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# Introduction

## by the Dean for the Humanities

It is a great honor to have been asked to write this brief introduction to **Humanitas**, Harvard's first student journal in the Humanities. The pages that follow represent the best that this university has to offer: the lively, inquisitive minds of its students. This is a student-led initiative, driven by the generous spirit of two student leaders, Chiara Condi and Catherine Vaughan, and inspired by the Humanities Center at Harvard, which energizes our campus intellectual life at every level. Its outreach to our undergraduates has been bearing generous fruits. This is one of them.

The pages that follow trace multiple interdisciplinary paths opened up by the Humanities: the writing of captivity narratives or political speeches and their engagement with questions of value, dignity and honor; the alimentary in Proust as eliciting a reading strategy likened to the peeling of fruit, revealing layers of figurative language and complex connotation; language and our understanding of the body-mind relationship in the Greeks and in contemporary life; the rhetorical ruses of the gendered and racialized discourse on the "War on terror;" poetry and its power to approach the unspeakable, to probe contradiction or to embody spiritual force; the challenges of translation; concepts of fractal geometry and theories of the built environment.

The essays are elegant and rigorous: they are eloquent instances of the multiple questions that are brought to bear on the world by humanistic inquiry; they show in their multiplicity of approaches how central language is to our analysis of and engagement with knowledge. All in all, they show how through humanistic scholarship human beings define themselves, articulate values, and reach a fuller life in which empathy, imagination and reasoning are enhanced.

I celebrate the effort to exchange ideas and to think well and hard through the process that went into putting together this journal. This is what makes us all belong to and in a university, and as Dean for the Humanities I want to express my gratitude for this superb and most auspicious beginning. I look forward to reading the future issues.

**Diana Sorensen**

James F. Rothenberg Professor of Romance Languages & Literatures  
and of Comparative Literature  
Acting Dean for the Humanities

## Foreword

This inaugural issue of **Humanitas** is the culmination of the remarkable first year of the Humanities Center's Undergraduate Advisory Committee. When the committee had its initial meeting last spring, we weren't surprised to learn that students in the College rarely participated in Humanities Center programs and that many had at best only a vague idea that the Center existed. Most Humanities Centers don't think of undergraduates as one of their main constituencies, and we had organized the committee to try to make Harvard's Center an exception. Members of the committee enthusiastically took up the work of making undergraduates more aware of Humanities Center events such as our "Age of Terror" series, our conversations with authors and public intellectuals, and our panel discussions of pressing topics ranging from Hurricane Katrina to bioethics. But they were also brimming with ideas for events and activities specifically directed toward undergraduates. February's discussion of "Strangers in a Strange Land: Questions of Travel" with Professors Sugata Bose, Steven Caton, Virginie Lefebvre, and Mariano Siskind was the first of these events conceived of and organized by the committee. An equally stimulating and successful conversation on existentialism and religion with Professors Peter Gordon and Sean Kelly followed in March.

It is the Humanities Center's mission to be a "crossroads of the campus," and we are honored to sponsor a journal dedicated to showcasing some of the finest Harvard undergraduate essays in the Humanities from across the departments and disciplines. From POW captivity narratives in the American Revolution to asparagus in Proust, from excessive exercise in ancient Greece to fractal architecture in the work of Frank Lloyd Wright, these essays display the critical, aesthetic, and ethical seriousness as well as the wit and intellectual verve of the Humanities at Harvard College. Thank you to the editorial board for the careful and creative work of soliciting and selecting the essays, and to the contributors for the careful and creative work of writing them.

**Homi K. Bhabha**

Director

**Steven Biel**

Executive Director

The Humanities Center at Harvard

## About the Authors and Essays

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**Julia Lam '09**, an English concentrator hailing from Dunster House, wrote “Literary Nosh: Asparagus and Memory in *Swann’s Way*” for English 97: Sophomore Tutorial, under the supervision of Marie Rutkoski.

**Eva Lam '10**, an aspiring Social Studies concentrator, wrote “Gendered and Colonial Discourses in ‘The War on Terror’” for Women and Gender Studies 1003: Theories of Sexuality, taught by Visiting Professor Gayatri Gopinath and teaching fellow Jennifer Nash.

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# British Soldiers, American Prisoners, and National Identity in Accounts of the U.S.S. Jersey

by Andy Malone '08

In 1780, the Continental Congress asked Benjamin Franklin to write a book for American children. In it, he was to provide thirty-five illustrated examples of the British army's cruelty toward their American prisoners during the ongoing War for Independence. The goal of the book, as Franklin explained in a letter to British philosopher David Hartley, was to "impress the minds of Children and Posterity with a deep sense of [Britain's] bloody and insatiable Malice and Wickedness."<sup>1</sup> Franklin never wrote the book, but if he had, its cover probably would have been an engraving of the **U.S.S. Jersey**. The British vessel was the most famous of the many stationed in Wallabout Bay, Long Island, where the British army began to use retired warships to store its American prisoners after it took control of New York in 1776. Anywhere from 47 to 64 percent of captives died during their imprisonment at Wallabout Bay.<sup>2</sup> As observations of the prison ships became accessible to the American public, the disturbingly inhumane conditions and shockingly high rates of death onboard made them fast symbols of British cruelty. No ship attained greater fame than the **Jersey**, where upward estimates suggest that 11,000 Americans perished amidst their filthy and diseased comrades.<sup>3</sup>

During the war and in the half-century following, survivors of the **Jersey** wrote narrative accounts of their captivity. An anthology of their stories would have been an effective alternate to Franklin's unwritten textbook. By detailing the gruesome conditions on these ships, American P.O.W. narratives inherently characterized the British soldiers who allowed for such conditions as inhumane. Most scholars of Revolutionary War captives have looked no further than these images, accepting that American prisoners condemned the British without complication or exception. In doing so, they have ignored the interesting fact that prisoners did not always portray British soldiers as cruel tyrants. Comparing moments that feature favorable British characters to ones starring evil Britons reveals a remarkable aspect of the **Jersey** captives' experience. American prisoners saw British offenses toward their general human rights, such as deprivations of food, clean facilities, and medical help, as less cruel than offenses toward their American nationality. To these prisoners, the worst British soldiers were the ones who prevented a Fourth of July celebration or disrespected high-ranking Patriot officers. The narrative's authors could sometimes favorably perceive British soldiers who committed inhumane crimes, but they could never forgive those who committed explicitly anti-American ones.

Historians of American prisoners during the Revolution have largely used prison-ship narratives to gain insight into Britain's wartime policies toward and treatment of American captives. For these historians, the narratives have little value otherwise; Larry Bowman opens his book **Captive Americans** (1976) with the warning that personal accounts of captivity "did little to educate their reader beyond recounting personal experiences."<sup>4</sup> But studies of captivity narratives as a literary genre indicate that more can be gleaned from these stories than descriptive records. In **Voices from Captivity: Interpreting the American POW Narrative** (1994), Robert C. Doyle maintains that American captivity narratives showcase their authors' beliefs and morals. Doyle argues that American captives have, since the Colonial era, recounted their imprisonment to both relay experiences and pass value judgments on specific aspects of those experiences. He finds that "the essential characteristic of the American captivity narrative is a common fund of ideas that characterize, qualify, and evaluate the right and wrong of personal and community conduct in captivity during armed conflict."<sup>5</sup> Doyle also

notes that Americans writing about their captivity have consistently made efforts to “ensure the salvation of human dignity, community identity, and a sense of order in a world of chaos” (3). This paper explores the interplay between these two key features of the American P.O.W. narrative in the writings of *Jersey* survivors. It compares how prisoners evaluated British conduct when it compromised “human dignity” and when it challenged “community identity.” The “community identity,” here, is prisoners’ newly acquired national sensibility as politically autonomous Americans.

A project drawing primarily upon prison-ship narratives for its evidence must address historians’ skepticism of these documents’ accuracy. Scholars have rightly questioned whether author’s recollections are compromised by the lapse of time between experiencing and recording their captivity. However, because this study is concerned with prisoners’ values and ideas rather than their experiences, the accuracy of the narratives matters little. The way in which these authors remember British officers is as important as the way they viewed them at the time – if a captive recalls his former British guards as especially barbaric when they insulted America, but less so at other points, this pattern of remembering still demonstrates that the captive left his experience with especially ill feelings towards threats to American identity. A more valid concern is that authors intentionally fabricated or misrepresented their experiences to make their stories pieces of anti-British propaganda. By emphasizing cruel and unjustified offenses toward America, they would foster national pride while damaging Britain’s image. But it seems unlikely that authors would save any space in their stories for positive portrayals of the British if this were their sole intent. Some of these narratives, including Dring’s, the longest and most detailed, were not even intended for publication.<sup>6</sup> Of the major narratives considered here, all but one were published after the war ended, when they would have been most valuable as anti-British pieces; most were published after 1820.

Even if survivors were not constructing propaganda pieces, their narratives do present an image of British prison-ships that inherently condemns the men and country responsible for them. These narratives paint strikingly similar portraits of life as a prison-ship captive. Prisoners’ food rations were two-thirds that of a British officer’s, and they did not always receive that amount in full. The food was of poor quality; the water was brackish, the bread had worms, and the meat was cooked on a corroded copper stove that poisoned it.<sup>7</sup> With limited opportunities to travel to upper decks, prisoners often excreted on the same deck they slept. Vermin were rampant, as were various diseases, including small pox. Infected individuals could be transported to nearby hospital ships, but the conditions aboard these ships were not much better – in one case, the nurses were so negligent that they wrapped up a man for burial before he had actually died; prisoners aboard the *Jersey* saw him moving in a pile of corpses from a distance.<sup>8</sup>

Given the conditions aboard these ships, one might expect *Jersey* prisoners to recall their captors with nothing but malice. There are, however, a number of instances in their narratives that feature positively portrayed British officers, even when British disrespect for human dignity is clear. Absent from these episodes are any explicit offenses toward American prisoners’ national identity. The significance of this absence will be explored later on.

Christopher Hawkins, who was imprisoned on the *Jersey* for three days, offers one such positive portrayal in his narrative. Hawkins mentions an American captive who steals food from some of his fellow prisoners. To punish him, a British officer orders the victims to strike the bare-chested offender six times each with a six-foot oar. Though it would be easy for Hawkins deem this idea barbaric, he doesn’t. The tone in which he describes it is detached and methodical: “six in number were arranged around him and directed to inflict six strokes each with the instrument aforesaid upon that portion of the defaulter’s body which had been laid bare.”<sup>9</sup> When Hawkins relays the British officer’s commands, he focuses on where the officer places objects and people, and does not discuss the impending physical or emotional results of the abuse in which they are about to

take part, thereby minimizing the scene's emotional impact. Hawkins does not, for example, include the details of the long, heavy weapon, or comment on what its effect will be on the prisoner's vulnerable body; he instead refers to it only as the "aforesaid" oar. This portrayal of the command therefore leaves its potentially cruel undertones unexplored. Instead, Hawkins offers physical descriptions of cruel torture when the American prisoners carry out the punishment:

one of the mess took the instrument in hand – (it was very heavy, and as much as one man could conveniently wield) – and inflicted six strokes with the ponderous weapon, apparently with all his might – the sufferer groaning at ev'ry stroke – blood appeared before the six had been administered – a second man took the instrument and with no less mercy than the first inflicted six more strokes – the blood and flesh flying ten feet at ev'ry storke – during this period the defaulter fainted... (68-69).

Suddenly the scene becomes ripe with vivid portrayals of human cruelty. Hawkins emphasizes the weight of the weapon twice. When he notes that the first prisoner strikes "with all his might" and that the second prisoner continues with "no less mercy," he vilifies these men's physical aggression. The descriptions of blood and flying flesh, coupled with those of the thief's constant groans, illuminate the scene's inhumanity by appealing to the reader's sense of both sight and sound. The British officer becomes the surprising hero of the scene when he steps in to end the assault: "The officer before mentioned then interposed and observed to the enraged mess-mates that they were too severe with their fellow" (69). Hawkins does not remind the reader that this punishment was the British officer's idea, merely referring to him as the man "before mentioned." By scolding the prisoners and putting an end to the thrashing, he becomes the episode's moral voice, and its only favorable character. Hawkins' account clearly conveys the barbarity of British prison ships, but by emphasizing the punishment's execution rather than its conception, he places blame on the American captives instead of the British soldier.

Other authors also positively portray British officers at moments when their inhumane crimes are evident. Cabin boy John Blatchford, who was imprisoned on the **Jersey** for a week, stayed in a number of British prisons before he reached the ship. In his narrative, Blatchford describes how the British soldiers at one jail keep their prisoners in iron shackles. Blatchford notes how the British disrespectfully bury an American "with his irons on his hands." He also complains that his small shackles "caused [his] hands to swell, and made them very sore."<sup>10</sup> Blatchford asks a sergeant for bigger irons. When the sergeant honors this request, Blatchford describes him as "a person of humanity, and compassioning my sufferings" (13). Blatchford's diction suggests that he finds this act entirely kind, going so far as to describe the officer as a "person of humanity." This phrase denies that the officer is humane relative to other British soldiers, or that his demonstration of humanity is temporary – humanity becomes central to his character. It is remarkable that Blatchford paints a British officer as fully humane and compassionate even when that officer re-casts his hands in manacles of any sort, in an environment where British soldiers have used them to disrespect and physically abuse American captives.

Thomas Dring, a captive on board the **Jersey** in 1783, also found space in his narrative to offer some positive portrayals of the British. When he discusses how American prisoners serving as nurses steal from their patients, he writes "I attach no blame to our keepers, in regard to the thievish habits of the Nurses, over whom they had no control. I have merely related this incident for the purpose of more clearly showing to what a state of wretchedness we were reduced."<sup>11</sup> After relaying an instance where the American cook throws a "shovel full of burning cinders" at his face, Dring speculates that "this wanton act of that inhuman monster would not probably have been justified by the Captain, had it come to his knowledge; but it was wholly out of our power to devise means

whereby to convey any complaint of him.”<sup>12</sup> Dring does not suggest that the British officers are blameless in these events. He asserts in his first comment that the conditions of the British prison-ship allow for a “state of wretchedness,” and in his second that officers should allow prisoners to petition complaints. But he does not dwell on these shortcomings; though he is aware that these policies permit for inhumane ship conditions, he is still willing to pardon British officers for not controlling thieves and to assume that they are humane enough to not approve of a cinder-flinging chef.

Thomas Andros, a member of the Connecticut militia who was imprisoned on the *Jersey* in August 1781, describes the most benevolent British characters in any *Jersey* narrative. A very ill Andros asks Mr. Emery, the sailing master, if he can accompany him to the Long-Island shore as he gets the ship’s water supply for the day. Though Andros has “the least expectation of success,” Emery replies “yes, with all my heart.”<sup>13</sup> On the way to Long Island, Andros tries to help oar, but a British sailor takes his oar, saying “you are not able to use it, you are too unwell” (17). Once on shore, Emery allows Andros to walk freely to a nearby house, asking only that he stay nearby. Andros takes advantage of this permission and uses the opportunity to escape from the *Jersey* crew, hiding in a nearby marsh. Emery and the other British officers are entirely favorable characters, concerned for a captive’s illness and lenient with enforcing rules upon him. Despite Andros’ portrayals of British kindness, he does not let the reader forget about British cruelty; as much as these officers demonstrate compassion for Andros’ illness, their repeated references to it remind the reader how the *Jersey*’s conditions produce severe negative health effects. Indeed, when Andros makes his escape, he tells the reader that he has been made so sick and feeble by his internment on the *Jersey* that he cannot even muster the strength to run. Though his suffering is clear, Andros does not dwell on the British officers who permit it. When he reaches freedom, his mind jumps instead to how he has deceived Emery, “a gentleman of sensibility and kindness.” Andros sends him an apology letter as soon as he returns home (18). Emery is so honorable that Andros feels guilt for betraying him even at the moment he achieves freedom from the *Jersey*’s horrors.

Emery and other positively portrayed British officers in the *Jersey* narratives are assuredly exceptions. Many of them come across as decent individuals who are working underneath a corrupt military policy. They do not, therefore, challenge the overall anti-British tone established by numerous descriptions of the haggard conditions American captives faced under British control. But this broader portrayal makes these favorable characters even more noteworthy. The inhumanity of British prison-ships is never lost on a *Jersey* narrative’s reader. What, then, compels these authors to include episodes with favorable British officers in their narratives? Under what conditions can they perceive certain British individuals in a favorable light, even when they daily face the realities of life aboard a British prison-ship?

Analysis of the moments when these authors most vilify individual British officers sheds light on these questions. These moments frequently involve a British threat or insult toward prisoners’ American nationality – an element entirely absent from the favorable British moments described above. If *Jersey* prisoners could sometimes sympathize with their captors despite the ever-present evidence of compromised human dignity around them, they expressed nothing but contempt when the British challenged expressions of their national identity.

Christopher Hawkins describes the British ship on which he and his crew are imprisoned before they reach *Jersey*. When first placed on this ship, the American captives begin singing patriotic songs. With these songs, which contain phrases such as “for America and all her sons forever will shine,” Hawkins and his crew express their common national identity and thereby aggravate British officers: “In these words it seemed to me that all prisoners united their voices to the highest key, for the harmony produced by the union of two hundred voices must have grated upon their human captors in a manner less acceptable than the thunder of heaven.”<sup>14</sup> The British

officers respond to these songs by aggressively threatening the captives; Hawkins recalls that one guard “frequently threatened to put fire upon us” and that “between the singing of every song the sentinels would threaten to fire upon us and the officer and the officers of the frigate would also admonish us with angry words” (63-64). The officers’ consistent death threats seem especially unjustified because Hawkins portrays the captives’ singing as harmonious. When he then notes that the music “grated upon their human captors,” or that they found it “extremely harsh,” he suggests that the men are irrationally opposed to an expression of American pride, and inhumanely prepared to kill in response to it.

The fact that the British never act upon their threat to fire does temper the image of their barbarity. The Americans are able to bravely and effectively ignore such threats, and even if the British are ill-intentioned, they don’t seem very dangerous. But this all occurs at the very start of the prisoners’ captivity, before the effects of the British prison ship have been fully felt. Thomas Dring conveys how the British treat American prisoners on the **Jersey** whom, weakened by worse conditions endured for a longer period of time, try to express their national pride. In 1782, the American captives attempted to celebrate the Fourth of July. When Dring begins to describe this celebration, he claims that the Americans did not “[dream] that our proceedings would give umbrage to our keepers; as it was far from our intention to trouble or insult them.”<sup>15</sup> Their initial action, hanging thirteen American flags on their deck, seems accordingly innocuous. The British guards, however, order the captives to remove the flags, and when their request is ignored, destroy the flags themselves. The Americans, though offended, remain respectful and well-behaved: “their destruction of our flags was merely viewed in silence, with the contempt which it merited” (117).

Later on, the prisoners sing patriotic songs, and the British officers’ responses grow increasingly aggressive. The guards close off common walkways to limit the captives’ mobility and use their bayonets to repel anyone who comes near these areas. They then drive the prisoners below deck at an unusually early hour. Throughout this display of aggression, the Americans keep singing, but they do not “utter any insulting or aggravating expressions.”<sup>16</sup> Frustrated by the songs themselves, the guards descend to the prisoners’ deck and begin to cut random prisoners with knives: “The poor, helpless prisoners retreated from the hatchways, as far as their crowded situation would permit; while their cowardly assailants followed as far as they dared, cutting and wounding everyone within their reach” (119). That night, the guards deny the prisoners any water, and the next morning the guards do not allow them out of the cramped lower decks. As a result of the attack, the withheld water, and the prolonged confinement, twice the usual number of captives died on the night of July 4.

This episode marks one of the most negative British portrayals throughout the **Jersey** narratives; the officers commit varied inhumane crimes without discrimination or apology. Their actions are unprovoked, as Dring consistently reminds his reader that the prisoners never physically or verbally threaten their captors. Dring considers the extent of the unjustified British brutality so great that he ultimately deems it a “combination of horrors which no pen can describe.”<sup>17</sup> By asserting that his vivid descriptions of abuse and murder insufficiently capture the episode, Dring constructs the most damning image of the British officers possible: men whose actions are so cruel that they are literally unimaginable. The British thus appear worst when American prisoners try to honor their national identity the most, celebrating the day on which their country declared its independence.

Prisoners vilify the British even when their offenses toward an American nationality are far more subtle than dishonoring the Fourth of July. Alexander Coffin recalls that his captain, though “a very gentlemanly man,” was “treated in the most shameful and abusive manner...and ordered to mess with the petty officers.”<sup>18</sup> Coffin thus highlights a British officer’s “shameful and abusive behavior” when he disrespects the American army, mistreating one of its high-ranking officials and

paying no mind to the place that his high ranking should ensure him among the men. Dring expresses a similar sentiment when he writes that “the cruel tyrants, to whose petty sway we were subjected on board this hulk, knew no distinction among their prisoners. No matter in what rank or capacity a prisoner might have been known before his capture, no distinction was made here; we were ‘all **Rebels.**”<sup>19</sup> The word rebels is dually significant. On one level, it disrespects the American military hierarchy by lumping all army members into one category. On another, it disrespects the United States by suggesting that the warring colonies are an insurgent territory rather than an enemy nation. If the British were to honor the Americans’ national identity, they would refer to them as “prisoners of war,” a title that recognizes an opposing party’s sovereignty.<sup>20</sup> The fact that British officers refuse to do so weighs heavily on prisoners’ minds. The first chapter in which Dring leaves the Jersey after he is exchanged for a British P.O.W. opens with this reflection:

“Down, Rebels; down!” was the insulting mandate by which we had usually been sent below for the night; and now, as we stood on the deck of the Cartel, watching the setting sun, I could hardly persuade myself, that I should not soon hear that unfeeling order shouted forth by some ruffian sentinel behind me (153).

Dring does not first look forward to eating well or bathing – he rejoices that he will no longer be labeled a “rebel.” The emphasis placed on this word in Dring’s freedom suggests that it was one of the worst aspects of his captivity; indeed, it was an “insulting” mandate spoken by “ruffian” British officers. Even in the face of gruesome physical conditions, the use of the word “rebel” as an insult to American nationhood remained one of the foremost British offenses in a **Jersey** prisoner’s mind.

No British officer was more offensive to the captives than an American Loyalist. These men are the least favorable characters in the **Jersey** narratives. Because they choose to support the British cause instead of the American one, Loyalists inherently insult an American national identity. Their vilification thus affirms that American prisoners consider such insults entirely unforgivable. Hawkins uses powerful biblical rhetoric to criticize Tories when he describes them as “more unrelenting than the devil.”<sup>21</sup> Dring asserts that Loyalists are crueler officers than the lenient Germans or even the English, who “merely obeyed their orders.” A Loyalist who follows his orders gets no pardon, and “the prisoners could not endure the sight of these men, and occasionally assailed them with abusive language...many provoking gestures were made by the prisoners, as they left the ship, and our curses followed them, as far as we could make ourselves heard.”<sup>22</sup> Recall that throughout the entire July 4 episode, the prisoners never threaten their captors, but here, a hatred for the Loyalists motivates them to do so. Dring helps his reader understand this hatred by constructing an unforgiving portrait of these men – they constantly threaten captives with their bayonets, they close off common walkways, and they even refuse to verbally communicate with the prisoners: “they never answered any of our remarks respecting them; but would merely point to their uniforms; as if saying, we are clothed by our Sovereign, while you are naked.”<sup>23</sup> This image highlights the Loyalists’ cold and inhumane disposition. They disrespect the prisoners by refusing to talk to them and proudly show off their own British military uniforms, demonstrating no sympathy for the Americans’ lack of clothing. These uniforms represent Loyalists’ betrayal of the American nation.

The **Jersey** authors similarly condemn American prisoners who betray their nation by cooperating with British officers against their fellow captives. That these men become as villainous as offending Britons speaks to how sacred prisoners’ considered their American-ness; whoever disrespected it gained their immediate contempt, even if the offender came from among their own ranks. Surely informing an officer about a fellow prisoner’s attempted escape is not as inhumane a crime as starving or abusing a man. It would be easy for prisoners to observe how the desperate

conditions aboard British prison ships drove American captives to become traitors. But such behavior receives no pardon in these narratives. Hawkins and Andros both relay the story of Spicer, a prisoner who informs a British officer that one of his peers, about to leave the *Jersey* as an exchanged captive, is trying to smuggle a young boy off with him in a chest. When the other prisoners learn of Spicer's betrayal, they, as Hawkins writes, "cut off his ears and mangled his body in the most shocking manner."<sup>24</sup> Though Hawkins describes the prisoners' cruel punishment, he does not blame them for it: "Spicer paid for his treachery with the forfeit of his life" (70). This sentence makes Spicer the agent responsible for his own death, as he actively forfeits his right to life when he betrays his fellow prisoners. Dring thus portrays Spicer's cooperation with the British as inherently worthy of the "shocking" punishment he later receives.

