

# SunStruck.

Freedom.

Vol. 2, No. 2

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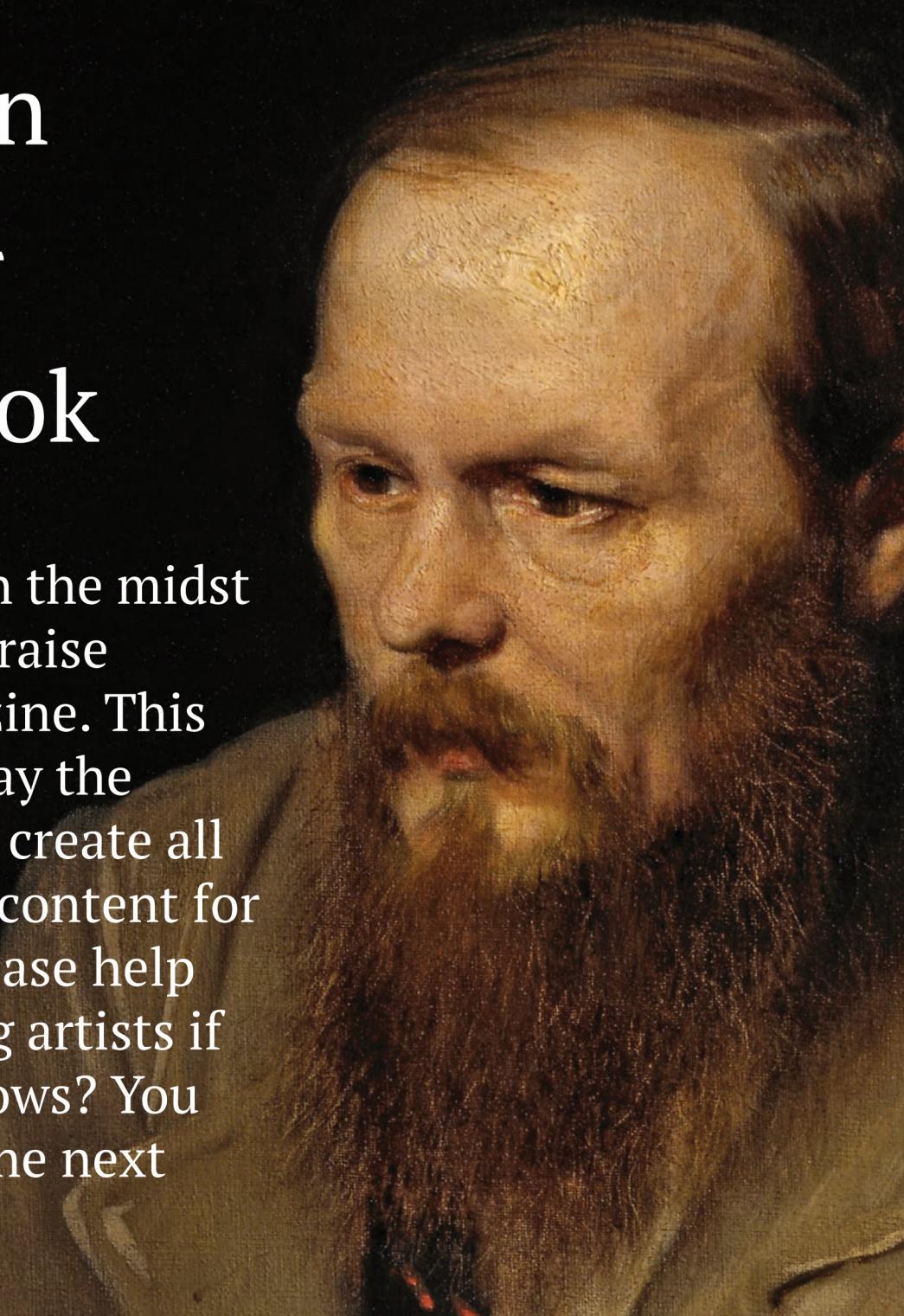
**You're not a Demon. We're not Idiots.  
So, why don't you help us out, Brother?  
It's not a Crime if you don't.  
We're not going to Punish you.  
But we'd appreciate it greatly.  
Even if it's only a few Notes of support.**

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We're currently in the midst of a campaign to raise \$1,000 per magazine. This will allow us to pay the contributors that create all of the wonderful content for SunStruck. So please help out some starving artists if you can. Who knows? You may be funding the next Dostoyevsky.



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*"Our tendency to scapegoat mental health as the driver of gun violence is misguided and does more harm than good, further stigmatizing mental illness and dissuading the afflicted from seeking the help they need."*

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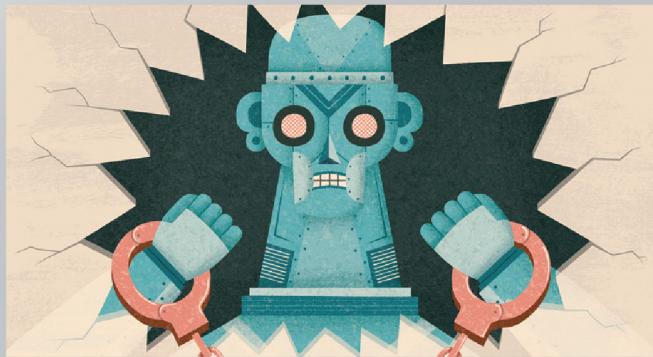
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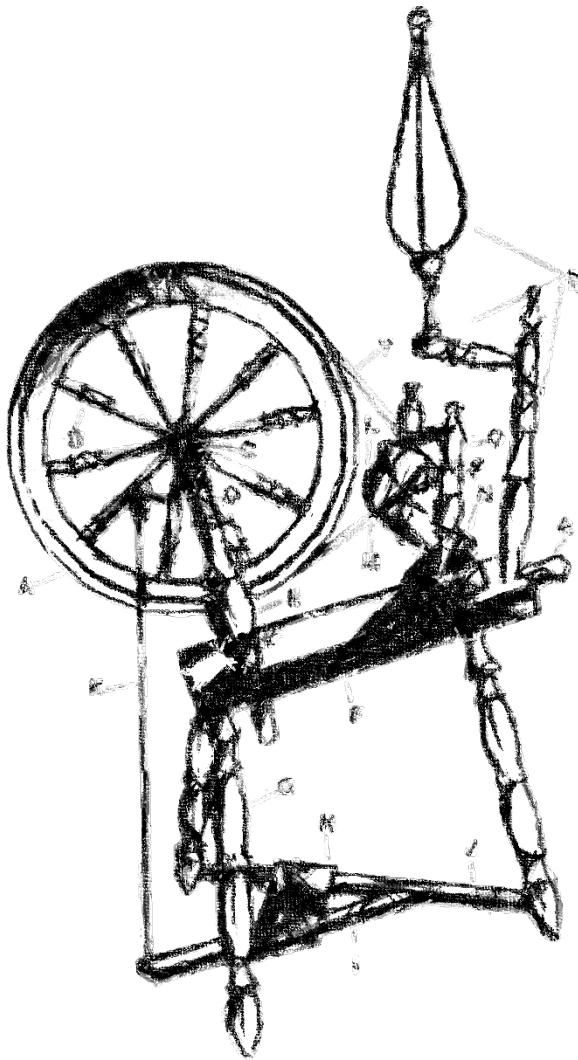
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# Letter From The Editor

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## Readers,

Ask five people on the street what freedom means to them, and you'll get five different answers. Therein lies the power and uselessness of the word. It is an empty shell, ready to be inhabited by any political, religious or legal ideology.

An ethical philosophy class I took in college highlighted this point. For the first half of the semester, we studied "The Ethics of Ambiguity" by the French existentialist Simone de Beauvoir. Following Sartre, de Beauvoir claims humans are naturally born free. The only thing holding us back today is modern capitalist oppression. Once we shed the roles and morality that have been imposed on ourselves by others, we become genuinely free. We then understand "the real requirements" of our freedom: the freedom of others. To be free is to fight for the freedom of the oppressed.

Directly after reading de Beauvoir, we moved onto "After Virtue" by the Scottish Catholic philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre. MacIntyre argues that the Enlightenment's true accomplishment was the development of the autonomous self: humans free from all irrational constraints like nature's whim, authoritarianism and war. However, in so doing, they destroyed the traditional structure of society, leaving the common man subject to manipulation by anyone more powerful than himself. To be truly free is to inhabit societal roles.

During a lecture in this class, one of my classmates described the American obsession with freedom as a psychological illness of sorts. Drawing from Zen Buddhist teachings, he said that it is only because we are such slaves to our desires that we crave freedom so much. To be free is to rid ourselves of desire.

From the same classroom, I was presented with three definitions of freedom: obligation, classification and contentment.

If freedom can mean anything, does it mean anything at all?

This month, SunStruck Magazine subverts and explores the concept of freedom. When the other editors and I determined that "Freedom" would be our theme for March, we expected politically charged and urgent work. We received work that met our expectations, but we also received work that turned the word "freedom" on its head, and we couldn't be more excited by that.

The writers featured in this issue discuss the ways in which freedom can be manipulated and distorted. They celebrate the experience of freedom, and they mourn its passing. And they ask whether freedom, in the traditional American sense, is really something we should be striving for. I hope reading this issue is as revelatory for you as it was for myself.

**Sincerely,**

Caleb Downs  
Editor-in-chief

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“Nothing is more  
precious than  
independence  
and liberty”

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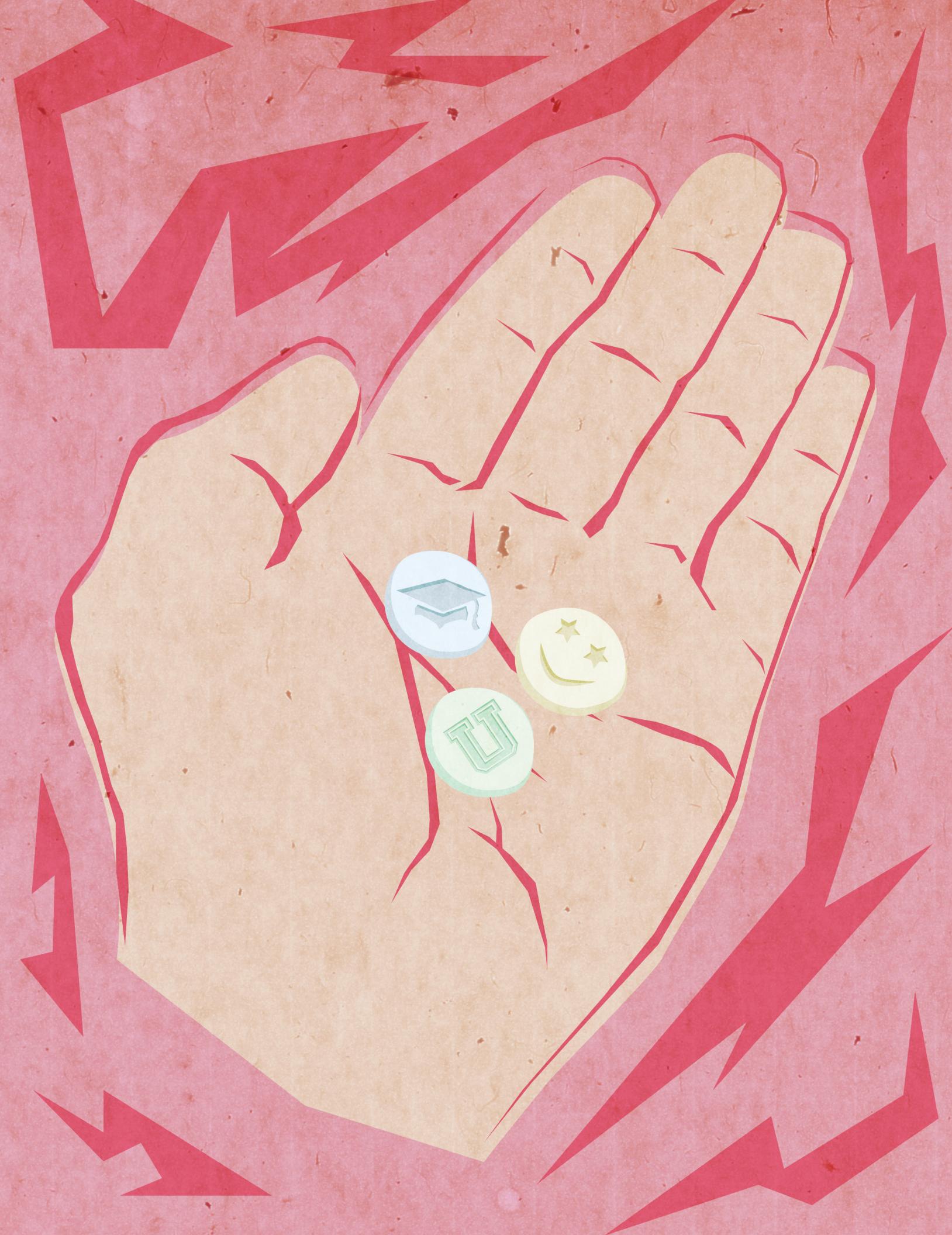
- Ho Chi Minh,

Chairman of the Central Committee  
of the Communist Party of Vietnam

# Non-Fiction

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Examining Freedom



# Keg Stands, Sexual Demands, and No Reprimands

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*How Hollywood and corporate higher education have perverted the American university.*

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Written by Alex Lepore

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**M**y college career is coming to a close, and I often find myself thinking about the summer before I first enrolled in class. My state of mind was one of intense excitement. I wanted to be out of my parents' home. I wanted to drink. I wanted to meet girls. I wanted to pursue what interested me.

My expectations were fueled by my fellow classmates, of course, but I also remember my impression was that those were just the things one did in college. Whenever an adult talked to me about going college, there was always this knowing glance they would give me. They spouted advice like "Study hard" and "Don't party too much," but there was always this implicit acknowledgement that I should enjoy myself to the fullest.

Everything I saw or heard about college seemed to communicate this as well. University brochures I received in the mail always had photos of a group

of friends walking in the quad, huge grins and phony Ray Bans on their faces. Whenever I sat down to watch a college football game with my father, I saw shots of crazed students covered in body paint shouting support for their team. They too were surrounded by their peers, and it seemed as though they had found something special in their community.

Perhaps the most powerful representation of the American university that I experienced was in film. College was portrayed as this magical place where young men like myself could drink as much as they wanted, chase after the perfect girl and discover who they truly were. The characters never had to worry about grades. Their friends always stuck with them. They were completely free, and they were better because of it. I wanted that. I wanted to be in my own college movie.

It's been five years since that summer, and thinking about the hopeful expectations I had for college makes me sad. I'm completely disillusioned with higher education, and I'm scrambling to get out. I've paid too much. I've not learned enough. I've heard too many horror stories about sexual assaults and rape on campus. All around me I see emotionally damaged and ill-prepared students bracing themselves for the work force, and I can't help but compare them and myself with the exuberant and satisfied students from college movies.

I realize now that my expectations were outlandish, but how exactly had I come to develop them? And why were they so far removed from reality? In an effort to answer those questions and further

investigate the cultural transformation that has led to the dismal state of modern higher education, I decided to revisit the most powerful influence on how my younger self perceived college: the college party movie.



**College party movies** are most generally about a group of guys trying to get laid. They're almost all comedies, and the antagonists usually take the form of university administrators or rival fraternity members. The genre was birthed with John Landis's classic "Animal House" in 1978. The movie follows the story of the blue-collar Delta fraternity's battle against the elitist Omega fraternity and the Dean of Faber College, Vernon Wormer. It was wildly successful (shot for a meager \$3 million and grossed a total of more than \$140 million) and set the trend for later movies in the college party genre.

What is most noticeable in "Animal House" is the role of fraternities within the university. Fraternities are depicted as the central focus of campus life. They are not organizations dedicated to brotherhood, public service or anything of that

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**But what does the film have to say about the American university? Most generally, its message is that grades and the formal academic setting hold almost no importance. Instead, the true role of the university is to provide an atmosphere where students can explore who they are and what they really want.**

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nature. They're organizations for white males to segregate themselves based on class and meet women with whom they share a level of perceived status. For example, the Omega house, which espouses conservative hierarchical values and repressed homosexuality, is portrayed as the elite social group on campus, and the women they date are all basically Barbie dolls: white, slim and mannered.

Delta house, on the other hand, is a group of wildly hedonistic young men (most famously portrayed through their toga party, bringing to mind ancient Roman orgies) who attract women that are more genuine, but also more willing to sleep with them. The Delta fraternity members are also more egalitarian. The seniors in the group are willing to interact and accept the freshman, however this egalitarianism is strained through a certain cynical lens, i.e. "We're all pieces of shit, so let's party."

But what does the film have to say about the American university? Most generally, its message is that grades and the formal academic setting hold almost no importance. Instead, the true role of the university is to provide an atmosphere where students can explore who they are and what they really want. In this sense, the university concentrates one's individuality, while simultaneously providing an outlet for their every desire: freedom from familial structures, readily available women and copious amounts of alcohol.

This is the true message of the film, and the message is directed at a specific group of people: white males. Women in the movie are almost always subservient to men, and peoples of other ethnicities are completely excluded or reduced to roles of literal servitude (the only African-American on campus is a servant at Omega house).

