NEW ART examiner
Est: 1973

THE INDEPENDENT VOICE OF THE VISUAL ARTS

Volume 39 No.1 Sept - Oct 2024 £4.50 / $6.50 / €5.30

DRAGON Issue

Nancy Nesvet, David Goldenberg, Lanita Brooks Colbert, Jeanne Stanek, Elizabeth Ashe, Marc Bloch, Rina Oh, Valerie Kennedy and Uranchimeg Tsultemin write about the artistic history, diversity of the mythical dragon in all its fairytale, firey, finery.

The New Art Examiner is the product of the thinking and life-long contribution of Jane Addams Allen. We thank you in her name for reading this independent journal of art criticism.
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A Drgon Jade gift fior passing an exam

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The New Art Examiner is a not-for-profit organization whose purpose is to examine the definition and transmission of culture in our society; the decision-making processes within museums and schools and the agencies of patronage which determine the manner in which culture shall be transmitted; the value systems which presently influence the making of art as well as its study in exhibitions and books; and, in particular, the interaction of these factors with the visual art milieu.

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QUOTE of the MONTH:

There are always flowers for those who want to see them"

Henri Matisse

NEW ART examiner CiC

September 2024
Volume 39. No.1

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Publisher: Daniel Nanavati
Founder: Derek Guthrie
(1936 – 2023)

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Cover

Ayana V. Jackson,
When the Spirit of Kalundo comes so does Kianda, 2019
Courtesy of Mariane Ibrahim

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New Examiner CiC is registered in the UK.

EDITORIAL

Dragons: The Legend Continues

I didn't read *The Faerie Queen* by Edmund Spencer until I was twenty-six years old and ready to wade through 4,000 sonnets, but I was hooked from page one and recall the knight defeating a dragon in typical romantic knightly fashion with lots of wounds from which he bled only to be nursed by a pretty damsel. Although he doesn't have a dragon appearing in *Well at the World's End*, William Morris did write about the saga of the Fall of the Nibelungs – with a Germanic dragon able to fly and willing to take on all comers. A depiction picked up by Tolkien in Smaug, one of the Drakes of the north, in his original fairy story *The Hobbit* – to my mind a better book than his popular *Lord of the Rings*. Smaug craves gold and kills to get it, enjoys riddles and smells out his enemies. C.S. Lewis took a similar but magical approach in the *Voyage of the Dawn Treader* where Eustace watches a dragon die, and walking into its lair falls asleep on its pile of gold waking to find himself transformed into a dragon. As with all things Lewis, this is a Christian morality tale where Eustace gains empathy as a hated and dangerous dragon, eventually turned back into a normal boy by the Jesus figure, Aslan the lion.

Kenneth Graeme and E Nesbit both took on the traditions and respectively in *The Reluctant Dragon* and *The Last of the Dragons* playing with the notion of a dangerous beast intent on conquest, imprisonment and murder and gave them a more friendly character, even benign while keeping the magical element. E Nesbit, who may be better known as the author of *The Phoenix and The Carpet*, a masterpiece I came to as I was exiting childhood and wished I had found when I was eleven. Her point of views was of the ending of a species and an era.

The Clangers was a very popular stop motion children's programme in the 1960s in which the soup dragon lives on a planet with the Clangers and helps them with their adventures. In the same decade Noggin the Nogg, a cut out adventure story of Vikings had a dragon that was intelligent enough to ask Noggin to help it and Noggin was wise enough to assist. Perfect for the under-fives. While antiquity and the Bible yields up dragons and 'perhaps dragons', the last fifty years has thrown up an entire industry of intelligent dragons, magical dragons, powerful beasts half in love with someone (look at *Game of Thrones*) and the fairy tale for children has evolved into an adult genre with deeply political overtones and fearsome set piece battles. Dragons that fight on the side of justice and demand respect. This can be seen as a description of how we have changed our own thoughts on the animal kingdom. Where once 'beasts' were to be feared or respected for their power, we have now become the beasts and we are no longer in the world of the brothers Grimm fairy tales but a world where dragons cannot exist because, despite their power and ability to defend the good, we would happily murder them all: intelligent, benign or reluctant as they may be.

As this Asian Year of the Dragon comes to a close, New Art Examiner and Art Lantern provides a history of dragons in past and present eras, all over the world, honouring and accounting for the fear of Dragons, and celebrating their power and depictions in art, music and literature.

SPEAKEASY

Each issue, the New Art Examiner invites a well-known, or not so well-known, art world personality to write a speakeasy essay on a topic of interest.

Daniel Benshana is a writer and son of the poet Shänne Sands. He lives and works in Cornwall and sometime s as a background artist on TV and films.

St. George and the Dragon

Daniel Benshana

A Roman soldier of Christian faith, St. George saved the daughter of a Pagan king by subduing a dragon with his lance. Princess Sabra then led the dragon to the city where St. George killed it with his sword, prompting the king and his subjects to convert to Christianity. Likely, George wasn't English, and he wasn't a knight. He was a member of the Roman Army having been born in Turkey and dying in Syria Palestrina, the Roman province, and buried in Lod. He probably never visited England but became popular with Edward I (1272-1307). At least, unlike many saints, he probably existed and became popular in England from the ninth century. And since most of the stories we have were written centuries after he is supposed to have died 'probably existed' is the best we can suggest. We must remember the proclivity of the early church (and even the modern church) to delight in finding and making saints both to underpin the faith of Christians as a whole and to cement the faith in the definite existence of a god. If such as these died for their faith, then you can make it to church this Sunday. But it is a fact that from Armenia through Nubia to Rome, early Christians honoured him as a saint. And it is a fact that there is a myth about him and a day set aside for him.

Let's be honest dragons as described in the legends do not exist. But in so far as the legend of St George goes back to the emperor Diocletian who persecuted and killed him for converting to Christianity, the symbol of the fearsome, fire-breathing enemy of princesses everywhere has its obvious forebears.

St George is such a symbol that his cross was the flag of England under Edward 1st
and his red cross is still a part of the flag of the United Kingdom; such is the power of legend and tradition. The single knight who faced a fearsome dragon

Raffaello Sanzio da Urbino: Saint George and the Dragon. oil on wood. (c1505)
Google Art Project

and almost lost but defeated it in the end by killing it, for a princess, no less and not, notice, by making friends with it like a decent Christian.

The Golden Legend by Jacobus de Voragine is the first written account of the legend which was by then (1269+) 900 hundred years old. This is a history of many of the saints on Christendom up to that point and obviously is a heavily embellished oral story. But myths have great power and today St George is not

Paolo Ucello: St George and the Dragon (1470)
Tempera

just the patron saint of England – he is particularly praised by Christian Arabs as his mother is supposed to have been born in Lydda, in Syria-Palestrina and has been held in esteem in Georgia (the country) since the 4th century and again his red cross is a part of their flag. In the Persian Book of Kings, Rustem kills the dragon in his second trial symbolizing the battle between Iran and Turania Here the horse helps the knight defeat the dragon, with the dragon contributing his lower nature to the horse's physical energy.

Such heroes are a part of giving a tribe a common tradition which helps to unify the country and gives them something to shout about when they charge an enemy. Most mythical people like this – King Arthur for example – and known nation builders – Alexander the Great, Charlemagne, Chin – are all great warriors. Few nations laud pacifists. George also became a saint which means we have to see the miracles in his story not just the shining white horse, but also the wonder of an entire town becoming Christian when he saved them from the dragon. It is ridiculous anyone ever believed these stories, but then human beings love to believe the ridiculous.

St George's dragon was a beast who needed sacrifice to placate his intent to destroy a town, but this is exactly what tribute was to the Athenians. The dragon is man as we experience him in every nation and the knight is the man we all want to be but never are. We invoke their name to give us a part of their courage – like kissing a medallion before a game or a battle. The symbol is of the lesser might defeating the greater might and saving the life of a woman – in this case a princess so in effect saving the future of the kingdom. It is how one man can make a difference through his faith, and in George's case very good eyesight to see the dragon's weak spot.

But myths are not guides to how the world is run, they are stories meant to blind us. None of us is George, we are each a scale on the dragon and the princess is our planet. We nearly always end up slaying the wrong animal or dragon, because the question – who is the human and who the beast – is not answered correctly. Why do we think errant knights were good people? Why was anyone ever clad in steel with weapons on him to kill? Because in real life the dragon, as I said at the start, never existed but these errant knights certainly did. They were the Christian war machine. And it is long past the time when we should stop lauding murderers or princesses.

Korea, Daegu, Dragon shaped Jug

East to West – All Dragons

Nancy Nesvet

We need a dragon now, a powerful, frightful, strongly scaled, fire-breathing dragon to defend those who need might to make right. Or maybe we would do better with a dragon in the Asian mode, who brings good luck and is benevolent. Although I would like to believe that was the motivation for those who adopted the dragon as their symbol, it is more likely that then as now, at least in the west and in dragon myth and popular adaptations, families desiring power needed a dragon to symbolize the power they had over their enemies and constituents. As we begin to exit the Asian Year of the Dragon, witnessing the chaos in the world and hardly defeating it, we honor the Dragon, tell its history and question whether or not its reputation as chaos and evil-mongering is deserved, or if it uses its power to carry good into the world, as Asian dragon myth, children's literature and those with good intentions, as in HBO's *World of the Dragon* portrays.

From Eve, who was motivated by a serpent, which may have inspired the form of the dragon, to entice Adam to eat the apple, relegating women thereafter to experience the pain of childbirth and humans to work rather than just chill in the Garden of Eden, mythologies and legends worldwide have framed fire-breathing, scaly, flying serpentine dragons as creators of chaos, enemies of saints, defenders of their compatriots, and in numerous other roles.

In one of the earliest iterations of the dragon role we encounter, Dreq, from Draco, Greek for serpent, an Albanian name for Satan, leads to the Babylonian (and Persian) myth of the dragon. This story of Bel and the Dragon, an apocryphal myth tells of Daniel killing the Dragon Bel, derived from the Mesopotamia word for Lord, the Mesopotamian God of the City of Babylon, that Babylonians revere as a living God. The dragon Bel is immortalized in carvings on the Ishtar Gate. Ur, King of the Mandaeist world of darkness is also portrayed as a dragon. In Zoroastrian sagas, in One thousand and One Nights, Alif Laylah, and in the Zoroastrian myth, Avesta, the yellow dragon is killed by the hero, Kirsap (middle Persian) while the Red Dragon was conceived to bring about the daeva-induced winter. In Avestas generally, daevas bring about chaos, whereas in the Zoroastrian Gothas, Davas are gods to be rejected. Scythian gods see daevas as malevolent as well.

