

# THE JOURNAL OF THE CORE CURRICULUM



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# The Journal of the Core Curriculum

## Volume XIII

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# Editors' Note

The thirteenth edition of the *Journal of the Core Curriculum*—a compilation of academic essays and creative prose, of poetic and artistic translations—provides only a taste of the intellectual inquiry sparked by the Core Program. Herein, the reader will find work representational of both first and second year students, as well as highlights of the talents of three professors of the Humanities and Natural Sciences in Core.

Core takes us on a journey of discovery. It builds the foundations of knowledge that allow for an exploration of the nature of good and evil, the purpose of the soul, and the continuing evolution of man. This journal is, quite literally, the reflection of all this knowledge put down on paper. Gathered from inside the classroom and out, the pieces that follow are the work of expanding, enlightened minds. They encourage all of us to not only question the world around us, but to enjoy it as well.

I would like to thank Professors Sassan Tabatabai and James Johnson for their time, gracious suggestions, and invaluable aid, Zachary Bos for his layout expertise, and Joseph Jerome for his tremendous dedication and art skills. Editors, you have all been so diligent. Thank you; it has been a pleasure to work with all of you. Enjoy.

Agnes J. Györfi  
EDITOR



# Human Nature on the Social Stage

*Joseph Jerome*

It was Aristotle who called man a political animal, one who by nature belongs in the cities with other men. From then onward, the nature of man has been under constant debate. Was man a solitary being? A noble savage? Or instead was man only to be defined within the context of his relations with other men? The rise of sociology in the nineteenth century sought to uncover the nature of man through scientific study of the societies he had built. While Emile Durkheim began the sociological school of thought, it was his disciples, Arnold van Gennep and Marcel Mauss, who crafted some of the best early analyses of human group behavior. At the same time, Erving Goffman attempted to provide a framework within which those relations could be explained. Taken together, these three sociologists theorized on a wide variety of actions that are the very core of human interaction.

Shakespeare said that all the world was a stage, and Goffman takes that saying to heart in his ideas on man's nature. He analogizes the individual to a per-

former and the world around him to one vast audience. Both elements then take part in a "pre-established pattern of action which is unfolded during a performance [that] may be called a 'part' or 'routine'" (Goffman 16). Goffman, using further dramaturgical devices such as "settings" and "fronts," illustrates that much of human interaction is actually a very complex performance or pre-scripted ritual. This concept is further discussed in the works of Van Gennep and Mauss, which explore the seemingly universal notions of certain explicit human actions.

Van Gennep looks at the events of a human life as being various "rites of passage" that are universally celebrated in a ritualistic manner. These rites involve much of what significantly defines a man's life. Van Gennep describes them:

*Thus we encounter a wide degree of general similarity among ceremonies of birth, childhood, social puberty, betrothal, marriage, pregnancy, fatherhood, initiation into religious societies,*

*and funerals. In this respect, man's life resembles nature, from which neither the individual nor the society stands independent (Van Gennep 3).*

One sees already a similarity between the scripted relations that Goffman suggests and Van Gennep's emphasis that a pregnancy is far more than a biological act and is also an important performance for the group at large. Van Gennep further divides the performance into three parts of varying importance: separation, transition, and reincorporation. In the example of pregnancy, it is the mother-to-be who must put on the show of a transformation from young girl into responsible woman for an audience of family and friends.

These sorts of theatrics, if one will, carry over into the deeper meaning that Mauss is espousing in the simple act of gift-giving. He sees the act of giving (and of receiving) as the establishment of a contract: you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours. Indeed, gift-giving forms the foundation of society's economic and judicial arrangements. While the many celebrations and rituals Mauss discusses are often "committed to in a somewhat voluntary form by presents and gifts, in



the final analysis they are strictly compulsory, on pain of private or public warfare" (Mauss 5). He goes into detail about the potlatch ceremony of the Tlingit of the American Northwest where a tribal chief ceremonially gives away every scrap of his wealth in order to earn the respect of his inferiors; consequently, they become indebted to him.

Whether through gifting or passing through a rite, these interactions form a most social view of human nature in which man's identity is crafted more by

the group than by himself. According to Goffman, "the world, in truth, is a wedding" (Goffman 36) where an individual performance can be looked upon "in the manner of Durkheim [...] as a ceremony as an expressive rejuvenation and reaffirmation of the moral values of the community" (Goffman 35). It is the performances we put on for each other that form a web of social interactions; perhaps it is this dynamic that can be construed as "human nature."

Granted, Van Gennep and Mauss are primarily using specific cultural examples to elaborate on their ideas, while Goffman is using terminology of the theatre to propose how men interact. Thus none of their views should be taken entirely at face value, and attempting to combine the three perspectives into one proves difficult. While they may not directly relate to each other, many of their individual ideas can easily be swapped back and forth and used to gain better perspective into the works of all three authors. All three are, in some respects, advocating a view of human nature where a man's actions are, as the saying goes, more than what meets the eye. That man has an ulterior motive to many of his actions is an interesting observation that warrants further thought.

Regardless, these sociologists under-

stand human nature to exist as a result of all the many complex human interactions man goes through every single day. Compared to the grim solitary model put forth by Hobbes or the noble savage of Rousseau, one sees here a view of man deeply immersed within his society. Outside of society, man has no rites of passage, no gifts to give. There is no stage to perform upon outside of society. That is not to say the individual is meaningless; Goffman quotes from Durkheim that "the human personality is a sacred thing; one does not violate it nor infringe its bounds, while at the same time the greatest good is in communion with others" (Goffman 69). Still, the individual perhaps only has a place at a table with others. In the end, these three twentieth century sociologists are portraying man as the same social being that Aristotle did two thousand years ago. ■

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# 1:00 a.m., Copley Mall

*Michael Brandon*

Men in blue suits scatter like insects,  
making sterile lonely sounds.  
There are waterfalls and fountains still in empty quiet.  
The water has been shut off and drained.  
A young Mexican man vacuums up the dreams of city children.  
The week is over,  
and the dreams must be taken from their underwater resting.  
So up they go, through the long tube of a vacuum.  
They are pulled beneath the city streets,  
clang up long elevator shafts and fall into the large hands of a man who  
never dreams.  
He puts them in his pocket to suffocate slow  
until they become quarters and dimes and nickels again.

## The Barrier

*Michael Zisser*

A sea of clouds hangs freely above the planet  
Like a mist lingering in the summer breeze.  
An avalanche of purity  
An endless flow of cotton hills and  
Ungraspable matter.

# When the Whole World Turns Black

*Alyx Schwartz*

Can the remnants of pain be seen through the eye,  
Where the embers still glow in the dark where they lie.  
Burning a hole straight to the heart,  
They eat through the soul, and their fires restart.  
The scars underneath swell up and puss,  
As the human itself turns to a crust  
Nothing exists within this blind, lifeless form,  
Once the pulsing flesh has been savagely torn  
Like a marriage vow, it runs through our veins  
Like a sharpened dart  
When the whole world turns black and we part.

# Buried God

*Jon Wooding*

believe you in a being  
so big  
it thinks in revolutions,  
inspects electron shells  
so large  
where one expects a word but  
instead are mathematics.

one cannot think about it.  
overanalyze and you  
depict the butterfly  
stripped of dust and  
shorn of wing.





# Headgear in *King Lear* and *Don Quixote*

Alex Diskin

Among the list of attributes that separate humans from the other animals, clothing seems to have become the most natural. Because society deems it appropriate, humans have made it second nature to wear clothing for every occasion. As this custom has become ingrained in the human mind, people often forget that clothing exudes a certain air to the rest of society. In many cases, it seems the purpose of clothing is to hide the truth about one's character metaphorically or actually. As the popular phrasing goes, sometimes the clothes make the man. In *King Lear* and *Don Quixote*, both Shakespeare and Cervantes use clothing as a means to depict societal status as well as mental transformations in the characters, a particularly potent example of this being the use of headgear throughout the stories. This, in turn, builds upon the prominent theme of appearance versus reality. The authors paint elaborate portraits of their characters to describe the way in which the clothes they don help reveal or conceal their real natures.

In *Don Quixote*, the main character himself serves as an example of this principle as he parades around on his quest to become a paradigm of the knight errant. In *King Lear*, this notion is illustrated in Cordelia, the Fool, and most prominently Lear himself. As these stories unfold, one detects an underlying parallel between the development of the characters and alterations of their headgear. Developing this idea further requires one to distinguish not only when the clothing imagery changes, but when the characters themselves are aware of these changes. Oftentimes, it seems the characters are oblivious as to what their clothing, or lack thereof, exposes about their true natures.

As the play begins, the audience comes face to face with King Lear and his attempts to extract professions of love from his daughters. Although it seems to the audience as though Lear has already divided his kingdom evenly for his three daughters, it is obvious that Lear has a predetermined favorite. Lear shows this favoritism by having an attendant enter the scene bearing a coronet, or small

crown, obviously intended for his youngest daughter, Cordelia. This situation is the first of many during this play in which Shakespeare uses clothing in order to establish status among the characters. Lear is demonstrating his nepotism to the royal court and his family. It is through this specific accessory that Lear places Cordelia above the rest of his daughters. On a more important level, however, it is Lear's way of reminding every character of his wish to remain significant as king: the crown with which Cordelia is presented is smaller than Lear's own. Although he wishes the public to know of his extreme love for his youngest daughter, Lear does not want anyone to confuse her new status with his. This is the first sign that Lear wishes to retain the power he has relinquished. Although it appears that Lear is turning over the power to his daughters, in reality, he believes he is still in control. Before Lear first speaks, his actions establish a hierarchy of authority, by exploiting the social meaning woven into clothing and accessories.

While the play develops further, the audience is able to see Lear's gradual descent into madness through his dress as well as his behavior. As Lear continues to display irrational behavior toward the mounting power struggle, the other characters begin to realize that his mental stability is failing. They comment on this progressive failure in different ways, some more blunt than others. Although it becomes evident that Lear's Fool is more a voice of reason than Lear himself, the Fool still points out Lear's faults in clever

bouts of mockery. This is done using images of headgear.

Starting at the end of Act I, the Fool begins to offer characters his coxcomb as a way of publicly recognizing their foolish actions. Kent is the first to receive this gesture when he loyally stands up for Lear against Oswald. "Let me hire him too. Here's my coxcomb ... Sirrah, you were best take my coxcomb" (I.4.97-99). The fool goes on to say that because Kent follows Lear—a man losing his mind along with his power—Kent himself must be a fool. The irony that lies within this scene describes the shifting roles of power and influence the characters undergo. By offering Kent his coxcomb, the Fool indirectly insults Lear and the choices the former king is making. He is also pointing out Lear's new status in the hierarchy of control established in the first scene. A physical representation of the more subtle plot line emphasizes nuances of the play a Shakespearean audience might not otherwise have understood. When one considers that Shakespeare's plays were viewed by the masses, this seems an appropriate way to depict Lear's madness and societal shift within the play.

By the beginning of Act III, the fury within Lear has grown so great that he can barely hold on to the little sanity he retained from the events concluding Act II. As he throws himself full-force into the brooding storm, Lear finally surrenders himself to the wrath of nature and relinquishes his ties to societal mores. On the heath, Lear is no longer a king, but just a man, a man furthermore who is almost

an animal. Just as the weather reflects Lear's inner turmoil, so does the way in which he is dressed. As a final act of breaking that bond to society, Lear strips off his clothes, crying to the gods, "Your high-engendered battles 'gainst a head so old and white as this. O, ho! 'tis foul" (III.2.23-24). The fool retorts by saying, "He that has a house to put's head in has a good headpiece" (III.2.25-26). This quote criticizes Lear's decision to throw



The aging Don Quixote, though mad in the same sense as Lear, purposefully adopts a disguise in order to make his world of knight errantry more realistic. Similar to Lear, Quixote is unaware that his clothing gives the people around him different impressions regarding his mental state and societal status. Although Quixote believes dressing as a knight will make him seem nobler than common villagers, those villages upon seeing

away his power while simultaneously alluding to the fact that Lear's head is now bare. Kent comments too, bemoaning the gravity of a king without his crown. "Alack, bareheaded? Gracious my lord..." (III.2.60-61). Ironically, when Lear is finally without a house to cover his naked head, he begins to see the ways in which a true king should care for his subjects. He says, "poor naked wretches, wheresoe'er you are, that bide the pelting of this pitiless storm, How shall your houseless heads and unfed sides...defend you from season such as these?" (III.4.28-32). Although this quote parallels his current situation on the heath, Lear is still oblivious as to how his physical status reflects his mental state.

his actions and clothing believe him insane.

As Quixote puts together the perfect suit of armor for a knight-errant, Cervantes goes into great detail about the imperfections of a suit without a proper helmet to accompany it. The Don's solution to the problem emphasizes the depth of his delusion:

...the headpiece was not a complete helmet but just a simple steel cap; he was ingenious enough, however, to overcome this problem, constructing out of cardboard something resembling a visor and face-guard which, once inserted into the steel cap, gave it

the appearance of a full helmet (Cervantes 28).

This quote establishes Quixote's world of knight errantry where things appear one way, but are actually quite different. Metaphorically, a helmet shields Quixote from the rest of the world, giving him reason to believe in his visions of magnificence. A helmet allows Quixote to hide from the same reality to which the cardboard headpiece blinds him. The reader's attention is drawn back to Quixote's helmet multiple times, emphasizing its importance.

In Chapter X of Part I, Don Quixote encounters and battles a Basque, resulting in the destruction of his helmet. When Sancho Panza tells Quixote he cannot exact revenge upon the Basque according to the rules of knighthood, Quixote swears not to live indoors as a civilized person would until he can find a suitable replacement helmet. "I swear anew and confirm that I will lead the life I have just described until I wrest from some knight another helmet at least as fine as this" (Cervantes 80). This quotation shows the significance Quixote places upon having the perfect helmet; without it, his knighthood is destroyed. It also shows, however, Quixote's sheer madness concerning what things appear to be and how they really are. Not only does Quixote believe he is truly a knight, but he believes his helmet to be such a fine piece of armor as to neglect sleep and proper nutrition over the destruction of it. Even Sancho Panza, Quixote's devoted squire, understands the

foolishness of the situation. He tells Quixote: "You just send all those oaths of yours to the devil" (Cervantes 81). This does not convince Quixote, however, that his quest for a new helmet is a moot one. Ironically, just as in *King Lear*, it is the seemingly dim-witted sidekick that asserts the wisest knowledge, evidence that predetermined societal roles have been turned on their heads.

Ending his encounters with the helmet, Quixote takes a basin from a barber he meets during his travels as a replacement. When Sancho—the voice of reason once again—tries to oppose the idea, Quixote explains why an object may look different to Sancho than to Quixote.

You have failed to realize that all things appertaining to us knights errant seem like chimeras, follies and nonsense...not because that is their real state...and so what looks to you like a barber's basin looks to me like Mambrino's helmet and will look like something else to another person (Cervantes 209).

Although a profound observation on Quixote's part, this quote shows again the dichotomy in this story between what-seems-to-be and what-actually-is. Quixote willingly adopts this helmet as his new one, knowing that to others it may seem like an act of folly. Quixote cannot look outside the reality he has created for himself, beyond the helmet and armor that keeps him shielded from the rest of the

world, to understand that his actions are the vain trials of a deluded man.

In these stories, Cervantes and Shakespeare use clothing imagery to pull the audience or reader deeper into the minds of two men who allow themselves to be afflicted by what they believe is happening around them. Both authors focus on headgear specifically in many instances, proving that there is no better way to metaphorically represent a person's mental state than to draw attention to his or her head. This is done by varying the accessories worn by the main characters, a tactic that serves a second purpose by high-

lighting the characters' position of power. Their multifaceted meanings are what make headgear such intricate components of *King Lear* and *Don Quixote*. ■

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# Yellow Light

*Katherine Martin*

Purple paper mâché litters the sidewalk  
in a sticky, summer heat  
as I run and pulse and run  
silvery strands of hair are sullen and surrendering to my neck  
and I stop  
in the gentle yellow light  
dancing out your front window  
before dreams and memories  
which watch tentatively with beady, yellow eyes.  
Stop and stare with me a moment  
and fail to forget  
the soft touch of your fingers on my back  
when you freely, openly, evenly, perfectly proclaimed  
“I love you.”  
The caress of your eyes in mine  
in a sultry glory and high pitched smile.  
The same, mimicked glory in that picture window was framed  
Your soft glow and silver-tinged skin dripping.  
Your golden hair mingling with brunette in the window  
framed  
in the window  
hands intertwined  
in the window  
and I wept and fell, surrendered by the yellow dust  
falling and spinning out of that  
frame window.

# Analects of Core

Rational beings ... are called persons because their nature already marks them out as ends in themselves — that is, as something which ought not to be used merely as a mean.

— *Kant*

Make all mankind your enemy, not the gods.

— *Aeschylus*

If you've been chopped into seventeen pieces, you've certainly been interfered with.

— *Ricks*

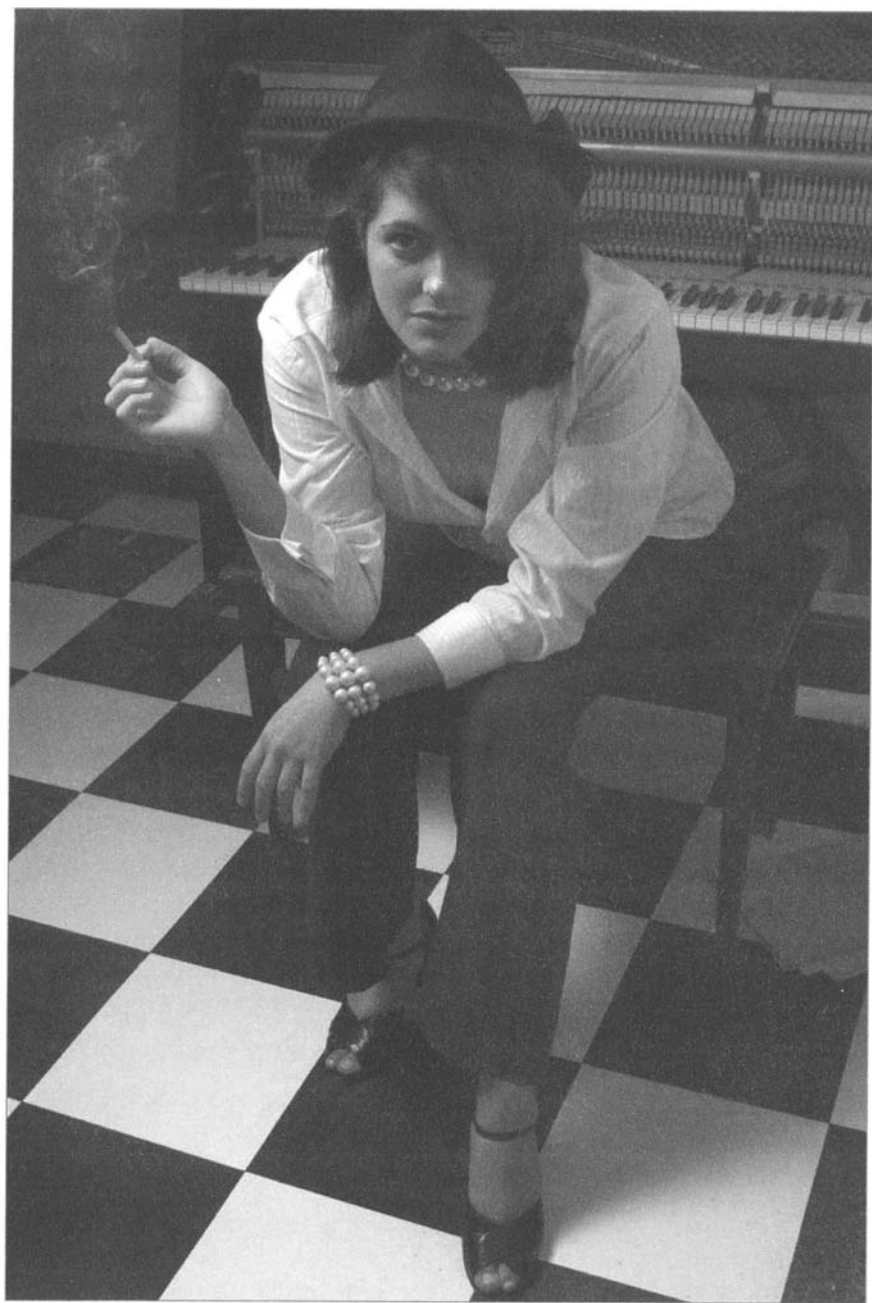
To fight against anger is hard; for it buys what it wants at the price of the soul.

— *Heraclitus*

But when in the end I was beaten I found the experience less dreadful in fact than in anticipation; and the very strange thing was that this punishment increased my affection for the inflictor.

— *Rousseau*





# Cosmo: A New Religion

*Yael Wilkofsky*

After spending my entire life going to temple, observing Passover and Hanukkah, and being a relatively good Jewish girl, I now live on my own. I have come to realize that I practice a different kind of religion. I have thrown away the Old Testament and have come upon what I like to call the Trend Testament. My scripture is *Cosmopolitan* magazine, and my place of worship is the mall. I seek advice from models, plastic surgeons, personal trainers, and my therapist.

