

The Daily Dada

Philosophy Is News That Stays News



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Richard Denner
Editor-in-Chief

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Misleading headline

Bouvard Pécuchet
Staff Reporter

Writing in *On Earth*, about Whitman, Creeley says: "Was it all phantasmagoria? Who was finally there? The roll and turn of the physical waves, their ceaseless repetition, the seeming return of each so particular, the same and yet not the same—this is the 'call,' recall (*recoil*), he has come to, an indeterminate spill of memories 'By any grand ideal tried, intentionless, the whole a nothing.' But one hopes to have been included even so, to have mattered, taken place, been part of *done*—as one says in this utterly merciless country—*something*."

alternative facts

/al-ter-nah-tiv fakts/

1. Information arranged to mislead the public; lies



THE DAILY DADA

Richard Denner

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[Jampa Dorje – The Observer \(cwuobserver.com\)](http://cwuobserver.com)

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///**NEWS FLASH**///

CANCEL CULTURE AT CWU

An Interview with Jampa Dorje

Bouvard Pécuchet, Staff Reporter

BOUVARD: What's going on?

JAMPA: I had a confusing classroom experience. We were doing an exercise called “four corners” where there were four areas of the room designated: *Agree*, *Strongly Agree*, *Disagree*, and *Strongly Disagree*, and we were asked by our professor to take a stand. The question posed: “Has cancel culture gone too far and begun to restrict free speech and free thought?” We had been assigned to read the July 7, 2020, Harper Magazine article, “A Letter on Justice and Open Debate” by Atul Gawande, signed by a bevy of public intellectuals, and we had just finished discussing John Stuart Mill's essay, “On Liberty,” where the author writes on the benefits of personal freedom for both the individual and society. The Harper “Letter” begins:

Our cultural institutions are facing a moment of trial. Powerful protests for racial and social justice are leading to overdue demands for police reform, along with wider calls for greater equality and inclusion across our society, not least in higher education, journalism, philanthropy, and the arts. But this needed reckoning has also intensified a new set of moral attitudes and political commitments that tend to weaken our norms of open debate and toleration of differences in favor of ideological conformity. As we applaud the first development, we also raise our voices against the second.

These are broad, sweeping claims, and the tropes are recognizable from standard news clippings. A large majority of the class located themselves in the Agree and Strongly Agree areas of the room. I took the Disagree position with four men. Our group spoke first. I waited and listened, and then I supported them in their arguments. I had not looked at the question on the board, and I thought I was taking a moderate stand in favor of cancel culture as being an understandable position for people that had no voice to addresses grievances concerning disreputable behavior by citizens who are able to avoid the consequences of their words and actions, but that many less fortunate individuals suffer irreparable devastation to their careers and reputations.

BOUVARD: Was this your true belief or were you just playing devil's advocate?

JAMPA: I was being an underdog. During an earlier discussion in class, I had mentioned that ostracism was a fundamental part of the democracy. I had read about *homo sacer* in Giorgio Agamben's book, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford University Press, 1998) where he relates how a tyrant, or any powerful person, could be ostracized and banned from society by early Roman Law. Such a person, living outside of society and at the mercy of the gods, could be killed but not used in a sacrificial ritual. In a Wikipedia essay ("Ostracism"), I read that 5th c. Athenians voted once a year to ban an unwanted citizen for a period of ten years. So, it appeared to me that cancel culture is built into the democratic process.

BOUVARD: How did this go over?

JAMPA: Two men on my side moved to the Strongly Disagree area, one man on our side of the room joined the other side, and a man, who had earlier made the comment that *The Declaration of Independence* was a big cancel of English culture, came and stood next to me. I was unsure of what was going on.

BOUVARD: Why?

JAMPA: Like I said, I had not read the question and thought I was answering John Stuart Mill's position that free speech was good for the individual and the body politic, and that this was in line with cancel culture because it was part of the process, even though tabloid journalism with its sensational claims and social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter have amplified the range and immediacy of the ostracism.

BOUVARD: What happened next?

JAMPA: Another man, on the Strongly Agree (that cancel culture prevents free speech and has gone too far) side, gave a coherent argument backed up by a personal story about being "cancelled" due to an essay he had written on feminism, even after he had made corrections to his comments. A restraining order had been filed by someone who took offence at his opinion, and he was contacted by the campus police. It seemed strange to me that there would be this much fuss over a term paper. Even though he had suffered an indignity, he still held the opinion that cancel culture has merits, such as bringing a form of comeuppance to powerful individuals who have biases that are demeaning to people of color and gender and disability, but that extreme ideological stances taken by those on the right and the left of the political spectrum can stymie the search for truth.

BOUVARD: I saw a riff from Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* on Facebook that runs: "Facts are information minus emotion; opinions are information plus experience; ignorance is opinion minus information; and stupidity is opinion minus facts. My grandson, who is a Millennial, says that his generation gets blamed for cancel culture but that it's the older, reactionary Generation Xers, who are the ones in positions of power, that do the actual canceling.

JAMPA: Be that as it may, at this point, I was standing pretty much alone. Our class came to an end, and I didn't have the opportunity to say that I stood with Jesus, Buddha, and Socrates—each

of whom had totally cancelled their entire culture. I wanted to say that everyone in the room had bought into the “American Dream” and that this dream is based upon material gain and self-aggrandizement with goal-oriented motivations that lead us to believe in a reality that is an illusion and a selfhood that is oriented toward objects and relationships that are by their very nature impermanent. This condition of clinging and desire produce a sense of false security and is the cause of our anxiety and suffering. Jesus taught love, but he wrathfully drove the moneychangers from the temple. Buddha taught compassion and the bliss-emptiness of phenomena. Socrates undermined the epistemological foundations of thought and revealed that most people haven’t the slightest understanding of what they are talking about. I might have included Spinoza. He cancelled his contemporaries’ belief systems. The Jews called him an atheist; the Christians, a pantheist; and the skeptics insisted he was a Deist. No one was happy with his concept of God imbedded in everything and his geometric proofs of the moral universe. So be it. He just wanted the freedom to think without being told what to think and to be let alone with his nose to his grindstone polishing his lenses.

BOUVARD: Amen.

MEDICINE FOR THE SOUL

Jampa Dorje, Staff Reporter



Plato

Goerger

Epicurus

Philosophy is alive and well in Downtown Ellensburg. I can attest to this because I attended a community discussion event at the Hal Holmes Center on Tuesday, October 4, 2022. I was amazed by people from the town meeting with people from the college in a community setting and discussing ideas relevant to their lives. I might have been in the Sufi Fourth Heaven of Friendship or on the Second Ring of Mercury, where philosophers of the past meet to discuss the perennial questions. The guest speaker was Associate Professor of Philosophy, Dr. Michael Goerger, and the subject of his talk was: “Ancient Greeks on the Good Life.” What might we learn from the ancient Greek philosophers about living a good life?

Philosophy can be intimidating. There is a professional vocabulary when talking about the first principles of things, like cause and time and space. This is a branch of philosophy called *metaphysics*. How do we know anything about these first principles? This is called *epistemology*. Right off, Dr. Goerger made short work of these mindbenders. He pointed out that for the Ancient Greeks, the main purpose of philosophical inquiry was to discover what the best life is. The other questions were subordinate to this goal. Dr. Goerger brought up the shade of Plato, who said (in the *Republic*) that life is not worth living when the soul is ruined and corrupted and that philosophy helps us to heal our soul. When Socrates was condemned to death, he claimed that “an unexamined life is not worth living” (*Apology*, 38a5–6) because he believed the study of wisdom was the supreme human endeavor.

A man in a short-sleeved striped shirt asked, “Does any of what these old philosophers have to say have relevance today?” Dr. Goerger responded, “Yes, much of what they say is important to research in modern psychology, political science, and sociology because the Greeks believed that philosophy was good for the health of the individual as well as the health of the populace.” He then asked the audience to form small groups at the tables in the room and to discuss among themselves their ideas about the nature of self-examination. This was exciting. We have been couped up so long in our Covid caves, muffled by our masks. It was refreshing to converse with a neighbor.

A lady with blue eyeshadow, wearing designer jeans, said that sometimes you must stop and take stock and that she had battled with alcoholism and sought a spiritual path. A lady with music in her voice, wearing a floral puff-sleeve blouse, said some people just go through life doing what they are told, going to work, coming home, and never take time to think about the meaning of life. A bearded man wearing a light blue slim-fit jacket, pointed out that some people just seem to be happy wanderers and others are always down on themselves and feel unfulfilled. A young man in a gray khaki bib shirt said that he felt he needed to find a balance between too much self-examination and just enough to clear the cobwebs from his thinking. A man with his hair in a topknot, wearing Thai fisherman’s pants, said that old age was the time for contemplation because when we are young, we must study, when a teen we must court, and when grown we must work and perhaps raise a family. An elderly man in a 50s plaid bowling shirt said he had gotten a lot out psychotherapy but that it was expensive.

According to Dr. Goerger, for the Greeks, when it came to the idea of happiness, there were two central questions: What is happiness? And how do you attain it? For Plato, with a spiritual outlook, we should adhere to the virtues and avoid the non-virtues. He claimed we had three “voices”: the voice of our desires, the voice of our reason, and the voice of our emotions, and that harmonizing these voices will bring about a life without internal conflict. Plato’s disciple, Aristotle, felt that happiness was the highest goal (*Nicomachean Ethics*). Happiness for Aristotle was more of a biological concept. The Greek word for happiness is *eudaimonia* which literally means a state of “good spirit” and by extension, “to flourish,” like an animal in good health.

To answer the question of how to attain happiness, Dr. Goerger turned to another philosopher, Epicurus (342-270 BC), who founded the School of the Epicureans. He believed in the wise pursuit of pleasure. Dr. Goerger pointed out that this was not a form of licentiousness like embodied in the Hippie slogan, “sex, drugs, and rock ‘n’ roll.” Here there is an emphasis upon comfort, a middle ground between asceticism and hedonism. Epicurus believed that it was not good philosophy if it did not treat an ailment. Epicureans have a prescription: *Do not fear the gods; do not worry about death; what is good is easy to obtain; and what is terrible is easy to endure.*

Again, Dr. Goerger asked us to discuss this topic among ourselves and then tell him what we had come up with. A girl in a red cashmere sweater said that happiness, for her, was in having things to be grateful for. A man in a black shirt with snap buttons said it was a feeling of being fulfilled. A girl with long hair in a ponytail, tied with a pink ribbon, felt it had to do with joyfulness. The man with a topknot said that the word “happiness” might be better understood as a state of well-being, of feeling at ease in the cosmos.

Then, Dr. Goerger told us about Epictetus (c. 50 – c. 135 AD), a Greek Stoic philosopher. who claimed that suffering is the result of wanting to control what we can’t control. This reminded me of the Serenity Prayer, written by the American theologian Reinhold Niebuhr: “God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference.” In his handy guidebook to happiness, *Enchiridion*, Epictetus admonishes us to not want things, refrain from excesses, expect to lose competitions, and if things go wrong, remind yourself to think other thoughts. For Epictetus, suffering derives from false beliefs. Grief is a false belief about life and death; desire is a false belief about happiness; fear is a false belief about what causes harm; and anger is a false belief about how to correct injustice. In other words, avoid emotions and do what is right, but don’t do it in anger. A girl in an abstract print tunic said this sounded cold-hearted and asked, “Isn’t it ok to love?” The man with the topknot said, “I think you would find a better answer to that question from the Greek poet, Sappho, or the Roman poet, Catullus.”

Time had run out, and Dr. Goerger concluded his talk saying, “By living the good life, we are cultivating our humanity by becoming the thing that we are meant to be.” He then quoted the Roman Stoic philosopher, Seneca, who says in Book III of *de Ira*: “This breath that we hold so dear will soon leave us: in the meantime, while we draw it, while we live among human beings, let us cultivate our humanity: let us not be a terror or a danger to anyone. Let us keep our tempers in spite of losses, wrongs, abuse or sarcasm, and let us endure with magnanimity our short-lived troubles: as the saying goes, while we are considering what is due to ourselves and worrying ourselves, death will soon be upon us.”

The event was hosted by Dr. David Schwan and was sponsored by the CWU Ethics Lab and Ellensburg Public Library. This was one of a series of monthly discussions on topics like love, happiness, creativity, art, technology, work, and family.



THE DAILY DADA SPORTS SECTION

PHILOSOPHY SLAM AT CALLIAS' HOUSE

Jubal Dolan, Sportswriter

Editor's note: The competitive form of slam poetry began on a boxing-like platform in the Get Me High Lounge in Chicago, in 1984, where the main rule was to stand your ground, work your way through the rounds, and take your punches, translated into your score on a score card, like in boxing. —BP

Socrates and Protagoras are the protagonists in Plato's dialogue, *Protagoras*. The scene is one of disarray—random activities, some people are awakening in the early morning; some are on their way to a gathering at Callias' villa, others are leaving; some are still in bed; Protagoras meanders, pontificating to his followers. It is a play with dramatic, personal dialogue, meant to be read on the page—a new concept, at the time. Indeed, Simonides, who has a cameo, is one of the first poets known to read his poems to his audience, from a papyrus, likely, rather than reciting from memory. There are two main rounds of argument between Socrates (a middle-aged citizen) and Protagoras, a famous, older sage from out of town, designated a sophist, a derogatory term because of the stigma of offering your knowledge up for sale;—but these were changing times in Athens Town. The ring is set up on the veranda. Beyond a row of Doric pillars, the blue Aegean glistens. One of the bouts occurs right after the opening scenes of *Protagoras*. Then, there is a diversion to

spar with the poets, always a merry sport. Simonides is a colorful poet-pugilist and loves the ring. After an entertaining half-time, the two philosophers return to their main argument, to a second round, to decide if virtue can be taught, or not.

These two philosophers have different styles. Protagoras is old school. He draws on myths to explain complicated concepts. He can argue with propositions, but he is careful about his inferences. Socrates is the avantgarde. He has a method of deconstructing an argument with a series of ever-quickenning questions that attack the basic assumptions of standard opinions, to arrive (perhaps “mystically”) at knowledge already known.

In the first round, Protagoras, in white shorts, looking fit, comes out swinging. Protagoras claims virtue can be taught; Socrates, virtue cannot be taught. In a series of right jabs to Socrates’ midsection, Protagoras offers an anthropogony, a story of the origin and development of man, rather than an argument based on propositions. The story of how humans gain a sense of civic wisdom (even if disproportionately distributed) is explained, by Protagoras, as due to an oversight at the time of creation of human beings by the gods. The titan, Epimetheus (“hindsight”) was given the task of distributing protective ware (claws, fur, etc.) to shield humans from the forces of nature, and his brother Prometheus (“foresight”) was given the task of checking to be sure the job was done well. Epimetheus gave all the animals their “appropriate qualities” (320d) but forgot humans. Zeus saw trouble ahead, when these creatures would come to form cities; and, with a dynamic one-two combo, he slammed in Shame and Justice, in equal measures.

Protagoras says that the addition of these two elements explains why humans possess different abilities, yet all are subject to being brought before Justice, and all feel Shame (322d). Protagoras is of the opinion that all citizens possess some knowledge of civic virtue: “Cities cannot exist if the virtues are shared by only a few, as the professional skills are” (322d). This is sound reasoning, if you believe in deities and their ability to hand out transcendental favors like they were candy bars.

Socrates asks Protagoras to clarify if virtue is one or has many parts (329d). Socrates swings a haymaker, asking if all fathers are successful raising their sons to be virtuous, and he has a long list of failures, but Protagoras blocks this by telling Socrates that he did not say all students had the same capabilities, but that society only expected them to have some familiarity with the civic virtues (327ff). Socrates stops there. There should be a discussion of the relativity of terms and the compositional content of mixed metaphors, at this point, but Protagoras is entirely on another plane of thought, and the dialogue segues to the subject of poets.

As exemplified in an idea posited by Andrei V. Lebedev, in his penetrating essay, “The Derveni Papyrus and Prodicus of Ceos” (Academia.edu) that there are two forms of pantheism present in the narratives of the philosophers at the time of our dialogue, Protagoras is giving lightning bolt punches of a religious pantheism, that reduces nature to God, and Socrates is counterpunching with a naturalistic pantheism, that reduces God to nature. In our dialogue, Socrates examines the

concept of virtue as though it is a commodity in the marketplace or the learned talent of an artisan. (In a later theory, Plato, in a radical move, reduces nature further—to eternal forms by which we can apprehend nature in its true ontological condition.)

