

“What Global History Needs Most Today: Wonder”

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This very personal and heartfelt essay about the teaching of global history in the present and near future is the work of a European intellectual historian, one whose interest in and affection for world history has been, however, wide and deep, and considerably enhanced by my service on the GAHTC Executive Board for the last eight years. The remarks below are the product of nearly thirty years of teaching, the writing of two textbooks, and endless advocacy for the study of histories of all sorts. The conclusions I would like to draw from my experiences (at least today, in 2021!) are twofold: Firstly, I would like to suggest that global history would do well to dispense with facile moralizing, binary oppositions, and dystopianism in favor of richer human stories which show students that history is not about condemning the past but about understanding it. Secondly, as a person who has grown increasingly weary of justifications of the humanities in general and of global history in particular that rest exclusively on “critical thinking,” I would like to suggest that we would do better, both as teachers of and as advocates for global history, were we to emphasize wonder rather than criticism.<sup>1</sup> I realize that some of what I am saying will be controversial, and it should certainly not be thought to represent the views of any of GAHTC’s other members. But the remit of these essays was to be provocative, and not to mince words, so here goes.

Allow me to indulge in just a little autobiography to illustrate how I have come to my conclusions. Arriving at university (Berkeley) in 1980, I was part of a generation that set out to

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<sup>1</sup> Please see also Adnan Morshed’s paper in this series, in which he discusses his ‘wonder and wounds’ approach.

question 'the canon,' albeit originally from Marxist and feminist positions; as a graduate student at the University of Chicago, I imbibed a great deal of Foucauldian theory and was drawn to cutting-edge forms of the history of the human and natural sciences. Subaltern Studies was beginning at the time, though I am embarrassed to say that only had a passing acquaintance with what was happening in that field, by way of work I did in the history of anthropology. My dissertation and first book treated the history of classical archaeology and the institutionalization of philhellenism in the German-speaking world.<sup>i</sup> A major chapter in this book did treat the reckless and extortive behavior of archaeologists in Asia Minor, and follow-up essays treated the history of German and Austrian ethnology as practiced chiefly in Africa. Yet I remained a very Eurocentric European historian, and one whose teaching was even more Eurocentric than my research. I regret to report that my teaching was all too often driven by a kind of coverage mania, and a declensionist narrative that fit my Foucauldian preoccupations as well as the course of German and European history in the first half of the twentieth century.

By about 1993, as a junior professor at Princeton, I had begun to think seriously about world history, and to encounter, and find profoundly important, postcolonial critiques of Eurocentrism. My next book project took up the history of German orientalist scholarship, and while I treated at length and, I hope, with sufficient critical acumen, the cultural history of German colonialism, I found that my evidence could not sustain a discussion of 'the discourse on the Orient' of the sort sketched by Edward Said for Britain, France, and the United States.<sup>ii</sup> Three of my most significant findings are relevant here: 1) that German orientalists were chiefly motivated to enter this field by religion, not by imperialist ambitions, and most of them focused in any event on the ancient rather than the modern world; 2) that popular and scholarly

orientalism were two quite different things, if occasionally consonant; 3) that European orientalists were often the very people combatting pervasive stereotypes and introducing critiques of Eurocentric modes of thought.<sup>iii</sup> After painful wrestling with the urge to give my work a coherent, critical structure, I decided that it simply would not do, *pace* Said, to lump all linguists, imperial fortune hunters, hawkers of 'orientalizing' porn, and sensationalizing novelists into the same 'discourse.' Some orientalists, of course, had contributed to empire-building. Others had tried to forestall it, or simply to show their Eurocentric contemporaries that vast worlds of beauty, creativity, erudition, and ambition lay outside their ken. In the end, I decided that to have been systematically 'critical' would be an act of presentism as well as hubris, and a failure of the historian's duty to understand ideas and behaviors contextually. The reception of this book has generally been favorable, and other work has now shown how fruitful it is not to impose facile oppositions and indulge in blanket moralizing.<sup>iv</sup>