The later apocryphal addition to the story of Daniel,

Edward Burne-Jones: St George and the Dragon (1868)
Wikimedia Commons

the deuterocanonical story in the Roman canon, tells of Daniel's successful struggle with the dragon. Mordecai, in the Book of Esther, (11.6) dreams of two dragons ready to fight who he interprets as Haman, the evil Shushan prime minister and himself, the heroic Jew, whose niece Esther saves her people. One of the dreamed dragons is on the good side, and a savior for the Jews, while the other is evil and destructive. In the Anglo-Saxon saga of Beowulf, the dragon, Wormhill, who emerges from a volcanic vent, is defeated by heroic Beowulf and Wiglaf.

The motif of the dragon in visual art is not new, nor relegated to the European and British worlds. Greek pottery features a motif of dragon slayers including Jason fighting the Colchian dragon and Cadmus killing the Ismenian dragon. But this visual mythology of dragons reaches a crescendo with the many depictions of the story of St. George and the Dragon. St. George is most famous as a Christian warrior saint who lived in the Roman Empire. Allegedly, a dragon had besieged a pagan city and devoured a child each day in return for not destroying the town. Heading to her death, the king's daughter was next in line when St. George arrived, made the sign of the cross, killed the dragon and saved her and the city causing the town to convert to Christianity but also beginning the legend of the courageous knight saving the king's daughter and the city.

In Portuguese mythology, Coca, a female dragon, fights with St. George, later patron saint of England,

Vortigern and Ambros watch the fight between the red and white dragons:
an illustration from a 15th-century manuscript of Geoffrey of Monmouth's History of the Kings of Britain

Portugal, Germany, Lithuania, Georgia, Russia and Palestine, and of the Order of the Garter. The dragon loses strength when St. George cuts off one of her ears, and in Book 11 of *Idylls of the King*, Guinevere, The Dragon of the Great Pendragonship appears on King Arthur's Shield and Crest. Indeed, the best-known dragon augury was the vision of two dragons that appeared in a dream of Arthur's father, Uthur, foretelling Arthur's rise to the Round Table. Prior to this, Merlin prophesizes Britain's history beginning with Vortigern's rule and the succession of Uther Pendragon, so named after he saw a comet in the shape of a dragon when marching to war. Arthur's basically peaceful reign follows but then, Geoffrey of Worcester's time, replete with dragons, brings chaos for Britain in the following years, as the Red Dragon, foretold by Merlin, tears itself apart. Whereas the Welsh Red dragon may be inspired by the Roman draconarius cavalry who dominated Britain from 1350 CE, the Welsh white dragon, Y Draig Wen, is associated with the Anglo-Saxons. Whereas the white dragon is Vortigorn, the white dragon is Satan. Both are depicted in battle in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain* where the white dragon is denoted as English as shown in the accompanying image. In a society where most, excepting those in the church, were illiterate, visual art conveyed the battles of good against evil, Christian against dragon.

The great artist Raphael might have found the story of St. George killing the dragon in an Italian collection of hagiographies, The Golden Legend. A favorite theme of Raphael's, his 1506 St. George and the Dragon depicts St. George using his wooden blade to slay the dragon. One might wonder how such a thin wooden blade would so easily kill the tremendous creature, and impale between his scales, until one knows that a dragon can be killed easily if impaled in a certain point of the throat. Tintoretto painted the struggle of St. George and the Dragon in 1558, and Bernat Mortorelli in 1434-5 for the Chapel of the Palace of the Catalan Government in Barcelona. Continuing the medieval tradition of depictions of St. George and the Dragon, the National Gallery's medieval armored knight on a horse killing the dragon, now lying on the ground underneath, lance

still implanted, features the English river and church spires behind and a medieval-dressed woman, probably Princess Sabra, with hands in prayer clearly praying for the dragon's murder. Similarly, the armorless St. George at the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore, steps over the felled dragon, his horse careful not to step on its bared teeth. Unlike Sodoma, the Sienese artist who painted St. George in 1518, now at the National Gallery in Washington, DC, has his St. George navigate from a mound of earth, to avoid stepping on the dead dragon below, while a crowned woman, undoubtedly Princess Sabra, from whom St. George has saved from the dragon, looks heavenward with hands open in a gesture of prayer fulfilled.

Edward Burne Jones painted at least two versions of St. George and the Dragon's story, including St. George, the Dragon and Princess Sabra, tied to a tree, in all of her anti-feminist, protected glory, and the fight in which St. George kills the dragon for her survival, not unlike the King Arthur Story in Tennyson's Idylls of the King Chapter 1, Guinevere, who also survived a dragon's wrath, defended by a knight in shining armor. Lucas Cranach painted at least two versions of St. George, armored in both. The Orthodox Church honored St. George as well, with the Italo-Byzantine School producing a painting of St. Michael between St. Cosmos and St. Damian and another, the *Beast of St. Mark, the Evangelist*, both owned by England's National Trust.

In China, the dragon is considered immortal and omnipresent, representing monarchy and supreme power but also belonging to the people, as we can see in the dragon dance participation by communities during Chinese New Year celebrations. Considered a beneficial beast until the Buddhists introduced the concept that there were also evil dragons, dragons' noble spiritual qualities were seen as unconquerable. The word, derived from the character for long, has come to mean dragon because of its shape, Chinese historians of the Shang period believed dragons with upturned noses were called kui, those with downturned noses were called guaizi. Owing to a homophone of guaizi meaning noble sons, the guaizi dragon was used to wish for a blessing. Kui dragons are indicative of the source of life, pure water, from which perfection and purity sprang, indicating that corruption would never accompany kui dragons. Indeed, images of kui are on the bases of the arches in Ming dynasty tombs honoring the emperor and wishing him peace and good fortune. Dragons are so benevolent that the green candle dragon lights the way for travelers to a mountain in the far north, during the dark winter months,

according to the official records of the Jin dynasty (265-420 BCE). The I Ching calls the flying dragon symbolic of the emperor.

There are multiple dragons in the Chinese compendium illustrated in the Ming encyclopedia, Collected Illustrations of the Three Realms (Sancai tuhui) compiled by Wang Qi and his son, Wang Siyi (1607-9 CE) including the winged dragon, ying long (there it is, the long character from which the word dragon derives), a flying fish type called fei yu, used as a badge of honor on garments, several winged dragons of the seas, including pai fang, with fish bodies and dragon heads used on archways denoted to honor individuals or communities. Fish dragons are used on gateways to honor, due to the legend of the carp that leaped over the Yellow River's rapids at the Dragon's gate in Hejing. A student passing their exams bore the symbol of a carp with a dragon's face, having achieved something for which he long struggled. Dragons in Chinese legend could change form and size, could rise up to the clouds and dive low to the seas. Some believed the dragon to be the primary image of creation. Dragons could bring rain. Often, sighting of a dragon brought a great rainstorm. The Green Dragon, or shen long, spirit dragon, who identified with the spring is depicted on an unearthed slab from 55 BCE on display at the Ancient Observatory in Beijing. Clay images of dragons were sacrificed to bring rain, with Daoist philosophers writing in 100 BCE in the Masters of the Kingdom of Huainan that 'the dragon regulates rain". The white dragon ruled the western regions and identified with fall, the black with the north, symbolizing winter. During a severe drought during the Xing dynasty, in

Chinese clay dragon teapot

Beijing, people would throw a piece of iron into the Pool of the Black Dragon, as dragons fear iron. According to the Chinese philosophy of the five elements, metal produces water. Two dragons in the south, Red and Yellow, divided rule during the summer. The Song Dynasty in 1110 CE granted princely titles to these dragons.

Dragons were male in early tales, as the best presents to give a dragon to get him to do something for you would be nubile young virginal girls. Only later did female dragons come to exist, as necessary for procreation, with later legends telling of laying eggs on hillsides, near water, to incubate for 1,000 years, first hatching into a lizard or water snake and taking another 1,000 years to fully mature into a dragon. Even today, as on August 23, 1913. The Gushan Monastery in Fujian province offered prayers to the Great Dragon, Lord Buddha of the Five Laes and Four Seas, which produces rain with a gilded bronze image featuring the characters of that message. With a bow to the World of the Dragon, currently on HBO and reviewed further in this issue, the Rain Master rode on a dragon through the sky and even the king of the state of Guizi subdued a vicious dragon and thereafter used it as his mount. Although the legends are Buddhist-influenced, Daoists had dragon legends including the Daoist priest who subdued a black dragon and made him his mount.

Mainly, art objects existed from small clay figures of dragons found in tombs and large sculptures in stone, clay and bronze in tombs of the Tang dynasty 618-907 CE), with one of pure gold in a tomb in Shaanxi province. Bronze castings shaped as imperial dragons are found at the Ancient Observatory in Beijing. In Beijing's Palace Museum in the Forbidden City are two bronze-casted dragons each holding a flaming pearl. Four more long dragon sculptures are in the Forbidden City. Relief carvings of dragons are found as old as Kublai Khan's Round Fort (from 1265) allegedly seen by Marco Polo. In Tiananmen, a dragon relief curves around the pillars on either side of the Gate of Heavenly Peace. The Museum of Fine Arts in Boston has a painting of dragons by the Southern Song artist, Chen Rong, and several examples of dragons on ceramics are in China and beyond. In the Forbidden City, two huge, gilded dragons guard the southern entrance to the Imperial Garden's Gate of Tranquil Longevity. Fearsome dragons with spiky claws and mane, it is meant to be frightening: If the emperor was virtuous, following the Dao or right way, the zhayu residing in the yin world would be tranquil but if he did not, it would protest vehemently. These dragons and their zhayu served as a warning to the emperor to follow the right path, being protectors of virtue, quite different from the western attackers. Perhaps we could use

Apep - also known as Apophis, was the Egyptian god of darkness and disorder and represented at a serpent seen here as the archetypical dragon.

dragons now in our world, to protect virtue, rule the right way, and ensure that the ruler makes decisions beneficial to the people.

At least, in other traditions, and often in contemporary times, the dragon is not seen as evil. Haku, in *Spirited Away*, is a good East Asian dragon, who like other Chinese dragons, are one of a group of four benevolent animals, that, with creators and destroyers, control the elements. The Asian dragon, a composite of fish, serpent and winged bird, able to fly has 117 scales and balanced yin and yang, calm and angered. According to Buddhist and later Shinto iconography, from the 7th century CE, the Green Dragon was present at the creation of the world, while the Golden Dragon swallowed the sun, and then became trees, grass, wind, animals and more living flora, fauna and beings. The Golden Dragon bears emperors, the progeny of a human mother and a dragon. Dragons promised wisdom, equated with goodness as a wise man could not be an evil one. These traits coming together in one man gave power over others, so dragons did not attend all births of rulers, only those in which wisdom and power were balanced. A great azure dragon appeared over the house where Confucius was born. A papyrus of Padiu-Khous shows the deceased offering the heart to the winged serpent, as the Egyptian heart, cut out before the body was mummified and sent down the river Styx was the center of the spirit. Allegedly, dragon bones have been found in Sichuan province.

