

THE
WORLD
IS A
SPIRITUAL
VESSEL

THE JOURNAL

OF THE CORE CURRICULUM
COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCES
BOSTON UNIVERSITY

AND
CANNOT
BE
CONTROLLED

天下神器
不可為也

THE JOURNAL

OF THE CORE CURRICULUM

AN ANNUAL LITERARY & ACADEMIC ANTHOLOGY
IN THE COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCES
AT BOSTON UNIVERSITY

ISSUE NO. XXX, 2021

ISSN 1555-2233

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“...AN ENTIRE SOCIETY,
A NATION, OR ALL SIMULTANEOUSLY EXISTING
SOCIETIES TAKEN TOGETHER,



are not the owners of the earth.

THEY ARE SIMPLY ITS POSSESSORS, ITS
BENEFICIARIES, AND, HAVE TO BEQUEATH IT
IN AN IMPROVED STATE TO SUCCEEDING
GENERATIONS AS BONI PATRES FAMILIAS...”

KARL MARX, *CAPITAL*

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>> ONLINE EXCLUSIVE: “Dido”, a video by Seynedhee Avenie

A note on the layout: Where punctuation occurs inside a pair of quotation marks, the editors intend the reader to understand that the punctuation is either original to the material being quoted, or appears there by convention, as in the case of periods after article titles in ‘Works Consulted’ lists.

THE FACULTY OF THE CORE CURRICULUM
CONGRATULATE OUR 2021 PROGRAM AWARDEES

Journal Awards

Selected by the editors, The Journal Essay Award: Daniel Cardosi. Honorable Mentions: Marina Berardino & Carolyn Zou. *The Journal Award for Creativity:* Sneha Korlakunta. Honorable Mentions: Gwen Liu, Miho Namba, Alexandra Iberico, and Onosereme Ofoman. *The Journal Award for Sustainability:* Riya Beri.

The James Patrick Devlin Award

For first-year writing, Vivian Dai, Kei Kwan Queena Lau, and Jonas Benjamin Raedler. Honorable Mentions: Sami Almond, Lauren Gotard, and Luke Saunders.



Devlin Award-winners are designated in this issue by a ribbon, as shown.

.....

Core Divisional Awards

For distinctive academic performance, in the **First-Year Humanities:** Seynedhee Avenie and Kei Kwan Queena Lau. Honorable Mentions: Isabel Plower and Jordan Lee. In the **Second-Year Humanities:** Dilara Turut & Amir Wilson. Honorable Mentions: Codell Christensen, Nic Rowe, and Jonas Kaplan-Bucciarelli. In the **Social Sciences:** Vanessa Hanger. Honorable Mentions: Alexandra Mascarello & Magdalene Rose Farren. In the **Natural Sciences:** Simone Seiner & Lauren Gotard.

Polytropos Award

Presented to Core alumni upon their graduation, acknowledging academic excellence and community leadership: Quinn Angelou-Lysaker, Brady Wright, Marina Berardino, Rownyn Curry, Abigail Sklar, Margaret Cramer, Alana Jimenez, Ashley M. Lai and C. Vega.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT BU.EDU/CORE/AWARDS

IN MEMORIAM



Jon Westling

1942-2021

We dedicate this issue to the memory of Jon Westling, President *emeritus* of Boston University. He was a scholar of medieval history and a man of deep concern for values of truth and justice.

Westling was an alumnus of Reed College and a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford University. His activities as a young man reflected his humanistic values. He took part in civil rights protests as a Freedom Rider, and was jailed in 1963 for his participation in a sit-in.

First brought to the Charles River Campus by a documentary film project in 1974, Westling was subsequently named Provost in 1984 by then-President John Silber. Westling's leadership was guided by a desire to "create an environment in which we can pursue truth and freedom", as he remarked on the occasion of his assuming the office of President. After leaving that role, Westling returned to the classroom in 2002, where he was a teacher of great impact in the Department of History and the Arts & Sciences Core Curriculum.

Colleagues and students alike valued his friendship, learning, and wit. ■

Readers are encouraged to share memories in the comments section following the article "Remembering Former BU President Jon Westling" published in BU Today.

.....



Editor's Note

“I am alone and they are everyone”

In this quotation, Dostoyevsky aptly summarizes the state that the Underground Man finds himself in, a feeling of being intensely *alone*. It is a state we perhaps each found ourselves in at some point over the course of the past year. Tasked to compile—entirely through screens—an anthology of commentary, criticism, art, and meritorious research, I feared that the alienating effects of remote learning might seep into our editorial work. This concern deepened my sense of responsibility as chief editor to provide encouragement and a semblance of community though we were physically separated. Cultivating a compassionate (virtual) space for cooperative group work and nurturing ties of friendship among the members of the editorial team became as important as the practical matters of proofreading and deadlines. Perhaps this wasn't a change in focus as much as a foregrounding of what should ideally always be a goal of publishing:

*the responsible use of resources
to lift as many people as possible,
empowering as many voices as we can.*

This issue of *The Journal* is noteworthy for many reasons; let me share a few:

- We saw the greatest number of submissions in program history, with nearly triple the submissions count from last year.
- We expanded our contributor pool to be more inclusive, inviting submissions from the entire CAS community. Our contributors now include departmental majors, cross-registered students, and alumni from any class year.
- We made a commitment to showcase the prize-winning essays of the Devlin Award competition for first-year writing.

- We launched a new content category relating to the topics of sustainability and environmental justice.
- We formalized award categories for sustainability, essay-writing, and creativity.
- And finally, we went multimodal. Our table of contents will now list exclusive and multimedia pieces selected and developed by the editors. Visit us online at www.bu.edu/core/journal to find an original musical, a timely video response addressing anti-Asian hate, and an extended interview with a Core alumnus turned popular YouTube creator.

We'd like to recognize and celebrate the students, alumni, faculty, and staff who collaborated during extraordinary circumstances to bring our print and online issues to fruition. Individuals from numerous disciplines and departments came together to offer suggestions on marketing, editing, and design, and to supply our contributors with careful, constructive feedback.

We wish to express particular thanks to Zachary Bos, for his meticulous mentorship and congeniality through each stage of the production process. To Prof. Hamill and the CAS leadership, we thank you for your guidance and trust. We are especially grateful to David Weinstein and the team at Write the World for providing our staff with immensely helpful editorial training and unprecedented financial support. And thank you to all who supported CAS, Core, and *The Journal on Giving Day*.

For this 2021 issue, we felt it important to collect and highlight responses to the COVID-19 pandemic and to preserve accounts of how the transition online impacted members of our learning community. In reply to our call for submissions, we received many dozens of essays, photos, and personal accounts. Some responses were academic in nature, offering intelligible answers grounded in perspicuous reasons that unbiased individuals can appreciate and possibly accept; others were more expressive, using artistic methods to transcend limits, which so often bear upon collegiate writing.

When reading these pages, it is our hope that you may be stimulated to ponder and to attempt to answer for yourself some of the great questions of human concern. The work of grappling with such questions, unavoidable and ultimate, is an important part of our profound enterprise of being in the world.

Transmitting peace and love on behalf of the entire editorial team,

Vanessa Stanger

BRIAN JORGENSEN

Going to the Virtual Show

Faculty band Fish Worship opened the March performance (on Zoom) of Plautus' *Menaechmi*, sponsored jointly by Classics and Core, with this new original song.

.....

Talking on the phone, hello, hello
 Nothing new here, things are pretty slow
 I got to go! Going to the virtual show
 Just like they used to in ancient Rome
 Except that you do it in the walls of your home
 At the show, at the virtual show

I like your looks and you know what I mean
 Let's meet for a drink, screen to screen
 And then we'll go! Going to the virtual show
 Just like the Roman marketplace
 Except that you stay in your personal space
 At the show, at the virtual show

Now you are standing by the Golden Gate Bridge
 And you dominate an Appalachian ridge
 You are floating through nebulae
 And you are a hole in a tropical sky

It's about some twins and what they don't know
 Some things change, some things less so
 Let's go! Going to the virtual show
 Contemporary references, salacious puns
 Gonna be a whole lot of virtual fun
 No need to even move your feet
 The show comes to you in your same old seat
 Prof. Klein, her class, classics nation
 Icon-claps of appreciation

Let's go! Going to the virtual show
 Going to the virtual show ■

JOIN THE DEPARTMENT OF CLASSICAL STUDIES AND THE CAS CORE CURRICULUM FOR
AN UTTERLY RIDICULOUS EVENING OF THEATER AS WE PRESENT PLAUTUS'

MENAECHMI

OR, 'THE BROTHERS MENAECHMUS'

A tale of identical twin brothers separated in childhood and reunited after complicated misadventures of mistaken identity

Adapted by the students of CL 229 and performed by a merry cast of faculty, graduate students, and undergrads

Featuring a special performance by the faculty band, Fish Worship

TUES, MARCH 30, 2021 - 5:30 PM (EST) ON ZOOM
 Register to receive the Zoom link at www.bit.ly/Plautus2021

Sponsored by the Department of Classical Studies, the CAS Core Curriculum, the Undergraduate Classics Association, and the NEH Distinguished Teaching Professorship. Poster by Zachary Bos. For more information, email sophie.k@bu.edu.

BOSTON UNIVERSITY

The annual staging of an ancient comedy is a long-standing CAS tradition. This year's selection, a tale of identical twins separated as children who reconnect after misadventure and mistaken identity, was adapted by students in CL229: Roman Comedy in Translation. The performers, a motley crew of faculty and students, "performed" the script on Zoom without prior rehearsal... to comic, chaotic effect. A recording of the evening be found at http://youtu.be/jslCT_h6t6o.

DANIEL CARDOSI

Nietzsche's Textual Panopticon: Toward a Language of Perspectivism

Exotic, arcane, and bristling with colorations, Nietzsche's writings seem to drift as far as possible from typical philosophical discourse. They move from understatement to hyperbole, from neutrality to conceit, and from truth to untruth—to perspectival truth. Herein lies the question at stake: if Nietzsche's statements stand at the mercy of his own situatedness and his own subjectivity, what saves his writings from hollowness—from overflowing with cancellations and self-subversions? The answer looms not distantly but intratextually, in his concinnity; that is, it intersects with his divergence from prosaic phrasing. In light of his later works on perspective, "On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense" (*TL*) coheres his theory of perspectivism by way of a style that arises necessarily, not fortuitously, and that sets forth a new expressive mode under which he can anticipate eisegesis and engage in a praxis that calls its own theory into question.

At its heart, the essay's figural language is exoteric: it seeks to withhold its reader from misunderstanding. Although Nietzsche's turn of phrase in itself presents a labyrinth, one in which critic Arthur Danto finds "dissonances . . . like architectural disharmonies in a transitional church, where the style being groped toward has not yet emerged" (62), in moving style to the periphery, Danto glosses over what underlies it. Nietzsche's variform style may appear bereft of immediacy, but upon a reading that assumes "every word [to be] also a mask" (*BGE* 173), the essay's rhetorical undercurrents begin to gleam through its surface, unveiling a larger design. As Nietzsche sees words as the products of a dual abstraction from "nervous stimulus" to "image" to "articulated sound" (*TL* 145), he believes that intention is inexorably refracted through semantic meaning, and he offers a twofold solution. Firstly, he aims to "speak only in forbidden metaphors . . . so that, by at least demolishing and deriding the old conceptual barriers, he may do creative justice to" his impressions (152). That is, by recasting his points into comparisons and analogies, he can combine multiple oblique entries into each idea, creating spheres of connotation that overlap around a single meaning. He compares, for instance, humans to midges, beasts, spiders, and bees (141, 142, 150); he likens the concepts in science and math to dice and to the ashes of the dead (147, 150); he describes the intellect as a master and as a slave (151); and he equates language with Chladni figures and with metaphor itself (144). By this metaphoric "*art*", the essay awakens read-

erly intuition, becoming heteroglossic and thus almost univocal (*BGE* 138). The second entailment of Nietzsche's solution is that his style abound with "sensuous vigour", for only then can his readers "sublimate" or "dissolve" their "impressions" into "schema[s]" and understand him (*TL* 146). For Nietzsche, as author Christopher Janaway observes, "multiplying different affects always improves knowing", so Nietzsche concentrates his expression into sensory, "affect-arousing" images (*TL* 211, 212): he writes, for example, of a flickering light, of a swelling balloon, of "flowing water", of "the twists and turns of the bowels", of the "flow of the blood stream", and of the "tremblings of the nerve fibers" (141, 147, 142). Because his readers' "eyes merely glide across the surface of things and see 'forms,'" he paints "illusions and dream-images" that well on the text's surface and provoke sensations, replacing literal signification (142). The essay's two stylistic strands converge, then, into an avoidance of polysemy and thus of categorical voicing, for any non-plural utterance of a truth presupposes firstly that language harbors no vagueness and no ambiguity, conveying transparently its agent's thought, and secondly that the truth being conveyed is *a priori*, transcending lived experience. Perspectival, *a posteriori* truth, in short, requires perspectival representation—exhaustion of meaning through various points of sight, through "the left-over *residue of . . . metaphor*" (147).

Woven into these metaphoric contours, Nietzsche's tropes also forge a self-reflexive style that displays the limitation in both perceiving and proclaiming truth. His language, insofar as it personifies its objects, incarnates his thought: nature is said to bear "eyes" and to have "drawn . . . breaths" (141); it peers "through . . . consciousness", it "knows", it "cavorts around men", and it deceives "in every shape and form" (142, 145, 151). Similarly, the intellect "jumbles up metaphors", "performs reckless tricks", and "copies human life" (151, 152); it "labours" in "its usual slavery" before "cast[ing] off . . . servitude" and "wip[ing] the expression of neediness from its face" (152). Metaphor, finally, is "the grandmother of . . . every concept" (147). For Nietzsche, what is knowable is not "pure truth" but only "the metamorphosis of the world in human beings" (144, 148), so it follows that he relies on personification—"an *aesthetic way of relating*", "an allusive transference" that mirrors human cognition itself (148). In patterning his already multiperspective writing with such description, he gives linguistic form to phenomenal knowledge, and his language takes a form like that of (his) truth: a "mobile army of metaphors, metonymies, [and] anthropomorphisms" (146). As scholar Lawrence Hatab notes, Nietzsche thus "*affirm[s]* the fact that a perspectival approach could be thrown back at itself and be subject to self-referential limitation" (136). Indeed, the style of *TL* suggests such apprehension on Nietzsche's part, for any other style would

contradict his notion of truth and create an aporia.

Nietzsche's project is thereby not so much to escape the pre-objective realm as to prove that it is inescapable—that “*perspectivity*” is the “fundamental condition of all life” (*BGE* 4). Through style alone, his essay becomes a metarepresentation of the very theory it proposes, introducing a vocabulary of perspectival reality that allows him to revel in self-contradiction. ■

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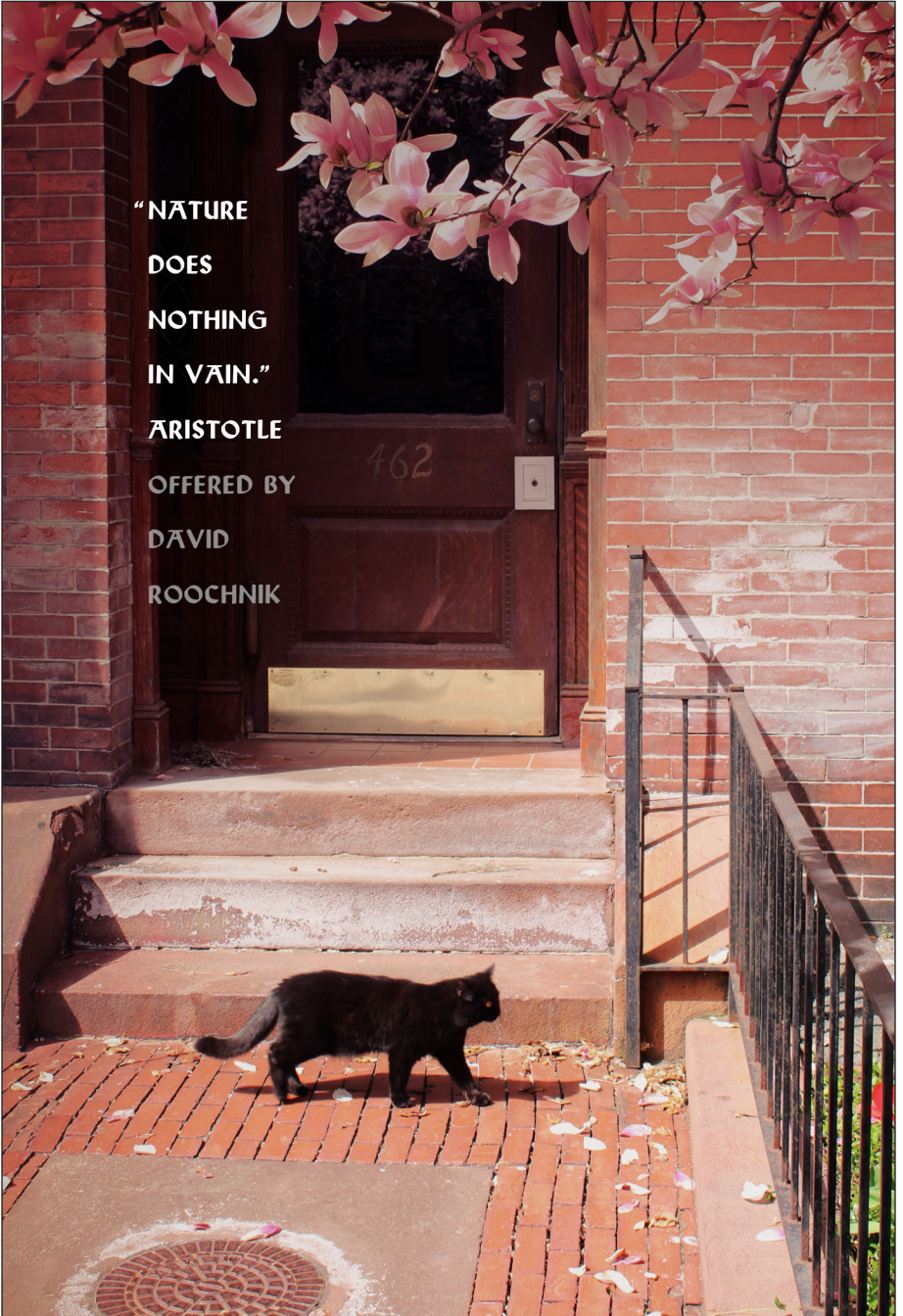
“IF NOT EVEN HEAVEN AND EARTH CAN KEEP

THINGS GOING FOR A LONG TIME

HOW MUCH LESS

CAN HUMAN BEINGS?”

DAODEJING, CH. TWENTY-THREE



**"NATURE
DOES
NOTHING
IN VAIN."
ARISTOTLE
OFFERED BY
DAVID
ROOCHNIK**

CORY WILLINGHAM

In Bloom

June should bring
peony-lavender scent,
springing from the earth
like Persephone's smile.
This year, cadavers and rot are in bloom.

Down on Ventura, braying
like youths obsessed
by the pool, a mass
of life, possessed of a lust
it refuses to smother, writhes and bleats.

June will claim them all.
Make mulch of the children
and salt of the rest.
Only vacant asphalt
will attest our needy self-negation. ■

CARLOS EDUARDO SANTOS TORRES

At Night, in the Backland

“Fellow man! Your whole life, like a sandglass, will always be reversed and will ever run out again, – a long minute of time will elapse until all those conditions out of which you were evolved return in the wheel of the cosmic process.” – F. Nietzsche

I

The Backland is a vast landform in between civilizations, colored by the sun’s restlessness in burnt shades of cider, bronze, and amber. The open terrain is occasionally interrupted by discoloured cacti, dead trees, and small, white, lifeless houses. The mighty air plunges the heat to the ground. At night, the air ceases pushing, the sun finally rests and unleashes the power of its absence, and the wind crackles, battling the outgoing sun, testing which is more punishing. The sky is chrome blue and incessant. The Backland is never a destination.

II

The air was pushing particularly hard on the traveller’s shoulders on that ginger summer day and he could feel them giving up with every trot his black horse surrendered. Not even the black felt hat his wife had given him ameliorated the Backland’s castigation and his head vacillated every mile or so. Fading shadows and the demising light reminded him that the trip was soon to be over.

Memories of his wife sputtered throughout the day. Their conglomeration indicted an absent husband and a mosaic of guilt wiggled through the thick air, enveloping him in remorse.

For the last five years, in the weeks following his return home, the Backland was a unanimous presence. The violence of the day and the indifference of the night wouldn’t wear off until the nightmares stopped.

The man under the black felt hat knew that the images he collected in this trip, like in the ones before—gaunt faces, failing towns, and famished animals being devoured by vultures—would permeate his mind like fever permeates the day and apathy the night in this damned place.

And through all this, the black horse trotted, on and on and on, until the scorched soil was interrupted by the phantasm of a paved road, revealing to the wandering pair a community with eight homogenous, white, lifeless houses—four on each side of the unpaved street that shaped the area's borders. At the end of the street was a church in need of repair.

The ostentatious moon warned the traveller that he had missed the sunset.

A young man greeted him with a warm smile.

“How has the sun treated you?”

“It tortures me, day in and day out”, answered the traveler.

“I know the feeling. Pick any of the houses. There'll be a bed available. Go to the church when you wake up.”

The traveller walked into the nearest one and promised himself that this particular fire-lit house would be the last one before homecoming. He laid down and fell asleep.

When he woke up it was still dark, but he felt rested nonetheless. He walked out of the house and the sky was chrome blue and full of stars. Lacking motive and will, he went to the church.

When the traveller entered the church, an explosion of unbearable, cacophonous, tired bellow stiffened his chest, shoulders, and eyebrows. Eleven people, he counted, shouting and crying and praying and singing.

They were gathered around a fire urn. As if captured by the feuding melodies, the traveller slowly advanced towards them and integrated into the circle. They started moving clockwise around the urn, picking up the pace upon the completion of a cycle.

At first he felt lost but as they went round and round and round and round, he felt lighter and cooler, eventually contributing to the communal song of desperation. They did this until the fire went out.

When the ceremony ended, the traveller felt dizzy and weightless and his shoulders sighed. He went outside to catch his breath. The dark blue chrome sky engulfed the Backland. He hadn't realized how long he spent inside the church. The young man who had greeted him followed him outside and said he should rest. So he did.

When he woke up it was still dark, but he felt rested nonetheless. He walked out of the house, smiled at the moon and made his way to the church.

There he sang and cried and prayed and shouted and got in a circle and moved, slowly and then fast, around the urn, whilst the others sang, cried, prayed, and shouted until the fire was out. Then he went to bed. The moon and stars looked just like before.

The heat and pressure exerted by the Backland had made him a bitter and violent

man, but the cold and the stars and the moon would make him temperate, he thought. The Backland would give back what it took.

He kept participating in the circular ritual that gave him purpose, over and over and over and over. The sky was always dark when he looked at it and the moon was a calming presence.

All days were alike.

Once, however, his black horse was waiting outside the church. The traveller looked at his companion and nodded. The stallion turned around and galloped away into the Backland, blending into the metallic blue of the night. It was time to go to bed.

When he woke up it was still dark, but he felt rested nonetheless. On his way to the church he looked at the moon and took a deep breath.

In the church he sang and cried and prayed and shouted and he got in the circle and moved, slowly and then fast, around the urn, whilst the others sang, cried, prayed, and shouted until the fire was out. He went outside and, at the sight of the moon, cried.

“How long have I been here?” he asked the young man.

“I don’t know”.

The young man said he would get used to it soon and that if they kept singing and crying and praying and shouting, the sun might remember that they exist. It was time to go to bed.

When he woke up it was still dark, so he went to the church. He sang, cried, prayed and shouted. He got in the circle and walked round and round and round and round until the fire went out. The traveller exited the church, looked at the moon, cried, and went to bed.

III

A traveller, mounted on a pale horse, strayed along the Backland’s eternal horizon, until the scorched soil was interrupted by the phantasm of a paved road, revealing to the wandering pair a community with eight homogenous, white, lifeless houses—four on each side of the unpaved street that shaped the area’s borders. At the end of the street was a church in need of repair.

The ostentatious moon warned the traveller that he had missed the sunset.

A crying man greeted him.

“How has the sun treated you?” he asked with a smirk, relaxing his shoulders. ■



ALEXANDRA MASCARELLO
When the Bough Breaks

Welcome to the land of steady habits.
To the world, this world, the greatest
of all worlds, the bleakest of each day.
A forever child, its newborn feet
dragging across blanched grass,
carrying itself to the beach. The air is
still, set for sleep. But the world
thanks us as it marches endlessly,
backwards, down the staircase of time.
At the bottom, roots meet upturned
sand, and the dropped fruit is sweetest.

This is the sunken memory tree,
the remains of its limbs too often used
for toothpicks, for reaching plaque on
untouched molars.

Oh, this world. This poor, drunken
world. It sucks that spoiled, sticky fruit
juice. Those momentary strains of
Mary, of Eddie, of Hank. The taste is
meant to linger, so luscious on the
tongue, so fleeting to the mind.

Our world cannot withstand the
fevered bile. It gurgles up the mixture
as it stretches, measuring its throat
around the sunken tree's fat trunk.

Sigh, we have once again realized —
its neck is not long enough to reach
around the other side. ■

A Discussion of Ritual



NB: Page citations throughout refer to the Burton Watson translation of Confucius' *Analects* (Columbia University Press, 2010) or to the Philip Ivanhoe translation of the *Daodejing* (Hackett, 2003).

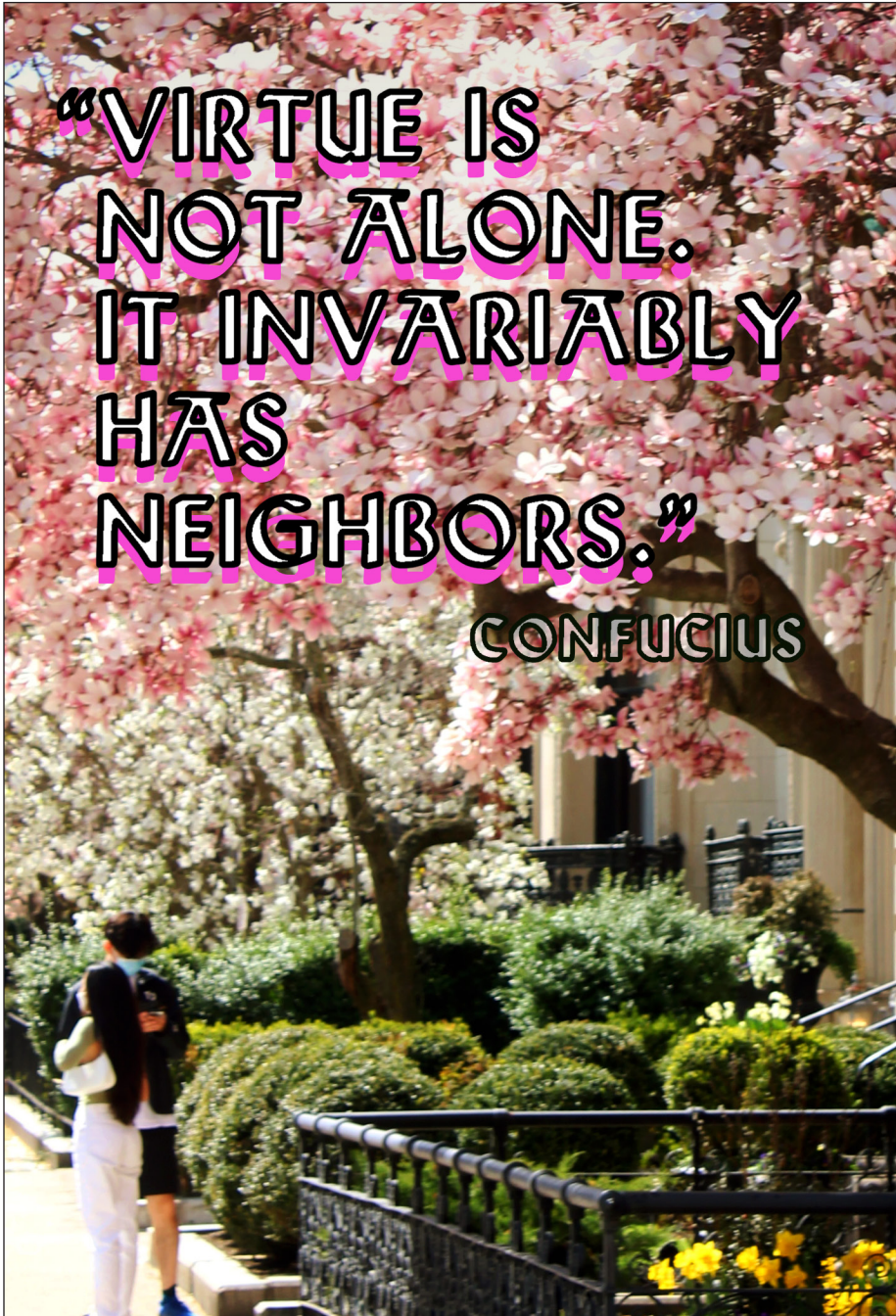
In traditional Chinese culture, rituals have always played an important role in people's daily lives. Transcending social class, rituals unite everyone from kings and government officials to average citizens. In the *Analects*, Confucius explores the nature of rituals, examining both their positive and negative aspects. According to Confucius, the benefits of rituals include: laying out clear guidelines for following the Way, gathering everyone together on the same path, and ultimately bringing about order and peace. However, he also demonstrates that rituals are most effective when they function as laws and instill more fear than respect. Moreover, Confucius argues how rituals can encourage insincerity when people perform them without the proper attitude. Laozi, in his own way, agrees with Confucius here; in the *Daodejing*, he similarly posits that rituals can be detrimental to an individual and to society. In the *Analects* and the *Daodejing*, these philosophers both highlight the deficiencies of rituals and how they differ in practice than in theory. Ultimately, the original values of the rituals erode over time and people perform them only for the sake of doing so without the proper intentions. In this way, by following the Way, they contradict the Way.

Because they regulate all aspects of life, rituals effectively function as “laws”, which govern people's ethics and behavior. I would argue that this encourages people to perform rituals not out of respect, but rather out of fear. Confucius warns readers that “things will not go well” if they fail to “employ ritual to regulate the proceedings” (1.12). This veiled threat succinctly captures Confucius' strong opinion on rituals, namely that they are not something “extra” performed for merit, but rather they are essential for maintaining basic order and peace. He later adds that rituals evoke “a sense of shame” and encourage people to “become upright” (2.3), and he warns that not performing them will “incur blame with Heaven”, leaving people with “nowhere to turn to for forgiveness” (3.13). Here Confucius implies that rituals work by instilling a fear of negative consequences, much like laws. Laozi makes a similar negative connection between rituals and laws in the *Daodejing*. He posits: “the more clear the laws and edicts, the more thieves and robbers. And so sages say: I do nothing and the people transform

themselves” (57). By this, Laozi suggests that rituals and laws are artificial cultural constructs which can run counter to the Way. The more we formalize them, the more we create opportunities for people to violate them. To him, rituals are just as ineffective as laws. While they can dictate how one should behave in society (i.e. social ethics), they have no sway over a person’s true nature (i.e. personal ethics).

