

Vol. 24
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THE
moon
OF ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE

LATEST
NEWS

STUDENTS EATING
ON LIBRARY STEPS
EMBRACE GOSSIP
GIRL AESTHETIC

"I DID NOT HAVE SEXUAL RELATIONS WITH THAT WOMAN"- BILL CLINTON

SEXLOVEEROSTEARSWAGESANGUISHJOYDRAMAPOWERCCHASTITY

**this month's
contributors...****Editors-In-Chief**Kasparas Adomaitis ('23)
Bridget Lynch ('23)**Editorial Staff**Bel Dodd ('25)
Elena Hochheiser ('24)
Phoebe Jackson ('23)
Javier Romero ('24)**Art**

Jane Maberry ('23)

Layout and DesignElena Hochheiser ('22)
Phillip Psalidakis ('25)**Faculty Advisor**

Michael Golluber

WritersBel Dodd ('25)
Lilian Dumas ('24)
Bryn Frye-Mason ('23)
Elena Hochheiser ('22)
Abram Klaassen ('25)
Kelly Kwon ('24)
Elena Loomis ('22)
Maggie McGuinness (AD)
Jaxson Oakley ('22)
Natalia Potemkin ('25)
Javier Romero ('24)
Gabriel Sildders ('24)
Ann Whipple ('25)
Storm White ('24)**and those whom we owe our
gratitude...**Secret reading groups that don't advertise
themselves on the Ephemera for making SJC
equivalents of Skull and BonesThose who throw their cigarette butts on the ground
for "preserving the campus sidewalk look"The snowball fight after Thursday's seminar for
reminding us that we're kids at heart

PaperTiger for printing a longer issue this month

And of course to everyone who help to put out issues
each month because it is a lot of work and we would
not be able to do this without your time, energy, and
openness to do work outside of the Program™**The Moon**is the student newspaper
of St. John's College-Santa
Fe. We produce free, monthly
publications that feature news, satire,
cartoons, and other feats of student
journalism. Any opinions published
are held by the writer of each given
article. Submissions are accepted.
However, we reserve the right
to edit as we see fit.**ADDRESS FROM EICS**

Dear community members,

Thank you for picking up the February issue of our
Moon!St. John's online was unsettling. It is at best
depressing. We dare not mention what it is at worst
(ultra-depressing?). Regardless of such a lousy
start to Spring semester, we ought to do the things
that bring us joy. Hence, your February edition:
a sparkling beacon of community-building non-
depression.It is very important for us to not stop conversing.
This sustains the well-being of our community. We
encourage you to respond to this issue and submit
for the next one.This pandemic is cantankerous, but we don't intend
to stop...

Have a great month!

Your EICs,
Bridget and Kasparas**LETTER(S) TO THE EDITORS**PLEASE SEND YOURS TO jlromero@sjc.eduSome of you may be wondering (and if you weren't,
perhaps you will be by the time you finish this
sentence): what does the Assistant Dean have to do
with the student newspaper?The answer is, in a way, 'not much.' The Assistant
Dean reads the paper, before it is published, with
an eye toward basic legal liability and responsibility
questions. She tries to ensure the paper is not
breaking or bending any laws (like libel and
harassment laws). And, as she is not a lawyer,
she consults with experts if in doubt. Aside from
that, she basically stays out of it. The AD's role is
decidedly not to make sure that the paper's message
is approved or appreciated by any particular
constituency, office, or person, at the college or
elsewhere.However, as an administrator, as a faculty member,
and as someone who has great love for and great
expectations of our community, I have high hopes
for the Moon. Most importantly, I hope that it can
be an organ of healthy and open communication
(which doesn't always mean merely nice or easy
communication) among all of us: students, faculty,staff and administration. I hope it can be a place
for us to hear and speak to each other in ways—and
about subjects—that can support, challenge, revise,
and run-off-in-completely-other-directions-from
the conversations we already have in the classroom
or in the occasional town-hall or meeting between
students and administrators.So, on behalf of the editors of the Moon, I'd
like to invite my colleagues to submit an article,
a poem, a book review, a letter to the editors, or
some unanticipated genre-bending surprise. Did
you find that an article in one of the most recent
issues of the Moon moved you to a riposte? Is there
something you think we should be talking about?The editors of the Moon have said that they want
this to be a paper for the whole community. I think
we should take them up on it.

— Maggie McGuinness, Assistant Dean



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INTRODUCING THE COMMUNITY CONSENT EDUCATORS ADVISOR PROGRAM

The Community Consent Educators are excited to announce our new Title-IX advisor program. The goal of this program is to have a group of individuals familiar with the Title-IX process that would be willing to serve as a first point of contact for students going through (or debating on going through) the Title-IX process. This includes giving students insight into how to start the process, the different paths they can take (informal or formal), and what they must be prepared for in both instances. Students can also request advisors to come with them to meetings with Christine and Cesar as a peer support during the Title-IX process. We will not be offering legal or mental-health support, as we don't have training in these areas, but we can serve to help students in a more informal capacity.

We ran various consent and Title-IX trainings last semester for students to become trained in this process and will be running more this coming semester for those interested in joining this program! Keep an eye out for our monthly CCE meetings and trainings throughout the semester!

CCE Advisors:

Because RAs are mandatory reporters, I have denoted who amongst this list also works in the RA position.

Seniors:

Simran Thapa — RA (sthapa@sjc.edu)
Micalah Miller (mrmiller@sjc.edu)
Sydney Whitten (smwhitten@sjc.edu)

Juniors:

Bryn Frye-Mason (bafrye-mason@sjc.edu)
Kasparas Adomaitis — RA (kadomaitis@sjc.edu)
Sara Fors — RA (smfors@sjc.edu)

Sophomores:

Carl Guttman — RA (cmguttmann@sjc.edu)
Michael Bronner — RA (mjbrunner@sjc.edu)
Elena Hochheisser (eahochheisser@sjc.edu)
Storm White (mswhite@sjc.edu)

Freshman:

Ella Hutchinson (ekhutchinson@sjc.edu)
Bel Dodd (indodd@sjc.edu)

—Bryn Frye-Mason ('23)

TRY COMMITTING WITH A COMMITTEE

Peterson is getting an update...in 4-5 years.

