

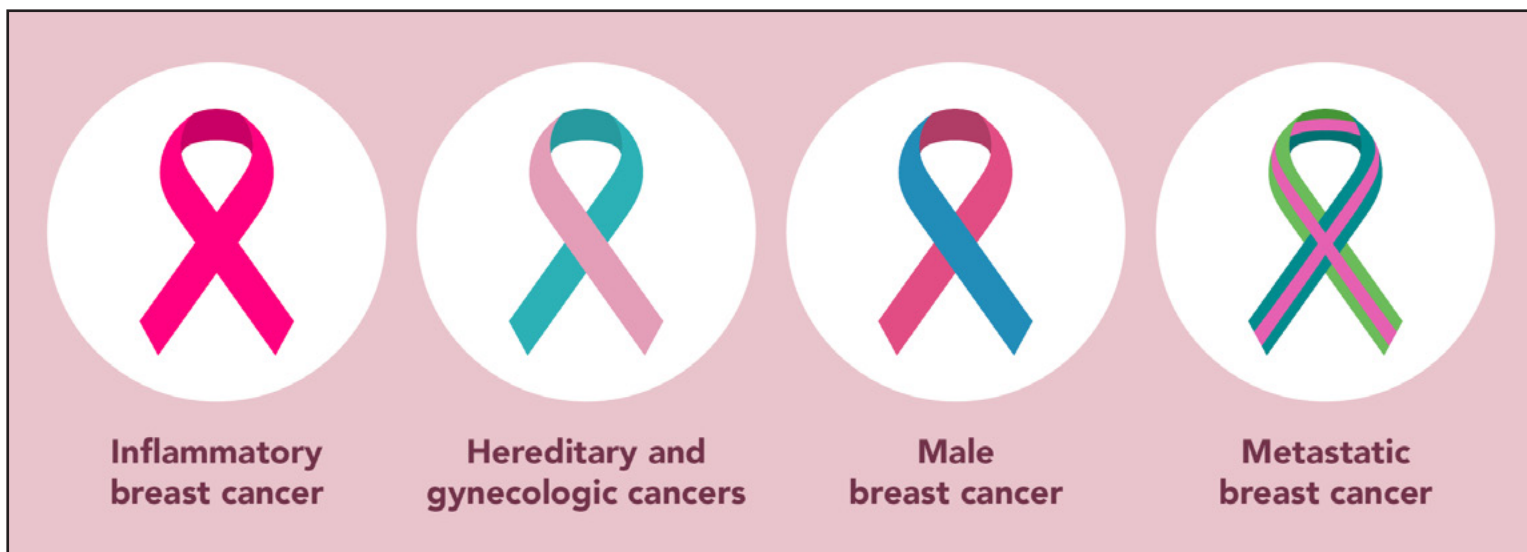


The importance of breast cancer awareness

BY LEAH FACELLA
Editor-in-Chief

According to the American Cancer Society, one in eight people develop breast cancer, mostly found in women sixty-two and older. Out of those who suffer from breast cancer, many go through remission; in the United States alone, there are approximately 3.8 million breast cancer survivors. Roughly one in thirty-nine (2.5%) people perish due to the cancer. With such small percentages, why is breast cancer so important? Why is the whole month of October dedicated to its awareness?

Many people have heard about wearing pink in October to support breast cancer awareness, but many do not know the reasoning behind it. "The pink ribbon has become the universal symbol of breast cancer, illustrating the cause, raising awareness and bringing together women in solidarity," according to the National Breast Cancer Foundation. "From a simple



piece of ribbon affixed with a pin, we are able to show our support for loved ones battling breast cancer and our hope for a brighter future."

In the early 1990s, Charlotte Haley, a relative to many who battled breast cancer, hand-made peach ribbons with a note attached to them stating "The National Cancer Institute annual budget is \$1.8 billion, only 5 percent goes for cancer prevention.

Help us wake up our legislators and America by wearing this ribbon." As the powerful message spread, different businesses asked permission to use her ribbon. She declined, believing they were too corporate. With persistence, *Self* magazine and their lawyers used the ribbon, but changed the color to pastel pink, thus creating the pink symbol everyone now knows. Fast forward from October 1992

to 2023, thirty-one years later, and it is still a symbol of hope and strength for those and their families suffering from breast cancer.

Today, some 43,700 women die from breast cancer in the United States. That said, due to better screening and early detection efforts (annual mammograms), increased awareness, and improved treatment options (chemotherapy, radia-

tion therapy, hormone therapy, targeted therapy, bone health guides, follow-up care, and surgery), breast cancer death rates have decreased by 43% from 1989 to 2020. As more research, awareness, and medicine come out, this number will continue to fluctuate until no more lives are lost.

There are now different hues

SEE **CANCER**, PAGE 3

OPINION: New Jersey Senator Bob Menendez must step down

BY WILLIAM EDMONSON
Staff Writer

On September 22nd, 2023 Senator Bob Menendez (D-NJ) along with his wife and four others was indicted on corruption charges for allegedly taking bribes from a halal meat provider in Edgewater, New Jersey in exchange for secretly helping the Egyptian government and for providing secret information to them. While everyone can agree that Senator Menendez is entitled to his presumption of innocence, this isn't the first time he's been charged with a crime.

Accusations of corruption go all the way back to 2006, however, he was never charged until 2015. He was charged with bribery, fraud, and making false statements over allegedly asking state department officials to pressure the Dominican Republic to enforce a \$60,000 contract with a company owned by Senator Menendez's friend and donor, Salomon Melgen. In exchange, Menendez allegedly received a

plethora of gifts and donations that he failed to disclose. This case ended in a mistrial in 2017 and prosecutors declined to press the matter further. All of this while serving as the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and as a major donor to other democratic politicians. Despite his power and influence, every democratic member of the New Jersey congressional delegation, except for his son, New Jersey's 8th congressional district representative Rob Menendez, has called for his resignation alongside Governor Phil Murphy and over twenty other Democratic members of Congress. While Menendez has voluntarily stepped aside as chairman of the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee just as he did in 2015, he still refuses to step aside claiming his innocence.

Regardless of his innocence, it is in the best interest of the people of New Jersey for Menendez to step down. As of the time of writing, we are nearing a government shutdown, there is the war

in Ukraine, there is the migrant crisis, there are multiple strikes and trade disputes, and there are countless political battles and policy debates that are happening at any given moment. The people of New Jersey deserve someone who can devote their full attention to solving these problems. Menendez simply can't do that if he has to spend the next few years in a courtroom. On top of this, he is facing a primary challenge for the Democratic nomination for senate ahead of the 2024 election by New Jersey's 3rd congressional district representative, Andy Kim. There has also been speculation that Tammy Murphy, wife of Governor Phil Murphy, may also announce a primary challenge for Menendez's senate seat. These are both people with significant power, influence, and money who pose a serious challenge



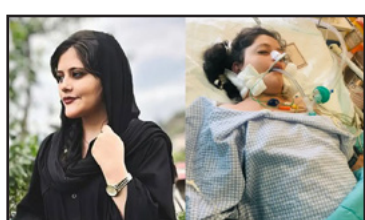
BOB MENENDEZ

to Menendez and his incumbency. He will have to spend considerable time raising money and campaigning to maintain his seat on top of his trial. How can he respond to his constituents' needs in a timely manner if he's too busy dealing with legal battles and campaigning? How many votes on reproductive rights, health-care, education, pensions, and so on is he going to miss because he has to go to court?

