In Medias Res

A compilation of student work
*The Odyssey Project*
Vol. 3, Summer 2014
In Medias Res would like to extend extreme gratitude to Amy Thomas Elder, Director of the Odyssey Project, for her continuing support. Her lively influence shines through the works of our students.

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Finally, In Medias Res would like to thank all of the Odyssey Project students for their countless hours of work on these submissions and their trust that our publication will showcase their talents.

To those we failed to mention, we thank you too for your help in growing the Odyssey Project and continuing its mission.

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Questions? Comments? Concerns? Submissions? Please send all inquiries to amy@prairie.org
This publication is a small testimony to grace—to the way that individuals, following their own creative and moral imperatives, can come together to make something that takes on a life beyond their own efforts.

This publication was born two summers ago, in 2012, when the first two summer interns from the University of Chicago’s Master of Arts Program in the Humanities, Anna Burch and Marybeth Southard, came to work with the Illinois Humanities Council’s Odyssey Project. In Medias Res was sustained and developed by last year’s intern, Greg Langen, and now Ellen Mueller has carried it on.

I want to express my gratitude and admiration for Ellen who has pulled together this third issue of In Medias Res and all the writers who have contributed to, edited, and done the many things necessary to bring it to light. “Intern” is not a very good title for Ellen, who designed her own project, deadlines, team, calendar, and everything else while I was on leave. If she weren’t a truly remarkable individual, this publication would not have come to fruition.
In this way, *In Medias Res* reflects the *Odyssey Project* as a whole, which is part of a national and even international movement called the Clemente Course in the Humanities. Like *In Medias Res*, the Clemente Course began with a particular vision and partnership between Bard College and the Roberto Clemente Center in New York. The course was carried on by others who were inspired by the vision and made it their own. Like *In Medias Res*, the Clemente Course brings together scholars from leading academic institutions and serious, curious, and determined adults who have been excluded, one way or another, from such institutions. Like *In Medias Res*, the Clemente Course bears witness to the profound and transformative learning that can result from such a partnership.

I’m very glad to have the Spanish voices prominently heard in this year’s issue. *Proyecto Odisea* began more than ten years ago, when Herlinda Suarez, a professor from the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) and organizer of a Clemente Course there, came to observe the *Odyssey Project* on her sabbatical. Inspired, she wanted to offer a course in Spanish in Chicago. With support from Gads Hill Center in Pilsen and the participation of Professor Mario Santana from the University of Chicago, we began the first pilot class, which got more than 300 applications. *Proyecto Odisea* has only grown in dynamism and vitality ever since.

The English and Spanish programs complement, enrich, and strengthen one another. When their graduates come together in the *Odyssey Project*’s second year Bridge course, they constitute an unparalleled multicultural community of learning and inquiry. I hope that *In Medias Res* reflects this union as well as suggests new avenues of growth for all of us and the project as a whole.
Editor’s Note

My work with the Odyssey Project this summer was a true start “in the middle of things.” When I set out to continue the tradition of *In Medias Res*, I knew that I had two excellent models to follow. Since the Odyssey Project provides access to further education in English and Spanish through Proyecto Odisea, I sought to produce a new version of *In Medias Res* that incorporated pieces from both of these communities.

I am delighted to debut several works from our students at Proyecto Odisea as well as submissions in English from past and present Odyssey Project students. This third volume of submissions represents not only the storytelling skills, poetic eye, and academic knowledge of our students, but also showcases their diversity of language and life experience. I believe this volume combination represents our multicultural learning community and hope it serves to strengthen the bonds between all of the Odyssey Project campuses.

In this volume, you will find memories of loved ones, stories of childhood, experiences of adulthood, philosophies of life, and vestiges of war. Most importantly, you will find writers, artists, intellectuals, and citizens of Chicago whose talents are evident in these pages.

I am honored to share the words of these remarkable human beings.
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Soy un rey

MATEO GONZÁLEZ

Esta mañana desperté, como lo he hecho por los últimos 17 años, bendecido. Estoy seguro que mi madre, como cualquier otra madre, encontró la manera que Dios escuchara sus oraciones. Y, que madre no pide a Dios por el bienestar de sus hijos.

Particularmente, esta mañana hubo algo que me hizo despertar dos veces. Por impulso rutinario alcance el cajón de los calcetines. Ahí estaban, doblados, ordenados y listos para ser usados una vez más. En ese momento llegó a mí, de alguna eternidad pienso yo, una pregunta; ¿Quién soy para que alguien dedique su tiempo y trabajo para mantener calcetines limpios en este cajón? Quien hace esto, toma muy en serio su trabajo, y sobre todo me ama.

Quien hace esto ha dividido su corazón, ya no le pertenece. Divide también su tiempo y pone más empeño en vencer su egoísmo que escuchar los llamados de cansancio de su cuerpo.

Quien pone estos calcetines en mi cajón tiene manos amorosas y mágicas. Sus manos convierten los calcetines en cadenas que siempre dirigen mis pasos al hogar donde se encuentre.

Quien lucha contra su enojo y un millón de veces recoge los calcetines tiesos y sucios del piso para darles vida una vez más, estoy seguro, aunque a veces le duela, ya no conoce la palabra; yo, se convirtió en, nosotros.
En mi absoluta ignorancia sólo puedo deducir esta conclusión: Soy un rey.

Porque sólo un rey merece una atención así.

Con una mirada ella, mi reina, obedece fielmente al llamado de que mis labios están secos y necesitan la humedad de sus besos.

Con una señal de mi mano ella, mi reina, viene mansamente a mí y deposita su confianza y su cabeza en mi hombro. Porque sabe que ese es su lugar y su refugio. Porque sabe que Dios le designo ese lugar para vivir en él.

Con una palabra ella, mi reina, deduce con exactitud mis más absurdas ideas alimenticias y sin medida se esmera en complacerme. A tal grado me conoce que he cedido mi voluntad a su voluntad.

Con un abrazo ella, mi reina, sabiamente me exige curar sus preocupaciones sabiendo de antemano que nos curamos los dos.

Porque sólo un rey tendría una reina así, con unos ojos hermosos así, una boca dulce así, un corazón fuerte pero sensible así, un cuerpo delicioso así.

Porque sólo un rey y una reina pudieron haber engendrado príncipes y doncellas así. Valientes e inteligentes como dioses míticos griegos, así.

Gracias madre por tus bendiciones, sigues en mi corazón como yo sigo en tus plegarias mi familia crecerá como una vez tu soñaste. Me enseñaste a ser fuerte y a perseverar. No te defraudaré. Y si soy un rey, es porque me crió una reina.
Being creatures of habit, our bedtime routine is deeply ingrained. At the moment of truth, eyelids heavy we have sleep on the brain. Claimed by exhaustion, our energy drained, The head hits the pillow and we begin to dream. I am no exception, every night it is the same: Seated by the fireplace, heated by the flame, I invoke the refrain I have repeated nightly to the portrait which hangs, Above the fireplace in my living room proper. Before I speak it, my eyes adopt her. With retinas wearily on this portrait trained, I glimpse a violinist at the height of her fame. Merrily in the midst of her final performance, History records it as her last before her disappearance. She exited the stage to a standing ovation, never to be seen hence. For a month she has riveted me, her musical innovations from heaven sent. On the tip of my tongue are the words which will raise her coveted bow. Intense is her concentration, as evidenced by her furrowed brow. The urge to sleep now dormant, my pupils captured, I note her blonde hair with long locks enraptured. To the woman in the frame, my irises are attracted. She is 200 years old, her bow still active. I sip warm milk to its tragic octaves. On strings of silk a story unfolds in melody, a lullaby hypnotic My cup mostly empty, I'm lost in her fervor. As ghostly symphonies waltz, I begin to adore her,
Yet behind her green eyes lies a spirit tortured. 
For two centuries thus, her soul has been trapped inside the portrait—
The details behind her disappearance a mystery sordid. 
By her lover’s own hand, her lyric was murdered. 
Through some strange twist of fate, a part of her survives death. 
As I observe her, her late violin draws breath.

