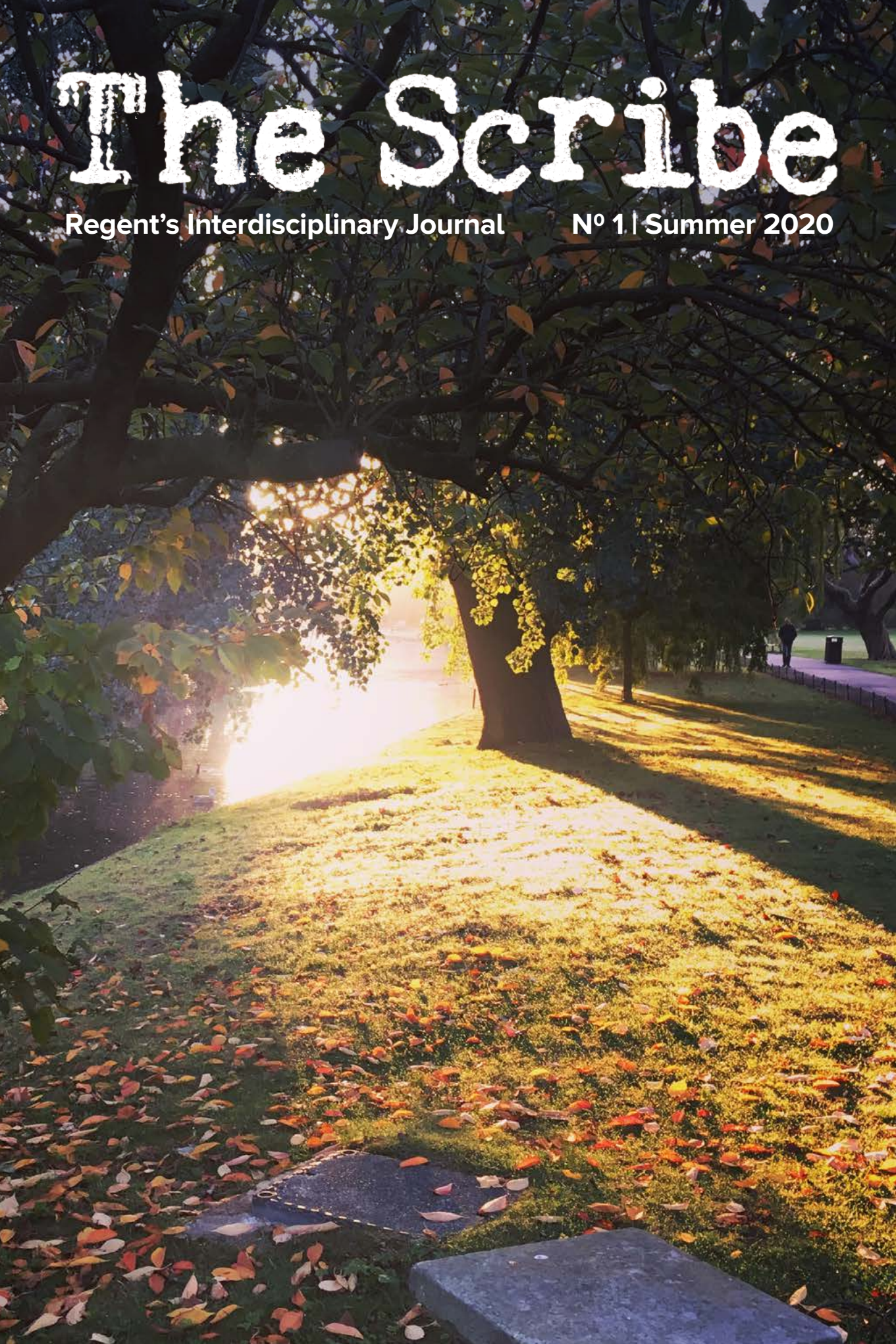


The Scribe

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C ontents

Introduction

The Choices that We Make
by Dr Ana-Maria Pascal3

Poetry

Vacation by Catherine Temma Davidson 7

We had one year by Sarah Dhupar8

Truth by Jaeda Dokes.....9

Blooming evanescent blossom buds
by Boris Glick 40

Lost Life by Boris Glick 11

Musing by Boris Glick 12

A Critic's View of Cirque du Absurd
by John Houghton.....13

Trapped in Time: (A pantoum)
by Damian Kirstein.....14

Daddy by Nia Yasmine Murat 15

Elegy for My Promise
by Nia Yasmine Murat..... 16

1 by Maia Wagener17

Vada by Maia Wagener..... 18

Fiction

Always Remember Your Dreams
by Dean Baker 21

Sometimes They Are
by Will Gillingham 26

The Answer by Ray Grewal 29

Going Away by Mike Harding 30

Just Another Monday
by Martin Milton33

Tapestries and Memories
by Julia Rédei.....37

Non-Fiction

Walking the River Between Two Englands
by Catherine Temma Davidson41

**Learning from Leonardo da Vinci for
Higher Education**
by Dr Peter Sharp45

I Dream of Apocalypses
by Irene Stoppoloni 56

Reviews

Writing about Contemporary Art
by Dr Deborah Schultz 59

**Human emotions through contemporary
video: Bill Viola at St Paul's Cathedral**
by Alina Arcari..... 60

**Is *Fons Americanus* a critique of slavery
or a reinforcement of racial stereotyping?**
by Simon Bond..... 63

**Sarah Lightman: Drawing from Life
and Literature**
by Anna Maffiuletti..... 65

I Introduction

The Choices that We Make

The choices that we make – the more decisive ones – stay with us a lifetime, or until, eventually, they become irrelevant for practical reasons.

We think we leave some things behind by choosing others, but the former have a way of chasing us, insinuating themselves into our lives, surprising us with their presence in places and at times we thought unlikely to find them, getting under our skin with unexpected persistence – as if *they* were the chosen ones.

At 17, I had to choose between continuing to dance and going to university to study philosophy. I chose the latter. But the former kept coming back, in different hypostases, infiltrating various aspects of my inner life. In fact, it ended up in my philosophy. My interest in metaphysics, for instance, slowly but surely became an interest in pragmatism. Phenomenology and hermeneutics survived as a constant preoccupation – indeed they became ever deeper and more nuanced; but this is unsurprising, given that both (taken separately, as well as in their area of overlap) engage the body as much as the mind, and at times make room for a third realm – that of the spirit.

At 21, I had to choose again – this time, between analytic philosophy and a way of reasoning that was closer to literature. My PhD supervisor asked me to. I chose the former – that's what you did, if you wanted to become (read: *be recognised as*) a 'professional philosopher'; but the latter stayed with me, following me around, always present in the background of my thinking and writing.

Borges, Kafka, Marquez, Kundera, Camus, Murdoch and many others have

always been there, whether acknowledged or not, in-between my lines of argumentation. Whenever I needed an example of a situation, or a suggestive turn of phrase, they always delivered – equally if not more so, than analytical tools.

That is why, when I teach rhetoric and argumentation, I prefer to call it *critical* thinking skills, rather than 'analytical'... Perhaps I am naïve in thinking that we can integrate literary, non-analytical discourse in Western philosophy (and be taken seriously), but I keep trying. And students appreciate and are inspired by it.

One more choice – the most important, perhaps. Where to live. The obvious choice would have been France, because of blood connections on my father's side. But no – I had to cross the Channel. My whole life was waiting for me here. But guess what our favourite holiday destination is, for me and my family...

We think we make these choices and stick to them, but often enough, it is precisely what we 'left behind' that seems to be guiding us. As if to prove that there was never a real dichotomy of mutually exclusive alternatives to choose from, in the first place. The 'choice' was an imaginary one, sometimes echoing in our mind like an image enlarged in a mirror game from Borges. There was never a need to sacrifice anything.

We should treasure our inclinations – and assume them as our own, act on them, and take responsibility for their impact on 'the rest' of us... We already know that cross-disciplinary approaches are key to building bridges (rather than walls) between theory and practice, but we should also consider the possibility that apparently contradictory styles and methods often

prove complementary; and some of these combinations bear fruit.

I wonder what it is that I might be discarding right now, without even realising it. If the conscious 'choices' that we make prove to be either too feeble because not followed through in practice, or unfortunate because, by following them through, we become poorer as human beings, should we not try to investigate some others we may be making at a deeper, unspoken level?

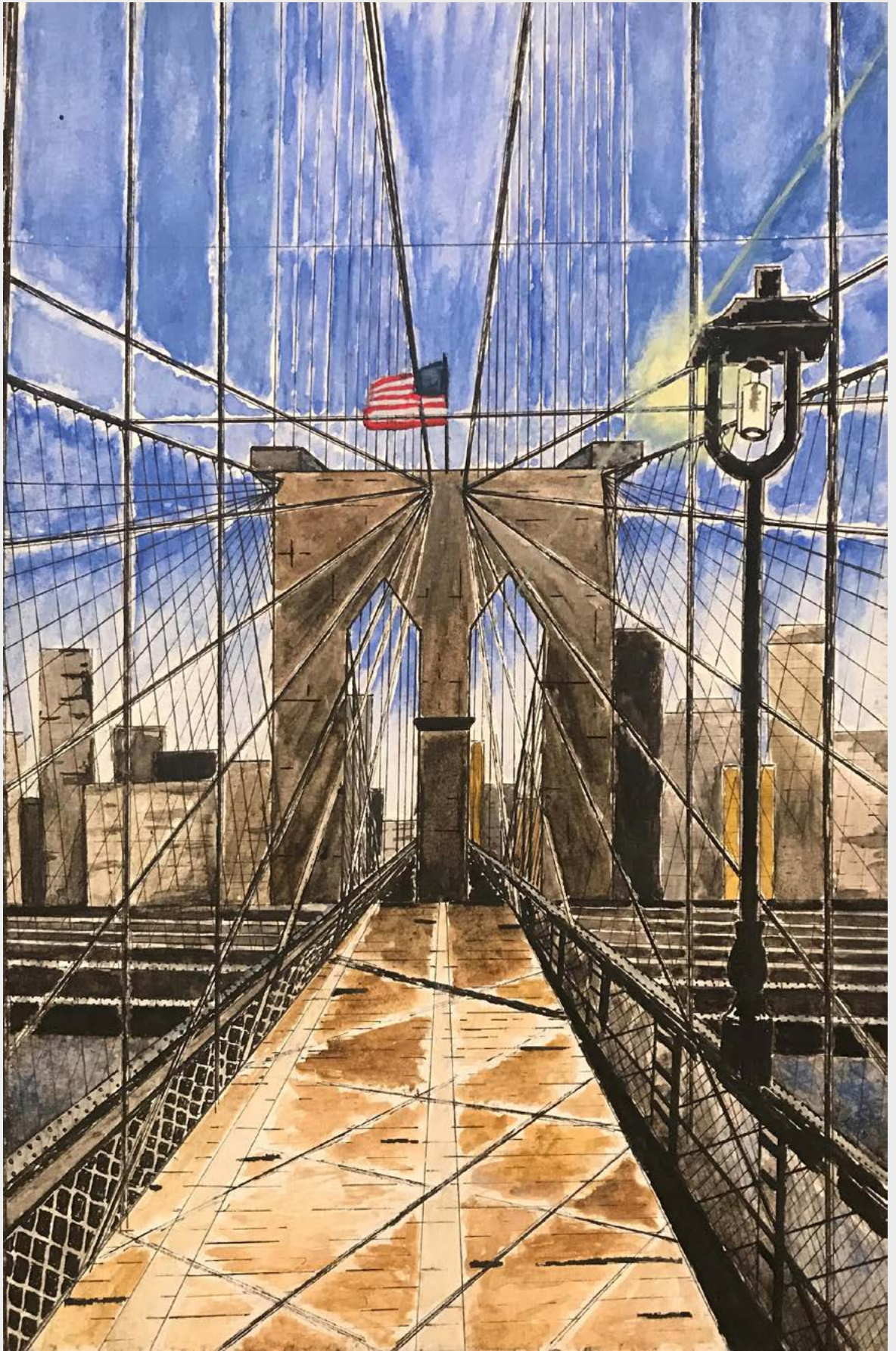
Our writing, for instance. How much time or energy is wasted, trying to decide which style (or even genre) we should

adopt. When all we should be doing, really, is just write. Get it done – as it comes, in the first instance; and work on it, sweat while improving it, but don't discard it before it has even seen the light of day, on grounds that it might be too lyrical, or too analytical.

Don't waste your time in making unnecessary judgements and illusory choices. Just get it done. Let others judge you – later, if ever. ■

Dr Ana-Maria Pascal, Editor
Reader in Philosophy and Public Ethics
Course Leader, BA (Hons) Philosophy,
Politics and Economics

POETRY



Rachel McClure, 2019.
Brooklyn Bridge. Watercolour and ink

CATHERINE TEMMA DAVIDSON
LECTURER IN CREATIVE WRITING

Vacation

On the plane the English baby flirts,
winks over his closed father's red palms.

We land, sky intimacy disperses into cars,
driving away from the tarmac's heat haze.

Our kids in the back, an ocean road, dunes,
pines, evokes childhood summers on Cape Cod,

following the chain of villages along Route Six,
Mashpee, Saganaw, Chatham, Harwich. History

as a series of pillages. In France, everything's old
as the ages, Iron to Enlightenment, from starvation

hovels to bio-nature, roadside stalls, cheeses, now
this fragile epoch of surfboards, bicycles, peaches.

We arrive in a pastel villa by a pool. My children
swim with other miniature European amnesiacs.

I notice turtle doves, tile roofs, sunlit chlorine:
hieroglyphics leading to the land of the dead.

Always this need to read the signs, find
metaphors to link seen world to unseen forces.

I want to pay attention to this here and now,
poet on vacation, surrounded by her family

limbs moving weightlessly through water:
all the geography I understand or could desire.

SARAH DHUPAR
SENIOR STUDENT SUPPORT & WELLBEING OFFICER

We had one year

We had one year together, your first, you grew so fast
That one year is over now, that time has nearly passed.

Every moment you were awake, I couldn't take my eyes from you,
I saw every time you changed, every time you learnt something new.

I heard every new noise you made, every smile, laugh and cry,
Every time you wanted something you couldn't yet do but gave it your best try.

I thought I knew what love felt like, but this was something new,
As what I felt in my heart every time your hand was in mine showed me I didn't have a clue

We've had so much fun together this year my beautiful baby boy,
I've been so very lucky to have spent this time with you, to have been your favourite toy.

Into your second year now, and you are off to nursery.
But I hope in my heart as the years continue to pass that your best times will be spent with me.

JAEDA DOKES
STUDENT IN BA (HONS) LIBERAL STUDIES

Truth

An unannounced zephyr whispers to
leaves of fire.
as the last leaf falls
I am ready for winter.

The burning red dims to
sombre brown and gently paints the streets.
the naked trees watch their lifeless leaves,
full of untold truths,
crunch into oblivion
I am ready for winter.

I invite you to stay,
how the flowers welcome the gust.
I am ready for winter.