This is something for Democrats to consider. The Senate is split 50/50, and the only reason Democrats are in control is because of a democratic vice president, with ideological battles on certain issues leading to senators Joe Manchin (D-WV) and Kyrsten Sinema (I-AZ) siding with Republicans on key issues. Democrats can't afford to lose a valuable vote in the Senate. If Menendez steps aside and Gov. Murphy is able to appoint a Democrat to replace him, then this allows an uninterrupted period of representation for both the people of New Jersey and for Democrats

in the Senate. It is also worth noting that despite how heavily the state of New Jersey supports the Democratic Party this wasn't always the case. Although unlikely it's not an impossibility that if Menendez stays in office and wins the democratic nomination for senate in 2024 he could lose to a Republican. Alabama, a very republican state elected Democrat Doug Jones to the senate in 2018 in the aftermath of scandals with the republican nominee, Roy Moore. Massachusetts, the poster child state for east coast liberal intellectual elitism elected Scott Brown, a Republican, to the senate in 2010 to serve out the rest of Ted Kennedy's term in the aftermath of his death and a disastrous campaign by then Massachusetts state Attorney General Martha Coakley. It is not an impossibility that Democrats could not only lose their current majority but be prevented from regaining it in the future if Menendez runs. For the good of the people and the party, Senator Menendez needs to resign immediately.

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Taylor Swift's 'Eras Tour' shatters presale records with \$26 million, dethroning 'The Force Awakens' Projecting \$100+ million opening

BY TANISH PARLAPALL
Entertainment Editor

Taylor Swift, one of the biggest pop artists in the world, has established her popularity beyond the music industry with her latest film, *The Eras Tour*, tracking to more than \$65 million in presales, ahead of *Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness* (\$60 million), *The Batman* (\$42 million), and *Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 3* (\$26 million). Swift set single-day presale records with \$37 million, crushing *Spider-Man: No Way Home* (\$16.9 million) and *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* (\$20 million). Releasing October 13th, 2023, the Sam Wrench-directed film is looking at upwards

of \$100 million in its opening weekend alone, which would already put it ahead of Justin Bieber: *Never Say Never's* lifetime sales of \$73 million—making it the highest-grossing concert film in North America.

Historically, female-centric films tend to be front-loaded, which may be the case for *The Eras Tour*. But *Barbie*, also said to be front-loaded, managed to maintain drop-offs less than 50% in following weekends, and sits as the highest-grossing film of 2023—so there's still hope. Swift's general appeal as an artist might save it from *Twilight*-level falls (*Breaking Dawn: Part 1* plunged nearly 70% in its second weekend of release), and AMC's

choice to only show the film Thursdays through Sundays could work in its favor as well.

Assuming *The Eras Tour* maintains its stellar performance in subsequent weekends, it's entirely possible that the film joins this year's highest-grossing movies list. This would be a major win for Swift after the colossal failures of her previous features, *Amsterdam* and *Cats*, both of which didn't turn a profit after performing far below their production budgets (*Cats* even being named the worst film of 2019!). Costing roughly \$10-20 million, *The Eras Tour* is set to make well beyond its budget, hopefully paving the way for more concert films distributed by large theater chains.

The 10 highest-grossing concert films domestically

(via Work and Money)

- Justin Bieber: Never Say Never (2011)*: \$73 Million
- Michael Jackson's This Is It (2009)*: \$72 million
- Hannah Montana and Miley Cyrus (2008): Best of Both Worlds Concert*: \$65 million
- One Direction: This Is Us (2013)*: \$28 million
- Katy Perry's Part of Me (2012)*: \$25 million
- Jonas Brothers: The 3D Concert Experience (2009)*: \$19 million
- Madonna: Truth or Dare (1991)*: \$15 million
- Glee: The 3D Concert Movie (2011)*: \$11 million
- U2 3D (2008)*: \$10 million
- U2: Rattle and Hum (1988)*: \$8.6 million

October? More like Croctober

BY LEAH FACELLA
Editor-in-Chief

October 23 has become a special day for Croc lovers; in 2017 it became National Croc Day. With Crocs', unique, comfortable, and colorful shoes, it is no surprise there is a day dedicated to celebrating them, but some may turn it into a whole month. Instead of

October: Croctober! Some people may think it is crazy to have a whole month to celebrate a shoe, but the real crazy ones are those who do not appreciate the masterpiece.

In 2002, Crocs were brought to the world by Scott Seamans, Lyndon "Duke" Hanson, and George Boedecker Jr. Unlike any other shoe, with unique properties

that allow for comfortability on land or water, Crocs got its name from Crocodiles' multi-environmental nature.

Though there are thirteen holes on top of every Croc, these were not made for the fashionable Jibbitz, rather their purpose is for air ventilation. If worn in water, Crocs easily can drain water through these holes. If worn

on land, as a way to get circulation, the holes are available to let your feet breathe. The holes give an overall comfortable experience to all its users because they become lighter than other comparable products. Additionally, the holes easily allow Jibbitz, Croc charms, to be placed on as a way to spice up the already glorious clogs. In October, some people may buy Jibbitz advent calendars as a way to celebrate Croctober. Instead of getting a snack or some other tchotchkes, as people do in December for Advent, there are twenty-six days of Croc-tastic fun with a new Jibbitz every day.

They are perfect to wear for leisure, such as going to a grocery store. Also, they are great for athletes. Many athletes will only use their sports shoes (cleats, basketball shoes, ice-skates etc;) for their sport, not wanting to get them dirty or worn out from something

else, so having Crocs is a quick and easy shoe change. After trying a multitude of other disappointing shoes, I instantly fell in love with Crocs. Additionally, the holes easily allow Jibbitz, Croc charms, to be placed on as a way to spice up the already glorious clogs.

Crocs are sold online at the Croc Store, Amazon, Kohl's, Dick's Sporting Goods and Walmart. They also can be found in stores, such as a Croc outlet, Kohl's, Dick's Sporting Goods or Walmart. There are a multitude of Crocs to choose from: different colors (28 total) to different styles of clogs (17 total), it takes time to find the perfect match. These allow for a match to any outfit you want to wear.

So, what are you waiting for? Go out, buy yourself a pair of Crocs, and walk around campus with the comfort and style that you deserve!

Workshops
*Students, Faculty, and Staff welcome to attend!

Puff Puff Pass - Cannabis 101

Think you know everything about Marijuana? Come to this presentation to learn about the basics of marijuana/cannabis use including information about marijuana products, marijuana and brain development, the pro's and cons of using, and the influence of peer pressure. Presented by Prevention Is Key - substance use organization of Morris County

Oct 10 @ 12:30 p.m.
Cohen Hall 104

CULTURAL CROSSROADS: Unraveling Immigrant Experiences and Generational Guilt

Those impacted by migration experience an intricate journey of navigating a new identity and culture. This presentation will examine the diverse narratives that emerge from the immigrant experience and the influence of cultural adaptation, family expectations, and identity development. Participants are welcome to share their own experiences to enrich the conversation around the intricate interplay of heritage, identity, and the enduring legacy of immigrant guilt.