In 1997, in connection with my work on German orientalism, I was invited to join the brainstorming underway on a new world history textbook, one that would reconceptualize the widely-used continent-hopping model for teaching the course (today, India, tomorrow, East Asia). The conversations—and arguments!—I had in the course of many, many weekend meetings with my Princeton colleagues in African, Chinese, Latin American, and US history were extremely generative, and eventually we hashed out a plan for chapters integrated chronologically and thematically and moving across the period from about 1500 to the present, with emphasis placed on the building of overseas empires. But a breakthrough moment occurred when our South Asian specialist rightly accused the group of simply conceiving our story as European history upside down, and of failing to give voice to the resiliency and

autonomy of non-European cultures. Then the Chinese historian pointed out that all of the thematics we had painstakingly constructed to link 'the world' together did not work for China; there, developments such as the division of labor, debates about fashion and status, and the expansion of taxation regimes had occurred 300 or more years earlier than was the case elsewhere. The Russianist noted that Ivan the Terrible had already conquered a massive overland empire by the end of the sixteenth century, long before the British, French, and Dutch really began to extend their holdings overseas. We realized that we had inadvertently internalized a 'winners' and 'losers' mentality which, in its haste to be critical of Europe, failed to appreciate the richness of each context and the complexity of global interactions.

We ended up completely rethinking our book, and titling it: *Worlds Together, Worlds Apart*,<sup>v</sup> to give voice to those otherwise caricatured merely as history's victims, and to do justice to both the connections (imperial, commercial, cultural) and the non-globalized particularities of local and regional societies. Out of this conversation about the need to offer more than West-bashing came our most innovative and dramatic chapter, "Alternative Visions of the Nineteenth Century," which treated several significant non-western models of the modern such as Islamic revivalist movements on the Arabian peninsula and in West Africa, Shaka's building of the powerful Zulu kingdom, and the Taiping rebels' reimagining of "the heavenly kingdom." Many of these alternative visions succeeded, at least for a time, and in the long run, some of them have probably been more significant for inhabitants of these areas than were periods of Europe's influence. Many of them, too, involved significant violence; Europeans have never had a monopoly on that. Another lesson learned: modernity isn't all about Europe and did not arrive anywhere in the same way; nor did was it adopted, imposed,

or displaced without significant resistance and, usually, violence. If one makes the mistake of overlooking its modernity's many forms, one may overlook the many particular histories that make our postcolonial world what it is today.

A further movement in my anti-critical odyssey came in Berlin in the year 2000 when I was privileged to hear a sublime lecture given by the then young Iranian-German religious studies scholar Navid Kermani. In this essay, the foundation for his subsequent book, *The Terror of God: Attar, Job, and the Metaphysical Revolt*, Kermani delved into the deep and powerful semi-universal tradition of quarreling with God, which Christians have generally downplayed. In this talk, Kermani introduced me to the late twelfth-century Sufi mystic, poet, and doctor Attar, who posed the same agonizing questions of Allah that the biblical Job and so many Holocaust victims asked of Yaweh: why, God, if we are your creatures, do you allow us to suffer so?<sup>vi</sup> Are you not weary of watching us suffer? Kermani's talk moved me powerfully and persuaded me to care about world literature and history in a way the critical thinking of my formative years had not: he taught me that my romantic soul could be touched and widened by the wonderful creations of the non-West about which I had heard and read too little in my desire to be 'critical.'

One reason I was so moved by Kermani's talk was that it was a beautiful invitation to appreciate the depth and power of Attar's philosophy; another was that the subject matter fell so far outside of my field that it never occurred to me to listen 'critically.' I knew enough to understand the agility of the philosopher's reasoning and the expanse of his knowledge; but I certainly never expected to be asked my scholarly opinion on the content. Rather than larding the introduction with theory, Kermani got right to Attar, and made his work the centerpiece of

his talk. It occurred to me then that sitting in his lecture I was experiencing the joy I had felt in my own great undergraduate courses, on Russian literature and German philosophy, enthralled by a teacher who wanted to introduce me to something unfamiliar (or defamiliarize the familiar) and to teach me to wonder at some aspect of humankind's wider experience rather than trying to score points, as it were, by simply denouncing the persons of the past. I resolved that I would give up teaching undergrads as if I were preparing them for general exams—accompanying lectures with too many theoretical frameworks and too much historiographical baggage—and try to teach like Kermani, with spare theory and concealed secondary-source underpinnings, and with the unfamiliar thing, whether it be Henrik Ibsen's "The Wild Duck" or the Qing Dynasty, in the limelight.

