

## 2022 Book List

*Mardoqueo (Marc) Arteaga*

WITHOUT TELLING ANYONE ON JANUARY 1, I made the decision to read as many books as I can with enjoyment this year. Oftentimes, I feel like I receive gratification from simply sharing a goal before accomplishing it and I want that to stop. I plan on letting my book list live on my website for posterity and it is also a good way to document the kinds of thoughts that my mind has in the background as I go about my day to day.

Personal experiences obviously occur during the year, but books influence the way we view the world because they provide such different narratives to the one we tell ourselves in the first person. In 2022, the penultimate full year of my doctoral program, I changed where I lived in NYC for the fourth time, began a new and rather serious relationship, traveled outside of the Americas for the first time in my life, and accepted my first full-time job offer as an economist. The following accompanied me throughout the journey, on average one per month:

1. [Please Enjoy Your Happiness](#), Paul-Brinkley-Rogers
2. [Theatre](#), Somerset Maugham
3. [Of Fear and Strangers: A History of Xenophobia](#), George Makari
4. [Heart of Darkness](#), Joseph Conrad
5. [Mozart: A Musical Biography](#), Konrad Küster
6. [A Brief History of Time](#), Stephen Hawking
7. [Ptolemy I, King and Pharaoh of Egypt](#), Ian Worthington
8. [The New PhD; How to Build a Better Graduate Education](#), Leonard Cassuto & Robert Weisbuch
9. [Memoirs of Hadrian](#), Marguerite Yourcenar
10. [The Lady and the Unicorn](#), Tracey Chevalier
11. [Columbus and the Enterprise of the Indies](#), Bliar Sullivan & Geoffrey Symcox
12. [Socorro: A Novel](#), Sara Leman
13. [Between the World and Me](#), Ta-Nehisi Coates

# #1. *Please Enjoy Your Happiness*, Paul Brinkley-Rogers (2016)<sup>1</sup>

**SUMMARY** A chance encounter between two displaced people, apart not as much by their 10 year age gap but rather a lifetime of experience. Beautifully sentimental, accessible writing. This book came to me like many beautiful things in life: unexpectedly. I am thankful for it and the experiences with the people who made me think about love and what I truly wanted during a low point in my life.

## PASSAGES, VOCABULARY, RANDOM THOUGHTS

The look of intensity, or as Yuki said, "imperial" look: "Such a look you have - I did not teach you that. Where did you learn to make a woman feel afraid?" Paul has unclear ancestry but dashing, dark good looks and an aura of 'energy, ignorance, and insatiable curiosity'. [p. 56]

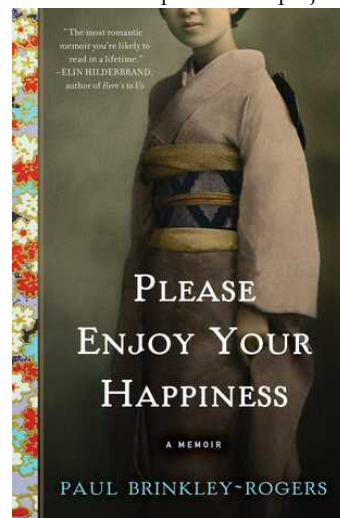
The biggest hit by Yamaguchi Momoe (from Yokosuka, raised by a single mother) was "*Hitonatsu no keiken*" (Experiences of Summer Youth) which answers, 'What is a girl's most precious thing?' with '*Magokoro!*' ('a true heart / devotion'). [p. 99]

An embrace of true love, though it could be the joining of souls that see each other plain. 'I reached out. It seemed as if I were reaching across time, and I pulled you so close to me that you gasped, and the crowd of sightseers and pilgrims stopped in its tracks and stared at us. You said "All my life I have been waiting for that embrace."' [p. 47]

From a conversation with Reiko (Rei-chan), a girl who works at the White Rose and who is 22, from the countryside. She is asking about a suitable partner for a young Japanese girl, and Paul asks her about what she is looking for in a partner. 'I am very definite . . . All the women in my family say that the measure of love is when you love without measure [. . .] In life there are very rare chances that you'll meet the person you love and that he will love you in return, so, once you have, don't ever let go because the chance might never come your way again.' [p. 130]

Beautiful melancholy: "Memories and tears are locked together for all eternity, like lovers." [p. 252]

<sup>1</sup> I finished this book on January 5th, which is slightly misleading as I began it over the 2021 Winter Break, maybe on December 20th. But this book spurred this project.



From Pablo Neruda's *Si tú me olvidas* in *Los Versos del Capitán*:  
'In me nothing is extinguished or forgotten // my love feeds on  
your love, beloved, // and as long as you live it will be in your  
arms // without leaving mine.' [p. 269]

'A Chinese poet from the T'ang Dynasty once told his beloved  
when he was losing her: "Promise that at the end of every sum-  
mer when I look up at the inexhaustible night and watch the  
seasons change, you will be a star looking down at me ... and  
if I die before you die, I will wait for you in Paradise.'" This is  
followed by the red string of fate, of red thread of destiny, which  
is a myth that says the gods tie a red cord around the ankles of  
those that are to meet one another in a certain situation or help  
each other in a certain way.<sup>2</sup> [p. 316]

A reflection in old age: 'Somewhere in the interior, behind  
those wrinkles and the shy smile, I know that you are still there.  
If we listened again to Puccini's *Un bel di* we would both weep a  
tear or two to celebrate a memory of us that never died. What  
a gift that was. What a gift that has been! I am sometimes as-  
tonished when I wake up in the morning and discover that I am  
still alive. . . Yes, I am alive. It is still dark outside and the local  
mockingbird, having now built his nest, is in full chorus deep  
inside the dense stand of giant timber bamboo that serves as a  
battlement along the white stucco wall of my garden.' [p. 256]

Buenos Aires, the capital of highly evolved despair and manic  
melancholy: "'Num deserto de almas tambien desertas, uma alma es-  
pecial reconhece de imediato a uotra" (In the desert of souls also de-  
serted, a special soul immediately recognizes the another)'. [p.  
276]

<sup>2</sup> After more research on this, I con-  
cluded that a contemporary inter-  
pretation is that of soulmates. How  
wonderful to think that a red string  
connects you and the various soul-  
mates through space and time; do  
we have one soul mate or various  
across our lives? Do we meet them?

#2. *Theatre*, W. Somerset Maugham (1937)<sup>3</sup>

**SUMMARY** This book was recommended by Joseph, my adoptive grandfather. The immediate impression of this book came from the first few pages that included such a curious back and forth between Julia Lambert and her husband, Michael. Of note, too, is the Latin, "*Nemo me impune lacessit*", which roughly translates that those who hurt me will not walk away unscathed. A threatening introduction to Michael that I do not know if it captures his superficial personality and physical aesthetic obsessions. Julia comes across as haughty even while she puts on this air of acceptance and understanding. The entire first chapter goes without either character bothering to learn the name of their guest, betraying their sense of moral superiority for being wealthy/famous. I disliked Julia for the most part during the first three-quarters of the book, even though she is the main character and I find pieces her personality relatable. She knows how to get people to do her bidding because she desperately yearns to be loved.<sup>4</sup> "She lowered her eyelids for a second and then, raising them, gazed at him for a little with that soft look...her velvet look." Even here, with someone in the palm of her hand, she had no object in doing this. She did it, if not mechanically, from an instinctive desire to please.

**PASSAGES, VOCABULARY, RANDOM THOUGHTS**

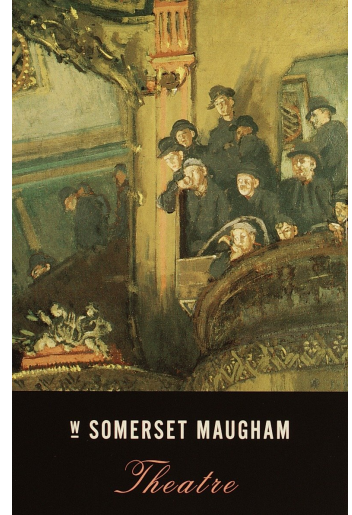
*Supercilious*: behaving or looking as though one thinks one is superior to others

Julia is ashamed for having her father as a vet, but later uses this as a point of strength as she acquires more fame. Curious connection: we feel ashamed of our origins when we have nothing but sometimes gain identity growth when we 'make it' due to having won against the odds.

Relatable: Calls herself a rotten bitch for allowing herself to be morally corrupt, yet revels in getting away with it. "But she giggled as though she was not in the least ashamed...she felt wonderfully exhilarated." [p. 90]

"She turned to him, standing by her side, as she said this. He

<sup>3</sup>I finished this book on January 23rd. This was mostly read in the Columbia University library where I, too, felt like I was acting



<sup>4</sup>This trait is not always apparent in those yearning to be loved. For instance, in 1776 *The Musical*, Judge Wilson is accused of this trait but it manifests itself as shyness.

put his arm round her waist and kissed full on the lips. No woman was ever more surprised in her life. She was so taken aback that she never thought of doing anything." [p. 97]

The affair with the Spaniard: "He did not leave her till a chink of light through the drawn blind warned them that day had broken. Julia was shattered morally and physically." [p. 108]

"People don't want reasons to do what they'd like — they want excuses." [p. 124]

*Officious*: Intrusively enthusiastic to offer help in trivial things, often domineering

"Still with that slightly imperious, but infinitely cordial smile, the smile that a queen royal procession bestows on her subjects, Julia gazed at her. She did not speak. She remembered Jane Taitbout's maxim: don't pause unless it's necessary, but then pause as long as you can."<sup>5</sup>

The Latin, "*Bis dat qui cito dat*". He who gives swiftly, gives twice. Or, swift payment is preferred over full payment.