Our beloved student center is at the focus of a new initiative to revamp campus buildings. This includes a new kitchen, finishing the Girard murals in the hallways, and knocking down the wall between the Coffee Shop and the Bookstore. Do you love these ideas or find one particularly asinine?

President Roosevelt is seeking primarily underclassmen to serve on a committee to start looking at what to fix and how. Juniors and Seniors are also welcomed but we won't see any of the progress. Contact him, be part of SJC architecture history, and have a direct line in Administration to complain to.

Contact: Mark Roosevelt.

TRY COMMITTING WITH A COMMITTEE

Close your eyes and imagine this:

Your seminar has just ended at 9:40 because someone wouldn't shut up about Hume's ideas about sense-perception. You really need a cigarette. Walking outside, there is no smoking section near the Ptolemy Stone. Instead it has been moved out to the parking lot and you have to sit in the snow.

Does this future make you scared or overjoyed? Either way, Student Life is starting a committee about smoking on campus and wants a range of viewpoints.

- Should we ban smoking entirely?
- Maybe we should defy federal law and start smoking inside again?
- What if I like the smell that hits me as I leave ESL?

Tell the committee your ideas before it's too late.

Contact: Polity Chair Elena Loomis or Christine Guevera.

TAKEN BY STORM: INSPIRED BY MX. WHITE

BANNED LOVE

Trigger warning—themes of familial rejection and homophobia

I spent most of my life in my country, where it is warm, but too conservative. I contemplated my identity when I was in kindergarten. I did not understand why adults desperately want to divide men and women, or boys and girls. To me, it was not different from dividing those who wear glasses and those who don't. People said to me, "Look, those boys are your potential romantic partners. Girls and boys are like the opposite sides of a magnet."



I have always been a pretentious but a candid person. Though I was good at concealing what I feel, I never have deceived or denied myself. I knew I was a queer since I was a small kid, and I am still quite affirmative. I am not a woman, or girl, but I cannot say I am a man nor a boy. I am just me. And I am both attracted to both sexes' bodies. Though for some reason, I have fallen in love with a few boys romantically. I am still figuring out why. One of the powerful reasons is because I highly value both boldness and intelligence, and I have not met a girl who had both qualities in my life yet.

I hated myself wearing skirts, stockings, bras, makeup, trimming hair on the armpit—the things usually gendered only to women. I sometimes stole my dad's underwear and wore it. It made me feel less suffocated. People always wanted me to perform as a woman: "Don't dream high. Dream women's one. Your happiness must be supporting your husband, his parents and your children. As Eve is born from the bone of Adam, you belong to men. I made your mom also belong to her domesticity. She said she wanted to be a designer, but no way, married women should not get a job. Especially prestigious jobs. I prevented her from being something. Now look at your mom. How happy she looks." My grandfather

said this to me when I was an elementary schooler. However, I remembered how she was depressed when I was a baby. Her dream was castrated, and she was performing a role as a typical Korean woman. It was so strange. Why does biological sex determine everyone's destiny? Why should all women be 'supporters' while all men are pressured to prove their performance? Why does sex determine the sex that I fall in love with, my future job that I will be dedicated to, the way I speak and laugh, the clothes I wear, and the thoughts or interests? I decided to be myself. Then people used to say, "Kelly is far from a woman. You know what, ugly women are forgiven, but lazy women are not. You should make an effort to be a woman." This is the way I lived.

Nevertheless, the moment of coming out was not at all easy. Some friends were very supportive that I was a pansexual, but some people's reactions were:

"How can you say you are attracted to women's bodies? You cannot be a woman."

"Ah, I did not know you thought of me in that way. I thought we were pure friends, and now I feel uncomfortable."

"Wait, don't say anything. If you say you are a lesbian or something, I will send you to a ward. Don't give me pain in my life."

Sadly, the last response was my mom's. And I pretended I was joking. After that, I never came out in front of my family again. Since my society purges the gay kiss scenes in the movie *Bohemian Rhapsody*, still bans gay marriage, pejoratively call gay people "anal-bugs" or "mentally ill people," is where you get socially isolated when you come out from the closet, until high school, I saw nobody coming out. In my first college there were just a few. I transferred to my second college which was queer-friendly all-women college. We started to call heterosexuals 'queer.' Sort of a revenge, haha.

My third college, SJC, made me feel envious. Some people say South Korea seems to be 50 years behind America. Here, nobody seems to discriminate against people being queer. (Though, using the prefix 'Mx.' seems to be somewhat nerve-racking in various situations. The previous article 'I hate being trans', by Storm White, describes these elaborately.) Ironically, I met my beautiful boyfriend here, being praised by my parents, pretending to be a heterosexual to them. If he were a girl, I would still love him. But one thing would be different, I would have to hide his presence forever from my parents. It would be a banned love. My identity still remains banned, denied by my beloved family.

However, the one permanent thing is I will always orient myself to be the most comfortable myself.

“The bird fights its way out of the egg. The egg is the world. Who would be born must first destroy the world.” -Hermann Hesse, *Demian*

For now, the eggshell is a language and cultural barrier as an international student. However, in the long term, the thickest eggshell in my life would be defining and explaining my identity. Step by step, gradually, I have to come out of the shell.

— Kelly Kwon ('24)

MY RESPONSE TO MY RESPONSE TO THE LACK (FLAW, DEFICIENCY, SHORTCOMING)

After writing my latest and first article for the *Moon*, I had but one overtly substantial question: where do I go from here? Since publication, there's been a provocation, a murmuring sub-corporeal ripple amongst my attentive readers, a prompting of participation from particular parties. More specifically, this ripple seemed to elicit a peculiar responsive inclination among those tethered by the trans tilt, much unlike the uppercase-C Cis identities—as I almost exclusively received response from the former. So, where are all the Cis-created trans responses? One problem for this apprehension could be the nature of my article. It is, in a few words: aggressive, bitter, and indirect. It reluctantly permits a somewhat elusive insight into my underlying emotions, a kind of contextual origin from which my response manifests, and proceeds to construct a somewhat fantastical scenario filled with nuance and conflicting sentiment.

In short, it's an arguably hard article to parse. Partly because it possesses such breadth of expressed layers: the first, me being misgendered by these Cis people; the second, my internal emotions in reaction to these specific Cis people's trans-related ineptitude; and the third, my external expression of these frustrated emotions. Even within this third layer, there are yet more layers. As a base, there's the legitimate exhibition of my hurt feelings. Then, built upon this base layer, there's this internal persuasion: the tiny intellectual inclination of subtle dignity-refusal through a veneer of pursuing politeness or satiating self-hatred. By hiding behind this cloak of humor, by cultivating this absurdly layered communication of a raw facet within a non-passing trans person's existence, I muddy my own grander goal: inclusion.