My work with the GAHTC over the last eight years has ratified this change of heart and made me a better teacher and historian as a result. I have been introduced to the magnificent tilework of the Masjid-i-Shah mosque in Isfahan, the glorious woven ceiling of the Royal Palace at Nyanza, Rwanda, the jewel-like painted Church of St. George in Voronet, Romania, the astounding rock-cut marvels of Java's Borabudur, none of which I knew anything about before I joined the GAHTC. I have also learned from GAHTC modules to appreciate more subtle accomplishments and bits of infrastructure; the ingeniousness of Meso-American granaries; the intricately-constructed homes built by ordinary women in Kenya; the modest but critical 'public spaces' represented by Ottoman coffee houses and Mesopotamian gardens. Perhaps because it is so very visual, but also because it is so very particular, architectural history has a unique power to entice us into unfamiliar worlds, and to hold us there, as we seek to comprehend them and their makers. These sites and images act as alluring invitations to our students, to

begin a conversation that goes beyond West-bashing about what the global was, is, and could be.

What I would like to do in the remainder of this paper is to provide a further defense of wonder, along the lines laid out by the brilliant medieval historian Caroline Walker Bynum in her AHA presidential address some 25 years ago. (One might reprove me for returning to an essay conceived so long ago, but I maintain there ought to be no statute of limitations on good historiographical ideas!) In the published version of this talk, Bynum discussed medieval conceptions of wonder, arguing that whether they were discussing exotic locales, miracles, or improbable stories, writers of the period conceived the act of *admiratio* as something that was “cognitive, non-appropriative, perspectival, and particular.” Wonder could be associated with paradoxes, with mixed or composite things, with stories meant to amuse and instruct, and was not so much the opposite of reasoning as of generalizing. Like Aristotle, medieval thinkers tended to see wonder as the first step toward knowledge,<sup>vii</sup> yet their wonder-reactions were not directed at imitating or using that knowledge; they were, instead, profoundly respectful of the diverse particularities of the world. She contends that even if wonder seems an old-fashioned approach, “we write our best history when the specificity, the novelty, the awefulness, of what our sources render up bowls us over with its complexity and its significance.” This is equally true, Bynum concludes, for the teaching of history, where our job must be “to puzzle, confuse, and amaze. . . . For the flat, generalizing, presentist view of the past encapsulates it and makes it boring, whereas amazement yearns toward an understanding, a significance, that is always just a little beyond both our theories and our fears.”<sup>viii</sup>

For Bynum, medieval wonder offers a model of non-appropriative admiration for the world's diversity and a means to continually astonish ourselves with the particularities of experience, past and present. But I would also like to emphasize the cognitive virtues of introducing the unfamiliar as well as what we might call the moral force of speaking to the heart. Although contemporary neuroscientists find wonder and curiosity difficult to study, some of their findings are indicative. A recent paper by Celeste Kidd and Benjamin Y. Hayden, for example, argues that we are at our most curious when we don't fully understand something, as in a trivia game in which we can offer a guess, but are not sure of the answer. As curiosity seems to be a behavior aimed at the reduction of uncertainty--an uncomfortable neurological position for human beings--we are at our most curious when we are exposed to stimuli that we don't fully comprehend. Indeed, tests show that respondents actually chose unusual images over familiar ones when there was no apparent benefit to doing so, leading the researchers to conclude that "...we have a tendency to seek out new and unfamiliar options, which may offer more information than familiar ones."<sup>ix</sup> Perhaps our own brains seek novelty and difference in order to train themselves to cope better with the many uncertainties life throws at us! This is to suggest by other means a truth that world historians have spoken for many years: in introducing our students to unfamiliar wonders, perhaps especially those we may never fully comprehend, we are preparing them to thrive and even exult in a world teeming with things they need to be curious, brave, and creative enough to try to understand, even while maintaining a position of humility (remember Bynum's admonition that we yearn toward an understanding that is always just beyond our theories and our fears).



