

# Noted

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*Editors:* Nora Zufferey, Aïcha Bouchelaghem, and Emily Smith

*Sub-Editors:*

Ana Paula Bravo Verduzco, Elisa Blais, Claudia Carrillo González, Valérie Fivaz,  
Holly Ann Lavergne, Emily Brinson

*Contributors:*

David Jaques-Olivier Bovet, Claudia Carrillo, Valérie Fivaz,  
Cristofe J. Marques, Prof. Debora Madsen, Laís Maia Machado  
River Orsini, Camila Oliveira Querino, Nora Zufferey

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Université de Genève

Faculté des Lettres

Département de langue et littérature anglaises

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## Editor's Letter

CHATGPT

Write an editor's letter for a university English Literature journal for an issue entitled "Afterlives".

It is my pleasure to introduce the latest issue of our university's English Literature journal, entitled "Afterlives." This issue delves into the complex and fascinating topic of what happens to literature after its initial creation, how it continues to exist and influence readers long after its publication.

The theme of "Afterlives" invites us to consider how literature can transcend its historical and cultural contexts, how it can be revived, reinterpreted, and reimagined in different contexts and by different generations of readers. The contributions in this issue explore a wide range of perspectives on this theme, from the afterlives of literary characters and authors themselves to the afterlives of literary movements and genres.

One of the highlights of this issue is a thought-provoking essay that examines the afterlife of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, tracing the enduring appeal of this classic novel and its many adaptations and interpretations in popular culture. Another compelling piece looks at the afterlife of Jane Austen's works, exploring how her novels have been appropriated and reimagined by contemporary authors.

Other contributions include an analysis of the afterlives of African American literature, a discussion of the afterlives of Shakespearean tragedy, and a review of recent scholarship on the afterlife of Romanticism. Taken together, these essays offer a rich and diverse exploration of the many ways in which literature continues to live and evolve long after its initial creation.

As always, the aim of our journal is to foster lively and informed debate among scholars and students of English literature. We hope that this issue on "Afterlives" will inspire new ideas and insights, and we look forward to hearing your feedback.

Sincerely,  
 [Your Name]  
 Editor-in-Chief, University English Literature Journal

## Editor's Letter, the Second

AICHA BOUCHELAGHAM, EMILY SMITH, AND NORA ZUFFEREY

The study of afterlives has always been spurred by urgency. How else do we place ourselves in the universe but by connecting past to present?

Arguably, though, this pursuit has rarely been as urgent as it is today. Our words are, as we speak, being gobbled up by a machine that spits them back at us in the most statistically likely order. As any diligent student of BA5 will tell you, the idea of "harvesting" the content of others in order to turn it to your own uses is an old one. Ben Jonson (1573-1637) insists that a poet should not be

"a creature that swallows what it takes in crude, raw, or undigested, but that feeds with an appetite, and hath a stomach to concoct, divide, and turn all into nourishment [...] to draw forth out of the best and choicest flowers, with the bee, and turn all into honey."

It is this suggestion of transformation, nectar turning into honey, which unifies the contributions to this issue. But bees don't only fly to the statistically most likely flowers. (In fact, according to engineers, it's a mystery that they can fly at all.) At a best guess, their flight paths are dictated by a mixture of skill, intuition, and sheer randomness. Literary afterlives see material harvested in much the same way.

In their own fashion, each of the contributions to this edition engage with the notion of this random-but-reasoned recycling. What is communicated most clearly is the rigorous intellectual engagement with the past which afterlives entail, and the affective implications which this (at times strained) interaction produces. What does it mean to recycle, redeploy, recontextualise? Does doing so have ethical implications? When faced with an afterlife, do we learn more about the past, or simply our present?

We invite you to explore these - and more - issues with us throughout this edition. We can promise what ChatGPT cannot: none of what follows is statistically likely, nor simply made up.

# *Moral Interpretations of Humor and Laughter in Shakespeare's Problem Plays*

*CRISTOFER J. MARQUES*

Although English Renaissance drama has been thoroughly conceptualized by many critics and historians, three of William Shakespeare's plays from the middle of his career seem to peculiarly resist any form of theoretical and generic classification – *All's Well That Ends Well*, *Measure for Measure*, and *Troilus and Cressida*. The singularity of these three plays has led several critics to arrange them under one label imported from the late nineteenth century called "problem plays" (Boas, 1896). Numerous definitions emerged from this reductive title hence contributing to the peculiarity of these three plays. One of the key critical views on this topic comes from philologist William Witherle Lawrence in his work *Shakespeare's Problem Comedies* (1931), in which he wrote:

The essential characteristic of a problem play ... is that a perplexing and distressing complication in human life is presented in a spirit of high seriousness ... the theme is handled so as to arouse not merely interest or excitement, or pity or amusement, but to probe the complicated interrelations of character and action, in a situation admitting of different ethical interpretations .... The 'problem' is not like one in mathematics, to which there is a single true solution, but is one of conduct, as to which there are no fixed and immutable laws. Often it cannot be reduced to any formula, any one question, since human life is too complex to be so neatly simplified. (4)

In his definition of a "probledm play", W.W. Lawrence dismisses the traditional generic classification of a drama by subsiding primarily (primary?) and entertaining feelings specific to Tragedy and Comedy such as "interest or excitement, or pity or amusement" (4). Instead, he argues that a "problem play" shall essentially revolve around complex social dynamics ultimately leading to a serious and complicated thought process on numerous ethical interpretations. Thus, according to Lawrence, the reductive term of "problem" unfolds multiple interpretations with regard to morality due to the complexity of human nature. As a means to demonstrate Lawrence's point, I have chosen to focus on humor and laughter from the classical and Christian perspectives since they both appear as the most influential authorities for the Renaissance writers.

Despite the multiple views on the generic classification of the "problem plays", the cata-

## ACADEMIA

logue of Shakespeare's First Folio clearly categorizes *All's Well That Ends Well* and *Measure for Measure* as Comedies. Indeed, the two plays seem to contain numerous moments of laughter emerging from both the characters present in the play and the audience. With regards to classical and Christian ethics, Shakespeare's comic scenes in *All's Well That Ends Well* and *Measure for Measure* can be interpreted in various ways.

Among all the classical philosophers who commented on humor and laughter, Plato appears as the pioneer figure on the matter. Indeed, the Athenian philosopher is at the origin of one of the earliest philosophical theses on humor and laughter – “The Superiority Theory”. This theory revolves around the idea that mirth emerges from the inadequacy and ridiculousness of others, hence reflecting an expression of scorn from the one laughing. However, although Plato emphasizes the relation between malice and humor, he does not neglect the enjoyment of laughter. Indeed, in one of his latest works *Philebus* (360-347BC), Plato discusses through a series of Socratic dialogues the interests of a life of pleasure against a life of intelligence, and comments on laughter: “It follows from this argument, then, that when we laugh at the ridiculous aspects of our friends, the admixture of pleasure in our malice produces a mixture of pleasure and distress” (50a). Therefore, since the enjoyment that provides humor and laughter is necessarily mixed with malice, a feeling of distress emerges which confirms the ethical issues that impose mirth according to Plato.

In his last work *Laws* (360 BC) the Athenian philosopher also started to explore the genesis of a potential virtuous use of laughter by praising its ability to communicate bitter truths and to illustrate disagreeable conducts in order to learn from them. However, these Platonic thoughts on humor and laughter only appear as sketches that will eventually be developed by his successor, Aristotle.

Aristotle shared his teacher's degrading interpretations of humor and laughter mentioned previously, notably in relation to “The Superiority Theory”. However, unlike Plato, Aristotle also considered a less pessimistic view of humor, which, according to him, can emerge from incongruity and not necessarily malice. Furthermore, in his work *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle theorizes Plato's sketchy thoughts on the virtuous use of humor and laughter by establishing a morally correct application:

Those who go to excess in raising laughs seem to be vulgar buffoons. They stop at nothing to raise a laugh, and care more about that than about saying what is seemly and avoiding pain to the victims of the joke. Those who would never say anything themselves to raise a laugh, and even object when other people do it, seem boorish and stiff. Those

who joke in appropriate ways are called witty. (4.8.3)

Here, Aristotle proposes a spectrum of humor and laughter in which at the one end, those who pursue immoderate humor are qualified as “vulgar buffoons” and at the other, those who hold on to excessive seriousness as “boorish and stiff” people. Consequently, the proper use of humor appears as temperate and reflects the wittiness of the virtuous individual. Succinctly, according to the pioneering works of Plato and Aristotle on the classical ethics of humor and laughter, one can conclude that malicious and excessive mirth is produced by dull individuals and considered as morally wrong, whereas incongruous and temperate laughter is perceived as virtuous and attributed to witty characters. Despite Aristotle's effort, early Christian ethics on humor and laughter appear as reluctant, if not even more, than Plato's “Superiority Theory”. Indeed, as many church fathers like to remind: “Jesus wept but never laughed” (Peter J. Leithart). Moreover, similarly to Platonic theorisation, laughter seems to be reserved for scornful individuals, as reminded in the New Testament: “And all wept, and bewailed her: but he said, Weep not; she is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn, knowing that she was dead” (Luke 8:52-53). Therefore, early Christian ethics on humor and laughter essentially share with the classical philosophers the malicious quality of laughter and hence its immorality.

One of the most notable comic characters in *All's Well That Ends Well* is Paroles. Indeed, from the start of the play, Bertram's companion is presented as a ridiculous character by Helen: “And yet I know him a notorious liar, / Think him a great way fool, solely a coward.” (1.1.101) This negative description of Paroles is emphasized by the fact that he already has entered the scene when Helen ridicules him, which confirms his foolishness to the audience since he seems totally unaware of what is happening around him. The first appearance of Paroles in the play therefore appears as comic to the audience despite him not having said a single word yet. However, with regards to the classical ethics on humor and laughter mentioned previously, the mirth that procures the unawareness of Paroles to the spectators is considered as morally wrong since it is based on ridicule and hence implies a form of mockery. Similarly, since the audience's laughter is characterized by an expression of scorn, Christian ethics also identify this comic scene as immoral. Therefore, Paroles emerges from the start as the comic character of the play but the laughter he procures for the audience seems to rely on his ridicule and is hence not ethical from both the classical and early Christian perspectives.