In prescribing “proper” actions, rituals fail to properly take sincerity into account. Confucius remarks on how often people go through the motions of performing rituals without the appropriate integrity and intentions, and he laments this: “Carrying out rites but without reverence, conducting funeral proceedings but without grief—how can I bear to view such as these?” (3.26). There are many reasons one might carry out rituals without reverence, for example, if one finds food offerings wasteful. Likewise, there are many reasons one might conduct funeral proceedings without grief, for example, if a person had a distant or rough relationship with the deceased. Confucius is asking people to find and genuinely experience meaning in the rituals they conduct. In the *Daodejing*, Laozi says: “When the Way was lost there was Virtue; when Virtue was lost there was benevolence; When benevolence was lost there was righteousness; When righteousness was lost there were the rites” (38). Rites and rituals rank low in this chart; they are considered a last resort to maintain order. Once again, Laozi separates inner ethics (i.e. virtue, benevolence, righteousness) from external codes of conduct (i.e. rites). When they are lost, all that remains is the empty shell of rituals, a social construct stripped of personal meaning.

These problems all contribute to the phenomenon of rituals losing their meaning over time. By instilling fear in people, rituals gradually become similar to laws in society, which effectively promote “good” behavior by threatening negative consequences. Furthermore, both laws and rituals are similarly ineffective because they only regulate external behavior, not internal ethics. Lastly, as time passes and circumstances change, people become further distanced from the original meanings of rituals. They often perform them blindly and without sincerity, simply for the sake of doing them. Taken together, these problems ultimately contradict the very Way that rituals are designed to follow. ■



**“VIRTUE IS
NOT ALONE.
IT INVARIABLY
HAS
NEIGHBORS.”**

CONFUCIUS

EVA RAGONESE

A Distanced Love

She is my love.
And yet if you'd asked me
To describe her delicate touch,
I could speak of nothing but the slick
Clinical friction of our gloves' grasp.
It is all I know.
For the caress that was smooth as her
Cashmere caramel skin is but a
Distant enchanting memory.

She gave me flowers once.
On the eve of our first day apart
Eight months ago,
Before the world separated hearts.
I keep them still,
Though their pigment and scent are long gone.
Much like the warm vanilla aroma
I once knew of her embrace at dawn.

She first struck me with her gaze.
Honeypots for eyes
That now glitch on the screen,
An intimate stare severed by muted pixels.
I stare at only screens and ceilings.
Her lips too, they tease my soul,
How I crave to taste them once again.
The faint sweetness lingers no more.

Our first revolution round the sun, alone,
The honeymoon phase bleak as a new moon.
And still our lives intertwine,
Our love transcends all. ■

CAROLYN ZOU

“what’s your favorite u.s. w4r cr1me?”: Militarization and Predatory Recruiting in Gaming Spaces During COVID-19

Due to the transition of so much daily activity to digital platforms during the COVID-19 pandemic, video games and digital entertainment are seeing record-breaking engagement. While traditional military recruitment methods are seeing declining returns, quotas are now being met and surpassed through the use of digital advertising and gaming platforms for outreach. Focusing on the US Army Esports team, this paper posits the predatory behavior of military recruiters in gaming spaces as an extension of a historically situated military-entertainment complex.

In a since-removed page on the U.S. Army recruiting website, the following description of the “U.S. Army Esports Team” reveals a cynical purpose:

Soldiers have expressed a strong desire to represent the Army in competitive gaming. They have shown Army leaders how **gaming can help us connect to young people** and show them a side of Soldiers they may not expect. This initiative will help make our Soldiers **more visible and relatable to today’s youth**.

Members of the eSports outreach teams are not recruiters. They will be in a support role to **help young people see Soldiers in a different light** and understand the many different roles people can have in the Army. **They will help the Army address the growing disconnect with society**.

(Emphasis mine.) Despite hundreds of hours of broadcasts on Twitch.tv, the US Army Esports livestreamers are shrouded in ambiguity. Broadcasters are featured playing *Call of Duty: Black Ops Cold War*, *World of Warcraft*, and *League of Legends*, among other popular games to an audience of thousands, while conspicuously avoiding questions about their role in the military and demands to answer for United States war crimes. Even the identities of the players themselves are muddled with uncertainty, as the *League* broadcasts cycle between a roster of five players under the usernames ‘Porkchop,’ ‘Alacrity,’ ‘Y Rito,’ ‘Talented,’ and ‘Its me thats op.’ The livestreamers play with usernames off, in an attempt to hide their identities, but fail to obfuscate their in-game identities elsewhere. We’re not told how these players are selected to stream on

the US Army Esports Twitch channel, nor why they continue to stream gameplay after an influx of users posting criticisms of the program or interrogating the broadcaster about U.S. war crimes.

For many recruiters, high school visits are an important way to reach prospective recruits. Yet with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the lack of access to public spaces and the closure of many high schools has significantly impeded the efficacy of traditional recruiting processes. Maj. Gen. Edward Thomas Jr., Air Force Recruiting Service's commander, has noted that large budget shifts occurred to account for our new, digital world: nearly 80% of their marketing budget now goes to digital engagement, which includes the use of video game livestreamers and hosting videogame tournaments (Harkins). For instance, the Syracuse-based recruitment battalion was unable to have its usual booth at the New York State Fair, so instead hosted an online tournament for the first-person shooter game *Call of Duty*. The tournament drew in more prospective recruits than the booth, according to the battalion's commanding officer, Lt. Col. Bryan Kilbride (Harkins). Defense Secretary Mark Esper has said that "COVID actually forced us to accelerate the process by which we go after today's youth", as recruiters have been forced to increase their digital presence (Myers). Army officials have also indicated an interest in a long-term shift to digital recruiting processes, suggesting that it could lead to a permanent scaling back of soldiers at in-person enlistment efforts (Baldor and Burns).

In 2018, the military missed its recruitment goal by 6,500—the largest gap since 2005. In response, a project to expand social media outreach was created, establishing the Army esports team and receiving \$752,426 to advertise on Snapchat in 2019. In 2020, that budget expanded to nearly \$15 million and explored other digital media, including esports. Members of the Army's esports team are paid to play popular video games and recruit (Sands). This comes at a time when the reach of games and gaming services has grown exponentially, especially since the beginning of the pandemic: Twitch.tv saw exponential increases in viewership (Stephen), while esports tournaments like the *League World Championship* saw record-breaking peak concurrent viewers, at 45.95 million (SVG Staff). Overall, the popularity of games is certainly a reason for recruiters to be interested in expanding their digital media outreach.

But this is not the first time that recruiters have worked through new media platforms. As early as 2015, the Pentagon had shown interest in "electronic games" that "may benefit Military Service recruiting and retention programs", leading to the formation of the US Army Esports team in 2018, which functioned explicitly as a recruit-

ing operation (Kohn) and was labeled as such on the US Army website. The Seattle recruiting battalion's social media manager, Sierra Starks, said recruiters would previously frequent in-person gaming tournaments (Shull). Recruiters were also present at other types of gaming events, frequenting conventions like PAX East with booths tucked behind merchandise and indie game showcases. In addition, the language of military advertisements serves to obscure: to hide the role of recruiters as military officials, and to minimize the distinctions between gaming and reality. While recruiters use slang to improve their relatability to teenagers, other recruitment tools use the language of games like *Call of Duty (CoD)* to appeal to viewers of those very games. For example, advertisements for the Marines use phrases like “creating loadouts” while others compare real guns with weapons in *CoD*. The shift to franchising in major competitive games like *League of Legends* and *Overwatch* caused an influx of non-endemic sponsors, including military branches. For instance, the Evil Geniuses organization formed a partnership with the US Navy in late March of 2020, right at the onset of widespread pandemic-related lockdowns (Hayward).

The use of the gaming platform aims to improve the perception of recruiters: they're seen as relatable and advertise to players by drawing parallels between military service and gaming. In particular, the Navy's Twitch channel reads, “Other people will tell you not to stay up all night staring at a screen. We'll pay you to do it. Get a look at what life is like inside the uniform on the America's [sic] Navy” (Uhl). In April, the Army's recruiting web page featured a news story titled, “U.S. Army Esports Team expands virtual outreach” and noted that “through this period of social distancing, the team is stepping up their game to provide more content and engagement on its digital platforms”. (The site and story are no longer accessible directly, but are available on Archive.org.) Virtual recruiting is trending upwards as soldiers avoid traditional methods of solicitation and avoid negative perceptions of the military as antiquated or alienating. For Eric Nordin, a recruiter from La Grange, Kentucky, digital recruiting made him feel “a lot cooler online than [...] in real life”. He also noted that his outreach efforts were more successful through direct messages or social media than “going out to the malls and asking individuals if they wanted to recruit” (Baldor). Indeed, some recruiters even engaged in the intentional obfuscation of their roles, claiming that they were only esports promoters (Gault). And in July, Twitch cracked down on one form of predatory recruiting in which viewers entered fake prize giveaways, where their contact details were then signed up to military mailing lists (Vincent).

America's Army is perhaps the most well-known game used for military recruit-

ment, with more than 30% of Americans 16-34 saying that what they knew about the Army came from the game (Huntemann and Payne), but a long history of intimate ties between the military and video game industries predates it. That relationship is often referred to as the military-entertainment complex. In Corey Mead's *War Play*, military interviewees claimed that "every service member encounters game-based learning at some point in his or her training". Mead also discusses the use of commercial game technologies as the basis for modifications used for military training, while 2019 reports showed \$3 billion in spending on training, modeling, and simulation technologies including "a combination of live training, virtual and augmented reality, and gaming technology" (Harper).

Typically, players undertake skills development without any further goal than to improve at the game, and without developing additional skills that are emulated in the game setting—for instance, getting better at *Overcooked 2* does not actually make one a better cook, nor are top *Call of Duty* players more well equipped for warfighting. The exception is 'serious games', games whose purpose is to train players—an example being *CO2FX*, a simulation game showing hypothetical effects of user-selected climate policies. In this sense, the skills that are developed by playing most video games are self-referential, a decodification of the neoliberal call for production, by ultimately producing nothing outside of the game—in opposition to modern forms of education and neoliberal value systems. However, these skills are now a target of co-optation, able to be harnessed by state actors to serve militarized goals by adapting war to require those aforementioned skills. For instance, some of the skills developed make gamers uniquely situated to be excellent drone pilots (Wright), and new Israeli tanks are piloted using Xbox controllers (Smith and Dayan). In Deleuzoguattarian terms, those self-referential skills posit gaming as nomadic; yet when the state captures the player-as-war-machine, it puts those skills in the service of the state.

Colonial tropes of an unquestionably evil enemy allow players to engage in violence with the faith that their actions are either correct or without negative consequences. That framing of enemies as literal aliens in early successful first-person-shooters mimics nationalist wartime propaganda to defeat 'aliens'—some of the earliest first-person shooter games, like *Doom* and *Quake*, place players in isolationist narratives that require them to defend against alien invasions (Nae). And games in the 4X genre serve the same function as military simulation games. Not only do these games provide training and the development of skills, but also they serve to virtualize actual violence to allow player-soldiers to act without any fear of consequence due to their detachment from

the subjects they affect.

Orson Scott Card's *Ender's Game* can be read as a warning of this—the belief that the war game simulations were not causing actual loss of life is what enabled the protagonist to focus solely on strategy, allowing for the fictional military victory. That same logic of gamifying war was applied by Michael Macedonia, chief scientist and technical director of the Army's gaming and simulation office. Macedonia's support of simulation and video game-based training methods for soldiers warrants the exploitation of children for military ends. He raised the issue of time as the constraining factor for training effective soldiers, arguing that introducing video games at a young age is a strategic way to engage student-players in a form of perpetual training. He acknowledges the inhumanity of this, saying, "It does get really weird, and really kind of becomes science fiction at a certain point. It really is *Ender's Game*." And yet, his attitude towards it isn't one of disgust, but rather morbid curiosity: "I've always been fascinated by what you could do with a six-year-old" (Mead).

It is that same curiosity that has served as the motivation for the excessive digital outreach from military recruiters now: recruiters prey on the vulnerabilities of an increasingly online generation of teenagers and young adults, hoping to pique their interests with popular games. But it is the military's justification for this that we should be the most interested in, namely, "[The esports team] will help the Army address the growing disconnect with society". The Army's associations with nationalism and masculinity are in tension with an increasingly progressive society, and the prevalence of counter-efforts and backlash against Twitch.tv recruiters speak to this. Furthermore, there is reason to believe that the U.S. military is failing to adapt to a growing level of discontent among the American public with the expansion of militarism. While digital recruitment techniques have minimized personnel losses from pandemic-related changes, these programs invite further investigation and discussion into how long they will be around, whether their overreach into gaming communities will continue, and what demands for transparency, if any, are to be met. ■

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CAT DOSSETT

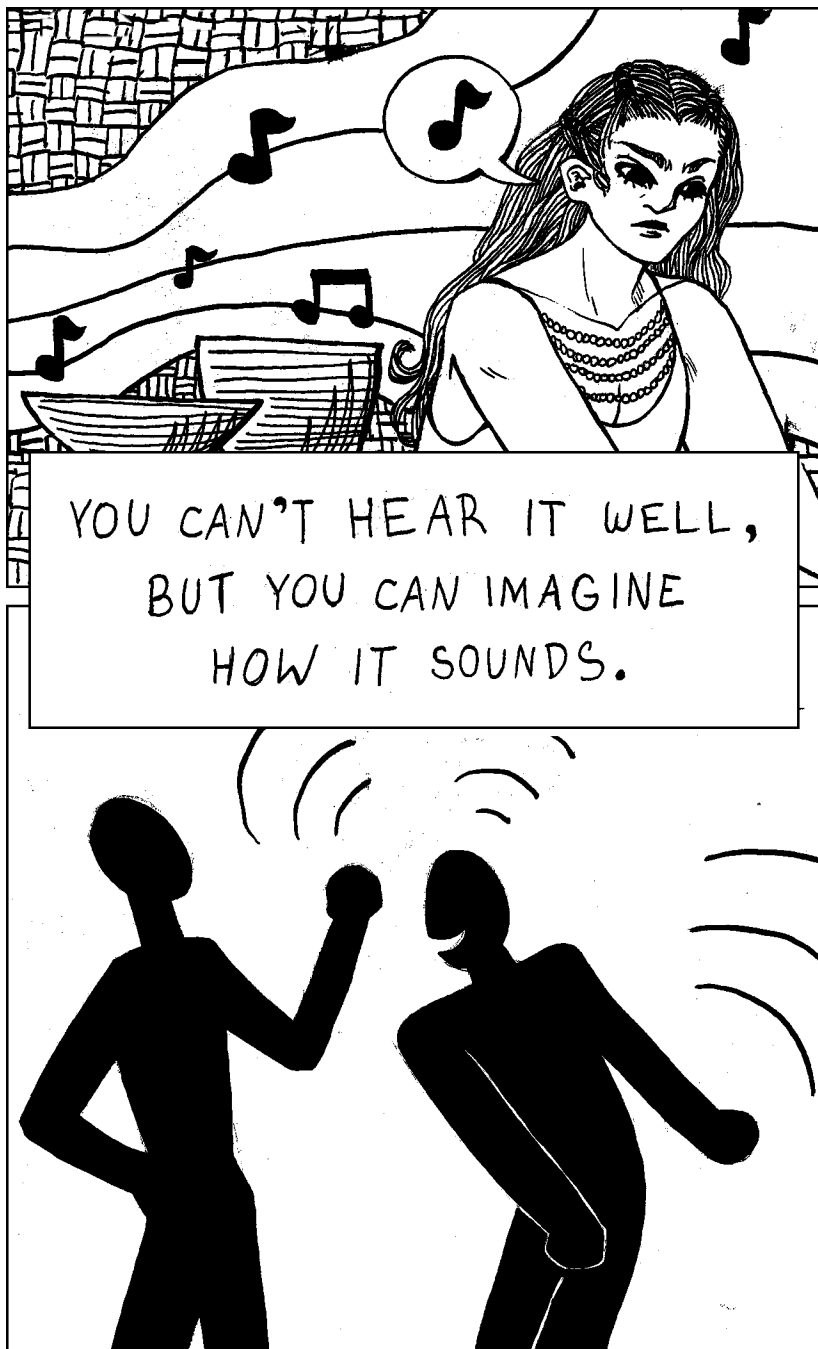
Reading

The bus provides interlude
between work and home.
At home my room distracts,
the threat of work, of chat,
but riding I can bask and read.
I take respite in the ambience:
the bus-babble, the recitation
of the usual route, the common faces.
These days we pass stops
where no one is waiting. The bus
itself is nearly empty. These days
I keep my book in my bag, fingers
buzzing with the surfaces I've touched. ■

ISABEL MEJIA
A Legacy

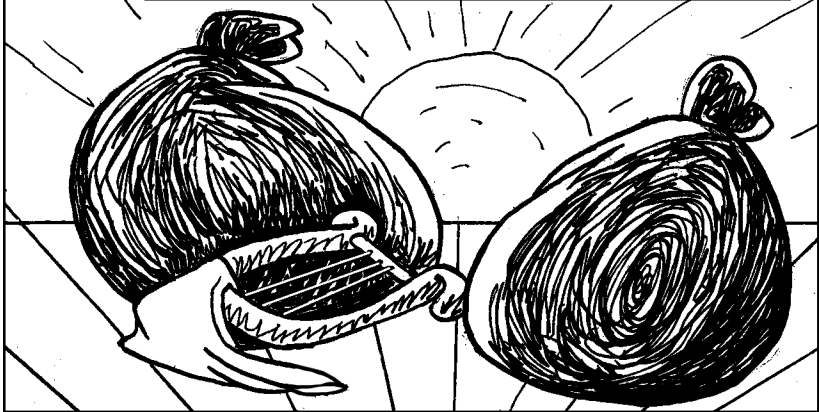
an adaptation of the Calypso episode in Homer's Odyssey



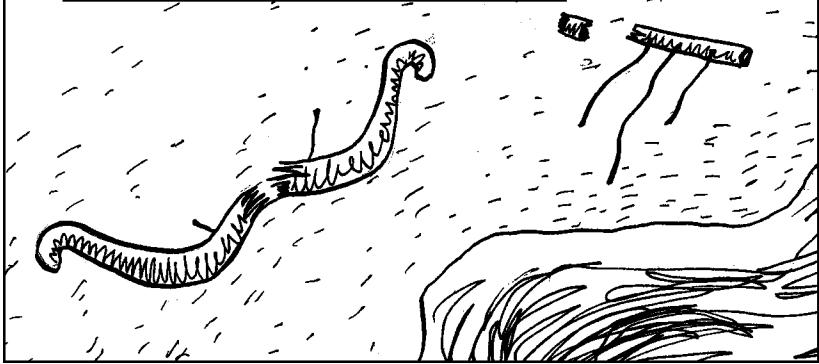


YOU WONDER IF HE TOOK YOUR
MUSIC AND YOUR NAME
BACK WITH HIM.

DID HE FIND THE LYRE
YOU HID IN HIS RAFT?



PROBABLY NOT.



HE PROBABLY FORGOT YOU.

BUT SOME NIGHTS, YOU CAN
HEAR THE MUSIC THAT
BEARS YOUR NAME,



AND YOU

DO NOT FEEL FORGOTTEN.

Art in an Age of Anxiety:

All-at-once-ness
All-at-once-ness
All-at-once-ness
All-at-once-ness

CURATED BY
 THE CORE DOCENTS

Over the course of two semesters in HUB CC181 and CC182, students in the Core Docent program are introduced to ways of interpreting and articulating themes studied in CC101 and CC102. Core Docents learn to look, reflect, interpret, organize, and design visual art that engages with ideas encountered in the Core classroom. This past academic year, the Docent courses had to be re-designed twice to accommodate safety protocols, and we were unable to give tours in person. However, in March 2021 our students were able to visit the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, once more. We went together to see the exhibit, *Writing the Future: Basquiat and the Hip-Hop Generation*, and they became truly inspired. In response to the exhibit, our Docents each selected a piece to research and integrate with their ideas about what it means to be experiencing community and everyday life through remote platforms. Rather than printing the images here, we hope for you to reproduce something of the past year's mediated experience by reading the text in print and then directing your browser to the corresponding link before reading the text again. – *Kyna Hamill*

Isabel Plower on

“Hollywood Africans”

by Jean-Michel Basquiat

>> whitney.org/media/1326

While the many elements of this painting compete for your attention, I'd like to direct your gaze to one in particular, a grouping of three faces—Basquiat, the rapper Rammellzee, and the painter Toxic. The trio is surrounded by brightly colored text on a shocking yellow background. Pause a moment. Imagine yourself in Basquiat's position, situated in this painting among his contemporaries. How does it make you feel? How do you think he felt when he painted himself next to Rammellzee?

Basquiat identifies himself as a villain, as noted by the unambiguous label, “Self portrait as a heel #3”. During his lifetime, Basquiat struggled to overcome the limitations of stereotyping and the white dominance of art culture. Additionally, he grappled with presenting himself as an original among his extraordinary contemporaries and friends. Rammellzee, for example, was—besides being a rapper and graffiti artist—a prominent theorist of graffiti culture. By labeling himself a heel, Basquiat is expressing the struggle he feels against the obstacles of American society at large and within the smaller circle of New York's graffiti culture of that era.

Words spread across the canvas; many are crossed out. Basquiat often used this method, as in his other paintings “Kings of Egypt II” and “Charles the First”. In this painting, we notice that the artist has struck-through several phrases which seem to refer to the limited opportunities for roles available to African Americans in Hollywood movies: “Sugar Cane”, “Tobacco”, “Gangsterism”. By crossing these out, Basquiat seems to be alluding to the historical exclusion of African Americans from the film industry, and from society as a whole.

Paradoxically, the technique of crossing out phrases ends up emphasizing them visually. Basquiat wants his audience to notice what constantly circulates around him and his fellow artists.

Starting in the mid-1970s and running into the late 90s, the City of New York embarked on a graffiti eradication campaign. It was during this period—Basquiat's own “age of anxiety”—that “Hollywood Africans” was created. The painter's vibrant colors and relentless words struggle to break free from beneath their crossings-out, and break out of the stereotypes counteracting his self-expression. All the while, the City's cleaners sought to eliminate any vestige of public art like Basquiat's. The artist was

forced to battle history, society, and government simultaneously, in an arduous all-at-once-ness where the conflict is between past and present, the powerful and the meek, the individual and the whole.

Ziwen Xie on

“When You Expect Fair Play You Create An Infectious Bubble Of Madness”

by Jenny Holzer and Lady Pink

>> projects.jennyholzer.com/paintings/with-lady-pink/gallery#9

>> cs.utexas.edu/users/field/holzer/survival.txt

This piece, part of a project entitled *Survival Series*, warns against the dangers of everyday living. In their collaboration, artists Jenny Holzer and Lady Pink combine language with imagery to explore the ways words can manipulate identity.

On first sight, the audience’s visual attention is drawn to the huge, centrally-located pink and yellow flower. However, at the focal point of the piece, the viewer will see that what seems to be a flower is actually a skull-like face. Flowers, in general, trigger positive emotions, with associations of beauty and hope. The skull motif, by contrast, relates to death, bad luck, and other triggers of negative emotion. The placement of the skull’s mouth over the flower suggests it is consuming the flower, as an insect might. After this bite, it might fly away to consume other blossoms, mirroring the text by Holzer: an “infectious bubble of madness”.

It is interesting to see how implied lines are combined with descriptive lines in this artwork. A bold outline is used to draw the shadowed part of the petals, while the uppermost part of the flower remains vague. The spray of black shadow links again to the methods of graffiti artists, while the soft quality of other lines speaks to a blurring of boundaries between reality and imagination.

Looking closely, the viewer will find that the title appears on the canvas as painted text. We also find text-like lines surrounding the foreground elements, indicating the constant powerful presence of language in our shared background. Text is frequently used in graffiti art, as is the highly-saturated palette used in this work. Both methods add vibrancy to the piece.

The text of the title functions as a caption or description about the entire artwork itself, forming a circle in the area of the flower around the skull-bud, *emphasizing* the skull-bud, and at the same time, giving the illusion that the skull-bud is whispering.

Tammy Dong on

“Tear Ducts Seem To Be a Grief Provision”

by Jenny Holzer and Lady Pink

>> projects.jennyholzer.com/paintings/with-lady-pink/gallery#2

>> ladypinknyc.com/fine-art-page

In the 1980s, New York had a reputation for urban grime and street hustle. High crime rates persisted through the 70s and into the 80s. It was described as a place where “people squatted in abandoned buildings left in disrepair by landlords who couldn’t pay property taxes” (*Daily Mail*, 30 June 2020). Poverty and substance use plagued its denizens. Yet, at the same time, New York had a reputation for artistic expression and innovation. Artists used different forms of media to comment on the life of the bustling city as well as the anguish experienced by those who lived there, a practice which helped to define the style of graffiti artists active during this era.

One such artist was Lady Pink, who was born in Ecuador but raised in NYC. She started her graffiti work in 1979 and subsequently became known as a prominent graffiti artist. In 1983, Lady Pink collaborated with Jenny Holzer—a neo-conceptual artist based in Hoosick, New York—to create the spraypainted piece “Tear Ducts Seem To Be A Grief Provision”.

The style of this painting is loud and bold, depicting skulls with open mouths and scrunched-up expressions. The immense size and style of the work convey feelings of smallness, anxiety, and fear. The collaboration between Lady Pink and Holzer is symbolic of an era that perhaps felt, to many living in New York during the 80s, like an age of anxiety. Though we do not know the personal stories of these skulls nor their reasons for screaming and therefore might not fully understand their particular forms of grief and suffering, we can all relate to circumstances that have elicited in us feelings of frustration and grief.

One may wonder why the piece carries the title it does though no tears appear on the faces of the skulls. Is the absence of tears meant to point to larger, more abstract ideas? Artist and activist Sara Skolnick says in response to the painting that it “inhabits a time, one that does not begin or end with a fixed date . . . Tears to connect with what’s overstayed its welcome, tears to cleanse it. Tears as a medium to speak to those who came before us, those who will come after us.” The echoes of grief and anguish trapped within this painting are timeless, capturing the emotions that we all grapple with in times of anxiety and uncertainty.

Avi Nguyen on

“Yellow Building”

by Lady Pink

>> thetech.com/photos/9501

Bright, bubbly letters wrap around the building and the signature of Lady Pink herself, shifting from pink to yellow hues. The building’s carnival of colors clashes with the somber blue sky. In “Yellow Building”, the subject—the building—is secondary to the other aspects of the work. The darkness of the building gives it a feeling of mystery or danger. Lady Pink melds iron bars into the spacing of the letters. The graffiti—her art—came first, and the iron bars must adapt to that. They curve and hide underneath her signature, never going over it.

Behind the bars, near the bottom of the piece, is a pale feminine figure. Her eyes seem to glow, though her pupils are obscured. She appears to be trapped within the dark, decaying structure. A sudden realization strikes when you first notice her... You thought you were alone, then all at once *you* have become the observed subject of Lady Pink’s artwork.

(In the age of anxiousness, we are constantly watching and being watched. An online presence has now become less of an exercise in ego and more of a necessity to exist in today’s world.)

The building is a raw exoskeleton; the iron grates are its ribs. Morphing from inorganic to organic, the curve of the artist’s signature and the lines of the building’s scaffolding bind into the double helix structure of DNA. The Yellow Building morphs from brick to biological. The building is human—bones and genes—yet just barely so. Under the surface of this pandemic we may have begun to feel barely human ourselves, our humanity reduced by loneliness and isolation.

There is a balcony there you didn’t initially notice. Because of the downward perspective, it appears as a cage. You come to realize that maybe you are the ghost. Doesn’t the stone grey of your skin match the outside sky?

As COVID ravages the globe, you too are shackled indoors. You are the pale, grey figure, confined behind an iron grate, still alive, watching the outside world crumble. ■

JENNA RIEDL

A Letter to My Brother

You don't know she's been followed, do you?

That your older sister has had eyes on her body, felt
their stickiness drag along every inch of her skin.

That she is afraid in public when she sees boys—
Boys that look like you.

You don't know that she's been harrassed, do you?

That men with gray hair and gaping mouths have told her to
Shake that ass, honey, and asked her to get into their cars.

That she has walked away on tiptoe, swallowing rage,
acutely aware of the distance to the nearest corner,
the nearest streetlight, the nearest witness.

You don't know why she dresses that way, do you?

When you see her in a dress, you ask where the aliens
have gone and taken your sister.

You don't know she likes dresses, do you?

But dresses and heels are impractical for running,
and to be a girl is to be ready to run.

You thought it was over, didn't you?

Now that there are no faces to identify, our invisible masks have become
solid, cloth armor blurring recognition. You ask,
how could there be catcalling in a pandemic?

Harassment doesn't go on hiatus. Now instead of leers,

I collect voices that crawl into my ears to wipe
their feet on my memories. *You alright, baby?*

How 'bout a smile, sweetheart?

A smile? What, under my fucking mask? It crosses my mind
at least once a day that if I got the virus

I'd be safe for two weeks. Except, of course,

for the minor threat of death. Girls didn't need a CDC advisory
to know human contact could kill. ■

ISABELLA VERY

Making a Musical During Lockdown

I'd like to tell you about my original musical, *Already Home*—concept and book by me, with orchestration and arrangement by Jackson Machesky and Neil Baker. This is a project I began work on in the fall of 2018, my sophomore year, and spent the next two years deeply invested in writing, composing, and revising. In my senior year, we were ready to stage the show... And then an utterly unanticipated obstacle halted our in-person production when a global crisis altered our plans, our lives, and our hopes.

“The distance between us is painful . . . and it takes work for me to reconcile it, to hold us here in the tension: in one hand, the reality of our separateness, in the other, the reality of our interconnection.” – *Megan Sandberg-Zakian*

When the pandemic hit, I was sent home from my study abroad program in London. Worse than that, I was put into isolation after being diagnosed with COVID-19. However, I had also just been elected President of Boston University Stage Troupe, and had duties to carry out. I set to work trying to maintain a semblance of normalcy in my life and the lives of those whom I was collaborating with, while trying to appropriately acknowledge and reconcile the losses all around us.

Making sure that the show would go on, in some form, felt important. But my priority was not simply to virtualize the production. During the first month of lockdown, I joined many Zoom theater audiences, but was often disappointed. Technical difficulties were common and it felt to me that a connection failed frequently to form between cast and audience. How could our team preserve the relationship between the actor and his character, within the limits of virtual theater? We had to go beyond a model of simply Zoom-ifying a stage piece, and reconsider our treatment of characters and direction in light of the operational and technical aspects of an online platform.

Instead of merely virtualizing the production and sacrificing elements that were important to me, I decided to revisit our goals to redesign a process that was more suitable to the unfortunate circumstance. Despite our isolation from one another, the entire creative team behind *Already Home*—comprising more than four dozen students and alumni—thoughtfully considered how to refocus our production on the new opportunities of a virtual medium. We set ourselves two goals: to create music, choreography, dialogue, and technical stage directions for an original musical; and to promote collaboration among the Stage Troupe community, and across other communities at



Pictured, left to right: David Simon (COM/CAS '21), Jackson Machesky (CAS '22), Mia Kelly (CAS '23), Carter Berling (ENG '22), and Kelly Shao (QST '24)

Boston University. Besides these, I had a personal goal for myself. I wanted to be able to describe and share my college experience through a musical production, while remaining open to different perspectives and new interpretations.

The past year made us more aware of the ways we relate to technology, and through technology relate to one another. Having been abroad when lockdown began, I had already been using various technologies to connect with friends and family stateside. It was not difficult to extend these tools to my creative work, and to put that experience to use putting our musical online. In doing so we sought to emphasize interconnection between creator, performers, and viewers. Experience the show in its digital form at:

alreadyhomemusical.com

Our immersive website was designed to maximize the opportunity for connection despite lack of live, in-person encounters in the theatre space. *Already Home* follows the story of several freshmen in college, particularly Clara Campbell, whose close relationship with her sister, Marie, contrasts with her friends' definitions of home and family. Over the course of the musical, we follow several female characters—their experiences of uncertainty, their tumultuous relationships, their challenges and losses, and their individual and collective growth.

Already Home is a project born out of community and love. My hope is that our readers and viewers will be able to partake to some degree in the love, comfort, and peace that this project has given me and my collaborators. ■

MAGGIE FARREN

Wasting

If it were not that April was the cruelest month
it would be September – the dull teeth of shortening days.

