

Du Fu: Poet, Sage, Historian

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Du Fu (712-770 CE) was a poet during a time of great political upheaval in China. He was born near Luoyang and spent much of his young adulthood in the Yanzhou region, finally settling down to a minor official position in Chang'an, the imperial capital. In 755 CE, An Lushan, a disgruntled general, led a rebellion against the Tang dynasty. The emperor was forced to flee Chang'an (modern Xian), and chaos reigned for the next eight years. For more than a year Du Fu was held captive in Chang'an by the rebels. After escaping, he made his way south, living for a time in a thatched cottage in Chengdu, and later at various places along the Yangtze River. His poetry is characterized by an intense love of nature, by elements of Chan Buddhism, and by a deep compassion for all those caught up in the turmoil of history. This is a longer post than usual. I have become fascinated by Du Fu.

Failing the Examinations

Du Fu (Tu Fu in the Wades Gilles transliteration system, the family name likely deriving from the name of a pear tree) was born in 712 CE near Luoyang, the eastern capital of the Tang Dynasty (Hung, 1952; Owen, 1981). The following map (adapted from Young, 2008, and Collet and Cheng, 2014) shows places of importance in his life:



Du Fu's father was a minor official. His mother appears to have died during his childhood, and Du Fu was raised by his stepmother and an aunt. Du Fu studied hard, but in 735 CE he failed the *jenshi* (advanced scholar) examinations. No one knows why: politics and spite may have played their part. He spent the next few years with his father who was then stationed in Yanzhou,

Du Fu met Li Bai (700-762 CE) in 744 CE. Despite the difference in their ages, the two poets became fast friends. However, they were only able to meet occasionally, their lives being separated by politics and war.

Du Fu attempted the *jenshi* examinations again in 746, and was again rejected. Nevertheless, he was able to obtain a minor position in the imperial civil service in Chang'an. This

allowed him to marry and raise a small family.

Taishan



We can begin our examination of Du Fu's poetry with one of the early poems written during his time in Yanzhou: *Gazing on the Peak* (737 CE). The peak is *Taishan* (exalted mountain), located in Northeastern China. Taishan is one of the Five Great Mountains (*Wuyue*) of ancient China. Today one can reach the summit by climbing up some 7000 steps (see illustration on the right), but in Du Fu's time the climb would have been more difficult. The following is the poem in printed Chinese characters (*Hànzì*) and in Pinyin transliteration:

望嶽

wàng yuè

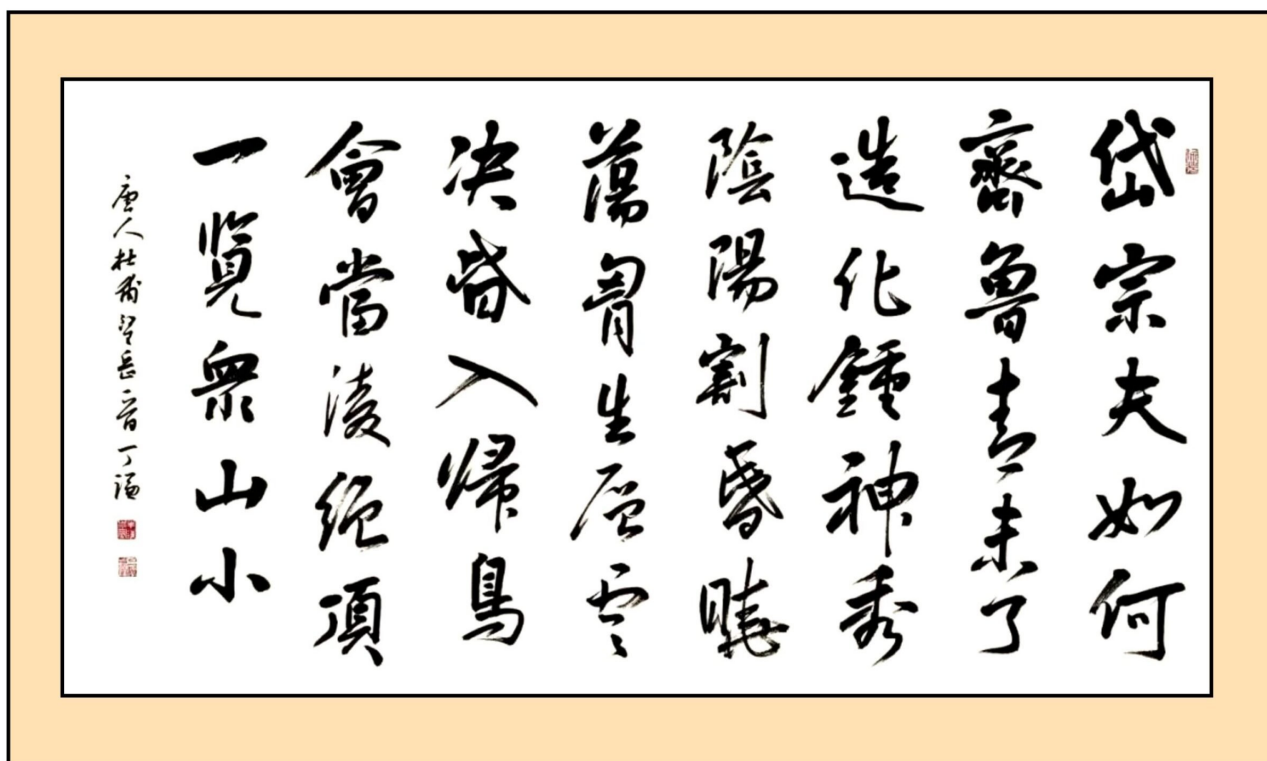
岱宗夫如何，
齊魯青未了。
造化鍾神秀，
陰陽割昏曉。
盪胸生曾雲，
決眴入歸鳥。
會當凌絕頂，
一覽眾山小。

dài zōng fū rú hé
qí lǚ qīng wèi liǎo
zào huà zhōng shén xiù
yīn yáng gē hūn xiǎo
dàng xiōng shēng céng yún
jué zì rù guī niǎo
huì dāng líng jué dǐng
yī lǎn zhòng shān xiǎo

The poem is in the *lǜshī* (regulated verse) form which requires eight lines (four couplets), with each line containing the same number of characters: 5- or 7-character *lǜshī* are the most common. Each line is separated into phrases, with a 5-character line composed of an initial 2-character phrase and a final 3-character phrase. The last words of each couplet rhyme. Rhyme in Chinese is based on the vowel sound. Within the lines there were complex rules for the tonality of the sounds (Zong Qi Cai, 2008, Chapter 8; Wai-lim Yip, 1997, pp 171-221). These rules do not always carry over to the way the characters are pronounced in modern Chinese. The following is a reading of the poem in Mandarin (from Librivox).

<https://creatureandcreator.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/wang-yue-from-librivox.mp3>

Chinese poetry is directed at both the ear and the eye, and fine calligraphy enhances the appreciations of a poem. Ding Qian has written out Du Fu's *Wàng yuè* in beautiful cursive script (going from top down and from left to right):



The following is a character-by-character translation (adapted from Hinton, 2019, p 2):

gaze/ behold mountain

Daizong (ancient name for Taishan) then
like what

Qi *Lu* (regions near Taishan) green/blue
never end

create change concentrate divine beauty

Yin *Yang* (Taoist concepts of dark and light)

cleave dusk dawn

heave chest birth layer cloud

burst eye enter return bird

soon when reach extreme summit

one glance all mountain small.

And this is the English translation of Stephen Owen (2008, poem 1.2):

Gazing on the Peak

And what then is Daizong like? –
over Qi and Lu, green unending.
Creation compacted spirit splendors here,
Dark and Light, riving dusk and dawn.
Exhilarating the breast, it produces layers of cloud;
splitting eye-pupils, it has homing birds entering.
Someday may I climb up to its highest summit,
with one sweeping view see how small all other
mountains are



The interpretation of the poem requires some knowledge of its allusions. In the fourth line, Du Fu is referring to the *taijitu* symbol of Taoism (illustrated on the right) that contrasts the principles of *yin* (dark, female, moon) and *yang* (light, male, sun). Du Fu proposes that Taishan divides the world into two ways of looking. Some have suggested that the *taijitu* symbol originally represented the dark (north) side and the light (south) side of a mountain, and this idea fits easily with the poem.

All translators have had difficulty with the third couplet (reviewed by Hsieh, 1994). My feeling is that Du Fu is noticing layers of clouds at the mountain's upper reaches – the chest if one considers the mountain like a human body – and birds swooping around the peaks – where the eye sockets of the body would be. However, it is also possible that Du Fu is breathing heavily from the climb and that his eyes are

surprised by the birds. Perhaps both meanings are valid, with Du Fu and the mountain becoming one. Du Fu may have been experiencing the meditative state of Chan Buddhism, with a mind was “wide-open and interfused with this mountain landscape, no distinction between subjective and objective” (Hinton, 2019, p 6). One might also consider Du Fu’s mental state: at the time he wrote this poem he had just failed the *jenshi* exams. This might have caused some breast-beating and tears, as well as his final resolve to climb the mountain and see how small all his problems actually were.

The last couplet refers to Mencius’ description of the visit of Confucius to Taishan (Mengzi VIIA:24):

He ascended the Tai Mountain, and all beneath the heavens appeared to him small. So he who has contemplated the sea, finds it difficult to think anything of other waters, and he who has wandered in the gate of the sage, finds it difficult to think anything of the words of others.

Zhang’s Hermitage

During his time in Yanzhou Du Fu visited a hermit named Zhang near the Stonegate Mountain, one of the lesser peaks near Taishan. Zhang was likely a follower of the new Chan Buddhism, which promoted meditation as a means to empty the mind of suffering and allow the universal life force to permeate one’s being. Buddhism first came to China during the Han dynasty (206BCE – 220CE). Since many of the concepts of Buddhism were similar to those of Taoism, the new religion spread quickly (Hinton, 2020). A type of Buddhism that stressed the role of meditation began to develop in the 6th Century CE, and called itself *chan*, a Chinese transcription of the Sanskrit *dhyana* (meditation). In later years this would lead to the Zen Buddhism of Japan. There are many allusions to Buddhism and especially to Chan ideas in Du Fu’s poetry (Rouzer, 2020; Zhang, 2018)

Du Fu reportedly wrote the following poem on one of the walls of Zhang's hermitage. The poem is a seven-character *lǜshī*. The following is the poem in Chinese characters (Owen, 2008, poem 1.4) and in pinyin:

題張氏隱居

tí zhāng shì yǐn jū

春山無伴獨相求

chūn shān wú bàn dú xiāng qiú

伐木丁丁山更幽。

fá mù dīng dīng shān gēng yōu

澗道餘寒歷冰雪，

jiàn dào yú hán lì bīng xuě

石門斜日到林丘。

shí mén xié rì dào lín qiū

不貪夜識金銀氣，

bù tān yè shí jīn yín qì

遠害朝看麋鹿遊。

yuǎn hài zhāo kàn mí lù yóu

乘興杳然迷出處，

chéng xīng yǎo rán mí chū chǔ

對君疑是泛虛舟。

duì jūn yí shì fàn xū zhōu

The following is a character-by-character translation (adapted from Hinton, 2019, p 22):

inscribe	Zhang	family	recluse	
house				
spring	mountain	absence	friend	alone
you	search			
chop	tree	crack	crack	mountain
mystery				again
creek	pathway	remnant	cold	pass
ice	snow			
stone	gate	slant	sun	reach
place				forest
no	desire	night	know	gold
breath/spirit				silver
far	injure	morning	see	deer
wander				deer

ride burgeon dark thus confuse leave
place
facing you suspect this drift empty
boat.

And this is a translation by Kenneth Rexroth (1956):

Written on the Wall at Chang's Hermitage

It is Spring in the mountains.
I come alone seeking you.
The sound of chopping wood echos
Between the silent peaks.
The streams are still icy.
There is snow on the trail.
At sunset I reach your grove
In the stony mountain pass.
You want nothing, although at night
You can see the aura of gold
And silver ore all around you.
You have learned to be gentle
As the mountain deer you have tamed.
The way back forgotten, hidden
Away, I become like you,
An empty boat, floating, adrift.

Notable in the poem is the idea of *wú* (third character) which can be translated as "absence, nothing, not" (Hinton, 2019, p 24) This is an essential concept of Chan Buddhism – the emptying of the mind so that it can become a receptacle for true awareness. The third and fourth characters of the first line might be simply translated as "alone (without a friend)," but one might also venture "with absence as a companion" or "with an empty mind." This fits with the image of the empty boat at the end of the poem.

Zheng Qian, a drinking companion of Li Bai and Du Fu, suggested the idea of combining poetry, painting and

calligraphy. The Emperor was impressed and called the combination *sānjué* (three perfections) (Sullivan, 1974). Li Bai and Du Fu likely tried their hand at painting and calligraphy but no versions of their *sānjué* efforts have survived. The Ming painter and calligrapher Wang Shimin (1592–1680 CE) illustrated the second couplet of Du Fu's poem from Zhang's hermitage in his album Du Fu's Poetic Thoughts now at the Palace Museum in Beijing.



澗道餘寒歷冰雪
石門斜日到林止

乙巳臘月寫

少陵詩意十

二幀似

旭成賢甥時年

七十有四時敘



The An Lushan Rebellion

Toward the end 755 CE, An Lushan, a general on the northern frontier rebelled against the empire and captured the garrison town of Fanyang (or Jicheng) located in what is now part of Beijing. Within a month the rebels captured Luoyang. The emperor and much of his court fled Chang'an, travelling through the Qinling Mountains to find sanctuary in the province of Shu. The city of Chang'an fell to the rebels in the middle of 756 CE.

Below is shown a painting of *Emperor Ming-Huang's Flight to Shu*. Though attributed to the Tang painter Li Zhaodao (675-758 CE), this was actually painted in his style several hundred years later during the Song Dynasty. Shu is the ancient name for what is now known as Sichuan province. This masterpiece of early Chinese painting is now in the National Palace Museum in Taipei. Two enlargements are included: the emperor with his red coat is shown at the lower right; at the lower left advance members of his entourage begin climbing the mountain paths.



The rebellion lasted for eight long years. The northern part of the country was devastated. Death from either war or famine was widespread. Censuses before and after the rebellion suggested a death toll of some 36 million people, making it one of the worst catastrophes in human history. However, most scholars now doubt these numbers and consider the death toll as closer to 13 million. Nevertheless, it was a murderous time.

Moonlit Night

At the beginning of the rebellion, Du Fu managed to get his family to safety in the northern town of Fuzhou, but he was himself held captive in Chang'an. Fortunately, he was not considered important enough to be executed, and he finally managed to escape in 757 CE. The following shows a poem from 756 CE in characters (Owen, 2008, poem 4.18), pinyin transcription, and character-by-character translation (Alexander, 2008):

月夜	yuè yè	moon night
今夜鄜州月，	jīn yè fū zhōu yuè	this night Fu Zhou moon
閨中只獨看。	guī zhōng zhǐ dú kàn	woman's room only alone watch
遙憐小兒女，	yáo lián xiǎo ér nǚ	far pity little boy girl
未解憶長安。	wèi jiě yì cháng ān	not understand remember Chang'an
香霧雲鬟濕，	xiāng wù yún huán shī	fragrant mist cloud hair wet
清輝玉臂寒。	qīng huī yù bì hán	clear brightness jade arm cold
何時倚虛幌，	hé shí yǐ xū huǎng	what time lean empty curtain
雙照淚痕乾。	shuāng zhào lèi hén gān	pair shine tears trace dry

The following is a reading of the poem from Librivox:

<https://creatureandcreator.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/yue-y-e-from-librivox.mp3>

Vikam Seth (1997) translated the poem keeping the Chinese rhyme scheme: the last character rhymes for all four couplets:

Moonlit Night

In Fuzhou, far away, my wife is watching
The moon alone tonight, and my thoughts fill
With sadness for my children, who can't think
Of me here in Changan; they're too young still.

Her cloud-soft hair is moist with fragrant mist.
In the clear light her white arms sense the chill.
When will we feel the moonlight dry our tears,
Leaning together on our window-sill?

Alec Roth wrote a suite of songs based on Vikam Seth's translations of Du Fu. The following is his setting for Moonlit Night with tenor Mark Padmore:

https://creatureandcreator.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/06-Songs-In-Time-of-War_-Moonlit-Nig.mp3

David Young (2008) provides a free-verse translation:

Tonight
in this same moonlight
my wife is alone at her window
in Fuzhou
I can hardly bear
to think of my children
too young to understand
why I can't come to them
her hair
must be damp from the mist
her arms
cold jade in the moonlight
when will we stand together
by those slack curtains
while the moonlight dries
the tear-streaks on our faces?

The poem may have been written or at least conceived during the celebration of the full moon in the autumn. Families customarily viewed the moon together and Du Fu imagines his wife viewing the moon alone. The mention of the wife's chamber in the second line may refer to either her actual bedroom or metonymically to herself as the inmost room in Du Fu's heart (Hawkes, 1967). David Young (2008) remarks that this may be

“the first Chinese poem to address romantic sentiments to a wife,” instead of a colleague or a courtesan.

David Hawkes (1967) notes the parallelism of the third couplet:

‘fragrant mist’ parallels ‘clear light,’ ‘cloud hair’ parallels ‘jade arms,’ and ‘wet’ parallels ‘cold’

Spring View

Spring View (or *Spring Landscape*), the most famous poem written by Du Fu in Chang’an during the rebellion, tells how nature persists despite the ravages of effects of war and time. Subjective emotions and objective reality become one. The character *wàng* (view, landscape) can mean both the act of perceiving or what is actually perceived. In addition, it can sometimes mean the present scene or what is to be expected in the future (much like the English word “prospect”). The illustration below shows the text in Chinese characters (Owen, 2008, poem 4.25), in pinyin and in a character-by-character translation (adapted from Hawkes, 1967, Alexander, 2008, and Zong-Qi Cai, 2008):

春望	chūn wàng	spring view
國破山河在，	guó pò shān hé zài	country broken mountain river remain
城春草木深。	chéng chūn cǎo mù shēn	city spring grass trees deep
感時花濺淚，	gǎn shí huā jiàn lèi	feel moment flower splash tear
恨別鳥驚心。	hèn bié niǎo jīng xīn	regret/hate parting bird startle heart
烽火連三月，	fēng huǒ lián sān yuè	beacon fires join three months
家書抵萬金。	jiā shū dǐ wàn jīn	family letters worth ten-thousand gold
白頭搔更短，	bái tóu sāo gèng duǎn	white head scratch become thin
渾欲不勝簪	hún yù bù shēng zān	simply about not bear hairpin

The following is a reading of the poem from the website

associated with *How to Read Chinese Poetry* (ZongQi-Cai, 2008, poem 8.1):

<https://creatureandcreator.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/c8.1-spring-scene.mp3>

The next illustration shows the poem as written by three calligraphers. All versions read from top down and from right to left. On the left is standard script by Anita Wang; on the right the calligraphy by Lii Shiuh Lou is gently cursive. At the bottom the calligraphy by an anonymous calligrapher is unrestrained: it accentuates the root of the growing grass (8th character) and the radicals that compose the character for regret/hate (16th character) fly apart.

國破山河在城春草木深感時花濺淚
恨別鳥驚心烽火連三月家書抵萬金
白頭搔更短渾欲不勝簪

乙酉春尾 姜裕緒書於亞城



國破山河在城春草木深感時花濺淚
恨別鳥驚心烽火連三月家書抵萬金
白頭搔更短渾欲不勝簪

杜甫春望 辛丑臘月五心銘



國破山河在
城春草木深
感時花濺淚
恨別鳥驚心
烽火連三月
家書抵萬金
白頭搔更短
渾欲不勝簪

杜甫春望
歲次壬子 姜裕緒書



The following are two translations, the first by David Hinton, which uses an English line of a constant length to approximate the Chinese 5-character line (2020a):

The country in ruins, rivers and mountains
continue. The city grows lush with spring.

Blossoms scatter tears for us, and all these
separations in a bird's cry startle the heart.

Beacon-fires three months ablaze: by now
a mere letter's worth ten thousand in gold,

and worry's thinned my hair to such white
confusion I can't even keep this hairpin in.

A second translation, with preservation of the rhyme scheme and phrasal structure, is by Keith Holyoak (2015)

The state is in ruin;
yet mountains and rivers endure.
In city gardens
weeds run riot this spring.

These dark times
move flowers to sprinkle tears;
the separations
send startled birds on the wing.

For three months now
the beacon fires have burned;
a letter from home
would mean more than anything.

I've pulled out
so many of my white hairs
too few are left
to hold my hatpin in!

The second couplet has been interpreted in different ways.

Most translations (including the two just quoted) consider it as representing nature's lament for the evil times. For example, Hawkes (1967) suggests that "nature is grieving in sympathy with the beholder at the ills which beset him." However, Michael Yang (2016) proposes that "In times of adversity, nature may simply be downright uncaring and unfriendly, thereby adding to the woes of mankind." He translates the couplet

Mourning the times, I weep at the sight of flowers;
Hating separation, I find the sound of birds
startling.

The last two lines of the poem refer the hair-style of the Tang Dynasty: men wore their hair in a topknot, and their hats were "anchored to their heads with a large hatpin which passed through the topknot of hair" (Hawkes, 1967). Most interpreters have been struck by the difference between the solemn anguish of the poem's first six lines, and the self-mockery of the final couplet (Hawkes, 1967, p 46; Chou, 1995, p 115). This juxtaposition of the tragic and the pitiable accentuates the poet's bewilderment.

The Thatched Cottage

Disillusioned by the war and by the politics of vengeance that followed, Du Fu and his family retired to a thatched cottage in Chengdu, where he lived from 759-765. A replica of this cottage has been built there in a park celebrating both Du Fu and Chinese Poetry:





Many of the poems that Du Fu wrote in Chengdu celebrated the simple joys of nature. He often used isolated quatrains to find parallels between his emotions and the world around him. This brief form called *juéjù* (curtailed lines) was widely used by his colleagues Li Bai (701–762) and Wang Wei (699–759). The form consists of two couplets juxtaposed in meaning and rhyming across their last character (Wong, 1970; Zong-Qi Cai, 2008, Chapter 10). The following poem (Owen, 2008, poem 9.63) describing willow-catkins (illustrated on the right) and sleeping ducks gives a deep feeling of peace. These are the Chinese characters and pinyin transcription followed by the character-by-character translation (Alexander, 2008):

糝徑楊花鋪白氈，
點溪荷葉疊青錢。
筍根雉子無人見，
沙上鳧雛傍母眠。

sǎn jìng yáng huā pū bái zhān
diǎn xī hé yè dié qīng qián
sǔn gēn zhì zǐ wú rén jiàn
shā shàng fú chú bàng mǔ mián

grain	path	poplar/willow	blossom	pave		
white	carpet					
little	stream	lotus	leaves	pile	green	
money						
bamboo	shoot	root	sprout	no	person	see
sand	on	duckling	beside	mother	sleep	

The following translation is by Burton Watson (2002):

Willow fluff along the path spreads a white carpet;
lotus leaves dot the stream, plating it with green
coins.

By bamboo roots, tender shoots where no one sees them;
on the sand, baby ducks asleep beside their mother.

Shui Chien-Tung provided the following calligraphy for the poem (Cooper, 1973). He used aspects of the ancient scripts (circles, curves and dots) in some of the characters to give a sense of simplicity and timelessness. The illustration shows the calligraphy of the poem on the left and the evolution of the characters *yáng* (willow, poplar) and *fú* (duck) on the right.

鳬鵲傍母眼
 疊青錢
 筍根稚子無人見
 沙上
 糝徑楊花鋪白氈
 點溪荷葉

yáng
(willow)

楊

楊

楊

杨

Bronze
Inscription

Seal
Script

Traditional

Simplified

fú
(duck)

鳬

鳬

鳬

鳬

Another quatrain from Chengdu describes a night scene on the river. The following shows the poem in Chinese characters (Owen, 2008, poem 13.61), in pinyin, and in a character-by-character translation (mine):

江動月移石, jiāng dòng yuè yí shí
 溪虛雲傍花。 xī xū yún bàng huā
 鳥棲知故道, niǎo qī zhī gù dào
 帆過宿誰家。 fān guò sù shuí jiā

river move moon change rock
 stream empty cloud beside flower
 bird perch understand old Dao
 sail pass stay(lodge) who home

This is the translation by J. P. Seaton (Seaton & Cryer,

1987):

The River moves, moon travels rock,
Streams unreal, clouds there among the flowers.
The bird perches, knows the ancient Tao
Sails go: They can't know where.

As the river flows by, the moon's reflection slowly travels across the rocks near the shore. The water reflects the clouds between the lilies. A bird on a branch understands the nature of the universe. A boat passes, going home we know not where.

The poem conveys a sense of the complexity of the world where reflections and reality intermingle, a desire to understand the meaning of our life, and a fear that time is passing and we do not know where it will take us. All this in twenty characters. Such concision is extremely difficult in English. An attempt:

River and rocks reflect the moon
and clouds amid the lilies
resting birds understand the way
sails pass seeking home somewhere.

The following shows a painting by Huang Yon-hou to illustrate the poem. This was used as the frontispiece (and cover) of the book *Bright Moon, Perching Bird* (Seaton & Cryer, 1987). On the right is calligraphy of the poem by Mo Ji-yu.



江動月移石溪虛雲傍花鳥樓知
故道帆過宿誰家
桂林 同源書

Above the Gorges

In 765 CE Du Fu and his family left Chengdu and travelled eastward on the Yangtze River. The region of Luoyang had been recently recovered by imperial forces and Du Fu was perhaps trying to return home (Hung, 1952). He stayed for a while in Kuizhou (present day Baidicheng) at the beginning of the Three Gorges (*Qutang, Wu and Xiang*).

While there Du Fu wrote a series of meditations called *Autumn Thoughts* (or more literally *Stirred by Autumn*). This is the second of these poems in Chinese characters and in pinyin:

夔府孤城落日斜，
每依北斗望京華。
聽猿實下三聲淚，
奉使虛隨八月槎。
畫省香爐違伏枕，
山樓粉堞隱悲笳。
請看石上藤蘿月，
已映洲前蘆荻花。

kuí fǔ gū chéng luò rì xié
měi yī běi dòu wàng jīng huá
tīng yuán shí xià sān shēng lèi
fèng shǐ xū suí bā yuè chá
huà shěng xiāng lú wéi fú zhěn
shān lóu fěn dié yǐn bēi jiā
qǐng kàn shí shàng téng luó yuè
yǐ yìng zhōu qián lú dí huā

A character-by-character translation (Alexander, 2008) is:

Kui prefecture lonely wall set sun slant
Every rely north dipper gaze capital city
Hear ape real fall three sound tear
Sent mission vain follow eight month raft
Picture ministry incense stove apart hidden pillow
Mountain tower white battlements hide sad reed-
whistle
Ask look stone on [Chinese wisteria] moon
Already reflect islet before rushes reeds flowers

The following is Stephen Owen's translation (Owen, 2008 poem 17.27):

On Kuizhou's lonely walls setting sunlight slants,
then always I trust the North Dipper to lead my gaze to
the capital.
Listening to gibbons I really shed tears at their third
cry,
accepting my mission I pointlessly follow the eighth-
month raft.
The censor in the ministry with portraits eludes the
pillow where I lie,
ill towers' white-plastered battlements hide the sad reed
pipes.

Just look there at the moon, in wisteria on the rock,
it has already cast its light by sandbars on flowers of
the reeds.

The poem is striking in the difference between the first three couplets and the last. At the beginning of the poem Du Fu is feeling regret that he is not in Chang'an which is located due north of Kuizhou (in the direction of the Big Dipper which points to the North Star). Owen notes that "There was an old rhyme that a traveler in the gorges would shed tears when the gibbons cried out three times." The eighth month raft may refer to another old story about a vessel that came every eight months and took a man up to the Milky Way. Owen commented on the third couplet that "The "muralled ministry" is where were located the commemorative portraits of officers, civil and military, who had done exceptional service to the dynasty." Incense was burned when petitions were presented. The final couplet disregards all the preceding nostalgia and simply appreciates the beauty of the moment.

The Ming painter Wang Shimin illustrated this final couplet in one of the leaves from his album Du Fu's Poetic Thoughts.

請看石上藤蘿月
已映洲前蘆荻花



Later in Kuizhou, Du Fu entertained a librarian named Li who was returning north to take up an appointment in Chang'an. The following is the beginning of a poem (Owen, 2008, poem 19.34) describing Li's departure in Chinese characters and in pinyin:

青簾白舫益州來，	qīng lián bái fǎng yì zhōu lái
巫峽秋濤天地回。	wū xiá qiū tāo tiān dì huí
石出倒聽楓葉下，	shí chū dǎo tīng fēng yè xià
櫓搖背指菊花開。	lǔ yáo bèi zhǐ jú huā kāi

A character-by-character translation is:

blue/green	curtain	white	boat/raft	Yizhou
arrive				
Wu	gorge	autumn	waves	heaven/sky
earth/ground	turn (around)			
stone/rock	leave/exit	fall	listen	maple
leaf	down			
scull/oar	swing	carry	point	chrysanthemum
flower	open/blume			

The following is Stephen Owen's translation:

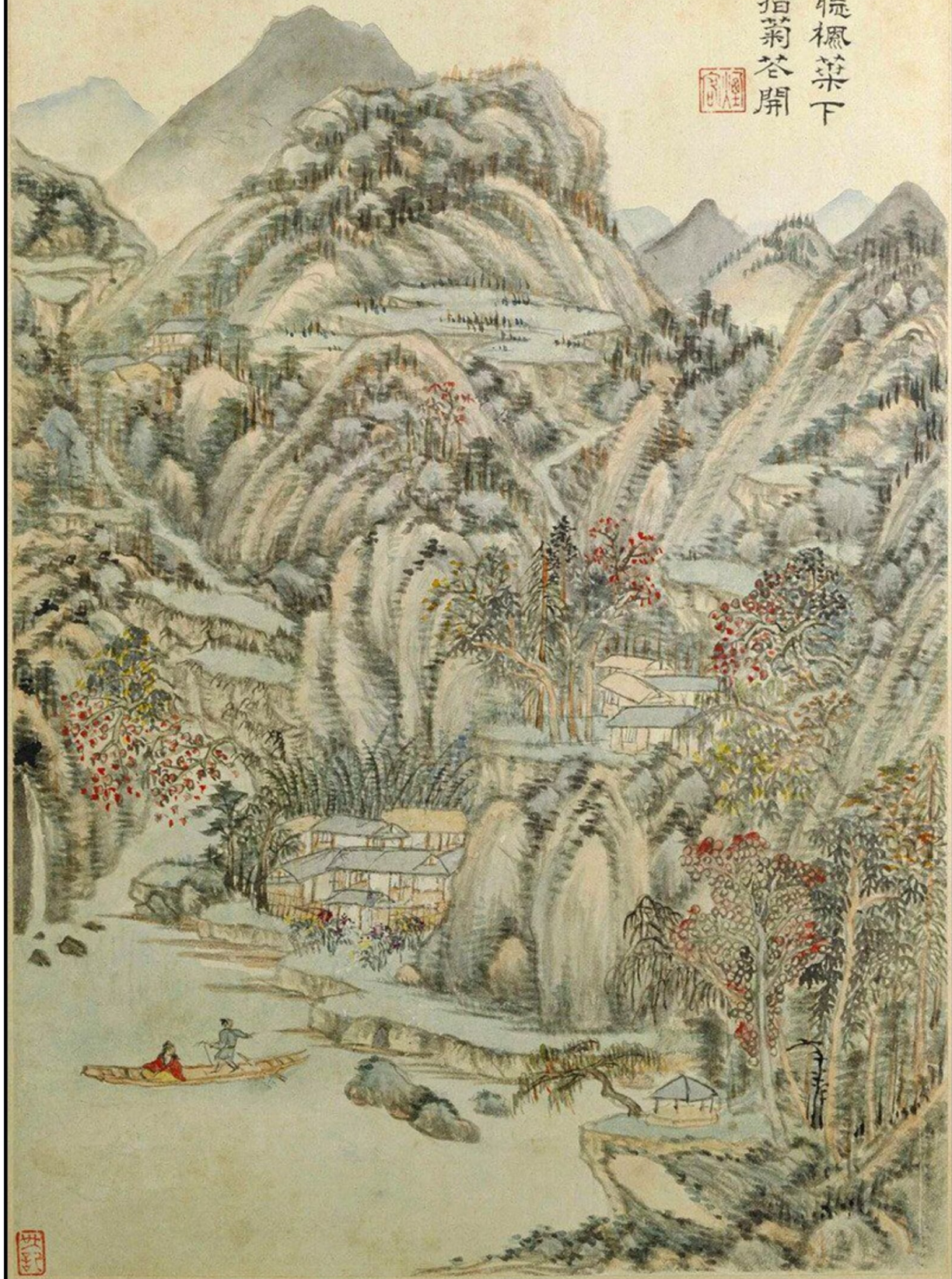
When the white barge with green curtains came from Yizhou,
with autumn billows in the Wu Gorges, heaven and earth were
turning.

Where rocks came out, from below you listened to the leaves
of maples falling,
as the sweep moved back and forth you pointed behind to
chrysanthemums in bloom.

The Ming painter Wang Shimin illustrated the second couplet in one of the leaves from his album Du Fu's Poetic Thoughts. The painting shows the bright red leaves of the maples. In front of the riverside house one can see the multicolored chrysanthemums that Li is pointing to. Harmony exists between

the wild and the cultivated.

石出倒懸楓葉下
櫓搖背指菊苔開



On the River

After his sojourn in Kuizhou, Du Fu and his family continued their journey down the Yangtze River. However, the poet was ill and was unable to make it beyond Tanzhou (now Changsha) where he died in 770 CE. No one knows where he is buried. In the 1960's radical students dug up a grave purported to be his to "eliminate the remaining poison of feudalism," but found the grave empty.

One of Du Fu's last poems was *Night Thoughts While Travelling*. The following is the poem in Chinese characters (Owen, 2008, poem 14.63) and in pinyin (Alexander, 2008):

旅夜書懷	lǚ yè shū huái	journey night write think
細草微風岸，	xì cǎo wēi fēng àn	gently grass soft wind shore
危檣獨夜舟。	wēi qiáng dú yè zhōu	tall mast alone night boat
星垂平野闊，	xīng chuī píng yě kuò	star fall flat fields broad
月湧大江流。	yuè yǒng dà jiāng liú	moon rises great river flows
名豈文章著，	míng qǐ wén zhāng zhù	name not literary works mark
官應老病休。	guān yìng lǎo bìng xiū	official should old sick stop
飄零何所似，	piāo piāo hé suǒ sì	flutter flutter what place seem
天地一沙鷗。	tiān dì yī shā ōu	heaven earth one sand gull

The following is a reading of the poem from Librivox:

<https://creatureandcreator.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/night-thoughts-from-librivox.mp3>

Holyoak (2015) provides a rhymed translation:

The fine grass
by the riverbank stirs in the breeze;
the tall mast
in the night is a lonely sliver.

Stars hang
all across the vast plain;
the moon bobs
in the flow of the great river.

My poetry
has not made a name for me;
now age and sickness
have cost me the post I was given.

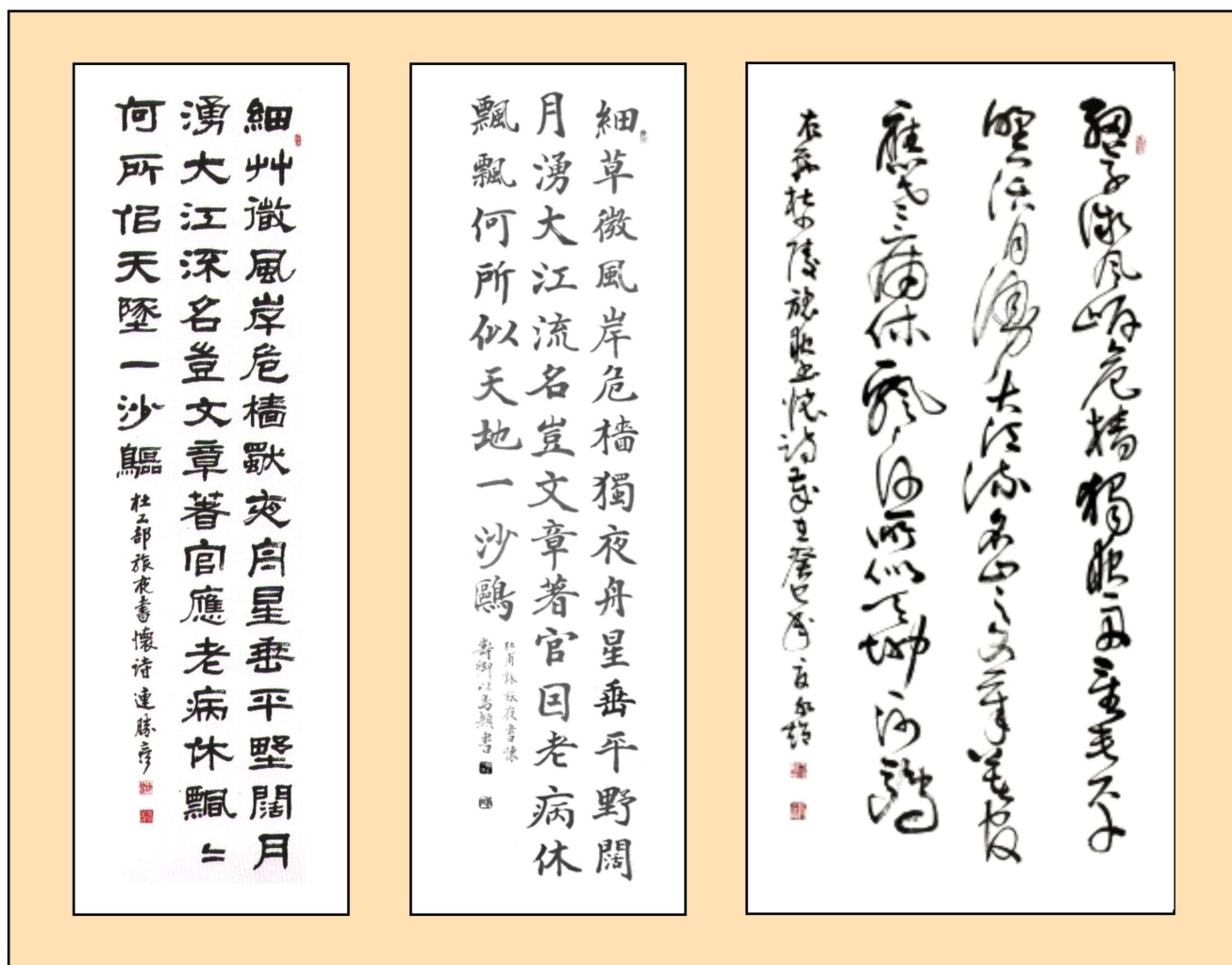
Drifting, drifting,
what do I resemble?
A lone gull
lost between earth and heaven.

Kenneth Rexroth (1956) translates the poem in free verse:

Night Thoughts While Travelling

A light breeze rustles the reeds
Along the river banks. The
Mast of my lonely boat soars
Into the night. Stars blossom
Over the vast desert of
Waters. Moonlight flows on the
Surging river. My poems have
Made me famous but I grow
Old, ill and tired, blown hither
And yon; I am like a gull
Lost between heaven and earth.

The following shows the poem in calligraphy with three styles. On the left the poem is written in clerical script, in the center in regular script and on the right is unrestrained cursive script. All examples were taken from Chinese sites selling calligraphy.



Changing Times

During the Tang Dynasty (618–907 CE) the role of literature, and poetry in particular, in society changed dramatically (Owen, 2011):

In the 650s, literature was centered almost entirely in the imperial court; by the end of the era literature had become the possession of an educated elite, who might serve in government, but whose cultural life was primarily outside the court.