In terms of the dramatic action of the dialogue, the discussion ends without agreement. I think this is a part of Plato's message, that this section of the dialogue contains a set piece of argument for revealing a rhetorical device at work in Socrates' method, the analytical vs. the story board. The use of a dramatic presentation is a media message (McCluhan), and the dialogue form, when enacted, is a form of theatre, a mind mirror (Artaud).

In the second round, Socrates (in red shorts) goes from the general meaning of virtue into a semantic field of specific meanings of the word virtue. All examples are connected to the world of arts and trades and warfare. All the examples are tautologies. Socrates seems to be going for a composite of many essences making up a unification of essences that he can call Virtue. For Socrates, all the examples combined do not equal one, undifferentiated Virtue. He has a strategy, to set the stage for an exploration of the one-or-many approach to his solution, whereby he can perform an amazing stunt and flip the argument (his real opponent) upside down (325c). Now, virtue is a form of knowledge and can be taught. This is called a *penitrope*, a table turning, in the trade. And in searching for the meaning of this word, a Wiki elf told me that Socrates did the same number on Protagoras again, in *Theaetetus*, where he juggled three meanings of knowledge and walked a virtual tightrope in his argument.

In both dialogues, Socrates leaves the party. Socrates concludes the dialogue in *Theaetetus* by announcing that all the two had produced were mere “wind-eggs” and that he must be getting on to the courthouse to face his trial for subverting the youth (Wiki). In our dialogue, in the second round, the slam is a draw. Both contestants are a bit bruised, but they have maintained status, and Socrates, with his understated genius, is given tribute as an up-and-coming contender. I hope he left this gathering to visit a friendlier place than he does in *Theaetetus*. I think of how George Foreman felt about Muhammad Ali, as reported in an interview (“Cassius Clay”, Wiki), that “[Ali is] the greatest man I've ever known. Not greatest boxer, that's too small for him. He had a gift. He's not pretty, he's beautiful.” Protagoras might have said this about Socrates.



THE INVISIBLE GOD IN CONSPIRACY THEORIES

Jampa Dorje, Guest Columnist

The greatest trick the Devil ever pulled was convincing the world he didn't exist.

—Charles Baudelaire

As I write this, President Trump refuses to concede the 2020 election to President-elect Biden and promotes a conspiracy theory that the election was rigged. In our present political climate, conspiracy theories abound. In this essay, I will present some of the central concepts from Quassim Cassam's 2019 book, *Conspiracy Theories* (Polity, Cambridge, 2019). I will apply them to two contemporary conspiracy theories—The Sandy Hook School Shooting and QAnon. My plan is to posit two separate overviews of two separate conspiracy theories (CTs). I will, then compare these theories and from my conclusions claim that the analysis of conspiracy theories is important and aids me in understanding the present social and political unrest.

Quassim Cassam, a Professor of Philosophy at the University of Warwick. wrote an article for the digital magazine *Aeon*, in 2015, that dealt with conspiracy theories as “the result of bad thinking and of the intellectual character traits that result in bad thinking.” In his book, *Conspiracy Theories*, Cassam moves away from his earlier thinking about conspiracy theories and presents a new thesis, that CTs are best understood as political propaganda (7). He understands that there are “conspiracies” in the historical record, but his focus is on theories that attempt to explain events by constructing Conspiracy Theory narratives with minimal factual data.

These CTs present themselves with recognizable characteristics. According to Cassam, the special characteristics of CTs are: the ideas are *speculative*, the ideas are not backed up by reliable evidence; the ideas are pursued by *amateur* detectives; the ideas are always *contrary* to the official story; the conspiracy suggests some deeper, *esoteric* cause to the events; the CT solution has a *premodern* ring to it; and the logic holding the theory together is circular and leaves the believer *self-sealed* in their mindset (97). Regardless of the amateur, premodern, and contrarian nature of the enterprise, the main weakness of the CT are: (1) its speculative nature and the flimsy evidence presented, (2) the allure of the hidden meanings attached to the cause, and (3) the logic used to arrive at the conclusion. If you peak under the surface, you find an abysmal confluence of structural disjointedness. Cassam says:

From the fact that a theory is speculative it doesn't follow that it is false. From the fact that a theory is contrarian or esoteric it doesn't follow that it is false either. Amateurs can and do sometimes discover truths missed by professionals. And sometimes major events do have a deeper meaning. But now put all these things together and you have a type of theory that is unlikely to be true. That's why we aren't justified in believing Conspiracy Theories. They aren't credible (29).

Another aspect of the nature of CTs is in the epistemological biases that appear in the development of the construction from their foundational ideas. Cassam posits three biases: (1) *intentionality bias*—the tendency to assume that things happen because they were intended rather than accidental; (2) *confirmation bias*—the tendency to look only for evidence that supports what one already believes while ignoring contrary evidence; (3) *proportionality bias*—the tendency to assume that the scale of an event's cause must match the scale of the event itself (40-41).

Realizing that my own confirmation bias will enter into how I weight my evidence, I will relate the history of two Conspiracy Theories, The Sandy Hook School Shootings and QAnon, and analyze them in terms of Cassam's ideas.

Sandy Hook Conspiracy

On December 14, 2012, at 9:35 AM, Adam Lanza, a resident of Newtown, New York, walked into the Sandy Hook Elementary School with a Bushmaster rifle and 10 mags of ammunition and fatally shot twenty children, ages 5-7, and six adult staff members. At 9:40, he committed suicide with his rifle. Within five minutes, he had committed one of the largest mass shootings in modern U.S. history.

Shortly after the tragedy in Newtown, conspiracy theorists began speculating that, contrary to official reports, deeper, more sinister activities were behind the events. Some claimed the events were a hoax; some claimed the events had not even occurred, or, if they had, were different than what had been reported; and some claimed the events were a "false flag" operation, meaning they were a distraction from a different Machiavellian plot.

The *Wikipedia* article “Sandy Hook Conspiracy” details speculations by conspiracy theorists from a world of sources: (1) the N.R.A. claimed it was a government hoax to push through gun control legislation and overturn the 2nd Amendment and promoted armed police in every school; (2) Iranian TV suggested it was a crime perpetrated by Israeli death squads in retaliation for diminished Israel-US relations, echoing other anti-Semitic sentiments; (3) Ben Swann, a *Fox News* host, reported that there were other shooters involved; (4) a blogger offered an unsubstantiated report that the event was connected to a testimony that Alan Lanza’s father was to give to a Senate committee in a financial scandal; (5) in a now defunct YouTube video, “We Need to Talk About Sandy Hook,” it was revealed there were discrepancies in the time signatures of early Sandy Hook postings, although, according to a debunker at *Snopes.com*, such postings can occur due pages being repurposed; (7) James Fetzer and Mike Palacek, in a book, *Nobody Died at Sandy Hook*, claimed that the whole event was a Federal Evacuation Drill with child actors—a report that people were walking around in circles, as could be seen from helicopter coverage, and it was deduced that these people, the parents, actually were actors just milling around, waiting to “go on” rather than grief-stricken parents in a state of shock; and (8) perhaps, the most rigorous and egregious assault on the families of the victims was by Alex Jones, of *Info Wars*, who walked a fine line between freedom of speech and defamation, claimed that the Sandy Hook mass killing did not even happen. He now admits it happened, blaming psychosis for his claims, but he remains resolutely uncontrite. As of November 22, 2022, Jones has been ordered to pay \$1.4 billion. This is a developing story.

Turning to the intentionality in this tragedy, there are many questions about the motivations of twenty-year-old Alan Lanza that caused him to commit such a heinous crime. An online news show, TVT, reported extensively on Lanza’s physical and mental condition, diagnoses ranging from an obsessive-compulsive personality disorder, Asperger’s syndrome, anorexia, to undiagnosed schizophrenia. He did not leave a suicide note or a screed that detailed his objective or revealed his state of mind.

However, a year before the shooting, Lanza gave an interview on a segment of a New York radio show (called “Anarchist”), and he talked about an event in the news where a chimpanzee, named Travis, who had always been well-behaved, without warning, ripped the face off a woman. He compared this to a parallel attack by a mall shooter, and he chastised the mainstream media for not seeing the similarity, claiming: “Civilization is something which just happens to exist without us having to do anything, because every newborn child is born in a chimp-like state, and civilization is only sustained by conditioning them for years on end.” TVT host Ana Kasparian, who reported on this interview, dismissed Lanza’s claim as being deranged thinking and implied that he had other motives. This aligns with Cassam’s claim (26) that, in general, conspiracy theorists have a premodern feel to them—with Sandy Hook, the ages old “Militia” myth—rather than a causal sequence of events explained in terms of the existential idiom, “shit happens”—an American version of Camus’ character in *The Stranger*. In this reading, Lanza’s random act is an absurd event.

QAnon Conspiracy

QAnon followers claim that international liberal elites—mainly Democrat politicians and Hollywood stars—are involved in a Satanic pedophilia cabal. Billionaire George Soros and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton are designated the main culprits, along with such Hollywood celebs as Tom Hanks and Roman Polanski. Q, the anonymous source who has top secret clearance from the U.S. Department of Energy, generated this theory to his followers, during the 2019 impeachment trial, reporting online that President Donald Trump was in league with Special Counsel Robert Mueller to track down the pedophiles. This theory seems to have morphed out of the earlier “Pizzagate” conspiracy, left-over from the 2016 election campaign, where a child-sex ring was being run out of the basement of the Comet Ping Pong pizzeria, in Washington, DC. During this time, Edgar Maddison Welch traveled to the pizzeria to investigate and discharged his semi-automatic weapon, much to the chagrin of the clientele (*Wiki*). There is no basement at the Comet Ping Pong Pizzeria.

In an expanded cosmos of paranoid thinking, Q is not a federal employee, working to save us from the Deep State; Q is a disguise for the “Queen of Peace” (Virgin Mary, Queen of Heaven). The blurb on the cover of the book, *The Big Q and the Little Q*, it says:

Everyone has heard of “Q”. Who is “Q” and “Qanon”? In every period there is a book for the time that man is in. This is the book. A must read now. Find out all about the coming storm in this edge of the seat read. A Friend of Medjugorje exposes the Divine mandate upon the earth and how it is manifesting physically and spiritually.

Everyone is invited to investigate with an open mind the events which are occurring in the small Bosnia-Herzegovina village of Medjugorje. I put on my critical thinking hat and headed for Medjugorje. Before I got far, I ran into my friend, Quornesha S. Lemon, a psychic transpersonal life coach and author, who told me:

“The Letter Q in your waking life, dream life, synchronicity, in a name is symbolic of high intelligence, integrity, class, and tenacity. Those who are opponents of the letter Q, will not stand...The letter ‘Q’ is a message that you are to use internal wisdom and call upon the assistance of higher help in every life challenge.”

The letter Q is numerologically an 8. Being a native of the Eighth House, Scorpio—the house of death, sex, and transformations—I was glad for the guidance.

Both the Sandy Hook and the QAnon Conspiracies display Cassam’s 5 aspects:

Sandy Hook, speculative: false flag; QAnon, speculative, based upon a questionable source, Q; Sandy Hook, contrary: shooting did not happen; QAnon, contrary: no person per se (Epstein?); Sandy Hook, amateur: detectives not at scene; QAnon, amateur: whole CT may be a Alternative Reality game; Sandy Hook, esoteric: Deep State benefits;

QAnon, esoteric: Deep State & Satan combined; Sandy Hook, premodern: focus on 2nd Amendment; QAnon: long history of Blood Libel; Sandy Hook & QAnon locked logic: confirmation biases lead both followers to follow their own biases.

The Sandy Hook Conspiracy mirrors QAnon. You have children in both instances, but in one the children are being disappeared and abused (behind the scenes) and in the other they are being killed with bullets (meaningless bodies on the ground). In QAnon the demons are exterior—out there, beyond my perception, things I fear or hate, Clinton (misogyny) and Soros (antisemitism), and in Sandy Hook the demon is an individual with a triggered psychosis from within the system, a young person killing young children, and then the killer killing himself in the aftermath. QAnon is speculative in the theological and political realms, and Sandy Hook is speculative in the existential and political realms. The two conspiracies involve contrary intentionality biases. QAnon projects a sinister but difficult to prove plot to throw shade on a political opponent, while the Sandy Hook Killings is raw data that must be denied or rendered harmless for the horror that it is and also to disguise the abject stupidity of guns.

The idea of taking down a Satanic cult of pedophiles can make a person feel sexy or powerful or that one's consciousness is quirkily expanded (religious). As regards QAnon, the union of Soros and Clinton has a parallel with other CTs: the Jaqueline Kennedy-Onassis couple, the Princess Di-Dodi Al Fayed couple, and the Yeshe Tsogal-Padmasambhava couple. Or, it may be merely metrological—a measurement bias—in my case, the shortest distance between two thoughts goes through Tibet.

With QAnon, the proportionality of the scale of response is difficult to determine, as it is hard to evaluate what documented “event” Q followers are responding to. It can be a Zoroastrian duel between good and evil or a ubiquitous ontological malaise fueled by antisemitism and class warfare—George Soros is a billionaire Jewish philanthropist and Hillary Clinton is a woman and was a Secretary of State during the Obama presidency and should be “locked up.” If you fear women politicians and hate rich Jews and call them “Satanic blood-drinking, pedophilic cannibals,” your potent language, *a fortiori*, helps to indict them. Hatred lets a person focus on a single thing and simplify their metaphysics.

Hopefully, the Sandy Hook Conspiracy has been laid to rest, but QAnon is alive and flourishing. For no other purpose than to re-elect a tragically failed president and potential tyrant, the QAnonists are now co-opting the “Save Our Children” slogan from a legit non-profit group, the Save the Children Fund, a group that has been working for the last hundred years to improve the lives of children.

Not long ago QAnon was a fringe group, but it networked itself on the internet and became a form of propaganda. Media attention glorified the followers and brought focus to their message. There may be a grain of truth in this November 6, 2020, *New York Times* article, “Study Considers a Link Between QAnon and Polling Errors,” by Cade Metz, where he states that there is

...a strong statistical correlation between state polls that underestimated Mr. Trump's chances and a higher-than-average volume of QAnon activity in those states, including Wisconsin, Michigan and Ohio. "The higher the support for QAnon in each state, the more the polls underestimated the support for Trump," said Emilio Ferrara, the University of Southern California professor who is overseeing the study.

Ferrara concludes that QAnon is suspicious of polls and avoids them. I cannot vouch for the authenticity of the data, and it may be bogus, but QAnon is now a recognized player on the political stage. If Trump builds a media empire, QAnon will be part of the paying audience and contribute to the furtherance of misinformation and propaganda, and this will not align with my Mahayanist-Madisonian political persuasion.

From a Mahayanist perspective, a dangerous effect of both the Sandy Hook and QAnon CTs is the lack of empathy for the actual kidnapping and mistreatment of children and righteous indignation for those who are (or system that is) to blame. Personally, as a participant in the Red Sand Project to bring about awareness of those suffering in modern day slavery, I take offence at the shenanigans of QAnon. Cassam points out that conspiracy theorists are more interested in their secret sources than they are about solving human problems:

One effect of obsessing about events that are best explained in personal rather than structural term is to divert attention away from social issues that are best explained in structural rather than personal terms (87).

When asked why I do not cross the aisle and enter debate with conspiracists, I said, "I don't want to be associated with those freaks." This is an esthetic bias. I will work on my equanimity and find something adorable about the deplorables, but I am not buying into their Logos.

Jim Jeffries made this critique on his YouTube show, "When you utterly trust yourself, it doesn't get you to the truth; it gets you to *your* truth, in the Age of Bullshit" (*Talking with Conspiracy Theorists in the Age of the Bulls**t*). Ok, it is easy to blow this off as bullshit—but I am reluctant in leaving the Socratic mission that quests to attain clear understanding and lucid thinking to reside in an epistemological outhouse.

Cassam believes that the Internet has had a great deal to do with the spreading of conspiracy theories in contemporary times:

The Internet increases the accessibility of Conspiracy Theories and the speed with which they can be transmitted from one person to another...But if the Internet is part of the problem, then it is also part of the solution. True, the Internet makes conspiracy Theories more accessible, but it also makes it easier to rebut them (117).

