



THE JOURNAL OF THE CORE CURRICULUM

SUMMIT

Editor's Note

The XXXV issue of the Journal of the Core Curriculum goes beyond a singular theme or topic. It strives to tell a story about Core's inner values of seeing the importance of classical works despite our current circumstances. The issue is divided into seven sections: nature, governance, society, transitions, turmoil, death, and endings.

Nature shows life's quiet defiance of decay and human alienation, with renewal emerging through growth, healing, and reconnection to the physical world. Governance explores challenges to unjust power and broken institutions, while perseverance appears in the enduring search for justice, order, and principled leadership. Society examines struggles against isolation, prejudice, and division, yet strength is sustained through language, community, identity, and shared culture. Transitions captures hesitation before uncertainty and change, while adaptability is found in movement, curiosity, and the courage to become something new. Turmoil confronts anguish, betrayal, tragedy, and inner conflict, showing endurance through reflection, survival, and the ability to persist and chaos. Death reflects humanity's struggle against mortality, violence, and erasure, while lasting grace survives through memory, dignity, and reverence for life itself. Endings present closure not as defeat but as a transformation, where renewal means carrying wisdom forward after things conclude.

On behalf of the editorial team, I'd like to thank people who have been crucial in publishing this issue:

- thanks to Robin Stevens, our faculty advisor and Hub instructor, for her guidance with reformatting this new issue and keeping us on track;
- thanks to Administrative Coordinator C Vega for providing their help with all of our technical issues and questions;
- thanks to Core Director Kyna Hamill and Core Assistant Director Brian Walsh for their sponsorship and support;
- thanks to our donors in the CAS alumni community; and thanks to all of our contributors, for giving us the opportunity to showcase their amazing work.

I would also like to personally thank the student editorial staff for all the hard work and time they have put into creating this issue. The team put tremendous effort into making this edition incredibly meaningful and an absolute pleasure to read.

As you read this issue, I hope you can appreciate the meticulous work of our submitters and staff. The Journal is not just a product of one semester, it is a history of the Core Curriculum: a history of its students and professors. It is an output of generations of all those issues that have come before – this is a circular story of endings that open up new beginnings.

To new beginnings,
Krishn More





Jas, Taken by Kyna Hamill

THE JOURNAL OF THE CORE CURRICULUM

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

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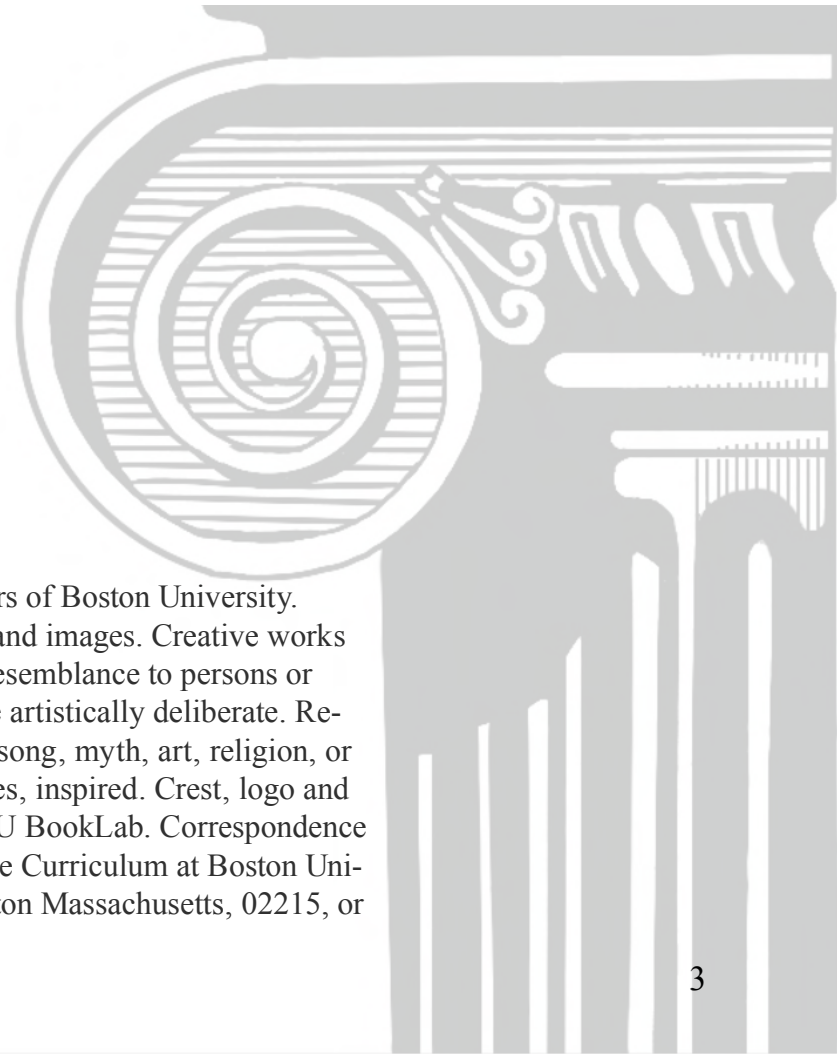
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Table of Contents

Invocation of the Muse:

13| Glory to Athena, Hannah Cadiz

Nature:

15| Spring Away from Home, Brynn Campbell

16| Cultivating a Sculpture Garden, Hannah Bryson

22| Little Eden, Kenner Bailey

25| Flowers, Jaala’Nnette Crenshaw

26| Bugs and the Mind, Julian Shyu

27| Vernal Sonnet, Zachary Bos

28| Cattledog, Elijah Maloney

30| A Question for the Sycamore at Beacon Hill, George Brown

31| The Garden of Death,
Ricki Pons Meyer

Governance:

34| Hamlet, Elijah Maloney

36| If Socrates and Hecuba Met: a Greek Tragedy Snippet, Samantha Robles Avalos

39| Why and How Plato’s Republic Can Change America, Sunwoo Chang

42| No Order is Ordinary, June Karmakar

46| Active vs Passive Governance, Hannah Gobell

50| The Consequences of Editing in Rembrandt’s “The Night Watch”, Tabitha Noel Curry

56| Decision 2028, Sebastian Stauber

Society:

62| Untitled Community, Brynn Campbell

64| The Fatality in Rejection, Sharleen Kaur Sandhu

68| Interview with Blue, Caroline Felix, Elijah Maloney, Robin Stevens

74| Untitled Drawing, Simran Anand

75| The Physicality of Language in the Gospels and Inferno, Lara Hartle

78| Bad Bunny, Eva Mangal

80| Photo Essays (Iran, Florence, Boston), Archer Liang

86| Jerash Castle, Jaala’Nnette Crenshaw

Table of Contents

Transitions:

- 88| An Interview with Christopher Ricks,
Hannah Bryson
- 94| The Perfect Story, Julian Shyu
- 99| Red Notebook #8, George Brown
- 100| The Gospels of John and Matthew,
Hannah Gobell
- 103| Pride and Prejudice: All the World's A
Stage, Alexa Thomas
- 105| Untitled, Jaala’Nnette Crenshaw

Turmoil:

- 108| The Depressed, The Absurd: An
Experience, Sofia Ulloa
- 112| Losing Myself, Jaala’Nnette Crenshaw
- 113| Hecuba, Ayushi Sharma
- 114| An Unusual Time, George Brown
- 115| Not for Us, Tim Laux
- 118| Hamlet + Ophelia, Riley McBride
- 120| The Disease of Love, Loves, and Lovers:
A Conversation, Adriana Hazlett
- 125| Penelope and Odysseus, Ayushi Sharma
- 126| Familiar Stranger, Jaqueline Del Castillo
- 128| Ajax as the Victim, Lucia Bronfman

- 132| Introduced by Athena, Catalyzed by Ajax:
Responsibility for Destiny in Sophocles’ Ajax,
Aanvi Sharma
- 136| The Role of Free Will in the Tragedy of
Ajax, Luka Moloney
- 139| The Blue Glass, Eojun Shin

Death:

- 141| Condit, Elijah Maloney
- 142| War, Autonomy, and the Body, Yunfei
Zhang
- 146| The Ideal Education, Mason Burns
- 155| Where the Geraniums Bloom, George
Brown
- 156| Fall of the Sparrow, Elijah Maloney
- 157| Titus Andronicus, Elijah Maloney
- 158| The Privilege of Living, Imaad Ali Tahir

Endings:

- 161| Ode to the Ancients, Jaala’Nnette
Crenshaw
- 162| The Snapped Thread, Caroline Felix
- 164| Climbing Mountains, Neoson Cao

Bookshelf

CAS CC101: Core Humanities I: Ancient Worlds

An interdisciplinary study of the origins of narrative, epic, tragedy, and philosophical thought including works from ancient Mesopotamia, the Hebrew Bible, and classical Greece.

Gilgamesh, trans. Ferry

Genesis, trans. Alter

The Odyssey by Homer, trans. Fitzgerald

Odysseus at Troy, trans. Esposito

The Republic by Plato, trans. Reeve

CAS CC102: Core Humanities II: Way: Antiquity

The examination of the literary, philosophical, artistic, and religious traditions that produced modern culture in the West as well as examining similar and contrasting traditions that emerged in the East.

The Daodejing of Laozi, trans. Ivanhoe

The Bhagavad-Gita, trans. Stoler-Miller

The Gospel of Matthew, New Testament

The Gospel of John, New Testament

The Analects by Confucius, trans. Watson

Inferno by Dante, trans. Mandelbaum

Purgatorio by Dante, trans. Mandelbaum

Paradiso by Dante, trans. Mandelbaum

The Aeneid by Virgil, trans. Fitzgerald

Nicomachean Ethics by Aristotle

CAS CC201: Core Humanities III: Renaissance, Rediscovery, and Reformation

The study of the revival of the Classics with a focus on the physical world and questioning of authority. Topics studied include the origins of modern political and scientific thought, the beginning of the novel and revival of epic, and Baroque aesthetics.

The Prince by Machiavelli, trans. Wootton

The Canzoniere by Petrarch, trans. Musa

The Essays: A Selection by Michel de Montaigne, trans. Screech

Don Quixote by Miguel de Cervantes

Saavedra, trans. Rutherford

The Sonnets by William Shakespeare

Hamlet by William Shakespeare

Discourse on Method and Meditations by

René Descartes, trans. Lafleur

The Convent of Pleasure by Margaret Cavendish

Paradise Lost by John Milton

CAS CC202: Core Humanities IV: Enlightenment, Romanticism, and Modernity

The examination and questioning of social hierarchy and what it means to know, the relation of subjectivity to reason, and our relationship with nature.

Candide by Voltaire, trans. Wootton
Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass,
Frederick Douglass
The Cherry Orchard by Anton Chekhov, trans.
Nelson, Pevear and Volokhonsky
Faust by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, trans.
Kauffmann
Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen
Leaves of Grass by Walt Whitman
Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals by
Immanuel Kant, trans. Grego & Timmermann
English Romantic Poetry: An Anthology
edited by Appelbaum
On the Genealogy of Morality by Friedrich
Nietzsche, trans. Diethel
The Souls of Black Folk by W.E.B. Du Bois
Frankenstein by Mary Shelley

CAS CC221: Core Social Science I: Making the Modern World: Progress, Politics, and Economics

The analysis and questioning of how did “society” emerge as a distinctive object of political engineering, normative discourse, and social scientific inquiry? What economic transformations helped shape theories of justice and social contract?

The Prince by Machiavelli, trans. Wootton
Leviathan, Thomas Hobbes
Second Treatise of Government by John Locke
Basic Political Writings by Jean-Jacques
Rousseau
A Vindication of the Rights of Women by
Mary Wollstonecraft
Democracy in America by Alexis de
Tocqueville
The Wealth of Nations by Adam Smith
The Marx and Engels Reader, edited by
Tucker
The Division of Labor in Society, Émile
Durkheim
The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of
Capitalism, Max Weber

Bookshelf

CAS CC221: Core Social Science II: “Unmaking” the Modern World: the Psychology, Politics, and Economics of the Self

Confronts the legacy of Enlightenment philosophy in the modern era, students encounter the postmodern psychological, political, and economic theories that expose the paradoxes behind freedom and individual rights ideologies.

Civilization and its Discontents, Freud, trans. Strachey

Purity and Danger by Mary Douglas

Discipline and Punish by Foucault, trans. Sheridan

Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity, Judith Butler

In the Ruins of Neoliberalism, Wendy Brown

A Category of the Human Mind, Marcel Mauss, trans. Halls

CAS CC212: Core Natural Science II: Science, Reality, and the Modern World

Studies the paradigm-shifting scientific theories of quantum theory and relativity that created a new world view and forced the 20th century into a new understanding of our relation to reality.

Merchants of Doubt, Naomi Oreskes & Erik Conway

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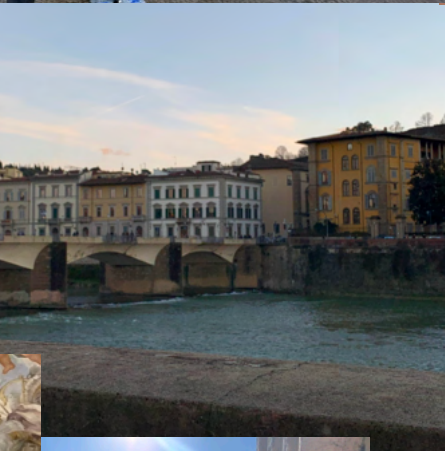
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CORE



IN LONDON




INVOCATION



OF THE MUSE

Glory to Lady Athena



Glory to Lady Athena
The grey-eyed goddess
Patroness of the arts
The wise maiden whose great city regions supreme
The lady who led warriors through their battles
Oh great Athena, give me your strength and wisdom to guide me
You have led lost men back to their homes
Weaved new paths
And fought for justice
Lady Athena, I call to you
Will you grant me your blessings?
As I sing your praises and fame

By Hannah Cadiz

NATURE

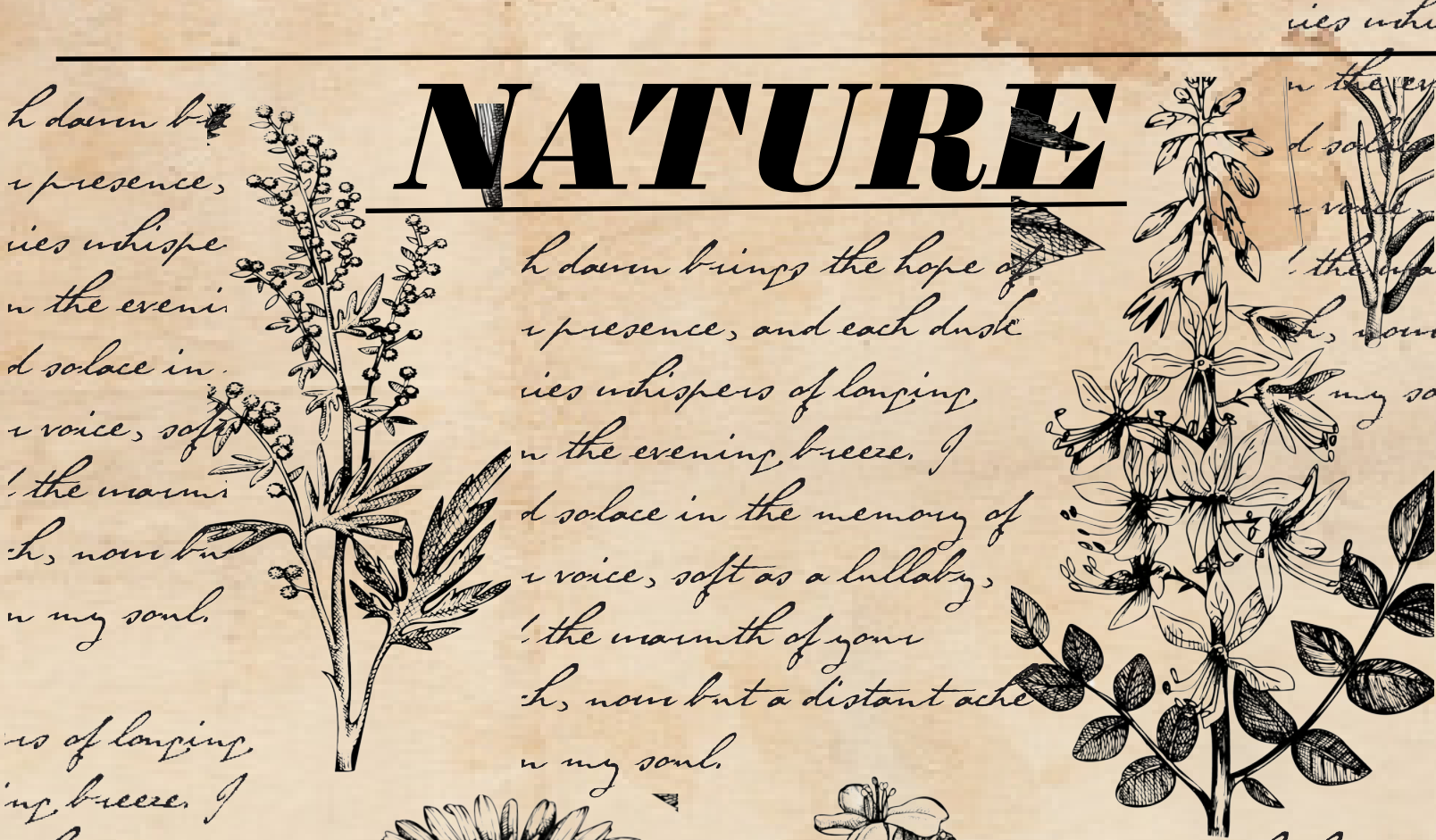
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your presence, and each dusk
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and the warmth of your
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“I ventured to continue my journey after the sun had risen; the day, which was one of the first of spring, cheered even me by the loveliness of its sunshine and the balminess of the air. I felt emotions of gentleness and pleasure, that had long appeared dead, revive within me. Half surprised by the novelty of these sensations, I allowed myself to be borne away by them; and, forgetting my solitude and deformity, dared to be happy.”
-Mary Shelley, Frankenstein 1831



Spring Away from Home

By Brynn Campbell

Cultivating A Sculpture Garden

A Reflection on the Core Florence Trip Through the Sculptures I Saw

By Hannah Bryson

Michelangelo's "Prisoners", Galleria dell'Accademia

There is an argument that could be made that Michelangelo's prisoners at the Accademia are unfinished. Unrealized. Incomplete.

To me, no sculpture had ever seemed more complete.

To me, they were fully realized in their unfinished nature. Halfway between the idea and the physical.

It was a place I was caught as well. Somewhere halfway. Full of thoughts, but bounded by physicality.

The prisoner which struck me the most had his arm lifted above his head. His elbow stuck up, his forearm masked his recoiling face. But his body was entirely exposed.

He was being revealed from the block of marble he'd been hiding in, exposed to the daylight like from the dark of Plato's cave. He had no control. It was impossible to return to the cave. All he could do was shield his eyes.

Only an observer like myself could see how vulnerable he made himself by lifting his arm and turning away. But surely he could feel it. Feel the cold air against his bare skin. Feel the sunlight touching his forearm, his chest, his hip, his thigh.

He wished to go back to being only an idea, but he could not ignore that he was now something physical too. He would feel it in every change of the weather and in every eye that fell upon his partly revealed image.

I felt every arm that brushed past my own, every eye that looked over my shoulder, every breath that exhaled too close to my face. But I looked down. Looked away. Kept my eyes on the notebook in my hands and the sculpture before me.

I'll make you an idea again, I said with my moving pencil. If I put him down on paper, I could capture him as just an idea, just a perception. He'd be only a shadow of himself, back in the cave that he longed for.

It was something I did with my own life as well. If I wrote about it, it ceased to be as real.

It became just a story, just an idea, just a perception. Life was more bearable that way.

My words were the arm with which I shielded my eyes and my mind. Did that mean I was leaving the rest of myself vulnerable?

Michelangelo's David, Galleria dell'Accademia

"Come see David."

David? I knew what David looked

at her here she always at her
like being at her
friendly family,
will woman and
understand

the way
unhappy
David
like
age
had
see
closer
the
age
can
had
be
closer
&

enjoy family, her
When I thought these that her for

like. He was constantly being recreated. I'd rather spend my time capturing the prisoners.

David? When there were so many sculptures and images to look at, what was the point in taking the time to approach him? Surely he was only a tourist destination.

David? Oh. I understood now. The original was different from the rest.

His hands, look at his hands. The veins defined, like there's blood pumping through them. He hasn't killed Goliath yet, but he's ready. His heart must be beating fast, no wonder his hand is lined with such prominent veins.

His hands. They reminded me of the hands of my father. The hands I held as a child, walking into the supermarket. I'd felt his veins under my little fingers; I would press down on them, intrigued by how soft they were.

If I touched the veins in David's hanging hand, would they be soft? Would they move beneath his skin? They appeared as though they would.

I wanted to reach out and take his hand. I wanted to feel the firm safety of it, like the hand of my father.

I wanted to feel what Michelangelo did when he brought David to life. Did he look at his own hand tightened around the chisel and notice the veins protruding with the physical labor? There would be no blood pumping through Michelangelo now, but it would forever be in David.

In that way, David was more alive than any of us. He fully embraced his physicality. He was not trapped by thoughts and ideas; his heart beat and his blood pumped and he stood confident in his vitality. There was nothing vulnerable about him.

I looked down at my hand, at the pencil still between my fingers. I could not

draw David. I could not limit him with my perception.



"Michelangelo's David" by Michelangelo, taken by Kelsey Wood '28

Plaster Casts, Galleria dell'Accademia

In the room to the side of David, there were hundreds of faces. Even in the center of the room, it did not seem as though they took any notice of me. They did not take any notice of anything.

They were surrounded by other faces, but there was no community among them. Each one was evenly spaced from the others, and though their heads were turned every which way, their blank eyes never focused on their companions.

Should I ever have the opportunity, I would come here every day just to focus

on one of them and craft their story in my own words. A new face each day. A new story. No relation or connection to the previous or the next.

But I would never have that time

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or opportunity, and being forced to look at them all together, a group but not a community, made me feel empty and uninspired.

I made my way through the crowd of people, not looking at any of them directly. I was just another one of the faces.

If I was a plaster cast – surrounded by a collection of casts I felt no connection with, emptied of my individuality, never focused on solely – then where was my marble counterpart? Had she found the attention and admiration that I sought?

Michelangelo's Crucifix, Basilica di Santo Spirito

I stood beneath Christ, and I looked up.

I realized I'd never been the one looking at him before.

I saw him only through other's eyes. In words and art. I'd seen the image of him on the cross so many times, but always from the same perspective. Christ on the cross, right in the center. Mary Magdalene, the Virgin Mary, the Roman soldiers, all in the foreground, looking up.

I'd always looked straight on; I'd never had to look up before.

I felt like one of the women, kneeling below him. Crying. Mourning. Pleading. For what? I knew that he would be resurrected. Yet here he was, forever hanging from the cross. So close, but entirely unreachable.

He would hear me if I spoke. I didn't speak.

I took a seat below him and looked up. My pencil was in my hand, but my drawing did not capture this perspective.

Oh, I understand now, I thought. *I understand why so much of humanity has been captivated by this image.* Sitting beneath the cross, I understood the pain of those present at the crucifixion; I understood their love for this man and his

sacrifice. It was a perspective I'd never known. A perspective the Gospels and the images did not provide.

The perspective mattered.

My perspective mattered.

My physicality mattered.

Christ was a body above me. I was a body below him. The body we were given mattered in how we viewed each other.

If I relied solely on my ideas and intellect, life might be more bearable in the short term, but I would never have perspective like this.

I would never feel connection.

Camilliani's River Gods, Museo Nazionale del Bargello

She leaned into him, her upper body turned halfway toward him, a hand on his shoulder for balance or comfort. His hand was on her waist, gentle; his feet braced apart, stable.

They were facing the same direction, facing something that caused them to be on alert. But what did her hand mean? Her hand raised behind his head, five fingers splayed?



*the way
netherhande ~~of~~ David. We are*

I imagined she had seen something he had not. She was the one protecting him, but she was choosing to appear vulnerable in his perception. She was allowing him to feel like he was her stability.

Was this connection? This allowance, this understanding, this gentleness.

She didn't feel the need to prove anything to him. She could protect him without ever needing the acknowledgement.

He perceived that he was caring for her; she perceived that he loved her. What was more important: knowledge or perception? What was more fulfilling: knowledge or connection?

Settignano's Youthful John the Baptist, Museo Nazionale del Bargello

The patron saint of Florence was depicted everywhere. Recognizable in his garment of camel hair, John the Baptist maintained a connection with the physical world even in artwork.



“Youthful St John the Baptist” by Desiderio Da Settignano, taken by Archer Liang '27

He stood in the Bargello with his lips slightly parted and his eyes raised above the horizon.

The sunlight entered the shadowy room in a single ray. It penetrated the chill that had been lingering within me since my early morning run. I'd watched this sun come up, been one of the first things its light had touched. I'd been craving it ever since.

I closed my eyes to savor the sensation of the light on my face, on my cheek, on my back. When I smoothed my hair, it was warm to the touch. My vision was hazy, and the first thing I saw when it adjusted was John the Baptist. He was glowing.

His eyes, raised, were looking directly into the sun. His mouth opened in a subtle shock, as though he saw something in the light that would blind most.

Maybe all the secrets to life were in the sun. Maybe that's why it hurt so much to look at, but was so pleasant to stand in the rays of. We could experience life, but we weren't supposed to know everything.

I kept my back to the sun and my focus on the illumined John the Baptist.

Niobid Group, Uffizi Gallery

I mimicked the poses of the sculptures: their might, their fear, their desperation. They were no longer simply art to look at, they were art to feel. They were art that was entirely human: in form, in creation, in motion.

Our bodies were meant to be in motion. They were meant to feel. To feel the fatigue of steps upon steps and stairs upon stairs. To feel the delight of dancing and the embrace of a friend. To feel the melting of good food on our tongue: gnocchi and gelato and bistecca alla Fiorentina. To feel exhaustion and pleasure and desire. Desire to live. To feel.

*She ~~was~~ ~~was~~ here at her home
another is always need something tasty*

*village
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once
Kels*

Gruppo di Amore e Psiche, Uffizi Gallery

I wandered through the Uffizi for a second time with some new friends, discussing art. Observations. And perceptions. And the way it made us feel.

It was not just an intellectual feeling, it was physical.

My feet faltered when we passed by two winged sculptures before the window, embracing, their lips not quite touching. And though I knew they never would, I also knew they surely must. They were right on the precipice, and they'd already begun to fall.

I felt myself tipping over with them. Tipping away from my sole reliance on two-dimensional images and ideas. Tipping out of the cave and into the light. Tipping into the physical.



Duomo di Firenze

The light was warm on my curved back when I bent over the notebook on my knee. It caused me to squint when I looked up at the dome of the Duomo. After observing the angle of the circular window to the left, I closed my eyes. They moved behind my eyelids, imitating the angle of the window from my perspective. Art was an imitation of the physical; images were an imitation of reality.

I felt the sun on my face and thought that I'd been living my whole life as an imitation. I'd been observing and then imitating through my writing and art. But when I sketched the window this morning, I was conscious of the fact that my art limited the reality. I was only able to show one perspective.

For much of my life, I'd been in such a rush to capture, that I had not let myself fully feel.

I felt everything now.

The twisting, clenching pain in my stomach that arose whenever I thought about leaving this all behind. The sticky, salty residue from the tears I'd let fall over a croissant and a cappuccino. The balmy, breathy rush of the breeze which dried those tears as I stepped outside, providing me the clarity with which to appreciate what was still in front of me. The sunlight.

Someone had once likened the Holy Spirit to the sunlight. The sun's rays were to the sun as the Holy Spirit was to God. He was too far to touch us with his own hand, but through the Holy Spirit we could feel his physical presence.

The warmth on my back was like a hand, acknowledging my existence. I existed. A physical being. A human being.

The hand gave me permission to feel. I put my pencil down, and I let myself feel.

A Sculpture Garden

Voltaire's *Candide* travelled all over the world, but he was content nowhere. Even in the utopia of El Dorado, he could not stop thinking about what else was out there. He filled his time while travelling with philosophical conversation.

Is this the best of all possible worlds?

I reflected on all that I had seen during my travels as I read. Not the suffering that *Candide* witnessed, but the wonder. The dancing, the music, the food, the company, the ardent appreciation of the body and its short existence beneath the sun.

And I felt insatiable.

I felt like Goethe's Faust, disillusioned with my words and ideas, desperate to experience and to feel. And I wondered whether it was better to never experience, never feel, never know what possibilities were out there.

For the first time in my life, I was not certain I knew myself in my entirety.

Rousseau said that "I do not know is a phrase which becomes us." *I don't know* was becoming me. There was so much I didn't know, and I was only now realizing it.

I didn't know what I was thinking, and I didn't know who I was. But I knew exactly *what* I was: A human being. A body. Created by touch. Meant to touch. Meant to feel.

Would knowledge be the end of us all? Or had we just been seeking knowledge in the wrong places?

When I finished reading *Candide*, I learned that I was not alone. But I also learned that I could not gain complete knowledge of myself through philosophizing or through my words.

Knowledge required perception. Learning required the physical. My mistake was ever trying to separate them.

As human beings we were meant to think; as physical beings we were meant to work with our hands: farm, or heal, or build, or sculpt.

We may philosophize forever, but we would never be able to work again. We would never feel dirt under our nails, or warm flesh beneath our fingertips, or build callouses on our palms, or create something entirely new and beautiful with only our hands.

"That is well said," *Candide* would say, "But we must cultivate our garden."

I needed a garden to cultivate. I needed to satiate myself with motion, to fully immerse myself in this life. I needed to find the satisfaction Adam and Eve had felt before they knew anything.

Florence had chipped away at my marble prison and warmed me with the touch of its sun. I was no longer a fixed figure, standing stiff and shielding my eyes from the world. My arm was lowered, and I was put in natural motion. *Contrapposto*.

I wanted to be a sculptor too, chiseling away to reveal something physical and human.

Like Michelangelo, I wanted to set an angel free.

Through hands and touch, instincts and feeling, I would create a sculpture garden. Not green, but *candide*.

My Garden of Eden was made of marble.

When I ~~was~~ here
she always used some
I like being at her door
friendly family, her
wise woman and the
eathy understand
+ all the

Little Eden

By Kenner Bailey



Sometimes I wish I could go back to the days of not knowing.

You were halfway up the fence now, your hands on the edge of the new plywood and your left foot balanced on a chink in the brick.

“What are you doing? Where are we going?”

“To the neighbor’s backyard.” you said, not pausing or looking back at me.

“But your mom said not to.”

Leaping down from your perch, landing soundlessly like a cat, you turned to me with one hand on your hip.

“She told me last time I was over.” I cut you off. I had learned not to give you any air before you spoke when you looked at me like that because I knew you would use it to make me think I was crazy.

“Then what did we pick all of these berries for? I thought you said you wanted to play.”

“I-I do, it’s just-”

“Well, if you don’t want to come, you don’t get to see the surprise. I’m not telling.”

I was still stuck on the first thing you said. You were my best friend, which meant a lot of things. It meant we had always known each other, we always ate lunch together and we always played together during recess. If I didn’t have lunch with you, nobody else would, because my friends were all of your friends first. If I didn’t come with you, you could play with someone else, which meant I was alone.

“Ok,” I conceded, looking behind me to see if your mother was watching, “just this one time.”

“I’ve already gone over the fence before.” you waved your hand before resuming your position and jumping lithely over the wood spikes. “You have the water bottle, right?”

“Yeah,” I huffed, trying to suss out how exactly you got over so easily. I always had my water bottle because I was prone to headaches. My arms shook under me as my shirt moved and the pudge of my stomach glanced at the top joist of the fence. I tried to do gymnastics like you but I wasn’t good at it.

-

The ‘forbidden forest’ of the neighbor’s yard was anything but natural in that suburban way. Somewhere on the way down, I scratched my shins on their artificial grass and almost ran face first into the ruler of this place. The previous owner had made the mistake of planting one bamboo tree, so it made a full show of its invasive tenacity by taking over the entirety of their backyard. It had crowded out all of the other trees, except for a fir in the corner. The pine needles it deposited made a lovely brown carpet that was soft underfoot. The late afternoon sun and the criss-cross of those innumerable green shoots concealed a shady, secret place just for us. In the center of the glade sat a diminutive mossy stump, but you pointed excitedly to an addition on top.

“For the fairies.” The little lopsided clay bowl was made more attractive by the dappled light on the smatters of colored glaze. It was your latest project from art class, a bell you had without me. “We’re making a potion.”

The blissful industry that followed made our little transgression against Mrs. Stevenson worth it. I found a honeysuckle bush as you grabbed a pebble and used it as a pestle to grind our four pockets worth of red holly berries into a fine pulp. I didn’t believe in Santa in second grade, but I absolutely believed in fairies. It made sense to me, for some reason, that holly berries looked so tasty but made people sick because they were fruits reserved for the fairies. I added the sweet-smelling yellow stamens in to add to the flavor before we poured the water in and picked the remaining impurities out. Our fairy wine was perfect.

-

The days with you blended into each other in a magical whirl when one day, finally, you came over to my house. I was so excited to show you the Calico Critters in my room but you had different plans.

“Let’s play massage therapist!”

It was your idea originally, but I liked this game. You showed me how by laying me out on the bedroom floor and ‘pork-chopping’ my back. We had done this funny game so many times that somewhere along the way, part of the game was to hike our shirts up and by now, the shirts had come off entirely. This was fine because we were laying face down of course, you



reasoned with me. I was confused why taking our shirts off needed a justification at all, since our private parts were covered and we were inside. I was more confused when you started to wear a tank top under your shirt because I wasn't, because after a shirt there was nothing to cover. I didn't know when exactly a girl was supposed to become a woman. All I knew was that women wore bras, which had something to do with men and women like-liking each other. We were unsexed then. All I knew is that you were my best friend and I liked the way you touched me.

“Caht-eh-Rin-ah!” called that stern voice from downstairs, suddenly, dangerously accented. All judgement, no passion, rolled, thundering from that Italian ‘r’.

You tensed up, being pulled by the ears, like some sort of prey animal and rushed to grab your tanktop.

“Caht-eh-Rin-ah!”, louder, coming closer now. Suddenly my cheeks were burning but I didn't know why. Only looking at you made me realize I was half naked. I sprung up from the rug and put my t-shirt on.

“I know you hear me, Caht-eh-Rin-ah!”

Frantically, you clawed at the old knob on my closet door, not caring about the ear-splitting creak, and backed in.

“What are you doing?” I balked, “You can't fit in there, you have nowhere to go!”

I could hear the individual footsteps booming as I held the closet door open, the door to my room at my back.

“I don't want to go home,” you whispered through gritted teeth.

“She's coming, what do I do?”

“Just lie!”

The blood drained from my face. You knew, I knew, I was a horrible liar. There had never ever been anything to hide from my mom. Now I would have to hide something from Mrs. Stevenson. God knows what she would do to me if she found out.

“Do it!” your one eye said in the sliver of light between my polka dot sundress, exasperated, “Just say you don't know where I went.”

The closet door slipped from my clammy hands. All I could do was to turn towards the bedroom door as it swung open. I knew I was facing it alone.

I closed my eyes and for the first time, I wished I could go back to not knowing.



Flowers

By Jaala'Nnette Crenshaw

الزهور

تنمو الزهور بين شقوق الأنقاض مثل الملائكة الذين دموعهم ترويهما.

Flowers grow between the cracks of the rubble, like the angels whose tears water them.



Bugs and the Mind

By Julian Shyu

The Frivolous Flies

Fluctuating undulations
Fleeting notions
Fascinating postulations
From luminous firmament to
Faint obscurity.
Forever transvering
Fast and brisk
Flying meridian of
Fantastic distractions
For the whimsiical encephlaon-
The frivolous flies.

The Happy Hornworm

Happiness is a hornworm that feeds on leaves. Delight is a warmth that fills the belly. Joyful is a bite of chlorophyll that can please. Carefree is a safety wrapped in jelly.
Merry is a jolt that puts things at ease. Content is a dependence to stick to a plant. Satisfaction is a bed that makes goals freeze. Fortune is a luck that's an un-replicable discant. Advantageous is a difference that can please Growth is a hornworm that knows it can't forever be a hornworm that feeds on leaves.

The Attuned

A

Neuron

Is

An

Ant

Life

connects

an

idea

colony

Is

life

abstract

mixed

together

Social

together

becoming

whole

one

Connections

inside

life

together

mind.

Vernal Sonnet

or Blooming, Already Withering

By Zachary Bos

I don't reproach the spring for starting up again.
I can't blame it for doing what it must year after year.
Szyborska, trans. Baranczak & Cavanagh

*There's robin worm-eater — hear his song?
His fallen nest in the yard is wove with
briar-vine, your lovely hair, and bristles
of dun-colored straw. The eyes of the dead
nestlings shine and seem to stare as I
pull strands out to keep. Ferns wave their
green flags hoping for a savior; the world's
a full reliquary. (IT OVERRUNS.) I behave
as if each root threads a holy jaw.
(I DO NOT THINK IT GRAVE TO BORROW DEATH
FOR PROOF OF WHAT I SAW.) Between thumb
and fingers I roll and press red maple buds
soft as infant lungs, proof that spring tends
to excess. Every nest is lined with what belongs.*

“Cattledog”

By Elijah Maloney

For this assignment I decided to represent the theme of dehumanization and animal transformation, whether literal or figurative in *Ajax* and *Hecuba*. Through the slaughter of the cattle set directly before the events of Sophocles’s bloodiest play, Ajax, the great ox himself, becomes a stand-in for the cattle he killed. His dehumanization takes on a metaphorical tone, as Odysseus says of him “[H]e has been yoked harshly to the harness of a dreadful delusion.” (121). In this collage I have chosen to lean into the theme of animalistic qualities by placing oxen and bulls around the character, with dialogue and symbols radiating out from his spot on the bottom left. The commentary surrounding him serves as his internal monologue that tragically leads to his suicide, with Achilles staring at the skulls of the oxen being carried, and Athena’s title hovering just above the ‘fortune’ that states “You will be surprised by a close friend” highlighting the betrayal that the madness placed on him is. Ajax’s death serves almost as butchery, a cleaving of the shameful and rotten roots he perceives himself to be.





Next is the piece on Hecuba, a symbol of her literal transformation into a dog during the events of *The Trojan Women* that follows the foreshadowing by Polymestor of her inevitable ‘baying and hounding’ that turns her into a dog after her attempted suicide. Hecuba’s quote is “A bitch dog you’ll become, possessing fiery eyes!” (1265), stated by Polymestor after she gains her vengeance. Because of this, I have chosen to include allusions to wolves/dogs in her collage. The reference to Hecate is due to the fact that Hecuba becomes her companion following her death. The central figure in this one is meant to be Polyxena, with the quote below it showing the sacrifice of a daughter. The playing card above her says ‘mom’, a reminder of Hecuba’s failure to be a mother due to the tragedies around her. Both Hecuba and Ajax face transformations and dehumanization due to their actions and their misfortunes that follow the narratives. These two stories serve to remind the reader of what the ‘correct’ actions are in society, and how we ‘should’ be following them, contrasting the actions of these two figures.

Work Cited:

Scully, Stephen, et al. *Odysseus at Troy : Sophocles’ Ajax, and Euripides’ Hecuba and Trojan Women*. Edited by Stephen Esposito, Focus, an imprint of Hackett Publishing, 2010.

A Question for the Sycamore at Beacon Hill

By George Brown

Sycamore sapling growing from slate on the roof of an apartment in Beacon Hill, you who lacking your forest, born here by unfamiliar winds, grew stunted and slow in an artificial valley where the rain tasted of salt and learned to love your family of ill placed dandelions, nettle and writhing grape vines; Modellos cans and yellowing smiley-face bags thrown from the upper levels now overgrown, a fetid amalgamation of your old world overcoming the destruction of the new in this place that has gone on decimated then forgotten, I must ask: do you still know of the rapid life of a bright brook, the dull death of a tree cascading down to shuffling ground gone unheard, that great green emptiness and truth of your origin?

And walking into another dream, I realize I have lost myself in a crowd of mismatched faces that jeer, that stare, that (in slow shades) vanish until I am again alone.

GN#7 p.221 6/4/25



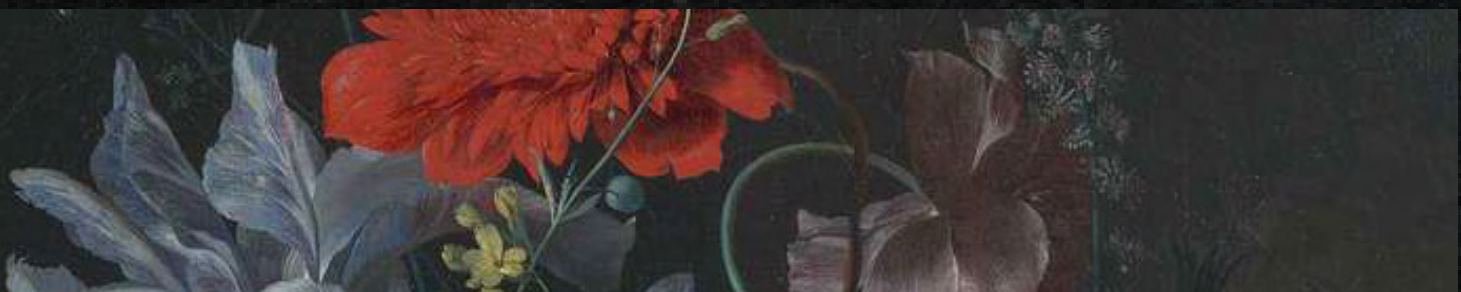
Garden of Death

By Ricki Pons Meyer

I work in a garden. It would be more accurate to call it a park, but it is a garden. I tend to its plants, bring in new ones, and, at times, shape its landscape. It doesn't have a name, not a real one, that is. People around here call it "the garden of death." I'm not sure when that started but I am sure it is built on rumors and falsities. Many claim that those who spend too much time in the garden will pass away early. That death shall visit them and take them away before their time. I have worked at the garden for many many years, not once have I seen or heard of this actually taking place.

