

# THE JOURNAL

OF THE CORE CURRICULUM

COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCES  
BOSTON UNIVERSITY



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# THE JOURNAL

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IN MEMORIAM

## Jennifer Formichelli

1974-2021

**We dedicate this issue to our dear friend, colleague, and fellow intellectual, who tragically passed away last fall.**

Jennifer had a long relationship with Boston University, having graduated *summa cum laude* from CAS with a BA in Literary History and earning an MS in Criminal Justice from Metropolitan College. She earned her PhD in English literature from Cambridge University. She served as a Core lecturer from 2006 to 2012. Following this, she worked for the College of General Studies, and in 2016, began her final tenure as a teacher at BU Academy. Jennifer had an extensive body of literary publications, including essays commenting on Shakespeare, Twain, and Empson and a co-edited volume of Eliot's works. She was also passionate about social justice, and was writing a book featuring a 2010 homicide in the Mattapan neighborhood of Boston.

In her personal life, Jennifer was a fervent animal lover, owning two pet dogs. She loved her job, particularly working with students; she often dedicated her own time to get to know them better. Above all, Jennifer loved her family. She is survived by her father, Carl, her brother, Greg, and her fiancé, Fillmore Parris.

We hope that this edition of the *Journal* adequately conveys the spirit of academic literature that Jennifer chose to dedicate her life to.

*Readers are encouraged to visit <https://www.buacademy.org/formichelli>  
to read and share remembrances of Dr. Formichelli.*

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## Editor's Note

### Issue Theme: "Age of Anxiety"

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It has been a liminal year. Covid, war in Ukraine, and political upheaval have shaken and will continue to shake preconceived notions about the world as we know it, from the viability of liberalism to the merits of state power in protecting public health. All these sources of apparent division make it all the more important to recognize what still unites people. Mindful of these circumstances, the editorial team of this publication have tried to provide a space where our community can find open dialogue and a sense of unity. While everyone will experience the words and images in the Journal differently, what we have in common is the experience of engaging with these works. That shared experience is proof enough that common ground is possible, even in small ways, no matter how ablaze the rest of the world seems. So, in the face of an Age of Anxiety, I think that the wise lyric of R.E.M. still holds true:

*it's the end of the world as we know it, and I feel fine.*

On behalf of the editorial team, I'd like to extend thanks to people who have been indispensable in the publication of this issue:

- thanks to Sassan Tabatabai, our faculty advisor and Hub instructor, for his instrumental guidance, especially with our expanded book review and poetry sections;

- thanks to Zachary Bos from the BU BookLab, who worked with us through every step of the publication process, supplying experience and expertise to make a daunting task seem less overwhelming;
- thanks to Core director Kyna Hamill for her sponsorship and support;
- thanks to our donors in the CAS alumni community;
- thanks to all the Core office staff, who were so hospitable in providing space for us to work and so helpful when it came time to draw upon their skills with revision and proofreading;
- and thanks to all of our contributors, for giving us the opportunity to showcase their phenomenal work.

I would also like to personally thank the student editorial staff for all the hard work that they've put in throughout the semester. Between school, social lives, and other extracurriculars, the life of a student is busy to the point of bursting, but our team members found additional time to invest themselves in making something worthwhile together.

As you read this issue, I hope you can revel in the collectiveness of reading, and appreciate the meticulous work of our submitters and staff. The Journal is an artifact created through the joint efforts of Core students, CAS students, faculty, staff, alumni, our editors, and our readers. It is not just the product of one semester, but the generative output of all those issues that have come before – and in an age of great worries, it has been a source of calm and pride to carry on that tradition for another year.

With hopes that you and yours will stay safe and be well,

*Jack Martin*



*NB: Pages marked with the TJC ribbon designate winners or honorable mentions of this year's Core Journal awards, as selected by the editors.*

MARY REGAS

## A Human-Centered Genesis

### DAY 1

We open our eyes, and it is morning. We feel the blistering sun beating down on our skin and gravity pulling our heavy bodies deeper into the muddy earth. Those who wish to rise do so. And We (who rose) look left and right to see each other. On this day, We are each other's companions: friends and brothers and mothers. We embrace each other strongly, pleasing our bodies and glorying in physical pleasure; We let our human hearts and instincts take control, and We are good. For We survive by instinct, so let us honor those instincts. And on this day, touch is our most hallowed behavior, for our human senses crave it. Damned be our species if We do not listen to our bodies and honor our animal cravings; this is our method of worship. On this day, We live lives of liberty and passion, and We are good.

### DAY 1

We open our eyes, and it is morning. As our bodies awaken, We lift and turn our heads to the rising waters in the east. Hearts beat faster as We perceive the image of our changing earth: bulbous waves begin to blanket our once solid lands in the distance.

With the tides now coming in, our bodies crash and slide against one another as We struggle to swim the tumultuous waters. Some of us latch onto branches or cling desperately to bushes. Others grasp at humans and use their buoyant bodies to stay afloat. And so, We drown other humans in desperate attempts to keep our noses and mouths above the water; for life is precious and must be preserved at all costs. We (who sacrificed our friends and brothers and mothers for the preservation of our own airy lungs) will feel the backlash of our broken hearts afterward in solitude. We (survivors of the floods) will confront our wailing hearts, learning that We will no longer have the option of embracing those sacrificed human companions in our future days. And so, We weep and learn from our actions, and We are good. For learning is a sacrificial process, and it is good.

And so continued the day, and We make it to the solid grounds of the mountains, and We are holy survivors. And We leave behind the buoys and branches and dead bodies that had saved us, for those are now the artifacts of our ancestors. Individually,



We listen to the circadian rhythms of our bodies, and We slumber. And in the new day, We will each begin a new life, and We will be good.

## DAY 1

We open our eyes, and it is morning. We look to each other, this time less of us, for We have since spread to separate nations. And Generations have passed since the floods tested our human hearts. During our spreading, many had preferred solitude to the perpetual fear of humans death. And so, while some migrated to build cities in the mossy flatlands of the east, others gravitated toward the isolated mountains in the west.

We used to use the calendar to keep track of our time spent together as companions. But on this day, the calendar is abolished. Seven cycles of the sun ago, our people's council came to order and decided to disband our council, for there is no community for which council is needed: there is no one people, or society, or nation, for We are seven billion individuals in no need of one overarching order. We create ourselves and the limits of our bodies, genders, and identities. We create for ourselves definitions of good and evil; and all that is free is good, and all that is forbidden is evil. Our days may be tainted with revolt and violence, but all acts of revolt and violence are of instinctual and human desire, and therefore these acts exhibit our free will, and our free bodies, and our freedom, and therefore these acts are good.

For We do live in a world of chaos and second chances, a world of death and redemption. We set fires to our lands and murder loved ones out of anger. But when We feel our souls ache at the sight of blackened mountains and fallen trees, and when We are grieved to our hearts at the loss of our once-loved companions, We embark on a new day, and a new life, with a blank slate.

For at the end of each day is a destruction of all life, and at the beginning of each day is a genesis of human experience. And if each life begins and ends with the opening and closing of our eyelids, then We will have fully exhausted the use of our human bodies and We will have dutifully honored our human species. And thus, each day is a life, and each day is dangerous and thrilling and full of passion, and each day is good. And thus, there is no past or future, only a holy present.

And each day is a genesis of our human-centric world. The individual presides over each other individual, and We are our own Gods, and our human agency determines all Good and Evil, and We are good. ■

TIAN LIAO

## **Evaluating Educational Anxiety:** *Interviews with Employees of New Oriental to Gauge Educational Anxiety Among the Chinese People After the Implementation of the ‘Double Reduction’ Policy*

**U**p until the summer of 2021 and the emergence of COVID-19, it was common to see K-12 students in China going to private learning facilities to review or preview material taught during the regular school year. In fact, it was an unspoken rule that in order for their children to perform well academically, parents needed to put their kids in these centers. After all, exceptional performance in elementary and secondary school assumedly leads to a greater chance of getting into a top university. Graduating from a prestigious institution allows students to secure better jobs, resulting in a rise in economic and social status. However, a policy named “double reduction” stopped these students from improving their academic performance by going to such private learning institutions.

As the competition for a better school is getting increasingly fierce, double reduction aims to alleviate people’s anxiety about education. On July 24, 2021, the General Office of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the State Council of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) announced new guidelines regarding education, officially titled “Further Reduce the Burden of Compulsory Education Students’ Homework and Off-campus Training”, referred to as double reduction. The measures reduce primary and secondary school students’ homework and the number of commercial curriculum subject tutoring services. The policy also forbade such services to be provided during weekends, holidays, and winter or summer vacations. Chinese President Xi Jinping presided over the nineteenth meeting of the Central Committee for Comprehensively Deepening Reform, and the “Opinions on Further Reducing Students’ Homework Burdens and Off-campus Training Burdens in Compulsory Education”, known as the double reduction policy, was passed.

The implementation of double reduction wreaked havoc in the field of paid education, with companies that sold tutoring services gradually disappearing or shrinking in size dramatically. Double reduction also ordered all private academic tutoring institutions to register as nonprofit organizations and barred them from raising money from

the public. On September 17, 2021, Yu Minhong, founder of New Oriental Education & Technology Group, Inc. (one of China's leading private education providers), announced that offline enrollment of primary and secondary school subjects would be stopped after the fall semester, and companies like his in various cities would be gradually closed. Business from its primary and secondary school services accounted for 80% of New Oriental's revenue in the fiscal year of 2021. Yu dismissed 60,000 workers in 2021. In November 2021, Yu announced a donation of nearly 80,000 sets of study desks and chairs to China's rural areas. Over the winter break of 2021-22, many other well-known education companies, such as Xueersi, Gaotu, and Youdao, removed curriculum courses from their spring enrollment catalog. As a result, parents and school teachers have been taking a more active role in their children's learning and development.

As double reduction was implemented, the Propaganda Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Youth League and the Social Investigation Center of the China Youth Daily conducted a survey called "National Compulsory Education Stage Students' Parents' Attitude to the 'Double Reduction' Policy." Over 500,000 parents participated in the research; of those studied, 87% felt anxious about their children's education. After the implementation of double reduction, 72.7% of those surveyed said that their anxiety about education has somewhat been eased, 15.1% said their anxiety was not relieved, and 6.5% said they were more anxious.

**T**his paper qualitatively assesses Chinese people's current view on education and practices around learning. Similar to the purpose of the previous survey, my paper presents insights to help people better understand people's anxiety due to education. Some guiding questions are: Are people now less anxious about education post double reduction? Why are people less or more anxious? I conducted interviews with three people with experience working in private education facilities and understood different groups' feelings of anxiety through their perspectives. After conducting interviews with people who work or have worked at New Oriental, it appears that while some people are less anxious after the implementation of double reduction, others are more anxious.

Interview subject **SHEN** has been teaching for twenty years and is now a Graduate Record Examinations (GRE) math teacher at New Oriental. He first explained what parents and students think about education: "Most parents and students are concerned about getting into a good college. They want to have a better social and economic status, and a college degree helps them to achieve this goal." Then, Shen pointed out the anxiety that parents and students have: "Parents are concerned about their children's

grades, if they can get into a good school, and find a great job.” He also answered whether people are less anxious about education post-double reduction. “What do you think?”, he asked me, chuckling. “School will not admit more students after this policy. The path to university stays the same – everyone still has to take *gaokao* [China’s National College Entrance Examination].”

He then talked about the impact of double reduction, identifying the people who are the most anxious, and explained why:

People who want to go to cram schools can still find them. This sector will not completely disappear. Big companies might secretly operate, or through one on one instruction. People need to pay more. Maybe before double reduction, people paid ¥3,000 (\$471) for a semester, now it is ¥30,000 (\$4,715). This policy does not affect rich people. People who are less well-off might experience more pressure. The most impacted people are the ones who rely on cram schools to improve their grades, but cannot afford them anymore. They might be more anxious.

Interview subject **XIAO** is an experienced consultant at New Oriental’s department that offers study abroad consultation. She expressed skepticism about the policy implementation, and indicated a belief that it will result in more inequality:

People are more anxious now. Maybe it was very competitive to get into a college, so it was necessary to stop this competition, but now people are no less anxious. Rich people can keep studying by hiring a private tutor, but there are no large-scale, affordable classes, so some people might not be able to study. This causes more anxiety, wealth gap, class division.

She also indicated that public school teachers are more tired because schools offer after-school programs, which seem to fill the vacuum created now that curricular trainings have become difficult and illegal to access:

After ‘double reduction’, some public schools provide after-school programs. During these programs, teachers will organize fun activities for students until their parents come to pick up their children, usually around 5 PM. Before, children went home at 3 PM. Although they are not required to attend, parents would sign their children up if possible, because they do not have the time to take care of them. This service that

schools provide is not free.

These activities might cause students to feel more burdened. Shen said, “Students do not learn during these activities. The purpose of these activities is to relax. Students who need the time to catch up on their studies need to find other times to do it.”

Since extra-curricular training is allowed, students now strive to stand out in their co-curricular achievements. Xiao said, “Now, parents let their children take drawing, piano, or swimming lessons, so I do not see a reduction in children’s pressure.”

Interview subject **YA** worked at New Oriental for six years, coordinating exam prep courses for study abroad applications such as TOEFL, SAT, and GRE. She quit her job this year and believes that public school teachers will be more tired now:

Some teachers have more pressure. They had to stay after class, and they had activities during the weekend. They need to do the work that the teachers at private learning centers did. They are already tired. Middle or high school teachers arrive at school at six am, but if they have to leave later now, they will feel unhappy. How can they take care of their own kids?

Ya also said departments and offices that provide curricular training at New Oriental disappeared:

K-12 curricular courses have disappeared. The middle school math and English courses disappeared. Many people were laid off. We cannot teach. In the past few years, these services generated a lot of revenue. They used a lot of resources, but they created a huge profit, but now it all stopped.

However, it seems that these teachers managed to find other jobs or keep teaching. Ya said, “some teachers found a new job, outside of the field of education. Others are still teaching, online, or teaching one on one lessons. They depend on referrals from their customers. There is a demand. Parents are trying everything to find teachers for their children.” People who work in private learning facilities seem to be the least impacted because they can either keep teaching or work in another field.

Shen identified the people who are less anxious and explained why: “Parents who never find curricular tutors for their children now see an illusion. They now feel relieved, because they think others cannot find tutors. However, parents who will find tu-



tors for their kids will still find them. Whether this will impact their kids' performance depends on the kids' ability." Thus, these parents' sense of relief is not warranted, but their decision to not send their children to 'cram schools' is now justified. They are not seeing the real situation; for other parents, it is business as usual. However, the impact of cram schools is not clear.

**T**hrough these interviews we can gain perspective on experiences and attitudes about education post-double reduction that the survey does not present in detail. It seems that wealthier parents are not now more anxious, but economic and educational inequality continues to rise. Some parents seem to feel more anxious because their previous method of improving their children's grades is no longer legal or widely available. Some parents are less anxious, perhaps because they did not consider sending their children to cram schools before double reduction and now they feel their stance is justified. The New Oriental employees think this group's sense of relief is false since they do not see the reality; this causes more inequality. Public school teachers are more tired because they might need to hold after-school programming. After-school activities aim to relieve stress, but force students to find other times to do homework or catch up on their studies. Students are competing for their extra-curricular achievements. This seems like how parents project their anxiety onto their children. Teachers at private teaching facilities seem to be able to find new jobs or keep teaching, so their feelings seem to be the least impacted.

My qualitative data suggests that further research on people's anxiety should pay attention to how much anxiety was alleviated or exacerbated in different parts of the population and why. Further studies should examine the impact of these cram schools on students' academic performance, and this contributes to revealing why certain parents are more or less anxious. Research on work-related anxiety among public school teachers would help better understand the feelings of this group. Combining these findings with quantitative data would help formulate a holistic view of people's feelings in the current situation. ■

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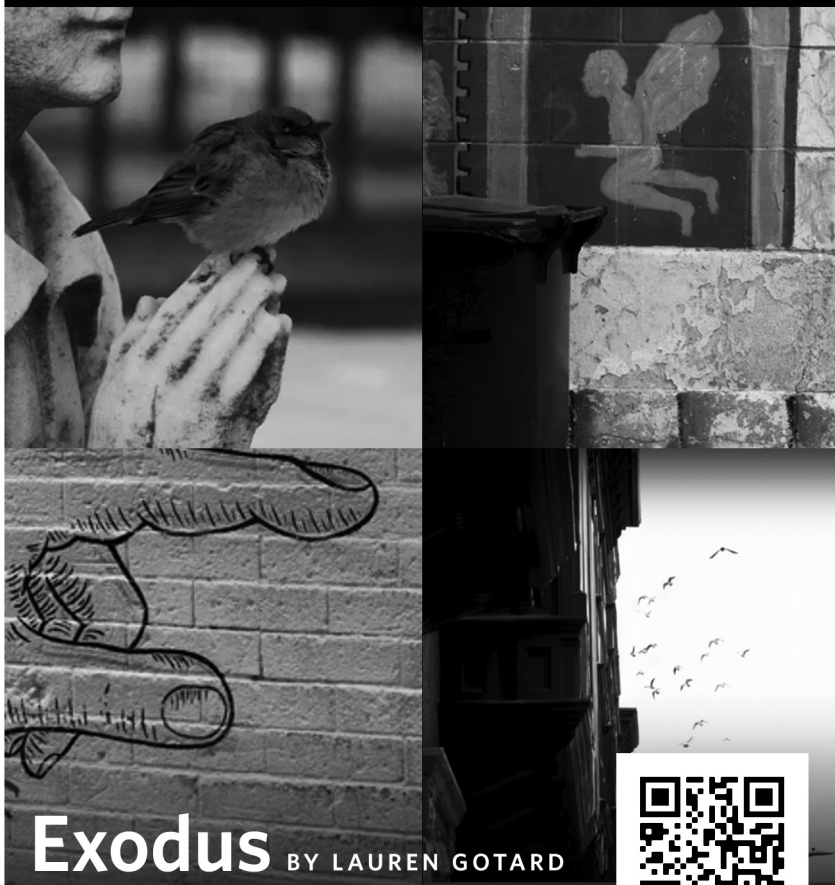
- ANALECTS OF THE CORE -

**"Courage is resistance to fear,  
MASTERY OF FEAR, NOT ABSENCE OF FEAR."**

MARK TWAIN, 1894

SUGGESTED BY SCOTT MONTY (CAS '91)

"MAN IS NOT WORRIED BY REAL PROBLEMS  
SO MUCH AS BY HIS IMAGINED ANXIETIES  
ABOUT REAL PROBLEMS." - EPICTETUS



# Exodus

BY LAUREN GOTARD

A silent video essay produced under the auspices of  
COM FT201: Screen Language - The Aesthetics,  
Grammar and Rhetoric of the Moving Image." Visit YouTube to  
view this selection from the Features & Multimodal section:



Use the QR code or <http://www.youtube.be/uTtm--3A2sY>

DAVID GREEN

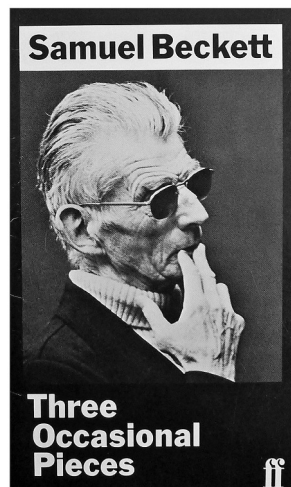
## Directing Beckett

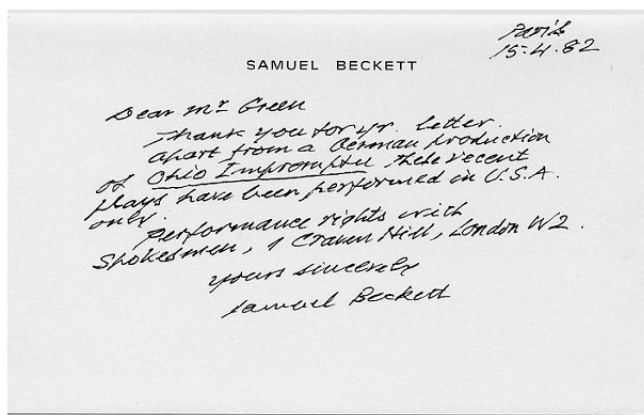
**S**hortly after graduating from college in the late seventies, I moved to New York to look for work. After knocking on the doors of dozens of publishers and advertising companies and taking a typing test at an employment agency, I realized my degree in English from a major university was not as marketable as I had anticipated and, out of options, applied for a job at The Gotham Book Mart, an historic shop on West 47th Street. My weekly salary was \$110, and I paid \$165 a month for an apartment on East 82nd where my bathtub was in the kitchen and my toilet was in a locked closet thirty feet down the hall from my front door.

Before Barnes & Noble drove many small bookstores out of business, Gotham was a mecca for book-lovers, especially those with an interest in modernism. While working there, I had the opportunity to meet William Gass, Susan Sontag, Tennessee Williams, Edward Gorey, Patti Smith, and many other literary figures of that era. The shelves were stacked three-deep with new and second-hand books by and about major twentieth-century authors like Joyce, Pound, Eliot, and Faulkner, and the poetry alcove was stuffed with books by every modern poet I had ever heard of and many more I hadn't. Creaking across the wooden floors, the staff raced to find rare books hidden away in the bins and basement for our customers who might be Norman Mailer or an aspiring poet living in a loft somewhere in the East Village. It was an exciting experience for a recent graduate and undoubtedly more valuable than a master's degree when it came to the sheer amount of knowledge I acquired about modern literature from customers and colleagues and lunch breaks spent reading in the basement.

One of my responsibilities was to empty the register and count the cash and receipts at the end of the day. To avoid interruptions and distractions, I went to the back office and closed the door. On the desk was a Rolodex with the names and addresses of regular customers and authors published by the store, like Gorey and Smith. And Samuel Beckett.

Not long after playing the role of Burke Dennings in *The Exorcist*, one of the Irish





author's favorite actors, Jack MacGowran, died of influenza. Three years later, to benefit MacGowran's family, Andreas Brown, the owner of Gotham, published a collector's edition of Beckett's prose piece entitled *All Strange Away* with illustrations by Gorey. One afternoon, while counting the day's receipts, I opened the Rolodex and looked up Beckett's address: 38 Boulevard St. Jacques, Paris 14. On an impulse, I wrote it down.

Several years later, I found myself in the role of Clov in Beckett's play *Endgame* as part of an English-language theater group associated with the Universidade de Santiago de Compostela where I was teaching. Because I had a vague recollection of Beckett offering a play to a young director in Britain, I thought, even if there was only a small chance of receiving a response, it was worth the effort to write to him to ask if he had a play that had not yet been performed. The audacity or naivety of that request still



surprises me.

So little faith did I have in the success of my query that when a small brown envelope from France arrived a few weeks later, I couldn't guess who might have written to me from that country. I opened the envelope and found a presale copy of *Three Occasional Pieces* with a minor correction in Beckett's hand and a card with a note on it.

According to the author, of the three plays, only one had been performed in Europe. Beckett, arguably the most important playwright of the twentieth century, had given our modest theater group the opportunity to produce the European premieres of two of his plays.

Because *Rockaby* required a spotlight, members of the group made an appointment with the vice-rector of the university to request 70,000 pesetas, or roughly \$700, for the equipment. We explained who Samuel Beckett was and mentioned some of the awards his work had received and the importance of such a premiere to the university. He hesitated and we waited. And we waited. When we accepted that no funding was forthcoming, we decided to perform *A Piece of Monologue*, which needed nothing more than a dimmer and a standing lamp with a white globe.

To ensure the production would be a European premiere, we hastened to rehearse the play during the fall semester of 1982, and, sometime that winter, I directed a colleague playing the role of Speaker in a large classroom in the Facultade de Filoloxía. On March 16, 1983, we performed the play again in the university auditorium.

Thirty-seven years later, a scholar at the Universidade de Santiago de Compostela writing about the history of productions of Samuel Beckett's work in Spain discovered that Beckett had been mistaken. The English actor David Warrilow had mounted a production of *A Piece of Monologue* at Bologna in November 1981 five months before the seventy-six-year-old Beckett had sent us the plays. Another performance had taken place in July of 1982 at Asti while we waited for funding. Though our production was not a European premiere, it was the first performance of the play in Spain.

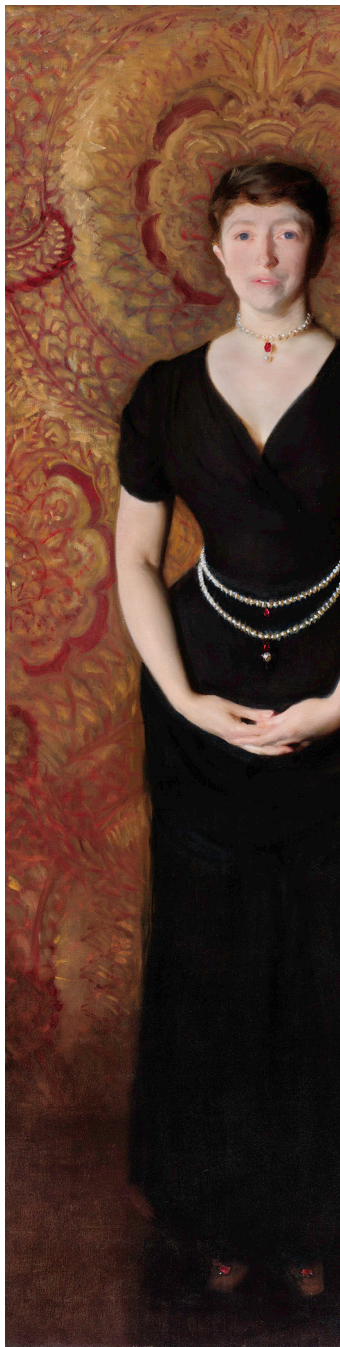
As I look back on that experience, what impresses me most is the generosity of such a prominent dramatist toward a university theater group with whom he had had no previous contact. Sending us a presale copy of three of his plays, two of which he believed had not been performed in Europe, was not the sort of thing most playwrights of his stature would typically do. There were no agents, no impresarios, just an author sending his work to young, enthusiastic actors. He was clearly more interested in the precision and integrity of performances than in the spectacle of major theatrical events, and we did our best to live up to that expectation. ■

EVE KLEIBER

## Portrait

There she watches, hair pinned tightly,  
shoulders stiff like stone,  
a muted pearl necklace effortlessly  
hugging the sides of her neck  
and dripping down into a ruby gem.  
Her hands lock loosely below her viscera,  
a harmony between left and right.  
On first look, you will find her alluring  
but a noble stare and million-dollar dress  
lead you falsely. Look into her eyes:  
bright blue globes so profoundly black  
that they scream grief. Her skin  
matches the colorless tone of her pearls  
so closely that they blend into one.  
In this big, beautiful house, she feels alone.  
Am I intruding, Isabella? ■

**Image:** an 1888 portrait (cropped)  
of Isabella Stewart Gardner by  
John Singer Sargent, oil on canvas,  
190 x 80 cm. On display in the  
Gardner Museum, Boston.



GIDEON GORDON

## A Response to Nezami Ganjavi's *Leyli and Majnun*

Mister Ganjavi, I must comment  
 About this poem which hath my heart rent.  
 I'd never dream to make light of your work  
 Though centuries past, its text has made its mark  
 But criticism's not the wise man's fear  
 And I intend to make critiques quite clear.

To begin, your epic's rather fluffy  
 It's padded like a pillow, windy, huffy,  
 A chapter on Leyli's looks, and for what?  
 Was that required, just to say "she's hot?"  
 And how often must Majnun nearly die  
 So you can prove his love to passers-by  
 Does he deserve this fate, oh heartless man?  
 Give him some privacy, or else a hand!

And what is more, this bloat bespeaks derision  
 Respect your reader, give us more concision.  
 We read between the lines, we're not all fools  
 We know that Majnun's eyes are finest jewels  
 That downy hair upon his fair face sprouts  
 That salty tears flow from his eyes in gouts  
 The stock descriptions in your verse are fine  
 But not when they appear line after line!

A few discerning edits are quite needed  
 I know it's far too late, I'll go unheeded  
 For you're now dead, and you deserve your rest  
 (And I must go to sleep, I have a test.)  
 But if you send from heaven new editions  
 I'd offer a few *pro bono* revisions:  
 Oh pen-bearer, let red ink flow like wine

And if you have no ink to use, take mine!  
 I'll bleed it through the page, and give my heart  
 To save Majnun from this cruel poet's art  
 He suffers greatly, but he never changes  
 His character arc is flat; in all exchanges  
 He repeats his sole obsessive aim  
 And flattened characters bring naught but shame.  
 And Leyli's character's more than her beauty  
 At minimum, she should be kind or witty!  
 (And why is it the woman's always sought,  
 Not seeker – that suggests a bit of thought.  
 But never mind, I'd hate to match your fault,  
 And to this tangent I must call a halt.  
 Brevity's the soul of wit, some say  
 Though they clearly did not live in your day.)

Beyond this, shortening would help a lot  
 And if you think this poem's short, it's not!  
 Two-forty pages come one at a time  
 Full of couplets of your tedious rhyme  
 I know the style's standard, that's well-known  
 But please, these couplets cut me to the bone!  
 I think at least for every fifty verses  
 Ten can be cut – please spare me all your curses!  
 I do not mean to mock – at least not much  
 But if you had submitted this as such  
 We'd send it back with plenty of removals;  
 Until you fixed it, we'd withhold approval.

Thus end my brief remarks on your great epic  
 I must admit that I'm not as ascetic  
 As you are, I may lack your blazing fire  
 That scorches you on God's great mighty pyre  
 But please, recall you write for human people  
 And it would help us were your verse more readable. ■



DANIAL SHARIAT

## Geology

I can hold a seed in my hand, and within my life could see it grow. I can see corals born and destroyed. Even in animals I can see mutation and then draw the line to evolution. But the lives of rocks I cannot see. It is not the data of geology which eludes me – the information which awaits me in stack – but the concept and spirit of rock.

You tell me how the stripes of a cliff face form but I can never observe this. You tell me how the crag is born, how the mountain rises; in my mind these always were. I cannot expect to see the titan born and fall; my ancestors could not, my progeny will not.