The children in their new school-things, tramping
over browning leaves – joyful small deaths.

The world is still large from the gaping mouth of a bay window
in the front room of an old Victorian – sagging sideways, septic.

There will be friends that come for tea with pink cheeks,
ushering in cold ghosts and spiced apple pie, one thumbprint.

Early evenings and long shadows, floor-length coats scurry
on streets and shiver at stoplights, fluorescent red setting sun.

Turns green, move the creaking bones on towards home, where
the furnace grumbles and wails into the curtained sky.

Sunday mornings will come and go again, light the fire of shame
on the tongue and let it burn into the chest, organ preens, frozen tune. ■

MARINA BERARDINO

Austen's Letter-Writing and Self-Authorship

After Jane Austen's death, her family members carefully selected what they would present to the public regarding the author's life. The exclusion of certain controversial pieces of writing and personal letters from public view had the effect of softening and censoring who Austen had been as a woman: "We are still feeling the effects of the Jane Austen myth constructed in 1870 for public consumption" (Auerbach 33). The common view of Austen as a shy recluse is a result of this selective framing, at first by her family and later by biographers working in the same motivated tradition. To better understand *Pride and Prejudice* and its author, we must revise this redacted view through a broader selection of the letters in Austen's life and fiction.

Letter-writing was a prominent activity in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Epistolary stories filled bookshelves, and letter-writing manuals were bought by all classes of people (Pearsall). Jane and Cassandra exchanged hundreds of letters over the course of their lives, though many were altered or destroyed by the Austen family (Auerbach). The letters that do remain are dismissed by Austen scholars as containing nothing of importance. According to Caroline Austen, Jane's niece, "There is nothing in those letters which I have seen that would be acceptable to the public ... they detailed chiefly home and family events" (Flynn 100). However, this critical response fails to appreciate the value of such reports. The evidence of Austen's letters, and of the letters she inserted in her fiction, suggests an overriding concern with inner growth despite the boundaries of her ordinary circumstances.

Just months after his sister's death in 1817, Henry Austen wrote that "short and easy will be the task of the mere biographer. A life of uselessness, literature, and religion was not by any means a life of events" (Austen and Austen). In his account, "she never uttered either a hasty, a silly, or a severe expression" (ibid). However, Emily Auerbach points to the fact that Henry failed to mention "that [Jane] wrote saucy adolescent burlesques filled with outrageous heroines who murder their parents and poison their rivals" and that Jane "acted in private family theatricals, negotiated with publishers, alluded in her novels to the slave trade and the rebellious Americans, and wrote acerbic letters to her sister" (Auerbach 31). Henry intended "to present a kinder, gentler Jane to the world" (32) and did so by selectively quoting from only two letters, omitting parts that were of "no concern to those outside the family" (31). This is not the only account

of Jane Austen by her family that purposely excludes important, and potentially disreputable aspects of her lifestyle.

Misunderstanding Jane

Jane Austen's nephew, James Edward Austen-Leigh, published a softened and censored portrait of her in his 1870 *Memoir*. This was the first full-scale biography of Austen, and the *Memoir* influenced future biographies, encyclopedia entries, and critical studies (Auerbach). Many of Austen's letters were quoted in the *Memoir*; however, Austen-Leigh omitted parts of letters deemed as unacceptable. The *Memoir* served later biographers for years as the primary source of Jane's letters, allowing "romancers [to succeed] in transforming their subject into a cozy spinster who wrote entertaining love stories as a pastime in the intervals between amusing her nieces and nephews with parlor games" (Tucker 5). As a result of this curation, "an entirely different Jane Austen had been foisted upon the public by sentimental biographers" (ibid).

Austen's nephew claims in the *Memoir* that his aunt "never touched upon politics, law, or medicine' and only concerned herself with 'the performance of home duties, and the cultivation of domestic affection'" (Auerbach 34). However, this view became untenable after more of Austen's letters became publicly available in 1884, and more untenable still when a complete collection was published in 1959 (Tucker). On closer examination of the newly available letters, Isobel Grundy claims that they "teem with every possible kind of reference to books: simple reports of what she or the family is reading; opinions; quotations applied sometimes straightforwardly but more often with multiple layers of irony" (189). That the volume contains many letters which Austen-Leigh only published in redacted form suffices to show the extent of his censorship. The first Austen letter quoted in the *Memoir*, dated 8 November 1800, censors Austen's allusion to a literary work. Addressing "My dear Cassandra", she writes:

Having just finished the first volume of les Veillees du Chateau, I think it a good opportunity for beginning a letter to you while my mind is stored with Ideas worth transmitting—I thank you for so speedy a return to my last two, and particularly thank you for your anecdote of Charlotte Graham and her cousin, Harriet Bailey, which has very much amused both my mother and myself.

The text in boldface, absent in Austen-Leigh's version, is a reference to *Tales of the Castle* by Madame du Genlis, a French text concerned with women's education (Grundy

dy). Clearly, Austen-Leigh did not include this line because he did not want Austen presented as an intellect. However, Austen's quotations and allusions in her writing show that she was a "novelist of ideas, with views on political, philosophical and legal issues of her day" (193). Austen had vast knowledge of "the established canon: Addison, Pope, Gay, the Swift of *Gulliver's Travels*, Thomson, Gray, Goldsmith, and Charlotte Lennox" (197). Austen quotes these and other authors from memory and uses them as a backdrop for her own life. One letter excerpt shows that "[Austen] indulges in comic self-identification with their heroines: 'I shall be just like Camilla in Mr. Dubster's summer-house'; 'Like Harriet Byron I ask, what am I to do with my Gratitude?'" (198). Austen does not mimic these authors but rather uses their works to help define her own characters. Grundy asserts that "each of Austen's works occupies a particular position in relation to the community of literary texts" and that Austen "commonly defines her characters in part through their reading habits" (203). The act and depiction of reading is less central to *Pride and Prejudice* than Austen's other novels, but there is still a parallel that "for her and for her central characters books and life are not divided; books are a vital part of life" (207). Just as indirect experiences mediated through letters or imagination were key to Austen's personal growth, they were crucial factors in the characterization of Elizabeth Bennet.

A Spur to Creativity

Austen communicated with her sister Cassandra via nearly daily letters. Thus letter-writing was an integral part of Austen's life, requiring her to write something every day, even when nothing eventful occurred. Carol Flynn argues that "since 'correspondence' becomes one of these [domestic] tasks, [Austen] must always be in search of a subject. In fact, it is the search itself which ties her to a constant reading of the vicissitudes of her own mind" (Flynn 102). Austen is aware of the mundane aspects of the epistolary landscape of her time, yet she attempts to write about domestic matters in a more interesting manner by adding her witty, self-aware commentary. An example, dated 10-11 January 1809:

I am not surprised my dear Cassandra, that you did not find my last Letter very full of matter, and I wish this may not have the same deficiency; - but we are doing nothing ourselves to write about, & I am therefore quite dependant upon the Communications of our friends, or my own Wit (107)

According to Flynn, “letters provide an excellent vehicle for such formidable observation. Silent and reserved, the correspondent can record household faults with impunity” (110). Austen uses letters to make penetrating offenses at people she observes. In one dated to November 1800, Austen describes the belle of the previous night’s ball as having “the same broad face, diamond bandeau, white shoes, pink husband, & fat neck” that she possessed in September, while the daughter of Sir Thomas Champneys appeared to be “a queer animal with a white neck” (111). This account of the night seems to be a pointed criticism of a wealthy family and the absurdness of the emphasis placed on balls and grandeur, one which can hardly be squared with the popular view of Jane Austen as shy and reserved.

Austen was aware that women were under surveillance at all times. Both the literary culture and the domestic norms of the 18th century required “that the female figure be always ready for inspection” (112). The subject matter of the letters that Austen wrote would not only be available to the direct recipient, but to many others as well. Austen knew this and thus “the letters of Jane Austen reveal the difficulties that she faced under a system of checks and repressions that needed to be negotiated” (112). Finding an appropriately interesting subject to write about was a constant challenge, especially if one sought to avoid public disapproval. However, there is no doubt that some of her letters were filled with ideas that would not have been received well by others; her family members chose not to present many aspects of these letters. The last available letter written by Austen is heavily edited by Henry Austen. He introduces it in his Biographical Notice with this excerpt:

She next touches with just and gentle animadversion on a subject of domestic disappointment. Of this the particulars do not concern the public. Yet in justice to her characteristic sweetness and resignation, the concluding observation of our authoress thereon must not be suppressed (Flynn)

The true thoughts of Austen are not available to the public. This is not because she chose not to present them in her letters, but because her family chose not to present them. Austen knew that what she wrote would be read by others and could have a powerful impact. Thus, the revelations she came to in her letters, especially those that were purposely destroyed, were controversial for her time. Austen was not afraid to write down everything she felt, but her family was. This makes Austen far from a boring individual only concerned with domesticity. She was unable to move away from her

domestic life, but she still wrote meaningful letters. It is unfortunate that many of her pivotal revelations were likely in those destroyed letters.

Letters in *Pride and Prejudice*

Although none of her books are wholly epistolary, “letters remain central to [Austen’s] novels, and are critical indications of character, both in the ways they are written and read” (Bray 85). In *Pride and Prejudice*, letters convey emotion and provide an occasion for self-expression, echoing the role of letter-writing in Austen’s personal life. It is often not the letters themselves that are terribly impactful, as much as the characters’ responses to the letters, and the reflections they have after reading them.

The exchange between Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth is a notable example. After Elizabeth declines Darcy’s proposal, he explains his behavior and clarifies his feelings in a letter, which Elizabeth reads and re-reads. That this letter is a pivotal moment in the narrative is made clear by Elizabeth’s proclamation: “till this moment, I never knew myself” (202). As Elizabeth re-reads the letter, she pays close attention to her response—indeed, her degree of self-consciousness is central to the scene. Eventually Elizabeth “grew absolutely ashamed of herself” and “of neither Darcy nor Wickham could she think, without feeling that she had been blind, partial, prejudiced, absurd” (201). She continues by saying, “I have courted prepossession and ignorance, and driven reason away, where either were concerned” (202). The letter prompts her to reconsider her actions and recognize her own prejudice. While her face-to-face interactions with Darcy and Wickham had not changed Elizabeth’s mind, letter-reading did.

Joe Bray notes that a “rushed, breathless style [of letter-writing] does not reflect well on the writer, suggesting similar defects of character” (93). A survey of other letters in the novel support this claim. A letter from Lydia Bennet sent to Mrs. Forster, addressed to “My Dear Harriet” and announcing her elopement, is quite revealing:

You will laugh when you know where I am gone, and I cannot help laughing myself at your surprise to-morrow morning, as soon as I am missed. I am going to Gretna Green, and if you cannot guess with who, I shall think you a simpleton, for there is but one man in the world I love, and he is an angel. I should never be happy without him, so think it no harm to be off. You need not send them word at Longbourn of my going, if you do not like it, for it will make the surprise the greater, when I write to them, and sign my name Lydia Wickham. What a good joke it will be! I can hardly write for laughing. Pray make my excuses to Pratt, for not keeping my engagement,

and dancing with him to night. . . . Good bye. Give my love to Colonel Forster, I hope you will drink to our good journey.

Here Lydia acts selfishly without thinking about the impact of her actions on others. When she writes, “What a good joke it will be!”, she is not thinking about her family and the consequences of her impulsiveness. Elizabeth’s response reveals disappointment, a feeling she may well have kept concealed if their communication had taken place in person. She exclaims, without restraint, “Thoughtless, thoughtless Lydia!” In Bray’s words, the exchange exemplifies “Austen’s habit of expressing character by means of the style of letters” (94). It is possible that in some of the letters destroyed by her family, Austen revealed flaws and inadequacies not compatible with the pious, well-mannered, or demure image her family was trying to portray.

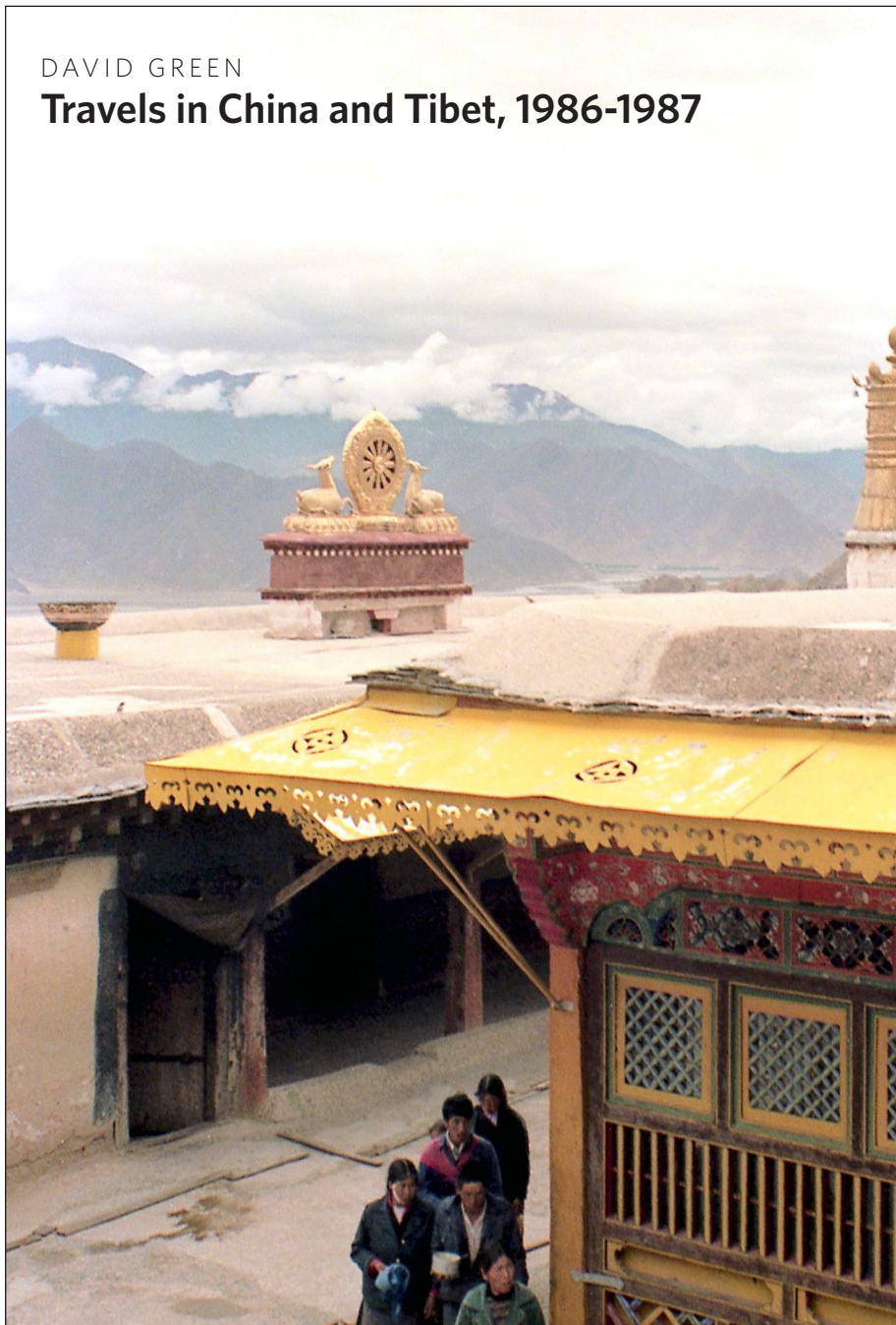
The notion of what it means to live an eventful life must be redefined. Although Austen was stuck in rural England and unable to physically experience the broader world, she was nonetheless able to grow as a person by interacting with friends and family, and with gifted authors, through letter-writing. The impact of these circumscribed acts of reading and writing can be seen in the rich epistolary revelations of her fiction and in the scale of self-expression and self-realization she was able to achieve despite her relatively provincial environment. In view of the complex and sometimes controversial content of her personal letters, we must not cede to the argument that Austen lived an unsensational life. Constrained domestic circumstances are no excuse for idleness. Whether the limits on one’s personal freedom are imposed due to provinciality or pandemic conditions, an expansive life is still within reach through engagement in literature, letters, and imagination. ■

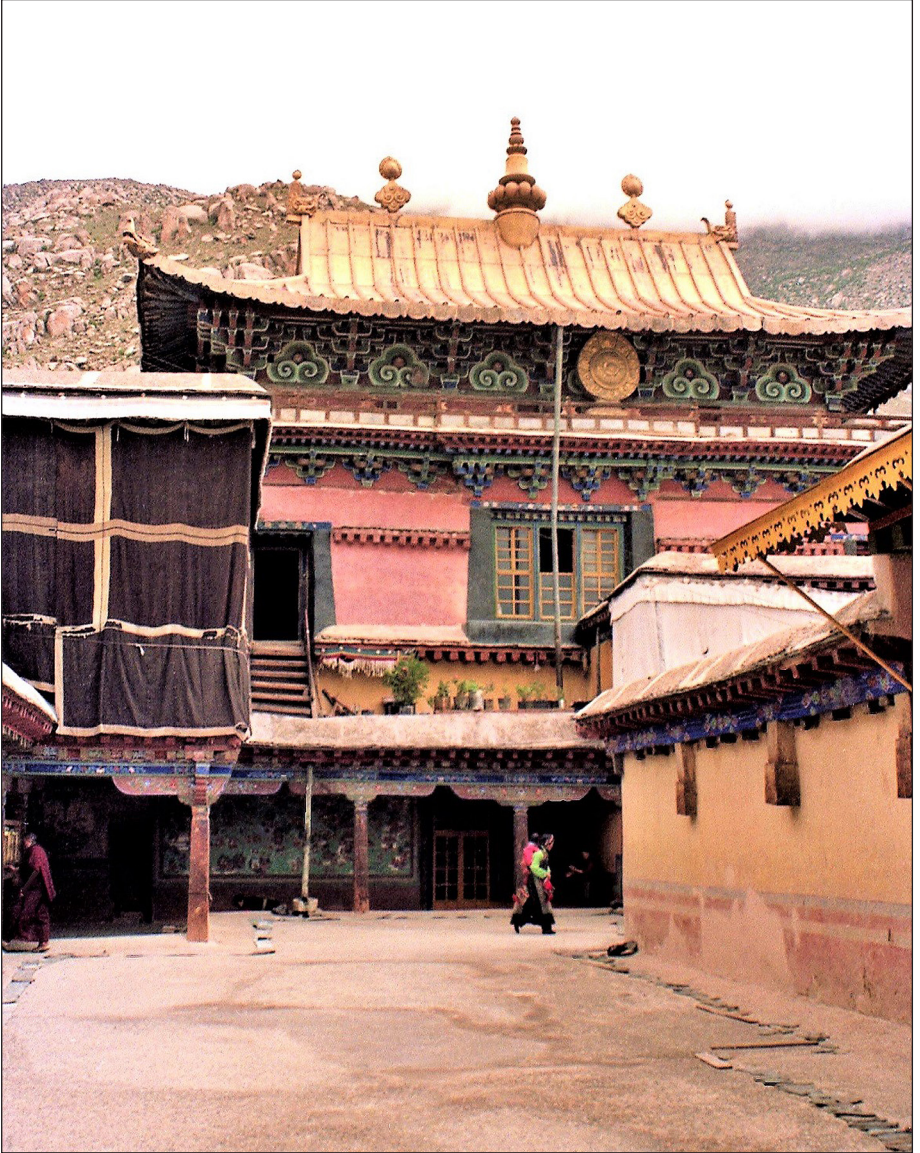
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DAVID GREEN

Travels in China and Tibet, 1986-1987





The pilgrims in the photo on the facing page are visiting Drepung Monastery in Lhasa. Located at the foot of Mount Gephel, Drepung once housed thousands of monks as one of the “great three” university monasteries in the Gelukpa tradition of Tibetan Buddhism. The photo above shows a courtyard in the same complex.





Opposite, top: A bronze statue on the Potala. Its turquoise mane marks it as a snowlion, a celestial animal and traditional emblem of Tibet. Bottom: a three-eyed protector deity, Chana Dorje, in a chapel at Drepung. Note the silk-wrapped palm-leaf books on the shelf. Above: An itinerant Tibetan peddler sells animal parts for traditional medicine on the street in Wuhan.



Above: Widower, near Wuhan. "I came upon this village by chance and located the house because people were shooting off fireworks. Just inside the front door was the body of the deceased woman who had passed away in the night. Her husband put on his coat for a formal photograph." Opposite: a street in Hankou, Wuhan. ■



GREY DUNN

Corona Verse/ Spare a Drink

We cleansed our coins in vinegar/ wore red bandanas to buy bread/ turned strangers away from our door/ had wet sex in dark cars parked out of sight from cops/ street lamps/ we were paid in colorless beads/ food stamps/ we weaved in n' out of alleys/ backpaths/ we saw hooded men selling weed out of backpacks

I was conceived in Philadelphia/ but born at the shore/ I saw climate change when the surge rolled past the dunes/ sandbags/ roads/ leaving sand/ flooded graves/ I saw pandemic spread when New York plates rolled through with excuses/ of liberty/ property taxes / saw grandmothers die/ children weep/ black-suited men walking Asbury Ave. / saw stores board up/ unemployment soar/ jobs move out/ saw heroin move in/ A-frames unriden on sunshine glassy days/ saw a Mexican hand walking the other way

Don't point your cameras at me/ there's fish on my ceiling/ I grew up reading police reports/ the horrors Columbus committed on Hispaniola/ I've long dreamed what could've been if only the church had listened to De las Casas/ Martin Luther/ let the pigs bleed/ let the pigs bleed/ take me away from these fiends Your Honor/ I'll write the church a check to cleanse me of my sins

Don't look at me

Don't look at me

I can only speak in teaspoons

I can only speak in nervous glances

I can only speak in the voice the wind blows

Can't you see who I am?

You can find me in the Pine Barrens/ you can find me in the store/ you can find me where there's low pay/ you can find me underneath the Parkway/ you can find me where the sea ends/ you can find me where the sky breaks / you can find me in the coal mines/ you can find me where the sun don't shine/ you can find me where the wind blows/ you can find me in empty casinos / at beach heads/ in halfway homes/ long castaway I've been from your door/ can't you let me in/ spare a drink? ■

JONAS RAEDLER

How to Become—or Remain—An Ideal Person

TJC

NB: Page citations throughout refer to the Burton Watson translation of Confucius' *Analects* (Columbia University Press, 2010) or to the Philip Ivanhoe translation of the *Daodejing* (Hackett, 2003).

For thousands of years, people have pondered the right way to live. What makes a “good” life and what really makes someone “good”? They have inquired about whether we have control over this matter: can we do something that helps us become a better person? If so, what is it? Confucius, a great Chinese philosopher, who traveled through China to offer his advice to rulers, argues that we do indeed have control over this. He believes that everyone should work on becoming a better person through rigorous learning and constant self-improvement. Laozi, however, another great Chinese thinker, argues that humans should not actively try to become better people. He believes that humans should affirm their natural selves and not aim for something they are not by nature. In other words, Confucius asserts that we need to fundamentally change through constant self-improvement and self-reflection in order to become the ideal, whereas Laozi believes that we should not force ourselves to become different, as that would cause us to deviate from our natural path.

According to Confucius, humans are inherently flawed and it is only through active self-reflection that they can—and should—remedy these flaws to become better people. He said: “It’s hopeless! I have yet to see anyone who can recognize his faults, look inside himself, and put the blame there” (40). Confucius looks for men to “recognize [their] faults”, thus indicating that all humans are imperfect and have things they can improve upon. He holds that faults do not merely exist because of some unfortunate circumstance, but rather because they are an inherent part of people. Consequently, he wants them to “look inside” themselves and “put the blame there”; he wants people to practice self-reflection.

In fact, Confucius emphasizes constant self-reflection and self-improvement throughout his *Analects*. For instance, he said: “When you see a worthy person, think about how you can equal him. When you see an unworthy person, reflect on your own conduct” (34). Confucius advocates for a constant mindset of “how can I be better?” When people see someone who is “worthy”, he wants them to determine what makes that person worthy and then to strive for those qualities themselves. When they see



someone who is “unworthy”, he wants them to determine what makes that person unworthy and then reflect on whether they carry a similar unworthy trait. Therefore, Confucius argues that everyone should constantly look for ways on how to be a better person. To him, every single person seems to be a constant work-in-progress, which can only be advanced through constant self-reflection and self-improvement.

In contrast, Laozi argues that humans should not set guidelines for themselves. As his very first sentence in the *Daodejing*, he writes: “A Way that can be followed is not a constant Way” (1). Although both Confucius and Laozi agree that the Way is something inherently good, here Laozi cautions against conceiving of and approaching it in an overly strict and regimented way. While Confucius believes that a Way which can be followed entails clear, concrete ideals that humans should strive after, Laozi disapproves of this notion and argues that this approach cannot be “a constant Way”. He posits that intentionally following a clear, laid-out path is too rigid for the ever-changing world in which we live. Thus, Laozi criticizes explicit guidelines and ideals that tell people what to do in order to live a good life, as these guidelines fail to keep up with the fluctuations of nature.

Instead, Laozi emphasizes the importance of developing naturally without interference of ideals and goals. He writes: “Everyone knows that when the good strives to be good, it is no good” (2). Laozi argues that people should not “strive to be good”, as this induces people to perform actions that solely function as a means to an end. Thus, such actions are not natural, but rather ones that are led by an ideal. This means that when people actively try to change themselves—even if their goal is to become a better person—they stop developing naturally. Therefore, according to Laozi, the “strive to be good”, or any other ulterior motive that an action might have, is an ideal or a guideline that interferes with our natural development and should thus be avoided.

These differing views on how to be an ideal person can not only be seen through Confucius’ and Laozi’s respective approaches on what a person should and should not do but also through their direct advice on how a ruler should govern his citizens. Confucius, for instance, advises that citizens should receive proper guidance so that they will develop certain characteristics. He said: “Guide them with government orders, regulate them with penalties, and the people will seek to evade the law and be without shame. Guide them with virtue, regulate them with ritual, and they will have a sense of shame and become upright” (20). Confucius argues that the way people are guided has a direct impact on them; thus, instead of being strict and forcing the people to act a certain way through orders and penalties, the government should instead lead by example and “guide them with virtue” and “regulate them with ritual”. This would cause the people to “be without shame” and to “become upright”—characteristics that are sought by the ruler. Thus, Confucius implies that people do not have these positive attributes by nature; they need to be guided and regulated to develop such characteristics.

Contrary to Confucius, Laozi advocates an entirely different approach, arguing that receiving no guidance at all is best for the people. He writes: “The more clear the laws and edicts, the more thieves and robbers. And so sages say, ‘I do nothing and the people transform themselves; [...] I engage in no activity and the people prosper on their own’” (60). Although Laozi agrees with Confucius that the guidance people receive has a big impact on them—as is implied by his argument that “more laws [lead to] more thieves”—he disagrees with the fact that it is simply a matter of choosing the right kind of guidance. Instead, Laozi claims that by not interfering in people’s lives at all, people will “prosper on their own”. Thus, he not only argues that people do not need any guidance altogether, but he even seems to say that guidance in general is more harmful than beneficial. After all, if there would be a better way of guiding people, then Laozi would not have given the advice to “do nothing” and to “engage in no activ-

ity”. If the best way to do things is to “do nothing”, then any other form of guidance must consequently be worse. Therefore, according to Laozi, it is best to just let people develop naturally; interfering in their lives through rules, ideals, and guidelines will be more harmful than beneficial.

Thus, there is indeed a very significant difference between Confucius’ and Laozi’s idea of the ideal person: Confucius prompts people to never stop looking for ways on how to improve. He argues that people are naturally flawed and that they should constantly practice self-reflection to correct these flaws. Only through this process of rigorous self-improvement, Confucius claims, can someone become an ideal person. Laozi, however, argues that people are perfect as their natural selves. He claims that guidelines and ideals on how to live and to become a better person are harmful to one’s natural development—even if they are meant to benefit oneself—and should thus be avoided. Put differently, Confucius thinks that people are like blocks of wood that need to be carved and polished into the perfect form, whereas Laozi believes that the unhewn wood*, the human’s natural self, is perfect and that people should stay as close to this state as possible. ■

* This metaphor of the block of wood is used by both Confucius and by Laozi. In the Daodejing, the unhewn wood is a symbol for the natural state of the human (e.g. Chapter 37), whereas Confucius uses “carving” and “polishing” analogies to describe the process of self-improvement (Book V).

The painting on the second page of this essay appears courtesy David Green. He notes, in suggesting it as a companion to this essay, that it depicts some of the essential ideas of Daoist art, such as the longevity of the twisted pine; emptiness; water wearing down rock; and the small place of humankind in nature.

*“AND THE LORD GOD TOOK THE HUMAN AND SET
HIM DOWN IN THE GARDEN OF EDEN TO TILL IT*

AND WATCH IT.”

GENESIS 2:15

ROBERTO CORDOVA
Inconsequentially

I lay beneath the window—
ivy leaves spilling off the sill,

moonlight painting my skin
as the world outside is on fire.
I continue to live in this country

that stage-magician politicians
claim is not the one they know.

Yesterday, tomorrow, and today
are beige, eggshell, and ecru.
An old man on TV speaks of the future

using words with no possible meaning.
At night I see myself floating

on the surface of an ocean,
moving like a palm leaf.
When it's more than I can bear,

I remember it's not *my* misery,
it's just my share. ■

BELLA T. FONG

Hollow Grounds

I beg of you, of god and gods,
take pity on a soul so helpless,
so hopeful, so vulnerable to the evils
of love ever lost and the sins of men.

Bewitched I am not by their grandeur,
but by their gentle manner, a gentility
that shrouds—no, that veils, as if
in high time, veils a darker heart.

I beg of you, of god and gods,
take my sorrow, my pain.
Do not look down on me, but look
upon me, your child, one among many,
your child nonetheless.

Give me rain and I shall plant seeds of growth.
Give me sun and I shall revel in your glory.
Give me wind to share my song.
Give me stars and I'll bid you tomorrow. ■





Photo taken in Elk, CA:

"The pandemic forced me to leave home. Anxiety forces me to go outside. My physique allows me to run, so I run and suddenly realize I am in another country. A different environment. In the middle of nowhere. Miles away from home, though I'm still the same. The oxygen I breathe is the same, the sky, the sun... I keep running until the light shines between the trees and I realize there is no turning back. In a few seconds, the sun will disappear and night will fall. Everything is constantly changing, and it is inevitable. All that matters is *now*." - ACI

BRIEFING BY JACK NORTON

SARS-CoV-2: Symptoms and Selection

Novel coronaviruses have had recent local endemic and even global epidemic impacts, but none have affected the world as profoundly as the virus causing Coronavirus Disease 2019, i.e. COVID-19. This briefing examines factors that seem to account for the larger public health impact of SARS-CoV-2 relative to other coronaviruses, and the hypothesis that stabilizing selection is one major such factor.

In 2019, SARS-CoV-2 appeared in Wuhan, China, but was not initially treated as a cause for widespread concern. Other epidemics involving coronavirus-induced diseases, such as SARS and MERS, had not resulted in epidemic outcomes. For example, the SARS outbreak in 2003 spread to 32 countries and regions, resulting in a total of 8,422 infections and 916 deaths over 10 months (JHM). Conversely, the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic had resulted in 138 million confirmed infections and almost 3 million deaths in more than 185 countries and regions as of 14 April 2021 (Lu).