This is a key facet of the film that has been adopted by practically every college party movie that has followed it. White males are the protagonists, and their primary goal is to get drunk and seduce women. In the process of said drinking and seduction, they overcome obstacles and learn more about who they really are. The only exceptions to this - and these are qualified exceptions - are "How High," in which Silas (Method Man) and Jamal (Redman) are accepted into Harvard only because of a magical strain of marijuana that summons a ghost who gives them all the right answers to tests, and the Van Wilder movies, in which Kal Penn's ridiculously-named character, Taj Badalandabad, has



a primary role (albeit a role whose main comedic quality is an absurd Indian accent). However, even in these movies, the main goal of the protagonists - who are still males - is to enjoy themselves as much as possible.

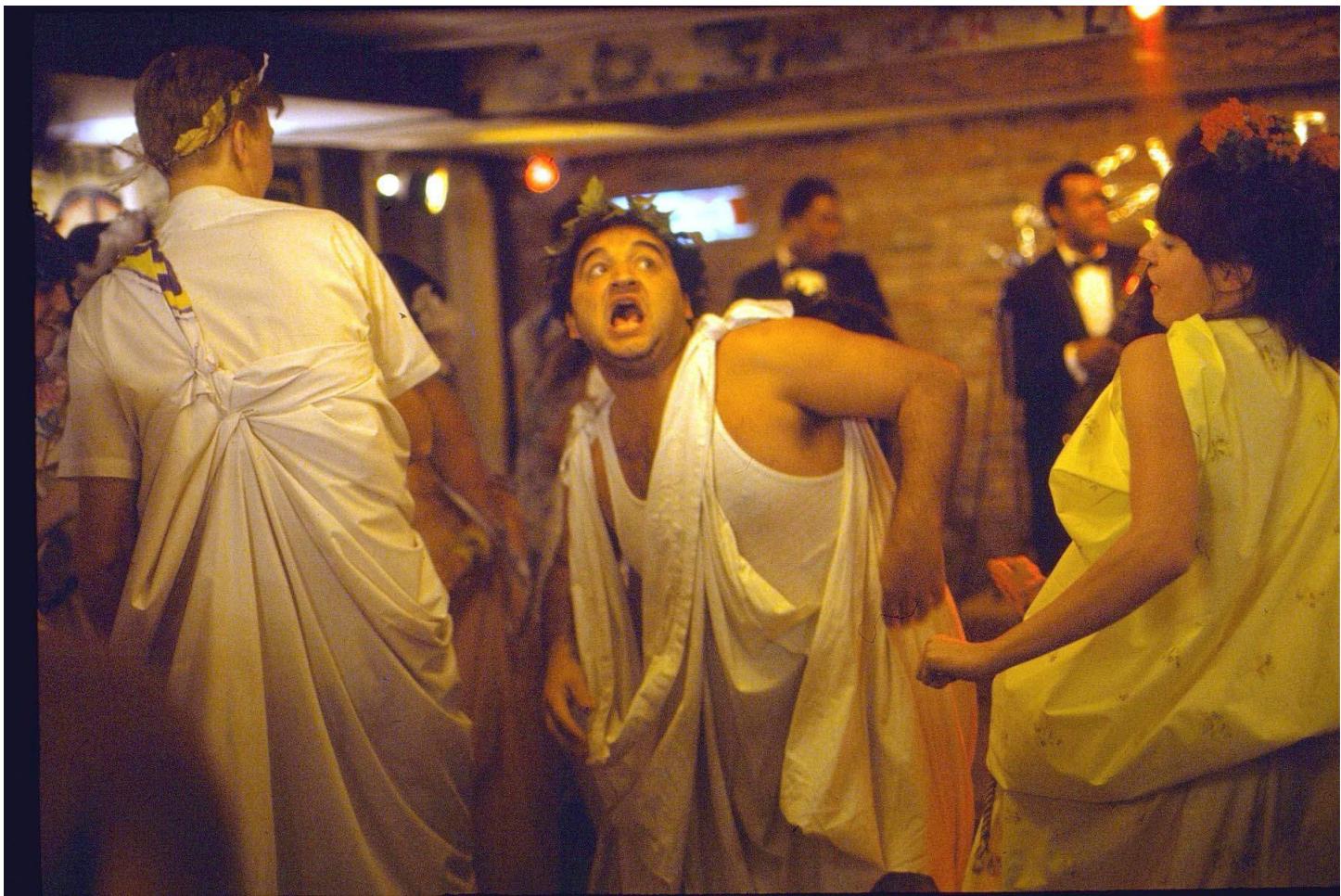
While college party movies center around the actions of men, the movies dictate the way in which women should behave on campus as well. Women are basically little more than sex objects in the average college party movie, and sometimes, this is taken to fairly demeaning lengths. In "Van Wilder," Jeannie's (Emily Rutherford) main purpose is to fulfill the needs of every member of the Delta Iota Kappa (Get it?) fraternity, which includes, but is not limited to, administrative tasks and revenge sex. In "Animal House," Babs (Martha Smith) fulfills a similar purpose, heeding every beck and call of Omega's president, Greg Malamard (James Daughton). Those are both extreme examples, but female characters are generally stale at best or mechanical props built to reveal their breasts at worst.

The significant exception to this is "Spring Breakers." The four female protagonists are developed characters and they make decisions in the movie, which is refreshing. Even more refreshing is to see how the film perverts typical ideals sur-

rounding the college experience. Throughout the film, there are sections when the characters give voice overs that use phrases commonly associated with the college experience while ironic scenes of vice and violence play out on the screen. For example, Candy (Vanessa Hudgens) describes spring break as a literal "break" from reality that changed how she saw the world, while images of her and Brit (Ashley Benson) murder an entire houseful of gang members.

But even in "Spring Breakers," which is ultimately more of a moral tale than a college party movie, the image of the college experience is essentially the same: one should flee the classroom at all costs, and parties are places to binge drink and pursue sex.

This is the representation of the college experience imparted to every viewer of practically any movie that even briefly mentions college, not just college party movies. The real issue lies in the fact that, along with this representation, college is simultaneously depicted as one's sole opportunity to determine one's self. Thus, college is a place where binge drinking is not only accepted, but encouraged. Sex is not only a possibility, but a requirement. Grades are not only unimportant, but incon-



Animal House - 1978 - Universal Pictures

sequential to one's college experience. Unless you'd like to work in a cubicle as a mid-level manager for the rest of your life, you'd better have a good time in college.



**It would be inaccurate to say** that college party movies are responsible for starting the trends of rampant binge drinking and sexual assaults on campus. American universities have long been known for raucous parties and questionable consent. But the two realms, film and reality, feed off of one another and have contributed to the deterioration of higher education over time. Filmmakers exaggerate the college experience to make an entertaining movie; high school and college students watch these movies and attempt to emulate them. The parties get wilder, and the movies strive for ever more jaw-dropping levels of insanity. But what makes this a particularly vicious cycle is the fact that the realities of spending one's

college career chasing sex and drinking heavily are almost completely ignored in the typical college party movie.

Of the sampling of movies that I chose to watch while conducting research for this essay (which included eight comedies and two dramas), "Animal House" was the only comedy to even toy with the possibility of excessive drinking leading to sexual assault. Larry Kroger, a Delta pledge, brings Mayor DePasto's daughter to a room in the frat house. Things get heated, but as soon as she takes her bra off she passes out. Larry debates with himself about what he should do, and then he leaves the room. And that's it. For another 40 years of college party comedies, the issue is swept under the rug.

This, from a business perspective, is understandable. Filmmakers want to make a light-hearted, coming-of-age college movie accessible to everyone, and they don't want to bother people with the horror of sexual assault. But from an artistic and moral standpoint, it's reprehensible. It's like making a war movie that completely glosses over the fact that some people die in wars. Or making

a movie about Mississippi in the early 1800s that pretends slavery didn't exist.

Despite the moral failure of these films, it must be made clear that the image of college fashioned by Hollywood is no excuse for the behavior of an individual on campus. Rape and sexual assault cannot be dismissed as inevitable byproducts of the messages communicated through popular film. A student is not wholly determined by his or her environment or the ideologies they receive through the media. One always possesses a certain amount of freedom to determine one's moral and ethical decisions.

Yet, if we're ever going to address the problem, we must understand where the ideas originate and how they perpetuate social pressures put on college students to drink and have sex. These pressures are incredibly powerful. If one accepts the proposition that the millennial ideal of college has been largely shaped by Hollywood, one of the nuances of the films that must be appreciated is that they tell viewers that not only does everyone have sex and drink in college, but even those that are traditionally marginalized get laid and party.

Take for example, "College," perhaps the most obnoxious and irritating of all college party movies. In the film, which stars Drake Bell as Kevin Brewer, three friends go to a nearby college for a visitation weekend. While there, they're recruited as temporary pledges by the raunchiest fraternity (an obvious and unjustified rip-off of the Delta fraternity from "Animal House"). They also encounter a trio of seductive women, two of whom are inexplicably interested in Brewer's friends, Carter (the most obnoxious and unlikable supporting role in recent memory) and Morris (the innocent nerd of the group). Brewer gets the remaining beauty, Ashley, for himself. But one would expect this. Drake Bell is the handsomest and most developed character of his group. He's the valiant one who wants to stick it to the douchey frat bros. He's the hero. Of course he'll get the girl. What separates this movie, and all other college party movies, from other genres is that his friends also find partners.

This is a distinct trope of the college party movie. Every guy gets laid, not just the hero. Sex-obssessed, but socially awkward Taj (Kal Penn) has a sexual escapade (albeit one that fails after he sets his room on fire) in "Van Wilder." Schmidt (Jonah Hill), the overweight and incompetent undercover

agent, gets the girl in "22 Jump Street." Glen (Adam Herschman), the afro-donning idiot savant of "Accepted," is constantly surrounded by strippers. Scoonie (Christopher Mintz-Plasse), known for his role as McLovin' in "Superbad," is a dorky third wheel in "Neighbors," but he's a legend for his huge dick, so he's accepted in the fraternity and gets plenty of women.

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**This is perhaps the most dangerous component of the college party movie. Women are attracted to these characters simply because they're on a college campus. What kind of message does that send to incoming male freshmen?**

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This is perhaps the most dangerous component of the college party movie. Women are attracted to these characters simply because they're on a college campus. What kind of message does that send to incoming male freshmen? It tells them that all college girls are ready to have sex, and that the past luxury they had of blaming their virginity on their social surroundings is gone. There is no longer any excuse to be a virgin. And it tells women that no matter how a guy behaves or looks, he deserves to be slept with. Thus, rejection is no longer rejection, it is a girl playing hard to get. If a man is rejected, it is not because there is something particularly undesirable about himself. There is something wrong with the girl. Her resistance is invalid and should be either ignored or silenced through alcohol and drugs.



**According to** the Washington Post-Kaiser Family Foundation poll, which surveyed a random national sample of 1,053 students aged 17 to 26

who were undergraduates at a four-year college, 20 percent of women who attended college during the past four years were sexually assaulted. Yet, only 11 percent of all victims (including men) told campus authorities, making campus sexual assault a vastly underreported crime.

One reason for this is obvious: victims of sexual assault are often humiliated by their experience, and they fear retaliation by their attacker if he or she were to find out. The other reason sexual assaults are underreported is much more sinister: campus administration has an interest in making sure these incidents aren't reported.

Due to the Clery Act in 1990, American universities are required to "prepare, publish, and distribute" information regarding rape and sexual assault on campus. The more incidents that occur on a campus, the less likely a student will attend. This dynamic has created an economic interest for university administrators to keep statistics on campus sexual assault as low as possible.

More startling is that university administrators are in prime position to fudge the numbers. Due to the high burden of proof required by the criminal justice system and the Title IX requirement that universities address allegations of sexual assault, most universities have panels – oftentimes composed of students or professors – that are required to investigate the victim's allegation and mete out justice if necessary. Thus, universities themselves are the ones that report these statistics, constituting what is probably one of the most repulsive conflicts of interest in the U.S. right now.

It has already been established that the college party movie has created an image of college that has led to a significant transformation in campus culture, but the more surprising – and the more disgusting – aspect of all of this is that universities, through their corporate-minded decision making, have legitimized the standard college party movie. University administrators are in fact the enemy. Binge drinking and wild parties are in fact acceptable. Consequences for one's actions do not in fact exist.

If these things are all true, why wouldn't the average freshman male think that he is bound to get laid? I stated earlier that there was a vicious cycle between the reality of college parties and the way in which they're depicted in film. We must now add to that cycle the reinforcement and support of

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We must begin to treat college party movies as pure fiction. We cannot allow them to shape our expectations of college, and we can't accept that they reflect the modern campus college. If we accept that, then we permit the binge drinking and sexual assaults to continue.

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such behavior through the unjust and self-serving actions taken by many university administrators.

In this manner, the three distinct facets of the American university – extravagant tuition prices, parties and rates of sexual assault – are all intimately related. Hollywood has exploited the college party in an effort to sell more tickets. University administrators have exploited sexual assault victims in order to continue raking in student loan money. And students themselves have exploited messages from popular film as an excuse to do whatever they want to whoever they want.

If this trend is ever going to stop, it has to start with the university. Administrators need to allow third-parties to conduct sexual assault investigations, rather than allowing their kangaroo courts to do so. This would send a message to students that sexually violating their classmates will have criminal consequences. Sexual assault should not be treated as a campus issue that's dealt with by the university. It is a crime, and it must be made clear to all incoming freshmen that there will be serious ramifications in the real world, no matter where an assault is committed.

Secondly, we must begin to treat college party movies as pure fiction. We cannot allow them to shape our expectations of college, and we can't accept that they reflect the modern campus college.

If we accept that, then we permit the binge drinking and sexual assaults to continue.

Hollywood oftentimes ignores the power and responsibility it wields in our society. Like any other business, it is concerned with the bottom line. It would be wrong to ask Hollywood to stop writing the college party movies that are contributing to the deterioration of American higher education. That would amount to little more than censorship. But viewers hold the purse strings. Once we begin treating the situation with the gravity it deserves, we can either walk into a theater with the proper, critical mindset, or we can avoid buying the ticket altogether (which may be the better option anyway, because who really needs to see Miles Teller try to figure out his life again?)



**My first year in college** consisted of me attempting to live out my own college party movie. I drank excessively at wild parties. I chased after girls. And I somehow managed to retain a GPA over 3.0. I had few obligations and life was good.

Then I was arrested for drinking while driving.

Calling my mom from a jail cell at 3 a.m. was bad, but what was worse was the realization that my college experience up until that point had been empty. I hadn't learned anything in an entire year. Most of my friends weren't really friends until we started drinking. My romantic life consisted of little more than drunken, sloppy make out sessions I was later embarrassed by. But that's what I had wanted. In a way, I had lived out my own college movie. I was just experiencing the logical conclusion of such a lifestyle.

When I was released the next morning, I began the long and arduous process of rebuilding my entire life. I transferred schools, changed majors and found a new job. Things got better after a while, and I came to understand that I had needed something radical to reorient myself in a more positive direction.

I'm telling my story to demonstrate the dark side of the current campus culture. I accept full responsibility for my actions. I was a fool, and I paid for it. I don't blame the movies I watched in high school for my arrest. But I do think they've created

a culture in which the way I was behaving was not only acceptable, but expected. The sad part is that things could've been much worse. I'm privileged enough to be a white male in our society. I wasn't violated in the way that a distressing amount of women have been. I wasn't injured or permanently disabled in a drunken accident. I wasn't treated disrespectfully by the police.

In many ways, I was lucky. A worrying portion of college students are psychologically or emotionally broken individuals by the end of their college experience. Others, who have been able to escape any consequence for their actions, leave as morally bankrupt individuals. This is the real tragedy of the modern American higher education system. What should be a place where students can explore their passions and better themselves has instead been perverted into a place where they are thrown in dangerous situations, abused by their peers and exploited for their money.



# Dystopia Americana

Investigating the “terribly possible”  
with author Darin Bradley

*by Tyler Hicks*

**D**ytopia is all the rage. Franchises like “The Hunger Games,” “Divergent” and “The Maze Runner” gross hundreds of millions of dollars regardless of what the critics say. At first glance, it seems like a new fad brought on by Jennifer Lawrence’s Katniss Everdeen. However, as novelist Darin Bradley says, this genre goes “all the way back to Thomas Moore.”

Tales of oppression, freedom lost and freedom regained are enmeshed in our religions and the fabric of our society. Telling these tales is an essential part of being human. Usually, they are quite formulaic: a person is thrust into a situation that seems insurmountable, but, with the help of their loved ones, they beat both the odds and the bad guys.