When Paroles eventually starts speaking, his character acts in perfect accordance with Helen's negative description of him, hence ruining a potential moral scene of laugh-

ter produced by incongruity. Indeed, Bertram's friend starts by lying to Helen on the subject of virginity: "Virginity, by being once lost, may be ten times found; by being ever kept, it is ever lost." (1.1.130-131) Here, Paroles provides an eloquent statement, as attested by the structure of the parallelism. However, although in terms of style this statement seems worthwhile, Paroles' reasoning is in fact fallacious since virginity is by definition a dichotomic state which can be either kept or lost. As a result, Paroles illustrates the meaning of his name – "words" in French – as he hides behind superficial speeches instead of proposing accurate statements and worthy actions. Subsequently, Paroles keeps embodying Helen's negative description of him by acting foolishly: "To speak on the part of virginity is to accuse your mothers, which is most infallible disobedience" (1.1.135). Abstinence being a private choice, it does not have any correlation with one's mother. Therefore, Paroles now appears not as a liar to the audience, but as a fool because of his repeated erroneous statements. Finally, Bertram's companion appears as a coward by abruptly leaving Helen as soon as he gets the chance to, instead of trying to reach a conclusion on the topic of virginity: "Little Helen, farewell" (1.1.185). Once Paroles is given a getaway, he displays a condescending behavior towards Helen by referring to her as "little" and then leaves. Helen notes that he must have been born under Mars "[w]hen he was retrograde" (1.1.195) since he cowardly flees conflictual situations as would do a contrary figure of the brave god of war. Therefore, by conforming to Helen's negative view of him, Paroles rejects comedy through incongruity and only appears as humorous when he is the object of derision, which is immoral according to classical and Christian ethics.

The ridicule of Paroles reaches its pinnacle when the Dumaines humiliate him outside the army's camp in Florence. Unlike the comic presentation of Paroles by Helen, this scene of laughter strikes the audience but also the characters present in the play. Indeed, although the main objective of the First and Second Lord Dumaine is to expose Paroles's cowardness to Bertram, they both find amusement in doing so. When Paroles approaches the army's camp after having faked an attempt to recover the military drum from the enemy, the Dumaines and their companions ambush him, pretending to be foreign soldiers: "Boskos vauvado. I understand thee and can speak thy tongue. Kerely-bonto, sir, betake thee to thy faith, for seventeen poniards are at thy bosom" (4.1.72-74). Although the nonsense language spoken by the soldier is mainly used for reasons of credibility to ensure that their scheme works, it also creates a ludicrous effect. This humorous effect indicates that the Dumaines and their soldiers are also having fun while exposing Paroles. This comic moment also extends to the audience who is made complicit in this immoral scene of laughter in which Paroles is yet again the object of derision. However, this scene also creates an incongruous situation since the nonsense language spoken by

the soldier stands out from the rest. This scene of laughter can hence be interpreted as immoral according to Christian ethics on laughter since it reflects an expression of scorn for Paroles' misfortune, and moral based on Aristotle's ethics on humor since it produces an incongruous scene.

Therefore, although the character of Paroles in *All's Well That Ends Well* offers numerous scenes of laughter that essentially rely on his ridiculousness, it appears that Shakespeare also provides morally dubious scenes in the play which cannot be strictly interpreted according to one precise philosophy of humor and laughter.

If *Measure for Measure* first starts on a serious note, the play eventually takes a comical turn when Elbow, Pompey, and Froth enter the scene. As the Duke's constable, Elbow abruptly brings the two men before Angelo because both have been found in a brothel. Quickly, Elbow appears as a humorous character, notably due to his tendency to speak in malapropisms: "I do lean upon justice, sir, and do bring in here before your good honour two notorious benefactors" (2.1.47-49). Here, due to their phonetic resemblance, Elbow mistakenly uses the word "benefactors" as in fact he means "malefactors" as would suggest his decision to bring them before Angelo. Although this malapropism illustrates the constable's inadequacy to speak intelligibly, it also seems to offer an incongruous situation between the semantical expectations of the audience and the actual statement of Elbow.

Similarly, when asked by Angelo to clarify what the two men are, the Duke's constable exposes two opposed thoughts: "I know not well what they are, but precise villains they are" (2.1.52-53). With this statement, Elbow's ignorance in the first sentence contrasts with his precision in the second one, which is emphasized by the parallel structure of the sentence. Therefore, Elbow's statement seems, yet again, confusing, since he pretends that he does not know the two men well, but then proceeds to define "precise[ly]" what they are. Once again, this scene of laughter produces two different comic interpretations. On the one hand, Elbow's confusing statement can be perceived as his inability to express clear sentences, which would emphasize his ridiculousness and hence identify this comic scene as immoral. On the other hand, this confusion produces, yet again, a form of incongruity since Elbow undermines the audience's expectations with his second "precise" sentence, hence categorizing this scene of laughter as moral according to Aristotle. Therefore, the laughter produced by Elbow in this scene can be interpreted in two different ways according to classical and early Christian ethics on humor and laughter. After Elbow's confusing entrance, Escalus seems to illustrate a morally correct use of humor. Indeed, as a means to react to the confusing statements of the Duke's constable

mentioned previously, Escalus points out ironically: "This comes off well. Here's a wise officer" (2.1.56). Although this antiphrasis reflects an expression of scorn with regards to Elbow's inadequacy to speak intelligibly, Escalus' moderate use of irony also suggests a virtuous application of humor as presented by Aristotle. Therefore, the character of Escalus seems to challenge the Manichean view of classical philosophers on humor and laughter as it appears that amusement can be simultaneously perceived as both moral and immoral.

Identically to Escalus, Pompey also seems to dispute the dualistic perception of humor and laughter proposed by the classical philosophers. Indeed, when Angelo asks Elbow to clarify the motives of his abrupt entrance as well as his name, Pompey decides to intervene and declares: "He cannot, sir; he's out at elbow" (2.1.59). Pompey uses the idiom from the Renaissance period "to be out at elbows" which according to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary means "wearing torn or worn-out clothes." In this situation, the expression has a comic connotation since Pompey indirectly answers Angelo's original request by pronouncing Elbow's name. As a result, despite the expression having a quite demeaning signification, the amusement it provides essentially emerges from Pompey's pun and not from Elbow's ridiculousness. Furthermore, this wordplay also illustrates the witty quality of Pompey which was viewed as a sign of virtuosity by Aristotle, as mentioned previously. So far, the character of Pompey hence emerges as the closest one to approach an appropriate use of humor and laughter according to classical and early Christian ethics since he appears in this scene as a moderate and witty individual.

Pompey confirms his wittiness in the rest of the scene, especially when he uses Elbow's malapropisms to his advantage. After being deliberately discursive when asked what happened to the constable's wife, Pompey eventually turns the situation around through Elbow's misuse of the word "respected": "First, an it like you, the house is a respected house; next, this is a respected fellow; and his mistress is a respected woman" (2.1.155-157). Here, the Duke's constable means "suspected" not "respected" which creates a comic effect for two different reasons, as explained previously. Pompey then utilizes this mistake to reverse the accusations: "Sir, she was respected with him before he married with her" (2.1.163-164). Pompey accuses the constable of having had premarital sex with his wife, which is the central crime in this play. The intentional but subtle misuse of the word "respected" to taunt Elbow confirms Pompey's ability to use words as a means to create humor. However, despite Pompey's wittiness, he does not appear as a moderate comic character since he seems to always try to raise a laugh. Therefore, according to Aristotle's ethics on humor and laughter, the character of Pompey cannot be considered as perfectly moral despite his wittiness, since he is excessive in his use of humor.

Despite the numerous scenes of laughter in *All's Well That Ends Well* and *Measure for Measure*, it often proves impossible to find comic moments which strictly concord with one specific moral philosophy on humor and laughter. Therefore, Shakespeare seems to question the moral interpretations of comedy by invoking morally dubious scenes. Nonetheless, in order to discuss thoroughly Shakespeare's moral questioning of humor and laughter in the "problem plays", it appears as necessary to consider *Troilus and Cressida* despite it not being labelled as a Comedy.

Unlike *All's Well That Ends Well* and *Measure for Measure*, which are explicitly considered as Comedies in Shakespeare's First Folio, *Troilus and Cressida* is labelled as a Tragedy. Nonetheless, similarly to characters like Paroles or Elbow which would provide pure comedy in their respective plays, *Troilus and Cressida* has Pandarus who, to a lesser degree, helps generate several scenes of laughter. Consequently, it appears as relevant to consider this third play with regard to humor and laughter despite its generic classification in the Folio as a Tragedy.

From the start of the play, Pandarus emerges as a comic character to the audience. Indeed, when Troilus shares with Cressida's uncle his inability to fight because of his love for his niece, Pandarus answers: "Well I have told you enough of this; for my part, I'll not meddle nor make no farther. He that will have a cake out of the wheat must tarry the grinding" (1.1.13-15). Here, Pandarus first states that he will not express his opinion on the matter since he has already done it enough. Nonetheless, he then proceeds in his second statement to advise Troilus on the importance of persistence. If these opposed declarations create an incongruous situation between what the audience expected after the first statement and what Pandarus actually declared, they can also illustrate Pandarus' inadequacy to formulate a coherent thought process. However, contrary to Elbow's contradictory comments mentioned previously, which were highlighted by the confusion of the other characters in the play, Troilus does not seem bothered by Pandarus' opposing statements. Therefore, from the audience's perspective, the mirth produced by Pandarus can appear as both moral and immoral whether his opposed statements are interpreted as a sign of incongruity or inadequacy. Nonetheless, from Troilus' angle, this scene is not even perceived as comic, which highlights the importance of perspective in comic situations.

