

THE GADFLY

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The EROS Issue

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Letter from the Editor

The Love Shack was a sex shop back in my hometown of Atlanta, GA. I remember being 11 and asking my mom to stop by whenever we passed it. It looked like an old Abe Lincoln-esque cabin and had bright purple railings. Being 11, I only knew it was for adults and I wanted in; and being the mother of an 11 year old, my mom never stopped. I still have never gone in, and nowadays, I'm not sure I even would. But in the same spirit of that curious and naive 11 year old, I offer you THE EROS ISSUE.

Inside, you'll find bad dates and heartbreak, a restaurant review, updates on next year's campus housing situation, and much more. Valentines Day might've passed, but love, I assure you, is still in the air.

Daniel Nathan,
Editor-in-chief



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.

Symposium offers the opportunity for our readers to thoughtfully consider contrasting opinions regarding a particular topic.

Polis serves as a platform for elevating voices in our community. Here we find letters to the editor, columns, cartoons, and submitted pieces.

Delegate Council Herald Report

Rylee Bain

Once again, we have been busy, busy bees over on the Delegate Council. During our meeting on January 31st, we heard a report from Ms. Maddie Minor about the goings on in the Alumni Association, notably the Odyssey program is going well. An amendment to the SCI was passed to make the charter align with how the club currently operates. Budgeting time followed, for sake

of brevity only budgets with notes will be listed, the rest will be in the BOB below: In our most recent meeting on February 14th, we held the SCI freshmen representatives and after hearing from three representatives we elected Ms. Millie Ransohoff and Mr. Ian O'Donnell. We then moved on to passing the Budget Omnibus Bill or the BOB:

Club	Proposed	Approved	Notes
Energeia	\$3,600.40	\$2,920.24	Club was willing to reduce the budget greatly.
Gadfly	\$1,520	\$1,105	Club was willing to reduce the budget greatly.
Platonic Players	\$880	\$380	Club was instructed to talk to Gary about wood, and also look into licensing for watch parties
Johnnies of Color	\$2000	\$1,800	Rachelle Munsey is helping them pay for some things
Prank	\$3,500	\$3,500	The approval of this budget was purely for tradition, unfortunately Prank has been canceled this year
Video Game Club	\$294	\$294	They get to have free snacks :)
Outdoors Club	\$500	\$500	The archon needs to find appropriate storage
KWP Emergency	\$50	\$50	They reduce printing costs from \$500 to \$50 omg

Our next meeting was on February 7th, which began with a report from me! We had a lunchtime forum about campus renovations—Mr. Chris Thomas wants hardwood

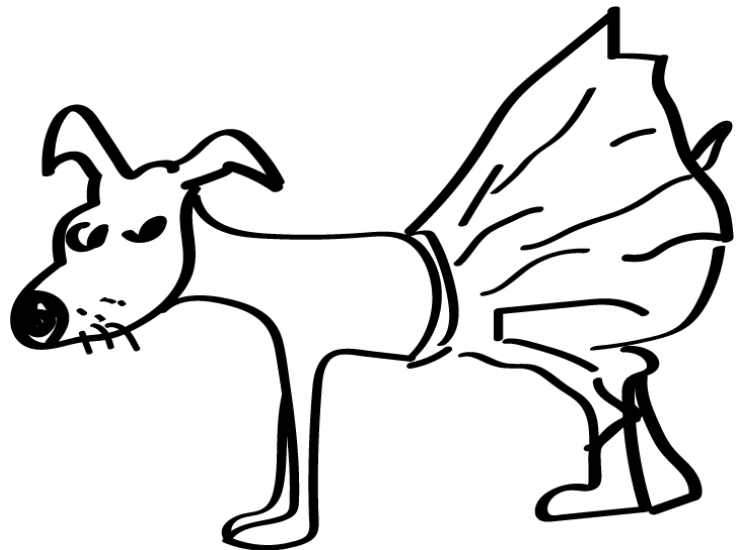
floors and he wants them NOW! Then once again it was time for budgeting:

Club	Proposed	Approved	Notes
Baking Club	\$540	\$540	Choosing new archons
Sewing, Mending and Fashion Club	\$1,537.00	\$1,167	Discussion about overlock machine
Rock Climbing	\$5,099	\$0	Parts of the budget were unconstitutional and after many failed attempts to adjust, the budget eventually failed by a vote of four ayes, eight nays and five abstentions
Swimming Club	\$1740.04	\$1,628.04	Students have to buy their own goggles
Jiu Jitsu	\$2,500	\$1,300	Removed unconstitutional parts
Jazz Coalition	\$3,900	\$1,850	Removed unconstitutional parts and extra instruments
OCF	\$516	\$360	Removed money already spent

Club	Budget	Club	Budget	Club	Budget
3D printing	\$385	HEMA	\$850.2	Yearbook	\$1568.6
814 Zine	\$1650	Insect Club	\$390	Waltz Committee	\$4690
Alexander Hamilton Society	\$590	Jazz Coalition	\$1850	Tea Eater Association	\$320
Baking Club	\$540	Jiu Jitsu	\$1300	Swimming Club	\$1150.68
Board Game Club	\$440	Johnnies of Color	\$1800	Storytellers Guild	\$150
Darkroom	\$850	JSPN	\$465	Sinfonia	\$611.619
Delegate Council	\$1409.5	King William Players	\$2300	Shammai	\$260
Energeia	\$2919.47	OCF	\$360	Sewing and Mending	\$1167
Futsal	\$1013.1	Outdoor Club	\$500	Reality	\$3910
Gadfly	\$1105	Peliclemos	\$500	Project Polity	\$584
Gaming Club	\$194	Platonic Players	\$380	Prank	\$3500
				POLO	\$3496.752

And that's what you missed on... GLEE!

Best, Rylee Bain
Polity Herald



Campus Renovations

El'ad Nichols-Kaufman

Plans to Renovate Campbell,

Move Coffee Shop and Bookstore Move Forward

Campbell Hall, like many of the dormitories on campus, is not in a good condition. It has not been renovated substantially since it was constructed in the 1950s, and is showing its age. While the worst cosmetic issues were dealt with by renovating the bathrooms last summer, and the building may seem to be in better condition from a student perspective, the underlying issues remain worse than ever.

“Campbell has radiant heating from the floors from the fifties,” explained College Treasurer Ally Gontang-Highfield, “and a lot of those pipes for the radiant heating are corroding, so whenever there’s an issue with the heating, they have to drain all the water out of the building, and when they try to fix it, the pipes crumble.” The hall’s electrical systems are also failing, and installing modern heating and cooling would require upgrading the transformers around the building, involving a great deal of excavation.

In short, Campbell is a mess. It has been first on the list for renovations for some time, and the possibility of doing substantial renovations on it has been raised at several of the last Board of Visitors and Governors meetings. However, rising construction costs seemed to put a definite stop to any plans at the last meeting, with the alternative of smaller projects done on the building over the summer and over the course of several years proposed instead.