This past Sunday morning, I was awakened by the familiar sound of the mail dropping through the slot of my door. I quickly looked at the clock to make sure of the time. It was 9:00 a.m. on the dot, just in time to meet up with the mailman. We exchanged smiles as I grabbed my Bible from his hands and ran to my kitchen table. As I stared at the cover of my new *Cosmopolitan* magazine, I smelled its pages and ran my fingers over the raised lettering. I had been waiting all week to find out this month's new rules on how to live my life. As I studied the

cover, one title jumped out at me: "129 Ways to Your Sexiest Look." I couldn't believe it! I had a blind date that night, and I was worried that this month's issue would not have the answers to my desperate questions. I turned the page as I slowly ate the neatly cut sections of my grapefruit and washed them down with coffee and a few diet pills. I had only been to the gym six times that week, and I could feel my thighs turning to cottage cheese.

As I turned to the article, I read the first line: "Today's new ideas are romantic prints contrasted by chic black, luscious color, and a sexy modern touch. This will give the man you're after EXACTLY what he wants." I frantically searched my closets and drawers for the magic outfit that matched the descriptions of this article. To my dismay, I found nothing. I searched through *Cosmo* to find the stores where I could buy such a wonderful outfit and decided to go shopping.

Living in Manhattan definitely has its perks. Searching through store after store, I finally spotted what I had been

looking for. It was a short flowery dress, with a pink and green floral design and a black ribbon belt. It was perfect for my date! As I was discussing the choice of shoes with the saleswoman, we began to make small talk. She asked what I thought about candidate Kerry, so I obviously responded with, "Oh my God! I just love her! Carrie Bradshaw is definitely my idol. She is just amazing on *Sex and the City*. She'll definitely win the Golden Globe." The saleswoman looked at me in disbelief. "I'm talking about John Kerry, the presidential candidate."

"Oh." I replied. "I never

pay attention to that news stuff. I mean, if you wanted to know about the J-Lo and Ben split, I'm your girl."

Clearly, I was spending too much time chatting with the salesperson and realized I hadn't checked *Cosmo* for the best hair and makeup tips to use for a date. I got home, found my *Cosmo* on my night table where I had left it, and stared at the cover. Another title caught my eye: "What He's Really Thinking When You: Get Naked, Make the First Move, and Gain Weight." I hadn't thought of how to act when I saw him, what to talk about, or what to do when he leaned in for the

first kiss. Guys aren't interested in smart, intelligent, opinionated girls, so I decided to play dumb and go along with his games. That would surely win him over. As I began to get ready for my date, I suddenly remembered what I had forgotten to do. I was supposed to call my doctor to make an appointment to have my

breasts redone. I was getting a cup size bigger, and they had to look absolutely perfect for the vacation I have coming up in two months.

Everything was taken care of, and now it was time to get ready. I removed *Beauty for Dummies* from the book shelf and set it down in

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"I am worried that the public might be too concerned with who will be running the country, instead of stressing over what jeans to wear."

---

front of me. It had been a really long time since I went on a blind date, and things would have to go perfectly to get my one-night stand. Who wants a relationship nowadays when *Cosmo* says women should be independent and never settle for anything less than perfect?

*Cosmo* wants women to know that they can also have the advantage of sleeping around just like guys. I'd never have time for a relationship anyway, with all the work I have. Shopping, working out, and dieting take up too much time, and since I heard about this election thing coming up, I am worried that the public

might be too concerned with who will be running the country, instead of stressing over what jeans to wear. We can't have people running around the streets of New York in Old Navy! Maybe society's fashion sense will be a topic discussed at one of these debates.

I thought about watching the news that night after my date left. Maybe there was something important and urgent happening in the world. After all, the saleswoman had seemed sort of sophisticated. Then again, she is in the minority. No one

knows about what's going on in the world these days. It's just not the trend—or so *Cosmo* says. After thinking for a few minutes about what I should do, I looked at my Palm and saw I had a yoga class at 9:00 the next morning. What could be more important than a toned, nice-looking body? I kissed my *Cosmo* and carefully placed it in the top drawer of my night table, anxiously awaiting tomorrow's new articles. The presidential elections would have to wait. ■

# Legend of the Golden Toad

*Daniel Hudon*

Rain pool fills  
cloud forest floor,  
golden toad waits.

Still as stone,  
throat bulging,  
cloud forest floor.

Rain fills  
wide black eyes,  
golden toad waits.

Water drips,  
splashes,  
black eyes stare.

Golden toad listens  
still as stone,  
mountain mists pass.

Cloud forest floor  
lone toad waits,  
rain pool fills.

# Night Fog

*James Riggan*

We used to watch the fog roll in  
We waited breathlessly when we were young;  
Beneath the hungry darkness of an Ozark sky  
We sat for hours in silent anticipation.

Roiling out of the valley cauldrons  
The fog never failed us.  
Wrapping around us, entwining our limbs  
In misty air, the fog welcomed its old comrades.  
The old world faded into sweet oblivion  
And we merged in Miru's realm, became one  
Without bonds, we flowed through the valleys,  
Whispering in the trees, breathing the night's darkness  
We were Gods. The moonlight glittered  
Within our bodiless forms as we shouted from  
The hilltops.

And the sun ravished us,  
Cremating our newly-found flesh—  
    revealing us for what we truly are.

# Holy Sonnet XIV

*John Donne*

Batter my heart, three-personed God; for you  
As yet but knock, breathe, shine, and seek to mend;  
That I may rise, and stand, o'erthrow me, and bend  
Your force, to break, blow, burn, and make me new.  
I, like an usurped town, to another due,  
Labor to admit you, but O, to no end,  
Reason your viceroy in me, me should defend,  
But is captived, and proves weak or untrue,  
Yet dearly I love you, and would be loved fain,  
But am betrothed unto your enemy,  
Divorce me, untie, or break that knot again;  
Take me to you, imprison me, for I  
Except you enthrall me, never shall be free,  
Nor even chaste, except you ravish me.

# On Holy Sonnet XIV

*Emma Hawes*

In "Holy Sonnet XIV," John Donne begs God to force him to behave. He chooses to write the poem in the sonnet form, succumbing to its demands in some ways and deviating from them in others. These deviations, including the length and meter of certain lines and one important departure from the rhyme scheme, emphasize the points in the poem where they occur. The medium of the work is used to highlight the message Donne wishes to impart. He struggles against the sonnet format just as he struggles unwillingly against God.

In the English language, sonnets are written in iambic pentameter. In the first word of the sonnet, Donne has already abandoned this convention: "Batter" is a trochee. The list in the second line of the poem contains another irregularity, where the iamb "but knock" is followed by the spondee "breathe, shine." God's actions in this line, "knock, breathe, shine," "seek" and "mend" are thus all stressed. In the next line, "rise" and "stand," actions the speaker seeks to perform, are stressed. The line has eleven syllables,

one more than it ought, but this extra syllable allows the line, like the one preceding it, to have every movement of the speaker and of God be accented. Again, the verbs in the fourth line, "break, blow, burn" and "make" are all emphasized. The stresses on these lines taken together create a sense of urgency in Donne's statements. Combined with the alliteration of "break, blow, burn" and "bend," the stresses enhance the violence of the actions they describe; they are an assault on the ears similar to the assault Donne seeks from God. "I," both instances of "me," "rise," and "stand," are all references to the speaker or his actions. They are also all stressed. This is an indication that, despite his yearning for righteousness, Donne's willful behavior is ingrained in his nature. He cannot help but emphasize his own actions just as much as he emphasizes God's.

The imagery in the first four lines of "Holy Sonnet XIV" is violent and seemingly paradoxical. Many prayers ask that God ease the pain of a broken heart, but Donne does not. He refuses to do the



expected, and demands that God must "Batter" his heart. His use of the imperative is emblematic of the proud nature he wants God to correct. God's current actions, "knock, breathe, shine and seek to mend" call to mind a tinker fixing a pot. This is not enough for Donne. His problems are larger than a mere dent; he must be completely remade. The actions in the fourth line parallel, but are stronger versions of, the actions in the second line. Knocking made harsher can "break," breathing more heavily is

blowing, a stronger shine, if one imagines a light on a pot, could appear to be burning. "Burn" also recalls a blacksmith's fire, as does "make me new," which is a total overhaul compared to a simple makeover. The third line epitomizes the paradox of Donne's request. If he is to "rise and stand" as a Christian man, God must "bend" him completely toward His will. The actions seem to oppose one another, but then the reader sees the image of a man bending or kneeling in prayer, then rising, standing up. This is what Donne seeks: true prayer, true communion with God.

In the second half of the octave, only the eighth line contains ten syllables. The fifth line begins with a trochee followed by two iambs, and the pattern

shifts dramatically in the center of the line. The comma following "town" makes the reader stumble on "to another due," stressing "to," reading "another" as an amphibrach, and stressing "due." The natural pattern is usurped halfway through the line by the extra stressed syl-

lable; the labor of understanding the strange pattern foreshadows the speaker's labor in the next line. In the sixth line the word "O" is stressed so that the line sounds as if it were uttered in

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**"Donne's emphasis on words representing himself is symptomatic of the problem he begs God to correct: his self-centeredness."**

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despair, — the speaker actually exclaiming "Oh!" The final bacchius allows both "no" and "end" to be stressed, emphasizing the speaker's feeling of futility in his struggle to admit God. Syntactically these two lines are odd. The subject, "I," begins the sentence, but the action of "labor" is held off until the next line. These grammatical somersaults give both the physical sensation of laboring to comprehend the sentence as well as the impression that the meaning has been interrupted.

The seventh line contains eleven syllables, and like the fifth line is broken in the middle by a comma, stressing the instances of "me" surrounding it. Personified "Reason" has a responsibility toward the speaker and ought to be defending him. The speaker reminds rea-

son of this with his double "me," which cries out for attention; it is also another indicator of the sinful vanity that Donne calls upon God to correct. In the eighth line the end of "captived," "weak" and the "un" in "untrue" to be stressed, signifying Reason's betrayal. The feminine ending of the line adds to the rendering of Reason as weak. That the line contains ten syllables, unlike the three preceding it, also seems to indicate weakness; this line did not struggle as hard as the others did against the conventions of form.

The images presented in the second quatrain are uncommon and unexpected. Donne compares himself to "an usurped town," occupied by his evil nature but trying to sneak in God's rebel forces, "but O, to no end." In comparing himself to an occupied town, Donne partly transfers the blame for his bad behavior to the occupier. However, it is also implied that he must not have fought hard enough against the invader in the first place. The metaphor succinctly depicts the state of a man who once enjoyed and reveled in his sinful behavior, but now wishes to change his ways and cannot. Next, he calls "Reason" God's "viceroys," who should be whispering in his ear the many reasons to behave piously. However, Reason too is "captived," denoting the irrationality of sin. When Donne calls Reason "weak or untrue," he is also talking about himself; though he may pass the blame on to others, he is the one who needs God's help to be strong and holy.

The sestet, though still containing

lines longer than ten syllables, is less syntactically contorted than the octet. The stresses that fall on "loved fain" emphasize the depth of Donne's true desire to be loved by God. The tenth line is perfect iambic pentameter. Within it, the only word that carries more than one stressed syllable is "enemy," showing sin's formidability. Near the center of the eleventh line is the stressed word "break." Its placement creates a snap in the line, aurally dramatizing the sound of a snapping rope or breaking branch.

In the penultimate line, the extra unstressed syllable before "free" adds to its importance as one of the things the speaker desires. In the final line, "chaste" is stressed, like "free," because chastity is what the speaker desires. The stress on the beginning of "ravish" enhances the violent nature of the word. In the entire poem, the words "I" and "me" appear thirteen times, and never once are they unstressed. Donne's emphasis on words representing himself is symptomatic of the problem he begs God to correct: his own self-centeredness. It is confessional, and serves to strengthen the idea that he truly needs help from God.

The sestet's conceit likens Donne and God to lovers. The ninth line could have been lifted directly from one of Petrarch's sonnets. Donne describes being "betrotted" to God's enemy. Like the trope of the occupied city, this metaphor implies that at some point, the speaker was attracted to and sought out sin. However, he has since changed his mind, and begs God to "Divorce" him

from the evil in his nature. The speaker tells God that he must "imprison" him in order for him to be free. The speaker is powerless against sin, and must be physically held back from it by God. God must "enthrall" Donne, be more interesting than sin, if Donne is to stay with him. The metaphor finally turns violent when the speaker says that he cannot be "chaste, except you ravish me." God must rape the speaker, totally control him physically, in order for the speaker to be chaste. The statement is shocking, echoing the speaker's need to be shocked out of his complacency in sin.

Sonnets generally follow one of two rhyme schemes. Petrarchan sonnets are divided primarily between the octet and the sestet, rhyming *abbaabba* followed by *cdcdcd* or *cdecde*. By contrast, Shakespearean sonnets are separated into quatrains and a final couplet, rhyming *ababedcdedefgg*. "Holy Sonnet XIV" is torn between these two types. The octet is plainly Petrarchan, rhyming *abbaabba*. The sestet is a bit less linear. The ninth and eleventh line endings, "fain" and "again," clearly rhyme and could be called *c*. The tenth, thirteenth and fourteenth line endings, "enemy," "free," and "me," also rhyme and could be called *d*. This leaves the twelfth line ending, "I," as the odd man out, showing Donne's loneliness in his sin. One can alternatively assume that "I" was intended to rhyme with "enemy," and that "free" and "me" is a separate pair, giving the sestet the scheme *cdcdde*. "Enemy" and "I" could be seen as an acceptable forced rhyme.

However, it is unlikely that they rhymed any more closely in Donne's speech than they do today. In "The Relic," Donne rhymes "I" with "thereby," implying that if "thereby" is pronounced as it is today, so is "I." In "Elegy XVI. On His Mistress," Donne rhymes "I" with "die," again showing the modern pronunciation of "I." Similarly, in "Elegy IV. The Perfume" "enemy" and "me" are rhymed, again suggesting a modern pronunciation. "Enemy" and "I" in "Holy Sonnet XIV" are not perfect rhyme because the speaker wishes to be separated from his sin, personified as his enemy. The words he uses to represent the two beings are so dichotomous that they cannot even rhyme. Thus Donne's departure from the established rhyme scheme is intentional, parting the two ideas represented by the words just as the words themselves are separated by their neither rhyming nor fitting into the rhyme scheme.

The sonnet cannot leap from the page and force the writer to submit to its rules, despite the fact that these rules have been made plain. Similarly, though God has made his teachings available to man through the Bible, He will never appear and force humans to behave piously. In selecting the sonnet form for this poem, Donne has chosen a format equivalent to God. It has established etiquette without an entity to enforce that etiquette. Donne selects the sonnet form in order to fight against it: half of his lines are too long and he fudges the rhyme between lines ten and twelve. He

wants to be righteous, just as he *wants* to write a sonnet. Inherent in his character is an inability to behave in a manner pleasing to God, which is paralleled by his inability to submit totally to the restrictions of the sonnet form. Until he is literally forced to obey the rules, he never will. His medium is thus an emblem of his message. ■

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**Appendix:** *The stress pattern noted below reflects the author's personal scan of Donne's meter.*

Batter my heart, three-personed God; for you  
 As yet but knock, breathe, shine, and seek to mend;  
 That I may rise, and stand, o'erthrow me, and bend  
 Your force, to break, blow, burn, and make me new.  
 I, like an usurped town, to another due,  
 Labor to admit you, but O, to no end,  
 Reason your viceroy in me, me should defend,  
 But is captived, and proves weak or untrue,  
 Yet dearly I love you, and would be loved fain,  
 But am betrothed unto your enemy,  
 Divorce me, untie, or break that knot again;  
 Take me to you, imprison me, for I  
 Except you enthrall me, never shall be free,  
 Nor even chaste, except you ravish me.



# Deus et Materna

Christine Toohey

*(Interior of the Sistine Chapel. 3PM. The hall is empty except for GOD, MARY, and EVE lying on the floor staring at the ceiling.)*

EVE. I don't like that the serpent is female. And I really don't like that I look exactly like Adam. Michelangelo knows there's more separating the male and female forms than breasts.

GOD. Like responsibility.

*(EVE laughs. Pause.)*

EVE. What?

*(Silence.)*

GOD. I like that I'm wearing pink.

MARY. Me too.

EVE. It makes You look like an angel,

and more approachable than a wrathful God. I don't mind being naked. That's how the story goes, after all. "And the man and his wife were both naked -"

GOD and MARY. "...and were not ashamed."

EVE. Genesis 2:25.

GOD. I like that the nudes are not ashamed.

EVE. Adam isn't, at least. Why does he get the big center panel? It's The Creation, as if the entire race were created in one person. I'm shunted off to the side, submitting to Your will. Adam's fingers (and Yours) are the most recognizable of any work of art and I'm blamed for bringing evil to the entire human race?



The Creation of Adam

GOD. It was your own choice.

EVE. Yeah.

GOD. And it was inevitable.

EVE. I know.

GOD. And it was redeemed.

EVE. Thanks, by the way. But I still resent Michelangelo's misogyny, especially because these paintings are so famous.

GOD. Am I mooning the Pope over there?

EVE. Looks like it.

GOD. Well, that's unfortunate. This ceiling almost realizes the splendor of heaven and it's full of petty gimmicks and flaws. No matter how good it is, it's still the creation of a fallible being.

MARY. Is that Ezekiel? And the Cumaean Sibyl across from him?

GOD. Yes.

MARY. Oh, I like that. They're predicting the second mother as the first is born.

GOD. Me too. Even though he didn't paint your face, you're in this ceiling.

MARY. Yes. (*Pause.*) Eve, stop moping over that expulsion image. Adam's protecting you against the serpent.

EVE. And a lot of help he was, too. "Eve, you shouldn't have eaten that!" Like scolding would have made any difference. It doesn't even look like he's protecting me. It looks like he's reaching to grasp another apple for himself, or trying to



The Prophet Ezekiel



The Fall in the Garden



The Expulsion from Eden



The Cumaean Sibyl

wrench the serpent's arm off, or even grabbing some branches to make clothes. That last one's probably not it because it looks like the serpent is giving me the fruit, so we wouldn't have eaten yet. Adam was being greedy and wanted the fruit and its wisdom for himself.



The Creation of Eve

Bible stories.

MARY. I know.

EVE. It is unfair to me and all women to give the serpent breasts, to paint me as muscular as Adam with no physical accuracy. I am powerless before God, in need of

MARY. When you're less irritated by Michelangelo's favoritism you'll believe he's protecting you. Does it matter what it looks like, so long as you know what happened? And as long as there's a record of the events? It's just Michelangelo's opinion.

EVE. Does it matter whether people really believe you're a virgin so long as you know the truth?

MARY. You have a point.

EVE. Does it matter whether the Eucharist really becomes the Body and the Blood? Does it matter whether art enhances or distracts from God's word?

MARY. I already conceded your point; you don't have to go on.

EVE. I think it matters a lot. I think that as long as there are stupid people in this world, they're going to misinterpret stories. Wars are always going to be fought over petty details. Especially in the Renaissance when very few people could read and Masses were in Latin, art was tremendously important for teaching

Adam's protection, and Adam is ready to grab God's hand and stand up. The paintings reflect a male-dominated world, and Michelangelo does nothing to dissuade the claim that men are better, stronger, and smarter than women. He actually adds to it by using as evidence highly revered biblical stories. Interpretation of the Bible has mattered for as long as the Bible has been around, and I resent that I am the instrument for such prominent misinterpretation that affected society's view of women's abilities for centuries to come.

GOD. And yet, without you, humankind would not exist.

*(He is lying below The Creation of Adam.)*

GOD. I had to create him first. He would have refused to procreate if you had gotten the glory of coming first and the glory of motherhood. Being first implies being most important. He would have felt like his only purpose was to aid in making more of you, and he would have eliminated the future human race out of spite.

*(EVE is about to protest.)*



GOD. I knew you would know better than to assume that the first is the best. I gave you the joy that comes with child-bearing and I know that you know better than to assume that your only purpose is to make children. You know you and all other women can create art just as beautiful and useful and great as this is.

(EVE and MARY come over to look at the *Creation*.)

MARY. It is beautiful, isn't it? Adam below, God above...

EVE. God is surrounded by all his pink angels barely contained in the sphere; Adam is surrounded by green and open land.

MARY. If heaven is infinite, it's funny that infinity would look so crowded, and such a small world would look so empty.

EVE. It's like how the stars can be so huge and yet so tiny at the same time.

MARY. (*with a smile*) Apparently, in order to bring heaven everywhere You go, You have to bundle all your angels up in a sheet.

GOD. It's related to that "heavenly sphere" view of the universe.

EVE. I wonder if this painting was in Milton's mind when he imagined Satan bringing Hell with him wherever he goes. Adam looks content and expectant at the same time.

MARY. I suppose that's how you look when you're about to receive the Word. It's like the Annunciation, with the Holy Spirit connecting me and Gabriel.

EVE. I guess Adam's look is the expression you had as well.

MARY. But I'm never as beautifully nude as Adam is.

EVE. You wouldn't have been, at least not by Michelangelo. He just didn't know how to paint nude women.

GOD. And she sees the light!

(*All three stare peaceably at various parts of the ceiling for a while.*)

MARY. What do you think this ceiling tries to do?

GOD. Keep the rain from falling on us.

MARY. Right. And it does that fairly well. But what do you think Michelangelo intended to achieve with this art? Do you think he just did it because he was commissioned?