I walk inside the garden to start the day, taking in the smell of the petunias I planted by the entrance. It's a quiet day today, I can hear the birds chirping in the trees that line certain parts of the main pathways. I see a couple walking next to some rose bushes and think of my husband, I miss him dearly. He proposed to me in the garden, underneath a willow tree. He never called the garden by that nasty name, after all, he knew how much it upset me.

"The Garden of Death?" I remember yelling at some teen once "well if you go in there I'll be the one that kills you." I have never quite known why it made me so upset. Maybe it was because of how much of me is in the garden. Or perhaps it's that the plants that line its paths are under my care. The tulips in this garden are only alive because of me. The petunias too. The roses as well. To call it the Garden of Death felt like an insult. I don't think my anger was ever reasonable. Death is not something to be angry at.





My sister always insisted the garden was bad news. She'd say that those who visited it often died soon after. I once yelled at her, told her to shut up; told her that if she could not talk about anything else she should stay silent. That was the first time I tried to drive her away; I never once succeeded. Petunias were her favorite flower.

I continue my walk along the garden. I feel the wind lightly caress my back, the same way my mother once did. It carries the smell of the roses that are planted further along. A shadow crosses over me. It's a mallard. I remember how my best friend once complained that the garden had no ducks or geese or, really, water fowl of any kind. Apparently the man I replaced refused to condemn them to death and filled in the garden's old pond. After all, if the birds stayed too long, death would take them prematurely. Knowing the truth, I dug a new pond for the ducks to swim in, or rather for my friend to look at them. A huge smile would spread across her face. I was always glad to give her that. I was always glad to see that smile. Tulips were her favorite flower.

I walk past the pond where a family of ducks presently resides. I wonder if I should add some fish too. That's a matter for another day, for now I keep on walking. As I climb up the hill at the center of the garden I once again think of my husband. I think about picking some flowers on my way out to put near his grave. My

sister would appreciate some flowers too. And then I see it, my favorite bench in the world. The bench sits under a willow tree. I placed it there knowing how much time I would spend there, reminiscing about the day my husband proposed to me. I planted some roses near there; those were my husband's favorite.

I sit on the bench and close my eyes. When I open them a cloaked figure stands in front of me. It holds out its hand and, although I can't see its face, I know it is smiling. I take its hand and stand up.

"Do you like your garden?" I ask.

"Yes I do," it pauses for a moment as if its entire body is tied to the ground, "did you like creating it?"

"Yes I did," I reply quietly. I wouldn't say I created it. We begin our walk to the garden's exit. We leave behind the bench. The lake. The petunias. The smell of the flowers stops me in my tracks. I take a deep breath. "Do you think it'll stay like this?"

The figure examines its surroundings casually and replies. "No, it won't."

I look at it, and then scan the garden. "Do you think you'll like it then?"

"I absolutely will."

I close my eyes and step outside the garden.

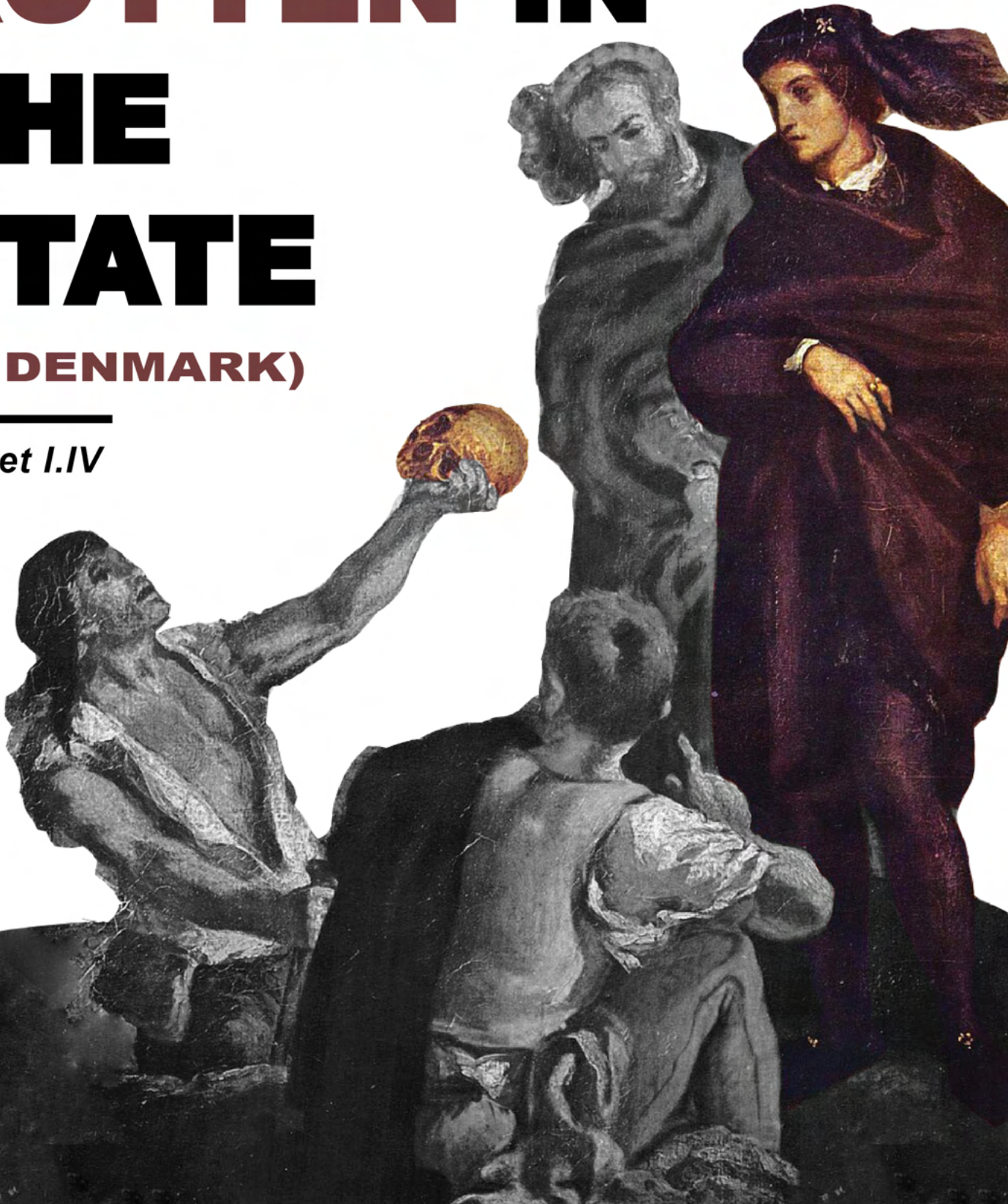


MARCELLUS:

SOMETHING IS ROTTEN IN THE STATE

(OF DENMARK)

Hamlet I.IV



GOVERNMENT

“Man is Born Free and Everywhere He is in Chains” -

Roussau, The Social Contract



If Socrates and Hecuba Met: a Greek Tragedy Snippet

By Samantha Robles Avalos

Enter HECUBA, cloak wrapped around her shoulders in mourning. She sees SOCRATES across the stage, who is seemingly buying fruits from a street vendor, and her hands start to tremble. She goes up to him.

HECUBA: I was Hecuba of Troy. The gods saw fit to unmake all that I was. Enlighten me, Socrates, a lover of all wisdom, if one has done good things, one should have said good words, but if his deeds were wicked, then his words are rotten, and never be able to speak well about injustice (1189-1191). How do you, Socrates, dare say that a man who murders, one whose intent is to hurt, speak of justice?

The fruit vendor looks at her bewilderedly, glancing back at SOCRATES. He waves a hand, giving the vendor money. The vendor leaves to attend to another customer. SOCRATES turns to face HECUBA.

SOCRATES: It seems to me that you yourself have been exposed to suffering, Lady Hecuba. But who is to say that the true definition of justice equals retaliation? If people continue to retaliate against one another, who will be there to stop them?

HECUBA (*scoffs*): What other definition would be appropriate for me, a grieving mother? A woman whose titles were stripped to being nothing but a slave? If you were in my position, you wouldn't dream of anything else but to get your own means of justice.

SOCRATES: Why assume that retaliation must be the answer to fight against injustice? To understand what injustice is and how to counter it, you first must understand what makes up your soul. Lady Hecuba, you suffered from the infliction of injustice by an outside force. Your spirited element of your soul is aroused, in complicity with your appetite to overpower your rationality, readily throwing you off course to see what is truly just (440c).

HECUBA: You speak what is not. I have supplicated, fallen on my knees against a ruthless and backstabbing leader, Odysseus, to whom I've pleaded to spare my daughter's virgin blood as a form of vengeance, wanting to regain what I was forcefully surrendered (391-401). That perfect example of a type leader you are fond of, the one with reason leading their souls, was not rational enough to keep my daughter safe from the demands of the ghost of Achilles. He took what I had left from the fall of Troy without mercy. Does that seem like a rationale is the most just soul one should have?

SOCRATES: I believe that we must have this conversation elsewhere. It might be unfit to hold upon the working class's home.

SOCRATES puts a hand on HECUBA's shoulder, gently leading her outside the marketplace. They arrive at the outskirts of the sea near the entrance of the market.

SOCRATES (*gesturing towards the tame waters*): Now, as we were. The stillness and the clarity of the waters signify the harmonious balance of a human's soul. The visibility of truth lies within. A person would refer to a person with a harmonious soul as wise, because he would know what is advantageous for him and for the whole. If he allows the temptation of necessary or unnecessary desires to control his soul, he will succumb to the overpowering of rational judgment (442c5); thus, the sea here would be in turmoil, proceeding in turbulent waters and loss of direction.

HECUBA: You speak of 'disorder within', but what about one's circumstances? Socrates, a man whose voice holds wisdom and lacks the weight of loss, understand that I was approached by a betrayal of xenia by a guest turned captor. Both my children were taken from me, and the sands of ash could only do so much but replicate their human bodies. To give and receive xenia is a sacred duty; you must know, as when you break this bond, the gods will turn the other way, yet nothing speaks more of injustice than supplicating to pity, only to be shown none (840-860).

SOCRATES: Indeed, when a man, or a woman, misuses hospitality, it only shows the sickness of their soul. A woman, as spirited as you, who once stood strongly as the Queen of Troy, guarded by honor, trained by reason, surrendered herself to the lowest class and forgot all of her instruction, filled with impulse, destruction, as she fulfills her desire of appetite for vengeance. Perhaps our paths meet more closely than they seem. And in truth, justice is, as it seems, of this sort. With the inner harmony, one could call just the action that preserves and leads it, and wisdom the knowledge that oversees such action; and calls anything unjust that destroys this harmony, and ignorance the belief that oversees it (443e5-444a).

HECUBA: That is why my judgment exceeds me as reciprocity for all the wrongdoing that was caused to me by the people who hold me captive. 'Eye for an eye,' as one might call it, is a desire that protects me from what I have been stripped of. I have not forgotten my instruction, as I know that reason leads my soul, but my stance of authority has been dethroned from me. I could only do so much, knowing my place in a Greek society cannot hold anything else but to satisfy my captors, knowing that what keeps me here are the shackles carrying my hands and my presence as a woman without power (883).

SOCRATES (*chuckles*): In my eyes, a woman equals a man in virtue, possibly even exceeding what a man could handle with reason, leading their soul. One who is led with a

spirited soul, such as yourself, is suited to be a guardian, courageous, who is not led by the desire of power or vile self interest, but guided by wisdom to maintain the internal balance between appetitive, spirited, and reasoning parts of their souls. A woman's femininity does not imply that she is weak. She carries herself just as well as a man could (455d5). What makes you different from becoming a philosopherking, the ultimate role of philosophy, is that you, Hecuba, fallen queen of Troy, caved in to your desire for redemption, that you never achieved the love of wisdom, and were unmotivated by the Form of Good.

HECUBA: Well, your inquiry about the ultimate philosopher will be acknowledged by its potential bias, wise Socrates. It will be acknowledged by me to understand that you and I have different views on what is considered to be justifiable or unjust. By Zeus, our paths are at their ends, and we must diverge.

HECUBA pats SOCRATES' shoulder gently and turns to walk away, seemingly back to the market. SOCRATES does not budge and stays at the shoreline of the sea, staring into the blend of the horizon.



We the People of the United States, in order to form a more perfect

How Plato's Republic Can Change America: A Political Analysis and Application of Plato's Republic on the Modern-Day United States

By Sunwoo Chang

Despite the many changes between Plato's Republic and today, the text remains relevant to the problem of living a "just" life and creating a "just" society. Humanity still struggles to find its path to a just, happier society. In the wake of the abundance of injustice that occurs throughout the world, and specifically within the United States of America, how would the hypothetical resurrection of Plato's Socrates into modern-day politics bring justice and happiness into society? Socrates' framework for an ideal city remains relevant to modern society through its philosophical standard for justice that challenges the delicate balance between individual and social harmony. Yet many of the structural features of his ideal city must be abandoned or altered to align with the core democratic and constitutional values of the United States to incite successful and competent political change.

First, Plato's Republic and its fundamental values of individual justice find value in modern United States politics as an ideology that ultimately aims to create a more just society. Socrates concludes that justice is when each part of the soul and each person in the city is "doing one's own work and not meddling with what is not one's own" (Republic, 433a). Essentially, he describes justice as a perfect harmony of the soul and city where every part serves its own, sole purpose. Since human nature is innately unpredictable and flawed, it would be evidently impossible to apply either justice within the soul or city directly into modern society; however, to fit its given definition as closely as possible would create a society that would work fluidly and harmoniously. A city where individual talents and desires can be fully explored and focused on without the distraction of financial needs or social perception would create a society that theoretically would fulfil the needs of the city as well as the individual. This mimics aspects of American values of justice and equality within society; as American society values the idea that everyone is equal under the law and the protection of individual liberties, the idea of justice Socrates creates can be applied similarly ("Constitution of the United States," amends. I, XIV). This concept of productive contribution creates a synthesis between modern U.S. politics and Socrates' that preserves American freedoms while encouraging a stronger cultural emphasis on civic duty, specialization, and rational governance.

When attempting to create political change, specifically within a representative democracy such as the United States, the most logistically sound outlet would be through a political party. By aligning himself with a political party, Socrates could advocate changes and spread messaging through a political platform that would be able to gain support, size,



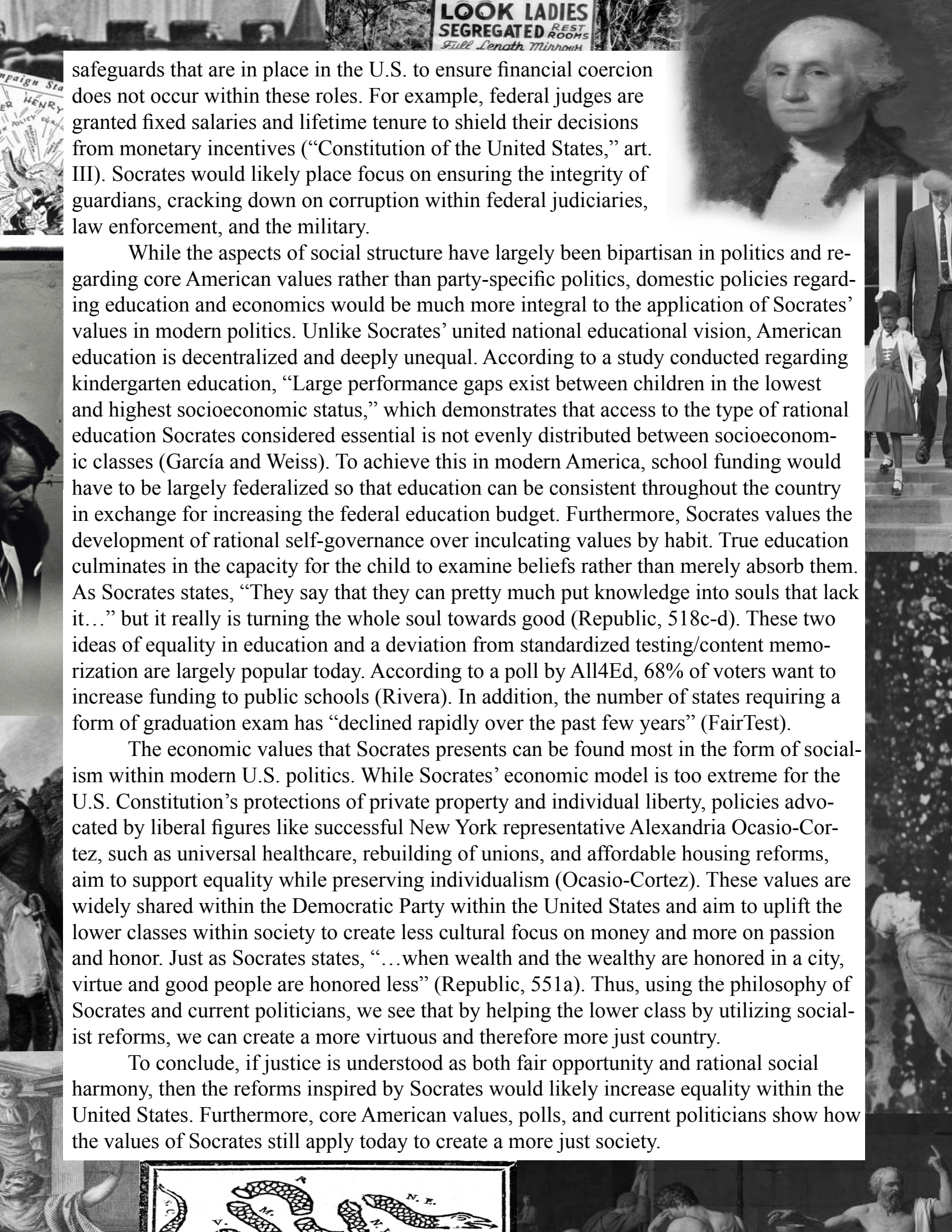
and funding, whilst ultimately leading to his admission into a position of political power, thus allowing him to then act out political change. A point to note, however, is that a common theme present in Socrates' dialogue is the criticism of factions within the state. Regarding the organization of the city, Socrates asks if there is any "greater evil for a city than what tears it apart and makes it many instead of one," (Republic, 462b) to which it is asserted that there is not. The "many" in a democracy can be seen as the factions, or political parties, that in any democracy are bound to turn on each other effectively, villainizing the other; this causes the focus to shift from working towards the greater good of the city to a competition that must be won between the ideologies of the factions. Despite this, for the sake of argument as well as to capture the benefits of the rest of Socrates' ideology within modern politics, the proposed arguments will be made without this belief in mind.

Critical parallels and deviances between Socrates' model of social structure and modern U.S. politics provide both compatibility and direct tension with American ideals. According to Socrates, society should ideally be organized according to natural aptitude, reinforced by the myth of metals that symbolically states, "each person must practice one of the pursuits in the city, the one for which he is naturally best suited" (Republic, 433a). While American society today rejects the rigid class systems present, the underlying principle of functional specialization is already embedded in the capitalist culture and systems within the United States.

Moreover, both societies emphasize meritocracy; whereas American meritocracy emphasizes upward mobility through effort and opportunity, Socrates' model emphasizes innate fitness found at birth. While Socrates finds these practices something naturally assigned, American society places a greater importance on meritocracy as a system where success is based on "their abilities and achievements, rather than birthright or privilege" (Hughes). While these two concepts may differ in how meritocracy is achieved, both place importance on an equality of opportunity. Both American meritocracy and the myth of metals reinforce the idea that people are in the positions that they are meant to be, whether that be based on effort or on natural ability.

As a result, Socrates emphasizes the importance of good guardians, relaying his expectation that political administrators must be able to uphold the values of the state while being insulated from personal wealth and ambition. While there isn't an exact one-to-one comparison of guardians as they are described by Socrates, qualities of the guardians as preservers of justice, internal order, and external security can be found in areas such as the federal judiciary, law enforcement, and military. As Socrates describes it, guardians must not "possess any private property that is not wholly necessary," or they will become corrupt and "hostile masters of the other citizens" (Republic, 416d-417b). This economic insulation is meant to prevent the corruption of judgment that inevitably follows the pursuit of material gain. While it would be unrealistic to expect the complete economic separation of political administrators, there are



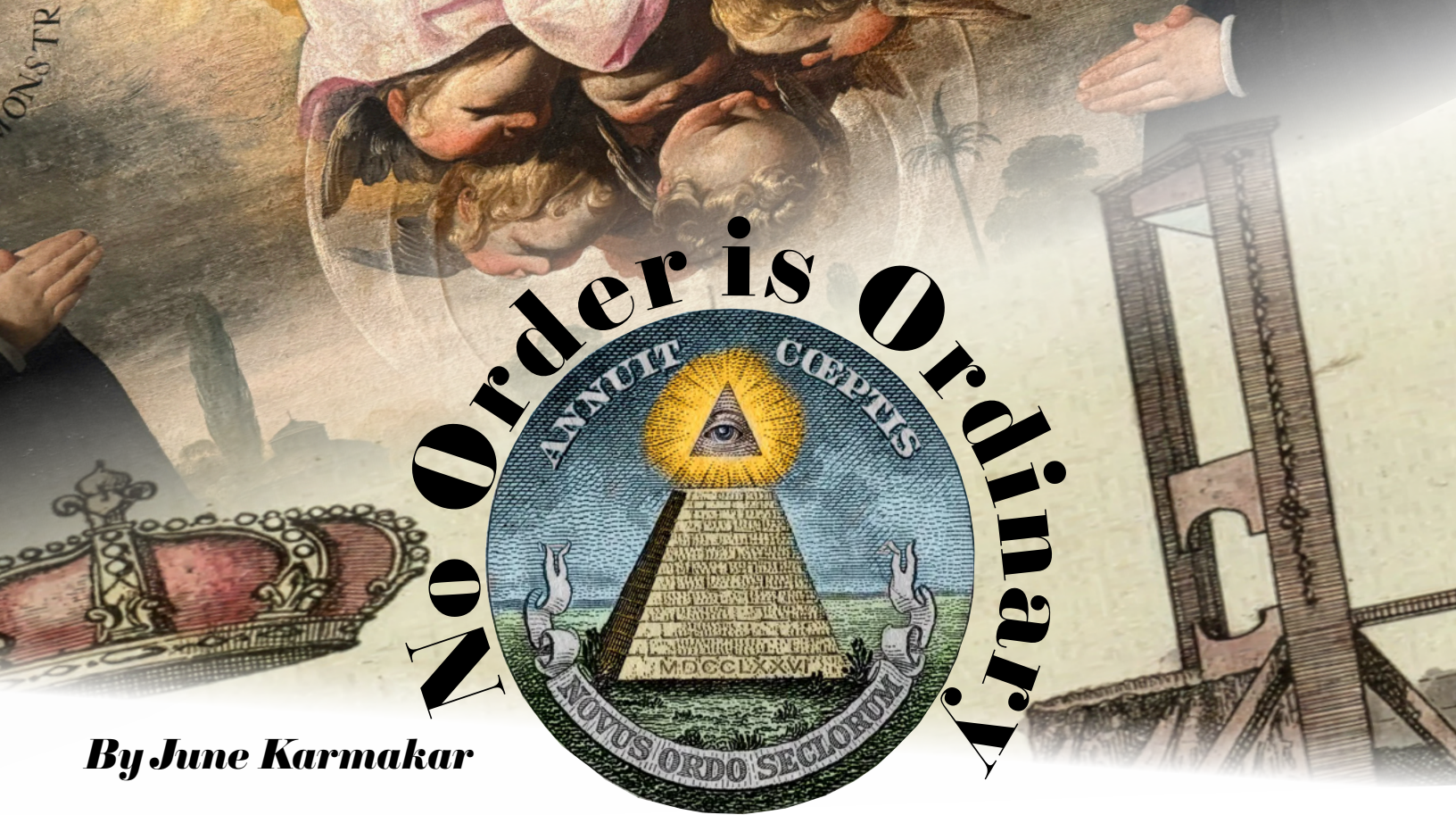


safeguards that are in place in the U.S. to ensure financial coercion does not occur within these roles. For example, federal judges are granted fixed salaries and lifetime tenure to shield their decisions from monetary incentives (“Constitution of the United States,” art. III). Socrates would likely place focus on ensuring the integrity of guardians, cracking down on corruption within federal judiciaries, law enforcement, and the military.

While the aspects of social structure have largely been bipartisan in politics and regarding core American values rather than party-specific politics, domestic policies regarding education and economics would be much more integral to the application of Socrates’ values in modern politics. Unlike Socrates’ united national educational vision, American education is decentralized and deeply unequal. According to a study conducted regarding kindergarten education, “Large performance gaps exist between children in the lowest and highest socioeconomic status,” which demonstrates that access to the type of rational education Socrates considered essential is not evenly distributed between socioeconomic classes (García and Weiss). To achieve this in modern America, school funding would have to be largely federalized so that education can be consistent throughout the country in exchange for increasing the federal education budget. Furthermore, Socrates values the development of rational self-governance over inculcating values by habit. True education culminates in the capacity for the child to examine beliefs rather than merely absorb them. As Socrates states, “They say that they can pretty much put knowledge into souls that lack it...” but it really is turning the whole soul towards good (Republic, 518c-d). These two ideas of equality in education and a deviation from standardized testing/content memorization are largely popular today. According to a poll by All4Ed, 68% of voters want to increase funding to public schools (Rivera). In addition, the number of states requiring a form of graduation exam has “declined rapidly over the past few years” (FairTest).

The economic values that Socrates presents can be found most in the form of socialism within modern U.S. politics. While Socrates’ economic model is too extreme for the U.S. Constitution’s protections of private property and individual liberty, policies advocated by liberal figures like successful New York representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, such as universal healthcare, rebuilding of unions, and affordable housing reforms, aim to support equality while preserving individualism (Ocasio-Cortez). These values are widely shared within the Democratic Party within the United States and aim to uplift the lower classes within society to create less cultural focus on money and more on passion and honor. Just as Socrates states, “...when wealth and the wealthy are honored in a city, virtue and good people are honored less” (Republic, 551a). Thus, using the philosophy of Socrates and current politicians, we see that by helping the lower class by utilizing socialist reforms, we can create a more virtuous and therefore more just country.

To conclude, if justice is understood as both fair opportunity and rational social harmony, then the reforms inspired by Socrates would likely increase equality within the United States. Furthermore, core American values, polls, and current politicians show how the values of Socrates still apply today to create a more just society.



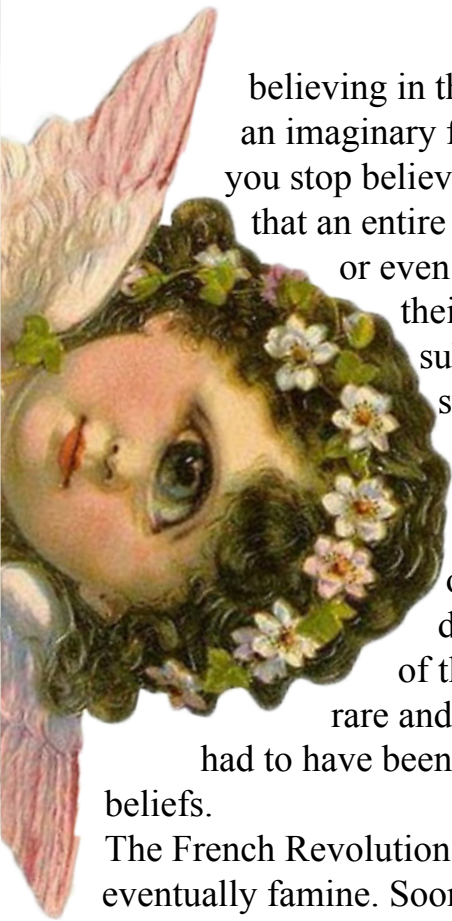
By June Karmakar

One hundred years ago there wasn't a single country in the world that could qualify as a democracy by today's standards, and yet today, more than half the countries are democracies. This begs the question, how does the world go from a period of near-complete authoritarianism, totalitarianism, and dictatorship to believing that people can govern themselves? And why would this happen- do we have a natural affinity for democracy that culminated in the 21st Century, or is there another reason altogether?

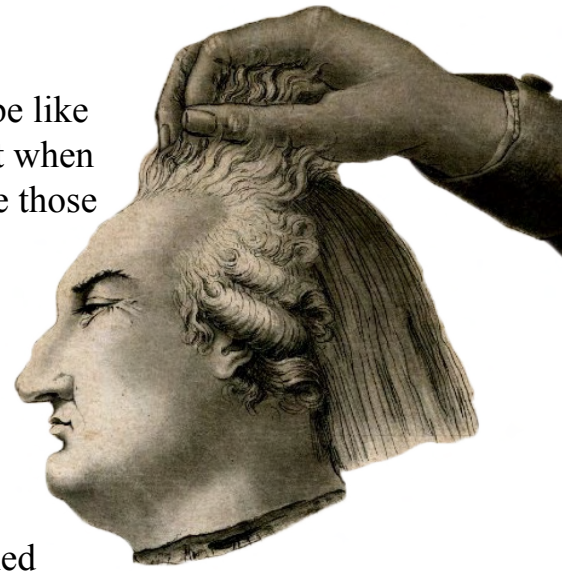
Take the example of the French Revolution. Before 1789, the French people believed in their Monarchy- they believed that the Monarchs deserved their loyalty and that the King had the unequivocal right to levy taxes, make laws, and appoint officials. At the onset of the Revolution, however, that entire ideology changed, and the people started to believe that the Monarchy had to be overthrown. There were myriad reasons for the Revolution, but the outcome was singular- the country went from being a Monarchy to being a Republic. What did it take to galvanize people to want to change their political order?

To understand this, it is necessary to understand the term 'order'. In his book *Sapiens*, History Professor at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem Yuval Noah Harari defined an imagined order to be a rule that people take to be real, even if it is not grounded in objective reality. To take an example, consider money. Enough people believe in money, so it is real. If one person stopped believing in the value of money, it wouldn't affect the lives of those around him, but if an entire country began to believe that money was nothing more than a piece of paper, it would lead to the downfall of its economic system, which is yet another imagined order. Similarly, political orders like democracy are just in our collective imaginations. Objective truths are those like gravity. They are incontestable, and they don't disappear if people stop





believing in them. Subjective truths, for example, can be like an imaginary friend- an imaginary friend ceases to exist when you stop believing in them, but inter-subjective truths are those that an entire society collectively believes in- like laws or even human rights. Their power comes from their numbers. Unlike objective truths, inter-subjective truths can change, and unlike subjective truths, they have the power to create or destroy entire cultures.



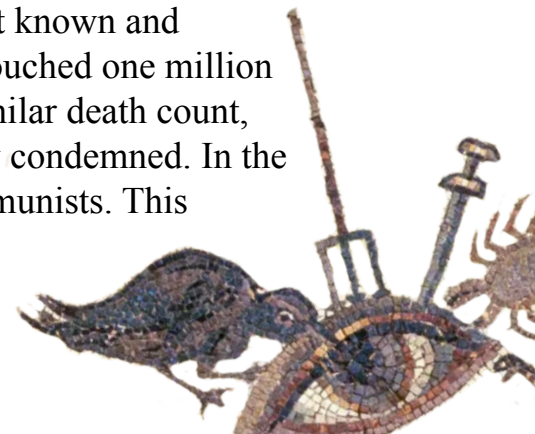
The French Revolution resulted in a change in the inter-subjective imagined order of the French people. In a relatively short period of time, they deconstructed their centuries-long belief that the power lay in the hands of the King and not in those of the people. Extreme changes like these are rare and having one on this scale happen in almost no time means that there had to have been a significant change in people's lives that caused this change in their beliefs.

The French Revolution was preceded by a harsh drought that led to poor grain harvest, and eventually famine. Soon, there were outbreaks of peasant revolts across the country, and after mapping the severity of the drought and the intensity of revolt it is clear that there is a strong correlation between the two. There is a similar relationship between the drought and the number of demands for institutional change (Waldinger, Mar 2024).

However, there were many more reasons for the Revolution, and reducing it to the Drought of 1788 would be an oversimplification. Another thing that was coupled with the French Revolution was a population boom. In the 18th century, France's population grew by nearly fifty percent. For comparison, in the previous century, the population of France rose by less than 17 percent. The population boom served only to worsen the effects of the drought, leading to famine and harsh conditions all-round. These two factors stand out as circumstances that would have a harsh effect on the lives of the peasants which would drive the people to fight for.

The Holocaust is another example of a change in the order. In this case, it changed twice. People went from believing that Jews were equal citizens, to believing that they deserved to be removed from the world, back to believing that they were equal citizens. This change in order was accompanied by constant political and social turmoil. It is during grim conditions like these that people begin to question the dominant order. But who determines the 'dominant order'?

Consider the Indonesian genocide. It remains one of the least known and reported-on genocides, but some estimate that the casualty count touched one million people. On the other hand, the Rwandan genocide, which had a similar death count, benefited from broader coverage and awareness. It was also widely condemned. In the case of Indonesia, the people in power sought to exterminate Communists. This persecution of Communists and their ideals matched the principles of the powerful West, and this approval that Indonesia received led to decreased scrutiny of the genocide. One of the differences



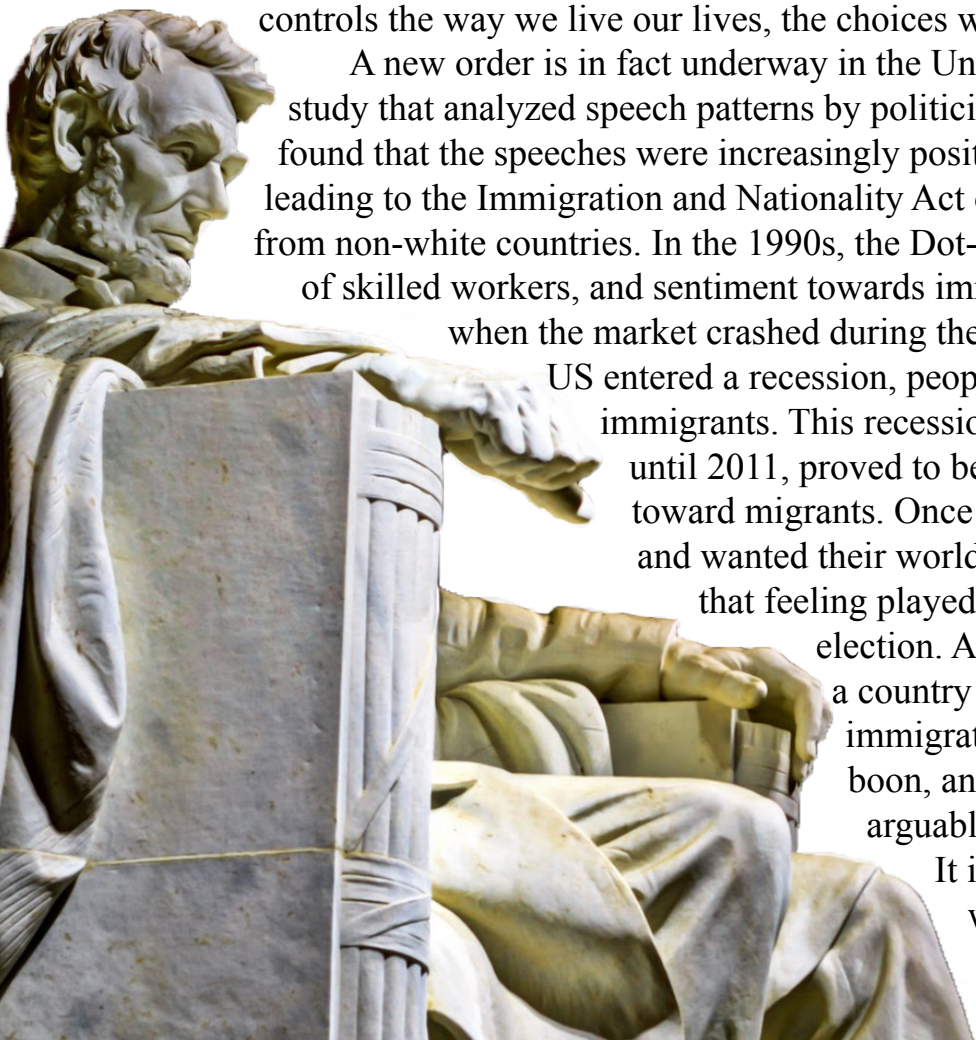
between the two is that the former aligned with the reigning order of a powerful society, while the latter did not. Another reason it remains underreported is because the perpetrators of the genocide remain in power, which means that we live in a world dominated by the ethics of people who win the wars. As difficult as the thought is to stomach, if Germany had won World War II, Nazi ideals would be one of our current orders. This is evident in the case of the Indonesian genocide: since the perpetrators of it won, they got to dictate what was right and wrong, what could be reported on and what couldn't.

Like France before the revolution, many places in the world today are undergoing their own hardships, caused by war, climate, or political instability, to say nothing about the exponential increase of the global population. Could this mean that our current orders are about to change? Yes, because if there's anything we learn from history, it's that everything but change is temporary. It is possible that we could soon be living in a world where capitalism and democracy are no longer the reigning orders. Perhaps we would sink back to a more authoritarian regime, or even one more liberal than our current one.

The change in a people's inter-subjective imagined order is a product of a need for change and not a natural progression toward modern ideals like democracy. There is nothing 'normal' about our current orders- they are a result of historical influences, and like all orders before them, they are subject to change. Orders are fluid because they are imaginary, and that makes it simultaneously its greatest weakness and strength. Autocracy isn't real. Fascism isn't real. Democracy isn't real. They are all only figments of our imagination. The imagined order is a part of our lives whether we want it to be or not. It controls the way we live our lives, the choices we make, and even the way we die.

A new order is in fact underway in the United States. A Stanford University study that analyzed speech patterns by politicians on the topic of immigration found that the speeches were increasingly positive from 1945 to 1965, possibly leading to the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 which ushered in migrants from non-white countries. In the 1990s, the Dot-com bubble also brought in a throng of skilled workers, and sentiment towards immigrants was still positive. But when the market crashed during the financial crisis of 2008 and the US entered a recession, people began to feel differently toward immigrants. This recession, from which the US didn't recover until 2011, proved to be enough to change feelings of people toward migrants. Once welcoming Americans turned hostile and wanted their world to go back to the way it was, and that feeling played a big role in the 2016 Presidential election. Americans were offered a view into a country with a different order- one where immigration was treated as trouble and not a boon, and this rhetoric is still prevalent today, arguably even stronger.

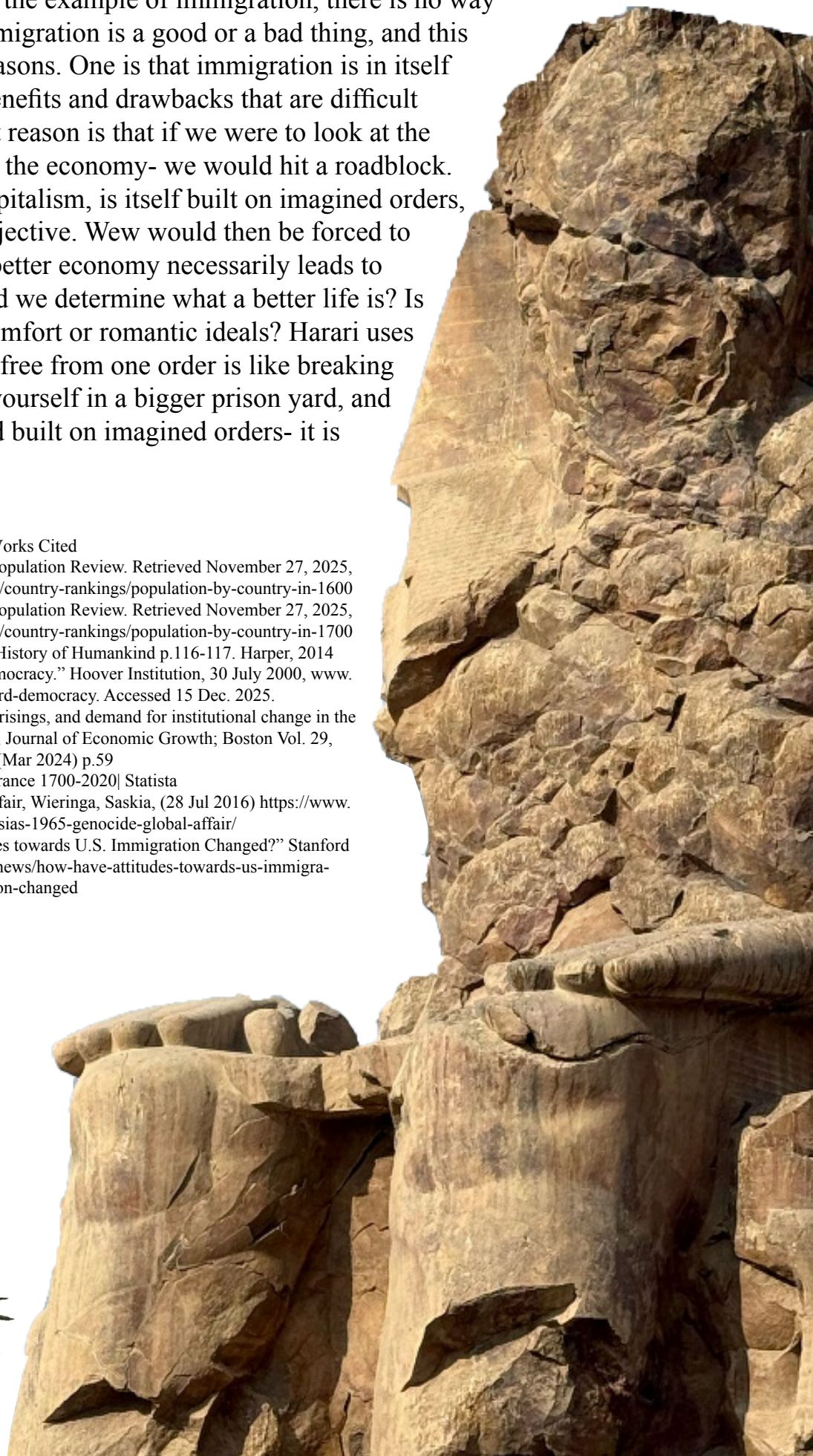
It is difficult to objectively classify one worldview as wrong and another



as correct. Continuing with the example of immigration, there is no way to state definitively that immigration is a good or a bad thing, and this is true for a multitude of reasons. One is that immigration is in itself a complicated issue with benefits and drawbacks that are difficult to weigh. A more important reason is that if we were to look at the benefits- say that it bolsters the economy- we would hit a roadblock. The economy, driven by capitalism, is itself built on imagined orders, which are by definition subjective. We would then be forced to find a way to quantify if a better economy necessarily leads to better lives. And how would we determine what a better life is? Is it one driven by material comfort or romantic ideals? Harari uses the metaphor that breaking free from one order is like breaking out of a prison just to find yourself in a bigger prison yard, and that is the beauty of a world built on imagined orders- it is impossible to escape.