“Before escalation costs and inflation, we thought the renovation would be three or four million, which was already more than we had to spend on the building, but after all the escalation costs, we found it would probably be more like 10, or up to 15 million,” said Gontang-Highfield. “At the November board meeting, I told the board I didn’t think we could do it... Karen Pritzker, who was at the meeting, started talking to Mark Roosevelt about the dorm, and offered to fund the entire renovation.”

The funding came through a \$15 million gift from the Jay Pritzker foundation, in addition to the \$25 million already committed by the foundation as part of the Pritzker challenge, a grant matching funds for other campus projects. The gift comes with one major stipulation: the project must be completed as quickly as possible, to interrupt campus life for as short of a time as possible.



St. John's College Campus Master Plan, EE&K Architects

Wider Campus Changes Proposed

With this opportunity to renovate Campbell also comes the opportunity to do wider-reaching renovations. “Most of the money is going to the infrastructure of the building, all the HVAC, heating and cooling... Our plan was to put in an elevator for ADA accessibility,” said Gontang-Highfield, “but since we are taking the building down, this is an opportunity for us to ask: is everything where it should be, or are there things that would be better served by relocating to Campbell?”

The current proposed plans include moving the coffee shop and bookstore to the basement of Campbell, and splitting the basement of McDowell into a faculty lounge and a student common space, featuring a small kitchen and vending machines where the current food service counter is. The mailroom, which currently is also in the McDowell basement, would move into the basement of Humphreys Hall.

The decisions to shift the use of so much space on campus came quickly, but not without planning or community feedback, explained Andrew Romiti, chair of the Campus Planning Committee. “There are ideas that have been floating around for a while, like the bookstore, and suddenly there were a lot of things to decide and big questions about what else we could do. We were already hosting forums and trying to gather feedback from an array of constituents in the community. We mobilized to that in the first week or two after hearing the news.”

Plans for moving the bookstore have been raised frequently over the years, in response to the current location’s inaccessibility, lack of visibility and small space, and seem to be generally agreed to by most people involved in the planning process. However, plans for moving the coffee shop have raised more debate on campus.



Campbell Hall

“The moving of the coffee shop was probably the move that had the widest range of opinion, explained Romiti. “There has been a longstanding concern that the coffee shop is underutilized, and that coffeeshop life is not the same as it used to be... In 2009, the last time there was a master plan, back then they were already looking to move the coffee shop... there was some concern, even then, that there was a need to revitalize the coffee shop. We’re in a peculiar position now, because the only active public space available right now is the coffee shop.

For example, I hold the meetings here that I would have held in the fishbowl. So this year, the coffee shop has been very well used, very lively, and perhaps overcrowded. I think people who have been attending to this question for a while think that’s an abnormality... We’re hoping to create far more life than the coffee shop has had in the longer view.”

Gontang-Highfield gave several additional reasons for the proposed move for the coffee shop. “We have known for years that the coffee shop gets by down there. There’s lots of traffic during the day, because students like to have a place to meet, or to study, but not many people actually buy things down there... We’ve heard all of our students go to Old Fox Books, instead of our coffee shop, and we’ve been trying to figure out why that is, and how we can serve students better here. Our architects also thought that it would be a lovely idea to help activate the spaces we’ve just renovated... Having the coffee shop by the bookstore gives a central hub feel to the entrance to Mellon, which is really an entrance to campus.”

Finding Housing Space

While renovating Campbell provides many opportunities for other campus improvements, it also has the potential to create a major housing shortage. The building has seventy beds, making up over 18% of all the beds on campus this year. With limited opportunities for expanding housing space, the administration had to find creative solutions.

"I heard rumblings about it in late November, and I kind of panicked, because seventy beds is a lot, and I wanted to make sure we had some kind of plan," explained Taylor Waters, Director of Student Services. "So what I did is I looked at every residence hall, and I counted every bed we have... and that number came out to 382, and I said, okay, where can we squeeze any other beds. So I took some common rooms off, made a bunch of triples for the incoming class, and then added about 30, 35 more beds... That's when we sent out the first email about housing. Then I took the total number of beds, which was about 340, 350. Then I blocked off the current freshman class, since they're required to live on campus, and then the incoming freshman class... And then I did the proportion, how many rising Juniors and rising seniors, and then we had a total of 55 beds for rising Juniors and rising seniors who wanted to be on campus. But we had 123 rising juniors and

seniors who wanted to be on campus after submitting their form."

The number of rising Juniors and Seniors who want to live on campus has exacerbated this problem. In the past, the college has tried to encourage more upperclassmen to live on campus than wanted to, but this year, record numbers of students submitted their names for housing on campus. Waters explained that the announcement of the renovations may have contributed to this. "I think some students may have panicked, and thought, 'oh no, I haven't even started looking, so I better submit my form saying I want to be on campus.' I have gotten a fair number of students who have written to me back and said that they don't want to take their spots on campus."

Even so, there is a need to increase the number of housing slots. Gontang-Highfield said that the college has been exploring all possible options. "What we've done

is we went back and looked at several other spaces we've been considering with architects, to see whether we could convert some of the common rooms into dorms... we also renewed the lease we have on this apartment building on Prince George Street, so that building we mostly had tutors in... so we'll have a number of beds for students there. Together with the common spaces, we should have as many, or more spaces as we had available last year."

Waters concurred, explaining that she "started with 382 beds before taking off Campbell, and now we have almost 380 beds. The issue is that we have more juniors and seniors than ever before who want to live on campus. Our ability to house people is just about the same as it has been, only the demand is so high... I would like to remind students that a lot more students will get on campus than they think. Ms. Lico and I have been working hard to make as many spaces as we can."

Student Response

All these changes could have a deep and far-reaching impact on the campus proposed, and many students know it. Besides the practical changes to how amenities are placed around campus, there are also changes to how our spaces around campus will look, which is very important for students who live and study in these spaces. Some students have decided to make their voices heard in these matters.

"I found myself getting increasingly frustrated about how little respect the renovation projects have for the historicity of the



Campbell Hall Lounge, 1954

campus,” explained Catherine Greer, Class of 2025, “and I’ve seen this frustration in the people around me, and how there’s a lack of attention to detail for how comfortable and homely spaces feel here... and I think at some point I got tired of being someone to complain about... there is actually something that can be done, people need to figure out how to use their voices and speak about these issues that deeply impact our lives and the future of our campus, and so I decided it was time for someone to do something about it. Since I cared so much about it, I figured I should do it myself.”

Greer has been hosting forums, in collaboration with the Delegate Council, focused on the aesthetics of the college, although many concerns about housing have been brought up as well. Many students have raised frustration about a lack of communication, feeling stranded by the administration as important decisions are made that shape day-to-day life on campus. “I realize that there’s a greater issue behind everything,” said Greer, “that is that there’s a lack of communication between the student body and the administration and the people who are making these decisions about the school, where it seems there’s a disconnect in what our vision is for the future of the school.”