The Creation of the Sun, Moon and Planets

EVE. Well, it's obviously a commentary on God's relationship to man. The easiest way would be to paint the scenes from the Bible where God appears.

MARY. I thought he chose the scenes he did because they foreshadow New Testament stories.

EVE. (*pointing*) The earliest scenes are God creating various things in preparation for the human race. The later scenes are of Man's sin: the temptation, the sacrifice, the drunkenness.

MARY. (*also pointing*) The creation of you and the creation of Adam reflect the creation of me and Jesus within me. Michelangelo stopped with Noah because of the covenant God makes with Noah, knowing most Catholics would remember that Jesus is the New Covenant.

EVE. Don't you think it makes sense that during this humanist age Michelangelo would emphasize man's role in his affairs with God, and his capacity for choice between good and evil as well as his knowledge of the difference?

MARY. I would think that, as this is a chapel for use mostly by the Papacy, there would be a lot of Christian allusion in these Old Testament scenes, especially because of the European tradition of allegory and symbolism since before Dante and Petrarch.

(*Pause.*)

(*Simultaneously*)

GOD. You could both be right.

EVE. Neither one of us has to be wrong.

MARY. We're both probably right.

(*Another pause.*)

GOD. Well, where does that leave us?

MARY. I think this ceiling is beautiful in its execution and meaning. It ties past events together, and the colors and forms are lovely.

EVE. I still wish Michelangelo wanted to paint nude women, but I recognize that even if he could, and even if he had chosen to make me look powerful, this ceiling alone would not have had much influence on the biases of Renaissance society. It's a good work of art.

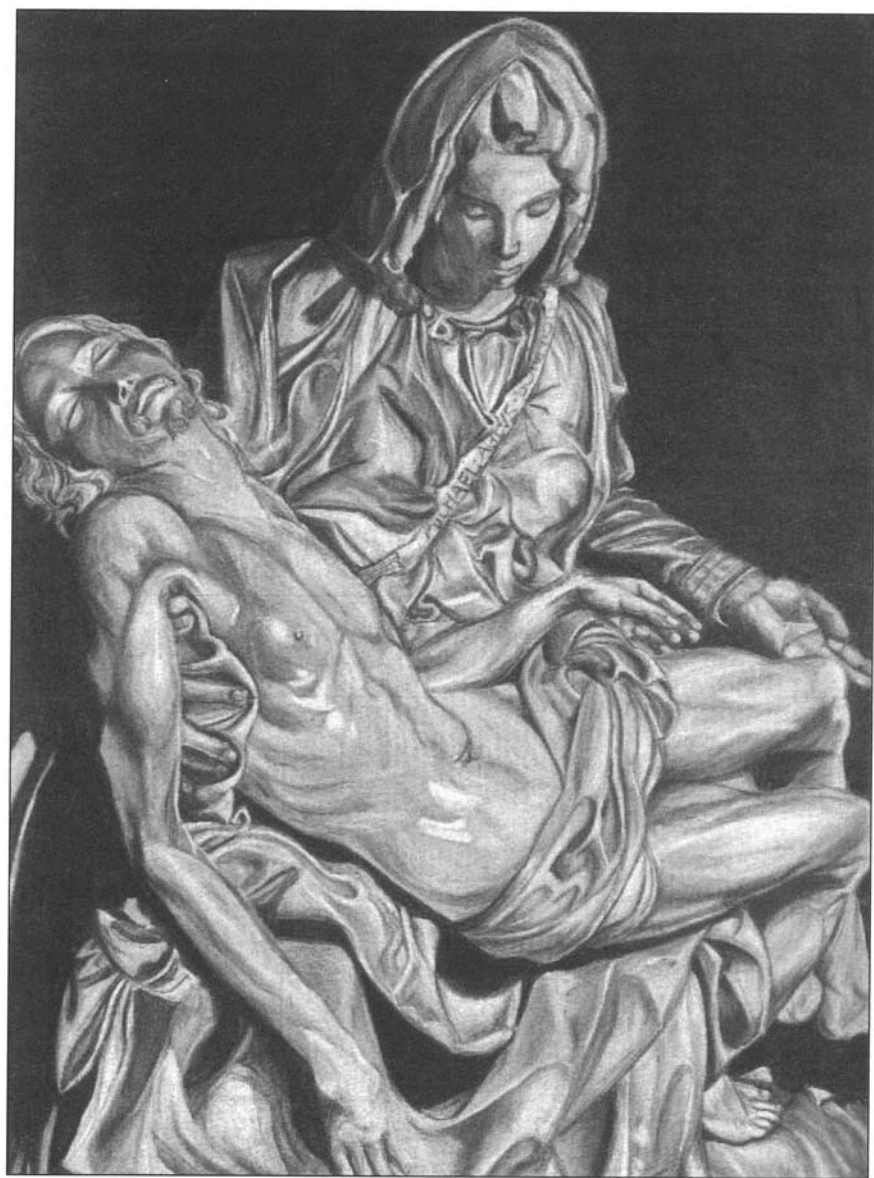
GOD. And I wish Michelangelo could restrain from putting his initials into everything he creates, and stop taking out his grudges in his paintings, but humans have flaws and that will never change. Where to next? Shall we do something that isn't about us?

EVE. The *Mona Lisa*?

MARY. All right.

GOD. The Louvre it is.

*Fin.*



# Religion in Goethe's *Faust*

Havovi Mirza

With his *Faust*, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe inserted himself into the literary cluster known as the Romantics. Romanticism emerged in response to the limitations and frustrations of the Enlightenment, proposing instead a return to nature and a life of simplicity. Goethe's hero Faust not only embodies the notions of Romantic thinking but also portrays the continuous battle between Romantic and Enlightenment thinkers. Like Rousseau, Faust realizes that true happiness and God can be found within nature, but simultaneously he cannot seem to detach himself from the "horror of verbalism and pedantry" (Hammer 77). This conflict remains unresolved to the very end and is arguably what makes Goethe's play a true tragedy.

Faust joins his guide Mephisto on a religious quest to bring meaning and happiness back into his life. In Part I, he reveals that he had hopes of achieving this goal since his youth and had always gone about it through the study of the arts and sciences. In what is perhaps a

not-so-subtle shot at Enlightenment reason, Goethe exposes that all such study has been, much to the frustration of the hero, in vain. In his first few lines, Faust complains, "[I] see that for all our science and art / We can know nothing" (Goethe 364-5). In his analysis of Goethe's play, Carl Hammer, Jr. also elaborates Faust's reluctance to use words to find God, or to put a name to Him (Hammer 78-9). Of Margaret's inquiry as to whether or not Faust believes in God, Hammer notes how he rejects the question, asking "who may name, or dare proclaim belief or unbelief in the One[?]" (Hammer 78). Faust continues, insisting that "Names are but sound and smoke / Befogging heaven's blazes" (Goethe 3457-8).

As the story progresses, Faust, thinking in the manner of a Romantic, feels "tormented by the desire for a return to nature, in which he sees the source of all true life" (Hammer 77)—the source, of course, being God Himself. Faust thus places himself in the hands of Mephisto, who promises him satisfaction through human experience,

rather than study. Faust believes he may capture the true essence of humanity by fulfilling his thirst for passion and emotion.

Faust's Romantic side is most prominently displayed in his admiration for all things natural, for things born directly out of the hands of God Himself. Faust is unable to experience God through the conventional forms of worship such as attending church or praying; upon hearing Church bells from his study, the scholar laments, "Why would you, heaven's tones, compel / Me gently to rise from my dust? / Resound where tender-hearted people dwell: / Although I hear the message, I lack all faith or trust" (Goethe 762-5). Later, he and his colleague Wagner venture into the town on Easter, and Faust witnesses the changing of the season on the mountainside:

Released from the ice are river  
and creek,  
Warmed by the spring's fair  
quicken eye;  
The valley is green with hope  
and joy  
[ ... ]  
Everywhere stirs what develops  
and grows,  
All he would quicken with color  
that glows (903-13).

Faust openly admires the end of a cold winter. In the first line of his speech, Goethe may also be alluding to the two friends leaving their dark studies and walking out into the warmth of the

spring, making Faust a physical part of the rejuvenation celebrated at Easter.

Further on in the speech, Faust expresses his deep connections to God not only through the beauty of nature, but also through the jubilation of the other townspeople on the mountainside. He observes them, too, leaving their crowded houses and trades to emerge into the valley. Like him, they bathe in the glory of the Lord outside of their churches: "All seek sunshine. They celebrate / The resurrection of the Lord. / For they themselves are resurrected ... From the churches' reverent night / They have emerged into the light" (920-8). Hammer also recognizes the villagers' "joy in being alive and 'resurrected'" (Hammer 78). In the last four lines of his triumphant oration, Faust cries:

I hear the village uproar rise;  
Here is the people's paradise,  
And great and small shout joyously:  
Here I am human, may enjoy  
humanity (937-40).

It seems that, at least for the moment, Faust has found the means for feeling truly human and for experiencing true religion. Nature allows him to experience God through all the passions He endowed upon man, including happiness, love, and sexual desire. Within many of Faust's speeches on nature and the earth, Goethe indirectly incorporates allusions to fertility and eroticism—ideas that are not foreign to Romanticism. In

the scene in which Faust hears the church bells from his lair, he is at first apparently unaffected by them. However, after listening for some time, the angelic rhythms force him to reminisce about his youth as a devout Christian. He recalls the vivid bursts of emotions caused by a single prayer, emotions that suggest feelings stronger than merely pious love:

Once heaven's love rushed at me  
as a kiss

[ ... ]

every prayer brought impassioned bliss.

An unbelievably sweet yearning  
Drove me to roam through wood  
and lea,

Crying, as my eyes were burning,  
I felt a new world grow in me.

This song proclaimed the spring  
feast's free delight, appealing  
To the gay games of youth ...  
(771-80).



Here Faust's language takes on an erotic tone, and vividly brings to mind "gay games of youth" (780); there is a reference to pregnancy, when Faust recalls, "I felt a new world grow in me" (778). However, this more sexual connotation does not make his love for God any less sacred. In revealing his hero's intimate feelings, Goethe places stronger emphasis on the link between God and humans in their most "natural" state, as He had created them (another highly Romantic ideal). As Faust turned his attention to Enlightenment reason and book-learning, he lost his ability to truly "feel human" and, consequently, his connection to God. Thus Part I consists of the hero's struggle to find ways to rebuild this connection and revive the passion he experienced in his youth. Ultimately, midway through the story, he comes across the most "naturally pious" and desirable means to his happiness: Margaret.

Margaret, who weaned her baby sister for her sick mother, is the icon of nature and fertility, and at the same time a devout Christian. To Faust, she is another Eve, and is his closest connection to God through nature. She possesses "That meekness and humility, supreme / Among the gifts of loving, lavish nature" (3104-5). In Wood and Cave, Faust privately thanks Mephisto for introducing him to Margaret: "With this happiness / Which brings me close and closer to the gods, / You gave me the companion whom I can / Forego no more" (3241-4). The desire he feels for

Margaret is reminiscent of the passion he himself once felt as a devout Christian; he can again experience God through her.

However, Faust does not simply adore nature as a creation of God, but more as a means through which he may reach God. He has wanted to achieve this end since the very beginning of the book, where he renounced book-learning as a way of reaching it. Faust does not admire nature and earthly pleasure as ends in themselves. Instead, he searches fervently for a higher connection, a religious truth that lies on a much grander scale; Faust is obsessed with the notion of the macrocosm. For this reason, Goethe makes constant references to his hero's adoration of astrology, particularly of the moon. This fascination is introduced most prominently at the very beginning of Part I, where he ceases his frustration over his lore to view the moonlight peering in from his study window:

Full lunar light, that you might  
stare

The last time now on my despair!  
[ ... ]

Oh, that up on a mountain height  
I could walk in your lovely light  
And float with spirits round caves  
and trees,

Weave in your twilight through  
the leas,

Cast dusty knowledge overboard,  
And bathe in dew until restored.

(386-97)

The moon is part of the macro-

cosm, part of God's Divine Plan. The moonlight is an all-reaching, all-encompassing glow; further on in the text, he refers to it as "heaven's lovely light" (400). Goethe makes it clear that Ultimate Truth is literally entwined in nature, within its caves, trees, and leas. This phrase foreshadows Faust's later recollection of being driven to "roam through wood and lea" (776), caught in the powerful experience of God and of religion. His desire to "bathe in dew until restored" also foretells a phrase he later utters, upon viewing the symbol of the macrocosm: "Rise, student, bathe without dismay / In heaven's dawn your mortal head" (445-6).

Through this and other associations, it becomes obvious that Faust's true gaze is directed to the macrocosm; the earth and nature serve only as a means to approaching near enough to understand it. Goethe lays out this idea at the very beginning, in the Prologue in Heaven, where Mephisto suggests, "Not earthly are the poor fool's meat and drink ... From heaven he demands the fairest star" (301-4). Further into the story, as he contemplates the symbol of the Spirit of the Earth, the moonlight dies away and the very specter comes into view, only to say, "Peer of the spirit that you comprehend / Not mine!" (512-3). Similarly, Hammer notices "the presence of two conflicting souls within [Faust's] breast ... between earth and sky" (Hammer 78). During his outing in the village with Wagner, Faust feels torn between his love of earthly delights and his desire for greater Truth, "in quest / Of rarefied ancestral spheres"

(1116-7).

As the hero of the story, Faust's tragic flaw remains his close affinity to Enlightened reason. Even though he discovers that he may never find God in any of his lore, he cannot seem to detach himself from the written word. At one point, he makes a conscious attempt to do so, reconstructing Genesis from "In the beginning was the Word" (1224) to "In the beginning was the Act" (1237). However, not long afterwards, when Mephisto appears from a cloud of smoke and surprises him, Faust's first reaction is to ask the stranger his name. Mephisto himself answers, "This question seems minute / For one who thinks the word so beggarly" (1327-8). His attachment to reason has apparently drawn him away from natural life, from seeing the universe for what it is and embracing God. In *The Brothers Karamazov*, Dostoevsky's character has just learned of neurons in

the brain: "It's magnificent, Alyosha, this science! A new man's arising—that I understand ... And yet I am sorry to lose God!" (644). Romanticism warned against the dangers of reason that might erase Man's true humanity. Ironically, reason only further distances Faust from the Truth and religion for which he fervently thirsts. ■

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# Analects of Core

The Master said, A gentleman is ashamed to let his words outrun his deeds.

— *Confucius*

The mind is its own place, and in itself  
Can make a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n.

— *Milton*

Do not seek to have events happen as you want them to, but instead want them to happen as they do happen, and your life will go well.

— *Epictetus*

And malt does more than Milton can  
To justify God's ways to man.

— *A. E. Housman*

# The Truthful Times

## Italy's boot labeled a terrorist Report by Jonathan Tucker

TUNIS, TUNISIA - U.S. President Bush met with the Tunisian President, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, last night at Ben Ali's castle in the capital city. The meeting lasted throughout the night and successfully brought the two nations together as allies.

On Thursday afternoon, Bush was seen running out of a D.C. middle school with a sixth grade geography book in his hands. He was visiting the Thomas J. Tucker Middle School to give a speech on the dangers of homosexuality and the benefits of traditional marriage.

When asked why the president had to leave early, sixth-grader Stephanie Brody said, "He wouldn't tell us. All he said was that he had highly classified intelligence on dangerous terrorist activities."

With Stephanie's geography book in hand, Bush quickly assembled his cabinet and departed for Tunisia. During the flight he explained the details of the classified intelligence he had received earlier that day.

According to Bush's National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice, "the intelligence suggests that the terrorists now have the most massive weapon of mass destruction ever."

Unfortunately she could not specify who, what, when, or how. Bush alluded to where and why when he said "Italy has always hated Tunisia."

This unbeknownst hatred came as a shock to every international relations expert we could get a hold of. Bush initially refused to clarify.

An undercover reporter for *The Truthful Times* in President Ben Ali's harem discovered exactly what Dubya was up to. Following his doctrine of pre-emptive strike that has now become famous, Bush thinks that Tunisia should attack Italy with all its force before Italy kicks Sicily at them.



White House intel photo showing Italy preparing to kick Sicily into Tunisia.

He brought along Stephanie's geography book as evidence of Italy's massive weapon of destruction.

Secretary of State Colin Powell estimated that "if the boot were to kick with enough force, Sicily could hit Tunisia with an impact greater than 420 earthquakes." A kick that hard would be heard and felt the whole world round, and therefore the Bush administration feels it is America's duty to insure that this terrorist boot never gets to kick.

"A real cowboy knows a boot when he sees one. We can either fear these terrorist masses of land, or we can act before they have a chance to," Bush said when reached for a comment this morning.

"The freedom of all God's heterosexual white children is at stake here," he said.

Bush plans on sending troops, bulldozers and dredges in to destroy Italy within the next week. ■

# On Vitality

*Zachary Bos*

The Visible Man  
Was a toy for intelligent children,  
Made of Plastic parts:  
Organs, a spleen,  
Two lungs, cords of muscles,  
Coiled guts, one stomach sac,  
The blanched-walnut brain.

It was transparent, so  
The smart kids could  
Easily explore  
The shapes of anatomy  
With fascination.

Like pre-scientific medical  
Ghoul-savants who pulled off skins  
To see the ticking insides of  
The convicted and the poor.

There was no slot for a soul:  
No hole to place the key  
That would wind  
The ghost in the machine.

So no matter  
How carefully  
I replaced the bits  
Of my Visible man, he never  
Woke up.  
Even after wriggling,  
After pleading...

# Dusting Lenin

*Zachary Bos*

Every morning it is my job at eleven  
to enter the reliquary of Lenin and  
knock dust off his paraffin skin.

At noon a lofty caucus of self-possessed white coats  
forgets itself and disputes theories of necrotic  
physiology with slaps and toothpicks over Lenin.

Lenin is sleeping, sustained on the scents  
of fruits and flowers. His brain was removed to Paris  
to be dissected, the genius stained soviet red.

I've learned to be humble, since Lenin has no lungs;  
the kidneys and spotted liver weep toxins after death,  
and were replaced by cotton balls and embalming wax.

Stalin is crumbling in the dry sandy soil out back,  
behind the mausoleum, though  
they did do a good job on him...

Incidentally, Lenin's antique corpse is slowly  
seeping fluid whose composition is kept secret by men  
whose theses tackled postmortem hair cells.



# Requiem for a Prayer

*Sassan Tabatabai*

The call to prayer rang out from the minaret. It made the hair of my arms stand on end, as it had twenty years ago when I last heard it. I had left Iran following the Islamic Revolution, an event which forever altered the attitude of millions of Iranians toward religion. Now, my self-imposed exile in America had come to an end, without fanfare.

I had spent a good part of my adult life in academia. For me, religion was just another academic discipline—my discipline. It was something to study, not practice. My approach to Islam was that of a scholar: detached, critical. I had read everything, from primary texts to obscure commentaries and felt at home discussing whatever issues my students would raise. But as for faith, belief, piety: they were as remote and inaccessible to me as trigonometry.

The Muslim “call to prayer” was a staple of my introductory course on Islam. “There is no God but God. Mohammad is the messenger of God.”

The repetitions, the simplicity of stressing and re-stressing the central tenets of Islam, I had always found quite penetrating. But hearing it here, in the same place I had as a child, was haunting.

The Mosque of Imam Reza was exactly as I remembered. The city surrounding the mosque and its courtyard lay sprawled as far as the eye could see, a vast congestion of humanity, traffic, pollution, noise: the unceasing movement of an over-populated third-world city. But the Imam’s mosque and its grounds seemed to have transcended time, perhaps in the way faith is said to transcend reason.

People walked about the cobblestoned courtyard as they had for centuries. A mullah wearing a black turban and a long brown robe hurried toward the mosque, to take his place among the Devout who had gathered for the evening prayer. The tail of his robe waved impatiently in the wake of his short, agile steps. A group of seminary students, Koran in hand, also made

their way to the mosque. Their bowed heads and lowered eyes, their thin and patchy beards betrayed their youth. At the entrance, they stopped by a shallow pool to perform their ablutions. In a single, uninterrupted motion, rolling up their sleeves, stepping out of their slippers (since shoes must be removed in order to enter the mosque, slippers are the preferred footwear of the mosque community) and removing their socks, they proceeded with their ablutions with robot-like efficiency: rinsing the face and neck, the feet, the hands and forearms, from elbow down to the fingertips.

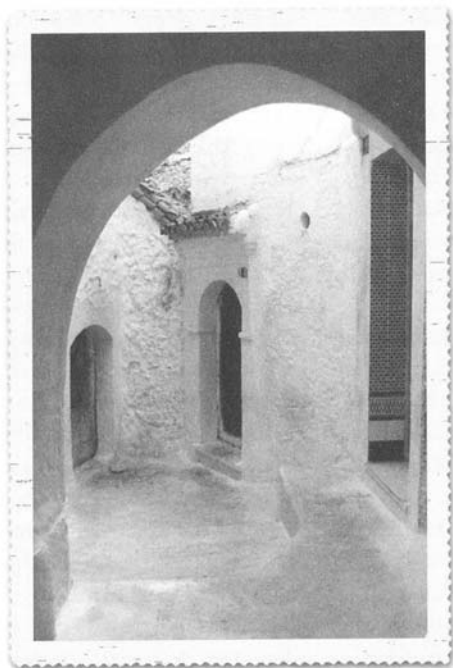
A woman covered head-to-toe in black chador clasped her unruly son by the wrist, struggling to hold the breeze-blown chador under her chin with her other hand. The boy pulled away with all his might, causing her to stagger toward a flock of pigeons, beaks to the ground, stuffing themselves on bread-crumbs. With a sudden yank, he broke free from the mother's grasp and recoiled from the sudden slackening of tension; the swollen sail of her chador deflated as she straightened out. The boy rushed into the feeding pigeons, which rose in unison. As if directed by the air-control of the mosque, the flock of pigeons, hundreds strong, flew in a predetermined pattern: clockwise around the southern minaret, before descending and settling in the opposite end of the courtyard, far from the prowling boy.