In the following scene, Cressida discusses with her servant Alexander the reason for Hector's anger. When Alexander explains to her that Ajax joining the Greek army is problematic since he is such an exceptional warrior who "stands alone" (1.2.16), Cressida

answers to him: "So do all men, unless they are drunk, sick, or have no legs." (1.2.17-18) Here, Cressida's response is humorous because she manipulates the semantical richness of the verb "to stand" in order to provide an incongruous answer. Whereas Alexander's statement bolsters Ajax's credentials as a warrior, Cressida's pragmatic answer undermines his martial skills by placing him on the same level as other men. Therefore, Cressida illustrates her wittiness through her aptitude to manipulate words as a means to create a surprising comic effect based on incongruity. From the audience's perspective, Cressida hence appears as an appropriate comic figure according to classical and early Christian ethics, since her humor does not revolve around one's misfortune but incongruities.

When Pandarus joins the conversation between Cressida and her servant Alexander on Hector's anger, he eventually brings up Troilus by stating that he is also a considerable threat to the Greek army. Consequently, Cressida and Pandarus start debating whether Troilus or Hector is the better man. Whereas the Trojan woman seems to believe that Hector is by far the greater man and hence that the two brothers should not even be compared, her uncle unsurprisingly supports the younger brother as a means to convince his niece to return Troilus' feelings for her. Stupefied by her niece's opinion on the matter, Pandarus questions Cressida's ability to recognize a man when she sees one, to which she replies: "Ay, if I ever saw him before and knew him" (1.2.64). Once again, Cressida appears as a witty character by playing with the semantical ambiguity of the word "man". Whereas Pandarus uses the word "man" with a masculine and virile connotation, Cressida considers in her answer the literal meaning of the word "man" from a biological standpoint. Indeed, Cressida's answer can be interpreted with a sexual undertone as the adverb "before" could mean according to the OED "In front, in or on the anterior side" (1.a.). Therefore, Cressida implies that in order to recognize a man, she has to see him from the front as a means to see his genitals. Moreover, the transitive verb "to know" can be defined by the OED as "To be sexually intimate with; esp. to have sexual intercourse with" (8.). These archaic definitions confirm the sexual undertone of Cressida's answer and hence demonstrate her wittiness through her ability to manipulate semantically ambiguous words as a means to create incongruous laughter to the audience. Therefore, although Pandarus does not seem to perceive Cressida's wittiness, this comic moment appears as morally appropriate from the audience's perspective since the amusement it procures is based on incongruities.

However, despite Cressida initially appearing as a morally appropriate comic character, she eventually starts to produce malicious laughter. In Pandarus' endeavor to depict Troilus as a perfect man, he mistakenly admits that the Trojan prince has dark skin,

which was not considered as an esthetic trait. As a means to correct himself, Pandarus clumsily states: "Faith, to say truth, brown and not brown" (1.2.93). Pandarus presents two paradoxical thoughts by saying that Troilus's skin is simultaneously dark and not dark. Cressida responds to this paradoxal statement: "To say the truth, true and not true" (1.2.94). Here, Cressida mimics the paradoxal structure of her uncle's statement as a means to express scorn for Pandarus' inability to produce a logical sentence which is immoral. Moreover, Cressida now also appears as excessive in her use of humor as she has already generated multiple comic moments in the span of one scene. Therefore, despite Cressida's morally correct use of humor at the start of the scene, she also appears as an immoral comic character because of her excessive and sometimes malicious use of laughter.

In conclusion, apart from some isolated instances, it appears as unworkable to find comic characters or scenes that fit perfectly and systematically in any specific moral category of humor and laughter presented by classical and early Christian philosophies. Indeed, in accordance with Lawrence's definition of the "problem play", the complexity that provides the dynamics between the characters in the play, their actions, and the audience, ultimately generates multiple ethical interpretations with regard to humor and laughter. As stated by Professor Leah Whittington in her essay 'Shakespeare's Virgil: empathy and *The Tempest*': "Shakespearean drama often takes its energy from the very conflation or juxtaposition of ethical registers" (98). Therefore, the presence of multiple morally dubious moments of laughter in the three "problem plays" appears as essential.

By invoking such equivocal moments, Shakespeare seems to question morality by presenting a wide range of characters from whom each spectator can freely decide if he wants to relate to them, admire them, or dislike them. With regard to humor and laughter, the audience can determine whether a comic character or action is moral or immoral. However, from a general perspective on the "problem plays", it appears that the intellectual liberty that gives Shakespeare to his audience is in fact the central problem behind *All's Well That Ends Well*, *Measure for Measure*, and *Troilus and Cressida*.

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# *The Books within the Songs: Taylor Swift and Better Oblivion Community Center*

*LAÍS MALA MACHADO*

Music can help introduce classic literature to new audiences, since young people nowadays find it easier to relate to this type of media than books. Some songwriters use their music to introduce literature to this newer generation and inspire them to look for the books or authors mentioned. When writing, most successful lyricists tend to draw inspiration from their lives and experiences. However, sometimes they retell the stories of books or authors. There can be no doubt that literature helps lyricists with their craft.

For instance, the song 'Dylan Thomas' from Better Oblivion Community Center's 2019 album is inspired by the 20th-century Welsh poet of the same name. It starts with the line "It was quite early one morning", which is the name of a collection of prose by Dylan Thomas called *Quite Early One Morning* (1945). Later on in the song, they sing "So sick of being honest / I'll die like Dylan Thomas / A seizure on the barroom floor". The barroom in question is the White Horse Tavern, famously frequented by Dylan Thomas in the early 1950s. The reference to a "seizure" is also ironic, since the poet did not, in fact, die of a seizure. Finally, they use a phrase common to addiction recovery groups: "They say you've gotta fake it / At least until you make it", which references Dylan Thomas being an alcoholic.

There are many other artists who similarly use literary resources to write their songs. One singer who frequently uses literature in their songs is Taylor Swift. Famously, Swift's song 'Love Story' (*Fearless*, 2008) is inspired by Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet. Much like the play, it tells the story of a young couple ("We were both young when I first saw you") whose families do not approve of their relationship ("And my daddy said, 'Stay away from Juliet'"). In Swift's interpretation, the story is narrated by Juliet. She recreates the fifth scene of Act 1 of Romeo and Juliet, where the couple first meet, with the lyrics "See the lights, see the party, the ball gowns / See you make your way through the crowd / And say, 'Hello'". The lyrics even mention Juliet's iconic balcony, which is the setting of one of the play's most famous scenes, nicknamed "The Balcony Scene" (in Act 2 Scene 2): "I'm standing there / On a balcony in summer air". Unlike Shakespeare's play, however, the song has a happy ending, in which Romeo gets Juliet's father's permission to marry her ("I talked to your dad, go pick out a white dress"). Swift also

mentions Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* (1850): "Cause you were Romeo, I was a scarlet letter". In Hawthorne's novel, Hester Prynne is sentenced to wear a scarlet "A" for the rest of her life because of adultery. The novel is similar to Romeo and Juliet, since both Hester Prynne and Shakespeare's young couple have been ostracised from society and their families because of their romantic choices. 'Love Story' is not a retelling of Shakespeare's play, but more of a comparison between the two fictional love stories. The couple in Swift's song are not Romeo and Juliet per se, but they both feel like their situation is similar to that of the Shakespearean characters. The singer has said that Romeo and Juliet could have been the greatest love story if it weren't for its tragic ending, which is why the protagonists get married at the end of the song.

Additionally, Swift's song 'the lakes' (*folklore*, 2020) is another great illustration of how songwriters are inspired by literature. 'The lakes' is all about the Lake Poets, who were a group of poets that lived in the Lake District in England during the first half of the nineteenth century. The Lake Poets most famously include William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and Robert Southey; however, the song takes particular interest in Wordsworth. In *Folklore: the long pond studio sessions* (2020), Swift mentions not only Wordsworth as her inspiration for this song, but John Keats, who went for an excursion in the Lake District in 1818. The song first mentions poetry with the line "Is it romantic how all my elegies eulogise me?". An elegy is a type of poem that is usually written to commemorate the dead. This idea of death also appears in the first line of the chorus ("Take me to the Lakes where all the poets went to die"). She also refers to her lover as her "muse", a term usually used to talk about an artist's or poet's inspiration. Another mention of poetry is in the line: "I want auroras and sad prose". In the line "Tell me what are my words worth", Swift plays with the double meaning of "words worth" and "Wordsworth" by directly referring to the Lakes poet. In fact, in the subtitles of the video, the line is written as "tell me what are my Wordsworth". Swift says she wants to get away to the Lake District to live a peaceful life with her lover, just like all those poets before her, where no one can find them. She wants to see the beauty in nature, without anyone there to bother her, which is shown when she says "A red rose grew up out of ice frozen ground / With no one around to tweet it". In an interview with *Vulture* in 2020, Aaron Dessner, Swift's collaborator on *folklore*, says the following about "the lakes": "There's a kind of Greek poetry to it. Tragic poetry, I guess." It is a song about escapism and feeling like you do not belong, which is something poets have been writing about for centuries, and which is a feeling the romantic Lake Poets certainly shared.

Allegedly, the song "ivy" (*evermore*, 2020) by Swift is about Emily Dickinson's relationship with her sister-in-law Susan Gilbert, which, according to recent scholar-

ship, might have been romantic or erotic (Hart 1990, Comment 2001). The song tells the story of a married woman having an affair, and many fans have speculated that it could be about Emily and Susan's secret love affair, despite the fact that Dickinson isn't explicitly mentioned in the song. The song starts with the line "How's one to know? / I'd meet you where the spirit meets the bone". Interestingly, *evermore* was released on the 10th of December, Emily Dickinson's birthday. Swift also said that the album cover is inspired by a "girl sleepwalking through the forest in a night-gown in 1830", the year Dickinson was born - although she could not have walked, this loose temporal connection does evoke the spirit of Dickinson. Like Swift, Dickinson also ends one of her poems addressed to Gilbert with the word "forevermore".

These are just a few examples of how songs are a great way of talking about and introducing literature to younger generations. It shows how singers and lyricists can inspire fans to find out more about texts or authors that they may not have heard of before. Literature is also a great tool for songwriting. So, let's all listen to the songs within the books, or read the books within the song.

