



Athenaeum Review

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Journal of the SCHOOL OF ARTS AND HUMANITIES
and THE EDITH O'DONNELL INSTITUTE OF ART HISTORY
at THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT DALLAS



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Issue 6

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Athenaeum Review publishes essays, reviews, and interviews by leading scholars in the arts and humanities. Devoting serious critical attention to the arts in Dallas and Fort Worth, we also consider books and ideas of national and international significance.

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Front and Back Cover: Maedeh Asgharpour, "Two Ministers and Anis Al-Jalis." From the series *1001 Nights*, 2010. Linoleum print, 9,5 x 13 inches. Copyright © Maedeh Asgharpour 2010.

Narrative summary, translated from the edition of *1001 Nights* by Abdul Latif Tassoji

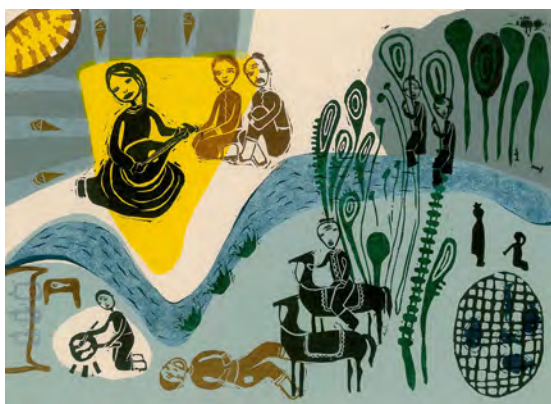
The king of Basra has an evil minister, Mu'in, and a good, generous minister, Fazl. Fazl buys a beautiful and smart slave, Anis al-Jalis, by the order of the king. Anis, after a long journey, recovers in his house for a few days, but Fazl's son, Nur al-Din Ali, falls in love with her. Fazl agrees to their marriage. After Fazl's death, Nur al-Din Ali ruins his inheritance. They move to Baghdad and enter the palace, not realizing that they are trespassing. Khalifa Harun al-Rasheed sees their lanterns and sees that they are celebrating. Khalifa Harun, who is now disguised as a fisherman, joins them. After hearing their story, Harun orders Nur al-Din to become the new king. Nur al-Din takes the Khalifa's decree to Basra, but the appointed minister imprisons him. At the point of Nur al-Din's execution, Harun's minister arrives and rescues him, and the appointed minister is punished instead.



"Two Ministers and Anis Al-Jalis," from the series *1001 Nights*

Frame 2 (front cover)

Anis al-Jalis said to Sheikh Ebrahim, "Do you allow me to light one of these candles?" Sheikh said, "Get up and light a candle." She lit all the candles and sat down. They sat down and sang poems and drank wine. The Khalifa climbed the tree and reached a branch that overlooked the porch of the palace. He saw a boy and a girl like the moon, who were sitting while Sheikh Ibrahim was holding wine in his hand and talking to Anis Al-Jalis.



Frame 3 (back cover)

The Khalifa said to his minister, "Ja'far, let us both go over the same tree." Anis al-Jalis took a lute, tuned it, and played so beautifully. A fisherman was fishing nearby. The Khalifa told him to catch a fish for him. Then he switched his clothes with the fisherman and put on the fisherman's clothes. Jafar saw Khalifa, thought he was a hunter and told him to get out of there. When Khalifa heard Jafar, he laughed so much that he fell on his back. Khalifa knocked on the door and told them, "I have brought you some fish." They were so happy and asked him to roast the fish and take it to them.

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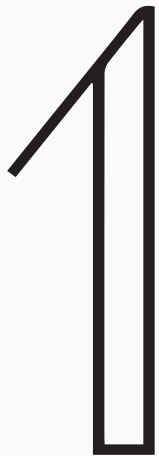
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Frederick Turner's science fiction epic poems led to his being a consultant for NASA's long-range futures group, through which he met Carl Sagan and other space scientists. He received Hungary's highest literary honor for his translations of Hungarian poetry with the distinguished scholar and Holocaust survivor Zsuzsanna Ozsváth, won Poetry's Levinson Prize, and has often been nominated for the Nobel Prize in literature. Born in England, raised in Africa by his anthropologist parents Victor and Edie Turner, and educated at Oxford University, he is also known as a Shakespearean scholar, a leading theorist of environmentalism, an authority on the philosophy of Time, and the poet laureate of traditional Karate. He is the author of about 40 books, ranging from literary monographs through cultural criticism and science commentary to poetry and translations. He has taught at UC Santa Barbara and Kenyon College, edited the *Kenyon Review*, and is presently Founders Professor of Arts and Humanities (emeritus) at the University of Texas at Dallas. Recent publications include *Light Within the Shade: 800 Years of Hungarian Poetry*, translated and edited by Frederick Turner and Zsuzsanna Ozsváth, Syracuse University Press, 2014; *Apocalypse: An Epic Poem*, Baen Books (ebook) and Ilium Press (hardback and paperback), 2016; *More Light: Selected Poems, 2004-2016*, Mundus Artium Press, 2017; and *The Golden Goblet: Selected Poems of Goethe*, translated and edited by Frederick Turner and Zsuzsanna Ozsváth, Deep Vellum Press, 2019.

Ben Wright teaches history at the University of Texas at Dallas. He is the author of *Bonds of Salvation: How Christianity Inspired and Limited American Abolitionism* and coeditor of three books: *Apocalypse and the Millennium in the American Civil War Era* as well as the two-volume *The American Yawp: A Massively Collaborative Open U.S. History Textbook*, available free online at americanyawp.com. He manages "Teaching United States History," a blog that explores pedagogy in college-level classrooms and The Abolition Seminar (abolitionseminar.org), a NEH resource designed to help schoolteachers explore the abolitionist movement. His research on antebellum slavery has inspired his advocacy in the modern anti-human-trafficking movement as a board member of Historians Against Slavery and Children at Risk.



**THE PAST
IS PRESENT**

Bonds of Salvation

How Christianity Inspired and Limited American Abolitionism

Ben Wright

Never go to the southern states of America! they are polluted with slavery, and slavery is the most demoralizing thing under the sun. It is the parent of oppression, the nurse of sloth and guilty passions. It is the bane of man, the abomination of God. Where slavery reigns the human being is made a beast of burthen, or the slave of lust. The poor half-famished negro, trembles at a tyrant's nod, and loses every good quality in the servility of a drudge, or the wickedness of a prostitute. O that this scandal of humanity were annihilated!

— Joshua Marsden, 1814¹

JOSHUA MARSDEN NEVER PENNED A PETITION AGAINST SLAVERY, wrote a representative in favor of abolition, nor joined an antislavery society. Despite describing slavery as “the bane of man, and the abomination of God” and earnestly yearning “that this scandal of humanity were annihilated,” this Methodist missionary did nothing more than write these seven sentences, buried in a lengthy autobiography designed to celebrate missionary work. Yet he was not alone in his seeming hypocrisy. Even as the early abolitionist movement scored victories for freedom, few American Christians took organized action against slavery. Marsden and countless others watched on the sidelines as the evil institution grew. How did American Christianity enable this inaction, and what changed to inspire the later, larger, more active, biracial Christian abolitionist movement?

¹ Joshua Marsden, *Grace Displayed: An Interesting Narrative of the Life, Conversion, Christian Experience, Ministry, and Missionary Labors of Joshua Marsden* (New York: 1814), 190.

Marsden penned this sole antislavery statement while reflecting on his 1808 experience watching enslaved men, women, and children rake salt on the beaches of Bermuda from sunup till sundown, backs bent under the brutal sun. But despite the dreadful scene, Marsden's attention turned heavenward, and he anguished over the failure of missionaries, bemoaning that the residents of Bermuda "have no meetings of any kind; no professors of religion... Alas, pleasure seemed their pursuit; money their god, and blindness to futurity their only refuge."² Slavery, that bane of man and abomination of God, not only oppressed the enslaved, but it also slowed the spread of salvation on the island. Instead of embracing Marsden's ministry and growing in Christian piety, the white men and women of Bermuda bowed before a false idol of slave-made wealth. Marsden hated slavery for fostering both brutal oppression and luxurious vanity, but his hatred for slavery paled before his desperate panic that his own church was failing to spread the Gospel to those otherwise destined for an eternity of torment. Marsden had a mission to save the world. Nothing could get in his way, not even the agents of torture empowering an increasingly powerful Atlantic slave system, nor the impassioned abolitionists seeking to destroy slavery.

Constructing national institutions required avoiding the divisiveness of slavery, and American denominations worked to contain the agitation of black activists and instead worked to expand salvation.

The vast majority of Americans who opposed slavery never took action by participating in the abolitionist movement. White Christians struggled to imagine a biracial kingdom of God, and racism deeply poisoned American Christianity in both overt and subtle ways. But while Marsden saw African-descended peoples as spiritual kin, he still refused to participate in the movement designed to end their oppression. And he was not alone. The absence of racism was not sufficient to turn white Christians into abolitionists. Spiritual visions of salvation redirected white Christians away from the confrontational political and legal action required to emancipate the enslaved. The spiritual cosmologies of most white American Christians devalued the work of abolitionists and their pragmatic, legalistic, political agendas. Men and women like Marsden imagined themselves in an international, millennial battle for the spiritual salvation of everyone, enslaved and free. The activism of black

² Ibid., 190.

Christians appeared to them a distraction for the more holy work of expanding salvation for all. Marsden and those like him understood themselves as part of a process that would liberate souls both in this world and the next. For these Christians, it was only worth changing laws if doing so directly enabled the spread of the gospel.³ Salvation could not wait. The outpouring of God's justice was nigh. Marsden was bringing it. And the world would soon be made anew.

Not even the righteous appeals of the oppressed could compete with these romantic religious dreams. In the minds of Christians like Marsden, tedious lawsuits for freedom or divisive politicking distracted, or even stymied, the international salvation that would save everyone. And yet a very small minority of white Christians did pursue abolition. For these men and women, their religious visions pursued purification rather than the expansion of conversion. This religious distinction between purification and conversion shaped the ideological possibilities of early American antislavery. Abolitionists worked to purify the nation of slavery, but the majority of white Christians prioritized expanding salvation and accordingly remained outside of the organized antislavery movement. During the 1830s, a new generation of white abolitionists joined their long-active black coreligionists and shattered the conversionist endorsement of the status quo. By 1845, the collision of abolitionism and salvation shattered the nation's largest Protestant denominations.

To understand how religion shaped the development of American abolitionism, we must uncover intellectual worldviews that looked to heaven to change life on Earth. From the American Revolution until at least the dawn of the nineteenth century, Americans optimistically believed that the world was rapidly improving, and that improvement would continue through the extension of the gospel. A small number sought to purify the nation before converting others, but in the first three decades after the American Revolution, these activists were drowned out by conversionists.⁴ But conversion necessitated coordination, and independence from Britain required the creation of new methods of coordination. By 1814, the nation's largest Protestant traditions had formed new national denominations equipped to carry the gospel across the American continent and eventually all over the

3 The fight to disestablish state churches, particularly in Virginia, did animate usually politically resistant white evangelicals, but this animation was short-lived. Once they secured disestablishment, these Christian activist networks fell dormant. By the late eighteenth century, slavery, on the other hand, was no longer seen by most Christians as an obstacle for conversion. See Katharine Gerbner, *Christian Slavery: Conversion and Race in the Protestant Atlantic World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018).

4 I refer to my actors as conversionists and their ideology as conversionism largely because all other terms are too narrow. These beliefs transcended the theological boundaries implied by labels like evangelicalism or even missionary Christianity. Even the nascent anti-missions movement shared a belief that conversion would remake the world in a more peaceful and just fashion, and while evangelicals were more zealous in extending salvation, nearly all Christians believed that conversion would solve the world's problems more effectively than political action.

globe. Constructing national institutions required avoiding the divisiveness of slavery, and American denominations worked to contain the agitation of black activists and instead worked to expand salvation.

To further facilitate the expansion of salvation, these new denominational institutions established the many organizations that collectively made up the so-called “benevolent empire” of social reform, including the American Colonization Society, formed in 1815 to address the problem of slavery. But yet again, salvation structured even this movement, as colonizationists maintained their coalition only by promising to extend salvation to the continent of Africa through the divine power of settler colonialism. By the early 1830s, a new national abolitionism emerged in opposition to the colonizationist movement. This movement too relied upon the need to convert the world, and increasingly rancorous conflicts over slavery and salvation tore apart the three largest American Protestant denominations by 1845. In each phase of this process, Americans remained deeply concerned about salvation: the salvation of their neighbors, their churches, and their nation. Throughout the early history of the United States, dreams of salvation structured the limitations and possibilities of both American abolitionism and its opponents.

Following this story changes our understanding of the era in at least five ways. First, we see the role of religious convictions in creating the ideological worlds of the early republic. Second, in seeking to understand the ideas underpinning abolitionist action, we move beyond the old paradigm of gradual versus immediate abolitionism and replace it with conversionism and purificationism. Third, we see how millennial dreams of salvation structured early American religious and political culture. Fourth, we come to recognize and understand antislavery Americans who have thus far remained outside of the focus of antislavery studies because they never took organized political action. Fifth, we rethink our broad narratives of American religious history, complicating the emphasis on democratization or diffusion with the recognition that this was an era of institution building, catalyzed by the need to expand salvation. These institutions enabled and inhibited American reform, including abolitionism. Eventually the collision of slavery and salvation destroyed America’s religious cultures.

Religious Americans in the late eighteenth century expected a new world to appear with the expansion of Christian conversion. A prophetic few adopted an alternative antislavery of purification, but these cries were either muted by the limitations of their source (i.e. the marginal Quakers or declining Calvinists) or they were drowned out by the challenges of rapid migration in the aftermath of the American Revolution. The challenges of this migration caused conversionists to focus energies on missionary outreach, resulting in the consolidation of religious authority in new denominational bodies by 1814. These new bodies created an opening for reform but restricted it from taking an aggressive, coercive shape. African colonization appeared to promise a solution by foreground-

ing the conversion of Africa. By 1830 it became clear that religious conversion would not solve the problem of slavery. Conversionist antislavery was turned into a conservative weapon by proslavery apologists, who wielded the weapon so well that abolitionists eventually broke the bonds of religious unity by denying enslavers positions as sanctioned missionaries. National religious cultures forged by dreams of conversion were undone by the inextricable connection between conversion and slavery. The pursuit of salvation motivated the formation, development, and dissolution of national American religious cultures. Emancipation only arrived via the deadly reality of civil war. Yet, for nearly a century prior, antislavery was inextricably tied to visions of American salvation.

Uncovering the theological worldview of early American social reform explains not only how Christians like Joshua Marsden could hate slavery and yet seemingly do nothing; it also clarifies the ideological underpinnings of American antislavery, recasting the political strategies of gradualism and immediatism as cosmological worldviews privileging purification or conversion. This is a story of how Christianity structured what was ideologically possible, as Americans reckoned with the nation's sin of slavery. Understanding the limitations of those possibilities explains how antislavery Christians enabled the expansion and entrenchment of human bondage, necessitating the cataclysm of war to finally secure emancipation.

Joshua Marsden's antislavery was not hypocritical, nor was it apathetic. Marsden hated slavery and looked with great anticipation for the day when God would fulfill his promise of deliverance for all creation. Marsden staunchly believed that the hours of study, preparation, and active ministry that occupied his time would serve to accelerate this glorious day. And he expected that day to come soon, for, as he wrote in 1814, "the Redeemer's kingdom is gloriously near. If the world is to be reformed, God will doubtless employ his Son—his Son will employ the gospel as the brightest transcript of his divine, gracious, and holy nature." Marsden dedicated his life to missions that he believed were "in the hands of a wise Providence, capable of doing infinite good."⁵ But these hopes and expectations hinged on a converted populace. Achieving this goal required a responsive, active church that included both enslavers and abolitionists. Conversionism provided an expectation of emancipation, but also a challenge to meet the needs of the age through institutional development, organization, and ultimately social transformation. Each stage of this progression shaped the worlds of American antislavery. By foregrounding ideas of religious conversion and religious purification, we can begin to understand the problem of human bondage and its potential solutions, as did the men and women whose lives included both dreams of salvation and the nightmare of American slavery. A

⁵ Marsden, *Grace Displayed*, 214.

President Biden, Langston Hughes, and the Expansion of the American Dream

Kimberly Hill

NEAR THE CLOSE OF HIS VICTORY speech on November 7, 2020, President-Elect Joseph Biden traced key moments in the history of “the American dream.” He referenced the words of Langston Hughes:

The American story is about the slow, yet steady widening of opportunity. And make no mistake, too many dreams have been deferred for too long. We must make the promises of the country real for everybody, no matter their race, their ethnicity, their faith, their identity or their disability.

The two poems alluded to in this excerpt (“Harlem” and “Let America Be America Again”) represent pivotal times in American history. Hughes published the latter poem in 1936—one year following the purported end of the Harlem Renaissance. And the poem “Harlem” first appeared during the Second Red Scare of the early 1950s. Author Arna Bontemps preferred to call the Harlem Renaissance “the Awakening” because the movement encouraged young artists like Hughes to practice more authentic,

comprehensive styles of depicting society. By referencing these poems, President Biden’s speech linked the intended future of the nation to an artistic tradition of evaluating controversial parts of the nation’s past.

Both poems developed in the aftermath of race riots. Financial tension during the Great Depression combined with residents’ safety concerns to spark the Harlem Riot of 1935. The crisis began after a teenage shoplifter was detained in a local store. According to Tabitha Wang of BlackPast, that riot resulted in at least sixty injuries and over \$200 million in property damages. The neighborhood acquired a reputation for criminality, but Langston Hughes complicated that reputation as he drafted “Let America Be America Again.” The poem argues for those oppressed by classism, racism, and xenophobia to collectively redeem and expand the nation’s principles. Its imagery about protecting the defenseless suggests that Hughes empathized with rioters’ appeals that the teenager’s crime should not warrant any mistreatment by police officers.

The 1951 poem “Harlem” consists of short metaphorical questions inviting readers into a conversation about lost potential. The poem shifts from overly dried treats to the revolting image of “rotten meat” before asking whether “a dream deferred” will “explode” eventually. These images may have alluded to the difficult food-packing and manufacturing positions that many Harlem residents took to survive the Great Depression. If so, the symbolic explosion referred to the literal disruption during the Riots of 1935 and 1943 as well as the further diminution of Harlem’s economic prospects after 1935.

Langston Hughes was among the artists who continued to suffer financially due to race-based hiring discrimination that he called being “blacklisted from birth.” He published a decade’s worth of satires about segregation before the House Un-American Activities Committee summoned him in 1953. But the tense questioning period made it clear that the Committee preferred for Hughes to deny any suspected radicalism in his literature, rather than expose social oppression in his responses. He avoided legal consequences by denying any Communist Party affiliation, yet the disavowal drew negative attention to other high-profile African American artists who did not cooperate as fully.

President Biden fulfilled part of the poet’s goals by referencing Langston Hughes in his victory speech and again in his inaugural address. Recognition of the perceived gap between the nation’s values and societal inequality was expressed in a major federal government statement. And the controversial context of race riots and suspected Communism did not preclude these references as inflammatory. Once treated as tangential to American politics, the “dream deferred” that Hughes drew attention to decades ago is being imagined as a means to guide and expand political approaches to “the American Dream.” A

Selected Readings

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Dismantling Living Legacies of White Supremacy

The UTD Antiracist Teach-In Collective

In this issue of *Athenaeum Review*, the School of Arts and Humanities’ “Dismantling Living Legacies of White Supremacy” teach-in collective offers a glimpse of its recent anti-racist work on and beyond campus. The teach-in series was created at UT Dallas during a time of global activism for anti-racism and racial justice. The fact that white supremacy’s legacy is alive in higher education and on our own campus was accentuated at a university town hall following George Floyd’s murder on May 25, 2020.

At that town hall, university leadership responded to a student question about the under-recognition of Juneteenth in a way that appeared to draw an equivalence between this holiday celebrating the emancipation of enslaved persons in Texas, and the state-mandated recognition of “Confederate heroes.” What lessons does our own institution need to learn about the histories of race and racism in Texas?, we wondered. What lessons do we need to learn about present efforts to support racial and other forms of justice in our own communities? The teach-in organizers recognize that the academy has much to learn about the living legacies of white supremacy, including in higher education at large and on our own campus in particular. We also recognize the wealth of knowledge in our communities: the practical expertise of people doing anti-racist work and the historical and cultural knowledge of scholars and artists. The teach-in series taps into this wealth, featuring conversations and calls to action with faculty, staff, students and community leaders.

Each teach-in is organized by faculty, staff, and students who come together to interrogate and respond to historical and ongoing local, national, and global emergencies. Through this service, organizers strengthen existing relationships while forging new connections across campus and the DFW community; and provide opportunities for students and staff to co-create shared spaces of collaboration and intellectual exchange. Cumulatively, the teach-ins create a local archive of anti-racist thought and action that is available as a resource to supplement educational materials in the classroom.

The teach-in series was launched on July 23, 2020 with a conversation about white supremacy and the structure and distribution of merit scholarships. Since then, teach-ins were held roughly every two weeks during the Fall 2020 semester. Sessions addressed police violence in Dallas; holidays, memorials, and racism in public memory; African Americans and human rights; diversity work in higher education; the trauma of racism and healing through creative expression; and border policing and ICE. Building on the strengths of UTD's vibrant interdisciplinary campus, interactive poetry readings and workshops were braided throughout the teach-ins to foster creative expressions of and responses to structural racism. Due to widespread support across campus, the teach-in series continued in the Spring 2021 semester. Recordings of all ten teach-ins from the 2020-21 academic year are available to watch on the School of Arts and Humanities' YouTube channel.

Hundreds of faculty, students, staff, and community members have attended these workshops, with an average of fifty audience members per session. Participants have responded enthusiastically, reporting that the teach-in series both enriches knowledge production across the campus community and provides an opportunity for marginalized members on campus to engage with programming that reflects their lived experiences. One audience member shared in a feedback survey: “This really helps fill in the blanks of where formal education has failed.”

Perhaps most crucially, these teach-ins provide a space where staff, faculty, and undergraduate and graduate students can fill in these blanks together. Campus community members labor in distinct roles and do not typically work together outside the classroom or office. As we organize and attend the teach-ins together, we learn not only about the historical legacies and contemporary inequities that shape our campus experiences—we also learn about each other’s experiences, the different forms of work we do every day, and the ways in which we can support each other from our distinct roles on campus. By creating new sites of learning together, the teach-ins help to make our campus more connected and collaborative, and ultimately, we hope, more just and equitable.

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White Supremacy, Merit Scholarships and UT Dallas

The “White Supremacy, Merit Scholarships, and UT Dallas” teach-in scrutinized merit scholarships at UT Dallas and how they sustain racial and economic inequities on campus, the community, and beyond. The panel conversation interrogated the ways in which the merit scholarship model excludes Black, Indigenous, low-income, first generation, and disabled students from accessing a public education. Speakers discussed how “universal standards” like the SAT and ACT benefit predominantly wealthy and white students, and challenged UTD’s reliance on these standards to recruit and select students. This practice of exclusionary admissions creates a community not reflective of Dallas’ diversity. Students discussed their personal experiences with racism in UTD programs, while speakers from the Dallas community outlined how UTD could better meet the needs of historically excluded groups. They advocated for an overhaul of universal standards, and argued for the reallocation of merit scholarship funds to need-based and diversity scholarships.

Student activists affiliated with the McDermott Equity and Justice Committee, including Samee Ahmad (‘20), Areeb Siddiqui (‘20), and Sarah Whipple (‘20), co-organized this teach-in to highlight the injustice of large university scholarships, such as the McDermott Scholars Program, hoarding significant university resources while admitting fewer than ten Black students from 2009-2019. While merit scholarships received upwards of \$58 million in the fiscal year 2020 budget, UT Dallas administration allocated less than \$375,000 to the Diversity Scholars Program. The event was part of a public pressure campaign to push university leadership to re-envision the role of financial aid at UT Dallas. In November 2020, the McDermott Scholars Program administrators ceased all meetings with the student-led McDermott Equity and Justice Committee.

Speakers

Kawa Barreh is a psychology student and Eugene McDermott scholar at UT Dallas. They are currently leading efforts in the Equity and Justice student committee for the McDermott Scholars. Their work on mental healthcare has taken them to Amman, Jordan, while they have also worked with the Refugee Trauma and Resilience Center.

Kia Jackson is a junior transfer student from Eastfield College at UT Dallas working on a Bachelors in Psychology. She is a commuter student from Pleasant Grove and hopes to use her skills in data literacy to combat online radicalization of white terrorist groups.

Peggy Taylor Larney is an American Indian who has served the Dallas community for over 30 years. She is an originator of a state bill designating the last Friday in September as American Indian Heritage Day in Texas and founded two non-profit organizations - American Indian Heritage Day in Texas and Indian Citizens against Racial Exploitation. She has worked with Dallas ISD to eliminate ten schools with American Indian names and mascots, to increase American Indian students' high school graduation rate, and to increase their higher education entrance rate.

Dr. Katy Washington is the director in the Office of Disability Access at the University of North Texas and the President-Elect of the Association on Higher Education and Disability. Dr. Washington is a highly motivated student affairs administrator with seventeen years of professional experience in various areas of student development such as disability services, standardized testing, student development, academic advising, and student success/retention programming.

Andre Watson is a schoolteacher who has taught at LV Berkner High School in Richardson ISD for 8 years. He teaches AP Biology and English as a Second Language. He was recently featured in the *Dallas Morning News* for his engagement with his students on issues of racial justice.

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Interrogations of Police Violence

Throughout the summer of 2020, global uprisings surged to protest the police killing of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor—two now-infamous tragedies in the much longer and ongoing injustice of systematic state violence against Black people. On August 6, students, staff, faculty, and community leaders gathered to reckon with police violence in Dallas and to ask urgent questions: What does the future of safety and belonging look like in Dallas, and what change do we need to make that future a reality?

The conversation opened with a brief history of law enforcement on this land. Anne Gray Fischer, assistant professor of U.S. women's history, discussed how contemporary policing is rooted in this country's foundational violence: the violence of patriarchy, colonization, and slavery. "Law and order" has historically meant enforcing white property and white wealth through the theft,

dispossession, and forced labor of Black and Indigenous men, women, and children. When viewed from the perspective of the policed, “law and order” is experienced as criminalization and crisis. Four panelists contributed their unique expertise to discuss the ways that these violent legacies continue to impact the lives of Dallas residents today. Community leaders Jodi Voice Yellowfish (Missing and Murdered Indigenous Womxn Texas) and Chris Robinson (Faith in Texas), and Sara Mokuria (Institute for Urban Policy Research at UT Dallas), described how Black and Indigenous people navigate both police action and police neglect. Bryson Royal, an undergraduate student at UT Dallas, shared his experience of police violence while living on campus. Ultimately, the panelists discussed how the people in Dallas who are most criminalized are those who are most in need of social support. They closed by providing strategies for the audience to help create a future of safety, care, and dignity in Dallas.

