

the Gadfly



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THE STRUCTURE

Logos typically holds news reports and narratives of immediate relevance to the Polity. The purpose here is to develop a shared reservoir of information relating to campus life and the community. The Managing Editor for *Logos* is El'ad Nichols-Kaufman. His email is eanicholskaufman@sjc.edu.

Symposium offers the opportunity for our readers to thoughtfully consider contrasting opinions regarding a particular topic. The Managing Editor for *Symposium* is Luke Briner. His email is lbriner@sjc.edu.

Polis serves as a platform for elevating voices in our community. Here we find letters to the editor, columns, cartoons, and submitted pieces. The Managing Editor for *Polis* is Daniel Nathan. His email is djnathan@sjc.edu.

THE COVER

Illustration by Zeinep Kyzy

From the Editor's Desk:

Dear Polity,

I have a very bad cold. I do not feel very well. I have been consuming equal parts DayQuil and air. My day is suffering and my night is pain. But the Gadfly is done, and it is in your hands now. I hope that you enjoy it and that you have a wonderful thanksgiving break.

The theme for the next Symposium section will be time and temporality. Reflections over what it means to take a break, inhabit a moment, fear the future, recall the past, and whatever else time is significant for are welcome. Submissions will be due just a bit before winter-break, December 9th is probably as late as it can be without making our (newly bolstered!) layout team mad.

Send all submissions, questions, or concerns to either myself (ce-koch@sjc.edu) or the gadfly email (sjca.gadfly@gmail.com).

Make sure to be nice to your parents; they've probably missed you.

Sincerely,
Craig Koch

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Injury Casts Cloud Over Hard-Fought Naval Victory

Navy Snaps Two Game Losing Streak With Overtime Victory Against the Temple Owls

by Adam Powers '24 and Lainey Rendelman '26

October 29—Backup quarterback Xavier Arline's overtime rushing heroics in Navy's 27-20 victory were not enough to prevent being overshadowed by the news Sunday that the injury suffered by starting quarterback Tai Lavatai in the first quarter would be season ending. The veteran starter, a Junior, suffered an unspecified left knee injury late in the first quarter after being hit from behind while running with the ball when Arline came in to replace him. Neither quarterback, though, was able to get the offense into gear as the Midshipmen were only able to manage

224 yards of total offense—a problem that has been haunting the team all season. However, an excellent first half defensive performance, anchored by Senior LB John Marshall, allowed the Midshipmen to jump out to a strong 13-3 lead going into halftime. Marshall, a former Gonzaga standout, had a career day, raking in 11 tackles, 5 pass breakups, 2.5 tackles for loss, and a sack. However, Temple turned the tide in the second half thanks to a stellar performance from Junior WR Amad Anderson Jr. and a strong showing from true Freshman QB E.J. Warner, son of NFL legend Kirk

Warner, who continued his series of impressive, mercurial performances this season. Late in the game, the Owls drove 66 yards in under a minute and a half and tied the game at 20 with a 22-yard field goal with 1:08 remaining in the 4th, forcing the contest into overtime. Xavier Arline's 23-yard touchdown run on just the second play of overtime gave the Midshipmen the lead, and it was a Dashaun Peele interception that clinched the Midshipmen their third victory of the season.



McDowell Lives!

Dr. Funkenstein's Psychedelic Garage Funk Experience Brings Down the House, Slays Satan, Saves the Day; Hain Cho ('25) Slings Atmosphere and Spins Discs in DJ Set

Photos by Bridget Mace '24, Interviews by Daniel Nathan '24



"ELECTRIC. All caps. Wish they boogied down like this at the academy. Wish we could transfer." - Some Midshipman



Josh Flippo ('26) - Keyboard, Logan Arendt ('24) - Guitar, Chris Turney ('24) - Drums, Hannah Chavers ('24) - Vocals, John Teague ('24) - Bass, Andrew Selway ('24) - Guitar



*"Have you been in there? You haven't? It's actually cool."
- Some Freshman to another Freshman*



*"Hannah [Chavers] is an insane singer. When she said nobody move, I felt moved."
- Some Other Midshipman*



*"Surprisingly, it [the vibe] was good in there."
- Dashiell Buyske-Friedberg ('23)*



*"There seems to be something distinctly European about DJing."
- Craig Koch ('23)*



Getting Literary With the Archons of Energeia

An Interview with Allyson Brink (A24) and Kelly Kane (A24)

by Daniel Nathan '24

DN: Can you describe for me what Energeia looks for in a submission, whether it be poetry, prose, or art?

AB & KK: We want to highlight the polity's strengths artistically, in whatever format a submission comes in. Throughout both of our times working for Energeia, we've noticed that each batch of submissions tend to have general themes, reacting to the world at large and the current culture of campus of the given semester. We look for the poetry, prose, and art that we, and our review staff, personally feel is the most gripping, refreshing, and rings the most true of the community's current state.

DN: What originally attracted the both of you to Energeia, and what made you decide you wanted to be archons?

AB & KK: When we joined as freshman, school was online and campus was closed for the most part. We were interested in ways to get more involved in the creative side of St. John's while being online, so we started attending the submissions review meetings on Zoom. When campus



reopened, we attended meetings in person and became acquainted with the new archons. Working closely with them, we had a lot of fun creating a publication we each found vital to the college's artistic life, which led us both to engaging a lot in the creation and management process. We both made mental notes of wanting to be archons, so we were sure to attend all the meetings and get on everyone's good side, masterminding our ways into leadership.

DN: What are some initiatives that you have taken as archons that differ from archons in previous years?

AB & KK: As you'll notice when this semester's edition comes out, we've decided to significantly cut the amount of submissions we accept. In the past, Energeia had increased the length of each issue, which could get overwhelming for both editors and readers. We've taken a lot of inspiration from editions from 2016-2018, which were shorter and allowed readers to spend more time with each piece. We're also playing around with new layout designs and ideas for other content we can create that will keep Energeia a "household" name, if you will.

DN: I presume you're somewhat well-versed in the history of the publication: What are some of the ways that Energeia has changed over the years?

AB & KK: In the 80s, Energeia published a Fall issue which consisted of prize-winning work from the previous year, while the Winter and Spring issues were dedicated to the current art that the polity was making. In the 2010s, we published a lot of prose and academic essays, but



we've since cut the length allowed for submissions, leading contributors to opt more towards poetry and short prose. We've seen all kinds of mediums published, from math proposition demonstrations to pottery to music scores. Of course, poetry, prose, and two-dimensional art have remained consistent contributions to our publication.

DN: That leads me to my next question: What do you hope for the publication's future moving forward?

AB & KK: We'd love to see more variety in our submission types – the bolder, the better. We strongly encourage thinking outside the box with submissions. Think: collages, math and lab proofs, translations in ANY language, three-dimensional art, tattoos, etc. With the call for more mediums, we've been working on engaging the polity more between releases. Before COVID, Energeia's presence wasn't as prevalent as we're now pushing for it to be. We want to see our stickers on all bottles, copies on all coffee tables, and everyone we know showing up to events. As we expand our empire, we're crossing the

bounds from physical to digital. Along with the announcement of zines next semester, people can anticipate a website where we could potentially take digital submissions.

DN: This latest Winter issue comes out soon: Did you notice anything in particular about the submissions for this issue? Are there any prevalent themes that stuck out in the polity's contributions?

AB & KK: We tend to get a lot of similar themes for every edition. We see a lot of cigarette motifs, invocations of Genesis and the Greek, and (sometimes concerning) depictions of depressive slumps and

alcoholism. Other than that, each round of submissions may or may not have specific themes depending on what's going on in the world and in our community. For example, last year we noticed a lot of cicada imagery as the reemergence from the soil took place.

DN: Can we expect campus events put on by Energeia, such as the open mics, to continue?

AB & KK: Yes! We're planning another party for the Winter edition release, as well as more events for next semester.

DN: My final, and perhaps most important question: Why won't you publish Gore Vidaniel?

AB & KK: Daniel, please. Be f*cking for real.

You can expect to see the Winter 2022 edition before Winter break.



The Selected Essays of
G O R E
VIDANIEL



Board of Visitors and Governors Meets

Inflation, Enrollment and Campus Renovations Discussed

by Elad Nichols-Kaufman '25

The fall meeting of the Board of Visitors and Governors was hosted in Santa Fe in early November this year. This semester, rising inflation and its implications on plans to renovate the physical plant of the campus and compensate faculty and staff, as well as national trends in enrollment and mental health dominated the conversation. The conversation largely focused on the college's list of seven institutional priorities, which include maintaining a balanced operating budget, maintaining full enrollment, improving student supports and retention rates, ensuring that students from all backgrounds feel at home at St. John's, the Freeing Minds campaign, meeting the Pritzker Challenge, and developing the Program through faculty development, curricular review and revisions, and new offerings.

With an already balanced budget for the 2023-24 academic year, much of the discussion focused on maintaining this financial position. "We've gone through our existential crisis, and now we're a small liberal arts college facing the difficulties of a small liberal arts college," explained Santa Fe President Mark Roosevelt at the Board's plenary session. However, the path towards keeping college finances stable appears difficult, since there has been a decrease in tuition revenue per student thanks to improved financial aid, and the college's endowment has suffered due to poor performance on the stock market.

In addition to this decreased revenue, costs have also increased. Ron Fieldings, Board President, explained that costs continue to rise for the college like for all private businesses, while the college cannot increase its

revenue like a business. "Productivity is not going to go up, because of the nature of St. John's. Tutor productivity hasn't improved since Socrates, but they still need to be paid a 21st century wage." Faculty and staff salaries are still lower than at most comparable institutions, and must be adjusted for the high levels of inflation over the past year. To fund this, the board voted to raise tuition by 5%. While this is below inflation, it is still a substantial increase for students, and may require even greater increases in financial aid offered by the college. 71% of students at St. John's already receive need-based aid, the most of any of the Small College Consortium, and thus the college receives increasingly little of its funding from tuition and fees.

