

Editorial Statement

Jonathan Hart

The Abigail Adams Institute and *The Veritas Review* are primarily focused on students at Harvard and students in schools in Cambridge and nearby. We are happy to extend outreach beyond; regionally, nationally, and internationally as appropriate.

In each generation, it is generally difficult for the young to get a start, and therefore the chief aim of the journal is to address that challenge and transform it into an opportunity. *The Veritas Review*, a journal of thought, interpretation, and the arts that will begin with one issue in 2021 with the hope of having two issues each year in subsequent years, will do just that, opening closed doors for students to help give them a start in essays, reviews, the visual and literary arts (poems and brief fiction and the like). In *The Veritas Review's* brief essays and reviews, the journal will concentrate attention on coming to terms with the past in order to create the future. For instance, we plan to focus exclusively on reviews of films and books before the Second World War. A review—as if you were there at the time (using historical imagination)—of Phillis Wheatley's first book of poems in London, although she lived in Boston, or of Red Cloud's lecture in Boston, or of Chaplin's first silent film, or of Massachusetts Hall at Harvard, or a portrait hanging in one of the Harvard Houses or buildings, or of a letter of Asa Gray in the library of the Harvard University Herbaria, or of some trace of T.S. Eliot at Harvard, and so on and so forth.

The poetry, fiction, and visual arts will also focus on craft and beauty, art as a shared experience. The artistic work will concentrate on the elemental, on what makes us human, on our place in the natural world. The artistic contributions should evoke rather than prescribe or proscribe. Art can heal and bring people together, as we see in medical humanities, with how art, stories, music, and poetry all help to heal. While encouraging creativity, the journal does not wish to duplicate the work of journals that promote instrumental or political art, which is important, because there are many outlets for this kind of work. The journal hopes to create art that speaks to our elemental humanity and the elements of nature. We hope for art that suggests and does not hector or lecture.

Given the divided times in the United States and worldwide, this journal wants to emphasize what brings us together as humans in culture and nature, and not what divides us. There are plenty of venues for that division, but few to bring us together. *The Veritas Review* is an interdisciplinary journal encouraging explorations of beauty, truth, and justice in fine arts, humanities, social sciences, and science; we stress evidence, intersubjectivity, objectivity. In the public forum, aesthetics, shared experience, science, and evidence can be overlooked or obscured today. The journal hopes to focus on what we can do harmoniously together. What do nature, logic, art, science, libraries, and archives tell us? How do we share this with others, not as a means of persuasion, but as something rooted in nature and life, in art, science, mathematics, and language, and not a zero-sum game? Aristotle recognized that humans are by nature political, and we have politics and political division all about us. This journal is about love, sharing, healing, common art and thought that bring us together to express our humanity, our respect for one another, and for nature.

So, while recognizing politics, this journal is not a political journal, not a review of contemporary divides. It looks to the past in thought and art, as in the reviews mentioned here, as a way to think creatively. Those who lived in the past can share their wisdom, justice, and beauty with us. They helped to make liberal arts, science, and fine arts. We go deeper in love, wisdom, and knowledge if we understand those who came before us, and we build creativity if we make visual and literary arts.

Students, then, get to explore freely in these pages. Other established faculty and visual and literary artists will be affiliated with the journal or try to contribute to it. These faculty, writers, and visual artists may set examples or mentor the students. We will feature faculty and artists in each issue to encourage and show solidarity with students, who by looking deeply into the past will become leaders in the fine arts, liberal arts, and science in the future. The journal and the institute are here to help achieve that. Scientists are also writers, musicians and visual artists and those in the arts and fine arts should understand science. As individuals, we are in a community of seekers, we research or search again or back to move forward.

Harmony is at the heart of The Abigail Adams Institute and *The Veritas Review*. We encourage students to come together in understanding. We invite you to contact us so we can do this together, start something new for students to get a new start.

7 June 2021

Reflections on T.S. Eliot

Loren Brown '23



Like many of my fellow high-school boys of the time, poetry was anathema to my seemingly rugged and straight-forward ways—that is, until I was introduced to T.S. Eliot. Upon reading Eliot’s “The Hollow Men,” I was introduced to the possibilities of poetry: its jagged verse, dark literary allusions, and trailing voice came together to form a work that could never be replicated in prose. This poem began in me what has become an ever-present love for T.S. Eliot, and poetry in general. My affection for Eliot arises from our shared commitment to tradition, memory, and continuity, and these concepts we both find essential to the life of any functioning civilization.

His search for faith, beginning with the aimlessness of “The Waste Land” and ending with the love of the “Four Quartets,” is one I have taken up in my own time at Harvard, and is a search that has been aided by Eliot’s words. Walking the same halls here at Harvard as Eliot once did imposes a feeling of respect and awe in me, knowing that it was this college that produced the poet and philosopher whose undying work now guides me down the same path he once trod. In “Little Gidding,” Eliot remarked that “the communication / Of the dead is tongued with fire beyond the language of the living,” and nowhere have I been more conscious of this

than reading Eliot, here at Harvard, over a hundred years after his residency. Many often experience a strong spiritual communion with a writer they deeply admire: for me it is T.S. Eliot, whose poetry will always be near my side offering me hope and a path out of the waste land.

Poems

Marilyn Chin



Marilyn Chin is an award-winning poet and author. Born in Hong Kong and raised in Portland, Oregon, she writes Asian American classics that are taught in classrooms internationally. Marilyn Chin's books of poems include *A Portrait of the Self as Nation*, *Hard Love Province*, *Rhapsody in Plain Yellow*, *Dwarf Bamboo*, and *The Phoenix Gone*, *The Terrace Empty*. She also published a book of magical fiction called *Revenge of the Mooncake Vixen*. In addition to writing poetry and fiction, she has translated poems by the modern Chinese poet Ai Qing and co-translated poems by the Japanese poet Gozo Yoshimasu. Chin has won numerous awards, including the United Artist Foundation Fellowship, the Radcliffe Institute Fellowship at Harvard, the Rockefeller Foundation Fellowship at Bellagio, the Anisfield Wolf Book Award, two NEAs, the Stegner Fellowship, the PEN/Josephine Miles Award, five Pushcart Prizes, a Fulbright Fellowship to Taiwan, and the Ruth Lilly Prize for the Lifetime Achievement in Poetry. Chin is featured in a variety of anthologies, including *The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women* and *The Norton Anthology of Modern and Contemporary Poetry*, *The Penguin Anthology of 20th Century Poetry*, and *The Best American Poetry*. She was featured in Bill Moyers' PBS series *The Language of Life*, and *Poetry Everywhere*, introduced by Garrison Keillor. She has read and taught workshops all over the world. Recently, she was guest poet at universities in Beijing, Shanghai, Singapore, Hong Kong, Manchester, Sydney, Berlin, Iowa, and

elsewhere. She is Professor Emerita at San Diego State University and presently serves as a Chancellor at the Academy of American Poets.

Beijing Haiku (Series 1)

*

A creepy ghoulish moth a good-for-nothing-cat
rubs against my leggings

*

Half a life is not an unfinished life she murmurs

*

Migrant sparrow on bamboo scaffolding coughs

*

I sit and sit until my ass is rotten
(can't sanitize my mind)

*

She's addicted to "Dae Jang Geum"
I've succumbed to "Moonlight Resonance"

*

She says *I love you I hate you You have wasted my life!*
我愛你，我恨你，你浪費了我的生命！

*

At Yonghe Gong I burnt incense at the Great Buddha's toenail

*

Perfume of sick mother bleach of departed fa-
ther

A scent like sea cucumber

*

Death haiku

Won't you change your strategy

The Ballad of Student X

In TJ he downed eight shots of mezcal, ate the worm.
Two prostitutes and a hellhound
Stole his skateboard and hundreds in cash,
Stabbed his friend, while he blacked out in a ditch.

His mother wired me five thousand to bail him out.
He's an animal, a jackass, but he's my student,
If he dies in a TJ prison, he'll be on my conscience.

She said, "He got straight As and decent SATs.
Captain of the football team in Junior High.
After my divorce, he went through a bad patch.
Could've been All-American, he's exceptional. Give him a break."

He wrote from rehab, "I found God."
A tweet from a half-way house, he saw Krishna
At a dude ranch, he shouted Allah on a mountain top.