John Blatchford's narrative showcases a similar story. It occurs before Blatchford and his shipmates reach the *Jersey* and are being held in a British land prison. Though the prisoners devise a plan to dig their way to freedom, they are "basely betrayed by one of [their] own countrymen whose name was Knowles" when he informs the British of this plan.<sup>25</sup> Blatchford's use of "countryman" affirms that he perceives disloyalty toward fellow prisoners as a betrayal to the American nation. Blatchford emphasizes the importance American captives' shared national identity by later repeating that Knowles' action was a "betraying of his countryman" (14). Blatchford also judges the impact of Knowles' betrayal on a national scale: "by his treachery he lost his country the lives of more than a hundred valuable citizens" (12). He further amplifies this harsh portrayal when he reveals that Knowles "would take every opportunity to insult and mortify" him (14). This comment reveals that Knowles is not a man made desperate by his prisoner status; he relishes in insulting his fellow captives and becomes a primary villain in Blatchford's narrative as a result.

When the *Jersey* authors so harshly criticize Americans who betray their countrymen, they make clear that their stories are not simply tales about British officers inhumanely abusing American prisoners. The British are not always bad, and the bad are not always British. For the American captives, a better judge of character is whether a man respects American identity. In the nine *Jersey* narratives examined for this paper, there is not one favorable portrayal of an individual that offends captives' national sensibility. Recall that every example of a positive British portrayal explored above lacks any sort of disrespect towards American identity. This is not to say that American captives approved of other forms of mistreatment. The *Jersey* authors do detail instances of British cruelty that compromise captives' human dignity but not their American-ness. Both Hawkins and Dring, for example, emphasize guards' physical aggressiveness and lack of sympathy when captives attempt to escape prison ships.<sup>26</sup> Two authors, Coffin and Freneau, completely vilify the British, finding their crimes against humanity and national identity equally unforgivable.<sup>27</sup> But when *Jersey* narratives include positive portrayals of British officers – and most do – it is never when those officers call American soldiers "rebels" or disband their Fourth of July celebration. No matter how desperate the conditions aboard the *Jersey* were, nothing excused a British man who insulted prisoners' national identity.

It is not hard to see why historians and other readers have long been impressed by and concerned with narrative accounts of life on British prison ships. The descriptions of starvation, filth, and abuse are dramatic, and they significantly contribute to our knowledge of American captives' condition during the War for Independence. But seeing these narratives as only "recounting personal experiences," as Bowman does, overlooks their worth as windows into what American soldiers valued when they had little more than values themselves. As Doyle reminds us, "to survive captivity with dignity and honor, ordinary people must cling to the most basic ideas of life in their cages."<sup>28</sup> British prisons ships violated two of these ideas: an individual's right to human dignity and his right to claim a national identity. The portrayals of British officers in the narratives of *Jersey* survivors suggest that American prisoners cherished the latter more. Prisoners could

sometimes look past crimes against humanity to see redeeming qualities in their British captors, but they could never ignore crimes against a man's expression of his American citizenship. For these soldiers, mistreating a prisoner as a man was deplorable, but disrespecting him as an American was unforgivable.

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<sup>1</sup> "Benjamin Franklin to David Hartley," 2 Feb 1780. The Papers of Benjamin Franklin, the Packard Humanities Institute, Online, <http://franklinpapers.org/franklin/framedVolumes.jsp?tocvol=33>

<sup>2</sup> For background information on the Wallabout prison ships, see Francis D. Cogliano. *American Maritime Prisoners in the Revolutionary War: The Captivity of William Russell* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2001), 142; Larry Bowman, *Captive Americans* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1976), 41; William R. Lindsey. *Treatment of American Prisoners of War During the Revolution* (Emporia: The Emporia State Research Studies, 1973), 15; and Cogliano, 149-150, 194.

<sup>3</sup> Most narratives give a number around 11,000; Cogliano reports that historians give a range of 400-1200 (See Cogliano 144).

<sup>4</sup> Bowman, vi.

<sup>5</sup> Robert C. Doyle, *Voices from Captivity: Interpreting the American POW Narrative* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1994), 6.

<sup>6</sup> Greene, iv-v.

<sup>7</sup> Albert G. Greene, *Recollections of the Jersey Prison-Ship: Taken, and prepared for publication, from the original manuscript of the late Captain Thomas Dring, of Providence, R.I., one of the prisoners* (New York: P.M. Davis, 1831), 47.

<sup>8</sup> Danske Dandridge, *American Prisoners of the Revolution* (Charlottesville: The Michie Company, 1911), 319. Dandridge's anthology includes highlights from the major narratives of prison-ship survivors, which effectively demonstrates the common aspects of their experiences.

<sup>9</sup> Christopher Hawkins, *The Adventures of Christopher Hawkins* (New York: Privately Printed, 1864), 68.

<sup>10</sup> John Blatchford, *The Narrative of John Blatchford* (New York: Arno Press, 1971), 13.

<sup>11</sup> Greene, 75.

<sup>12</sup> Greene, 107.

<sup>13</sup> Andros, 19.

<sup>14</sup> Hawkins, 63.

<sup>15</sup> Greene, 117.

<sup>16</sup> Greene, 118.

<sup>17</sup> Greene, 121.

<sup>18</sup> "Alexander Coffin to Dr. Mitchill" 4 Sep 1807. In *The Narrative of John Blatchford*, ed. Charles I. Bushnell (New York: Arno Press, 1971), 118

<sup>19</sup> Greene, 41.

<sup>20</sup> Charles Metzger, *The Prisoner in the American Revolution* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1971), 294.

<sup>21</sup> Hawkins, 87.

<sup>22</sup> Greene, 89-90.

<sup>23</sup> Greene, 90.

<sup>24</sup> Hawkins, 71.

<sup>25</sup> Blatchford, 12.

<sup>26</sup> Hawkins, 72-75 and Dring 131-134.

<sup>27</sup> Freneau's account is not a narrative, but a long poem, He was a prisoner on the *Scorpion*, another Wallabout Bay ship, but not on the *Jersey*. See Freneau, Philip Morin. "The British Prison-Ship: A Poem in Four Cantoes" (Philadelphia: F. Bailey, 1781). From [http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:hul.ebookbatch.EAIFS\\_batch:aas03030061](http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:hul.ebookbatch.EAIFS_batch:aas03030061).

<sup>28</sup> Doyle, 4.

# Literary Nosh: Asparagus & Memory in *Swann's Way*

by Julia Lam '09

Perhaps playing with food merited no punishment in the Proust household: in *Swann's Way*, a rich spread of cameos by edibles makes for a veritable banquet. The narrator likens his appetite for poetry to an off-duty cook's penchant for "gormandis[ing] himself" (73)<sup>1</sup>; introduces his uncle's mistress as "a young woman who was just finishing a tangerine" (59); and equates picking the play he should most like to see to "choos[ing] between *rice à l'Impératrice* and the famous cream of chocolate" (56). Most famously, a morsel of tea-soaked *anister* incites the cascade of memories that forms the heart of the volume. With tea and cake as magical potion and enchanted portal, the story is cast in a literally alimentary framework.

Still, the near-ubiquity of comestibles does not entirely dispel the strangeness of one particular riff on the motif: the curious incident of the Proustian asparagus. Mention of the vegetable garnishes several portions of the story – Marcel even dubs this "the year in which we ate such quantities of asparagus" (61) – but its most prominent manifestation occurs when the narrator recounts his daily kitchen visits before dinner (92). There, he remembers, "what fascinated me would be the asparagus, tinged with ultramarine and rosy pink... finely stippled in mauve and azure... still stained a little by the soil of their garden-bed: a rainbow-loveliness that was not of this world." The transcendent beauty in the passage's language and imagery stands perhaps without parallel in the literary history of *Asparagus officinalis* – an unprecedented accomplishment for such an earthy, profoundly unromantic vegetable.

Whether this eminence might be redolent of more than a dash of absurdity is perhaps an inevitable question (and one hopes *A. officinalis* would find no insult in our voicing it). To begin with, while other edibles in *Swann's Way* can lay claim to traditions of cultural importance – tea and cake implicate elegance and ritual (as Henry James famously remarks in *The Portrait of a Lady*<sup>2</sup>); the chicken that Françoise slaughters has Biblical antecedents<sup>3</sup>; Uncle Adolphe's mistress's tangerine echoes the fruit that Eve consumes – casting asparagus as an equivalently well-endowed heir is a considerably less intuitive task. Furthermore, Proust's depiction of the plant is strikingly inconsistent, alternately peppered with sanctity and coarseness, artistry and facileness. One may, in reading, peel back infinite layers of connotation as if paring the plant's shoots. In effect, Proust casts asparagus in simultaneously metaphysical and corporeal roles, swathing the plant in layers of metaphor while upholding its materialness – and in so doing creates something entirely new: an essence that transcends the sum of its metaphorical and material parts.

In one reading, the highly figurative language of the passage in which Marcel investigates dinner preparations (92) would seem to render the plant as a profoundly abstract, ethereal form. "I felt that [the stalks'] celestial hues indicated the presence of exquisite creatures who had been pleased to assume vegetable form," the narrator says, "who, through the disguise which covered their firm and edible flesh, allowed me to discern in this radiance of earliest dawn, these hinted rainbows, these blue evening shades." Here, the imagery is transcendent, divine, bathed in the glow of such exultant words as "celestial," "exquisite," "radiance," "rainbows." Indeed, the stalks' beauty lends them an unearthly quality: theirs is a "rainbow-loveliness that was not of this world." These are hardly the vegetables one might dig up from the ground, find in the local grocery store's vegetable bin, dish up for dinner. In a sense, Proust's asparagus would seem to have been entirely stripped of all its alimentary qualities.

Fittingly, the narrator's mention of "vegetable form" invokes the Platonic world of forms – beautiful, perfect, and profoundly theoretical. Perhaps Proust's asparagus references are tethered to

that metaphysical world, rather than rooted in our own; perhaps they might best be scrutinized as textual representations of abstract forms, far transcending our earthy, earthly universe through which run such fleshly concerns as tonight's dinner menu. For in the world of forms what need is there for so carnal, so coarse, so feral an act as eating?

Similarly, the passage's references to art echo these notions of representation and abstraction. The melancholy kitchen maid assigned to dressing the asparagus has been nicknamed "Giotto's Charity" by Swann, a reference to one panel in the Venetian's fresco series illustrating the seven virtues. Beside her, the narrator describes – as if painting a portrait in words – sits a basket of the shoots: "the light crowns of azure which capped the asparagus shoots above their pink jackets would be finely and separately outlined, star by star, as in Giotto's fresco are the flowers banded about the brows, or patterning the basket of his Virtue at Padua" (93). Here asparagus is rendered in an artistic, conceptual palette of shape and hue. The stalks exist as if in painted form, redolent of a Venetian masterpiece, and styled in aesthetic perfection that seems possible only exist in artistic invention. The plant's presence in the text is impressionistic – and again bereft of nutriment: no more edible than a still-life painting.

But this stylization is not without complication. While the asparagus shoots' celestial loveliness, their "white feet," and their association with Giotto's depiction of virtue would seem to imply virgin purity, the passage also presents implications of dirtiness and sexuality. Most overtly, the kitchen-maid who dresses the stalks is pregnant under disreputable circumstances. In addition, the white feet are "stained a little by the soil of their garden-bed"; and their flesh is "firm and edible." Perhaps, then, the asparagus' uncommon beauty points not to virginal purity, but rather carnal seduction.

Likewise, further complications in the text's language and content obfuscate any impression of clarity in explication. Marcel's use of the qualifier "I felt" and his relegation of the stalks' beauty to a "disguise" that conceals the "edible flesh" of the exquisite creatures would seem to highlight the imagined nature of their transcendence, transposing it into nothing more than a matter of the observer's perception (and not, then, especially expressive of such metaphysical grandeur as the world of forms or artistic conceptualization). Moreover, the narrator's revelation that Françoise's penchant for feeding asparagus to the household "was because the smell of the plants gave the poor kitchen-maid... such violent attacks of asthma that she was finally obliged to leave [his] aunt's service" (95) casts the vegetable in shades of cruelty and darkness. As Marcel discovers hidden wells of sadism in people, this revelation allows the reader to discover hidden potency in Proustian asparagus. Perhaps the last expectation hung on the vegetable – that of its innocuousness – is here shattered. Taken together, these factors – the dark undertones, the qualifications in the narrator's language, and the implication of carnal corruption – embroil and render inadequate a purely metaphysical reading.

For despite all its transcendental symbolism, Proust's rendering of asparagus remains insistently corporeal. The materialness of asparagus in *Swann's Way* faces up to its symbolism, appearing as tangible matter, a physical entity, a **thing**. Accordingly, Proust mingles the elaborate romanticization in his portrayal with relics of its down-to-earth corporeality. The stalks' otherworldly façade of pure whiteness is "stained a little by the soil of their garden-bed" (92), as if Proust is underscoring their earthliness even while waxing poetical on their divinity. Likewise, the narrator notes, beneath their guise of divinity is "firm and edible flesh." flesh-like solidity that has merely been dressed up in costume. Furthermore, reference to the asparagus' (marred) whiteness specifies their "feet;" and the artistic depiction of their likeness to Giotto's fresco makes mention of their "crowns" and "jackets" – phrases that frame the plant in anthropomorphic terms, so as to suggest its humanlike corporeality. The transcendent imagery yields a corporal seductiveness that begs a scrutiny as meditative as the narrator's early analysis of his consumption of tea and cake,

Unlike other figurative items, such as the Japanese flowers that Proust memorably references in the novel's opening chapter, asparagus is an object that can be, and is, physically handled. That the narrator pays attention in the kitchen passage to the shoots' location – "lying beside [the kitchen-maid's] feet in a basket" (93) – not only mimics the sketching of a portrait, but also impresses upon the plant a physical sense of place. They are as solidly present in the scene as the kitchen table: one does not place a metaphor in a basket, no more than one carries it (as Mme. Imbert does in the novel's first reference to asparagus), or considers its dimensions ("thick as my arm" [42], Aunt Léonie says, explicitly likening the vegetable to a corporeal limb).

Perhaps most arresting of all the qualities that Proust accords to asparagus are the all-too-corporeal consequences of its consumption. "Long after a dinner at which I had partaken of them" (92), Marcel recounts, "they played... at transforming my humble chamber into a bower of aromatic perfume" (92). The plant is not merely a physical object that characters may handle; it is also charged with the ability to effect pungent physical change in those who imbibe it. This uncomfortably frank revelation from the narrator would seem to deflate all foregoing allusions to the humble vegetable's sanctity.

Perhaps an initial credulity of the extraordinary is not so misplaced after all; and Proust's vegetable poetry might be read as an elaborately constructed joke, an intentionally over-the-top satire of erudite abstraction and literary effusiveness. Its operative punch line reaffirms the crudity of ancient comedic tradition's like the Shakespearean that the passage references. The asparagus stalks that the narrator scrutinizes in the kitchen and contemplates in his mind imagination are "lyrical and coarse in their jesting as the fairies in Shakespeare's *Dream*," he says. Recasting the passage in crude comedic fashion does not, as one might expect, relegate its literary value. Rather, its association with Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream* (a comedy touched with enchantment, yet peppered with coarse body humor) and the intricacy with which its multifaceted implications are spun out only serve to heighten its richness – and more meaningfully merge its metaphysical and corporal threads.

To be both "lyrical and coarse", many-toned metaphor and objective thing, representation and reality, need not be paradoxical. This theme recurs throughout the text. For instance, Marcel's contemplation of Giotto's fresco entwines similar aspects of allegory and realism. "There must have been a strong element of reality in those Virtues and Vices of Padua," he reflects, "since they appeared to me to be as much alive as the pregnant servant-girl, while she herself appeared scarcely less allegorical than they" (62). Similarly, in describing his first encounter with the real Duchesse de Guermantes' (who appears in his imagined chronicle of his magical lantern), Marcel mingles his perception of the duchesse in the chapel with memories of her form in his imagination. His expression of dissatisfaction at the two likenesses' incongruity effectively unifies them for the reader, as he admits, "I was picturing her to myself in the colours of a tapestry or a painted window, as living in another century, as being of another substance than the rest of the human race" (134).

Taken in its totality, Proust's asparagus-conception is infinitely synergetic, telescoping beyond its vegetable body and its metaphysical form. In essence, the effect references the sum of the work: as asparagus fulfills dual roles of metaphor and prop in the drama of *Swann's Way*, memory functions in both its structure and content. "Overture" and "Combray" take place within the framework of accounts from memory, within which the nature of the narrator's memory is recurrently examined. And in relating his past the narrator materializes as both actor and storyteller. As a rainbow-like spectrum of implications may merge in an asparagus shoot, a whole world of people, place and memory may grow solid and spring into being from a cup of tea; and all the emotions, sensations, memories, and speculations that a storyteller brings to his craft may be contained within one chronicle.

<sup>1</sup> Proust, Marcel. *Swann's Way*. Trans. C.K. Scott Monroeff. New York: Vintage Books, 1970.

<sup>2</sup> "There are few hours in life more agreeable than the hour dedicated to the ceremony known as afternoon tea."

<sup>3</sup> For instance, Jesus compares himself to a mother hen in Matthew 23:37 and Luke 13:34; and alludes to a cock's crow in forecasting Peter's betrayal in Luke 22:43.

# Gendered and Colonial Discourses in the “War on Terror”

by Eva Lam '10

In the immediate aftermath of the September 11 terrorist attacks, beyond feeling shock and grief, Americans were gripped by the burning desire to know who was responsible for the attacks. The government and media quickly focused on Osama bin Laden, al Qaeda, and the menace of Islamic fundamentalism as the primary targets in the “war on terror.” But this attribution of blame was far more complicated than a simple act of picking suspects out of a lineup; it involved the discursive construction of both “us” and “them” in such a way as to make military intervention seem inevitable, necessary, and even benevolent. In its “war on terror,” the United States employs gendered and sexualized representations of the West (embodied in the American-led “coalition of the willing”) and the Arab world, constructing the war as a welcome intervention by civilized white men to protect white women and liberate oppressed Arab women from barbaric Arab men. This representation sets liberating Western forces and the Middle East apart from each other along two distinct axes: one of masculinity and femininity, and another of development and primitivism mapped out along women’s bodies.

In the rhetoric of the “war on terror,” the United States represents itself as a masculinized entity. In a broad erasure of internal dissent, the country presents a unified front to the rest of the world; George Bush’s famous dictum that “you are either with us or you are against us in the fight against terror”<sup>1</sup> presupposes the existence of a unitary “us.” In its military actions, the United States is set as strong, dominant, objective, and rational, in stark contrast with the chaotic and conflicted Middle East. Additionally, the U.S. takes its own official discourse as definitive: the American government determines what constitutes a “terrorism” worth addressing by force and what constitutes an acceptable interpretation of Islam. More subtly, American rhetoric assumes power to speak of and for Middle Eastern subjects, particularly women, articulating “their” desire for liberation from their own stultifying culture and a wish to develop along the same cultural lines as the West. This condescending gesture further allows the United States to cast itself as a savior, forcefully intervening in the Middle East only to save Arab subjects from their own backward culture. All of these elements suggest that the construction of the United States in the discourse of the “war on terror” fits squarely into the frame of the “strict father” described by George Lakoff.<sup>2</sup> This frame, the implicit referent of much neoconservative rhetoric about foreign policy, metaphorically casts the United States as an explicitly male parent to the rest of the world, intervening with force when necessary to discipline “rogue” states like Afghanistan and Iraq and set them on the correct path towards emulating its own civilized Western values. Consequently, the gendering of the U.S. resonates with domestic conservatives, rallying their support for war.

Similarly, the Middle East is simplified in the politics of representation of the “war on terror.” Here, discourse focuses on a constructed monolithic culture in which all Middle Easterners are Arabs, all Arabs are Muslims, and all Muslims either subscribe to a fundamentalist version of Islam or are cowed into silence by fundamentalists. Thus, **Time** reports that “Afghan society is tribal and conservative,”<sup>3</sup> while an ethnographic text widely used in U.S. military training broadly generalizes about “the Arab mind” based on fifty-year-old surveys and isolated anecdotes.<sup>4</sup> This inherently repressive theocratic culture exerts the forces of taboo against women and sexuality in an especially visible way: the **Economist** reports that “Islam [is] deeply opposed to homosexuality,”<sup>5</sup> while **Time** claims that “nowhere in the Muslim world are women treated as equals.”<sup>6</sup> In this depiction,

Arabs and their unitary culture are controlled by the unpredictable and irrational forces of religious belief; unlike the Judeo-Christian tradition that pervades Western thought, Islam is deemed illegitimate because it expresses itself beyond the boundaries of personal life. The demand that religion relegate itself (or at least its most obvious official expressions) to the private sphere in order to be accepted as legitimate, and the high value placed on secular rationality in this mindset, together reveal the gendered view of religion in Middle Eastern society taken by the West: religion is irrational (and stereotypically feminine) and thus must be confined to the private sphere, traditionally occupied by women; only secular rational (masculine) arguments should influence decisions made (by men) in the public sphere of politics.

This relegation of Islam to the implicitly female private sphere is only one of the ways in which the discourse of the "war on terror" genders the United States and the Middle East. As in any militarized society, gender pervades the discussion of war. In Betty Reardon's view, both war and sexism are based on the "dominator" way of thinking: men learn from infancy to assert control over "inferior" women, a mindset that easily transfers to the military's demand that its soldiers assert control over the vilified, "uncivilized" enemy.<sup>7</sup> This explains the frequent use of gender in the language of war. Soldiers fight to protect the "women and children" of a country, defending the "homeland" (implicitly populated by mothers) against "rape and pillage." Invasions "penetrate" enemy territory and military masculinity "sees weapons as phallic extensions,"<sup>8</sup> tropes that contribute to the pervasive "eroticization of domination" that links military success with sexual pleasure.<sup>9</sup> The victor in a battle asserts his superior masculinity by depriving the enemy of his own masculinity, a view epitomized by Lyndon Johnson's proud proclamation after a successful bombing raid in North Vietnam: "I didn't just screw Ho Chi Minh; I cut his pecker off."<sup>10</sup> In the discourse particular to the "war on terror," however, the United States adopts a more genteel masculinity, playing the role of the gentleman stepping in to liberate helpless Muslim women from the men who oppress them in the name of religion and tradition. Through the act, the language, and the imagery of war, as well as the association of the Middle East with feminine emotion and irrationality, the rhetoric that constructs both sides of the "war on terror" repeatedly refers to gender to mark the difference between "us" and "them."

The Western characterization of the Arab man juggles two contradictory figures: one recklessly violent, especially towards women, and another emasculated by the power of the West. In the first case, the Arab man is purely threatening, both to Americans and to Arab women. In battle, he is fierce to a fault: "Most Afghans live by a tribal 'code of the hills,' based on blood debts and death over dishonor. Violence and honor are inseparable concepts."<sup>11</sup> Short of war, this barbarism manifests itself primarily in Arab men's treatment of women and their sexuality. In the discourse of the war on terror, "narratives that conflate sexuality with violence" establish Arab men as both sexist and brutal,<sup>12</sup> drawing on the old trope of the Middle Eastern harem and pairing it with the indignation of contemporary Western feminists at the perceived sexual exploitation of women.<sup>13</sup> This uncontrolled Arab man in his "native habitat" stands in stark contrast to a second image in which Arab men are rendered impotent at the hands of the West. On a societal level, as previously discussed, Afghanistan and Iraq were both emasculated at the swift end of their struggle against the U.S. military. The close linkage of weapons with phallic imagery can be extended to suggest that the supposed disarmament of Iraq was a symbolic act of castration. This feminization through disempowerment also occurs on a personal level. In leaked photographs from the U.S.-run prison at Abu Ghraib, Iraqi prisoners are forced by leering American soldiers to strip and pose in humiliating, usually sexual, positions.<sup>14</sup> In the United States, a magazine gives an account of a Pakistani-American man forced to leave an airplane in November 2001 because the pilot was uncomfortable with his race; it describes how, "angry and humiliated, [he] returned to the terminal and watched the plane leave without him,"<sup>15</sup> like a child left behind by his parents. This figure of the emasculated

Arab man, deprived of power vis-à-vis both American men (particularly soldiers and other authority figures) and Arab women, exists in contradiction to the violently misogynistic Arab man in his “native habitat” prior to the civilizing intervention of the United States.