Instead, the college must turn increasingly to philanthropy to fund its operations. Board members highlighted the success of some fundraising initiatives, with nearly a hundred million raised from the Freeing Minds campaign, primarily directed towards the endowment, as well as the ongoing efforts to raise funds to meet the Pritzker Challenge. Even here, however, inflation takes its toll. The Pritzker funding, which is meant to go towards campus improvements, will not be able to fund all the more extensive renovations initially considered for the Annapolis campus, with all discussion over constructing a new residence hall tabled. Even renovations to existing buildings in great need of repairs will be impacted. The renovations to Campbell Hall, which were initial estimated to cost around \$4 million, may now cost between \$8-10 million due to rises in construction cost. The

college now plans not to shut down Campbell for a year to perform the most substantial renovations, but instead to run the renovations over the course of two summers, and continue housing students in it during the year.

Other major concerns of the board were student enrollment and retention. The national "demographic cliff," the phenomenon of their being, for the first time in United States History, less people of college age each year than before, was mentioned frequently. Santa Fe met, and Annapolis exceeded, the enrollment goals for this year, but total applications went down, and further decreases are expected. Austin Lignon, a board member, explained that the decrease in applications has been seen nationally at private colleges, it is limited to certain demographics. "The demographic cliff really means a demographic cliff for white students. We need to find ways to increase our reach."

Student retention has improved over the past few years, although graduation rates are still below the college's goal. Particular improvements have been made for students who receive Pell Grants: ever since 2017, Pell Grant recipients have been graduating at an equal or higher rate than the college average. Annapolis President Nora Demlitner explained that the college has been working to implement many different programs to support students throughout their time at St. John's. "We start with the Pritzker Bridge Program, and we work to continue attentions to students. We've built one of the best wellness centers for a small college in the country, and moved the Health Center to the lower level, or as some like to say, "garden level" of

Randall... Students are facing more mental and physical health challenges than any generation before, we need to offer better mental health services.”

The Annapolis campus recently underwent the accreditation process by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, and the

notes from that accreditation also informed the board’s discussions. The accreditors were largely positive, with reaccreditation recommended without any requirements, also recommended stronger focus on diversity and inclusion, as well as more research by faculty and better data management.

President Demlitner indicated a desire to work on these recommendations, as a way to maintain the intellectual rigor of the program in the 21st century. “We’re a distinctive college, and we need to work to keep ourselves distinctive.”

{STUDENT ART}

Mr. Sterling in Sketch

Quite a Man, Quite a Hat!

by Zeinep Kyzy '24



Bug Bulletin

*What's Red and Grey and Spotted All Over? *Lycorma delicatula*!*

by Louis Rosenberg '25

On a day not too long ago, in a dining hall a bit too familiar to most Johnnies, *Lycorma delicatula*, commonly known as the spotted lanternfly, initiated a heated debate about the role of humans in addressing invasive species. The prosecution (read: those in favor of squishing those unfortunate bugs they encountered) argued that the bugs posed a threat to agricultural and logging industries and that — without established natural predators in the infested areas — their vigorously rising populations could outcompete native species, causing further ecological harm. Those speaking in defense of the spotted lanternflies asserted the innate value of so many insect lives outweighed the harm they might do. Further, killing individual bugs would likely not be enough to stave off the infestation.

Now, chances are that just one decade ago, no one at St. John's would have been thinking about spotted lanternflies — like most Americans of that time, they probably would never have heard of the species. Indeed, it wasn't until late 2014 when the insect first arrived in the United States. (Native to parts of China, the bug had also established itself in Korea as an invasive pest earlier in the 2000s.) And it is only in the past few years that the spotted lanternfly has more broadly entered public discussion. A Google Trends analysis shows searches for “spotted lanternfly” peak annually around September, with that peak search volume increasing to its all-time maximum this year. Those seeking information on the spotted lanternfly are most frequently located in Pennsylvania (where the pests first appeared), followed by other

Northeastern states (where they are currently most prevalent), but their range is rapidly expanding into the Midwest, leading to more recent searches in that area as well.

But what do we know about spotted lanternflies? Let's start with a look at their taxonomy — they belong to the family Fulgoridae (also known as simply lanternflies), and in turn to the infraorder Fulgoromorpha. Fulgoromorpha are commonly known as planthoppers because they tend to, when startled, hop off of the leaves they feed on. Like other members of this infraorder, spotted lanternflies' mouthparts have evolved to allow them to pierce plant stems and suck out the sap. Damage to the host plants can sometimes occur as a result — vineyards are at particular risk, for the insects especially enjoy eating grapevines.

Spotted lanternflies are also gorgeous animals throughout their lifecycle. Their forewings (which, as for most planthoppers, are held in a tent-like shape over the back when at rest) are grey with black spots, with red coloration on their hindwings and antennae and, for females, the rear end of their abdomen. They can reach slightly more than an inch in length, with females generally larger than the males. Starting in September of each year (which likely explains the annual peak in public interest in the bugs), adults lay thirty to fifty eggs at a time, with the mass of brown eggs covered in a waxy grey coating for protection, staying dormant through the winter. Once they hatch, the nymphs are black with white spots for the first three instars before gaining red coloration for their fourth instar. Adults can be

found starting in the summer months, and they generally survive for four or five months after their final molt.

Naturally, human intervention can cut their lives short — and you may soon be faced with determining a spotted lanternfly's fate, for they have already been spotted in Maryland, albeit not yet in Anne Arundel County. Should you see a spotted lanternfly, you should report the sighting to the Maryland Department of Agriculture through their online form.

Sources:

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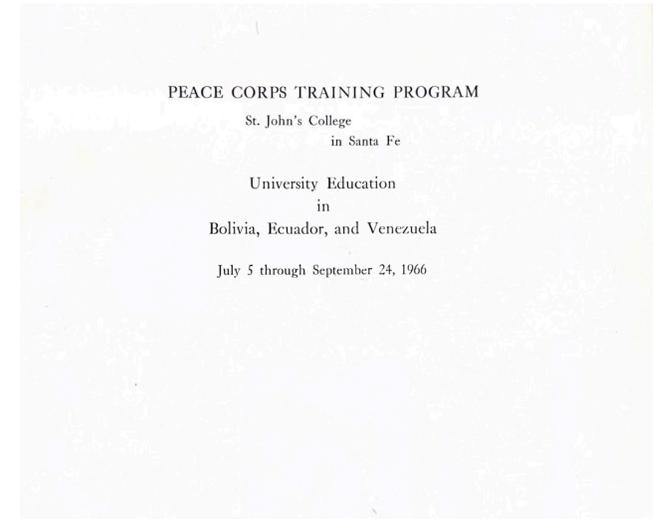
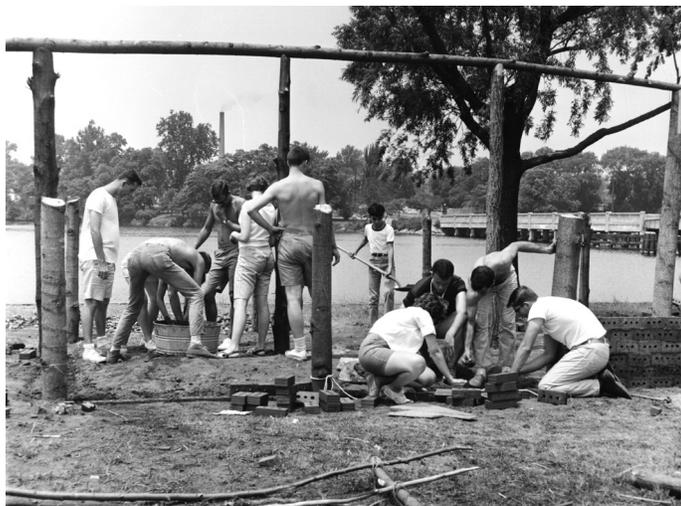
Finds From The Archives: St. John's and the Peace Corps

Helen Wagner

I am of the opinion that every Johnnie ought to know about the Peace Corps. Not only is it an intriguing option for postgraduate work, but the Corps and the College are, in fact, old friends. Let me tell you the story.

In case you're not familiar with it, the Peace Corps is a government agency that deploys volunteers abroad to provide support and assistance to developing countries. Perhaps you're planning to join after you graduate—a number of Johnnies do. But the Corps' connection to St. John's runs deeper than that: In the 1960s, it partnered with the College to create an experimental training program for its incoming overseas volunteers. A bit of archive digging brought me some gems: reports and reading material from the program, as well as a few photos of volunteers on campus. I was intrigued: what sparked this partnership?

The reports highlighted the value of St. John's educational philosophy as preparation for the Peace Corps. The Corps had experienced a few years of success after its establishment in 1961, but its members sensed something lacking in the training program. A 1965 report in our archives says that, prior to the collaboration with St. John's, "There had been little opportunity in some



programs for the trainee to stretch his imagination.”¹ Like many modern universities, the old training was lecture-based and composed of separate-track disciplines. But this kind of instruction did not translate well into the real world. The report states, “[W]hen the Volunteer goes to his overseas assignment, there is no one there to lecture him; he is on his own. The key to his success is individual initiative and responsibility.” There was a disconnect between training and reality. So, how to remedy this deficiency? The Peace Corps believed that St. John's offered a better approach to education—one that would smoothly translate to actual fieldwork. See this excerpt from the same report:

This summer's program is a special attempt to move away from separate track, one-way instruction to a program in which trainees can think, question, and participate instead of just listen. Our aim is integration: a single faculty, and one program built around common principles of education. Seminars have replaced lectures; books on India and America, among them epics of the east and west, have become the substance of the seminars.²

The rest of this initial report contained more detailed plans and reading lists for the summer curriculum, sprinkled with some healthy praise of the College and many beautiful words on behalf of the Great Books. One piece about St. John's was especially eloquent. It described how our



own Program was founded to reclaim the essence of liberal education amid a “crisis” of the American College. The Peace Corps, sensing disorder in a fragmented world, wanted a similar innovation in thinking. See this excerpt:

The American College, it was felt, faced a crisis. [It] seemed dismembered, an unconnected series of specialties and specialists, each arguing for supremacy...In short, the essential role of a liberal education—to make free men—no longer seemed the primary aim of the American college. It was to recover this goal that the new program at St. John's was founded...The world today reflects a similar crisis. Its ideologies and competing systems, its political, cultural, religious, social and economic specialties are also disordered. The violent arguments amongst them are what we call war, cold and hot; the mildest form of the argument is what we call cross-cultural shock. Whatever the term, it seems clear that these specialties require the kind of understanding and unity that will make peace and pluralism possible.³