BORIS GLICK
HEAD OF STUDENT SERVICES

Blooming evanescent blossom buds

Blooming evanescent blossom buds
Bend in wind and droop in rain
Spots of sparkle, droplets of colored light
 Undulating scents reclining on the backs of floating breezes
Shoots in sidewalk crevices
Pitted, potted, planted, tended,
Grafted into ground and garlanded-amended,
Plucked and up-ended
Surrendered then rendered
Adorned and shorn-ed
For leavers, believers, celebratory achievers,
Consolers, condolers, amatory cajolers,
But most of all
For wanderers and observers
 who ramble and roam
Without a care in the world
And
Not in a rush, to get home

BORIS GLICK
HEAD OF STUDENT SERVICES

Lost Life

To re-live your life
Through reflection
To feel the pervasive, nagging pain of the past
To bring back sadness and sorrow
Confused struggles hidden from view
But felt through the chronic current
Of trouble waters within
A slow process of healing
Reclaiming, through steady purpose,
The proper ownership of a life, your own,
Once lost

BORIS GLICK
HEAD OF STUDENT SERVICES

Musing

Musing on a theme not yet clear or defined
Wandering restless and roaming in mind
Searching and yearning
Seeking to find
Not really knowing
What, where or what kind
Slipping and sliding
Climbing and straining
Hopeless and hopeful
Yet
Ever returning

JOHN HOUGHTON
SENIOR TEACHER IN ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE
AND LECTURER IN ENGLISH FOR ACADEMIC PURPOSES

A Critic's View of Cirque du Absurd

Outside an *Avant-Guarded* theatre,
I read a placard that said,

“A Modern Classical Fairy Tale of How to Lure, then Maim and Massacre your Audience:
Without a trace of irony.”

I went in...

At the end of an inspired and passionate performance,
Just before the applause
I saw the pianist smash his head Into the bone hard keys of his Steinway
As the slippery wet tendrils of his hair splattered in a disarranged fan over the keyboard
And a trembling left hand

The last trickled notes reverberated wearily and discordant...

Then silence:

This was the signal that sent the whole of the blubbery brass section
Cowardly clambering into their tubas two-by-two
To escape the anarchy that they knew was about to ensue

And then...

The woodwind flung flutes and oboes into the air like arrows and spears
To pierce the hearts and craniums of patrons and petrified musos
The surviving front row's curious or those paralysed by fear
Were crushed by *metaphored* kettle drum boulders
To the sinister, smirky joy of the percussionists

And then

The double bass and cellos were make-shifted into gallows
To hang concert organisers, promoters and sponsors
Whose quivering legs kicked heels on to the stage in unusual syncopation.
And the sad violins mimicked the wails of the painfully dying
With superior artistry and friction-burned horse hair
So that suspicions, alarms and eyebrows, would not be raised

And then... silence...

I left in to a quiet evening street
Amazed to have survived
Nothing was ever revealed
Nothing was ever assumed
Only a mystery left surrounding
Only a surrounding mystery left.

DAMIAN KIRSTEIN
MEDIA SERVICES PHOTOGRAPHY & STORES TECHNICIAN

Trapped in Time: (A pantoum)

I keep the camera close at hand,
Pocket-pitched, somewhat square.
This sooty-shaded Apple brand
Serves up snaps I seek to share.

Pocket-pitched, somewhat square,
A two-faced tool that lets in light;
Serves up snaps I seek to share,
Touch-up tweaks make them right.

A two-faced tool that lets in light,
Its techy tricks magic motion.
Touch-up tweaks make them right;
Flaws will fade, a nifty notion.

Its techy tricks magic motion
In bay of black and one of white.
Flaws will fade, a nifty notion,
With second slices, bulb-flash bright.

In bay of black and one of white,
Posing people, products placed.
With second slices bulb flash bright,
Fabrics flourish, forwards-faced.

Posing people, products placed,
Framing finished, shutter snaps;
Fabrics flourish, forwards-faced,
Photos favoured, session wraps.

Framing finished, shutter snaps,
This sooty-shaded, Apple brand;
Photos favoured, session wraps,
I keep the camera close at hand.

NIA YASMINE MURAT
STUDY ABROAD STUDENT

Daddy

You held my tiny hands,
still supple and new,
as we both cried.
Then, you let me go
before the tears rolling down my face
had even dried.

Now – with callouses
built thick upon my skin –
I miss how that word felt on my tongue
back when I didn't know
what fathers were supposed to be.

NIA YASMINE MURAT
STUDY ABROAD STUDENT

Elegy for My Promise

I broke it. That contract you and I signed
with intertwined fingers –

our middle school love affair.
I remember our first kiss, prompted by

heaven and sevens – a clash of teeth that grew
into *I love you*. I broke that.

I heard its agonized wail – it was bent
with splinters of bone piercing through

and spilling marrow as it bled out.
I held someone else as it died,

my hands the bloodied ones
as our promise hemorrhaged

into me
and you.

MAIA WAGENER
STUDENT IN BA (HONS) LIBERAL STUDIES

1

walk in the forest in the dark
they said you'll make friends
with your thoughts as the light
bleeds through the trees it's leaves
will fall on your head and you
will grow branches and grow
right up to the sky to the sun
you will bask in the heat
and make friends with the
stars that shine at night

i walked in the forest
in the dark and i spoke
to the trees and it's leaves
to the dew and the moss
the soil under bare feet
i said swallow me up
eat me whole use my limbs
as roots to grow around
my blood as rain my eyes
to see in the dark
i whispered
swallow me up
i'll be your friend
and it did

MAIA WAGENER
STUDENT IN BA (HONS) LIBERAL STUDIES

Vada

pour hot oil on your dry hands
and plait my hair tight, pull each
lock to your chest do not caress.
i throw soaked dal into oil hear it
sizzle. puff. crisp. burn. inhale
thin swirls of smoke smell like home.
slap the side of my head with
your palm oiled. not yet.
not yet.
no. not yet.
now.
oil splutters onto my arm
massage it into my veins i can
taste home in my blood.

FICTION



Ina Maksimova,
2019. *Gardens*. Digital media

DEAN BAKER
ITS HELPDESK TEAM LEADER

Always Remember Your Dreams

‘Careful fool! You’ll tip us over!’ said Buffalo Tail.

I’d not sat in a canoe since I was six years old and it took me several seconds to gain my balance.

‘Take this,’ he said as he shoved a paddle into my hands.

I dipped my paddle into the grey, dirty-looking water and looked about me at the creek. ‘It doesn’t look like I remember it,’ I said.

Back then the water had been so clear you could reach down and touch the smooth pebbles on the creek bed or feel the tails of fish tickle you. Now, when I looked over the side, the water was a foggy grey colour, strange things floated on the surface, and you couldn’t see the bottom.

‘What happened to the creek?’ I said, gingerly paddling to avoid splashing myself with the filthy water.

‘It’s been like this since the white men came with their wagons looking for the yellow metal. Ever since, the creek’s been like that, filled with the white man’s trash. No fish swim in it now,’ said Buffalo Tail as he reached into the sack cloth of provisions, took out some beef jerky and began to eat. ‘Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored, and you shall be clean,’ said Buffalo Tail, through his mouthful of jerky.

You could smell the foulness as our paddles cut the surface and I tried to recall when as a child the transparent water had been icy cold to my small fingers when I dangled them over the side of the canoe. I remembered playing by the edge of the creek and feeling the pebbles, slick and wet under my feet, the clear water rippling the reflection of the sky, the birds and the trees. Now, when I looked down at the water, it

reflected nothing but my blurred, ghostly image. How could they give up the old creek for this dead water? In which even the reflections looked like ghosts?

I looked to the opposite shore for a place to land, anxious to get across the creek, a body of water that almost seemed to wail in the throes of death and decay.

We paddled in laboured rhythm as the sound of the paddles dipping into the water merged with our own breaths until our canoe skimmed the jagged stones of the bottom and we came to rest on the shore. We jumped from the canoe and dragged it up the shallow bank, hiding it amongst the bushes.

‘Do you think we’ll be able to find Uncle Running Bear?’ I asked.

‘From what my pa said, we can track him by the smell.’

‘But what about the forest demon?’

Buffalo Tail paused and thought. ‘It’s just a story the white men tell to keep us away from the forest.’

‘Little Moonlight said he’d seen it, and it eats the souls of young children.’

‘If you believe Little Moonlight then you are a bigger fool than he is,’ said Buffalo Tail. ‘Now come on.’

I shrugged and followed.

We had left early in the morning, before we would be missed in school, to come to the forest. Buffalo Tail had got into some trouble with Miss Jackson and was keen to avoid another licking from the stinging cane. I’d taken little convincing to follow him as we packed up some provisions and headed for the creek. Little Cloud’s Pa had taken me in since my parents had died of the cholera.

We’d not heard of old uncle Running Bear for months when Buffalo Tail told me one night that he’d been seen back on the reservation looking tired and

weak. Little Cloud's Pa said that the gangrene in old Uncle Running Bear's foot had come back and that the family had sent him across the creek because the stink was so bad.

Buffalo Tail continued up the bank, towards the trees and I followed, scanning back and forth through the underbrush. It didn't take long for us to run into a small trail that followed the waterline, and we took that into the shadowy woods.

'He must camp around here somewhere,' said Buffalo Tail. 'He can't move much with that foot.'

'So, where is he? I hope the forest demon hasn't gotten him.'

'Quiet!' said Buffalo Tail suddenly and held a finger to his lips. 'I hear something.'

It was a slow, shuffling sound, like an injured elk or a lame wolf dragging a leg.

'I bet it's Uncle Running Bear!' said Buffalo Tail and started up the trail.

'Wait!' I called after him. 'It might be the forest demon!' and I raced after him, scared to follow but more afraid to be alone. Soon Buffalo Tail was out of sight and I was aware of the shadows of the tall trees, clawing at my skin like ghosts. A shiver ran down my spine. 'Buffalo Tail? Where are you?'

I stopped, the drumming of my heartbeat loud in my ears. Then I heard his footfalls to the west and I ran quickly between the trees as the light flickered in the gaps between the branches and the sky, every shadow a potential demon waiting to grab me. I burst through a bush and to my relief found Buffalo Tail. He was stood trembling amongst the trees and in the distance was a huge silhouette. The terrifying stooped figure of a demon. Then we heard a loud thud, and a trembling arrow embedded itself in the trunk of a tree to our left. I turned to look at it and saw a flash of movement as the hind of an elk disappeared into the bushes.

The dark silhouette shifted, looking momentarily like a giant black monster before coming out of the shadows to approach us, grumbling under its breath.

'Foolish kids! What rights have you to disturb my home?'

'Uncle Running Bear! It's me, Buffalo Tail!'

'What are you doing up here? And who's with you?'

'It's me, Little Cloud!' I said and raced to him.

'Little Cloud? You've grown like a corn stalk,' he said ruffling my hair.

'We thought you were the forest demon,' I said, noting the smell of his rotten foot.

'Forest demon? There are only the spirits of the animals in these woods. I would have sent one more to the spirit world if you two mischief-makers hadn't disturbed my hunting. Have you brought me anything to eat?'

'Yes, Uncle Running Bear,' said Buffalo Tail, reaching for the bag of provisions – but it was not there. 'I must have lost it.'

'Foolish children,' grumbled Uncle Running Bear. 'Well, now you're here, pull that arrow out and follow me.'

Uncle Running Bear limped back deeper into the forest, and Buffalo Tail followed, leaving me behind to struggle with the arrow. The tip had buried itself so far in the bark it took a fierce effort to dislodge it. By the time I had wrenched it free, Buffalo Tail and Uncle Running Bear were out of sight. I scanned the trail, looking for their tracks and saw the marks of shuffling and ran as quickly as I could to find them.

When I caught up, Uncle Running Bear led us to a small cave amongst the trees and motioned us inside.

'Is this where you live Uncle Running Bear?' I asked.

'Yes, Little Cloud,' he said, gesturing to us to sit. 'When I was your age, and the old people became a burden, folks would bring them to the mountains and seal them up in caves with just a little opening for food. Every day they'd come and leave food, until they knew the old person was dead.'

The smell of Uncle Running Bear's foot was even more apparent in the confines of the cave.

'I'm saving folks the trouble. They won't even have to carry me to the mountains. And maybe the wolves will eat me when I die?' He laughed and began to light a fire.

'You can't die Uncle Running Bear. You're not old,' I said.

'Not old? I've lived many lives, fought many battles, loved many women. I've seen the white men come and take our lands and our braves fall under the hooves of their horses

and their long knives and thunder sticks. I am tired,' he said, suddenly melancholy.

By now he'd lit the fire and was warming his hands over it. Despite the stink of Uncle Running Bear's foot, Buffalo Tail and I edged closer to share the warmth.

'Now tell me why you came up here? Did your father send you to bring my body back?'

'No Uncle Running Bear. We...we ran away.'

'Run away from that damned reservation? Sitting in one place all the time is what a white man does. That's no life for our people,' he said and began to fill a long pipe with some tobacco. 'No, give me the sky and the trees and the wind and the spirits of my ancestors.'

He lit the pipe with a flaming stick from the fire. Soon there was a cloud of smoke in the small cave which made me cough but also helped mask the rancid smell of his foot.

'Is this Yankee pipe weed too harsh for you Little Cloud?' said Uncle Running Bear. 'I took it from a white man who pitched his tepee by the creek. He was cutting down trees. I left some bear dung and scraped some footprints right by the tepee and sat in the trees and watched. In the morning he took off in a hell of a hurry!' Uncle Running Bear laughed and slapped his thigh. 'Got me some of his whiskey too.'

He raised the pipe and took another deep drag, savouring the smoke in his lungs before blowing it in a long plume at his foot, which he had wrapped in a crude bandage of dry moss and leaves, bound with strips of dried sinew. 'Helps with the smell, huh?'

Though I was too embarrassed to say, I could still smell the rancid odour over the tobacco smoke.

Uncle Running Bear gave a slight grimace and reached for the bottle of whiskey.

'White man may have a black soul, but his whiskey is plenty good medicine,' he said with a smile.

'How did your foot get hurt Uncle Running Bear?'

'That, young braves, is a long story.'

'Pa said you was shot by the poison arrow of the Pawnee,' said Buffalo Tail.

'Your Pa talks too much and drinks too little.'

We nodded dumbly.

'Listen,' said Uncle Running Bear. 'You two go out into the woods and fetch my arrows, and I'll tell you the story. It's going to take you a while, and since you brought no food, I'll have something ready for you to eat when you get back.'

'Yes, Uncle Running Bear,' we said.

'Look to the lower branches. If your eyes are good, you should find them. Bring up some water while you're at it,' he said, and threw a leather water bag to Buffalo Tail and shooed us off.

When we were out of earshot, Buffalo Tail punched me on the shoulder and said, 'Uncle Running Bear's foot has made him crazy. It'll be dark soon. We'll never find his darned arrows.'

'But he can't hunt without them, and then he'll die.'

'Pa says he's halfway to the spirit world anyway. I'm hungry, let's just go home.'

'But Uncle Running Bear says he has food for us.'

'What food? He hasn't got any and he's too sick and drunk to shoot straight,' he shoved the water bag into my belly and stalked off down the trail.

'How will I get back if you take the boat?'

'I'll come back in the morning. You're going to be out here all night looking for his arrows.'

I watched him disappear into the trees and in a few moments, I could no longer hear the sound of his footfall. The woods grew so quiet, I remembered the forest demon and began to get scared.

Suspecting a demon lurking behind every tree, I searched for arrows. I searched until it got so dark, I could no longer distinguish colours in the shadows. I was afraid, yet my fear of the dark forest and the demon was outweighed by my will to find those arrows. I struggled through tangles of shrubbery and glimpsed a feather on the other side. Uncle Running Bear's aim must have gotten worse, and I found four arrows.

I returned to the creek to fill the water bag. There was no sign of Buffalo Tail, just his tracks running to the water's edge. The boat was gone.

'You've gotten yourself plenty dirty,' Uncle Running Bear said when I returned to his cave with the arrows and the water bag.