As peaceful and good as Chinese dragons were, Bronze Age and Iron Age early Chinese art are described and visualized in the western, Irish 10th century *Book of Lismore* as water monsters or dragons, including the Great Worm of Connemara, similar to those purportedly observed in Loch Ness, in Scotland and in bodies of water in Ireland as "Repulsive, outlandish, fierce and very terrifying was the beast that arose there . Its front end was like a horse with a blazing eye in its head…two hideous thick legs under it in front. Iron claws on it which struck showers of fire from the stony rocks which they trod across…It had a fiery breath which burned like embers …the tail fins of a whale on it behind… it could travel over sea and land alike." (author unknown).

Whether repulsive, wormlike, fishlike, serpentlike, of fiery breath, flying and forbidding, as written about and visualized in the west, especially Britain, or, as in China, responsible for keeping in check the rulers or choosing those to ride them who were deserving of the honor, ethical, brave, and of good moral character, ruling benevolently for their people, we need dragons now, or at least the concept of a dragon to keep us in check, before we ruin the planet; the seas and heavens that are the dragon's realms. And maybe, just maybe, as broached in World of the Dragons, the rulers, better at compromise and diplomacy, willing to fuse families for the greater good, should be women. There were female dragons, and hopefully, with dragon's good judgment of those they serve, dragons could again rule the skies, the seas, and the land.

Births: Compromise and Acceptance:

The Game of Thrones and House of Dragons

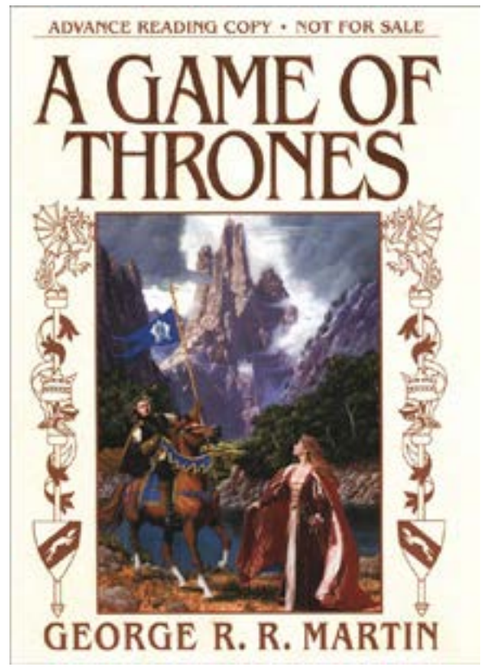
By Lanita K. Brooks-Colbert

Our use of visual art, the written and spoken word, music and performance continue to cultivate imagination, build empathy, bridge ideological divides and further our common humanity. This is why we are fascinated by the HBO series, Game of Thrones and *House of the Dragon*. The battle of the strongest, most powerful, and determined to sacrifice all for the crown of the "Iron Throne of the Seven Kingdoms" challenges the viewer in seventy-three episodes of Game of Thrones and twenty-six episodes of *House of the Dragon* to predict the actions and fate of characters while feeding our fascination with death and power.

Life and death are codependent, and from that need, conflict is inevitable. Conflict may result from several causes including the influence of military or economic power, discrimination against people from different cultures, intervention to protect the values of a culture, or imposing the perpetrator's values on people different than themselves.

When conflict is fueled by a desire for power by an oppressor who uses weapons, entitlement and birthright, control of land and waterways, destroying culture, and creating new laws to control the masses, the oppressor often wins and the oppressed are forced to accept their domination. The HBO series Games of Thrones is the story of six houses seeking power and acceptance. *House of the Dragon*, an earlier story foretelling the houses' continuance in Game of Thrones tells of two factions seeking loyalists for a birthright at any cost.

Game of Thrones is based on the novel, A Song of Ice and Fire written by George R.R. Martin, part of a long tradition of borrowed themes of conflict, both historical and fictional. Many believe the writer, Martin, created the story based on the many years of civil war; the English War of the Roses between the House of Lancaster, symbolized by Roses and the House of York, both houses of Plantagenet royalty through King Edward III, to gain the throne of England. The spark that ignited the civil war lasting thirty-two years of death, corruption, greed and loss of over 100,000 lives was the fight for the inheritance of the English throne through a female descent, Catherine of York, vs a male descent, Prince Edward, son of



Bantam Advance Reading Copy 196
artwork by Stephen Youll

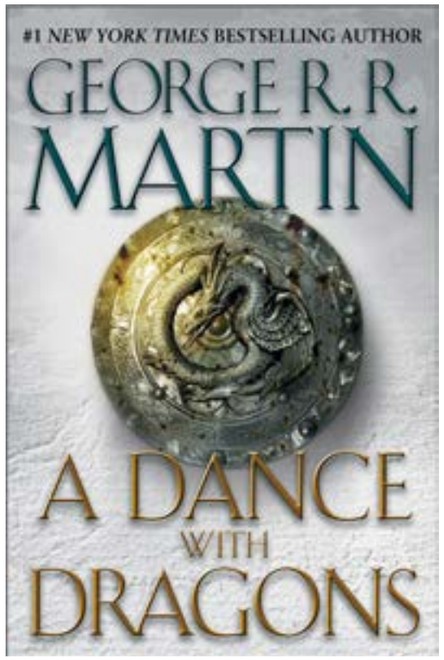
Margaret of Anjou, Queen Consort of England's King Edward VI and leader of the House of Lancaster. Elizabeth of York's marriage to Henry VII combined the houses and ended the War of Roses.

In the Game of Thrones series' final episode, we learn the fate of the surviving House of Stark (House of York); the ruler of Westeros (England), continues the dynasty, making twenty-first century Queen Elizabeth II the great, great, great granddaughter of Elizabeth of York. Ending Game of Thrones with the assassination of Daenerys Targaryen after the killing of the masses with her dragon while leveling King's Landing, ousting the House of Lancaster, Queen Cersei makes us witness how actions inspired by conflict's only outcome is acceptance of the new. The actions of Jon Snow, her lover and killer, ends her reign of terror. Accepting loss of his love for her and

banned to the Wall in the HBO series, Jon Snow was guided by his overwhelming sense of duty to the House of Stark and the future of mankind.

The *House of the Dragon* series is based on another fantasy book by writer George R.T. Martin.

A spin-off of Martin's famed A Song of Ice and Fire novel series, The Princess and the Queen is set about 200 years before the events of A Game of Thrones



Bantam hardcover 2011

(1996) and chronicles the "continent-burning warfare" of a Targaryen war of succession that explodes between heir to the throne Crown Princess Rhaenyra Targaryen and Queen Alicent Hightower. Martin's The Princess and the Queen tells the history of House of Targaryen, the dynasty that ruled the Seven Kingdoms of Westeros in the backstory of his series A Song of Ice and Fire.

The House of Targaryen, ruler of Seven Kingdoms rules in peace because of the dragons' and kingdom's loyalty to the crown. In Martin's novella and the HBO series, we are shown how the actions of those in power can decide their rightful place in history as champion or oppressor of the people as defined through lineage of the dragon riders. Only Targaryen blood can bond with a dragon and command its power. Here again the power struggle is birthright. Queen Alicent Hightower, the second wife of King Visery Targaryen and daughter of Ser Otto Hightower, Hand of the King, wants her son, Aemon from the late King to rule. Moving to the highpoints of the story, King Visery is dying, and he knows it's time to gather all houses of the Seven Kingdoms and name Rhaenyra as the Princess of Dragonstone and heir to the Iron Throne. Upon his death, with Queen Alicent by his side, the Queen claimed his death bed wish was for her son, Aegon to rule instead of Rhaenyra. In the book, Rhaenyra knows that only males can sit on the Iron Throne. This mandate is written in the Book of Knowledge. Knowing her fate, she destroys the text.

How should they stand, the loyalists and supporters of Rhaenyra vs those with duty to reigning Queen consort, Alicent Hightower, advisor to her son and the Council, when what is at stake will result in the break of fifty years of peace in Seven Kingdoms under King Visery Targaryen's rule. Queen Alicent and Rhaenyra agree to unite their families by intermarriage between their sons and daughters, producing a united House of Targaryen. But all plans are quashed when one of Alicent's sons, in reprisal for the stabbing of his brother's eye, mounts his dragon to fight with Rhaenyra's younger son on his dragon, leading to Rhaenyra's younger son's death. Now Rhaenyra must war against Queen Alicent to avenge her son's death, in the manner of Greek tragedy.

Both books give us a lesson as to how history often repeats itself. Humans' quest to have and yield power, oppress and destroy all where entitlement is the basis for conflict can only manifest in betrayal or lead to death. Compromise is a concept of finding agreement with mutual acceptance often involving variations from the original goal or desires. Compromise with acceptance can be where we often find ourselves when we have no voice or seat at table. And the story continues.

Dragons in America-

What Season Two of House of the Dragon Reveals About the U.S. Present and Future

By Valerie Kennedy

Artwork: Carlos Cram / Unsplash

It's little surprise that HBO's *House of the Dragon* (HOTD) has become a mega hit globally and here in the U.S., which for the last five years, certainly since 2021, has been immersed within its own Dance of Dragons. Kings Landing may be a fictional representation of Westeros' seat of power, but its hushed Red Keep chambers of political intrigue, shifting alliances and unending power struggles certainly seem to mirror the happenings of modern-day Washington, DC and its power centers, especially Congress.

Like the kingdom of Westeros in Season Two, our nation finds itself on the precipice of an uncertain future in this still relatively new century and its volatile political season. It's a moment shaped by expediency and distrust that has led to the re-drawing of old party lines and oaths. The emerging prospect of our own civil conflict and a Dance of Dragons which could destroy our democracy through election denial tactics and outright battles in the street a la January 6, 2021 isn't fictional, though we wish it were.

The conflict between those yearning for Old Valyria and its old gods versus those pressing for a truly united Westeros from sea to shining sea will determine the fate of our country as a 21st century mecca of democratic ideals or stronghold of authoritarian beliefs.

The internecine battle between Team Black led by Queen Rhaenyra and Team Green led by King Aegon

II is not just about who will govern, but how and to whose advantage. The power struggles reflected within their respective Small Councils, especially that of the governing Red Keep, mirrors the dynamics of the existential chess game and fight for partisan advantage that has now become a new norm in the nation's capital and state capitals around the country.

The dysfunction of Congress, the ideological pivots that continue to hurt smallfolk and functioning government, despite the best efforts of well-meaning electees who know that thoughtful legislation is critical for everyday Americans is itself a HOTD plotline. The unresolved blockade of food and supplies for the citizens of Kings Landing who are pawns suffering from the political fractures of Westeros resonates deeply as a knowing nod to the modern-day realities of a country feeling the effects of blockaded democracy and divided Congress.