Both of these constructs of the Arab man fail to live up to the standard set by the archetype of the (white) American man. U.S. soldiers epitomize such an idealized masculinity by the very nature of the war system: “[m]ilitarism manifests the excesses of those characteristics generally referred to as **machismo**, a term that originally connoted the strength, bravery, and responsibility necessary to fulfill male social functions.”<sup>16</sup> Their victory thus confirms their masculinity. The American man, however, is restrained in his violence, exercising physical force only against enemies abroad and never against women at home. The mark of his civilized behavior is his genteel treatment of “his” women. The rhetoric of American authority figures constructs equal treatment for women as a privilege granted by the government rather than a natural right: “[s]uccessful societies,” George Bush proclaims, “**recognize** the rights of women,”<sup>17</sup> as if those rights would not exist had the government not allowed it. Even when the Abu Ghraib scandal revealed that the American occupation engaged in the type of (sexually explicit) humiliation of prisoners it professed to have eliminated, Western media displaced blame from white men by focusing on Lynndie England, the private depicted holding a naked Iraqi prisoner by a leash. This “shifted the focus of the story away from images that showed male U.S. soldiers torturing Iraqi men,”<sup>18</sup> explaining the actions at Abu Ghraib while letting “white masculinity remain[] outside the category of ‘depravity.’”<sup>19</sup> The gendered language of war, the emphasis on American men’s superior cultural evolution as evidenced by their treatment of women, and the erasure of white men’s involvement in the Abu Ghraib scandal are all elements of a discourse that constitutes implicitly white American men as heroes and saviors in the “war on terror.”

Every savior, however, needs someone to rescue, and consequently the calls for war against both Afghanistan and Iraq employed references to an archetypal “Arab woman” as the beneficiary of invasion. In Afghanistan, such a woman faced the repression of the Taliban government at every moment of her life. She was “denied access to doctors,”<sup>20</sup> “barred from attending school,”<sup>21</sup> and subjected to “domestic abuse in a traditional, male-dominated society.”<sup>22</sup> Most importantly, she was oppressed by the omnipresent burqa, which set her as an outcast from male public society. Because of this oppression, Western discourse omits the possibility of her complicity with the Taliban regime in any way; rather, the Afghan woman was consistently and universally opposed to Islamic fundamentalist government, but under the Taliban she had no power to engage in activism against it. Consequently, she required the liberating gesture of a Western invasion in order to achieve her full potential; she constantly requires white men to protect her against the barbaric advances of the Afghan man. The Iraqi woman was constructed similarly, though with fewer references to religion. After the fall of Saddam, she was “hungry for democracy”<sup>23</sup> but struggled to “simply find[] a voice,”<sup>24</sup> as if she had never spoken before white Westerners liberated her. While this discussion makes few explicit references to American women, it relies on the idealized liberated (white) American woman – with her freedom to associate with men and work in the public sector – as both a contrast with the oppressed Arab woman and a role model for the liberated Arab woman. This construction erases both the agency of Arab women (despite the vocal activism of groups like the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan both before and after the invasion)<sup>25</sup> and the limitations to American women’s equality with white men, ranging from earnings inequalities to gender stereotypes. Through these erasures, “the archetypal image of the deprived and debased Muslim woman was resurrected to perform her duty as a signifier of the abject difference of Muslims; the barbarity and anti-modernism of Islam and its essential repression of women; and most importantly as camouflage for US military interventions.”<sup>26</sup>

The “resurrection” of this representation of Muslim women focused particularly on the burqa in the American construction of Afghanistan. A CNN documentary entitled **Beneath the Veil**, which claimed to expose the truth of life in Afghanistan under the Taliban, “became the world’s most celebrated documentary film” shortly after September 11.<sup>27</sup> An Australian newspaper marks the Taliban’s imposition of the “shroud-like burqa” as the first step in a series of “gradual prohibitions on Afghan women working, attending school or university, or appearing in public without a male.”<sup>28</sup> The **Boston Globe** reports that in removing the burqa, women are “shedding [the] cloak of Taliban oppression.”<sup>29</sup> This obsession with the veil as the tangible embodiment of patriarchal oppression erases the complex meanings of veiling in Islam and in particular Muslim women’s lives, all in the service of a political cause – namely, promoting the invasion. More troubling, though, the elevation of the veil to an iconic status implicates a neocolonialist dynamic. Historically, “the need to free veiled Muslim women from oppression was often cited as a justification for colonialist actions.”<sup>30</sup> The recycling of this excuse for intervention accompanies the condescension inherent to the view that the West must intervene to free the Middle East from its own culture. Hoodfar notes that “mostly man-made images of oriental Muslim women continue to be a mechanism by which Western dominant cultures re-create and perpetuate beliefs about their superiority.”<sup>31</sup> By reducing the Muslim woman to a question of veiling or unveiling, this dominant discourse employs women’s bodies as the marker of civilization or primitivism in a neocolonialist discourse.

Moreover, the focus on the veil engages in the specifically Western demand that Muslim women reveal the truth of their subjectivity by making themselves physically visible. This seemingly universal emphasis on seeing is in fact central to the “scopic regime” of the West,<sup>32</sup> in which visibility is a prerequisite for intelligibility. The veil and its complex meanings frustrate the West’s attempt to make Muslim women – and, more broadly, the exoticized Orient – intelligible through stereotype; this frustration is displaced onto the veil through the repeated demands for “liberation” of the Muslim woman’s “true” nature by unveiling. This frustration echoes the “disappointment and rejection” experienced by the French postcard photographer decades earlier, whose “scopic desire” (more bluntly, “voyeurism”) cannot penetrate the Algerian woman’s veil.<sup>33</sup> In Malek Alloula’s account of this relationship, the photographer serves a second function as ethnographer, attempting to reveal the exotic subjectivity of the *algérienne* to white French people. In this quest, he physically constructs this subjectivity, hiring models to dress and pose as he instructs and ascribing labels to his photographs in an attempt to create a scientific catalog of the Algeria he imagines. This earlier use of unveiling (the women pictured individually are, in the end, bare-faced) starkly demonstrates how “knowing” can mean the violent imposition of one’s values, perspectives, and agendas on those seen as mirrors of the self rather than as complex, historical subjects.”<sup>34</sup> As with the photographer’s violent imposition of his invented “knowledge” on Algerian colonial subjects, the West employs the charged symbol of the veil to impose the role of victim on Muslim women, enabling its own (white, masculine) fantasy of the “war on terror” as a fairy-tale rescue mission.

The difference between “us” and “them” in the “war on terror” is thus mapped out along two axes. The first, one of masculinity and femininity, makes its presence known virtually everywhere: in the language of war as sexualized dominance, in the association of reason with the United States and emotion with the Middle East and Islam, in the characterizations of a powerful, gentlemanly United States and an emasculated, impotent Arab world, and in the denial of Middle Eastern women’s agency through the rhetoric of liberation. The second axis, which measures each society’s progress in the narrative of development that takes Western civilization as the height of refinement, is mapped out primarily across women’s bodies. The construction of women in Afghanistan, Iraq, and other “pre-democratic” societies as helpless and oppressed subjects served as a comment on the barbarism of the men by whom they were subjugated. This simultaneously

asserted the power of patriarchy by insinuating that all women were doomed to wait until men liberated them to enjoy rights and equal opportunity, and proclaimed the dominance of the West by placing its ideals of nominal equality on a pedestal for other societies to emulate. The twin discursive maneuvers that rendered the Middle East simultaneously effeminate and barbaric were a powerful political move; the association of Arabs with femininity made the Middle East an appropriate target for masculinized militarism, while the deployment of a developmental narrative co-opted the support of many mainstream feminists who saw the Western model as the only model for achieving women's equality. The "war on terror" depends on the continued discursive construction of a feminine, primitive Middle East, full of oppressed women and violent men, waiting to be rescued by the masculine heroism of American intervention and set onto the path of development.

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<sup>1</sup> George Bush, "President Welcomes President Chirac to White House," White House, November 6, 2001, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/11/20011106-4.html>.

<sup>2</sup> George Lakoff, *Don't Think of an Elephant!* (Vermont: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2004).

<sup>3</sup> Richard Lacayo, "About Face for Afghan Women," *Time*, December 3, 2001, <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,185651,00.html>.

<sup>4</sup> Brian Whitaker, "Its Best Use is As a Doorstop," *The Guardian*, May 24, 2004, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/elsewhere/journalist/story/0,7792,1223525,00.html>.

<sup>5</sup> "Caught Between Two Worlds," *The Economist*, October 29, 2005, Lexis-Nexis.

<sup>6</sup> Lisa Beyer, "The Women of Islam," *Time*, November 25, 2001, <http://www.time.com/time/world/printout/0,8816,185647,00.html>.

<sup>7</sup> Betty Reardon, *Sexism and the War System* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1985).

<sup>8</sup> Henri Myrntinen, "Disarming Masculinities," *Disarmament Forum*, no. 4 (2003): 40, <http://www.unidir.org/pdf/Gender/6%20myrntinen.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> Jasmin Zine, "Between Orientalism and Fundamentalism," in *(En)Gendering the War on Terror*, ed. Krista Hunt and Kim Rygiel (Hampshire, England: Ashgate Publishing, 2006), 31.

<sup>10</sup> David Halberstam, *The Best and the Brightest* (New York: Random House, 1972), 414.

<sup>11</sup> Richard Kidd, "How Afghan Men Fight," *Christian Science Monitor*, October 1, 2001, <http://www.csmonitor.com/2001/1001/p11s1-coop.html>.

<sup>12</sup> Anne Norton, "Gender, Sexuality, and the Iraq of Our Imagination," *Middle East Report* 173 (1991), 27. Cited in Melisa Brittain, "Benevolent Invaders, Heroic Victims and Depraved Villains," *(En)Gendering the War on Terror* (Hampshire, England: Ashgate Publishing, 2006), ed. Krista Hunt and Kym Rygiel, 79.

<sup>13</sup> For a comprehensive description of the phantasm of the harem in an Algerian context, see Malek Alloula, *The Colonial Harem* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986).

<sup>14</sup> Seymour Hersh, "Torture at Abu Ghraib," *The New Yorker*, May 10, 2004, [http://www.newyorker.com/fact/content/articles/040510fa\\_fact?040510fa\\_fact](http://www.newyorker.com/fact/content/articles/040510fa_fact?040510fa_fact).

<sup>15</sup> Sasha Polanow-Suransky, "Flying While Brown," *The American Prospect*, November 19, 2001, Lexis-Nexis.

<sup>16</sup> Betty Reardon, *Sexism and the War System* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1985), 15.

<sup>17</sup> George W. Bush, "President Discusses Freedom in Iraq and Middle East," White House, November 6, 2003, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/11/20031106-2.html>, emphasis added.

<sup>18</sup> Melisa Brittain, "Benevolent Invaders, Heroic Victims and Depraved Villains," *(En)Gendering the War on Terror* (Hampshire, England: Ashgate Publishing, 2006), ed. Krista Hunt and Kym Rygiel, 87.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* p. 89.

<sup>20</sup> Laura Bush, "Radio Address by Laura Bush to the Nation," November 17, 2001, <http://www.usembassy-china.org.cn/press/release/2001/17nov01.html>.

<sup>21</sup> David Rodhe, "Education Offers Women in Northern Afghanistan a Ray of Hope," *New York Times*, October 3, 2001, B6.

<sup>22</sup> Pamela Constable, "Out of Afghanistan," *Washington Post*, October 10, 2001, C1.

<sup>23</sup> Elaine Chao, "Ask the White House," White House, March 9, 2004, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/ask/20040308.html>.

<sup>24</sup> Maria Cristina Caballero, "Raising Their Voices," *Newsweek*, December 10, 2003, <http://ori.msnbc.msn.com/id/3683810/site/newsweek/>.

<sup>25</sup> For more on RAWA, see <http://www.rawa.org>.

<sup>26</sup> Jasmin Zine, "Between Orientalism and Fundamentalism," in *(En)Gendering the War on Terror*, ed. Krista Hunt and Kim Rygiel (Hampshire, England: Ashgate Publishing, 2006), 34.

<sup>27</sup> Martin Kramer, "The Camera and the Burqa," *Middle East Quarterly* 9, no. 2 (spring 2002), <http://www.meforum.org/article/177>.

<sup>28</sup> Nicky Jones, "Unveiling the Future for Afghan Women," *Courier Mail* (Queensland, Australia), December 20, 2001, Lexis-Nexis.

<sup>29</sup> Ilana Ozerney, "The Burka: Women Shedding Cloak of Taliban Oppression," *The Boston Globe*, November 26, 2001, Lexis-Nexis.

<sup>30</sup> Eli Sanders, "Interpreting Veils," *Seattle Times*, October 5, 2001, Lexis-Nexis.

<sup>31</sup> Homa Hoodfar, "The Veil in Their Minds and on Our Heads," in *The Politics of Culture in the Shadow of Capital*, ed. Lisa Lowe and David Lloyd (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 250.

<sup>32</sup> Martin Jay, "Scopic Regimes of Modernity," in *Modernity and Identity*, ed. Scott Lash (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994). Cited in Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan, "Warrior Marks," in *Keyframes: Popular Cinema and Cultural Studies*, ed. Matthew Tinkcom (London: Routledge, 2001), 53.

<sup>33</sup> Malek Alloula, *The Colonial Harem* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 7. Italics have been removed from the original quotation.

<sup>34</sup> Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan, "Warrior Marks," in *Keyframes: Popular Cinema and Cultural Studies*, ed. Matthew Tinkcom (London: Routledge, 2001), 63.

“Gently as the dews of heaven”:  
Lincoln’s Argument for Gradual Emancipation and Colonization,  
December 1, 1862

by Robert E. Nelson ‘07

Abraham Lincoln closed his Annual Message to Congress on December 1, 1862 with two bold yet elusive declarations.<sup>1</sup> First, the president proclaimed, “Fellow-citizens, we cannot escape history.” Then, he offered the proposition, “In giving freedom to the slave, we assure freedom to the free.”<sup>2</sup> To understand Lincoln’s address, we must attempt to discover what Lincoln meant in these two final statements, and why he felt compelled to persuade Congress of the validity of these propositions. In the first, how did Lincoln understand “history” as a determinative force, suggesting or even directing certain decisions and actions? In the second, how did Lincoln believe emancipation would support and augment the freedom of the already free? Each concluding statement concisely summarized the constitutional amendments Lincoln proposed in his address, and embodied complex ideas of time, geography, demographics, economics, and national unity – all within the framework of constitutional law. Through these ideas, the address revealed the evolving role of emancipation as a political and military strategy, and the importance of the states of the upper South to Lincoln’s attempt to reunify the nation.<sup>3</sup> To fully grasp the roots and significance of these ideas, though, attention must also be given to Lincoln’s audience that day in Congress, and to the political context in which he spoke.

Over the course of the year leading up to Lincoln’s December address, the president struggled to maintain enough political cohesion to maintain a unified Union war effort. As Republicans and abolitionists pressured Lincoln to consider emancipation, Lincoln had to straddle radical and conservative factions within his own Republican party, while confronting firm resistance to emancipation from the Democrats. Radical Republicans believed emancipation should be achieved by the forceful confiscation of rebel property. Conservative Republicans hoped slavery could be ended voluntarily by the slave states themselves, assisted in this process by the colonization of freed slaves outside the United States. On the whole, Republicans demonstrated a growing “conviction that the fate of the nation could not be separated from the fate of slavery.”<sup>4</sup> Lincoln’s emancipation proposals in 1862 attempted at once to satisfy both wings of his party, undermine Democratic opposition, and, perhaps most importantly, maintain the loyalty of unionist slaveholders in the border-states of the upper South.

To achieve these multiple goals, Lincoln made two strong attempts in 1862 to persuade congressmen of the upper South to endorse what he saw as a moderate compromise on the issue of emancipation. About forty percent of the country’s slaves lived in the upper South, representing a significant labor force. Convincing slaveholders in the border-states to free their slaves would significantly undercut the Confederate war effort by preventing the Confederacy from winning their allegiance.<sup>5</sup> On March 6, Lincoln proposed a gradual, compensated emancipation to Congress. Though the *New York Times* lauded the president for finding “the happy mean,” border-state representatives rejected the plan.<sup>6</sup> Lincoln made a second attempt on July 12, in a meeting with these upper South congressmen at the White House. There, Lincoln argued that a voluntary, gradual, compensated scheme would best serve their economic interests. If they did not adopt his proposal, Lincoln told them, the institution of slavery “in your states will be extinguished by mere friction and

abrasion – by mere incidents of the war...and you will have nothing valuable in lieu of it.”<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, two-thirds of the border-state congressmen again rejected Lincoln’s proposal, and issued a manifesto claiming emancipation would be too “radical a change in our social system.”<sup>8</sup>

After Lincoln issued a preliminary Emancipation Proclamation on September 22, which set January 1 as a deadline but excluded the border-states, the Democrats used anti-emancipation sentiment to their advantage in the November elections. Democrats won legislative majorities in Illinois, Indiana and New Jersey, and made a net gain of thirty-four congressmen.<sup>9</sup> If the January 1 deadline was to be maintained, Lincoln would have to be creative and persuasive in his Annual Message that December, as he looked out over a crowd of hostile Democrats and divided Republicans from the podium. Lincoln acknowledged the “great diversity of sentiment and of policy in regard to slavery and the African race among us,” but suggested that all friends of the Union “should harmonize.”<sup>10</sup> The strategies of persuasion Lincoln employed in his address must be understood as a careful but forceful confrontation with the divisions and oppositions he faced in that chamber, as well as a final effort to persuade Confederates to lay down their arms and rejoin the Union.

Lincoln devoted the greatest portion of his address to the merits of a gradual approach to emancipation, which suggests that he believed this argument would be especially persuasive and would attract broad appeal. In Lincoln’s articulation, gradual emancipation embodied a theory of the relationship of geography, demographics and political economy to time. Lincoln used this theory to make an argument for the paramount importance of national unification based on the strong incentive of economic prosperity. In Lincoln’s formula, time, in both its brief human dimension and larger historical dimension, was of “great importance” to emancipation. “Time spares both races from the evils of sudden derangement,” he claimed.<sup>11</sup> Far from the “radical change” that Democrats feared, Lincoln believed time, as he explained to Salmon P. Chase, would allow emancipation to “come gently as the dews of heaven, not rending or wrecking anything.”<sup>12</sup> Time was the stabilizing factor that could avoid the “friction and abrasion” he had warned of in July. No one present in Congress that day could “escape history,” Lincoln argued, but they could use it to their advantage.

In Lincoln’s vision, transient humans lived on permanent land. He quoted Ecclesiastes: “One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh, but the earth abideth forever.”<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, demographic trends indicated to him that the population of the United States would continue on its path of rapid growth. The open land of the “great interior region” would accommodate and encourage such growth. Lincoln estimated that this region, then home to around ten million, “will have fifty millions within fifty years.”<sup>14</sup> The combination of a growing population with vast natural resources, Lincoln argued, would produce such wealth that “we shall be overwhelmed with the magnitude of the prospect presented.”<sup>15</sup> He cited population figures which indicated that U.S. population growth and, in turn, prosperity, could reach European levels “at some point between 1920 and 1930 – say about 1925.” America could only match European prosperity, though, if the nation was reunified. Permanent secession, Lincoln argued, “would retard population, civilization, and prosperity.” Emancipation would reliably “shorten the war, perpetuate peace, insure this increase of population, and proportionately the wealth of the country.”<sup>16</sup> Demographic trends, for Lincoln, promised future prosperity only if the nation realigned itself with the course of history.

Lincoln’s use of the Constitution as the framework for his proposal suggests that in addition to looking forward to the twentieth century he looked backward to the eighteenth. In Article 1, Section 9 of the Constitution, the framers had set out a timeline for the gradual diminishing of U.S. involvement in the African slave trade. Northern states emancipated slaves gradually, as they reached adulthood, and used various measures of compensation for owners’ property losses.<sup>17</sup> Lincoln’s ideas were rooted in the same unit of time as the authors of Section 9 – namely, the generation. The Constitution allowed a generation for the gradual withdrawal from the African slave trade, which

was to be completed by 1808, or after approximately twenty years. In his address Lincoln calculated historical development in human time: “our strife pertains to ourselves – to the passing generations of men; and it can, without convulsion, be hushed forever with the passing of one generation.” Those who might continue to oppose emancipation “will have passed away before its consummation. They will never see it.”<sup>18</sup> In these terms, Lincoln’s deadline for total emancipation, 1900, would represent about two generations. It seems evident that Lincoln’s idea of gradual emancipation drew upon the model of the northern states after the American Revolution.<sup>19</sup> Looking both backward and forward, Lincoln saw his moment in time as one that could at once fulfill the legacy of the founders and propel the nation toward the promise of the twentieth century.

Turning to Lincoln’s idea that emancipation would “assure freedom to the free,” we must consider the steady opposition he faced on any type of emancipation from Democrats across the aisle. Opposition was especially strong among Peace Democrats, a growing faction in 1862 that advocated ending the war through negotiation rather than Union victory.<sup>20</sup> Democrats sought to make gains in the November elections through the emancipation issue. They warned that Republicans would let loose “two or three million semi-savages” to “overrun the North and enter into competition with the white laboring masses,” mixing with “their sons and daughters.”<sup>21</sup> Senator Lyman Trumbull, representing Lincoln’s home state of Illinois, asserted that “there is a very great aversion in the West...against having free negroes come among us. Our people want nothing to do with the negro.”<sup>22</sup> Trumbull’s argument recalled the attacks Lincoln faced in Illinois four years earlier from Stephen A. Douglas, who had accused Lincoln of promoting racial mixing and black social equality. One Democratic newspaper asked, “Shall the working classes be equalized with negroes?” The specter of labor competition incited violence. Over the summer, riots broke out in over a half-dozen cities, including Cincinnati, where striking Irish dockworkers attacked black neighborhoods after black workers had replaced the Irish on the docks.<sup>23</sup>

The final amendment Lincoln proposed in his address, authorizing Congress to appropriate funds for black colonization abroad, may be understood as a direct response to Democratic arguments against black labor and racial mixing – arguments which proved effective in the November elections. As with his argument for national unity based on population growth, Lincoln used economic incentives to persuade his audience, presenting both emancipation and colonization as measures that would benefit white labor. Lincoln argued that, rather than new competition, emancipation would actually maintain a stable status quo: if freed slaves “stay in their old places, they jostle no white laborers; if they leave their old places, they leave them open to white laborers. Logically, there is neither more or less of it.” Without new competition, Lincoln argued, emancipation “very surely, would not reduce” white wages. Colonization, by reducing the supply of black labor, would raise white wages. As in his study of demographic data, Lincoln’s confidence in his calculations showed here too: “With deportation, even to a limited extent, enhanced wages to white labor is mathematically certain.”<sup>24</sup>

Lincoln must have been aware that the idea of colonization had for decades won bipartisan support. Organized efforts to deport blacks – to Africa, the Caribbean, or Central America – dated back to the establishment of the American Colonization Society in 1816, which was founded by political figures from both the North and South.<sup>25</sup> As one historian puts it, “colonization was the sugar around the pill of emancipation.”<sup>26</sup> Lincoln claimed to have the support of free blacks as well, in the form of “applications...to favor their emigration.”<sup>27</sup> Colonization, though, had long divided blacks. In fact, the first national black convention, in Philadelphia in 1817, was “convened explicitly to repudiate the doctrines of the American Colonization Society.”<sup>28</sup> Others, however, led by Martin R. Delaney, the “father of black nationalism,” advocated for a black homeland in Africa or the Caribbean where blacks could become “the ruling element of the country.”<sup>29</sup> Northern black leaders, including Frederick Douglass, had ridiculed Lincoln’s attempt that August to convince them to

support a pilot colonization project at a White House meeting.<sup>30</sup> What mattered in Congress, though, was not black support but Democratic support, in order to reach a bipartisan agreement on conditions for emancipation.

In addition to assuaging concerns for white wages, Lincoln sought to counter fears of racial mixing. Along with the Democratic hysteria, racial fears constituted the “Achilles heel” of the Republican party as well, and led many Republicans to endorse colonization.<sup>31</sup> Again, Lincoln relied on hard numbers to calm these fears. In a hypothetical situation, Lincoln explained that if blacks were “equally distributed among the whites of the whole country,” “there would be but one colored to seven whites.” “Could the one,” he asked, “in any way, disturb the seven?”<sup>32</sup> Lincoln’s hypothetical scenario represented a sort of checkerboard vision, in which the threat of racial mixing was diffused evenly across a vast landscape of whiteness. Confronted with prevalent anxieties about wage depressions and racial integration, Lincoln’s case for gradual emancipation coupled with colonization was meant to persuade Congress that his plans would “assure freedom to the free.”