Tuesday, Oct 24 @ 12:30 p.m.
Cohen Hall 104

ABC's of ASD

This presentation will give you insight into better understanding Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Whether you are on the spectrum or just want to learn more about ASD, this presentation is for you. Join us as we discuss and celebrate all things ASD!

Wednesday, Nov 15 @ 2 p.m.
Cohen Hall 104

SAY THE "F" WORD: How to Handle Failure

Failing feels bad. Many people will go to great lengths to avoid failing so they don't have to feel painful emotions. Learn how to cope with and handle failure in a healthy way so you can bounce back better than before.

Thurs, Nov 2 @ 12:30 p.m.
Cohen Hall 104

Events
*Students, Faculty, and Staff welcome to attend!

National Coming Out Day

National Coming Out Day (NCOD) celebrates all who have come out as LGBTQ+ and honors this courageous act. Whether you are part of the LGBTQ+ community or an ally, celebrate with us on this important day.

Wednesday, October 11 @ 12 p.m. - 2 p.m.
Student Community Center (SCC) Lobby

THERAPY DOGS

The pups are back! Take some time off from studying for your midterms and finals and come relax and play with the therapy dogs.

Thursday, Oct 12 - outside the SCC building
Tuesday, Nov 28 - SCC Lobby

Academic Skill Building Workshops

TIME MANAGEMENT

There are 24 hours in a day, yet that doesn't feel like it's enough. Join this workshop to learn how to make time work for you, combat procrastination, and increase motivation.

Meeting Dates:
Thurs, Sept 7 @ 12:30 p.m. Cohen Hall 271
Wed, Oct 4 @ 11 a.m. Cohen Hall 271
Tues, Nov 7 @ 2 p.m. Cohen Hall 271
Mon, Dec 4 @ 10 a.m. Cohen Hall 271

STUDY & TEST TAKING STRATEGIES

Staring at your notes and freaking out? Join this workshop to learn about different learning styles, different strategies to incorporate into your study habits, and learn ways to better prepare for your exams.

Meeting Dates:
Wed, Sept 21 @ 11 a.m. DeMare Hall 100
Mon, Oct 16 @ 2 p.m. Cohen Hall 162
Tues, Nov 16 @ 12:30 p.m. Cohen Hall 162
Tue, Dec 5 @ 2 p.m. Cohen Hall 162

THE YOUNGTOWN EDITION

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All students are welcome to contribute articles to The Youngtown Edition either in person or via e-mail. However, students cannot receive a byline if they belong to the organization on which they are reporting. The deadline for articles is the Monday prior to a production.

Will 'Oppenheimer' Reach \$1 Billion?

What we can learn from its success

BY TANISH PARLAPALL
Entertainment Editor

As of its tenth weekend of release, *Oppenheimer* has shot past \$925 million at the worldwide box office, ahead of *Bohemian Rhapsody* and Christopher Nolan's very own *Dunkirk*, making it the highest-grossing biopic and World War II movie, and the second-highest R-rated film of all time (\$150 million behind *Joker*). Initial projections estimated the movie to land about \$40 million in its opening weekend, reaching a domestic cume of less than \$200 million and \$500-\$550 million worldwide. Defying all odds, *Oppenheimer* flew past \$80 million in its first three days of release, never dropping by more than 50% in subsequent weekends, and reaching an astounding \$321 million domestically. Overseas numbers crushed expectations as well. China, Germany, France, and the UK each contributed \$40+ million a piece, with Australia, South Korea, Spain, Italy, and the Netherlands providing a respectable \$20+ million each. At \$604 million internationally, *Oppenheimer* has shown its appeal beyond North America—and it isn't slowing down. The Christopher Nolan-directed movie is currently the 3rd-high-

est grossing movie of 2023, past *Guardians of the Galaxy*, *Fast X*, *Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse*, and *Mission Impossible 7*. The film is projected to end its run at \$950 million, but the fact that overseas numbers continue to exceed expectations makes the possibility of \$1 billion reasonable.

Oppenheimer's success introduces a variety of questions. First, and perhaps most importantly, how is it that a 3-hour historical drama primarily consisting of dialogue and art-house-esque material has grossed more than every superhero and action film this year? The answer appears to be a combination of Christopher Nolan's mass appeal as a director, the various memes inspired by the movie, its overall quality, and its timing.

Currently, the 43rd-highest-rated movie on IMDB and holding a great 93% on "Rotten Tomatoes," *Oppenheimer* has solidified itself as one of the best movies in recent years according to audience members and critics. Beyond its reviews, however, the film has also benefited from Christopher Nolan's involvement in the project. As a member of TIME's 2015 list of the "100 Most Influential People," Nolan has built a solid reputation that seems to

keep climbing. His films have grossed more than \$5 billion, with *The Dark Knight* and *Memento*—widely considered to be his best movies—being featured in the National Film Registry. Simply having Nolan's name attached to this project appears to have piqued the interest of avid movie-goers.

The internet also hasn't failed to create a variety of *Oppenheimer*-inspired memes that have worked to increase its popularity. Following the trend of Nolan's previous films, *Oppenheimer* has proven to be incredibly memorable, and one scroll through Instagram, Reddit, or TikTok will demonstrate the myriad of viral content the film has inspired. This phenomenon appears to have originated from the "Barbenheimer" talk months before the movie's release.

Releasing the same weekend as *Barbie*, many assumed *Oppenheimer* would suffer from the general appeal that the Greta Gerwig-directed film has over it. But given the stark contrast in tone and subject material between the two movies, more than 200,000 movie-goers chose to watch them back-to-back, double-feature style. As a result, both *Barbie* and *Oppenheimer* succeeded in their respective categories, with *Barbie*



Cillian Murphy as Robert Oppenheimer

standing as the highest-grossing movie of 2023 at a jaw-dropping \$1.4 billion.

What can we learn from the success of *Oppenheimer*? It's every cinephile's hope that "Barbenheimer's" success has demonstrated that audience members aren't going to the cinema for superhero films exclusively. With big-budget Marvel films like *Ant-Man* and the *Wasp*: *Quantumania* and *Thor*:

Love and *Thunder* performing below expectations, it's safe to assume that the dreaded "superhero fatigue" alluded to more than five years ago may be materializing, and the sudden box office successes of *Oppenheimer* and *Barbie* might indicate a shift in audience preferences. The landscape of cinema is changing, and only time will tell whether it's for better or worse.

CANCER

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

of pink ribbons, representing different types of breast cancer.

Hot pink ribbons represent inflammatory breast cancer; an aggressive and fast-growing form of cancer, where cancer cells attack the skin and lymph vessels of the breast, but often are hard to diagnose because until lymph vessels are completely blocked by the cancer cell. No symptoms are present. Teal and pink ribbons represent both hereditary and gynecologic cancers.

Pink and blue ribbons represent male breast cancer. Roughly, one in every one-thousand males will have breast cancer. All people are born with breast cells and tissue, but because males can not produce milk, male breast cancer is often overlooked. Since such a small amount of males are diagnosed, when a male has a hard lump under the nipple and areola, they typically think nothing of it, and don't get diagnosed or treated as they should. With this in mind, it is important to know your own body, and if you see something strange, tell your physician.