Dapper in my robe and slippers, warmed by a fire that flickers—
One familiar phrase do I now deliver. 
More a question than command, not a whisper nor a stutter. 
With earlobes aquiver to a ghost I utter: 
“Elizabeth, Elizabeth, will you play for me tonight?”
The query provokes an unearthly response, 
For as I eye the portrait, her violin haunts. 
She proceeds to play a most beautiful score. 
I hear her Stradavarius in my dreams as I begin to snore. 
Upon daylight’s glare, I will be snoozing by the fireplace in my favorite chair.
¿Dónde estás? (A mi padre)

LUISA OLIVO

Tenías un andar orgulloso como de un toro de lidia. Un hombre bajito un tanto robusto, tu pelo castaño ensortijado contrastaba con la blancura de un rostro seco, un par de ojos dorados y penetrantes, con una nariz fina, tu boca dibujaba una línea recta que muy pocas veces se curveaba para sonreír. Tus manos de piedra resultado de toda una vida de duro trabajo. Tu aspecto da la impresión que te estacionaste en los años 40 con tus pantalones con grandes pliegues y enormes bolsillos en combinación con una guayabera impecablemente limpia y planchada remantando con un par de zapatos negros brillosos. Abrazarte era como abrazar un gran roble fuerte y callado. ¿Dónde estás?... sólo miro un ser pequeño como un animalito herido y mutilado desmadejado en esa silla, tu voz de trueno no me alcanza mas ahora tu mirada no me reconoce, tu mente se va alejando como el sol al atardecer.
I’m Sassy Too

SYLVIA TAYLOR

The spotlight is on the Divine One. Everything else is dark with the exception of the light beaming from the heavens encapsulating her. She belts out the songs, covering the low notes to the high notes. I feel her hand on my back as she helps me tolerate JIM for a little longer. Comfort is provided when I admit that Jim is not the man for me. I hear that when she sings LOVER MAN. Encouragement is supplied when I decide that I need to find someone new. I’m convinced of that as I hear her sing I CRIED FOR YOU. She scats and I shake my head. I involuntarily close my eyes, soaking up her spirit. Imagining that I’m at the microphone, I’m so uplifted by her as she sings SNOWBOUND. This is the time I wished I was with that special someone. Her rendition would be just right to cast a spell even with the one I’m with benefiting from the roused passion. I’m soberly thinking back to the time that I first heard her sing this song – I was in the arms of my beloved. It’s the way that she sings MISTY that has me sedated.

Now, I’m back at the mic. I’m finishing up with SEND IN THE CLOWNS. Oh, if I could really serenade my lover man like Sassy! I would need no trio or orchestra. I could put him in a trance, as I sing a capella or just accompany myself at the piano.

The concert is over. I will sing silently to myself all the way home and into the morning. Maybe I’ll keep Jim. Tonight he owes it to Sarah Sassy Vaughn.
A Juana Goergen

MATEO GONZÁLEZ

"¿No hay límites eh, Juan? Entonces en un tiempo no muy distante me apareceré en tu playa y te enseñaré una o dos cosas sobre vuelo"

--Juan Salvador Gaviota
Richard Bach

Déjame decirte;
Fuiste un intruso rayo de sol veraniego que vino a modificar los últimos párrafos en el capítulo otoñal de mi vida.

Déjame explicarte;
Fue la elocuencia de tus manos que como hisopos blancos esparcían indiscriminadamente las frases, las palabras, las silabas tónicas que sin cesar fluían emotivamente de tu boca.

Déjame decirte;
Fuiste la realidad irónica de la medusa mítica. La horrible pesadilla de Perseo convertida en el más anhelado sueno de Quetzalcóatl.

Déjame explicarte;
Que sólo Luis con su Gongorismo pudo profetizar con versos endecasílabos el esplendor de tu pelo en necia rebelión ondulada.

Que después de esas nano-semanas de tu presencia, la materia oscura que emana de tus ojos ha convertido la piedra, en flor.
Déjame decirte;  
Fueron tus ojos amielados que sembraron semillas termodinámicas  
hinchadas de valor y orgullo lingüístico en mi corazón.

Déjame explicarte;  
Que una capa de amnesia lamosa ya cubría sigilosamente, mi amistad con  
Rulfo y Paz; que mi espíritu indígeno-americano sucumbía muy a  
menudo a los dramas fatídicos de Shakespeare y los embrujos  
de Fitzgerald.

Que guarde muy dentro de mis congeladas neuronas, los esporádicos  
destellos de tu mirada de amanecer. Y los usaré para festejar  
una noche bohemia con un tequila sunrise.

Déjame decirte;  
Fuiste tú, toda. Y tus gestos y tu nombre serán el meridiano que rija el  
calendario de mi vida.

Déjame explicarte;  
Ahora los acontecimientos serán clasificados en: antes de conocer a  
Juana, y, después de conocer a Juana.

El porte decidido y tu frente en alto; tu figura con tus ropas holgadas  
y elegantes, serán la metáfora para describir a una mujer  
inteligente con un corazón de esponja purpura.

Que un día en una crisis de Deconstrucción descubriré por fin el origen  
musical de tu voz melancólica.

Déjame decirte;  
¡Gracias por compartir tu genio!
The House that Wright Built

JOSEPHINE MCENTEE

If one were to say “Prairie Style,” Frank Lloyd Wright (1867-1959) immediately comes to mind. Wright designed and built homes in the Prairie Style for many wealthy families: the Arthur Heurtley House in Oak Park, the Avery Coonley Estate in Riverside, and his own home and studio in Oak Park. But the house that epitomizes the Prairie Style is the Frederick C. Robie House, completed in 1910. This paper will look at the architectural style of Frank Lloyd Wright through one of his most enduring works, the Robie House, and how its owner, Frederick C. Robie, shaped that style.

Located on the University of Chicago campus in the Hyde Park neighborhood of Chicago, Illinois, Robie House is a popular architectural attraction. Robie House is long and flat — reminiscent of the Wisconsin prairie landscapes of Wright’s childhood. Characteristic of the uniquely American Prairie Style are exteriors dominated by horizontal lines, sloping roofs, and banded rows of windows; and interiors featuring open spaces surrounded by a central hearth, long horizontal oak bands, textured plaster, and beeswax finishes. Wright’s idea of organic architecture — using building materials indigenous to the construction area — further defined Prairie Style. “A building is not just a place to be. It is a way to be,”1 Wright has said, “it’s a part of its environment, and it graces its environment rather than disgraces it.”2

In 1908, Frederick Carlton Robie, a bicycle manufacturer and auto parts supplier, purchased the 60-foot by 180-foot corner lot at 5757 South Woodlawn Avenue and commissioned Frank Lloyd Wright to design a home for him and his family. “Robie wanted a house with an abundance of light and great views of the surrounding neighborhood, yet one that also maintained his family’s privacy. He didn’t like small confining rooms and thought that flowing spaces were essential in a well-designed home.”

He wanted a home that was modern, sturdy, functional, and “free of ‘curvatures and doodads.’” Wright’s design aesthetic maintained the Robie family’s privacy by concealing bands of floor-to-ceiling windows and the main entrance beneath overhanging balconies. Weight-bearing steel beams were incorporated into the floors and ceilings, thus eliminating the need for supporting columns and walls, and increasing the openness of the interior spaces. Outside, the elongated lines were emphasized with the use of long, horizontal Roman bricks. Wright was a master of detail: the mortar between the vertical joints was the same color as the bricks, while the horizontal joints were sealed with cream-colored mortar. This further emphasized the horizontal lines and minimized the vertical ones.

Wright created a “complete environment” for Robie, designing furniture (some built-in), lighting fixtures, rugs, and wall hangings in addition to 29 art glass designs seen throughout the house’s windows and doors (179 total). On his collaboration with Wright, Robie said, “Both Mr. Wright and myself were highly in accord on every line to the last inch. And we agreed that there should be no deviation whatsoever from these specifications.”

Robie, his wife Lora, and his children, Fred Jr. and Lorraine, moved into the house that Wright built for them in May 1910. They enjoyed the warm earth-tone walls, banded windows and fluid spaces for less than a year: in the wake of financial ruin, in April 1911, Lora Robie took her children and left her husband to return to her family in Springfield, Illinois. Robie sold

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the house in December, and in March the following year, the Robies divorced. It is ironic that the house that bears his name has enjoyed decades of fame and notoriety, while Frederick C. Robie faded into obscurity.

While Wright created the Prairie Style, and referenced the prairie when describing his radical and unique Midwestern aesthetics, architectural historians were responsible for naming it “Prairie Style.” Robie House incorporated many of the architectural details that would define not only the Prairie Style, but American architecture in general, and influence foreign architecture for decades. As such, Robie House was rightfully named one of the 10 most significant structures of the 20th century by the American Institute of Architects, and hailed as “the cornerstone of modern architecture” by Wright.