During Du Fu's lifetime, poetry became no longer a part of the ancient traditions; rather it began to be concerned with the present and with the personal. Lucas Bender (2021) describes the traditional role of poetry in a society following the

precepts of Confucianism:

Most people ... would be incapable on their own of adequately conceptualizing the world or perfectly responding to its contingency, and therefore needed to rely on the models left by sages and worthies. Many of these models were embodied in texts, including literary texts, which could thus offer an arena for ethical activity. Poetry, for example, was understood to offer models of cognition, feeling, and commitment that would ineluctably shape readers' understanding of and responses to their own circumstances. One way of being a good person, therefore, involved reading good poetry and writing more of it, thereby propagating the normative models of the tradition in one's own time and transmitting them to the future. (p 317)

Du Fu found himself bewildered by the state of the world. He sought to convey this confusion rather than explain it:

Du Fu doubts the possibility of indefinitely applicable moral categories. The conceptual tools by which we make moral judgments, he suggests, are always inherited from a past that can – and, in a world as various and changeable as ours has proven to be, often will – diverge from the exigencies of the present. As a result, not only are our values unlikely to be either universal or timeless; more important, if we pay careful attention to the details of our experience, they are unlikely to work unproblematically even here and now. (Bender, 2021, p 319)

The complexity of Du Fu's poetry – the difficulty in understanding some of his juxtapositions – becomes a challenge. The past provides no help in the interpretation. We must figure out for themselves what relates the mountain, the clouds and the poet's breathing in the first poem we considered. And in the last poem we must try to locate for ourselves the place of the gull between heaven and earth.

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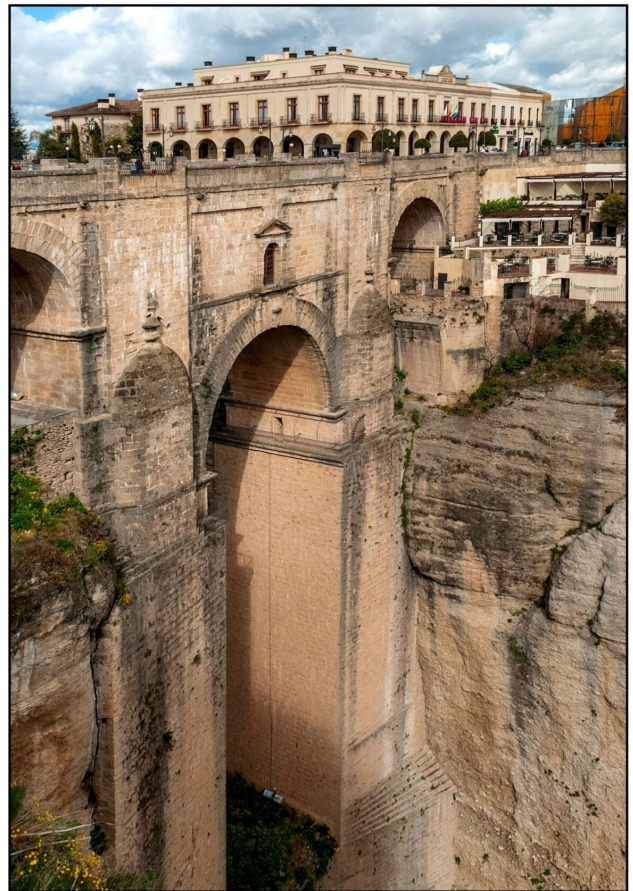
History, Myth and Fiction

This post describes some of the events that occurred in Ronda, a town in southern Spain, during the summer of 1936. After the Spanish Civil War broke out, Anarchists quickly took control of the town, and murdered many supporters of the Nationalist cause. Two months later, advancing Nationalist forces captured Ronda, and drove most of its people from their homes. Those that refused to leave suffered bloody reprisals. These events quickly became mythic rather than historic. In one story, the Anarchists had murdered the town's Falangists by having them beaten to death in the town's plaza and then thrown into the canyon that cuts through the center of the town. Ernest Hemingway recounted this version in his 1940 novel *For Whom*

the Bell Tolls. However, most historians now agree that this never happened.

Ronda

Ronda is one of the most beautiful of the *pueblos blancos* ("white towns") perched on the inland hills of Andalusia. The name comes from the buildings that were white-washed to protect them from the heat of the sun. Through the center of Ronda runs the Guadalevin River, which has carved through the limestone cliffs a steep-walled canyon, *el tajo*, reaching depths of more than 100 meters. The most striking bridge over the river is the *Puente Nuevo* constructed in 1793 at the point where the canyon opens into the huge valley know as *la caldera* (cauldron) The following illustration shows the bridge viewed from the West (left) and from the Southeast (right).



The large building just to the north of the bridge used to be Ronda's *casa consistorial* (town hall) where the *ayuntamiento*

or local council met. In the 1990s this was converted into a *parador* (state-owned luxury hotel). The following illustration shows the old city hall with its arcades facing the large town square. On the far left can be seen a low wall looking over the canyon.



Ronda has many other luxury hotels. The Hotel Reina Victoria, a summer resort for the English stationed in Gibraltar, was built on the cliff overlooking *la caldera* in 1906. The German poet Rainer Maria Rilke stayed there for several months in the winter of 1912-1913. The gardens beside the hotel have a commemorative statue of Rilke gazing out over valley (shown below in a photograph by Bryan Appleyard).



In Ronda, Rilke continued working on a set of poems that would not be complete until ten more years had passed – the *Duino Elegies*. He was also able to compose several poems about Spain. In the third part of a poem called *The Spanish Trilogy* he praised the peasants he could see in the valley, hoping that he might become as attuned to the universe as a simple shepherd:

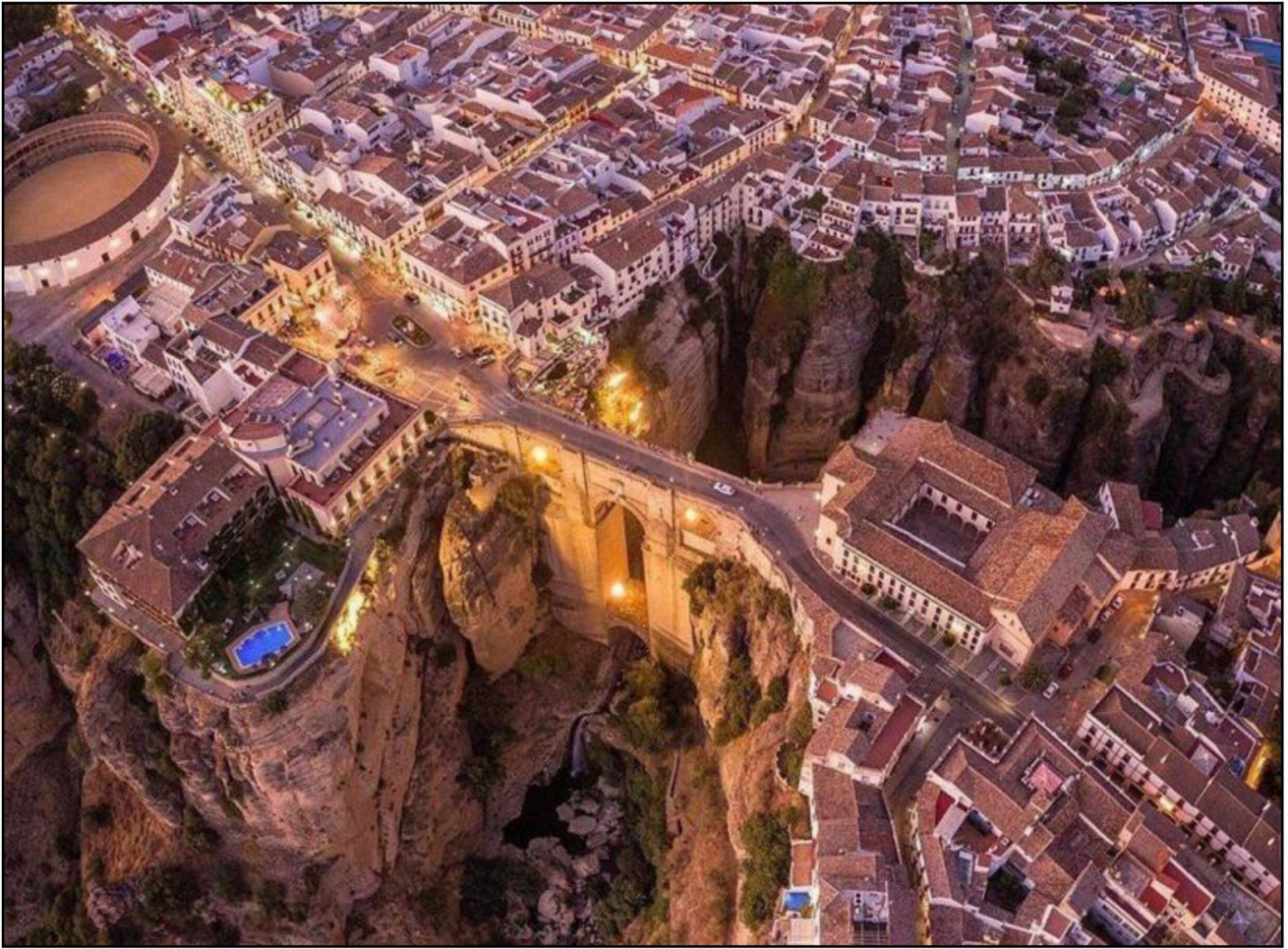
Langsamen Schrittes, nicht leicht, nachdenklichen
Körpers,
aber im Stehn ist er herrlich. Noch immer dürfte ein
Gott
heimlich in diese Gestalt und würde nicht minder.
Abwechselnd weilt er und zieht, wie selber der Tag,
und Schatten der Wolken
durchgehn ihn, als dächte der Raum
langsam Gedanken für ihn.

slow stepping, not light-footed, his body lost in

thought,
but splendid when he stands still. A God might
secretly take his form and not be any the lesser.
By turns he tarries and continues on like the day
itself
and the shadows of the clouds
pass through him, as if the vast space
were thinking slow thoughts for him.
(translation Paul Archer)

The poetry is beautiful. However, one cannot help but wonder about how shepherd felt looking up toward the hotel on the cliff. And whether this young shepherd would participate in the revolution some twenty years later.

As well as the canyon and its bridge, Ronda is famous for its *plaza de toros* (bullring) which was built in 1785. The bullring is seen in the upper left of the aerial view of Ronda in the following illustration:



Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961) first visited Ronda in 1923 and became enamored of its site and of the bullfights (Buckley, 1997). In his 1932 book on the traditions of bullfighting, *Death in the Afternoon*, he remarked

There is one town that would be better than Aranjuez to see your first bullfight in if you are only going to see one and that is Ronda.

Hemingway visited Spain during the Civil War, although at that time he could not visit Ronda, which was controlled by the Nationalists. He returned to Ronda many times in the 1950s. For the bullfights, and for the memories.

The Spanish Civil War

In 1931, the Spanish king was deposed and a new government was proclaimed: the Second Spanish Republic, the first having lasted for less than two years (1873-1874) before being aborted by a military coup. The governing coalition of the Second Republic was composed of many separate and feuding parties, among them Anarchists, Communists, Republicans and Catalanian Separatists. The right-wing opposition contained parties favoring the Monarchy or the Catholic Church. The Falangist party, a fascist organization was founded in 1933 in response to the new republic.

The government had to deal with multiple problems

- much of the land was owned by the aristocrats, who managed large tracts of land (*latifundia*), and who treated the peasants as slaves
- the military was far larger and more powerful than necessary for a country that had long ago lost its empire
- the church sided with the generals and the aristocrats, for they were the source of their power and wealth
- the new industries, run by a small number of capitalists, exploited the workers who made the factories run, and who were organizing into unions
- the police force – the *Guardia Civil* – mainly existed to support the landed aristocrats and the capitalists.

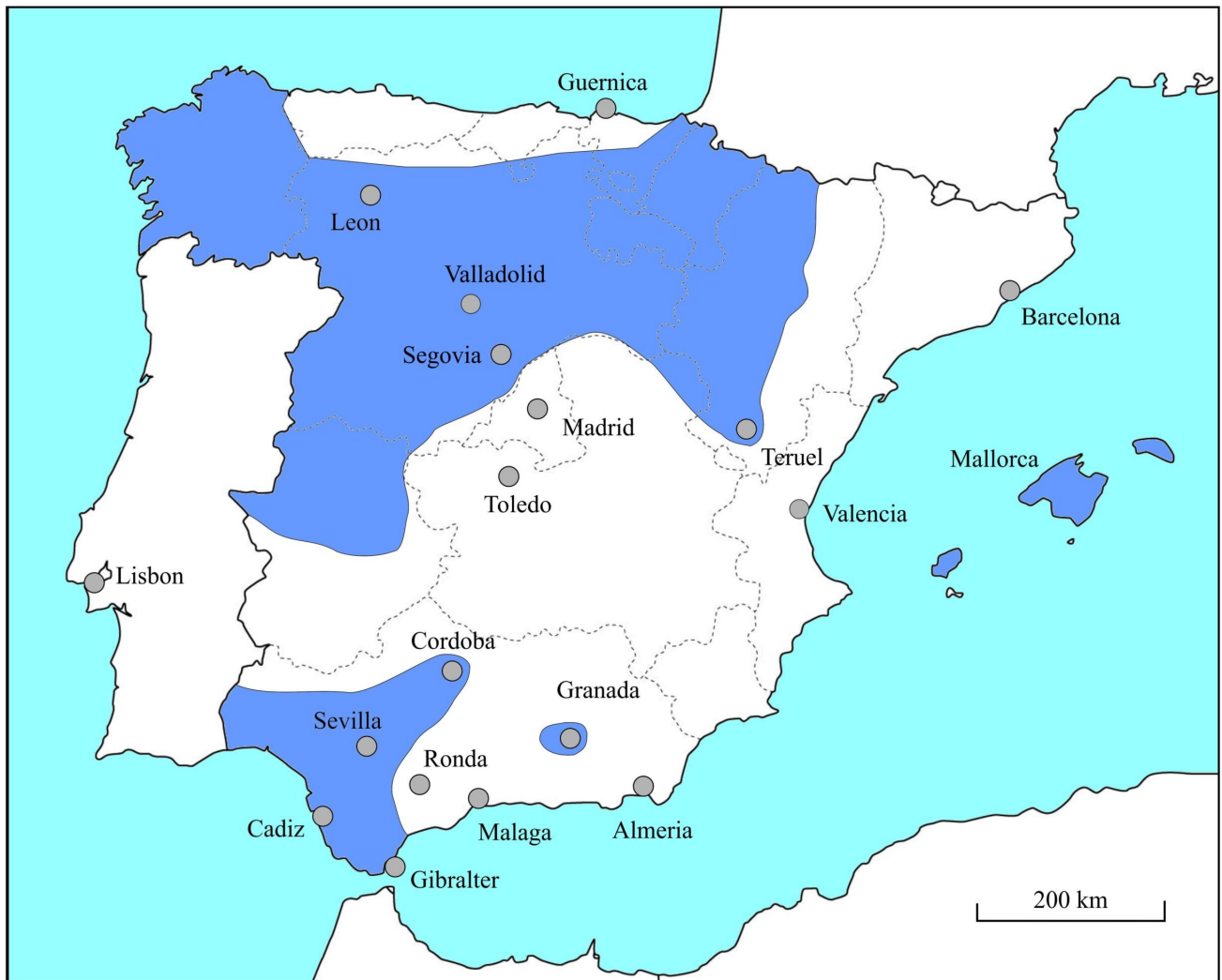
The course of the Second Republic was extremely turbulent. The government reduced funds for the military, and closed down the military academy in Zaragoza, run by General Francisco Franco. Strikes occurred and these were put down with excessive force. Attempts to take land away from the *latifundista* were unsuccessful. The government tried to restrict the role of the church in the educational system. Many of the poor, urged on by anarchists and communists, attacked the church. In 1933, Pope Pius XI published an encyclical *Dilectissima Nobis* ("Dear to us") specifically deploring the anti-clerical violence in Spain.

In the election of January, 1936, the left-wing parties in the Popular Front won a majority against a coalition of the right-wing parties named the National Front. Many have suggested that the election was rigged to some extent, and the voting was followed by much violence. Manuel Azana Diaz (1880-1940), who had served in various positions in the preceding government, became the president of the newly elected Republican government.

In July 1936, General Emilio Mola, supported by General Francisco Franco, called for a coup to end the republic and to return the nation to its previous form. The leftist parties reacted by calling for a Revolution of the workers. The country descended into anarchy. The Nationalists (or Rebels) were able to take control the north of the country, but the Republicans (or Loyalists) held off the coup in the south and in the major cities. The Civil War had begun (Thomas, 1961; Graham, 2005; Payne, 2012).

The governments of Germany and Italy immediately provided assistance to the Nationalists, and Russia came in on the side of the Republicans. England and France decided that they should not intervene in the internal politics of Spain. However, volunteers from these and many other countries (even Germany and Italy) began to organize the International Brigades to fight with the Republicans: among them were the Abraham Lincoln Brigade from the United States and the Mackenzie-Papineau Brigade from Canada.

Soon after the coup was declared, Franco borrowed planes from Italy and Germany and transported troops from North Africa to shore up the Nationalists in Seville, a Catholic stronghold. The regions of the country controlled by the Nationalists (blue) and the Republicans (white) in July, 1936) are shown in the following map (derived from Preston, 2012, p 658):



From Seville, General Franco sent troops northward to join up with the Nationalists besieging Madrid. Another key point in the fighting was near Teruel, where Nationalist soldiers were attempting to advance to the sea to cut off Barcelona from Madrid. Franco also sent troops eastward to relieve the city of Granada.

Mola died in a plane crash in June of 1937, and General Francisco Franco Bahamonde (1892-1975) became the supreme leader (*el caudillo*) of the Nationalist forces. The following illustration shows the leaders of the two sides. On the left is a modernist stone statue of Manuel Azena by José Noja and Pablo Serrano that was not erected until 1979. On the right is a bronze equestrian statue of Francisco Franco by José Capuz Mamano initially cast in 1964. Various versions of this statue were erected in several of the major cities of Spain.



The following figure shows propaganda posters from both sides of the civil war. On the left is a poster stating “No Pasareis” (You shall not pass). This slogan and its variant “No Pasaran” (They shall not pass) was used by the Republicans throughout the war. The Communist politician Dolores Ibarruri Gomez (also known as *La Pasionara* – the passionate one) used the latter version in a famous speech urging on the defenders of Madrid in November 1936. The Republican poster comes from the two parties that were the mainstay of the Popular Front: the CNT (*Confederacion Nacional de Trabajo*) and the FAI (*Federacion Anarquista Iberica*). The right poster is from the Falangists. In the background are the four red arrows held together by a yoke, the Spanish version of the *fascis* (bundle of rods) of the Italian Fascists. Superimposed is a hand on a rifle. The call is “To arms – Homeland, Bread and Justice.”



Events in Ronda during 1936ca)

Soon after the military coup was declared in July, 1936, members of the CNT took control in Ronda and many of the small towns in Andalusia. Members of the *Guardia Civil* and many local Nationalist leaders were executed. Similar outbreaks of violence occurred in many regions of Spain. This “red terror” was not condoned by the Republican Government, which had difficulty controlling its many factions.

Once the Nationalists had shored up control of Seville, Franco placed the bloodthirsty General Queipo de Llano in command of retaking Southern Spain. After Granada was relieved, the Nationalists returned to the other cities of Andalusia. Reaching Ronda in September, 1936 they quickly subdued the town, and took bloody revenge. Those killed by the Nationalists far outnumbered those who had been murdered in the summer (Preston, 2012).

Exactly what had happened in Ronda during these early months of the war was not clear. The Nationalists declared that the anarchists had murdered several hundred people and thrown them over the cliff. This claim was used to justify their reprisals.

Many of the townspeople left Ronda and fled to Malaga, but this city soon fell to the Nationalists in February 1937. Republicans in Malaga were rounded up and shot. The Nationalists boasted that they executed more Republicans in seven days than the Republicans had killed in the seven months they were in control of the city (Preston, 2012, p 177).

Most of the citizens of Malaga, together with a few surviving Republican soldiers, then tried to reach Almeria along the coastal road – walking, riding donkeys and hanging onto rickety vehicles for a distance of about 200 km. These refugees were strafed and bombed by planes, and shelled by Nationalists warships. The number of people killed in what became known as the Malaga-Almeria Massacre was over 3000. The Canadian physician Norman Bethune used the few vehicles available to him to help the refugees travel to Almeria (Stewart, R., & Majada Neila, 2014), but this had little effect. The following photograph shows the refugees:

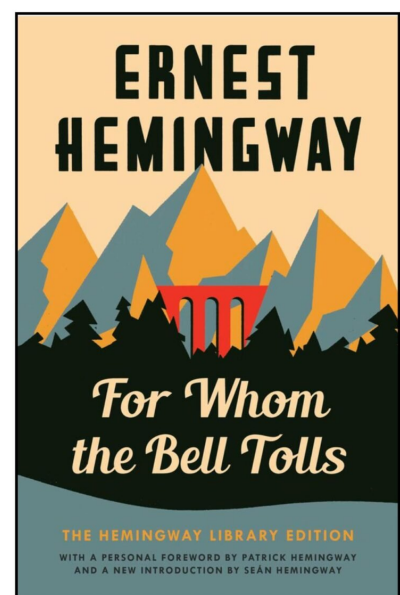
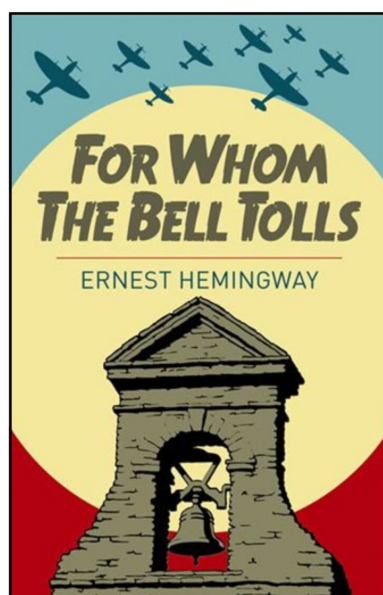
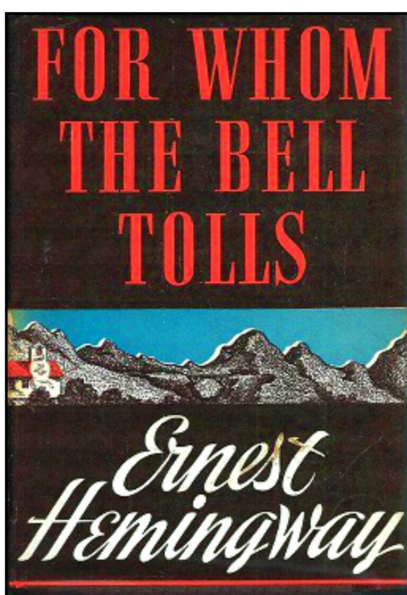


For Whom the Bell Tolls

Ernest Hemingway came to Spain toward the end of 1937 to produce a documentary film on the Civil War – *The Spanish Earth* – to help raise money for the Republicans. The photograph below shows him in the Republican trenches at Teruel (low center) together with the filmmaker Joris Ivens (high center).



After the Spanish Civil War ended in 1939, Hemingway wrote *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940), a novel based on what he had heard about the violence perpetrated by both sides during the conflict. The following illustration shows some of the covers used by various editions of the book, the original on the left:



The epigraph to the novel is from John Donne's *Meditations*

upon Emergent Occasions (1624) The quotation ends with:

any mans *death* diminishes *me*, because I am
involved in *Mankinde*; And therefore never
send to know for whom the *bell* tolls; It
tolls for *thee*.

The novel's central character is Robert Jordan, an American Professor of Spanish, and an explosives expert, now a volunteer serving with the Republicans. In the spring of 1937, he is ordered to blow up a mountain-bridge to prevent Nationalist forces from Segovia from reaching Madrid. For this task he recruits the help of a band of Republican guerillas, led by Pablo and his woman Pilar. Jordan falls in love with Maria, a beautiful young woman serving as the band's cook. Maria's father, the Republican mayor of Valladolid, and her mother had been executed by the Nationalists early in the war. She herself had her head shaved, and was raped and imprisoned, before finally escaping to the mountains.

One evening, Pilar tells Jordan and Maria what had happened in Ronda at the beginning of the war. Pablo, the leader of the local anarchists in the town, had captured the barracks of the *Guardia Civil* and executed all the guards. He had also rounded up the main supporters of the Nationalists and imprisoned them in the city council. Pilar describes the center of the town (see preceding illustrations):

The town is built on the high bank above the river and there is a square there with a fountain and there are benches and there are big trees that give a shade for the benches. The balconies of the houses look out on the plaza. Six streets enter on the plaza and there is an arcade from the houses that goes around the plaza so that one can walk in the shade of the arcade when the sun is hot. On three sides of the plaza is the arcade and on the fourth side is the walk shaded by the trees beside the edge of the cliff with, far below, the river. It is three hundred feet down to the

river.

Pilar then describes how the town square was set up for the execution of the fascists:

Pablo organized it all as he did the attack on the barracks. First he had the entrances to the streets blocked off with carts though to organize the plaza for a *capea*. For an amateur bull fight. The fascists were all held in the *Ayuntamiento*, the city hall, which was the largest building on one side of the plaza. It was there the clock was set in the wall and it was in the buildings under the arcade that the club of the fascists was.

Pablo organized the peasants and workers who had gathered in the square:

He placed them in two lines as you would place men for a rope pulling contest, or as they stand in a city to watch the ending of a bicycle road race with just room for the cyclists to pass between, or as men stood to allow the passage of a holy image in a procession. Two meters was left between the lines and they extended from the door of the *Ayuntamiento* clear across the plaza to the edge of the cliff. So that, from the doorway of the *Ayuntamiento*, looking across the plaza, one coming out would see two solid lines of people waiting.

They were armed with flails such as are used to beat out the grain and they were a good flail's length apart. All did not have flails, as enough flails could not be obtained. But most had flails obtained from the store of Don Guillermo Martin, who was a fascist and sold all sorts of agricultural implements. And those who did not have flails had heavy herdsman's clubs, or ox-goats, and some had wooden pitchforks; those with wooden tines that are used to fork the chaff and straw into the air after the flailing. Some had sickles and reaping hooks but these Pablo placed at the far end where the lines reached the edge of the cliff.

The assembled crowd was told that they must kill the fascists by beating them to death. One of the peasants asked Pilar why, and she reported the following exchange:

“To save bullets” I said. “And that each man should have his share in the responsibility”

“That it should start then. That it should start.” And I looked at him and saw that he was crying. “Why are you crying, Joaquin?” I asked him. “This is not to cry about.”

“I cannot help it, Pilar,” he said. “I have never killed any one.”

One by one, the fascists were led out of the city hall and made their way through the crowd of peasants. One by one, they were beaten and clubbed to death. And one by one, their bodies were cast over the edge of the cliff into *el tajo*.

This fictional representation of the Anarchist terror in Ronda is extremely powerful. In the novel Hemingway also describes Nationalist atrocities in Valladolid – the summary execution of Maria’s parents and her abuse and rape by the Falangists. This vivid portrayal of the brutality of the war should make us rethink our hatreds. We are all in this life together; we are diminished by the death of any man; the bell tolls for us.

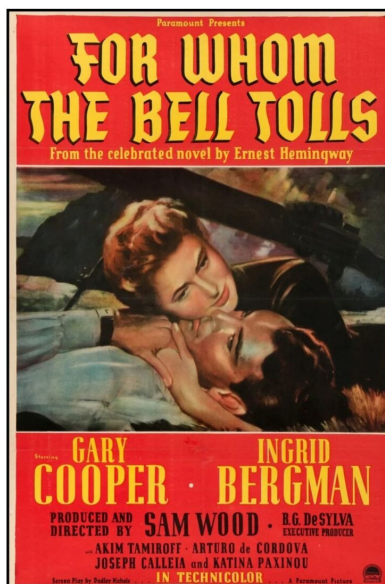
Later in the novel, Jordan and the guerilla band succeed in blowing up the bridge. but Jordan is severely wounded and unable to move. He convinces that the rest of the band to retreat while he stays to delay the advancing Nationalists. He insists that Maria leave with the guerillas. The novel ends with Jordan trying to stay conscious as the soldiers come closer. Talking to himself, he claims

And if you wait and hold them up even a little while or just get the officer that may make all the difference. One thing well done can make □

Hemingway leaves the thought unfinished. The novel ends with

an officer of the Nationalist forces riding slowly up toward where Jordan awaits him.

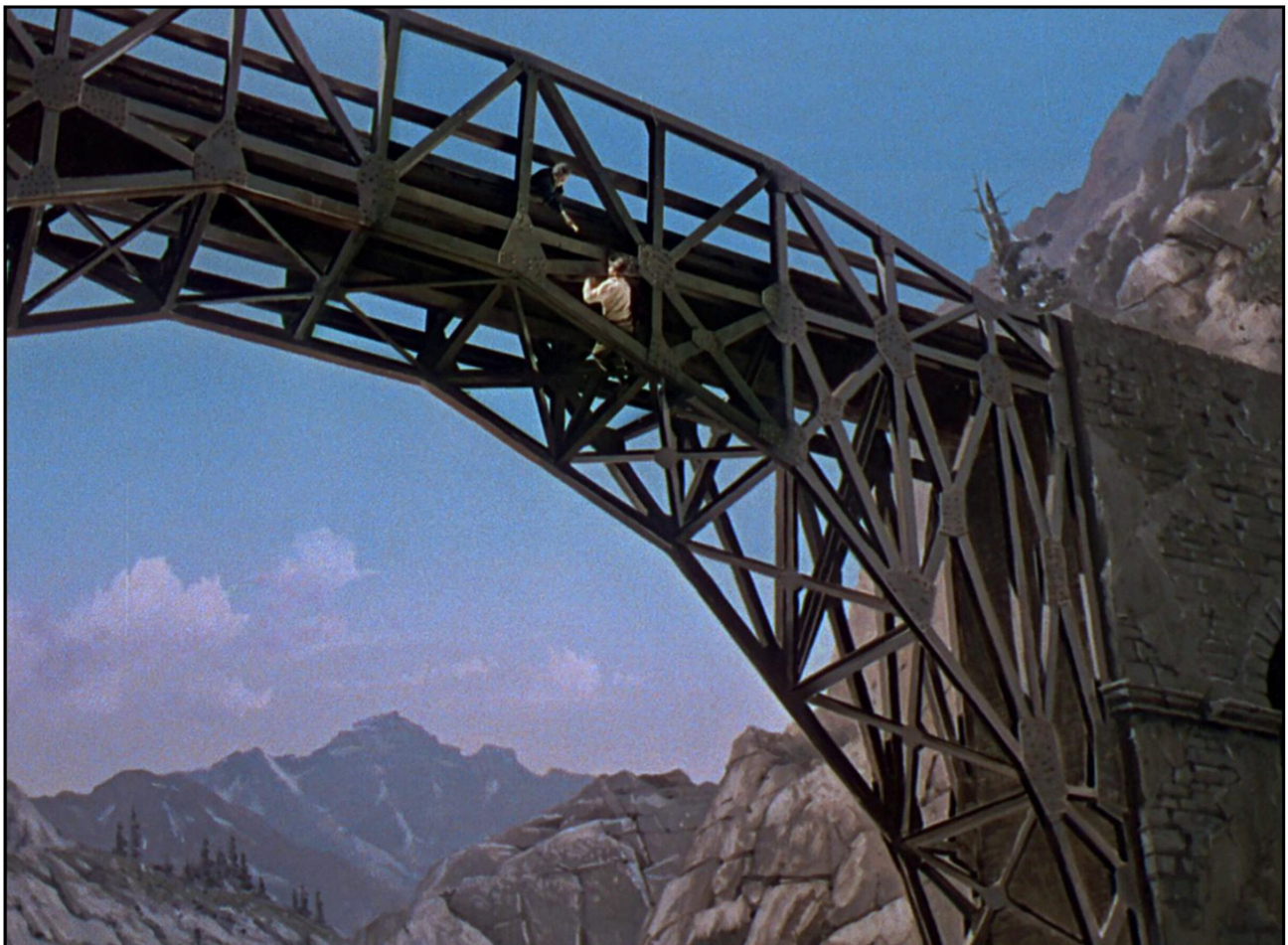
The book sold well, and in 1943 it was made into a film starring Gary Cooper as Jordan, Ingrid Bergman as Maria, Akim Tamiroff as Pablo and Katina Paxinou as Pilar. The film was an international success, although it was not distributed in France or Germany until after World War II (see posters below). The film received multiple nominations for the Academy Awards, with Katina Paxinou winning for best supporting actress.



The film follows the novel quite closely. When Pilar recounts her tale of what happened in Ronda at the beginning of the Civil War, the movie shows in flashback some of the brutal executions in the plaza:



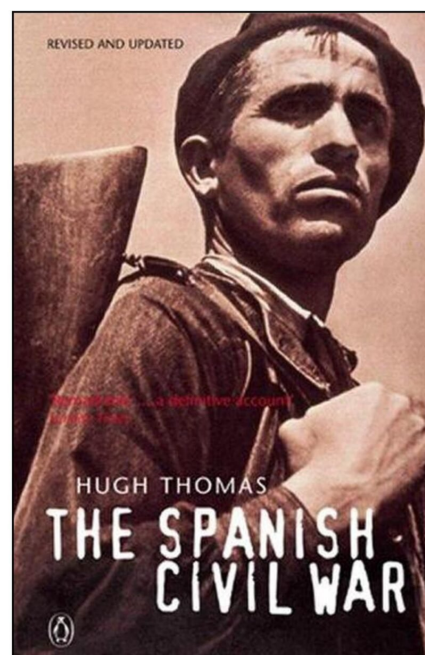
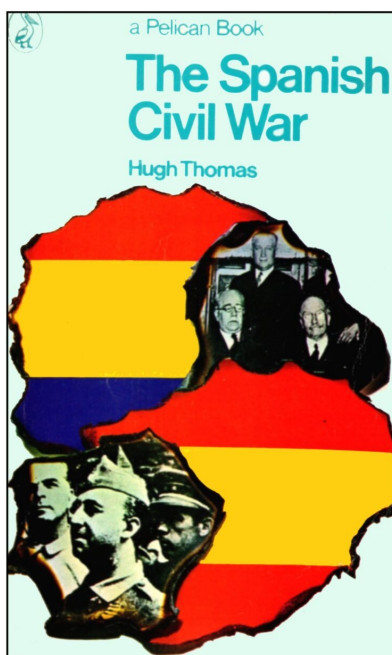
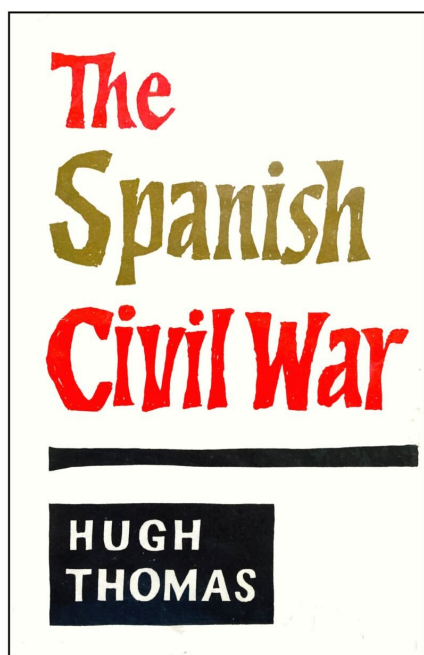
The bridge that Jordan dynamites just before the end of the movie is as high as the Puente Nuevo in Ronda:



Historical Accounts of the Events in Ronda

The history of *The Spanish Civil War* (1961) by Hugh Thomas was the first major examination of what happened in Spain during

the war. The book became a best seller soon after it was published and it has since gone through two revisions and multiple printings:



Thomas discussed the events in Ronda:

In country districts, revolution itself often consisted primarily of the murder of the upper classes or the bourgeoisie. Thus the description, in Ernest Hemingway's novel *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, of how the inhabitants of a small pueblo first beat the male members of the middle class and then flung them over a cliff, is near to the reality of what happened in the famous Andalusian town of Ronda (though the work was the responsibility of a gang from Malaga). There, 512 were murdered in the first month of war. (p 263 in 1989 printing)

Other historians have proposed that the Ronda executions described by Hemingway, although based on accounts he had heard, was completely fictional. Buckley (1997) described what happened in Ronda in the Summer of 1936, according to the records maintained in the town hall:

On 19 July 1936 the commander of the small army garrison in

Ronda, upon reports of a military uprising in Morocco, went to the Town Hall with a small platoon and demanded that the mayor submit to his authority and publicly announce that the city was under martial law and the army was taking control. The mayor belonged to the left-wing coalition known as the Popular Front. He refused to follow the commander's orders and swiftly disarmed him and his small band of soldiers, heavily outnumbered by the peasant groups beginning to assemble on the plaza outside the town hall. Thus, Ronda remained loyal to the Republican government of Madrid, and did not fall to the fascists until 18 September 1936.

However, it would be wrong to assume that during these two months the Republican government in Madrid had any control over the town or its inhabitants. As soon as the reports of a military rising in Africa began to spread, the peasants from neighboring villages poured into Ronda and in effect took control. Although the mayor was nominally in charge, the real power belonged to a "Comite" formed by the peasants themselves, most of whom belonged to CNT (Confederacion Nacional del Trabajo), the Anarchist Labor Union.

The task of this committee was three-fold: first, to arrest all persons suspected of having fascist sympathies; second, to insure that food was evenly distributed to all inhabitants (money was outlawed and vouchers with the CNT rubber-stamp were issued); third, to prepare to defend Ronda from a probable attack by fascist troops stationed in Seville.

The word "revolution" immediately comes to mind when we attempt to describe the situation in Ronda in summer 1936. The Secretary's "Record of Proceedings" for 28 July 1936, preserved in Ronda's Town Hall, displays revolutionary rhetoric: "[W]e are living through a moment of historic transcendence ... the fascist coup has spurred the populace to rise to the last man and to demand social justice . . . a new society is being born, based upon liberty, justice and equality ... justice has now become `revolutionary justice'

designed to cleanse the state of all fascist elements as well as to establish the basis for a new social order etc.”

Many priests and supporters of the Nationalist cause were executed. However, these victims were not killed in the plaza, but were driven away from the center of the town and shot. It is difficult to determine the number of those killed, but it was likely much less than the 512 claimed by the Nationalists. None of the bodies were thrown into *el tajo*. This story seems to have been invented by General Queipo to inflame his troops as they went about their reprisals.

Corbin (1995) considers the story about the executions in the plaza and the casting of the bodies into *el tajo* as an example of myth-making. Myths have their basis in historical events but the stories become altered in the telling, often to justify the actions of those in power:

Any story of the past has a double construction and a double truth. The truth of the tale told is its historical truth; the truth of its telling is its mythical truth.

The story of the executions by *el tajo* served the purpose of the Nationalists: it portrayed the class hatred of the anarchists and communists and the violence that they promulgated in the early weeks of the Civil War. This then justified their violent repression. Society must be protected from any recurrence of such revolutionary terror.

In *The Spanish Holocaust* (2012) which describes the repression of the Spanish Republicans during and after the Civil War, Paul Preston summarizes the events in Ronda:

Famous for its Roman and Arab bridges and its exquisite eighteenth-century bullring, Ronda had suffered a pitiless repression at the hands of anarchists led by a character known as ‘El Gitano.’ Initially, the CNT committee had maintained a degree of order although churches were sacked and images destroyed, but soon there were murders being

carried out by anarchists from Malaga and also by locals. However, there is no substance to the claim, first made by Queipo in a broadcast on 18 August and popularized by Ernest Hemingway's novel *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, that large numbers of prisoners were killed by being thrown into the *tajo*. The many rightist victims were shot in the cemetery. Francoist sources claim that victims of the red terror from Ronda and the nearby pueblos of Gaucin and Arriate numbered over six hundred. On 16 September, when Varela took the town, the defenders fled and his forces suffered only three casualties in the assault. His men stopped and interrogated anyone found in streets and shot many of them. Over half of the population fled towards Malaga. Under the new authorities, those of the town's defenders who had not fled were subjected to a bloody repression and the theft of their property. (p 171)

In the White City

The American poet, Philip Levine, spent time in Spain trying to learn more about the Spanish Civil War and the poets that wrote about it (Levine, 2016). He also wrote about Ronda in a prose-poem entitled *In the White City* (2009).