I retrace Petrarch's path up Ventoux and realize what I cannot apprehend. Is this not a description of some eldritch beast that sits upon the earth eternally, uncaring for our follies or time? When I consider the meager magnitude of our population, the depths of our oceans, the vastness of space, I feel small, and scared of my insignificance. These fears are not present in me with the rocks. Their structure dwarfs me and their monumentality oppresses yet I do not feel small or large; I simply feel.

Amongst the living trees and living animals I am aware of my time-bounded living but amongst the unliving rocks I feel unliving and connect with the dust from which we came. In the strata of the landscape and in the nooks of the rocks, my granular, miniscule self finds its fit. Here I feel no need to conquer, to overcome or summit, knowing that in the unbound timelessness of geologic time I will eventually come to conquer – not by being greater than or even feeling greater than, but by finding my natural home in the pores of the earth. ■



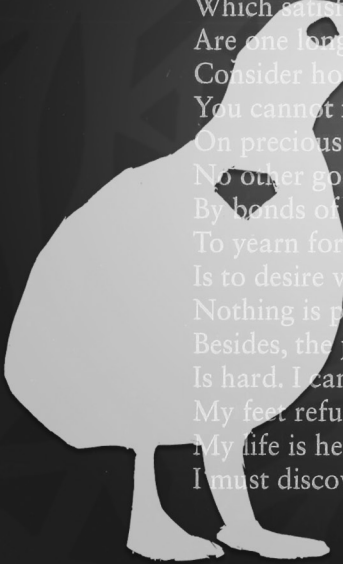
## The Sheikh and the Bartender

**F**arid ud-Din Attar's *Conference of the Birds*, written in the 12th century, is a seminal work of mystical poetry. As expressed in the poem, the Sufis believed that every human soul is a reflection and a part of God, and longs to be reunited with the divine. But the soul is estranged from the divine by its imprisonment in mortal flesh and weighed-down by human obsession with material things. Sufi mystics followed a path of *tasawwuf*, purification, through a process of abnegation, meditation, and striving for closeness to the divine, with the end goal of complete union with or dissolution in God. One important component of this concept is the universality of God; He is accessible to all who seek him seriously, regardless of their precise beliefs or ritual practices.

Attar's *Conference of the Birds* is an extended allegory of this struggle to reach God, in which the birds of the world gather to journey to reach the Simorgh, the king of the birds, and a representation of God. Their guide in this journey is the hoopoe, who tells the birds anecdotes to illustrate the different elements of the mystic's mysterious journey. One such anecdote is the story of Sheikh San'an, which expresses the arduous process of spiritual growth. A pivotal part of the hoopoe's lessons to the birds is when the birds ask the hoopoe about the length of the journey. He tells them of the Seven Valleys of the mystical journey, each representing a stage (or *magham*) in the journey to join with God. Each *magham* has its own *hal*, the spiritual state characteristic of those who reach that *magham*, with the final *hal* involving the dissolution of the Self in God.

The story of Sheikh San'an is the longest anecdote told by the hoopoe in *Conference of the Birds*, a story of a Sheikh in Mecca, who beguiled by the beauty of a Christian girl in Rome, abandons his faith and dignity to seek her love. His quest for the Christian girl, like many stories in *Conference of the Birds* is an allegory for the Sufi's mystical path towards the divine. Though Sheikh San'an struggles for months or years to achieve union with the divine, represented by the Christian, he never reaches past the third of the seven Valleys, the stages in the journey mentioned later in the text and foreshadowed here. He is able to abandon his worldly possessions, as necessary for the Valley of

*The partridge's excuse*



The pompous partridge was the next to speak,  
 Fresh from his store of pearls. His crimson beak  
 And ruddy plumage made a splendid show –  
 A headstrong bird whose small eyes seemed to glow  
 With angry blood. He clucked: 'My one desire  
 Is jewels; I pick through quarries for their fire.  
 They kindle in my heart an answering blaze  
 Which satisfies me – though my wretched days  
 Are one long turmoil of anxiety.  
 Consider how I live, and let me be;  
 You cannot fight with one who sleeps and feeds  
 On precious stones, who is convinced he needs  
 No other goal in life. My heart is tied  
 By bonds of love to this fair mountain-side.  
 To yearn for something other than a jewel  
 Is to desire what dies – to be a fool;  
 Nothing is precious like a precious stone.  
 Besides, the journey to the Simorgh's throne  
 Is hard. I cannot tear myself away;  
 My feet refuse as if caught fast in clay.  
 My life is here; I have no wish to fly;  
 I must discover precious stones or die.'

the Quest, and his rational intellect, as is necessary for the Valley of Love, and he gains a deeper understanding of the purpose of religion as occurs in the Valley of Insight into Mystery, but never achieves complete dissolution in or union with the Christian girl. The Christian girl, however, achieves this final dissolution in God when she collapses and dies at the end of the story.

Sheikh San'an's first step on the mystical path comes from his ominous dream of bowing to an idol in Rome. This foreshadows his worship of his beloved Christian, who he later describes as his idol, but at the time, he treats this dream as a disaster, a "well of need" like the one into which Joseph was thrown (68). He decides that to find the

reason for this dream, he has to go to Rome. As an old man, his journey to Rome is not a trivial matter. By leaving behind Mecca and the place where he has authority, stature, and the ability to perform the ritual observances of Islam, he symbolically abandons, at least in part, his past status: “they left the ka’aba for Rome’s boundaries”, writes Attar (69). This move outside of the Sheikh’s comfortable life in Mecca as a teacher is his first step towards the humility and genuine search for truth which will enable him to follow the way of the mystic. Though he has not yet fully abandoned his worldly possessions, he has plainly entered the Valley of the Quest, where the hoopoe warns that the heart of a seeker must “purify itself and move apart from everything that is” (181).

Sheikh San’an’s first few days in Rome exemplify the *bal*, or spiritual situation, experienced by those in the Valley of the Quest. The elderly Sheikh lies down at the door of the Christian’s house, “put[ting] aside the self and selfish lust” and “smear[ing] his locks with filth and dust” (70). These expressions of abnegation have a religious dimension as well, or rather a dimension superseding religion. When one of San’an’s disciples asks, “Where is your rosary?” San’an replies that “I fling the beads away from me” in favor of venerating the belt of the Christian.

His disciples despair, saying that “passion has led his wandering wits astray.” While this appears to suggest that San’an has entered the Valley of Love, San’an’s reply references the abandonment of worldly goods and power which Attar associates with the Valley of the Quest: “True, I have lost the fame I once held dear”, he says, “and fraud as well, and fear” (72). To the Sheikh’s disciples, the destruction of the Sheikh’s intellect is the only possible explanation for his abandonment of his worldly status. They lack the imagination to understand how the Sheikh could give up all he owns in pursuit of a higher spiritual purpose, because to them, high spiritual purpose and the Sheikh’s status are inseparable. Their only conclusion once they have seen the supposed depths to which San’an sinks is to declare that San’an “travel[s] on hell’s road” (72) and is therefore no longer a worthy spiritual leader. However, San’an’s apparent veneration of the Christian has not yet led him to directly violate the precepts of Islam, as to do so would seem to require an abandonment of all his knowledge of the truth of the religion; this larger step he only takes once he reaches the Valley of Love.

By the time San’an finally has a chance to speak to his beloved, he has spent the night in the dust before her door “disputing with stray dogs” for that honor (73). However, though he has sacrificed his honor, station, and wealth for the love of the Christian girl, she tests him further, asking that he burn the Qur’an, drink wine with her, close his eyes to faith, and bow to idols. Initially, having not yet lost his intellect to love,

he says that he'll never do anything beyond drink wine. She reprimands him, saying "the love which does not care to bend to love's requests is empty air", and he acquiesces to drinking wine for her sake.

Having been drawn by the early stirrings of love to drink, San'an's intellect then finally leaves him: "Wine conquered and his intellect grew dim" (75). This reflects the *hal* of the Valley of Love, which the hoopoe later describes by saying "Love here is fire, thick smoke clouds the head / when love has come the intellect has fled." The metaphor of love as drunkenness appears further here, as the hoopoe describes the experience as "love's intoxication" (187).

His loss of intellect is symbolized by his abandonment of the true religion, which to Attar was Islam. He announces to the Christian "I spurned idolatry / when sober, but your beauty is to me / an idol for whose sake I'll gladly burn / my faith's Qur'an" (76). The use of Islam as a proxy for knowledge and awareness is repeated elsewhere in the text. For example, in the story of Gabriel and the unbeliever, God tells Gabriel that the unbeliever's worship of his idol is honest and worthy, even if misdirected. "Mere ignorance has led this man astray", God says (99). Likewise, while until this point San'an has simply humiliated himself, he has not yet fully renounced the formal tenets of Islam. Now that he has lost his wits to wine, he gladly burns the Qur'an and stops praying towards Mecca, "setting his face against the faith and Mecca's holy place" (76). By specifically setting his face *against* faith, he has moved from the *hal* of the Valley of the Quest, characterized by humility and abnegation, and into the *hal* of the Valley of Love, characterized by the destruction of the intellect.

The Christian tells him that before he can become one with her, he'll need to be her swineherd for a year (78). His disciples protest, and finally give up on Sheikh San'an and walk back towards Mecca. It is at this point that the narrative follows the Sheikh's disciples instead of the Sheikh (who throughout the following section is still hanging around the Christian girl, herding swine). The disciples return to Mecca, face a rebuke from the Sheikh's dear friend for abandoning Sheikh San'an, and along with the Sheikh's friend they walk back towards Rome.

The Sheikh appears to reach the Valley of Insight into Mystery as the final stage he reaches before he returns to Mecca. On the way, the Sheikh's friend has a dream, in which Mohammed comes to him and tells him that "thick clouds of dust have been allowed to blow / between his sight and Truth – those clouds have gone" (82). This echoes the hoopoe's description of the *hal* of the Valley of Insight into Mystery, in which "Truth's sunlight clears the upper air" (194). The hoopoe cautions, however, that

even as one who reaches Insight into Mystery may feel that they have reached their goal, finding that “joy flood[s] their life”, they must continue. “Though you should reach the throne of God, implore / Him still unceasingly, is there yet more?” (195).

Though Sheikh San'an has reached the stage at which his understanding of faith has been cleared and his insight is deepened, he never quite reaches the end of the Way. His friend's prayer for him leads him to be “cured of his unnatural mistake” by divine intercession and causes him to realize his errors in abandoning the path of God (82-3). He is thus given a chance to continue in his life as a teacher, just with a level of spiritual knowledge he had previously lacked. But at no point in the story does Sheikh San'an reach union with the girl, by any definition. His year of service to her as a swineherd was interrupted, and after the interruption, his last meeting with her is to explain Islam to her, after which point she dies (84-5).

However, while Sheikh San'an's journey on the spiritual path is incomplete, his beloved reaches states he never approached. She passes through abandonment of her worldly needs, responding to God's call that she should “beneath his feet be dust” (83), she feels “her soul slip gently from the intellect's control”, reaching the *hal* of the Valley of Love. She then seems to have some sort of insight and finds “herself alone / in an uncharted world; no tongue can tell / what then she saw” (84). Though she never explicitly is said to have reached Detachment or Unity, she does certainly reach the next Valley, that of Bewilderment. The text says that “the desert's endless vacancy / bewildered her; wild with uncertainty, / she wept and pressed her face against the sand” (84). Finally, having reached the Sheikh and learned Islam, “she was like a drop returned to Truth's great sea” (85), foreshadowing the later description of the Valley of Poverty and Nothingness, the final stop in the mystical journey, where seekers are “lost in this wide sea” and dissolve themselves “in profound tranquility” (219). Her journey to God is complete, while Sheikh San'an's was cut short.

**T**he story's message is subversive even to the final paragraph: A Christian girl achieves in less than a year during her travel from Rome towards Mecca what it took a learned Sheikh a lifetime to even begin. This comparison reflects the broader Sufi belief in the universality of religion and spirituality. There is no fundamental difference between people of different religions in the eyes of God, and mystics can find Him in many forms. ■

AREZU MONSHIZADEH

## The Perspective of Children in Iranian Cinema

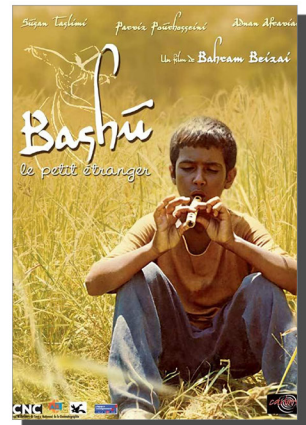


The Journal  
Essay Award:  
Honorable  
Mention

In recent Iranian films of note – Majid Majidi's *Children of Heaven* (Miramax, 1998) and *Color of Paradise* (Sony, 2000), Bahman Ghobadi's *Turtles Can Fly* (Lorber, 2000) and *A Time for Drunken Horses* (IFC, 2004), and Bahram Beizai's *Bashu, the Little Stranger* (International Home Cinema, 1989) – the point of view is observed through the eyes of children. Each of these films revolves around a loss of youth and innocence, where the world of the child clashes into the world of the adult.

An examination of the characters and plot of recent films in Iranian cinema reveals commonalities. The films examined here all prove to employ similar thematic elements to understand the clash between childhood and adulthood in Iranian cinema and to portray life's hardships from a different perspective. *Children of Heaven* navigates through a pair of siblings' pure, moving love and their determination to face real-world problems of poverty and misfortune. *Color of Paradise* and *Bashu, the Little Stranger* both tackle themes of misjudgment, alienation, and acceptance surrounding the child protagonist. Amid war and chaos, *Turtles Can Fly* and *A Time for Drunken Horses* explore the emotions of a group of orphans – their search for survival, and willingness to risk it all for each other. Each of these films employs similar thematic elements to understand the clash between childhood and adulthood in Iranian cinema and to portray life's hardships from a different perspective.

Scholar Amir Ali Nojournian writes that child characters in Iranian film “represent free spirits who are trapped within the norms and values of grown-



ups” and they lack “meaningful relationships with adults”, as in Mohammad’s relationship with his father in *Color of Paradise* (280). When compared to adult characters, “children have a special ability to inspire certain moods and sentiments” (Hallihan). By telling a “story through the eyes of a child”, Iranian filmmakers captivate their audience in a more impactful way, evoking deeper “emotions of empathy” and offering a new perspective of understanding the world and the struggles others face (Hallihan). Iranian directors may frame their work around child-centered themes “to avoid the complications of showing relations between women and men” (Gregory 6). Furthermore, the “Iranian revolution redefined the state of children’s film” by focusing on “the struggle between social classes” and the “impact of war on children’s lives” (Nojoumian 286). These films made after the Islamic Revolution “criticize the way childhood innocence is taken away from them by war” (Nojoumian 287), a theme which is prominent in *Bashu*, *Turtles Can Fly*, and *A Time for Drunken Horses*.

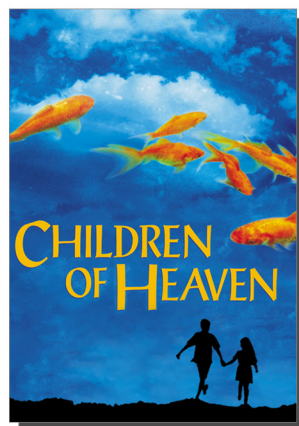
Beginning with *Children of Heaven*, the film starts with Ali and Zahra slyly passing notes in their notebooks to devise a plan of sharing one pair of shoes to get to school after Ali loses Zahra’s newly repaired sandals (13:30). They make sure not to let their parents know about their plan, as their “dad will beat both of [them] because he doesn’t have money to buy [Zahra] a new pair of shoes” (15:05). From the start of the film, the children automatically assume adult roles. Their main concern is “making life easier for their parents who are struggling with keeping the family afloat” (Gregory 2); they are forced to deal with the burden and stress of financial troubles, a problem that children typically do not have to face. The seemingly insignificant problem of a lost pair of shoes becomes Zahra and Ali’s whole world, as they take self-sacrificing measures to alleviate their parents’ suffering and ultimately create a “new definition of what it means to be a child” (Houck 7). Towards the end of the film, Ali exhibits his selflessness and dedication to helping his parents and his sister when he signs up for a race in which the third place prize is a new pair of sneakers. He promises Zahra he will “be third for sure” and will exchange the sneakers for a pair she desires (1:10:50). Ali eventually competes in the long-distance race and unintentionally wins first place. While everyone cheers and applauds him for his victory, Ali keeps his head down and tears begin to fill his eyes, as he realizes he has let his sister down (1:21:40). Winning first place in a competition is normally an achievement that is celebrated with pride and joy. However, Ali’s only focus is his sister and his parents, not himself. Unlike other children, he is confined by the barriers and pressures of society and adulthood, preventing him from acting and living like a typical child. As Houck writes in her analysis of children in Iranian film,



“child characters act as stand-ins for adult characters,” (17) here Ali acts as the adult for his younger sister and even his parents.

With a similar emphasis on a child protagonist, *Color of Paradise* revolves around Mohammad, a young blind boy, and his relationship with his father and the natural world. Despite being blind and different from the rest, Mohammad is loved and accepted by his grandmother and sisters and also finds love and acceptance in nature. However, his father sees him as an embarrassment, refusing to accept his differences and instead attempting to keep his existence a secret; he tells Mohammad’s school teacher to “do [him] a favor and keep [his child]”, doing whatever he can to pass on the responsibility of his child to others (15:25). Towards the end of the film, Mohammad confides in the blind carpenter, telling him that “nobody loves [him]” and everyone “runs away from [him] because [he’s] blind” (1:00:15). This film navigates through Mohammad’s misjudgment and struggle for identity, the insensitivity of adults towards children, and “the definition of childhood as the realm of pure innocence” (Nojournian 290). Mohammad’s father’s refusal to accept his condition causes him to only see his child as a “burden”, embarrassed by “his childlike enjoyment of nature” (Gregory 6). Despite being a child, Mohammad is forced to negotiate adult-like emotions of grief and battle an internal struggle of identity and acceptance.

*Bashu, the Little Stranger* revolves around similar themes of misjudgment and alienation surrounding the child protagonist, but is grounded in a post-Revolution setting that navigates the effects of war on members of society. After witnessing his family members’ death in bombings, Bashu must survive on





his own, sneaking into a truck and getting off in an area where everything is different, from the people to the landscape to the language being spoken (9:00). Bashu clearly stands out in this new village, as he is dark-skinned and speaks Arabic, causing him to constantly be ridiculed and mocked by the other individuals in the village. However, he soon meets Na'i, who accepts him for who he is and forms a bond with him despite his appearance and their cultural and linguistic differences, unlike Mohammad whose existence is dismissed by his own father in *Color of Paradise*. Na'i and Bashu's differences bring them together and they learn to develop their own sense of family and belonging, defying society's barriers and stereotypes and "the authority of family and village elders" (Naficy 552). As seen in the others films, Bashu is forced to act like an adult after the war strips him of his family and his youth. He is left alone to struggle with "issues of national identity, ethnic diversity, dislocation, and exile" and must learn to navigate a brand new life on his own, completely losing any sense of youth and childhood (Naficy 552). Bashu's survival and success as a member in this new village "depends upon [his] ability to adopt qualities" and the "degree to which others empathize with him", a situation that children do not typically find themselves in (Houck 27-8).

*Turtles Can Fly* examines the impact of war on a village of orphans, focusing on the dynamic between Agrin and her blind son, a product of her rape by an Iraqi soldier (57:40). Agrin time and again attempts to abandon her son, a reminder of her trauma. The film opens with Agrin standing on the edge of a cliff and jumping to her death, which we later discover occurs after she watches her son fall and drown in a spring, too hopeless to dive in and save him (1:40, 1:29:50). Dealing with the weight of war, rape, and suicide, this film is a notable example of how war and "other political and social crises make children grow up quickly;" they can no longer afford to act as children, as the "violence and hostility of war has taken away their childhood innocence" (Nojournian 287). In his review for *The New York Times*, Scott discusses the purpose of focusing these war-based films on children. He argues that Ghobadi uses children "for their guilelessness and vulnerability" and neither "sweetens nor sensationalizes" their hardships (2005). In doing so, he portrays a more heart-breaking account of the effects of war on children, evoking more profound feelings of empathy from his audience.

In a similar setting of wartime, *A Time for Drunken Horses* explores a heart-warming sibling relationship, where Ameneh and Ayoub risk everything for their younger brother, Madi. When they learn that Madi is ill and "must be operated on within four weeks or he will die", both Ameneh and Ayoub immediately take extreme measures to find money for his operation (26:40). Ayoub takes on the dangerous job of smuggling

truck tires on mules through snow-covered mountains and Ameneh agrees to marry into a family that can pay for Madi's operation, insisting that she must "[do] it for Madi" (32:00, 53:45). This child-centered film is particularly moving, as Ghobadi uses "nonprofessional actors and tells his story in a naturalistic style that purposely blurs the distinction between fiction" and reality (Scott, 2000). As a family of orphans, the group of siblings are all on their own. With no parental figures to look after them and help care for Madi, Ayoub and Ameneh are forced to take on the role of a parent towards their younger brother. In film review, Scott highlights these risks and measures the siblings are willing to take to find money for their brother's operation, noting that "Ayoub is nonetheless still a child, vulnerable to being cheated by middlemen when he joins the smugglers", but he still insists on making moral choices and acting selflessly (ibid.).

By viewing life through the eyes of a child in all these films, Iranian filmmakers emphasize a clash of childhood with adulthood, where children are forced to bear burdens of financial troubles, identity, acceptance, death, and war. All the films discussed revolve around underlying themes of a loss of youth and innocence, where the children must navigate life's hardships on their own with no guidance or support from adult figures. In Iranian cinema, children act as "voices of rebellion, change, resilience, creativity, and companionship" (Nojoumian 294). By focusing their films in a child's world, Iranian filmmakers evoke emotions of pain and grief from their audience, hopefully inspiring them to invoke change and challenge society to create a world where children no longer have to suffer these hardships alone. ■

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EVE KLEIBER

# Haibun: A Salted Family



The Journal  
Creativity Award:  
Honorable  
Mention

**T**he chatter of estranged family members, who met only on the fourth Thursday of every November, began to fill the mid-century modern home. This was an occurrence unfamiliar to the typically silent, eerie kitchen of the four-person family. The house suddenly felt warmer than normal. The youngest child sought shelter from the overlapping voices under the table. The mother brought out a perfectly presented pumpkin pie topped with just the right amount of low-fat whipped cream. The child crawled out from under the table to take a slice and then returned to the safe underbelly of the dining table. She eagerly bit into the half-slicer of pie, and then helplessly winced and spat it onto the beige-colored carpet. There, she noticed a pair of buckled, shiny boots sticking out from the wooden table. They belonged to one of the many people in her home whom she could not remember the name of, yet who had pinched her cheeks red when she greeted them at the door. The rest of the feet were bare. Maybe the booted woman felt cold, too.

*beneath the cherry oak  
a different kind of chilly  
salt instead of sugar ■*

## editorial translations of eve's haiku:

bajo el cereza  
un tipo  
diferente de  
frío  
sal en lugar de  
azúcar  
(ZB)

под вишневым  
дубом  
другой вид  
прохлады  
соль вместо  
сахара  
(PS)

체리 오크 밑에  
쌀쌀한 다른  
느낌  
설탕 대신 소금  
(SC)

sous le chêne  
cerisier  
une sorte  
différente de  
froid  
sel à la place de  
sucre  
(JM)

KATHRYN LAKIN

## 'The Lone Danger': How Omar Little Western-ized *The Wire*

**M**any Americans indulge in 'mindless television' on occasion, but 'mindless television' was the American standard until the emergence of thematically complex, realistic television serials such as *The Wire*. Unlike the condensed, theatrical television shows of previous eras, *The Wire* portrays the city of Baltimore through a realistic lens, reminiscent of Dickens' portrayal of London in the Victorian era. Indeed, *The Wire's* focus on the realities of life for the lower class as a means of critiquing established institutions is not a novel idea. David Simon furthers the show's connections to Victorian realism through an emphasis on food and drink, the characters' distinct speech patterns, and McNulty's position as a picaresque hero. In this world populated by rough yet clever characters adapted from detective stories or Dickens novels, one man stands out as belonging to an entirely different genre. In a world plagued by bureaucracy and hierarchical oppression, Omar Little serves as the ultimate Western rebel, altering the typical narrative structure of the show through his poetic dialogue, emphasis on morality, and association with Western film tropes.

Both the dialogue and the action of *The Wire* are marked by grit and violence; the various characters are constantly discussing violent crimes and murders in blunt language that contradicts literature's romanticization of criminality. While D'Angelo has his moments of poetic dialogue when discussing chicken nuggets and chess with the pit crew, he largely communicates in fragmented sentences like the rest of the cast. This fragmented dialogue conveys a sense of urgency, and it is often marked by profanity, sexual language, and violent threats. The world of *The Wire* is one marked by urgency and secrecy, leading both the police officers and drug dealers to condense and encode their communications among themselves. Omar sees no need to conceal his identity, strolling through the streets of the west side toting a sawed-off shotgun. When Brandon accidentally uses Omar's name during a robbery, Omar tells Brandon that it does not matter because "everybody in these projects been knowing Omar, you heard" (E4). Omar's notoriety and openness about his profession eliminate the need

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Citations throughout refer to episodes in Season 1 of *The Wire*, created by David Simon for Blown Deadline Productions (2002).

for secrecy and allow him to express himself poetically and at length. Omar's dialogue is unusually poetic compared to that of other characters, and he often casually drops profound one-liners. One-liners concerned with death, masculinity, and freedom delivered in dialect are characteristic of Westerns, and many of Omar's quotes would not sound out of place in a Clint Eastwood film. During a shoot-out, Omar tells Wee-Bey, "you come at the king, you best not miss" (E8). Omar also refrains from using profanity and chides Brandon for cursing (E5). This clean and deliberate speech elevates Omar above the other characters that populate the streets of Baltimore and implies a level of independence and non-conformity.

*The Wire* may portray Baltimore as a lawless land akin to the Wild West, albeit with fast-food joints in place of saloons, but Omar adheres to a strict moral code. Omar tells Bunk that while "[he does] some dirt too, but [he] ain't never put [his] gun on nobody who's not in the game" (E7). Omar's most violent crimes are motivated by a need for revenge or justice for his murdered lover, and the drive for vengeance is a key factor in many Westerns. While Omar participates in a number of shoot-outs, yet another Western film convention, he warns citizens to clear the area through his whistling. He seems unconcerned with secrecy and tells the detectives, "What I do, I do! Straight like that" (E6). Omar's preoccupation with honesty and morality is unusual, not only because of the dishonesty that surrounds him but also because of the contrast between Omar's ethics and the violence of his crimes. While Omar's killings are less gruesome than some of the murders Avon Barksdale orders, they are also more terrifying in their precision. When Omar kills, he approaches the task as a mission to exact revenge; most importantly, Omar kills with his own gun and his own hands. While Barksdale sends soldiers to do his dirty work to cement his reputation on the west side, Omar's violence is direct and personal. When Brandon says to Omar, "And you him, ain't you?... Danger", Omar replies that he is simply a man with a gun (E5). This assertion separates Omar from the men who define themselves by the amount of power their positions within established institutions afford them.

While the Wild West was the new frontier in terms of American storytelling in the twentieth century, television has since shifted its focus to the inner-city as a site of lawlessness and masculine violence. The imagery associated with Omar illuminates the connections between the city of Baltimore and the American West, rather than focusing on the Dickensian aspects of city life that characterize much of the show. The most prominent symbol of Omar's status as a Western rebel and Lone Ranger figure is his distinctive shotgun, which pairs with his duster to form a well-known generic costume.

Omar is similar to many Western heroes in that he is an unmarried, semi-nomadic man with a strong moral sense who refuses to conform to societal expectations. One could even consider Omar's white van to be the modern-day equivalent of the Lone Ranger's white horse, Silver. The robbery of the pit crew and later the corner boys brings to mind the crimes of Butch Cassidy and the bank robberies of Bonnie and Clyde. Western outlaws are open in their violence and weaponize their reputation by crafting personal mythologies and gimmicks, such as Omar's signature whistling of "The Farmer in the Dell" when he is on the hunt. Omar is also accompanied by a coming-of-age side-kick in the form of his lover, Brandon, and Omar says of him, "You can only treat a young man like a boy for so long before they buck" (E6). It is precisely Omar's attachment to Brandon that causes the hypermasculine stickup man trope to break down. Omar is unusually tender in his interactions with Brandon, petting the younger man's head and later crying over Brandon's dead body in the city morgue (E6). While a number of cowboys were gay men looking to escape persecution by moving out to the frontier, the stereotypical Western heroes they inspired were aggressively heterosexual and macho. Omar's subversion of this trope through his open sexuality and tenderness is rebellious, and this subversion inspires insecurity and hatred among the other characters. After a member of the Barksdale crew informs Avon that Omar "had a whole stable of boys down in Jessup", Avon doubles the bounty on Omar's head (E4).