Speakers

Jodi Voice Yellowfish is Muscogee Creek, Oglala Lakota, and Cherokee. A product of the US government’s Relocation Program, Jodi was born and raised in Dallas, Texas and has lived in Oak Cliff her entire life. She attended Haskell Indian Nations University in Lawrence, Kansas where she received her Associate’s degree in Social Work and studied for her bachelor’s in Indigenous and American Indian Studies. Jodi is an ambassador for American Indian Heritage Day in Texas, Indian Citizens Against Racial Exploitation, Chair for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Womxn Texas, a member of the steering committee for Dallas Truth Racial Healing Transformation, and is also with Our City Our Future. Jodi is also an adoptive parent.

Chris Robinson is an organizer with Faith in Texas, who works to get more college and university students and young adults active in their communities, politics, and social justice. Chris is from Dallas, TX, and before attending college in Arkansas, he graduated from the Center of Law and Public Safety Program at Grand Prairie High School. While pursuing a double major in Political Science and Economics, Chris participated in building a county-wide program in Arkansas that dropped the crime rate by 45% and dropped the unemployment rate by almost 35%. In addition to his role at Faith in Texas, Chris is a high school coach. He believes that young adults and college students are vital in bringing much-needed change to our communities, and he hopes to coach young adults to not only prosper in life but to make a difference in the lives of others.

Bryson Royal is a senior electrical engineering student at UT Dallas. He has been involved in organizations on campus such as NSBE (the National Society for Black Engineers) and BSA (the Black Student Alliance) and is currently the lab manager for the ArtSciLab, a research lab in ATEC. In his free time, he enjoys reading novels and comic books, drawing, and listening to music.

Sara Mokuria is the Associate Director for Leadership Initiatives at the Institute for Urban Policy Research here at UT Dallas. She holds a bachelor’s degree from New School University and two master’s degrees from Simmons College. In addition to her work on campus, Sara is a co-founder of Mothers

Against Police Brutality, a founding partner of the Steward Cultural Development Group, and a co-founder of Young Leaders Strong City. Sara is a mother and lives with her family here in Dallas.

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The “African Americans and Human Rights” Read-In

On September 17th, 2020, the Teach-In Series hosted a public reading of the 1946 National Negro Congress petition to the United Nations. This petition is significant to Arts and Humanities partly because it included or inspired several African American leaders important to the study of drama, history, music, and philosophy. These leaders include A. Philip Randolph, Paul Robeson, and W.E.B. Du Bois. The content of the petition demonstrates how professionals from different fields produced an argument relevant to domestic and international affairs.

In keeping with that example of collaboration, the Teach-In started with information about the regional chapter of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH). W. Marvin Dulaney (Associate Professor of History Emeritus) described the ASALH chapter named in his honor and its ongoing work to present and support African American Studies research. Dr. Kimberly Burdine (then the Assistant Director of the UTD Student Counseling Center) provided strategies for processing the petitioners’ details of racial oppression in an effective and healthy way. Then the event continued with about twenty students, staff, and faculty reading the petitioners’ reasons for asking the U.N. Economic and Social Council to monitor human rights violations within the United States.

Those violations were presented in the following nine categories: occupations, family income, housing, health, education, other public services, civil liberties, and peonage and violence. Each category was supported by statistics and qualitative citations under the academic guidance of the historian Herbert Aptheker. During the Q&A that followed the reading, Dulaney, Will Guzman (Professor of History), Andrew Scott (Associate Professor of Visual Arts), and other scholars provided updates on those details based on their specific expertise.

Several readers followed up with questions and comments about the petition, such as regarding the role of religion and the diplomatic outcome. Potential comparisons to current events drew the most eager responses from participants. Some expressed surprise to hear certain topics from the past summer’s protest speeches echoed in the evidence from the petition. The parallels to statements from a U.N. panel in September 2016 and June 2020 were also noteworthy; these statements called on the U.S. to consider providing African Americans with reparations and additional protection from racial violence. The

level of participation from students and colleagues within and beyond the University of Texas at Dallas was impressive and appreciated.

Speakers

Dr. Kimberly Hill, who organized this read-in, is an Assistant Professor of History at UT Dallas and the author of *A Higher Mission: The Careers of Alonzo and Althea Brown Edmiston in Central Africa* (University Press of Kentucky, 2020). She earned her B.A. in Plan II Interdisciplinary Honors (U.T. Austin) and her M.A. and Ph.D. in U.S. History (U.N.C. Chapel Hill) with coursework in church history (Duke Divinity School). Her work focuses on the intersections between religious education and black internationalism during the early twentieth century. The National Negro Congress petition was one of the primary sources analyzed by students enrolled in her interdisciplinary course on the Harlem Renaissance.

W. Marvin Dulaney is Associate Professor of History Emeritus, former Interim Director of the Center for African American Studies, and the former Chair of the Department of History at the University of Texas, Arlington. He is a graduate of Central State University in Wilberforce, Ohio, where he earned his Bachelor of Arts degree in History, magna cum laude. He earned his Master of Arts and Doctor of Philosophy degrees in American and African-American history at the Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio. He is a native of Alliance, Ohio. Dr. Dulaney is also the namesake of the DFW branch of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH).

Dr. Kimberly Burdine is a licensed psychologist. Until January 2021, she served as Assistant Director and Training Director at The University of Texas at Dallas Student Counseling Center.

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Border Policing and ICE

On October 30th, the Border Policing and ICE Teach-In addressed the legal and historical factors which have contributed to the creation of U.S. border policy and its effect on the lives of immigrants. Samuel Worthington, UT Dallas PhD student and research assistant for the Center for U.S. Latin America Initiatives, opened the discussion with a brief historical background on Central American immigration patterns and motivating factors. Following this broad overview of regional instability and its causes, UT Dallas student Meha Srivastav provides a closer look at the migrant experience from Central America through Mexico through a discussion of her experiences as a student-volunteer working at *Hermanos en el Camino*—a migrant shelter in Ixtepec, Oaxaca, Mexico.

Dr. S. Deborah Kang, then UT Dallas associate professor of History and Fellow of the Anne Stark and Chester Watson Professorship in History, turned the discussion to the history of border policing in the U.S. Her commentary traced the advent of the US Border Patrol as a relatively small and explicitly peripheral law enforcement agency through its eventual evolution into a police force which has been granted the purview to carry out enforcement action in the US interior. The final

panelist, Lorena Tule-Romain, speaks to the realities of immigrant lives in the United States. As the co-founder of ImmSchools and the Education Coordinator for the North Texas Dream Team, Tule-Romain addressed the experiences of those who live in fear of raids and deportation and the ways Texas families are facing these challenges.

Speakers

Sam Worthington is a PhD student in the History of Ideas program with a focus on Latin American History, Propaganda Studies, and Translation Theory. Sam is currently working as the CUSLAI Research Assistant for an interdisciplinary grant project focusing on Machine Learning approaches to the reading and interpretation of propaganda. Prior to enrolling at UT Dallas, Sam worked for over fifteen years as a professional translator and interpreter for state and federal judicial systems.

Lorena Tule-Romain was born in Michoacán, Mexico and immigrated at the age of 9 and has been living in the United States for the last 21 years. Ms. Tule-Romain started her journey as an undocumented student activist in Dallas, Texas, back in 2006. For the last four years, she co-lead Teach For America DACA national work as their Managing Director supporting over 240 DACAdmented teachers in 25 cities across the country. Prior to working at Teach For America, Lorena was a Teacher Assistant in Bogota, Colombia. Ms. Tule-Romain's passion for education equity and liberation comes from personal experience growing up as an undocumented student living in a low-income community in Texas. Ms. Tule-Romain served as a founding board member for ImmSchools during its first two-years. Currently, she is pursuing her master's in Higher Education at Southern Methodist University and serves as the Education Coordinator for the North Texas Dream Team. She currently resides in Dallas, Texas.

Meha Srivastav is a recent graduate from UT Dallas, where she studied psychology and creative writing. She is passionate about migration policy and humanitarian issues, and is currently working within the social work field at a domestic violence shelter.

S. Deborah Kang served as the Anne Stark and Chester Watson Associate Professor of History at the University of Texas at Dallas. Her research focuses on both the historical and contemporary aspects of US immigration and border policy. Her first book, *The INS on the Line: Making Immigration Law on the US-Mexico Border, 1917-1954* (Oxford University Press, 2017) traces the history of US immigration agencies on the US-Mexico border and earned six awards and many accolades.

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Diversity Work at UT-Dallas

This panel began by posing some basic, but urgent, questions: What are the challenges facing diversity workers on campus at UTD? What labor is currently being done, and who is doing this labor? What more can we do as a community to support work on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI)? What does an equitable, diverse UTD look like and how will we know when we have achieved it? How do we foster sustainability and accountability as advocates?

The scholar and writer Sara Ahmed has observed the double bind that shapes DEI work: “Being a diversity practitioner means you are in effect appointed by an employer to transform the employer. It is a difficult position...Even if you are appointed by an institution to transform the institution, it does not mean the institution is willing to be transformed.” Panelists shared cautionary tales from their work and discussed how to maintain their own critical consciousness about DEI practice as they do their jobs.

The panel also took stock of DEI work in this moment of exposure to pandemic and of the revival of the Black Lives Matter movement. There is, it seems, a broader awareness of the vulnerabilities and disparities that have been felt for centuries by those with marginalized identities. Panelists were asked to consider how such crises and public-policy responses, at levels ranging from the campus to the international scale, affect their work. The panel also considered that the passion and collective care that emerge at the start of a crisis can ebb and flow. Ta-Nehisi Coates, for example, has spoken about the reality that he will not likely be around to witness the fruits of his work. Panelists reflected on how to ensure their work lasts beyond them and is actually walking the walk.

The panel also invited personal reflections. Equity work is deeply personal and pulls up a number of emotional reactions. Panelists discussed what it is like to be seen as a privileged expert whose own struggles may be invisible to those seeking their help, and how to understand the defensiveness, confusion or threats that can be occasioned by DEI work.

Finally, panelists weighed in on questions for their practice going forward: What are some of the norms that we engage, or impose, in the academy and in higher education? What needs to shift in our culture, broadly and specifically at UT Dallas, based on your roles and interactions with students, colleagues and administrators on campus?

Speakers

Bruce August, Jr., is Assistant Director of Programming & Marketing for the Multicultural Center at UT Dallas.

Dr. Kimberly Burdine is a licensed psychologist who served as Assistant Director, Training Director at The University of Texas at Dallas Student Counseling Center until January 2021.

Brianna Hobbs is Assistant Director of Experiential Programs in the University Career Center. Hobbs also serves as the President of the Black Faculty & Staff Alliance employee resources group at UT Dallas.

Poe Johnson is Assistant Teaching Professor of Media and Communications at Drew University.

Jacqueline Prince is Assistant Director of Women's & Gender Equity Programs in the Gender Center at UTD.

History, Holidays, Monuments and Memory

This last year has been, among many things, a year of reckoning with white supremacy. This is as true at UTD as it is anywhere in the nation. Last spring a group of UTD student leaders polled hundreds of Black students and produced a list of demands to create a more equitable UTD. The demands fall under three categories. The first included protecting and extending funds, as well as creating a single space, for campus offices that promote racial equity, including the Office of Diversity and Student Engagement, the Student Counseling Center, the Multicultural Center, and the Office of Diversity and Community Engagement. The second sought direct relief for Black and low-income students through scholarships, subsidized meal plans, and increased recruitment. The final goal advocated for hiring Black faculty and creating an African American and African Diaspora Studies program. These calls grew more urgent after the President's town hall in June equated Juneteenth, the holiday celebrating emancipation, with Confederate Heroes Day, a state holiday that distorts the past in order to preserve white supremacy.

The event began when Axum Taylor, a junior Interdisciplinary Studies major with a concentration in Public Health and secretary of the Black Student Alliance, explained the student desires that prompted this event. Ben Wright, an assistant professor of history, discussed the history of the Confederacy and Juneteenth, making clear why the latter is worth celebrating and the former certainly is not. Lindsay Chervinsky, presidential historian and author of *The Cabinet: George Washington and the Creation of an American Institution*, explored national trends in the removal of Confederate monuments. Dr. Sharron Conrad, a recent PhD graduate from UTD and current postdoctoral fellow at SMU's Center for Presidential History, discussed how black Americans have used history to resist racism. Dr. George Keaton, the founder and president of Remembering Black Dallas, applied these histories to the movements against racist monuments in Dallas. Finally, Tamara Havis, a senior computer engineering major and active participant in the National Society of Black Engineers and Black Congress, concluded the event by reiterating the demands issues earlier in the spring. A host of excellent questions and comments from students, staff, faculty, and the wider community concluded the event.

Despite major technical difficulties that prompted the rescheduling of the event, nearly 100 attendees participated in this lively exploration of the relationship between past and present and the struggle against white supremacy. The organizers continue to support the Black students at UTD and wish to see the adoption of the proposals issued in the spring petition.

Speakers

Axum Taylor attended UT Dallas through Fall, 2020, where she majored in Interdisciplinary Studies with a concentration in Public Health. She formerly worked as a Student Success and Outreach Assistant for the Multicultural Center, and served on the Living Our Values Task Force.

Dr. Ben Wright is an assistant professor of US history at UT Dallas. He is the author of *Bonds of Salvation: How Christianity Inspired and Limited American Abolitionism* and the co-editor of both *Apocalypse and the Millennium in the American Civil War Era* and *The American Yawp: A Massively Collaborative, Open U.S. History Textbook*. He also works in the fight against human trafficking as a board member of Historians Against Slavery and Children at Risk.

Dr. Lindsay Chervinsky is Scholar in Residence at the Institute for Thomas Paine Studies at Iona College, Senior Fellow at the Robert H. Smith International Center for Jefferson Studies, and Professorial Lecturer at the School of Media and Public Affairs, George Washington University. She is a leading historian of the American presidency and is the author of *The Cabinet: George Washington and the Creation of an American Institution*.

Dr. Sharron Conrad, a recent PhD graduate from UTD, is currently a postdoctoral fellow at SMU's Center for Presidential History where she is completing a book manuscript on the memory of Presidents Kennedy and Johnson within the Black community. She previously served as Director of Education and Public Programs at The Sixth Floor Museum at Dealey Plaza.

Dr. George Keaton is the leading authority on the history of Black life in Dallas. He is the founder and president of Remembering Black Dallas and previously served for 31 years as a professional in the Dallas Independent School District.

Tamara Havis graduated from UT Dallas with a computer engineering degree in December, 2020. While attending UTD, she was involved in several student organizations such as the National Society of Black Engineers and Black Congress. She collaborated on the call to action that was sent to President Benson, as well as served on the Living Our Values taskforce.

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One Breath Poem: A Needful Message

LabSynthE (xtine burrough, Sabrina Starnaman, et al)
with Nomi Stone

One Breath Poem: A Needful Message is a telematic call and response in which the voice expresses a poetic phrase with the limitation of speaking in just one exhale. This edition of LabSynthE's *One Breath Poem* was prompted by the uprisings against police brutality and systemic racism during the summer of 2020. In this version we center Ross Gay's poem, "A Small Needful Fact," which explores the beauty of a man's life and the legacy of his death in the span of a breath.

The poem plays with the irony that a man who was prevented from breathing made it easier for others to breathe. Yet to trace the poem's form is to see the transformation it enacts: its single sentence of depleting breath as we read it is then met with the replenishment of breath, by the plants Garner has rooted in the earth. To preface our conversation on police brutality, we offer this work: a sorrow over the many Black lives lost in America to state-inflicted violence, alongside a recirculation of life and of memory—and breath.

For The University of Texas at Dallas' teach-in "Living Legacies of White Supremacy at UTD and Beyond" we translated and recorded "A Small Needful Fact" in Farsi, French, Italian, Korean, Portuguese, and Spanish with the help of student and faculty translators. Moving beyond English situates Garner's death and American police brutality within the global community. Moreover, the use of other languages de-centers English in America.

Speakers

xtime burrough is a new media artist, author, and Professor of Arts, Technology, and Emerging Communication at The University of Texas at Dallas.

Dr. Sabrina Starnaman is an Associate Professor of Instruction in Literature at The University of Texas at Dallas. Their collaborations present critical explorations of women and labor in the twenty-first century. *The Laboring Self* is a media project funded by Humanities Texas, the Dallas Museum of Art, and Puffin Foundation West, Ltd. (2017). *Return to Sender* and *Conscious Machines* are touring workshops that extend ideas of the self in labor to sites outside the museum walls (2018). Their critical exploration of archives resulted in *An Archive of Unnamed Women*, supported by a Nasher Microgrant (online, 2019), and a commission from the Photographers' Gallery for their year-long program, *Data/Set/Match: Epic Hand Washing in a Time of Lost Narratives* (online, 2020), and *A Kitchen of One's Own* (The Photographers' Gallery Media Wall, London, 2020).

Dr. Nomi Stone is a poet, anthropologist, Assistant Professor in poetry at UT Dallas, and author of two collections of poetry. Winner of a Pushcart Prize and featured in *Best American Poetry*, her recent collection of poems, *Kill Class*, based on her fieldwork across the United States and the Middle East, was a finalist for the Julie Suk award. Her anthropological monograph, a winner of the *Atelier Series*, *Pinelandia: Human Technology and American Empire/ An Anthropology and Field-Poetics of Contemporary War* is forthcoming (University of California Press, 2022).

A

A large, stylized outline of the number 2, rendered in a simple, clean line-art style. The number is positioned on the left side of the page.

**LITERARY
LIVES**

Aeneid Wars

A.M. Juster

The Aeneid. by Vergil. Translated by Shadi Bartsch. Random House, 464pp., \$35 cloth.

Vergil, *The Aeneid*. Translated by Sarah Ruden. Introduction by Susanna Braund; notes and glossary by Susanna Braund and Emma Hilliard. Yale, 392pp., \$18 paper.

RECENTLY THE STUDY OF ANCIENT GREEK AND ROMAN literature seems to illustrate Newton's Third Law of Motion—for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. Young scholars in “the classics” (a phrase under increasing attack) are lobbying for a reinvention of their field that will accommodate their ideologies.

Their target is an easy one. Nineteenth- and early twentieth-century British scholars largely defined the field, and they did so in their own image, which included many race, gender and class biases. Their worldview also tended to incorporate strong emotional connections between the Roman Empire and their British Empire, which is why they focused on the perceived glory days of the Augustan era, downplayed the repulsive aspects of that era, only grudgingly studied the following century, and then largely ignored the empire's literature after about 100 A.D.

The dissolution of the Roman Empire was painful for British classicists not only because of the parallels to their own nation's international decline, but because the literature became increasingly Catholic. Hatred of Catholicism was a standard failing of the British elite through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and classicists were no different. Most classicists of that period viewed Late Antique Latin poetry as degenerate, and simply did not study it or teach it.

The strangeness of this cutoff for the study of a language's literature still escapes attention in our colleges and universities. French departments do not stop teaching French literature after Moliere and Racine, Italian departments do not stop teaching Italian literature after Dante and Petrarch, so why do almost all classics departments feel they have no duty to study and teach Latin literature after Juvenal, Martial and Seneca?

The general intentions of the new generation of classicists are clear, but the specifics of their vision are not. One of the few areas of common ground between the old guard and the new guard is distaste for Catholicism, so do not expect to see Prudentius, Corippus or Aldhelm on curricula any time soon. You may not see Virgil's *Aeneid* or Homer's *Iliad* on as many readings lists any more either. As just one example, Oxford had a heated public debate last year about removing both books from its second-year curriculum. Some would go even further—a Stanford University classics professor, Walter Scheidel, recently stated about classical studies that “I don't think it should exist as an academic field.”

Whether as a reaction to the critics or not, there is also renewed interest in some quarters in ancient Roman and Greek texts. Public universities, such as the University of Vermont, may be dropping classics departments, but interest is surging among home-schooling parents, private schools, and some religious colleges and universities. Classics for All, a non-profit British institution, is doing a wonderful job of expanding interest in and access to Greek and Latin literature for students traditionally denied the opportunity to engage in such study by the class, race and gender biases of the British academic establishment.

As part of this revival, a growing number of translators have recently taken on the most significant texts. The earliest translators of these texts, such as Pope and Dryden, valued good poetry over literal accuracy. In the nineteenth century, academic philologists took over the field and tipped the balance toward painful literal accuracy and against the pleasures of poetry. Due to the sentimentality about Augustan Rome, translation of the *Aeneid* and other texts also suffered from avoidance of literal accuracy whenever it cast Rome in a bad light—so rape became romance, slaves became servants.

Translation of the *Aeneid* in most of the twentieth century was not much better, except that the Victorian *faux* antique diction gave way to the over-the-top, testosterone-driven language of Ezra Pound—language that often paid little attention to what the text actually said. Robert Fitzgerald's 1983 elegant translation is a notable exception to that generalization, but it achieved concision at the cost of excluding key details and it continued the tradition of looking at Rome through rose-colored glasses. Harold Bloom and acolytes of deconstructionism appear to have given *Aeneid* translators of the early twenty-first century even greater license to use the *Aeneid* as something akin to a writing prompt for sprawling free verse that wanders far from the source text. The unfortunately popular Robert Fagles 2006 version is the best example of this phenomenon, and the nadir is surely Frederick Ahl's 2007 translation.

In the nineteenth century, academic philologists took over the field and tipped the balance toward painful literal accuracy and against the pleasures of poetry.

It was against this backdrop that Sarah Ruden's 2008 translation of the *Aeneid* challenged the classical establishment. It was a challenge for which she was well prepared—she is a distinguished poet with a doctorate in classical philology from Harvard. While there was reluctance in some quarters to welcome into the men's club the first woman to translate the *Aeneid* into English, what upset the classics establishment even more than her gender was her decision to render the poem in blank verse, the workhorse meter for Milton and Shakespeare. I once witnessed a panel where two tenured Ivy League professors tried to shout Ruden down as she tried to explain her rationale for her decisions on prosody.

For all the criticism she received, Ruden's embrace of the regular blank verse of Shakespeare and Milton has been influential. The great David Ferry published a disappointing 2018 *Aeneid* translation in loose blank verse, and Len Krisak raised the ante in 2020 with a version in rhymed and metrically regular iambic hexameter couplets.

This year Yale University has released a revised version of the Ruden translation. The competing translation is from Shadi Bartsch, the Helen A. Regenstein Distinguished Service Professor in Classics at the University of Chicago. Bartsch's approach is closer to that of Ruden than that of Fagles or Ahl. Both translators embrace meter, although Bartsch's meter is less strict:

After some experimentation, I compromised between the familiarity of Shakespearean blank verse and Vergil's meter by allowing six, sometimes five beats in my iambic lines. (p. LI)

Both translators translate line-for-line, a practice that makes it much easier for students to tie these translations to citations in scholarly articles; this approach also acts as a governor against unnecessary verbiage. Both translators are also zealous about avoiding the Victorian and postmodern claptrap that has diminished so many translations.

A good starting point for thinking about these two books is to look at II.875 (*quadripedumque putrem cursu quatit ungula campum*), a line for which A.N. Wilson once contrasted the G.P. Goold “literal” translation from the venerable Loeb series with a laughable line from the Ahl translation.

And in their galloping course the horse hoof
shakes the crumbling plain (Goold)

Cloven-hoofed quadruped clatter kicks
clumps, quivers plains at a gallop (Ahl)

Bartsch and Ruden render these lines as:

they shook/the pockmarked plain with
horses at full gallop (Bartsch)

And hoofbeats’ rhythms shook the soft-earthed plane (Ruden)

These takes are both reasonable, although I would probably have chosen the simpler “dusty” for *putrem* over the more lyrical choices Bartsch and Ruden made. As you look closer at their versions, though, you start to see differences in language that reflect the two translators’ different approaches. Ruden achieves full line-for-line equivalence, but Bartsch pulls in a foot from the previous line.

In and of itself, the occasional theft of a foot from a previous line is not a big deal. However, Bartsch had difficulty maintaining the line integrity of both the original text and good iambic pentameter verse in English. Frequently she resorts to enjambment where lines end with conjunctions, pronouns are split from verbs, and other awkward choices, as in this excerpt from 5.315-320:

At the signal, suddenly
they sprang out from the gates and sped over
the distance, rushing on like storm-clouds. When they
saw the finish line, Nisus flashed into
first place, faster than winged lightning and
the wind. (5.315-320)

Contrast this section with Ruden’s more fluid and concise version:

At the signal,
They sprang across the line and down the course,
Pouring like clouds. Now with the goal in sight,
Nisus flashed out ahead and took the lead
As swiftly as the wind or wings of thunder.

Ruden understands that once a translator chooses the verb “sprang,” the adverb “suddenly” suddenly becomes extraneous.

There are times when Bartsch's philological focus is helpful. In the section quoted above I prefer her more accurate "winged lightning" to Ruden's "wings of thunder" on both philological and esthetic grounds. However, Ruden's word choices are only rarely off-key, whereas Bartsch's choices regularly miss the mark as poetry. A small example of this difference between the two translators occurs at 1.635 where Ruden uses "fat lambs" but Bartsch uses "fatty lambs"—a description that evokes an unappetizing and unhealthy piece of meat on a plate rather than a gamboling farm animal. Thirty-two lines later a reader can see this contrast again when Ruden uses the properly assertive "You know," but Bartsch uses the flimsier "You're aware"—a phrase of faculty meetings, not battlegrounds.

Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* retain their grip on the public imagination; words and phrases from these epics are firmly lodged in our parlance, and genres from film to comic books continue to mine Homer's characters and scenes. The *Aeneid* once had a similar role in Western culture, but today's undergraduates—clearly the target audience for both editions—will usually be unfamiliar with the poem. This unfamiliarity makes it important that translators render the text not only accurately, but with rhythms and word choices that keep reminding the readers that the *Aeneid* popularized the phrase "the golden line."

Self-indulgent free verse translations loosely tethered to Virgil's Latin have worked to undermine the reputation of the *Aeneid* and made it easier for critics to call for it to be removed from curricula. If the Bartsch translation had been released fifteen years ago, it would have been controversial and celebrated as superior to the reigning versions of Fagles and other recent translators. However, the Ruden translation, both in its 2008 edition and the 2021 edition, accomplishes everything that the Bartsch translation does, and more. They both show the unappealing aspects of the poem, much in the way that Emily Wilson's widely acclaimed 2017 translation of the *Odyssey* did, and they both inform their translations with serious philology in ways that Fagles, Ahl and others did not. Both versions are reasonably accessible to readers and generally free of the "translatese" that haunts the Loeb and many earlier translations.