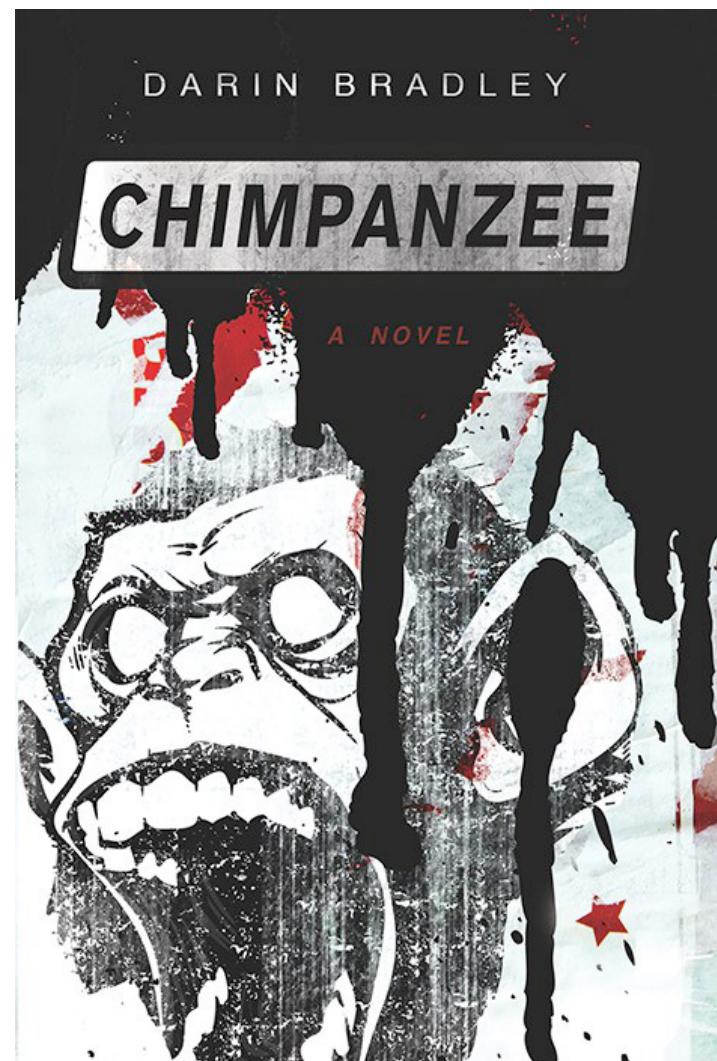
But what about those dystopian stories that don’t end in triumph? Bradley has written two such novels – “Noise” and “Chimpanzee” – and a third, “Totem,” is on the way. His stories follow individuals lost in a world that is not their own. But there is no fight-to-the-death contest to be won. The fight has already been lost. Bradley’s prose just picks up the pieces.

“My characters get to make this world in their own image,” he says of the residents inhabiting his dystopian worlds. The United States of “Noise” and “Chimpanzee” is evocative of a post-financial crisis America, a place that Bradley knows all too well. In “Chimpanzee,” for example, students have their educations audited and eventually wiped from their brains when they are unable to pay back their loans. When he graduated from the University of North Texas with a doctorate in literature and theory, he joined “the first generation to walk out of school \$100,000 in debt.” As an 80s baby, he was told greatness waited for him at the end of the graduation stage, but he quickly realized that “the American Dream was a lie.”

Bradley entered academia after graduation, yet he yearned to create worlds. While his first novel was a “doorstop fantasy” tome, “Noise” marks the beginning of his published career and the “thematic cluster” that draws to a close this year. Much of these books are based in fact – either from Bradley’s life, or the absurd, dark news that is, at times, darker than his fiction. And to call them “post-apocalyptic” would be a mistake: in each installment, the author reveals a world gone awry, and Bradley deftly blends and bends genres to cre-

ate works that are eerily accessible.

Like his characters, he’s lived through harsh times and has found a way to survive. But survival is far from victory, and Bradley’s brand of dystopia hits closer to home than what you’ll find at the multiplex.



**Q:** Do you have a strict writing process or does it fluctuate?

**A:** My approach is always the same: ending first. I know what’s going to happen to my characters at the end of each story. From there, it goes to hell. Every time I start to write a book, I always ask myself how the hell I wrote the last one. But I usually start at the ending, then work backwards in 18 points because all of the books have 18 chapters. I start with vague terms, then I go through it and fill in all of the details, and just keep writing.

**Q:** Reading “Chimpanzee” reminded me of Don DeLillo’s “White Noise,” although his novel depicts a successful college professor. While I hope some shady organization isn’t repossessing your education, how much of “Chimpanzee” was drawn from your personal experience as an academic, and how much was from literary influences?

**A:** Both. “Chimpanzee” is directly influenced by my experience. Ben Cade has a doctorate in poetics and cognitive theory, and so do I. He follows his wife when she gets a job, and so did I. There are many things that happen in that book that are real. It’s also vaguely set in Asheville, North Carolina, where I lived at the time. It’s based on what it was like for me when I graduated and had no prospects and lots of debt. “Noise” is similar because almost every one of Hiram’s memories is one of my own. I borrowed from these experiences to fill in the humanity of these characters. But I am really influenced by authors like DeLillo and guys like John Steinbeck, two of my favorites. So it’s a combination of 1) writers that stuck with me 2) my personal experiences, and 3) my field of study.

A lot of people study creative writing, but I studied cognitive theory and theoretical linguistics. I spent all these years looking at poetry and understanding how language works. I came out of that with an understanding of just how broken language is. We don’t think in complete sentences, and we rarely talk in complete sentences. I learned how swampy and unclear consciousness is, and how we all dart from one idea to the next. So that’s why I write the way I do: to evoke how the mind actually thinks and get at what selfhood really is.

**Q:** NPR called “Chimpanzee” a “fresh take on dystopia.” For some readers that are tired of the norm and the clichés, dystopia has become a four-letter word. Why do you think that genre caught fire?

**A:** It’s not the first time this has happened, and you have to look at dystopian and utopian literature together. We’ve been telling ourselves stories about the end of the world for a very long time. As soon as we got in to groups and started forming civilizations, we realized we were going to die.

DARIN BRADLEY



Most of our world religions are eschatological. And every time a new millennium takes over, people freak out. But there’s kind of a lag effect to it.

There’s a stimulus, and then it takes a little while for everybody to react. So think of everything that’s been popular between 2010 and 2015, and consider the production time of books and films. So books and films coming out in 2010 and beyond were in reaction to the crisis of 2007-2009 that we’re still reeling from. The job report that came out recently shows that unemployment is down, but wages are stagnant. There are too many applicants, and there are millions of people still seeking work. Typically, it’s the young people that get cut out.

When people can’t provide for themselves or their family, they get frustrated, and they start looking for stories to explain their situation. And that’s why people can relate to a “Hunger Games,” or a “Noise,” or a “Chimpanzee,” because there’s a certain comfort in watching things fall apart, because then it’s not so weird that you’re having a

hard time yourself.

But I think you're about to see some pushback. I've heard a lot about the need for utopian fiction and literature about the poetics of hope and not despair, and that's great, but I don't think I can write that. And it's all, in my opinion, based on the fallout from the financial collapse.

I grew up in the 80s, and I was always told if you work hard and get good grades you can be an astronaut and a rock star and a President. But I was part of the first generation to walk out of college over 100,000 dollars in debt, and there were no jobs. So the American Dream felt like a scam. And you look for other people who are enduring this scam, and when you're all sort of the same mentality, the art starts to reflect that. So this trend goes back about 10 years, but it'll fade – and then come back again.

Things tend to keep happening that keep generations on edge – 9/11, the Cold War, etc. I couldn't tell you what a happy generation, especially a happy generation of young people, looks like.

**Q:** Do you think the government's education repossession therapy in "Chimpanzee" is in any way a future possibility?

**A:** What cracks me up is how absurd my books are, but the things I predict in my books always end up being horribly possible. Between the final draft of "Chimpanzee" and its eventual release, research was coming out from Cal Tech about using light to erase rats' memories and then put them back. Then I read about these activities in India creating free schools for children under overpasses.

I'm not a prophet, it's just that all of these ideas are in the air, and many of us are having them at the same time. I just happen to be putting them into books. Now "Totem" is about all of these dark, depressing real world concepts that I'm learning about from my wife, who studies crisis all over the world: xenophobia, refugees, singularity, American exceptionalism. It's trying to show that when we only think about these parts of the world in pathetic terms we're doing them a disservice. It's great to send money, but I wanted to show them as human beings just living.

And when you read an apocalypse or dystopian story, it may be in the future, but it's about us now:

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I think you're about to see some pushback. I've heard a lot about the need for utopian fiction and literature about the poetics of hope and not despair, and that's great, but I don't think I can write that. And it's all, in my opinion, based on the fallout from the financial collapse.

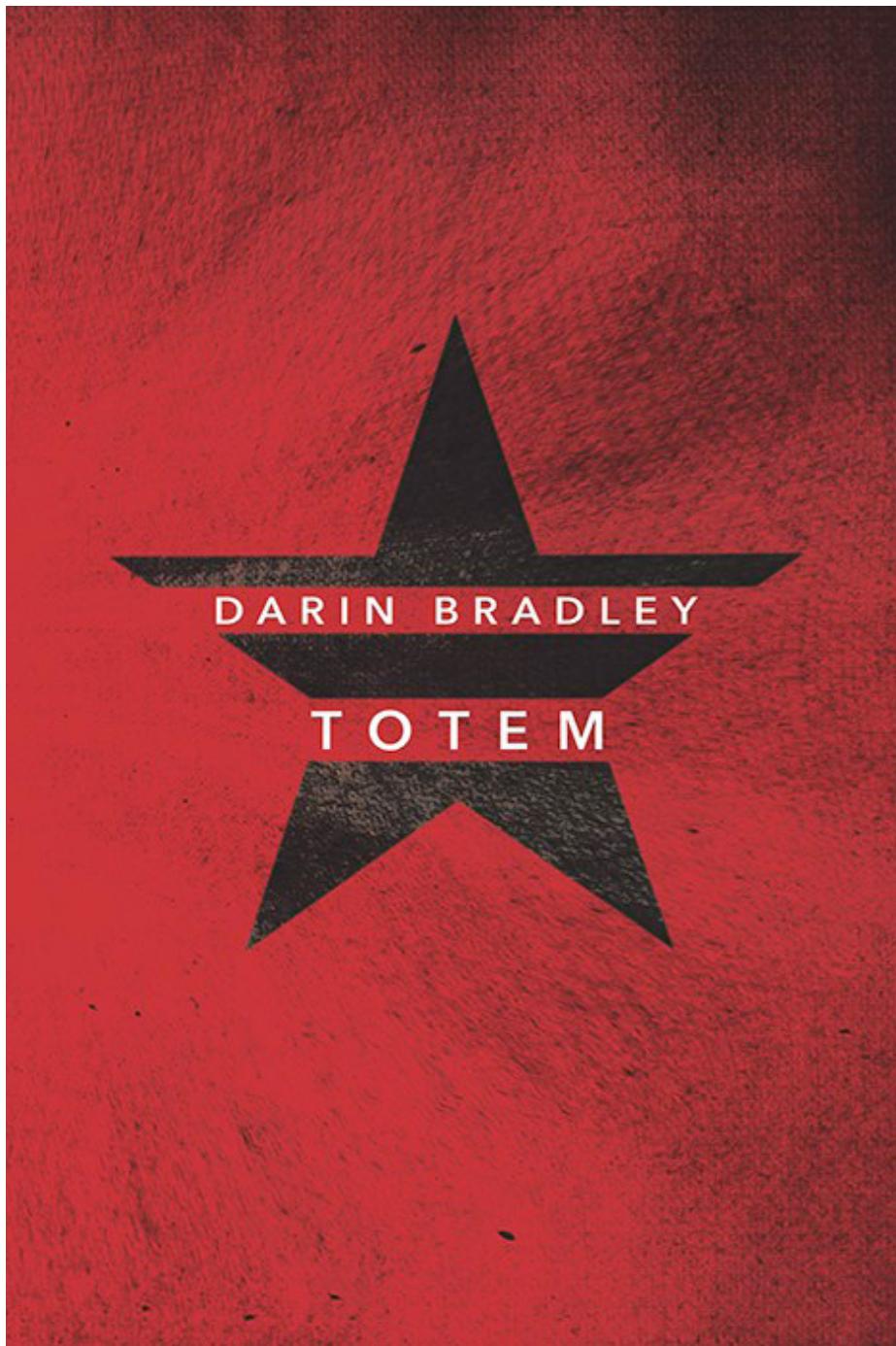
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there's a problem, we have to fix it. In a way, it's a morality play, and it's about whether or not we fix these problems we're facing. In the blockbusters, we do fix them. In my stories, I try to leave that open, and I never know if they fix them or not. Which is why they make millions and I don't. But what this allows us to do is think about our world in a context that is not real, and we see these people and their families fix the problem and make it right. And that's cathartic. But then we walk out of the theatre and things still suck.

With "Noise," the world is remade in a certain way, and the same happens in Chimpanzee. In "Totem," it's more about whether or not the reader will remake the world.

**Q:** All three of your novels are part of a "thematic cluster." "Noise" is, in many ways, a coming-of-age tale. In "Chimpanzee," the characters are what we would consider adults. What do you have in store for us in "Totem?"

**A:** People thought of "Noise" as an apocalypse novel, and it is. But even more than that, it's a coming of age tale. The main character, Hiram, is dealing with all sorts of personal traumas, and the apocalypse serves as a metaphor for that. Before I wrote that, I taught courses on apocalypse narra-



tives at Furman University. Then “Chimpanzee” is the second in this thematic cluster. This one was supposed to be a bit more contemplative, stopping to think about a collapse and dystopia and what it meant after you age through these times.

“Totem” (kind of the big brother of all three of them) is supposed to show what it’s like when people like Ben from “Chimpanzee” have struggled with internalizing dystopia, and what that yields in a large group. So a lot of it is about radicalization and terrorism. It’s a little bit more science fiction than the other two, and it’s set in a radioactive city where the world’s come together to help

with abatement. It’s kind of like the effort to save Tibet, or the Syrian refugee crisis, where people are donating vast amounts of money to allow these indigenous people to stay in their homeland – so how can they let them stay there but still keep them safe? So it turns into a voyeuristic projection of self where everyone is watching what’s happening in this city, and they do it commercially. It’s like a UNESCO World Heritage site that people still live in. It’s a dystopia where people have internalized the things you see in “Chimpanzee,” and they find themselves manipulated by government agencies, which leads to radicalism, which leads to

terrorism, and the question: what is terrorism in the first place?

**Q:** So it sounds like Totem is the most hopeful of the three...

**A:** I hope so! My friends and readers make fun of me for being too dark, and I get I – they’re dark books! I think “Chimpanzee” will end up being the closest to happy. The way I look at it – it’s a love story about a guy who’s so hopped up on himself that he doesn’t notice all that this woman does to protect her husband. I was trying to reverse traditional gender roles: on the surface, it’s a book about men, but the women are the ones in power. So “Chimpanzee” is a love story, but I think “Totem” will be the easiest to read, and the kindest book.

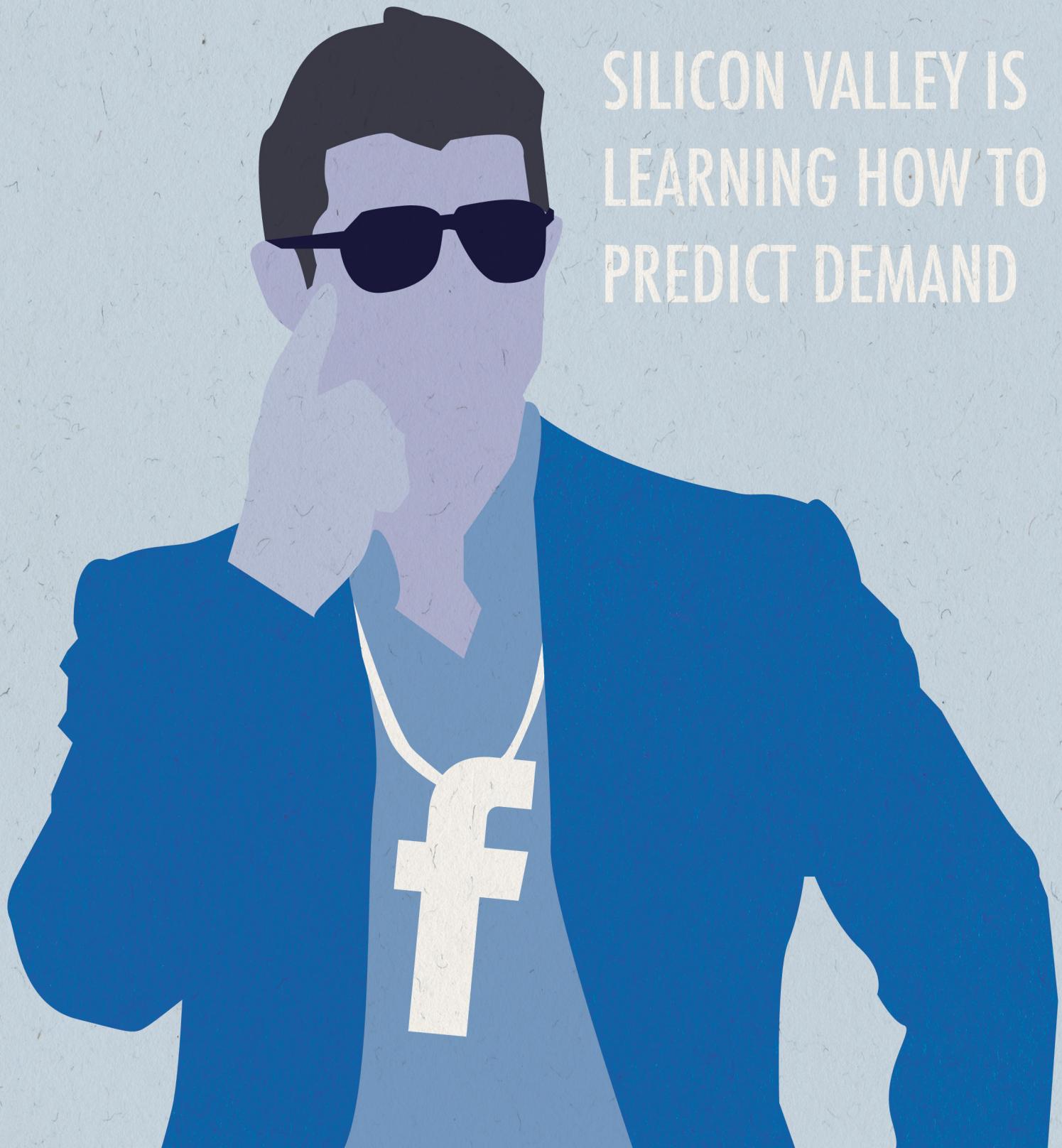
There are six characters, and it’s from a third person perspective. It’s sort of a documentary, and it has a very minimal plot. I wanted to write more about people and less about plot. That being said, the ending is not hopeful. It leaves you feeling defeated and exploited. It’s about people as generators of media content that you can monetize, and I don’t see a happy ending in that. We’re just data that can be sold to marketers. So I think “Totem” will be the saddest, but in a satisfying way. I think people will put it down and say, “Yeah, there isn’t anything redemptive about these trends we’re in...” but in a sense, that’s okay.

