

Contours

The Institute for the Humanities at SFU: A 40th Anniversary Celebration



Left to right: Glen Lowry, Peyman Vahabzede, Martha Langford, Ian Angus, David Kettler, and Samir Gandesha, Joanne Brown Symposium on Violence and Its Alternatives, Bowen Island, BC, 2003. Republished from *Humanitas* Volume 3: Spring 2004.

This issue of *Contours* celebrates the 40th anniversary of the Institute for the Humanities, with a special focus on the Institute's journal in its previous incarnation as *Humanitas* and its renewal as *Contours*. The Institute has as its mandate the following:

The Institute for the Humanities at Simon Fraser University began in 1983 as a home for research, public programming and for the development of ideas concerning social issues. The Institute was one of the first such institutes in Canada to pursue these goals. The mandate to build audiences for the humanities in the public sphere has been carried out along four broad interrelated themes: humanities and modernity; community education; cultural roots of violence and nonviolence; human rights and democratic development.

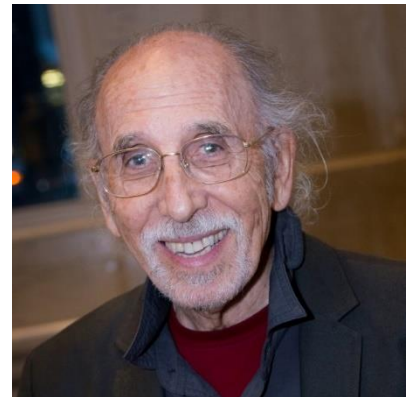
The early journal for the Institute, *Humanitas*, was explicitly organized along these themes. *Contours*, the current version of the Institute’s journal, stays true to this mandate while attempting to innovate, expand, and challenge boundaries. The pieces included in this issue were chosen to reflect the mandate of the Institute as well as the people who, throughout the years, have participated in supporting and continuing the Institute’s work. With these kinds of collections, it is rarely possible to include the voices of all those who should be acknowledged. We would like to thank everyone who has contributed to the Institute and its journal over these many years.



Jerry Zaslove and Prague Field School students at Rimov in Sumova—“Stations of the Cross.” Photo republished from *Humanitas*, Volume 3: Spring 2003.

It can be argued that the earliest and most defining feature of what it means to be human is to honour the dead. With this issue we have endeavoured to so honour those who created and shaped the Institute and its journals, and who sadly are no longer with us. Jerry Zaslove, the

founding director of the Institute, as well as the founding faculty member of the Department of English at SFU, the founding director of the Department of Humanities' Prague Field School, and the Simons Chair in Graduate Liberal Studies, passed away in 2021. He is represented here in pieces from *Humanitas*, as well as a contribution to the recent *Contours* issue on the COVID pandemic. A special memorial issue of *Contours* dedicated to Jerry will be published in conjunction with this issue. We would also like to remember Donald Grayston, director of the Institute from 2001–2004, an Anglican parish priest who taught religious studies in the Department of Humanities at SFU from 1989–2004, and was president of the Thomas Merton Society of Canada and the International Thomas Merton Society. He passed away in 2017. Patricia (Trish) Graham was program administrator of the Institute for the Humanities from 1991–2011, and an editor of *Humanitas*. Trish left us on August 13th of this year. We pay homage to these remarkable figures of the Institute, and to *Contours* contributors Chinmoy Banerjee, SFU professor emeritus, who passed away in 2020 and in whose name the Institute co-sponsors the Annual Professor Chin Banerjee Memorial Lecture in Anti-Racism; and Frank Cunningham, former professor of Urban Studies at SFU, whose piece in *Contours* on the care economy, republished here, constitutes his final publication before his death in 2022.



From left to right: Donald Grayston, Trish Graham, and Jerry Zaslove.

The first section of this issue begins with a statement on the 40th anniversary of the Institute by current director Samir Gandesha. This is followed by historical material from the Institute's archives, including an address by Jennifer Simons on the opening of the J.S. Woodsworth Chair in the Humanities in 1990, and selections from the Institute's journal as *Humanitas* and as *Contours*. The director's letter of the first issue of *Humanitas*, "A Valediction Forbidding Mourning," features Donald Grayston taking the reins of the Institute and the journal from Jerry Zaslove, and mirrors the intention of this anniversary issue as a whole: to remember in celebration. Jerry, in turn, in "*Humanitas: A Commentary*," introduces *Humanitas* as a journal and remarks on the role of the Institute in the university. These pieces are not only of historical interest but provide relevant insights on the current challenges and enduring value of the humanities. The editorial introduction to the first issue of the journal as *Contours*, by Samir Gandesha and Stuart Poyntz, outlines the changes brought about in the journal's transition, while reaffirming continuity in the Institute's objective's and in content that expresses "the continuing and enduring contemporaneity of humanistic perspectives." This section concludes with a tribute to Trish Graham.

The second section consists of selected pieces from the catalogue of *Humanitas* and *Contours*. We begin once again with early material from *Humanitas* relating to the Joanne Brown Symposium on Violence and Its Alternatives. Steve Duguid recounts the first of these symposiums in September 2000, while Jerry Zaslove expands on the theme of the 2003 symposium on exile. From *Contours*, we begin with the late Chinmoy Banerjee's contribution, "Identities, Diasporas, Cosmopolitanisms, and the Possibility of Global Humanities," along with a piece on dispossession and clearances by Ian Angus. The events surrounding the controversial 2014 protests against the Kinder Morgan (now Transmountain) pipeline, and the resulting SLAPP suits against SFU faculty members, are considered in two pieces by Stephen Collis, "After Burnaby Mountain: Does This

Change Everything?” and the poem “Come the Revolution.” 2015 Grace MacInnis Visiting Scholar and former MP Libby Davies discusses her experiences in activism and parliamentary politics, while 2015 Thakore Visiting Scholar Jennifer Simons offers a critique of technology and relates the ongoing need for work on nuclear disarmament in addition to urgent climate issues. Samir Gandesha outlines the neoliberal personality in the context of the Trump phenomenon, and Hilda Fernandez provides a rendition of her performative reading and dérive presented at the Institute’s 2017 Spectacle of Fascism conference. The COVID pandemic is observed in a remarkable curriculum of breviaries for plagues by Jerry Zaslove, and the embodied experience of the early pandemic is described by Alessandra Capperdoni. Finally, Frank Cunningham provides philosophical arguments and support for the idea of a care economy in Canada.



Joanne Brown Symposium on the Great War, Bowen Island, BC, 2020.