"When I've seen you go into an empty room I've sometimes wanted to open the door suddenly, but I've been afraid to in case I found nobody there." [p. 261]

"I might love you if I could find you. But where are you? If one stripped you of your exhibitionism, if one took your technique away from you, if one peeled as one peels an onion of skin after skin of pretence and insincerity, of tags of old parts and shreds of faked emotions, would one come upon a soul at last?"<sup>6</sup> [p. 262]

"She remembered that Charles had once said to her that the origin of poetry was emotion recollected in tranquility. She didn't know anything about poetry, but it was certainly true about acting." [last page of the book]

<sup>5</sup> Frankly, a great lesson in negotiation tactics. Reminds me of all the points given by Chris Voss.

<sup>6</sup> A damning quote by Julia's son who accuses her of being fake in every aspect of her life. The anger here is directed at the main issue of the novel: Julia cannot distinguish between being an actress on the stage and being an actress in her personal life. What are the masks that I wear, that we all wear, and when do we shed them to be our true selves?

#3. *Of Fear and Strangers: A History of Xenophobia*, George Makari, (2021)<sup>7</sup>

**SUMMARY** Given to read by the English Department at Fordham (from Anwita Ghosh and Prof Anne Hoffman) in late January, early February. The author, Makari, is from Lebanon and applies a 'man of Jewish ancestry' lens throughout the book. Themes I liked were the historical anecdotes, the duality of immigrant vs patriot and how being the former in a new country leads people to prove themselves by being the latter, and the things that unite a society or a people are often the things that end up being negative (such as hate).

**PASSAGES, VOCABULARY, RANDOM THOUGHTS**

"My parents, like many immigrants, became experts at such, often mortifying, flag-waving. And yet long after becoming American citizens, they persisted in the unspoken knowledge that all those fancy degrees and citations could, poof, like a broken spell, turn into swirling taunts and mockery, Harvard undone by a funny accent." [p. 7]

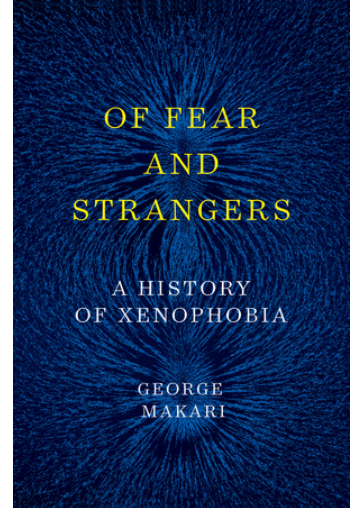
"*Una ghareed ma hal'alum*", or "I am a stranger among these people". Spoken by Makari's father as he felt out of place in America.<sup>8</sup>

*Mélange*: a mixture of often incongruous elements (not agreeing, inconsistent)

*Philoxenia* was coined to refer to those who took pains to be friendly to strangers. This term filtered into the Bible where in the book of Hebrews it was written: "Let brotherly love (*philoxenia*) continue. . ." and this theme is seen in the book of Matthews by Jesus when he spoke: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself". Revealingly, the author of Hebrews anchored his exhortation to *philoxenia* with a dire warning: "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers for thereby some have entertained angels, unawares." In other words, we don't know who strangers are - they could be the Divine in disguise. [p. 26]

*Philology*: the study of language and how words develop ("old fashioned", more so in scholarly methods and mostly about his-

<sup>7</sup>I finished this book on March 8th, a little bit before the Spring Break 2021, and took a small break from reading to focus on poetry.



<sup>8</sup>I have felt this many times before, even though I was raised in the country. But a flower can't be a flower without its roots and I certainly have no roots here. I cannot imagine what it must feel for someone like my mom, or any other immigrant who has had a life elsewhere and must come to the United States to begin anew.

torical studies, and not to be confused with linguistics)

Paul Gauckler was a French archaeologist part of the pioneers to study Tunisia in that capacity. He and his workers uncovered that Eastern superstitions once thrived in the Western world. "The unavoidable implication was this: there was a time when some powerful Romans worshiped Eastern Syrian gods." [p. 38]

"Before the term 'xenophobia' made its first appearance in the 1880s, what had been learned from the first modern European empire and its trials? The first lesson was that the dehumanization of strangers thrived on ignorance. Barbarism, following Saint Paul, might be due to the inability to comprehend each other." [p. 65]

"Schücking and his allies were citizens of the world, who echoed the words of Terence, that North African slave turned Roman dramatist, who wrote: 'I am a man: I consider nothing pertaining to a man foreign to myself'" [p. 86]

Early on, the great Black American sociology W. E. B. Du Bois predicted that the central problem of the twentieth century would be 'the problem of the color-line.' As the century progressed, this prophecy could be expanded to include the religious line, the ethnic line, and the ideological line. Xenophobia was a violent form of zealotry, one of the greatest evils of the times. In an ever-more interconnected world, if strangers were enemies, the state of war would be permanent. [p. 164]

Raphael Lemkin. "He stalked legislators, diplomats, and dignitaries, and after much behind-the-scenes lobbying, on December 9, 1948, the newly created United Nations passed the Genocide Convention. Thus human rights treaty was not just a reaction to the recent war, the document declared, but also the sacking of Carthage and Jerusalem, the routing of the French Albigensians, the victims of Christian and Islamic holy wars, and the Spanish Conquest. Genocide was an international crime against humanity, and it had just led to the death of six million European Jews (and 7 million other Europeans). Lemkin's word became part of international law, naming a form of extreme identity-based violence, framing it ethically and politically, and linking it to some of the worst atrocities in history. Lemkin's relief, however, was short-lived. As he pushed for ratification of the UN proposal,



he found resistance coming from his new homeland. The United States refused to accept the Genocide Convention; some senators worried the rules might be retroactively applied to their own treatment of Native Americans of African Americans." [p. 180]

Emory Bogardus. "[He] concluded that phobias were formed by both frightening experiences and also by what he delicately called "derivative" experiences. In those cases, consumers of media felt *as if* they had been startled, wounded, or terrorized. They reacted *as if* these had been their own experiences. The person who relies heavily on second-hand and hear-say racial reports usually gives evidence', he wrote, ' of having entered imaginatively into them so often and so thoroughly, that they seem to have become his own personal experiences.' Imaginatively? The imagination?" [p. 210]

Walter Lippman. "As more sophisticated methods of communication like radio and film spread, Lippman recognized that opportunities for manipulation would multiply if 'derivative experiences', like reading a book or seeing a cartoon, was all it took to create hatred and bias. The manipulative use of more immersive media like film could undermine democracy and peaceful coexistence. New technologies had the power to create imaginary world, what Lippman called a 'pseudo-environment', which could support deluded ideas about others." [p. 214]

"Stereotypes" or "stereoplates" were a variety of metal plates that marked an early 19th century advance in the printing process; they did not require the setting of individual type and were used to swiftly make identical imprints. By the middle of the 19th century, "stereotype" migrated into general discourse to connote a mechanically repeated phrase or formula." p. 216]

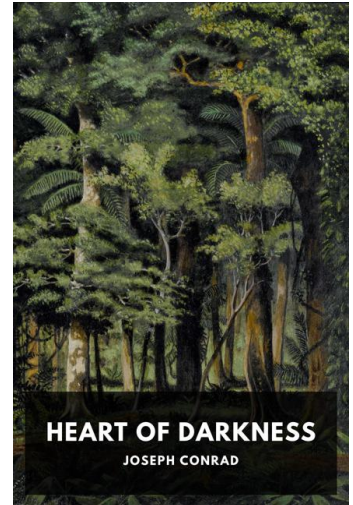
"Projection was an old idea and, at first blush, rather simple. We stare out at complex, ambiguous realities and unwittingly discover feelings, ideas, attributes, and identities *out there* that actually emanate from our own minds. The pre-Socratic philosopher Xenophanes of Colophon may have been the first Westerner to recognize this human proclivity. . . since then, many - from Plato to the post-Kantian idealists- have observed how we clothe the outer world in our own predilections, how we falsely and unwittingly generalize from our own condition." [p. 243]



#### #4. *Heart of Darkness*, Joseph Conrad (1899)<sup>9</sup>

**SUMMARY** One of the books that Makari references in *Of Fear and Strangers*, and one which I recall having people read in high school. While I did not at the time, it was a goal to go back and read something that should shape the way a young mind thinks. The tales of the Belgian Free State of the Congo under King Leopold II are horrific and truly showcase the extent of human savagery, but more than that touches upon that theme of conquest. There is some innate desire in humans to hold dominion over something, that base desire of control that even as a child calls to us to pine for. How can it possibly be bastardized into this type of behavior? I notice this question of "who is the true savage?" coming out of the books I have read thus far. Seems to transcend space and time.