Of the three of them, “Totem” has taken the most time and made me the saddest. I feel bad about what happens to these characters.

# #BLURREDLINES

(FACEBOOK KNOWS YOU WANT IT)

SILICON VALLEY IS  
LEARNING HOW TO  
PREDICT DEMAND



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## Written by Adam G. Emerson

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**F**ive years ago it was estimated that 94 percent of all data in existence was stored in a digital format. A new term, “big data,” was used to describe our ever-increasing ability to store and categorize vast amounts of information. However, the true development lies in our ability to analyze that information in less time.

Data analysts are able to tear though terabytes of data with advanced software designed to analyze behavioral trends and patterns online. They know how long we stay on any given web page, the type of content we “like,” who we interact with on a regular basis, and, most importantly, what products are most likely to attract us. They’ve inadvertently stumbled upon the unprecedented ability to understand human consciousness and the state of our society as a whole through their ability to analyze little more than the content we click on. Of course, as is always the case, a few people have learned how to exploit this technology for their own gain.

We already know all the major networking sites store enormous amounts of data on user actions. Household names like Facebook, Twitter and Google have to build huge complexes across the country to house all of the information we generate. This is no secret. But what is kept from us, and what we should be entitled to know, is how this data is currently being used, how it will be used and what it means for humans to be reduced to simple bits of data. It’s crucial that we understand the reality of the situation and address the issue at hand before it is beyond reconciliation.

“**Big data**” is a phrase that began circulating shortly after the start of this decade. The International Journal of Internet Science sums it up nicely as “data sets so large and complex that they become awkward to work with using standard statistical software.” These massive data sets are largely a product of our interactions on social media.

Features like image sharing, status updates and news feeds have become the core of every social network. At this point, they are synonymous

with a platform’s user-experience. The formula is predictable, but predictability isn’t always a bad thing. When you run an application, be it on your desktop or mobile device, you bring along certain expectations. You expect that specific actions (a swipe or a click) will generate specific results (the next screen loading). We all know what clicking a silhouette of a man with the “+” next to him does. In the same way, we know that clicking on a little gear will open up a “Settings” menu.

Whether we realize it or not, we’ve undergone a certain level of conditioning. This universal language of symbols serves to connect specific behaviors with images in our brain. This is done intentionally to the benefit of everyone involved, helping users quickly familiarize themselves with whatever virtual environment in which they may find themselves. Unfortunately, this type of appeal to the subconscious doesn’t stop with interface design.

Advertising has attempted to tap into the desires of the subconscious for decades, and a good ad strives to create a positive connection between what is seen and what is expected: If I buy Nike, I’ll become fit; If I drink Budweiser, I’ll have lots of friends.

However, there is a permutation taking place within the realm of online advertising, and big data is the catalyst. Silicon Valley has found a way to bypass the traditional “courtship” between advertiser and consumer. Advertisers no longer have to attempt to make an emotional connection in order to win consumers over. The “big four” (Facebook, Twitter, Reddit and Google) have all implemented their own advertising platforms, which

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Silicon Valley has found a way to bypass the traditional “courtship” between advertiser and consumer. Advertisers no longer have to attempt to make an emotional connection in order to win consumers over.



A Facebook Data Center in Prineville, Oregon, 2011 - Photo by Tom Raftery

operate under the same basic philosophy: optimizing ads by analyzing user data.

There is a direct correlation between the power of these platforms and the amount of data they contain. As a greater detail of analysis is made possible over time, these platforms will become even more powerful. Sooner rather than later, with the use of profiling techniques similar to those employed by the FBI in criminal cases, these platforms will be able to accurately predict which of their users will buy any given product.

Bad news for consumers: the days of advertisers taking you out for dinner and a movie are over. Chivalry is dead.

**By now most** of the internet's denizens realize that their data is being collected in some form or another. None of this is really new. Advertisers have been using "cookies" since the late 90s to optimize their ads.

What internet users fail to realize is the extent to which their data is being collected and how it is

being utilized. In 2013, Facebook partnered with large data firms like Acxiom, Oracle and Epsilon, launching an endeavor to associate an individual's offline purchasing history with their online profile. Facebook's partners have been collecting data about individuals' purchasing habits for quite some time now. This is accomplished through the use of discount cards common among grocery stores and large retailers. When consumers use these cards, the cards record their purchases, associating them with the email or phone number the consumer provided when they signed up. So, in addition to knowing your relationship history, Facebook also knows what brand of toilet paper you buy.

In the past, the amount of data advertisers gathered online was relatively minimal. Large advertising firms would place ads on specific television channels or in the pages of certain magazines depending on what they were trying to sell. This deliberation was (and still is) done in an attempt to ensure that advertisements reach their intended demographic in the most cost effective manner. A Nike commercial will be more effective on a net-

work like ESPN than HGTV, for example.

In the age of “big data,” much less guesswork is required, and advertisers have the ability to predict with increasing accuracy exactly who is most likely to buy their product. This unprecedented level of buyer prediction inevitably raises ethical concerns. To what extent is the analysis of personal information with the objective of soliciting customers acceptable? Only recently, in the past five to 10 years have advertisers had access to these very specific and personal details, and we are only just beginning to get a good idea of the impact these new standards will have.

It's true that mankind's newly acquired ability to generate and store these enormous sets of data holds great promise for innovation. In an article titled “The Promise of Big Data,” the Harvard School of Public Health details the potential benefits:

“In big data lies the potential for revolutionizing, well, everything. Police employing seismology-like data models can predict where crimes will occur and prevent them from happening. Astronomers using the Kepler telescope snag information on 200,000 stars every 30 seconds, which has led to the discovery of the first Earth-like planets outside our solar system. Businesses sifting social networking and supply-chain data dynamically tailor their products to fulfill desires we don't even know we have.”

Preemptive crime prevention and the search for habitable planets are both remarkable enterprises, and these endeavors are just the tip of the iceberg regarding what is possible with proper implemen-

**Sooner rather than later, with the use of profiling techniques similar to those employed by the FBI in criminal cases, these platforms will be able to accurately predict which of their users will buy any given product.**



IBM's “Watson”

tation. However, “The Promise of Big Data” also makes reference to another rapidly growing field of study, seemingly foreshadowing the inevitable abuse of this power to allow businesses to “fulfill desires we don't even know we have.”

Yet, how this technology affects our everyday lives is a bit more concerning. In an IBM commercial released this January, the IBM supercomputer “Watson,” famous for competing on the gameshow “Jeopardy,” is shown “conversing” with 19 year-old entrepreneur and internet personality Tavi Gevinson. The clip is one of many in a series that IBM calls “Outhink,” and it is meant to showcase the many innovative opportunities that a computer like Watson will create. In the ad, Watson casually tells Gevinson that he(?) is “learning to analyze social media to spot trends and predict demand.” The finical implications here are immense. Watson then goes on to say the he is “learning to think like a teenager,” only furthering this idea that Watson is a tool for monetary gain.

Corporations are making a massive effort to analyze and understand our data, and their sole purpose in doing so is to present us with products that appeal to us on subconscious levels. Watson is just the latest iteration of this trend. Perhaps most shocking is that these companies openly admit they are doing this, surrounding statements like Watson's in a positive light and phrasing press releases with the sort of affirmative language that conceals their true intentions.

Due to the rapid advancement of computer technologies, these types of systems will only become more powerful and advanced. One can only speculate what the world will look like in 20 years when a computer like Watson can truly predict de-

mand, effectively reading the minds of adults and youth alike. It's easy to imagine a dystopian future where a few corporations have complete control over the market due to their ability to analyze data.

**It's funny to think** that the Internet, once a place for poorly designed Geocities pages, has now become an indispensable tool for bringing collaborators, friends and families together. This evolution is largely in thanks to the very platforms I am so strongly criticizing, and to suggest that these companies must remove all advertisements from their sites would be both foolish and irrational. The services they provide are invaluable, and these companies must generate an income in some form or fashion. But the way in which they optimize and distribute ads across their sites should be reformed, or at the very least made more transparent.

So how do we as individuals combat the all-encompassing machination that is big data? And more importantly how do we do so in way that doesn't involve going off the grid and living in a cabin somewhere in the woods?

It seems unrealistic to vie for stronger regulations concerning our privacy and what amount of our personal data can be used in advertising.



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Especially when we live in an age where our own government is participating in the same practices as the companies in question, and virtually every establishment politician is clamoring to get their hands on more of our data in the name of fighting terrorism. Yet however unrealistic it may seem, regulation should not be ruled out. The ability to predict a consumer's desires holds massive potential for abuse and the only way to ensure that the public isn't victimized is to pass laws on what data can and can't be used for the purposes of advertising.

One such regulation might be ensuring that the data companies are permitted to use be restricted to data collected directly from their platforms. Advertisers can still target their ads based on the expressed interests of individuals on any given platform, but the usage of that data should be restricted to the platform on which it was provided. This would prevent partnerships currently forming between tech companies and data firms, and it would result in fewer details about your personal life getting passed around like a bag of chips.

Defenders of online advertising and social media platforms will be quick to shift the responsibility onto the user, saying something along the lines of "If you don't like the platform's policies, then don't use their service." This seems like a reasonable argument until you consider the lengths

**1 April, Royal Institution, London**  
**3pm – 5pm event**  
**5pm – 6pm reception**

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An example of the "affirmative language" used by tech companies.

one must take to accomplish something so seemingly simple. Anyone trying to avoid data collection would first need to deactivate their social media accounts, shutting the door to a multitude of beneficial connections and future friendships. Businessmen and women would miss out on countless networking opportunities. Journalists would lose access to precious sources. Researchers couldn't share ideas. People shouldn't be forced to choose between privacy and meaningful interaction online.

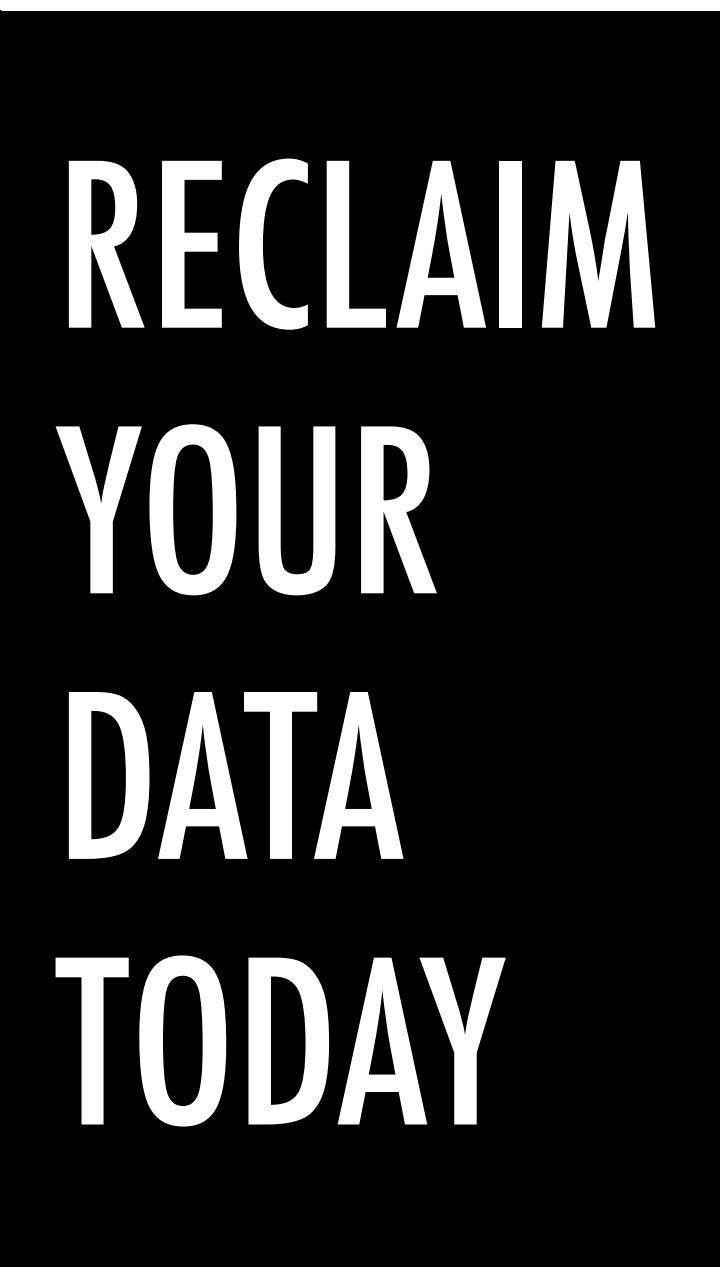
And therein lies the problem. Due to the deceptive practices espoused by major tech companies, users are forced into making a decision between a meaningful internet presence and their personal security. However, this responsibility has been shifted upon them without their faintest knowledge.

How can a company like Facebook, who has made it their mission to "connect the world," have so little regard as to the moral and ethical implications of their actions. Is their seemingly altruistic philosophy really motivated by a desire to help develop third world countries? Or is it a ploy to mine even more data from the unsuspecting?

These may seem like dramatic questions, but the fact is, we don't know what they're going to do with anyone's information. And we can't know. We've all voluntarily donated information about ourselves and any data we generate in the future. It belongs to Silicon Valley. We belong to Silicon Valley.

A handful of private organizations, like the Digital Advertising Alliance, have taken it upon themselves to try and regulate the data that advertisers are able to use. Though the program only applies to advertising firms that choose to participate, it is a step in the right direction. Inspired by their efforts, SunStruck has put together a resource for those who wish to further investigate the issue. The page can be found on SunStruck's website, and it contains links to various articles and websites designed to help you maintain your privacy and easily opt-out of ad services across the web. It's not a permanent solution to the problem, but until stronger regulations and restrictions are put into place, it's the best that we as individuals can do. Start reclaiming your data by checking out our page at:

[www.sunstruckmag.com/reclaimyourdata](http://www.sunstruckmag.com/reclaimyourdata)



# EXHIBIT A:

## CORPORATE SPONSORSHIP PLAN



**CORPORATION CORP., LLC**

# The Perils of Responsibility

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## The Hand That Feeds... And Also Muzzles.

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Written by Johanna Ryan

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**O**n Feb. 22, a group of 100 geoscientists wrote an open letter to the American Geophysical Union asking the president of the organization, Carol Finn, to drop Exxon Mobil as a sponsor of both their annual Earth Science conference and the organization as a whole. The geoscientists questioned the appropriateness of having Exxon as a bedfellow, writing that they are “deeply troubled by the well-documented complicity of Exxon Mobil in climate denial and misinformation.”

Citing a conflict of interest due to the antagonistic values held by the two organizations, they called on Finn to “protect the integrity” of the organization - and climate science in general - by rejecting sponsorship from the oil giant. In response, the AGU promised to “carefully review the information” and discuss it with the organization’s stakeholders.

Whatever the final decision is, the criticism of the AGU’s partnership with Exxon is part of a growing trend of resistance against corporate sponsorship deals, which are increasingly pervading non-governmental organizations.

Critics of these deals point to the ethical issues of having a corporate presence in public affairs. They worry that when respected NGOs partner with large multinational corporations with histories of injustice and exploitation, they end up legitimizing the reputation of the corporation and sullying their own. They also argue that it’s inappropriate to accept money from unethical sources, and any sponsorship deals should be made in respect of shared values, not simply because the NGO needs the money.

Proponents of sponsorship, however, disagree on moral and practical terms. They argue that these are hard times, and private and corporate funding is the main financial support for many non-governmental public agencies that have scientific, cultural or social missions. This is understandable. Since the 1970s, government funding to charities and cultural organizations has been steadily decreasing. As part of a wave of privatization policies, once public obligations - such as healthcare, education and resource distribution – have been transferred to the corporate sphere. This transfer is referred to as the “privatization of responsibility.”

For charities, art museums and other NGOs, the result is a lack of government support and an increasing dependence on corporate and private sector finances. Corporate sponsorship, in this

# Should we expect corporations to adopt a more authentic philanthropic spirit and stop trying to scam their way to hegemonic world domination? Or should we hold our public institutions and NGOs accountable and assume they won't sell out at the sniff of corporate money?

sense, is simply a practical means to respond to a financially challenging situation. In response to public disapproval regarding British Petroleum's sponsorship of the Tate gallery in London, writer and cultural sociologist Tiffany Jenkins said she is "suspicious of this notion that the arts need to be ethically funded" because "these are difficult times for the arts and they need the money."