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# The Importance of Canon: Historiae Literariae or the Way to Remember

DAVID JAQUES-OLIVIER BOVET

Over the years and the centuries, pieces of literature have entered and exited the canon, as a fluid, continuous flow. Much like language, which is as alive as its users, literature is meant to constantly evolve and change. The question here is not whether this or that piece of literature is worthy enough to enter “the canon”, and whether these other pieces should leave it. On the contrary, the aim is to interrogate what makes the canon as attractive to readers as it is, and why certain books are privileged or chosen repeatedly compared to others. To explore this topic, this essay will focus on three primary axes: a definition of canon and a comparison between the seventeenth century and contemporary days, the characteristics deemed relevant to make a canon and the impact on nowadays’ canonical literature.

First of all, it is essential to understand what a canon is, and why it is – and has been – so important throughout history forming the basis of many literary studies. A canon is defined by the OED as “A general rule, fundamental principle, aphorism, or axiom governing the systematic or scientific treatment of a subject, e.g. canons of descent or inheritance; a logical, grammatical, or metrical canon; canons of criticism, taste, art, etc.” (OED, 2b). However, another definition is given by the OED, which explains this term as “The collection or list of books of the Bible accepted by the Christian Church as genuine and inspired” (OED, 4). What can be outlined from these two definitions is that the canon has religious origins, and therefore should be understood and studied with this formative influence in mind. Even though it has greatly evolved to integrate new and different authors, the canon’s original goal was to distinguish “good” literature from “bad” literature, and this idea is still very much ingrained in our minds, even in the twenty-first century. The question we should ask then is: what has changed? And the answer lies in “how” an author can be considered canonical. Is it because of gender? Race? Style of writing? Recognition by contemporaries? The author’s own values? The message in the text? In the end, we need to question what the relevant criteria are to deem an author “worthy” of canonisation, or on the contrary, on which basis authors are deemed “not worthy enough” to enter into the canon.

In his article about the early modern canon and Thomas Pope Blount’s work, Kelsey Jackson Williams argues for the relevance of Blount in the creation of corpora. I have used this resource to outline the process of canonical creation in the early mod-

ern period and in particular the goal behind creating canons, as well as what criteria are used to decide which works are to be part of the corpus. Williams outlines the fact that Blount’s *Censura celebriorum authorum* “becomes a handbook to help the unwary library builder through a wilderness of potentially worthless texts”<sup>1</sup> and then goes on, claiming that “Author-centered *historiae literariae* were developed by antiquaries throughout the British Isles to manage and shape knowledge about writers.”<sup>2</sup> This particularly outlines two different yet similar goals in the seventeenth century, both making different uses of a specific canon. The first one intends to guide unlearned or lesser-learned people on their journey to acquire knowledge; the second one, which is a broader goal that includes the first one, is, “to manage and shape knowledge”. While this conception of the canon was broadly accepted in earlier centuries, the relationship to scholarship and erudition in the twenty-first century has changed drastically. Indeed, our contemporaries have aspired to broaden our horizons and gain interest in more fields. To compare today to the seventeenth century, it seems that we are experiencing a movement from what Blount defined in his *De re poetica* to the broader *Censura celebriorum authorum*. To be clearer, it seems that we are moving backwards to a broader understanding of what literature is, and instead of reducing it, we are looking at extending it.

To understand how exactly we are moving backwards, although not exactly as we will see later on, we must focus on the criteria that Blount used to decide which authors to include in his *historiae literariae*. The first aspect we can outline is the fact that “Blount includes no living writers in the *Poetica*.<sup>3</sup> Whilst this neglect might be understandable, given the little attention that is given by critics to living authors, we have seen, in our contemporary canons, the integration of either still alive or recently deceased authors, such as Toni Morrison (deceased in 2019) or Terry McMillan (currently 71 years old). Furthermore, Williams carefully points out that “prominent figures of [Blount’s] own time [...] are conspicuously absent”<sup>4</sup> and the use of the word “conspicuously” outlines the partial nature of creating a canon. Whilst Blount in the seventeenth century based his works on critical material that was offered by other critics, which therefore clearly outlines which literature was praised in his time, it is important to note that this method is still in use nowadays. A piece of literature is likely to enter the canon based on praise by critics, and universal enjoyment. However, there is one main

1 Kelsey Jackson Williams. “Canon before Canon, Literature before Literature: Thomas Pope Blount and the Scope of Early Modern Learning.” *Huntington Library Quarterly*, vol. 77, no. 2, 2014, pp. 177–99. JSTOR, <https://doi.org/10.1525/hlq.2014.77.2.177>. Accessed 5 Mar. 2023, p. 183.

2 Ibid. p. 190.

3 Ibid. p. 187.

4 Ibid. p. 185.

issue that was raised in recent years, and that led to the creation of sometimes entirely new modules in English departments in universities: notably featuring the integration of the works of people of colour, or, to be clearer, the diversification of the canon. To give a tangible experience, the module *Race, Writing and Decolonization*, at the University of Leeds, was created to integrate people of colour's works into a corpus, especially in the first year of English literature undergraduate studies. In the end, the aim of modern canons, compared to earlier canons, is not to be reductive, and to narrow the number of works studied; on the contrary, it is to continuously augment the canon, by continuously integrating new authors.

However, let us now focus on our modern canon, and especially whether works should be added to or deleted from it. Instead of wanting to delete, or forget works that would be deemed indecent nowadays, like Joseph Swetnam's anti-women pamphlet named *The Arraignment of Lewd, Idle, Froward, and Unconstant Women*, it is interesting to study them, to understand the impact that they had on their society. To keep our example going, Swetnam sparked the pamphlet war on the role of women in society, while also giving women writers the opportunity to rise, take their pen and answer to him, as Rachel Speght did in *A Mouzell for Melastomus*. As a more general claim, I would argue that many authors of earlier centuries would be deemed indecent for one reason or the other, let it be their misogyny, their strong religious beliefs, their racism, etc. The way into earlier corpora is not to totally ignore those authors, as they are part of the history of English literature, but instead, to use those views as a way into the text, to understand the context of writing, before stamping a text with an "offensive" label and moving on.

In the end, corpora are there to indicate and to guide, not to restrict. Therefore, readers of all backgrounds and levels are able to access literary works that they are interested in, while also gaining deeper knowledge on specific topics. It is, and probably will be for a long time, interesting to study the works of massive authors like Shakespeare or Austen, as they have successfully integrated the culture of a language. However, it is also interesting to focus on works of smaller, lesser-known authors, who wrote either in the same style but having political takes, or just other styles and/or other focuses. Consequently, while corpora are great tools to remember works, and can act as encyclopaedias of literature, it is important to keep in mind that their purpose was – and still is to an extent – to help people build an interesting library. In that regard, it is not because a piece of writing is not in a corpus that it is not worth remembering, it could simply be omitted for multiple factors, such as its original language, its date of publication (a work that has just been published cannot be part of a corpus, as there is not sufficient hindsight) or just its lesser impact upon audiences of its own time.

## *A Research Sneak Peek...*

WITH DEBORAH MADSEN

*Interview with Prof. Deborah Madsen, the principal investigator in the research project “Vegan Literary Studies: An American Textual History, 1776-1900.” The project is funded by the Fonds National Suisse. It was launched in August 2022 and will continue until July 2026.*

*1. Describe your project in five key-words*

## Legacy, justice, rights, intersectionality, ... and food

2. *What motivates you to pursue this research project?*

The primary motive of the project is the “sensibilisation” (to use the wonderfully expressive French word) of the public to the long history of “vegan” thought and practice (vegan is a shorthand expression signifying either vegan or vegetarian). The contemporary debate over fake meat – plant-based versus lab-grown meat, for instance – is not new. In the US, the impact of animal agriculture on the environment (like soil and water) was seen as problematic by some in the early nineteenth century, long before the emergence of the intensively destructive CAFOs (Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations) that characterize contemporary agri-business in the US. We want to draw attention to this fact.

My personal motivation is a bit more complex. I must admit that when it comes to research ideas, I am a bit like a magpie, picking up interesting “shiny” things and hoarding them for future use. One such snippet that I came across years ago and filed away for later was the episode in Benjamin Franklin’s autobiography where he explains why he became a vegetarian. This put into my thoughts the idea that diet and nationalism are deeply connected in discourses of US national formation. Another example is the media story about a fashion student who was planning to make a range of handbags and leather jackets from the cloned skin of the late designer Alexander McQueen. I find this fascinating because it intersects with another snippet that I have had stored for a long time, which concerns the binding of books with human skin. There is even a name for the practice: anthropodermic bibliopegy. Google it! The thing about snippets like this is that they do not mean very much in isolation. However, when placed in an appropriate context they can take on all sorts of significance. Rather obviously, the vegan refusal of all animal-based products (including books bound in animal skin and clothing made from animal leather), working in conjunction with extensive philosophical and literary theo-

rizing of animal exploitation, provides a very stimulating context within which to think about the cultural significance of skin. So yes, I collect interesting items of *information and sometimes they intersect in ways that suggest a research project.*

In the case of the "Vegan Literary Studies" project, over the years my snippets from Franklin and others have developed into a nascent bibliography of American vegan writers. At the same time, my research effort was centered in Indigenous studies, where I kept encountering a common, but not monolithic, philosophy that governs relations between many Indigenous cultures and co-inhabiting beings in their environments. For instance, the Anishinaabe concept of Mino Bimaadiziwin or "living the good life" is based on reciprocity and acknowledgment of the right of all creatures and creation to exist. This philosophy, as the motivating structure of certain videogame narratives created by Indigenous game designers, was my subject in a series of essays and is a topic on which I continue to publish. I was also pursuing my long-standing interest in ecofeminism, but a very important motive for the transformation of these interests into a full, externally-funded, project was one of the doctoral theses I was supervising. This was the project of Bryn Skibo, who successfully defended her thesis in 2020 and now teaches at Vancouver Island University in Canada. Put simply, Bryn was working on literary deconstructions of the anthropocentrism underpinning the human-animal binary, with specific reference to Margaret Atwood's fiction. The Faculté des Lettres generously funded a one-year post-doc position for Bryn. To this was added a research assistantship for Caroline Martin which was funded by the décharge I enjoy as recompense for my work in the Rectorat's mentoring program. Thus, in 2020-2021, Bryn, Caroline, and myself could work together to survey the field of US veg\*an literature and, on the basis of our findings, I was able to submit a research project proposal that was accepted by the Swiss National Science Foundation (Fonds National Suisse). That then is the "origin story" of the project!