From up there—& he points to the bridge high above us—they tossed down the fat barber, the Falangist, to his death. “It is all in the book by the American communist.” “The communist?” I say. Yes, the friend of Fidel Castro, Comrade Hemingway “The tourists come because of your Mr. Hemingway, that is why you are here.” Who can argue with this young, balding lieutenant of the Guardia Civil who has dared to leave his barracks lacking his tricorne & with only a small sidearm? In felt house slippers he stands at ease on the west streets of his town, Ronda, to show me the world. “On those rocks,” he continues, pointing to a ledge half way down the

gorge, "he first hits & his belly explodes. Then they rape his beautiful daughter, the film star that is Swedish, & when they have finish they shave her head. That is why we execute them all." Does he mean that is why in the novel the Nationalists executed them. (I am careful not to say "the fascists"; it is 1965.) "No, no, executed them here, in life or death"—he smiles at his little joke—"up there on the bridge"— & he points again,— "by military firing squad one at a time, properly. That is why the whole town must witness & learn. It is educational." But, I insist, the death of the Falangist was merely in a novel that made no effort to be true to events, *una novela*, a fiction, a best seller. The lieutenant enjoys this repartee, he's amused by my innocence, he shakes his head, he is discreet & patient with this visitor to his ancient city that boasts the first Plaza de Toros in all the world. "You Americans," and he suppresses his laughter, "you think because he was a famous red he could not tell the truth. They do not give Noble Prizes to liars."

The poem illustrates how history becomes mixed up with fiction, with movies, and with photographs to form the myths that we remember about the past. Hemingway was not a communist and, though he spent time in Cuba, he was not a friend of Castro (Michaud, 2012). This idea stems from photographs of the two of them together at a fishing competition, the only time they ever met. The character Maria in Hemingway's novel, played by the Swedish film-star in the movie, was the daughter of a mayor who was executed in the Civil War, but this was in a different town, and the mayor there was a Republican executed by the Nationalists. The poem ends with the idea that fiction written by a winner of the Noble (sic) Prize has to be true.

The following is an etching of the *Puente Nuevo* in Ronda done by Gary Young for a broadside edition of Levine's poem.



Epilogue

By the spring of 1938, the Nationalists ultimately made their way to the sea, isolating Barcelona from Madrid. After Franco's troops marched into Barcelona in January 1939, Manuel Azana was among the thousands of refugees who fled from Barcelona to France. In March, Madrid was taken and Franco declared victory on April 1, 1939, and became the Prime Minister of Spain, continuing in this office until 1973. During and after the war, many thousands of Republicans were executed by the Nationalists in a repression known as the "white terror" or the "Spanish Holocaust" (Preston, 2012).

Hemingway's novel was translated into Spanish as *Por quién doblan las campanas*, but was not allowed into Spain until 1969. The movie was not shown there until 1978. Hugh Thomas's history of the war was forbidden in Spain until after the death of Franco in 1975. Today Spain continues to unearth the bodies of those executed during and after the war, and to seek some understanding of the violence and brutality of those days (Anderson, 2017). The myths need to be converted back into history.

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Madness and Poetry

Robert Lowell (1917-1977) was one of the most important American poets of the mid-20th-Century. He was famous both for his contribution to poetry and for his recurrent attacks of mania. This post reviews his life, comments on some of his poems, and considers the relations between creativity and mood disorders. Madness sometimes goes hand-in-hand with poetry:

Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,
Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend
More than cool reason ever comprehends
The lunatic, the lover and the poet
Are of imagination all compact
(Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, V, 1, 5-9)

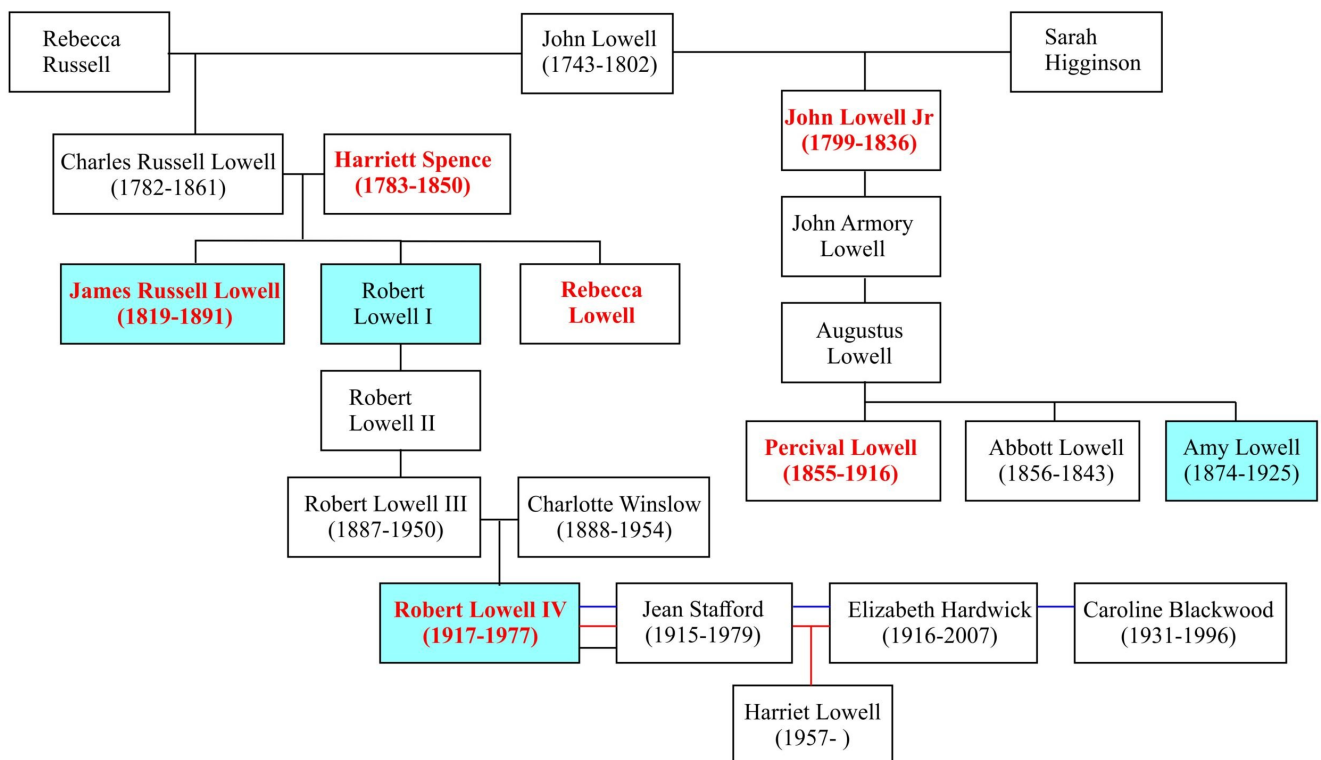
Family Background

Robert Traill Spencer Lowell IV, as his full name suggests, was born to a long line of "Boston Brahmins," a term that Oliver Wendell Holmes Sr. coined to describe the an untitled aristocracy with ancestors among the original Protestant

colonists who came to New England in the 17th Century.

The following figure shows part of Lowell's family tree (Jamison, 2017, pp 39-51; also websites by Wikipedia, Geneanet, and Nicholas Jenkins). The diagram begins with John Lowell (1743-1802), a judge in the United States District Court for the District of Massachusetts, remembered for authoring Article I of the United States Bill of Rights:

All men are born free and equal, and have certain natural, essential and inalienable rights, among which may be reckoned the right of enjoying and defending their lives and liberties.



The Lowell family tree is noteworthy for the incidence of published poets (light blue shading) and mental disturbances (red lettering). In 1845, Lowell's great-great-grandmother Harriett Bracket Spence was institutionalized for incurable madness in the McLean Asylum for the Insane in Somerville. The hospital later moved to Belmont and became known simply as McLean Hospital (Beam, 2003). Lowell was himself committed

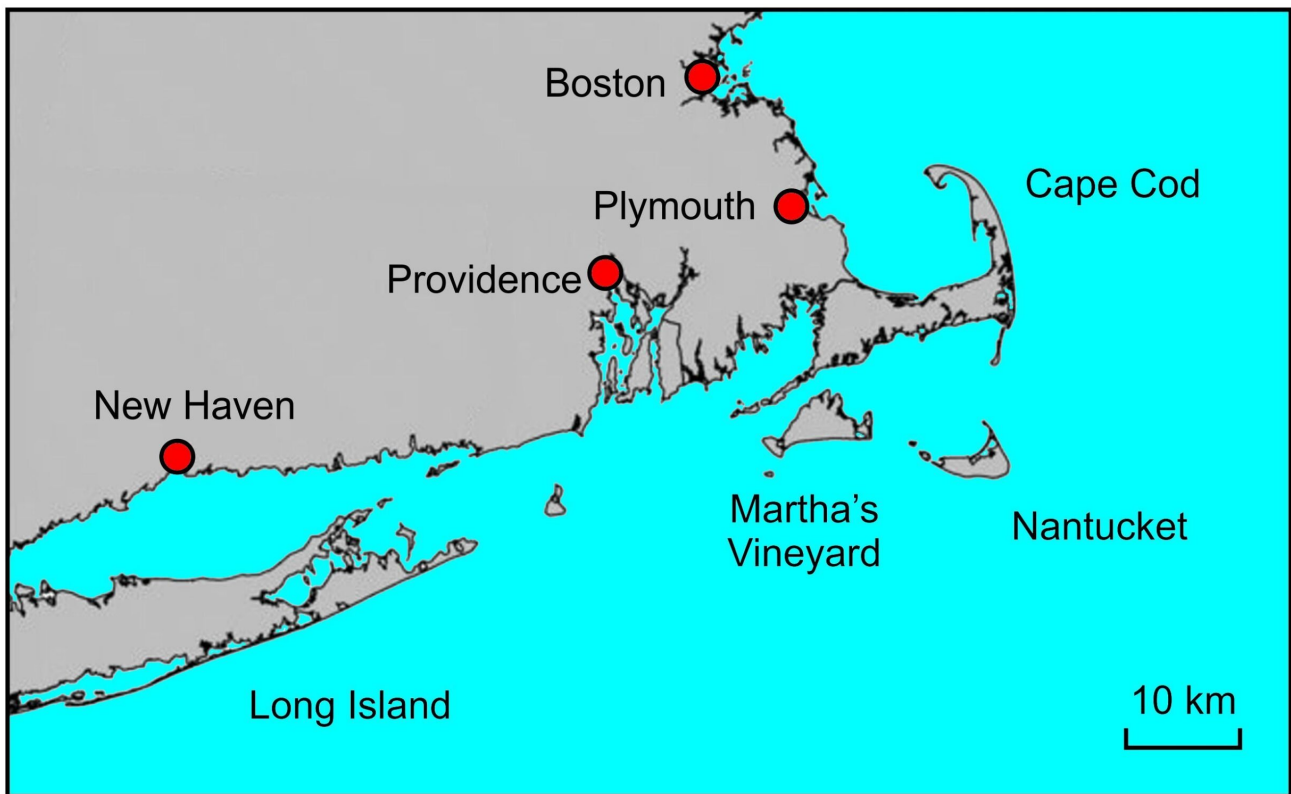
there for treatment on several occasions between 1958 and 1967.

Charles Russell Lowell was considered one of the “fireside poets,” a group which included Longfellow, Whittier and Bryant. These were poets whose work was read aloud to the family at the fireside. Amy Lowell became fascinated by Chinese poetry, which she attempted to imitate in brief intensely visual poems, a style that came to be known as “Imagism.” Percival Lowell was an astronomer who falsely believed that the markings he observed on the planet Mars represented a network of canals.

Through his mother, Charlotte Winslow, Lowell was a direct descendent of Mary Chilton (1607-1679), who arrived on the *Mayflower* in 1620. On this father’s side, he could trace their ancestry back to a Percival Lowle (1571-1664), who settled just north of Boston some 20 years after the *Mayflower* arrived.

Youth

While attending St Mark’s, an Episcopal preparatory school in Southborough, just south of Boston, Lowell was significantly influenced by a young teacher and poet, Richard Eberhart, and decided that poetry was his calling. He spent the summers of 1935 and 1936 with his friends, Frank Parker and Blair Clark, in a rented cottage on Nantucket Island just south of Cape Cod (see map below). There, under Lowell’s domineering direction, the three engaged in an impassioned study of literature and art. Lowell came to be known as “Cal,” a nickname that derived from both the Roman Emperor Caligula and Shakespeare’s character Caliban (Hamilton, 1982, p 20).



Lowell attended Harvard University but after two years left to study with the poet Allen Tate, finally graduating from Kenyon College in 1940. After graduation, he married Jean Stafford (McConahay, 1986), started graduate studies in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, converted from his family's Protestant religion to Roman Catholicism, and began writing the poems for his first book. These were days of decision.

When the United States entered World War II in 1941, Lowell initially registered for the draft. However, he soon became upset with the Allied policy of "strategic" bombing: attacking civilian targets to undermine morale, as opposed to the "tactical" bombing of military targets. After receiving orders for his induction into the armed forces in 1943, he wrote an open letter to President Roosevelt describing his objections:

Our rulers have promised us unlimited bombings of Germany and Japan. Let us be honest: we intend the permanent destruction of Germany and Japan. If this program is carried out, it will demonstrate to the world our Machiavellian

contempt for the laws of justice and charity between nations; it will destroy any possibility of a European or Asiatic national autonomy; it will leave China and Europe, the two natural power centers of the future, to the mercy of the USSR, a totalitarian tyranny committed to world revolution and total global domination through propaganda and violence.

In 1941 we undertook a patriotic war to preserve our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor against the lawless aggressions of a totalitarian league: in 1943 we are collaborating with the most unscrupulous and powerful of totalitarian dictators to destroy law, freedom, democracy, and above all, our continued national sovereignty. (quoted in Hamilton, 1982, p. 89)

Lowell was sentenced as a Conscientious Objector to a year and a day at the Federal Correctional Center in Danbury Connecticut. He was released on parole after 5 months, and spent the rest of his sentence working as a cleaner in the nearby Bridgeport hospital. At the end of this period, his first book, *Land of Unlikeness*, was published in a limited edition, to encouraging reviews.

Lord Weary's Castle



Lowell's first mainstream book of poetry, *Lord Weary's Castle*,

was published in 1946 and was awarded the Pulitzer Prize. The title comes from an old ballad about the stonemason Lambkin who built a castle for Lord Weary. After the lord refused to pay for the castle, Lambkin murdered the lord's wife and child. The frontispiece of the book was an engraving of Cain's murder of Abel by Lowell's schoolfriend Frank Parker (right). Title and frontispiece both point to humanity's long history of violence.

The first poem in the book is *The Exile's Return*:

There mounts in squalls a sort of rusty mire,
Not ice, not snow, to leaguer the Hôtel
De Ville, where braced pig-iron dragons grip
The blizzard to their rigor mortis. A bell
Grumbles when the reverberations strip
The thatching from its spire,
The search-guns click and spit and split up timber
And nick the slate roofs on the Holstenwall
Where torn-up tilestones crown the victor. Fall
And winter, spring and summer, guns unlimber
And lumber down the narrow gabled street
Past your gray, sorry and ancestral house
Where the dynamited walnut tree
Shadows a squat, old, wind-torn gate and cows
The Yankee commandant. You will not see
Strutting children or meet
The peg-leg and reproachful chancellor
With a forget-me-not in his button-hole
When the unseasoned liberators roll
Into the Market Square, ground arms before
The Rathaus; but already lily-stands
Burgeon the risen Rhineland, and a rough
Cathedral lifts its eye. Pleasant enough,
Voi ch'entrate, and your life is in your hands.

The poem is elusive. In their notes to the *Collected Poems* (2003), Bidart and Gewanter remark on the similarity of some of the poem's lines to passages in Thomas Mann's novella *Tonio Kröger*, first published in 1903. It recounts the return of a young poet to Lübeck, where he (like the author) had grown up. In the opening lines of the novella, Mann remarks that "sometimes a kind of soft hail fell, not ice, not snow" (Neugroschel translation, 2998, p 164). He also describes Tonio's father as the "impeccably dressed gentleman with the wildflower in his buttonhole." (p 180). So we should likely place the poem in Lübeck, though I am not sure why Lowell uses the French term *Hôtel de Ville* to describe its historic city hall (later referred to by its German name Rathaus).

In 1942 Lübeck was one of the first German cities to be strategically bombed by the Allies. The following illustration shows the Market Square and City Hall in a 1906 postcard together with a photograph of the destruction after the bombing. The Allied attack focused on the city center, which had no military significance; the docks (in the upper right of the photograph) were completely spared.



Lowell's poem imagines the military occupation of the devastated city. Though there may be hope for some sort of salvation – the lilies probably allude to the Virgin Mary and the Annunciation – the general impression is of the Gates of

Hell. The last line quotes from Dante's *Inferno*: *Lasciate ogni speranza, voi ch'entrate* (Abandon all hope, you who enter here).

The most important poem of the book is the seven-part *The Quaker Graveyard in Nantucket* (Axelrod, 2015; Hass, 1977; Remaley, 1976). The poem was written in memory of Lowell's cousin Warren Winslow, who died in an explosion that sank the destroyer *Turner* close to Rockaway Point near Coney Island in 1944 (Fender, 1973). The cause of the explosion is not known; it was likely caused by an accident and not by enemy action.

The full poem is available on the website of the Poetry Foundation. The beginning vividly describes the recovery of the body of a drowned sailor:

A brackish reach of shoal off Madaket—
The sea was still breaking violently and night
Had steamed into our North Atlantic Fleet,
When the drowned sailor clutched the drag-net. Light
Flashed from his matted head and marble feet,
He grappled at the net
With the coiled, hurdling muscles of his thighs:
The corpse was bloodless, a botch of reds and whites,
Its open, staring eyes
Were lustreless dead-lights
Or cabin-windows on a stranded hulk
Heavy with sand.

<https://creatureandcreator.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/graveyard-1.mp3>

Madaket is a beach on the Southwestern edge of Nantucket. As noted by Bidart and Gewanter, much of the description of the drowned sailor derives from Thoreau's *The Shipwreck* (1864). Warren Winslow's body was never recovered. Lowell's poem therefore alludes to all those who died at sea in the war. The

poem conveys the violence of such deaths with harsh rhymes, irregular rhythms and the striking enjambment of the fourth line.

The second section of the poem further generalizes the tragedy to all those sailors who have died at sea, like those of the 19th Century whalers in Melville's *Moby Dick* or the Quaker seamen buried in the Nantucket graveyard. The third section reveals how the sailors failed to understand their deaths. They thought that God was on their side, but did not realize that God was in the sea that drowned them or the whale they tried to kill. The next two sections further describe the violence of the whale trade, and by extension the violence of the war that had just come to an end.



Where might we find redemption from the ongoing violence? The sixth and penultimate section of the poem – *Our Lady of Walsingham* – changes dramatically from the previous sections. In 1061, Richeldis de Faverches, an Anglo-Saxon noblewoman, received a vision of the Virgin Mary in Walsingham, a small village in Norfolk. Following the Madonna's request, she built there a replica of Jesus's home in Nazareth, and placed a statue of the Virgin with the infant Jesus within. This shrine became one of the most visited pilgrimage sites in Europe. In 1538, during Henry VIII's dissolution of the monasteries, the shrine and its associated priory were torn down. (A damaged statue of the virgin in the Victoria and Albert Museum may actually be what remains of the Walsingham statue.) In 1897 a new statue (illustrated on the right) was blessed by the pope and placed in the Slipper Chapel, the last station on the original pilgrimage route to Walsingham. In the 20th Century, Walsingham began to welcome pilgrims again, though now separate Catholic and Anglican sites compete for their visit.

Lowell looks to find salvation but finds indifference:

Our Lady, too small for her canopy,
Sits near the altar. There's no comeliness
At all or charm in that expressionless
Face with its heavy eyelids. As before,
This face, for centuries a memory,
Non est species, neque decor,
Expressionless, expresses God: it goes
Past castled Sion. She knows what God knows,
Not Calvary's Cross nor crib at Bethlehem
Now, and the world shall come to Walsingham.

<https://creatureandcreator.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/graveyard-2-walsingham.mp3>

The face of the Virgin is indeed “expressionless.” The Latin “there is nothing special nor beautiful about him” is from

Isaiah 53:2, which in the Vulgate reads

Et ascendet sicut virgultum coram eo, et sicut radix de terra sitiēti. Non est species ei, neque decor, et vidimus eum, et non erat aspectus, et desideravimus eum:

The King James Version translates this verse (and the succeeding three verses) as

For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.

He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

This is part of Isaiah's prophecy of the Messiah, the man of sorrows who will take away our sins. Looking for redemption, the world comes to Walsingham, but the Virgin pays the world no special attention. Our ideas of God being born in human form at Bethlehem and of our salvation through his death on Calvary are human hopes not divine realities.

The final section of the poem describes the Atlantic Ocean as seen from Nantucket:

The empty winds are creaking and the oak
Splatters and splatters on the cenotaph,
The boughs are trembling and a gaff

Bobs on the untimely stroke
Of the greased wash exploding on a shoal-bell
In the old mouth of the Atlantic. It's well;
Atlantic, you are fouled with the blue sailors,
Sea-monsters, upward angel, downward fish:
Unmarried and corroding, spare of flesh
Mart once of supercilious, wing'd clippers,
Atlantic, where your bell-trap guts its spoil
You could cut the brackish winds with a knife
Here in Nantucket, and cast up the time
When the Lord God formed man from the sea's slime
And breathed into his face the breath of life,
And blue-lung'd combers lumbered to the kill.
The Lord survives the rainbow of His will.

<https://creatureandcreator.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/graveyard-3-section-vii.mp3>

The poem concludes by remembering how God made man by breathing into his face, and how God later destroyed everyone except Noah and his family in the flood, when huge “combers” (long curling sea waves) covered the earth. The final line likely alludes to the rainbow that God gave as a sign to Noah that he would not flood the Earth again:

And I will establish my covenant with you, neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth.

And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations:

I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. (*Genesis* 9: 11-13)

The world wars have shown that humanity's propensity for violence has not improved. One assumes that God will keep his promise. But at what cost? God will survive but humanity may perhaps extinguish itself.

Madness

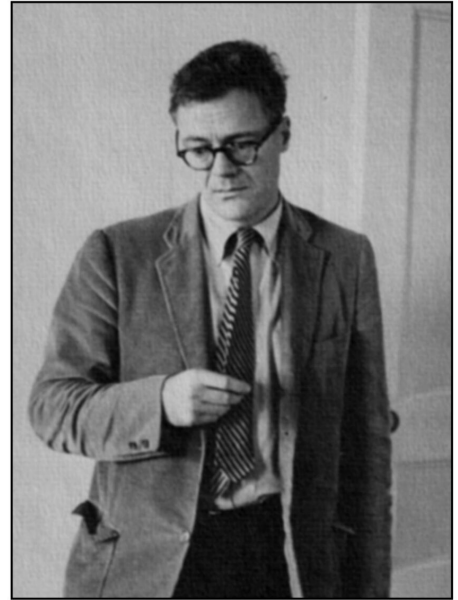
After *Lord Weary's Castle*, Lowell became famous. The following illustrations show photographs of him from youth to maturity:



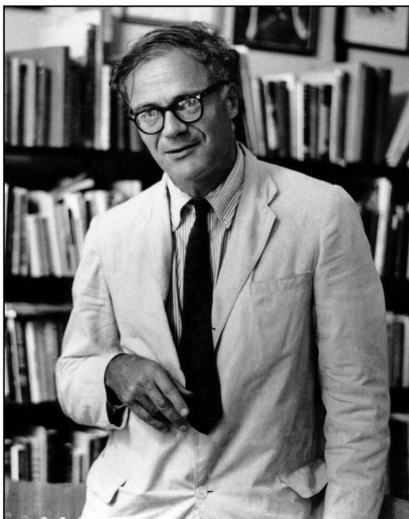
1930



1947



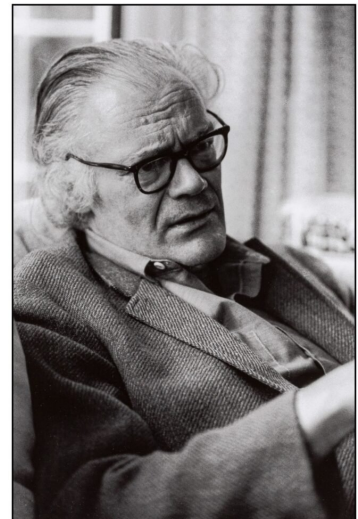
1961 (Henri
Cartier-Bresson)



1965 (Elsa Dorfman)



1967 (Jane Brown)



1977 (Judith Aronson)

Lowell published his second book *The Mills of the Kavanagh* in 1948. In early 1949 he started to become “wound up” (Hamilton, 2003, p 140). While teaching at Yaddo, an artists’ community in Saratoga Springs, New York, he became unjustifiably

paranoid about a communist takeover of the center. By the time he arrived in Bloomington, Indiana, to give a talk in March, he was frankly psychotic. He later remembered his state of "pathological enthusiasm:"

The night before I was locked up, I ran about the streets of Bloomington, Indiana, crying out against devils and homosexuals. I believed I could stop cars and paralyze their forces by merely standing in the middle of the highway with my arms outspread. Each car carried a long rod above its taillight, and the rods were adorned with diabolic Indian or voodoo signs. Bloomington stood for Joyce 's hero and Christian regeneration. Indiana stood for the evil, unexorcized, aboriginal Indians. I suspected I was a re-incarnation of the Holy Ghost and had become homocidally hallucinated. To have known the glory, violence and banality of such an experience is corrupting. (*Memoirs*, p 190)

Lowell's mind was experiencing an overwhelming "flight of ideas." He suffered from delusions of grandeur. His behavior was irrepressible and reckless. He refused to sleep. Lowell was 6-foot 1-inch tall: when he was psychotic, it was extremely difficult to restrain him (Jamison, 2017, p 83). He was finally subdued by the police, and committed to a psychiatric hospital. This was the first of multiple prolonged hospital stays, most lasting several months, that occurred once every year or two from 1949 to 1968 (Jamison, 2017, pp 112-113). Initially, he was treated with Electro Convulsive Therapy. In the 1960s, when the major tranquilizers became available, his bouts of mania were controlled by chlorpromazine. After 1968, treatment with lithium provided him with some respite from his illness. Yet the mania still occasionally occurred.

Each manic attack was followed by a prolonged period of depression. Lowell attributed his depression to his regret and shame over what had happened when he was psychotic. However, they were likely part and parcel of his bipolar mood disorder.

Lowell wrote feverishly during the periods just before he went completely manic, He then revised what he had written during his prolonged periods of depression.

Mania and depression are more common in creative individuals than in normal controls and this association appears most prominent for poets (Andreasen & Canter, 1974; Ludwig, 1995; Andreasen, 2008; Jamison, 2017; Greenwood, 2022). The flight of ideas that characterizes mania can easily lead to novel ways of looking at things. This is especially true during the hypomanic phase that precedes the psychotic break, when some modicum of control remains.

Despite his recurring attacks of mania, Lowell continued to write. In his 1959 book, *Life Studies*, he examined himself and his family in intimate detail. Rosenthal (1967) used the term “Confessional Poetry” to describe this work. Poets had always tapped into their personal experience to write poetry but until now none had been so unabashedly honest about their failings:

Because of the way Lowell brought his private humiliations, sufferings, and psychological problems into the poems of *Life Studies*, the word ‘confessional’ seemed appropriate enough. Sexual guilt, alcoholism, repeated confinement in a mental hospital (and some suggestion that the malady has its violent phase)—these are explicit themes of a number of the poems, usually developed in the first person and intended without question to point to the author himself. ... In a larger, more impersonal context, these poems seemed to me one culmination of the Romantic and modern tendency to place the literal Self more and more at the center of the poem.

During the 1950s and 1960s Lowell became the poetic consciousness of the United States, declaiming against its descent into materialism and its waging of unjustified wars. Lowell was one of the lead speakers at the 1967 March on the Pentagon to protest the Vietnam War. Norman Mailer describes

him at the March:

Lowell had the most disconcerting mixture of strength and weakness in his presence, a blending so dramatic in its visible sign of conflict that one had to assume he would be sensationally attractive to women. He had something untouchable, all insane in its force: one felt immediately that there were any number of causes for which the man would be ready to die, and for some he would fight, with an axe in his hand and a Cromwellian light in his eye. It was even possible that physically he was very strong—one couldn't tell at all—he might be fragile, he might have the sort of farm mechanic's strength which could manhandle the rear axle and differential off a car and into the back of a pickup. But physical strength or no, his nerves were all too apparently delicate. Obviously spoiled by everyone for years, he seemed nonetheless to need the spoiling. These nerves—the nerves of a consummate poet—were not tuned to any battering. (Mailer, 1968, pp 53-54)

Final Poems

Lowell's last book of poetry, *Day by Day*, came out just after his death from a sudden heart attack in 1977. The penultimate poem in that book is *Thanks-Offering for Recovery*:

The airy, going house grows small
tonight, and soft enough to be crumpled up
like a handkerchief in my hand.
Here with you by this hotbed of coals,
I am the *homme sensuel*, free
to turn my back on the lamp, and work.
Something has been taken off,
a wooden winter shadow—
goodbye nothing. I give thanks, thanks—
thanks too for this small
Brazilian *ex voto*, this primitive head
sent me across the Atlantic by my friend . . .

a corkweight thing,
to be offered *Deo gratias*
in church on recovering from head-injury or migraine—
now mercifully delivered in my hands,
though shelved awhile unnoticed and unnoticed.
Free of the unshakable terror that made me write . .
.

I pick it up, a head holy and unholy,
tensured or damaged,
with gross black charcoaled brows and stern eyes
frowning as if they had seen the splendor
times past counting . . . unspoiled,
solemn as a child is serious—
light balsa wood the color of my skin.
It is all childcraft, especially
its shallow, chiseled ears,
crudely healed scars lumped out
to listen to itself, perhaps, not knowing
it was made to be given up.
Goodbye nothing. Blockhead,
I would take you to church,
if any church would take you . . .
This winter, I thought
I was created to be given away.



Lowell is describing a small figurine from the northeastern region of Brazil, a gift from his friend Elizabeth Bishop. This was an *ex voto* (“from a vow”) offering, called *milagré* in Portuguese. Such objects, were left at a church as thanks to God after recovery from illness. A tiny leg would be left when the arthritis abated, a miniature head after the migraine had ended. The illustration on the right shows a small (4-inch) head (not the one described by Lowell). The poet wonders whether such an offering might serve as thanks now that the “unshakable terror that made me write” had finally finished.

Epilogue

Lowell’s final poem in the book *Day by Day* serves as an epilogue to a life distinguished by severe madness and by significant poetry:

Those blessed structures, plot and rhyme—
why are they no help to me now
I want to make
something imagined, not recalled?
I hear the noise of my own voice:
The painter’s vision is not a lens,

it trembles to caress the light.
But sometimes everything I write
with the threadbare art of my eye
seems a snapshot,
lurid, rapid, garish, grouped,
heightened from life,
yet paralyzed by fact.
All's misalliance.
Yet why not say what happened?
Pray for the grace of accuracy
Vermeer gave to the sun's illumination
stealing like the tide across a map
to his girl solid with yearning.
We are poor passing facts,
warned by that to give
each figure in the photograph
his living name.

<https://creatureandcreator.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/lowell-epilogue.mp3>

At the end of the poem Lowell refers to Vermeer's 1662 painting *Woman Reading a Letter* in Amsterdam's Rijksmuseum. Lowell's prayed to be as accurate in his poetry as Vermeer in his painting. On another level, the painting embodied the tranquility that was so often missing in his life.



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Basho's Journey to the North

Matsuo Basho (1644-1694), one of the most famous poets of Japan, was a master of the *haiku*, a poetic form in which an abundance of meaning is concentrated into a paucity of syllables. Basho travelled widely in Japan, writing about his experiences in a fascinating mixture of prose and poetry. In 1689 he undertook his longest journey: from Edo into the far north of Japan, a region known as *Oku*. His record of that journey is known as *Oku no Hosomichi* (*The Narrow Road to the North*).

Life of the Poet

Basho was born in Ueno in 1644 as Matsuo Kinsaku. As a young man, he served Todo Yoshitada, the local Samurai lord, and gained from him a passion for poetry. After the death of his master in 1666, Basho left Ueno. No one knows where he went or what he did for the next few years. Tradition suggests that he studied poetry, philosophy and calligraphy, perhaps in Kyoto (Ueda, 1970). The illustration on the right is a detail from a portrait of Basho by Yosa Buson (1716-1784).



In 1672, he published *The Seashell Game*, an anthology of *haiku* by various poets, together with his personal commentary. Later that year Basho moved to Edo (modern Tokyo) as a professional poet, organizing poetry sessions, reviewing the work of others, judging poetry contests, and providing commentaries on classic poems (Carter, 1997).



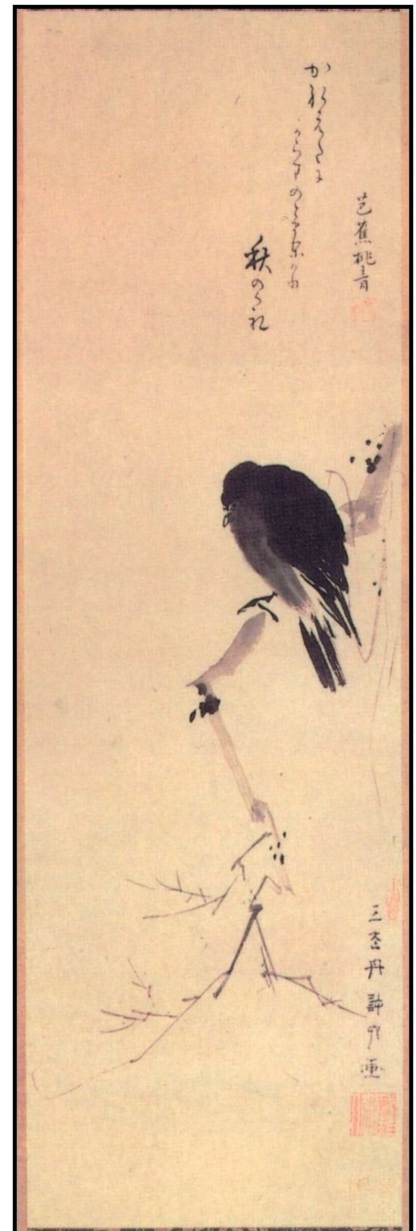
In 1680 Basho retired to a small hut in a rustic area of Edo. A disciple planted a small Japanese banana tree (*Musa basjoo*) beside his hut, and the poet henceforth assumed the name

Matsuo Basho. The tree typically rises to about 2 meters and has a crown of broad leaves each up to 2 meters in length. These fronds are easily torn by the winds (see illustration on the right). Basho felt that he shared both the sensitivity and the resilience of the tree. The following is a poem by Basho about his tree:

*Basho nowaki-shite
tarai ni ame o
kiku yo kana*

The banana tree is blasted in the storm,
I listen all night to the leaking
raindrops in a basin
(trans. Toshiharu Oseko, 1990)

The alliteration of the k-sounds at the end of the poem suggests the recurring drops from the leaking roof.



In his new home, Basho practiced Zen Buddhism with the monk Butcho, who lived nearby, and studied painting with another neighbor, Morikawa Kyoriku (1656-1715). He lived by himself, likening himself to a crow on a bare branch (Carter, 1997). On the right is a painting by Morikawa Kyoriku with calligraphy by Basho. Both artists celebrate the poet's newfound solitude.

kare eda ni
karasu no tomarikeri
aki no kure

On a bare branch

a crow settled down
autumn evening
(trans. Jane Reichhold, 2008)

Basho soon began to travel through the different regions of Japan, recording his journeys in prose and poetry. Most of the poems were in the *haiku* format.

The Evolution of *Haiku*

Medieval Japanese poetry (*waka*) was largely based on a 31-syllable format consisting of 5 sections of 5-7-5-7-7 syllables. By themselves these lines could be a *tanka* poem. Linking together many sections was the basis of *renga* poetry (Carter, 1991; Ueda 1991). A single poet could write a long *renga* by himself, or several poets could get together to create the succeeding sections of the poem. In the 16th Century a style of *haikai no renga* evolved, using common and often comic subjects, light-hearted puns and rhymes. As a professional poet, Basho would have arranged *renga* sessions wherein different poets would interact, one proposing a *hokku* of 5-7-5 syllables and the next capping this with the *waki* of 7-7 syllables. After 1680 Basho isolated the initial *hokku*, and imbued it with greater seriousness. In later years this format became known as *haiku*.

A *haiku* is characterized by its 5-7-5 syllabic structure. In general, a *haiku* contains two contrasting ideas often separated by a *kireji* or cutting word. Usually, the *haiku* contains some reference to the season of the year (*kigo*).



Basho wrote the following *haiku* after observing the falling yellow petals of Japanese roses (*yamabuki*) close to a waterfall near Yoshino Mountain south of Kyoto. The flowers are illustrated on the left. The painting below is once again by Morikawa Kyoriku and the calligraphy by Basho. The cursive calligraphy is beautiful but only interpretable by experts.



horo horo to

quietly quietly
petal by petal
yellow mountain roses fall
roses at fall
sound of the rapids
sounding waters
(trans. Makoto Ueda, 1991)
Andrew Fitzsimons, 2022)

In quiet succession,
The yellow flowers of Kerria fall
To the sound of the waterfall

horo-horo-to: an onomatopoeic word (adv.) describing flower-petals are falling down quietly here and there in succession. This word has a delicate poetic sound exactly matched with this scene even with the visual image so vivid

yamabuki: a Japanese rose, *Kerria japonica*

chiru: to fall

ka: an exclamatory particle

taki: a waterfall

oto: a sound

The cutting word is the particle *ka*. The seasonal reference is to the late spring time when the *yamabuki* blossoms fall.

Translating *haiku* can follow different principles. One can maintain the same syllabic structure (as in the Fitzsimons translation), but this is often difficult. Furthermore, the translator must choose between providing as much context as possible (as in the Oseko version) or being as concise as the original (as in the Ueda version).

This poem has evoked extensive commentary (Ueda, 1991). The

following is from Handa:

As the poet trod a shady path by the river, he saw petals of mountain roses fluttering down. That instant he awoke to the sound of the rapids, to which he had paid no attention before. In brief, I wish to interpret the poem as presenting a shift of the senses: the vision of falling petals causing the poet to shift his awareness to the sound of the rapids.

The Lure of *Oku*



From 1682 until the end of his life, Basho travelled to various regions to Japan, hoping to find himself in what he saw, and to describe what he found in poetry. Beginning in the spring of 1689 he undertook a journey to *Oku*, the northern regions of Japan, together with his companion Sora. They covered a distance of some 1500 miles over a period of 156 days, almost all of it on foot. The painting on the right by Morikawa Kyoriku shows Basho and Sora as they set out on their

journey.

Basho published a record of his journey in *Oku no Hosomichi* (The Narrow Road to Oku). The word *Oku* has been variously translated as: the north, the deep north, the interior, the hinterland, and the heart. Keene (1996) remarks that *Oku* was

the general name for the provinces at the northern end of the island of Honshu. *Oku* also means “interior” or “inner recesses,” and this meaning would also be appropriate, both geographically, indicating that Basho’s travels would take him to the inner recesses of the country, and metaphorically, suggesting that his journey was to an inner world, probably the world of *haiku* poetry. We shall never know which of these meanings Basho intended; perhaps he meant all of them.

Japanese is typically written using both ideographs (*kanji*) and a syllabic alphabet (*hiragana*). The following illustration shows the *kanji* for *oku* on the left. It contains the radicals for “remote,” “rice,” and “great.” Since this *kanji* is uncommon, the title of the book is typically written using *hiragana* script, except for the final term *michi* (road, path), which is expressed in *kanji*. This ideograph for *michi* is the same as that for *do* (way, teaching), which derives from the Chinese *dao*, the way of Daoism. A brief discussion of the differentiation of *michi* and *do* is available on the web. The latter is used in words that describe the study of *judo* (gentle way) or *shado* (calligraphy). Basho was clearly aware of the two meanings of the *kanji*. The illustration also shows the title in full *kanji*, and in semi-cursive (Miyata Masayaki) and cursive (unknown calligrapher) scripts. On the right are the *kanji* for Matsuo Basho.

Oku		Oku no Hosomichi			Matsuo Basho
Kanji	Kanji	Hiragana and Kanji			Kanji
		Classical	Semicursive	Cursive	
奥	奥	おく	おく	おく	松
Radicals	奥	おく	おく	おく	尾
冂	の	の	の	の	芭
remote	細	ほ	ほ	ほ	蕉
米	道	そ	そ	そ	
rice	道	道	道	道	
大					
great					

The following illustration shows a map of the central part of Japan with an outline of Basho's journey, beginning in Edo and ending in Ogaki.



