

NOT WANTED ON THE VOYAGE PODCAST

The title of Timothy Findley's *Not Wanted on the Voyage* is indicative of his novel's main question: Who hold the passes to society's V.I.P room, and who are stopped by the bouncers? Commenting on mankind's proclivity towards marginalizing those who diverge from the norm, the book casts biting aspersions on the narratives that have facilitated humanity's neglect of our 'undesirables'. Findley criticizes many societal convictions, behaviours, and attitudes that have wrongfully gained axiomatic status over time. Findley cautions his reader to never take any narrative for granted. Just as power is upstream of morality, people's perspectives are inculcated, not naturally occurring. For this reason, he conveys no source of power should ever go unquestioned, lest their edicts work in their subjective interests and disregard the rest. ***Findley's Not Wanted on the Voyage illustrates that the rules, systems and notions governing any group are not inherently founded in right reason and objective truth, but are constructs developed in accordance with the biases of those who have the power to set them.***

Almost immediately after the Noyes family's departure on the ark, a shift that is both literal and figurative occurs in Noah, when he demands to be referred to as "The Most Reverend Doctor." While this self-chosen title may seem to be a relatively innocuous ego-booster, the motives driving Noah's change in title are far more pernicious than originally realized by those aboard. It is Ham who puts the pieces together. On page 210 Findley writes: "Only Ham, it seemed, was not surprised by the change in his father's titles. "Most Reverend Doctor", it seemed to him, was only proper for one who was on his way to becoming a god." Noah's reasons for this title change are a calculated move to reinforce his position as patriarch and ensure his vision for life on the ark is affirmed. A doctor's advice may be easily ignored, but few would dare contravene the word of a reverend. This gives him the power to dictate the other's perception of how life on the ark should be organized, justifying his oversight as a necessary feature in keeping everyone alive. This grants Noah the power to unilaterally decide right from wrong and tolerable from impermissible. On page 244, Dr. Noyes once again demonstrates his ability to use his power to create a narrative that serves only his own interests during an exchange with Japeth and Shem: "Keep your eyes where they belong. In your head."

"I don't understand you father."

"You were feeding on that woman's shape. I saw you."

Japeth swallowed hard and started to choke.

Noah ignored this - and turned to Shem.

"Haven't you noticed your brother's attentions to your wife? What sort of husband are you?"

"He's a child, father?" (Noah's attentions to Hannah had by no means gone unnoticed- but Shem could not mention these.)

Noah sneered. “A child? He is a married man.”

Here Dr. Noyes condemns his son, Japeth, for leering at Hannah, an offense which he makes out to be a moral failure rooted in licentiousness. He then goes on to criticize his eldest son, Shem, for not taking his brother’s improprieties seriously enough. Shem’s recognition of Noah’s hypocrisy shows that Noah’s admonishings have little to do with decency towards Hannah, but because he merely feels jealous. Noah abuses his position of authority to intentionally fabricate reasons that have no basis in fact. If Noah were to follow his own rule, he too would be guilty, so he purposely construes the event as a failure of Japeth’s to uphold the integrity of his marriage, rather than admitting that his anger stems from his own primal impulses. Dr. Noyes swiftly institutes a set of rules to control his son, pretending that leering at Hannah is akin to adultery, when that is just a feigned narrative that serves his own interest.

It should come as no surprise that in today’s hyper-partisan public discourse many are wont to disregard the evidence that flies in the face of the narratives they hold dear. However, this practice is no longer unique to people, but has begun to be performed by the social media giants of Silicon Valley. Twitter, especially, has demonstrated a habit of unfairly issuing bans and suspensions to certain right-leaning public figures who don’t share in their ultra-progressive agenda of intersectional primacy. In a recent case in the summer of 2018, Twitter showed that not all forms of racism violated their community guidelines, but only certain ethnicities in line with their subjective narrative of marginalized groups would be protected by their regulations. Sarah Jeong, a technology journalist, was hired by the New York Times when some of her old tweets resurfaced. These tweets displayed anti-White sentiment, yet were kept on the platform for years and Jeong faced no repercussions. Some of her tweets were as follows:

“Oh man its kind of sick how much joy I get out of being cruel to old white men” and *“Are white people genetically predisposed to burn faster in the sun, thus logically being only fit to live underground like groveling goblins.”* and *“#cancelwhitepeople.”* Candace Owens, a conservative political commentator, tweeted Jeong’s exact tweets, replacing only the word White for Black or Jewish. These tweets were not left up for years for all to see, and Owens was banned from Twitter within mere hours despite indicating these tweets were replicas of Jeong’s statements with only one word exchanged. Twitter’s actions show that what mattered was not the objectively hateful content, but which group it was directed at. Despite professing that all forms of hate-speech violate their community guidelines, their actions revealed that they too follow the increasingly popular narrative that racism against Whites isn’t real racism. Rather than keeping with their original purpose of providing an impartial space for individuals to publish their thoughts, in Noyesesque fashion, Twitter has started to assert themselves as a sort of arbiter, carefully selecting the voices they will permit and banishing those who pose the threat of undermining the narratives they are partial to.

Bias against certain cultural and political stances, however, are not strictly contained in the social media platforms, seeping into the reporting of major news outlets. A great number of these newsrooms are failing to properly establish the connection between the current suffering of Venezuelans and the Socialist policies of their leader Nicolas Maduro. Statistics show that Socialism is very much in vogue among a substantial portion of the American populace. Although Venezuelans and economists alike categorically credit the prevailing socialist policies for the calamities in the country, these news outlets are failing to in fear of alienating segments of their viewer base. Student News Daily found that the word “socialist” or “socialism” was excluded from an astounding 93% of NBC, ABC, and PBS stories about Venezuela during a one-year period stretching from February 2018 to February 2019. Since socialism continues to be regarded positively, liberal news outlets have purposely framed their stories in a way that will preserve that image; casting the crisis as humanitarian or political, but rarely economic. Relying on their sway to push a particular way of thinking, these networks have prioritized their stories’ conformity to their own values rather than objective reporting.

In *Not Wanted on the Voyage*, Noah Noyes can easily be paralleled to a newscaster disseminating partisan values rather than reality. The character repeatedly uses his power to foster a view in others conducive to his own subjective wants. The power of narratives should never be underestimated, for as Findley warns, they can enable the worst of human nature. It is critical to reflect on where we derive our beliefs from, and then investigate the probity of those sources. Nothing should ever be taken as self-evident. And everything should be questioned.