sutures. Others did not, splintering in jagged edges. I placed the fragments in ordered lines on top of the table so I could return them to their proper places at the end of the night. When I had succeeded in opening the right side of my skull, I repeated this process on the left. Once I had removed the broken covering of yellow bone, I expected to drift out easily into the night. But there was one further obstacle. I discovered that the pain I had felt all those years was caused by a smooth lump of flesh lodged behind my corpus callosum. I reached into the crevice between the hemispheres and probed the tumor bluntly with my finger. As I did, a stream of memories came rushing out. Accretions of sorrow. Words of regret. I loosened the tumor by moving it back and forth, turning it as I did, and then plucked it,

roots and all, from its hold forever. Blood poured into the crevice, forming a pool beneath the hemispheres that rose above it like the walls of a narrow canyon. Overhead the stars and moon were shining. As from a chrysalis I emerged, an imago fleeing, faint as breath. Bound by no burden of tensile and torque, I had my run of the night. Through hanging mists I passed the lonely cliffs of temple valleys, waters falling in choral harmonies, and sea-birds sleeping on star-crested heights. Pine boughs swayed along mountain roads where houses were rimmed by blue shadows. To the north I saw the white horizons of ice fields in the dawn and then an ascension light over the sea. Soft westerlies blowing the fragrance of morning poured around me, curling gently, like streams flowing down silent cataracts of time. Until I had to return. I lifted my arms heavy with sleep and pulled back the curtains. On the table were the chips of bone I had arranged like pieces of a puzzle during the night. The blood on the surface of my brain was sticky and held each piece in place. When all but the last were set, I poured the glass of blood into the opening and sealed it shut. Then I pulled the flaps of skin back over the bones and tamped them down, smoothing out the wrinkles. A quick shower washed away the last traces of blood from the seams and when my hair had dried, the seams themselves were almost impossible to see. I took two aspirin with breakfast and put on my jacket and tie and went to work. My friends and colleagues little suspected the cause of my contentedness and to this day know nothing of the places I have been, of the person I am.

*This story originally appeared  
in the collection The Garden of  
Love and Other Stories, published  
by The Pen & Anvil Press in 2010.*



# The Parable of Parables

JACOB ROSENBAUM

When I was a younger man, still in my formative years, there was a man of some mystical renown in my town. He was the talk of many of the boys in my school, he appeared in many of the young girls' dreams, and he was a constant source of gossip amongst the lonely middle-aged housewives around the bridge table or on the tennis court. The man, however, remained shrouded in a deep mist of conjecture and speculation. In fact, few had even seen him, and a few were adamant that he didn't exist. But tales of him permeated everyone's thoughts.

A common conception of him was that he was a former C.I.A. agent with a hundred discreet assassinations under his belt. Others said that he was a rocket scientist and the true inventor of the atomic bomb, that he had personally persuaded Truman to drop it and had carried out the order himself. Opposing thoughts were that he was best friends with Timothy Leary and that he gave him his first stamp. It is commonly believed that he played a major role in ending the Vietnam War and that he was the voice in Abbie Hoffman's left ear. My father insisted that he was nothing more than a cuckold and a carpenter.

Amongst these wildly differing legends was one common thread: that he was a legendary lover. Word of his sexual conquests reached every ear of our town. Boys would tell the stories in schoolyards, each trying to outdo the boy before him with an even raunchier tale. Girls giggled about the tales in hallways and documented them in under-the-desk notes. And housewives

recounted them to their husbands, trying to elicit some heat in the bedroom but they usually only received grunts, as their husbands were watching very important sports updates.

No one knew how many lovers he had been with, but the most common estimate was 523.

Over the years the stories grew in both number and prominence. They gained a certain association with our town, which was known for miles around—and in every direction—for myths of the mysterious man.

When the stories were at their peak intensity, and the man's name fluttered on everyone's lips, I was becoming a bit of a Don Juan myself. I had enjoyed the company of many women. One day while I was at the video store, a man walked out of the adult video section and began to watch me as I made my selection. Attempting to avoid confrontations or awkward invitations to the back of a van, I politely informed the stranger that he was barking up the wrong tree. But the man persisted in eyeing me until I left the store.

Outside I lit a cigarette and began to walk toward my car when the unknown man approached me. As he got nearer, I noticed a distinctive scar dividing his right eyebrow into two equal parts, giving the impression of a dually-colored cross (a recurring description of the aforementioned legendary man). So, I said, "You are him, aren't you?"

He replied, "Yes, I am."

"Are the stories true?"

"The stories are true."

"You did all those things?"

"No, but they are true stories; I just wasn't a party to them."

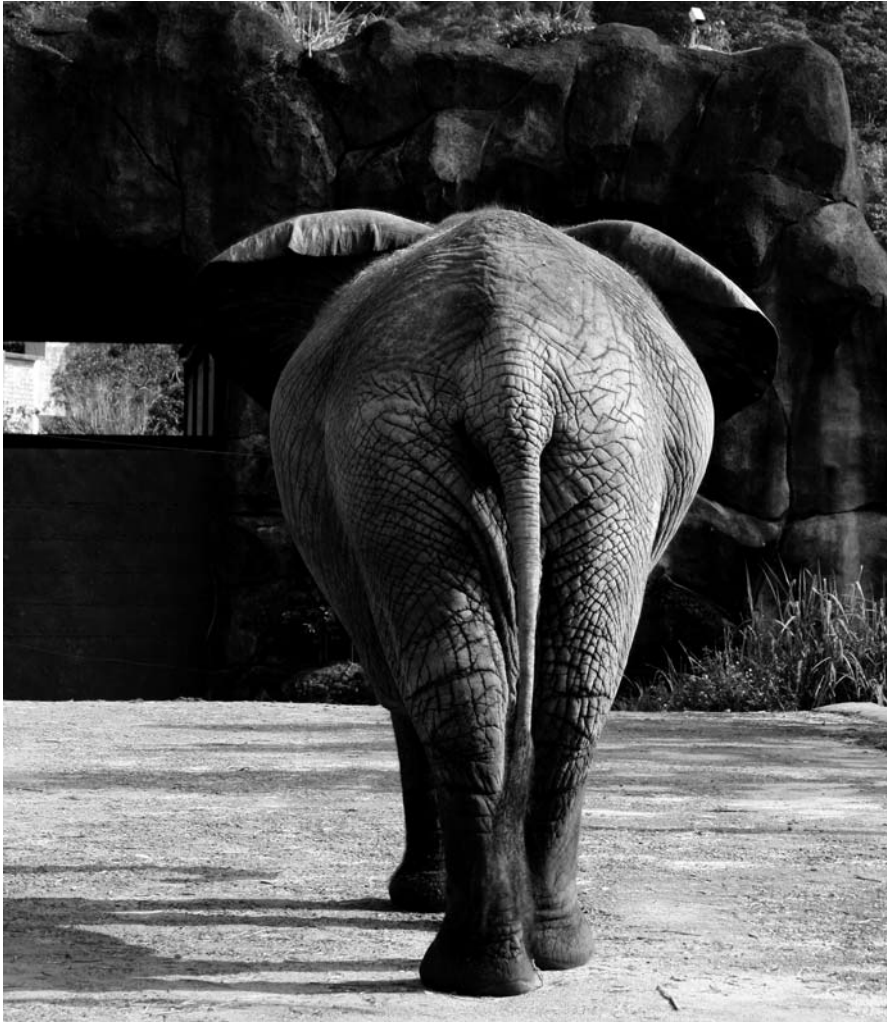
To this, I replied, "Well, why did you approach me? Does my reputation as a lover stretch that far to catch your ear?"