The difference comes down to the quality of the poetry, and there Ruden has the edge over Bartsch. The Bartsch translation has moments of genius, but they are too few and they invariably come in lines where a regular iambic pentameter line forces the concision and power that consistently sustains the Ruden translation. Ruden set the bar for *Aeneid* translations in 2008, and has raised it now with this revision. I am confident it will be a long time before a translator exceeds the standard that she has set. A

Better Lives Through Reading

Jonathan Hartmann

"And if he left off dreaming about you, where do you suppose you'd be?"

—Tweedledee, in *Through the Looking-Glass*

Philip Davis, *Reading for Life*. Oxford University Press, 320pp., \$33 cloth.

Umberto Eco, *On the Shoulders of Giants*. trans. Alastair McEwen. Harvard University Press, 336pp., \$28 cloth.

The Edinburgh History of Reading: *Common Readers*, edited by Jonathan Rose. Edinburgh University Press, 384pp., \$125 cloth, \$40 ebook.

In Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking-Glass*, bully boy Tweedledee tells Alice that The Red King, whom she notices snoring, is dreaming of her. Next, he posits that Alice's very existence may depend on her presence in the dream. A similar conundrum occurs to narrative theorist Umberto Eco, who asks, "Which came first, the author or the reader?" Books, Eco argues, extend readers a hand for a tacit though consensual relationship. Reading fiction, for example Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), gives one chills, not only for the content but also the

uncanny resemblance between fictional and real-world events. Reading opens us up to a topsy-turvy, funhouse-mirror, Alice in Wonderland universe where we follow in wonder every hint of the hero, intermittently puzzling over what our author is doing.

Eco's theory of reading explores what we do when, like Hansel and Gretel entering the forest, we are faced with a new text—that is, a story whose pages we have not previously entered. As he puts it in his Harvard lectures *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods* (1994), we give a novel roughly ten minutes to engage us, making an Inferential Walk, that is, a mental scouting expedition, each time we read. This involves asking ourselves a series of "what if" questions in order to help us predict the arc of the narrative and the relatability of its central character. Since we are made anxious not by the presence of a wolf but by the possibility of a (story) world without meaning, we find comfort in all manner of rationalizations, reducing ambiguous situations to simple quest, princess, or buddy stories.

Reading opens us up to a topsy-turvy, funhouse-mirror, Alice in Wonderland universe where we follow in wonder every hint of the hero, intermittently puzzling over what our author is doing.

While Eco focuses on our individual engagement with our books, Jonathan Rose's collection *Common Readers* offers empirical studies of reading. Instead of focusing on readers and authors, however, two chapters of Rose's work address the reciprocal relationship linking readers and publishers. In Chapter 10, "Putting Your Best Book Forward: A Historical and Psychological Look at the Presentation of Book Collections," Nicole Gonzalez and Nick Weir-Williams show how readers and publishers discriminate in both the positive and negative sense of the word. As the authors explain, readers do so for two reasons: to simplify their buying choices and to enhance their self-image. Publishers model distinctions between literary and popular fiction as a way to make their wares costly habits. For publishers' bottom line depends on their conditioning individual readers to rush after literature or lunge into beach reading. By painting every expensive new release as either an ascetic nibble or a zesty stew of passion and violence, publishers engrain this distinction in readers.

Outside of our two pandemic years, large numbers of reading groups have met at readers' homes. These meetings may flourish not so much as literary appreciation sessions, but as opportunities for members to meet and greet one another over wine and cheese. Samantha Rideout and DeNel Rehberg Sedo's *Common Readers* chapter "Novel Ideas: The Promotion of North American Book Club Books and the Creation of Their Readers" maps out the

effort of North American publishers' own book clubs to attract and secure their target audience. Club members, largely female readers, receive regular publisher promotions. As Rehberg Sedo and Rideout observe, publishers' newsletters abandon any fear of overselling their wares. For example, Harper Collins's April 13, 2010, newsletter *Chatter* delivered the message

"... in the newest novel from beloved #1 New York Times bestselling Ya-Ya author Rebecca Wells."

This description yields the formula

"qualifier + amplifying adjective
+ rank + bestseller type + term
'best-selling' + reference to earlier
bestselling work + author's name."

Apparently, a New York Times mention works as publishers' most highly prized descriptor. Harper Collins' language seduces readers by implying that their purchase confirms their intimate acquaintance with the finest writing available. Rehberg Sedo and Rideout suggest that busy readers are at a publisher's mercy: if book promotions were stripped from our magazines, newspapers, and e-book interfaces, we would be confronted with a daunting array of choices. When we read in conspicuous book consumption—that is, one's bookshelf display and discussion in a book group—reading serves as a kind of mirror to which we ask the classic question, Honey, does this book make me look attractive? For all practical purposes, then, publishers and readers rely on each other in a mutually beneficial relationship.

Our adventures in reading are dramatized in an 1882 tale, Frank Stockton's "The Lady, or the Tiger." Stockton offers a fairy tale fused with a Roman forum event and "The Price is Right," asking readers to choose between two endings for the princess's common lover. Readers may observe that the two endings offer differing challenges to this forbidden dalliance. That the lover is awarded immediate marriage to a woman he has never met (door number 1) or death by tiger (door number 2), with his lover's body language his only guide as to which door is which, emphasizes the challenges of going against cultural and familial strictures. Stockton's title announces its intention of simply offering two paths for the commoner to follow. Readers may ponder the possibilities for surviving tiger attack, evading the door-woman before or after the forum wedding, or somehow escaping the Monty Hall forum.

Eco's work helps us see that readers are more like the Princess—who has a modicum of choice, restricted by patriarchal and royal confines—than her lover, who will be either eaten or married off, thus ending the lovers' relationship. At the same time, Eco's studies suggest that authors are something less than absolute monarchs: rather than simply kill us or marry us off, so to speak, they generate signals for us to interpret.

Instead of reading to improve our appearance or entering a deep dark forest like Hansel and Gretel, groups of British readers meet to uncover a book as one would unwrap a holiday gift. Since there's no studying up for *The Reader's* book groups, readers surprise each other with

emotions and long-hidden memories brought to life. A drug addict, for example, may find a bit of hope, and an ex-offender may be spurred to reach out to someone he thought was lost to him. One well-educated but troubled participant observes:

If you're reading aloud you're thinking Help, where's this going to end? But you want it to keep going as well. It's a sort of double feeling: relief when it does end in making sense, but exciting when it keeps going into another phase, and then another. I'm not at all used to reading aloud: it is a physical thing, you use different muscles from when you read at home, and the length of the sentence becomes like a physical thing in the mind. Your brain is looking ahead on the page because you've not seen it before. There is a sense of an immediate future ahead of you, to work out.

Here Frances describes her investigation of literature, which *The Reader* takes as poetry and challenging fiction. *The Reader* and CRILS (Centre for Research into Reading, Literature and Society, housed at The University of Liverpool), to which Philip Davis dedicates *Reading for Life*, might take as their motto "Better Lives through Reading."

Davis describes the mission of *The Reader* as generative reading—that is, an activity that opens up new possibilities for everyone involved. When reading literary writing, he reports, we slow our pulse to indulge in its deliberate embrace. Davis's framing of the activity resembles Carroll's notion of Alice caught up in the Red King's dream, to the extent that the book-less life may be a lonely one. One would thus do well to follow the authors' advice and make time for a new book. ■

Like Magic

Ben Lewellyn-Taylor

Hanif Abdurraqib. *A Little Devil in America: Notes in Praise of Black Performance*. Random House, 320pp., \$27 cloth.

A BOOK ARRIVES TO READERS ALREADY finished. If we allow ourselves to be mystified as we age, we might wonder at the object in our hands. Like a magic trick, this text arrived fully formed. How did these words form those sentences, and how did those paragraphs come together to make those chapters? The author did not merely pull the book out of a hat like a hidden rabbit, but rather spent years painstakingly perfecting their craft so that we might find our eyes widening in wonder while we turn each page.

This was the awe I experienced while reading Hanif Abdurraqib's latest essay collection, *A Little Devil in America: Notes in Praise of Black Performance*. Abdurraqib himself takes interest in the workings of magic, placing himself in conversation with Christopher Nolan's 2006 film *The Prestige*, which also appeared in his previous poetry collection, *A Fortune for Your Disaster*. In Nolan's film, an ordinary object does something extraordinary before the audience's eyes, then returns to its original

state, but slightly altered. Here, Abdurraqib uses the notion of this trick to consider the intricacies of Black identity on personal and public scales.

As in *The Prestige*, where a magician took his own life each night and replaced himself with a copy, Abdurraqib considers the weight of performing identity with a double consciousness. He turns to Dave Chappelle, who left the U.S. at the height of the *Chappelle's Show* because, as Abdurraqib observes, he "found out that in his particular line of work, the laughter of white people was both currency and conflict. A long and echoing purgatory with no exit." Throughout *A Little Devil in America*, Abdurraqib praises a wide array of Black performances, including examples from film, television, dance, music recordings, concerts, and beyond, while counterbalancing their appearance of magic with the dynamics of the audience looking on. He explores how Black performance can mean one thing to Black audiences, and how it can mean an entirely other, more insidious, thing to white audiences.

Chappelle told *Time* in 2005 that he knew it was time to go when he saw a white man laughing louder and longer than everyone else in the audience. Both Chappelle and Abdurraqib understand how Black love can be mutated in the wrong hands: "I say I love my people and I mean there is a language that is only ours, and within that language there is shelter. But when I speak that language into the world, I know how eager the world might be to bend it to its own desires." Abdurraqib pivots to *Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri*, the 2017 film written and directed by Martin McDonagh, and which features a prolonged scene where three white characters—two of whom won Oscars for their performances—volley the n-word back and forth in what is meant to be a humorous exchange.

Movies that proclaim to interrogate race but actually serve to promote white comfort appear throughout the essays. Too often, white audiences, including the audiences who go on to make our own art in turn, see Black performance and translate it into permission for our own ends. While Abdurraqib praises Black performance in *A Little Devil in America*, he is careful to note that praise is not without conflict.

Elsewhere, Abdurraqib takes a kaleidoscopic view of blackface, bending white laughter back on itself: “It would be humorous or fascinating if it wasn’t so suffocating. I would laugh if I was not being smothered by the violence of imagination.” Each time blackface reappears in the news cycle because another white person or group has resurrected it—or proven its ever-presentness—Abdurraqib wonders if the history of its violence has really been addressed: “I wonder about the benefits and failures of this: how far the country has gotten laying down the framework for societal dos and don’ts while not confronting history. If it is possible to ground a true behavioral shift without attacking the root of blackface.”

Considering Ben Vereen’s performance of minstrelsy at President Ronald Reagan’s 1981 inauguration, which Vereen intended as a confrontation with the white audience before the broadcast was cut short, Abdurraqib understands Vereen’s intent: “A demand, once again, to ask a white audience what the fuck is so funny. What, exactly, do they understand themselves to be applauding.” Abdurraqib celebrates the magic of Black performance while weighing the cost of carrying it forth into a nation built on the subjection of Black people.

In this way, Abdurraqib’s collection articulates an ethic around audience reception on several layers. “The thing I find myself explaining most vigorously to people these days,” he writes, “is that

consumption and love are not equal parts of the same machine. To consume is not to love, and ideally love is not rooted solely in consumption.” Differentiating between consumption and love, that is, between white consumption and Black love, Abdurraqib examines Black performance as a staging ground for larger conversations on race and racism that have yet to result in a transformation of the country or its violent progenitors.

Abdurraqib turns to his own white audience—to white readers, myself included—and considers us: “This one goes out to the answers I do not have for you, or for myself, and this one goes out to the sins I cannot crawl myself out of in order to forgive the ones you might be buried under.” With *A Little Devil in America*, white readers do not get to revel in Black performance without considering the implications of our prying eyes. “I have no real magic to promise any of you,” Abdurraqib warns. Instead, he invites complexity in place of false resolution, heavy meditation in place of easy enjoyment.

* *

Although *A Little Devil in America* features well-known Black performances, from Beyoncé’s 2016 Super Bowl halftime appearance to Billy Dee Williams’ role as Lando Calrissian in *Star Wars*, Abdurraqib displays his skill as an archivist to dig out lesser-known, yet still compelling examples. Some of these may not seem like performances until Abdurraqib goes long on a subject. He considers Josephine Baker’s time as a spy, or his own experiences playing spades with his friends and in different regions, as reshaping the terms of performance itself.

In one essay, Calrissian’s role in *Star Wars* connects to Afrofuturism and then to Trayvon Martin. Abdurraqib considers the

widely shared photos of Martin, or “photos that were sometimes him and sometimes not,” the ones intended to create a dehumanizing portrait of Black boyhood. He turns to his favorite, that of Martin visiting Experience Aviation in Florida and wearing a replica of the blue uniform worn by Michael P. Anderson.

I had seen the photo, but did not previously know that Anderson was the ninth Black astronaut to go to space in 2003, aboard the Columbia mission that killed all of its crewmembers. Anderson died a hero, and Abdurraqib notes that, unlike Martin, “No one insisted that he deserved what he got.” Abdurraqib imagines Martin as someone who “could have been a person who watched the skies and sought to climb into them.” Or, maybe he wouldn’t have done anything spectacular, anything seen as magical. “But he would have been alive to do it all,” Abdurraqib remarks, “or not do it all.” In this way, Abdurraqib imagines an alternative to one foreclosed future and demands dignity for Martin as a person grounded on this earth, whether or not he would have flown into the stratosphere.

Throughout the collection, Abdurraqib performs frequent imaginative exercises that become poetic exercises in humanizing visions of Black identity. As with Martin, Abdurraqib envisions alternate futures for many. Thinking about Merry Clayton, who showed up the Rolling Stones with her vocal turn on their 1969 song “Gimme Shelter,” Abdurraqib wants her to be as big as the white band she sang alongside: “I want teenagers to wear her face on T-shirts, and I mean her good face with her good afro and her fur coat and her father’s eyes. I want record stores to stock the solo records of Merry Clayton in the front case and I want them to play all of the songs she sang alone, with no one else.”

On the white comfort provided by the Oscar-winning film *Green Book*, Abdurraqib

imagines other, better movies for Don Shirley to exist in, until he arrives at the simplest, most ordinary possible alternative: “I want a movie in which Don Shirley goes to the movies and watches a movie in which no one Black suffers for the imagined greater good.”

Abdurraqib’s own performance on the page becomes a means to express how magic functions, in that it provides an illusion of something that is not quite real, and the grief that often coincides with the momentary suspension of disbelief. Often, these flights of imagination result in Abdurraqib bending the shape of his prose around this other world, losing punctuation and essayistic form in pursuit of something higher than language itself. Linking Michael Jackson’s death with his own mother’s, Abdurraqib’s associations string together in concert: “I can sleep my way into hunger & on the nights I dream of my mother the woman I rest my body next to tells me that I stop breathing in my sleep & inheritance is the gift of someone to spread the news of a morning you didn’t wake up for...”

Before he arrives at Trayvon Martin by way of Star Wars, Abdurraqib gazes at the spacesuits worn by Labelle in the 1970s, and wonders about his own mother’s dreams of flying.

Before he arrives at Trayvon Martin by way of *Star Wars*, Abdurraqib gazes at the spacesuits worn by Labelle in the 1970s, and wonders about his own mother’s dreams of flying: “I guess I have tricked you into reading about my mother again, and how I do not know if she wanted to go to space but how

I still wanted that for her.” Abdurraqib’s mother reappears on the page, but I felt the gravity of mourning that this manifestation entailed each time she appeared.

There is a sense in which *A Little Devil in America* is Abdurraqib’s greatest trick yet, the collection where he shows you what it cost him to make this book that sits in my hands, and which I hope you decide to hold in yours. When he wishes better vehicles for Don Shirley, Abdurraqib notes that his favorite thing about the musician is “not that he was a genius who led a sometimes spectacular life. It is that in the moments in between, he likely led a life that was very normal. And that is spectacular too.” He wishes the same for all Black geniuses: “I want them to be absolved, but no one else. There can be no solution without acknowledgment, and so I don’t want anyone to watch this movie and consider themselves clean. Everyone else will have to earn it.”

Likewise, white readers like myself who read *A Little Devil in America* should not come to the book expecting a magic wand waved over the sins of whiteness, cleansing

us because we, too, want to celebrate Black performance. Abdurraqib suggests that there is no such magic, only the illusion, and moments that appear spectacular in Black performances are only humans tethered to the earth who sometimes seem to levitate over and above time and circumstance, pointing to a somewhere else that looks like this world, but altered, and better.

“It will appear spectacular to everyone who isn’t us,” Abdurraqib muses. If white readers want to be a part of transforming the world, part of our work is to see ourselves as unextraordinary, not shallowly comforted by white movies or falsely absolved by the bottomless consumption of Black art—as something altogether unspectacular and unflattering and unsung.

It’s no wonder we wish for magic to be real. The reality is so much harder to bear, but it’s where we live, as material as a book in our hands, as costly as what it takes to bring it forward into the world. I returned from reading *A Little Devil in America* as I was before, but something inside me had been altered. ˆ

3

FOLIO

On Taking Students to the Millstone River and Re-Considering the Category of Fieldwork

Nomi Stone

Our classroom is small, the world,
large. Through everything,
a river passes.

/

Before piping it under the earth,
this town was a river. The mind
rushes water into the library, into Spring
Street's yards, red brick apartments,
once a spring. Park the car below:
bright puddles round the pipes.

/

Following GoogleMaps, all 12 in a van,
we choose stops: by the parking lot
of Penn Medical, through icy grass
and trash to the river, gathering what
charisma we can find. Reeds are lit in the sun.
Deer droppings *blaze up into golden stones*.
Drive another bend to Shep Lee, who left
Merrill Lynch to farm pears with his wife: near
the river, but not near enough. They dig a well.
Fieldworkers hold a recorder to Lee's
lips: "What do the pears taste like?" We try
to find the old mill, but where it was is
Modway, industrial storage facility. Behind it,
the river. After, I ask, does it feel closer?
My student *Elijah* says, Well it's in my shoes.

/

Anglers dart American shad
and drop flutter spoons
as bait. Shad fly against
the river, up ladders
of water. Fieldworkers write
in notebooks. They set it down.

/

I'm trained as a social scientist.
For centuries now we've made maps,
noted kin, drawn boxes around what
we know. Oh friend, can I learn

how to see it, the world—electric,
bright, terrible, and beautiful—but
not turn it into food?

/

Fieldworkers climb into a dank, cooled
beaver den.

We'd read about a zoologist, Charles Foster, who wanted
to become animal, to know

their secrets. Why not? Greek Gods did it to spy
on mortals. As a child,

Charles collected blackbird tongues, listened
to mudflats.

We too, he argued, have golgi tendons, muscle spindles
to register space. One

bird has as many receptors on its beak as
a clitoris. It nuzzles

towards a worm. Horse chestnuts stir in the wind.
He chooses

to be a badger and live in a burrow, even
bringing his son.

Finally writes, "This is Charles Foster, writing
about being an animal." Language

is the tunnel the world rushes through.

/

Thirty-eight miles long, the river crosses
Sweetman, Applegarth, the Turnpike:
our part flows into the Lake, siphoned
in 1903 for Princeton rowers, who build
their torsos as above them swans pass.

We meet a man who paints the river
chocolate brown speckled with reflections
of trees. Another who lives above it,
sleeps to it. You can't drink it or wash
your face in it. But some people love it.

/

Turtles are drunk from 8 months
of sleep: you could pluck them
from the mud. *Jasmine* and *Zoe* find one
with a maimed face. The students point
their iPhones there. I do too. *Elijah*
lifts it above his head, then carries it.
To the water.

/

Willa records the rain
falling on the trees
into the Millstone.

It isn't special unless
everything is special.
But everything is special.

/

Paddling under honeysuckle branches, *Elijah* finds a nest
of four teal-green eggs, pillowed with feathers
and mud. *Don't touch it.* I'm not very good

at paddling, but I keep going, til my shoulders burn, til the
Box around the river
falls away. The Field grows and grows to hold the boy's
wet shoes, the mall where he bought them, just past Macy's.
And the hole

he falls through whenever he is sad. The trees at the park and
the swans. And the stars.

I meant from here to the stars, moving like quick currents
between us. So much faster than we could write it down.

Note: this poem incorporates a fragment of a line
from James Wright, "blaze up into golden stones"

(Originally published in *American Poetry Review*)

Latter Days

Poems from a plague season

Frederick Turner

Spring Harvest

The Indian paintbrush paints the meadows scarlet,
The wood-doves woo, the tender leaves turn green,
Birdsong is everywhere, the sky is violet,
A morning cloud is lit to tangerine.

All life rejoices, but its guest is dying;
The streets are void, the air is strangely clean;
Death stalks the human cities, terrifying:
Grey lungs, grey thoughts, and not a trace of green.

We had forgotten Death, the harvester,
He's come now for his crop, his ashen tithe;
We thought we had the power to defer
Forever that old specter with his scythe.

O yes, he's part of life, is Master Death:
We name life's colors, but he takes our breath.

The Sahara Sandstorm Comes to Texas

June 27 2020

Dust out of Africa smelling of locusts,
Smelling of turmeric, burnt tires, honey,
Dried dung, cumin, sour cassava,
Smells of my childhood, dreadful, returning,
Smelling of black skin, dogs, and love—
All this roaring in gales from the east,
Middle passage all over again,
Turning my sky white as burnouses,
White as a blind eye, white as breastmilk,
Gusting like furnaces, blowing me over,
Smelling like resin dripped on the drumhead,
Beating with sweetness, terror and holiness,
Roaring like lions in the heat of the day.

Plague out of Thebes or blessing of new things?

In a Plague Spring (in an Election Year)

In spring the laciest leaf and sweetest green
Belongs to this wild carrot whose white stars
Of clustered florets make a pretty scene,
Like baby's-breath about more noble flowers.

By April they have set their thousand seeds,
That cling in matted masses to your clothes,
Voracious of survival, pods of needs
That now have overwhelmed the ancient rose.

Like certain ideologies, they feel
So sweet and natural at first, but spread
And clutch and smother up the true and real;

This is the hemlock that scared Athens fed
To Socrates to cap his civic meal.
It numbed his feet, his knees, his heart, his head,

And he was dead.

The Cytokine Storm

The body's a seven-gated city
Whose citizens live by a norm,
Competing and sharing, in praise and in pity,
Except in the cytokine storm.

When the guardians designed to defend us
Come to hate those who do not conform,
Then what should befriend us becomes what will end us
In the wrath of the cytokine storm.

With a knee on the throat of his brother
The guardian has turned to the germ,
And the kinsman or lover is marked as the Other
And drowned in the cytokine storm.

When the Right is the poisonous virus,
The Left is what does us more harm;
When the Left is the toxin to fire and inspire us,
The Right is the cytokine storm.

We live in a sickening spiral
Where form is destroyed by reform,
Where the message that's worst is the one that goes viral,
Unleashing the cytokine storm.

The only recourse in this fever
Is refusal to go with the swarm:
Reject the deceiver, instruct the believer,
And ride out the cytokine storm.

After COVID

What is this creeping from the chrysalis?
An ancient form of life.
What is the purpose of its metamorphosis?
Creation out of strife.

A strange return to cottage industry;
A kind of money-mine;
An odd contemplative philosophy;
Home redesigned as shrine;

A silence in the tumult of the sky;
Cities designed for friends;
Roads turned to streets, walks for the passers-by;
Places not means but ends;

The marketplace become an everywhere;
Work as its own sweet scrip;
All persons servants, everyone an heir;
Wealth made of craftsmanship;

The family come back from its long death;
The person valued for the mind;
Earth breathing now its green and azure breath,
Gardened by humankind;

And now the universe is opened wide,
The bold explorers fly:
Our wings now grown to bear us on the ride
Into the starry sky.

4

**MAPS OF
MEANING**

Damn Lies and Statistics

A Critique of Probability

Frederick Turner

L'homme...est également incapable de voir le néant d'où il est tiré, et l'infini où il est englouti

—Pascal

1. Quality, Quantity, and Thresholds of Emergence

Blaise Pascal was the founder of modern probability theory and statistics, and understood probability better than any business actuary of his time. He knew he was cheating when he proposed his famous wager, since the probabilistic calculation of betting odds compares quantities, and cannot handle the infinity of eternal life and the nothingness of absence.¹ Worldly quantitative calculation could never capture the kind of qualitative difference in life he valued. What he might not have known was something that has only recently become clear: that a quantitative difference, if close enough to some great natural threshold or

inherent and constitutive instability in the world, can trigger a qualitative difference. Today's market risk analysts, as Nassim Nicholas Taleb has pointed out in his book *The Black Swan*, are no better at detecting and evaluating the importance of such threshold-crossings, such inherent instability, than they were in Pascal's time.² The recent banking crisis was the result. Mark Twain's famous aphorism, quoted by Churchill—"There are lies, damn lies, and statistics"—has been proven true yet again.

That instability, that thresholdiness—the daemon that haunts all worldly calculation—has been more recently explored by three other remarkable Frenchmen—René Thom, Benoît Mandelbrot, and Rémy Lestienne, and

¹ If you bet that there is an afterlife, you can't lose, since you will not be there to pay up if you're wrong. If you bet against it, you always lose: either you're right, but you're dead anyway and can't collect your winnings, or you're wrong, and must face an angry God.

² *The Black Swan: Second Edition: The Impact of the Highly Improbable*. Random House, 2010.

a Belgian, Ilya Prigogine.³ The instability is perhaps even more interesting than the nature of qualitiveness itself. It is the threshold between the quantitative and the qualitative *en soi*, the way that something can “amount to” something else.⁴ In Mandelbrot’s insight, a Peano space-filling curve, which is after all only a line, can “amount to” a plane, if a plane is defined as a two-dimensional space in which all the locations are occupied.⁵ A frilly crocheted plane, a flower whose bell results from more growth of cells per open space than there is space for on the plane, can “amount to” a negative curvature and traces out a volume. Seven (but not five) H₂O molecules “amount to” water, with its constitutive wetness, flow, surface tension, ripples, bubbles, capillary action, drops, meniscus, and so on. It is only at the threshold of six that there emerges a sufficient numerical quorum of molecules to provide the right degrees of geometrical freedom, and thus exhibit the collective electric interrelation between them that generates these effects. A primitive light-sensitive spot on the head of an amphibian, with enough accumulation of transparent focusing tissue, “amounts to” an eye. A sufficiently large collection of self-organizing nerve cells “amounts to” a mind. An over-insured and over-secure real estate market can suddenly “amount to” an economy where people owe more money than there is in the world.

