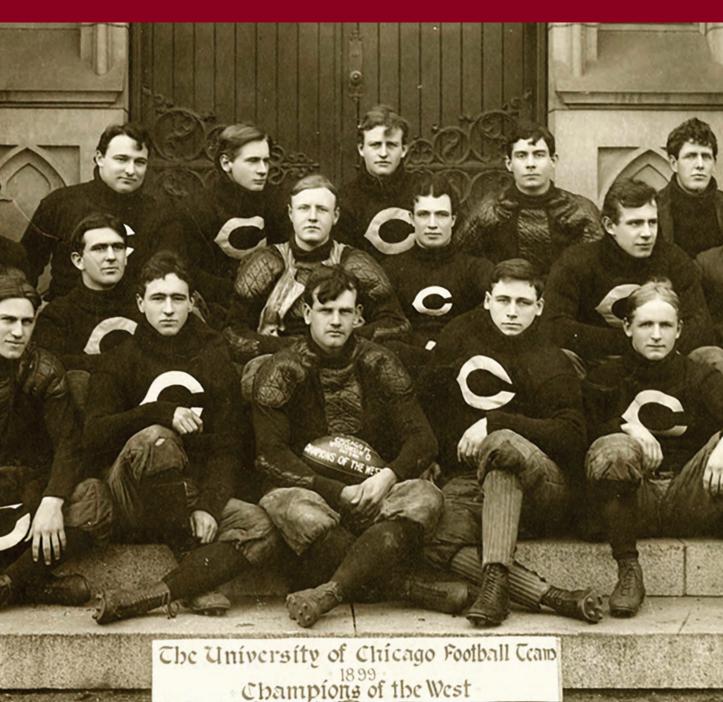
#### SIX SCORE OF UCHICAGO FOOTBALL THE HUNDREDS ZELDA ET AL.

Also "Themistocles, Thucydides ... " Unmemeable music "A kitchen wench ... " A vaudeville clown

# TheCORE

# THE COLLEGE MAGAZINE

Winter 2020 Supplement to The University of Chicago Magazine





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#### EDITOR

Carrie Golus, AB'91, AM'93

**ART DIRECTOR**Guido Mendez

**DESIGNER**Michael Vendiola

#### CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Susie Allen, AB'09 Jeanie Chung

COPY EDITOR Rhonda L. Smith

#### CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Laura Demanski, AM'94 Mary Ruth Yoe

#### DON'T HAVE SOMETHING NICE TO SAY ...

From the editor

**IF YOU** 

Among the emails about the cheer "Themistocles, Thucydides ..." that flooded my in-box in November (see page 2), there was this message: "I write not to share a tale or a score for our fight song but a comment on the suggestions that Mr. Winter add words to his guitar compositions."

Like the cheer, guitarist
Eli Winter, Class of 2020, was
featured in the November issue
of College Review, the Core's
email newsletter. Although
Winter is a creative writing
major, his songs don't have
lyrics. After his shows, audience
members sometimes take issue
with that.

Richard P. Martin, AB'62, took issue with them. "There have always been, and probably always will be, those who wish to improve works for guitar or piano (I suspect there are fewer who wish to improve compositions for other instruments) by adding words," he wrote, "Some things, like Frank Lloyd Wright's Robie House, are fine as conceived and executed," (Of course, the Robie House, now a National Historic Landmark and a UNESCO World Heritage site, was not always universally beloved; it was nearly torn town in 1941 and again in 1957.)

In December, the Guardian named Winter to its list of 50 artists to watch in 2020. Read more about his "thoroughly unmemeable" music on page 6.

-Carrie Golus, AB'91, AM'93

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773.702.2163 (phone) 773.702.0495 (fax) uchicago-magazine@uchicago.edu mag.uchicago.edu/thecore

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# TALES OF GOOD CHEER

The November issue of the College Review, the Core's email newsletter, included this rousing call to action:

> Themistocles, Thucydides, The Peloponnesian War, X squared, Y squared, H<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub>. Who for? What for? Who we gonna yell for? Go, Maroons! —Alleged UChicago cheer\*

\*The editors of the College Review have seen the cheer "Themistocles, Thucydides ..." in writing but have never actually heard it. Ever chanted it at a sporting event (or Model UN or anything else)?

The definition of "fighting word" varies by jurisdiction, but at UChicago "alleged" clearly qualifies. Alumni emails swiftly rolled in, documenting the cheer at UChicago (and elsewhere) beginning in the late '60s, as well as asking the big questions: Where is the world's largest kazoo? Below, a selection of these cheerful tales.—Ed.

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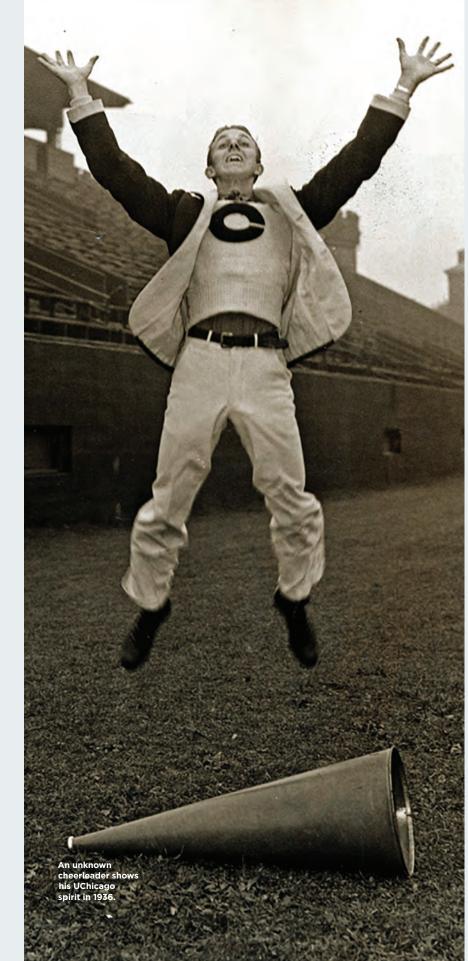
#### LOUD

I absolutely remember hearing that chant ("Themistocles, Thucydides ...") during my years at the U of C in the '60s, although I don't remember the circumstances. It might have been as a joke at the demonstration against football in the fall of '63. Or maybe during O-Week when some new second-year friends were introducing us to College life. Or some other time entirely. I hadn't thought of it in years, but as soon as I saw the first few words on the page, I heard all of it in my head. I hope today's students see the value of shouting it out, loud and proud.

-Joan Phillips-Sandy, AB'68

#### **MESS**

The 1970 Homecoming game. Yes, it was a cheer. Everyone received a



free kazoo before the game and took the field in a disorganized mess at halftime as the kazoo marching band. —Dean Polales, AB'75, JD'79

#### **HOMAGE**

I recall the cheer during football games in the early 1970s, shortly after football was reinstated, but with some minor differences from the version that you posted. My recollection is that we used a squared and b squared rather than X squared and Y squared, presumably in homage to the Pythagorean theorem. Also, the last line was not "Go Maroons," but simply "Chicago" from a lower part of the octave. We never used "UChicago," a subsequent branding; the name we used was always either U of C or simply Chicago.

-Steven J. Shapero, AB'74, JD'77

#### **ALLEGED?**

Alleged? I can confirm the referenced cheer was cheered on multiple occasions at University of Chicago football games in the '70s (the decade in the last century, not the temperature of the field at game time), along with the following cheer of similar stripe:

e to the y, dy/dx, e to the x, dx, cosine, secant, tangent, sine, 3 point 14159, square root, cube root, BTU, sequence, series, limits, too. Rah!

And the always popular,

Perambulate the oblong spheroid up the turf!

A more difficult mystery you might solve is where is Big Ed, The World's Largest Kazoo? Lost more than a decade ago (no one seems sure when), the location of Big Ed remains shrouded in mystery or perhaps shrouded under a gray tarp in a University equipment garage. College Review stands uniquely positioned to inquire of U of C football fans of yesteryear what they may know about where The World's Largest Kazoo can be found in these

troubled times. Even knowing when it was last seen in public (at a game? at a parade? borrowed by another school? consigned to the scrap heap of silliness past?) would be of critical assistance in this mystery for the ages. Does anyone, anyone (Bueller?) have a picture they can send in to put on a wanted poster or milk carton?

Perhaps finding Big Ed can be included as a challenge for the next Scav Hunt. Goodness knows, those teams are resourceful.

By the way, my understanding is that Michigan State got Chicago's spot in the Big Ten, and that Chicago could have rejoined the Big Ten, but gave up that right when it rejoined an NCAA conference some years ago. I have not, however, researched the relevant documentation. I'm sure an enterprising journalism student could track it down.

I have included Keeper of The World's Largest Kazoo in every résumé I've ever used.

> -Donald J. Bingle, AB'76, JD'79, Former Keeper of The World's Largest Kazoo

#### "ALLEGED"

I just had to write about this edition of the *Review*.

The "alleged" cheer is not alleged. It's the cheer we used when I was in the College. We used it at football games. In those days, a kazoo marching band would emerge from the stands to play something during halftime. By the way, when I was in the College, the quarterback of the football team was premed and the running backs were pro-ops [professional option program] in the B-School. So U of C ...

I recite that cheer when people ask what the U of C is like. That and the lyrics to the Blackfriars' song "Living the Life of the Mind." Then I tell them about "Hell does freeze over" and the Nobel laureate U of C T-shirts.

The U of C is my beloved intellectual home. I returned to Hyde Park for law school. I'm a lifer.

-Mindy Recht, AB'81, JD'86

#### *INGLORIOUS*

I was a varsity Chicago swimmer from 1978 to 1982, and we regularly

chanted "Themistocles, Thucydides ..." at swim meets. Other Maroon teams used it too; I think I heard it from the football bleachers. Everyone seemed to consider the cheer quintessentially University of Chicago—a quirky "humble brag" taunting competitors: win or lose, at least Chicago athletes are scholars living a "life of the mind" beyond the playing field (or swimming pool).