After his address, and even after he issued the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863, Lincoln made persistent attempts to make his idea of colonization a reality. In September 1862 he had authorized a contract between the federal government and the Chiriqui Improvement Company, which had convinced Lincoln that coal deposits in a certain province of Panama would support a black colony there. A few weeks later, Lincoln received a proposal from one Bernard Kock for the settlement of five thousand blacks on the Haitian island of Ille-a-Vache.<sup>33</sup> In his December address, Lincoln acknowledged resistance from Central American governments, and cited Liberia and Haiti as the only realistic locations for a colony. Lincoln’s plans suffered a setback, however, after he sponsored a settlement of 453 blacks on a Haitian island in 1863, only to suffer from starvation and smallpox and require rescuing by a U.S. naval vessel the next year – only 368 survivors returned.<sup>34</sup>

Despite the faltering of Lincoln’s colonization scheme, his Annual Message to Congress deserves recognition as a window onto Lincoln’s position in Union politics of 1862 and as a significant complement to the Emancipation Proclamation. While Lincoln called the Emancipation Proclamation a necessary “war measure,” the constitutional amendments he proposed in December 1862 were far broader in scope, both geographically and temporally. Constitutional law, Lincoln believed, could permanently secure what his war measure could temporarily hope for.<sup>35</sup> These proposals may be considered his “peace measure” – a stable process, aligned with history and designed for the improvement of freedom, for the total eradication of slavery from the United States.

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<sup>1</sup> Title: Abraham Lincoln to Salmon P. Chase, quoted in James McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (Oxford University Press, 1988), 499.

<sup>2</sup> Abraham Lincoln, “Annual Message to Congress,” Dec. 1, 1862, in Course Reader, 199.

<sup>3</sup> The states of the upper South, or “border-states,” included Maryland, Kentucky, Delaware and Missouri.

<sup>4</sup> McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 495.

<sup>5</sup> See Eric Foner, *Forever Free: The Story of Emancipation and Reconstruction* (New York: Vintage, 2005), 11.

<sup>6</sup> Quoted in Richard Carwardine, *Abraham Lincoln: A Life of Purpose and Power* (New York: Knopf, 2006), 203.

<sup>7</sup> Quoted in McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 503.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 503.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 561.

<sup>10</sup> Lincoln, “Annual Message,” in Course Reader, 197.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 197-198.

<sup>12</sup> Quoted in McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 499.

<sup>13</sup> Lincoln, “Annual Message,” 196.

- <sup>14</sup> Ibid., 196.  
<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 196.  
<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 198.  
<sup>17</sup> See Foner, *Forever Free*, 10.  
<sup>18</sup> Lincoln, "Annual Message," 196-197.  
<sup>19</sup> See McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 499, footnote 18.  
<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 506.  
<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 507.  
<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 508.  
<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 507.  
<sup>24</sup> Lincoln, "Annual Message," 198-199.  
<sup>25</sup> See Foner, *Forever Free*, 26.  
<sup>26</sup> Carwardine, *Lincoln*, 211.  
<sup>27</sup> Lincoln, "Annual Message," 195.  
<sup>28</sup> Foner, *Forever Free*, 26.  
<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 30.  
<sup>30</sup> See McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 508-509.  
<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 508.  
<sup>32</sup> Lincoln, "Annual Message," 199.  
<sup>33</sup> See Carwardine, *Lincoln*, 211.  
<sup>34</sup> See McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 509.  
<sup>35</sup> See Carwardine, *Lincoln*, 216.



# “Entre la noche y el tiempo”: Conceptos de la Vida y la Muerte en el Poema “Galope muerto”

by Matt S. Blumenthal '08

*Galope Muerto por Pablo Neruda  
[de Residencia en la tierra I (1925-1931)]*

Como cenizas, como mares poblándose,  
en la sumergida lentitud, en lo informe,  
o como se oyen desde el alto de los caminos  
cruzar las campanadas en cruz,  
teniendo ese sonido ya aparte del metal,  
confuso, pensando, haciéndose polvo  
en el mismo molino de las formas demasiado lejos,  
o recordadas o no vistas,  
y el perfume de las ciruelas que rodando a tierra  
se pudren en el tiempo, infinitamente verdes.

Aquello todo tan rápido, tan viviente,  
inmóvil sin embargo, como la polea loca en sí misma,  
esas ruedas de los motores, en fin.  
Existiendo como las puntadas secas en las costuras del árbol,  
callado, alrededor, de tal modo,  
mezclando todos los limbos sus colas.  
Es que de dónde, por dónde, en qué orilla?  
El rodeo constante, incierto, tan mudo,  
como las lilas alrededor del convento,  
o la llegada de la muerte a la lengua del buey  
que cae a tumbos, guardabajo, y cuyos cuernos quieren sonar.

Por eso, en lo inmóvil, deteniéndose, percibir,  
entonces, como aleteo inmenso, encima,  
como abejas muertas o números,  
ay, lo que mi corazón pálido no puede abarcar,  
en multitudes, en lágrimas saliendo apenas,  
y esfuerzos humanos, tormentas,  
acciones negras descubiertas de repente  
como hielos, desorden vasto,  
oceánico, para mí que entro cantando,  
como con una espada entre indefensos.

Ahora bien, de qué está hecho ese surgir de palomas  
que hay entre la noche y el tiempo, como una barranca húmeda?  
Ese sonido ya tan largo  
que cae listando de piedras los caminos,

más bien, cuando sólo una hora  
crece de improviso, extendiéndose sin tregua.

Adentro del anillo del verano  
una vez los grandes zapallos escuchan,  
estirando sus plantas conmovedoras,  
de eso, de lo que solicitándose mucho,  
de lo lleno, oscuros de pesadas gotas.

Cuando el crítico Amado Alonso preguntó a Pablo Neruda que estaba explorando en el poema “Galope Muerto,” Neruda le respondió crípticamente: “el misterio de la vida.”<sup>1</sup> Verdaderamente, Neruda se acerca a la vida – y quizás aún más a la muerte – con gran poder en este poema. Nos da imágenes muy fuertes y conectadas de los dos fenómenos. Pero su investigación no es tan sencilla. Neruda nos presenta dos imágenes casi paradójicas de la vida y la muerte. Hay una visión colectiva y universal personificada en el ciclo eterno de vida y la muerte, y además un concepto más personal e individual de un ciclo de vida demarcado por el punto de morir.<sup>2</sup>

Uno de los efectos más fuertes y obvios del poema es la imagen del ciclo, sugerido por círculos, esferas, y rodeos. El motivo del círculo especialmente es muy sobresaliente. Con las “ruedas” del molino y el “anillo de verano,” Neruda insinúa una visión de la vida y la muerte como un ciclo que no tiene comienzo ni fin, ni separación entre los dos partes (vida y muerte). También, con el uso de la palabra “alrededor” – la usa dos veces en la segunda estrofa cuando la sugerencia del motivo del círculo es más fuerte – crea una imagen de una jornada alrededor de algo o un rodeo. Como un círculo, este ciclo continua siempre, sin fin. En ese sentido, Neruda nos presenta un concepto comunal y universal de la vida y la muerte en la sociedad humana – siempre hay personas que están naciendo y muriendo, pero la raza, el organismo humano, siempre continúa.

Neruda complica esta visión con otras imágenes de ciclos a lo largo del poema. Con “El rodeo constante, incierto, tan mudo,” Neruda nos da otro concepto de un círculo. Sin embargo, esta imagen es más compleja. El “rodeo” es “constante” – nunca termina – pero también es “incierto” y “mudo.” Con “incierto,” Neruda nos dice que la raza humana está atrapada en este rodeo, un ciclo de vida y muerte que no tiene ningún conocimiento ni entendimiento de su destino ni su propósito. Aquí, el otro sentido de “rodeo” como “circunlocución” o “digresión” es relevante – dice que el ciclo de la vida y la muerte que representa “el rodeo” no tiene propósito ni destino. Las palabras “tan mudo” tienen un efecto aún más complejo sobre el sentido del verso. En un sentido, la palabra mudo significa “silencioso,” sugiriendo la incapacidad de hablar. Un proceso que no emite ningún sonido no puede ser muy reconocido por su ambiente, y entonces Neruda aquí representa la falta de importancia que la experiencia humana tiene dentro del universo – el universo, tan grande, no la reconoce. Sin embargo, “mudo” también crea un sentido de quietud, y entonces, una falta de mudanza. El rodeo es un ciclo que nunca mueve, y nunca cambia – una repetición sin sentido o progreso de la vida y la muerte humana.

Neruda desarrolla el motivo del “ciclo sin movimiento” en su tratamiento del “molino” y su maquinaria. Lo menciona por primera vez en la primera estrofa, diciendo “haciéndose polvo en el mismo molino de las formas demasiado lejos.” El concepto del molino en sí mismo tiene gran sentido y una asociación fuerte con la muerte en el poema – el propósito del molino es la desintegración de formas (árboles) y la propagación de “lo informe” (aserrín), como se desintegra el cuerpo dentro de la tierra o sus cenizas después de la incineración. En este sentido, alude al concepto bíblico de “ceniza a ceniza, polvo a polvo” – que el polvo y la desintegración son el origen del hombre, y también representan su fin (cf. Génesis, 3:19). Sin embargo, a pesar de la importancia

del concepto del molino en sí mismo, Neruda parece mucho más interesado en las maquinaciones, literales y figurativas, “no vist[as]” dentro del molino. Su tratamiento del interior del molino ocurre en la segunda estrofa:

Aquello todo tan rápido, tan viviente,  
inmóvil sin embargo, como la polea loca en sí misma,  
esas ruedas de los motores, en fin.

En esta cita que describe las maquinas dentro del molino, Neruda presenta dos ejemplos vívidos del motivo del “ciclo sin movimiento.” La imagen de “la polea loca en sí misma,” una polea que gira, fija en sólo un punto del espacio, de nuevo crea un imagen de un ciclo de vida y muerte que nunca termina y nunca cambia. Modificando la polea con el adjetivo “loca,” Neruda confirma la naturaleza absurda del ciclo interminable de la vida y la muerte. Con la segunda imagen de “esas ruedas de los motores,” Neruda sugiere varios asuntos. El primero es, de nuevo, el motivo del ciclo sin movimiento: una rueda en un motor, diferente de una rueda en un coche, por ejemplo, no se mueve en el espacio; está fija. Pero el uso de “ruedas” y “motores” sugiere aún más referencias indirectas y metafóricas. La palabra “ruedas,” y la imagen generalmente, sugiere el concepto antiguo de conspiración de “ruedas dentro de ruedas.” Ya que Neruda está explorando el “misterio de la vida” y estas maquinaciones de vida y muerte dentro del molino son bastante incomprensibles, esta referencia es muy apropiada. La referencia al “motor” es importante también. La idea del motor sugiere que el trabajo está siendo hecho, y que algo se está produciendo – pero todas las labores de los motores son en vano; su único producto es la desintegración: “mezclando todos los limbos sus colas.”

A lo largo del poema, Neruda desarrolla otro concepto de la vida y la muerte – una concepción más personal donde la vida y la muerte están separadas – como las entiende el individuo. Esta separación está representada simbólicamente por el agua (la vida) y la tierra seca (la muerte). En el primer verso, Neruda establece el contraste entre los dos símbolos: “Como cenizas, como mares poblándose.” Crea una fuerte oposición entre las cenizas, que son los desechos apagados de vida (en la forma del fuego) y algo muy viviente, el agua del mar, “poblándose” de un estado agitado. Neruda usa esta yuxtaposición para dar énfasis a la diferencia enorme entre la vida y la muerte, pero también a la proximidad momentánea de los dos en el punto de muerte. Este énfasis también presta atención a la conciencia humana e individual de los dos estados – el individuo es muy consciente de su mortalidad. Neruda continúa esta yuxtaposición y motivo a lo largo del poema. En el sexto verso de la primera estrofa, Neruda habla del “polvo” que crea el molino. Dos versos después, Neruda examina “las ciruelas.” Ciruelas, como cosas llenas de agua y también las frutas literales de algo muy vivo, son un símbolo apropiado por la vida. Entonces proporcionan un contraste simbólico muy fuerte con el polvo, que es el producto de la desintegración.

Otra imagen muy vívida de la vida y la muerte está representada en la forma del “buey” de los dos versos finales de la segunda estrofa: “o la llegada de la muerte a la lengua del buey/que cae a tumbos, guardabajo, y cuyos cuernos quieren sonar.” Estos dos versos representan una escena muy expresiva del punto de morir – el momento en que se enfrentan la vida y la muerte. Neruda hace hincapié en la noción que la muerte viene sin advertencia, agarrando el buey “guardabajo” y causándolo caer “a tumbos” – en el medio de su galope. Neruda también nota que la muerte es inevitable – su “llegada” no es impugnada – y da énfasis a lo musical y el sonido, diciendo que la muerte viene a “la lengua” del buey. A pesar de la imagen, estos dos versos son posiblemente los dos más optimista del poema. La frase “cuyos cuernos quieren sonar” tiene un doble sentido muy importante: que los “cuernos” del animal pueden convertirse en trompas y entonces “sonar,” implicando la posibilidad de preservar al individuo o sus hazañas y obras para la posteridad, y entonces dar significado a la vida.

Para analizar los dos conceptos de la vida y la muerte en el poema, hay que examinar lo que Neruda quiere decir exactamente sobre “el misterio de la vida,” y donde existe el hombre en este misterio. Para hacer esto, necesitamos analizar tres símbolos: las ciruelas, la orilla, y la barranca húmeda. Las ciruelas entran en la primera estrofa. Neruda escribe: “y el perfume de las ciruelas que rodando a tierra/ se pudren en el tiempo, infinitamente verdes.” Este par de versos, el segundo una paradoja, resumen lo que quiere decir Neruda: aunque las ciruelas individuales “se pudren en tiempo” y mueren, siempre habrá ciruelas, y entonces siempre hay ciruelas que son “infinitamente verdes.” Simbólicamente – la ciruela representa un símbolo fuerte por la vida – dice que los organismos (y específicamente los seres humanos) individuales mueren, pero la vida, personificado por la ciruela como especie de organismo, permanece siempre. Entonces, las dos concepciones de la vida y la muerte existen al mismo tiempo.

¿Pero dónde está el ser humano en este retrato del misterio de la vida? La respuesta se encuentra en las figuras de la “orilla” de la segunda estrofa y la “barranca húmeda” de la cuarta estrofa. Estos lugares son bastante simbólicos: ambos existen donde se encuentran el agua (la vida) y la tierra seca (la muerte). Existe aquí el punto de morir, pero también la conciencia humana. El ser humano es el único organismo que tiene consciencia no sólo de su propia vida y mortalidad, sino también del ciclo eterno, invariable, e insignificante de vida y muerte humanas. Aquí encontremos el misterio de la vida humana según Neruda, el hombre está atrapado entre dos concepciones de la vida y la muerte, “entre la noche y el tiempo,” en el precipicio o el abismo de una barranca. Su única esperanza frágil es crear algo que permanece, como el cuerno del buey, de una generación hasta la próxima. Parece que Neruda solucionó este misterio.

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<sup>1</sup> John Felstiner, *PMLA*, Vol. 93, No. 2. (Mar., 1978), 185.

<sup>2</sup> Antes de empezar, es importante reconocer que la contradicción es un elemento esencial en el poema – aún aparece en el título. “Galope” sugiere el movimiento intenso mientras “muerto” representa el estado más inerte posible – la muerte. Esta discordancia no puede ser resuelta, porque el significado “dead gallop” del inglés (un galope de la más rapidez posible) no existe en el castellano. Además de la yuxtaposición, hay una ambigüedad de significado que nos presenta varias preguntas. ¿Qué significa “galope muerto”? ¿Significa “un galope hacia la muerte”? En este caso, el título y quizás el poema en todo representaría la vida como una jornada rápida a la muerte. O, ¿significa “galope de la muerte,” donde la muerte está galopeando hacia el individual? ¿Hay un jinete o caballo sugerido en este poema? ¿Y quién es? El “yo” poético está oscuro, y la construcción del poema no tiene sujeto ni predicado. La confusión del poema corresponde con el periodo relevante de la vida de Neruda. Durante los años de *Residencia en la tierra* (1925-1932), su obra había tenido éxito críticamente pero todavía era muy pobre. En desesperación, Neruda fue a Rangoon para trabajar como diplomático. Su dislocación – económica, literaria, y geográfica – domina “Galope muerto.”

## View with a Grain of Sand: Szyborska's Poetry through the Lens of Translation

by Jessica A. Hui '06-'07

More than five years after September 11, I've seen my fair share of disappointing poems and lyrics about the tragedy. The products, despite the best intentions, all manage somehow to turn out trite and prosaic – to the point where “9/11” is almost edging out “Hallmark” as the defining adjective for the substandard poem. A small poem titled “Photograph from September 11” would seem no different and, as a matter of fact, its publication in August 2002 in a collection called Poems of New York did little to change the reputation of 9/11 poetry in general. Reading it in its second debut (in her latest collection, Monologue of a Dog), however, Wislawa Szyborska's “Photograph from September 11” stands out as a poem that achieves a register both evocative and respectful.

They jumped from the burning floors—  
one, two, a few more,  
higher, lower.

The photograph halted them in life,  
and now keeps them  
above the earth toward the earth.

Each is still complete,  
with a particular face  
and blood well hidden.

There's enough time  
for hair to come loose,  
for keys and coins  
to fall from pockets.  
They're still within the air's reach,  
within the compass of places  
that have just now opened.

I can do only two things for them—  
describe this flight  
and not add a last line.

(trans. By Cavanagh/Baranczak)

In six short stanzas, Szyborska simply describes in detail a photograph of victims jumping from the towers, and ends with the statement about the small things she can do for them. What makes this poem so different from the myriad other attempts to versify the September 11 experience? Two main decisions stand out. First is her focus on detail, both literal and speculative – people don't just jump from burning floors, they jump from “one, two, a few more / higher, lower” (lines 2-3); she imagines the next moments where “hair [comes] loose” and “keys and coins / ...fall from pockets” (lines 11-12). Giving these people detail, giving them each a “particular face” (line 8), is how she allows them to become real and relatable and thus universal. Second is her use of the unspoken. The poem is most poignant at the end, where her second tribute to the fallen is to “not

add a last line.” This recapitulates what the description has been doing all along when it “keeps them / above the earth” (line 5-6) and “still within the air’s reach” (line 13) – staying out of reach of the fatal impact itself. By this exclusion, the poem not only gives the victims personal respect for their deaths, but it respects the terror of how they died and leaves this magnitude undiminished by an attempt to put it into words. There is a sense of humility in the reticence she uses. This same sense and method of exclusion lies behind the rhetoric of the unspeakable seen in Holocaust literature – the permeating idea that something is so great that one can find in himself anything to do it justice. So we feel in Szyborska’s poems a wonder and a humility with which she treats the world: a world so great.

These characteristic devices – an intense focus on the minute, especially after zooming in from vaster views; the inversion of leaving the topic of the poem (ie. Death) unspoken – are two of considerable diversity that mark Szyborska’s poems. While she maintains an uncluttered voice throughout (one that is never deliberately obscure, never forcing the reader to dig beneath its language even while it chooses what to say and what to withhold), her stylistic maneuvers vary for different poems. She has a penchant for inversion, for throwing a negative into the mix, as in her “Evaluation of an Unwritten Poem” or in “The Railroad Station” where she describes a non-real reunion in detail from her “nonarrival” (line 1) down to a kiss with “not our lips” (line 19). She also works (or plays, rather!) from various and unusual perspectives: in “The Terrorist, He’s Watching,” she inhabits the mind of a terrorist as he watches people come in and out of a bar in the minutes before his bomb detonates there; in “Advertisement,” she speaks with the voice of a tranquilizer drug and sells herself. Both remarkable and delightful is the way she tackles philosophy with simple, colloquial language. However, in other poems, she freely thrills herself and the reader in the sheer sound of words, as in “Birthday” (she marvels at how the world “rustles and bustles” and launches into lines of “moraines and morays and morasses and mussels,” “chinchillas, gorillas, and sarsaparillas”). Wordplay comes in single words or as the conceit of whole poems, like “An Opinion on the Question of Pornography” where thinking is described in terms generally used to denounce pornography or sexual promiscuity. For instance, Szyborska writes that “nothing’s sacred for those who think” (line 4) and exclaims about how

It’s shocking, the positions,  
the unchecked simplicity with which  
one mind contrives to fertilize another!  
(lines 24-26, trans. C/B)

She describes sensationally that

In broad daylight or under cover of night  
they form circles, triangles, or pairs.  
The partners’ age or sex are unimportant.  
Their eyes glitter, their cheeks are flushed.  
(lines 10-13, trans. C/B)

Translators, according to their own theories, are forced to privilege one aspect of a poem over another, giving up rhyme for form, for instance, or choosing literal precision over precision in the “feel” of the poem. Some translators believe that the sound of a poem is more important than the meaning; others adhere to a rule of transport of each of the words into the translation. Given Szyborska’s diversity of techniques and maneuvers, it is difficult to rely on any set theory or rule of translation. Sometimes her emphasis is on the sound of the words: it’s imperative then to sacrifice a

literal translation for a choice of English words that create the same aural effect. Other times, the precise words she chooses are infinitely important: the duplicity of the word “positions” in its relation to both pornography and debate, for instance. This issue prompted the Nobel Prize Committee to note that “the stylistic variety in [Szyborska’s] poetry makes it extremely difficult to translate.” However, the committee also recognized that despite this difficulty, the translations are able to “vouchsafe us glimpses of her mastery of technique, even in rhymed verse.” How do these translations get over the apparent hurdles to do such vouchsafing? What makes the translations by Clare Cavanagh and Stanislaw Baranczak – who have published the last three authoritative English editions of Szyborska, and are most often quoted, whether by the Nobel Committee itself or by amateur critics and appreciators on the internet – successful (in their own right, and compared to past translations)? In approaching Szyborska’s dexterity with numerous techniques, Cavanagh and Baranczak make themselves equally flexible with their methods of translation. Nowhere do you see a hint of what either poet particularly favors in poetry or in translation, whether it be sound, imagery, or a certain line length. Their project itself – overall a faithful rendering of Szyborska for the English speaker – is even itself subject to their deference to her: the strictness with words is completely laid aside when they come across a poem that Szyborska devotes to sound alone. In all these small choices, they exhibit and are thus able to “translate” the sense of humility that exudes from Szyborska’s poems.

Aside from the specific difficulties of translating Szyborska, her poems bring with them the intrinsic difficulties of translating from the Polish language. On the very surface of things, Polish sounds drastically different from English, not simply as a separate language but because many of its phonemes are altogether different. None of Polish vowels, for instance, are present in English, nor are a good number of Polish consonants and consonant combinations. Like many Slavic languages, Polish is also consonant-rich compared to English. Grammatically, Polish also differs significantly from English (though not as much as we think, especially if you look back to Old English). It has three separate genders (masculine, feminine and neuter) and, in addition to the three simple verb tenses (past, present and future), it also boasts two aspects (imperfective, for continuous and repeated actions, and perfective, for completed actions). Since the inflection of verbs carries a lot of information in the ending alone. Since the inflection of verbs carries a lot of information in the ending alone, Polish also uses participles (ie. “working” in “working woman”) and gerunds (ie. “telling” in “her telling of the story”) more frequently than in English, which uses clauses more frequently. One particularly jarring difference is the complete lack of articles in Polish – this is compensated for by seven separate cases for nouns: nominative, genitive, dative, accusative, locative, instrumental and vocative. Languages with various cases for nouns are notably stubborn in poetic translation because of the economy of words gained by cases that is difficult to maintain in English. Polish also tends to accent its penultimate syllables (while English accents its ending syllables), possibly related to the syllabotonic meter of its verse. Syllabotonic, or accentual-syllabic, meter is heard today in languages such as Russian and Hebrew; however, it had a life in English as well, dominating poetry more or less from Chaucer until Yeats. Instead of dictating the number of syllables (as in syllabic meter) or the number of stress (as in tonic meter) in a line, it does both. This strictness of meter is difficult to replicate naturally for the free-verse-loving modern English ear. In addition to grammatical differences, a different language with its own influences simply develops differently, and things like double meanings or slang arise in different places. For instance, the Polish noun **rachunek** translates most literally as “account” – along the lines of a bank account or a company record. It can, however, also mean a check or bill, and is used colloquially most often for one’s bar tab. Cavanagh and Baranczak translate the title of the poem “**Rachunek elegjny**” as “Elegiac Calculation,” which captures the more sterile side of the world but not the grittier, everyday side of

it. Adam Czerniawski translated the title as “An Elegiac Account,” which seems to retain slightly more of the duplicity than “calculation.” Neither, of course, approximate the situation in the Polish well, simply because the two ideas in English diverged into one drier and one livelier term while they remained intertwined in the Polish.