He cried for salvation, world peace and love.
Some 12-step blather, don't believe a word of it.

Spring break—
He smashed into a tuk-tuk in Changmai,
Maimed an old pedestrian in Phuket.
Plied them with cash,
No questions asked.

"Can you give me an incomplete and comment on my poems?
There's one about my grandmother who died of Covid."
We shared a virtual hug, teared up on Zoom.

Next week, he drove his Beemer off a cliff.
Lucky, he landed on a giant banyan tree,
"Got away without a scratch."

Instagrams of Frat parties, sake bombs at Yuki's,
Arms around bronzed girls in bikinis and sunsets.

"Please, Professor, two more days,
I'm blogging about MLK, writing an opus.
Hand-rolling Maui Wowie
For social justice."

Last week, he came to me in a dream
Dressed for Mortal Kombat, lizard green.
After decapitating a jihadist
And three cleaver-wielding ghouls,

He emerged from a flaming school bus
Showered and shaved.

How we heal this nation, I do not know.
Primal sins erupt through tortured souls.

He graduated with his brothers, Magna cum laude,
Chanting “Liberté, égalité, fraternité! Or death!”

Folksongs, Revisited

Eggplant

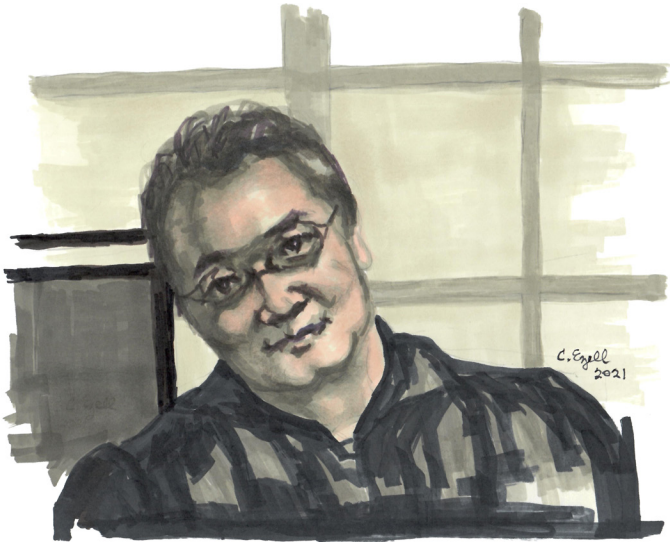
Your mother’s eggplant
You kept on the vine too long
It is black now, cracked and overripe
Should I throw it out?

Please don’t, let’s make use of it
For the autumn equinox
We’ll dry the belly in the sun
And replant the seeds

Suzie Asado

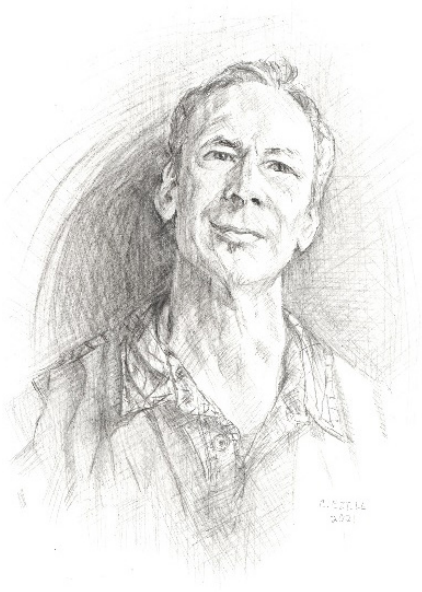
Suzie Asado, bitter green tea
Please add honey and make it sweet
She was afraid of radiation, upstream
So she threw out the *Sencha*
Matcha, and *Kombucha*
And kept the *Jasmine Green*
But Suzie, it’s laced with arsenic!
The Chinese earth, too, is mean
Now Suzie has recycled her tins
And drinks plain water from a Sippy Cup

Translators of Kido: Tomoyuki Endo and Forrest Gander



Shuri Kido, known as the “far north poet,” has published many books of poetry and essays and is considered one of the most influential contemporary poets in Japan. He has introduced translations of works by Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot to Japan. His work is infused with a profound knowledge of Japanese culture.

The Translators:



Forrest Gander, born in the Mojave Desert, lives in California. A translator and multiple-genre writer with degrees in geology and literature, he’s the recipient of numerous awards, among them the Pulitzer Prize, The Best Translated Book Award, and fellowships from the Library of Congress, the Guggenheim, and United States Artists Foundation.

Tomoyuki Endo is an assistant professor at Wako University in Tokyo, teaching modernists and post-modernists such as Ezra Pound, W.C. Williams, T.S. Eliot, Gary Snyder, Allen Ginsberg, Junzaburo Nishiwaki, Katue Kitasono, and Kazuko Shiraishi, along with literary pop artists including Bob Marley, Bob Dylan, Bruce Springsteen, and others. He has collaborated with Forrest Gander on the translation of three poems from Shiraishi’s *My Floating Mother, City* (New Directions). He also served as supervisor of English subtitles for Gozo Yoshimasu’s movies *Thousands of Islands* and *The Reality behind What We See*, which won more than ten awards at international movie festivals.



The Direction North

“*Ara-Mitama* (The Wild Spirit)” who puts curses on people.
The sun burns
over this wasteland
and its few creatures,
the outline of some object coming clearer and clearer,
which you recognize as: “the default” of yourself.
Though there are those who yield it to others.
An “existence” akin to a phantom’s, like “The Flying Dutchman,”
for existence and non-existence
can both supply substantiation.
A theological “wasteland” yawns
open in the field of language.
Peaches rot,
mountains crumble,
reviving the fertile soil,
and like drafts on a canvas of “the nothing that is,”
they belong to “space,”
but also to “time.”
A part of “the other world,”
those trailing clouds
and the nimbus piled high to resemble “*Kushi-mitama* (The Spirit of Wisdom),”
message after unreliable message.
In such a way,
the year 1990 passes.
Some kind of “place,”
or “name,”
and the disappearance of that field where both interact, then,
“the void”?
Although driven by
a conviction riffled with fallacies,
the “mind” wanders.
Existence and non-existence
can both supply substantiation.
May sanity go sane, let sanity go insane
May insanity go sane, let insanity go sane.
May curses fall on those who keep running their mouths,
May curses fall on those who can’t
fathom silence.
Such are the words the dead speak.
Scaling the (construction) as though it were a tower
of vocabulary without dialects,
reading “scriptum (=inscriptions on a stone),”
asking where those rows of geese are flying.
North is the way,
the
way due north,
that cursed direction.

Nonferrous

NOT NONFERROUS,
all colors mixed to render
the color “gray.”
The river bites into the land and
“geological memories” surface.
Plants with a grayish tint,
Tillandsia, or remnant snow.
Nothing swaying,
 nothing wavering,
not a thing too complex to grasp.
Grayish prosaic phenomena,
afloat at the horizon, a cipher, a viper
raises its head.
In what country’s language does the word “subject”
hold two opposite meanings: “subject OF an action,”
and “subject TO an action”?
There’s no such limbo in human memories.
Still, “particles of iron” course through the blood
and all the color drawn from everything
mixes into a “gray”
 that from nowhere
stirs up emotions.

Ritual Utensils

You draw water.
Yesterday as you did today, today as you will tomorrow.
The headwaters emerge from a range of calm mountains,
fish course through its pools.
As though deflecting the flow with your palm,
you draw water
as though your palm is deflected by the flow.
In the north, water runs thin.
So the vase you hold loses its shadow in sunlight.
Every dream is a nightmare.
Through this small town, 95 streams surge,
and 309 bridges cross those streams.
People come and go over them silently.
You're someone who knows
the secrets of the shallows and the conspiracies of the pools.
Sometimes, a bland smile comes to your lips
which can be read as the sign that you've broken free from your ordinary life.

You can see it.
And though it appears as one stream, many smaller streams compose it.
One stream carries mud,
another carries nothing.
Even while your body heat is lifted away from your wet ankles by cold wind
blowing above the river,
you continue to draw the clear water
which flows with no other ambition.
Your vase goes transparent as a ritual utensil,
and your body shows no sheen of sweat.
Suddenly the smile drains from your bland, pale face because
when your fingers make contact with the indifferent water,
you're nearly carried away to the world beyond.
What you despise:
trees, duck down, anything that radiates heat,
and language.
What you love:
picked flowers, cut flowers, whatever fades, slenderness
especially, forms that cast no thick shadows.
Only cut flowers, which you arrange.
Every day, you change the vase's water,
and wait for the moon to rise.
You talk very little,
except on that occasion when you came across the foreigner
crossing the old bridge.