But in embracing "Themistocles, Thucydides" as unique to the University's sports programs, I wonder whether we have done our homework. I arrived at the College in 1978 from Marmion Military Academy, a Catholic high school in Aurora, Illinois, with no special connection to the University. Yet I got to campus already knowing "Themistocles, Thucydides" by heart. Back then, Marmion swimmers used it too.

Did "Themistocles, Thucydides" emerge from Hyde Park and spread outward? Or was it born elsewhere, with Maroons adopting but not originating it? This cheer may be indigenous to Chicago, but it certainly isn't endemic.

(And the less said the better about the cheer's inglorious cousin: "That's all right / That's OK / You're gonna work for us / Someday.")

·····

-Donald C. Dowling Jr., AB'82

#### CRACKED

I never chanted the cheer myself, but I heard the cheerleaders yell it at a Maroons football game in 1980 or 1981. It cracked me up then, and it still does now.

-Greg McCracken, EX'84

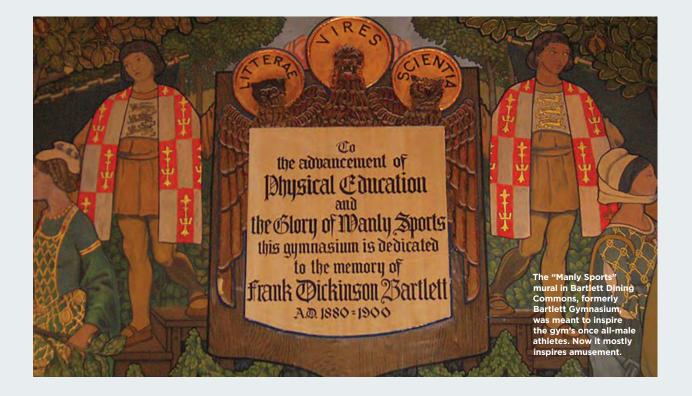
#### DIFFERENT

Yes, I have heard this cheer and chanted it at Maroon football games.

The cheer I remember had slightly different wording for the last two lines.

Who are we gonna cheer for? Go Chicago!

My first year at the College (1982) I had two second-years as roommates who were also cheerleaders for the football team. During that football season, I attended several of the Maroon



games to see them cheer. This cheer was and still is so memorable.

-Ann (Erdtmann) O'Neil, AB'86

#### **MARKED**

I was part of the Model UN team from 1997 to 2001, and we absolutely would chant the "Themistocles, Thucydides ..." cheer at MUN conference award ceremonies. Whether we took home the Best Delegation Award or simply did our best, the whole team would stand and cheer when the awards were all doled out. It definitely marked us as one of the more eccentric teams on the circuit.

Instead of "Who you gonna yell for?" for the second-to-last line, we used "What the hell are we cheering for?" which, to be honest, I think scans much better. After "Go Maroons!" we would finish off with a chant of "Kant, Kant, Kant!"

-C. P. Hoffman, AB'01

#### OLDEN

So. I am now old enough to be a source on a "Did this really happen in the olden times?"-type story.

I did, in fact, chant the "Themistocles, Thucydides ..." cheer at U of C football and basketball games in 1998-99, when I was briefly in the pep band. (Does that still exist?)

Other cheers I remember:

- Get them, get them, get them, get them ... (e.g., when our team was chasing a ball-holding member of the other team)
- Counting ball bounces during a foul shooter's free throw setup dribble out loud in varying agreed-upon languages in order to distract them (e.g., Band Leader: "Ok, German this time." All: "Eins, zwei, drei!")

   Ananth Ramanarayanan, AB'02

The pep band, founded in 1898, still exists. The band plays at football games, basketball games, and community events.—Ed.

#### **OTHER**

I was a member of the pep band from 2003 to 2007. I remember chanting the UChicago chant at some of the football games we played at. We may have done the chant at basketball games as well. I think there were other verses but we never remembered them.

-Andrew Shu, AB'07

#### **DEFINITELY**

Alumni Association, if you get one or more current U of C bands, official or not, to make a collection of 1914 U of C fight songs, I would definitely buy it, and I think many others would too.

-Phil Gibbs, EX'85

Agreed! The University of Chicago Song Book, which contains such classics as "Dear Old Midway," "The Girl in the Graduate School," "I'm Strong for Chicago," and "You've Got to Study to Stay," is at mag.uchicago .edu/songbook.—Ed.



The College Review, the Core's email newsletter, is sent out six times a year (January, March, May, July, September, and November). Subscribe at alumni .uchicago.edu/college-review.

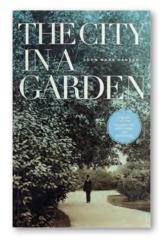
#### The College's own Shark Tank

During winter quarter, undergrads from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign will join UChicago students in a course that prepares them for the College New Venture Challenge. The 2019-20 cohort includes 15 teams from UChicago and six from the University of Illinois. Their business ideas include a sneaker rental company, an online legal education platform, and an eco-friendly low-sugar alcoholic drink. In March the teams will compete to win \$100,000 in investments and in-kind services.

#### The City in a Garden

The Chicago Studies Publications Series has brought out its first book, The City in a Garden: A Guide to the History of Hyde Park and Kenwood (2019) by John Mark Hansen, the Charles L. Hutchinson Distinguished Service Professor in Political Science. In the preface, Hansen explains that he wrote the book not as a historian or a social scientist, but "to fulfill a resident's curiosity about his or her community." He tells the story of Hyde Park-Kenwood "through the stories of individuals," all linked to specific addresses.

Hansen reveals, for example, the site of the original Harold's Chicken Shack: 1235 East 47th Street (47th and Kimbark). The restaurant was opened in 1950 by Harold Pierce, who had moved to Chicago from Alabama. "Soon Pierce was known as the Fried Chicken King," Hansen writes. "He made deliveries in a white Cadillac with painted wing feathers on the doors and a papier-mâché chicken head on the roof... Pierce invented the red and white décor for the chicken shacks. He also commissioned



the logo, a hatchet-bearing man in robe and crown chasing down a bolting hen."

Read a longer excerpt from *The City* in a Garden in the Summer 2020 issue of the Core.

#### Design Your Chicago

This year the Chicago Studies program is offering a series of four workshops, Design Your Chicago, to help students apply design thinking to their time in the city. Start Here is an introduction to this approach to decision-making, borrowed from the world of design. Wayfinding focuses on figuring out where to go when you don't actually know your destination. Building Values asks students to reflect on what's most important, while Odyssey Plan helps them structure and prototype their own Chicago journeys. The sessions, which last 60 to 90 minutes, will be offered several times each quarter.

#### SSA offers first minor for College students

This academic year the School of Social Service Administration (SSA) is offering

its first minor for College students. Called Inequality, Social Problems, and Change, it's open to students in any major. "Inequality is everywhere," says Susan Lambert, associate professor in SSA and faculty director of the new minor. "You can take what we teach to any career that you pursue—law, medicine, IT, you name it."

The minor requires a foundation course, taught in SSA, and four approved electives. Students can choose from more than 25 courses offered, not just in SSA, but also in human development, political science, public policy, and sociology. A sampling of this year's courses: How Things Get Done in Cities and Why, Inequality in Urban Spaces, Policing the City, Race and American Public Schools, and Inequality at Work.

Lambert, whose research focuses on jobs at the lower end of the labor market, teaches Inequality at Work. One of the assignments is to research a job that doesn't require a college degree. Her students have to find out how many of these jobs there are, how to train for the job, and which types of employers are better than others. Then they have to interview someone who has experience with the job as a worker, manager, trainer, or labor organizer. A number of the students have interviewed University employees: cafeteria workers, security guards, shuttle bus drivers.

The full name of the minor—Inequality, Social Problems, and Change—is important. "The key thing is the change," Lambert says. The courses take a scholarly approach to understanding social problems and examining solutions that have been tried in the past. "But now," she says, "What do you do about it?"

-Carrie Golus, AB'91, AM'93

#### UChicago creature

## VERY HUNGRY SQUIRRELS

In the fall the *Chicago Maroon* published "The Very Hungry Squirrels of UChicago," a crowd-sourced list of items that campus squirrels have been observed consuming.

In the wild, gray squirrels (*Sciurus* carolinensis) eat nuts, seeds, berries, tree bark, and fungi. Sadly, the ones in Hyde Park have developed a taste for the same refined carbs that very hungry students enjoy. Bagels, churros, cookies—sugar cookies were the most frequently

reported—doughnuts, muffins, pie, and sweet potato fries were all on the list.

There were just two healthy-ish choices: a whole banana—observed and photographed by the article's author, third-year **Alice Cheng**—and an apple core, which came with an alarming backstory: "I once had a squirrel jump out of a trash can and literally GRAB MY APPLE CORE FROM MY HAND," third-year **Olinka Regules** reported (caps in original).

Read the *Maroon*'s story and see the photographic evidence at mag.uchicago .edu/hungry-squirrels.

-Carrie Golus, AB'91, AM'93





Music

# ELI WINTER HAS NO WORDS

The guitarist and creative writing major lets his music speak for itself.

Eli Winter, Class of 2020, describes his music as "thoroughly unmemeable." It's not what you'd necessarily expect a twentysomething to listen to, or play—the Chicago Reader noted that the fingerstyle guitar songs on Winter's debut album The Time to Come (2019) showed him to be a songwriter "wise beyond his years." The Core sat down with him to talk words and music.

This interview has been edited and condensed.

#### You're a creative writing major, and yet your songs don't have any lyrics.

Every so often somebody comes up to me after a show and says, "Hey, you should try putting words in your songs next time."

I sing when I want to; I just haven't wanted to for most of the time I've been really playing shows. Part of it's a function of what I have, which for a long time was just acoustic guitar. It doesn't feel as unintuitive as it might seem at first glance.

One of the reasons I started playing this kind of music was that I was feeling low enough that just the sound of the voice in a song felt incisive, like it was cutting into me. I also like the thought of it being unbound from a definite meaning or emotional tenor. A lot of my favorite kinds of music have either a sort of inquisitiveness—in terms of different sounds I might incorporate—or a sort of malleable emotional center. It's nice to have the meaning out of my hands. I wouldn't be able to control that.

Maybe it makes it hard to market a record. But also, not having lyrics still is kind of goofy. Which is cool. Goofy is good.