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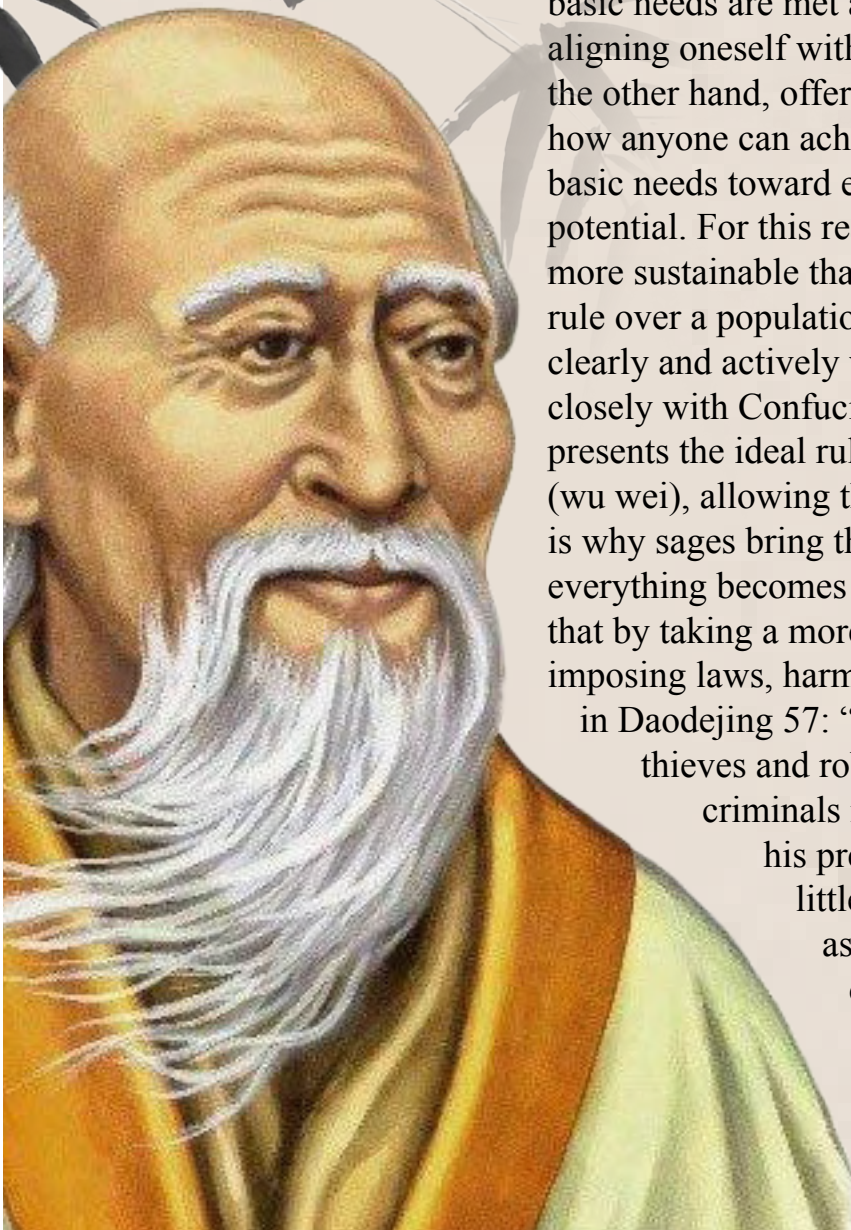
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Active vs. Passive Governance: Insights from Chinese Philosophy on Leadership and Sustainability

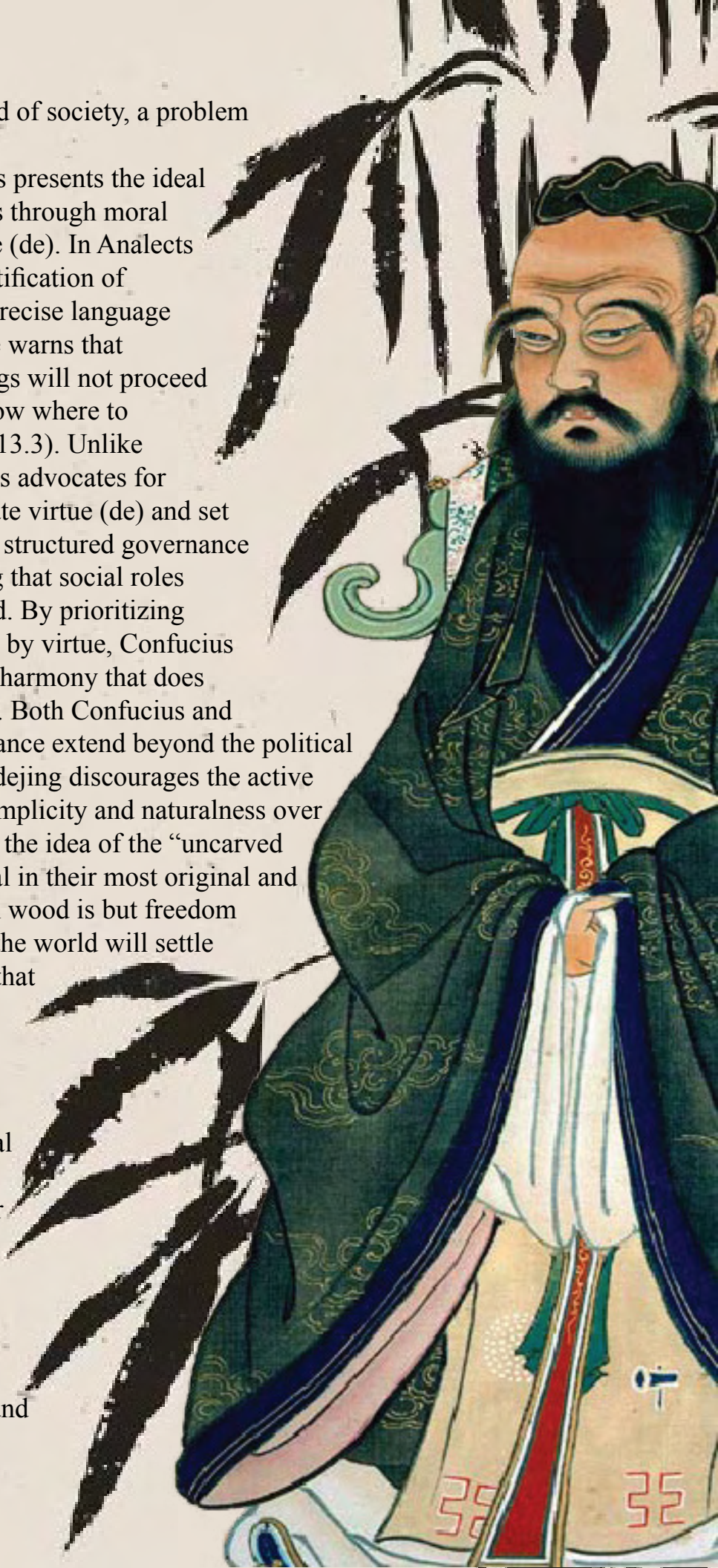
By Hannah Gobell


During times of political instability and disorder, prominent philosophers can offer insights on the way a leader and government should function. Confucius and Laozi present contrasting ideals in the Analects and the Daodejing, yet Confucius' vision of leadership is ultimately more sustainable. While Laozi advocates for the sage-ruler who governs through minimal intervention, Confucius champions the gentleman-ruler who takes a more active role in governance. On the one hand, Laozi suggests that harmony will be achieved when one's most basic needs are met and one seeks nothing beyond that, simply aligning oneself with the natural order of things. Confucius, on the other hand, offers clear, prescriptive, purposeful advice on how anyone can achieve this harmony, moving beyond one's basic needs toward educating oneself and expanding on one's potential. For this reason, Confucius's philosophy is ultimately more sustainable than that of Laozi. To effectively administer rule over a population, a leader must be able to communicate clearly and actively with their people; this aligns much more closely with Confucius' ideology than Laozi's. Laozi's Daodejing presents the ideal ruler as a sage who governs by non-action (wu wei), allowing the natural order to guide the people: "This is why sages bring things to order... sages enact nonaction and everything becomes well ordered" (Daodejing 3). This suggests that by taking a more hands-off approach and not explicitly imposing laws, harmony will arise naturally. He expands on this in Daodejing 57: "The more clear the laws and edicts, the more thieves and robbers." He argues that strict laws create more criminals rather than preventing crime, reinforcing his preference for a government that interferes as little as possible. Unfortunately, this philosophy assumes that people will self-organize without direction, which can potentially lead to disorder rather than harmony. Without clear moral guidance, individuals may act out



of self-interest rather than for the good of society, a problem Confucius addresses in the Analects.

In contrast, Confucius' Analects presents the ideal ruler as a gentleman (junzi) who leads through moral example and strict adherence to virtue (de). In Analects 13.3, he emphasizes the need for "rectification of names", arguing that clear roles and precise language are essential for maintaining order; he warns that without this rectification, "undertakings will not proceed [and] the common people will not know where to place their hands and feet" (Analects 13.3). Unlike Laozi's hands-off approach, Confucius advocates for active leadership, where rulers cultivate virtue (de) and set moral examples for their people. This structured governance fosters long-term stability by ensuring that social roles and responsibilities are clearly defined. By prioritizing clarity and structure, ideally informed by virtue, Confucius provides a sustainable framework for harmony that does not rely solely on passive governance. Both Confucius and Laozi's distinct approaches to governance extend beyond the political sphere into the personal. Laozi's Daodejing discourages the active pursuit of knowledge, emphasizing simplicity and naturalness over intellectual refinement. He introduces the idea of the "uncarved block" (pu), symbolizing an individual in their most original and uncorrupted state: "Nameless unheven wood is but freedom from desire. Without desire and still, the world will settle itself" (Daodejing 37). This suggests that knowledge, like carving into a block, only complicates a person's natural state. In Daodejing 20, he goes even further, stating, "Cut off learning and be without worry." By rejecting formal education, Laozi implies that true wisdom comes from unlearning rather than actually acquiring knowledge. However, this passive approach assumes that ignorance is bliss, ignoring the potential for stagnation. In contrast, Confucius' Analects presents self-cultivation as an active and essential duty.





He encourages individuals to seek wisdom and moral refinement, stating in Analects 2.4, “At fifteen I set my mind on learning; by thirty I had found my footing; at forty I was free of perplexities; by fifty I understood the will of heaven; by sixty I learned to give ear to others; by seventy I could follow my heart’s desires without overstepping the line.” Unlike Laozi, who values simplicity and naturality over education, Confucius believes in striving for lifelong intellectual development, which is reinforced in Analects 8.17: “Study as though you could never catch up, [and if you did], you would be fearful of losing it.” Through rigorous study and self-improvement, individuals can become gentlemen (junzi) – morally superior individuals who contribute to a stable society. Rather than passively adhering to the Dao, Confucius’ vision fosters personal responsibility and continuous growth, ensuring that individuals play an active role in shaping an ordered and virtuous world. While Confucius and Laozi differ in their views on leadership and individual development, both philosophers emphasize the importance of virtue (de) in restoring harmony to a chaotic world. Writing during times of political instability, they each recognize that a well-ordered society cannot rely solely on laws or force – it must be rooted in moral integrity. However, their conceptions of virtue can diverge. For Laozi, virtue is an effortless alignment with the Dao, cultivated by wu wei rather than deliberate moral striving. He warns against artificial displays of goodness, stating in Daodejing 38, “Those of highest Virtue do not strive for Virtue and so they have it.” This suggests that true virtue is spontaneous, whereas trying too hard to be virtuous results in its loss. By contrast, Confucius presents virtue as something that should be actively cultivated through ritual and self-discipline. In Analects 12.1, he states, “Master the self and return to ritual, and the whole world will become humane. Being humane proceeds from you yourself.”

Unlike Laozi, who believes virtue will emerge naturally when interference is minimized, Confucius insists that virtue requires education, effort, and moral refinement. This structured approach ensures that individuals and rulers alike develop into moral exemplars, creating a stable society. While Laozi’s effortless virtue allows for a freer, more organized way of living, it risks passivity and more ambiguity. Conversely, Confucius’ emphasis on self cultivation fosters ethical leadership and social order, though it demands continuous effort and adherence to prescribed roles. Ultimately, both philosophers recognize virtue as essential, yet they disagree on whether it should be instinctive or actively pursued – mirroring their broader debate on passive versus active approaches to governance and self-improvement. While both Confucius and Laozi offer insightful perspectives on leadership, self-cultivation,

and virtue, a direct comparison reveals that Confucius' model is more sustainable in the long run. By emphasizing active moral leadership, personal development through education, and a structured yet ethical approach to governance, Confucius provides a political philosophy that addresses both immediate needs and higher aspirations. Laozi's more naturalistic approach, while appealing in its simplicity, lacks the mechanics to ensure stability and progress. Ultimately, Confucius' vision of leadership – one that actively guides the people, promotes continuous selfimprovement, and establishes clear moral and social responsibilities – presents a more effective and enduring model for governance.

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The Consequence of Editing in Rembrandt's "The Night Watch"

By Tabitha Noel Curry

Posterior, unauthorized, compositional edits of paintings serve as a reminder of the exchange in ownership from artists to patrons. The decision to alter an artist's final product can pervert art historical scholarship seeking to analyze the figure through their life's work in relation to their contemporary circumstance. The 1715 editing of Rembrandt's *The Night Watch* is no exception, following in a line of artistic subversions such as Michelangelo's *Last Judgement*, Jean Bourdichon's *Hours of Louis XII*, and Vasari's *ceiling in the Palazzo Corner-Spinelli*.¹ When an original composition no longer remains, one must turn to copies made prior to the edit in order to analyze the painting as the artist intended. When art historical literature disregards this technique, taking the composition as it stands for primary evidence, it enters the world of skepticism; this inherently increases the margin of error when approaching interpretations of artistic pursuit and the information disseminated in material culture. In the case of *The Night Watch*, this disregard affects the conventional understanding of Rembrandt's innovations within the history painting genre; a widely overlooked characteristic of his artistic endeavours. Through an analysis examining the act of editing, sourcing Gerrit Lundens' 1649 replica, the Rijksmuseum's reconstruction, and the composition as it stands in 2025, this literature presents *The Night Watch* in its original form as an innovative approach to history painting.² Rembrandt had no contemporary precedent for the incorporation of genre painting subject matter in the Dutch Republic's militia imagery; yet, his composition and setting place the militia in intimate proximity to whom they protect. It's beyond militaristic - it's a communal sense of civic pride. Finally, through an establishment of the painting's singularity, this piece engages a new era in the Dutch Republic; the female figure of the central register as an overlooked nod to the increasing agency of women in the period being the primary basis for this argument.

In 1639, the Klovenier militia company commissioned Rembrandt for a painting in the Kloveniersdoelen, the grand hall of Amsterdam's civic guard. The setting is critical to understanding the painting as they both reflect three celebrated values within Dutch society: the presence of a strong defense system, the potential for upward trajectory in the affluence associated with being part of a militia, and collective civic pride.³ On a micro level, it was an affordable and public-facing means for the eighteen militiamen to immortalize themselves, in comparison to private portraiture.⁴ The composition takes on the conventional form of group history painting, as do the other paintings in the hall in their construction of the militia as "larger than life-size, as if they were standing and living, fully armed and appareled."⁵ While



Figure 1: Rembrandt van Rijn, The Night Watch Militia Company of District II under the Command of Captain Frans Banninck Cocq, 1642. Edited 1715. Oil on canvas.



Figure 2: Gerrit Lundens, Copy of *The Night Watch*, 1642-1655. Oil on canvas.

historical in scale, Haverkamp notes the assembly hall compositions break from historical precedent in the usage of contemporary militia clothing, as opposed to presenting the men in predated military garments that would overtly align them with celebrated figures.⁶ This break sets the stage for a degree of flexibility in Rembrandt's approach to group history painting in *The Night Watch*.

To present *The Night Watch* as Rembrandt's artistic liberty of group history painting, one must compare and contrast the conventions and pursuit of the genre within the work.

Upon commission, Rembrandt would have understood his theoretical pursuit: to docu-

ment the group in relation to an event that has occurred prior to the painting, using sitters as models.⁷ Note the action of *The Night Watch*, where the reality of this event is steeped in skepticism, as are most history paintings.⁸ The formulaic compositional approach would be to present the group lined up or ambulating a table, in both cases posing as active participants in the prescribed context.⁹ Rembrandt's composition aligns more closely with the former and yet the figures appear more individuated in their pursuits, as compared to the six other group history paintings in the Kloveniersdoelen.¹⁰ It's important to note that Rembrandt is never quoted as having defined the painting's genre; modern scholarship only prescribes this term on the basis of a quote from two of the painting's sitters.¹¹ This explains why not a single one of these other six paintings feature the degree of individualized dynamism present in *The Night Watch*. The action of the scene shows Rembrandt's desire for flexibility in his approach to the genre, playing with ambiguity to leave space for multitudes of interpretations that are either dismissed or of lesser interest to historical scholarship. In the case of the golden girl, this dismissal likely stems from patriarchal constructions of history that are devoid of critical information on the role of women that one may utilize to reanalyze the function of femininity in *The Night Watch*. Using Rembrandt's contemporary program of the Kloveniersdoelen's as a sample reference to compare *The Night Watch* with historical group portraiture, it becomes evident that Rembrandt presents a number of non-militia figures; an unconventional choice within the genre. While coeval viewers were privy to these figures' presence, viewership since 1715 would be highly influenced by the editing down of the painting that removed two militiamen and a young boy.¹² Thanks to Gerrit Lundens' 1642 replica of the work, scholars have been able to analyze the composition as Rembrandt finalized.¹³ Note Rembrandt's death in 1669, 46 years before the strips were, absent of his authorization and quite imprecisely, removed.¹⁴ While many scholars acknowledge the edit, they minimize the consequences in claiming Rembrandt placed lesser emphasis on the left register; as the painting would be seen from an angle.¹⁵ This argument dismisses the significance of Rembrandt including the notably non-militia young boy, making it simpler to depersonalize the female figures of the central composition as simply allegorical.¹⁶ Considering that each militiaman paid proportional to their depiction and the intention of group portraiture as discussed above, it's reasonable to assume any non-militia figure is an exemplification of Rembrandt's creative autonomy in approaching group history painting.¹⁷

Haverkamp-Begemann makes important note of the ambiguity of the girl as a sutler and how through this, Rembrandt encourages a multitude of interpretations as to her function.¹⁸ Putting the young boy in conversation with the female figure opens space for the presentation of the girl serving two functions in the painting. The first being the conventional allegorical interpretation, the second as an allegory for the increasing socio-economic participation of women in the Dutch Republic.¹⁹ The growth of the Dutch East India company created a necessity for women to be



Figure 3: The Night Watch with highlights reconstruction, Photo

educated and active participants in the economy, as men were often in maritime labors with periods of absence.²⁰ This shifts feminine domesticity from household affairs to oversight of the larger Dutch Republic dominion, increasing the status of women in the artistic and social canons. Inspirational images reflective of this sentiment begin to emerge, referred to by modern feminist scholars as “relational autonomy.”²¹ In order to contextualize the golden girl of *The Night Watch* as an example of this, it’s important to consider Rembrandt’s pursuit of representing overlooked figures in society. This is demonstrated by the exhibition *HERE: Black in*

Rembrandt’s *Time*, from the Rembrandt House Museum, in which Rembrandt presents African diaspora figures within the Dutch Republic.²² Through the degree of inclusivity present in Rembrandt’s portfolio and liberties taken in his approach to group historical painting, the conventional analysis of the girl seems incongruent with the ingenuity of his artistic endeavors.

Haverkamp-Begemann argues the girl and young boy as reflections of festivities related to the societies of rhetoric, in which children would present themselves as mythological figures such as Athena.²³ While this is a reasonable and thoughtful consideration, his analysis can be extended upon to demonstrate the girl’s presence as a powerful device that canonizes feminine strength. To solidify the notion that the female sutler’s identity goes beyond allegorical, Dutch Golden Age artistic production and modern feminist art historical scholarship on the period must be considered. Here, one turns to Martha Pea-



Figure 4: Photo: Rijksmuseum/Reinier

cock's literature on the Maid of Holland, an example of feminist allegories that Rembrandt would have been familiar with that speak to the increasing agency of women.²⁴ If the Maid of Holland is born in defiance of Catholic norms, embodying the religious and patriotic values of Dutch society while subverting stereotypical impressions of inferior femininity in her strength, it's reasonable to posit Rembrandt's golden girl as a similar conflation of sentiments.²⁵

Through this lens of increasing female agency, her claw attribute is allegorizing the Klovenier's strength, but the specific presentation of it as a chicken attached to her hip is emblematic and celebratory of female sutlers, a position newly held by women.²⁶ While this would not have been a conventional pursuit of group historical portraiture, Rembrandt's *The Night Watch*, as discussed above, is not attempting to precisely comport to the expectations of the genre. Furthermore, Rembrandt is contextualizing the celebratory nature of the scene by presenting a woman engaged in trade, the fruits of a modernized country with a strong defense and economy.

One may look to Rembrandt's own reliance on Hendrickje as a business partner as demonstrating the importance of empowering images of femininity, as this made it possible for him to continue his practice.²⁷ Haverkamp almost reaches a similar conclusion, stating that in "making those figures that are purely symbolic...perform their own act among the citizens, he

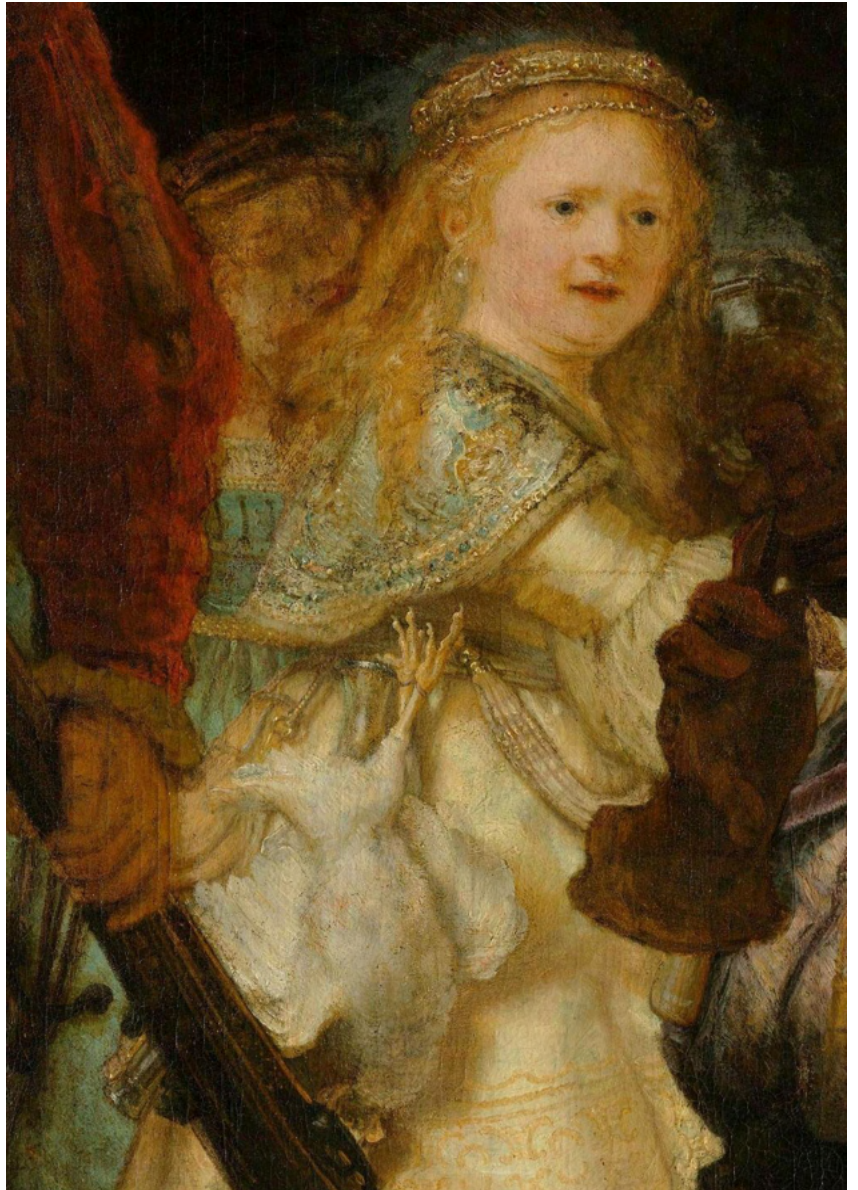


Figure 5: Detail from Rembrandt van Rijn's *The Night Watch*, 1642.



Figure 6: Claes Jansz. Visscher, *Batavian Mirror*, 1610, detail, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

made them their equals, thereby intensifying the validity of the concepts they symbolize.”²⁸ Simply put, he misses the nuance of the concepts the girl possibly reflects.

The intentional ambiguity of the girl is reflected in Rembrandt’s practice outside of *The Night Watch*, highlighting the pursuit of his work to extend beyond singular, definable symbols. His painting *A Woman Bathing in a Stream*, from 1654, serves as a reaction against feminine prototypes that present women as vain creatures lost in their own reflection.²⁹ Not dissimilar from *The Night Watch* in its vague categorization, the painting incorporates elements of genre and history painting in subject matter and scale, respectively. *A Woman Bathing in a Stream* importantly adopts the imagery of a woman gazing into her own reflection, but extends the feminine characterization from vain to introspective; a symbol for “purity, truth, wisdom, and self-knowledge, as well as a symbol for the sense of sight.”³⁰ This work demonstrates Rembrandt’s reconstruction of the feminine in the European canon and while produced after *The Night Watch*, this ingenuity is too present in predating work such as *Naked Woman Seated on a Mound* and *Woman with a Mirror* from 1631 and 1638, respectively.³¹

In conclusion, the editing of *The Night Watch* serves to reflect the gap present in its related

art historical scholarship. In the same way the edited strips have been artificially reconstructed to allow viewers to engage with the work in Rembrandt’s intended form, art historical scholarship that recontextualizes women within the Dutch Golden Age offers a new, holistic interpretation of the artwork. This presents Rembrandt’s *The Night Watch* as a celebration of civic pride extending beyond the grandeur of the militia, speaking to how society flourished in a period that relied on female economic participation. This becomes translated into the establishment of feminine aesthetics beyond representations of vanity or as allegories for male-dominated realms. Therefore, not only is the golden girl emblematic of the group, she’s an allegory in her own right to demonstrate the integral role of women in Dutch society.

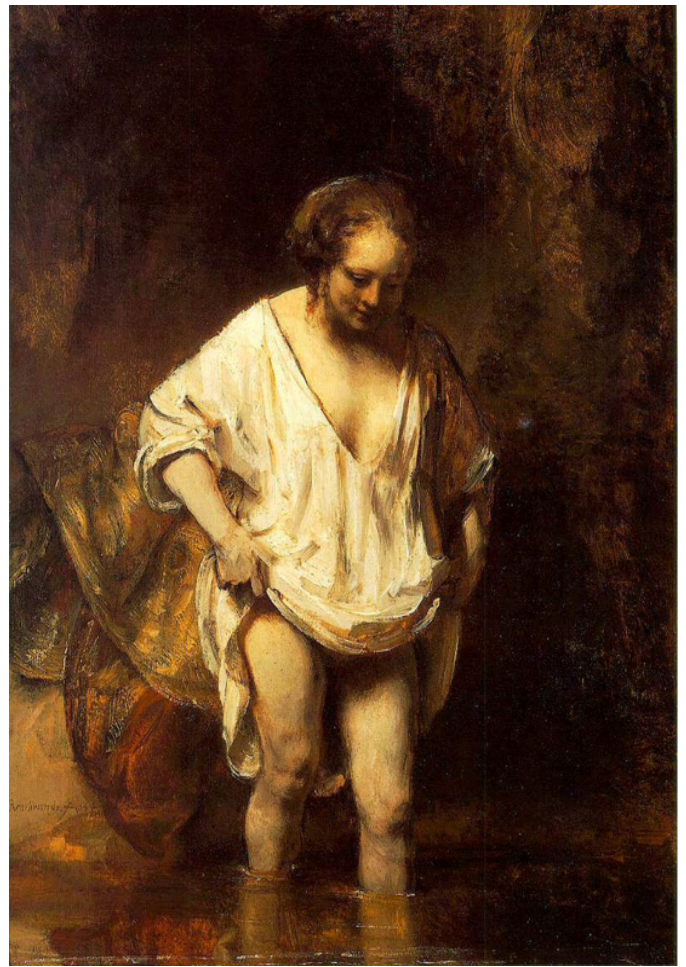


Figure 7: Rembrandt van Rijn, *A Woman Bathing in a Stream* (Hendrickje Stoffels?), 1654. Oil on wood (Baltic/Polish oak, identified). National Gallery.



Figure 8: Rembrandt van Rijn, *Naked Woman Seated on a Mound*, 1631. Etching. British Museum

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Figure 9: Rembrandt van Rijn, *Woman with a Mirror*, 1638, oil on panel. Hermitage, St. Petersburg.

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Decision 2028

By Sebastian Stauber

INT. DEBATE STAGE DRESSING ROOM - EVENING

The dressing room is barren and gutted, only retaining the necessary chairs and unnecessary mirrors. The singular object of interest is a flickering live TV in the corner.

It's broadcasting the presidential debate between "FRANKLIN" and "JAMESON" that's occurring in the adjacent room.

THREE SCRAWNY POLITICAL AIDS watch it intensely. While appearing like average suited pundits from the back, from the front they are revealed to be alternate, inverted versions of SIGMUND FREUD, WENDY BROWN, and PAUL GILROY.

All leaning against the desk in front of the TV, they watch each moment carefully. Freud recoils and throws a hand up.

FREUD
He's let his ID take over. Absolutely zero self-discipline. All these quotes will look horrible out of context.

NOTE THAT ALL **BOLDED** DIALOGUE ARE DIRECT QUOTES FROM: IN THE RUINS OF NEOLIBERALISM, THERE AIN'T NO BLACK IN THE UNION JACK, AND CIVILIZATION AND ITS DISCONTENTS RESPECTIVELY.

GILROY
Relax, he's just laying harsh groundwork that he'll mire in redaction later.

Freud rubs his eyebrows.

FREUD
He's also not talking to the average person. They're the ones who got him here. I don't know why he keeps abandoning them.

Brown takes her arms off the table.

BROWN
He's gotta speak to the rich when he can so they know he has their back -- petty morals and politics aside. As Hayek says, **markets reward contributions, nothing more.**

GILROY
That's a lot you're throwing aside.

Brown swivels towards Gilroy.

Pg 4



2.

BROWN
Well if he can **shift the blame from Wall Street to Washington**, gaining financial support from the elites while retaining and redirecting the vitriol of the masses, then the white house is his, no matter what he throws aside.

Gilroy rolls his eyes and looks back at the TV.

FREUD
Fear of loss of love is a dangerous thing. Always put your base first. Devotion can quickly turn into hate if you mislead them long enough.

Gilroy hits the table.

GILROY
Oop! That's it! The first half is over.

On the TV, the two men shake hands. The three aids disperse from the TV and prepare for Jameson's immanent arrival. Freud does a quick line of coke to calm himself down.

The door swings open and JAMESON, a lanky, sickly looking man in his 80's, steps into the room. He smiles full and toothy.

JAMESON
How'd I do?

BROWN
You did--

GILROY
Not great.

Brown gives Gilroy a stinging side eye.

GILROY (cont'd)
Not enough about race. It's your strongest point. Whenever you **acknowledge guilt while summoning fear** it becomes hard to counter you.

BROWN
It's not all about about--

Pg 34

GILROY

It should be. Race, whatever you think of its ideological origins, provides a more potent means to organize and focus the grievances of certain inner-city populations than the languages of class politics. Race is a political category. It's pure gold for us. If he dog whistles right, race could be constructed as a problem or threat against which a homogeneous white national 'we' could be unified. That's a strong base that will stick by you no matter what.

Pg 27

Pg 38

Pg 48

Brown takes a sip of water.

FREUD

He's barking at the moment.

Brown spits some of her water out in laughter. Gilroy's eyebrow twitches.

FREUD (cont'd)

No offense sir.

JAMESON

No no, hit me hit me straight. Honest. Like Abe.

FREUD

Gilroy's not wrong, the advantage which a comparatively small cultural group offers of allowing this instinct an outlet in the form of hostility against intruders is not to be despised.

Freud wipes his nose.

FREUD (cont'd)

It's always possible to bind together a considerable amount of people in love, so long as there are other people left over to receive the manifestations of their aggressiveness.

He motions to Gilroy.

Pg 83

Pg 110

FREUD (cont'd)

But it's got to be covert. Frame it as a conflict between the family and the larger community to which the individual belongs. Make it more general, broadly applicable. The inclination to aggression is an original, self subsisting, instinctual disposition in man. Give them a push, not a shove and they'll feel more in control.

Jameson nods as if his neck was a loose door hinge.

BROWN

Great can I go now?

GILROY

Floor is yours.

She forces out a fake smile.

BROWN

Thanks. You gotta spread wide and thin. Feign a combination of libertarianism, moralism, authoritarianism, nationalism, hatred of the state, christian conservatism, and, yes Gilroy, racism.

Gilroy mockingly celebrates to himself.

BROWN (cont'd)

I agree with your tenets we just need to be doing more. Be all of these, so you check all boxes while not tying yourself to a potential dud.

Freud returns to the corner to snort another line of coke.

GILROY

I can assure you that this is no dud. And there limits of a political strategy based on appeals to a homogeneous and cohesive nation.

BROWN

That's not what I'm saying at all. All of the movements I mentioned slice people up into opposed groups. You should be many things to avoid getting pinned, but first you must define an outline of America if you wish to shape it in your image.

Pg 115

Pg 98

Pg 2

Pg 28

Pg 85

JAMESON

How.....

Brown winds up.

BROWN

Well. Draw on a mythical past when families were happy, whole, heterosexual, when racial minorities and women knew their place, when neighborhoods were orderly, secure, and homogeneous, when heroin was a black problem and terrorism was not inside the homeland, and when hegemonic Christianity and whiteness constituted the manifest identity, power, and pride of the nation and the west. Then on--

GILROY

It sounds like you're agreeing with me.

Brown shoots Gilroy a look, before turning back in defiance. Freud returns from his one man powder party.

BROWN

Then once you've done that, you can widen the chasm between the midlanders and the educated, urban and urbane, mixed race, feminist, queer affirmative, and godless - and bleed hard-right populism from the wound of dethroned privilege that witness, Christianity, and maleness granted to those who were otherwise nothing and no one.

A now hyped and sea-legged, Freud reasserts himself.

FREUD

On that, civilization is built up upon a renunciation of instinct. As such, what we call our civilization is largely responsible for our misery. Take advantage of that, break down the rules and niceties from time to time. Give people a treat that they know is bad for them. It'll make you feel like a liberator.

JAMESON

How many people will actually swing that? Swing. Like golf, I love golf.

Pg 5

Pg 6

Pg 5

Pg 72-73

Pg 26

Pg 75

Pg 58

FREUD
It does not seem as though any influence could induce a man to change his nature to a termites. No doubt he will always defend his claim to individual liberty against the will of the group. There is nothing more important than the feeling of our own sense of self, of our own ego. It's harsh, but since there is no fixing it we might as well use it.

A STUDIO INTERN bumps their head through the door.

INTERN
Okay you're back in in three guys.

BROWN
In three?

INTERN
Was rounding up it's more like two and a half.

GILROY
Where was "on in ten" or "in five". In three? No warning. Just three?

FREUD
Probably in two now.

Gilroy and Brown throw their heads up, Freud jitters to himself, Jameson continues to stare forward even tho everyone is now turned to the Intern. The Intern checks their watch

INTERN
Not yet.

They slither back through the door. Jameson weakly claps his hands.

JAMESON
O, o, okay Jack quick quick. Do you guys have any of this in a bumper sticker? I like bumper stickers. They go on cars, I see them on cars. And I think and I see on cars. It's new, it's what Obama did, I only--

FREUD
"Cleanliness and order."

Brown whips around to face Freud.

Pg 67

BROWN
Now how is that what you just said at all?

FREUD
In the broad strokes it's not. But it's what people believe they'll be getting for themselves by marginalizing others.

The Intern peaks his head back through the door.

INTERN
Two minutes.

Gilroy turns angrily.

GILROY
Thank you! Thank you for the two minute warning. Much appreciated!

The Intern recedes back though the door. Everyone begins to speak at a rapid pace.

BROWN
Okay well how about **"Protect and restore."** Mine at least lines up with what I'm advertising.

GILROY
I think you go bolder, so direct it loops back into illuminating exaggeration: **"War and invasion."** Pull **direct attention to national boundaries, focusing attention on the entry and exit.** Tie the process of **national decline as coinciding with the dilution of once homogeneous and continuous national stock by alien strains.**

BROWN
You can pull back just a little bit.

GILROY
No this is the time. As Gramsci says, **at a certain point in their historical lives social classes become detached from their traditional parties.**
(MORE)

Pg 5

Pg 45

Pg 29

GILROY (cont'd)
When such crises occur, like right now, the immediate situation becomes delicate and dangerous, because the field is open for violent situations, for the activities of unknown forces, represented by charismatic 'men of destiny.' You could be a man of Destiny. You just need to steel yourself and grab the currant of history.

INTERN (O.S.)
One minute.

GILROY
I'm for real gonna kill that guy.

FREUD
At this point he's doing his job correctly.

Jameson has dozed off. Gilroy claps his hands

GILROY
Jameson!

Jameson jolts up.

JAMESON
Uh- uh- uh- what what where am I? Bomb the shit of out them. 1954.

BROWN
Sir! If you mark out the white uneducated laborer at the dispossessed and then point out that they were thrown under the economic bus at every turn while being played a political symphony of christian family values along with paeans to whiteness and their young sacrificed in senseless and endless wars, you can win this debate.

Freud mockingly throws his hands up.

FREUD
If you talk for 4 hours summarizing and weponizing the last 50 years of politics you can win this debate.

BROWN
Oh what's your plan?

Pg 46

Pg 4

FREUD

Be more universal point out that **civilization imposes restrictions on it and justice demands that no one shall escape those restrictions**, depriving instincts of satisfaction. Give them satisfaction. It's what they want. Throw out the rule book live on stage, while still maintaining your own super-ego so you can lead them.

GILROY

What does that even mean man.

FREUD

You wouldn't get it. You're perception isn't narrow enough.

GILROY

Maybe not, but yours definitely is. Jameson, look. As Sivanandan says, **Capital requires racism not for racism's sake, but for the sake of capital**. And you need the backing of a lot of folks with a lot of capital. If you're not going to listen to me for any other reason, listen to me for that.

The Intern sticks his head into the room, wincing as he does.

INTERN

Hey- guys, it's time.

GILROY

Obviously.

JAMESON

Well thank-thank you all. I'll it, it I'll all in mind.

Jameson goes to shake each of their hands. His hand limply collapses as it hits each one of theirs. Freud grasps his hand hard and shakes roughly, almost knocking Jameson over. Jameson then turns towards the door and exits. The three sit in silence.

BROWN

Did he grasp a single thing we said.

FREUD

I don't think so.



Pg 72

10.

GILROY

All bounced right off of him.

BROWN

My career is at a dead end with this.

GILROY

Foucault told me they pay better on the other side anyways.

FREUD

Wanna all switch?

BROWN

Yeah. Fuck that guy.

The Intern slowly slides his head back through the door.

INTERN

Starting now.

ALL

WE KNOW!