If wonder, properly conceived, might be good for building our brains, perhaps, too, its surplus of meaning and its aesthetic qualities might make it a more powerful formative force than critical reasoning for young adults. The problem with criticism, as the 21-year-old Alexander Pope understood already in 1709, is that it entices us to be picky or even mean-spirited, to amplify authors' failings rather than their accomplishments. Critics tend to delight in finding imperfections, setting an impossible standard for mortals. "Whoever thinks a faultless piece to see," writes Pope, "Thinks what ne'er was, nor is, nor e'er shall be."<sup>x</sup> Today, even more than in Pope's era, "criticism" tends to imply negative evaluation only. Thus we, and our students, presume that to critique the actions of a person, the rhetoric of a poem, the operations of an institution, or the composition of a work of art is to say something unpleasant about these things. The habit of thinking that to be critical is to be negative, and, conversely, to be positive about anything is to be uncritical, is difficult to shake; just ask any grad student foolish enough to say in seminar: "I thought this was a terrific book!" The implications of these assumptions are, I think, far-reaching, and particularly problematic for the teaching of undergrads as they strongly incline us to a judgmental present-mindedness that both does violence to our histories and impairs our empathetic inclinations. This is definitely not a set of inclinations we want to instill in the (mostly) young adult we teach! While wonder suggests we don't know all, and usefully reminds us to adopt a posture of humility, critical reasoning, at least in its current form, suggests we never have had any good answers, and that, I submit, is not a healthy attitude for historians, and human beings in general, to take.

Another problematic aspect to criticism is that even in its early years, it tended to be associated with an overly cerebral and even cynical perspective on the world. Kant's three

critiques (1781, 1788, 1790), meant to provide the secure, philosophical foundations on which the sciences, moral action, and aesthetic judgment could be established, reinforced the association of criticism with abstruse brainyness and the meticulous drawing of the boundaries for inquiry. This is why Friedrich Schiller, in 1793 his *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man*, argued, with both Kant and empirical sciences as his targets, that the great problem with critical reason is that it fails to touch the heart. Poetry and art, on the other hand, engage the individual as an integrated, feeling, sensing, *and* thinking being. Aesthetic experiences—like wonder, in Aristotle’s view—come first, *before* knowledge, as a premonition and promise of comprehension; the enduring power of what he calls ‘noble’ art actually consoles and heals us as natural, mortal beings, inspiring us to perfect ourselves as a species. As Schiller writes in his ninth letter, “Long before Truth shines her triumphant light into the depths of the heart, the poetic imagination catches its rays, and the summits of humanity will be glowing even as humid night lingers in the valleys.”<sup>xi</sup> Poetry offers us an inkling, an anticipation, of truth that makes us want to understand and to make those truths our own.

For this romantic thinker, aesthetic experience allows the mind to play with reality and to exert formative effects on the building of the self (rather as our cognitive neuroscientists suggest that we seek out unfamiliar stimuli to build our brains). It was the means to an education beyond the technical and the deterministic—remember that Schiller was writing in an age in which most of his countrymen were fated either to have no education at all, or to only be educated to take up their father’s professions (and his female contemporaries were to be educated only to run the household, or as servants or serfs to be commanded by their husbands and their betters). Conjured to counter these realities, Schiller’s ideal of aesthetic

education was conceived in eighteenth-century terms we would now largely reject. But its premise was one we still, I think, embrace, that is, the belief that education ought to form the royal road to becoming who we are—a motto coined by the Greek poet Pindar, but famously repurposed by Friedrich Nietzsche—at the highest level of self-unfolding.<sup>xii</sup> All of my years in the classroom, as a student and as a teacher, have amply proven Schiller’s insights to me: engaging the heart *first* is the most successful way to leave a lasting impression on students of any age. To do this, too, is to give our precious charges the fullest scope for their own self-discoveries.