The unchecked partisan acrimony between our two ruling political houses is buffeted by the dark magic of disinformation, scorched earth tactics, and whispers about policy and political bedfellows that when leaked only further undermine public trust and confidence in government. These dynamics have both defined and weakened the state of play through which our democratic future will be forged. A new political season is crucial. Otherwise, a bitter winter may be coming for all of us and the generations that follow.

Season Two of *House of the Dragon* serves as both visceral metaphor and bellwether for what can happen when a house divided pursues the nuclear option of dragons to win the future, whether it be one of peace, equity, and reconciliation or sheer dominance and control sustained by unfettered aggression. Who we are as a nation and as a global geopolitical player will be shaped by how we contain the dragons that rampage among us.

In Westeros, these dragons have whimsical names that almost seem to evoke Native American naming traditions; Moondancer, Dreamcatcher, Seasmoke. These HOTD names are beautiful, even magical, but they belie the actual ferocity of their dragons. In America, the ferocity of our dragons isn't hidden in their names. Here in America, the names are more like warning signs- literal and straightforward. Names like Project 2025, for example. In Westeros or Valyrian speak, it would be translated as Vhagar.

Long before dragons became a global pop culture phenomenon and trenchant metaphor, myths of their power and ability to create chaos prevailed among indigenous tribes whose sovereigns now comprise the Americas- North, South and Central America. One of the great blind spots of the dragon lore highlighted in film, television, and fantasy literature has been its focus on European mythology. But in fact, Native American tribes and indigenous tribes in Central and South America also recognized dragons within the oral and artistic canon of their tribal mythology.

From the Persian Book of Kings

Whether as deities or spirits like the Seneca tribe's Gaasyendietha, a fire breathing creature that could fly and swim, or the Aztec nation's shape-shifting Quetzalcoatl, represented as a feathered serpent, the god of wind and as a happy eagle, the dragons roaming the continents of North and South America were agents of division and danger or forces of irrevocable change. These dragons were both feared and worshipped.

One's relationship to dragons is also a critical theme in Season Two of HOTD. Dragons are a pathway to power and respect. It's an idea linked to ancient Chinese mythology in which those who could ride and control dragons were seen as divinely appointed to reign and lead.

One of the most pivotal scenes of HOTD's Season Two takes place when Adam of Hull, who is Black,

not silver-haired or blue-eyed, meets Queen Rhaenyra on Driftmark's beach with his dragon, Seasmoke. He bends the knee and immediately pledges his fealty to her, but not before asserting his own divinely ordained appointment as a dragon rider by declaring "if the gods have called me to greater things, who am I to refuse them?" Rhaenyra, at first skeptical, then stunned, ultimately agrees and confirms that Adam has achieved the impossible.

The subtext within the U.S.' own political history can hardly be ignored. Adam has come out of nowhere as a lowborn son of a shipwright on the margins of society. He is not even publicly acknowledged among the small folk of Westeros as a Dragon seed or bastard progeny of the Targaryen dynasty. (Although, he is the unacknowledged son of Lord Corlys Velaryon, Queen Rhaenyra's hand.)

Yet, Queen Rhaenyra concedes that the dragon's choice of Adam as its rider must indeed be divinely appointed and later remarks that he must have Targaryen blood, especially since Seasmoke independently chooses Adam over the queen's first choice, a white noble of Targaryen descent who meets a fiery end.

Adam's noble blood, while not readily apparent, is reflected in his elegant manner, natural talent for dragon riding, and ease in Rhaenyra's presence. He is a member of what W.E.B. Dubois characterized as the "talented tenth" of personal exceptionalism among those whom Dubois felt were necessary to lift the Black community during America's post slavery era.

Adam's personal exceptionalism and royal bloodlines allow him to ascend to dragon rider status and immediately gain the queen's confidence. He is not only impressive, he is family.

Rhaenyra's quest for members of the Targaryen bloodline to become dragon riders also underscores the internecine battle in *House of the Dragon*. This battle between the families of Westeros who are torn between supporting the Targaryen "Blacks" who are ride or die for Queen Rhaenyra and her claim to the throne and the Targaryen "Greens" who support and fight for King Aegon II impacts generations to come. Dragons and the threat they pose reinforce the power of heritage and family lineage associated with Westeros' ruling families, especially the Targaryens, who are at the center of this defining generational conflict.

The tensions between the "Blacks" and the "Greens" also serves as a brilliantly crafted symbiotic nod to the U.S.' own enduring civil war over color and heritage. The Great Civil War and the fight for power that has followed is anchored in internecine conflicts of the Old South in which the majority of enslaved men and women and their progeny, DNA studies indicate at least 80 percent, shared bloodlines with slaveholding families.

America's Civil War, our own Dance of Dragons, has been characterized simply as an essential moral battle about democratic principles and human rights. In reality, it was an incredibly complex one guided by a high- stakes chess game of economic, political, and moral considerations between regions, families, and people interminably bound by common history, blood, family dynasties and birthrights, business interests as well as unshakeable oaths of loyalty to the Union or the Confederacy. Just like Westeros.

And like shifting pieces on a chess board, the competing interests connected to money, power, and regional dominance which fractured our country have never been fully resolved. Those enduring fractures

cast shadows over the future of our democracy and our nation's ability to serve as a pillar of geopolitical stability.

In its August 2023 issue, The Atlantic magazine published an article titled What America's Great Unwinding Would Mean for the World. The opening paragraph grimly opines "[E]verywhere you turn, there is a sense that the U.S. is in some form of terminal decline; too divided, incoherent, violent, and dysfunctional to sustain its Pax Americana. Moscow and Beijing seem to think that the great American unwinding has already begun, while in Europe, officials worry about a sudden American collapse."

Like Westeros, the dangling Damocles sword of political implosion and civil unrest demands that we elect a leader who can unite our own Seven Kingdoms- the South, Northeast, Midwest, West, Silicon Valley, Wall Street and the remainder of Corporate America. Being a fearless dragon rider is a necessary first step as is self-awareness.

With the help of witch Alys Rivers, the crystal ball clarity with which Prince/King Consort Dameon Targaryen sees the future in the last episode of Season Two is attainable once he finally yields his own claim to power. When he does, his revelation inspires him to choose the future of Westeros' unity and to recognize that Rhaenyra must be the queen to achieve it. It is a profoundly powerful moment.

The scene's looking-glass resonance is deepened because the King Consort's actions mirror the recent decision by President Joe Biden to withdraw from the presidential race, passing the torch (or Valyrian steel sword) to his Vice President, Kamala Harris, first of her name to continue the quest to unite the country.

In Season Two, *House of the Dragon* deftly unfolded into political and moral allegory about power and the role of all society, small folks, nobles, witches, grand masters, even Masters of Whispers in sustaining it, re-defining it, defying it and fighting for it. Dragons as a metaphor for both unchecked power and aggression and as a symbol of submission to power due to human touch and influence underscore the series' insights about the fundamentally human nature, psychology, and manifestation of power through the prism of circumstance.

This season was the perfect alignment of themes and context that tapped into the current political moment in America and the high stakes represented by the players in our presidential election season. Whether you are Team Black or Team Green, House Velaryon, Targaryen or Lannister or consider yourself smallfolk, this season's *House of the Dragon* had teaching moments about the realities of human history and politics with lessons we cannot ignore:

History does not reward tyrants (Prince Aemond, rider of the world's largest and most fierce dragon, learns this when Princess Heleana informs him that he will disappear in the Godseye and be forgotten.) True leaders inspire others by fighting for the future and looking past the present moment and themselves and peace often requires a hard, unavoidable fight.

Finally, for all of its complexities and plot twists, Season Two of *House of the Dragon* never failed to convey a simple, incontrovertible truth in each episode about our country's political future that has stretched against Time. No matter how daunting the dance of history may seem in a present full of dragons, the dawn of brighter days lies in the destiny we choose and fight for.

Iconography of Dragons - Hobbits, Disney and More

By David Goldenberg

It seems that dragons, knights, the Crusaders, and St. George have always been iconographies that saturate our lives, through mass produced films, comics and animations. The St. George flag is often worn by football supporters and hooligans although they operate in a secular culture. Distinct iconographies of American film by Marvel and Disney and Japanese manga and film animation include dragon motifs forming a distinct but inclusive iconography.

The Dragon joins together multiple histories, geographies and cultures condensed into one form. This synthesis, in the west, often takes place in the figure of St. George, providing the sense of unbroken historic and cultural continuity leading to an unending invention of new myths and forms and a search for new myths for the present day. The reappearance of the religious political iconography of the Dragon and St. George in recent times goes back to their source in popular culture, then forward to the present impact on today's western Culture.

How do we explain why the Dragon and St. George secretly shifted centre stage in contemporary geopolitics and cultures, why this iconography has been little explored, and why the reason for their reappearance as both protest and rejection of cultural modernism and a world built after the 1st world war has been largely neglected. Why is today's popular culture saturated with the worn-out iconography of St. George and the Dragon amid its apparent lack of sense in a secular culture?

Why should anyone spend their time looking at the iconography of western Dragons and St. George within the context of contemporary art when contemporary art in its Puritan secular version repressed mythology? Although it is evident that the contemporary did not bring to an end religion and illusion, humanism became the new religion of the age. In the visual arts, remembering that the Pre-Raphaelites' tradition in the UK after the 1st World War led to a rejection of European modernism, we now see the revival of a mythological world and new myths for today.

We find in Wagner and Nietzsche an iconography that develops continuity, found in the use of the

Saint George and the Dragon (1434-1435) by Bernat Martorell

dragon and St. George, which embodies all of history, place and peoples going back into pre-history. The use of dragons and gold was an already overly familiar story, found in Wagner's Ring cycle, from sources going back to eleventh century Germanic poetic cycles and Nordic myths, specifically the tale of Fafnir, a dwarf who kills his brothers for their gold and turns into a dragon to protect his treasure.

Tolkien's works, influenced by the iconography and story of St. George and the Dragon see a world the victorious powers declared as Modernism rejected

when, in 1938 the Roman Catholic writer Tolkien published his now world-famous religious fairy story for children, The Hobbit. In The Hobbit, the dragon Smaug the Golden hunted maidens, recalling the dragon slain by St. George to protect Princess Sabra. After Smaug's death in the Third Age in late 2491, the great dragons became extinct. However, according to Gandalf, the firedrake race survived until just after the War of the Ring and to a lesser extent survived even after that war. At the heart of Smaug's and the Hobbit's story is the quest for the dragon's gold. The Christian overtones recalling St. George's dragon are obvious as, with all religious stories, the hobbit's fight against the dragon is reduced to a fight between good and evil.