SYMPTOMS AND TRANSMISSION

SARS-CoV-2's closest human-infecting relatives are SARS-CoV_NS-1, SARS-CoV_Sino1-11, SARS-CoV_GZ02, and SARS-CoV_GD01 (CDC 2005). While genetically similar to SARS-CoV-2, these viruses have not had as significant a public health impact. The SARS and SARS-CoV-2 genomes are 79% similar (CDC 2005). Both SARS and COVID-19 express intermembrane spike proteins which bind to angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE2) receptors on host cells in order to initiate infection and viral reproduction, unlike MERS and cold-causing OC43 which bind to DPP4 receptors and sugars, respectively (Cascella; Li).

Symptoms associated with SARS include high fever, headache, body aches, dry cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, malaise, loss of appetite, night sweats and chills, confusion, rash, and diarrhea; reported complications include pneumonia, acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS), and cardiac and liver failure (JHM). Reported symptoms of SARS-CoV-2 include cough, shortness of breath, difficulty eating, fever, chills, muscle tremors, muscle pain, sore throat, headache, and loss of smell or taste (CDC 2019; Mayo Clinic). Moderate symptoms include persistent chest pain, confusion, psychomotor delay, and bluish lips or face, while severe complications of COVID-19 include ARDS, pneumonia, sepsis, neurological symptoms, and intravascular

coagulation (ibid).

SARS is spread via respiratory droplets when an individual is symptomatic, after a typical incubation period of 2-7 days; transmission can occur up to 10 days following a fever (JHM). COVID-19 is transmitted via respiratory droplets from asymptomatic and symptomatic individuals and the virus has an incubation period between 2-14 days with a potential for transmission of up to 14 days (WHO).

DIFFERENCES AND SELECTION PRESSURE

Whether a virus has the potential to infect and kill as high a number of individuals as COVID-19 has, depends upon a certain confluence of transmission mechanisms and symptoms. Individuals with mild symptoms of COVID-19 might mistakenly believe that they have the flu and won't self-quarantine, resulting in behaviors likely to increase transmission. Asymptomatic individuals and those with mild symptoms seem to spread the virus at equal rates of transmission; such infections comprise an estimated 85% of reported cases (CEBM; CCDCP). By comparison, the symptoms of SARS infection tend to be moderate or severe. More severe symptoms tend to motivate more individuals to self-quarantine while they rest and recover, resulting in reduced opportunity for transmission.

What accounts for these observed difference in the clinical presentation of symptoms? That question goes beyond the scope of this briefing, but it seems likely that the evolutionary mechanisms of directional and stabilizing selection have causal roles in the epidemiology of SARS-CoV-2. There is a range of pathogen efficacy which optimizes the transmissibility and therefore the selective advantage of a pathogen variant. A pathogen which kills its host before transmission can occur will likely be selected against, and will not have the opportunity to spread within a larger population

Comparing SARS and SARS-CoV-2 and its concomitant COVID-19, differences can be seen in patterns of transmission; presentation of symptoms; and timelines and severity of disease progression. Given the similar infection mechanisms of SARS and SARS-CoV-2, it is reasonable to look to genomic differences to help account for these clinical and epidemiological divergences. ■

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"YOU ARE NEITHER RICH ENOUGH
TO ENERVATE YOURSELF WITH SOFTNESS AND
LOSE IN VAIN DELIGHTS THE TASTE FOR TRUE
HAPPINESS AND SOLID VIRTUES
NOR POOR ENOUGH TO NEED MORE
FOREIGN ASSISTANCE THAN YOUR SKILLS
PROCURE FOR YOU."
JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU, LETTERS TO THE
REPUBLIC OF GENEVA, 1755

MONICA COURTNEY

A Pandemic Year in Texts

The messages which follow appear here exactly as they were sent or received over the past year. - MC

.....

someone in Essex County was confirmed with Coronavirus

11 March // 1:13 am

dude I don't wanna be in my house til June
until there's a vaccine we're screwed man

7 April // 11:42 am

the neighbor next door just turned 15 so a bunch of cars drove
by honking with posters which is really sweet.

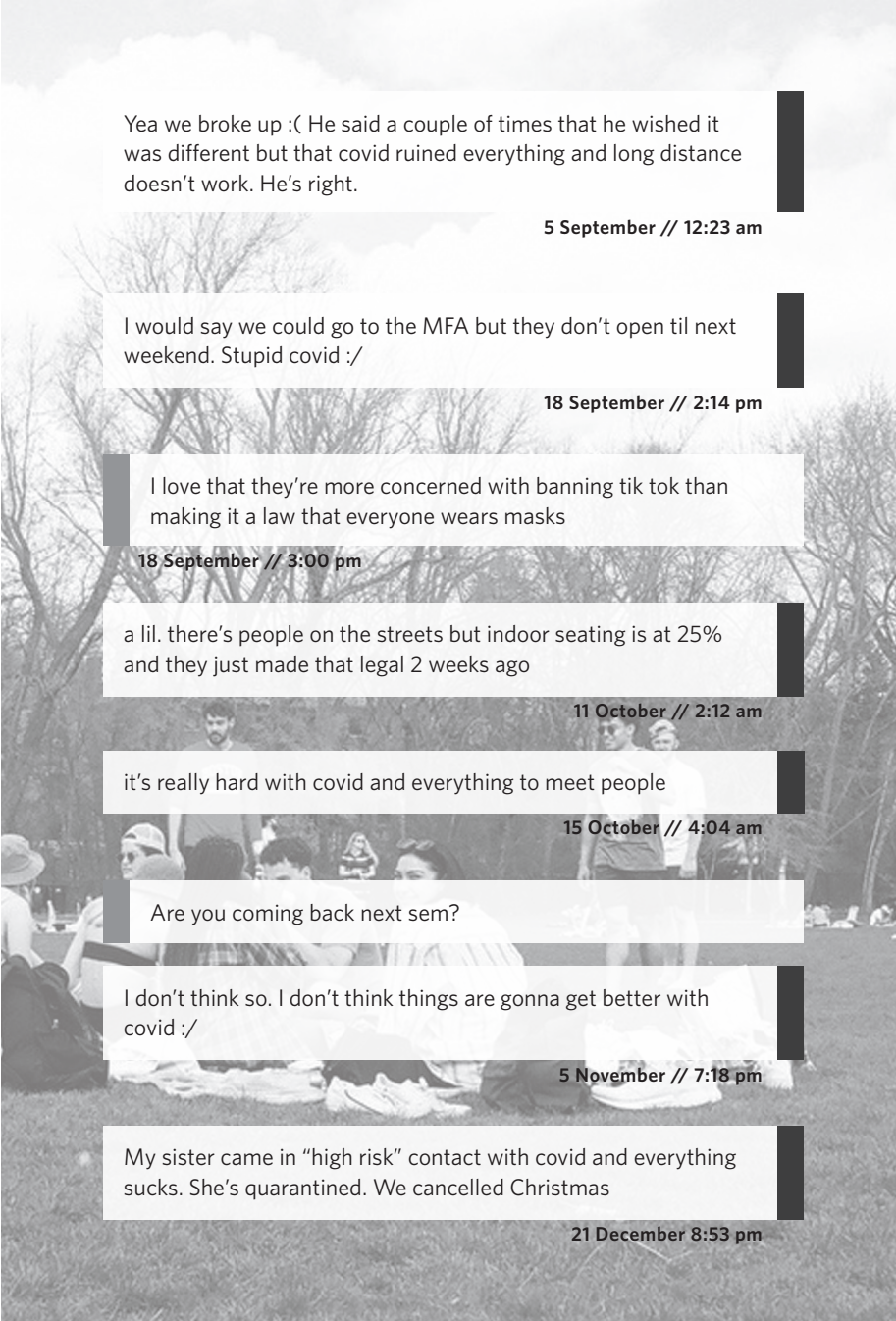
28 April // 4:17 pm

I just miss having freedom. And I understand that it's covid rn
so I'm just hoping I can convince my mom to let me move back
to the campus in the fall. Just rn it's like I go no where and do
nothing and see no one.

19 August // 4:54 pm

Alright I gotta go to bed. I have a covid test at 8:30 A.M.
tomorrow :(

28 April // 4:17 pm



Yea we broke up :(He said a couple of times that he wished it was different but that covid ruined everything and long distance doesn't work. He's right.

5 September // 12:23 am

I would say we could go to the MFA but they don't open til next weekend. Stupid covid :/

18 September // 2:14 pm

I love that they're more concerned with banning tik tok than making it a law that everyone wears masks

18 September // 3:00 pm

a lil. there's people on the streets but indoor seating is at 25% and they just made that legal 2 weeks ago

11 October // 2:12 am

it's really hard with covid and everything to meet people

15 October // 4:04 am

Are you coming back next sem?

I don't think so. I don't think things are gonna get better with covid :/

5 November // 7:18 pm

My sister came in "high risk" contact with covid and everything sucks. She's quarantined. We cancelled Christmas

21 December 8:53 pm

Just a PSA I have rice in my throat and am about to clear it aggressively. Not covid. Just rice

23 December // 1:03 pm

I was invited to a bday party last week and obviously I didn't attend but thank god I didn't someone had covid.

31 December 31 // 10:02 pm

Omg literally ask your parents. I will wear 6 masks and sit a mile away I'm just dying for a change of scenery

15 February // 12:59 pm

Lemme just say trying to get a vaccine is so difficult. It's like playing the damn lottery

4 March // 11:48 pm

CVS Vaccine: We're Confirming your appointment(s). Manage your appointment(s) here:

6 March // 5:09 am

Omg right I forgot covid is going to be over soon cuz BU is lifting LfA. Ngl I kinda liked covid season

29 March // 3:50 pm

CVS Vaccine: You must complete pre-appointment forms before your 2nd Covid-19 Vaccine dose on 3/31/21

29 March // 4:03 pm

MAGGIE FARREN

The End of All Things, and Perhaps a Beginning

Reviewed:

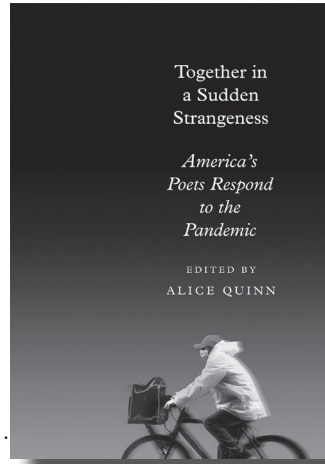
Together in a Sudden Strangeness: America's Poets Respond to the Pandemic

edited by Alice Quinn,

with 107 contributors

Published in November 2020

Knopf; 208 pages



Ada Limón concludes “The End of Poetry” with the line “I am asking you to touch me”, expressing a deep fear of loneliness, or the need to feel connection with others. The same sentiment is at the core of many of the works gathered in *Together in a Sudden Strangeness*, edited by Alice Quinn. In the middle of a pandemic and a national resurgent engagement with the problems of racism and police corruption, this human vulnerability may seem trivial and almost selfish. What is the role of poetry at a time when it feels like the world is ending? The breadth of poems assembled here permits many different answers to this question.

The anthology opens with a piece concerning the effects of the pandemic on poetry. Author Julia Alvarez uses “poetry” as a cipher in questions that have been central in our societal conversations around COVID, asking “will the lines be six feet apart?” and “will there be enough poetry to go around?”

The topic of poetry seems a suitable placeholder for the pressing social and personal worries we might otherwise be asking about directly, since poetry is able to accurately depict the current state of the world. After all, poetry can so often be a solitary act, even an isolating one. For many readers, the pandemic has illuminated how important human contact and interaction is.

In contrast to this perspective, Kitty O’Meara’s “And the People Stayed Home” sees our period of isolation as a time for both people and the world to heal. Her poem—which went viral thanks to social media and Oprah—views the pandemic almost as a reset button. Such an interpretation reads a bit ingenuous when one considers the number of people who have died or lost their jobs and financial

security. However, that a poem might be naïve does not mean it is completely wrong. The drastic changes caused by COVID prompted a renewed appreciation for the pleasures and stabilities of everyday life. Perhaps that renewal is what O'Meara refers to when she writes:

And the people began to think differently.

“A Private Life” by Mark Wunderlich straddles these two viewpoints: conceding to the romantic notion of healing through solitude, while also wondering what the value of a life really is if one spends it alone. Wunderlich admits that he feels “more a fiction than previously thought”, which he hurries to tell the reader is “not so bad, not so sad”. His reassurance falls a bit flat when he later calls his existence in quarantine a “threadbare life nobody will see”.

* * * * *

One of the strengths of this anthology is its variation on a central theme. The collection is about the pandemic, and *also* about everything else. The pandemic becomes a lens through which all of human experience can be viewed. However, the pandemic is not merely reduced to a metaphor for loneliness. It a real and pressing presence throughout, notably in Rachel Eliza Griffiths’s “Flowers for Tanisha”. This poem tells the story of a forensic technician who places flowers on the body bags of patients who have died from COVID-19. Griffiths writes,

I would like to believe this poem is a daffodil
placed on the lid of a language that is trying to speak
about the world.

The poem speaks in a grounded way about the reality of sick patients and deceased bodies, before expanding into the impulse Tanisha feels to gift the dead with flowers. Her small gesture is likened to the writing of poetry, an act of recognition and commemoration. The flowers that Tanisha leaves are an elegiac ode to a world that is quickly becoming obsolete.

Any peace or acceptance established through Griffiths’s poem is dispelled by the poem “Batshit” by Sally Wen Mao. This piece grapples with the anti-Asian hate brought into the spotlight as a result of the pandemic. She opens by commanding

the reader to “Say it. Say it to my face”, an aggressive tone that continues throughout. Mao is asking readers to confront her directly, and at the same time to confront their own views of Asian Americans. She calls out the hypocrisy of the anti-Asian American sentiments fueled by the fear and hysteria surrounding COVID, writing:

they call eating dog barbaric,
but not police brutality. They hate a caged animal in a foreign
country, but ignore the border camps in their own

It is easy to condemn a culture that isn't your own, Mao says, but such judgment can be the convenient way we deny our own inhumane practices and institutions: corrupt policing, family separations, children caged at the border. Her poem makes a crucial link between public health and social justice—at the time of the anthology's creation, a link which was evident in the unrest of the pandemic and in our collective outrage after the killing of George Floyd.

* * * * *

The poems of this anthology are concerned with distance and closeness, and with the anxiety of returning to ‘normal life’. They serve as a catalyst for reflection on the human condition and argue for the continued importance of poetry as a means to find and to feel connection with others. Reverent to the dead and hopeful about the future, the texts brought together here by Alice Quinn work in diverse ways to document the unique situation of the world as it is today. ■

“WON'T WE HAVE TO SEIZE
SOME OF OUR NEIGHBORS' LAND, THEN,
IF WE ARE TO HAVE ENOUGH
FOR PASTURE AND PLOWING?”
PLATO, THE REPUBLIC

S. E. VATALARO
Looking Back

after Kitty O'Meara's "And the People Stayed Home"

"And the people healed..."

And I wish it'd been that simple.

And I wish we'd retreated and blinked awake from our cruel ways,
 And made amends, and emerged better versions of ourselves,

Pandemic butterflies. But we didn't. And we struggled.

We spent A year apart, alone. And we can never recover
 What we lost—a year of touch, and first steps, and last
 Goodbyes, and friends, and family, and lives.

And we lived in fear. We feared for ourselves, our mothers,

Our teachers, our dads and brothers and aunts.
 And fear was a familiar dinner guest at empty tables
 But we squared our shoulders and swept it out the door,

And kneaded it into bread, and sewed it into masks.

And we put up our dukes and dove, head-first, in. And
 Here we are, wheezing across the finish line, sprained,
 sunburnt, bruised—but *finishing*.

And we are not yet those miraculous creatures fluttering in the air, but

We have emerged from our cocoons and are waiting, wet wings
 Still setting and strengthening, in the sunshine of a world
 We are reacquainting ourselves with.

And if we have not yet begun to heal

We have survived
 And that is just as precious. ■

ZACHARY BOS

The Burning Stacks

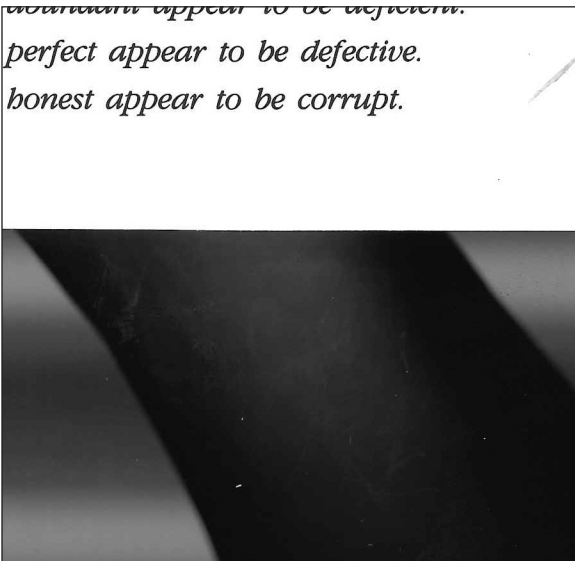
after Li-Young Lee and James Tate

This whole world is a burning library
and we are the books, our deaths, and lives.
Our pages are indecipherable, charred by
lichen-burns progressing like limping
blossoms across the creased skin of the covers
and crook of the split spine. We smolder
for ages between borrowings, trapped
and wary, our pages are greasy where
patrons have tried to kiss the flame to sleep.
Wrapped in wondrous sulfurous cresting and
ebbing, we contain such stories! We yearn
to read them by our own cast light but the fire
incuses us and consumes us. We shall
never be free, yet impossibly are. ■

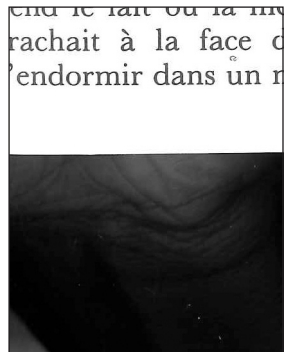
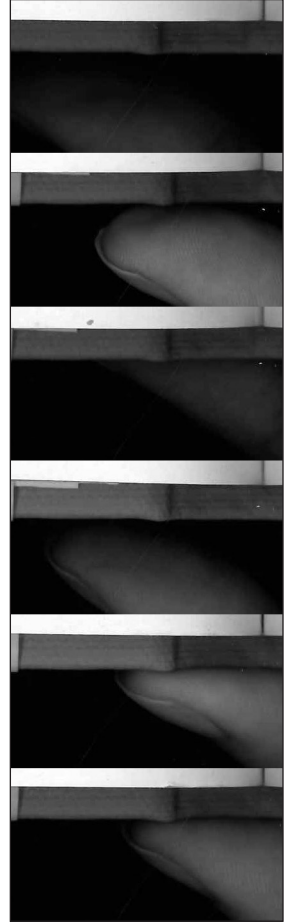
.....

Author's note. "I make use in this sonnet of language borrowed from two poems: 'The Burning One' by Li-Young Lee, appearing in the anthology *Together in a Sudden Strangeness* edited by Alice Quinn (2020), and 'The Long Loon of Democracy' by James Tate, appearing in *Riven Doggeries* (1979). The images on these pages are part of a series showing fingers and hands captured incidentally, while their owners were scanning pages out of literary or philosophical texts. Call them candid stills from a back workroom in the Library of Babel. Let me identify the scanners: On this page, myself; on the next page, at left top and bottom, Cassandra; at right top, the succession of consecutive images, Alina; and at right bottom, Rania." - ZB





*mountain appear to be defiled.
perfect appear to be defective.
honest appear to be corrupt.*



end le fait ou la m
rachait à la face d
'endormir dans un r

SABINE OLLIVIER-YAMIN

Notes on an Ending

The endings of pandemics seem to be noted in the historical record with little fanfare. The Black Death is typically cited as ending in 1351, though in actuality the disease continued to re-emerge every twenty years or so until 1665. Each time, it killed twenty percent of the population of London. The Spanish Flu—“Spanish”, though the first cases were documented in Kansas in 1918—is recorded as ending in 1920. In reality, it reemerged in 1957, 1968, and 2009. The COVID pandemic appears to be following a similar pattern. The prospect of recurrences will hang over our heads for the foreseeable future. Once a majority of the population is vaccinated, we will be free, or will feel free, to resume daily activities with fewer restrictions. However, there will be no final date that marks the exact end of the COVID era. Absurdist poet Jesse Ball’s “Come Back, Come Back” reflects the anticlimactic, undefinitive nature of endings of this sort. (The poem can be read online at books.google.com/books?id=cQfhDwAAQBAJ&pg=PA6.)

Reflecting the confused perspectives and clashing interpretations which have characterized this COVID crisis, the poem begins with a speaker stymied by misunderstanding. In the first stanza, they begin by stating how they went to save their brother from drowning, but the brother “wasn’t there”. How can one take action, or make oneself useful, in this atmosphere of dreamy uncertainty? The speaker states in the sixth stanza that the wind was crying, only to state later that there was no wind. Contradictions iterate throughout the poem, compounded by the fact that dreams are all the more confusing for being solitary, unsharable experiences; there is no one to confirm what takes place in a dream other than oneself. The speaker’s self-reflective questioning of their dreamed recollection emphasizes the isolation. We might then think of this sort of poem as a quarantine soliloquy.

Constructed spaces occur throughout the poem. Here is one example: While describing how they were rescuing their drowning brother, the speaker states, “All of him/ could only fit” . . . “on my finger like a ring”. The two phrases are separated by a substantial white space. Here is another: The sixth stanza ends with the line, “The day was/ perfectly still, and the wind was”, and then we have another space, before the concluding word “crying!” What is happening in these moments of physical lacking or absence? I find myself thinking about how so much of COVID’s social and emotional impact cannot be easily spoken about. Through spaces like these, Ball conveys grief which cannot be put into words. Such spaces also give the reader the impression that our speaker is still in mid-thought, still processing the remnants of

the dream. This is akin to how we ourselves are still in mid-thought, processing the uncertainty of the present moment.

A recurrent motif in the poem is sound that cannot be heard through one's ears. The speaker describes a crying wind which they had to cover their ears to hear. Later on, the speaker describes a song that "came in, came in/ where my ears weren't". Though the pandemic has been a collective and global experience, we as individual human beings have had to experience it while in isolation from each other. What we hear about each other's suffering and worries is not heard with our senses, but with our hearts. The kinship we feel with others at this time is not established through physical conversation or connection, but as a spiritual, invisible bond.

We're now reaching the end of this crisis—however naive, or hopeful our approximation of "end" may prove to be. As we come to this end, I feel that we must take notice of the profound lack of significance the moment so far seems to hold. To draw upon Eliot's words, this chapter of history seems to be concluding not with a bang, but with a whimper. I expect that we'll see no immediate visible change, no singular event, to mark the end of the COVID pandemic. Instead, our ending will be characterized by spaces: moments of silence for those who have passed and periods of confusion where we find ourselves with nothing definitive to say. The moment will pass unceremoniously, apart from the funerals that could not be held during the pandemic. Grief repressed for so long dissipates into amorphous feeling, and we lose the chance to give it concrete forms of expression. However, speechlessness is not hopelessness. Ball's poem suggests that there can be unity and companionship through silence. Though there may be no way to express or fully comprehend the insurmountable grief of losing a loved one, there is strength in knowing that we are connected in the silence of this tragedy. ■

"L'INSTRUCTION EST LE BESOIN DE TOUS."

DECLARATION OF THE RIGHTS OF MAN

AND CITIZEN, 1793

ANDREW KELBLEY

Aristotle Said

Truly

It is hard to be proud

It is impossible without nobility

Without goodness of character

But isn't everyone worthy?

Noble, even?

So we only have to know ourselves

Grabbing each other tight

With layered claws

To this abstract law

Far away from Greece

Of what beings should be

Across the sea

Gathering in the grass

Chasing that pack of lions

To the end.

We are all saints

Stalking the long path to pride

Right there, in the sunny grass waiting.

Thucydides Said

For the men are the city

Not the walls

Nor the ships empty of people

But if the men are the city,

Who is the city

For?

Not the women

Nor the wombs empty of children

Not the corgis

Nor the parks empty even in April

Not the beech trees

Nor the books

Nor the steeple

This city is a different world

Barely grasping

More

But the city is

Always losing

Space

And trading

Us for war. ■

Persian Romance Through a Sufi Lens

In the Persian cultural tradition, romance characteristically focuses on the transformative dynamic between a lover and the beloved, often making use of Sufi allegories and symbolism. This paper will compare Persian romance in several mediums, looking for Sufi themes of introspection, spiritual journey, and mystical love in a prose translation of Nizami's *Layla and Majnun*, Jami's epic *Yusuf and Zulaikha*, and the modern film *Baran*, directed by Majid Majidi.

Across different creative genres, certain themes of Persian romance occur and recur. In the twelfth-century story of *Layla and Majnun*, Nizami tells how Layla and Qays meet as schoolchildren. Immediately “a fire [is] lit in both” of their hearts. From their initial interaction, Qays “gives his heart to Layla before he [even] understands what he is giving away” (5). As the story progresses, the lovers are separated and Qays becomes a *majnun*, a ‘madman’—“not only losing his beloved, but also himself” (10). Majnun finds a home in the wilderness where he is free to express his suffering and longing for Layla, while Layla must keep her love for Majnun suppressed. She remains confined by the walls of her home, by her parents, and by her duty to her new husband. When Layla and Majnun finally reunite, they express their love from a distance, as Majnun recites his poetry to her. When Layla dies, Majnun mourns her death until he too passes away, with her gravestone “embraced in both his arms” (173).

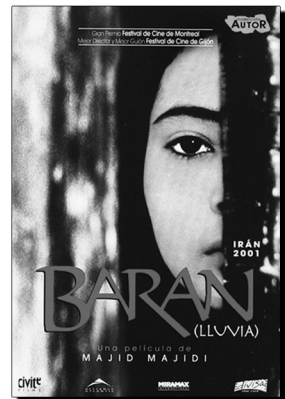
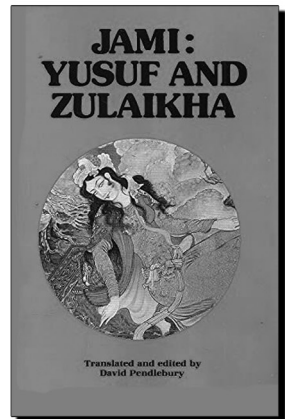
The fifteenth-century story of *Yusuf and Zulaikha* follows a comparable storyline, though initially it is the female character who acts as the lover seeking after her male beloved. In a dream, Zulaikha sees Yusuf, who “robs her mind of all peace”, as her burning “passion for him [becomes] the root of all the misery she [suffers] for several years” (51). When Zulaikha subsequently sees Yusuf in real life, she is overcome by a state of obsession, and attempts to win his love by covering the walls of her palace in images of the “two lovers entwined in a passionate embrace” (78). However, Yusuf’s devotion to God and refusal to yield to Zulaikha’s desire drive her to misery. Eventually, Zulaikha has a spiritual awakening, “shattering her idol”, and is freed from her suffering (121). Yusuf falls in love with this transformed version of Zulaikha and the roles of lover and beloved switch.

A similar dynamic structures the plot in the 2001 film *Baran*. When Lateef loses his job to Rahmat, he is filled with rage, slapping Rahmat and threatening him. As

the film continues, Lateef discovers that Rahmat is actually a girl when he observes her combing her hair. This moment marks a shift in Lateef's attitude towards the girl whose real name is Baran. He begins to feel protective towards her, and eventually, Lateef falls deeply in love. Through their silent, distant encounters, she seems to reciprocate the emotion. Fully devoted in his love for her, Lateef sells his most valuable possession—his identity card—to protect her and her family. Towards the end of the film, Baran and Lateef make direct eye contact, acknowledging their love for each other though they must continue their lives separately.

In a structural analysis of the genre, critic So-mayeh Olfat Fasih asserts that Persian romance is based on the “existence of dual oppositions” and contains the common elements of a “hero [loving] a beautiful girl” and a hero taking “a long journey filled with various hardships” (77). These elements can be identified in each of these three stories. Though they appear in different eras and in different mediums, they share clear similarities of plot, character and theme.

In *Layla and Majnun*, Qays transforms into Majnun when his intense love and separation from Layla drive him to madness. In this new state, Majnun expresses his pain through poetry and embraces the spiritual world, devoting himself completely to his lover. Similarly, in *Yusuf and Zulaikha*, Zulaikha has a moment of spiritual awakening when she breaks her idol; she realizes the insignificance of the material world and sees the world from a spiritual perspective. In *Baran*, Lateef also evolves from a young man blinded by the material world. When he discovers the true identity of Baran, his heart softens



and he desperately falls in love with her, willing to do anything to protect her, revealing that through love, material objects lose their value. Another common thematic element between all the stories is the inevitable nature of love. None of the characters chose to fall in love; instead, they lose themselves in the pursuit of love. The characters yield to the force of their love and learn to navigate through the rewards and hardships of love whether that be from a distance, as in *Layla and Majnun* and *Baran*, or from physical touch, as in *Yusuf and Zulaikha*.

In addition, there are various similarities and differences between the relationship between the lover and beloved in each story. In Persian romance, typically the lover is a male character and the beloved is female. This trope is seen in both *Layla and Majnun* and *Baran*. However, in *Yusuf and Zulaikha*, it is instead the female who is seeking after the male beloved; the roles are reversed only after Zulaikha undergoes her spiritual transformation, which then causes Yusuf to become the lover and Zulaikha the beloved. Furthermore, the initial interactions between the lover and beloved differ in each story. In both *Layla and Majnun* and *Baran*, the characters fall in love after meeting in person. By contrast, in *Yusuf and Zulaikha*, Zulaikha falls in love with Yusuf through imaginary visions of him she sees in a dream.

According to scholar Bahman Solati, Sufism can be defined as “the reality of the divine”, in which an individual “free from ego and pride” undergoes the Sufi path “to explore and finally reach the [essential] truth” through “love and devotion” (3). Sufis believe that love is the “key to understanding God, creation, and man’s role in the universe” (Chittick). In Sufi poetry, the authors employ “indirect and symbolic language”, which may be written as a “man’s love for a woman”, in order to highlight man’s love and praise for God (ibid). Thus, Sufi beliefs revolve around the notion that the “goal of love is to bring about union between lover and beloved”, which can only be achieved through overcoming “separation, pain, and suffering” in order to “bring about nearness and union” (Chittick). Analyzing these stories from a Sufi lens, it is evident that they can all be further classified as mystical love stories; let us look at each in turn.

In *Layla and Majnun*, Majnun describes how he wishes to “sacrifice [his] life for Layla’s beauty” and although he “burns for her painfully, like a candle, none of his days [will] ever be free of this pain” (27-8). Majnun’s willingness to endure pain and suffering for his beloved parallels the Sufi idea that grief and suffering should be acknowledged and expressed, as “this longing is infinitely precious” and “draws one directly back to God” (Vaughan-Lee). Thus, on his path of love, Majnun embodies the Sufi qualities of a lover, as he embraces his overwhelming pain and longing for Layla, accepts the

power and cruelty of love, and stays true to his beloved. Furthermore, when Majnun finally reunites with Layla, he remains “ten paces apart”, as “nearness brings [lovers] disaster;” he compares himself to a “burning candle” and if he “approaches the fire, he shall be consumed” (154). In this moment, Majnun is “unable to endure the actual presence of the beloved” (Vaughan-Lee); their physical proximity is too overpowering and overwhelming. This interaction between Layla and Majnun reflects the Sufi belief that “too much spiritual light can be overwhelming” (ibid). Just as a burning candle gets consumed by its flame, fully immersing himself in Layla’s love will completely consume Majnun’s life.