Conspiracy theories are seductive. There is a thrill that comes with solving a puzzle. It may be pointless to try and change the mind of Alex Jones, but there are young minds to attend to. As more information flows through the Internet, teachers will have to revamp their pedagogical

models to teach critical thinking (perhaps combined with training in *resting-in-the-nature-of-mind* meditation) to earlier age groups in the hope of improving their students' ability to tell information from misinformation from disinformation.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS ON CONSPIRACY THEORIES

I recognize a Conspiracy Theory because it is so clunky, so kludge-like, so hokermokered—it looks like one; it sounds like one; ergo, it must be one. Back to my own Zoroastrian conspiracy model: on one side of the battle for good or evil, I have the Satanic pedophiles, organized by Hillary Clinton and Georges Soros, running a worldwide sex slave ring speaking in pizzeria language and on the other The Donald and his minion, Mueller, in cahoots to root out the pedophiles in the Deep State. This is as dystopian as it is preposterous. As QAnon manifests, in what may be a pivotal moment of U.S. history, the followers of the mysterious Q see themselves as chivalrous patriots saving children from a cabal of leftist pedophiles harvesting their blood in the basements of pizza parlors in an attempt to energize a propagandist web of disinformation, all in hopes of changing the outcome of an election. Of course, this would also be true of a left-leaning CT, where a sex slave ring run from Kentucky Fried Chicken outlets (white meat or dark, thighs for boys, breasts for girls, mashed potatoes for orgies) by the late Jeffery Epstein, who was suicided by operatives of the Deep State, led by reptilian Mitch McConnell, was a false flag to cover up a real cabal of pedophilic priests by packing the court with Catholics.

Cassam's main contention, that the motivation to accept one conspiracy over another is based more on political ideologies than on personality profiles, suggests that there is a seductive quality to believing in a theory that fits into an already evolved belief system. He says that consumers of CTs "...are inclined to accept particular Conspiracy theories or particular types of Conspiracy theory...that are in line with their political outlook" (49). In this sense, it is the epistemological form of the CT that fits the person and not the other way around. If a researcher knows the political persuasion of a person, it is easier to predict what kind of Conspiracy to which they might be susceptible. Having like-minded friends helps to fill the void feeling of existential angst inculcated by a sense of alienation. A push factor for someone to leave the set structure of traditional ideas that do not relieve the angst is the chance to meet others of similar beliefs who can satisfy a need for understanding.

What scares me is that I would have thought that by *TFG* losing the election this would be a demoralizing denunciation of the QAnon cognitive constructs. Instead, as of November 22, 2022, the QAnon Movement is gaining momentum.



LIFE, LIBERTY, AND THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

Jampa Dorje, Staff Writer

The question of whether all drugs should be legal is a complex one, although it has often been answered with a yes or no. There are drugs used to cure ailments of the body, insulin for diabetes, antibiotics for infections, chemicals for cancer. These drugs (medicines) are dangerous unless they are prescribed with precision. Then, there are drugs for pleasure that are called “recreational drugs.” They, too, are dangerous when abused and are classified by laws as “controlled substances.” These substances are illegal to use (namely, heroin, cocaine, LSD, etc.) or are regulated by the state (alcohol, marijuana). Added to this, there are a class of drugs (such as opioids and amphetamines) that can be used for pleasure but require a prescription from a medical doctor. It is the pleasure drugs that are treated here as worthy of consideration to be legalized.

In my pursuit of philosophical arguments concerning social issues, I was introduced to an argument by psychiatrist Thomas Szasz in his essay, “The Ethics of Addiction: An Argument for Letting Americans Take Any Drug They Want.” He writes:

“Although I recognize that some drugs—notably heroin, the amphetamines, and LSD among those now in vogue—may have undesirable personal or social consequences, I favor free trade in drugs for the same reason the Founding Fathers favored free trade in ideas. In an open society, it is none of the government’s business what idea a man puts into his mind; likewise, it should be none of the government’s business what drug he puts into his body.”

A wandering journalist am I. At a dinner party, I asked a man who is a mentor in AA what he thought of this idea. He had a positive response because he said that the drugs could be better regulated. He had heard that a dangerous drug, fentanyl, was being added to marijuana and that people were dying from this combination. He felt, however, that if drugs were totally legal, there

must be better recovery programs established nationwide.

At a memorial service, I asked a lady who is an artist, what she thought about this idea. She felt that drugs should be kept illegal because they are very addictive and, if they are legal, more people will become addicted. A tall man at the service, wearing a blue checkered shirt, said he was all for legalizing drugs that give pleasure because it is a victimless crime and only the user is at risk. A lady standing next to him said that she could understand his point of view, but she didn't want drug addicts lying dead on the streets.

I asked a sheriff's deputy what he thought, and he said that most of the disturbances that he was called out to assist in were related to alcohol, but that he believed that a lot of crime relates to drug trafficking. He believed that more mental health professionals should be involved in police work where there are drug addicts involved.

An old woman sitting on a bench in a park said that drugs were dangerous and that she believed that drugs like marijuana, no matter how soft they may seem, are a "gateway" to harder drugs. An architect friend, at a university gathering, said, "Oh, yes, fentanyl in my corn flakes, please!" He was being sarcastic.

A young professor, who had been to a retreat in Peru and taken ayahuasca (a psychoactive drug used in ritual spiritual ceremonies), said that ethical standards surrounding drug use in American society are shifting.

A scholar who sat in a chair across from the professor said (I had my tape recorder): "In *The Doors of Perception*, Aldous Huxley claims each one of us is potentially Mind at Large. By exploring his specific mind, he finds mescaline to be a way to cleanse the doors of perception and, thereby, enter the Mind of the universe."

I asked a Buddhist monk his view, and he told me that he has a vow not to become intoxicated. He says that his vow covers drugs as well as alcohol because these substances cloud the mind and prevent *samadhi*, or meditative equilibrium.

An evangelical preacher told me that drugs are The Devil incarnate. The human body is a sacred vessel and must remain pure since it will resurrect on The Day of Judgement.

In the book, *Morality and Moral Controversies* (Simon & Schuster, NJ, 1999, p. 337), John Arthur, the editor, added this abstract of Szasz's essay:

"Relying explicitly on John Stuart Mill's discussion of liberty ('On Liberty'), Thomas Szasz discusses the legalization of drugs. After reviewing the historical effects of prohibition, he argues that such policies lead to socially harmful consequences and fail to respect the legitimate control

citizens may exercise over their own lives. A decent regard for individual liberty demands that government respect citizens right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of highs.”

Another religious, a Sufi initiate, echoed this sentiment and told me that drugs are both a disease and a cure, and they can be used to bring joy and freedom of insight as well, or, being monetized and weaponized, can bring enslavement and death. She said that the author of *Ecclesiastes* has the answer—there is a time to love, a time to dance, and a time to get high.

We live in an angst-ridden society, and reckless drug user is a symptom of a society that encourages aggressive consumption and material wealth beyond attainment. The rampant death and destruction of property tells me that we don’t really know how to handle our drugs, how to get high without getting arrested, and how not to hurt people around us. The drug lords make stronger drugs and ruin the quality of the experience. The government sees a source of revenue to keep the polis in line with its economic model. The church wants obedience to moral absolutes that even Angels have trouble obeying. The newbie to drugs has no notion of how high to get. The down-and-out dropout just wants oblivion.

Research has shown that recreational drugs have both negative and positive effects. I am not advocating Dionysian excess. A concept known as *set and setting* was first introduced by Timothy Leary, Ralph Metzner, and Richard Alpert (Ram Das) in their 1964 book, *The Psychedelic Experience: A Manual Based on the Tibetan Book of the Dead*. The concept of set and setting refers to the inner and outer factors influencing a drug trip. If drugs are used in a safe setting, where they are monitored and prepared with ritual care, the insights gained through such experience can contribute to psychological and spiritual health. Again, the rampant use of drugs should not be encouraged, but it cannot be ignored. Having used many of these substances, I can see that there is both a drive towards pleasure and a drive towards death at play (Freud). I am still unsure why I took sixteen caps of peyote when I was told to take eight. Impatience, probably. It was a heroic dose. The “doors of my perceptions” were opened. Sixty years later, I’m still high from that trip.



COOKERY

Theregonia of Lesbos, Food Writer

RECIPES FOR A DADA ARTICLE

Take a newspaper.

Take a pair of scissors.

Choose an article the length that you are planning to make your story.

Cut out the article.

Then cut out each of the words that make up this article and put them in a bag.

Shake gently.

Next, take out each cutting one after the other and paste them down in lines.

SALMON DATA CASSEROLE

blueback salmon, entire lives in ready to migrate as kokanee, do not during spawning. primarily of populations, the Northern Sockeye kokanee salmon, also called and live their spawn. Some migrate to (Oncorhynchus nerka), in freshwater an anadromous length and This species they are species of referred to that is primarily Pacific Ocean ocean, over distances The sockeye salmon red salmon, fresh water and rivers diet consists found in discharging red in hue after they remain semelparous, salmon dying or simply salmon (5–15 lb). Pacific salmon to the ocean until they are sockeye, is into it. up to 1,600 km (1,000 mi)

Blending Jnanasattva with Samaysattva





Recipe for Disappearing Egos

Theragonia of Lesbos, Food Writer

Preliminary: Find a good lama and receive the pith instructions on the back of the box. Meditate on the first three Noble Truths; then, giving praises and making offerings (organic ingredients preferred), move to the kitchen.

Step 1: Knead the six paramitas into a ball and let sit until the bodhicitta rises. Knead again until all sentient beings' needs are fulfilled. This is the Mahayana stge.

Step 2: Combine yidam practice with Dzogchen (or Mahamudra) in a separate bowl. Pick a point, and keep your balance, juggle shamatha and vipassana while you stir. This is the Vajrayana stage.

Step 3: Pl ace the Mahayana in a pan and pour the Vajrayana on top. Keep breathing, gently.

Step 4: Take into long retreat and shut the door. Set the timer for three years, three months, and three days. When golden, you're got it.

“Got what?” you ask.

“Faith and devotion,” I answer.

Until the head is cooked, what use is the tongue?

A Ritual Feast (Tsog)

Jampa Dorje, Staff Writer



Photo by Jampa Dorje of a Tsog at Luminous Peak

I am cooking up a feast for the deities of the mandala. All the elements have come together, an alluring buffet designed for what each body can handle—elixirs, nectars, concoctions for harmony and balance, for energy and action, for inertia and grounding. The invitations have been sent and now the table is set.

The hungry ghosts and asuras are the first to arrive. I have urine in a chipped earthenware container for the ghosts with straws for their tiny throats. I built a fire with hardwood in a copper kettle and barbequed songbirds for the asuras. These dainties had been strangled with malice after being terrified in a gage in order to stimulate the flow of adrenalin, just the way the asuras like them. I ask these demigods to keep all the bones and return them so I can later resurrect the birds according to Do Khyentse's yogic instructions.

The gods and goddesses arrive in splendid attire, sleepy and sensuous in their movements. The dharmapalas (mountain protectors) make their entrance with barbaric fanfare. The calm of the garden is filled with a fearsome clamor with everyone talking at once, but I smooth the ripples of competitiveness with a bottle of vintage blood distilled from wrathfully liberated ignorant emotions.

I bring out trays of finger food, heaps of auspicious signs and a Macedonia salad made from sounds, scent, forms and tactile sensations. We chant:

OM RUPA SHABDA GANDHE RASA

SPARSE MAHASUKAH PUJA HO.

The realized Machig Labron is my honored guest. She is escorted by His Oiliness, Black Dampa. They are accompanied by a retinue of dakas and dakinis. At the head of the table is Pema Thotrentsel, who carves a fresh human corpse with his short sword. Offering goddesses fill the plates of the guests.

All levels of existence resound with songs in praise of the Dharma. Dutsi rains from the arbor; flowers fall from the sky; and there are party favors made from ringsel. A canopy of rainbow light sets the mood.

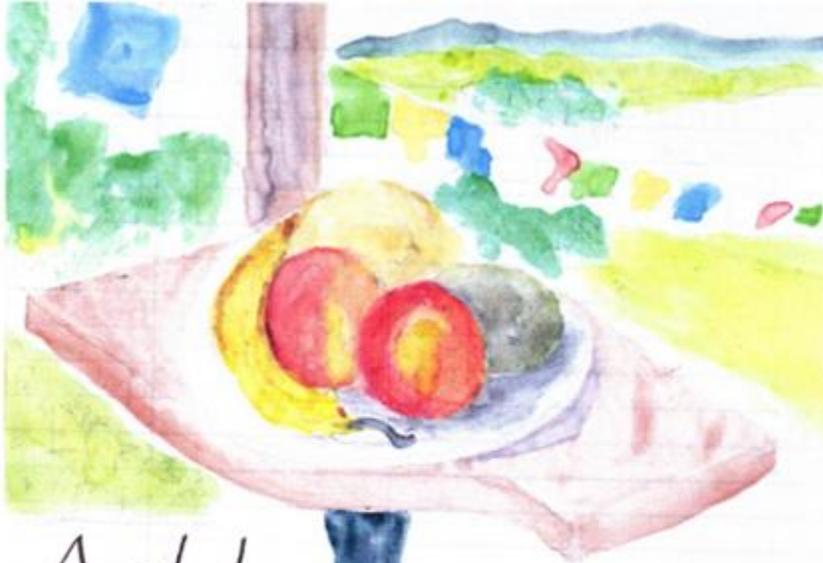
Amitabha and The Fab Four take the stage. Manjushri blows a mean sax. Arya Tara belts out a steamy blues number. A drum solo by Tromba brings everyone to their feet, and from there on the place rocked.

However, all things are transient. Even Buddhas and bodhisattvas have to go to work helping sentient beings. The morning star was on the horizon. Birds began to chirp. Smoke escaped from dwellings. “Good night, good night; it was wonderful”—fond farewells between the beings of the different realms. The tsog was a success and I did it all with a box of crackers, a bag of jerky, and a bottle of beer.

AH LA LA HO

Phenomenological Still Life

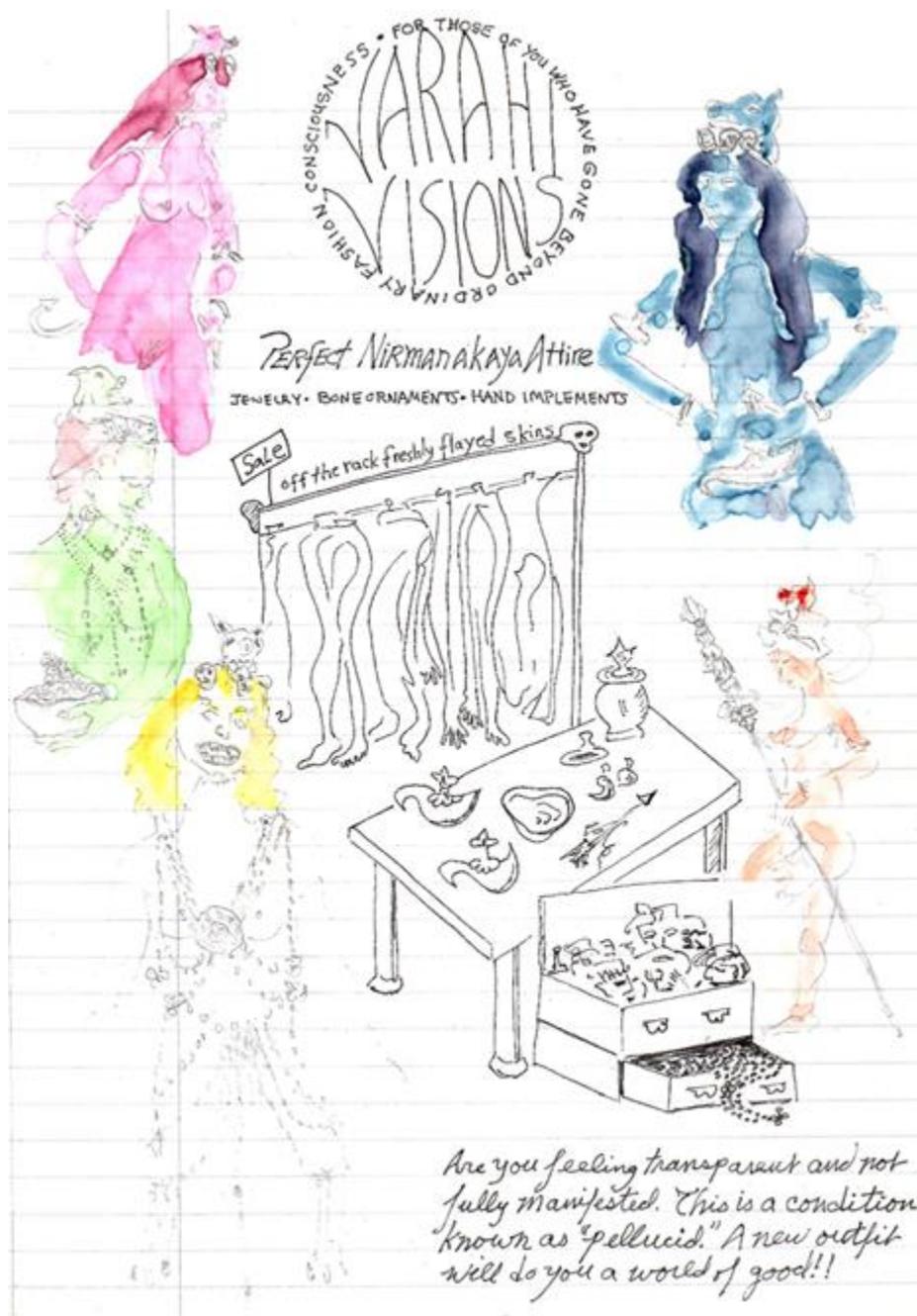
Theragonia of Lesbos



A plate
of fruit

the thing itself
a concave curl
of porcelain
piled with orbs
and parabolas of
light [bracket].
a vitreous translucent ceramic
body, circular, circles within
circles, and sufficiently
supplied to fill the hollow
with the developed ovaries
of various seed plants
[bracket] refracting
bands of color
radiating from
a celestial body
the sun [bracket]

FASHION by Theragonia of Lesbos





AN INTERVIEW WITH FASHION ICON YESHE TSOGYEL, founder of Vajrayogini Boutiques



WHAT SHE'S WEARING: "It's one of my own outfits. My jewelry is by Hephaestus of Olympus."