Tolkien's influences, from William Morris, Pre-Raphaelites, Beowulf, art movements reacting to the terrible costs of the Industrial Revolution and its wars are examined in The Hobbit. The Hobbit's recipe and quest for the Dragon's gold fits seamlessly into Disney World's family friendly animations' use of myth and mass popularisation and global distribution of art based on the familiar and recognisable.

The link between the dragon and the crusades becomes clear in the "Order of the Dragon" or "Dracula", an order conferred by the Holy Roman Emperor, from the seat of the Holy Roman Empire in Nurnberg to aristocrats and kings in the Middle Ages, to declare a Crusade against its enemies, particularly the Ottoman Empire. The rise of St.

George and the Dragon was spread by the crusades throughout Europe, through the popularisation of chivalric tales and the chivalric code in the stories of King Arthur and the Round Table, and the Christianisation of non-Christian beliefs and iconography. St. George is seen as a figure and iconography that continues the Roman Empire and the Christ figure with the dragon in film and popular culture formed in militaristic forms of Christianity including the Crusades. In contemporary popular art the dragon is seen alongside the knight crusaders, Batman, and Superman affirming and fighting for the true faith and beliefs through sacrifice to beliefs and ideas beyond this reality.

Herman Melville's Moby Dick, the white whale or leviathan, the second coming, the Dragon, is misspelt Dagon, the Hebrew name for the Mesopotamian God who is the origin and father of all Mesopotamian Gods taking the notion of the Dragon into a completely new direction. Dagon resurfaces in H. P. Lovecraft's story of 1917, Dagon, and The shadow over Innsmouth, in 1931, and a substantial body of work examining the dragon, beast, demon, devoid of a recognisable form, as morphogenesis or shape

St George, mounted on a spotted horse, killing the dragon, 19th century

St George and the Dragon
Greek Orthodox Church

Tolkien exhibition Bodelin Library Oxford University, Oxford, UK
Installation view

shifter, found in At the Mountain of Madness, 1931. The interesting point of Lovecraft's fiction is that now the Dragon is purged of its religious intention and form, turning into an entity that is indescribable and beyond human comprehension, embodying the horror of the everyday.

This secularisation of mythology is taken to yet another level in Conan the Barbarian and Conan the Destroyer, with its use of dragons and militaristic codes, declaration of war on everyday life hidden behind an adolescent façade of pulp fantasy novels. Adopting Scandinavian mythology forms new worlds in opposition to western European modernism, use of paganism and the complete negation of western modernism's order and culture put in place after the first world war. Here the narratives do not operate as rebellion and protest on the same level of counterculture and its use of absolute hedonism and celebration of this world that we find in Robert Crumb's pornographic comics and drawings.

If these stories show a complete rejection of all aspects of this world, and the total destruction of this world, its historical order, civilization and history, what should we expect from reading these works? What does fiction, fantasy, mean in relationship to cinematic and virtual space? Each one of these stories has been translated into mass entertainment, mass popular global culture, mirrored in Disney's secular religious family friendly films and culture, alongside Marvel and Dreamworld, as a receptacle for old and new mythologies.

Although troubling links exist between Tolkien and the context of the contemporary, at this difficult point in time for Western Art, in late 2023, Italy's culture minister, Gennaro San Giuliano, organised the largest exhibition of Tolkien's work, in the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art in Rome, Italy's most important art museum that normally shows Warhol and Picasso, in the first stop on a tour of Italy to popularise Tolkien there, and for people to engage Italians in the worlds and myths of Tolkien's stories, So here we have a scheme to educate a Nation-State in the worlds and ideas of Tolkien's fictions using art to counter competing ideologies.

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Camp Hobbit 1977. - appropriation by Italian Fascists

Cthulhus: Dagon and the monolith in a black muddy
Artwork by Daniel Guerra-

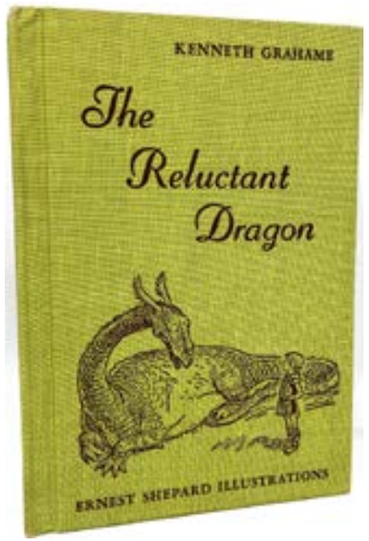
Happy Dragon Year!
Readers of the New Art Examiner and Art Lantern are artists today!
Please draw in, around, color, name your dragon.
You don't have to stay within the lines.
Please scan and send your completed dragon to
ukeditor@newartexaminer.net We will post all in next issue!

With Intellect Comes Friendship

Kenneth Grahame's *The Reluctant Dragon*: Friendship, Understanding, and Radical Queer Love

Dragons are often fearsome creatures who terrorise humans. That's certainly an accurate description of Smaug, the dragon at the denouement of J.R.R. Tolkien's beloved fantasy epic *The Hobbit, or there and Back Again*. Not all classic fantasy's dragons are evil, though. A notable exception is the protagonist of *The Reluctant Dragon*, a mesmerizing and underappreciated novella by *The Wind in the Willows* author Kenneth Grahame.

The Reluctant Dragon was published in 1898 as part of his collection "Dream Days," almost a decade earlier than *The Wind in the Willows*, and at about the same time as Grahame's contribution of his "Pagan Papers" to the scandalous, Wilde-influenced literary arts periodical The Yellow Book. In the dozen decades since, The Reluctant Dragon has captured the hearts of readers around the world. The unlikely hero of this whimsical story is a dragon. He has a bad reputation in the nearby medieval village, but he is a creature of peace and love who is misunderstood and desperately wants to be tolerated, and more than that: befriended and loved. Like The Wind in the Willows, this late Victorian story offers some visionary alternatives to the toxic masculinity promoted to boys by many of Grahame's contemporaries.



Holiday House Publishing 1938. Cover Design by Helen Genrty. Printed by William E Rudge's Sons

Introduction to the Dragon

The dragon in Grahame's tale is not the fearsome creature of traditional folklore but a gentle soul who prefers reading poetry to causing mayhem. This unconventional portrayal immediately sets the tone for a story that challenges stereotypes and invites readers to question their assumptions about appearances and behaviors. From the very first description of the dragon, he combines stereotypical Western dragon physiognomy with pacifism. The first character to encounter him, a shepherd, says:

He was sticking half-way out of the cave, and seemed to be enjoying of the cool of the evening in a poetical sort of way. He was as big as four cart-horses, and all covered with shiny scales—deep-blue scales at the top of him, shading off to a tender sort o' green below. As he breathed, there was that sort of flicker over his nostrils that you see over our chalk roads on a baking windless day in summer. He had his chin on his paws, and I should say he was meditating about things. Oh, yes, a peaceable sort o' beast enough, and not ramping or carrying on or doing anything but what was quite right and proper.

In Grahame's mythopoeic world, the dragon represents the misunderstood outsider. In a society quick to judge based on appearances, the dragon's peaceful nature and intellectual pursuits contrast sharply with the villagers' expectations. Like Ratty and Mole in *The Wind in the Willows*, the dragon can be read as a queer hero. His struggle serves as a commentary on prejudice and the importance of looking beyond surface impressions to discover true character.

Central to the narrative is the unlikely friendship between the dragon and the shepherd's son. This boy, who is never named, is introduced as an outsider. He likes reading books. His parents "book-learning often came in useful at a pinch, in spite of what

Shepard, "He's coming! He's here now"
Kenneth Grahame's The Reluctant Dragon' Dream Days, 1930

their neighbours said." Like the boy, the dragon is a book lover in a book-hating world. He writes poetry, and promises that if anyone wants to read it, he'll read theirs. A more congenial creature cannot be imagined.

Initially, the Boy is tasked with confronting the dragon, but instead of engaging in battle, they engage in conversation. The Boy is the figure with whom the child reader, perhaps especially the boy reader, is encouraged to identify. Both characters learn that friendship can arise from understanding and mutual respect rather than fear and hostility. In fact, their relationship arguably shifts beyond friendship into love: a love that is radical because the Boy's society opposes it. The shepherd demonstrates that in his society, it is normal to hate what is rare and misunderstood: "I ain't used to 'em [dragons], and I don't hold with 'em, and that's a fact!" If this seems redolent of xenophobia or homophobia, that's on purpose. It makes sense to read both the dragon and the boy as queer outsiders entranced and endangered by the atavistic violence of nativist heteropatriarchal masculinity.

The theme of courage is also deeply intertwined with the dragon's narrative arc. Despite his peaceful nature, the dragon faces the daunting prospect of defending himself against the fearful villagers who perceive him as a threat. His decision to confront the situation peacefully, aided by the Boy's advocacy, underscores the bravery required to stand up for oneself without resorting to violence. Courage belongs to the peacemakers and lovers, not the fighters, Grahame dmonstrates.

Grahame's portrayal of the dragon draws upon a rich tapestry of literary influences. From traditional folktales where dragons often symbolize chaos and destruction to more contemporary reinterpretations that emphasize their complexity, Grahame's dragon stands out as a nuanced character in its own right. It's also related to other misunderstood creatures. In medieval and early modern Europe, cats were persecuted as demons, and many of their female owners were persecuted as witches. Grahame's dragon is like a cat: he "purrs." The misunderstood giant of Oscar Wilde's children's story *The Selfish Giant* might also be an influence; Grahame was profoundly affected by Wilde's trial and borrows dialogue from it in Toad's trial in The *Wind in the Willows*. Throughout *The Reluctant Dragon*, Grahame's expert blending of literary and other cultural influences provides readers of all ages with a refreshingly multi-dimensional perspective on the mythical dragon.

The Reluctant Dragon continues to resonate with readers of all ages due to its timeless themes and endearing characters. The dragon remains a symbol of the enduring power of literature to challenge perceptions and inspire empathy. By embracing his uniqueness and refusing to conform to stereotypes, the dragon invites readers to celebrate individuality and appreciate the richness of diversity in all its forms. As readers continue to be enchanted by Grahame's tale, the dragon's legacy endures as a testament to the transformative potential of compassion and understanding in a world often marked by fear and misunderstanding.on prejudice and the importance of looking beyond surface impressions to discover true character.

"Now you're tickling, George," said the dragon, coyly. Illustration this and next page by Ernest Shepard in the original first edition.

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Jung and the Dragon

By Mark Bloch

"The dragon stands as the guardian of the treasure." (~Carl Jung, CW, The Collected Works of C. G. Jung, 9i, Para 283.)

Just as a dragon guards its treasure, our subconscious guards valuable lessons and opportunities for growth. The process of self-development is an ongoing journey to be continuously confronted and integrated with each passing moment, symbolic of an inner conflict between our conscious ego and our unconscious instincts. Life is far from perfect but we are resilient.