For a moment, the setting sun

came out from behind dark, knotted clouds and it was as if the turquoise ceramic tiles that covered the dome of the mosque had suddenly been ignited. The sun reflected off the square tiles, each set with a slightly different orientation to the light, emanating a subtle sense of movement, a hypnotizing, unfocused depth.

I realized that other than the boy inching his way stealthily back toward the pigeons, and his mother keeping a distant vigil on him from beneath the impenetrable cloak of the chador, the courtyard was empty.

I stood by the side of the pool and watched my distorted reflection on the surface of the water, still agitated from the students' ablutions. I wondered if ablutions could cleanse *me* of a lifetime's indulgence in the *harām*, of which alcohol was the least of my offenses. I had to remind myself that many prohibitions were open to interpretation. After all, were not the Faithful promised wine from the hands of beautiful maidens at the gates of paradise? But my sins went beyond mere prohibitions. What of the pillars of Islam, most of which I had neglected my entire life. I knew the prayers but I had never prayed. I had never given alms or made the pilgrimage to Mecca. I had taught courses on Islam for years, preaching what I myself was not so sure about. Was I an apostle or an apostate? Now, standing before God's watchful eyes, preparing to enter His house, I felt exposed, transparent, a



*a courtyard in  
Chaouen in the Rif  
Mountains, Morocco*

fraud hiding behind obscure books and ten-point footnotes.

I pushed the heavy wooden door and after a moment's hesitation, walked into the mosque. To my left, in the great prayer hall, rows of the Devout stood at prayer, each on his prayer rug, internal compass pointing toward Mecca. In an impressive display of synchronicity, they all bowed, straightened, bowed again, went down on their knees and prostrated themselves on their prayer stones.

To my right, in a large well-lit room littered with shoes, two boys with

stubbled scalps, no older than twelve or thirteen, shuffled about on their knees pairing the shoes and neatly arranging them in rows. I took off my shoes and handed them to one of the boys, who without looking up at me, placed them with the others, one pair among hundreds that had carried the Pious on this pilgrimage. My thick-soled Timberlands, which only a few weeks earlier had trudged through New England snow, stood head-and-shoulders above the black or brown patent leather of the others, most of them with heels worn almost flat.



I made my way past the communal hum of prayer rising from the Worshipers and into the main chamber of the mosque, the final resting place of Imam Reza, the eighth in the Shi'ite cosmology of Imams, the great-great-grandson of the Prophet. The main chamber was just as I remembered. In the center of the room, an ornate cage with interlaced gold bars held the Imam's body.

Even though most of the people in the mosque were busy at prayer, I realized I was not alone in the chamber. A woman, the chador clenched in her teeth, was holding an infant. With outstretched arms she offered the child to the Imam and gently rubbed its cheek, its forehead and finally the entire length of its body against the golden cage. Her head slowly rocked to and fro, in rhythm with the prayer she was whispering. Apart from a barely discernable whimper, the child was silent and motionless, staring at the mother through half-open eyes. I moved to the other side of the cage.

I reached out and touched the gold bars, which over the centuries had been rubbed as smooth as marble. How many people had rubbed these bars in the hope of redemption, of a blessing, a miracle? I gripped the bars with both hands and moved closer, resting my cheek on the golden knots. The metal felt cold against my skin. It smelled of hope.

From the commotion outside the chamber I realized the prayer was now

over. The Devout dispersed throughout the mosque. Some put on their shoes and headed out, others filtered into the chamber, many stayed on their prayer rugs, lost in contemplation, no doubt basking in the afterglow of communion.

I joined a group of Faithful making their way back toward the door of the mosque and the perfectly aligned rows of shoes, waiting at attention for their respective owners. For a moment, as I joined my fellow Muslims, I was moved by the simplicity, the poverty of standing naked yet unashamed—all equal, all brothers—under the inundating light of His divine grace.

As I glanced over the rows of perfectly aligned and paired shoes, I realized that mine were missing. My thick-soled Timberlands, towering over the other flat, worn-out, poor-excuse-for-footwear shoes, had been stolen. I picked out the newest and shiniest pair that looked as if would fit my feet. I put them on and walked out of the Mosque of Imam Reza. ■

*This short story first appeared in The Republic of Letters, Number 11, 2001.*

# prayer to the god(s)

*Bethany Pickard*

oh, but that you had created the world  
and let me be subject to you and your creation  
more knowing, more wise.  
or even let creation run its course  
and left us to our own destruction

you are not holy; your pitfalls are  
my destruction  
there is no ransom  
nor contrition

instead you torture me these twenty years  
as you change your fickle minds.  
and fate is altered at your whim;  
at once when i see  
some semblance of order  
it is dashed  
like hope of love's return

glory blinds the eyes of him,  
glory you have set before them  
and truly anyone who seeks that face,  
will meet entirely the same demise,  
devoid, discarded, wishing he had rent and wrestled  
more years from a humble life  
but glory still, the lust, the craving, the carnage  
is passed as though in blood, onto my son  
and though my heart screams in agony against it  
i cannot lift the spear to pierce that glory  
from his eyes  
or woo my love from battle

and i grow more convinced  
that i am unclean from within  
evil abounds only from my own heart  
not what i feed it  
these greedy eyes of mine  
hunger and hunger  
unquenchable hunger—this is the only light i  
have to see by, ephemeral  
and i lust for more  
but you are not much more than i and  
you cannot explain this mercenary passion

oh, but that you were one god,  
that i could grapple with you  
that you would not contradict your character.  
what i would give to find humility  
in what is greater than myself  
in scope of breath and mind,  
not only might

even then perhaps i might  
catch a glimpse of Truth,  
of Wisdom,  
that is what i truly long to know  
and will never find in you, legion

cover me with your hand  
and pass by me  
that i might see your back  
only One.  
only Once.  
the tension in my heart would ease,  
to be taken up in my mind  
where it belongs

i am.  
this i fathom in my very blood;  
it courses through my limbs  
in ways i do not know  
it cannot be reached by eyes or lips  
it cannot be reached by you

it would be better to believe  
it came from someOne else.



# The Summersault

*Cristen Brinkerhoff*

please try to remember what it feels like to be outside in child-summers ...  
the whitest-sun, with that wind through the air that wraps over your skin and fills you  
up from inside like a baby blue water balloon.

I see those few hours, holy hours,

when the sun crouches down behind the mountains to hide from the city lights  
that burn into the horizon.

these are summers when possibility takes its rightful back seat.

long weeks of breathe in, breathe out.

re-charged by the heat, they come back like robots to work through the  
calloused hands of the winter witches.

and I think I could be an angel, wafting above the streets and making landscapes wave  
like the leaves on the mountain.

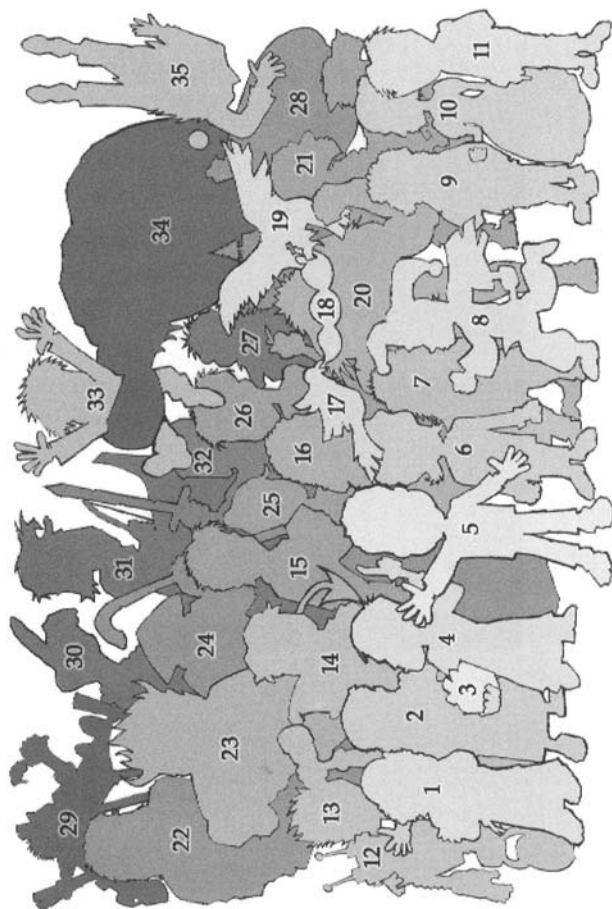
Angels only live in the summer, and rise like heat in the cold.

try to remember that before the chill will come the fire-days, when everything is easier  
to understand, when the walls come down behind the backdrop; days when we can  
backwards-roll through wind and heat and mom's new sprinkler.

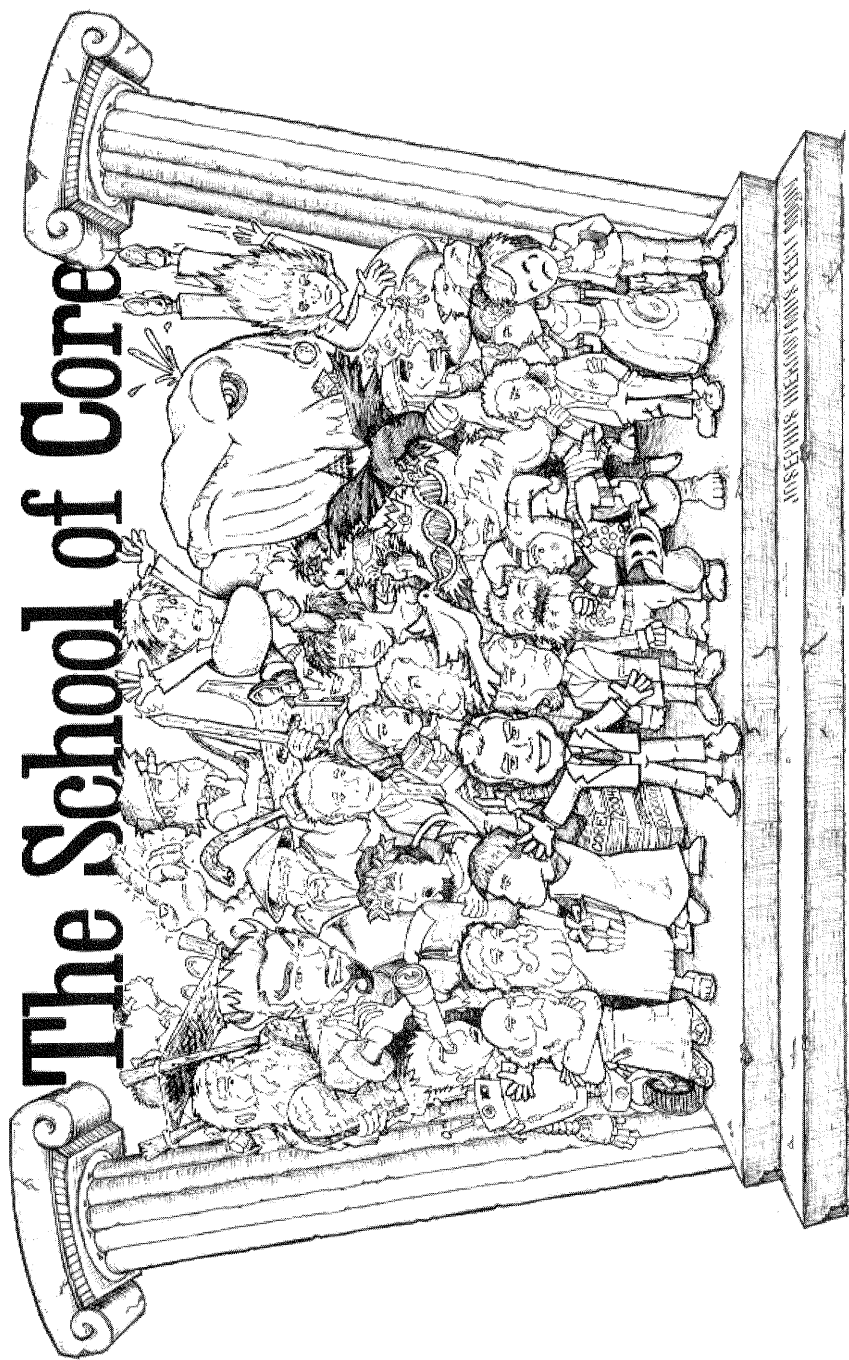
days of tension like three deep breaths before the fall.



# Joseph Jerome's "School of Core"



- |                      |                       |
|----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1) Socrates          | Genome                |
| 2) Plato             | 19) Dawkin's Hawk     |
| 3) Mauss' Gift       | 20) Gilgamesh         |
| 4) Aristotle         | 21) Bedouin on        |
| 5) Dean Johnson      | Camel                 |
| 6) John Locke        | 22) Moses             |
| 7) Karl Marx         | 23) Mephisto          |
| 8) King Lear's Fool  | 24) Confucius         |
| 9) Jean's Jacques    | 25) Eve               |
| Rousseau             | 26) Adam              |
| 10) Elizabeth Bennet | 27) Bonobo            |
| 11) Goffman's        | 28) Pantagruel's      |
| Presentation of the  | Tongue                |
| Self                 | 29) Michelangelo      |
| 12) A.I.             | 30) Smith's Invisible |
| 13) Galileo          | Hand                  |
| 14) Petrarch         | 31) Odysseus          |
| 15) Denis Diderot    | 32) Percles           |
| 16) Voltaire         | 33) Thomas Hobbes     |
| 17) Dawkin's Dove    | 34) The Leviathan     |
| 18) The Human        | 35) Isaac Newton      |





# Philosophical Mess

*Aya Rothwell*

It was a fine day after a storm, and the sun shone brightly in an azure sky. Two roads had just merged into one; there had been a pair of travelers on each road, and they now made a group of four. They began to politely trade words, pairing off with one from the other road. For whatever reason, they spoke the same tongue. And because they were great thinkers, their talk went on like this:

“Good knots have no rope, but cannot be untied,” said Lao-Tzu, nodding in a satisfactory manner.

Aristotle nodded along a few times with Lao-Tzu, and looked intrigued. Then he paused, and said, “I find that you make no sense.”

“We’ve got to help people, help them change! Make them see the light!” emphasized Plato.

Confucius nodded. “Yes, bring back the fine traditions of the past that once lit the way.”

Plato looked at Confucius with disgust, so much that Confucius did a double-take on this sour reaction.

“The past and the ideas handed

down,” said Plato stiffly, “is what shackles people. People must relearn what they once knew and have forgotten.”

Confucius gave Plato a look of bafflement.

“So the Tao—” continued Aristotle. “Is it the greatest good?”

Lao-Tzu blinked. “Er—it is unformed and complete, like an uncarved block of wood. Tao endures in its own nature.”

“Self-fulfilling? So it is happiness?”

“Those who sustain Tao do not wish to be full ...”

Plato had been explaining his just city to Confucius, who was politely listening in the manner that one listens to an elder indulgently orate a story. Plato had gotten to mentioning family bonds, and Confucius began to look like he’d get along with Plato after all. “Oh, you agree, too, that family ties are important in everyone’s life?” noted Confucius.

“Very much so,” nodded Plato. “Family bonds, in fact, are far too strong.” Confucius frowned on the intonation. Plato went on. “If you ever want

a just city, ties should be broken and blood family should never know one another."

"WHAT!?"

Meanwhile, Lao-Tzu was still trying to explain the Way to Aristotle.

"Water, you say? The Tao has to do with water?"

Plato frowned, arguing, "Well, surely there are some traditions from the past that won't do for governing a city."

"I do admit," said Confucius, although he appeared to not want to admit anything, "I should like to do away with the tunes of Cheng, which are licentious. And the clever talkers, too, which are dangerous."

"Ah, yes. Poets are clever talkers and troublemakers if they aren't watched. Should I rule, I would be careful about who hears poetry, music, and stories in my city."

Confucius did not look happy at sharing something with Plato. "Common people can lack understanding, but rulers should not be corrupt like that."

"Not corrupt," replied Plato in irritation, "but thinking of the people's happiness as a whole."

Confucius looked even more unhappy. "But ... the trust of the people in their rulers!" he said with a simplicity that emphasized his statements' importance.

"Exactly why some of the people shouldn't hear certain music and poetry that will make them think too much, be unhappy, and doubt you."

Confucius grimaced, although in a strangely elated way, and shook his head.

"No no, they will trust you and be happy if you carry out the rituals."

"What?" said Plato, taken back for once.

"Forgive me, but why are you so concerned with reason?" asked Lao-Tzu to Aristotle in the background.

Plato had gone into his famous argument mode, something no one, least of all a gentleman like poor Confucius, should be subjected to. Finally Confucius cried, "Why do you trap me with so many questions?"

Plato glared at him. "Why don't you question things more? Such as, should your ancestors' rituals and traditions be held with such high regard?"

"Well, at least I teach a system that I know to work!"

"In the past, anyway. How do you know it will work in the modern day?"

"I consider the system better than the practices in my country now. At any rate, they worked at one time, but how do you know that your city of justice will work at all?" Confucius tutted. "Really, breaking up families like that!"

"I would break the families to make a bigger family, that of the city." Then Plato looked at Confucius. "Why are you obsessed with family?"

"I grew up with very strong family ties." Confucius added, a bit nastily and ungentlemanly, "Were you perhaps abandoned as a child?"

Lao-Tzu suddenly looked happy. He tossed his hands lightly with an "Ah!" and paused walking, turning to Aristotle. Aristotle stopped walking as well. "I

believe I know what can help you understand." Hearing this, Aristotle looked intently at Lao-Tzu, as if determined to find the answer first by scrutinizing Lao-Tzu's face. Lao-Tzu smiled. "Tao called Tao is not Tao."

"What!?"

Confucius threw up his hands in a more frustrated manner, during a different conversation. "Aiyah! What do you think of ..."

Confucius trailed off, as he looked around quizzically for his traveling partner. "Lao-Tzu?"

Aristotle and Lao-Tzu seemed to have decided that, as long as they had both stopped walking, they should take a rest by the side of the road. Although they were from opposite ends of the earth, they united in their cheerfully scatter-minded attitude that halting without telling the rest of the traveling group was a fine thing to do. Or perhaps they had been caught up in conversation as Confucius and Plato were. Either way, they now sat and enjoyed the scenery.

Lao-Tzu gestured and spoke. "See how that oak, so mighty and strong, has fallen over? But the grass is weak like water, like an infant, it bends and does not break. The weak prevail."

Aristotle looked surprised. "Oh? I was going to say, that frail spider-web over there was broken, and that stubborn oak was destroyed, but the weeds, being of neither extreme, survived." He added, "However, that is an interesting way of thinking."

Lao-Tzu bowed in a manner that

thanked Aristotle and somehow acknowledged that Aristotle's words were appreciated in the same way. (Aristotle wondered how Lao-Tzu managed such a subtle gesture.) Lao-Tzu then gestured towards the patch of plants nearby, and the two took a moment to look at them.

"That one flower, that stands out so," said Aristotle, gesturing, "the one that does not veer too much in either direction, that is perfect in blossom, that flower is as rare as the truly good person." He looked at Lao-Tzu expectantly.

Lao-Tzu spoke. "That one blossom, with so fragile petals and delicate color, it is seen because it does so without trying, it does not fight with the other flowers and therefore the other flowers cannot crush it." Aristotle looked delighted upon hearing this, ecstatically tapping his fingers together.

By now, Confucius and Plato had come over, as they wondered what was keeping their companions and why they hadn't bothered to announce a stop. Confucius glanced at the flora, noting, "My cousin enjoyed picking these flowers when learning traditional flower arrangements."

"Hah, flowers, these flowers are just images, shadows, particular manifestations of a higher form," noted Plato at the same time.

Hearing yet another reference to family and tradition, Plato gave Confucius a funny look.

Everyone else looked at Plato as if he was mad.

Aristotle clapped Lao-Tzu on the

back, laughing. "Well, anyway—I don't quite understand you sometimes, my friend, but I like you. You make me think, and that is a pleasure."

Lao-Tzu, who looked briefly startled on being clapped on the back, smiled. "There is also pleasure doing nothing."

Aristotle laughed again. "That's wonderful! Say something else!"

Lao-Tzu smiled once more, but seemed a touch nettled.

Plato was getting riled up, which was unusual. "You cling to the past, you teach nothing new!"

"I never said I did! I merely transmit, I teach the great traditions." Confucius added, rather pointedly, "Such as the importance of family."

Into the middle of this came Aristotle. "Plato, have you met this fellow?" said Aristotle, pulling Lao-Tzu forward by the shoulders. "He's delightful!"

Lao-Tzu was flattered, but also moments away from asking why Aristotle was treating him something like a trained monkey.