Thus, in response to these parallel crises— both academic and cultural disintegration— the partnership was formed. The final report on the 1965 summer program states its six goals (some of which I’ve paraphrased):

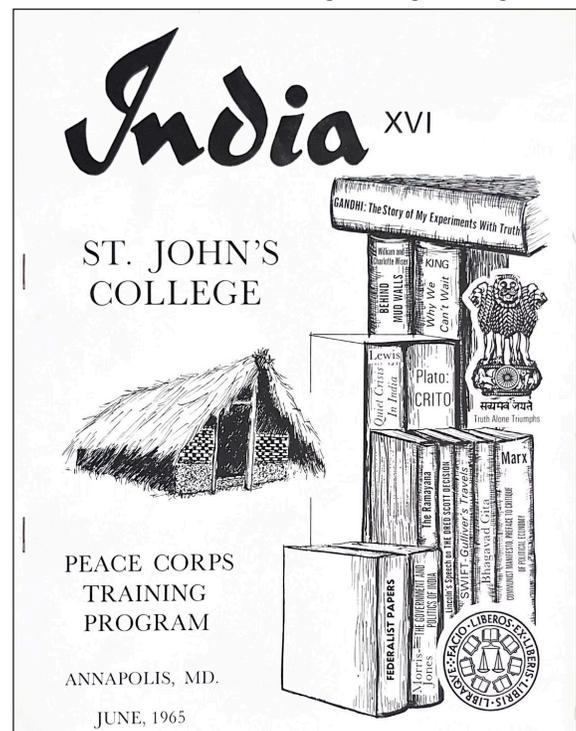
1. To give volunteers good practical training in Indian poultry (their specific area of fieldwork). To acquaint them with Hindi.
2. To teach the volunteers about India’s “heritage and traditions; its religious, political, economic and social problems; its life and customs.”
3. To teach the volunteers about their own country, its contemporary problems, and its Western roots.
4. “To do all this in too brief a time, in ways that would encourage them to think a little more freely, a little more

deeply, a little more carefully, a little more humbly, about themselves and their assignments, America and the west, India and the east, the world and its terrifyingly complex problems.”

5. “[N]ot to violate the spirit, integrity, and motivation of the trainees— however deep or shallow— by unwarranted and unnecessary intrusions, however well intentioned.”⁴

The final report also included a list of the St. John’s tutors involved—among them Jacob Klein and Eva Brann—as well as feedback from participating volunteers, a report by the director, Philip A. Camponeschi, and a commencement address by Klein. Camponeschi, in his report, said something wonderful about the value of seminars that I feel compelled to share here:

Unfortunately, the term seminar is often misunderstood; it is sometimes looked upon as so much intellectualizing, or simply as a technique. Divorced from its aims and ends - and they are never fully realized - a seminar is just a talk session. Not that there is anything wrong with good talk.



notes

- (1) “Training Program Statement,” India XVI, St. John’s College: Peace Corps Training Program, Annapolis, MD, June 1965.
- (2) Ibid.
- (3) “St. John’s College Evening Seminars,” India XVI, St. John’s College: Peace Corps Training Program.
- (4) Philip A. Camponeschi, “Report of the Director,” India XVI, Final Report: Peace Corps Training Program, Annapolis, MD, June 18-September 10, 1965.
- (5) Ibid.

How Language is Like Restoring a House

Dolan Polglaze

Somewhere in the dwindling days of August, a friend quoted a poem to me that has been drifting in and out of my mind ever since. The poem is short and taut: it strikes one head-on and feels somewhat like the blow of a hammer. It is called *Lightenings ii*, and is written by Seamus Heaney, an extraordinary Irish poet who uses language in a way I have never before encountered. Heaney is a master sculptor of language, and his poems are brilliant examples of what it looks like to fully narrow one's attention on the specifics of physical sensation and force. I have specifically chosen to write here about *Lightenings ii* for this reason: the poem speaks tangibly of language as an intentional action, and calls our attention to the gap—sometimes narrow, sometimes vast—between sensations and the words we choose to express them. Let us take the poem two stanzas at a time:

Roof it again. Batten down. Dig in.
Drink out of tin. Know the scullery cold,
A latch, a door-bar, forged tongs and a grate.

Touch the crossbeam, drive iron into a wall,
Hang a line to verify the plumb
From lintel, coping-stone and chimney breast.

As the first stanza begins, we can see someone at work. “Roof it again. Batten down. Dig in,” he begins arduously. We see someone sweating from the difficulty of re-roofing a house, securing it against the unpredictable sky. The second line shows that there is a certain roughness to this period of restoring the house against the harsh outside; things are in motion and nothing is settled. There is only a tin to drink from, and the scullery kitchen—normally a center of warmth for any home—is cold. Yet even in this time of re-building, there is strength and conviction. The listing of “latch, a door-bar, forged tongs and a grate” in the third line emphasizes the presence of security, the comfort of

knowing one's door is both latched and barred against whatever is outside. In the second stanza, the work becomes finer. Someone is checking the straightness of the “lintel, coping-stone, and chimney breast.” A lintel is the support that stretches across a window top to support the wall, and a coping stone is the highest stone in a wall. Verifying the verticality of the walls and chimney breast is essential to ensuring the structural life of a house. It is a precise act, requiring attention to minute variations and an acute awareness of the future. I say that ensuring the straightness of the walls is an act of future-looking because in such an act one is looking to build something that will last. Such work must be sufficient for the house to persist long after our labor on it has ended. Let us take up the last two stanzas:

Relocate the bedrock in the threshold.
Take squarings from the recessed gable pane.
Make your study the unregarded floor.

Sink every impulse like a bolt. Secure
The bastion of sensation. Do not waver
Into language. Do not waver in it.

This third stanza brings us firmly into the earth, to the foundation on which the house is built. A bedrock is the ground of any created thing, and relocating is surely no easy task. The bedrock is often the image of the absolute foundation of all things, the first place on which all else is built. In the second line, our vision is quickly reflected upwards, towards the triangular gable pane, which is usually the highest window in a house. Here also the restorer is verifying the squarings (angles) of the window in order to check whether the window is rectilinearly sound or not. The description of the house ends with a study of the floor, directly opposite of the roof where we began in the very first line. At this point, the poem is entirely charged with descriptions of force.

The strength and power needed to restore a house is immense: “Batten down... Touch the crossbeam... Drive the iron... Relocate the bedrock.” These actions require physical strength, power, conviction and time. Yet the quality—goodness—of labor is paramount: to properly restore a house, the actions of pure force—of roofing, of driving iron, of toiling with one’s entire body—requires a certain delicate attention and care.

As we reach the final stanza, we are no longer talking about physical action; force is now a mode of human impulse. Impulse seems to be somewhere between endeavor and action. It is like endeavor in that it is a sort of inward motion, but unlike endeavor in that an impulse seems to possess a clarity that mere inward motion lacks. Yet an impulse without a mooring is transient and passes away in the tumult of desire. This is why the imagery of sinking our impulses like a bolt strikes me as profound. It calls us to secure our convictions in the same way that one secures a structural beam out of the desire to secure the future of the house. Yet, anyone who has sunk a bolt into wood knows that it is destructive to under or over-tighten a bolt— likewise, one must also sink their impulses with a fine-tuned sensibility of the necessary force. Every impulse is a call to commitment, a call to sink and strengthen our unfolding sense of what must be secured in ourselves.

Heaney’s call for us to commit to the full reality of our experience culminates in his final meditations on language. “Secure/The bastion of sensation./Do not waver/Into language. Do not waver in it.” He likens sensation to a kind of fortification, drawing forth the thought that we must secure our trust in our sensations. Perhaps Heaney is causing us to recognize that the sum of our experience—which arises both inwardly from impulses, and outwardly from sensation—is all we’ve got, and so we must commit our trust to it. With language too, although it is perhaps the greatest weakness of human beings, it is also our greatest strength. When Heaney says, “Do not waver/Into language. Do not waver in it,” perhaps he means this: Do not allow the structures of language to sway you from the inimitable intricacies of your impulses and sensations, but when the time does come to commit to speech—and it inevitably will come—commit fully. Like the restoration explored earlier, if absolute care and a fine-tuned awareness of the force necessary for ensuring the strength of the house is not present, the house will not stand. Thus, there is a strong sense of quality and security required in building. Likewise, in regards to language, Heaney asks us to consider how important it is that we approach our

speech with these same sensibilities: we must not waver in the ideas we deem worthy of being secured. As the house must be made strong for its inhabitants, so our language must be made to stand strong and unwavering in the whirlwind of our ever-confused experience. Our speech must be an intentional and forceful action—the action of placing our trust in the security of our language-house.

I would like to end with an open consideration of language that this poem has lately stirred in my mind. Reading Genesis and Job again for my preceptorial, I was struck by the difference of the creation story as told in both. In the former, God’s creative force is embedded in his identity as a speaker, whereas in the latter, the same force comes from his identity as a builder. We are all familiar with the opening lines of Genesis: God’s use of language seems to draw things into being from the watery darkness of the pre-light cosmos: “When God began to create heaven and earth, and the earth then was water and waste and darkness over the deep and God’s breath hovering over the waters, God said, “Let there be light.” And there was light.” I have always regarded these lines as a sort of paradigm of absolute speech: in Heaney’s words, perhaps we could say unwavering speech. Now compare those lines of Genesis with God’s speech to Job about the same creation:

Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundations?
Do you know who fixed its dimensions
Or who measured it with a line?
Onto what were its bases sunk?
Who set its cornerstone
When the morning stars sang together
And all the divine beings shouted for joy? (38:4-7)

It is striking how Heaney’s poem seems to so closely echo these lines from Job. God relays to Job the Genesis moment as if He was but a house builder all along: God laid the foundation stone, measured the straightness with a line, and sunk the base through His creative language. God secured what was worthy of battening down, sinking the impulses most worthy of enduring through the chaos. Perhaps God’s first speech was the very first house.

The Subversion of Identity

Sibyl Kushnir

Within our current political climate, the question of how to ground queer politics is more urgent than ever. The political climate looks dire in this country, and to speak personally, the future is scary from here. I've been trying to think through what is necessary to ground a queer politics for a while. For whatever I say here, I'm mostly a scared girl who's read a few too many books and wants to share. I've read the following authors in the hope of answering my own questions, and I hope that by showing you through some prior critiques of earlier attempts at queer politics, I can provide something of use, or of interest. At the very least, this isn't a recent question as far as our history goes: it's been the focus of both Foucault's *History of Sexuality Volume 1*, and Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble*. In past movements for the queer liberation, the issues they identify are frequently in orbit of the related concepts: intelligibility and identity.