Through one facet, my article is directly telling Cis people that their efforts are not good enough, that regardless of how hard they're trying, it's

not enough; my emotions are still hurt. Through another facet, I'm externalizing an internal fight with myself over who has the presumed permission to feel in the 'right' or 'wrong' of this misgendering scenario. In other words, do I have the right to feel angry or bitter towards these Cis people? Do they 'deserve' this aggression? Are Cis people 'right' for trying or 'wrong' for not being enough? How much do my emotions really matter in the grander politics of this situation? In a way, I kind of weaponize Cis people's external reaction by recontextualizing it for my own uses, thus refusing them a right to their own externalized-internal explanation through my own external satirical/emotional manifestation.

In this way, I have created a clear 'in' and 'out' crowd: the 'in' are the people potentially affected by this lament, the trans community; the 'out' are the potential perpetrators, the Cis. By creating this clear binary (irony, yes) I have essentially indirectly only allowed space for 'in' crowd. Which is why, I assume, mostly only trans people have reached out about or are writing on this last article.

This unintentional exclusion, as it happens, is antithetical to my values. I want, as I assume many queer people similarly want, to create a diverse and inclusive environment for all voices. So, let this response to my previous response to you be an invitation: be the change you want to see; write your thoughts, questions, laments, externalized-internal emotional reactions, poetic waxings, methodical parsings, intractable ravings, antipodal theories, acrid observations, internecine ponderings, and other such works of human intellect for the next edition of the *Moon* or simply send me an email. Genuinely, I am interested in hearing your reflections, publicly or privately, on any aspect of this.

Postscript: If any of you fine attentive readers would like to peruse more trans-related topics (created for trans audiences) instead of or in addition to a written response, here are my recommendations ranging from most agreeable to most intellectually repulsive: *Detransition, Baby* by Torrey Peters, *Time is the Thing a Body Moves Through* by T. Fleischmann, and *Females* by Andrea Long Chu. If you prefer a briefer enlightenment, consider “The Dressing Room” by Torrey Peters or “On Liking Women” by Andrea Long Chu. Though all these are about trans women, I believe they still aptly communicate the grander 'trans experience.'

— Storm White ('24)



DRESSING GIRLY

Inspired by Mx. White

Growing up, I always dressed girly. What I mean by dressing girly is that I wore lots of skirts and dresses and loved dressing up as a ballerina or a princess. I really didn't like wearing anything without a skirt as part of it. Once I had learned about trans people, my April Fools' joke was me coming out to my parents as trans. I knew they would never believe it—of course I wasn't a boy, that would be ridiculous. I have since learned that cis people don't spend a lot of time wondering about whether or not they're trans, which I certainly did. But I had good arguments for why I couldn't be trans: I like dresses, and I don't feel like a guy. At this point, I had never heard about being nonbinary, so I was only considering being a woman or a man.

I do want to quickly note that gender presentation/ expression is not the same thing as gender identity, and articles of clothing are not inherently connected to any one gender. However, I (and many other people, I'm sure) still tend to think of some clothes as more masculine or feminine regardless of who's wearing them, so for now I'm going to continue with the idea that dresses are girly, and pants and other things can be more androgynous.

Cut to a few years ago, after I started learning about enbies (nonbinary people). I began to question my gender again, wondering if this new term could fit. But no, that couldn't be me. Just in case, I experimented with clothing, wearing more androgynous things. They felt absolutely terrible, and I couldn't handle it. When I tried to analyze that icky feeling, I came to the conclusion that I didn't feel feminine enough in these ambiguous items of clothing. Once again, I dismissed the thought and went back to my dresses. Then, this fall, something changed. More and more of my friends were coming out as nonbinary, and one day a couple of them accidentally used they/them pronouns when referring to me. That nonplussed me, because I was so used to she/her. But it didn't feel bad or wrong, it was actually pretty thrilling. I thought about it some more, and of course consulted all the important places—Google, YouTube, and random teenagers' quizzes. The idea of changing my mindset on something so big still felt weird to me, but it also felt deeply right. So I asked my close friends to start using they/them pronouns for me, and it wasn't until after I asked these friends to use different pronouns that I asked my enby friends about their experiences. As with most times I've learned something about myself, it was sudden and dramatic. I just knew that it was true, I felt it. And it turns out I love the change! Every time I hear "they", I feel a spark of joy.

But I was still confused about clothing, and why androgynous clothing always felt so wrong on me. The first thing that occurred to me is a sensory issue with pants—they are very distracting with their seams, weird waists, and many places to rub up against leg hair in an uncomfortable way. Dresses just bother me less, that's all. However, that doesn't explain the gender-related discomfort I felt when wearing things other than dresses. So, what is it that causes me to feel better or worse in my clothes?

Everything comes to this: the fit of clothes against my body. The thing is, I know I have a very feminine shape. When I wear dresses, I know that I look good, and I feel good because everything fits in the right places. But if I try to wear less fitted things or styles that aren't necessarily meant for women, I can feel bits of fabric hugging me in all the wrong places. These things don't even have to look bad to cause problems—I automatically feel out of place and am quickly reminded of my too-womanly figure.

One option for dealing with this would be to alter my body. It would even be a natural next step as a trans person. But right now I don't want to do that. I love my body. It's true that I wear women's clothes and I look like a woman in them, but I'm more confident in them than in anything else, even as someone who is not a woman. I don't love the fact that people will probably doubt me more than if I dressed differently, used a binder, or started taking T, but my clothes are for me and reflect how I feel. When I wear dresses, I'm not trying to trick people into questioning their assumptions, I'm just being me.

— Elena Loomis ('22)

ROCKY HORROR: A TRANS AWAKENING

The feeling is familiar though the images are inadequate. I feel it every time I see myself in the blue light melancholy pastels of cinematic depictions of trans women. Our lives are short. Our lives are miserable. Our sex and sexual desires are absent. We are monsters until we are victims, and then we are dead. The feeling is familiar. The lives of trans women are indeed expected to be shorter than the rest, and truly many of us are miserable for a seasoning of reasons.