ON HER SHOES: "I did a lot of research and found that Asuras have the best shoes because they are on their feet all day."

ON HER HAIR: "I go to Sherab at Supreme Mother's on Akanistha Avenue."

ON HER SCENT: "It's called 'Ghande' and is part of my new line of cosmetics. (More on this below.)"

ON HER STYLE: "I try to keep to a state free of elaboration — designs that may not be eternal

but that will last a bit beyond tomorrow."

ON THE AD IN THE N.Y. TIMES: "Yes, my brand name was misspelled. The daka at my ad agency is dislexic, but it turned out alright. People came into the boutiques to say something about it and bought things. It seemed to generate business, which is what an ad is supposed to do."

NEW PROJECT: "I have always loved the poem 'Makeup on Empty Space' by Anne Waldman, and I asked her if I could use a phrase to promote my line of cosmetics, and she was very gracious and gave me her consent. E ma ho."



"I am putting makeup on empty space."

Apologies to
Karin Nelson (Purse)
& Daphne Guinness
and FENDI

Below the fold

A LETTER TO THOREAU

Bouvard Pécuchet, Staff Writer

Dear Thoreau,

Salutations from my outpost in the Pacific Northwest. I can imagine you snug in your cabin at Walden Pond. I know you've only received one or two letters in your life that you considered worth the postage, and I'm not sure this one will reach up to the standard you've set, but I feel compelled to fill you in on a few recent developments of philosophical themes dear to your heart.

I've been taking classes at Central Washington University, which is located in the city (really a small town) of Ellensburg. My present studies focus on the philosophy of wilderness as taught by Dr. Michael Goerger. He is a spirited individual and rigorous in his analyses of our contemporary dilemma relating to the conflicting demands upon the tracts of wilderness bequeathed to us through congressional bills and the whims of presidents since your time. In many ways, your experiment of going to the woods to live and your many writings on your experiences have been an inspiration to generations of naturalists and outdoor enthusiasts of all ilk. What seemed, in your time, like an infinite expanse of land with a cornucopia of resources is becoming a limited commodity. I use the word "commodity" because so many of our countrymen consider the wilderness only as a material resource, something without value unless it can be exploited for financial gain. Any ethical appraisal or concept of esthetic nourishment the wilderness might offer is a byproduct reserved for a privileged few (HZ 63).

The debate on how to manage the federal parks we call our "national treasures" (an idea not even a twinkle in anyone's mind when you were living in your cabin) has been continually raging since Theodore Roosevelt, our 26th president, made conservation a top priority by establishing an array of national parks, forests, and monuments intended to preserve the nation's natural resources. The realization came to us that our scenic wonders should be protected, and steady progress has been made by environmentally conscious individuals to ensure that some of this heritage will be protected for future generations.

After you so poignantly revealed in *Walden; or Life in the Woods* how nature opposes human society, others discovered that they, too, could find solace and renewal from the deadening existence of social intercourse. Dr. Goerger has had us read selections from your works and the works of your dear friend, Ralph Waldo Emerson, as well as from the works of John Muir, Sigund Olson, Howard Zahniser, and Edward Abbey. While Emerson is a true philosopher, Muir is a true outdoorsman, an adventurer, who explores the western United States and writes profoundly about the destruction of the forests and the beauty of untrammelled wilderness. (Check out his *Atlantic Monthly* articles.) He railed against the havoc caused by logging and mining in order to get Congress to establish protections and create some kind of management of our resources instead of just wasting them. He's forthcoming about his connection to God in the setting of the great outdoors, and he focuses on beauty and the esthetic value of his nature experiences. In 1903, Theodore Roosevelt camped with John Muir in Yosemite Valley, in California, and Muir convinced Roosevelt to establish a national park, while the valley was still pristine (Wiki). Today, it is overrun by tourists, but it is still a sublime vista. Come west, and we'll go see it before they build another dam.

Olson is susceptible to romantic nostalgia. So much of the vast forest was wasted between Muir's time and his. He has notions of history and a lost way of life and what he calls "a gap" between human nature and civilization (SO 120). Like yours and Muir's, his is a complete sensory experience, perhaps mystical; however, this is not to say Olson is not reasonable. He worked effectively as a writer and as an administrator in the Wilderness Society and the National Wildlife Federation. He was instrumental in getting Jimmy Carter, our 39th president, to sign a law, in 1978, granting the Boundary Canoe Area Wilderness full wilderness status (*Wiki*). Knowing your libertarian leanings, I can sense you raising an eyebrow upon my mention of these official groups, but an environmental movement was born from the incense that rose from your hearth, and I think you'd like Sig; he'd be a great companion on one of your huckleberry party excursions.

Now, Zahniser is a bird of a different plumage. Not much of an outdoorsman, he's more of a missionary on a quest to secure wilderness for future generations. He believes "wilderness is something to which everyone is entitled, including those that are not yet born" (HZ 63). The battle to retain some semblance of wilderness has become desperate since you stood in the clearing near your cabin and listened to the sound of frogs along the banks of Walden Pond. Although Zahniser is not one to rough it, he concurs with your view that "the mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation" (PT 103), but he doesn't go so far as to say that "unconscious despair is concealed even under what are called the games and amusements of mankind" (*ibid.*), because he feels that, in these times, we need recreation like camping and sports in the wilderness as well as mystical experiences. He, too, is against development, in the sense of exploiting the wilderness for commercial profit, and he accomplished a monumental task by writing and husbanding through Congress what is now called the Wilderness Act.

In an exchange of letters between C. Edward Graves and Zahniser, during the drafting of the document, Graves asked Zahniser to change the word “untrammled” to “undisturbed” in the definition of wilderness. In its final form, Section 2, Part c, of the act reads:

A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain (Wiki).

Graves had his reasons for making the change and Zahniser had his for leaving the word be in the definition, but I think the word “fucked-up” would be closer to the point, although I’m sure my version would not have passed through congress. The Wilderness Act (with the word “untrammled” left in place) was signed by Lyndon B. Johnson, our 36th president, on September 3, 1964. The value of having such a place, so defined, continues to be debated among Americans with different interests.

During the Wilderness Act’s drafting process, another letter arrived on Zahniser’s desk from F.S. Baker, a forester at U.C. Berkeley, dated January 2, 1946. Baker accuses Zahniser (and the Wilderness Society of which Zanhiser was a leader) of being elitist in their dedication to keeping pristine wildernesses in perpetuity (HZ 63), and, in a further letter, Baker delineates the types of people who, he feels, desire this kind of wilderness: the “solitary minded,” the “man-against-nature fellows,” and a breed “who go in search of the strange and unusual” (HZ 67). In other words, there are those who merely want to take walks, those who want recreation, including hunting and fishing, and those who want something more, like Edward Abbey, who wants the chance

to confront immediately and directly if it’s possible, the bare bones of existence, want to be able to look at and into a juniper tree, a piece of quartz, a vulture, a spider, and see it as it is in itself, devoid of all humanly ascribed qualities, anti-Kantian, even the categories of scientific description. To meet God or Medusa face to face, even if it means risking everything human in myself (DS 6).

The bullets fly back and forth even between those who love nature. Here’s an example:—on his first day in office, March 2, 2016, Ryan Zinke, upon being appointed Secretary of the Interior by The Donald, our 44th president, an insensitive bore if there ever was one, signed an order overturning a ban on the use of lead ammunition on wildlife refuges, a policy implemented on the last day of the Obama administration by former Fish and Wildlife Service Director Dan Ashe. This might have been a symbolic act on the part of the new administration because of the outright hatred between members of our current political parties. You wrote, in *Civil Disobedience*, that the government, “which is only the mode which the people have chosen to execute their will, is equally liable to be abused and perverted before the people can act through it” (PT 75). We’ve reached a point where our government is dysfunctional, and our culture is in hyper-transformation.

But back to the invisible (as well as quite literal) bullets flying in the wilderness. I read opinion

articles in favor, opinion articles against, and balanced articles on the subject of the ban on lead bullets and the promotion of “green” (safe or, at least, less-damaging-to-the-environment-type) bullets. A lot of this is not going to make any sense to you, and I know you are off the grid and don’t have a computer, but I am going to reference these articles with their links to what we call the *internet* for your future access.

As reported in *The Hill* by Timothy Cama, Ashe’s policy banned the use of lead ammunition and lead in fishing tackle on all the federal wildlife refuges that allow hunting or fishing. The ban was meant to help prevent plants and animals from being poisoned by lead left on the ground or in the water but hunting and fishing advocacy groups condemned the policy an outright ban on their activities.

The overall situation of green versus lead bullets, like all situations that you look at closely, is a complex one. On one side there are the Second Amendment fanatics and certain hunting groups and, on the other side, environmentalists and health scientists. At *Patriot Update*, Jim Yardley claims that: (1) those wanting to ban are “pandering to rabid environmentalists”; (2) the cost to shift ammunition to copper alloys could cost about \$20 million, a 300% increase from current costs, and will raise electronics and house wiring costs; (3) a loss of jobs in the lead industry; (4) green ammo doesn’t kill any better. Perry Chiarmonte, a *Fox News* contributor insists that lead bullets have: (1) no effect on environment and are not a hazard; (2) that green bullets costs hunters more; (3) quotes the National Rifle Association that it is “restrictive legislation”; (4) hunters would have to reset guns. And there is more of the same, except that there’s a “Catch 22” (says Michael Bastsch, in *The Daily Caller*, and his use of this expression implies there’s a dilemma because of conflicting conditions), because the U.S. Army doesn’t want armor-piercing bullets in the public domain, while the State of California has a ban in place against lead bullets at a time when green bullets are hard to obtain.

The environmentalists are of a completely different attitude, and they posit an alternative interpretation of the data. Lori Ann Burd, writing for *Oregon Live* claims that lead bullets are: (1) toxic to humans; (2) poison wildlife; (3) the largest source of man-placed lead in the environment—3,000 metric tons of lead fired randomly into the wilderness and 80,000 metric tons of lead fired in shooting ranges—all a health hazard; (4) argues against the rise in retail costs, claiming that costs will come down; (5) green bullets have as good or better ballistics. Laura Geggel, writing for *Live Science*, reports: (1) toxicity of spent ammo eaten by animals that forage; spent ammo eaten from dead prey; (2) lead gets in water supply; (3) bald eagle, our national bird, and condors, an endangered species, are threatened; (4) 10-20 million non-target animals, dead, along with 2 million ducks dead from ingesting pellets. An article posted at the Humane Society website explains that: (1) animals at every level of the food chain are affected; (2) no safe level of lead for humans.

I remembered that Edward Gibbon included lead poisoning as one of several causes for the fall of the Roman Empire, so I investigated this. Thomas Sumner reports in *Science Mag* that lead levels ingested from the drinking water running through the lead pipes of Roman houses didn't rise to a level high enough to be alarmed about. The Romans also made use of lead in their cooking utensils and added lead to their food for flavor. Still, Roman skeletal remains don't contain half of the lead isotopes that exist in our bones today. Edward Gibbon's prose in the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* is known for its ironic tone, and from what I've told you, you can see that mankind is never going to get the lead out and do something about cleaning up the mess it is making.

All factions arguing over lead bullets insist they want there to be wilderness. They are not arguing over exploiting the wilderness for private profit, only how far to go with lead bullets. The argument gets bogged down in all the usual philosophical considerations. What is "wilderness?" How do you experience "wilderness?" Is "wilderness" within us or without?" So, there are a lot of intangibles to be debated, and I doubt there is a definitive answer to be given, because the problem evolves with each new dialectic. We have the New Gods of Olympus in the White House and the Old Gods in the tree roots, and now the Old Gods are the New Gods, and the New Gods are the old. We all agree we want something called Wilderness, some to play in, some to work in, some to commune with,—and, for others, just some to piss on and exploit.

I've sat and meditated on a falling leaf in the Rockies, felled giant cedars in the rainforest of Alaska, planted trees on the moonscape of Mt. Saint Helen after she erupted, camped, and fished in the Sierras, and simply meandered along the bank of the Yakima River by Peoples' Pond. I like it all. For me, this lead-bullets-in-the-wilderness-thing is a matter of esthetics. Does it make sense to continually shoot bullets, three or four or more metric tons, year after year, forever, into the woods? Take the Climate Change controversy; let's say we aren't the cause of climate change with our industrial footprint; does that mean we aren't trashing the planet? We all know there won't be anything like the wilderness that was, until after the next ice age. I doubt being on my knees can be considered a stance, but I pray that we will keep some of what wilderness is left. It would be nice to keep some of it, don't you think?

In all humility,
Jampa

From the desk of
Henry David Thoreau:
Sleepy Hollow, Concord

My Dear Jampa,

The cabin you mention that I'm snug in is, of course, a pine coffin. I hear you through the noosphere and offer my sincere condolences on your plight. Many of the items you mention, home wiring, electronics, the internet thing, I am familiar with through overhearing ghosts chattering. "Isotopes" still baffle me, but this is all incidental to what seems perennial in our discussions. I was reading Zahniser's article, "Threat to Wild Lands" (HZ 135), and I came across a reference to Antæus, and it triggered an association with what you were saying about the new gods becoming the old gods and the old, the new. Hercules fought Antæus as his eleventh labor. Antæus was born from Gaia, and his source of strength was the earth;—so, as long as he was touching the earth, he could not be defeated. Hercules lifted him off the ground,—creating a gap,—and squeezed the life out of him. The Olympians represent the Modern Age, our scientific prowess,—and, as we explore these new realms, we sever the connection to our Ancient Source. As my new friend Abbey keeps harping, "Now is the time for some serious monkey-wrenching!"

As ever, Henry

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ART-LITERARY SUPPLEMENT

I Was Sad a Little on the Twentieth

by Karl Avdek

"Hi, how you been and where?"
 (Fred always sticks his head in his stupid pockets when you meet him.)
 "Shopping with Carol can you believe
 it getting married next week to
 Steve on leave from the service and
 oh yeah, she's just well...
 Indian,
 you know...and then he's going
 back goddam
 war."