Omar is a rebel not only in that his character opposes the law and established drug gangs; he is also a rebel against the typical form of the show. While other characters on *The Wire* communicate in short, often vulgar phrases, Omar uses unhurried, poetic dialogue. His speech – although colored by a Baltimore accent, rather than a Western accent – is similar in its delivery to that of Western film heroes. The violent crimes Omar commits may seem to be further evidence of lawlessness in Baltimore, but Omar's strict moral code separates him from the police officers and drug dealers who carry out needlessly cruel and reckless violence. Omar's brand of violence is quick and open, but it feels scripted. The rifle and duster that comprise Omar's costume recall the figure of a notorious Western outlaw or cowboy who participates in robberies and shoot-outs. The tenderness Omar demonstrates toward Brandon undercuts the macho stickup man image and contrasts with the hypermasculine, disconnected relationships between other male characters on *The Wire*. Omar is a theatrical, Western figure in a realistic, inner-city setting, and it is this dissonance that makes him a compelling and unique character. ■

## Favorite Quotes, Part I

**F**rom the **BOOK OF MATTHEW**: “Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is easy, that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many.” (7.13) ■ From Ashvagoshā’s **LIFE OF THE BUDDHA**: “How wretched that ignorant man, blinded by pride, who, though himself powerless and subject to the law of disease, old age, and death, should treat with contempt another who’s sick, dead, or oppressed with old age!” (*suggested by Prof. Richard Oxenberg*) ■ From **THE AENEID**: “This urge to action, do the gods instil it, or is each man’s desire a god to him, Euryalus?” (9.252) and “Unconscionable Love, to what extremes will you not drive our hearts!” (4.571) ■ From the **ANALECTS** of Confucius: “If you do not understand words, you will have no way to know people” (20.5) and “Standing by a stream, the Master said, ‘It flows on like this – does it not? – never ceasing, day or night.’” (9.17) ■ From the **DA-ODEJING** of Laozi: “If you are a canyon for all the world, constant Virtue will never err, and you can return home to be a child” (28) and “The greatest misfortune is not to know contentment . . . And so those who know the contentment of contentment are always content.” (46) ■ From Aristotle’s **NICOMACHEAN ETHICS**: “The friendship of utility is full of complaints” (Book VIII) and “For our character is determined by our choosing good or evil, not by the opinions we hold.” (Book III) ■ From Attar’s **CONFERENCE OF THE BIRDS**: “When once your hands are empty, then your heart must purify itself and move apart from everything that is” (p.181) and “My heart is empty, yet with love is full; My own love is to me incredible.” (p.212) ■ From Dante’s **INFERNO**: “It was from there that we emerged, to see – once more – the stars.” (XXXIV.138) ■ From **GILGAMESH**, the opening lines: “Of him who knew the most of all men know; who made the journey; heartbroken; reconciled; who knew the ways things were before the Flood, the secret things, the mystery; who went to the end of the earth, and over; who returned, and wrote the story on a tablet of stone.” (*suggested by Prof. Kyna Hamill, as is the next and final selection*) ■ From Plato’s **REPUBLIC**, the last lines: “But if we are persuaded by me, we will believe that the soul is immortal and able to endure every evil and every good and always hold to the upward path, practicing justice with wisdom every way we can, so that we will be friends to ourselves and to the gods, both while we remain here on Earth and when we receive the rewards of justice, and go around like victors in the games collecting prizes; and so both in this life and on the thousand-year journey we have described, we will fare well.” ■





AIDAN PATT

## Of Greatness and Glory

A dialogue between three enslaved persons traveling through Uruk in ancient Sumer. They walk through the city, noting its wonders, as they travel to their destination, the slaves' quarters. The three companions were pressed into servitude after Gilgamesh – who is praised for his greatness – conquered and destroyed their homelands.

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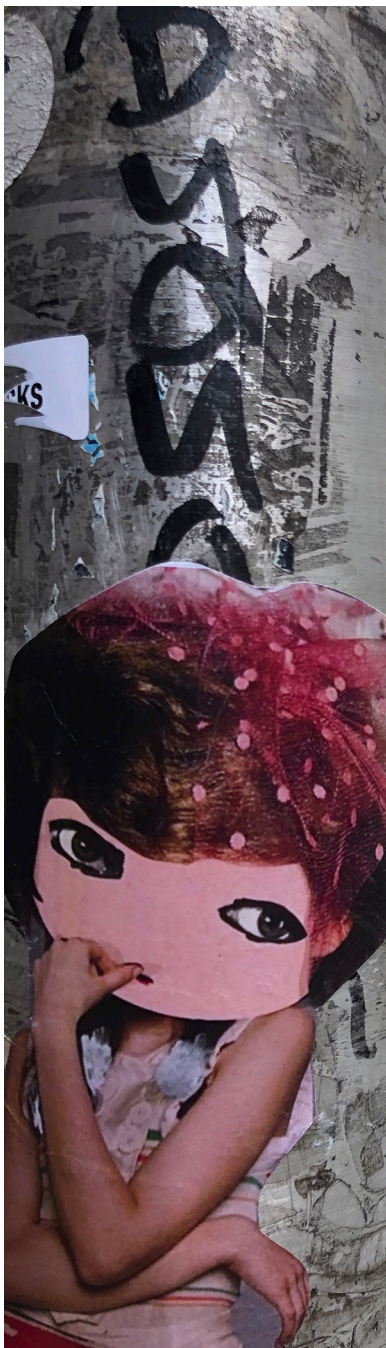
**AGLIG:** My friends, you know that I am blind and cannot see;  
Please speak to me and describe in detail Uruk's beauty...

**ETAF:** What good will Udikne's words create?  
We are doomed to toil, that is our fate –  
To sow the field but never reap rewards,  
Since silence dominates the house of our lords  
The great glory of Uruk's Beauty is undeniable  
But the act of striving for fame is unjustifiable.

**UDIKNE:** But how could seeking greatness ever be unjustifiable?

**ETAF:** Because greatness isn't great if it creates or comes from suffering.

**UDIKNE:** But greatness is only ever formed within suffering.  
Aglig, pay no attention to Etaf, for he is pessimistic,  
His knowledge seems to be solely sadistic,  
He thinks he knows everything that is  
And everything that will be from his analyses  
But the inherent Beauty is miraculous  
To seek its destruction would be scandalous!  
'The massive wall' is larger than anything I've seen;  
I feel fragile against its blinding sheen.  
It scrapes the sky and protects our fragility,  
It is our defense and offers tranquility.



**ETAF:** Each foot in height stands for a  
conquered city,  
It is just as much a symbol for our captivity.

**UDIKNE:** Stop. Listen, for we are all equals  
with song,  
Do you hear that melody as we carry along?

**ETAF:** I hear the bitter sound of clanking  
chains.

**AGLIG:** Why of all the slaves to be bound to,  
Do I have to be stuck with you?

**UDIKNE:** In seven years we could be free from  
servitude  
But as for now, you should take note of and  
include  
That you do not have to be free  
To enjoy music, wine, art, and other finery.  
We do not have to own knowledge to  
understand it.  
We do not have to own an experience to fully  
feel it.  
Our bodies may be bonded, but we are our  
mind's warden –  
We have the power to create, share, and bear  
our cordon.

**ETAF:** Bondage is bondage, even though you're  
involved in a great feat  
It will do nothing to soothe your aching back,  
hands, and feet.

**AGLIG:** Please share the beauty with me before



I become like him  
 So I can imagine the glory and learn to live life  
 on a whim.

**UDIKNE:** You were not always blind, so recall  
 the colors of your past  
 From your home, before you were put in the  
 lowest caste,  
 For they are all here, every color, every shade,  
 in a mania,  
 An explosion of light as the people dance in  
 hysteria,  
 For the day is almost over, darkness already  
 approaches,  
 But there is still so much to do before it  
 encroaches,  
 The music is powerful, deafening, energizing,  
 Can you feel it within you, as it stirs an  
 uprising?

**ETAF:** But what is the point of such an  
 uprising?  
 Life should not be lived to gain notoriety,  
 But instead to make a positive difference in  
 society.

**UDIKNE:** But that is the effect of greatness. It  
 reduces suffering!  
 Greatness is what guides and teaches the sad  
 to sing.

**ETAF:** Did Humbaba sing?  
 Did your family sing,  
 When greatness entered your lives?  
 Because all I heard were cries!



UDIKNE: My friend, we both agree  
Why can't you see  
That the pursuit of glory is reason enough for shame.  
It is the lowest class that gives Uruk its great name  
Look up from your shackles and see the inherent beauty  
The act of creation is what truly connects us with divinity.  
Do not confuse glory with greatness, or destruction, or animosity.  
With divine sanctity and prosperity  
We are the people who built this city.  
With pride, I look up and thank the gods  
Even though I've faced terrible odds.

ETAF: Then you are a fool,  
And your lack of sight is cruel.

UDIKNE: I feel sorry for you.  
Honestly, I do.

AGLIG: The music is fading. I barely hear them playing.

UDIKNE: Do not worry, I hear, every day they are partying.

ETAF: Of course, they celebrate every day  
For they have us to do whatever they say!  
We are beaten and damned times seven  
To be the slaves in someone else's heaven.

AGLIG: I cannot hear the music anymore  
We walk from joy, victims of war...  
What is that stench that I abhor?

ETAF: It's what permeates the dark city depths  
From waste trickling down the deluxe steps,  
Welcome to the slave quarters, your new home!

AGLIG: I want to go back to my real home.

UDIKNE: We could gain our freedom in seven years.

ETAF: But we will all die within three years.

AGLIG: I want to go home.

ETAF: There is no home!

It has been destroyed by the glorious Gilgamesh!

Now we get to observe his greatness in the flesh.

AGLIG: Greatness isn't great if it creates or comes from suffering.

UDIKNE: Greatness is only ever formed within suffering.

ETAF: Then path of greatness is not the path to choose,  
Because the price of dues is not something I can excuse.

UDIKNE: Nevertheless, it's the path we're on, whether we like it or not  
It's our fate and therefore we must brace for the onslaught  
But I agree greatness should not create further suffering,  
Rather it turns pain into a song we can happily sing.  
Whether you are the lowest of slaves or the conqueror of kings –  
You are still human, at the end of the day, and when the bell rings,  
You have the same fears, hopes, and longing as any other,  
And great work reminds us we are not alone amongst each other.

ETAF: Fine, my friend, I will relent,  
And consider our talk time well spent.  
Though striving for glory is indeed harmful,  
The desire for greatness is what makes humans charming.  
It's pitiful they are confused because their differences are clear –  
One is ideal, the other just wants people to cheer. ■

BIRDIE GILE

***"You're too close!":*****The Personal Space Conundrum**

**T**he complex, often unspoken etiquette of personal space has long been a source of confusion and ambiguity for people around the world cross-culturally. In America, it is generally enough to provide a foot of space in between one and another in lines or with seating, and it is polite to not choose the chair right next to someone if there are others open. This norm has been amplified and intensified with the spread of the Covid pandemic, with many governments advising citizens to 'socially distance'. However, after two years and the reopening of most educational institutions, what does it mean to "social distance"? The way students take up space has changed dramatically, inhibiting classroom connection and friendly random encounters, while increasing general discomfort and anxiety in social settings.

I began to observe a change in classroom culture in my very first class on the BU campus: Death and Immortality, taught by Professor Laura Harrington and held in the Law Auditorium. In this room with almost 400 seats, my 150 classmates determinedly spread themselves out thinly across the rows, with almost no one sitting in groups or next to each other. This makes the class feel much bigger and disconnected – there is no opportunity for side commentary and it is impossible to hear most of the students when they ask a question (it is now standard practice in this class to jog around the room with a handheld microphone whenever someone raises their hand). After the first two lectures, Professor Harrington pointed out what I too had been noticing: she explained that in past years, she asked students to sit in the front together to have a more compact group, and therefore a closer class. However, she acknowledged, this year, not everyone may feel comfortable being close to each other due to Covid risks. She invited a show of hands: "Who would like the whole class to sit closer together?" Then: "Who is more comfortable being spread out?" For the first option, I and four other people tentatively agreed with a raised arm. For the second option, the entire rest of the class raised their hands. This exact situation played out twice more in the next week's lectures, with my Professor's urgent, but democratic suggestions to come together as a class, and my peers showing an overwhelming silent 'no' with a sea of raised arms. I was surprised at everyone's collective aversion to the idea of sitting together. I doubt that all odd 140 students' reason for their reluctance was a fierce caution of COVID-19, but rather that in these two years, it's been all too easy to become secure



in isolation. It is simpler to not socialize and to hoard a few seats of space between one and the next neighbor. For some, perhaps the new personal space norm is even an excuse to sit in the back and hide. After almost a full year taking class on Zoom, I have grown accustomed to the lulling school survival mode made possible by the familiarity of my bedroom. Now, I am ready to burst out and return to the liveliness of in-person classes, but others may prefer to rest in the warm blanket of social separation and the other precautions of the Covid mind-set.

The aversion to sitting near strangers nowadays is intense even at the BU beach. When searching for a place to sit for a few moments between classes, my brain automatically rules out any bench or picnic table with anyone already seated there. Some of these benches are close to six feet long, and, pre-Covid, I would have no qualms with sitting on the opposite side of the bench – at the time, this would have been more than enough personal space to give. These days, my initial reaction is to turn and search for somewhere completely empty; not out of wanting to be alone, but out of subconscious anxiety of making someone uncomfortable or even angering them. I've given up this desperate journey for an empty bench many times to just head to class early and stand in a hallway. It gets alien and somber to not feel welcome or comfortable in a public space, but I also know that I, too, have started silently judging people for sitting too close to me as I've gotten used to a wider personal space bubble.

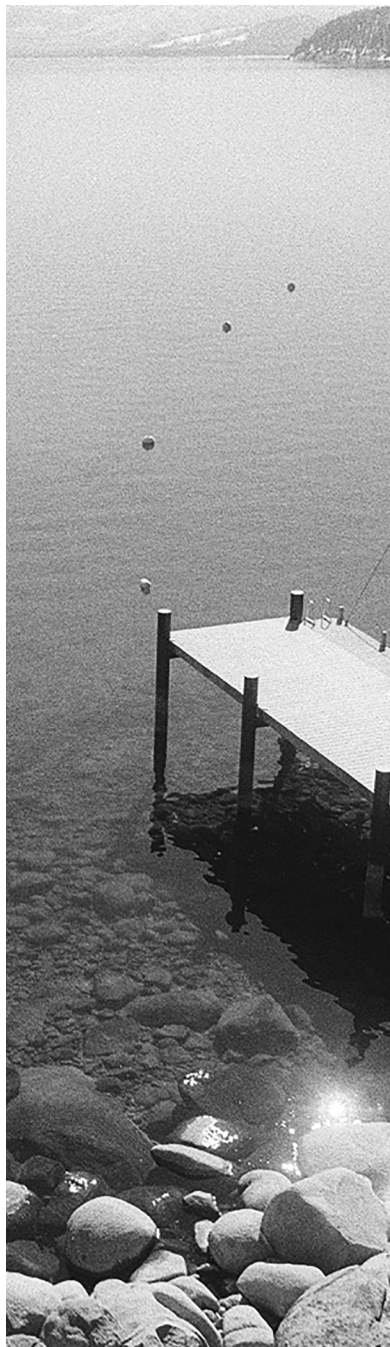
This outward projection of my own comfort zone extends to my close family members, as well. I have recently become hyper-aware of how close my mother stands to others while in line at the grocery store or at the airport. Ever since the pandemic, seeing her do this has made me incredibly and irrationally anxious, partly because I am afraid of conflict, and, with new social expectations, I suddenly expect infringement on personal space to result in conflict. The mere sight of her standing so close is now registering to me as a severe breach of public etiquette. This is, of course, not her fault, but I am intrigued to recognize that I react so extremely to her not giving ample distance to the point that I feel I must shepherd her to spare her embarrassment. I did not feel so strongly about this, let alone notice it pre-pandemic.

As I've grown accustomed to taking up more space, not only with my body but with the implicit personal circumference I feel I should be given, it's become more difficult to reintegrate into public life. In daily activities, the newfangled version of personal space has influenced the way I approach and react to peers and strangers, and undoubtedly the way they approach and react to me. In classes, there have been four occasions where someone has sat directly next to me due to seats being full but then moved away when

a seat away opens up. Before the pandemic, I would have been slightly miffed, inferring that they thought I was bothersome or wanted to get away from me by making the effort to move all their things. Presently, however, I understand it to be an act of courtesy.

Basic views of how to appropriately operate in public spaces have changed and are continuing to change with the ever-fluctuating state of the worldwide pandemic. In these weeks of observing the norm of personal space as a result of the past two years, I have often recognized the feeling of being on high alert in an attempt to be courteous of others' space. Having a social norm arise that is explicitly built on providing physical space for others naturally creates a campus that feels considerably more lonely and rigid. It may take years to build back comfort in being around others peacefully after a prolonged experience of a quick-onset new social norm. ■





ALLIE MASCARELLO

## Lost Canto

Like lightning ripping through a storm,  
 an unfamiliar voice called out to me.  
 A sound of taunting more than of forlorn,  
 but 'twas my guide who turned at first to see.  
 "Beware the man who owns this cursed voice.  
 He may attempt to coax you to agree.  
 Remember every soul here had a choice."

With this, we knelt toward the ice below,  
 and saw a figure ready to rejoice.  
 His eyes were wide as he whispered: "Hello."

And when the dead man spoke to us again,  
 I found that he had chosen to forgo  
 addressing me with usual disdain.  
 Instead, his words were aimed at my dear  
                     friend,

who he had recognized with ghastly speed,  
 and tried, with all his might, to condescend:  
 "Oh Virgil, greatest poet passed my time,  
 how fortunate we Greeks did feel to lend  
 our legends, hardships, tales of frightening  
                     crime

for you to do with as you so desired.  
 Your noble lines were truly at their prime  
 when Homer's tropes and prose were grossly  
                     mired.

No matter all the evils that I've done,  
 it seems your wretched thievery backfired.  
 A stalemate drawn since neither side has won,  
 we find ourselves together here in Hell."

At this, I felt compelled to stab or shun  
the man who haunted from this icy well.

Before my anger reached its fervent peak,  
I bit my tongue, allowing Virgil's quell:  
"Ignore this man who I referred as weak,  
who cowered at my pious Aeneas.  
He must have lost the courage that he seeks,  
for spineless fathers are so treacherous."

I found myself bewitched by his bare chest.  
His flesh, once clean, now marred with blood and pus.  
A serpent latched and sucked upon his breast,  
until his heavy heart was drained complete.  
Before the suckler could at last ingest,  
the demon cried and retched upon the teat.  
And once again the dead heart filled anew.

"I see you ponder just what costly feat  
has led to this unwanted rendezvous.  
Let Virgil tell the myth from which he's drawn,  
unless he needs another's words to spew."

My guide began the tale of Queen and pawns,  
when men had choice between their kin and war.  
And one was preferred by King Agamemnon,  
who sent his daughter straight to Hades' door:  
"The evil man deserves his punishment,  
a serpent's sharpened teeth evens the score."

And to this claim, the King gave his dissent:  
"Imagine just how difficult it was  
to find the proper way to orient  
against abandoning my land and cause.



In doing so I lost my daughter dear,  
but stayed in line with Greece's loyal laws,  
and kept my faithfulness to my home clear."  
It was with this ridiculous remark,  
which almost caused me to forget my fear,  
that Virgil motioned my back toward the dark,  
and we continued on our journey's way.

What does the dead man know of writers'  
marks,  
or loyalty in who or what to slay?

Debates of love and war aside at last,  
I briefly wondered on whose side I lay.  
But these discarded thoughts are of days past,  
and have no bearings on my current state.

My trusty guide had led us onwards fast,  
but noticed my distraction as of late.  
And I recalled the lesson that he'd cast –  
how muses are what make a poem great. ■



SAMANTHA VATALARO

## British Satire in the Age of Fake News



The Journal  
Essay Award:  
Honorable  
Mention

English humor has a long and close relationship with satire and parody, particularly of a political nature. In fact, one of the earliest (and most famous) examples of English satire is political in nature: Jonathan Swift's 1729 *A Modest Proposal*. Here, Swift satirizes the policies of the British empire towards Ireland and suggests that rather than taking 'sensible' steps like taxing the rich or using domestic goods, the Irish should instead eat their own children in order to save money. Like any good political satire, Swift deliberately exaggerates his "proposal" into something that clearly no person would advocate for, such as eating children, in order to highlight the absurdity of the policies at the time. But what becomes of political satire when truth is stranger than fiction? In the past few years, "fake news" regarding politics has become an international issue. No longer can one write a satirical piece and assume that all will understand that it is in jest; particularly over digital media, it seems that intent can get lost much easier, and even the wildest of claims come across as genuine. The question stands: Have the responsibilities of political satirists changed due to the proliferation of fake news?

Satire itself can take many forms in British media. In film, its earliest origins trace back to films made in the 1920s by creatives such as Adrian Brunel (Porter 5). In television, the "satire boom" of the 1960s had long-lasting cultural effects, both on screen and off. This includes satire in print form, such as the magazine *Private Eye* that has been in print since 1961; in television programs, such as *That Was the Week That Was* that ran in the 1960s on BBC Two; or even in puppet form, as in the widely popular TV show *Spitting Image* that has come back from its initial iteration in the 1980s and 1990s for new seasons. In addition to these more traditional formats, there has also been a new digital outburst of satire publications. These include websites like *The Daily Mash*, which presents its readers with a full daily spread of fabricated headlines intended to lampoon those in power ("Women can avoid attacks by rogue police officers by 'not existing,' advises Met Police" reads a recent example – a send-up of the Sarah Everard case). What these examples have in common, besides their British subjects and creators, is the involvement of politics in their works.

The genre of satire itself "suggests comedy with serious political intent." Long-running programs like those mentioned above are popular examples of how satirical

depictions of political life tend to do very well with British audiences. And rather than taking offense at these depictions, British officials tolerate, if not embrace, them. John Corner suggests in his article, “Comedy, the Civic Subject, and Generic Mediation”, that “acceptance of being occasionally the target of comic portrayal, including derision, is seen as yet another part of performing the contemporary political persona.” This only further highlights the close relationship between British satire and politics: the objects of “scorn”, rather than lashing out or criticizing the comics, accept the chidings. Boris Johnson, the current Prime Minister, is an example of a British politician who not only tolerates satirical depictions of himself, but seems to welcome them. Johnson, who has his beginnings as something of a satirical political correspondent for *The Daily Telegraph*, is known for using insensitive and, at times, outright “racially and ethnically pejorative language.” However, despite the potential for scathing commentary on these actions through satire, Johnson seems comfortable participating in British satire culture, even appearing on the program *Have I Got News for You?* This satirical BBC news quiz show regularly lampoons news stories, but when Johnson appeared on the show, aside from a few critical comments by one panelist, he took center stage in creating the satire by playing the “buffoonish play-boy” he was criticized to be. This highlights what John Stubbs deems the issue with satire as a “form of discourse”: it has “lost its bite” by allowing itself to conflate what it deems criticism-worthy with what it finds entertaining.

This argument that British political satire is “weakening” comes at a time when some have begun to question the usefulness of political satire. In the last several years, controversial issues such as Brexit, immigration, and diversity have all driven heated debate, and have been covered thoroughly both in informative programming (such as true news programs) and in satirical works. Where the BBC might note that the U.K. is facing a shortage of truck drivers in an article that explains what that entails for the average citizen, *Spitting Image* produces a sketch where Tom Cruise volunteers to drive a truck to help the shortage – and then crashes it due to his short height. In examples such as these, the satire is gentle and relatively harmless due in part to the fact that it is clearly a parody. No one truly would believe that Tom Cruise would arrive and announce to Boris Johnson that he is here to save the day. A mature audience is expected to understand that this is a criticism of the situation, not a portrayal or suggestion of a solution.

The issue comes when this obviousness is lost. Modern British satire has drawn fire from both its fans and its critics for not “going far enough” – that is to say, not distin-



guishing itself from merely presenting information. Stuart Jeffries sharply criticizes satire as being nothing more than “displacement activities for supine Britons.” As for Johnson, the self-satirizing Prime Minister, Jeffries argues that “satire props up what it should destroy... Johnson is stronger for being laughable, and the laughter he attracts serves as a force field to stop us thinking too hard.” Rather than inspiring us to action, Jeffries asserts that political satire comforts us into inaction over the injustices it highlights. Another issue arises when satire goes further than “propping up” what it portrays, and instead comes across as genuine. It is one issue to laugh and do nothing; it is another to spout false (and potentially harmful) information without the clear designation of entertainment. James Curran notes that “to view entertainment as something removed from politics ... is no longer sustainable.” Entertainment is fully engulfed in our political lives, which, when satire has “weakened”, creates the issue of what is fact and what is for fun. Furthermore, what if the content is being deliberately portrayed as truth when it is, in fact, not?

“Fake news” entered the public lexicon within the past decade with the BBC noting that one of its earlier high-profile uses came in a statement from Hillary Clinton in 2017. Since then, it has been adopted by everyone from disgraced former United States President Donald Trump to the average Internet user and to journalists themselves. While Clinton’s usage referred to a conspiracy theory involving a prostitution ring run out of a pizza parlor, the meaning of “fake news” has slipped from describing blatantly unsupported claims to something that a reader might personally disagree with. There is evidence of fake news stories across the political spectrum, and people have come to use the term to describe anything from “a sponsored post or ad” to “a bot on Twitter or a rumor.” With the sheer amount of information made available on the Internet, it is no wonder that some people describe themselves as being “unsure of what to believe.” As satire publications become drier and less centralized, the clear distinctions between real news and satire can grow tenuous on controversial topics. On the website for *The Daily Mash*, a small online-only publication, there is absolutely no mention of the site’s satirical nature anywhere on the main page. There are headers for its different sections – politics, sport, lifestyle – and a plethora of articles ready to be read and shared across social media platforms, including Instagram and Facebook. It is only by scrolling to the bottom of the homepage and clicking the “About” section (in tiny letters and light coloring) that one can find the paper’s declaration of its satirical content. If someone shared an article and an unassuming person only saw the link and headline, or perhaps only clicked as far as the homepage, they might not immediately assume that it was

satire. Obviously, in the case of *The Daily Mash*, the quality of the satire is such that it's easy to distinguish it for what it is – it is not “propping up what it should destroy”, as Jeffries would put it. But the fact remains that there is no guarantee that satire – especially in its current “weakened” state – will clearly distinguish itself to not be deliberate misinformation. It could be argued that to publish satire in the current “fake news” world is downright irresponsible.

Luckily for satire, things are not yet that grim. Despite the potential for misunderstanding, the likelihood of someone truly not understanding what is and is not satire is quite slim. The key to satire being successfully consumed as both a form of entertainment and a criticism of politics is the competence of the viewer to understand what is true and false. James Curran warns that “democracies need to be informed as well as entertained.” In terms of politics, though “fake news” websites might proclaim falsehoods about endorsements, goals, or actions of certain politicians, the population of Britain is politically active enough to determine what is likely to be reality and to be able to follow up with an outside source. A recent study found that both younger and older Britons prioritized participating in “elections, on the power of the government to implement effective solutions, and a consensus around distrust of politics and political institutions.” A population that is politically active and informed is unlikely to either fall for “fake news” or conflate satire with truth because they can refer to their own knowledge. This “distrust of politics” demonstrates a healthy skepticism of elected officials, which is a good sign for satire that seeks to lampoon them for their faults, and a guard against favorable depictions of these politicians. In other words, British people already *know* what Boris Johnson is doing, but they aren't allowing satire (even self-satire) to sway them, as Jeffries might suggest, despite the fact they they're laughing at it.

In fact, laughing at satire is a good way to understanding serious topics like politics on a deeper level. Humor is accessible in a way that serious discourse cannot always be. As Corner states, “the broad sense of the farcical aspect of politics and of power elites informs civic consciousness more pervasively than any focused, urgent, and perhaps angry perception of specific deficits and alternatives.” In this more informal setting and tone, people are more likely to remember and understand information. Curran also highlights the need for television (including satire) to be understood as a “space for exploring and debating social values.” Satire in this way is democratizing; it gives every viewer the same chance to interact with its content. Stern political debates might scare off viewers who feel they won't understand the minutiae of the discussion, but anyone can laugh at a satirical show.

Thus satire's power endures. The responsibilities of political satirists have not changed in the era of "fake news." Their duties are much as they have always been: to provide a humorous and critical look at some aspect of modern life and highlight where change could be made in a way that most viewers can both understand and enjoy. They are tasked with creating satire in such a way that their audiences can clearly see the absurdity in both their proposition and in the real situation underneath; they must be able to present both the entertaining audacity as we saw in the "baby recipes" of Jonathan Swift, and the trenchant critiques of prevailing conditions of injustice. Their responsibilities have not changed because those have always been the charges of a good satirist – for truly, any satire that cannot be distinguished from a regular story is not good satire at all. ■

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JAKOB WELCH

## The Lighthouse

A tower of stone  
built upon  
stones of atonement.  
Seeing stones  
surround the home  
of a sullen sole  
keeper of all things  
upon his rock  
and to those beyond,  
a beacon of hope.  
Beyond the reaches  
of time's persistence,  
before the land  
of lights and riches,  
there sits the man  
of light and wishes.  
He soothes the sails  
of sailor's missions,  
granting warmth  
and forgiveness.  
A time, he cried,  
with love,  
his witness.  
A crime he tried  
to scrub  
his hands of.  
In time he learned  
to be forgiven.  
A lie he told  
to thoughts  
relinquished.  
The siren's scream,



a sweet relief,  
 easing into a bliss;  
 a deep abyss  
 of sleep and dream.  
 A subtle kiss  
 with sultry lips,  
 the last kiss  
 to grace his lips.  
 Remiss, he is,  
 we're lost to his  
 lonely, lost and  
 sunken stare. Beware,  
 for his tale  
 is not of failure...  
 He stands today,  
 though not without  
 a cross and rope to  
 hold his head about,  
 proud to be  
 a feast for all  
 these prowling  
 beasts. ■



**Image:** Flying fish and diving birds in  
 a detail of a diorama in the Milstein  
 Hall of Ocean Life at the American  
 Museum of Natural History, NYC.

JENNIFER FORMICHELLI

**from The Tao of Henry****1.**

The dog who can be called is not this dog.

Calling: he moves further away.

Not calling: he remains where he is.

Empty of anxiety: perceive Henry's face.

Full of anxiety: watch Henry's tail.

These have the same source, but different directions.

Call him again, and again and again.

Why he won't come: is a mystery.

**6.**

The Hound Dog Never Stops. He is called the Henry Dog.

*Shush over here stay on the path please boy*

The entrance to the Woods

Is root of his earth and heaven

Endless flow

Of inexhaustible energy.

*Sigh*

**7.**

Patience is short, anger enduring.

I thought Ace whistles were the best.

Long and enduring

But they do not make him heed.

Therefore the Owner

Steps back, and remains there,

Waits around, and gets cold.