"Have you met this fellow?" growled Plato, glaring at Confucius. "He's infuriat-

ing!" Confucius glared back in a rather ungentlemanly manner.

However, in the end, the four thinkers traveled together after all. Lao-Tzu seemed to have forgiven Aristotle for treating him like a festival amusement, for Aristotle was earnestly interested. And eventually, Aristotle told Lao-Tzu more of his ideas, instead of just having Lao-Tzu talk all the time.

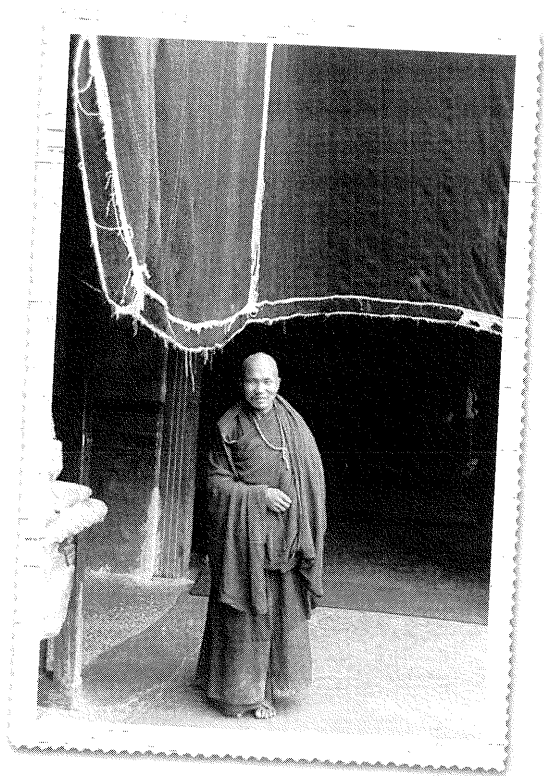
One would think Confucius and Plato would want to get out of each other's sight as soon as possible. But they were sincere in their curiosity toward each other; or at least, they were addicted to arguing with each other. At any rate, they walked in distances close enough to throw snippets of arguments at each other.

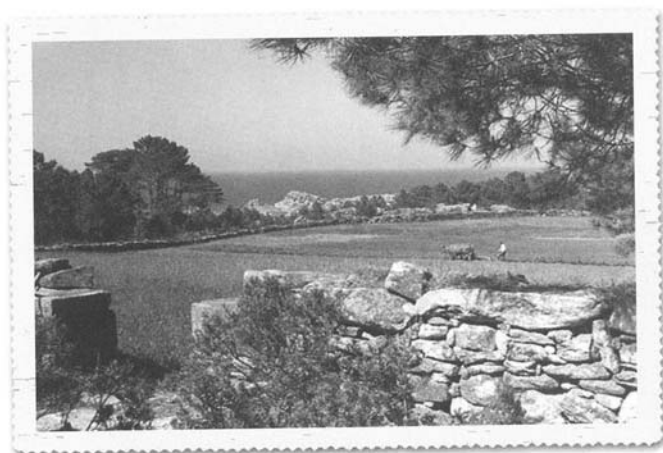
In the manner of great thinkers, no one had remembered the proper introductions. But in time, everyone figured out the others' names anyway. ■

# Spain, Morocco, China, Tibet: Photos from Traveling

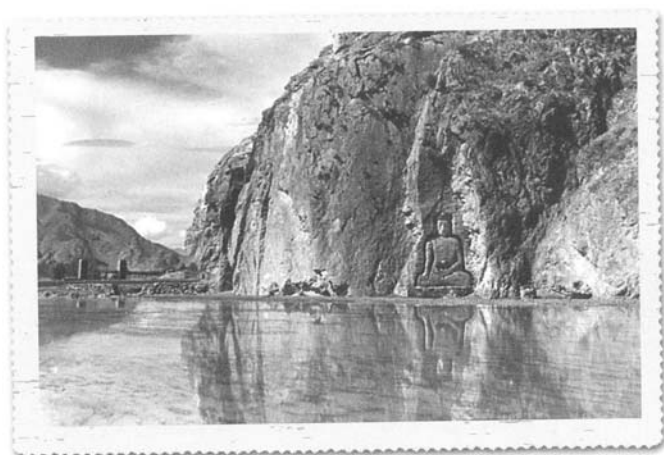
*David Green*

*a monk at  
Drepung  
monastery  
near  
Lhasa.  
Tibet*

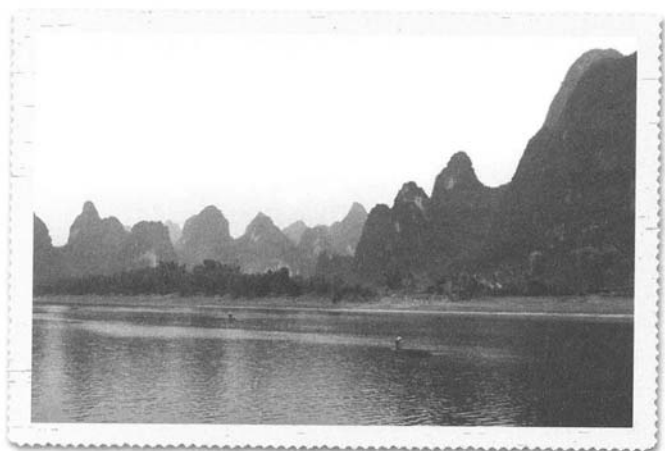




farmer using a wooden  
plow near Castro Baroña.  
Spain



a Buddha on the road to  
Lhasa, Tibet



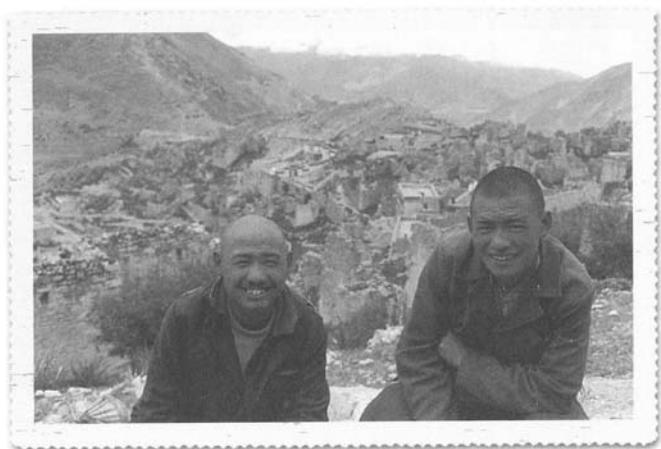
*fishing on the Li Jiang near Guilin, China*



*a pilgrim on Mt. Rúa in Galicia, Spain*

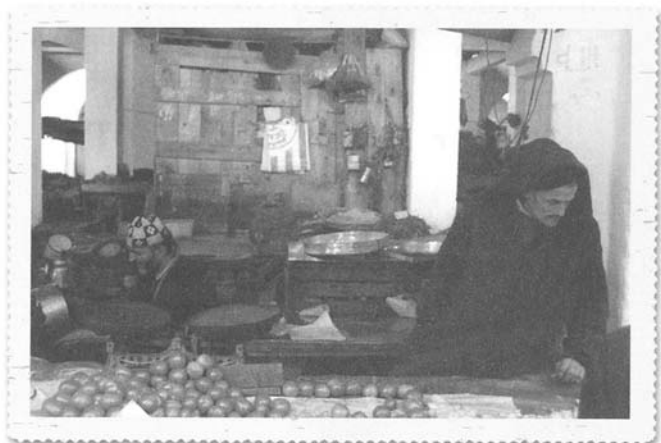


*protective Deity in  
Drepung Monastery,  
Lhasa, Tibet*



*pilgrims at Ganden monastery, Tibet*





*merchants in the market at Tangier, Morocco*



*Forest of Stone Steles  
museum in Xian, China*

## Italian Sonnet

*Meghan O'Keefe*

If he could only take me in his arms,  
I could love him, and show him sights unseen.  
I would please with all my saintly charms  
And make him glow with stolen heaven's sheen.  
If he would tell me that I was his love  
I would not have to be so meek and coy,  
Or be confined to my cloister above  
The earth; I might know pleasure and joy ...  
And yet, I know none of these dreams shall be,  
For he is too rapt with doubt and can not  
Believe he could touch an angel like me,  
Though I am mere maid and pray to be caught.  
But he hangs me in the sky with glitt'ring comets,  
And prefers to draw his love from Italian sonnets.

## Tragic Balladeers

*Meghan O'Keefe*

Every blessing is a curse;  
God silences the balladeers first.  
Only the dead say the words just right,  
So that I quiver in blinding light.  
Those boys spoke a language too beautiful to be  
And if I could I would steal them up to me.

He has the sexiest voice I'll ever hear  
And he was dead before his name hit my ears.  
The fire with which his vocal cords dripped  
Strikes me deeper than any knife tip.  
Those romantic poets, tragic balladeers,  
Have the sexiest voices I'll never get to hear.

# The Bare Space Between Being and Non-Being

*Justine Berti*

Nothing in this world is soft and weak as water.  
But when attacking those hard and strong  
Nothing can conquer so easily.

Weak overcomes strong.  
Soft overcomes hard.

...

True words resemble their opposites (Lao-Tzu 78).

Although a work in translation, the *Tao Te Ching* enthusiastically explores the nuances that exist among words. Words exist to qualify and clarify universal ideas, yet perhaps they only confuse their own message by attempting to impose shape and definition, or to carve the "uncarved block" (28). By confirming nothing and remaining most vague, or by refusing to finitely carve his teachings into stone, however, the teacher of the Tao is able to present a philosophy which places just as much emphasis on non-being as being. Presupposing their existence, perhaps the Taoist must simply accept the presence of opposing and clashing forces, and progress on in life from there. The archetypal Sage is able to gain mastery over the world because

he "[a]cts and does not contend" (81). He realizes basic contradictions and does not fight them. The Sage can then find peace and harmony with the world by allowing nature to follow its course. Like water, he can be both passive and aggressive, maintaining fluidity without internal contention. By using various examples throughout the *Tao Te Ching*, the speaker challenges the exclusive quality of individual words, and essentially, of definition itself. Lao-Tzu begins his work, "Tao called Tao is not Tao" (1). Macroscopically, the Tao becomes a concept without any designation, one which bears almost no name and, therefore, permits the impossible. Ironically, however, the Tao can only be explained by referring to concrete, familiar ideas and, thus,

by being codified in language.

In the above reproduced passage, the speaker proves his own mastery over language as he probes the contradiction arising in the use of simple adjectives. He begins Chapter 78 by describing a familiar, everyday subject: water. By using the same method throughout the Tao, the speaker solidifies his abstract concepts by use of quick evidence apparent to all. He points out how fantastic it is that something so "soft and weak...can conquer so easily," and the reader is amazed as well. Yet this statement is only validated when the observation comes down to a manageable, human level. Water serves as a model that produces an immediate visual impression: at once a feeling of depth and weight (as in the ocean), and lightness and clarity (as in a thin trickle of water). Accordingly, the resemblance of opposites which the chapter explores is clarified. The teacher never forces the reader to arrive at one correct conclusion, but the speaker is sure to specifically classify the paradox which is embodied in the concept of water. He states directly, "Weak overcomes strong. / Soft overcomes hard." Since the speaker has already laid out a perfect instance of the Way in everyday life, the reader believes exactly what is eventually stated. By this point, the statement makes sense to the reader, and the Tao can be an interesting, fresh way of looking at the world, despite the tension in its meager definition.

Although the speaker has seemed to present the Tao in a comfortable, charming manner, the speaker reminds the

reader, "Sages are not kind" (5) and "Sincere words are not pretty" (81). By the time one is able to begin agreeing with the speaker, the speaker dares to devalue the awareness of the reader. The Tao says, "Everyone knows this, / No one attains it." The reader is challenged to do more than become familiar with this text, because anyone can read it. The solution lies in the jump from specifics to generalities, in the understanding that the Tao can be applied to all things. The last line of Chapter 78, the most abstract observation of all, summarizes the speaker's argument in one simple statement: "True words resemble their opposites." As much as this chapter is a play on words ("weak/strong," "soft/hard"), the speaker defines the Tao itself as the relationship between opposites, as the empty space between two contradicting terms. In this sense, water is a metaphor for the Tao, a substance that can both be and not be at the same time. The Tao exists independently of "space," yet it is inextricably placed between various material "things." (See Chapter 43: "No-thing enters no-space.")

An indefinite picture of the Tao slowly starts to gain shape when the speaker uses such examples as water in Chapter 78. For the most part, however, the *Tao Te Ching* relies on more unsubstantial statements, on broader sayings without definite examples. Chapter 40, for example, is only four lines long, making four simple, yet infinitely grandiose, statements:

Reversal is Tao's movement.  
Yielding is Tao's practice.  
All things originate from being.  
Being originates from non-being  
(40).

Here, the speaker gives the reader a sense of focus by qualifying two of the Tao's methods. The concepts of "reversal" and "yielding" continue from the metaphor of water used in Chapter 78.

Water is able to nimbly change directions and reverse its movement, never exerting too much force unless it is unnaturally impeded. Like water, the Sage takes each circumstance as it reveals itself, and he is not afraid to change positions in order to better observe the larger

picture. In this way, the Sage can master the Tao's natural "movement" of reversal, allowing himself to be in sync with the boundless cycle of being and non-being. Likewise, the Tao's "practice" of yielding is mastered by the weak water of Chapter 78. When water quietly submits to the flow of life, its motion will be pure and spontaneous. The ocean will have triumphant strength when it needs to, yet this is only because it waits for its turn, yielding when it knows it will not win. In

the same manner, the wise man does not impose himself upon others, but waits for his turn to speak. He follows the various paths down which life takes him and is able to satisfy his own desire because it is in accordance with the various whims of the path. He will not walk into trees because he will change his footing and yield to their presence, passing by them. Essentially, both the reversal and fluidity honored in the Tao allows one to follow

smoothly the various turns of his life, accepting them and making the best of every circumstance.

After presenting the reader with these practical applications of the Tao, the last two lines of Chapter 40 jump to an even broader teaching about the Way. The

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"Man's one hope  
must therefore lie in  
the Sage, an actual  
human embodiment  
of the Tao who can  
be empirically  
looked up to."

---

speaker says, "All things originate from being. / Being originates from non-being." These lines engage the reader in the idea of a universe which is completely sufficient unto itself, rolling and flowing back and forth between being and non-being. The speaker uses no concrete examples to make sense of his thought, but he presents an abstract problem very much like the chicken and egg paradox. The Tao apathetically grasps all concrete objects within the words "all things," and

it then highlights the most essential concepts by attributing all things to "being" and "non-being" as such. These are not explained or defined, but observed against each other, as they are opposites. In Chapter 40, the speaker suggests a cycle which has no beginning: all things come from being; being comes from non-being; non-being comes from...(?). The question needs no answer because the focus lies in the relationship between the subjects. It is the balance between being and non-being that sits at the very core of the Tao, as the contradiction almost denies the importance of being itself. The Tao is "empty" and "bottomless" (4), existing almost without existence. Because there seems to remain nothing to grasp onto, the Tao further becomes the bare space between opposing extremes, absent of all definition. It can only be defined by casual relation to definite objects.

Thus far, the *Tao Te Ching* has seemingly left the reader with more confusion than at first. No answers are given, and the depth and emptiness of the Tao are never straightforwardly defined. The Way admits of obvious contradiction and will only continue in a cycle with no beginning and no end. Man's one hope must therefore lie in the Sage, an actual human embodiment of the Tao who can be empirically looked up to. This wise man is someone who is able to actually "attain" the "it" of Chapter 78. He thrives in the mysteriously dynamic balance of opposites and does not get lost in the world. The speaker again plays upon

words and their meaning in Chapter 25, when he tries to define what one should aim for in life:

Great means passing on.

Passing on means going far.

Going far means returning (25).

In the same manner as both Chapters 78 and 40, here the speaker continues to highlight the cyclical nature of the Tao and of man's place in it. He describes the "greatness" of the Taoist Sage by relating it to those actions which enable him to see the larger picture, to "pass on" beyond prosperity and accomplishment. In this sense, the wise man is not only able to separate himself from the world, but he must practice non-being, or non-action. "Only those who don't strive after life," the speaker says, "Truly respect life" (75). By allowing the self to let go of "all things" (40) and embracing the absence inherent in pure humility, man may then begin to understand being. By letting go of the concrete, contradicting qualities of the Tao, he may begin to "go far," to understand the great formless space in between various identified extremes. The Tao says that the reader could take a first step by embracing the peace and stillness which emanates from emptiness. He could begin by forgetting the word "Tao" and throwing away the very *Tao Te Ching*. All in all, the aspiring Sage must free his mind and allow himself fluidity, like the water of Chapter 78. Such a "passing on," or letting go, is great in itself, for the

mere quality that nothing will pain the Sage. The speaker recognizes that after certain things are given up, even the Tao is easy to find. "And so in the end / Nothing is difficult" (63), he says. The Tao will follow its own method and come naturally, without force.

Chapter 25 begins by telling the reader to free himself from this world. Yet the reader cannot deny that he must live in this world and "truly respect life" (75). He must live rationally and fluidly, without deviating too far from societal norms. The *Tao Te Ching* does not forget this, and admits that "thirteen body parts" (50) tie man to the mortal world. Chapter 25, as well, does not forget that all must "return" to the immediate physical world and the constraints of time. When the Sage has been able to discover non-being and appreciate its formlessness, he will only then be able to celebrate the potential of being. He will be able to embrace the Tao in its fullness (as opposed to its emptiness) everyday. Only then will he come one step closer to individually achieving the mysterious "it" of Chapter 78. ■





# Excerpts from the Astronomical Revolution

*Daniel Hudon*

## **Copernicus Moves the Earth**

Earth's revolutions explain the retrogradations,  
A little commentary on the loftiness of the firmament  
Ensures highest heaven remains unaltered;  
The sun in the centre like a lamp in the temple.

## **Tycho Observes a New Star**

Shine forth, *nova*, I stand still and mark thee  
With sextant's eye, high in the firmament  
And fixed in place. The heavens change.  
Know this: thy light hath not died in vain.

## **Kepler On the Verge of Ordering the Heavens**

Mars at opposition and Tycho's gone to bed  
Drunk with Earth and circles. War sweeps the world,  
All is in error. I will persevere. God only knows  
This torment of numbers, eight arc-minutes from harmony.

## **Galileo Through the Looking Glass**

The light tube is the messenger of a rational vessel  
In a world inclined to ignorance and unbelief,  
It opens the senses, turns the tides to reason  
And begins a new dialogue with the divine.

## **Newton Writes a Book**

These are the principles and these the laws of Nature.  
This is the action and this the agent of understanding  
Like gears of a clock producing incremental variations,  
Truths and inverses are mere reflections of the force of faith.

# Simple

*William Goldberg*

“**W**hat can I get for you?”

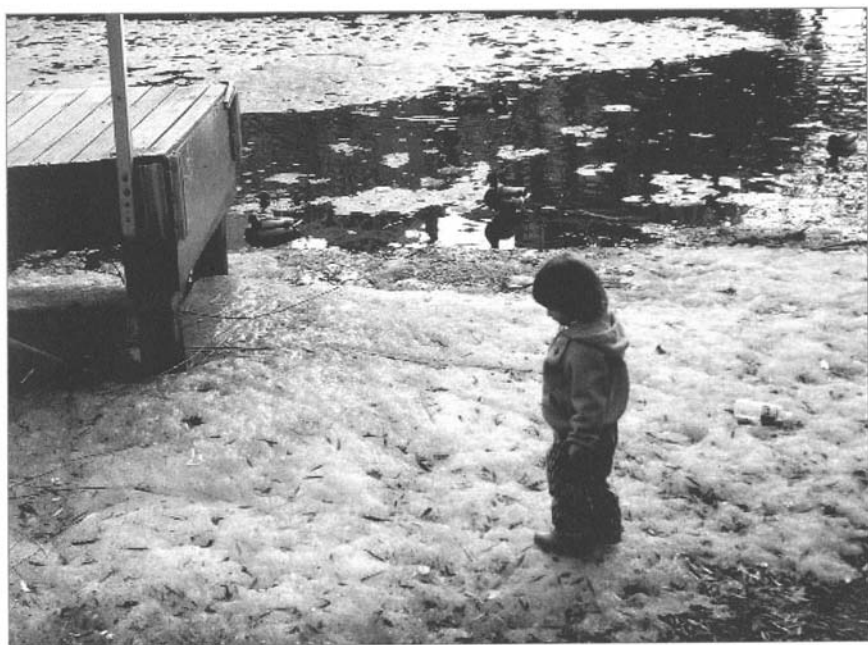
The simple questions are always the hardest.

“What do you want?” the girl behind the counter reiterated a moment later, craning her neck to cast an impatient glance over Ben’s shoulder at the line of customers blooming behind him.

