
Simanowitz, Stefan


format is wrong and i can see in page history that Harrison gave you lots of advice about the format. when he reviewed your original entry

Hunger Starvation is an ugly, ugly death. As one of the most traumatic and primal fears known to mankind, most ("most " is debatable given the complexity of humans -- safer to just say "much") of our behavior can be traced back to avoiding this gruesome end. Then why would one ever willingly accept the horrific fate of allowing one's own body to devour itself? Stefan Simanowitz sets out to inform the reader of the effectiveness, practices, methods and people involved with hunger strikes.

Simanowitz begins by quoting a W.B Yeats passage about a hunger striker, which ties into his later emphasis on how the familiarity of certain country’s countries familiarity with hunger strikes stems from their culture. This is an interesting introduction because the passage captures the reader’s attention and depicts the somber and yet noble idealism that is attached to the protest in Irish culture. He then names a modern day case, the “African Gandhi” Aminatou Haidar (with whom we find out he had been travelling with at the time) and her struggle to return to her home land. We are told that Haidar is detained in Morocco as part of a larger conflict with Western Sahara and that the day she is admitted into the hospital, the Moroccan government had caved into her demands. Simanowitz then goes on to describe some other examples of past strikers ranging from Romans both selfless (Cremetius Cordus to maintain freedom of speech) and selfish (Tiberius to gain self-exile to Rhodes), to the most famous case (Mohandas Gandhi), to the modern case of a Venezuelan farmer who died in protest against the government of Hugo Chavez. However, Simanowitz overlooks several details like the relationship between Tiberius and Augustus (Augustus was Tiberius’s uncle, not father) and the nature of some of the hunger strikes (the motive for Tiberius’s hunger strike was discovered in five minutes of outside research). While this does not affect the article dramatically, it does cast slight skepticism on the depth of the author’s research. good to see some fact checking. I don’t think this journal is peer-reviewed, it simply has a general editor. This is a good example of why peer-review is so important.

Then Simanowitz gives some facts and figures on things like how long a body can last in a hunger strike under certain conditions i.e. with water, without water, with sugar and vitamins etc. However, he gives the reader no way to double check the validity of these figures because nothing in the article is cited, thus we are left to take the author’s word that all these statistics are true or not. This also retracts from the value of the argument, but this is more than made up for by the use of other (double checked) historical references to the Irish and Indian Independence movement.

One could accuse Simanowitz of being one-sided in his presentation of hunger strikers for the majority of the article, but it is very difficult to see the issue from the other side of the argument when the subjects are political protestors, freedom fighters and Mohandas Gandhi. All of these cases won over a much more powerful political entity, be it Morocco to Western Sahara or The British Empire to Ireland/India, violent methods were overcome by determination, peaceful demonstrations, and the human revulsion to the cruel treatments and eventual wasting away of a human body consumed by hunger. This is a good critical analysis but your criticisms draw attention to the fact that this is a weak source to begin with. Scholarly but not strong for the reasons you mentioned and the nature of the journal itself.