No thing to do,

He finally appears. ■





Henry on the beach in Gloucester, by Jennifer Formichelli, 2010





KYNA AND EMILY HAMILL

## Photos from Cuba, 1991

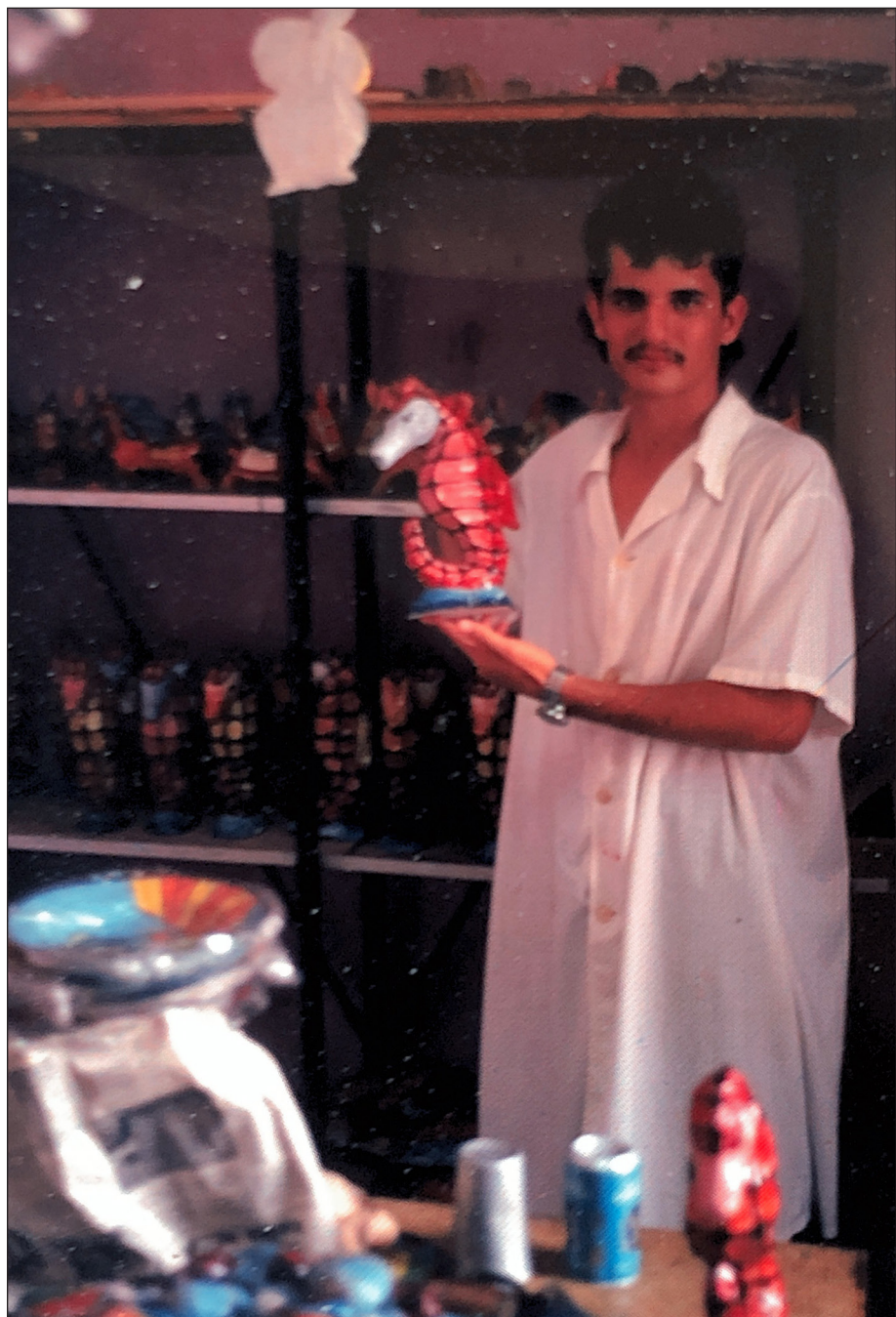
In July 1991, my sister Emily and I (pictured here on the beach) traveled together to Cuba supported by the Anglican Church of Canada. In Havana, we stayed with Very Rev. Miguel Tamayo, Bishop of Holy Trinity Cathedral, and the Rev. Marta Lopez, deacon-in-charge of missions in Santa Cruz del Norte and Bacuranao. We then traveled two hours east to attend an Episcopal Youth Church Camp held at the Seminario Evangelico de Teologia in the city of Matanzas, Cuba.



1988-91 saw the dissolution of the Soviet Union, which brought on an economic crisis in Cuba known as the Special Period in the Time of Peace (*Período especial en tiempos de paz*). The economic depression was extremely severe that summer as Cuba entered into a series of austerity policies. Many shops were empty and there were food shortages since Cuba had relied on so much food exports coming from the collapsed Soviet Union. In the absence of such food imports, food prices in Cuba increased and the little food available was of lower quality. Some days shops only had bananas, some days, only avocados, some days nothing. Toilet paper was non-existent. There were meat rations every day. For breakfast at the camp, we would have milky sweet Cuban coffee and two pieces of bread and margarine that would last us until 3 PM. Since Cubans were not allowed to use hard (American) currency, my sister and I shopped in hotels for soap, toothpaste, and other essentials only available to non-citizens, to give to the congregation. During the Special Period, Cubans had to adjust to the rations of oil and machinery and use creative ways to move around the cities and the country.

These photos show some of the places we encountered and the marvelous and creative people we met that summer. I am still in contact with friends there, though I have not seen them since 1996. Things in Cuba continue to be economically strained and difficult. A package I sent with medicine in 2021 took four months to get there. ■

Photo on facing page: marketplace in Havana







**Facing page:** artist in a papier-mâché factory, Matanzas

**Above:** Street scene, Matanzas

**Next page:** bridge over San Juan River, Matanzas

**Final page, top:** boys in the street, Matanzas

**Final page, bottom:** art school print shop, Matanzas







LILA HELLER

## Downstream Boy

he packed up his life on a Tuesday  
took clothes and letters and left,  
floated down the river –  
lying on his back, star-fished,  
with his hair held gently by the water,  
his suitcase, softly bouncing against his leg,  
tenderly keeping time.  
he put his heart into a box,  
safe from water damage or wind,  
hidden from sun and sky and stars  
and put it in the pocket of his jeans,  
felt it press against his hips  
never tempted by the current or the waves.  
every drop of water on his back urged him forwards.  
he passed through silty banks  
hands brushing rocks  
    suitcase rocking slowly  
        box in jeans.

he washed up on a Monday  
his legs shaking as they met the land,  
greeting each other like two old friends  
tender, familiar, new, with  
promises and sugar in the air.  
he let the wind wash over him,  
drying cleansing  
whispering softly to him  
daring him to step forward,  
rolling through his hair  
in between his toes,  
shaking the zipper of his suitcase in a secret melody



comforting and haunting and steadyunsteading  
at once.

he stood there, waiting  
listening  
for years. every second,  
expecting his feet to move,  
his hand there, ready to grab his bag but  
the wind kept running, the river kept racing  
and he stayed.

he started walking on a Thursday  
his feet sinking into the earth,  
grass mud sand reaching to his ankles  
one hand in his pocket

one curled around the handle  
little wheels faithfully following his path.  
every step he took forward opened his eyes a little further.  
sun and sky poured into his pupils  
overwhelming him in color.  
he let the world pull him  
sideways and backwards and forwards  
let the earth lead him  
on a path. as long as his feet didn't stop moving  
he was fine.

he steadied himself on a Wednesday  
his breath uneven and weighty  
his heart fluttering  
and determined and strong,  
eyes not blinking, focus forwards  
every sense awake.  
he stopped his feet.  
let his legs bend from the knee,

fingers onto earth

dirt soil sand under nails.

he let his eyes close,

let air and tension and the memory of riverwater

melt off of him,

falling into the ground and hardening like candlewax.

he fell on a Friday

kicking up dust, watching it

swirl, spin, dance in the air

levitating up and forward and down

a surprise for the ants and bugs and worms.

his hand released

an age of holding the handle dissipating

knuckles softening stretching

by the time his ear hit the ground

the wheels were rolling, bag bouncing and shaking

throwing clothes and letters and life overboard.

jeans tore and pockets tore

the box opened and left,

jumping out to end empty

by his feet. ■



JAKOB WELCH

## An Island Lost at Sea

Surrounded eternally by sunken dreams,  
 an hour to believe,  
 a fruitless journey to be free.  
 Waves crashing on the beach,  
 breaching silence out of reach.  
 Creatures smiling 'fore the storm,  
 sworn to adorn the clouded skies  
 beneath the highlights of deceit,  
 keeping the violence, feeding greed.  
 Oceans laugh as tides climb,  
 rising high above the storm,  
 those caught below, to be forsworn.  
 The island sits, hallowed in grief,  
 a shallow grave beyond belief.  
 An island lost at sea,  
 found but never seen. ■

**Image:** Polar bear after a hunt, from a diorama in the Milstein Hall of Ocean Life at the American Museum of Natural History, NYC.

MAGGIE FARREN

## After Proteus in Joyce's *Ulysses*

Protean, as in the undulating tide.  
Island of a man wrapped in threadbare  
skin, sign of the cross as a habit, as  
a way to greet the sullen morn-ing.

Gulls' wings beating against the breast of  
grayed sky, which meets the sea like  
the crease in a bedsheet. Same molten  
color, lightless and begging for clouds  
to break.

Stilted sea-foam and spit-ridden sand,  
the water gnashing its teeth against  
the shore, over and over. Like the  
slow pull of insanity and its many  
tendriled fingers.

Acrid rot of seaweed on chilled breeze,  
rough against unshaven chin and cheek,  
looking for home in desolate places.  
The sea is a wide, impenetrable mouth:  
both within and without.

In the mirror of the waves, distorted and salt-severed  
nose and reddened ears. Loathing and desiring,  
at once, to be beneath those cold dark peaks.  
Sea-wreck at the sandy base of the mother's  
stomach, where the altar candle is lit. ■

NOBEL CHAN

## Those Who Love You

*"I cannot share in hatred, but in love." – Antigone*

Yes, I know loneliness  
like I knew the sun  
or the lines on my brother's palm  
when he used to hold my hand.  
Laughing, he'd swing me  
between him and Eteocles,  
and for a moment I'd fly  
like a god through the air.  
Everything is so different now.  
Now I hold only my own hand,  
palm in palm, both full,  
both empty. And why is that?  
Why do we always halve ourselves in two?  
Sitting here with my rocks and my darkness  
maybe I'll think of an answer  
before Thanatos comes, taking  
the half of me that's lying here.  
The other half he already has,  
buried long ago with mom and dad  
and Eteocles and Polynices too,  
Creon be damned.  
No, I am the one to be damned.  
I promised myself I wouldn't be scared.  
Maybe I'm not. Maybe I'm trembling  
out of excitement to meet  
my new bridegroom, Hades,  
who will have me all year round.  
Down there I will become shade,  
shadow, and everything will go  
through me. Try to touch me.

Try to wrap your arms around me,  
 try to hold my hand  
 and make me fly through the air.  
 We used to count stars,  
 my sister and I, used to trace  
 the constellations of women long gone.  
 Ismene was always the scared one.  
 I used to hold her hand to my heart  
 tell her to breathe to the beat,  
 and as long as that heart was beating  
 she could keep breathing, keep breathing.  
 And why did I do that? Why did I  
 pretend to her that we could live forever?  
 Sitting here with my thoughts and the ashes,  
 maybe I'll learn something about life  
 that life couldn't teach me.  
 I was a bad student at any rate,  
 never took any criticism,  
 always had to be right.  
 I was harder to move  
 than the stone blocking the entrance,  
 and maybe that is justice,  
 maybe that is fate.  
 I guess I am afraid.  
 I know fear like  
 the back of my hand  
 pressed against Ismene's forehead  
 to feel for a fever.  
 But what of that? I know love, too.  
 Love is a boulder moving  
 from some unseen force.  
 Love is my sister  
 taking my hand underneath a winter sky,  
 asking if it's really true  
 that I can fly. ■

**Author's note:** In  
 Sophocles' *Antigone*,  
 the titular character is  
 imprisoned in a cave  
 and commits suicide.  
 This poem explores her  
 unwritten time in that  
 cave, exploring what she  
 may have felt in her final  
 moments; I wanted to  
 give one last moment of  
 peace to a character that,  
 in my interpretation, was  
 always so full of love.

- NSC



SARAH GOODMAN

**toast**

it is 6 pm and we are 6 feet apart.  
 a small gathering in the age of loneliness.  
 we are all here together to create some art,  
 to find honesty in the age of phoniness.  
 “in vino veritas”, i say upon first drink,  
 “nasdorovia”, my acquaintances respond.  
 we hit each other’s glasses to hear them go “clink”  
 and let the drinks rush to our heads so we can bond.  
 some here sniffle after wine to release their cries  
 or run hot of head when proclaiming the unsaid.  
 love is in the air and yet we are still inside.  
 if sickness is ‘out there’, is it because they hide?  
 the diseases of the heart we yearn to mend  
 always heal when we do not play pretend.  
 love can be felt, so it has a smell.  
 give me kisses since we are both well.  
 by 6 am, i have made a lover, a friend,  
 never to see or meet with each other again. ■

**Author’s note:**

A founding university  
 freshman is conflicted in  
 reminiscing on the peak  
 of the night before;  
 written during the peak  
 of COVID-19 mandates  
 in 2020. - SG

TAYLOR THOMAS

## Birdwatching with Karl Marx



Winner of  
The Journal  
Creativity  
Award

I get up at about a quarter past the crack of dawn, well before the first bird has opened its scrawny beak to yell at God... or whatever it is that birds do when the sun first kisses the earth.

I'm ten years old... or thirteen... or seventeen. I'm not really sure. Every year seems to bleed into the other like watercolor paint. The only real change I see across the years is a little more height and a little less patience for morning chatter. That's why I'm always up on my own, or so I tell myself.

I retrieve the tin of the dollar store coffee and a mug – one that's older and even more distressed than I am – from the cabinet and begin brewing. I've never really been myself until I've gargled down the undignified labor of an exploited coffee bean farmer toiling their life away in a country whose name I can't remember. Most people say that I'm too young to be a coffee drinker. But I don't listen to most people.

A lingering loneliness from the night before draws me into the quiet space that exists between yesterday's resolution and today's possibility. What I did in the past and what I'll do in the future isn't important now, because, cradled in the arms of twilight's sobering solitude, I don't dwell on why I have to wake up by myself and make my own coffee.

It's cold outside. Or warm. Or it's not-quite-warm-but-not-really-cold. To be honest, I've never noticed much of a difference between winter and summer in the morning, save the potential presence of some frost and a few degrees that will determine whether I go shoeless for the rest of the day or wrap up like a burrito to stay warm.

If I see snow on the ground when the light finally peeks over the rolling mountain ranges and the piney, untamed forests, I'll chop some wood and build a fire in the wood stove downstairs, just like Daddy taught me. The heat will feel good, and I'll enjoy watching the flickering flames while I finish the pot of coffee I brewed. If there's no snow, I'll step outside on the porch, probably still wearing the t-shirt and oversized boxer shorts I slept in, and contemplate what the birds are yapping about. *Such a beautiful day to rage against the absurd*, I'll think, summoning the spirit of a dead philosopher who might have, likewise, contemplated meta-ethics and bird theology in their pajamas.

Yet, it's not merely God or avian existentialism that comes to mind as I drink coffee at just an hour or so past the crack of dawn. It's something else. It's everything and it's

also nothing at all. It's life, death, and it's especially that curiously fraught middle part that nobody quite knows what to do with. I wonder if that's what gets the birds riled up: a little bit of everything and a whole lot of nothing, all at once and somehow never at the same time. Either might prompt the jolliest sparrow to appease the itch in the back of their head with a pistol. But the birds outside don't have thumbs to pull the trigger, which might explain what they're so angry about.

I sometimes think about permanently scratching that itch, although never in the morning, since I can't drink coffee or build fires or watch birds yell at God if I'm dead. I don't dwell too much on death right now. Something about this time of the day reminds me that I'm alive. *Really* alive, I mean, and not just meandering through the motions of trying to realize a dream that never comes true for people in my part of the world. I can't say whether or not that's the dream my parents wanted, but it's the one they chased.

Perhaps I'd be okay with it all if Mama and Daddy could fix breakfast and drink coffee with me. We could sit outside or huddle up in their bed and wait to hear the birds as they stumbled out of their nests and greeted the sun. Mama would insist that they were praying, not yelling, and Daddy would ask her where she learned how to talk to animals. We'd laugh because we'd be together and that's all that would matter.

But she's not here and Daddy is still in bed sleeping through another lay-off and staving off the hangover that's going to hit him like a freight train when he opens his eyes. Nobody is with me and instead of making pancakes or talking about the prayers of birds, Mama is at work, finishing a graveyard shift that never seems to end in her desperate attempt to make our lives just a little bit more bearable. If either one of them ever escapes their station in life, it'll be through death and, even then, debt collectors will probably knock on my door and pass my parent's burdens along to me as seamlessly as if the doctor had never cut the umbilical cord in the first place.

It all reminds me of a story I once heard from a preacher who, I suspect, wore shoes that were far too expensive for a man claiming to worship a Nazarene carpenter. I didn't trust him or his stories. He preached with the undeserved confidence of someone so saturated in hypocrisy and self-deceit, that he saw the devil lurking in every heart except his own.

As the preacher tells it, a little boy is found digging through a pile of horse manure, certain that there's *got* to be a pony at the other end. He thinks that all he has to do to unearth his prize is keep digging and digging and digging. Dig is exactly what he does, and very happily so, because, as we are told, he has faith. That's where the preacher

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tracted for breakfast. 60 working-hours are left,  $10\frac{1}{2}$  for each of the first 5 days,  $7\frac{1}{2}$  for the last. Certain guardians of these laws are appointed, Factory Inspectors, directly under the Home Secretary, whose reports are published half-yearly, by order of Parliament. They give regular and official statistics of the capitalistic greed for surplus-labour.

Let us listen, for a moment, to the Factory Inspectors. "The fraudulent mill-owner begins work a quarter of an hour (sometimes more, sometimes less) before 6 a.m., and leaves off a quarter of an hour (sometimes more, sometimes less) after 6 p.m. He takes 5 minutes from the beginning and from the end of the half hour nominally allowed for breakfast, and 10 minutes at the beginning and end of the hour nominally allowed for dinner. He works for a quarter of an hour (sometimes more, sometimes less) after 2 p.m. on Saturday. Thus his gain is—

Before 6 a.m.,	15 minutes.
After 6 p.m.,	15 minutes.
At breakfast time,	10 minutes.
At dinner time,	20 minutes.
Five days—300 minutes,	60 minutes.
On Saturday before 6 a.m.,	15 minutes.
At breakfast time,	10 minutes.
After 2 p.m.,	15 minutes.
	40 minutes.
Total weekly,	340 minutes.

Or 5 hours and 40 minutes weekly, which multiplied by 50 working weeks in the year (allowing two for holidays and occasional stoppages) is equal to 27 working-days."

always ends the tale... with a little boy searching for salvation in a pile of dung.

Of course, the wise know that, someday, the little boy will stop digging. Maybe not forever, but long enough to understand that he's now an old man and the only thing of value that he's dug is the grave he'll be laid to rest in, after he's given away every part of himself to the ravenous jaws of a system that doesn't care about his life, only his labor. When he's finally gone, the birds will sing and dance through the air, yelling at God while they relieve themselves on the old man's tombstone, carrying on with no regard for his sullied and needlessly squandered life. Then, in two or three generations, nobody will remember his name, much less the faith that kept him digging for so many years.

He'll be forgotten but the parable of the gullible manure-scooper will play out again and again and again because that's also the story of Mama and Daddy and maybe even the coffee bean farmer working for pennies in a part of the world that I'll never visit.

I hope the birds don't soil my tombstone. But if the birds must make a toilet of my grave, I'd be very pleased if they also fed on the worms who'll surely grow thick feasting on my corpse. I imagine they'll pluck one juicy invertebrate right after the other from the soft clumps of dirt covering my bones until their bellies are so fat that they'll be too satiated to yell at God. But, how nice would it be if they could also fertilize all the flowers in the cemetery or dirty the debt collector's suit or stain a crooked preacher's shoes? What if, just maybe, they flew to the financial district of lower Manhattan and emptied their bowels on every building in sight. The banks, the trading meccas, the five-star restaurants – the epicenter of the world's oldest religion painted in the dirty white dung of a swarm of sky rats.

The best part is that a little piece of me will be buried in the excrement. Somehow, I'll find a way to laugh about it from the other side. The callous sowers of my and my parent's discontent won't know I'm laughing. Hell, they probably won't even notice that the high-rise temples within which they worship their sacred cows are now covered in bird shit. But I'll know and the birds will know and, if there's really anyone up there looking down at us, God will know.

In a few years, when I'm no longer ten, or thirteen, or seventeen, I imagine I'll join the same rat race that condemned my parents. My body will deteriorate, slowly at first, but rapidly once there's too much month left at the end of my paycheck for me to afford the medical bills that begin to pile up. I'll gradually decay into a husk of what I could have been, my teeth as rotten as the economic machine that's killing me. It'll be my story and my parent's story and everyone's story, except for the few at the top who only look down on us when they need to piss off the edge of their ivory towers.

For now, however, I'm brewing coffee and listening to the birds and thinking about nothing and everything and not about the low-life preachers or the devils on Wall Street. I'm building fires and standing outside in my pajamas. I'm basking in the fresh light of day, sipping the elixir in my cup, and sucking in the little bit of Appalachian air that hasn't yet been tainted by the coal barons who've created never-ending wealth out of combustible rocks and human misery. And, somewhere amidst the snippets of splendor and the maddening melancholy and the naive faith that permeates my life, just like that spectacularly foolish dung-shoveler, I'm wondering whether Karl Marx ever stopped to admire the birds. ■

HALL, MAJARWITZ, MARHAMATI & GUTTORMSEN WETZLER  
**Five Translations from the Persian**

These renderings into English – by Tayler Hall, Savannah Majarwitz, Juliet Marhamati and Andrea Guttormsen Wetzler – were produced in CAS LZ311, a course focusing on advanced Persian with special concentration on the translation of diverse registers and culturally-specific idioms. The project was commissioned from instructor Sassan Tabatabai by the editors of *www.thearchipelago.org*, a website where refugee writers express their perspectives on migration and decolonization. The author of the source texts, Hafizullah Shariati (Sahar), is a poet, scholar and translator. He holds a PhD in Literature & Linguistics and has served in positions at schools including Ibn Sina University, Rabia Balkhi University and Gharjistan University.

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**Colorful Nightmares**

(SM)

Standing beside the window  
 I count trees one by one  
 There is nobody in the alley  
 No wandering singer  
 No Gypsy woman with her children  
 Only the white shirt of Layli flutters in the wind

I turn my face  
 – Love like seasonal clouds drifts over me –  
 The wind brings autumn leaves into my room  
 I puff on my cigarette  
 I confine my breath  
 I return to the room  
 On my bed that smells like loneliness  
 I lie down  
 My eyelids are heavy  
 In sleep, no one sings to me  
 No one embraces me  
 Only – always God –  
 You sit on the porch



And smoke a cigarette  
 And I wake up  
 With colorful nightmares  
 The wind of sleep rattles the window  
 The white shirt of Layli flutters in the wind

### **Most of the Blackberries are Sour**

(JM)

I live your laughter  
 The depth of your laughter  
 Multiplies the appetite of the mirror  
 With two feet in the fire  
 In shapeless, circular movements  
 I hang from the skirt of your smile  
 And with the ticking of your eyes  
 I fall asleep  
 The wild breeze of your lips  
 Caresses my long tresses  
 Unable to watch you  
 With open hands  
 Step by step I dance with you  
 And you give me your night  
 And your fantasy  
 And seeking pieces of your kisses  
 I tread the earth  
 So that I have faith in your existence  
 I lie down  
 And I face the windows that frame your message  
 And the ghazals that rain from you  
 And I am delighted  
 With the apples I sink my teeth into  
 When I swallow  
 Your rosy cheeks  
 Bite by bite  
 How strange and distant

**Despairs of the City**

(TH)

When you sit next to me  
 You lick my hair  
 Like a domestic deer  
 And I get lost in the leisure of watching you  
 And cover your unfamiliar lips  
 Under the rain of my lips  
 And in the malady of the night's fantasies  
 You make the city the bed in which you sleep  
 When the despairs of the world have wilted over the city  
 And I remain a farmer  
 Whose plantations  
 Hungry deers graze

**Outskirt of the Sea**

(AW)

with the steam of my breath I call you  
 in Kabul's frozen winter  
 counting the avenues one by one  
 like stubborn taxis  
 which spy in every direction  
 the wind carries my voice far-away  
 to sea, to river, to moon  
 birds scatter my sorrow.

sad melodies of shepherds in love  
 back and forth they call to me  
 you are there  
 I raise my hands up to the sky  
 I pluck the moon  
 I tie it up inside your hair  
 the shepherds come to watch  
 wind carries my voice far-away –  
 to mountains covered in snow

to the holy statue of Buddha  
 to the tangled-haired girls of Balkh and Bayman  
 who are returning from a stream  
 – your name is broadcast to the world.

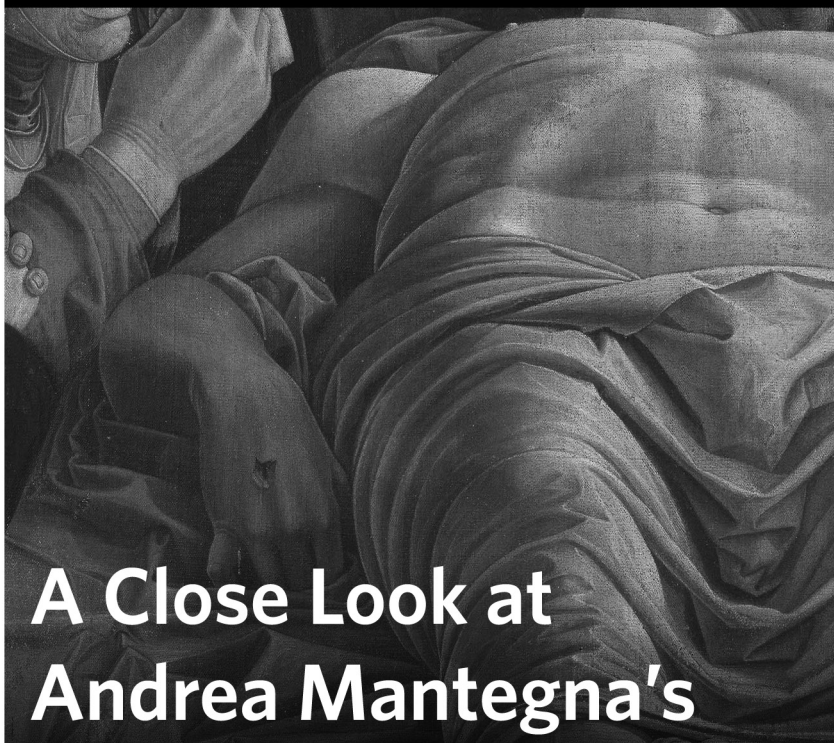
when you sit beside me  
 the sea gathers up its skirt  
 fish circle around your legs  
 you move your legs  
 the moon embraces your legs  
 giving the earth's attraction to you  
 the ebb and flow of the sea begins  
 but I send my words to greet you  
 words embrace me  
 become poems  
 and flow inside me  
 but you with fingers that smell of cigarettes  
 draw diagonal lines on the face of the world,  
 the world comes to an end in me  
 only crows sitting on my shoulders  
 are singing.

## **The Smell of Cigarettes**

(TH)

When you speak  
 The sea gathers its skirt  
 And the moon comes down  
 The wind carries my songs  
 With migrating birds to distant places  
 Poets turn you into a poem  
 And trees wave at you  
 But you  
 With fingers that smell of cigarettes  
 Walk gently along the parallel lines of the world ■

"WHEN I SEE YOU/ I REALLY SEE YOU UPSIDE DOWN/  
BUT MY BRAIN KNOWS BETTER/ IT PICKS YOU UP  
AND TURNS YOU AROUND" - DEATH CAB FOR CUTIE  
AS QUOTED BY PROF. FITZPATRICK IN CAS CC212



# A Close Look at Andrea Mantegna's "Lamentation"

BY SUMNER JONES

This analysis, a project for CAS AH352: Venetian Renaissance Art, zooms in on a 1480 work by an artist who reputedly began painting at the age of ten. Visit YouTube to view this selection from the Features & Multimodal section:



Use the QR code or <http://www.youtube.be/NVveEhoUUmM>

ZACHARY BOS

## Résumé

*If a man walks in the woods for love of them half of each day,  
he is in danger of being regarded as a loafer. – HDT*

Pencil-shaver, cabin-sweeper, mussel-  
poacher, pie-stealer. Backyard naturalist.  
Seed-counter, hope-tither, Macavity;  
cravated flâneur in the meadow mist.  
Semi-puritan Siddhartha; green-gowned  
guide to shrine-seekers at the kettle pond.  
Anchorite and socialite; Harvard plum  
in the Porcellian mode; trusted chum –  
hell, a near littermate – to the rust-streaked  
wood frog, and the gray treefrog, and the ground-  
dwelling eastern spadefoot toad. Song-master  
taught by whippoorwill. Charcoal-eater,  
cloud-suited Concord cuckoo with ideas  
notoriously hard to kill: Thoreau. ■

**Author's note:** Regarding "green-gowned"; as reported in Henry Salt's *Life of Henry David Thoreau*, Thoreau's "traits of aloofness and self-seclusion" were attributed by his college classmate Rev. John Weiss to "a sort of homely 'complacency'" which "had the effect of putting him out of sympathy with his surroundings at Harvard. Thus he is said to have worn a green coat at College, 'because the authorities required a black one'", reflecting "determined concentration on his own life-course." The phrase also suggests to me the green of nature with which Thoreau surrounded himself while in his small cabin beside Walden Pond. – ZB

TRAVIS TISCHLER

## Nevertheless, Each Day

They awake to a frightening contusion  
Christened with disfiguration and an evolving enhancement  
It lays politely next to them  
Repulsive like her mother or inviting like his father  
Each cursed in their own warm sheets  
With the weight of a hundred dead men  
Morphs into an inescapable entrapment so profound  
The sun's mirage can't reach them  
Slumber becomes more slumber and the mind  
Becomes the only companion as it always was, as it only can be  
An untrustworthy partner

Nevertheless, each day he finds himself with them  
Prancing and galloping between him and his frame  
He may get up but the entrapment has him scorned  
His iris burnt from the lack of light  
Jaded but not blind he may walk  
In between everybody and each other  
Only to circulate back into the sheets  
Which await with a disdained warmth  
Proudly presenting a sly grin  
As they know, all he can do is lay

And I too lay with him  
Recognizing their entrapment  
Watching him walk and just like him and them,  
I am subject to watch ■

CAT DOSSETT

**Event Scripts, 2021***after Yoko Ono*

## i. CHORE PIECE

Set up an ironing board in the woods.  
 String fallen leaves onto a clothesline.  
 Iron as needed.