³ René Thom: *Structural Stability And Morphogenesis*. Westview Press, 1994. Benoît Mandelbrot: *The Fractal Geometry of Nature*. W. H. Freeman, 1982. René Lestienne: *The Creative Power of Chance*. University of Illinois Press, 1998. Ilya Prigogine: *The End of Certainty*. Free Press, 1997.

⁴ The English phrase “amount to” does not easily translate into French. “Revenir” implies a return to essential origins rather than the completion of a sufficient quantity to meet a goal; “décomposer” and “réduire” imply that the whole can be reduced to the parts. “Déboucher” might be a better translation.

⁵ A Peano curve is a fractal curve (not differentiable) that, although consisting of a simple line, fills the whole plane between determined x,y limits.

It is the existence of thresholds at all that is so remarkable. They are not confined either to the concrete or the abstract world. The traveling salesman problem can be expressed by a pure mathematical formalism, but the way that the mere addition of cities to his most efficient route so massively increases the difficulty of the calculation is the same both in mathematics and in physical space. And the degree of difficulty quite soon crosses the natural limit of the universe’s computational capacity, even were it organized as the most efficient possible calculating engine. This difficulty, familiar to all who deal with limit theory and knots in mathematics, is itself a sensitive index of what we might call “thresholdiness.” Indeed, the measure of difficulty, its tendency to increase exponentially with new variables in nonlinear systems, and its differential rates of increase in different circumstances, may be primitively constitutive of time itself, a fossil of the original instability, the emergence of temporality. The threshold (the present moment) of the past (all that might be known for certain) abuts upon the radical otherness of the unpredictable future. All we need for there to be a future at all is uncomputability.

New things emerge because thresholds await them. The thresholds are both necessitated by mathematical logic and encountered in the physical world, which remembers the limiting contracts that enabled its emergence. New things are like the bucket of water perched upon the proverbial door that will descend upon the unlucky victim of the practical joke when he pushes it far enough open. What are the conditions for that practical joke, what makes it possible, what rules would one need to have a universe free to invent radically new things without succumbing to mere inconsequential anarchy?

2. Digital and Analog: The Need for Granularity in a World of Thresholds

One of those conditions is that a universe capable of threshold-crossing, of emergence, cannot be perfectly analog, in the sense of being totally dependent on continuous variables. It cannot be resolvable into more and more minute gradients of quantity, and cannot be fully understood by the smooth bell-shaped curves of probability. The “thresholdy” universe must be granular, quantized, digital as opposed to analog, at some fundamental level. It must be made up of “pixels,” so to speak, atoms in the old Greek sense of the term. (Contemporary particle physics now knows of much smaller pixels than the atoms, but in the Greek sense those smaller irreducible chunks—whether quarks or strings—are the new atoms).

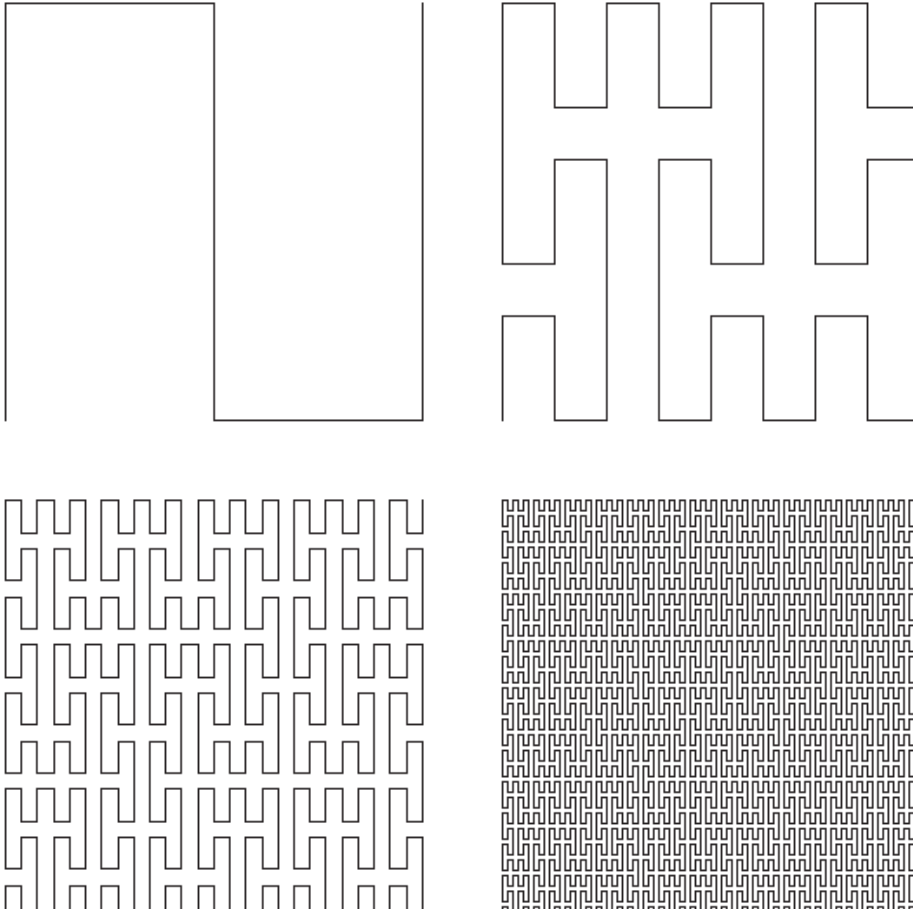
“Time,” said Heraclitus, “is a child playing a game of draughts; the kingship is in the hands of a child” (Fragment 52: K. Freeman translation), which I take to mean that the mutual prediction contest—the second-guessing that gives all games their suspense and thrill—is at the heart of the nature of time, its strange asymmetry between the past and the future. The Hindus, too, regard time as a *lila*, a game. And all games require the equivalent of distinct counters, turns, and players. A tennis ball is either in or out. A chess turn, a chess piece, a chess square are fundamental quanta, granules, of the game. Without turns, the players cannot synchronize enough to have a contest at all. Without individual players with distinct interests, neither prisoner in “Prisoner’s Dilemma” could wish to rat out his accomplice. Electronic calculation is itself a useful game, using distinct ones and zeroes; all over the world, engineers are looking for ways of making smaller and smaller secure thresholds to hold and transfer bits of information. Even quantum computers only kick the problem of keeping the counters of the game distinct down to the quantum level.

The “calc” in “calculation” is a Greek pebble or abacus-bead used in geometry and arithmetic, and also in children’s board games of the times.

Paradoxically, it is only when we play with distinct pieces, and the defined rules that identify them, that the true mysteries and discoveries can happen: because it is only if the lines are sharp, and the definitions granular, that the fertile paradoxes can appear. Imaginary numbers—the way in which the number line gives birth to the Hamiltonian plane in response to the need for another orthogonal space to accommodate the imaginary numbers—could not come to be without the distinct plus and minus signs, the distinctness of both the natural numbers and the exponents that transform them.⁶ Individuality in its most primitive sense is necessary for invention.

It does not matter if those counters and turns—the quanta and chronons of the world—are only relative to some particular feature of the universe, say sound or light or living cells. They can be fundamental and relative at the same time. No event can be shorter than the Planck time or happen in a smaller space than the Planck length; no sound for a human ear can be shorter than one twenty-thousandth of a second, 20 kHz being the highest pitch it can hear. No piece of light is smaller than the wavelength of its photons. No cytological activity can take place on a smaller level than a cell. No vote can be cast by less than one person, no sonnet recitation last less than about thirty seconds.

⁶ If at certain points in this essay it is difficult to tell whether the calculative process referred to is that of the analyst of the universe or the universe itself, the ambiguity is intentional. I take it that a.) whatever we have to calculate, the universe must itself have had to work out first; and b.) we are part of the universe anyway, and our calculation process is part of the universe’s calculation process. Hamiltonians are both a human concept and a natural organizational structure.



A Peano space-filling curve in four steps. (Wikimedia/Creative Commons)

3. The Problems of an Analog Universe

Let us perform a thought experiment and imagine a purely analog probabilistic world. It is one of continuous gradients and variations in mixtures. Claude Shannon pointed out that information can only be transmitted, can only exist at all, if the magnitude of its departure from the default state of its medium, channel, or carrier-wave is enough to cross some threshold that distinguishes it from noise.⁷

The probabilistic/analog world is, so to speak, all noise. It cannot make explosions or compounds (as opposed to mixtures). It is all bell-curves, it has no cusps, no catastrophes. It has no states of matter; Gibbs' free energy law, which governs such phenomena as freezing, boiling, melting, evaporating, precipitating, condensing and so on, does not hold because there are no natural thresholds to cross. No new species, no new ecological niches, no new works of art could emerge into existence, crossing the boundary from the unimaginable to the possible.

⁷ Claude E. Shannon: *A Mathematical Theory of Communication*. University of Illinois Press, 1949 (reprinted 1998).

If everything merges smoothly into everything else, if everything gradually becomes everything else, there can be no game. Points could not exist, and thus could not cluster together to make lines. Lines could not stitch themselves into planes, planes could not rumple and frill themselves into volumes. Time could not have distinct beats, and thus length; it could not mount up and thus could not have a direction; it would be an eternal amorphous cloud of becoming. The change of phase among solid, liquid, gas, and plasma, between crystalline and amorphous, could not happen. Functional individualities make available the strategic back-and-forth of feedback, the competition and cooperation among regimes of crystallization or polarization in a metastable melt, among rock anemones in the ocean, predators and prey in the steppes, stock investors in the market, or nations in global politics, that lead to emergent ecological niches, technologies, and politics. It is only by such interactions that things can “amount to” something other than themselves, that the whole can be greater than the parts, and that the crises, bouleversements and dénouements of evolution can be free to occur. Without distinct notes, there could be no music. Without distinct words, there could be no language. Without distinct lines, there could be no poetry.

This is not to say that the analog aspects of the universe—those that are quantifiable and divisible all the way down, and are subject to probabilistic expression and statistical analysis—are an illusion or unimportant or an obstacle to progress. Much of the universe, much of the time, is fairly accurately describable by approximations and averages, and we are fairly safe when we “round things off.” Many varying conditions do indeed regress to the mean. Chi-square tests for goodness of fit are rightly persuasive. But the success of probability theory as a way of predicting events and describing states too complex to be tractable in terms of Newtonian

determinism, and its reliable use in the thermodynamic understanding of gases, work, entropy and even in quantum mechanics, have led to an overestimation of the extent of probability’s writ. Probabilistic mathematics can handle negative feedback, but not positive feedback when it crosses thresholds that define natural states. The resulting errors are especially glaring in evolutionary biology, the social sciences, public policy, and the arts and humanities.⁸ The mutation that triggers the emergence of a new species, the assassination that triggers a world war, the dream that inspires a masterpiece, cannot fit a system of standard deviations. What makes a human being a human being is precisely what differentiates that human being from their demographic.

Autonomy literally means “the making of rules for ourselves that we obey”—and the paradox occurs when we ask whether we are obeying the rules when we make them up, and whether once we are obeying the rules we have made, we are still autonomous as when we made them up.

⁸ Rémy Lestienne (personal communication) points out that Ludwig Boltzmann never believed that nature was analogic and thought that analogic physics was only a mathematical trick. Lestienne adds that Henri Bergson went so far as to identify true freedom of will as itself exclusively a moment of creative emergence—“les actes libres sont rares”—while most of our decisions remain physiologically determined.

4. Time as Difficulty

It is the continuous competition and coexistence of the analog and the digital, the probabilistic and the “thresholdy,” that enables the curious open-ended creativity of the universe. There is an analog logic—it is the logic of the quantum computer, in which the yeses and noes of Aristotelian logic are replaced by superimposed statistical likelihoods harmonized with each other by entanglement. The mismatch between the two logics, and the continuous *difficult* calculation process that reconciles them in an *ad hoc* accommodation, is perhaps part of the constitution of time itself. The difficulty of solving difficult algorithms, like the calculation of factorials or the traveling salesman problem, is due directly to the nestedness of sub-calculations and sub-sub-calculations that must be solved

before each step in the process.

Out of this recalcitrance emerges a primitive form of sequentiality, an asymmetry between the ease of, for instance, the simple multiplication of a set of numbers, and the exponentiating difficulty of the reverse, that is, the extraction of the factors of the large numbers that result.⁹ Significantly, a quantum computer, clumsy at classical computation, can in theory solve factorial problems with ease, being unburdened by temporal order, while a classical computer, struggling with scheduling problems, is quickly stymied when the number to be factored gets too large. We might speculate that each new emergent entity in the world is the latest attempt at solving the paradox of the coexistence of both kinds of computation.

5. Inventing a Free (and Therefore Survivable) Universe

If one were tasked to invent a survivable universe, it would be hard to avoid the singularly ingenious solution to the problem that we find in this one. A survivable universe is one that generates a new moment every moment, a new

moment that reliably encodes the previous moment but is not encoded by it. It must be retrodictable but not predictable: it must be genuinely branchy as we go forward in time, and genuinely single when we look back at it. Such a universe must be continuous in both space and time (or it would not be one but many universes). But the continuity should not be in the trivial sense that a point is a very small circle or that something is continuous with itself because it is identical to itself, or the musical note C₄ is in harmony with C₅. It must be continuous but asymmetrical with respect to space and time.

The solution seems to be to make the basic constituents of the universe quantized—digital; but make the logic by which they interact with each other and with themselves probabilistic—analog. Then let its logic transform to digital once a certain size and duration threshold (the

⁹ Michael Heller (see my review of his *Creative Tension: Essays on Science and Religion*, Templeton Foundation Press, 2003 in *Kronoscope*, 11, 2011, p. 167) argues that noncommutativity, i.e. an asymmetry in logical order in respect of the identity relation, is all that is needed to get a universe. From my review: “For Heller, the essential issue is how timeless mathematics—which, he argues, miraculously does truly describe the real world—actualizes itself in matter and time. He suggests interestingly that the mathematics of quantum theory is noncommutative. That is, unlike commutative mathematics in which 3×7 is the same as 7×3 , the noncommutative mathematics of the first moment of the Big Bang and of any space in the present universe smaller than the Planck length dictates a difference in the state of a system according to the order in which a mathematical or logical operation is performed. That is, if 3×7 is not the same as 7×3 , the difference is the fundamental unit of space and time. Given such units, a whole universe can evolve without outside assistance through the now familiar processes of selection, self-organization, and emergence in nonlinear dynamical systems...”

quantum/classical divide) is passed. The fine-grain logic of the universe is fuzzy; the coarse-grained logic is hard-edged and granular. The basic quanta of our hypothetical universe, its atomic pixels, work together by analog probabilistic rules of combination—quantum logic—rules that are different from those of its coarse-grained logic, which is classical, Aristotelian, digital. Make the world out of very tiny indivisible pebbles, or calculi, and make them chunk only at certain specific thresholds—but make the fine-grain logic, by which their interactions and their chunkings happen at the most fundamental level, probabilistic and always analog and curvy, branchy and inexact at some level of magnification.

Then let a more digital logic emerge in the interactions of the chunks that result. In large numbers those chunks themselves will still exhibit collective statistical properties, but only up to the point where some threshold of overcrowding suddenly appears, such as when enough molecules exist in a space to constitute a gas, with emergent collective properties like pressure and temperature. But the really ingenious twist is that those chunks must compete for existence; and their existence, their individuation, is assured only by their internal process being so difficult to predict that they cannot be absorbed by some more

complex and unpredictable chunk or system of chunks, with its own prepared niche and procedure for modeling and incorporating subordinate chunks. They are game-players already, unconsciously outthinking each other. This evolutionary process produces structures that act *in anticipation of each others' actions*, creating a new indeterminacy of strategic competition and cooperation.

The final result of the struggle was the emergence of very large and complex individual (digital) organisms such as ourselves, that possess the emergent property of freedom, an instantiation of the paradox of autonomy. Autonomy literally means “the making of rules for ourselves that we obey”—and the paradox occurs when we ask whether we are obeying the rules when we make them up, and whether once we are obeying the rules we have made, we are still autonomous as when we made them up. Are we constrained to only make rules that are amendable, like the U.S. Constitution? Is such a constraint itself amendable, as when we bind ourselves to a solemn promise? Such a promise may be our freest moral act—a choice not only of what we do, but who and what we are. The match between such hypothetical issues—predicted by the tension between the digital and the analog, the probabilistic and the “thresholdy”—and our actual experience, is quite striking.

A quantum computer, clumsy at classical computation, can in theory solve factorial problems with ease, being unburdened by temporal order, while a classical computer, struggling with scheduling problems, is quickly stymied when the number to be factored gets too large.

6. Better Models for the Emergent Properties of Time

Neither inductive reasoning, which is generally quantitative, probabilistic, and analog (and characteristic of British empiricism) nor deductive reasoning, which is generally qualitative, “thresholdy,” and digital (and characteristic of French rationalism) can by themselves account for the emergent properties of time. What kinds of models and strategies might work better?

The first recommendation might be the avoidance of certain kinds of errors. As we have seen in our hypothetical universe, to construct the kind of ordered unpredictability we need there must be a curious set of reversals, perhaps heralded at the beginning by the wave-particle dualism of the elementary structures of nature—a kind of sawing back and forth between apparent constraints upon free play, and apparent dissolution of all law and necessity. The digital graininess of the basic pixels of the world would seem to imply a fixed deterministic order, such as that suggested by Laplace’s famous calculator, which, programmed with the position, momentum, and vector of every particle in the universe, would be able to accurately predict all events. That set of predictions would constitute an eternal and instantaneous singularity, with no need to work them out in time, and would not correspond to the messy and unpredictable universe we have actually got.

This first error, however, is compounded by a second one: that the observed unpredictability or randomness of individual quantum events is in itself a true escape from the chains of determinism. In different ways Erwin Schrödinger, Hugh Everett III, and Roger Penrose have entertained and struggled

with this proposition; but randomness is surely even further away from the observed autonomy of the world’s inhabitants than is the Calvinist or determinist notion of Fate or necessity.¹⁰ The “degrees of freedom” found in the statistical logic of quantum mechanics are not free in the sense that a fish or a philosopher are free. And the Many Worlds hypothesis, often used to reconcile determinism with quantum randomness, cries out for Occam’s razor—any other explanation must be superior by definition. The randomness of the behavior of the universe at its most fundamental level can provide choices, but it cannot choose. In an analog universe of superpositions, an infinite number of shades of color are available, but choosers of one in particular do not exist.

The second reversal is the way that digital individuality makes possible the emergence of strict rules and symmetries—an apparently deterministic feature. But rules, symmetries and constraints create thresholds, and thresholds make possible the crossing of thresholds and the emergence of new structures and functions. The evolutionary competition of such structures, with their new functions, produces entities that begin to show the characteristic features of true freedom, the ability to strategically contest or choose from the various determinisms on offer.

¹⁰ Erwin Schrödinger: “Science and Humanism” in *Nature and the Greeks* and *Science and Humanism*. Cambridge University Press, 1996.
Simon Saunders, Jon Barrett, Adrian Kent, David Wallace, eds.: *Many Worlds? Everett, Quantum Theory, and Reality*. Oxford University Press, 2010.
Roger Penrose: *The Emperor’s New Mind*. Oxford University Press, 2002.

7. Promising Directions for Further Inquiry

Thus one direction that one might take philosophically, so as to be able to transcend the mistakes of both deterministic and probabilistic thinking, might be in the direction of American pragmatism in the tradition of C. S. Peirce, William James, and John Dewey, and French evolutionary philosophy in the tradition of Henri Bergson and Teilhard de Chardin. As poetic metaphors, their conception of progress (with its implicitly tragic undertones) might serve as a good corrective to the simplemindedness of reductionistic positivism on one hand, and deconstructionist arbitrariness on the other.¹¹

The view of emergence taken by some implies that information (and later knowledge, when knowers evolved) is immanent in the universe, or let us say *increasingly immanent*, as structures of matter increasingly acquire the ability to model and predict each others' behavior.¹² Thus we should be looking for ways to explore the curious correspondences between information theory on one hand and thermodynamics on the other. The way in which living organisms use the flow of increasing entropy as a collection device to acquire useful models of the future and fuel for behaviors and structures that anticipate it, is very suggestive. In what sense and circumstances can the increase of thermal disorder be also a potential increase in meaning, of informational order? In the discipline of economics there have been a series of breakthroughs, from a mechanistic,

probabilistic, statistical, econometric approach, to an understanding of rational expectations, to a recognition of biopsychological biases on rationality, and to a new understanding of the intentionality of crowds. What everything and everybody knows about everything and everybody else is not an epiphenomenon of the world but a force locally more powerful than gravity or electricity. The emergent tail wags the causal dog.

Chaos theory and complexity theory have supplied us with mathematics, models, and images for reconceptualizing the world in an emergentist perspective. Much work has already been done in this direction: to quote from my own preface to *Chaos, Complexity, and Sociology: Myths, Models, and Theories*:

What the new science has done in effect is to place within our grasp a set of very powerful intellectual tools—concepts to think with. We can use them well or badly, but they are free of many of the limitations of our traditional armory. With them we can dissolve old procrustean oppositions—between the ordered and the random, for instance—and in the process reinstate useful old ideas like freedom. New concepts, such as emergence, become thinkable, and new methods, such as nonlinear computer modeling, suggest themselves as legitimate modes of study. I have divided these new conceptual tools into six categories: a new view of cause and prediction, a richer understanding of feedback and iteration, a revolution in the idea of time, an anthology of new recognizable structures and shapes, the idea of the attractor as a way of dissolving old dualisms, and the technique of modeling.¹³

Game theory offers us powerful experimental tools, conceptual tools, and mathematical techniques for analyzing

¹¹ As highlighted by the fact that Alan Sokal's hoax essay "Transgressing the Boundaries: Towards a Transformative Hermeneutics of Quantum Gravity" was published by the postmodern journal *Social Text*.

¹² Spinoza, Rémy Lestienne points out, came to a similar conclusion, that the physical and mental worlds were one and the same.

¹³ Raymond A. Eve, Sara Horsfall, Mary A. Lee: *Chaos, Complexity, and Sociology: Myths, Models, and Theories*, Sage Publications, 1997, pp. xi-xxvii.

strategic behavior—and a recognition that such behavior extends deep into the evolutionary roots of life on earth, and perhaps further still.

For a grand philosophical overview we need go no further than that of J.T Fraser's monumental conspectus of the temporal levels of the world, with its splendid account of the mechanisms by which new levels emerge from the old.

And if we are troubled by the reflection that as rational thinking beings we can have no intuitive understanding of the process of emergence, or that it is pointless to try to analyze the inherently unpredictable, there is a talent that we possess that may console us. I propose that

the human aesthetic sense is precisely the capacity that an advanced animal with brain tissue to spare might develop to both guess and contribute to the course of emergence as it occurs around us on both the large and the small scale. What we find beautiful may be said to be what is about to emerge, what is emerging, what reveals its emergence. Art and poetry are the way that we use the hugely complex, multiply iterative, and astonishingly adaptive tissue of our nervous system to continue the invention of the world. A new work of art, whether a sonata, a fresco, a sonnet, or a lovingly-raised child, is the most improbable thing in the world, and the most valuable for that reason. ▸

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Religious Heresy, Liberalism, and Political Philosophy

Steven Grosby

Eric Nelson, *The Theology of Liberalism: Political Philosophy and the Justice of God*. Harvard University Press, 218 pp., \$31 cloth.

THOSE READERS OF A CERTAIN age who, as undergraduates in college, were rightly assigned to read Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* will without much effort recall certain phrases from the conclusion of that book. They are able to do so because those phrases, with their rhetorical flourish, are memorable, describing, perhaps too melodramatically, what is taken to be modern life. The most famous of those phrases is the description of the circumstances of our life as being an "iron cage," inhabited by, to refer to another of those well-known phrases of that conclusion, "specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart: this nullity imagines that it has attained a level of civilization never before achieved."

As famous as those phrases are and however much the latter's description of us deflates our self-estimation, more important for our consideration is the wrongly neglected observation made by

Weber following those previous characterizations, "modern man is in general, even with the best will, unable to give religious ideas a significance for culture and national character which they deserve." Weber was surely correct about the inability of today's intellectuals to engage seriously with religious ideas. As but one example of that inability, more than seventy years have passed since a picture of Reinhold Niebuhr appeared on the front cover of *Time* magazine. It is difficult even to imagine a theologian today having the influence that would garner that kind of attention. Who today, to take another example, reads and ponders that important work of Weber's friend, Ernst Troeltsch's magnificent *The Social Teachings of the Christian Churches*? We and our culture are worse off for being unable to give religious ideas the significance they deserve, for not taking religion seriously.

I do not wish these observations to be misunderstood. I am not calling for intellectuals today to become theologians; and I certainly do not think that our universities should take theological positions, even though not doing so raises another set of problems which cannot be

pursued here. I do, however, think that there should be rigorous, impartial exploration into the nature of religion: what it is, that is, in what ways it is distinctive from other orientations of the mind; why it persists; the changes it undergoes over time and from one civilization to another; its place in our understanding of what it means to be human; and, to return to Weber, its place in the development and continuation of a culture. One need not be a believer to recognize the importance of this engagement with religious ideas and the history of theological disputes. That this engagement is largely lacking is an indictment of today's intellectuals and universities. Needless to say, the Schools of Divinity have become a part of the problem of the lack of serious exploration of, and engagement with, the significance of religion as many of them appear today to be institutions of what often seems to be political propaganda. Thus, the appearance of *The Theology of Liberalism: Political Philosophy and the Justice of God* by the political philosopher Eric Nelson is refreshing, almost even startling, and certainly welcome, as this work emphasizes that religious ideas should be given the significance that they deserve for political theory and its history. This is not the first time that Nelson has drawn attention to the influence of religion and theology on political thought. He had presented this proper view in his earlier *The Hebrew Republic: Jewish Sources and the Transformation of European Political Thought*.