#### How would you describe your music?

I've started to realize it wouldn't hurt to have an elevator pitch. Which I don't really have. If I need to put it in just a couple words I'll tell people I play guitar music.



I've been starting to look for booking agents to work with and that, to some degree, entails sort of—

#### Classifying yourself?

Classifying, but also making it more difficult to work in more underground communities. One thing I'd be concerned about is making sure that the edges of what I'm doing don't get sanded off just because I work with somebody who can help me play better shows and in more parts of the world than I've been able to do by myself. But I'm starting to get the sense that that would be the next logical step to "advance my career," because this is definitely something I'm in for the long haul.

#### Did you play a lot of shows to support the record?

I had the record release show at the end of May at Constellation [in Chicago's North Center neighborhood]. That was a really special night—surprising and crazy—and there was something kind of fun about coming back to a dorm [Granville-Grossman] at the end of it.

Then in the summer, I had a Metcalf Internship at the Renaissance Society. After that I flew home to Houston for a couple weeks, flew up for a couple days, and left on tour. I did it by bus and train, because I don't drive. It was surprisingly pretty easy and surprisingly a lot

of fun: 14 shows in 16 days. I got back exactly a week before school started.

This tour effectively funded recording sessions for the next record, which is probably going to have just three songs. The shortest songs are each going to be about eight to nine minutes long, and the longest song is going to be 22 minutes long or so. I might record one or two other things as well to see what fits, but I have a feeling that's going to be it.

#### Do you plan to stay in Chicago after you graduate?

Completely. The music here is just too good. Chicago music feels interesting and special and good in ways that no other city could really match.

## You've mentioned that you're an anxious person. Do you feel like music helps you be less anxious?

Touring has changed my life in that regard. With this last tour under my belt, I feel a lot less ill at ease than I otherwise would. It's been a lot easier to talk back to anxious thoughts.

#### Was that because you had to put yourself out there?

I think in part. Playing guitar also helped a lot in high school—playing guitar in particular as opposed to finding words to put into songs. —Jeanie Chung Winter (at right) performs with Sam Wagster.



# "A KITCHEN WENCH IS A KITCHEN WENCH FOREVER!"

Liva Pierce, Class of 2022, goes viral with her Twitter spoof of Broadway musicals.

This past August, **Liva Pierce**, Class of 2022, was at home in Maine, nursing a broken elbow and feeling antsy, when she got an idea for a funny video to post on her Twitter account, @realchoppedliva.

The final product, "when characters in musicals transition from speaking to singing," is one minute and 18 seconds of pure joy, a romp through the first lines of 10 made-up Broadway musical numbers—all of which one wishes were real—in accents including cockney, bad Australian, and evil stepmother ("And where do you think you're going, Grizabelle?").

The video has its roots in a newish internet comedy genre: rapid-fire character bits filmed straight into a smartphone camera. Among its 7.6 million viewers were artists and comedians Pierce loves—Mike Birbiglia, Rachel Bloom, and Lin-Manuel Miranda. A few even sent her direct messages. Pierce, a second-year, describes the experience as "weird," "nice," and "crazy."

Spurred on by her summer of virality, Pierce is continuing to pursue comedy on- and offline, alongside her coursework in creative writing.

This interview has been edited and condensed.

#### What got you into making Twitter videos?

This year I started seeing way more people doing them, and they were so tight and so clearly easy to make. It's such a forgiving format. If you can tap into a shell of a thought that a lot of people have had, and then fill that

shell with all the different variations of that one thought, it's easy—it's just the same joke a bunch of times.

#### Did you do a lot of musical theater growing up?

Yeah. Starting from when I was around eight or nine, I did theater camp for eight years, and I did some community theater. By the time I got to high school, I was getting really into comedy—Tina Fey and Saturday Night Live. I still loved theater, but I just stopped doing it as much. I also was never that good of a singer.

A lot of people in comedy are former theater kids who can't sing, or weren't getting the parts they wanted—bitter former theater kids. Or maybe they were more interesting than the roles they were getting. I think high school theater can be pretty "you're just doing *Oklahoma* again and again."

## You do internet comedy and live performances. Do you like one better than the other?

Online is fun, but it takes so much time. There's the little thrill of seeing someone you admire like your tweet, but I'm really consciously trying to stop looking at who likes something I post. It's so toxic and it's hard to resist. So for me, I like performing live a lot more. It's a lot less mind gamey.

#### What are you working on now?

In Off-Off Campus, we're doing sketches right now. So that's been taking up most of my time. I'm either writing sketches, editing them, or memorizing them.

I'm writing a musical with my Off-Off generation and Greer Baxter [Class of 2020], who's a really good composer. It's a parody of *High School Musical*-type shows. We wrote a love song between two people in a room when the generator gets shut off and the lights go out. They're in the dark, literally and figuratively, about the way they feel about each other.

It's really silly. It's set at a school called Left High School and the big "Stick to the Status Quo" song is "Nothing Is Right at Left High School," which is so dumb. But it's so fun to write. I'm really excited for it.

#### If you could play any part in any musical, what would it be?

I love Éponine; I love "On My Own."<sup>2</sup> If I could nail that song, I would love to sing it.

Or Jack from *Newsies*.<sup>3</sup> I randomly love *Newsies*. We have a joke in Off-Off of always putting *Newsies* jokes in our shows and no one cares, but we love it.

When I was a kid I loved *Annie*. So Annie, as an adult, I guess—that would be awesome.

#### An all-adult production of *Annie*. I would like that.

Yeah, that's what everyone's clamoring for.

-Susie Allen, AB'09

<sup>1.</sup> High School Musical's big cafeteria dance number and arguably the high-water mark of singer-actress Ashley Tisdale's career to date. 2. A song from Les Miserables attempted by theater kids everywhere, with varying degrees of success.

<sup>3.</sup> Broadway adaptation of the 1992 film about the Newsboys' Strike of 1899. Dubious New York accents abound.



Books

# THE KNOWN

Whet Moser, AB'04, adds a new volume to the library of books on Chicago.

After spending two years at California's Deep Springs College, which is based on a working ranch and enrolls just 30 students, **Whet Moser**, AB'04, was ready to live in a city. He transferred to UChicago in 2001 and found the experience "a little overwhelming," he says. "I would do things like forget to have correct change for the bus."

After graduation Moser worked at the Chicago Reader and Chicago magazine, in the process becoming a self-taught expert on the city. Last year he published Chicago: From Vision to Metropolis (Reaktion Books), part of the Cityscopes series, which includes guidebooks to New York, Beijing, and other major urban centers. He now holds the intriguing job title of deputy editor, Obsession at Quartz, where he writes about topics other than Chicago.

This interview has been edited and condensed. Read excerpts from Moser's book on page 11.

#### What was the most surprising thing you learned during your research?

How much work was done to control the environment in Chicago. It doesn't seem like it would be that hard. It's totally flat. But the sewers required historic engineering that is virtually unrivaled around the world.

I don't want to say the engineers failed, but they were not successful enough. So then the city had to double down and do something even more epic: build the Sanitary and Ship Canal to reverse the flow of the Chicago River.

#### What's missing from Chicago that would make it the world's most perfect city?

A better public transportation system. Chicago, with our hub and spoke system, is very good for getting you downtown and back. But I live on the Northwest Side. If you want to go east or due south, you're reliant on the bus system.

Map from 1830 showing proposed lots (west is at the top); a wellpreserved bungalow; a classic Chicago hot dog.

#### I would have said mountains, personally.

That's also true. One of the theories I mention in the book is that we had to make Chicago such an architecturally beautiful place because there's not a lot else to look at.

The excerpts in the *Core* are about the grid, the bungalow, and the Chicago hot dog. Could you rank them from most favorite to least favorite?

I love all of them. I would say the bungalow is number one.

#### Do you live in a bungalow?

I do. Unfortunately it has vinyl siding on it. I have no idea what it looks like underneath. In structural form it is a bungalow, but it is not the classic brick bungalow.

The grid is number two, just because it makes things so easy. I have a fairly poor sense of direction, and I'm not good at remembering street names. If someone says, Meet me at a certain place, you can just ask, What are the coordinates?

I guess the hot dog is number three, although I love them a great deal.



#### How often do you eat one?

A couple times a year. When I go to baseball games.

#### Sox or Cubs?

Sox. My wife [**Liz Ptacek**, AB'02, JD'10] is from the South Side. They go a couple generations back as Sox fans.

#### Do you have another book in progress?

No. I have two young children. Right now I'm just reading whatever I want, which is kind of nice.

—Carrie Golus, AB'91, AM'93

#### THREE THINGS WE LOVE ABOUT CHICAGO

An excerpt from Chicago: From Vision to Metropolis

By Whet Moser, AB'04

#### The Chicago Hot Dog

Two foods are inextricably linked with Chicago: deep-dish pizza, and the Chicago-style hot dog. In truth, Chicagoans eat many types of pizza, with the absurdly rich native version—as much a casserole as a pizza—as an occasional indulgence. But we are insistent on the superiority of our approach to this most modest of foods.

And for good reason. Unlike the deep-dish gimmick (sorry), the hot dog is Chicago history that fits in your hand. Sausages on bread and mustard come from the Germans; poppy seeds on buns from Eastern European Jews: greentomato-based relish from the English: tomatoes from "the combination of Jews, Greeks, and Italians living on Maxwell Street, vying for control of the vegetable market"; pickles and onions from all over; sport peppers from Mexico; and celery salt from Lakeview, "one of the major celery-growing areas in America in the 1920s" (now a dense, expensive urban neighborhood). And no ketchup. Because when you have all that—a cross-cultural symphony of flavors combined into the most modest of American foods-what more do you need?

But the heart of the Chicago hot dog is the all-beef sausage, itself a synthesis of Chicago's earthy foundations and greatest global-city aspirations: the meeting of the stockyards and the White City. Among the many legacies of the 1893 World's Fair were sausages sold by two Austrian immigrants, Emil Reichel and Sam Ladany. The two men called their company Vienna Beef, and according to the



# "We had to make Chicago an architecturally beautiful place because there's not a lot else to look at."

-Whet Moser, AB'04

And Vienna Beef is everywhere in the city, often marked by the company's garish red-yellow-blue logo on restaurant signs or umbrellas, from the great (the 72-year-old suburban stand Gene & Jude's) and the good (the beloved local chain Portillo's) to the convenient (7-11), distinguished by how it's cooked and which ingredients are piled on.