Oh Fuck

by David J. Capp

OH FUCK
 MY HEAD IS ON FIRE WAYS
 THERE IS NO BITTUM TO THE HOLE
 OF SELF FEEL I GAVE DRUG MYSELF
 TWO WEEKS OF TONIGHT
 STAYED APARTY
 AND MENTAL SAFE
 WHY DID I WASTE MY TIME
 WITH THE INADEQUACY OF LIFE?
 WHY AM I TOO DAMNED STUBBORN
 TO JUST QUIT
 ACCEPTING LIFE'S MEANINGLESS HOLE
 THE MAGIC DELUSION DOESN'T KNOW
 WHY SHOULD I BE A MAN
 ANY TRY

1969

by Marjorie Kowalski

FastFast poetry writes off my head
 whiting away intelligence centers. I think of
 ideas - thoughtfully being and old white dead.
 I see someone I love in the center of it all.
 Spinning. Flailing. watching words and beautiful thoughts
 I love's help but cannot to that making call
 Spinning round and round but in control of it all
 Oh this morning! Oh! You
 Eyes could easily glow--
 But who'd want to?
 Fantastic, simple, tender, clever.
 How this you, you great sky,
 I found of being there?
 But there is no more I
 No, in this spinning, screaming, comfortable one--
 I am not alone. I have no fear
 I belong to you.

Three Poems

by Lorry Kerschner

I THINK
 TO YOU
 WITH A BRAIN
 AS BIG AS MY PENIS
 SHOULD
 READ MAKE
 MEDALS FOR MY COUSIN
 STIMULUS FOR MY FRIENDS
 AND NOTHING MUCH ELSE
 TO REMEMBER.
 ANDER'S
 BLACK ME ZIG
 TELL ME TELL UP DICK AND LANE SAFE
 AND TELL ME THAT YOU LOVE ME

HEY, MR. BUCKY FALLER!
 WHAT YOU GORN' DO
 WHEN A
 BLACK GUN IS SHOT IN THE BACK?
 REMEMBER IN YOUR COURT
 HOW THE GUN IS MARCHING AND STANDING
 WANTS TO CUT OUT YOUR HEART
 AND REPLACE IT WITH ANOTHER!

He is the kind of guy
 who gets in matches
 for the hands of blind beggars.
 He is the kind of guy
 who has a watch
 in a land without time.
 He is the kind of guy
 who uses space
 shingles
 behind the six seven number.
 He is the kind of guy
 who rubles you
 When fashion a job?
 He
 Here you
 A minute
 Oh
 A moment?



9
6
9
YEARS
LIVED
METH.



REVELATION
4 BEASTS
LION
CALF
MAN
EAGLE

POEMES BLOCKS

RYCHARD DENNER

A NEW GAME
PLAY "JAR"
I SEE YOUR
SELF



COMPARE
THEM TO
A GARDEN
AND THEY
WALK ON
FLOWERS



serene scene

A MEDITATION ON HIGHER FREEDOMS

Rose Sélavy

Guest Columnist

Between University Avenue and E.7th Street and between Samson and Walnut, in Ellensburg, there's some wild Nature—not exactly Wilderness—but a patch of land left alone and gone to seed. The trail is about seventy paces, along the edge of a creek. A piece of cardboard in the bushes gives me a dry place to sit on the dewy grasses. I've brought food from Safeway's deli, and my plan is to step off the grid for an hour and find solitude.



University Avenue between Anderson & Walnut photo by S. Mutt

My first urge is to start naming the plants and animals. Even put in the Latin, *Pseudotsuga menziesii*, but to get in contact with the nature of mind within the nature of reality, naming things isn't going to get me there. I must go beyond the tree and the forest to where there is no perceiver or perceived, just for an inconceivably wondrous instant.

A few lines of Wordsworth's come to me from "The World Is Too Much With Us"—

The world is too much with us, late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers;—
Little we see in Nature that is ours...

And these meters lead me to appreciate the gap that exists between people living in society and what it is like to live alone in the woods. I'm making a concerted effort to step out of my "city life" mindset and be still.

Reecer Creek, emerging from under the pavement, makes a couple of dramatic bends through this part of town. By slightly turning my head, I can see a landscape without any man-made objects. There is a mix of birch saplings and older, gnarly cottonwoods on the north shore, a few young pines, maybe a sub-species of *Pinus Ponderosa*, to the south. One large standing tree, an evergreen, standing there before this area was a park, maybe standing in the front yard of a farmhouse, with the trail being here when the Psch-wan-wap-pams lived here (www.co.kittitas.wa.us/about/history.asp). Anyway, the tree's branches have provided shade for a long time.



The "Serene Scene"

photo by S. Mutt

Sitting on my sheet of cardboard, I make a tsog offering—a Tibetan Tantric feast, where one is blessed in a sea of senses—sight, sound, touch, taste—all tastes as one taste—the crunch of coleslaw, the saltiness of ham, and the sweetness of berry pie—the rush of the water, the verdure of the foliage, the limpid blue sky. A male mallard duck flying through! My eyes follow its path, the hunter in me taking aim, —and the drone of construction sounds in the background becomes that of furiously flapping wings.

Deep memory follows a beaten path, and my feet lead the way. I'm up for an adventure. I have on a couple of sweaters to shield me from the gusts of frigid air passing through the trees. The density of the undergrowth increases, and the bushes snag my clothes. And then, I come upon a renegade shrine to a dead teenager, a memorial tree covered with friendship ornaments—a tree with a plaque that says, "Wish You Were Here," and I think, "Lucky, to be here now,"—but how

cross the creek in the marsh? As I approach the upended root structure of one of the trees that bridge the creek, a tangle of wings, powerfully rising from the reeds, disturbs the air. I am prepared for another mallard—see lots of them along the Ganges, on campus—but not a Great Blue Herron! My heart stirred.

Escaping the entanglement of Nature, I cross the log and set foot on concrete, still trembling from the excitement of my encounters. Across from me is Vinman’s Bakery. . . and I’m beginning to sense freshly baked croissants. . . and, voila, I’ve returned to the predictability of the grid.

MOVIE REVIEWS



A RESPONSE TO ARONOFSKY'S

NOAH

Rose Sélevay Guest Columnist

Darren Aronofsky's 2014 film, *Noah*, has generated considerable controversy for deviating from the original depiction of events in the flood story, as related in the *Tanakh* (or Old Testament). How much of the film is an accurate portrayal of the episodes detailed in *Genesis* 6 through 9 and how much of it is the creation of the director and his co-writer, Ari Handel? The four chapters in *Genesis* that concern Noah take about ten minutes to read, while the run time for the film is 138 minutes. After analysis, much of the physical activity and character development in the film is the product of Aronofsky and Handel's imaginative story telling.

Why would they make changes to the original story? In an interview in *The Atlantic*, "The 'Terror' of Noah:

How Darren Aronofsky Interprets the Bible," Cathleen Falsani claims that it is the messages, not the history, that matters. She quotes Aronofsky:

I think it's more interesting when you look at not just the biblical but the mythical that you get away from the arguments about history and accuracy and literalism. That's a much weaker argument, and it's a mistake. But when you're talking about a pre-diluvian world—a pre-flood world—where people are living for millennia and centuries, where there were no rainbows, where giants and angels walked on the planet, where the world was created in seven days, where people were naked and had no shame, you're talking about a universe that is very, very different from what we understand. And to portray that as realistic is impossible. You have to enter the fantastical,

<https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2014/03/the-terror-of-em-noah-em-how-darren-aronofsky-interprets-the-bible/359587/>

I am going to focus on Aronofsky's development of characters not present in the original story and how these changes allow him to develop both an exciting visual narrative and a convincing solution to some of the enigmatic elements in the events as they unfold.

First, the involvement of the giants (*Nephilim*), called "The Watchers" in the film, in the building and defense of the ark, allows Aronofsky to introduce one of the first fantastic highlights in the story. Next, the initial infertility of Shem's wife, Illa, and Noah's later attempt to sacrifice her twin daughters, allows Aronofsky to develop a coherent psychological and consistent temporal narrative. And, lastly, the role of Tubal-cain as Noah's nemesis allows Aronofsky to pit father against son, as Tubal-cain encourages Ham to murder Noah, which creates a backstory to help



explicate and resolve the ambiguity in Ham's response to his father's nakedness in the post-flood events.

In *Genesis* 6:2, "divine beings saw how beautiful the daughters of men were and took wives from among those that pleased them." In verse 4, "It was then, and later too, that the Nephilim appeared on earth." Scholars debate whether the Nephilim were the offspring of fallen angels and human women or whether they were a separate race of giants or whether they were the lineage of Seth, the third son of Adam and Eve, or whether they were aliens from another planet. Aronofsky portrays these large "transformer-type" creatures as being made of huge chunks of rock that have a core of light, portraying these creatures as made of light that has become deeply materialized. There are, also, tell-

tale signs of their having once had wings. Regardless of their genealogy, they serve Aronofsky well as characters in a modern action film. There are no battle scenes in the biblical version of the Noah story, but the epic battle in the film foreshadows the upcoming stories in *Judges* and *Kings*. Aronofsky conflates the different interpretations of the Nephilim. During the battle to protect the ark from the wicked men who God regrets having created (*Gen.* 5-8), the Nephilim, upon being defeated, are suddenly "beamed" into the heavens. Their fallen, embodied nature appears to be redeemed by having helped Noah and his family.

In both versions of the Noah story (*Gen.* 6 and *Gen.* 7), Noah's sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, have wives to take onto the ark. Aronofsky departs from this traditional depiction. Much of the dramatic development of the film revolves around finding wives for the young men. Early in the film, Noah and his wife rescue a young girl, named Illa (portrayed by Emma Watson), who is still alive after a brutal rampage of her village by the warriors of Tubal-cain. Illa has an abdominal wound; later, she finds herself to be barren. A romantic interest develops between Illa and Shem. Noah goes to a village to find wives for his other sons, but he is repulsed after seeing young women sold for food, and he returns empty handed to tell his family that they will be the last humans. My favorite new character is the one-eyed crone, played by Aronofsky's seventh grade teacher, Vera Fried, who confronts Noah in the village and gives him her fierce English teacher look, shouting, "You! You!" In a video-interview with the



Palm Beach Post News, she tells of her reaction in getting a cameo in the film with Russell Crowe www.mypalmbeachpost.com/news/vera-fried-reenacts-her-scene-with-russell-crowe

Noah is in the firm belief that God wants all humanity dead, but Ham rebelliously runs away to find a wife. Meanwhile, Noah's wife, Naameh (Jennifer Connelly) connects with Grandfather Methuselah (Anthony Hopkins) and explains the dilemma; later, searching for berries in the forest, Methuselah bestows his blessing on Illa, and she becomes fertile. Ham (played by Logan Lerman) befriends a young woman, but in the commotion before the flood, she is abandoned. Disheartened by his loss, Ham blames his father, and a rift develops between father and son.

Beyond extending the theme of romantic love (a modern and not a biblical notion), the conflict between Ham and Noah extends the theme of the transfer of the father's lineage to his sons, a theme that was posited at the beginning of the film. During an interrupted ceremony, where Noah's father, Lamech, is passing his lineage to his son, a sacred snakeskin talisman is lost. In Aronofsky's rendering, this heirloom is stolen by Tubal-cain (Ray Winstone) and is later given to Ham, who, at the end of the film, gives it back to Noah. Rightfully, it belongs to Shem, since he is the firstborn. Ham relinquishes his place in the family structure and, like Cain, becomes a wanderer. Aronofsky works in another touch of Cain and Abel allegory, when Shem (Douglas Booth) is sent by Noah to find his brother and returns without him.

Tubal-cain is mentioned in *Gen. 4:22*, as the one who "forged all implements of copper and iron." Not all Tanakh lists agree, but in *Gen. 4:22*, Tubal-cain is listed as a son of Lamech; in *Gen. 5:25*, Methuselah is said to have begot Lamech; in *Gen. 5:29*, Lamech begot Noah;—so, Tubal-cain would be Noah's older brother (or older half-brother, since the name of Noah's mother is not mentioned). Aronofsky's understanding of Tubal-cain being a worker in metals connects to the iridescent material that is being mined in the film. There is a shifting technology in play.

One of the most tenebrous parts of the Noah story is in the post-flood stage, after Noah has become a drunkard (*Gen. 9:21*). It is here where Ham views his father's nakedness. These events have spawned an ongoing debate around whether there was a rape of Noah by Ham, a castration of Noah by Ham, or that Ham "seeing his father's nakedness" (*Gen. 9:22*) is to be interpreted only as sign of disrespect in seeing Noah in an immodest pose. Aronofsky has set the stage for the latter, more literal interpretation. Noah feels he has failed God by not keeping his promise to end humanity because he failed to sacrifice Illa's twin daughters. Aronofsky does not emphasize God's command, "Be fertile and increase, and fill the earth" (*Gen 9:1*). Noah's failure to understand God's plan, combined with a full dose of post-traumatic stress, has led him into drunkenness. In the Falsani interview, Aronofsky says:

Noah just follows whatever God tells him to do. So that led us to believe that maybe they were aligned, emotionally, you know? And that paid off for us when you get to the end of the story and [Noah] gets drunk. . . .What do we do with this? How do we connect this with this understanding? For me, it was obvious that it was connected to

survivor's guilt or some kind of guilt about doing something wrong.

This is plausible enough, although the film raises as many questions as it solves. Whose brilliant idea was it to get the animals to lie down? Is the curse of Canaan (*Gen. 9:23*) now extirpated? How does Methuselah, a mortal, become the healer of infertility and not an Angel of the Lord? What might happen with this altered gene pool? With the seas rising due to global warming, is God rescinding his covenant? But, as they say, "It's only a movie." Regarding the last question, only time will tell.

RELIGION



TRANSGENDER PLAY AND THE BUDHIST MIDDLE WAY

Jampa Dorje, Staff Writer

Inside the ambiguities of Sea-Tac Airport, I'm waiting to pass through the security check point before boarding my flight to Colorado to attend Tara Mandala's White Dakini Drup Chen, when I hear a distant voice shout, "Kelly, you're in the wrong line." I see a tall man ahead of me in a blue suit with dark curly hair turn toward the person calling. There is a great distance between them, an almost infinite distance by Zeno's reckoning, but Love wins, and the tall man turns, and I see he has large breasts and is wearing makeup. Now, he's a woman: lips red, cheeks rouged, eyes with long lashes and eyelids artfully shadowed. I like curly hair. When done right, it speaks a lot about your personality and aesthetic outlook. Looking directly at her, I feel the curl coming out of my hair. Ze was tall and broad shouldered and moved with force. People stepped aside, and as

ze passed I could smell amber or something from the Orient, perhaps the perfume Shalimar or Opium. There was a lot of man in this walk. Transgender or transvestite? Was ze being a she or a he? Ze waved, and the nails on hir hand were long and manicured. I realized how doubtful and uncertain I was of this person's meaning and intention.

The small, thin man outside the line, calling to Kelly, was wearing black pants and a white under shirt, the wife-beater type. Was ze the woman or was ze butch and he the femme in this relationship? Rigid bi-polar gender makes it impossible to play with truth. In the gender game, the gigantic playground is not marked with chalk; however, the line I'm in is defined, and my driver's license lists me as male. I am guessing I will be searched or asked to stand inside a glass chamber where air will circulate and detect any sign of explosives. Because of my robes, I'm listed as "bulky." I prefer the chamber. I like to say, "I'm the flying monk." Kelly waves, and says something I don't hear. Hir voice is husky and deep; and ze walks with hir feet shoulder-width apart. There's attitude in hir walk. I'm going to abandon what I think I know and watch.

The police are alert. What I take to be a man in a security guard's uniform, and a woman, perhaps, both observe the scene from a distance—no movement—guards merely observing the confusion. Both have guns. One has close cropped hair; one has hair pulled back in a ponytail; their sex is indeterminate, but their uniforms represent authority.

Points of view are social constructs. In attempting to describe a gender model that allows for full play of its diversity in everyday life, Judith Butler contends that we must overcome our biases in how we interpret reality and says, "The prescription is invariably more difficult, if only because we need to think a world in which acts, gestures, the visual body, the clothed body, the various physical attributes usually associated with gender, express nothing" (FPR 106).

I make it through security this time, seems there's a pass-through for me; maybe it's facial recognition from the monitoring. I still have to take off the cord around my neck, which has a silver locket, called a gow, that holds protection mantras against all kinds of demons, and for a moment, I'm vulnerable. I accept this. It's only security: so, I feel secure, just to feel secure.