FIN



Pg 21

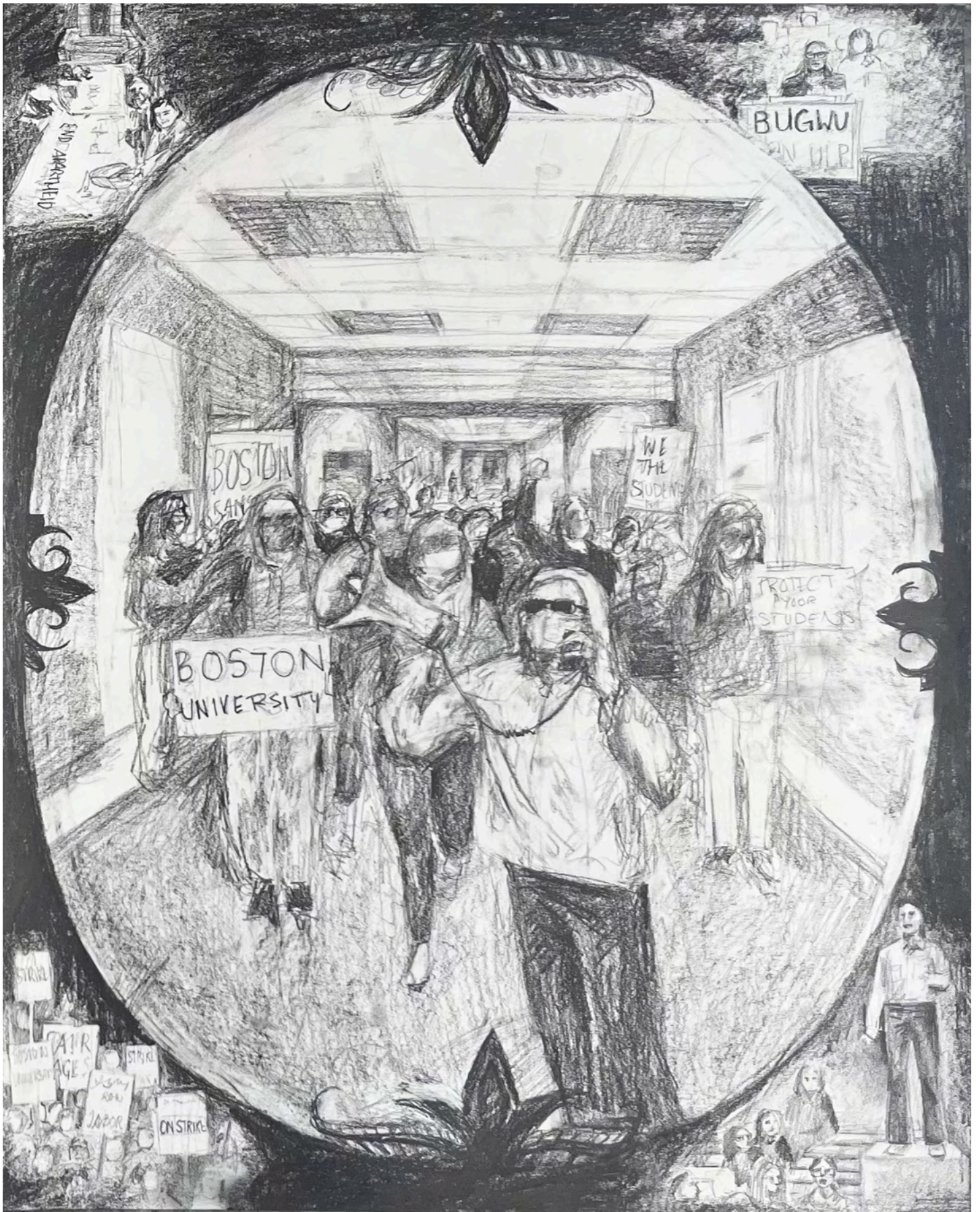


SOCIETY

**“I am the mate and
companion of people,
all just as immortal and
fathomless as myself..”**

**“..I am large, I contain
multitudes”
- Walt Whitman**





The Fatality in Rejection

By Sharleen Kaur Sandhu

Among the multitude of societal complications in the contemporary world, gender inequality repeatedly strikes communities and degrades social harmony. Judith Butler, Michel Foucault, and Mary Douglas brilliantly provide distinguished approaches which deconstruct these learned inherent biases. All three authors cover different topics in their respective texts, yet remarkably enhance each other's content to answer: To what extent does the fear of social marginalisation keep individuals trapped in the conventional and harmful behaviour which perpetuates gender inequality? This question considers Butler's extensive breakdown of gender roles, Douglas's understanding of the schema, and Foucault's idea of authority over one's autonomy. Ultimately, the conversation among these works will show the power dynamic that exists among gender in society and its prevalent nature to restrict freedom.

To begin with, Butler introduces the argument that "culture becomes destiny" (Butler 11). In one's lifetime, instead of developing an autonomously chosen self, one is shaped into a certain identity. For example, from childhood, many communities impose dolls on girls and toy cars on boys. When they grow up, they believe hobbies adjacent to these are natural and therefore accepted, almost like a prophecy they must fulfil. Fortunately, this does not have to be the case because of Butler's recognition of the "construction" of these roles. However, Douglas's portrayal of the schema explains why societies are compelled to pertain to organised behaviour. She describes the natural human tendency to sort endosomatic stimuli into patterns (Douglas 45-46). Thus, communities create certain labels and categories that are acceptable, distinguishing them from ambiguous and unacceptable ones. These are later assimilated into the individual's values and understanding of what can and cannot be "normal" traits. Douglas and Butler's concepts coincide by showing that culture regulates behaviour. The anomaly, which threatens the order of society by existing at its margins, is promptly confronted to minimise ambiguity which makes people uncomfortable (Douglas 48). This is understood through the "matter out of place" notion; societies reject elements which do not conform to the conventionally accepted patterns (Douglas 44). Synthesising Douglas and Butler, cultures have progressed to organise themselves in certain acceptable and non-acceptable behaviours, and to maintain order, one must developmentally shape themselves accordingly to please the majority before being removed.

Foucault addresses this propensity to congregate into acceptable groups where each individual validates each other. With the leprosy and plague comparison, societies developed a politically sanctioned method to exclude certain groups. In the case of the leper, people began

the practice of the “great Confinement”, as the philosopher defines it. The plague-victims furthered these exclusion efforts by isolating the individual to the point of micro-assessing their existence (Foucault 198). This technique to order society aligns with Douglas’ analysis of the schema because it reveals the need to categorise each other and mutually validate the tendency to create an outer group. Foucault continues, “...individualise the excluded, but use procedures of individualisation to mark exclusion... Generally speaking, all the authorities exercising individual control function according to a double mode” (199). This contextualises the role of power in creating rigid gender structures because those who struggle to fit in are excluded from acceptance.

One effect of this “double mode” is the formulation of the “normal” category against the “abnormal”, which is what society has developed in terms of gender roles. Considering that women and men are assigned their behaviours, stepping out of these boundaries invokes an uncomfortable feeling due to this ingrained psychological conformity to categories that Douglas proposes. For example, behaviour in heterosexual relationships: the man is expected to perform the duty of paying for dinner, buying flowers, and a multitude of other tasks to prove his masculinity and dominant personality. Conversely, the woman is expected to clean, wait to be picked up, and perform various other attitudes which display her feminine submissiveness. Relating back to Douglas, the issue arises when the woman completes the man’s tasks—she is frowned upon for buying him dinner, picking him up, or buying him flowers. Why should she take initiative? Using Foucault’s theory, she is considered abnormal, and therefore socially shunned into behaving according to her prescribed function. Others will frown upon her, tell her, “You deserve better”, when really, she just wants to exist as a caring individual in an intimate relationship. Society has developed emotionally influential tactics to keep men and women shackled.

There are two aspects here which Butler highlights: the heterosexual matrix and the performativity of gender. The heterosexual matrix is made of three main components: sex, gender, and sexuality. Its importance, in this context, is recognising the negative connotations of believing that one’s sex constitutes gender and sexuality. At its basic form, the matrix functions in the following manner: vagina means female, female means woman, and woman means attracted to men; penis means male, male means man, and man means attracted to women. The contention with homosexuality is revealed when applying Douglas’ understanding of marginalising outer groups; women attracted to anyone other than men disrupt the matrix’s structure, which is yet another manifestation of the psychological schema. It does not fit and therefore must be fixed or avoided to preserve societal patterns. With gender inequality, the matrix is detrimental to the self when one’s sexuality is assumed and those around them behave in a certain manner to appeal to this assumption.

In addition to the matrix’s effects, Butler discusses the incapacitating need to perform gender. Inspired by Foucault, she explains the intrusion of heteronormative activity into the soul, imposing its power past the body’s physicality (Butler 184). Induced by anxiety, they argue, “As a set of sanctions and taboos, the ego ideal regulates and determines masculine and feminine identification” (Butler 85). In understanding how authority exerts power onto the

body, Foucault explains the strategy of power structures fixating onto one's physical form and utilising its biological functions to maintain a projected order for civilisation. The body's relevance derives from its productivity and ability to be subjected (Foucault 25-26). This explains the patriarchal tendency to convince the public that the woman is only important and may only contribute through her ability to give birth. Patriarchs believe her value comes from her reproductive system. Therefore, using the heterosexual matrix and gender performativity, Butler effectively exposes the illusion that sex constitutes gender and its subsequent attitudes towards sexuality. Instead, sex has been manipulated into a tool of designing productive and dangerously restrictive political socioeconomic systems.

Douglas' explanation for social pollution provides an insight into this aversion to welcoming all modes of coexistence as a harmonious species. In other words, it explains the self-imposed restrictions which cause one to subject themselves to remain within the boundaries of social normative activity. She explains that bodily boundaries become social boundaries, so the body and its actions reflect the extent to which one can assimilate into an intricately socially constructed society. As aforementioned, societies order themselves according to inner and outer groups based on acceptable, ambiguous, and abnormal schema. More importantly, they work to purge themselves from abnormalities. Consequently, existing in these margins leaves one vulnerable to social exclusion, which is detrimental to their self-preservation (Douglas 150-151). Conclusively, one wants to avoid presenting behaviour which is classified as social pollution. The function of the schema aligns with Butler's understanding of gender performativity, where they affirm the compulsion to exclude those who do not fall under the accepted categories. The telos of performing gender is cultural survival, and it reinforces itself through repetition of action (Butler 190-191). In modern Western civilisation, an example of this can look like women waxing or shaving to remove bodily hair to seem more clean or pure. If a woman chooses not to, she is treated differently for not maintaining the standard by performing the necessary actions. Thus, the collective develops social initiatives to regulate the self by practicing performances of gender for survival.

Foucault's daunting reality of the Panopticon lays the foundation for explaining the detrimental collectivism involved in developing strict surveillance over each other. This internalised behaviour creates and promotes society's distance from freedom as we express power over each other. Foucault extensively outlines the human tendency to discipline each other, in his words, "to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power" (Foucault 201). Proponents of the Enlightenment have fooled the population to require "discipline" to strive for equality through liberation of the mind. Instead, it is a tool of subjugation which has been so deeply integrated into the function of civilization that it is now nearly impossible to escape. Power shapes the being into innately carrying out orders to conform (Foucault 154). Applying this to gender inequality, individuals inherently ascribe standards to each other, surveying whether the person right next to them and those easily observed over social media are conforming to the accepted criteria. This judgement that results from our rejection of nonconforming exhibitions of gender roles tends to destroy relationships and create

division among communities who would otherwise uplift each other. We rely on the comfort of easily categorising each other into conventional patterns rather than breaking the degrading practices which train us towards corrupted regulated paths. Therefore, the concepts of social pollution and panoptic practices install fear in individuals which manifest as surveillance within the self and amongst each other.

In understanding the attitude towards gender inequality, societies have gradually developed microphysical power techniques to attain, maintain, and exert domination over each other. With the works of Douglas, Butler, and Foucault, this development is quite apparent. Beginning with Douglas, culture regulates behaviour. Authority figures then sanction and institutionalise this exclusion by creating binary structures which dictate one's acceptance. Next, individuals become increasingly uncomfortable by the prospect of stepping out of these categories, fearing the margins of the schema. The heterosexual matrix reinforces these behaviours, reinforcing Douglas' original idea of culture becoming destiny. The body, viewed as a productive machine which must be subjected, develops gender performative activities that are assigned differently amongst men and women. Lastly, the Panopticon serves its purpose by effectively facilitating control over each other's actions through the mask of discipline. Synthesising each thinker's unique philosophy and juxtaposing elements of their revolutionary ideals reveals humanity's distance from liberation. Everybody becomes morbidly afraid to break free from the pattern. Social rejection leads to a loss of the self, requiring subjugation to the system to survive.

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Interview with Blue

Co-founder of Overly Sarcastic Productions

**Conducted by Caroline,
Eli, & Professor Stevens**

CAROLINE: For people who don't know who you are, could you tell us a little bit about yourself and your history with Core?

BLUE: I am Blue, a former Core student. I started Core in the fall of 2014, which is impossibly far away for you both, I'm sure. But I had so much fun with the program, so I swiftly changed my major from Economics to Classics and Philosophy. I later became a Core peer tutor, and I did the inaugural run of the Core minor. I then transitioned my hobby of making YouTube videos about history into what is now my full-time job at Overly Sarcastic Productions (OSP).

ELI: How do you think Core has affected you after graduation? Do you think it's affected your perspective in daily life?

BLUE: Indelibly, yeah. One of the things that I feel most strongly about the way that I do my job, talking about history online, is that I really did not come from the history department pipeline. I came from a much more Core and Classics worldview; I was forged in culture and human civilization being a very wide and all-encompassing thing that reaches from strict events that happened in capital "H" history through literature, philosophy, art, and architecture. It's in science as well. When I did some research on ancient Greek Ionia, I discovered that the entire concept of Greek science is intrinsically

linked to their literature, philosophy, and history. It is all connected. So I tend to take a very Core-derived approach of looking at everything as a system. All different art forms are part of the same tapestry of civilization. It is very much a guiding force in how I do my videos.

CAROLINE: Coming from economics to engaging more with classics and philosophy, was there a particular moment or lecture where you knew, "Oh, this is what I want to do"?

BLUE: I went into economics because I had an economics class in my high school that I had a lot of fun with. I was getting a lot of the sense of economics as a system. As humans interacting. But then I came to a university setting, which was very "we're doing economic math." I had this moment where I was working with a friend in the cafeteria, and I was like, "I've got this economics homework that's just a pain in the butt. This math is stupid. It doesn't make sense. This is invented nonsense. It does not describe any real economic scenario. I was doing more interesting stuff in high school. And I'm writing this essay on Virgil and the Aeneid, and it's really, really cool." And after about 10 minutes, she looked at me and said, "You need to change something. Clearly you care more about this other thing than your major."

ELI: Is there a text that you often return to for advice, even if it's not necessarily your favorite?

BLUE: I think I do, unfortunately, have to bring it all the way back to the very beginning, being Homer, because there's so much of the Greek identity in history throughout the entire 3,500 years that is in so many ways just touching on that text and extrapolating [from it]. So I, as a historian that is largely, though not entirely, focused on Greece, also Rome and Italy and the Byzantines, have a very wide array of interests in the Mediterranean. It often comes back to Homer because Dante goes back to Homer, and Virgil goes back to Homer. It is the start of, in the nebulous thing called the West, all of it. So I never escape it for long. If I try to do something else, it usually comes back one way or another.

ELI: If you were going to add one text to the program, what would it be?

BLUE: I thought about this a lot, actually, because like any good Core student, I was chatting with my other friends in Core in the Starbucks across the street every Friday morning about, "How would we fix the world? How would we redo the Core program?"

I would love to add *The Consolation of Philosophy* by Boethius, [which] is basically the last Roman work of philosophy and the first medieval one. Anicius Boethius was very interested in translating all this ancient wisdom from Greek into Latin because he could tell, "Oh, the Mediterranean world is not as gleefully bilingual as it used to be." And this guy who's working on this big translation project was wrongfully imprisoned

on charges of conspiracy against the king and thrown in jail and basically given a year until he was eventually executed. And he wrote a book that starts with the premise of "I'm in jail; this sucks." And in this self-insert writing scene, the spirit of Lady Philosophy shows up and says, "You're in a rut; you're having a bad time. I'm going to drag you back to having sense and not being a crying wreck. But we're going to go through this and work through all of this logic." It's a balance of prose and poetry, and it's such a beautiful work because it is one person in jail trying to just make himself not go mad, and he comes to conclusions that clearly demonstrate, "Oh, he has accepted what has happened; he's justified that it's not about good or bad things happening to you, it's about virtue being its own reward, and that brings you closer to God." At the same time, it is a very historical text because it is this transition window of "the old Roman world is clearly gone, but the new medieval world has not yet taken shape," and it's such a transformative moment in literature in history.

CAROLINE: Speaking of transitions, how did you feel about the transition from being in college to becoming a YouTuber? Is there anything you wish you could say to yourself then?

BLUE: I had it really nice because I could see it coming ahead of me. I don't think I really could have done anything differently because we got incredibly lucky in many ways. But I think I would tell myself then what I would still tell myself now: do the best at the project, at the work, at the art that you can. And either it will work and everything will go great, or you will have had fun and learned something,

and then you can try another thing next. I still in many ways maintain the college attitude of: “I’m trying to be scrappy and work on this as best I can, knowing that everything around me is potentially very fragile.”

ELI: Do you have a favorite project you’ve gotten to work on?

BLUE: On the channel, my “Complete History of Rome” is the total of my best history work. I started, nebulously, a series of sequential videos on Roman history. After I’d gotten enough work [under] my belt, I was like, “I think I can do a front-to-back, over the course of a dozen videos, the complete history from the Roman Republic, the Punic Wars, Julius Caesar, and Augustus.” When I got to the end of the Byzantines, I realized I could start to assemble these into something bigger. I was eventually able to thread together this huge, three-hour grand narrative. It is so rare in the world of art and creation that your best work is your most popular work; usually it is painfully inverted, and I count myself extremely lucky that the Rome video is the best and most popular thing that I’ve ever made.

Outside of that, I’ve had a lot of fun working on a side project that began as a Core minor project that turned into the *Veneziad*, an epic poem that I’ve been working on, which someday soon will actually be printed. It’s very rewarding in a different way, and I can’t quite quantify it yet because no one else on the planet has read it. There’s a very bad first draft somewhere in this office of my Core Honors project. It was me and another student working with Professor Hamill to do an artistic project, and my friend was like, “Why don’t you try to rewrite the *Aeneid*? You’re a try-hard; go for it.” And I didn’t

think, “Oh, haha, good joke.” I’m like, “Oh no, you’re correct.” The *Veneziad* is a story from medieval Venice set in the moments right before the Renaissance, when it was one of three times they’d ever been directly besieged. Their arch trading rival, Genoa, beat them up in one battle, destroyed their navy, and then blocked them in their own lagoon. It’s a fun little moment in history that I was able to turn into an *Aeneid*-esque journey narrative and a bit of a travelogue history of Venice as they sail back from this distant corner of the Mediterranean, going past all these famous locations from Venetian history. I got to combine history and literature in a very fun, very Core-esque way.

CAROLINE: Seeing as you’ve been making content for over 14 years, how do you feel that OSP and you have evolved over that time?

BLUE: It’s been a very delicate process in many ways because my channel partner Red and I have been, basically at every stage, surprised that it’s going this well. Conventional wisdom about careers on the Internet is that if you’re good, you get five years out of it before you’re completely irrelevant and you can’t. So in many ways, it’s been a quest to maintain, above all else, consistency. Red and I maintain very strongly that we’re doing this because it’s fun, and we will, at every point, prioritize keeping it that way. Even if it means we make less money, even if it means we’re less popular, even if it means we’re not chasing the algorithm. And being able to take that constant joy in the work for the sake of the work is, I think in many ways, what has allowed us to continue doing this for as long as we have. As much as we are a business, we’ve maintained that. So, if anything, it’s been the lack of change, but

just crystallizing into something a little more resilient based on that initial premise and that initial attitude that we started with.

ELI: Is it weird seeing your videos become a staple for high schoolers and college students?

BLUE: It's so weird because in many ways we don't see it. I'm watching statistics, and I'm looking at comments and trying to extrapolate what that might mean about how people interact with our work. And that's one of the ways in which being a creator on the internet is a very isolating thing because you really have to guess and intuit how and if anyone actually cares. There are so many people who live and die by this stuff that will just simply never leave a comment because they're not the type of person to leave internet comments. Or I know they leave a comment, but that is one movement of how they reacted to this one video; it does not express the entire tapestry of joy and engagement and learning they've gotten out of my work.

It is strange to see people progressively [learning] these things. In ancient Athens, I'd be accused of corrupting the youth; I would get Socrates-ed so fast. I've heard, "Oh, I've made this friend because of OSP," and that's crazy. I don't know what that looks like. I'm very much stuck in my own little solipsistic bubble. It's cool to hear about, and it's part of why I enjoy doing things like this so much, because interacting with two people here in front of me who like this stuff is more than I get almost the entire rest of the year.

CAROLINE: In recent years, we know AI is becoming more and more mainstream. What are your thoughts on it specifically? And how do you feel it's impacted the way people engage with history and the humanities?

BLUE: You could tie me to a chair and force-feed me glass while you kicked me in the sternum before I used AI for anything. My videos and Red's videos have been plagiarized for the AI training databases. They took some of my old, not-good videos, too, which is like, jokes on you, idiot. Why are we destroying the planet for this? One of the other problems with AI is that even if it does regurgitate plagiarized information accurately, it is a complete black box about how it works. Is it pulling from a PDF page, a JSTOR article, or a book? How is it synthesizing that? You have no idea.

One of the things that I love about Herodotus and Thucydides is that both of them take time to explain their process. Herodotus says, "Listen, I'm going to tell you some bullshit, but I am simply relaying everything that I have heard on my travels throughout Greece, Persia, Egypt, and the world. If I tell you a story about ants in Central Asia that dig up gold, listen; it's what someone told me." Thucydides says, "I'm going to make shit up in this book." At every point he's laying out this process and clueing you in immediately. He's doing historiography. And an AI doesn't do that.

If you are watching my stuff, you can see: "Oh, that's Blue. Here's what I know about him from this other stuff, and I can triangulate what he's given me a sense of this timeline but also recognize the things that I know he's leaving out." Even when an AI is saying something true, the fact that it is a black box means it is bad.

CAROLINE: That's interesting. On the flip side, there is AI art. I remember during one of our lectures this year, the lecturer couldn't

find a good image, so he AI-generated one to show it to us. As a huge part of OSP are Red's illustrations, I was wondering, do you think art is integral to learning? And do you think that AI art has a place in that?

BLUE: I'm trying not to throw up in my mouth. No amount of flashiness is really worth something that is fake. Art is a process, and it is important in similar ways that learning is important. Scholarship and art take different final forms, but they are doing a lot of the same things. Good science, I think, has an artistic quality about it; they are in similar lanes. Even the crappiest JPEG can be expressive in a PowerPoint if it was chosen with love and chosen for a reason. In any digital pursuit, there's a baseline of, "Does the software do what I need it to do?" Anything above that is just icing, and it's functionally interchangeable. My videos have remained very low tech for a pretty long time. I use little dumb maps that I made myself; I use little images of a little JPEG of New Rome that says "SPQR"; I use a little Athens with an owl, and that is part of my artistic style. That, however flashy or crappy it looks, is unique to me and conveys things about history that are specific to my style. Herodotus: "I'm going to get shit wrong, but I'm showing my hand."

CAROLINE: Nowadays a lot of people devalue the humanities, which might be why there's a tendency to go, "Oh, I don't understand this reading... Let me use AI." How would you respond to people who say there's no value to learning about what we learn in Core in the modern day?

BLUE: You're setting yourself up to be a zombie. Not everyone needs to go through a comprehensive humanities education to be a fully formed adult with thoughts and

feelings and valuable personal experiences. But, the humanities show you how to think, and they show you so much of the human experience that it creates a reinforcement. I see a beautiful painting, and I want to go write something; I want to go create something. It's a feedback loop. And good science has an element of art to it. The war on the humanities the last 20 years started from the very well-meaning prioritization of STEM/STEAM. It has done a lot of good things, but you see the problem when all of the architects of AI are the most soulless automaton people. Now that we've read all the billionaires' emails lately, these people are monsters. They stop seeing other people as humans and start seeing everyone as a resource. [The billionaires] use the misunderstanding of what history actually was as a tool to manipulate people to want to go back to a time when it was simpler, when everything worked. "America was great in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s." What was great about it, boss? [It's] a misreading of the beautiful human tapestry that has actually contributed to the world being a place that is worth living in. When you see how the worst people in society behave and what they value, you notice these common blind spots. The humanities are not a cure-all for that, but they are part of the process of becoming a more rounded, more actualized person. And there's some value in that that goes beyond just pretty pictures making the brain go "burr."

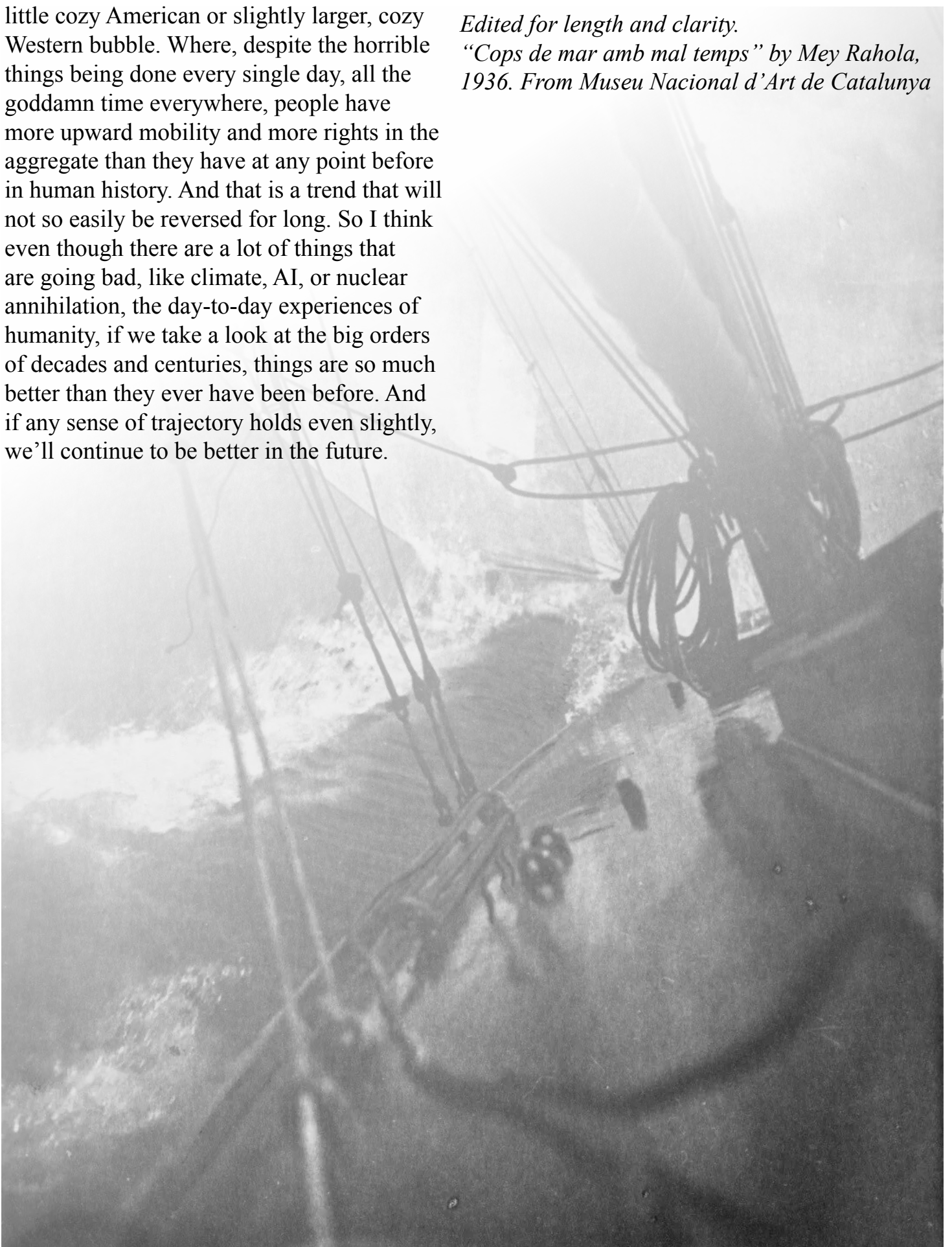
PROF STEVENS: Much of this conversation has focused on the past and problems in the world. Let's end on a positive note. What are you looking forward to?

BLUE: Despite the fact that we are currently experiencing a bit of a backslide in many things, there is a sense of tangible rights and progress in the world, not just in our

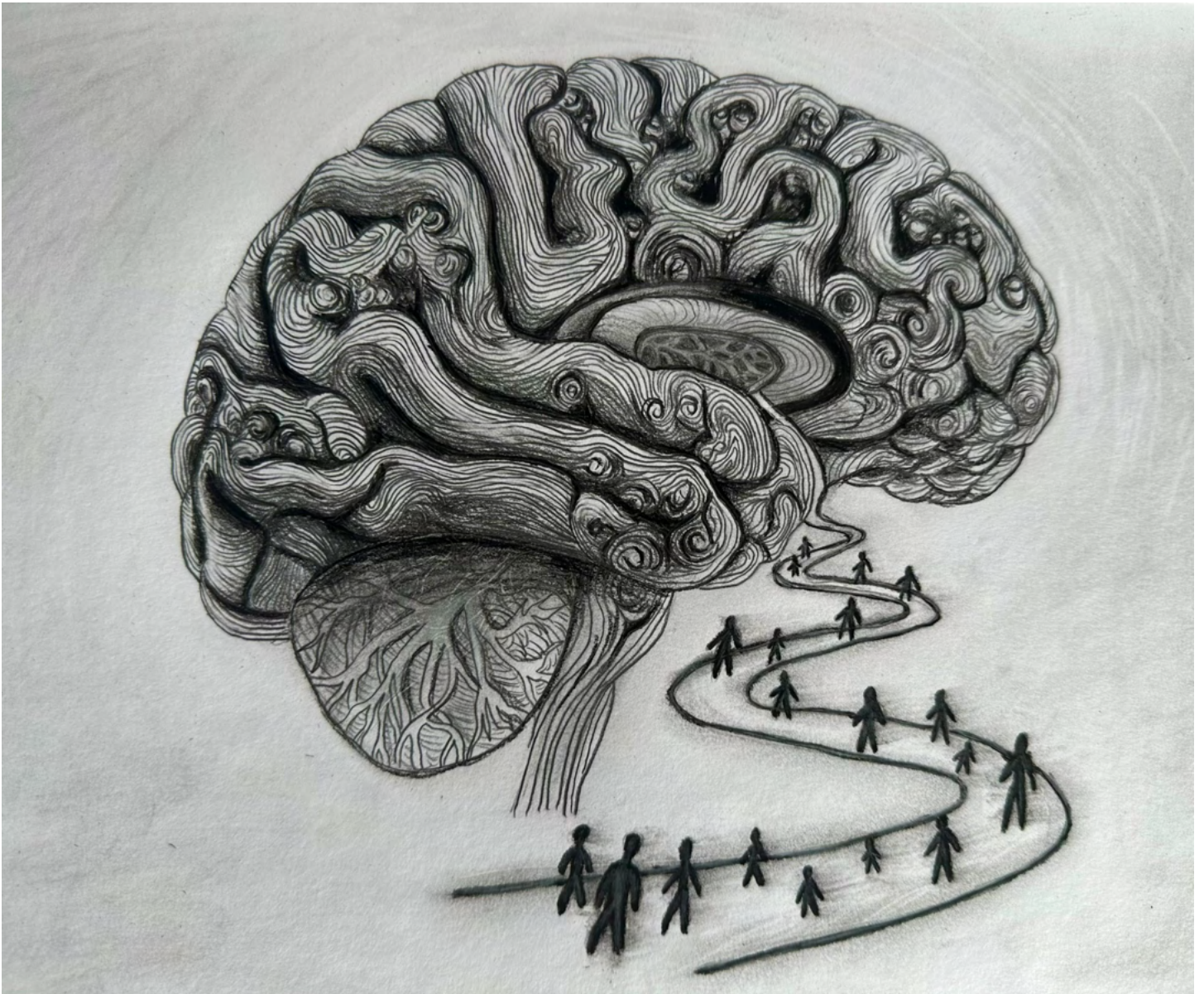
little cozy American or slightly larger, cozy Western bubble. Where, despite the horrible things being done every single day, all the goddamn time everywhere, people have more upward mobility and more rights in the aggregate than they have at any point before in human history. And that is a trend that will not so easily be reversed for long. So I think even though there are a lot of things that are going bad, like climate, AI, or nuclear annihilation, the day-to-day experiences of humanity, if we take a look at the big orders of decades and centuries, things are so much better than they ever have been before. And if any sense of trajectory holds even slightly, we'll continue to be better in the future.

Edited for length and clarity.

"Cops de mar amb mal temps" by Mey Rahola, 1936. From Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya



Untitled Drawing



By Simran Anand

The Physicality of Language in the Gospels and *Inferno*

By Lara Hartle

Throughout many works of religious literature, there are ways in which a distinction between the holy and the unholy is created. One such way is through language and speech. As demonstrated throughout the Gospel of Matthew, the Gospel of John, and Dante's *Inferno*, the language of the holy and the unholy varies greatly. Essentially, the language of the holy is one of coherence and reason, and it has the power and ability to heal people. Furthermore, language becomes physically represented by Jesus, as he becomes the "Word". In contrast, the language of the unholy is represented by Satan, one who cannot speak, has no reason, and is described with violent and animalistic terms. In this paper, I will argue that because Jesus becomes the physical representation of language, reason, and speech, and this is what is considered holy, then the language of the unholy has to be something completely opposite, represented through animalistic descriptions of the mouth, descriptions of noise, and the lack of speaking within places, such as hell.

To begin, it is important to establish the dichotomy between what is holy and unholy in regards to language, speech, and reason, and who occupies each part. The Gospel of John establishes immediately that "in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God" (RSV John 1:1), and then continues with "and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). In this case, "Word" refers not only to a part of the construction of speech, but also can be translated as *logos* which is the Greek word for reason, and "flesh" refers to Jesus arriving on earth. Therefore, Jesus becomes the embodiment of *logos*, and language becomes a physical entity. In direct contrast, if Jesus is the essence of language, then those who have sinned occupy the unholy nature of speech. The Gospel of Matthew describes how "the Son of man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, and throw them into the furnace of fire; there men will weep and gnash their teeth" (Matthew 13:41-42). In the case of the sinners, language and reason become replaced with an animalistic quality and violent imagery of the mouth. The phrase "gnash their teeth" appears twice more in Matthew when referring to those who have

sinned or have been cast out from the 'holy' group. Furthermore, in *Inferno*, this exact phrase is used when describing the occupants of Hell. Dante says, "But all those spirits, naked and exhausted, had lost their color, and they gnashed their teeth" (3.100-101), which identifies the disintegration of language. The guardian Minos stands at the gate "gnashing his teeth" (5.4) and makes judgements without speaking. Finally Lucifer, at the bottom of Hell, is described as using his three mouths "like a grinder—with gnashing teeth he tore to bits a sinner, so that brought much pain to three at once" (34.55). Therefore, language and reason are reserved for those who are 'holy', such as Jesus, God, or those who are followers and likely to reach heaven. For the unholy, or the sinners, language and reason disintegrate, and are replaced with a violent animalistic quality.

Jesus as the embodiment of language is apparent in the Gospels of Matthew and John, as they establish the difference of the power of language in Jesus compared to those who are not followers of him. Jesus is able to heal with his words, such as in the instance where "Jesus said to him, 'Rise, take up your pallet, and walk.' And at once the man was healed, and he took up his pallet and walked" (John 5:8-9). Simply by speaking, Jesus is able to heal someone. In addition, he uses certain phrases to begin his speech throughout the Gospels. In Matthew it is "truly I say to you" and in John it is "truly, truly, I say to you". This is how he often prefaces his statements, messages or teachings. Not only must one trust the word, but this constant repetition and recognition demonstrates that what he "says" is important, as that is the power he has. Finally, in Matthew, Jesus says, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away" (Matthew 24:35). He indicates that his words are eternal, the thing that will always exist. The eternal nature of what he says implies something that is holy, which demonstrates the heavenly aspect of his speech.

The Gospel of Matthew also provides instances that demonstrate the difference in the lack of power of language in those who are not Jesus or his followers, as they cannot embody that trait. This is first demonstrated in the warning: "And in praying do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard for their many words" (Matthew 6:7). This statement demonstrates the lack of power in the language of "Gentiles" as their "empty" phrases cannot be "heard". While Jesus can do things with language and speech, the "Gentiles" cannot. This is further exemplified when Jesus is sent to the Gentiles to be "mocked and scourged and crucified" (Matthew 20:19). The only ability they have in their speech is negative and insulting, as opposed to being able to heal. The inclusion of "crucified" with the descriptions of negative speech shows something unholy in their intent. Finally, there is a clear indication of the lack of language and reason in the exclamation of "You brood of vipers! How can you speak good when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks" (Matthew 12:34). If one is evil, one cannot speak; furthermore, those who cannot speak are compared to "vipers", conjuring up the imagery of a snake or serpent, which is what Satan appears as in Genesis, indicating the lack of language and reason. Within the Gospels, it is established that the language of Jesus, who is the embodiment of logos and reason, has the power to heal and to remain eternal, whereas the language of the unholy mocks, scourges, and is only evil.

Dante's *Inferno* demonstrates what happens to the language and speech of those who are in Hell. As Dante descends further into Hell, there is an apparent disintegration of language

that gets more incoherent. When Dante first enters, he describes the sounds of the souls in Hell, in which “sighs and lamentations and loud cries were echoing across the starless air... strange utterances, horrible pronouncements, accents of anger, words of suffering, and voices shrill and faint, and beating hands–” (3.25-27). In these initial observations, language and reason have no place in Hell. There are no “words”, just exclamations and sounds of the utmost despair that are incredibly dissonant and full of discord. He later describes that the outcries make the air tremble and that only “notes of desperation have begun to overtake my hearing” (5.25-26). The disintegration of language continues as he descends, and it turns animalistic. He describes how the “sinners howl like dogs” (6.19) and that “their voices bark” (7.43). Farther down, the souls do not even produce any noise, as Dante describes “I saw souls advancing, mute and weeping” (20.7-8). He later identifies a sound coming from a ditch out beyond, a voice that Dante describes as “not suited to form words” (24.66). In these instances, where those occupants of hell go from “sighs and lamentation” to howling and barking voices, to muteness, to an inability to even conceive of an actual word, there is a clear idea established that the unholy are not granted the ability of language, speech or reason.

These ideas of language, speech, and reason are displayed in the exact opposite form of Jesus when Dante reaches the lowest circle of Hell and encounters Satan. Satan, who is described as having three heads, is unable to speak at all, rather his mouth is only able to tear apart sinners. His wings are described in Italian as “non avean penne”, which translates to “they had no feathers” (34.49). While this is a way of simply describing his appearance, it also can represent his lack of language and reason. A feather, which was used at the time to write, is not present on Lucifer’s wings. Jesus, who, according to John, is the “Word” and uses the power of his speech to teach and to heal, is directly contrasted with Lucifer who has no language, no reason, and just “gnashes” his teeth and tears sinners apart.

There is a clear difference in the way speech and language function between the holy and unholy. Based on the Gospels and *Inferno*, language and reason are associated with the holy, as Jesus is described as the “Word” which refers to the structure of language and reason. The opposite is reserved for the unholy, as is demonstrated in the descriptions of the disintegration of language as one descends further into hell, encapsulated in the unreasonable and incoherent nature of Lucifer.

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The Holy Bible. Revised Standard Version, Penguin Publishing, 1974.

Bad Bunny, Super Bowl

Puerto Rico Pride



By Eva Mangal

Upside-Down American Flag

Taken in Iran



By Archer Liang

Iran So Farr Away

By Archer Liang



It all started with a bottle of wine. Omar Khayyam wrote that wine is wisdom made liquid, and one night on a staircase, with a now stranger and two finished bottles between us, I decided I would go to Iran. There was no plan, no intention, just the impulse to go. The series that followed was born not from preparation, but from surrender.

At the airport, I watched families collapse into each other's arms, the air thick with anticipation and relief. The country I had known only through headlines unfolded instead in gestures: a smokehouse where cigarettes were rolled fresh by hand; an uncle who insisted—twice—that he would buy my dinner: lamb head soup shared over espresso; gardens that felt strangely familiar from the pages of art history; miniature paintings retelling Layla and Majnun with aching devotion.

“Iran So Farr Away” plays on distance and on farr, a Persian word connoting divine radiance or chosen courage. The photographs do not seek to explain Iran. They sit in the awe of it: in hospitality that disarms, in myth that lingers, in the quiet oddness of daily life. What began as an unplanned trip became a meditation on closeness, on how quickly a place considered far away can feel intimate.

Watching the current events unfold from afar has made me more aware of the distance between observation and lived reality; the limits of representation. I can't say anything about it. This project does not attempt to explain Iran, nor does it claim to reflect the current situation. It holds no authority over what is happening now. The thing I saw is the thing I saw (is the thing I saw is the thing I saw). I can only hope the best for the friends in Iran to be safe. I should only hope for peace because I don't live in that reality.



Florence

By Archer Liang



Florence arrived in flashes. Bodies leaning close to hear each other over music, hands brushing in crowded piazzas, conversations unfolding with a kind of temporary intimacy that only travel allows. The city felt suspended between centuries, and we moved through it as students, tourists, philosophers, and night-walkers all at once. I was struck not only by beauty but by the odd details of the street—a dude smoking pipe in a club, another dude on a kid size bike, and another dude fixing his collar with rings flashing like stars under the sun. Small, strange moments that made the city feel alive rather than monumental.

This series documents the dual pulse of the Core trip: the intensity of learning by day and the immediacy of youth by night. We studied frescoes and political theory; we debated beauty and virtue; we dressed up, went out, and danced “you are not drinking enough,” beneath statues older than our countries. Fashion became a language, nightlife a form of inquiry, friendship a temporary republic.

“Florence:” is less about the city as monument and more about the city as catalyst. The images hold the friction between discipline and desire, between intellectual inheritance and lived experience. In Florence, philosophy does not stay in the classroom, it follows us into the streets.