"No. I'm not aware of such things," he said. "I just wanted to share a bit of worldly advice before I passed, and I liked your choice of literature."

"Oh, you're referring to my copy of *Faust*? Yes, I carry it everywhere."

"The means by which we immortalize ourselves haunt us for all eternity."

And at the utterance of that last syllable he disappeared in a puff of smoke, most likely caused by the passing of the 57 bus.



"Dàxiàng," Taipei Zoo, Taiwan, by Kalani Hoe McDaniel, 2010

I took his advice to heart and have since avoided leaving any lasting impressions. And out of reverence for this man's sage-like advice, I have omitted his name in an attempt to preserve his much-deserved mortality.

# An interview with MFA curator Frederick Ilchman

INTERVIEWER: JEN ZIMMERMAN

*Frederick Ilchman is the Mrs. Russell W. Baker Curator of Paintings at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. He was responsible for the MFA's highly acclaimed exhibition, "Titian, Tintoretto, Veronese: Rivals in Renaissance Venice," which debuted in 2009. For the past several years, Mr. Ilchman has lectured about Michelangelo and the Sistine Chapel ceiling for the students of CC201 each fall. In April 2011, Jen Zimmerman conducted a phone interview with Mr. Ilchman in order to learn more about his background and his interests beyond the lecture hall. He spoke about his work at the MFA and shared his thoughts on the Core Curriculum and the MFA's usefulness to students.*

**What did you study as an undergraduate at Princeton, and how did it shape your life and career?**

As an undergrad, I was already quite interested in art history: I had gone to Rome before starting college and had seen the Raphael Rooms—which include his famous fresco of the “School of Athens”—in the Vatican, as well as Michelangelo’s paintings in the Sistine Chapel, and that was the moment of crystallization for me; it was life-changing. I knew I wanted to learn more about this complex historical period. Art history is a way of studying history, and I consider myself a historian. I’m just more interested in visual texts than written ones.

**Where did you go from there? How did you end up at the MFA?**

Before I moved to Venice and then eventually came back to Boston, I was a graduate student at Columbia University, and I taught survey classes in art history there. I was surprised by the course evaluations, as the students didn't particularly mention the classes with slides, but instead thought that the class in the Metropolitan Museum of Art was the best of the semester. So the next term, I decided to schedule two classes at the Met. These students said in their evaluations that the two classes in the museum—rather than in the classroom—were the best, and that was a pretty big hint that the ideal spot for me would be in a museum rather than in a traditional academic setting. This turned out to be true, as I am now very happy where I am, with original objects always nearby. Five years in Italy made me attractive to the MFA.

**So teaching was not your calling? Like many grad students, were you planning on a teaching career before realizing there were alternatives?**

Midway through graduate school, I knew that I wanted to work in a museum with the actual paintings and sculptures, rather than in an academic setting with reproductions. But I still do some forms of teaching. I give tons of lectures and see lots of students, and I've even been a second reader for some master's theses—I just don't teach a regular, weekly group of students.

For me, the choice of work within the art world begins with the kinds of questions a profession asks. If you work as an art dealer or at an auction house, your first question must be, "What do I have for sale?" and the second question should be, "How can I sell it?" At a museum like the MFA, I ask questions based on what the museum already owns, what we hope to collect, what we can borrow, and why it is important. In a college setting, however, you can ask all sorts of questions with few restrictions, and many of these questions may have little to do with the actual art per se. For my personality, teaching might be too broad. I prefer the structure of the museum setting: I can begin with an object and use that as a point of departure.





Cathédrale St Michel, Brussels, Belgium, by Guyomar Pillai

### **What do you think students should take away from the museum?**

There are many potential analogies for this: the MFA is like a great library for Core students, or it's like a course that you can drop into and out of whenever you want, a kind of amazing lecture course to audit. To continue the analogy, one thing I find so powerful about the Core is that students are not reading textbooks; they're analyzing great books, statements

by individuals arguing a point at a specific moment in time. Similarly, the Museum is not meant to be a textbook. Its collections are composed of hundreds of pieces from all world cultures that represent values, ideals, and expressions. Rather than just reading an art textbook, consulting the original painting or sculpture or work of art is like reading a text; you have to meet it halfway. It doesn't get translated for you. It's in the Core spirit.

### **That's absolutely true! What is notable about the MFA?**

The MFA is one of the great encyclopedic museums in the world, with incredible depth in certain areas—particularly Japanese, Chinese, French, American, and ancient Egyptian art. And it's important to note that in these collections, some of the objects are world famous. The MFA also contains objects that are not always found in art museums: musical instruments, textiles and clothing, and ship models. I hope you will realize the diversity of the collections and cultures. It's not just oil paintings on canvas!

Sometimes, students think that they can only visit the Museum on Wednesday evenings, the free night for the public, but they are actually able to visit seven days a week. Because BU is part of our University Membership program, student admission is free. You can think of the museum like a gigantic encyclopedia of the world's art, and each gallery is a chapter in that volume. And so, when you go to view art in the MFA, try to determine the topic of that particular chapter, or gallery; establish the thesis, the main points, and the subsidiary points or digressions, just as you would with a great book text in Core.

### **Where should students start when they first go to the MFA?**

You should start with something that relates culturally to a class you're taking. If you're enrolled in the Ancient World section of Core, for example, try the ancient Greek and Roman material. The labels and wall texts will give you some guidance. If you're doing an Asian history or culture class, try starting with the Asian arts. If you're doing a studio art class, or if you're partic-

ularly interested in a certain medium, like photography or ceramics, you might consider starting with that interest.

Right now, the MFA's focus is the new "Art of the Americas" wing, which is the Museum's attempt to contain the cultural diversity of two continents, North America and South America, under one roof. Unlike many other museums which have one wing for paintings, one for sculpture, one for decorative arts, the MFA has been trying for the last decade to install integrated displays with two- and three-dimensional art in the same gallery. Generally, these types of installations are greatly beneficial for sculptural or three-dimensional art, which earns more attention because of its placement. Often, rooms containing only sculpture or decorative arts are neglected by the public in favor of paintings. If you're bringing friends to the Museum, and you're not sure what might interest them, photography is often a good bet. And everybody's mother enjoys the Impressionists: we have thirty-eight Monet paintings and a range of great Renoir, Degas, Van Gogh, and so on.

**Can you talk about some of the other resources the MFA offers?**

The MFA offers regular free gallery talks given by professional art historians. A gallery talk can be a very good way to get to know a particular period or a theme of art. You can look for these online or in the printed schedule. Also, note that if you start a talk, and you decide it isn't to your interest, you can take off! The speaker won't be offended if you decide to leave. Sometimes, you might need someone to give you pointers and a few tools for reading the work of art, especially with material that is unfamiliar to you.