To be perfectly honest, I often feel like a monster in the eyes of others, and I fear for my life and the pain of brevity. However, I have never known trans women to become sadistic serial murderers and rapists. Perhaps anecdotal evidence is insufficient for some people, but as I reflect on my experience viewing myself, I find all images inadequate with respect to relevant portraits. Fearful, depressed, sexually uninterested, victims of a cruel and unjust world? Occasionally, but is that all we could ever hope to be? Monsters? In the eyes of some perhaps, but killers, predators, and psychopaths? No. The feelings persist, but I find myself lacking truly beautiful images.

Yet, what does it mean for images to be adequate and truly beautiful? Surely, in art we expect a going beyond of the mere accuracy of facts. For cinema as for all art, its Truth is found through the artificial, the distorted, dreams and the deinic. In a word, cinematic Truths are alien to the truths of fact and whoever is faithful to fact. This Truth, however, caricatures reality when the intentions of the director are led by hate or fear, and this Truth which caricatures is true only in its truthful depiction of the director's prejudice.

The Rocky Horror Picture Show stands alone in its brilliance. Tim Curry delivers a performance as Dr. Frank-N-Furter which is at once sexy and terrifying. The terrifying presence of Frank N Furter is palpable even in our first encounter with the self-proclaimed "transsexual transvestite from

Transylvania" who is revealed to us by the terrified screams of the cis-het woman protagonist, Janet. It is not at all intelligible on the level of meaning why Janet screams at seeing this campy vampire standing in the door of an elevator, but when Tim Curry throws off his cape to reveal the fishnets and corset underneath, there is no doubt in my mind that I am witnessing the modern interpretation of the horror of the uncanny: transexuality. The horror, Janet's screams, and the hooting and hollering of the queers at the late night show are all in recognition of this modern day monster.



While it is no small feat to portray the feeling of being trans as something monstrous without resorting to threats or violence, Frank-N-Furter's sex appeal dumbfounds me with every consecutive viewing. There is no other movie which treats transness as something so sexy. And dear God, it is sexy. Tim Curry is tall and gorgeous in heels and his sex appeal is infectious. Both of the heterosexual protagonists give themselves over to, as Dr. Frank-N-Furter sings, "absolute pleasure" through Frank-N-Furter. Janet becomes a slut who has sex with Rocky after sleeping with Frank-N-Furter, and Brad is

completely emasculated after bottoming (classic). It is this depiction as transness as sexual influence and power which truly subverts the accepted way to depict trans women in cinema.

I was one of those budding trans women who felt the powerful sway of *Rocky Horror* as a driving influence on who I was to become. I wanted the sex appeal of Tim Curry. I wanted the power to make sexual objects out of men and drive women crazy. For me, it was dreams turned to images, dreams of sex and power for a body otherwise sexless and powerless. Yet, the dream chafes against reality. For however beautiful I may appear to myself or others, the possibility of conventional cis-het people encountering me with fear and loathing remains. Janet will always scream upon seeing Frank-N-Furter, and the sexy antagonist remains a monster.

— Javiera Romero ('24)

HOW GREAT ARE THE GREAT BOOKS?

On January 7th, a troubling article by *The Intercept* popped up on my Instagram feed: “A Marine’s College Essay May Hold a Clue to His Role on January 6.” I’d spent more than my fair share of time over the past several days reading the typical progressive thought pieces decrying the claims of last year’s insurrection as anything but inevitable and scoffed through the far-too moderate takes in the NYT opinion section over breakfast with my dad. I assumed this piece would be the same, almost scrolling past until my eye caught the words “St. John’s College” in the caption.

In the article, author James Risen explores the personal history of Major Christopher John Warnagiris—the highest-ranking military officer to have been arrested for his role in last year’s storming of the Capitol. Oh, and a former Johnnie. Not surprisingly, Risen turns to Warnagiris’ tenure at St. John’s in an attempt to understand why a military officer of this stature would be participating in an insurrection. Some might be shocked about his connection to SJC. Truthfully, I was shocked we know of only one Johnnie there.

Risen focuses his attention on Warnagiris’ senior essay on Epictetus, who he describes as a “relatively obscure stoic philosopher who lived 2,000 years ago, [and] has become a rock star in the strange world of the alt-right.” The article later goes on to describe how the alt-right has turned to Epictetus, along with various other classical authors—various other Program authors—to “underscore their view that they are the defenders of a traditional, white-male dominated Western civilization that is under siege today from the left.”

I could attempt to mount a defense of the classics in response to this. I could try to assert the integrity of the Western Canon despite this encroachment and claim that the increasing use of the so-called “Great Books” to justify the maintenance of an inherently exclusive status quo runs contrary to the spirit of these texts themselves. Yet even though I am a Johnnie (and perhaps because of that very reality), I am unable to mount that defense. I am too ignorant to comment on Epictetus specifically, but I am not ignorant enough not to pose the question of whether the alt-right’s burgeoning interest in these texts at large is appropriating or appropriate.

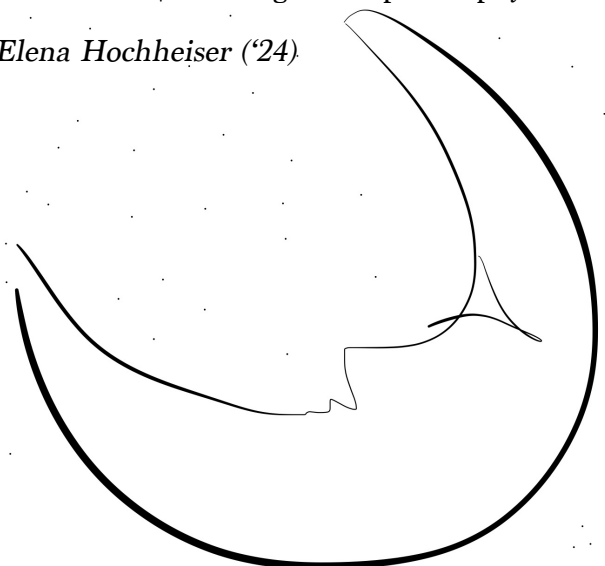
What about the Western Canon expands beyond the “traditional, white-male dominated”? Beyond sparse admissions of authors of color, women, and non-Christians (and to call these admissions sparse is generous), these texts, and their centrality to our Program, draw a straight line from Aristotle’s natural slavery to Heidegger’s membership in the Nazi party.