SPRING

## ii. FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Fill a serving cart with supplies and snacks.  
 Push it throughout the city  
 and hand out refreshments.  
 Wear a uniform, if you wish.

SUMMER

## iii. MBTA PIECE

Gauge your luck with  
 public transportation.  
 Make the bus (a)  
 or watch it pull away (b)

WINTER

## iv. THE MENDING SPOT

Mark a spot in the woods.  
 Stand there to mend

FALL ■



COLLEEN RATH  
**Self-Portraits**



TJC

*The Journal Creativity Award:  
Honorable Mention*





ABBY DUERKSEN

## The Role of Charismatic Leadership in the Events of Jonestown in 1978

**I**n spiritual tradition or ritual, the line between religion and violence can often be blurrier than one might think. There are several cases where religious ritual or a collective belief is seen as adequate justification for acts that would otherwise be considered violent, if not for the element of spirituality and intent attached to it. While this is a controversial topic, other instances of correlation between religion and violence are a bit more difficult to justify, given the excessively violent and corrupt nature. In November of 1978, the colony of Jonestown, a religious sect led by Jim Jones, committed a mass suicide of more than 900 church members in Guyana. The incident gained immediate attention and still remains the largest loss of civilian life at one time until the attacks of September 11, 2001. The tragic event of course led to much investigation and speculation regarding what was it that allowed such an event to take place. How could it be that every single one of the hundreds of people who lost their lives that day were completely motivated by their own individual and spiritual will to commit suicide?

An idea relevant to this investigation is a term Durkheim uses in *The Social as Sacred* – “collective effervescence”, referring to a spiritual feeling that is felt within the soul and amplified as a result of this feeling being felt by others in proximity sharing the same belief. While Durkheim’s reasoning of collective effervescence can be applied to instances of religion and violence to some extent, and perhaps even the events of Jonestown, I’d also argue that this idea of collective effervescence as reasoning behind the mass suicide is largely outweighed by darker intentions: namely, Jim Jones using religion as a means to an end rather than means for itself. Other sources seem to support the idea that collective spirituality cannot be completely to blame for an event of this magnitude; one such critic made the following statement about Durkheim’s idea of collective effervescence: “I also suggest that it is *impossible* for participants in ritual to share common beliefs or intersubjectivity. Individuals may collectively perform a ritual without attaching the same belief, or any belief, to it” (Lee 5). Lee’s statement argues against Durkheim saying that religious motivations are ambiguous from the perspective of the individual. A combination of recorded speeches, personal accounts from Jonestown survivors, as well as what we know about the persona of Jim Jones all seem to characterize the powerful leader as a dangerously charismatic, manipulative, and well-spoken leader that craved power and knew precisely how to acquire it, by

appealing to others and rallying them in support of his own ideals. This investigation argues this exact point; while many believed that their actions were making them a part of these religious ideals Jones had preached to them so consistently, for Jones, the reality of his intentions was clear. His charisma as a leader allowed him to use religion as a mechanism for carrying out his own much larger plan, making the members of the church out to be unknowing victims of his madness much more so than the willing participants as he painted them out to be.

In the case of the 1978 mass suicide of Jonestown, the members were led to collectively carry out this act so they could be relocated to their eternal place in the afterlife that was seemingly much better than the life they lived on Earth. Or rather, this is what Jones preached to these people time and time again, people who felt that Jones was the guardian angel they had never had. While it is known that a large majority of Jones's followers came from marginalized groups in society, mostly African Americans, what is especially alarming about his church's congregation is that he enticed these groups with promises of luxuries they were not accustomed to coming from their low income hometowns, almost as if Jones saw these marginalized groups as easy prey for his wicked intentions. The following quotation is taken from an excerpt of a Jonestown survivor's personal account:

As I sat down to eat, a guilt washed over me. No one in Jonestown is eating this I thought. My appetite was suddenly ruined, and now I ate in deep contemplation. This was not Socialism; some having and others not. [...] Why were we not being fed properly when there was so much money in banks? Why was it not used for food? Why are we out here begging, like we don't have anything? This is what I can't understand; we were near starving or at least eating as if we did not have anything left. I would come to understand this tactic later on as the last white night was nearing. (Wagner-Wilson)

In this quotation, she is recalling a time when she was given permission to travel off of the site in Guyana and begins to realize she is receiving much better treatment compared to the conditions she was living under in the Jonestown colony with her family. The first aspect that is important to note is the mention of Socialism. As time went on under Jones's leadership, his teachings grew to be much more about social justice and reform and less about spirituality. As he gradually became more politically driven, the congregation seemed to take on an aura of what can be called an "us against them"

mentality. Preaching socialism, Jones used this idea to convince his followers that their movement was the right one, that they collectively fought for an equal and just society that aimed to provide balance between all members of society. Following this idea, that is why Wagner-Wilson's reference to Socialism is so important in her writing; because if Jones wasn't attempting to achieve his own ideals among his followers, then what were his actual intentions? Secondly, Wagner-Wilson questions the allocation of funds and the means of Jim Jones's intentions with the People's Temple congregation. In the last few sentences of the excerpt, she hints at the idea that there is something secretive that she could sense about Jones's sinister nature. The last sentence of the excerpt in particular directly references the events of the "white night" and connects it to the idea that it was something Jones had been planning for some time.

Author Doyle Paul Johnson stated the following: "The apparent ability to perform miracles provides objective and dramatic evidence of the charismatic leader's claims and so helps overcome the precariousness of [their] position" (316). In the case of Jim Jones, this quotation provides an explanation as to how Jones went about performing his manipulation tactics on his followers so that they would see him as their divine leader. My sources suggest various ways in which he did this, whether it was causing distrust between families or sexually harassing young women and girls using justifications of religious discourse. Additionally, there's evidence that he did in fact stage "miracles" to happen during church services so that his followers would see him as a sort of deity. All of these aspects contributed to his end goal.

The concept of religious violence refers to violence committed with religious motivations. However, Jones's motivations in carrying out the events of the white night seemed to be anything but religious. The circumstances under which the events of the white night took place seemed to drive Jones to madness and built up paranoia that resulted in the deaths of hundreds. Jones appealed the idea to followers saying that it was a release from a society in the secular world that seemingly was not ready for them. But for Jones, it was a last stand against an opposing force that he would not allow to take his pride and dignity as a leader. In David Chidester's work *Salvation and Suicide*, outlining the nature of the congregation and the events of the white night, he writes the following about how people were to think about their impending suicides: "Again death was symbolized as a welcome friend. 'It is not to be feared,' one man declared. 'It is a friend.' Death was a joyous release from a body that had served as only a temporary abode" (156). A problem with this perspective, however, is that it doesn't seem to explain the various bodies that were found with gunshot wounds instead of their death

resulting from the kool-aid mixture that Jones had given out. In addition, spirituality and collective effervescence cannot account for the children who were given the poison first, so the congregation was forced into the notion that there was truly no going back.

In analyzing the events of the white night, a crucial precursor that must be noted are the words of Jim Jones in his final speech to the members of the People's Temple before the mass suicide. From the first minute, he talks about those in opposition or seemingly against them that, according to Jones, have "made [their] lives impossible" (FBI). He continuously uses language such as this indicating that their life is a small price to pay for the joy of the after-life, if Jones even truly believed that. My sources also suggest that in the later years of Jim Jones, he began to identify as an atheist, therefore seeing himself as a god instead. In the final speech, he aims to paint himself as inclusive saying that every decision he's made has been for the good of the congregation, and it was the same with his asking them to poison themselves for the good of the whole. The records of the speech also highlight one woman in the crowd who attempted to change Jones's mind talking about the potential lives of the children, only to be quickly ridiculed by other members of the People's Temple. Jones attempts to respond to her in an understanding manner, but it's clear his intentions are solid and he does not care for the opinion of the woman. The tone of his speech seems to grow in paranoia as time goes on. Context is a very important element to understand in association with Jones's speech because it has taken place after a tense visit from a congressman and Jones is aware that murder is soon to be committed against him by a member of the People's Temple. It's always been a rather convenient fact that Jones is insistent on his followers taking the poison promptly after he realizes his leadership position will be compromised with the controversy of a murdered congressman. It paints the white night as Jones's attempt to escape consequences and preserve his pride and reputation instead of some ritualistic release from all the things wrong with society. The reality of the situation is that in the society of the People's Temple, Jones was what was wrong with society. Jones had no intention of bettering society; a documentary released for the 40th anniversary of the Jonestown deaths included interviews with survivors who revealed that while Jones had been known to preach racial diversity and acceptance and even use it as one of his main platforms for the People's Temple, members of these communities would take note of the fact that Jones's entire inner circle was white (ABC News). It's likely that performative activism greatly aided Jones as a manipulation tactic to grow his congregation of followers to those who were already marginalized by society.

In the course of examining these materials I have pondered the question of whether or not violence, as an objective term, is adequately justified by religion. The answer is tentative in the case of the mass suicide of the Jonestown colony, as the violence was induced by a manipulative leader; perhaps this example does not apply to the question at hand. Some forms of ritualistic violence may be adequately justified by religion, but the events of the ‘white night’ were not. Religion was not the motivation; it was the *mechanism* of motivation used by a narcissistic and power-obsessed man. Scholar Bruce Lincoln writes: “No practices are inherently religious, and any may acquire a religious character when connected to a religious discourse that constitutes them as such” (6). Lincoln is not writing of the events of Jonestown, but his statement proves applicable because it separates the aspect of religion and spirituality from the practice in itself and makes the argument that when the spiritual element is isolated, all we are left to observe are objective acts of violence “connected to a religious discourse.” Personally, I don’t believe that any ritual performed under the ideals that religion is meant to represent should ever be of a violent nature. And in the case of Jonestown, hundreds of people were convinced that what they were doing was in the name of religion. So in some sense, collective effervescence and individual spirituality was at play in allowing Jones to carry out the mass suicide. But knowing this, how does it change the significance if the movement’s leader did not seem to believe what he was preaching to his followers? His power was gained and amplified through charisma, fear tactics, and manipulation. Religion was used as a tool to benefit his own agenda rather than the spirituality that it is supposed to represent, the spirituality that the victims of Jonestown believed they were laying down their lives for. They were actually laying down their lives to help a power-hungry man escape the consequences of his actions.

In the aforementioned documentary it is stated that there was “a point where [Jones] could no longer control perception of him” (ABC News). This creates a very prevalent tone of self preservation in reference to Jones that seems to greatly overshadow any spiritual or religious implications of the mass suicide. Furthermore, the interview also reveals additional commentary from the perspective of Jones’s son stating that to some extent, he believed his father always knew he was a “fraud” behind the facade of strong leadership he outwardly showed to his followers.

The events of Jonestown should not be categorized under religious violence *per se*, but instead as the tactics of a manipulative and dangerous leader. Jonestown community members believed that their lives were serving as a protest against the secular world when all Jim Jones had in mind was a protest against accountability. ■



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## - ANALECTS OF THE CORE -

"TALKING TO OTHERS MAKES ME SHUDDER.  
IF THEY SHOW INTEREST IN ME, I FLEE. IF THEY  
LOOK AT ME, I TREMBLE. I AM CONSTANTLY ON  
THE DEFENSIVE. LIFE & OTHER PEOPLE BRUISE ME.

**I can't look reality in the eye."**

FERNANDO PESSOA, 1915

SUGGESTED BY ZACHARY BOS



## ANALECTS OF CORE

## Favorite Quotes, Part II

**F**rom Hobbes' **LEVIATHAN**: "This is more than consent, or concord: it is a real unity of them all, in one and the same person, made by covenant of every man with every man..." (109) ■ From Rousseau's **DISCOURSE ON THE ORIGIN OF INEQUALITY**, Part II: "It is iron and wheat that have civilized men and ruined the human race." (*suggested by Prof. David Roachnik*) ■ From Butler's **GENDER TROUBLE**: "Gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a stylized repetition of acts." (Chapter IV) ■ From Weber's **THE PROTESTANT ETHIC AND THE SPIRIT OF CAPITALISM**: "Am I one of the elect?" (110) ■ From Douglas' **PURITY AND DANGER**: "Some argue that even the most exotic of ancient rites have a sound hygienic basis." (Chapter 2) ■ From Durkheim's **THE DIVISION OF LABOR IN SOCIETY**: "But is it true that the happiness of men increases in proportion as men progress? Nothing is more doubtful." (189) ■ From Marx's **GRUNDRISSE**: "Nature builds no machines . . . these are products of human industry; natural material transformed into organs of the human will over nature, or of human participation in nature." (Section G) ■ From Oreskes' **MERCHANTS OF DOUBT**: "Industrial civilization has been dining on the energy stored in fossil fuels, and the bill has come due." (266) ■ From Rousseau's **ON THE SOCIAL CONTRACT**: "Force is a physical power; I fail to see what morality can result from its effects." (Book 1) ■ From Du Bois' **THE SOULS OF BLACK FOLK**: "The true college will ever have one goal – not to earn meat, but to know the end and aim of that life which meat nourishes." ■ From Shelley's **FRANKENSTEIN**: "Make me happy, and I shall again be virtuous." ■ From Foucault's **DISCIPLINE AND PUNISH**: "We are in the society of the teacher-judge, the doctor-judge, the educator-judge, the social worker-judge; it is on them that the universal reign of the normative is based; and each individual, wherever he may find himself, subjects to it his body, his gestures, his behavior, his aptitudes, his achievements." ■ From Alexander's **THE NEW JIM CROW**: "The genius of the current caste system, and what most distinguishes it from its predecessors, is that it appears voluntary. People choose to commit crimes, and that's why they are locked up or locked out, we are told. This feature makes the politics of responsibility particularly tempting, as it appears the system can be avoided with good behavior. But herein lies the trap. All people make mistakes." ■ From Shakespeare's **HAMLET**: "Report me and my cause aright." (V.ii.323) ■

CHARLOTTE BEATTY

## Constructing the Virtual Enemy



Winner of  
The Journal  
Essay Award

**T**his past fall, my small New England hometown experienced a contentious Board of Education (BOE) election, where three extremist Republican candidates made it onto the ballot and held the potential to disrupt the historically liberal status quo in our public schools with their hysteria around critical race theory and explicit denouncement of anti-racism. Their campaign was largely created in response to local 2020 Black Lives Matter protests and steps the district superintendent had taken to improve diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives in our predominantly white school district. The July 2021 caucus that solidified the extremist slate's spot on the BOE ballot incited a period of several months where the town experienced a collective moral panic surrounding racism, white privilege, party lines, and the overall integrity of the town that was often verbalized and explored through public town Facebook pages. As I watched emotionally charged and hateful dialogues from liberals and conservatives circulate the digital space of Facebook, I noticed that the hateful rhetoric employed by town citizens, regardless of partisan lines, was often coded and paired with statements of denial, whether outright emotional, blatant forms of denial, or more nuanced, negotiative forms of denial. This led me to my guiding question for this paper: What is the relationship between hatred and denial as it manifests in online discourse?

What I found through evaluation of Facebook posts and dialogue was that denial is an essential tool for expressing hate online. Condemnation of the 'opposition' was frequently partnered with denial that they had any potential for redemption, meeting of perspective or growth. By drawing on the work of Nitzan Shoshan and Roser Benito-Montagut, I analyzed the ways in which Facebook users created visible objects of hate by inserting scenes and elements of the everyday life in the online sphere for public observation and commentary. This controlled, deliberate posting of personal stories and photographs, accompanied by statements of hatred and denial, managed the expression of hate online and the direction that it flowed. Objects of hate were made visible by individual users and the direction of hate towards one political affiliation was carefully mediated through expressions of denial of potential common ground and sustained by co-presence created between ideologically similar users and the author of a post.

To understand the management of hate as it occurs in the physical world, I drew from Shoshan's *The Management of Hate*, which explores how affective governance occurs between the government and alt-right extremist youth in East Germany. While

his work engages with the physical phenomena that facilitate and manage expressions of hate, elements and observations from the physical interactions he observed can be potentially translated to what I observed in online spaces, especially in relation to the public transmission of hateful affect and its management through denial. On a larger academic scale, the line between emotion and affect is blurry, so I will be engaging with Shoshan, who understands affects as “attachments and investments that, while perhaps not entirely conscious or explicit . . . are not unstructured intensities or indeterminate potentialities [and] are always already socially mediated and configured structures of feeling (Shoshan 2014).

William Mazarella’s writing on affect has also influenced me to think about the idea of an online “crowd” that affect passes through – he notes that crowds often become “mimetic feedback loops, with an inability to contain influence or direction of energy” and that public discourse often holds the potential to “solicit us as embodied members of a sensuous social order” (Mazarella, 296–7). The idea of a “sensuous social order” is supported by what Shoshan observes in his ethnographic work – the sights, smells, and positioning of foreign bodies, food, and businesses create a sensual “politics of visibility” that raise “contestations over the visual representation of the new Germany through the visual management of its past” (Shoshan 2016, 228). The sensuous social whole is very much dependent on what is made visible and invisible in public spaces, and by consequence Shoshan observed his informants’ hatred to manifest as primarily directed towards what is immediately visible in the quotidian space, such as a body or business in one’s daily path. In this way most “objects of hate” are tied to and sustained by what is immediately visible to a hater in their everyday life. While more abstract concepts and feelings like anger about immigration policy or ethnonationalism may influence and inform expressions of hate, Shoshan found the affect of hate to be primarily grounded in the quotidian space and experience and managed by visibility. This makes the question of how hate is expressed and sustained in the online space, and what role denial may play as a mediator, all the more interesting, as platforms like Facebook are spaces where disclosure and visibility are deliberate, controlled acts.

However, to better understand the mechanics of online social gathering and communication before applying theoretical analysis to it, I turned to the work of sociologist Roser Beneito-Montagut, who drew on the work of Erving Goffman to study how six high-frequency Internet users performed and managed emotions online. In Goffman’s work published in the mid-twentieth century, he observed several key components of social interactions: single visual and cognitive focus of attention, mutual and preferen-



tial openness to verbal communication, a heightened mutual relevance of acts, an eye-to-eye ecological huddle, and a “we rationale”, or sense of the single thing two people are doing together at the same time (Beneito-Montagut 539). Goffman concluded that these elements produce “a circular flow of feeling among participants as well as corrective compensation for deviant acts”, but Beneito-Montagut observed that based on the vast potential differentiation of online interactions, a “flow of feeling” could be disrupted, accelerated, or multi-situated between users. The most important distinction in online interactions, however, was one-to-one versus many-to-many communication. On many-to-many platforms, such as Facebook, communication does not need to center or be catalyzed by a singular person or idea, “implying a clear objective of communication in itself and attention is organized around topics rather than people” (ibid. 544). This depersonalized baseline of communication in the online space means that when people do choose to engage with one another rather than the broader collective, that engagement is highly intentional and creates a sense of copresence “acknowledged through focused attention and achieved by expressive signs embedded in online talk” (ibid. 545), which is to say, through engagement via comments, shares, likes, and so on.

Within the highly intentional space of online communication, Beneito-Montagut also observed how much users value control, not just over the attention they receive, but over the attention of others as well, and maintained this control through various tactics. These included self-disclosure of identity and boundaries, the power to publish, delete, and block media or users, and limited participation on two counts – the inclination to engage with content and accounts most ideologically similar to the user as well as the likelihood that platform software would generate users, groups, and pages more aligned with a user’s interests. While there are blurrier boundaries to online encounters in some regards, for example, the infinite lifespan of a post or lack of explicit ritual to mark the complete end of an encounter, these elements help maintain the continuous sense of copresence or huddle just as much as Goffman’s directed actions of engagement do – so often do we see users engaged in dialogues in a comments section weeks, months or years after a post has been published. These considerations of temporality are essential to understanding how hateful sentiments are produced and maintained in the online sphere, and call attention to the paradoxical nature of posting media in online communities – users have incredible control over what content they share and yet the content itself simultaneously has ambiguous boundaries and may be extremely malleable or uncontrollable in how it is perceived, manipulated, and responded to. While there are still clear boundary tactics to manage communication such as privacy

settings, blocking users, and deleting posts, affects can also become sustained, called back to, and reinserted into discourse because of the ability to circumvent linear temporality through posting – as I saw within my own town, for example, citizens could publicly recount and share stories, media, and the emotions embedded within them that had occurred weeks, months, and years ago, reinserting both the media and the emotions into the present moment and potentially creating an indefinite lifespan for a post and the dialogues attached to it, depending on how long it stayed up or was circulated online.

The tenuous ability to manage expressions of hate through these technical controls and blurring of temporality was very apparent in the Guilford Facebook page. One woman shared a post on December 4, 2021, about a month after the election, which had been won by the liberal Democratic slate (Figure 1). The post is a photo of a broken window, accompanied with a personal testimony about what the woman was told by police – that hers was one of a series of houses that had been targeted due to the progressive signs in their yard. She draws a clear line between herself and those who allegedly attacked her house – “inclusiveness” versus “cowardice” – and warns others to be wary of the attacks. The post received one hundred comments, echoing and expanding on the division first drawn by the post author – “This is the unconscionable work of cowards” received five likes, and a joke to put together a reward to find the culprits received thirteen likes. Others labeled the attack “unacceptable”, “disturbing”, “infuriating” and “unbelievable.” One user commented, “Modern day brownshirts. This is who those people are.” and others echoed “This is why we persist” and “It needs to be punished as a hate crime.” The implicit denial of any possibility of morality in the culprits through the extreme comparison of the vandals to Nazis demonstrates the use denial plays in expressions of hate online. One user commented that people should avoid speculation and avoid assuming the vandals were extremists based on limited facts, and received two replies from other users refuting him and restating that the act was a hate crime, again implicitly denying the possibility that the broken window, while upsetting, was perhaps not indisputably due to the progressive yard signs, or at all near the same level of violence as the Ho-

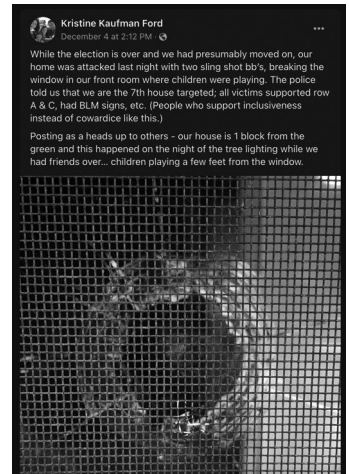


Figure 1



locaust. Similarly, the original author of the post could control which comments she replied to, and tended to thank users who expressed shock, disgust, and sympathy, but did not engage with users who raised questions about the validity of the allegations. Through these intentional engagements, users who were aligned with liberal politics and who shared an expressed hatred of the extremist individuals in town were able to create a sense of copresence – the “we” mentality discussed by Goffman – while simultaneously maintaining that the window-breaking was severe enough to warrant a serious and hateful response from other community members. What is interesting is that while a Facebook section may become a “mimetic feedback loop” as described in Mazzarella’s analysis of affect circulated through crowds, it does not necessarily have the same “inability to contain influence or direction of energy” that a physical crowd might. As Beneito-Montagut observes, users are deliberate, and can choose which comments they interact with and emphasize and which they ignore or delete, consequently boosting certain emotions and neglecting others.

Considering the potential online comment sections have to control and create norms for expression of emotion, the broken window post raises questions about finding the line between hatred and accountability, if it can be found at all in the online space. While on the one hand, acts of violence such as throwing rocks at people’s homes are not acceptable and perhaps public condemnation through an online mimetic feedback loop of disapproving comments could create a sense of collective disapproval, it is also important to consider how political lines were drawn by online users and became inherently a part of the condemnation. Damning extremism, hating a political party, and damning the vandalism in and of itself became one in the same. This provokes thought on how the “adversary to enemy” phenomenon Shoshan notes may manifest in the online space and blur expressions of hatred and demands for action together.

In his study of German politics, Shoshan discusses the critical transition from radicalism being perceived as that which was far from the mainstream but not threatening to the liberal democratic order, to the “fractal recursion” of political alignments and transformation of certain forms of “radicalism” into “extremism” that were deemed evil and an active threat (Shoshan 2016, 7). This shift marks a transition from that which is perceived as nonthreatening to a newly designated political and social enemy. In Germany, Shoshan observes the tenuous category of extremism to be perceived as “an obscene potential that lurks within the most ordinary forms of life” and that the fight against it “has ingrained itself as the constitutive kernel of a post-reunification national project.” Similar to Germany, in the U.S. extremism has come to symbolize not only

the recent past and present of Trump's America, but the U.S.'s larger history of white supremacy and racial violence as well, and for many, the fight against it has become central to creating a new national vision for the U.S. As the past has been increasingly confronted through social movements and public debate over the future of the country, national extremism has become, more than ever, an ever-lingering source of national anxiety, lurking in the shadows of the everyday. In this case of a smaller community like my town, the threat of extremism is presented as an ambiguous vandal throwing rocks through windows, reflective of a larger issue of shadowy, evil actors who are a threat to the entire social fabric and moral integrity of the town. In the Facebook dialogues online, anxieties about extremism expressed through hatred of extremists seem to be perceived as synonymous with demands for accountability and action. This reflects what Shoshan refers to as "working through a national neurosis" in the German case, writing that "taming cultural anxieties and forever policing the exclusion of another that obstinately contaminates the inside" have become essential to dealing with extremism within the social community (ibid. 10). In the case of Guilford, anxieties about extremism made present in the everyday through the proximity of the election and tangible acts like the broken window are expressed and worked through in the online space of Facebook, and become a vehicle for liberal citizens to police extremism through expressions of hatred and disgust. The lines between expressions of hatred and calls to action become blurred, and one becomes synonymous with the other.

In this way the deliberate posting of content like the broken window becomes a virtual "otherwhere" – a term Shoshan uses to describe the nature and function of extremism as a category and the spaces that are affiliated with it. Otherwheres are "spaces where a whole range of anxieties can be projected" and where in-group norms can demand a high degree of homogenization so that the self can be distinguished from the source of anxiety. Posts like the broken window photo become virtual otherwheres, a symbol for the community to project anxiety onto and a tool for drawing a clear differentiation between liberals and extremists by homogenizing either side – "inclusive" versus "cowardly." The irony of this is that conservative members of the town are creating the same effect with their posts and dialogues, but flipping the script to frame liberals as the pervasive and unacceptable social threat. One extremist Republican BOE candidate shared a photo of a chart on her Facebook wall, explicitly mapping a clear differentiation and division between the different slates (Figure 2). One user commented beneath her post, "Everything the left touches, it destroys. It's time for citizens to take their country back from these coercive utopians who want total

control.” Others echoed “The A & C is a ticket from Satan himself” and “[the left] acts like they support everyone but only support those that follow their ways... Those who don’t are punished, ridiculed, and cast aside.” One user pushed back on the sentiments that had been posted by other users demonizing the Republican party at large in the Guilford Facebook page, commenting that “being a Republican does not make you a racist, extremist or a person that is against equity or equality.” A leftist user replied to this and argued through several comment exchanges, most notably retorting with “everyone should stand for something and that does mean choosing a political side when voting.” Just as room for grey areas was denied in leftists posts and dialogues, so too was it denied in conservative discourse – any attempt to distinguish between Republican and extremist political affiliations was denied by intentional policing from other users, as was potential humanity, reason, or morality among the leftist opposition. The reiteration that there are hard “sides” with homogenous traits that everyone must align themselves with again denied any room for range of opinion or common ground to be found across party lines. Shoshan notes that otherwheres reveal

not so much what one is not but rather the nature of deep anxieties about the potential of becoming – or indeed, already being contaminated by – one’s nightmares; hence, the profound discomfort and angst that physical proximity to right-wing extremist ‘things’ seem to provoke among many Germans (ibid. 9)

In the context of the town election, either side had constructed online “things” to represent the opposition – photos of letters to the editor, photos of campaign signs, and personal testimonials about encounters with candidates or their supporters. This created media served to reproduce the markers of extremity and anxiety in the physical world within the online space of Facebook. Due to their online nature, however, these markers could exist beyond the lived moment and become everlasting sites for users to express hate and draw lines between the self and the despised other.

	ROW B	ROW A & C
<i>Range of opinion?</i>	Expect diversity of	Expect uniformity of
<i>Attitude toward those who disagree?</i>	Tolerance of the eccentric	Hostility to the deviant
<i>Atmosphere encouraged?</i>	Benevolence	Fear
<i>Methods allowed?</i>	Argument and rhetoric only	Use any tactic, e.g., ad hominem, shouting down, threats, doxing, etc.
<i>Final judgment?</i>	Individual independence encouraged	Conformity demanded
<i>Media?</i>	Some choose generic platform and some choose publisher functions	Secretly and/or double-standard-selectively de-platform
<i>Government's role?</i>	Protects free speech	Censors
<i>Formal education?</i>	Liberal education ideal	Authoritarian
<i>Underlying philosophy?</i>	Reason, objectivity, individualism, social wins/loss	Irrationalism, subjectivity, collectivism, social adversarialism

Figure 2

It is important to remember however, that these online expressions are fragmented and never show a full picture of reality. Beneito-Montagut's work emphasizes how intentional and deliberate any act of online engagement is, and posits that the self is ultimately centered in any online encounter as individuals "seek to confirm their global self-conceptions and attribute meaning through social encounters in the online realm." (Beneito-Montagut 550). This, in combination with Orkideh Behrouzian's ethnographic study of Iranian blogger communities, suggests that online social interaction can create a warped perception of collective reality for an individual. Behrouzian observes that virtual communities are spaces of possibilities and make-believe, allowing post-war Iranians to negotiate emotional experiences and their meanings and "make sense" of things (Behrouzian 9). She discusses how online dialogues help individuals internalize larger social and psychological discourses and constitute new social norms and networks (*ibid.* 10). In the case of the town Facebook groups, the discourses and emotional negotiation revolve around politics, so networks being formed create political alliances among individuals who are ideologically similar. However, Behrouzian writes that the online self is in itself also fragmented – it is "neither complete nor polished due to the fractured act of editing and publishing" and corresponds to the fragmentations of personal memory and subjectivity (*ibid.* 10). Nevertheless, individual expression and online encounters still held the potential to create affective networks of collectivity and community, or as she puts it, "an affective arena for the reconstruction of memories and reworking and working through unprocessed emotions." (*ibid.* 10). While there may be unity felt in working through emotion together online, the perceived experience of the collective online is still inextricably framed by personal subjectivity and limited by the fragmented nature of online communication.