Waters agreed that communication could be better, but noted that the administration is doing everything they can to help students find housing and let their voices be heard in the design process. “The roll out of the announcement was poorly done, and we acknowledge that. Even though I sent out five emails between

December and January, it didn’t hit people until they got their lottery numbers... the whole college could have been giving more information this whole time... In the future we’ll communicate about these sorts of things much more clearly.”

In both planning and housing, plans are being made to be more receptive to student voice. Romiti said the campus planning committee still welcomes feedback, especially now in the critical period as the last elements of designs are being finalized. “I think

it’s been right to mobilize on both of these fronts, aesthetic and functional, because now is when major decisions will be made that determine both of these factors... I’m happy to hear from students in any way. Anyone should feel free to just reach out to me, at least just as a focal point: I can hear things and have discussions one on one, I can bring them to the campus planning committee, or I can just direct people to other individuals in the college that could help them with their questions.”



One of Campbell's Iconic Windows

Student Opinions on the Housing Situation

Jackson Wojnowski

As most of our readers know, next year there will be a shortage of living spaces on campus due to the upcoming Campbell Hall renovations. As a result, more juniors and seniors will need to live off-campus than usual. Here, we'll see what some students have to say about this matter, an event that reminds us that the pursuit of knowledge and the cultivation of the mind can often be inconvenienced by the happenings of our larger political community, some of which are born of necessity, and others of chance.

However, before going into those statements, a quick note is in order: several students expressed concern that Humphrey's would be under renovation as well next year and thus add further awkwardness to the housing situation, but as Taylors Waters incidentally answered to an email inquiry, "Randall and Humphrey's will remain first-year resident halls" for next year. With that said, we move onto the views of our fellows.

"At the very least, it sucks for campus culture," said Finn Yekple, a rising junior who will be living off-campus of his own desire.

"A lot of the discussions Johnnies do have happen

after class hours—because everyone lives on campus," said Rebecca Hile, another rising junior who will be living on-campus next year. She, a domestic student, further expressed concern regarding how the policies would affect international students.

These concerns were substantiated by Helen Felbek: "I'm concerned because I have to return to my home country, Germany, over the summer because I have an internship there lined up...and I just feel like with the housing, that means that many things have to happen during the school year, likely basically right now...and that is very stressful because I know I won't be here to make arrangements."

Regarding what help the college is offering for such concerns, Ms. Felbek explained that the international student coordinator, Kidus Kebede, has said that "while the college can't give us legal advice. He expressed willingness to guide us through the process [of securing housing], which is kind of a relief because he was an international student when he was a student here. Which is a nice thing. And then also this idea of being able to have some of the



Dorm Life in Campbell Hall

furniture from Campbell when it's going to be closed." However, her point of concern was most pointedly the timeline, which the college is not able to help.

Another student, who wished to remain anonymous and who will be living off-campus next year, expressed different concerns. "I am very much used to living in boarding schools, so basically I never had a [private living situation] that I needed to care for...I am excited for the chance to get more cooking done...but I do very much want to live, or continue to live, on campus because it is very convenient for me, and there's no

added cost whatever, so it's kind of disappointing...also, there seems to be an increasing number of accepted students that kind of squeeze out the dorm rooms, and that feels kind of not right to me."

Going along with all these concerns, there has been at least one unexpected upside to all this: a limited number of sophomores who wish to do so are being allowed to live off-campus. Referring to her fortune in the lottery system, rising sophomore Molly Sprout said "I got one of the lowest numbers possible; it was 130, so because of that I'd have to live in a poor-quality [used as a euphemism

for a harsher phrase] double...so I just thought why not pay for a situation that I'm gonna enjoy more."

Of course, this conciliation leads much to be desired for many. Said rising junior Fiona Guinness, who personally will be able to live on-campus next year, "I really wish there had been more of an effort, especially early on, to accommodate students who weren't going to be able to get on-campus housing-because I have a lot of my friends who all are very much panicked..given how freaked out they are, how much they're struggling to get housing...it's difficult to watch them go through it."

Johnnies of Color Hosts Annual Black History Month Cookout

Meliha Anthony

Johnnies of Color hosted a campus cookout for the polity on Feb. 11 to commemorate Black History Month. Students gathered on the quad to enjoy a variety of foods, including burgers fresh off the grill, mac and cheese, hot dogs, cornbread, and other assorted snacks and drinks. A firepit completed the atmosphere, where attendees roasted marshmallows while laughing and talking in the middle of the quad.

Johnnies of Color aims to "create a space where [students], primarily students of color, can find each other and talk to each other," according to Linda Bellamy, the co-archon of the club. Bellamy and her co-archon, Stephanie Harris, formed Johnnies of Color to create this safe space where students can address the issues on their minds, whether or not those issues are specific to their experiences as students of color.

The cookout is one of the club's main events of the year.

"Last year, we only had two weeks to plan the event," Bellamy said. This year, the archons knew to plan further in advance, starting about a month before the cookout, with more of a goal and vision in mind. The



process involved mainly budgeting, timing, and enlisting the proper help from students who work with student coordinator Rachelle Munsey. Then, of course, the day of the event involved the actual process of setting up and cooking the food.

To Bellamy, the additional planning this year, as

opposed to last year, made the event run more smoothly and successfully. A greater number of people were able to enjoy the food and stay for longer. Bellamy also describes this year as being less stressful than last year, with the additional planning, expressing gratitude that everything went according to plan. Bellamy also



enjoyed seeing people who might not typically interact socialize with each other during the cookout, hoping that the event might be able to spark new conversations and create a fun, comfortable atmosphere.

“I’d say it was very successful,” Bellamy said.



The Scientific Necessity of Heartbreak

Helen Wagner

Dear reader, have you known heartbreak? Have you suffered the pain of a failed love? Has it changed you? Has it changed you for the better? It has, I'm sure. I'd venture to say it must. Just as the breakdown of hypotheses (and the formulation of new ones) drives scientific progress, heartbreak seems an essential step towards a true and honest conception of love. Whether or not you've experienced heartbreak, I know you've read the Symposium, so let me remind you of Diotima's Ladder of Love. She tells Socrates,

This is the right method of approaching the ways of love or being led by someone else: beginning from these beautiful things always to go up with the aim of reaching that beauty. Like someone using a staircase, he should go from one to two and from two to all beautiful bodies, and from beautiful bodies to beautiful practices, and from practices to beautiful forms of learning. From forms of learning, he should end up at that form of learning which is of nothing other than that beauty itself, so that he can complete the process of learning what beauty really is.¹

Thus, says Diotima, we will move from loving individual beauty to loving the form of Beauty itself. But how will we make this journey? What will drive us? Something tells me that it will be painful. As we ascend Diotima's ladder, each rung represents a realization that our previous conception of love was incomplete. We cannot move from individual to universal love without learning that "the beauty of the body is something petty."² How could we learn this unless the beauty of the body failed us?