The movement of sexual politics in Foucault's time was largely a reaction to a perceived prior repression. In the

Victorian age, it is said, we hid the truth of our sexual desires from ourselves. Only recently have we allowed them to come to light in speech. This speech must be multiplied, and our understanding of our sex must be clarified—although its truth (the “truth of sex” as he puts it) will always remain a secret we cannot fully grasp. Thus, we must continue our investigation indefinitely.

It's with this paradox that Foucault starts his investigation: despite sex (and the desire it entails) being positioned as a secret we can never fully uncover, ever more numerous modes of inquiry are being brought to bear on it. It is hypothesized that during the Victorian age, a sort of puritan cultural law had descended and repressed any sexuality other than the married, heterosexual norm. This is referred to by him as the repressive hypothesis—the idea that cultural norms around sexuality took the form of a law of prohibition. That is, everything abnormal was prohibited, or driven out of view. Most importantly: sexuality was excluded from speech; it was not something that could be asked about nor could it answer. Our sexualities were hidden, made unreadable, their truth obscured. In order to bring them back into intelligibility, to understand ourselves, it was necessary to speak constantly of sex.

Upon further examination, however, it becomes apparent that during the Victorian age there was not so much a repression of sexuality. Instead, we can find the roots of the same search for a “truth of sex” that we see in Foucault's time. During the Victorian age, sex seemed omnipresent. It was of great medical and psychiatric concern (sex was introduced as a potential cause or cure of illnesses), there was an ongoing campaign against masturbation (and methods to stop it), social dynamics in families were structured around unspoken, but present, sexuality. All this of course being part of a questioning of sex, an attempt to make sex speak—in a different tone, certainly! But nevertheless, dating back to the Victorian age there can be traced an apparatus with a purpose of producing truths about sex.

What Foucault is tracing is the genesis of a *scientia sexualis*—attempting to make scientific inquiry of sex, producing (rather than discovering) truths of it that are ordered and intelligible. These truths often were truths about us—that is, the fact of one's sexual desires and habits were constituted as a part of one's very person. Think of how



Nude Wrestling Women, Leonhard Kern

the descriptor “gay” conjures a certain image when thought about, how it reveals something seemingly essential to the person it is applied to. As much as it tells you what it is, it also excludes what it is not—both the heterosexual, but also those who are not gay “correctly.” This makes more sense when applied to something like transition: my masculine style of dress does not suggest I am putting a whole lot of effort towards “becoming a woman,” despite the implications of my identity. In a certain way, I’m doing something wrong—I am here, but I am a logical defect, somehow or another excluded from the term meant to encompass me.

With those examples we have grabbed the roots of what “intelligibility” is. Inquiries into sexuality in search of a “truth of sex” are seeking out truths that can correlate ideas to people – the idea of a trans woman is used to identify a set of people in the world and exclude those who don’t fit the idea. One “passes” or not based on the actions one takes—nobody is looking at me for some kind of eternal womanly essence, just checking to see how I look and act. So, to be intelligible then: this is to act in such a way that accords with the classification-idea one identifies as.

The issues with forming a politics around intelligible identity may be already clear: intelligibility is predicated on the exclusion of the unintelligible. A political movement which constitutes itself around a certain identity has locked itself in: this identity cannot change and develop to reflect the actions taken by the members, nor can it work to the benefit of anyone who does not fit the standards it sets. Throughout the 1900s, feminist movements were divided over the question of whether or not trans women were part of the same struggle, or even oppressed at all. Though it would seem all involved were women, the way womanhood had been made intelligible was in such a way that could exclude trans women.

The intelligibility of identities is founded on a relationship between an ideal and the actions one takes. One’s actions, to remain intelligible, must remain in agreement with that idea. I am not that idea, though – none of us are– whatever idea I may be compared against as a defective mode, it is my actions that are being compared, my actions that reflect backwards and constitute who I am. Identity was never the original: as Foucault understood, its genesis was predicated on an inquiry into and categorization of actions. What is primarily me is my actions, whether they correctly reflect what my identity should be or not.

The alternative to a politics based on identity is a politics based around actions. Identity is a limiter: in order to remain intelligible under an organized framework of sexual identities, I lock myself out of certain actions, and I lock

myself out of developing—my identity cannot change. But queerness and politics both seem to be places where change is essential—to lock myself down like that would be untenable. By organizing ourselves around shared actions, rather than shared identities, identity itself can be set free to flourish and change with the free play of forms of life. So, while we don’t have much of a choice about being categorized, we seem to be always under the sign of one identity or another. Paradoxically, our way forward is a kind of a non-action: refusing to be determined by the marks of one’s identity, making it consistently unclear through one’s actions the “truth” of one’s identity. In not actively striving to “be,” we may find a way to disrupt the apparatus of our classification.



Émilie, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec

Joy, Beauty, and Terror

Luke Briner

There are many times when I'm overwhelmed, at the experience or even the prospect of joy, by a suffocating, all-consuming terror; crushed by the awareness of the beauty of life whenever I turn my attention to it. When I'm pained by the very existence of anything with the innocent sheen of childhood, not because I think it's bad, but exactly because I think it's too good—because the very idea of being present to it is too heartbreaking to me. When I feel that simply living in the world is something impossibly heavy to bear, not insofar as it's ugly, but insofar as it's beautiful. When real beauty presents itself to me as something so inconceivably vast and terrible that to give myself up to it would be to cripple myself beyond recovery. When the bright, happy sky opens wide above me, or the autumn leaves blowing gently in the ambrosial gold of the late afternoon sun, or the sweet innocence of a children's book where nothing truly bad ever happens and where there's always a happy ending, or the simple, unconditional love of my family, knocks the wind right out of me—skewers me with such a violent, crippling sadness that the only thing I'm able to do is skulk away to my dorm, put down the blinds, and sit there alone in the dark, trying to distance myself from what I'm feeling and from what made me feel.

But why this terror? Why, when I experience things I recognize clearly as joy and beauty, am I consumed with melancholy and dread? If it's true, as Plotinus observes and as I believe, that the Good is “the desired of every Soul” (Enneads, I.6.7), then what account can I give to myself for my apparent aversion to that very Good, to the very things that I actually value above all else?

Since I've had these feelings my whole life, I've had my whole life to investigate them. In fact, the very attempt to work out the psychological and spiritual mechanics of them has become a common way for me to distract myself from the pain of actually feeling them. What I'm confident enough to say about them here and now is that they arise not from joy or beauty in themselves, but from an inability to dissociate them from evil, their contrary. This occurs to me in three forms: the evil within myself, the evil within others, and the evil of the world itself. By “evil” I mean not just immorality, but whatever desecrates or destroys beauty and joy. By “beauty” I mean anything I understand

to be truly Good, and by “joy” I mean both the present experience of beauty, and the oblivious, happy innocence which can accompany it.

Now by “the evil within myself,” I mean the ever-looming threat of my own ignorance or moral deficiency threatening to ruin any kind of true joy I come into contact with, provided I ever allow myself to be fully open and present to it. The reality of this threat is confirmed to me by a consistent series of actions and consequences throughout my life. Whenever I've really given myself permission to be immersed in the joy of any given moment or situation, it's resulted in shame, rejection, and regret. And each instance of this throughout my life has appeared to me as a polluting stain, irremovable and degrading my very value as a human being, as that Scottish Lady with virile ambition so unchecked and “soul so potent in crime” (Baudelaire, “L'Idéal”) found out. What's especially disturbing to me is that it doesn't even have to be something conscious—actually, it rarely ever is. I live in constant dread of becoming like that fate-blighted Theban, undone by inescapable ignorance in spite of the best intentions. The fact that I'll always end up doing something wrong when I give myself any leeway to be present with joy fills me with a deep reluctance to engage with it at all. To do so would necessarily be to let my vigilance over myself slacken, and so would risk ruining that joy by the smallest misstep, which I would be bound to make. Innocence, then, is so crushing to me because it reminds me that I feel I've lost my own.

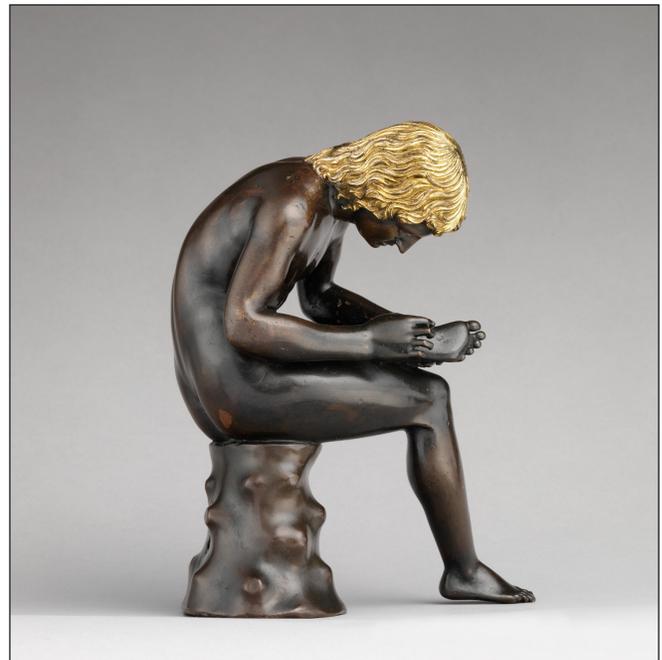
By “the evil within others,” I mean something very similar to what I've just said about myself, only extended to human nature as a whole. I know that great capacity for evil I so clearly see within myself is equally present in others, and I'm fully aware of the sordid, abysmal depths that we can and do sink to if we permit ourselves to. This makes the world to me not simply a dangerous but profoundly tragic place—one where even the most perfect innocence can be brutally and mercilessly beaten down into nothing at any moment, for any reason, and by anyone. The sadness I feel at joy, then, is in this sense a product not of the joy itself, but of the fact that I'm unable to get the thought of how painful the desecration of that joy would or will be. Human depravity at large, combined with the awareness of my

own unique capacity for, and, indeed, apparent tendency toward that depravity, is why I'm so often uncomfortable around others. I usually can't shake the feeling that every interaction, no matter how small, is nothing more than an opportunity for sin. And even in the rare cases where that opportunity isn't actualized, the dread of it being actualized at any moment, for any reason, and by any party, thereby ruining any innocent, wholesome joy there was, always accompanies me. I observe, then, a dialectical instability in joy: its juxtaposition with evil not only causes unbearable melancholy at the very beholding of it, but it also, in its carefreeness, inevitably produces the very evil which it consequently enters into juxtaposition with. The moments when our hearts are absolutely open are exactly the moments when the securing sanction of Conscience loses its sovereign power over it, and so when we hurt others and ourselves the most.