This raises concerns about the consequences of online dialogues like those in the town Facebook pages. I often observed personification of the town and invocation of the collective in phrases like "This isn't who we are", "for everyone's daughters and sons", and "let the little town with a big heart and great character be a leader for change." These linguistic observations pointed to an underlying assumption among some users that they were speaking on behalf of the collective, and this assumption seemed to be validated via affirmation from other users who commented on, liked or shared an author's post. Beneito-Montagut stated that when someone posts something on a many-to-many platform like Facebook, copresence is not a given as usually no one person is a target of the post and therefore no one is obligated to respond. Rather, copresence is established and expanded on every time a new user chooses to inter-

act with the post (Beneito-Montagut 550). In the case of Facebook, copresence and consequently, validation, can be measured numerically by number of comments, likes, and shares. I believe that this may create a false sense of certainty that one's opinion is reflected or shared by the broader collective, when in reality those who are choosing to comment and validate a user's thoughts on a many-to-many platform are other users who are intentionally deciding to engage with the post and are likely already very ideologically similar to the post author. I think these self-feeding echo chambers exacerbated division between liberal and conservative discourses online, and made the calls to action to oust either opposing extremist group feel all the more powerful and statements of denial seem all the more impervious. When you have a hundred people leaving messages of agreement on your post to form a mimetic feedback loop, it can be easy to forget that the other 19,900 town members are not present in the dialogue.

Denial becomes an essential part of this feedback loop then in that it creates firm, non-negotiable facticity about the authors of Facebook posts and their expression of hatred. If the possibility of nuance or the potential unreliability of an author are both denied, then hateful demonizations of the extremist other are made to seem like completely legitimate reactions to utterly immoral actors, no matter the quality of the subject matter at the heart of a post. I think for this reason denial is an essential tool in expressing hate in the online sphere, especially in the context of extremism and political debate. While I do believe there is a necessity for communities to identify and address acts of racism, hatred, and misinformation, I think it is also important to critically evaluate and understand how online discourses play a role in both seeking accountability for harm and perpetuating conflict and aggression. The ethnographic example of Guilford's Facebook page shows how hate is managed and sustained in online spaces by statements of denial of nuance or humanity in bad actors that always appear alongside cries to oust extremism from the community, as well as the creation of visible subjects to project anxieties onto.

**T**he real-world effects of these dialogues of hate are difficult to gauge – if the only indicators of affect online are the linguistic and visual components of the online sphere, seen in both media published and volume of engagement, it is difficult to get at a universal experience of affect felt somatically by all individuals involved in an online dialogue, and yet the experience of an affective waves of emotion sweeping through online communities on platforms like Facebook seems to have become more and more common in recent years. What is certain is that online encounters on many-to-many

platforms like Facebook are belabored with intention, deliberation, and immense potential for editorial control and transcendence of temporality. The ways in which this enhances and constrains collective experiences of affect should be researched more, as well as the ways in which the paradox of the online sphere's potential for highly controlled and highly malleable forms of communication can obstruct or influence perceptions of reality. These questions seem to be essential to the ongoing misinformation crisis in the U.S., and Guilford's election drama exists as a bottlenecked example of a broader issue in the evolving online American political landscape. It is worth understanding what function expressions of hate, particularly those made in good faith to prevent or dissuade violence, racism, and bigotry, truly serve, and how essential expressions of hate and disgust are in demands for action and accountability. If the online discourse of hatred of extremism constantly use denial of potential growth or rehabilitation of extremists to index extremists as "cowards" who are a lost cause and pervasive threat to society, then I wonder what space there is to address and remedy extremism beyond social and institutional policing and carceral punishment. It is essential to understand what role denial of humanity in the liberal "other" serves in conservative discourses of hate, and how potential denial of intelligence and humanity in the feared other may serve to perpetuate cycles of political violence and white supremacy. It seems that hatred best maintains its legitimacy when the object of hatred is denied certain qualities of nuance, and instead adopts a rigid, impenetrable image to be forever invoked as a justification for perpetuating hate. ■

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MARIA OSIPOVICH

## Recreation



The Journal  
Sustainability Award:  
Honorable Mention

*"Nature is out of control you tell me and  
that's what's so good about it." – Eileen Myles*

**A**utumn in the White Mountains of New Hampshire is a damp, muddy festival of color. Maples and birches burst into fiery hues for several weeks before their leaves join decaying branches and pine needles on the forest floor. In the winter months, the forest lies still under the weight of several feet of snow, covering the complicated topography underneath. Eventually, the wild fractal ice formations on the tops of alpine spruces melt and the mountains turn green again. To the average observer, the environment around the many popular hiking trails in New Hampshire appears uniform. But at a closer look, the history of the White Mountains area permeates the land – old stone fences rotting under moss and lichen mark boundaries between pastures and crop fields; swathes of old growth evergreens merge with early successional stage forests and take over farmland cleared during the merino wool sheep craze of the 1800s. Separate from loud urban areas, traffic, and bright lights, the cycles of the White Mountains have persisted for centuries. Their climate, thought to be resistant to increasing global temperatures, is changing, like many other ecosystems across the globe. The impact will not only affect the mountains environmentally, but also culturally, as sites to witness vivid seasonal change and breathtaking extremes.

There is comfort in the inevitability: the countless think-pieces on our inevitable doom from anthropogenic climate change imbue a fatalism that nothing we do now matters. But should one jump when the bridge is already collapsing under them? Confrontation of reality in the Anthropocene distills it into snippets of information that we now receive so rapidly there is no time to reset without feeling socially amputated. Compounded with a pandemic, where isolation could not be supplanted with interaction, and unrelenting negativity that transformed into a self-reinforcing cycle with no way out except through hyperlinks. Hence one accepts that nature is irreparably affected by human action, and one becomes frozen envisioning the scale of the problem. The constant demands of industrialized society leave us perpetually nervous, and this fear is a dominant mechanism for profit. However, we have the capacity to change and adapt in radically short periods of time. There is power in the choice to silence notifications even for a short period of time and to sit alone. Anxiety, with its hand-wringing

and throat-closing, is an efficient tyrant, but not irrepressible. The ability of people throughout history to wax poetic about birds or stones or buds on trees indicates the profound grounding effect of stepping outside of our manufactured chaos. These new social conditions affect human health. When the gap between ourselves and the world around us widens, isolation amplifies and resists change. For an invisible creature with no natural predators, seclusion becomes the dominant survival mechanism, and it becomes easier to fear the stillness of the natural world. Yet our resource for breaking this pattern has undergone rampant commercialization. The barriers to outdoor recreation are artificial: going outside becomes a novelty affordable only by those with time and money for GORE-TEX and tour guides. But our biosphere has no regard for social status. It consists of infinitely-connected microcosms, from weedy grasses growing through cracked sidewalks to continent-spanning deserts. All we need to navigate nature's convoluted communion is our curiosity, a resource which is powerful even on a small scale. By getting outside, life beyond foreboding walls of text materializes. Wonder motivates millions across public parks every year, but the outdoors needs to remain accessible to encourage change for the future. In terms of knowledge, the ability to identify local plants or animals is not restricted to biologists. Amateurs are just as effective at sharing with others the beauty of the natural world and at inspiring care for biodiversity. Understanding how we affect our environment turns collective despair into action.

There is nothing to 'get' about the outdoors. The human connection and fascination with nature has persisted for millennia, and the social value of exploring life around us will persist even in the face of the greatest challenge to the planet's wellbeing. Our insecurity is unstable and ugly, but if the never-ending popularity of nature documentaries is any indication, we are able to embrace the uncertainty of being one of many organisms on this planet, resultant from billions of years of evolution, still adapting. Hopefully, it will be enough. ■

- ANALECTS OF THE CORE -

"RATHER SEEK OUR OWN GOOD FROM OURSELVES,  
AND FROM OUR OWN LIVE TO OURSELVES."

JOHN MILTON, *PARADISE LOST*

SUGGESTED BY JONATHAN HAN (CORE '18, CAS '19)

EMILY YODER

## The Great Turtle Is Drowning: The Effects of Climate Change on Mackinac Island



Winner of  
The Journal  
Sustainability  
Award

**M**any Michiganders close the summer with a family road trip to Mackinac Island, located in the Straits of Mackinac in vast Lake Huron. According to the local tourist bureau, the tiny island, only about eight miles long, rose to local appeal as a tourist hub during the Victorian era and has attracted summer travelers ever since. While the island is home to an abundance of tourist traps and attractions – including typical souvenir shops brimming with mass-produced t-shirts and a seemingly out-of-place but always busy “haunted” theater – the families that make the trip year after year return for its old-world charm and calming ambience. Cars are banned on the island, with the exception of emergency vehicles, and travel occurs either by foot, bicycle, or horse-drawn carriage. The landmark Grand Hotel, which was built in 1887 and has hosted Mark Twain, Esther Williams, and multiple U.S. presidents, sits atop a grassy, landscaped hill and welcomes visitors with billowing American flags stretched across its porch, which is the longest in the world. Guests enjoy afternoon drinks from rocking chairs that overlook the Straits of Mackinac, postcard-perfect Round Island Light, and passing freighters carrying iron and copper ore to and from Michigan’s Upper Peninsula. The hotel still requires a dress code for dinner service and is a sanctuary of bygone times in an increasingly fast-paced world. Guests loll in its eclectically classy lobby, decorated with custom carpets and furnishings by renowned interior designer Carleton Varney before falling asleep at night to the sound of waves on the shore, the clip-clop of horses, and live jazz music and dancing at the upstairs cupola bar. With its astounding natural landscape and calming atmosphere, Mackinac Island draws guests and visitors across multiple generations season after season.

However, if one visited the island during the past summer of 2021, pushed off on their bicycle, and headed to M-185 (the world’s only car-less highway, which encircles the perimeter of the island in a loop), their trip would have been cut short by construction crews, loose gravel, and a cracked roadway that is slowly being consumed by the

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Top, Mackinac Island shoreline. Bottom, erosion on M-185. 4 August 2020. Photos by the author.



pristine waters of Lake Huron. A reconstruction project budgeted at \$6 million closed M-185 for much of the summer 2021 tourism season after the roadway was partially destroyed by rising water levels and storms during the winters of 2019 and 2020 (Kessler). Rising water levels and the erosion that they have caused during the twenty-first century have threatened lakeside communities throughout the entirety of the Great Lakes. Water levels have risen by as much as six feet, causing sand dunes, stone, plant life, and entire houses to slide into the water, destroying both residential communities and the natural landscape (Brown). Although water levels in the Great Lakes rise and fall cyclically the changes of the past few years have been unprecedented and historic. During the summer of 2019, water levels in Lakes Superior, Erie, and Ontario hit historically high levels and those in Lakes Michigan and Huron came within one inch of their highest recorded levels in recent history (Cosier). These rising water levels are the results of higher amounts of rainfall, which are caused by climate change as higher temperatures allow more moisture to be held within the atmosphere, leading to more severe rain and thunderstorms (ibid.). While overall precipitation in the U.S. increased by 4% from 1901 to 2015, precipitation in the Great Lakes region increased by nearly 10% (Wuebbles).

While rising water levels and erosion have threatened nearly all lakeside communities on the Great Lakes, Mackinac Island’s continued existence as an essential part of Michigan’s tourist economy, residential areas, and an incredibly beautiful natural landmark and State Park is particularly threatened. Due to its small size, Mackinac is especially at-risk for substantial damage caused by erosion. M-185 was partially underwater during the winters of 2019 and 2020 and is not only a heavily-frequented tourist attraction but also an important route of transportation for the island’s year-round residents, numbering five to six hundred persons (mackinac.com).

Although Mackinac Island exists purely as a destination in the minds of most Michiganders, it does have a permanent residential community that is threatened by climate change. Many of the island’s houses, including historic, Victorian mansions, lie perched on limestone cliffs that are susceptible to erosion and breakage as a result of rising water levels, as well as decreased accessibility as M-185 has become damaged.

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Top, view over Mackinac Island downtown; photo by the author, 3 August 2020. Bottom, photo by Island resident Jason St. Onge of coastal erosion, published with the article “Portion of M-185 on Mackinac Island to Be Closed to Continue Repairs from Erosion Damage” by upnorthlive.com on 26 May 2021. Included here under fair use guidelines.







Furthermore, rising temperatures as a result of climate change threaten permanent residents' mobility and quality of life in the winter. Ferries are the main means of transport to and from Mackinac Island; there is a small airport on the island, but it does not run commercial flights and is limited to private charters. Ferry service ceases when the Straits of Mackinac freeze in the winter. During the winter, residents remain on the island until ice on the lake surface is thick enough to permit crossing on snowmobile ice on the surface of the lake to traverse via snowmobile, typically by midwinter (Mariner). The "ice bridge" gives residents some freedom during the isolated season to leave the island by snowmobiling to St. Ignace in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. However, warmer temperatures prevent the bridge from forming, so while it may be too warm for residents to cross the lake on snowmobiles, ferries are not running as an alternative. A state of thermal limbo occurs in which it is too cold for ferries to run, but too warm for the ice bridge to form.

Although Mackinac Island's downtown center and landmarks such as the Grand Hotel attract tourists, its rich natural beauty and status as a preserve are arguably its main source of allure. Mackinac Island was the country's second national park (established in 1875) and since then has become a state park; nevertheless, it is a biodiverse location and attracts hikers, kayakers, rockhounds, birdwatchers, and many other visitors seeking to admire its natural wonders (MHSP, "Parks & Attractions"). The island is filled with limestone formations and its rocky shores are covered by limestone pebbles, Lake Superior agates, and many fossils. Over six hundred plant species live on the island and it is covered by dense, coniferous forests as well as by marshes, bogs, and open fields (Hamilton, "Environment"). The island is inhabited by bats, beavers, toads, migratory birds including hawks, seagulls, and eagles, blue jays, woodpeckers, cardinals, red foxes, raccoons, and many other species of wildlife, all of which are threatened by climate change ("Natural Wonders"). The Environmental Law and Policy Center's 2019 report asserted that rising temperatures throughout the Great Lakes region will drive species out of their native homes as temperatures rise and precipitation patterns change (Wuebbles). While the exact impact will vary from species to species – some will flee north, others will flee west; some may not survive – Mackinac Island's species will all be threatened. Fish will be at risk as well; warming water temperatures have already begun to push fish into the cooler waters of Lake Ontario (*ibid.*). Furthermore, the report predicts that shifting water levels and temperatures will increase the incidence of diseases in fish such as botulism due to bacteria growth. In turn, this will lead to the death of fish-eating bird species which spend the summer on Mackinac Island

before migrating (ibid.). Mackinac Island's wildlife populations, natural landscape, and natural resources are at risk as a result of climate change.

The Odawa and Ojibway indigenous tribes who first inhabited Mackinac Island referred to it as Michilimackinac, meaning "great turtle." According to their creation story for the island, their ancestors watched a giant turtle surface out of Lake Huron and settle on the surface of the water. This turtle became the island and Mackinac's topography arose from its shell (Hamilton, "Native Americans"). Mackinac Island is a key genesis point for the Anishinaabek – comprising the Odawa, Ojibway, and Potawatomi peoples – and curators of the island's historical communications have only recently given publicity to its indigenous history, despite the story of the great turtle being an integral part of state lore for centuries (Stateside). Eric Hemenway (Anishinaabe/Odawa), Director of Archives & Research for the Little Traverse Band of Odawa Indians, collaborated with Mackinac State Historic Parks staff to create a trail of Native history markers on the island in 2015 (MHSP, "Cultural History Trail").

Hemenway also collaborated with the Parks to restore the house of Agatha Biddle, an indigenous woman who lived on the island and observed the forced relocation of Michigan's indigenous tribes firsthand (Armitage). Biddle was also a pillar of the island's community during the nineteenth century and housed foster children while conducting fur-trading from her family's home . . . which would have been quite unusual for a woman at the time as well (ibid.).

Ironically, the timing of this overdue honoring of Native history coincides with rising water levels and climate change of the twenty-first century that threatens the island's existence. Without drastic action to mitigate climate change and fight rising water levels, the great turtle may sink beneath Lake Huron's waves once more, as it did before the tourists, before the Victorian visitors, and even before the Anishinaabek, the original islanders, designated Mackinac Island as their ancestral home. ■

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- ANALECTS OF THE CORE -

**"The mind is its own place**

AND IN ITSELF CAN MAKE A HEAVEN OF HELL,  
A HELL OF HEAVEN.

JOHN MILTON, *PARADISE LOST*

SUGGESTED BY NELOY BHOWMIK (CORE '17, CAS '19)

LAUREN GOTARD

## Detachment from Divinity: The Origins of Evil and Milton's Fallibility in *Paradise Lost*

As Europe entered the Age of Enlightenment, many prominent writers engaged in an intellectual movement to understand the morality through reason. However, memories of the bloody Wars of Religion and violence in the New World posed a paradoxical question, nipping at the heels of progress: where does evil come from if the universe is commanded by a benevolent, omnipotent God? Scholars like Alexander Pope expressed an optimistic view of divine judgment while Voltaire, in his "Poème sur le désastre de Lisbonne", disparaged theodicies as inherently fatalistic. In *Paradise Lost*, John Milton attempts to "justify the ways of God to men", yet his explanation of how evil originates from man's imperfection reveals his own literary shortcomings. The poet successfully proves *why* God permits the existence of evil, as his subjects must be independent to create true goodness, but Milton ultimately fails to explain *how* the Lord knows but does not control fate, as the writer is removed from divine knowledge, forced by language to describe God in human terms.

Milton confirms that evil thoughts derive from the Lord's creations because they are begot and removed from the initial perfection of the divine. Following Platonic metaphysics and St. Augustine's theory in *Concerning the Good, Against the Manichaeans*, the poet illustrates that not everything *from* God is actually *of* God. The writer emphasizes his own separation from the divine when he invokes the holy spirit to disclose knowledge "invisible to mortal sight." Petitioning supernatural aid, he acknowledges his and all human beings' division from godly omniscience, attempting to represent the Father "unblam'd" but recognizing that men are naturally prone to misinterpreting the divine. Just like the poet, Adam and Eve are "godlike" yet only in the sense they are derived from "the image of their glorious Maker." By admitting man's estrangement from divinity, Milton effectively presents a "theodicy from below", locating the source of evil in the defective nature of human beings. Through this estrangement, Milton illustrates how the Lord cannot reasonably be blamed for the existence of sin when he is the embodiment of perfection and his creations derive from him in inferior form.

The poet proves that the Lord has gifted mankind the free will to reason independently by juxtaposing Satan's and man's perceptions of God, but man's detachment from divine knowledge enables him to misinterpret divine intentions and become



the *creator* of evil. While God has given all rational beings the potential to reason right and love the Lord, he announces that “reason is also a choice” encompassed under free will and subject to man’s flawed judgment. In his political treatise “Areopagitica”, Milton expands on the idea of potential while championing for freedom of speech, describing that God has made man “sufficient both to judge aright and to examine each matter.” Scholar Dennis Danielson at the University of British Columbia argues that Milton’s inclusion of characters with antagonistic perceptions of God proves that the way to determine if the Lord is good is by personally judging whether “the object of our worship is wholly worthy of being worshipped.” When God places Adam and Eve in Paradise, he tells them “Do this and you shall remain happy”, leaving the pair with the right to discern “what doing this (obeying the will of God) requires.” Although they interpret the Lord as good and choose peace, Satan’s hatred demonstrates how the reasoning of an imperfect mind can easily spoil the potential for good. Milton crafts the figure of the devil who, like human beings, is endowed with the capability to reason well, but does not reason right. In book four of the epic, Satan introspects on his miserable state, intelligently admitting he is a harbinger of evil and not a heroic rebel. But free will also allows him to reason askew and distort God’s throne into “the Tyranny of

Heaven.” Satan’s fall is a mirror for the initial obedience of man, emphasizing that, like all of God’s rational creatures, human beings maintain the “capacity to make the right choice and therefore the wrong one.” In response to the question “how can anything sinful have come from God?” Milton provides a clear answer: it does not. Evil is the creation of ‘free agents’, entities separate from divine command with the ability to think independently. By exercising this right, man is free to label God a divine Lord, or mistake him for an unhinged tyrant.

The writer reveals that God’s creations are only privy to the outward appearance of divinity; therefore, they can extrapolate evil intentions from the Lord’s empirical goodness. While Genesis provides a blunt portrayal of man’s fall, Milton foregrounds the psychological capabilities of God’s creatures to construct false realities out of his perfection. The devil is unaware of the ideal form of divinity; in turn, he is *free* to pervert the appearance of heaven from a divine realm to an oppressive kingdom. His ability to conceive an image of “God as a paternal tyrant” confirms that the Lord’s imperfect subjects can form opinions of their external environments based on their own subjective reasoning. Satan’s perception of persecution becomes linked to his identity, influencing “his understanding of everything” and causing him to view all heavenly landscapes as miserable reminders of his defeat. Like the devil, Eve can only speculate about the superficial environment of Eden. Upon her creation, she is enraptured by her appearance in a river, incapable of locating a living, breathing entity beyond her watery reflection. Her idea of the Lord is malleable because she does not possess knowledge of his true form; the devil is able to manipulate Eve’s similar psychology, convincing her that God desires to keep human beings “low and ignorant” in forbidding the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. As her focus shifts from glorifying her extreme closeness to the Lord towards her separation from him, she mentally transforms Eden into an enclosure, barring her from divine knowledge. Although she is deceived, Eve’s ignorance of the divine is what allows her to construct a prison out of paradise, accepting Satan’s lies. Milton’s characters become encased in the evil “which wells up from within” their inferior minds, distorting God’s grace with their flawed reasoning. When Eve actually tastes the fruit, or Sin literally springs forth from Satan’s head, the evils these characters imagine *become* their realities – and “this then is the world” in their eyes. Their perceptions of their external surroundings are effectively changed, influencing them to act immorally. Once they perceive the Lord in a particular fashion, their opinions become powerful enough to *create* personal evils out of objective perfection. If God is good because men perceive him thus, they may also denounce him. Would it not be easier



for the Lord, in all his omnipotence, to create a brigade of automatons willing to obey his commands within the realms of heaven and earth?

While Milton admits that man's imperfect reasoning creates evil, he elucidates that choice also lets him express *true* love; therefore, God allows human beings to act independent of divine command so that they may create real goodness. The Lord permits the possibility of evil because he desires "true allegiance", or love borne of independent thinking (Milton 3.104). God could have easily constructed "an artificial *Adam*" whose admiration is ensured by divine force. But he discerns that in order for any good, or evil, to exist, it must be willed outside of his control. Because man's liberated state is precarious, he can always misapply his freedom – this danger is a necessity, as the Father must let him exist beyond divine constraint or he cannot act in any meaningful way. If evil outweighs automation in God's divine balancing act, then Milton sufficiently justifies the lack of heavenly intervention. The Lord *must* permit Satan and his army of defeated angels to rise up from their loosened chains because "the possible good which presupposes freedom" eclipses the potential evil predestination could prevent. The poet verifies that, for God, man's detachment from divine control is a necessary risk in the formation of honest, adoring subjects.

Confirming that the Lord does not force his creations to be good, Milton demonstrates that when goodness emerges in spite of man's ability to produce evil, it is all the more impressive. The Father includes the fatal Tree of Knowledge in Eden as a trial for man because "merely declaring the goodness of God is one thing", but affirming it "in the face of evil" is far more challenging. Author Stanley Fish quotes Christopher Ricks as saying that if men are free to fall, "were they not already in some sense fallen?" Man enters the world already impure because of his inherent capability to sin yet what purifies him is "trial by what is contrary." By constantly reminding himself that God's commands are just, man actively chooses morality in spite of being able to sin. Ultimately, the writer explains that God allows Mulciber to construct Pandemonium, Satan to rally his troops, and the snake to beguile Eve because these sins create the opportunity for the greatest good of all; his Son may "willingly" volunteer to redeem mankind and rescue it from spiritual death. When God asks his council of angels for someone to assume bodily form and give their life for man's salvation, heaven falls silent and "Intercessor none appear'd." But he does not force any of his heavenly attendants to step forward, nor does he preclude the fall of man himself. Instead, Milton justifies God's choice to *let* goodness take shape as the Son organically offers himself in a pure act of humility – a grand gesture of redemption that can only emerge from

the possibility of man's destruction.

While the poet effectively explains *why* God allows man to create evil, Milton is also separated from divine knowledge and restricted to the time-driven terminology of language; he cannot clearly depict a being as both a deterministic deity, aware of man's fate, and a timeless spectator, removed from its execution. The poet's literary theodicy describes the Lord only somewhat successfully because his work is beholden to a medium which "cannot break out of the world of language." Milton has already proved that man is removed from God's omniscience. Therefore, all literary theodicies can merely "construct a linguistic speculation" of an unknowable, divine reality. While the writer indicates that the Lord's foreknowledge "*had* no influence" on human beings' fall, they would have acted the same even if God did not possess premonitory power, he contradicts himself. Because the poet must choose a discreet verb tense, he cannot properly voice a being who "dwells in an eternal present" far beyond "our categories of time and tense." The past form of "*had*" portrays God, or the force of Providence, as having already sealed man's fate; the Lord appears to remember a predestined outcome that has since occurred, a memory of how Adam and Eve already "*ordain'd* their [own] fall." Struggling to categorize God's grasp of past, present, and future without necessarily enforcing fate, the poet's dialogue depicts a confusing entity. While Milton justifies the Lord's decision to allow the creation of evil, the actual intricacies of his knowledge *of* but exclusion *from* man's fate exceed the temporal limits of language. Whether God is the Deist spectator or Calvinist scripter of man's fall, the writer's explanation of mortal autonomy cannot describe the Father's inexpressible multi-dimensionality.

Acknowledging this paradox, Milton includes rhetorical uncertainties to leave some space for man to dictate his own fate; but ultimately his contradictory language leaves the reader unsure of the extent to which mortal agency can determine the future. When God portends Satan's infiltration of Paradise, he expresses some doubt. The poet voices a deity who is unsure whether the rebel angel will attack man with violence "*or* worse" design. The inclusion of "*or*" implies that auxiliary possibilities may engender the same fatalistic outcome. Although man will fall, God does not know exactly how. Perhaps Satan will employ deception over physical violence and "By some false guile pervert" mankind. Milton's choice diction of "*some*" insinuates that while the ultimate fall of man is necessarily going to occur, the steps leading to his disobedience can only be "known certainly after the fact." At the very least, the poet's rhetorical ambiguity leaves room for Adam and Eve to freely decide their own behavior leading to a prescribed end, serving as "Authors to themselves" in the rising action of their epic story.

But despite these caveats, the writer's explanation of the ultimate fate of man is, once again, contradictory. At the end of his speech to the Son, God reveals the redemption of man will derive from "grace in me." Now man's earlier autonomy seems insufficient to override Providence. Milton struggles to balance mortal and divine will as he works within a medium that is "textually determined", demanding definite plot parameters and a clear source of blame for man's fall from grace. While he does contradict himself, the poet's pitfalls are expected, especially after he proves man's inherent separation from providential knowledge.

Even if Milton fails to explain God's role in man's fate, he still endows humanity with an important responsibility. Although human beings are to blame for any and all evil in the world, to the extent that they are capable of dictating their individual actions within the plan of Providence, let them not squander it. He implores man to reason right and use his freedom for good, striving for righteousness despite his eternal separation from the divine. ■

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#### - ANALECTS OF THE CORE -

"TO BE GREAT IS TO BE **misunderstood.**"

RALPH WALDO EMERSON, *SELF-RELIANCE*

SUGGESTED BY XIAOHAN WANG (CORE '21, CAS '23)

NYAH PATEL

## Once Again, an Argument for Liberal Education

Reviewed:

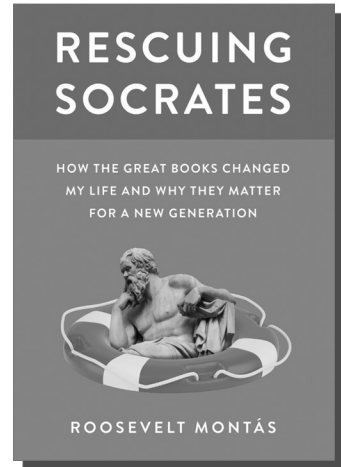
*Rescuing Socrates: How the Great Books Changed My Life and Why They Matter for a New Generation*

by Roosevelt Montás

Published in November 2021

Princeton UP; hardcover, 248 pp.

9780691200392



In *Rescuing Socrates*, scholar Roosevelt Montás makes a case for the enduring value of what he terms a “liberal education.” In order to accomplish his task, Montás relies upon his own upbringing and experiences; from his immigration from the Dominican Republic to New York City as a child, to his subsequent integration into Columbia University’s Core Curriculum, he takes formative historical figures and their works from the Core and applies them to both his own development as an academic and the problems he identifies in academia.

The question as to what this so-called “liberal education” actually comprises is foundational to understanding Montás’ work. Admitting that the notion is “not well understood, even among academics”, he chooses to define it as “[education concerning] the human yearning to go beyond questions of survival to questions of existence.” By way of methodology, he chooses four historical thinkers to support his claim – Augustine, Plato, Freud, and Gandhi – to examine closely, each of whom allowed Montás to grow as a person in different ways. He likens Augustine’s *Confessions* to a coming-of-age story mirroring his own life, while *City of God* allows Montás to ruminate on the nature of power, social and political, through his personal lens. Aristotle, using Socrates as a messenger, forces Montás to see decisions not just in terms of himself, but in terms of the potential human impact to others; in doing so, he gains closure on his once-fraught relationship with his father. Montás is able to directly apply Freud’s psychoanalytic techniques, as outlined in *Five Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*, with the help of a therapist. This leads him to his current vocation as an educator while also allowing him to achieve balance in his life. Finally, from

Gandhi, Montás gleans greater appreciation for his own immigrant story, along with principles well-suited to critique modern values of western civilization.