I mentioned cynicism above, and I would like to briefly return to that subject, in view especially of our current political, social, and institutional situations. I have become alarmed by just how cynical our students have become, about politics, about the media, about authorities of all kinds. This is a stance that erodes hope and torpedoed compromise. I would say the same about dystopian views of capitalism, gender relations, race, and the environment, which I see as corrosive and also, ultimately, a recipe for either extremism or quietism. I believe in human-caused climate change, but as a child who saw Los Angeles’ skies transform from orange to at least vaguely blue after the banning of leaded gas, I have also seen the power of human advocacy and decision-making in reversing at least some damage. Similarly, no historian can miss, or should omit to mention, the enormous structural and attitudinal changes in the treatment of people of color, women, and members of the LBGTQ community that have occurred in the last 30 years, a relatively short time span in world history. Of course, this is not to say there is no racism, chauvinism, or injustice left to combat, nor to criticize any of those who speak about the *longue durée* of these evils! But such changes should give us some confidence that we can make further, even dramatic, progress. When we accentuate the glass

half empty, we may, inadvertently, be damaging our students' belief that positive change is, after all, possible.

Cynicism, for historians, may also have the unfortunate outcome of undermining one of our key principles, that of the contingency of events. In writing *WTWA*, we deliberately began the world's 'modern' chapter with the Mongol invasion rather than with the Columbian expeditions. This was our means to render Europe's emergence as a world power a surprise, and to showcase the superior wealth, sciences, and commercial linkages of Asia and many African polities, and we hoped to show that there was no straight line from Columbus to Lord Curzon, so to speak. Unfortunately, we were talked into publishing some 'splits' of the book (that is, specialized editions) for the many colleges where world history has been divided this way—though we still insisted on beginning with the Chinese explorer Zheng He rather than with Columbus. In any event, I fear that in many places the cynical West-upside-down view has been adopted because it is easier to square with the old-fashioned rise of the West thesis, and with an all too easy narrative of victimization of the rest which takes away all contingencies and the agency of local rulers and peoples. Students get the false impression that Europe was somehow fated to conquer the rest—and in fact did completely extirpate all local cultures. This leaves no room for the nuanced world history we have learned from such experts as Christopher Bayly or Jürgen Osterhammel,<sup>xiii</sup> and the multiple different experiences of (just to select a few) China and Algeria, South Africa and Mexico, Vietnam and Japan.

Again, to tackle this issue need to get more real exposure to and knowledge of the many non-western nations into our courses, and to teach students not cynicism, but the non-appropriative admiration for the astonishing diversity of global experiences that Caroline

Bynum advocated, and that the GAHTC library makes available. To teach our students contingency in world history is to underscore that things did not have to happen as they did, and that different environments, leaders, and forms of local resistance mattered. To reiterate the principle that history is contingent is to remind them that they have choices to make, just as did their ancestors (of course it is not to say that everyone's choices are equally constrained, or equally effectual; lessons in structural inequalities in choice-making are also essential!). If we are to expect our students to choose wisely, we need to give them confidence that those *choices do* make a difference and *can* make things better, the complete opposite of the cynic's point of view.

To return, finally, to wonder, and to advocacy: I recently learned that one of the environmentalist movement's earliest and most effective champions, Rachel Carson, was a great fan of wonder, first of all as a means of teaching children to cherish nature. In a 1956 article entitled "Help your Child to Wonder," published in *Woman's Home Companion*, Carson outlined an approach to raising children that beautifully echoes the medieval and romantic conceptions we have been following. Carson writes:

[F]or the child, and for the parent seeking to guide him, it is not half so important to *know* as to *feel*. If facts are the seeds that later produce knowledge and wisdom, then the emotions and the impressions of the senses are fertile soil in which the seeds must grow...Once the emotions have been aroused—a sense of the beautiful, the excitement of the new and the unknown, a feeling of sympathy, pity, admiration, or love—then we wish for knowledge about the objects of our emotion response. Once found, it has lasting meaning.<sup>xiv</sup>

Indeed, in an essay that details Carson's lifelong invocation of the wonders of nature, Warren Tormey describes her faith in wonder "as an ethical force, which serves as a foundation for her defense of nature against human encroachment and manipulation."<sup>xv</sup> I wonder if we historians can't somehow take a page out of Carson's book, or the glorious series "Blue Planet," and use wonder as an ethical force, reminding students of the creativity and resilience of the human spirit, and inspiring them to work to conserve the world's historical, as well as natural, treasures.