But the major criticisms and counter-criticisms are missing the most important ethical point arising from sponsorship deals, and that is what is being sacrificed in the exchange of dollars.

The old saying "there's no such thing as a free lunch" springs to mind. Many sponsorship deals are heralded as "win-win scenarios." The sponsoring party improves their reputation and gets to exercise their philanthropic spirit, and the sponsored party receives financial compensation to continue their mission. However, it doesn't always work out quite so amicably. There are cases where conflicts of interest emerge (for example, the Exxon-AUG case mentioned above) as well as circumstances where the autonomy of the sponsored party is seriously compromised. As a result, the social mission of the NGO is shifted in a direction more compatible with their corporate partners.

This leads to intriguing questions. Who should take the moral high ground? Should we expect corporations to adopt a more authentic philanthropic spirit and stop trying to scam their way to

hegemonic world domination? Or should we hold our public institutions and NGOs accountable and assume they won't sell out at the sniff of corporate money?

Of course, ethical questions regarding philanthropy are not new. In 1852, Henry David Thoreau noted the contradiction between the rhetoric of philanthropists and their often seedy motivations, arguing that selfishness had overrated philanthropy and made it an essentially meaningless endeavor. Although Thoreau's words may still have some relevancy today, any modern analysis of philanthropy and sponsorship must take into account an important development in the relationship between business and society since then.

In Thoreau's time, business and morality were still perceived as mostly antithetical. The horrors of the Industrial Revolution haunted the minds of the regular citizen, and there was a clear divide between everyday morality and the exploitative, greed-frenzied pursuits of the factory-owning capitalist. It was not until the end of the 19th century that a more benevolent side to business emerged. Spurred on by the philanthropic, society-loving actions of billionaires like Andrew Carnegie, John D. Rockefeller, Henry Ford and others, the gulf between business and the public sector narrowed. These so-called "captains of industry" voluntarily rerouted vast amounts of corporate money back into society to build schools, fund social projects, and develop cultural and artistic projects.

In his 1898 essay "The Gospel of Wealth," Andrew Carnegie provided the moral foundation for corporate philanthropy. He argued that it is "the responsibility of agents with great wealth to distribute to those in need." The notion that business has a responsibility to society - a responsibility above and beyond making profit - was a novel idea at first, but one that soon became almost entirely institutionalized into the modern political framework.

This institutionalization came to full fruition with the concept of corporate social responsibility. Corporate social responsibility, which first emerged in the 50s and blossomed in the early 90s, is defined by the World Business Council for Sustainable Development as the "commitment by business to contribute to economic development while improving the quality of life of the workforce and their families as the community, envi-

ronment and society at large." Generally speaking, corporate social responsibility policy can include a commitment to responsible business practices, an involvement in community outreach programs, or the sponsorship of an organization dedicated to science, environmental health, social justice, employment and so on.

Corporate social responsibility embodies the idea of the responsible, moral corporation; the possibility that business can exist in harmony with society and also be a force for good. Under this flattering light, corporations are no longer the resource-guzzling, profit-making machines of times past. They are moral agents actively seeking social improvement.

But the language of corporate morality is a problem because it is used to veil a key characteristic about modern sponsorship relationships: an exchange takes place between the two parties. This is the common understanding of sponsorship in the private sector. In an article titled "Commercial Sponsorship" published in the European Journal of Marketing in 1983, John Meenaghan defined sponsorship as an exchange between a sponsor and a sponsored entity. According to Micheal Polonsky, chair of marketing at Deakin University, the focus on exchange and commercial intent is the key facet of modern sponsorship relationships.

In other words, when corporations sponsor an organization, they want to know what they can get back.

In a 2003 article in "The Chronicle of Philanthropy," Kurt Aschermann, the former chief marketing officer for the Boys and Girls Club, spoke



Henry David Thoreau

about his first-hand experience with this issue. When a check from long-time sponsor Reader's Digest failed to show up one year, he decided to do some research. He contacted Reader's Digest and was told to talk to the company's marketing department. "Basically what they meant was, 'We've been giving you this money for a long time, and now it is time to talk about what value-added we can get back from this deal,'" Aschermann said.

"If we were going to start approaching corporations like business partners rather than donors, which was clearly becoming the more lucrative opportunity," Aschermann said, "I knew we had to start making some hard decisions about what we would and would not do for corporate money."

In an era where the public sector is increasingly reliant on corporate dollars, the rhetoric of responsibility obfuscates power dynamics and key

motives at play. Corporations – although heralded by many as the newest moral agent in town - still have one eye firmly fixed on the bottom line. In sponsor partnerships, this can result in exchanges which are uneven at best, and downright unethical at worst.

One recent example of a potentially uneven exchange occurred between the Sierra Club, the oldest environmental organization in the U.S., and Chesapeake Energy, the second largest natural gas producer in the U.S. Between 2007 and 2010, the Sierra Club accepted millions in sponsorship from the CEO of Chesapeake Energy, Aubrey McClendon, to support the Sierra Club's "Beyond Coal" campaign. Controversy emerged when it was revealed that the campaign was advocating for hydraulic fracturing, one of the main enterprises of Chesapeake corporations. Carl Pope, the director of Sierra Club at the time, even toured around with McClendon to promote the environmental benefits of hydraulic fracturing. Pope ultimately resigned amidst claims that the independence of the environmental NGO has been compromised.

This is not an isolated case. Last year, the Science Museum in London stopped accepting sponsorships from Shell after The Guardian reported that Shell had attempted to influence and direct the language of the climate change exhibition the Science Museum was holding. The oil giants were worried that one section of the exhibit created "an opportunity for NGOs to talk about some of the issues that concern them around Shell's operations."

Incidents like these are dangerous, as they represent a direct compromise to the independence of the sponsored party. Without the liberty to advocate for socially oriented goals, socially directed NGOs and charities can become subject to the interests and objectives of large corporations. As a result, the social goals in question may be compromised and the transparency and integrity essential to a social cause may be undermined.

Most modern critiques of sponsorship concentrate their spite on inauthentic donations from the corporate sponsor, but issues of independence are increasingly relevant. Spurred on by the idea that corporations must be socially responsible, the private sector now has free rein to develop partnerships that benefit them. However, the autonomy of the receiving organization can be severely hampered in the process.

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One solution to this may be to re-evaluate the limits and boundaries of corporate responsibility. A good place to start this endeavor is with one of corporate social responsibility theory's most ardent critics: Milton Friedman.

In 1970, Milton Friedman published an article in The New York Times titled "The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase its Profits." In the article, Friedman harpooned the rising trend of corporate responsibility: the idea that corporations have obligations to society outside of the attainment of profit. In an oft-quoted passage, he argues that in a free economy "there is one and only one social responsibility of business to use its resources and engage in activities designed to increase its profits."

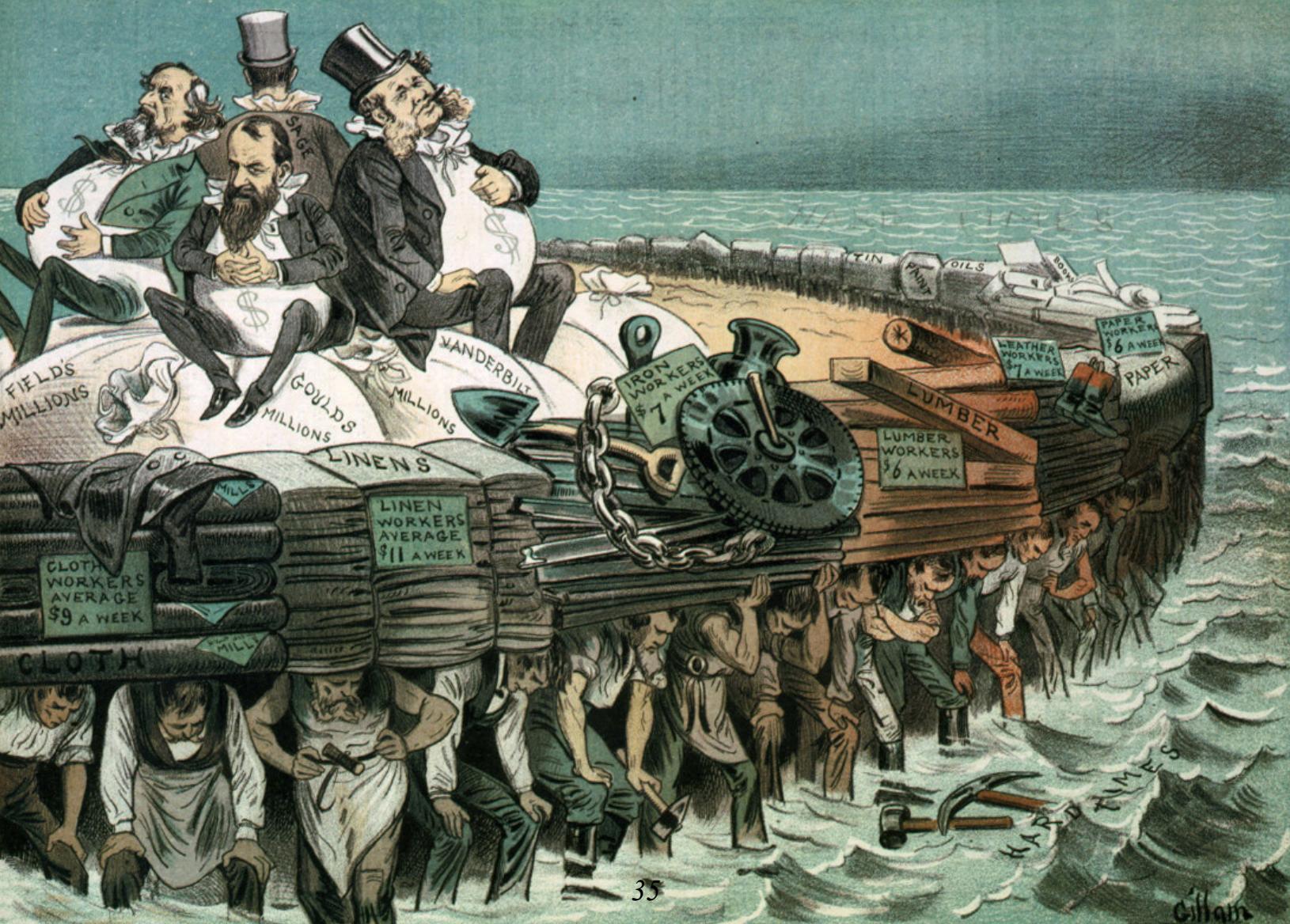
Many took this as a classic example of neo-liberal greed; a profit-driven view of reality reflecting the myopia of capitalism in general. But on closer inspection, Friedman is giving a slightly more nuanced argument. He argues that corporations are not democratically elected officials and are therefore not in a position to distribute resources. A CEO of a company that gives herself a "social mission" is acting on behalf of the public but without being elected by the public to do so. According to Friedman, presenting corporations with social

responsibilities opposes the basic tenets of democracy, as it allows non-democratically elected corporate entities the power to influence affairs outside of their rightful realm.

Friedman didn't accurately predict how popular corporate social responsibility practices would become, nor could he have predicted the pervasiveness of corporate sponsorship. But what he did foresee were the dangers in allowing powerful agencies the ability to influence the trajectory of social organizations by way of sponsorship or through "responsibility" missions.

In a political context where large sections of the public sector are increasingly dependent on corporate dollars, Friedman's criticisms are perhaps more relevant now than ever.

"The Protectors of Our Industries," Puck, 1883



We The People



# Political Misfire

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*Cutting Through the Ideology Surrounding the Gun Control Debate*

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Written by Jared Jones

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**W**hat does this sentence mean to you? “Honey, ask the kids if they have a rubber I can borrow.”

If you’re from the U.K., it is perfectly clear that somebody is in need of an eraser. However, if you’re from the U.S., where the word “rubber” has an entirely different meaning, you’re probably feeling slightly uncomfortable right about now.

Even within American English, the same word can have multiple meanings depending on the context in which it is used. The word “set,” perhaps the most extreme example, has 464 unique definitions, ranging from a verb meaning “to place” to a noun referring to the movements constituting a square dance. Given a little context, the multiple meanings of words in the English language are commonly understood, and they can be communicated with minimal controversy. However, there are two particular words in the American vocabulary that, when used in tandem, have distinct and

irreconcilable meanings depending, not necessarily on where one is from, but on one’s political leanings: gun control.

To those on the Left, gun control refers to regulations intended to stem gun violence and keep guns out of criminal hands. For the Right, gun control is a euphemism for government overreach intended to disarm all Americans. Somewhere in the space between those two perspectives lie some common sense solutions to the very real issue of gun violence in America. Yet, working through the ideology has proven to be a monumental obstacle for both sides of the debate.

The term “gun control” wasn’t actually coined until the 1960s, following the assassination of John F. Kennedy in Dallas. After it was revealed that Lee Harvey Oswald bought the rifle he would use to assassinate President Kennedy via a magazine ad, citizens and politicians began to reexamine the so-called “gun culture.”

During this period, there was popular support for stricter controls on who was able to purchase and possess firearms and how they were able to do so. Many of those that we consider to be traditional opponents of gun control, including the National Rifle Association, were generally supportive of stricter gun laws. Even Ronald Reagan, who at the time was serving as the Governor of California, supported the state’s Mulford Act, which prohibited citizens from carrying guns in public, one of the strictest gun control laws in the United States

at the time. The Mulford Act passed in large part as a response to the Black Panther Party's support for blacks openly carrying weapons to deter racial violence. However, in a demonstration of the moral pliability with which many approach this debate, Reagan would recalibrate his point of view on the issue as he prepared to run for president in 1975. "The Second Amendment is clear, or ought to be," he wrote. "It appears to leave little if any leeway for the gun control advocate."

For its part, the NRA was generally supportive of sensible gun control regulations such as the National Firearms Act of 1934 and, less enthusiastically, the Gun Control Act of 1968. But amid a

## After it was revealed that Lee Harvey Oswald bought the rifle he would use to assassinate President Kennedy via a magazine ad, citizens and politicians began to reexamine the so-called "gun culture."

changing political climate and shifting attitudes in both the post-Civil Rights and Vietnam eras of the late 1960s and 70s, many Americans began to feel, as they do now, that their culture itself was under attack.

Those feelings of persecution contributed to a change in strategy for the NRA. The organization rerouted the bulk of its efforts from firearms training and promotion to lobbying for gun rights based on Second Amendment arguments. This transition reached its crescendo in 1977 at the "Revolt in Cincinnati," where an intensely dogmatic leadership took control of the NRA and began pushing what was at the time a new and radical interpretation of the Second Amendment. Since then, the primary objective of the NRA has been to

lobby state and federal legislators for the relaxation and removal of regulations on firearms and those who use them.



**For almost 40 years now,** the NRA's interpretation of the Second Amendment as supporting the rights of individuals to own firearms for personal protection, hunting or any other lawful purposes has been the subject of continuous debate. The actual text of the Second Amendment reads as follows:

"A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed." If you go to the NRA headquarters in Fairfax, Virginia, the amendment is engraved in large letters in the lobby, but with a significant omission: the "militia" clause. Leaving this out makes sense for an organization dedicated to the promotion of individual gun rights. It seems to qualify the right to keep and bear arms as being contingent on militia membership. If that were the case, it would follow that the right to bear arms is actually not an individual right but a collective right conferred in conjunction with militia service.

In 1939, the Supreme Court ruled in *United States v. Miller* that this was precisely the way the Second Amendment should be interpreted, ruling that a sawed-off shotgun could be regulated by the federal government because it could not be shown to have "some reasonable relationship to the preservation or efficiency of a well-regulated militia..."

In 2008, the Roberts court dismissed that interpretation in *District of Columbia v. Heller*. Writing for the majority, Justice Scalia found that the Second Amendment did establish an individual's right to possess firearms, claiming that the militia clause is a prefatory clause that does not limit the function of the Second Amendment. The Roberts court would extend their findings to the state level two years later, ruling in *McDonald v. Chicago* that the 14th Amendment precluded states from prohibiting the possession of firearms. To arrive at this decision, the court combed through the records surrounding the adoption of the Second Amendment in an attempt to determine the true



The Black Panther Party - Feb 29, 1969, Washington State Archives

intentions of the founders.

Given the context of the period, it is hard to argue that the founders would have condoned a total ban on the personal possession of firearms. Participation in the militia was compulsory for all able-bodied men between the ages of 16 and 60, and a requirement of militia service was that members own a musket (as opposed to the fowlers that were used for hunting but would have been worthless in combat) that was kept in proper working order along with balls and powder. But even those policies came part in parcel with others that would make modern gun rights advocates cringe. Several states performed audits in which they catalogued and kept registries of the firearms belonging to their citizens, a policy that was favored at the federal level by George Washington, though it was never enacted.



**Through all of the debate** surrounding the passage of the Second Amendment, it is exceedingly rare for discussion to stray from the context of the militia. The reason for this lies in the meaning of the phrase, “bear arms.” The Pulitzer Prize-winning author Garry Wills has noted that “to bear arms” is an inherently military term. “One does not bear arms against a rabbit,” he wrote. Understanding that point simultaneously clarifies and obfuscates portions of the modern debate. The founders clearly intended for individual citizens to be allowed, obligated in fact, to possess weapons for service in the militia. But given the lack of any distinction between personal firearms and military weapons at the time, and the gulf that exists between the two today, how should one factor that into today’s debate? In the absence of a well-regulated militia, what does the Second Amendment have to say about the government’s regulation of firearms for an individual’s protection from either his neighbors or the government?