Now to restrooms, where, supposedly, there is no monitoring. I haven't had a problem, a bearded monk in full robes going to a restroom in an international airport, or anywhere else, but I wonder about Kelly. Ze going into a restroom, either with the sign for male or the sign for female, in an international airport would probably not cause a disturbance, but after the defeat of the heroic "bathroom ordinance" in Huston, Kelly could be at risk in many parts of the country. Dr. Ben Carson believes in segregation. According to Tierney McAfee:

Recently, Carson proposed his solution to the public debate over transgender people using public restrooms that correspond with their gender identities – transgender bathrooms. The GOP presidential hopeful is already under fire for the suggestion he made during an interview with Fusion's Jorge Ramos on Thursday. "How about we have a transgender bathroom?" Carson said. "It's not fair for them to make everybody else

uncomfortable,” and he added, “I think everybody has equal rights, but I’m not sure that anybody should have extra rights—extra rights when it comes to redefining everything for everybody else and imposing your view on everybody else.

Redefining everything...a lot of that going on...Tucker Carson, a Fox News pundit, claims such redefining by the Fairfield, Virginia, School Board’s policy change recognizing “something called transgender” is part of “the Left’s continuing war on biology.” Matters are getting complicated, as the rigidity of gender identity becomes unstable. As Judith Halberstram says in her essay, “Transgender Butch: Butch/FTM Border Wars and the Masculine Continuum”:

Specificity is all. As gender queer practices and forms continue to emerge presumably the definitions of *gay*, *lesbian*, and *transsexual* will not remain static, and we will produce new terms to delineate what they cannot (FPR 161).

More people are beginning to play with or deconstruct their gender identities. In *Gender Outlaws*, Kate Bornstein asks, “Where’s the fun?” and quotes a Zen poet: “All roads in life lead nowhere. So, you might as well take the road that has the most heart and is the most fun” (CP 30). She posits “high camp” behavior as a means to bring about change in the self and in society: “High camp can be a man in full nun drag, with great showgirl makeup, on roller-skates in the middle of town. Does that man really want to be a nun?”(CP 31), and goes on: “Camp can be a leading edge in the deconstruction of gender, because camp wrests social control from the hands of fanatics. Camp in fact reclaims gender and re-shapes it as a consensual game” (CP 32).

World-traveling is another form of play that assists in the reshaping of gender identity by traveling to other experiences of life-style and consciousness. The term “world-traveling” I take from Mariá Lugones’ essay, “Playfulness, ‘world’-travelling, and loving perception.” She admits to “worlds” that one cannot enter playfully, nor would want to, but there are “worlds” that we can travel to lovingly, and travelling to them is part of loving at least some of their inhabitants. The reason why I think that travelling to someone’s “world” is a way of identifying with them is because by travelling to their “world” we can understand what it is to be them and what it is to be ourselves in their eyes (FPR 79).

Gender is not stable (Butler, FPR 97) and is therefore the perfect playground for personal transformation. As a high camp group having fun breaking down barriers, Bornstein referenced the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, street-performers in San Francisco, who began dressing in drag as Catholic nuns, and whose original appearance now includes exaggerated make-up that accentuates their rebellion against gender roles. Fausto-Sterling (FPR 132) suggest that ultimately, concepts of masculinity and femininity might overlap so completely as to render the very notion of gender difference irrelevant and, she references Roshblatts’ chromatic system that differentiates hundreds of different personality types which could translate into “shades of gender” (FPR 133).

Is being what Bornstein calls “transgressively gendered” (CP 30) an extreme in thought and action, if that is how you find yourself thinking and acting? By including myself in a transgender

community (transgendered defined here as including neutral, chaste monks) I belong to a larger community than when I am a lone, wandering yogi-monk. And if I come out from being a monk and still wear my robes, which is fine with the Buddhist community, am I now cross-dressing?

After reading Judith Butler's "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," I begin to question whether or not, not only gender, but the body itself might be a cultural construct. I'm reminded of something one of my lamas said about the metaphysical foundation of the world (in its physical sense) resting on an elephant which rests upon a tortoise, and when asked what the tortoise rested on he said, "It's tortoises all the way down." The study of gender for me, at the moment, is the metaphysics of metaphysics, and the field theory of play is a means to ease, unify, and harmonize tensions, dissonance, and contradictions in the polarities of the body, voice, and mind. Outwardly, I can join the camp parade, but inwardly I must deconstruct my gendered self; and being a tantric yogi, I know the way to go about this.

A Tantric practitioner lives in a view, not a point of view but a kind of seeing of the world in indestructible splendor. This sounds romantic, and there is passion involved, but this view is unclouded and luminous, and its sublimity is the seal of its authenticity. The essence of this luminosity is wisdom and its resonance is compassion, or Buddha's heart-mind, which is the motivation for Bodhisattvas (who recognize their essence) to help all sentient beings attain enlightenment.

Tantra is the path of sacred union. Its methodology utilizes the union of form and sound (deep visualization and mantra recitation) to facilitate, in short order, the recognition of the nature of mind. The ritual items always present with a Tantric practitioner are a bell and a vajra ("thunderbolt" symbol). The bell is a symbol of emptiness-wisdom and is held in the left hand, whereas the vajra is the symbol of compassionate, skillful means and is held in the right hand. The crossing of the right and the left hands during formal practice represents the union of compassion and wisdom.

Reflecting on an event I witnessed, while at the Great Accomplishment Ceremony at Tara Mandala celebrating a tutelary deity in the form of the White Dakini, I can see that Buddhist training does not totally prepare one to assimilate the accelerating changes in gender identification. Yes, the concept of equanimity and "one taste" are foundational to the path, but what is a lama to do when an openly gay practitioner wants to be blessed by a ritual item that traditionally has the opposite gender valence? To perform a ceremonial blessing for someone claiming an alternative gender identity, in the pomp of a tradition that hardly recognizes homosexuality, is enough to make a knowledge-holder's nosebleed. I told my friend that he had taken a giant step for the liberation of all queer Buddhists.

Two themes I have heard at conferences over the past year—at the Human Behavior and Evolution

Conference, in Vancouver, and at the Washington States Art Commission con-fab, in Ellensburg— are co-operation and reciprocity. How can we get along and help one another? Again, we must overcome our biases in how we interpret the world. And what better way to start than tolerance?

Transgender people may identify as heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, asexual, or they may consider sexual orientation labels inappropriate. Coming to terms with one's gender, where an individual feels authentic and is comfortable within their appearance and can accept their identity, requires time and patience.

I have described the transgendered condition in which I find myself. For a young person, choosing the form of gender neutrality might enable her or him to decide on an appropriate lifestyle, but for an old person, being a they can be a way of summing up all the facets of one's oneness.

I wonder if Kelly made hir flight. Ze might have been enroute to Thailand to complete hir surgery.

NEWS OF THE NORTH
RICHARD DENNER

Poetry
Books raise censorship question
by Barbara Hibber

The question of who has the right to decide what UA students may read has arisen with the censoring of a book of poetry from the university bookstore.

"In 1968 vs. Called [illegible], 214 S. 476 (1977) [illegible] was defined by Mr. Justice Brennan as that which was "liberally without reducing social importance." What did Brennan intend by "obscenity?" Material "which deals with sex in a manner appealing to prurient interests." - *Censorship Landmarks* - Edward DeGracia 1988

The book, written, illustrated and printed by student Richard Denner, was termed "unsuitable" by William Hagan, manager of Business Service and omitted from bookstore shelves.

Hagan is the superior of Leroy Rich, manager of the UA bookstore. "I thought it was ob-



"Some caddy, little girl?" Student poet Richard Denner displays copies of his works now on sale at the University Bookstore. Photo by Jon Metzger

scene," Hagan stated.

Denner had originally agreed to provide six books for sale in the bookstore. Upon receiving the books, Rich was concerned that one of the books would be considered pornographic.

After consulting his superior, the decision was made to "omit" the book. The rest of the books were to be kept under the counter and sold only if asked for specifically.

At the same time, English instructor John Hulbert presented copies of the books to the library. In a letter which accompanied the books, Hulbert wrote, "My own opinion is that he (Denner) is a sincere and talented artist, and that as he grows the university will be glad to have collected his early attempts at writing and printing."

Hulbert also wrote, "I'll be using several of his things during this term as reference material." (Hulbert was referring to a graduate writers workshop.)

The library accepted the books. Director Ted Ryberg said, "Our function is to present both sides of all topics and let our patrons make up their own minds. We don't have a position on any topic. We are to support the curriculum."

When Rich and Hagan were informed of the library's decision, the books were classified as text books, and supposedly put behind the text counter. The "black sheep" of the lot was included, making the total again six.

Rich said, "The bookstore and the library should have the same policy about books. I'm not going to back the library."

In an attempt to explain the original censorship, or "selection" as Hagan prefers, he offered the following statement:

- 1) Because of faculty children we are compelled to censor;
- 2) The fact that we don't carry it in the bookstore doesn't mean we are denying it...we're prepared for space anyway. We don't carry every book that has ever been published; and
- 3) I think it's reasonable that

CONT. ON PGL 4

UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA

POLAR STAR

Vol. XXX No. 4

Friday, October 18, 1978

POETRY BOOKS RAISE CENSORSHIP QUESTION

by Barbara Rhines

The question of who has the right to decide what UA students may read has arisen with the censoring of a book of poetry from the university bookstore.

"In *Roth vs. United States*, 354 S 476 (1957) 'obscenity' was defined by Mr. Justice Brennan as that which was 'utterly without redeeming social importance.' What did Brennan intend by 'obscenity?' Material 'which deals with sex in a manner appealing to prurient interests.' "

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material other than texts should be judged."

Hogan suggested that because the books had been printed by hand and were made by a student that they had attracted undue attention. "If this was intended to throw sand in the machine, it has done it," he said.

Hulbert commented, "It wasn't meant to bother anybody and I'm surprised that it has. A lot more graphic and bothersome things have been classics for the last 15 years."

Terrance Choy, professor of art, said, "I'm an artist, not a poet, and I think the books have artistic merit. Richard shows a proficiency in dealing with woodcuts."

Choy was concerned that there were no rules or an official definition of censorship for the university. "Pornography exists in the mind of the beholder. Any person who is offended by it can ignore it," he stated.

Director of Student Activities, Don Scott, said, "It's not that the books are great, or really bad....it's just because they are different."

Lyle Harris, associate professor of journalism was refused the opportunity to see the books while they were being kept under the counter.

Harris stated, "I went over to the bookstore and asked to see "Poemebooks." The girl clerk said she didn't know where they were. I asked her to find out, and she looked around the store

for several minutes. She returned and said she couldn't find them. I asked her to find out why they weren't around. After a conference in the back she returned and told me that the books were thought to be unfit to be sold by the manager. She said the manager was out of town."

Harris commented, "I think the whole thing was utterly ridiculous to advertise a book and then pull it off the shelf because it offends one person's standards."

Assistant professor of journalism, Don Wright, who was with Harris when the incident occurred, commented, "I'm against any form of censorship." He also brought up the age-old, "Who shall judge the judges?"

Author-artist Denner said, "I'm upset that people have no sense of humor about the whole situation. I wanted them to be received with a sense of humor."

Denner said the uproar "aroused a bewildered feeling."

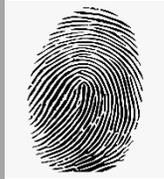
"The works will endure no matter how much they are criticized," he commented.

Asked if he was angry, Denner replied, "About the only thing that would make me angry is if someone should destroy them."

The books are now on the poetry shelf, accessible to the general public, but the vital question of the authority of UA employees and administrators to censor or "select" student reading material remains.

Quipped Ryberg, "A little bit of censorship is like a little bit of pregnancy...it just ain't."

POLICE BLOTTER



Thanks to *Uniform Stories*



Rycharld Denner's first column,
"Where is The Citizen?"

October 13, 1965

ELLENSBURG DADA ARTIST WINS ART TREASURE AWARE



"Enough said."

Photo by Rose Sélavy

Celebrity



Bouvard Pécuchet, Staff Reporter

Here are three stories, *Deadman Finds Happy Trails*, *Notable for Not Being Notable*, and *A Bit of Notoriety*. Two of the stories are played out on the national level, the first through the American press and the second through the press and the internet. A tragedy and a comedy. The third story is a bit of burlesque.

Richard realizes he was caught up in events that originated outside of himself, and although he appears to be a hero in one story and in another a cause célèbre figure, he was, for the most part, swept along—not that he didn't enjoy himself.

DEAD MAN FINDS HAPPY TRAILS

Retailing at Christmas time gets hectic. I was in my bookstore, taking a short break, drinking an espresso with my friend, Webster Hood, when the phone rang.

"Four Winds. Richard, here. How can I help you?"

"Hello, my name is Sally Macdonald. I'm a reporter for the Seattle Times, and I'm trying to find a Roy Rogers lunchbox. I've been told you have such an item in your store. Is this true?"

"Yes, I've got a Roy Rogers lunchbox. It's a Roy Rogers/Dale Evens Chow Wagon. Why do you ask?"

"Is it for sale?"

"No, not really. I have been asked several times if I would sell it, but I have told people it is not for sale. Everything in the store is for sale, but the buck stops there. Are you scouting for a certain antique dealer who persists in asking me to name a price?"

She laughed. "Goodness, no. My situation is entirely different. May I explain?"

"By all means, go ahead."

"A couple of weeks ago, the Times ran a feature article on Roy Rogers. The story was a reminiscence of growing up with Roy Rogers and the gang at the Double R Bar Ranch. It was a full page spread with pictures, and soon after the article appeared, a letter arrived from a lady, who asked if anyone might know where she could get a Roy Rogers lunchbox. She said she and her friends had been scouring antique stores without luck, and that she was getting desperate. I asked her why, and she told me it was for her husband's ashes. I said, 'What!?' She told me she wanted the lunchbox because it was her husband's wish that his ashes be stored in a Roy Rogers lunchbox. I was incredulous, at first, and she said she knew it was a strange request, but she had been looking for six months, and she wanted to give her late husband this last gift after twenty-five years of marriage."

I said, "I don't believe a word of this. I bet you are trying to trick me out of the lunchbox by concocting this story."

"Really, Sir, this is the truth. She says she will pay almost anything for an authentic Roy Rogers lunchbox. I asked around the newsroom, and a colleague of mine, Randee Fox, said she had seen one in your bookstore when she was visiting Ellensburg. Believe me, although this story seems farfetched, it's true."

"I think I will have to talk to this woman in person, just to be sure. Can you give me her phone number?"

"Yes, I can give you her number. Really, this is on the up and up. Trust me."

She gave me the lady's name and her number, and I said, "Ok, I'll give her a call, but this sure sounds bizarre."

"I know," she replied, "but you'll see I'm telling the truth."

After she hung up, I said to Webster, "You won't believe what I just heard." I told him the gist of the story and, then, I dialed the number I had been given.

"Is this Mrs. Beverly Gibson?"

"Yes, I am Beverly Gibson. Who is calling?"

"My name is Richard Denner, and I am the owner of the Four Winds Bookstore in Ellensburg. I just received a call from a Sally Macdonald, who says she is a reporter from the Seattle Times, and

she told me you were looking for a Roy Rogers lunchbox. Is this true?"

"Oh my, yes. I have been looking everywhere. Do you have one? I need one, ever so bad."

"Yes, I have one. It's been in my store for years. It's sort of like a mast head. I keep pennies in it."

"Did Miss Macdonald tell you what I wanted it for?"

"Yes, she did, but I had a hard time believing the story."

"Mr. Denner, my husband, Bruce, was a great fan of Roy Rogers. As a kid, Roy Rogers was his idol. He always had to be Roy when the neighborhood kids played cowboys. He sang 'Happy Trails' as his own theme song. He told me, 'When I die, skip the funeral urn and just keep my ashes in a Roy Rogers lunchbox.' Is there any chance you would sell me your lunchbox?"

"Excuse me for a minute, Mrs. Gibson. Let me consult with a friend." I looked at Webster, who was listening to my conversation and smiling. "Webster, you teach ethics, if I've told people I won't sell the lunch box under any circumstances, I shouldn't back down, should I?"

"You should stick by your guns, or in this instance, your lunchbox, Roy," he said.

"Mrs. Gibson?"

"Yes?"

"I have made my decision."

"Yes?"