Ben ignored her and, giving his jaw a speculative scratch, continued to regard the blackboard menu that dominated the back wall. Ordinarily, he would just order a cup of coffee, probably whatever the daily blend was, and go about the rest of his morning. Ordinarily, Ben would have already decided and would be on his way to work by now. Maybe it was the unseasonable cold or the increasingly large, increasingly drafty hole in the left member of his favorite pair of shoes, but today he was struck for an instant by how many choices there were, and how few of them he had tried. Ben didn’t really know the difference

between a latte and a cappuccino, and he certainly didn’t know if cappuccino was at all like frappuccino, although they sounded similar. Ben could put a taste to the name of a few of the beverages; hot chocolate he knew, cider and he had a long and checkered history, and espresso he was well acquainted with—but all the talk of adding shots of it to various other drinks made him uncomfortable. As a child, Ben had always been afraid of doctors, and shots, however benign the context, had always made his arms itch. Ben scratched his arm. Who was he trying to kid? He was still afraid of doctors and shots. Of all the people he lied to, he always imagined that it should be harder to deceive himself, and yet he was always surprised to find that he was the easiest one to fool.

Coffee, that was the one he’d been looking for. He finally found it, tucked away in a corner, lurking among words like ‘Vanilla,’ ‘Hazel,’ and ‘Crème.’ Confident he could find the coffee again in the brightly chalked maze behind the counter, Ben’s gaze contin-



ued to wander over fascinating terms like 'Mocha,' 'Chai,' and the infinitely intriguing 'Macchiato.' He'd heard of them all, at least most of them, before, but he'd never tasted them. Of course that simply placed them on a long list of things he knew about but would never experience. Unfortunately, however, most of that list couldn't be ordered in a coffee shop.

Ben scrutinized the colorful menu but the writing began to lose meaning, even more meaning, as his attention strayed. There were a lot of things he'd never done, but who was to say that was necessarily bad? A lot of the things he had done had only ended in sorrow and regret: medical school, the

wrong end of a pyramid scheme, Pepsi Blue. Maybe the less he did, the less he tried, the better. Sure, Ben mused, he'd never eaten raw oysters, but the other side of that coin was that he'd never had hepatitis. That seemed a decent tradeoff. And granted, on the one hand, he had never flown overseas, but, on the other, he had also never dined on co-pilot in the Andes, either. An equitable deal, he thought. When viewed in that light, it seemed a more than fair bargain to have struck. But what was the right light to look at one's life in? Maybe the artificial fluorescence in which he preferred to regard it was the wrong one. Sunlight, moonlight, candlelight, his life looked differ-

ent in all of them. Perhaps a black light would reveal an overlooked facet, some hidden aspect that could not be perceived by natural illumination, or perhaps the rapid flicker of a strobe could turn the demons of his life into hollow, harmless, silhouettes.

The girl behind the counter released a heavy sigh, a single finger beating a slow, seething rhythm on the corner of the cash register. Ben blinked and returned his concentration to the menu. It hadn't been that long. He couldn't have been standing there for more than a minute, but he appreciated the funny thing about minutes, how long they could seem while waiting for things—trains, people, Godot—and so he adopted the approximation of what he hoped to be an apologetic smile and projected it in the girl's direction. Unaffected, she tilted her head to one side and continued to drum and stare, her eyes fixed on a spot just below Ben's mouth, in all likelihood his chin.

Ben looked down to escape her gaze but found little respite in his changed perspective. Just behind his own foot was another, a black wing tip, tapping its irritation on the beige tile. It was a silly place, Ben knew, for soul-searching and introspection, but maybe it was time. After all, could there be a bad time for an epiphany? He could start taking chances, risks, trying things that might not turn out so well. Yes, maybe a little hepatitis would, in fact, do him some good. Maybe a Mocha

Coconut Frappuccino with a shot of espresso and some kind of added fruity-flavored syrup would change his life for the better. For that matter, why stop at one elaborate, coffee-like beverage? Ben could order one of everything, take them all to a seat in the corner, and swill lattes and chai until his world made sense, or until he upended the table in a fit of caffeinated twitching. But, again, why stop there? If he was going to have hepatitis, he might as well contract a little salmonella, a touch of botulism too, and call it a hat trick. Or maybe now wasn't the best time to start fiddling with a system that, though not without its flaws, had gotten him this far.

The girl coughed loudly and Ben swung his attention back to the increasingly pressing matter of his order.

"Coffee," Ben croaked at last, surprised to find his voice cracking from disuse. "Sorry. Coffee," he said, clearing his throat and repeating the word.

"What kind?" sighed the girl, pushing away from the counter and straightening. She rattled off a list of varieties, only one of which, the last in the series, the ambiguously titled Daily Blend, could Ben remember.

"Surprise me."

She nodded, the surly roll of her eyes clearly suggesting that surprising customers was not a part of her job, but, as she turned to fetch his drink, the faintest flicker of a smile fluttered across her face. Briefly, Ben entertained thoughts of what the surprise

might be. The safe money was on spittle, but if the coffee shop had a rat problem, he figured he might be very surprised indeed. Ben watched her work, taking a detached pleasure in the efficiency and competence she displayed in navigating the cramped space, selecting a cup, pouring the coffee. Every movement the girl made was sure, precise, and without any hint of hesitation, but he wondered if she was always so comfortable and capable. As she continued to work, Ben snuck a sheepish peep over his shoulder. Past experiences with peeps had yielded Ben bargain glimpses of nudity, or, at the very least, diminutive, artificially yellowed marshmallow chicks, so he was disappointed to find only a row of people. Some of them shuffled and shifted wearily, one yawned, another looked him in the eye. Each of them, Ben was sure, knew exactly what they wanted.

The register chimed.

"Dollar thirty-seven," the girl announced. "It's hazelnut. My favorite," she explained.

Ben thanked her, fished two bills out of his coat pocket, and paid, drop-

ping the change in a flamboyantly decorated jar labeled "tips." He stepped to the side, out of queue, and paused, regarding the steam as it swirled away from the cup in his hand. It didn't really matter; he had his coffee, and he had the rest of the day. To his left, the man in line behind him ordered a double espresso. As the man waited for his order, he turned to Ben.

"Are you okay?" he asked, his gaze bouncing from Ben to the girl behind the counter, and back.

Ben responded with an automatic nod and a slight smile before sliding through the crowded shop and out the door. Alone on the other side, though, he sipped his coffee and reflected. It was always the simple questions. ■

# A postás

*Sándor Reményik*

A levelet átnyújtja, s elköszön.  
S ahogy búcsúzik, mintha mondaná :  
Ami benne van, ahoz nincs közöm.  
Megy, hogy a nyári port, s a tél havát  
Lerázhassa a szomszéd küszöbön.  
Ahogy búcsúzik, mintha mondaná :  
Nem érdekelhet egyéb engemet  
Mint utca, házszám, ajtó, emelet  
Csak kívülről látom a levelet.

Kezén világok iramlanak át.  
Szerelmek égnék, és melódiák  
Örvénylenek ezer pecsét alatt.  
Neki pecsétet törni nem szabad  
A titkok végtelenjén átmegyen  
Húnyt szemmel, házról-házra, csendesen.  
Mosolyt fakaszt—és nincs érdeme benne.  
Könnyet fakaszt—és nincs vétke benne.  
Vihart támaszt—és nem ő támasztotta.  
Kegyelmet oszt—és nem ő osztogatta.

Olyan világtól idegennek tetszik,  
És mégis olyan emberinek tetszik  
E kéz, mely nem tudja, hogy mit cselekszik.

# The postman

*Sándor Reményik*  
*Translated by Agnes Győrfi*

He hands over the letter, and turns to leave.  
 And his valediction almost says:  
 I have nothing to do with whatever is in it.  
 He goes so he can shake off the summer dust, the winter snow  
 On the neighboring door-step.  
 As he says goodbye, it is as if he says:  
 I cannot concern myself with anything  
 Except street, house number, door, floor—  
 I see your letter only from the exterior.

Worlds sweep across his hands.  
 Sincere love ignites, and melodies  
 Swirl under a thousand wax seals.  
 He is not permitted to break those seals.  
 He wanders through endless secrets  
 With closed eyes, from house to house, noiselessly.  
 He induces smiles—and does not deserve credit.  
 He generates tears—and does not trespass.  
 He nurtures a storm—and it is not his creation.  
 He distributes mercy—and it is not his allocation.

Ostensibly strange,  
 But presumably human is  
 This hand, which does not know what it executes.



الفتيل رقم ١٨

غاية زيتون كانت مرة جضراء  
كانت والسماء  
غاية زرقاء كانت يا حبيبي  
ما الذي غيرها هذا المساء

اوقفوا سيارة العمال في منعطف الدرب  
وكانوا هادئين  
وادرؤنا الى الشرق  
وكانوا هادئين

كان قلبي مرة عصفورة زرقاء  
يا عش حبيبي  
ومناد ياك عندي كلها بيضاء  
كانت يا حبيبي  
ما الذي لطخا هذا المساء  
انا لا افهم شيئا يا حبيبي

اوقفوا سيارة العمال في منعطف الدرب  
وكانوا هادئين  
وادرؤنا الى الشرق  
وكانوا هادئين

لك مني كل شيء  
لك ظل لك ضوء  
خاتم العرس وما شئت  
وحاكورة زيتون وتين  
وساتيك كما في كل ليلة  
ادخل الشهابك في الحلم  
وارمي لك فله  
لا تلمني ان تأخرت قليلا  
انهم قد اوقفوني

غاية الزيتون كانت داءما جضراء  
كانت يا حبيبي  
ان خميسين ضحية  
جعلتها في الغروب  
بركة حمراء خمسين ضحية  
يا حبيبي  
لا تلمني  
قتلوني ..

قتلوني ..

قتلوني ...

# Victim number 18

*Mahmoud Darwish*  
*Translated by James Riggan*

The olive groves were green once,  
 ... and the sky  
 was a blue woodland, my beloved  
 what changed it that night?

They stopped us in the worker's truck,  
 Quietly.  
 And they turned us to the east,  
 Quietly.

My heart was once a black sparrow  
 Nest of my beloved  
 And your handkerchief was pure white  
 My beloved,  
 What stained it that night?  
 I do not understand, my beloved

They stopped us in the sputtering truck  
 Quietly.  
 And they turned us to face the east  
 Quietly.

To you I leave the wedding ring,  
 The dark, and the light  
 And anything you desire.  
 Orchards of olives and figs,  
 And I shall come in the night  
 As I used to,  
 Entering a dream through your window  
 To give you fresh jasmine.

Do not blame me if  
 I am a little late,  
 If they have stopped me.

The olive groves were always green  
 Until the blood of fifty victims  
 Dyed the pond red in the sunset  
 Fifty villagers, my beloved.  
 Please, do not blame me  
 For they...

Killed...

Me too.

# Der Sänger

*Johann Friedrich Reichardt*

“Was hör ich draußen vor dem Tor,  
Was auf der Brücke schallen?  
Läßt den Gesang zu unserm Ohr  
Im Saale widerhallen!”  
Der König sprach’s, der Page lief,  
Der Knabe kam, der König rief:  
“Bring ihn herein, den Alten!”

“Gegrüßet seid, ihr hohen Herrn,  
Gegrüßt ihr, schöne Damen!  
Welch reicher Himmel! Stern bei Stern!  
Wer kennet ihre Namen?  
Im Saal voll Pracht und Herrlichkeit  
Schließt, Augen, euch, hier ist nicht Zeit,  
Sich staunend zu ergötzend

Der Sänger drückt’ die Augen ein  
Und schlug die vollen Töne;  
Der Ritter schaute mutig drein,  
Und in den Schoß die Schöne.  
Der König, dem das Lied gefiel,  
Ließ ihm, zum Lohne für sein Spiel,  
Eine goldne Kette holen.

“Die goldne Kette gib mir nicht,  
Die Kette gib den Rittern,  
Vor deren kühnem Angesicht  
Der Feinde Lanzen splintern.  
Gib sie dem Kanzler, den du hast,  
Und laß ihn noch die goldne Last  
Zu andern Lasten tragen.

Ich singe, wie der Vogel singt,  
Der in den Zweigen wohnt.  
Das Lied, das aus der Kehle dringt,  
Ist Lohn, der reichlich lohnet;  
Doch darf ich bitten, bitt ich eins:  
Laß einen Trunk des besten Weins  
In reinem Glase bringen.”

Er setzt’ es an, er trank es aus:  
“O Trank der süßen Labe!  
Oh! dreimal hochbeglücktes Haus,  
Wo das ist kleine Gabe!  
Ergeht’s euch wohl, so denkt an mich,  
Und danket Gott so warm, als ich  
Für diesen Trunk euch danke.”

# The Singer

*Johann Friedrich Reichardt*

*Translated by Ben West*

“What do I hear outside the wall?  
What comes in ‘cross the moat?  
Let that tune on our ears fall,  
And through the chamber float!”  
The King decreed, the page-boy fled,  
The boy came back, the King then said:  
“Bring the drifter here inside!”

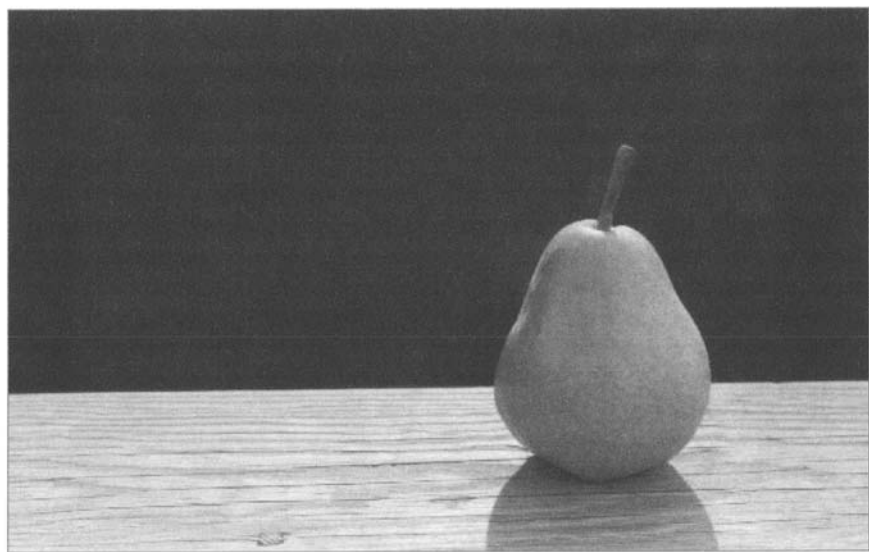
“Greetings to you all, high lords,  
Greetings to you, fair dames!  
What amazing stars this view affords!  
Who claims to know their names?  
In this hall full of pomp display,  
Shut your eyes, for you cannot stay  
To delight yourselves in marvel!”

The Singer shut his eyes up tight  
And sang a handsome tune:  
The knights looked on with all their might  
While the ladies could but swoon.  
The king, whose ear the song did please,  
As thanks gave him a set of keys  
To choose what gold he would.

“Do not give me thanks in gold,  
Your knights are more deserving,  
Before whose enemies lances fold  
Whilst they are your realm preserving.  
Award the counselor of your state,  
And let him bear the golden weight  
Along with all his burdens.

My songs are like the sparrow’s trill  
That nests among the twigs.  
The song alone provides my fill,  
And compensates these gigs;  
But I solicit one thing fine:  
Lend me a drink of your best wine  
Brought in your purest cup.”

He brought it to his lips and drank:  
“O draught of sweet elixir!  
Oh! To this hall I must give thanks,  
Where this is but a souvenir!  
You’re full of choice sincerity,  
Just thank God as you have thanked me!  
For this sweet drink, I’m grateful.”



# The Chameleon Changes Colors

*Nalini Gupta*

Samantha browsed through the Power Bar-packed shelves  
 In a feeble attempt to decide whether she should  
 Purchase with her Convenience points the Banana Nut Zone bar  
 That she held in her left hand, or the energy boosting  
 Chocolate Peanut Butter Protein bar that lay in her right, to keep  
 Her awake for the long, tiresome, work-filled night that lay ahead.  
 Face streaked with the grime of Boston Streets, eyes puffed like  
 The powdery clouds up high, and hair pelted by the  
 Deluge of rain, she frightened the incoming applicants  
 To whom the clean-shaven tour guide was explaining the  
 Use of CampCo and its deceitful habits of taking  
 Advantage of naive students' money that their well-  
 Wishing parents sent to them for enjoyment at college.  
 Only then did she take another glance at the tour guide, and  
 Without a fierce heart and strong neurotransmitters to hold her  
 Overly-charged hormones, she dropped all that she held in her hands.

He jumped at the clatter, and turned around astonished.  
 And Samantha came, debating inwardly what her plan  
 Of action should be: whether she should do as she had always done,  
 And allow her cheeks to gloss with the color of the rose and run  
 Away in utter embarrassment, or if she should rise to the opportunity  
 Of being anonymous in a sea of five million college students, who  
 Know not the histories of any one being? She decided to do as she had  
 Never attempted to do before and told her subconscious to stop  
 Annoying her with messages of "don't do it, don't do it." She  
 Remembered her Favorite character from TV who was infamously  
 Known for her sizzling nature and boldness and Samantha saucily flanked  
 Over to his side, batted her long eyelashes, and chided,  
 "Tell me if you are a Chippendale performer, or an Abercrombie model?"

If you are neither one of them, then tell me why you were graced  
By Aphrodite with the gift of beauty, for it is that beauty that  
Caused me to stumble and drop my snack which was needed  
To keep me awake, but that snack is no longer  
Needed for my eyes have lain sight upon you and now are  
In no mood to linger shut. Why waste a moment to  
Blink and clear the dust from my eye when I can see your  
Rugged muscles for yet another second and stand in awe?"

Then he, with the abs of steel, Jake, replied:  
"Flattered am I by your kind remarks, but I must be  
On my merry way to the towers of Warren, the almost-largest  
Nonmilitary dorm in the country, to explain to our  
Gumshoes the vivacious life that is lived among these  
Corridors. But, before I leave, will you be so kind as  
To pen your screen name so I may call on you if I please?"

And Samantha flushed the color of mahogany, for she,  
The shy chameleon, who had always blended in with  
Her surroundings, changed colors to stand out in front of the  
Other 3000 naïve freshman girls, who would be prepared to  
Do whatever it took to even converse with a member of  
A higher class, for it is the ultimate sign of superiority when a  
Freshman has connections with the upperclassmen. Samantha  
Stood in awe for a moment, and then composed herself by staring  
Into his eyes and shifting her weight to one side, so she might  
Be able to answer with a decent reply that might impress the man  
With the abs of steel, Jake, and he in turn may go one step further  
And ask her for a night of dancing of hip-hop this Friday night  
At one of Boston's most prestigious clubs: Pravda 116.





# proverbial perfection

*Marianna Staroselsky*

diamonds, sirens, wailing lights  
attract the human animal  
hypnotized by chains ripped  
from the spectrum swinging  
in planned disarray  
we follow the rules of chaos  
we become tethered to clouds  
my atmosphere is yours  
maybe that's why  
I can't seem to stomach life  
I have an everlasting  
sleeping pill to save me  
until I have to see you again  
this definition of existence  
is below me and you can  
never know just how perfect  
my void is

# Purr-ay

*Marianna Staroselsky*

purr-ay she told  
me she felt like a cat  
wise the boys with  
ashen pipettes like white tongues  
a protrusion of direction  
they know where the golden roads  
converge to kingdom sunshine  
where daisies pop out  
babies, chubby hands first  
they crawl out of the ovum  
proclaim the day into  
a housewife's omen  
purr-ay she says again  
smoothing the bed into a fine line  
in the mummification of sleep  
they come to me  
you may think it meaningless  
but like traffic signals  
there is government under the eye  
skin-a nude covering  
a colouring of movement  
she sits up and watches  
the shadows skim through the air  
they remember to be people,  
they keep flowing past,  
a horizontal gravity-  
forward,  
individual.

# A (Not So) Brief History of the Transits of Venus

Daniel Hudon

"This great marvel which we have just witnessed, fellow savants (it almost takes my breath away), is nothing less than the transit of Venus!"

— *Some Learned Tales for Good Old Boys and Girls*, Mark Twain, 1875

Few tales in science can match the intrigue, drama and adventure of those surrounding the transits of Venus. With only five occurrences since 1631, this rare phenomenon has been doggedly pursued by astronomers determined to plumb the distances of the solar system—with mixed success. For some astronomers, the transit of Venus provided the adventure of a lifetime. For the less fortunate, it cost

their lives.

A transit of Venus occurs when it passes directly across the face of the Sun as viewed from Earth (*Figures 1,2*). It is one of the rarest periodic celestial events, occurring in pairs separated by eight years, with more than a century between pairs. Observers in this century will see transits this year, on June 8, and on June 6-7, 2012 (see Table 1). No one alive has seen a transit of Venus.



Transits were first predicted in 1629 by Johannes Kepler, using improved astronomical tables derived from his planetary laws. Kepler predicted that Venus would pass directly across the face of the Sun two years hence, in 1631, and that it would just miss in 1639.

The 1631 transit occurred when it was nighttime in Europe so there are no recorded observations. In the spring of 1639, the promising young scientist Jeremiah Horrocks discovered that Kepler was wrong: Venus *would* transit across the Sun that year, and in only a few weeks time. Horrocks and another Englishman, William Crabtree, were the only two people to observe the transit. They lived 30 miles apart but had never met—they communicated by letter. Both were so excited to see the tiny black dot of Venus dwarfed by the bright disk of the Sun that they failed to make any useful timings. Horrocks writes of how Crabtree “could scarce prevail upon himself to trust his own senses.” Indeed, the surprise must have been great, for Kepler had thought the Sun was much closer and that Venus would cover one quarter of its disk. Horrocks and Crabtree suddenly got an image of the immensity of the solar system.