The teal, pink, and green ribbon is for metastatic breast cancer. This is a Stage 4 breast cancer where the initial cancer found only in the breast metas-

tasizes (spreads) via cancer cells invading healthy cells, penetrating the circulatory system or the lymph system, going through the bloodstream to other parts of the body, getting lodged within capillaries, or new tumors begin to grow. Some of the most common other parts are the lungs, liver, bones, or brain. If metastasis in bones occurs, you may have severe pain, swelling, or a higher likelihood of fracturing a bone. If metastasis goes to the brain, you may have persistent and worsening headaches, disturbances of your vision, seizures, vomiting/nausea, or behavioral or personality changes. If metastasis goes to the liver, you may notice itchy skin or rashes, jaundice, high amounts of enzymes in the liver, and stomach problems (abdominal pain, loss of appetite, nausea, and vomiting). If metastasis goes to the lungs, you may have chest pain, chronic cough, feeling unable to catch your breath, and X-rays showing abnormalities within your chest.

Let me tell you my story. In December 2014, my grandmother was diagnosed with breast cancer. Not wanting to dampen the holiday spirit, she waited until after the New Year to spread the word about the cancer. As a nine-year-old, I was very worried about what this meant for my grandma. Questions raced through my head. Is she okay? What is going to happen? When will she be better? Soon enough,

my questions were answered. Starting in January 2015, she started treatment, getting chemotherapy—a treatment where an IV is administered to the patient to have a combination of drugs that attempt to destroy or slow down the growth of cancer cells.

Like many treatments, there are both short and long-term side effects. A commonly known side effect for cancer patients is hair loss. My grandma did end up losing her hair, but once the treatment was finished, she was able to grow her hair back. Another side effect was neuropathy, a condition that gives her hands and feet tingling and numbness because the chemotherapy affected the nerve cells. Unfortunately, she still has aspects of neuropathy in her life, sometimes making it hard for her to open up water bottles, pick up papers, or realize when she steps on something sharp. Throughout the whole process of chemotherapy, our whole family was by her side, having strength and hope that she would get better. In May of 2015, after hours of treatment, she became cancer-free, still alive to tell her story about how she overcame breast cancer. She has been in remission for over five years now. I am grateful that she is fine and am confident that in the future we can continue to have hope and strength to get through such tough times.

Breast Cancer - Mythbusters

Myth: Breast injury causes breast cancer. If you encounter a major injury, such as a car crash, where you have pain, bruising, or bleeding, eventually resulting in a hematoma in the breast. This does not mean the pain you are having in your breast is cancerous. Rather it most likely needs to heal on its own. Once in a while, post-injury, breast cancer can be found, but this is typically because the injury had doctors examine more closely, not that the injury caused the cancer.

Myth: Those with bigger breasts have a higher chance of being diagnosed with breast cancer. No correlation between breast size and breast cancer risk has been found, however, obesity can increase the risk of breast cancer.

Myth: Using your bra to carry your phone causes breast cancer. Studies have found bras being used as a phone holder will not cause cancer, but this is not the most comfortable option long term to hold a phone.

Myth: Breast cancer is contagious. Breast cancer is not like a cold, so being around someone with breast cancer will not miraculously give you breast cancer as well. The only way to contract breast cancer is from uncontrolled mutated cell growth that travels to breast tissues.

Myth: Certain deodorants can cause breast cancer. According to the National Cancer Institute, there are no direct links between breast cancer and deodorant.

Unity: The latest company to launch itself off the trust thermocline

BY OLIVER KOENDERS
Entertainment Editor

For years, Unity has been the default video game engine for many developers. Its tiered pricing structure and wealth of documentation allowed it to become popular for use in education, including at CCM. That de-facto use in schools has allowed it to gain a large amount of market popularity, as most people only truly learn a few engines in their game development career.

On September 12th, however, Unity announced that they would be updating their pricing policy. The policy, in addition to an existing licensing fee, would force developers to pay 20 cents per install of their game over 200,000 on the lower tiers of their licensing structure. While this may sound low, this fee also counts for free-to-play games and the threshold is low enough that it would likely impact many studios still attempting to pay off the expenses they accrued making their game, even before any

profit could be made. Comparably, while other game engines like Unreal do implement revenue shares for their engine's use, the threshold that these developers must meet is far higher, and thus it is more likely that the developers who have to pay the fees will be able to do so.

Unity drew massive criticism for this new fee structure, with many developers publishing that they would either consider removing their games from app stores or starting the process of converting their games to other game engines to try and avoid the fees. Others began speculating the feasibility of their claims—they claimed to have a “proprietary model” to be able to track the number of installs and prevent counting pirated installs, which is something that no other company has been able to provide at this point. Unity, however, was unable to provide any other details. They also claimed that charity games would not be affected by the fees, however allegedly denied charity status to a game that was

benefitting a children's hospital in Michigan and Planned Parenthood, which were reportedly both deemed political groups. To add insult to injury, both the CEO and members of the board of directors reportedly sold off thousands of shares in the week leading up to the announcement, drawing speculation that they might have been engaged in insider trading, profiting off share price increases from prior announcements about the company outperforming profit expectations.

After this backlash, Unity proceeded to make a series of confusing clarifications and backtracks, until they released an “open letter” on September 22nd that resulted in them raising the minimum revenue requirement for the fees and altering the fees to either be a flat revenue share or one based on the number of new users per month. They also walked back their prior statements saying these fees would be based on lifetime statistics, and instead only on statistics going forward and whose games were using

versions of Unity released in 2024 and beyond.

The damage, however, has already been done. John Bull, a writer and historian, originally forwarded the idea of the “trust thermocline” when Elon Musk first took control of X, the social media site formerly known as Twitter. The idea goes that consumer trust works like a water temperature thermocline: there will only be gradual decreases in temperature until a certain point, where it suddenly grows extremely cold. With companies, his point goes, there will come a point where, after enough changes that prioritize profit over quality, there will be a seemingly innocuous change that causes a mass exodus of users that cannot be won back. This often comes because of breaching users' trust in some way, whether that be modifying the product or changing ownership. The fee changes Unity made were likely just the straw that broke the camel's back: after all, developers have been complaining for years about the constant dep-

recation of features and unstable experimental features created to replace them, extensive fees for larger teams, unreliable code handling, and much more. One change like this was all it would take to completely erode trust in the engine among indie game studios, the primary paying developer base for the engine. It showed to developers that Unity's management was unable to be trusted to have their best interests at heart and was instead willing to wring developers dry of any money they might make, whether through licensing fees, team access fees, runtime fees, or any number of other actual or potential fees.

It is truly sad to see an educational and industry tool become largely worthless so quickly, but one cannot blame developers for this: instead, it is the fault of Unity's corporate management for prioritizing profits over people. Any company that does so should be heavily criticized, and if that results in the mass abandonment of that company's products, then so be it.

REVIEW: Starry Messenger: Cosmic Perspectives on Civilization by Neil deGrasse Tyson

BY PROFESSOR
KENNETH A. SHOULER
Moderator for the Youngtown Edition

“Plato is my friend, Aristotle is my friend, but my best friend is truth.”