Nelson's argument in *The Theology of Liberalism* begins with the observation that the political convictions of "protoliberals" of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (for example, Milton, Locke, Leibniz, Rousseau, and Kant) and those who are their heirs (the latter often described as "classical liberals," standing for free markets

and trade, individual responsibility, and a limited state) were animated by the theological heresy known as Pelagianism. He continues by observing that once one sees that this early modern "liberalism" was Pelagian, one is in a better position to understand the recent disputes over what is just or fair that begin with John Rawls's *A Theory of Justice*. Those early protoliberals knew well that their arguments for individual liberty and responsibility were a continuation of the early fifth century dispute between Augustine and Pelagius over the nature and extent of sin and free will. Rawls, too, so Nelson argues on the basis of Rawls's undergraduate thesis, *A Brief Inquiry into the Meaning of Sin and Faith*, knew that those earlier theological disputes continued today, albeit in a different guise. However, in contrast to those earlier protoliberals, Rawls's understanding of justice was, according to Nelson, derived from his self-conscious repudiation of what actually was and is a complicated Pelagian theological tradition, and, thus, represents a departure from what had previously been understood as the liberal tradition, itself also by no means uniform.

Whether they know it or not, so Nelson continues, today's political philosophers take positions in that long-standing theological dispute. By not knowing, the recent positions taken by political philosophers over the nature of justice repeat, but superficially so, those much earlier theological arguments over sin and free will. An important conclusion of Nelson's argument is not over the specific determination of what is justice, as necessary as that determination obviously is and about which Nelson, a defender of that Pelagian tradition of an earlier liberalism, has much to say; but rather that to distinguish sharply between theology and political philosophy, as has taken place, is unproductive. It ignores the influence of

the former on the latter. However, it is by no means simply a matter of historical derivation; for as Nelson refreshingly put the matter in Chapter Four, “political philosophy has something to learn from theology.”

By not knowing, the recent positions taken by political philosophers over the nature of justice repeat, but superficially so, those much earlier theological arguments over sin and free will.

The dispute between Augustine and the British (or possibly Irish) monk Pelagius was over the human capacity to choose what is right, and thereby overcome sin, or at least some aspects of sinfulness. Do we face the utter depravity of humanity—the original sin which, as such, is inescapable, so Augustine—or is there a human capacity in the free exercise of choice to overcome sin, so Pelagius? One gets an anticipation of the dispute over the nature and capacity of reason to organize rightly life and society through law in the exchange between Jesus and the Jews over what it means to be free, as recounted in John 8:31-34. Indeed, some of the early modern Pelagians were accused of being “Judaizers,” as Nelson notes in passing and as I discuss at some length in *Hebraism in Religion, History, and Politics: The Third Culture*, because of their distinction between righteousness, which was within their grasp even if always in need of adjustment given the uncertainty of the future, and salvation, which, as they were Christians, was beyond their grasp.

At stake here among the early modern, “protoliberal” Pelagians was a re-evaluation of reason. It was no longer the source of sinful pride or the means of self-deception. Through a turn to “natural reason” or, more theologically formulated, a doctrine of the “fortunate fall” that allowed humanity to be free so as to know sin and, thus, consciously reject it, or the recognition of the continual existence of two covenants—not only the new covenant of grace offered by the “good news” but also the still operative earlier covenant, either with Adam or Noah—these Pelagians and other Christian Hebraists opened up a reconsideration of law, good works, and ultimately a view that the relation between individual effort and reward is just.

Many complications ensued. They remain with us. Recognition that they do is the merit of Nelson’s book. One, but by no means the only, implication of the Pelagian view is that what accounts for sin is not that we are all descended from Adam, but rather the way society is organized. This is the position of Rousseau in his (second) *Discourse on Inequality*, which Nelson rightly characterizes as a Pelagian text (although one that, in contrast to the works of the earlier Pelagians, doesn’t draw a distinction between righteousness and salvation, the absence of which can have disastrous consequences as it arouses a totalitarian temptation). The political theorist George Armstrong Kelly had, approximately fifty years ago and on several occasions, referred to Rousseau as a Pelagian and Kant as a semi-Pelagian. My mention of Kelly is to observe that there really is nothing new in Nelson’s argument for those who have paid attention to religion and its influence on other spheres of human thought and action. That is why Nelson’s analysis of Pelagian liberalism, while certainly refreshing and welcome, is not startling. What is new is that an

established political philosopher at Harvard is calling upon his fellow political philosophers to pay attention to the history of religion and to learn from its theological disputes so that they can become better political philosophers. That by itself warrants praise.

The basis for Rawls's anti-Pelagian brief against the relation between individual merit and reward is that the very idea of individual merit is morally suspect because of the advantages arising from the accident of birth, the contribution of others to one's successes, and luck. However, as Nelson argues, even if a person has benefitted from the advantages of birth and social standing, just how is one to determine what percentage of that person's accomplishments was a result of that favorable initial condition or a result of that person's industriousness and, as is often the case, the unpredictable intuition or, if you will, the luck that an entrepreneur has to have in order to take advantage of an opportunity? To pose this question in this way is not to deny that attempts ought to be made to ameliorate initial states of inequality, for example, through legally mandated education of children; but it is to instill a deserved caution regarding the scope of those attempts.

That caution is all the more called for when, as is usually the case and one hopes is the case, those advantages accruing to a person were the results of the choices made by that individual's parents to sacrifice for the future of their child. In determining what is just, one had better proceed with the utmost caution in disrupting the relation between effort and reward, or, theologically formulated, between good

works and grace or blessing. A state mandated egalitarian redistribution, arising out of a desire "to level the playing field" will compromise both that industrious effort in pursuit of a reward and the sacrifices that parents make for their children. It will compromise what should, in fact, be encouraged, namely, the responsibility of parents for their children's welfare. After all, we do hope that parents sacrifice so that their children will have a better future, don't we? And shouldn't we approve of that sacrifice?

True enough, the result of those sacrifices, or theologically formulated "good works," will be an inequality of results, or theologically formulated "blessings," as some parents make greater sacrifices than others from which the children of those parents benefit. But is that inequality which includes the preference of parents for their children unjust? Nelson seems not to think so. Ultimately at stake here is a version of the earlier theological dispute over Pelagianism: the nature and extent of freedom, and the relation between "good works" and grace.

What are we to make of the apparent development of the political philosopher Eric Nelson in light of *The Theology of Liberalism* and his previous book *The Hebrew Republic*? Has he responded to Weber's lament by recognizing and exploring, as had Weber albeit with a different, wider focus, the continuing significance of religious ideas for our understanding of modern culture and politics? It appears so. While the subject matter of Professor Nelson's research is his own affair, I hope he continues this exploration; for there is much work, of considerable importance, still to be done. A

A large, stylized outline of the number 5, rendered in a simple, clean line-art style. The number is positioned on the left side of the page.

**OBJECTS
OF
HISTORY**

How To Think Outside, Around, In Between, and Beyond the Box

Lydia Pyne

Boxes: A Field Guide, edited by Susanne Bauer, Martina Schlünder, and Maria Rentetzi. Mattering Press, 628pp., 143 color illus. £50 deluxe hardcover, £35 paperback, free online (web, PDF, epub and Kindle).

It's impossible to overestimate how completely ubiquitous boxes are in our twenty-first century Western consumerist lives. Everything from takeout trays to online orders is sent and received while encased in a cubed corrugated exterior. Boxes are basically the stuff that encases other stuff as it moves from one place to another. Consequently, the cardboard box has become a symbol of stuff—how we acquire it, how we transport it, how we store it, how we discard it—and has been since its very invention.

The cardboard box is a nineteenth-century innovation, thanks to the ever-growing mass production of paper in American paper mills at that time. In 1871, Albert Jones of New York filed a patent for the “improvement in paper for packing,” and the term “corrugated” was part of the paper's description. The most efficient iteration of the classic cardboard box, however, is credited to American lithographer Robert Gair who, a few years

later, developed a system for storing cardboard boxes flat, and could print boxes that served as advertisements as well as a means to move paper. By the early twentieth century, a plethora of factories in the northeastern United States employed tens of thousands of workers—primarily women who were paid much less than their male counterparts—to make and box the manufactured paper boxes.

For decades, these sorts of boxes have been the things used to move other things—offering a transience and non-permanence to the items inside of it. Over the last century, however, the cardboard box has become more than just a token that connotes items schlepped via U-haul or received via Amazon Prime. Poignantly, as the cardboard box came to be associated with the economic success and commercial consumerism of late-stage capitalism, it has also become a visceral symbol of homelessness and income inequality. In the 2020 coronavirus pandemic, cardboard boxes even double as hospital beds and coffins.

In short, boxes are ubiquitous, functional, and necessary. While iconic, the cardboard box is but one example of all things “box.” This begs the questions: What makes a box, well, a box? How does history treat boxes? And why do boxes matter?

Boxes are deceptively simple objects. Four walls, six sides, one opening.

But boxes are so much more than their archetype. Beyond their materiality, boxes are metaphors, allegories, and symbols. A box is a material expression of boundaries and boundedness—it's a technology for establishing and maintaining categories, and a tool for sorting. Once we think about the box outside of its cardboard, it's easy to see that the world is made up of boxes all the way down, and has been for humankind's entire evolutionary history. From metaphor to material, humankind has used containers of some sort for the past 200,000-400,000 years.

In *Boxes: A Field Guide*, editors Susanne Bauer, Martina Schlünder, and Maria Rentetzi organize a fascinating and complex reading of boxes as intricate, social texts. Boxes, they argue, are performative objects. Boxes have the power to create epistemologies; boxes catalog taxonomies. In short, they argue, boxes are how intellectual traditions, especially Western ones, have understood and defined themselves. And, running parallel to all the epistemic history of boxes are hundreds of thousands of years of humans using boxes for a plethora of purposes.

Boxes: A Field Guide is a multi-author collected volume that features 39 specific box-informed essays. Examples are drawn from the history of science (e.g., petri dishes) to contemporary sociology (e.g., managing drinking water in Taiwanese households) to science studies (technology's black boxes) to consumerism (big box stores), and of course the enduring mythology of boxes (Pandora). The authors and editors are clear in their purpose—they envision *Boxes: A Field Guide* to be a new, foundational text for studies in material culture, and bring considerable intellectual heft to the anthology from a plethora of disciplines.

The earliest archaeological examples of “boxes”—“storage,” really—trace back to the

Pleistocene-age layers of Qesem Cave in Israel. Somewhere between 200,000 and 400,000 years ago, early *Homo sapiens* or Neanderthals appear to have saved marrow-rich bones in their outer layers of skin and flesh to keep the marrow more or less fresh. (The archaeological context isn't clear at this point about which species was doing the storing.) The marrow was saved in a skin and flesh “box”—popular press dubbed the discovery “Stone Age Tupperware”—and was created with the purpose of putting something in the container to use later.

Fast-forward hundreds of thousands of years through any number of egalitarian and complex societies, and we find that just about any sort of social organization fundamentally depends on storage. Storage of resources (food) of course, but also of intangible capital like knowledge and cultural mythos. All of these require boxes of different sizes and shapes, materials and metaphors.

This anthology is a herculean undertaking in no small part because it's looking to “unbox” and “re-box” the human condition. (Boxes are everywhere and always have been and, it turns out, may not even be evolutionarily limited to humankind.) Occasionally, there's a feeling of being overwhelmed in *Boxes* by the mass manufacture and scope of boxes and their ephemera—that there are so many boxes and so many ways to think about them—that the prospect of imposing some sort of order is daunting to the reader. And this where, at times, the anthology becomes incredibly esoteric. (To use a box analogy, there are points where it feels like looking at a living room strewn with toys before they're neatly put into their toybox.) But the collection is well-grounded in theory, history, and philosophy and always manages to come back to the box in question. Rest assured, readers will never look at boxes the same way again.

Boxes are deceptively simple objects. Four walls, six sides, one opening.

Two examples from *Boxes* that stand out as non-obvious ways that societies are organized around boxes are “The Green Minna,” a carriage “box” used to carry police detainees in Imperial Berlin, and Prussian census boxes from the mid- to late-nineteenth century that were custom-made to move census records and then to be broken down and recycled.

“The Green Minna was used to transport arrestees to and from police headquarters,” historian Eric Engstrom describes. The fleet employed from two to nine wooden horse-drawn vehicles between 1866 and 1890, transporting between five and ten thousand detainees per month—thus cutting down on the number of arrestees who attempted to escape police custody on foot. The painted green boxes offered an element of social performance—as detainees were loaded and unloaded—and a clear moral demarcation between society’s offenders and those who detainees were accused of offending. The Green Minna was often followed by another “storage” box for the arrestee—a cell.

Outside of boxes associated with policing, societies have also long depended on boxes to organize themselves and their bureaucracies from census gathering to voting. As such, Prussian census boxes, historian Christine von Oertzen explains, were transient objects used to transport census cards from one place to another. As bureaucracies across nineteenth-century Europe became enamored with the idea of data collection, “the daunting mass of loose paper slips needed to be moved,” von Oertzen explains, and the Prussian solution was a box “custom-made to hold between

two and four stacks of 2,500 counting cards, the boxes allowed the enumeration material to be apportioned into manageable units.” These boxes were made of wood to very particular specifications and were produced every three years to be “discarded, demolished, and recycled” when they were no longer needed to transport records.

It turns out that societies box more than just people and data—ideas, knowledge systems, and entire epistemologies are built out of various boxes. Boxes show up repeatedly in the history of science as necessary for collecting, first as cabinets of curiosities and several hundred years later as the means by which collected specimens are sent back to museums or through which contemporary collections of archaeological material are stored. “Boxes and containers were integral to the construction and organisation of knowledge in early modern collecting practice,” as outlined by historian Stephanie Bowry in her description of the Augsburg Art Cabinet, one such seventeenth-century art and curiosity cabinet.

Historian Tanja Hammel profiles the plethora of various boxes that form a meta-collection in the Archives of Life at the Natural History Museum in Basel, Switzerland. These boxes are made of either wood or cardboard, and varied in size and shape considerably. Most were reused (“previously contained goods such as sugar, soap, cigarettes, photo glass plates, etc.”) thus emphasizing the constant circulation of boxes or “parcels” as Hammel terms the items—the specimens going to the natural history museum were not the first things that these boxes stored and transported. “Parcels are companions, and have life forces,” Hammel argues. “One such force... render[s] visible their human companions who have hitherto been neglected because of their belonging to subordinate social

groups—whether this subordination was based on ethnicity, gender, or social class.” We can read boxes, then, as a potentially equalizing force.

But *Boxes: A Field Guide* isn’t simply a historical survey of the ways that boxes have been made and used. Drawing on contemporary sociological studies, *Boxes* dives into the world of shipping containers, cargo transportation, and hurricane relief, to

name a few. Boxes are deployed in times of hurricane crises, and provide the logistical backbone of twenty-first century late-stage capitalism. While impossible to chronicle each example presented in the anthology, every single one prods audiences to expand what “counts” as a “box” and how they’re being used to store, transport, and organize. Excavate each box carefully and we inevitably find axes of power and privilege.

* *

It’s impossible to write about boxes without the ancient Greek myth of Pandora. (As editor Maria Rentetzi notes in her chapter, Pandora’s “box” was actually a jar.) In Hesiod’s *Theogonia*, Pandora is the first human female made of earth and water; she is given a precious *pyxis* (a “box”) by the gods and told to never look inside. Of course, Pandora opens the *pyxis* and a myriad of evils swarm out to make their ways into the world. Only hope is left at the bottom.

The myth of Pandora has been told and retold over millennia—details and descriptions vary but the purpose of the box

remains intractable. It stores the troubles of the world until it does not. It is a physical means to separate good from bad (hope remains in the box, after all) and has become a bit of cultural shorthand. To which, Pandora’s box lives beyond its myth.

As *Boxes: A Field Guide* points out, the world is full of boxes and always has been. From Pandora to the Pleistocene, from cardboard to cabinets of curiosities, boxes require us to consider how we categorize the world and what we make of it.

Never mind thinking outside the box—it’s impossible, it turns out, to think without it. ◻

The Evolution and Extinction of Lady Liberty

A story in U. S. Coins, 1792-1947

Robert J. Stern

COINS ARE A UNIQUELY INTERESTING FORM OF DURABLE ART. About 3,000 years ago in Greece, people started using lumps of metal emblazoned with representations of authenticity for buying and selling, and they have evolved ever since then. Wikipedia defines a coin as "... a small, flat, round piece of metal used as a medium of exchange or legal tender. They are standardized in weight and produced in large quantities at a mint by a government in order to facilitate trade. Coins usually have images, numerals (date and value), and text (value, national mottos) on them. Obverse and reverse refer to the two flat faces of coins. In this usage, obverse means the front face of the object and reverse means the back face. The obverse of a coin is commonly called heads, because it often depicts the head of a prominent person, and the reverse *tails*."

This description says nothing about the artistic value of coins. The people who are most interested in coins (numismatists) are often focused on other aspects, especially scarcity, errors, and how worn or unworn they are, or on collecting sets of coins. Some old coins are worth millions of dollars to collectors. An often overlooked value of coins are the glimpses they provide us of how the nations that produced them choose to present themselves to their people and the world. According to Cory Gilliland:

Coins... serve as brilliant reflecting mirrors of the age in which they were produced. One finds that coins represent their era as loudly and forcefully as do paintings and sculpture from the same period. Considering their diminutive size, the practical reason for their production, and their everyday usage, it is fascinating, if not miraculous, that such lowly pieces do mirror the same cultural and artistic visions as do the more famous and aristocratic works of art: the architecture, sculpture, and painting.

Coins are an alternative way to see governments and societies through time as they saw themselves, or as they wanted to be seen. Coins give us another way to put ourselves in dead people's shoes, unfiltered by modern perspectives or prejudices.

Assuming that coins do provide important insights into the societies that created them, why don't we see more studies using this approach? Until recently, it was not easy to study closely coins unless you owned them. Their small size and value makes them attractive and easy to steal; therefore, they are traditionally displayed by museums behind glass, where they are difficult to study and appreciate. Today, because of modern photography and the internet, we can better study coins as history. Anyone with interest and the internet can find and examine a high-resolution image of just about any coin that was ever made. This is possible because museums and dealers like Heritage Auctions in Dallas post high-resolution images of the coins in their collections or that they auction.¹ In fact, the most beautiful unworn coins (uncirculated and/or proof coins) can be studied better by downloading and enlarging JPEG images from a quick search on the internet, than in your own hands.

This essay takes advantage of the new ways of studying coins to explore how women were used on U.S. coins to symbolize our national aspirations from 1792 to 1947, the last year that a symbolic Lady Liberty appeared there. Two key points result: first, Lady Liberty evolved a lot over this time, from a disembodied head with hair to a full-bodied human, in concert with the growing power of U.S. women. Second, the national narrative, as shown by the people on U.S. coins, shifted from abstract and aspirational to concrete and historical in the first half of the 20th century. Representations of historical women briefly re-appeared in 1979 on the ill-fated Susan B. Anthony dollar and in 2000 on the Sacagawea dollar, which continues to be produced today, but these interesting episodes are not discussed here. Instead, this essay investigates and focuses on how women were portrayed on U.S. coins up to 1947.²

¹ See coins.ha.com/?ic=Task-coins-121913.

² It should be noted that my training and expertise is in the Earth sciences, not art history or gender studies. I do have an affection for U.S. coins, having collected these as a boy.



Figure 1 Marianne, the French symbol of liberty and inspiration for U.S. lady liberty.

A (left) *La Liberté*, by Jeanne-Louise “Nanine” Vallain (1767-1815), painted in 1793-94. Notice the Phrygian cap atop the liberty pole. The painting is in the Louvre. B (right) *Liberty leading the people*, by Eugène Delacroix (1798-1863), painted in 1830. This painting commemorated the July Revolution of 1830, which toppled King Charles X of France, but its spirit is that of the French Revolution. Note her Phrygian cap.

Inspiration and Motivation

The Coinage Act (or the Mint Act), passed by Congress on April 2, 1792, set the dollar as the country’s standard unit of currency, established the coinage of the United States, and provided for a federal mint in Philadelphia to make coins. The first draft of the Act stipulated that all coins would use a portrait of the president on the obverse. President Washington objected, because he felt that such personification was too reminiscent of the monarchy from which the new republic had just freed itself. (Can you imagine what he would think about today’s coins, with a president on every denomination, including his own on the 25 cent piece and also on the dollar bill?) The Mint Act that he signed into law heeded this objection by calling for an emblem of liberty and the word “liberty” to appear on the obverse. What that emblem of liberty should be was unspecified, but Secretary of State Jefferson—who Washington asked to supervise mint activities—had an idea. He had returned in 1789 from serving as ambassador to France, which was in the early stages of its own revolution. The French Revolution began with the storming of the Bastille prison in 1789, but became increasingly bloody after the



Figure 2 U.S. cents, 1792-1859.

A 1792 Flowing hair B 1794 Flowing hair with liberty pole and Phrygian cap C Flowing hair with curls and ribbon D 1810 Liberty crown, 13 stars E 1830 Liberty crown, curly hair, 13 stars F 1859 Indian head penny. Lady Liberty masquerades as a native American.



Figure 3 U.S. silver dollars.

A Seated Liberty (1840-1873) B Morgan dollar (1878-1904, 1921)



Figure 4 Early 20th-century depictions of Lady Liberty.

A Winged Liberty or Mercury dime (18mm; 1916-1945) B Standing Liberty quarter dollar (24mm diameter; 1916-1930) C Walking Liberty half dollar (1916-1947) D Peace dollar (38mm diameter; 1921-1935) E Saint-Gaudens double eagle (\$20) (34mm diameter; 1907-1933). A-D are silver, E is gold. Note that these coins have different sizes.

beheading of the royal family in early 1793. The growing chaos and violence of and international reaction to the French Revolution that continued until 1799 was very much on the minds of the leaders of the vulnerable, young American republic.

Any national government requires a narrative that defines and legitimizes it, and this is especially true for revolutionary governments. For the first three years following the fall of the Bastille, the old national symbols were adapted to represent the revolution. This became impossible after King Louis XVI was guillotined in 1793, causing a “crisis of representation” requiring new legitimizing symbols. The Jacobins addressed this by adopting a female allegory of liberty known as Marianne (Figure 1A); note the red felt Phrygian cap, symbol of emancipated slaves of ancient Rome, atop a liberty pole. Liberty pole and Phrygian cap were ancient Roman symbols of liberty that originated following the assassination of Julius Caesar in 44 B.C.

Female symbols of civic virtues and principles of government were well known in 18th century Europe. The casting of women as universal abstractions for civic virtue and freedom can be traced back to the classical republics of Greece and Rome. The Swiss Confederacy, the only non-monarchy on the French border, used the female allegory “Helvetia” beginning in the 17th century. Because of this romantic imagery and because the common people of France were fighting for their rights, it seemed fitting to name the Republican heroine after a representational woman with a common name: Marie-Anne. Rebel accounts of their exploits often referred to Marianne wearing a Phrygian cap of freedom (Figure 1B). Marianne inspired the French revolutionaries, and she symbolized the many women who served the revolution. Marianne stood for *Liberté, égalité, fraternité*, the aspirational virtues of the nascent French Republic. Together, Marianne and the Phrygian cap were the two most important symbols of the French revolution. The clear link between the U.S. and French abstractions of liberty is shown by the fact that U.S. cent obverses in 1794 through 1797 also showed a Phrygian cap and liberty pole (Figure 2B). The symbols reappear on the dollar coins minted from 1836 to 1839 and 1840 to 1873 (Figure 3A). A Phrygian cap is worn by Lady Liberty on the U.S. silver dollar in 1878 (Figure 3B) and on silver coins of the early 20th century (Figure 4). It is one of the ways we recognize her.

Early Years

President Washington made a startling decision—not to ask Treasury Secretary Hamilton to oversee the new Philadelphia mint and the first coins, but to put Secretary of State Jefferson in charge. This was likely because Washington was both wary of Hamilton’s monarchist tendencies, and impressed with Jefferson’s ideas of what the first coins of the new nation should show. Once in charge of the

new mint, it was only natural that the Francophile Jefferson refashioned a young American Marianne to put on the first U.S. coins, in 1792. Abstracted women as symbols of liberty on U.S. coins contrasted starkly with the personification of British and Spanish monarchs on their coins (although coins bearing the image of a young Queen Victoria in British coins from the 1830s to the 1850s are remarkably similar to U.S. coins of the same period). The irony that women were used to symbolize Liberty while real U.S. women were deprived of civil rights was apparently missed by late 18th century U.S. leaders. Apparently, U.S. white male leadership recognized nothing hypocritical about ascribing lofty ideals to womankind while excluding real women from the public and political realm. To them, it somehow made sense.

The American symbol was never formally named, but some female representation of Lady Liberty persisted until Hamilton's vision slowly gained momentum and dead U.S. presidents replaced Lady Liberty on U.S. coins in the first half of the 20th century. The transformation took half a century, beginning with Lincoln on the penny (1909), then Washington on the quarter (1932), Jefferson on the nickel (1938), Roosevelt on the dime (1946), and Kennedy on the half dollar (1964). But until 1947 Lady Liberty graced the obverse of at least one U.S. coin.

Lady Liberty on U.S. coins evolved over her 155 year reign before disappearing after her last and most beautiful representations in the early 20th century. Female allegories for the U.S. ideal of liberty appeared on the obverse of all U.S. coins for 120 years with few exceptions, the most spectacular being the 1858-1909 cent. But we will see that even the native American chief on this cent is Lady Liberty in disguise.

Let's first use the humble penny as the exemplar of Lady Liberty's evolution until 1859 (Figure 2), then switch over to the mighty dollar to show how she evolved over the last half of the 19th century (Figure 3) until her culmination in five beautiful coins of the early 20th century (Figure 4). Take a quick look at all of these coins. What are your first impressions? Figure 2 shows her evolution during the first 60 years. She is only shown in profile, looking right in the 1790s, and left in the 1800s. The three depictions from the 1790s are the most carefree, depicting a teenager or young woman with long, flowing hair (Figure 2A, B, C). The 1794 version features Lady Liberty with a Phrygian cap on a liberty pole over her left shoulder. The Lady Liberty of the 1790s looked like no face on European coins, but by the early 1800s, Lady Liberty looked regal (Figure 2D, E) and was much more circumspect, with her hair restrained by a hairpiece and tied in a bun. In 1859 she bizarrely dons a pearl necklace and an Indian headdress, posing as a native American, but her disguise fools no one. What strange inspiration moved Mint Engraver James Longacre to make this image? Whatever it was, it was a successful design, continuing to be

minted for 50 years until it was replaced by a profile of Abraham Lincoln in 1909. The Lincoln penny was the first of the male presidents (along with Benjamin Franklin) that would replace Lady Liberty on all U.S. coins in less than 40 years.

To follow Lady Liberty's evolution in the last half of the 19th century, we need to see how she was presented on the silver dollar. In the "Seated Liberty Dollar," minted from 1840 until 1873, we see more than just her head (Figure 3A). She is resting on a boulder with her Liberty-emblazoned shield resting against it. She wears no headband, but holds a liberty pole with a Phrygian cap. The design is remarkably similar to Vallain's *La Liberté* (Figure 1A). The design was also somewhat controversial; former Mint Director Samuel Moore had deprecated the use of the Phrygian cap as a symbol. Quoting Thomas Jefferson, Moore had written to Secretary of the Treasury Levi Woodbury, "We are not emancipated slaves." In fact, the Phrygian cap and liberty pole were portents of liberty for U.S. slaves, continuing to be minted for 8 years after the Civil War ended.