He had added wood to the fire, and a couple of crows he had skewered, which were slowly roasting above the flames. The moment I smelled the cooking meat my mouth filled with saliva. Uncle Running Bear took the arrows and the water bag with a nod.

'I could only find four arrows.'

'A blessed number,' Uncle Running Bear said. 'The sacred number four, for the four winds, and the four celestial rivers watering paradise.'

I nodded. 'What about the other arrows?'

'Well, you plucked that other arrow from the tree, let's forget that one. Five is not a good number. It sounds like the sign of the snake, which is bad medicine.'

He ran each arrow through his fingers, checking the shafts, and their feathers. Satisfied he laid them next to his bow.

'I'm hungry. Here, eat,' Uncle Running Bear said and took the two roasted birds from the flames.

I sat at the edge of the fire and took the spitted bird from Uncle Running Bear. I now realised that he had shot and cooked only two birds, and I looked from mine to his.

'What's the matter? You have the smaller one?'

'No, sir. I was just wondering.'

'If both of you had come back? Well, then, I suppose you'd be fighting over the one, huh?' He laughed and tore a piece of meat from the breast of his crow. 'Buffalo Tail takes after his Pa. He never had patience.'

I ate too, chewing around the black crow feathers, the meat tasted magnificent in my hunger. Warmed by the fire, I tore the meat from my bird and sucked the bones until they were dry. When I was done, Uncle Running Bear passed me the water bag to wash down the last scraps of crow meat.

'I have not had company at night for many moons,' said Uncle Running Bear. 'Tell me what you're thinking.'

'You promised to tell about your foot,' I said.

'Well, there's a story. But everyone's life is a story, isn't it?'

I expected Uncle Running Bear to smoke while he talked, but his foot must have been hurting him plenty so that he took a huge swig from the whiskey bottle and just closed his eyes, as if to let the firelight warm

his eyelids. He sat with his legs crossed, his bad foot on top, and he told the story as I looked into the fire.

'I was coming home from a celebration for Old Chief Grey Bear's fourth wedding. It was past sunset, and they told me to stay the night with them, but I stubbornly refused their hospitality and came over the mountain. They told me not to go that way, warning me of the evil spirits, but I took no heed. The moon was out, there was enough light to see the trail. I had feasted well at the celebration and drunk much whiskey. I wasn't thinking of demons at all when I first saw the light. It was a strange glow in the distance, like a flaming torch in the shadows or campfire in the woods.'

Uncle Running Bear paused, and I felt a sudden chill run over me. I shuffled closer to fire, away from the dark shadows of the cave.

'I called out, *Howisiwapani! Who's out there?* No answer came. I shouldn't have left the trail. But I was drunk and foolish. Before I knew it, I was in the middle of the woods, and the light suddenly disappeared, and I was alone in the darkness. Then the light flickered and floated high amongst the trees. And that's when I knew it was a spirit. I started running back toward the trail, but wherever I ran, the light appeared in front of me.

'I lurched blind, in circles. My clothes torn like rags. I ran until my strength was gone, and I collapsed against a tree. The light grew brighter and brighter until it was a brilliant green, blinding light. A beautiful squaw came out of the light. It was as if a dream. She was dressed in buckskins with tiny silver bells along the seams of her leggings. She had long black hair and green eyes. She didn't speak but she motioned me to come with her. I stood up and followed her into the light, and then I found myself lying naked on a bed of furs in a wide tepee, with a fire in the centre, spewing green flames.

'Pale green smoke rose up to the top of the tepee, the woman held up a shining jewel brighter than the sun and then everything grew dark again and I lost consciousness. When I woke up the sun was rising. I was sitting against the tree and there were two little wounds on my foot. Everyone says it was the bite of the rattlesnake, but that's not true and no medicine man could ever heal it. Sometimes, when I dream, I remember just

how beautiful everything was. And that's why I have never mourned the fate of my foot. It was the price I paid, for my foolishness, but also for my pleasure and I will bear it until I pass into the spirit world. Now, your little Uncle Grey Cloud didn't tell you that story, did he?'

'No, Uncle Running Bear.'

Uncle Running Bear laughed. 'Throw some more wood onto the fire and light me my pipe.'

I added the wood and lit the pipe and handed it to him. I was glad of the smoke, as the rotten smell of Uncle Running Bear's foot was getting more pungent with the heat of the fire. I could see him sitting there, gazing into the flames and thinking his thoughts, exhaling long plumes of smoke, his black eyes glinting in the firelight, as if in some kind of trance.

After some moments he breathed deeply and opened his eyes. When they fell on me, he said: 'Say what's on your mind now, Little Cloud.'

'I was thinking about your bow, Uncle Running Bear.'

'What about my bow?'

'An English missionary came to school once. He told us about an outlaw named Robin Hood. He lived in a secret camp in the woods, and his bow was as tall as a man.'

'A bow as big as a man?'

'They called them longbows, and they could shoot arrows that could pin a man to a tree.'

'Long bows? Hmm,' Uncle Running Bear said thoughtfully.

'The missionary said Robin Hood made war on the chiefs and gave their money to the rest of their tribe.'

'The chiefs must have been plenty angry,' said Uncle Running Bear.

'They hunted him in the forests, but he escaped them many times. When he knew he was about to die, he shot an arrow out of his tepee and told his braves to bury him where it fell.'

'I like that story,' Uncle Running Bear said after a moment. 'This Rowbin Hoo sounds like a fierce brave. He had plenty honour.'

Uncle Running Bear stretched his arms and yawned. He tipped the ashes from his pipe into the fire and then coughed and spat into the flames. Stiffly, he rose to his feet, picked up his bow and one of his precious arrows.

With powerful arms, he drew the bow, bending it nearly back on itself against the nocked arrow, the coloured feathers glowing in the firelight. Looking out of the cave, directly into the night, he let the arrow fly with a hiss of air, and it arched high up into the darkness and disappeared. He lowered the bow and looked at me, his eyes flickering with the light of the fire.

'Swear to me, that when I am dead, you'll find the arrow, and make sure they bury me where it has landed.'

I sat silent and confused.

'You swear it?'

'Yes, Uncle Running Bear, I swear.'

I was suddenly afraid, but then his stern face broke into a wide smile and he sat down by the fire, looking tired and old.

'You should always remember your dreams, Little Cloud,' he said. 'When you die and move on to the spirit world, you forget your old life and all the wondrous things, just like you forget dreams. What a shame to forget,' he said and lay down to sleep.

That night I dreamed many dreams. Of fierce warriors, great battles, beautiful squaws and even Robin Hood. I was terribly stiff when I woke in the morning, just before dawn. The fire had burned out in the night and I shivered in the morning chill. Rubbing the sleep from my eyes I rolled over to wake Uncle Running Bear and to tell him of my dreams, so that I would not forget, but the old man was cold as stone and as still as a fallen tree. For a moment, I was afraid, but suddenly I was struck with a feeling of warmth, as if Uncle Running Bear's spirit was with me, like a robe of bear furs or beaver pelt and as the first bright rays of the rising sun came up through the trees I felt the spirit soar into the heavens and heard the whispering on the wind, *always remember your dreams.* ■

Sometimes They Are

There's someone in the field. They're camping over at the far end, at the break in the fence, where the turf haemorrhages into the forest. Except you can't really call it camping. They've got a tent with them, but it's all caved in like they can't work out the poles. Charles is walking back towards me now. He's got a smile on his face, and that's not a good thing. I push my arms into the folds of my cardigan.

'You won't believe this,' he says.

'What did you say to them, Charles?' I've been pacing across the lawn, but I stop now and watch him approach.

'It's a kid. Just a little boy. I'm telling you, I'm right.'

'How old?' I say.

'Can't be more than ten. Goldmine.'

'What did you say?' I can't help but flick my eyes in the direction of the tent, but there's nothing to see at this distance.

'I told him to bloody well stay put, didn't I?' He laughs as he walks. His body shakes with the weight of it.

'You were over there longer than that.'

He reaches me, and then continues walking. I turn and follow him inside.

'Well, maybe I said more, and maybe I didn't. Maybe we sat around and had a cheery scout's breakfast. Or maybe I put a peg through his foot to stop him going anywhere. Does it matter? Jesus.'

He takes the kettle off the stand and holds it under the tap. 'Couple of days, that's what I reckon,' he says.

I stop in the middle of the room and watch him at the sink. He returns the kettle to the base and flicks the switch. He lifts one mug off the rack and drops a teabag into it.

He's just a kid, Charlie,' I say. He slams a palm down on the counter.

'So, what?' he says. 'Christ Almighty Annie, what do you know about kids?' He walks to the dining table and takes a seat.

'It's two days,' I say. I walk over to where Charles has been standing and pour the kettle into the mug. I watch it muddy as it gurgles to the brim. 'Does he even have food over there?' I say.

'He'll be fine. You should have seen me at that age.'

He pulls a coaster off the pile and places it in front of himself. I dip a teaspoon into the mug and bring it over to him. He twirls the tea. He pulls the spoon out and sucks at the dregs. He reaches for the sugar-bowl.

'I bet the parents are worried sick,' he says. He's smiling again. 'Couple of days, most. That's all it'll be. We'll be able to go on that holiday.'

I sit down opposite him. There's a droplet running down the mug from the stirring. I watch it fall onto the table, missing the coaster. I stand up and look out of the patio doors.

'Just don't get any ideas,' says Charles.

I look over the field, at the thistles drowning the wildflowers. At the back, I can just make out the tent, flapping loosely in the breeze.

A poster has gone up at the ford. It's only small. Someone has stuck it to the telegraph pole. There are families sitting on the side of the stream, and one of the mothers is wiping sun lotion into the grass. Children are screaming in the water and dabbing their feet in the shingle. And then there's this bright pink poster.

I'm carrying the groceries. We were supposed to be heading into town together to get a few things, but Charles said he'd hang back. Just in case, he'd said. He'd gone out to find his binoculars in the garage.

I put down my bags and step closer to the sign so I can read the writing. It says MISSING, and then there's a hazy picture printed in monochrome and a number to call. The reward is at the bottom. It's got one more zero than Charles was expecting. I look at the way it loops round on itself. The splashing seems louder.

'It's terrible, isn't it? Just awful.' It's one of the mothers. The one who was wiping her hands.

'Mmm,' I say.

'I can't imagine it. If I lost my Ellie.' She shakes her head. 'Do you have children?' she says.

'No. I don't.'

'Oh. Well.' She gives me a sympathetic smile. We stand looking at the poster.

'Did you see who put it up?' I say.

'No. It's just one of those things, isn't it?' They go up for a few days and then come down, and you never see anyone. It's such a shame.'

'He hasn't been missing for that long,' I say.

'I know, but he won't be found. They never are, these ones.' She turns and looks down at the stream. A little blonde girl is throwing handfuls of water into the air. The woman waves.

'Sometimes they are.' I say.

'I know,' she says, taking a step in the direction of her daughter, 'but only when it's too late.'

She takes another step, and it looks as if she's going to leave, but she pauses and turns back to face me.

'That wouldn't be bad though, would it?' she says, and points to the number at the bottom of the sheet. She laughs and walks away back to the bank.

I watch her go. Nobody else is paying attention to the flyer on the telegraph pole. It's not really the right tone for a day at the ford. I pick up my bags, tear the sheet from the staples, and slip it in with the shopping.

I drop the bags on the table. Bread and milk and a missing person's poster. Through the window, I can see Charles out on the lawn. He's sitting on one of our stools and he's got his binoculars pressed up to his face. You can barely see the tent anymore. The bulk of it is squashed flat into the ground, with only the entrance pulling taut against its pegs, somehow staying up. It rained last night. I take the milk over to the counter and put the kettle on.

'Listen to this,' Charles says, as he hears me step out onto the patio. 'His tent's as good as gone and he's sitting there trying to get a fire going. Cocky little bastard.'

I put his tea down in the grass, so he can reach it from the stool.

'Charles,' I say. 'Charlie.'

'What is it?' he says. He's heard something in the way my voice sounds. He turns his head and sees the pink sheet of paper in my hands. His eyes widen and he actually looks surprised. As if the poster wasn't part of the plan anymore. As if it wasn't ever part of the plan. But then he reads downwards, and I watch as he revises his own calculation.

'You're joking,' he says. He laughs. He takes the sheet and rubs a thumb over the number. 'Took them long enough,' he says.

'We need to call it,' I say.

He holds the sheet up to the sun and looks at it at full glow. Like he's won a raffle.

'Please, Charles. Let's call it.'

'He'll still be there in a couple of minutes, Annie. What's the rush?' He's holding the thing with both hands and nodding at the investment he's made. At the profit.

I look down at the grass, where my foot is right next to his mug of tea. Right next to it. It would only take an inch of poor footing, or loss of balance, but Charles knows I'm not like that. I remain still.

'I'm going inside,' I say, look up to the field, and freeze. There's movement in the thistles. They're being pushed away from each other to make way for someone coming through.

'Charles,' I say. He looks at me and follows my gaze.

'Oh shit. I didn't think he would,' he says.

The boy steps clear of the field. He's holding a few empty bottles. He sees us watching him and stops. Then he lowers his head and proceeds with a short, slow step. He walks up to Charles.

'Please could I have these filled up, if that's alright?' His voice is high, and there's a slight quiver to it.

'Well I said you could, didn't I?' says Charles. He smiles. He's turned the flyer over and placed it on his thigh. The binoculars are underneath the stool, hidden by his feet. 'Here, pass them to Annie.' He points a thumb across at me.

The boy looks up and takes the extra few steps across to where I'm standing. When I don't take his bottles, he repeats his question. But I'm not listening. The boy's right cheek is discoloured and yellow. There's a similar mark on his arm, where someone

has grabbed and held him tight. They look several days old. I look at Charles and he's just shaking his head. I take the bottles from the boy without a word, fill them up in the sink at the kitchen, and give them back to him.

'Thank you,' the boy says.

'Anything you need,' says Charles. 'Off you go, then.'

The boy half smiles and turns back into the field. We watch him go in silence.

'They must have looked worse a few days ago,' I say, once the boy is out of earshot.

'So, what if they did?' he says. 'We've given him a bit of time away from the bastards. And look, they're sorry.' He flicks a wrist at the paper on his knee.

'I'm going inside,' I say.

Charles puts down his fork and picks up the poster, as he's been doing all dinner. The sun is on its way down. There's a pinprick of orange flickering at the end of the field.

'How about Italy?' he says.

I don't answer.

'The Colosseum,' he says. 'We can write our names on that wall and that. All-inclusive, that's what I'm thinking.'

I look at the plate in front of me. It's untouched. I pick it up and scrape its contents into the bin.

'Or Portugal?' he says, undeterred.
'Down in the Algarve. Lovely.'

He picks up his fork again. I watch him eat. Preparing the new mouthful before he's finished the old one. The same way he has for the past seventeen years.

'I don't think we can,' I say.

'He's not yours, Annie,' he says, voice muffled.

'I know that,' I say.

'It's just right place, right time, that's what it is,' he says.

I stand up and go to the window. There's a wind coming in from the east. It's whistling through the cracks in the walls. Outside, the thistles in the field are swaying and beating their heads into the earth. I've been meaning to clear them out for years, ever since we first bought the place. They were only meant to be temporary.

'Anyway, we can think about it,' says Charles from behind me. I listen to his quiet dinner clatter. I think of the way his hands are gripping firmly around the steel.

'You weren't just leaving him out there for nothing, were you?' he says.

A stronger breeze blows around the house. In the distance, the orange dot dwindles and dies.