<sup>9</sup>I finished this book on April 23rd, mostly on the MetroNorth as I ventured into new parts of my life with someone new.



#### PASSAGES, VOCABULARY, RANDOM THOUGHTS

"The conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much. What redeems it is the idea only. An idea at the back of it, not a sentimental pretence by an idea; and an unselfish belief in the idea — something you can set up, and bow before, and offer a sacrifice to" [p. 7]

"There was a touch if insanity in the proceeding, a sense of lugubrious drollery in the sight; and it was not dissipated by somebody on board assuring me earnestly there was a camp of natives —he called them enemies— hidden out of sight somewhere." [p. 14]

*Lugubrious*: looking or sounding sad and dismal

*Drollery*: something whimsically amusing or funny, or oddly amusing

*Recrudescence*: breaking out afresh or into renewed activity; revival or reappearance in active existence

Marlow (narrator) expresses himself during a conversation with the Brick maker at the coastal trading station. Marlow describes him as a "papier-mâché Mephistopheles" [p. 31]. Mephistophe-

les is the Demon from the German legend "Faust" who is depicted within folklore to collect the souls of the already damned. "Faust" itself is described as

The erudite Faust is highly successful yet dissatisfied with his life, which leads him to make a pact with the Devil at a crossroads, exchanging his soul for unlimited knowledge and worldly pleasures. The Faust legend has been the basis for many literary, artistic, cinematic, and musical works that have reinterpreted it through the ages. "Faust" and the adjective "Faustian" imply sacrificing spiritual values for power, knowledge, or material gain

After being asked by his uncle "You have been well since you came out this time?", alluding to the dangers of being out in solitude within the expanse of this 'untamed land', the Manager said that he was fine, but others were not and dying quickly. The uncle then says "'Ah! my boy, trust to this—I say trust to this.' I saw him extend his short flipper of an arm for s gesture that took in the forest, the creek, the mud, the river—seemed to beck with dishonoring flourish before the sunlit face of the land a treacherous appeal to the lurking death, to the hidden evil, to the profound darkness of its heart." [p. 33]

"There were moments when one's past came back to one, as it will sometimes when you have not a moment to spare to yourself; but it came in the shape of an unrestful and noisy dream remembered with wonder amongst the overwhelming realities of this strange world of plants and water and silence. And this stillness of life did not in the least resemble a peace. It was the stillness of an implacable force brooding over an inscrutable intention. It looked at you with a vengeful aspect." Marlow then proceeds to say he did not dwell on these feelings because he was occupied with day to day triviums, and that "When you have to attend to things of that sort, to the mere incidents of the surface, the reality—the reality I tell you— fades. The inner truth is hidden—luckily, luckily. But I felt it all the same; I felt often its mysterious stillness watching me at my monkey tricks..." [p.34]

When Marlow is talking about Kurtz and how he had power over many things in his domain, but yet "It made me hold my breath in expectation of hearing the wilderness burst into a prodigious peal of laughter that would shake the fixed stars in their places. Everything belong to [Kurtz]—but that was a trifle. The

thing was to know what he belonged to, how many powers of darkness claimed him for their own." [p. 48]

"I saw on that ivory face the expression of sombre pride, of ruthless power, of craven terror—of an intense and hopeless despair. Did he live his life again in every detail of desire, temptation, and surrender that supreme moment of complete knowledge? He cried in a whisper at some image, at some vision—he cried out twice, a cry that was no more than a breath: "The horror! The horror!" [p. 69] As Marlow sees Kurtz draw near death, he hears the dying man's last words as he takes in how terrible the things done by man, either savages or sophisticates in their own eyes, commit in their lifetimes. Who is a savage? How do we abide public opinion on ourselves to dictate the decorum by which we display ourselves? What happens when that is gone? These 'descents' into madness and primal ways of existing as people with a facade of propriety are found everywhere, regardless of the society. In fact, I would say that we hide these truths behind masks or sweep them under the rug in more structured societies, like cities. How else would we be able to explain away the state of affairs in places like New York City, where public despair and mental illness plays the backdrop to opulent lifestyles not even 10 feet away.

Marlow has "wrestled with death. It is the most unexciting contest you can imagine. It takes place in an impalpable greyness with nothing underfoot, with nothing around, without spectators, without clamour, without glory, without the great desire of victory, without the great fear of defeat, in a sickly atmosphere of tepid scepticism, without much belief in your own right, and still less in that of your adversary" [p. 70] He continues "... And perhaps in this is the whole difference; perhaps all the wisdom, and all truth, and all sincerity, are just compressed into that inappreciable moment of time in which we step over the threshold of the invisible."

*Sepulchral*: proper to or suggestive of a tomb; funereal or dismal. (what Marlow uses to describe the city and how people live there as if nothing happened, as if everything is proper, while deep down they are all capable of savagery even in the confines of civilization)

"She struck me as beautiful—I mean she had a beautiful expression. I know that the sunlight can be made to lie too, yet one felt that no manipulation of light and pose could have conveyed the delicate shade of truthfulness upon those features" [p. 72] when describing "the Intended" that Kurtz alluded to when talking to Marlow. Also, "She had a mature capacity for fidelity, for belief, for suffering." [p. 73]

When describing the need to deliver the papers to the Intended, Marlow writes that "[p]erhaps it was an impulse of unconscious loyalty or the fulfilment of one of those ironic necessities that lurk in the facts of human existence. I don't know. I can't tell. But I went." [p. 72]

"And the girl talked, easing her pain in the certitude of my sympathy she talked, as thirsty men drank." [p. 75]

#5. *Mozart A Musical Biography*, Konrad Küster (1990)<sup>10</sup>

**SUMMARY** Picked up this book at Book-Off, part of the haul I collected thanks to a generous gift card I received from an admirer. Wanted to know more about Mozart from a technical standpoint, and had never read a "musical biography", which turns out to document the types of music a person makes and then relates it to the time period of the life, rather than the inverse which is more typical. Of course, the fact this book deals with music lends itself to shape the soundtrack by which I governed myself during this time period and I am pleased to have many of my prior music tastes validated.

**PASSAGES, VOCABULARY, RANDOM THOUGHTS**

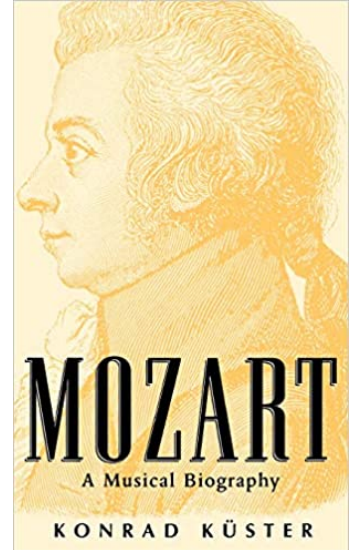
Father Leopold (chamber musician for the Prince-Archbishop of Salzburg, Austria) had a firm belief in learning foundations versus jumping to the fancy material, warning against the example of people

who, hardly at ease with time, get straightaway to work on concertos and solos, in order (in their foolish opinion) to force themselves straight into the company of [virtuosity]. Many succeed so far that they play off with uncommon dexterity the most difficult passages in various concertos or solos which they have practised with great industry. These they know by heart. But should they have to perform only a couple of minutes melodically according to the instructions of the composer, they are unable to do so. [p.8]

Mozart seems to have a fear of trumpets in his composing until around after the age of 9, according to trumpeter Andre Schachtner, though the musician's acquaintance with the family may leave a bit to be desired regarding validity of this claim. [p. 18]

Mozart began to play the piano at 4 years old; 5 when he began composing music; and 6.5 when he first headed to Vienna in order to play (by then he had learned to read music). The virtuoso work for solo soprano and lavish orchestral accompaniment was written when he was 17 in 1773, during a stay in Italy, called *Exsultate, jubilate* which proved pivotal in reinforcing the young

<sup>10</sup> I finished this book on June 15th, on the plane ride to Orlando, Florida, where I was set to complete training for my internship in economic and valuation services.



Mozart in continuing to develop a distinct style. [p. 25-27]

*Amanuensis*: a literary or artistic assistant, in particular one who takes dictation or copies manuscripts. Leopold Mozart took over this role for a time before the young Mozart knew how to write music, the father normally writing down what the younger would play as a means of improvising

Young adulthood for Mozart came during a time when a new Archbishop came (so instead of Sigismund Graf von Schrattenbach who allowed the Mozarts to travel a lot, they got Hieronymus von Colloredo (another count)), a much more conservative and restrained person, and changed the landscape of music at the time (following the "annus qui" from Pope Benedict XIV in 1749 that asked church music to be restrained for the sake of the liturgy). People were not very pleased about this and said things like "Women, wine and night / have made His Highness's might" or "The scourge of God is upon us now" [p.34]

*Encyclical*: a [papal] encyclical is one of the highest forms of communication by the pope and usually deals with some aspect of Catholic teaching — clarifying, amplifying, condemning or promoting one or a number of issues. A papal encyclical historically is addressed to bishops and priests of a country or region or to all clergy.