"This lunchbox has sat on a shelf in my store for twenty years. My ex-mother-in-law found it in a secondhand store and gave it to my son, Theo. After he grew up, it wound up in the store. It sits with some Old West books in a little display. Once, a friend was going to a Roy Rogers Show, and he asked if he could take the lunch box with him to get it autographed. I don't think it was actually signed by Roy, probably by his son. It's signed *Roy Rogers and Trigger* in green ink. The signature has faded to where you have to know where to look to see it. An antique dealer offered me \$300. She said in New York, it would fetch more, but I told her, No deal. It's a keepsake. So, I don't think I can change my mind about selling it, now." At the other end of the line, I could hear a sigh of disappointment. I waited a beat, for dramatic effect, and then I told her, "On the other hand, I could give it to you."

"My goodness," she exclaimed, "do you mean it? You would give it to me? Oh, that is marvelous."

"Give me your address. I will wrap it up and mail it to you."

"Mr. Denner, you are just too kind."

"Don't mention it, Mrs. Gibson. It is my pleasure."

I wrote down her address. I dusted off the lunchbox and put the pennies in a jar. I found a cardboard box and some bubble wrap, and I made a tidy package for Beverly Gibson. And for Bruce. I mailed

the box that afternoon, and I thought no more about it. A couple of days later, I got another phone call from Sally Macdonald. She was full of enthusiasm about my kind-hearted gesture, and she asked if she could write a story about what I had done.

I said, "Sure," and I told her pretty much what I had said in my conversation with Beverly. I concluded with, "I'm an old hippie. It seemed sort of cosmic to me. Now, Bruce can rest in peace, and I won't be bothered with people always wanting that lunchbox." That was a week before Christmas. I should have anticipated what the newspapers were going to do with this story. The next day, on the front page of the Seattle Times there was a picture of Beverly holding the Roy Rogers/Dale Evans Chow Wagon and a story by Sally Macdonald entitled, "Roy Rogers Fan gets Last Wish." Then, the phone began to ring.

Associated Press picked up the story, and it was run as a piece to make you feel good in every newspaper in the country. People phoned to thank me for being an angel. A guy phoned wanting to know if I wanted to buy more Roy Rogers paraphernalia. I got cards and letters from everywhere. The tabloids competed. The National Enquirer wanted a story, but World News beat them to it. I reiterated what I had previously told the Seattle Times, and at the checkout counter in Safeway I saw a piece on the back page of World News under the heading "Dead Man Finds Happy Trails" next to a sighting of Elvis. It was surreal. They didn't change a thing. The TV program, *Ripley's Believe It or Not*, contacted Beverly, and they filmed her in her home in Federal Way. She was standing by her mantelpiece. She took down the Chow Wagon with Bruce's remains, and she told the interviewer about how her husband had had several surgeries and painful chemotherapy and that his last wish was to be kept in a lunchbox. It was a brief interview between pictures of the smallest park in the state of Washington and the largest apple. My uncle, Remos, a great storyteller himself, phoned from Albuquerque, to tell me that he was reading a newspaper, and as soon as he saw the "bookstore in Ellensburg" he knew it had to be me.



NOTABLE FOR NOT BEING NOTABLE

"Richard, you're famous!"

"I am? How so?"

I was talking to Belle Randall, in Seattle. She had phoned to tell me that I was mentioned in *The New York Review of Books*, in a review by Nicholson Baker of a book entitled *Wikipedia: The*

Missing Manual by John Broughton (Pogue Press/O'Reilly, 2008). More than a book review, Baker, who is a respected novelist, had written a very informative and entertaining essay, "The Charms of Wikipedia" (Vol. 55, No. 4, March 20, 2008, www.nybooks.com/articles/21131). It begins: "Wikipedia is just an incredible thing. It's fact-encirclingly huge and it's idiosyncratic, careful, messy, funny, shocking, and full of simmering controversies—and it's free, and it's fast." He goes on to relate the background of this online encyclopedia, how it evolved, how it's structured, and how for some people it has become a fascinating project. For Baker, it became a mission.

The uniqueness of Wikipedia is that it is a reference work written by strangers who contribute anonymous articles on any subject they wish—or re-write articles or vandalize them. Beginning in 2001, in eight years, Wikipedia amassed over two million articles on diverse subjects, all written without editorial oversight. "It worked and grew," said Baker, "because it tapped into the heretofore unmarshaled energies of the uncredentialed." I, too, had been intrigued by this openness, and in a blatant act of self-promotion, I created a page for myself. I did not read the rules or follow the guidelines for creating my page. I designed my page by entering the "edit" area on the page of another, more famous poet and copied the formatting codes. Voilà, I had a profile on Wikipedia.

In his essay, Baker mentions that Broughton's manual is useful in keeping one from breaking wiki-rules but he notes that the original rule endorsed by the founders was: "Ignore all rules." In this spirit, I proceeded. It wasn't long before a notice appeared on my page that tagged my profile as a "stub," and I realized that there were wiki-elves at work behind the screen. The term "stub" meant that the article was short and needed help.

So, I expanded my profile to include a short bibliography, and Jonathan Penton, my webmaster, added a couple of links. Unbeknownst to me, the halcyon days of just offering information for the sheer joy of adding your two-cents worth were over, and delitionists were on guard. Soon, my profile was tagged "not-notable."

Baker designates himself as an inclusionist. He makes edits to improve and expand articles, and he is protective of articles which he believes have merit, that are slated for deletion. He tells how he became a crusader:

But the work that really drew me in was trying to save articles from deletion. This became my chosen mission. Here's how it happened. I read a short article on a post-Beat poet and small press editor named Richard Denner, who had been a student in Berkeley in the Sixties and then, after some lost years, had published many chapbooks on a handpress in the Pacific Northwest. The article was proposed for deletion by a user named Pirate Mink, who claimed that Denner wasn't a notable figure, whatever that means. (There are quires, reams, bales of controversy over what constitutes notability in Wikipedia: nobody will ever sort it out.) Another user, Stormbaly, agreed with Pirate-Mink: no third party

sources, ergo not notable.

Denner was in serious trouble. I tried to make the article less deletable by incorporating a quote from an interview in the Berkeley Daily Planet—Denner told the reporter that in the Sixties he'd tried to be a street poet, “using magic markers to write on napkins at Café Med for espressos, on girls' arms and feet.” (If an article bristles with some quotes from external sources these may, like the bushy hairs on a caterpillar, make it harder to kill.) And I voted “keep” on the deletion-discussion page, pointing out that many poets publish only chapbooks: “What harm does it do anyone or anything to keep this entry?”

An administrator named Nakon—one of about a thousand peer-nominated volunteer administrators—took a minute to survey the two “delete” votes and my “keep” vote and then killed the article. Denner was gone.

Notable/not-notable...endless argument. Baker claims, “...a lot of good work-verifiable, informative, brain-leapingly strange—is being cast out of this paperless, indefinitely expandable accordion folder by people who have a narrow, almost grade-schoolish notion of what sort of curiosity an on-line encyclopedia will be able to satisfy in the years to come.”

What led up to my profile's demise? One doesn't often get to see the various elements in a sequence of events, from cause to effect, but on-line in virtual reality the record is there. Here is a bit of the history retrieved from Wikipedia.Org/wiki/User:Balloonman/afd/Richard_Denner:

Note: This debate has been included in the list of Poetry- deletion discussions.----pb<talk>18:24, 18 January 2008 (UTC)

I've been pondering the notability of this person and I can't decide whether there should be a Wikipedia article about this subject or not. There seems to be some claims to notability in the article, but I can't find any reliable third party sources to back them up (most of the current sources seem to be unreliable or edited by the subject of the article), searching for the two listed books brings up little or nothing, and one them appears to be self-published. —Pirate-Mink 15:04, 17 January 2008 (UTC)

DELETE I agree with the lack of reliable third party sources. I will revisit this discussion if some (any) good sources are posted.---Stormbay (talk) 04:00, 22 January 2008 (UTC)

KEEP The man is a publisher and a poet with an extensive bibliography, part of the sixties Berkeley scene. Many poets publish on chapbooks—there is a long and rich tradition of this. What harm does it do to anyone or anything to keep this entry?---Wageless (talk) 03:51, 23 January 2008 (UTC)

[Wikipedia Deletion review/Log/2008February](#)

[RICHARD DENNER \(edit/talk/history/links/watch/logs\)](#)

This article about a poet who was deleted last month based on Wikipedia:Articlesfordeletion/Richard_Denner. The sparse discussion consisted of the nomination, one person who supported deletion (but said they would “revisit this discussion if some (any) good sources are posted”), and one person who wanted the article kept. This last person also added some material to the article, including an additional source—the article already had several sources, but these weren’t considered sufficiently “third-party”—but neither of the other two, nor the closing administrator, seems to have noticed this. Based on, I guess, a calculation that this is 2-1 in favor of deletion, the discussion was closed as “delete”. Now in the first place, I disagree and think that at a minimum, the nomination should have been relisted for more discussion. The failure to consider new evidence also means the arguments for deletion need to be re-evaluated. Fortunately, the person trying to save this article happens to be Nicholson Baker, and took time to write about this in *The New York Review of Books*. So, arguably the article could have yet another source now. Poetry often languishes in obscurity, making research challenging for those who don’t know their way around, but let’s not compound the problem in this case.---Michael Snow (talk) 18:15, 29 February 2008 (UTC)

Standard gripe about no apparent discussion with the deleting admin before bringing it here. Many of these sort of cases should be resolvable with a little discussion.---81.104.39.63 (talk) 18:53, 29 February 2008 (UTC)

Many see us as a scary desk sergeant or whatnot. Regardless, here we are.---Dhartung (talk) 23:26, 29 February 2008 (UTC)

OVERTURN, there was no consensus. The nominator said “I’m not sure if…” the only delete comment was hesitant and said “if sources…” and the keep was fairly confident it should be kept. There was no elaboration in the closing statement as to how the outcome arrived at delete. Closing as delete was a mistake.---Jerry (talk) 21:32, 29 February 2008 (UTC)

OVERTURN, lack of consensus, this should be relisted and given another chance.---Mbimmler (talk) 17:54, 1 March 2008 (UTC)

OVERTURN, I thought it was a quick delete. I suspect that only marginal notability exists but the article deserves due process.---Stormbay (talk) 21:06, 1 March 2008 (UTC)

> Hi, I know Richard and found his page when people were beginning to assert his lack of notability (I did not participate in the deletion debate). My comments on the talk page, where I disclose my conflict of interest and add a couple of sources, are presumably visible to admins. At that time, it is mentioned that Richard started his own page. If it would be helpful, I can start a page for him from scratch.---JonathanPenton (talk) 03:39, 2 March 2008 (UTC)

OVERTURN, Came here from NYRB as well. Which I suspect now serves as an additional source.---Relatarefero (talk) 09:53, 2 March 2008 (UTC)

OVERTURN, insufficient consensus to delete the article. I would have relisted the debate.-
--Hut8.5, (talk) 10:37, 2 March 2008 (UTC)

And so, I was back—a cause célèbre figure. I wanted to thank Nicholson Baker. I left a message at his fan club site: “I would like to thank you for coming to my defense in your book review, *The Charms of Wikipedia*. It was very well-written, entertaining and thought-provoking. On a personal note, being a Buddhist monk, I am charmed to be notable for not being notable.” He replied by email: “I wish I had your Buddhist attitude toward literary vicissitudes.”

A BIT OF NOTORIETY

Another bit of notoriety befell Richard near Christmas 1993, in Ellensburg. Earlier that year, he had met Gail walking up Pine Street. It was night, and he could plainly discern her attractive body silhouetted through the thin dress she was wearing by the street light. They walked together and sat on her porch and talked. She kissed him goodnight. The next evening, he gave her a rose and a poem.

The touch of your tongue my lip
My palm on the curve of your hip
A cut rose in a vase—another,
Invisible, rose growing here

Richard came to stay nights with Gail and her son, Alex, in her dilapidated duplex. She wrote short stories. He liked the one where the heroine drops Acid on top of a pyramid in Mexico. He asked her why he hadn't seen her at Four Winds. She said she didn't want to be stigmatized as an “artist.”

In the early hours of the morning, there was a pounding on the outside wall of the house and the cry of “Fire!” Smoke could be smelt in the bedroom. Gail woke Alex, and the three of them hurriedly got dressed and exited through the front door. The cat was the first to flee. Flames could be seen near the rear of the house where a tenant lived. There wasn't time to rescue the fish in the aquarium.

The house burned quickly. Firemen poured water on the blaze, but it was obvious the house was going to burn. Alex, Gail, and Richard stood wrapped in blankets in the snow-covered street. Someone took their picture.

When the commotion subsided, the three of them and the cat rode to Richard's house, on Capitol Avenue, in Gail's car. Gail was in shock, and as soon as it was light, she returned to her house. She picked through the debris, but there wasn't anything that wasn't ruined. The aquarium was

smashed and the fish lost in the ashes.

There are good Samaritans in Ellensburg. Richard found a fully-decorated Christmas tree and many wrapped presents and useful household things on his front porch. It made for a Merry Christmas, of sorts.

After the holiday, Richard was in the Valley Café. As he was walking past a booth, Professor Bob Goedeke stopped him and said, “I saw your picture on the front page of the Daily Record. Looks like you have a new girlfriend.”



EPISODES IN THE HERE AND NOW

Jampa Dorje, Guest Columnist

Then she stood up, put her jacket back on with the same robotlike movements, and left.

—Albert Camus (*The Stranger*)

I was in line at Safeway in Ellensburg, and a woman ahead of me had four boxes in her arms that she didn't put on the conveyer belt, so I placed a plastic divider down with enough space for her boxes. She picked a small package of pretzels off the impulse rack and put them on the belt and lay a dollar on top, still holding the boxes in her arms. She moved a step ahead, but she seemed distracted. When her turn at the cashier came, she set down four boxes of organic quinoa. I wanted to ask her if she had seen the YouTube video of David Lynch cooking quinoa—very creepy—but I decided if I asked her, that might seem creepy. She moved robotlike, as a Lynch character might in one of his dream sequences. She was going through the motions of a person buying quinoa; perhaps, she was on medication. Each of the four credit cards she proffered was

rejected, and she left the store with her pretzels after a cash sale, as though the boxes of quinoa were merely a prop in the theater of the absurd. I wonder if she might have anticipated that her cards would be rejected and felt that the small cash purchase would “exonerate” her from judgement.

I was reminded of a scene in Camus’s *The Stranger*, where a woman sits and eats with Meursault in a cafe. The odd, little robotlike woman is convergent to his character, both live in their own worlds outside the judgement of others. The reader starts to wonder if Meursault is himself a robot going through the motions, while asking little else but to continue in these habitual patterns. Yet Meursault’s apathy is of his own choosing, as he moves toward finding meaning in a meaningless universe.

At any street corner the feeling of absurdity can strike any man in the face.

—Albert Camus (*The Myth of Sisyphus*)

A sense of absurdity arises out of the conflict between our wanting a world of order and the world of random events that resist our understanding. We duck out of confronting the absurd because of our difficulty in resolving incompatible aspects of reality. Still, the absurdity of some events is undeniable. Recently, I saw The March of the Ducks at the Peabody Hotel in Memphis, Tennessee.

How did the tradition of the ducks in The Peabody fountain begin? According to the official legend:

Back in the 1930s Frank Schutt, General Manager of The Peabody, and a friend, Chip Barwick, returned from a weekend hunting trip to Arkansas. The men had a little too much Tennessee sippin' whiskey and thought it would be funny to place some of their live duck decoys (it was legal then for hunters to use live decoys) in the beautiful Peabody fountain. Three small English call ducks were selected as "guinea pigs," and the reaction was nothing short of enthusiastic. Thus began a Peabody tradition. In 1940, Bellman Edward Pembroke, a former circus animal trainer, offered to help with delivering the ducks to the fountain each day and taught them the now-famous Peabody Duck March. (www.peabodymemphis.com/ducks-en.html)

I relaxed in a deep-seated chair, sipped tea from a cup with a saucer, listened to the cacophony of voices that has always proceeded this event—and, before tedium set in, I watched a man in uniform shepherd a team of ducks from the elevator, along a red carpet, to the marble fountain in the center of the lobby of the Peabody Hotel. The Peabody is a well-maintained bastion from the Gilded Age, and it resides comfortably in the decadence of the present. Because this hotel is

a staid institution, I was not sure how to interpret the spectacle transpiring before me.