—Isaac Newton, at Cambridge
In his smallish book *Starry Messenger*, astrophysicist Neil deGrasse Tyson sets the tone straightaway. “Objective truths of science are not founded in belief systems,” he writes. “They are not established by the authority of leaders or the power of persuasion. Nor are they learned from repetition or gleaned from magical thinking. To deny objective truths is to be scientifically illiterate, not to be ideologically principled.” Yes, he is talking to all of us. All of us who could seek truth more persistently, as well as those who have turned denialism into a sort of religion, and thus end up sounding like blithering fools who go about doubting proven election results, the reality of climate change, and Covid science, as if they knew what they were talking about.

In his preface to this book about objective scientific truth, Tyson starts ominously. “Starry Messenger is a wake-up call to civilization. People no longer know who or what to trust. We sow hatred of others fueled by what we think is true, or what we want to be true, without regard to what is true. Cultural and political factions battle for the souls of communities and of nations. We've lost all sight of what distinguishes facts from opinions.”

As you might expect, Tyson owns a firm grasp of the history of science. When Galileo Galilei published *Sidereus Nuncius* in 1610, he “brought to Earth cosmic truths

that had been waiting since antiquity to descend upon human thought,” Tyson reasons. Because of his “freshly perfected telescope,” the author continues, “[Galileo] revealed a universe unlike anything people presumed to be true. Unlike anything people wanted to be true. Unlike anything people dared say was true.” The Italian astronomer's little book contained his observations of the Sun, Moon, and stars, as well as the planets and the Milky Way. Neil deGrasse Tyson gives us two takeaways from Galileo's book: “(1) human eyes alone are insufficient to reveal fundamental truths about the operations of nature, and (2) Earth is not the center of all motion. It orbits the Sun as just one among the other known planets.” He then translates the Latin title: *Sidereus Nuncius* means “Starry Messenger,” the title of deGrasse Tyson's brilliant volume.

As Tyson sees it, the emphasis on objective science in his own book is a necessary antidote to the overwrought emotionalism that characterizes our disputes these days. “What then of our collective disagreements?” he asks. “All I can promise is that whatever opinions you currently hold, an infusion of science and rational thinking can render them deeper and more informed than ever before. This path can also expose any unfounded perspectives or unjustified emotions you may carry.” Yes, an infusion of science and reason do promise



PROFESSOR
KENNETH
SHOULER

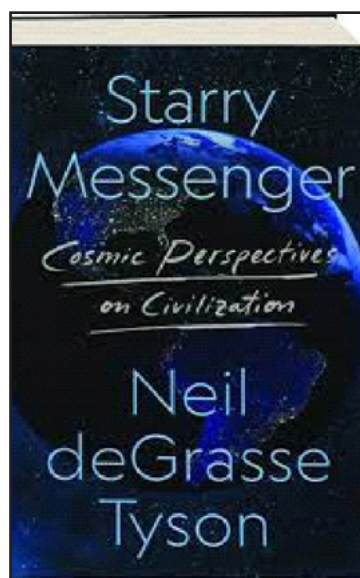


would make each of us, and hence the universe, a more informed place. The chances of this happening, however, are slim.

In writing about the scientific method that underpins our scientific discoveries, he says it can be summed up in one sentence: “Do whatever it takes to avoid fooling yourself into believing that something is true when it is false, or that something is false when it is true.” At this point, the author, unwittingly, shows the overlap in his thinking with that of Aristotle, who wrote in *Metaphysics*:

“To say of what is that it is not, or of what is not that it is, is false, while to say of what is that it is, and of what is not that it is not, is true.” *Metaphysics*, (1011b25):

Instead of referencing Aristotle's definitions of truth and falsehood, however, Tyson shifts to the Arabic scholar Ibn al-Haytham (965-1040) who warned scientists against bias: “The duty of the man who investigates the writings of scientists, if learning the truth is his



goal, is to make himself an enemy of all that he reads, and... attack it from every side,” he wrote. “He should also suspect himself as he performs his critical examination of it, so that he may avoid falling into either prejudice or leniency.” (*The Optics of Ibn Haytham*, Books I-III). Leap forward five centuries to the European Renaissance, and Leonardo da Vinci, Tyson notes, is in full agreement. “The greatest deception men suffer is from their own opinion.” (*The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci*, vol. 2).

I enjoy reading Tyson most when he is talking about objective truth, which philosophy defines as truth independent of what any perceiver thinks. It's here that he is showing the through line that exists from Aristotle's *Metaphysics* to the present, showing what has always been relevant in establishing truths of science and, by contrast, showing our culture's hackneyed preoccupation with social media and with informational silos of the viewer's choosing (whether Fox or the ill-

named Truth Social) even when those silos spew little but falsehoods.

Two sections of Tyson's book, both on the topic of objective truth, are among my favorites and I close with them here. “Objective truths established by repeated experiments that give consistent results, are not later found to be false,” the author says. “No need to revisit the question of whether Earth is round; whether the sun is hot, whether humans chimps share more than 98 percent identical DNA; or whether the air we breathe is 78 percent nitrogen.”

The second section warns of what happens when two other sorts of truths are mistaken for objective truths. “Part the curtains of all-out conflict and find the puppeteers of politics and religion. Two topics that, we are warned, should never be discussed in polite company. Two topics with a lot in common for how deeply personal they can be. Two topics that, when disagreements are severe, can lead to bloodshed and full-blown war.”

“Including all casualties among all warring nations across the six-year span of World War II (1939 through 1945), more than one thousand people were killed—per hour. a morbid and inevitable consequence of forcing your truths upon others in a world which is fundamentally pluralistic. A scientist's entire mission in life is to discover features of nature that are true, even if they conflict with your philosophies...”

In response to the disease of irrationalism so prevalent in our times, Tyson offers us the antidote to cure the disease: respect evidence and the rationality of science.

Iranian women defying the law

BY OLIVIA KING
Features Editor

Recently, Iranian forces have been trying to threaten women who wear their hair down with psychological treatment. Iranian actress, Afsaneh Bayegan, has posted several images of her on the internet, revealing her hair as an act of deviance against the Iranian government. She has also recently attended a public ceremony without her hijab, which unsurprisingly, received a great deal of negative feedback.

Iranian authorities have been examining new ways to force women to cover their hair, while women in Iran have been continuously retaliating against the law after the death of Mahsa Amini, a victim of mistreatment by morality police for wearing her headscarf “improperly.” Women who refuse to wear their headscarves are being labeled as individuals with “anti-personality disorder” and being told they need to seek help at “psychologi-



Mahsa Amini, before and after being beaten by Iran’s morality police in September 2022. She died in a Teheran hospital on September 16.

cal centers.”

The public is wrongfully ascribing these deceiving and downright ludicrous labels to Iranian women for rejecting sexist and oppressive traditions embedded in the laws of Iran. The verbal

and physical harassment Iranian women deal with for repudiating laws against their bodily autonomy is simply outrageous, but despite this constant ill-treatment, women in Iran continue to dismiss the public outcry and chal-

lenge the discriminatory rules of the government.