No letters reach your house.
The slow suicide of another cigarette.
The well of your vase, so high above its base,
resembles a Korean ritual vessel.
Children are born, children grow,

seeds take root, budding out into forests,
and then, die.
The seven stars up in the northern sky tilt.

But still, I'm curious why
you draw water,
arrange flowers, douse yourself.
Water allows cut flowers to live a few more days,
they say,
but you argue that water drowns flowers.
Your flowers, I remember, were diaphanous as an antlion's wings,
even in sunlight they cast no shadow.

On the northern waters whose murmurs can't be heard,
yesterday's shadows fall, today's shadows flow off,
you wipe the bland smile from your lips.
Up there is Yugaoe Bridge,
upon which, night after night, they say, a woman stands apart from her shadow.

"Look—that man.
That's Mr. Serunbato. The one
who arrived from the desert just before the war broke out,
so now he can't go home.
He wasn't much acquainted with 'water,'
but now he bathes every day,
he washes his body
and watches the river go by."
That's your longest monologue, meant for no one.
The transparent water barely holds anyone's shadow to its surface.

Elusive water.
You draw it up,
pour it over yourself.
Today courses by like yesterday,
today floats like a cork on tomorrow.
And that's why you draw water.
As though scoring the silence, 95 streams flow,
in the pool something breathless lives,
panting, there in the shallows of the river, where you stand,
your body like the thin wings of an antlion,
casting no shadow under the sun.
Your vase, going more transparent still,
is filled with dead, mute water.
Your flowers, day by day, go transparent,
water rots them, it was you who said so.
You draw water,
your body rinsed of human scent,
the bodies of creatures in the pool growing colder,
the flowers going transparent, not wilting,
you go transparent.
And the vase, too, goes transparent.

Azure in Angel City

a blues sketch, part one

Russell C. Leong 梁志英



Russell C. Leong was chief editor of UCLA's *Amerasia Journal* from 1977 to 2010, and later founded and edited the *CUNY FORUM: Asian American/Asian Studies* for the City University of New York's Asian American/Asian Research Institute. His collection of stories, *Phoenix Eyes* (University of Washington Press), garnered an American Book award, and his poetry collection, *The Country of Dreams and Dust*, received an Oakland PEN Josephine Miles award. Leong's stories and poems have been translated and published in Shanghai, Hong Kong, Taipei, and Nanjing. Leong, a native Cantonese born and raised in San Francisco Chinatown in the 1950s, was one of fifty American poets featured in the five-part PBS series *The United States of Poetry*. Leong has an MFA in theater and film from UCLA, where he was an adjunct professor of English and Asian American Studies. See www.russellleongwrites.com.



Blue Monkey was abandoned, orphaned to a homeless life along the Los Angeles River. He, together with three denizens of the river—"Thumbless," "Breathless," and "M & M" (Mirror Man)—question the skewed world in which they find themselves: *"What's azure in Angel City?"* As of this writing, the L.A. River is in the midst of a clean-up, but that's only the surface of this tale.

What appears before you is an excerpt (part one), a "blues sketch" from jottings and fifty+ *Instagram* pen drawings that began at the start of Covid. The journey of Blue Monkey and his compatriots begins in the the City of Angels and ends its course in Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka, alluding to elements of *Journey to the West*, *Records of Faxian*, *Meghaduta*, and *Ramayana*, among other ancient texts and modern tales.

"Clothed in sacred darkness not thine own, Thine is the azure of the costly stone..."

-*Meghaduta*, Cloud Messenger by Kalidasa, 350 CE

What's azure in Angel City?

Among the foreplay of lost dialects and stray desires,
a premature birth is recorded as fluently as time follows tide—

He was born East of Hollywood
on a river mudflat, sheltered by cat tails and oak,
between the Sepulveda Dam and the L.A. River
under barbed-wired electric fences and cement block warehouses

Sigh Gulp Sigh Humph Sigh Aiiieeeee
with tender wings of lung, gasping bronze air bravely.
The minute he entered the world: 12:00 PM exactly,
his parents threw a blue tarp
over his face and body to quash the whimper below:
Homely as hell, his parents think,
undeniably a mammal, yet looking more monkey than manly!
Stuck-out ears, squashed nose, and big lips,
they prayed the blur would turn breathless blue.

Tarp

After they left him for dead, almost
a common miracle occurred, as life arises in the midst of mud:

An overheated cosmic sign—110-degree sun
congealed the color of blue tarp
fused cobalt onto a flat face
shoulders, chest, simian fingers and feet—
Immaculate indigo.

Solar-baked, his skin colored in radiant blue!
Despite such a cruel, radioactive state of blueness
the blue monkey survived day one, day two,
day three, day four, and months more.

Yet for others, as we know, blue tarps
barely conceal camps of trespassers and transients
who pick at the outer scabs of cities—
not only L.A., Manhattan, Manila, Beijing, Mumbai,
in any language that we speak, their names are relatives:
Homeless. Drifter. Exile. Refugee. Migrant..
Wanderer. *Lau-long*. Paperless.
Picker. Persona non grata.

Thumbless

Swoop! A strong hand plucked Monkey into thin air!
Thumbless (who leaves no trace)
held Monkey in the palm of his right four-fingers.
Grinning, five-foot five inches—Khmer,
but how did he lose his right thumb?

In short (like shortbread), Thumbless worked
for Wonder White Bread (the Atwater branch),
downstream just blocks from the river.
Not making bread, which he didn't eat much,
Thumbless (given name, Anchaly, for hand)
formerly was head factory mechanic from Siem Reap
So he knew a lot about machines long before America

Pausing once to fix the bread-cutting machine,
He cussed as the blade whirled and sliced off his thumb
which fell to the factory floor, scampering away.
Detached from hand and body, it still had memory, like a foot
with a path of its own.
Workers called him "Thumb-less,"
closer to his real name, anyway, until he was laid off.

Anchaly chased his thumb out the door, but it hid in the cottontails,
and he pleaded with Buddha, to no avail.
In the meantime, he twirled Blue Monkey like a toy
around the palm of his hand, pointing with his index finger
South to a world beyond the river, across the Pacific—

Osaka, Kaohsiung, Hong Kong, Phnom Penh, Colombo—
ports he'd passed through as a seaman.

Now, each dusk after checking the bakery dumpster
he'd head down to find Monkey on a mud islet on the river.
From a backpack Thumbless would take out a loaf
of day-old bread—soft and porous as a sponge.

River

Taken to heart and raised up by *longong*
the working hands and roving relations of the river
Monkey would strut out and stutter to his own reflection:

Nilā Nalā Nilā Nalā
Out of negative, Newness!
Out of blueness, Monkey!

Blue Monkey dared to call this river home
but for flotsam of factories, jetsam of acrid anthropoids
that jettisoned his take on a beautiful world.
Brown stream bubbling beneath his toes
Elegant egret, thin legs hobbled for a second
in a frothy swirl of discarded plastic wrappers,
orange peels, crumbling styrofoam cups,
glass bottles and half a fishing pole, red rubber ball,
bicycle hub, stringless pastel face masks.

No one could deny Monkey this truth: The L.A. River was a concrete ditch.
Once fertile banks and native riverbed, now channeled waste water
suppressed by concrete, cement block walls, laced with red and blue graffiti,
an unending chain that carries detritus from Santa Susanna,
Sepulveda, Los Feliz, downtown L.A., Compton, Lakewood, Wilmington, Long Beach,
to empty its own existence into the Pacific.

Blue Monkey scratched his arms until his wrists bled.
His body ached with sorrow, seeking farther places in his mind
distraught as any Hanuman under a cloud of sewer flies.

Breathless

Under a fragrant bush of sage
Blue Monkey daydreamed he was a dapper deva,
tossing magic stones
floating across an azure sea as Nilā and Nalā did
eons before he was born—
until someone began teasing and tickling his feet.