BU students should take advantage of the University Membership program, and go to the MFA at least once a semester—not only for class, but just to learn for the fun of it.

**What is your advice for people who love art but don't know where to begin, both in the MFA and in general?**

A couple things—one is to make a point of visiting special exhibitions to see what's new in the art of today. You could also look at exhibitions of older art that's being presented in new ways. The chief art critic for the *Globe*, Sebastian Smee, is a brilliant writer and is very respected in the art world. [Very respected; he just won a 2011 Pulitzer Prize for his criticism! - *Eds.*] If you're interested in art, you should definitely try to read his columns and reviews. Smee has a finger on the pulse of art in Boston, and he's very observant. As a side point, I would encourage students to take one or two art history courses while at Boston University. You'll become much more perceptive whenever you look at art and architecture.

### **Do you have any favorite works of art in Boston outside the MFA?**

Living in Boston, we are so fortunate—this city is full of great art and architecture. I want people who live in Boston to explore downtown, with the street pattern remaining from the colonial period, and great buildings like the Old State House. I also encourage people to get to know the Boston Public Library, with its elegant architecture and famous paintings inside. The city's also full of great sculpture. Augustus Saint-Gaudens's "Shaw Memorial," which faces the State House on Beacon Street, serves to commemorate both the white leader of a Union regiment in the Civil War made up of freed slaves and the soldiers themselves, and it is an incredibly beautiful and moving piece. It's a reminder of how, at its best, art that commemorates the past can try to encourage the future. When my friends from Europe visit, I make sure that they see this sculpture. It sums up Boston and the US in a very good way. But I also claim that it is one of the best pieces of public sculpture in North America, and after studying it, they rarely disagree!

\*

**The MFA is open seven days a week, has late hours Wednesday-Friday, and is closed only five days a year. BU students enjoy free admission with their ID.**

## Art as Afterlife

JEN ZIMMERMAN

**H**uman beings are undoubtedly dignified, perhaps extraordinary creatures: they are separated from the rest of creation by their intelligence, powers of reasoning, and other characteristics. In Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, the titular tragic hero speaks of humankind's singularity with wonder, but he notes that life's, and thus humanity's, marvels are fleeting. "What a piece of work is a man," Hamlet speculates. "How noble in reason, how infinite in faculties, in form and moving how express and admirable, in action how like an angel, in apprehension how like a god: the beauty of the world, the paragon of animals." The hero precedes these lines by remarking that, despite his belief in humankind's unparalleled greatness, he has "of late...lost all [his] mirth." In the wake of his father's death, the world, to Hamlet, seems to be "nothing...but a foul and pestilent congregation of vapors." With his father's demise, his mother and uncle's deception, and his own disintegration of mind and faculties, Hamlet realizes in speaking to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern that human beings, for all their exceptional qualities in life, their grand abilities and impressive natures, are in death nothing more than "the quintessence of dust."

Although it would seem more optimistic, more humanistic to refute Hamlet's notion that death brings nothing but decomposition into dust—into mere fragments of humans' former selves—it is more honest to contend that sufficient evidence simply does not exist to deny the prince's position. The idea that human beings are capable, through composition or through

personal achievement, of overcoming their mortality is no doubt comforting; however, it is perhaps more realistic to acknowledge that humankind is not free from the degradations of mortality. Although human beings may see themselves as superior, they die and decay in much the same way as any other creature. By no means, however, do mortality and decay signify the futility of human existence, as Hamlet implies in his speech. Rather, people should realize that any experience after life is of a completely separate realm and thus cannot be imagined in terms of the living. Death is independent of existence on Earth, and it can be assumed that every aspect of life ceases to be in death. Human existence is not entirely futile if people can change or improve circumstances or conditions for one another in life. One's life work or composition aids in the propagation of his or her identity throughout human existence, but it dies again with each person's death who comes into contact with it; in other words, the work exists only in the physical plane. The idea of the afterlife's uncertainty is not necessarily pessimistic, nor does it imply that human life is fruitless; it merely suggests equality in death.

In his essay "The Dignity of Man," Giovanni Pico Della Mirandola expresses the marvels of humanity in a way that is directly parallel to Hamlet's own articulation. "Man is...the interpreter of nature by the sharpness of his senses, by the questing curiosity of his reason and by the light of his intelligence...a little lower than the angels," the philosopher writes. Mirandola, however, does not share the same view that human beings will eventually decompose into dust or nothingness; instead, he emphasizes the importance of humanity's existence based on its creation in the likeness of God and the possibility that human beings may be able to spend the afterlife with the "Highest Father." Mirandola writes of the many ontological characteristics which distinguish people from "lower beings," but he stresses most the distinct, apparently God-given free will of humanity. "To [man] it was granted to have what he chooses, to be what he wills," which Mirandola contends is the greatest wonder of humankind. He writes that God created human beings such that they would be "confined by no limits" and that they would be able to "determine for [themselves their] own natures, in accordance with [their] own free will." In his essay, Mirandola creates direct speech from God to Adam in which man is declared central to the universe,

although not mortal or immortal, earthly or divine. Decomposition into dust for humanity in Mirandola's view seems impossible based on the description of the being, which is superior to all other creatures.

Mirandola's argument or main premise stems from the idea that God firstly exists and that He created the world and its inhabitants, including human beings. The philosopher highlights humankind's centrality to the universe, and he also advocates the concept of free will over the power of fate or destiny. Mirandola's stance, therefore, is primarily rooted in assumptions which may or may not be accurate and are, in any case, impossible to prove. The basis of any argument on religious belief, although of a certain kind of merit, is simply no longer relevant in contemporary society. Mirandola's idea that human beings are superior to other life forms is also faulty: there is no evidence that supports the claims that human beings hold a meaningful place in the world and that they experience death differently than do all other creatures. Hamlet's argument is more secure in that it does not make grandiose assumptions; it utilizes the human capacity for reason in order to postulate that humans too will decay into dust upon death. Although Hamlet imagines what it is to die without any proof as well—as this is not feasible—his reasoning and arguments are based on logic and realism.

Mirandola's emphasis on the beauty of free will is perhaps even more problematic than his religious foundations. The less appealing aspect of humanity's free will—if, as Mirandola assumes, it exists—is exemplified in *Paradise Lost*. In Milton's epic, the supposed free will of Adam and Eve actually facilitates humanity's fall. Free will can potentially beget sin, and sin begets evil in the world. In *Paradise Lost*, Eve eats of the Tree of Knowledge after God expressly forbids it. Eve freely decides to test both Adam's love for her and her own abilities by dividing the day's labor and by working apart from her counterpart, who eventually agrees to separate their tasks. Under the guise of the serpent, Satan tricks Eve into eating a piece of fruit from the forbidden tree. Although Eve later claims that the serpent "beguiled" her, she chose to eat of the tree of her own volition. After some deliberation, Eve tells Adam that she has eaten from the tree, and she pressures him to do the same. Adam almost immediately concedes, as his own "self-love has deprived him of free will; he cannot act independently of Eve because, as far as he

is concerned, there is no Eve apart from him” (Gross 104). Eve’s actions according to her independent will—and her unintentional denial of Adam’s ability to proceed freely—essentially introduces sin into the world. Unlike the implication of Mirandola’s essay, humankind’s assumed ability to act in accordance with free will is not necessarily beneficial and does not engender virtuousness.