As an institution that continues to entertain conversations about the legitimacy of these claims of Aristotle—they are not legitimate, no matter the time—when can we allow ourselves to be surprised that a Johnnie stormed the Capitol? I say never. When we host preceptorials after guerilla seminars after reading groups on Heidegger that neglect to mention that he saw the atrocities of Nazi Germany and chose not to act, we must recognize that we open the possibility that Johnnies might march, and have, alongside banners with swastikas.

And in this vein, we do not speak in freshman lab of how Robert Boyle (of Boyle’s law) thought, as the incredible Chandra Prescod-Weinstein put it in her book *Disordered Cosmos: A Journey into Dark Matter, Spacetime, and Dreams Deferred*, that “the role of women was fundamentally to be dangerous sexual objects and the best thing women could do for humanity was to be as chaste as possible.” And many of the voices we do have that speak outside of the white-Christian-male framework sit too comfortably in that very frame. The suggestion that the “vulgar” in Maimonides’ *Guide to the Perplexed* referred to the Jews was not lost on me—amplifying the voices of members of marginalized groups at the expense of the community that they are a part of only works to the benefit of the structures of traditional Western civilization.

I do not say these things to complain, and to accuse me of writing this as such would be to ignore the broader repercussions of my argument, to ignore the necessity of interrogating the broader repercussions of the texts we read in this Program. To read Plato’s *Republic* without a serious conversation of a Johnnie’s attempt to help overthrow our own would be anathema. If we continue as an institution to ignore both in and outside of the classroom what these texts have enabled historically, what they have been used to justify, and who their authors are, we do a disservice to the intellectual project we claim to engage in. Greater than my fear that more Johnnies will be insurrectionists is my fear that we will be the ones teaching moral philosophy.

— Elena Hochheiser (‘24)



THE RILA ESSAY I DID WRITE

I must admit this at the front: my request for funding to attend the Rome Institute of Liberal Arts' summer program entitled *Beauty and the Sacred* is motivated by purely personal reasons. I cannot use the philosophy of Plato to completely rationalize the strong pull in my soul that drags my mind to RILA; it the black horse of desire found in *Phaedrus*. That being said, I will rationalize it anyway in the neatly organized format of a three-pronged argument so that I might try to convey to you all the nature of this horse.

First prong. I want to take part in RILA's *Beauty and the Sacred* because I have thought too seriously about getting a Euclid proposition tattooed on my body. After dragging myself through the sublime mud of Euclid's *Elements*, I was struck, most vividly, by its pure beauty. Each proposition is like a sketch of God's holy keester, a small bit of mathematical, aesthetic, and divine perfection that suggests a larger, deeper exploration that must only be thought of in the mind. After dragging myself through the rugged mud of freshman math class, I was struck, most odiously, by the complete overabundance of the beauty of it all. No other part of The Program since has contained the simple beauty that Euclid did. And like pure, uncut heroin I was hooked; imagine, me, a junkie for geometry. In *Beauty and the Sacred*, I hope to be supplied with the Pablo Escobar analogous connections to even more of that main vein beauty. In 'polite' words, I look forward to spending a summer beholding physically and intellectually the nature of beauty with other people who are (I imagine) as terrified as I am of dying without knowing true beauty. Call it group therapy.

Prong B. The words *Beauty and the Sacred* has a unique meaning for boys like me who, at a disastrously young age, were exposed to *The Wizard of Oz*. Dorothy dancing across the screen from a VHS tape horribly corrupts the eyes of men who are told they must fall in love only with women. After watching Judy Garland prance down that yellow brick road, these boys know no women they could meet will match her flamboyant power resulting in the boys resigning themselves to homosexuality. Because of this traumatic exposure to fabulousness, young gay men sanctify beauty to an unhealthy extent. (Some even go so far as to compare it to opioid addiction! Imagine the gall of those twerps, comparing the problems of an upper middle class white man's education to a literal epidemic!) In many young homosexuals this sanctification of beauty is invigorated by weekly church attendance. How could it not? Palm Sunday recalls the same imagery as *Oz*: a weary traveler gaily skipping on the road towards home with newfound friends; the friendly chanting either *Hosanna* or the

Munchkin Town Theme; the evil plotting to stop the sojourner. While many Christians find beauty in Christ's teaching, gay men know that Christ's beauty extends much closer than his teachings. I mean have you seen those abs! Quick, somebody add crucifixion to my work-out! For gay Christian boys, beauty and the sacred are linked differently. The sacred is beautiful as an erotic image, but this is fraught with tension; sacred and erotic tend to not get along. Figuring out how to live or comprehending this problem with beauty will be a lifelong challenge for me, but *Beauty and the Sacred* will give me some tools to parse out why I'm allowed to cry at the cross but, if I drool, I'm going to the Gehenna, which is a mighty long way from Oz. To sum up, I hope that through discussion on how others have tackled beauty and its relationship to the sacred I can understand the relationship they have with each other.

Prong III. I no longer want to be beautiful because of Plato. Another side effect of premature admittance into the Dorothy fan club is a desire to turn yourself into nothing short of pure beauty. One is pressured to do everything they can to become at least superficially beautiful, and I believed that I had to hate myself until one day, after destroying myself, I would be beautiful. In my attempts to become a failing neutron star, I would exercise to the point of nearly passing out all in the hope that I would look like an ascetic mole rat, but then I read Plato. I saw everything I was doing not as virtuous or valiant, but vain and ugly. True beauty was in contemplation, in finding harmony with this petty body that causes problems, not in slowing killing it off. This realization was slow, but it reached a peak reading Plato's *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*. There, Socrates, and the interlocutors, struggle with wanting physical beauty but knowing it is incomplete. For them, physical beauty was the hottest twink on the block, but no twink, neither kissing one nor becoming one, will ever fill the soul. Thusly, I have tried to turn my back to the idea of twinkhood, but it keeps tantalizing me. I ask for a summer to spend time contemplating the form of the beautiful, the good, like Plato suggests in the hopes that I will stop thinking about twinks. Which is to say, I want to become more beautiful in the mind through RILA.

Thus, my black horse has been beaten. Overall, I'm humbly asking for you to see my need personally to internalize the Beautiful and the Sacred, and that RILA's program can greatly help me accomplish that. I know RILA won't solve all these questions that a Johnnie friend of Dorothy has, but I hope it can start.