Wearing a cheap kung-fu jacket,
caricature Chinese waiter, laughing right in his face.
Monkey frowned, but the man looked stronger,
so he just squatted, kept his cool.

The man said: You're Master Monkey of the River, right?

Monkey nodded modestly.

But I'm Master of the Borrow.
Can I borrow your time?

Monkey said "Why not? I have lots of time and it's still free."

The buff man huffed: I'm from the famous Chinese city of Xian.
Juicy dumplings, and thousands of ancient soldiers carved in stone.
As for me, I used to run bike repair shops when I wasn't doing kung-fu.
I'm here on borrowed time, my tourist visa ran out some time ago.
But, I never panic. I know how to breathe.
Walk forward and talk backwards.
Look at the river! Look at the tree! Look at the fence!

Blue Monkey looked, shrugged.

The man from Xian said: Everything we have is borrowed from this river.

Nothing is really ours. We make use of things.
Recycle time. Recycle things.
We're scavengers of everything thrown away.
If you learn this well you can double, triple,
Even quadruple your powers!
Everyday I'll come by and show you how to recycle time.
Don't waste your precious life sleeping under that silly sage bush.

Blue Monkey said "It's a real deal, sir. Whatever is your honest name?"

"Breathless" the man said. It means:
Waste less hot air--but breathe down deeper.
Love things less to live forever.
Beyond what heaven intended for monkeys like you!

Blue Monkey and the Breathless practiced *prana*—
Water way. Seagull soar. Willow sway.
Paws planted firmly on broad nostrils, Monkey would
filter musky smells before they ever reached his nose.

Rain

What's azure in Angel City?
Not in a hundred years, but one real day
when foolish men anger Chinigchinix,
rain will fall without fail and fell all that stands:
Tongva shamans, sketching sacred figures
upon the sand, forecast generations of birth
and decay, rain and sun.

Thus they built huts of wood, branches and reeds,
villages nestled within oaken groves named
Cahuenga, Tujunga, Cucamonga, Topanga

above Angeles river streams
Keeping their plank boats ready to push off

whenever flash floods called upon them to higher ground.

But after another hundred years, tainted copper clouds
appeared tonight, December, the time the Tongva had foreseen.
Violet smog eclipsed the sun, oxidized Angel City,
fermented the blood of unborn fetuses-by then
Gaia's cycle of birth and life was aborted,
green river commas of tadpoles already gone.

Winter sky batters down to deep purple bruise
lightning bolts splice the bloated air
Acid rain ravages clay bungalows, overtakes
mega-mansions, fissures freeways: ancient anger
recoils at the overturning of ancient loam to acrid earth.

Instantly, Monkey was drenched, as rushed as ramen in a bowl,
Skidding and skittering into the black river below.
Thumbless and Breathless at his side, clutch
an empty shopping cart, cling to
a Volkswagen hood, clamber up the concrete
bank, out of breath,
curse, unpeeling neon bits of plastic,
tossed transparent condoms,
fishing nets entangling their limbs-collapsing
under a lost blue tarp, tossing and turning
to the drumbeat of rain until dawn.



Mirror

Achoo! I'm hungry now, nowhere to call home! Monkey chimed.

Thumbless pulled out the last loaf of bread from his cargo pant.

Never fear, you're not alone, we're here! Three's a crowd.

Where is home, Monkey cried again, but soon distracted
a red cruising bike steadily moving towards the trio. Affixed
onto its wide handlebars, eight small mirrors
glinting like a starry chandelier in the drizzle.

Save us! cries Monkey.

Breathe slowly, Breathless purses his lips.
Thumbs up! Thumbless holds up four sturdy fingers.

The biker leaned on the handlebars: triangular face,
mustache, and ivory teeth below a frayed Dodgers cap.

So it's you, Boss Monkey of the River!

Nah, I'm just a monkey, blue and wet. Thumbless & Breathless here for the ride.

Boss, can't save you from your final fate. But I can help you find your way!

And, who are you? Why the mirrors?
Can I see my handsome self? asks Monkey.

These are my Mayan mirrors, Monkey Man.
Rain and smog don't cloud 'em. My extra mirror eyes-
reflect past, present and future.
Avoid accidents, bad luck, sheriffs.
I see 'em before they see me—so far so good.
Here around the river I'm Mirror Man—M & M!

Dragnet

Hey man, what's happening over there?
Jagged flashing movements in his mirrors glint in his eyes.
Three pale men carry black searchlights.
Not construction workers.
Not picnickers, not now, not ever.

Zig-zagging in tandem, up and down the concrete,
river dragnet snaking behind trees and river grass
until they find and pull forth a fugitive,
pinion and cuff the dark, unlucky man.

Sheriffs? ICE? Vigilantes? When the rain stops,
after saving all the wet ones in their tents
or the homeless caught outside by floodwaters,
they want human catch squirming in their hands.
But they won't get us, no way!



Way

Let's scam! Pushing his heels on his wheels, M & M leads the way-
 Ach! Ach! One by one Monkey starts pulling hairs from his chest
 dashing them with all his might like swords into wet earth.
 Behind his blue tail, thick green brambles shoot up as tall as a man!
 That'll buy them time from the dragnet.

Monkey, Breathless, and Thumbless reach the freeway underpass
 WE RECYCLE LIVES, MAKE LA GREEN AGAIN
 on the side of a dumpster truck revving its engine
 Jump on, M & M said, hoisting Monkey in first, then the others.
 Pulling the canvas tarp tight and taut over their heads.

Thump, jerk, bump, toss and turn, crammed
 under the wet tarp with plastic bottles, discarded toys
 lumbering down I-5 South, west on 710, until
 they whiff the tang of salt, sea, bunker oil.

The truck slowed, a voice somewhere shouts:

You, driver-Recyclables left, combustibles right.
 Meantime, fill out the new drayage forms. Gotta wait in line.



From under, Thumbless says:

Port of Long Beach, I know that smell, I know it well.
We're gonna be dumped or find ourselves far away!

Blue Monkey: Once they open the tarp, they'll find us, now what?

My cruiser? Wish I could fit it in my backpack! said Mirror Man.
My mirrors tell me we need to go with the flow. Not stick out like sore thumb.

Borrow the Tao, the Way of Nature, says Breathless.
Who the hell is Tao? grunts Thumbless.
Mind over matter! replies Breathless.
Even when matter is polluted? quips Monkey.

Breathless goes on:

I will show you how to breathe.
Shrink your body as small as a water bottle!

But can we return to our real sizes later? Monkey wonders.

Fanning his arms in an arc, Breathless says:

Don't fear, breathing is everything. Back and forth.
Big to small. Small to big. Young to old, old to young.
Even male to female, or female to male, if that's your thing.
Pronto! Close your eyes, and follow me!

Monkey shrugged. Thumbless put his good thumb up.

M & M shook his head in disbelief-what his Tongva grandpa had told him

made sense now-

*Do not fear the future. No matter
how far you stray from the river, it will bring you back one day.*

In unison, they chant:

One breath. One body. My mind over any body!

Fingers and toes start to twitch and tingle, inch by inch they shrink
even M & M's wheels, now pint-sized, fits in his miniature backpack.

Not a minute too soon, as the tarp flew up, a steel forklift
lifted and unloaded the entire truck, dumping the recyclables
into the mouth of a forty-foot container.
As small as water bottles, the four hold onto each other
so they wouldn't drown in the tide of trash.

Broiling under hot sun until a giant orange claw they could not see
Lifts the container up and on board the waiting ship.
Would they be sent down deep in an airless bay

or stacked above the hatch facing the sea? Breathless wondered.

Clang, the steel door closes. Metal rods lash door to panel,
turnbuckles bolt them inside from the outside!

It was just one container
stacked in a pyramid among the rest:
Evergreen. COSCO. Hyundai, Wanhai, Hanjin. Maersk, CMA...
tons of all the world's goods, and all the world's trash plowed
back and forth through tide and tsunami across the North Pacific,
Sea of Japan, East China Sea, Strait of Malacca.

Homeless before and homeless now, trapped
on a container ship. Would they end up in an other place?
Blue Monkey panicked, tears began to stream
from his eyes. Cosmic destiny or is this all
some dirty trick, he moaned.

Stop sniveling! Thumbless said.
Hold tight, I know my way around these ports!
Look carefully, this old container is gonna be discarded soon.