My Own Private Idaho

By Archer Liang

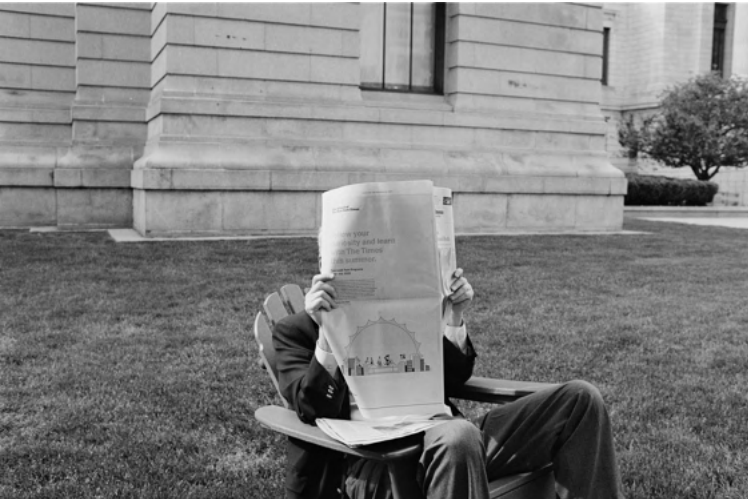


None of these photographs were taken in Idaho. They were all made in Boston.

The title borrows from a movie that feels distant and interior. Boston becomes that landscape for me: a city I have walked for years yet still struggle to assemble into a coherent memory. Streets repeat; light returns to the same brick walls; strangers pass like fragments of a dream I almost recognize.

“My Own Private Idaho” explores territory not as geography but as state of mind. The images linger in thresholds—between waking and dreaming, belonging and detachment, youth and something that comes after. Beauty appears unexpectedly: in a reflection on wet pavement, in a solitary figure framed by winter light, in a quiet corner that feels briefly infinite.

This project asks what it means to inhabit a place while it is still becoming memory. If Iran was a spontaneous departure and Florence a shared translation, Boston is the ongoing question: What am I doing here? And how does a life slowly gather meaning through light, repetition, and the fragile architecture of dreams?



Jerash Castle, Jerash, Jordan



By Jaala'Nnette Crenshaw

**“My guide and I came on that hidden road to
make our way back into the bright world; And
with no care for any rest, we climbed-He first,
I following-until I saw, through a round open-
ing, some of those things of beauty Heaven
bears. It was from there that we emerged, to
see-once more-the stars.”**

- Dante's *Inferno*



TRANSITIONS

An Interview with Professor Ricks

By Hannah Bryson

Hannah: Can you start by broadly telling me about yourself?

Professor Ricks: I'm in this country, and at BU, because Judith, my wife, didn't wish to live forever in England.

So, why, Boston? Well, I didn't want to live in New York with three very young children. Judith didn't want to live in California. It's back when I'm 52, it seems to be a sensible time to move, if you're going to change country, because you've got a span that's big enough for it.

And BU, because John Silber – a controversial president of the university, who I not only admired, but liked very much – made a move that I not go to Brandeis.

So that's why I'm at this place, and I've enjoyed teaching here more than anywhere, including Oxford and Cambridge.

Hannah: Really?

Ricks: Yes, because the teaching at Oxford and Cambridge, that is best, is tutorial teaching – one to one, or one to two. That is a wonderful way of teaching and learning, but after 10 years, it's extremely difficult to maintain interest in the same way as if you were giving seminars and classes.

So, that's a good reason for enjoying BU; if I get bored by what I'm honorably obliged to talk about, I can change what I talk about. Whereas the tutorial system, you went very valuably week by week, from Dryden to Pope, from Pope to Swift, from Swift to Johnson, and so on.

Hannah: When did you discover that you were interested in literature?

Ricks: I was very lucky with the people who taught me. I was at an English grammar school in Wantage, Berkshire. I was there from eight to eighteen.

The war was on, so it was a good idea to get out of London. I remember the Blitz. I remember being woken by my mother during the war, going over with my brother, and sitting in the garden – sitting in the garden under the corrugated island – and playing a card game called Abyssinian Whist. How old am I? I'm six, six and a half.

The move, then, was to school... old-style grammar school. I had very good school teachers. I remember very well the names of the two English masters. They were completely different in their convictions about literature, but they liked and respected one another very much. So it was very good to be taught by two people – whom I liked and respected and was very lucky ever to meet – who didn't agree.

When I arrived at Oxford, I had somebody whose very simple wish was to give people a resource, for the rest of their lives, of things worth enjoying and learning from.

Hannah: What was the most pivotal moment in your education?

Ricks: I think it was probably this: There was a suggestion that I should move from Wantage to a very good public school at the time – public in the sense of expensively private. I failed to win a scholarship; it was very good that I failed to do that.

And there's a similar moment when I failed to get a job from Oxford in Edinburgh. I published a book on Milton; I had reason to think I would be a candidate for moving out of Oxford, where I was a fellow of a college, to Edinburgh, where I would have been a professor. I didn't succeed in getting that. At the time, that was a disappointment, but actually, it was a piece of luck. Because a few years later, I went from there to Bristol, which was in many respects a better place to go to than Edinburgh – not a better city, but a better English department.

So the pivotal moments and so on have been ones where one failed to get something.

Hannah: Is there something that you've read that has especially influenced or impacted you?

Ricks: There's a person.

The people who are central to me change, though none of them ever disappear. We've all got writers or artists whom we used to admire, it's a perfectly reasonable process. But it's a wonderful thing when you have a writer with whom nobody ever becomes unillusioned.

When I was young, it was Dr. Johnson. It was: here was somebody who was a believer, but not a missionary, because I had ceased to be Christian when I was confirmed.

Then later, the person became T.S. Elliot.

Hannah: Tell me a little about your interest in Bob Dylan.

Ricks: Oh, Bob Dylan. When I taught in Berkeley in 1965 – something like that – I did not listen to Dylan. It was all in the air, in the immediate wake of big student protests and tear gas, because of the insistence, combinedly, that there were certain kinds of ways in which the campus mustn't be politicized, but it must let the army campaign on the campus. And the student protests were about this contradiction.

Then when I went to teach at Smith, three years later, things had changed for me, because a friend gave me “Dylan’s Greatest Hits” which came out around that time.

The one little pivotal moment was doing a BBC talk about him, because a BBC talk is a very good medium for intercalating things that you say with things that you hear. It must have come to his attention at some time– and that was a wonderful phone call: “This is Mr. Dylan’s office, he would like to meet you.”.

I was told as a child, if you don’t know what to say, you say, “Have you read any good books lately?” So, meeting Bob Dylan, I said, “Have you read any good books lately?” And he said “Richard III”. Now, he said Richard III partly because I had written about Richard III in relation to one of the songs. So that was rather wonderful.

Hannah: I know you’ve written quite a few works of literary criticism. What has been the most meaningful project that you’ve worked on?

Ricks: I think the books I’ve written have different claims on my admiration of them.

The first book about Milton was a direct argument about something that puzzled me. I found that the best critics thought Milton wrote very, very badly, whereas I thought Milton wrote very, very well. So there’s something to sort out for myself.

The starting point– people often say it’s like grit for an oyster. You get no pearl, unless there’s grit that’s gone under the oysters’ skin or shell. So the grit is something like: how can it be that the two critics I really admire and enjoy reading, tell me to not admire Milton, who I have enjoyed reading and whom I admire? So that book deals with the question that intrigued and puzzled me.

The book about Keats, rather similarly – that’s a book about: how can it be that bits of Keats which are held to be embarrassingly bad, are so memorable?

For me, it was only worth a whole book – or even worth an essay – if there was something I wanted to sort out for myself before sorting it out with somebody else.

I think literature should only really matter to people if they are intrigued by what it is about, irrespective of whether that ever got written.

Hannah: How did you get into the education field?

Ricks: I trusted the university examinations system at Oxford. I trusted it because the people who told you how well or ill you had done were not the people who had taught you.

It was a very good system. It's not in the hands of the gods, it's not like that. But it is in the hands of a dozen people who have no reason to be prejudiced for or against you. So when I was wondering what to do after graduating, I decided that if I got a first class degree, I should do gradual work.

Hannah: And you did two years in the army, too, right?

Ricks: Yes, well, everybody did. National service required you to do two years.

The college that I got into at Oxford, Balliol College, happened to have somebody who had been Field Marshal Montgomery's Chief of Staff in the army. He said, "We will be offering you a scholarship. Let me advise you to go into the army now for two years, not to wait to go into it after.

"If you still, after two years in the army, are interested in the poems of Matthew Arnold, that matters. But if you just get onto the escalator now and simply go on the escalator and then go into the army, it won't have tested your commitment to further education or further, further education."

Hannah: What has been the most rewarding part of your time at BU?

Ricks: I find it very rewarding that there are all three kinds of teachings, sort of equilateral. That is, there's the class for seminar. There's the lecture. There's the individual meeting.

I like giving lectures, and I sometimes give them in the Core. Though the Core, I think, does not sufficiently use non-Core faculty for lectures. For me, though there are often very good lectures from people who teach in the Core, there is a special quality which comes when they don't teach in the Core.

In a meeting with former President Brown, one of his questions was about: "In what way is this, though not perhaps unique, unusual and special as a setup?"

What I found terrifically valuable in the Core was that the lectures on, say, the Sistine Chapel are given by somebody who is a world authority on the Sistine Chapel. The discussion

sections are not by people who claim to be authorities. They're people who claim to have a general human interest in, and appreciation of, the arts, humanities, social sciences, and sciences.

I said, "What is good about the Core is the combination of your being in the hands both of certain kinds of specialists in the subject and a generalist who knows about it." So it is like having a primary care physician and access to a hospital.

President Brown said, "No, no, we have just the same in engineering. A specialist gives the lecture, and then the graduate students conduct seminars." Now, for me, this was very telling. He simply did not understand what I had said. Every one of the graduate students in engineering who conducts a seminar, wishes to be an engineer, and is an engineer, and would like to ascend to being the authority that gives the lecture. So it is really not the same case.

We need to hear about the law from judges and from non-judges. We need, in war, to hear from soldiers and from non-soldiers. Neither party should be trusted to be able to do this on its own. You can be too specialized; you can be too randomly ignorant.

There have been changes for the worse at BU, which are partly the consequence of national and international politics, and partly the belief that STEM is the model for real education. Just find specialists to educate people into being a certain kind of primitive specialist.

But what I like doing is saying: "What was on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel before Michelangelo?" And to not be interested in that, is to not really be interested in Michelangelo. Because he replaces – the ceiling is replaced. And you can't judge a replacement until you say, "What was lost?"

Hannah: What have you found the greatest value of studying literature to be? And specifically what we study in Core?

Ricks: I can't talk for the Core as a whole. I'll express one criticism and move on. The criticism is that the chronological claim is not actively bogus, but is not true.

I think it is not coherent, and it doesn't attempt any coherence of the three points of the triangle. There's no attempt to cohering the social sciences with the sciences and the humanities. They are three separate things.

I said the Core should be organized around chosen topics or areas or terrains, which matter to the sciences, the social sciences and the humanities. You should say, "This semester is on war. This semester is on age. This semester is on disease." You take something which is important in the sciences, the social sciences, and the humanities and arts, and you say, "We'll consider what kind of evidence the scientist brings forward for an understanding of age or aging. And

what do you, as a historian, want to choose as the instance for us to look at?"

I think it should devote each semester to an unignorable reality. Unignorable by science, social science, and the humanities and arts.

Hannah: Are there any texts that you wish you had the opportunity to teach?

Ricks: That flips back to the coverage. That is, I think the Core cannot afford to negate coverage. I think there should be coverage of central considerations. I think we should be able to look a social scientist or anthropologist in the eye, and say, "We have chosen something where we believe it can be central to understand this society and individuality." So the coverage wouldn't be by Renaissance, Enlightenment, and industrial revolutions.

I think the key bits that need to come in are bits without which you can't understand the next bit. We pretend that the Renaissance includes Dr. Johnson. Well, it doesn't. He's not a Renaissance figure. He's not an Enlightenment figure, because enlightenment comes with the sense of a freedom from certain kinds of traditional, no longer strong enough beliefs.

My problem with an immense number of the essays is that the whole argument is "no longer". No longer. And if I say, "When was it ever the case, that— such and such?" There's no answer. No longer do they believe that everything is clear and certain. "When did they believe that?" Skepticism occurs in every age. So there's this sort of bogus historicizing, which, above all, is "no longer".

Hannah: Do you have a favorite subject to cover?

Ricks: Well, I do, in a way— I am an enemy, or an adversary, of critical theory. And that's because I'm a friend of critical principle.

When I came to BU, there had just been a big quarrel in England about critical theory. Lots of people, including me, got quoted in the newspapers. It became national news.

I arrived in BU with a bad reputation as having been opposed to critical theory. And I opposed, within the English department, critical theory courses, where all the prescribed works had been written in a language other than English. It's not that you shouldn't read Derrida, but you better know what it is in French.

Dr. Johnson had no philosophy of literature. He had a series of principles. "The only end of reading is to enable the reader better to enjoy life or better to endure it." Now, he's wrong, because it is possible to change life to some degree. And enduring and enjoying are not the only possibilities. There is a triangle.

Edited for length and clarity.

THE PERFECT STORY

JULIAN SHYU

THERE WAS ONCE A MAN WHOSE DAUGHTER WANTED
NOTHING MORE THAN TO HEAR THE MOST PERFECT STORY
IN THE WORLD.

SO HE AGREED,
AND WENT OFF TO SEARCH.

HE TRAVELED
THROUGH MANY
LANDS, AND MET
MANY PEOPLE BEFORE
COMING TO THE ONE
THEY CALL THE
ULTIMATE
STORYTELLER.



TELL ME, TRAVELER, WHAT BRINGS YOU ALL THE WAY UP HERE?

I am here for
the perfect
story.

THEN,
WHAT HAS BEEN
YOUR JOURNEY?

AND SO, THE MAN RECOUNTED HIS SEARCH,
HE TOLD TALES OF CREATION
IN HIS TRAVELS IN AUSTRALIA

WHERE THE
RAINBOW SERPENT

THE TRICKERY
OF THE RAVEN OF
HAIDA

ROSE DURNG

THE BRAVERY
OF BEOWULF

DREAMTIME.

THE TRAGEDY OF
ORPHEUS OF
ANCIENT GREECE

THE HUMANITY OF
HOU-YI AND THE
TEN SUNS

THE ABSTRACTIONS OF MODERNITY



HE CONTINUED ON WITH THE COUNTLESS ADVICES
HE WAS GIVEN.

How a story can be straightforward



Or Never Ending

STANDING, AND ON THE INSTANTLY SPRUNG OUT. "MORTUNATE THAT YOU SHOULD QUALIFY YOURSELF TO SEE IN A MOMENT FORGOT ME DURING MANY MONTHS, CORDIAL MANNER, AND WE TIME ABOUT OUR MUTUAL INGOLSTADT. "YOU MAY EATHER THAT ALL NECESSAR AND, INDEED, I BELIEVE I UNWEARIED ENTREATIES TAKEFIELD. I HAVE TEN TH BUT HIS REFECTION FOR ME ME OF COURSE TAKEN A V GREAT TO SEE VERY WELL, AND VERY HAPPY BY, I MEAN TO LECTURE YOU CONTINUED HE, STOPPING VERY ILL YOU APPEAR; SO NIGHTS." "YOU HAVE GUESSED THAT I HAVE NOT ALLOWED

THE WORDS TO STRUCTURE.

ALL THESE EMPLOYMENTS EXCESSIVELY; I COULD NOT HE PRECEDING NIGHT. I WOULD REFLECTED, AND THE THIRTEENTH PARTMENT MIGHT STILL BE ARRANGING USUALLY STOPPED. HIS EYES FIXED ON A COACH THAT DREW NEARER I OBSERVED THAT BUT I FEARED STILL MORE DREW NEARER THE BOTTOM OF THE LOCK OF LIVERING CAME OVER ME. WHEN THEY EXPECT A SPECIFIC APPEARED. I STEPPED FEARFULLY FROM ITS HIDEOUS GUEST. IT FALLEN ME, BUT WHEN I BECAME JOY AND RAN DOWN TO BROUGHT BREAKFAST; BUT I FELT MY FLESH TINGLE AND REMAINED FOR A WHILE IN A LAUGHED ALOUD. CLERVAL WHEN HE OBSERVED ME MORE COUNT, AND MY LOUD, UNDEAR DEAR VICTOR," CRIED HE, "VICTOR HOW ILL YOU ARE! WHAT I SHOULD MORE MY EYES, FOR I THOUGHT YOU WOULD SAVE ME! I IMAGINE YOU ARE A FIT. POOR CLERVAL! WHICH JOY, SO STRANGELY TUNNELS AND DID NOT RECOVER NERVOUS FEVER WHICH COULD ONLY NURSE. I AFTERWARDS I

THE CONSUMPTION OF FEAR.

THE HEART TO INSPIRE.

THE SPIRIT TO CONVEY.

THE DREAM OF UNDERSTANDING.

THE GROWTH OF CHARACTERS.

THE DESTRUCTION OF HOPE.

THE HEART TO INSPIRE.

THE TRANQUILITY OF LOVE.

THE SERENITY OF AN END.

THE PERILOUS ACTION.

THE MALEDICTION OF EVIL.

THE FRANKENSTEIN OF IDEAS.

DOOR BEING OPENED, I PERCEIVED HENRY DEAR FRANKENSTEIN," EXCLAIMED HE WOULD BE HERE AT THE VERY MOMENT CLERVAL; HIS PRESENCE BROUGHT BENEATH OF HOME SO DEAR TO MY RECOLLECTION. HORROR AND MISFORTUNE; I FELT SUDDENLY, AND FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE I HAD COMED MYSELF. CLERVAL TALKED OF HIS FRIENDS AND HIS OWN GOOD FORTUNE. "I BELIEVE," SAID HE, "HOW GREAT WAS YOUR KNOWLEDGE WAS NOT COMPRISED IN IT. IT WAS INDEED TO THE LAST, AS THE SAME AS THAT OF THE DUTCHMAN ISLAND FLORINS A YEAR WITHOUT GREAT LENGTH OVERCAME HIS DISLIKE OF HIS YAGE OF DISCOVERY TO THE LAND OF YOU; BUT TELL ME HOW YOU LEFT MY HEART, ONLY A LITTLE UNEASY THAT THEY WOULD BE A LITTLE UPON YOUR ACCOUNT MY SHORT AND PALE AS IF YOU HAD BEEN RIGHT; I HAVE LATELY BEEN SO DEEPLY ENGAGED IN ONE OCCUPATION THAT I HOPE, I SINCE I ARRIVED AT MY COLLECTION WHOM I HAD LEFT I REMAINED SOME MINUTES AT THE OTHER END OF THE STRIPPER JUST WHERE I WAS STOPPING HIM, THEREFORE, TO ILLUSTRATE MY OWN ROOM. MY HALF I THEN PAUSED, AND A CHILDREN ARE ACCUSTOMED TO BE ON THE OTHER SIDE; BUT NOT MY BEDROOM WAS ALSO A GOOD FORTUNE COULD I HAD, I CLAPPED MY HANDS AND THE SERVANT PRESENT WAS NOT JOY ONLY THAT MY PULSE BEAT RAPIDLY. I WAS ARRIVED MY SPIRITS TO MY EYES FOR WHICH HE COULDN'T ENDED AND ASTONISHED. DO NOT LAUGH IN THAT MANNER," CRIED I, PUTTING MYSELF INTO THE ROOM; HE CRAWLED FURIOUSLY AND FEELING, WHICH HE ANTICIPATED THE WITNESS OF HIS GRIEF, FOR THIS WAS THE COMMENCEMENT OF ALL THAT TIME HENRY ADVANCED AGE AND UNFIT

Y CLERVAL WHO, ON SEEING HOW GLAD I AM TO SEE YOU MY ALIGHTING!" NOTHING BACK TO MY THOUGHTS MY RELECTION. I GRASPED HIS HAND SUDDENLY, AND FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE I HAD COMED MYSELF. CLERVAL TALKED OF HIS FRIENDS AND HIS OWN GOOD FORTUNE. "I BELIEVE," SAID HE, "HOW GREAT WAS YOUR KNOWLEDGE WAS NOT COMPRISED IN IT. IT WAS INDEED TO THE LAST, AS THE SAME AS THAT OF THE DUTCHMAN ISLAND FLORINS A YEAR WITHOUT GREAT LENGTH OVERCAME HIS DISLIKE OF HIS YAGE OF DISCOVERY TO THE LAND OF YOU; BUT TELL ME HOW YOU LEFT MY HEART, ONLY A LITTLE UNEASY THAT THEY WOULD BE A LITTLE UPON YOUR ACCOUNT MY SHORT AND PALE AS IF YOU HAD BEEN RIGHT; I HAVE LATELY BEEN SO DEEPLY ENGAGED IN ONE OCCUPATION THAT I HOPE, I SINCE I ARRIVED AT MY COLLECTION WHOM I HAD LEFT I REMAINED SOME MINUTES AT THE OTHER END OF THE STRIPPER JUST WHERE I WAS STOPPING HIM, THEREFORE, TO ILLUSTRATE MY OWN ROOM. MY HALF I THEN PAUSED, AND A CHILDREN ARE ACCUSTOMED TO BE ON THE OTHER SIDE; BUT NOT MY BEDROOM WAS ALSO A GOOD FORTUNE COULD I HAD, I CLAPPED MY HANDS AND THE SERVANT PRESENT WAS NOT JOY ONLY THAT MY PULSE BEAT RAPIDLY. I WAS ARRIVED MY SPIRITS TO MY EYES FOR WHICH HE COULDN'T ENDED AND ASTONISHED. DO NOT LAUGH IN THAT MANNER," CRIED I, PUTTING MYSELF INTO THE ROOM; HE CRAWLED FURIOUSLY AND FEELING, WHICH HE ANTICIPATED THE WITNESS OF HIS GRIEF, FOR THIS WAS THE COMMENCEMENT OF ALL THAT TIME HENRY ADVANCED AGE AND UNFIT

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IT SEEMS THAT YOU HAVE EVERYTHING YOU NEED
FOR THE PERFECT STORY.
GO HOME, YOU ALREADY HAVE IT.

THE MAN NODS, AND LEAVES
FOR HOME.

AND SO, HE TOLD HIS STORY
TO HIS DAUGHTER.

OF HEROES,
OF DREAMS,
OF LOVE,
OF EVIL,
OF FEAR,
OF HUMANITY.

ALL THAT HE
LEARNED FROM
HIS JOURNEY
BY USING
EVERYTHING
HE KNEW.



WAS IT THE PERFECT
STORY?

IT MIGHT BE.
IT MIGHT NOT.

I DO NOT KNOW.

BUT HIS DAUGHTER THOUGHT IT WAS.

AND IN THE END
THAT WAS ALL THAT MATTERED.

Red Notebook #8

By George Brown

It is pleasant when life
seems new, like the unusual smell
of pressed linens on a single bed,
in a small, disorderly room,

where the velvet shades still
are drawn and stained by eerie
red light, the decades-old
dust still hangs (as if waiting)

in the rich air, to silently
sit, stare at the white wall
and think of nothing.
In my rough hands: red

notebook (#8), which, once,
was new, obstinate in its sheath,
unchanged as it had always
been, its crisp dimensions hinting

at realities of life otherwise lost,
and now lies with a bent spine,
the corners frayed, the pages warped
and giving way. Rising, I rigidly set #8

on a cluttered oak table
where it will stay, waiting
with its siblings. I leave
then, past the mess of toys,

comic books, cassettes, and dust.
The white door I painted
with Magic Marker to not
forget where it was

closes behind me. It squeaks,
like it always has,
and I step into a spring
of fields of milkweed.

8/8/35 p.8 GN8

The Gospels of Matthew and John

By Hannah Gobell

The Gospels of Matthew and John each depict their own distinct portraits of Jesus. In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus comes across as far more realistic, relatable and ultimately human than he does in the Gospel of John where he is portrayed as more idealized, distant, and divine. This is perhaps best illustrated in the depictions of Jesus' doubt and suffering in the two texts. In each example, Jesus takes a very different approach to thinking about and dealing with the hardships he encounters. In Matthew, he struggles during his hardest moments, which makes him far more relatable than in John, where he accepts his destiny with divine grace. For this reason, Matthew is a better "first" text for someone new to the faith, in that it is more welcoming, inclusive, and it offers a more human model for followers to emulate than The Gospel of John does.

One of the clearest ways that the Gospel of Matthew presents a more human and relatable portrait of Jesus is in the way that Jesus responds to that doubt with patience, reassurance, and even encouragement. Rather than condemning uncertainty, Matthew's Jesus treats it as a natural and acceptable part of the faith journey. Indeed, even John the Baptist experiences doubt and sends messengers to ask Jesus, "are you he is to come, or shall we look for another?" (Matthew 11:3). Coming from the very man who baptized Jesus, this question is surprising – it suggests that even the most faithful can have serious doubts. Jesus replies, "the blind receive their sight and the lame walk...blessed is he who takes no offense at me" (Matthew 11:6). Rather than giving a definitive yes or no, Jesus invites reflection. He points to actions, not declarations, as evidence. This response honors the question instead of dismissing it.

In these moments, Matthew's Jesus accepts that even the faithful may struggle with uncertainty, and he meets them where they are. Perhaps the most telling example of this is Jesus' teaching in Matthew 17:20, where he tells his followers that "if you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you will say to move mountains... nothing will be impossible to you". This image affirms that doubt and belief can coexist – and that even the smallest bit of trust is enough to begin. This positive depiction of doubt continues even after the resurrection, when Jesus appears to the disciples on the mountain. Matthew writes that "they worshiped him, but some doubted" (Matthew 28:17). Instead of chastising them, Jesus immediately affirms his authority and assures them, "I am with you always, to the close of the age". His words offer reassurance rather than judgement, modeling a version of faith that can accommodate hesitation. By making space for spiritual uncertainty, Matthew presents a model of faith that is flexible, forgiving, and fundamentally human – one that may feel more accessible to new believers than the more rigidly confident vision found in John.

In contrast to Matthew's compassionate treatment of the subject, the Gospel of John often presents doubt as a weakness or even a failure of faith, highlighting a version

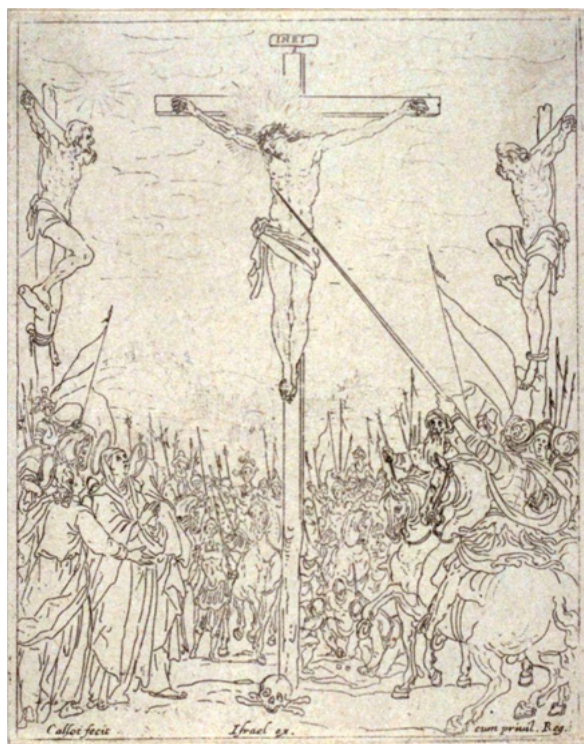
of Jesus who demands belief without question and rewards those who trust without needing evidence. This theme is seen early on in John 3:18, where Jesus declares, “He who believes in him is not condemned; he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.” This statement leaves no room for nuance – faith is black-and-white. Unlike Matthew’s mustard seed metaphor, there is no space here for hesitation or spiritual struggle. We see this all-or-nothing view of doubt again in John 6:29, when the crowds demand a sign from Jesus to confirm his divine authority. Jesus replies, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.” (John 6:29) He does not meet the request with evidence but with a call for total trust. Belief itself is the only acceptable response. There’s no invitation to journey or wrestle with uncertainty – just a clear directive. The most famous example, however, is likely the story of doubting Thomas, when Jesus appears after the resurrection and tells him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe” (John 20:29). Here, Jesus draws a clear line between acceptable and ideal faith: true believers, he suggests, should not need signs or proof. This statement elevates blind faith over ambivalent belief, suggesting that if you have any doubts about Jesus - a very human thing to do - then you are somehow excluded from being one of the “true” faithful. This vision of Jesus might inspire confidence and awe, but it also creates distance. For those at the beginning of their spiritual journey, John’s message can feel intimidating – demanding full belief before the believer is ready to give it.

Just as Matthew normalizes and embraces doubt, the text also presents Jesus’ suffering as raw, painful, and deeply human – further supporting the idea that this version of Jesus is a more approachable model for believers, especially those who feel broken or lost. In Matthew’s depiction of the crucifixion, Jesus cries out in agony, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46). This moment is powerful not only because of the pain it reveals but because of what it says about Jesus’ emotional state. He does not face death with serenity – he feels abandoned, overwhelmed, and afraid. He does not pretend to be above the moment. Yet this cry is not a betrayal of faith. Jesus does not renounce God - he questions, he pleads, but he does not walk away. His words echo Psalm 22, which begins in anguish – “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” – but moves towards trust: “For he has not despised or abhorred the affliction of the afflicted... [he] has heard when he cried to him” (Psalm 22:1, 24). This progression shows that questioning does not equal faithlessness but can instead be part of a faithful lament that ultimately turns to trust. In this version of the crucifixion, Jesus models a form of faith that makes room for suffering and even doubt, showing that wrestling with God is part of being faithful, not a betrayal of it. For someone new to Christianity, this depiction might be comforting: if even Jesus can ask “why?” in his darkest hour, then believers can also be allowed to struggle without feeling like failures of faith. His vulnerability on the cross models a kind of faith that is not perfect but persistent.

In sharp contrast to Matthew’s emotionally raw and human depiction of suffering, the Gospel of John presents Jesus’ death as almost serene – emphasizing his divinity, composure, and absolute control, rather than his pain or doubt. On the cross, Jesus utters no cries of abandonment or desperation. Instead, his final words are calm and conclusive: “It is finished.” Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit” (John 19:30).

These words suggest completion, confidence, and control – no torment. Jesus is not overcome by suffering; he seems to transcend it. He does not ask where God is or why this is happening to him. Instead, he embraces the moment with full awareness, as though the outcome has never been in question. In this telling, Jesus does not appear to suffer in the ordinary way that humans do; he seems already above it, fully aware of and aligned with God’s plan. Even in his death, Jesus demonstrates perfect obedience and confidence – a kind of idealized faith that feels almost impossible for ordinary people to imitate. This reinforces the Gospel of John’s broader tendency to frame Jesus as a distant, divine figure rather than a relatable human being. For believers who long for spiritual certainty or aspire to total submission to God’s will, this portrayal can be deeply inspiring. But for newcomers to the faith – or those struggling with grief, fear, or confusion - it may feel alienating, as if real doubt and pain have no place in the Christian experience.

In comparing the Gospels of Matthew and John, it becomes clear that each offers a radically different vision of who Jesus is – and, by extension, what it means to follow him. In Matthew, Jesus is someone who feels pain, wrestles with doubt, and leans into faith even when it is hard. He is someone that anyone can be: flawed, searching, human. In John, by contrast, Jesus is unwavering, all-knowing, and fully divine – someone people want to be, but perhaps cannot realistically emulate. These differences shape not only how Jesus is understood, but also what styles of faith each *Gospel* encourages. *Matthew* invites believers into a more honest, inclusive journey -- one where questions are allowed and weaknesses do not disqualify. *John* calls for an absolute conviction and surrender, inspiring in its ideal but demanding in its expectations. Still, despite these differences, both Gospels ultimately present Jesus as a model for Christian life – whether that model is deeply human or divinely transcendent depends on where and how one begins their walk with faith.



Pride and Prejudice: All the World's a Stage

By Alexa Thomas

In the marriage-market society of *Pride and Prejudice*, obsessed with appearance, status, and manners, it is Darcy's authenticity that ultimately earns Elizabeth's love, through which Austen offers a critique of the performative nature of gentry society. Austen presents gentry society as an intricate and delicately maintained performance, where titles serve as roles to play, manners function as scripts, and courtships are a matter of strategy and scheming. Within this performance, men and women are required to uphold distinct appearances in accordance with the rigid gender hierarchies of the time. For instance, women are expected to maintain a certain "air and manner" and "tone of [their] voice," as well encouraged to "shew more affection than she feels" towards a prospective marriage partner (Austen 39, 23). Men are expected to be "gentlemanlike," displaying "easy, unaffected manners," as well as possessing a stable, satisfactory salary (Austen 13).

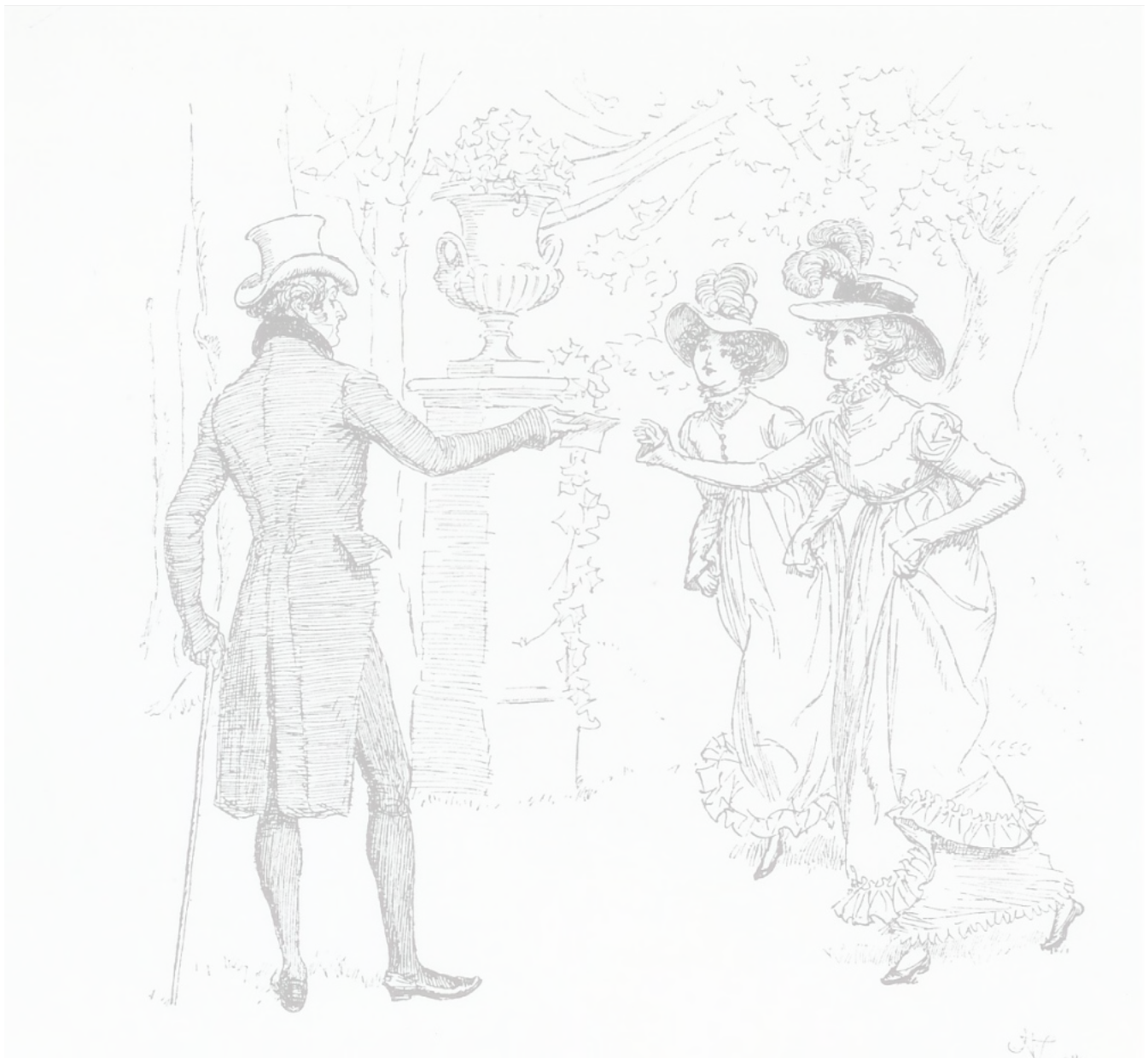
One of Austen's characters who unsuccessfully attempts this social performance is Mr. Collins, who despite his deliberate efforts at humility, fails to conceal his "very good opinion of himself," creating an odd demeanor of both "self-importance and humility" (Austen 69). Upon first impressions, Elizabeth is put off by Mr. Collins' lengthy, reverential speeches and excessive apologies, recognizing their artificiality and performance. Her disgust reaches its height when Mr. Collins delivers his verbose marriage proposal, during which he is unable to comprehend her refusal, convinced that his "situation in life" and his "connections" render him "highly desirable" (Austen 106). Ultimately, due to both the lack of emotional connection and Mr. Collins' disingenuous character and poorly concealed conceit, Elizabeth is morally compelled to refuse his proposal. Through Elizabeth's rejection, Austen critiques the insincerity that underpins relations in gentry society, deeming it unsuitable for a happy, desirable marriage.

In contrast to Mr. Collins, whose proposal Elizabeth rebuffs due to his inauthenticity, Elizabeth *does* accept Darcy's second proposal on account of his vulnerability and genuine demeanor. From their very first encounter, Elizabeth vehemently rejects Darcy due to his "haughty, reserved, and fastidious" manners, and firmly maintains this disdain until he openly confesses in his letter to her (Austen 18). Within this letter, Darcy assiduously explains his "actions and their motives" regarding the offences Elizabeth accuses him of, even going so far as to describe sensitive, intimate details involving Mr. Wickham and his family (Austen 191).

Darcy's vulnerability both reconcile Elizabeth's prejudices and mark a shift in Darcy's demeanor from performance to authenticity—at first shocking Elizabeth, but then eventually delighting her. Towards the end of the text, Darcy explains the reasons for his arrogant behavior, stating he was “given good principles” but applied them with the “pride and conceit” expected of his social positioning (Austen 349). However, due to Elizabeth's scathing remarks, Darcy becomes “properly humbled,” and relinquishes the performative arrogance tied to his early conditioning and societal expectations, instead embracing civility and gentleness (Austen 349). In Elizabeth's decision to accept Darcy's proposal only *after* his reform, Austen critiques gentry society, suggesting that authenticity triumphs over the frivolous posturing and performance that governs the matters of marriage.