Robie House is innovative in design and unconventional in furnishings. Robie House stands today as a testament to the prairie, with Robie as the muse and Wright as the artist.

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8 The Imperial Hotel, another of Wright’s architectural engineering masterpieces, still stands in Tokyo, Japan, having survived the 1923 Kanto Earthquake that registered 7.9 on the magnitude scale, which destroyed much of the city.

The Robie House: A Timeline

It is ironic that the house that bears his name has enjoyed decades of fame and notoriety, while Frederick C. Robie faded into obscurity.

- **1908** Chicago bicycle manufacturer and auto parts supplier Frederick Carlton Robie purchases the 60-foot by 180-foot lot at 5757 South Woodlawn Avenue for $13,500. Frank Lloyd Wright commissioned to design and build the Robie House.

- **1909** Contractor H.B. Barnard Co. begins construction on April 15. Fred C. Robie (father) dies. Frederick C. Robie begins liquidating the family businesses to satisfy his father’s debts incurred on his behalf.

- **1910** Construction is completed, $1500 under the $60,000 project budget (land $13,500; construction, $35,000; furnishings, $10,000). In May, Frederick and Lora Robie and their children move into the Robie House.

- **1911** In April, Lora Robie takes her children and leaves her husband (Divorced March 1912). In December, Robie sells the house to David Lee Taylor, president of Taylor-Critchfield Company, an advertising agency for $50,000.
• 1912  In October, David Lee Taylor dies
In November, Taylor’s widow, Ellen Taylor, sells the
house to Marshall Dodge Wilber
In December, Marshall and Isadora Wilber and their
daughters move into the Robie House

• 1926  Marshall and Isadora Wilber sell the house to the
Chicago Theological Seminary; the Seminary uses the
building for housing its married students

• 1941  Chicago Theological Seminary makes plans to demolish
Robie House and build a larger dormitory on the site
Led by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and supported by
Wright, a letter-writing campaign was started to
save Robie House

• 1957  In March, Chicago Theological Seminary makes plans
to demolish Robie House on September 15 and
begin construction of student dormitories
89-year-old Frank Lloyd Wright returns to Robie House,
drawing international attention, to lead the fight for its
perservation
In April, the Commission on Chicago Architectural
Landmarks names Robie House a Chicago Landmark,
thus permanently stopping Chicago Theological
Seminary’s plans for demolition

• 1958  In August, real estate developer and friend of Frank
Lloyd Wright, William Zeckendorf, buys Robie House
from Chicago Theological Institute

• 1963  In November, Robie House becomes a United States
Registered National Historic Landmark
William Zeckendorf donates Robie House to the
University of Chicago
• 1997 University of Chicago hands over the management of Robie House to Frank Lloyd Wright Preservation Trust

• 2002 In March, Frank Lloyd Wright Preservation Trust begins the multi-year Robie House restoration project to return Robie House to its original 1910 design

Interesting Wright Facts

Wright was christened Frank Lincoln Wright; the divorce of his parents and his father’s abandonment spurred Wright to change his middle name to Lloyd, a maternal family name.

Wright built his Oak Park home was built with mentor Louis Sullivan and a $5,000 loan from his.

Wright was fired from Adler & Sullivan for moonlighting.

Wright named the home he built in Spring Green, Wisconsin, Taliesin (1911);\(^{10}\) the home was rebuilt after a fire in 1914 and renamed Taliesin II (1915); Taliesin II was reconstructed and renamed Taliesin III following the 1925 fire that claimed $225,000-$500,000 in Japanese artwork; Taliesien West (1937) in Scottsdale, Arizona was the last Wright home to bear the Taliesin name.

Wright abandoned his own family in 1909 and took up residence with his neighbor’s wife, who died in a deliberately-set gasoline fire at the original Taliesin.

In both the 1914 and 1925 fires at Taliesin, the home was destroyed but not the studio; Wright took this to mean that God disapproved of him as a man, but not as an architect.

\(^{10}\) Welsh word meaning “shining brow.”
Four of Wright’s buildings, Robie House, Imperial Hotel, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, and Falling Water have been commemorated in the Lego Architecture series.

Wright on Wright: “You see, early in life I had to choose between honest arrogance and hypocritical humility. I chose honest arrogance.”

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La etapa de la niñez

RICARDO TORRES

Hay muchos eventos en mi vida que han marcado mi manera de pensar filosóficamente y cambiado mi perspectiva del mundo que me rodeaba. Sin embargo hay uno que me afectó de una manera de observar la vida de otro modo. Nací en una sociedad muy pobre debido a la desigualdad que existe en mi país de origen, México. Crecí con muchas carencias económicas debido al oficio de zapatero mi padre, pero más por las carencias de atención a mi persona como un niño. La falta de información y educación que era tan nefasta en los años 50 y la religión que se interponía entre las parejas creándole culpas, llevó a mis padres como a la mayoría de la sociedad pobre y media a llenarse de hijos como si fueran conejos, no había control de la natalidad. Para la oligarquía era y es un método muy efectivo para que haya esclavos modernos que trabajen de sol a sol para seguir llenando los bancos suizos y los mejores colegios para sus hijos, mientras nosotros crecíamos con la mentalidad de trabajar y dejar que manejaran nuestras vidas a su antojo las elites del país y la iglesia.

Mis padres tuvieron diez hijos, el último fui yo. Fui quien pagó los platos rotos. La extrema pobreza de mi padre, la obligación de mi madre de no tener respiro por tantos hijos y el alcoholismo de mi padre, llevó a la separación final de mi madre, la cual empezó a trabajar y a desobligarse de los últimos cuatro que quedábamos en casa. Al principio nos llevó a vivir con ella pero a los dos años mis tres hermanos regresaron con mi padre, menos yo. Mi vida desde que empecé a tener uso de razón se volvió un mar de sangre. Golpiza tras golpiza, al grado que me sentía un insecto. Algo que “cambió” para bien, fue que en vagos recuerdos de mi niñez me veía
bien vestido, buena comida y un departamento decente; pero amargado y pobre dentro de mi ser, me sentía prisionero de mi cuerpo. Así pasé los primeros casi cinco años de mi vida al lado de la mujer que me dio la vida. Hasta que una de mis hermanas se dio cuenta del abuso y me raptó dejándole una nota a mi madre que jamás me volvería a tocar un pelo, antes de eso me había puesto la golpiza de mi niñez, tirado en el baño y bañando en sangre, un rayo de sol daba sobre mis ojos y todo lo veía rojo. Pensé que mi niñez sería eterna y eso me mataba de horror.

Al llegar de vuelta con mi padre, el cual para mí era un extraño, recuerdo que le decía “señor me da mi domingo,” y él decía, “no soy un señor, soy tu padre.” Al poco tiempo mi vida dio un giro de 360 grados, empecé a ser un niño normal si se le puede llamar así. Sin embargo mi vida volvió a llenarse de golpes, no por mi padre, que era un ser bello y puso todo de su parte para remendar sus errores, aunque esto le llevó casi una década; me dio todo el amor y comprensión de los años perdidos, pero pasábamos mucho tiempo solos y las golpizas esta vez por mi hermana, la misma que me arrebató de la atrocidad, se volcó contra mí. No fue tanto su culpa sino que era una joven de quince años, lidiando con cuatro niños, entre los cinco y once años de edad. Prácticamente no era su obligación, era la sociedad y el círculo vicioso en el que había crecido. Me vida se volvió a llenar de pobreza y hambre pero en el fondo empecé a formar mi propia esfera de protección. ¿Cuál, era mi símbolo de protección? Por supuesto que la violencia. Con los años me volví un renegado y mis defensas fueron los puños y las ofensas hacia la sociedad. Me volví una lacra de la sociedad. Lo único puro que yo veía era la niñez y la defendía erróneamente (con violencia). Si los atacaban o si había abuso verbal. Sin embargo mi escape era el brindarles cariño y entonces salía el otro yo que solo compartía con ellos.