When production of silver dollars resumed after a five-year hiatus in 1878, Lady Liberty had a new look: a mature woman in profile (Figure 3B). She again uses the Liberty headband to hold her hair in place. Superficially, she resembles her staid profile on early cents (Figure 2) but there are signs of independence stuffed between her headband and Phrygian cap: wheat stalks, maple leaves, and thistle. Below this her hair flows like a mountain stream.

The Twentieth Century

Lady Liberty on U.S. coins reaches her artistic peak in the early 20th century about the same time that seismic shifts were happening in the way that women were treated in the western world. Women were slowly becoming more equal with men. This can be seen most clearly in the fact that most major Western powers extended voting rights to women in the early 20th century, including Canada (1917), Britain and Germany (1918), Austria and the Netherlands (1919) and the United States (1920). Surprisingly, France, with Marianne and its revolutionary past, did not allow women to vote until 1944. Today, women can vote in every country that has elections.

In 1904, President Theodore Roosevelt began to push to make U.S. coinage more beautiful. Roosevelt was an admirer of ancient Greek coins, especially high-relief designs where the features of the coin project far outward from the coin's surface. He wrote to the Secretary of the Treasury: "I think the state of our coinage is artistically of atrocious hideousness. Would it be possible, without asking permission of Congress, to employ a man like Augustus Saint-Gaudens to give us a coinage which would have some beauty?" The answer was "Yes!" The penny, nickel and gold coins were redesigned during

1907-1913, but redesign of the dime, quarter, half dollar, and silver dollar had to wait until these coins' minimum term (as specified in an 1890 law) expired in 1916. Interestingly, four of the five new coins featuring Lady Liberty were designed by three immigrants, from Ireland (Augustus Saint-Gaudens), Germany (Adolf Weinman) and Italy (Antonio de Francisci).

The vanguard of the five new coins was Saint-Gaudens's stunning \$20 gold piece, first issued in 1907 (Figure 4E), three years after Roosevelt started his crusade and the same year that Saint-Gaudens (1848-1907) died of intestinal cancer. A triumphant, young Lady Liberty stands rampant, locking eyes with the viewer. She is dressed in a loose blouse, fastened at the shoulders, and a long dress. Her flexed left leg is braced on a large rock, allowing her to thrust a long torch towards the viewer while her outstretched left arm clutches an olive branch of peace. Her long hair billows in the breeze. A small capitol building in the distant background is backlit by a rising sun. The scene is festooned by 46 stars, one for each of the states in 1907. Sunrise, striding strength and beauty, torch and olive branch. Such optimism and hope, signs of an increasingly confident nation. This coin was last minted in 1933, the year that the U.S. went off the gold standard.

The next three of the new coins—dime, quarter, and half dollar—came out together in 1916. The dime startled, the quarter shocked, and the half dollar dazzled. The ten-cent piece, generally known as the Mercury dime (Figure 4A), was designed by sculptor and medalist Adolf Weinman (1870-1952). This coin features a right-facing young Lady Liberty with Phrygian cap, out of which small eagle wings emerge. Weinman wrote that he considered the winged cap to symbolize "liberty of thought." The public, however, misunderstood Weinman's intent, thinking her to be the Roman god Mercury, who often was shown with wings coming out of his cap. The coin was last minted in 1945, when it was replaced by a dime with the just-deceased President Franklin Roosevelt on its obverse.

The quarter dollar (Figure 4B) was designed by Hermon Atkins MacNeil (1866-1947). MacNeil's original design showed Lady Liberty on guard against attacks. The Mint required modifications, and MacNeil's next version included dolphins to represent the navy. His final design is only slightly less militaristic; Liberty faces to the viewer's right in the direction of Europe and World War I, and her shield also faces that way. She holds an olive branch as she strides through a gap in a low wall that is inscribed, "In God We Trust." Her short hair is mostly covered by a Phrygian cap, and her right leg is bare up to the mid-thigh. According to art historian Cornelius Vermeule, "Liberty is presented as the Athena of the Parthenon pediments, a powerful woman striding forward." Vermeule opines that, but for the Stars and Stripes on her shield, "everything else about this Amazon calls to mind Greek sculpture of the period from 450 to 350 B.C." The shocking feature of

MacNeil's design was Lady Liberty's bare right breast, reminiscent of Delacroix's Marianne (Figure 1B) and a far cry from the mostly disembodied Lady Liberty of the 19th century (Figure 2,3). This was covered in 1918 by a chainmail vest, but the quarter was doomed to have the shortest lifetime of the five early 20th century coins, as it was replaced in 1932 by the Washington quarter that is still minted today.

The half dollar (Figure 4C) is the most beautiful of the 1916 silver coins. Weinman designed this, taking inspiration from his mentor Saint-Gaudens's double eagle, but turning Lady Liberty to stride left. Saint-Gaudens's rising sun, rough terrain, sandals and armful of olive branches remain, but the torch is gone. Instead, she stretches out her right hand to someone or something unseen. Her hair is much shorter, underneath a Phrygian cap. Her principal article of clothing is the U.S. flag, part of which billows behind her and her outstretched hand. This coin was minted until 1947, when Lady Liberty was replaced by Benjamin Franklin.

The last of the new 20th century coins was the silver dollar, which features the head and neck of Lady Liberty. Antonio de Francisci designed the coin, using his wife as the model. Lady Liberty's most striking feature is her spiked crown, surely inspired by what was by then the best-known representation of Lady Liberty: French sculptor Frederic Bartholdi's 1886 Statue of Liberty. Sailing beneath this into New York to land at Ellis Island must have made a strong impression on the eighteen-year-old De Francisci when he arrived in the U.S. in 1905. This coin was produced intermittently until 1935, when the U.S. stopped making silver dollars.

Interpretation

How can we best interpret the evolution of Lady Liberty on U.S. coins from 1792 until she disappears in 1947? She changed a lot over these 155 years; only the word "Liberty" remained constant. Over this century and a half, she went from only showing her head (Figure 2) to being a body at rest (Figure 3A) to being a body in motion (Figure 4A, C, E). Certainly, much of this evolution reflects improvements in mint technology and the increased artistic skills of U.S. designers. Does any of her remarkable transformation over this time reflect the changing roles of U.S. women? Women's place in American society changed dramatically over this time, as our nation's economy shifted from rural and muscle-based to urban, mechanized, electrified, and mobile. By far the most spectacular change was passage of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920, which gave women the right to vote. It almost seems as if Lady Liberty on Weinman's half dollar is striding towards and reaching out her hand to receive this right. But many other incremental improvements and opportunities for women

happened during this time as well, in education, medicine, and employment. Women didn't have all the opportunities and political power they enjoy today, but they were well on their way. I like to think that this is at least part of the story that the evolution of Lady Liberty on U.S. coins tells.

And what are we to make of the disappearance of Lady Liberty from U.S. coins, replaced by U.S. presidents and founding fathers? Considered solely from the perspective of gender, it is a striking reversal of our national narrative as captured on our coins. The timing of this reversal is intriguing: abstract Lady Liberty disappeared from U.S. coins within 27 years after real U.S. women got the right to vote—the most important right of a U.S. citizen. Did this subtle backlash reflect powerful patriarchy's fear of women's growing equality? Or perhaps women's increasing equality with men made it too difficult to accept abstract, idealized women as depicted as Lady Liberty?

The explanation that I prefer is that the disappearance reflects a major change in our national narrative, from aspirational to historical. After 155 years of history—of wars, expansion, and innovation—our narrative could no longer be purely aspirational and abstract. It had to become more historical. The narrative had to tell how our experiment in self-government turned out. Long before the middle of the 20th century, the U.S. had a story to tell. It was time to replace earlier abstract representations of liberty with concrete examples of leadership.

The history of the U.S. is personified by some of our presidents. For example, the Civil War and ending of slavery is personified by Abraham Lincoln, and by the tragedy of his assassination. It was natural that our increasingly historical national narrative be reflected by celebrating past presidents, and that this process began humbly, with Lincoln appearing on the penny on the 100th anniversary of his birth.

There is some support for this interpretation. Our nation began celebrating past presidents in the mid-19th century with construction of the Washington Monument, which took 40 years to complete (1848-1888). The Lincoln Memorial (1914-1922) followed, then the Jefferson Memorial (1939-1943). The massive monolithic monolith of four U.S. presidents, each with 18-meter (60-foot) heads carved into Mount Rushmore granite and undertaken privately between 1927 and 1941, would awe even the Egyptian pharaoh Ramses. More than any other monument, the colossi of South Dakota signaled that the national narrative was no longer aspirational and embodied by Lady Liberty. The continent had been civilized and tested in great wars. The U.S. narrative was now historical, as personified by our presidents. It was time for Lady Liberty to retire, leaving behind only her signature phrase "Liberty," which is still found today on the obverse of all U.S. coins. A

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6

**ART
WORLDS**

Recent String Quartets

Daniel Asia

THEY ARE FOUR ORNAMENTED boxes with some strings attached. No, I am not referring to someone's Christmas shopping, but rather to the components of a string quartet: two violins, a viola, and a cello. These instruments of sophisticated technology date back some four hundred years, with their antecedents, the viol family, much older than that. They, and the bows that go along with them, were originally made of various woods and animal materials, and are objects of physical beauty. But their primary purpose is not to beguile the eye but to create beautiful sounds; sounds that express the human soul, and that, when organized into a quasi-linguistic framework, are called music. They are played with the fingers and hands. They also transmit something of the physical nature of their human performers, as well as something of their soul. It is no

secret that while it is not so complicated to reproduce electronically many wind and brass instruments, those most difficult to duplicate include these string instruments as well as the human voice. It is as if their singular voices, a mixture of the human body and spirit, refuse to be copied or synthesized. Which is to say that the music formed directly of human experience is irreducible to some other medium.

Recordings can capture and reproduce much of the sound, but this is not the same as lived experience. The best recordings, however, can lead us into new vistas and allow us to experience something new that otherwise we most likely will not be able to access in any other way.

Recordings weren't around at the time of "Papa" Joseph Haydn, who invented the string quartet in the eighteenth century. And as with many inventions, it seems so

obvious. Two treble (or high sounding) voices, a middle voice, and a low voice, which does somewhat replicate that of our voice types, soprano, alto, tenor, and bass. After Haydn's first explorations of this new chamber music medium, which consisted of music generally for the players themselves or with small audiences, Mozart and then Beethoven followed, and of course Schubert and Brahms. The mother lodes of the earlier part of the twentieth century are Bartok's six quartets and Shostakovich's fifteen.

Composers of the latter part of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first are still very much interested in the medium. While the instruments themselves have a somewhat limited sound palette—as they are an acoustical family—that has certainly been expanded of late. This expansion includes all sorts of rappings and tappings (including playing the instrument with pencils or chopsticks!); sound transformation from the normal to *sul tasto* (playing on the finger board, producing a gentle wan, contracted sound) to *ponticello* (a glassy sound with little of the fundamental tone but rich in high harmonics); there are now electronic versions, and composers have also amplified the older instruments. Nonetheless, many composers have found it of interest to write their quartets more or less in the “tradition,” finding more to discover in the patterns of communal communication and their own individual musical languages than in the extension of the instruments' sonic possibilities.

Elena Reuhr has contributed six quartets to the genre. Her music is generally genial, tonal, and evocative of past and present folk musics. It often resides on relatively long tonal plateaus and is somewhat reserved and laid back. It unfolds gradually and the ear is easily able to ascertain almost all of its moves; it signals well its intentions and is in accessible and hearable forms. The first can

serve as an instructive introduction to all six of Ruehr's quartets. It is comprised of four movements of considerably varying character.

The first movement is lyrical, almost pastoral, and has a quiet sense of yearning. A clear sense of background and foreground is present; it is quite tonal and simple, but not dumb. A seemingly Celtic figure closes the first movement against a quietly held drone, and it ends on an octave, securing the tonal nature of the materials. The second movement is more textural and bustling with a busy buzzing, and it is shorter than all the other movements. Against the busy texture a tune, graceful and *leggiero*, is played in the cello and violin at a two-octave distance. There are also syncopated folk-like materials, or maybe further reminiscings of country fiddling. The third movement is slow, mysterious, and quiet for the most part. Scalar passages are present in imitation, overlapping with major and minor seconds creating a web of sound within a restricted middle range. This is then offset with the same web presented in a very high register in the violins and viola while the cello plays quite low. Reuhr's attention to registral placement makes this music vivid. The fourth and final movement begins directly after the previous with no break. It is much more dissonant than previous movements. Dynamics are generally loud and the music is boisterous. The music is again folk-like, in a Bartokian Eastern European sense, as there are sections of music played *pizzicato*. Materials are octatonic, with scale fragments with simple ornamentation. Unison lines occasionally burst out, and the structure is clear with repeats of materials that are of high enough definition to be grasped. This is music that is well heard, well sculpted, and well thought out. It is a pleasure to listen to its evocative world.

I was fortunate to hear the premieres of two new works by Robert Maggio, as they were commissioned by my hometown organization, the Arizona Friends of Chamber Music. AFCM champions new music, with numerous new commissions performed every season. Maggio's pieces, *Songbook for Annamaria*, and *Rain and Ash*, are highly successful works, somewhat similar to Reuhr's work, in that they are based on folk materials.

Songbook for Annamaria is in four movements, each based on a well-known folk song. This time-honored tradition of borrowing from vernacular music stretches all the way back to the Middle Ages and is found in the more contemporary music of Aaron Copland (e.g. *Rodeo*) and Robert Beaser (e.g. *Mountain Songs*). The tunes referred to include *Shenandoah*, *All the Pretty Little Horses*, *jimmy crack corn/ Blue Tail Fly*, and *I've Been Working on the Railroad*. The use of these well-known melodies is often done with them present only in the background, which is to say, they never are presented in an insipid way, although sometimes they bubble to the surface just to humorous affect. Each tune and movement is conveyed with an individual approach to sound and a sense of unfolding storytelling. Even in slow music,

but of course in faster music, there is a vibrant rhythmic intensity, that obtains throughout. The overall arch of energy and structure is sure, and the final close of this quartet is, well, verging on the magical, as it ever so gently glides into a tonal resolution.

Rain and Ash (String Quartet No. 2) presents two starkly contrasting movements. *Rain*, a compact rondo that alternates between weighty, rhythmic materials and more lyrical episodes, is celebratory in nature.

The second movement, *Ash*, begins with a quietly soaring melody, over a gentle weave of lower strings. This serene atmosphere is interrupted by angry and aggressive chords. The piece involves the working out of, or the interaction between, these two radically contrasting emotive states. It leads to the most unexpected and charming events. Time sometimes rushes on and at other times comes to a complete stop. The effect is mesmerizing. Its extended coda might be a touch too long, but since it is formed of sinuous lines of gorgeous harmonics, I am willing to forgive this minor lapse. Or then again, maybe I am wrong, and on further hearings I will find it just right. This is what makes listening to fine works so engaging—how one hears them changes with each encounter.

* *

Shulamit Ran's "*Glitter, Doom, Shards, and Memory*," is the title of her third string quartet. Like Steve Reich's *Different Trains*, it is a meditation on the Shoah, the Holocaust. Whereas Reich's is a somewhat personal reflection—placing his story in relation to world-shaking events—Ran's meditation is to be seen through the eyes of the Jewish artist, Felix Nussbaum, who

perished at Auschwitz. She makes no suggestion in her reflections on the piece that the work or movements have any direct correlation to any of Nussbaum's paintings, but rather that the spirit of his paintings inform the music. And a reminder, that we should not, will not, forget. In working with this subject, Ran has worked her way back to the terrain of

one of her earliest pieces, *O the Chimneys*, a work based on the texts of Nelly Sachs, dating from 1969, and written when she was just twenty. At the same time, she also wants this newer music to be viewed and understood only as music, which is to say that while there is a program of sorts, the music must work and speak as music.

The first movement is titled “that which happened,” which is what poet Paul Celan called the Holocaust, given our inability to comprehend it. Ran says that her title refers to normal life being utterly and irrevocably shattered. It begins quite pastorally with a lyrical melody in a clear, tonally based language. This is immediately interrupted by a more expressionistic music in an atonal, but never harsh, idiom. These two worlds alternate or abut each other as the shattering process proceeds. An extended siren effect leads into a more maniacal music, much more dissonant and “broken.” The music is made of short, interrupted phrases.

The second movement, *Menace*, is a distorted waltz. Ran describes it as mechanical and unstoppable. It is, again, broken, misconfigured, occasionally grotesque, and at its conclusion, expresses a last wheeze of life.

“If I perish—do not let my paintings die” are the words of Felix Nussbaum, and in this third movement Ran “imagine(s) ...the conflicting states of mind...to continue to live and practice one’s art...(and) bearing witness to the events.” The music is filled with aggressive outbursts, and the occasional appearance of quarter-tones produce a somewhat world-weary quality, a *weltschmerz*. The use of *col legno battuto*—striking the strings with the wood of the bow—produces the sounds of bones. There are semi-tonal wanderings, blank and empty silences, and downward glissandi suggest a loss of energy or the life force itself.

The stillness of high harmonics, and fragments and sequences of unrelated materials, seem to represent the disjointed, depleted nature of mind when confronted with the destruction of the bodily self. Towards its conclusion, crescendos are abruptly cut off followed by segues to new material. The melodic material is hyper-romantic and there is a climax of rising pitch with *pizzicato*, but the movement ends with the resolution of a consonance of affirmation. While Nussbaum didn’t survive, his paintings did.

The stillness of high harmonics, and fragments and sequences of unrelated materials, seem to represent the disjointed, depleted nature of mind when confronted with the destruction of the bodily self.

The fourth movement is all about “*Shards, Memory*.” It is slow-moving, of course, with notes of longer duration. A descending minor second is prominent in its well-embellished melodies. The texture is often thin and transparent. It is rigorously expressive and, not surprisingly, often mournful, sometimes keening. It is music of reflection. This fine work covers complicated and expressive musical and world-historical territory. Ran has more than succeeded at what is not an easy task.

Dzubay's Astral Quartet was written for the Orion String Quartet in 2008. It references the heavens, in all of their primordial wonder; and is in five movements whose lengths range from just less than two minutes, to an expansive six and a half.

The first movement, *Voyage*, provides materials for the entire work. It is a mini-world that is then replicated on the macro level, as the following movements are each based on an idea or two presented here. It contains different divisions of the beat, starting with a quickly loping figure that segues to a quicker and more articulated rhythm. The pitch materials are quite open and consonant, as the original fragment contains a major second and minor third. This motive will be presented in both more consonant and dissonant settings, and thus this sound world is rich in tension and repose. The opening texture features an accompaniment in the lower three instruments with a wild, free, and flexible melody, high up in the violin which starts with a Mannheim Rocket, as the line shoots upwards with a scalar passage. The next section presents high trills, low strings on warm consonances, and a pizzicato figure in the cello that sounds like the fragments of a jazz walking bass. This is a rich and sonorous movement formed of a kaleidoscopic range of emotive gestures, but the return to its opening makes for a clear and satisfying form.

Starry Night portrays just that: a quiet look at the celestial canopy. It is in slow, meditative time. It is even languorous as high harmonics create a sense of stasis, as calm counterpoint unfolds in the lower parts. It is sometimes chorale-like, perhaps lending a certain religious undertone in this music of reflection.

S.E.T.I. refers to the institute founded by the astronomer Carl Sagan: the Search for

Extraterrestrial Intelligence. This is the shortest and, not surprisingly, the most out-of-this-world movement. It is formed of a compendium of extended techniques, exploiting pizzicati, col legno battuto, ponticello (playing very close to the bridge producing a thin, glassy, eerie sound), and glissandi. All these techniques are used in the context of very rapid nervous gestures with non-tonal pitch materials; they are self-contained, brief utterances of sound with quickly alternating dynamics. Most of these disconnected moments occur in the higher registers, sounding almost disembodied, and there is seemingly little coordination between the various parts. The entire effect is quizzical, whimsical, and fantastical, appropriate for portraying the unfettered and uncontrolled sounds of the universe.

Wintu Dream Song is a setting of a funereal song of that West Coast Indian tribe. It is repetitive—in a nice way—and quite tonal, respecting its lineage. Expansive, gentle, calm, and lulling, it suggests a simple and primal response to existing in a bewildering universe and the mystery of our living and dying. When written, it must have been thought of as an homage, while now it might be seen as appropriation—while the world turns and the universe expands.

Supernova is the final and concluding movement. It “begins with music of constrained energy, explodes in a wild development of earlier ideas, and then dissipates into the expanse of space,” as per the liner notes. Which is to say that this entire piece ends with many of the materials with which it began and toyed with throughout the following movements. It is a fine summarization and it, and the entire work, with a series of overlapping Mannheim Rockets, ends with a bang. **A**

Four Images of a Neapolitan Rebellion

David Carrier

I dedicate this essay to the memory of Richard Brettell, great scholar and generous friend.

IN JULY 1647, ONE OF THE MOST important political events in the life of old regime Naples took place. There was a massive revolt led by Masaniello, a plebeian Neapolitan fisherman. In response to an increase in taxes, he led a mob, which ransacked the armories and opened the prisons. But after a few days, when this sudden success turned his head, the people, in turn, rebelled against his leadership. He was murdered, and his would-be revolution brutally crushed. In the seventeenth century, viceroys sent by the ruling Bourbon kings governed Naples. These over-extended rulers administered a vast empire in Europe, Asia and the Americas. Naples, the largest city in Italy, was heavily populated, largely by the very poor, who came from Southern Italy. The taxation was burdensome, and so not surprisingly there were revolts, in which reformers tried to employ the discontents of the populace.

Masaniello became an internationally famous folk hero. An English account in 1664 was titled *An Exact History of the late Revolutions in Naples; and of their Monstrous Successes, not to be parallel'd by any Ancient*

or Modern History.¹ Responding to this rebellion, the execution of Charles I and the Polish revolt by the Cossacks, Nicolas Poussin, who lived in Rome, said: “It is a great pleasure to live in a century in which such great events take place, provided that one can take shelter in some little corner and watch the play in comfort.”² He was clear about “the danger of popular revolt and the unreliability of the people.”³ There were many books about Masaniello and even a French opera, *La muette de Portici* (1828) by Daniel Auber, which has recently been recorded. And recently there has been considerable debate amongst historians about how to understand him.

Visual representation of a rebellion like Masaniello’s is tricky, because an artist needs to choose to present just a moment of a temporally extended action. My four small images come from eBay, a valuable

1 Alexander Giraffi, *An Exact History of the Late Revolutions in Naples; and of their Monstrous Successes*, Trans. J. H. Elqr London: 1664. (modern Amazon reprint).

2 Anthony Blunt, *Nicolas Poussin* (London: Phaidon, 1967) 169.

3 Blunt, *Poussin*, 170.

wohner der grossen Stadt Neapolis sich sch
chwert/ daß ihnen die vom König Ferdinand



Figure 1 Picture from an old German history illustrating the 1647 Naples revolt against the Spanish led by Masaniello, a plebeian Neapolitan fisherman.

A would-be revolution, when you are in the midst of it, is a confusing business.

resource for the independent scholar.⁴ Some have no identification of the artist or date. I love the idea that a revolution by the Neapolitan underclass be studied using these inexpensive prints. Nowadays any significant event is presented in numberless photographic and video images. But in Masaniello's time, images had to be made individually 'by hand,' and visual art did not pay sustained attention to individual lowlife heroes.

Masaniello became internationally famous. Indeed, the philosopher Spinoza, who lived in Amsterdam, had himself depicted as Masaniello. Art historians, E. H. Gombrich noted, have little occasion to attend to "the vast mass of ephemeral propaganda prints, broadsheets, and cartoons."⁵ Yet it is worth considering "these strange configurations with puzzled curiosity," he argued, "not so much for what they can tell about historical events as for what they may reveal about our own minds." Because these four images show different stages in Masaniello's developing rebellion, taken together they will function somewhat like a rudimentary film, collectively providing a fuller, sometimes contradictory perspective than any one picture could offer.

In the first image (Figure 1), the buildings have steeply slanted roofs. This picture from an old German history must have been done by a Northern artist, for the North is where you find such roofs. On the left someone is gathering stones for the throwers, who exit to the right. Is the man

who is carrying a paper at the far right-hand edge Masaniello? That isn't clear. Nor do we see the target for these stone throwers. A history by Pietro Giannone (1723), translated into English in 1731 as *The civil history of the kingdom of Naples*, describes such a scene: "Masaniello and his Boys, armed with Sticks, came, and encouraging the Mob, they all began to pillage the Office where the Duty was paid, and to drive away the Officers with Stones."⁶ Stones do not appear in my other pictures of the rebellion.

The second image (Figure 2) is by Louis Turgis (the inscription is tiny), a nineteenth-century French artist. The long narrative at the bottom describes the events. And at the far right is a sign that reads "Bureau de Taxe," identifying this as the site of the rebellion. Traditionally, Masaniello was shown as an impoverished, shoeless young man. But here, elegantly dressed, he marches with his wife Leona, musket in hand. Fish at the right front edge identify this as the market. But the turmoil around Masaniello and Leona is impossible to decipher. The three figures, male and female confronting the armed man at the right—are they Neapolitan activists? That's hard to tell.

The third image (Figure 3), *Scene from "Masaniello" at the Royal Italian Opera*, shows the market. In "La Muette de Portici" the performers include Masaniello, who was then believed to be from Portici, a nearby port city, and a mute woman, his wife, who was played by a dancer. This fantasy about his wife comes from a Walter Scott novel, *Peveiril of the Peak* (1823), which

⁴ I got this idea from doing a review of a Manhattan gallery show of contemporary eBay images; see my "Acquired on eBay (and from other surrogate sources)," *Brooklyn Rail*, February 2020.

⁵ "The Cartoonist's Armory," reprinted in his *Meditations on a Hobby Horse* (London: Phaidon, 1963), p. 127.

⁶ *The civil history of the kingdom of Naples* (London: Ecco Print Editions, n.d.), 762.



Figure 2 Image by French artist Luis Turgess depicts Masaniello as elegantly dressed, holding his musket in the market.

tells a completely different story. When Masaniello dies, Vesuvius erupts. That too is fiction, for the eruption came some years later. The high steeple at the center is vaguely like the bell tower of S. Maria del Carmine, a prominent landmark. But the rest of this stage set has very little connection with this part of Naples. Nor is it clear what action is taking place here. Are the soldiers rebels? So far as I can see, Masaniello himself is not in this picture.