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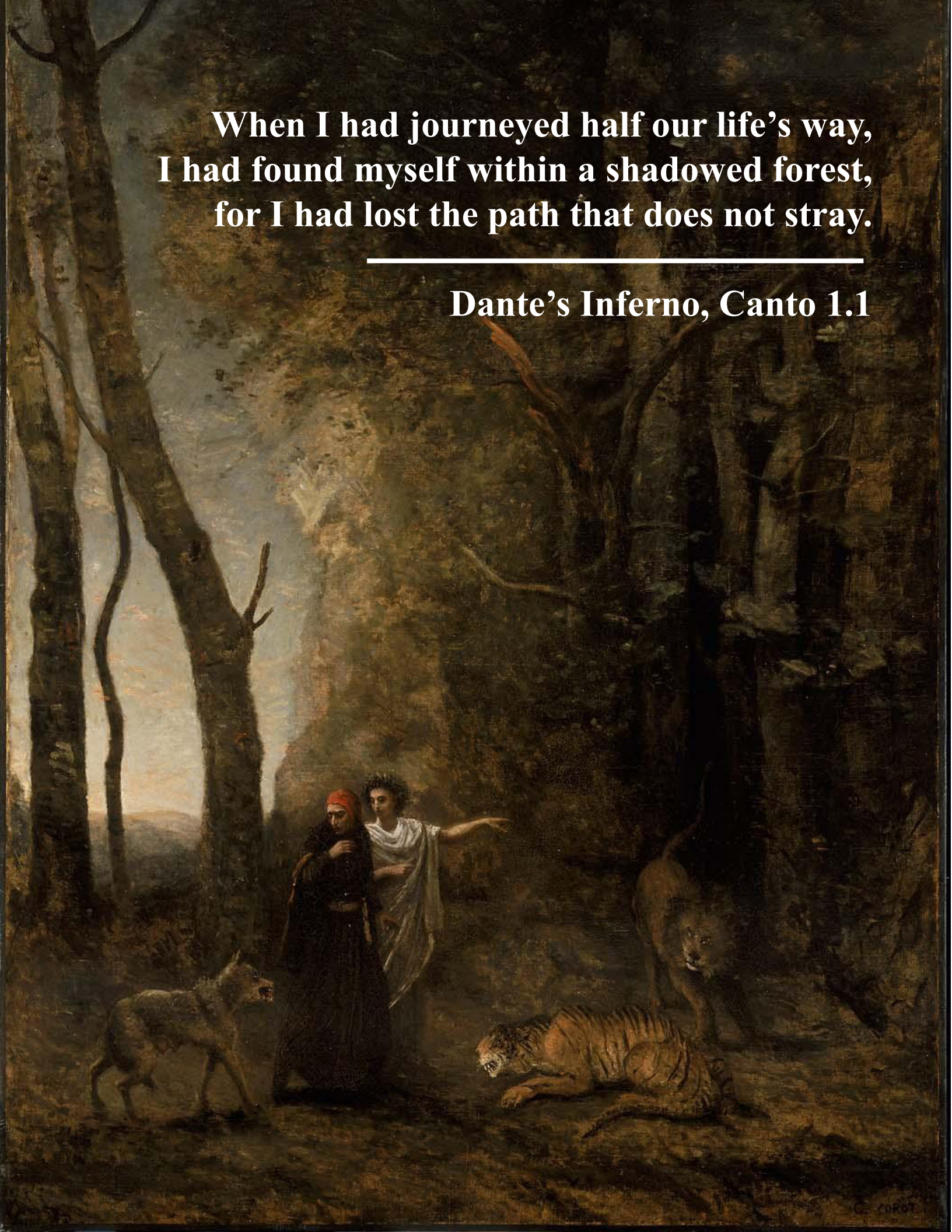
Untitled

By Jaala'Nnette Crenshaw

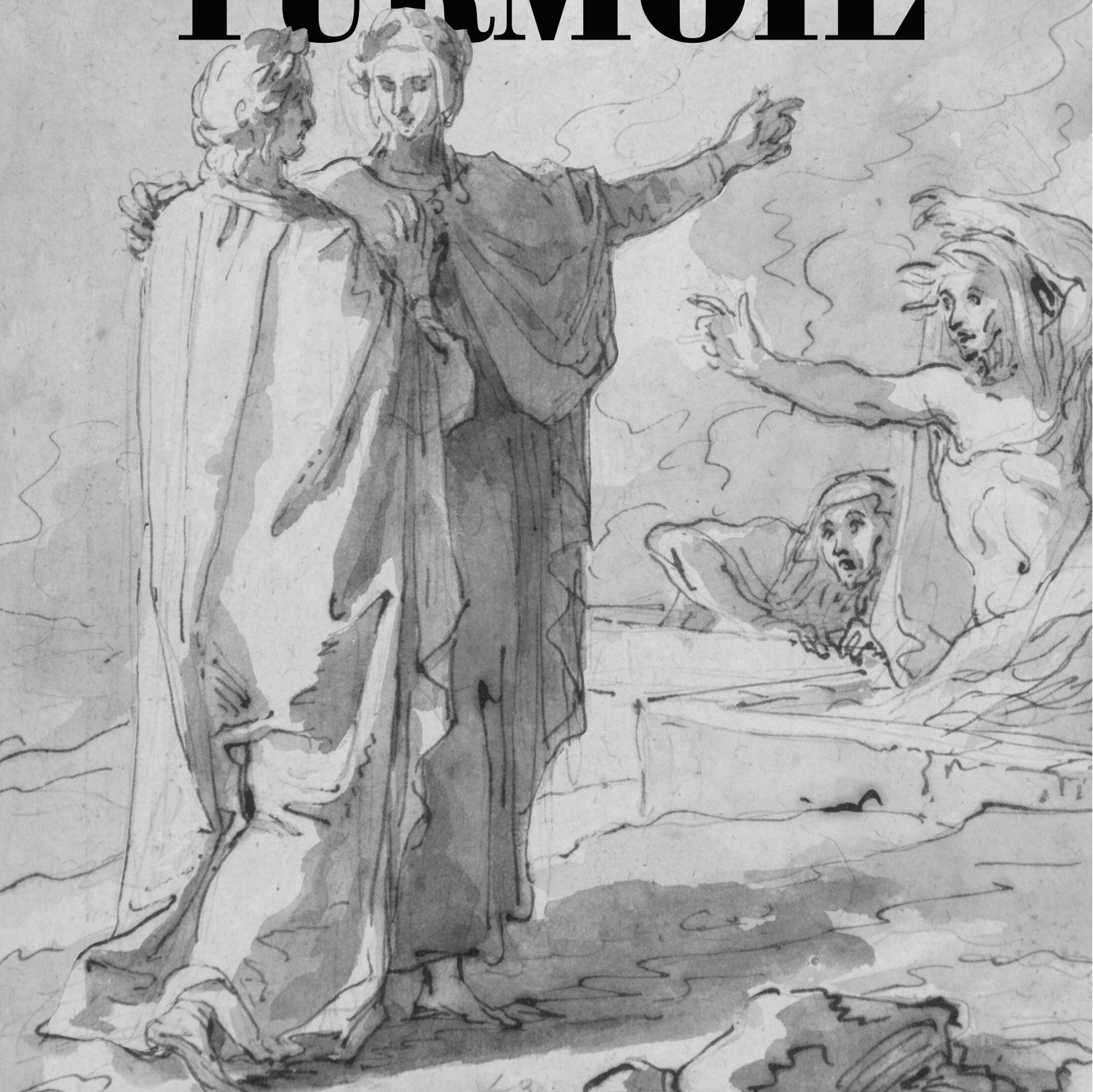
I'm turning 21 tomorrow
And all I can say is that I've seen a corner of the world—
Its beauty and its brokenness.
Imagine what my eyes have yet to take in.
I'll have lived a third or fourth of this brief eternal span tomorrow
And all I can say is that I've heard tambourines and birds that sing—
To mourn and celebrate lives like mine.
Imagine all the paths that I've yet to cross.
I'll reach the last milestone tomorrow
And all I can say is that I've clinked my cup—
With strangers whose cups spilled joy into mine,
And I've drowned out sorrows—
That I don't think I'll ever recover from.
Imagine the cups that are yet to be filled.
I'll take my last steps out of childhood tomorrow
And all I can say is that I've been shaped and molded—
By people who I laugh with every night and heal from their words every day.
Imagine the person I have yet to become.
I'm turning 21 tomorrow
And I can say that I have hurt and loved—
More than I ever thought possible.
Imagine what I have yet to experience.

**When I had journeyed half our life's way,
I had found myself within a shadowed forest,
for I had lost the path that does not stray.**

Dante's Inferno, Canto 1.1



TURMOIL



The Depressed, The Abused: The Experience

By Sofia Ulloa

I still recall the memory of when I felt existential dread for the very first time: I was no older than seven. I was lying in a field on my parents' farm on a hot summer day, and I was looking up at a singular cloud in the sky. As I looked at the sky above me, I suddenly wondered why it was blue. Not knowing the answer, I asked what was beyond the blue sky. Blackness? What was beyond the blackness? Unable to answer my own questions, I looked down at my small hands and wondered so many things. Why was I breathing? Why was I alive? Why was I a human and not a blade of grass? Unable to find the answer to these problems, I found myself crying uncontrollably in a state of alienation. I believed that at any moment, I would cease to exist, for how could I continue living without the answers to what seemed like life's quintessential questions. Since this day, in twilight moments of self-reflection, I have seen the totality of my existence with anguish, through a lens of despair, lasering past the insolence of it all. The insistent prominence of my being fills me with dread, a dread that would materialize in the form of sleepless nights and lack of interest in the world, a dread that I would later rename as depression.

The conventional understanding of mental health often categorizes altered or 'disturbed' perceptions as symptoms of pathology, implying a departure from what is considered 'normal' or 'rational' with individuals who suffer from mental health disorders such as depression. However, this classification raises profound questions about the nature of rationality and reality itself. Is it possible that what we deem as irrational in the context of mental health could actually be an appropriate response to certain existential conditions? In this essay, I aim to reveal that the inexplicable feeling of depression and its desperation is actually a symptom classified by the seemingly pointlessness of life. I have already given you a personal perspective on absurdism through the retelling of my own experiences. Next, I will explain the phenomenon of absurdism and how it occurs in our lives. Lastly, I aim not to solve the problem of absurdism, but to provide a remedy for the absurdist depressive who can find no value in existing without answers to unsolvable problems.

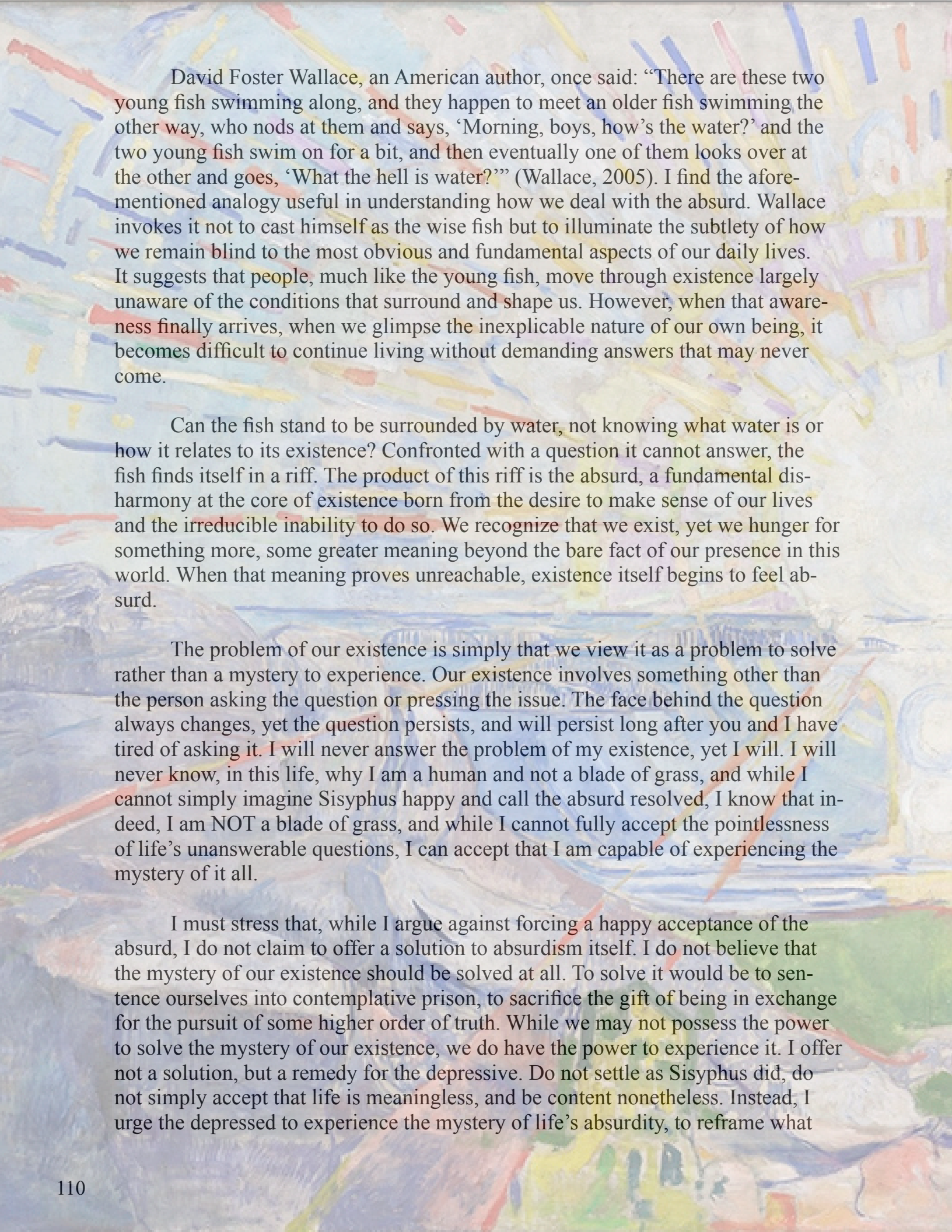
Albert Camus described the "absurd" as the fundamental conflict between humans' natural tendency to seek inherent meaning and value in life, and the cold, indifferent universe that offers no solutions. In his essay, "The Myth of Sisyphus," Camus uses the story of Sisyphus, a figure from Greek mythology who is

condemned to repeatedly roll a boulder up a hill only for it to roll down each time it nears the top, as a metaphor for human existence. Consequently, Camus argues that life is inherently devoid of meaning, yet humans cannot help but search for it. Knowing that the search is irrecoverably in vain creates the absurd condition. Camus suggests that the proper response to this condition is not suicide or despair, but rather a full acceptance of the absurdity of existence; by accepting this condition, we allow ourselves the freedom to live with the knowledge that life itself is the most important source of meaning. Stripped to its core, as Camus once famously declared, “One must imagine Sisyphus happy” (Camus, 24), for to imagine his contempt is to embrace the belief that the struggle toward the heights is itself enough to fill a man’s heart. Now that I have briefly explained the nature of absurdism, I will attempt to explain why Camus’ solution of simply accepting the

“The vanity of existence is revealed in the whole form existence assumes: in the infiniteness of time and space contrasted with the finiteness of the individual in both; in the fleeting present as the sole form in which actuality exists; in the contingency and relativity of all things; in continual becoming without being; in continual desire without satisfaction; in the continual frustration of striving of which life consists. . . Time is that by virtue of which everything becomes nothingness in our hands and loses all real value.” (Sørensen, 1).

The notion that the very nature of existence—its temporality, finiteness, and constant flux—renders all endeavors and desires ultimately futile and meaningless suggests that time reduces all achievements and pleasures to nothingness, stripping them of lasting value, revealing the inherent vanity of human life. Given the realization that life is meaningless in the grand scheme of things, how can one not feel depressed under the absurdity of our existence? Why can’t we accept this truth, the stupidity of it all, and be happy knowing our only purpose is to exist and experience? To understand why these questions elude us, I argue that we must first reckon with the peculiar limits of the minds doing the asking.

Humans are greatly intelligent on a micro scale, meaning we are highly intelligent in the context of our existence, in our society, on this small planet. However, on a macro scale, the human truly is unintelligent; we know nothing beyond the context of our operating lives. Human intelligence is a peculiar condition, one sharp enough to perceive the great uncertainties of existence, yet insufficient to penetrate them. Thus, we generally strive to find a greater purpose within our existence, but met with the iron fist that is our restricted ability to comprehend, we are unable to find such purpose in the broad extent of our existence. As a result, we are constantly reaching for incomprehensible, unsolvable answers. Our understanding of reality can thus feel so misunderstood that the point of it all, well, becomes pointless.

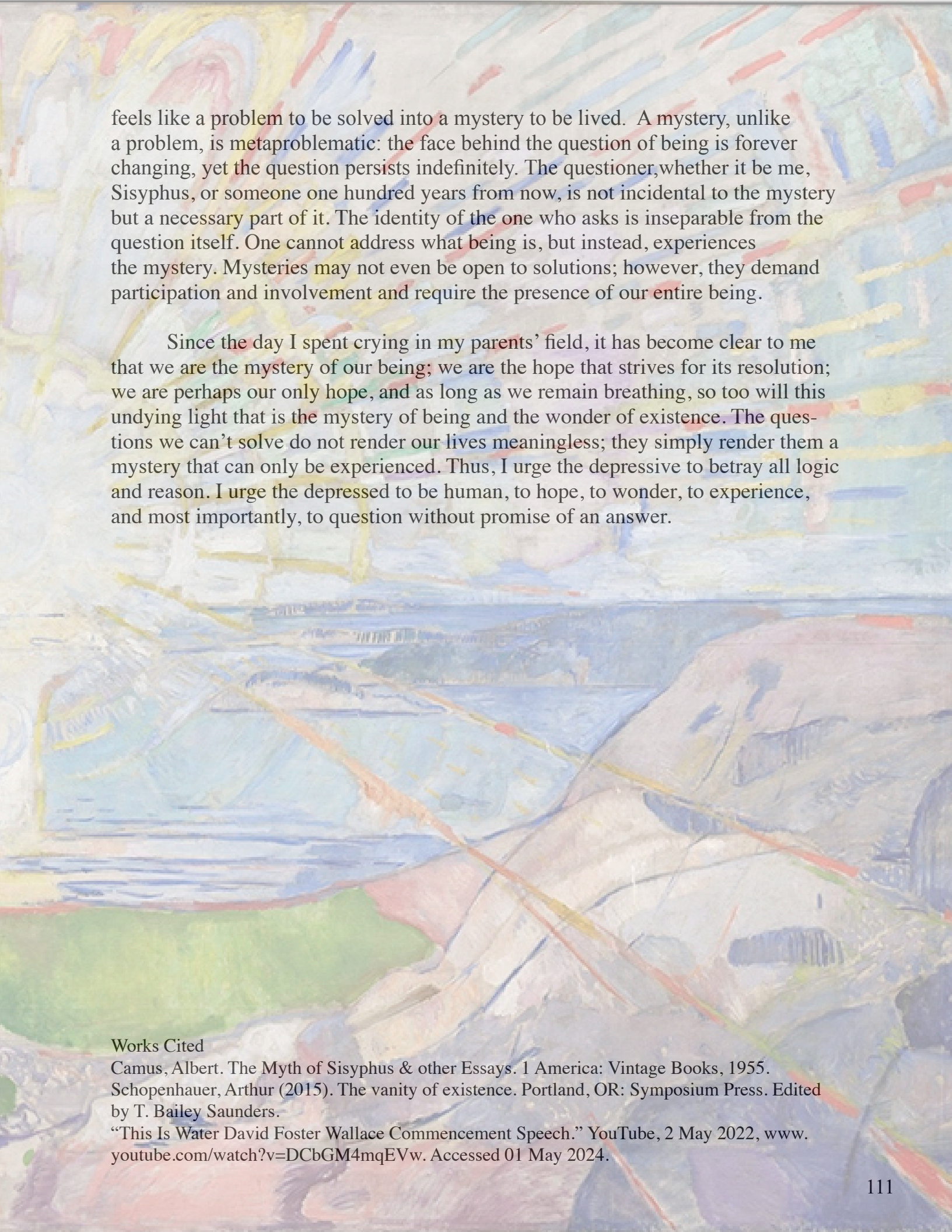


David Foster Wallace, an American author, once said: “There are these two young fish swimming along, and they happen to meet an older fish swimming the other way, who nods at them and says, ‘Morning, boys, how’s the water?’ and the two young fish swim on for a bit, and then eventually one of them looks over at the other and goes, ‘What the hell is water?’” (Wallace, 2005). I find the aforementioned analogy useful in understanding how we deal with the absurd. Wallace invokes it not to cast himself as the wise fish but to illuminate the subtlety of how we remain blind to the most obvious and fundamental aspects of our daily lives. It suggests that people, much like the young fish, move through existence largely unaware of the conditions that surround and shape us. However, when that awareness finally arrives, when we glimpse the inexplicable nature of our own being, it becomes difficult to continue living without demanding answers that may never come.

Can the fish stand to be surrounded by water, not knowing what water is or how it relates to its existence? Confronted with a question it cannot answer, the fish finds itself in a riff. The product of this riff is the absurd, a fundamental disharmony at the core of existence born from the desire to make sense of our lives and the irreducible inability to do so. We recognize that we exist, yet we hunger for something more, some greater meaning beyond the bare fact of our presence in this world. When that meaning proves unreachable, existence itself begins to feel absurd.

The problem of our existence is simply that we view it as a problem to solve rather than a mystery to experience. Our existence involves something other than the person asking the question or pressing the issue. The face behind the question always changes, yet the question persists, and will persist long after you and I have tired of asking it. I will never answer the problem of my existence, yet I will. I will never know, in this life, why I am a human and not a blade of grass, and while I cannot simply imagine Sisyphus happy and call the absurd resolved, I know that indeed, I am NOT a blade of grass, and while I cannot fully accept the pointlessness of life’s unanswerable questions, I can accept that I am capable of experiencing the mystery of it all.

I must stress that, while I argue against forcing a happy acceptance of the absurd, I do not claim to offer a solution to absurdism itself. I do not believe that the mystery of our existence should be solved at all. To solve it would be to sentence ourselves into contemplative prison, to sacrifice the gift of being in exchange for the pursuit of some higher order of truth. While we may not possess the power to solve the mystery of our existence, we do have the power to experience it. I offer not a solution, but a remedy for the depressive. Do not settle as Sisyphus did, do not simply accept that life is meaningless, and be content nonetheless. Instead, I urge the depressed to experience the mystery of life’s absurdity, to reframe what



feels like a problem to be solved into a mystery to be lived. A mystery, unlike a problem, is metaproblematic: the face behind the question of being is forever changing, yet the question persists indefinitely. The questioner, whether it be me, Sisyphus, or someone one hundred years from now, is not incidental to the mystery but a necessary part of it. The identity of the **one** who asks is inseparable from the question itself. One cannot address what being is, but instead, experiences the mystery. Mysteries may not even be open to solutions; however, they demand participation and involvement and require the presence of our entire being.

Since the day I spent crying in my parents' field, it has become clear to me that we are the mystery of our being; we are the hope that strives for its resolution; we are perhaps our only hope, and as long as we remain breathing, so too will this undying light that is the mystery of being and the wonder of existence. The questions we can't solve do not render our lives meaningless; they simply render them a mystery that can only be experienced. Thus, I urge the depressive to betray all logic and reason. I urge the depressed to be human, to hope, to wonder, to experience, and most importantly, to question without promise of an answer.

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Losing Myself

By Jaala'Nnette Crenshaw

I can't count the number of times I've been asked
What advice I'd give my younger self.
But she's already passed, she's already been failed.
What about me now?
What advice do I give the girl
Who's trying to navigate this world
While healing past ones?

I find myself listening in
When others give their aged advice,
Trying to find bits and pieces I can swallow
And digest into my mind's eye
So that it might open and see some golden way,
Or a yellow brick road—
Fuck, I'd even settle for some beaten dirt path—
Breadcrumbs even—
Just something—
Anything—

I just need something that keeps me
Here—
That keeps me together—
Cause every time I look down I see
My hand pulsing with my heart—
Expanding and contracting as hard as it can
to run away—
Like an eager little caterpillar ready to be a butterfly—
But I don't have a chrysalis—
I'm not ready for any kind of metamorphosis—
Cause every time I look up
I see my hair blowing in the wind,
Wiping off the few neurons I have left—
Strands statically sending off cells—
Axons to dendrites—
And there I go losing my mind.

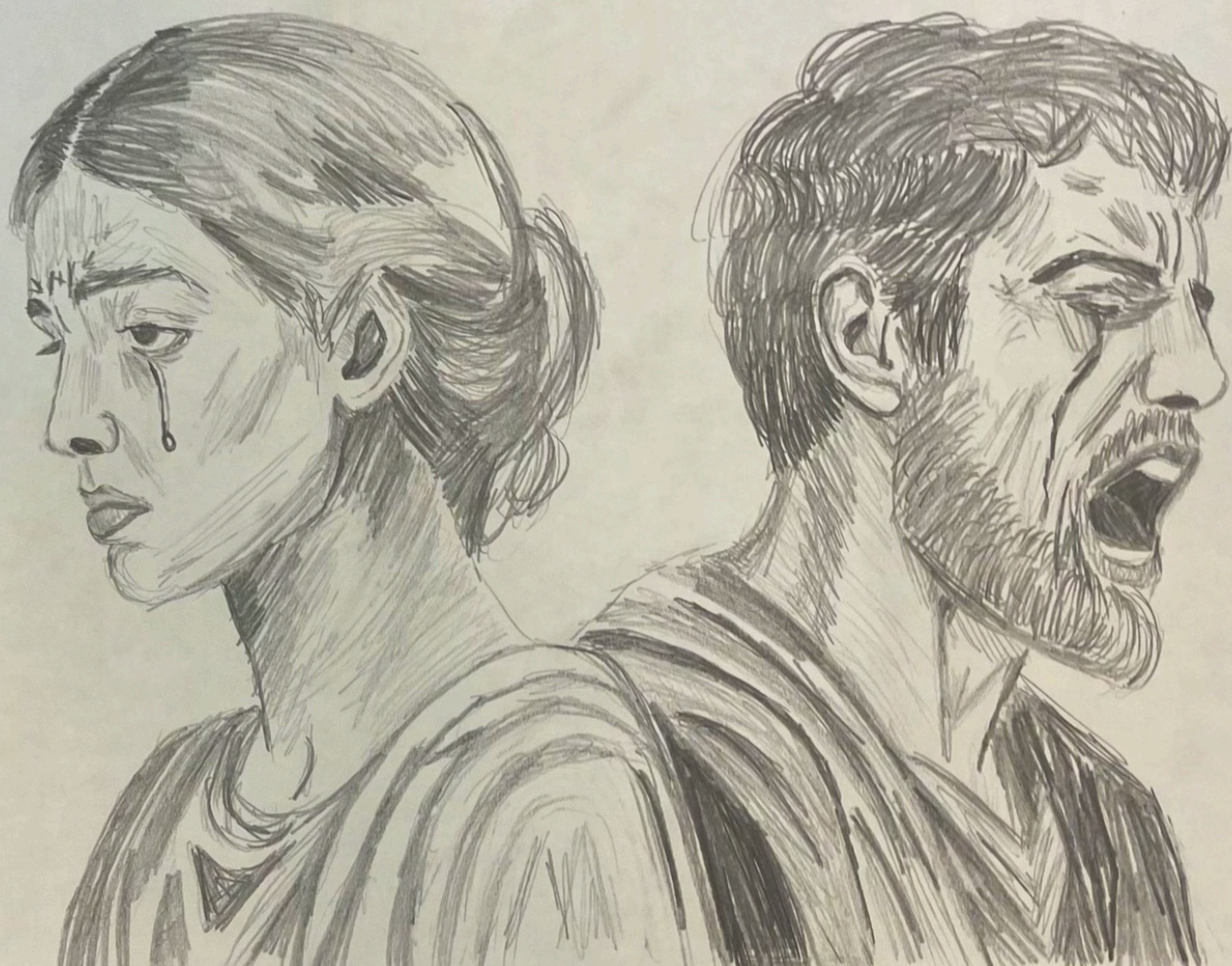
My heart and my mind are turning on me
Just as I thought I understood them—
And my body is overseeing the coup
Just as I started to love her.
I'm losing myself
Just as I started to get that little girl back.
I need my older self to come visit me now
because
I'm losing myself.
And my body, heart, and mind have run away
So it's too late to share them with anyone—
I'm losing myself.

I think all I have left is my soul .
But I'm still trying to understand that.
No matter how many philosophers I read or
poets I feel,
my soul is so much more than thoughts or
feelings.
But I'm trying to know her and trying to
love her,
Cause she's so known and so loved.
My soul is grounding me.

I'm trying to find myself.

Hecuba

By Ayushi Sharma



An Unusual Time

By George Brown

In Memory of Jill

Grandma tells me it's an unusual time.
She is bruises and bone, upper lip
catching on her teeth.
She tells me much has become clear:

She is grateful. The Lord doesn't decide
when the spirit must leave,
He can only mourn,
surrounded by his children.

She still laughs like a penny,
still remembers driving Mom
barely nine months pregnant
with a Goldfish on her lap

to the new house, me
in the backseat. She tells mom:
you taught me how to be a woman
and her voice does not break:

she is still Jill. I remember
when we would weed
the empty lot at the end
of the street, getting tired

pulling out an unlucky Dandelion.
She would say: Good job.
But the bruises and bone,
the bruises and bone.



Not For Us

By Tim Laux

I am in a metal box. I ride it up every week and watch the numbers on the wall - hectic, flickering, impatient - until somewhere around the sixth floor they slow down. A six becomes a seven. A seven becomes an eight. We are there.

The doors open.

The therapist asks how I'm doing, and I tell her I'm doing well. She writes something down. I've always wondered what you write when someone says they're doing well.

I tell her: I used to feel things more. She nods. Writes something. I watch the pen and think about how the act of writing a thing down is already a small act of violence against it. You catch the butterfly. You pin it. It's still a butterfly, technically. But that's not the point anymore.

I tell her: something is quieter than it used to be. I don't know if that's health or damage.

She writes it down.

My parents are from the East. The real East - the GDR, where the state had a theology and asked for the same devotion as a church. My father rowed for a program that owned him. Ate what it prescribed. Woke up for years without the question of whether he wanted to be available. He told me this once, without bitterness, and I remember thinking: I know how to do that too.

What I don't know is whether he found peace in it or just stopped looking.

He gave me discipline instead of faith. I'm starting to wonder if those are the same thing wearing different clothes or if one of them actually answers something the other doesn't.

I tell her about the winter runs. Boston in February - the kind of cold that has an opinion about you, that gets into the joints, that makes breathing a thing you have to think about. I started running in it because I thought discomfort was a form of honesty. If you can feel the cold, you're still present. Still inside your own life.

But somewhere this winter I noticed something. The cold stopped arriving. Same route, same temperature, same gray sky at six in the morning - and it was just information. Thirty-two degrees. Wind from the river. Noted. Processed. Moving on.

I didn't decide to become numb to it. I just became numb to it. And then I started wondering what else I had quietly become numb to, and whether I would know, and whether the knowing would even change anything.

She asks: when did you first notice?

I read somewhere that if you want to write something true, cut the first paragraph and the last. The first paragraph is you clearing your throat. The last is you explaining what you just said.

The truth lives in the middle, where you forgot to perform.

I've started to think my whole life has become the first paragraph. The preparation. The getting ready to live, rather than living. And I can't find the middle anymore - the part where something arrived unfiltered and I let it.

She waits.

I say: I think I've gotten very good at the surface. At functioning. And I think functioning became a way of not having to answer certain questions. And I think somewhere along the way the questions stopped asking.

She writes something down. The pen makes a small sound against the paper. I watch it and think: that is the exact sound of a thing being caught.

I tell her: there was a teacher in Germany who once put a flower in a glass on her desk and didn't explain it. We all looked at it. The room changed. I've thought about it for years.

What I've figured out: beauty only exists because it's leaving. The moment you try to keep it - put a lid on the glass, name it, write it down - it starts to die. Not slowly. Immediately. The dying is what the lid causes.

She asks what that means to me.

I say I'm not sure. She writes it down.

I tell her: I don't know what I believe in. I was raised without religion, which I used to think meant I was raised without illusions. Now I think it might mean I was raised without a certain kind of permission. Permission to not have an answer. Permission to sit in a thing that doesn't resolve.

Kafka wrote that there is infinite hope - just not for us. I think about that line more than I should. Not because it's hopeless. Because it's honest about the distance between the hope that exists in the world and the hope that's actually available to you, standing where you're standing, built the way you're built.

I have systems. I have habits. I have a body that wakes at five-thirty and a mind that knows how to move through a day without losing time. I've been so good at surviving that I forgot to notice when surviving became the whole project.

MAP
Public Library
City of London

She asks: what would it look like to not be fine?

I sit with that for a long time. Outside, the city is doing what cities do - indifferent, continuous, not waiting.

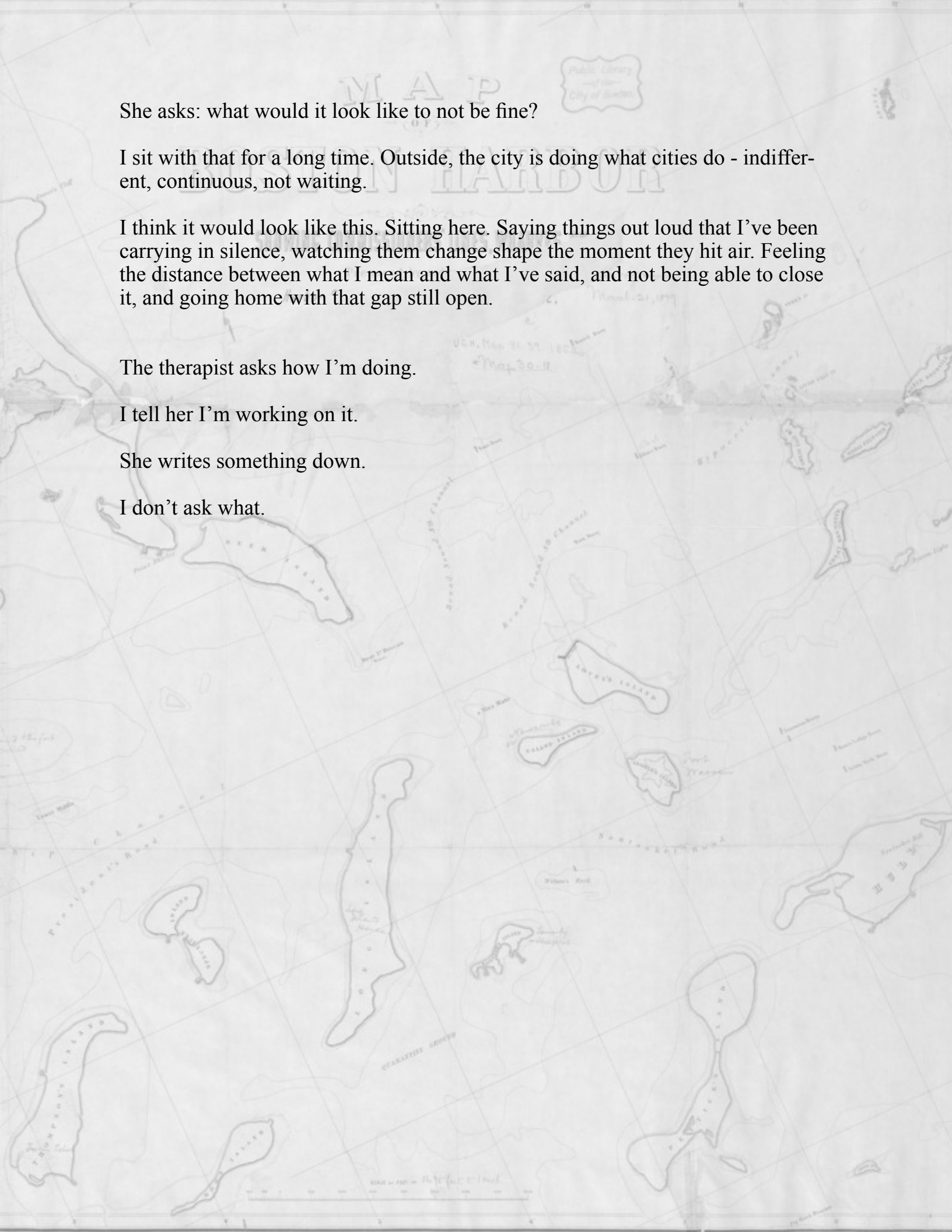
I think it would look like this. Sitting here. Saying things out loud that I've been carrying in silence, watching them change shape the moment they hit air. Feeling the distance between what I mean and what I've said, and not being able to close it, and going home with that gap still open.

The therapist asks how I'm doing.

I tell her I'm working on it.

She writes something down.

I don't ask what.



3.1 (right after Hamlet's big speech)



HAMLET + OPHELIA

BY RILEY MCBRIDE



The Disease of Love, Loves, and Lovers: A Conversation

By Adrian Hazlett

This conversation is in response to Shakespeare's Sonnet 147. It takes place between Hamlet, Ophelia, and Don Quixote — three characters from the semester's texts who have been considered "mad" by others who interact with them. Additionally, they are all "lovers," and they love at least one other character. Hamlet and Ophelia's are each other's lovers, and it would make more sense if the conversation were between them exclusively. However, Don Quixote interrupts them, as is his wont in his original text. To clarify, Don Quixote acts as he does throughout most of his book; here, he has not relinquished books of chivalry (as he does at the end of Don Quixote). Ophelia speaks from the perspective of having already died, though I write Hamlet's lines as if he were alive and it were around the turn of Act 4 to Act 5 (which is when he finds Ophelia dead). I imagine this conversation around a table where Hamlet and Ophelia sit across from each other and Don Quixote perpendicular. They all are under the impression that it is completely normal for them to be meeting like this; they simply must discuss Sonnet 147.

"Sonnet 147"

My love is as a fever, longing still
For that which longer nurseth the disease,
Feeding on that which doth preserve the ill,
Th' uncertain sickly appetite to please.
My reason, the physician to my love,
Angry that his prescriptions are not kept,
Hath left me, and I desperate now approve
Desire is death, which physic did except.
Past cure I am, now reason is past care,
And frantic-mad with evermore unrest;



My thoughts and my discourse as
madmen's are,
At random from the truth vainly
expressed:
For I have sworn thee fair, and
thought thee bright,
Who art as black as hell, as dark
as night.¹



Don Quixote. “As black as hell, as dark as night?” This woman is nothing like my Dulcinea del Toboso, who is, rather, the “day of my night.” I can hardly conceive that a knight, a gentleman, even in his despair, would curse his beloved lady, who should be considered the “star of” his “fortune.” Now that is mad!

Ophelia. You do not understand. You swear of the light of your lover, but the poet says he had “sworn” his lover “fair” and “bright,” as well. He admits he was deceived, or was deluding himself, as often happens to lovers. Even knights and gentlemen may fall prey to that in love. The poet declares his “reason” “hath left” him — he believed something about his lover without reason, something unsupported by reality. I know the poet’s meaning all too well. My love, Hamlet, once gave “countenance to his speech” with “almost all the holy vows of heaven.” I questioned my brother Laertes when he forewarned that Hamlet’s love was “trifling,” “a violet in the youth of primy nature.” I did not question it by the end; the truth sunk within me, as I tossed the flowers. I too had sworn Hamlet “bright” and “fair,” but this was “forward, not permanent, sweet, not lasting.”

Hamlet. So, you found me to be “dark as night,” by the end?

Ophelia. Night had descended over you; it enveloped you. You seemed mad and had spurned me. I felt the same bitterness as the poet. My love seemed “black as hell,” enveloped in madness too.

Hamlet. You say, “my love,” and I do not know whether you use the word “love” to refer to the object or the act of it. And when the poet speaks of love — what does he refer to? Is it the object of his love — the person, his lover — who is “as a fever,” or is it the act of love — the verb, the emotion? At the start, he writes, “my love” is “longing still / For that which nurseth the disease.” The lover, the object, is

what “nurseth the disease,” so in that line, “my love” must refer to the act and feeling, as these things “feed” upon the object. The act of love is “as a fever.” So, when the poet addresses “thee” in the couplet, perhaps he is not addressing a lover; “thee” could still refer to a feeling. Love, as a state, seems “fair and bright” but is in fact “black as hell.” So really, it is all love that turns one mad, regardless of the lover. “We are arrant knaves all.”

Ophelia. But “thee” is customarily used as an object pronoun, to address a person. Does the poet not transition between meanings of love throughout his sonnet? In the quatrain preceding “thee,” “madness” is directly professed, and the poet seems increasingly “frantic,” admitting he is “past cure.” With the semicolon after “expressed,” he posits that his thoughts are thus, that this is the root of his illness: his lover is not what he swore she was. There, the madness seems directly attributed to “thee” — the object of love makes him “frantic-mad.”

Hamlet. Still, Ophelia, I am of the belief that madness is not caused by one kind of lover — all acts of love can be “past cure,” all love a disease. Even if the lover differs, this nature, this result, of love does not.

Don Quixote. Hamlet, do you mean to say disease is congenital to the nature of love — that “love” and “disease” are synonymous? For it’s not true, and courtly love could never be termed a disease. I maintain that your sentiment and the poet’s are misguided. Love may indeed make one mad with despair or longing, but for a knight errant, it is only right one should feel that madness — a knight who feels it is in proper chivalric health. The pangs of love should not be condemned as an “ill,” as they are in the sonnet. Every knight should rightly have the “appetite to please” his lady, and though it may feel “uncertain,” it is deluded to call it “sickly.” Amadis of Gaul was “one of the most perfect knights errant there ever was,” and “one of the ways in which this knight best demonstrated his prudence, resolve, courage, long-suffering, steadfastness and love” was when he went mad, went “weeping” and “heartbroken,” after his lady Oriana “disdained” him. All knights “serve under the banner of love,” and this “fever” the poet talks of is just love’s natural flush. His lady is certainly not “black as hell” for making him feel it. I imitated Amadis of Gaul, went mad waiting in the Sierra Morena for my Dulcinea

del Toboso's response to my letter. To be "frantic-mad with evermore unrest" for love and in love — it's no disease at all.

Hamlet. Not I, nor Ophelia, nor the poet, are knights errant, and we have never, not once, claimed to be. "I will speak daggers to you," Don Quixote — it is your love for books of chivalry that make your "thoughts" and "discourse" as "madmen's are." Your "love" for Dulcinea is only a result of your incurable love for chivalry, which, as a code, is "past care" to everyone but you.

Don Quixote. I take offense. I love Dulcinea truly. "I can swear that, in the twelve years I have loved her more than the light of these eyes that the earth will one day devour, I have not seen her as many as four times," and she has "not even once noticed." I love her platonically, and my love is no poisonous disease. Your loves and your lovers are your diseases.

Ophelia. I concur with you, Don Quixote, that not all states of love produce such a sickness. When the poet uses "for," at the start of the couplet, he blames the mad disease — which the preceding quatrains described — on a marked "thee," since "for" is often used to express "for that reason." I know it too, for I have loved differently. I loved thee, Hamlet, without bitterness, and there was a time when my love for my father did not scourge me.

Hamlet. Oh, it all "hath made me mad." "The pangs of despised love" — who would bear it?

Ophelia. Must all love be "despised," Hamlet? The poet says, "desire is death," and I hover over the word "desire." Desire may represent the poet's love for his lover, but it does not represent or encompass all types of love. If there is desire, then there is want and yearning, usually intense yearning. But if you want something, it follows that you do not presently have it. Want is a wish to possess; you cannot desire what you possess. So, the poet is sick because his love is coated with desire. He lacks what he wants, which is an agony; he wants to "possess" a different reality of his lover, of his love. I have too "approved" "desire is death."

Hamlet. Oh, yes, indeed, poet, my "desire is death."

Ophelia. Hamlet, you seemed for a moment to reason, to have regained it. And now you twist words again, once more “blasted with ecstasy.” Me, I am exasperated and expired. My only further desire is to say that I love this sonnet: it’s a sonnet that pierces the heart of my condition. Whoever wrote it also wrote me.

Hamlet. “I loved Ophelia. Forty thousand brothers / Could not with all their quantity of love / Make up my sum.” I loved my mother, and still do, though I found her “stained” “black as hell.” And in the darkest of nights, it was, at the heart of it all, my love for my deceased father that drove me to “frantic-madness” and “evermore unrest.” I have known it to be all love and lovers and loves, and the poet is too narrow in his scope, for it is not just his “thee.” Nay, furthermore, the poet must replace “my love” with “my life” — my life is “as a fever.” My life is as a fever, and while I “sleep” and “feed” and make my resolutions, I “nurseth . . . on that which doth preserve the ill.” Yes, my “discourse” may be as “madmen’s are,” but I am only “mad in craft.” All of life, all of it, are the “whips and scorns of time.” Life is the disease and love a measly bit of it. “It is not madness / That I have uttered.”

Ophelia. “He is gone, he is gone, / And we cast away moan.”