Anduve vagando por la ciudad de México, no me gustaba regresar a casa. Al llegar a la adolescencia me convertí en un drogadicto y vándalo. Siempre andaba golpeado. Hasta que una vez, yo con mi vagancia y mi padre tratando de dejar el alcoholismo y hacer mil esfuerzos por regenerarme, lo hundió más. Nos estábamos muriendo vivos. La última golpiza que me
dieron le afectó de tal manera que volvió a agarrar el vicio. A la mañana siguiente después de la cruda realidad con olor a sangre, encontré a mi padre sentado en el catre, tomando y llorando por mí. Lo miré profundamente y encontré eso que tanto me había hecho falta: amor. Me sentí una basura y me di cuenta que había traicionado al único ser que me dio abrigo, al que llegué a reprocharle su conducta, pero caí en cuenta que al igual que yo la sociedad nos oprimía. Me acerqué y le dije que pasaba; me dijo que él era el culpable de todas mis desgracias y le dije que no, que nadie era culpable y que teníamos que nacer de nuevo. Nos abrazamos y lloramos todas las lágrimas de repudio y odio que nos había dado la vida. Le prometió que jamás volvería a usar drogas ni a andar de vándalo, y que el dejará el vicio.

Tengo que cerrar de esta manera filosóficamente tomando todo a mi favor. El cual me daba la posibilidad de pensar antes de actuar. Mi atroz niñez y juventud me afectó de tal manera que me hizo ver la vida de una manera y todas las esferas que hubo en mi vida las cambié para sanar mi alma y mi mente (símbolos de superación). Le he enseñado a mis hijos que si se les quebrara, una tienen derecho a llorar a mares si lo desean, pero que también hay que mirar el dolor ajeno y ver que hay gente que son mutiladas de sus extremidades y literalmente de igual manera de sus pertenencias y derechos humanos y sobresalen. Les he contado mi vida no para que sufran sino para que superen sus miedos y siempre exijan sus derechos de una manera sana y no como la que yo viví. Aprendí a ver que la sociedad siempre está ahí, esperando a aplastarte y suprimirte, a condicionar tu vida y llenarte de culpa junto con las religiones fanáticas que sólo sirven a la oligarquía para que chupen tu cerebro. Jamás volví a pelear y aunque pase trastornos mentales por dejar la adicción yo solo, me recupere y a través del dolor y la soledad me encontré con mi “otro yo.” Sigo amando al niño que quiso volverse un insecto y salir por una ventana abierta. Me liberé. Leí y devoré libros. Entre aquellos libros, dos me sanaron filosóficamente y espiritualmente: The King 0f Children: The Life of Janusz Korczak de Betty Jean Lifton y The Rape of Nanking de Iris Chang. Con estos libros encontré que mi sufrimiento era una migaja comparada a las atrocidades que habían hecho los imperios. Que todo lo manejan a su antojo.
La globalización nos absorbe en Latinoamérica si nos dejamos llevar por elites, que van de la mano con la iglesia, ideologías y terrorismo mediático: que se emplea en los noticieros, periódicos y propagandas capitalistas. Hoy he encontrado en mi camino del saber al filósofo, Enrique Dussel. Nos muestra la realidad a través de la filosofía de la liberación. En su mencionado libro, *La liberación de la filosofía*, filosóficamente el ser humano desde el vientre de su madre se le tiene que hablar y amar, ya que el embrión ya piensa desde el vientre y nos escucha. La vida es un libro de la liberación y a cada uno de nosotros nos corresponde hallarla. Basta con dejarse de prejuicios y tomar provecho del pensamiento que nos fue otorgado para ilustrarnos y no permitir que nadie piense por nosotros.

Para concluir debo decir que pasaron 25 años, los mismos que mi padre ha dejado de beber y yo de no usar drogas, ni golpear a nadie. Filosóficamente he entendido que puedo luchar por mis derechos a través de la vía pacífica, y no caer en las garras de las sociedades. No he vuelto a ver a mi padre ya que yo me exilié voluntariamente o forzadamente al extranjero para recuperarme. Sé que un día lo veré. La sociedad en la que viví es la misma que sucede en Latinoamérica.
Variations of a Childhood Song

“In That Summer”
(Translated by Biruk Eyesus)

Beza Bebega Beza Bebega
Echogna tefeto Filega
Meshebetina Sew Bet Geba
Legituan Ayat tekenaniba
Wededechew Wededate
Yezuat tefa Belelitu
Bechelema Bezutaguazu
Abay Deresu wenzu kemola
Lemeshager Simokeru
Gebita Kerech Yeresu Fekir
Aleqese Hodu Baba,
Aleqese Yefekir Enba

In that summer, in that summer
One was desperate for a lover
Out to search, he went.
Night came, and the traveler
sought refuge in a
stranger’s home
To pass the night.
And in this stranger’s home he
encountered the girl,
Wearing a veil covering her face.
He loved her and she loved him
(there and then they were in
love).
He stole her into the night (like a
thief, and like death).
In that night they traveled far,
They went on and reached the
Abay river;
Yet, the river was full, and alas,
as they attempted to cross
she drowned in the flood,
And the river took his lover.
He wept inconsolably. He cried; he
cried tears of love.
The man was never there. He never had a place under his name. Eventually, searching for him felt insane and superstitious. He was there until recently; and until very recently, he was social, jovial, and he was observed hanging around the village attendant’s brother and the village attendant’s daughter. And yet, none knew of his whereabouts. Just like none knew he was wanted for the burning of two churches in Debrebirhan, a city about two days walk from this village. His presence came quick and large, and his past receded and blended with the community as if he were one of the villagers. A night and a day had passed searching for him in every pit; he was seen having a sip of tella or eating his dinner among the village’s only eating place for newcomers. In some places, he was seen helping folks with their daily chores. He had kidnapped the village attendant’s daughter and left no traces. The arson investigators sent from Debrebirhan and the village attendant kept searching without a clue that he had left town.

The village had three main roads and several alleys that dissected, divided, and converged the oval-shaped huts constructed from brown soil and animal dung. Their roofs were thatched with yellowish dried savanna grasses. One main road led to a tributary river — a clear water source and the site where all clothes were washed and men and women took baths at several points across its length. Like a sickle blade, the river divided the village in half, and the river was legendary, known for flooding during the rainy season. The villagers avoided it at all cost during the three months of rain; thus, it created this seasonal division of the village because no one dared to cross it.

There exists a fable about a demon, commonly known as “the river snatcher,” that awakens with the coming of the rain and the rising of the water. Many who attempt to cross the river have been drowned by the river snatcher, who brings the flood of great commotion and fury, like a horde of horses galloping or the growling of dogs when the morning breaks and the hyenas have retreated from the village.
The river usually threw its corpse together with fallen tree logs and broken yellow lilacs on a particular edge at the north end of the village before it joined the bigger river — Abaya. The wanted man crossed this river and took the village attendant’s daughter with him during the rainy season. So it was impossible for the villagers to imagine that he was not in the village, but rather, on the other side of the river. They had no way of communicating with the farmers and cattle herders on the other side of the river until the rainy season stopped and the river subsided.

This predicament benefited the accused arsonist. He had, yet again, escaped the relentless arson investigators. On the other side of the river, the village attendant’s daughter washed his cloth, made him dinner, and went to the market every Wednesday to get groceries—cobs of corn to roast on charcoal at night or flour to make genefo for their breakfast. On Sundays, she went with him to church.

Their first meeting had been inside the village attendant’s home for the yearly celebration of St. Mary. The arsonist spoke to the daughter very bravely and kindly. As she was passing the tella, pouring it into everyone’s gourds, he seized his moment.

“Are you the daughter of Teferi?”

She held her jug close to his gourd, filling it to the rim, and replied, “I am, of course.”

“Well, if I must say, you have pretty eyes...and I don’t mean that in a tacky or unfriendly way, but you have big eyes; they are big and pretty like fish eyes.” He added. “I can say that because it is my first time looking at your face, while everybody here has probably grown familiar with your features.”

She smiled and blushing, responded, “Thank you. It has been a few years since anybody has commented on them. Ever since my mother died.”