Also by age 17/18, Mozart had composed the G Minor Symphony, K.183, one of the famous symphonies he wrote when in Salzburg during the time of the new Archbishop. This was also during a time when his "motivic and harmonic structures were in transition" [p. 53]. He asks for this symphony in a letter in 1783 that is also written in partial code, which is interesting since it shows that there are many ways that genius can spread. There are multiple dimensions to a person, as it seems. [p.55]

During the years he stayed in Salzburg, he branched out as a composer/interpreter, using the commissions from patrician (nobleman/wealthy) families there as the basis for his eventual departure to Paris and, later, Vienna. Amongst these were the Serenade K. 204 and Posthorn Serenade K. 320.

[Thoughts outside of Birch Coffee, UES, May 27, 2022] The bond between Mozart and his father is very strong. Mozart seems to have continued a tight relationship with Leopoldo despite long

distances by telling him of plans and asking for his opinions. They were not always followed but his input was constant. [p.118]

Curious that the [*Idomeneo, re di Creta ossia Ilia e Idamante* (Italian for Idomeneus, King of Crete, or, Ilia and Idamante; usually referred to simply as *Idomeneo*, [1 K. 366]) opera is considered a really big work but did not find much success where he was (imperial capital of Vienna, where he was called by his employer Archbishop Colloredo). So between him returning from Paris and when he actually achieves fame in Vienna, we could say it was a developmental stage without much progress on money or fame.

Equal but different (odes to Haydn, and how they all learned from each other), and also that Mozart wrote the six quarters over two years did not finish them in 1783 as was originally intended. He mentions that writing the quartets became a “lunga, e laboriosa fatica”: a long and tedious labour. [p.199]

The manuscripts we have of K 488, the A major Concerto, open the door not only to the history of the work itself but also to the daily routine on Mozart’s desk. He seems to use various types of papers which, at the time, were easily identifiable by their watermark. So he could have been someone to start something and then leave it if it did not go the right way, only to come back to it later when he worked on something else. This exposes a sort of genius: he is able to identify something useful in something entirely different and apply it to something else that must be in the back of his mind. This identification is not an easy skill, neither back then or today. [p.214]

From the *La Folle Journée, ou le Mariage de Figaro*, where the page Cherubino (*a farfallone amoroso*, or amorous butterfly) confides in main character Susanna by pouring out his emotions and says ‘non so piu cosa son, cosa faccio’ (I no longer know what I am or what I’m doing) [p.220]

*Libertine*: a person who is unrestrained by convention or morality (used to describe Don Giovanni. He is called this by the statue of Commendatore, whom Giovanni killed when the latter found him seducing his daughter, Donna Anna)

*Mollified*: to appease the anger or anxiety of someone else. As in, ‘he was going to tell people the truth but was mollified by a bribery of danger money’. [p 276-77]



## #6. *A Brief History of Time*, Stephen Hawking (1996)<sup>11</sup>

**SUMMARY** This is the updated and expanded 10th Anniversary edition where Hawking casts doubt on his earlier claims and instead asks the audience to think about more fascinating topics. Hawking is such a superior author to be dealing with esoteric topics yet being easy to follow. Could it be that perhaps his physical condition led him to give a second thought to how he should comport himself as a physicist? It must be. That or the difficulty of typing may have forced him to think deeply about the language he chose to write in.

### PASSAGES, VOCABULARY, RANDOM THOUGHTS

*Antinomies*: contradictions, coming from Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* published in 1781. [p.8]

Hawking is a wonderful writer, taking apart the complexity with simple charts, weaving historical references, and restating what he has said several times in order to keep the ideas manageable.

A good scientific theory: it is simple and it makes definite predictions that can be tested by observation. [p.50]

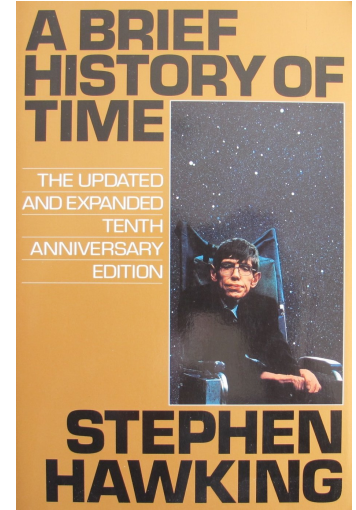
I like the way he described his work:

However, at the time that Penrose produced his theorem, I was a research student desperately looking for a problem with which to complete my Ph.D. thesis. [p.52]

The duality between waves and particles in quantum mechanics gives rise to 'interference' whereby crests or troughs of waves can cancel or augment each other. Think of bubbles and how we can see the colors on them. These colors are caused by reflection of lights from two sides of the thin film of water forming the bubble; for certain wavelengths, the crests of the waves reflected from one side of the soap film coincide with the troughs reflected on the other side. The same can be said for particles where you cut slits into fabric and shine a light into them; the electrons appear to pass through both slits at the same time [p.59]

Great new concept: the *anthropic* principle, states that we see the universe the way it is because we exist. From Nick Bostrom

<sup>11</sup> I finished this book on July 18th having read most of it during my commutes to the internship. This, however, I ended on a train ride to New Jersey to visit my family.



("Was The Universe Made For Us?"),

The anthropic principle, also known as the "observation selection effect", is the hypothesis that there is a restrictive lower bound on how statistically probable our observations of the universe are, because observations could only happen in a universe capable of developing intelligent life.

Hawking tends to write out a large number using 'million' as a basis. Such as, "10 million million million million". This line is in a song that I heard many years prior when I was in high school! Wow. It took about a decade for me to piece that together that it wasn't just satirical, it was historically accurate.

#7. *Ptolemy I, King and Pharaoh of Egypt*, Ian Worthington (2016)<sup>12</sup>

**SUMMARY** This story is about the founder of the Ptolemaic dynasty in Egypt, a Macedonian by the name of Ptolemy. He accompanied Alexander the Great during the conquest of the Persian Empire, was one of his bodyguards, and would have stayed relatively obscure if it were not for Alexander's death in 323 BC. His story is one of 'being in the right place, at the right time' but also of recognizing it and playing it strategically.

**PASSAGES, VOCABULARY, RANDOM THOUGHTS**

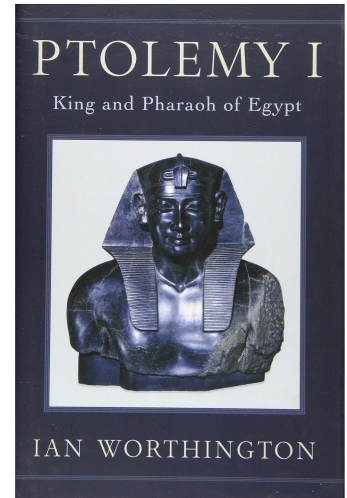
Alexander led by example and in the front of his men. That is something that cannot be understated: he evoked a lot of love because he did not lead from behind. When his men tried to revolt at Opis (after he was going to send many home since he wanted to go for an Arabian campaign), he gave them a speech where he effectively made them capitulate and ask for forgiveness. In short, treat your people with respect and they will respect you in turn. [p.66]

One thing that Ptolemy took from Alexander's misgivings was the latter's affinity to claiming divinity. Ptolemy took this to heart and strayed clear from this for he did not want his people to grow to hate him. Indeed, even when he had a successful incursion in Syria, Ptolemy did not commemorate anything himself. Rather, it was the priests at Buto that made the satrap steele that boosts Ptolemy's standing. Here, we can see of using religion as a means for military considerations. Ptolemy may not have been the strongest or best militarily, but he was extremely clever and strategic. [p.124]

Stealing Alexander's body, and thereby keeping Alexandria and all its wonders in Egypt with the name of the eponymous ruler, gave Ptolemy social proof that he was fit to rule. This is a matter of framing: if you say you are something and have something to back it up, people's impressions of you will also be the same. [p.137].

Ptolemy established the Museum, Library, and the lighthouse

<sup>12</sup> I finished this book on August 4th, the day after my partner's birthday, and again another victim to my reading on my commutes.



at Pharos, all at Alexandria. [Note that the Colossus of Rhodes (in the image of Zeus), the hanging gardens of Babylon, and the Lighthouse are all wonders of the ancient world that existed at the same time in this tale]

The library was one of the first centralized places for research scholars to come and be paid to just do research and it was because Ptolemy wanted to produce intellectual life. Also, *Mou-seion*, literally 'sanctuary of the muses'. Ptolemy distinguished himself from other kings because of patronage: he was not inviting prominent intellectuals to his court as a sort of "artist in residence" but rather sponsoring scholarly activity in existing intellectual institutions. This can be seen as the ancestor to the modern think tank or research center. [p.139-141]

Much of the discussion around Ptolemy comes from his establishing a dynasty in Egypt, which ends with Cleopatra VII and the death of her and Mark Anthony due to Octavian (the later emperor Augustus) storming Egypt. It's interesting to note that Ptolemy is not considered someone who changed world history but is nonetheless pivotal to his region. The fact Cleopatra is a direct descendant is arguably a case to how he influenced history.