See light coming through? Broken welds? Rusted
cracks in the corners? This ain't airtight. We can breathe.
And squeeze. Find food. Wait
until the ship is out of the harbor-I'll get out
back to normal size, and be one of the crew!

Breathless took a deep breath, wiped his brow,
exhausted, his mind over matter exercises only went so far.

Without lighting his usual bundle of river sage,
Mirror Man chanted to his ancestors, hoping
to reach their ears anyway. In the dark
container of the ship, *Fortuna*,
Blue Monkey just bid his time:
he'd for sure see blue skies again.

Azure was the hue of his skin,
azure the color of his name. And, unbeknownst to him,
a blue cintamani gem was growing
deeper in his heart.

(journey to be continued...)

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Was This the Only Way?

Deepak Singh

In nature, there is nothing contingent.

the ink of your traumas
bled into these sheets long ago
it cannot be erased
or rewritten
as I read those pages, I think

a monster wrote this story.

But it is absurd to affirm this of a Being absolutely infinite and supremely perfect.

this is how it was meant to be-
the only way it could be.

you, child-

do you sit up in the night and wonder
when the quill will descend next
or from which vein it will drink?

do you search yourself
looking for scars you don't yet know,
asking
if the ink is dry,
why am I still bleeding?

when the stars fall from the skies
do you make a wish
or do you wander
lost between lines of dead starlight
hoping to follow them to a better world?

*Immediately after the tribulation of those days,
the sun will be darkened,
and the moon will not give its light,
and the stars will fall from the sky,
and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.*

Extracts from “Tarikh Baghdad”

Henry Stratakis-Allen

Here are comments on two excerpts (both cited) from the *Tarikh Baghdad aw Madinat as-Salam*, a history of Baghdad written in the eleventh century by the Arab intellectual al-Khatib al-Baghdadi; this is an original translation from the Arabic. “Histories” of that age often included a variety of genres such as poetry, philosophy, and hadiths. Original descriptive history constituted only a small part of al-Baghdadi’s work. The first excerpt is of a transmitted poem, and the second is Baghdadi’s original comment.

There was a legend, told by augurs and astrologers, that none of the Abbasid caliphs would ever die in the city of Baghdad. It was prophesied that every one of them would end their lives in some foreign country, or else outside of the city walls:

<i>Do you see in the length and width of the earth another land</i>	<i>like Baghdad? She is the heaven of the earth.</i>
<i>Life becomes clear in Baghdad and its branches become green.</i>	<i>Life without Baghdad is unclear and unfresh.</i>
<i>The Lord has ordained that a caliph will not die</i>	<i>in Baghdad, so, truly, he wills as his people judge.</i>
<i>The foreigner’s eye slumbers in Baghdad; you will not see</i>	<i>a foreigner in the land of Syria aspiring to close his eyes.*</i>

According to al-Baghdadi, historians debated over whether this legend was true; there was disagreement over whether a particular caliph died outside of the city walls.

Baghdad, once the capital of an Islamic state that stretched from the Loire Valley to the edges of modern Pakistan, began to decline dramatically in the eleventh century. Famine and plagues ravaged Iraq; dams and roads went decades without maintenance; law schools and public markets were demolished by sectarian rioters: Sunnis raging against Shi’ites, Sunnis raging against Sunnis. But al-Baghdadi loved his city, which he referred to as “the navel of the world,” and his people:

*So the types of people moderated in Iraq, and this extended to the peoples’ bodies, and they were free from the fairness of the Romans and the Slavs, from the blackness of the Ethiopians and other foreigners of Sudan, from the ruggedness of the Turks, from the rusticity of the mountain people and the Khurasanians, from the ugliness of the Chinese, and from the ways of nationalization and creation that shaped them; the Iraqis are free from all of them.**

The political dissolution of classical Islamic civilization was sealed by the capture and destruction of Baghdad by the Mongols in 1258. According to a story repeated by Marco Polo, the conquerors were so astonished by the amount of treasure in the city that they locked the last Abbasid caliph in a tower of gold and starved him to death. Perhaps al-Baghdadi’s sources would argue that this caliph did not technically die in the city, since he had expired *within its walls*.

*The text is translated from *On the Withdrawal of Caliphs from Baghdad*, Ummara bin Aqil bin Bilal in *al-Khatib al-Baghdadi* (vol. 1, p. 377), and al-Khatib al-Baghdadi (vol. 1, p. 320), from the edition published by the Dar al-Gharb al-Islami, edited by B. ‘A. Ma’ruf (Beirut, 1422/2001).

The Question of Justice in Plato's Republic

Education is difficult and rare. The AAI seminar on Plato's *Republic*, a small group studying and discussing the Question of Justice in a spirit of friendship, is more in keeping with the Socratic view that true education is not a pouring of knowledge into empty minds, but rather a "turning around" of the mind and soul to see for itself. Plato wrote in dialogues because true education is a dialogue. Instead of deducing justice from laws, we discover it from seeing how beliefs arise and operate in particular characters and souls. One must understand, for example, what sort of person is making the argument, what passions and hopes are driving him, and what the relationship is between his argument and himself (or his view of himself). Socrates has come down to us not only as the first moral and political philosopher, but also as the first psychologist. The inquiry into justice is an inquiry by and into the human soul.

We were very fortunate to have this summer a bright and lively group of students who were not afraid to reflect on their opinions about justice and God, and how they hold up against such seemingly formidable opponents of justice and piety as Thrasymachus or the Athenian envoys in the Melian Dialogue—those who brazenly claim that might makes right. The atmosphere of friendship and trust makes it possible to consider such disturbing views: perhaps one lives as a prisoner in a cave, by what turn out to be only shadows of artifacts. The spirit of free and hopeful inquiry is the way out of the cave of indoctrination and politics into the light of nature. Education is liberation.

Manuel Lopez '89

Participating in the weekly seminar "The Question of Justice in Plato's *Republic*" has been a wonderful opportunity to become more familiar with the foundational text of Western philosophy, and perhaps its most fundamental problem—justice. The seminar is perfectly suited to studying these questions: being that it is such a small group, its intimacy is highly conducive to fleshing out even the most complicated ideas in the text. Mr. Lopez and Dr. Petranovich deftly guide participants through Plato's complex arguments, but just enough to allow us students to begin the laborious task of slowly extricating ourselves from the Cave. Additionally, the mixed format creates the best forum for discussing philosophy: after an hour in the classroom giving the text a deep treatment, we move to a dining establishment in Harvard Square to continue the discussion.

Like a symposium of old, we create fraternity over a delicious meal, accompanied by an unbroken conversation on justice in the Republic, and in our own world. The two-tiered design provides the best of both worlds: in the classroom, we blush like Thrasymachus in simply trying to grasp Plato's intricate logic, while at the dinner table we embrace our own opinions on justice and make a stand for them against others. The seminar is the ideal way to go to the root of these questions—philosophy is best engaged in among friends, which is a state of being that the small nature of the class encourages. Whether one has no experience with Plato or is extremely familiar with him, I would highly recommend this seminar. The questions that lie at the heart of the Republic are eternal and high unanswerable, making this class just as necessary, and just as enjoyable.

Loren Brown '23

Book VIII in the great drama of Plato's *Republic* presents the reader with cycles of change in regimes. Cycles themselves appear to be changing, and therefore something untrue and incongruous with true justice. However, by taking the form of a typical, recurring sequence, these cycles mimic human nature, and are therefore unchanging. Political regime as cyclical is something that is unchanging, and reveals something not merely about justice, but also about human nature.

In Socrates' image of the tripartite soul, eros, the fundamental source of instincts, compulsions, and desires, causes all humans to yearn for undying happiness. From this perspective, human beings seek to gain, which should not be seen as something inherently corrupt. However, as many humans find, this instinctual yearning for undying happiness cannot be satisfied or fulfilled by anything temporal.

This innate insatiability in humans causes regime itself to be unstable and cyclical, since regime can no more than anything else truly and fully satisfy human wants. This is not an anarchist argument; rather, it is an explanation for why

humans still ought to seek the best regime. According to Plato, the best regime is the philosophical one, which still holds to the concept of gain, albeit in its highest form. If there is anyone who is satisfied, it is the philosopher, who has mastery over and can reason through eros, the source of his most integral desires.