How could it fail us without pain?

Each step in our journey toward true love must be a heartbreak. Every time our conception of love collapses on us, we create a new one, improved by the knowledge gained through pain. It is on these ruins that we build our understanding of love: we learn the truth through the constant failure of ideals. This is the scientific necessity of heartbreak, although in science, of course, the emotional stakes are much lower. Scientific progress, too, is only made when hypotheses are broken. After an experiment has run contrary to current expectation, we can learn where we are wrong and improve our understanding accordingly. Diotima has convinced me that love must work in a similar way: just as science runs on failure, love runs on heartbreak. Consider these lines of Rilke's poem, "The Man Watching," where he imagines an Old Testament man, wrestling with an angel:

Whoever was beaten by this Angel
(who often simply declined the fight)
went away proud and strengthened
and great from that harsh hand,
that kneaded him as if to change his shape.
Winning does not tempt that man.
This is how he grows: by being defeated, decisively,
by constantly greater beings.

Just like the man in the poem, we will grow by being defeated. But defeat is painful, and the paradigm shift brought about by a broken heart is never an easy process. But take comfort! If you've been down that road of pain, you are on the right track. You are learning how to love. And, if you're lucky enough to have avoided it so far, remember this: it will come. But it will make you better. Brace yourself.

1. Plato, *Symposium*, trans. Christopher Gill.

3. Rainer Maria Rilke, "The Man Watching," trans. Robert Bly.

2. Ibid

On the Need For Pretty Books, and the Plethora of Not-Pretty Books RANGER KASDORF

St. John's College calls its curriculum the "Great Books Program," and as catchy as this label may be, it seems like something of a misnomer. Are books really what we study here? The works of Homer and Plato predate the invention of "books" as we now know them; the plays of Sophocles and Shakespeare were meant to be performed onstage, and only appear in their leather-bound or paperback volumes incidentally. Bach's St. Matthew Passion and Mozart's Don Giovanni cannot just be read in order to appreciate them properly; they must be heard. Certainly the program contains works which are unequivocally books, as opposed to scrolls or tablets or oral traditions. But, in practice, what St. John's cares most about as an institution is not books, but texts—texts whose true forms lie beyond our reach, forcing us to use imperfect, typo-prone, mass-produced volumes to access them.

And yet it cannot be denied that all but the most aesthetically ascetic of Johnnies do care, at least a little, about books as well as texts. There is a certain thrill—oft unremarked upon but undeniably felt—associated with the selection of a particular incarnation of a Program text. Reading a book for seminar means spending a lot of intimate time with whichever particular edition you've picked out, and if it's a particularly long reading—a lengthy over-break novel, or a dense philosophical treatise to which the Program dedicates a month (think the Republic or the 353 page Don Quixote reading which opens up Junior year)—you'll want it to be a book which, for lack of

a better term, feels good. That might mean a decades-old paperback with yellowing pages and some watercolor painting on its front, or a sturdy hardcover which eschews all pop and color in favor of good old-fashioned muted earth tones. The decision one makes at this point reveals a certain kind of personal taste which, unlike one's favorite food or music, is rarely ever expressed, nor even noticed. But I'm convinced all at St. John's will know what I am talking about.

"And yet it cannot be denied that all but the most aesthetically ascetic of Johnnies do care, at least a little, about books as well as texts."

Many of us, upon first coming to campus Freshman year, might buy a new, school-bookstore copy of a certain text out of desperation—my closet is, at present, clogged up with shiny Freshman-year copies of Harvey and Lavoisier with phosphorescent pages and covers so glossy they border on greasy—but certainly, given the choice, the average student would prefer a nice, unpretentious vintage volume¹ every time². But if I'm indeed correct about the

1. There could be any number of reasons for this: perhaps it's the quality of the paper (which, in older paperbacks, tends to be coarser than modern editions, and easier to make notes on); perhaps it's the famous "used book smell" (a phenomenon which, though some may scoff at it, is undeniably real); perhaps, as a generation raised with the slogan "Reduce, Reuse, Recycle" always ringing in our ears, we find it more prudent—not to mention frugal—to use already-extant books, rather than drive up the demand for new ones. Perhaps we simply feel more comfortable supporting a struggling local bookstore than we do feeding even more money into an institution that's already taking \$30,000+ from us every year.

2. This dichotomy has resulted, for me, in a personal custom which I imagine some readers of this piece will recognize in themselves. This is the division of all of one's books into two groups: one, full of well-loved books kept within easy reach on the bookshelf and by the bedside, and another, full of books owned purely out of obligation—textbooks, manuals, translations of Dante inferior to the one kept in the first group but potentially useful for a paper, etc—kept hidden like the mad woman in the attic, stowed away in closets, in cars, even at parents' houses, and only ever retrieved on the rare occasions which demand them.

universality of this little-acknowledged aesthetic discrimination among bookish types, then this would mean that a sizable chunk of the St. John's College Annapolis campus prefers Penguin Classics—and that's a conclusion which I'm not quite ready to accept.

Now, as far as their content goes, Penguin Classics are perfectly serviceable, especially if your intent is to read them once for seminar and then return them to the library and never think of them again, rather than display them proudly on your shelf. They use solid translations of non-English works, and they present the reader with helpful footnotes. They are generally well-constructed: they use ink which does not easily fade and paper which does not offend the fingers like the glossy photostock used by popular magazines, though their spines are so prone to cracking that if I saw a classmate at seminar with an uncracked Penguin Classic I'd assume that everything they said for the rest of the night was a bluff.

From what little I've heard people say about them, they seem to have a reputation as the "Ol' Reliable" of modern classics editions. Still, I've always been a little down on Penguin Classics for the admittedly petty reason that I find their covers hideous.