The painting below is by Yusa Buson (1716-1784), a painter and haiku poet, who produced a illustrated copy of Basho's *Oku no Hosomichi*. It shows Basho and Sora taking leave of their friends as they set out on their journey.



Days and Months

Basho began *Oku no Hosomichi* with a brief comment on the passage of time and his need to travel:

Days and months are travellers of eternity. So are the years that-pass by. Those who steer a boat across the sea, or drive a horse over the earth till they succumb to the weight of years, spend every minute of their lives travelling. There are a great number of ancients, too, who died on the road. I myself have been tempted for a long time by the cloud-moving wind – filled with a strong desire to wander.
(translated by Noboyuki Yuasa, 1966)

The following illustration shows the beginning of the book in Basho's own calligraphy, from a scroll that was discovered in 1996. The text is read from top to bottom and from right to left.

月日は百代の過客にして行かふ
 年も又旅人も舟の上に生涯
 をうかへ馬の口とらへて老を
 かふるものは日々旅にして
 旅を栖とす古人も多く旅に
 死せるありいつれの年よりか
 片雲の風にさそはれて漂泊
 のおもひやます海浜にさすらへ
 て去年の秋江上破屋に
 蜘蛛の古巣をはらひてや
 年も暮春改れは霞の空に
 白川の関こえむとそゝろかみ
 の物に付てこゝろをくるはせ

月日は百代の過客にして行かふ
 年も又旅人も舟の上に生涯
 をうかへ馬の口とらへて老を
 かふるものは日々旅にして
 旅を栖とす古人も多く旅に
 死せるありいつれの年よりか
 片雲の風にさそはれて漂泊
 のおもひやます海浜にさすらへ
 て去年の秋江上破屋に
 蜘蛛の古巣をはらひてや
 年も暮春改れは霞の空に
 白川の関こえむとそゝろかみ
 の物に付てこゝろをくるはせ

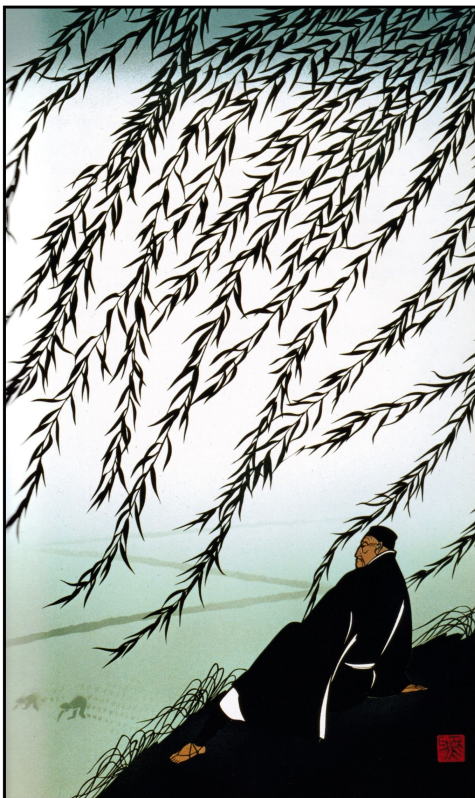
The initial characters of the book can be translated as the "sun" and the "moon" instead of "days" and "months."

Ideographs are intrinsically metaphorical. Another translation of the opening lines is therefore:

The moon and sun are eternal travelers. Even the years wander on. A lifetime adrift in a boat, or in old age leading a tired horse into the years, every day is a journey, and the journey itself is home. From the earliest times there have always been some who perished along the road. Still I have always been drawn by wind-blown clouds into dreams of a lifetime of wandering. (Hamill, 1998)

The opening words of the book allude to a poem by the 8th-Century Chinese poet Li Bai which states that the “sun and moon are wayfarers down the generations” (Carter 2020, p 97). Basho was as much a wanderer as Li Bai, who spent much of his life in exile in the hinterland of China.

Willow Trees

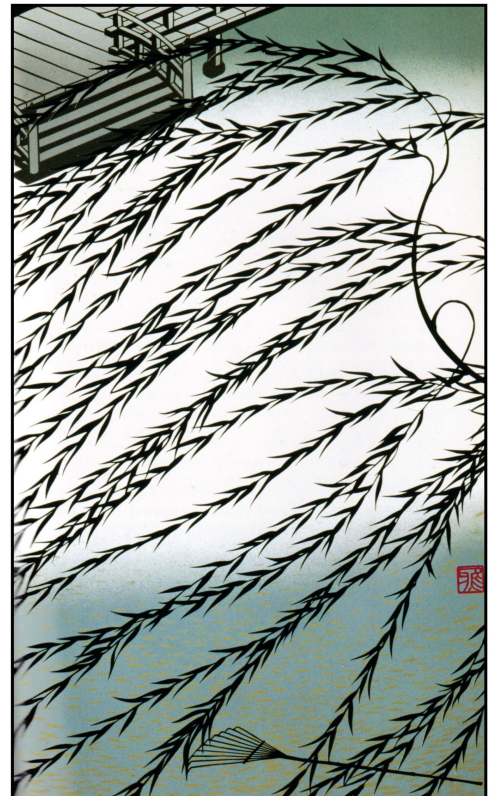


Basho visited briefly the great Tokugawa monuments in Nikko, but was more concerned with simpler things. Near Ashino, Basho

stopped by a willow tree (*yanagi*) that had been made famous by the 12th-Century Japanese poet Saigyō. Bashō sat for the whole day beneath the willow branches, watching as the peasants planted rice in a paddy field. The illustration is by Miyata Masayuki:

*ta ichimai
uete tachisaru
yanagi kana*

They sowed a whole field
and only then did I leave
Saigyō's willow tree
(trans. Donald Keene, 1996)



Near the end of his trip Bashō stayed for a night at a Buddhist temple near Daishoji. In the morning, he swept away the fallen willow leaves before leaving, a small recompense

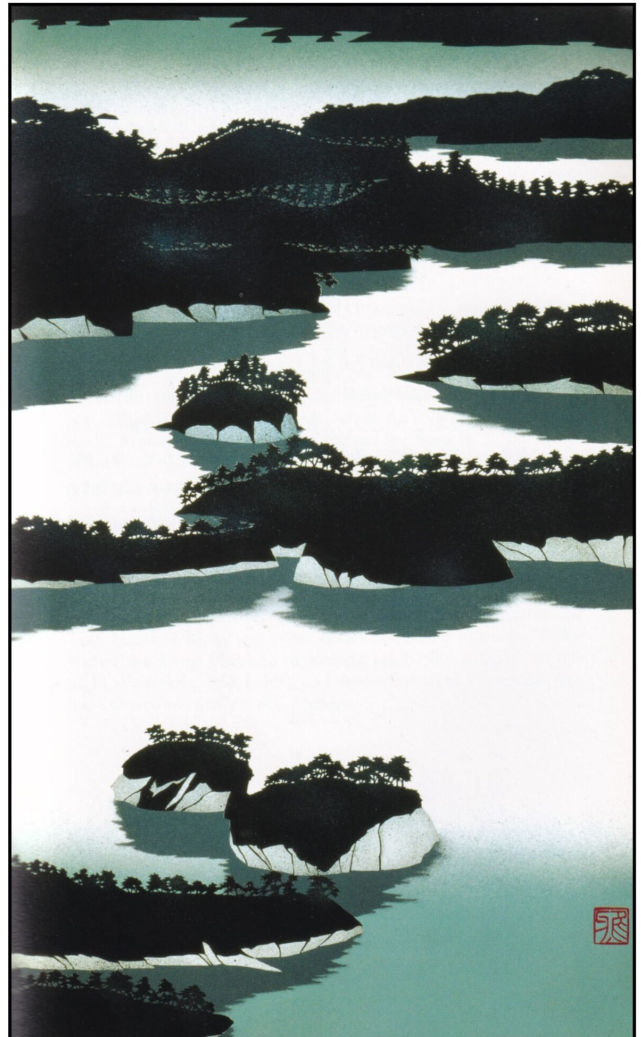
for the monks' hospitality. Again, the illustration is by Miyata Masayuki:

niwa haki-te
ide-baya tera ni
chiru yanagi

I'll sweep the garden
before I leave – in the temple
the willow leaves fall
(trans. Donald Keene, 1996)

Matsushima

In the bay of Matsushima are hundreds of small rocky islands topped by weathered pine trees (*matsu*, pine, and *shima*, island). Basho was entranced by the view. On the right of the following illustration is a representation of the bay by Miyata Masayuki. On the left are a photograph of one of the islands, and a photograph of me talking to an effigy of Basho outside a tea-house in Matsushima.



Basho described the bay:

And so many islands!—tall ones looming into the heavens, low ones crawling over the waves. Some have two layers, others three; appearing separate from the left, connected to the right. One island carries another on its back, others seem to embrace, like parents or grandparents with their young. The pines are of the richest green, their branches molded by salt spray into natural shapes that seem as if man-made. So fine is the beauty of the scene that one envisions a woman just finished applying her makeup, or a landscape crafted by Oyamazumi [the god of the mountains – *yama*] in the age of the mighty gods. To capture with the brush the work of Heaven's creation—why, no one could do it, not with paint, not with words (translation Carter, 2020).

Though Basho was too overcome by Matsushima's beauty to write a poem, Sora composed:

*Matsushima ya
tsuru ni mi wo kare
hototogisu*

In Matsushima
you'll need the wings of a crane
little cuckoo
(trans. Sam Hamill, 1998)

The poem is cryptic: the idea is that the tiny cuckoo would need to borrow the huge wings of the crane to comprehend the beauty of the scene.

Basho later wrote a poem about Matsushima though this was not included in *Oku no Hosomichi*.

*shimajima ya
chiji ni kudakite
natsu no umi*

Islands and islands
a thousand pieces shattered
on the summer sea
(trans. Andrew Fitzsimons, 2022)

Hiraizumi

From Matsushima, Basho journeyed north to the site where Minamoto no Yoshitsune, the great Samurai warrior, had been defeated in 1189 CE by the army of his brother. Yoshitsune retired to the castle of Koromogawa to commit *seppuku* (ritual suicide). Outside on the bridge, his companion Benkei prevented his enemies from interfering. After failing to best him in single-handed combat, the attackers killed him with arrows. Benkei died but his body remained standing, and it was a long time before anyone could gather enough courage to cross

the bridge. The castle was razed to the ground: nothing remains.

Basho remembered a poem of the 8th-Century Chinese poet Du Fu who wrote a poem entitled *Spring View* about the wars and rebellions of his day. It begins:

The country ravaged, mountains and rivers remain
in spring at the fortress, the grasses and bushes grow
thick

(translation by Carter, 2020)



Basho composed his haiku in homage to both Yoshitsune and Du Fu. The illustrations on the right is by Miyata Masayuki.

natsukusa ya
tsuwamono-domo ga
yume no ato

Only summer grass grows
Where ancient warriors

Used to dream

(trans. Toshiharu Oseko, 1990)

The following provides a recording of the poem in both Japanese and English. This and all subsequent readings in this post are by Takashi Sudo. The English translation he is using is by Hiroaki Sato (1996).

<https://creatureandcreator.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/summer-grass.mp3>

Fleas and Lice

The accommodations where Basho and Sora stayed were often far from luxurious. At Shitomae the guests and the horses were under one roof:

*nomi shirami
uma no shitosuru
makuramoto*

Fleas and lice
a horse pissing
next to my pillow
(trans. David Young, 2013)

The word for piss, *shito*, puns with the place name.

Yamadera

In the middle of summer, Basho visited Ryushakuji, also known as Yamadera (mountain temple). The temples of this Buddhist complex are located on the side of a mountain, linked together by some 1000 stone steps. The mountain is covered with pines and the place is renowned for its tranquility. Basho found that the cry of a cicada intensified the silence.

*shizukasa ya
iwa ni shimi-iru
semi no koe*

Quietness
seeping into the rocks,
the cicada's voice
(trans Hiroaki Sato, 1996)

<https://creatureandcreator.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/ryushakuli.mp3>

The upper part of the following illustration shows the topmost temple of the complex. Below is a photograph of votive buddhas on the hillside, and an impression of the temple steps by Miyata Masyuki.



Western Sunset



After spending some time in the region of the *Dewa Sanzan* (Three Mountains of Dewa), Basho came down to Sagata where the Mogami River empties into the Sea of Japan. The illustration on the right is by Miyata Masayuki>

atsuki hi o
umi ni iretari
Mogamigawa

Pouring the hot sun
into the sea,
the Mogami River
(trans. Hiroaki Sato, 1996)

<https://creatureandcreator.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/mogami-river.mp3>

Sea and Stars

One night near Niigata Basho compared the rough seas with the serenity of the stars:

araumi ya
Sado ni yokotau
Amanogawa

The turbulent sea
unfurling over Sado
the River of Stars
(trans. Andrew Fitzsimons, 2022)

Amanogawa (Heaven's River) is the Japanese term for the Milky Way.

Bush Clover and Moon

One night in late summer, Basho and Sora spent the night in an inn near Ichiburi. Two prostitutes were staying in an adjacent room. From listening to their conversation, Basho discovered that they had repented of their life and were journeying to the Ise Shrine to seek redemption. He wrote the following *haiku*:

Hitotsu-ya ni
yujo mo ne-tari
hagi to tsuki.

At the same inn
Under the same roof
play women are also sleeping
prostitutes are also sleeping
bush clover and the moon
bush clover and the moon

(trans. Robert Aiken, 1978)
(trans. Toshiharu Oseko, 1990)

<https://creatureandcreator.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/bush-clover.mp3>

Bush clover (*Lespedeza japonica*) is a bushy plant with multiple blue-pink flowers on slender branches that trail downward from the center.

Since this is probably the most famous *haiku* in the book, it is worth considering the notes from Toshiharu Oseko (lightly edited):

hitotsu: one, *ya* = *ie* = *uchi*: a house, *ni*: in, at

hitotsu-ya ni: (1) under the same roof (2) in a solitary house. The basic meaning in this poem is 1, but it also has a faint image of 2.

yujo: a prostitute

mo: a particle for an addition and stress

ne: from *neru*, to sleep, lie down, go to bed. This word refers not only to the people, but also to a bush clover indirectly.

-tari: aux. v. for perfect and progressive perfect, but my interpretation is that the women (and probably Sora also) are already sleeping, but Basho is still awake looking at the moon over the bush clover

hagi: a bush clover, *Lespedeza*. When a bush clover droops down, it is often expressed as *neru*, lying down. Hence it could be possible to take the bush clover as a euphemistic metaphor of a prostitute.

The upper left section of the following illustration shows branches of the bush clover and a close-up of its flower. The upper right shows Miyata Masayuki's representation of the prostitutes. The lower part of the illustration shows a Japanese silk-painting of bush clover and moon on a set of sliding doors from the 19th Century.



The *haiku* has been extensively discussed. Ueda (1991) quotes from Koseki:

The bush clover stands for the courtesans, the moon for Basho. The bright moon in the sky and the delicate, lovely bush clover are friendly with, yet keep a certain distance from, each other. Basho and the courtesans associated with each other in a similar way as they shared the same lodging.

Basho kept his distance both because of his asceticism, and also because he leaned toward the homosexual in his longings

(Leupp, 1997).

However, the moon might also represent the heavens looking down on the transient life of human beings. Sin and redemption, beauty and mortality, are of little import *sub specie aeternitatis*

In 1943, scholars found Sora's diary of the journey to Oku. This confirms most of the details of Basho's book, which was put together a few years after the journey had been completed. However, it makes no mention of the episode with the prostitutes, and some have suggested that Basho's account was therefore fiction rather than fact. Perhaps only the dream of a tired traveler.

Last Years

Basho's journey to Oku came to an end in Ogaki. He spent several months there and in the environs of Kyoto before returning to Edo where he put together his memory and notes of the journey to form *Oku no Hosomichi*. He undertook several other shorter journeys over the next few years, finally falling ill and dying in Osaka in 1694 (Ueda, 1970; Kikaku, 2006).

One of his last *haiku* was:

*Tabi ni yan-de
yume wa kare-no o
kake-meguru*

Ill on a journey,
my dreams still wandering round
over withered fields.
(trans. Toshiharu Oseko, 1990)

Basho was buried according to his request near Minamoto no Yoshinaka, a famous Samurai general from the 12th Century. In one of the Noh plays, Kanehira, the spirits of the general and

his companion wander around after death seeking rest.

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Zeno of Elea

Zeno of Elea

Zeno of Elea was a Greek philosopher who lived in the 5th Century BCE. He described a set of paradoxes to prove that space and time are continuous and cannot be divided into discrete parts. The most famous of these are the *Paradox of Achilles and the Tortoise*, which purportedly shows that

Achilles could never catch up with the much slower Tortoise, and the *Paradox of the Arrow*, which shows that an arrow in flight is always stationary.

Life of Zeno

Very little is known about the life of Zeno of Elea (Palmer, 2021). Elea, modern-day Velia, was a settlement on the southwest coast of Italy, founded in 540 BCE by Greeks from Phocaea, an Ionian city on the western coast of Anatolia. The Phocians were experienced sailors who had also established colonies in Catalonia and Marseille. The Persian invasion of the Ionian cities drove most of the Phocians toward their colonies, which together with other Greek settlements formed an extensive empire called Magna Grecia. Roman ruins, including the Porta Rosa and a theater have been excavated in Velia:



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A Book of Paradoxes

Zeno wrote a book of forty paradoxes to defend the philosophy of Parmenides (Dowden, 2023). Unfortunately, the book did not survive and all we know about its contents are brief references in later writings by authors who may not have understood Zeno's thinking. A paradox is a logical argument that leads to a conclusion at odds with (*para*, beside or beyond) accepted opinion (*dox*) (Strobach, 2013). A paradox may be used to demonstrate that accepted opinion is wrong, or at least open to contradictory interpretation. However, the usual intent of a paradox is to show that the premises of the argument must be incorrect since the conclusion is so obviously impossible. This is a variant of the *reductio ad absurdum*. Any paradox therefore presents us with a choice:

either the conclusion is not really unacceptable, or else the starting point, or the reasoning, has some non-obvious flaw. (Sainsbury, 2009, p 3)

One problem with Zeno's paradoxes is that we do not know how to interpret them because we do not know how he intended them to be used. The following paragraphs will consider the two most famous of Zeno's paradoxes from the point of view of modern science and mathematics.

Achilles and the Tortoise

The original paradox appears to have involved two runners one faster than the other. Their identification with Achilles and the Tortoise occurred later. In a race the speedy Achilles is attempting to pass a slow Tortoise, who has been given a head start. In order to catch up with the tortoise Achilles must first reach the point where the turtle began the race (t_0). However, by then (t_1) the tortoise has already moved ahead, albeit by a smaller distance than Achilles has traversed. Achilles must then reach the point to which the Tortoise had advanced. He can cover this extra distance by t_2

but again the Tortoise has already moved ahead. Achilles continues to reach the point to which the Tortoise has advanced only to find that the Tortoise has already moved further on. Achilles can therefore never pass the Tortoise. The first three episodes of this infinite train are shown below. For ease of illustration, Achilles is made to run about 4 times faster than the Tortoise:



The paradox basically proposes that the time taken by Achilles to catch up with the Tortoise is composed of an infinite number of intervals. Even though the later intervals may become vanishingly small, an infinite number of intervals would take an infinite amount of time. Modern mathematics, however, has shown that infinite series like that of Achilles and the Tortoise can have a finite sum. An infinite geometric series of the form

$$\sum_{n=0}^{\infty} z^n$$

sums to a finite amount $1/(1-z)$ if the absolute value of z is less than 1. For the example that we have been using the value of z is $1/4$, i.e., the ratio of the velocities between Tortoise and Achilles. The sum of the series is thus $4/3$.

This is demonstrated through the following equations. The sum of the series (T) is equal to the time taken to cover the distance of the Tortoise's head start (for simplicity this is made equal to 1) plus the time taken to cover the distance that the Tortoise has covered in the meantime (equal to $1/4$ since for our illustration Achilles travels 4 times faster than the Tortoise) plus $1/16$ for the next abortive catch-up, and so on to infinity (...). The equations demonstrate that the sum of the series equals $4/3$.

$$T = 1 + \frac{1}{4} + \frac{1}{16} + \frac{1}{64} + \dots$$

$$4T = 4 + 1 + \frac{1}{4} + \frac{1}{16} + \dots$$

$$4T = 4 + T$$

$$3T = 4$$

$$T = \frac{4}{3}$$

The paradox can also be solved using algebraic equations. One can assume Achilles catches up with the Tortoise at a time T after travelling a distance D . The equation for Achilles is

$$D = T \cdot V_a \quad \text{where } V_a \text{ is the known velocity of Achilles}$$

And for the Tortoise is

$$D = T \cdot V_t + H \quad \text{where } H \text{ is the distance of the head start and } V_t \text{ is the velocity of the Tortoise}$$

Combining the two equations we have

$$T \cdot V_a = T \cdot V_t + H$$

Thence

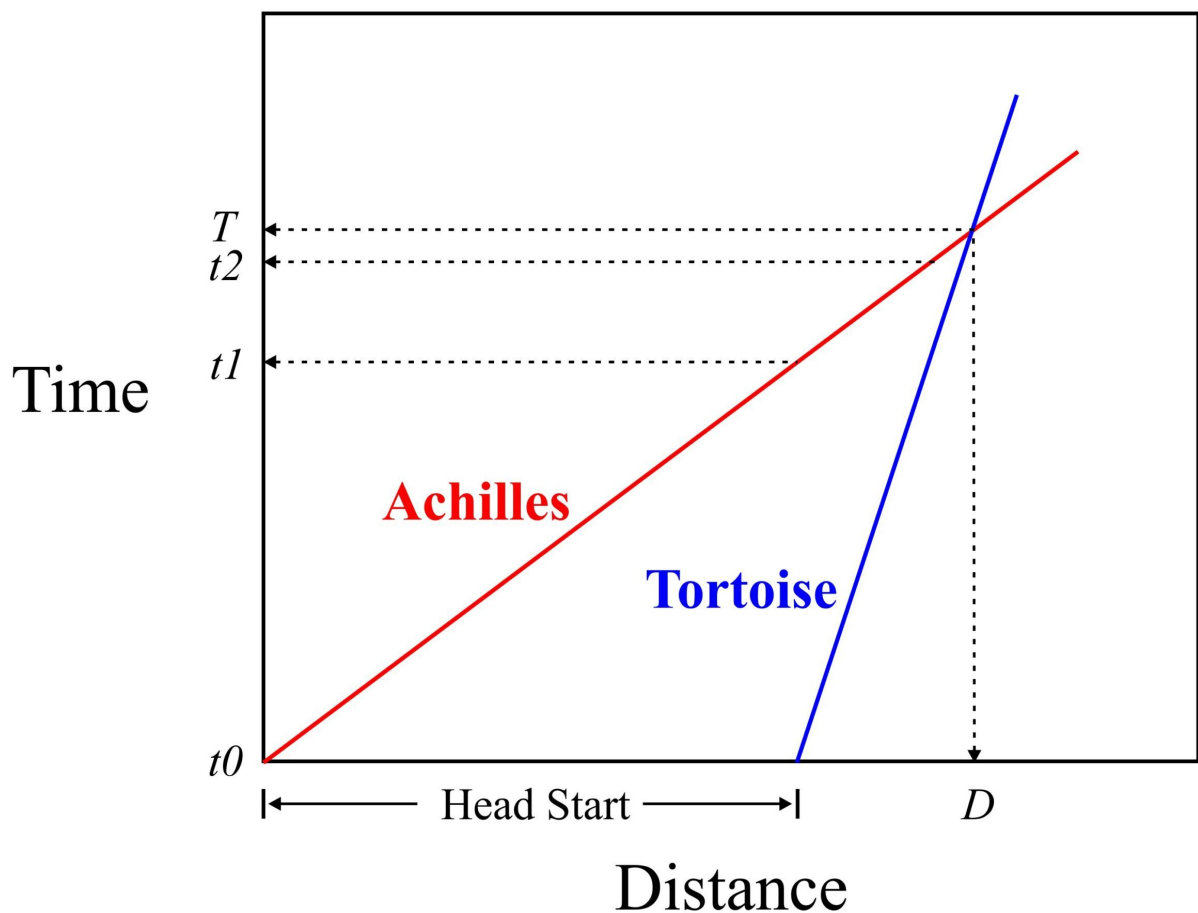
$$T = H / (V_a - V_t)$$

In our example V_t is $1/4$ of V_a

$$T = H / (3/4 \cdot V_a)$$

Or $4/3$ the time that it takes Achilles to travel the distance of the Tortoise's head start.

These calculations can be represented graphically with distance plotted on the horizontal axis and time on the vertical axis:



A simple mathematical view of Zeno's paradox is to set the frame of reference to the moving Tortoise and to calculate the speed of Achilles relative to this reference. In our example, the speed of Achilles relative to the Turtle is 3. This is $\frac{3}{4}$ the speed of Achilles relative to the absolute reference and thus it will take Achilles $\frac{4}{3}$ the time to catch up with the Tortoise.

These mathematical approaches allow us to understand the movements of Achilles and the Tortoise, to determine where they will be as time passes, and to calculate when Achilles will finally pass the Tortoise. However, they do not really resolve the paradox as presented by Zeno. If space and time are infinitely divisible into points and instants, it will take Achilles an infinite number of acts to catch up with the Tortoise, and an infinite number of acts will take forever (Black, 1970).

We do not know Zeno's original intent in formulating his paradoxes of motion. He probably did not wish to prove that motion is impossible, and that our perception of moving things is illusory. Rather, he likely wanted to prove that space and time are continuous and cannot be divided into discrete points and instants. This would be in keeping with the monism of his teacher Parmenides. Bertrand Russell (1926, p 174) stated that

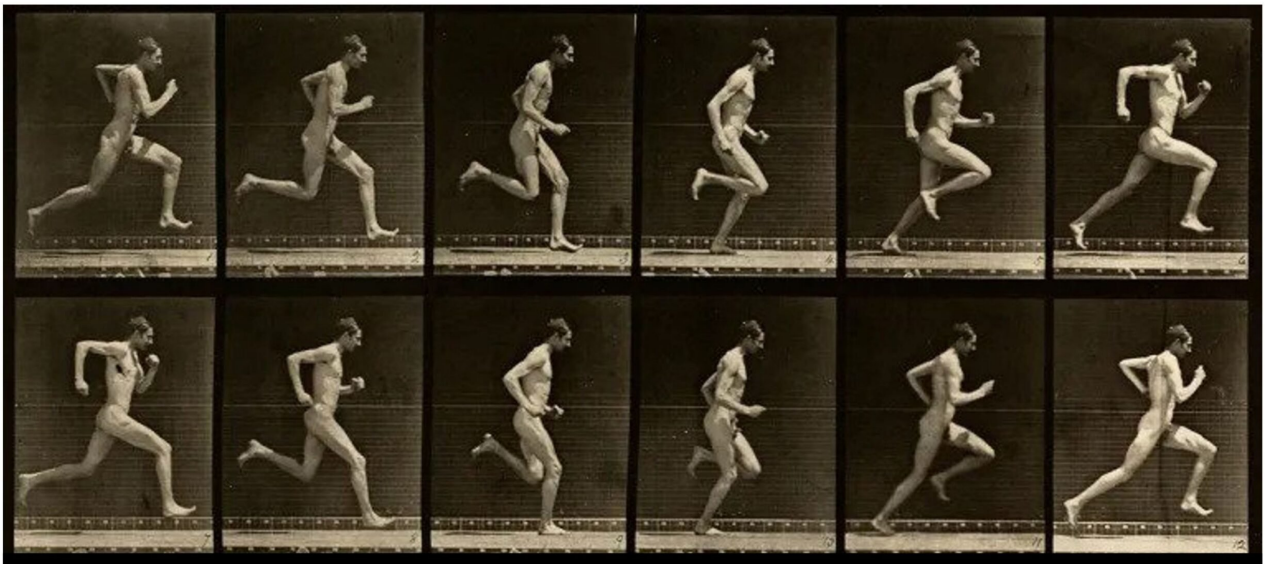
The conclusion that Zeno wishes us to draw is that plurality is a delusion and that spaces and times are really indivisible.

However, Russell goes on to propose that space and time may be infinitely divisible if we properly understand infinity.

Zeno's Arrow

At any instant of time a flying arrow will occupy a space equal to its own size and therefore show no evidence of movement. Its flight is therefore a succession of rests. While it is moving, the arrow is always stationary.

Zeno had not observed an arrow at an instant of time: he could only imagine it. Modern high-speed photography can record moving objects at an instant of time. If the exposure time is very small, they appear unblurred, or completely stationary. The observer cannot tell that the object is moving from its instantaneous appearance. The first person to record motion using high-speed photography was Eadweard Muybridge (1840-1904). The following set of photographs of a running man were likely taken in the 1870s and printed in 1887.

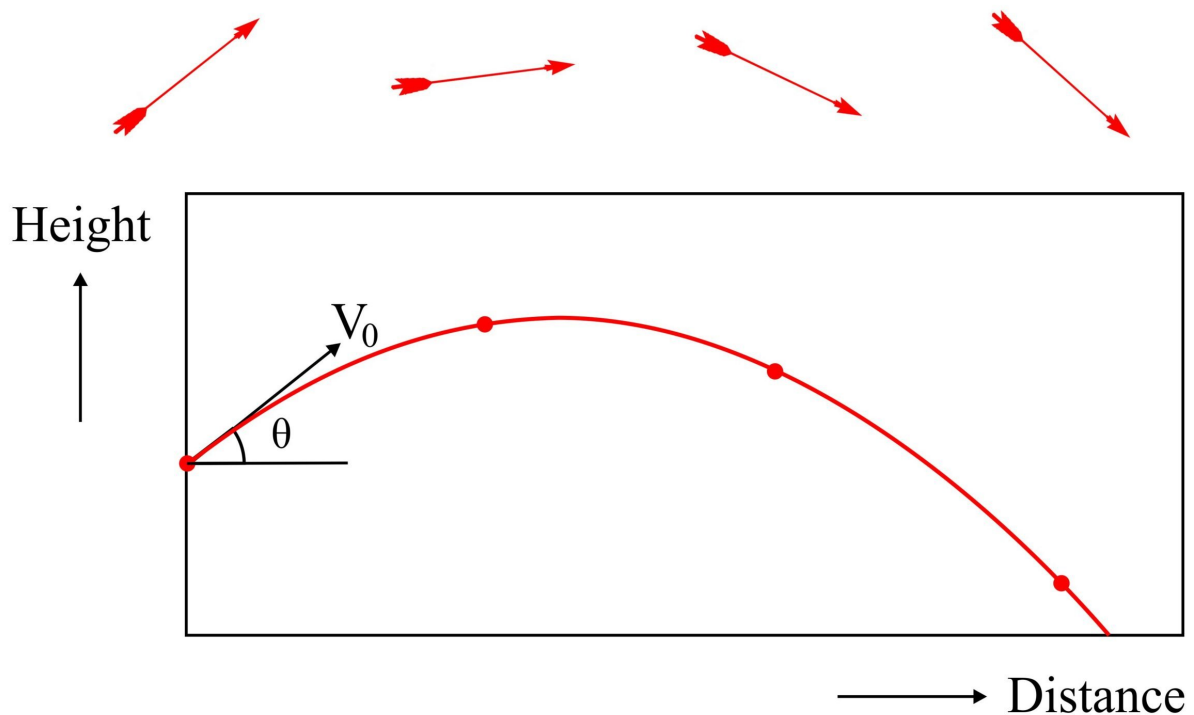


The development of the stroboscope which could present brief flashes of bright light allowed photographers such as Harold Edgerton (1903-1990), also known as "Papa Flash," to examine very rapidly moving objects. The following photograph from the 1950s shows a moving bullet "caught" at two instants by two stroboscopic flashes separated by only a brief time (probably of the order of 50 microseconds).



At first glance, modern science apparently confirms the conclusion Zeno's *Arrow Paradox*: at any instant of time a moving arrow, man or bullet is stationary. However, just because something looks stationary does not mean that it does not have velocity. The trajectory of the arrow can be

represented by two functions denoting its horizontal (x) and vertical (y) position:



The parabolic trajectory is determined by the initial velocity (V_0) of the arrow as it is released from the bow, the angle (θ) at which it is released, its initial height above the ground (y_0), and downward acceleration caused by gravity (g). The following diagram shows a sample trajectory, together with views of the arrow at four instants of time. Note that the formulae do not consider the (very small) effects of friction and treat the horizontal velocity of the arrow as constant. The horizontal axis can therefore also represent time.

$$x_t = x_0 + v_0 t \cos(\theta)$$

$$y_t = y_0 + v_0 t \sin(\theta) - \frac{1}{2}gt^2$$

The invention of the calculus by Newton and Leibniz allowed us to calculate the velocity of a moving object at any instant in time. If the distance travelled can be represented by a function (f), the velocity at any instant (t) can be

calculated by seeing how far the object travels in a tiny period of time (Δt)

$$\lim_{\Delta t \rightarrow 0} \frac{f(t + \Delta t) - f(t)}{\Delta t}$$

The limit as Δt approaches zero – the derivative of the function – is the object's instantaneous velocity. At any instant of time the object shows no evidence of movement, but it still has velocity. Though it appears stationary, it still moves.

The calculus allows us to calculate the velocity of the arrow at any instant (Reeder 2015). However, Zeno's paradox calls into question the idea of discrete instants in time. Motion is continuous; it is not a succession of stationary positions. William James (1910, p. 157):

Zeno's arguments were meant to show, not that motion could not really take place, but that it could not truly be conceived as taking place by the successive occupancy of points. If a flying arrow occupies at each point of time a determinate point of space, its motion becomes nothing but a sum of rests, for it exists not, out of any point; and in the point it doesn't move. Motion cannot truly occur as thus discretely constituted.

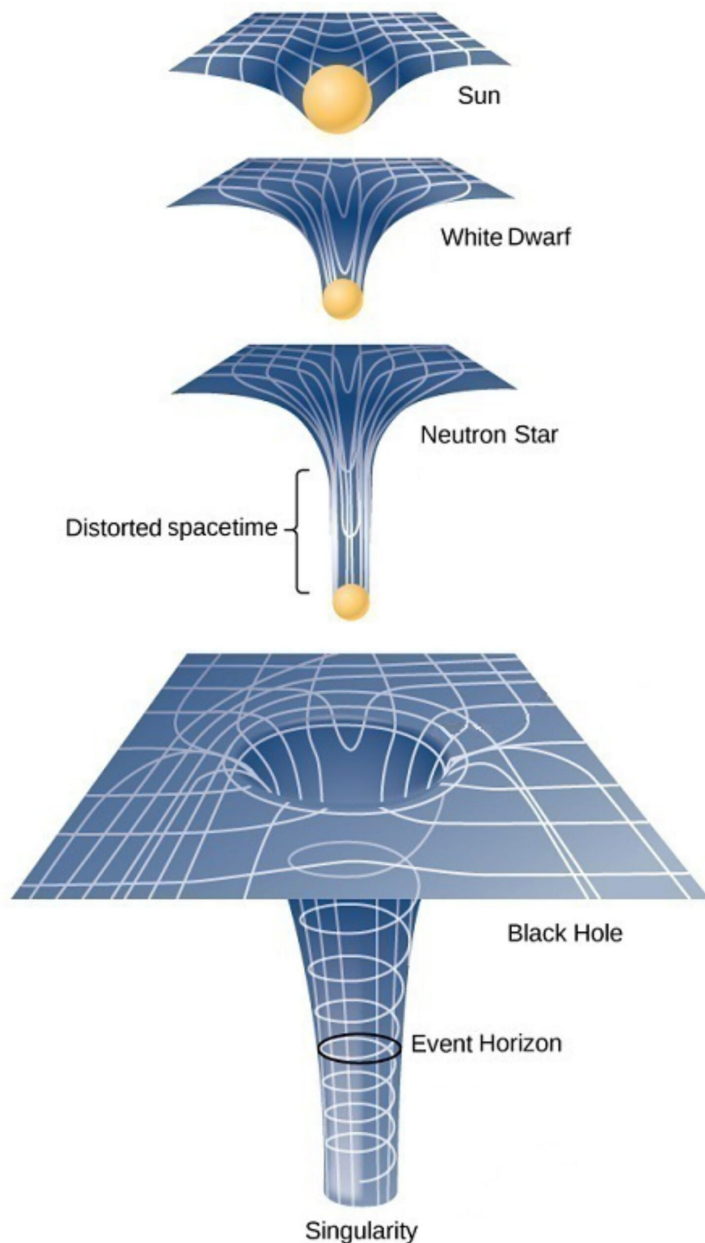
Time and Space

Zeno's paradoxes have been discussed extensively (Dowden, 2013; Grünbaum, 1967; Huggett, 2018; McLaughlin, 1994; Sainsbury, 2009; Salmon, 1970; Strobach, 2013). Most writers suggest that modern mathematics can handle the paradoxes: infinite series may sum to a finite amount and instantaneous velocities can be assessed with the infinitesimal calculus.

However, the nature of time and space remain imperfectly understood. A particular problem involves what might be

considered the smoothness of these dimensions. Achilles does not run through an infinite set of decreasing distances to catch up with the Tortoise. Rather he runs smoothly and quickly passes the Tortoise. The arrow does not move from one stationary position to the next as if it were in a movie flickering at a slow frame-rate. The arrow moves smoothly from the bow to the target.

Modern conceptions of space and time propose that they are not absolute (e.g., Rovelli, 2018; Markosian et al., 2018). The fabric of space and time can be altered by gravity. A large mass like our sun will distort the adjacent space. Light travelling near such a mass will be deflected by the resultant curvature. A large mass also alters time, which passes more rapidly the closer one is to the mass. It is difficult to understand how such elastic dimensions can be represented by discrete points. The effects of gravity are illustrated in the following diagram, where the four-dimensional fabric of space is shown as a 2-dimensional mesh:



Time's Arrow

Although we often consider our universe as existing in four dimensions, the dimension of time is distinct from the three spatial dimensions. Though we can move back and forth in space, we can only move forward in time.

Studies of statistical mechanics demonstrated that the state of a system can be described by the organization of its components. With the passage of time, this state can only change towards increasing disorder. In the formulation of Rudolf Clausius (1822-1888) of this disorder was called "entropy" (Greek *en*, in + *trope*, change). Ludwig Boltzmann

(1844-1906) considered entropy in terms of statistical mechanics. He described entropy (S) in terms of the number (Ω) of possible microstates (organizations of its molecular components) that could result in a system's macrostate (temperature, pressure, volume, density, etc.). His formulation of entropy, and of the second law of thermodynamics (with the passage of time entropy can only increase) are:

$$S = k_B \ln \Omega$$

$$\Delta S \geq 0$$

where \ln is the natural logarithm and k_B is Boltzmann's constant.