She noticed his dark complexion and hairy cheeks, his dim, yet deep and twinkling eyes, and she moved to pour tella for the next person.
The village attendant felt lost and unbalanced after his daughter was snatched from him. There had been only one day between the arrival of the investigators and the disappearance of his only daughter, and his hopes were revived by the attention the state authority had given the kidnapper for the burning of the two churches. But as a cattle keeper revealed, the couple had crossed the river. The attendant’s hopes of capturing the madman who had his child, dwindled. The rain wept heavy for days, his heart felt heavy, and his eyes were bloated and red from the lack of sleep. He argued with his brother because they had let the arsonist into their home. The season was insufferable because his wife had passed away years ago, and now, his daughter had been taken by a demon — for who else could have escaped the river snatcher except a demon himself? A demon who had burned two churches. Now, he was surrounded like shemma, like gabi, by the dark and heavy clouds, the muddy alleys, and the cold windy roads. At double loss, he felt like he had nothing else to live for. His daughter was the only part of his life that remained of his wife but his memory — that beauty with whom he shared many great days. His daughter had grown into such a womanly figure, and he was always comforted by her voice, which was as sweet, and settling as her mother’s. He was a miserable sight for everyone when the arson investigators weren’t able to provide him with any more hope. He had hoped that housing them would bring back his daughter, in some way, quicker.

Men and women of the village — more frequently the elders and clergymen — came to his place to console his heart, to help his mind rest by telling him the little things that were happening in the village: whose cow gave birth; who was to be married; word from the capitol; and such. Some came to revive his spirit, some brought him food, some prayed for him, and they reminded him that the river would not be full forever; that after the rainy season passed, they would all search for his daughter, and they would show no mercy to the demon who had stolen her. Some reminded him of his responsibilities to the village and brought up their disagreements on farming, on market prices, and on cattle matters.
Finally, the rain subsided, and the river was low enough that it could be crossed. The village attendant and the arson investigators crossed the river and went on their search to the other side of the village. They heard that the couple had walked out of the village a week past, and that no one had seen them since; no one knew where they went.

They told the father that the girl acted with the manners of a wife attending to her husband, and they recognized her as a villager from the other side of the river. They informed him that she was well and happy during the two months she stayed there; yet, she was never open to anyone or invited anyone into the home they had rented from an old widowed cattle herder who lived by the edges of the river.

The same cattle herder told the father that the couple had crossed the river and had escaped the demon who had taken two of his stray goats and his ten-year-old son.

Inconsolably sad, the father returned, and the arson investigators gave up their search, deciding to keep the name of the wanted man on a watch list. On their return over the river, it rained, and as the father attempted to cross, the river snatcher took him and his horse. Heavy rain poured for the last time that season. The mass of water rushed down the river, taking wood logs, broken yellow lilacs, and the fertile soil of the land with it.
Patrones de la edad

ELIZABETH AGUADO JIMÉNEZ

Soy Elizabeth Aguado, oriunda de la Ciudad de México, criada en una sociedad cosmopolita, y según se me hizo creer por muchos años de una mentalidad abierta a la diversidad. Al pasar del tiempo y con mi llegada a los famosos “treintas” me ha comenzado a seguir más asiduamente una serie de preguntas y comentarios derivados de la sociedad que me rodea, como por ejemplo: ¿No te piensas casar? ¿Por qué aun no tienes hijos? Entre otras. Esto me ha hecho entrar en varios cuestionamientos.

Para nuestra sociedad ¿Somos sólo percibidos a través de patrones preestablecidos de acuerdo a nuestra edad? ¿Es cuestión cultural? ¿Dónde queda nuestro individualismo? Antes de entrar en un cuestionamiento más profundo, considero que es importante buscarle tal vez una explicación científica a este problema. En mi búsqueda por respuestas encontré algo que se llama “esperanza de vida” que es la edad promedio que una persona puede vivir. Según datos provistos por el Banco Mundial, a principios del siglo XX la esperanza de vida era de 31 años, y esto tal vez pudo ser un factor en el pasado del por qué nuestras bisabuelas, abuelas y aun nuestras madres se casaban y tenían hijos a edades muy tempranas; pero en la actualidad la esperanza de vida en México es de 77 años y aquí en los Estados Unidos es de 79 años. Al entender estos datos, podemos deducir que esto ya no es una cuestión de longevidad.

Al pensar estos cuestionamientos de los patrones de la edad, comencé a buscar en nuestra cultura, que es lo que nos orilla a pensar que para antes de nuestros treinta ya tenemos que estar casados
y con hijos o haber hecho determinadas cosas. En nuestros países latinoamericanos, en particular en comunidades aisladas o que viven en extrema miseria, las mujeres se casan a muy temprana edad debido a la pobreza que les embarga y a la falta de educación de estas. Algo que desde mi punto de vista tiene sentido, ya que ¿Cómo pueden codiciar algo más, si no tienen conocimiento alguno de que existe algo diferente? Pero ¿qué pasa en comunidades o ciudades más grandes como en la que yo fui criada donde la educación, información y oportunidades son más accesibles? Así que en mi opinión esto es una cuestión más tradicionalista, ya que aun en nuestros tiempos con toda la información que nos rodea seguimos creyendo lo que nuestras abuelas creyeron en un pasado. Se nos ha olvidado cuestionar estos factores de suma importancia, mismos que al dejar pasar de largo nos pueden privar de muchas oportunidades en nuestras vidas, como el seguirnos educando, conocer lugares o personas diferentes. Aclaro que el hecho de que una persona se case o tenga hijos no la hace menos propensa a hacer lo mismo que una persona que no tiene hijos y que es soltera, pero creo que si la pone en una posición más difícil de alcanzar y por consiguiente de liberarse de la falta de conocimiento.

En conclusión, creo que antes de seguir fomentando patrones obsoletos y dictatoriales deberíamos hacer una pausa para pensar y preguntarnos si el casarnos y tener hijos es lo que realmente queremos, si lo estamos haciendo de una manera consiente o inconsciente. Entendamos que al cuestionar estos factores de la edad o del famoso “ya es tiempo de que...” nos podemos liberar de prejuicios y vivir de una manera diferente.
Remnants of War

-- Odyssey Summer Session-Reflections of First World War 1914

In the aftermath of devastating conflicts.
We are left with more pain and struggles.
Transformations of feelings and ideas reflect our lives.
Families, livelihoods, homes, emotions, and thoughts all tremble with instability and they must be handled.

It is difficult for the veteran soldier to accomplish this with bombs landing only several feet away, as one watches their fellow comrades’ body parts disperse in various directions. At the same moment, dinner is being served at the family gathering with insignificant chatter. No one notices the sudden “about face” command, back to the battlefield, in your distant glance.

When war has ended, life is expected to resume.
But does it really? No, not like before.
The battlefield remains in your personal space, minus the blood.
Unexplainable to those who have not experienced battle.
They do not feel the tension and the stress within, which haunts your everyday life.

A most difficult and horrific experience to share, even with a loved one. The day in the life of a civilian includes waking up from a restful nights’ sleep, getting dressed, and preparing their daily chores. All closely resembles the previous day.

Not the same for a soldier. They relive their battle experience repeatedly. Recalling the dangers, the rage, the combat, the camaraderie, the pain, the bloodshed, and the loss first, before they recall, “the reason.” Now that the soldier has completed his tour and returned to regular life, they are faced with a new battle, a new normal.
Haunting Lyric

KAHIL GIVHAN

A siren once enchanted me, enthralled, then abandoned me.
Into every nook and cranny her symphonic chord crept.
Like a spider to his web, I cling to her call, lest I forget the rapture of her melody.
Her throat caressed notes like strings on a violin.
Her medleys confessed hope and seemed to reach inside my skin.
I had no choice but to be entranced by her hymns,
For her cacophony danced on the wind like ballet.
As her lyric pranced, I would hang on every word she would say.
Stunning rhapsodies spilled from her lips which left me humming absently her riffs.
Penetrating as a lance her lyric captured me,
And to this day I am still clutched in its grip.
The noise emanating from her diaphragm touched everyone it hit.
Her horn blew such intoxicating jazz.
Resonating like notes struck on a piano,
Each key of her flow was more breathtaking than the last;
One moment breaking glass, teasing like a feather the next.
Her measure was unsurpassed.
Yet the only thing more devastating than her dialect was her death;
An untimely tragedy in my memory still fresh.
A wound that still stings because I miss her with each step.
She struck fire with her clef,
And just when the swan started to sing, she left
A girl who had become a woman, a lady I respect.
As I study her operas, it inspires a chill, for I can almost feel her in the room—
A familiar ghost who croons to me by the moon. Haunting me with a lyric, a verse that cools the spine, Conducting a musical séance whose every nuance is divine. Hearing the apparition, my ears petition that she is alive. They itch and tingle, twitch and crinkle as I sit amazed, Reacting to the jingle as if ablaze. Not a single note escapes them, they sip the serenade—Swayed by the spell of a mage who seduces me in song from the grave. Yet even at the height of this event, a tinge of pain intrudes and I lament, For when twilight ends, I will be estranged from the diva heaven-sent.
Alta Definición