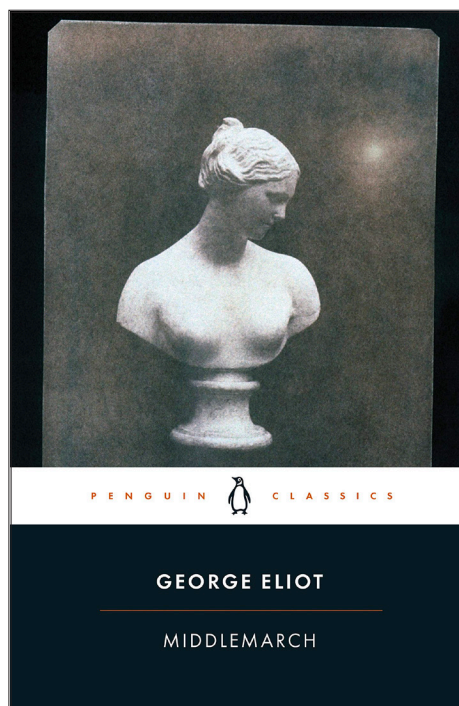
However solid the pages between the covers of these volumes may be, they outwardly exhibit a ghastly contradiction in their design sensibilities: they are at once uniform in their typography (always that same efficient, conservative font in the same shades of white and orange on the same field of soothing black) and utterly lawless in their visuals, leaving them in an aesthetic dead zone: any pleasing visual distinctiveness is deadened by the dogged adherence to the template, and any joy which might be gained from the volumes' uniformity is eliminated by the apparent lack of discernment in the choice of images for their covers. For works of philosophy and other nonfiction prose, the go-to seems to be to use the most widely circulated portrait of the author, often the one which appears on the author's Wikipedia page. For plays and novels, meanwhile, the practice is to pick any random painting or photograph which even remotely suggests

the content of the work—sometimes a painting explicitly depicting a specific scene or character, but most of the time not. There is no visual cohesion between these images; set two Penguin Classics next to each other and odds are good that their covers will be from two different artists, likely in two different mediums, perhaps from two entirely different centuries, even if the two authors of the books themselves were contemporaries. The Penguin Classics edition of *Macbeth* features Henry Fuseli's chilling sketch of Act IV, Scene I (Macbeth being shown apparitions by the witches)—which is fair enough—but their edition of *The*

Comedy Of Errors is fronted by a cubist painting by Jean Lambert-Rucki, seemingly unrelated to the actual play beyond its vague suggestion of the concept of "twins". The most egregious example I've yet seen is the Penguin Classics edition of Eliot's *Middlemarch*, which features William Henry Fox Talbot's photograph of a bust of Venus, presumably in a hackneyed attempt to hint toward the novel's fascinating examinations of the nuances of womanhood via the most obvious and generic symbol of femininity in the Western artistic canon.

I'm sure I'd have no quarrel with these editions if their fronts bore only the book's title and author; this would lend the editions

a soothing sameness, a sense that they all belong to a set. But the inclusion of these arbitrarily picked images, thematically incongruous with the books which they claim to represent and visibly incongruous with one another, makes the entire series a mess of contradictory noise that insults the wonderful words contained within. To my mind, this aesthetic inconsistency places Penguin Classics among the most disposable of trade paperbacks: they look fine on a shelf, but horrid when held in the hands, and will certainly be the first to go when it comes time to trim the fat in one's personal library. In this way they are much like the spiral-bound construction-paper manuals handed out by St. John's for tutorial and lab classes—utterly utilitarian, useful for

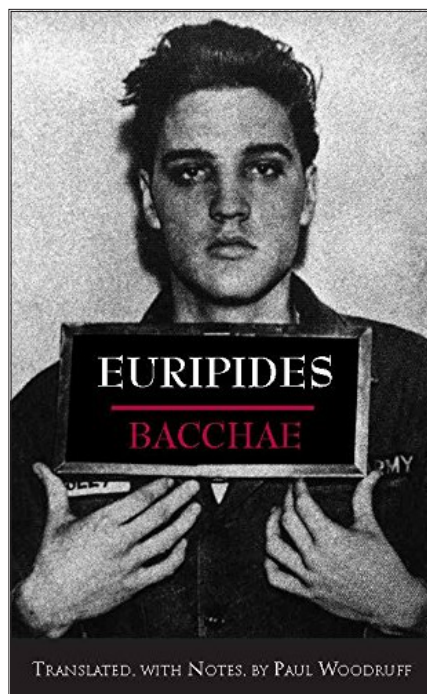
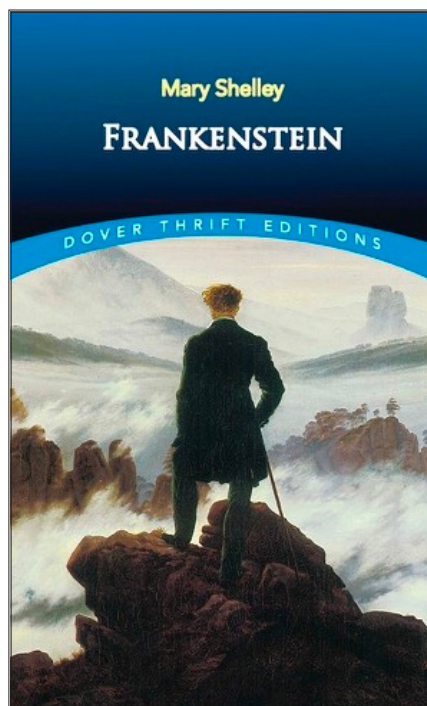


as long as one needs the information within, but otherwise unremarkable, and easily discarded once that period passes. They may contain great texts, but they are hardly Great Books; in truth, they are only a few rungs up from a printed PDF. Still, every Seminar, I look around the table and inevitably see at least one Penguin Classic, blaring out at me with its orange-creamsicle-in-a-tar-pit color palette and its public-domain portrait of the author with a mild expression on his face, alongside more charming, pulpy editions from the '60s and understated hardcovers with the dust jackets removed, prized possessions and family heirlooms.

To be clear, Penguin Classic are not the worst of the worst when it comes to paperback cover design; that honor would likely go to the infamous Dover Thrift Editions, which more closely resemble educational DVDs than they do books.

And that's to say nothing of the various design blunders committed by Hackett Publishing, from their embarrassingly hack stunt-placements of quasi-relevant 20th century American cultural figures on editions of Ancient Greek plays—Elvis Presley on the *Bacchae*, James Dean on the *Oresteia*, JFK on the f*cking *Theban Plays*—to their use of a font which is just a few stray lines away from being Microsoft's Papyrus on their edition of Hesiod's *Theogony*.

Indeed, personal experience seems to back me up on these judgments; I have heard plenty of classmates groan over how ugly these more egregious editions are, and have rarely seen them used in Seminar without some snide remark being made about them. It's not hard



to see why Penguin Classics are more popular; their color scheme is broadly appealing, and, setting aside the images which take up the bulk of their covers, that logo is damn adorable. If Penguin Classics are cheap plastic folding chairs from Walmart, Dover Thrifts are oil barrels from the local scrapyard; even if all you need is a place to sit, it's easy to see why the former are preferred over the latter. But without these inferior covers to indirectly flatter them, the charms of the Penguin Classics—for me, at least—swiftly vanish.