'Maybe Italy,' I say. ■

RAY GREWAL

ASSOCIATE LECTURER IN SCREENWRITING AND SCRIPT ANALYSIS

The Answer

‘Imagine you’re standing on a beach,’ he says.
‘OK,’ she says.
‘In front of you is a clear blue ocean and above you is a clear blue sky.’
‘OK.’

‘Now imagine yourself swimming out into the ocean. You could swim out into that ocean all the days of your life and you would never get to the end of it because it’s infinite. Do you know what infinite means?’

‘I think so.’

‘Now imagine yourself flying up into the sky. You could soar up into that wonderful blueness all the days of your life and you would never get to the end of it because it’s infinite.’

‘OK.’

‘Now look at the beach you’re standing on. Look to the left, see how the beach disappears beyond the horizon? You could walk along that beach, in that direction, all the days of your life and you would never get to the end of it because it’s infinite.’

‘And to the right?’

‘Look. See how it stretched out beyond the horizon? You could walk along it, in that direction too, all the days of your life and you would never, ever get to the end of it because it’s infinite. Now turn around. See how the beach seamlessly becomes a desert that stretches out as far as the eye can see in every direction? You could walk out into that desert, in any direction, all the days of your life and you would never get to the end of it because it is infinite.’

‘And beneath me?’

‘The same: you could dig down into that beach all the days of your life and you would never find anything but sand because it is infinite.’

‘So, all there is is the sky, the ocean and the sand?’

‘Yes.’

‘And me.’

‘Of course. Now look down at the beach. Look at all the many millions of grains of sand between your feet. What I need you to do is focus on a single grain of sand, just one grain amongst the millions between your feet. Can you do that?’

‘I can try.’

‘Once you’ve focussed on one grain of sand, I need you to imagine a microbe appearing on that grain of sand. Just one microbe on that one grain of sand. And once you can see that single celled organism on that single grain of sand I want you to imagine that it is there for one...two...three...four...five... six seconds and then it’s gone.’

‘OK.’

‘Do you understand what I’ve just told you?’

‘I think so,’ she says. ‘The sky is all the space that is in all the universe; the ocean is all the energy that is in all the universe; and the beach and the desert are all the planets and stars in all the universe.’

‘Exactly.’

‘And that single grain of sand is the Earth and that single microbe is the entire human race, and those six seconds are the entire history of the entire human race from the moment it came into existence to the moment it will become extinct; six seconds for a single microbe on a single grain of sand, in the context of an infinite universe that lasts for billions upon billions upon billions of years.’

‘Precisely. Now you tell me, what is god in that place?’

‘Me.’ ■

MIKE HARDING
CERTIFICATE COURSE LEADER / SENIOR LECTURER

Going Away

Martha disappeared yesterday, or it could have been sometime over the weekend, one can never be sure. At any rate, she didn't turn up for work on Monday and by Wednesday her tasks were reallocated according to the Department's standing procedures. I got Brighton added to my folder, which was okay. It could have been some large conurbation, which would have been somewhat inequitable as I have already a fair amount of cities to oversee, and was landed with the whole of Cumbria when William went last Christmas. At the time I was told it was mainly countryside, which is not absolutely true, it has – or had – quite high urban populations, but that missed the point, as it is actually much more difficult to oversee a basic social infrastructure amongst scattered rural communities than it is to re-jig things within a town. Brighton was okay; it's pretty compact and at the moment things are working reasonably well there, for which I guess I have Martha to thank. It would be fair to say that I missed her; she was a good colleague, always cheerful and helpful, but we're supposed to set an example for the rest of the country. It actually says that in the last contracts we were given after a dozen or so from Overseas Liaison went in one week and there was momentary panic, as you can imagine.

No matter how well we've been trained in statistics there is a natural tendency to think that a momentary blip heralds a whole new scenario and all current thinking gets turned upside-down, but of course the figures evened out with very few vanishings in the following year. Indeed, even counting Martha and William, the Department as a whole is actually under the mean for the population as a whole. Though this could also indicate that another blip might be expected, depending on the timescale used. For instance, if

you're looking at one week, you might get major fluctuations, such as happened in Basingstoke a couple of months back when hundreds went in just two days, though fortunately not many functionaries. But re-draw the graph for ten years and you can see that they lost no more than one would expect over that period. Re-draw it for the thirty years that this has been going on and one could make a case for Basingstoke actually being under the average. It's as difficult to get a really clear picture of population decline as it is to engage with the phenomena itself. Not that this really matters any more as it was made clear long ago that this issue is not one of the Department's concerns. Indeed, it is now an immediate sacking offence to get involved in any such discussion, however much individual employees may have personal experience of what used to be termed 'the vanishings'. If such questions are brought to our attention by members of the public, they are referred to a separate office, but there are now very few who bother to enquire, as everyone is aware there is no scientific explanation, and nothing that can be done. Of course, when it started to happen, it was a very different matter.

It's very hard to pinpoint exactly when the phenomena began, as people have always been disappearing and initially they were just recorded by the police as 'missing persons'. It took a while to realise that this was something different. Until then the usual missing person was someone who had just had enough of things, jacked in their job, their marriage, whatever, and on one fine morning just took off. Most returned, although there were some who had lost their memory, or had got into debt, or drink and drugs. For others there was a criminal component, a need to change identity, and obviously there were always teenagers who couldn't handle their family anymore. A few were murder victims. The big difference was that they still

existed somewhere, if only as a decomposing corpse in some squat. It took a while for the authorities to realise, and then finally to admit, that a growing number of missing persons had literally vanished.

Initially those whose loved ones had disappeared envied the bereaved and the funereal traditions for those who had died, declaring themselves to suffer more as their loss was inexplicable and unnatural. Eventually a range of ceremonies were created, initially under the auspices of the Department, to honour the lives of the vanished. But after a few years this was increasingly discouraged, the Department holding the view that such disappearances had to be accepted. Vanishing might be a new phenomenon, much as were climate change or the European Union's economic collapse, but had now to be accepted as part of a natural order.

Of course innumerable theories were at first suggested to explain the vanishing, most of them based on one form of conspiracy or another – inevitably including alien abduction – or were a version of the Gaia hypothesis, the planet seeking revenge in the style of a ravished Greek goddess dragging her abusers into the underworld. A number of ecological feminists declared themselves the inheritors of Persephone's mantle and created ceremonies in which they expressed her rage at the manner in which males had treated the planet, perhaps in the hope of some sort of appeasement. For their part some males adopted the mythology and rituals of the Green Man or claimed that this had all come about because their traditional role as protectors of women had been usurped by the state. There was no evidence that those professing either view were spared.

As a matter of fact, the Department made a very specific study of both cohorts during the early years, which indicates just how seriously all possibilities were investigated. Although all documentation regarding this has been deleted, such fringe views as abduction, parallel universes intersecting with our own, quantum phenomena, and so on, were all subjected to intensive analysis by a team of high-ranking physicists drawn from all the major countries

who experienced similar anomalies. While the supporting mathematics remains beyond me, the general consensus was that it was perfectly sound at a theoretical level. While it suggested how disappearances might occur, it offered no suggestions as to *when* they might happen, much less as to what could be done to stop them happening in the first place. In the midst of my first encounter with such incomprehensible algorithms emerged a memory of Valerie. She was a colleague from pre-disappearance days when we both worked in the statistics department of a market research company. She was fascinated by the stories of missing persons that were reported in the papers from time to time and told me of her fantasy of closing her front door and walking away from everything. I have often wondered to what extent such a wish might translate into reality if enough people held similar desires. Nonsense, I know, but such was said of many other ideas.

If you're under the age of thirty and thus born after all this started it may be that you can't really come to grips with what things were actually like. The old newsreels just don't convey it, even to me, and I lived through it all, being well over what used to be called retirement age. It was the same when my parents spoke about the war. No matter how much was documented, and despite the endless films, I just couldn't get a sense of how people actually got on with life when they were being bombed. My father would tell me stories of how arbitrary this could be. Sometimes half a row of houses lay in ruins, but in the middle was one utterly undamaged with even the windows intact. There was some bomb damage remaining when I was a child, but all the debris had long been cleared, leaving only walls covered in creepers. At the time one would have seen their rickety remains: floor boards kiltered towards the street, baths hanging on their plumbing, men digging through the rubble while ruptured pipes spouted water, and nearby a waiting ambulance and tearful neighbours. What I saw as a child was a sort of sanitised version of my father's experience, and this thought often came back to me in the years following the Government's formal acknowledgement that nothing could be done about the vanishings, any more than Churchill could do anything

about the bombing, offering only words of acceptance and endurance.

The Department's policy was to focus on how best to live with it. Children were to be taught about it in school in simple and factual terms, much like sex education. There will be some bodily changes and feelings you have not had before; this is all part of growing up. Some of your friends will vanish one day, just as people do all the time. These things are part of life, so it's important to learn how best to deal with them. Life is full of events that we cannot currently explain, but the fact that they continue to happen is proof that they are all a natural part of life, and so have to be accepted. From time to time people disappear. That's just how it is.

With a decreasing population, and with thousands going every day, it's one of the Department's duties to maintain what are known as functional avenues. London's tube and bus lines have been cut down to a bare minimum, as are all the utilities, leaving only certain sections of the city thriving in particular corridors. Now that the law allows anyone to take over the property of the vanished, people have tended to congregate in what used to be known as the better parts. Many prefer the old luxury apartments in

Hyde Park and Kensington, others favouring the old East End tower blocks, perhaps believing that having neighbours in the same building might in some way protect them. Figures prove this to be untrue, and so I prefer to live alone in a ten-room house once owned by a famous writer. It's on the fringes of what was once a park but is now more of jungle, inhabited by the progeny of the few animals that escaped the zoo's mass culling. At night they can be heard prowling the remnants of what were once fine buildings set amongst it, now occupied only by memories and dreams. It can be lonely, but that has been the case since my wife disappeared many years ago. I woke up one morning and she was not in the bed beside me. She had vanished. At the time I did the usual things; ringing all her friends, banging on neighbours' doors, stopping people in the street with a copy of her photograph. Everything, indeed, that the Department prohibits as antisocial behaviour, as pointless as complaining about falling leaves in autumn. I still miss her and for years hoped that she would just as mysteriously return, and one day she would be there in the bed when I awoke. But, of course she hasn't. ■

MARTIN MILTON
PROFESSOR OF COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY

Just Another Monday

8:05am and Justin walks across the bridge, a warm breeze at his back and a skip in his step. Bright summer mornings have always put him in a good mood, they have done ever since he can remember. But so did their time in the shower this morning. He smiles as he thinks of it.

It's Justin's first day back at work and it feels an age since he last crossed the Albert Bridge on foot. More like two months than the two weeks it has actually been and he feels like a different man. He walks briskly, arms swinging, enjoying the bounce of the bridge beneath his feet. The sun catches his ring and he touches it like he has touched it a thousand times this past fortnight. *Wonder if I'll ever get used to this? I hope not.* And he smiles again.

Crossing the King's Road he feels his phone vibrate; it's the news app with more horror. This time it's a gay man being thrown to his death in Syria. He shudders, shuts the app and continues walking. Outside the Royal Brompton he checks his watch – and his ring – again. It's 8.30am and he is going to be early. No doubt there will be a backlog of emails to get through even though Monique has been covering them. *Who the hell thought up emails? That's come back to bite us* he thinks to himself.

Ten minutes later, Justin skips between the buses; the one in front has the voluptuous semi-naked Armani models and the one behind has the bare-chested woman advertising a tabloid newspaper, her modesty saved only by the strategic placing of two 10p coins. *What he wonders does that have to do with the news?*

He passes South Kensington tube station and is at the office two minutes later. Monique arrives at the same time from the other direction. She is excited to see him and four kisses cement their reunion as they enter the building together. While being well travelled, Justin hasn't quite got the ritual

of multiple kisses – 'What is that all about?' he would often ask. Just as often Monique would shrug and reply: 'I am French mon cher, c'est tout.'

As soon as they open the door to the main office, all eyes are upon him, from behind desks and drawing boards. 'Hey boss, welcome back', 'So you went through with it then?', and 'How was it?' So many post-honeymoon questions and comments, all thrown his way. There's no point trying to respond to them all, so Justin simply blushes his familiar blush, smiles, waves, says 'Hi everyone' and proceeds to his office to hang up his jacket and drop his bag. His office is just as he left it, his laptop on the desk, his designs on the draught-board and his pens and pencils all neatly aligned – just as he likes them.

Justin picks up his cup and it is apparent that that too is just as he left it. *Ugghh* he groans, shuddering at the sight of two weeks' worth of mould that has been successfully cultured. *That'll teach me. Don't leave without washing up* he sighs. But he had been a bit distracted when he left: he was getting married, after all. Cup in hand he makes his way to the kitchen to wash it clean and for his first coffee of the morning.

11am and with about half of her emails read – if not answered – filed, or deleted and her report for the noon meeting on the go, Monique looks up to see Erik just about to knock on her door. 'Hi Erik, come in,' she says, indicating that he should take a seat. He smiles and drops into a chair with that sinewy gracefulness she had noticed on meeting him six months previously. 'What can I do for you?' she asks.

'Well...' Then silence.

Monique looks at him quizzically, 'Yes? Everything ok?'

Erik fidgets in his seat and says 'Yes... Yes...Everything is fine. It's just...Well, I'm not sure about something'.

Monique indicates her attention with

a nod of her head and Erik continues: 'I've been working on the Tressler project, yes?'

Monique nods, familiar with the ambitious home redevelopment project, 'Yes...and it's looking good so far...Non?' Monique's interest is piqued but she is also feeling frustrated. *What's going on? What's the big secret?* She catches a glimpse of her watch out of the corner of her eye – she has a mountain of things to check before her meeting and is tempted to ask Erik to come back later. Just as the thought starts to form and as she flips her hair behind her ear, Erik starts to talk.

'That last section...I think we should start again. It's fine but it's crude...basic...run of the mill and it's all been done before' he squints and sits forwards. 'It needs a revamp, something original, something new.' There he's said it. He sits back in the chair.

'Oh, does it?' Monique asks sharply, silently cursing these training courses, always encouraging students to be architecturally bold, to be assertive. To run before they can walk. 'Merde!'

Erik senses her annoyance and retreats into the folds of the oversize chair. He can tell that Monique has been taken aback. *Shit, I knew I should have waited* he thinks, but he also knows he couldn't. He doesn't do patient – his mind is too active, now he has had the idea he knows he would get no sleep till it has had its chance. No sleep, no focus, the current direction would be beyond him till he knew if he had the OK to change tack. Erik is not a multi-tasker. He never has been.

'You have some ideas about this...eh... new direction? Monique asks.

Erik blushes, nods and says: 'Yes. Yes I do.'

'Good, we are meeting about that project tomorrow, aren't we? Work up your synopsis and let's look at it then. But you are ready for today's meeting, aren't you' she asks pointedly, more a statement than a question of fact. Simultaneously she shifts her seat slightly and turns a hair's breadth towards her laptop.

Erik jumps to his feet. 'Yes, I am. Great. OK, will do that. See you later...see you later,' and he closes the door behind him as he leaves.

'Cheeky bugger,' Monique thinks as she opens email number 47 of the morning.

1.30pm and Justin swings into Monique's office. 'You want to come for a sandwich?' he

asks. He stops in his tracks: 'What's wrong? You look ready to murder someone!'

'It's nothing' she snaps.

'Really?'

'No, nothing other than I just wasted an entire hour and a half of my life meeting that pompous, self-inflated odious prick of a planner. He is so patronising, I could scream.'

'Ahhh ... OK. Come on then, let's go for a wander. Walk it off and get a bite to eat.'