Even if one concedes that the right to bear arms

is fundamentally an individual right, to argue that the founders intended to place that right beyond the reach of any regulations requires an almost willful ignorance. During the Revolutionary War, personal weapons were routinely confiscated by colonial governments to be used in the service of the State. And laws that prohibited carrying concealed firearms were ubiquitous throughout the 18th and 19th centuries. Texas Governor J.S. Hogg told his legislature in 1893 that “the mission of the concealed deadly weapon is murder,” and that “[checking] it is the duty of every self-respecting, law-abiding man.” In most cities and frontier towns throughout that period, authorities required all firearms and other deadly weapons to be checked upon arrival like one might check a coat at a restaurant. Even the quintessential Wild West town, Tombstone, Arizona, had more stringent firearms regulations than most cities today. As Politico’s Katherine Benton-Cohen wrote following the shooting of Congresswoman Gabby Giffords in 2012:

*“In late 1880, as regional violence ratcheted up, Tombstone strengthened its existing ban on concealed weapons to outlaw the carrying of any deadly weapons within the town limits. The Earps (who were Republicans) and Doc Holliday maintained that they were acting as law officers—not citizen vigilantes—when they shot their opponents. That is to say, they were sworn officers whose jobs included enforcement of Tombstone’s gun laws.”*

Such was also the case in colonial Boston, Philadelphia, New York and many other places the founders called home, and it would remain so in an ever expanding list of cities for the next two centuries. But as bankrupt as the idea of an unbounded right to possess firearms may be, even more laughable is the surprisingly common notion that the framers of the Constitution intended for armed citizens to use their weapons as a means of insurrection against the federal government. It’s



According to FBI data, rifles were used in only 322 murders out of 12,765 in 2012. Handguns were used in 6,371 murders.

not that this idea never crossed their minds. It was very clearly addressed when, in Article III, Section 3 of the Constitution, they placed a very specific label on this type of revolt: treason. Treason is specifically defined as “levying war against [the United States],” and while it is true that the colonists taking up arms against the British was the genesis of our nation, the impetus for that uprising was a government in which the colonists had no representation. Through the Constitution, the founders gave Americans that representation, as well as a legal framework for recourse against unjust government actions; a framework that eschewed the use of violence as a political tactic.



**It is worth noting** that the founding of our current government was necessitated by the realization that the weak federal government created by the Articles of Confederation was entirely ineffectual. Its inability to levy taxes kept it underfunded. It lacked a judiciary branch, hampering its ability to resolve disputes between states. And without a permanent fighting force, it was unable to quell the uprisings that were not uncommon at the time. This situation was brought to a head by the federal government’s embarrassing failure to curtail Shay’s Rebellion, an uprising of disaffected farmers who were violently protesting tax levies and farm foreclosures. Realizing that a stronger federal government was needed to maintain order and put down exactly that type of domestic threat, a Constitutional Convention was called and a new government was created to resolve these problems. Only two years later, citizens took up arms to protest a newly levied tax on in what became known as the Whiskey Rebellion. This time, however, the government created by the new Constitution was in place, and George Washington had at his command the “well-regulated militia” alluded to in the Second Amendment. Upon sending this militia to confront the rebels, the insurrection dissipated and the perpetrators were allowed to go home with only a handful being charged. This incident established that the new federal government was willing and able to take on rebels and armed insurgents. It also demonstrates that taking up arms against the

government is not a right that the founders believed was encapsulated within the Second Amendment.

As the debate is framed today, both sides have misconceptions about the history of the Second Amendment and the intentions of those across the aisle. That incongruity has turned what should be a constructive dialogue about gun violence into a rancorous quagmire, the subject of which cuts to the very core of our liberties. If we are ever going to change course towards a more constructive direction, it is imperative that both parties acknowledge these misconceptions. It is equally important that we focus our efforts on the issues that can actually mitigate gun violence, rather than those our respective dogmas insist should be prioritized. The first step towards these efforts has to be an understanding by those on the Right that discussing gun control is not tantamount to the government attempting to ban all guns. This point of view is surprisingly prevalent among otherwise rational folks, and it breeds hysteria and paranoia that shut down any chance for a real discussion. There are certainly a handful of politicians that would like to

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**It is equally important that we focus our efforts on the issues that can actually mitigate gun violence, rather than those our respective dogmas insist should be prioritized.**

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ban guns altogether, but there is not a single credible piece of legislation in existence that attempts to do so. Not only is any gun ban a political non-starter, but with one gun in the U.S. for almost every man, woman and child, it is also entirely infeasible. Even if a serious campaign were mounted to ban all firearms, and even if that effort had the backing of the entire Democratic Party, history clearly demon-

strates that such a proposal would never gain any traction in Congress. If you're not convinced, just look back to 2013, when a bill that would have required background checks for all gun purchases was defeated in the Senate, despite the fact that such a measure has over 90 percent support among all Americans, including gun owners. If a common sense measure with that kind of support can't make it through Congress, how in the world could the Democrats ever muster enough votes to ban gun ownership in general?

The Left has to come to terms with certain realities as well. One such reality is that a ban on "assault weapons" will do virtually nothing to stem the tide of gun violence. Assault rifles of the type with which Democrats generally take issue are used in less than two percent of all murders committed with a firearm. In 2012, only 323 murders were committed with rifles of any kind, and assault rifles represented just a fraction of that number. When the Brady Bill made certain types of rifles illegal in the 1990s, their use in violent crime did go down, but violence involving other types of firearms increased by about the same amount. A ban on assault rifles might represent a symbolic victory, but it would accomplish practically nothing, and the political capital expended to pass it could be put to better uses. If the goal is to achieve a reduction in gun violence, the proper target is handguns, which are used in more than 80 percent of violent crimes involving a firearm. However, since any legislation taking aim at handguns themselves would be dead on arrival, it would be wise to concentrate policy efforts on more practical solutions.

Another bogeyman that both the Left and the Right employ is mental illness. To be clear, mental illness is a serious problem in the U.S. Our system for identifying and helping the mentally ill is woefully inadequate, and our culture often exacerbates these issues unnecessarily. But our tendency to scapegoat mental health as the driver of gun violence is misguided and does more harm than good, further stigmatizing mental illness and dissuading the afflicted from seeking the help they need. Additionally, we tend to reserve talk of mental illness for the sensational mass shootings involving white assailants. If, on the other hand, the perpetrator is black or brown, the issue is forgotten and we direct our criticism instead towards the pathologies of black culture or Islam.

According to research by Dr. Jonathan Metzl and Kenneth T. MacLeish at Vanderbilt University, less than five percent of gun crime is committed by someone with a diagnosed mental illness, and the mentally ill are actually 60 to 120 percent more likely to be victims of violent crime than the average person. Their research indicates that implicating mental illness as the chief cause of gun violence is little more than a pernicious myth. Doctors can rarely predict violence based on a diagnosis of mental illness, and there are more reliable predictors to which we can look, including drug and alcohol use, a history of violence, access to firearms and personal relationship stress. The prospect of the mentally ill obtaining weapons should be taken seriously, but controlling that variable is not a panacea. We should certainly be doing more to care for the mentally ill, and we should work to improve communication between the medical community and law enforcement. But we should also be realistic about the kind of results that these measures will yield.



I often hear people argue that California has some of the strictest gun control laws in the country, but even their policies did not stop the attacks in San Bernardino. Likewise with regulations in Chicago and the heightened level of gang violence the city has recently experienced. These are intended to be arguments against gun control, but I can't help marveling at the irony of how these contentions reveal the inadequacies of even our strictest gun laws when compared with those in the rest of the world. Of course, the Second Amendment is a uniquely American piece of legislation, so what works in other countries may not work here. But that cannot be an excuse for sitting idle as body after bullet-ridden body piles up before our eyes.

Even more frustrating is the oft-invoked tautology that gun laws are useless because criminals will just break the law anyway. That criminals will break the law is true by definition, but the law gives us recourse against those criminals and can help prevent people from becoming criminals in the first place.

Psychologists and criminal justice experts have come to understand that crime is largely an opportunistic endeavor. Criminals are generally not determined to break a law for its own sake. People are willing to place their freedom in jeopardy only when an opportunity is presented in which the reward is sufficient to counter the risk of being caught. This equation contains variables that are squarely within the purview of legislators to adjust through public policy. Limiting the opportunities for a would-be criminal pays disproportionately high dividends in crime prevention, and the best way to limit opportunities for gun violence is to make guns less accessible. This does not mean that law-abiding citizens should not be able to purchase a weapon legally, but it does demand that we establish a legal framework to keep more weapons off the streets, particularly the supply of guns that flows into the black market. This is, I believe, where the attitudes of the Left and Right begin to diverge. We are all in agreement that criminals shouldn't have access to weapons, but whereas the Left sees expanded background checks and weapon registries as a means to prevent firearms from reaching the secondary market, the Right sees these as blanket propositions that will, in effect, punish law-abiding citizens in the process.

In the current political climate, people have come to expect very little from our elected representatives. Still, it is an absolute travesty that even with near universal support among the people, Congress will not pass legislation requiring universal background checks for firearm purchases. It also speaks to the strength of the gun lobby, which has ardently fought against similar common sense measures, such as making smart guns more available to consumers and allowing the National Institutes of Health to study health risks posed by firearms. These types of measures would undoubtedly challenge the public's perception of guns and reduce the accessibility of firearms to those not qualified to own them. Further, they would be a blow to the gun industry, which ultimately profits from even illegal weapon sales.

President Obama's decision last December to address what issues he could through executive order was a direct affront to gun manufacturers. While I personally disagree with them, I understand the qualms that some have with the President's actions. What I can't understand is why even more anger is

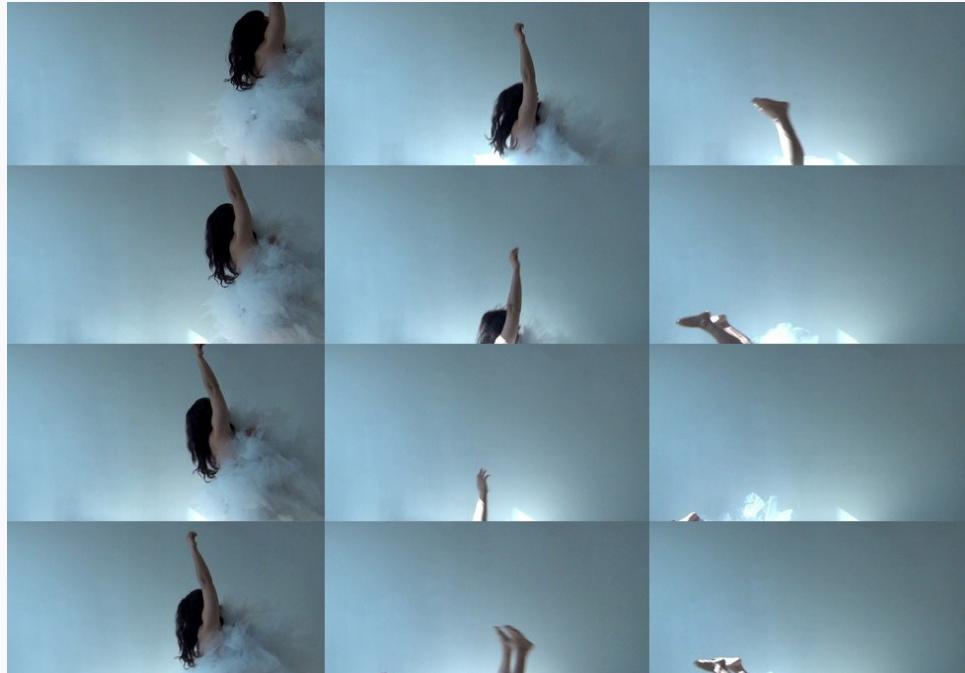
not directed at our so-called representatives who have completely abdicated their responsibilities by refusing to pass legislation that we have told them we want in no uncertain terms.

Part of the problem is that we have become so numb to the ongoing national tragedy of gun violence that we seem to have given up hopes of stopping it. That attitude plays perfectly into the hands of the deafeningly vocal minority of interests who benefit from us not taking any action at all. However, if the majority were able to find its voice, the gun lobby's stranglehold on the political process would have no choice but to loosen its grip.

It is not necessary, or even preferable that we all agree 100 percent on the details of how to move forward in the fight against gun violence. What does matter is that we are able to have rational discussion based on the realities that we face, and that we're able to use the facts, instead of ideology, to chart the course ahead. That starts with the acknowledgement that our brand of violence is a very real and uniquely American problem. What follows is a concerted effort to make our leaders begin to treat it as such.

# The Work of Danielle Georgiou

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"Falling"  
2012

*A series of video stills from the video piece, "Falling," which was part of Pizzicato Porno, a live performance piece.*



"The End," 2012 - Photograph

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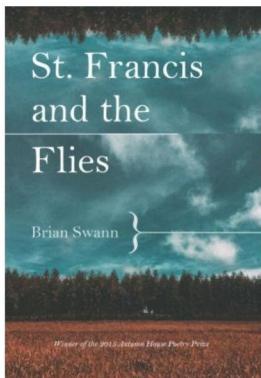
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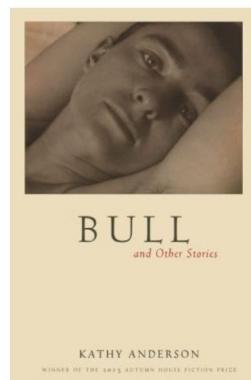
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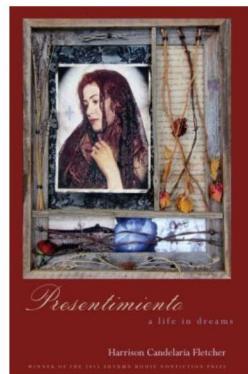
*Presentimiento: A Life in Dreams*

by Harrison Candelaria Fletcher



### FICTION:

*Bull and Other Stories* by Kathy Anderson



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“I find only  
freedom in the  
realms of  
eccentricity.”

---

- David Bowie,  
British Singer and Songwriter

# Poetry

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Lyrical Freedom

# Freedom of A Higher Order

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Readers,

Introducing poetry to the theme of “freedom” feels like an obvious thing to do. It’s kind of like boxing to the song “Eye of the Tiger.” It’s not that poetry was made to express freedom. It’s that it does so inherently.

Poetry is capable of describing humanity’s capacity for nobility. It is the medium of immensity, but I don’t intend to speak about high-flying national banners or the boundaries of state lines or mythological, wigged men. Our poets for this month outline freedom of a higher order and demonstrate the mobility of creative thought.

Tommy Alexander takes us up and over everything with his two poems, “Branching” and “Joy-Song.” Though short, both pieces jump out with viscerality (that’s me trying to combine “visceral” and “vitality”), unbridled wonder at the heavens, and the exhilaration

of flight. Alexander reminds us of the glory of life.

“Palm Sunday” and “the fisherman and his wife” by Miriam C. Jacobs speak plainly and read like fine brushstrokes on a painting. The poet’s every word is deeply considered. As you read, you feel as if it’s safe to fall back into her brass-cornered, precisely woven stories. That trust comes from being in the hands of a practiced artist.

Seun Adeleke brings “The Truth of Tongue” from his native Nigeria to remind you that discourse is noble, that the written word can cast light over everything and that the cure for our soulful ills lies within the heart of basic truth. You ought to walk away from these poems with your chest feeling wide open.

Enjoy,

Ben Abercrombie  
Poetry Editor

# Branching

*by Tommy Alexander*

---

People that go and people that stay:  
Humanity splits in a billion ways,  
and builders, breakers, finders, makers,  
lovers, leavers, givers, takers;  
weaving webs of arks and acres,  
all in search of Home.

So travel far or settle near,  
and find a “where” that feels sincere,  
and give in to the wanderlust,  
and do not live in fear.

Remember: this is human.  
This is dreaming.  
This is true.  
This is why the earth is teeming and the reason there is you.  
If your heart is a horizon and you yearn to bloom anew,  
there is nothing else but motion.  
There is nothing else to do.

# Joy-Song

---

*by Tommy Alexander*

Going!  
All suddenly;  
leap into motion:  
into the clouds and up over the ocean,  
to sing through the sunsmiling sky with devotion:  
up into everything,  
ROARING with power  
soaring and losing all sense of the hours,  
and seizing this moment:  
and going to GO:  
uncorking the lifeblood and letting it flow:  
through this now and the next,  
and each wondrous breath;  
a birth and a death and a changing of clef.  
So go. Be bright.  
Be bold and be light.  
Oh, this is the joy-song of taking to flight!

# Palm Sunday

by Miriam C. Jacobs

---

What does wind represent? I ask the class.  
They are reading Jean Toomer.  
'Freedom,' one says, and as I write it on the board,  
underlining,  
my puerile self awakens

leaping in a backyard clearing,  
nearly swept away, but not quite,  
in the heavy winds before that tornado, so long ago.

An aborted bath,  
a child naked and dripping –  
pajamas tossed down stairs, blanket, candles –  
she's tucked up clean and safe in the surrounding alarm,  
sucking sugar.

The morning's palm fronds fan under a crucifix.

Then why not say so? I ask the students –  
'Change is coming!' A rallying cry.  
'It's poetry,' they let me know. 'And code.'