Perhaps all this strikes you as needless snobbery; after all, a true appreciator of literature ought to be more interested in what's in between a book's covers than in the covers themselves. I must admit I feel a bit silly writing this, and I'm sure that whoever put up that poster in the McDowell coffee shop calling the Gadfly's contents "pretentious blather" is feeling quite vindicated in their accusation if they're reading this. Still, I'll end this piece with an earnest inquiry: am I alone in this desire that my books look outwardly as gorgeous as they inwardly are? Is my cringing at what I perceive to be low-effort book design a frivolous overreaction? Please do reach out to me with your thoughts on the matter; I am genuinely curious. Perhaps someone will offer me a perspective which I have never considered, and will convince me that a book's cover design is of less significance than the edibility of the plastic wrap around a brick of cheese.

If I am so persuaded, I may soon cast off my collection of well-loved paperbacks in favor of the ethereal PDF file, and abandon myself to a more monastic way of life.

A New Platonic Reading of the Myth of Ganymede

Luke Briner

I've been thinking a lot about the myth of Ganymede recently. While I immediately find it a very beautiful story about a beautiful and virtuous man lifted to the height of a divine and immortal embrace, the carnal perversion which has historically found justification or at least solidarity in it is undeniable. The Athenian, in Plato's *Laws*, condemns the myth wholesale on these grounds, considering it to be nothing but a license to licentiousness invented by the Cretans.¹ Given this, though, I can't help but wonder if that darkness surrounding the myth can't be overcome, and if a different, brighter reading of it isn't possible.

In order to proceed to this kind of reading, three preliminary steps need to be taken: 1) the formal exposition of the myth as originally presented; 2) the refutation of an entirely negative interpretation of the myth on the basis of the sexual perversions that are read in it and have proceeded historically from it; and 3) the development of the interpretive mode by which a higher reading is possible.

1) The first literary references to Ganymede are found in Homer: two in his *Iliad*,² and one in his *Hymn to Aphrodite*.³ According to Homer, he was a Trojan prince, a son of Tros, who, being "the loveliest⁴ born of the race of mortals,"⁵ was lifted from the earth "so that he may be together with the immortal ones, as wine-pourer for the gods in the palace of Zeus."⁶ Upon this Homeric foundation, additions to the story were made by others: Ovid, for instance, describes Zeus transforming himself into an eagle in order to carry Ganymede up to Olympus,⁷ and Apuleius describes him as engaged in shepherdry before his ascent.^{8,9}

2) We can then already see a disparity between the basis of the Athenian's condemnation of the myth and the myth itself in its bare, original form. In all three Homeric references to Ganymede, there's no mention whatsoever of his age. Certainly he's a younger man, but by no means necessarily a minor—he's only spoken of as Tros' son. Nor is anything overtly sexual, let alone pederastic, described

between him and Zeus. Hence versions of the story depicting Ganymede as a minor or his relationship to Zeus as pederastic, or interpretations of the story so modified, are superfluous and discardable. This point is corroborated by Xenophon's Socrates when he argues that "in the case of Ganymede, it was not his person¹⁰ but his spiritual character that influenced Zeus to carry him up to Olympus,"¹¹ deriving his name from γάννυται (to be glad, to take joy) and μῆδεα (counsels, arts; thus he's "not physically but *mentally* attractive").¹² And again, Nichols Jr., in a note in his version of Plato's *Phaedrus*, asserts



Ganymède, Gustave Moreau

that only “later renditions of the tale make Zeus fall in love with him [Ganymede]” at all.¹³ The Athenian, therefore, doesn’t necessarily condemn the myth itself but only the *common interpretation of it* which sanctions or glorifies perversion, and we’re free to condemn it alongside him while reappropriating the myth itself for a more worthy purpose.

3) Now Plato himself, far from condemning mythology universally, “creates a mythology of his own.”¹⁴ Although it’s his original “reformed mythology and by no means the objectionable old inherited religious legend which he wishes to enthrone,”¹⁵ he clearly recognizes that the myth, as a didactic and dialectical instrument, can “aid in making the interlocutor receptive to arguments and leads him to these arguments by offering him insights to be tested, insights often about ‘worlds’ with which he is not familiar.”¹⁶ We see this in the tales that Socrates tells in the *Republic*, the *Phaedrus*, the *Laws*, etc. For Plato, myths themselves are not substitutes for or directly connected to the truth, but the right interpretation of the right myths can lead us to the truth more easily than otherwise. Plotinus agrees with Plato that myths may be used for the sake of clearly and powerfully expressing to the mind grand truths which would otherwise be difficult to grasp or attach oneself to. For Plotinus, “[the] myth divides in time what is transmitted in the discourse and separates entities from each other which in reality are united, meaning that the myth takes back to the past—from an origin—things which are in the present.”¹⁷ The

myth expresses the Eternal in the temporal and grounds the esoteric logos with an engaging pathos. In this, however, he takes a broader view than Plato, and happily applies an exegesis of metaphysical allegory to common myth with remarkable utilitarianism. He uses mythical situations or characters to illustrate whatever philosophical situation he finds himself in, even if that means using the same character to represent different things at different times or isolating a part of one from the whole;¹⁸ hence, to give only a few specific examples, he represents Zeus as the Intellectual-Principle¹⁹ or the Supreme Good,²⁰ Aphrodite as “the Soul at its highest”²¹ striving toward the Intellectual Realm, and the generational struggle between Uranus, Kronos, and Zeus as the hypostatic procession from the One to Intellect to Soul.²² Ordinarily there might be a serious tension between these two approaches given Plato’s reluctance to interpret allegorically the basically objectionable and dangerous content of many common myths. But seeing as the Ganymede myth in particular has had the objectionable scum stuck to it washed away (section 2), I suggest here that it’s foundationally pristine enough to serve as the basis of a safe and fruitful allegorical interpretation which, though overtly Neoplatonic in metaphysics, still satisfies the strictly Platonic condition of genuine educational value described earlier.

I venture, then, that Ganymede’s ascent to Zeus may be read as the spiritual ascent of the Soul, animated by Love, toward the Intellectual-Principle, the Divine.

1. 636c-d. To be clear, the perversion I personally refer to is pederasty in particular, although the Athenian is unfortunately talking more broadly about *all* homosexual relations here. The point stands regardless.

2. V.265-267, XX.230-235.

3. 202-218.

4. Κάλλιστος; i.e., beautiful, good, virtuous.

5. *Iliad*, XX.233.

6. *Hymn to Aphrodite*, 203-204.

7. *Metamorphoses*, X.162-169.

8. *The Golden Ass*, XI.8.

9. I’ve chosen not to mention the story of Tros and Zeus after Ganymede’s ascent as related by Homer in *Iliad* V.265-258 and *HtA* 207-218, as it’s outside the scope of my current interest. I feel justified in doing this because it’s consistent with the style of allegorical interpretation which Plotinus uses and which I’ll go on to follow the example of. This will be developed in section 3.

10. Σώματος; i.e., body.

11. *Symposium*, 8.30.

12. *Ibid.*

13. n. 126, 255c.

14. Edelstein (1949). “The Function of the Myth in Plato’s Philosophy.” *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 10, No. 4, p. 466.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 478.