MATEO GONZÁLEZ

Quiero vivir en alta definición,
Agudizar mis sentidos y mi corazón para que la vida pase ante mí como un cuadro digital de un millón de píxeles.
Quiero ser el mismo de un millón de siglos atrás,
Hundir sin miedo los pies en el lodo,
Absorber con el torso desnudo la temperatura pasajera de la lluvia
Y el aliento
Sin tiempo
Del viento
Milenario.
Hinchar al máximo las fosas nasales, como una bestia,
Cuando lleguen a las intimidades eléctricas de mi cerebro las feromonas fluorescentes de la mujer que amo
Implorando posesión.
Recuperar, porque lo necesito ahora, el sexto sentido que un día sintiéndome a salvo y sin pensar elimine por innecesario. Ser fiera para luchar contra fieras.
Quiero mirar más allá de los poros de mis propias manos
Y descubrir esa partícula atómica de bronce que soles atrás levantada al cielo le rindió culto a Quetzalcóatl pero que por avaricia y para mantenerme atado me hicieron creer que era un infortunio.
Encontrar esta misma partícula en el corazón de mis hijos y por me dio de una resucitación cardiopulmonar darles también la oportunidad de mirar al mundo tan real y tan natural como es y desvanecer por falso el mundo onírico que los mercaderes nos presentan como un regalo de dioses binarios.
IN MEDIAS RES

Quiero sentir a mi hermano al escuchar sus palabras rotas,
Que no entren a mis oídos solamente sonidos guturales de un ser
extraño, sino que mi corazón y su corazón sintonicen el mismo
suspiro de queja o de alegría.
Escuchar el triste murmullo de sus lágrimas al mojar en cascada
Las células abiertas de sus mejillas malgastadas;
Y secarlas.
Que al fin y al cabo,
En esta vida o en las diez mil más que tengo pendientes
Seré yo quien vierta esas mismas lágrimas.
Quiero aspirar una a una las palabras
De los finamente tallados discursos de aquellos que se autoproclaman
líderes y en razones aún turbias para mi entendimiento tratan de
ganar mi confianza.
Sería interesante percibir el olor de la mentira y la maldad aun cuando
vengan disfrazadas de olores y colores embriagantes.
Descubrir por fin, y nítidamente en los ojos del líder partidista, la
verdadera razón de su incesante lucha por conseguir el poder;
o tal vez definir si esto en verdad no es más que un teatro.
Quiero expulsar el ocio de mi razonamiento,
Desentumir sus habilidades y sin ningún temor aceptar la realidad de mi
existencia.
¿Temporal?
¿Confusa?
¿Eterna?
¿Tan clara y brillante como un amanecer?
¿Cíclica?
Pero inevitablemente material y con fecha de caducidad.
Entender,
Y dolerá al momento,
Que sólo estoy de paso,
De vacaciones.
Que un día estaré en uno de esos puertos blancos modernos donde
parten las almas caducadas

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Y llegan las almas vírgenes.
Y que este mundo será para otros
Con todo lo que poseo y fanáticamente atesoro,
Para aquellos a quienes nunca conocí
O aquellos a quienes por creerlos diferentes
Tontamente odié.
On Being Human

JOSEPHINE McENTEE

What does it mean to be human? Definitions abound:

*Adjective.* Pertaining to people or humankind; being a person; having the nature of a person.¹

*Adjective.* Of, relating to, or characteristic of people of human beings; of or characteristic of people as opposed to God or animals or machines, especially in being susceptible to weaknesses; of or characteristic of people’s better qualities, such as kindness or sensitivity; (zoology) of or belonging to the genus Homo; a human being, especially a person as distinguished from an animal or (in science fiction) an alien.²

*Antonym.* Inhuman [adjective]: lacking human qualities of compassion and mercy; cruel or barbaric; not human in nature or character.³

In looking through the many definitions of “human,” two facts indelibly imprinted themselves on my mind, and influenced the thesis of this paper. First, “human” is primarily considered a descriptive word (adjective) and secondly, a name of a person (noun).

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Second, there is no legal definition of human; it is addressed in an opposing definition of “monster”:

*Noun.* A prodigious birth; a human birth or offspring not having the shape of mankind, which cannot be heir to any land albeit brought forth in marriage.\(^4\)

This compelled me to look at the non-legal definitions of “monster”:

*Noun.* An imaginary creature that is typically large, ugly and frightening; an inhumanely cruel or wicked person; often (humorous) a person, typically a child, who is rude or badly behaved; a thing or animal that is excessively or dauntingly large; a congenitally malformed or mutant animal or plant.\(^5\)

With these definitions in mind, I have chosen to look at the characters in *Philoctetes*\(^6\) by Sophocles to begin answering the question, “What does it mean to be human?” The relationships between Philoctetes and Odysseus, Odysseus and Neoptolemus, and Neoptolemus and Philoctetes serve as a catalyst for examining the human condition.

Philoctetes, once a warrior celebrated for his archery, honor, and integrity, lives in exile from a society that cannot bear to witness his gross disfiguration. After a decade of bitter isolation, providence intervenes through a prophet’s vision and the society that has abandoned him now needs him for their salvation.

Disease has left Philoctetes an “unhappy creature,”\(^7\) living a “miserable life,”\(^8\) “utterly alone — [always suffering] the savagery of his illness with

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\(^7\) Sophocles. *Philoctetes*, line 161.

\(^8\) Sophocles. *Philoctetes*, line 165.
no one to care for him, with no friendly face near him, but bewildered and
distraught at each need as it comes.” Philoctetes has come to think of
himself as less than human — inferior and repulsive because of his
infirmity. He echoes these sentiments on his first encounter with
Neoptolemus, “Do not be afraid or shrink from such as I am, grown a
savage, I have been alone and very wretched, without friend or comrade,
suffering a great deal. Take pity on me; speak to me...” And when
Neoptolemus feigns any knowledge of him, Philoctetes laments, “Surely,
I must be vile... that never a word of me, of how I live here, should have
come home through all the land of Greece.” Philoctetes is truly a man
without human ties — all of his noble deeds and triumphant victories were
not enough to prevent society, using Odysseus as its agent, from
ostracizing and banishing him.

Odysseus, like Philoctetes, is a seasoned Greek warrior. Their history is one
of friendship and betrayal. Odysseus feels no remorse — his moral
compass always points to the greatest good for Greece. He unabashedly
excuses his betrayal of Philoctetes with, “I had orders for what I did; my
masters, the princes, bade me do it.” But Odysseus is clearly comfortable
with his lack of scruples, as he tells Neoptolemus he is not opposed to
lying, “not if lying brings our rescue with it.” “I see that everywhere among
the race of men it is the tongue that wins and not the deed.” “When one
does something for gain, one need not blush.” Odysseus is bound to
honor and integrity only so far as they serve his goals.

Neoptolemus is an idealistic young warrior, under the command of
Philoctetes’ frenemy, Odysseus. Neoptolemus “would prefer even to fail
with honor than win by cheating.” Yet, he allows Odysseus to persuade
him to compromise his integrity — he agrees to trick Philoctetes into

9 Sophocles. Philoctetes, line 170-174.
10 Sophocles. Philoctetes, line 225-229.
11 Sophocles. Philoctetes, line 254-256.
12 Sophocles. Philoctetes, line 5-6.
15 Sophocles. Philoctetes, line 111.
16 Sophocles. Philoctetes, line 95-96.
returning with the bow of Heracles to the battlefields of Troy.

Neoptolemus’ guilt is obvious as he spins the “truth” he has been commanded to tell: “unruly men become so by the instruction of their betters.”17 But, true to his nature and in response to Philoctetes’ gift of the bow, Neoptolemus confesses his part in the hoax.18 He begins by saying, “All is disgust when one leaves his own nature and does things that misfit it.”19 Neoptolemus’ confession of duplicity to Philoctetes leads to the pivotal confrontation among the three characters: Philoctetes, Odysseus, and Neoptolemus.