In this way, the Question of Justice Seminar seemed to investigate more the nature of humans and the individual soul rather than the nature of justice as a broad concept.

Alexandra Rider, Hillsdale College '22

Is law supposed to be made for the interest of the ruler or the ruled? What is the nature of injustice, and is it done intentionally or out of ignorance? What justifies the laws of a regime? Who should rule, a single man, a powerful few, or the many poor? What ideas about the gods and goodness should art and poetry impart to the impressionable young? How should the soul and the regime order itself? Should the regime dictate what happens in the family? And why set the exploration of such questions in the form of a philosophical dialogue? These and many other questions arise dramatically in *The Republic*, the book we discussed in our seminar under the guidance of Manuel and Danilo.

I loved the insights and energy that everyone brought to the discussions, and the fact that some were experienced in philosophical discussion, others adept at applying contemporary political parallels, made the seminar sparkling and interesting. Manuel sent us stimulating analysis and questions ahead of discussions, so the discussion never lacked direction or substance. And Manuel never came across as a “teacher” who merely condescended to listen to his students, waiting for the right moment to spill all that he knew; we had authentic Socratic discussions. To borrow Keats: The experience was truly an adventure and a discovery of Plato’s amazing domain with fellow travelers. And each night’s discussion was continued in true Socratic spirit, in the fashion of Plato’s *Symposium*, at dinner with good talk and good food!

Blake Chen '25

Looking back at my time at the Abigail Adams Institute, I am reminded of the kindness I was continuously shown each week. From the start everyone was extremely welcoming. Both professors and students made sure to help out in ways extending beyond deep analysis of Plato. As an incoming freshman, this seminar has been daunting, since I have not been in an environment similar to AAI before. Yet it has been rewarding for this very reason, because in the midst of my confusion I have grown intellectually. I have learned the importance of diligently listening, which has improved my ability to ask questions. Through the observation of the professors I have become better acquainted with the note-taking process along with reflection. Because of the fast-paced nature of the sessions, I often do not write much down in the moment, but rather reflect on the car ride home.

The harsh reality of this is that much of my reflection has not amounted to results in terms of answering what justice is. I have inched nearer to truth and have bolstered my own understanding of the concept of justice. The dinner portion, although less formal in speech, was very informative because we would extend our talks beyond Plato. This presented me with a good opportunity to foster relationships with everyone. I thought the food was excellent and liked how we tried a variety of different cultures’ foods: as we immersed ourselves in unique cultures both through physical food and through intellectual food our taste palettes grew extensively.

Temidayo Lukan, Boston College '25

Initially I did not know what approaching the Question of Justice in a seminar setting would be like, since I have only studied it in solitary settings, but the Abigail Adams Institute and Professor Manuel Lopez did not disappoint. The questions asked and the subsequent discussions were deeper than I could have ever imagined and dealt with the core issues with which the nation (and perhaps the entire Western world) is grappling. People often assume that everyone is looking for the same common good, but what happens when, upon examination, this isn’t the case? What is the good and what is justice? I do not believe that Plato has proposed a concrete answer, as he often leaves his readers at an aporia, but he leads the readers, no matter what era they might live in, to re-examine simplified definitions of right and wrong.

The additional readings that were provided (such as the Melian Dialogue) and the sheer breadth of historical, linguistic and philosophical context that Manuel commanded with respect to Plato were indispensable to the seminar. I especially appreciated the focus on Thrasymachus and the Cycle of Regimes, since they have their parallels with modern contexts. If there were another class assessing another text of Plato's-or even a more tangential topic-I would definitely recommend attending. This recommendation applies even to people who are no longer in school, including individuals such as myself who work in professional settings such as engineering.

Felix Yang, Cornell University '19



Alyosha the Pot

Leo Tolstoy

Alyosha was the younger brother. He was called the Pot, because his mother had once sent him with a pot of milk to the deacon's wife, and he had stumbled against something and broken it. His mother had beaten him, and the children had teased him. Since then he was nicknamed the Pot. Alyosha was a tiny, thin little fellow, with ears like wings, and a huge nose. "Alyosha has a nose that looks like a dog on a hill!" the children used to call after him. Alyosha went to the village school, but was not good at lessons; besides, there was so little time to learn. His elder brother was in town, working for a merchant, so Alyosha had to help his father from a very early age. When he was no more than six he used to go out with the girls to watch the cows and sheep in the pasture, and a little later he looked after the horses by day and by night. And at twelve years of age he had already begun to plough and to drive the cart. The skill was there though the strength was not. He was always cheerful. Whenever the children made fun of him, he would either laugh or be silent. When his father scolded him he would stand mute and listen attentively, and as soon as the scolding was over would smile and go on with his work. Alyosha was nineteen when his brother was taken as a soldier. So his father placed him with the merchant as a yard-porter. He was given his brother's old boots, his father's old coat and cap, and was taken to town. Alyosha was delighted with his clothes, but the merchant was not impressed by his appearance.

"I thought you would bring me a man in Simeon's place," he said, scanning Alyosha; "and you've brought me *this*! What's the good of him?"

"He can do everything; look after horses and drive. He's a good one to work. He looks rather thin, but he's tough enough. And he's very willing."

"He looks it. All right; we'll see what we can do with him."

So Alyosha remained at the merchant's.

The family was not a large one. It consisted of the merchant's wife: her old mother: a married son poorly educated who was in his father's business: another son, a learned one who had finished school and entered the University, but having been expelled, was living at home: and a daughter who still went to school.

They did not take to Alyosha at first. He was uncouth, badly dressed, and had no manner, but they soon got used to him. Alyosha worked even better than his brother had done; he was really very willing. They sent him on all sorts of errands, but he did everything quickly and readily, going from one task to another without stopping. And so here, just as at home, all the work was put upon his shoulders. The more he did, the more he was given to do. His mistress,

her old mother, the son, the daughter, the clerk, and the cook-all ordered him about, and sent him from one place to another.

"Alyosha, do this! Alyosha, do that! What! have you forgotten, Alyosha? Mind you don't forget, Alyosha!" was heard from morning till night. And Alyosha ran here, looked after this and that, forgot nothing, found time for everything, and was always cheerful.

His brother's old boots were soon worn out, and his master scolded him for going about in tatters with his toes sticking out. He ordered another pair to be bought for him in the market. Alyosha was delighted with his new boots, but was angry with his feet when they ached at the end of the day after so much running about. And then he was afraid that his father would be annoyed when he came to town for his wages, to find that his master had deducted the cost of the boots.

In the winter Alyosha used to get up before daybreak. He would chop the wood, sweep the yard, feed the cows and horses, light the stoves, clean the boots, prepare the samovars and polish them afterwards; or the clerk would get him to bring up the goods; or the cook would set him to knead the bread and clean the saucepans. Then he was sent to town on various errands, to bring the daughter home from school, or to get some olive oil for the old mother. "Why the devil have you been so long?" first one, then another, would say to him. Why should they go? Alyosha can go. "Alyosha! Alyosha!" And Alyosha ran here and there. He breakfasted in snatches while he was working, and rarely managed to get his dinner at the proper hour. The cook used to scold him for being late, but she was sorry for him all the same, and would keep something hot for his dinner and supper.

At holiday times there was more work than ever, but Alyosha liked holidays because everybody gave him a tip. Not much certainly, but it would amount up to about sixty kopeks-his very own money. For Alyosha never set eyes on his wages. His father used to come and take them from the merchant, and only scold Alyosha for wearing out his boots.

When he had saved up two roubles, by the advice of the cook he bought himself a red knitted jacket, and was so happy when he put it on, that he couldn't close his mouth for joy. Alyosha was not talkative; when he spoke at all, he spoke abruptly, with his head turned away. When told to do anything, or asked if he could do it, he would say yes without the smallest hesitation, and set to work at once.

Alyosha did not know any prayer; and had forgotten what his mother had taught him. But he prayed just the same, every morning and every evening, prayed with his hands, crossing himself.

He liked like this for about a year and a half, and towards the end of the second year a most startling thing happened to him. He discovered one day, to his great surprise, that, in addition to the relation of usefulness existing between people, there was also another, a peculiar relation of quite a different character. Instead of a man being wanted to clean boots, and go on errands and harness horses, he is not wanted to be of any service at all, but another human being wants to serve him and pet him. Suddenly Alyosha felt he was such a man.