Language and politics,  
they've got that right,  
and are right without knowing  
the lies I told at school next day,  
and the next year in another classroom

half a continent away, Providential lies,  
lies that change nothing in the straitened  
confounded landscape, lies  
that make me the center of the story,  
important for five minutes.

# the fisherman and his wife *by Miriam C. Jacobs*

---

An old joke: three Natives sitting on a riverbank  
discover – washed up – a brass lamp. When they rub  
its tarnished sides, poof!  
pops a genie with three wishes to give away.  
One man asks for home, the Dakotas,  
and vanishes instantly; the second for the Carolinas,  
his tribe – and he's gone – kaboom!  
The last, none too bright – a Navajo –  
this is a joke about Navajos –  
asks, ‘Geez, I sure miss those guys, innit?  
I wish they were back here.’

That water should yield vain magic we accept  
perhaps because like seekers in fairy tales,  
we have already what light we long for  
shut up within us. The fisherman’s wife, held close  
in her father’s house, deems  
poverty a curse, dreams  
watering flowers with a garden hose,  
then a tower and blue-jacketed courtiers  
toting her jewels on a cushioned platter.  
This wife’s lackey spouse, ordered about by everyone,  
we side with him, share his embarrassment

having to ask a fish for a penis  
for his wife, although she takes him to bed, after.  
She must be King, Emperor, Pope, God –  
while with each turn of fortune  
she grows more dissatisfied. We understand  
she in penury is like God to begin with.  
And we wonder, as with the genie, how it is  
an enchanted fish (for certainly it, too, is like God),  
can help others, but not itself,  
or why the wife sends the fisherman with her questions.  
It’s not like she doesn’t have the balls.

---

When I was a child I felt bad for God.  
I pictured him alone in watery depths, like Jonah,  
scribbling the Law. In my father's library  
gray-green tides rose and grew black with prayer;  
I didn't have it, what you need to piss on a wall.  
Shut-mouthed, I copied out rules for myself.  
When I grew up, I built my house by the ravine  
between electrical towers  
and the McDonough penitentiary.  
The fisherman's wife turns on a wish toward her poor hut.  
I barely knew my mother.

# The Truth of Tongue

(For a Poet in the dungeon of death)

*by Seun Adeleke*

---

Let the truth of tongue  
wag its edges like a sword  
across our lands

Let it cut and pierce  
the bellies of despots

Let it dissolve  
in the stomach of storm

Fly in the wings  
of wind to shores  
where truths are thorns

Let it behead  
with the ferocity  
of a lion's teeth

Let it open gates  
of giant dungeons  
for the freedom of our Pen fighters

Across the lands  
Across the rivers  
Across the oceans



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but advertising is  
forever.*

*-Napoleon Bonaparte*

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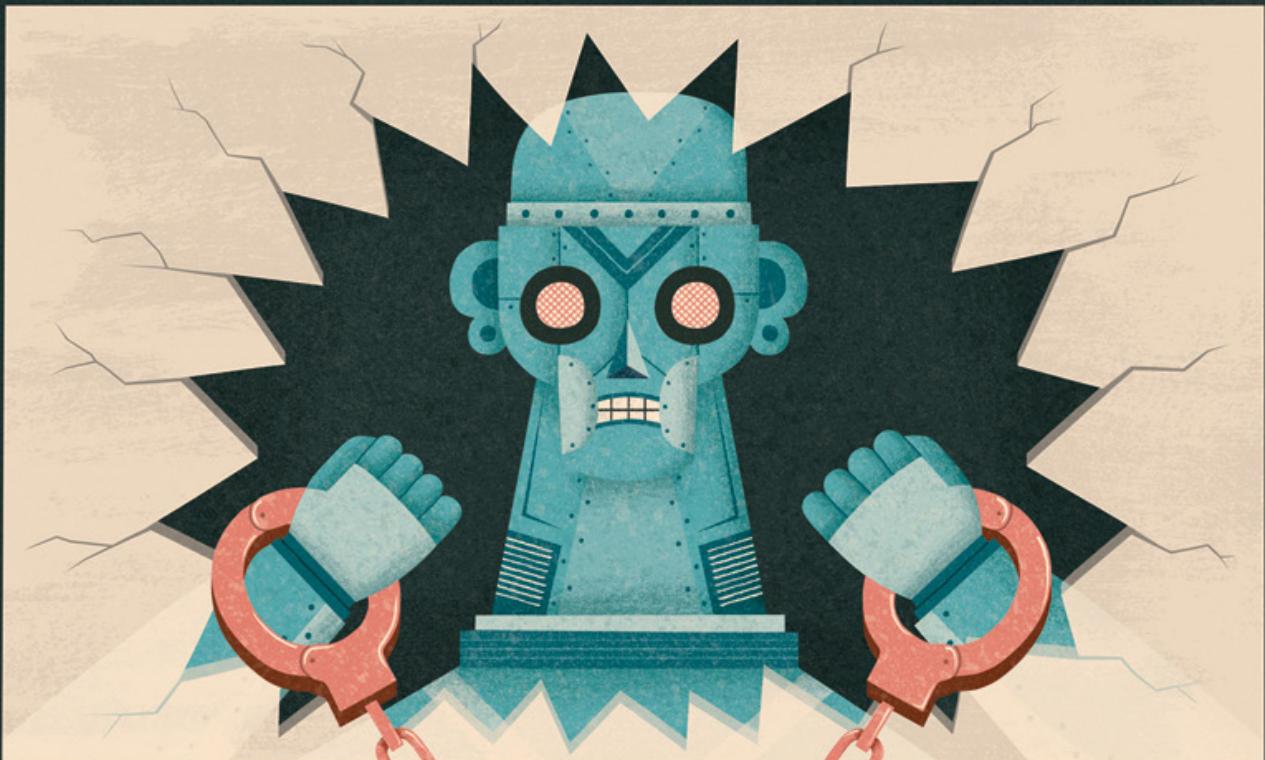
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# THE WORK OF JACOB STEAD









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“Let me be, was  
all I wanted.  
Be what I am,  
no matter how  
I am.”

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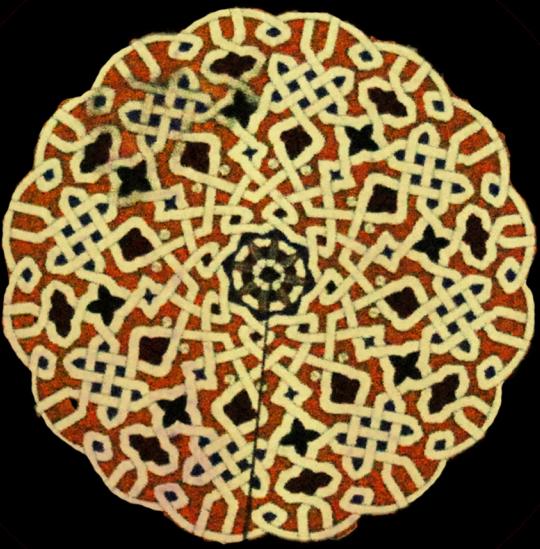
- Henry Miller,  
*Stand Still Like The Hummingbird*

# Fiction

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Experiencing Freedom

IN  
SYMPHONIES



WE FLOW

SIDDHARTH DASGUPTA

# LIBRETTO

Life is short, wouldn't you know. And tonight, the night refuses to be anything but brutally young. Photographs keep washing onto the shore, and dreams keep playing truant with the light within your eyes. As pupils blossom, you see an ancient wooden home by the waves, keeping time to the rebellious tides. You sense three stilled notes of pure, amazing grace. You find atonement in knowing that someone, somewhere is thinking of you at a café by the sea; wanting to be held in your arms, wanting your shoulder to rest her head on, wanting your lyrics to make up her song. That's all there is. And you try and figure out the dots and lines that lead to something resembling a picture. Were you destined to play the rebel to karma's near-perfect script? Was it decreed that for this act, you be the joker of the pack, a Capricorn dissident wreaking disorder with the beautifully aged tarot cards? Drink some wine. Smoke some moonlight. Try and keep innocence alive. It's nothing. It's everything. The ocean saves its best for last.



Beyond me, like an ancient, sacred snake, winds the mighty Bosphorus. It is early morning now, and a soft layer of mist rises above the water. No life in Istanbul is left untouched by the maiden's majestic sweep. These are two different halves of the world, being unified by a cadence that sometimes flows in shades of pure blue, as it is doing now, or in billowing clouds of ink black, or, as when dusk is at its doorstep, in striking palettes of golden red, or, most thrillingly, as when the night is thick and filled with the moon's romantic essence, in streaks of giddy silver. I step on to Galata Bridge, taking the lower passage and walk, keeping step with the shores as they flank different customs, different communities, different relationships, and even, as it feels at times, different eras. Beneath the onslaught, there are boats coming in with the day's first catch and small ferries waiting to transport an anxious working-class horde to any of the city's distant villages and tourist hotspots. As the fishermen dock their precariously tiny vessels, one of them offers me a smoke. I accept gladly, and inhale the dark essence of dawn, nicotine and rancidness. My eyes are alive to every heartbeat. My ears are privy to every secret. Small makeshift cafés have already begun grilling fish and handing them out in hastily wrapped paper. I'm reminded of yesterday at dawn, biting into the ethnic chaos of the Eminönü ferry docks out by the banks of the old peninsula, opening my arms to some of the most spectacular views in all of Istanbul. Yesterday's fare was the fried fish sandwiches, delivered to me by a young fisherman with a toothless grin. Basit was sailor, commander and head

chef of the good boat Ayda, a garish, illuminated wonder that rocked ever so steadily on the water even as its chieftain set about his delicacies. Akin to this morning, I sat for a while on a red plastic chair, while the dock and its coterie of pickle sellers, corn men and leather goods salesmen readied themselves for the day ahead. Today with every savored bite, with every protracted drag, with every inhalation of dawn, the revered hush of the water's sacred flow fills my mind. Ahmet and I bond over the silent language of the wisps of our unified smoke. I sense from his eyes and the scars that mark his face and the soft trembles that accost him from time to time that here is a man whose past lies littered with loves lost, hopes crushed and addresses forgotten. But in his sea worn smile and the glint that often accosts his eyes, I also see the bliss of a life lived in tune to the strange vagaries of the sea. Even at this early hour, Istanbul lies afflicted with a symphonic cacophony of hooting cars, streets waking up to the surge of the day, wailing calls to prayer, the equally wailing replies from a wealth of seagulls, and, as always, those haunting sermons from the far-away dissonance of water traffic. I try and map out a course. I try and gauge the direction of the wind. I try and imagine myself as being one with the city – exotic, erotic, multi-ethnic-hypnotic – one amongst its nineteen million, an anonymous speck in a wild confluence of color and texture. In the distance, a few larger ships have come into view. Everything lays spread out before me – from Golden Horns to Blue Mosques, from Turkish disco to the heart's libretto, from ancient rites to cosmopolitan rhymes, from mystic savants to misfit miscreants – a rich cauldron of everything my heart could have ever hoped for. And yet the Bosphorus flows...

## OVERTURE

Light is short, wouldn't you know. Blink of an eye, eye of a storm, storm in a cup. The Native Americans have this staggering superstition wherein if someone takes a photograph of you, you lose a little bit of your soul in the process. Flash. Burn. Gone. These shadows must have been taking photographs of her since the day she turned seventeen, because this vacancy doesn't seem forced or instantaneous. It bears the marks of many a painstaking year, it bears the soul of a masterpiece in progress. The days are already slowing, and I'd be better off not knowing. There are familial windows around every unfamiliar street corner, some with torn, ragged corners, holding years of family secrets within their horizons of wood. Others are freshly painted, all glistening and new to the world. No history. No mystery. Tomorrow will be a brand new story. Enough with windows, I wonder what's behind these doors. Drink some wine. Smoke

some moonlight. Try and keep innocence alive. It's nothing. It's everything. The ocean saves its best for last.



The streets of Galata, Beyoğlu, Cihangir, Taksim, Nişantaşı and a bevy of neighborhoods whose names flow like poetry, together with their bewildering assortment of side streets, intimate pathways and accidental arteries, throb under afternoon's steady gaze. I harbor a near perverse addiction to Istanbul's old, forgotten streets, those in which you find ravaged men drinking çay and reminiscing sadly over their youthful conquests or the ones in which forlorn women stare down at you from the windows, silently cursing you for having intruded on their melancholic lives and claiming a small slice of it as your own. I walk, shielded from the sun by shops and buildings and trees and pillars, each a vital piece in a maze without any real escape. My heart skips to an ancient beat, as apartment buildings greet me with stories ancient and fragrant. The stylish newer ones with their European wrought-iron flourishes and beckoning al fresco terraces hint at a romance yet to fully bloom. But it is the old symphonies that consume me. A strange and familiar sadness has overcome me under its gaze, numbing me as much to the restlessness of youth out on Taksim Square as to the stylishly bohemian fallacies of chance encounters and Turkish coffee parlors out on Beyoğlu. The strange and familiar sadness I speak of was in full view a few days ago as well, when Mehdi, Dilara and Aydin, my lifelong Turkish connections, had taken me out for coffee. I'd like to step inside a fabled Turkish coffee-house, a place painted in nostalgia, I'd told them. And so we'd headed to Kadıköy Market, where on Serasker Caddesi, stands a place steeped in yesterday. At Fazıl Bey, the smell of freshly roasted coffee beans lives with the simplicity of small gracious cups. As music composed of crackling and silences played softly, we dipped into the gentle chocolate textures of their house favorites before venturing on to the unexpected pine flavoring of the *damla sakızlı* and winter-battling *salep*. As we discussed the vagaries of our lives in the company of centuries-old wood, I felt it creep up to me. It revealed itself quite gently through the black and white frames that had nearly seeped into the walls before confidently taking a seat at our table and becoming a breathing part of our conversation: that sadness, that longing, that inexplicable *yearning*. But today it is here in Beyoğlu, traversing the mystic climb of İstiklal Caddesi, flanked by homes and lives and memories and regrets to which I have no access. My heart is on the verge of exploding into a million poignant pieces. Every outer visage carries a certain art to it, regardless of whether the home is a French-style villa presiding over majestic views or a tiny, anonymous apartment in a tiny, anonymous tenement brimming with decline

and mediocrity. I ruminate on the buildings. I ruminate on their tragic histories. I ruminate on the sad lives they harbor. I ruminate on their shapeless squalor. I ruminate on the bleeding of my heart. I ruminate on the painful contradiction of having so much style and hedonistic chic in the same square address. I ruminate on the pointlessness of their tomorrows. I ruminate on the harsh realities of their eyes... And I come to accept the fact that I can no longer move, anchored to this earth by a regal connection to its very core, horrified and attracted by the profound truths of these lives placed before my eyes. What to say of human beings who haven't set foot outside the places in which they were born, who have stubbornly refused to accede to the world and its myriad pleasures all through their lives? Is theirs a quality to be admired? A principled stance of having no interest in the world and the mysteries it holds, being content instead with the piece of earth they were born into and bequeathed? Or is theirs a fate to be bemoaned? Just sad lives bereft of fragrance and courage, colored only in a relentlessly monotonous shade of monochrome? Are all of our lives, rich or poor, intrepid or insipid, poetic or robotic, bound, in the end, by the select few human experiences that no one is destined to escape? These questions haunt me: I crave for their stories, I ache for their secrets. I'm engulfed by these unknown names and faces, stilled by the cumulative profundity of births, deaths, ecstasies, epiphanies, childhoods, celebrations, failures, fathers, mothers, sons, daughters, rivers, homes, shops, the first crush, that last dance, the enraptured kiss, that transient romance, those moments of silence, these flowing parades of loud crowds – the cumulative profundity of life, in a manner of speaking. And yet the Bosphorus flows...

## ADAGIO

Lies are short, wouldn't you know. There's a broken radio playing an old Turkish film song from the '50s somewhere out there tonight. 'He drinks much more than he ought to drink, because it brings him back you.' Its plaintive notes and slightly odd time signature give birth to forgotten black-and-white portraits from days long lost. I can hear it if I put my ears to the ground. There's a swirl of clouds coming together gracefully, forming an erotic portrait of a woman's thigh somewhere in this soon-to-be ink-dipped sky. I can see it if I close my eyes. There's a parade of mystic mermaids making their Chanel-clad way down a boulevard of destined disappointment. I can smell the excitable anguish on their lips, drunk in their own repentance, scared by the thought of what might happen when the ingénue roles dry up. Sweet chardonnay, there's nothing in her way. Forego it for something that'll fuck the pain away. Drink some wine. Smoke

some moonlight. Try and keep innocence alive. It's nothing. It's everything. The ocean saves its best for last.