After these observations, haphazard as they were, transit fever grew. In 1716, Edmund Halley published a paper outlining how the upcoming transits could be used to find the Earth-Sun distance. By sighting Venus’ position against the disk of the Sun from two widely spaced places on Earth, the Earth-Sun distance could

December 7, 1631
December, 4, 1639
June 6, 1761
June 3-4, 1769
December 9, 1874
December 6, 1882
June 8, 2004
June 6-7, 2012
December 11, 2117
December 8, 2125

**Table 1:** Past and future transits of Venus

be calculated through basic geometry. It’s the same as holding your thumb at arm’s length: by measuring how its angular position changes first with one eye, then the other, and knowing the distance between your eyes, you can calculate the length of your arm. Knowing he would probably be dead by the time of the next transits, Halley issued a call-to-arms to astronomers worldwide, “Therefore, again and again, I recommend it to the curious strenuously to apply themselves to this observation.” Halley further pointed out the desirability of making observations from multiple widely separated stations, both to improve the observations and to guard against the problem of one station being clouded out.

### The 18th-Century Expeditions

By the time the next pair of transits rolled around, in 1761 and 1769, astronomy had become an organized science. National societies formed that held regular meetings and published papers and transactions. The most important of these were the Royal Society of London and the French Academy in Paris. Under the auspices of these scientific societies, it was now possible to heed Halley's call and mount major expeditions. Accordingly, expeditions were sent to many of the world's far-flung places: Northern Canada and Siberia, South Africa and the South Pacific, Baja California, and the Indian Ocean.

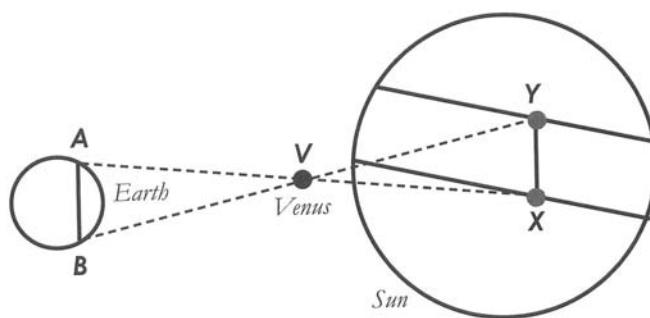
During an age when travel was decidedly less comfortable, if not downright dangerous, the scale of the expeditions was truly impressive. More than 100 astronomers participated. For those traveling by sea, the normal problems of navigational errors, monsoons, and scurvy were exacerbated by the Seven Years' War, fought between France and Britain in both hemispheres in the early 1760s.

Before gaining lasting fame for surveying the eastern United States in 1763, the British team of Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon nearly became casualties of the Seven Years' War. In December 1760, they set sail for a station in Sumatra on a transit expedition for the Royal Society. However, within hours of leaving port their ship was attacked by a French frigate. With 11 dead and 37 wounded, they limped back to port and

promptly wrote to the Royal Society threatening to quit. The Society was unmoved and threatened to sue the rattled astronomers. Mason and Dixon reluctantly capitulated and this time took a military escort with them. After three months at sea, they decided to stop and set up their observatory at Cape Town, South Africa. They enjoyed clear skies on transit day and the quality of their observations secured their reputation.

Transit fever reached the American colonies too. The Governor of the Province of Massachusetts gave a stirring appeal to the House of Representatives on behalf of John Winthrop, professor of mathematics and natural philosophy at Harvard, that this was a "[P]henomenon which has been observed but once before since the Creation of the world." Winthrop was duly equipped with observational instruments and assistants and sailed to St. John's, Newfoundland in the Province-sloop "Massachusetts." Despite an unabating plague of "venomous" insects, the team enjoyed clear weather and made useful timings of the end of the transit (the beginning of the transit occurred before sunrise in North America).

Intrigue and adventure came in various forms during the transit expeditions. Maximilian Hell, an Austrian Jesuit and member of the French Academy, was accused of fabricating his data. Hell was renowned in Europe as a writer and astronomy educator. He successfully observed the 1761 transit from Vienna. For the 1769 transit, Hell was invited by



**Figure 1** Observers at different latitudes on Earth will measure different parallel tracks of Venus across the Sun. From precise timings of the duration of the transit, the angle that the two terrestrial stations subtend at Venus can be determined, and hence both the distance to Venus and the scale of the solar system (from known orbital parameters).

King Charles VII of Denmark and Norway to lead an expedition to the island station Vardö, located near Lapland, north of the Arctic Circle. On transit day, Hell and his assistants were so pleased to see the clouds part just before the transit began that they loudly celebrated afterwards by firing their ship's cannon nine times and singing a *Te Deum* in gratitude. Hell then stayed on for eight months to collect additional scientific data for a proposed encyclopedia on arctic regions.

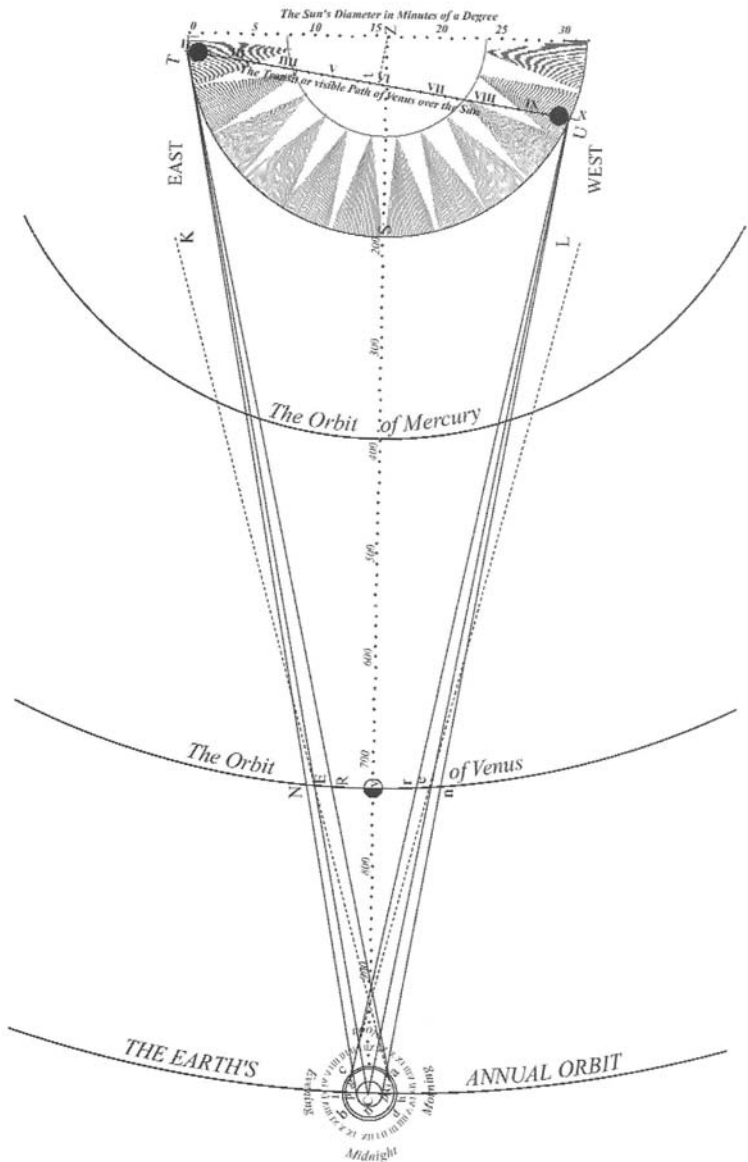
But back in Paris, French Academy members grew impatient with Hell's delay in reporting his data and some suspected him of waiting to hear other reports so that he could adjust his data accordingly. Though Hell finally published accurate data, the matter didn't end with that, nor with his death. Another astronomer, Carl Littrow examined Hell's original manuscripts and claimed to find evidence that Hell had manipulated his data. It wasn't until 1883 that American astronomer Simon Newcomb, who figures promi-

nently in the 19th-century transits, discredited Littrow's evidence and exonerated Hell. Newcomb found that Hell's changes were due to using a defective pen at the time of the observations, and further, that Littrow had been colorblind.

### The 18th-Century French Expeditions: Chappe's Journeys to Siberia and Mexico

For widescreen cinematic drama, few expeditions can match that of Jean Baptiste Chappe d'Autoroché, a young Jesuit, who undertook a 4000-mile trek to Tobolsk, Siberia, in the dead of winter. Tobolsk was chosen because from there the transit would have the shortest duration.

Chappe's journey got off to a bumpy start—all his instruments and his carriages were damaged on the rough roads between Paris and Strasbourg. He industriously made himself new instruments and set off again. By mid-February he had arrived in St. Petersburg. But his Russian colleagues



**Figure 2:** A rendition of the Transit of Venus by James Ferguson, 1778. Reprinted with permission from *The Transit of Venus: the Quest to Find the True Distance of the Sun* by David Sellers (Magavelda Press 2001).

feared he wasn't coming and had sent their own observers on ahead. Aware of the scientific urgency of the expedition, and the onrushing spring, they quickly outfitted Chappe with an interpreter, guides, new giant sleds drawn by five horses abreast, plus supplies and provisions for his stay at the remote outpost. In early March, Chappe was mobile again. Astronomy historian Donald Fernie gives a vivid imagining: "One can picture them racing for the Urals through the silence of the frozen countryside, great clouds of snow rising from the horses' flying hooves." Had *Dr. Zhivago* been about an astronomer, this would have been a pivotal scene.

It was a month of steady winter travel. Chappe often had to coax his guides along with brandy. Through sheer determination, they beat the thaw—and with it the prospect of being mired forevermore in the Siberian mud. They rumbled into Tobolsk on April 10, 1761.

Chappe got to work immediately and set up his observatory on a mountain near town. However, trouble now came from the spring thaw. This year it was unusually early and severe, and the two local rivers flooded the town. The superstitious townspeople acted accordingly: they blamed the foreign astronomer for messing with the Sun. To quell the rising mob, the local Governor posted guards for both Chappe and his observatory.

Though Chappe fretted over the unsettled weather, clear skies prevailed for transit day and he made good observations. The governor and the archbish-

op paid him a visit, but the rest of the townspeople shut themselves up in their houses or in the churches.

By the time of the next transit in 1769, Chappe wanted to go somewhere different—likely somewhere tropical. He decided on Baja California. After nearly three months at sea crossing the Atlantic, a lengthy hike across the breadth of Mexico, and a three-week voyage across the Gulf of California in which they were becalmed and saw their food, water, and time run perilously short, Chappe's team at last arrived at a small village on the tip of Baja on May 19, only two weeks before the transit. As the village was suffering from an epidemic of yellow fever, the team took a considerable risk when they decided to stay there. Chappe thought they wouldn't have time to find a new location and went ahead with the preparations. It was a costly decision.

Chappe set up his observatory in a large barn outside the village. Once again he made good observations, among the best of all expeditions. But soon he and his colleagues all caught the deadly disease. The epidemic that claimed the lives of three-fourths of the village also claimed the life of Chappe on August 1. Only one member of his team survived to bring the data back to Paris. Chappe's words from the earlier 1761 transit have a lingering poignancy: "Pleasures of the like nature may sometimes be experienced; but at this instant, I truly enjoyed that of my observation, and was delighted with the hopes of its being still useful to posterity, when I had quitted this life."



### **The 18th-Century French Expeditions: Le Gentil's Epic Voyages**

If Chappe's sled journey across frozen Siberia was a scene from a cinematic epic, then the voyage of Guillaume Le Gentil to the Indian Ocean was a comedy of errors and a bounty of bad luck. Le Gentil's voyage has been regarded as "probably the longest lasting astronomical expedition in history. In fact, it is quite possible that, except for interplanetary travel, there will never be astronomical expeditions to equal in duration and severity those made for that particular pair of transits."

Le Gentil, a young member of the French Academy, set out from Paris on March 26, 1760, for Pondicherry, on the east coast of India, a full 14 months in advance of the transit. Little did he know what he was in for. The first of his problems was being stranded on Isle de France (modern Mauritius) for six months because the war had flared up between the French and British at Pondicherry and no boats were travelling there. When he finally caught a boat in February, 1761, monsoon winds soon blew it far off course. Eventually, the ship came close to the western coast of India, only to receive news that Pondicherry had fallen to the English. The captain turned back to Isle de France. Consequently, when transit day arrived, Le Gentil was stuck aboard a rolling ship in the Indian Ocean, unable to make any reliable observations. He dutifully observed the transit anyway and

measured his longitude and latitude. But he knew full well that his data was useless.

Rather than make the long journey back to France, the intrepid Le Gentil decided to stay for the next transit, eight years later in 1769. According to his calculations, the best place to observe the transit would be in Manila, Philippines. But after arriving in Manila he received a letter from the French Academy requesting that he observe the transit in Pondicherry, now back in French hands. So back he went.

Le Gentil arrived at Pondicherry more than a year before the transit. For his observatory, he chose a partially ruined palace (thanks to the British). In the weeks before the transit, everything was ready, the weather was terrific and Le Gentil was nearly beside himself with impatience. Even the night before the transit was clear. But here Le Gentil's luck ran out.

Overnight, the sky clouded over. At dawn, instead of improving, the weather got worse. A freak squall blew in, piling the clouds together and completely obscuring the Sun when it rose. When the transit was over, the winds calmed and the sky cleared—the Sun shone brilliantly for the rest of the day.

Le Gentil was so stupefied at his misfortune that it seems only fair to quote him at length.

That is the fate that often awaits astronomers. I had gone more than ten thousand leagues [30,000 miles]; it seemed that I

had crossed such a great expanse of seas, exiling myself from my native land, only to be the spectator of a fatal cloud which came to place itself before the Sun at the precise moment of my observation, to carry off from me the fruits of my pains and of my fatigues....

I was unable to recover from my astonishment, I had difficulty in realizing that the transit of Venus was finally over.... At length I was more than two weeks in a singular dejection and almost did not have the courage to take up my pen to continue my journal; and several times it fell from my hands, when the moment came to report to France the fate of my operations.

To make matters worse, he soon learned that the skies had been clear in Manila that day!

With two failed transit observations behind him, Le Gentil now wanted nothing more than to return to Paris. In the world of Le Gentil, this was easier said than done. He was stricken with dysentery and bedridden for months both at Pondicherry and Isle de France. Finally feeling well enough to resume his voyage, he waited four months for a ship. When a ship arrived and took him aboard, it was promptly demasted in a hurricane and once again, Le Gentil returned to Isle de France. He had better luck with a

Spanish ship, which, despite "tempests and tempests," deposited him safely on the coast of Spain. With some exasperation, Le Gentil finished his journey on land, crossing the Pyrenees back into France on October 8, 1771. It was an absence of eleven years, six months, and thirteen days.

Le Gentil's return was not entirely happy. Much to his dismay, he found he'd been declared dead and immediately had a lengthy court battle to regain his estate. He had also lost his seat at the French Academy—on whose behalf he'd taken his journeys in the first place. On the positive side, he gained some satisfaction from "hearing people recognize me and attest loudly that I was really alive." He married, had a daughter, and took up a quiet life writing his memoirs. Having met many untimely tempests in his life, he mercifully died in 1792, just as the great storm of the French Revolution was descending upon Paris.

### **The 18th-Century British Expeditions: William Wales' Expedition to Hudson's Bay**

The Royal Society sent out two other major expeditions besides Mason and Dixon's, including that of William Wales to Hudson's Bay and the most famous of all, that of Captain Cook and the *Endeavour*.

Having heard about all the adventures in 1761, William Wales, an assistant at the Royal Greenwich Observatory, was keen to get in on the adventure and volunteered to observe the 1769 transit for

the Royal Society as long as the destination was warm and not too far out of the way. Naturally, he got the opposite. He was sent to Fort Churchill, on the Hudson's Bay, known even then as the Polar Bear capital of the world.

As the shipping routes to the Hudson's Bay would be frozen solid until early summer, it was necessary for Wales and his assistant, Joseph Dymond, to sail in late-spring 1768 and winter over in Churchill. Wales and Dymond endured hordes of "intolerably troublesome" mosquitoes and sandflies upon arrival and then increasingly frosty nights as winter set in. Mid-winter, Wales made the pertinent observation that the nights were cold enough to ice over a half-pint of brandy left in the open air in five minutes.

After more than a year of preparation and waiting, transit day, June 3, dawned partly cloudy. At noon, the transit began and the two astronomers differed in their initial contact times of Venus on the disk of the Sun by 11 seconds, a result that was a great disappointment to Wales. Back home, Wales was so distressed by his transit observations that he refused to submit them to the Royal Society because they were inaccurate. However, the Society would not be denied, and Wales eventually presented his results to the Society. Happily, he was applauded for his efforts and now on his way to warmer climes: Captain Cook recruited him to act as navigator for his second and third voyages around the world. Wales then finished his career as a

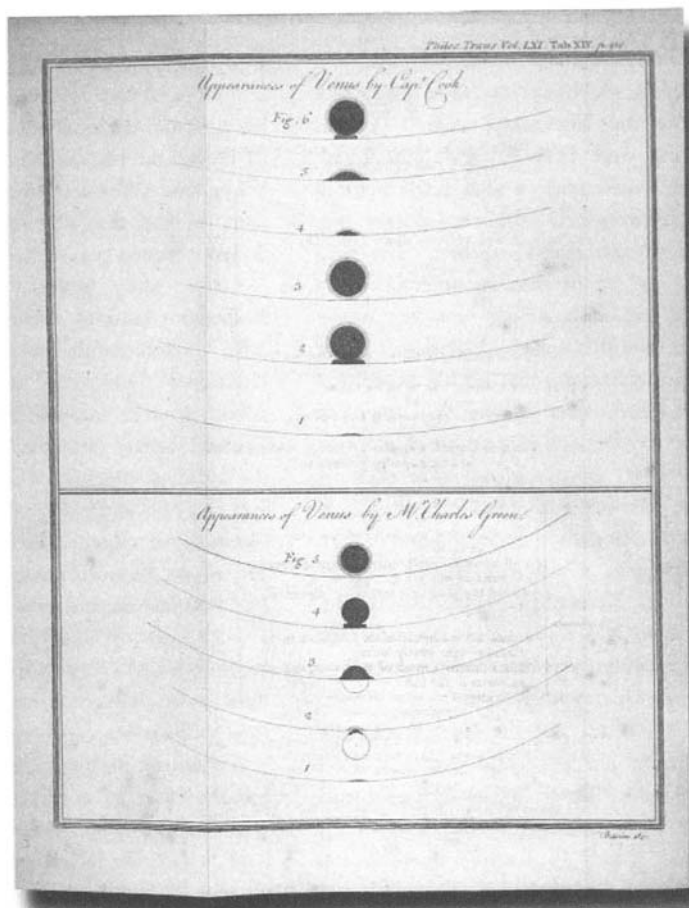
mathematics teacher in London and taught the likes of Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Charles Lamb. It is tempting to wonder how much of Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner" was inspired by Wales' stories.

### **The 18th-Century British Expeditions: Lieutenant Cook's Voyage to Tahiti**

For the Royal Society, the 1769 transit of Venus coincided perfectly with its plans to explore the South Pacific. Since Ptolemy, geographers had wondered if another continent, Terra Australis Incognita, lurked there. But an exploratory expedition, with the aim of claiming newly discovered lands for Britain, would surely raise the suspicions of the other European powers. The transit was the perfect ruse.

To lead the expedition, the Royal Society chose James Cook, a young naval officer who had a reputation as an excellent navigator, surveyor and mathematician. Cook had even taught himself enough astronomy to determine longitude from timings of a solar eclipse. The Navy promoted Cook to lieutenant—not to captain, that only came later—and he was given command of the HMS Endeavour. They sailed in August, 1768.

The official astronomer was Charles Green, an assistant at Greenwich (and brother-in-law of William Wales) adept at finding longitude at sea solely based on observations of the Moon and stars. He sailed with Neville Maskelyne in 1763-4 to Barbados to test John Harrison's



**Figure 3:**  
Excerpt from  
Cook's journal  
showing the  
"black drop"  
effect.  
Courtesy of  
Linda Hall  
Library of  
Science,  
Engineering &  
Technology

fourth marine chronometer — the device that finally solved the problem of determining longitude at sea. Interestingly, by the time the *Endeavour* sailed in August 1768, similar chronometers were still very expensive and the ship went without.

Before arriving in Tahiti, in April 1769, Cook issued a set of rules to his men in order to promote the best relations with the island's inhabitants. Foremost on the list was cultivating a

friendship with the locals, while other rules regulated trade and responsibility. The last rule prohibited the exchange of "Iron, or anything that is made of Iron...for anything but provisions."

This last rule was necessary literally to keep the ship together. The Tahitians were a metal-less culture and thus held metal objects, such as nails, scientific instruments, and tools, in extraordinarily high regard. According to sailors on the

Dolphin, which had landed in Britain just before the *Endeavour* sailed, Tahitian women were beautiful and uninhibited. They would trade sexual favours for a simple iron nail—the very things that held wooden ships together. For men who had spent months at sea, such a price was so beguiling that they nearly pulled the ship apart. Cook wasn't about to jeopardize the rest of his expedition over these dalliances and thus took the necessary steps to protect his ship.

Apart from the inevitable theft of nails, relations with the local inhabitants weren't altogether genial. Days before the transit, a valuable quadrant went missing. Before the culprit was caught, Cook took a local chief into custody. The quadrant was returned—in pieces—and the chief was released.