'Eat? You think I can eat? It's a drink I need – and a long one.' Monique snaps her laptop closed and picks up her bag. 'Do you know what he called me? Go on, guess. Do you know what he called me?' Justin escorts her out of the building while trying to look concerned – but he only manages to look blank. Before he can say anything, she continues: 'Miss...He actually had the cheek to call me Miss.'

'Oh ... and what's he put in our way this time?' Justin knows there was debate about the extra three inches they need on the conservatory. He wouldn't put it past the planners to want more information or another consultation with neighbouring parties.

'No, no, no, no nothing like that, he is granting full permission. He just loves baiting us. He could have called and said everything was fine, but no, he has to write a report. And he has to call a meeting, he has to be vague for half an hour, refer to me as Miss ... Miss no name, never my name.' Her face flushes with fury as she continues: 'Erik – he called him Mr Olson, or Erik. Me - just Miss. He is an odious little man.' And with that they reach the busy streets and head off to Gail's for lunch.

It doesn't take long. A coffee and a sandwich and a walk up to the Natural History Museum changes the mood and when Monique and Justin return to the office they easily slip back into work. Justin struggling to cope with his emails and Monique stealing some time away to look at the Tressler project. She can see what Erik means. It is a bit dull ... it will be interesting to see what thoughts Erik has. But there is a deadline and the Tresslers themselves are quite happy with it. Monique sits back and smiles to herself. She had high hopes when she agreed they take Erik on, maybe he can come up with some possibilities.

Justin is almost finished with his emails

when he realises that the office is noisier than normal. He looks at his watch; something is definitely afoot. The team usually call it a day about 6.30 or so. And it's only just five. As he looks up, Erik approaches. 'I have been sent to collect you. We are due at the bar at 5.30pm,' he says a little awkwardly.

The penny drops, the team want to celebrate the wedding properly. He hadn't been able to invite everyone to the ceremony. The wedding had been small and intimate – just as he and Ahmed had wanted. He is pleased but a little reluctant – and he isn't sure why. Ahmed won't finish work till 7, he has that human rights lecture this afternoon. He says, 'Sure' and grins at Erik. 'Give me five minutes to finish up and I'll be right out'. Before Erik has even left the room he picks up the phone and calls Ahmed. It rings twice and goes to voicemail. 'You have reached the voicemail of Ahmed Machai...' He hangs up and sends a text instead.

Twenty minutes later Justin, Monique and the rest of the team leave Sloane Square tube station. Justin knows the bar well, it's on the corner, a popular location after shopping or pre-theatre. At 5.30 it is still quite empty, so it is not long before the team are all ensconced in the comfortable beige-leather couches, raising a glass of bubbly that Justin finds himself splashing out on. He settles down to receive the barrage of questions they have been disciplined enough to leave till now. Questions about the wedding venue, what they both wore, how the parents and the in-laws were, did they need translations, and details about the honeymoon. On and on it goes.

While Justin is made the centre of attention, Monique spots that Erik has positioned himself on the periphery of the group, has gulped one glass of bubbly down and is now working on his second, smiling, nodding but not really joining in. She wonders to herself about this mysterious young man – talented, smart and funny one minute, shy and nervous the next – and makes a note to interrogate him at the earliest opportunity. In the meantime she helps herself to a top-up of fizz too.

As it gets later, the bar gets busier and noisier. It doesn't matter that it's a Monday

evening, the bar is soon awash with Paul Smith-suited men and Jimmy Choo-clad young women. Calvin Klein aftershave fills the air and the sound of clinking glasses becomes the soundtrack to the evening. Alongside their own conversations Monique can make out pained reflections on the loss of Bowie and Prince; she hears calls for wine at the bar; can understand the outrage at the latest statement from number 45; and there are questions about buses and taxis at the door. A group of young lads ask whether the remaining seats are free and squeeze themselves in.

During the next hour, with trips to the bathroom, people going outside for a smoke or to the bar for more drinks, bodies re-arrange themselves and Justin is asked the same questions over and over. While he likes the attention, he is beginning to get a little bored with the sound of his own voice. It's not long before he draws on Monique's support and the conversation widens. At one point he realises that he is talking rugby at the same time as the guys at the neighbouring table. What he fails to notice in his busy-ness is every now and again, they look over and laugh. Erik sees though.

An hour later, feeling questioned out and slightly light-headed, Justin decides that he should start towards home, although – first things first – he heads to the men's room. He returns to the sound of raised voices, including the tail-end of Monique's instruction to the neighbouring table: 'Leave it, just leave it. Say nothing and go back to your party.' He notices that Erik is looking quite annoyed too. As Justin gets closer, all eyes are upon him.

'Everything OK?' he asks.

'Yes, everything is fine,' says Monique loudly, but he sees Erik shaking his head, his eyes darting from Monique to one of the group and back.

'Erik? ... You OK?'

'Yes, fine. I'll walk out with you,' he says and hands Justin his jacket.

Justin is sure that he has missed out on something, but he can also see that no one is going to say anything right now. So he says his goodbyes, including the obligatory four kisses for Monique, checks that Erik is with him and they make their way to the door.

'See you tomorrow,' says Monique.

Justin and Erik wave and head out the door.

'Bus or tube?' Justin asks. 'I am on the bus.'

'I'll join you for a bit, I think,' says Erik and they cross the Square to wait for the number 22 bus, looking in the window of Hugo Boss as they do. As they wait, Justin asks, 'So... what was all that about?'

'Oh...nothing really.' Just then the bus pulls up. They touch their Oyster cards and find two seats at the back.

'So what was it?'

Erik is feeling a little sheepish now. 'Oh, they just pissed me off, provincial dickheads – that's all. They'd figured out what the celebration was about and couldn't keep their mouth shut. "Really?" "Two blokes married?" "No way" "You're shittin' me" and just crap like that.'

'Their first night out in the big city, huh?' Justin asked. 'So...is that why...how did Monique get involved?'

'Ah...that's my fault,' said Erik, blushing a little.

'Go on.'

'Well, I just told them they should be quiet, maybe they wouldn't show their ignorance,' Erik grimaced and looked at Justin out of the side of his eyes, once again being unsure how his boss would take this.

Justin grinned, 'Good for you.'

'Hmm...' replied Erik. His voice tailing up at the end uncertainly.

'There's more?'

'Fraid so. ... One told me to shut up and another called me "pretty mocha momma's boy".'

'Oh, I see. So you...'

'Got up to tell him to shut up...and that's when Monique decided to calm things down.'

Justin half-smiles, he has seen Monique at her most formidable, situations like these are smoothed over in no time with her blend of seduction and imperialism. But why should she have to? Why should Erik have to take this crap?

Erik adds, 'I feel a bit silly now.'

'I wouldn't worry about it,' Justin says. 'Just make sure you compliment her diplomacy tomorrow. There's nothing she'll enjoy more than that.'

'OK, cool,' Erik smiles, looking more 18 than his 26 years. He notices they are approaching the Town Hall. 'I better jump off here. Will get the tube from South Ken. See you tomorrow.'

'Mine too,' Justin says as they both get up. As they head their separate ways Justin stops: 'Hey Erik...thanks.'

'No problem,' Erik says. And for the first time that evening he smiles fully.

And Justin adds, 'I am sorry about the bigots.'

'Oh, I've had worse' says Erik with a wave of his hand.

It is a 10-minute walk, and Justin is back on the beautifully lit Albert Bridge with its familiar bounce. The sensation strikes him as being part of his escape: the lights, the river and the bounce, together they transport him from the cut and thrust of work to a different space. The space that is home.

As he puts the key in the door, he realises it is not double-locked. 'Hello,' he calls as he steps into the apartment. Ahmed's smile welcomes him home. 'Hey... how was your day?'

Glad to be home Justin simply says: 'Oh you know, just another Monday.' ■

JULIA RÉDEI
LECTURER IN BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT

Tapestries and Memories

We were sitting at a window in a room that overlooked the sea. The windows were dusty, and we were tired. You opened the window.

It creaked. The clarity of the morning, the sounds from the harbour, they broke the dusty silence. We looked at each other for a moment, as neither of us could make up our mind. We did not want to be here, and we did not want to leave, because once we'd left, we would never return. And not even that. We would not find the way back. And not even that. All this would no longer be here.

For a while neither of us dared to breathe, until you started to laugh. The deep laugh I knew so well, and yet, this time I could not join your laugh. I stood up and closed the window and inhaled the dust.

'This has stopped,' you said. 'Stopped being an object of hospitality. Perhaps it has turned into an object of admiration, but it has broken hearts...'

'Yes,' I continued, 'it has broken hearts. And friends and lives.'

'We have to say good-bye,' you said. 'Good-bye to this house. But there are two things here...'

'Things? There's nothing.'

'Things, objects. Two objects, two things should leave with us, or rather we'll leave with two objects. Choose...'

There was not much to choose. The room was empty, almost empty.

Then I remembered the maps, the hidden maps, as we'd called them, patterns woven into tapestries. Sometimes their meanings appeared clear, so blatantly clear, but those were always a disguise.

I stood up and looked at the cushion I'd been sitting on. I looked at the woven pattern of diamonds and triangles and horizontal lines. You pointed at the 'X' that was just off-centre.

'Yes,' I said, 'We take this one.'

'And the other one,' you said, and we left the room that overlooked the sea, the dusty windows now closed. With two cushions and their hidden maps, we walked down the squeaking staircase. Light was shining through cracks in the door, shards of light reflected on the stairs.

For a while we stood and simply breathed. There was a fragrance in the air, of powdered sandalwood. I wanted the cushions to soak up this smell. The smell of the house. We waited until our eyes had completely adjusted.

'This could be a sad moment. Much later, when we remember this moment. This could be sad, unless...'

'No,' you said, 'We leave. We'll be leaving. We've already left. We're leaving now.'

The meaning of the pattern suddenly appeared clear, so blatantly clear. Not a map, nothing hidden, no formation, but a wish and a blessing.

We opened the door and let in the light. Yes, the light, we only remember the light now, how we were blended by this light. ■



Mike Harding,
2019. *The Book Fair*. Digital photographic print

NON-FICTION



Sarah Waller,
2019. *At Sea*. Collograph print

CATHERINE TEMMA DAVIDSON

LECTURER, CREATIVE WRITING

Walking the River Between Two Englands

In the year before we voted to leave the European Union, I went for a walk down by the river Thames with an English friend. It was a beautiful, sunny morning after a day of heavy rain, the first, weather watchers said, to mark the end of a warm period and the beginning of what threatened to be weeks of unseasonable cold. But here was a reprieve: clear blue skies, the golden halo of autumn, ripe and still.

We walked down my street to the underpass near the old Quaker meeting house, by the disused Hammersmith registry where I got married as a newly arrived immigrant from California nearly twenty years before. We went under the busy highway cutting through the neighbourhood, built when the river was an open sewer full of warehouses and docks. Now it's been cleaned up, the warehouses turned into luxury housing and the riverside pubs thriving and restored.

You can do a good four miles, bridge to bridge, over the green Victorian iron laced monument of the Hammersmith Bridge, along the southern shore west to Barnes and then back east again to the terraces of Chiswick by the Fuller's Brewery.

I have done the walk many times in the two decades I have lived in London. The first was before I moved here, with the English boyfriend who became my husband. We did a lot of those walks, escaping his rented single room with nowhere else to go, so involved with the details of our future life we hardly noticed what was around us.

On my walk that November, I noticed that the tide, which my friend told me had been so low on the weekend that the river looked almost dry, was rising fast, muddying up the edges of the walls by the boat houses,

lifting the houseboats to highway level.

In England, there is an expression I like – putting the world to rights, and that is what we did as we walked: we talked about our parents, dead and alive, our sisters and brothers; we talked about our teenage sons and daughters, about school and friendship. We talked about politics, sorting through the dangers in the world as they might one day filter down to us: mother talk.

On the radio I'd heard a debate between a professor with a lilting Germanic accent, and a clipped Sir Somebody or other. The professor was explaining the results of a study measuring the impact of immigration on the economy. England's prosperity was due to its immigrants. Being against immigration was like stepping over a one-trillion-pound cheque someone dropped on the pavement. It would be crazy and self-destructive.

Sir Somebody was having none of it. These people were not like the rest of us, he seemed to be saying. They're a drain on the public purse. They may be all right to man a building crew or dig a tunnel when they're young and healthy, with their animalistic agility, but what about when they get old, like me, and demand to be taken care of?

I told my friend I was puzzled by this view of England. In all the time I'd lived in the country it had seemed a tolerant, open-minded place. The story of threat was new to me then.

She grew up in St Albans, a suburb outside of London famous for its Roman ruins. I'd been an accompanying mother on a school trip there once. There'd been giggles when the guide explained to the children how Romans used the sponge on a stick in their communal toilets. England was an island empty of inhabitants once, and every group who arrived brought something: a system

of law, a language, cloth trading, curry. The English royal family came from Germany. Even the English language was the product of a mixed marriage. That was all I knew about the history of England and immigration.

My English friend's grandmother was Irish, but she did not think of herself as belonging to a hybrid culture, the way I'd done as a Greek and Jewish-American. She spoke with the authority that was her birthright as an English person when she assured me that people like the blustery man on the radio were in the minority. Good sense would prevail as it always had, and I felt the threat recede.

The rhythm of two sets of feet together, voices weaving in and out of each other, acted like a river tide clearing away all the little bits and pieces piled up on the shores of our mind, allowing our horizons to expand. The world grew large and our place in it gained on perspective. We reassured ourselves as we looked forward, our talk sweeping across place and time. Of course, we did not see what was around the bend.

Now that walk has dropped into the past. Once again, I peer into the fog of future, when Britain will no longer be a part of the European Union. In the time between then and now, I have often tried to quiet the roar of the news and consider what was happening, quietly, on a deep level. I have walked and talked for miles, but I am not sure I have come to any clearer understanding of what is coming.

Two years into the post-vote era, I went to California. My sister lives in the hills behind Berkeley, a warm, low-brush area of small towns and the desert heat that waits behind the reaches of the Pacific fog bank. My teenage son was with us, and we were talking about British and American stories. I write autobiographically, and my son, who considers himself English despite his dual nationality, told me he thought only really famous people should write about themselves.

My sister is a psychiatrist who has never lived outside of California and is married to a man who grew up in Beirut. She said most of the books she was reading were memoirs; she could not get enough of people's stories about themselves.

I told them about a walk I'd been on recently with an English friend, a journalist. We were talking about growing up, and she said her mother's motto for most trouble was 'don't make a fuss'.

'Don't make a fuss could be the motto for the whole country!'

My friend had turned her journalist's eyes on me, and asked if country's had mottos, what would America's be?

I thought about my favourite American poet, Walt Whitman; I thought about the way Americans introduce themselves with the history of their lives and families.

'The Epic Story of Me.'

I told my son writing stories about ourselves is just what Americans do.

My son replied: 'You're wrong about the slogan, though. Remember the scene in *Over the Hedge* when the raccoon character found all the animals gorging on junk food and shouted – CAN'T YOU PEOPLE EVER GET ENOUGH? That should be the motto for America.'

It was a June day and the contrast between the cold ocean and hot land had created a bank of heavy clouds over San Francisco. We were walking along a reservoir path that looped through the hills behind Oakland, under clear blue skies. The sun was hot, but we could feel a breeze coming off the cooling tank to the west. I breathed in the scent so characteristic of the landscape where I first discovered nature – a combination of chaparral, scrub oak and ozone. As we started up a steep rise, the baked sand path was turning to gravel; walkers on the other side slid as they tried to retain footing on the way down.