A would-be revolution, when you are in the midst of it, is a confusing business. In his account of a 1920s riot in Vienna, Elias Canetti says:

Nothing is more mysterious and more incomprehensible than a crowd.

It was scattered, driven away, and sent fleeing by attacks; yet even though wounded, injured, and dead people lay before it on the streets, even though the crowd had no weapons of its own, it gathered again⁷

His modernist narrative is, in its general style, not unlike Stendhal's accounts of Napoleonic battles. When people rush by on every side, it's all but impossible to comprehend what's happening. The Neapolitan crowds,

⁷ Elias Canetti, *The Torch in My Ear* (London, Granata: 2011), 250.



Figure 3 Scene from "Masaniello" at the Royal Italian Opera probably does not contain an image of Masaniello himself. The opera is loosely based on the historical uprising of Masaniello in 1647.

similarly, were thought to be mindless, incapable of any self-consciousness; they were said to be like a force of nature, akin to the eruption of Vesuvius or the plague. Hence the Archbishop's suggestion that in this rebellion they "boiled" like some liquid" or his claim that "they resembled a thoroughbred horse which disliked saddle and bridle."⁸

Image four (Figure 4) is an engraving of a painting by a nineteenth-century Frenchman, Edouard Hamman. The rulers

receive Masaniello at that brief moment when he was in power. He is on the left, elegantly dressed but barefoot, in the posh interior. Armed guards keep the populace outside. The stern gestures of the men facing him are inscrutable. Masaniello's fate is sealed.

Just as Akira Kurosawa's classic film *Rashomon* (1950) presents incompatible, divergent versions of one story, so these four scenes present fragments of a narrative that is difficult to synthesize. Indeed, without the captions you would hardly know that they all are of Masaniello. Minor historical records, they have at present an

⁸ Peter Burke, "The Virgin of the Carmine and the Revolt of Masaniello," *Past and Present*, 99 (1983), 6.



Figure 4 Engraving of a painting by a nineteenth-century Frenchman, Edouard Hamman. The rulers receive Masaniello at that brief moment when he was in power. He is on the left, elegantly dressed but barefoot, in the posh interior.

interest out of all proportion to their artistic quality, because they reveal his international fame. Imagine a group of people performing some common action. They can be subordinated to one central figure. Or they may be acting independently to serve some shared goal. Under the old regime, individuals acted collectively when subordinated to the rule from above. But in a rebellion, they briefly acted under the spell of a shared will.

The English history from 1664, *An Exact History of the late Revolutions in Naples; and of their Monstrous Successes, not to be parallel'd by any Ancient or Modern History* says: "A city is a ship, and divisions are the

leaks, through which, while the mariners fight one with other, the water enters and drowns all."⁹ The funeral for Masaniello

*Was the occasion of one of the most intense experiences of collective existence and of a feeling of unity in the entire history of the city . . . It was precisely at the moment, then, that the gravity of the crisis began to be understood.*¹⁰

The revolt thus created very briefly a public sphere, but then failed to destroy the old regime. *Masaniello of Naples* (1865), a

9 Giraffi, *An Exact History*, 9.

10 Rosario Villari, *The Revolt of Naples*, Trans. James Newell (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993), 156.

history by Mrs. Horace Roscoe St John, offers an ultimately optimistic reading. Masaniello failed, but “a spirit as dauntless, a heart as disinterested, and an arm better inured to the service of the sword, were found . . . when Garibaldi hastened to the deliverance of Naples.”¹¹ Alas, her optimism was not justified, for less than sixty years later Mussolini came to power.

Some years ago, I published an essay about the two large contemporary history paintings showing Masaniello.¹² I focused on Domenico Gargiulo’s *Piazza del Mercato during the Revolt of Masaniello* (late 1640s–early 1650s), which then was on display in Museo di San Martino, high above the city.¹³ A luxurious, relatively isolated site, Certosa di San Martino is only a few kilometers from the scene of the plebian political revolt, which is far below in the historic center.¹⁴ Since my account is accessible, I won’t repeat the details here. But one point I didn’t fully discuss is of interest for our present purposes.

Sometimes philosophers have odd blind spots. When looking at *Piazza del Mercato*, I realized that in my numerous trips to Naples, I had never visited the marketplace shown in that painting, which is but ten minutes away in a swift cab ride downhill. (I had, however, visited Galleria Spada, a small Roman museum, to see Michelangelo Cerquozzi’s *La rivolta di Masaniello*, the other large painting that shows this revolt.)

You can learn something, sometimes, from visiting the site depicted in a painting. And so I immediately went to the market. Later, when I got the catalogue *Micco Spadaro: Napoli ai Tempi di Masaniello* (2002), I discovered some other smaller images and prints that show this violence close up.¹⁵

You can better understand *Piazza del Mercato* by visiting the market. At the Piazza Mercato, the market is on the South side of the historic center, divided from the nearby harbor by a wide, busy divided street, Via Nuova Marina. During World War II, this area was heavily bombed because it is close to the harbor. Still, even today you cannot escape seeing the causes of Masaniello’s revolt; densely populated impoverished neighborhoods, which fueled this rebellion, surround the square. There is no monument to Masaniello in the square, but there is a plaque on the nearby house where he was born. And S. Maria del Carmine, with the high steeple, which has been restored, looks just as it does in the painting.¹⁶ The pulpit from which Masaniello harangued the populace is there. And behind the high altar is a large, much venerated fourteenth-century Byzantine icon, *Madonna della Bruna*.

If you walk from Piazza Mercato to “Masaniello,” which is a very good, modestly priced restaurant, you can dine beneath a life-size painting of the failed revolutionary. a

11 (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1865), 247. (Modern reprint: Forgotten Books: London, 2015).

12 “Two Representations of Masaniello’s 1647 Revolt in Contemporary Neapolitan Paintings,” *Source*, XXVII, 1 (Fall 2007): 32–38.

13 *Napoli sacra. Guida alle chiese della città* (Elio de Rosa: Napoli, 2010), 13, 805–825.

14 See Christopher Marshall, “Causa di stravaganze”: order and anarchy in Domenico Gargiulo’s Revolt of Masaniello,” *The Art Bulletin*, 80(3), 478–497.

15 (Napoli: Electra, 2002).

16 See *Napoli sacra*, vol. 9, 536, 272.

Owning It: Crypto Art is Just Another Currency

Julia Friedman and David Hawkes

OVER HALF A CENTURY AGO, Marshall McLuhan identified a “moral panic” that continues to roil Western culture today. In his now-canonical *Understanding Media* (1964), McLuhan discussed the mixture of fear and snobbery exhibited by “many highly literate people” in response to the dramatic rise of “electric technology”— the cinema, the telephone, the radio and above all, the dreaded television. Since these new media “seem[ed] to favor the inclusive and participational spoken word over the specialist written word,” McLuhan argued that they posed a threat to established hierarchies of culture and class. As he pointed out, elitist systems of cultural knowledge and power extend all the way back to ancient “temple bureaucracies” and “priestly monopolies,” and the cultural elites have always worked to keep their domains exclusive. A strikingly McLuhanesque spasm of outrage followed Christie’s procured sale of a digital art non-fungible token, or NFT. *Everydays: The First 5000 Days*, created by the savvy operator known as Beeple, fetched an eye-watering \$69 million at a recent auction. That kind of money always guarantees mainstream

media attention which, of course, is part of the point. Another part is the furiously hostile response to that kind of money being splurged on such a radically innovative art form: so innovative that a large part of the cultural elite questioned its status as art in the first place. It doesn’t help that Beeple’s content is resolutely demotic: puerile cartoons, defaced logos, ironic emojis, frat-boy fantasies.

Writing in *Spike* magazine, Dean Kissick remarks that “the old gatekeepers have been losing their power for a while now,” and he counts the entrance of NFTs into the artworld among the costs. To Kissick, Beeple’s “triumphant procession of popular things” is a violation of art’s privileged autonomy.” In the “collective-hallucinatory firmament” of postmodern hyper-reality, artists no longer express ideas but rather present empty “images of images,” which the writer defiantly dismisses as “tired art, recycled pop, bad taste, political spectacle, and hyper-speculation.” As J.J. Charlesworth observes in *ArtReview*: “What really seems to disconcert ‘our’ current artworld is the sense that a form of largely unregulated, DIY mass culture has spawned beyond the reach or control of cultural gatekeepers.”

LA ZONE N°1 serie N°4 de
SENSIBILITÉ PICTURALE
IMMATERIELLE
APPARTIENT A. M. BLANKFORT



et de plus vient de
s'intégrer à lui, CAR
... l'or, a été rendu à la
NATURE ...

Yves Klein, Transfer of a "Zone of Immaterial Pictorial Sensibility" to Michael Blankfort, Pont au Double, Paris, February 10th 1962. Performance by Giancarlo Botti. Photo © Giancarlo Botti.
© The Estate of Yves Klein c/o ADAGP, Paris. Used by permission of The Yves Klein Archives.

The real ethical objection to the rise of NFTs involves the elimination of aesthetics itself as a discrete sphere of human experience.

It is tempting to see the cultural gatekeepers' protests against digital art NFTs as the grouching of a critical establishment at its own loss of influence. The snobbery of the self-appointed elect was challenged decades ago by Marcel Duchamp, in what looks like a premonitory contribution to the current NFT discourse. In his 1957 paper "The Creative Act," Duchamp rejects the elitist exclusion of "bad" art: "art may be bad, good or indifferent, but, whatever adjective is used, we must call it art, and bad art is still art in the same way that a bad emotion is still an emotion." Yet Duchamp also rejected the idea of equity in artistic value: "Millions of artists create; only a few thousands are discussed or accepted by the spectator and many less again are consecrated by posterity." Three conclusions follow for our own day: (1) *Everydays* is indeed an artwork, (2) it has passed the approval of the spectators (buyers) by garnering such a high bid, (3) only posterity will determine its ultimate aesthetic value. Nowhere does Duchamp mention professional critics.

This omission is especially glaring since the late 1950s were the apex of critical influence on contemporary art. These were the years when a pair of New York critics—Clement Greenberg and Harold Rosenberg—wielded an almost dictatorial influence. Such critics did not just evaluate already-existing art; their pronouncements determined the forms of future works. Because the relationship between artwork

and art criticism has been mutually determining for most of the twentieth century, one of Bepko's many transgressions is his deconstruction of the polarity between the two.

Meanwhile, the media response that his oeuvre evokes is not something external to it, but one of its most vital components. The outrage increases the price, and the price is not an addition to the art but its very essence. In the form of the NFT, the ancient opposition between art and money is finally abolished. So perhaps the consequent eruption of indignation and disbelief throughout the artworld is more than defensive elitism, and there are reasons other than snobbery to be suspicious of the NFT's fusion of aesthetics with economics.

Before the twentieth century it was a simple matter to own a piece of art. One simply bought it, took possession of it and, if one chose, locked it away in one's cellar. Ownership gave exclusive rights to the artwork (albeit not to its copyright). That changed in the age of mechanical reproduction, and by the twentieth century anyone could view the same image as the artwork's owner photographed in a book or magazine. What ownership brought was now access to the *original*, the bearer of the mysterious, pseudo-sacred "aura" that Walter Benjamin famously associated with the original work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction.

The relationship between art and money has always been symbiotic. This was true of papal patronage in the Renaissance, and it remained true of the twentieth-century European avant-garde whose fortunes, according to Greenberg, were inexorably linked to the market "by an umbilical cord of gold." After all, art and money are basically similar phenomena: both are valuable and significant systems of symbols. The twentieth century was replete with artists questioning the relationship between

art and money. Their difference from Bepko was that they were looking for ways to uncouple the pair, rather than fuse them.

As early as 1914, Duchamp's revolutionary concept of the "readymade" had undermined the process of commodification. Along with his Dadaist allies, Duchamp succeeded in redefining the fine arts, moving away from the given of physical painting and sculpture and towards serialized, de-commodified, temporary or even traceless performances and manifestos. By insisting that a fictitious "R. Mutt" had the right to anoint a urinal as art because "whether Mr. Mutt with his own hands made the fountain or not has no importance. He CHOSE it," Duchamp initiated what the late David Graeber called the "aesthetic validation of managerialism." A lowly plumbing fixture can be art, as long as someone (who did not even create it) calls it art. According to Graeber, the task of validation, and the creation of value, later devolved from artists to curators, who could throw ordinary objects into the mix along with *bona fide* artworks, confident that no one could legitimately object. Today this function falls to auction houses which, in Graeber's words, use "money as a sacral grace that baptizes ordinary objects magically, turning them into a higher value." That is exactly what happened to Bepko's *opus* on March 11, 2021, when the sale closed at \$69,346,250.

Subsequent movements like Fluxus and Conceptual Art continued Duchamp's efforts to separate art from money. Their methods included relying on performance instead of painting or drawing, and using DIY kits instead of traditional cast or carved sculpture. They documented events with sets of instructions or certificates of authenticity, and these took the place of paintings and sculpture as the physical manifestations of art that was otherwise disembodied. The remarkable Piero Manzoni created works such as *Merda d'artista*

(*Artist's Shit*, 1961), and advertised his "product" by standing in a toilet with a tiny tin in his right hand and a coy smile on his face. Manzoni commented on the relations between art and money in *Sculture vivendi (Living Sculptures*, 1961), which consisted of living people "authenticated" with different colored ink stamps designating various body parts, or the entire person, as an artwork. He incorporated tongue-in-cheek pricing systems into his artworks: the price of the shit-tins corresponded to the price of gold per gram, the color stamps on the living sculpture were priced by body part and so on. Manzoni documented his works with photographs, making the record part of the process, and proving their uniqueness, just as the blockchain records the uniqueness of the NFT.

At around the same time, Yves Klein was inventing, performing and documenting his transgressive classic *Zone of Immaterial Pictorial Sensibility*. Performed on February 10th, 1962, it involved Klein throwing half of his payment into the river Seine. The work's buyer then burned the receipt for the transaction. This performance presaged the NFT in several respects. The artwork included the physical destruction of the artist's remuneration, provocatively suggesting an equivalence between the two processes. As Klein gnomically explained: "For each zone the exact weight of pure gold which is the material value correspondent to the immaterial acquired." To be authentic the event had to be witnessed—Klein specified by "an Art Museum Director, or an Art Gallery Expert, or an Art Critic"—in a manner that anticipates the authentication provided by an NFT's imprint in a blockchain. Klein even included a provision to prevent resale: "The zone[s] having been transferred in this way are not any more transferable by their owner."

Klein had first made his point about the arbitrary value of art in 1957, when he placed eleven identical paintings in Milan's Galleria Apollinaire. These were to be purchased at various prices, according to what the buyer felt each was worth. In the mid-nineties, the British duo K Foundation performed an artwork by burning banknotes to the value of a million pounds sterling. By the twenty-first century, when Banksy's \$1.4 million *Girl with Balloon* dramatically shredded itself to pieces in front of a stunned audience at Sotheby's, and Maurizio Cattelan taped a perishable fruit to the wall at Art Basel, the venerable system of exchanging enduring artworks for money had been thoroughly and irretrievably deconstructed in theory. It continued to flourish in practice, however, and it blooms anew in the parodic form of the NFT.

The confusion and scorn with which the general public has responded to the sale is no mere backwoods Luddism. It may be true, as the influential dealer and gallery owner Stefan Simchowicz recently pointed out in a Clubhouse chatroom, that NFTs are just another commercial platform based on a new technology. But they also represent the ultimate aestheticization of exchange-value—a process on which artists and art critics have meditated for most of the last century. NFTs are the apotheosis of the tendency described in Guy Debord's 1967 *The Society of the Spectacle*, whereby alienated human labor-power attains an autonomous, performative force by taking a symbolic form. Debord had nothing but scorn for the society of the spectacle, but it would surely be rash to dismiss his prophetic diatribe as cultural elitism.

NFTs' dramatic entrance into the art market announces another stage in this process. It is not access to the artwork that has been sold: anyone with an internet connection can view the content, which has

in any case been dismissed by Beeple himself as "trash." There is no "original" to which the owner might enjoy exclusive access. What the NFT's purchaser has bought is not the image itself, or even the copyright to the image, but *ownership* of the image. Furthermore, this ownership is entirely conceptual or, if you prefer, financial. It does not consist in exclusive rights to view the image; it consists in exclusive rights to *sell* the image. Ownership of art has become identical with art *per se*, just as an artwork's price has become part of its essence. Art has become money; it has turned into currency.

This erosion of the border between aesthetics and economics is also visible in the financial sphere, where most value now takes the form of "derivatives," a hyper-symbolic mode of representation whose manipulation for profit looks more like artistic than economic activity as traditionally understood. Meanwhile, NFT "creators" assimilate the market dynamics which give their work value into their art itself. In that, Beeple is a true heir of Kaws, whose current retrospective at the Brooklyn museum was characterized by the *New Yorker's* Peter Schjeldahl as "a cheeky, infectious dumbing-down of taste" where "blandness reigns." The content of Beeple's work is unimportant. Its images are self-consciously banal, proudly lowbrow, deliberately jejune. But it is not images that Beeple is selling. They're not even what he's creating. What he's creating, what he's selling, is ownership: financial value. The advent of the NFT renders the distinction between art and money obsolete.

This is the culmination of a lengthy process. As early as 1976, the former Situationist Malcolm McLaren simultaneously heralded and criticized the merger of art and money with the project he called "the Sex Pistols." McLaren delighted in provoking interviewers by

drawing attention to the disparity between the financial rewards reaped by the band and the objectively low quality of their aesthetic accomplishment. This perceived incongruity had already caused public outrage with the Beatles but, whereas the “60s generation of rock stars attempted to defend their work as legitimate art, McLaren actively celebrated the disproportion between his band’s aesthetic quality and their remuneration. In fact, that disparity, and the fury it provoked among cultural gatekeepers, was an inherent element of the project itself.

Does the scorn displayed by McLaren and McLuhan for the twentieth century cultural elite and their “moral panics” apply to the widespread critical suspicion of NFTs in our own day? There is surely an element of elitism, and even envy, behind the cultural gatekeepers’ dismay at Beeple’s success. But that does not mean there are no reasonable or ethical objections to the NFT’s forced union of art and money. The real ethical objection to the rise of NFTs involves the elimination of aesthetics itself as a discrete sphere of human experience. If aesthetics and economics are not merely analogous but actually identical, we must bid farewell to aesthetic experience itself. Art will no longer be even theoretically autonomous of the market. There will be no sphere of experience that can meaningfully be separated from finance. The prospect of Beeple’s \$69 million will undoubtedly encourage many to tie the knot (as evidenced by the subsequent Sotheby’s and Phillips auctions entirely dedicated to digital art NFTs), but the marriage of art and money may well turn out to be fraught, fractious and ultimately unfeasible. And divorce is always expensive.

Two recent controversies suggest that the emergence of crypto art may forever undermine the hegemony of the object-centered art market. In March 2021, a firm

known as Injective Protocol bought a Banksy print for \$95,000, sold an NFT of it for \$380,000, and publicly burned the original on YouTube. Then, in April 2021, a firm known as Daystrom attempted to auction off an NFT of a drawing by Jean-Michel Basquiat on the understanding that the purchaser would have the right to “deconstruct” the original. Both were provocations in the venerable tradition of Dada and Punk, and the pearl-clutching public reaction was an integrated response. Headlines included “NFT: No Fucking Thanks,” “Sickos,” and the withering deadpan of the BBC: “Banksy Art Burned, Destroyed and Sold as Token in ‘Money-making Stunt.’”

The idea that the destruction of art can be part of art is old news, having been espoused throughout the twentieth century by artists ranging from Yves Klein, to Ai Weiwei, to Pete Townshend. Such auto-destruction aimed to make a grander statement than anything available within the formal confines of material art. In 1953, attempting “to figure out a way to bring drawing into all whites,” the young Robert Rauschenberg came up with the idea of erasing an extant drawing. Not one of his own, though. Rauschenberg was then pretty much unknown, and he insisted that the drawing erased had to be “real art.” He approached the abstract expressionist Willem de Kooning, whose work was held in the highest esteem. The chasm between the two men’s artistic standing was the key to the project, pointedly framing the affair as a newcomer’s challenge for dominance.

The “Erased de Kooning Drawing” sent shock waves through the New York art world. It was simultaneously hailed as a daring act of Neo-Dada defiance and damned as ignorant vandalism. But Rauschenberg’s stunt was an attempt to force his way into the artistic canon, not a challenge to the existence of the canon itself. Long after his apparently

anti-aesthetic gesture had been comfortably assimilated into high art, Rauschenberg described it as “poetry.” The advent of digital art NFTs is very different. A moral gulf separates an artist who painstakingly erases another’s drawing, with his explicit permission, from the wanton destruction of an artist’s work by the owner of its digital avatar.

The NFT that represents the artwork stands in an antithetical, hostile relation to the original. The putative purchaser of the Basquiat non-fungible token was granted the option to “deconstruct” the original, because by doing so, they would transform the NFT itself into the original. But even if Basquiat’s handiwork had been destroyed, its reproductions would remain. In the twenty-first century, the NFT—a digital imprint of the work in the blockchain—is thus actually *more* unique than the original drawing itself. As BurntBanksy put it:

If you were to have the NFT and the physical piece, the value would be primarily in the physical piece. By removing the physical piece from existence and only having the NFT, we can ensure that the NFT, due to the smart contract ability of the blockchain, will ensure that no one can alter the piece and it is the true piece that exists in the world. By doing this, the value of the physical piece will then be moved onto the NFT.

The financial value of the artwork rises, Phoenix-like, from the ashes of the original’s destruction and finds a new abode in the NFT. What was really destroyed when the Banksy was burned? Neither the image itself, which continues to exist online, nor access to the image, which is available to anyone with a computer or a smartphone. By physically destroying the Banksy print, the purchasers of the NFT attacked the Benjaminian “aura” that dwelt within the original work of art.

The “aura” is what makes the experience of viewing Da Vinci’s *Mona Lisa* in the Louvre, or his drawings at the Met, different

from looking at their images in a book. It is inseparable from the viewer’s visceral reaction to the physical traits of the work: variable pressure of the crayon on paper, the thickness of impasto brushstrokes or their glossy translucency, the weave of the canvas showing through the loosely applied imprimatura, the mutable effects of light playing on the surface at different times of day. An artwork’s aura is also the source of its financial value, the reason the original *Mona Lisa* is worth more than a reproduction. But if the original is destroyed, there is nowhere physical for the aura to reside. The aura’s abstract, symbolic nature is then revealed, and it becomes possible to package, market and sell the aura in the absence of the original. The destruction of the original allows the NFT to monetize the aura, imposing on it the form of financial value. As Daystrom explain:

Value has become increasingly fungible, diluted and unstable in our evolving metaverse and there’s a tremendous spike in user demand for exclusivity. NFT assets provide this exclusivity and create an entirely new online value system that was previously unimaginable.

But an “aura” is not a material thing. Does it necessarily perish along with its physical incarnation? Perhaps it was not destroyed so much as transubstantiated, reborn into a financialized afterlife where it is no longer subject to mortal decay. Like BurntBanksy, Daystrom make a plea for authenticity, not a protest against it. Authenticity is no longer a quality of the original artwork, contingent on the artist’s touch or painterly gesture. Authenticity is now a quality of the NFT that represents the original, and the only authenticity available today is statistical uniqueness. Yet people remain sentimentally attached to the old distinctions between authenticity and image, original and reproduction, reality and representation. The cries of fear

and loathing at the prospect of destroying a Basquiat drawing (albeit not a great one) or a Banksy print (albeit one of an edition of 500) are not naïve defenses of the artwork's lost integrity. They are inarticulate but nonetheless passionate protests against the postmodern condition. No wonder the word "deconstruction" where simple "destruction" would have sufficed was so triggering.

Of course, the owner of anything has always had the right to destroy it: that is what ownership means. There was a persistent rumor that Van Gogh's *Portrait of Dr. Gachet* was cremated along with its deceased owner in 1996. It turned out to be false, but the idea of an owner wantonly destroying the work evidently resonated with the *Zeitgeist*. To preempt any such plans, the federal government passed the Visual Artists Rights Act of 1990 to protect works of "recognized stature" from destruction by their owners. In this context, the new form of ownership represented by NFTs is arguably more democratic than its predecessor. When ownership involved taking physical possession of the unique artwork, the owner could easily prevent the public from viewing it by keeping it in a bank vault. In the digital age, the detachment of the aura from the artwork makes such hogging impossible, so perhaps this detachment is not the problem. The problem is the NFT's inherent antipathy towards the original.

That has the potential to become a very serious problem. NFTs are liable to physically attack the artworks they represent as long as there is a financial incentive for them to do so—and such an incentive is hard-wired into their

blockchain nature. In dystopian theory, NFTs could obliterate all actually existing works of art, replacing them with tokens of their financial value. The process would be seamless. NFTs simultaneously embody two kinds of abstraction: financial value and the aesthetic aura. The fact that both of these abstractions can be incarnated in the same symbol at the same time shows that they have become functionally identical. And if identical, then interchangeable.

If art is money, then money is art. The history of money is a process of aestheticization, and the NFT heralds its climax. As money develops from precious metals through bank notes and credit cards to cryptocurrencies, its symbolic nature is incrementally revealed, and its kinship with other forms of symbolic representation becomes clear. The arcane gyrations of financial "derivatives" that constitute today's economy are entirely figural in nature, and thus ontologically indistinguishable from the manipulation of symbols in art, poetry, or music.

It is this final collapse of aesthetics into economics that dismays the artworld's commentators, although they do not yet articulate their fears coherently. They are right to be alarmed. The proposed physical destruction of the artwork may (Banksy) or may not (Basquiat) actually happen, but the concept of art as something different from money has already been fatally undermined. Aesthetics and economics are united in the NFT, but theirs will not be a partnership of equals. And while artists and critics may be slow to catch on, economists should easily recognize the merger for what it is: a hostile takeover. ▀

Love, Envy, and Revenge

Brian Allen

Mythological Passions. Museo Nacional el Prado, Madrid. March 2 to July 4, 2021. *Titian: Love, Desire, Death*. National Gallery, London, March 16, 2020, to January 17, 2021. *Titian: Women, Myth & Power*. Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston, August 12, 2021, to January 2, 2022.

Miguel Falomir, Sheila Barker, Javier Moscoso, and Alejandro Vergara. *Mythological Passions: Titian, Veronese, Allori, Rubens, Ribera, Poussin, Van Dyck, Velázquez*. Museo Nacional el Prado, 192pp., €32 cloth.