— Anonymous



THE TRUTH ABOUT LEO STRAUSS OR: HOW I LEARNED TO STOP WORRYING AND LOVE LYNDON LAROUCHE (I HAVE NEVER SEEN DR. STRANGELOVE)

“A specter is haunting America, and that specter is, strange to say, Leo Strauss.” This is how husband-wife duo Catherine and Micheal Zukert chose to begin their 2006 work of Leo Strauss apologia, *The Truth About Leo Strauss*. Keen observers will notice that I also chose to begin my first piece on Strauss with the same allusion to the *Communist Manifesto*—a piece I wrote prior to reading the Zuckerts’ book. Great minds think alike.

The polar opposite of my article, *The Truth About Leo Strauss* is an attempt to salvage the reputation of the titular thinker. The book is written as a response to (and reaction against) an alleged spate of articles written in the aughts that blame Leo Strauss for the Iraq War. The journalists that the Zukerts concentrate their fury upon see Leo Strauss as the ideological progenitor of the second gulf war, citing his apparent neoconservatism as well as Paul Wolfowitz’s attendance of a bizarre Straussian barbecue.

To properly repudiate this horrific slander, The Zukerts trace these allegations to their source. Where are all of these journalists getting their anti-Straussian ideas from? Their primary source, according to the Zukerts, are the followers of Lyndon Larouche. The Larouchians are a political cult that formed in the 1960s around their once presidential leader. They are infamous for promoting rather out there, oftentimes anti-Semitic ideas, among a host of other things that *The Moon*’s word-count will not allow me to get into.

Full disclosure: I am a Larouchian. I attended a lecture of theirs on the third floor of a run-down Vietnamese restaurant in central Manhattan, in order to write about a political event for a sociology class I was taking. While most of my peers were marching with BLM protesters, or handing out pro-choice leaflets with the rest of their feminist allies, I was trying desperately to understand the cosmological metaphysics that undergirded Donald Trump’s inevitable global conquest. A few days after my attendance of this lecture, the Larouchians faxed my political sociology professor an anti-“zionist” (read: Jews) screed, which he promptly shredded.

Any true Johnnie could understand the Larouchian beef with Leo Strauss: Strauss misinterpreted Plato! According to the Larouchians, Plato is best understood as a progressive thinker. The Socratic dialogue proves that truth can be known

with objective certainty. The objective certainty that the Platonic project seeks to achieve is the same certainty that is expressed in technological rationality, which will lead the way into a glorious egalitarian utopia. The mentality behind this techno-utopian progressivism is expressed in the myth of Prometheus, an archetype the Larouchians align themselves with.

No wonder, then, that the Larouchians would have a bone to pick with Leo Strauss, a “depraved, anti-promethean creature.” Strauss’s disgusting anti-promethean outlook led him to interpret Plato as a conservative thinker who ultimately sought not the betterment of society but the perfection of the human soul.

Whether or not the Zukerts tied those anti-Straussian articles to a rather disreputable political cult in order to discredit them remains an open question. Another open question: would I have ever thought to pin responsibility for the Iraq War on Leo Strauss were it not for the plethora of Straussians insisting that their guru was not, in fact, responsible for the Iraq War? I’ll close the question right now: no, I would not have. I’d never even heard of the guy before coming here, and I’m fairly certain, cliché as it may sound, that the Bush administration was a lot more influenced by oil money than the ideas of a semi-obscure mid-twentieth century political thinker.

So I agree with the Zukerts. Leo Strauss was obviously not responsible for the Iraq war. This is so obvious to me that any defense seems unnecessary. So why do Leo Strauss fans keep bringing it up? Why does the bookstore on campus still stock literature going into painful detail about Leo Strauss’s lack of responsibility for the Iraq War? Why do Straussians waste so much verbiage defending Strauss against accusations that to any reasonable person seem absurd?

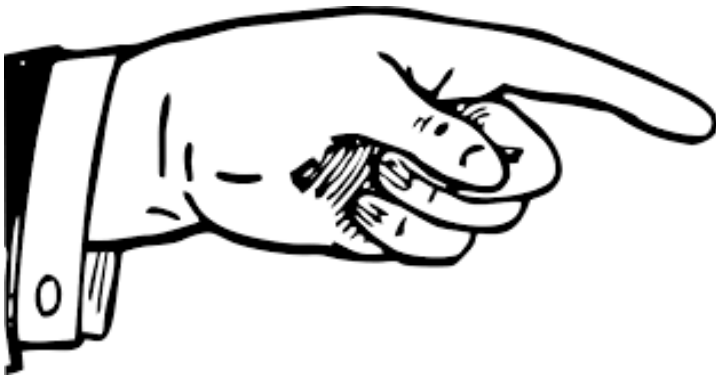
It seems to me that the line of thinking surrounding this defense is more important than finding the capital-t Truth about Leo Strauss’s responsibility for the Iraq War. As any good Leo Strauss fan will tell you, including the Zuckerts, Strauss’s primary ambitions transcended politics. He sought not the perfection of politics, which to him was an impossible task, but rather the growth of man through the practice of philosophy. A lot of conservatives were forced, following the failure of the U.S occupation of Iraq, to similarly recognize the imperfect nature of politics. Leo Strauss serves as ideological fodder for what I dub “pessimistic conservatives,” a subgenre of hooligans that I will discuss in future articles.

— Gabe Slidders (‘24)

TITLE IX IS FRUSTRATING AND HARD TO UNDERSTAND. THAT'S THE POINT.

If you've ever attempted to file a Title IX report or counseled friends debating what to do with their own case, you know how frustrating, confusing, and often unsatisfying this process can be. But why is this? If this law is in place to protect the safety of students, why is it so damn hard to understand? This isn't just an issue at St. John's. Students at every college campus in this country are faced with these same frustrations.

Part of why Title IX is so difficult to comprehend is because the law is ever changing. The way Title IX works at universities today is very different from the way the law operated just six years ago. With each White House administration, the law is subject to change and universities must hustle to adjust and comprehend these changes.