On transit day, the sky was perfectly clear. But like Wales and Dymond, Cook and Green differed in their timings due to what became known as the “black drop effect” (*Figure 3*). Because of the small telescopes that were used, Venus' contact with the Sun's disk was not distinct—it appeared like an oil drop that wouldn't fully detach from its source—making it difficult to obtain precise timings. After such a long voyage, Cook was inevitably disappointed in the outcome of its primary purpose.

There was further intrigue that day. During the observations, the ship's store-room was broken into and a large quantity of nails was stolen. Evidently, the transit provided enough distraction for other sorts of pursuits. Cook turned a

blind eye to the fraternization between his crew and the local women for the sake of morale but he couldn't ignore thievery. When one sailor was caught with some nails on him that day, he suffered two dozen lashes as punishment.

On the return journey, the *Endeavour* ran into a string of bad luck. After unsuccessfully searching for the Unknown Continent, the *Endeavour* spent several months charting New Zealand before Cook ventured west to the coast of Australia where he had not one but two harrowing run-ins with the Great Barrier Reef. The ship limped all the way to the nearest large port, Batavia (modern Jakarta, Indonesia) for repairs.

By insisting on fresh food and water for his crew whenever possible, Cook had done more than any commander before him to keep his crew healthy and keep scurvy at bay. However, he couldn't combat the diseases contracted at Batavia: malaria and dysentery. Seven crew members died during the month-long stay and another 23 died in the voyage across the Indian Ocean to Cape Town, South Africa, where the ship landed on March 14, 1771. Included in the unfortunate death toll was Charles Green, who had been battling health problems over the many months at sea. The *Endeavour* returned to England in July, 1771, three years after beginning its voyage.

Though the 18th-century transit expeditions produced a wealth of data, the range of the measurements was disappointingly large. When the next pair of transits came around, in 1874 and 1882,

astronomers rallied to try to improve their measurements.

### The 19th-Century Expeditions

Once again, astronomers ventured to far-flung places. In 1874, Father S. J. Perry led a British team of observers to Kerguelen Island, a damp, chilly, windswept, and altogether uninviting island that lies in the southern Indian Ocean, closer to Antarctica than to either South Africa or Australia. Discovered by the French explorer Yves de Kerguelen-Trémarec in 1772, it often goes by a nickname given it by Captain Cook, who stopped there on his third voyage around the world: Desolation Island. Until a scientific base was set up there in 1950, this remote, inhospitable island was home only to seals and penguins.

Also on Perry's team was Lieutenant Cyril Corbet, a 24-year-old member of the Royal Society, who kept a journal giving us a vivid and colorful glimpse of the drama of the event. After making longitude and latitude measurements of their station, Corbet recorded the conditions: "We got a few observations in the evening, but it was terrible work in the high winds—lamps flickering and blowing out, couldn't hear the ticks of the clock or anything." Corbet was keenly aware of the importance of the expedition. On December 6 he wrote: "Trying to keep calm and collected for the day after tomorrow." In fact, it seems his youthful zeal nearly got the better of him because the night before the transit he recorded the following:

Weather still bad and the barometer very low and still falling, but I shall keep hoping, hoping, hoping for tomorrow. Oh! to think it is so close—I feel funnier today than I have ever felt in my life, and I suppose really tomorrow morning will be about the most unpleasant time of my life up to 11 o'clock, when one will know one's fate....

It was a classic case of butterflies. Understandably, he was far too anxious to sleep that night and was up at 4:30 a.m. He waited until 6 o'clock before rousing his assistants and "got their fat heads shaken out of them" even though he described the weather as "dubious, very."

First contact was due at 6:30 a.m. and Corbet was not disappointed: "Oh! the happy moment, when from 6:00 am to 6:30 I had been watching intently the bottom of the Sun for an impression, and I saw it—really and truly the happiest moment of my life." It was exactly the opposite of the "unpleasant time" that he had feared.

Corbet then kept a detailed observer's report. He and his assistant differed by as much as 15 seconds for their first contact (of Venus to the Sun's disk) timings due to the nefarious black drop effect. Soon, heavy clouds moved in and though Corbet caught a glimpse of Venus leaving the Sun's disk, he wasn't able to time it. When the event was over, the team members treated themselves to

a breakfast of Oxford sausages and a bottle of champagne. On February 27, 1875, the expedition set sail back to England. Upon leaving the island, Corbet recorded his wistful thoughts:

We watched the dreary desolate island for ever so long till all the low land had sunk into the sea and we could see the snowy mountains only.... We were clear of the land by night, and all with light hearts and full of happiness at getting away from Kerguelen at last after five months of it, which sometimes seems an age, and at other times as nothing but a mad whirling gap in one's existence.

Unfortunately, both Corbet and Perry gave their lives to their work. A year after the transit, Corbet succumbed to a fever off the coast of Africa, cutting short a promising career. Like Hell before him, Perry gained a reputation as a lecturer. He continued to make expeditions: he observed the 1882 transit in Madagascar and later died at sea in 1889, after completing solar eclipse observations in French Guiana.

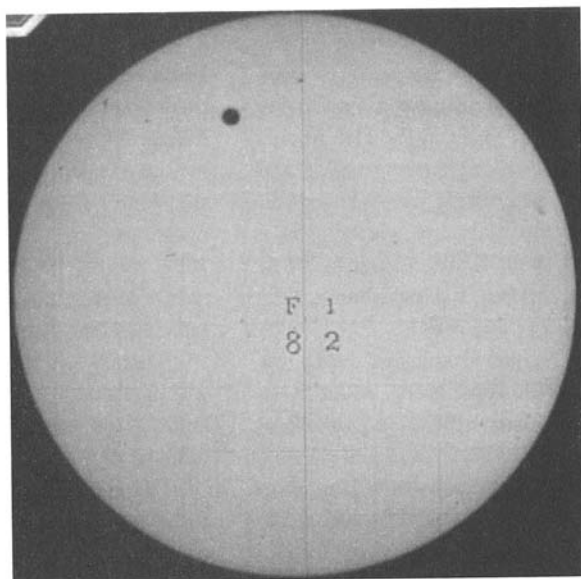
The American effort was spearheaded by Simon Newcomb, who was an early proponent of recording the transit photographically. Unlike today's digital snapshots, photography then was a complicated affair, with cumbersome photographic plates and the added concerns of the lenses being heated by the intense sunlight. Newcomb devised a method simi-

lar to that used for solar observations: a horizontal telescope with a 40-foot focal length in which the Sun's light was directed to the photographic plate by a tilted, slowly moving mirror (known as a heliostat). The entire procedure was complicated enough that practice observations were made on the grounds of the Naval Observatory with an artificial sun and Venus more than a year in advance.

In June 1874, the USS *Swatara* left New York Harbour on a "milk run" to destinations in the Southern Hemisphere. Five parties were dropped off: Kerguelen Island, Tasmania (two parties), New Zealand, and Chatham Island (880 km east of New Zealand). The three Northern Hemisphere parties travelled to Nagasaki, Japan; Vladivostok, Siberia, and Beijing, China. If anything, the American expeditions were routine, with few mishaps. Though travel had become much more predictable, the weather had not, and on transit day the Southern Hemisphere stations were cursed with poor weather much of the time. Like the British parties on Kerguelen Island, the American party stationed there viewed only a portion of the transit.

Things were slightly better in the Northern Hemisphere. Unlike Chappe in Siberia, who had battled the spring thaw, Asaph Hall's party in Vladivostok was stuck fighting the Siberian winter. Gale winds continually threatened to blow the roof of their observatory off and lubricants for the sidereal clock and heliostat froze. The temperature difference between the inside of the photography

**Figure 4:**  
Photo from the  
1882 transit.  
Courtesy of  
the U.S. Naval  
Observatory  
Library.



house and outside was 30 degrees Celsius, plaguing the photography program with unsteady air.

In Beijing, James Watson caused a stir among Chinese officials during his preparations when he discovered an asteroid. He diplomatically asked Prince Kung, regent of the empire, to name the new minor planet. Today, the 139th asteroid, "China's auspicious star" or, Shui Hua Hsing, is known by its contracted form, Juewa.

Newcomb was optimistic about the results and thought the Earth-Sun distance could be determined to an accuracy of less than 1%. Here he was sorely disappointed. Not only that, he was soon to be frustrated in his attempts to complete the data analysis.

Due to confusion about appropriation of funds earmarked for this work,

Newcomb was shortchanged \$3000 and had to discharge his computers in 1876. The next year, new money was held up in a legal dispute and Newcomb had to lay off his computers a second time. In 1879, an additional fiscal dispute caused a now predictable reaction: Newcomb let his computers go a third and final time. For Newcomb, this was the last straw and he turned the work over to William Harkness.

William Harkness had developed important equipment for the 1874 transit and led an expedition to observe it from Tasmania. Getting the transit data analyzed and published became part of his life's work. Meanwhile, the 1882 transit was fast approaching. However, because of the wide error range in the transit measurements, astronomers approached the 1882 transit with considerably less



enthusiasm than for the previous ones. Even so, with the next one not occurring for another 122 years, at the 11th hour, a "now or never" attitude prevailed and many countries hastily prepared expeditions. For the Americans, partly through the efforts of Harkness, Congress finally approved funding for expeditions four months before the transit.

It so happened that this transit was partially visible from North America, so there were many official and unofficial stations in the United States and Canada. If professional interest was lacking, public interest was at an all-time high. *The New York Times* reported that "A telescope was mounted on Broad Street, near the Stock Exchange, and the owner of this, too, had all the business he could attend to." Elsewhere in the city, some enterprising amateur astronomers set up telescopes and made good money—the going rate was 10 cents a look!

Harkness observed the transit from Washington, D. C. where he had the good fortune to view the entire transit. Three other American parties had similar success so that in terms of weather, the 1882 transit was much better observed, yielding better data and more photographs than the 1874 transit. One of the 11 surviving photographic plates from the 1882 transit is shown in Figure 4. In total, Harkness collected 1380 measurable photographs from the various American stations for the 1882 transit, compared to only 221 measurable photographs for the 1874 transit.

The wealth of data swamped

Harkness. He directed the measurement of the photographs, the time and latitude determination of each station and the various subsidiary calculations that today are done instantaneously by computer programs. In 1888, six years after the 1882 transit, he finally published the results in the *Astronomical Journal*. He calculated the Earth-Sun distance to be 148,788,000 km (92,455,000 miles), with a probable error of 199,600 km (123,400 miles). This was lower than the modern value by only 0.5%.

Harkness must have been pleased to come up with a result when Newcomb couldn't. But Newcomb got the last word when he summarized results for the Earth-Sun distance from a variety of methods and gave Harkness' results low weight. It was Newcomb's new value that was widely adopted by astronomers. In fact, this was within 0.06% of the modern value.

### Tallying Up

Modern methods to calibrate the Earth-Sun distance are almost embarrassingly straightforward. Giant radio telescopes are used to fire a radar beam towards Venus and the signal's return is timed by atomic clocks. Combining half the round-trip time with the speed of light gives the Earth-Venus distance at that moment; this is transformed to the Earth-Sun distance via Kepler's laws. Based on these measurements, in 1976, the International Astronomical Union measured the Earth-Sun distance to be 149,597,870.691 km  $\pm$  0.030 km. With a

precision of 1 part in 5 billion—like measuring the distance between Boston and Los Angeles to within 0.7 millimetres!—this latest result has surely exceeded the early transit astronomers' wildest dreams.

Thanks to their rarity, the transits of Venus provide a sort of "passing of the baton" through the generations. No one observed the 1631 transit and only two people saw the next one, in 1639. The 1769 and 1769 transits were observed by perhaps a few hundred amateur and professional astronomers. The next pair, in 1874 and 1882, was likely seen by thousands. Now, with television and the Internet, the next transit in June 2004 could have an armchair audience of millions.

In an address to the American Association for the Advancement of Science in 1882, William Harkness gave the following stirring words:

We are now on the eve of the second transit of a pair, after which there will be no other till the 21<sup>st</sup> century of our era has dawned upon the earth, and the June flowers are blooming in 2004. When the last transit season occurred [1761 and 1769] the intellectual world was awakening from the slumber of ages, and that wondrous scientific activity which has led to our present advanced knowledge was just beginning. What will be the state of science when the next transit

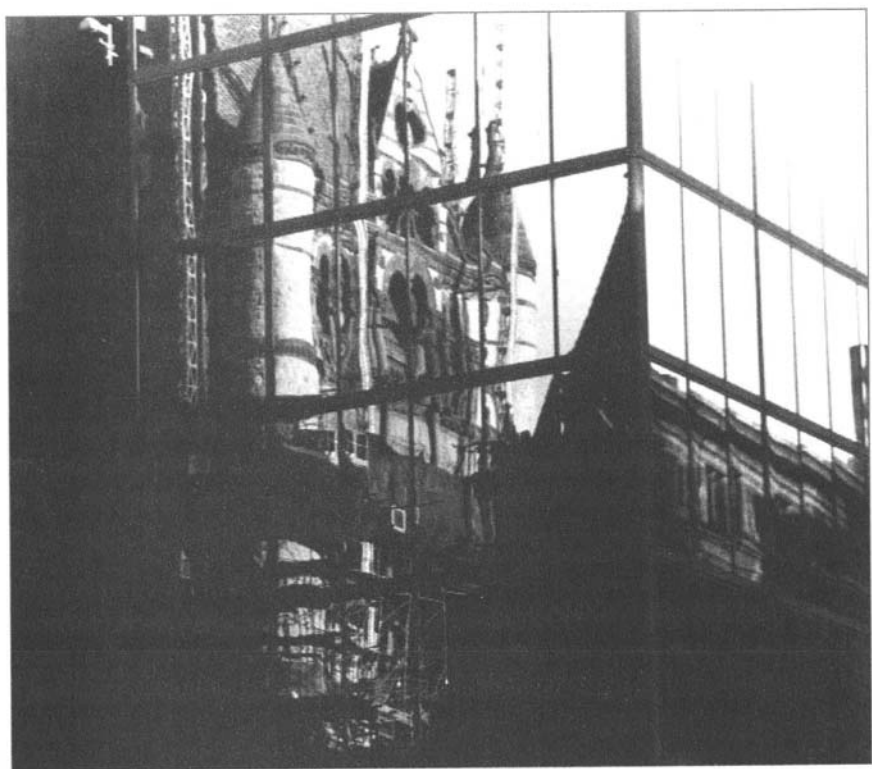
season arrives, God only knows. Not even our children's children will live to take part in the astronomy of that day. As for ourselves, we have to do with the present.... ■

*This essay has been adapted from a much longer version that appeared in the Journal of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada, February 2004.*

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# Final Choral Ode

*James Riggan & Alyx Schwartz*

All things of this world  
Spawned from themselves  
Exist forever, deathless and imperishable.  
Life itself is eternal.

But all our lives from nothing start and cease.  
And this mortal life  
Stands alone beneath the heavens  
By its birth into decay, and dawn  
That slices through the cycle of biological life.

This is mortality:  
To be born unto death  
Walking a straight path of doom  
In a universe that rises  
And falls, only to rise again.

And all creatures of creation  
All cities and altars, all speech  
Shall fail—  
Unless mortality may endow these creations  
With some permanence  
By making them live forever, in memory.

For then these crumbling things  
May enter the world of the everlasting  
And mortal men and women, hence  
May find their place at last in the cosmos.

Such is the riddle of time—  
The human heartbeat's rhythm of memory,  
Its capacity to echo through time, and death,  
Into eternity.

All things fleshly vanish.  
Everything is swept away  
Except the echo  
That beats red with remembering  
And caught between canyon walls  
Keeps coming back to unsettle.

And so it is  
That our breathing hearts, and nothing more  
Speak in judgment  
On what it is  
To be human.

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This "Final Choral Ode" was written for the *Corestia* production performed by students of the Core in November 2003. Their interpretation of the *Oresteia* was adapted in part from Charles Mee's *Agamemnon 2.0*, but the Mee's version of the final choral ode was thought to stray too far from the original meaning and rhythm of the Greek. The *Ode* was written to bring the last portion more closely in line with the original.

# Contributors

**Justine Berti** (CAS 07) hails from Medfield, MA and is minoring in French. ■ **Zachary Bos** is a graduate of the Core Curriculum, though he missed the company of Kant and Goethe with such distraught intensity that he signed on as the Senior Administrative Secretary. He is a writer of scientifically informed poetry and will someday find more time to construct theory in the field of evolutionary neuroscience. ■ **Michael Brandon** (CAS 07) is from Hillsborough, NC and has not



yet declared his major. ■ **Cristen Brinkerhoff** (CAS 07) is an English major from Franklin Lakes, NJ. ■ **Alex Diskin** (CAS 06), from Las Vegas, is an English major. ■ **William Goldberg** is a reluctant English major. Despite having little love for classical English literature, nor possessing a particularly concrete understanding of the language's mechanics, he still hopes to graduate in 2006. Raised in rural Kentucky and presently residing year-round in Boston, he wishes to have developed a twisted blend of the two locales distinctive speech patterns. Unfortunately, he has no accent at all. ■ **Dr. David Green** teaches in the Core Curriculum and the Writing Program at Boston



University. Before coming to Boston he traveled extensively in Europe and Asia. ■ **Kathryn Grover**, second-year Core student from Cincinnati, is currently working toward completion of a degree in Geology. She is, however, considering running away from school to pursue a life of fine arts and silly walks. ■ **Nalini Gupta** (CAS 07) is a Biology major from Easton, CT. ■ **Agnes Györfi**, a native of southern California, enjoys reading, writing, and translating poetry; she also takes great pleasure in editing the mistakes found in Hungarian tourist pamphlets. Agnes is an English, international relations and history triple-major. ■ **Emma Hawes** is a second-year Core student from Baltimore. She likes the Pleiades,



cats, and coffee. She was asked to write this bio during Humanities lecture, and is quite sure she would have had something witty to say if she hadn't been paying so much attention to the speaker.

■ **Dr. Daniel Hudon** is a native of Canada where he has met his share of "venomous" insects on canoe trips. He writes poetry and prose, and hopes to have less trouble observing the upcoming transits of Venus than his predecessors. He teaches Natural Science in the Core. ■ **Joseph Jerome**

is off to UNI (06) next year to study the culture of Western imperialism or, as his friends would say, learning how to conquer the world. In the meantime, he plans to read some of his "unfinished" Core books and advocate the *Terminator* trilogy as good cinematography. ■ **Katherine Martin**, of Philadelphia, will be graduating from CAS in 2007 with degrees in Political Science and Philosophy. ■ **Jennifer Milne** is a sophomore in CAS and a double major in English and Psychology. She used to enjoy the outdoors when she lived in Miami, but here it's too cold. One thing she doesn't miss, though, is the mosquitoes. Or elections.

■ **Havovi Mirza** (CAS 06) is an English major from Somerville, MA. ■ **Meghan O'Keefe**, English major slated for graduation in 2006, performs improv, eats obscene amounts of candy, and watches *ALLAS* every week. ■ **Bethany Pickard**, from Flemington, New Jersey, is a math major in the College of Arts and Sciences class of 2007. ■ **James C. Riggan** (CAS 06) is a deluded Religion major from Walnut Shade, Missouri. He is in the business of saving souls, for the right price. ■ **Aya Rothwell** (CAS 07) is from Atlanta, GA, and has not yet declared her major. ■ After parting with the warm weather of Los Angeles, CA, **Alyx Schwarz** is still recovering from the shock of her first real winter. As a freshman, her major is yet to be declared, but her interests are in Psychology and English. Nevertheless, she continues to write lyrics, short stories, and poetry. ■ **Marianna Staroselsky** (CAS 06) is a Psychology major from West Des Moines, IA. ■ **Dr. Sassan Tabatabai** is a boxer,





poet, Reggae enthusiast, and a notoriously slow grader. He teaches Humanities in the Core Curriculum. ■ **Christine Toohey** (CAS 06) was born in Boca Raton, FL and is majoring in English, with a possible minor in French, Journalism, Music, or English Education. After graduation, she plans to rule the world, with the help of well-chosen advisors. ■ **Jonathan B. Tucker** is a sophomore is CAS from Crofton, Maryland. As a coordinator of the Youth Empowerment Project for Boston

Mobilization, a local non-profit grassroots organization, Jon facilitates workshops in local high schools to raise awareness on issues like racism, sexism, homophobia, and government deception. His interests include hip-hop, acting, activism, the spoken word, laughing till it hurts and shaking it like a polaroid picture. ■ **Ben West** in an International Relations major (CAS 06). ■ **Yael Wilkofsky** (CAS 06) is an IR and American History major, and has been playing the violin since the age of 3. She loves animals, traveling, and spending time with friends and family. For



the past three summers, she worked at Cedar Lake Camp in Pennsylvania—her second home. She'll miss Core, and won't quite know what to do when she actually has to pick all her classes on her own. ■ **Jonathan Wooding** is a sophomore in the College of Arts and Sciences. He comes from Southington, Connecticut, and is an English major with a minor in French. He likes his music loud and his dental floss minty fresh. ■ **Michael Zisser** (CAS 07) is a Philosophy, Psychology and English major from Oceanside, NY. ■ **T.J. Kirkpatrick** (COM 06) is a photo-journalism major and loves music and bikes, in that order. He is from Half Moon Bay, California, but while in Boston races with the BU Cycling Team. ■