Editors’ Note

The Undergraduate Journal of Humanistic Studies is pleased to publish our fifteenth issue, presenting two papers that explore the meaning of place and its interactions with the people who construct it, physically and socially. These works cover a broad range of geographical experiences, from the crowded streets of Dublin and London to Northern New York, where the natural and the human meet in interesting ways.

In “Rewriting the City: The Transgressive Flâneuse”, Hannah Sheridan investigates the viability of the flâneuse, the female counterpart to the quintessential urban walker and writer, the flâneur. This paper brings two texts, Virginia Woolf’s Mrs. Dalloway and Caitriona Lally’s novel Eggshells, into conversation with Baudelaire, the originator of the flâneur, and literary critics who have challenged the existence of the flâneuse. Ultimately, this paper argues that not only does the flâneuse exist, but because she walks despite obstacles that try to constrain her movement, her walking is always transgressive. This opens generative possibilities for new ways of moving, and of being, within a city, as well as a new framework for analyzing narrative movement through a text.

In “Fires, Floods, and Conspiracies: A Century of Ecological and Social Change on New York’s Black River Canal”, Madison McManus builds on prior “informal” histories to examine how the Black River Canal affected the natural and social landscapes of its environs. Completed in 1855, Northern New York’s Black River Canal was perennially overshadowed by its parent canal, the Erie. In the 1890s, however, the feeder canal became a source of intrigue, when a series of suspicious canal breaks attracted government scrutiny. A century before the breaks, the Black River Valley had been an isolated, sparsely populated “frontier”. But, by the turn of the twentieth century, it had become a locus of industry - and conspiracy. This paper argues that, as the valley’s physical landscape was transformed by the canal, so too did its social landscape evolve. Constant, however, were citizens’ perceptions of New York’s government, which they ceaselessly charged with providing “egalitarian” investment to all of the state’s regions. Thus, the history of the Black River Canal is not only the story of a public works project, but also one of the uneasy relationships between the natural world, social world, and government at the dawn of modern America.

We appreciate all the submissions we received in anticipation of this issue and the work of our editorial board. We are also especially grateful for the ongoing guidance and support of Professor Baird Jarman, our faculty advisor, in the creation of this issue. Additionally, this publication would not be possible without the expertise and patience of the Digital Humanities Team, who consistently take a collection of papers and turn it into the journal we bring you today. On behalf of our entire team, we hope you enjoy reading the Winter 2024 issue of the Undergraduate Journal of Humanistic Studies.

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