**#8. *The New PhD; How to Build a Better Graduate Education*,  
Leonard Cassuto & Robert Weisbuch (2021)<sup>13</sup>**

**SUMMARY** Recommended by Peter Krause, a PhD student in History with whom I had worked with prior in my capacity as the vice president of the graduate student council at Fordham. Peter was looking for a career in higher ed, was working with another Fordham Alum over at Princeton, and Leonard Cassuto is a Fordham professor. This book came as our discussions of my interests in higher ed leadership (director of academic admin, Dean, etc) came ot fruition.

**PASSAGES, VOCABULARY, RANDOM THOUGHTS**

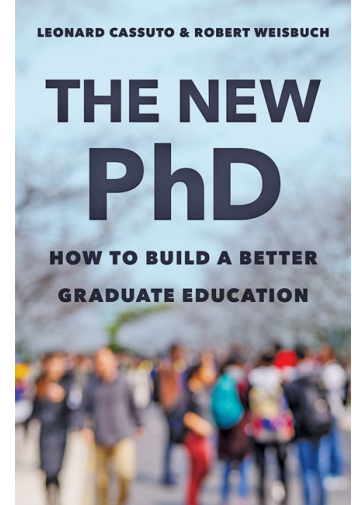
Derek Bok (former president of Harvard, lawyer, educator) described graduate school as "woefully out of alignment with the career opportunities available to graduates." [p.3]

Looking ahead, "we need a PhD that looks outside the walls of the university, not one that turns inward. There's nothing new about a public-facing PhD. Its roots lie in the American academic past, before the Cold War expansion of academia created a temporary demand for professors, along with a seemingly permanent sense that this demand would endure forever." [p.13]

When someone with a doctorate doesn't know what she is good for, that's more than an expression of personal despair. It also says something negative about graduate training and academic culture. We should expect holders of the highest academic degree not simply to know a great deal but to know what to do with it, both within the academy (teaching, for instance, is one enactment of knowledge) and beyond it. [p.15]

Great historical review of the national reform efforts (1990 - 2006) from the Graduate Education Initiative (GEI, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation from 1991 - 2000), to Preparing Future Faculty (PFF, the association of American Colleges and Universities and the Council of Graduate Schools from 1993 to present), Re-Envisioning the PhD (University of Washington Graduate School, from 1999 - 2002), Humanities at Work (Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation from 1999 - 2006), Intellectual En-

<sup>13</sup> I finished this book on September 3rd, not a moment too soon since the Fall 2022 semester had just begun.



trepreneurship Program (University of Texas, from 1997 - 2003), etc. Many of these aimed to lessen the time to degree, increase training in how to teach, and foster a sense of greater community within programs. However, due to a difficulty in selling the 'non-professional careers for doctoral students' idea, many of these were shut down, the money drying up, on the program being absorbed into an undergraduate one instead. [p.64]

Reforms from 2011 - present have seen more success, and now the trend of diverse careers post PhD are more accepted. Creating a culture of "yes", for instance, and understanding attrition/retention. A new call has been in creating a conversation between faculty and the world, beginning with employers. Additionally, the idea of an 'empowered Dean' that can make unilateral decisions without the muck in the administrative swamp. [p.101]

The wrong question: *"So what are you going to do with that?"*, with the right response: *"Is there anything you can't do with this"* [p.120]

Case study of CUNY, which is through the Pipeline Fellow Program. Aims to complement the funding aid to a limited number of students, but it begins at undergraduate level to cross the undergraduate-graduate boundary. Peer mentoring seems to be key, as well as admissions with a purpose, not just strategic to help the research agenda of the current faculty at play. [p.175]

The answer for time to degree (and student happiness) is not just money. It requires a holistic change to how graduate students are dealt with, starting with engagement and clear expectations that remove the vagueness of a program (and vagueness often leads to imposter syndrome). Lehigh has a graduate student internship system that aids in this endeavor, for instance. Or the 5+1 at Notre Dame. [p.198]

Building a collaborative advising culture is key to keeping students clear on what they should be doing and how. This requires an institutional, not personal, model of advising. This is an inherent problem: the literature that analyzes graduate student advising is scant. This absence is telling in itself. There's very little in the way of studied procedure, of intellectual exploration of an activity that arguably defines graduate study. Instead, there's

plenty of lore - which is of limited value, no less. [p.225]

John Guillory (NYU, in a speech at the Modern Language Association in 2020): "The moment to prepare [graduate students] is when they arrive to begin their studies" in order for them to know what to expect. They need a workshop on the job market - not just the academic job market - as soon as they walk in the door. If it's when they are almost done, then students will have been thoroughly set in their ways. [p.229]

Why did PhD time increase so much? Outside of the intellectual requirements (literature base is much greater now, computation allows for more robustness, etc), (i) graduate students stay in academia far longer to write the strongest possible dissertation (book fields tend to have this a lot, but the logic applies elsewhere); (ii) requirements for credible dissertation are up due to the diminishing number of professorships (as the job market tightens, the requirements for the credential has to tighten alongside it); (iii) preceding points lend themselves to staying longer since students try to build up teaching and service records, and to publish, and with a bad outlook, why rush to get through? [p.274]

Public scholarship. The public figures who do we great communicating sophisticated knowledge to many audiences are outliers. We need doctoral students to practice "bilingualism" from the Thomas Bender phrase. This is the ability to speak to both scholars and lay audiences. To this end, there is the "Three Minute" idea, where people promote the idea of making three minute videos about dissertations or give three minute talks (alluding to the Three Minute Thesis competition). This was something advocated by David Wittrock (psychologist) during his tenure as dean of the graduate school at North Dakota State University. [p.298]

This is a time of public questioning of higher education generally. We are also engaged in an undeclared war against fact and disinterested reason amid a resource-draining viral pandemic and its inevitably straitened aftermath. In these times, public scholarship is integral to the future of the academic, not an amusing sideline. We need to put ourselves forward - and educate graduate students to do the same. [p.318]

Lots of people want the system to change, but no one person or



groups believes that it is tasked with changing it. In other words, we see a lack of assigned and accepted responsibility. Meanwhile, Rome burns. [p.323]

Designated priority: (i) rethink the nature of the graduate school and empower the graduate deanship to enable institutional change based on student-centered interests. (ii) create incentives for change at entry level, from students to departments and their chairs, to provosts and presidents, and to foundation and disciplinary leaders, with an eye to government as well. If the graduate school and dean become the central conduit for these incentives, the two parts become one. The dean of the graduate school requires an independent budget to encourage innovation, reward improvement, and, occasionally, withhold funds from programs. That is a key part of what deans do - except graduate deans right now. But look at the example from Emory University (Lisa Tedesco)! Creating ties from local nonprofit leaders and campus non-professorial intellectuals to discuss opportunities and possible partnerships with the group of faculty at the school. With a graduate dean's leadership and insistence, exemplary processes may very well come to fruition. [p.326]

Student centered grad school [p.327]:

- Thoughtfully considered admissions policy that undergoes periodic review from faculty
- Publication of attrition and time to degree statistics ([Like at Duke](#))
- Explicit guidelines for faculty advising at all stages of the program
- Expanded career opportunities with curricular and co-curricular features to support them
- Clear goals and guidelines imparted to students at start of and throughout the program
- Interdisciplinary opportunities and flexible dissertation alternatives
- Thorough data on outcomes for graduates that go back at least a decade

#8. *Memoirs of Hadrian*, Marguerite Yourcenar (English Edition) (1974)<sup>14</sup>

**SUMMARY** Gifted to me by Joseph. I opt to discuss the chapters which are more like epochs in the emperors' life. They are not numbered, and are in Latin.

*Animula Blandula Vagula* is a brief introduction to the purpose of the letter; the heading is the first line of a short poem by Hadrian, whose meaning is debated by scholars but loosely translates to "Little soul, gentle, and drifting" (as per Yourcenar)

*Varius Multiplex Multiformis* tells the life of Hadrian prior to becoming emperor; the heading is taken from a short history of Imperial Rome by Sextus Aurelius Victor where Hadrian was described as being curious about many aspects of life and having many skills. (multifaceted identities)

*Tellus Stabilita* (Pacified Earth) covers his efforts to reach a lasting peace with the Parthians and strengthen the empire, as well as his discussions of thinking about godhood, astronomy, different ways of reaching peace with himself.

*Saeculum Aureum* (Golden Century) describes his travels and his promoting the construction of aqueducts, granaries, roads, ports, defences etc. It ends with the death of Antinous in 130.

*Disciplina Augusta* (Imperial Discipline) is an account of his last sad years and of the steps he took to ensure an orderly succession to the throne.

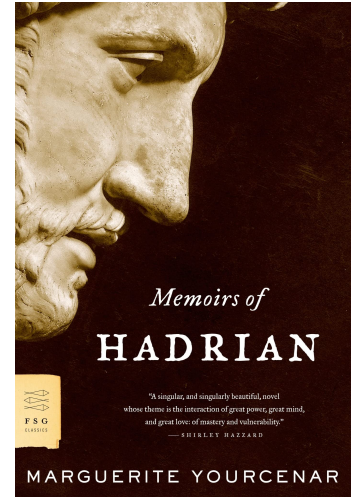
*Patientia* (Endurance) is a short chapter in which Hadrian discusses his imminent death.