The concept of entropy led Arthur Eddington to propose the idea of "Time's Arrow:"

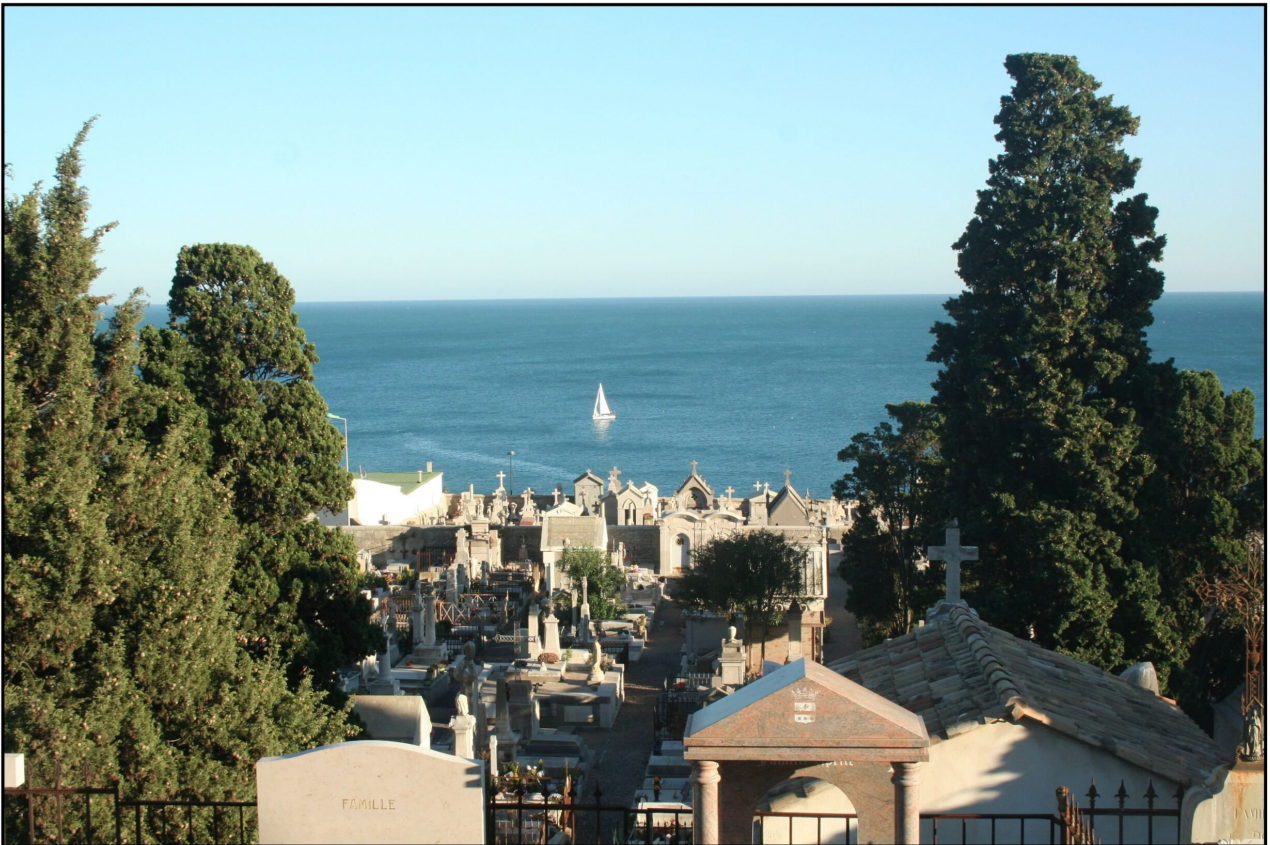
Let us draw an arrow arbitrarily. If as we follow the arrow we find more and more of the random element in the state of the world, then the arrow is pointing towards the future; if the random element decreases the arrow points towards the past. That is the only distinction known to physics. This follows at once if our fundamental contention is admitted that the introduction of randomness is the only thing which cannot be undone. I shall use the phrase "time's arrow" to express this one-way property of time which has no analogue in space. (Eddington, 1927, p 67.)

Unlike Zeno's Arrow which is concerned with the nature of motion in time, Eddington's arrow is concerned with the nature of time itself.

The Graveyard by the Sea

In 1922, Paul Valéry wrote a long poem *Le Cimetière Marin* about time and mortality. Its setting is a cemetery

overlooking the Mediterranean Sea at Sète in Southern France:



At the poem's climax, Valéry calls on Zeno.:

Zénon! Cruel Zénon! Zénon d'Élée!
M'as-tu percé de cette flèche ailée
Qui vibre, vole, et qui ne vole pas!
Le son m'enfante et la flèche me tue!
Ah! le soleil . . . Quelle ombre de tortue
Pour l'âme, Achille immobile à grands pas!

;Zeno, Zeno, cruel philosopher Zeno,
Have you then pierced me with your feathered arrow
That hums and flies, yet does not fly! The sounding
Shaft gives me life, the arrow kills. Oh, sun! –
Oh, what a tortoise-shadow to outrun
My soul, Achilles' giant stride left standing!
(translation by C. Day-Lewis, 1950)

Zeno, Zeno, the cruel, Elean Zeno!
You've truly fixed me with that feathered arrow

Which quivers as it flies and never moves!
The sound begets me and the arrow kills!
Ah, sun! . . . What a tortoise shadow for the soul,
Achilles motionless in his giant stride!
(translation of David Paul, 1971)

(I have included two translations, one by Day-Lewis which maintains the rhyme scheme and a more literal version by Paul.)

Valéry's imagery is complex, it melds Time's Arrow with Zeno's paradoxes of the Arrow and of Achilles and the Tortoise. Time will proceed to death and disorder before we can ever attain eternity.

Valéry does not leave us stumbling unsuccessfully after the Tortoise. His poem ends with an invocation to live completely in the life we have no matter that it leads to death.

Le vent se lève! . . . Il faut tenter de vivre!
L'air immense ouvre et referme mon livre,
La vague en poudre ose jaillir des rocs!
Envolez-vous, pages tout éblouies!
Rompez, vagues! Rompez d'eaux réjouies
Ce toit tranquille où picoraient des focs!

The wind is rising! . . . We must try to live!
The huge air opens and shuts my book: the wave
Dares to explode out of the rocks in reeking
Spray. Fly away, my sun-bewildered pages!
Break, waves! Break up with your rejoicing surges
This quiet roof where sails like doves were
pecking.
(Day-Lewis)

The wind is rising! . . . We must try to live!
The immense air opens and shuts my book,

A wave dares burst in powder over the rocks.
Pages, whirl away in a dazzling riot!
And break, waves, rejoicing, break that quiet
Roof where foraging sails dipped their beaks!
(Paul)

The last line of the poem alludes to its opening where Valéry likened the boats sailing on the sea to doves moving on an immense roof. That quiet roof – the sea – represents the eternity that we live not long enough to understand.

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Gauguin

Gauguin

In 1891, Paul Gauguin (1848-1903) left his wife and five children and sailed for Tahiti, where he hoped

to immerse myself in virgin nature, to see no one but savages, live their life, with no other thought in mind but to render, the way a child would, the concepts formed in my brain and to do this with the aid of nothing but the primitive means of art, the only means that are good and true (letter quoted in Eisenman, 1997, p 77).

His decision to desert his family and follow his art has been considered by philosophers as a case study in ethics. Was his hope of artistic success adequate justification for his behavior? As luck would have it, Gauguin did become a famous artist, albeit posthumously. Can this retrospectively vindicate his flight to Tahiti? These issues are complex – both in the abstract and in terms of Gauguin's actual life.

Life Before Art

Gauguin was born in France but spent much of his childhood in Peru, where his mother's family had aristocratic connections. His grandmother Flora Tristan (1803-1844), a feminist and socialist, was the niece of Juan Pío Camilo de Tristán y Moscoso, who briefly served as president of South Peru.

Gauguin returned to France to finish his schooling and then spent three years as a merchant sailor and two years in the French Navy, during which time he travelled throughout the world. When he returned to France in 1871, Gauguin was taken in by a rich relative, Gustave Arosa, an avid collector of realist and impressionist paintings. Arosa got Gauguin a job on the stock exchange, and introduced him to Camille Pissarro.

Gauguin became a very successful broker, and took up painting as a hobby. He married a young Danish woman Mette-Sophie Gad (1850–1920), and had five children. Having made a fortune on the stock market, Gauguin became an art collector himself, buying paintings by Pissarro, Cézanne, Manet, Degas, and Sisley (Bretell & Fonsmark, 2005, p 56)

Impressionism

Gauguin had talent and he quickly learned the new Impressionist style. His paintings were included in the Impressionist Exhibitions beginning with the fifth in 1880. Below is one of his paintings from this time – *Vaugirard Market Gardens*, 1879 – together with a self-portrait from 1885.



The Stock Market Crash

In 1882 the Union Générale bank collapsed and the Paris Bourse crashed. By 1883 Gauguin was out of work. The family moved to Rouen where life was less expensive than in Paris. Gauguin decided to paint full time. However, he was not able to sell his paintings. Mette moved back to Denmark with most of the family in 1884, and Gauguin reluctantly followed in 1885. For a brief time, he was a salesman for French tarpaulins in Copenhagen, but he did not speak Danish and the endeavor came to nought. Mette supported the family by giving French lessons. Gauguin's paintings found no market among the Danes. He became depressed, and sometimes was sometimes physically violent with his wife (Mathews, 2001, p 62). Mette's family insisted that he leave.

In 1885 Gauguin returned alone to Paris. He submitted nineteen paintings to the Eighth and Final Exhibition of the Impressionist in 1886, but these were not well received by

either critics or buyers. Gauguin fled Paris for Pont-Aven in Brittany, an artists' colony where living was cheap. There he worked with Emile Bernard and Louis Anquetin.

Vision after the Sermon (1888)

Gauguin was fascinated by the deep religiosity of the Breton peasants. He developed a new style of painting to portray their lives. He began using clearly outlined blocks of flat color in the manner of the Japanese prints that had become popular in Paris. He further decided that colors should be based as much upon the imagination as upon reality. This emphasis on the creative imagination derived from the Symbolist movement in literature. Gauguin named his new style of painting "Synthetism." This approach was also called "Cloisonnism" after the technique for decorating metalwork, whereby colored enamels are placed within spaces bordered by metal strips. A masterpiece of this approach was Gauguin's *The Vision after the Sermon*, which portrays Breton peasants experiencing a vision of Jacob wrestling with the angel after a sermon on this episode from Genesis 22: 22-32 (Herban, 1977):



The figure at the lower right is Gauguin. The young peasant at the lower left is likely a portrait of Bernard's sister Madeleine, with whom Gauguin was infatuated. The following is a description of the painting from Vargas Llosa's novel *The Way to Paradise*. Vargas Llosa used the second person narrative as though someone is talking to Gauguin (or Gauguin is talking to himself). "Koké" was the name that the Tahitians called him – their best approximation of his name:

The true miracle of the painting wasn't the apparition of biblical characters in real life, Paul, or in the minds of those humble peasants. It was the insolent colors, daringly antinaturalist: the vermillion of the earth, the bottle green of Jacob's clothing, the ultramarine blue of the angel, the Prussian black of the women's garments and the pink-, green- and blue-tinted white of the great row of caps

and collars interposed between the spectator, the apple tree, and the grappling pair. What was miraculous was the weightlessness reigning at the center of the painting, the space in which the tree, the cow, and the fervent women seemed to levitate under the spell of their faith. The miracle was that you had managed to vanquish prosaic realism by creating a new reality on the canvas, where the objective and the subjective, the real and the supernatural, were mingled, indivisible. Well done, Paul! Your first masterpiece, Koké! (Vargas Llosa, 2003, pp 217-218)

Gauguin also created a striking version of the crucifixion based on his time in Pont-Aven – *The Yellow Christ* (1889):



The Studio of the South

Back in Paris, Gauguin met the dealer Theo van Gogh and through him his brother Vincent. The two artists exchanged self-portraits. Van Gogh's saw himself as an austere Japanese monk; Gauguin's portrait is off-center against a floral wallpaper background includes a portrait of Emile Bernard:



Vincent invited Gauguin to stay with him in Arles in Provence. For nine weeks in late 1888 the two artists lived and worked together (Silverman, 2000; Druick et al, 2001). Although their relations were initially amicable, they disagreed on many things and the tension between them increased. If we are to believe what Gauguin later recalled in his journals (Gauguin, 2009, pp 12-14), one evening van Gogh threatened Gauguin with a razor and Gauguin decamped to stay the night in a hotel. Van Gogh then proceeded to cut off his right ear with the razor and presented the ear to one of the prostitutes in Arles. Gauguin fled to Paris and van Gogh was confined to an asylum.

Manao Tupapau

Van Gogh and Gauguin had discussed the book *Rarahu* by Pierre Loti (1880), which described the author's marriage to a Tahitian girl, and the two artists considered the possibility of painting in the islands of the Pacific. Van Gogh committed suicide in 1890. Gauguin sailed to Tahiti in 1891.

In Tahiti Gauguin took a Tahitian girl aged thirteen, Tehemana (Tehura), as his mistress. One night when returning home late to his hut, he found her lying frightened on the bed:

Quickly, I struck a match, and I saw. . . . Tehura, immobile, naked, lying face downward flat on the bed with the eyes inordinately large with fear. She looked at me, and seemed not to recognize me. As for myself I stood for some moments strangely uncertain. A contagion emanated from the terror of Tehura. I had the illusion that a phosphorescent light was streaming from her staring eyes. Never had I seen her so beautiful, so tremulously beautiful. And then in this half-light which was surely peopled for her with dangerous apparitions and terrifying suggestions, I was afraid to make any movement which might increase the child's paroxysm of fright. How could I know what at that moment I might seem to her? Might she not with my frightened face take me for one of the demons and specters, one of the Tupapaus, with which the legends of her race people sleepless nights? Did I really know who in truth she was herself? The intensity of fright which had dominated her as the result of the physical and moral power of her superstitions had transformed her into a strange being, entirely different from anything I had known heretofore. (Gauguin, 1919/85, pp 33-34)

In Tahitian legends the Tupapaus were malignant demons. Over the next few days Gauguin painted the scene that he had witnessed, calling it *Manao Tupapau*, "Spirit of the Dead Watching" (1892):



Vargas Llosa imagines his thoughts about the painting:

Yes, this was truly the painting of a savage. He regarded it with satisfaction when it seemed to him that it was finished. In him, as in the savage mind, the everyday and the fantastic were united in a single reality, somber, forbidding, infused with religiosity and desire, life and death. The lower half of the painting was objective, realist; the upper half subjective and unreal but no less authentic. The naked girl would be obscene without the fear in her eyes and the incipient downturn of her mouth. But fear didn't diminish her beauty. It augmented it, tightening her buttocks in such an insinuating way, making them an altar of human flesh on which to celebrate a barbaric ceremony, in homage to a cruel and pagan god. And in the upper part of the canvas was the ghost, which was really

more yours than Tahitian, Koké. It bore no resemblance to those demons with claws and dragon teeth that Moerenhout described. It was an old woman in a hooded cloak, like the crones of Brittany forever fixed in your memory, time-less women who, when you lived in Pont-Aven or Le Pouldu, you would meet on the streets of Finistère. They seemed half dead already, ghosts in life. If a statistical analysis were deemed necessary, the items belonging to the objective world were these: the mattress, jet-black like the girl's hair; the yellow flowers; the greenish sheets of pounded bark; the pale green cushion; and the pink cushion, whose tint seemed to have been transferred to the girl's upper lip. This order of reality was counterbalanced by the painting's upper half: there the floating flowers were sparks, gleams, featherlight phosphorescent meteors aloft in a bluish mauve sky in which the colored brushstrokes suggested a cascade of pointed leaves. The ghost, in profile and very quiet, leaned against a cylindrical post, a totem of delicately colored abstract forms, reddish and glassy blue in tone. This upper half was a mutable, shifting, elusive substance, seeming as if it might evaporate at any minute. From up close, the ghost had a straight nose, swollen lips, and the large fixed eye of a parrot. You had managed to give the whole a flawless harmony, Koké. Funereal music emanated from it, and light shone from the greenish-yellow of the sheet and the orange-tinted yellow of the flowers. (Vargas Llosa, 2003, pp 22-23)

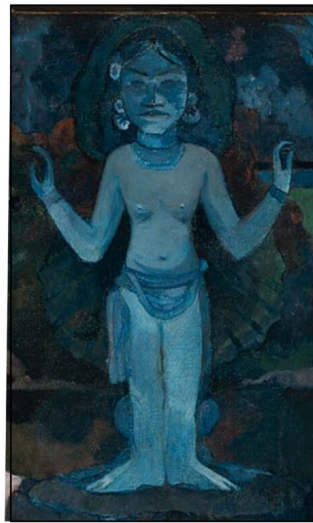
The painting is one of the most discussed of Gauguin's Tahitian pictures. The commentary is ambivalent:

All this is to put the painting in the best possible light. But there is surely more to it than just a charming anecdote based on local folklore. In blunt terms what we actually see is the interior of a hut at night, with a large couch, covered in a boldly flowered cloth, partially overlaid by a plain white sheet on which lies a naked girl, face down, another of the child-like, yet distinctly erotic figures who

have appeared before in Gauguin's work – pert buttocks offered invitingly to the spectator. There is even something disturbing about the way the face is half-turned towards the viewer, or rather towards the artist, Gauguin, as if he and not the figure in the background is the spirit of which she is afraid. (Sweetman, 1995, pp 326-327).

Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?

In 1893 Gauguin returned to Paris and arranged to sell some of his Tahitian paintings. He was not happy in Paris and in 1895 he returned to Tahiti. Over the next few years, Gauguin became severely depressed. He had suffered a broken ankle in a brawl in Concarneau near Pont Aven and the fracture had never really healed. He drank excessively – partly to relieve the pain and partly to improve his mood. He had sores on his legs, perhaps related to syphilis or perhaps related to the malnutrition that accompanies alcoholism. In 1897 he attempted to commit suicide with arsenic but failed. After this he worked on his last great painting, *D'où venons-nous? Que sommes-nous? Où allons-nous?* (1898):



Gauguin described his work in a letter to Daniel de Monfried:

The canvas is 4.50 meters long and 1.70 meters high. The two upper corners are chrome yellow, with the inscription on the

left and my signature on the right, as if it were a fresco, painted on a gold-colored wall whose corners had worn away. In the bottom right, a sleeping baby, then three seated women. Two figures dressed in purple confide their thoughts to one another; another figure, seated, and deliberately outsized despite the perspective, raises one arm in the air and looks with astonishment at these two people who dare to think of their destiny. A figure in the middle picks fruit. Two cats near a child. A white she-goat. The idol, both its arms mysteriously and rhythmically uplifted, seems to point to the next world. The seated figure leaning on her right hand seems to be listening to the idol; and finally an old woman close to death seems to accept, to be resigned [to her fate]; . . . at her feet, a strange white bird holding a lizard in its claw represents the futility of vain words. All this takes place by the edge of a stream in the woods. In the background, the sea, then the mountains of the neighboring island. Although there are different shades of color, the landscape constantly has a blue and Veronese green hue from one end to the other. All of the nude figures stand out from it in a bold orangey tone. If the Beaux-Arts pupils competing for the Prix de Rome were told: "The painting you have to do will be on the theme, 'Where do we come from? What are we? Where are we going?' " what would they do? I have finished a philosophical treatise comparing that theme with the Gospel. I think it is good. (Gauguin, 1990, p. 160; original letter is illustrated in Shackelford & Frèches-Thory, 2004, p 168)

The philosophical treatise he mentioned was likely *The Catholic Church and Modern Times* (Gauguin, 1990, pp 161-173), in which Gauguin decries the hypocrisy of the modern church and urges his readers to return to a more natural theology. His painting is a testament to these ideas.

In a letter to Charles Morrice (Goddard, 2029, p 48) Gauguin describes his painting as proceeding from right to left, with

the answer to "Where do we come from?" on the right, the answer to "What are we?" in the center and the answer to "Where are we going?" on the left. Nevertheless, the painting has no simple interpretation (Shackelford & Frèches-Thory, 2004, pp 167-201). The man plucking fruit from a tree in the center perhaps refers to Adam in a modern version of Eden. The two women in purple may refer to the church and its interpretation of our origins. The idol on the left is the Tahitian Goddess Hina (Gauguin, 1953, pp 11-13). Hina represented the sky, moon, air, and spirit. From the union between Hina and Tefatou, God of matter and earth, came forth man. Hina wished that man might be reborn after death much like the moon returns each month. Tefatou insisted that, although that matter lasts forever, man must die.

The painting stands at the cusp between earlier paintings like that of the neo-classical *Between Art and Nature* (1895) of Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, which Gauguin has seen on his visit back to Paris, and the Fauvist *La Bonheur de Vivre* (1905) of Henri Matisse. Both paintings are smaller than Gauguin's masterpiece.



La Maison de Jouvir

Gauguin decided that Tahiti was too tainted with Western civilization and decided in 1901 to move to the Marquesa Islands, about 1500 km northeast of Tahiti. There he again took a young Polynesian girl for his mistress and built himself a home that he called *La Maison de Jouvir*. This is

usually translated as the “House of Pleasure” but more precisely means the “House of Orgasm.” He continued to paint and to write, and he created many striking woodcuts and drawings. One of his paintings from 1902 was the *Riders on the Beach*. The pink color of the beach is in the imagination of the artist and nowhere near reality.



In these last years, Gauguin was wracked by pain and became more and more depressed. His last *Self Portrait* (1903) from just before his death shows the ravages of alcohol and morphine. It is presented below together with two earlier portraits, one from 1889 alluding to his time in Pont-Aven, and one from 1893 referring to his first visit to Tahiti:



Acclaim

Gauguin was never recognized in his lifetime as a painter of significance. His death in 1903 warranted only a few lines in the Paris newspapers. It was not until 1906 that his friends arranged a retrospective exhibition at the Salon d'Automne in Paris. His fame has grown since then. Art historians now consider Cézanne, van Gogh and Gauguin as the “guiding lights” (Hook, 2021, p. 21) of the modernist revolution in art that occurred in the first decades of the 20th Century. This assessment is borne out by the high prices that Gauguin’s paintings now command at auction.

Isabelle Cahn (in Shackelford & Frèches-Thory, 2004, pp 300-1) writes

He was the one who had dared take all the liberties, sparking the most advanced research, particularly in the domain of color . . . Gauguin had perceived the decline of the West and revolted against the dictatorship of Greco-Roman culture. In his wake, other artists had tried to surpass the traditional boundaries of thought and, seeking regeneration, had taken an interest in primitive arts, children’s drawings, folk art and outsider art. An interest in the unconscious had also opened new vistas. By giving shape to his internal world, Gauguin exposed the anxiety of

the modern soul and its questions about its fate, leading us to edge of our own enigma, but not weighing it down with explanations.

Bretell (1988, p 396) remarks about the effects of Gauguin's work on later painters:

Picasso was clearly devastated by the power and raw, crude strength of the printed drawings. Matisse was overcome by the color and the apparently casual draftsmanship of the late paintings. Indeed, if one can measure the strength of an artist by that of his most brilliant followers, Gauguin would be among the very greatest from the late nineteenth century.

Moral Luck

In 1976 Bernard Williams presented a paper on "Moral Luck," in which he dealt extensively with the

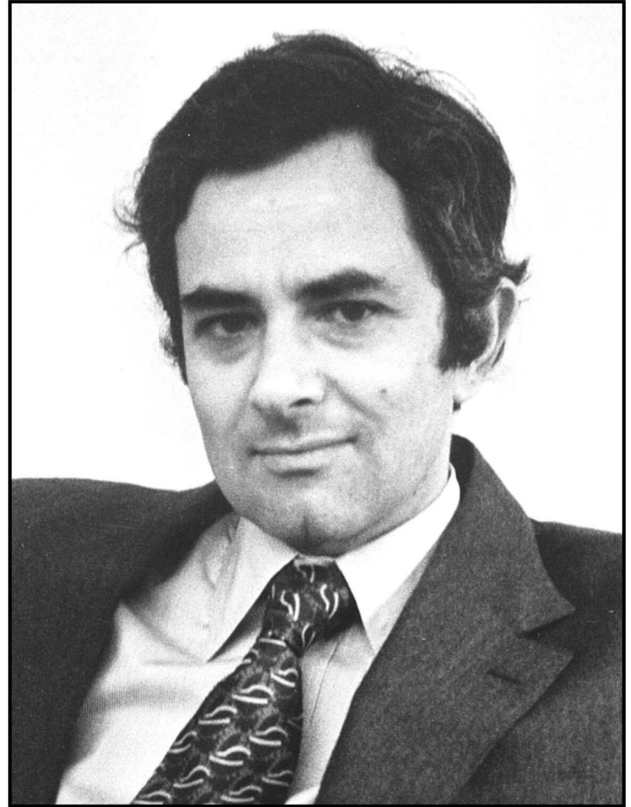
example of the creative artist who turns away from the definite and pressing human claims on him in order to live a life in which, as he supposes, he can pursue his art.

For simplicity he calls the artist Gauguin, but he considers the case abstractly without being limited by historical facts. The main issue is that when Gauguin decided to desert his family, the only justification for his action was his hope that he would fulfil his destiny (and become a great artist), and that his art would contribute significantly to human culture. The concept of moral luck is that we cannot predict the future with any certainty. Gauguin may have died in a shipwreck before he reached Tahiti. In this event, his actions would have no justification. As chance (or "luck") would have it, Gauguin did live to paint his greatest works in Tahiti, and did contribute significantly to the history of modern art. The problem is whether such an outcome can retrospectively justify the desertion of his family. Certainly not from the point of view of his family; probably not from the point of

view of those with little interest in modern art. A secondary issue is whether aesthetic values can be used as justification for behavior that is, in itself, unethical.

Thomas Nagel commented on Williams's ideas and discussed moral luck in a more general way. Both authors thereafter updated their papers (Nagel, 1979; Williams, 1981), and there has been much further discussion in the literature (e.g., Lang, 2019; Nelkin 2019). Nagel described moral luck as that which occurs between the intention to act and the outcome of the intended action. Though we might profess, like Kant, that moral guilt or acclaim depends upon the intension (or "will") rather than the outcome, in actuality, the outcome largely determines our sense of an action's moral worth. For example, a person who drives while impaired and winds up killing a pedestrian is considered much more blameworthy than one who was similarly impaired but, as luck would have it, did not kill anyone. Moral luck points to the issue that we do not completely control the outcomes of our actions.

The following illustrations shows Williams on the left and Nagel on the right.



The Crimes of a Colonist

At the time of Gauguin's sojourn, Tahiti and the Marquesas were French colonies. The administrators of the colonies exploited the native Polynesians; the church taught them that their own culture was worthless and that they must convert to Christianity; whatever was worthwhile in their life was appropriated and made part of European culture. It was impossible for Gauguin not to be part of this process – he was a European and French Polynesia was a colony. However, he did not act in the same way as most of the Europeans. He lived with the natives, and tried to understand their language and their ideas. He was aware of the problems:

Circumstances exposed him to the effects of recent colonization; he saw the depredation and the irrecoverable loss first-hand. He also spoke out about colonization – and thereby earned the animus of the colonial and church authorities who hounded him until the end of his life (Maleuvre, 2018).

Gauguin called the Polynesians “savages.” However, for him this was a term of praise rather than contempt. As quoted in the opening paragraph of this post, Gauguin aspired to become a savage.

Sex Tourist

Gauguin’s mistresses in Tahiti and in the Marquesas were young girls of 13 or 14 years. Although it was normal at that time for Polynesian girls of that age to have sexual relations with men, it is impossible not to deplore Gauguin’s taking advantage of them for his own sexual pleasure. Reading about these girls in his book *Noa Noa* (“Fragrance”) is terribly disconcerting:

Indeed, it is soon clear that he is not just the average Westerner exploring for the sake of broadening his understanding of the world—he is, more than anything, a sexual tourist. Even the title *Noa Noa*, which means “fragrance,” is used by Gauguin to indicate the aroma of a human body particularly in sexual situations. Although sexual liaisons similar to those described by Gauguin were regularly reported in other contemporary travel accounts, Gauguin makes them central to the story and, in doing so, transforms the normally pedestrian Tahitian sojourn into an erotic holiday. (Mathews, 2001, p 178).

Most historians believe that the sores on Gauguin’s legs and the heart problems that led to his death were caused by advanced syphilis. However, since the discovery of the causative agent (*Treponema pallidum*) and the definitive Wassermann test did not occur until after his death, we cannot be sure. A recent examination of Gauguin’s teeth did not show evidence that he had taken the mercurial compounds that normally were used to treat the disease at that time (Mueller & Turner, 2018). Nevertheless, the prevalence of syphilis then was high – about 10% in urban populations and likely much more in those who frequented prostitutes. If Gauguin did have

syphilis, he almost certainly gave the disease to his young mistresses.

The following is from a poem Guys like Gauguin (2009) by Selina Tusitala Marsh. Louis Antoine de Bougainville was a French naval captain who explored the Pacific Ocean in the late 18th century:

thanks Bougainville
for desiring 'em young
so guys like Gauguin could dream
and dream
then take his syphilitic body
downstream to the tropics
to test his artistic hypothesis
about how the uncivilised
ripen like pawpaw
are best slightly raw
delectably firm
dangling like golden prepubescent buds
seeding nymphomania
for guys like Gauguin

The Artist as Monster

Gauguin as a person was not easy to like. He was concerned only with his own presumed genius. He treated his family and his mistresses egregiously. Does this mean that we should not consider his paintings – that he should be, in our modern idiom, “cancelled” (e.g., Nayeri, 2019)? Many artists have done monstrous things (Dederer, 2003), and it is often difficult to consider their art independently of their immoral lives. We should not shy away from their sins. We should not call Gauguin’s Polynesian mistresses “young women” but clearly state that they were girls who were seduced by a sexual predator. Nevertheless, we must consider the art for its own sake. Gauguin’s paintings are powerful: they make us experience things differently.

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Robinson Jeffers

Robinson Jeffers (1887-1962) was an American poet who celebrated the beauty of California's coast. In 1914 he and his wife Una settled in Carmel. In 1919 Jeffers and his family moved into Tor House, a home that he and a stone-mason had built on Carmel Point using rocks from the shore. From 1920 to 1924 he built by himself the adjacent Hawk Tower. Jeffers became famous soon after the publication of *Tamar and Other Poems* in 1924. This book and those that followed included both long narratives and shorter lyrics. His epics were bloody and tragic; his verse was free and passionate. Underlying his poems was an austere philosophy of "inhumanism." This compared the transience of humanity to the persistence of the natural world, and proposed that we should detach ourselves from the passions of mankind and simply celebrate the beauty of the universe. Over the next decade, Jeffers published extensively and in 1932 his photograph graced the cover of *Time*. After World War II, his outrage at the death and destruction that occurred during the war and the severity of his inhumanist philosophy led to controversy and obscurity. In more recent years, the environmental movement has found inspiration in his love of the natural world and his anger about how humanity has despoiled it.

Early Life

John Robinson Jeffers was born in 1887 in Allegheny, Pennsylvania. His father was a Presbyterian minister and a Professor of Ancient Languages at the Western Theological Seminary. It was his father's second marriage, and his son's middle name, which he preferred, was in honor of the first wife, who had died five years earlier. Robinson Jeffers attended private schools in Pittsburgh, and then in Germany

and Switzerland. He was a bright student and by the time he was 16 he was fluent in Latin, Greek, French and German. In 1903, his father turned 65 years old and retired to live in Los Angeles.

After graduating from Occidental College in 1905, Jeffers was unsure of what he wanted to do.. He studied languages at the University of Southern California for a year, but then switched to Medicine. After 3 years, he decided that he did not wish to be a physician and began studies in Forestry at the University of Seattle. He found the curriculum too business-oriented and quit, returning to Los Angeles in 1910.

While at the University of Southern California in 1906, Jeffers met Una Call Kuster (1884-1950) who was also studying languages (Greenan, 1988). At the age of 18 years, she had married Edward Kuster, a rich lawyer and socialite, but wished to complete her education before having a family. Over the years Robinson and Una become fast friends and then passionate lovers. By 1910, their affair became widely known, and divorce proceedings were initiated. These events may have contributed to Jeffers's moving to Seattle to study forestry. The following illustration shows photographs from 1911 (adapted from Karman, 1913).



After the divorce was finalized in 1913, Robinson and Una were married. Their first two years together were marked by grief. A daughter was born in early 1914 but only lived a day. The couple then moved to Carmel, a small village just south of the Monterey peninsula, to be alone together. Then Robinson's father died in December, 1914.

In 1912, Jeffers had published at his own expense a book of poems – *Flagons and Apples*. Of the 500 copies printed, 480 were remaindered and sold to a second-hand bookstore. Now in Carmel, inspired by the Big Sur country just south of the

village, Jeffers put together a new book of poems – *The Californians* – that was published by Macmillan in 1916. This book contained poems of many forms and lengths, most using classical rhythms and rhyme-schemes.

Twin boys – Garth and Donnan – were born in 1916, and the Jeffers slowly settled into their life at Carmel. When the United States entered the war in 1917, Jeffers attempted to join the Aviation Section of the Signal Corps but his application was rejected because he was already 30 years old and responsible for a new family. Jeffers attempted to write a long poem about the war but it came to nothing. In 1920 he submitted some new poems to Macmillan, but *The Californians* had not sold well and the publisher rejected his submission (Zaller, 1991).

Tor House and Hawk Tower

In 1919 Jeffers purchased land out on Carmel Point, a raised area jutting out into the ocean just south of Carmel Beach. Here Jeffers helped a stonemason to build Tor House using the rocks and boulders on the point and the adjacent beach. The name comes from the Gaelic word for hill or rocky outcrop. After the house was finished, Jeffers built the adjacent Hawk Tower by himself over several years. The following photographs by Morley Baer show views of the house and tower (from the land and from the sea) as it was in 1964 (Jeffers, Baer & Karman, 2001). At that time everything was still open to the sea; now other houses encroach upon the site.



Working on the house and the tower freed up Jeffers's mind and released his creative impulses. Jeffers stopped using rhyme, and decided to write with natural rhythms in the style of Walt Whitman. Line length became a structuring device for his new poems, which often used alternating long and short lines (Hymes, 1991). The long lines have a grandeur but make the poems difficult to print upon either page or screen. In the books he was to publish in this style, the longer lines are broken in two. For this posting some of the poems will be printed in a smaller font than the rest of the text. These new characteristics are present in his poem about *Tor House* (published in 1928):

If you should look for this place after a handful of lifetimes:

Perhaps of my planted forest a few

May stand yet, dark-leaved Australians or the coast cypress,
haggard

With storm-drift; but fire and the axe are devils.

Look for foundations of sea-worn granite, my fingers had the art

To make stone love stone, you will find some remnant.

But if you should look in your idleness after ten thousand years:

It is the granite knoll on the granite

And lava tongue in the midst of the bay, by the mouth of the
Carmel
River-valley, these four will remain
In the change of names. You will know it by the wild sea-
fragrance of wind
Though the ocean may have climbed or retired a little;
You will know it by the valley inland that our sun and our
moon were born from
Before the poles changed; and Orion in December
Evenings was strung in the throat of the valley like a lamp-
lighted bridge.
Come in the morning you will see white gulls
Weaving a dance over blue water, the wane of the moon
Their dance-companion, a ghost walking
By daylight, but wider and whiter than any bird in the
world.
My ghost you needn't look for; it is probably
Here, but a dark one, deep in the granite, not dancing on
wind
With the mad wings and the day moon. (CP I, 408)

(The references for this and for subsequent poems in this posting are to Jeffers's *Collected Poems* edited by Tim Hunt).

Tamar

Jeffers's first collection of poems after moving to Tor House – *Tamar and Other Poems* (1924), published at his own expense – was written in his new free verse. The epic poem *Tamar* tells the tragedy of a family living at Point Lobos just south of Carmel. The tale has biblical echoes in the stories of Tamar who seduced her father-in-law Judah (*Genesis* 38), and of her namesake Tamar, the daughter of King David, who was raped by her step-brother Amnon (2 *Samuel* 13). The following is a summary of Jeffers's poem (from Karman, 2015, pp 55-56);

Tamar ... tells the story of the doomed Cauldwells who live in an isolated home on Point Lobos, south of Carmel. The head

of the house is David Cauldwell, an old, broken-down man who frequently quotes the Bible. Two children, a son named Lee and a daughter Tamar, live with him, along with his demented sister Jinny, and Stella Moreland, the sister of his dead wife Lily. The action of the story, set around the time of America's entry into World War I, concerns Tamar's incestuous relationship with her brother, an ensuing pregnancy, and her seduction of an unloved suitor to snare a respectable father for the child. Through her Aunt Stella, a medium for the dead, Tamar learns that her father had an incestuous relationship with his sister Helen, which makes her behavior seem more like the simple repetition of a family pattern instead of the singular act of a bounds-breaking free spirit. In the process of coming to terms with this knowledge, Tamar dances naked in a trance-induced frenzy on the seashore, where she is violated by the ghosts of Indians who once lived on Point Lobos, and where she speaks with the ghost of her Aunt Helen, her father's sister-lover. As Tamar's mind sickens, she thinks of ways to destroy her family, especially after learning that her brother, seeking adventure, plans to enlist and leave home. The end comes in a wild conflagration. On the eve of her brother's departure, with her benighted suitor at hand, Tamar orchestrates an explosion of jealous rage. As her brother pulls a knife and stabs her suitor, Tamar's Aunt Jinny sets the house on fire. Floors break, walls fall, and everyone perishes in the flames.

Jeffers tells his convoluted story of incest and murder in an epic style, and intersperses the events with quieter descriptions of the California Coast. This combination of the lurid and the lyrical makes for uneasy reading. Not a poem for the faint of heart, it was the first of many long narratives that Jeffers was to write over the next decades.

The book also contains many short poems describing the beauty of the California Coast, such as *Divinely Superfluous Beauty*:

The storm-dances of gulls, the barking game of seals,
Over and under the ocean...
Divinely superfluous beauty
Rules the games, presides over destinies, makes trees grow
And hills tower, waves fall.
The incredible beauty of joy
Stars with fire the joining of lips, O let our loves too
Be joined, there is not a maiden
Burns and thirsts for love
More than my blood for you, by the shore of seals while the
wings
Weave like a web in the air
Divinely superfluous beauty.(CP I, 4)

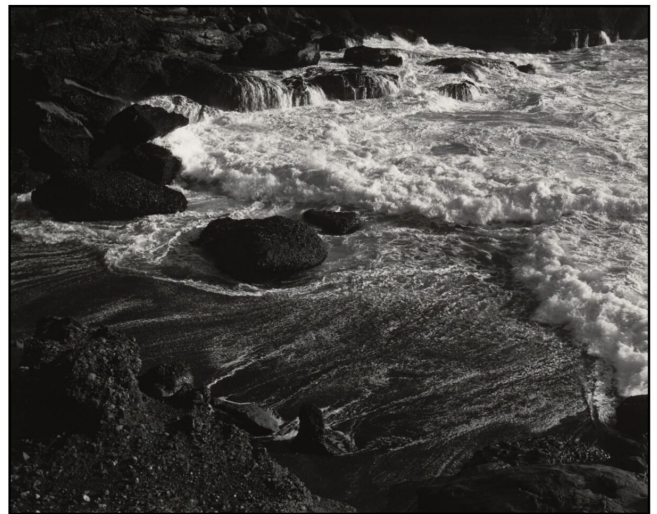
Jeffers also began to consider the transience of humanity in a universe that lasts for ever in such poems as *To the Stone-Cutters* (recorded by Jeffers in 1941):

Stone-cutters fighting time with marble, you foredefeated
Challengers of oblivion
Eat cynical earnings, knowing rock splits, records fall
down,
The square-limbed Roman letters
Scale in the thaws, wear in the rain. The poet as well
Builds his monument mockingly;
For man will be blotted out, the blithe earth die, the brave
sun
Die blind and blacken to the heart:
Yet stones have stood for a thousand years, and pained
thoughts found
The honey of peace in old poems. (CP I, 5)

<https://creatureandcreator.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/To-The-Stone-Cutters-by-Robinson-Jeffers.mp3>

Big Sur

The California coast south of Carmel and north of San Simeon is known as the Big Sur – a name deriving from the Spanish *el sur grande* (the big south), which is how the Spanish settlers on the Monterey Peninsula referred to the region. Here the Santa Lucia mountains rise directly from the sea. Edward Weston (1886-1958) took many striking photographs of this coastline, and in 1938 moved his studio to Carmel. Below are Weston's photographs from 1929 and 1938.