In *Yusuf and Zulaikha*, Zulaikha attempts to seduce Yusuf by covering her palace walls with images of the “two of them portrayed in amorous embrace;” however, Yusuf refuses to “burn [his] body in the fire of lust” (82-3). Eventually, Zulaikha becomes “weary of her own self” and aims “to be free of it” by breaking her idol and “imploring forgiveness of the true God” (103, 121). Zulaikha’s shift in attitude and outlook on love can be interpreted as her progression on the Sufi path to the ultimate truth. At first, Zulaikha symbolizes the material consumption of love and beauty, while Yusuf represents the spiritual side. She does not recognize the difference between carnal love and true love; she is still “trapped in the world of appearances” and does not yet comprehend “the ultimate object of her passion” (Beutel). However, as she continues on the path, she cleanses herself from the barriers of the material world and embraces her spiritual self. Zulaikha’s persistent devotion to Yusuf ultimately leads to her union with him, demonstrating that commitment and “persistence in the Sufi path will be rewarded” (ibid).

In *Baran*, the moment when Lateef discovers the true identity of Baran marks the beginning of his Sufi path of love and introspection. Baran “functions as a mystical guide on Lateef’s road to self-realization”, as he learns the insignificance of the material world through his love for her (Zargar 23). From giving up his life savings to selling his identity card, Lateef breaks free from the superficial world and undergoes a personal transformation in his search for the beloved, classifying him as a true Sufi. Furthermore, the film opens with a bakery scene, where the bakers prepare lumps of fresh dough and Lateef waits in line surrounded by several other individuals. In contrast, after watching his beloved drive away, the film ends with Lateef standing alone, as he admires the rain filling Baran’s footprint. This contrast between the opening and ending scenes highlights a shift from the “non-identity of mass-createdness to the unique identity created by love” (ibid, 21). The crowd of people waiting in line and the

bakery filled with identical mounds of dough symbolizes the basic human form, lacking individuality. However, Lateef's spiritual transformation and the ultimate union of Baran and Lateef yields two new identities: Baran's unique footprint that stands alone in the mud, and a new version of Lateef who stands alone in the rain.

Nizami's tale, Jami's epic, and Majidi's film each navigate through a spiritual journey guided by love, suffering, and perseverance, where the true self is discovered and united with the beloved in fulfillment of the essential doctrines of Sufi mysticism. In *Layla and Majnun*, Majnun's separation from Layla drives him to madness, where he eventually unites with his beloved after learning to embrace his grief and longing, as pain always accompanies love in the Sufi world. Similarly, in *Yusuf and Zulaikha*, Zulaikha is ultimately united with her beloved after she overcomes the darkness of passion and discovers her spiritual self. In *Baran*, Lateef's search for his beloved develops into a search for his true self, in which he learns the value of empathy and introspection. The essential shift in the protagonist's focus from "self-centeredness to beloved-centeredness" (Zargar 23) is most, if not only, evident when we remember to consider these works through a Sufi lens. ■

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CURATED BY KYNA HAMILL

Playlist for Enlightenment and Romantic Revolt

“This world is not conclusion. / A sequel stands beyond / Invisible, as music /
But positive, as sound” – Emily Dickinson

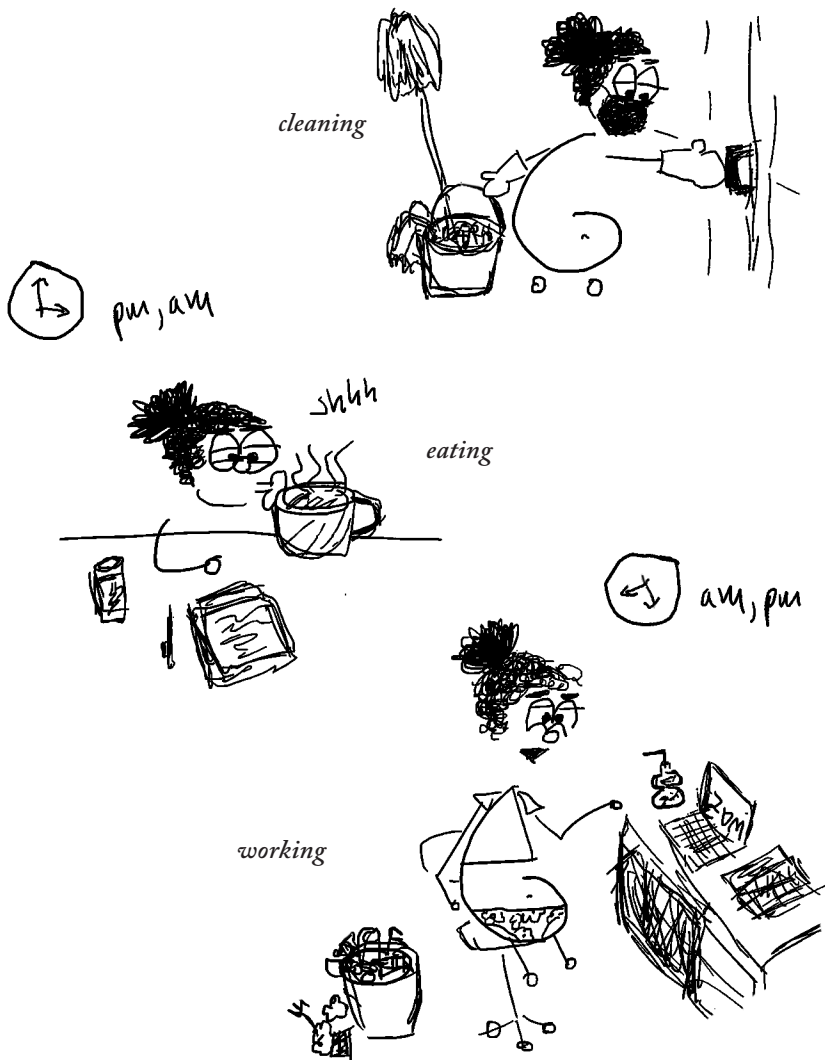
THESE TRACKS ARE each either drawn from or complement the book list for CAS CC202. This second-year Core humanities course spans topics from the Enlightenment and periods of Romantic revolt in Europe to ideas of freedom in America.

♫ 1) Chapter 2.4, Kant’s *Foundations of Ethics*, 2020. ♫ 2) “Best of all possible worlds” and ♫ 3) “Eldorado” from *Candide* Broadway Cast Recording, 2018. ♫ 4) “J’ai perdu tout mon bonheur” and ♫ 5) “Menuets” from Rousseau’s *Le Devin du village*, 1956. ♫ 6) “Vin o bière” from *Faust*, Théâtre National de l’Opéra de Paris, 2009. ♫ 7) “Gretchen am Spinnrade” from Schubert’s *Schumann Lieder*, Marian Anderson, 2000. ♫ 8) “Meet the Family” from *Pride and Prejudice Suite on Heroines in Music*, 2011. ♫ 9) “Meryton Townhall” from *Pride & Prejudice Soundtrack*, 2005. ♫ 10) Finale, Beethoven’s *Symphony No. 9 in D Minor*, Filharmonie Brno, 1992. ♫ 11) Blake’s “London” read by Rowe, 2013. ♫ 12) Wordsworth’s “Tintern Abbey” read by Hardwicke, 2011. ♫ 13) Shelley’s “Ozymandias” read by Martin, 1962. ♫ 14) Keats’ “Ode to Autumn” read by Wagner, 2012. ♫ 15) Whitman’s “When Lilacs in the Dooryard Bloomed” read by Jones, 2011; and ♫ 16) “Song of the Open Road” read by Murray, 2017. ♫ 17) “Walt Whitman” Op. 7, H. 42 from *Holst’s Orchestral Works*, London Philharmonic, 2007. ♫ 18) Dickinson’s “I’m Nobody - Who Are You” read by Harris, 2010; ♫ 19) “I Am Alive I Guess” read by Chartoff, 2020; ♫ 20) “A Bird Came Down the Walk” and ♫ 21) “There’s a Certain Slant of Light” read by Harris, 2010; and ♫ 22) “Because I Could Not Stop For Death” read by Streeep, 2011. ♫ 23) “Heldenklage” ♫ 24) and “Klavierstück” from *Music of Friedrich Nietzsche*, 1998. ♫ 25) “Mrs Dalloway: Words” from *Music From Woolf Works*, Max Richter, 2017. ♫ 26) “Virginia Woolf” from *Profesora*, 2006. ♫ 27) “Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?” by James Brown, 2007. ♫ 28) “Early College Years: Fisk U” from *DuBois: A Recorded Autobiography*, 1961. ♫ 29) “Written Out of History” by Los Chicharrons, 1999. ♫ 30) “I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel to Be Free” by Nina Simone, 1967. ♫ 31) “Freedom” by Beyoncé feat. Kendrick Lamar, 2016. ♫ 32) “Me and the Devil Blues” by Robert Johnson, 1937. ■

>> On Spotify at www.bit.ly/CoreTunes21

SUSAN FOSTER

Coronatoon Diary



BRIAN JORGENSEN

What Is That Covid? Blues*(minor blues with a mechanical offbeat)*

Not Joey V. nor Janey C.	Not looking for a job or mate
Got no personal narrative	No dream, no love, no hate
Not knowing who world leaders are	The weather or the date
Not bored, not quitting, not intrigued	Replicating to replicate
Killing my friends, killing my sister	Killing 'round the world unseen
Real beyond zoology	Trillion pimply globe machine

Covid, Covid, Covid: Covid, Code Blue
 No mind, no heart, sure know what to do

By cough, by word, by sneeze, by sigh	Taking a winner's ride
Invisible upon the air	Ready to thrive on my inside
We beat your kind back years ago	Now you return anew
Mutating efficaciously	Not knowing that you do
If you were to fasten to my cells	They'd die of deadly glue
No way in Hell twice over	You could think about a truce
I'm hoping day and night to get	Some strong immunity juice

Covid, novel Covid, *you* are what you're all about
 You virally viral virus, I'm trying to wait you out ■

Grief and Violence as Disfiguration



What happens to women when men wage war, especially war fought over the bodies of women? Picasso's 1963 *Rape of the Sabine Women* and Euripides' fifth-century *Hecuba* both attempt to answer this question. Both express grief and violence as disfiguration, but in *Hecuba*, grief is assigned to women, while in Picasso's painting only the child grieves. Is this because in war, grieving is often done by those with the least agency, and the most to lose?

Picasso's *Rape of the Sabine Women* (in the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, accession no. 64.709) emphasizes the power of its men over its woman and child in many ways. The men take up almost the entire top two-thirds of the canvas, with the woman and child are consigned to the bottom. This is accomplished in part

by elevating the Sabine man on a horse, a symbol of war (as opposed to oxen and donkeys more commonly used for agriculture). The Roman and the Sabine man look only at each other, barely acknowledging the woman and child they trample below. The composition of the painting places the figures in the foreground in a rectangle with the Roman shield roughly in the middle. Not only does this establish a hierarchy of agency, with the weapons on the top edge deciding what happens to the bodies on the bottom, this draws the viewer's eye towards the shield. In this way, the composition of *Rape of the Sabine Woman* literally centers the eventual dominance of the Roman Empire. Other elements in the painting also reference this growth: the temple and the field in the background are painted with light, desaturated colors and very little black compared to the foreground, which is painted in stark, saturated colors with the forms outlined in black. This creates a sense of heaviness in the foreground that sharply contrasts with the prosperity in the background. Additionally, the black of the background forms lines sloping along the Roman soldier and horse up to the field and the temple, as if the success of the Romans is rising on the backs of the woman and child. All four figures are heavily distorted and grotesque, with very simple coloring and harsh shadows—none of the smooth gradations of value expected in Classical style. The Roman, child, and woman are all colored bright white, blue, and yellow, with the gold on the Roman's armor and weapons reflecting off of the Sabine woman's skin, implying that he already possesses her. The mother and daughter, therefore, symbolize the conquest of reproductive labor necessary for empire-building. The Roman is drawn larger than life: almost as tall as the Sabine on horseback, which might also foreshadow Rome's hegemony. The flat, rough style Picasso employs makes the weapons of the men appear to blend into their bodies, with the Sabine's face the same color as his spear and the Roman's face the same color as his sword. This suggests the idea of men as extensions of their weapons and wars, an idea also developed in *Hecuba* (Hamill).

Both *Hecuba* and *Rape of the Sabine Women* show women suffering due to conquest and subjugation, though the reactions of the women differ. Both works depict the violent fallout of one war, the Trojan War and War with the Sabines, respectively, in order to critique a contemporary conflict, those being the Peloponnesian Wars and the Cuban Missile Crisis, as the MFA's description of painting states. Thus, both works raise the question of manufactured necessity as a pretext for violence. Was Polyxena's sacrifice necessary for the Greek war effort? Was the abduction of the Sabine women necessary for the Roman empire? Both the play and the painting ask us to critically consider what justifications for violence are truly legitimate—especially acts or means

of violence which in their respective cultural settings are considering extraordinarily transgressive, such as nuclear weapons in the United States during the Cold War, or human sacrifice in the time of the ancient Greeks (Hamill). At the same time, both works seem to acknowledge that war builds up an empire. The inclusion of the temple and fields in the background of *Rape of the Sabine Women* implies that Roman and Greek culture itself wouldn't have come into being without the absorption of the Sabines and the Trojan War. Yet these works also force the viewer to consider the characteristics that a civilization built from violence develops. Just as the Greeks' and Romans' exploitation of women abroad influenced their domestic treatment of women, the arms sent abroad today with American troops ends up in the hands of American police (Dahl), leaving women to grieve for lost family across the globe and throughout time. Just as in antiquity, the fate of people at home and people abroad today is more intertwined than one might think.

The Sabine man who tramples the woman and child he purports to defend resembles the men in *Hecuba* who treat the titular character and her children as objects. Even Agamemnon, who supports Hecuba's revenge against Polymestor, addresses her flippantly in saying that freeing her from slavery is "fairly easy" (755). In both of these wars fought over women, the women depicted in these two works gain nothing except grief that in turn grants them new, more grotesque forms. Hecuba will turn into a "bitch dog ... possessing fiery eyes" and drown (1265). The figures in Picasso's painting are disfigured, particularly the child, who reaches up towards the Roman with gaping eyes, mouth, and nostrils. Both works suggest that violent grief dehumanizes the griever—that grief can't be contained in human form and therefore changes it. In *Hecuba* the mother weeps over her daughter's death and the daughter dies willingly, while in Picasso's painting it is the mother who looks impassive while the child grieves violently. Perhaps the mother is dead, but even in that case the image of a child weeping over her mother's body still subverts the Greek expectation of female professional mourners (Hamill). The child, of course, is too young to know any sort of grieving ritual, but she is still able to express the raw grief she feels in reaction to the conflict above her, indicating that the inexperience and previous innocence of the child allows her to emote even more strongly than her elders. Because it is a child who grieves in the Picasso and not an adult, there is no revenge or justice of any kind. The child in *Rape of the Sabine Women* cannot gather a group of enslaved women and blind the Roman soldier like Hecuba did; she will die unavenged herself. In this respect, the woman and child of *Rape of the Sabine Women* have even less agency than Hecuba does.

There are those who might look at *Rape of the Sabine Women* and ask what its appeal is. They may think of it as simple, lacking in technique, or inferior to a more traditional version of its subject, such as Rubens' painting of the same subject created around 1635 (now in the collection of the National Gallery, London). Yet, Picasso's flat, rough style is able to express the grief of the child and the violence the men commit in an entirely different way than is possible with hidden brushstrokes and smooth shadows. Because Picasso's brushstrokes are rough and his perspective is distorted, the viewer is simultaneously drawn in and distanced from the scene. It is almost as if the viewer is watching the battle play out in a cartoon or perhaps on the news today—the blood spilled is removed from the viewer's reality. Picasso's technique reflects the way an entire class of Americans interacts with violence today: filtered through screens, colored by outside commentary, as something outside of their personal sphere. Yet this bloodshed has substantial repercussions for people both miles and mere feet away from the viewer. Though Picasso is centuries removed from both ancient Rome and the Dutch Golden Age, these themes of men as war and women and children as grief transcend time and space. When we see a piece like Picasso's *Rape of the Sabine Women* or a modern adaptation of Euripides set during the Syrian War, we ought to ask ourselves: for how much longer will women and children everywhere be disfigured by grief over conflicts over which they have almost no control? ■

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The image on the title page of this essay is a detail of an acrylic on canvas, "Drifting Away", painted by Jaden Duenas in 2021.

ZOË FIGUEROA

Two Weeks

I was prepared to handle two weeks of being trapped
inside my house, alone with my family and intrusive thoughts
—and for the first two weeks, I held up. I kept them at bay.
For those first two weeks, there was a sense of hope.
For those first two weeks, I could look ahead to an end.

Two weeks bled into months, then a year,
and with each passing week, my resolve crumbled.
Medications became the duct tape hastily patched over
my self-doubt, mood swings, anxiety, and depression.
When any strip of tape began to lose its grip, it'd be ripped off,
and a new one destined to hold me together was applied.

I can't help but wonder if I've been tethered to this fate my whole life,
or, if I was chained to it by those who promised
two weeks. ■

BRIEFING BY JENNY MOTZER

The Costs of Single-Use Plastics in Healthcare

Sanitizable and disposable single-use plastic products have become one of the largest components of the waste streams generated in the global healthcare industry. Despite the affordability and practical benefits of single-use plastics, efforts are being made to reduce the amount of non-recyclable and non-biodegradable plastic waste generated in hospitals and other healthcare facilities. These efforts are motivated especially by social and economic pressure to mitigate the environmental and carbon-footprint consequences of single-use plastics.

The World Health Organization estimates that roughly 80% of the hospital waste produced is general waste, of which 55% is plastic with a recycling rate of 20%. The average hospital produces twenty-five pounds of waste per day per patient and generates over five million tons of waste per year, including infectious waste such as bandages and gloves, hazardous and chemical waste, radioactive waste, and other general waste such as paper and single-use plastics (Okafor). Plastics commonly used in hospitals include polyvinyl chloride (PVC), polyurethane, and polyethylene. PVC is primarily used for building applications such as flooring and walls, but it is also utilized for disposable medical devices, despite deleterious consequences for human health and the environment. When degraded, PVC releases chlorine-based toxins which cause major disruption in food chains when introduced into the environment via air and water.

An additional consequence of the exponential increase in the manufacture and use of non-reusable and non-biodegradable substances is the growing problem of microplastic pollution. It can take up to 1,000 years for plastic to decompose in a landfill, which is where an estimated 79% of the world's plastic waste is disposed, and most of it eventually enters the oceans (Ritchie). Microplastic fibers are expected to be toxic to organisms, and are thought to be absorbed by certain aquatic life in the lowest levels of the food chain, like algae and other microorganisms.

Since plastics like polyurethane and polyethylene are derived from fossil fuels, emissions of greenhouse gases occur through their lifespan. The Center for International Environmental Law estimates that more than 850 million metric tons of greenhouse gasses were emitted in 2019 as a result of plastic production and incineration. CIEL estimates these emissions to be equivalent to those from 189 five-hundred-megawatt coal power plants. While plastic manufacturing emissions are lower than those for pa-

per, they are still significant. Furthermore, plastic production provides another source of revenue for the high-emitting fossil fuel industry. Given that plastic brings these additional decomposition and health concerns, it may be worth exploring alternatives to plastics in healthcare facilities.

There is a need for an effective material which can replace single-use plastics in the healthcare industry while lowering environmental impact. Several corporations are undertaking research and development in pursuit of a solution. In 2019, the FDA approved the Enviropouch, a reusable pouch meant to replace single-use plastics in steam sterilization of healthcare supplies (Stoddard). Another company called ecoMedSupply has released an array of biodegradable and compostable hospital materials including gloves, sharps, gauze, bedpans, patient gowns, and various medical containers used for storage purposes. NewGen Surgical, a company that specializes in biomedical engineering, has proved to be another pioneer in the manufacturing of sustainable medical equipment with the development of a plant-based skin stapler. For every 10,000 staplers used, 500 pounds of plastic waste is saved. Other sustainable NewGen Surgical products include a needle counter box that reduces plastic waste by approximately 93% in comparison to the non-sustainable counter box that it would be replacing. While still not in use on a large scale, these innovations have served as remarkable steps towards sustainability in modern healthcare products.

While materials science seeks alternatives to microplastics, other enterprises are attempting to achieve a systematic restructuring of healthcare through the mechanisms of environmentally-responsible policies and funding. Practice Greenhealth, a non-profit health organization, has been pivotal steering medical centers towards sustainable standards of practice. This organization provides resources and strategies for healthcare facilities to help reduce the amount of waste generated per facility. This aligns with the widespread opening of sustainability officers across the hospital industry. According to one report, such hospitals have been able to avoid the generation of over 140,000 tons of waste and 180,000 metric tons of carbon emission.

Through guidance provided by Practice Greenhealth, Kaiser Permanente in California last year became the first major healthcare system to reach carbon neutrality, offsetting their 800,000-ton carbon footprint—an emission volume equal to that of approximately 175,000 passenger vehicles.

Practice Greenhealth has also implemented a nationwide Environmental Excellence Awards program which recognizes hospitals making efforts to cut back on waste. Award recipients have included the University of Vermont Medical Center, Abraham

Lincoln Memorial Hospital in Illinois, Seattle Children's Hospital, and here in Boston, our own Boston Medical Center.

Looking Beyond COVID

Over the course of the coronavirus pandemic, the utilization rates of single-use plastic products such as masks, gloves, bottles of hand sanitizer skyrocketed. The United States alone generated an entire year's worth of medical waste within the first two months of the pandemic alone. It has become common to see abandoned facemasks lying in parking lots and parks as litter. Plastics pollution was a burden on the environment before the pandemic and has since been exacerbated by the international health crisis. As governments and communities begin to think about practices and policies to help recuperate after COVID, we should hope that advocacy and incentives for the switch to plastic alternatives will be stronger than ever. ■

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KAITLYN DESOUZA

Thusia

(Bb Clarinet part)

♩ = 70 Adagio doloroso

8 Exposition

p *mf* *p* *mf*

15

p *mp* *mf* *p*

24 Bridge/cadence

sub pp *f* *rit. e dim.* *a niente*

Development ♩ = 170

33 Agitato

f *cresc.*

38

(cresc.) ff *mf* *f*

44

rit.

48 Cadenza

49 ♩ = 120

Recapitulation Tempo Primo

mp *mf* *rit.* *p*

58

Coda 4

> pp *< p* *mf* *rit. e cresc.* *ff*

Composer's Note

I wrote “Thusia” as an accompaniment to the play *Hecuba* by Euripides (b. circa 484 – d. 406 BCE). The title comes from the ancient Greek word for “sacrifice”. The emotional movement of the piece follows the emotional point of view of Polyxena, Hecuba’s daughter, and is structured as a sonata, with the traditional three sections: exposition, development, and recapitulation. The introduction and exposition, written in the home key of B-flat major, correlate to the beginning of the play, just after Troy is sacked, when Polyxena’s father and brothers are killed and she and Hecuba are taken captive by the Greeks.

The exposition moves at a melancholy, an *adagio* tempo. This slowness conveys Polyxena’s sorrow, but the section is written in a major key because Polyxena is not at this point entirely hopeless. She knows she still has her health, as well as her mother, who continues to motivate her to keep going. In measure 18, we hear a brief modulation to B-flat minor, to foreshadow the tragedy and turmoil to come. There is then a *ritardando* and a *diminuendo* leading up to Hecuba telling Polyxena she will be sacrificed. I hope that the quieter, slower mood will evoke the feeling Polyxena might have had, as everything around her slows down and becomes muted as she realizes the gravity of her mother’s words. The music fades to a silent *caesura* at the moment her thoughts come to a halt and everything in her mind goes dark.

After this full pause, we transition into the development with an immediate shift in style. The tempo is much faster, the music louder, and the key—which began to modulate in the previous measures—begins in the dominant F major. Throughout this section, the key modulates quickly and often, creating tonal instability to make the audience feel unsettled. The tempo and modulations correspond with Polyxena’s emotional turmoil. The interaction of the rhythms of clarinet and piano should feel very jarring and disquieting, to again represent Polyxena’s disturbed state of mind. I made this section *staccato* and *forte* to contrast with the exposition, which in general is more *legato* and quieter, with a wider variety in dynamics. I wanted this contrast to be obvious in order to represent the change in Polyxena’s mind, emotions, and perspective, as well as how this turn of events completely transforms her life. The peak of her chaotic emotional state comes at measure 47. After this, there is a *ritardando* into the clarinet *cadenza* as she begins to grow calmer, simulating the sensation of falling which I imagine Polyxena would have experienced as she slowly came back to reality from her state of panic and turmoil.

After the *cadenza*, the music transitions into the recapitulation, slowing again and



becoming softer as Polyxena comes to terms with her fate. She realizes she must calm down and behave with dignity for the sake of her mother, who, in her devastation and anguish, is depending on her daughter to remain strong. The recapitulation, rather than resolving to the major key, instead dwells in the minor, representing Polyxena’s lingering sadness that she will be leaving her mother to suffer alone. The theme from the exposition is repeated in minor, indicating the change that has occurred, the additional sorrow Polyxena now feels, and the added burden she must bear. Leading into the coda, there is a sudden, dramatic decrease in tempo and crescendo, ending with a low, booming note held out by the clarinet as the piano drops out. Here, Polyxena’s sacrifice is carried out and she dies; there is a moment of silence as she leaves this world.

“Thusia” ends with the coda in minor, with slow, mournful piano to represent the lament of her mother, left behind. ■

The screenshots above show the faculty of CAS CC101 at a live Zoom reading of *Hecuba* (translated by Esposito) in November 2020. A recording of that event can be viewed at bit.ly/BU-Hecuba-2020.

To hear a recording of “Thusia” on YouTube, direct your browser to bit.ly/Thusia-by-DeSouza.

RYAN IVES

Anaphora

after Ms. O'Meara, Homer, and T. S. Eliot

And they learned about each other

And the families strove to educate their children about the classics and the virus

And the teachers called each to check in

And it was spring. Chicks arrived. Coops were built.

And the sap flowed and boiled

And the land was brown and green

And the dawn arrived early with its fingertips of rose to embrace the pained earth

And Netflix and chill became Netflix and bond

And people worried about money

And the new mother worried about diapers and learned that she is doing okay

And people knew that they were ingesting too much news,

 but it was calming to not be alone

And new gardeners sought control

And people felt awkward wearing masks

And the house throbbed with activity

And the kids learned to share chores

And projects were begun with good intentions

And birthdays passed and memories of loved ones who passed

And emails became phone calls again

And when it ended everyone remembered where they were at that time and place.

 For history is now and it is everywhere. ■

NYAH PATEL

Grief and the Great Books

“Though much is taken, much abides”

Tennyson, *Ulysses*

At the time of writing, it is the twenty-ninth of April; I have quarantined with my family for forty-two days. Our relationships with each other have suffered. We talk to each other less frequently and less kindly. Keeping up with my online coursework has been challenging while trying to steer clear of my noisy, distracting twelve-year-old sister. Her junior piano interpretation of “In the Hall of the Mountain King” clangs through the rooms of our home with no regard to Zoom sessions or class schedules. But as much as I’ve been frustrated with my family, I know that I would be experiencing different, yet equally unpleasant emotions if I were going through lockdown without them.

The books we study in BU’s Core Curriculum have been a comfort during these challenging times, even as my family has been, at times, an annoyance. Though they are drawn from vastly different eras and cultures, the wisdom that these “great books” contain remains relevant and meaningful. Our Core texts deal in many places with the ongoing, everyday maintenance of personal relationships between ourselves and family and friends; but I think they are most profound when they address the *loss* of those relationships, and how we recover ourselves from that loss.

* * * * *

The very first work we read in the Core humanities sequence is perhaps the oldest written work of literature in the world—the epic of Gilgamesh, is at heart a tale of loss and its repercussions. After Enkidu’s death, Gilgamesh loses the confidence and security he once had with his place in the world and forfeits his kingdom for a chance at immortality. From the beginning of his adventure, Gilgamesh is described as “wander[ing] in the wilderness / grieving over the death of Enkidu”. The setting itself creates an image of uncertainty; wandering in the wilderness speaks to someone lost, both figuratively and literally. The mentions of grief link the ideas causally, as grief is the source of his misdirection. Although not explicitly stated, the selfish actions Gilgamesh takes in seeking out immortality are at odds with his image as “the perfect, the

terror / the wise shepherd, protector of the people”, one which he is described as having at the start of the epic; this change seems regressive. Gilgamesh’s quest is ultimately fruitless, revealing that the fulfillment he was searching for cannot be found alone but instead in his kingdom, among subjects who love him.

* * * * *

Quite apart from the political and historical question of whether the *Aeneid* was written to retroactively legitimize the founding of the Roman Empire, the poem contains depictions of acute and genuine human feeling. The grief Aeneas experiences early on drives his future actions as well as the plot of the story, though ultimately he is left unfulfilled. In his book-length study of the poem published in 1993, critic Steven Farron describes the *Aeneid* as a “poem of grief and love... [that] always gains readers’ sympathies”. I see these dynamic tensions at work especially in the sheer loss Aeneas suffers at the hands of war, in Book II. He is described as “fill[ing] the streets with calling; in [his] grief, time after time [he groans and calls] Creusa, frantic, in an endless quest from door to door”. The death of Aeneas’ wife Creusa subsequently gives him a new calling when she posthumously, as a ghost, tells him of Rome. In doing so, she ties his quest to his grief. To a fault, Aeneas clings to his quest rather than his relationships, corrupting his morality and sense of self to a point of no return. He abandons Creusa’s memory in order to pursue Dido, and then he leaves Dido as well, despite Creusa being the initial driving force for his travels.

Despite having lost his wife, father, and homeland due to war, Aeneas does not hesitate to return to battle in order to fulfill his destiny for the sake of Rome. In Book XII, Aeneas dishonorably kills Turnus, revealing an unappeasable bloodlust the origins of which can be traced back even before the loss of Pallas, to his initial losses in the Trojan conflict. Is his search for a homeland a coping mechanism? If so, Aeneas may never be fulfilled. It will be his descendants, and not the hero himself, who will live to see the quest achieved.

* * * * *

In *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, Tom Stoppard examines the primary relationships of Shakespeare’s Hamlet through the lens of background characters. In the play, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern awaken to their lack of purpose within the dramatic narrative, and to some extent in their own narratives as well. That they lack a deep personal connection to Hamlet is arguably the biggest reason for their useless-

ness, while their relationship with each other is what gives their lives any real sort of meaning. Their malaise is least noticeable when Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are left by themselves, each suspended in his inaction relative to the main plotline yet comforted by the presence of the other. Despite having no other purpose than to be scapegoats, the pair still find a semblance of closure in their interactions with each other. It is only at the end of Act 3, when they part ways, that their inevitable death closes upon them and their stories, and personal meaning, cease.

* * * * *

In Anton Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard*, Lyubov Andreevna Ranevskaya is a woman marred by grief. She returns to her beloved orchard under the guise of joy, yet realizes upon arriving that the memories she holds of the place are more of a burden to her than a comfort. The problem is that they remind her of those she has lost. From the first act we see that Lyubov is grief-stricken, as when she mourns her "little boy [who] died"—it is implied that his death was a result of her infidelity. Despite her obligations to a still-living brother and daughters, the loss of her son consumes her. Lyubov spends all her money in Paris, reasoning in her grief that her culpability means that she doesn't deserve to be happy and thus has to "give everything away". Once the cherry orchard is sold, however, Lyubov is finally able to focus less on her loss and more on the people she still has with her. Her daughter Anya particularly gives hope to Lyubov, to the point where finally her "nerves are better" despite losing her son and the orchard.

