



The Thetean: A Student Journal for Scholarly Historical Writing

Volume 49 | Issue 1

Article 3

2020

Editor's Preface

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Recommended Citation

Andersen, Jake (2020) "Editor's Preface," *The Thetean: A Student Journal for Scholarly Historical Writing*.
Vol. 49 : Iss. 1 , Article 3.

Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/thetean/vol49/iss1/3>

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From the Editor

Editor's Preface

IN ALBERT CAMUS' 1947 NOVEL *THE PLAGUE*, THE TITULAR DISEASE sends the French Algerian town of Oran into total quarantine, with no movement and little communication between Oran and the outside world. In Oran, “a feeling normally as individual as the ache of separation from those one loves suddenly became a feeling in which all shared alike,” to use Camus' words. While the present global health crisis fortunately has not taken as deadly a toll as many plagues historically have, the global “ache of separation” remains acute and profound. In the novel, former activist and freedom fighter Jean Tarrou, an idealistic foil to the absurdist hero Dr. Bernard Rieux, keeps a careful journal in which “he set himself to recording the history of what the normal historian passes over.”¹ Tarrou's journal serves as a reminder that history is not only about recording great deeds and heroes, but about seeking, understanding, and documenting the experiences and perspectives of all, from the extraordinary, to the ordinary, to the other. As Tarrou recognized the importance of documenting the experiences of ordinary people during the plague, *The Theatean* recognizes the importance of telling human stories during this pandemic.

And human stories these are, indeed. Brandon Smith and Natalie Merten document the reactions and involvement of Protestants and women, respectively, in the French Revolution. Three papers explore marginalized groups in early-twentieth-century America. Elyse Slabaugh and Bethany Morey both look at the immigrant experience; Elyse focuses on immigrant healthcare while Bethany explores how immigrants experienced motherhood. A third paper looks at working women's roles in the world of labor unions. Taylor Tree uncovers the difficult reality that many indigenous children faced being “adopted”

1. Albert Camus, *The Plague*, trans. Stuart Gilbert (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), 24, 67.

by Mormon settlers in nineteenth-century Utah, while Travis Meyer show us another dimension of suffering related to the Rwandan Genocide. Finally, we see the significance of the ordinary in Rachel Felt's work on missionary board games and Brooke Sutton's on chewing gum.

Of course, all of this remarkable work would not be possible without the wisdom, guidance, and patience of the history faculty. They provide the experience and perspective that allows eager students to turn their interests and ideas into fully realized projects worthy of publication. They deserve our every thanks. I would also like to personally thank this year's editing staff, a collection of excellent students whose insight and hard work ensured that we could publish the best possible edition of *The Thetean*, particularly under such difficult circumstances.

I distinctly remember sitting in Dr. Karen Carter's World Civilization as a sophomore, still operating under the misguided assumption that medical school was the right path for me. The first day of class she told us that the true purpose of history is to learn how to have compassion through understanding people of the past, an idea which affected me enough that I changed my major to history soon thereafter. Indeed, the value of history to me has always been the ability to see people of the past not as abstractions, but as individual human beings whose emotions and experiences were as real as mine. I hope this year's *Thetean* might help us find and cultivate such a perspective.

—*Jake Andersen*
Editor-in-Chief