Milton’s *Paradise Lost* echoes Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* in its examination of free will and its effectiveness, and it also invokes the play’s treatment of suicide’s contemplation, the afterlife’s uncertainty, and the body’s decomposition into dust after death. In *Hamlet*, the tragic hero logically considers the advantages and disadvantages of committing suicide during one of Shakespeare’s most famous soliloquies: “To be, or not to be: that is the question / whether ‘tis nobler in the mind to suffer / the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune / or to take arms against a sea of troubles / and by opposing end them,” Hamlet poses. “To die, to sleep—to sleep, perchance to dream: ay, there’s the rub.” Hamlet ultimately concludes that the uncertainty of the afterlife prevents people from committing suicide in order to end life’s pain. His fear of decomposing to dust—to go from “being” to “not being”—in the end overrules his desire to feel at peace once again, or to at least terminate the intense anguish he feels over his father’s murder at the hands of his uncle. Hamlet seems to realize that the afterlife is completely detached from life on Earth, and he feels incapable of actually committing suicide because of his morality and his ignorance of the experience of death. In his contemplation of his own mortality, Hamlet initially wonders whether it is best to allow the inevitable misfortunes of life to simply happen or if it is of more use to fight against one’s troubles, to actively resist them. Although Hamlet thinks that action may be futile—and often finds himself to be incapable of acting on his emotions and desires—he eventually takes drastic measures in order to avenge his father’s death. His decision to act on his desires may suggest that human existence is not entirely futile, despite the fact that Hamlet expresses his idea that for all humanity’s admirable qualities, people all decompose into dust.

In *Paradise Lost*, Adam makes a similar speech in which he also refutes the idea of suicide as a solution for the experience of acute pain. After eating



forbidden fruit from the Tree of Knowledge, Adam and Eve bring suffering and misery onto themselves and into the world for all of humankind. Upon introducing sin into God's creation and being disgraced, Eve suggests that they commit suicide together: "Let us seek Death, or hee not found, supply with our own hands his Office on ourselves." Adam, recognizing Eve's despair, seeks to comfort her while resolving to no longer submit to her. "Adam hesitates to follow this counsel, giving Hamlet's reason, that beyond the certain sleep of death there may be uncertain adventures" (Erskine 577-8). He refuses to accept her idea, saying, "Death so snatcht will not exempt us from the pain / we are by doom to pay; rather such acts / of contumacy will provoke the highest / to make death in us live: Then let us seek / some safer resolution." Adam tells her, in essence, that their lives on Earth are not futile, that suicide cannot ease their pain or deliver them from their fate, which had been sealed by Eve's free will. He addresses the uncertainty of the afterlife for them as sinners; he is not confident that they may be saved from the threat of decomposition into dust. Adam and Eve's newfound purpose, as Adam articulates, is to "bruise the Serpent's head" with their progeny, and thus, they must not die prematurely. "When Adam sees that all is not lost, that through the love of God the race may be saved for a second and nobler innocence, it is dramatically fitting that he should be rather proud of his sin" (578); he realizes his continued significance despite enduring pain and chooses to continue with life despite the uncertainties of death.

Shakespeare in his tragedy, Milton in his epic, and Mirandola in his essay each purport to address in their own ways the greatness of being human, equipped with the faculties to compose, build, and invent within one's lifetime. Each work also intimates that human beings are capable of shaping their experiences entirely for themselves. None of the works attempts to deny the abilities, skills, and sheer power of humanity: human beings are presumed to be reasonable, rational, intelligent, noble, admirable, and "infinite in faculties," but despite their alleged impressiveness and their distinctness from other life forms, their fates are unknown and impossible to determine. Hamlet directly questions the ultimate usefulness of humanity, asking, "What is this quintessence of dust?" In *Paradise Lost*, Adam also becomes aware of his own mortality after eating forbidden fruit from the Tree of Knowledge. He

realizes that with death comes undeniable uncertainty, regardless of his direct contact with God, his personal ability to affirm God's existence. Mirandola, however, does not seem to consider the unknown aspects of death, perhaps because his faith in human composition and in God's salvation are so strong that the afterlife's uncertainty is negligible to him. After his father's death and mother's deception, Prince Hamlet understands that the most logical argument is that human beings are all equalized in death, that they all decompose into dust in the same manner, that they are like any other lifeform. However, he assumes that this decomposition means that one's own composition in life is rendered useless; after his unfortunate experiences, he seems to believe that human existence, despite all its tremendous aspects, is, on the whole, fruitless. Although it is not possible to definitively say, it seems that regardless of the nature of death, humanity's existence is entirely valuable: one may not necessarily live on after death in other people; however, one's ideas may be propagated through and remembered by other human beings, which causes one person's work or life to be useful to another. Those people who have not yet experienced death may be comforted by others' works or composition, they may learn from them immensely in life and, with another person's experiences and knowledge, thus may be able to better deal with the ills and pains of existence on Earth.

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Buddha at the Jain temple atop Shatrunjaya Hill, Palitana, Gujarat, by Chloe Gummer

# Lao Tzu Meets Krishna

ANDREW WEN

**T**he blacksmith's apprentice ran away in the dead of night. He was frustrated and confused, sick of the endless hours spent by the forge. He ran into the wilderness without looking back, until his town was just a speck in the horizon.

"Way to go, kid."

The apprentice turned to see an old man stepping out from the shadows of a tree, his wrinkly hands gripping an aged, wooden walking stick.

"Go, now, and let the wind and trees take you along their path," the old man winked.

"Uh," the apprentice stammered in response.

"Do not listen to that old fool," another voice said from behind the trees. A tall man with blue skin appeared from the shadows and stepped forward.

"This can't be really happening," gaped the apprentice.

"Your duty is to be a blacksmith, and you belong back at the anvil, designing spoons and crafting sculptures. By running away, you are forsaking your dharma. That is what you were born into, and that is how you should live your life," said the blue-skinned man.

"Give the kid a break," said the old man. "He is just following what his heart is telling him to do and being a little spontaneous."

"What do you know about duty?" demanded the blue-skinned man. "You spend your life wandering, not caring where you began, or even where you need to go."

“But none of that is important,” the old man replied.

“It is important because by following your true dharma, you are devoting yourself completely to me, and that leads to enlightenment. Do you mean to say that striving to follow the path to enlightenment is not the most important goal?”

“Do not strive to follow any path, and you will find the Tao.”

“Are you suggesting that one is to perform actions without any thought of whether they are right or wrong? Surely you must believe that the thoughts behind the doing of an action reflect upon the character of that person.”

“If you let the world guide you to your next direction, then the way to the Tao will become clear,” countered the old man.

The blue-skinned man sighed. “You speak of this Tao as if it is everything, but that is not true. I am everything. I am the sun and the moon. I am the rivers, the mountains, the plains. I am everything you see and everything you cannot see. I represent all of existence; the Tao does not,” he said.