To return to the original question, I am motivated by the impulse to let people know that the current debates about animal exploitation are not at all new. The same issues were debated in the nineteenth, and eighteenth and, in some cases, the seventeenth century. Of course, these issues historically include the health implications of refusing to eat animal flesh, but they also embrace the intersection between the transformation of living beings into meat and a whole range of oppressive practices that follow from the assumption that one species (humanity) is superior to, and entitled to exploit and consume, all others: the enslavement of "less than human" humans, for example; the oppression of women not least through women's fashions that often make use of animal body parts; the overuse and exhaustion of land, the pollution of oceans, rivers, and other waterways; and so on. Debates around these justice issues are not new, even if very little progress has been made – as we can see, unfortunately, in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report that was published in mid-March. I think the public

needs to know about the historic legacy of veg\*an reformers and the important role of literature in anticipating and offering productive responses to the environmental crisis.

*3. What phase of your project are you currently in, and which tasks are you carrying out to complete it? (And... what will be next?)*

The first phase of the project involved gathering all likely candidates for the title "veg\*an writer" and veg\*an text within the time span of the project, which starts in the middle of the eighteenth century, at the time when the USA was coming into existence as a nation, and 1900. In fact, one of my original motives or prompts was the episode in Benjamin Franklin's autobiography that I mentioned before. Finding the authors was a dynamic process, in that the list kept expanding while we tracked down digital editions of these writings: tracts, speeches, letters, periodical and newspaper articles, as well as poems, novels, plays, and so on. Having access to digital texts is important for the current phase of the work, which uses a list of keywords to search each text quickly (the Author Bibliography currently runs to more than 450 pages) for evidence of veg\*an relevance. The phase that will follow requires that each text identified as probably relevant is read in detail to extract information with which to create a metadata record for that text. Eventually, this information – such as the publication details and history, a summary of the text, links to other relevant texts by the same or another author – will appear on the project website in the form of a hyperlinked database.

At the same time, I am annotating selected texts (or textual excerpts) for publication on the project website along with a brief explanatory introduction and bibliography. Eventually these annotated texts will comprise a digital, web-based anthology of American veg\*an literature. So far, there is an excerpt from Louisa May Alcott's satirical sketch of life at Fruitlands, the vegan utopian community created by her father Bronson Alcott in the 1840s; there is an early veg\*an Thanksgiving menu by Emarel Freshel, who, along with her husband, was involved in the development of "fake meat" products; a rather dark festive short story by William Dean Howells, in which the Christmas turkeys "turn the tables" and eat the humans; and I am currently working on a poem written by a Shaker eldress, Martha Jane Anderson. The poem critiques the late nineteenth-century fashion for women to wear real, stuffed bird corpses (and other avian body parts) on their hats, by pointing out the irony that the exploitation of beautiful birds for ornamentation is not so different to the position of women whose primary function is to ornament the arm of their affluent husbands. The poem gestures to the contemporary dress reform movement, which was closely allied with other veg\*an social justice movements: the condemnation of whale-bone corsets, for instance, which restricted physical movement and promoted the image of weak "fainting ladies"; also during this period the anti-fur

movement was loudly building momentum. The connection between feminism, fashionable clothing, and the exploitation of both women and other-than-human animals is evoked powerfully in Anderson's poem. It is this kind of intersectionality among a range of social justice issues that the project seeks to expose.

4. *What is one text – literary, theoretical, or otherwise – you would recommend to anyone interested in finding out more about your research domain?*

I would be delighted if readers took a look at the project website ([www.unige.ch/vls](http://www.unige.ch/vls)) where the beginnings of a digital anthology of annotated historic texts can be found. In a more theoretical vein, Carol J. Adams's vegetarian feminist analyses of the animalization of women and the feminization of animals, as rhetorical strategies that enable the consumption of both in a carnist patriarchal culture, are very powerful. Her discussion of advertising images, in books like *The Sexual Politics of Meat* (1990), is particularly enlightening and also very disturbing; her website ([www.caroljadams.com](http://www.caroljadams.com)) is a great place to start.

## *A sneak peak of the findings of the Vegan Literary Studies Project...*

Scientific research in substitutes for meat and dairy products is not merely the result of the current market for vegan foods but can be traced back at least to the late nineteenth century. In 1889, John Harvey Kellogg, with his brother Will Keith Kellogg, founded the Sanitas Nut Food Company in order to experiment with nut-based meat substitutes. According to Laura J. Miller and Emilie Hardman, the Kelloggs' work on meat substitutes represents "the first truly . . . successful effort" to popularize fake meat as a dietary commodity (116).

Kellogg's commitment to the promotion of a vegan diet was primarily motivated by dietary concerns. Kellogg trained as a doctor and, in 1876, became the director of a medical sanitarium in Battle Creek, Michigan, where his wife, Ella Eaton Kellogg, conducted culinary experiments. Together, John and Ella Kellogg set out to create nourishing but also attractive and varied vegetarian menus for the sanitarium residents. Ella Kellogg created many vegetarian recipes using meat substitutes developed by Sanitas at the Bat-

tle Creek Sanitorium, such as Protose, Nuttolene, and Nuttose. In her 1896 cookbook, *Every-Day Dishes and Every-Day Work*, she claims that "[i]n odor and taste, protose so closely resembles flesh that it is really difficult for one eating it to convince himself that he is not partaking of animal food" (158).

## **... NUTTOSE ...**



Nuts have been very appropriately termed **vegetable meat**. In popular parlance the kernels or edible portions of nuts are termed **meats**. Nuts resemble flesh meats in a number of particulars. They contain a large proportion of **proteid substances**. Some nuts contain as much as 50% more of albuminous substances than the best beef-steak. In other words, **In a pound of nuts**—peanuts for example—**there is practically a pound and a half of beefsteak**, in addition to the other invaluable nutritive elements which the nut contains. Besides this large proportion of a most digestible albuminoid substance, nuts contain on an average about 30% of a delicate and very digestible fat. Nuts contain little or no sugar, and with the exception of the chestnut, which contains nearly 70% of starch, they are almost entirely free from starch. The proportion of phosphates and other salts contained in nuts is large, amounting in some cases to more than 3%.

Nuts may then be fairly regarded as the **vegetable analogue of meat**. They are, in fact, a more perfect nutrient than meat, as they are capable of sustaining human life for an indefinite period, whereas an exclusive diet of meat soon results in serious disease, because of the poisonous substances which are always found in dead flesh. **An animal corpse, in fact, is, from a sanitary standpoint, possessed of all the obnoxious and repulsive characteristics of a human corpse, and from a physiological standpoint is just as antagonistic to human life.** Nuts are a pure food, and with fruits and grains constitute the natural diet of man, as they do of the gorilla, the chimpanzee, the orang-outang, and other anthropoid apes, which, the most man-like of all the animal creation, are still holding up before the human race the dietetic standard established by the Creator and adhered to by the first races of mankind.

**Nuttose** is a pure, unmixed preparation of choice, edible nuts, which is the result of long and patient investigation and experimentation, resulting in the development of a process whereby, through the aid of perfectly natural and non-chemical processes, it is possible to develop, in certain varieties of nuts which lend themselves most conveniently to the process, a consistency, an appearance, a flavor, and other gustatory and nutritive processes almost identical with those of choice meats.

Figure 1: This advertisement for Nuttose argues that nuts are healthier and more effective nutrients than meat. It draws on evolutionary theory, i.e. the proximity of humans to primates, to present nuts as a natural diet for humans. Source: *Sanitas Nut Preparations and Specialties*. Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald Pub. Co., [1898?], p. 17. Hathi Trust, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015071116415&view=1up&seq=17>.



Figure 2: Ella Kellogg not only created vegetarian recipes featuring fake meats but presented them in elaborate menus, adapted to various occasions and tastes. Source: Kellogg, Mrs. E. E. "Seasonable Bills of Fare." *Good Health*, vol. XXXIV, no. 9, September 1899, p. 537. *Internet Archive*, <https://archive.org/details/good-health-volume-34-issue-09-september-1st-1899/page/n33/mode/2up>.

**\*Scalloped Protose.**—Put a pound of Protose through a vegetable press, or mince fine with a chopper. Add to two parts of minced Protose one part of stewed and strained tomato. Mix thoroughly, and put into a shallow dish, having the mixture not over two inches deep; bake in a rather slow oven for three fourths of an hour. Serve hot with Tomato Sauce.

**Protose Roast.**—Place one pound of sliced Protose in the bottom of a small dripping-pan, with a few slices of onion and a little salt. Cover with water, and bake slowly for several hours. Three quarters of an hour before serving, pare and quarter, lengthwise, three or four potatoes, and place in the pan. Sufficient water should be added from time to time to make a gravy.

**Protose Roast, No. 2.**—Cut Protose lengthwise through the center. Place in a baking-pan, and baste with Tomato Sauce.

**\*Protose Roast, No. 3.**—Take out both ends of a can of Protose, being careful to cut the tin close to the edge. Remove the contents of the can whole. Split lengthwise through the middle, lay in a roasting-pan, flat side downward. Prepare a sauce by

Figure 3: Ella Kellogg's recipes treated meat substitutes as meat; they could thus be scalloped, roasted, broiled, stewed, or eaten in the form of a steak. Source: Kellogg, Mrs. E. E. *Healthful Cookery. A Collection of Choice Recipes for Preparing Foods, with Special Reference to Health*. Battle Creek, MI: Modern Medicine Publishing Company, 1904, p. 81. *Hathi Trust*, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.32044087424461&view=1up&seq=89>.