We stopped talking to concentrate on the hill. I thought about my English-American son's perspective on my country of origin. I come from a culture full of self-mythologisers, with an expansionist vision from the days of the first colonies. Not getting enough may be part of who Americans are. I did not think I was so greedy, but now I wonder. I started life with one passport. Now I have two, and until the vote, my British passport included entry to a union of 27 other countries I had come to consider as much mine as New York or Florida – places I might not want to live but where I liked feeling I could.

Today is the last I will be able to consider myself entitled to such wide borders. I have felt like a Londoner, like a European Californian, like a British American. One thing I have not felt very often is English, but somehow this vote has made me grapple with Englishness more than ever before. I have found this hard.

Today the weather outside is heavy and dark. I will not go down to the river to walk. Instead, I sit here writing, and thinking about the time during my first year of living in England, when I understood the gap between who I had been and who I was expected to become. Like many other revelations, it took place in my kitchen. I was eating organic American wheat thins with some sweet English strawberry jam. As I read the label on the box of my revolutionary grains, I discovered that not only would eating this innovative product fill my body with health, it would save the planet itself. I was eating the food of a better, greener future. Meanwhile, my English jam assured me that nothing had changed since the company first began in 1795. Each strawberry had been tried and tested: no surprise or stranger could invade those perfect, well-ordered rows. Quality rested on the assurance of history, the long experience of the past.

Over time, of course, I have become as much of an English person as I may ever be. I've built my career, become a home-owner and a citizen; I've pledged allegiance to the Queen and paid my taxes; I've given birth to English citizens in NHS hospitals, twice. I have never lost my accent. People still ask me, all the time: where are you from? I can be of here, but I cannot be *from* here. My children are English; I do not know if I ever will be. Britain is an idea that by its nature contains multitudes. So far all England has been is a place. So how can I find my place in the England of the future?

Not long ago, on a walk along the Thames, my husband and I spotted a group of primary school students standing on a gentle foreshore formed by the shelter of a local eyot. Wearing wellington boots, they crowded around their teacher who stood next to a guide in a green London Rivers Authority shirt. The guide was a young blond woman with her long hair tied back,

her sleeves rolled up. We went closer to see what they were doing, nostalgic for the days when our own children went on school biology expeditions to the same spot.

On the bed made by the tide was a large, clear Perspex box. Mud formed a layer on the bottom and on top swam small fish; a crab scuttled through marsh grass. As the guide scooped up water and dropped it into the box, the children peered in. I heard her explaining about the health of the river, how it had nearly died, suffocated from pollution and untreated sewage. She told them about the Super Tunnel being built not far away, designed to scoop up the effluents washing into the water through old Victorian drains. Created in response to European regulations, it will eventually make the water even cleaner than it is now.

We continued along the mall, past the four-storey cake made of bricks and wisteria, commissioned by Charles II for his mistress Nell Gwynne. On the platform where my son used to launch his school boats, four cormorants stood, opening their wings to the wind. They looked like poles with matching flags on either side. Once, when he was on the water rowing back from Kew, he heard what sounded like a blow-hole, and looked to see a dolphin, swimming along next to him.

My husband and I stood on the dock near the Dove, the pub where *Rule Britannia* was written in the 18th century, or so the sign outside always claims. We watched a fat swan glide between houseboats. A young woman came up to us, looking lost. She was wearing a red coat and boots. Her face too was red and round as a baker's. She spoke with a French accent and told us she had lost her way. How could she get back to the station? We were able to show her how to find the tunnel reaching under the A4 that would lead her to the trains. It was good to know and share a path you might easily miss.

At a recent poetry event I attended, everyone in the audience was asked to make a drawing that summed up their identity in a single image. I drew the Thames, starting as a dot deep in the countryside and expanding wider and wider until it spills into the Channel, a link between ocean and sea. The Thames is the reason London exists; for hundreds and hundreds of years, it has brought people,

ideas and goods back and forth between England and everywhere else. An island can be a fortress, a series of forbidding cliffs and crashing waters. An island can also be a series of harbours, open to the world. Since the vote, I have heard both views of England, and Englishness.

The Thames is a tidal river. When the moon is full and the rains have been heavy, it breaches its barriers and the path that runs between the lines of houses and the water floods in places. Ducks paddle between parked cars, their tires half-submerged. At low tide you can see the old brick kilns from

the days when that was a major cottage industry and the reeds were used to weave baskets to fill with produce from the local orchards, now turned into lines of houses.

Our vote to leave the European Union took away one idea about myself. Gradually, another has been rising slowly but surely to wash away the sense of loss. If I ever become English, it won't be through its land, but through its waters, rising and falling with the tides, changing and being changed, passing out of us and back in again, linking drop by drop to all the oceans of the world. ■

PETER SHARP
PRINCIPAL LECTURER IN BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT

Learning from Leonardo da Vinci for Higher Education

Abstract

Just over 500 years since Leonardo da Vinci's died there is an enormous level of interest in the incredible output of this innovative man, who was a creative knowledge thinker *par excellence*. This paper draws from Leonardo's life and work observations about how he accumulated knowledge and developed his thinking. This is a presentation of learning from how Leonardo thought. These observations form the basis for principles of learning that apply to innovative research and thinking today. This paper discusses and illustrates these principles and gives examples of how they apply to projects today and potentially in the future. This will be of interest to any person interested in being better at learning and who works in innovative projects. It will also interest anyone who seeks inspiration in approaches to learning and accumulating knowledge.

Introduction

'...there is something supernatural in the accumulation in one individual of so much beauty, grace and might.' (Vasari (1550) cited by Bramly 1994)

Just over 500 years after the death of one of the greatest thinkers that has graced the Earth, there will, no doubt, be an enormous amount written about the genius and inspiration of Leonardo da Vinci this year and in the future (Bramly, 1994; Gelb, 1998 and Campbell-Johnson, 2019). However, one issue worth reflecting on, for those interested in learning and accumulation of knowledge, is what we can

learn from him about how to accumulate knowledge, learn and innovate. This is especially significant today considering the increasing significance of the skill of the ability to learn in an increasingly technology/knowledge-based world (Ali, 2016).

In terms of his accumulation of knowledge and learning, there are many things writers say about Leonardo da Vinci's approach that helped him learn so much. This paper derives from reading about Leonardo da Vinci's life, examining his drawings, notes and inventions and compiling a mind map to detect patterns about his life and learning. This approach led to the identification of five principles of learning that are as applicable to workers today as they were when he was alive.

Observations from Leonardo da Vinci's life and work suggest he learnt from:

1. Making detailed observations of the world and recording his observations and thoughts in drawings and notes [he wrote 13,000 pages of notes] (Bramly, 1994) [Accumulation of knowledge through detailed observation]
2. Studying lots of different phenomena and accumulating knowledge, then creatively bringing together thinking from different knowledge domains, e.g. helicopter rotors to food blenders (Bramley, 1994; and Heydenreich et al. 1981) [Knowledge created through synthesis of thinking and brainstorming]

3. Logically extending thinking from small details to a larger whole, e.g. in the way he planned and executed the Last Supper (Bandello, 1910; Ettliger and Chiesa, 1985; Heydenreich, 1974) [knowledge accumulated through project management and problem solving]
4. Imagining what could be possible and not letting his mind be constrained (Bramly, 1994; Gelb, 1998; Heydenreich et al. 1981; Niccoli, 2002) [Imagination and knowledge development]
5. Being ambitious in his thinking and projects. This can be seen when we read his letter to Ludovico, the governor of Milan in 1482 (Bramley, 1994) and in his inventions (e.g. Heydenreich et al. 1981) [Ambition as a driver for knowledge and learning].

However, to understand these observations about how he learnt, I think it is important to understand the historical background and work context for Leonardo da Vinci's innovative work.

Historical background, inventions and work context

Leonardo da Vinci was born in Vinci, near Florence in Italy on 15th April 1452 and became a member of an art group in Florence led by Verrochio in 1472 (Bramly, 1994). Here he was an apprentice in art and creative work with other artists who

were primarily inspired by nature. Florence was a city that was prosperous with booming trade. There were festivals and churches that sponsored the art group (to do paintings and make festival items, e.g. masks). Leonardo also learnt how to play the lute at this time (Bramly, 1994).

In 1480 Ludovico the Moor took power in Milan and, after playing the lute at his court, Leonardo wrote a letter to Ludovico in c.1482 'advertising' his skills and abilities. Ludovico invited Leonardo to work for him at his court in 1482 (Bramly, 1994), when Leonardo was 30 years old. He started writing his 13,000 pages of drawings and notes and enjoyed 15 years of patronage and support from Ludovico in the court of Milan (Bramly, 1994). In 1503 Leonardo returned to Florence and worked there until 1506 when he was summoned to Milan where his painting 'Madonna' impressed Louis XII of France. Louis XII appointed Leonardo as his painter and engineer. After working in Rome, Leonardo went to France in 1516 and organised the festivities for the baptism of the Dauphin and Lorenzo's marriage in 1518. He died in Cloux in 1519 (Bramly, 1994).

This brief summary of his life obscures the amazing range and diversity of the work that Leonardo produced over his life of 67 years. A summary of some of the inventions he is said to have created gives a small indication of this (see Table 1 below).

Table 1 A Selection of Leonardo da Vinci's Inventions (e.g. Bramly, 1994; Niccoli, 2002; Routh 1987)

Categories and Inventions		
<i>Kitchen items</i>	<i>Food-related items</i>	<i>Tools</i>
Tumble dryer	Table decorations	Wood planer
	Table napkins	Lathe
<i>Engineering</i>	Spaghetti machine	
Lifting equipment	Recipes	
Cylinder grinders	Blender	<i>War machines</i>
Pistons	Pepper grinder	Crossbow
Pumps	Corkscrew	Gun
Ball bearings	Nutpress	Tank
Roller	Egg slicer	
Belt supports	Roasters	<i>Architecture/Infrastructure</i>
		Bridges
<i>Mills</i>	<i>Instruments</i>	Designed buildings
Hydraulic power mill	Compass	Drainage
Windmill	Perspectograph	
<i>Flying machines</i>	<i>Transport machines</i>	<i>Statues</i>
Helicopter	Bicycle	Bronze equestrian statue
Parachute		
	<i>Music for the military</i>	
<i>Underwater equipment</i>	Drum machine	
Scuba diving		<i>Mathematics</i>
Snorkeling equipment	<i>Word classifications</i>	Geometrical games
	<i>Physics</i>	<i>Art</i>
	Mirrors	Use of new equipment/ techniques

Perhaps it is also worth noting the conditions in which Leonardo seems to have been most creative, such as when he moved to the court of Milan in 1482 and started working for Ludovico, the Governor of Milan. This is when he is thought to have started writing his notebooks. Of the 13,000 pages of notes/drawings he made, 7,000 have been found and studied (Bramly, 1994). Although he needed to paint pictures to make his living and reputation, Leonardo seems to have had a great freedom to be inventive with support from Ludovico. This generosity of support was

evident when Ludovico supported Leonardo in projects that took so long that they were never finished in his lifetime. For example, Ludovico commissioned his bronze horse in 1489, a project Leonardo worked on for 20 years and never completed (Bramly, 1994).

So, although Leonardo made his reputation through art, he worked, investigated and invented in a huge range of areas that are hard to comprehend. These areas included town planning, artillery, waterworks, optics, anatomy, mathematics, physics, astronomy, engineering, word

categorisation, architecture, wave motion and currents, to name just a few (Bramly, 1994; Niccoli, 2002; Routh, 1987).

This paper considers each aspect and then applies it to today and beyond. The five areas that stem from learning from how Leonardo thought are:

1. Accumulation of knowledge through detailed observation
2. Knowledge created through synthesis of thinking and brainstorming
3. Knowledge accumulated through project management and problem solving
4. Imagination and knowledge development, and
5. Ambition as a driver for knowledge and learning

Each will be considered in turn below.

1. Knowledge accumulated through detailed observation

‘One thing I have learned [is]... that all our science, if compared with reality, is primitive and infantile... and yet it is the most precious wealth we have’ (Einstein quoted in Kruger, 1999, p. 121)

The wealth of what exists in the observed world exceeds human understanding of it. However, understanding it, even if not perfectly, is very valuable in so many ways. One means of understanding, is careful observation and analysis. This is something that Leonardo da Vinci and other great thinkers have understood (Bramly, 1994 and Kruger, 1999). It continues to be an important means of understanding and learning today.

Careful observation may be done in many ways. However, one of the simplest is looking at something (see Figure 2) and taking time to draw it. This is something that Leonardo da Vinci did over 500 years ago, accumulating 13,000 pages of notes and drawings in his life (Bramly, 1994).



Figure 2 Careful observation leads to knowledge accumulation

Even with sophisticated devices for magnifying and taking photographs, drawing what is observed is still a means of learning and accumulation of knowledge today in certain fields (Panagiotoulos, 2018). One of these fields is medicine, where students are required to observe and draw dissected anatomical material (Panagiotoulos, 2018). Such activity enhances students’ understanding of anatomy and is considered a useful learning exercise (Panagiotoulos, 2018). Careful observation of anatomy by Leonardo da Vinci enabled him to find and understand functionality and certain parts of the heart (aortic valves) that no other thinker accepted or understood until the 20th century, when sophisticated microscopes could be used (Shoja et al. 2013).

In the fields of botany and plant biology students gain knowledge and understanding of species of plants through observing and drawing. Research has found that this has helped students of plants be more motivated and interested in the subject (Stagg and Verde, 2019). Also, observation and drawing has been found to help students study physics and chemistry and improve exam performance and memorisation (Stagg and Verde, 2019). Stagg and Verde (2019) argue that drawing has helped science students enjoy their subject(s) and become more motivated in their learning, and this, in turn helps the development of science as a whole. The higher the motivation of students,

the greater the likelihood that they will accumulate more knowledge in their field.

A third area of observation that does not normally involve drawing but has been considered to be a helpful means of accumulating knowledge, is observation in learning environments (e.g. McDonald and Howell, 2012). Peer observation in education is commonly used to understand patterns of behaviour, levels of engagement and interaction in education (McDonald and Howell, 2012). Also, peer observation in higher education helps observers and observees share knowledge, and reflect on learning (Tenenberg, 2016).

So, in short, detailed observation has been, and continues to be, a valuable means for learning, sharing and accumulating knowledge. This may be done in a lot of different ways. However, in the fields of medicine, physics, biology, botany and teaching, observation continues to be a valuable means of accumulating knowledge and learning.

2. Knowledge created through synthesis of thinking and brainstorming

One reason why Leonardo da Vinci was so innovative 500 years ago, was that when he accumulated his 13,000 pages of notes and drawings he synthesised thinking from different knowledge domains (Bramly, 1994; Gelb, 1998). Synthesis of ideas and innovation is an important and valuable basis for enterprising and entrepreneurial thinking (Gelb, 1998) and it is a significant basis for the creative process involved in brainstorming (Lefika and Mearns, 2015 and Litchfield 2008).

Litchfield (2008) provided a four-rule guide for effective brainstorming (see Figure 3). He said, to be effective at brainstorming participants need to:

- I. Generate a lot of ideas
- II. Avoid criticising ideas
- III. Attempt to combine and improve ideas and
- IV. Encourage 'crazy' ideas.

Litchfield (2008) also suggested that one individual should summarise what the group says by taking notes during the brainstorming session.