“The Tao is not everything. It encompasses everything, but it is silent, and stems from emptiness,” the old man replied.

“Then how would you know how to find it? If it is silent, how do you know that it even exists?” The blue-skinned man paused to pick a rock out the dirt. “I know this rock exists, because it originated from me. If you want me to offer proof, I can, but I do not think you are ready to see my true form.”

The old man took the rock from the blue-skinned man. “The Tao is in this rock. It is pure and untouched, capable of becoming anything under the hands of a blacksmith. Let me ask you a question: if you are everything—if you represent all of creation—then are not the men who follow my path also serving you? By surrendering to all of creation, and allowing themselves to be led by the world around them, are they not also following your footsteps?”

“They are not following me,” the blue-skinned man answered, “because they do not know what they are doing. In order to reach enlightenment, one must be actively devoted to me. Every action he performs must be committed in accordance to me, and he must not act expecting to benefit from the action. By devoting himself completely to me, the man will act according to his dharma, and he will come closer to enlightenment.”

The old man thought for a moment. “But if these people renounce selfish



Mahayana Buddha by Erica Ross, 2011

desires, would they not become wanderers like me? Would they not abandon society—and all the material wealth that society offers—to return and live as one with nature?”

“They would not. These people still have societal duties. They are defined by their specific roles in a community, not by their individuality or by nature. I require more than just the renunciation of selfish desires—if the person is able to renounce not only his actions but also his individuality, he will experience the vast totality of creation in which he is only a small part.”

“In other words, they become one with the Tao,” the old man grinned.

The blue-skinned man was furious. “No! I cannot possibly be any clearer...”

As the two men argued, the apprentice slowly backed away, wondering if his night could get any stranger.

GUYOMAR PILLAI

# Viens, viens

Viens, viens doucement lueur d'été  
Viens valser au sifflement des alizées  
Mêler à mes cheveux le parfum des orchidées

Peins, peins vivement mes journées  
Du bleu céleste dans le fleuve infiniment reflété  
Et dont mon âme se recrée

Caresse, caresse tendrement mes pensées,  
Berce-les comme si elles étaient  
d'une inexprimable fragilité

Demeure, demeure plus que le temps d'un baiser  
Afin que mon âme aura suffisamment respiré  
Quand tu me quitteras pour une autre naufragée

Et qu'elle ne se mourra pas comme les fleurs fanées  
Qui se perdent à mes pieds  
Qui s'évaporent avec l'été...

TRANSLATED BY THE AUTHOR

## Come, Come

Come, come softly glow of summer  
Come and waltz to the whistle of the trade winds  
Diffusing into my hair the perfume of the orchids

Paint, paint vividly my days  
With the celestial blue in the stream infinitely reflected  
Of which my soul recreates itself

Caress, caress tenderly my thoughts  
Rock them as though they were  
Of inexpressible fragility

Stay, stay longer than the time of a kiss  
So that my soul will have breathed sufficiently  
When you leave me for another castaway

And so that it will not die like the wilting flowers  
Which drift to my feet  
And evaporate with the summer...





Monk in Dharamsala, Himachal Pradesh, India, by Chloe Gummer

# New Analects of CC102

BY STUDENTS IN PROF. HAMILL'S 2011 SECTIONS

If you believe something, believe it. If you wish to say something, say it. But if you do not mean what you say, and do not act accordingly, you cannot truly be a good human being.

The truly good person knows what he is doing. He thinks not only in the present, but also in the future.

If you do not judge, you need not fear judgment.

Only with a good heart and good actions are you a good person.

I was once asked, "What is it to be good"? The simple answer: being true to oneself, being just to others, and being committed to finding happiness.

The purpose of life is not to enter heaven, but to find the correct way to get there.

The situation of my birth does not determine the adult I will become.

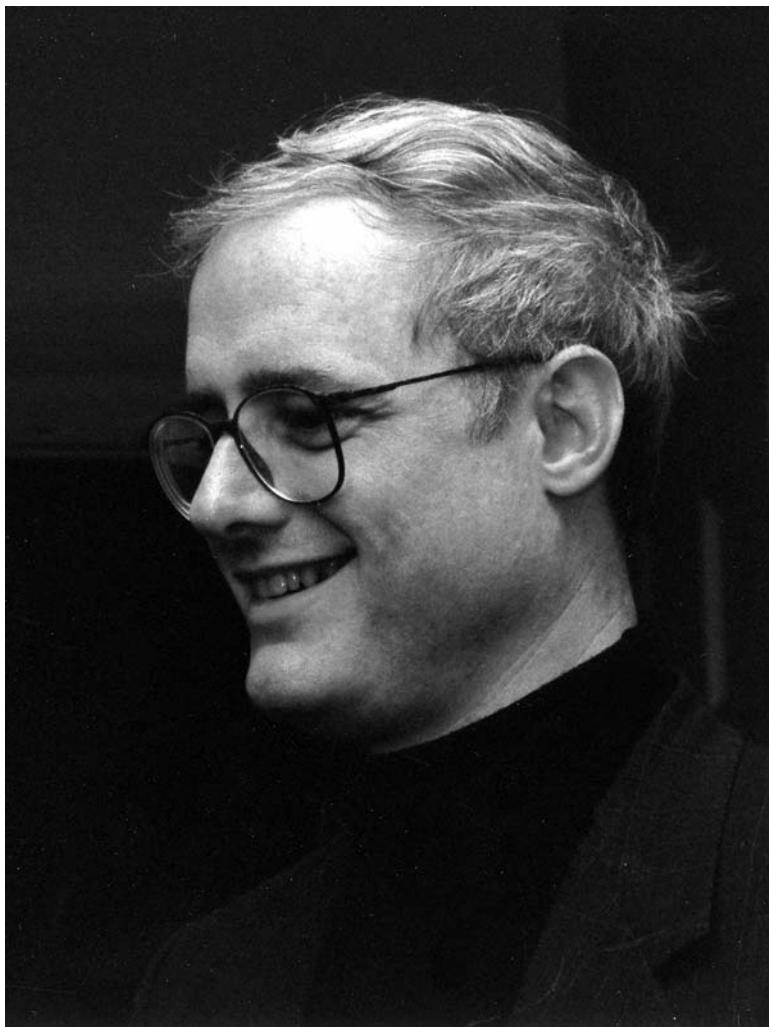
When writing for prosperity, write from the heart, not your notes.

# Fifteen Things I Learned in Core

STEVEN ABRAMS

1. I now know how to best run an Italian city-state.
2. *Star Wars* is really just a sci-fi version of the Tao.
3. The sole justification for the existence of the French people is that they produced Voltaire.
4. I could make bank writing an epic poem on a heroic journey across time and space. Every couple of centuries, some guy tweaks the same basic story, and it works out wonderfully for him.
5. Actually, scratch that. Core has awakened within me the desire to personally go on a heroic journey across time and space. And if that proves to be as unrealistic as it sounds, I can just delude myself into thinking that the train rides between Boston and New Jersey are epic adventures through a Brobdingnagian amount of reading.
6. My choice to receive a liberal arts education makes me gold-souled.
7. If Rousseau were alive today, he'd be on pills—a perfect example of the thin line between creative genius and lunacy.