#### The Grid

Befitting a city that engineered its way to greatness, Chicago is a physically rational metropolis: a remarkably consistent street grid with few exceptions across its length and breadth. The Loop intersection of State Street and Madison Street, long called (with typical Chicago bluster) the busiest street corner in the world, is the zero point; the street numbers go out in the four cardinal directions at eight blocks to a mile. Walking, driving, or biking anywhere is as simple as knowing the coordinates. Chicago's grid also includes alleys, the most by mileage of any city in the country. This makes the city less dense than New York and it also means garbage bags aren't left on the sidewalk, and while the prevalence of alley-facing garages encourages a car-dependent city, on summer nights many serve for socialization, like detached, open-air dens inviting neighbors to stop by.

And while Chicago also has a great legacy of urban planning, its grid was laid out for convenience by a downstate man named James Thompson, "one of the great surveyors of the early days,"

who "surveyed the islands of the Mississippi River, from the mouth of the Missouri to the mouth of the Ohio." Thompson's streets were 66 feet wide, the length of a surveyor's chain, which remains the standard width, and for better or worse makes Chicago harder to jaywalk in than New York.

As well as his design worked out for its residents and despite coming to define the city, even extending to some of its suburbs, Thompson's grid was initially for virtually no one. In 1908 the Chicago settler Edwin Gale told the Chicago Historical Society that when Thompson plotted the future city, only seven families lived outside the walls of Fort Dearborn. It was gridded at the behest of the commissioners of the not-yet-existent Illinois and Michigan Canal in order to sell the lots, to finance the canal, to give the grid reason to become a city.

#### The Bungalow

Chicago can lay no exclusive claim to the bungalow—the term itself is anglicized from a Hindi word meaning basically "Bengali-style house." The British borrowed the style as well, and it spread throughout the U.S. in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It's an adaptable idea: a low-slung, one- or one-and-a-half-story house with a hipped roof and an open, relatively informal floor plan and a porch in the front. It is a modest type of housing, which is why the term is often associated with vacation homes.

When Chicago's population exploded, tripling in size from

1890 to 1930 by adding over two million residents, builders adapted a substantial version to house the city's growing middle class. "Sociologically, [a] bungalow used to signify a specific kind of homeowner," the executive director of the Historic Chicago Bungalow Association told WBEZ in 2014skilled craftsmen, government employees, public-safety workers. Emerging out of the Arts and Crafts movement, which emphasized the aesthetics of simplicity, the Chicago bungalow is muscular but pleasant. Brick construction and the stable. low-pitched roof give it a physical and visual stoutness, but the steps ascending to the raised first floor and the central dormer window to the attic give it verticality, and the front windows that run across the first floor-sometimes extended out from the rectangle of the house as a pentagonal pudge and often including stained glass-bring in necessary light. According to the association, there are 80,000 bungalows in the city, about a third of all single-family houses, so many that they encircle the city along its edges, creating what's known as the Bungalow Belt.

In many ways the success of the bungalow in Chicago is due to a confluence of craft and mass production: the William A. Radford Company, based in the Olmsteddesigned suburb of Riverside, helped start the bungalow craze by selling handsomely designed mail-order blueprints that could be given to contractors, often immigrant European craftsmen, to build. The result was that rare thing: quantity and quality, and an architectural style that is beloved despite its omnipresence in much of the city.

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THE MANLY SPORTOR

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BY (ARRIE GOLUS, ABOLAMOS

Winter 2020 / 13

n 1899 the University of Chicago won its first Big Ten championship in football. The Maroons won again in 1905, 1907, 1908, 1913, 1922, and 1924, for a total of seven titles.

In 1939 University president Robert Maynard Hutchins famously got rid of varsity football. UChicago's massive stadium—with space for more than 50,000 fans—was later demolished to make room for the Regenstein Library.

In 1969 football returned as a varsity sport, though not in Division I. UChicago is now part of the Division III Midwest Conference, playing against institutions such as Grinnell College, Knox College, and Washington University in St. Louis. This year's team ended the season with a record of 6-3. Go Maroons!







**Opposite: Horace** Greeley Bodwell, EX 1900, played on the baseball and football teams. This page, clockwise from top left: Jay Berwanger, AB'36, the first winner of the Heisman Trophy, served as an assistant coach after graduation. Football cocaptain John Davenport, AB'40, was also a champion sprinter. UChicago's pep band marches with Big Bertha, reportedly the world's largest drum.

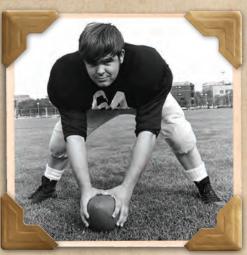


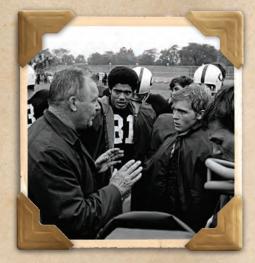
~ 1939 -

"Never before has such a heterogeneous conglomeration of Hyde Park weirdos ever supported the same event."

-Chicago Maroon, October 14, 1969, on UChicago's first home varsity football game in 30 years







~ 1969~

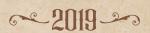








Opposite, clockwise from top: The 1969 varsity squad; Coach Walter L. Hass confers with players; Richard Kulp, AB'70, MBA'72, who joined the club football team in 1966. The varsity sweater Kulp received after the 1969 season "is still proudly displayed in my home," he says. This page, clockwise from top: The 2019 Monsters of the Midway; both running back Vittorio Tricase, '21, and quarterback Marco Cobian, '20, were named to the UAA All-Academic Team in 2019.



# ORDINARY POETRY

Lauren Berlant on the collaborative project *The Hundreds.* 

By Carrie Golus, AB'91, AM'93

In 2019 Lauren Berlant, the George M. Pullman Distinguished Service Professor in English, won the Hubbell Medal for Lifetime Achievement from the Modern Language Association.



n 2012, at a writing workshop in Austin, Texas, **Lauren Berlant**, Kathleen Stewart, and other academics tried out a 100-word poetics exercise.

Berlant, the George M. Pullman
Distinguished Service Professor in English,
and Stewart, professor of anthropology at the
University of Texas, were so taken with the form,
they decided to use it to explore what they call
"the new ordinary." The two began writing short
prose poems—either exactly 100 words long or
multiples of 100—inspired by moments both
overwhelming and everyday.

In 2019 they published a book called simply *The Hundreds* (Duke University Press), a collection of 100 of these poems. Among the intriguing titles, "Friendhating," "Office Hours," and "A Month in Arrests and Other Things." Most pieces have citations at the end, typically authors but occasionally objects: photos, cranberry bread mix, pansies.

The poems show clues of who originated them—some are based in Chicago, others in Austin—but all are unsigned. "What does 'yours' and 'hers' mean when she's started to edit mine, and I've started to edit hers?" Berlant says. "Where you begin isn't where you end up."

Read excerpts from *The Hundreds* on page 22. The interview below has been edited and condensed.

I love how direct and condensed this book is. In the spirit of that, could you try to answer in around 10 words? Or maybe one or two sentences?

Oh ok. But the danger is it will sound like I'm making statements.

In psychoanalysis, therapists are trained not to make statements, because the statement itself translates into the listener's mind as a truth, even if the statement was intended as a proposition. I'd always rather say more than less, because I'd rather have my interlocutor see that I'm walking around a problem. But I'm willing to go with it.

#### So let's try it?

Let's try it. I was just giving you a preamble.

#### How are the pieces organized in the book?

We went with resonance. We started with "First Things" [a piece about what people do first thing in the morning], and then we said, what picks up on something in that?

#### Is it like a journey? Even if it's meandering?

I guess I would say, people will have to tell us if it feels like there's a build, versus a series of separate encounters. Readers recognize patterns in such different ways.

#### One reviewer started at the back.

I have a friend who says they use it as a psalmistry—as a book that they open up to a different page every day and then try to think about their day in the light of that thing they opened up. I would have not have predicted that.

In the Kindle version, you can search for patterns. Other interviewers have been really interested in how many times we used the word "hundred," for example. It turns out we use it 100 times. I haven't really checked that.



"I think when people come to The Hundreds, they don't know what the conventions of the desired effect would be."

-Lauren Berlant

Several reviews have called this book weird or strange, which it doesn't seem to me at all.

It's hard for people to understand the conceptual and art parts of *The Hundreds*.

I'm always surprised by how hard my work is anyway. When I'm in the middle of it, I'm just trying to make things clear. Later I'll say, well that's actually kind of intense to read. I thought I had made the object available in the world, but maybe I didn't.

What I found so charming was it was like hearing professors talk when they're off duty. It was like having coffee with you.

That's interesting. You trusted that the voices of the book weren't trying to do work on you.

You know when people go to films—melodramatic films or sentimental films—they



#### "Strange and captivating."

-The New Yorker

#### "An extremely weird book."

-Bookforum

# "The authors seem keen on messing up certain conventions of scholarly writing."

-Social Text

frequently say, I felt
manipulated, and I'm like,
well, you went to that film
to get manipulated. That's what
the aesthetic experience is. So
what you mean is, either you're
embarrassed because it worked,
or you could see the strings on the
puppets too much, and you wanted to
be more unconscious about
its manipulations.

I think when people come to *The Hundreds*, they don't know what the
conventions of the desired effect would be.

#### What's your writing practice like?

I try to write every day either about a scholarly problem, a situation—in a diaristic form or memoir form—or starting somewhere that will surprise me, like remembering something that happened, and then I try to make a world for it. A lot of these poems came from that daily writing.

In the introduction, you mention the word count variations in different word processing programs. Do you ever write by hand?

I'm much more likely to pull out my iPhone and thumb type something into the notes.

And then in the revision—sometimes I'll print it up. I do revise by hand, then. I don't assume my revisions are good. One thing about editing is that you can ruin your work. But you also have to edit.