Finally, by "the evil of the world itself," I mean the even more fundamental circumstances of life that naturally and inevitably lead to joy's negation and pollution. For even if human nature was perfect, my own and that of others, the certainty of death's hellish dart finding its mark in the end is still just as certain. The world itself, in its inexhaustible vastness and variety, serves both as the foundation for all beauty and as that very beauty's immutable executioner. This is perhaps the deepest and truest cause of my terror. Here, joy is necessarily something ephemeral, something that, even in its most jubilant Spring, can't help but foreshadow the abyssal Winter which will inevitably follow. I'd certainly like to believe that there's another, infinitely greater Spring waiting beyond that Winter, but I'm not sure I'll ever truly be able to. If I did, then I doubt that I would have most if any of my present terror, given that what I'm terrified of is exactly joy's ultimate dissolution. I realize that the very ephemerality of joy makes it something even more precious and beautiful; but the more precious and beautiful it becomes, the more painful the consciousness of its ultimate loss becomes. I find myself hopelessly trapped between beauty and death, the one informing and accentuating the other. I fear death, but I fear it because in thinking of it I'm able at the same time to contemplate the utterly overwhelming beauty of life, of which death is a negation. On the other hand, I'm only able to recognize beauty for what it is precisely by my awareness of that ultimate negation. The tragic fragility of the state we find ourselves in is itself the content of its beauty, and that beauty is at the same time what makes that fragility so tragic.

All this is what makes me desperately want to be numb to myself, to distract myself from the overbearing presences of joy and beauty—to cut myself off from the world and

from my fellow human beings, and, in a perfectly safe and controlled environment, pursue what I think is worth pursuing without ever having to ever truly open my heart up to That which I know is always there. But this is futile, and I know it. I can't hide or distract myself forever. I know in my heart of hearts that someday, at the end of everything, I'll have no choice but to face joy and beauty in their absolute fullness alongside evil and death in their own. In that great and terrible and beautiful Moment, when I finally open myself up to it all, I know beyond knowing that I will see the bright, happy sky, and the late afternoon sun, and the children's books, and my family, and I will weep, and I will understand what I was always meant to understand.



Spinario, Antico (Pier Jacopo Alari Bonacolsi)

"Longing," Luke Briner

May I speak to myself now as to that
 Husband astrayed, whose tortured, homesick heart
 Beat 'gainst his visage artful and complex
 As savage curls of that Ogygian drink
 Crashed down upon the crags, with salty mist
 Commingling with his every bygone tear.
 Poor vagabond, is that the marriage left
 To you? I urge you, get you up, and go—
 Return to your dear Ithaca, who, sat
 Before the loom, weaves divers shrouds of Love.

Ξένος, pt. 2

Paz Daniela Ortiz

Santa María

As my first semester at St. John's comes to an end, something that I've found outrageous is the lack of conversation, even of attempts at starting one, about feminism. Finding myself at the early centuries of the Western canon, I suppose I half-expected that seminar conversations would not touch upon this topic for the sake of sticking to notions present in the texts at hand; what I did not expect, however, was the relief—almost glee—with which any interpretation that could be remotely considered as stemming from a place of feminist criticism was avoided or otherwise immediately shut down.

For all the time spent discussing justice, whatever this strange concept means based on what we manage to understand from Platonic dialogues, it seems that Johnnies struggle to connect this notion to the handling of womanhood in the other texts in the Program, happy to attribute any perceived misrepresentation or blatant unfairness to the author's historical or cultural context and thereby dismiss any further conversation or criticism.

Even if we put up with the evasion of debates of this nature, little is done to counter this in extra-academic life, or even in casual conversation. Events like the Pangaea Potluck and Hispanic Heritage Month go on to show that celebrations surrounding diversity only attract Johnnies' attention because they offer something, whether that be food or entertainment. Based on several conversations, first-hand information and attempts at dialogue, it appears that our apathy is undeniable, inescapable, glaring.

The rest of the world does not wait for study groups to catch up to what happens in it. The Mahsa Amini protests in Iran are still going on, and human rights groups claim that more than three-hundred people have been killed. As alleged free-thinking adults, shouldn't there be something we ought to be doing to, at the very least, raise awareness about it?

I do not feel familiar enough with the stories of the Iranian women taking part in the protests in order to recount their narratives to you at the present time. Instead, I will recount that of certain women from my country with the help of my notebook and pen. With them, I've drawn some people whose faces I want to share with you.

The first woman I've drawn is 82 years. He was from Huancavelica, Perú. The 31st of January this year, she was beaten and suffocated to death by her neighbor because she refused to have sexual intercourse with him. Her name was Linda Valentina Condori Huamán.

This woman's name is Sharoom Berusca León Jara. She was 23 years old and from Lima, also in Perú. Her dismembered and burned body was found inside a cave. Her partner killed her on the 20th of March, 2019.

The next woman's name is Sonia Ascate Chumpitaz. She was 39 years old, also from Lima, and eight months pregnant. The 13th of April she was beaten, disfigured, and then killed by her partner.

The following woman's name is María Marleny Abad Reyes. She was 34 years old and had four young children. On the 21st of last June she was killed with a machete wielded by her partner in front of her five year old daughter.

Further, this woman is Jessenia Rosmary Ramos Perez. Despite being only 23 years old she had three children. On the past 5th of July the father of her children beat her to death because he found out that she had had an abortion.

Finally, this woman's name is Silvia Saavedra Sangama. This past 5th of September, her former partner broke into the place where she worked and shot her in the head in front of her daughter.

These are just six victims of the thousands of cases of femicides registered in Perú every year, most of which have been caused by a current or former male romantic partner or other family member. None of these women have obtained justice yet. If I were to draw the faces of the 70 women who have been killed this year alone, I would run out of ink. And if I were to draw the faces of all the women around the world who have suffered from gender violence, the world would run out of paper.

Despite the huge advances the fight for gender equality has made, there's still thousands of cases like the ones I've mentioned happening all around the world, not just in my country, but literally everywhere. Being a woman, in spite of your age, sexual orientation, race, religion or occupation means being constantly in danger of being assaulted, hurt, and killed.

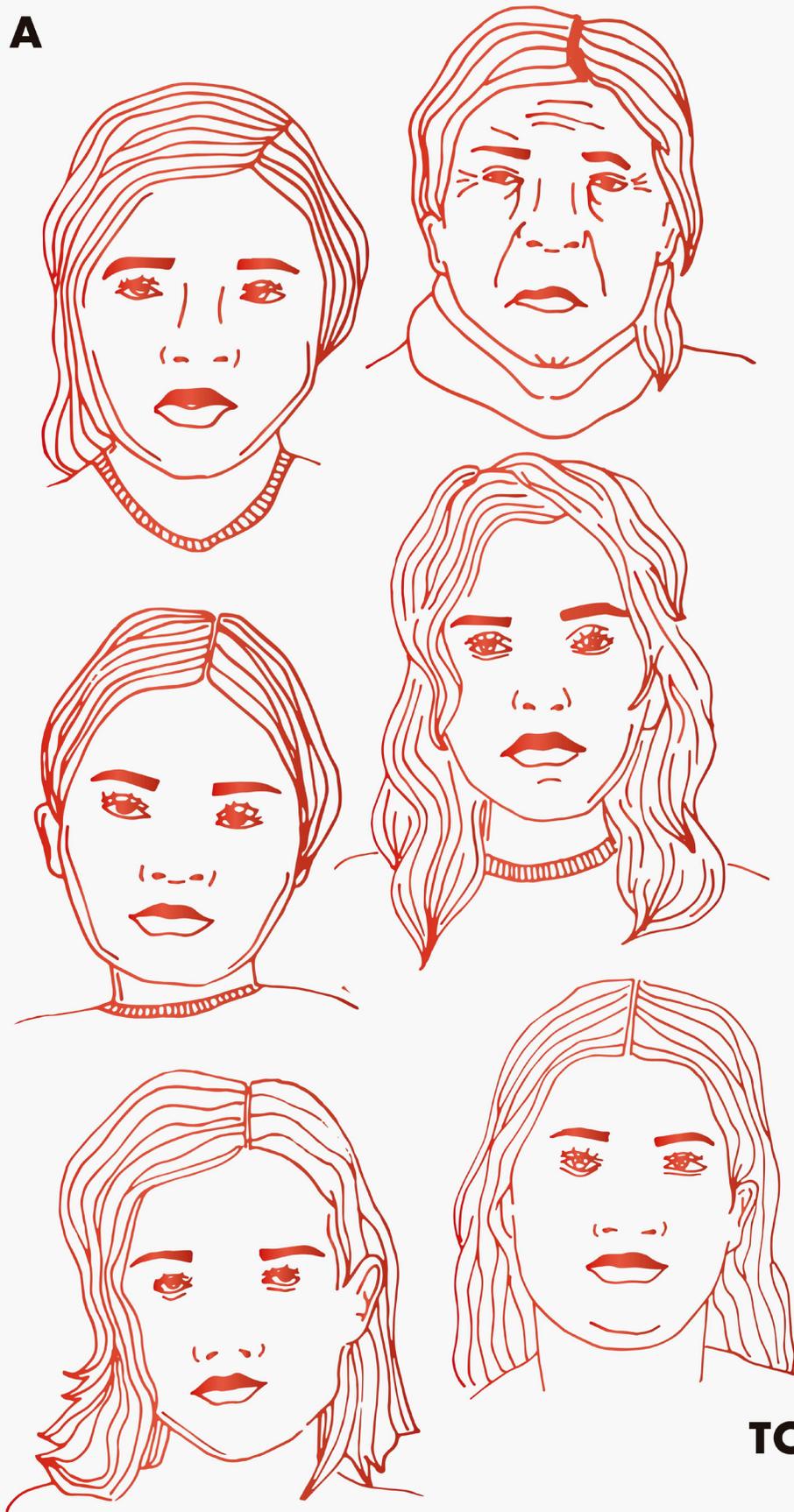
So we ask ourselves in seminar, "what is justice?" We will turn to different definitions and endless discussions, but if I were to speak from the heart, I'd say that for me, justice—a little of it, at least—can be found in dignified representation. In that arena, we Johnnies have a lot of work to do.