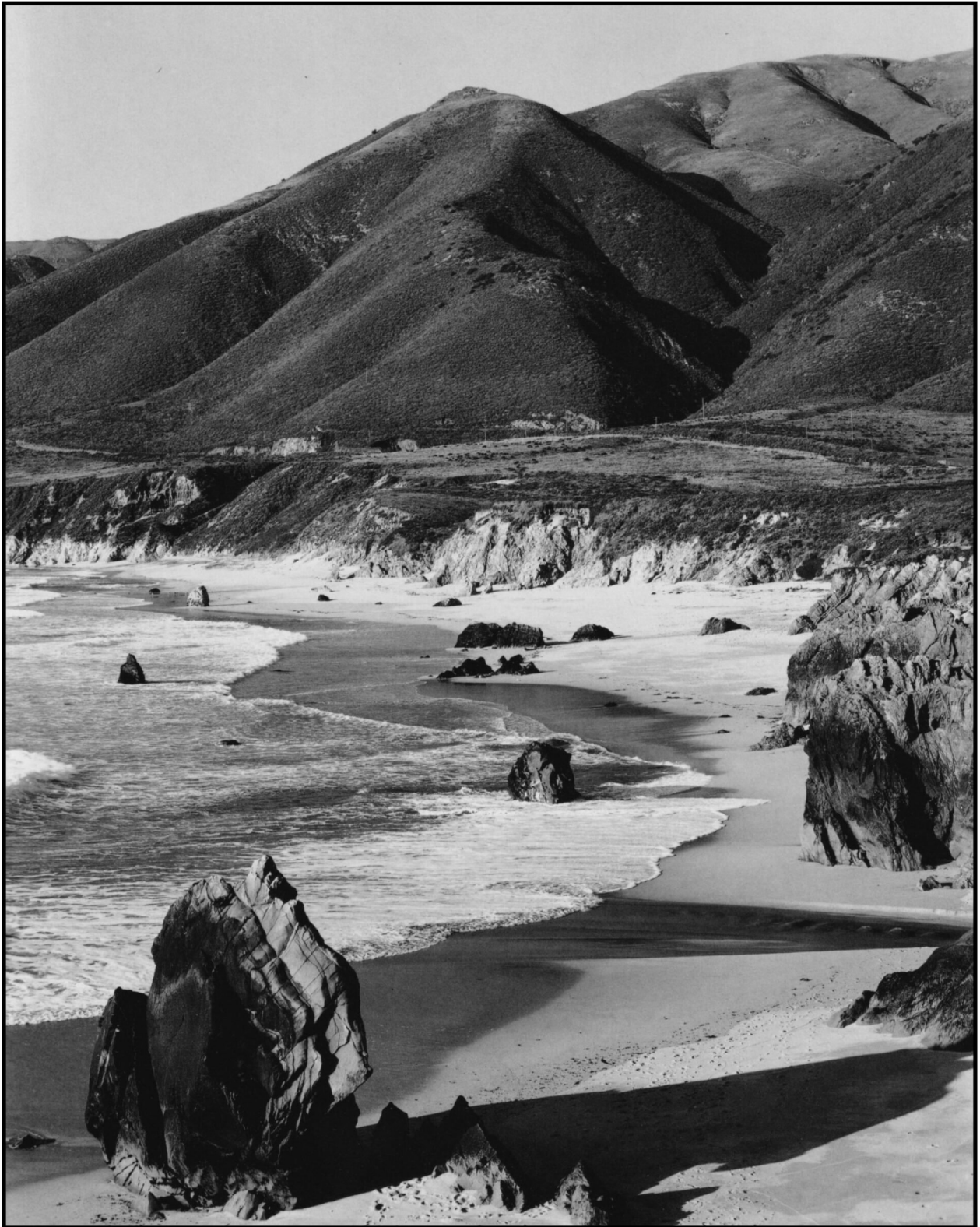
The poetry of Robinson Jeffers celebrated the beauty of Big Sur. The following is a poem about Garapata Beach where Soberanes (or Sovranes) Creek empties into the Pacific – *The Place for No Story* (1932). When introducing the poem in a reading in 1941 Jeffers remarked about the title:

These eleven lines are called “The Place for No Story,” because the coast here, its pure and simple grandeur, seemed to me too beautiful to be the scene of any narrative of mine. (Jeffers, 1956)

The coast hills at Sovranes Creek;
No trees, but dark scant pasture drawn thin
Over rock shaped like flame;
The old ocean at the land's foot, the vast
Gray extension beyond the long white violence;
A herd of cows and the bull

Far distant, hardly apparent up the dark slope;
And the gray air haunted with hawks:
This place is the noblest thing I have ever seen. No
imaginable
Human presence here could do anything
But dilute the lonely self-watchful passion. (CP II, 157)

The following it is a 1964 photograph of the beach by Morley Baer (Jeffers, Baer & Karman, 2001). Barely visible in the photograph are hawks, haunting the sky above the further slopes:



The poem is “an evocation of the sublime” (Zaller, 2012, p 171). Yet it differs from Wordsworth’s sublime. It is not the participation of the individual human consciousness in something universal:

...a sense sublime,
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and the mind of man;
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things.

(Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey, 1798)

For Jeffers, the sublime is totally independent of any human interaction. It is something to be wondered at but not participated in.

Fame

After *Tamar*, Jeffers became very successful, publishing a book every year or two. Like *Tamar*, these books contained both long narratives and short lyrics. His poetic style – the long lines and the free rhythms – did not change. The narrative poems continued to be full of sex and violence – like penny-dreadfuls updated to the 20th Century and translated into poetry. Jeffers, however, had tapped some current in the American soul.

The shorter poems continued to be more approachable. The following is *Hawk and Rock* (1935). Robert Hass (1987) was to use this as the title poem for a later collection of Jeffers's shorter lyrics.

Here is a symbol in which
Many high tragic thoughts
Watch their own eyes.

This gray rock, standing tall
On the headland, where the sea-wind
Lets no tree grow,

Earthquake-proved, and signaturred

By ages of storms: on its peak
A falcon has perched.

I think, here is your emblem
To hang in the future sky;
Not the cross, not the hive,

But this; bright power, dark peace;
Fierce consciousness joined with final
Disinterestedness;

Life with calm death; the falcon's
Realist eyes and act
Married to the massive

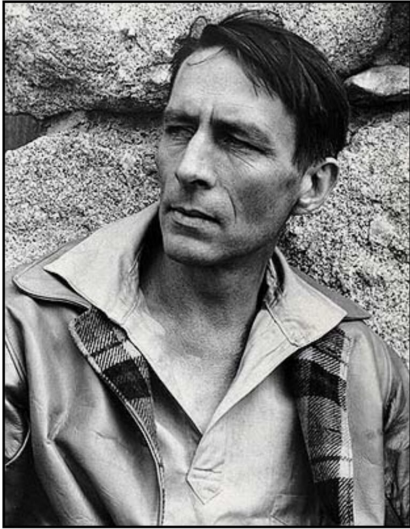
Mysticism of stone,
Which failure cannot cast down
Nor success make proud. (CP II, 416)

The poem proclaims Jeffers outlook on life – a combination of fierce consciousness and disinterestedness, bright power and dark peace. The following shows the final lines in Jeffers's handwriting (from an inscription in a book gifted to a friend).

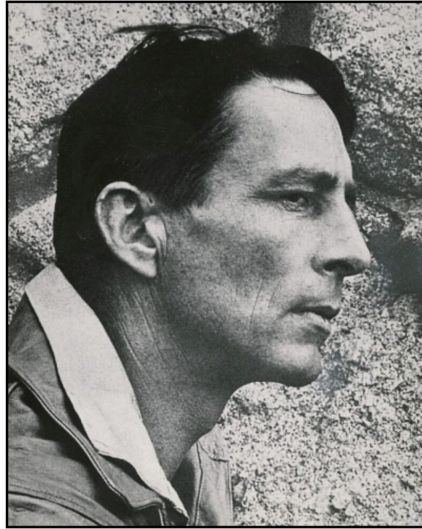
— The massive
Mysticism of stone,
Which failure cannot cast down,
Nor success make proud.

Jeffers's photograph made the cover of *Time* in 1932. (It was not until 1950 that the magazine awarded a cover portrait to either Robert Frost or T. S. Eliot.) In 1938, Random House

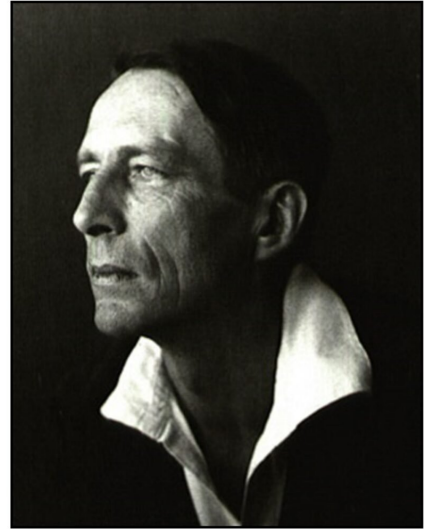
published *The Selected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers*, a volume of over 600 pages. The following are photographs of Jeffers taken by Edward Weston during the height of his fame – the middle image is from the cover of *Time*:



1929



1932



1933

Inhumanism

Jeffers had received a modern scientific education and understood the import of evolutionary theory and recent findings in astronomy upon our place in the world and in time. He realized that the human species might develop further, but would ultimately become extinct, the universe then continuing to exist without any further contribution from mankind. Nevertheless, he gloried in the heart-breaking beauty of the natural world. He described this “religious feeling” in his 1941 talk to the Library of Congress (Jeffers, 1956, pp 23-24):

It is the feeling ... I will say the certitude ... that the world, the universe is one being, a single organism, one great life that includes all life and all things; and is so beautiful that it must be love and revered; and in moments of mystical vision we identify ourselves with it.

But these moments are evanescent. The beauty of the world will

outlast us. The following are the lines that end his 1926 poem *Credo*:

The beauty of things was born before eyes and sufficient to itself; the heart-breaking beauty
Will remain when there is no heart to break for it. (CP I, 239)

Jeffers' view of beauty was that it was part of nature and would outlast the perceiver. An opposing view is that beauty is in the mind, and that human beings have evolved to find the world they live in beautiful. Such a development facilitates human survival: if we cherish the world, we will reap its bounty.

Jeffers's philosophy was more specifically described in the preface to his 1947 book *The Double Axe* (the original version of which is included in his 2001 *Selected Poetry* edited by Tim Hunt):

It is based on a recognition of the astonishing beauty of things and their living wholeness, and on a rational acceptance of the fact that mankind is neither central nor important in the universe; our vices and blazing crimes are as insignificant as our happiness. We know this, of course, but it does not appear that any previous one of the ten thousand religions and philosophies has realized it. An infant feels himself to be central and of primary importance; an adult knows better; it seems time that the human race attained to an adult habit of thought in this regard. The attitude is neither misanthropic nor pessimist nor irreligious, though two or three people have said so, and may again; but it involves a certain detachment.

Jeffers contrasted his ideas to Renaissance Humanism, which, though he preferred it to the preceding Scholastic Theology, he felt improperly placed Man at the center of the universe. The Renaissance took to heart wisdom of philosophers such as Protagoras of Abdera who proposed that "Man is the measure of all things" and doubted the existence of the gods: "Concerning

the gods, I have no means of knowing whether they exist or not, nor of what sort they may be, because of the obscurity of the subject, and the brevity of human life.” (Bonazzi, 2020). Renaissance philosophers like Pico della Mirandola focussed on the man rather than on God. In his *Oration on the Dignity of Man*, he proclaimed that “There is nothing to be seen more wonderful than Man” (Forbes, 1942).

Jeffers called his philosophy “inhumanism” to distinguish it from the humanism of the Renaissance (Carpenter, 1981). As Nafis-Sahely (2016) has remarked, the philosophy “might have fared better under a different name.” Perhaps, for example, “naturalism.” The first meaning suggested by the word “inhumanism” is “brutality.” Jeffers’s inhumanism is an austere and detached view of the world. It has many similarities to stoicism (Lioi, 2025): we live our life as best we can; we pass away and the world persists. In his 1941 talk, Jeffers (1956, p 28) related his inhumanism to the main tenets of Christianity:

It seems to me, analogously, that the whole human race spends too much emotion on itself. The happiest and freest man is the scientist investigating nature, or the artist admiring it; the person who is interested in things that are not human. Or if he is interested in human things, let him regard them objectively, as a small part of the great music. Certainly humanity has claims, on all of us; we can best fulfill them by keeping our emotional sanity; and this by seeing beyond and around the human race. This is far from humanism; but it is, in fact, the Christian attitude: ... to love God with all one’s heart and soul, and one’s neighbor as one’s self – as much as that, but as little as that.

Jeffers was enthusiastic in his love of nature, but far more detached in his love of neighbor. Although he wrote in the style of Walt Whitman, he lacked that poet’s intense love of his fellow man.

One of the clearest poetic descriptions of inhumanism is in final section of the late poem *De Rerum Virtute* or (On the Nature of Virtue) (1954, discussed extensively by Chapman, 2002):

One light is left us: the beauty of things, not men;
The immense beauty of the world, not the human world.
Look—and without imagination, desire nor dream—directly
At the mountains and sea. Are they not beautiful?
These plunging promontories and flame-shaped peaks
Stopping the sombre stupendous glory, the storm-fed ocean?
Look at the Lobos Rocks off the shore,
With foam flying at their flanks, and the long sea-lions
Couching on them. Look at the gulls on the cliff-wind,
And the soaring hawk under the cloud-stream—
But in the sage-brush desert, all one sun-stricken
Color of dust, or in the reeking tropical rain-forest,
Or in the intolerant north and high thrones of ice—is the
earth not beautiful?
Nor the great skies over the earth?
The beauty of things means virtue and value in them.
It is in the beholder's eye, not the world? Certainly.
It is the human mind's translation of the transhuman
Intrinsic glory. It means that the world is sound,
Whatever the sick microbe does. But he too is part of it.
(CP III, 403)

The Double Axe

Jeffers was thoroughly dismayed by World War II and believed that the United States should never have entered the fighting. His pacifism was accentuated by the fact that his son Garth was serving in the US forces. Donnan had been excused because of a heart murmur. Jeffers could not see any difference between the sides – he thought that Churchill and Roosevelt were as guilty as Hitler and Mussolini.

In 1948 Jeffers published his first collection of poems since

Pearl Harbor – *The Double Axe*. The title poem was composed of two parts: *The Love and the Hate* and *The Inhumanist*. In the first part a young soldier killed in the Pacific Campaign wills his decaying body to return home to the family ranch in the Big Sur and confront his father:

Did you
And your old buddies decide what the war's about?
I came to ask. You were all for it, you know;
And keeping safe away from it, so to speak, maybe you see
Reasons that we who only die in it can't, (CP III, 222)

The second part of the poem occurs years later on the same Big Sur ranch. Its caretaker (and possessor of the double-bit axe) looks after the homestead as various refugees from a nuclear war arrive. After a snowfall the old man addresses his axe to repudiate the humanism of the Renaissance:

Man is no measure of anything. Truly it is yours to hack, snow's to be white, mine to admire;
Each cat mind her own kitten: that is our morals. But wait till the moon comes up the snow-tops,
And you'll sing Holy. (CP III, 264)

Jeffers's politics and philosophy did not appeal to a people that considered the war they had just won as righteous. The publisher convinced Jeffers to withdraw some of his most virulent anti-war poems (Shebl, 1976) and added a disclaimer to the book in a "Publisher's Note":

Random House feels compelled to go on record with its disagreement over some of the political views pronounced by the poet in this volume.

The reviews were scathing. From then on, Jeffers was no longer an acclaimed poet. He lived out the rest of his life in Carmel in relative obscurity. He continued to publish occasionally but critics disparaged his work even while admitting its importance. The following is from a review of his posthumously published last poems:

Surely he provides us with plenty to carp about: his oracular moralizing, his cruel and thoroughly repellent sexuality, his dreadful lapses of taste when he seems simply to throw back his head and howl, his slovenly diction, the eternal sameness of his themes, the amorphous sprawl of his poems on the page. The sheer power and drama of some of Jeffers' writing, however, still carries the day despite everything, and this is not so much because of the presence of the Truth that Jeffers believes he has got hold of but because of what might be called the embodiment of that Truth: Jeffers' gorgeous panorama of big imagery, his galaxies, suns, seas, cliffs, continents, mountains, rivers, flocks of birds, gigantic schools of fish, and so on. His Truth is hard to swallow try looking at your children and drawing comfort from Jeffers' "inhumanism"—but one cannot shake off Jeffers' vision as one can the carefully prepared surprises of many of the neatly packaged stanzas we call "good poems"; it is too deeply disturbing and too powerfully stated. (Dickey, 1964).

In the late 60s the escalation of the Vietnam War led to the involvement and death of US troops. Jeffers's passionate pacificism became more understandable, and his poetry underwent some rehabilitation and republication (Nolte, 1978).

The Environmental Movement

Another important development affecting the reputation of Robinson Jeffers was the birth of the modern environmental movement with the publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* in 1962. As well as pointing out the severe problems that result from our misuse of the environment, the movement also published books showing the beauty of unspoiled nature. A major example of this was the book *Not Man Apart* (Adams et al, 1964) which combined photographs of the Big Sur Coast with lines from Robinson Jeffers.

Karman (2015) remarks about Jeffers attitude to man's place in

nature:

Jeffers' experience of deep time added a vatic amplitude to his verse, and a sharp moral edge. He spoke repeatedly about the destruction of Earth's environment, warning, shrilly at times, of the effects of overpopulation, pollution, and the exploitation of natural resources.

Quigley (2002) places Jeffers in a direct line between Thoreau (1817-1862) and later authors such as Edward Abbey (1927-1989) and Gary Snyder (1930-) in the development of modern environmentalism. Of these writers, Jeffers was the most critical of how man has misused the world, and perhaps the most pessimistic. However, Abbey, Snyder and other writers have taken to heart his criticisms and tried to formulate new and better ways for man and nature to interact. Wyatt (1986) has written of the affinity between Jeffers and Snyder, both of whom spent much time building homes to fit in with the natural world. John Elder (1985) discussed Jeffers and nature in the context of how nature and humanity must interact – a process that he terms “culture:”

In learning to find equivalence between mountains, grass, and man, we gain the composure of a larger design. It is not a fixed, symmetrical rose, like Dante's covering order, but rather a process of tidal exchange, of decay and renewal. Only as we learn to see it in a natural order beyond man's civilized system may the human waste-land be redeemed and the individual made whole. Conversely, unless the city is restored and human life brought back into physical and spiritual balance, the wilderness beloved of fierce solitaries like Jeffers will inevitably be destroyed. The circuit of mutual dependence between nature and civilization defines my understanding of the word culture: it is a process rather than a product, something that grows rather than being manufactured. And only in poetry is culture fully realized.</p>

In Retrospect

Jeffers wrote some powerful but difficult longer poems and some fine shorter lyrics. I would like to end the posting with one of his early poems – *The Excesses of God* (1924) – together with the engraving by Malette Dean that accompanies the poem in his 1956 book:

Is it not by his high superfluousness we know
Our God? For to equal a need
Is natural, animal, mineral: but to fling
Rainbows over the rain
And beauty above the moon, and secret rainbows
On the domes of deep sea-shells,
And make the necessary embrace of breeding
Beautiful also as fire,
Not even the weeds to multiply without blossom
Nor the birds without music:
There is the great humaneness at the heart of things,
The extravagant kindness, the fountain
Humanity can understand, and would flow likewise
If power and desire were perch-mates.(CP I, 4)



Resources

The website of the Robinson Jeffers Association provides links to many different resources about the poet, including an archive of most of the issues of the journal *Jeffers Studies*.

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Edward Hopper

Edward Hopper (1882-1967) painted the independence and the loneliness of 20th-Century America. He was a realist in the days when most painters tended toward the abstract. Yet his paintings incite the imagination far more than the works of any abstract expressionist. His enigmatic images force the viewer to wonder what is going on:

Hopper was neither an illustrator nor a narrative painter. His paintings don't tell stories. What they do is suggest—powerfully, irresistibly—that there are stories within them, waiting to be told. He shows us a moment in time, arrayed on a canvas; there's clearly a past and a future, but it's our task to find it for ourselves. (Block, 2016, p viii).

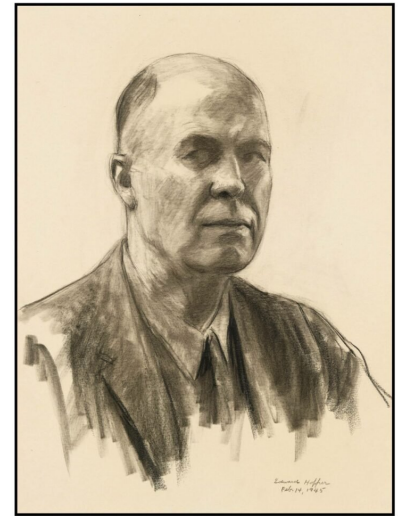
More than any other painter, Hopper has inspired writers to find the stories and meanings behind his paintings. This post summarizes his life, describes his working methods, and presents some of his pictures together with the writings they have stimulated.

Early Life

Hopper was born in Nyack, a town on the Hudson River some 25 km north of the upper end of Manhattan (Levin, 1980a, 2007). He decided early to become an artist and studied at the New York School of Art and Design in Greenwich Village, where he was taught by William Merritt Chase and Robert Henri, among others. Hopper considered Thomas Eakins his artistic hero.

The 1903 self-portrait, illustrated on the left below, shows the conscientious young student. The others are from 1930,

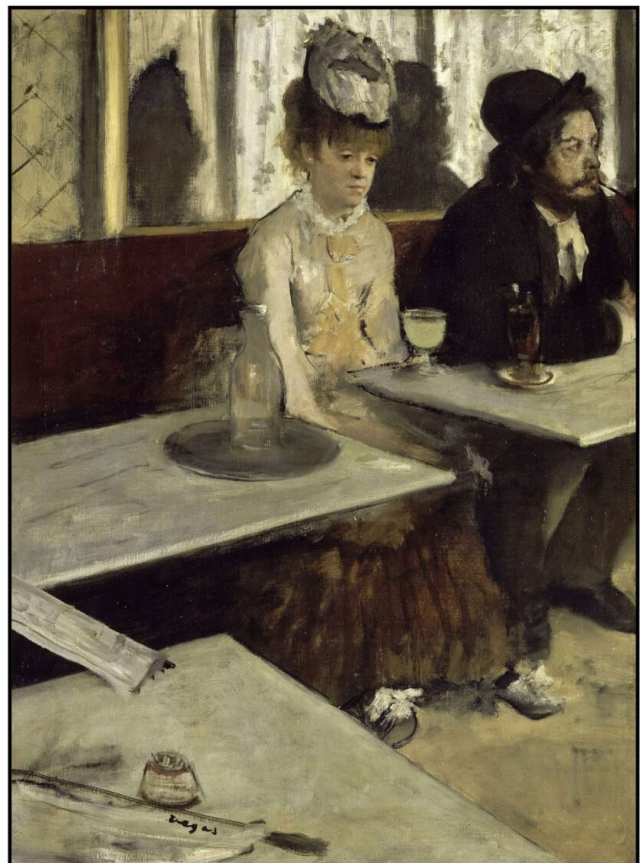
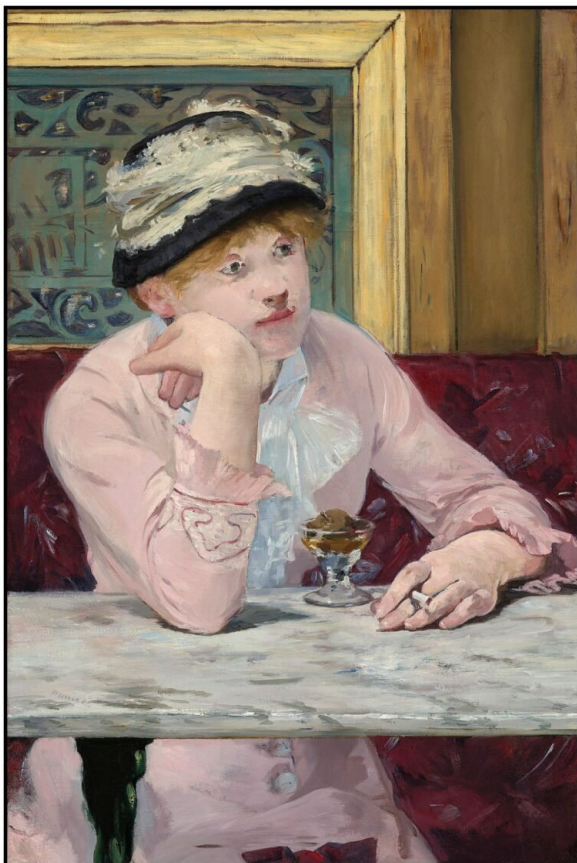
when he was becoming successful, and from 1945 after he had become famous.



In 1906 Hopper made his first trip to Paris, where he stayed for almost one year, making occasional journeys to other cities in Europe. He returned for two further shorter visits in 1909 and 1910. In Paris, he visited the museums, attended classes, and sketched and painted *en plain air*. The illustration on the right from the graphic biography by Rossi and Scarduelli (2021) was derived from a 1907 photograph of the young student sketching (Levin, 2007, p 68).

Hopper was influenced by the impressionists, in particular

Edouard Manet and Edgar Degas (Kranzfelder, 2002, p 150). His later painting *Automat* (1927) shows similarities in mood and structure to Manet's *The Plum Brandy* (1877) and to Degas' *The Absinthe Drinker* (1876):



Another influence was Eugène Atget who had photographed the empty streets of Paris (Llorens & Ottinger, 2012, p. 263). Since his camera required long exposure-times, Atget chose to photograph early in the morning before there were any people moving around in the streets. His haunting images foreshadow Hopper's lonely city-scenes. Walter Benjamin in his *Little History of Photography* (1931) remarked that Atget's photographs sometimes seem to portray the "scene of a crime." The same can be said of many of Hopper's paintings.

The ongoing modernist revolution in Paris had no effect on the young American. Hopper paid little attention to the post-impressionists (Van Gogh, Cézanne and Gauguin), and was apparently unaware of the current work of painters like Pablo Picasso and Henri Matisse.

One of the last paintings from Hopper's time in Europe was entitled *Soir Bleu* (1914). Various characters interact on a café terrace:



On the left is a *macquereau* (French: mackerel, slang for "pimp"). In the center, a garishly made-up prostitute attempts to entice a client from a table where three men are seated:

someone who appears from his beret to be an artist, a soldier with epaulettes on his uniform, and a clown in full make-up and costume. On the right a bourgeois man and woman survey the scene. One is tempted to consider Hopper as the clown, out of place and without voice among the French. Three of the figures are smoking: the clown, the pimp and the artist. This may suggest something similar in their livelihoods: they all survive by selling to the rich and powerful: the couple on the right and the soldier. Hopper exhibited the painting when he returned to New York, but it was never sold and stayed in storage at his studio until his death.

The painting's title may come from a poem *Sensation* (1870) by Rimbaud, which in its second verse talks of being mute like the clown.

*Par les soirs bleus d'été j'irai dans les sentiers,
Picoté par les blés, fouler l'herbe menue :
Rêveur, j'en sentirai la fraîcheur à mes pieds.
Je laisserai le vent baigner ma tête nue.*

Je ne parlerai pas ; je ne penserai rien.
Mais l'amour infini me montera dans l'âme ;
Et j'irai loin, bien loin, comme un bohémien,
Par la Nature,—heureux comme avec une femme.

Summer's deep-blue evenings I will go down the lanes,
Tickled by the wheat-berries, trampling the short grass:
Dreaming, I will feel the coolness at my feet.
I will let a northern wind bathe my bare head.

I will not stir my tongue; I will think of nothing.
Yet love infinite shall at once mount in my soul;
And I will go far, very far, like a gypsy,
Through Nature,—enchanted as with a woman.
(translation by Gregory Campeau)

Back in New York, Hopper was unable to sell more than an occasional painting. He therefore supported himself by

providing illustrations for magazine stories and advertisements. For a while he learned etching with Martin Lewis. From these studies, he developed a better sense of how light plays on surfaces, especially at night. He also began to define spaces more distinctly than the impressionists that he had hitherto been following.

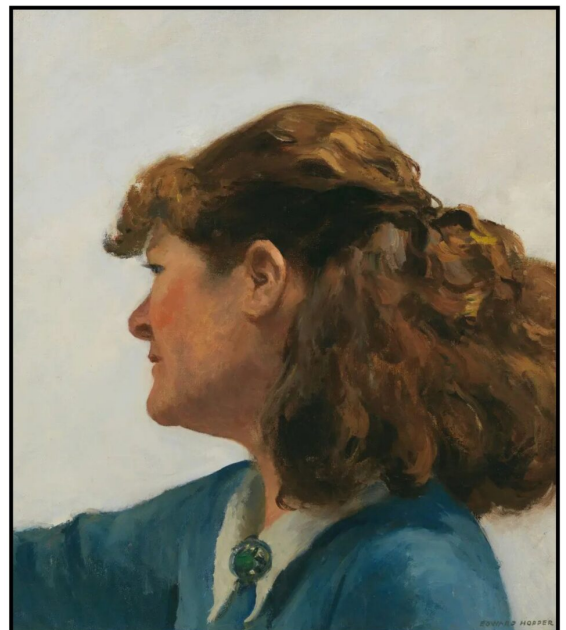
In 1913, Hopper moved into the top floor of Number 3, Washington Square North, Greenwich Village. This was his studio and residence for the rest of his life. The following illustration shows the building, the roof-top view from the top floor (Levin, 1985) and Hopper's 1932 painting *City Roofs*:



Jo Nivison

In the summer of 1923 on a painting trip to Gloucester, Massachusetts, Hopper re-encountered Jo Nivison, who had been

a fellow-student at the New York School of Art and Design. They both painted water-colors and on their return to New York, Nivison was instrumental in getting Hopper's work exhibited. They enjoyed each other's company and were married in 1924. Both were 41 years old. They were physically and psychologically different: he was 6 ft 5 inches while she was just 5 ft; "she was gregarious, outgoing, sociable and talkative, while he was shy, quiet, solitary, and introspective" (Levin, 2007, p 168). The following illustration shows a 1906 portrait of: *The Art Student Miss Josephine Nivison* by Robert Henri, a photograph of Jo and Edward (from the 1930s), and a 1936 painting of *Jo Painting* by Hopper.



Edward painted and Jo took care of things. She modelled for his figure paintings, and kept meticulous records of his paintings in a set of notebooks. She sometimes rebelled against her help-mate status, and urged her husband to promote her own artistic career. There were arguments, some of which degenerated into physical fights. Nevertheless, their marriage lasted until Edward's death in 1967. Jo died a year later, leaving all her husband's unsold paintings to the Whitney

Museum of American Art. The museum also accepted her paintings, but many of these were discarded. Jo Hopper was not given the recognition that she deserved (Colleary, 2004; Levin, 1980b, 2007, pp. 717-728; McColl, 2018).

Working Methods

Although Hopper worked *en plein air* in France and during his summer excursions to New England, most of his pictures were painted in the studio from sketches made *in situ*. His images are thus based on reality but tempered by the imagination. The perspectives are altered; the surfaces are simplified and flattened; the colors are changed to what they might have been rather than what they were. His 1946 painting *Approaching a City* shows the rail lines of the Metro-North Railroad entering the tunnel at 97th Street to travel under Park Avenue to Grand Central Station. The painting provides a heightened representation of what a traveler might experience coming into a city for the first time. The illustration below shows the painting together with contemporary (Conaty, 2022, p 13) and more recent (Levin, 1985) views of the scene.



The perspective of the painting would only be possible from

the level of the rail-lines. Hopper has tried to see from the point of view of a passenger in a train rather than a pedestrian on Park Avenue. Even if the graffiti were erased, the opposite wall is (and was) not as it appears in the painting. Hopper has flattened its texture and removed the cables. The buildings above the wall are not those on Park Avenue, either now or when the painting was made. Conaty (2022, p 13) remarks

Here. the building types – from the nineteenth century brownstone to the modern industrial structure at the far left – suggest the passage of time in the histories that coexist, pictured as a single mass of forms seen from the train track below.

The illustration below shows Hopper's 1954 painting *Morning Sun*. The preparatory sketches show both the general layout of the room the effects of the bright morning light, and a more accurate representation of the model (Jo) with extensive details about shading and color:

Greenwich Village, recent evidence has pointed to a source on Bleeker Street (Marcum 2022). The painting has a wonderful visual rhythm: the repetition and variation between the different units and their windows reminds me of the stanzas and rhymes of poetry.



John Updike (2005 p 199) describes the painting:

Early Sunday Morning is a literally sunny picture, with even something merry about it: bucolic peace visits a humdrum urban street. We are gladdened by the day that is coming, entering from the right, heralded by the shadows it throws. The glow on the sidewalk is picked up by the yellow window shades. The barber pole is cheerful, the hydrant basks like a sluggish, knobby toad. But the silent windows, especially the darkened big shopwindows, hold behind them an ominous mortuary stillness. The undercurrents of stillness threaten to drag us down, even as the day dawns. The diurnal wheel turns, taking the sun on one of its sides. But the other side, the side where sun is absent, has its presence, too, and Hopper's apparently noncommittal art excels in making us

aware of the elsewhere, the missing, the longed-for. He is, to use a phrase generally reserved for writers, a master of suspense.

The painting takes liberties with the shadows. Neither 7th Avenue nor Bleeker Street run directly east-west, and the morning sun could not cast shadows so long and so parallel to the buildings in either place. As noted by the poet John Hollander (in Levin 1995 p 43), the long shadow on the sidewalk is especially mysterious:

Long, slant shadows
Cast on the wan concrete
Are of nearby fallen
Verticals not ourselves.
Lying longest, most still,
Along the unsigned blank
Of sidewalk, the narrowed
Finger of shade left by
Something, thicker than trees,
Taller than these streetlamps,
Somewhere off to the right
Perhaps, and unlike an
Intrusion of ourselves,
Unseen, long, is claiming
It all, the scene, the whole.

A striking aspect of the painting is its overwhelming silence: the calm before or after the storm of normal life. Ward (2017, p 169) remarks

Hopper's paintings are uniquely silent, conveying a sense of unnatural stillness. The silence is more active than passive, mainly because it suggests little of the calmness, tranquility, or placidity commonly associated with it. Hopper's silences are tense-hushed decorums maintained with terrific strain.

Probably Hopper's most famous painting is *The Nighthawks* (1942), wherein a man and a woman sit at the counter of an all-night diner. They are served by a young waiter and observed by a solitary man at the other end of the counter. The diner is brightly lit; outside it is dark. The streets are deserted: it is likely long past midnight. We sense the couple's anxiety and we are grateful for the light.



Hopper may have based the painting on a restaurant near the intersection of Greenwich Avenue and 7th Avenue (now Mulry Square). More likely it is an amalgam of various diners in the area. The title apparently comes from the beak-like nose of the man sitting with the woman.

The poet Mark Strand (1994, pp. 6-7) described the general effect of the picture:

The dominant feature of the scene is the long window through which we see the diner. It covers two-thirds of the canvas, forming the geometrical shape of an isosceles trapezoid, which establishes the directional pull of the painting, toward a vanishing point that cannot be witnessed, but must

be imagined. Our eye travels along the face of the glass, moving from right to left, urged on by the converging sides of the trapezoid, the green tile, the counter, the row of round stools that mimic our footsteps, and the yellow-white neon glare along the top. We are not drawn into the diner but are led alongside it. Like so many scenes we register in passing, its sudden, immediate clarity absorbs us, momentarily isolating us from everything else, and then releases us to continue on our way. In *Nighthawks*, however, we are not easily released. The long sides of the trapezoid slant toward each other but never join, leaving the viewer midway in their trajectory. The vanishing point, like the end of the viewer's journey or walk, is in an unreal and unrealizable place, somewhere off the canvas, out of the picture. The diner is an island of light distracting whoever might be walking by—in this case, ourselves—from journey's end. This distraction might be construed as salvation. For a vanishing point is not just where converging lines meet, it is also where we cease to be, the end of each of our individual journeys. Looking at *Nighthawks*, we are suspended between contradictory imperatives—one, governed by the trapezoid, that urges us forward, and the other, governed by the image of a light place in a dark city, that urges us to stay.

Night makes us aware of our insignificance. A café can fend off these feelings. The older waiter in Hemingway's story *A Clean, Well-Lighted Place* (1933) notes how his café provides an elderly customer with some sense of security in the night:

It is the light of course but it is necessary that the place be clean and pleasant. You do not want music. Certainly you do not want music. Nor can you stand before a bar with dignity although that is all that is provided for these hours. What did he fear? It was not fear or dread. It was a nothing that he knew too well. It was all a nothing and a man was nothing too. It was only that and light was all it

needed and a certain cleanness and order. Some lived in it and never felt it but he knew it all was *nada y pues nada y nada y pues nada*. [nothing and then nothing and then nothing]

Strong (1988) remarks on the similarities between the isolation of Hopper's images and the loneliness of Robert Frost's poems. Hopper read and admired Frost's poems. Jo Nivison painted a picture of him reading Frost in 1955 (Levin, 1980b). Frost's poem *Desert Places* (1934) ends:

And lonely as it is, that loneliness
Will be more lonely ere it will be less –
A blanker whiteness of benighted snow
With no expression, nothing to express.

They cannot scare me with their empty spaces
Between stars – on stars where no human race is.
I have it in me so much nearer home
To scare myself with my own desert places.

There is something essentially American about the lonely individualism – the internal desert places – of Hopper, Hemingway and Frost.

Ecphrasis

Ecphrasis (Greek: words about) is the verbal description of a work of art, either real or imagined, expressed in vivid poetic language (Heffernan, 2015; Hollander 1988, 1995; Hollander & Weber, 2001; Panagiolidou, 2013). Ecphrasis is concerned with the effects the art on the viewer whereas "interpretation" deals with the what and how of these effects (Carrier, 1987).

Perhaps more than any other artist, Hopper has stimulated the imagination of poets and writers. Poems and stories written in response to his paintings have been collected in several anthologies (Block, 2016; Levin, 1995; Lyons et al., 1995),

and individual poets have composed whole books inspired by his images (Farrés, 2009; Hoggard, 2009; Strand, 1994). The following are three examples of Hopper's images and the poetry and prose that they have evoked.

Hopper's 1921 etching *Evening Wind* shows a nude woman about to lie down in bed as the wind blows the curtain into the room. The viewer feels that he is in the same room as the woman, and this intimacy recalls Degas' paintings of women bathing. The Hopper website suggests that the sudden interruption of the wind might be akin to the appearance of a god, like the annunciation to Mary or the shower of gold that fell upon Danae.



Robert Mezey (Levin, 1995, p 24) describes the etching in a beautifully constructed sonnet:

One foot on the floor, one knee in bed,
Bent forward on both hands as if to leap
Into a heaven of silken cloud, or keep
An old appointment – tryst, one almost said –
Some promise, some entanglement that led
In broad daylight to privacy and sleep,
To dreams of love, the rapture of the deep,
Oh, everything, that must be left unsaid –

Why then does she suddenly look aside
At a white window full of empty space
And curtains swaying inward? Does she sense
In darkening air the vast indifference
That enters in and will not be denied,
To breathe unseen upon her nakedness?

Hopper's 1939 painting *New York Movie* depicts an usherette at one of the grand movie theaters in New York. She is standing beautifully and pensively near the side exit.

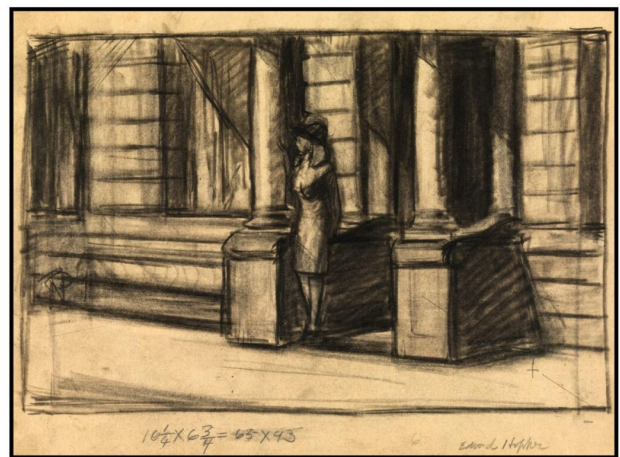


Leonard Michaels (Lyons et al, 1995, p 3) wonders about who she might be:

Of course, she wasn't going anywhere. I mean only that there was drama in the painting, a kind of personal story, and it was more engaging, more psychologically intense, than the movie on the distant blurry screen, a rectangle near the upper left corner of the painting, like a window in a dark room. The usherette isn't looking at that movie, isn't involved with any movie drama, any mechanical story told with cuts and fades while music works on your feelings. Her drama is mythical, the myth of Eurydice doomed to wait at the edge of darkness. The red flashes in the shadows of the painting are streaks of fire and streams and gouts of blood. Eurydice stands at the edge of Hades waiting for Orpheus.

This movie theater, like many others in Hopper's day, is called the Orpheum.

The 1943 painting of *Summertime* shows a young woman in a thin dress standing at the door of a New York building. She is about to face the day. She feels warm but a cooling breeze blows the dress against her body.