*Tellus Stabilita*, *Saeculum Aureum*, *Disciplina Augusta* and *Patientia* (*Augusti*) are mottoes found on coins minted by Hadrian.

PASSAGES, VOCABULARY, RANDOM THOUGHTS

*Facuity* (noun); something foolish, archaic meaning of the condition of being affected with intellectual disability. Hadrian warns against being swayed to think that people actually like you when you are in a position of power when usually these positions are the ones that are the target for lies and adulation (excessive flattery). He says that positions like this teeter on the brink of think-

<sup>14</sup> I finished this book on October 4th on the plane ride to Madrid, my first European visit. Coincidentally, Hadrian was from Spain, too.



ing more self important, or that 'fiction of pretending that one is a seducer when one knows oneself to be merely the master'. [p.16]

*Ascetic* (adjective); practicing self denial as a form of personal and especially spiritual discipline.

Hadrian accepts himself and his lot in life, nay, his ambition and what it will lay before him, through the rigorous notion of 'liberty of submission'. He says *'Whenever an object repelled me, I made it a subject of study, ingeniously compelling myself to extract from it a motive for enjoyment'*. This is also portrayed in his desire to learn from new, unforeseen challenges: *'If faced with something unforeseen or near cause for despair, like an ambush or a storm at sea, after all measures for the safety of others had been taken, I strove to welcome this hazard, to rejoice in whatever it brought me of the new and unexpected, and thus without shock the ambush or the tempest was incorporated into my plans, or my thoughts'*. He's malleable, like putty, looking at each new object in the horizon as a means to learn. But he also has this idea of revolt carefully tucked away behind this submissiveness, and he speaks to this in a matter that shows a duality of man: *"And it is in such a way, with a mixture of reserve and of daring, of submission and revolt carefully concerted, of extreme demand and prudent concession, that I have finally learned to accept myself."* [p.43-45]

His discussions of his deeds show that he understands that much of what he did was not all that special, but in the grand scheme of things from who he was, was given a certain degree of legend. *"But most of my so-called acts of prowess were little more than idle bravado; I see now with some shame that, mingled with that almost sacred exaltation of which I was just speaking, there was still my ignoble desire to please at any price, and to draw attention upon myself."* And I really enjoy the way he talks about his assumed wonder, which in his case came out as courage. He acknowledges that 'the kind of courage which I should like to always to possess would be cool and detached, free from all physical excitement and impassive as the calm of a god. I do not flatter myself that I have ever attained it. The semblance of such courage which I later employed was, in my worst days, only a cynical recklessness towards life; in my best days it was only a sense of duty to which I clung.' I feel this

strongly, as well, with the achievements that I have been able to collect over the course of my lifetime. Said in a black and white medium, I can be an impressive specimen but when pulling back the curtain, they have oft been shams. [p.54]

Hadrian discusses being a politician and the kind of versatility that emerges from being this multi-faced entity, something I have been told I can exude without much work. I think my background has fed this personality trait. He writes that *"I nevertheless constrained myself to the utmost politeness toward all these folk, diverse as they were. I was deferent toward some, complaint to others, dissipated when necessary, clever but not too clever. I had need of my versatility; I was many-sided by intention and made it a game to be incalculable. I walked a tight-rope, and could have used lessons not only from an actor, but from an acrobat."* [p.60]

*Acerbity* (adjective); Sarcastic, ironic in temper or mood, and a word he uses to describe that it reminds him of Sabina, his wife and familial connection to Trajan. Sabina, he writes, had beauty that was simply the first bloom of youth and with whom he had little interest in. [p.64]

In discussing his ascension to the title of emperor once Trajan passes. *"Everything that for ten years' time had been feverishly dreamed of, schemed, discussed or kept silent, was here reduced to a message of two lines, traced in Greek in a small, firm, feminine hand."* How oft the final prize that lay in store carries little ceremony, like getting a doctorate being just a single piece of paper with less than 200 words on it. [p.90]

He thanks fortune that he ascended emperor status during time of peace in the world: *"And I was thankful to the gods, for they had allowed me to live in a period when my allotted task consisted of prudent reorganization of the world, and not of extracting matter, still unformed, from chaos, or of lying upon a corpse in the effort to revive it."* So he was fully aware that he was in a key point in the history of Rome where he could get away with exploration and enjoy the advancements, or 'spirit of the times'. [p.111]

There was something poetic in recognizing a spectrum of positions held by Hadrian's lover Antinous, as with any lover who we take in life. "And yet this submission was not blind; those lids so often lowered in acquiescence or in dream were not always so;

the most attentive eyes in the world sometimes look me straight in the face, and I felt myself judged." [p.155]

Beautiful passage on love: "At that period I paid as constant attention to the greater securing of my happiness, to enjoying and judging it, too, as I had always done for the smallest details of my acts; and what is the act of love, itself if not a moment of passionate attention on the part of the body? Every bliss achieved is a masterpiece; the slightest error turns it awry, and it alters with one touch of doubt; any heaviness detracts from its charm, the least stupidity renders it dull." [p.164]

*Vertiginous* (adjective); causing vertigo due to dizzying heights. Hadrian reflects with how success was multiplying itself around him. He says that 'the seasons seemed to collaborate with the poets and musicians of my escort to our existence one continuous Olympian festival'. [p. 173]

Homage to the colors of a lion, which Hadrian and Antinous hunted during their trek into Africa wildlife: "The mighty cat, color of the desert, of honey, of the sun itself, expired with a majesty greater than man's." [p. 187]

Hadrian reflects on his failures in dealing with Jerusalem; he had a difficult time accepting the practice of monotheism when many religions and cultures accepted plural versions of gods. He observes a difficulty in trying to bring his 'order' to something he viewed as chaotic: "I was only the more anxious to make Jerusalem a city like the others, where several races and several beliefs could live in peace; but I was wrong to forget that in any combat between fanaticism and common sense the latter has rarely the upper hand." [p. 235]

*Natura deficit, fortuna mutatur, deus omnia cernit.* Nature fails us, fortune changes, a god beholds all things from on high. Hadrian falls into a depression towards his last days as he tries to figure out what the empire must do once he is gone. His time spent with Antinous enjoying life kept him from making future plans and his grief after his lover's death did not spur him to make changes, either. 'I was beginning to find it natural, if not just, that we should perish'. [p. 243]

His acknowledgment that just because something that flares up, like sickness, goes away does not mean that it won't come

back with a vengeance. I think that this kind of attitude is true for many things in life ('what goes around, comes around') and we should be mindful of our actions and the ramifications we could potentially face. "A recovery which seemed so complete astonished my friends; they tried to believe that the illness had been due merely to excessive efforts in those years of war, and would not recur. I judged otherwise; I recalled the great pines of Bithynia's forests which the woodman notches in passing, and which he will return next season to fell." [p. 250]

"Rome had prepared me a triumph, which this time I accepted. I no longer protested against these vain but venerable customs; anything which honors man's effort, even if only for a day, seemed to me salutary in presence of a world so prone to forget." [p. 251] Tying into the idea from a few points ago, where it is often the case we do not celebrate big achievements, it is also true that we tend to quickly forget the effort and gains we make in our lives. Why do we do this to ourselves? Time carries forth and the moments' glow fades.

*Animula blandula vagula,  
Hospec comesque corporis,  
Quae nunc abibis in loca  
pallidula, rigida, nudula,  
nec, ut soles, dabis iocos.*

Little soul, gentle and drifting,  
guest and companion of my body,  
now you will dwell below  
in pallid places, stark and bare;  
there you will abandon your play of yore.  
But one moment still, let us gaze together  
on these familiar shores, on these objects which  
doubtless we shall not see again. . .  
Let us try, if we can,  
to enter into death with open eyes [p.295]

### #8. *The Lady and the Unicorn*, Tracey Chevalier (2004)<sup>15</sup>

**SUMMARY** From Tyler Stovall's library. I went into this book rather blind. This is not like the other books I have read this year by a long shot, with the colorful binding a sight for weary eyes who have pored through historical narratives and psychological adventures. However, I do have one connection that drew me from the start: the unicorn. During a visit to the Cloisters in Upper Manhattan last year, I beheld *The Hunt of the Unicorn*. This series of seven tapestries, made in the late 15th century and shroud in uncertainty as to their creation, caught my attention almost entirely and I wondered if this book also dealt with the same theme. To my surprise, they dealt with an entirely different set of tapestries made in the same time period and also surrounded by the unknown.