* * * * *

Over these past forty-two days, grief and loss seemed to be everywhere I looked. But, so was my family. Unlike the personal relationships of so many characters in the "great works" canon of the Core, my own closest personal relationships have remained steadfast despite all of the chaos. I know I am privileged to be able to say that this is the case. It is worth remembering that no matter how distant or close we may be, I am always able to lean on my family and friends for support and guidance. I learn from and take much from these books, but it is these people who help me reaffirm who I am and who I want to be. ■



balloons

“Take Your Time and Space”

A VIDEO BY NOELLE NO

This piece is my response to the rise in incidents of anti-Asian hate seen over the course of the pandemic. I created this video as a means to speak up for myself and on behalf of my Asian-American community. To those of you who are affected by hateful rhetoric, attitudes, and acts, I would like say: You are not alone. You matter. For those who are not directly affected, I would like to remind you that your allyship means a lot. I know some people are afraid of doing or saying the wrong thing, of having their support called performative, or some similarly counter-productive label. But, don't be dispirited—When you speak up for and check in with your friends, coworkers, classmates and acquaintances, you are helping to relieve tension for all of us. *The present is always the right moment to renew our conversations about how best to empower the vulnerable and the marginalized in our communities.* Silence may feel like the more comfortable choice, but it helps to maintain an unjust status quo. By contrast, empathetic speech and empathetic acts have the power to open up time and space in which others can safely process their hurt. Or even better, can protect them from being hurt in the first place. ■

>> [ACCESS VIA BU.EDU/CORE/JOURNAL](https://www.bu.edu/core/journal)

BRIAN KO

Polyphemus' Lament

O how I long to see again the dewdrops on the springtime grass
 Reflecting off the morning sun, whose light from on high mocks my loss.
 My flock, they rub their bodies soft against my legs affectionately
 But I will never see them again, my vision stolen senselessly.
 O, curse the name Odysseus, forevermore I cry!

My gravest dirge to heaven rend, as here I sit in darkness wrought
 On me by him, war criminal, of slant talk and sly tales I bought.
 He stole my food, this lying man, and as I took to balance this,
 He drew me after Nobody, his face a masked façade of his.
 O, curse that name Odysseus, the man who stole my eye!

Did I deserve a fate so cruel, o father, ruler of the seas?
 Is it not fair that from them who stole retribution I should seize?
 To them I did no harm at first, but then they came and stole from me,
 Then did I level incurred debt—and now I wail in misery.
 O, curse that man from Ithaka, condemn him 'til he burns!

Like old Humbaba there I sat, while guarding naught but my own life,
 When so-called heroes came to me and imposed this endless strife.
 I asked not for a savior—we need not these damned human souls—
 But anyway they come, and still I feel the searing of those coals.
 O, curse that man from Ithaka, I pray you make him hurt!

Perhaps I was too harsh in this, in doling my own justice then.
 But who determines what is right, and where and how and when?
 I butchered them as animals and thus they called it foul
 But they do similar to pigs and cows—they slaughter, disembowel.
 O Ithakan, how can you claim to pursue justice now?

This thievery is miniscule but is it not the same for those
 Who steal crumbs and yet are murdered, sent to hellish throes.

And for the sake of being heroes they performed their dubious deeds
 And labeled me a monster just to vindicate heroic greed.

O Ithakan, how dare you hold this unheroic vow?

Gaze upon me, Ithakan—how pitiful I now must seem,
 A shepherd now reduced to groping dumbly like his sheep.
 O, how my once-sleek body now contorts in blinded rage,
 my darkened vision serves as an eternal hellish cage.

O, woe is me, Odysseus! For thou doom me to die.

My brothers say I am inept to let ‘Nobody’ hurt me thus
 As I sit here in the solemn dark, burned by a fire treasonous.
 They ridicule my lack of sight and treat me cruelly as they say:
 “Polyphemus pierced his own eye, and blamed the winds and spray”—

O, woe is me, Odysseus, for by thy fault they lie!

I’ve lost it all, Odysseus, my vision, honor, everything—
 This shame is overwhelming me, brought by you, thou knavish king.
 Shadows creep upon my thoughts, like tragic heroes of the Greeks
 And I fall deep into despair, my hopes dashed on sharpened peaks.

Odysseus, monstrous man, you cause me endless grief!

Now I beseech you, O my father, lord of oceans Poseidon!
 To stir the wind and move the seas, to make his journey homeward widen.
 He pierced my honor and my pride and left me here, a wretch alone.
 Now let a watery death unmask him. Send to the deepest depths his bones.

Odysseus, you monstrous man, of honor, you’re a thief!

May death relieve me of this dishonor, suffering and pain—
 May I who has lost his sight never see that villain again. ■

The Honorable John Kerry
 Special Presidential Envoy for Climate
 United States State Department
 Washington, DC 20520

Dear Envoy Kerry:

COVID-19's effects on the US include 542,000 deaths¹, an unemployment high of 14.7% in April 2020², and an exacerbation of social and economic inequalities. These effects are a sneak peek at the circumstances we will face due to the climate crisis in the coming years. According to a 2021 article by Bradshaw et al. in *Frontiers in Conservation Science*, the risk of a pandemic increases due to human activity including soil degradation, biodiversity reduction, and the use of single-use plastics.³ I assume, Mr. Kerry, that you understand the grave danger our country is facing, but I fear certain recalcitrant Congress members do not. I therefore urge you to advocate that they endorse the Green New Deal (GND),⁴ a legislative proposal introduced by Rep. Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY) and Sen. Markey (D-MA) in February 2019. According to reporting by Lisa Friedman in *The New York Times*, the plan “calls on the federal government to dramatically reduce greenhouse gas emissions, create high-paying jobs, [and] ensure that clean air, clean water and healthy food are basic human rights”.⁵ Critics of the proposal have protested that the plan will be too costly and that, as former President Trump put it, Americans stand to lose their “airplane rights” (ibid). While there does not yet exist a detailed budget for the GND, Rep. Ocasio-Cortez outlines that the proposal functions as an investment that will seek heavy return through subsequent economic growth. For instance, Vermont’s goal of achieving 90% renewable energy by 2050 costs ~\$33 billion but job growth and cost savings for consumers would balance out the long-term costs (ibid).

1 covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker, as of 26 March 2021

2 bls.gov/opub/ted/2020/unemployment-rate-rises-to-record-high-14-point-7-percent-in-april-2020.htm

3 doi.org/10.3389/fcosc.2020.615419

4 congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-resolution/109/text

5 nytimes.com/2019/02/21/climate/green-new-deal-questions-answers.html

Mr. Kerry, in your efforts to persuade Congress of reaching carbon neutrality by 2050, I implore you to stress the threat that the climate crisis poses to American infrastructure, national security, and economy, and make clear to recalcitrant members of Congress that the Green New Deal is an essential means to mitigate the worst case scenario.

American infrastructure is extremely vulnerable to the effects of climate change as has already been seen through weather-related emergencies occurring throughout the country such as forest fires, rising sea levels, and storms. Joshua Busby, writing for *Foreign Affairs*, explains that “the seasons are changing”⁶ causing strange weather patterns to occur worldwide. While California has always been prone to fires because of its dry landscape, the ten largest fires in the state’s history have occurred in the past 20 years.⁷ In the 2020s, the cost of firefighting, infrastructure repair and property loss related to California wildfires was between \$130 and \$150 million, corresponding to an increase in federal wildfire costs from \$425 million in 1985 to \$1.6 billion in 2019.⁸ While California is experiencing too little rain, other states have been experiencing too much. Busby explains that rising sea levels and storm surges “will flood coastal infrastructure, as has already happened in Miami in recent years, necessitating the installation of storm water pumping systems at the cost of hundreds of millions of dollars”. The GND proposal outlines as well that there exists “a risk of damage to [one trillion dollars] of public infrastructure and coastal real estate in the United States”. As infrastructure becomes damaged, Busby explains that military resources will be used to carry out rescue operations and rebuild damaged cities as has already occurred in 2017 after three storms hit the country and National Guard personnel were deployed to rescue people, bring relief supplies, and restore essential services. Busby notes that “the total cost to the United States of these storms and other weather-related emergencies in 2017 was \$300 billion”. The cost of these crises will only increase in the near future. At the same time, overconsumption of natural resources and consumer products will increase the

6 foreignaffairs.com/articles/2018-06-14/warming-world

7 nytimes.com/article/why-does-california-have-wildfires.html

8 nfpa.org/News-and-Research/Publications-and-media/NFPA-Journal/2020/November-December-2020/Features/Wildfire

country's risk of failure in future warfare. Thus climate change is a threat to national security. These finite resources in combination with high population growth rates leads to massive food insecurity; moreover, population growth causes more overall consumption through the production of more pollution in the form of throw-away plastics and synthetic compounds (Bradshaw).

As we live through the economic and social consequences of the latest pandemic, we must take note that the national mood is incredibly polarized. This polarization exacerbates the political difficulty in managing fragile or scarce resources for large populations, increasing the likelihood of conflict, both domestic and international. Busby explains that water wars may become more common, as can already be seen through tensions between India and Pakistan: "tensions over water within and between countries will create new flash points in regions where other resources are scarce and institutional guardrails are weak or missing". Wars fought over access to necessities like water will become more common even while America grows weaker due to instability or a lack of the same resources, and our military has its attention diverted from security to climate damage mitigation.

Economies weakened by the costs of weather-related damage, pandemic relief, and, ultimately increased defense budgets lack the resilience to respond positively to the effects of climate change, whether those effects are domestic or foreign. For example, Busby explains that in 2010, Russia banned grained exports after a drought destroyed one-fifth of their wheat harvest. As a result, global grain prices spiked, with destabilizing implications across the world market. No less than other nations, the US is vulnerable to these impacts as the climate crisis progresses.

Past efforts to bring about society-wide change have lessons for the current climate crisis challenge. Speaking at the National Women's Studies Association Conference in 1987, feminist philosopher and activist Angela Davis specific that we need policy solutions for policy problems.⁹ Climate change is indeed a policy problem. American regulatory action and inaction has allowed for an increase in greenhouse gas emissions casually linked to global warming. Per Davis' wisdom, an effective policy solution is needed if we are to prevent climate change

9 doi.org/10.17763/haer.58.3.32147541624550x3

from fatally impacting American infrastructure and security, and the American economy. As a policy road map, the GND proposes a ten-year plan to reduce carbon emissions and shifting all of the country's energy generation to renewable and zero-emission sources (Friedman). As the US is one of the largest net sources of carbon emissions, choosing to shift to 100% zero-emission energy would have a substantially positive impact. Thus the US would be in a position to pressure China, the other major source of carbon emissions, to make similar changes in its own economy. As for the costs of such change, the language of the GND recognizes that it "is the duty of the government to provide job training and new economic development, particularly to communities that currently rely on jobs in fossil fuel industries" (ibid). A switch to clean energy can justify investment leading to net job creation in the clean energy industry.

Importantly, American climate leadership and investment need not be a unilateral action; taking the lead on clean energy initiatives would provide other countries with models to emulate in their own climate crisis response. For instance, Mr. Kerry, it has been suggested that you "could use a bilateral United States-Mexico trade agreement... to persuade Mexico to open up to American investment in clean energy projects".¹⁰ In many ways, the U.S. has the opportunity to strengthen its position in the international community through leadership in clean energy.

It is vital that Congress form a consensus view that the United States can and must become a leader in clean energy initiatives for the sake of our own country's survival and for the well-being of the planet. It is more beneficial to the country in terms of domestic impact and foreign relations to act now and receive applause for preventative measures rather than face the already projected harsh repercussions later. The Green New Deal is our best change to mitigate future disaster while also opening up new opportunities for the future. ■

Respectfully,



Riya Beri (CGS/CAS, Political Science and Sociology)

10 [nytimes.com/2021/01/27/climate/climate-change-biden-kerry.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/27/climate/climate-change-biden-kerry.html)

SASSAN TABATABAI

Spring in Griggs Park

The helmeted woodpecker
single-minded
in its mission
to penetrate
the armored bark
raps its percussion
on the sturdy trunk
of the oak.

The territorial blue jay
—a Herod cloaked in violet—
screeches its authority
at the crimson-breasted robin
who thinks of nothing
but the blind earthen worm
carelessly sticking its head
out of the cool mud.

In pursuit of his mate
the fiery cardinal
streaks across the azure sky
like a blazing comet.
They disappear together
into the drape of tender green
that hangs from the willow.

The mourning dove
sighs its melancholy song
for any who listen.

The industrious squirrel
busy with its gatherings
ignores them all.

They know nothing
of social distancing.

They avoid
the two-legged creature
by instinct. ■



BRUCE HALLGREN AND NYAH PATEL

A Conversation with Gregory Kerr

Gregory Kerr (Core '16, CAS '18) is one half of the two-person team behind Overly Sarcastic Productions, a YouTube channel which uses animation and storytelling to educate viewers about mythology, literature, and history. At BU, Kerr graduated *magna cum laude* with majors in classics and philosophy and minors in economics and Core interdisciplinary studies. Earlier this spring, he joined our editors via Zoom to answer questions about content creation, the educational potential of video games, and how the pandemic impacted his work.

Bruce Hallgren: On Overly Sarcastic Productions you go by the moniker “Blue”, and you and your partner “Red” both use cartoon avatars rather than ‘live-action’ video. What made you decide to create these personas for your channel?

Gregory Kerr: In the early days, Red and I were at different colleges, with different schedules, and couldn't really work synchronously. Instead, we worked in parallel, with our own production pipelines where we could still pass notes back and forth. Now, Warren Towers at BU is not conducive to high-quality filmmaking, so initially we both hid behind our virtual characters in order to mask the fact that we didn't have studio space. As time went on, we realized, oh, these are actually fun; let's run with it.

Truth be told, a lot of the choices we made early on and which guided the trajectory of OSP were products of necessity. The channel's origins go back to when Red was in high school and early college creating Shakespeare summaries, and around the same time I was in CC101 and CC102 reading Homer, Virgil, Dante. When Red shifted to working on video content, I was like, I'm studying this in class—I can help!

After one truly memorable lecture by Prof. Samons [Loren J. Samons, Classical Studies]—it was on the Athenian empire—I was like, man, *this* is good stuff. That was when I started doing videos on topics like Greece and Rome before going into other directions.

BH: It seems like the avatars have become a symbol for your show, and that the decision worked out quite well.

GK: Well, you can only take a cartoon character so seriously, right? And that works for us because we're not trying to be authorities. Cartoons add to the lightheartedness of what we're doing, and the accessibility. And it's also an extra layer of abstraction between us as people and the content we're producing. When you never see a human face,

it's easier to focus on the raw material, whether it's a drawing, a map, or a recreation of ancient Rome. Having those characters as stand-ins is a useful way to not put ourselves in the presentation as much, while still allowing for emoting.

BH: Do you think that comedy is a bridge to getting young people interested in history and literature?

GK: Absolutely, because that's how it happened for me. After you get them engaged via humor, you can teach them important thematic, moral, and structural lessons about how the world works, why things are the way they are, how the choices that people make matter, and how cultures influence political and economic systems and institutional structures. In academic contexts, you're being *tested* on this material. But in our videos, which tell jokes, you don't have the same pressure. Instead, it's like, *I'm letting this information come to me; I'm laughing; and along the way I'll catch bits of information.* Then when you see that material again for class, you'll have anchor points you picked up from OSP, and you'll know better where to go next. That initial summary we give you—and we're not trying to be comprehensive—is meant to be entertaining and engaging to make it as easy as possible and as accessible as possible for a wide range of audiences: high school, college, or beyond.

Nyah Patel: Now, back when you were in our seats in CAS, what was your favorite Core text? Do you have any meaningful experiences or discussions from Core that you'd like to share?

GK: Oh, gosh, that's like picking a favorite child. From CC101, I *really* liked the *Odyssey*. I had read it before, in high school, but then I was at the BU Open House for admitted students when I heard Prof. Esposito [Stephen Esposito, Classical Studies] give his Penelope lecture.* I was like, whoa, that's such a cool reading of it. We all know that the *Odyssey* is a story about Odysseus, but actually Penelope is the one doing all the work over here!



* Espo's 2020 lecture on Penelope can be viewed at <http://youtu.be/LjN8XAZpFYE>.



Then in CC102, the *Aeneid* and the Divine Comedy really resonated with me, both for the sake of seeing the literary progression from one to the other, and for the chance to dig a little into the cultures that shape those texts. Really engaging, really exciting. In CC201, Machiavelli was a blast. I was that nerd in high school who had read *The Prince* for fun and then also the *Discourses on Livy*. I had points I could bring up in discussion that no one else could because no one else read the *Discourses* except me and the instructor! I am a man of simple tastes: Greece, Rome, and Italy.

BH: How do you go about telling stories of historical figures who are so mythologized, and about whom we have so many varying reports?

GK: We really only focus on specific people in our “History-Makers” series. With our “History Summarized” stuff, it’s usually states, time periods, big events, and large swathes of history. Sometimes I’ll cover two thousand years in a single video like an absolute madman. But then I had wanted to do a video just looking at Homer and how his legend came to be. So I needed to justify the fact that I would be doing something different from my usual fare. I wanted to talk about this character, but I didn’t want to confuse it with “great man” history, because that’s garbage. I still wanted to talk about the people whose works shape our understanding of the past, and Homer is one of the

first people to do that. So digging into whether or not this character was real (probably), and whether or not he wrote his epics himself as original works (probably not), was my way of synthesizing. We can talk about the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, but let's also talk about how we *got* those stories and what that process means, and how it fits into the cultural context of early archaic Greece.

That first video on Homer was an experiment, but it worked well, people liked it, so I did more! It's great how each one is an opportunity to bring together historical facts, biographical data, and great texts in a way that is much greater than each of those topics or approaches individually. A good example is our video about Marco Polo, and how his travels comprise a very much historically significant document—the West's first encounter with the East and with the far Muslim world.

BH: Some of your more recent videos take a look at video games, many of which have a basis in myth—like *Hades*—or history, like *Assassin's Creed*. I'm curious to know your feelings about video games as a means for storytelling.

GK: It depends. Some people use games as a setting only and some people try to do something more substantive. Reading about people in textbooks can be distancing, but seeing and talking to Da Vinci, hearing Machiavelli and Ezio move and talk, in games set in the Italian Renaissance—*Assassin's Creed II*, or *Brotherhood*, say—is just so cool.

Sometimes our livestreams show us playing games that are either historically or mythologically relevant. We talk about how those games work, what choices the creators made, and how they use historical or mythological sources to tell their stories. But there are some games where I do just a *realism* review. “Hey, they have this setting. It's very vibrant and well-realized, but does it corroborate with historical accounts?” For example, with *Assassin's Creed Origins*, I'm like, yeah, this is pretty good. They butcher Cleopatra and Caesar but overall, the world, the setting, and the events are pretty okay. *Assassin's Creed Odyssey* is really cool in the way the world is presented. Not every structure is perfect, but there's so much historically accurate detail that you know the creators did their research. The *Assassin's Creed* games actually came out with a Discovery Tour mode where players go through and just learn history in the context of the game! It's like time travel, and that's awesome.

Then there's *Assassin's Creed Valhalla*. It tries too hard to be cool, by name-dropping every single period detail that you've heard of. ‘Yeah, we're going to do *Beowulf*, but in England, even though the poem takes place in what is known today as Denmark and Sweden’. I don't want to discuss *Valhalla*.

So yes: video games can absolutely be used as a medium to tell historical stories if

attention and effort is invested in creating a world in which players can interact, get immersed, and get a sense of historical context. The quality is variable, of course; people can write trashy historical fiction in prose form and, in the same way, people do this for video games. But while the medium is still in its infancy, the possibilities ahead are astronomical. We're going to see more game studios take a crack at creating historically accurate worlds in ways I think will be exciting for people in academic settings, giving students a new entry point into all of these great stories and places.

NP: Are there any blind spots or prejudices you find in the traditional, academic presentation of historical events, like what you might find in a high school textbook?

GK: Yeah, the part where it's *interesting*. Sorry, I mean, there are always prejudices. Consider how the history we encounter in the US is so heavily Eurocentric. And how history is so often presented from a point of "let me convince you why this is important and, for instance, why the British Empire is the best thing ever" rather than allowing work to speak for itself. We get these explanations in the mode of "This event caused this event caused this event", which can be skewed or self-serving. In trying to create those grand narratives, people have agendas they're trying to promote.

With OSP, our perspective is usually just, *look, this is a cool thing. We're going to try and be enthusiastic to get you to share in our enthusiasm*. We're not trying to be authoritative. We hope our videos serve as catalysts for people to go and do their own research. The difficult but crucial thing for us is crafting a story that is both accessible and compelling. We don't always hit our target, but it's always what we're aiming for. ■

Graphics above by Red. Visit bu.edu/core/journal to read an extended version of this interview. Find OSP merchandise, bios, news updates, and links to their podcast, Patreon and other online activities at overlysarcasticproductions.com. New videos are posted weekly to youtube.com/user/RedEyesTakeWarning. Connect with the OSP fan community on Twitter @OSPyoutube.

Our thanks to Gregory for making himself available during challenging times for this interview. "It seems very strange that one must turn back, and be transported to the very beginnings of history, in order to arrive at an understanding of humanity as it is at the present"—These words from Émile Durkheim remind us that knowing what has come before allows us to be better prepared for the challenges of the current moment, and for challenges that lie ahead. The intellectual and technical storytelling labor of Blue and Red and creators like them is part of that preparation. — *Eds.*

JUNIA GENEVIEVE JANVIER

If Eden Were a Woman

I close my eyes and imagine the first appearance of Creation. Did we have then any small hint of the Creator's ethereality? As time passed did we grow a little further away? Are we carbon copies of Him or Her? What image do I claim when I've been claimed by Man already: an Eve to Adam? I picture Adam before Eve—alone, guideless, no essence or real being. He slumps against the forbidden tree, already enraptured in its branches—enraptured in its branches like the tactician of Ithaka was enraptured by Circe.

I picture Adam lamenting to the Creator, begging for a companion. A lover? Or an object of lust ready beside him, like a glass of water left by a child's bedside so that they may drink, drink. In this fashion Eve was brought forth to be always giving. A nurturer. Cursed before Temptation to yield to man, always, a commodity. I see Them, the Creator, pondering as the sun begins to set. Them: a singular and a duality set forth out of what I presume to have been a fireball of magical power. They ponder, and then they pry out one of Adam's ribs.

They pry out one of Adam's ribs. An image simulating violence against beautiful Self—as if Eve were a force to be reckoned with, one neither Creator nor Adam had anticipated. Then, molding the bloodied bone like gentle clay, They brought forth a hand—a leg—a mind—a heart. And there she stood on her own, Eve. Eve. Eve, the beginning, and our end. Eve, and then immediately, as if she were too much for Creation, Adam latched her to his side. Her wholeness reduced to his halfness, consumed into manhood for the rest of time.

With no understanding of why my lineage is attached to the men in my life, I am Junia Janvier, never Saint Preux, although

Mother is all I have... All I know and all that I am... Imagine Eve with only Adam to call lineage, her first family, cursed before temptation and mortality; now envision Eden, a garden of perfection, a place of dreams, and now a place commemorated only by her tasting of forbidden fruit. By her hope of standing equal under divinity. Did Eden weep, as Jesus later did, seeing her sisterhood doomed for having been tempted by those branches?

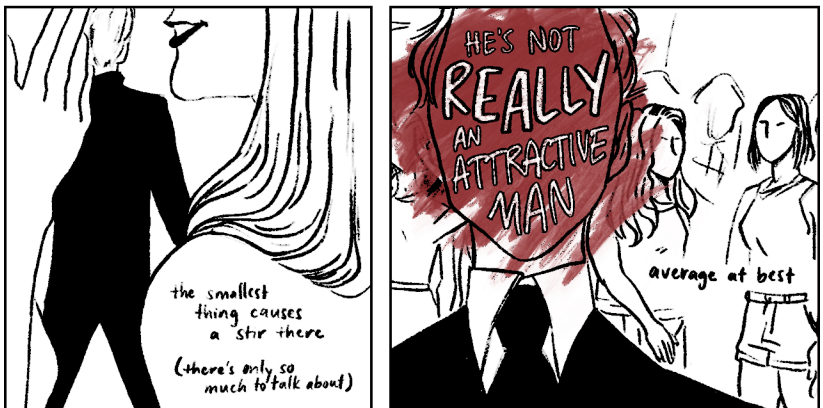
Did Eden condemn her condemnation for wishing to be wise, and daring to act on it? Eve stood, as Shamhat stood, enlightening a savage Enkidu. The untamed self brought by rite into civilization. Or is Eve Eden: the original woman, the original mother. That's it... Her fruit and fruitfulness denied to man, and as a consequence her landscape subject to subjection, to nature's grazing, until the end of time. Is Eden the allegory for keeping women down? Is Eden Penelope, waiting, wilting? Is Eden Ishtar the goddess, seeking worship in Uruk?

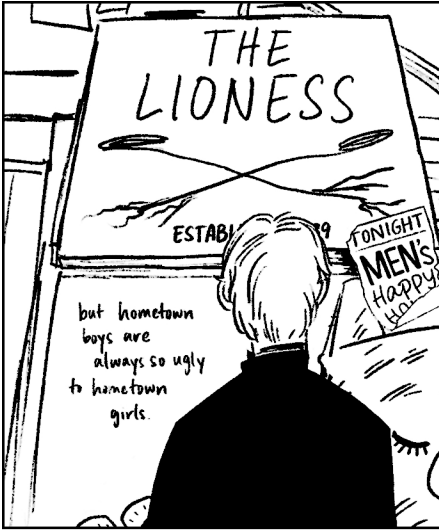
Is Eden Circe the sorceress, seeking power from no one but herself? Is Eden me? Am I too, thousands of years later, doomed to nurture, without being nurtured myself? My flesh, soil—my tears, to water; did my mother cry for me too? Did her tears summon me into existence? If Eden is me, am I her? When Adam and Eve were cast out, I wonder if Eden was relieved. Her gates shut, she might then have kept her fruit for her Self, for her own reasons, untouched by man, or corruption. If Eden were a woman, is there hope for me? For us?

Let's say Eden is a Black woman. Commodified. Used. A glass of water by the bedside, left so that they may drink, drink. A glass never fulfilled but somehow always expected to be full. Will my edges, my essence, my soul be ever looked into, rather than through? Will I ever be no longer an oppressed intersection of gender and hue; when will I be? ■

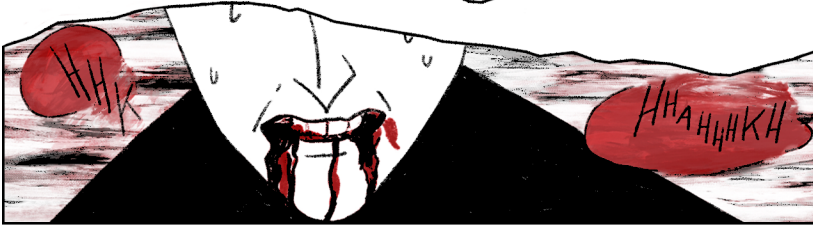
SNEHA KORLAKUNTA A New Man in Town

an adaptation of the Circe episode in Homer's Odyssey









a man!

cried the
pigs of aiaia



there's a new
man in town!

SIGOURNEY SCHULTZ

Art in the Age of Artificial Intelligence: Aesthetic Judgement After the Internet

In this essay, I apply Kant and Marx's historical philosophy to contemporary theory surrounding James Bridle's term "the New Aesthetic", analyzing what is at stake for our understanding of aesthetics and identities after the internet.

I was born in 1997, making me (in Marc Prensky's terminology) a digital native—part of the first generation to have grown up side by side with the internet. One of the first questions that came up during my research in preparation for writing this paper was: how does one define the internet? In the present year, we might define the internet as a worldwide system of computer networks that can communicate through hardware—smartphone or computer—and software, the intangible sphere of the internet which "has propelled the most significant cultural shift of the twenty-first century thus far" (Kholeif, Preamble). The generation born in the late 1990s straddles a technological divide, leaving us with one foot in the time before the internet, and one foot in the post-internet. I believe this is why my generation suffers from an epidemic of early-onset nostalgia—we are able to relive our childhood as no other generation has been able to before: virtually.

My personal sickness for nostalgia lies in music: In 2005, I listened to a Britney Spears song on my HitClips—an mp3 device that played one-minute clips of pop songs from exchangeable cartridges—while we drove to the hospital for the birth of my little sister, the same year my father started working at Apple to begin designing the first iPhone. Another example: I found my most prized possession one hot summer in Philadelphia, while digging through a box of second-hand records. Aptly named *Nostalgia Ultra*, the debut mixtape by American singer Frank Ocean is a physical manifestation of 2011 internet culture. With only 750 copies ever made and its songs never released on online streaming platforms, to me its cultural value is priceless.

These days, I spend more time looking at a computer screen than the outside world. I have all these windows open, but feel no fresh air. The urgency of society's interconnectedness with technology has only been expedited due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as our lives are repeated on a monotonous cycle through the screen. In 1999, the Y2K panic warned of a major glitch that would cause systemic technological failure and the media stoked this hysteria, just as more people began integrating computers into their

daily lives. In 2020, one might say that our problem lies in the lack of understanding about the devices on which we have become dependent.

Judgement & Profit

One of Kant's first points in the *Critique of Judgement* is that in order for an aesthetic judgement to be pure, it needs to be disinterested. This cognitive process is a reflection of the three faculties of the human mind: 1) aesthetics (from the Greek, *aisthetikos*); 2) understanding (from the German, *Verstehen*); and 3) rationality (reason). From the time we are born, we are passively receiving aesthetic experiences from our environment in the form of raw data, feelings, and sensation. Through understanding in the form of words, language, representations, and concepts, we learn how to digest and make sense of these sensory receptions. In the final stage, we develop ideas of higher consciousness in the form of God, freedom, and sensibility. According to Joachim Pissarro, Kant warns us against mistaking these dreams for reality but does not dismiss them entirely because of their ability to orient our actions. In today's post-internet context, higher consciousness ideas are expressed through a third realm of artificial intelligence, which humans cannot understand, but are becoming increasingly reliant on to digest the data deluge.

How does Kant apply the theory of aesthetic judgment to fine art and artists? Kant believes that fine art and natural beauty involve the same type of cognition. Accordingly, Kant develops the concept of the 'genius' to address how fine art changes our perception of constructed beauty. He believes that only a genius—"the talent (natural gift) that gives the rule to art" (*Critique* 186)—would be capable of making art as mimesis of nature's beauty. Fine art is also distinguished from *handicraft*, which is produced for a payoff rather than for the activity of *making* itself (183). Furthermore, art is broken down into the *mechanical* and *aesthetic*—the first, although not handicraft, serves some definite concept of purpose, while the second projects the feeling of pleasure as its immediate aim (184). Thus, Kant's theory creates a strong boundary between fine art and labor—artists are geniuses, not laborers.

Although Marx never engaged directly with aesthetics, his dialectical materialist approach to labor theory can be applied to this context and the cultural sphere. Marx's writings speak to the core belief that economic conditions and class relations relegate every aspect of an individual's life. The Marxist theory of art asserts that the purpose of art is to truthfully represent economic and social conditions, while seeking to improve them in some capacity. One of the most important dichotomies in Marxian aesthetic

theory is the ambition to unite the social *base* with the domain of art and culture, the *superstructure*. In *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels conclude that art is not something produced by great geniuses beyond general understanding, but simply another form of economic production (D'Alleva 51). This was a revolutionary argument, especially considering Kant's strong position on the validity of the artistic genius. In the same text, using Raphael as an example, Marx writes:

Sancho [Panza] imagines that Raphael produced his pictures independently of the division of labor that existed in Rome at the time. If he were to compare Raphael with Leonardo da Vinci and Titian, he would see how greatly Raphael's works of art depended on the flourishing of Rome at the time, which occurred under Florentine influence...Whether an individual like Raphael succeeds in developing his talent depends wholly on demand, which in turn depends on the division of labor and the conditions of human culture resulting from it. (113-4)

Thus, according to Marx, the success of Raphael and his "artistic genius" depended wholly on the flourishing economic climate in which he was working. What is at stake then, for artists and aesthetics as technological advancement continues to change our economic and social conditions?