Don Quixote. You two are indeed mad. My Dulcinea del Toboso, she is maddening, and my love for her the least mad thing of all.

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Penelope and Odysseus

By Ayushi Sharma



Familiar Stranger

By Jaqueline Del Castillo

Tell me dear friend, what troubles you so? Are you ill with an ailment or burdened by books?

I call you by your name but you are not the same Shaded clouds of gray drape over your face

You force out a smile when I seek you out, A poorly performed bravado, I can tell by your gaze.

Dawn-lit walks were a day to day,
Now you saunter at sunset; you live your days in dusk

Help me out here. I can't figure it out You tell me that you're fine,
but your eyes don't lie

Who took my friend and replaced him with this stranger? My hope grows all the more fainter

But wait! It's not too late!

Pray, pray, pray, that this gray mess may soon be driven away.

AJAX ESSAY PROMPT

In Professor Marie McDonough's CC101 class, students were asked to respond to Professor Esposito's thesis about what Greek tragedy is, specifically as it relates to Ajax and his destiny. Three of Professor McDonough's students (Lucia Bronfman, Aanvi Sharma, and Luka Moloney) each took a different side when answering the following prompt.

Professor Esposito states that the thesis of fifth century Athenian tragedy is “that the ground of the human condition is [1] one of constant change, conflict, and fragility in which [a] man is not the measure of all things (i.e. not self-sufficient), in which [b] reason/intellect, man's distinguishing trait, is often morally impotent against the forces of evil and darkness that are inherent in human nature, and in which [c] there is a frequent eruption of irrational, mysterious, and other-worldly forces (e.g. erotic passion, madness, chance, ancestral curses, gods). Despite the constraining yoke of these necessities we are [2] still deeply responsible for our destinies.”

Consider this statement in relation to Ajax and write a short essay explaining why you agree or disagree with the final part: to what extent is Ajax “still deeply responsible for” his destiny? What does his “heroism” (or perhaps, in your judgment, lack thereof) mean in this context?



Ajax as the Victim

By Lucia Bronfman

The story of Ajax is a tragic account of an Ancient Greek soldier who takes his own life, because he feels unable to handle the burden of losing honor. In the story, Achilles' armor is given to Odysseus over Ajax, which leaves him humiliated and drives him crazy. Scholar of classical tragedy, Stephen Esposito, argues that, despite the outside influence of larger Greek culture, Ajax is still wholly responsible for his destiny. However, I believe that his destiny was pulled and manipulated so intensely that he isn't responsible for it – he is a victim of it. As a whole, the consuming trauma of warfare and the role of fate in Ancient Greek Myth absolve Ajax of responsibility in his own destiny.

To begin, Ajax is haunted by what today we would call Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, or PTSD. He is clearly tired of the war, as he laments that he has been “detained” at Troy for “much too long” (414-415). Additionally, he has just witnessed the tragic death of his companion Achilles. One can only imagine that Ajax, a warrior of secondary strength, is both mourning the death of his friend and fearful for his future in battle. However, amidst the violence, it is his duty to continue fighting. In Ancient Greek society, nobody is technically freer than Ajax. He is a man, a citizen, and he is not a slave. Despite this apparent freedom, war has trapped everyone in a role, and his trauma likely compounds as time passes and the war intensifies.

This analysis is critical in understanding why losing the armor impacts Ajax so deeply. He is unable to extract himself from his role as a warrior, which means that the process of losing honor invalidates his identity. As a result, Ajax loses his ability to reason. The play describes this mental decay as “sick senses straying

idly” (636), which prevent him from changing his mind as the plot unfolds.

Indeed, immediately after slaughtering the cattle, Ajax decides to kill himself, but he later realizes that suicide is not the best option. He remarks that he feels “pity at leaving,” which is proof that he recognizes his own wrongness. However, this change in ideology doesn’t impact his decision. Though he feels pity, though he knows that his enemies have the potential to be his friends, though he knows that the seasons will change and so too will his luck, he doesn’t bend. Ajax has every reason to change his mind, but he doesn’t because trauma has made him irrational. This is why he shouldn’t be held deeply responsible for his destiny. Soldiers, who have PTSD from war, cry when hearing loud noises, even if they are safe at home in bed. They shouldn’t be blamed for this reaction, because sometimes one’s body defies one’s mind. Ajax’s reaction is beyond his control, and no amount of reason by Tecmessa or by himself could ever prevail. Thus, when the traumatized warrior, whose value has been ripped out of his hands, gives up, it is impossible to blame him. This is his body’s reaction to his trauma being invalidated, and to assert that he made this destiny for himself is invalidating and wrong.

However, perhaps the most compelling argument that Ajax is not profoundly in control of his own destiny is the existence of fate. In Greek mythology as a whole, physical manifestations of determinism called fates pull the strings of individual people’s destinies. Ajax’s story is no exception to this rule, and he explicitly acknowledges the existence of Furies as he is about to die. Importantly, fate does not control absolutely every action, and Ajax does not have zero agency. However, he cannot ever stray away from the universe’s ultimate plan for him. This is clear when Athena herself hints at the inevitability of his demise. She remarks that a single day can “sink the scales on human fortunes,” because the gods “hate the wicked” (131-133). This is proof that the consequences of human actions aren’t

due to those actions at all, but are rather a result of outside forces. There is a plan, and, though Athena blames Ajax's personality, even she knows that there are gods and forces outside of her control that influence every part of history. The messenger delivers a statement in agreement with this principle, where he laments that "from the very moment [Ajax] set forth from home" his fate was sealed (762). Though he may have some level of agency in minor decisions as the plot goes forward, he cannot outrun the plan that has been set up for him. The fates and the gods together have a hand in deciding how humans will interact with their world. As a result, Ajax is a victim of his own destiny.

As a whole, it feels unproductive to decide that Ajax isn't responsible for his fate. Importantly, however, this recognition doesn't mean we absolve him of the burden of his actions. The lesson is not exceedingly transferable to real life; the reader does not benefit from forgiving murder, deciding that free will doesn't exist, or ignoring the consequences of their actions. Instead, the argument is a devastating scholarly realization. This new understanding can help revise the degree of empathy with which we approach Ajax's story. It makes it impossible for the reader not to sympathize with him as Tecmessa begs him to stay, as he cries for change, and as he speaks to his son. These events could play out over and over, but Ajax will always make the same decision. Unlike other tragedies, however, the inevitability of the character's demise is not solely caused by a character flaw, but by PTSD and outside actors pulling the strings. He fulfills his role as a soldier when he goes to war, but the reader should feel intensely moved by the extent to which he is traumatized and the god's unbending decision to facilitate his suicide. The story of Ajax is, at its core, the story of a victim.

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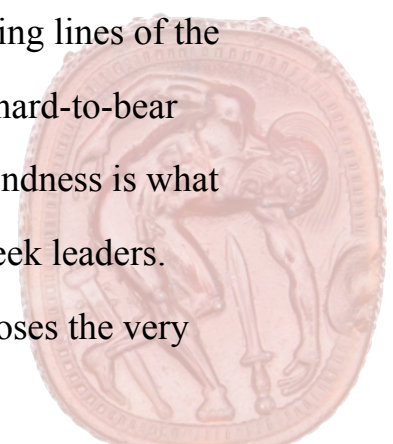


Introduced By Athena, Catalyzed By Ajax: Responsibility for Destiny in Sophocles' Ajax

By Aanvi Sharma

In fifth-century Athens, tragedy became a mirror through which citizens confronted the tension between divine power and human agency. A major form of dramatic art, it explored how individuals sometimes struggled to act with freedom in a rule governed by gods that were fickle and temperamental. Central to this tension were the ideas of fate vs. free will, hubris, and divine justice; which converge in Sophocles' Ajax. The play dramatizes the cost of a warrior's inability to adapt his firm code of honor to a changing moral order. Ajax's downfall begins when Athena imposes madness upon him, yet his destruction is finally brought on by his own pride, desire to be a hero and pursuit to protect his kleos. Thus, the question of Ajax, in Professor Esposito's words, being "deeply responsible for" his destiny becomes two-sided and complex. Though Ajax's decline commences due to divine will, his ultimate ruin comes from his refusal to evolve beyond the very ideals that define him.

From the beginning, Sophocles frames Ajax's downfall within a world where divinity is intertwined with human destiny, and the gods expose the limits of human control. This is evident in Athena's dialogues in the opening lines of the play. In conversation with Odysseus, she says "It was I who threw hard-to-bear imaginings over his eyes" (50), admitting to blinding Ajax. This blindness is what leads him to slaughter a flock of sheep who he imagines are the Greek leaders. Athena does more than simply punish Ajax for his actions; she exposes the very

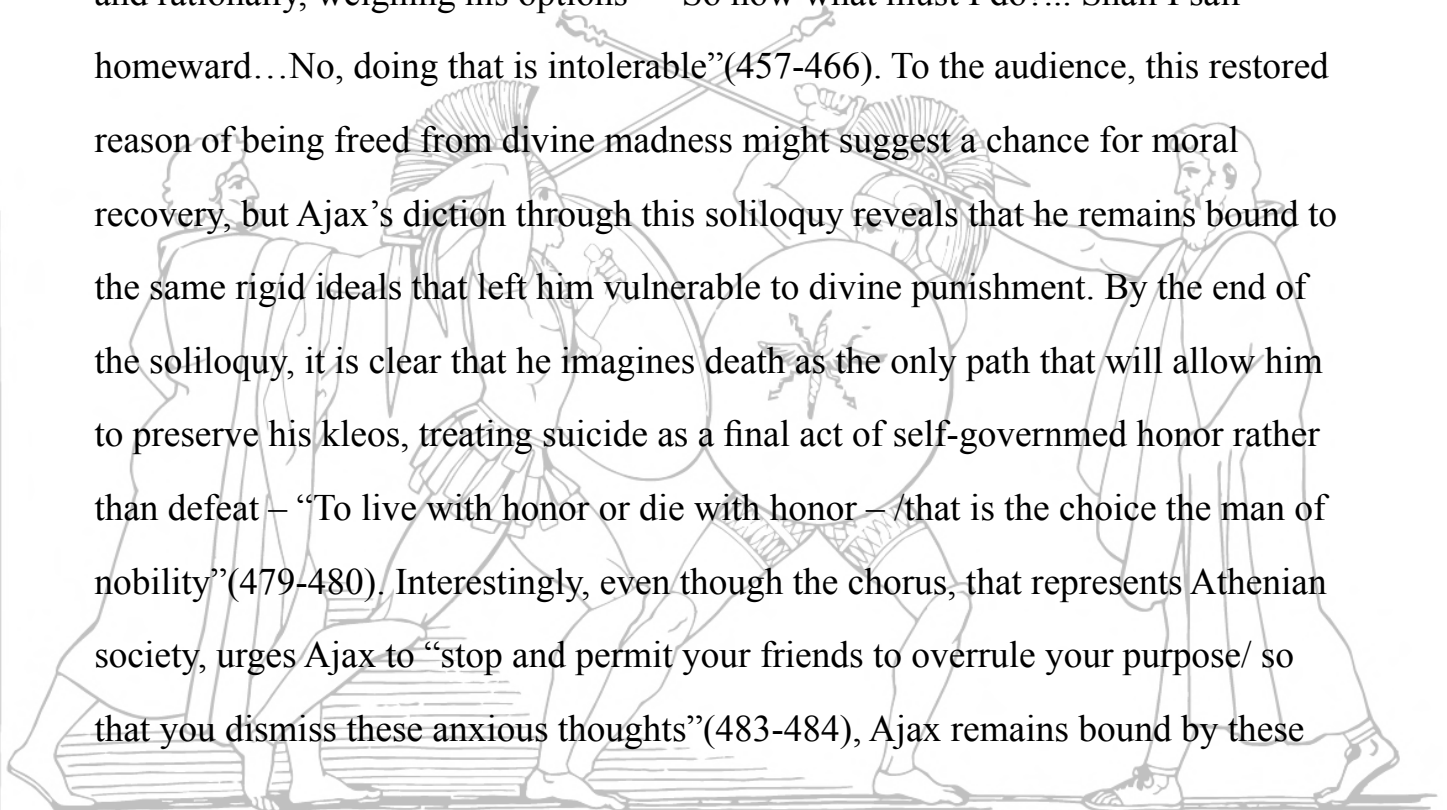


the very oblivion that defines him. Her actions transform his pride and arrogance into literal delusion, suggesting that his hubris and desire for kleos are exactly what leave him vulnerable to divine intervention. As she continues to taunt him while he gloats over the slaughtered livestock, Athena forces the audience to confront how fragile reason is when measured against the gods. In particular Ajax's reason for this action was not receiving Achilles' armour when it was him who carried Achilles' dead body away from the battlefield. His fixation on Achilles' armour underscores how the culture of honour and kleos in Classical Greece traps warriors in external validation, making them psychologically vulnerable to divine interference and emotional collapse. This complicates the question of Ajax's responsibility for his own destiny. Although Athena imposes madness upon him, it is his internal heroic code and the cultural pressures that shaped it that make him susceptible to the downfall he suffers.

Odysseus', who receives the armour of Achilles in place of Ajax, reaction to Athena's words further complicate a simple interpretation of Ajax's responsibility for his fate. Instead of gloating with her, Odysseus humbly responds with actions that acknowledge human dependence on the gods, community, and reason for being. This is made clear when he pleads with Athena to stop bothering Ajax – "What are you doing, Athena? Don't keep calling him out!"(74). He even empathizes with Ajax for falling to divine intervention– "But nevertheless, I pity the poor wretch, /even though he is my enemy, because he has been yoked/harshly to the harness of a dreadful delusion."(121-123) This response makes clear what Ajax refuses to accept: that human beings are fundamentally dependent on several different aspects and sustained by forces beyond their control. His empathy shows

his recognition of the limited nature of human agency by divine will, circumstance, and the fragility of reason itself. On the other hand, Ajax treats autonomy and self-sustenance as the core of his identity, and it is precisely this denial of dependence through which Athena exposes his madness. This contrast between Odysseus and Ajax accentuates the deeper problem over destiny in the play. Although Athena initiates Ajax's collapse, his susceptibility to this intervention was supplemented by the flaw in his inability to see himself as part of the communal, interdependent world that is fifth-century Athens. Hence, the scene suggests that Ajax's destiny begins out of his hands in divine punishment, but its moral roots lie in his own refusal to recognize the limits of human autonomy.

Ajax's suicide scene introduces another aspect to the question of being "deeply responsible" for your destiny. It is evident that once his madness imposed by Athena lifts, he acts with full clarity. Yet, he self-imposes imprisonment by his own heroic code. This is amplified in his soliloquy, where he speaks calmly and rationally, weighing his options – "So now what must I do?... Shall I sail homeward...No, doing that is intolerable"(457-466). To the audience, this restored reason of being freed from divine madness might suggest a chance for moral recovery, but Ajax's diction through this soliloquy reveals that he remains bound to the same rigid ideals that left him vulnerable to divine punishment. By the end of the soliloquy, it is clear that he imagines death as the only path that will allow him to preserve his kleos, treating suicide as a final act of self-governed honor rather than defeat – "To live with honor or die with honor – /that is the choice the man of nobility"(479-480). Interestingly, even though the chorus, that represents Athenian society, urges Ajax to "stop and permit your friends to overrule your purpose/ so that you dismiss these anxious thoughts"(483-484), Ajax remains bound by these



strict choices and his extreme desire to be self-sufficient and independent, and succumbs to suicide by falling upon a sword gifted to him by his Trojan enemy Hector. The irony of his method of suicide further accentuates how Ajax's identity is tied to a world of conflict and isolation he cannot outgrow. At this point without divine interference, Ajax's choice is unmistakably his own, and he is deeply responsible for his destiny, especially as society urges him to rethink his logic. In the long run, his destiny is shaped by his own internal logic of a flawed heroic mentality that he refuses to abandon even in the matter of life and death.

Ultimately, Ajax reveals a vision in which failure to recognize human dependence leads to tragedy, and divine force and human failure are inseparable. Athena's imposed madness indeed initiates Ajax's downfall, but the deeper tragedy lies in Ajax's inability to imagine a life beyond his kleos and the heroic values that define him. In my opinion, this is a lack of heroism, as he refuses to evolve as a person and sticks too closely to unrealistic ideals. In the end, his suicide shows that once the gods withdraw, he continues to destroy himself through the same ideals that left him vulnerable to divine punishment, indicating a fatal lack of self-awareness. Therefore, I agree with the statement to a large extent. Sophocles complicates Professor Esposito's claim, as Ajax is constrained by forces he cannot overcome, but he is still responsible for his own destiny, as he constrains himself to a code that is simply no longer relevant to the society he is a part of. In Ajax, true responsibility does not lie in resisting the gods and being independent, rather it lies in recognizing the limits of human autonomy and accepting that we are a part of an interconnected society that shapes our paths and destiny.

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The Role of Free Will in the Tragedy of Ajax

By Luka Moloney

Professor Esposito's thesis of fifth century Athenian tragedy, that despite all outside intervention one's destiny ultimately belongs to themselves, is reinforced by the narrative of Ajax. Throughout the story, from his initial dishonor and embarrassment to his eventual suicide, many outside factors seem to be the ultimate deciders of Ajax's fate, seemingly contradicting Esposito's thesis. However, a closer reading of the text reveals that despite everything, Ajax is responsible for his fate. This is demonstrated through his interactions with the divine, his interactions with the social order he lives in, and by giving the positive counter example of Odysseus as a man who despite also facing pressure still does what is right.

The intervention of other characters may seem at first glance to go against the idea that Ajax is in control of his fate, but these instances actually reveal his deeper intentions and show that this was the path he was following all on his own. Athena manipulates Ajax into killing livestock instead of the Greek leaders he intended to kill, and while he believes that this embarrassment is what has cost him his honor, I would disagree. Even if he were allowed to proceed as planned, he still would have lost his honor amongst the eyes of the people as he would have been murdering his direct superiors over pride. By the laws of the time, Odysseus had received the armor fairly, so Ajax lashing out like this would not be seen as a proportionate response to an insult. He would have even succeeded in the act of

killing them, if he had failed then he would've died in dishonor. Ajax even acknowledges his own culpability, saying "...revenge is close at hand to repay my devotion to such a foolish hunt" (406-407). He frames this admission in a self-pitying manner and is more concerned with the danger he perceives, but this is a tacit confession that even without Athena's intervention this ordeal was a bad idea. While the exact specifics of what happened were determined by Athena, the end result of Ajax's embarrassment was ultimately a downstream consequence of his conscious choice to put pride above reason.

While the ethics and codes of the society he lived in do play a part in Ajax's fate, the story takes great pains to show that his suicide is still a choice he is making. Before he takes his own life, the people he speaks with try to offer him a better path. Teccessma especially offers a very well reasoned explanation for why he must keep on living, and how true honor would be remaining with and providing for those he cares about (485-526). Ajax acknowledges the soundness of her argument (527-529), and in his own monologue is able to articulate the flaws within his own ideology and how needless killing himself really would be. He speaks of the mutable nature of the world, describing how enemies could become friends and friends could become enemies, implicitly acknowledging that things can be made better and that this is not necessarily the end for him (678-682). Despite this, he kills himself anyway, unable to live with how he feels despite what he understands to be true on an intellectual level. While some debate could be had on whether he could truly be understood to be in his right mind given his emotional state, all external factors in his life are trying to push him away from suicide as an answer, so the story only offers himself as a factor in his ultimate fate. Ajax believes following his codes to the letter are necessary to be heroic, but he

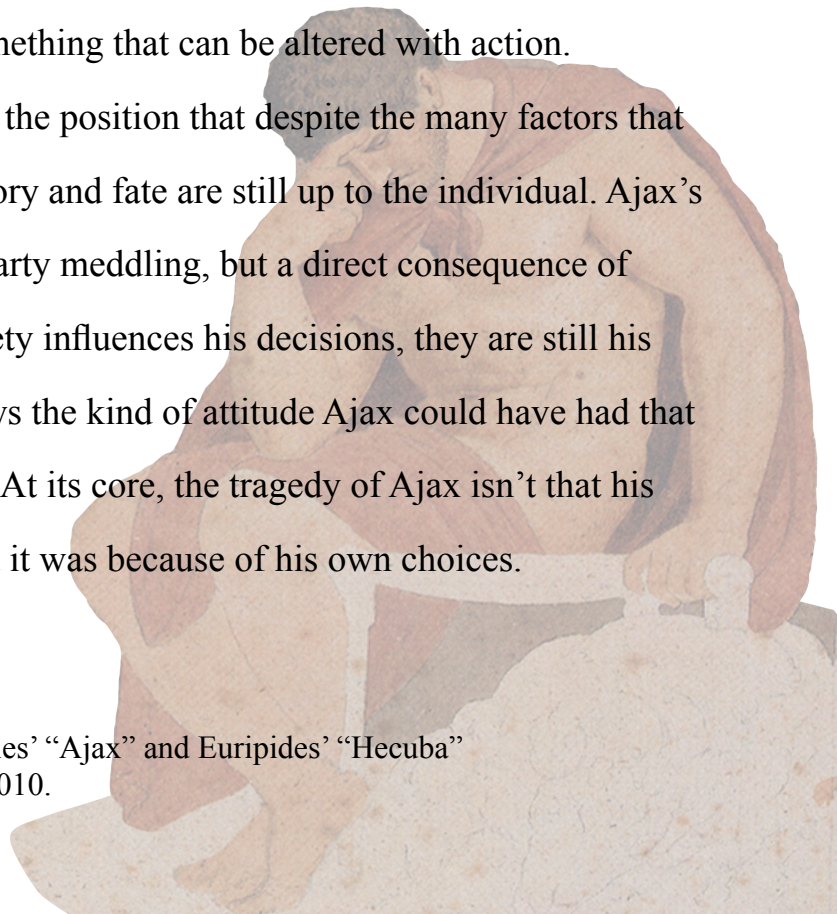
has already failed his code and adapting to his new situation he instead abandons it.

The story also positions mortal choice as above outside intervention when it comes to people's fates through its depiction of Odysseus. At every turn he is offered a chance to do bad and be rewarded for it, and yet he refuses. Odysseus's power is meaningless when compared to Athena's, and yet when she tells him to mock a disrespected enemy he refuses her despite the possibility of losing her favor (79-80). While this is not as hostile of a divine interaction as what Ajax deals with, it is arguably more revealing of Odysseus's character as he is consciously engaging in something dangerous to act according to his morals. When Agammemnon pushes him to refuse Ajax a proper burial, an action which would according to the codes of kleos put them above an enemy who disrespect them, he argues against this and for treating Ajax's corpse with respect as a fellow warrior (1332-1345). While the presence of the divine and the broader social paradigms people live in do play a role in decision making, the story ultimately supports the idea of free will by having Odysseus act for what he believes is justice in spite of this. The agency and determination of Odysseus contrasts with Ajax's fatalistic attitude, reaffirming to the audience that Ajax's destiny is not predetermined but instead something that can be altered with action.

In conclusion, the story of Ajax takes the position that despite the many factors that can intervene in one's life, that life's trajectory and fate are still up to the individual. Ajax's embarrassment is not just a result of third-party meddling, but a direct consequence of his own choices. While the code of his society influences his decisions, they are still his decisions. Through Odysseus the story shows the kind of attitude Ajax could have had that may have resulted in a happier end for him. At its core, the tragedy of Ajax isn't that his fate was thrust upon him, but that in the end it was because of his own choices.

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The Blue Glass

By Eojun Shin

Look, what you should have touched was this blue glass. Isn't the water blue inside?

It's proof that time is distorted. Look at my body, it's the same blue.

A memory comes to mind. When he looked into someone's eyes gently, that was the beginning.

I didn't see him touching the cup, but I could tell he had definitely touched it.

Everything we touched remains evidence like this. Now that I see it, it's easy, right?

I accepted, plainly, because they were too obvious evidence, and it would have been difficult to notice.

But somehow, a sense of skepticism crossed my body.

Why is it so easy to tell you this? Shouldn't it be a secret?

I looked around. The living room and kitchen in the same landscape, and the family dancing on TV,

I thought everything was a peaceful routine. If there's one thing that's changed, only that I've traveled.

I got goosebumps. Yes, my body was blue, too. I couldn't touch the blue water cup, and my body was blue as I crossed the other room and looked for things. Now I was standing in the middle of an empty living room, just staring at my family dancing.

He said as he walked to the front door.

"Let's go now"

I've been following him for a while without a word and thinking about this and that. I think it's over now, I think I can go and dance with him, and I think it was a really cool experience..

"... No, no, no. You can't do this. You're different from me, you're the executor of time. Mom and dad! You see me?!"

Come to think of it, that I was blue meant only the executor of time could see me. I was afraid I might never go back. But I had to follow him. It was not a dream.

'What is this? Why on earth am I the first to experience this and go with him!' ...

Did grandparents already experience it. If it's not me, it could be my dad or my mom. My thoughts crossed my mind.

I burst into tears after a lifetime, hugging my mom and dad once in a while and shouting that I love them.

“Because I could not stop for Death /He kindly stopped for me
The Carriage held but just Ourselves /And Immortality.”

Emily Dickinson

DEATH



CONDIT verb

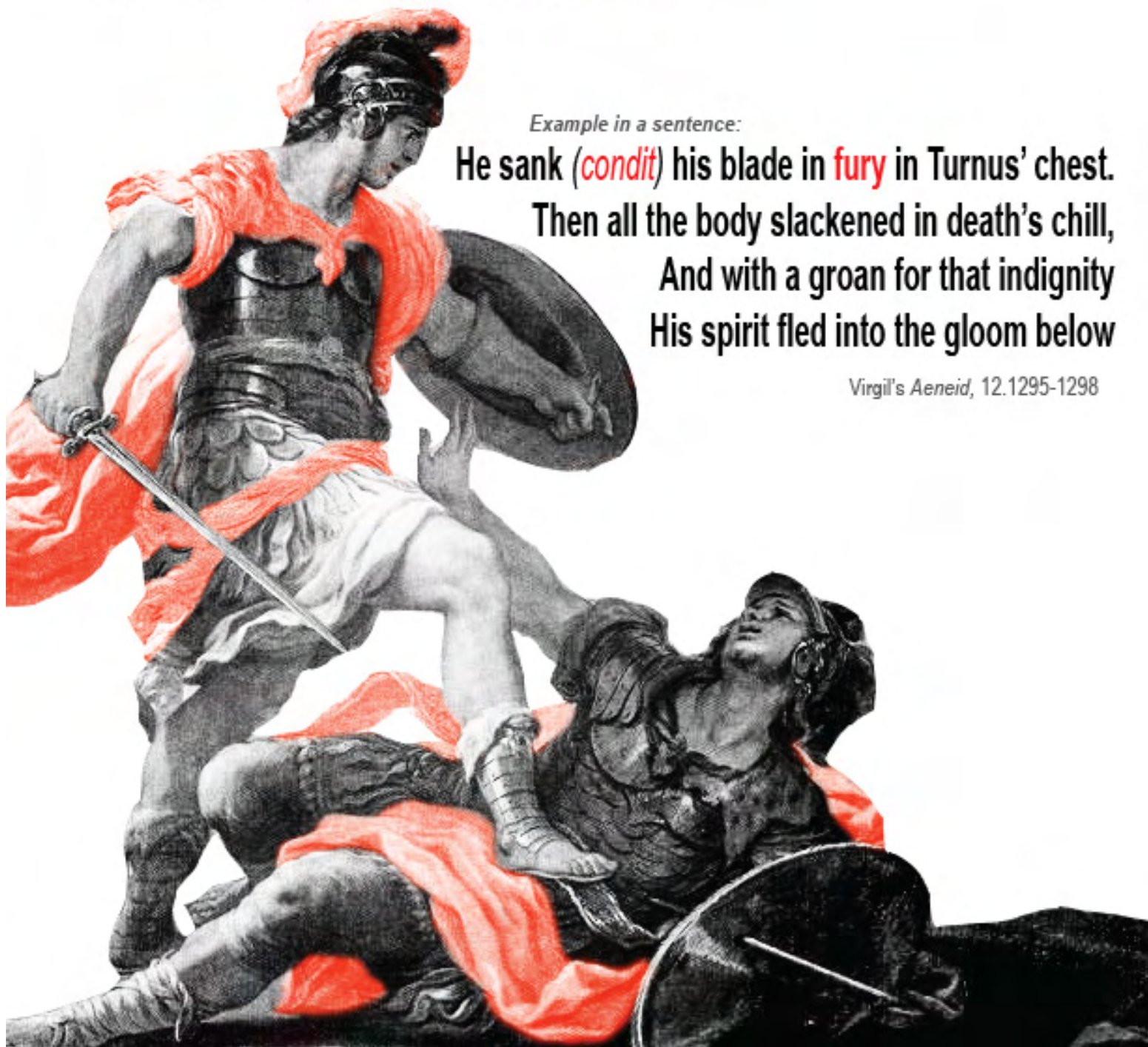
\kahn-deet • third-person singular present active indicative

- 1 : to **build**, **establish**, form, found
- 2 : (figuratively) to **plunge/bury** (weapon in enemy); **sheathe** (sword)
- 3 : (figuratively) to **bring to an end**, **conclude**

Example in a sentence:

He sank (*condit*) his blade in **fury** in Turnus' chest.
Then all the body slackened in death's chill,
And with a groan for that indignity
His spirit fled into the gloom below

Virgil's Aeneid, 12.1295-1298



War, Autonomy, and the Body

By Yunfei Zhang

Euripides' *Hecuba* describes the aftermath of war and its impacts on those involved, primarily those of the enslaved women of Troy and the titular Hecuba. However, this play not only reveals the conditions of the losers of war but also the impact of the war on the winner and those with power. In this, Euripides uses the irony in the characterization of Hecuba and her children and Agamemnon to characterize war as depersonalizing. This is used to ultimately reveal the lack of autonomy war causes, not only in the losers, but equally so in the victors of war. Euripides uses the mercantile nature of the exchange of lives, the inherent depersonalization of the enslaved women, and the ironic powerlessness of the victors of the war to depict this.

The narrative framing of the death of Polydorus serves to further center the materialistic elements of war, which Sophocles hangs over the narrative to emphasize the materialistic exchanges of lives that occur. Sophocles' choice to begin the play with the ghost of Polydorus telling the story of his death as a result of Polymestor's desire for his wealth. The exchange here of a life for material wealth is presented in the most literal sense: Polydorus' life is exchanged for gold. Despite the distance from the stage of war, the nature of this mercantile exchange serves to depersonalize Polydorus, lowering him to like that of a material object to be exchanged for money as well as dehumanized to a literal object, thrown out to sea. This depersonalization leads to a lack of agency seen also in his inability to receive a burial. Polydorus' request to the gods for a burial (49-50) represents a further loss of agency, being forced to rely on others to receive the dignity of a burial as the result of the ultimate loss of agency in death. This also serves as foreshadowing for the exploration of the loss of autonomy throughout the rest of the play as Polydorus first presents to the audience Polyxena's eventual death as "assigned destiny" (43). These references to the material exchange of lives and loss of agency serves to frame the play with this idea, reminding the audience that all involved in the war are limited in their agency throughout.

Euripides' focus on the new status of Hecuba and the Chorus as slaves and as possessions, continues the focus on the material nature war causing depersonalization. Hecuba and her children's enslavement is a transition from their previous role as nobility and in this not merely the loss of status but the removal of agency as they become akin to objects. The transition of the chorus from their fears of displacement in the first chorus (445-483) to the repetition of "necessary" (630) and "compulsion" (639) show the inherent dehumanization of the slave women in both their inability to determine where they shall go as well as the actions they perform. The reference to the very beginning of the Trojan War (644-647) in addition serves to emphasize the inevitability of their condition as slaves as foreshadowed throughout, and in being tied to war.

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Polyxena’s characterization throughout serves to represent the continuous dehumanization even beyond becoming a slave. At the beginning of the play, Polyxena is directly described as a “prize” (115) to be offered for the ghost of Achilles. This is further reflective of her status as a possession of Agamemnon to be offered but also lowered as just a material object of value. However, even beyond being a slave and a prize, Polyxena is continuously compared to an animal for sacrifice. The repeated reference of others to Polyxena as throughout as cattle, in particular during her sacrifice as “the bucking of your calf” (526) serves to lower her below the status of a slave to that of a sacrificial animal. This too is internalized as these references are not only external but through Polyxena’s own reference to herself as a “a mountain bred-calf” (205). Polyxena is thus reduced from not only her status as a slave captured in war but to a sacrificial animal to be killed for the honors of war.

Throughout the play, though there are some attempts to seize a higher level of agency, these attempts by the living are shown to be ultimately futile. Though it could be argued that Polyxena willingly going to her sacrifice serves an act of reclaiming agency, this act of supposed agency does not change the eventual result of the sacrifice being her death. She gives up her ultimate autonomy with her life and, like Polydorus, is only able to seek any form of agency in death. In addition, in her death her body is seen as an object, both in the nature of her sexuality in being naked upon her death, seen in the urgency by which the soldiers cover her (577), as well as Agamemnon’s giving her body to Hecuba (726) as a favor. Though there is an attempt by Polyxena to gain autonomy by arranging how her body falls (567-70), in the end she becomes just a body and thus an object and exchanged as such between Agamemnon and Hecuba.

Though Hecuba is able to enact revenge upon Polymestor for the loss of her two children with the killing of Polymestor’s two sons, the direct exchange of lives does not change her own status and only furthers the mercantile nature of exchange of lives that she also has experienced. This exchange is foreshadowed by Polydorus’ ghost who describes the “two corpses of two children” (44) that Hecuba will see, a prophecy that is fulfilled by as the bodies both of Polymestor’s children on stage (1116) and the “two corpses” (1288) of Polydorus and Polyxena. In response to the killing of Polymestor’s son Hecuba compares Polymestor’s pain and loss to her own (1256), making clear the nature of the equivalent exchange she believes she is making in their killing. In making this exchange of the deaths of Polymestor’s children for the loss of her own two, ironically she too dehumanizes the children into objects of material exchange. Her attempts in gaining autonomy in revenge only serves to continue the mercantile exchange of lives that had occurred with her own children. At the end of the play she, like Polyxena, is further

reduced to an animal as Polymestor prophesizes that she shall become a dog (1265) and ultimately she gains no autonomy from her revenge. Thus the attempts at gaining autonomy of both Polyxena and Hecuba only serve to further their own depersonalizations. Euripides uses irony in the contrasting power roles between the slave women and Polymestor and Agamemnon, the winners of war, to highlight the ultimate lack of autonomy of not only the defeated but even the victors. Those of higher status are also portrayed as limited in agency due to the social constraints that they face. Agamemnon, despite his belief in Polymestor having done wrong, cites his inability to help due to his fears of the view of the soldiers (850-860) showing the way by which his agency to do what he believes is honorable is limited. Hecuba's commentary in response (864-866) similarly shows this lack of agency, directly comparing the equality of their lack of freedoms. However, this makes Hecuba's ability to act upon her revenge all the more ironic since, even as a slave, she holds more agency than Agamemnon. Though their freedoms are limited in different ways, they are both equally limited in their agency despite the differences in status.

Sophocles' focuses, with the culmination of the play in Agamemnon's trial over Hecuba's revenge, on her justification despite being of lesser status than him but simultaneously there being no change in their statuses as a result. Despite Agamemnon's inability to act to aid Hecuba, he simultaneously cannot act but still cannot let Polymestor go unpunished for fear of "reproach" (1249-1250). Polymestor too is made to pay "justice to my inferiors" (1253) as a result, an ironic comment that juxtaposes the expectation of association of justice with those superior. Thus the pursuit of justice, something seemingly more closely associated with the code of honor and men like Agamemnon and Polymestor, is made ironic through Hecuba and the women's enactment of it instead. Just as Agamemnon is limited in agency due to the competing pressures of the public view and ideals of honor, Polymestor must yield to the structures of justice that are enacted upon him, even through those lesser in status to him.

The nature of Polymestor's autonomy being limited is made literal also through his blinding and the killing of his sons at the hands of Hecuba and the chorus of slave women. This too is ironic in its upending of the perceived power roles. Euripides characterizes the women particularly as "unaccustomed to war" (1034) and their perceived weakness is emphasized by Agamemnon earlier in the play (885), furthering the contrast between the seeming power difference between not only men and women but also their status as slaves and Polymestor's as king. The loss of light and sight is associated with the loss of freedom, seen in Polyxena's attempt at agency in death being described "from free eyes I release this light" (377-378). This is paralleled by Hecuba and the women's revenge upon Polymestor by blinding him. Additionally, Polymestor's despair in response to being blinded (1090-1105) parallels the despair of the slave women of the chorus (445-483) in their sense of displacement and the loss of agency upon their enslavement. The blinding thus, is used by Euripides to emphasize the loss of autonomy for Polymestor, who would be typically seen as more powerful, as a result of the actions of those who are seen as

the oppressed.

Agamemnon is similarly brought to the same level. At the very end of the play, Polymestor foreshadows the death of Agamemnon (1281) and Cassandra (1275) upon their return to Argos. Just as Polydorus' life is exchanged for gold and Polymestors' sons for the children of Hecuba, Agamemnon and Cassandra are killed in exchange for the death of Iphigenia. In addition, despite their differences in status, Agamemnon and Cassandra are killed as a pair, ultimately showcasing the equal loss of autonomy for all. Ultimately in *Hecuba*, Euripides reveals that not only are the victors and the losers in war equally lacking in autonomy but also that the oppressed and those who hold power, though having different restraints, are equally limited in agency. The depersonalizing nature not only appears in the dehumanization of the slave women and their loss of autonomy but also is present in the obligations of the powerful to ideas of public perception and justice. Euripides reveals that even those with higher statuses, as a result, are unable to escape from the equalizing force of death and the commodification of life in war.

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Ideal Education

By Mason Burns

The sickroom was hushed, its white marble walls made ever more beautiful by the light from the eastern window, falling in perfect golden sections, just as it had every morning before. Caretaker Korinna's shallow breaths and the distant crashing of champagne-colored waves offered the only reminders that the day was moving at all.

"Can you hear those footsteps, Myrrha? You should get going; breakfast will be starting soon." Korinna said to a reluctant Myrrha, sitting beside her bed.

"Okay," Myrrha replied, her hand lingering by the rough indigo linen, "just promise you'll be here tomorrow morning, okay?"

Korinna was quiet for a moment. When she spoke again, her voice carried the same quiet patience Myrrha knew so well. "I will be fine, Myrrha," Korinna's eyes, bright despite the malady, found Myrrha's face. "But you cannot waste your time worrying. Wait a while before visiting again—a few days, perhaps. Focus on your education."

The tightness in Myrrha's chest eased slightly. Korinna would not tell her to wait if she thought... She stood, straightening her undyed linen tunic. "A few days, then."

"A few days."

Myrrha walked to the door, then turned back. Korinna's eyes had already closed, her face peaceful in the morning light; she reminded Myrrha of the statue of Athena in the colonnade.

Myrrha proceeded through the day as it marched on in its usual rhythm. Mathematics in the morning, Elder Kleitos guiding them through geometric proofs while the younger ones tallied their sums, and the older ones fidgeted with cubes and pyramids. Myrrha copied the figures onto her wax tablet. The midday meal was simple: bread, olive oil, cheese, figs. She ate with Philon and Xanthe and the others, listening to them debate whether Dorian or Phrygian mode was more appropriate for the hymn they were learning. The afternoon brought spear training. Her body knew the movements. First stance, turn, thrust, recover. The sand was warm beneath her feet, the practice spear familiar in her hands. Her instructor chanted corrections, and she adjusted her footwork, her balance.

She tried not to think about the sickroom. About Korinna's closed eyes, about the promise to wait a few days. She focused on the rhythm of training, the geometry of movement, the way her shadow fell across the sand in late afternoon. When the training ended, she poured some oil from her atyballos on her arms and legs, scraping the sand and sweat and oil from her skin. She changed into a clean tunic for the evening meal as the sun fell below the horizon again, the shadows stretched longer across the floors and walls than they had the month before— *Even Apollo cannot retrace his steps across the sky perfectly*, Myrrha thought.

The dining hall held two hundred people beneath its high, vaulted ceiling. Five long, elaborately decorated tables ran parallel to each other, each seating forty guardians and guardians-in-training. The hazy evening light came through tall windows on the western wall, turning the white marble columns to amber, the statues gold. Myrrha took her usual place between Philon and Xanthe. Serving dishes made their way down the table: lentil stew tonight, warm bread, roasted vegetables, olives. She filled her wooden bowl, waiting for the blessing.

Elder Kleitos stood at the head table where senior guardians ate. His voice carried through the hall's impeccable acoustics. "We give thanks for this food, grown in good soil and prepared by willing hands. We give thanks for this city, built on justice. We give thanks for each other, who strive together toward what is good."

"We give thanks," the hall responded. Two hundred voices as one voice. People began to eat. Conversation rose in a low murmur. Someone asked about tomorrow's lessons. Someone else described a new footwork pattern they'd learned. Myrrha broke her bread and dipped it in the stew. The warmth and salt grounded her. Halfway through the meal, Guardian Theron stood. The hall didn't fall silent, but people nearby stopped talking as they turned their attention toward him.

"A reminder," Theron said, his voice measured, "that tomorrow at dawn we'll honor three guardians who have completed their service this month: Caretaker Korinna, Guardian Philippos, and Guardian Lysia. The ceremony will be brief, in the amphitheater. Those who wish to speak should inform me before sleep."

He sat back down.

At Myrrha's table, Philon glanced at her, his eyes widening. Xanthe, who sat across from them, reached for another piece of bread without pausing. At the far end of their table, someone laughed at something unrelated.

Myrrha stared down at her bowl. The hall seemed too bright. Too loud. All these people eating and talking and living, and Korinna was...

Completed their service. That's what Theron had said. Completed their service.

She picked up her spoon. She made herself take a bite. She chewed. She swallowed. The food tasted like nothing.