The actual law is only a single sentence: “No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.” Simple enough, right? Wrong. What this single sentence means is up to whoever holds power in the White House at the time. The current rules can be found in a 2,033-page document that the Trump administration released. The Obama administration’s document was 38 pages long. The new rules make it harder than ever for victims to understand their rights—and that’s kind of the point. Understanding your rights under law should not take shuffling through a document over 2,000 pages. A lot of the frustration we experience on campus regarding Title IX can very well be traced back to changes the Trump administration made.

The main thing that changes within each administration is definitions. Under Obama, schools had to use “the preponderance of the evidence” standard for proof; under Trump, it became “clear and convincing evidence.” Back in 2014, the U.S. Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights

(OCR) and the White House had included “verbal conduct” such as “making sexual comments, jokes or gestures,” “spreading sexual rumors,” and “creating emails or Web sites of a sexual nature” in their definition of sexual harassment. Trump’s administration took a much narrower approach by redefining sexual harassment as “severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive.” The problem with this is that finding evidence that the sexual harassment you may have experienced is “objectively offensive” is nearly impossible. By narrowing the definition of sexual harassment, Trump’s administration lessened the amount of cases universities can even consider.

The Trump administration also changed the way formal resolutions are run by requiring cross-examination, which forces survivors to be face to face with their abuser in a live hearing. These hearings can be incredibly traumatic for survivors since they are forced to be questioned about their experience in front of the person who has traumatized them. The administration also introduced “informal resolution,” which is another way survivors can report cases if they don’t want to go through a live hearing—though it’s not necessarily a better option. With informal resolutions, both parties must volunteer to go through the process only after a Title IX file has been made. This allows survivors to report a case without confronting their abuser, but their abuser has the right to refuse.

Now, while this may seem rather discouraging, it is not the end of the discussion. The way Title IX cases are handled at St. John’s is not entirely up to the White House. Each college has its own policies and regulations they can make as well, this does not have to be just in the hands of students.

The Title IX process is flawed and waiting around for this process to be made better is not the solution. We need to take a different route altogether. Our school should create alternate options for students who still want to seek help but who don’t want to undergo this confusing process. Survivors who come forward should have maximal access to mental health services. Struggling with mental health while taking part in such a challenging curriculum is overwhelming. Our school must acknowledge this. Survivors should be allowed accommodations for their classes if so needed. We should introduce a crisis center on campus for students who need immediate help, one that allows students to understand their rights but does not infer mandatory reporting. Students deserve to feel safe on campus. They deserve to feel supported. Our school must do its part in making sure this is the case.

— Bel Dodd (‘25)

LOVE AND THE ETERNITY OF THE POETIC MOMENT

Poetry does not tell a story, nor does it make an argument. Essentially, it does not exist in, or move through, time. I leave aside epic poems, which are a kind of literature of their own, but I suspect that even they are more eternity than passage of time—however, my current purpose is the short poem. You might be tempted to say the modern poem, but even Sappho takes part in such poetic eternity. Rather than moving through time or focusing on development, poetry tells a feeling, with all of its complexity but as felt in a single specific instant. Perhaps it uses stories, the past, the future, even makes an argument or has a turn—most good poetry has a turn, a moment of realization—but these are all in service of the moment, showing it from every side and every view, weaving much together to do justice to a single deeply-lived second. Because neither its value nor its life comes from its relation to other things through time, the moment described cannot decay. There is no claim made on its persistent presence in the changing, temporal world, but it is enough for this moment to be or have been at any time, so that in some absolute sense it always exists. It neither begins nor ends but endures impassibly in the consciousness.

Now, it is February, and we the writers are obliged to say a word about love. I think that this eternity is especially present in love poems, which give the poet an opportunity to dwell at length upon a single moment of feeling while enriching it through its connections to past and future. Love is the nature of poetry, just as eternity is the nature of both. Though poetry almost certainly cannot be done without love—or at least, a feeling which is worth being immortalized, of which love is the highest—I think it is also true that love cannot be done without poetry, at least implicitly. The lover must see eternity and the everlasting moment in the beloved, and in love itself. That is to say, the lover must be always writing poetry, or something in the nature of poetry, or something in the nature of writing, even if it is only thinking, or feeling.

Poetry does not always create this eternity, but it often does, because it is well-suited to focusing on a single moment in such a way as to make it eternal. Imagery is a major element, because it allows one to tell a whole story or lay out a whole scene just to say “this is what it feels like.” We sometimes have to tell a whole story just so that a single moment will hit right, but by telling these stories in metaphor rather than giving concrete context for the specific feeling at hand, the poet indicates that the temporal story is far from the point. We are

interested in the feeling that is suspended in the air, untouchable in itself, when we use metaphor or simile—the intangible thing every image has in common when we say “this feels like this, which feels like this.” It doesn’t need the context to exist, but we need the context to become prepared to feel it, and to process our feelings of it.

An example of this is found in *We Have Lost Even* by Pablo Neruda, a poem about parting between lovers. The final lines tell the moment: “Always, always, you recede through the evenings / toward where the twilight goes erasing statues”. This feeling of oncoming loss, with the beloved not yet gone but surely going, is the moment suspended into the eternal. Though this is the feeling of a single moment, its richness comes from the story which has created the moment, and Neruda brings that richness to the reader by telling stories that end in this same feeling. For instance, the opening lines of the poem: “We have lost even this twilight. / No one saw us this evening hand in hand / while the blue night dropped on the world”. The dropping of the night holds within it the oncoming ending, and the loss of twilight even before the night has totally come, while it is inevitably approaching, is a smaller in-between moment than twilight itself, and a more agonizing one. The lovers are hand-in-hand, representative of their current closeness, but their separation from the world in the form of witnesses seems to beg somebody to hold this memory, and to call into question its endurance: in how many minds will this scene exist once it has dissolved?

These images allow the reader to hold a broader context in his mind, and draw from temporal, changing scenes in order to understand the single moment being described. The feeling is not something subject to the decay of the world, even though it may make itself known through the lovers themselves, and through other material things which do, of course, come into and go out of being. Time must pass for eternity to be fulfilled in the changeable present, but in telling the moment, rather than the story, poetry stops in eternity and opens the mind to its continual presence.