8. People have not changed from at least the time of Thucydides. The strong dominate and kill the weak. Wars are fought because of fear and pride. And self-interest is the ultimate driving force of the human condition.
9. On the flipside, sex is fun. So, there may still be hope for humanity.
10. I am now able to describe the underlying motives behind Kurt Cobain's suicide.
11. World-changing ideas can come in small packages: both *The Communist Manifesto* and all four gospels are smaller than the average Harry Potter novel.
12. Inequality amongst people exists. And it apparently takes a semester to figure that out.
13. The specter of theodicy will haunt humankind until we all either kill each other or stop believing in God.
14. The humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences complement each other much more than I ever could have imagined. The intersection of these three disciplines of knowledge is a truly beautiful spot on one's academic journey. Although this may not be the ultimate destination, true wisdom lies just around the bend.
15. And yet, it is quite possible that none of this actually matters. In the end, we are all just stardust.



IN MEMORIAM  
JAMES PATRICK DEVLIN, PH.D.  
1943-2010

# Memories of Professor James Devlin in the Core

BRIAN JORGENSEN

**M**any successful institutional enterprises have required for their inception two kinds of people: the individual of fire—luminescent, leaping, a little dangerous, a source of excitement and warmth, a stirrer of pictures in the imagination, a burner and cooker, origin of sudden pops and sparks; and, on the other hand, the person more bureaucratically inclined—the calmer, mitigator, the one with something of a head for procedures and patience and ordinary dogma. Anthropologists sometimes define these types as the shaman and the priest. Professor James Devlin, a friend of many years, a founding member of the Core Curriculum and its first lead lecturer in the humanities, was unmistakably the former type.

The university may be said to have as at least one of its functions the bringing into vivid presence, for the sake of the future, the great and ancestral spirits of the past and the lofty and invisible powers. Such, too, is the shamanic vocation. There is a match of purposes, then, though with opportunities for unease on both sides. It is difficult to think of any pedagogical tool, up to and including shock and awe, that for Professor Devlin was ruled out—any more than, when the shaman scrutinizes the scene and reaches into his bag of tricks, any item of efficacy, from floating feathers to attractors of cracks of lightning, is forbidden. The point is to connect people and worlds. For Professor Devlin, fear, surprise, pathos, nausea, wounded sensibilities, as

well as feelings of warmth and ecstasy and shared astonishment, were never out of the question. Nor was hilarity—indeed, at times staircases of hilarity with, occasionally and unaccountably, some of the effect of Jacob’s dream. The shaman has his own decorum, and for Professor Devlin it was not proper to be polite about such ill phenomena as political correctness or shoddy thinking; it was, in fact, proper to be impolite. Many a student received from him the feeling that the world was a more dangerous and interesting place than he or she had been led to believe—and received as well, through a dialogic laying-on of hands or opening of dimensions, a sense that this world seen under a second sun was more accessible than supposed—accessible but not containable. “I think for a lot of us,” one student said, “the discovery of Devlin was to thought what the discovery of calculus is to mathematics. You thought you had it pretty much figured out, and then he opened up enough complexity to last and bewilder you forever—showed you just how unsettled things were.” When this student goes on to say, “If you thought you had things figured out, you could become his special project,” the ominous overtones are not irrelevant. On the other hand, a student says, “I don’t know how he did it, but he managed to make you feel you were a long way from getting this stuff *and* that you had what it took to get there.”

The shamanistic personality includes roles and masks and momentary enspiriting ranging from the austere *magister* to the uninhibited clown. Few who saw it will forget the innocent smug smile of baby Bill Clinton closing his deal with the black crow, the serenity of the Confucian scholar/bureaucrat stretching his hand lightly over his region, the deep indulgence of the Cartesian egoist kissing himself through his prolonged utterance of “*moi*,” or Professor Devlin’s acting out of the emotions as described by Spinoza: joy and despair alternating as one cannot tell whether or not a wide receiver has caught the ball in the end zone. “Yes! No! Yes! Aaagh! Eeeyahh!” Soundless but the picture of contorted anguish was his impersonation of the man trying to drive a car by using his intellect. Beyond all imitation was the shamanistic pedagogy of the Devlin stride, stalk, stare, squint, desk-smash, fluttering hypnotic fingers, or multifaceted grin.

Perhaps most looming and beckoning among Professor Devlin’s Core assignments was The Philosophy—a lengthy final paper in which was to be

stunningly put forth one's philosophy of life as one was then able to understand, develop, and express it. This paper was a product of numerous iterations, with Professor Devlin offering ongoing and elaborate commentary by means of tape recordings dictated at hours when bureaucrats are asleep, though many students awake—Professor Devlin seemed often to need only about as much sleep as the average freshman gets. His Core sections were also encouraged to write and perform dramatic skits, such as the one in which the most pretentious of insipid and self-absorbed artists, and his encourager and abettor, the most sophisticated and misled of fox-furred philanthropists, are both eventually devoured by the Furies.

Among his themes:

Self-mastery. "If someone gave you ten million and asked for it back in return for self-mastery, which would you choose?"

Self-knowledge, sometimes of an oddly practical kind. "What kind of mind do you have? 'Buzzing with understanding' or 'a deep well that after some time of stillness brings up the perfect understanding?' Once you figure this out, you can cultivate that part of your nature."

The Jung and Myers-Briggs personality typology, especially N (Intuitive) and S (Sensory): David the N and Saul the S.

The Vats, once *The Matrix* came out.

The perfect life; the perfect party; what makes love possible and impossible; the relationship of money to love. "He talked a lot about such things with students," says one. "I think he was actually trying to teach people how to be happy, as he understood that word." Professor Devlin's lecture on Aristotelian happiness was one of his most splendid.

Talking about Aristotle one day in class: "The point of going to college is to have ideas. Here, I'm going to count to three and clap my hands, and everyone in this class is going to have an idea, all right? One, two, three! <Clap.> You sir—what was your idea?" By a drawn-out four-tone whistle he would signal a sudden manifestation of thought or evocation of some other weirdness. Among his designations was "*Elegante y elephante*."

It seemed to me, speaking now as a colleague, and seemed, I think, to some of the other teachers and personalities, magnificent all, who first undertook the Core, that Professor Devlin contributed something that



became characteristic of the enterprise. He did not really believe in teaching a “subject”—he believed in something much more like the “turning around” evoked by Socrates. Not impressed with the lines drawn between disciplines, or even by lines between books or topics, he was much more interested in the lines connecting them. He treated books and ideas like friends—in the sense that he was more interested in their characters and their relationships to other friends than in their physical descriptions or résumés. Perhaps another way to say this, speaking now as a friend, would be that, for Professor Devlin, teaching seemed, at times, an activity capable of subsuming all others, a kind of highest activity in which all topics and forms and existences would have their place. It was the kind of activity that produced in the present precious moments something akin to a distant analogue, subject to distortion, of the struggle of Dante-poet, if he had had not merely readers but interlocutors—the struggle to communicate, to bring forth again, some shadow of what he believes he must have seen in *Paradiso* XXXIII. This, it might be supposed, would lead to the essential passion. “I think he wanted to make you fall in love with a few aspects of something,” one student has said. “Make them really catch your imagination. Trust that you would do the rest.”

Friendship, love, ideas, the divine, the imagination—these were the shared province of the not quite tamable shaman of the early years of Core. “Shared awe of Devlin was responsible for starting a lot of friendships,” a student remembers. “You never forgot the first time you heard him talk,” says another. “He changed your whole idea of what intellectual was. I remember thinking early on, at his first Core lecture, ‘Wow, this is college, and there will be more Professor Devlins.’”

SASSAN TABATABAI

## Uzunburun

See how tall Damavand stands,  
its head held high above the clouds.  
It is silver haired even in this green season.  
The sun reflects off the tangled locks  
that fall on the mountain's  
broad, colorless shoulders.

Damavand had been like this  
long before you and I  
first looked up at its heights.

Snow clings to the summit's every rise and fold  
like an old man's wrinkled face,  
lined by the contours of age:  
strong, northern features,  
angular nose and sunken eyes  
that seem to squint under the sun  
and swell with tears;  
tears that slowly drip and at times,  
with a flashing wink,  
catch a fleeting ray.

Soon, quiet streams  
will roll down the snowy face and rocky bosom  
through deliberate lines  
carved long ago.

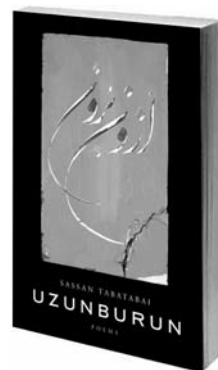
They follow their own ancient routes  
to a calm, expectant pool,  
join and gather force  
before tumbling toward  
the valley below  
that lies cradled in shadows.

And at the mountain's foot,  
the Caspian  
—this giant lake, this gentle sea—  
awaits the rushing waters to feed its depths.  
There, hidden from our eyes  
suckles the surgeon, queen Uzunburun,  
blessed with the gift of laying golden eggs.

Unlike you and me who watch from afar,  
her fate lies in the weathered hands  
of the old fisherman  
who slowly drags his net,  
taut with the Caspian's riches,  
onto the unyielding sand.  
And with it, the sturgeon  
is drawn to the edge of her world.

She breaks the surface  
to a place rounded at the edges,  
and with a silent gasp  
pumps her gills with inaccessible air.  
Suddenly aware of her own weight,  
she strains to return to the cool depths of home  
and lay her golden eggs,  
which now belong neither to herself  
nor to the fisherman.

*This poem will be appearing in  
Prof. Tabatabai's first collection  
of verse and translation, titled  
Uzunburun, forthcoming from  
Pen & Anvil Press in 2011.*



ALAS  
OVR LIFE  
IS SHORT  
AND ART  
IS LONG  
THEY SAY

## Contributor & Staff Bios

**Steven Abrams** (CAS 2013) is a History major and Political Science minor. His first two years at BU—and his Core experience in particular—burst the suburban New Jersey bubble in which he was raised, and blunted his cynicism. It has been unhelpful, however, with his problem of constantly getting lost in his own thoughts.

**Elise Alexander** (CAS 2013) is double majoring in History and Political Science. She is only slightly neurotic, and enjoys eating spicy Indian food, listening to violent hip-hop, and reading Dostoevsky (preferably all at the same time).

**Lincoln Bliss** (CAS 2014) is originally from Bath, Maine. He is working towards dual majors in English and Political Science.

**Zachary Bos** has been an administrative staff member of the Core since 2003. He has at different moments in his life been responsible for programming humidity sensors for a physics lab, puréeing fish gonads for a neuroendocrinology lab, translating French sonnets for publication, and braising fiddlehead ferns for a Nobel laureate. His creative writing has appeared most recently in *The Black Herald*.

**Julia Chen** (CAS 2014) is majoring in English. She is a walking study in inanity and an oatmeal cookie virtuoso from suburban southern California. An unashamed Lindy Hopper, she will break out some Charleston in the supermarket when the music calls for it. When Julia is not looking at photos of baked goods, she spends her time missing her double bass-playing days, snorting at some Sedaris, and being a voracious musical theater nut.

**Keita DeCarlo** (CAS 2013) is majoring in Environmental Science and minoring in African Studies. He loves everything about water, from Poland Spring to hydraulic conductivity to Taoist analogies. Naturally, he studies water and other topics related to the environment. He spends an inordinate amount of time pondering about French writers, as seen in his rambling essay.

**Neel Dhanesha** (CAS 2014) is majoring in Photojournalism. He is from Bangalore, India, and loves taking photos of pretty much everything. Neel enjoys exploring his surroundings, especially new cities, because they always provide something new to discover and photograph—no matter how much everyone else takes them for granted (like the T).

**Margarita Diaz** (CAS 2013) is majoring in Political Science and minoring in Music. She plans to use the disparate disciplines of her degree to become the next Joan Baez. When she is not devoting her evenings to the pleasures of the Core reading list, she's either singing, injecting her body with copious quantities of caffeine, or

retweeting her favorite headlines from *The New York Times's* Twitter page.

**Michael Ferron** (CAS 2013) is a Philosophy major specializing in how to get out of doing too much work. His interests include theater, Jesuit impersonation, and conversing with the horses he happens to meet. Michael one day hopes to sit on the Supreme Court, learn High Dutch, and open a farm in Turkey.

**Jennifer Formichelli** received a doctorate from the University of Cambridge in 2003. She currently teaches in the Core Curriculum, writes on poetry and literary history, and walks her two dogs for miles and miles, every single day.

**Hannah Franke** (CAS 2014) is double majoring in Art History and English. She traveled across the country from Seattle, Washington to attend Boston University, hoping to save the whales and all that. Mostly, she enjoys writing and listening to music, and she can be found frequently in the dining hall reading and eating.

**Christine Gamble** (CAS 2013) is double majoring in Neuroscience and Psychology, and she is pursuing a minor in History. She is a literature nerd masquerading as a science nerd, and her contribution to the Core Journal represents her desire balance her love of the humanities and sciences. Christine participates in ongoing research at BU's Perceptual Neuroimaging Lab, and she harbors a secret ambition to learn to sing the Queen of the Night aria from Mozart's *Zauberflöte*.

**David Green** teaches humanities in the second year of the Core Curriculum. His story "Anatomy of a Dream" first appeared in the collection *The Garden of Love*.

**Chloe Gummer** (CAS 2014) is planning to study both International Environment and Development and French. At BU, she is involved with Amnesty International and several CSC programs. Chloe took the photos featured in *The Journal of the Core Curriculum* while living and studying abroad in India as a Rotary International Youth Exchange Student.

**Kyna Hamill** teaches in the first year humanities area of the Core Curriculum. She loves to travel and took the photo of the Aeneas sculpture during a trip to Munich and Saltzburg in the summer of 2010.

**Charlotte Hogan** (CAS/SED 2013) is studying Hispanic Language and Literature and Bilingual Education. She is from southern Vermont, and enjoys traveling, music, and participates in BU's Inner Strength Gospel Choir. Core is a central part of her BU experience, and she looks forward to bringing the big ideas to the teaching profession.