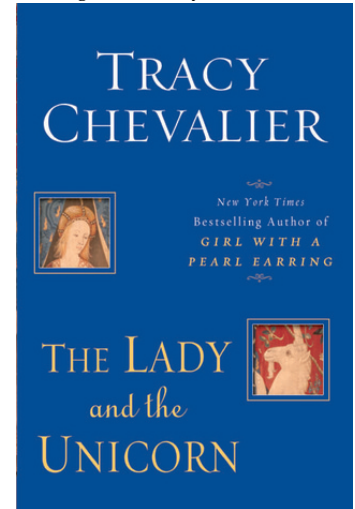
#### PASSAGES, VOCABULARY, RANDOM THOUGHTS

After meeting Geneviève de Nanterre, who commissioned Nicolas des Innocents (named after the street he lived on, not at all because of his obviously non-pious lifestyle) and hearing about the unicorn idea, Nicolas reflects on mortality and the wistful desire to have lived meaningfully: "For I had a sudden vision of myself in ten years' time - after long journeys, harsh winters, illnesses - alone in cold bed, limbs aching, hands crabbed and unable to hold a paintbrush. At the end of my own usefulness, what would become of me? Death would be welcome then. I wondered if she thought that." [p. 21]

The difference between *clever* and *cunning*. Both require the intelligent use of a skill, or experience and tools, at the disposal of said individual or entity. However, cunning carries a connotation that lends itself to deceitfulness or slyness; it is almost as if cunning represents intelligence used for self gain as opposed to clever which is much less malicious in nature. This is the type of difference Geneviève de Nanterre alludes is required to convince her husband.

A common theme surrounding the Le Viste's is that they are not nobles from a long time ago, but rather *nouveau riche*. Nicolas

<sup>15</sup> I finished this book on October 19th, about a week after I had returned to the United States from Spain, during which I refused to touch anything relating to my dissertation.





thinks this after finding it easier to convince Jean Le Viste than he thought; "But then, that is nobility without the generations of blood behind it - they imitate rather than invent. It didn't occur to Jean Le Viste that he might gain more respect by commissioning battle tapestries when no one else had." [p. 27]

*"Ça c'est mon seul désir"*; the phrase which Claude Le Viste overhears her mother say at confession at Saint-Germain-des-Prés. She does not know that this is regarding her mother's desire to live in the convent as she grows tired with her life with Jean. Claude repeats this to Nicolas when they meet, prompting him to use the phrase in the climax of the tapestries. [p. 29]

The idea of a craft embodying the feelings one has about themselves, as from Philippe de la Tour: "Cartoons are not so beautiful as paintings, but they are essential for the weaver to follow as he works. That is how I often feel - essential but unnoticed, just as Nicolas des Innocents is a painting you cannot take our eyes from." [p. 80]

Notes from the family dynamic of the weavers in Brussels (Georges, Christine, Alienor, Philippe, Georges le Jeune, etc): The composition seems to be more centered around similar work performed by each, with some of them not even being family but rather helpers and close friends who have been more or less adopted by the main family. It also appears that the general work is spearheaded by the father, though the 'grease' of things getting done permeates from the matriarch. This also poses the relationship strains that I think are not present in society today, at least to the degree they were: husband/wife duo have to make a decision about how to keep family wealth afloat, daughters have little intrinsic use if they cannot make money because of the lack of trade options and thus must marry usually with someone who is a smart match for the family, work is often seen as a means to stay afloat and not to somehow get rich (those opportunities did not come along very often, anyways), and hobbies or anything post work seems to be rather limited (garden tending, going to taverns, etc). Not a lot of variety in the life presented to the people from lower circles.

Nicolas's naiveté that led to his beating stems from his unabashed lifestyle with women. He did not consider that someone

was fed up with his lies and how he takes advantage of others with his sweet talk, and so he could not have seen it coming. Even though the consequences were minuscule, he appears to lose a bit of his bravado after this episode. [p. 155]

The fact Alienor throws herself at Nicolas towards the end of their involvement (while he visited Brussels a second time to tell Georges of the expedited timeline) and wants to bear his child is an interesting matter of agency. Alienor, being blind, has been forced to find value in life from places that often make little sense. Without wanting a future decided on her by her parents, she chooses Nicolas as her proxy for having control over her future even though it only makes it much harder to have a child out of wedlock. Nicolas, of course, obliges. He is the unicorn. [p. 221]

**#11. *Christopher Columbus and the Enterprise of the Indies*, Blair Sullivan and Geoffrey Symcox (2005)<sup>16</sup>**

<sup>16</sup> I finished this book on November 22nd in the BlueStripes cafe near Union Square.

**SUMMARY** In 1492, previously separate worlds collided and began to merge, often painfully, into the world-system in which we live today. Columbus's four Atlantic voyages (1492-1504) helped link Africa, Europe, and the Americas in a conflicted economic and cultural symbiosis. These carefully selected documents describe the voyages and their immediate impact on Europe and the indigenous peoples of the Caribbean.

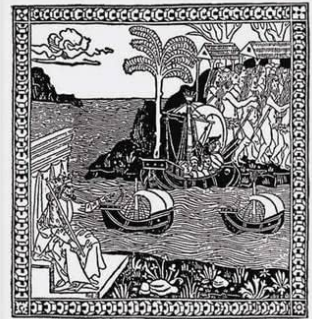
**PASSAGES, VOCABULARY, RANDOM THOUGHTS**

Cristoforo Colombo, or Christopher Columbus, was born in 1451, the oldest of 5, in Genoa. His family were ordinary folk fresh from the countryside and had only recently moved to the city. His father, Domenico, was a weaver and owned some farmland and a tavern outside of the city as well as keeping one of the city gates which was the first tie to influential Genoese families (the Fregosos) that Columbus would benefit from in life. His schooling, while not long, was based from the mercantile city-state POV and these years gave him the basis of being a merchant. His commercial heritage comes from the old proverb, *Januensis ergo mercator* ("Genoese, and therefore a merchant"), and his outlook on life early on became that of a businessman seeking profit in every opportunity. [pp. 4-7]

Why did the Spanish crown of Fernando and Isabella agree to go into business with Columbus? The latter had been laughed out of many rooms for proposing his idea of sailing Westward, though not because the fable of a flat earth percolated in contemporary thought. Indeed, many of Columbus' peers thought the world was indeed round, but they did not think there was anything between Europe and Asia. The Portuguese had already found success with traveling around the Cape of Good Hope (and thus thought Westward sailing was risky and foolish) and so, with the Spanish monarchy feeling relaxed after the fall of Granada in 1492, he was able to obtain a royal audience that was eager for their next gain. How he came about with that audience

**Christopher Columbus  
and the Enterprise of the Indies**  
A Brief History with Documents

Geoffrey Symcox and Blair Sullivan



is again a testament to this networking: he had been in contact with Franciscan friars at the monastery of La Rabida in the coast of Cadiz who interceded on his behalf.

The original contracts for the famed trips in 1492 had no mention of any religious motivation, nor was it to build any empire. The voyage was meant to be a commercial enterprise with the Crown taking the lion's share but Columbus potentially profiting from both fiscal wealth and nobility (the title "Admiral of the Ocean Sea" and all the societal prestige that came along with it was to be bequeathed down to his children).

*Aquiline*; to be that of a hooked nature. Particularly relating to descriptions of noses, of which Columbus was said to possess this shape of nose. Average stature, reddish brown hair, serious demeanour. We have most of this from Bartolome de las Casas and Gonzalo Fernandez de Oviedo. The former describes him as eloquent, easy to like, aristocratic in bearing, moderate in eating and drinking, soberly dressed, mild in expressions when angry or surprised (though he felt both rather strongly when they occurred). The biggest note for Columbus was his devout nature, particularly as a devotee to St Francis of Assisi. The latter corroborates most of these descriptions, adding that he was well learned, or had the ability to learn well, and was generous with people he was fond of.

*Apocryphal*; a statement or claim of doubtful authenticity but widely circulated as if true. This is being used as de Oviedo's claim that Columbus had learned of the charting for the "New World". The story goes that there was a caravel full of foodstuffs that set out from Spain to England (southern Spain to the British Isles), but that there was so much bad weather that it was blown entirely off course so that the ship and crew was lost, headed West by accident and encountered the New World. The return voyage had everyone pretty much die, except three or four sailors, one of which was a friend of Columbus's. Even those that made it died shortly after landing, but the friend told Columbus the exact locations of their travel through coordinates, and this led to Columbus being the only living person in possession of their secret. [p.50]

A curious detour to discuss the Xpo FERENS signature from

Columbus. It seems he took this version of signing after his first voyage. The complete signature also includes "S, SAS, XMY" in three rows written above this Byzantine-Greek and Latin last row. [p. 55] There is still much speculation about what it truly means. One take is that it means *Servus Sum Altissimi Salvatoris Xristus Maria Yosephus Xristo Ferens*. "Servant I am of the Most Exalted Savior, Christ, Mary, and Joseph, Christ Bearer." I think that the one obvious meaning of this, although hazy, interpretation is again Columbus's devout nature.

A drive for Columbus during his entire career was the need to report on what he was doing in the most favorable light. Since his entire livelihood depended on benefactors having faith in his ability to deliver, he had all the motivation to say that the "New World" was prone to profit, and no doubt made him interpret the natives to the land in the ways that best suited his purposes. He was, of note, the first to think about colonizing since he saw how ill-equipped the natives were relative to the Europeans. And from his first writings, the idea of the new land found took hold as a duality of man: innocent children of nature, many of them unclothed, living side by side with bestial creatures that cannibalized each other. This duality led to a lot of concern in the ways of thinking in Europe.