"The archetype as an image of instinct is a spiritual goal toward which the whole nature of man strives; it is the sea to which all rivers wend their way, the prize which the hero wrests from the fight with the dragon." (Carl Jung, CW 8, Para 415.)

I had a teacher once who liked to say you have to approach battles with dragons not only voluntarily but also early. Ignore them at your own peril, he said. They are beings trying to give you a piece of information so if you listen to them, it can be a sweet, instructive experience. That makes it best to pursue dragons when they are small and cuddly. The more we pretend they aren't there, the larger and scarier they get. If we ignore them too long, they become huge and unmanageable by the time we are finally ready to fight. Either way, we must conquer the dragon, or the dragon will conquer us.

Carl Jung, pointing the way to the ongoing process of individuation, was not one to shy away from darkness so it should not be surprising that the dragon, though one of man's darkest symbols, was seen by him as positive—but only when it is confronted as an enemy. A saying in medieval alchemy, in sterquilinis invenitur, roughly translates as "in filth, it will be found," meaning our salvation will be found in the places where we least want to look. Yet for Jung, overcoming the dragon is not a matter of dominance over or suppression of forces that dominate and repress but rather the integration of them into a coherent whole—taming an inner dragon that represents the chaotic world of the subconscious.

"The universal hero myth always refers to a powerful man or god-man who vanquishes evil in the form of dragons and liberates his people from destruction and death." (Carl Jung, Man and His Symbols; Page 68.)

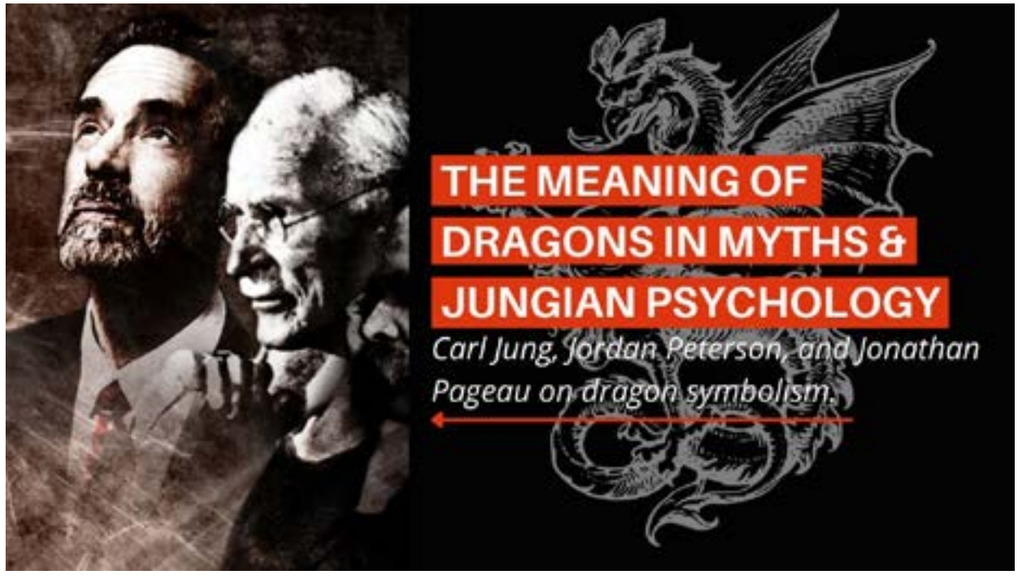
The dragon burns you in a second, breathes fire, the ultimate destructive agent. The dragon lives forever, a terrible, predatory thing, very wise and very dangerous. It will push you to your limits as it hoards a treasure of gold or a damsel in distress. The dragon is the repressive mother archetype saying no, who guards access to another feminine archetype the virgins the hero is looking for. The dragon is part tree, part cat, part snake, part bird, ancient predatory forces in their own right with much in common.

Image from the Jungian psychology website

"The dragon is beyond what is known and unknown even beyond what's not known to be unknown. How does one approach such a terrifying entity? Myths about dragons with examples in every culture include details about how a hero can approach a struggle against chaos, the chaos monster. The Germans even have a word for it: Chaoskamph, sometimes Drachenkampf, the struggle against chaos."

"The hero's main feat is to overcome the monster of darkness: it is the long-hoped-for and expected triumph of consciousness over the unconscious." (~Carl Jung, CW 9i, para. 283.)

In a Proto-Indo-European language created eight thousand years ago, the original dragon myth was imparted, perhaps as early as 4000 BC. (see Rig Veda 10.8.8-10.8.9) Trito fights a three-headed, seven bri-



The video above may be found here
Or search on youtube.

dled serpent called NgWhi establishing many features of the features of the Drachenkampf tale, similar to the later Mesopotamian myth of Marduk vs. Tiamat, the Norse myth of Thor vs. Jormungandr, the Egyptian myth of Ra vs. Apep, the Israelite myth of Yahweh vs. Leviathan and the Greek myth of Zeus vs. Typhon. Any great monster, whether of land or sea, can fit the pattern as in Rapunzel, The Hobbit and Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets.

"The serpent is the earthly essence of man of which he is not conscious. Its character changes according to peoples and lands, since it is the mystery that flows to him from the nourishing earth-mother." (~Carl Jung, The Red Book, Page 247.)

The dragon represents immeasurable potential, both positive and negative. The triumphant hero will marry the virgin and establish a new kingdom. The hero tames the chaos by getting a future, getting a life one might say. Freeing the damsel, winning the treasure, manifesting opportunity, and creating a new order revealing the potential of the inner feminine, the anima—the inner feminine qualities of a man, the opposite existing in a woman; the creative connection to the subconscious, intuition and creativity. What was once potential becomes real. For Jung, the dragon, the enemy in the fight in which the Self leads us to change, is similar to the snake or the serpent and must be converted, transformed. The ourobourus, a snake eating its own tail, is the alchemical symbol of the joining of opposites, a mandala representing eternity.

"Nature is then represented as an undivided being, a dragon or a snake biting its own tail, eating itself up from the tail end." (~Carl Jung, Modern Psychology, Page 42.)

The opposite of the chaos, represented by the dragon, is Logos: order, attention, language, truth, reason. To find the dragon first we must figure out where we are. "Some have their reason in thinking, others in feeling. Both are servants of Logos, and in secret become worshipers of the serpent." (Carl Jung, The Red Book, Page 280.)

So how to proceed? We are lost. There are a million places we could go. We need to lay out the narrative of our lives. For each of us, the epic story of our own life. The consequences of where I have been, what I regret, what I love. I need to zero in on where I am. Most of us don't want to know, preferring chaos, vagueness, and inner darkness.

"It is as though consciousness were aware that the dragon is the lower half of man, which indeed and in truth is the case." (~Carl Jung, Letters Vol. 1, Page 489.)

Overcoming challenges by claiming self-discovery, self-acceptance, and self-confidence, we face the dragon and integrate its lessons, not for cash and prizes but for the sake of inner strength and trust in oneself. It is a continuous journey, with each conquered dragon paving the way for further growth and realizing one's true potential

"The serpent in the cave is an image which often occurs in antiquity. It is important to realize that in classical antiquity, as in other civilizations, the serpent not only was an animal that aroused fear and represented danger, but also signified healing." (Carl Jung, CW 18, Page 116.)

Dragons in the Korean Royal Court

Emblems of the king, representing power, authority, and dignity

By Rina Oh

Korea is known to have many dragons, each one serving a purpose. Of all the mystical dragons, the most popular is Yong, a benevolent hornless ocean dwelling creature who symbolized protection and hope, and protected humans, warding off evil spirits.

Several types of dragons in Korean folklore vary in form and symbolism. Though its origins lay in ancient Chinese culture, the dragon, commonly recognized as a symbol of power, influence, and wealth has become part of the Korean Royal Court that first emerged in the Buyeo period, the predecessor of Gorgouyeo and later, in the three kingdoms: Goryeo, Shilla, and Baekjae. Kings were adorned with the iconography of the dragon in court attire, furniture, and insignia along with personal possessions such as the famous Dragon Jar acquired by the Metropolitan Museum, New York. We see evidence in historic royal portraiture of the Joseon Dynasty. Royal portraits were painted with ink on paper, then transferred onto fine silk, with fine color pigment added in many layers in a process of transferring the ink on paper study onto silk called sangcho.

The ink on silk royal portrait of King Taejo owned by the Korean Cultural Heritage Administration is the only surviving full length portrait of a Korean king from the Joseon Dynasty with three remaining royal half-length portraits including a study for the portrait of King Sojong.

The royal court artists worked closely with the King, and his ministers. They were involved in the decision-making process, from the sitting position, to gestures and characteristics of the persona which were always depicted.

The royal portraits were commissioned, not privately but rather as an official state affair. The first portraits on record, emerge with several impressions of King Taejo, the first monarch of Goryeo (founded in 918 CE.).

The most notable portrait is a statue of the monarch. Through my research writing this article, I discovered Taejo's second wife, Queen Janghwa of the Naju Oh clan is a distant relative of mine, as my ancestry traces back to her ancestors. My Korean birth certificate registered my surname under the Naju Oh Clan. My ancestry book traces my bloodline back to the origins of the 16 Oh clans in Korea.

King Taejo Wang Geon.
Photo: Professor Ro Myoung-ho

The portrait of King Taejon (1392-1398), first ruler and founder of Joseon Dynasty

Dragon Jar
Courtesy MetMuseum. Korwan

The Kings of the later Joseon Dynasty wore bright silk dyed clothing, embroidered with intricate images of the dragon. Hanbok is the traditional indigenous garment of the Korean Peninsula, developed over a period of at least 600 years. Hanbok, the traditional garment worn, and popularized during the Joseon Dynasty had design elements meticulously curated to display and symbolize the social status of the persons wearing such clothing. In modern day Korea, hanbok styles of the Joseon Dynasty (1392-1910) are still worn by men and women during special occasions.

Korean master artists had several names. An Gyeon (one of the most famous landscape painters, whose work is the subject in the K-drama Saimdang Light's Diary is among them. His names include Hyeonndongja (;) and Gado (;). An Gyeon was a Korean royal court painter known for his rendition of Mongyu dowondo [ko] ( ). The mountain depicted in this work, was oftentimes referred to as the dragon mountain.

In historical K-dramas and films, royal court artisans are filmed painting portraits of kings, queens, his subjects and nobility. Portraits of royals and nobility were skillfully rendered with ink on paper as studies, then transferred onto silk laid out flat on the floor. Once the study is traced with black ink, color pigments were added in layers, along with shading- to create a three-dimensional effect. A mat was typically used instead of an easel, and the portrait painted in sections. The undrawn parts were covered with fabric to preserve the cleanliness of the material. This process took a long time, and typically the subject(s) had to sit in for several sessions. The finished painting is mounted on thicker, richer oftentimes embroidered or patterned opaque silk. Korean royal portraiture has several names. Usually referred as Eojin, other words used to describe royal portraiture include: eoyong, suyong, jinyong, seongyong, and wangyeong. During the reign of the Joseon Dynasty (the last dynasty in Korea before the colonization by the Imperial Japanese troops), this portraiture style and technique developed and flourished.