He made this discovery through the cook, Ustinia. She was young, had no parents, and worked as hard as Alyosha. He felt for the first time in his life that he-not his services, but he himself-was necessary to another human being. When his mother used to be sorry for him, he had taken no notice of her. It had seemed to him quite natural, as though he were feeling sorry for himself. But here was Ustinia, a perfect stranger, and sorry for him. She would save him some hot porridge, and sit watching him, her chin propped on her bare arm, with the sleeve rolled up, while he was eating it. When he looked at her she would begin to laugh, and he would laugh too.

This was such a new, strange thing to him that it frightened Alyosha. He feared that it might interfere with his work. But he was pleased, nevertheless, and when he glanced at the trousers that Ustinia had mended for him, he would shake his head and smile. He would often think of her while at work, or when running on errands. "A fine girl, Ustinia," he sometimes exclaimed.

Ustinia used to help him whenever she could, and he helped her. She told him all about her life; how she had lost her parents; how her aunt had taken her in and found a place for her in the town; how the merchant's son had tried to take liberties with her, and how she had rebuffed him. She liked to talk, and Alyosha liked to listen to her. He had heard that peasants who came up to work in the towns frequently got married to servant girls. On one occasion she

asked him if his parents intended marrying him soon. He said that he did not know; that he did not want to marry any of the village girls.

“Have you taken a fancy to some one, then?”

“I would marry you, if you’d be willing.”

“Get along with you, Alyosha the Pot; but you’ve found your tongue, haven’t you?” she exclaimed, slapping him on the back with a towel she held in her hand. “Why shouldn’t I?”

At Shrovetide, Alyosha’s father came to town for his wages. It had come to the ears of the merchant’s wife that Alyosha wanted to marry Ustinia, and she disapproved of it. “What will be the use of her with a baby?” she thought, and informed her husband.

The merchant gave the old man Alyosha’s wages.

“How is my lad getting on?” he asked. “I told you he was willing.”

“That’s all right, as far as it goes, but he’s taken some sort of nonsense into his head. He wants to marry our cook. Now I don’t approve of married servants. We won’t have them in the house.”

“Well, now, who would have thought the fool would think of such a thing?” the old man exclaimed. “But don’t you worry. I’ll soon settle that.”

He went into the kitchen, and sat down at the table waiting for his son. Alyosha was out on an errand, and came back breathless.

“I thought you had some sense in you; but what’s this you’ve taken into your head?” his father began.

“I? Nothing.”

“How, nothing? They tell me you want to get married. You shall get married when the time comes. I’ll find you a decent wife, not some town hussy.”

His father talked and talked, while Alyosha stood still and sighed. When his father had quite finished, Alyosha smiled.

“All right. I’ll drop it.”

“Now that’s what I call sense.”

When he was left alone with Ustinia, he told her what his father had said. (She had listened at the door.)

“It’s no good; it can’t come off. Did you hear? He was angry-won’t have it at any price.”

Ustinia cried into her apron.

Alyosha shook his head.

“What’s to be done? We must do as we’re told.”

“Well, are you going to give up that nonsense, as your father told you?” his mistress asked, as he was putting up the shutters in the evening.

“To be sure we are,” Alyosha replied with a smile, and then burst into tears.

From that day Alyosha went about his work as usual, and no longer talked to Ustinia about their getting married. One day in Lent the clerk told him to clear the snow from the roof. Alyosha climbed on to the roof and swept away all the snow; and, while he was still raking out some frozen lumps from the gutter, his foot slipped and he fell over. Unfortunately, he did not fall on the snow, but on a piece of iron over the door. Ustinia came running up, together with the merchant’s daughter.

“Have you hurt yourself, Alyosha?”

“Ah! no, it’s nothing.”

But he could not raise himself when he tried to, and began to smile.

He was taken into the lodge. The doctor arrived, examined him, and asked where he felt the pain.

“I feel it all over,” he said. “But it doesn’t matter. I’m only afraid master will be annoyed. Father ought to be told.”

Alyosha lay in bed for two days, and on the third day they sent for the priest.

“Are you really going to die?” Ustinia asked.

“Of course I am. You can’t go on living for ever. You must go when the time comes.” Alyosha spoke rapidly as usual.

“Thank you, Ustinia. You’ve been very good to me. What a lucky thing they didn’t let us marry! Where should we have been now? It’s much better as it is.”

When the priest came, he prayed with his hands and with his heart. “As it is good here when you obey and do no harm to others, so it will be there,” was the thought within it.

He spoke very little; he only said he was thirsty, and he seemed full of wonder at something.

He lay in wonderment, then stretched himself, and died.



Reflections on Tolstoy

Alex Hughes '25

Should we be basically optimistic or pessimistic? Does duty remain important in the modern world? From where is meaning derived? The late Count Lev Tolstoy's newly published "Alyosha the Pot" poses these necessary questions and lends itself to answering them. His eponymous protagonist is clearly a simple man both in appearance and intellect, motivated primarily by an unstated sense of filial duty. Despite his unsophistication, he shows that there can be honor in accepting our role in the world and filling it well. While today's revolts against hierarchy and external responsibility suggest to the modern reader that Alyosha is happy despite his position, Tolstoy implies the opposite is true. His service is "without the slightest hesitation"; he is "always cheerful." Notably, his sense of duty and faith are mutually reinforcing; he prays even without words because his mother taught him so, and his deathbed prayer glorifies obedience and nonviolence.

His deviation from these norms is equally instructive. The only time Alyosha cries is upon informing his fiancée that his father will not allow their marriage. His father's injunction is the sole time Alyosha's obedience truly makes his life worse. Alyosha's disappointment at being denied marriage and thereby family affirm them as the main sources of meaning outside of piety and work. Importantly, he finds the bright spot even in this in that his untimely death will not widow his beloved. Through Alyosha, Tolstoy provides a poignant example of true generosity of spirit, the only mindset capable of generating internal peace.

Portraits by Catherine Ezell

“The literary vision these poets and writers express with words inspires how I envision them and render a portrait with pencil or pen.”