For the women who have died victims fighting gender violence, victims of a system designed to violently oppress them, rest in power. We remember them.

No justice, no peace.

**TOCAN A
UNA**

SIN JUSTICIA



NO HAY PAZ

**TOCAN A
TODAS**

Original Work by the Author

Questioning Questionable Lectures

El'ad Nichols-Kaufman

Lecturers enjoy an odd position at St. John's. At a school that likes to frame every learning opportunity as a conversation filled with questions, lecturers are provided the chance to speak, in statements, for an hour of their own specific findings and views. In general, most of them approach this in the same questioning spirit, and the atmosphere of question and answer period provides that same ability to examine their lecture from different people's points of view. Still, lecturers hold a larger platform than any one tutor or student, and thus have an unusual position of power granted to them by the college as an institution. When the college recognizes someone with the honor of giving a lecture, it is in some way recognizing something special about their thoughts, questions and beliefs. To some extent we recognize the power of a lecture slot as a place of respect or honor, like when we recognize the dean for the first lecture of the year, but as students, we largely fail to question the choice of

who the college chooses to honor in this way.

I was prompted to examine the granting of this power by a recent lecturer. His lecture itself was not the problem—it was rather unremarkable—but rather his wider views on the world posed a challenge to my understanding of the power granted by a lecture slot. This lecturer has a past of anti-semitic statements, arguing that the Catholic church was justified to kidnap six year old Edgardo Mortara, a Jewish child, since it was really the “the rescuing of a Christian child from the custody of those who would have defrauded him of the inheritance that he was promised in Baptism by teaching him to deny Christ,” or that the holocaust was really an attack on the Christian God, as if for him the racial hatred of Jews was not cause enough to condemn it morally. As a Jewish student, this made me uncomfortable, but as a Johnnie, I wondered whether I was in some way obligated to ignore, or at least put aside, these statements. After all, are we not meant to confront difficult ideas from difficult thinkers at this college, and address arguments of writers in good faith regardless of what their writers might have said in other contexts?

This thinking, which allows us to examine texts that we may find problematic, is deeply ingrained in St. John's culture. This is not only a concession necessary for the function of the program; it lies at the center of the very concept of a Great Books education. The texts on the program are not great because we like them or agree with them. Any kind of growth we experience through discussing and analyzing them should not, indeed cannot, come simply from the strength of our affinity to their authors.

The question at stake regarding lecturers, however, is not whether we should be willing to grapple with their difficult ideas. There are people who believe things that I find repulsive, and it doesn't do any good to pretend they don't exist. Rather, the question that perplexes me is how our willingness to approach difficult and even morally abhorrent views comes into play with the power inherent in the Friday night lecture. From



Scholars at a Lecture, William Hogarth



We Have the Exhibition to Examine, William Heath

the lecturer's unusual position of honor comes a connection of the lecturer's thinking to the college itself. It is not that the college is actually endorsing their opinions, but it is endorsing their intellect in some way, saying that their thoughts are worth engaging with, and that they are worth listening to with the greater attention provided by the lecture format. By receiving a lecture slot, the lecturer is also receiving an endorsement by the college of their authority as a thinker.

This brings us to something which may be obvious, but I think is important to state: it is vital that we hear and examine thoughts we disagree with. However, that does not mean that we should automatically accept the intellectual authority of those who think these thoughts. We should be able to examine these two concepts separately, and be able to agree with someone's ideas without recognizing their authority as a thinker, while also being able to disagree with someone's ideas while recognizing their intellect.

With this, the college's responsibility in selecting a lecturer still remains uncertain for me. If the college really is granting this power and recognition to lecturers, the choice of lecturer is an incredibly important, and delicate one. If the college recognizes someone whose thoughts have led them to hold repulsive opinions, it is in some way recognizing those repulsive opinions as legitimate, if not necessarily as correct, through its authority as an institution. These opinions may be acceptable

to examine on their own, but if the college as an institution recognizes them, it jeopardizes its own mission as an institution. As a Jewish student, if I sense the college endorses thinking that leads to personal attacks against me and my community, that damages the credibility of the college and the program itself.

I do not feel like I am absolutely qualified to judge what thought is worthy of being recognized by the college, but neither do I feel that there is any one person in the administration who is so qualified. I see no easy way to absolutely determine what is worthy of being honored by a lecture. Maybe it is easy for me to declare that a lecturer should not be honored when I feel personally insulted, but even there my own personal feelings may be getting in the way of the kind of detailed meditation necessary to determine whether or not the speaker should be invited. The best I can do now is hope for further examination and consideration of this issue, and encourage the rest of the polity to think about it with me. As a community which is constantly concerned with virtue, it is collectively our responsibility to look at who we honor, and what kind of thinking we see as worthy of our own consideration.



Man and Woman in Attitudes of Distress, Henry Tresham

Amsterdam: Are Big Names Enough?

Ranger Kasdorf

I refuse to believe that David O. Russell's latest film—or at least this version of it—was ever actually pitched. I can certainly believe that somebody at some point long ago pitched a movie about the Smedley Butler affair, a strange and obscure little piece of American history ripe for dramatization, and I can even believe that part of that pitch involved casting Robert de Niro as Smedley Butler. But *Amsterdam*—the 134-minute ensemble-period-piece-cum-celebrity-orgy with more top-billed actors than letters in its title—is the kind of film that can only be the result of a long, long roll down the side of a mountain of Hollywood cynicism, accumulating more and more A-listers, money, and delusion before finally barreling into theaters with a soft thud.

This kind of writing is admittedly outside of my comfort zone. Each of my previous film reviews for the *Gadfly* have been earnest analyses of films which—flawed though they are—I view as respectable works of art whose ideas deserve some sort of good-faith engagement. But if *Amsterdam* has any ideas worth engaging with, they are certainly not the ones the filmmakers had intended. This is not a film about undying friendship or prevailing justice or any of the other themes which it so desperately wants to be about; what *Amsterdam* is really about is clout. It's about a director taking a mediocre, unpretentious script and stuffing it with stars until it chokes to death on glitter.

The marketing for *Amsterdam* shamelessly uses the film's cast as a major selling point. Indeed, it would seem to be the only point worth selling: I saw the trailer countless times in the months leading up to the film's premier, and yet when I invited friends to see it with me I could only tell them I was pretty sure it was a murder mystery, and, based on the use of *Ten Years After's* "I'd Love To Change The World" in the trailer, that it was set in the '70s. But though the basic premise of the film eluded me, I could say, without any uncertainty, who was in it.

The remarkable thing about *Amsterdam's* cast is not merely that it has a lot of stars; it's that they are stars with completely different backgrounds, amounts of experience, and—let's be blunt here—levels of talent. Long-established and widely-respected legends like Robert de Niro and Christian Bale are given equal billing with fresher faces like Rami Malek and Anya Taylor-Joy, as well as off-genre wildcards like Chris Rock and—most bafflingly—Taylor Swift. The result of this names-drawn-from-a-hat approach to casting is an ensemble which is much less than the sum of its parts. Christian Bale, Margot Robbie, and Anya Taylor-Joy are all thrilling here—Bale especially—and even Rami Malek and Chris Rock provide some memorable moments. But these performances, strong though they are when taken individually, clash hideously when taken together.

Although it's the aim of an actor to make the



audience see them not as themselves, but as their character, the truth is that audience members have a knee-jerk response to seeing an actor they recognize, and the way they process the action of a scene will inevitably be affected by how familiar they already are with the actors involved. A skilled director can use this effect to their advantage; Steve McQueen's excellent *Twelve Years A Slave* wisely cast the beloved Brad Pitt as Canadian abolitionist Samuel Bass, making the audience trust him automatically even before they find out that he wants to help free Solomon Northup from slavery. But in *Amsterdam*, there is no such intent. To borrow an observation from a friend who accompanied me to the film's premier, it very often feels like an amateur theater production in which the director keeps bringing people onstage but forgets to have them exit. Director David O. Russell just doesn't seem to know what to do with his actors much of the time; every scene is just a hazy mess of recognizable faces, all pulling focus from one another and ultimately making the viewing experience incredibly dull.

Amsterdam's box office performance appears to have borne out my criticisms; the film cleared a piddling \$28 million at the box office compared with its \$80 million budget, a considerable amount of which I imagine went towards securing its cast. Certainly, *Amsterdam* is far from the first film to lean on its A-list stars, but it's hard to think of another recent film that did it so flagrantly and was punished so severely for it. 20th Century Studios seems to have overplayed their hand here, perhaps assuming that *Amsterdam* was too big to fail and sinking an embarrassing amount of money into it, only to be met with a round rejection from the movie-going public. There is a lesson to be learned here, and it's one I hope Hollywood takes note of: if you want to get butts in seats, you need more than just a long list of famous people on your poster. If a film does well, it will be because it had something to say, because it pushed boundaries, because it captivated people—not just because it had Taylor Swift in it.

{Tutor Submission}

Onyx Moon

J.H. Beall

He died "East of here under an Onyx Moon"
in an older time. We have not seen his like
since. This is a letter from the Dark
Ages, of a place and time it is better

not to know. What is the wind coming to?
Or from? Which is the orb that rises North
of a convergence of tracks, dark rails
shining, seeming to have their own light.

We know in our minds these thin strings, barely
luminous, do not meet. But what does the mind
know, really? It is the heart that teaches us
dread. There is a mist in the sky in place

of stars. What compass can tell us, we
do not believe: the false convergence of tracks,
the true convergence of meridians, the pale
skin of a girl we knew once, becoming flame.

Good Hill Haunting

Shirley Jackson, As It Turns Out, Has Written Things Other Than *The Lottery*. Who Would've Gussed?