James Hoggard (2009) imagines Hopper talking about his painting:

It's good you noticed, if you did
A number, I'll say, have not come close
This one's a nude, the clothes a guise,
a mask, a witty, illusory stab
at idiot propriety – imagination strips
everything bare, as I've done here:
the nipples and heft of breasts in view
and the screaming delight of thighs
rising toward the truth between them,
as suggested by the curtain's cleft –
all this a celebration of my mood,
and my mood trumps anything that's yours

This lass, who looks sweetly nubile now,
is Jo, my wife, whose age has been reduced
by the cleverness of my brush and paint
I've stripped her nearly bare, but I
have also preserved defiant ghosts
in the willful set of her swelling lips

The tensions and songs here are mine
You can do with your own what you will

Homage in Film and Photography

Hopper's work has had a large influence on the visual arts as well as on poetry. Many of Hopper's paintings depict large ornate 19th-Century houses – often standing isolated from other buildings. One such picture is *House by the Railroad* (1925). According to Levin (1985) this was likely partially based on a house in Haverstraw just north of his home in Nyack (lower left of the illustration below). This house is across the street from the railway: Hopper often compressed the distances

between things in his paintings. The Mansard roof and central tower and columned porch were also found in other houses that Hopper painted. These houses defiantly insists on their isolated existence.



Variations on this house have appeared in several movies: most importantly Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960) and Terrence

Malick's *Days of Heaven* (1978). These sets are shown in the illustration above (lower middle and lower right).

Many photographers have been profoundly influenced by Hopper's pictures. Phillip Lorcia diCorcia photographs isolated people in urban settings: his images suggest what Hopper might have seen he had lived a further fifty years (Llorens & Ottinger 2012, pp. 306-309). Even more recently, the photographer Richard Tuschman has recreated many of Hopper's paintings in photographs. The illustration below shows Hopper's 1926 painting *Eleven a.m.* together with Tuschman's *Woman at a Window*, 2013. The chair has changed from blue to pink and the model now wears heels. Most importantly her face is visible.



Empty Rooms

Hopper was always intrigued by the play of light in empty rooms. His 1951 painting *Rooms by the Sea*, shows an empty room leading through an open door to the sea. The image derives from the Hopper's studio in Truro on Cape Cod. The door does not directly open onto the sea: Hopper has compressed the space. The main room in the painting is completely bare. On the left, however, another room can be glimpsed with a couch, a chest-of-drawers, and a painting on the wall. Hollander (2001, pp. 72-25) suggests that the two rooms might represent the memories of the past and the presentiments of the future.



One of Hopper's late paintings *Sun in an Empty Room* (1963) is devoid of detail. The room contains nothing but the light. The

stark simplicity almost approaches the abstract, though Hopper would insist that the image is still tied to reality.



Strand (1994, pp. 57-58) remarks:

In the later painting, *Sun in an Empty Room*, there is nothing calming about the light. It comes in a window and falls twice in the same room—on a wall close to the window and on a slightly recessed wall. That is all the action there is. We do not travel the same distance—actual or metaphorical—that we do in *Rooms by the Sea*. The light strikes two places at once, and we feel its terminal character instead of anything that hints of continuation. If it suggests a rhythm, it is a rhythm cut short. The room seems cropped, as if the foreground were cut away. What we have is a window wall, with the window framing the highlighted leaves of a nearby tree, and a back wall, a

finality against which two tomblike parallelograms of light stand up-right. Done in 1963, it is Hopper's last great painting, a vision of the world without us; not merely a place that excludes us, but a place emptied of us. The light, now a faded yellow against sepia-toned walls, seems to be enacting the last stages of its transience, its own stark narrative coming to a close.

Last Things

Hopper's last painting, *Two Comedians* (1965) portrays two actors taking their bows on a stage raised high above the audience. The actors are the artist and his wife. Representing himself as a comedian refers back to his earlier painting *Soir Bleu*. The illustration below shows the painting together with Scarduelli's impression of the elderly couple in their studio (Rossi & Scarduelli, 2021).



The Portuguese poet Ernest Farrés (translated by Lawrence Venuti, 2006) imagines Hopper's comments on the painting

Perhaps it's the costume
that lets me laugh,
or smile as it were –
for me they've been the same

Perhaps it's the clown's disguise
that lets me be
looser than I usually am
strutting cock-proud now,
goofy-eyed at a crowd,
the illusion of a crowd
no one sees but you and me

Clowns, we move toward stage's edge,
a place I've made like a roof's edge,
with threat or promise of a fall

But the moment seems sweet,
our domestic wars almost done,
and white-clad and foolscapped,
we seem blest as we press
toward the last edge we'll meet,

our lyrical selves always in France,
our final days just bibelots:
Nous sommes, Jo et moi, les pierrots

Final Words

Hopper painted the real world, but he allowed his imagination to interact with his perception. Conaty (2022, p 14) remarks that he often felt torn between working from the fact and improvising upon what he saw. Hopper argued against abstract expressionism, insisting that art should always have its source in "life." The following is his 1953 statement on art from the short-lived magazine *Reality* (quoted in Llorens & Ettinger, 2012, p 275):

Great art is the outward expression of an inner life in the

artist, and this inner life will result in his personal vision of the world. No amount of skillful invention can replace the essential element of imagination. One of the weaknesses of much abstract painting is the attempt to substitute the inventions of the intellect for a pristine imaginative conception. The inner life of a human being is a vast and varied realm and does not concern itself alone with stimulating arrangements of color, form, and design. The term "life" as used in art is something not to be held in contempt, for it implies all of existence, and the province of art is to react to it and not to shun it. Painting will have to deal more fully and less obliquely with life and nature's phenomena before it can again become great.

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The Cathars

The Cathars

From the 12th to 15th Centuries groups of people called the Cathars lived quietly in various regions of Western Europe – Northern Italy, the Rhineland and, most especially, Southern France. They followed the moral teachings of Jesus, forsaking worldly goods and loving one another, but they did not believe in the basic theology of Christianity. They considered that the world was evil, that human beings were spirits imprisoned in the flesh, and that the soul could only be set free at death if one had lived a life of purity. The Catholic Church considered these beliefs heretical, and in 1208 Pope Innocent III called for a crusade to eradicate the heresy. Named after the inhabitants of the city of Albi which had a flourishing Cathar population, the Albigensian Crusade lasted from 1209

until 1229. After years of terrible violence and cruelty, most of those who professed Cathar beliefs were dead. All that now remains of these peaceful people are the ruins of the hilltop castles in which they sought refuge.

Heresy and Dissent in the Middle Ages

The increasing secular power and the ostentatious luxury the Catholic Church were far from the life of poverty and compassion taught by Jesus. This contrast triggered dissent in various forms (Moore, 1985). In 1098 a group of monks left the Benedictine monastery and founded the order of the Cistercians. In 1135, Henry of Lausanne, who had taught throughout the South of France that the individual believer was more important than the church, was condemned as heretical. In 1143 and again in 1163, small groups of heretics who denied the authority of the Catholic Church were burned at the stake in Cologne. In 1173 in Lyons, a merchant named Valdes (also known as Waldo) began preaching a life of apostolic poverty as the way to salvation. His followers, who became known as the Waldensians, were initially tolerated but later considered heretics.

The monk Eberwin of Steinfeld Abbey near Cologne wrote to Bernard of Clairvaux about the heretics of 1143. He was astounded by their fortitude in accepting death rather than disavowing their beliefs, and he tried to understand them:

This is their heresy: They say that the Church exists among them only, since they alone follow closely in the footsteps of Christ, and remain the true followers of the manner of life observed by the Apostles, inasmuch as they possess neither houses, nor fields, nor property of any kind. They declare that, as Christ did not possess any of these Himself, so He did not permit His disciples to possess them. 'But you,' they say to us, 'add house to house, and field to field, and seek the things of this world. So completely is this the case, that even those among you who are considered

most perfect, such as the monks and regular canons, possess these things, if not as their private property, yet as belonging to their community.' Of themselves they say: 'We are the poor of Christ; we have no settled dwelling-place; we flee from city to city, as sheep in the midst of wolves; we endure persecution, as did the Apostles and the martyrs: yet we lead a holy and austere life in fasting and abstinence, continuing day and night in labours and prayers, and seeking from these only what is necessary to sustain life. We endure all this,' they say, 'because we are not of this world.' (Mabillon & Eales, 1896, p 390).

Bernard considered the danger of these apparently innocent heretics, and in his series of sermons on the *Song of Songs* (also known as the *Song of Solomon*), he expounded upon the verse

Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines:
for our vines have tender grapes. (*Song of Solomon* 2:15)

He proposed that the vines are those of the Church and the little foxes are the heretics. He described the ways of their deceit:

They study, then, to appear good in order to do injury to the good, and shrink from appearing evil that they may thus give their evil designs fuller scope. For they do not care to cultivate virtues, but only to colour their vices with a delusive tinge of virtues. Under the veil of religion, they conceal an impious superstition; they regard the mere refraining from doing wrong openly as innocence, and thus take for themselves an outward appearance of goodness only. For a cloak to their infamy they make a vow of continence. (Mabillon & Eales, 1896, p 390)

In 1145 Bernard journeyed to Toulouse to challenge the teachings of the Henricians and to bring them heretics back to the teachings of the Church. The heretics refused to listen to

him.

In 1184, Pope Lucius III, dismayed by the prevalence of heresy, issued the bull *Ad abolendam diversam haeresium pravitatem* (To abolish diverse malignant heresies). This initiated (or formalized) the Episcopal Inquisition: local bishops were empowered to try suspected heretics. Once convicted, heretics were handed over to secular authorities for appropriate punishment. The church did not wish to sully itself with their death.



Heretics were executed in various ways. However, the most common sentence was burning. The first such sentence to be carried out since ancient times was at Orleans in 1022 under Robert II (also known as the “pious”), King of the Franks. The fire gave the heretics a foretaste of hell “enacting in

miniature the fate that awaited all those who failed to take their place within a united Christian society” (Barbezat, 2014; see also Barbezat 2018). An illumination from the *Chroniques de France* (1487) in the British Library shows the burning of the heretics. Noteworthy is the idyllic landscape in the background, and the complacency of the king and his followers.

Catharism

Many of the heretics, such as those in Cologne and in the South of France, were called “Cathars.” The name perhaps derives from the Greek *katharoi* (pure ones), but the word may also have described the worship of Satan in the form of a cat. The heretics did not use the term; rather, they considered themselves “good men” (*bons omes* in the Occitan language of the South of France).

Most of what we know about the Cathars comes from the writings of the Inquisitors. The books and manuals that the heretics may have followed were burned. In recent years there has been much discussion and dispute (e.g., Frassetto, 2006; Sennis, 2016) about whether the Cathars were a linked group of believers (in essence a church) or whether that idea was a paranoid construct of the Inquisition used to establish terror and maintain the power of the established Church. Skeptics thus believe that a Cathar was anyone who disagreed with the teachings of the Catholic Church (Moore, 1987, 2012; Pegg, 2001). The more traditional view, followed in this posting, is that the Cathars were a specific congregation of believers linked to other sects such as the Bogomils in Bulgaria (e.g. Hamilton, 2006; Frassetto, 2008).

The Cathars were dualists, both ontologically – spirit and matter were distinct and antithetical – and theologically – one god created the spiritual world and a separate god created the material universe. In these beliefs they followed a long line of Christian heretics. The Gnostics of the 2nd Century CE

often considered the world in these terms. In the 3rd Century CE the Parthian prophet Mani taught that the spiritual world of light was separate from the material world of darkness. His followers believed that he was the reincarnation of earlier teachers such as Zoroaster, Buddha and Jesus. Saint Augustine of Hippo (354-430 CE) was a Manichaean before he converted to orthodox Christianity. In the 8th and 9th Centuries CE, a group of dualists called the Paulicians flourished in Armenia. In the 10th Century CE, followers of the priest Bogomil ("dear to God" in Slavic) established in Bulgaria a sect of dualist believers that called themselves by the name of their leader (or vice versa). The Bogomils (Frassetto, 2007, Chapter 1) were condemned as heretics by both the Roman and the Eastern Churches but they persisted in their beliefs, and some of them travelled to Italy, Germany and France. A lost manuscript purportedly describes a meeting in 1167 between a Bogomil priest named Nicetas from Constantinople and several Cathar believers in Saint Félix near Toulouse (Frassetto, 2007, p 78). The authenticity of the document has been questioned, but the idea rings true.

The main beliefs of the Cathars were described by the Cistercian monk Peter of Vaux-de-Cernay who was with the army of Simon de Montfort during the Albigensian Crusade (Wakefield & Evans, 1991, pp 235-241), and are detailed in the 1245 testimony of Rainerius Sacconi, an Italian Cathar who converted and became a Dominican (Wakefield & Evans, 1991, pp 329-346) and in *The Book of Two Principles* written by an Italian Cathar, John of Lugio in the mid 13th Century CE (Wakefield & Evans, 1991, pp 522-591). Oldenbourg (1961), Roquebert (1999), O'Shea (2000), Smith (2015) and McDonald (2017) provide modern summaries:

(i) **Dualism:** The Cathars believed that there were two worlds – spiritual and material – and that each world had its own god. Human beings were spiritual entities imprisoned in the flesh.

The spiritual world was the “Kingdom of Heaven” that Jesus described in his beatitudes and parables. In answer to Pilate’s asking him whether he was King of the Jews, Jesus had stated “My kingdom is not of the world.” (*John 18:26*)

(ii) **Reincarnation.** At death the soul migrated in another body. Such an idea is widespread in the religions of the East. There is no separate afterlife, no heaven or hell. Although the life of the flesh may itself be considered hell.



(iii) **Consolamentum.** If a believer wished to escape the eternal cycle of reincarnation, he or she could decide to live a pure life, abstaining completely from material goods and desires. Such people were called Perfects. The decision to become a Perfect was enacted through the ceremony of *consolamentum*, wherein one already a Perfect laid hands on the head of a believer who aspired to the life of purity. This was the baptism of fire. The illustration at the right shows an illumination from a 13th Century Bible in the Bibliothèque nationale de France: two Franciscan monks stand aghast at witnessing a ceremony of consolamentum.

If the Perfects maintained their state of purity, at death they would be released from reincarnation and united with the spirit of the good God. However, any lapse from the pure life

– eating meat or any of the products of procreation (milk, eggs), indulging in sexual intercourse – would render them (and whomever they had provided *consolamentum*) no longer Perfect.

(iv) **Apostolic Life:** The Cathars followed in the basic teachings of Jesus. They used the Lord's prayer. They believed a compassionate life dedicated to the benefit of their fellows and in the rejection of all worldly possessions. In the latter they followed the injunctions of Jesus:

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:

But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

(*Matthew 6: 19-21*)

(v) **Denial of Church Dogma:** Although they believed in the ethical teachings of Jesus, the Cathars rejected most of the teachings and sacraments of the Catholic Church. They denied the baptism by water, preferring the true baptism by fire. They refused the sacrament of marriage since they thought that procreation only served to maintain the endless cycle of reincarnation. They had no patience with the Trinity, and were uncertain about whether Jesus was God incarnate. Many of the Cathars in the South of France believed that Jesus was human and was married to Mary Magdalene.

(vi) **Oaths:** The Cathars refused to take oaths. In this they were following the instructions of Jesus

But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne:

Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King.

Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black.

But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil. (*Matthew 5: 34-37*)

This was a severe problem in a feudal society, wherein all relations depended upon oaths of fealty.

(vii) **Role of women:** The Cathars denied that women should be subordinate to men. Many Cathar Perfects were women.

Languedoc

By the end of the 12th Century the Cathar heresy had become widespread in the South of France. The language spoken in this region was Occitan or the *langue d'oc*. This Romance language used *oc* to mean "yes," unlike French or *langue d'oïl* which used *oïl* (later *oui*) or Spanish which used *si*. Each region spoke its own dialect of Occitan, the most prominent of these being Provençal in the east and Gascon in the west.

At that time, the Languedoc region, named after the language, was a patchwork of different political entities. The most prominent leader was Raymond VI of the Saint-Gilles family which controlled Toulouse and regions in Provence. Raymond-Roger II Trencavel governed the region of Carcassonne and Bézier. Raymond-Roger of Foix in the foothills of the Pyrenees was an important ally of Toulouse. His wife and sister had both become Cathar Perfects. All these leaders had feudal ties to Pedro II, King of Aragon in Northern Spain. The illustration below shows a map of the region:



Languedoc was flourishing. The land produced a bounty of wine, olive oil, and wool. Weavers abounded and cloth merchants became rich. The region was a major trading crossroads linking

Spain and the Mediterranean to the North and West of France. Its leaders fostered tolerance. A large Jewish society fostered both trade and new learning. Much of the medieval development of the Kabbalah occurred in Provence and in Northern Spain (Boboc, 2009).

Life was to be enjoyed. Time was available for chivalry and courtly love. The poetry of the troubadours (Chaytor, 1912; Paterson, 1993) brought the rhymes and rhythms of Arabic poetry into the literature of romance languages. Dante called the Occitan poet Arnaut Daniel *il miglior fabbro* (the best [word]smith), and Petrarch called him the *gran maestro d'amore*. The following are a few lines with translation by Ezra Pound:

Tot quant es gela	Though all
things freeze here	
Mas ieu non puesc frezir	I can naught
feel the cold	
C'amors novela	For new
love sees here	
Mi fal cor reverdir	My
heart's new leaf unfold.	

Pope Innocent III

In 1198 Lotario dei Conti di Segni became Pope Innocent III. He was aware of the dissension in the church and initially sympathetic to those who criticized priestly affluence. During his reign (1198-1216), he founded two new mendicant orders: the Franciscans led by Francis of Assisi in 1209 and the Dominicans led by Domingo Félix de Guzman in 1216. The illustration below shows frescoes of Saint Francis (by a follower of Giotto c. 1300; Innocent III by an anonymous artist, c 1225 and Saint Dominic by Fra Angelico, c. 1440).



In 1202 Innocent III initiated the disastrous Fourth Crusade to the Holy Land. The crusaders, attracted by the hope of plunder and egged on by the Venetians, sacked Constantinople instead of freeing the Holy Land. Only a few crusaders refused to participate in the sack and travelled on to Palestine, among them Simon de Montfort.

Innocent III was particularly concerned by the Cathars in Languedoc and urged Raymond VI of Toulouse to contain their heresy. He sent many priests, among them Saint Dominic, to dispute with the heretics and to urge them to return to the church. Their efforts were to no avail. The following illustration shows two paintings by Pedro Berruguete from about 1495. The left represents a legendary meeting between Dominic and the Cathars. Books of Cathar and Catholic teachings were submitted to trial by fire. Only the teachings of the Catholic Church were miraculously preserved and rose above the assembled disputants. On the right Dominic presides over an *auto-da-fé* (Portuguese, act of faith) for the burning of heretics. However, there is no evidence that the saint participated in any trials of the heretics: he died in 1221 long before the Papal Inquisition was established in 1231. Berruguete's paintings were commissioned by the Spanish Inquisition founded in 1475. That institution with its frequent autos-da-fé was sorely in need of a founding saint,

and was more concerned with terror than with truth.



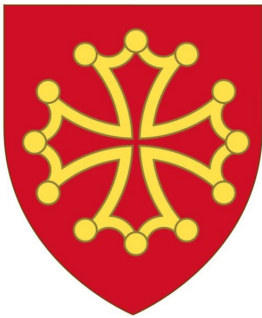
In 1207 the papal legate, Pierre de Castelnau, excommunicated Raymond VI of Toulouse. In January of 1208 Pierre negotiated with Raymond at Saint-Gilles but refused to absolve him. Pierre was then murdered at the Rhône River as he travelled back to Rome. No one knows who ordered his assassination but Raymond was held responsible. Raymond submitted to being scourged as penance for the death in June of 1209. However, by then the Pope had already called for a Crusade against the Cathars (or Albigensians) and Christian knights from the North of France had rallied to the cause, driven as much in hope for power and plunder as by desire to defend the faith. The Crusaders were led by the knight Simon IV de Montfort and by

Arnaud Amaury (or Almaric), the 17th abbot of Cîteaux, mother house of the Cistercians. The following illustration from the *Les Grandes chroniques de France* (14th Century, folio 374) now in the British Library shows Innocent III excommunicating the Cathars and the subsequent Albigensian Crusade.



Below are shown the coats of arms for the participants in the Albigensian Crusade. The upper line shows the powers of Languedoc and Aragon; the lower line the crusaders. The Pope's arms would have added a papal tiara and the keys of Saint Peter to the basic arms of the house of Segni. The kings of the Franks were from the house of Capet.

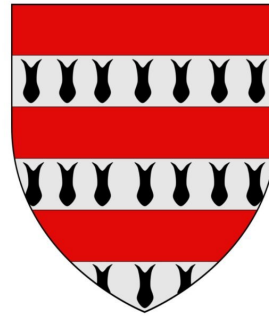
Toulouse



Aragon



Trencavel



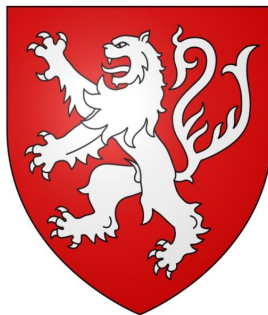
Foix



Segni



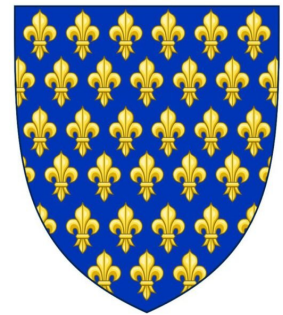
Montfort



Burgundy

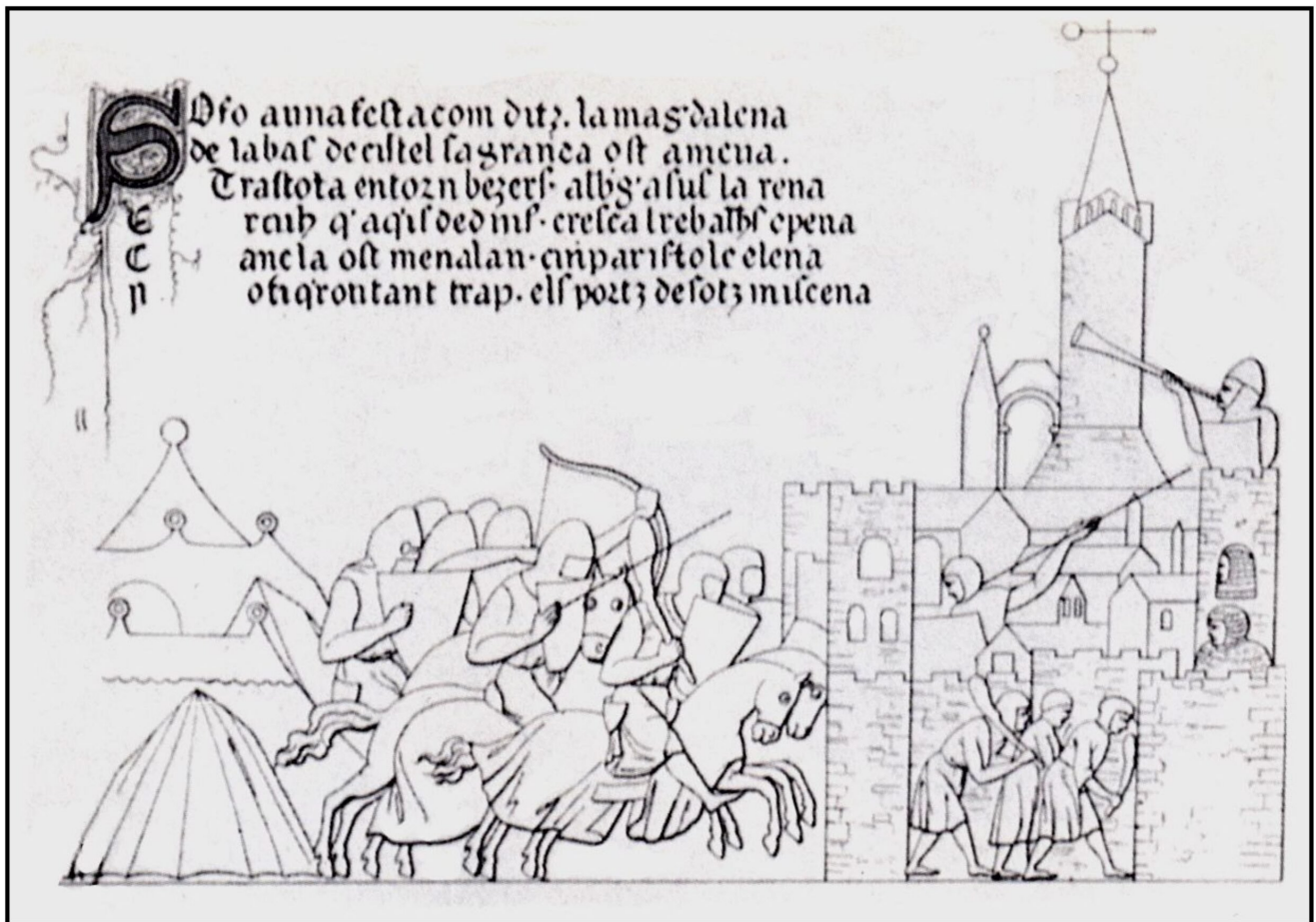


Capet



Béziers

The first engagement of the Crusaders was the siege of Béziers, whose citizens were Catholic Cathar and Jew. The huge army encamped outside the city walls on July 22, 1209, the feast day of Mary Magdalene. The following picture is from the manuscript of the *Canso de la Crozada* (Shirley 2016). This epic poem was begun by Guillaume de Tudela and completed by another anonymous troubadour. The writing was likely finished by 1219 (the date of the last event it records), but the only extant manuscript comes from 1275. The illustrations were outlined in preparation for painting but, although the decorated initials beginning each section (or *laisse*) were illuminated, the outlines never were. (The actual illustration is from an engraving based on the drawing – the manuscript drawing is very faint):



The text in Occitan can be translated as:

On the feast of St Mary Magdalen, the abbot of Cîteaux brought his huge army to Béziers and encamped it on the sandy plains around the city. Great, I am sure, was the terror inside the walls, for never in the host of Menelaus, from whom Paris stole Helena, were so many tents set up on the plains below Mycenae (Shirley, 2016, laisse 18)

A minor skirmish between the defenders and the besiegers led to the gates of the city being left open. The camp followers and mercenaries stormed through and began looting the city. The knights followed. The result was a massacre. Various reports numbered the dead as anywhere between 10,000 and 20,000 people. No distinction was made between Catholic and Cathar. Everyone died.

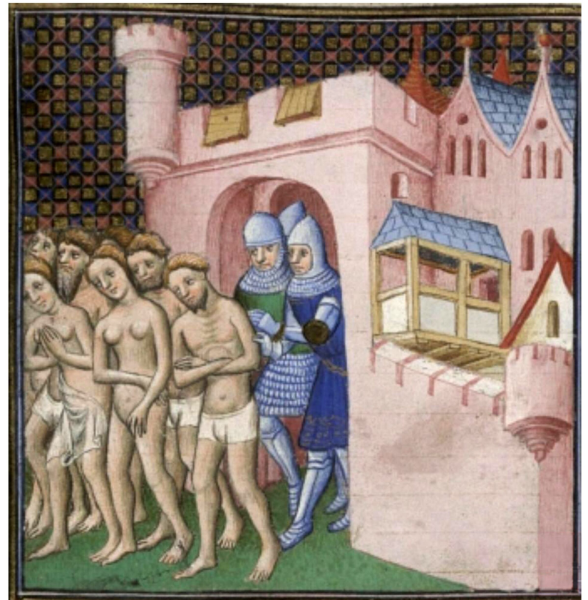
A Cistercian chronicler later reported that Arnaud Amaury was

afraid that the Cathars in the city would falsely claim to be pious Catholics and escape to spread their heresy. When asked how to distinguish between believer and heretic, he is reported to have said *Caedite eos. Novit Dominus qui sunt eius* (Kill them all. The lord knows those that are his own). This may not be true, but he would have been familiar with the words, which derive from a verse in the New Testament describing how only true believers go to heaven.

Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. (II Timothy 2:19)

Carcassonne





The Crusaders then moved on and laid siege to Carcassonne on the banks of the Aude River. The city lacked its own supply of water and could not hold out for long. Under promise of safe conduct Raymond-Roger Trencavel therefore negotiated the surrender of the city. All the citizens of the city were spared but they were forced to leave without taking anything with them. The illustration on the right from *Les Grandes chroniques de France* shows them leaving the city without even the clothes on their back. Simon de Montfort was granted dominion over Carcassonne and Béziers. Raymond-Roger was imprisoned in his own dungeon in Carcassonne and died there within a few months.

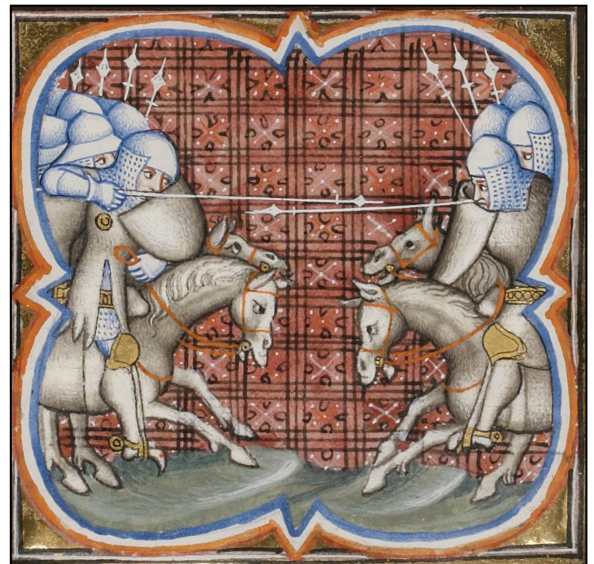
Mass Burnings

After Carcassonne, the army moved on to besiege other Languedoc towns and cities. After a month of siege in 1210, Simon de Montfort accepted the surrender of Minerve, and agreed to spare its inhabitants. However, Arnaud Amaury insisted that they should all be asked to swear allegiance to the Catholic Church. One hundred and forty Cathar Perfects refused and were burned at the stake outside the town. This was the first of the many mass immolations that would recur throughout the crusade. Among the most heinous of these executions, four hundred Cathar Perfects were burned at Lavaur

in 1211.

The Battle of Muret

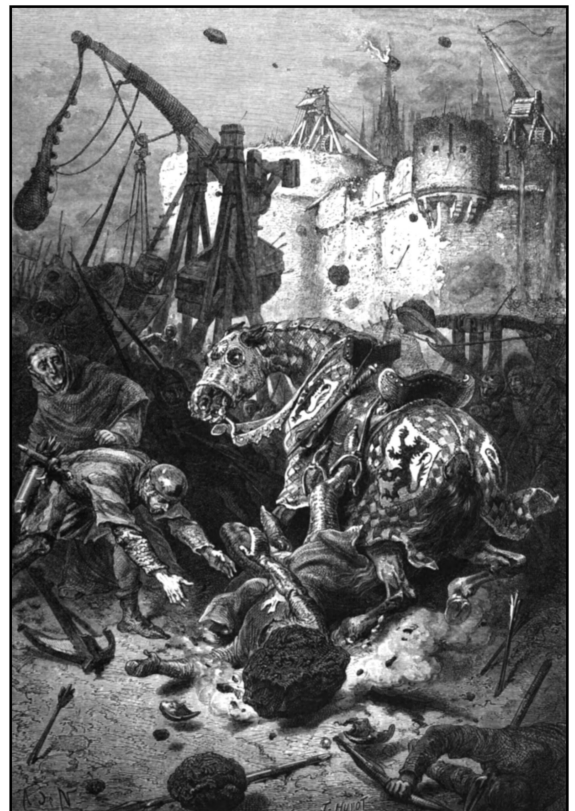
Simon de Montfort continued to take various towns and cities in Languedoc, but stayed away from Toulouse, which was large and well defended. Raymond VI of Toulouse negotiated support from Pedro II of Aragon and from Raymond-Roger of Foix and in 1213 a large army assembled on the plain outside the city walls of Muret just south of Toulouse, where the forces of Simon de Montfort were garrisoned. The crusaders were vastly outnumbered. Some reported a ratio of 10 to 1 although it was more likely 3 to 1.



Early in the morning of September 12, 1213, Simon de Montfort said his prayers and led his knights out along the Garonne River away from the encampment of the besiegers. After a while he turned and led a ferocious charge against the besiegers (see illustration on the right from *Les Grandes chroniques de France*). The southerners turned toward them but the knights of the Crusaders hit the besiegers at full speed shattering their defenses and breaking through their lines (O'Shea, 2000, pp 141-149). The result was a complete rout. Among the thousands of Toulousian and Aragonese dead was Pedro II. Less than one hundred Crusaders died.

Toulouse

Toulouse remained unconquered. In 1215, the Pope convened the Fourth Lateran Council to broker disputes within the Christian lands. Raymond VI journeyed to Rome to plead the case for an independent Toulouse, but the council ultimately granted Simon de Montfort dominion over all of Languedoc. The crusaders, recently reinforced by prince Louis of France (later to become King Louis VIII), came to take up residence in Toulouse. In 1216, Raymond VI returned to regain his patrimony. Over the next two years the city changed hands several times.



On June 25, 1218, Simon de Montfort coming to the aid of his brother Guy who had been wounded in an assault on the city walls, was struck by a boulder launched by a catapult from within the city walls (illustration on the right from a 19th-Century engraving):

This was worked by noblewomen, by little girls and men's wives, and now a stone arrived just where it was needed and struck Count Simon on his steel helmet, shattering his eyes,

brains back teeth, forehead and jaw. Bleeding and black the count dropped dead on the ground (Shirley 2016, p 172)

The poet who wrote the latter parts of the *Canso de la Crozada* (Shirley, 2016) did not grieve the death of Simon. He reported that the crusaders took Simon's body to Carcassonne for burial, and imagined a fitting epitaph. The original version in Occitan gives a flavor of the rhyming of troubadour poetry:

Tot dreit a Carcassona l'en portan sebelhir
El moster S. Nazari celebrar et ufrir,
E ditz el epictafi, cel quil sab ben legir :
Qu'el es sans ez es martirs, e que deu resperir,
E dins el gaug mirable heretar e florir,
E portar la corona e el regne sezir;
Ez ieu ai auzit dire c'aisis deu avenir:
Si per homes aucirre ni per sanc expandir,
Ni per esperitz perdre ni per mortz cosentir,
E per mals cosselhs creire, e per focs abrandir,
E per baros destruire, e per Paratge aunir,
E per las terras toldre, e per orgolh suffrir,
E per los mals escendre, e pel[s] bes escantir,
E per donas aucirre e per efans delir,
Pot hom en aquest segle Jhesu Crist comquerir,
El deu portar corona e el cel resplandir!

[Straight to Carcassonne they carried it and buried it with masses and offerings in the church of St Nazaire. The epitaph says, for those who can read it, that he is a saint and martyr who shall breathe again and shall in wondrous joy inherit and flourish, shall wear a crown and be seated in the kingdom. And I have heard it said that this must be so – if by killing men and shedding blood, by damning souls and causing deaths, by trusting evil counsels, by setting fires, destroying men, dishonouring *paratge*, seizing lands and encouraging pride, by kindling evil and quenching good, by killing women and slaughtering children, a man can in this world win Jesus Christ, certainly Count Simon wears a crown

and shines in heaven above. (Shirley, 2016, laisse 208)]

The word *paratge* in Occitan is difficult to translate. It derives from the Latin *par* (equal) and is thus similar to the English word “peerage.” However, it had come to mean all that was good in Occitan society: equality, honor, chivalry, hospitality, *joie de vivre*.

The End of the Crusade

After the death of Simon de Montfort, the crusade continued intermittently. Various strongholds in the domain of Toulouse were conquered by the crusaders. Louis VIII of France became the main leader of the crusade. He conquered the city of Marmande in 1219 but was unable to take Toulouse. Many of the Cathars retreated to mountain strongholds. Raymond VI died in 1222; Raymond-Roger of Foix died in 1223. Their heirs lacked their strength and charisma. Most historians date the end of the Crusade to 1229 when the Treaty of Paris was signed in Meaux, granting the Kingdom of France dominion over all the lands previously held by Toulouse.

In order to root out the remaining Cathars in Languedoc, Pope Gregory IX established the Papal Inquisition in 1231. Instead of allowing local bishops investigate heretics, the pope appointed itinerant inquisitors from among the ranks of the Dominicans and the Franciscans. Accompanied by clerks and lawyers, these inquisitors travelled throughout the region of Languedoc, seeking out heretics, bringing them to trial, and handing them over to the secular authorities for burning (Deane, 2011, Chapter 3) For their faithful service the Dominicans became known as the Dogs of God (*Domini canes*).

One of the last Cathar refuges to fall was Montségur (Occitan for “safe hill”) a castle built on top of a steep and isolated peak known in Occitan as a *puog* (illustrated below). The castle was 170 m above the plain and the stronghold was virtually impregnable. In 1242 two inquisitors were murdered

by Cathars from Montségur. The French forces (now under Louis IX) began the siege of the isolated mountain stronghold in May 1243. Slowly and inexorably the French came closer to city until it was within range of their catapults. The castle finally surrendered in March 1244. About 220 Cathar Perfects were burned to death on the field below the puog. This became known as the *Plat dels Cremats* (field of the burned).



Saint Peter Martyr

The Inquisition moved on from Languedoc to the Northern Italy. In 1852, Peter of Verona, a Dominican friar, was appointed Inquisitor in Lombardy. When returning from Como to Milan, Peter and his companion Domenic were assassinated by assassins hired by the Milanese Cathars. This is illustrated in a 1507 painting by Giovanni Bellini (see below). Despite the foreground violence one can see in the distance a countryside of peace and beauty. The woodsmen go about their work. The light from the harvest shines through the trees.



Albi

In 1282 work was begun on the new Cathedral Basilica of Saint Cecilia in Albi, which was to become the largest brick building in the world. With its narrow windows and huge tower, it dominates the city like a fortress, a true bastion against heresy (see below). Above the high altar a vast fresco of the Last Judgement reminds the people of Languedoc of the torments that await those that do not follow the true teachings.



Peyrepertuse

The history of the Cathars should not end with the formidable Cathedral of Albi. More fitting is the Cathar castle of Peyrepertuse (from Occitan *pèirapertusa*, pierced rock). It was finally surrendered to the French in 1240, and later became part of the French border defences.



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Cézanne

Paul Cézanne (1839-1906) learned to experience nature with the vividness of the Impressionists but evolved his own individual

style of painting. How he perceived the world was as important as the way it appeared. For most of his life he lived and painted in Aix-en-Provence. He had no students and his work became recognized only toward the end of his life. Nevertheless, many of the proponents of the modernist movement that began in the first decade of the 20th Century acknowledged Cézanne as their artistic father (Hook, 2021). This post comments on some of his paintings.

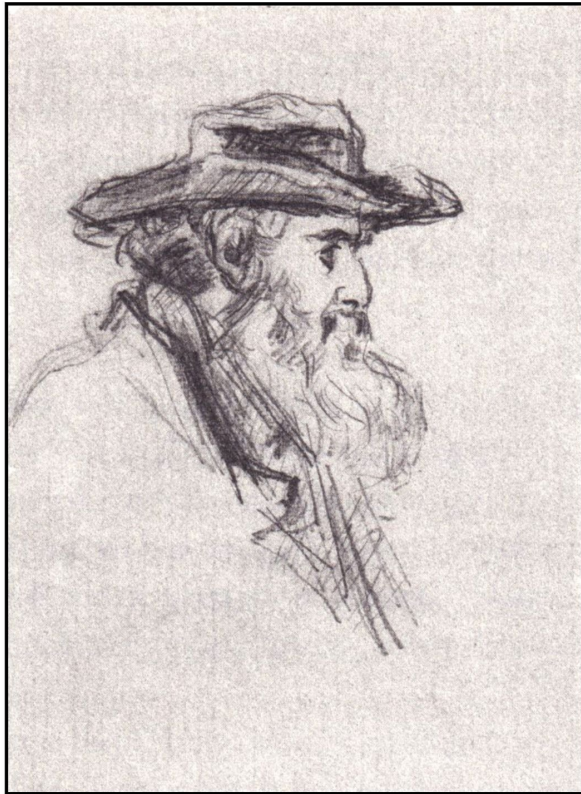
Early Life

Cézanne's father, a successful businessman and banker in Aix-en-Provence, wanted his son to carry on the family's banking business. However, Cézanne wished to become a painter and his father eventually gave in to his stubbornness. The young man came to Paris in 1861, took lessons in some of the painting studios and spent time studying and drawing in the Louvre (Schapiro, 1952; Danchev, 2010). He was impressed by the emotional force of Delacroix and intrigued by the iconoclasm of Manet. He later made his own versions of Manet's *Olympia* and *Le Déjeuner sur l'Herbe* (both exhibited in 1863). He brooded and made paintings of rape and murder. His style was generally dark and heavy. He seemed destined to be just another angry young man without significant talent.