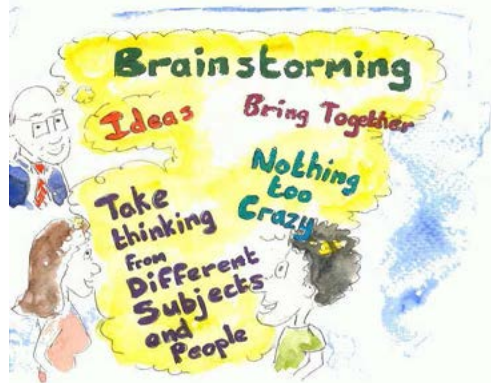


Figure 3 Synthesising thinking and brainstorming (adapted from Litchfield, 2008).

The key thing to remember about creating knowledge through synthesis of ideas/thinking from different people and domains is to realise the value of bringing ideas together and being open-minded. Leonardo da Vinci brought many ideas together through his own study as he mixed with different groups of people in society and he had a mind that was constantly inquisitive. Brainstorming can do the same through conversation where certain 'ground rules' are used.

3. Knowledge accumulated through project management and problem solving

When someone paints a picture they are faced with a number of challenges which, in effect, mean they need to address a number of mini-problems in order to bring everything together in one whole picture. For example, when Leonardo drew/painted *The Last Supper* he drew/painted individual disciples and features of the picture, and then put them together in a suitable composition (Heydenreich, 1974). Da Vinci was also innovative in the process when he used his picture to 'elongate' the room of the refectory. This meant that anyone who dined in the room would be joined by Jesus and his disciples. This was a truly innovative work, but at the same time a very big project (Heydenreich, 1974).

This process of addressing individual

problems and putting them together to address a bigger challenge is a process directly relevant to projects today in information systems (McManus and Wood-Harper, 2004), hospitals (Zippel-Shultz and Schultz, 2011) and other areas of work. At the end of the process, the quality of the output is normally assessed against criteria. These normally include an evaluation of the project against time and cost (Abyad, 2018, and Radujkovic and Sjekavica, 2017), something that was generally considered a weakness in Leonardo's project management (!) (Bramly, 1994). In virtually all such projects incremental steps are taken, individual problems are solved, and knowledge is accumulated. Also, either within the incremental steps or in the final product, or in both, normally something innovative/new is created.

4. Imagination and knowledge development

The theme of imagination is another important aspect of Leonardo da Vinci's work (Pedretti and Clark, 1981). Some argue that in higher education this is stifled rather than encouraged. For example, the highest qualification in UK education is the PhD. Many supervisors advise students to focus their PhD work on delivering a small, incremental step in a domain of knowledge. Arguably, such an approach can stifle imagination because the focused in-depth approach can lead to narrow thinking. Also, papers that discuss the development of knowledge in the context of tacit knowledge sometimes lead to conservative conclusions which are similarly limited. For example, Eraut (2000) concludes his paper as follows:

'...researchers need to be both inventive and modest with their aspirations. The prime purpose of this paper has been to draw attention to both the importance of tacit knowledge and the difficulty of investigating it.' (Eraut, 2000, p. 135)

However, others argue that imaginative expansive approaches are essential for memorisation, learning and development of knowledge (Charlton et al., 2018; Dudley, 2013 and Egan, 2004). This was Leonardo da Vinci's approach (Bramly, 1994). In my view, imaginative expansive approaches

to knowledge development should be encouraged wherever the approach helps address challenges (e.g. Charlton et al. 2018).

Various examples illustrate how expansive imaginative approaches help develop knowledge in pioneering ways. Often these imaginative approaches extrapolate from observed, deduced and/or previously experienced knowledge. For example, Leonardo da Vinci almost certainly invented the bicycle by reflecting on the previous invention of wheels and his own idea of ball bearings. He took these thoughts (among others, perhaps) and imagined the bicycle that he drew in a sketch (Bramly 1994) (see Figure 5).

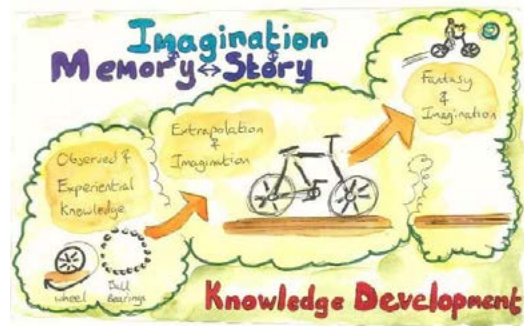


Figure 5 Imagination and knowledge development

Many writers experience things and then write stories that extrapolate from those experiences. Artists take inspiration from other artists and then use their imagination to further a new line of creative knowledge, e.g. Vincent Van Gogh (Tate Britain, 2019). This is true with musicians and other creative thinkers too.

Imagination can be used to address challenges, develop knowledge and aid memory (Egan, 2004). Usually imaginative approaches are interwoven with experiences from the past and can be developed through drawing, and today, this may entail the use of software technology too (Charlton et al., 2018). The value of imagination to the process of knowledge development in individuals and communities is as important today as it ever was, and to stifle it runs counter to what education should help students do. I am

inclined agree with Egan (2004) who cites Egan and Nadaner (1988) when he says:

'Stimulating the imagination is not an alternative educational activity to be argued for in competition with other claims; it is a prerequisite to making an activity educational.' (Egan, 2004 p. 5 citing Egan and Nadaner, 1988, p. ix).

5.Ambition as a driver for knowledge and learning

People who are ambitious often pioneer areas of knowledge and learning. Leonardo da Vinci expressed huge ambition and confidence in his letter to Ludovico Sforza, the governor of Milan, in c.1482 (Frere, 1995; Landrus, 2009). Leonardo da Vinci's ambition and confidence was clear in his letter. Also, throughout his life, he continually explored and tried new things in an enormous range of fields of study. MacCurdy, who studied Leonardo's notebooks for over 25 years, described his work as an accumulation of 'a vast encyclopaedia of human knowledge' (MacCurdy, 1956, p.16).

Leonardo was never afraid to try new things out in whatever he did, and this reflected his ambitious mindset to further thinking in the areas that he worked in (Pedretti and Clark, 1981). For example, when he painted *The Last Supper* (Heydenreich, 1974), he had a new 'take' on the scene [the revealing of the betrayer Judas], used different materials, and applied innovative thinking, e.g. Pythagoras' harmonic mathematical mean (Landrus, 2009). I think that Leonardo's ambition in such a diversity of fields, e.g. the anatomy of heart, architecture, tanks, robots and flight, helped yield great additions to knowledge that are still being studied and explored today (BBC Radio 4, 2019).

An ambitious mindset drives creative endeavour to big goals. This is because ambitious goals often generate great effort towards addressing problems that entail learning new things on the journey. This is something that is normally important to a business when it creates a new product or an organisation that delivers a service in a new way. One area of ambitious endeavour today is in the field

of artificial intelligence (AI). Questions are being asked. For example, how can AI be harnessed to transform the way products are delivered to customers? In my field of work (higher education): how should lecturers, researchers and students operate in higher education with the increasing use of AI in society? (Lukin, 2019). Ambitious visions for the future are important to developing knowledge and learning. However, ambitions need to be tempered with wisdom so that people are not harmed on the journey.

Synthesis of the patterns of learning of Leonardo da Vinci

There are at least five aspects that can be drawn from patterns in Leonardo da Vinci's life and work that help us 'learn from how Leonardo thought'. These areas can help us to pioneer thinking and create knowledge today. These five areas are discussed above but some examples of how they relate to pioneering work today are given below (see Table 2).

Table 2 Learning from how Leonardo da Vinci thought by example

Leonardo da Vinci's approach	Examples of fields that themes relate to today	Examples of pioneering work / areas which use the approach	Possible future areas of pioneering work /knowledge development
1. Accumulation of knowledge through detailed observation	Medical students Anatomy/surgery Botany/ plant biology Physics and chemistry Learning about teaching	Application of observation of anatomy and nervous system to cyber robots (BBC Radio 4, 2019) Study of the tongue and voice projection with scan technology used in study of singing	Implementation of cyber robots in a multiplicity of roles Development of more sophisticated voice projection and recognition software/ song generation. Voice cloning and using in the future (Marr, 2019)
2. Knowledge created through synthesis of thinking and brainstorming	Entrepreneurship (usually new products combine thinking from different fields)	Combined thinking about language, dialects, new social media technology and intergenerational sharing in Mandarin (Shi <i>et al.</i> 2019)	Any number of combined multi-disciplinary projects tailored to areas of interest
3. Knowledge accumulated through project management and problem solving	City development projects Information systems Hospital projects Any project in organisations with some complexity	Knowledge cities and lifestyle offices for happy workspaces with new technology (Hills and Levy, 2014)	More sophisticated links in international city workspaces, with seamless contact between all relevant people
4. Imagination and knowledge development	Science, technology, engineering, art and mathematics (STEAM) learning projects with children (Charlton <i>et al.</i> , 2018)	Different technology / creative learning environments across different subject areas	Taking this type of learning further with more interactive imaginative technology in the future, e.g. immersed simulations connected to the brain
5. Ambition as a driver for knowledge and learning	Artificial Intelligence in different fields	Transport/logistics (replacing lorry drivers with AI) Higher education student profiles	No lorry drivers in the future and deliveries made with AI lorries and AI drones Higher education studies tailored through interactive AI schemes

The principles explained in this paper that stem from considering the patterns of work that Leonardo da Vinci developed, inform how can learn, imagine, innovate and accumulate knowledge today. In many cases the principles overlap in how they operate in practice. For example, the accumulation of knowledge through detailed observation (Principle 1, see Table 2 above) generated much knowledge for Leonardo in his notebooks that he could then combine in projects where he accumulated knowledge through project management and problem-solving (Principle 3, see Table 2 above). This involved synthesising thinking (Principle 2, Table 2) and using imagination (Principle 4, Table 2) that was driven by an ambitious aim (Principle 5, Table 2). For example, all these principles applied in the bronze horse project commissioned by Ludovico, the governor of Milan in 1489. Leonardo made detailed drawings observing the anatomy and movement of horses. Each aspect of the design (in terms of materials and engineering) needed to be thought through. This brought together mathematical and scientific thinking. He needed imagination and ambition for the project in the first place. He did all the thinking and design of the bronze horse project over a period of 20 years. He never implemented the project. However, his detailed design work was put in to practice effectively in the time of Louis XVI, 200 years later, following Leonardo's design almost exactly (Bramly, 1994). Today, this way of thinking is required in applying these principles (e.g. in cyber robot and voice recognition projects). Some other examples and suggestions are given in Table 2.

These principles have implications for higher education: what is taught; how it is taught; how people think in our society today when they leave higher education institutions like universities. The debate about what areas of study are more valuable to knowledge economies continues. For example, a recent article said:

“Those [undergraduates] who take subjects such as history, law and drama, are just as likely to be in work as their chemistry, maths or engineering

counterparts [the study by the British Academy and the London Economics consultancy said]...The findings challenge the popular belief that the future is all about Stem (Science, technology, engineering and maths) and the degrees in those subjects are more valuable to the economy now and in the future...The findings about recruitment in the fastest growing parts of the economy are particularly striking. These businesses, including information and communications, finance, transport and property, all prefer humanities graduates. In finance almost 70 per cent of graduate employees have humanities backgrounds.” (Bennett, 2020, p. 25)

The value of studying different subject areas in depth must not be underestimated. However, the synthesising thinking from those different areas must not be underestimated either. Therefore, universities where students do both either in courses or through conversation or both, will, in my view, be much better learners and valuable members of society when they leave university. This is something that can be learnt from Leonardo da Vinci's life and applied to higher education settings.

Conclusion

Reviewing the life and work of Leonardo da Vinci can help us learn today from how he thought. There are patterns from his life and work that indicate ways of thinking that made Leonardo da Vinci such a pioneering thinker and innovator. These principles are summarised:

1. Accumulation of knowledge through detailed observation
2. Knowledge created through synthesis of thinking and brainstorming
3. Knowledge accumulated through project management and problem solving
4. Imagination and knowledge development, and
5. Ambition as a driver for knowledge and learning

These principles and the fields of study that he was involved in, continue to be studied and worked on today. This paper argues that these principles are worth applying in group projects in areas of business and higher education, and at an individual level too, following in the footsteps of this truly innovative and learned man.

This keynote article was compiled from two years of thinking, which was partly expressed in the author's knowledge and learning blog articles:

<http://knowledgelearningpd.wordpress.com>. ■

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I Dream of Apocalypses

Imagine this: deserted landscapes, darkened skies, black smoke, silence, destruction. I walk through the rubble and I see the people around me are lost, purposeless, wondering: what has happened? How will life go on?

This is not the scene of an apocalypse, nor from a movie, nor from the news about war-torn countries.

This is the scene from one of my recurring dreams.

One night it was a terrible environmental disaster, one night it was the aftermath of a nuclear attack. Sometimes I am conscious something terrible has happened, most of the times I am there as it happens.

I used to think these recurring dreams might be the sign of some Freudian family trauma of sorts, or possibly an irrational fear of mine. However, the more I think about this and explore these peculiar dreams, I am convinced that it is a sign of our times.

It is no wonder that my mind is unconsciously processing the billion pieces of information it receives every day: this is supposedly one of the main functions of dreams (although we might never know the full potential and purpose of dreams).

What is really fascinating is that threats of natural disasters, impending climate change ultimatums and nuclear war horrors have penetrated my dream world to such a great extent.

Dreams are windows into our internal life – each a journey into ourselves. If we let them, dreams can reveal much about our desires, expectations, fears.

I never consciously thought I feared the impending doom of climate change, and I certainly never in my waking life fear a nuclear attack might occur. I have learned that my waking hours are not as telling of what goes on ‘inside’ as dreams can be.

Not a day goes by that our generation does not hear about the impacts of climate

change, or about wars, earthquakes, accidents.

Might not our brains be completely oversaturated with information about death, disasters, and doom?

It is no surprise that I find the need to process, digest and discard most of this information. Is it not called survival?

I tell you what I believe: I dream of Apocalypses because of what I see every day. What passes from my eyes and ears through to my brain, is received and stored, whether I am aware of it or not. It needs processing. I am not talking about films or sci-fi fiction. I am talking about Iran, Trump, Greta Thunberg, nuclear agreements, and maybe also Brexit.

One night it was a hydrogen bomb exploding as I sat anxiously in my parents’ car. Another night it was planes crashing down and fires everywhere. Yet another night it was a tsunami that had washed away London as I knew it.