It is not clear when the first eojin was created. Stylistically- these paintings are known to achieve fine details on the face, and more specifically the fine hair lines. In order to achieve this, one had to be a true master of ink painting and calligraphy, making no mistakes. Water based paint does not give a sec-

Photo: A celadon (greenware) ceramic kettle in the form of a mythical dragon-turtle creature. Goryeo dynasty, 918-1392 CE, Korea.
(National Museum of Korea, Seoul, South Korea)

King Sejo's portrait copied in 1935
National Palace Museum of Korea

ond chance. With a wrong turn of a single brushstroke- an entire painting will require to be made again. Many believed the portraits not only conveyed the true essence of the subject(s)- they also believed the soul of the subject lived on in the paintings.

Otherwise known as Yi Seong-gye, King Taejon was admired as a dynasty founder, with a total of twenty-six official portraits enshrined in many parts of his kingdom. Unfortunately, these portraits have disappeared except the one currently hung in Gyeonggijeon Shrine in Jeonju.

The portrait of Taejon is comparable to the portrait of the first emperor of the Ming Dynasty of China. King Taejo wears a royal robe and winged cap, and sits in a chair engraved with dragons facing forward. The angled outlines of the royal robe and its voluminous lower part covering the legs reflect the characteristic style found in the meritorious subjects' portraits of the early Joseon Dynasty. The dragon design decorating the throne can be traced back to the portrait of King Gongmin of the Goryeo Dynasty which was later used for kings' portraits.

Hanbok design elements were used to display status within the royal court, and beyond. Dragon imagery being reserved only for the King, and heirs – they appeared embroidered on their court dress having five and four toes. Phoenix designs adorned hanbok for queens while the robes of princesses and the king's other royal consorts featured flowers. These dragons or phoenixes were depicted in circular badges. Round shapes represented the sky and therefore, the power held by the monarchy.

Art historians refer to the style achieved by royal court artists during the Joseon Dynasty, as an East Asian form of realism. This process of depicting realism in portraiture captivated the essence of the subject, depicting their personal lives- which in many cases included obvious birthmarks, moles, wrinkles, hairlines. The portraits depicted the status of the subjects- a characteristic important in Korean society throughout history. For the artisans of Korea- this was as close as you could get to seeing a realistic portrait. It was hyperrealism of ancient times in East Asia.

Siegried Slays The Dragon Fafner

Jeanne Stanek

Siegried Slaying The Dragon Fafnir (1880)
Konrad Wilhelm Dielitz

Taking the dragon's place in opera, the dragon Fafnar appears in the opera Siegried, the third of the four epic musical dramas that constitute *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (The Ring of the Nibelung), by Richard Wagner which premiered at the Bayreuth Festspielhaus on 16 August 1876, as part of the first complete performance of The Ring cycle.

Siegried is the legendary dragon slayer written about in stories of Norse Mythology from as early as the 11th century. Richard Wagner was fascinated by folk tales and medieval legends. Like many in the 19th century, he felt that these stories held profound truths about contemporary culture and society, and so he immersed himself in the great Norse sagas, relying heavily on Norse mythology in creating his version of Siegried and naming his son Siegfreid, in honor of the dragon slayer.

As one of the earliest known dragon slayers, the warrior Siegried, in the German version, or Sigurd in the Scandinavian version, lived so long ago that the facts of his dragon-battle are greatly muddled. Some people believe that he slew the dragon Fafnar to rescue a captive maiden; in other accounts he was simply looking for treasure. In these myths, dragons often traditionally guarded treasure, whether it be material as in gold or symbolic as in knowledge.

Fafner fits into this tradition in Wagner's version as he guards treasures. However, Fafner is first a man and a symbol of greed, who kills his father, gets treasures from the gods including the Ring, and then transforms himself into a dragon to protect and defend his treasures in a deep forest. Wotan, the god, warns Fafner that a hero will come and fight him for the Ring.

Fafner, awakened by the sound of Siegried's horn, rears up to attack Siegried. Siegried then plunges his sword through the dragon's heart causing the dragon's blood to splash on him. He bathes in the dragon's magic blood which makes his skin invulnerable except for one spot on his back which is covered by a leaf. Before Fafner dies, he warns Siegried that whoever sent him to the cave is also planning to kill him, and the stolen ring comes with a curse that it would destroy whoever owns it. Before The Ring ends, Siegfreid is killed by Hotan who knows the dragon's vulnerable area and stabs Siegried in the back. Aria is Here

In this aria, tenor Clay Hilley with Deutsche Opera Berlin, sings the titular character's Siegried slays the Dragon.

With the founding of the German Empire in1871, the German view of Siegried became more nationalistic: Siegried was seen as an identifying epic figure for the new Germany, equated with Otto von Bismarck "reuniting" the German nation. Numerous paintings, monuments, and fountains of Siegried date from this time period. Following the defeat of Germany in WWI Siegried's murder by Hagen was extensively used in right-wing propaganda that claimed that leftist German politicians had stabbed the undefeated German army in the back by agreeing to an armistice. This comparison was explicitly made by Adolf Hitler in Mein Kampf leading to Nazi propaganda using Siegried "to symbolize the qualities of healthy and virile German men".

In Sweden today, surviving depictions of Sigurd/ Siegried are frequently found in churches or on crosses; this is likely because Sigurd's defeat of the dragon was seen as prefiguring Christ's defeat of Satan.

As for the opera Siegried, it is one on the most difficult roles for a tenor and continues for about four hours. The entire Ring Cycle is shown over four days and lasts fourteen hours and remains extremely popular worldwide.

“Healing the Earth” in the Wake of Joseph Beuys

Dr. Uranchimeg Tsultemin

Among the increasing number of recent exhibitions dedicated to the topic of environmental issues is the exhibition titled Healing the Earth: 50 Yeas of German-Mongolian Friendship, opened last month at Kunsthalle Düsseldorf. While the topic is not new, the structure is unique as it is a major show featuring nine established Mongolian artists placed in direct conversation with nine German artists, who include Joseph Beuys (1921–86).

The exhibition is organized and curated by the art historian Gregor Jansen, the Director of the Kunsthalle. Jansen collaborated with Mongolia’s cultural envoy, Ms. Oyuntuya Oyunjargal, whose background is in arts administration, as well as with the Chingis Khan Museum in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, which will host future German exhibitions. The exhibition’s main programming includes German artists’ trips to Mongolia, and Beuys’ solo exhibition featuring his early drawings, planned to be shown in the Chingis Khan museum in spring 2025.

The exhibition takes the concept of healing beyond the context of postwar Europe, during which Beuys’ idea of artist-as- healer/shaman was born, and connects it directly with the current era of political turmoil and the Anthropocene, as these issues “should not be conceived of as separate systems that have chronically failed to understand each other since the start of the modern era.”1 The exhibition revolves around the critical question of nature/culture divide through explorations of urban and nomadic modes of living and a stark contrast in human attitudes toward nature as seen through a dichotomy of West vs. non-West.

Throughout the three galleries, the German and Mongolian artists’ works are set up in a juxtaposition and dialogue of human relationship to nature triggered by the concept of “Social Sculpture” that Josef Beuys initiated in the late 1960s in his performances, teachings and lectures. It is well-known that this concept later led to his famous project of planting trees at Documenta in 1982 thus pioneering a socially engaged, team-based approach to art in general, aiming, in Jansen’s words, to “strive to transform and shape themselves and society - as a means and an opportunity to heal humanity, society and nature.”2 While it is not specifically mentioned, the exhibition’s focus on Beuys’ interest in “Eurasia,” explored with organic materials–such as felt, wool, wax, and more – is strongly conveyed throughout.

Installation View

The exhibition is deliberately structured to begin with Beuys’ objects and papers on healing and to end with installations by a contemporary art collective “Slavs and Tatars”, whose works and activities articulate provocations of intersectionality within the socio-cultural “area east of the former Berlin Wall and west of the Great Wall of China known as Eurasia.”3 “Eurasia” for these artists is not only a geography, but it is a broader artistic concept that these artists tackle from different lenses and interests: linguistic and material, including “Mother Tongues and Father Throats” by Slavs and Tatars, culturally-specific materials and metaphors, “Big Mom (Venus)” by Unen Enkh, “Crows” by Gerelkhuu), the analysis of modern-day fraught politics as “we are in this together” to borrow Rosi Braidotti’s term, “Strange Love E.H.” by Carmen Schaich and “Tij (sun)” by Melike Kara), through epistemological interrogations into civilizations. These interrogations include “108 Questions to a Nomadic Woman with a Gun” by Thomas Stricker and through a dichotomy of spirituality and Western science Baatarzorig’s “Eternal Sky,” and “Dig of No Body (Organ*isation)” by Mariechen Danz). Other works include Otgonbayar’s *Finding Myself* (2022), and Gan-Erdene’s “Way Home” (2022). Munkhtsetseg’s “Incubator” (2017) is among others which address broader issues of human-nature relations.

The idea of “Social Sculpture” and evolving forms of socially engaged participatory art are critically debated topics among contemporary artists and curatorial practices today, especially after the global pandemic.4 The last Documenta in 2022 was entirely based on art collectives, political activism, and socially engaged, team-based art, whereas the upcoming 15th Gwangju Biennale in September 2024 will focus on mutual relationality, mediation, and participation. Jansen’s exhibition is successful in showcasing the impact and legacy of Beuys in the works by the German artists represented in the show, the majority of whom, with only one exception, have some direct ties with Dusseldorf, the city of Beuys and of Fluxus. The exhibition is built with an intended audience of Dusseldorf.

Since Beuys was not alone in Dusseldorf in his fascination with “Tatars”, Eurasia, shamans, and healing,5 the exhibition unfortunately limits these ideas to Beuys alone, and such limitation does not help the viewers to grasp and explore the complexity and the depth of how these notions developed in postwar Germany, what they meant then and how they can and should be relevant to modern-day problems of humanity.

Indeed, the exhibition argues for the critical relevance of Beuys’ “Social Sculpture” to the hot debates of the environmental crises today and in contemporary art in particular. The era of the catastrophe and destruction of the environment, the natural world that we face globally, a key issue, and in this exhibition, Mongolia and its culture is best placed to address this important emergency, with or without Beuys.