An intellectual revolution took hold once news of 'new people' came out. The duality of mankind in this unexplored part of the world: peaceful innocents and inhuman cannibals. Theologians like Peter Martyr and Alessandro Geraldini note that the duality found in the new land did not fit Europe's customary cultural taxonomies. The religions therein, too, contradicted a lot of what was thought to be 'proper'. Geraldini went further to add that the the true evils in the new land were not internal but could be the external settlers. When the dust settles, who are the real cannibals? Was Christianity an essential component of a civilized society? Might a society of pagans conceivably be more virtuous than one of Christians? [p 34]

The second, third, and fourth (last) voyage by Columbus could best be described as "colonization", "resupply and revise ranking", and "one final attempt to beat the Portuguese". The second voyage saw Columbus return to the American continents as a

hero from Spain, where he was lauded for finding "Asia" and given a large degree of wealth and prestige. When he returned, however, he had such high expectations placed on him to make a return on exploration (hence the push for gold) and so he turned to slavery of the native population to make progress in settling. This was not really agreed on before he carried out his explorations, and many of the religious figures who came with him to convert the natives spoke out against Columbus. The third voyage saw Columbus return with less than a hero's farewell from Spain, and really in order to resupply what he had started in the second voyage. But by then, the word was that Columbus was a bad administrator/governor, so the monarchy replaced him. Disgraced, Columbus fought hard with every legal loophole he could find to get the monarchy to sponsor him to go one more time. Luck was on his side because the Portuguese started making headwind on beating the Spanish at their own exploration game. Desperate, the Crown decided to fund Columbus once again since, as bad of an admin he was, he was still an exceptional navigator. So we have the brilliance in one arena being shadowed by his shortcomings in others, leading Columbus to feel threatened that his financial prospects were going to dwindle. This manifested itself in being concerned that his son, Diego, was not going to get anything (or much). When Queen Isabella died in 1504, Columbus lost his biggest supporter in the court of Spain and so he spent the last two years of his life trying to keep what he had built together.

In all, Columbus did not die in poverty though he certainly did not die in the high esteem given to him after the first voyage. If anything, 'live long enough to become the villain' seems to be adequate here. The breach of contract from the Crown to remove Columbus and his family as bases of powers in the colonies through sole governorship's was fought in the courts. When Columbus died, so too did the first ambiguous, pioneering and adventurous phase of imperial dominion by the Spanish Crown. In its place came a series of bureaucratic governances that marked the 16th century.

While the Pope at the time issued a number of decrees (or Papal Bulls) which were meant to settle disputes regarding newly

found lands and such between existing powers, the existence of new worlds led a type of thought that eventually rendered such types of power positions as dubious. Who was the Pope to say something about a land that was unknown to Christianity? Other legal attempts to settle disputes that were so new in thought came, like the Treaty of Tordesillas in 1494 which established a line of demarcation 370 leagues west of the Cape Verde Islands (and hence why Brazilians speak Portuguese).



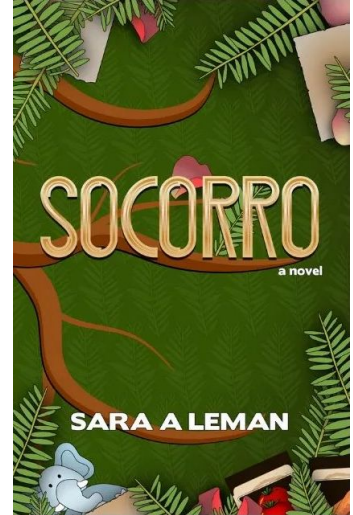
#12. *Socorro: A Novel*, Sara Leman (2022)<sup>17</sup>

**SUMMARY** I have no passages or random thoughts for this one, just a summary. This book was written by the Assistant Dean of Strategic Initiatives of GSAS at Forham University, also a Professor of Spanish, avid mountaineer, and close friend. Sara was able to let my feelings as an former undocumented immigrant breathe fresh air after years of not knowing how the expressions of such a life can manifest themselves in daily life. I was twelve when my own father left the United States, leaving behind a mother with no education, three children, debt, and a gaping hole in an already threadbare family dynamic. The cost was enormous. My mother paid with her physical body, toiling away at a overnight jobs for years; I paid with my childhood. Years of early adolescent development condensed themselves into a short span where I took responsibility for my brothers, often weekends at a time, and faced the reality of being poor. What did that mean for my future? Silvia's realization as a hard working 18-year old that it was going to take a miracle to protect her upward trajectory mirrors my 12-year old awakening. I only lament that it happens to many more children, not just undocumented ones, who have to give up a future to manage the present. I know I was one of countless young ones who go through similar anxieties: where is the money for the rent going to come from? Will I be found out next time? Will I make it; what about the ones I care about?

A quick summary of the book: *Told through parallel narratives, Socorro is a story about the fears and struggles of children of an undocumented parent, two mothers' sacrifices for their families three generations apart, the cyclical history of anti-immigrant sentiment in the United States, and the enduring legacy of hope.*

(i) Hispanic culture, as patriarchal as it touts itself to be, is truly more matriarchal. And it ought to be recognized that families are often kept together and progress through the will of a strong female presence. (ii) Fantastic description of the confusing feelings that many children of undocumented parents have. "Do I belong here?" Many of the critics against birthright citizenship incorrectly apply their lens of hate.

<sup>17</sup> I finished this book on December 20th at the cafeteria in the McShane Center at Fordham, just before I went to speak with Sara and commend her on her novel.



### #13. *Between the World and Me*, Ta-Nehisi Coates (2015)<sup>18</sup>

#### SUMMARY

I found this book, by chance, at Fordham. After reading the summary online, I knew that I needed to finish this book and internalize its contents. The 2020 BLM protests were all too recent in my memory and, with a black man as my best friend and one-day stepfather, I needed to understand a narrative that seemed similar yet distant. Perhaps it is too much of a stretch to claim that being black in America has similarities to being undocumented, but the latter is the life I know. Of course, mine is a matter of status that is easily hidden or not spoken about. I know that. However, I think this also touches upon this larger theme that I believe in: being part of a minority group, however the cause, can either strike deep empathy for others or increase prejudice in the hopes of becoming the in group. Coates is a phenomenal author, possessing a felicity of expression that I thoroughly enjoyed.

#### PASSAGES, VOCABULARY, RANDOM THOUGHTS

[pg. 24] I have no desire to make you “tough” or “street”, perhaps because any “toughness” I garnered came reluctantly

[pg. 25] What did it mean to, as our elders told us, “grow up and be somebody”? And what precisely did this have to do with an education rendered as rote discipline?

*Agitpop*; political propaganda that Ta-Nehisi would read and confuse with studying hard

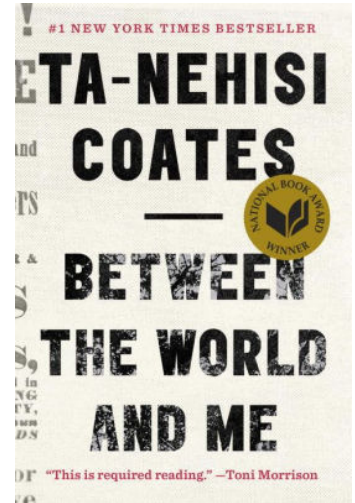
On how it wasn't just being “black” that received this kind of treatment, for instance in physical depictions. “Perhaps being named ‘black’ was just someone’s name for being at the bottom, a human turned to object, object turned to pariah” [p. 55]

[pg. 60] “I am black, and have been plundered and have lost my body. But perhaps I too had the capacity for plunder, maybe I would take another human’s body to confirm myself in a community. Perhaps I already had. Hate gives identity”

I was barely out of the fog of childhood, where questions simply died in my head.

“Enslavement was not destined to end, and it is wrong to claim

<sup>18</sup> I finished this book on December 29th on the 3rd floor of the Barnes and Noble cafe in one of the two most sought after nooks, bathed in sunlight.



our present circumstances-no matter how improved-as the redemption god the lives of people who never asked for the posthumous, untouchable glory of dying for their children."

"As though it were his senior prom, and frozen in the amber of his youth" how Ta-Nehisi described the look he remember Prince Jones when they ran the picture of him after his murder.

*Inchoate*; rudimentary, not yet developed, just begun

"And there were others like him, others who, having gotten a boost from a teacher, an aunt, and older brother, had peered over the wall as children, and as adults became set on seeing the full view. These black peoples felt, as did I, that their bodies could be snatched back at a whim, but this set in them a different kind of fear that propelled them out into the cosmos. They spent semesters abroad. I never knew what they did or why." [P. 85]

"The robbery of time is not measured in lifespans but in moments. It is the last bottle of wine that you have just uncorked but do not have time to drink. It is the kids that you do not have time to share, before she walks out of your life. It is the raft of second chances for them, and twenty-three hour days for us." [P. 91]

Of being in Paris and ordering food: "and with all the fear of a boy approaching a beautiful girl at a party, I ordered two beers and then a burger" [p. 124]