— Lilian Dumas (‘24)



REVIEWS

TWO TEENS WALK INTO A BALL...: A REVIEW OF CHRYSOSTOMOS' PRODUCTION OF *ROMEO & JULIET*

Chrysostomos' performance of Shakespeare's *Romeo & Juliet*, directed by Maddie Adams ('22), was an excellent display of what college kids having fun can do with Shakespeare. From the vibrant costuming with colored masks to indicate allegiances, a minimalist yet intimate set and staging, and the exuberant action from Sydney Whitten's *Romeo* ('23), Adams presented the brightest version of *Romeo & Juliet* possible, which resulted in just a dang ol' good time.



The first half was vibrant, exuberant, and jolting. Most noticeable was Campbell Lozuaway-McComsey's Mercutio ('22)—a deeply silly, overtly and rambunctiously sexual, and boisterous goon and able to turn on a dime to a bamboozled man facing his death. The star-crossed lovers Romeo and Juliet, played by Sydney Whitten and Hallah Herb ('24), shared a subdued and skeptical chemistry, which lends itself to a modern interpretation that poses skepticism on love at first sight. The vigorous verve of Romeo's rapid romance was juxtaposed judiciously against the contemplative carnation of love from Juliet. Vibrant mentors gave structure and life to every interaction. William Crombie ('24) offered a deeply wise patron in Friar Laurence (and in what looked like a phenomenally comfortable bathrobe), and the energetic and at times overbearing Nurse by Madeline Pugsly ('22). Sometimes you wondered if it was even possible for the performers to have any more fun than what they displayed so freely!

The show took on a second darker life as the second half began, with a deep mournful lamentation of

the death of Tybalt by David Adah-Ogoh's Lady Capulet ('22). However, the second part was not without its faults. As the energy waned, the strange cuts that Chrysostomos made for their stage resulted in an out of place period of awkward laughter from the audience as the servants bumbled around and sang out of tune to prepare for Juliet's wedding to the county Paris. It's important to strike a balance, but it's hard to laugh after you've watched 2 people die and another exiled. Peter's subplot overstayed its welcome.

Though I was occasionally distracted by the classic shifting in place of younger actors, and by the constant motion of the staging as characters seemingly couldn't deliver dialogue without walking at the same time, and by the fight choreography short enough that you craved more action, nothing but joy swept across the room as St. Johns' finest pranced around the great hall.

While this production of *Romeo & Juliet* followed well established ground and directions, it was filled with life and was a thoroughly enjoyable night of theater. From this reviewer, Chrysostomos' return earns a firm 6 people killed by a teenage romance gone wrong out of 6.

— Abram Klaassen ('25)

THE SONG OF ACHILLES BOOK REVIEW

"I knew Achilles' golden skin and curve of his neck, the crooks of his elbows. I knew how pleasure looked on him."

We all know the story of the *Iliad*'s Achilles: the war machine, the rage, the vengeance, the loss of his closest friend which drives him to battle. Madeline Miller pondered who Achilles was before he became a godlike warrior in battle and how he came to know and love Patroclus in her book *The Song of Achilles*. I was drawn to *The Song of Achilles* after having read her other work, *Circe*. Without much experience of Greek mythology before coming to St. John's, Madeline Miller led me to care for characters I had only analyzed and judged from a distance. Her interpretation of the Epics transformed my relationship with the original texts, and I often escape into her vision of Achilles' life even after having read the book through twice in the last few months.

I was pleasantly surprised to find that the tale was narrated from the perspective of Patroclus, the man known for his kindness and gift for medicine in the *Iliad*. I found that Patroclus embodies a familiar decency, one that my heart could easily recognize. His acceptance of his own humanity allows readers

to see themselves in Patroclus and empathize with his frustration with the fates and the gods, over whom he lacks influence, just as all humans have little power over external forces. Patroclus's human perspective also emphasizes the absurdities of the gods and the terror of love as a mortal who is on an equal plane as us.

If you are interested in falling in love this Valentine's season, I highly recommend *The Song of Achilles*. Madeline Miller has a gift for understanding great love, and her development of the relationships between characters left me emotionally dependent on the happiness and wellbeing of my favorite pair, only to have my heart chopped in half when the storm clouds roll in. After having read her work, I like to think that the great love she fosters in her writing exists, and it is something we all seek.

— Ann Whipple ('25)

...but Work is king



HOROSCOPES

Aries: A person might offer you a diamond ring this month. Don't take it as an act of kindness, but instead a marriage proposal! Don't allow yourself to be tricked into matrimony, but if you do, make sure you have a prenup.

Sagittarius: You may feel lonely this month, so perhaps invest in a pet! Befriend a lizard or fish and care for them as you never have before. They may turn out to be the only friend you can truly rely on.

Libra: You may meet a mysterious cowboy, but whatever you do, do not trust him. He is wanted in several states for crimes only a cowboy could commit. His silver tongue may charm you, but do not swoon!

Scorpio: This month has your creative juices flowing! Try new skills and go wild with crafts. Sell your wares to willing buyers, and you just might find yourself with a new source of income.

Leo: You may find yourself feeling ill, likely from an iron deficiency. You may attempt to eat some steak and beans, but your efforts will be futile. The forces of the universe want you to see spots in your vision when you stand up quickly. Don't try to fight it.

Capricorn: Don't give in to the temptation of a new hairstyle. Whether it be a goatee or a shaved head, you will regret it come morning. Focus your energy instead on learning how to ride a bike if you don't know how. Good luck!

Taurus: In your time away from campus, you have grown comfortable. Don't be fooled by this sense of serenity. Enemies surround you this month, so never allow your guard to fall. You never know who may be out to get you.

Cancer: Your star alignment reveals that you may become invisible as you dissolve into the fabric of space and time itself. Your friends will forget your name and your family will write you out of the will. Hopefully next month will be better!

Gemini: You will receive good news this month! Whether it's a winning lottery ticket or the coffee shop finally being open on Sundays, you will have a good month. Keep on smiling, champ!

Aquarius: Be careful this month, as you may find booby traps littering campus. Banana peels, nets in the air, and large metal cages falling from the ceiling are all serious threats to you. It is unknown who has set them, but they sure have it out for you.

Pisces: Avoid large bodies of water this month. Something lurks under the surface, but whether it is friend or foe, you do not know. It may be better to just not go swimming.

Virgo: You may find yourself drawn to NFTs this month. Don't answer their call.

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**DON'T LIKE IT?
SUBMIT SOME ART
(TRY DRAWING SOMETHING HERE)
(OR USING IT AS SCRATCH PAPER FOR YOUR NEXT MATH DEMONSTRATION)**