Relying on our definitions of “human,” let us put our characters to the litmus test. Philoctetes, Odysseus, and Neoptolemus are undoubtedly human. They are men, homo sapiens, and they are flawed. While Philoctetes is consumed by a monstrous disease, and Odysseus is capable of monstrous cruelty and deceit, and Neoptolemus is guilty of naivete of monstrous proportions, they are nonetheless human. Their weaknesses — physical and of character — are evidence of human status.

At this point, I believe it is important to consider one final term as we further examine our characters — “humanity.” It is the missing noun in our quest for understanding what it means to be human.

*Humanity*. noun. The human race; human beings collectively; the fact or condition of being human; humaneness; benevolence.20

We tend to think of humanity as embodying the more noble attributes of compassion, fair play, benevolence, generosity, kindness, empathy, goodwill, and charity (though, certainly, the opposite of each exists in society).

18 “You may have it and anything else of mine that is for your good.” Sophocles. *Philoctetes*, line 658-659.
Humanity is bound by moral principles and ethical behavior. And it is within the community of human beings that humanity is practiced — for better or worse.

Since Philoctetes has been outcast and alone for nearly ten years, it would be expected that his humanity might yield to baser values. On the contrary — though his self-worth has been greatly damaged, Philoctetes has not wholly succumbed to apathy or savagery. Witness his rationalization of why his “loving father”\(^{21}\) has not responded to his pleas for rescue from the island: rather than think his father has rejected him too, and thus is ignoring his please, Philoctetes believes that the messages were never delivered, or that his father is too poor in health to affect a rescue, or that he is dead.\(^ {22}\) Yet, just as irrationally, Philoctetes cleaves to his suffering and is unable to pursue his own healing: when told that by returning to Troy with the bow, he will regain his health and status, Philoctetes would rather kill himself — so comfortable he has become with his pain and intent to defeat Odysseus’ purpose.

Despite his savage living conditions, his monstrously foul illness, and his moments of madness, Philoctetes has managed to hold on to his humanity. He still feels for others. Neoptolemus marvels, “God help you, I would think your own sufferings were quite enough without mourning for those of others.”\(^ {23}\) Philoctetes is very human, and his humanity is intact.

Odysseus is cunning: “[his] wickedness and impudence are without limit.”\(^ {24}\) He is single-minded in his pursuit of any goal, and is not averse to compromising his honor (or anyone else’s) to achieve the objective. After all, victory brings with it its own honor and glory, which he is not hesitant to usurp: “Yes I, I and no other,” he says to the capture of Philoctetes and Heracles’ bow, ignoring the part and price Neoptolemus has paid.\(^ {25}\)

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Odysseus remains relentless in his ruthless, sadistic behavior towards Philoctetes, and his callous manipulation of Neoptolemus.

Still, for all his bravado, Odysseus is a coward when it comes to defending his beliefs (perhaps because they are not entirely his own): he stands down to Neoptolemus’ sword challenge saying, “I will let you alone; I shall go and tell this to the assembled Greeks, and they will punish you.” Odysseus loses a bit of his humanity each time he compromises himself or others. He is definitely at the low-end of the humanity scale: Odysseus is very human, but he lacks humanity’s virtues and far too comfortably embodies humanity’s vices.

Neoptolemus’ humanity shifts as he interacts first with Odysseus, and then with Philoctetes. Perhaps this is because he has not fully matured and developed his own character. Perhaps it is in his character to yield to command or gesture. Time will tell. As Neoptolemus behaves in Philoctetes, there is hope that he will always catch himself when he stumbles and set himself back on high moral ground: he is ashamed that he has “practiced craft and treachery with success,” and “go[es] to undo the wrong [he has] done.” Neoptolemus is fearless in this climactic confrontation with Odysseus: “I have no fear of anything you can do, when I act with justice; nor shall I yield to force.” Neoptolemus is very human, but his humanity waivers.

Ironically, Sophocles’ tale of Philoctetes, with its flawed humans and their muddled thoughts and deeds, comes to a favorable conclusion only after the intervention of a non-human — Heracles. Heracles, hero and half-god, revered by the Greeks, uses his position as the son of Zeus to convince Philoctetes to bring his bow and return to Troy with Neoptolemus. It is by Heracles’ word that Philoctetes accepts that renewed health, wealth, and glory are rightfully to be returned to him. Neither the integrity of Neoptolemus nor the treachery of Odysseus could accomplish this.

26 Sophocles. Philoctetes, line 1255-1257.
27 Sophocles. Philoctetes, line 1228.
28 Sophocles. Philoctetes, line 1223.
29 Sophocles. Philoctetes, line 1251-1252.
Perhaps it is the human condition — Philoctetes’ humanity — that prevents Philoctetes from rebounding quickly. Having accepted his lot, brought about by divine retribution, only divine intervention can successfully steer him onto the course of recovery.

So, what does it mean to be human? This paper is only a glimpse into a multi-faceted answer. Looking at Philoctetes, Odysseus, Neoptolemus, and their tale, I am mindful that any definition of “being human” must be shaped in a manner which does not discount our moral responsibility. We must endeavor not to forsake the virtues of our humanity in the process of being human. First, being human is not just a physical state; it is also our humanity and all that it implies — good and bad. Second, how one perceives himself and how others perceive him, builds additional complexity into the definition of “human,” since our perceptions are seldom objective. Third, Sophocles’ play reveals that being human means yielding to gods, instincts, fate and the like, as we seek order and direction in our lives. Being human is messy, erratic, and fraught with error. It can be no other way. For if it was, we would not be human.
Vuelta y vuelta

Vuelta y vuelta  gira que gira la banda y la lira, pasan que pasan como desfile militar el pan, el jamón, y el queso con su rítmico andar.
Yo, solemne y callada sueño que sueño como en la paz de mi almohada, escribiendo versos en mi cabeza.
Que osadía  la mía,  yo soñando con “La Noche boca arriba,” queriendo saber el secreto de “Murdock” … pero no... nada que viene a mi mente,
Ni siquiera la esperanza de “Ignacio” que no oye ladrar los perros más yo creo que “Leo,” mudo quedo al escuchar a aquel hombre que nunca aprendió a ladrar.
Se me figura que “El otro yo” me está jugando una broma mal sana; invitándome una manzana, igual que a “Blanca nieves y compañía.”
Da igual, ya sabemos que “El paraíso imperfecto” si existe, me lo dijo Tito Monterroso ya que tal fue mi acoso y yo queriendo ser autentica, no encontré el sabor a pollo en las ancas de rana que loca diría mi hermana.
Más mi osadía sigue sin compasión con riesgo de cometer un “Pecado de omisión” pudiendo soñar con “Historias sencillas.”
Ahora esta ilusa le dio la nota de escribir como si tal cosa, ¡un soneto! Más se encontró en gran aprieto rimando los tercetos para resolver los cuartetos ya ni se diga en la matemática de las silabas, ¡qué atrevida! Diría De Quevedo, ¡habrás visto tal arremedo!
IN MEDIAS RES

Trabajo final de Filosofía

MATEO GONZÁLEZ

A medida que han pasado los años de mi estancia en Los Estados Unidos de América ha cambiado mi percepción de la vida política. Como resultado de la propaganda comercial norteamericana en mi país de origen llegué aquí con la idea de encontrar el sistema político perfecto. Los políticos que imaginaba eran los personajes de película que prefieren morir antes que ser parte de una injusticia, un abuso o un acto deshonesto. La ignorancia de la maraña política era lo que me hacía pensar de esta forma. Aunque a veces pienso que años atrás tal vez la sociedad en verdad era más parecida a esa imagen perfecta. Poco a poco al acercarme más a los medios de comunicación local y nacional, me enteraba de tal o cual político encarcelado o bajo investigación; siendo esto también parte del teatro. Pero sobre todo cuando surgieron en mi mentalidad preguntas simples sobre leyes y costumbres que encontraba dudosamente creíbles.