Not wearing a hijab places an Iranian woman in the spotlight for misjudgment, as they are deemed sexually promiscuous. In July, a Tehran court sentenced a

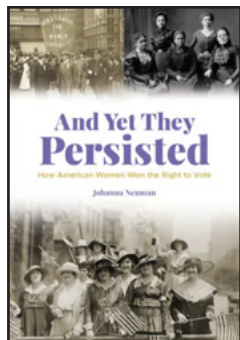
woman to two months in prison and six months of psychological treatment for not wearing her hijab, which was seen as a form of a mental disorder.

Although there have been efforts made by the government to end anti-hijab protesters, women in Iran have been abandoning their headscarves and continue to go out in public with their hair down in recent months. There is also pressure within the workplace for women who refuse to wear their hijabs. If women are spotted without their hijabs they are to be fired, and those who are caught driving with their hair down can have their vehicles confiscated.

At the end of July, a bill passed in the Iranian parliament that women should receive harsher penalties for refusing to wear headscarves. Although the hijab remains a symbol of religious affiliation, under Iran it has transformed into a symbol of abuse, marginalization, and expulsion of the rights of women.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

The League of Women Voters will have a voter’s information and registration table in front of the library café on October 11th, from 11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. For more information on voting, see the library’s pamphlet display, the website at <https://ccm.libguides.com/vote>, as well as our current book display on the right to vote at <https://ccm.on.worldcat.org:443/list/20023086>



And Yet They Persisted: How Women Won The Right to Vote, by Johanna Newman (Wiley, 2020)

The CCM Mini

		1	2	3
	4			
5				
6				
7				

Across

- 1. A common email attachment
- 4. Level
- 5. CCM’s mascot
- 6. Oppenheimer (2023)’s intended theater
- 7. An old-school gaming console

Down

- 1. Essential parts of gyros
- 2. The covered lot closest to Center Grove Road, to the foreign language department
- 3. The central bank network of the USA, abbr.
- 4. Hours and minutes, i.e.
- 5. Common can material

Answers on page 8

Giveaways!

For the list of employers go to www.ccm.edu/career-services/job-fairs/

Find your next job here!

Part-time jobs, full-time jobs, and internships

COUNTY COLLEGE OF MORRIS FALL 2023

Job Fair

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 18

10:00 AM – 1:00 PM

Student Community Center, Davidson Rooms

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit our website to see who’s attending, how to prepare for a job fair and what to expect while you’re there.

Presented through a collaboration between the Office of Career Services and the Center for Workforce Development.

As library's PBS documentary Bird Brain shows, if someone calls you a 'bird brain,' say 'thank you'

BY PROFESSOR
KENNETH A.
SHOULER

Moderator for the Youngtown Edition

"Documentaries for Free" is the ninth in a series of articles for the *Youngtown Edition* about the more than 1,200 streaming PBS documentaries that can be seen online by everyone at the college, whether on-campus or off. Accessing the videos is simple. Those interested in reviewing the collection and picking a video to stream can go to www.ccm.edu/library. Click on "Articles and Databases." Then scroll down and click on PBS videos. Enter your CCM login credentials when prompted (if off-campus). Once in the database, click on "Filter Your Results." Under the "Subject" listing, click on the topic that interests you.

Biologist Auke-Florian Hiemstra enjoys studying how wild animals repurpose human materials. In observing the common coot, a water bird often found in Dutch canals, he found nests laced with windshield wipers, sunglasses, plastic carnations, condoms, and even envelopes used to package cocaine. "My definition of what is nesting material was already quite a broad one," said Mr. Hiemstra, a doctoral student at the Naturalis Biodiversity Center in the Netherlands. "Almost anything can become part of a bird nest."

But one nest, discovered in Antwerp, Belgium in July 2021, drew more attention than the rest. Resting at the top of a maple tree was a Eurasian magpie nest that "resembled a cyberpunk porcupine, with thin metal rods sticking out in every direction," according to the *New York Times* (July 13, 2023). Mr. Hiemstra was startled. "I couldn't believe my eyes. These are birds making a nest with anti-bird spikes." Bird spikes. You know the ones: the metal spikes often found on the ledges of buildings that discourage them from building their nests or perching there. "They're outsmarting us," he surmised. "We're trying to get rid of birds, the birds are collecting our metal spikes and actually making more birds in these nests. I think it's just a brilliant comeback."

Bird Brain. It's an ironic term in our language, given what scientists are discovering about the mental capacities of birds. "The next time someone calls you a birdbrain, be sure to thank them for the compliment--because it turns out that birds are much more intelligent than we ever imagined," writes Bruce E. Fleury, Emeritus Professor of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at Tulane. He authored his book *The Scientific Wonder of Birds* in 2018. Given the evidence that birds are fortifying their nests with anti-bird spikes, he can fortify his thesis all the more.

This startling bit of avian ingenuity only adds to the thesis



Bird Brain (2017), directed by John Capener

of the documentary *Bird Brain*, directed by John Capener (2017). The view of scientists in this documentary raises seminal issues of bird intelligence. With the thousands of different species found everywhere on Earth, it can be asked if any of them can solve problems, cooperate, and feel emotion? Yes, yes, and yes are the answers.

Take a ten-year-old scarlet macaw from the South American rainforest. As if trying to emulate a gymnast, the bird hangs upside down off a rope. His favorite food, a peanut, is dangling on a string. To get the peanut he will have to pull the string up. He's not been trained to do this and in fact, has never been confronted with this puzzle before. "If you're a parrot in the wild, you probably have never come across a peanut dangling from a piece of string," says Christina Riehl, professor of Biology and Evolutionary Ecology at Princeton University. So, he must have the ability to visualize a solution. At first indifferent to the lure of the peanut, he soon figures out what to do. He pulls the string. "When a bird pulls a string and secures food in that way, it demonstrates a level of insight into the problem," says John Marzluff, a professor of Wildlife Science at the University of Washington. "It has worked out the mechanics and the process beforehand, and that's not something we used to think, uh, birds really did much of." For many decades, scientists thought that most of a bird's behavior was ruled by instinct.

The Austrian zoologist Konrad Lorenz conducted some of the earliest studies on the lives of birds in the 1930s. Working with geese, he saw that they learn from the moment they're born. It's called imprinting. They follow the actions of the first thing they see, which is usually their mother. But Lorenz showed that even this most basic behavior can be learned in a new way. These geese imprinted on him.

Lorenz spent years trying to discern the difference between instinctual and intelligent behav-



Birds make use of anti-bird spikes to fortify their nests.

ior. In one set of observations, he discovered that a goose sitting on a nest reacts immediately if an egg rolls away. She brings the egg back to the clutch. It looks like an intelligent action, but if the egg is removed and replaced with a cube, she still brings it back to the nest. Her brain responds instinctively to a simple trigger, suggesting the behavior is instinctive, not learned.

In another instance, Bran, a black crow, coaxes food from a plastic bottle by dunking the bottle in water and letting the food wash out. Bran was not taught by Lloyd how to solve this problem. He gave him the challenge and let him figure it out on his own.

Bran and Rio (the peanut solver) are parts of two families that are considered to be among the smartest species. Ravens are part of the Crow family. Crows live almost everywhere on Earth with an average lifespan of ten to fifteen years. They have a starring role in many classic myths as cunning animals who bring bad luck or are harbingers of death, as in Edgar Allan Poe's stories.

Parrots, on the other hand, have been loved as pets by humans for thousands of years. They also thrive in many different environments, and they can live up to 80 years old; such a span gives them opportunities to learn many new things and that is

one reason they are considered so smart.