As I noted above, my training lies chiefly in European history, and like Schiller and Carson, I throw myself into teaching subjects, texts, and artifacts which—first--touch my heart. I do not want to be misunderstood as saying that I only teach, or only recommend teaching, 'happy' history, about beautiful and sunshiny things. I do, very often, teach about tragic and terrible things: the persecution of witches, the Armenian genocide, the horrific events of the Second World War. I assign heart-rending works such as Euripides' "The Trojan Women," Primo Levi's *Survival in Auschwitz*, and Svetlana Alexievich's *Secondhand Time*. I wish, in fact, I knew more of the non-European literature which treats the melancholy of unrequited love, the miseries inflicted by warfare, or the heartbreak of lives cut short by famine and disease. I wish I had known Attar's searing phrases about life's meaninglessness and brevity a few weeks ago when I had students read aloud Macbeth's agonizing lament, "Out, out brief candle!"<sup>xvi</sup> To teach world history as human tragedy is to teach empathy for all human beings; and here, too, I think there is a place for the medieval form of non-appropriative wonder. Of course, we must never forget that we are not the ones who have suffered, and that we will never fully understand the pain of others, foreign or domestic. But the more we teach and learn about

those tragedies, and the more we hear those voices, the more we develop new, empathetic, habits of the heart, habits that will, one hopes, last a lifetime.

These days there is nothing I love more than teaching texts and monuments I find exquisite, heartbreaking, shocking, hilarious tributes to the human spirit in all its variety, in its breathtaking beauty *and* its astonishing depravity. I used to teach some historiographical and literary theory, but at least at the moment, I am much more eager to engage my students' sense of wonder than to sharpen their theoretical knives. Like Alfred Lord Tennyson's *Lady of Shallot*, imprisoned and able only to see the world through a mirror, I am half sick of shadows, and I long to get out into the sunlight landscapes beyond my already known world.<sup>xvii</sup> I want to learn, and to teach, about *other* people, and to believe that I can, albeit imperfectly, understand them, and convey to students the wonders of worlds beyond their own. I cannot do this simply by West-bashing or by theorizing otherness; what I need in my toolkit is empathy, aesthetic inspiration, and the power of wonder, and material resources, such as the GAHTC library, that strike my imagination with Schillerian rays of light.

Thus, for my part, for at least the next five years—very possibly the last years of my teaching life—I will be devoting myself to advocating for wonder and for empathy as a humanistic virtue. I will not, of course, suggest that we do away with critical thinking, or that we forget the many cruelties human beings have inflicted on one another. But I do want to make my contribution to confronting the cynicism I now see pervading our educational institutions and our society at large. With respect to global history, I hope to teach my students to think of it not only as a history of oppression and bloodshed—although of course it is that—but also as a vast archive of the tales of always imperfect humans, historical actors who have

left fascinating, difficult, and wonderful—in both senses—local and international legacies, which continue to shape our lives, perspectives, and opportunities. In the end, for me, being a global historian means that, to paraphrase Marley’s ghost in *A Christmas Carol*, “Humankind is my business.” Instilling a sense of wonder for that business of being human should, in my humble opinion, be what global historians, and good teachers, do.

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<sup>i</sup> Suzanne Marchand, *Down from Olympus: Archaeology and Philhellenism in Germany, 1750-1970* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

<sup>ii</sup> Said’s classic work is, of course, his *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

<sup>iii</sup> Marchand, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire: Religion, Race, and Scholarship* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

<sup>iv</sup> Two excellent recent works, on very different topics come to mind: Alexander Bevilacqua’s award-winning *The Republic of Arabic Letters: Islam and the Enlightenment* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018), and Anna Maria Busse Berger’s *The Search for Medieval Music in Africa and Germany, 1891-1961: Scholars, Singers, Missionaries* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020).

<sup>v</sup> Volume 2 of this coauthored work was published by W. W. Norton in 2002; I also contributed to the revising of subsequent editions of this volume. Volume 1 (the prequel!) was the work of an almost entirely different team of authors and first appeared more than a decade after the first. I owe a great deal of my engagement with world history and world historians to my many years of work on this widely-used textbook, and indeed it was my work on this project that earned me an invitation to the first of GAHTC’s workshops.