Emily Caswell

The Haunting of Hill House by Shirley Jackson, and adapted for the stage by F. Andrew Leslie, hides the horror from you as long as it can. Right as it's too late to save her, we realize Eleanor Vance (Ranna Kisswani) is the real force haunting the play and that the house has already gripped her. This realization is the thrust of Director Megli Micek's production. Once it happens, the audience remembers back to her strange moments earlier passed off as character quirks. The terror of Eleanor is snuck into the play, and it is terrible when it arrives.

Ranna Kisswani's performance is the most gripping, most chilling in the play, and she delivers it without holding anything back. Compared to the surreal way she talks in the latter half, and the intensity of her screams, her delivery in the beginning feels regrettable. All the actors suffer from what I call "actor-voice" at the start of the play, Ms. Kisswani being no exception. She warms up as her character gets closer to the brink, but I would've liked to see her speaking more naturally with Theodora (Sarah Lieberman) who is implied to be a love interest (more on that below). The main four characters, Eleanor Vance, Dr. John Montague (Wyatt Sweeney), Theodora, and Luke Sanderson (Griffin Kearney) are shown to quickly develop a cheerful, joking way of talking with each other. But the actors carried their conversations without real laughter or fluidity, and the lack made some scenes feel wooden. There were moments, though, where the characters interrupted each other, and those moments felt like genuine people having a genuine conversation. Ms. Kisswani nailed the

delivery of Eleanor's most tragic moment when she asks to go home with Theodora. Theodora's initial warmth has been growing colder throughout the play and at this moment we see Eleanor open up. "I'm serious, Theodora." These words carry real weight, and later I thought back to that scene and wished that Eleanor could have gotten her escape. Theodora, however, at first rejects it as a silly joke and then just walls herself off completely.

Sarah Lieberman excellently portrays that responding chill. She does however continue to speak in a similar tone throughout the play, giving the performance a slightly artificial feel.

Griffin Kearney does a similar thing. His character is constantly cracking jokes, but they are almost all told in the same voice regardless of the scenario. While the audience member suspects the jokes are meant to come off as confident and suave (Mr. Kearney's fine sweater vest points in this direction), the surprising similarity between his tone and Arthur Parker's (whose character is more of a joke than not) makes this hard to realize. A more relaxed, sarcastic tone would have helped make his character stand out.

Wyatt Sweeney's performance was more dynamic, but I think his portrayal could have been weirder. Dr. Montague often has lines at the end of scenes, often ones with troubling implications. When Mr. Sweeney says these lines, he speaks like a character thinking aloud, which would best suit the character's eccentricity if it carried through to all the rest of his lines. Well, almost all—there are several parts where the character is on autopilot, interacting with Mrs. Montague (Rachel Schuman)—and increasing the eccentricity when he's earnest would only magnify his deep hatred. We would learn that his absent-minded philosophical way of speaking is more honest, and that he enjoys being around these three relative strangers more than his own wife.

Rachel Schuman and Mirek Jungr are very funny, and provide an excellent adversary for us to side with against the cast's main four. They don't do very much except be annoying, but they entertain and provide a certain variety that makes the next scare scarier. Ms. Schuman speaks in the style of high-theater, but it works with her character. She exuded false confidence, which is just who

THE HAUNTING OF HILL HOUSE

ADAPTED FOR THE STAGE BY

F. ANDREW LESLIE

FROM THE NOVEL BY

SHIRLEY JACKSON

Cast

Eleanor Vance	Ranna Kisswani
Dr. John Montague	Wyatt Sweeney
Theodora	Sarah Lieberman
Luke Sanderson	Griffin Kearney
Mrs. Montague	Rachel Schuman
Mrs. Dudley	Aviel Honey
Arthur Parker	Mirek Jungr
Hugh Crain	Joseph Bennett
Mr. Grattan	Silas Pillsbury
Mr. Hill	Ranger Kasdorf

Crew

Director	Megli Micek
Asist. Director	Dash Buyske-Friedberg
Tech	Avery Laur
Costumes	Megli Micek

DRAMATISTS
PLAY SERVICE

Special Thanks

Alyssa Raymond, Rachelle Mims, Diane Enser, and Eli Ross

Ms. Montague is supposed to be. Mirek Jung is much the same. These characters make me wish the other actors were in contrast to them even more—more natural and dynamic. Mrs. Dudley (Aviel Honey, Avery Laur) is also very funny, her extreme, over-the-top seriousness gives an opportunity for the main characters to bond and have something to laugh at. Mrs. Dudley is actually giving us fair warning of the house’s dangers, but the absurd way she tells us is funny enough that we can look past it (as the characters do themselves).

The scares throughout the play are fairly well done, but only once did they really make me jump. A door slam behind me was surprising and unsettling, and I think the production could have utilized the boathouse balcony. They did use the attic space well to make the

whole building shake, which was very effective. The music was excellent when present, and in fact could have been even more present without being too much. There were some issues, like the lighting cutting in and out for some reason. I don’t know if it was intentional or not, but its effect was more distracting than eerie. Aside from this flickering, the lights did have some clearly intentional, good moments.

Overall, *The Haunting of Hill House* delivered an interesting portrayal of loneliness. If the actors had been able to be a bit less like actors, I think this portrayal could have been even more convincing than it was. Nonetheless, the intense conclusion of the play shined through despite this, and the bleakness—the evil of the house—was felt throughout the boathouse.



Cast of the Haunting of Hill House
Back: Aviel Honey, Rachel Schuman,
Silas Pilsbury, Joseph Bennett, Mirek Jung
Front: Griffin Kearney,
Sarah Lieberman, Ranna Kiswani,
Wyatt Sweeney

The Crane

Lee Tague

Yesterday evening I thought about my reasons to go on living. I thought about those reasons because I was thinking about my reasons not to.

My body had become accustomed to the subtly wearing jolt one feels when walking along a set stone path. My mind no longer took in the clip clop of my cracked faux leather shoes. I was supposed to carry on. I was supposed to just stay on a path. A path that would supposedly take me to a place I was supposed to go.

For some reason, I left that path and my body followed with me. That constant shock wave disappeared, replaced by a blanket of unnumbered blades of grass embracing my every step. Before my eyes lay a small field, at its end was a series of small buildings made of once deep red bricks now washed away by the flood tide of countless Sun-filled days. Not a soul around. Behind me, near that path, a rush of automobiles came in a scattered cascade of sound, growing quieter with each step. To my right a thin tree line nestled itself against a hill and faded along its crest; I directed myself towards its edge.

Sunset was drawing near, and needles of light pierced the wave of broad green leaves swaying in the air up above. The calming sight inspired me. I felt able to breathe. I kept moving forward.

In the failing warmth of the day, my body felt comfortable, warmed but not hot, it was enjoying the light exhale of wind against its cheek. I was off in my thoughts. The tree line came upon me faster than I had expected, and my feet were confronted by a rather steep but not unnavigable hill which led to a river.

Going downhill, I thought about my reasons for living, because I was still thinking about my reasons not to. My feet reached the bottom, and they weren't so sure where to go next. So, they just kept churning forward; they took turns: up, down, up, down, but always forward.

Until, I noticed a little dock tucked between a thick collection of cattails, willow trees, and an assortment of water grass. My feet took me out onto the bleached gray wood. The dock's dead boards reminded me of home for some reason. Such ugliness in that lumber. The familiar feeling of walking on wooden planks made me comfortable.

My eyes looked out on the quiet river, a brilliant fire burning on its surface; its model, the Sun, hung up above. My eyes moved slowly from detail to detail. I took in the whole of my view, but I was still. I was still in my mind. I was still mulling over my reasons to not live, so my mind wandered over my reasons not to do that.

For some reason, my head turned to the right; with my head turned my eyes, and with my eyes I saw something that brought me back from my reasons not to anymore and my reasons not to do that. On another dock, made of those bleached planks, the form of a slender Water Crane stood still, basking in the final rays of the Sun. I didn't think about much, aside from my days of fishing as a boy and the hatred we had for such birds. You see, a Crane hungers, and that hunger drives them forward at a constant rate. In that hunger a Crane can deplete an entire pond or small lake of life. Cranes are constant, steady, efficient fishermen and stark competition can build hatred. That was the boy me; the me of now, at least of yesterday, wasn't concerned with the comings and goings of a Crane. I thought the Crane was beautiful, in an ugly sort of way.

My head turned back to the water, carrying my eyes onto the calm scene. I thought more about my reasons. They were good reasons, I thought. So, the Crane and I stood still there for a long time. I wondered what the Crane was thinking about. My suspicions came true. The corner of my eye caught motion. Turning my head and eyes, I took in a strange dance.

In a sudden leap, a flutter of wings, and a splendid circular motion, that for some reason I desired to have gone on and on, the Crane demonstrated masterful its grace.

Flying forth from the water, plucked from its world, a silver form reflecting the light of the Sun was torn from its once tranquil reality and thrown onto those dry planks. It felt like a long dance, but it wasn't. Time just slowed down. I was focused on them. I know the nature of animals well. I feel that nature in my self. I know the hunger to take. I've taken life, just like the Crane, just like this flopping silver form. Regardless of what I knew, the scene was unpleasant to watch, but once you witness the

start of such a thing it demands to be seen through to the end, one way or another.