The ducks walked the red carpet, in their waddling manner, as the majordomo raised his cane and drove them along with dramatic gestures. Order of sorts—and continuity. Nearly a century after the inaugural march, ducks still visit the lobby fountain from their room in the hotel at the appointed hour each day. What is this ritual? Does it celebrate a prank? Is it advertising? Vanity? Or is it just another distraction in the tsunami of mundane events? There's little one can do but embrace the absurd while also doing one's best in the search for meaning. This, according to Camus, is our absurd freedom.

For the listener, who listens in the snow,

And, nothing himself, beholds

Nothing that is not there and the nothing that is.

(from "The Snow Man" by Wallace Stevens)

A snow man doesn't have feelings, but a poet can use words (employing Keats' *negative capability*) to transcend logical meaning and explore what it might be like to be a snow man. "The Snow Man," a poem by Wallace Stevens, has a lot in it about nothing. Here, nothing is not nothing. To someone with an existential orientation, "nothing" is a something to be given consideration.

Kierkegaard, who believes a human being is spirit, experiences a gulf between himself and God, a nothingness that terrifies him and that drives him to despair. Dostoevsky's underground man, in his spiteful and contrary way, professes to believe that, after all, there's nothing to be done. Focused solely on the being of Being, Heidegger asks, "Why is there something rather than nothing?" Sartre conceives of nothing as the backdrop to what is. Nothingness is an open space that allows us, without God, to make choices. When Nietzsche's madman claims that "God is dead!", a foundational element for society begins to crumble. The madman believes his prognosis is premature, but by the time Camus writes *The Stranger*, where a priest entreats the atheist Meursault to contemplate the Divine Face in a sweating rock (his own Sisyphean hellhole), the dissolution of the meaning of "God" is well underway. How, then, are we to act in a meaningless universe?

Behold the snow man beholding itself and not thinking of any misery! A happy thought. Another reading reverses this and reveals us as empty spirits dwelling in an inhospitable place.



ON THE LEFT: Photo from Department of Justice via AP. Breitbart.com claims: The Federal Bureau of Investigation is under fire for a recent photo that showcased documents the Bureau seized from Mar-a-Lago scattered across the floor, leading some to call out the photos for being “staged.” ON THE RIGHT: The Virginia Kelly Karnes Archives and Special Collections Research Center keeps many Purdue artifacts. These are boxes that make up the Neil Armstrong collection.

SHIFTING SANDS OF AN ARCHIVE by Jampa Dorje

On August 8, 2022, the Federal Bureau of Investigation searched Mar-a-Lago, the club-like residence of former U.S. President Donald Trump in Palm Beach, Florida, for documents that were a part of the national archive. The warrant was requested by the attorney general of the United States and was approved by a federal judge. Trump’s allies likened the FBI’s search to political persecution. The terms “Nazi” and “banana republic” were bantered about.

According to an August 13, 2022, article in The Washington Post, by Josh Dawsey, Rosalind Helderan, Jacqueline Alemany, and Devlin Barrett: “What began as a low-level dispute over the Trump White House’s chaotic and haphazard record-keeping had morphed into a deeply serious probe of whether the ex-president had endangered national security by hoarding highly classified documents, some potentially related to nuclear weapons.” [Trump’s secrets: How a records dispute led the FBI to search Mar-a-Lago | Flipboard](#)

A letter dated February 18, 2022, sent by archivists at the National Archives to the House Committee on Oversight and Reform detailed how President Trump’s staff had not preserved many social media records and that many paper documents had been destroyed by the former president. The letter went on to reveal that after Trump left the White House, the torn-up paper records had been transferred to the agency. The letter claimed that “Although White House staff

during the Trump Administration recovered and taped together some of the torn-up records, a number of other torn-up records that were transferred had not been reconstructed by the White House.” [Bill seeks to strengthen presidential record keeping, citing Trump | MyStateline.com](#)

Throughout these revelations, Trump insisted that the documents were his personal property. He also claimed that the top-secret documents were declassified by his thinking them to be so and that there was not a necessary protocol for doing this. In an article published on November 22, 2022 in Truthout, Chris Walker writes: “In an interview with Fox News’s Sean Hannity on Wednesday, former President Donald Trump claimed that he could have declassified government documents he removed from the White House upon leaving office simply by using his mind. ‘There doesn’t have to be a process, as I understand it,’ Trump said. ‘You’re the president of the United States, you can declassify just by saying it’s declassified, even by thinking about it.’”

In a November 14, 2022, article in Raw Story, Travis Gettys says, “Donald Trump's attorneys argued this week that he automatically designated government documents as personal property just by taking them to his home at Mar-a-Lago. The former president's defense team filed a new legal brief arguing that he was authorized to designate those records as his own property because he was still in office at the time, and they insisted that his designation cannot be challenged in court. The Justice Department disagreed, saying Trump was playing a ‘shell game’ with the presidential records and trying to have it both ways. [Trump claims classified documents automatically became his property by taking them to Mar-a-Lago \(msn.com\)](#)

What was the significance of this hullabaloo, and why is it important?

The action was unprecedented because it was the first time in U.S. history that the residence of a former president had been searched for violations of the Espionage Act and for his destruction or concealment of records that are the property of the people of the United States of America and not the property of a single individual (Wikipedia.org/FBI Search of Mar-a-Lago).

What is an archive? The word archive has its root in *arche*, an Ancient Greek word for beginning and, by extension, commencement. For Aristotle, arche is the principle of a thing, which “although indemonstrable and intangible, provides the conditions of the possibility of that thing” (Barry Sandywell, *Presocratic Philosophy*, Routledge New York, 1996, Vol. 3, p, 142). Arche also means command, as well as an authority (i.e., an archbishop), and by extension order. Anarchy is disorder.

An archive, as defined by bing.com, is a collection of documents such as books, letters, photographs, digital data, etc., that are organized in such a way as to provide information about a place, institution, or group of people. In archives terminology, the organization of the documents is determined by *provenance*. Provenance is a fundamental principle of archives, referring to the individual, family, or organization that created or received the items in a

collection. The principle of provenance or the *respect des fonds* (archival integrity) dictates that records of different origins (provenance) be kept separate to preserve their context. <https://dictionary.archivists.org/entry/provenance.html>

According AIDCSC (All India Deprived Community Support Centre), archives are important for three reasons: personal reasons, cultural reasons, and official or administrative reasons. Regarding personal reasons: “Man is a selfish animal, and he calculates for himself for the benefit or the loss before entering into a public affair.” Regarding cultural reasons: “Since [An archive] is the emporium of all the activities of mankind from time immemorial to the present, it depicts customs, conventions, and usage of people.”

Finally, regarding official or administrative reasons:

“Archives are considered as the knowledge of past administrations. They furnish information pertaining to the day-to-day administrations of the prior governments and their attendant administrative system. In Judicial matters, judgment is based on previous judgments. For judicial decisions, documents in the judicial department and in law reports and law journals are produced to substantiate their claims. [In short, historians and other writers are fully dependent upon the documents and records of archives for portraits of the life and activities of their predecessors.](#)” [Importance of Archives | AIDCSC \(indiancommunities.org\)](#)

Archives are important for the continuation of civilization. According to my lama, Nankhai Norbu Rinpoche, when Atisa, an 11th c. Indian scholar, discovered the store of Sanskrit texts at Pekar Kordzoling, the library of Samye, he was amazed at that the degree to which Vajrayana Buddhism had spread in Tibet beyond what had occurred in India.

We owe a debt to the 12th c. Islamic philosopher, Averroes, for writing his commentaries on the Greek philosopher Aristotle, whose works had been abandoned after the fall of the Roman Empire and without which a strong foundation for scientific inquiry would have been lost. (Bertrand Russell, *History of Western Philosophy*, Simon & Schuster, NY, 1945).

According to Thomas Cahill, author of *How the Irish Saved Civilization* (Hachette, UK, 1996), everyone today owes a debt of gratitude to the Irish monks of the 5th century, who stored the written record of western civilization and kept it safe during an era of anarchy and constant warfare.

A Canticle for Leibowitz by Walter M. Miller Jr. (J. B. Lippincott & Co., NY, 1959) is a post-apocalyptic science fiction novel set in a Catholic monastery in the desert of the southwestern United States after a devastating nuclear war. Over many centuries, the monks preserve the remains of our scientific knowledge until the world is ready for it again.

There is, of course, no guarantee we have a future on this planet. There is no icon labeled “P” to push for Posterity. We are in an era of rampant self-archivisation via social media, but if our

electronic infrastructure collapses, the so-called “cloud” would dissipate. The intricacies of digital archives are beyond my expertise; still, the main task of developing any archive begs similar questions. Where does it begin and where does it end? What is to be included and what is to be suppressed?

At this level, an archive is a metaphysical foundation of a government and the source of the narrative of that government. To quote Abraham Lincoln, from his Gettysburg Address, the United States of America is a “Government of The People by The People for The People.” This is the definition of a democracy. Trump’s claim that the archival records of his administration are his personal property is the claim of a monarch.

Presidential papers have not always been turned over to the National Archives. This tradition began with President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and it was not until after the Watergate Era and the dispute over President Nixon’s tapes that The Presidential Records Act (PRA) of 1978 was enacted. The Presidential Records Act mandates that “all records created by the Executive Office of the President are to be preserved and transferred to the National Archives at the end of a president’s administration.” ([“National Archives and Records Administration - Wikipedia”](#)) Therefore, the notion that Trump can say that the presidential records are his personal records is fallacious. In simple terms, when he became a regular citizen, he stole public property.

To many Americans, Trump is a dangerous buffoon. Alluding to Trump possibly being in collusion with the Russians, Dave Chappelle, in his November 13, 2022, Saturday Night Live Monologue, asked, “Why he got all those documents in his house? What is this? This guy is famous for not reading his press briefings. Now, all of a sudden he’s got 10,000 documents in his house, gonna catch up on his reading list?” (11:32) ([64\) Dave Chappelle Stand-Up Monologue - SNL - YouTube](#))

Giving the ex-president the benefit of the doubt, Rachael Maddow reported on November 15, 2022, that officials in the F.B.I, believe that there is the possibility that “we appear to be left with a good-news, bad-news situation. The good news is the former president apparently didn’t intend to sell or misuse the classified secrets he took. The bad news is, the reporting presents Trump as some kind of man-child who saw official documents as toys and trophies that he couldn’t stand the thought of losing — despite the fact that they didn’t belong to him.” [Maddow Blog | Officials reportedly think they know why Trump took classified docs \(msn.com\)](#)

I’ve heard it said, “History is written by the victors.” I’ve never heard it said, “...by the losers.”



Howard Barlow

“Shucks #1” Bronze



Stephen Robison

“Flash” Ceramic

ART FOR THE BLIND

Jampa Dorje, Staff Reporter

What is beauty? It’s often been said, “Beauty is in the eye of the beholder,” and this might be so, but if you are blind, beauty is felt by the handler.

The term *aesthetics* is a modern term. The ancients conceived of aesthetics as “sensation” or as a response to stimulation upon the different sense faculties, hearing, seeing, touching, smelling, and tasting. In his treatise, *Aesthetica*, Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten (1706-1757), a German philosopher, gave the word a new usage: “taste” in the sense of a person’s ability to judge what is considered beautiful or worthy of value (Wiki). This is how we use the term today. Or, at least until recently. A new form of aesthetics is emerging, called Disability Aesthetics, which reveals to us that an understanding of disability is crucial to the way we understand modern art (*Disability Aesthetics*, Tobin Siebers, University Michigan Press, 2010).

In his October 2019 Poetry Magazine essay, “Tactile Art,” deafblind poet John Lee Clark writes about art he can touch: “What shall we call it—tactile grammar, semiotics of touch, Protactile aesthetics, tactiletics? True tactile art must have language. It should express and extract meaning. Texture, contour, temperature, density, give, recoil, adsorption, and many other elements are units in this language.”

The message in Clark’s essay has guided Professor Gregg Schlanger on his mission to find art

for a new residential hall at the Washington State School for the Blind in Vancouver, Washington. Schlanger, an installation artist and Chairman of CWU's Department of Art and Design, is known for his community-oriented art projects. I asked him what inspired him about this project, and he said, "I love a challenge." The State Arts Commission paired Schlanger with Chris Downey, the architect for the project.

Downey is blind. He was not born blind. He was a practicing architect before a tumor affected his optic nerve and caused his blindness. Undeterred, he turned this challenging experience into an opportunity. He retrained himself in the basic skills necessary to live as a blind person and was then able to create braille-like architectural drawings and an innovative way to make alterations to standard drawings. ([Chris Downey | Architectural Digest](#))



One of the first artworks Schlanger purchased for the residence hall is by Dell Fine Art, a blind sculptor born in London to Jamaican immigrants. He now lives in Portland, Oregon. After blindness brought an end to his textile design business, he turned to three-dimensional assemblage art and wood carving. "Piece of the Pie" (2019) incorporates Braille and is made for a hands-on experience. According to his website: "Del seeks to reclaim or establish a portrayal of Black folk in the history of Western culture. Inherently political, his work aspires to be accessible to an inquisitive audience that enters with an open heart and mind."

Another blind artist whose works will be present in the residence hall is Michael Naranjo. On one occasion he said: "Being blind makes the pace of life slower; you can't walk fast or grab for things quickly. Life is more gentle and soft and the change brought my creative energies out."

Here is a biographical note that I received from Gregg Schlanger: "In 1968, after just a few months in Vietnam, Michael Naranjo was blinded by a grenade. While recuperating in the hospital in Japan, the wounded 23-year-old asked a volunteer for some modeling clay. He'd lost the use of his right hand; with his left, he sculpted a small figure and began his career as a sculptor. Naranjo's sculptures often feature the narratives of his childhood: native dances, eagles and buffalo, women carrying water. But his work is wide-ranging — he sculpts mythical creatures, such as mermaids and centaurs, as well as cherubs and nudes. The forms he creates are simple and bold, but the surfaces have a varied texture that viewers are encouraged to touch." The piece shown here is entitled "Rudolph."



Among the nine artists chosen to present art for the residence hall, Schlanger picked works by two members of the CWU Art and Design faculty: Howard Barlow, who teaches sculpture, and Stephen Robison, who teaches ceramics (see above). He also picked Crista Ann Ames, who is a resident artist and Studio Manager at Gallery One in Ellensburg. The biographical note that Schlanger sent me reads:

“Crista Ann Ames is a sculptor working primarily in ceramics and textiles. Through the layering of mythology, iconography and personal narrative, Crista explores how our own animal nature relates to the ways we establish and sustain personal relationships. Raised on a small hobby farm in Washington State, Crista often draws on her own experiences to explore pastoral life, animal husbandry, women’s craft, and fertility.” The work shown here: “Lamb’s Head.”



Howard Barlow says, “Shuck #1” was already cast before the call came, and he felt these this bronze would be just right for the residence hall because of the sensuousness of the shell shapes.

Stephen Robison says his works have “Viruses and Diatom influences.” I asked him if he has an aesthetic theory, and he told me he thinks of line and color and occasionally a word comes into his mind but that mostly he focuses on “calligraphic reference points.”

Other artists involved in this project are Rachael Dorn, John Furniss, Chris Gryder, and Allen Moe.

Chris Downey, in his TED talk, says, “In the disability community, there is a saying, that there are only two kinds of people, those who have disabilities and those who haven’t found theirs yet.” [Chris Downey: Design with the blind in mind - Bing video](#) (9:12) He continues: “If you design cities with the blind in mind, you’ll have a rich, walkable network of sidewalks with a dense array of options and choices all available at street level. If you design a city with the blind in mind, sidewalks will be predictable and generous.” In this sense, designing for the blind works both ways

in making the world a more comfortable place for everyone to live. It is an attractive proposition to reach out to those who are limited in their appreciation of the visual world that surrounds us, and they can reach out to us with their Insight.

According to John Lee Clark:

The goal of the Protactile movement is for us to get, do, and make everything in our own way. After we peeled our language away from visual sign language and remade it completely, reciprocally, and proprioceptively tactile, Protactile storytelling, Protactile poetry, and Protactile theater quickly emerged. It makes sense that those forms would come first, as they do not require that we buy anything or lug equipment around or hammer something together. Just ourselves and each other. Protactile theater, though, is starting to play with costumes and props. Does this mean Protactile art is next?

And so, the mission of Gregg Schlanger and the work of the artists he selected for the project at Washington State School for the Blind is in step with the times. A Protactile Art movement is well underway.