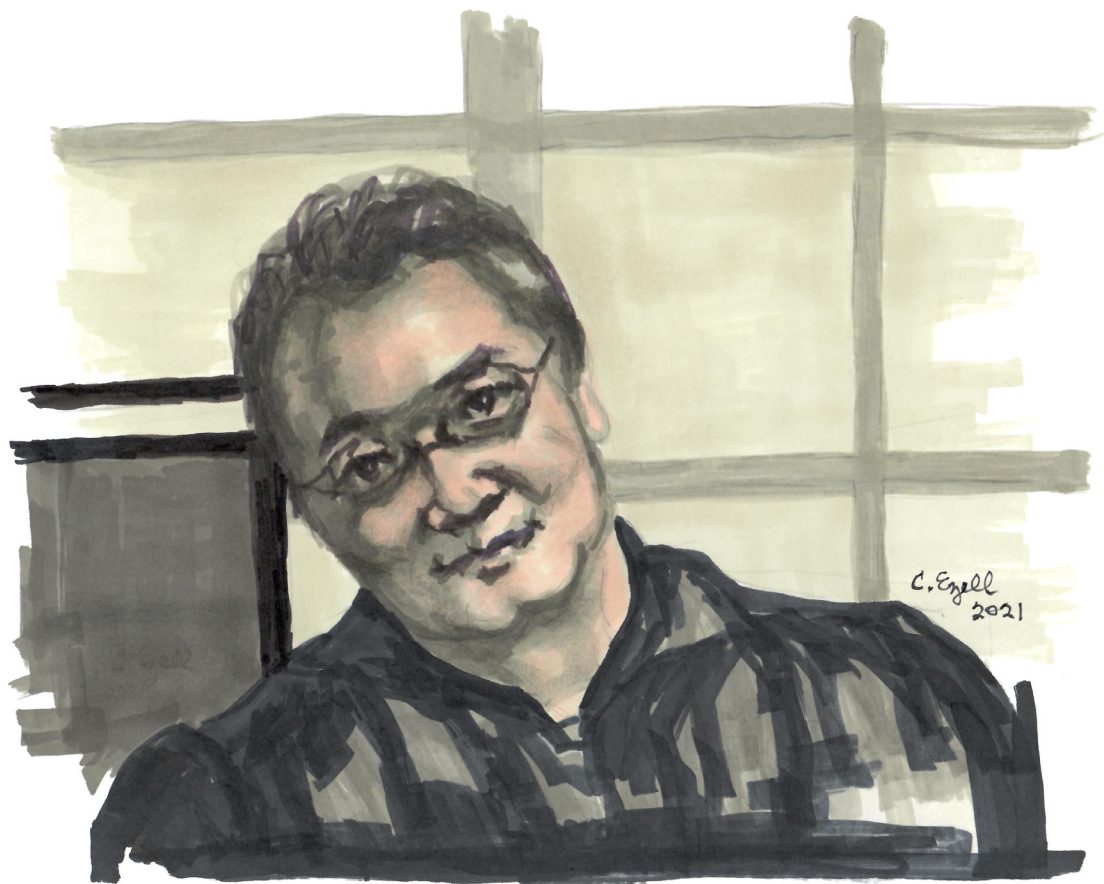
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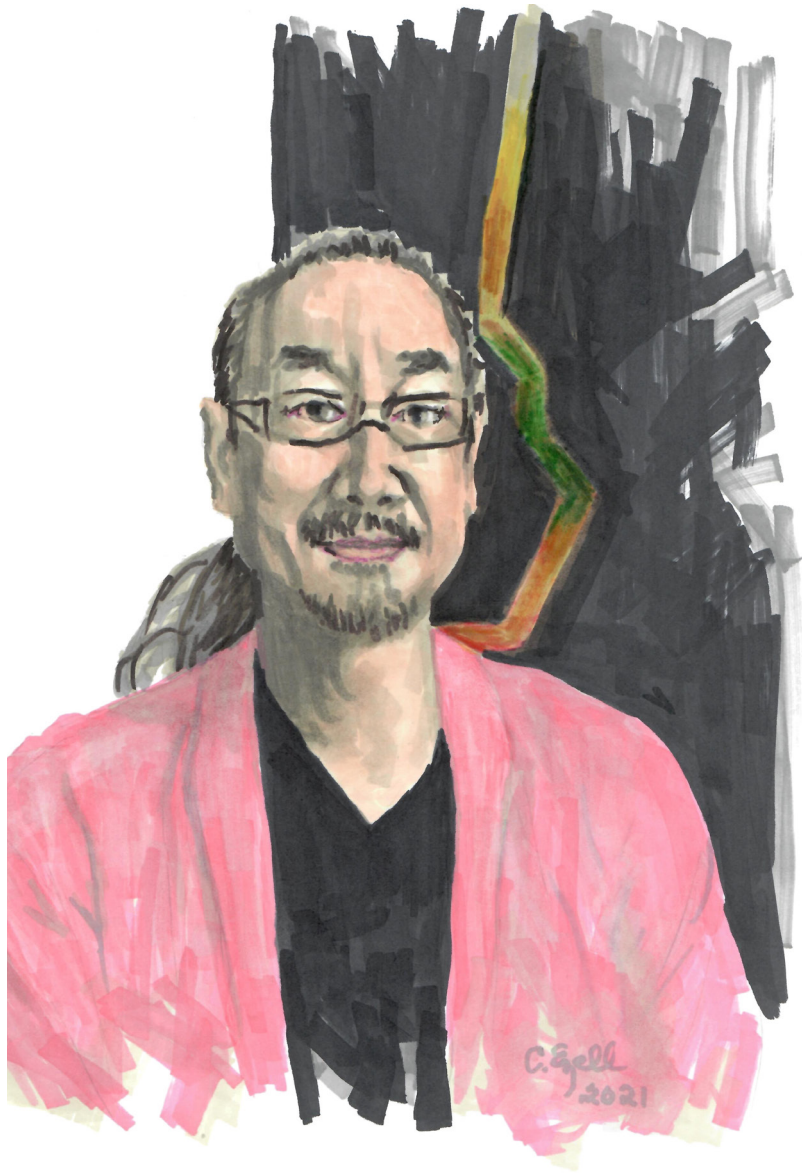
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Shuri Kido



Forrest Gander



Tomoyuki Endo



Russell Leong



Young Leo Tolstoy



Old Leo Tolstoy

Biographies

Editors

Cindy Chopoidalo is the Assistant Editor of the *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature* and a member of Editors Canada. Her publications include *Shakespeare's First Tetralogy, Epic Poetry, and Historiography: How a Dramatist Creates a Fictional World* (2014) and *Shakespeare's Possible Worlds* (2018), and she also contributed to *The Definitive Shakespeare Companion: Overviews, Documents, and Analysis* (2017).

Catherine Ezell has an advanced education in English literature and is a self-taught artist. She has experience in scholarly editing and writing and has devoted her life to drawing and painting. Combining her passion for good writing and art, Catherine creates portraits of authors that are meant to reflect the tone of their works.

Iosif M. Gershteyn is the Chairman of the Ajax Biomedical Foundation, Senior Fellow at the Abigail Adams Institute, Visiting Scholar at the Medical University of South Carolina, and a poet. His work has been published in *International Immunology*, *the Journal of Translational Autoimmunity*, *Researchers*, *One*, *Quillette*, and other publications. Alongside scientific and business pursuits he dedicates time to theater, philosophy, and literature.

Jonathan Locke Hart (Associate, Harvard University Herbaria) is Chair Professor, School of Translation, Shandong University, has held two Fulbrights at Harvard and visiting appointments in English and in Comparative Literature at Harvard as well as having various affiliations with Kirkland House, Harvard over 35 years, and is a poet, literary scholar and historian who has published widely and also taught at Toronto, Cambridge, Princeton, the Sorbonne Nouvelle, Peking University, and elsewhere.

Danilo Petranovich '00 is the Director of the Abigail Adams Institute in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The Institute provides supplementary humanistic education to the Harvard intellectual community by exploring questions of deep human concern that cut across the boundaries of academic disciplines. Previously, Dr. Petranovich taught political science at Duke University and Yale University. He is frequently seen in Harvard's Kirkland House, where he is a dedicated member of the Senior Common Room.

Henry Stratakis-Allen is a Junior at the College of William & Mary majoring in Medieval & Renaissance Studies and Mathematics. His past work has included research in Byzantine Studies and medieval Middle Eastern art and political history. He is currently conducting pre-research for an Honors Thesis focusing on religion and politics in medieval Iraq.

Contributors

Loren Brown '23 is a junior at Harvard College studying political philosophy and English. After his exile in Cambridge, he hopes to return to his native state of Washington.

Blake Chen '25 is a Harvard College freshman. His interests include history, public policy, constitutional law, and economics.

Alexander Hughes '25 is a first-year at Harvard College from Clinton Township, Michigan. He is a member of the Harvard Undergraduate Foreign Policy Initiative and plans to concentrate in Government.

Manuel Lopez '89 has taught political philosophy at the University of Chicago after receiving his undergraduate and law degrees from Harvard. His work focuses on Plato's view of eros and the theological premises of modern science.

Temidayo Lukan, Boston College '25 is a first-year student at Boston College, hailing from Malden, MA, currently double-majoring in Political Science and Philosophy.

Alexandra Rider, Hillsdale College '22 is a senior at Hillsdale College, where she studies English and Classical Education. She is originally from Marlborough, MA, and was an intern for the Abigail Adams Institute during the summer of 2021.

Deepak Singh '25 is a junior at Harvard College jointly concentrating in Philosophy and Computer Science, with a secondary in Neuroscience. He is passionate about the problem of intelligence, universal basic income, and the England national football team.

Felix Yang, Cornell University '19 is an environmental engineer with interests where philosophy, literature, and spirituality meet. He is currently working with an environmental consulting firm based in NYC.

Advisors

Tom Conley is the Abbot Lawrence Lowell Professor of Visual and Environmental Studies and of Romance Languages and Literatures in the Romance Languages and Literatures Department at Harvard. He studies relations of space and writing in literature, cartography, and cinema. His work moves to and from early modern France and issues in theory and interpretation in visual media.

Donald Pfister is the Asa Gray Research Professor of Systematic Botany at the Harvard University Herbaria & Libraries. He studies fungi, particularly ascomycetes. In his studies he uses molecular, morphological, and life history information to understand the relationships among these fungi and their activities in nature. He also uses archives and museum specimens to document collections and their origins.