<sup>vi</sup> To cite only one passage, Attar, who frequently puts painful questions in the mouths of fools, writes:

“The fool stood up, raised  
His face to the heavens, and called out:  
Maybe Your heart has not grown tired  
Of these pitiful goings-on,  
But mine did long ago! How long shall this continue?  
Do You never grow weary of such things?”  
Quoted in Kermani, *The Terror of God*, 14.

<sup>vii</sup> Aristotle: “It is through wonder that men now begin and originally began to philosophize; wondering in the first place at obvious perplexities, and then by gradual progression raising questions about the great matters too, e.g. about the changes of the moon and of the sun, about



the stars and about the origin of the universe.” (Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1.982b; the Perseus Library translation is available at:

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0052%3Abook%3D1%3Asection%3D982b>.

<sup>viii</sup> Caroline Walker Bynum, “Wonder,” in *The American Historical Review* 102, no. 1 (Feb. 1997): 1-26; quotations 3, 25, 25-6.

<sup>ix</sup> Celeste Kidd and Benjamin Y Hayden, “The Psychology and Neuroscience of Curiosity,” in *Neuron* 88 no. 3 (Nov. 2015): 449-60; quotation, 452. Thanks to Michelle Zerba for this reference.

<sup>x</sup> In just one of his many reproves to critics who see their tasks as that of fault-finding, Pope writes: “Whoever thinks a faultless piece to see/Thinks what ne’er was, nor is, nor e’er shall be.” Alexander Pope, *An Essay on Criticism*, available at:

<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/7409/7409-h/7409-h.htm>.

<sup>xi</sup> Friedrich Schiller, *Schiller’s Briefe über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen*, ed. Arthur Jung (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1875), 177; my translation.

<sup>xii</sup> The subtitle of Nietzsche’s *Ecce Homo* is “Wie man wird, was man ist” (How one becomes what one is). It should be noted, however, that in German, Nietzsche’s subtitle also forms a pun and implicit reference to Ludwig Feuerbach’s claim, “Der Mensch ist was er isst” (Man is what he eats), which is important for the interpretation of the text. Of course, the notion of the self’s quest to know and realize itself fully, whether understood at the individual or the species level, is a venerable one, perhaps already imbedded in Homer’s *Odyssey*. There is a strong parallel here, too, Attar’s *Book of Suffering*; his wanderer drags himself through the world, only to realize he must look within himself; “What you have sought is within you,” speaks the soul, and instructs the wanderer to sink into its ocean. “O soul, if you were everything, why did you let me wander so far first?” asks the wanderer, and the soul replies: “So that you would recognize my worth. Your search,” the soul continues, “was a search for yourself.” Quoted in Kermani, *The Terror of God*, 45.

<sup>xiii</sup> I am thinking of classic works in the field such as Christopher Bayly’s *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780-1914: Global Connections and Comparisons* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2012); and Jürgen Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World: A Global History of the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Patrick Camiller (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), although both authors have written many more works, and there are hundreds more volumes one might cite.

<sup>xiv</sup> Carson quoted in Warren Tormey, “Teaching Rachel Carson Within the Traditions of Wonder,” in *Studies in Popular Culture* 41, no. 2 (Spring 2019): 18.

<sup>xv</sup> Tormey, “Teaching Rachel Carson,” 1.

<sup>xvi</sup> “Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow,  
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,  
To the last syllable of recorded time;  
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools  
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!  
Life’s but a walking shadow, a poor player,  
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,  
And then is heard no more. It is a tale  
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,  
Signifying nothing.” Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, V.v.

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xvii “...No time hath she to sport and play:

A charmed web she weaves alway.

A curse is on her, if she stay

Her weaving, either night or day,

To look down to Camelot.

She knows not what the curse may be;

Therefore she weaveth steadily,

Therefore no other care hath she,

The Lady of Shalott.

But in her web she still delights

To weave the mirror's magic sights,

For often thro' the silent nights

A funeral, with plumes and lights

And music, came from Camelot:

Or when the moon was overhead

Came two young lovers lately wed;

'I am half sick of shadows,' said

The Lady of Shalott....” Tennyson, “The Lady of Shalott,” available at:  
<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/45359/the-lady-of-shalott-1832>.