Aside from these natural, more arbitrary, diversions in the way the languages were influenced, Polish poetry is also informed by a different emotional history than that of English. While many Polish poets would, rightly, resist the classification of all their poetry as political, the stereotype exists because much of Polish poetry arose out of the need created by oppression. During the times of partition – from the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century to the end of World War I) – the nation was targeted by Russian and Prussian conqueror intent on eradicating the Polish identity. A decade or so later and the Nazi regime takes its turn against the Polish people. In a 1986 interview, Czeslaw Milosz describes how in “moments of cataclysm and upheaval, poetry becomes popular as the expression of the people’s hope, aspirations, and identity” in explaining why poetry is so important in Poland. Thus poetry, as an expression of freedom or even freedom itself and as a way of addressing oppression, takes on a different character in Polish than in English, where it has less of a desperate history. This influence comes through in instances such as the poem “Mine Eyes Have Known Tears” (*Polaly sie Izy*) by Adam Mickiewicz, where soft rustling consonants and nasalized, wailing vowels – sounds unavailable to the English translator – combine to replicate the sound of crying that augments the semantic work of the poem.

How does one carry the history and the complexity of the Polish language into a translation? For the unwitting reader, popular translations of relatively new poets like Neruda, Milosz and Szyborska can feel like the poems’ original forms. This was certainly the case with me: I was a year or so into my relationship with Szyborska’s work before I realized that what I was reading was in translation. In a small way, this itself says something about the success of the translation, insofar as translation strives to also be a poem in and of itself. Upon this discovery, my next erroneous assumption was that these translations, by Clare Cavanagh and Stanislaw Baranczak, were the first of Szyborska, and freshly new ones at that (we always like to think we’re among the first to unearth a great new poet). Instead, authoritative English editions of Szyborska date back to at least 1981, when Krynski & Maguire put out *Sounds, Feelings, Thoughts*. In line after them were Trzeciak (originally with Lugowski) and also Czerniawski. It seems that all these translators, responsible for Szyborska’s introduction to the English-speaking world, aimed for largely literal translations, resulting in poems that rarely differ drastically from each other in terms of content, in terms of the building blocks. However, like all translators, these teams make different stylistic and even semantic choices. Inevitably, they come across the reality that the whole of Polish cannot be summarily transported. The willingness to admit a certain level of inadequacy in translation, then, is crucial for any successful attempt. For Cavanagh and Baranczak, the choices they often make for the sake of clarity and for faithfulness to the “feel” of the original set them apart from the previous translations.

One of the most drastic instances is in the difference between the Cavanagh/Baranczak and the Trzeciak translations of *Niektorzy lubia poezje* (“Some [People] Like Poetry”), written in 1993. In this poem, Szyborska starts with small observations:

Some people –  
that means not everyone.  
Not even most of them, only a few.  
Not counting school, where you have to,  
and poets themselves,

you might end up with something like two per thousand.  
(lines 1-6, trans. C/B)

She then goes on to question what difference there is between liking poetry and liking other things, and finally addresses the question of the very nature of poetry, asking

Poetry—  
but what is poetry anyway?  
More than one rickety answer  
has tumbled since that question first was raised.  
(lines 13-16, trans. C/B)

In general, the Trzeciak translation is done in a far more formal language and a more literal translation of the Polish. Trzeciak opts for words like “majority” and “minority” where Cavanagh/Baranczak say “most of them” and “only a few” (line 3), “there will be perhaps two” where Cavanagh/Baranczak have “something like two” (line 5), and “must” where Cavanagh/Baranczak have “have to” (line 4). Trzeciak also sticks closer to a by-the-book translation. This comes up even in the title itself (translated by Trzeciak as “Some Like Poetry” and Cavanagh/Baranczak as “Some People Like Poetry”), where **niektorzy** is strictly “some” in a dictionary, but encompasses the meaning “some people” in the same way that **wszyscy** in line 2 has both the definition “all” and “everybody.” The addition of the understood “people” is a move toward clarity and toward the ease with which the language strikes the reader. Shortly thereafter, we encounter the Polish word **szkol** (line 4). The sense of the line is that in thinking about those who like poetry, you have to take account for those who only liked it because they had to for school. The absence of an ending on **szkol** makes it a plural noun, and Trzeciak translates it as “the schools.” While grammatically feasible, the resulting phrase – “not counting the schools, where one must” – is not commonly heard in English as such and comes out awkwardly. In contrast, the choice that Cavanagh/Baranczak make to sacrifice the grammatical accuracy and translate **szkol** as a singular gives us “not counting school, where you have to,” a much more colloquial qualification. Their privilege of the colloquial – in this case, at the expense of grammar – aligns with Szymborska’s noted colloquial style in Polish, and their reward is a much more natural poem.

However, these are still stylistic differences which separate the two translations, and it is in the very last two lines that the two translations diverge in interpretation. These end the stanza where she questions the nature of Poetry, and instead of attempting to define it, she mentions how many answers have arisen in the same attempt. The last two lines read, in a literal translation:

**A ja nie wiem i nie wiem i trzymam sie tego  
jak zbawiennej porczy.**

And I don’t know and don’t know and I hold it  
like a saving handrail.

(lines 17-18, my trans.)

I translate the lines with a contraction because the Polish combines a negating word (**nie**) with the word for “to know” (**wiem**) and the English “don’t know” approximates this relationship the best. Trzeciak’s translation is essentially faithful to this literal, dictionary translation:

But I do not know and do not know and clutch on to it,  
as to a saving □ anister.

(lines 17-18, trans. Trzeciak)

Both these translations use the English word “it” – the correct translation of the Polish *tego*. The reader understands, and is justified grammatically, that this “it” refers to the subject of the entire six-line stanza: Poetry. This interpretation – that in uncertainty a poet would clutch to poetry as she would a handrail -- makes perfect sense. Cavanagh and Baranczak, however, take some license in translating the pronoun:

But I just keep on not knowing, and I cling to that  
like a redemptive handrail.

(lines 17-18, trans. C/B)

In their case, *tego* becomes “that” instead of “it” – and now what the speaker clings to is the “not knowing” rather than the poetry. This is a considerable departure especially at the end of the poem where it dictates whether the mood is one of being on solid ground (Trzeciak) or one of less surety (Cavanagh/Baranczak). The translators’ choice to make such a radical choice, however, is rooted not in sheer faith but in a belief that Szyborska has expressed before. In her Nobel Lecture in 1996, three years after the poem was written, she speaks about “torturers, dictators, fanatics, and demagogues” who box themselves in with their limited knowledge and refuse to open their minds to any new knowledge for fear of contradiction. “This is why,” she says

I value that little phrase “I don’t know” so highly. It’s small, but it flies on  
mighty wings. It expands our lives to include spaces within us as well as the  
outer expanses in which our tiny Earth hangs suspended.

She goes on to cite Newton and Marie Curie as examples of great achievements that would never have come about had their discoverers never said “I don’t know.” She adds the exhortation that “Poets, if they’re genuine, must also keep repeating “I don’t know.” The Cavanagh/Baranczak translation succeeds in capturing this belief in their interpretation of the poem. They also capture a philosophy of attaching one’s self to the unglorious stance of not knowing, a philosophy inherently humble – part of the reason that they are able to do this is their own humility, their own recognition of “not knowing” in translating Szyborska’s ending. They had to sit down and admit that there was something larger in the words than they knew for certain, something beyond what they could approximate by working with words alone, and chose to seek help elsewhere. Their choice also serves to bring the reader to a closer relationship with the original Szyborska by submitting to the influence of one of the central beliefs of the poet herself, and revealing to the reader what would naturally never be expressed by the Szyborska herself: the poet’s humility.

Where most translators might have a rule of thumb for what to privilege in translating foreign language poetry (Seamus Heaney’s priority in *Beowulf* is accuracy, bringing in the lulling, repetitive sound of the Old English alliterative line wherever possible; Robert Hass, on the other hand, is willing to be slightly looser with the imagery in his haikus), the key to the success of the Cavanagh/Baranczak translations seems to be their translators’ keen sensitivity and deference to the different priorities Szyborska seems to display within each poem. It’s difficult for rhyme in modern English to approximate the free, colloquial tone it has in Polish, and for this reason they generally stay away from rhyme; however where rhyme plays a central part in the original, they maintain it. In some poems, the Polish proper nouns that Szyborska uses are replaced with English versions, while in other poems, ones where the preservation of the Polish has some

significant function, the Polish originals are kept. Stanislaw Baranczak expresses this in a 1985 interview for the *Artful Dodge*, saying that the decision about which linguistic quality to preserve

depends on what the dominant point in the poem is. Sometimes the pun is so important that to lose it means to lose the poem. But there are other poems in which an occasional metaphor or image can be omitted or replaced by something else – if that's occasioned by an artistic purpose which is more important.

Baranczak betrays a natural deference here, not only to Szymborska but to the sense of the “artistic purpose”. The particular example with the use of proper nouns is seen in the poems “Séance” and “A Memory.” In “Séance,” Szymborska delves into the ideas of chance and unknowing that she champions in her Nobel Lecture. The poem describes the different tricks of happenstance: an unexpected shared relation with a fellow at a bistro, coincidental meetings with lost friends in foreign places. “A Memory” is literally that: the speaker recounts a brief episode with friends while on a trip, in which they spot a lovely girl, and describes the small actions that follow immediately after this collective sighting. In “Séance,” the Cavanagh/Baranczak translation, all the Polish proper nouns are Anglicized or exchanged (the only ones untouched are the Polish translations of international names like “Mercedes,” “Athens,” and “Tokyo”): **Jasia**, **Malgosi** and **Oli** become Jack, Jill, and Alexandra; the streets **Szewskiej** and **Jagiellonska** become Maple and Pine; and the town **Plocku** becomes Potterville. Their translation of “A Memory,” on the other hand, retains all the original Polish names. These contrasting decisions are made to support the conceits of their respective poems. The personal and particular nature of “A Memory” is nourished by the fact that Krystyna and Agnieszka remain themselves instead of becoming Christina and Agnes (Agnieszka is, in fact, translated to Agnes in “Séance”). In “Séance,” however, the poem seeks a characterization of happenstance to which we can more or less universally relate. Renaming **Jasia** and **Malgosi** as Jack and Jill not only removes the barriers of language and of particularity, but the choice of the more iconic names Jack and Jill open the poem up for the reader to imagine their own acquaintances therein. If the names had been Doreen and Jasper, the poem would have less of the sense that this situation happens everywhere time and again. Instead, the names chosen for the Cavanagh/Baranczak translation are almost generically American, with “Maple and Pine” and “Potterville.” For the American reader, this opens up a space in the name that allows them to attach their personal experiences.

Two other poems that exhibit Cavanagh and Baranczak's flexibility with translation and deference to their poet are Szymborska's “**Urodziny**” (“Birthday”) and “**Niebo**” (“Sky”). Where the majority of translations are strictly faithful to the original Polish terms, “Sky” includes a translation that semantically has little relation to the original, and in “Birthday” most of the literal words are altogether different. However, the choice to take license in these poems is made for discrete reasons. In the first, the word **niebo** is translated as “sky,” but also has the additional meaning of “heaven.” Moreover, since Polish lacks articles, there are even more possibilities for translation: sky, the sky, a sky, heaven, a heaven, the heaven. For Cavanagh and Baranczak, this duplicity of meaning informs the way they create their translation. The third stanza reads:

Even the highest mountains  
are no closer to the sky  
than the deepest valleys.  
There's no more of it in one place  
than another.  
A mole is no less in seventh heaven

than the owl spreading her wings.  
The object that falls in an abyss  
falls from sky to sky.

(lines 11-19, trans. C/B)

With the double meaning of sky and heaven in mind, it's not difficult to engage in a parallel reading that champions equality: one thing is no closer to heaven than another, and same for animals and people. Cavanagh and Baranczak take the liberty to strengthen this connection between sky and heaven (and between the literal proximity of height and the abstract proximity to heaven and happiness) in line 16. The Polish line reads

**Kret rownie wniebowziety  
jak sowa chwiejaca skrzydlami.**

The mole is also equally assumed in the sky  
as the owl spreading its wings.

(lines 16-17, my trans.)

The Cavanagh/Baranczak translation, however, takes license with the portrayal of the mole's equality in favor of the phrase "in seventh heaven." Not only have they chosen to substitute the original translation of **niebo** for its alternate (as translators seldom do in a single poem), but they are emphasizing the figurative duplicity as well. In addition to the physical heavens, we are considering something more abstract and emotional: Heaven, for instance, or simply the happiness of seventh heaven. This license, however, still falls under a deferential eagerness on their part to approximate the whole roundness of Szyborska's poem. The duplicity of the wordplay and Szyborska's own humility in only sparsely alluding to the idea of God or Heaven even when the sense of such touches her poems – these both come out in the translation. Then there's the idea of seventh heaven, a choice of words that captures so strongly Szyborska's sensibility. She is a poet who overflows with absolute wonder at the very fundamental joys of this world, and her reader constantly gets the sense that there is so much more in the world than one can possibly appreciate. For seventh heaven – a worldly instead of spiritual bliss – to be the depiction of happiness in this poem seizes this feeling, one of smallness, directly.

In "Birthday," Szyborska gives us delight for "so much world all at once" (line 1) and for the sheer sound of the names of the things contained therein. She displays a sense of awe at a world that is so diverse and so great that she herself has no recourse in possibly taking account of all them. While she clearly tries to name a number of them, the theme of the poem is this inability – an expression of her smallness. The English translation is playful:

So much world all at once—how it rustles and bustles!  
Moraines and morays and morasses and mussels,  
the flame, the flamingo, the flounder, the feather—  
how to line them all up, how to put them together?  
All the thickets and crickets and creepers and creeks!  
The beeches and leeches alone could take weeks.

(lines 1-6, trans. C/B)

The abundance of alliteration and of assonance in the list-like format mirrors the original Polish. In both cases we can also appreciate that it isn't necessarily straight rhyme that pulls all these things of the world together, but similarities in sound that are both more diverse (sometimes it's a starting

letter, sometimes it's an ending syllable) and unexpected. The result is that we get less of a sense of Dr. Seuss and more of euphoric babble. The original in Polish reads:

Tyle naraz swiata ze wszystkich stron swiata:  
moreny, mureny i morza i zorze  
i ogien i ogon i orzel i orzech –  
jak ja o ustawie, gdzie ja to poloze?  
Te chaszczce i paszczce i leszczce i deszczce,  
bodziszki, moliszki – gdzie ja to pomieszczce?

So much at a time in the world           , from the world in all directions  
Moraines, morays, and the sea and the aurora  
and fire and a tail and an eagle and a nut—  
how do these line up around me, whereabouts me in this dance?  
These thickets and yawns and hazels and rains,  
geraniums, mantises – whereabouts me is there room?

(lines 1-6, my trans.)

Working literally with each word, my translation keeps the alliteration in “moraines” and “morays” rather naturally, but otherwise the streaming sound of Szymborska’s lines are lost. In addition, the more consonant-rich Polish language gives its alliteration more “rustle and bustle” than English can. Cavanagh and Baranczak take from this poem that it’s more the sense of all these things coming together and the delight in the menagerie rather than any significance on any individual item – the result is that they take considerable license with the literal meaning, but create a poem that gives the English reader an experience as similar as possible to that of the Polish reader. The precise meaning is sacrificed for wordplay and sound, but they still keep as much as possible (“moraines, morays,” the idea of fire, and “thickets” are all kept and used to inform the rest of the lines) and from there the Cavanagh/Baranczak lines emerge from the original and run strictly on alliteration.

Yet more poems where Cavanagh and Baranczak put aside their general priority for the literal in favor of sheer sound are “In the Park” and “Still.” In “In the Park,” their translation mirrors the playful way Szymborska writes “**taka po...o...o...poobijana?**” in “so-o-o-o beat-up?” (line 7). Then at the end of the poem, Szymborska uses the colloquial phrase “**juz juz**” (line 12). The most precise translation of this would be something near “come already” or “get going already” – the word *juz* by itself means “already.” The last lines, which make up the fourth and last snippet of spoken conversation, read:

Nie wiem, odkad pamietam,  
zawske taka byla.  
Miasto powinno cos z tym w koncu zrobic.  
Albo wyrzucic gdzies, albo odnowic.  
No, juz juz, chodzmy dalej.

-- I don't know, she's always  
been like that I think.  
The city should do something about it.  
Get rid of it, fix it.  
Well, don't dawdle, let's get going.

(trans. C/B)

Cavanagh and Baranczak let go of this “already” in favor of a phrase that preserves the alliteration (which is crucial in creating the tone of a Mother speaking to her child) and is also essentially accurate. They also preserve the sounds in the two previous lines, where the Polish ending *ic* surfaces to rhyme the words, by using the word “it.” In the poem “Still,” the entire poem rhymes, mostly in an ABAB fashion. This is one of the few cases where Cavanagh and Baranczak choose to rhyme their translation. Interestingly, however, the original Polish is less strictly rhymed than their translation. The third stanza, for example, rhymes simply the second and fourth lines:

**Nie skacz w biegu, imie Dawida.  
Tys jest imie skazujace na kleske,  
nie dawane nikomu, bez domu,  
do noszenia w tym kraju zbyt ciezkie.**

Also, the way the ending words do rhyme in the Polish is varied, in contrast to the set rhyme scheme of the Cavanagh/Baranczak translation. Their reason for giving rhyme such a prime position seems to be drawn from the last stanza. There, Szyborska mimics the sound of a train running along its tracks:

**Tak to, tak, stuka kolo. Las bez polan.  
Tak to, tak. Lasem jedzie transport wolan.  
Tak to, tak. Obudzona w nocy slysze  
tak to, tak, lomotanie ciszy w cisze.**

Yes, yes, clicks the wheel. Gladeless forest.  
Yes, yes, through the forest a transport of noise.  
Yes, yes, awake in the night to hear  
Yes, yes, the collision of silence on silence.  
(my trans.)

In their translation of this stanza, Cavanagh and Baranczak abandon the literal translation, keeping the gladeless forest, the noise and the returning silence only as they can fit in with the chugging sound:

That's-a-fact. The rail and the wheels.  
That's-a-fact. A forest, no fields.  
That's-a-fact. And their silence once more,  
that's-a-fact, drums on my silent door.  
(trans. C/B)

Their choice for a strict, repetitive rhyme scheme throughout the rest of the poem seems to recognize the deficit of a softer English to mimic the railway as well as the brusque sound of Polish does. In compensation, the chugging rhyme of the English replicates in the background the feeling of the train. The translators' choices to make way for sound, at the expense of their general loyalty to the literal in “In the Park” and of both the literal and the original rhyme in “Still,” are a mark of their openness and flexibility. These in turn reflect the feeling, at the end of both poems, of resignation and of a limitation on the speaker.

The success of Cavanagh and Baranczak, then, arises out of a flexibility in translation, but particularly a flexibility driven and maintained by a sense of humility in their approach. In their translations one repeatedly finds the sense that they feel as translators that they have little or no part

in the final creation and that they are striving constantly to keep as much of their own trademarks and styles out. Much of the features that draw them to this deferential sensibility – giving them translations that have a sense of awe – and likewise are highlighted by looking at the translations are marks of Szymborska’s own humility: the dedication to not knowing, for example, and to not being able to take on the whole of everything. The success with which Cavanagh and Baranczak translate the feel of Szymborska is ultimately grounded in this humility, and in seeking the reason for their success in “feel” we find the reason for hers.



# Function, Individual and Communal: Athletic Excess in Ancient Greece and Modern America

by Jesse M. Kaplan '09

“Excessive care of the body that goes beyond simple physical training is pretty much the biggest obstacle of all. For it’s a nuisance in household management, in military service, and even in sedentary political office.” – Glaucon<sup>1</sup>

The ancient practice of dietetics, a discipline loosely synonymous with regimen or hygiene, contained prescriptions (and proscriptions) for every aspect of one’s daily life. Encompassing not only the contemporary conception of “diet” (that is, consumption of proper aliment), but also areas as diverse as exercise, environment, bowel movements, and sleep, dietetics was, in the words of Michel Foucault, “a whole art of living”<sup>2</sup> – and an art that carried a heavy moral weight. For the Greeks, the ability to live a regimented lifestyle separated humans from animals. Such “dietary dysjunction” between rationality and irrationality held important implications for the civic life and the conception of the proper behavior for a social actor.<sup>3</sup>

A dietetic regime could, however, be carried too far. It was distinctly possible for a person to subscribe so completely to a regimen of hygiene that he effectively sacrificed his own autonomy for that of the regimen. In particular, the physical aspect of dietetics was not to “be too intensely cultivated for its own sake.”<sup>4</sup> Such “athletic excess,” as Foucault terms it, was characterized by “repeated workouts that overdeveloped the body and ended by making the soul sluggish,” as it was locked inside a “too-powerful musculature.”<sup>5</sup> Numerous ancient authors wrote about the dangers of athletic excess, the problems of which were myriad. Healthy regimen was beneficial both to the city (by building a physically, mentally, and morally strong group of citizens) and to the individual. Excessive dedication to physical training, by contrast, had functional benefits for neither party, and was to be avoided at all costs.

While dietetics in general as conceived by the Greeks has no proper modern equivalent, the concept of athletic excess has survived, in somewhat altered form. Academic and popular writing about contemporary gym culture, and in particular the practice of bodybuilding, retains much of the moralizing tone characteristic of ancient criticisms of athletic excess. Critics generally identify a lack of functionality as the primary reason that bodybuilding is neither noble nor desirable. Yet while the uselessness of the overcommitted athlete to the **polis** concerned Greek authors, modern scholars focus much more on the extent to which bodybuilding is useless for the bodybuilder **himself** – the language of individualism has replaced the language of community. This shift in language reflects a shift in the social circumstances of the various civilizations – while it was of the utmost importance, given the uncertainty of daily life, that all Greek men be prepared to defend their city at a moment’s notice, men in contemporary Western society have no such obligations. The relative stability of modern life effectively precludes any criticism of athletic excess on communal, functional terms.

## Greek Conceptions of Masculinity and The Dangers of Excess

The ancient Greeks viewed the body and mind as overlapping parts of the rational actor, both of which were vital to properly take one’s place within society and contribute in a valuable and

meaningful way as a citizen. A typical picture of “Hellenic masculinity” was therefore “both well-read and well-exercised,” and created by “a healthy mind in a healthy body.”<sup>6</sup> Exercise furthered both “physical and intellectual development in a rational programme” in such a way as to prepare the men of a city for whatever fate befell them.<sup>7</sup> The Greeks saw this intellectual development as the most important result of exercise. Plato (through the voice of Socrates) notes in **Republic** that the ideal guardian of youth “will undertake even the regimens and exertions of physical training with an eye **less to strength** than to arousing the spirited part of his nature.”<sup>8</sup> In addition, he writes that the originators of both physical and musical training had the same purpose in mind: “they established both chiefly for the sake of the soul” (and not the body).<sup>9</sup> Within dietetics then, the focus was not only on the body, but on the mind (or soul) as well, and dietetic instructions had “both the authority of a moral precept and the utility of sound advice for health.”<sup>10</sup> The ability of a person to follow an exacting schedule of hygiene was taken to be an external manifestation of internal moral fiber. Training in the Greek gymnasium not only improved combat prowess and strengthened the ability to ward off disease, but also conveyed mental benefits, the by-products of the determination and persistence needed to continually summon the will to engage in strenuous exercise.

The personal utility of physical training “lay precisely in the possibility it gave individuals to face different situations”<sup>11</sup>: health was important, but only insofar as it permitted adaptation to changing circumstances. Ancient authors emphasized preparation for the vicissitudes of life. The dietetic physician Celsus states that “a man in health, who is both vigorous and his own master, should be under no obligatory rules,” and “his kind of life should afford him variety.”<sup>12</sup> Plato also addresses the issue, arguing that “warrior-athletes” must be able to “sustain frequent changes of water and diet generally.”<sup>13</sup> The “best physical training” would be “a simple and good physical training,” preparing citizens for adversity in life in general and in war specifically.<sup>14</sup>

Athletic excess contrasted with this “simple and good” training on many levels. First, an excessive focus on the body impeded the mental and spiritual development that was the primary goal of exercise. Rather than contributing to a well-rounded citizen, overtraining “deforms the character,” and weakens and distorts morality.<sup>15</sup> In Athenaeus’ **The Deipnosophists**, a dialogue concerning, among other subjects, diet, health, and entertainment, the author quotes Euripides as claiming that athletes never learn the proper art of living, and because of this are the worst “of all the countless evils infesting Greece.”<sup>16</sup> In Plato’s view, if a man only trains and “never enters into partnership with a Muse,” his soul becomes “weak, deaf, and blind,” regardless of whether his nature is inclined toward mental pursuits.<sup>17</sup> The athlete neglects learning, thinking, and personal reflection.<sup>18</sup> Most damningly, Plato claims that an athlete overcommitted to his body “[becomes] an unmusical hater of argument who . . . behaves like a wild beast.”<sup>19</sup> A hater of argument (**misologos**) contrasts directly with a philosopher (**philogos**), or lover of argument.<sup>20</sup> In the **Republic**, which depicts philosopher-kings as governing the ideal society, this is a harsh denunciation indeed. Athletic excess effectively reverses the dietary dysjunction between man and animal, preventing the development of rationality and morality in the athlete.