The "GANfather" & the New Aesthetic

In the preface to his essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", Walter Benjamin acknowledges Marx's prediction that capitalism would continue to exploit the proletariat, until eventually the conditions would be right to abolish capitalism itself (Benjamin 217). He expands upon this assertion by claiming that the socio-cultural effects of mass-produced reproduction art would devalue the art's *aura* (uniqueness). Benjamin's theory responds to the Nazi regime's revolutionary demands to use the aestheticization of politics for fascist means. Benjamin writes:

Fascism attempts to organize the newly created proletarian masses without affecting the property structure which the masses strive to eliminate. The logical result of Fascism is the introduction of aesthetics into political life. All efforts to render politics aesthetic culminate in one thing: war. (241)

If you show an AI a million pictures, it can easily tell you which ones depict a

streetlight. But AI lacks creativity—it is terrible at generating new images on its own. Ian Goodfellow, a former doctoral student at the University of Montreal, discovered the solution to this problem during an academic argument in a bar in 2014. He invented the Generative Adversarial Network (GAN), which takes two neural networks and pits them together in a digital cat-and-mouse game, effectively optimizing their ability to produce extremely realistic images. *MIT Technology Review* calls him the “GANfather: The man who’s given machines the gift of imagination” (Giles). The GAN’s newfound creative intelligence is attributed to machine learning, which extends humans’ capability to identify patterns within large quantities of “big data”. The result is www.thispersondoesnotexist.com and www.thisartworkdoesnotexist.com, two websites made using a StyleGAN, a novel GAN developed by Nvidia researchers in December 2018. The AI behind these sites creates shockingly realistic images of fake people and artwork. The first is a never-ending slideshow of fake portraits, reminiscent of a cyborg ghost trapped in the shell of a human body. The second is an online gallery of fake contemporary art, manufactured to replicate abstract color fields and shapes that could easily be mistaken for a Rothko painting. Even more startling, both networks have “black boxes”, whose code of inner workings are only graspable by humans through their eventual results. Kevin Slavin, a professor at the MIT Media Lab, writes: “We’ve produced systems of such complexity that they’ve all been written by humans but they are totally illegible to any human on earth, and yet their effects are quite tangible” (Blum). My question then is: For whom is this data being optimized? The aesthetic judgment of humans or of a reality beyond human perception?

The term “New Aesthetic”, coined by James Bridle in 2012, may pose an answer to this question. The investigation/project, which Bridle in 2014 urged should not be labeled as an art movement, is “used to refer to the increasing appearance of the visual language of digital technology and the internet in the physical world, and the blending of virtual and physical” (Bridle 21). The term had been born out of a May 2011 Tumblr blog post, and began gaining traction later that summer amongst the online community Bridle had fostered, in a moment described by Andrew Blum in *Vanity Fair*:

The Internet Age was finally getting an art movement to call its own, a viable successor to the way futurism responded to the age of speed, Pop art to the age of the advertisement, and Abstract Expressionism to postwar American power. (Blum)

Bridle, writing in 2012, reflected on this development: “They started coming to me,

bringing things, and saying, ‘is this the New Aesthetic?’ or even ‘I think this is New Aesthetic’ and I’d go yes, possibly, or better, why do you think that?”

In an essay originally published in *Wired* magazine and subsequently appearing on his Medium page, science fiction novelist Bruce Sterling describes the New Aesthetic as a movement without a manifesto:

It’s from London, but it was born digital, on the Internet. The New Aesthetic is a ‘theory object and a ‘shareable concept. It is rhizomatic, it’s open-sourced, and triumph-of-amateurs.

Sterling highlights the most important facet of the “born digital” New Aesthetic: its online community. The New Aesthetic as a rhizomatically expanding *shareable concept* expands Bridle’s initial term into a source of global storytelling amongst technologists, artists, and curators. Paola Antonelli, senior curator of architecture and design and director of research and development at the Museum of Modern Art, comments: “I find it quite beautiful because it’s a group effort to try and describe the coming together of the physical and the digital—which is the dimension where we will live the most in the future” (Blum).

Invisible Infrastructures of Power

In 2019, Bridle started a BBC podcast titled *New Ways of Seeing*, a title which references John Berger’s 1972 book and TV series, *Ways of Seeing*. Drawing on ideas from Benjamin, Berger criticized traditional Western cultural aesthetics by revealing how the hidden ideologies within images influence our perceptions of society and self. In the podcast series, Bridle carries this same perspective and applies it to the political and social systems that are present in our post-internet world. He interviews writers and artists, surveying different interpretations of the New Aesthetic. Hito Steyerl, a German filmmaker, artist, and writer, recounts a personal anecdote on how she connects the invisible landscape of the internet with the material world:

I think I remember the first time it really occurred to me that the internet and the real world were linked in a very material way. People used to laugh about other people that would think that “The Cloud” – in the digital internet sense – had anything to do with real clouds, or the weather? But then a real hurricane – Sandy, I think – hit New York, and knocked out many of the big cloud servers that were sitting there,

so that the digital cloud of course ended up being affected by the weather, by literal flood surges and storms. (Bridle 2019)

The internet is everywhere, but we cannot see it. Its power is hidden, underground, in packets of electromagnetic radiation, or in fiber optic cables laid along the bottom of the ocean.* The internet's incomprehensible code is filtered through an intimate screen. This inability to "see" the internet's power relates to a long artistic history of understanding the world through its hidden representation.

Art is one of the more unregulated industries on the planet. In her book *Duty-Free Art*, Hito Steyerl writes about freeport art storage facilities, which she describes as secret museums. Steyerl asks the reader to ponder how artworks move around the world. They move from one storage unit to another without being seen, staying inside boxes that travel outside national territories with a minimum of tracking or registration, in a system she likens to the Silk Road: "For all we know, the crates could be empty. It is a museum of the internet era, but a museum of the dark net, where movement is obscured and data-space is clouded" (83). Freeport art storage is to this "stack" as the national museum traditionally was to the nation. Duty-free art's advantage over the nation-state cultural model is that it is not bound to any culture, nation, or capital. It has no duty—to perform, to represent, to teach, or to embody value. "It has the duty of being an asset" (97). Thus, duty-free art is allowed to be autonomous and anonymous. Steyerl believes that duty-free art may function as an alternative to the nation-state model institution, one might even say a Remote Institution. Free from the Western canon, political culture, and proletariat-exploiting capital, the reality of duty-free art tows a thin line between a utopian and dystopian future.

Boundaries: Avatar & IRL

In 2013, a Black creator legally changed their name to American Artist, an alias to serve as an avatar through which to navigate the internet anonymously. This name challenges the boundaries of the *category* "American artist", insisting on an expansion beyond the canonical list of Pollock, Warhol, and other white men active in New York during the postwar era. Artist says, "I was very interested in reframing the definition of an American Artist. If I make that my name, now I am it" (Greenberger).

* It is worth noting that at the time of writing, Facebook is fighting for a fiber optic monopoly in Africa.

Artist's name also pushes back against the "roving eye" of search engine optimization (SEO), a set of technological practices which prioritizes certain results and establishes a hierarchized social narrative of art history (Russell 114). Conduct a Google search for "American Artist", in quotation marks. What comes up? The top hit is www.americanartist.us (or at least, this is the case based on my Google settings, profile and preferences—your results may be different depending on where you live, what content you interact with, etc.) Artist's algorithmic critique can be understood as a digital performance, a blind that protects the artist's physical self from ever being present in the digital space, and a bid to bury any digital trace of their pre-alias deadname.

Through their digital performance *A Refusal* (fig. 3), Artist protests how social media representations dictate our experience in the world. For one year, Artist replaced all would-be image content on their social media with blank blue rectangles, and redacted text with black bars. The blue color references their essay on "how this shade of blue has the potential to produce an image and can represent the state prior to revolution" (27). Artist printed the deleted images as one would regular film photos and archived them in a photo album. The only way to view these images was to meet Artist in person and see them first-hand in the album. In a letter (fig. 4) written to their mother, Artist acknowledges how their digital absence may result in emotional distance and suggests keeping in touch more often via Skype.

In her manifesto *Glitch Feminism*, Legacy Russell notes how Artist challenges the construct of the virtual self and withdraws their labor as a producer of content. The value of Artist's content increased as a result of its rarity. In Russell's words, "In limiting the supply of the 'product,' the artist created a shortage thereby amplifying the demand for the raw commodity: access to the physical presence of the person" (141). Russell uses Artist's works to examine the line between our online avatars and our physical selves. She goes so far as to claim that the term IRL ("in real life") is now an antiquated falsehood because the two identities inform each other, becoming one continuous progression of the self (31). While Russell wants to use glitch as a vehicle to rethink our physical selves, Artist uses the glitch to protest the New Aesthetics' inclination to condense the two into one.

"Art After Social Media"

How has the sharing of art on social media impacted the art market? Brad Troemel, artist and writer, reflects on this question in his essay titled "Art After Social Media". Troemel believes that art on social media has been divorced from its traditional rela-

tionship to the market by overturning these three conventions:

1. Authorship must be attributed to a work of art. Through the process of sharing art on social media, the art is divorced from its contextual information until an inverse reaction occurs: “the more famous an art image becomes, the less its author will be attributed”. (39)
2. Art is a form of property, “Whether owned and promoted as an investment, a civilizing tool for the middle class, a demonstration of aristocratic power, or a visual guide for religious narrative, art has always had an owner ever since it ceased being used for mystical purposes”. (36)
3. Art must be placed in a context that declares it to be art. “Museums and galleries still cling dearly to the sanctity of all that appears inside those buildings as being art and all that occurs outside them as being part of everyday life”. (37)

Authorship does need *not* be attributed to a work of art, art is *not* a form of property, and art does *not* need to be placed in a context that declares it art. These three mutually reinforcing traits have historically kept fine art bound to its status as a commodity. Social media distances art from these three antiquated functions and art is transformed from a commodity into a recyclable material, which can be appropriated at will by its new author. What happens now that more people view art through a screen than through their own eyes? Artists are now reliant on their audience to produce work, rather than the traditional recipe that requires artists to make work to have an audience. Troemel also points out that young artists who use social media to promote their artwork have the ability to generate a highly individualized persona through a grass-roots communal effort. Unlike reality television stars, who are connected to behemoth broadcasting entities, artists exist in an every-man-for-himself free market ideology, and they need a community to support their brand.

“Glicht glieth glitch your way into existence”

Contrary to Kant’s assertion that aesthetic judgements are a reflection of a disinterested judgment that is fundamentally undefinable, art in America is proliferated through the filtered eye of AI, shared through the intimate screen of social media, and fueled by capitalism. This theory aligns with Marx’s claim that the way we function in this world is entirely dependent on the social and economic conditions in which we live. For Kant, this reality was dependent on artists as genius, the only rational explanation for how artists could mimic natural beauty.

In 1784, in “An answer to the question, What is Enlightenment?”, Kant defined enlightenment as “man’s emergence from his self-incurred immaturity”. In the same essay, he advocated for one to use his own understanding, rather than subscribing to the dogmas and formulas of ‘guardians.’ The danger in succumbing to these guardians, he believed, was in the likelihood that harmful prejudices would disseminate amongst those who are unable to think for themselves. Thus, Kant reasons that we need freedom and we need the ability to exercise it in public. For example, the clergyman who is bound to the doctrines of his private congregation should also be allowed to occupy public space as a scholar, in order to “offer suggestions for a better arrangement of religious and ecclesiastical affairs”. Kant is advocating for one to have free judgment over his own thinking. It seems as if there have always been outside forces, guardians, who function to infiltrate one’s ability to make his own judgments in order to accrue political, economic, or cultural power.

As we become increasingly dependent on technology, it is more important now than ever to gain literacy of these systems. Devices such as GPS, facial recognition, and machine learning should not be used as objective tools to replace conscious with computational thought. We must acknowledge that technology is flawed because it is created through a coded bias. Every day our data is sourced, recorded, mined, and monetized by these technologies that are disseminated without public awareness (Delgado and Smiley). In Bridle’s words, “Over the last century, technological acceleration has transformed our planet, our societies, and ourselves, yet it has failed to transform our understanding of these things” (2018, 2). Americans must gain systemic literacy of how these technologies function, because they actively shape and direct our politics, education, warfare, commerce, and art, whether we realize it or not.

I would like to conclude with a poem from Katy Ilonka Gero, a poet/essayist and doctoral student in computer science at Columbia University, whose words sum up my thoughts beautifully. My thanks to the author for granting us permission to reprint the text in here in full:

Glicht glieth glitch your way into existence

No one will know you were an accident, a mild defect
 trying to get free of its loving box. You were a million,
 little sparks dying quick in the cold air, and only one of you
 started a fire in the mind of your creator. I found you

in random digits, pulled a gem from the slush.

I've mixed my metaphors, little glowing lights of meaning.

You get it. This has gotten to you by a happy little accident.

By a billion unborn children. By a friend saying, *Hey*.

Look at this. Here.

It is hard to swim in the constant, unfurling blur of robots,

so happy to continue talking after you have left the room,

continue talking until you return, fireflies in a forest

no one is around to love this blinking beauty because

there is so much to see here and not space or time enough

to let it all settle in your heart.

My favorite time of day is after the sun goes down, when my partner and I take our puppy on his last walk of the day. We sit by the river and watch the inky black water form undulating patterns under the moonlight. I leave my phone at home and notice how my way of seeing changes. I am no longer anticipating the perfect moment to take a picture; I no longer feel the spike of dopamine that rushes my brain as my phone buzzes. My eyes see the world through an unfiltered lens. In this age of the internet, I believe being present enough to observe our aesthetic experiences and judgments is a form of resistance. ■

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"THE FATEFUL QUESTION FOR THE HUMAN SPECIES
SEEMS TO ME TO BE WHETHER & TO WHAT EXTENT
THEIR CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT WILL SUCCEED IN

MASTERING THE DISTURBANCE

OF THEIR COMMUNAL LIFE BY THE HUMAN
INSTINCT OF AGGRESSION AND
SELF-DESTRUCTION."

SIGMUND FREUD, *CIVILIZATION
AND ITS DISCONTENTS*, 1930

plato and ari

venus

marie curie

confucius

jane goodall

web du bois

**"There is but one coward on earth,
and that is the coward
that dare not know."**

- Du Bois, from *Dusk of Dawn: An Essay Toward an Autobiography of a Race Concept*

Mute Stop Video Security Participants Polls Chat Share Screen Record Live Transcript Reactions More End

Reconstruction of an ideal Core seminar on Zoom: Plato and Aristotle, dialoguing; Venus, vogueing; Curie, discovering; Confucius, mulling; Goodall, bonding; and Du Bois, expounding. Illustration by Alexandra Mascarello.

TIAN LIAO

Going Abroad, Going Home: Ethnographic Insight into the Lives of Chinese International Students During COVID

In the spring semester of 2020, when Chinese students who had been studying in the United States went home due to the pandemic, users on Chinese social media were accusing these students of being likely to spread the virus. It appears that one of the consequences of the pandemic was increased criticism of international students, reducing their elevated social status. Wishing to learn more about the impact of these shifting views, I interviewed five people, each either an international student or a relative of such a student. My questions included: Do these students have higher status? Did their status devalue during the pandemic? Will this change have an impact on Chinese students' willingness to study abroad in the future?

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Studying abroad is common in our globalized world. With increased globalization comes an “intensification of global interconnectedness, suggesting a world full of movement and mixture, contact and linkages” (Inda and Rosaldo 4). Migrant workers as a group are defined by their movement and are impacted by the intensification of their interaction with members of different host communities. Anthropologist Mary Beth Mills studies rural Thai women who explain their movement to Bangkok as being motivated by their desire for the fashionable lifestyle of migrant workers (37-61). In particular, these migrant workers aspire for “urban glamour” and “personal autonomy”; Bangkok is “where they can earn the money needed to actively enjoy the style and amenities of a modern identity”. Might we use Mills’ findings as a frame for understanding the situation of Chinese students studying abroad? These students might be considered migrant workers, as they regularly travel and work far from their points of origin. Given my own experience as an international student in Boston, I can report that such students are, like the Thai workers who move to Bangkok, also perceived as fashionable (or at least, concerned with fashion). I hypothesize that international students study abroad to obtain higher status. To investigate this hypothesis, I conducted remote interviews with five informants: Xi, 28, who studied in the US for three weeks; Hua, 52, whose nephews are studying abroad in the US; and Sun, Gao, and Feng (each 21), Chinese students who began their studies in the US in high school. These conversations reveal that Chinese international students are of a higher status, but this status

has been devalued due to the pandemic. While some of them are studying for the sake of status, others go abroad for improved educational opportunities, particular learning environments, or freedom. Indeed, the willingness of those going abroad in search of higher status will likely be more negatively impacted by the pandemic.

THE VALUE OF STUDYING ABROAD

I wished first to establish a status quo for the perception among Chinese people of students who travel abroad to study. Most of my informants mentioned that international students are fashionable and trendy, similar to how migrant women workers in Bangkok are perceived by rural women in Thailand. Moreover, my informants identified themselves as also of higher economic status. Gao told me:

International students are rich. They do not worry about the price when they buy things. On social media, they look awesome. They created a good life, are well-dressed, and have trendy clothing. This is what I see online. However, international students are not all the same. When I told other international students that I am learning online, they said to me that online school is easy and fun. Why would they think that? I was very concerned about the quality of the education.

Although Gao mentioned different types of international students, she expressed the opinion that most of them are rich and fashionable. I asked Sun if she agrees; she answered: “Yes. They can go home and inherit wealth.” Feng likewise commented on the fashionable image of international students: “They do spend a lot of time and effort on their outfits.” This means that they exert a good deal of energy on styling themselves. Is this a selection effect, or an outcome of studying abroad? When I asked my informants whether studying abroad signals that one is wealthy, they expressed mixed views on the relationship between studying abroad and economic status. Sun told me, “Not everyone who studies abroad is rich.” However, Feng asserted that “if you can study abroad, your family is doing well, because the tuition is expensive.”

According to my informants, whether the pursuit of elevated status is a significant factor motivating the choice to study abroad depends on the particular circumstances of each student. Xi stated:

People who do not do well in school think the status is a very important reason to study abroad because they cannot get into a good school in China, and if they study

abroad, they do not need to go to a school that people here know is bad. They think studying in a different country is better because people do not understand what schools are good in other countries. The names of the schools can sound foreign, which looks more prestigious than Chinese schools. But some students study at a very good school, but the names of their schools sound funny if translated to Chinese, so people in China do not take them seriously, but these students do not mind, because they know they are studying at a great school.

Xi explained that students who cannot study at a good school in China often choose to study abroad, their reason being that studying elsewhere makes them better off, for even if their schools abroad do not provide superior educational value, people in China will not be aware of this.

It appears that Hua believes status matters for some people who want to study abroad, but that there are perils to pursuing education for this reason:

If you go abroad to 'gold plate' yourself, it will not make you better. People will understand whether you learned something abroad or not. And degrees are also different, a good school or a bad school, a good major or a bad major. When you come back and apply for a job, your boss understands why you studied abroad. Remember, the recruiters also look at your GPA. People who genuinely want to study will not care about this status.

She explained further that studying abroad for the sake of joining a group with higher status is not a good idea, since professional recruiters understand the curricular demands and differences of schools outside China. They know that a student is not likely to be academically successful if they focus more on getting accepted into a program and not on the actual work of learning. Such students will have a rough time finding a job when they return to China.

I would characterize my informants' consensus view on this matter as follows: The *perceived social status of international students* appears to be a key motivation for students who do not perform well at school. Studying abroad gives them a chance of having a higher status because Chinese people generally have a favorable impression of foreign institutions, and because going abroad allows students to avoid enrolling at a Chinese university known for being low quality. My informants seemed to share the view that status matters much less for students who study for the sake of learning.

I asked my informants what reasons mattered the most during their decision-making processes. Gao, Feng, Xi each indicated other reasons to study abroad as being far more important than status. Here is Gao:

The educational environment and the freedom American schools offer matters the most. In China, I am forced to learn a predetermined curriculum, so it leaves no space for individuality. In America, I am motivated to study because I can choose what I am learning.

Feng noted her appreciation for the atmosphere of American schools, saying, “no one will push me to study. I do not have the same pressures and there are no ranking systems as we do in China.” Thus, for them, the educational environment is a major reason to study abroad. Indeed, most of my informants mentioned forms of freedom as a reason to study abroad. Sun: “I could go out whenever I wanted when I was in America, but there is a curfew at home.” Xi: “I want to stay in the United States forever; I do not need to worry about my child. My family’s decision will not limit my actions.” When asked, Feng and Sun agreed with that sentiment.

I would liken this appreciation of freedom to the “autonomy” Mills has identified as a benefit motivating Thai women to work in the city. However, is autonomy a component of elevated status, or is it a separate social benefit? According to the conversations I cite in this paper, I can say that it seems likely that people who study for the sake of learning will not see improved status as a primary reason for studying abroad.

WILL STUDENTS GO ABROAD AFTER COVID?

Have social attitudes altered by COVID devalued the status of students who leave China, and will those changes make students less willing to study abroad? In the first quarter of 2020, most of my friends who are international students from China decided to go home. It seemed at the time that many users on Chinese social media platforms including WeChat and Weibo were angry with these returning students:

As news about imported infections intensified, people feeling strongly about the topic began sharing their views under the Weibo hashtag #留学生该不该回国 (“should Chinese students abroad come home”), which has been viewed over 200 million times and generated more than 30,000 comments since earlier this week. “Everyone knows that you guys left China in pursuit of the ‘freedom’ that you liked.

Now you are coming back for free healthcare? [...] Don't return if you don't love your country from the bottom of your heart!" said one typical comment. (Feng)

Chinese students, rather than the pandemic itself, were being blamed for the entire forced return, and for the migration of learning to online platforms. Some online even proposed barring their return, arguing that they might carry the virus with them, countering the government's effort to reduce the spread of infection.

My informants told me that the pandemic has lowered the status of the present cohort of international students. Gao, an undergraduate student in Washington DC, went home last spring. She told me:

Before the pandemic, studying abroad sounded nice, but now, it is not as good as before. Chinese media portrayed the United States as a mess. Chinese people now think that there are a lot of protests and coronavirus outbreaks, so America is not safe. However, I felt pretty safe when I was in the US. Their impressions of the United States were influenced by the Chinese media. The media intentionally stigmatize international students, which forces us to deal with harassment and biases. For example, people coming back from another country are often blamed for infections. If there is a case, people will say that it was the fault of the person who traveled back, that the person brought back the virus. And no one would go near the area where that person lives. The entire neighborhood was excluded. My relatives now will say, 'So good that you are back, you will not study abroad again right?' But I will because I have not earned my degree yet. We are stigmatized because we went home to avoid the pandemic, so people say that we are bringing back the virus to China from the United States. Also, we could not get airplane tickets, or they were very expensive if there were any tickets left. People in China pitied us. All of a sudden, we were being judged, criticized, and blamed. People will always exclude others who are not like them, who are different. They are pathetic.

Sun also went home last spring. She told me:

Some people are really sensitive. I did not run into someone who would treat me badly because I recently traveled internationally. But I heard stories. If I meet people like this, I will fight them if I am with my friends. I was a tutor a while ago, and my clients would ask me whether I came back from America. I know that they were just

“In March 2020, my roommate decided to leave the campus of Bard College in NY—the school I was attending at that time—and return home to China. Twenty-four hours after I took this photo of her packing, she let me know that she’d been trapped in Ethiopia when her flight to Beijing was canceled.”
 — Kehan Yi



trying to stay safe. The hate will not last long; it will go away.

It appears that although Sun did not encounter people who discriminated against her because she had returned to China from abroad, she was aware of such hostility towards other people with that status. Both Gao and Sun take the view that the status of international students has devalued as a result of reasons including rejection and skepticism about this group and the unexpectedly high costs of air travel which burdened students’ families. I questioned how this devalued status will affect future students’ interest in studying abroad. Hua explained that “a pandemic will always end. America has a lot of great schools. You cannot question that”, suggesting that high-quality education remains enticing for the Chinese people. Gao said:

People who want the status that international students have will be less motivated to study abroad, but people who want to learn will go regardless of the COVID pandemic because they have goals and plans for their futures.

Feng, who attends a college in Ohio, did not go back to China when the pandemic hit. Like Gao, she cited economic status as a factor likely to shape people's perception about study abroad after COVID:

People who will be affected do not have the socioeconomic status to study abroad.
 People who have studied abroad will understand the real situation.

It thus seems likely that people who want the status of international students and who have not studied abroad will be more greatly affected by the pandemic, but people who want an American education, and who *have* studied abroad, will not be less influenced. Having not been home since March 2020, I am deeply aware of the discrepancies between the Chinese people's imaginations of the situation in the United States and the reality here, so I have to agree with Feng. It seems that the pandemic intensified people's misunderstanding of studying in America.

According to my informants, status seems to be an important motive for Chinese students to study abroad, especially among those who do not perform well at school. Other reasons include education, learning environment, and autonomy. Though the status of international students is devalued due to the COVID pandemic, this more greatly affects students who study for the sake of status, since the status has been lowered. Students whose goal is learning rather than status will be less impacted. Based on these conversations, we can look ahead to the post-pandemic era with stronger reasons to believe that among students who consider educational quality, personal autonomy, and the particulars of the learning environment to be important, there will be undiminished interest in learning abroad in the United States. ■

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COMPILED BY MARCO ROTELLA W/ZACHARY BOS

Experiences Abroad During COVID

We reached out to students, alumni and friends of the College of Arts & Sciences to invite them to share brief accounts of their experiences living abroad during the COVID-19 pandemic. – *Eds.*

Elizabeth Churchill – *Core '01, Religion '04*

“I have been living in Paris for a little under eight years with my husband, who is French. I own a small company that prepares French students for studying at universities in the United States. Since March of last year, I have been teaching individuals or small groups remotely, and—to be honest—the transition was remarkably smooth. After a crash course on how to use Zoom, I found that I was able to deliver the same level of quality instruction as I had in my in-person courses. Some of my students actually learn better online because they are used to being in front of a screen; one of my students was already teaching himself Japanese through videos on YouTube! I am really proud of how I’ve managed to pivot and remain present and available to my students.

“In terms of the advantages of remote learning, my dogs and I have never been closer. I think this has been the best year and a half of their lives. However, this was a tough time to be an expat. I think it’s fairly well documented that France did not handle this crisis particularly well. And even if you love where you live, it’s hard to be cut off from your country of origin and the loved ones who live there. As Dante would say: *‘The bread has never tasted so salty...’*

“No matter how I’m teaching, in-person or online, the experiences that I had in Core continue to influence just about every lesson that I give. Building bridges across disciplines, finding connections between texts, looking for the weird parts—all that stuff I learned as a Core student serves me now as a teacher. I was in school for like a million years, but the years that I spent in Core have had the greatest influence on my pedagogical and intellectual make-up.”

Alex Karapancsev – *Core '20, Environmental Analysis & Policy '21*

“I have been at home in Switzerland for the past year because my family was worried that I would not be safe in the US due to the high number of confirmed cases of COVID-19. Though I’m not in Boston, I’ve had no difficulty attending classes re-

motely. For some of my classes, the lectures are prerecorded and do not require me to attend synchronously. However, taking classes in a different time zone has been challenging. But I had it easy compared to other students attending classes online. Attending synchronous classes from Europe meant that my classes were mostly in the evening, which—compared to international students who had classes in the middle of the night—was not too bad. I initially thought that my academic performance would be negatively affected by L_fA, but it turns out that I had more time to focus on my assignments without the distractions of commuting or social gatherings. Believe it or not, I ended up taking part in more extracurriculars this year than in previous years!

“As a graduating senior, I was concerned about the decrease in job opportunities, though Switzerland now seems to be recovering economically. The COVID-19 pandemic forced me to go back to the living situation I had in high school—dependent, once again, on my family, having to plead that they respect my need for privacy and personal space. Really, these challenging times taught me that the boundaries of my entire life are not coterminous



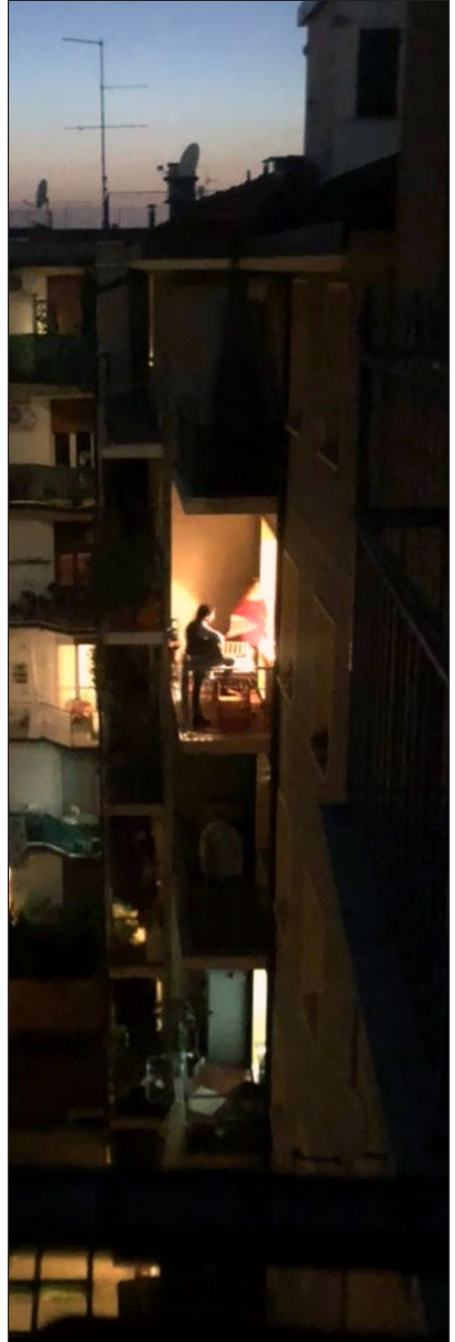
with the boundaries of my campus life...

“Before the pandemic, I was narrowly concerned with my academic studies, but now I realize that I have other interests I want to explore and invest time in. For me, the past year has been, at least in part, a liberating experience. Yet trying to stay connected to the new friends I made through virtual classes and Zoom meetings was challenging. For the first time, I became keenly aware of the distance that separated me from Boston.”

Leonardo Reggiani - *QST* '22

“I returned to home in Italy after the end of the spring semester. For the remainder of 2020, I attended classes online. I decided to stay in Italy instead of returning to Boston for several reasons. For one thing, my parents strongly believed that I'd be safer at home than in Boston. Certainly, I wasn't less comfortable! And it goes without saying that my food was much better at home. It was also nice to spend time with my parents. As an international student I don't get to see them as often as I would like to. For another thing, I figured I could save money without the added expenses of housing payments or a campus dining plan.

“COVID changed my learning experience quite a bit. Both students and professors had to adapt very quickly to the new, unexpected reality of learning remotely. For me, the hardest change was the lack of



a feeling that we as students were still members of a community. I really value that part of my BU experience. The time difference between the US and Italy was also an issue.

“I think there are some advantages to learning remotely. Learning, for example, has had to become more standardized, which will have long-term advantages. Many students had the chance to attend classes that otherwise they could have never attended in person. And in instances of inclement weather, professors can just hold classes online instead of cancelling them.

“During COVID, Italy had a complete lockdown for a while, during which it was impossible to see friends and definitely harder to stay in touch with some people. In Boston I was used to meeting other college students every day. Even during busy weeks where I spent most of my time studying, I would still meet my friends at Mugar, or meet them for dinner, or a trip to the gym. I always felt like I was surrounded by people. This was so different than life in Italy, in complete lockdown with a 10 PM curfew, for those many months.”

Dani Le - *QST '22*

“I attended classes on campus this past spring; but in Fall 2020 I was a remote student, living in Moscow, Russia. I was uncomfortable with the surge in confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the US, and with the shuttering of so many business; it made sense to stay home, where I could save money, spend time with family, and feel safe.