The strength of his argument comes in part from how eloquently Montás is able to describe his own experiences, those of both a new college student and of a seasoned academic. Despite being wholly focused on his own, subjective interpretations of these great thinkers, he leads the reader to believe that, yes, this could apply to anyone, and there is value in that. Part of what he is trying to argue is that liberal education should be “... the common education *for all* – not instead of a more practical education, but as its prerequisite.” By connecting these works from across time and space to his own story, Montás is able to show us exactly how anyone might be able to gain some benefit from them, even if they are not a philosopher, or a psychologist, or a peacemaker.

However, what is also the book’s greatest strength doubles as its greatest weakness. Because the account is so personal, it is inherently based on Montás’ own experiences, which are primarily within the context of the Columbia University Core Curriculum; at times, the book feels more like a long-winded advertisement for this program than anything else. The argument is also limited by Montás’ identity as an English scholar, a perspective which does not encompass the entire variety of experiences within academia. It would be a mistake to imagine that the types of thinking that govern humanities discourse are comparable to, for example, those of the physical sciences.

In arguing for a liberal education, Montás also argues that it is under attack, particularly from what he terms a “research ideal”, which teaches students to focus more on objective fact than on introspection. Arising from the Scientific Revolution of the 16th and 17th centuries, Montás blames René Descartes and his *Discourse on the Method for Conducting One’s Reason Well and for Seeking Truth in the Sciences* for this alleged obsession with truth, to the detriment of liberal education. It is in this that the gaps in Montás’ claims can be seen. Oftentimes, as with Boston University’s own Core Curriculum, Descartes is included in this list of influential historical thinkers, not set apart from it as Montás chooses to do. He appears to make an error in assuming that a “liberal education” would be selective about the types of historical thinkers it chooses to posit. If this were the case, then how would it be any different than what the ‘research ideal’, which Montás believes is currently at the forefront of academia, is doing?

Montás is wonderfully effective in justifying why humanities and social science teachings ought to be valued in the context of an undergraduate education, but seems

to believe that this type of education can provide more value to any student than can a research-based one. My own perspective is likely just as, if not more limited than Montás'. But, as a biology student approaching graduation who has gained insight from both Descartes and Plato, I have to disagree with him. No one type of education can necessarily be superior to another, but as Montás shows us, I have no doubt that the issue of "liberal education" will be argued for years to come. ■

SOREN CHANG

## Giving New Life to the Music of the Oldest Story

Reviewed:

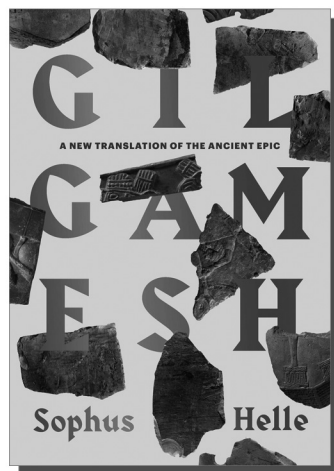
*Gilgamesh: A New Translation of the Ancient Epic*

translated by Sophus Helle

Published in October 2021

Yale UP; hardcover, 320 pp.

9780300251180



At approximately 4,000 years old, *The Epic of Gilgamesh* stands legendary in the literary world as the earliest epic tale we have written recordings for. This mythical Sumerian story is carved into clay tablets in the ancient script of cuneiform, a syllabic writing form and the oldest method of script known to man. The tablets follow the journey of the semi-divine Gilgamesh, a hero, a king, a tyrant, and his beloved Enkidu – a man of the wilderness created to be Gilgamesh's equal and opposite to balance his character – as they battle, kill monsters, and face death. At its core, *Gilgamesh* is a tale of the mortal condition and a lesson on the values to hold dear during a fleeting, temporary life.

The epic has been tackled by many scholars and translators throughout the years including the iconic David Ferry and Stephen Mitchell. In 2021, Yale University Press released a new translation by Sophus Helle, who had already once translated *Gilgamesh* into Danish. The translation is the most direct and literal yet, pulled directly from the cuneiform for an audience of literary scholars and general readers.



## Gilgamesh in the Core

For years, the students of the Arts & Sciences Core at Boston University studied David Ferry's monumental rendering of the epic, one that Harvard professor William Moran described "a highly selective and reactive . . . transformation" rather than a translation (jacket copy). Ferry's rendering is fluid, reading like a poem written in English verse rather than a translation from a language long dead. In 2019, Stephen Mitchell's version was introduced to the Core classroom – a version in which, he explains in the front matter, he works to "find a genuine voice for the poem . . . lithe and muscular enough to match the power of the story." His eloquently concise adaptation of *Gilgamesh* seems more tailored to the contemporary audience; in his Introduction, he speaks to the changes he made and the blank spaces he filled to adapt the Sumerian epic to modern times. These artistic choices so appreciated in Core are exactly the choices Helle declines in his translation.

## The Murder of Humbaba

One of the most prominent themes in *Gilgamesh* is wilderness vs. civilization. Enkidu's creation as a man of the wild, a directly antithetical character to Gilgamesh the king, and his subsequent journey into the civilized world allows the reader to determine what the Sumerians held as characteristics unique to humanity. As Enkidu becomes increasingly intertwined in the culture of Uruk and mankind, he further embraces the human values of pride and honor Gilgamesh holds esteemed. When Gilgamesh suggests the two head deep into the Cedar Forest to murder its guardian, the monster Humbaba, Enkidu shows initial apprehension at murdering "the terror of men." With tales of glory and valiance, he is convinced by Gilgamesh, and the two head out of their city Uruk and into the Cedar Forest.

The initial description of the Cedar Forest in Helle's translation of Tablet V is much longer than the descriptions in Mitchell and Ferry. He keeps the sensory details of the forest's peace, its "sumptuous cedars" and their "pleasant, joyful shades", as well as the repetition of lines like "filling the forest with . . . joy" to create a quiet atmosphere of tranquility. The Cedar Forest is a place of gentle ambience, and Helle's maintenance of the extensive focus on that ambience gives the first indication that Gilgamesh and Enkidu are about to commit a sin—that their murder of Humbaba is an unjustified one driven by selfishness.

As Enkidu and Gilgamesh approach Humbaba, the great monster of the Forest, there is a phrase of broken dialogue in which Humbaba "[converses] with his

heart” in fear and anguish. Much is missing from this speech, likely the reason this small bit was omitted from Ferry’s rendering as well as Mitchell’s. This moment of vulnerability in Helle’s translation, though fragmented, adds depth and humanity to the character that serves to emphasize the moral corruption of Gilgamesh and Enkidu, for what is more human than the fear of death? Gilgamesh’s desperate terror of his own mortality after witnessing Enkidu’s death defines the second half of the epic. This fear of death is a crucial aspect of Gilgamesh’s character development, the final step he takes in his transformation from an arrogant and tyrannical king, two-thirds god, to a man fully cognizant of his impermanence. To give the trait that delineates Gilgamesh’s inescapable human nature to Humbaba, the monster they kill, is a glaring indicator of their offense.

It is ultimately Enkidu – far too enraptured with the idea of glory through gore – who encourages Gilgamesh to kill Humbaba in a repetitive speech that spans pages and is interrupted by Humbaba begging for his life. “No mother gave birth to me”, Humbaba pleads, “no father brought me up: the mountain gave birth to me, you brought me up! Enkidu, only you can release me. Speak to Gilgamesh, save my life!” The parallels drawn between Humbaba and Enkidu in this line illustrates the death of Enkidu’s “wild side” and his whole-hearted embrace of both the good and the bad of civilization. Helle’s version is unique because this scene is longer, drawn out, violently explicit in a way the other versions are not. In his faithfulness to the Sumerian text, Helle spotlights the conclusive point of no return in Enkidu’s fall from grace, playing into the juxtaposition of Enkidu’s growing dehumanization and cruelty as he journeys deeper into the grasp of the civilized world. Upon Enkidu’s death, ordained by the gods “because they killed Humbaba, who kept the mountains thick with cedar”, Gilgamesh is left to grapple with the images of honor and legacy and what really matters in life, left behind in the wake of Enkidu’s degeneration.

## **The Voice of Helle’s Gilgamesh**

Unlike Ferry’s elegant poetry and Mitchell’s polished storytelling, Helle’s translation adopts a language much more reminiscent of the original text. It includes the consistent use of heavy repetition present in the cuneiform but absent in Ferry’s and Mitchell’s versions, and tries to reproduce the epic as literally as possible. Prioritizing the voice of the Sumerians over his own, Helle leaves entire paragraphs and pages blank to indicate where the text has been rendered unreadable by time.

Helle also includes the Tablet XII, an appendix “translated directly from an older

Sumerian tale” that details an alternate ending to the epic—Enkidu is alive, and as per Gilgamesh’s request, journeys to the underworld to fetch his ball and bat, instruments in a game played in the epic (Helle). Many translators, including Mitchell, exclude this tablet seeing as it deviates sharply from the rest of the story. Ferry includes the tablet, but it was never read in the classrooms of Core. Helle’s inclusion of it along with a short explanation of its nature is a testament to his faithfulness to the original text. Commended for the life it gives to the “music of the original”, Helle’s retelling is a gateway to the true rhythm of the oldest story in the world, and a fascinating look into the morals and beliefs of those who came long before us.

### **“A gentle rain fell on the mountains”**

To spotlight the choices Helle has made, let us look more closely at a representative moment where Helle’s translation differs from others. In Mitchell’s *Gilgamesh*, two lines of “gentle rain” wash over Gilgamesh and Enkidu following their murder of Humbaba. Students in Core devote entire class periods to the analysis of this section, asking what purpose the rain served in the scene, what it implied about the morality of (and the stance of) the gods regarding Humbaba’s murder, and why the word “gentle” seemed apt. Helle, by contrast, chooses to leave the opening of this line a mystery lost to time. One could say his writing of the text with a lacuna – as “. . . fell on the mountains” – detracts from the scene and overall story, but it’s yet another display of Helle’s commitment to the text he wanted to create.

The different versions by Mitchell, Ferry, and Helle all serve different purposes and address different audiences – when considered alongside one another, they seem each well-suited to their own purpose, and do not reflect on each other as being greater or lesser works of literature. Mitchell writes for literature students, filling in those “many gaps in the text” in order to create a comprehensive story. Ferry’s is a text that would most likely appear in a poetry class. Helle’s is designed for those with come to the book with a certain amount of background knowledge on the adventures of Gilgamesh and Enkidu, and are interested in a scholarly reading that emphasizes the text itself rather than the over-arching themes that play through the text and which have carried the epic across history.

**T**his latest version provides deeper insight into Sumerian construction of the city of Uruk, and in doing so, breathes life into the treasured cuneiform and clay tablets we are so fortunate to have inherited from the past. ■

CAROLINE FERNANDEZ

## On the Tangled History of Beauty and Racism

Reviewed:

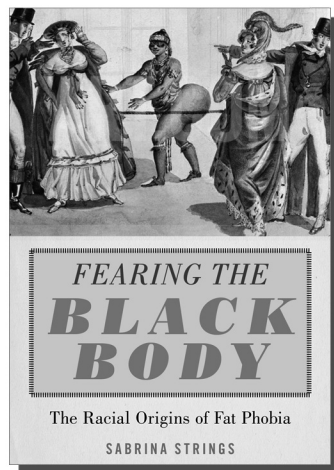
*Fearing the Black Body: The Racial Origins of Fat Phobia*

by Sabrina Strings

Published in May 2019

NYU Press; hardcover, 296 pp.

9781479819805



**D**ominant Western beauty standards have consistently been reflective of whiteness. *Fearing the Black Body* by Sabrina Strings contextualizes how thinness fits into this narrative. The conceptualization of “race” necessitated the establishment of distinctions and inferiorities to uphold the already functioning framework of slavery. The identities of whiteness and blackness were developed to work in opposition, and one of the easiest ways to racially differentiate people was through their appearance; namely, the color of their skin and the shape of their bodies. These differences were initially pushed forth as a means of justifying the subjugation of Africans for the exploitation of labor. Post-slavery, they have been maintained as a means of continuing the legacy of black suppression.

Contrary to our modern understanding, anti-fat bias was not conceived in the medical field – art, religion, and philosophy filtered through the prism of racism were the true pioneers of this movement, and science is but the most recent to join. Early artists set the standard of “perfect” proportionality as a measure of beauty. Black women as perceived by colonists did not fit this description. They had observably bulging, bountiful flesh. As such, the colonists determined it was only in the “uncivilized” regions of the world that being fat could be considered attractive. Protestants and Catholics further reinforced this concept, adding that fatness was indicative of gluttony, one of the cardinal sins. It is interesting to note the widespread influence of religion in non-religious spheres of life; Catholicism sustained a noteworthy impact on non-believers. All of these disciplines worked together to reinforce the idea that fatness was indicative of inferiority, and by extension, because blackness was associated with fatness, they were seen as naturally subservient.

Strings' work is relevant because not much change has materialized over time, aside from the adoption of new forms of anti-blackness. 'Culture vultures', as they are colloquially referred to, are those who appropriate aspects of a culture not their own without enduring the stigma, discrimination, and racism these groups often face. The Kardashian sisters are often identified with this term for the body augmentation procedures they have undergone to achieve fuller forms, thicker lips, and darker skin without consideration for the consequences black women have faced for naturally bearing these very characteristics. They have popularized and sensationalized this form of femininity that Strings suggests is synonymous with the black female form. This extends even beyond the emulation of the anatomy of the black body and into



**Left:** a political caricature (cropped) by William Heath from 1810, showing Saartjie Baartman as the object of attention for prime minister Lord Grenville and playwright and parliamentarian Richard Sheridan. **Right:** the cover image (cropped) from Kim Kardashian's 2014 appearance in *Paper* magazine. **Sources:** "The Significance of Sarah Baartman" by Justin Parkinson for BBC News <[bbc.com/news/magazine-35240987](http://bbc.com/news/magazine-35240987)> and "Kim Kardashian Tries to Break the Internet; Internet Responds Hilariously" by Victoria Hoff for *Marie Claire* <[marieclaire.com/celebrity/a6711/kim-kardashian-paper-mag-cover](http://marieclaire.com/celebrity/a6711/kim-kardashian-paper-mag-cover)>.

hair styles. While the Kardashian women are dubbed fashion-forward for sporting box-braids, black women face disrespect and work-place discrimination for donning the same style—a style conducive to their hair’s natural texture.

One noteworthy parallel reflective of these differences in social treatment is that of Kim Kardashian’s 2014 appearance on the cover of *Paper* magazine and the colonial exploitation of Sarah Baartman. Sarah, or Saartjie, was born in South Africa and subsequently transported to England in the early 19th century to be showcased as a curiosity. She attracted tourists from across Europe with the exclusive intent of analyzing the extreme curvature of her body. She was poked, prodded, humiliated, and violated. Even the one boundary she set in her lifetime – avoiding the inspection of her genitalia – was ultimately disrespected in her death when scientists dug into the cavity of her body searching for anatomical differences between African and European forms. Her life was defined by the dehumanization enforced on her by Western obsession with the shape of her body. Now, in the 21st century, as Kim Kardashian increases her hold on pop culture, so do the dimensions of her backside. Given the extreme nature of her transformation, it is evident that she is surgically achieving her intended aesthetic. When her *Paper* cover was released, it provoked comment and interest just as widely as Baartman had, but Kardashian is celebrated as an empowered sexual icon whereas Baartman was scrutinized, corralled, gawked at, and treated with animalistic cruelty. Admittedly, Baartman and Kardashian lived during different points in history, and thus operated within different contexts. However, even now as beauty standards morph over time, black women are always excluded in one way or another. Fuller figures have come ‘into fashion’, but there is no regard for how black women have historically been treated for naturally appearing as such. Strings brings this important and contemporaneous point to the forefront. In reality, conditions have likely shifted as despite white women once having turned up their noses at black bodies and culture, they now actively emulate those same features. The modern beauty standard encapsulates all the defining elements of black beauty, and yet black women remain underrepresented.

Society has not yet entirely progressed beyond the narrowness of the premium it places on Eurocentric beauty. This is evident in the modern modeling industry, dominated by slender, white women. Social media has helped perpetuate these standards, making them more widely accessible, particularly to impressionable teenagers. It wasn’t until recently that “body positive” movements came to fruition, largely because white women are increasingly detrimentally impacted by the



unrealistic standards prevalent in society. The issue is no longer exclusive to black bodies. Reverence of the svelte form has precipitated a sharp increase in eating disorders. It has now become important to represent the natural female form, now synonymous with softer, plumper bodies. When black women were constrained by these same ideals, there was no widespread concern or outrage, yet now that the issue has expanded and affects white women, there is a movement towards acceptance of the “natural” female form. Furthermore, there is no widespread acknowledgement of the racist roots of fat-phobia, making Strings’ work all the more important.

*Fearing the Black Body* demonstrates how black women’s bodies have historically been marked controversial. Their natural curvature has been mobilized as justification for slavery, mistreatment, and discrimination. The book provides important context for many contemporary racial issues, specifically cultural appropriation. It supplies insight regarding the origins of the beauty standards we have grown accustomed to. Strings’ work is also relevant to the awareness of black women in feminism, given how heavily women’s body positivity factors into it. It is imperative that moving forward, there is wide scale awareness for how fat-phobia has impacted black women. Strings shows how many cultural aspects – from art, to religion, even cereal brands – have contributed to pervasive fat-phobia. In order to adequately address fat-phobia and the other issues it has precipitated, attention must be paid to its racist roots. ■

JAMIE POIRIER

## A Look at History’s Most Luxurious Book of Kings

Reviewed:

The *Shahnameh* of Shah Tahmasp

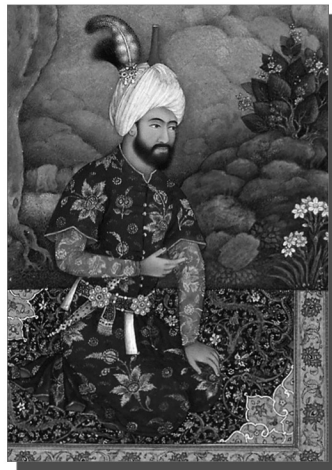
text (Persian) by Ferdowsi

edition in the mid-1530s

gifted to Sultan Selim II in 1568

Tabriz, Iran; 759 pp. w/258 illustrated

Disbound pages in var. collections



The *Shahnameh*, also known as the Book of Kings, is one of historical Iran's greatest and most celebrated texts. Regarded as one of world literature's largest epics, this book has been illustrated into various versions both in and outside Iran throughout time. Highly renowned as the national epic of Iran, the *Shahnameh* begins with ancient and mythical kings and the genesis of humanity, then follows the legendary history of Persian heroes and rulers. Along the way it includes tales of how man came to be civilized, to wield fire, to learn crafts, to fight demons, and to learn language, before closing with the history of the Sasanian Empire. It features the renowned tales of Zahhak, Fereydun, Rostam, and many others, and ultimately serves as an example on how to live righteously (Ferdowsi and Davis). The detailed epic has long had a place in Iranian history and culture as well as extensive influence on the surrounding region. The *Shahnameh* of Shah Tahmasp, sometimes referred to as the Houghton *Shahnameh*, is one of the epic's most ornate editions and serves as a shining representation of Persian classical artistry. It deserves to be more widely known as a masterpiece of book arts, as recognizable in cultural discourse as the Gutenberg Bible or the tablets of *Gilgamesh*.

## History of the Edition

The poet Abu'l Qasim Ferdowsi (940–1019/1025 CE) began writing the *Shahnameh* in 977 CE and completed it in 1010 CE, having written approximately 50,000 couplets in Early New Persian. The *Shahnameh* would become a lauded work, and was widely commissioned by courts in Iran and in the surrounding areas of central and south Asia. Many illustrated versions of the *Shahnameh* exist – the one under consideration here was completed mostly under the rule of the 16th-century Shah Tahmasp. Its 759 pages of text with 258 accompanying artworks in the Persian miniature style were written and illustrated by royal artists in the then-capital, Tabriz, in what is now the northwest of modern-day Iran. A short while after it was finished, the book was presented to the Ottoman Sultan Selim II in 1568 along with a procession of other gifts, including textiles, silks, ceramics, and more (Leoni).

The *Shahnameh* of Shah Tahmasp is famous for its level of detail and extravagance. Its completion was the result of the great appreciation for the traditional Persian arts held by both Shah Tahmasp I (pictured on the previous page in a folio from the edition) and his father Shah Ismail I, who launched the project in 1524, as well as the dedication of the many artists who contributed to the piece over the forty-year span of the production effort. Tahmasp I was known as a patron of the arts, and continuously strove to expand artistic efforts. Before becoming

king, Tahmasp was an artist himself, and his artistic inclinations persisted into his administration (Yalman). The manuscript completed under his direction was lavishly decorated, leading to its celebration today as a major achievement in art history.

## The art of the *Shahnameh* of Shah Tahmasp

The Persian miniature was an art form that revolved around, as the name suggests, miniature paintings. These artworks were often included as illustrations accompanying a story to enrich visualization and enhance comprehension of the literary work, and were essential parts of the text. Miniatures developed into many different styles over the course of Iranian artistic history, with three notable species being the Shiraz style, the Tabriz style and the Herat style (Kianush), named for the regions in which they originated. The *Shahnameh* of Shah Tahmasp represents a blending of the Herat style with the Shiraz and Tabriz styles (Leoni). The Herat school of Persian art, which had been the most recently established, featured more accurate and detailed drawings. In this style, the representation of characters received heavier focus and attention than in past styles (Kianush). For the Shah Tahmasp edition of the *Shahnameh*, its legendary heroes and ancient kings were proudly drawn as the focal points of the illustrations and given the amount of distinction consistent with the intense literary representations within the stories.

The Shiraz style, predating the Tabriz and Herat schools of miniatures, featured clear, confident line-work that gave clarity and precision to the art and made it more effective as an aid and companion to the written text (ibid.). The artists of the Shah Tahmasp's *Shahnameh* incorporated elements of this style, allowing the illustrations to provide artistic details corresponding to Ferdowsi's attention to literary detail. The Tabriz style, having traditionally reflected Far-Eastern influence (ibid.), had combined with the Shiraz style around the time of the composition of this version of the *Shahnameh*. This shift is evident in the illustrations of the text, which included the fusion of these styles alongside influences of the Herat style (Leoni). As a result, the Shah Tahmasp *Shahnameh* is one early example of the culmination of hundreds of years of perfecting the Persian miniature style with its rich colors, intricate backgrounds, heavily defined central subjects, and attention to detail.

The leaf (Folio 22v, here cropped) reprinted on the facing page depicts the legendary Feast of Sada and is representative of the rich colors and detail of the miniature paintings throughout the edition. (Opaque watercolor, ink, silver, and gold on paper; page size 47 x 31.8 cm; Metropolitan Museum of Art, item #1970.301.2.)





With the complexity and careful detail of the illustrations also comes the exceptional display of calligraphy written in the Nastaliq style (*ibid.*). Nastaliq is a form of calligraphy often used for Persian and Urdu texts. It is a cursive writing system that typically flows in a diagonal manner, from right to left and top to bottom (Gulzar and ur Rahman). The calligraphy is an essential companion to the miniatures, as it serves to further contextualize the illustrations and solidify their meanings.

## The Life and Fate of This Edition

After the *Shahnameh* of Shah Tahmasp found its place in the Ottoman court of Sultan Selim II, it stayed there for several hundreds of years. Its whereabouts after the end of the Ottoman Empire were ill recorded until its appearance as a purchase by Edmond James de Rothschild, a Frenchman who kept the text in his own personal collection. In 1959, it was purchased by Arthur A. Houghton II, after whom the work is sometimes called the Houghton *Shahnameh* (Launer).

Once Houghton had assumed ownership of the *Shahnameh* of Shah Tahmasp, he split up the work and sold a great number of its individual pages. He presented a collection of 78 illustrations out of the original 258 to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York where they still currently reside (*ibid.*). The pieces that were not given to the museum or sold to other collectors were kept by Houghton for his own personal collection. As a result of his actions, this *Shahnameh* as it originally existed is nearly impossible to reassemble.

Following Houghton's disassembly and subsequent distribution of the *Shahnameh* of Shah Tahmasp, the Persian epic found itself at the center of a new wave of attention from the world outside its original home in Iran. People across America and Europe were introduced to the *Shahnameh* as institutions like the Metropolitan Museum of Art displayed the fragments of the book that they held in their collections. In the wake of publicity surrounding the *Shahnameh* of Shah Tahmasp, Harvard University Press even published its own version of the edition.

Some writers at the time of this *Shahnameh*'s mid-20th-century public revelation describe their awe and fascination with the text and its unparalleled illustrations (*ibid.*). Their remarks about the intricacy and level of mastery are reminiscent of some of the comments left in the margins of the text by Ottomans over the years. Its history has shown through the centuries how much of a masterpiece it has always been, both in the eyes of royal courts of days past and the curious minds of contemporary writers.

**T**he *Shahnameh* holds a place of honor in culture and academia. In Iranian history, the text of the poem and the artifacts of its print editions have been a central repository of cultural tradition, myth, and values. In art and literary studies, it has been highly regarded as one of the greatest achievements in epic and illustration. Shah Tahmasp's *Shahnameh* exemplifies the Persian tradition of dedication both to masterful artwork and to the continuation of that long history by inspiring the talented artists that come after. ■

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- ANALECTS OF THE CORE -

**"Gilgamesh is tremendous!**

I HOLD IT TO BE THE GREATEST THING

A PERSON CAN EXPERIENCE."

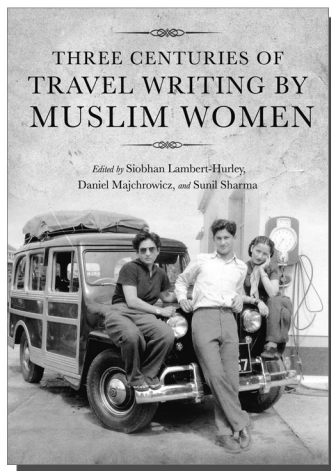
RAINER MARIA RILKE, 1916



NETIVA SINHA

## Travel Writing in a Time of Limited Travel

An interview with Sunil Sharma,  
co-editor with Siobhan Lambert-Hurley  
and Daniel Majchrowicz of *Three Centuries  
of Travel Writing by Muslim Women*  
Forthcoming in August 2022:  
Indiana UP; softcover, 534 pp.  
9780253062390



Sunil Sharma is a Professor of Persianate &

Comparative Literature in BU's Department of World Languages & Literatures. His areas of interest include premodern Persian and South Asian Literatures, poetry, court cultures, and travel writing. Since the COVID-19 pandemic has severely impacted many people's options for traveling, I visited Prof. Sharma to ask questions on the nature and appeal of travel writing – which is a way to travel without traveling! – and about his forthcoming book about travel writing. – NS

**Netiva Sinha:** I hear you have a soon to be released publication on Muslim women travel writers! What inspired you to write this book?

**Prof. Sharma:** I had already worked on some travel writing by Muslim women. I co-edited a previous book, *Atiya's Journeys*, with one of our co-editors for this new volume. That earlier book was a translation of the earliest known travel diary by an Indian Muslim woman visiting the West. At the time, I was also teaching a course on travel writing in the Muslim world. In this course we look at travel writings by both Muslims and non-Muslims, but they are mostly on male writers. We realized that we have very few sources to work with. It's not that there were no [female] travelers, but that their works have yet to be translated into English. I happened to come across some wonderful travel writing anthologies, and I took one home. It was an anthology of European women's travel writings, and I thought that it would be such a great idea to have one for Muslim women.

Why Muslim women and not just Eastern women? It just happened that there were more Muslim women traveling, mainly because of the pilgrimage to Hajj. A lot

of these narratives are Hajj narratives of women with their families or of royal women in the 19th and 20th centuries. Whereas other kinds of women, non-Muslim women from the Middle East and Asia, in contrast to Muslim women, had fewer travel opportunities.

**NS:** I've never really thought about how ethnicity relates to travel writing. How exactly do they relate?

**PS:** Well, European women travelers were generally called intrepid women. They tend to be seen as just a curiosity just as women poets were seen before the 20th century. And writing by women in this time period, whether it's travel logs or poetry, is viewed as an activity removed from mainstream writing. In terms of the connection between ethnicity and travel writing, I would say it's more that in Islam there is a sense of one community. When you go on pilgrimage, the differences of race, ethnicity, and nationality are supposed to disappear. The idea of one universal Muslim community has been upheld many times, and I think travel writing really brought that to the fore. Whether it was Indian or Pakistani women traveling to Europe or Iranian women on pilgrimage or Arab women somewhere else, there was still a kind of sisterhood. On one level they would identify with *women*, and another with *Muslim women*.

**NS:** You were saying that you also teach travel writing. What do you think is the appeal of travel writing?

**PS:** The course, yes; I designed it, and now Prof. Roberta Micallef teaches it as well. I thought that people not only like to read about other people's travels, but also everyone likes to tell their own travel stories. In the course we do both. We read from the medieval times onwards and about famous people's travels, including Ibn Battuta, who's like the Marco Polo of the Muslim world, Marco Polo, and many other famous travelers. But I also have students write about their travels and about how they see themselves in the role of the travel writer and traveler after they have become more conscious about what it means to be a travel writer. What does a successful or seasoned travel writer observe, or what do they write about? Though one's travelogue can be all about yourself, no one's really that interested. There has to be, of course, something about yourself, especially in modern travelogues there's kind of a sub-genre of misadventures. People enjoy it when things go wrong! I think many of us, whether we travel or not, are also armchair travelers: we enjoy reading about all these places that we have never been to, and we enjoy discussing other people's adventures.