Second, athletic excess, in a practical sense, prevents the athlete from participating in the social realm. Such an athlete “voluntarily [places] himself outside the civilized company of men.”<sup>21</sup> Celsus writes that the “necessities of civil life” often require a “break in the routine of exercise.”<sup>22</sup> This break is unacceptable to athletes, and they ignore social obligations in favor of training and diet. Even if athletes were willing to alter their training regimen to attend social functions, they would likely not be willing to eat what was served, or would consume far more food than is socially acceptable. Joseph Fontenrose notes that many Greek myths involving athletes describe in detail

the inordinate quantity of meat they consumed.<sup>23</sup> **The Deipnosophists** is replete with stories focusing on the differences in quantity and quality between the food of athletes and that of enlightened citizens. Theagenes, an athlete from Thasos, consumed an entire bull; Titormus, another athlete, consumed an ox. Astyanax of Miletus “promised to eat all the food prepared for all the guests” at a dinner party, “and actually did so.” Theophilus defines an athlete simply as a man who eats a great deal.<sup>24</sup>

These feats of appetite, moreover, were not admirable. Instead, they were subjects of mockery. Athenaeus recounts the tale of a Theban athlete “who surpassed his contemporaries in strength because he used goat’s flesh as a diet.”<sup>25</sup> Rather than marveling at the athlete’s physical prowess, however, his peers mocked him “because of the bad odour from his sweat,” which was presumably caused by the pungency of the goat’s meat.<sup>26</sup> The diet of the athlete, composed of enormous quantities of meat, was undesirable in both hypothetical and practical terms: not only did athletes by their diets place themselves outside of civilized company, but the consumption of an excess of meat interfered with the livelihood of other members of society, who either had access only to limited amounts of meat themselves, or depended on livestock for trade and agricultural purposes.

The athlete did not eat socially or for entertainment or cultural growth, but rather gorged himself in the privacy of his own home, “eating the wrong foods, and in the wrong circumstances,” and “in obsessive pursuit of a narrowly defined regimen” that may perhaps not have been desirable even for its own sake.<sup>27</sup> For just as athletic excess corrupted the intellectual and social functions of exercise, the Greeks somewhat paradoxically believed it weakened the athlete physically as well. The fitness of the athlete was a precarious state, requiring constant vigilance and liable to collapse at any moment. It was an illegitimate fitness and unable to adapt to changing circumstances – even the most minute change in routine was thought to potentially “bring shocking and sudden physical decline,” and athletes were “delicate and vulnerable” physically.<sup>28</sup> Celsus claims that the bodies of athletes “age very quickly and become infirm” and that because of this “the example of athletes should not be followed” by responsible citizens.<sup>29</sup> Athletic excess prohibited variety: “it only permitted one to live in one place, with one type of food,” and was completely opposed to the flexibility of regimen engendered in proper dietetic practices.<sup>30</sup> Plato called it “a soporific sort of regimen and unreliable as regards health,” because athletes “sleep their lives away,” and “become seriously and violently ill” if their routine is broken in any way.<sup>31</sup> Contrary to the physical versatility that proper training cultivated, athletic excess resulted in a citizen who was in many ways disabled and a liability rather than an asset to his city.

Plato’s discussion of the athlete’s lack of ability to adapt immediately precedes his discussion of the ideal warrior-athlete who is the proper trainer of the youth of the **polis**. The warrior-athlete follows a simple physical training, adapts to circumstances without difficulty or complaint, and cultivates both physical training through exercise and cultural training through music. He is, in short, everything that the athlete is not. He is “courageous,” rather than exhibiting “savagery and toughness,” and he uses “argument to persuade people,” rather than resorting to “awkward ignorance.”<sup>32</sup> His “musical and physical training” is “harmonized . . . by being stretched and **relaxed** to the appropriate degree.”<sup>33</sup> The athlete cannot relax his physical training; the warrior-athlete recognizes the need for balancing physical cultivation with intellectual cultivation.

The fact that Plato’s ideal citizen is a warrior-athlete carries with it the implication that the best contribution to the city can be made through defending it in wartime. The Greeks couched moralizing judgments of the athlete as too ignorant, too antisocial, and too inflexible in distinctly

communal terms: the athlete is seen as morally lacking not for his own sake, but because he is useless to his city. He “[spends] his life as an invalid,” because he is helpless in the face of his dietetic regimen.<sup>34</sup> He cannot contribute anything to society, and even if he could would be unwilling to do so. A criterion of functionality forms the basis for this communal morality, which speaks to the uncertainty of daily life in ancient Greece. Theoretically, the athlete would be acceptable in Greek society if his excessive training made him more valuable in combat. When the city may have to be defended at any moment, all able-bodied citizens must be effective combatants. For the largest and most fit members of society to be unable to fulfill this duty seems wanton on their part, and possibly fatal to the **polis**.

This instrumental focus of dietetic morality remained stable throughout much of history between the Greeks and modern Western culture. While a full survey of this period is outside the scope of this paper, I will provide a few examples in support of the point. Ludwig Edelstein notes that Romans believed “daily routine should be regulated only in so far as this is possible for **active** people,” and that excessive athletic training “would necessarily be interrupted by the citizen’s daily obligations.”<sup>35</sup> These daily obligations included military service, and were seen as vital to the functioning of the state. In the face of civic demands, “all kinds of athletics and prescribed nutrition were superfluous,” and “living according to gymnastic rules [was] decidedly rejected.”<sup>36</sup> The Romans, like the Greeks, viewed shirking social duties to train as dangerous to the country.

Much later, the Lord Michel Yquem de Montaigne, a philosopher and civic actor, though not specifically addressing the issue of war, nevertheless casts his criticism of dietetic excess in instrumental terms. A man of society cannot regulate very carefully what he eats, as “a mannerly belly is a great part of a mans liberty,”<sup>37</sup> and social circumstances often choose what food must be consumed. Because “publike lives are due unto ceremony,” which dictates one’s obligations, training must be made a minimal, or at least flexible, part of a social actor’s life.<sup>38</sup> Montaigne’s opposition to excess is clear: “a man should apply himselfe to the best rules, but not subject himself unto them” so that he might best fulfill his social duties.<sup>39</sup> The importance of functionality, rooted in the Greek tradition, thus dominated dietetic discourse about excess for much of the history of Western civilization.

### Contemporary Athletic Excess

Entrenched gym culture is a very modern development – gym-going, while somewhat established in the early twentieth century, began to accelerate only in the 1970s.<sup>40</sup> In its most desirable form, the frequenting of modern gyms is, like the physical training of the Greeks, reputed to be as important mentally and emotionally as physically. Modern exercise leads to “physical mastery of both self and world,” which in turn increases confidence, self-esteem, and the “connected[ness]” one feels to society.<sup>41</sup> Exercise does have “specific and legitimizing objectives,” including “the care and transformation of the body” and “a shared attempt to **embody** and **display** a sense of empowerment and self-mastery.”<sup>42</sup> Such objectives, however, are not exclusively physical, nor are they opposed to the external world. Nick Crossley in fact notes that “the social world of the gym is important” for gym-goers.<sup>43</sup> Instead of escaping the social realm at the gym, dedicated, committed gym-goers instead augment the external social realm with a separate but related society within the gym itself.

This “gym society” also enforces the morals of society at large. In a fashion very similar to that of the Greek authors, modern scholars describe exercise in strongly moral terms which frequent gym-goers internalize. Crossley refers to the guilt of the lapsed exerciser as not concerning the

“state of the body” itself, but instead “a perceived failing of character” in his inability to follow a regimen.<sup>44</sup> Weight gain itself has a moral significance: the common phrase “I’ve let myself go” implies a deficiency not only in exercise routine but in morality as well.<sup>45</sup> Just as the Greeks believed moral development was both forged and exhibited in the ability to follow a routine of physical training (within proper limits), modern authors frame their discussions of the gym-goer with comments about the admirability of undertaking a regimen. A dedication to the gym entails the “difficulty of leaving aside normal, outside expectations.”<sup>46</sup> Exercise routines are “punishing regimes of self-transformation” – transformation that includes mental and moral as well as physical aspects.<sup>47</sup> Regular gym attendance may indeed be, as Crossley asserts, “a moral career.”<sup>48</sup> The choice to begin such a career represents one’s dedication to good morals; the ability to maintain this career reflects internal fortitude.

Yet like Greek gym-going, excessive dedication to exercise is not desirable. Indeed, while the “lithe and energetic” or “exercised and dieted” body may be idealized within modern culture, it is only admired “up to a certain point.”<sup>49</sup> As muscle mass grows and body fat percentage decreases – that is, as the modern gym-goer becomes a bodybuilder – he becomes “outlandish” in the eyes of his peers.<sup>50</sup> As with Greek conceptions of athletic excess, modern bodybuilding corrupts in a number of ways the purity of the moral, mental, and physical development that is the normal outgrowth of exercise, resulting in the bodybuilder being “ostracized in non-bodybuilding settings.”<sup>51</sup> Instead of the positive social reaction that regular gym attendance generates, the general public’s response to the bodybuilder is starkly negative.

Like Greek athletic excess, bodybuilding prevents the bodybuilder from appropriately participating in normal society. Physical training for him becomes not a relatively firm routine but a set schedule. He trains “at the same times, without consideration” of other possible obligations.<sup>52</sup> He arranges other activities around the gym, attaches a lesser priority to friends and work, and “even [his] eating arrangements are affected.”<sup>53</sup> The gym becomes primary for him; everything else is secondary. Even when not actually at the gym, it dominates his thoughts and actions. Several studies have concluded that bodybuilders spend inordinate amounts of time thinking about increasing muscle mass; one group of researchers found the average time to be in excess of five hours per day.<sup>54</sup> Scholarly writing about bodybuilding is filled with anecdotes in which a bodybuilder will choose to miss the birth of his child or an important deadline at work because of a need to train. Such behavior has been viewed as so athletically excessive that modern psychiatry has pathologized it as “muscle dysmorphia,” a subtype of Body Dysmorphic Disorder.<sup>55</sup>

As with Greek athletic excess, society also views the physical results of bodybuilding as undesirable. Non-bodybuilders have described a “built body” as similar to that of “an alien,” “a reptile,” or “a cat.”<sup>56</sup> Bodybuilders cross “limits to the extent that they evoke feelings of repulsion or disgust.”<sup>57</sup> And just as Clement of Alexandria described the strength of the athlete as “endangering and enervated,”<sup>58</sup> modern bodybuilding is not seen as a salubrious enterprise. From a strictly dietetic standpoint, the exercise in which bodybuilders engage, with its lack of cardiovascular activity, is not particularly healthful, and their excessive intake of protein, dangerously low consumption of dietary fat, and widespread use of anabolic steroids is in many ways as unhealthy as more conventional eating practices. Bodybuilding does not “confer any direct benefit on internal physiological functioning,” and may in fact be deleterious to physical well-being.<sup>59</sup> Health “is secondary to the healthy look,” and bodybuilders are “motivated by the power of the **image**.”<sup>60</sup> Like the strength of the ancient Greek athlete, the physical prowess of the modern bodybuilder is a façade, liable to collapse at any moment and reveal the weakness it conceals.

Scholars often use this focus on the image (and its lack of actual functionality) to contrast bodybuilding with normal exercise, which “emphasizes both the characteristics and the possibilities of the body.”<sup>61</sup> Simply looking good, the stated goal of bodybuilding, has no instrumental value – not to the bodybuilder himself, and certainly not to society in general. “Appearance, rather than performance,”<sup>62</sup> is important, and this shares much with Greek conceptions of excess. Bodybuilders who simply wish “to look better” are in sharp opposition to normal sportsmen who aim “to improve function.”<sup>63</sup> An overly-developed body lacks function not only athletically, but in practical terms as well. Excessive brawn is not necessary for most occupations, nor is it desirable in war. Its limitations rest, quite literally, on the surface.

### Conclusions

Though there are certainly similarities in approach, the modern discussion of functionality differs from the Greek emphasis on adaptation in an important respect. While contemporary writers compare bodybuilders unfavorably with modern athletes, it is not because legitimate sportsmen are in any way better suited to contribute something of value to society than are bodybuilders.<sup>64</sup> Modern scholars do not echo Plato’s criticisms that the athlete is useless to his city, nor do they lament the fact that the bodybuilder is not well-suited to go to war. Instead of a sense that the bodybuilder is a waste to society, there is more a notion that he is a waste to himself – he distorts his own development and limits his own potential through his distortion of the normally beneficial practice of exercise. The immorality of bodybuilding, the modern conception of athletic excess, is on an individual, not a communal, level.

The rejection of communal moral obligations, at least as it pertains to athletic excess, reflects the fact that modern life is relatively stable in comparison to that of the Greeks. Modern man has no social obligation to be fit and ready to defend his society for the simple reason that society no longer faces threats (or at least those that can be warded off with physical force) on a daily basis. A bodybuilder’s consumption of excessive protein harms only himself, while a Greek athlete’s consumption of a bull could have economic ramifications for his entire city. Much of the pressing value of proper dietetic regimen (and much of the harshness directed toward those who violated it) has dissipated. The ancient Greek who committed athletic excess could be a very real, if indirect, threat to his *polis*; the modern bodybuilder is at worst an oddity. It is perhaps for this reason that bodybuilding can be discussed academically as a widespread practice, while Greek accounts of athletic excess center around fictitious myths of superhuman appetite. Bodybuilding may be stigmatizing, but the modern bodybuilder, unlike the Greek athlete, has a place within his society. He does not endanger society with his excess; to the extent he endangers anyone, it is only himself.

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<sup>1</sup>Plato, *Republic*, trans. C. D. C. Reeve (Cambridge, MA: Hackett, 2004), 91.

<sup>2</sup>Michel Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure: The History of Sexuality, Vol. 2*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1990), 104.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 97.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 104.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.* Foucault also describes a different but related form of undesirable dedication to dietetic regime, which includes “the constant vigilance that one applied to one’s body, one’s health, the least ailment.” He calls this slavery to hygiene the “valetudinary’ excess.”

<sup>6</sup>Gideon Nisbet, “A Sickness of Discourse: The Vanishing Syndrome of *Leptosune*,” *Greece & Rome* 50 (October 2003): 199.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup>Plato, *Republic*, 94. Emphasis added.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 102.

<sup>11</sup>Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*, 105.

<sup>12</sup>Celsus, *De medicina*, trans. W. G. Spencer (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1935), Vol. I, 43.

<sup>13</sup>Plato, *Republic*, 87.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>Nisbet, "A Sickness of Discourse": 202.

<sup>16</sup>Athenaeus, *The Deipnosophists*, trans. Charles Burton Gulick (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1928), Vol. IV, 373.

<sup>17</sup>Plato, *Republic*, 95-6.

<sup>18</sup>For purposes of this paper, I confine my use of the term "athlete" to those who engage in athletic excess.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 96.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid. This observation is the translator's. See footnote 65 in Book 4 of *Republic*.

<sup>21</sup>Nisbet, "A Sickness of Discourse": 202.

<sup>22</sup>Celsus, *De medicina*, 43.

<sup>23</sup>Joseph Fontenrose, "The Hero as Athlete," *California Studies in Classical Antiquity* 1 (1968): 86, 88.

<sup>24</sup>Athenaeus, *The Deipnosophists*, 369-71, 389.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 321.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

<sup>27</sup>Nisbet, "A Sickness of Discourse": 202.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

<sup>29</sup>Celsus, *De medicina*, 43, 49.

<sup>30</sup>Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*, 105.

<sup>31</sup>Plato, *Republic*, 87.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 94, 96.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 96. Emphasis added.

<sup>34</sup>Ludwig Edelstein, "The Dietetics of Antiquity," in idem, *Ancient Medicine: Selected Papers of Ludwig Edelstein*, eds. Owei Temkin and C. Lilian Temkin (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1967), 313.

<sup>35</sup>Edelstein, "The Dietetics of Antiquity," 308, 309.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 309, 311.

<sup>37</sup>Michel Yquem de Montaigne, "Of Experience," in idem, *The Essayes of Michael Lord of Montaigne*, trans. John Florio (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1928, orig. publ. 1581-1588), Vol. III, 365.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 346.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid.

<sup>40</sup>Nick Crossley, "In The Gym: Motives, Meaning and Moral Careers," *Body & Society* 12 (2006): 31. Though there are important differences between a true gym and a "health club," such distinctions are outside the scope of this essay and for the sake of simplicity I will simply use "gym" to refer to both.

<sup>41</sup>Crossley, "In The Gym": 42.

<sup>42</sup>Roberta Sassatelli, "Interaction Order and Beyond: A Field Analysis of Body Culture Within Fitness Gyms," *Body & Society* 5 (1999): 232. Lee Monaghan, "Looking good, feeling good: the embodied pleasures of vibrant physicality," *Sociology of Health & Illness* 23 (2001): 334. Emphasis original.

<sup>43</sup>Crossley, "In The Gym": 45.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 44.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., 30.

<sup>46</sup>Sassatelli, "Interaction Order and Beyond": 236.

<sup>47</sup>Garry Whannel, *Media Sport Stars: Masculinities and moralities* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 71.

<sup>48</sup>Crossley, "In The Gym": 35.

<sup>49</sup>Sassatelli, "Interaction Order and Beyond": 227. Lee Monaghan, "Creating the 'Perfect Body': A Variable Product," *Body & Society* 5 (1999): 278. Emphasis original.

<sup>50</sup>Monaghan, "Creating the 'Perfect Body'": 278. Though I recognize that there are female bodybuilders, I have chosen to use masculine pronouns to refer to bodybuilders to avoid clutter.

<sup>51</sup>*Ibid.*, 284, 286.

<sup>52</sup>Sassatelli, "Interaction Order and Beyond": 35.

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup>Roberto Olivardia, Harrison G. Pope, and James I. Hudson, "Muscle Dysmorphia in Male Weightlifters: A Case-Control Study," *American Journal of Psychiatry* 157 (2000): 1294.

<sup>55</sup>Roberto Olivardia, "Mirror, Mirror on the Wall, Who's the Largest of Them All? The Features and Phenomenology of Muscle Dysmorphia," *Harvard Review of Psychiatry* 9 (2001): 254-9.

<sup>56</sup>Lee Monaghan, "The Bodybuilding Ethnophysiology Thesis," in *Bodies at the Gym*, ed. Nick Watson and Sarah Cunningham-Burley (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 138.

<sup>57</sup>Monaghan, "Creating the 'Perfect Body'": 277.

<sup>58</sup>Clement of Alexandria, *Paidagogos*, quoted in Nisbet, "A Sickness of Discourse": 201.

<sup>59</sup>Monaghan, "Looking good, feeling good,": 337

<sup>60</sup>*Ibid.*, 337, 338. Emphasis original.

<sup>61</sup>Nina Waaler Loland, "Some Contradictions and Tensions in Elite Sportsmen's Attitudes Toward Their Bodies," *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 34 (1999): 294.

<sup>62</sup>Whannel, *Media Sport Stars*, 70.

<sup>63</sup>Loland, "Some Contradictions and Tensions," 297.

<sup>64</sup>Arguments have been made that team sports have formative moral value, but this value lies not in the actual sport itself but in the aspect of working as part of a larger group, and in any event is limited to youths.

Divination from the tips:  
A Reading of O’Hussey’s Lament for Hugh Maguire

By Lisa A. Park ‘07

Eochadh O’Hussey was one of the most distinguished poets in Ireland in the early seventeenth century and served as the last hereditary bard of the Maguires of Fermanagh. Here, he laments the hardships faced by Hugh Maguire, Lord of Fermanagh, during a winter campaign in Cork. Maguire defied the English government, underwent numerous battles and ultimately died fighting the crown authority during the Nine Years War in 1600.

“Hugh Maguire” by Eochy O’Hussey

Too cold this night for Hugh Maguire,  
I tremble at the pounding rain;  
    Alas that venomous cold  
    Is my companion’s lot. (4)

Cold on the tender blushing cheek  
The fury of the springtime gales  
    That toss the stormy rays  
    Of stars about his head. (28)

It is anguish to my heart  
To see the fiery torrents fall;  
    He and the spiky frost,  
    A horror to the mind. (8)

I can scarce bear to conjure up  
The contour of his body crushed  
    This rough and gloomy night  
    In its cold iron suit. (32)

The floodgates of the heavens yawn  
Above the bosom of the clouds,  
    And every pool a sea  
    And murder in the air. (12)

The gentle and war-mastering hand  
To the slim shaft of his cold spear  
    By icy weather pinned—  
    Cold is this night for Hugh.(36)

One thinks of the hare that haunts the wood  
And of the salmon in the bay,  
    Even the wild bird, one grieves  
    To think they are abroad.(16)

The low banks of the swollen streams  
Are flooded where the soldiers pass,  
    The meadows stiff with ice,  
    The horses cannot feed. (40)

Then one remembers Hugh Maguire  
Abroad in a strange land tonight  
    Under the lightning’s glare  
    And clouds with fury filled.(20)

And yet as though to bring him warmth  
And coax the brightness to his face  
    Each wall that he attacks  
    Sinks in a wave of fire. (44)

He in West Munster braves his doom  
And without shelter strides between  
    The drenched and shivering grass  
    And the impetuous sky. (24)

The fury of the fire dissolves  
The frost that sheaths the tranquil eye,  
    And from his wrists the flame  
    Thaws manacles of ice. (48)  
    (O’Connor, 82-3)

According to Irish tradition, **díchetal di chennaib**, ‘incantation of heads,’ is one of the three requirements of a great poet. **Cenn** is the Irish word for ‘head’ (appearing here in its dative plural form), but alternatively translates into ‘top,’ ‘end,’ ‘tip,’ **etc**. In the Irish text **Cormac’s Glossary**, the medieval encyclopedia of traditional Irish culture, we see how this latter meaning can be employed.

In this work, *díchetal di chennaib* is said to be produced by a person 'do chennaib a chnámae,' or 'from the ends of his bones.'<sup>1</sup> Here, the best translation of *cenn* is thus 'fingertip.' I found the potential for ambiguity inherent in the term *cenn* a fascinating basis for thought on O'Hussey's "Hugh Maguire."

O'Hussey distinguishes in his treatment between the head/face as being vulnerable body parts and the hand as being the source of exceptional power that transcends bodily threats environmental and otherwise, demonstrating a metaphysical power not dissimilar to the supposed magical gifts of a great poet. At first, O'Hussey portrays Hugh Maguire's body as vulnerable by conjuring up numerous sensations and descriptions of what it must feel like to be cold; and this vulnerability is felt on the face, head and body as a whole. His 'tender blushing cheek' (25) is exposed to the wilderness and 'the impetuous sky' (24) and 'rays of stars about his head' (28) threaten injury to this uppermost exposed and unarmed body part. Furthermore, Hugh Maguire's vulnerability is felt in terms of the relative softness of his face and body when compared to the hard and unrelenting surroundings. His apparently physically malleable 'contour' is deformed as his body is imagined 'crushed' by external forces (30); even the most delicate soft tissue in his 'tranquil eye' has been seized by the infectious and frostbiting cold, concealed under a layer of 'the frost that sheaths' (46). The arctic force thus attacks and seizes the tender and vulnerable flesh of the exposed head and body.

In contrast, O'Hussey utilizes Hugh Maguire's hands, the body part with the highest bone to soft flesh ratio, as the means through which a turning point takes place in the battle between outer forces and Hugh Maguire; it is 'the gentle and war-mastering hand' (33) of Hugh Maguire that enables him to reassert control over the situation. Indeed, before the mentioning of his hands, Maguire is portrayed as being *given* to outer forces rather than reactant to them: 'Too cold... for Hugh Maguire... cold is my companion's lot' (1-4). It is through his hands that his hardness of force and internal combative spirit are ultimately manifested in opposition to the icy enemy. Though the cold has seized his entire body (indeed, even infected the physical extension of his body, 'his cold spear' (34)) his hand employs the tool of warfare and unleashes his will; with it he 'attack[s],' creates 'a [new] wave of fire,' and 'coax[es] brightness to his face' (42-4) which had been hitherto hardened by ice.

His furious assault against the enemy gives birth to a new spirit and warmth that reinvigorates the body and removes the blinding and limiting consequences of the frost: 'the fury of the fire dissolves the frost that sheaths the tranquil eye' (46). Heat and force emanate from the hands and though they may seem relatively insignificant in size and proportion of flesh as compared to the rest of the human body, it is precisely from this agile, agentive extremity and hard, bony, bodily margin that there emerges a power that can melt away and heal even the past harm done by the cold: 'and from his wrists the flame thaws manacles of ice' (47-8). Can demonstration from the hands be tantamount to a type of divination? Rather than demonstrating the perception of the occult or future events, in this scenario, it demonstrates the miracle of a singular extremity being able to embody, focus, and channel a spiritual force that has the power to prevail over and transcend overwhelming inimical odds and create watershed events that ultimately change the course of future perceptions and alter the destination and result of past occurrences.

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<sup>1</sup> In Cormac's Glossary, it is explained that St. Patrick outlaws *Imbas forosna* and *Tenn Láida* as being paganistic, thereby banishing two of the three necessary ritual requirements of a great poet or diviner. This left solely *Díchetal do chennaib*: "Díchetal do chennaib, extempore incantation, however, that was left, in right of art, for it is science that causes it, and no offering to devils is necessary, but a declaration from the ends of his bones at once" (O'Donovan, p. 156f).

# Complexity and Chaos: The Rise, Fall, and Redemption of Fractal Architecture

by Kelly W. Heuer '07

## I. Introduction

“Fractal geometry will make you see everything differently... You risk the loss of your childhood vision of clouds, forests, galaxies, leaves, feathers, rocks, mountains, torrents of water, carpets, bricks, and much else besides. Never again will your interpretation of these things be quite the same.”<sup>1</sup>

When Benoit Mandelbrot published *Les Objects Fractals: Forme, Hasard et Dimension* in 1975, he gave geometrical expression to patterns already present in the natural forms of our world. In a later book, *The Fractal Geometry of Nature*, he regrets having previously defined the concept fractals only in terms of the mathematical methodology used to calculate the fractal dimension of any object or process. “For me,” he writes, “the most important instrument of thought is the eye. It sees similarities before a formula has been created to identify them.”<sup>2</sup> The world of fractals has a conceptual application far beyond mathematical theory and modeling, and it is significant that Mandelbrot explicitly refers to the primacy of the human eye in identifying a more comprehensive definition of fractal geometry. In fact, I will argue that it is symbolic of exactly the most fundamental of many relationships fractal geometry has had with the world of architecture.

I began researching this topic intending to focus mainly on those architectural forms consciously inspired by and derived from the in fractal geometry, ignoring the many architectural and archeological forms which exhibit fractal properties but cannot actually have derived them from the 1970s system of geometry. These forms, from self-similar characteristics of Mayan architecture<sup>3</sup> to the chaotic boundary formation of modern cityscapes<sup>4</sup> to the self-scaling complexity of many Frank Lloyd Wright’s buildings<sup>5</sup> have no technical relation to fractal science except insofar as they lend support to certain ideas about the complexity of natural forms and their intrinsic and fundamental relationship to the human observer now as in ancient times.

However, I have found it far more illuminating to discuss those properties which already existed in works of architecture and to look at the power this gives fractal geometry as a theory underlying and guiding human interactions with the environment, rather than as trend in architecture which only began with the publication of *The Fractal Geometry of Nature*. The story of the rise and fall of fractal architecture reflects what I believe to be its unfortunate association with some of the “trendier” ideas of postmodernism (particularly deconstructivism), which lost a great deal of glamour in the 1990s. In this paper I will argue that it is the fractal architecture which **pre-dates** the mathematical elucidation of fractal geometry which has the most value for architecture today.

Whereas the postmodernist interpretations of chaos theory and fractal science which rose to popularity in the mid-1980s employ fuzzy and often misguided appropriations of mathematical propositions from the sciences of complexity, those examples of fractal dynamics in architecture which escaped the postmodernist polemics by pre-dating them manifest the importance of scaling and natural form in mediating man’s relationship to the built environment and the world around him. In the end, I argue that it is the engineers and physicists who are today making the best use of fractal architectural applications. Whether this always has been, will be, or should be the case is of course another question entirely, one which I entertain but do not try definitively answer here.

This paper is divided into eleven sections for clarity. This is Section I, the introduction. In Section II I provide a brief overview of fractals, chaos theory, and the sciences of complexity, before

discussing their application to architecture in Section III. Section IV provides a preliminary overview of the rise and fall of fractal architecture in the years following the publication of Mandelbrot's book, while Section V discusses in more depth some of the ideas largely overlooked by the postmodern theorists of the 1980s but fundamental to the operation of architecture and the fractal nature which constitutes part of this operation (including the nature of man's relationship to architecture via scale and complexity), before discussing some reasons why many theorists believe that the popular failure of the modernist movement resulted from a lack of fractal dimension. Sections VI and VII discuss ways in which the postmodernist movement has tried to respond to what they deem the failure of modern architecture, with VI focusing on ways in which fractal concepts might be employed in the service of this aim, and Section VII detailing several ways in which the theorists failed to do so properly. In Section VIII I return to the positive by examining the work of a man who demonstrated a more thorough grasp of fractal architecture than any of the theorists in the previous two sections, despite dying about two decades before the word "fractal" was even coined: Frank Lloyd Wright. In Section IX I discuss some other legitimate uses of fractal principles in manipulating our built environment (often by people outside the realm of architecture), while in Section X I pause to reflect on the status the fractal architecture argued for in this paper via discussion of its role in the relationship between architecture and engineering, before coming to a final resting point in Section XI, the conclusion.

## II. Fractals

**"Why is geometry often described as 'cold' and 'dry'? One reason lies in its inability to describe the shape of a cloud, a mountain, a coastline, or a tree. Clouds are not spheres, mountains are not cones, coastlines are not circles, and bark is not smooth, nor does lightning travel in a straight line."**<sup>6</sup>

Although Mandelbrot had already published over sixty papers on topics relating to fractals and chaos theory,<sup>7</sup> his 1975 publication still for many marks the true "birth" of fractal geometry.<sup>8</sup> To paraphrase Mandelbrot's more technical definition, a fractal is a geometric shape that exhibits self-similarity across all scales. (There are self-mapping yet non-scaling fractals, but the most common forms are all self-similar, or structurally invariant under ordinary geometric transformations of scale.)<sup>9</sup> A fractal is typically constructed via repeated iterations of the same form at a fixed scaling factor, such that no matter how small a subdivision of the fractal object is taken, the subsection will contain no less detail than the whole. Fractals are thus infinitely scalable, with the same forms – and the same degree of complexity – at every level of examination.

In purely mathematical terms, theoretical fractals are infinitesimally subdivisible. However, at some stage of subdivision, detail inevitably will be lost in actual objects, whether mathematically constructed or naturally occurring. Hence, although **true** fractals cannot actually exist outside the realm of mathematical theory, physical objects (like ferns, or trees, or even buildings) **can** possess fractal properties across a certain **limited** range of scale. The geometry of these dynamically created objects requires what mathematicians call a scaling function to fully elucidate them.<sup>10</sup> Thus our interaction with a fractal must necessarily take place over a range of scales. It is an experience unavoidably embedded in time, for we must move from one level of focus to another – from one distance to the next – for the full experience of the curve, plane, or figure.

A fractal curve is a nominally one-dimensional object so complex that it actually lies **in between** dimensions: the infinitely detailed line comes close to filling **two** dimensions rather than just one. The fractal dimension of such curves will thus be a fractional value between 1 and 2. Similarly, a fractal surface will have a fractal dimension **D** such that  $2 < D < 3$ . The value of **D** in each case depends on the complexity of the geometrical form: the closer the dimension of a fractal is to its possible upper limit, the rougher or more "space-filling" that curve or surface is.<sup>11</sup> The fractal

dimension of any object or building can be calculated using a few formulae from non-Euclidean geometry and a technique called “box-counting,” which measures the cascade of detail across scales of a variable scaling factor  $r$  (which can theoretically be any fraction, but in practice typically falls between  $1/2$  and  $1/10$ ).<sup>12</sup> Again, architectural forms are clearly not themselves fractals, as they cannot maintain **true** self-similarity across **all** possible scales. However, over a certain range of scale some buildings possess fractal properties, in their progression of self-similar detail as the focus moves ever closer or further away.

### III. Fractals in Architectural Design

“Nature is relationships in space. Geometry defines relationships in space. Art creates relationships in space.”<sup>13</sup>

The first person to systematize fractal analysis for architecture was a mathematician and architect named Carl Bovill, whose seminal work **Fractal Geometry in Architecture and Design** has been the jumping-off point for nearly every theorist in the field. Bovill sets out by describing two main ways in which fractal concepts can be employed in architecture and design. The first uses fractal dimension as a critical tool in assessing established buildings and plans: dimensional calculus “provides a quantifiable measure of the mixture of order and surprise in a rhythmic composition.”<sup>14</sup> The range of scales one ought to use in architectural fractal measurements is especially important, and is a function of human visual perception. The measuring unit sizes that make sense for a given observer and location are determined using the following equation:  $d \tan(\theta) = r$ , where  $\theta$  is the angle of the viewer’s eye in observing the structure,  $d$  is the distance from the observer to the structure, and  $r$  is the scaling factor already discussed above.<sup>15</sup> From this we can easily calculate the box-counting fractal dimension of a building and judge its level of complexity across a range of scale, from the very large to the very small. We will discuss the critical applications of fractal dimension for buildings and plans in Section V.

Bovill’s second suggestion for the use of fractal geometry in architecture is to act as a kind of generator of “complex rhythms for use in design” taken, for instance, from famous fractal distributions like the Julia or Mandelbrot sets, or from similarly chaotic systems.<sup>16</sup> While this presents a fruitful avenue for designers interested in using chaotic fractal rhythms in their work, it is for our purposes less germane and so will not be focused upon as emphatically here as the use of calculation of fractal dimension to measure the degree of meandering of the texture and complexity of architectural form.

### IV. The Rise and Fall

“Complexity has offered a ‘cosmogenic’ cocktail – the motifs of fractals, catastrophic theory, and chaos – that has caught the imagination of architects.”<sup>17</sup>

In many ways the story of fractal architecture is a short one, beginning in the late 1970s, reaching a peak of popularity in the late 1980s before plummeting to the level of architectural anathema by the mid-1990s. It is a tale of shifting interests and intrigue, in theoretical alliances illegitimately forged and innocent ideas slandered. It is infinitely tied up with the peaks and troughs of architectural postmodernism’s popularity, and I argue that this misbegotten association between the sciences of complexity (including chaos theory and fractal geometry) and postmodern theory has obscured the true value of fractal analysis for architecture. Michael Ostwald’s excellent article detailing the intricate and often contradictory relationship between architecture and fractal geometry pegs Peter Eisenmann’s exhibition of **House 11a** for the first time at the Cannaregio design seminar in Venice in

July of 1978, **House 11a** as the first example of fractal principles consciously applied to architectural design.<sup>18</sup> Eisenman makes use of fractal scaling processes, which he describes philosophically as involving “three destabilizing concepts: **discontinuity**, which confronts the metaphysics of presence; **recursivity**, which confronts origin; and **self-similarity**, which confronts representation and the aesthetic object.”<sup>19</sup>

What followed this was a whirlwind of popularity for the concept of anything and everything fractal in the architectural world. Architects from all camps of postmodern theory embraced their inner chaos by exploring the principles of complexity science and fractal forms in a variety of writings, designs, and exhibitions. It is during this time that the theoretical slippage from actual geometry and physics into postmodern exuberance in the name of mathematics which I detail in Section VI first begins. Ostwald points out that by the late 1980s “many philosophers including Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (whose works were becoming widely influential at that time) had appropriated fractal geometry to explain complex and often unrelated concepts.”<sup>20</sup> The science of fractals was being pushed beyond its natural boundaries, employed in postmodern polemics decrying the static Euclidian flatness of the modernists and instead celebrating a philosophical effusion of randomness and chaos unwarranted by the careful geometry of the physical theory.

Indeed, Ostwald notes that “as early as 1988 some architectural writers were deriding their colleagues’ obsessions with chaos theory, nonlinear dynamics and fractal geometry,” dismissing it as kitschy, trendy, and ultimately devoid of any true significance.<sup>21</sup> By 1994 the acerbically satirical words of Paul Shephard voice a consensus opinion of the so-called fractal architect: “here is a man,” he writes, “who scatters chaos on paper and talks about randomness and fractional theory. He calls the scatter the plan of a building... He claims the building is ambiguous – he says it is like the chaos of modern life – he tells us all that it is profound.”<sup>22</sup> Harsh words indeed, but not, I think, undeserved. By the turn of the new century, fractal architecture had plummeted from the height of *chic* to the lowest depths of conceptual disregard.

## V. The Crisis of Scale

“As we approach a building from a great distance, the increasing resolution of what is perceived gives us satisfaction in its progressive revelation; it intrigues us at the same time as, by stages, it reveals itself.”<sup>23</sup>

Just as the formulae proposed and expounded in Mandelbrot’s great work gave mathematical quantification to the patterns in nature mathematicians (and others<sup>24</sup>) had for so long observed, the techniques of fractal geometry gave theory and backing to a kind of architectural criticism which well pre-dates Mandelbrot’s elucidation of the mathematical principles of natural fractal forms. This type of architectural criticism has to do with issues of **scale** and **human relationships** to the built space they inhabit. Thus there is no more fitting place to begin an analysis of what has been termed “the crisis of scale” in modern architecture than with the classic books **The Dynamics of Architectural Form**, by Rudolf Arnheim, and **Scale in Architecture**, by Frank Orr.

In his seminal work, Rudolf Arnheim describes a number of design principles in harmony with the theory behind fractal geometry and also scorns some of the earliest postmodern attempts to incorporate chaos into architectural design. **The Dynamics of Architectural Form** was published in 1977, the same year of the first English edition of Mandelbrot’s great work, yet Arnheim’s book uncannily foreshadows many of the themes already on a certain level incorporated into architecture but would be given mathematical force by fractal geometry. The author scorns the postmodern affinity for chaos and randomness, insisting that order will almost always be found at all levels of complexity. “The more complex the structure,” he writes, “the greater the need for order and the more

admirable its achievement, because it is harder to obtain.”<sup>25</sup> Significantly, his description of the **kind** of order manifested at these different levels of complexity employs a musical analogy curiously similar to that which pervades much of the literature on fractal architecture. In criticizing the modern and some early forms of the postmodern, Arnheim describes the “distressing condition” of complete symmetry, in which a visitor “finds himself in the same place wherever he goes:”

“This... is avoided in most other instances because the tendency toward order is constrained by a countertendency, which we may call the **theme** of a system. The theme is what is being ordered. In a piece of music, the composer’s “idea” and the given structure of the musical system are constraining features, to which the best possible order is applied... Ordering serves to organize the parts in the whole and thereby to avoid redundancy, conflict, self-contradiction – all those deficiencies that would prevent the work from being truly itself and fulfilling its various psychological and physical functions.”<sup>26</sup>

Self-described fractal architects frequently employ the metaphor of fractal design as a kind of “fugue” of self-similar forms manifested at different scales in describing their works, just as a number of self-similar melodies or musical “themes” are introduced at different times, tempos, and keys.<sup>27</sup> Importantly for Arnheim, the “theme” is what organizes and gives life to the entire structure, not enabling (as some postmodernists might suggest) chaos and layers of self-repudiation whose tension enables layers of “multivalent double-coding.”<sup>28</sup> His emphasis, too, on the various “psychological and physical functions” of the built environment,<sup>29</sup> as well as his scorn of the rigid modernist symmetry of identically scaled forms, combine to show an attitude toward scale and repetition in architecture which I argue is, if not yet explicitly fractal, at least anticipates it in theory and intent.

By chronological contrast, Orr’s **Scale in Architecture** was published in 1985, at the height of the fractal craze. Although his book makes little explicitly mention of fractal geometry, it is tellingly incredibly similar in message (if not in tone) to Arnheim’s treatment of the topic. “Scale is the aspect in architecture that makes buildings intelligible to us,” the book boldly asserts. “It gives us a sense of how to relate to the building, and it does so in a way that either attracts us and reinforces or values or repels us and contradicts our values.”<sup>30</sup> Orr describes the various ways in which this relation between self and environment can be evaluated, concluding that there are essentially three main sources of scale in architecture: the “inherent scale-giving qualities of the materials we use” (like the size of wood grain, marble veining, etc.), the natural world, and the human body.<sup>31</sup>

Orr theorizes that the incorporation of botanical and other natural forms into ancient and classical architecture might reflect a subconscious desire to maintain the sense of scale given by certain familiar plant forms. He writes that “human beings share a perception of the surrounding world that constantly relates and compares external forms to the more or less measurable dimensions of the human body... The body is the one physical entity that unites and unifies us with all other human beings; and this particular kind of unity can be seen as a strong, essential, fundamental source of understanding about scale.”<sup>32</sup> The use of forms at a level of scale and complexity similar to those found in our natural surroundings, even if not explicitly mimicking their form, helps to mediate between man and his built environment. It is perhaps for this reason that so many ancient and folk architectures contain a common fractal substructure, as Nikos Salingaros suggests: “there is some observable structure at every level of magnification, and the different levels of scale are very tightly linked by the design.”<sup>33</sup>

Salingaros goes on to comment on the removal of this scaled complexity from Modern architecture, with unfortunate results. “In contradistinction,” she writes, “modernist buildings have no fractal qualities... Indeed, one can see an unwritten design rule in the avoidance of organized fractal scales.”<sup>34</sup> Orr presents a similar criticism of buildings in the Modern style, noting that they

often present such a limited range of scale that “they have no distance distinctiveness – that is, the buildings reveal the same amount and kind of information about themselves from every distance.”<sup>35</sup> Not only are there very few levels of complexity on different scales in the work of such Modernists as Le Corbusier or Mies van der Rohe, but the few different scales these modern works do employ are not linked in any meaningful way.

It is here that the mathematics of scaling self-similar fractals can give solid theoretical backing to these architectural reservations. Calculating the fractal dimension of these works can, Bovill suggests, help explain why certain of the high-Modernist or “international” style works of architecture hailed by the avant-garde simply never caught on with the general public to whom it fell to inhabit them. Bovill pins this failing on the lack of textural progression in many Modernist buildings: they were simply “too flat.”<sup>36</sup> Bovill’s calculation of the progression of fractal detail in several of Le Corbusier’s works showed progression of complexity only over or three of the largest scales: those corresponding to a distant view. Up close, Le Corbusier’s architecture is flat and straight, with no fractal qualities. A fractal dimension between one and two characterizes a design that has an infinite number of self-similar levels of scale, whereas the fractal dimension of Le Corbusier’s buildings drops immediately to one. Miesian architecture likewise displays an extremely limited range of scale. The title of a recent article by historian of architecture Michael Ostwald speaks for itself: “Fractalesque Architecture: An Analysis of the Grounds for Excluding Mies van der Rohe from the Oeuvre.”<sup>37</sup>

## VI. P o s t m o d e r n i s m

“‘Disharmonious harmony’ also finds validity in the present consensus among scientists that the universe is dynamic and evolving... Paradox is itself a typical postmodern trope and ‘disharmonious harmony’ recurs as often in its poetics as ‘organic whole’ recurs in the aesthetics of classicism and Modernism.”<sup>38</sup>

One might think, based on the overwhelmingly bad rap that Modern architecture has been receiving from fractal theorists thus far, that postmodernism **must** be the answer to the problem: that it should have seized the banner of cascading fractal detail in a bid to bring architecture back into a harmonious relation with the populace. Postmodern theorist Frederick Jameson suggests as much when he writes of the inseparability of postmodernist positions in architecture from a critique of the “architectural high modernism” in which “formal criticism and analysis” fundamentally isolate the public from architectural discourse by creating buildings which speak only to a theory-loving elite divorced from those characteristics which make buildings habitable. “Postmodernism in architecture,” Jameson suggests, “will then logically enough stage itself as a kind of aesthetic populism,” committing itself to the effacement of the “older (essentially high-modernist) frontier between high culture and so-called mass or commercial culture.”<sup>39</sup>

Theorists like Charles Jencks have taken up this cause, suggesting that the removal of this barrier between the elite and the masses can be obtained through what he calls “dual-coding.” In postmodern architecture, irony, contradiction, and ambiguity are employed to present different levels of interpretation of architecture to different audiences, a kind of “double entendre,” if you will. Jencks writes:

“A Postmodern building is... one which speaks on at least two levels at once: to other architects and a concerned minority who care about specifically architectural meanings, and to the public at large, or the local inhabitants, who care about other issues concerned with comfort, traditional building and a way of life... [I]t is this discontinuity in taste cultures which creates both the theoretical base and ‘dual-coding’ of Postmodernism.”<sup>40</sup>

Pablo Portoguesi terms this an “architecture of **communication**” operating on several different levels at

the same time.<sup>41</sup> “When several codes are used coherently to some purpose,” Jencks writes, “they produce another quality sought by postmodernists, **multivalence**.”<sup>42</sup> The “multivalent” layering of meaning via rejection of the modernist banner of unity in intention and execution of a design has meant that many postmodernists have in their architecture embraced various “incompatibilities of style, form and texture... incompatible elements are laid side by side and work in juxtaposition.”<sup>43</sup>

This juxtaposition has created a whole vocabulary of chaotic tension in postmodern architecture. Jencks cites catch-phrases like ‘disharmonious harmony’, ‘asymmetrical symmetry’, ‘syncopated proportion’, ‘fragmented purity’, ‘unfinished whole’ and ‘dissonant unity’ which typify the postmodern movement.<sup>44</sup> Little wonder that fractal geometry, with its wonderfully non-Euclidean forms, its infinitely iterative nature, and its connections with the enticingly-titled “chaos theory” of physics caught on with the anti-modern crowd. In **Post-Structuralism and Postmodernism**, Madan Sarup describes some of the features of postmodern “hyperspace” meant to transcend the modernist obsession with Euclidean space: effacement of the categories of inside and outside, bewilderment and loss of spatial orientation, and the messiness of an environment in which things and people no longer find their ‘place.’<sup>45</sup> Fractal architecture thus becomes a tool available to postmodern architects toying with notions of scale and spatial orientation. Self-similarity at multiple scales of certain design elements can become a trope which creates a bewildering loss of “place” and “scale” for the inhabitants of these new, fractalized spaces.

## VII. Misappropriation

“Oh yeah, no, there’s nothing more unfashionable than post modernism.”<sup>46</sup>

However, even the sketchy picture of architectural postmodernity presented above begins to demonstrate the movement’s susceptibility to many criticisms that have since been launched against it. Belgian theorist Lucien Kroll scorns the very possibility of a cohesive postmodern theory, since thinkers have thus far tended to define themselves negatively rather than positively: in terms of what they are not rather than what they actually are. “Often,” scoffs Kroll, “this motley crew turn out to be united only in their rejection of modernist forms, in their efforts to detach themselves aesthetically and theoretically from everything modernist.”<sup>47</sup> Kroll’s translator, Peter Jones, also denies the coherence of the postmodern agenda in his introduction to Kroll’s **The Architecture of Complexity**. He goes so far as to argue that postmodernism is reacting against a **mistaken** view of the modern movement: “For half a century now,” he writes, “the myth has persisted that the Modern Movement in architecture was an inevitable consequence of technological progress.”<sup>48</sup> In a sense this may be attributed to the over-zealous claims of modernist propaganda. By the 1970s, Jones writes, disillusionment in the architectural community had set in... and in a bid to rebuild its self-confidence architects “declared afresh that architecture as an Art, that they were Artists,” becoming, in a sense, the very snobbish, elitist, publicly inaccessible architects that Jameson claims to leave behind with the new “aesthetic populism” of the postmodern.<sup>49</sup>

Moreover, the use of supposedly “chaotic” or “fractal” forms in deconstructivist architecture turns out in most cases to be a misappropriation of these terms rather than an actual exhibition of their guiding principles. Fractals are not some transcendent metaphor for the randomness and chaos of the world around us, they represent the kind of self-ordering complexity Arnheim would have found perfectly agreeable. Chaotic forms are not undetermined but merely unpredictable. While the divorce of these two previously identified concepts provides great philosophical fodder for writers, I argue that it is simply a mistake for architects to believe that they are tapping some kind of self-contradicting randomness underlying the very soul of the cosmos.