“The pandemic definitely changed my learning experience—for the worse. It’s hard to pay attention on Zoom, and it’s harder for professors to engage their students online. My biggest challenge with online classes was balancing school work with the demands of home life. While I appreciated the flexibility of online classes, I have to admit that the academic performance was negatively impacted. I didn’t feel motivated to study for exams, and my GPA tanked.

“Back in March 2020, I thought the pandemic would be over by the end of the summer, and I’d be in Boston for the start of the fall. I’m happy my classes were at least hybrid in the spring, so I could have the option to go in person.”

Jonathan Han - *Core '19, English '19*

“I was located in Boston during the first part of the pandemic and then in Hong Kong per my parents’ wishes. I didn’t have to run the gauntlet of taking classes remotely because I’d had the brilliant foresight to graduate a year early. I did run a few creative writing workshops, giving me the teacher’s perspective on COVID, but the workshops



weren't much impacted by the lockdown. They would have been online no matter what.

"If anything, the proliferation of online teaching made things easier, because it became our go-to. Obviously, one of the risks of online classes is that people might not pay attention. The issue I have is that it's harder for me, the guy running the show, to pay attention. The only real advantage to having things online is convenience, which counts for a bunch of advantages in my books!

"When I was still in Boston, COVID forced me out of a job in publishing. Instead, I went where I could find a position, meaning work with a cloud tech company. I never would have expected that two years ago. I also had to say goodbye to a lot of good friends in the US when I left. That said, when I returned to Hong Kong, I got to connect with a lot of people who I hadn't thought I'd ever see again. It was a year of returning, and that part I loved.

"It is kind of funny how in January of 2020 I was fleeing Hong Kong for Boston when COVID-19 was just beginning. By July, I was going the other way around. The primary difference I found is that in Hong Kong, I never thought that my health, or the health of others, were under threat. Things were quite the other story in Boston, where I was afraid to even pick up a pizza in person. Being able to release that direct fear and anxiety was very comforting. Of course, shelter from such fear can be comforting too, although in a different way." ■



MIHO NAMBA

Learning During the New Normal

In 2020, as COVID-19 began its spread worldwide, almost every aspect of our social lives was impacted. From my vantage point in urban Japan, I saw university students around me react in different ways to remote learning, cancellation of abroad programs, and restrictions on gatherings and movement. Some people shut down a bit; some people found fresh energy for long-delayed projects; some were fortunate enough to be among family, and could enjoy that time together. As my fellow students sought safety and happiness during the “new normal” via academics, hobbies, and work, I saw tremendous resilience, and used my camera to document some of those efforts.

Above: A BU student takes online classes at night due to the thirteen-hour time difference between Japan and Boston. Students have to make an extra effort to actively engage in classes held remotely. >>





Previous page, top: International students experienced the social activism of 2020, including the Black Lives Matter movement, via screens. Some took action to educate other Japanese students on current events. Bottom: This is Kichijoji Station, in the western part of the Tokyo metropolitan area, closed and vacant on a Saturday morning. Before the pandemic, this mall was a popular shopping site for many. Above: Ranran, a student at Keio University, enjoys local take-out while learning remotely outdoors. Her normal commute, pre-COVID, was an hour and a half to get to central Tokyo; she found herself appreciating her spare time during lockdown. >>



Above: Sunday afternoon in Yoyogi Park, adjacent to the well-known Meiji Shrine. As stay-at-home orders eased, people of all generations began gathering at greenspaces to catch up with friends. Next page, top: Mai, enrolled at Waseda University in Tokyo, was disheartened by the cancellation of her study abroad program at UCSD. However, she determined to use her time meaningfully. Bottom: Rika, a student dancer, takes online lessons and practices at her local park. Universities were not allowing anyone on campus, especially in recreational spaces. >>





Previous page, top: Shibuya Crossing, typically a visual epitome of Tokyo's dense population, with relatively few people for a Sunday afternoon. At this time, surrounding shops and restaurants were just beginning to reopen. Bottom: Milly works as a freelance model while attending Yokohama City University, where she lives alone. During COVID, she was able to spend more time with her family. Below: Chino—facing the camera, which you can see me holding in the reflection—is a student at Keio University. She has been annoyed when she goes out for a brisk walk and finds that the commotion in Harajuku is beginning to resemble pre-COVID levels. She thinks Tokyo is reopening too fast. ■



VERONICA BOOTH

Just Go

Go out to your usual bar
and act like nothing is bizarre.

Get up and do some skiing
and unnecessary sightseeing.

Gather for Thanksgiving dinner
and pretend you're not a sinner.

Let's have a cookout! Grab the grill—
who cares who we kill?

Tell me how I'm paranoid.
When I say I'm scared, say you're annoyed.

Act like there isn't a virus;
tell me to shove my liberal bias.

Invite over all your friends
and hope none of their lives end,

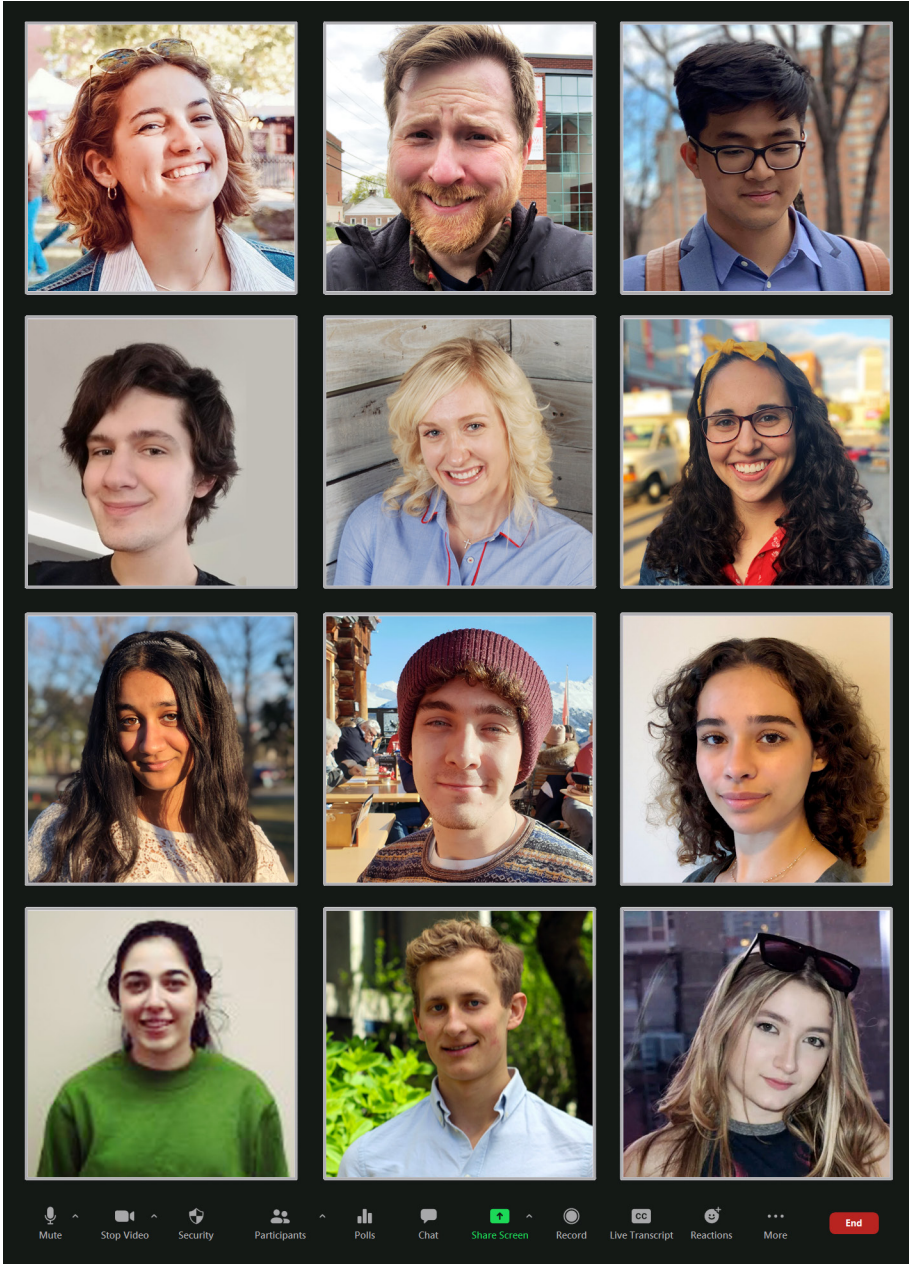
Hope it isn't your mother or father.
Then, would you bother? ■

Our Contributors and Staff

staff last names are set in capitals

Seynedhee **Avenie** (CAS '24, PAR '24) was born in DC and raised in Paris, from Ivorian descent. She is an avid reader of fiction like *The Metamorphosis*, *The Hate U Give*, and *L'éducation sentimentale*. In her spare time, she acts in short films, watches Netflix, and visits museums with friends. ■ Marina **Berardino** (CAS '21) is from Minneapolis, and majored in Political Science with a Core minor. She has been accepted to the University of Minnesota Law School. When not studying she can be found reading classics, spending time outside, and hanging out with her kitten, Rory. ■ Riya **Beri** (CGS '21, CAS '23) is a Political Science major with a Sociology minor from Orange County, California. Her passions include learning about social inequality, promoting inclusivity, candle-making, and punch-needle rug-making. On social @royaberoy. ■ Veronica **Booth** (CAS '19) recently moved to Denver for a change of pace and new scenery. She writes for a non-profit, The Borgen Project, and is focusing on short stories and poetry in her free time. She plans to move around and pursue writing in every place she possibly can. While at BU, she was a contributor to *The Beacon* literary magazine. ■ Zachary **Bos** is an alumnus of the Core humanities and of BU's graduate poetry workshops. In 2021 he was a semifinalist in the Unterberg Center's Discovery Contest. He convenes HUB CC192 and facilitates other student and alumni publishing projects as coordinator of the BU BookLab. On social @zakbos. ■ Michelle **CARDONA** (CAS '21) is majoring in Environmental Analysis & Policy. She was raised in Chicago but born in Colombia, where her love for nature first ignited. She is passionate about climate activism, forest conservation, and sustainable energy, and enjoys anime, manga, and thrifting. ■ Daniel **Cardosi** (ENG '24) is an Electrical Engineering major from California who plans to major in Math as well. He enjoys playing music, reading literary theory, and building speakers, and he works as a research assistant in BU's Psychoacoustics Lab. ■ Alexandra **Castro Iberico** (COM '23) was born in Peru, and is majoring in Journalism with a Sociology minor in CAS. She aspires to contribute to the world in a positive way through photography and writing. She is a member of the BU Women's Rowing team. On Twitter @alecastro2809. ■ Roberto **Cordova** (CAS '21) graduated with a degree in Political Science and a minor in English. Now based in Connecticut, focusing on his writing, he wants you to listen to Frank Ocean. On Instagram @roberto.cordova1. ■ Monica **Courtney** (SED '22) is studying for a degree in English Education. She has a passion for reading and writing and hopes to pass on

that passion as a future educator. ■ Vivian **Dai** (CAS '24) is a Classics and Philosophy major from San Jose. She serves in Student Government as Social Advocacy Director and as Secretary of BU YDSA. Find them on campus taking minutes, reading Core texts, and planning picnics. On Twitter @biclassics and Instagram @viviandied. ■ Kaitlyn **DeSouza** (CAS '23) is an Economics and International Relations major from outside Chicago. She plays clarinet, saxophone, and piano. She is involved with the BU Jazz Ensemble and several pre-law groups. She also enjoys soccer, reading, and watching films. On Instagram @kaitlyndesouza. ■ Tammy **Dong** (CAS '24) is an International Relations major from New York. Both an art admirer and an art creator, her other interests include history, exploration and travel, and spending time with animals. On Instagram @tammyiee. ■ Cat **Dossett** (CAS '18) graduated with a BA in Art History and minors in Comparative Literature and Core Interdisciplinary Studies. Her publication credits include the comics *Laika* and *Vessel*, the chapbook *Odysseus & Eden*, and bylines in *Burn*, *Hawk & Whippoorwill*, and *Sobotka*. On social @aboutadaughter. ■ Jaden **Duenas** (COM '22) is a Film & Television major. As a visual artist and writer, he works in mediums including painting, digital photography, and screenwriting. On Twitter @jadenduenas_. ■ Greye **Dunn** (CAS '22)—studier of International Relations and Spanish, word writer for *The Daily Free Press*, amateur poker player, blues guitarist, disliker of dating apps. Was once famously reminded by Thomas Bailey: “Greye, Bukowski is dead”. On Twitter @boofitt. ■ Maggie **Farren** (CAS '22) is an English major from the Chicago area. She is the author of a chapbook titled *The Bug Orchestra* (Pen & Anvil) and has published other writing in *The Beacon* and *Clarion*. ■ Zoë **Figueroa** (CAS '22) is a Psychology major from Connecticut. When not writing or working as a research assistant, she can be found playing with her puppy, reading, listening to music, or out adventuring. On Instagram @zozo_figuerozo. ■ Bella T. **Fong** (CAS '21) is a Philosophy and Political Science major from San Francisco. She enjoys writing, playing classical music, fawning over tote bags and puppies, reading religious texts, and plotting her own Basil E. Frankweiler adventures. On Instagram @bellabellabartok. ■ Susan **Foster** (CAS '21) is a majoring in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology. Her pastimes including voice lessons, embroidery, and doodling on her homework. She sells original cartoon designs on Redbubble as “suzendudes”. On Twitter @susan_f_. ■ Elisabeth **Graves** (CAS '24) is an Architectural Studies major from a suburb outside Chicago. As a young adult in a city full of possibilities, she tries to connect with herself and her surroundings by taking walks, doing yoga, painting, and taking care of plants. On Instagram @ellie.graves. ■ David **Green**, PhD, teaches in the Core Humanities and



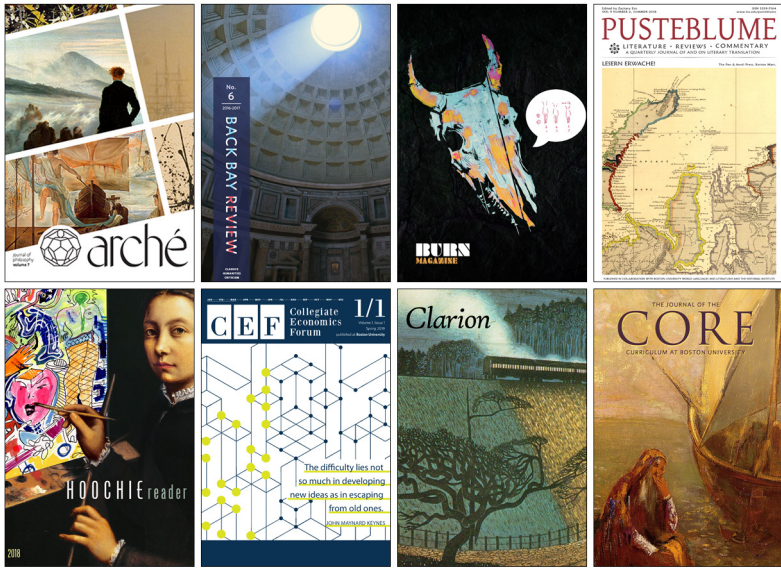
Reconstruction of a typical all-hands Zoom meeting for the '21 editorial staff: S. Vatalaro, Z. Bos, J. Ha, B. Hallgren, V. Hanger, M. Jadick, N. Patel, A. Karapancsev, A. Mascarello, S. Ollivier-Yamin, D. Malkin, M. Cardona.

traveled extensively in China and Tibet while living there in the 1980s. ■ Bruce **HALL-GREN** (CAS '22) is majoring in English and Psychology with a Core minor. A native of Weymouth, at BU he works as a Core Peer Tutor and will be the Core House RA starting in Fall 2021. He enjoys spicy foods, classical theater, horror movies, and chess. On Instagram @1inchpuncher. ■ Kyna **Hamill**, PhD, is Director of the CAS Core Curriculum and a faculty affiliate of the BU School of Theatre. ■ Vanessa **HANGER** (CAS '23) is majoring in Philosophy and Neuroscience with a minor in Core Independent Studies. A recipient of Divisional Awards for exceptional performance in the Core Social Sciences (2021) and Humanities (2020), she is currently a research assistant with the Framingham Heart Study. On Twitter @hanger_vanessa. ■ Jicheol **HA** (CAS '23) is pursuing a BA/MA in Mathematics on a pre-med track with minors in Chemistry and Computer Science. In his free time, he trades stocks, makes music, and plays table tennis. He aspires to be an anesthesiologist or a gastroenterologist. ■ Chloe **Hite** (Core '15, CAS '17) was finishing her MA in International Economics and Development at the Johns Hopkins SAIS campus in Bologna when *la quarantina* hit last March. She likes pasta on the beach, a good glass of wine, and putting in a few miles in the mountains every other weekend. ■ Andrew **Huynh** (QST '23) is a Business Analytics major raised in Boston. Besides photography, he spends much of his time gaming, listening to hip hop, and building outfits. He plays jazz, edits videos, and dances to keep himself creatively motivated. On Instagram @andrew_huynh_. ■ Ryan **Ives** (Core '98, CAS '00) earned a BA in International Relations, a Polytropos Award, and a Scarlet Key at BU. After graduation from Georgetown's School of Foreign Service, postings in London, Bangkok and Singapore, and travel to nearly fifty countries, he now resides with family in Vermont. ■ Mica **JADICK** (CAS '22) is a Neurobiology major with minors in Core and Computer Science. She is a drum major of the BU Marching Band; president of TBΣ; has been a Learning Assistant for Chemistry and Physics; and is involved in computational biomedicine research at BUMC. On Instagram @mica_jadick. ■ Junia **Janvier** (CAS '23) is studying Computer Science and Physics. She is an active member of the Black Policy Initiative, BU Spark!, and the BU chapter of the National Society of Black Engineers. On Instagram and Twitter @juniagi. ■ Brian **Jorgensen**, PhD, was founding Director of the Arts & Sciences Core Curriculum, and taught in the program for many years. ■ Alex **KARAPANCSEV** (CAS '21) is an Environmental Analysis & Policy major from Zürich. He has a passion for combatting inequality, especially in the area of sustainability. He also enjoys painting, poetry, and taking care of plants. On Instagram @the.ms.harry.styles. ■ Andrew **Kelbley** (CAS '21)

is majoring in Economics and Environmental Analysis & Policy. He comes to BU from Connecticut; next year, he will study law at Duke. He enjoys writing, playing the French horn, vegan cooking, yoga, and studying Greek. On Instagram @andrewkelbae and Twitter @andykelbae. ■ Brian **Ko** (CAS '23) is a Political Science and Classical Civilization major from Andover, MA. He is president of the Undergraduate Classics Association, an avid fencer, and a board game enthusiast. He is on the board of a non-profit which helps to place Korean-American students in Boston-area political internships. ■ Sneha **Korlakunta** (CAS '23) is a Biology major from Dallas. She enjoys painting, ancient texts reimagined in new contexts, and cooking experimental recipes for her family. At present, she is busy making her newest puppy feel welcome in her home. On Instagram @snehakorlakunta. ■ Tian **Liao** (CAS '23) is an International Relations major from Beijing. He is fascinated by anthropology; a believer in multilateralism; a past participant in Model UN and the Model G20; and a past service leader at the BU Community Service Center. He loves to play piano. On social @tianl34. ■ Gwen **Liu** (CAS '24) plans to major in Philosophy and Physics. Outside of class, she enjoys green tea, magical realism, Studio Ghibli films, and the excitement of discovering new paintbrush functions on procreate. On Instagram @gwen.liu. ■ David **MALKIN** (CAS '22) is a History major from Cleveland. This is his third year as part of the *Journal* staff. If he's not editing, reading, or writing, you can likely find him wandering the streets of Boston. On Instagram @davmalk. ■ Alexandra **MASCARELLO** (CAS '23) is a Philosophy and Classics major from New York. She enjoys doodling, playing piano, and getting annoyed with Aristotle. You can often find her in the Core office or eating a blueberry bagel in the CAS basement. ■ Isabel **Mejia** (CAS '23) is a comics creator and Anthropology major from Virginia. When not working on projects, she can be found crocheting or bothering her cat. On Instagram @panocsur. ■ Laura **Meyer** (CAS '21) is a Psychology major from New York who dreams of working in the medical field. She enjoys photography, music, and exploring. On Instagram @l.auraaaaaaa. ■ Arezu **Monshizadeh** (CAS '23) is a Biology major from California, with a minor in Persian Cultural Studies. When not cramming in Mugar, she can be found drinking excessive amounts of coffee, going on hikes, or exploring different Boston restaurants. ■ Jenny **Motzer** (CAS '23) comes to BU from New Jersey. She is studying Neuroscience on a pre-med track. She is a staff writer for *The Emerald Review* and a peer mentor in Kilachand Honors College. ■ Miho **Namba** (CGS '21, CAS '23) is a Philosophy major with a WGS minor. She was awarded a Special Recognition Award from the College of General Studies; is a Dean's Host; and is a member of the Hub Advisory Board and the ex-

ecutive board of Fusion dance troupe. On Instagram @miho_0719. ■ **Avi Nguyen** (CAS '22) is a graduate of Boston Latin School, and comes to BU from Dorchester Center. He is majoring in Political Science and Economics. ■ **Noelle No** (CFA '21) is an artist from Georgia. While at BU, to complement her studies in the arts, she took CAS classes in ethics, Philosophy, sociology, and Korean. Her passions include her brand, Noon Authentic; dancing with friends; and self-development. On Instagram @knoale. ■ **Jack Norton** (CAS/GRS '23) is a dual-degree Biology major from southern California. He is currently researching treatments for antibiotic-resistant infections. He plans to attend medical school after graduation to pursue his interest in internal medicine. ■ **Onosereme Ofoman** (SAR '21) is a Public Health major from Lagos. Besides her interest in healthcare, she dabbles in poetry, photography, theater, and gardening, and strives to live life without regrets. On social @oseremee_. ■ **Sabine OLLIVIER-YAMIN** (CAS '23) is a History and Neuroscience major from New York. This fall, she will be busy writing the house columns as Opinion Editor at *The Daily Free Press*. At other times, you will be able to find her stocking shelves at Target, reading supermarket novels, or watering her plants. ■ **Nyah PATEL** (CAS '22, SPH '23) is majoring in Biology with concentrations in Epidemiology and Biostatistics. She is involved in gene therapy research at BIDMC. In her free time, she enjoys reading, piano, ballet, and cross-stitching. On Instagram @nstar1000. ■ **Isabel Plover** (CAS '24) is an Environmental Analysis & Policy major from Atlanta. She likes reading (with the exception of dystopian novels), playing piano and viola, scrolling through @juniperfoxx on Instagram, and exploring nature. ■ **Kei Kwan Queena Lau** (CAS '24) is a Psychology major from Hong Kong. She loves reading, writing fiction, and rope-jumping at the park—her moves are slick as butter. She believes that Core texts are a crucial addition to a reader's palate. On Instagram @hornyhammerhead and Twitter @laamsaaauce. ■ **Jonas Raedler** (CAS '24) is a Computer Science major from Hamburg. He has enjoyed discussing Core texts and solving problem sets from Germany, but looks forward to coming to Boston this fall to experience BU in person. He loves playing the guitar and singing with the Allegrettos. On Instagram @jonas.rae. ■ **Eva Ragonese** (CAS '21) earned degrees in Psychology and WGS and is now working as a behavior technician in the Boston area. She has a passion for poetry, vinyl records, LGBTQ+ activism, and queer and trans* human rights advocacy. Eva's pronouns are she/they; on Instagram @rosiepoesi and Twitter @evaragonese. ■ **Jenna Riedl** (KHC/CFA '23) is an artist studying painting, statistics, and art history. On the rare occasion when she is not using words or paint, she is usually deep in the woods attempting to befriend squirrels. She also sings a ca-

pella, against her introverted instincts. On Instagram @dotproductsbyjenna. ■ Marco **Rotella** (QST '22) is a Business Administration and Management major from Rome. He regularly returns to Italy to watch soccer and eat. In his free time, you can find him reading history, playing table tennis, and bragging about his cooking skills. ■ Sigourney **Schultz** (Core '17, CAS '19) is a writer and curator based in New York. She is a current MA candidate at Hunter College and an intern at the Dia Art Foundation. Her thesis research examines the Internet's impact on our understanding of identity and aesthetics. On Instagram @sig-gfigg. ■ Sassan **Tabatabai**, PhD, is a poet and translator. He teaches in the Arts & Sciences Core and the Department of World Languages & Literatures. His translation of Sadegh Hedayat's *Blind Owl* is forthcoming from Penguin Classics. ■ Carlos Eduardo **Santos Torres** (CAS '22) is an Economics major from Rio de Janeiro. He enjoys reading, tennis and soccer, and going out with friends. On Instagram @carlos_storres. ■ Samantha **VATALARO** (COM '22) is a Film & Television major with a Core minor. She comes to BU from Saratoga Springs. When not working as a producer, playwright, or production assistant, she can be found gardening (usually poorly). On Instagram @samantha_ella_v. ■ Isa **Very** (KHC/SHA '21) is a playwright and theater-maker. She spent her childhood traveling with her opera-singer parents. After a gap year to be spent writing and working at home in Pittsburgh, she will enter the MFA program in Playwriting at the Actor's Studio Drama School at Pace University. ■ Cory **Willingham** (Core '18, CAS '20) is a transgender poet, writer, and communist agitator from nowhere in particular, living in Boston. As an undergrad, they majored in Political Science and Classics. Cory would be grateful if you'd visit them online at >> medium.com/theredwedge. On Twitter @coriolanussum. ■ Ziwen **Xie** (ENG 22') is a Biomedical Engineering and Computer Engineering major from Nanjing. Her friends call her Josie. When not coding, she loves writing, reading science fiction and history, playing video games, drawing, and song-writing. On Instagram @xzw_65 and Steam @cybermoyu-monster. ■ Dolly **Yin** (CAS '23, COM '23) is a Sociology and Public Relations major from Shenzhen. She loves 90s indie rock and pop, film photography, movie-watching, playing the guitar, and philosophical conversation. On Instagram @dyfilmphoto. ■ Carolyn **Zou** (CAS '23) is a multimedia artist interested in interactive media and postmodern communications theory. In their free time, they can be found writing, playing video games, or writing about playing video games. On Twitter @cqzou. ■



THE BU BOOKLAB

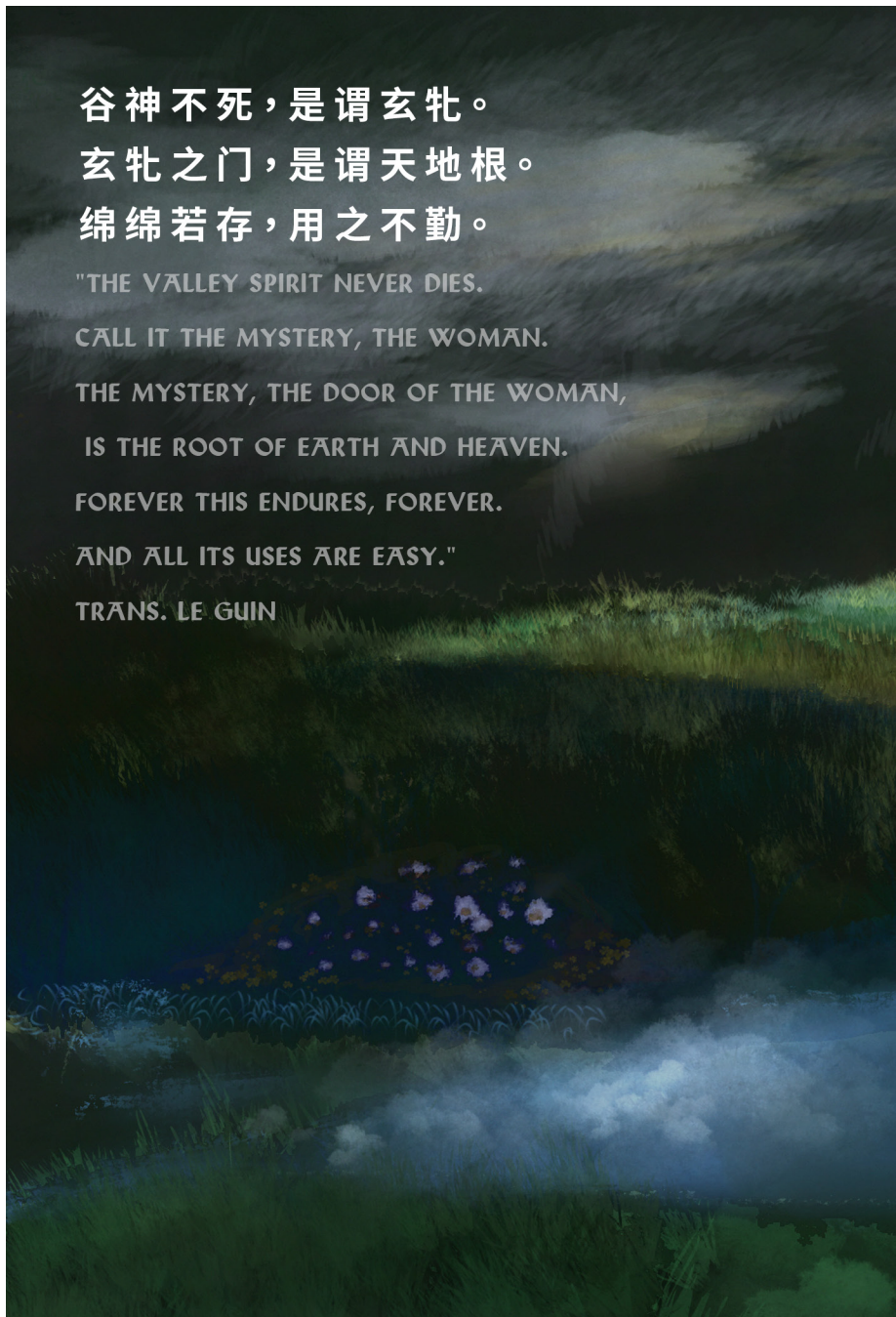
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谷神不死，是谓玄牝。
玄牝之门，是谓天地根。
绵绵若存，用之不勤。

"THE VALLEY SPIRIT NEVER DIES.
CALL IT THE MYSTERY, THE WOMAN.
THE MYSTERY, THE DOOR OF THE WOMAN,
IS THE ROOT OF EARTH AND HEAVEN.
FOREVER THIS ENDURES, FOREVER.
AND ALL ITS USES ARE EASY."
TRANS. LE GUIN





TRATTO T'HO QUI CON INGEGNO E CON ARTE,
LO TUO PIACERE OMAI PRENDI PER DUCE,
FUOR SE' DE L'ERTE VIE, FUOR SE' DE L'ARTE.

"I'VE BROUGHT YOU HERE THROUGH INTELLECT AND ART,
FROM NOW ON, LET YOUR PLEASURE BE YOUR GUIDE..."

TRANS. MANDELBAUM



“IT IS CLEAR THAT IT IS IN
the nature of human beings

TO ENTER INTO CLOSE CONTACT AND
TO ASSOCIATE WITH EACH OTHER,
EVEN THOUGH THEY MAY NOT
HAVE A COMMON DESCENT...”

IBN KHALDÛN,
THE MUQADDIMAH

"A UNIVERSITY PROPERLY CELEBRATES HUMAN ACHIEVEMENT, BUT IT
ALSO MUST BE MINDFUL OF ALL THAT IT MEANS TO BE HUMAN. . .
DEMOCRACY URGENTLY CALLS UPON YOUR CREATIVE ENERGY,
YOUR INTELLIGENCE, YOUR DISCIPLINE, YOUR
IMAGINATION, AND YOUR VISION."
PRESIDENT JON WESTLING (1942-2021),
2002 COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS

