

## Crossings Editorial

### Volume 6

In her book, *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities*, Martha C. Nussbaum argues that a “humane, people-sensitive democracy” requires particular competencies, including “the ability to think well about political issues . . . to examine, reflect, argue, and debate” and “to recognize fellow citizens as people with equal rights, even though they may be different in race, religion, gender, and sexuality” (25). As many theorists over the ages have argued, discourse in the public sphere should aspire to be thoughtful, inclusive, and responsive—and often requires taking a critical stance towards hegemonic and authoritative projects. We, editors of this sixth volume of *Crossings*, view this collection of student writing as evidence of such excellence and exchange. Adopting multidisciplinary and varied approaches, these essays present cogent and delicately studied readings on such topics as settler-colonialism, medical discourses, identity, censorship, and sanctioned state violence against vilified others. They are also, each and every one, expertly and engagingly written. If this collection offers a glimpse of our future citizenry, we have reason for hope.

Cierra Bettens, whose paper opens this collection, asks how newcomers to Canada might work with Indigenous peoples through Indigenous-led intercultural initiatives in order to resist reproducing settler-colonial narratives. This resistance, Bettens argues, may be achieved through “reciprocity and mutual understanding, as well as the recognition of shared experiences such as displacement and assimilation.” The inequalities and racism of settler colonialism—in this case, as manifested in the disproportionate number of Indigenous people who contracted or died from the COVID virus—

come to the fore as well in Katryna Barske's examination of Métis artist Kenneth Lavalley's proposed installation, *204 Bison*, in which 204 metal bison charge towards the Manitoba Legislative Building, a powerful symbol of opposition to the economically focused government rhetoric around COVID-19.

The two essays that follow shine a light on discourses of disease and the power of categories, naming, and representation. Olivia Rosemarie Ferreira's historical examination of a little-studied medical condition, General Paralysis of the Insane (GPI), argues that the disorder legitimized the then-developing field of psychiatry within medicine: GPI had a neurological basis but resulted in psychiatric symptoms. Ferreira highlights the social and class distinctions attached to 17<sup>th</sup>- and 18<sup>th</sup>-century diagnosis, with monied or "intellectual" classes more often enjoying the "privilege" of a GPI diagnosis. Medical diagnosis, as Emma Joyal demonstrates, is often *not* a privilege—in fact, it is sometimes an act of brutal exposure and misrepresentation. Such was the case with Gaëtan Dugas, a man falsely named and stigmatized as "Patient Zero," the first person to transmit AIDs to North America. Joyal traces "a complex history of misinformation, blame, and prejudice," which underscores the necessity of "problematizing cis-heteronormative perceptions of queerness."

As the next three essays demonstrate, film and television provide a generative site to examine identity and ideology. Maram Raposo de Medeiros da Rocha brings a transmasculine reading to the highly successful, long-running musical, *Phantom of the Opera*, and shows (by looking at the 2004 film version) how creative works in popular culture offer invaluable narratives for 2SLGBTQIA+ people. Queer representation in film can be seen as threatening rather than hopeful, however. Christian Higham argues that the banning of Wanuri Kahiu's 2018 film *Rakiki* in Kenya was motivated by a "patriarchal nationalism" that saw the queer film as a threat to the familial order of Kenyan society, an order with its roots in colonial

ideologies. These ideologies, as we see in the next contribution, often play out through representations of the body. Salam Al Sayed offers an intersectional and postcolonial reading of Fat Monica from the popular American sitcom *Friends*, a show Al Sayed first viewed as a teenager in Syria. Drawing on bell hooks' concept of "the oppositional gaze," Al Sayed revisits this character ten years later and, through a postcolonial reading, refuses the restrictive, American "thin ideal" depicted there.

The topic of "Other-as-threat" continues with Sanjam Panag's analysis of India's longstanding anti-Sikh media narratives, which legitimized the paramilitary attack on the Sikh Golden Temple in 1984. Panag draws parallels between that 1984 attack and recent farmers' protests in India and throughout the diaspora. These parallels, we learn, include the weaponization of the Indian media, as well as strategies of propaganda and censorship, all designed to spread and strengthen Anti-Sikh sentiment. Where Panag's essay examines state strategies of propaganda, Noah Lesiuk's contribution takes the reader back to the latter half of the 1930s and British strategies of appeasement of Adolf Hitler and Nazi Germany. Lesiuk's argument—which also, interestingly, picks up on the idea of fear and anxiety—is that the decisions around appeasement were influenced by "a desire to avoid war based on fear and economic incentive, lack of dominion support and anxiety over colonial control, and the need to buy time for re-armament."

With the end of the collection comes the tale of a lone water molecule that begins as snow and—after some travels—ends as snow. Ezra Wesley Enns' translation of Baldomero Lillo's *Las Nieves Eternas* or *Eternal Snow* offers a lesson in kindness, connection, and the price of holding oneself apart from others. Enns' translation describes the "tones of porphyry and alabaster" on the "living rocks" of a cave; the "musical, rhythmic gurgle" of drinking swallows; and lilies "flirtatiously tossing their pollen-laden stamens." Beauty refracts through the prose like light through the clear droplet.

And, as the little water molecule comes to learn (we hope), that connection is essential to living, we as Editors were reminded yet again (as if we needed reminding) that connection is central to any publishing endeavour. We would like to thank all the students who submitted pieces for consideration for this issue. We would also like to thank the *Crossings* Editorial Board for their careful vetting and demonstrable commitment to student success, and those outside of the Board who vetted student papers as well. Special thanks goes to Alina Moore, our student assistant who copyedited papers and provided the wonderful cover art. Thanks, too, to Kaitlynn Couto, a new student to this project, who did a fine job with the final layout. Thanks also to Tari Mvingi, for expert administrative support at various stages of the project.

A collective effort, this, and a fine one! Please enjoy what this issue has to offer.

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