16. Smith (1986). “Plato’s Use of Myth in the Education of Philosophic Man.” *Phoenix*, Spring, Vol. 40, No. 1, p. 13.

17. Calvo (2017). “Myth and Exegesis in Plotinus: How to Divide and Recompose Words and Things.” *Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities*, Vol. IX, No. 2, p. 87.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 84.

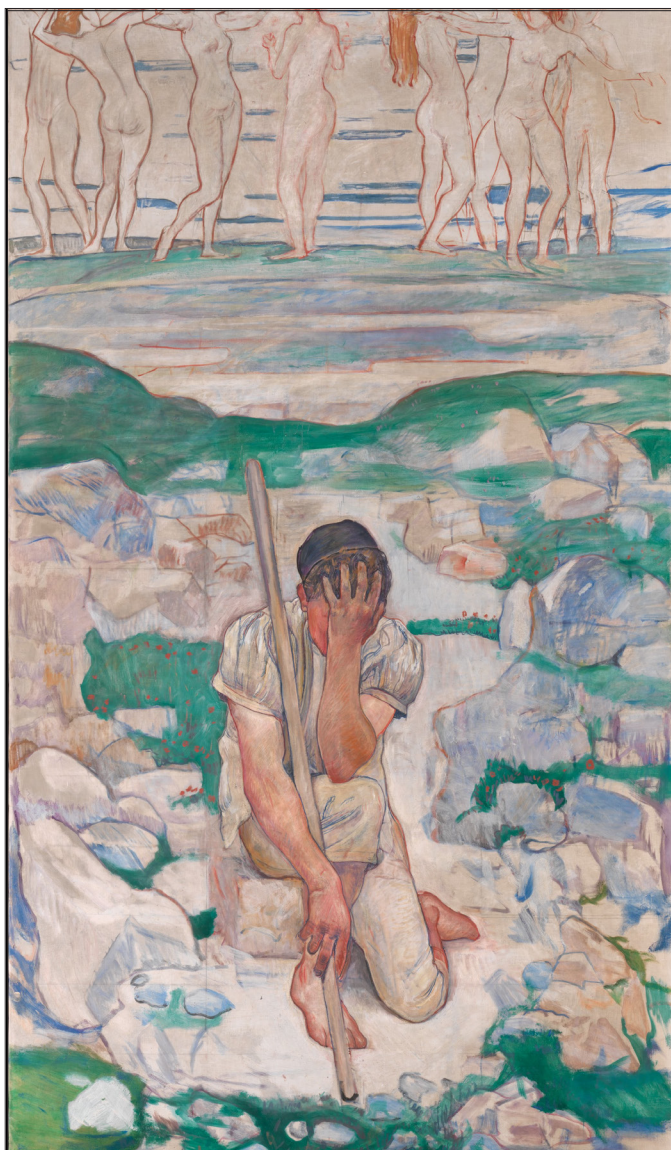
19. *Enneads*, III.5.

20. *Ibid.*, VI.9.

21. *Ibid.*

22. *Ibid.*, V.8.

Ganymede's own relative youth in the first place may be seen as representing the "youth" of the Soul itself, which has by "a voluntary plunge"²³ descended from its fixed station Above into the generative and degenerative world of Becoming. This can also apply more generally to the procession of the World-Soul from the Intellect.²⁴ If it's accepted that Ganymede was engaged in shepherdry as a mortal, I take this as the Soul's development of Virtue by directing the chaotic flock of its own internal faculties and inclinations through Reason,²⁵ and generally of overcoming the struggles brought on by the multiplicity of the world.²⁶ I therefore take the ascent of Ganymede itself, being ordained by Zeus, as the favor incurred by the Soul by its "attaining Likeness to God" through Virtue so developed.²⁷ If it's accepted that Zeus took the form of an eagle in order to bring about that ascent, then I understand it either as simply a more specific illustration of the general divine exaltation given to the virtuous Soul, or as representing the way in which visible, earthly things serve as a foundation for the dialectic which eventually transcends them.²⁸ Finally, Ganymede's ultimate residence with Zeus and all of Olympus as a wine-pourer may be read as representing the Soul's own absolute absorption into the Divine, such that that Soul *itself* becomes the wine, not only the offerer but the offering, flowing back into the Source from which it once proceeded. Thus is the divine eros of the Soul at last fulfilled, freed from the loneliness and suffering of the world below and united to the Beloved forever.



The Dream of the Shepherd, Ferdinand Hodler

23. *Enneads*, IV.7.5.

24. *Ibid.*, V.1-2.

25. *Ibid.*, I.4.2. Also see Plato, *Phaedrus*, 246d-247b.

26. *Enneads*, I.2.

27. *Ibid.*, I.2.1.

28. *Ibid.*, I.3. Also see Plato, *Symposium*, 209e-212a.

In the spirit of the newly-renamed Mitchell Art Museum's reopening, I (on behalf of the rest of the layout staff) want to extend an invitation to write, draw, paint, or otherwise create something in the space on this, the last page of this issue's συμπόσιον section. While a symposium in the classical sense certainly involves a lot of listening to others' opinions, it also requires the participation of all, and submitting to the Gadfly can only take one so far. So to that end, please: do your worst! —Cooper

Considering Kunai

By AUDREY FOX

Dearest Polity,

I write to you not to facilitate argumentation, nor to assert upon you what I consider to be a “correct opinion.” I wish solely to convey my thoughts and experiences surrounding the recent discussion on Kunai’s role here at the college. All I can ask is that you meet my words with compassion instead of problems. As a tutor once told a friend of mine who was complaining about all those stories Socrates tells in the dialogues: how are we to understand one another if we do not have a means to share our experiences?