Does publishing this make you vulnerable? You write about places you like to go, things that interest you that seem very particular to you.

But where you live has to be composed. I'm a historian of the present. One of the things I say

to my students is, we're alive at the same time, but it doesn't mean we're in the same present.

I definitely experience it as vulnerablizing, especially when I'm doing a reading, but I don't think of *The Hundreds* as a memoir in any way.

To me, that just adds to the vulnerability—these are things important enough to put in a non-memoir. They're chosen moments.

I don't know if I thought they were important. That's my point, in a way. I don't think of the ordinary incidents or thought as self-evidently important. I think of them as something I built something around—an object, a scene, a problem, a form, a life.

With the citations, did you write a piece and then think, here are the influences that came out? Or were they more like writing prompts?

It depends. Sometimes the poems have quotations in them. But often it was the feeling that we were writing in a conversation that our brains were having with other minds. So at some point we said, why don't we go through the poems and see what were we thinking with?

The citations at the bottom of the pages are what we read *with*, what we read *under the influence of*, as it were.

#### Why call it The Hundreds?

It was always called *The Hundreds*, I don't know why. I wonder if we should have thought about other names. Anyway, we didn't.

What did I miss that you feel like, why didn't she ask me X?

I'm not like that. I wasn't sitting here wishing for something. I was just trying to be game for you.

#### TEN

#### An excerpt from The Hundreds

#### BY LAUREN BERLANT AND KATHLEEN STEWART

#### **Dilations**

The Hundreds is an experiment in keeping up with what's going on. Ordinaries appear through encounters with the world, but encounters are not events of knowing, units of anything, revelations of realness, or facts. Sometimes they stage a high-intensity tableau of the way things are or could become; sometimes strangeness raises some dust. This work induces form without relieving the pressure of form. It pushes and follows histories out. It takes in signs and scaffolds. If our way is to notice relations and varieties of impact, we're neither stuffing our pockets with ontology nor denying it: attention and riffing sustain our heuristics.

What draws affect into form is a matter of concern. Form, though, is not the same thing as shape: and a concept extends via the tack words take. Amplified description gets at some quality that sticks like a primary object, a bomb or a floater. The image that comes to mind when you read that (if images come to mind when you read) might not be what we're imagining—and we're likely not imagining the same thing either. Collaboration is a meeting of minds that don't match. Circulation disturbs and creates what's continuous, anchoring you enough in the scene to pull in other things as you go.

"Punctum" ought to mean whatever grabs you into an elsewhere of form. There ought also to be a word like "animum," meaning what makes an impact so live that its very action shifts around the qualities of things that have and haven't yet been encountered. You can never know what is forgotten or remembered. Even dormancy is a kind of action in relation. Think about watching a dead thing, a thing sleeping, or these words. Think about skimming as a hunger and defense against hunger. Think about the physiological pressure of itching.

(BARTHES [1980] 1981; DELEUZE [1988] 1993; FREUD [1925] 1961; GOFFMAN 1981; MASSUMI 2010; MOTEN 2013; NERSESSIAN AND KRAMNICK 2017; POSMENTIER 2017; SHAVIRO 2016)

#### Space Junk

Things cross your path like the fireflies you once dreamed of collecting in a jar. Memories come at you like space junk. My sister, Peg, remembers that our mother made us get short haircuts when we were kids because it was easier to take care of. All I know is that when my hair is cut short it's chaotic. I remember the humiliation of the high school yearbook picture with the parted hair all poofed up on one side. And that, only because the picture showed up at the bottom of a box forty years later.

Thought is an afterthought.

(A BOX OF PHOTOGRAPHS ONCE TAKEN; SISTER TALK OVER DECADES)

#### Writing, Life

Once, I needed the perfect time and place to write. I stood in my way like a poison-pen letter to myself. But slowly, under the velocities of worldy reals that came and went, I learned to write in my own skin, like it or not.

Making money, making dinner, taking care of people and stupid shit, getting sick or getting well, getting into and out of what presented, I ended up with a writer's life. I learned to write in thirty-minute episodes on my frail mother's dining room table with a three-year-old playing with old plastic toys underfoot. I took notes on my phone at a doctor's office. I started the day writing in bed even though I had only ten minutes. Over time, I became allergic to the long-winded and roundabout, cutting words down to size. But then I'd become attached to a word fern shooting up in the space between words or I'd be surprised by something energetic already somehow taking off.

Some people have long, lean writing muscles; mine are shortened and taut like a repetitive stress injury turned into a personal tendency. I can write anywhere now but not for long, and it's only in the morning that I have that kind of energy and interest.

Things are usually in my way but that's the thing about writing. For me, it's an arc sparking in the midst of what's already freighted. It knots up on what crosses its path in a bit of bark, sparks on a sliver of rock, turns its back on someone.

For me, writing is necessarily recursive. Every day I start at the beginning, scoring over words like a sculptor chiseling things neither here nor there. Working words is like feeling out the pitch of a note set by an imaginary tuning fork. Pockets of composition can produce worlds as if out of thin air but only because writing is a compression stretched by a torque. When writing fails the relation of word and world, it spins out like car wheels in mud, leaving you stranded and tired of trying.

Deleuze once thought to say we're for the world before we're in it. Writing throws the world together, pulling the writer in tow into contact with a slackening, a brightening, a muffling. Something saturates with physicality and potential. There is a pond and then the occasional water bug skimming its surface.

(CLOUGH 2000B; DELEUZE 1986; DELEUZE AND GUATTARI 1987; KUSSEROW 2017; RAFFLES 2011, 2012)

#### The Icing on the Cake

I am the girl who sits by the fire whether or not it's cold. The three kids at the next table are clearly siblings, stealing gleefully from each other's plates. They have similar haircuts and their eyebrows are noticeably thin. They are young and their teeth are tiny squares. One kid is having a birthday and a large cupcake with a lit candle approaches. There is oohing and clapping, then high-spirited bad singing. After the silent beat of the child's wish they all blow because everyone wants in unison to wish that the wish would have a shot at coming true.

Draw a storyboard of this scene.

Does "birthday cupcake" suggest a budget or a festive surplus? How big is large? Are the surrounding tables paying attention or passively penetrated by the family's sound? Is it sunny out? What are the genders and races

of these children and their muffin-delivering adults? How big or cropped is their hair? Are they all dressed alike, or do generations shift? Are there presents on the table? Are these the right questions? What is it about icing that links it to joy, to empire and excess and the sovereign tongue? Seriously, what is it?

(LOEFFLER 2017)

#### **Bad Feelings**

I fall into step on the sidewalk behind a family of five. The thin, blond grandmother has the gnawed face of a meth addict. She lopes when she walks, swinging her legs out and forward, cutting her eyes over her shoulders, arms circling a little randomly. It's as if she'd been torn limb from limb and now finds herself at the outlet mall with her daughter's family. Her shorts are ironed, she has nice sandals.

She reminds me of a woman I met who has trouble being in a room. I stood next to her. We started off pretty well, talking about books and travel and how we knew people, but after twenty minutes we were trapped. I drifted away, releasing us. Over the next three days, we ricocheted off a backlog of social failures; there were furtive looks, the occasional sharp turn on the poolside pavement to avoid contact. No bad feelings but bad feelings were between us, suturing us in a contact aesthetic like my childhood visits to the piano teacher—the earthy oils she wore, the way she ran her hand up the page of music, opening it flat without catching her skin on the staples.

(CONTACT AESTHETIC; CONTAGION; GIBBS 2006, 2011; PINE 2012, 2016)

#### Friction

On one side of the café January (they talk at length of her name) is on a date with a sweet internet hookup whose fingers are like Tiparillos. And it's going so great for a while until January says no, in a slightly louder voice, NO, I do not eat meat, it makes me feel bad, I won't even have plants. The guy loves meat. It's the only reason I see my father, he says: no one cooks meat like him. The conversation gets quiet and then turns toward work, and phrases like "and whatnot" spring up, so things get sweet again.

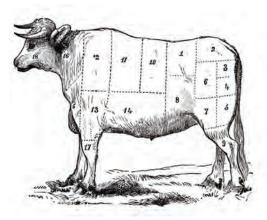
I have eight pairs of khakis and eight shirts, he says, so I never have to make a decision. My underwear is all sorts of colors, but that doesn't mean anything, she says—I like to live simply—and to look at her metal T-shirt and sweet flats with jeweled skulls embroidered on them, I get it. They are trying to maintain. They already know how they will fail because when they're not alike their jaws get set. Santa over here wants to give them five pouches of patience and some Xanax to help them ace the test like in fairy tales.

Outside, in the sun, a couple who divorced a year ago has a date to take an "inventory." Before the woman arrives the man tells a friend he runs into that it's been a year since he's seen his ex: they've kept it to email. The friend nods and backs off. The remainder tilts back in his chair, straightening up when she arrives in a van. She is a foot taller than he is: wider too. There is no awkward hug, just the scraping of metal chairs. Both are gray-pale, as though they'd remained inside since the apocalypse poisoned the air.

Each ex has a paper with penciled notes—I'd bet anything that their mediator, or someone's shrink or sponsor, suggested this tool so that they could erase their bullshit if it showed up for a fight. From the outside they seem tired. The woman is wearing big metal jewelry and the man a baseball cap backward. I'll begin, she says.

1. I was a narcissist.

Then quiet. Things have gotten so bad, she rebegins, that I had to do an inventory with another friend too, and she made me admit it: I'm all about my own feelings. The guy gets sad and seems humiliated, too, that still, a year later, he is profoundly passive in the air of her. He makes supportive noises.



- I had my stuff, too, he mutters, looking at the paper. I tested you. We played games, she said. I wasn't trusting, he said.
- 2. Also, she said, I owe you money, I took a lot from you when you were sleeping, and she hits the table with a crushed ball of bills that scatter to the ground. Everyone on the outside rises and laughs, pretending to steal what wasn't ours, or theirs.

(JACKALOPE COFFEE & TEA HOUSE)

#### Fish in Drag

Think about what you do when you revise a sentence, seeking a precision that gets at a situation so well that the empirical expands. You add something, delete something, substitute tenses; you rearrange clauses and phrases, remember another thing that happened that made this thing more of an event, and with each change the world offered to your readers shifts. Any attempt to delineate in words even the smallest moment—a greeting in the street, the opening of a window, the startling sound the world slips in—necessarily leaves out more than it includes, which is nothing to despair about.