THE MOST SPLENDID ART EVENT of 2020 and, I suspect, 2021 is having a most circuitous time getting itself before the eyes of a large public. The event is the reunion—after 450 years—of Titian’s six “poesie” pictures, the word used in Italian painting at the time to describe works that delight the senses and make poetry an aesthetic experience.

Mythological Passions is the exhibition, now at the Prado, and it includes Titian’s six “poesie” works, done in the 1550s and 1560s, and related paintings by Titian, Veronese, Alessandro Allori, Rubens, Poussin, van Dyke, and Velazquez. Almost all are female nudes. Ganymede does a flyover, and there are lots of Cupids, but female nudes are thick on the ground, in bed, and in the air.

This is a show about sex. There’s no cant and no jargon. There’s little concern with oppression, repression, protest, or pretense. There are no marginalized artists. Toxic masculinity is stigmatized here and there—*The Rape of Europa* is, after all, a rape scene—yet men and women alike seem mostly happy to be in an erotic playground, learning how much can go wrong. Oh, it’s about love, envy, and revenge, too. Amid all these nudes there’s prudery, too, or an obsession with chastity that invites violence.

It’s brilliantly old fashioned and frank at the same time. Eroticism, the show tells us, is a core subject of the art and literature of antiquity. The Renaissance, we’re reminded, revived sex as a high-end subject. The exhibition is clear that Titian’s paintings and



Figure 1 Titian, *Bacchanal of the Andrians*, 1523–26. Oil on canvas, 175 x 193 cm. Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado

the twenty or so works by other artists are open to many interpretations and have certainly received them over hundreds of years. It disparages none. Rather, it sees Titian's works as expressing the emotional pull of desire—desire driven by the attraction of men to women. Artists like Rubens and Velazquez, who saw and studied Titian's paintings in Madrid, elaborated on Titian's take. So, the show's still about sex but also about emulation.

The paintings by Titian are among the icons of Renaissance secular art and, arguably, *Danae* from the Apsley House in London,

The Rape of Europa from the Gardner in Boston, and *Venus and Adonis* from the Prado are foundational in the development of the female nude. You would have to be a large rock not to find them luscious.

They're both the zenith of Titian's career and its denouement. Philip II (king of Spain from 1566 to 1598) was his most important and lucrative patron, and Titian had never done a series so complex in terms of figures, settings, and narrative complexity. Its denouement? Titian died of bubonic plague in Venice's 1576 iteration, leaving *The Death of Actaeon* mostly finished. It's not counted

usually as one of the "poesie" paintings, never got to Madrid, and isn't in the exhibition there. The other paintings in Titian's series date from between 1553 and 1562. They are *Danae*, *Venus and Adonis*, *Perseus and Andromeda*, owned by the Wallace Collection and never before lent, *Diana and Actaeon* and *Diana and Callisto*, jointly owned by the National Galleries of Scotland and the National Gallery in London, and *The Rape of Europa* from the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston, also never lent. For the Wallace Collection, the loan of *Perseus and Andromeda* is a first. It's never lent a work of art in its 120-year history.

Titian is after the joy and playfulness of early love, before the discovery of heartbreak.

The pandemic seems to have followed the show, but don't love and sex thrive in impediment? The exhibition was called *Titian: Love, Desire, Death* when it ran at the National Gallery in London. It opened on March 16, 2020, and remained open for exactly four days before closing in the first United Kingdom lockdown, which was ordered on March 20. *Love, Death, and Desire* was rightly touted as a focus show, since it reunited the paintings Philip II commissioned from Titian but included little else. It was a Titian feast nonetheless, and eventually did become available to the public for a few weeks between the UK's first and second lockdowns. The exhibition was extended until January 2021, but alas, very few people saw it, between the closure of the museums and the public's fear of communal spaces, even those graced by a bevy of Titians.

The exhibition was slated to go to the National Galleries of Scotland in Edinburgh after London. Edinburgh owns *Diana and*

Actaeon and *Diana and Callisto* with London's National Gallery, so this seemed natural. Both were famously and expensively purchased by the two museums from the Duke of Sunderland, who'd owned them since 1803. Edinburgh, alas, fell from the tour because of Scotland's stricter lockdowns and, so, to Madrid it went as *Mythological Passions*, a large show situating the Titians among later nudes. Alas, again, Spain's hard to visit because of its own travel restrictions. At least Madrileños were able to see it.

In August, yet another version of the exhibition called *Titian: Women, Myth, and Power* will open at the Gardner, unless something new happens to an exhibition that seems to have a bad whammy following it. I think it will be fine, will look fantastic, crowds will want to see it, and it'll be a revelation.

The Prado, using its own collection and borrowing some objects, expanded the project to include other artists who both treated love, beauty, and desire through mythological themes, and used Titian's "poesie" as their launch. Although the Prado owns only one of Titian's series, its collection of Titians overall as well as paintings by Rubens are the world's largest. Philip II is the genesis of the Royal collection that became the Prado, with Titian his favorite artist.

The exhibition at the Prado is about thirty objects. All except two are paintings, though the show begins with a sculpture, a first or second century CE Roman version of *Venus and the Dolphin* originally from around 250 BCE. "The goal of art," the wall text tells us, "is to make the spectator—all of us—feel strong emotions in our bodies as if we were witnessing not works of art but exciting situations in real life." This is a point worth making. We're physical and emotional creatures as well as, at times, cool, detached, and thinking.

Miguel Falomir, the director of the Prado and a scholar of Venetian painting, is the curator of the show. Philip II, Falomir tells us, seems to have given Titian wide if not complete flexibility. By the 1550s, Titian had worked for the Spanish court for more than 30 years. He'd already pried from Philip II's father, Charles V, the realization that piety and eroticism could be conveyed in art as separate concepts, with religious art serving a set of goals but erotic art having its own merit and place. And Philip II was no prude. Falomir refreshingly distances both Titian and Philip from political or ideological meanings attributed to the "poesie" by past scholars. He respects these interpretations and others deeply referencing myths, implicating Neo-Platonic theory, drawing religious implications, or evoking music.

Falomir focuses on flesh. Titian's "poesie," at least for the few years they were all together in Madrid, were displayed in private spaces near one of the palace gardens, frankly linking art depicting the female nude with nature. It's easy, the show tells us, to think paintings of nudes by Titian, Rubens, and others were mainstream since we see them in public museums and in textbooks.

They were decidedly not. Titian's nudes were neither pornographic nor pinup girls. They weren't explicit enough to be truly pornographic and, in any event, Renaissance-era pornography is its own well-documented niche. And they're too erudite to be of the pinup genre. They're erotica that arouses the emotions in addition to the libido and very much the private, (not, however, secret) pleasures of elites. They were not to every king's taste. By 1614, Philip III moved them to storage, finding them too lascivious.

I keep calling the exhibition "the Titian show" when I describe it to family and friends. There are lots of great works by other artists, though Titian's the main event. That said Titian's "poesie" aren't the only star turns the artist makes. *Venus with*

an Organist and a Dog from 1550 is one of the first pieces of the puzzle to find its spot. "What is going on here?" the exhibition asks. Any number of lofty, intellectual interpretations are possible. Looking at the object, though, gives us two indisputable answers. "This painting is about sex," says the mask above the keyboard, a couple in the background walking by a fountain topped by a leering satyr, and animals sniffing each other. She's naked, suggesting the two know each other, but she's aloof, while he definitely isn't. "The woman has what he wants," the catalogue tells us, and it's not directions to Padua.

Two earlier Titians, *Worship of Venus* from 1518 and *Bacchanal of the Andrians* from 1523-26, tell us something about Titian's nudes that seems to run through his career (Figure 1). *Worship of Venus* might as well be called "Love Among the Toddlers" as it shows at least fifty three-year-olds in variously randy states. I wouldn't say it's charming, since that suggests it's fodder for a children's book. Rather, I'd say Titian is after the joy and playfulness of early love, before the discovery of heartbreak. The painting is not didactic. No one looks at it and thinks of the patriarchy. *Bacchanal of the Andrians* is about pure pleasure, too, though the players are adults who seem well versed in arranging an orgy. Both pictures reference antiquity—a passage from Philostratus the Elder's "Eikones" on the meaning of painting—yet the link to antiquity doesn't seem musty. Both are hedonistic, but that doesn't distract or dishonor antiquity, whether mythology or philosophy. Rather, Titian invites us to empathize with antiquity and to humanize it.

Everyone will see the show in his or her own way. I beelined first to the "poesie," not wanting to postpone time with the superstars for a second longer. Once both dazzled and reassured the exhibition was indeed worth a trans-Atlantic trip, I went to these early Titians. I didn't give works by

Rubens, or Allesandro Allori's *Venus and Cupid* from the 1570s, much time at first. Allori's splendid painting from the Musée Fabre in Montpellier is there to bring Michelangelo and Bronzino into the mix, but I decided to let Titian anchor my first round.

So, back to the main course. There are two versions of *Danae* in the exhibition, which, among much else, resolves the question of which was made for Philip II in 1553. It's not the version the Prado owns, which dates to the mid-1560s, but the Apsley House picture. Velazquez bought the Prado version on his first trip to Rome.

Dozens of writers in antiquity treated the subject of Danae, a princess locked in a tower by her father, a king who took seriously a prophesy that Danae's child would one day kill him. No male visitors, no child. Zeus, though, goes wherever Zeus wants. He appears in a shower of gold, and in both versions Danae greets the visit with a dreamy look and open legs.

Titian had painted an earlier version of the Danae story for Cardinal Alessandro Farnese in 1544. There's documentary evidence, though I'm not entirely convinced by it, that Danae in this version was a surrogate for Farnese's favorite prostitute and that this painting, now at the Capodimonte in Naples, started as a nude portrait but got the false beard of the Danae myth when Farnese thought it best not to be too explicit. He was, after all, a cardinal. I can't help thinking that the shower of gold coins, a convenient fact in the Danae myth, infers the exchange of money for sex that's part of Farnese's own, definitely true story.

The exhibition, and this I buy, looks at the different versions of Danae's story from antiquity, among them written by Sophocles, Euripides, Terence, and Ovid, and finds that Terence's take is the one Titian decided to represent. In Terence's 2nd-century BCE comedy *The Eunuch*, Chaerea, a young Athenian, has broken

into the private apartment of Pamphila, the woman he loves. She's looking at a painting of Danae as he contemplates her beauty, but Chaerea's an egotist. He soon thinks about himself as a contemporary Zeus, without "the lofty power of thunder," a mere mortal who's found a way to the woman he wants, and that very thought arouses him all the more.

Kinky, yes, but Terence's take does make the picture cheekier, if not utterly shameless. Kings exist by divine right, but Philip II didn't think he was Zeus. He knew he was a flesh-and-blood mortal. Terence's story proposes that Zeus's power to seduce is more broadly accessible, and that power itself is an aphrodisiac.

The side-by-side comparison of the two versions, more than ten years apart in execution, shows Titian, by the 1560s, well on his way to his late, radical handling of paint. His 1553 *Danae* has a tighter finish, the earlier nudes tighter still, but the paint in the Prado version of *Danae* is more loosely applied, denser, and more likely than in Titian's earlier work to be unblended. The look's one of pliancy in flesh and in fabric.

If Danae is about sex, transgression, and a dollop of love, *Venus and Adonis*, the next painting Titian did in his series, is about love and loss, and a dollop of sex. Adonis, centered and in red, and his hunting dogs share the spotlight with the nude Venus, awkwardly positioned and seen from behind. Her face is obscured, and as she looks at Adonis, we look at him, too. We see the handsome, determined, indeed reckless man she loves. Falomir quotes one of the few bits of correspondence between Titian and Philip. Titian, in sending *Venus and Adonis* to Madrid, told the king that while *Danae* was seen from the front, Venus is presented from the back. Eventually, Philip would get every angle the nude could supply.

Far from divine, Venus looks powerless. It's clear that her pleas to Adonis to stay won't work. We feel sorry for her, since we know the story as well as she does, though she knows it via prophecy. The mood's more serious than in *Danae*, since her fling with Zeus is a one-night stand, or a mutual crush at most. Venus is the goddess of love, beauty, and fertility, a portfolio of far greater immensity than anything Danae would know.

At that point, it's not possible to move to the next Titian without leaving the "poesie" room to look at Veronese's painting of *Venus and Adonis* from 1580, a generation later. The exhibition, after all, counts artistic emulation as one of its themes, and I'd chosen up to this point to focus on Titian. Veronese's figures are life-size and so have wall power, but his palette—Adonis's orange tunic and Venus's blue and gold dress—grab even the passerby. Veronese's orange, made with arsenic, is a thing to behold and uniquely his.

Veronese's orange, made with arsenic, is a thing to behold and uniquely his.

The poses of the Veronese and Titian are nearly flipped, as Veronese's Adonis is now prone—he's asleep—and Venus is upright and intensely aware. Veronese's take is still dynamic, though, since Adonis is hefty and foreshortened. His is a big look. Veronese's landscape is lush, too. Cupid, sleeping in Titian's *Venus and Adonis*, is actively engaged in keeping Adonis's doom at bay by restraining the dog who has already caught the scent of the wild boar that'll kill Adonis before too long.

If Titian's view of the couple is noisier and more contested, Veronese's is more

poignant. We see only part of Venus's face in the Titian, but Veronese presents her beautiful, deeply engaged face a central motif. Hers is a face on which inevitability registers. At that moment, she suffers in silence. If Titian gives us a couple's push and pull, Veronese presents an arresting moment. The future, Venus knows, can't and won't change, and soon, when Adonis's dead, hers will be the only broken heart.

Now hooked on the story of Venus and Adonis, I leapt into the Neapolitan Baroque and Ribera's angle, which centers on Venus's discovery of the dead Adonis (Figure 2). It's a new era, we learn, one of exaggerated emotion. Veronese's Adonis, though sleeping, is virile. He's present. While Titian's Adonis is physical, active, and impudent, Ribera's is dead, his limbs twisted. Venus isn't nude, either, since that would detract from the spectacle.

I wish I'd spent more time looking at Allori's painting, if for no other reason than to adore its palette, especially passages where green easily and slowly elides into blue. It's color that Allesandro Vergara said in the catalogue "hints at the color of glaciers, the most beautiful color in the world." Allori's *Venus and Cupid* from the 1570s is in the show to emphasize the sculptural quality of Florentine nudes, as is Hendrick van der Broeck's version of Pontormo's painting based on a highly finished, lost Michelangelo drawing of Venus and Cupid done in the 1550s, late in Michelangelo's career but concurrent with Titian's work for Philip II. Pontormo's picture, copied by van der Broeck, is seen to replicate Michelangelo's mood and style as closely as possible.

Of love, Michelangelo wrote in a sonnet, "one love draws toward heaven, the other toward earth, one draws toward the soul, the other the senses." The exhibition explains that Michelangelo's love, personified by these two figures, is most at



Figure 2 José de Ribera, *Venus and Adonis*, 1637. Oil on canvas, 179 x 262 cm. Roma, Gallerie Nazionali d'Arte Antica di Roma

home in heaven or in the soul, but not in the sack. The van der Broeck is said to evoke Michelangelo's emotional abstraction and allusiveness. Michelangelo is cryptic and didactic, and luscious female nudes were never his favorite things.

I think there are good reasons to put the Allori and the van der Broeck in the exhibition, though I wish the Pontormo itself was there to make things less convoluted. Visually, the Allori and the van der Broeck are cold, hard pictures. The nudes are sculptural. Together, they create a Florentine counterpoint to the point of the exhibition, which is the carnality of Titian's nudes, and the tradition of the voluptuous, sexually fetching nude that develops from Titian. And Michelangelo is always a good name to add to the mix. By the 1530s,

Michelangelo and Titian were rivals, so the comparison sharpens the difference between the two.

We don't see Zeus at all in *Danae* or any of the other "poesie," and Adonis, for all his beauty, is the rash James Dean, seizing the car keys and riding off to oblivion. *Perseus and Andromeda*, the next "poesie" Titian painted, gives us not only a happy ending, however weird the picture looks. He gives us a rescue scene and a hero, and what's romance without heroism?

Perseus is the child Danae conceived in her liaison with Zeus, so there's a continued storyline. Both Danae and Andromeda are women under lock and key, Danae because her father fears her son will kill him, Andromeda for a more convoluted reason still related to bad parenting. Andromeda's

mother, the vain, pompous Cassiopeia, brags that she and her daughter are more beautiful than the Nereids. An infuriated Poseidon demands the sacrifice of Andromeda as penance for Cassiopeia's impertinence. Andromeda is to be chained and killed by a sea monster.

Perseus sees Andromeda in chains, the sea monster about to devour her, and is smitten, Ovid tells us, by her beautiful hair

moving in the breeze and her tears. In love, he engages the monster in an air-and-sea fight to the death. It's action hero stuff.

The Wallace Collection owns the painting. Seen alone in London, it seems like an off moment for Titian. It's a turbulent picture and one of Titian's few seascapes. He's not known for monsters, either. Looking at it in context gives it more sense. Andromeda is the first in-your-face,

Figure 3 Titian, *Diana and Actaeon*, 1556–1559. Oil on canvas, 184.5 x 202.2 cm. The National Gallery, London and The National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh, with contributions from the Scottish Government, the National Heritage Memorial Fund, The Monument Trust, Art Fund (with a contribution from the Wolfson Foundation), Artemis Investment the Management Ltd, Binks Trust, Mr Busson on behalf of the EIM Group, Dunard Fund, The Fuserna Foundation, Gordon Getty, The Hintze Family Charitable Foundation, J Paul Getty Jnr Charitable Trust, John Dodd, Northwood Charitable Trust, The Rothschild Foundation, Sir Siegmund Warburg's Voluntary Settlement and through public appeal, 2009



standing nude that Titian supplied to the king. She's chained, which adds a frisson all its own, though obviously she's uncomfortable. Unlike Danae and Venus, she's not luscious, though I'm sure the monster expects she'd be a good lunch were it not for Perseus.

Visually, the upside-down Perseus must have been a trick to paint. We don't know how the "poesie" were arranged, though the presentation of Perseus adds variety. If Titian felt he needed to show how clever he was as a painter, producing the topsy-turvy hero is one way to do it.

Diana and Actaeon and *Diana and Callisto* were next to be sent to the king (Figure 3). Titian painted them in the late 1550s. They are the most complex of the group, each with nine or ten figures, and neither was a tried-and-true subject in Renaissance painting or storytelling. Both are, in fact, very rare. Coming after Perseus's acrobatics, Titian must have thought, "how can I top this?"

Diana, suffice to say, is the ultimate Mean Girl. She's one of the marquee goddesses, known as Artemis to the Greeks, and she is chaste, as is her coterie. In the two paintings, we don't see her as the active, pathological killer she is. Rather, we see a feast of nudes in an abundance of poses, as well as the moment when we learn something about fury and revenge.

Actaeon, a young hunter, sees her nude, a breach of etiquette for which Diana turns him into a stag ripped to shreds by his hunting dogs. Titian presents the moment of offense. Callisto sullies the cult of Diana through no fault of her own. Zeus rapes her. She manages to hide her pregnancy for months, until she disrobes for a bath before Diana and her virgins. Large and caught, Callisto is expelled. Diana knows what's she's doing. A hateful, jealous Juno punishes Callisto for being in the wrong place at the wrong time by turning her into a bear, and ultimately into a constellation of stars.

The exhibition catalogue concedes there are numberless interpretations of these two paintings but sticks to the obvious ones. Both answer a hypothetical demand from the king for more nudes with "You want nudes...I'll give you nudes." And after painting a chained nude, a rejected nude, and Danae, a one-night-stand nude, there's little more outré than a pregnant nude. And, of course, men looking at these paintings would likely conclude that some measure of emotional distortion happens to women who scorn their company. Diana's cruelty is by no means extreme, as gods go. That said, the look she gives Actaeon is a chilling one.

The Rape of Europa is the last painting Philip got from Venice (Figure 4). It's so famous, it's not easy to absorb it with a clean palate. First of all, it looks fantastic, having been cleaned. It's never traveled from the Gardner, where Mrs. Gardner installed it high on a wall. If anyone needs reminding, it's here that I again pinched myself. These Titians haven't been together in hundreds of years.

Second, it's a stranger picture than *Perseus and Andromeda*, and made me think of those *Caprichos* by Goya that show oddballs in flight.

A large white bull with crazed eyes—Zeus again, in disguise—carries the princess Europa away against a blue sky streaked with red, heading toward dark clouds while a befuddled crowd watches. Moments earlier, Europa had been playing with the bull in a field, decorating him with flowers.

The exhibition and catalogue correctly treat it as a rape scene, and an act of violence against a woman. Zeus and Europa eventually have three children, one of whom, Minos, established the Minoan civilization on Crete. It's a picture about violence driven by lust, but is it a love scene? The exhibition makes the point that, in part, led me to Goya. "Love is not a



Figure 4 Titian, *The Rape of Europa*, 1559–62. Oil on canvas, 178 x 205 cm. Boston, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum

rational state,” the final essay says. “It’s a pathology.” José Ortega y Gasset called it “a kind of temporary imbecility.” Technically, the painting is the most daring of the six. Titian used a spatula and, in seems, his fingers, in addition to a brush, to apply the paint. This gives, the show argues, a look of quick realization on Titian’s part, as if he’s conveying a rapidly evolving situation.

Velazquez’s *Fable of Arachne*, also called *The Spinners*, dates to 1655–60 (Figure 5). While the exhibition isn’t linear and there’s no narrative build to a splashy conclusion, *The Fable of Arachne* is the one painting not by Titian to hang with the “poesie.” It’s the

latest thing in the show and comes toward the end of Velazquez’s life, most of which was spent at Philip IV’s palaces surrounded by Titians. It also features “the Rape of Europa,” in the tapestry Velazquez painted in the picture’s background.

The Fable of Arachne isn’t as famous as *Las Meninas*, but it’s still one of Velazquez’s best and most enigmatic paintings. Arachne, a spinner, challenges Minerva to a tapestry-making contest. Challenges of this kind between god and mortal never end well for mortals. When Arachne was judged the winner, Minerva turned her into a spider.



Figure 5 Diego Velázquez, *The Fable of Arachne, or The Spinners*, c. 1655–60. Oil on canvas, 170 × 250 cm (original dimensions, without the additions made in the eighteenth century); currently 223 × 293.4 cm. Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado

The painting is not a nude. Though an abduction and rape scene, neither is *The Rape of Europa*. Titian's painting has been translated into a tapestry, or a painted tapestry, and is in the very back of *The Fable of Arachne* and only partially visible. The exhibition makes a good point, though, on the point of artists emulating masters of the past, as Velázquez clearly does.

Arachne is foregrounded in a busy, surprisingly realistic scene of her working with her assistants to create the tapestry. This team is hardworking, but very average looking. That Titian made the gods seem real and occupied by the same yearnings and strivings as we mortals. Or, at least, the mortal elites at Philip II's court, who weren't doing prosaic things like spinning but had lots of time to think of other human concerns, like sex and intrigue.

Velázquez is a far more reserved painter than Titian, but the analogy works. Arachne, like Velázquez, channels the gods through art.

Essential reading is Sheila Barker's essay in the catalogue, which looks at how the nudes of Titian and others were received by women. It starts with the vandalism of Velázquez's *Rokeby Venus* in 1914 by a deranged suffragette. This painting, now sewn back together, could have been in the Prado show. Painted in the late 1640s, it's Velázquez's most explicit riff on Titian.

Barker's essay looks at women collectors of erotic mythological pictures like Isabella d'Este and the small number of documented responses of women who saw nudes by Titian, Rubens, and others. There's a good section on Artemesia Gentileschi's and Michaelena Wautier's



Figure 6 Peter Paul Rubens, *Nymphs and Satyrs*, c. 1615, enlarged and repainted c. 1638–40. Oil on canvas, 139.7 x 167 cm. Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado

nudes. Wautier's *Triumph of Bacchus* from 1655 is packed with male nudes and a giant self-portrait of the artist herself. It's a huge, gaudy triumph of a painting, and I wonder why it isn't in the show. It's a big painting, I know, and the exhibition isn't big. Wautier's unknown to most, but so is Allori. I think the curators felt Barker's essay covered what I'd call "the woman's point of view."

Barker ties it nicely to the show's theme of artist emulation. In a section called "Viewing Titian's Women in the Age of the Guerilla Girls," she contends there's a battle in these nudes surrounding who, exactly, is objectified. Is it the women in the paintings, or the men whose lust the subject arouses? Or is the figure with real power not the

male viewer but the artist, who takes control of the viewer and manipulates him?

My quibbles about the exhibition at the Prado are small. Rubens is a big name, I know, and a superlative painter, but *The Garden of Love*, from 1630–35 and owned by the Prado, doesn't really belong in the exhibition. It does indeed "incarnate the idea of joyful love" and it's got a sculpture of Venus in it, but it doesn't have anything to do with Titian. Neither does *Dance of the Mythological Figures* from the same time. It's probably true, as the catalogue says, that "no other painter made antiquity seem so natural and homely," but that is not even remotely a goal that Titian hoped painting the gods would achieve.

Neither picture has any nudes, but *Nymphs and Satyrs*, another Prado picture by Rubens, has nudes galore (Figure 6). He started it in 1615 and repainted it in the late 1630s. How it springs from Titian needs to be developed. The catalogue frankly says that Poussin's *Hunt of Meleager* from the late 1630s has nothing to do with love. Why is it in the show?

The Death of Actaeon isn't in the exhibition. It's the painting by Titian ordered, possibly, by Philip II as a 7th "poesie" but was, possibly, not finished when Titian died in 1576. It's usually not considered part of the "poesie" series, only because Titian seemed, again, possibly, never to have been satisfied with it. It never made it to Madrid, and was sold to a Venetian collector whose family later sold it to the Duke of Hamilton. It's now owned by the National Gallery in London. Some scholars feel Titian meant to see it to some other, unidentified client.

It's not unfinished in any technical respect. There is no area missing glazes, for instance. X-rays show that Titian made more changes in this painting than in any of the "poesie," which could mean that he wasn't happy with it. Titian was 86 when he died, deaf, toothless, his eyesight worsening, and he had about half a dozen paintings in process. Possibly he thought *The Death of Actaeon* too violent or too pessimistic.

The subject is, after all, mauled by his own dogs. None of the "poesie" is a death scene. The palette is browner and somber. Possibly he thought the picture wouldn't look right with the others. In any event, I would have liked to see its place in the group addressed.

The "poesie" are at Boston's Isabella Stuart Gardner Museum, starting in August. It'll be a smaller show, and more tuned to Titian and Ovid, but it will be splendid, as is the show in Madrid and as was the show in London. a

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