Compared to other birds, parrots and crows have large brains compared to their body size. Scientists suspect that may be one reason they can work out problems they don't encounter in the wild. Most bird brains are small, but they have one critical area in common with humans and other animals with higher intelligence. Their executive center (12:00) allows them to make plans and strategies.

Bird brains may be tiny, but for their size, they seem to contain more brain cells, or neurons, than many other animals. "The number of neurons is a better indication of brainpower than the physical size of the brain," said John Marzluff. "This is an interesting thing that we've learned recently, that bird brains actually pack a lot more neurons into a particular area than do mammal brains. So even though they are very small in size, they have a lot of punch in that size."

The intelligence of parrots, like Keanis, is also thought to be influenced by where they come from. In their natural habitat, the highest mountains of New Zealand, food is scarce. Sometimes Kea parrots can strip berries from shrubs and bushes, other times they have to search for insects. They only find enough to eat by

being adaptable, and that has an impact on their brains.

"Anything that involves innovation and trying new techniques and having to solve problems with the environment to get food, that all stimulates a greater connection of the neurons in one's brain," says John Marzluff. "So they're basically building a strong brain by having to explore this complex and variable environment."

It's suggested that crows are wary, which is a good evolutionary strategy. Auguste von Bayern works with New Caledonian crows, considered to be one of the most intelligent species. One crow, Wek, is wearing a collar, because she recently lost her mate, and the collar keeps her from plucking the feathers. Crows mate for life, and Wek started pulling out her feathers when her partner died. She's been hand-raised by humans since infancy. "That's why she has a very close relationship with humans," Von Bayern, an ornithologist from the University of Oxford said. One experiment is about how New Caledonian crows and Kea solve problems. Wek represents the crows, and for the Kea parrots, this is Kermit. Their reward? A peanut.

Their challenge is called a "multi-access box." The food is in the center of the box and there are four ways to get into the box. One way is to use a string to pull the peanut out. When the researchers take that solution away, to see what they will do next. Wek will not put her head in the door, since crows, being cautious, will not risk their heads getting stuck. Rather, she opens the door with a stick through a hole in the box to poke the nut free. Auguste Von Bayern is not surprised. "New Caledonian crows are very special because they're the only crow species that uses tools in the wild," she says. Dr. Von Bayern is an ornithologist at the Behavioral Ecology Research Group at Oxford University. "They obtain a lot of their diet by using tools in the wild."

By contrast, Kermit has a hard time grabbing a round stick with her beak. But persists and knocks the peanut down. Kea parrots don't use tools in the wild. But Kermit figured out a solution--he rolled the ball down a chute which knocked out the peanut. Researchers remove that option. Wek rolls the ball down the chute. Kermit opens the door with his beak. Both birds found four different solutions to the problem.

Scientists once believed that birds were driven by pure instinct. But we now know that they are capable of solving problems, making friendships, and putting themselves inside the minds of others. They are not automata but are seeing themselves in much the same way that we do. Still not convinced? Treat yourself to Bird Brain.

Professor's Purview: An Interview with English professor and author Dr. Philip Chase

**BY PROFESSOR
KENNETH A. SHOULER**
Moderator for the Youngtown Edition

A new feature for the *Youngtown Edition* is "Professor's Purview," where professors share their thoughts about teaching, writing, retirement, and whatever strikes their fancy.

Dr. Philip Chase has just published a head-spinning three books in six months. No misprint. A professor of English at the County College of Morris since 2002, his love of fantasy literature goes back even further. "When I was about twelve years old, I read *The Lord of the Rings*," he explains. "Though I did not know the word 'catharsis' back then, I now recognize the sense of awe and wonder I experienced as just that, and I decided that I wanted to provide the same thing to people if I could."

Youngtown moderator, Kenneth Shouler, who shared an office with Professor Chase, observed his persistence over the years. The attempt to get one's writing in print includes many fits and starts. It takes bravery to stay the course, to believe in what one is writing, and to carve out the time to write between one's full-time teaching responsibilities. When Chase isn't "beasting it" on the tennis court—an admiring remark made by a player watching him compete from an adjacent court—he enjoys discussing his favorite sport. On cue, Chase can tell you how many major single titles John McEnroe or Martin Navratilova won. He won seven and she won 18. You see, he is a good teacher.

Professor Kenneth Shouler: Where did you earn your doctoral degree and what topic did you write on?

Professor Philip Chase: I obtained my PhD in English Literature at Drew University. My dissertation is about William Morris's translations of Icelandic sagas and the Old English poem.

KS: What courses have you taught at the college?

PC: Since 2002, I have taught the following courses here: ENG 111 (Composition I), ENG 112 (Composition II), ENG 210 (Fantasy Novels — a course I created), ENG 246 (English Classics), and ENG 247 (Major British Writers).

KS: Back to your books. Did the *Prophet of Edan* (book two of the Edan trilogy) come out at the same time as *The Edan Trilogy?* (book one of the Edan trilogy)

PC: *The Way of Edan*, book one of *The Edan Trilogy*, came out on March 21, 2023, and *The Prophet of Edan*, book two, was released on June 21. Book three, *Return to Edan*, came out on September 21. One of the benefits of self-publishing is the ability to release all three books within the same year, which will, I hope, lead to a more satisfying experience for readers, who won't have to wait long for the trilogy's completion.

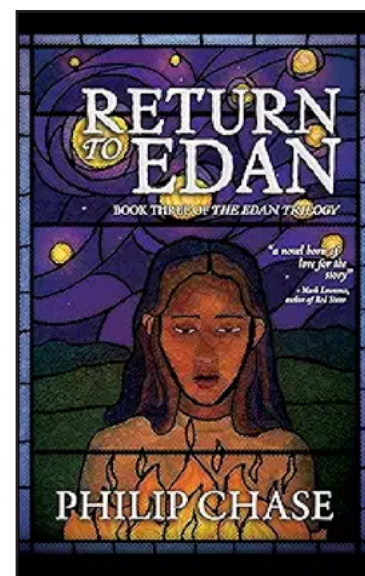
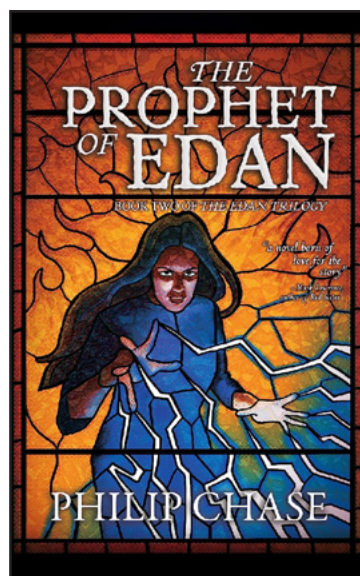
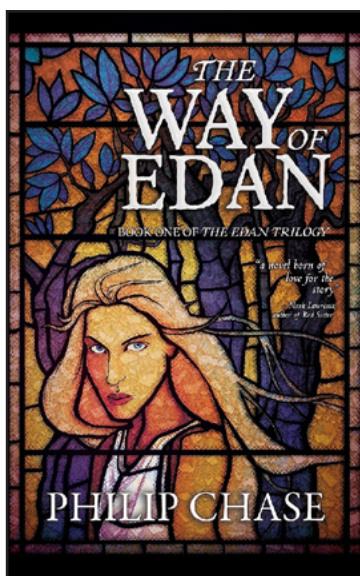
KS: Is it still true that you can

get the first two books of the trilogy for \$7.99 total on Amazon?