(FISH 2012)

#### Camera Worthy

I was raking leaves in the backyard when I heard honking and yelling on the street.

Thinking one of our dogs or cats had gotten out, I ran through the gate to find neighbors standing in the street yelling back and forth. "What was that?" "We should call the police." "Did you get her license plate?" A woman walking a dog and pushing a stroller had to walk around a parked car into the street (no sidewalks). A car speeding up the street nearly hit her and then stopped to yell, "GET OUT OF THE ROAD!!!" A young couple walking down the other side of the street told us the driver was well known as "the crazy driver" and there were YouTube clips of her doing this kind of thing. The police had been called, her license plate had been circulated on the neighborhood listserv. There was a pause. We looked at

All the Desperate Calls Rolled into One

each other. The scene

rickety, ricocheting off

isolation, vulnerability,

snap judgment, the state of place,

wondered where that crazy driver

her house, and her life, and her car.

lived and what it was like inside

the status of community watch,

the thinness of commonality. I

felt overfilled and

Each day begins glasses off and a quiet reading of the world's noise. The cats, the street already flowing with joggers and cars, sirens because I'm in a city and inside the hover of yesterday's knee-buckling encounters. I call Katie for a refresher course in dedramatizing the crazy. We banter and cackle, then she says: rather than saying "I'm hurt," say "I feel funny" and "What's up?" Rather than saying "I want x to change," say "What if we did x?" I've also heard "Feel ten in your heart, act seven in your movements." "Smile like an animal tracking prey." "Don't rush to breathe: just write."

Baldwin says, love the racist enemy too fearful to ditch his vicious innocence. Imitation is the something of something but it's also a way of learning, and I'd give anything to sound loving-sad like that instead of not understanding the burst of what comes out when I play the keyboard. Because I love no one when I'm

writing there's an everything—it's like laughter, fierce and emotionless. Norms are spongy, absorbing a lot and smearing the encounter with grit. I say embrace the love you feel surging when you're taken up by your whatever weapon.

(BALDWIN [1963] 1992; BARTHES [2002] 2005; BERGSON [1900] 1914)

#### It's Structural

Every house we lived in had a thing we called "the built-in." A built-in is an infrastructure for everyday order slotted into a closet whose frame would have read, "This house is mine" if things had signs revealing their true function. My father's change jar sat there, a large brandy snifter that was

or ceremonial candy. His watches lay there too, just next to his cufflinks. Near them were his stacked white laundered shirts, each of which had supportive cardboard in the back, and if you slid it out carefully you would have a thing to draw on. Today I emptied mine, for \$27.23. His was full of quarters: never lesser coins. The counting machine at the Jewel supermarket at all times has a long line of characters. It's like a social club where everyone

makes everyone else more alive,

but less jumpy. Coinstar tithes 10

it's involving to pour the change

percent of what you pour into it and

once for something else, a terrarium

in, to catch the spraying rejects and try again. The woman ahead of me glanced over and said, "Everything helps." She poured her change from tall tins that had once held incense or Pringles.

(MÁRQUEZ [1967] 2006)

Excerpted from The Hundreds by Lauren Berlant and Kathleen Stewart. © Duke University Press, 2019. To see the full works cited information for these poems, go to mag .uchicago.edu/hundreds-citations.





he lecture hall at 5727 South
University Avenue is handsome and
restrained, the perfect setting for
an instructor in a tweedy jacket to
lecture on ethics, or perhaps Tolstoy's
view of history. But today several dozen
students, roughly evenly split between men and
women, have convened for something weightier:
ENGL 12320, Critical Videogame Studies.

Patrick Jagoda, professor of English and cinema and media studies and director of the Weston Game Lab, opens by asking the students to turn to their neighbor. They're to spend two minutes discussing the homework assignment: trying out *The Stanley Parable* (2011), a single-player game centered on an office drone looking for his missing coworkers. The room erupts in a low roar, punctuated by laughter and groans of frustration as the students recount their misadventures.

When the two minutes are over, Jagoda's co-instructor, **Ashlyn Sparrow**, assistant director of the Weston Game Lab, pipes up. "I need you to put your laptops away," she says sternly. Sparrow explains that too many people aren't doing the readings or playing the assigned games; this quiz will keep them honest. TAs pass out the quiz, which starts with simple questions like How difficult did you find The Stanley Parable? Then, Do you think you played the game for more or less time than your partner? Then, Draw a sketch of Stanley's face as it appears in the game. Finally, Now, draw a top hat on your image of Stanley's face.

After Jagoda calls time, he instructs the students to hold their quiz sheets vertically in the air. They do so. I do as well, even though my quiz is blank.

Then he tells them to tear the sheet from top to bottom into two equal strips. We all do that too.

Finally, he displays a slide with discussion questions: How fully did you report on your partner? Did you draw the image of Stanley? Did you rip up your paper? Why?

The quiz is a red herring. ("I believe most of you are actually playing the games and doing the readings," Jagoda admits.) The real lecture for the day concerns why we obey rules and instructions in games and in real life.

As the discussion unfolds, one student reveals he didn't tear up his quiz paper: "I was proud of the work I put into it," he says with a tinge of sheepishness. Another says she started to question the directions when asked to draw Stanley's face, since the player never sees it. A third suggests maybe he was only willing to follow the puzzling instructions because of the nature of the class: "If it was a calculus quiz, I wouldn't have ripped it up."

"There are some situations when you want to follow the rules, and others when you want to disregard them," Jagoda says. He segues into a discussion of the famous Milgram experiment, run by Yale psychologist Stanley Milgram. Under pressure, participants administered what they thought were painful electric shocks to someone pretending to be a test subject.

"This brings us to the question of whether video games can condition us to obedience," Jagoda continues. Most early video games used on-screen instructions to help you through the game, he says, but more recently, experimental games have asked players to think about decision-making, consent, and complicity.

A student mentions an example from *The Stanley Parable*: at one point, the narrator tells you explicitly not to press a button, but it turns out that pressing the button is the only way to continue. Another student mentions an instruction from the game that rewards you if you turn the game off and ignore it for five years. If she complies, she wonders, is she even still playing the game? And if she abandons the game at that point with no intention to return, is she nevertheless still following its instructions?

As Jagoda wraps up the discussion, he leaves the class with one last question: "What systems in your lives are rigged games?"

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Clockwise from left: Ashlyn Sparrow and students work with a 3-D printer; Patrick Jagoda sports Terrariuminspired dyed hair; students enjoy playing tabletop and video games at the Weston Game Lab.

atrick Jagoda—tall, lanky, and with teal hair—looks more than a little like he stepped forth from a video game; adepts of Japanese games might note his resemblance to Hubert Oswell from *Tales of Graces* (2009). He earned his doctorate in English from Duke in 2010, while simultaneously earning a graduate certificate in information science and studies. At UChicago he received a two-year Mellon Postdoctoral Fellowship to study new media.

Ashlyn Sparrow came to the Weston Game Lab after studying entertainment technology at Carnegie Mellon University and Universidade da Madeira. She's developed a score of games,

many of them educational.

The seeds of the Weston Game Lab were planted in 2011 when Jagoda started working on serious games about public health—particularly adolescent sexual and reproductive health—with **Melissa Gilliam**, then professor in obstetrics and gynecology and in pediatrics and now also Ellen H. Block Professor of Health Justice and vice provost. Their project became the Game Changer Chicago Design Lab, which is part of the Center for Interdisciplinary Inquiry and Innovation in Sexual and Reproductive Health.

Sparrow joined the University in 2013, first as a game designer and later as the Weston Game Lab's assistant director. Jagoda and Sparrow have been creative partners ever since. "I could not imagine so robust a media arts culture without her vibrant presence," he says.

Although the Game Changer Chicago
Design Lab focuses on public health, Jagoda
and Sparrow noticed how excited the teens
got about the process of designing the games.
That led to the question of how to build a game
design curriculum and provide a career path
for interested students at UChicago. Critical
Videogame Studies was one result of that; the
Weston Game Lab was another.

Sparrow and Jagoda work with more games than just the video variety. The duo have a particular expertise in alternate reality games, which combine live-action and online components through transmedia narratives. "There might be a website that a player needs to navigate, or they might actually have a phone number that they found on a poster that they need to call," Sparrow explains. "They might get a voicemail, or they might actually get in touch with a live actor."

In 2017 Jagoda and Sparrow collaborated with University faculty (including **Heidi Coleman**, AM'08, senior lecturer in theater

and performance studies, and **Kristen Schilt**, associate professor in sociology) on an alternate reality game, *the parasite*, for O-Week. This past summer the group created a similar orientation game, *Terrarium*, focused on climate change.

Terrarium required the incoming first-years to help people from four versions of 2049—played by actors—to solve puzzles and escape their predicaments. (Sparrow and Jagoda played parts as well, even dying their hair green for the roles: "I suppose you could say that this happened with extended exposure to the SPORE device," Jagoda jokes, referencing the events of the game.) Terrarium "was inspired by video games," Jagoda says, "but had many analog components too."

Likewise, a major component of the Weston Game Lab is the study of tabletop games. "Students can learn fundamental game design skills through the analog components of board, card, and tabletop games, before they ever move into video game development," Jagoda says.

The Weston Game Lab hosts regular tabletop and board game play nights. Designers of games—students and nonstudents alike—bring their new creations into the lab to play test them. One group of students created their own original tabletop role-playing game, called Wanderstruck. Two PhD students in English, Arianna Gass and Evan Wisdom-Dawson, organized a night of board games about the apocalypse that connected to both of their research interests.

But when it comes to teaching about the structure of games in general, video games are ideal for several reasons. For one, Sparrow says, "it's easy to get these games and have our students do these close readings. They also only take a couple of hours, and you can play them individually."

Jagoda adds, "A quarter is a very short time." Students bring their previous video game knowledge and experience to the classroom, so they can immediately "dive into more complex materials."