Friendship with Pissarro.

However, during his studies in Paris, Cézanne became friends with Camille Pissarro (1830-1903). Pissarro was older but both were outsiders: Cézanne was an unsophisticated provincial and Pissarro was a Jew from the island of St Thomas in the Caribbean. Pissarro had taken up the idea of painting directly from nature (*en plein air*), molding shapes in colors rather than defining them with outlines. He was one of the founding members of the Impressionists and exhibited with them from 1874 to 1886. He was full of enthusiasm for this new movement and loved to discuss its theories with his younger colleague. Despite their different personalities – Pissarro was gentle

and congenial, Cézanne rough and unsocial – the two painters became fast friends, exchanging pencil portraits of each other (from around 1874, Pissarro on the left and Cézanne on the right).



In the decade from 1871 to 1881, they often worked together in the environs of Paris (Pissarro, 2005). Pissarro lived in Pontoise, and for a while Cézanne lived in nearby Auvers. Sometimes Cézanne directly copied his colleague's paintings, sometimes they worked simultaneously, and sometimes Cézanne would revisit a scene that Pissarro had painted before. Under the tutelage of Pissarro, Cézanne lost his youthful darkness and began to paint what he saw rather than what he imagined.

However, the two painters maintained their individual styles. Pissarro worked continuously adding tiny points of color to the canvas. His paintings vividly portray the atmosphere of a landscape, capture the color of its light, and accurately delineate its perspective. Cézanne would often spend a long time contemplating what he saw before adding paint to the

canvas. His colors were perhaps brighter than reality and they were put on the canvas in “patches” rather than dots. His perspective never really fit a single point of view.

The following illustration shows two paintings of *The Road at Pontoise*. The upper painting by Pissarro was made in 1875 and the lower by Cézanne about a year later. Cézanne’s painting has a more limited field of view, his colors show more contrast and less definition, and his landscape contains no people.



Nancy Locke (2021) recounts the observations of a peasant who once watched the two painters at their easels in the countryside:

“M. Pissarro, en travaillant, *piquait* (et mon paysan faisait le geste), et M. Cézanne *plaquait* (autre geste).”

Selon cet observateur contemporain, Pissarro était plus susceptible de travailler avec un pinceau perpendiculaire à la toile, l’approchant avec un mouvement de tamponnage ou de piqure, alors que Cézanne était plus enclin à se déplacer latéralement avec son pinceau ou son couteau à palette, travaillant ainsi dans le même plan que la toile.

[M. Pissarro, while working, “stung” (and my peasant made the gesture), and M. Cézanne “plastered” (another gesture). According to this contemporary observer, Pissarro was more likely to work with a brush perpendicular to the canvas, approaching it with a dabbing or stabbing motion, whereas Cézanne was more inclined to move his brush or palette knife laterally, thus working in the same plane as the canvas. (my translation)]

Cézanne later described his method of painting to Joachim Gasquet. However, Gasquet wrote down these conversations long after Cézanne had died and the words are likely as much Gasquet as Cézanne:

[L]entement les bases géologiques n’apparaissent, des couches s’établissent, les grands plans de ma toile, j’en dessine mentalement le squelette pierreux. Je vois affleurer les roches sous l’eau, peser le ciel. Tout tombe d’aplomb. Une pâle palpitation enveloppe les aspects linéaires. Les terres rouges sortent d’un abîme. Je commence à me séparer du paysage, à le voir. Je m’en dégage avec cette première esquisse, ces lignes géologiques. La géométrie, mesure de la terre. Une tendre émotion me prend. Des racines de cette émotion monte la sève, les couleurs. Une sorte de délivrance. Le rayonnement de l’âme, le regard, le mystère

extériorisé, l'échange entre la terre et le soleil, l'idéal et la réalité, les couleurs! Une logique aérienne, colorée, remplace brusquement la sombre, la têtue géométrie. Tout s'organise, les arbres, les champs, les maisons. Je vois. Par taches. L'assise géologique, le travail préparatoire, le monde du dessin s'enfonce, s'est écroulé comme dans une catastrophe. Un cataclysme l'a emporté, régénéré. Une nouvelle période vit. La vraie ! Celle où rien ne m'échappe, où tout est dense et fluide à la fois, naturel. Il n'y a plus que des couleurs, et en elles de la clarté, l'être qui les pense, cette montée de la terre vers le soleil, cette exhalaison des profondeurs vers l'amour. Le génie serait d'immobiliser cette ascension dans une minute d'équilibre, en suggérant quand même son élan. Je veux m'emparer de cette idée, de ce jet d'émotion, de cette fumée d'être au-dessus de l'universel brasier. Ma toile pèse, un poids alourdit mes pinceaux. Tout tombe. Tout retombe sous l'horizon. De mon cerveau sur ma toile, de ma toile vers la terre. Pesamment. Où est l'air, la légèreté dense? Le génie serait de dégager l'amitié de toutes ces choses en plein air, dans la même montée, dans le même désir. Il y a une minute du monde qui passe. La peindre dans sa réalité ! Et tout oublier pour cela. Devenir elle-même. Être alors la plaque sensible. Donner l'image de ce que nous voyons, en oubliant tout ce qui a paru avant nous. (Gasquet, 1921, pp. 136-137)

[S]lowly geographical foundations appear, the layers, the major planes form themselves on my canvas. Mentally I compose the rocky skeleton. I can see the outcropping of stones under the water; the sky weighs on me. Everything falls into place. A pale palpitation envelops the linear elements. The red earths rise from an abyss. I begin to separate myself from the landscape, to see it. With the first sketch, I detach myself from these geological lines. Geometry measures the earth. A feeling of tenderness comes over me. Some roots of this emotion raise the sap, the

colors. It's a kind of deliverance. The soul's radiance, the gaze, exteriorized mystery are exchanged between earth and sun, ideal and reality, colors! An airborne, colorful logic quickly replaces the somber, stubborn geography. Everything becomes organized: trees, fields, houses. I see. By patches: the geographical strata, the preparatory work, the world of drawing all cave in, collapse as in a catastrophe. A cataclysm has carried it all away, regenerated it. A new era is born. The true one! The one in which nothing escapes me, where everything is dense and fluid at the same time, natural. All that remains is color, and in color, brightness, clarity, the being who imagines them, this ascent from the earth toward the sun, this exhalation from the depths toward love. Genius would be to capture this ascension in a delicate equilibrium while also suggesting its flight. I want to use this idea, this burst of emotion, this smoke of existence above the universal fire. My canvas is heavy, a heaviness weighs down my brushes. Everything drops. Everything falls toward the horizon. From my brain onto my canvas, from my canvas toward the earth. Heavily. Where is the air, the dense lightness? It would take genius to discover the amity of all these things in the open air, in the same ascent, in the same desire. A minute of the world goes by. To paint it in its reality! And to forget every-thing else. To become reality itself. To be the photographic plate. To render the image of what we see, forgetting everything that came before. (Cochran translation in Doran and Cochran, 2001)

Je peins. Par taches. The French word *tache* most commonly denotes a spot, stain or blemish. In painting it means a patch of color. With these patches Cézanne was able to portray on the canvas what he perceived. Pissarro (2005), the grandson of the painter, remarked about how the French word is close to *touche* (touch) and that this brings to mind how touch is both a sensation and an action. Cézanne's painting was an active participation in his experience, not so much a representation

as a recreation of reality.

Over the years Cézanne began to distance himself from the Impressionists (Shiff, 1984). Verdi (1992) called him the “reluctant impressionist.” As well as heightening his color contrasts, he portrayed space quite differently. Each part of the painting existed on its own plane, and these planes intersected to form the structure of the scene. Cézanne was more interested in the underlying form of what he saw rather than its immediate appearance. His differentiation from the impressionists is visible below in two paintings made in the gardens of the Hermitage at Pontoise: Pissarro’s from 1867, and Cézanne’s from 1881. After 1881 Cézanne retired to Provence only coming to Paris occasionally.



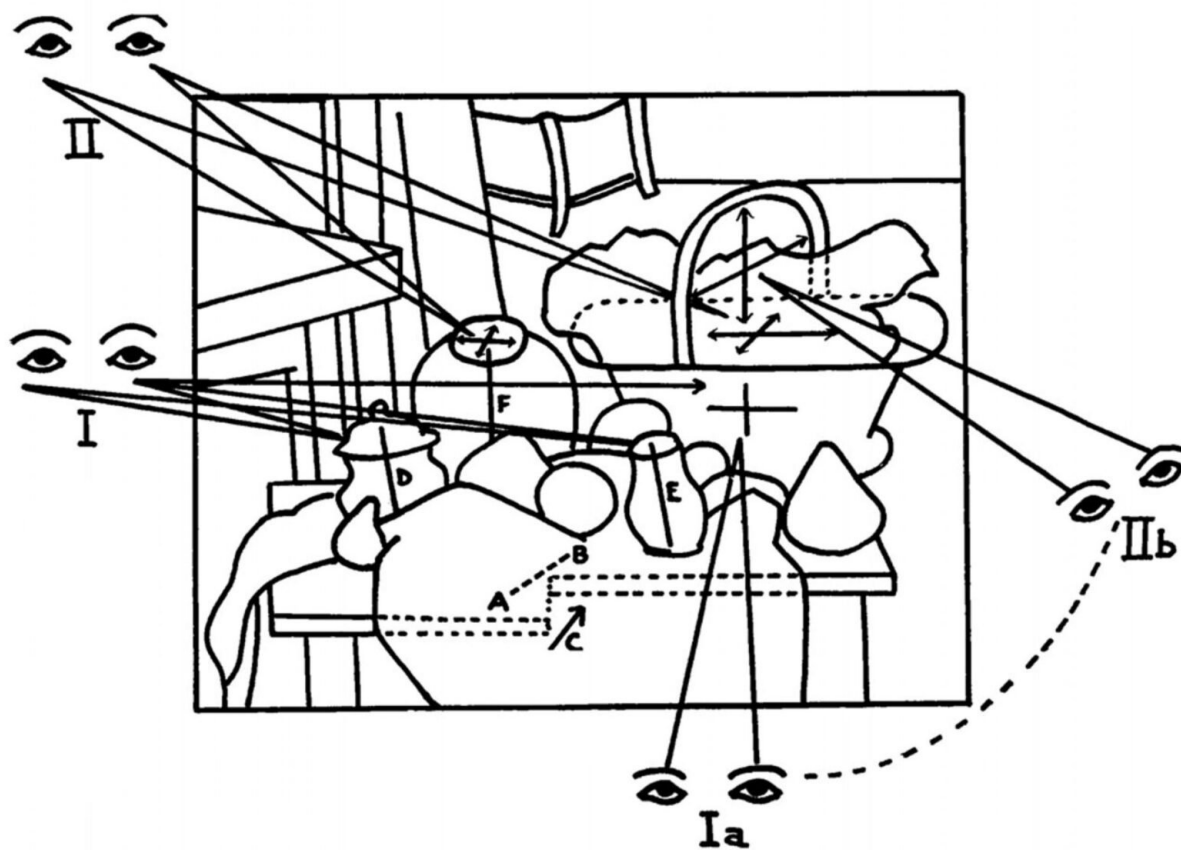
Still Lives

During his association with Pissarro in the 1870s, Cézanne developed his own individual technique for portraying still lifes. French painters had followed the Dutch in their enthusiasm for still life. The illustration below shows paintings by Chardin (1764), Manet (1864), Pissarro (1872) and Cézanne (1874). All contain a paring knife. In Cézanne's painting, the objects do not simply exist. The space tips upward. The objects seem to move towards the viewer, but are restrained by the rumpled tablecloth.



Multiple points of view were characteristic of Cézanne's later still lifes. The following figure shows his 1890 painting of *The Kitchen Table* as analyzed by Erle Loran (1943). The

diagram shows that the objects are viewed from two main heights (I and II on the left); the lower point of view is then located either directly in front or on the right (Ia and IIb). Some of the objects tilt as though they are about to fall (D and E) whereas others stand upright (F). The tabletop on the left is lower than on the right (ABC). These problems of perspective are not due to clumsiness. Cézanne considered each section of the painting by itself and then pieced the scene back together. Such an approach to reality was to become the driving force of Cubism.



The following illustration shows two more of Cézanne's still lifes. In the upper painting – *The Basket of Apples* (1893) the bottle leans to the left, the biscuits tilt upward, and the table top again has two different heights. This instability becomes even more marked in the lower painting of *Still Life with Apples* (1895), about which T. J. Clark (2022, p 75)

The whole array ... is disturbed and unstable (those spilling red spheres, that tipping plate, that earthquake landscape of blue and white cloth) yet composed and crystalline at the same time. And both the orderliness and the disturbance can strike us as features of seeing and features of manufacture – inventions, impositions, flashes of grim wit. Take the crisp fold at the top of the tablecloth, continuing the dark line of the dado [lower portion of a wall]. Or the whole brilliant hard decisiveness of the made pattern – made by machine and then by Cezanne the re-folder – on the blue-and-black drape. Or the anti-colour of the ice-block wall. </p>



The spatial instability of the paintings can make the viewer uneasy. The uncertainty of the artist is palpable. The critic Gustave Geffroy was perhaps the first to mention this *inquiétude* in a review of Cézanne's 1895 exhibition:

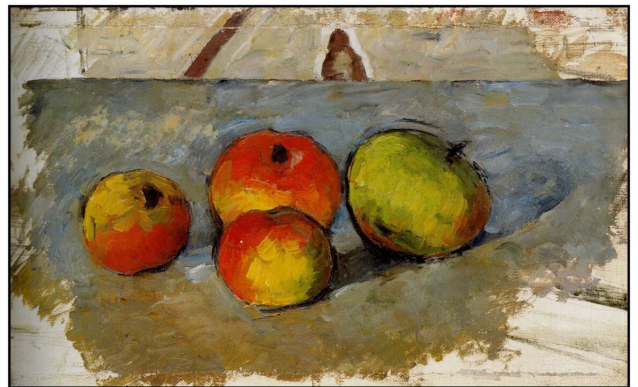
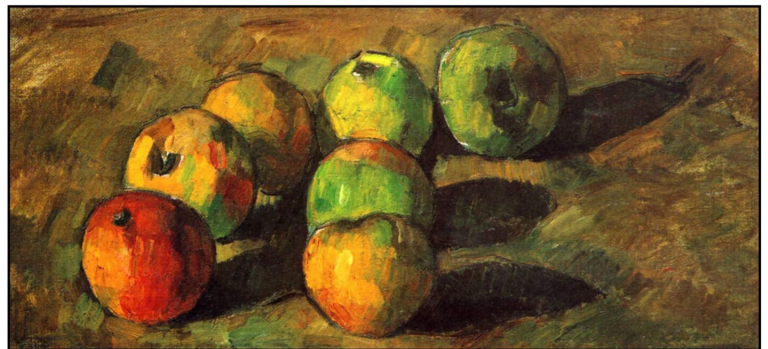
L'inquiétude de l'artiste l'a dominé. Cézanne n'en a pas moins raconté sa sensation profonde au spectacle de l'univers. Il importe peu que sa personnalité ait pris, pour s'exprimer, telle forme plutôt que telle autre. Regrettons qu'il n'ait pas doté son pays et son temps de l'oeuvre grandiose qui était en lui. Mais son individu ne subit de ce regret aucune déperdition, puisqu'il est présent, et bien présent, par toutes ces oeuvres où se mêlent, comme on ne l'a jamais vu davantage peut-être, la réflexion et la spontanéité. (Geffroy, 1900, p 218). </p>

[The anxiety (unease, disquiet) of the artist overcame him. Cézanne nevertheless recounted his deep experience of the universe. It matters little that his personality took, in order to express itself, one form rather than another. We are sorry that he did not endow his country and his time with the great work that was in him. But his achievement suffers no loss from this regret, since he is present, and very present, in all these works which mingle, more than we have ever seen before, reflection and spontaneity. (my translation)] </p>

Cézanne's Apples

At school in Aix, Cézanne had once come to the defence of the young Emile Zola who was being bullied by older students. The next day Zola brought Cézanne a basket of apples (Schapiro, 1968). The two became fast friends and Cézanne's apples became a recurring *motif* in his paintings, many of which simply show a group of apples on a surface (Leca, 2014). As illustrated below, each apple is defined by its colors. There are no outlines, only shadows. They represent things as they exist unto themselves (Armstrong, 2018). In his poem *To an Artist*,

Seamus Heaney (1984) describes “his coercion of the substance from green apples”

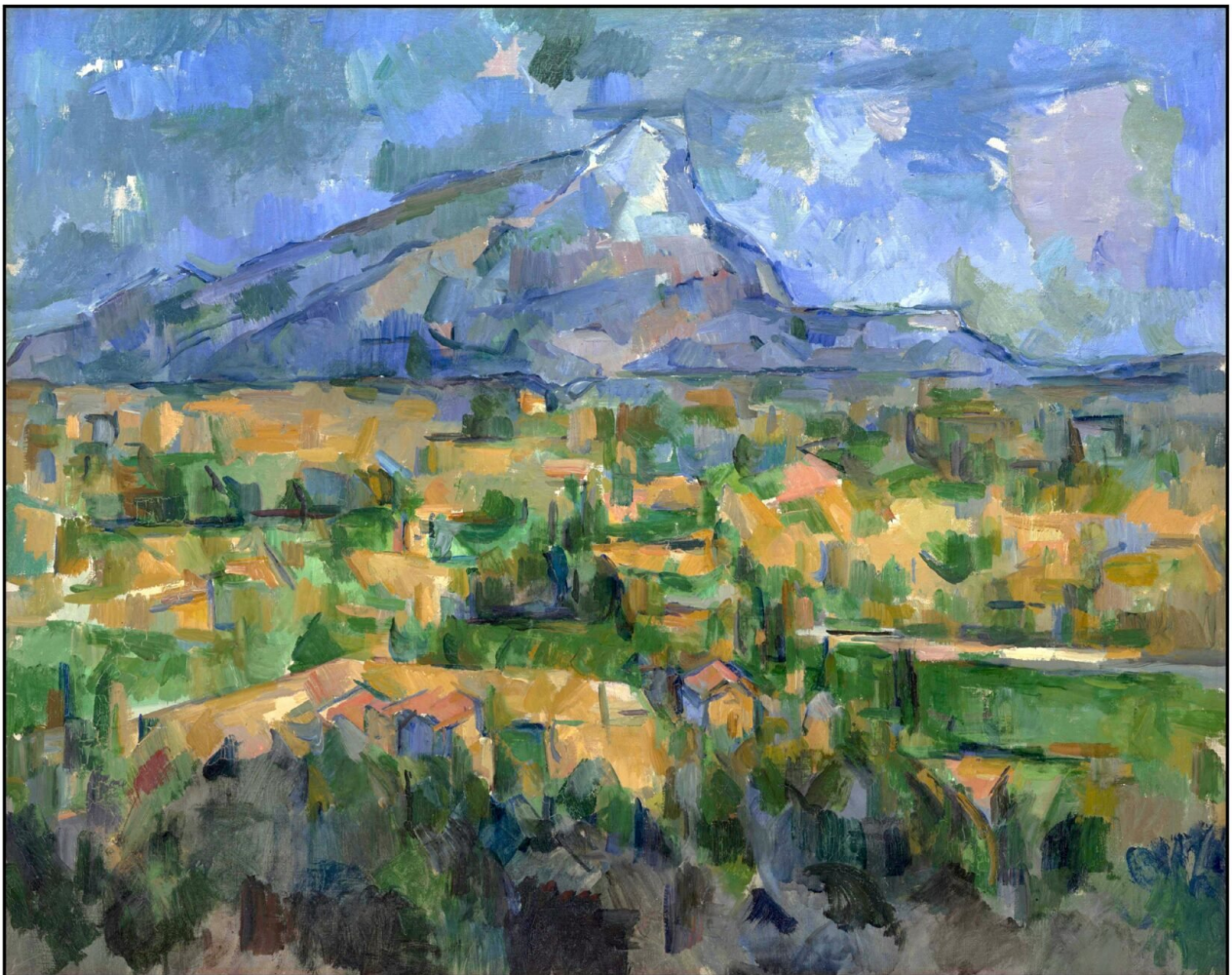


Mont Sainte Victoire

After he returned to Provence, Cézanne began a series of paintings depicting the mountain to the east of Aix-en-Provence: Mont Sainte Victoire. The following illustration shows two paintings from the mid 1890s, the upper one now in the Barnes Collection in Philadelphia and the lower in the Courtauld Collection in London.



As the years went on the depictions of the mountain became more abstract. The color patches expanded and the structure simplified. The following illustration shows a modern photograph of the mountain together with Cézanne's 1904 painting:



William Wilson commented on the multiplicity of the depiction:

the deep space represented in Cézanne's paintings is not the space of historical events; he has altered that space, bringing the distant nearer, and pushing the near back. As we look towards Mont Sainte-Victoire it is brought towards us, but Cézanne doesn't show the cross that had been erected on it. Anything might happen in historical space, but Cézanne did not want that; he wanted painting to be about what was happening, when what was happening was an experience of successive spontaneous visual sensations which include a feeling of earlier and later, of before and after, along with *now*. Looking at a landscape by Cézanne, it is as though in that space we would go a few yards to the left, some yards back, some more yards upward, and several yards *later*. (Wilson, 1988, p 193)

As the years went by, the paintings of Mont Sainte Victoire became more monumental. The following illustration shows two late depictions.



The paintings have become independent of their source, creations in their own right. The following is a statement by Cézanne as reported (much later) by Gasquet. It is likely exaggerated. The comment that *le paysage se pense en moi* does not ring true as something that Cézanne would have said, but it does depict the way that the critics and painters began to consider his achievement:

L'art est une harmonie parallèle à la nature. Que penser des imbéciles qui vous disent: le peintre est toujours inférieur à la nature! Il lui est parallèle. S'il n'intervient pas volontairement... entendez-moi bien. Toute sa volonté doit être de silence. Il doit faire taire en lui toutes les voix des préjugés, oublier, oublier, faire silence, être un écho parfait. Alors, sur sa plaque sensible, tout le paysage s'inscrira. Pour le fixer sur la toile, l'extérioriser, le métier interviendra ensuite, mais le métier respectueux qui, lui aussi, n'est prêt qu'à obéir, à traduire inconsciemment, tant il sait bien sa langue, le texte qu'il déchiffre, les deux textes parallèles, la nature vue, la nature sentie, celle qui est là... (il montrait la plaine verte et bleue) celle qui est ici... (il se frappait le front) qui toutes deux doivent s'amalgamer pour durer, pour vivre d'une vie moitié humaine, moitié divine, la vie de l'art, écoutez un peu... la vie de Dieu. Le paysage se reflète, s'humanise, se pense en moi. Je l'objective, le projette, le fixe sur ma toile. (Gasquet, 1921, pp. 131-132)

[Art is a harmony parallel to nature. What would you think of idiots who would tell you, the painter is always inferior to nature! They are parallel, if the artist doesn't intentionally intervene ... hear me well. His entire will must be silent. He must silence all prejudice within himself. He must for-get, forget, be quiet, be a perfect echo. Then the full landscape will inscribe itself on his photographic plate. In order to fix it on his canvas, to exteriorize it, his craft comes into action. But it must be a respectful

craft which, itself also, is ready only to obey, to translate unconsciously so long as it knows its language well, the text it deciphers, these two parallel texts: nature seen and nature felt, the nature which is out there ... (he indicates the blue and green plain) and the nature which is in here ... (he taps himself on the forehead) both of which must unite in order to endure, to live a life half human, half divine, the life of art, listen a little ... the life of God. The landscape is reflected, becomes human, and becomes conscious in me. I objectify it, project it, fix it on my canvas. (Cochran translation)

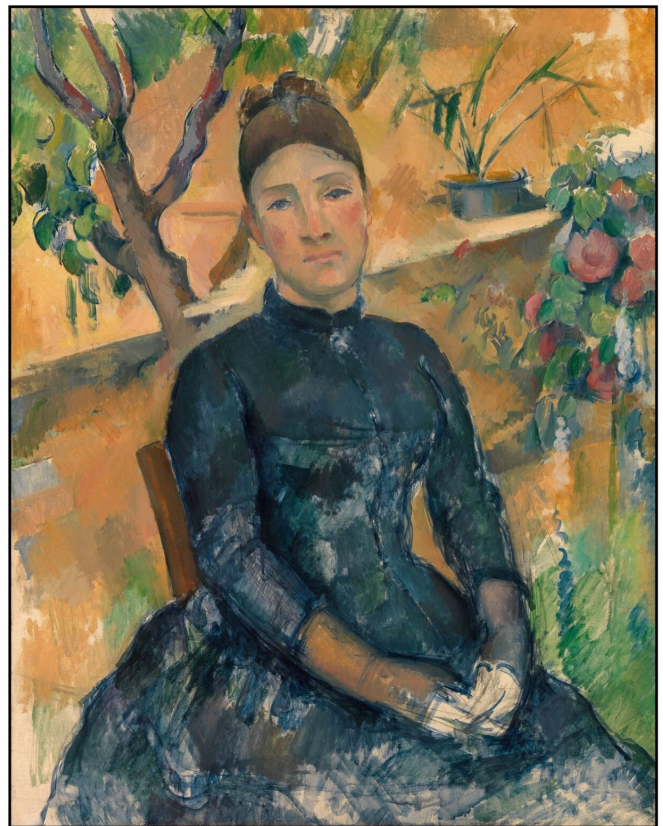
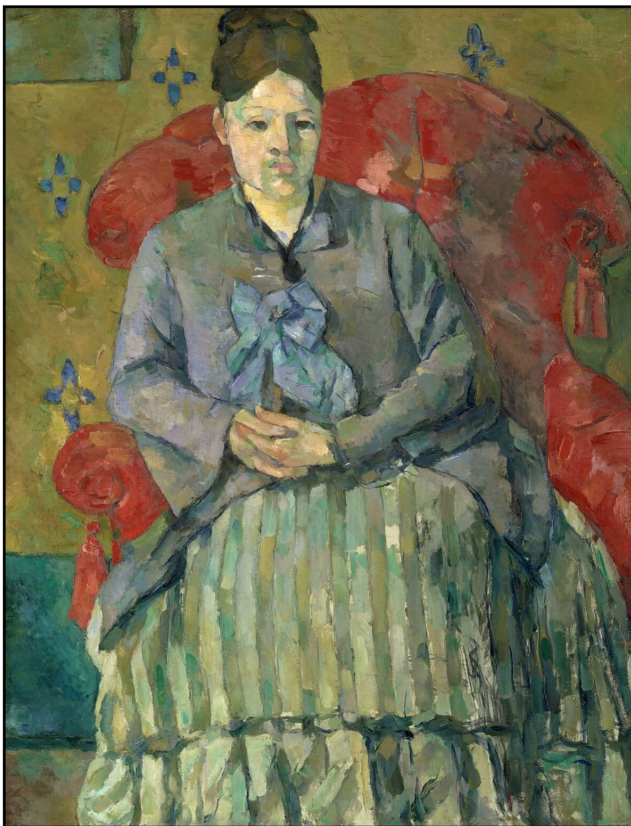
First Recognition

Cézanne bought his paint supplies from Julien Tanguy (the same Père Tanguy that was painted by Vincent Van Gogh) in Paris, and left some paintings with him for possible sale. When Tanguy died in 1894, the dealer Ambroise Vollard obtained some of Cézanne's paintings from the sale of his estate. He then contacted Cézanne, and arranged for his first solo exhibition in 1895. Cézanne suddenly became a success.

Younger painters found inspiration in the vividness and the uncertainty of Cézanne's still lifes. In 1900 Maurice Denis painted his *Hommage à Cézanne* showing Cézanne's 1880 painting *Still Life with Compotier* being admired by artists and critics. The persons illustrated are from left to right: Odilon Redon, Edouard Vuillard, André Mellario (in top hat), Ambroise Vollard (behind the easel), Maurice Denis, Paul Ranson, Ker-Xavier Roussel, Pierre Bonnard (with pipe) and Marthe Denis.



Several portraits were included in Cézanne's first exhibition (Elderfield, 2017). Below are shown two 1891 portraits of Madame Cézanne (Marie-Hortense Fiquet, his one-time model and mother of his son). The portraits lack the fine detail that characterized the paintings of classical artists. Yet facial perception depends more on general form than on details, and Cézanne's paintings grasp this form. The portraits have a monumentality – as if the sitter was as important to the painter as his beloved Mont Sainte Victoire.



The poet Rainer Maria Rilke was impressed by the portrait on the left:

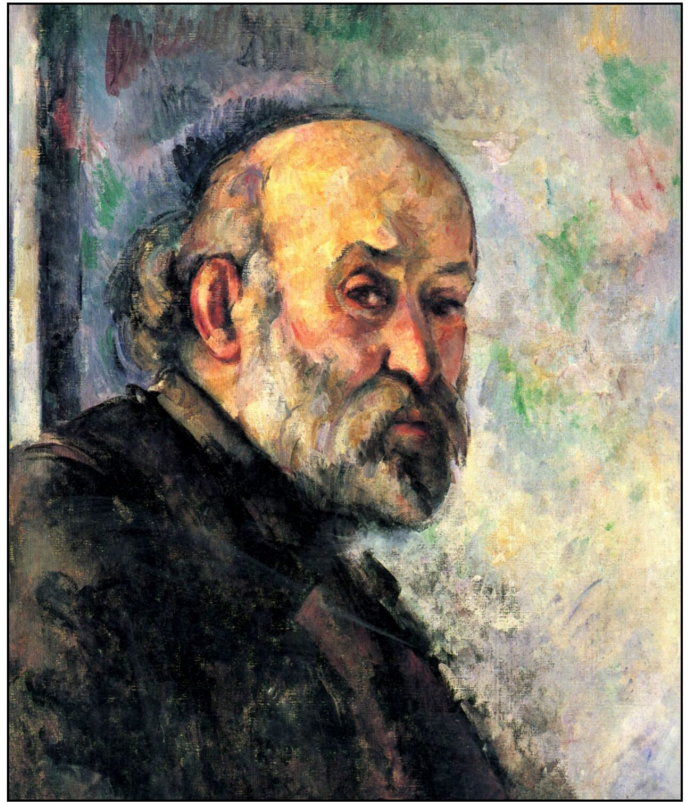
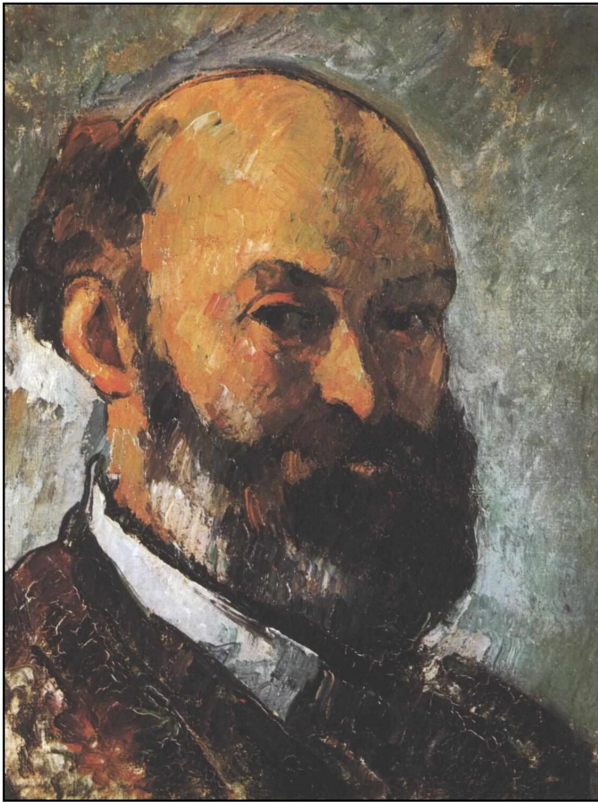
A red, upholstered low armchair has been placed in front of an earthy-green wall in which a cobalt-blue pattern (a cross with the center left out) is very sparingly repeated; the round bulging back curves and slopes forward and down to the armrests (which are sewn up like the sleeve-stump of an armless man). The left armrest and the tassel that hangs from it full of vermillion no longer have the wall behind

them but instead, near the lower edge, a broad stripe of greenish blue, against which they clash in loud contradiction. Seated in this red armchair, which is a personality in its own right, is a woman, her hands in the lap of a dress with broad vertical stripes that are very lightly indicated by small, loosely distributed flecks of green yellows and yellow greens, up to the edge of the blue-gray jacket, which is held together in front by a blue, greenly scintillating silk bow. In the brightness of the face, the proximity of all these colors has been exploited for a simple modeling of form and features: even the brown of the hair roundly pinned up above the temples and the smooth brown in the eyes has to express itself against its surroundings. It's as if every part were aware of all the others—it participates that much; that much adjustment and rejection is happening in it; that's how each daub plays its part in maintaining equilibrium and in producing it: just as the whole picture finally keeps reality in equilibrium. (Rilke, 1907, translated 1985 pp 70-71)

The following illustration shows Cézanne's portrait of the critic Gustave Geffroy (1896) seated at a desk that expands irrationally toward the reader and the unfinished eyeless portrait of the dealer Ambroise Vollard (1899).

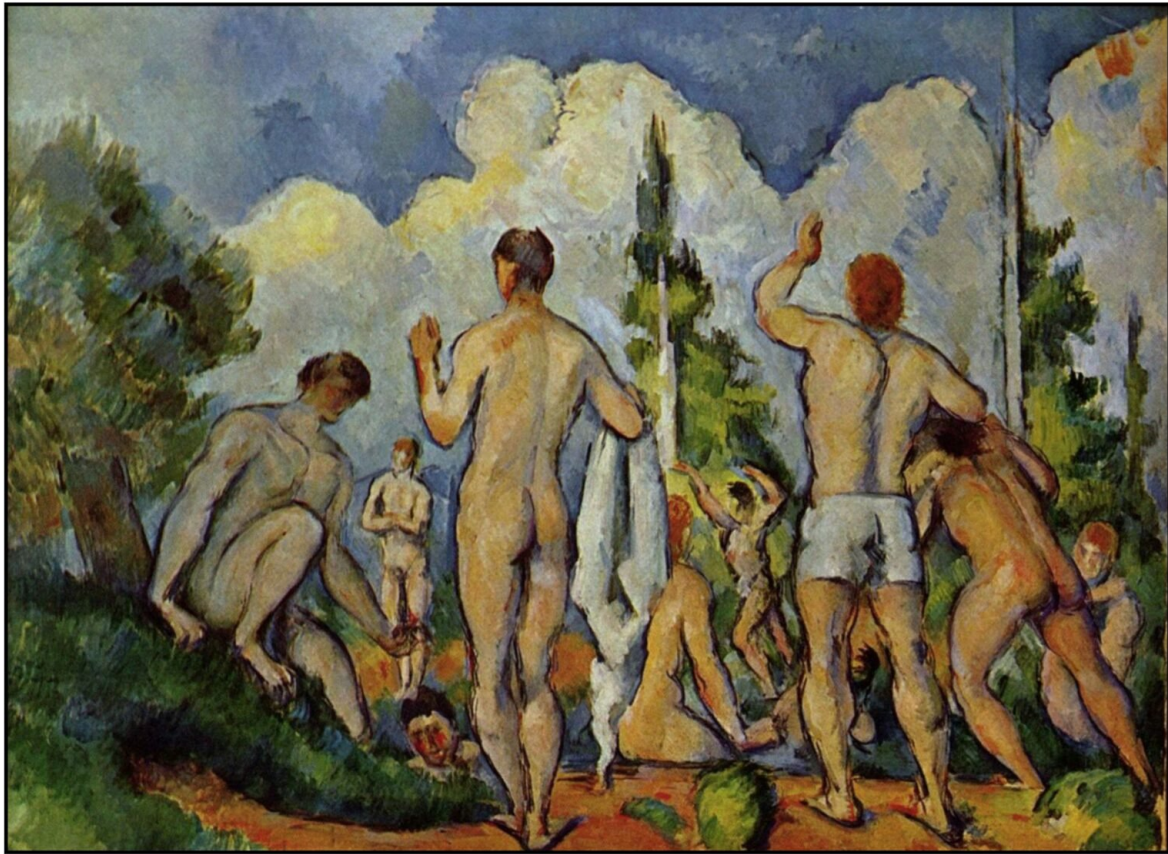


Cézanne produced many self-portraits. Those illustrated below are from 1880, when he had decided on his way of painting, and from 1895, when he had attained success but had begun to doubt his ability to make it significant.



The Bathers

Cézanne's fondest memories of childhood were the times he spent swimming with Zola and other friends in the rivers and lakes near Aix-en-Provence. Throughout his life he painted scenes of bathers (Krumrine, 1989; Garb1996)). In the early years of the 20th Century, he worked on several large paintings of bathers which were left unfinished at the time of his death in 1906. He did not use models. His figures were based on drawings he had made as a student in Paris, on photographs and on prints of the old masters (Verdi, 1992, Chapter 6). The following illustration shows a painting of male bathers from 1894, and one of the large paintings of female bathers unfinished at his death:



The very incompleteness of the late works became part of their appeal. Cézanne was attempting to find humanity's lost innocence. His inability was later interpreted as reflecting the difficulty of perceiving a world that may not be where we wish to live. This conflict between consciousness and reality became a major part of the later philosophy of existentialism – the search for meaning in a meaningless world. Merleau-Ponty remarked in his 1948 essay on *Cézanne's Doubt*

The meaning of what the artist is going to say *does not exist* anywhere– not in things, which as yet have no meaning, nor in the artist himself, in his unformulated life.

The artist must attempt to create this meaning in his work (Alsdorf, 2010; Rutherglen, 2004). The following is from the poem *Morning in the Studio: Les Grandes Baigneuses* by Maitreyabandhu (2019).

They were like dinosaurs in the swaggering green,
insecurely sexed with their hands above their heads.

He wanted earthed Etruscan statuary; he wanted
voluptuaries of the sun, but some were missing limbs
or had their heads blown off, others had broken
wrists
and severed fingers. They were like crippled monkeys
under cathedral trees: they were the century to
come.

The final illustration shows Emile Bernard's 1904 photograph of Cézanne in front of one of his unfinished paintings of *Les Grandes Baigneuses*. The detail on the left of the painting (now in the Barnes Collection) was later changed but the painting remained incomplete at the time of his death.



The Creative Artist

Medina (1995, pp 122-125) remarks on how a Cézanne's painting becomes independent of the experience that led to it. She likens it to *The Poem that Took the Place of a Mountain*, one of the last poems written by Wallace Stevens (1954).

There it was, word for word,
The poem that took the place of a mountain.

He breathed its oxygen,
Even when the book lay turned in the dust of his table.

It reminded him how he had needed
A place to go to in his own direction,

How he had recomposed the pines,
Shifted the rocks and picked his way among clouds,

For the outlook that would be right,
Where he would be complete in an unexplained completion:

The exact rock where his inexactnesses
Would discover, at last, the view toward which they had edged,

Where he could lie and, gazing down at the sea,
Recognize his unique and solitary home.

Death of an Artist

Cézanne tried continuously to make his painting meaningful. His art was his life. He painted right up to his death:

he was caught in a storm while working in the field. Only after having kept at it for two hours under a steady downpour did he start to make for home; but on the way he dropped exhausted. A passing laundry-wagon stopped, and the driver took him home. His old housekeeper came to the door. Seeing her master prostrate and almost lifeless, her first impulse was to run to him and give him every attention. But

just as she was about to loosen his clothes, she stopped, seized with alarm. It must be explained that Cezanne could not endure the slightest physical contact. Even his son, whom he cherished above all ("Paul is my horizon," he used to say), never dared to take his father's arm without saying, "Permit me, papa." And Cezanne, notwithstanding the affection he entertained for his son, could never resist shuddering.

Finally, fearing lest he pass away if he did not have proper care, the good woman summoned all her courage and set about to chafe his arms and legs to restore the circulation, with the result that he regained consciousness without making the slightest protest—which was indeed a bad sign. He was feverish all night long.

On the following day he went down into the garden, intending to continue a study of a peasant which was going rather well. In the midst of the sitting he fainted; the model called for help; they put him to bed, and he never left it again. He died a few days later, on October 22, 1906. (Vollard, 1919)

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