PC: Amazon set that price as a sale for the ebook versions of *The Way of Edan* and *The Prophet of Edan*. In addition to that sale, Amazon has offered discounts on the physical versions of the books at various times. This is something Amazon does when they see a book doing well, so it's a good sign!



**DR. PHILIP
CHASE**



KS: You mentioned during your talk at the college last spring that it took 18 years to get the books out. Talk about that process.

PC: Yes, though, most of those years were just the summers in terms of writing. I was too busy teaching during the rest of the year to write. I probably spent more time editing than most sane people would, and if I had been doing it for money... Let's just say that I would be, according to Samuel Johnson, a blockhead par excellence since "No man but a blockhead ever wrote except for money." To be fair, very few writers succeed to the point where writing is their primary income. Like many creative endeavors that are poorly rewarded in financial terms, it requires passion. I drew a map of Eormenlond (the continent where the story is set) back in the summer of 2004, two years after I started working at CCM. In addition to that, I wrote a history and mythology of that world, focusing on such aspects of the various cultures as religion and language. I based the languages of Eormenlond on languages I know, such as Old English, Old Norse, Welsh, and Nepali. This is what they call "world building" in fantasy. It's not a requirement, but I had fun doing it. Once I had a strong sense of the world where everything would happen, I started on the story. At first, all I knew was my protagonist's name: Dayraven. It's a modern translation of a name in the Old English poem *Beowulf*. That "Dayraven" briefly appears as a warrior whom *Beowulf* kills during his illustrious career. I always thought it was a waste of a good name, so I stole it. I worked on a detailed outline of the story and then plunged into the writing, mostly during the summers. By 2007, I had written most of what is now books one and two, but as a single book. Back then, I wanted to publish traditionally, but it took me until 2012 to find an agent. Over the course of nearly a decade, again with me working mostly in the summers, that agent helped me to edit my work further as I split the book into two, added material, and wrote book three. Ultimately, because of the state of traditional publishing and a desire for more creative freedom, in consultation with my agent, I opted to self-publish. More recently, I hired a professional developmental editor to help me improve the books further before releasing them, and now here we are. It has been a lot

of editing!

KS: A combined 1,859 pages for the three books. That's a lot of writing not to mention editing. PC: Yes, it's a good thing I like writing. I suspect that most people who write fall in love with it. There is no feeling I know that is like being immersed in a story you are creating, all the while tweaking it obsessively. That said, I think it's like the sort of "flow" that athletes experience when they're 100% in the moment. Everything feels more alive and focused, and time becomes irrelevant.

KS: What was the most challenging task in getting these books ready for publication?

PC: Marketing. I'm not a natural marketer or participant in social media. These days, self-published and traditionally published authors all have to hustle, especially online, to get the word out about their books. Fortunately for me, I started a YouTube channel about fantasy literature back in February 2020, becoming part of an online community of people who are crazy about fantasy. My channel isn't huge by YouTube standards, but with about 22,300 subscribers as I write this, it has given me an excellent audience for my books. Many of these folks are helping to spread the word about *The Edan Trilogy*, and there is still no better marketing than word of mouth.

KS: The third volume came out less than a month ago.

PC: Yes, I'm very excited about *Return to Edan*. I conceive of the story as having three parts reflected in the three books: Departure, Transcendence, and Return. So, book three is the completion of the Hero's Journey.

KS: How has the public response been thus far?

PC: One of the best feelings in the world is having someone reach out to tell you they enjoyed your book. It feels like the story comes alive when it has an audience. Reviews have been very positive, and a handful of well-known fantasy authors have endorsed my books as well as some folks with large channels on YouTube and other reviewers. In terms of sales, I have already managed to do better than break even, which, in an incredibly competitive market where it's very hard to get noticed, is more than most

self-published authors ever do. Keep in mind that it usually costs between \$5,000 and \$10,000 to produce and market a self-published book.

KS: How essential was it to the success of the books to have YouTube as a platform? For example, do people who engage with you on YouTube and have discussions with you convert to buyers of books?

PC: Absolutely essential. Not all subscribers to my channel have bought my books, but the kind people I've interacted with on YouTube are my core audience, and they are the ones I am relying on to spread the word. I have had numerous discussions on my channel and on other channels about my books, and I hope to have many more since those discussions are vital for helping people enjoy the story even more. Also, my books are appearing in other YouTube videos, such as tag videos, TBR videos, wrap-up videos, "favorite reads of the year," and others. I am thankful every time someone mentions my books, especially if they're enjoying them.

KS: How many followers do you have on YouTube?

PC: 22,300 and counting. The channel continues to grow at a steady pace. My channel has never "blown up" as some channels do, but I'm happy with my audience, who are people who enjoy discussions of literature that go a bit more in-depth than most content on YouTube might.

KS: Are the books in stores, too?

PC: Most people will acquire the books online from Amazon, Barnes and Noble, and other booksellers in various countries. The vast majority of self-published books don't get into bookstores, especially the big chain stores. However, I know of some independent bookstores that are carrying copies of my books.

KS: What are your publication plans following the trilogy?

PC: I have a complete draft written of a standalone sequel to the trilogy, titled *While Darkness Gathers*, and I hope to publish it in 2024. After that, I'd love to produce a book every year, and I think I'll be staying in Eormenlond for a while. I guess I like it there!

KS: Since you self-published,

how does this affect your relationship with your agent?

PC: In the event that my books do well enough to interest a traditional publisher, the first thing I will do is contact my agent, who has agreed to remain part of the project. I have a very positive relationship with him, and I would like to see him profit from the help he has given me.

KS: Who is the agent?

PC: Simon Lipskar from Writers House, which is based in Manhattan.

KS: Will you pitch books to him in the future?

PC: Definitely.

KS: Did you begin to hatch your idea to publish fantasy at Pierce College (Fort Steilacoom, Washington), Evergreen State College (Olympia, Washington), or Drew?

PC: In a way, my entire education was preparation for writing. Since Tolkien was my childhood inspiration, I decided to be a medievalist and learn languages (Tolkien was a scholar of Old English) in order to lend depth to my writing. It was definitely the scenic route to becoming a writer!

KS: How much did creating and teaching the fantasy course at CCM and Drew aid your writing?

PC: Teaching fantasy has helped me to understand fantasy and storytelling at a level much deeper than just reading it could. I am grateful to all my students for the learning experience that those classes turned out to be.

KS: Why did fantasy become your fancy, as opposed to some other kind of fiction?

PC: I love all forms of literature, but fantasy is special for me. It is the genre that most encourages the imagination to soar. Since it often takes place in created worlds, it includes a kind of psychic distance that allows a reader to wrestle with real-world themes and issues, returning to our world with a sense of clarity and meaning. Like other forms of storytelling, it imposes patterns on what feels like a chaotic existence, but unlike a lot of modern literature, fantasy embraces its patterns even as it spins off new manifestations of them. Plus, fantasy is fun!