Critical studies of video games is a young field, just 30 years old or so; Jagoda estimates that only in the 21st century have games been a subject of serious academic inquiry. But video games are "arguably a major, if not the major cultural industry of our time," he says, with an estimated 2.5 billion players worldwide. "Many of our students are growing up spending tens of hours playing video games each week. Yet they don't have the same kind of capacity to analyze games for their graphic components,

















Emotions run high during the Super Smash Bros. tournament.

their audio elements, their mechanics and rules, and the medium-specific ways they tell stories."

Jagoda offers, by way of example, a 2018 game they discussed in class called *Return of the Obra Dinn*, which is organized around logic puzzles, and set in 1807—the year Britain abolished the slave trade. "You're on board this ship and have to figure out how all the people on the ship died. You are playing a bureaucrat, an insurance adjuster, who has to discover a precise narrative about these deaths—who should get paid out, who owes money, based on wrongdoings." On one level, he says, "it's just a fun logic game." But scratch the surface, and "the game is ultimately a meditation on colonialism, finance, and slavery."

hellwyn Weston and Bradford Weston, JD'77, the donors who made the Weston Game Lab possible, come from the world of high finance, but they are avid gamers, particularly of the online role-playing game World of Warcraft. It's not just a hobby: they believe well-designed games could have a major impact on society. "Gaming increasingly provides demonstrable improvements in individuals' ability to acquire knowledge and make decisions," said Shellwyn Weston when the lab was opened. "Moreover, I believe that augmented reality will soon emerge as a strategic imperative for corporations and an effective tool for NGOs."

The Weston Game Lab's physical space is but one component of the larger Media Arts, Data, and Design (MADD) Center, built in what was until recently the periodicals section of the John Crerar Library. When I visit on a rainy Saturday afternoon, the MADD Center desk clerks are playing jazz softly in the background, and several students are plugging away at their homework. A foursome plays a card-based role-playing game.

A few feet away are video screens on carts where you can hook up game consoles for individual or group play. Half a dozen College students are playing Super Smash Bros. Ultimate, the latest installment of a fighting game from Nintendo that pits characters from different video game series against each other. It's straightforward and light of heart. There's none of the introspection of

The Stanley Parable here—just cartoon characters darting about and punching.

The Weston Game Lab is about to get a lot noisier. The weekly *Smash Bros.* tournament begins at 5 p.m.

As they warm up, the students graciously allow me to play. It's particularly kind of them since (a) I don't have a controller, (b) I've never played this game, and (c) I'm twice their age and inherently uncool. The MADD Center desk attendants lend me a

controller, which solves problem (a). I've tried to address (b) by watching an instructional video on YouTube the night before, in which I learned roughly what combinations of buttons I need to mash. And I resign myself to (c).

Athan Liu, Class of 2021—one of tonight's tournament organizers—is my opponent. First, we choose characters. Liu chooses Ganondorf, a villainous warrior-sorcerer from The Legend of Zelda. (I later learn it's a UChicago Smash Bros. tradition for newcomers to play their first match against Ganondorf.) I choose Kirby, a friendly faced pink ball from the game series of the same name. (If you didn't grow up playing video games, the incongruity of this matchup is probably lost on you. Think of it like Dracula versus Snoopy.) "3—2—1—GO!"

I quickly figure out how to punch, duck, jump, and ... that's about it. Any hope I had that beginner's luck might favor me quickly evaporates; Ganondorf repeatedly knocks Kirby off the floating platform where the fights take place. There's too much going on for my untrained eye; I press buttons wildly. I'm inordinately proud when one of my punches lands and knocks my opponent off the platform, but it's too little, too late. Liu wins, as we knew he would.

The group continues playing friendly matches as I slip away to speak with **Jonathan Castro**, SB'18, the chief tournament organizer. Castro says that in early 2019, soon after the latest iteration of Super Smash Bros. came out, a few people staged a tournament in the Reynolds Club. With the opening of the MADD Center, the tournament moved to the Weston Game Lab's main room. It's low stakes—each entrant pays \$3, the winner gets the pot—but "people find satisfaction in being able to grow as a player and competitor."

Many regulars also participate in Inter-Collegiate Chicago Smash, a regional tournament with 100 entrants representing local universities. At the last one, Castro notes with a hint of pride, the UChicago team won. There are even some fans: Castro explains that they stream the matches on Twitch (a live streaming service for video games). The audience isn't big—10 to 15, he estimates, and nothing like the 600,000-plus who watched rapper Drake play Fortnite in March 2018—but it's a start.

The organizers eventually wander away from their pickup games and start readying the room for the tournament. They move the screen we've just been playing on and fire up Twitch on the Weston Game Lab computers. Not many players are expected today, they tell me: it's Family Weekend, which explains the puzzled middle-aged couples periodically being led through the space by their offspring.

By 5 p.m., only 19 players are registered. The official start time is pushed back to 5:15 to give stragglers a chance to arrive. It's a double-elimination bracket format, but even so, it looks like they're in for a short night.

"Do you want to sign up?" asks first-year **Summer Long**, running the registration desk. I shake my head. She watched me play earlier and surely knows I'm an easy mark.

remember my original job dinner, when I was interviewing for a postdoc at the University of Chicago in 2010," Jagoda says. "Since the position was officially in the English department, I expected questions about American literature. In fact, we ended up talking about digital and networked games for over two hours."

There's a straight line between this realization—that senior scholars in his field would take games seriously—and Critical Videogame Studies and other classes on games at UChicago (see sidebar). Scholars are quickly warming to the field, which, Jagoda notes, "was not the case even a decade ago."

The growth in the complexity of video games—from the visual overstimulation of Super Smash Bros. to the wide-open worlds of Grand Theft Auto—has been made possible by advances in technology, both hardware and software. It's tempting to think of these games primarily in terms of microelectronics and computer programming; in other words, as products of science and engineering. (Arguably UChicago's most famous alum in the game industry is **Alex Seropian**, SB'91, cocreator of Halo—and a math major.) But Jagoda sees the games as rooted in the humanities, a product of how people play and interact with each other.

"There's a lot of talk about the humanities being in crisis," he says. "This narrative isn't completely new. But when I think about a field like media arts and design, or game design, or many other emergent areas in media, the humanities feel more necessary than ever."

Gaming has exploded as an art form in recent years, Jagoda says: board games and video games, serious and casual, played in private and as professional e-sports in front of massive audiences. "Among scholars, if not journalists, it is no longer adequate merely to trumpet the economic success of the multibillion-dollar videogame industry that now outpaces book publishing, music, and even film, or to express wonder at the possibility that video games can be art," Jagoda says. Video games already encompass entertainment, art, education, activism, and more, and their future is a blank page, just waiting to be written on.

# THE GAME'S AFOOT!

There are numerous courses at UChicago that explore video games. Here are some of this year's offerings, along with excerpted course descriptions.

#### **ARTGAMES**

Reset your expectations of video games! Video games can be political, experimental, and poetic. ... Develop, hack, mod, and utilize video games as an artistic medium.

#### Climate Change in Media and Design

In this course, we will examine the aesthetics of climate change. ... The most substantial work of the quarter will be an ambitious multimedia or transmedia project about one of the core course topics to be completed in a team.

#### Computers for Learning

Over time, technology has occupied an increasing role in education, with mixed results. ... This course covers technology, psychology (e.g., motivation, engagement), and pedagogy (e.g., constructivism) as they apply to educational technology so that students can design and build an educational learning application.

#### Embodied Data and Gamified Interfaces

We produce caches of data within our networked lives, from social media interactions to mass surveillance systems. ... The aesthetics of many of these interfaces uses gamification as a guise to data collection, relying on dopamine rushes from "winning" likes, shares, and views to keep us coming back. ... We will explore data and games as artistic mediums and how they interface and exchange with each other.

#### Games and Performance

This experimental course explores the emerging genre of "immersive performance," "alternate reality," and "transmedia" gaming.



#### Design

## THROW ONE ON

As an English major at UChicago, Liam Lee, AB'15, was interested in studying the connection between the novel and the built environment. His BA thesis focused on "poetry that approached memory as something constituted through the juxtaposition of objects," he says.

After graduation, Lee moved back to his hometown of New York City. At RUR Architecture DPC, he helped put together the book *Projects and Their Consequences* (Princeton Architectural Press, 2019), the founders' reflections on 30 years of their firm's work. Lee now works as a design assistant for MHS artists, a set design agency for fashion shoots.

A year ago, he opened his own design studio, where he creates furniture and objects, such as these wool throws. He started with textiles because they don't require much space; the choice was made "largely through convenience," he says. Lee's throws are woven by a small wool mill in Ireland. He dyes, felts, and finishes them by hand.

-Carrie Golus, AB'91, AM'93

See more of Lee's textile and furniture designs on Instagram @studio\_liamlee.





# WHAT PAIRS WELL WITH WINTER AND DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS?

A warm bowl of soup.

Last year **Seher Siddiqee**, Rockefeller Chapel's assistant director of Spiritual Life, was trying to figure out what kind of programming would help students manage the pressures in their lives. She kept hearing the same concerns again and again—and yet each student was certain they were the only one in such a quandary.

When then program assistant **Nur Banu Simsek**, AB'19, jokingly suggested a support group called SOUPport, Siddiqee had her concept. "Soup in the winter!" she says. "Because students always come for food. We're going to be cheesy and go with it."

The series SOUPport, Difficult Conversations over a Warm Bowl of Soup, was held one Wednesday a month, at lunchtime, during winter quarter 2019. Its topics: "How do I tell my parents ...," "Relationships," and "Expressing my faith in the classroom."

During the session on parents, participants brought up all kinds of disputes, and not necessarily the ones you might expect. Religious adviser Rev. Stacy Alan, who led the discussion, spoke about the first time she missed being home for Christmas—an important tradition in her family-because she wanted to visit a friend working in a war zone in Nicaragua. "I had always been a very cooperative and compliant daughter, even as a teenager and in college, so it was really important for me to own my decision," Alan saysthough in retrospect, she wishes she'd had more empathy for her mother's disappointment.

During the discussion that followed, a graduate student brought up her parents' lack of support for her academic work. "It became this incredible conversation about, who do we revert to when we're around our parents? Because we all do it," says Siddiqee. "You curate a certain version of yourself for your parents."