"Myrrha," Philon whispered beside her. "Are you—" "I'm fine."

Xanthe looked up then, noticing the exchange. "Did you know Caretaker Korinna well?"

"She was one of my primary teachers," Myrrha said. "She taught me music when I was younger."

"I heard she was very skilled," Xanthe said. "It's good she'll be honored tomorrow."

"Yes. Good." Myrrha made herself eat three more bites. Four. She counted them.

When people started finishing, standing to clear their bowls, she stood with them. She moved through the familiar motions. Scrape the bowl into the collection pot for the pigs. Stack it with the others for washing. She filed out with the rest of the students in her age group to the sleeping hall.

The colonnade stretched forty paces, twenty columns. Each shadow fell where it should. Birds gathered on the roofs and trees; from their chirps and squabbles arose an unstructured symphony of nature. Myrrha had walked this path with Korinna a thousand times. She'd often wonder if the birds had their own rhythm, if the souls of every species could find tempo, if it was even important for them. She walked this path yesterday, retraced her steps this morning. She would walk it tomorrow, too, and Korinna would still be gone, the birds would keep singing.

Philon caught up with her. "Myrrha, wait."

She kept walking. The columns blurred past. One, two, three, four. "I'm fine, Philon."

"You were close to her. It's okay to be sad."

"*I am sad.*" The words came out sharp, hot. "*But I'm not going to fall apart.* I'm going to go to the ceremony tomorrow, and I'm going to honor her memory properly, and I'm going to continue my training. That's what she wanted."

"Okay," Philon said quietly.

They walked in silence to the sleeping hall. Children washing faces at basins. Pulling on sleeping tunics. Arranging themselves in their beds. Everything in its proper place. Everything moving forward. Myrrha drew the indigo curtains and lay in the darkness.

Completed their service. The phrase echoed in Myrrha's mind as the night went on. Four counts in. Four counts held. Four counts out. The way Korinna had taught her. Around her, sixty children settled into sleep. She thought about the sickroom. White marble walls. Light falling in golden sections. Korinna's face, marble-still. The promise—a few days—there would be no few days. The thought arrived sharp: *She knew. She knew she was dying and she sent me away.* Her chest felt too tight. The tears came hot, slipping into her hair. She made no sound. Around

her, sixty children breathed in rhythm. She lay there and waited for the dawn.

The amphitheater was carved into the hillside; seven terraces of stone seating looked out onto the coast. The dawn light turned the sea pink, then amber. Myrrha sat with the other children her age on the third terrace. Below, three bodies lay on simple biers, dressed in clean white linen. Caretaker Korinna. Guardian Philippos. Guardian Lysia. Guardian Theron stood in the center. His voice carried easily in the perfect acoustics. “We honor three guardians who have completed their service. They lived well. They served justly. They taught and aided and protected those who continue after them.”

He gestured to the first bier. “Guardian Philippos trained warriors for thirty years. He taught courage and discipline.” A younger guardian stood and spoke briefly about a lesson Philippos had taught him. Others nodded.

“Guardian Lysia organized our provisions and ensured no one went without. She taught foresight and care.” Another guardian spoke. Brief. Measured. Good.

“Caretaker Korinna trained children in music and mathematics. She taught harmony and precision.” Myrrha waited for the next speech. And waited.

Myrrha’s hands gripped the stone bench. She should stand. She should speak. But her throat was too tight and the words—what words? *She taught me to breathe in rhythm. She told me to wait a few days. She sent me away.*

The silence stretched.

Finally, Caretaker Althea stood. “Korinna was patient. She could explain the same concept a dozen times without frustration. She believed every one of her charges could be turned if given the proper guidance.” Althea sat.

That was all. Theron nodded. “These guardians served well. We carry forward what they taught us. We remember them through our actions, not through lamentation. The body returns to the earth. The soul continues. This is natural. This is good.”

Completed their service.

The children filed out of the amphitheater in orderly rows. The morning bell would ring soon. Breakfast would be served. The day would begin. Myrrha walked with the others, her legs moving automatically. Around her, children talked quietly about the upcoming lessons, about training. Philon walked beside her but didn’t speak.

Everything continued.

The days moved in their usual rhythm.

Myrrha copied figures onto her wax tablet. She answered when called upon. She nodded when Elder Kleitos pointed out a mistake in her proof. She ate her portion. She listened to conversations around her. She went through the drills, mimicked the movements. Stance, turn, thrust, recover. The movements were familiar. Her body knew what to do. She went through the motions. The days moved in their usual rhythm, but it felt as if Myrrha had stayed behind. With Korinna. Her footwork lagged a half-beat behind the others. Her spear felt heavier than it should. During wrestling practice, she lost her balance and fell hard against the sand.

"Again," Instructor Charmides called.

She stood. She tried again. She lagged again. That night, she practiced her breathing. Four counts in. Four counts held. Four counts out. It didn't help. The next day was the same. And the next. On the fifth day, during spear drills, her grip slipped. The practice spear clattered against the stone edge of the gymnasium. Twenty heads turned.

"Myrrha," Charmides said. "Step out." She retrieved the spear, placed it back on the rack. She sat on the stone bench at the gymnasium's edge and watched the others continue. Their movements were synchronized, fluid. Perfect. Beautiful.

That evening, after the meal, Guardian Theron found her in the colonnade. "Walk with me," he said.

They walked past the sleeping halls, past the training grounds, toward the terraced gardens where the geometric paths divided the space into perfect sections. Theron didn't speak until they reached the central fountain. Water fell in a steady pattern, the same pattern it had fallen for years.

"You're struggling," he said.

"I'm fine."

"You're not fine. Your instructors have noticed. Your caretakers have noticed." He paused. "I've noticed." Myrrha stared at the fountain.

"I'm trying. I go to all my lessons. I complete all my training."

"Yes. But you're not present. You retrace your steps, but your mind is elsewhere." He sat on the stone bench beside the fountain. "Sit."

She sat.

"Korinna's death troubles you."

It wasn't a question, but Myrrha answered anyway. "Death is natural. Death is not terrible. Good people don't lament."

"You're reciting what you've been taught."

"Isn't that what I'm supposed to do?"

It was quiet for a moment. "Tell me what you're actually thinking."

"I don't understand." The words came out before she could catch them. "Korinna was good. She was just. She served the city well. But she died anyway. She got sick and she died and everyone just... continued. Like nothing happened. Like she was just—" Myrrha's voice cracked. "Like she completed her service and that's all there is."

"What else should there be?"

"I don't know. Something. Anything." She turned to face him. "Why did she die? Why do good people suffer?"

"Good people don't suffer from death. Death is neutral—"

"But sickness isn't neutral. The sickness hurt her. I saw it. I sat beside her bed and watched her get weaker every day and that wasn't neutral, that was..." She stopped, her chest tight. "How can the gods only cause good if good people still get sick?"

Theron studied her face. "You think the gods caused Korinna's illness?"

"Didn't they? Don't they cause everything?"

"The gods cause good things. Sickness is not a good thing, the gods did not cause it."

"Then what did?"

"The body. Matter. Nature." He gestured around them. "The physical world operates by its own principles. Bodies age. Bodies fail. This is not divine punishment. This is simply what bodies do."

"So the gods don't care?"

"The gods care about the soul, not the body. Korinna's body failed. Her soul remains just."

"But I can't see her soul. I can't talk to it. All I have is..." Myrrha felt something hot behind her eyes. "Nothing. She's just gone."

"She's not gone. What she taught you remains. What she gave you remains. You carry her forward."

"I don't want to carry her forward." The words came out bitter. "I want her to be here." Theron was quiet. Myrrha's hands were shaking. "Everyone else seems fine. Guardian Euthymios died and Philon was fine the next day. But I can't—I can't focus. I can't train properly. I can't stop thinking about her. What's wrong with me?"

"Did you love Korinna?"

The question caught her off guard. "I—yes. She was my teacher." "That's not what I asked." His voice was gentle. "Did you love her? Specifically? More than your other caretakers?"

Myrrha hesitated. "We're supposed to love everyone equally." "That's not what I asked."

"Yes." She managed to say. "Yes. I loved her. More than the others. Is that wrong?"

Theron looked at the fountain, at the water falling in its eternal pattern. "Tell me what you think."

Myrrha stared at her hands. "I think it's wrong. I think I loved her too much. I think that's why I can't focus. My soul is disordered—my grief is overpowering my reason. If I were just, if I were properly educated, I would have moved on by now. Like Philon. Like everyone else."

"Philon didn't love Euthymios the way you loved Korinna."

"I know. He told me."

"And you think that makes him better? Stronger?"

"Doesn't it? He can function. I can't."

Theron turned to face her fully. "Myrrha, why do you think we train guardians?"

The question seemed too simple. "To protect the city."

"Yes. And what are we protecting?"

"The people. Justice. The good."

"Can you protect something you don't love?"

Myrrha hesitated. "I... I don't know."

"You can obey something you don't love. You can serve it out of duty. But to *truly* protect something, to be willing to die for it, you must *love* it." He paused. "Korinna taught you what excellence looks like. You loved her because she was worth loving. Because she embodied the virtues we're all striving toward. The love was recognition."

"But it hurts."

"Yes."

"So how is it good?"

Theron was quiet for a long moment. "Tell me. When you think of Korinna now, what comes to mind?"

"Pain. Loss. Like something's been ripped away."

"What else?"

Myrrha thought. "I... I remember her teaching me. I remember the way she'd explain things, over and over, a new way each time, until I understood. I remember her hands showing me how to hold the lyre properly. I remember—" Her voice caught. "I remember that she cared. That she wanted me to become something good."

"Does remembering those things dishonor her?"

"No."

"Does it make you want to abandon your training? To give up on becoming a guardian?"

Myrrha shook her head slowly. "No. It makes me want..." She paused. "It makes me want to become what she thought I could be."

"Then your grief isn't disordered. Your grief is appropriate." Theron stood. "The education isn't meant to prevent you from loving deeply, Myrrha. It's meant to prevent destructive grief—the kind that makes you believe death is the worst thing, that makes you wail and tear your clothes and abandon your duty. You haven't done any of that. You've continued. You've struggled, yes, but you've continued."

"But I can't focus. I'm failing at training."

"You're not failing. You're processing. There's a difference." He gestured toward the garden paths, their geometric precision. "Look at these paths. They're designed to teach proportion, harmony. But do you think the first time the architect drew these lines, they were perfect? No. He drew them, measured them, adjusted them. Over and over until they were right. Your soul is the same. You're adjusting. You're finding the harmony again."

"How long does that take?"

"As long as it takes. But Myrrha," He looked at her seriously. "You need to understand something. The other children aren't better than you because they moved on faster. They simply loved differently. Some people form deep, specific bonds. Others spread their affection more equally. Neither is wrong. What matters is that your love doesn't lead you astray."

"Does it look like it's misleading me?"

"No. It looks like it's refining you."

Myrrha felt something shift in her chest. Not relief, exactly. But something loosening. "What should I do?"

"Keep training. Keep learning. Let yourself think about her. Don't push it away. And when you remember her, remember what she taught you. Not just the lessons, but the way she taught them. The patience. The care. The belief that you could become something excellent." He started walking back towards the main complex. "That's how you honor her. Not by forgetting. Not by pretending it doesn't hurt. But by becoming what she believed you could be."

They walked in silence for a while. The evening light fell through the columns in golden sections. "Guardian Theron?" Myrrha said quietly.

"Yes?"

"Did you... have you ever lost someone you loved? Like this?"

He was quiet for a long moment. "Yes."

"How did you... how did you keep going?"

"The same way you will. One day at a time. One drill at a time. One lesson at a time." He paused. "And eventually, you'll realize that thinking about them doesn't break you anymore. It steadies you. A hand on your shoulder, guiding you forward." They reached the sleeping hall. The other children were washing

up, preparing for the evening rest. "Get some sleep, Myrrha. Tomorrow, try again. That's all any of us can do."

He left.

Myrrha stood in the colonnade for a moment longer, watching the light fade.

Then she went inside, washed her face, changed into her sleeping tunic. She lay down and drew the indigo curtains. Four counts in. Four counts held. Four counts out. The breathing didn't bring calm. But it brought something. A retracing of steps walked countless times. A rhythm Korinna had taught her.

Around her, sixty children settled into sleep.

Myrrha closed her eyes and, for the first time in a week, sleep came.

Where the Geraniums Bloom

By George Brown

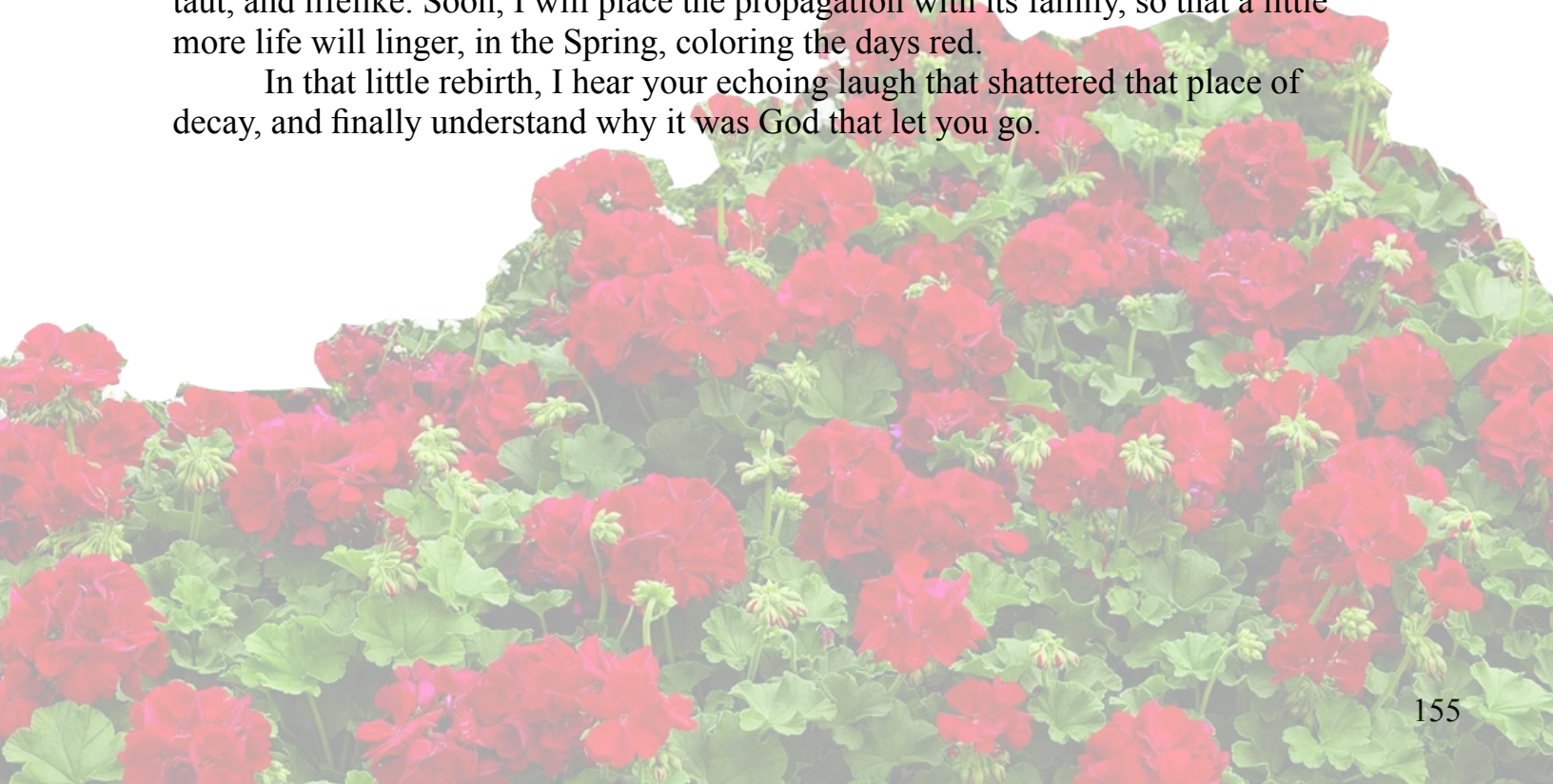
In Memory of Grand Jan

Grandmother loved her geraniums. She loved the soft contours of their drooping leaves, how their clustering petals cluttered her sterile home (white on white) and, scentless, introduced punctual green to the chaos of her drawn on days, at this point spent waiting for the end that was already late; in an adjustable nursing bed in a room that smelled of urine and rich flesh she lingered and the geraniums bloomed.

In this room, I was a child who could not understand. While you and Mom chattered and laughed, in slowing tones until the end, I would look out the window. There I saw where the sparrows would boisterously collect like dew, ostentatious in their bird bath of carved granite, maybe aware that across the thick glass, grandma sat in her beeping throne, covered by a hot white sheet, staying awake to sleep, until she could no longer speak.

I still see the patient, dull red of those never-ending flowers, who persisted even as their caregiver grew impatient for death. And grandma, I regret to inform you, I never learned to share your belief in the divine; at your funeral, when the priest commanded us to pray, I spoke and did not understand. But, as for the problem of death, the geraniums and I are in agreement: this morning I planted a cutting next to its mother and watched as the soft verdant green of its velvet leaves grew turgid, taut, and lifelike. Soon, I will place the propagation with its family, so that a little more life will linger, in the Spring, coloring the days red.

In that little rebirth, I hear your echoing laugh that shattered that place of decay, and finally understand why it was God that let you go.



Not a whit, we defy augury; there's a special providence in the fall of a sparrow. If it be now, 'tis not to come; if it be not to come, it will be now; if it be not now, yet it will come: the readiness is all. (Hamlet, V.2)



This piece was made to reflect the acceptance of fate in *Hamlet* in the fall of a sparrow speech. At this moment, he chooses to embrace uncertainty and his lack of agency, but by doing so takes his first (and last) intentional step, for once, actively taking charge of his destiny. The sparrow's wing is built in multiple layers connected via hinges, to reveal a developing understanding of his crisis, ending with the fortune cookie paper stating "the situation is changeable, yet you cannot push the river."

The situation is changeable, yet you cannot push the river.

Sparrow

By *Elijah Maloney*



The Privilege of the Living

By Imaad Ali Tahir

... Is to eat.

To eat, and be satiated. To eat, and know that you once again have the fuel to see another day. To eat, and find purchase with your mouth, or your proboscis, or roots. There is no living thing that does not eat, or has not eaten, and there will not be a living thing that does not eat.

If you do not eat, you will die.

If you do not eat, there will be no more you.

A privilege is something you are given, and it is something good for you— just as it is good for you to eat, and you did not choose to have a mouth, or teeth, or a tongue, or a stomach. You have been given the ability to eat, and it is so vital to your existence that it takes up the entirety of the lower halves of your skull and your torso. After all, you do not need a mouth to communicate— just look at the luna moths, so singularly made for procreation that they exit their cocoons without any mouth to speak of, doomed to starve within a matter of days. What else do you have a mouth for if not to eat?

If you are given a privilege, then there must be someone who is trampled in the path of you exercising it. “Every action has an equal and opposite reaction” says Newton, and the reaction to your consumption is clear: something is lost, ground up by your teeth and melted down in the acid of your stomach.

If you wish to eat, something’s life must be taken.

Something must die, all so that you don’t have to.

Whether it is a plant, an animal, or perhaps something in between, your life requires the sacrifice of countless others. Every apple you bite into, every banana you peel, every yeast you scorch in an oven, and every cow you slaughter. You do not live without others dying in your place.

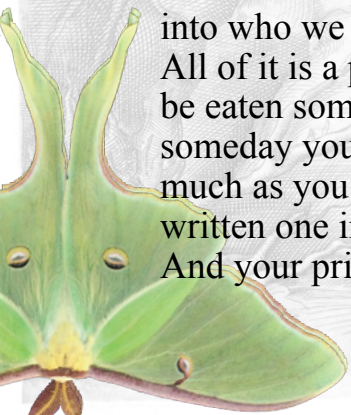
That is what your privilege requires.

Every animal cooped up in a farm is there to sustain your existence. Every banana that was bred to shrink its seeds was done to sustain your existence. Every fish that is trawled from the sea with its innumerable brethren is to sustain your existence. They are done to sustain your existence, and the existence of eight billion others, as well as pets, and plants, and yet more. It is all for you, and from them.

I do not say this to harm you. I do not say it to make you feel guilt. I don’t even say it out of some depressive lack of self-worth. I only say it so that you know what it has taken to bring you to where you are today, to let you know what privilege you have taken for granted. After all, how incredible is it to be able to permanently incorporate another creature into yourself? To take what it was, and make it into what you will become. We are what we eat, and what we eat is a patchwork of creatures that shape us into who we are.

All of it is a privilege, but the living share a burden, too: to be eaten. You, too, will be eaten someday. Be it by worms, or by bacteria, or by a more complicated animal, someday you will donate your body to sustain the existence of this world we live in. As much as you may be the consumer now, fate, God, or whatever else you believe in has written one immutable rule to this world: Everything ends.

And your privilege allows you to break that rule for just a little bit longer.





ENDINGS

**“What do you think has become of the young and old men?
And what do you think has become of the women and chil-
dren?**

**They are alive and well somewhere,
The smallest sprout shows there is really no death,
And if ever there was it led forward life, and does wait at the
end to arrest it,
And ceas'd the moment life appear'd**

**All goes onward and outward, nothing collapses,
And to die is different from what any one supposed, and
luckier.”**

- Walt Whitman



Ode to the Ancients

By Jaala'Nette Crenshaw

Hold me forever and don't let me go.
I'll follow behind you like your own shadow.
Hold me forever and never turn back.
You can trust in my footsteps, my presence you'll never lack.
Hold me forever, even if I burned the world.
Escape with me from the garden, as the depravity behind us is unfurled.
Hold me forever even if we commit sins.
Hold my hand in hell as the hurricane around us spins.
Hold me forever even if I break your trust.
I would labor forever, to win you back I'd do anything I must.
Hold me forever and don't let me go,
Like the lovers who promised eternity lifetimes ago.

The Snapped Thread

by Caroline Felix

Humanity is enamored with the concept of fate. One of the most iconic depictions of fate is the Fates of Greek and Roman mythology: three sisters and their threads. Each woman has a role in deciding fate: Clotho spins the thread of life, Lachesis measures its length and events, and Atropos cuts it to end life. This all-powerful “destiny” even subjects the gods of Olympus to its demands. Yet within this system, an argument for free will exists. Fated heroes, time and time again, reject their destinies and decree that they will “find their own way” yet end up walking down a path already paved for them. A quintessential example of this is Aeneas, whose constant rejection of his fate is ultimately overridden as he fulfills his prophecy. However, while on his path defined by the unspoken rules of the universe, one thread slips out of Lachesis’ hands. Throughout Book IV of the Aeneid, as Virgil develops the relationship between Aeneas and Dido, Queen of Carthage, the queen’s infamous descent leads to her defying her own destiny by ending her life with her own hands. Through the relationship between Aeneas and Dido in the Aeneid, Virgil argues that free will exists, but as a destructive force for humanity that must be controlled.

The catastrophic potential of free will becomes clear in the immediate consequences of Aeneas's and Dido’s relationship, where their individual desires begin to destabilize their societies. When Aeneas initially arrives in Carthage, he marvels at its construction, admiring the dedication of the workers under Dido’s leadership. Yet after Dido begins to obsess over Aeneas, suddenly “towers, half-built, rose no further; men no longer trained in arms... cranes unmoving stood against the sky” (Fitzgerald 98). Carthage mirrors Dido’s internal collapse; she, as their leader, is directly responsible for every facet of their society. So when love blinds her and drives her off course, Carthage is driven off course as well. In turn, Aeneas's own city and people are reduced to a halt. Aeneas, despite being aware of his fate to marry Lavinia, tries to stay with Dido in Carthage. When he is eventually driven by the gods to leave, he “[struggles] with desire to calm and comfort her in all her pain” while still “shaken by his love of her” (Fitzgerald 110). His feelings and actions aren’t spurred by a whim but by an actual desire to be with Dido. His actions force his people to remain in Carthage, which, while safe, is stationary. Their relationship prevents the natural progression of each city. Carthage is an amazing city right now, but Rome must become the greatest city. However, this destabilization of fate is not driven by human free will alone; Virgil complicates the idea of choice by introducing divine interference that redirects human actions back towards fate.

Virgil further complicates the idea of free will by showing that Aeneas ultimately abandons his desires not through personal choice, but through divine coercion that enforces fate. The gods consistently interfere with Aeneas’s decisions, but these actions are rewarded by their outcomes because they are on the side of fate and the progress of humanity. When Jove sends Mercury to command Aeneas to continue his journey, Mercury finds Aeneas “laying foundations for new towers and homes” (Fitzgerald 104) in Carthage, assuming command and acting as though the city were his own despite only having been there for a year. After Mercury’s speech, Aeneas is only provoked to leave because “heaven had shaken him awake” (Fitzgerald 105). When Dido and Anna plead for Aeneas to stay, “heaven seals

him awake” (Fitzgerald 105). When Dido and Anna plead for Aeneas to stay, “heaven seals his kindly, mortal ears” (Fitzgerald 111). Virgil creates the sense that throughout Aeneas’s path to leaving Dido, the gods are constantly in his ear and constantly coercing him to do what he should do, not what he wants to do. If fate were a power unopposed, there would be no need for the gods’ interference on either side, but the gods do interfere. Juno and Venus make Dido fall in love, while Jove and Mercury compel Aeneas to abandon Carthage. Fate remains inevitable to a major degree, but it needs help when it comes to keeping things on course, and its fulfillment is neither smooth nor untouched by conflict.

Despite their role in enforcing fate, Virgil reveals that the gods’ own unchecked will is even more destructive than human free will, as it disregards the human cost entirely. Carthage was a city destined for greatness and treasured by Juno, and naturally, Dido was as well. Fate always involved this chance encounter between Dido and Aeneas; however, Juno’s attempt to use this meeting to derail the future leads directly to its catastrophic ending. When it comes to humanity, there’s only so much that human emotion can shift the tides of destiny, but for immortals, it’s different. Juno convinces Venus to make Dido fall in love with Aeneas, explicitly with the intent “to divert the future power from Italy to Libya” (Fitzgerald 99). The goddess’ motivation behind this act solely lies in her own ego and rage at the Trojans. To exact her revenge and convey her rage, she even uses her beloved Dido to achieve these goals without even considering the effects it would have on Carthage or on the queen herself. Aeneas was always destined to leave and found Rome; Dido was not destined to take her own life, “she died not at her fated span nor as she merited” but instead “before her time, enflamed and driven mad” (Fitzgerald 121). While free will appears to guide human action, Virgil complicates this idea by showing that the gods can manipulate those desires, turning personal choice into a tool of destruction. Dido’s suicide stems from a divinely intensified passion that overwhelms her reason. She even has a brief moment of clarity as she screams to attack Aeneas’s departing men, where she asks herself, “What say I? Where am I? What madness takes me out of myself?” (Fitzgerald 117). Without Juno’s interference, Dido’s love may have only resulted in humiliation rather than destruction. This divinely willed lovesickness made such a reality impossible. In a way, Virgil shows this as the ultimate price for going against fate: even if loving Aeneas was not fully in Dido’s control, all of Juno’s actions were. Dido’s death causes the goddess to be “filled with pity” (Fitzgerald 121) and leads directly to the long-lasting feud that destroys Carthage during the Punic Wars. Virgil illustrates how the gods, no matter how much they cherish humanity, do not have humanity’s best interest in mind. Like humans, they are selfish and act on their own desires, and in a way, fate serves as a counterbalance to that destructive selfishness. Virgil positions fate as a natural force fighting both humanity and the divine for the greater good.

Virgil suggests that while free will exists, it is most dangerous when left unchecked, capable of unraveling both individual lives and entire civilizations. Dido and Aeneas’ relationship serves as a classic example where Aeneas’ submission to fate grants him glory and Dido’s denial brings her infamy. Modern society, although somewhat removed from the direct influence of gods, reflects this same tension between freedom and control. Endless expansion, constant human exploitation, societal collapse, and war—like Juno, modern leaders often act on ambition and desire without considering the consequences on humanity as a whole. But are the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people a predicted, measured sacrifice for a greater society of the future? Or is this what happens when humanity begins to cut its own threads of fate?

Climbing Mountains

by Neoson Cao

Mt. Everest does not exist,
It is not real.
There's only a body,
Penned by the shadows' of people still climbing.

There are three things to remember when climbing a mountain.
Do not forget your mountain stick.
The one your mother made and your father packed,
The one you colored in with your friend.

Do not forget to be tired,
Others have reached your peak.
Join them in their tents,
And listen to their stories by the dim light's glow.

So when you reach a plateau,
You can take a picture.
And send it to them,
But also to remind yourself that climbing is more than staring at rocks.

Because most importantly,
Remember that Everest does not exist.

About our Contributors

Aanvi Sharma is a freshman (Class of 2029) studying Biochemistry and Molecular Biology. She is also passionate about writing and literature, with a particular interest in modern works and a wide range of literary voices. Her work on Sophocles' Ajax examines questions of fate, agency, and moral responsibility.

Adriana Hazlett is a sophomore majoring in History and double minoring in Business Administration and Creative Writing. She is interested in reimagining and reinterpreting classic literature, and her piece in the journal, written for a CC201 assignment, is an exercise in this.

Alexa Thomas is a junior studying Physical Therapy and minoring in Core. She is from Philadelphia and has a cranky, senior cat named Tasmin. Around campus you can find her either studying at Mugar or chatting in the Core office.

Archer Liang is a junior studying Biochemistry & Molecular Biology with a minor in Visual Arts. His work attempts to translate the feeling of dreams, memory, and interiority into images. Alongside this, he enjoys making photographs of people holding bananas.

Ayushi Sharma is a sophomore, interested in business. In her free time, she is an artist who enjoys making illustrations inspired by her coursework and experiences. She has a strong interest in Greek Mythology, which often influences her artwork.

Brynn Campbell is a sophomore majoring in Political Science and minoring in Visual Arts. Her work explores the intersection of political engagement with visual art through personal and collective moments, emotions, and histories.

Caroline Felix is a freshman studying Psychology and Political Science with a minor in Core. When she's not reading for class, she writes stories that explore the very real horrors of being human. Her dream is to transform into a butterfly and live a fulfilling life pollinating the Brooklyn Botanic Garden.

Elijah Maloney is a freshman majoring in Psychology and minoring in Core and Art History. He's from Connecticut and has a distinct love of all things sci-fi, art, and Hamlet. He's a collage artist, photographer, amateur bass player, and enthusiastic 'Monty Python' fan.

Eojun Shin is a freshman majoring in economics and minors in physics. In "The Blue Glass," Eojun Shin says, "I'll never be a green tree again," sitting back home. Eojun Shin was walking around the room looking for traces of time showing through a blue glass that not only he but also his family did the same.

Eva Mangal is a freshman majoring in Biomedical Engineering. She is a big fan of Latino musicians like Bad Bunny and MXKA, and spends most of her free time as both a traditional and digital artist.

George Brown is a junior with a Genocide and Human Rights Studies and English Major and a minor in Jewish Studies. He will graduate in Spring 2027. George's writing is inspired by Rilke, Borges, and a deep love of Tennyson's poetry. He currently works as Editor-in-Chief of the oldest creative writing journal at Boston University, *The Beacon*, and in his free time enjoys growing tomatoes.

Hannah Bryson is a sophomore pursuing an English major with minors in Religion and the Core Curriculum. She visited Florence, Italy with Core in January and was very moved by her experience; so, of course, she had to capture it through her writing.

Hannah Agerka Cadiz is a freshman studying Political Science. Hannah is an adventurer whose main goal is to travel the world and gain all the knowledge within it. She is also an aspiring writer who hopes to publish her first novel in the future.

Hannah Gobell is a senior majoring in Business Administration and Management in Questrom.

Imaad Tahir is a sophomore student majoring in Biology and minoring in the Core Curriculum. He has a particular fascination with nature and animals, and believes that extrapolating meaning from these processes can better help us understand our own lives and relations to the world at large.

Jaala'Nnette Crenshaw is a senior studying International Relations with a minor in Arabic. She has spent two semesters abroad in Amman, Jordan where she has focused on her Arabic studies and pursued her passion of working with refugees. Jaala'Nnette also enjoys writing poetry and published her first poetry book, *Letters to the Girl in the Mirror*, in 2024. Jaala'Nnette is a Core Curriculum lover as she has taken many core classes and has previously worked in the Core office.

Jaqueline Del Castillo is a senior majoring in Psychology in BU's College of Arts and Sciences. The poem "Familiar Stranger" is about the personality change a loved one undergoes when battling anxiety and depression. It is meant to describe the gradual loss of who they used to be, the pain the author experiences, and the hope they hold for a new and better future. Jaqueline intends to pursue higher education in the mental health or related field and loves to spend time walking around the city and spending time with her family.

Julian Shyu is a Data Science Masters student with an undergraduate degree from BU in Computer Science and Psychology. When he isn't doing a problem set, he enjoys writing, petting cats, and drawing abominations.

June Karmakar is a freshman pursuing a Neuroscience major. Her piece is a lengthened (and highly edited) version of an essay she wrote at sixteen after reading the book 'Sapiens', by Yuval Noah Harari. She grew up in India and enjoys dancing and trying new hobbies in her free time.

Kenner Bailey is a sophomore with an English major and Core Minor. "Little Eden" is a short piece of autofiction, inspired by multiple childhood experiences and a reflection on Adam and Eve's relationship in *Paradise Lost*, Milton's epic poem discussed in the Core Curriculum's 201 course.

Krishn More is a senior hailing from Princeton, New Jersey, and is pursuing Human Physiology on the pre-med track with minors in the Core Curriculum and Public Health. Krishn loves reading and playing chess. In his free time, he'll be working on puzzles in the Law Library or rock climbing at FitRec.

Lara Hartle is a junior majoring in English and History and minoring in Core. Originally from New Jersey, she loves Modernism, movies, and middling alliteration. Her piece was selected as a winner of the Global Medieval Studies Essay Prize.

Lucia Bronfman is a freshman majoring in International Relations & Political Science.

Luka Moloney is a freshman in the College of Arts and Sciences majoring in Political Science. Luka is from Queens, and likes to represent his borough whenever and wherever he can.

Mason Burns is a freshman currently studying Neuroscience and Philosophy. His work, 'The Ideal Education', is set in Plato's ideal city, Kallipolis, and explores the tensions that arise between the perfect ideals of Plato and the uncontrollable events and feelings fundamental to human life.

Neoson Cao is a junior studying a double major in Psychology and Sociology with an English Minor. Neoson has always loved writing, though he has rarely shared any of it. College is a time of trying something new and he wanted to share something that others may enjoy.

Ricki Pons Meyer is a junior pursuing a history major with two minors: one in philosophy and one in art history. They've often been interested in writing fiction but have only recently sat down to do so. They have been working on several other short stories over the past couple of months!

Riley McBride is a junior majoring in Comp Sci and minoring in Core. Riley enjoys creating digital and traditional artwork in a multitude of mediums/platforms, be it commercially, academically, for others' enjoyment, or for the kick of it, and will not stop.

Samantha Robles Avalos is a freshman majoring in Psychology. Originally from Texas, she loves to window-shop and explore new places. She's a first-generation college student, and this is her first publication.

Sebastian Stauber is a junior with majors in FTV and Philosophy and – evidently – a minor in core. He's currently plodding and plodding and plodding and plodding and plodding and plodding and plodding and plodding and one day it will stop.

Sharleen Kaur Sandhu is a junior majoring in History and Philosophy with a minor in Core. She loves talking about anti-colonial movements and postcolonial theory! Shar wrote this piece for CC222 as it was strongly inspired by the restrictions on human life and the mind.

Simran Anand is a senior at Boston University majoring in Cell and Molecular Biology with a specialization in Genetics. She is involved in research exploring molecular mechanisms of disease and has experience in both laboratory and clinical research settings. In addition to her scientific work, Simran is passionate about medical storytelling and uses art to explore themes of illness, healing, and identity.

Sofia Ulloa is a senior pursuing a joint major in Philosophy and Psychology. She has a deep love for writing and is drawn to questions at the intersection of mind, meaning, and the human experience.

Sunwoo Chang is a freshman studying psychology and neuroscience as a pre-med major. This work represents the US political landscape in conjunction with the theories presented in Plato's Republic. It is simple to criticize and dismiss Plato's model of politics as anti-democratic, totalitarian, and unfit for today's society. However, this paper dissects the ideas represented within The Republic by examining how these theories and values both parallel and diverge from modern US politics.

Tabitha Noel Curry is a senior undergraduate student at Boston University majoring in the history of art and architecture and economics. She is most interested in art historical approaches to documentary photography and the early Christian period, hoping to write books on the subjects one day. In this work, she underscores the consequences of tampering an artist's final composition through the 1715 cropping of Rembrandt's The Night Watch.

Tim Laux is a sophomore international student from Germany. His writing explores questions of mental health, emotional distance, and the ways in which students learn to function under pressure while losing touch with what they feel. He is particularly interested in the intersection of mental health and technology and is currently involved in developing a student-focused mental health initiative at BU.

Yunfei Zhang is a freshman double majoring in Anthropology and Biology. In addition to her interest in both people and animals she enjoys greatly reading assorted literature and is grateful to the Core Curriculum for the community that she has been able to participate in and learn with.

Zachary Bos is an alumnus of the Core Curriculum Humanities (2002) and of the BU MFA program in poetry. His work has appeared recently in Consequence Forum, London Magazine, Painted Bride Quarterly, and Atlanta Review. He was a member of the Core staff for many years, and now operates Bonfire Bookshop in Fitchburg, an hour west of Boston.

IMAGE CITATIONS

Invocation of the Muse

- *Parnassus by Rafeal*

Nature

- *Bouquet in a Clay Vase, Jan Brueghl from the National Gallery*
- *Glass Vase with Flowers, a Poppy and a Finch Nest, Jan Van Huysum from the National Gallery*
- *Vase of Flowers, Jan Davidsz de Heem*
- *Poppies and Italian Mignonette, Maria Oakey Dewing*
- *A Garden Is a Sea of Flowers, Ross Sterling Turner*
- *Primavera, Sandro Botticelli*
- *David, Kelsey Wood*
- *Sculpture + Boston Photos taken by Archer Liang*
- *London Collage, Maria Gapotchenko, Alexa Thomas, Sebastian Stauber, Kelsey Wood*
- *Florence Photo, Kelsey Wood*

Governance

- *Engraving for Paradise Lost, Gustave Dore*
- *Immaculate Conception, Francisco De Zurbaran*
- *French Revolution Montagnard Pamphlet With A Robespierre'S Letter After The Execution Of Former King Of France Louis XVI 1793*
- *Dialogue, Unknown*
- *Colossi of Memnon, Sebastian Stauber*
- *Drawing of the Eye of Horus in Pashedu Tomb, Deir el-Medina*
- *Lincoln Memorial in Washington DC, Wikimedia Commons*
- *Dolor aerotransportado (Paracaídas con ojo), Helios Gómez Rodríguez*
- *Join or Die, Benjamin Franklin*
- *Sejanus is arrested, an etching by G. Mochetti*
- *USA Bonds, WWI Liberty Bond Poster, J.C. Leyendecker*
- *Socrate au Moment de Prendre la Ciguë, Jacques Louis David French*
- *Alexander Hamilton At Yorktown In 1781, Alonzo Chappel Poster*
- *Signing the Constitution, Louis Glanzman*
- *Confucius, Anonymous*
- *Watercolor Mountains, Wikimedia Commons*
- *Bird on Twig, China, Unknown*
- *Promptuarii Iconum Insigniorum, Guillaume Rouille*
- *Socrates, Getty Images*
- *Inleyding tot de Hooge Schoole der Schilderkonst, Samuel Von Hoogstraten*

Transitions

- *Illustrations for Pride and Prejudice, Hugh Thomson*
- *Inferno Canto 34, Gustave Doré, Project Gutenberg*
- *Landscape with the Sermon on the Mount Tabor, Claude Lorrain*
- *Jésus en Croix (Jesus on the Cross) Jacques Callot, 1631*

Turmoil & Death

- *Dante and Virgil, Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot*
- *Dante and Virgil, Giuseppe Manno*
- *Sisyphus, Titian, 1548-1549*
- *The Sun, Edvard Munch, 1909*
- *Triple Self-Portrait, Norman Rockwell, 1960*
- *Taraxacum Officinale, Walther Otto Müller, 1887*
- *Boston for 100 years, Charles C. Perkins*
- *Hamlet and Ophelia, Act II, Scene I, William Greatbach*
- *Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, Honoré Daumier*
- *Hamlet and Ghost, John Gilbert and the Dalziel Brothers*
- *Ophelia (Shakespeare, Hamlet, Act 4, Scene 5), Caroline Watson*
- *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog, Caspar David Friedrich*
- *Duel between Ajax and Hercules to recover Patroclus' body, Gianni Dagli Orti*
- *Tecmessa, Eurysaces and Ajax, Jakob Carstens*
- *Ajax, John Steuart Curry*
- *Scarab with Aias/Ajax falling on his sword, Etruscan*
- *Hector and Ajax Separated by the Heralds, John Flaxman*
- *Angel awakening the dead at the Last Judgement, Sainte-Chapelle, Ile de la Cité*
- *Dance of Death: Death the Strangler, Alfred Rethel*
- *Aeneas defeats Turnus, Luca Giordano*
- *Tantalus, Giulio Sanuto*
- *Actias Luna, Shawn Hanrahan*

Endings

- *Dido and Aeneas, J.M.W. Turner, 1814*
- *Orpheus and Eurydice, Filippo Pedrini, 1763-1856*

**LIFE, ALTHOUGH IT MAY BE
ONLY AN ACCUMULATION
OF ANGUISH, IS DEAR TO ME,
AND I WILL DEFEND IT.**

**MARY SHELLEY,
FRANKENSTEIN**