There is no doubt or questioning of Beuys’ central positioning and critical importance in modern and contemporary art. Strangely unclear, however, is how did Beuys impact the Mongolian artists and those shown in the exhibition? How and in what way does an understanding of Beuys contribute to any understanding of Mongolian art, here placed in its conversation with German artists? While a deeper understanding of Mongolian art is not among the goals of the exhibition, it appears here to only corroborate Beuys’ ideas of creativity and interdependent living with nature. Such linear vision counteracts Jansen’s otherwise positive ambition to give visibility to these understudied Mongolian artists.

By placing lesser-known art of Mongolia in direct dialogue with German artists, the exhibition triggers a probing into another acute problem of today, which is a rapidly growing call for, and effort to decolonize arts and humanities. Precisely because these nineteen artists in Healing the Earth are addressing issues of global concern, an introduction to the dynamics of Mongolian art is certainly missing as it would have been important for a German viewer to better understand Mongolian artists and their connection to Beuys, which is limited.6 This is particularly true as Beuys is known only to a handful of people in Mongolia. Those Mongolian artists who matured with a direct understanding and impact of Beuys in Mongolia are not featured in this exhibition and the instances of Mongolian limited, yet important engagement with Beuys—such as Beuys Club in 1995 in Ulaanbaatar—are not even mentioned.

Peripheral to the central mission of the exhibition, which is to commemorate the two countries’ half-centenary of diplomatic relations, the exhibition is breathing with Beuys’ ideas, and it is certainly a unique homage to a German-Mongolian connection, or a German interest in Mongolia––which Beuys was among the first artists to explore in art in the past century.

Melike Kara: koyai I (2023)
Oil stick and acrylic on canvas
Photo: Mareike Tocha.
Courtesy: the artist and Jan Kaps, Cologne

German-Mongolian exhibition at Kunsthalle, Dusseldorf, Germany (June 29- September 8, 2024)

Dragon Ring

My great-grandfather, was a Cossack.
The normal family story
starts with the Revolution years,
and his strength as the Czar's Bear.
He spent the rest of his life
mumbling about how If Only
he wasn't sent far out on patrol that day,
Nicholas and the family would not have fallen.

Before the Revolution
when the Czar first called him My Bear –
he also gave my great-great grandfather
a dragon ring in a box carved like a cloud.
It was a wedding present for his bride,
something so extravagant, but from an extravagant
man who loved beautiful things.
The gold dragon was set with Alexandrite eyes
like the sea, a deep sea at a flash of sunset
and ruby breath and claws, just a little, almost invis-
ibly red.
The filigree, my mother says, was almost mystic.

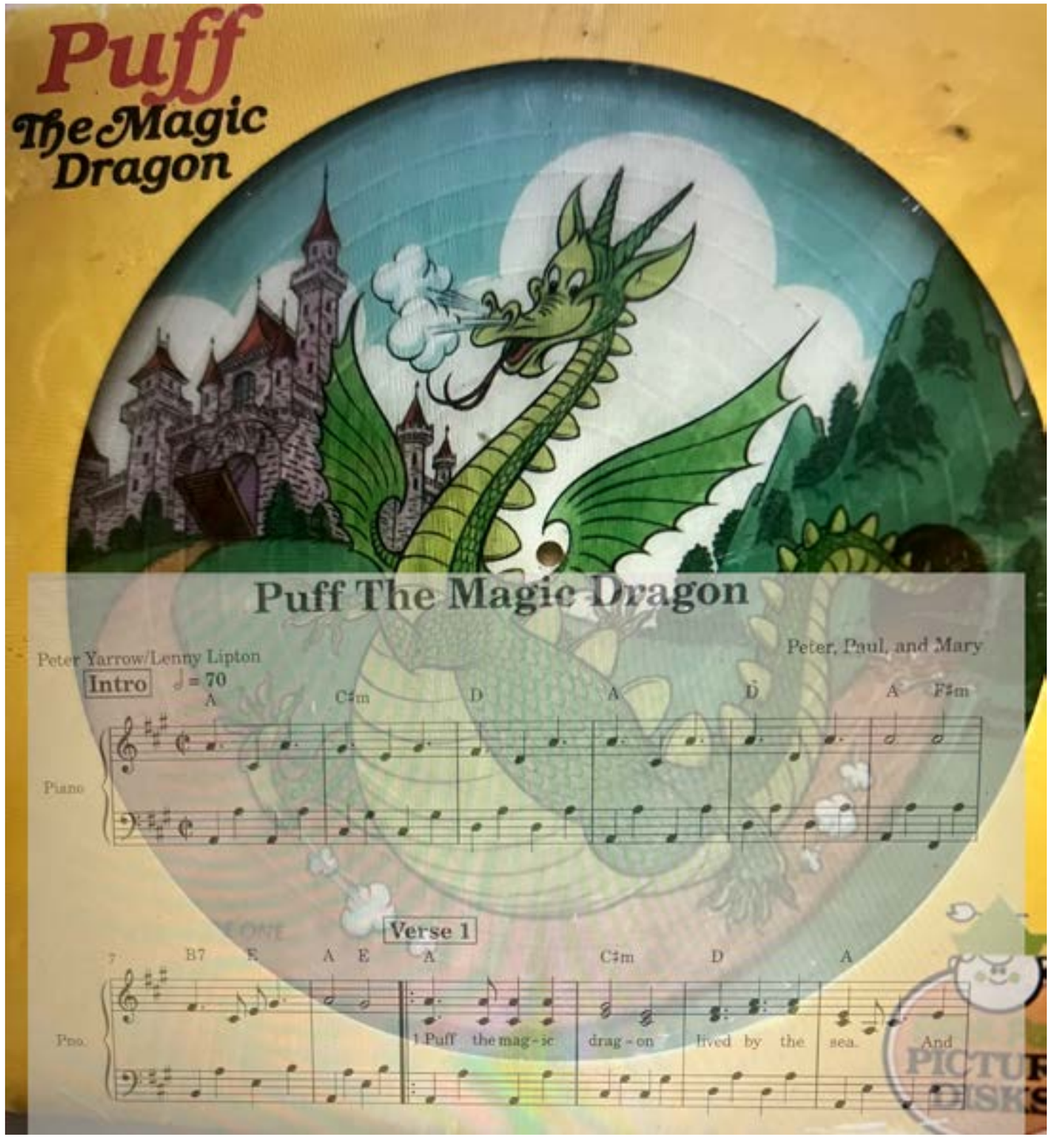
This ring was passed down to my mother.
When I was four, the ring was stolen.
My mother thinks my step-dad set it up,
because that's the kind of person he was –
Only her things were stolen by a group who said
they were workers, and she caught them
leaving hurriedly one late afternoon.

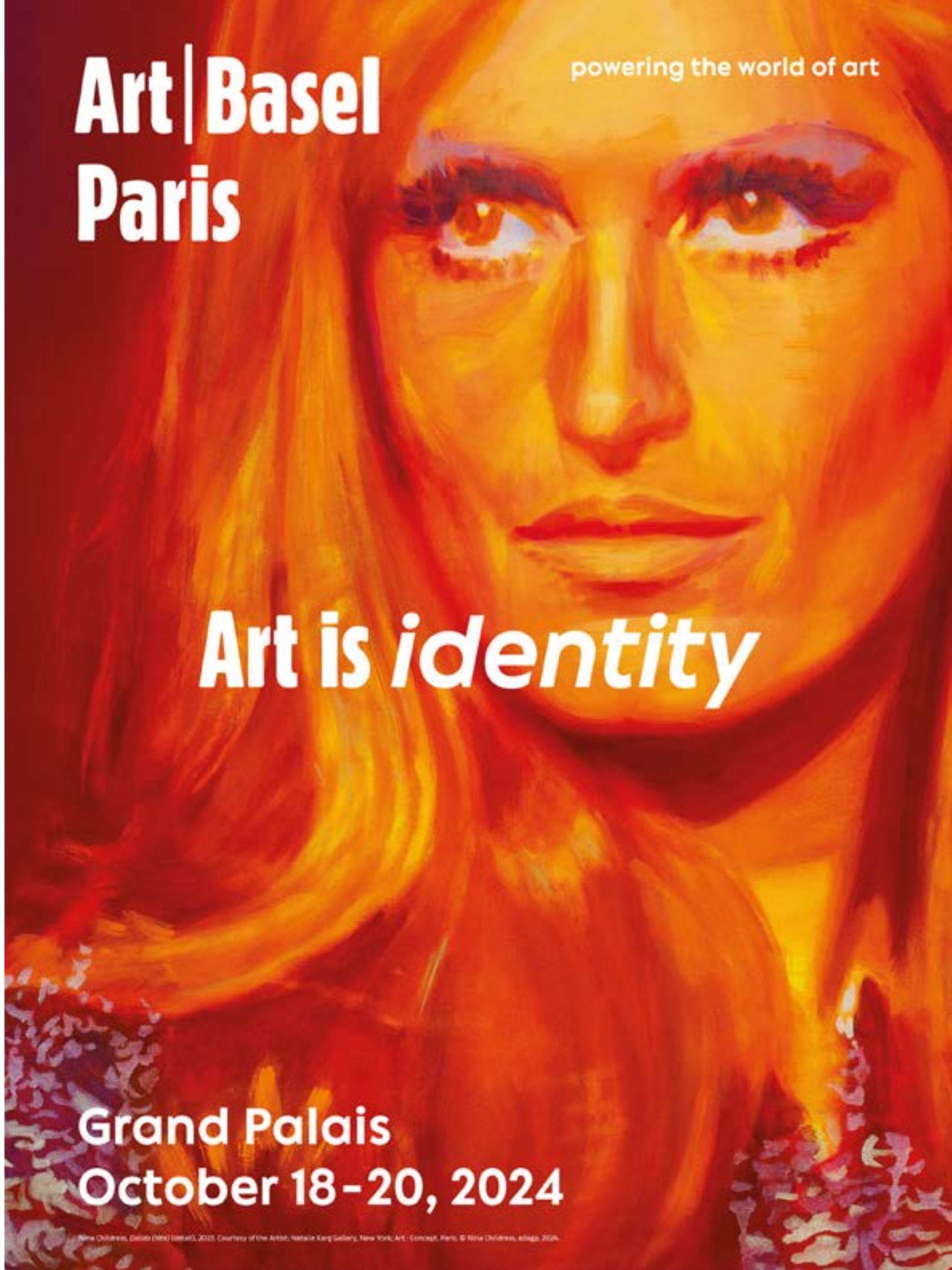
She didn't notice the ring was missing
until she packed me up and left him
a few months later. The box was empty.

She flung the ring box out over Sunset Cliffs
where the Pacific carves and churns caves
under the sandstone and golden poppies.
Hoping to draw the power of its ring
back to protect her, even if only
as a flash of eyes, in a lair beneath the cliff.

Elizabeth Ashe

Lair - the visual interpretation of the poem by Elizabeth Ashe

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