Evening has settled over Istanbul, thick with the scent of *nargileh* bubbling through glamorous oriental cisterns, redolent with the aroma of a strikingly sensual city that bristles with the embers of Byzantine, oscillates between the fragrances of the Ottomans and wrestles with its Muslim identity in a decidedly cosmopolitan European visage. There is squalor and there is glamor; there is poetry and there is savagery; there are the millions of tourists, there are the handfuls of purists; there is a brutal synergy, there is a mystic symphony. I have come to realize that my attack of sadness from earlier in the afternoon hasn't been such a bad thing after all. It has only served to bring me closer to this fascinating conundrum of a city. I have recalled how the Turkish writer Orhan Pamuk speaks about the overpowering melancholy that grips him and envelops his city in a blanket of haze that drifts from rooftops and chimneys and homes where the light lingers with a soft sadness well into the night before gradually becoming one with the sky that hangs over Istanbul; a shroud, a veil, a second skin, a heavenly sin. It's a Turkish term called "hüzün". I hope I'm pronouncing it correctly for you. Pamuk refers to it as a communal melancholy of sorts, as opposed to an individual sadness, wherein the entire populace of the city finds itself united by an inexplicable sorrow, one bred from the striking inevitability of their own lives, one nourished by the embers of a fallen empire struggling to come to terms with the harshness of its new reality. Of course, all this flies in the face of the millions of tourists who are here, eager to tick off 'Hagia Sophia', 'Grand Bazaar' and 'Bosphorus Cruise' from their list. It flies in the face of the excitement that pervades the outer layers of the city as well, because this is an inner sadness, a poetic sadness, an invisible aura that leaves neither pristine Islamic minaret nor dazzling high-rise; neither the buried cinders of the old wooden *yalis* that once used to preside over the Bosphorus' course nor the rolling hills that nestle the city in their grasp; neither the neighborhoods with no name nor the throbbing coastal hotspots redolent with bliss and ecstasy – it leaves none of these untouched by its spell. Has my recognition and realization of this *hüzün* brought me closer to Istanbul? In coming to terms with the sad, bitter truth of Istanbul, have I now been freed from the yoke of preconceived notions, free to delve within its inner silences? In viewing this communal melancholy with my eyes, as it weaves and flows through homes, lives, loves, yesterdays, maybe, tomorrows, how comes, what ifs, have I finally found some sort of secret key to deciphering this maiden's compelling flow? But I've stopped at this, confident in

the thought that having recognized the scent of *hüzün* and having come to peace with it, I am now much more attuned to the wild, scattered heart of this city. Also, perhaps I am now more attuned to the wild, scattered heart beating within *her*. And yet the Bosphorus flows...

## ARIA

Love is short, wouldn't you know. All the rage of a scathing tempest, and then just as suddenly, the tragic submissiveness of a washed-up actress. You're a prisoner to its constant whims and fancies, wrapped unwittingly in the deep sleep of possession. Boats come, boats go, love affairs more than any man will ever know. Here's a forgotten horizon, make of it what you will. Nothing will injure you more than this, this temptation to swim across miles of stillness to the shining lighthouse of fondness, only to come crashing against the rocks. As it leads, so it deceives; as it transcends, so it bereaves. So near and yet so far; a fistful of sky to a last sip of stars. Drink some wine. Smoke some moonlight. Try and keep innocence alive. It's nothing. It's everything. The ocean saves its best for last.



I'm running wild through Istanbul's streets, spurred on by the intoxication of the night, urged to give every last bit of my heart to a city that dabbles in poetry and delivers with ecstasy. Am I chasing after the ghost of Flaubert, who loved so mercilessly only to perish to an assailant as inelegant as syphilis? Am I enraptured by the essence of Rumi, weaving sacred verses of Sufi and 'save me' in a bid to decipher a truth most divine, a truth that would next lead him onward to India? Am I matching steps with Julien Viaud, whose oriental obsessions lie entrenched in the hilltop café that overlooks the Eyüp Mosque and bears but his nom de plume, Pierre Loti? Great men have faltered at the hands of Istanbul, and yet, a few great men have soared under its wings too. The greatness of a few is what I crave. And the greatness of ourselves is what we craved last night, Leyla and I, as we made love to the frantic ebb and flow of the Bosphorus. Last night, ours was a love built on urgency and potency, desperate to quench every last drop of its thirst, lest it be swallowed by the city's greedy melancholy. Tonight, as they did last night, her flowing wisps of dark black hair are having their way with me; flicking my lips as she throws her head back in hushed, rhythmic moans; brushing against my face like wayward feathers in an unexpected breeze; and unfurling onto me in a violent pool of melody when we are

in ardor's deepest throes. Our cries and whispers and scratches and movements are like a melodic counterpoint to the traffic and the murmurs and the distant echoes of ships and the even further laments of seagulls. We've stepped out onto Leyla's small balcony now, our naked bodies still flush with the fragrance of recent love, with only a thin blanket for company. Lives, millions of lives, lie scattered before us – across undulating rooftops and sloping cobblestone streets, across dimly lit homes and brightly scented rooftops, across a capital that once presided over four empires spanning sixteen centuries and those seven encircling hills that have enraptured poets since time immemorial. Leyla wants to know what my plans are for the next few days. But what am I to tell her? I who hadn't even planned to fall so deeply within her. We met a week ago when my *Istanbullu* friends threw a small party for me at their charming apartment. But wasn't I to have left already? A week has come and passed. This was meant to be a detour, not an epiphany. As Leyla guides my hands and wraps them around her delectable waist, the skies are assaulted by a blissfully orchestrated performance of the day's final prayer. From our balcony, we can almost see the prayers being set to a celestial domino effect of sorts, cascading from one mosque to the next, creating a divine dance that has soon engulfed the entire city. Why do you think you've stayed on in my city? Leyla asks me. I wasn't expecting to be so moved, I tell her, and I wasn't expecting you. She turns around to face me and rises on her toes to kiss me, deeply. Can we go chase after the night? I ask her. She winks, and we're off. On Neçati Bey Caddesi in Beyoğlu, the heady blend of densely textured tobacco, ancient lamps and strong coffee at Katmerler is just the tonic for our restless hearts. We don't even mind the roaring football fans in here tonight. Leyla's done with her melon-flavoured *sheesha*, and we've moved on to Karabatak, where solemn churches and a busy whorehouse look down upon us from either side. Here, seated on old cane chairs in the heaving quarter of Karaköy, Leyla and I must talk to one another in the presence of bygone European grandeur and the remnants of a fairly authentic Ottoman essence. Quaint poster-art bearing 'Meinl Kaffee' looks me in the eye, jostling for attention with the antique Islamic motifs on the tiles. Herr Meinl's legacy is strong, potent and perfectly brewed. Leyla is telling me about her childhood, spent in a small wooden *yali* just off the shores, where she and her two older brothers would pretend they were pirates out to plunder the seas. Theirs was one of the few Bosphorus-gracing wooden mansions still standing in the eighties, before it too came crumbling down to earth in a hypnotic dance of fire, blaze, smoke and, finally, forgotten ashes. There is something in her voice. It's not just nostalgia, it's not just sadness, but a sense of *impermanence*, as though she's telling me about the childhood of some other girl from her imagination. I find out that Leyla has her masters in philosophy from Galataseray University. Is she going to get bored of my illiteracy, I wonder?

I find out that she wants to uncover India, that she wants to get to the heart of its mysteries and spiritual proclivities, that she wants to spend two or three months there, not as a tourist, but as a philosopher trying to uncover her own truths. I tell her a little bit about my own life, about wanting to become a poet, journalist, writer and documentarian at various points in my life, and how words have somehow always been at the heart of it. I tell her that when she arrives in India, perhaps we should meet. I tell her what I think of Istanbul, at least what I can fathom of it. I tell her what I think of her. At least what I can fathom of her. We fall into a slow, beautiful hush. It is close to midnight, and our final stop for the night is going to be the Marmara Pera Hotel, whose rooftop plays home to the exquisite flavors of Mikla. I can see the Golden Horn shimmering in the distance, and all 360 degrees of Istanbul embrace me with the fervor of a long-lost friend. We have some delicious finger food on our high-table and a bottle of deep Shiraz for company. Set darkly against her perfectly almond-shaped face, Leyla's eyes are a-sparkle. We talk, we laugh, we slow dance with the intimacy of a familiar couple, we hold on to each other's bodies with the trembling audacity of two passionate strangers. The night is slipping away, our hearts are but minor specks in its wake. And yet the Bosphorus flows...

## FINALE ve CADENZA

Lust is short, wouldn't you know. Wrapped in the cruel crush of destiny's waward arms, days flew by like letters thrown out of a car headed nowhere on a windy evening. June, July, August. Three months. Might just have been three months too many, back when summer was all pain and glory. Whisper a name. Carve it into the skin of a tree. Memorize to heart the way you feel right now. Pick something to go with it. A song, a smell, a word. Anything to keep you chained to the dangerous attraction of now. It won't come back again. Nostalgia is wasted on yesterday. When ever-after strikes up a conversation with you, and your heart begins to ache with the possibility of what could be, perhaps it's best to just walk away. No wait, don't you dare walk away. Drink some wine. Smoke some moonlight. Try and keep innocence alive. It's nothing. It's everything. The ocean saves its best for last.



It has now been over two weeks since I landed in Istanbul. Within my recognition of Istanbul's lingering melancholy, within my realization of my own

hüzün and the place it holds within the city's fractured sorrows, within my grasp of what is to become of Leyla and me, I am at peace. The two of us have been hedonistic flower-children, only too willing to dissolve within the fragrance of lasting *nargileh* smoke, only too happy to lose ourselves in the wild confluence of breathlessness and nostalgia that is this city's calling card. We've made the Cihangir quarter our home, delving into its leafy, literary nooks with curiosity and emerging with a cradle of memories: Susam Café with its air of friendliness, those potent Aegean Mojitos and a living-room like vibe that opens out to a street-side terrace of unrelenting drama; Smyrna and its laid-back ambience replete with the literati and an outdoor space blooming with plane trees; Cukurcuma 49 and its split-level eccentricities that come laced with Turkish-style pizzas and an artisanal house wine bottled on the Aegean shores of Bozcaada; or better yet, 5.Kat, where flame-haired actress Yasemin Alkaya presides over a boudoir bliss essence draped in deep red velvet and staggering Bosphorus views that come at us from full-length windows. We crave more, and it is more we shall have. We cherish the rich essence of Turkish wine by the waterfront at İncirli Saraphane. We get loudly, stupidly drunk over the fermented semolina and cinnamon madness of Boza at Vefa Bozaçısı. We immerse ourselves in the old-school opulence of Kybele Café in Sultanahmet and have deep conversations with the spirit of Alphonse de Lamartine at Desde Café right at the very top of breathtaking Çamlıca. Whether at dawn after an all-nighter or later in the morning, breakfast is just the one address though, no options necessary. Ada Bosphorus, which Leyla informs me was earlier known as Van Kahvaltı Evi, tempers my insatiable craving for the maiden while satisfying both our cravings for warmly traditional Turkish breakfasts. My senses are aflutter at the explosions of color, history and artistry they're being assaulted with. Whether it's sitting under domed passageways beside carpet-covered stone walls and ethereal mosaic lamps at the 18th-century *madrasah* tea gardens of Çorlulu Alipasa Medresesi or the old brick walls and cezve-accented coffee of Ethem Tezçakar Kahveci near the Grand Bazaar; whether it's the heady confluence of Turkish rock, late-night backgammon marathons, unexpected troubadours and shapely puffs of smoke of Küçük Parmakkapı Sokak in İstiklal Caddesi or the worthy combination of ice-cold Efes Pilsen, coma-inducing baklava and sesame-blessed *simit* on cobblestone-streets... Leyla and I hold on to one another, tightly, dreamily, lest each moment pass us by. Mehdi, Dilara and Aydin come join us in Galata and we go browsing through vintage book stores where the smell of old paper merges with the faint whiff of embedded regret on the owners' distant faces. We step inside small, incredibly atmospheric art shops and galleries where portraits of Rumi swirling to the tune of his own calligraphic etchings merge seamlessly into the lost stares of Oriental maidens from the Pasha's harem. My head is spinning,

my heart is thumping. I want it all. I want it now. I want all this happiness and all this anxiousness and all this ecstasy and all this melancholy to be dissolved within my intrepid body. Is no one else aware of this, this all-encompassing melancholy? Has no one been unable to unearth the finality of his or her existence? Such an achingly cool city, and yet, its *hüzün*. This is a poetic sorrow, as it flows along the seven-kilometer stretch of the Theodosian Walls, from the Sea of Marmara to the Golden Horn. This is a nostalgic sorrow, as it flows through the narrow streets and silently poignant *yalis* in the Bosphorus villages of Arnavutköy. This is a ravaged sorrow, as it flows between delicious cocktails and divine sunrises at Zelda Zonk. This is an evocative sorrow, ideally suited to the bevy of nargileh cafés that lie fragrant with the scent of rosewater and rose-accented smoke in Tophane. This is a tempestuous sorrow, reconciled to its destiny within the intricate mosaics and exquisite apartments in the harem quarter of the Topkapi Palace, and within the glitzy ostentatiousness of the Dolmabahce Palace. This is an inevitable sorrow, left to wander through the mystic blue essence of the Rustem Pasha Mosque and the almost elegiac courtyard of the Yavuz Selim Camii in Fatih. And this is a drunken sorrow, stumbling its way past the talking parrot and the silent nostalgia of days gone by in Büyük Londra on Mesrutiyet Caddesi, past soft jazz views of the Golden Horn at Le Fumoir on Serdar-I Ekrem Street, past the sweeping views from L'tera Bar on Yenicars Caddesi. But most compellingly of all, this is a divine sorrow. And nowhere is it more potent than when I'm by the Bosphorus' side, as I am now, on the banks of Ortaköy village, staring out at the immensity of 'the First Bridge' and the divinity of the neo-Baroque Ortaköy Mosque. You should stay on a while longer, Leyla tells me. We're standing hand in hand. Everything's moving too quickly, I tell her. Istanbul is moving too rapidly for me. What if everything were to just disappear? I ask her. Young men sell baked potato *kumpir* on rickety streets. Why *don't* I stay on for a while, I ask myself. Why am I so afraid of Istanbul's veiled sorrows? Why am I consumed by the sudden thought of losing Leyla, when we've haven't even had the chance to find each other to begin with? Can't Leyla and I just *be*, allowing our desires and destinies to write their own script? These questions escape my mouth and hover around Leyla for a while, before drifting towards the Bosphorus and being swallowed in its vastness. Yes, yes, I'm aware that yet she flows. As she always has, as she always will. Only now, she carries the added texture of two lovers and their secret needs wrapped within her waves, engulfed within her reflections. The city rises hazily in the distance beyond us - blissful, hectic, perfectly melancholic. Dreams and hopes and fears and regrets and expectancies and ecstasies rent the sky in a techni-colored dream. Leyla grasps my hand just a little bit tighter. The wind is fierce. Our hearts are full. It's like Istanbul has come to an unexpected, unrequited standstill. And yet the Bosphorus flows...

# About The Cover Artist

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**Jacob Stead** is an artist from Amsterdam. His work often comments upon society's relationship with technology, and how advances in the field of robotics make us question what it is to be human. Stead's other work pokes fun at the financial sector while simultaneously reminding us of the threat it poses. His pastel and textured style has been featured in some of the most prominent magazines and newspapers in the world, including The New York Times and Wired. You can view more of his work at [jacobstead.com](http://jacobstead.com), or connect with him on Twitter or Instagram by following:

@jacobstead

# Contributor Biographies

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## Seun Adeleke

Seun Adeleke is from Ibadan, Nigeria. He writes across the three literary genres, and is also a critic and reviewer. His previous work has appeared in local newspapers and journals.

## Tommy Alexander

Tommy Alexander plays with words, makes music, and builds community amid the colorful hill-streets of San Francisco. His work has been featured in *The Catalyst*. He holds a BA from the University of California, Santa Barbara, and he is a wikiHow digital editing fellow.

## Siddharth Dasgupta

Siddharth Dasgupta is an Indian novelist, short story writer and poet. He also articulates travel and cultural horizons for the likes of *Travel + Leisure*, *Condé Nast Traveler*, the Dharamshala International Film Festival and the Tibet Foundation. He is currently consumed with finessing the minutiae and finding the right publisher for a collection of short stories. Follow him on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

## Adam G. Emerson

Adam G. Emerson is the art director and co-founder of Sun-Struck Magazine. Adam dabbles in many tech-related fields, and he's currently studying computer science at Northern Arizona University. He lives in Flagstaff, Arizona, with his patient and loving wife Emily and their hellish guard-cat "Set."

## Danielle Georgiou

Danielle Georgiou is a multi-hyphenate artist who works in performance and video and is based in Dallas, TX. Her stage and video work deals with puzzles found in femininity—vulnerability, deformity and beauty. Her work has shown across the U.S. and in Germany. She exhibited a performance and video at the 2013 Texas Biennial in Marfa, Texas, and recently completed a solo show at Women and their Work in Austin, Texas.

## Tyler Hicks

Tyler Hicks is a writer and journalist from Dallas. When he's not scouring the Earth for the perfect iced latte, he's probably in the corner of a library reading a history book. He has published work in the Denton Record-Chronicle, American Way and several other publications. After earning his master's degree from the University of North Texas, he hopes to work for a magazine and eventually become a documentary filmmaker.

## Jared Jones

Jared Jones is a native of Dallas, Texas. He holds a bachelor's degree in political science from the University of North Texas. He's previously worked for the House of Representatives in Washington, D.C. He plans on attending law school in the near future. This is his second essay in SunStruck.

## Alex Lepore

Alex Lepore is a journalist and photographer from San Antonio, Texas. He's somehow survived four years of college on a diet primarily consisting of Ramen noodles, cigarettes and coffee. He considers this his main accomplishment in life, as he believes not many people have the dedication - nor the ability to intake high levels of sodium - necessary to continue functioning on such a disheartening meal plan.

## Johanna Ryan

Johanna Ryan is an activist and essayist from Ireland. She currently lives in North Texas with her cat (Mum) and dog (Pup) who get along adorably well. Her work focuses on labor movements, the environment and corporate influences in America.