**Daniel Hudon** hails from Canada, and, in addition to his work as a Core Natural Sciences instructor and lab coordinator, is a prolific writer—he has published dozens of prose pieces and poems in various print and online journals. He thanks the *Cream City Review* for first publishing the piece reprinted in this issue.

**Megan Ilnitzki** (CAS 2014) is an English major and Journalism minor. Megan is from New Jersey, which means that she's a diehard Mets fan; she will never convert to the Red Sox—sorry Boston! She loves Indiana Jones and David Wright. She plans to travel the world fueled by massive amounts of Thai food.

**Meenakshi Iyer** (CAS 2013) is majoring in International Relations and minoring in English. She has an ardent love of Shakespeare and T.S. Eliot, both of whom she has been able to explore further through the Core. In her spare time, she practices with BU's classical Indian dance team Dheem; watches Japanese anime; collects cat memorabilia; and enjoys holding poetry readings with tea and crumpets.

**Brian Jorgensen** is a former dean and professor of Core. He performs in the Fish Worship Blues Band with James Jackson (Astronomy), Jay Samons (Classics), Wayne Snyder (Comp. Sci.), David Mann (Psychiatry, Harvard), and Core alumnus Edmund Jorgensen. Four members of the band are ex-deans or deans-to-be; the day may be coming when every third member of the faculty will be a dean.

**Kalani McDaniel** (CAS 2012) is majoring in Environmental Analysis and Policy. Kalani is from Clearwater, Florida, and owns a Russian tortoise named Raskolnikov or "Rasko." In her spare time, she enjoys hula dancing, being barefoot, being outdoors, photographing insects, and watching trees. She drinks almost a gallon of milk every three days.

**Caitlin Outtersen** (CAS 2013) is majoring in Economics and Biology, and she is pursuing a minor in History. She lacks time management skills, as shown in her deep and abiding relationships with Minesweeper and Netflix instead of with the library or her friends. She is studying abroad next semester in New Zealand and cannot wait to be in the land of the hobbits.

**Guyomar Pillai** (CAS 2011) is majoring in French literature and Economics. She is an international student who was born in Saudi Arabia and grew up in Mauritius. She enjoys the poetry of Baudelaire, folktales, studying languages, cooking international foods, and taking long walks. She plans to be a professor of French literature and hopes to travel around the world.

**Jacob Rosenbaum** (CAS 2013) is majoring in English. He was born in Connecticut in 1990; he later moved to Ohio, then Michigan, and finally California before coming to Boston. He is the middle child in a family of three brothers.

**Erica Ross** (CAS 2013) is majoring in Marine Science with a minor in Religion. She was born in Michigan and is a big fan of the Midwest. She likes biking and art, and she went to Bonnaroo for the past three summers. Erica also has a minor obsession with shoes.

**James Shapiro** (CAS 2011) is majoring in Philosophy. He is from New Haven, Connecticut. He has been creating sample-based hip-hop production for eight



years and has worked with several unsigned but up-and-coming artists. He hopes to one day teach high school English and coach baseball in an urban setting.

**Reenat Sinay** (CAS 2013) is majoring in International Relations and pursuing a minor in Journalism. She loves Thai food and all things British (except the food), and she almost always falls asleep at night with a book still in her hands. Reenat will miss the Core, but she is excited to study abroad in London this fall.

**Sassan Tabatabai** teaches Core Humanities and Persian. This is his eighth year as advisor to the Journal.

**Alexis Valdovinos** (CAS 2013) is currently majoring in International Relations. Among other interests, he loves politics, reading, writing, and soccer. Life and God inspire his works.

**Andrew Wen** (CAS 2014) is majoring in English and minoring in Mathematics. He is trying to balance his plans of becoming an aspiring writer against his hope of being at least a little self-sufficient.

**Sam Wildman** (CAS 2013) is pursuing dual majors in Philosophy and Psychology.

**Jen Zimmerman** (CAS 2013) is currently pursuing an English major and Art History minor. Her favorite artists are Chagall, Redon, and Van Gogh, and she spends way too much time reading about their art and lives. She hopes to someday publish the story of her life as told in awkward moments.

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THE JOURNAL OF THE CORE CURRICULUM || HOW O HOW  
COULD I STAY SILENT | HOW | O HOW | COULD I KEEP QUIET | MY  
FRIEND WHOM I LOVE HAS TURNED TO CLAY | ENKIDU | MY  
FRIEND WHOM I LOVE HAS TURNED TO CLAY | AM I NOT LIKE  
HIM | MUST I LIE DOWN TOO NEVER TO RISE AGAIN - GILGAMESH  
|| JOY & GRIEF NEED EACH OTHER | THEY CANNOT BE PARTED  
- MEPHISTOPHELES IN FAUST || FOR MEN ALMOST ALWAYS WALK  
ALONG THE BEATEN PATH & WHAT THEY DO IS ALMOST ALWAYS  
AN IMITATION OF WHAT OTHERS HAVE DONE BEFORE | BUT YOU  
CANNOT WALK EXACTLY IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THOSE WHO HAVE  
GONE BEFORE | NOR IS IT EASY TO MATCH THE SKILL OF THOSE  
YOU HAVE CHOSEN TO IMITATE - MACHIAVELLI || KNOWLEDGE  
WITHOUT JUSTICE OUGHT TO BE CALLED CUNNING RATHER  
THAN WISDOM - PLATO || IT IS THE MARK OF AN EDUCATED  
MIND TO BE ABLE TO ENTERTAIN A THOUGHT WITHOUT  
ACCEPTING IT - ARISTOTLE || HE HAD OF ME ALL HE COULD  
HAVE | I MADE HIM JUST & RIGHT SUFFICIENT TO HAVE  
STOOD | THOUGH FREE TO FALL - GOD IN PARADISE LOST || YOU  
WERE NOT RAISED ON CUSHIONS IN COOL SHADE BUT NAKED  
TO THE WIND | BAREFOOT IN THORNS - PETRARCH || THE  
JOURNEY OF A THOUSAND MILES BEGINS WITH A SINGLE STEP  
- LAO TZU || THERE ARE MORE THINGS IN HEAVEN & EARTH  
HORATIO THAN ARE DREAMT OF IN YOUR PHILOSOPHY - HAMLET  
|| I WAS BORN FREE & TO LIVE FREE | I CHOSE THE SOLITUDE OF  
THE COUNTRYSIDE & TO THE TREES & THE WATERS | I REVEAL MY  
THOUGHTS & MY BEAUTY | I AM THE DISTANT FIRE & THE FAR OFF  
SWORD - DON QUIXOTE || NEVER HAVE I NOT EXISTED NOR YOU  
NOR THESE KINGS & NEVER IN THE FUTURE SHALL WE CEASE TO  
EXIST - KRISHNA IN BHAGAVAD GITA || HERE FORCE FAILED MY  
HIGHEST FANTASY | BUT MY DESIRE & WILL WERE MOVED ALREADY  
LIKE A WHEEL REVOLVING UNIFORMLY BY THE LOVE THAT MOVES  
THE SUN & THE OTHER STARS - DANTE-PILGRIM || SPRING MMXI