Aceptar mi condición indocumentada nunca creí injusto el que se me negaran varios servicios sociales, económicos, o algunos privilegios; así que me pareció un hecho casi sobrenatural el que me hubieran otorgado un numero fiscal clasificándome como un contribuyente de impuestos. Convirtiéndome yo así, en alguien legítimo, pero no tan legítimo. Después vino la pregunta ¿cómo es que yo siendo un indocumentado y habiendo tantas agencias gubernamentales dedicadas totalmente a la remoción de individuos como yo, y teniendo toda mi información personal, no hacen nada por deportarme? ¿Cómo es que se me permite contribuir económicamente a este país pero no puedo participar de los más necesarios servicios? ¿O si es necesario porque no se me remueve
totalmente de aquí? Parecería que existe alguien a quien le beneficia esta condición en la que vivo; pero a todas voces afirman los medios de comunicación que soy un intruso y que próximamente se hará algo al respecto. Incluso, en los últimos procesos electorales presidenciales los candidatos se han atrevido sin ningún descaro a prometer abiertamente, unos a tomar medidas extremas para deshacer esta sociedad de indocumentados que según sus cifras ya ha sobrepasado los doce millones; otros a incluir esta misma sociedad en la vida cívica de este país. Por supuesto, todo esto resulta ser una gran estrategia política. Invariablemente y por millonésima vez confirmamos que las palabras de un político suenan bien pero carecen de sustancia. Siempre estarán en el eterno juego de culpar al otro partido por no tomar acción, aunque de sobra sabemos, pero no queremos aceptar su estrecha genealogía con Aristófanes.

Expongo como ejemplo de abuso policial y legislativo una situación que se ha creado localmente y claro pienso yo beneficiando mayormente a entidades gubernamentales semioscuras. Esta es, la oportunidad ficticia de poder comprar un automóvil, sin tener una licencia de conducir. Una trampa monetaria. Se pagan impuestos de compra-venta, impuestos anuales estatales y locales, seguro mandatorio, impuestos al comprar combustible, refacciones. Se pagan multas por estacionamiento inapropiado, y otras tantas. Sorprendente es saber también que últimamente varias compañías financieras otorgan préstamos a gente que comparte mi situación (claro, esto nunca lo anuncian en inglés). En fin, que la industria automotriz sufriría un pequeño hipo si estos doce millones no tuvieran un automóvil.

Pero si por infortunio uno es detenido por la policía conduciendo ese mismo vehículo se abre una caja de pandora. El conductor es encarcelado inmediatamente por no tener una licencia de conducir y es suerte si esto no termina en deportación. Fianzas, cortes municipales, confiscación del automóvil y un historial de criminalidad que después tomará miles de dólares en abogados para aclarar que sólo estaba conduciendo. Podría asegurarse que en cualquier día ordinario, en las
cortes de las ciudades y condados cercanos tres de cada diez personas citadas se encuentra en esta absurda situación. Por experiencia propia sé que es prudente presentarse con un abogado a un lado ante el juez o se correrá la suerte ser deportado desde ese mismo momento o ser asignado otras tres o cuatro citas más; que por supuesto alguien tiene que pagar. Pareciera ser esto algo escondido a plena luz pues todos los que estamos en esta situación lo sabemos, pero ninguno de los nativos (personas nacidas en este país) se ha percatado de ello. Los bien intencionados se preguntan inocentemente ¿por qué no se evita ese problema siguiendo las leyes? Otros conservadores sorprendidos odian la osadía de conducir pero desconocen que fueron los oficiales que ellos mismos eligieron los que permitieron todo ese enredo.

Contrariedades como las antes explicadas son las que principalmente han cambiado mi opinión sobre la autenticidad de la imagen que día a día nos tratan de implantar en nuestra mente los medios de comunicación. Esto es vivir en dos mundos al mismo tiempo. Con la intención de atraer el mercado hispano-hablante en los últimos años han surgido varias emisoras locales y nacionales que transmiten programación en español. Naturalmente estas últimas, presentan en sus noticieros diarios, temas y noticias que atraen esta audiencia particular. El tema de una Reforma Migratoria es lo que predomina ahora, y lo que dijo o hizo tal o cual político al respecto; novelas glorificando narcotraficantes, etc... En tanto las emisoras de habla inglesa, hablan de las palabras de Putin en Rusia; que tal o cual persona del medio artístico fue sorprendido usando drogas o murió en una sobredosis; las injusticias en el resto del mundo y cuál será la posición política que tomará el presidente. ¿Será cuestión de imagen el preocuparse por una población medio mundo aparte y parecer insensible a doce millones que viven en el propio país?

Ahora recuerdo, viví esto siglos atrás en el mito de la caverna. Me consuela saber que no soy el único en ella. Todos estamos dentro, esto es infinito.
It was morning in Connecticut, Crystal’s living room aglow. Sunlight poured in through the windows, illuminating the piano. For months it had collected dust as it sat there untouched; A stranger neglected, once a friend she could trust. Now it was just an antique, sporting a restored veneer — Occupying the center of the room, underneath the chandelier. Seeming to speak through her gloom, it beckoned her to play, Demanding an encore after a whole year away. She would forego Sunday breakfast, and with fingertips trembling, birthed prose majestic.

Crystal paused tending the ivories to caress her dangling necklace. A gift from her papa, the locket was a possession most precious. A droplet escaped as she made noise eclectic. She painted with vivid colors, in the glass chandelier reflected. With hands unsure, Crystal composed a message, A verse to her father. Tears burst from her eyes and with delicate hands that didn’t falter, A song she rhapsodized. Like a whispered prayer, soft was the melody. A teardrop fell, and splashed onto C. As water spilled from the corner of her eye, she honored her father’s memory. First she inspected the instrument, running her fingers across the keys. Their rust was evident, but then a harmony started to breathe.
She warmed up with a bit of Bach, knuckles freshly popped. Wearing the trademark ponytail she always wore when she practiced. After a year without applause, her fingers were restless. She reacquainted them with the piano, its flaws and crevices; All the while feeling a presence that she knew was her Dad. She painted with broad brushstrokes, an artist redefined. Her inheritance, though vast, was the farthest thing from her mind. Perhaps the hardest thing about the last twelve months, was pretending to smile all the time. And the never-ending stream of condolences in which she could find no comfort. The chandelier watched her performance, A silent witness to her solo.
La retirada

MATEO GONZÁLEZ

That’s it!
Detengo mis pasos.
Me calmo.
Controlo mi respiración.
Desarmo mi posición de ataque.
Mi cara se torna en una risa burlona hacia mí mismo, me doy cuenta que el césped no es más verde de este lado.
Y que mis pies al pisarlo no han cambiado en lo mínimo. Pero llegué aquí y no me arrepiento haber dejado mi juventud en el camino. Como Nervo estoy “En Paz.” I had what I had to have.
Llené mi ayate de Frost, de Whitman, de Cornel West, y Tupac;
Of grudge against Republicans and Democrats playing with my dignity and situation just to gain more power and votes.
You know what!
Keep your “legal resident status.” Shove it. I declare myself legal resident of this earth.
From now on I quit trying to walk on water. Ahora emprendo el retorno como Sysiphus al bajar la montaña, como Quijote a la Mancha. But, watch out; I am leaving you a cuckoo’s egg.
Lo siento Benedetti, daré a otro tu bandera del “no te salves”; me sentaré junto Urbina “a un lado del camino.”
¡Alas suaves!
perfume tenue andar frágil...
¡vida buena loca vida!... que nunca se disipa
¿por qué la voz de la alegría se muere?
Lamento... mi alma recogida de sufrimiento
ahora ni siquiera se inmuta, ante esta tu partida.
¿Cuándo se murió el amor?
Que no lo vi agonizar
que paso en la vida
que mi corazón te dejo de amar.
Acaso mis ojos se cegaron
mi alma se marchito ante el abrasante sol
de la rutina.
Cuanto dolor causa su partida
dejando en el corazón, un toque de vacío
mundano que ya ni la caricia sincera tengo
de tu mano.
Voz seguid tu camino... y quizás con gran tino
la vida se reconcilie contigo.
No odies la transparencia de mi verdad
es hiriente pero es una realidad.
Precious Butterflies

Butterflies dare not attempt to soar in our neighborhood
They can’t
Because if they try to soar, so beautiful and free
They are sure to be destroyed by crude pests that do not embrace their beauty

Curiosity is a forbidden treasure to butterflies in the hood
It is always a challenge for them to seek out mysteries and grow and pollinate the flowers
Pollination? It won’t happen because our butterflies are not given enough time to finish the process

This year, we will not smell the roses, because the flight of our butterflies has come to a halt, they are wounded
This phenomenon has occurred early in their season

In our neighborhood, the air will not be fresh; the flowers won’t even bloom, because Spring has been interrupted

So those butterflies might as well remain caterpillars crawling into little holes or hiding under leaves
Let them prepare for the next season
Then maybe our precious butterflies will take some advice and flutter their colorful wings to higher, safer grounds