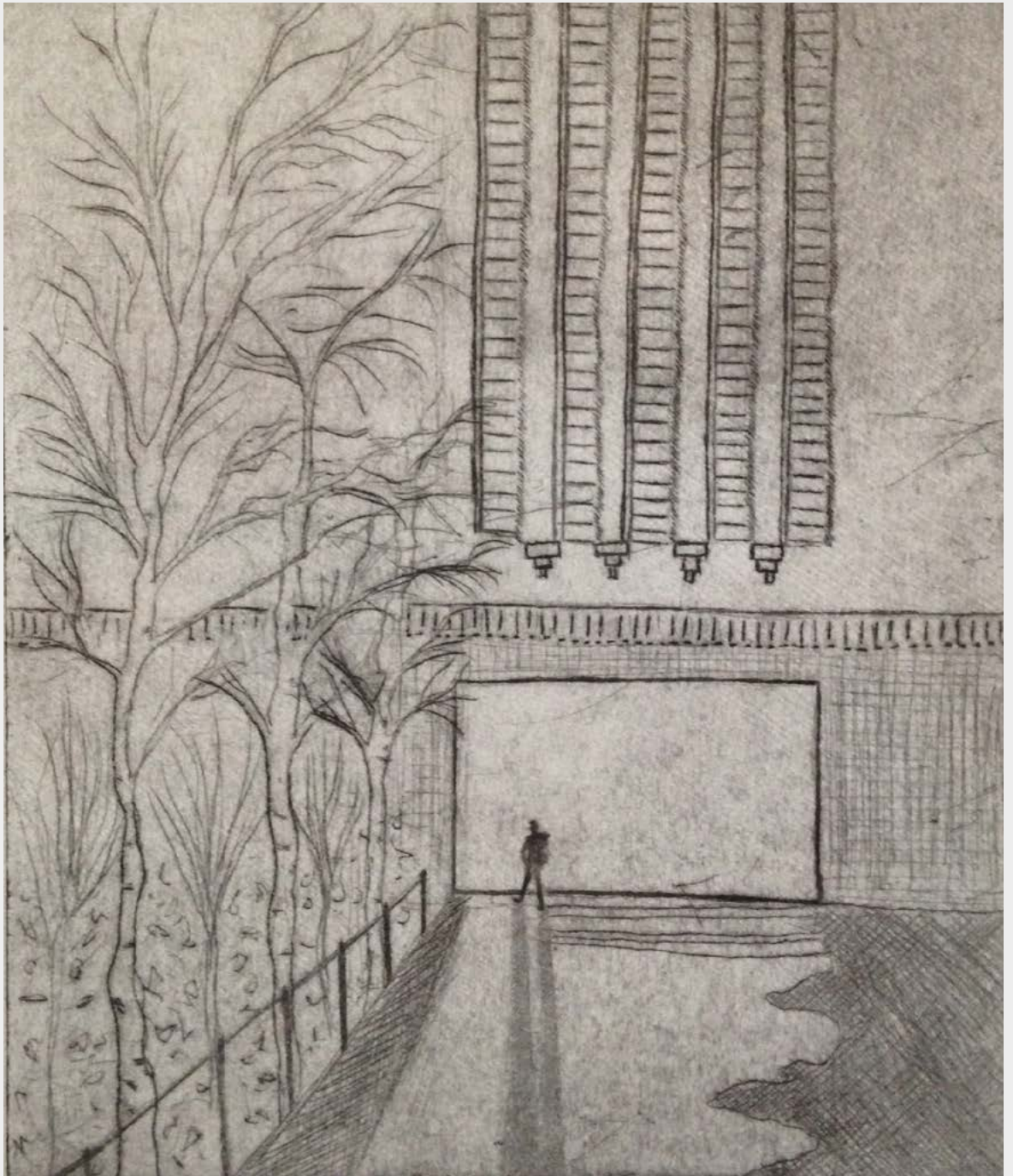
And then there is the aftermath. What does life look like after the worst has happened?

Lost faces, dysfunctional behaviours, the need to find shelter and a way to survive.

I do not believe in prophetic dreams, or in being able to tell the future. What I know is that my brain processes much more information than I can ever be consciously aware of. I know that instincts exist. I know that nothing is really meaningless – or at least there is a reason and cause behind most of what happens (not just in our brains).

So here I am, wondering if people that stock up on supplies in case of an apocalypse might be not too different from me and my dreams about life after the end of the world. ■

REVIEWS



Sarah Waller,
2019. *Tate Modern*. Aluminium drypoint etching

DEBORAH SCHULTZ
READER IN ART HISTORY

Writing about Contemporary Art

Students on the BA (Hons) Liberal Studies have the opportunity to study contemporary art and the ways in which art is written about, whether as part of a major or minor in art history, or as an elective, an option that is now also open to students on the new BA (Hons) Philosophy, Politics & Economics.

With a wide range of art on display in London, there are always interesting works to see as students recognise the ways in which art helps them to understand the world around them. Art constructs a dialogue between the artist and the viewer, as works reach back into the past via cultural references and visual memories and extend into the future through hopes and ideas. The works discussed in these reviews are not participatory in the sense that the viewer is not required to do something physically to complete them. However, the viewer may

act as a result of these works, both of which reflect upon how we live in and engage with the contemporary world.

For one of their assignments, students write about a work we have studied. They address the ways in which the artist has communicated their ideas, exploring the medium and materials that have been used as well as how the work relates to its setting. They study the reception of the work in a range of sources, from established newspapers and art journals to online blogs. I have selected a couple of examples.

The monument *Fons Americanus* by Kara Walker, at Tate Modern until 5 April 2020, is discussed by Simon Bond, a media communications major, with particular attention to its reception, while videos by Bill Viola, on permanent display at St Paul's Cathedral, are explored in their setting by Alina Arcari, an art history major. ■

ALINA ARCARI
STUDENT IN BA (HONS) LIBERAL STUDIES

Human emotions through contemporary video: Bill Viola at St Paul's Cathedral

How does video artist Bill Viola combine traditional Christian themes with contemporary issues? While walking along the south quire aisle in St Paul's Cathedral, an object that does not seem to belong in a church becomes visible. Four plasma screens are joined together to form one large display at the end of the aisle. In Bill Viola's video *Martyrs (Earth, Air, Fire, Water)*, 2014, the viewer watches four individuals being martyred, with each screen relating

to each of the four elements. From a pile of dirt, a man appears; a suspended woman is repeatedly hit by a great wind; another man sits on a chair on a stage that is consumed by fire; and rain soaks a third man who is hanging upside down. The natural elements gradually disturb the stillness of each film as we follow the martyrs through their death and into the light. After just over seven minutes the video starts again, reminding the viewer of the ongoing suffering of the



Bill Viola, *Mary*, 2016
Video installation
Color high-definition video triptych on vertical flat panel displays
Duration: 13:13 minutes
Photo: Kira Perov

Gift to Tate by Bill Viola and Kira Perov,
with support from donors, 2015
On loan to St Paul's Cathedral

martyrs, and maybe also of one's own humanity.

Moving on to the north quire aisle, we see the three plasma screens of *Mary*, 2016. Built up like a triptych, the work resembles a religious object but is clearly very modern. The video describes the life cycle from birth through to death in five parts, mixing the historic with the religious while including a contemporary view on the life of the Virgin Mary. As Viola points out in the press release, she is the personification of creativity, procreation, inner strength, love and compassion. Mary is a timeless icon of motherhood. In the video, Viola explores biblical imagery of Mary and simultaneously represents the contemporary mother. In one scene, a mother is pictured with her baby, much like a typical Madonna and child painting from traditional Christian art. But the background is of skyscrapers. This then contrasts with what we see at the end of the video: a typical *pietà* of the Virgin Mary holding Jesus. The setting changes but the subject is the same.

This is not the kind of triptych that we are used to seeing as it is made of metal and plasma screens rather than wood. The development of technology in recent years has made possible the display of video work with minimal distractions. Earlier video art was projected on to a wall or screen, or displayed on bulky monitors. Here Viola's works stand independently on the north and south quire aisles behind the High Altar in an area of the cathedral that is designated for contemplation and meditation. Viewers do not disturb the works with their shadows.

A film usually has a clear beginning, middle and end, but Viola's works are played on a loop. The contemporary medium of video is in both works slowed down to unravel in a controlled way, leading us to face ourselves alone with the artwork. The calmness and stillness of the subjects are highlighted by the video being without sound and the slow motion. The viewer is given time and is encouraged to watch everything unfold. We might be looking at a painting or a photograph, but then one is reminded that



Bill Viola
Martyrs (Earth, Air, Fire, Water), 2014
Video installation
Color high-definition video polyptych on
four vertical flat panel displays
Duration: 7:15 minutes
Photo: Kira Perov

Gift to Tate by Bill Viola and Kira Perov,
with support from donors, 2015
On loan to St Paul's Cathedral

it is not by the small and slow movements. Viola adds something new and unfamiliar to traditional historical paintings, using a contemporary medium to honour the past.

In *Martyrs (Earth, Air, Fire, Water)* and in *Mary*, Viola takes religious references out of context to give them more universal meaning. Paintings that show the suffering of martyrs almost force the viewer to feel compassion. By contrast, the high definition of the videos makes it easy for the viewer to feel compassion as the figures seem so similar to us. What Viola manages to achieve through his videos is to engage the viewer in the art. As he states in the press release for *Martyrs*:

The Greek word for martyr originally meant 'witness'. In today's world, the mass media turns us all into witnesses to the suffering of others. The martyrs' past lives of action can help illuminate our modern

lives of inaction. They also exemplify the human capacity to bear pain, hardship, and even death in order to remain faithful to their values, beliefs, and principles. This piece represents ideas of action, fortitude, perseverance, endurance, and sacrifice.

In *Martyrs* and *Mary*, Viola beautifully binds together contemporary issues with the timeless themes embodied in the cathedral. The religious side of his art is only part of the whole picture as he leads the viewer to reflect on his or her activity or inactivity in the face of contemporary suffering. Viola's works engage the viewer with strong emotions, mixing the individualism that our Western society is based on with universal values. Slowing down each video and removing the sound forces the viewer to focus on what is depicted. ■

SIMON BOND

STUDENT IN BA (HONS) LIBERAL STUDIES

Is *Fons Americanus* a critique of slavery or a reinforcement of racial stereotyping?

Kara Walker's *Fons Americanus*, 2019, was created to challenge understanding of the role of the United Kingdom in the slave trade. On first impression, it looks like a tribute to people of colour, who historically have been left out of monuments. It was inspired by the Victoria Memorial that stands tall before Buckingham Palace but takes a rather caricatural form compared to that gold and marble behemoth.

How has the work been received? What have the critics written about it and how have they done so? The reviews have varied, however most have been positive and favoured Walker's use of satire to portray a socially poignant subject. The form of the reviews by *The Guardian*, *Time* and *Art Monthly* took various approaches, with Adrian Searle for *The Guardian* utilising short, emphatic sentences that draw in the reader. The language used, such as 'lards up an already over-the-top monument' and 'shark-infested pool of citations' (Searle) coincide with the imagery in *Fons Americanus*: emotional, explicit and seemingly astray from the critical analysis provided by the likes of 'serious' art historians. Although written in the third person, this review seeks a response to the 'sardonic,

barbed, monstrous, absurd, astonishing and funny' (Searle) monument. Instead of posing an argument about the meaning or effect of the piece, the critic for *The Guardian* poses questions for the reader to decide for themselves: 'And who is the seated black buccaneer captain in his four-league boots? And what of the boy with the snorkel, playing oblivious in the water?' (Searle).

The reviewer for *Time* magazine, Suyin Haynes, took a different approach, citing many quotes from Walker herself and, almost scientifically, diagrammatising *Fons Americanus* into sections numbered 1, 2, 3, etc. This breaking-down into sections method feels similar to John James Audubon's work on documenting the birds of the United States, or Anna Atkins, who photographed and recorded the world's sea algae both for research and art purposes. *Time* does not present a strongly



Kara Walker, *Fons Americanus*, 2019. 13m high, jesmonite over cork, Tate Modern.
Photo: Simon Bond

opinionated review, but instead outlines Walker's intentions for the work.

The article in *Art Monthly* takes a different approach, with Morgan Quaintance critically analysing the work as an 'appeasement', arguing that it is a product of 'institutions keen to virtue signal'

(Quaintance 13). By using the phrase 'virtue signal', Quaintance locates the work's place in an institution looking for moral stature, but by displaying a work that addresses the past from a 'historic distance' rather than one that focuses more explicitly on contemporary issues. He makes an extremely reasoned argument that 'in the end, however, *Fons Americanus* does nothing to highlight the myriad detrimental ideological and structural effects of the British Empire. Walker's work is just another depressing symptom of its endurance' (Quaintance 14). He pushes the idea of 'appeasement' strongly, even criticising artists of colour for accepting royal honours and asks, 'By the performance of what psychological gymnastics can one be both a critic of the British Empire and master or commander of it at the same time?' (Quaintance 14).

Walker's work is sited in the Turbine Hall, the space occupied by William Kentridge's performance *The Head and the Load*, July 2018, which 'tells the untold story of the hundreds of thousands of African porters and carriers who served in British, French and German forces during the First World War' (Tate). Attending this performance, I was given the distinct impression of criticism against empire and institution. There was no room for playful or satirical condemnation. Compared to Walker's display, Kentridge's performance was almost three times the size, but only required one actor, or one singer, to provide a more chilling, more critical, more accessible, more evident reproof of the consequences global slavery created. One could argue that Walker's *Fons Americanus* does not do enough. It is not enough to make reference to tragedy. It is not enough to satirise the effects of slavery, and it is not enough to recreate a monument in a questionably black-empowering vision. Kara Walker created a monument to all the things that like-minded artists have better criticised and re-imagined, albeit through different mediums. Instead of empowerment, the impression bestowed by *Fons Americanus* is that of status quo, of reluctant apathy, and of defeat for the oppressed. ■

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ANNA MAFFIULETTI
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Sarah Lightman: Drawing from Life and Literature

On Tuesday 25 January the Knapp Gallery at Regent's University London opened its doors to the private view of the show: Sarah Lightman: Drawing from Life and Literature.

Sarah Lightman is a London-based artist, curator and writer whose work has been previously exhibited in galleries and museums of global fame. Sarah's art is extremely personal and introspective, featuring a vast array of portraits, self-portraits and everyday objects which helped her create her identity and discover her nature.

With these reasons in mind, the curatorial team behind the exhibition, formed of Regent's students Davis Goldenberg, Anna Maffiuletti, Martha Moskowitz and Anya Nikolaeva have structured the exhibition with the intent of walking the audience through Sarah's personal journey of self-discovery.

The artist's artworks are thematically separated between the two large rooms of the Knapp Gallery. The first room is dedicated to some bigger portraits drawn in charcoal on paper. The different faces that cover the gallery's white walls, all direct their gaze towards the spectator, inviting a moment of personal evaluation and self-analysis. Sarah's perspective on the use of charcoal as her favourite artistic medium lies in the flexibility that charcoal allows. 'Pencil and charcoal are both very forgiving. You can make mistakes and you can rub it out. I like it because it reminds me that we spend all our lives making mistakes and then picking up and trying again.'

The second room of the gallery is dedicated to more personal self-portraits and a series of book covers that have accompanied Sarah through different



Setting up the Sarah Lightman exhibition in The Knapp. *Photo: Anna Maffiuletti*

moments of her life, ranging from the Jews' sacred book the *Torah* to the story of the *Hungry Caterpillar* that she used to read to her son before bed. As the spectator's journey moves on from the big-scale portraits towards a far more personal sphere of Sarah's work, one cannot help but wonder how it must feel to have such personal work under the eyes of hundreds of strangers ready to scrutinise it.

Sarah commented: 'As you get older, you care a bit less of what everyone feels about what you do. I am always delighted and surprised when people relate to my work. To think that something so personal that I have done on a specific day relates to someone 15 years later is just fabulous.'

The first impression that comes spontaneously after visiting the show at The Knapp is strongly bonded to Sarah's willingness to welcome her spectators into her artistic and personal realm. Flipping through the pages of the graphic novel, *The Book of Sarah* by Sarah Lightman, I remember being very impressed by a simple

drawing of two bananas accompanied by the caption: 'Two bananas when I thought my boyfriend no longer loved me'. The concept of time and longing for something to happen, whether that is an answer from a gallery for a show or a call from a loved one, really comments on humanity and its mysteries. Sarah incapsulates and translates feelings we have all experienced at some point in our lives, even across generations and cultures, making her art a very valuable resource to remember to slow down and take a look inward, discovering yourself.

Organising Sarah's show was an incredible experience which taught us the value of working as a team with shared victories and losses. However, none of this would have been possible without the participation of Sarah Lightman and her unforgettable work, undying patience and constant support. A special thanks also to our professors, Julia Weiner and Phil Grey, who guided us through every step of this journey and to all the staff at Regent's University London. ■

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