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# *English Studies Elsewhere*

## *The Revival of William Blake in the Beat Generation*

INTERVIEW WITH CAMILA OLIVEIRA QUERINO

Camila holds a PhD in Comparative Literature from the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, and has spent a year at our department as a post-doctoral researcher in 2021-2022. Her area of expertise is located in the literature and literary reception of William Blake. Her current project focuses on Blake's influence on popular music going back to the 1960s.

1. You've been working on a monograph about the reception of Blake in contemporary music. Can you tell us a bit more about how Blake has survived up to this day?

Blake was a visionary artist in a broader sense and his reception is very dissimilar from the so-called Big-Six [expression referring to the six most famous romantic poets: Blake, Byron, Keats, Shelley, Wordsworth, Coleridge]. In his lifetime, he was basically seen as an engraver and illustrator of some repute, but his poetic endeavors were often dismissed as mediocre and incomprehensible by his contemporaries. Blake died destitute and uncelebrated except for a small group of devoted disciples. I believe there are milestones that help to understand his growing popularity over nearly two centuries. The first was the publication of his biography by William Blake Pictor Ignotus, in 1863, which rescued him from obscurity by shedding light on his eccentric persona and by presenting a compilation of his writings, as organized (and objectionably retouched) by the pre-Raphaelite Dante Gabriel Rossetti with the help of his brother William Rossetti. After the publication of this biography, interest in Blake increased, gathering illustrious admirers such as Algernon Charles Swinburne, W. B. Yeats and Ralph Waldo Emerson, to name a few. The biography also spurred academic interest in Blake, turning him into one of the most studied romantic poets by the 1950s-1960s, alongside Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Byron and Keats. Another milestone of Blake's reception was his assimilation by the counterculture movement, which is crucial to understand the reception of his work in popular culture. And a plethora of different ways in which Blake is digested and appropriated by contemporary artists reflects the richness and intrinsically multimedia nature of his production and turned out as an extremely efficient mechanism of revitalization and circulation of his work.

2. You also talk about how Blake has impacted the Beat Generation. Why do you think Blake has had a special impact on this counter-cultural movement specifically?

There is enough evidence that the Beats were immensely influenced by Blake. The counterculture was above all a movement that questioned the mainstream ideology, culture, art, religion, something that Blake had already done in his time. Michael McClure, William Burroughs and, mainly, Allen Ginsberg, were voracious readers of his work and each one of them had a very peculiar vision of Blake. Ginsberg was especially devoted to Blake, having written a series of poems inspired not only by his work, but also by the vision he had of the poet in 1948 and which had an incalculable impact on his life and work. It is possible to affirm that not only the Beat generation, but the entire counterculture movement of the 60s and 70s was tributary of Blake. Little is said about Blake's influence on British countercultural poetry in the 1960s, but Blake was also a major influence on many poets, notably Michael Horovitz and Adrian Mitchell. The latter was responsible for the first theatrical adaptation of Blake, "Tyger a Celebration of William Blake", staged at the National Theater in 1971. I strongly recommend the anthology *The Children of Albion*, organized by Horovitz and published in 1969.

3. So do Blake and the Beat Generation share common aesthetics or poetics?

We are talking about very different worlds and historical contexts, so there are, of course, quite noticeable differences, but there is undeniably a series of affinities at the level of discourse and form. Today there are several articles and theses that discuss the intersections between Blake and the Beats. I recently read the very interesting essay "A Blakean Approach to William S. Burroughs's 'Naked Lunch'" in which the author examines Burroughs' and Blake's conceptions of consciousness and individual freedom, arguing, among other things, that both Burroughs and Blake have a common interest in spirituality, repression and sexuality. Ginsberg also deals with the same themes and eventually appropriates Blake's poetics as well, especially in his long poems "Kaddish" and "The Howl", which allude to Blake's prophetic books by their evocative tone and prophetic imagery. Similarly, we can think of Jack Kerouac's motto "first thought, best thought" as to some extent derivative of Blake's experiments with automatic writing in his prophetic prose. Michael McClure was also a great admirer of William Blake and claimed to have dreamt a couple of times of himself as the British artist. In the words of Linda Freedman, McClure "equated Blakean delight with animality and biological unpredictability". Gary Snider and his 'ecopoetry' was again highly influenced by Blake. He was a common denominator in terms of influence and I can't think of any other author who had such an impact on the Beat Generation.

4. For your PhD, you worked on translating one of Blake's works from English to Portuguese: if we agree that this translation is another strand of the afterlife of Blake, what have been the challenges you've faced in this endeavor? For example, has it been a struggle to convey something so close to 19th-century and contemporary English culture into your native tongue?

Translation plays a central role in reception. By making a text accessible to a broader and more diverse audience it foments interest, promotes scholarship, etc. My major concern when translating Blake's *Jerusalem: The Emanation of the Giant Albion* into Portuguese was to make it accessible without being overtly condescending. When I first approached the book, it was so cryptic that I virtually couldn't make sense of anything. Then I tried again and I gradually started to hear some echoes from the Bible, which I am fairly familiarised with because of my religious background. The Bible is considered by Blake as the Great Code of Art and it is ubiquitous in his prophetic cycle. Its universe merges with Britain's myths and Blake's own cosmology, creating an extraordinary multi-layered narrative. To help the Portuguese-speaking reader navigate through such a complex work, I tried to convey as much as possible its intense intertextuality by using different strategies. With a view to point out intertextual references, W.H. Stevenson resorted to footnotes in his edition (Blake Complete Works, 2007) which are indeed quite helpful to clarify some obscure points of the intricate narrative. Inspired by his edition I also decided to use footnotes, but unlike Stevenson, I tried to avoid interpreting the text, which he does very often. My footnotes are focused on offering information and context about Blake's mythopoetic system, toponymics (as he turns over Britain's and the Bible's map), onomastics [the study of proper names and their origins] and ultimately, pointing out the intense intertextuality with the Bible. But more than just indicating the references in the form of footnotes, I also try to highlight and imprint biblical intertextuality through specific syntactic structures, vocabulary etc. In the process of translation I had the King James Bible on one hand and the Portuguese translation on the other in order to trace the references and to reproduce the tone and phraseology of the Scriptures so that the Portuguese-speaking reader would be able to identify the biblical inflection. We must bear in mind that the reader from Blake's time was much more familiarised with the Bible than the contemporary reader is and, therefore, more capable to identify the references to the biblical text. Still, it is important to stress that the Bible is not the only sacred text which inspired Blake. We can also identify books from different traditions, including the Torah, the Koran and the Bhagavad Gita, for instance.

5. *I know you are quite fond of Nick Drake. Could you share with our readers the link between Drake and Blake's poetry?*

Nick Drake studied English at Cambridge, but dropped out to pursue a career as a singer-songwriter. He was a voracious reader of poetry and it is not surprising that Blake was among his favorite authors, along with W. B. Yeats, a confessed disciple of Blake. According to his mother Molly Drake, Nick went as far as to affirm that Blake was “the only good British poet”. In his book *Nick Drake: The Complete Guide to his Music* (2009), Peter Hogan argues that Nick’s work is romantic in the classical sense, with a spiritual/mystical core that concerns itself with the deeper meaning of existence. Ian McDonald, who attended Cambridge alongside Nick, refutes the idea that Drake was a literal disciple of Blake, since there are no direct Blake references in his lyrics. Nevertheless one of his most famous songs, “Northern Sky”, resonates with the poem “Auguries of Innocence”, by using a similar image of the hand that contains infinity, or something uncontrollable like emotion. In both Blake’s poem and Nick’s lyrics, the contemplation and physical perception of nature produces a sense of communion and transcendence.

To see the world in a grain of sand  
 And heaven in a wild flower  
 Hold infinity in the palm of your hand  
 And eternity in an hour (“Auguries of Innocence”)

I never felt magic crazy as this  
 I never saw moons, knew the meaning of the sea  
 I never held emotion in the palm of my hand  
 Or felt sweet breezes in the top of a tree (“Northern Sky”)

6. *Because our issue is called Afterlives, I'm tempted to reflect as well on our skills as 'professional readers' of literature and the methods we use, and specifically I'm wondering if you sometimes too reflect on the distance between your life and the afterlife of Blake? Or if you have found yourself as well, sometimes, learning from Blake – just like the Beats have found inspiration in him for their own artistic life?*

Every artist expects to have their work recognized in their lifetime. Blake ardently hoped for recognition from his peers, even though he knew he was a deviant artist who defied common taste and the aesthetics of his time. And that obviously is not exclusive to Blake. Many artists we consider geniuses today did not enjoy the fame and prestige they deserved. Blake, however, was fully convinced of his genius and later recognized that his art would be better understood and appreciated by future generations. Blake’s oeuvre is

to a great extent a product of his time and through it we can apprehend the dynamics of 18th and 19th-century London and the tribulations of Georgian England, for instance. But his greatest achievement in my view was to encapsulate universality through ‘minute particulars’, sometimes via the accessible language of nursery rhymes, sometimes via the cryptic poetic prose of his prophecies. What drew me to Blake was basically his innovative approach to adamantine notions of good and evil, heaven and hell, God and Satan, Reason and Energy, but also by his views on society, politics and art. The Beat poet Michael McClure affirmed that there is a Blake for everyone, and I believe that those who are enraptured by his work are so in different ways. Nonetheless, it seems to me that Blake is the kind of artist who tends to captivate deviants and non-conformists for his unsubmissive and unconventional way of thinking. So in that sense, the study of his reception is also a way to better understand his work as the passage of time amplifies and reiterates its relevance and topicality.

7. *Now – because I believe all this existential thinking could use some anchoring – what is for you the best musical setting in the reception of Blake that you'd like to recommend to our readers?*

There are several musical settings that I think capture not only Blake’s spirit, but also the intrinsic musicality of his verses. I am stunned with the multiplicity of musical interpretations that a poem can inspire. Allen Ginsberg’s setting of the poem “Spring” from *Songs of Innocence* (1970), for example, conveys a kind of gaiety that is replaced by a melancholic and contemplative atmosphere in Alan White’s (Yes drummer) setting, conferring to Blake’s words a totally different meaning. As I am currently preparing a comprehensive catalog of Blake set to music, I have literally listened to thousands of settings and there’s a huge risk of committing injustice because there are some really great hidden gems. On the spur of the moment I can think of “Cradle Song” by Vaughan Williams, “London” by Mike Westbrook, “Ah Sunflower” by The Fugs, “Nurse’s Song” by Walti Huber and “Tyger” by Allen Ginsberg as some of my favourites.