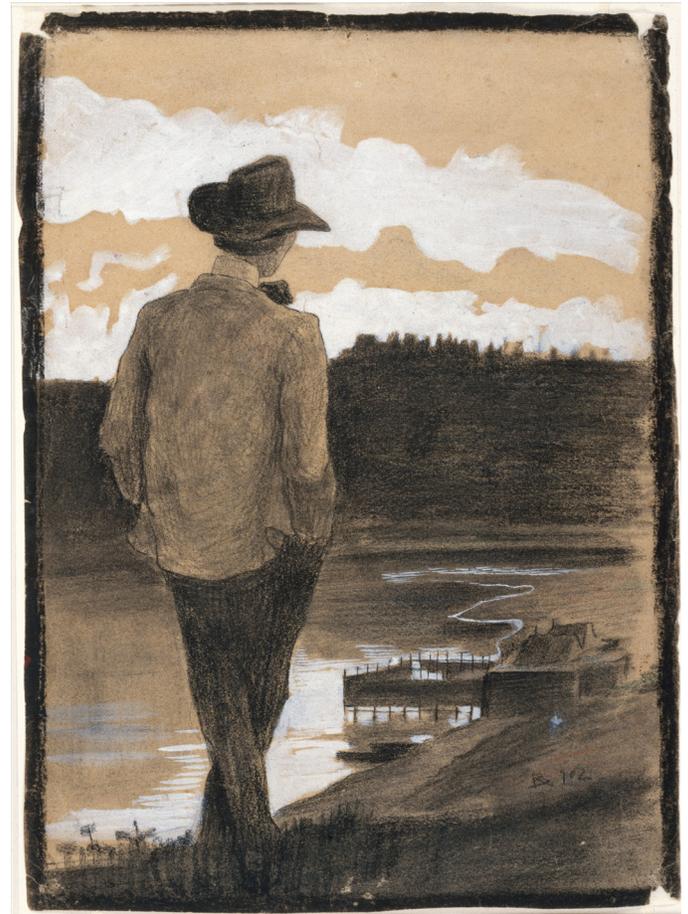
The silver form had little hope. It rested in the center of the dock. Its shining body slowly drying out under the beating of the setting Sun. Its sides working up and down in a frantic and shocked motion, unsure why it could no longer feel the reassuring breath of life. The silver form, for all its struggling, went nowhere. The nature of its situation was coming into view:

The silver form would shake and flip, then cease; in its ceasing the Crane would pluck it from the dock testing its resolve, testing its reasons. The silver form would struggle inside the mouth of the Crane until it was dropped back to the planks. Standing over it, the Crane would let it go still and when all the silver form's motion was gone, the Crane would lunge, piercing its body with its grotesque slender beak.

Then nothing. The scene would pause. The Crane constant, the silver form still. Then the frantic motion. Back to the mouth. Back to the planks. Piercing. Pause. Over and again.

But with time the silver form seemed to forget some of its reasons. The shaking became weak, the flipping ceased entirely. Back to the beak. Into the air. Towards the Sun up above. The nature of the silver form's situation beamed down on its now still body, reflected into my sight.

My head turned back to the water, it was growing dark, the Sun was gone, only a burning horizon lingered. I thought about my reasons. They all seemed good at the time.



Young Man on a Riverbank, Umberto Boccioni

Henry's Homer's Odyssey

Henry David Hills

Hello, I am one of your Greek assistants this year. Although I know the other Greek assistants to be very qualified persons worthy of their positions, I am the only one named Henry. You do the math.

Translating is a sad work, especially when it's poetry being translated. It's an impossible job to capture the feel of the original language—its sounds, its rhythms—which influences us on a level deeper than many think. Add to this so many words lost in translation, and you've got yourself a doozy. In truth, I can't give you Homer's Odyssey. Only Homer can do that. I can only offer you what little I know of it from my limited and brief exposure to it: Henry's Homer's Odyssey.

So, here's how translating a line goes for me. Take the first one of book ix, “τὸν δὲ ἀπαμειβόμενος προσέφη πολύμητις Ὀδυσσεύς” which I've rendered as “And in response, Odysseus much-shrewd:”. I always tell my Greek assistance clients to start with the subject, then to go to the verb. Simple. Ὀδυσσεύς—“Odysseus”. προσέφη—“answered” (literally something like “toward-spoke”). “Odysseus answered.” And we go from there. τὸν is a masculine singular accusative definite article—we call it “the.” Homer uses “the” substantively very often, so it could also be taken to mean “him” in this instance. “Odysseus answered him.” δὲ is short for δέ, a particle which connects thoughts together. It could mean “and,” “but,” or even go untranslated. I used “and.” “And Odysseus answered him.”

“Homer” “wrote” in dactylic hexameter. And since I regard anybody who translates poetry into prose as someone making a grievous mistake, if not an outright moron (and this goes for J.R.R. Tolkien's translation of Beowulf. Sorry, Tolkien.) I decided to use the dactylic hexameter of the English-speaking world: iambic pentameter. That's how I ended up with “And in response, Odysseus much-shrewd:”. I had to cut out some words to fit the meter, of course. My translation doesn't stress Odysseus's act of responding as much as the original, nor does it preserve the original word order, nor does it specify to whom Odysseus responds. Homer meant for these small details to be included, otherwise they wouldn't've been written. So, I've butchered his hard work and danced on his grave just to bring you a chip of the grand work he made. You're welcome.

So that's how I translate a line of Homer. Rinse and repeat five-hundred-and-sixty-five times over, and you'll have the entirety of book ix, which I hope to have completed sooner than later. In the meantime, please enjoy the provided 28 lines (although it's technically 27.5 lines if I'm being honest).

“Oh lord Alkínoös, renowned by all,
a noble thing to listen to such bards
as this, his voice as though it were of gods.
For deem I no end gratifying more
than when a fest may hold secure the realm,
and meal-guests listen to a bard and sit
on benches, tables full of bread and meats
among the host, and the wine-man, drawing drink
from mixing-bowls, bears wine and fills the cups.
This looks to my wit a thing most beautiful.

But your heart is bent to beg my pitiable
cares, that I yet, lamenting, groan the more.
In that case, what tell o'er I the first? What last?
The sky-realm gods have giv'n me many cares.

But now will I reveal my name, that you
may know, and when I flee the ruthless day,
I'll be your guest-friend, though my house lies far off.
Laértēs' son Odysseus am I, well-known
by all for craft; my fame to heaven goes.
I dwell in shining Ithaka; there's a mountain,
leaf-shaking Néritos, jutting out;
around are many islands close together,
Doulíkhon, Sámē, tree-full Zákynthos.
Mine isle lies low and far into the sea
toward western-gloom – the others far toward east
and sun –
a jagged place, but good as a nurse. Oh, I
can't see a sweeter land...



Still Life, Georg Fiegl

Bubble Boy

Paolo Medelius

“Bubbles” constrain their members to specific, collective experiences while reinforcing the attraction of such experiences, and the common negative connotation of bubbles comes from the fact that those in one tend to become isolated from certain beneficial experiences outside their bubble. I live in a bubble and have since soon after I first arrived here. Mine is a version of the St. John’s College bubble, and many of us live in our own version of this bubble. Our small campus provides not only for the simple needs of the so-called Room Johnnie, but also for the more extensive needs many of us have as well. It is a powerful and compelling form of solipsism, and therefore it is worth investigating.

There are two main questions I’d like to pursue: 1.) How fulfilled can we be inside this bubble? And 2.) To what extent does being inside this physical bubble isolate us from certain non-physical experiences? As a mode of investigation, I’ll describe my own bubble.

My bubble first includes the essential destinations on campus: my dorm in Humphreys, the dining hall, my classrooms, and the most direct paths between these places. Slightly less often, my bubble includes the gym for exercise and jiu-jitsu, the Chasement for unspecified extracurriculars, and McDowell for swing dancing. It allows me to “touch grass” so to speak, usually through gardening, playing soccer, or sunbathing. I am probably on the more active and involved side when compared with most Johnnies, but there are still many parts of campus that I rarely frequent. For example, my bubble includes the path in front of McDowell only once a week when I walk to the BBC for Gadfly meetings, and it includes the coffee shop only when I’m there to meet with someone.

While my bubble provides for most of my general interests to some extent, the virtue of it lies in something other than what I actively pursue. While I enjoy many of the activities that I’m involved in on campus, and while I appreciate my bubble for supplying me with the means to take part in them, it is not any of these extracurricular activities which really satisfy and fulfill me. Even in the moments when my general interests are entirely satisfied, I find that the majority of my fulfillment depends on effectively pursuing those interests that I explicitly came here to pursue: the St. John’s program and my own education within it. This, I think, is the real concave limit of my bubble to me.

Looking at it this way, I begin to love my bubble. Not only does it provide for my “extra” needs in a way that’s for the most part satisfactory, it also reminds me of the limited

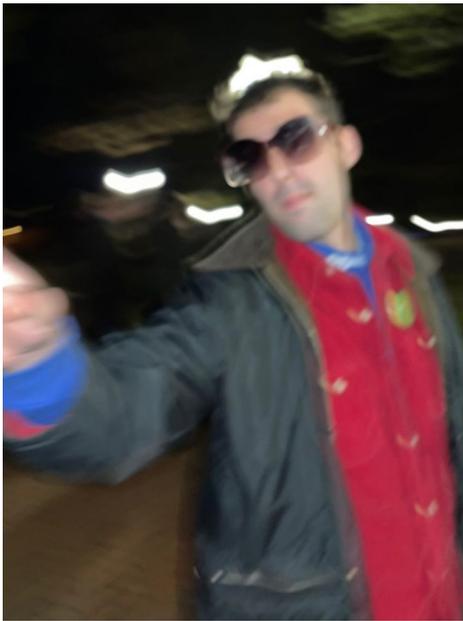
fulfillment my “extra” needs can provide in comparison to what I’m truly here for. Further, I do not feel isolated from or that I’m missing any beneficial experiences that may exist outside of my bubble. I assume that if those experiences did exist within the bubble, they would still pale in comparison to the curriculum and the experience of seriously engaging with it.

Putting aside my flight of academic passion, I do still require other sorts of fulfillment. Often this involves some form of socializing, but I think this is best done on campus anyhow, perhaps because others spend so much time here in their own bubbles as well. Again, I find that I love my bubble not only for what it does for me but also for what it does for others. Perhaps this love, along with my low evaluation of extracurricular interests, makes me into something of a Room Johnnie. It feels like that may be the way my progress is leading me. Even if this is so, though, it is a life that I’m choosing for myself, and one which the bubble in its extracurricular provisions always challenges. There are always extracurricular activities and satisfactions available on campus, and how far one goes in indulging in them determines something about the breadth of one’s bubble. Whatever choice each of us make, however, it is my assertion that it is always a voluntary one: we may all be bubble boys, but we are also boys within a bubble of our own choosing.

I believe this voluntary decision is the virtue of the St. John’s College bubble. The path to dedication to the Great Books and perhaps even to becoming a Room Johnnie is a just one, with constant opportunities to reevaluate one’s interests. At the time of my writing, I have not stepped foot off campus in four weeks, and this decision feels most free, just, and fulfilling. I am a bubble boy, and I smile at that fact.



Bubble Boy,
Max Anthon



THE STUDENT NEWSPAPER OF ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE

Founded in 1980, the Gadfly is the student newsmagazine distributed to over 600 students, faculty, staff, and alumni of the Annapolis campus.

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