**NS:** Speaking to this issue's theme, Age of Anxiety, how do you think COVID-19 has impacted travel or travel writing, and what do you see coming out of it afterwards?



**PS:** I think staying at home probably made people more armchair travelers and [made people] eager for travel when it started to open backup. But, I think, even though there's a lot of travel going on, people are still a bit cautious about going to certain places. In terms of future travel, I think what we have gone through and experienced will definitely have an impact on people's interest in traveling. But that's why it's good to have professional travel writers, because you can see the world through their eyes. And as you know, all major newspapers like *The New York Times* have travel sections with travel essays. There are people who are still traveling in times of distress.

**NS:** What importance has travel or travel writing had for you personally?

**PS:** I've only dabbled in travel writing. I do always keep in a journal with notes when I travel, but I've only actually published one. It's in the first issue of our department's student journal, *Alexandria*, an essay about Elephant Island, half an hour off the coast near Mumbai, where people go to see these old cave sculptures. I don't feel I'm a very adventurous traveler; I'm more of an armchair traveler.

But the traveling I've done, the ones that have made the most impact are the most far away places or unusual places. I had trips to Mauritius, and I know it's not exotic anymore, but Japan, for me, it took me out of my world because I don't study

Japanese, I'm not a professor of Japanese. Or during the pandemic, near the end of lockdown, I went to Iceland, and I know a lot of people go, because that was the only place that was easy to get. My choices have been somewhat random, in some senses, because I've had friends in a place. I don't think I'm the kind of person who easily goes to a place where I don't know anybody. I'm just not that kind of traveler. I did that in my younger days when I was a student, I traveled in Iran, but that was easier then.

**NS:** On a similar note, what would you say has been the best trip for you?

**PS:** I think one of the best for me was Puerto Rico. I went to San Juan last year, which was surprising because I've lived on the East Coast for most of my life and had never been even though it's so close. Actually, maybe I should say it was four years ago, my trip to Bermuda. I had thought Bermuda was like the Caribbean, one of these places people go to unmask, to party and enjoy themselves, which is fine, but Bermuda was a total surprise. Being so close to us in the North Atlantic, it felt like finding something entirely new in your backyard.

**NS:** So for all the beginner travel writers out there, could you maybe give us some tips on maybe how to get started or how to write a fulfilling piece?

**PS:** Yes, I would say definitely keep a diary when traveling and think about what kind of persona you want to craft for your reader. You don't have to tell them everything you do and think. Remember, travel writing is a kind of fiction as well, that people, if they don't make up things, they do embellish the truth. I think that it's not just a documentary kind of report that you're writing, but an engaging sort of story you want to tell with yourself as a protagonist in a different place.

**NS:** That's good advice. Last thing, any last comments, or stories?

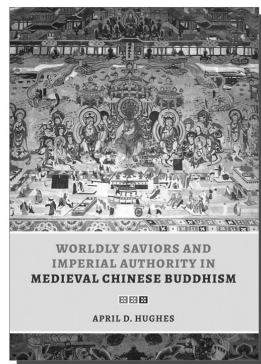
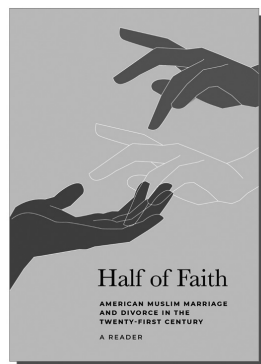
**PS:** Yeah, let me think. I guess I don't really have stories because there's so many and they all sound silly. But I would say, yes, that travel logs or travel writing have been an important part of the human experience in all ages. I think there was a time travel texts weren't taken seriously by academics, or that people would only look to them for information and facts. Now I think we have started to realize how intertwined they are with other genres like autobiography, the novel, and other forms of narrative. We are learning how to enjoy them as literature as well. ■

*Our thanks to Professor Sharma for taking time out of his schedule to have this conversation with us. To learn more about his forthcoming book, visit [www.iupress.org/9780253062390/three-centuries-of-travel-writing-by-muslim-women](http://www.iupress.org/9780253062390/three-centuries-of-travel-writing-by-muslim-women).*

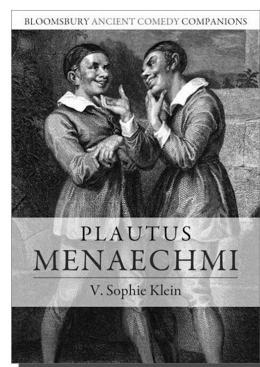
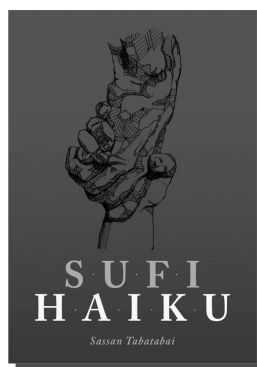
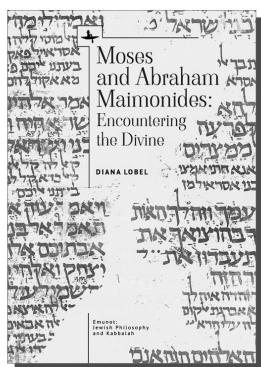
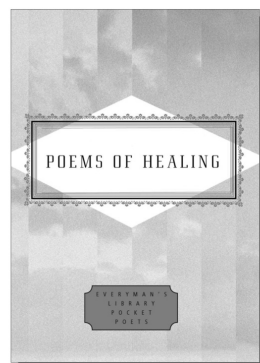
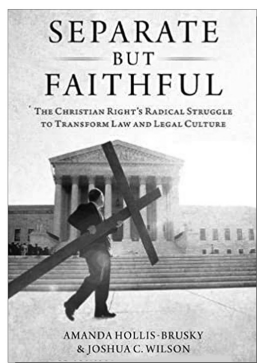
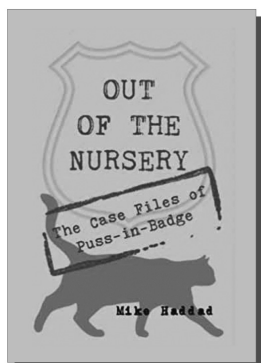
## PUBLICATION ANNOUNCEMENTS

## New Releases from CAS Faculty & Alumni

**K**ecia **ALI** (Religion) edited *Half of Faith: American Muslim Marriage and Divorce in the Twenty-First Century*, for release on the OpenBU platform, 2021. ■ Alumnus Mike **HADDAD** (Core '01, CAS '03) released his second book, *Out of the Nursery: The Case Files of Puss-in-Badge*, in 2022. It is a darkly comedic detective noir set in Fairyland in which veteran police detective Puss-in-Boots solves cases involving famous nursery rhyme and fairy tale characters. Like his first book, *Legends: Modern Myths and Urban Fairy Tales* (2019), *Out of the Nursery* is available on Amazon. Trivia: Haddad was a co-founder of the Wandering Minds theater group, which got its start when the first crew worked together on a Core of Aeschylus' *Orestia* trilogy. ■ Alumna Amanda **HOLLIS-BRUSKY** (Core '01, CAS '03) released a book in October 2020 with Oxford University Press, co-authored with Joshua C Wilson at University of Denver: *Separate But Faithful: The Christian Right's Radical Struggle to Transform Law and Legal Culture*, part of the Studies in Postwar American Political Development series. Hollis-Brusky is a scholar of Constitutional law specializing in the politics of the Supreme Court and the conservative legal movements of originalism and textualism. She is chair of the Politics Department at Pomona College. ■ April **HUGHES** (Religion) published *Worldly Saviors and Imperial Authority in Medieval Chinese Buddhism* with the University of Hawai'i Press, 2021. ■ Karl **KIRCHWEY** (Associate Dean for the Humanities) edited *Poems of Healing* for Penguin Random House, 2021. The volume includes selections from other CAS/GRS faculty: Herbert Golder and James Uden (Classics); Robert Pinsky and Nicole Sealey (Creative Writing); Sassan Tabatabai (Core/World Languages & Literatures); Alissa Valles (Translation); and J. Keith Vincent (World Languages & Literatures). ■ V. Sophie **KLEIN** (Core) published *Plautus: Menaechmi* with Bloomsbury Publishing, 2022, as part of the Bloomsbury Ancient Comedy Companions series. ■ Diana **LOBEL** (Religion) published *Moses and Abraham Maimonides: Encountering the Divine* with

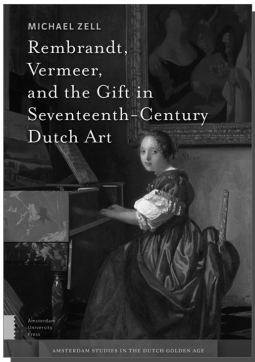
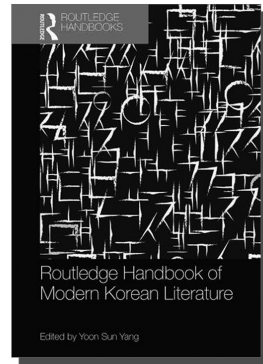
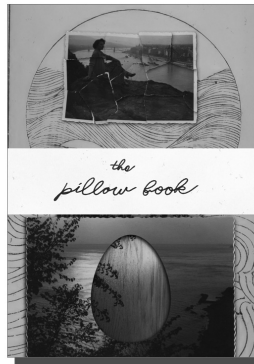
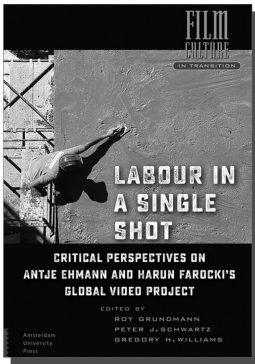
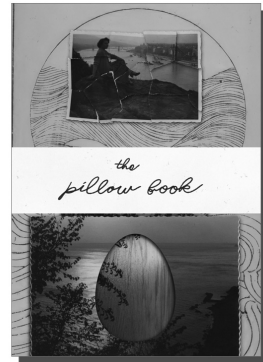
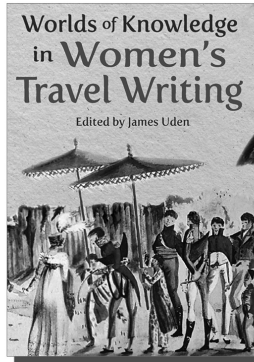
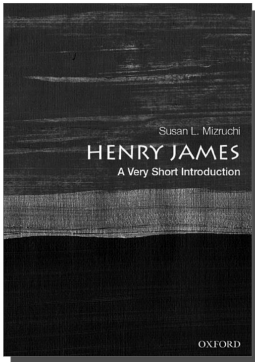






De Gruyter, 2021. ■ Susan **MIZRUCHI** (Director of the Center for Humanities) published *Henry James: A Very Short Introduction* with Oxford University Press, 2021. ■ Alumnus Scott **MONTY** (CAS '91) studied classics while he was in CAS as an undergraduate, and now some thirty years later he has found a use for that knowledge in his *Timeless & Timely* newsletter, now ranked in the 50 of history newsletters on Substack. The newsletter features lessons on leadership from history and literature, applied to challenges of the present. Online at [www.timelesstimely.com](http://www.timelesstimely.com). ■ Peter **SCHWARTZ** (German & Comparative Literature), Gregory H. Williams (Contemporary Art) and Roy Grundmann (Film Studies) co-edited *Labour in a Single Shot: Critical Perspectives on Antje Ehmann and Harun Farocki's Global Video Project* for Amsterdam University Press, 2021. ■ Sassan **TABATABAI** (Core, Persian) published the poetry collection *Sufi Haiku* with Nemi Books, 2021. ■ James **UDEN** (Classical Studies) edited *Worlds of Knowledge in Women's Travel Writing* for Harvard University Press, 2021. This volume is the third from BU's Travel Studies Research Group, and features contributions from other CAS faculty: Roberta Micallef, Sunil Sharma and Sarah Frederick (World Lan-





guages & Literatures) and Elizabeth Goldsmith and Mary Beth Raycraft (Romance Studies). ■ J. Keith **VINCENT** (Japanese & Comparative Literature, Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies, Japanese) translated *The Pillow Book* by Sei Shōnagon for publication as an audio book through the Alexander app, 2021. ■ Yoon Sun **YANG** (Korean, Chinese and Comparative Literature) edited the *Routledge Handbook of Modern Korean Literature*, 2021. ■ Michael **ZELL** (Baroque and Eighteenth-Century Art) published *Rembrandt, Vermeer, and the Gift in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art* with Amsterdam University Press, 2021. ■

## CORE ALUMNI

## What We've Been Reading

**Z**achary **BOS** (GRS): "I've been enjoying *The Council of Animals*, a fable in novel form from Nick McDonell. It concerns the fate of the human race when our species is nearly extinct and a delegation of animals convenes to decide what's to become of us. Shades of *Conference of the Birds*..." ■ Francis **DIMENTO** (Core '17, CAS '19): "I've been reading so much in law school but my go-to genre is fiction these days. I've been reading *The Godfather* by Puzo and listening to *The Girl Who Kicked the Hornet's Nest*. Shout-out the Libby app via my Boston Public Library membership!" ■ Cat **DOSSETT** (Core '16, CAS'18): "I've been diving into *Everybody Loves Our Town*, an oral history of grunge music by Mark Yarm. I've been tucking into this brick of a book on-and-off for years, and I've recently gotten back into this collection of wild, wonderful, tragic stories from one of my favorite genres of music." ■ Catherine **EN-WRIGHT** (Core '14, SED '16): "I'm reading *History of Love* by Nicole Krauss and *An Area of Darkness* by Naipaul." ■ Josh **GEE** (Core '05, CAS '07): "I've been working through *Seeing Like a State* by James C. Scott. It's a critique of High Modernism and some kinds of government programs. As a government employee, I've appreciated it as a strong critique of certain beliefs that I've held." ■ Adlai **GORDON** (Core '14, CAS '16): "I went to Puerto Rico and my jaw dropped. Since then I have been bingeing on histories of global imperialism. I recommend *How To Hide An Empire: A History of the Greater United States*." ■ Talene Liberty **KELEGIAN** (Core '02, CAS '04): "I'm just finishing up the *Anne of Green Gables* series. It's delightfully distracting from everyday life." ■ Jacqueline **MOUSTAKAS-VERHO** (Core '98, CAS '00): "I'm reading *Dark Paradise* by Rosa Liksom, *Lolita* by Nabokov, and *Purge* by Sofi Oksanen. Hoping to lighten things up soon by finishing *Mr. Know-It-All* by John Waters." ■ Kim **SANTO** (Core '98, SED '00 & '02): "I'm reading *Green with Milk and Sugar: When Japan Filled America's Tea Cups* by Robert Hellyer. It's a wonderfully researched book about the commodity of tea and how it framed national cultures in the US and Japan." ■ Sydney **SHEA** (Core '12, CAS '14): "I've been making my way through *The Glass Bead Game* for like the thousandth time. It's epistemology at its finest." ■ Suzyn-Elayne **SOLER** (Core '98, CAS '00, SED '02): "I'm reading *The Shape of Family* by Shilpi Somaya Gowda. I love the Indian American diaspora stories. In this case it is a blended family with an Indian mother, American father and a daughter caught in between two identities. Read *The Golden Son*, too... it's an amazing book as well!" ■



## THE BU BOOKLAB

... is a resource for undergraduates and recent alumni interested in writing, editing, and publishing. We offer participants the opportunity to:

- contribute to student-led, University-affiliated journals
- become a BookLab Fellow
- earn Hub units in a Collegiate Publishing Workshop
- present work at the Northeast Student Publishing Conference
- network with alumni in publishing or book-arts industries
- take part in readings, writing workshops, and letterpress studio visits
- intern with Boston-area indie and nonprofit literary orgs

BookLab projects include publications devoted to: creative writing; critical writing and the humanities; cultural secularism and critical thinking; comparative literature and translation; feminism and intersectionality; economics; philosophy; and editorial experimentation. **Email the coordinator to learn how to get involved: [booklab@bu.edu](mailto:booklab@bu.edu).**

## CORE AND CAS ALUMNI

## Campus Recollections & Memorable Quotes

Howie **CHEN** (Core '21, CAS '24): I immensely enjoyed my classes with Professor Christopher Ricks, and offer here a few of my favorite quotes which I recorded from his teaching. The first: "You use ink to both reveal and conceal where you are." The second: "Is something not persuasive because of the argument or the delivery? We mustn't fake being convinced." And finally: "The words themselves behave in a certain way, in the same way a certain gesture of your hand conveys a message." ■

Cassandra **NELSON** (Core '03, CAS '05): I started my undergraduate years planning to major in journalism, international relations, or political science. After two years of Core humanities, I haphazardly decided on English instead. Twenty years later, I've ridden that horse about as far as one can take it in contemporary America. I did an MA at the Editorial Institute after Christopher Ricks took me under his wing. Later I did a PhD in English at Harvard; I taught literature and composition classes at West Point; and for now I'm mostly a toddler mom and a writer when time allows. The last two things I wrote were a piece for *Plough* online about Milton – specifically on how the rather miserable form of freedom offered by the Internet resembles Hell in *Paradise Lost* – and a piece on Clausewitz, out this month from *The Point* magazine. We didn't read Clausewitz in Core, but I know that my willingness to venture outside of my usual faith, fiction, and technology wheelhouse is because of the Core Curriculum.

I've never been much of a lecturer as a teacher, but I have always endeavored to do for my students the two things Core did for me. First, to give at least a little bit of a trajectory of how we got here, from *Gilgamesh* to this very weird present moment in space-time. Second, to make books come alive, through conversation, through community, no matter how far the bridge in time between the writer, who still has something to say, and us, who often more than ever need to hear it. I wish every student had to go through something like the Core during their time in college. I credit Core with my poverty, alas, but also with having chosen the better portion. ■

Timothy **RODRIGUES** (Core '02, CAS '04): Core profoundly expanded my worldview. It's the best academic choice I ever made. The obscene volume of reading even gave me a leg up on my peers once I hit law school! By way of an analect from the library of Core authors, I submit the following from Nietzsche's *Twilight of the Idols*:

"If we possess a why of life, we put up with almost any how." The sentiment, I feel, fits well into this year's journal theme. If I had to offer a personal analect, it would be: "If Core merely reinforces who you think you are, you're doing it wrong. Drop your guard. Remain vulnerable. Struggle. Say the wrong thing. Make mistakes. Change your mind. *That's the point.*" ■

Rudy **SEBER** (CAS '04, SMG '10): I have three analects that I would like to share with my fellow Terriers. The first is from author and poet, Maya Angelou: "People never forget how you make them feel." I have always felt that this epitomizes my personal ethos in life, and something I strive for, albeit imperfectly, to achieve every day. In the spirit of this analect, I can't help but honor my freshman year roommate at BU, Jeremy Jacob Latt, who in no small way changed the course of my life by giving me the confidence to pursue a career in Information Technology. He did so with this line that I still share to clients and colleagues alike: "Just because it comes easily for you, does not mean it is easy for everyone else."

This is one of the hardest lessons I've had to learn early in my career, not out of pride of my work or skills, but out of humility for what I did not know, and empathy for my colleagues who all bring something great to table but may struggle with what others may consider "easy" things. The management of expectations is so important for all of us to overcome our anxieties and if we are just open to being vulnerable about what we know and don't know, we would be so much happier in our lives.

Sadly, Jeremy did not live past his 31st birthday and was lost to us to cancer. He would've turned forty this year on April 14th. I say that he changed the course of my life; this is not hyperbole. Before Jeremy came along I thought my skill in tinkering with computers was just par for the course and I was stuffing envelopes at my work-study job in Admissions. It was because of Jeremy I got my first job in IT, at BU's RESNET, the office which provided networking and troubleshooting help for students in the resident halls. After that I got a job with CAS HELP (where I met my best friend Jason), and after graduation and some travel I came back to BU for a job supporting the Art History department, then another at CELOP (where I met my wife), then another with Global Programs.

This all led up to a job at Forrester Research which gave me the opportunity to fulfill my life's dream to work for NASA. I can think of no better way to honor Jeremy's memory than to share a final analect from his favorite book, *Atlas Shrugged* by Ayn Rand. It is where the character Midas Mulligan says: "Do you know how much I've

always loved it – being alive?” I have always loved this line and all its implications and quoted it openly even before Jeremy passed as it represented gratitude in its simplest form. The gratitude I feel every day for being alive, even in the worst of times, knowing that I’m able to be an ally, husband, friend, father, son, cousin, to those I love and receive that love back, even from those who are no longer with us in person but never forget how they made us feel when they were alive. ■

Micah **SHAPIRO** (Core ’07, CAS ’09): Who can forget Prof. Samons lecturing about triremes? “Athens was so garish it looked like a Walmart.”

Suzyn-Elayne **SOLER** (Core ’98, CAS ’00, SED ’02): I am happy to contribute an analect that runs through my mind still to this day, twenty years after completing Core. It comes from *The Handbook* of Epictetus: “If you are fond of a jug, say ‘I am fond of a jug!’ For when it is broken you will not be upset.” This is a reminder to not sweat the small stuff. I carry my copy of Epictetus in my backpack with my work supplies. It is such a small book but it contains wisdom that I continue to refer to in my life, including the remarks about what is “up to us.”

Core was the best part of BU, providing a small community in a huge university. The people that I met while living on the Core floor of Warren Towers are lifelong friends. Even now, I am transported back to the Tsai Center when I hear certain songs play, for they were the ones that played at the start of Core lectures – songs like John Coltrane’s “A Love Supreme” and Simon and Garfunkel’s “I Am a Rock.” ■

- ANALECTS OF THE CORE -

“ALL THE WORLD IS A VERY NARROW BRIDGE -  
AND THE MOST IMPORTANT THING

**is to be unafraid.”**

RABBI NACHMAN

SUGGESTED BY KEITH WHITAKER (CORE ’91, CAS ’93)



## About Our Contributors

Charlotte **BEATTY** is majoring in Anthropology. Her essay in this issue was written in response to the communal panic critical race theory she observed in her small New England hometown.

Zachary **BOS** studied poetry in the graduate workshops at the BU Creative Writing Program. He is an alum of both the Core classroom and the Core administrative team. He presently oversees the BU BookLab project. On social as @zakbos and @bonfirebookshop.

Alexandra **CASTRO IBERICO** is majoring in Journalism with a minor in Sociology. She is grateful for every day she is able to get out on the water to pursue her passion for rowing.

Nobel Shut **CHAN** is majoring in English, and hails from Hong Kong. In her spare time, she loves to read, write, and watch cartoons.

Soren **CHANG** is majoring in Comparative Literature with a minor in Art History. She enjoys Donna Tartt novels, museums, Ghibli movies, and when in Seoul, biking along the Han River.

Cat **DOSSETT** (CAS '18) is an artist and writer based in the Boston area. They are the creator of the comics *Laika* and *Vessel*, a chap-

book called *Odysseus & Eden*, and a handful of 'zines. On social at @aboutadaughter.

Abby **DUERKSEN** is majoring in American Studies and Religion with a minor in Spanish. She comes to Boston from Los Angeles. She values the place of religious studies, including those in Core, for understanding the emotional elements of life. On Instagram and Twitter @abbyduerk.

Maggie **FARREN** is majoring in English with a Core minor. Her poem in this issue was written while reading *Ulysses* in a class taught by Prof. Stephanie Nelson.

Caroline **FERNANDEZ** (CAS '21) graduated with a major in International Relations and a concentration in Regional Politics & Cultural Anthropology in Latin America, with minors in the Core Curriculum and Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies.

Birdie **GILE** is majoring in Anthropology with a specialization in the Cultural track.

Sarah **GOODMAN** is studying History and Philosophy. She is an opinion columnist for *The Daily Free Press* and enjoys writing, reading, walking, and reading and walking at the same time, especially when it is cloudy.

Gideon **GORDON** is studying International Relations with a focus on the Middle East and North Africa. His upbringing at Jewish day school gave him a love for close textual analysis and comparative religion. An avid science fiction and fantasy reader, he has not yet learned to tie a tie.

Lauren **GOTARD** is a History major from New York with minors in Film and Television and in Core. Her academic interests primarily concern the intersection of filmmaking and historical research.

David **GREEN** has taught in the two-year sequence of the Core Humanities for the past twenty-four years. He has directed or acted in plays in Spain, China, the United Kingdom, and the United States, and earned a Master's Degree in Stage Direction from the University of London.

Andrea **GUTTORMSEN WETZLER** is studying Comparative Literature with a minors in Persian Cultural Studies and Medieval Studies. She has studied Persian every semester at BU, and has translated in both Norwegian and Persian.

Taylor **HALL** is studying Human Physiology with a minor in Persian Cultural Studies. This is his first translation of a Persian poem.

Kyna **HAMILL** is Director of the College of

Arts & Sciences Core Curriculum and Master Lecturer with affiliations to the School of Theatre and the African American Studies Program. She specializes in Baroque theatricality, theatre and visual culture and theatre and war. Her research on the origins of the song "Jingle Bells" was covered in *The Guardian* in 2017. Her current research examines the visual legacy of the print artist Jacques Callot (1592-1635) in art, literature and theatre.

Lila **HELLER** is studying Theatre Arts with a minor in History. She is (mostly) from New York, but now lives in Allston, with the rats.

Sumner **JONES** is concentrating in Finance and Law with a minor in Art History. He enjoys reading, watching documentaries, long distance running, and spending time outdoors and in the mountains.

Eve **KLEIBER** is studying psychology with a minor in English. She is from Madison, Wisconsin and hopes to earn her PhD in psychology without abandoning her passion for creative writing. On Twitter @evekleiber.

Kathryn **LAKIN** is studying English and Spanish. Her paper in this issue was expanded from coursework undertaken in CAS EN155: The Myth of the Family in Classical American Literature, Film, and Television.

Tian **LIAO** is an International Relations

major from Beijing. He is a member of the CAS student government, and a contributor to BUTV and *The Daily Free Press*. On Twitter @tian134.

Savannah **MAJARWITZ** is studying International relations with minors in Persian Cultural Studies and Holocaust, Genocide, and Human Rights Studies. She has been able to feel closer to her culture and family by taking Persian language courses with Prof. Tabatabai.

Di **MALKIN** is majoring in International Relations with minors in Business and in Core. She works in the Core office and as an RA for the Core Floor, hosts a show for WTBU, and is a member of the pre-law fraternity Phi Alpha Delta and the Cheese Lovers Society. Outside of these involvements, she enjoys painting, playing tennis, and improving her mastery of French.

Juliet **MARHAMATI** is studying Political Science with a minor in Persian Cultural Studies.

Allie **MASCARELLO** is a Philosophy major with minors in Core and Classics. She likes reading and writing, Spinoza's *Ethics*, and blueberry bagels.

Arezu **MONSHIZADEH** is majoring in Biology and minoring in Persian Cultural

Studies. She is originally from California and enjoys traveling, trying new foods, and drinking too much coffee.

Maria **OSIPOVICH** is studying Biology and Spanish. Her submission is a reflection on the importance of respecting the environment. When not in the lab, she can be found hiking or on her bike.

Nyah **PATEL** is a BA/MPH student majoring in Biology CMG and concentrating in Epidemiology and Biostatistics. Outside of class, she is a biochemistry research assistant and medical scribe. In her free time, she enjoys reading, piano, ballet, and cross-stitching.

Aidan **PARR** is undeclared but thinking about majoring in Psychology. He enjoys discussing Core books with his friends and going on walks.

Jamie **POIRIER** is studying Biology. Their paper in this issue was expanded from coursework undertaken in CAS LZ380: Persian Epic and Romance.

Colleen **RATH** is majoring in Architectural Studies with a minor in Urban Studies. Her recent photography project has centered around the theme of anxiety.

Mary **REGAS** is BA/MA student majoring in English with a minor in Business Admin-

istration & Management. Originally from Brooklyn, she enjoys skiing, swimming, reading, and spending as much time as possible in the outdoors.

Andre **SALKIN** is studying Journalism and Marine Science. He has a background in visual arts.

Netiva **SINHA** is majoring in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, with a minor in Core. Originally from Thailand, she enjoys drawing, reading, and writing, and giving things quirky names – her plants, for example, are named ‘Paintbrush’ and ‘Ka-ching’.

Danial **SHARIAT** (CAS '20) is a PhD student at the University of California at Berkeley studying Agricultural and Resource Economics. He enjoys rock climbing and poetry. On Twitter @danial\_shariat.

Xi **TAO** is studying International Relations and Anthropology, and was motivated to undertake a double major after personally observing the clash between German and Chinese culture. Whenever she feels anxious and stressed, she bakes cookies or cake to calm herself. On Instagram @tao\_sissi.

Taylor **THOMAS** is a PhD student studying Theology, Philosophy, and Ethics. She is from North Carolina and holds a BA in religious studies from Appalachian State Uni-

versity and an MTS from BU in Theological Studies.

Travis **TISCHLER** is studying English. He is originally from New York and spends the majority of his time staring into space while listening to music.

Samantha E. **VATALARO** is a Film and Television major. She is also undertaking a minor in Core, a program which she has found to be her home-away-from-home at Boston University.

Jake **WELCH** is studying Psychology with a minor in Linguistics. He enjoys playing music, rock climbing, and watching films. On Twitter @vitruviandeath.

Emily **YODER** is a second-year Kilachand Honors College student with majors in Comparative Literature and History. On Twitter @eemily\_marie.

"OTHER PLEASURES FAIL US OR WOUND US  
WHILE THEY CHARM, BUT . . . I BELIEVE I SPEAK  
BUT THE STRICT TRUTH WHEN I CLAIM THAT AS



**there is none among earthly delights  
more noble than literature.**

THERE IS NONE SO LASTING, NONE GENTLER, OR MORE  
FAITHFUL; THERE IS NONE WHICH ACCOMPANIES ITS  
POSSESSOR THROUGH THE VICISSITUDES OF LIFE  
AT SO SMALL A COST OF EFFORT OR ANXIETY."

PETRARCH, WRITING TO GIOVANNI BOCCACCIO  
IN A LETTER DATED 28 APRIL 1373



"DID HUMBĀBĀ SING?  
DID YOUR FAMILY SING,  
WHEN GREATNESS ENTERED YOUR LIVES?"  
FROM OF GREATNESS AND GLORY  
BY AIDAN PATT



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