## ART

## Selected Poems

RIVER ORSINI

**snowflakes / selene**

You should have been here.  
And now  
no matter  
how far  
I stretch  
my arm out  
I can't reach you  
How many times  
snowflakes  
will fall  
on my eyes  
before I can  
see you  
again?

As the days  
pass by  
I'm so full  
of grief,  
I don't know  
where  
to put it

**Forever kissing the moon**

Clear skies  
I haven't seen them  
in a while

You shine  
so bright  
my aurora borealis,  
queen of all stars  
on my leaf filled  
path

This year  
December tastes  
like cigarettes,  
again  
and I long for  
your blue nights  
and my days  
of innocence  
back when

I didn't know  
a human heart  
could break  
like this

But it's fine  
because I am alive  
and your light  
flows through  
my holes and cracks  
and no winter  
is ever too cold  
when my eyes  
kiss the moon

**08.04**

In the darkest hours  
the moon shines  
the brightest  
just like  
in my darkest days  
you bring me  
comfort and solace

I want  
to live  
for you  
but  
I also want  
to live  
with you

And I  
don't know  
what to do  
with my hands

# plenty but not enough

ATLAS

my ma was the first one in her family to go to college  
 she then became a full-time working single mom  
 while my mami stayed at home cooking and knitting  
 and spoiling me with gifts and love and homemade meals  
 while my papi, retired, helped me with homework and discipline  
 not really being a hugger  
 I remember being told to always let someone know where I am  
 and when I'm coming home and who I am meeting  
 at first I thought it just was pure innocent thoughtfulness  
 and while it was,  
 I quickly realised  
 it was unfortunately also part of being born a woman

-  
 being an immigrant  
 I have realised that I will always be “not white” enough on  
 and never “latina” enough  
 I am daily and constantly flooded with awareness  
 of the cards I’ve been dealt with,  
 the luck, the love and kindness that has crossed my path  
 but also of the hurt and pain and suffering my sisters deal with on a daily basis  
 news of girls being raped, kidnapped and killed miles and miles away shatters me  
 hace siete décadas se nos concedió nuestro pinche derecho humano al voto  
 tras larguísísimas batallas  
 and while some may argue it is plenty  
 it will never be enough  
 it won’t be enough until we all gain bodily autonomy,  
 until I won’t be scared to have a little baby girl instead of a boy,  
 until we all be able to live a life worth of living

*Cuando el 17 de octubre de 1953 se concedió a la mujer mexicana el derecho al voto y a ser votada a cargos de elección popular en México, se había llevado a cabo un largo proceso que inició hacia fines del siglo XIX. Entre 1884 y 1887, la revista “Violetas del Anáhuac” demanda el derecho al sufragio femenino.*

*When, on 17 October 1953, Mexican women were granted the right to vote and to be elected to office in Mexico, it was the culmination of a long process which began in the late 19th century, between 1887 and 1887. During this time the magazine "Violetas del Andhua" (Violets of the Anahuac) demanded the right to women's suffrage.*

# *"Daddy's Little Girl"*

CLAUDIA CARRILLO

I was six when I saw a little purple bicycle in the middle of the living room. It had a huge golden ribbon attached to these little handlebars. My father said it was my Christmas present. I had had a bike before, but it had been a bike with training wheels. But this one was a real bike. I was more than excited. I remember thinking it was such a beautiful bike and it was all mine. It was just what I wanted for Christmas.

And there I was, just fascinated by my new bike. I thought I would explore the entire world on it. People actually do that. I would soar wildly with the wind, I would go faster than light. I was so naïve.

"It is too cold to be outside," Mom said whenever I asked if I could learn to ride my bike "Maybe next week," she added. I waited, counting every last day of December. When January finally arrived, I asked Mom if she could ride my new bike. After all, she was the one who had offered to teach me.

She was working on her computer at the kitchen table. As she was typing, she gave a quick glance at me and said coldly and in a hurry, "Can't, honey... I'm working. Go and find something else to do." So I did what I was told and went on looking for someone who would teach me.

I found my dad in his office; he was always happy whenever I popped in to visit him. He would sit me on his lap and explain chemical reactions to me and the experiments he was working on. He had this 3D program where he would show me chemical bonds of all kinds of molecules represented with bright colors. He would say: "Look, darling! This molecule is an ammonium ion that has a coordinate covalent bond." And he would go on and on, explaining for hours. I did not understand what he was saying, but I loved to hear the sound of his voice.

But this time it was different. As I walked into his office, I saw a bunch of papers on his desk. And he was typing quickly on his laptop. He did not even notice I had entered the room. As I approached his desk, he turned and said "Oh! Hi, baby," while he hugged me.

I said, "Dad, do you have lots of work?"

"I always have a lot of work to do," he answered with a smile.

But I knew he did have more work than usual, so I gave him a big hug and left the room. As I was leaving the room, I heard him ask, "Do you need something, my dear?" I did not answer.

I went on wandering around the house. My brother was watching TV. He had some chocolate in his hand and was watching Thomas the Tank Engine. He was smaller than me. He didn't know how to ride a bike, so I didn't bother to ask him either.

My sister was older than me, so I went looking for her. I found her reading a book on her bed. She was reading The Witches by Roald Dahl. I sat on the bed and asked her: "Can you teach me how to ride my bike, please?"

She looked at me and said she was busy. She told me she would teach me another day. Why wouldn't anyone teach me how to ride my bike? Why wouldn't anyone help me? I felt rather sad and sat on the staircase of the back door for a long time. I kept feeling sorry for myself, but then I told myself that if nobody was going to teach me, I would learn on my own.

Confidence struck me like lightning, and I was sure I could do it by myself. I certainly did not need anyone else. So I stood up and went to the garage and took my bike to the backyard. I climbed onto the bike and thought it couldn't be that difficult. It was easy.

And I did it. I was riding my bike. I was so happy. I had done it: I had learned how to ride a bike after all. All by myself.

I did fall a couple of times but eventually got up and tried it again and again. I'm not sure how many hours I actually spent trying to ride my bike.

The time had gone past so quickly and I hadn't realized it had gotten late. "Cheer up, you can do it, girl," I told myself.

And then I saw my dad. He was standing at the window, watching me, and he seemed pleased.

I smiled and shouted, "Look, daddy! I know how to ride my bike!"

I think I heard him laughing or maybe I just imagined it. I wondered if he felt proud of me. But then all these emotions of freedom, liberty, and joy overcame me. And I started rushing on my purple bicycle.

I started to pedal as fast as I could. I could feel the wind on my face. The cold wind made my face hurt, but at the same time, I felt so good: the wind was refreshing. The breeze, the cold icy breeze. I was free, like a bird flying into the sky. The darkness of the evening seemed like fuel, providing me strength. And I felt strong, like a roman warrior who couldn't be defeated. I was on top of the world and could control everything.

I heard my dad shout, "Be careful, you're going too fast!"

But I did not go slower; I kept thinking I was like a flash. Superfast.

And then, I lost control and crashed against a huge tree that stood in the yard.

I fell hard on the muddy ground and everything went black. The next thing I remember was my dad asking me, "Are you alright?"

He was actually shouting. I couldn't feel my knees: they were numb. I touched them and there were stains of blood on my hands.

"¡Ay, 'mija!," he said as he saw the wound bleeding and carried me inside the house. I felt better.

Mom asked us what had happened. Dad did not answer. He sat me on the blue sofa and went for his first aid kit.

He soaked a piece of gauze with alcohol and said, "This is going to hurt a little, honey." It didn't hurt a little - it hurt a lot. I cried. The wounds weren't that bad, or that was what dad said. He finished treating all my wounds, my wounded arms and lacerated knees, but the pain did not go away. Dad gave me some dark chocolate and said, "You'll soon feel better, dear."

Mom asked again, "What happened?"

"My little girl is stubborn and fearless. She'll overcome anything, but she will fall."

Many times. That's for sure!" Dad answered.

\*

Isn't life like learning to ride a bike? Isn't it similar to falling in love too? There is nobody that can help you or teach you how to live and love. You must learn it by yourself. And you fall so many times and you stand up again. And then you take a risk and you start to believe you can actually do it and you start going faster and faster, you start going too quickly. You are living life intensely or you start loving someone fearlessly. And then, suddenly, something hits you. You crash into something big and hard. And you have wounds all over your body. And you are in such awful pain. The wounds are not bad enough to kill you but will hurt like hell. And eventually, the wounds will heal but the pain never truly goes away. It is in your memory. And a scar will remain. A mark will be left to remind you that you have failed...

\*

I do not mind the scars or the pain, because the truly awful part is that Daddy is no longer there to pick me up, bring me home, and heal my wounds...

## *The Pentrametron*

We know the Shakespearian sonnets have a life of their own, sure, but finding that Shakespearian form in the midst of the Twitter chaos is unexpected. The famous sonnets materialize and are reborn in the 21st-century digital world thanks to the Pentametron, a twitter algorithm that selects tweets in iambic pentameter and combines the randomly poetic birds' songs into a Shakespearian sonnet-like form. Your friendly neighbourhood *Noted* team selected a few for you to read and enjoy:

I.

*Thanks for respecting my relationship.*

lay dagger dead inside a lonely bed.  
Had everybody thinking they were HOT :"(  
I Absolutely Love The Walking Dead.  
I pay attention to details a lot.

i have a fluffy as a cuddly toy  
it's useless even trying anymore  
My doggie is the cutest little boy.  
im gonna buy a gun and start a war

I always been a sucker for romance  
It doesn't even matter anyway  
Not everyone deserves a second chance !!!  
I treat myself a starbucks drink today

It's gonna be another sleepless night..  
How we're communicating isn't right

II.