Although architectural self-similarity is often statistical (involving the degree of complexity, though not exactly the same pattern or form at various scales), the self-organization of these systems

is the essential core. As Salingaros writes, deconstructivist buildings can indeed approach a stochastic fractal, “but they have no patterns, either on a single scale, or across different levels of scale.”<sup>50</sup> Fractal geometry does not equate to self-negating randomness or irrationality, and it is the unfortunate association of fractal architecture and chaos theory with certain untenable forms of postmodern theory which, I argue, has made them such a **bête noire** today.

## VIII. Fractals and Frank Lloyd Wright

“During the incredibly long and fruitful career of Frank Lloyd Wright there are two constants: Nature and Geometry.”<sup>51</sup>

It is for this reason that I find the best discussion of what I am calling fractal architecture can be found in the writings and buildings of man who never lived to see the publication of **The Fractal Geometry of Nature**. The concept of fractal geometry and its relationship with natural forms simply did not exist when Wright was practicing architecture. However, some of his writing approaches the concept very closely. He discusses his emulation of natural forms in his work, looking beyond mere replication of natural forms to find his inspiration in the underlying geometry and organization of their structure, and calls for all the elements of design in a building to be held together in “scale and character” by one basic idea, rather Arnheim’s concept of a “theme” or a form whose repeated iteration at various scales lends fractal objects their self-similar scaling properties.

In an article published nearly seventy years before Mandelbrot’s book, he refers to nature as a source of inspiration for his work: “Primarily, nature furnished the materials for architectural motifs out of which architectural forms as we know them today have been developed, and, although our practice for centuries has been for the most part to turn from her, seeking inspiration in books or adhering slavishly to dead formulae, her wealth of suggestion is inexhaustible; her riches greater than any man’s desire.”<sup>52</sup>

Although Wright described his design method as “organic,” his writings tend to drift around the concept rather than to crisply define his meaning. Carl Bovill offers this interpretation: “Organic architecture emphasized the understanding of the deep principles underlying natural forms. One of these deep principles is a cascade of detail from the large to the small scale. Nature virtually never flattens out.”<sup>53</sup> Indeed, fractal analysis of certain of Wright’s later works gives great credence to this theory about the fractal nature of his guiding design principles. Analysis of Wright’s Frederick C. Robie House (Chicago, Illinois, 1906) conducted by Bovill showed that Wright had designed the building with a cascade of detail “from the organization of the building’s masses to the stained glass designs of the windows.”<sup>54</sup> Fractal analysis of Wright’s Unity Temple (Oak Park, Illinois, 1905) reveals similar characteristics of scale and complexity, demonstrating that Wright provided a cascade of detail over a scanning range from 1 to 15 feet. Analysis of smaller detail on the building, including the molding on the pillars and the fractal dimension of the planters would take this cascade into the inch range.<sup>55</sup>

Wright himself suggests that we as architects need to move beyond mere imitation of organic forms in architecture: “if we dig deep enough to read the **principles** upon which these [organic forms] are activated, we arrive at secrets of form related to purpose that would make of the tree a building and the building a tree.”<sup>56</sup> Leonard Eaton offers a similar interpretation of Wright’s method by analysis of Wright’s William Palmer House (Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1950-51), a building which shows fractal properties not just in terms of cascade of detail, as Bovill found in the Robie House and in Unity Temple, but in a cascade of **self-similar** forms repeated at a wide variety of scales. The invariant form is the equilateral triangle – triangles and triangular forms characterize elements of the house from scales of 1 (the living room) to 1/40<sup>th</sup> (light fixtures), and including the bedrooms, carport roof, terrace, study, fireplace, planters and closets, columns, and even lampshades. Even

finer levels of detail are manifested in decoration and minimalist ornamentation,<sup>57</sup> creating what Nicoletta Sala refers to a series of “nested” triangular figures whose scaled iteration reflects the meandering forms of the natural environment.<sup>58</sup>

Eaton takes a similar line to Bovill’s in his assessment of Wright’s architectural principles and their relationship to geometry of any kind. “Whether or not Wright was aware of such concepts as the Golden Mean and the Fibonacci series is a moot point,” he writes. “Wright used nature as the basis of his geometrical abstraction. His objective was to conventionalize the geometry which he found in Nature... Therefore, it is not too shocking perhaps that in this quest his work should foreshadow the new mathematics of nature first put forth by Benoit Mandelbrot: fractal geometry.”<sup>59</sup> As Mandelbrot himself suggested, the eye is, in fact, the tool by which the first not-yet-quantitative truth is discovered.

## IX. Man, Nature, and the Built Environment

*“L’imagination se lassera plutôt de concevoir que la nature de fournir.”<sup>60</sup>*

There are many ways, however, in which the new tools of fractal analysis can be put to legitimate use. So far, it seems that scientists and engineers have had the most success in this endeavor, even when the subject of their investigation is architectural in nature. In “Aesthetics and scarcity,” physicist Karl Svozil applies the physics of complexity science to questions of human aesthetics. He posits that human experience is developed “as a function of decryption,” which is itself analyzable in terms of computation and coding in terms of heuristics like the “law of decryption,” “descriptive complexity,” “computational complexity,” and the “law of aesthetic complexity.”<sup>61</sup> This last law aims to find a balance between the monotonous regularity of plain structures and the irritating randomness of totally stochastic structures. Svozil suggests that this balance is best met through the concept of “*das Naturschöne*,” or “nature-beauty.”<sup>62</sup> He suggests that engineers can employ the fractal qualities of natural settings to recreate aesthetic beauty to create “enjoyable habitats for the human mind by algorithmic methods.”<sup>63</sup> While admitting that such a task “presents a great challenge,” he posits a list of six formal characteristics which can guide us, including randomness, permutation, self-similarity, repetition, and symmetry.<sup>64</sup>

Similar use of fractal concepts in quantifying our interaction with the built environment was made by a recent study conducted by Andrew Crompton measures the size of a living space by counting the number of places available for a particular activity, rather than by using an absolute measure such as the square foot.<sup>65</sup> His study finds that space is the inversely related to our body size: “small people may,” he writes, “find the world larger.”<sup>66</sup> The form of this function suggests that the everyday environment has a fractal dimension, a proposition was tested with experiments based on children playing hide and seek and adults and children sharing the same living space in which to read a book. This application of fractal calculus is a new kind of “box-counting” to analysis of the space which we inhabit. Writes Crompton, “the results... confirm the findings that inverse power-law distributions such as this are ubiquitous in the built environment.”<sup>67</sup>

Other examples of recent publications in this vein include analyses of student performance as a function the fractal dimension of school architecture,<sup>68</sup> more box-counting in the analysis of the number of cars of different sizes can line a street to determine the fractal dimension of a personal-vehicle-based transportation network,<sup>69</sup> fractal calculus of the cascade of complexity of various levels of a small Italian town to develop new principles of city planning<sup>70</sup> – the list goes on and on. It seems likely that the list will continue to grow, and perhaps in time might even pave the way back into architecture for complexity science, chaos theory, fractal geometry to once again hold sway as legitimate and respectable tools of the trade.

## X. Architect and Engineer

“There are at least two kinds [of geometries]: the mechanical and the organic; both are mathematical insofar as they involve the imposition of measure, but behind them lie quite different approaches, for the mechanical dominates while the organic composes.”<sup>71</sup>

The nature of fractal architecture is in a certain sense an odd one, perched as it is somewhere in between art and mathematics, between post-Modern deconstructivism and human psychology, between the physics of chaos and the chaos of beauty. In many ways fractal architecture can serve to highlight a number of issues which typically characterize the great fault-line dividing the two halves of the building world: architects and engineers. Elizabeth Mock voices a common idea when she suggests that the engineer is typically less concerned with aesthetics than the architect, although she points out that “as soon as [the engineer] did start worrying about [aesthetics] his designing became inhibited, whereas the architect, unaware during this early period that he was being left out of anything, is now more aware than the engineer of the aesthetic value of structural forms.”<sup>72</sup> The picture she seems to suggest here is that of an engineer who designs with an eye only toward the physical and structural success of a construction, and his creation may be interpreted and appropriated by the architect, whose domain includes aesthetic considerations because for so long math and science were not the realm of the architect at all.

This is obviously far too crude a picture of the long, complex, and continually evolving relationship between architecture and technology in Western society, but for our purposes it will perhaps serve as a suitable backdrop for our inquiry into the nature of fractal architecture. Do we have here a case of architects appropriating a mathematical principle for their own, purely aesthetic purposes? This is what Bovill suggests when he writes of using fractal images to generate different tiling patterns, or chaotic sequences of numbers heights of buildings, in what he deems the “second” use of fractals in architecture. This is also the approach favored by many post-Modernists, and scorned by more traditional thinkers like Arnheim. Is **this** the essence of fractal architecture?

Or, are fractal architects rather utilizing mathematical discoveries about the fractal geometry of our natural environment to try to recreate the relationship of man to nature by incorporating the elements of fractal geometry into buildings? This is the approach argued for by Svozil, Orr, and (we might theorize) Frank Lloyd Wright? This seems a better answer to the question, as it grants fractal geometry a more important role in the very formulation of architectural design than use as a mere instrument for generating interesting deconstructivist building patterns. However, this answer complexifies the relation between the mathematicians and engineers who work with fractals and chaotic systems and the architects who use these principles in their work. No longer can Mock’s simple picture of the artless engineer creating things in which the architect discovers beauty and promptly appropriates hold sway: the task of fractal architecture is one of human psychology and manipulation of the physical environment of as much as it is one of aesthetic accomplishment.

Here again, however, we may counter: the dynamic human relationship at play in the “engineering” of the built environment described above is one of an **observer** being affected by his surroundings via their **scale** and **complexity**, two concepts which have always been, so to speak, at the heart of architectural aesthetics. Do the visual and aesthetic natures of the interaction between humans and their fractal environment attest to the impossibility of ignoring art and aesthetics in favor of pure statistics and mathematical calculation? Can an engineer occupied in this respect truly be said to be ignoring art? Or is it a new aesthetic altogether, one which simply underscores the fundamental similarity and increasing inextricability of these two oft-divergent fields?

One might continue in this philosophical vein for some time, but a real treatment of the topic would require a far more substantial set of definitions of “architecture,” “engineering,”

“aesthetics,” and the like, each of which would need to be fleshed out and argued for in a space I do not have in this paper. However, it will certainly remain a live question as the techniques and ideas of fractal geometry and the sciences of complexity continue to develop in their relationship to the realms of art, architecture, and engineering.

## XI. Conclusion

“The human eye constantly scans its universe, roaming over every surface and void, seeking diversion and entertainment on one level, and meaning and guidance on another. Architects must respond to this seeking on both levels, providing scale-giving features that speak to the underlying human needs.”<sup>73</sup>

In this paper, I have tried to argue that although the fractal properties of buildings and cities have only been quantifiable since the late 1970s, the themes which they express have manifested themselves throughout the history of architecture. However, the quantification of the principles of fractal geometry in math and physics have provided a new justification for previously held ideals, particularly as exhibited in the architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright, and although the association of fractals and chaos and complexity theory with certain ideals of postmodern architecture have dampened their popularity in recent years, I suggest that it is a mistake to believe that the hackneyed proposals of the chaos-loving postmodernists as the final work fractals have to offer to the world of architecture. Many of the most recent examples of so-called “fractal architecture” represent a misappropriation and misrepresentation of the true meaning of fractal patterns in architecture. In fact, in addition to complexifying and possibly even redefining the continually evolving and dynamically evolving relationship between architecture and engineering sciences, the truth of fractal principles can work toward establishing a new and more cohesive relationship between man and the environment he builds for himself.

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<sup>1</sup> Barnsley, Michael. *Fractals Everywhere*. (Boston, Massachusetts: Academic Press, 1998), 5.

<sup>2</sup> Mandelbrot, Benoit. *The Fractal Geometry of Nature*. (New York: W. H. Freeman and Company, 1982), 8.

<sup>3</sup> Ravilious, Kate. “Maya and Fractals.” *New Scientist*. (10 January 2004, Vol. 181, Issue 2429), 33.

<sup>4</sup> Batty, Michael and Paul Longley. *Fractal Cities* (New York, New York: Academic Press Inc., 1994), 39.

<sup>5</sup> See Section VIII of this paper.

<sup>6</sup> Mandelbrot 1977, 1.

<sup>7</sup> Chaos has to do with certain discoveries in physics about deterministic systems whose behavior was still fundamentally unpredictable. It makes use of fractal geometry in the expression of many of its most important ideas, and the wild beauty of chaotically-generated fractals has captivated the imaginations of many outside the boundaries of math and physics, particularly those of artists and postmodern theorists looking for the antithesis of the rigidly deterministic and predictable modernist ideas. However, it will only be referenced in passing in this paper as our main concern is with the dynamic geometry of self-similar fractals, and not with all of chaos theory itself. For more on the relation between chaos and the postmodern, see Sections IV and VI of this paper. For more information on chaos theory and its relation to fractal geometry and architecture in general, see *Chaos and Fractals*, full reference in endnote 10, below.

<sup>8</sup> Briggs, John. *Fractals: The Patterns of Chaos*. (Simon and Schuster, Inc. New York, New York: 1992), 71-73.

<sup>9</sup> Mandelbrot, Benoit. *Fractals: Form, Chance, and Dimension* (New York: Academic Press, 1977), 13.

<sup>10</sup> Peitgen, Heinz-Otto, with Hartmut Jürgens and Dietmar Saupe. *Chaos and Fractals*. (Springer-Verlag New York, Inc. New York, New York: 1992), 9.

<sup>11</sup> Maguire, Michael. *An Eye for Fractals*. (Addison Wesley Publishing Company, Inc. Redwood City, California: 1991), 14.

<sup>12</sup> In other words, it is necessary to measure the size of the object as a function of ruler size. This is accomplished using the technique of box-counting, a method of analysis that is not unique to architectural fractal science, but has proven most efficient in this context.

A grid of squares of spacing  $r$  is superimposed onto the object, and the number of squares,  $N(r)$ , overlapping a portion of the object is counted. This step is then repeated for different sizes of  $r$ , generating a set of data whose line, as plotted above, will give the fractal dimension of the object in question by determining the line's slope.

We can summarize this data in the following equation:

$$\log N = d \log (1/r) + \log H$$

where  $N$  is the number of rulers of size  $r$  which intersect the object (or  $N$  is a number of squares in a grid composed of units of length  $r$ ), and  $H$  is the Hausdorff dimension, a useful way of calculating size in fractal geometry given by the formula  $H = Nr^d$ . (You will notice that the first formula is simply a rearrangement of the Hausdorff formula by taking the log of each side of the equation.) This means that a graph of  $\log N$  versus  $\log (1/r)$  will yield a line whose gradient is equal to  $d$ , the fractal dimension.

So, taking Bovill's formula for box-counting units given in relation to the human form and perspective, if we know the viewer's distance from the building and the angle at which he is observing the building (almost always a function of the building's height), we can generate a range of measuring units  $r$  for different viewing distances (it is usually not useful to vary the angle of view, although in certain unique cases this may be applicable), and use these values to generate a series of grids with square-length of  $r$  which overlay the object (or a picture of the object in the case of its being an architectural structure or natural object). At each value of  $r$ , the number of boxes which contain lines (or meaningful detail) are totaled, yielding one value of  $N$  for every value of  $r$ .

This process creates a set of data which can be plotted and analyzed to finally obtain the fractal dimension, a quantified measure of the object's intrinsic complexity.

<sup>13</sup> Boles, Martha and Rochelle Newman. *Universal Patterns Book One: The Golden Relationship: Art, Mathematics and Nature*. (Bradford, Massachusetts: Pythagorean Press, 1990), 22.

<sup>14</sup> Bovill, Carl. *Fractal Geometry in Architecture and Design*. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Birkhäuser Boston, 1995), 3.

<sup>15</sup> Bovill, 118.

<sup>16</sup> The Julia and Mandelbrot sets are sets of integers on the complex number plane whose iterations create those lovely, spiraling, infinitely detailed images which irresistibly spring to mind when one thinks of fractal art. The Mandelbrot set isn't a real fractal by definition, but as it is semi self-similar and still shows infinite detail, so we usually call it a fractal set as well. Various measurements of a consistent kind can be made to generate chaotically-determined sequences of numbers for use in the generation of fractal or chaotic patterns in architecture (Bovill, 5-6).

<sup>17</sup> Coveney, Peter and Roger Highfield. *Frontiers of Complexity: The Search for Order in a Chaotic World* (London, England: Faber and Faber, 1996), 339.

<sup>18</sup> Michael J. Ostwald, "'Fractal Architecture': Late Twentieth Century Connections Between Architecture and Fractal Geometry," *Nexus Network Journal*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (Winter 2001), 29.

<sup>19</sup> Eisenman, Peter. "Eisenmanesie." *Architecture + Urbanism*, Extra ed. (August 1988), 70.

<sup>20</sup> Ostwald, 30.

<sup>21</sup> Ostwald, 34.

<sup>22</sup> Paul Shephard. *What is Architecture?: An Essay on Landscapes, Buildings, and Machines* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1994), 15.

<sup>23</sup> Orr, Frank. *Scale in Architecture*. (New York, New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1985), 72.

<sup>24</sup> There is substantial evidence in many levels of art and architecture from folk to classical to gothic even to certain kinds of modern styles that an unconscious (or, as I will argue for the case of Frank Lloyd Wright, conscious) understanding and application of fractal principles to the composition and design of art and architecture. See Sections VII and IX.

<sup>25</sup> Arnheim, Rudolf. *The Dynamics of Architectural Form*. (Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1977), 178.

<sup>26</sup> Arnheim, 164-165.

<sup>27</sup> For an example, see Eaton, Leonard K. "Mathematics and Music in the Art Glass Windows of Frank Lloyd Wright." (*Nexus III: Architecture and Mathematics*, ed. Kim Williams, Pisa: Pacini Editore, 2000), 57-71.

<sup>28</sup> See Section VI.

<sup>29</sup> See Section IX.

- <sup>30</sup> Orr, 9.
- <sup>31</sup> Orr, 13.
- <sup>32</sup> Orr, 21.
- <sup>33</sup> Salingaros, Nikos A. "Fractals in the New Architecture." (*Archimagazine*, 8 January 1996. Translated from the Italian), 17.
- <sup>34</sup> Salingaros, 18.
- <sup>35</sup> Orr, 73.
- <sup>36</sup> Bovill, 5-6.
- <sup>37</sup> Ostwald, Michael J. and R. John Moore. "Fractalesque Architecture: An Analysis of the Grounds for Excluding Mies van der Rohe from the Oeuvre." *Traditions and Modernity* ed. A. Kelly, K. Bieda, J. F. Zhu, and W. Dewanto. (Jakarta, Indonesia: Mercu Buana University, 1996), 437-453.
- <sup>38</sup> Jencks, Charles. "The Emergent Rules." *Postmodernism: A Reader*, ed. Thomas Docherty. (New York, New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 282.
- <sup>39</sup> Jameson, Fredric. "Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism." *The Postmodernism Reader: Foundational Texts*, ed. Michael Drolet. (New York, New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2004), 190.
- <sup>40</sup> Jencks, Charles. *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture*. (London, UK: Academy Editions, 1977), 43.
- <sup>41</sup> Portoghesi, Pablo. "Postmodern." In *Postmodernism: A Reader*, ed. Thomas Docherty. (New York, New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 309-310.
- <sup>42</sup> Jencks 1993, 288.
- <sup>43</sup> Sarup, Madan. *Post-Structuralism and Postmodernism*. (Athens, Georgia: The University of Georgia Press, 1993), 170.
- <sup>44</sup> Jencks 1993, 282.
- <sup>45</sup> Sarup, 171.
- <sup>46</sup> Jencks, Charles. In conversation with Michael Cathcart, *Arts Today* (Australian National Radio), 2/2/2001.
- <sup>47</sup> Kroll, Lucien. *The Architecture of Complexity*. (Translated from the French by Peter Blundell Jones. London, England: B. T. Batsford Ltd., 1986), 11.
- <sup>48</sup> Jones, Peter Blundell in Kroll, ix-x.
- <sup>49</sup> Jones, Peter Blundell in Kroll, x-xi.
- <sup>50</sup> Salingaros, Nikos. "Architecture, Patterns, and Mathematics." *Nexus Network Journal*, Vol. 1 (1999), 75-85.
- <sup>51</sup> Eaton, Leonard K. "Fractal Geometry in the Late Work of Frank Lloyd Wright: the Palmer House." (*Nexus II: Architecture and Mathematics*, ed. Kim Williams. Fucecchio (Florence), Italy: Edizioni dell'Erba, 1998), 23.
- <sup>52</sup> Wright, Frank Lloyd. "In the Cause of Architecture." (*Architectural Record*, March 1908. Reprinted in *Frank Lloyd Wright, Collected Writings*, Vol. 1), 88-97.
- <sup>53</sup> Bovill, 134.
- <sup>54</sup> Bovill, 127-128.
- <sup>55</sup> Bovill, 128-135.
- <sup>56</sup> Wright, Frank Lloyd. As quoted in Bovill, 136.
- <sup>57</sup> Eaton, 30-36.
- <sup>58</sup> Sala, Nicoletta. "Fractal Models In Architecture: A Case of Study." (*Journal of the Academy of Architecture of Mendrisio*, from a lecture presented at the International Conference on Mathematical Education, 2000), 16.
- <sup>59</sup> Eaton, 37-38.
- <sup>60</sup> Pascal, Blaise. As quoted in Mandelbrot, 8.
- <sup>61</sup> Svozil, Karl. "Aesthetics and scarcity: A physics perspective on ornament." (Presented at the *Data Ecology Workshop II* at the Institut für Theoretische Physik, Linz, Austria 13th - 14th May 2005), 33.
- <sup>62</sup> Svozil, 41.
- <sup>63</sup> Svozil, 47.
- <sup>64</sup> Svozil, 52.
- <sup>65</sup> Crompton, Andrew. "The Fractal Nature of the Everyday Environment." *Environment and Planning B: Planning and Design 2001*, (Vol. 28), 243-247.
- <sup>66</sup> Crompton, 245.
- <sup>67</sup> Crompton, 252.
- <sup>68</sup> Uptis, Rena. "School Architecture and Complexity." *Complicity: An International Journal of Complexity and Education*. (Vol. 1, No. 1, 2005), 19-38.

<sup>69</sup> Maletz, Andrew Scott. “Developing a Fractal Architecture. Ph.D. dissertation. Oxford, Ohio: Miami University, May 1991.

<sup>70</sup> Carrera, Fabio. “Campo Santa Maria Formosa.” Ph.D. dissertation. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, May 1997.

<sup>71</sup> Kroll, 6.

<sup>72</sup> Mock, Elizabeth. As quoted in Martienssen, Heather. *The Shapes of Structure*. (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1976), 42-43.

<sup>73</sup> Orr, 109.

## Afterword

We hope you have enjoyed the inaugural issue of **Humanitas**, Harvard's first interdisciplinary undergraduate humanities journal. This journal is the culmination of a long but gratifying selection process during which the Humanities Center Undergraduate Committee had the pleasure of reading 85 different submissions from all departments within the humanities. These essays reflect both the hard work of students and the investment of their teaching fellows, tutors, and professors, all of whom were instrumental in recommending essays to the journal. Of the 85 submissions, the 9 featured essays represent the highest achievement in scholarship, creativity, and prose.

We could not have published this journal or recognized these works without the tremendous support of a number of individuals involved. First, we would like to extend our deepest gratitude to Executive Director of the Humanities Center Steven Biel, who has guided us throughout this entire process and written an eloquent foreword at the beginning of this book. We would like to thank Dean for the Humanities Diana Sorensen for encouraging this particular endeavor and promoting interdisciplinary and university-wide discourse in the humanities. Mary Halpenny-Killip, Shannon Greaney, Mary Beth Wilkes, and Claire Sammon have continually helped make undergraduate plans at the Humanities Center a reality. Finally, we could not have read and evaluated the dozens of submissions we received without the help of our editorial board: Lois Beckett, Alex Chase-Levenson, Liz Goodwin, Matthew Growdon, Dina Guzovsky, Aidan Kelly, Ann Mary Olson, Emily Simon, and Ryan Thorpe.

In its breadth of intellectual pursuits, interdisciplinary focus, and collaborative production, this journal exemplifies the vision of the Humanities Center at Harvard and fulfills the goals of its undergraduate committee. We look forward to and encourage your participation in future issues of **Humanitas**.

**Chiara Condi '08** and **Catherine L. Vaughan '08**

Editors-in-Chief