Religious adviser **Joshua Oxley**, MDiv'13 (who's now at George Washington University), led the second meeting, on relationships. Though it was held on Valentine's Day, the session was about all kinds of relationships, not just romantic. "Several students mentioned concerns about friendships, especially those carried over from high school," Oxley says.

The third and final session was inspired by students who had experienced "trying to use their faith as part of who they were in the classroom and being shot down," says Siddiqee. The session was led by Yousef Casewit, an assistant professor of Qur'anic studies in the Divinity School, who talked about the notion of "insider versus outsider."

While he teaches about Islam as a believer, his insider status doesn't give him an advantage when it comes to doing scholarship, Casewit told the group. Similarly, being an outsider, or a nonbeliever, doesn't make scholarship more objective.

With a faculty member leading the discussion, the dynamic was different—more of a lecture and Q&A format, says Siddiqee: "But the students were asking really meaningful questions. It seemed to be helpful."

SOUPport returns this winter quarter, with slightly revised topics. "How do I tell my parents ..." is back, but the others will focus on multiple religious belonging and the pressure.

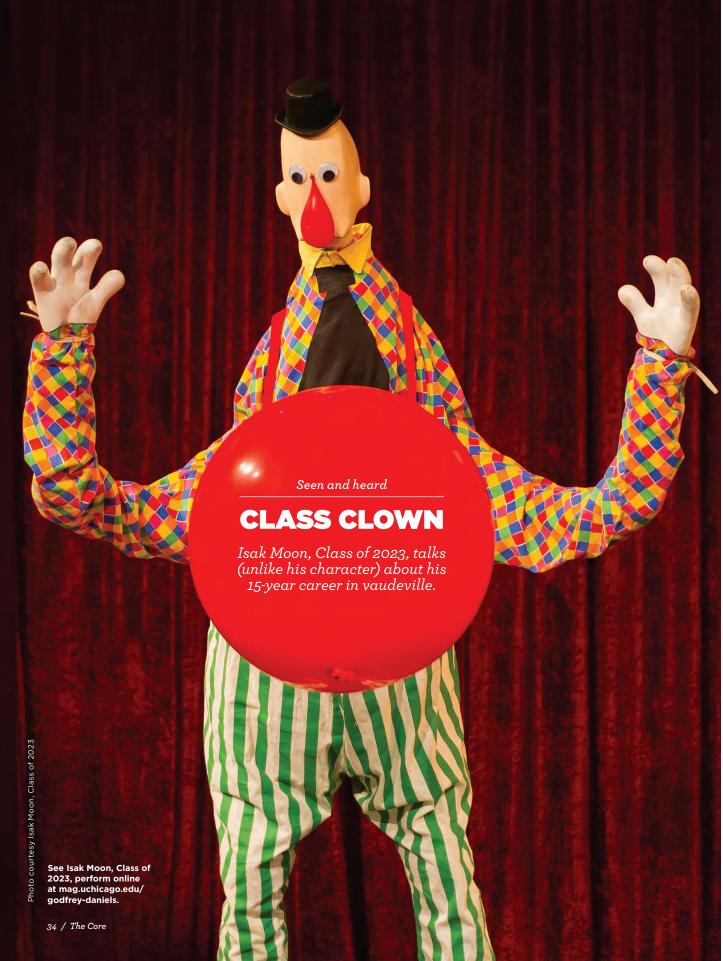
religious belonging and the pressure to succeed.
Siddiqee considered making the soup from scratch, but "My boss was like, 'Why are you putting more work

soup from scratch, but "My boss was like, 'Why are you putting more work on your plate?'" she says. "So instead we do this very fun recipe called canned soup from Costco."

#### SOUPport soup

- Purchase a variety pack of vegetarian canned soup from Costco. "There are so many different dietary religious rules, vegetarian is just easier," says Siddiqee. Last year she served lentil, tomato, and vegetarian minestrone.
- When you arrive at work, choose which soup to serve. Pour into Crock-Pot and heat.
- 3. Serve warm soup with salad and "whatever fancy bread rolls."
- Consume while engaging in heavy-duty discussion and making yourself vulnerable.

-Carrie Golus, AB'91, AM'93



UChicago News Office

First-year **Isak Moon** doesn't remember the first time he appeared as a clown. He was just 4 years old when family friend Randy Minkler, who performs as the vaudeville clown Godfrey Daniels, brought him onstage dressed as Little Godfrey. The crowd loved him, and he's been a regular part of the act ever since.

As well as his hometown of Seattle, Moon has performed in Oregon, California, Idaho, Montana, Alaska, and Canada, in venues that include theaters, prisons, and The Gong Show.

This interview has been edited and condensed.

#### What is a vaudeville clown? Is that different from a circus clown?

Vaudeville clowns don't wear the typical clown makeup and have more depth—there are multiple dimensions to the character. Some early vaudeville clowns are Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton, and Laurel and Hardy. Avner the Eccentric and Bill Irwin are considered new vaudeville clowns.

Godfrey Daniels—whose name comes from the way W. C. Fields, another vaudeville clown, cursed in his movies—is more a combination of vaudeville clown, circus clown, puppet, and mime.

## What does it feel like to perform as a character that was invented by someone else?

I try to move like Randy—slowly, the way he does. I don't remember trying to learn. Parts of the character have influenced who I am, just because I've been doing it for so long.

#### What do you mean?

Some other vaudeville performers have said they can see as I'm walking around, certain movements mean a lot more than just the gesture. The character doesn't have a voice. It's a lot of shrugging shoulders, turning your head, walking, moving around.

So certain movements that you learned to do onstage, you now do in real life?

Yeah.

I've seen videos of the act online. It's sort of like juggling, but with just one balloon. I can't get over how slow the pacing is.

It's very hypnotic and entrancing.

## What's the role of clowns in a world that has the internet, video games, etc.?

Our act—and vaudeville in general, but especially our act—is so subtle.



A lot of times in shows, adults laugh more than kids. They can read into the subtleties.

In live theater, it's a shared experience with everyone in the same moment, which amplifies the meaning.

#### Do things ever go wrong?

Things often go wrong, especially with Godfrey since his fingers don't move and there is limited visibility in the costume. When a mistake happens, you have to be in the moment and figure out how to go with it.

Oftentimes audiences can't tell. Sometimes the mistakes can be funnier than the actual bit itself.

#### What's it like to perform in prison?

It's the same base routine, but usually we do it in the gym. Sometimes we imitate playing basketball with the balloon. We play basketball with the quards or inmates or both.

#### How was The Gong Show?

Right at the end, Will Arnett gonged us, but then the host, Mike Myers—he's in disguise so you don't know it's him—said it didn't count, it was too late.

#### How many costumes have you had over the years?

I had the original one, from when
I was 4, and as I grew, Randy kept
altering it. When I was 13 or 14, I
transitioned to one of the adult
costumes. So I've only had two
costumes, but my first one is a lot
bigger now than it originally was.

#### What's it like inside?

Hot. You can't see that well. Sometimes it's uncomfortable.

## Any thoughts on other famous clowns, like the Joker, Krusty the Clown, or the Insane Clown Posse?

These clowns were designed to play on the fear of clowns. They are purposefully scary looking. They highlight the flaws, shortcomings, cruelty of our society.

I think it's important for clowns, especially vaudeville clowns, to have compassion and the ability to sense and display vulnerabilities and flaws, and to help create a world that is safer for everyone.

#### Will you continue performing in Chicago?

The costume is in Seattle. As of now, no. But if the opportunity arises, yes.

—Carrie Golus, AB'91, AM'93

# to column 1: What is Style?, What is *When Harry Met Sally?*, What is Great Books?, What is law?, What is atomic/nuclear? to column 2: Who is Henry Moore?, Who is Elena Kagan?, Who is Saul Bellow?, Who is Thornton Wilder?, Who is Milton Friedman? Responses to

#### **UCHICAGO JEOPARDY! CLUES**

Last year Regenstein user experience librarian **Emma Boettcher** made headlines after she defeated James Holzhauer on Jeopardy!, ending his 32-game winning streak. She won \$97,002 and a nickname from Alex Trebek: the "Giant Killer." Test your own knowledge of University of Chicago clues that have appeared on the show over the years.

WRITERS AND EDITORS COULDN'T DO WITHOUT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS' "CHICAGO MANUAL OF" THIS, NOW IN ITS 17TH EDITION

HIS SCULPTURE,
"NUCLEAR ENERGY,"
CAN BE SEEN ON THE
UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
CAMPUS

IN THIS 1989 FILM, THE TITLE PAIR'S RELATIONSHIP CRYSTALLIZES ON A DRIVE FROM CHICAGO TO NYC SHE TAUGHT LAW
AT THE UNIVERSITY
OF CHICAGO
& HARVARD BEFORE
THE SUPREME COURT
CALLED IN 2010

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO'S
ADLER & HUTCHINS USED
THIS 2-WORD PHRASE FOR A
PROGRAM OF CLASSIC
WORKS ON WHICH TO BASE
A CURRICULUM

"I AM AN AMERICAN, CHICAGO BORN" BEGINS "THE ADVENTURES OF AUGIE MARCH" BY THIS ALUM & PROFESSOR

JOHN PAUL STEVENS WENT TO THE U.OF C. AND LATER LECTURED THERE ON THIS SUBJECT IN THE '30s, THIS
"OUR TOWN" DRAMATIST
WAS A LECTURER ON
LITERATURE AT
THE UNIVERSITY OF
CHICAGO

IN THE 1940s THE
UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
CAME TO BE RECOGNIZED
AS THE BIRTHPLACE OF
THIS TYPE OF ENERGY

HE WAS TEACHING AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO WHEN HE WON THE 1976 NOBEL PRIZE IN ECONOMICS

#### Strange Planet

By Nathan W. Pyle









#### **WESTON GAME LAB, CRERAR LIBRARY**



Collective life ... brings about a state of effervescence which changes the conditions of psychic activity. Vital energies are over-excited, passions more active, sensations stronger; there are even some which are produced only at this moment.

-Émile Durkheim, The Elementary Forms of Religious Life (1912)