I want another movie nite tonite!  
The graceful lady dressed in black and white !  
You lucky I consider you a friend

## I AM A SENTIMENTAL NERD THE END

11 isn't coming fast enough  
 I have a random person texting me.  
 she take forever doing other stuff.  
 updated to Adobe Reader XI :D

Can't catch a break... Unspoken prayer request.  
 That movie wasn't even scary though..  
 Life after highschool is the biggest test  
 Another dollar's just another blow  
 It's only 9 and i'm exhausted. 3:  
 She got a body like a mermaid . (Me)

III.  
 Im really growing as a person though

Some people don't deserve a second chance.  
 I really wanna know what's going on  
 I need a partner for the stafford dance :(  
 I'm on a money makin marathon .

Just slightly disappointed. But okay.  
 this is reality in anyway .  
 I pray tomorrow is a better day  
 It's gonna be a freaking awesome day!

SHE TOOK THE MIDNIGHT GOING ANYWHERE  
 I hate the Tigers pitchers as a whole.  
 "The cushions are the essence of the chair!"  
 Take chalmers put and put in Norris cole

I've never seen a shooting star before.  
 It doesn't even matter anymore

## IV.

I didn't walk away, remember that

I need a ticket to Atlanta. PLEASE  
 Bon aller hop direction la cuisine !!!  
 I got the macaroni with the cheese  
 confessions of a teenage drama queen

Is fusion really worth the stomach ache?  
 My strange addiction is the weirdest show...  
 They dream in courtship, but in wedlock wake.  
 I just responded to a statement tho

Tomorrow better be a better day  
 good morning beings of the internet  
 If only heaven was a mile away  
 My money growing like a chia pet

Slugs are invading! Fucking everywhere!!  
 I rather be a lonely billionaire.

## V.

I saw a butterfly in hell today.  
 Lord, I identify myself in you.  
 I really wanna dance the night away.  
 oops my reaction was a little too

just waking up, goodmorning everyone  
 Drew spelling just a little off today  
 Another boring weekend has begun...  
 I only can accept and go away!

So funny watching people fall asleep  
 I was especially missing you today  
 "You'd rather be a shepherd than a sheep."  
 another perfect moment thrown away

I get the motivation from the hate  
 When things were going they were going great

VI.

*Boxed wine and Harry potter it'll be*

I didn't know the combine was today..  
 did louis really get a deer tattoo  
 is Andrew Bynum ever gonna play?  
 Does anyone remember Pepsi blue?

"In spiders eyes, the man becomes a fly."  
 my brother going to the movies yay ^\_~  
 Oh. Lemme count the many reasons why.  
 Todays a backyard football kinda day

She hotter then a Summer day in hell  
 Cars european, come and see the fleet  
 Adele.Adele.Adele.Adele  
 These bitches getting sadder by the tweet

I really wanna watch the Lion King.  
 This weather isn't helping anything

VII.

*Cat woman is a super hero right? ??*

I'm leaving never looking back again..  
 my mother is forever running late  
 Installing internet explorer 10  
 im waiting for the expiration date..

I never listen to the radio  
 What channel is the vs fashion show?!

I wanna see Chicago fire tho  
 Contemporary Studies is the BLOW!  
 There's nothing better than a sister love  
 my heart's exploding like a burning sun  
 Get paid tomorrow thank the lord above

Drunk Santas aren't fooling anyone

I wanna hear the Dedication 4  
 it doesn't even matter anymore

VIII.

*i really fancy justin timberlake*

another hour later.. still awake.  
 "cry me a river" justin timberlake  
 I want a Little Debbie zebra cake  
 I wanna do another Harlem Shake

FUCK! I FORGOT ABOUT THE HARLEM SHAKE  
 I absolutely love Brazilian steak !  
 Another night, another tummy ache ):  
 i really fancy justin timberlake

I'd rather keep the real and loose the fake  
 Sweet baby Jesus Justin Timberlake  
 Still haven't even started Prison Break..  
 Still really fancy Justin Timberlake

Frank Ocean is a fucking shitty mess ..  
 Two Justin Timberlake commercials 😍 #YES

# A Gentle Grilling...

NORA ZUFFEREY

Nora Zuffrey is currently pursuing doctoral research in the field of literature and music, as followers of her Spring 2023 seminar, 'Africa and Jazz Poetry', will know well. Here she shares a little bit about her research and herself...

*When did you choose your academic speciality – and why?*

If you're talking about my specialty now (contemporary music and literature) it was instinct and love – super cheesy I know. I've loved jazz forever and wanted to write about something that animated me. But if you're talking about the choice of études after the matu exams, then it's just coincidence, honestly. And a bit of instinct, I suppose. I couldn't picture myself studying at UniMail, for instance, and was trying to maybe capitalize at least a little bit on what I was not too bad at back in collège. I was clearly not a person who knew what they wanted to do right away, or who felt they were destined for a specific job.

*Who is your favourite poet?*

Anne Micheals.

*If you could make the world discover one book and one album, which would they be?*

For the book, that would be *Das Parfum* by Patrick Süskind, even though the world probably knows about this one already. But I love books that make you remember and recalibrate your senses. And the album would definitely be *Now Is The Time – Live at the Knitting Factory from 2000*, by bassist Alex Blake and saxophone player Pharoah Sanders. It's the first jazz album I remember listening to – I had probably heard some before, but it's the one I remember – and it will always remain one of my fondest and clearest memories of an emotional experience related to music. (Also, there's a tremendously incredible bass solo of 'With a little help from my friends' and this album is so underrated).

*What is your most marked personal trait?*

I've asked friends and family. They say meticulous and passionate. Which are not unrelated, I think.

*Which talent would you like to have?*

Organization and being able to maintain a not too catastrophic level of it.

*Which fear have you successfully faced?*

Playing jazz.

*What piece of advice, wisdom, or encouragement would you give to your first-year past self?*

Trust your guts and do not just study – find something else to do outside of the academic world/life to balance it out.

*How/what does music/musicology/the study of music contribute to/enrich the study of English-language literatures?*

Ah! I recognize my interviewer on this one, it's a question that would need a proper PhD thesis to get the contours of an answer, or even several academic careers!

I hope I'm not disappointing anyone when I restate the cliché that music has always – closely or from afar – accompanied the word. If we go back to the first Greek/Western poems, they were performed or sung in order to be better memorized both for the

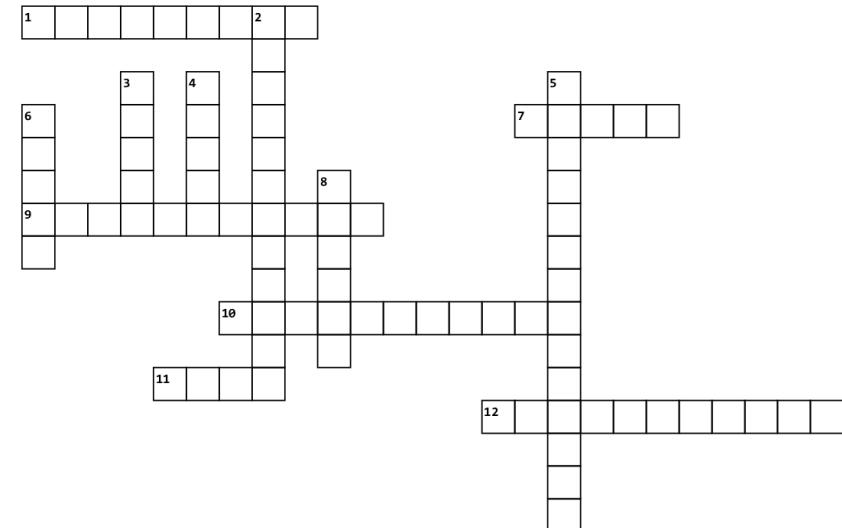
reciting person and for the audience. In the sense that even if there was no lyre, there would be a certain rhythm that would go with a certain text or a certain part of a text.

So because it was there from the beginning, I'd say music contributes to the study of literature in that it opens it up to its core or returns it to its pre-written form: orality and performance. Now, today of course they are different approaches one can take when one studies the link between music and literature. If it's studying the symbolic impact of music, then countless links have been made, for instance that the *Sturm und Drang*, the Grimm Brothers and Wagner are closely related. If it's related to the textures and structures of the texts (for lack of a better word), or how the fabric is made and what it is made of, I'd guess jazz has had a tremendous influence on American literary forms (theater, novel and especially poetry) ever since the beginning of the 20th century.

Now if we take performance studies, they stem from theater, music and dance, and have impacted the way we perceive literature in an unprecedented way. And in terms of language, each music genre impacts language in performance a little differently. Opera works in a certain way, sometimes to the point of blurring the meaning of words.

But sometimes music also clarifies language. A very common example is early-90s rap, where each line of text would correspond to a 4-beat bar, and where of course, each word stress would coincide with the beat. The interesting question is, what does it create when the stress doesn't coincide?

I would say that in general, it's about two artforms that were closely related, that developed into two disciplines, and how now the musical lens allows to see any literary object from a different point of view – and in the end, it's really about the surprises it reveals when it's an object we've been looking at for a very long time.



#### Across

1. The day celebrated by sci-fi fans annually
7. The size of the book which posthumously collected the works of [12, across]
9. The tomb opened 100 years ago
10. Years since the creation of the NHS (UK National Health Service)
11. The Captain whose voyage set sail 250 years ago
12. The author of the volume of [7, across]

#### Down

2. The measure introduced in 1973 in the UK in response to inflation, strikes, and fuel prices
3. The country which celebrated its 75th anniversary of independence in 2022
4. The tank battle fought 75 years ago
5. 250 years ago, where was trouble brewing?
6. Years since the death of Guerinca's painter
8. The republic which turns 100 this year

*Answers at the bottom of the next page...*

1. MayFourth
2. ThreeDayWeek
3. India
4. Kursk
5. Fifty
6. Turkey
7. Folio
8. Turnhamun
9. SevenFive
10. Cook
11. Shakespeare
12. Shakespear

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Contributions, comments, and suggestions are very welcome, and can be sent to [noted-lettres@unige.ch](mailto:noted-lettres@unige.ch)

Thank you for reading *Noted!*