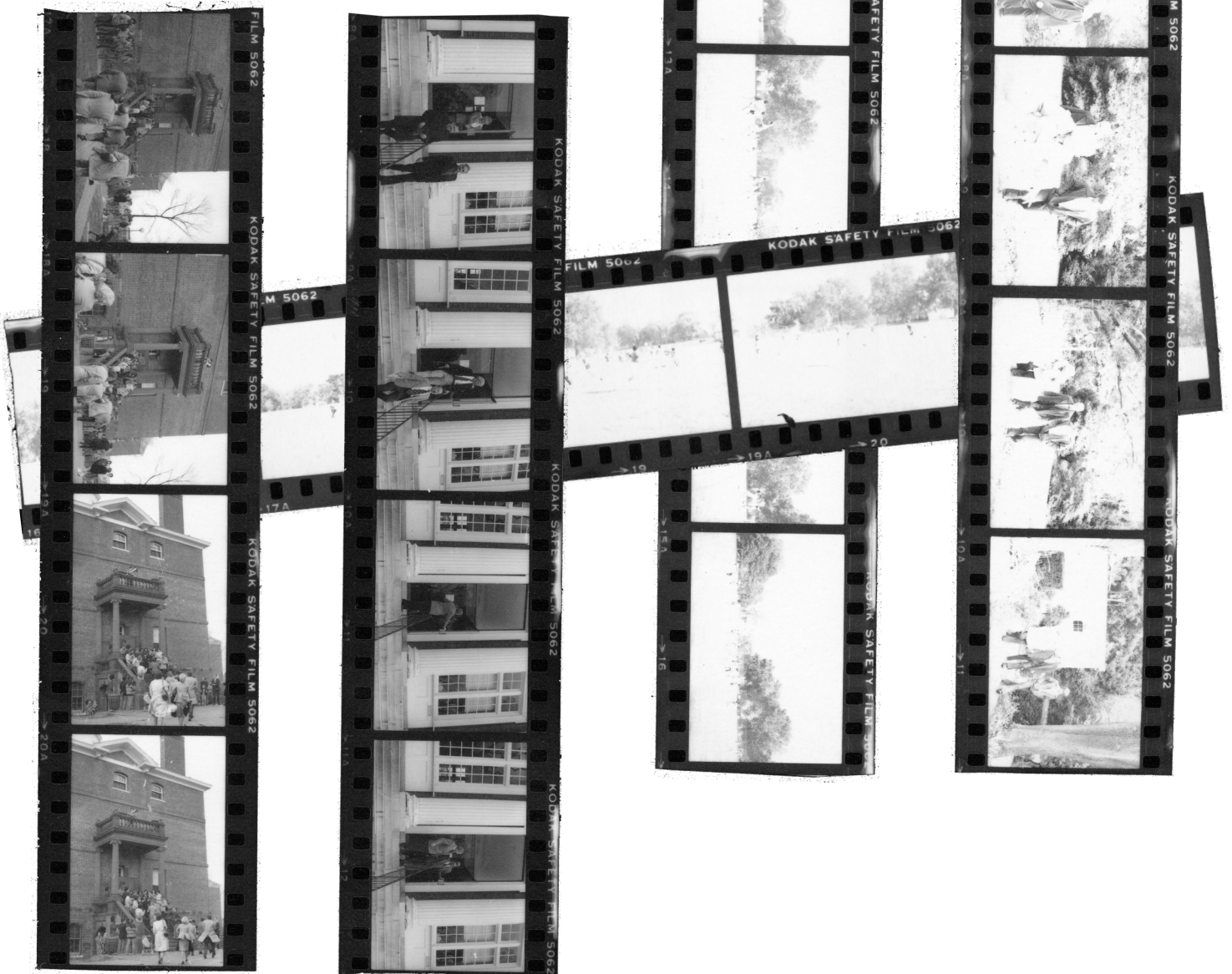
I will not go into too much explicit detail about what we discussed at the forum, for I want to protect the members who were brave enough to be vulnerable about their experiences. Instead, I’ll speak on my own. Unlike the classroom, the field and the court are the domains of the body. We all would like to think we have more control over our bodies than is the reality. I mean in the most literal sense: I think it should not be that hard to kick a soccer ball with control, but then I try and find it much less intuitive than I expected it to be. This is an experience common to us all, that our bodies have limits, and mastery over sports are things people will dedicate their entire lives to. I want to add a further complication: not only do we have limited control over the physical movement of our bodies, but we also have even less control over how those bodies are perceived by others. This complication is for me, and for other members of Kunai, something that makes participation in intramurals difficult—especially when your body does not feel your own. People watching you move, people examining how well you exert yourself at a sport—that can be a daunting, almost debilitating thought for me. And I refuse to dance around the subject: the presence of cis men at intramurals can exacerbate this experience. I do not mean that cis men are actively trying to make my

participation hard, but that the world of sports has been historically and culturally built around the standard of men, and when I am playing a co-ed game my body and I are facing that comparison. This difficulty is especially hard for non-binary and trans members of our athletic community, and Kunai serves not just as a place where we are tolerated but a space where we actively recognize and appreciate each other. The saddest part of the forum was the multitude of trans and non-binary individuals who spoke about this very feeling of finding Kunai to be a place where they felt comfortable moving their bodies, yet this feeling was often ignored and met with little compassion by those advocating for including cis men in the group.

I also do not believe that this is an active consideration for cis-male intramural attendees. The forum was open to the public; anyone who wanted could attend. Yet we only had one cis-male attendee who expressed that his motivation for being there was to observe—the rest were people who have participated in Kunai. It is apparent to me that if there was anyone who did not feel included in Kunai they would have been at that forum. As one Kunai member aptly put it: the road to athletic success for cis men, even for the inexperienced, has been paved by the existence of St. John’s College intramurals. They do not need Kunai, and if they do need something like Kunai, it is not our responsibility to provide that for them. Ms. Fleming said she is happy to accommodate suggestions on different options for inexperienced players.

Again, I do not think that the cis men of the college have any active malice towards us. However, I do not think that there is any active concern either. When I watch our A team basketball players get into borderline physical altercations, I am amazed at how tunnel visioned people can get at intramural games. Is this what it means to be a competitive

animal? Do I have to forsake my care for others in the name of the game? I often look back on a game and sometimes find that I did not like how aggressively I was playing. Yet I am often praised for my aggression. I have fun, and get in a good exercise, but I am constantly left with the question of whether this is the only way to engage in sports. So, for those of you who want to know what Kunai is, I will tell you at least what I think it is. I would like to consider it an experiment in competition, not determined by skill or masculine physicality, but instead by compassion and active concern for those we are playing with. If you find that idea to be a sign of weakness, then I think you also might want to start evaluating what competition means for you.



Not to be Pedantic, But...

By CALEB CLARK

“Not to be pedantic, but...”

Have you ever heard someone say this in class? Moreover, have you ever heard someone say this, then continue to say something incredibly pedantic? Have you ever said this? Why? In fact, what does it even mean to “be pedantic” in the first place?

Being a pedant, being pedantic, peddling in pedantry, these are all—to put it bluntly—dirty words. After all, the common image we all have of a pedant: someone who is uptight and anal, predisposed to miss the forest for the trees, someone who frequently revels in minute corrections for the petty joy of appearing superficially more intelligent than whoever it is they’re correcting, whose general vibe is best summed up by the phrase, “Um Actually,” is obviously something to avoided. No wonder, then, that people go out of their way to avoid being perceived as pedantic.

But let’s not kid ourselves. This halfhearted measure, a lukewarm gesture to the possibility of being pedantic—or worse, annoying—does by no means achieve its desired end, i.e. that of not coming across as pedantic. If anything, this prelude only serves to draw attention to itself, putting the idea in your own head into everyone else’s, giving your classmates the ability to revel in the irony of it all (at your own expense, of course). If this insertion is so self-defeating, then, why do people continually feel the need to adjoin it to whatever pedantic thing they’re going to say? In fact, it seems like it’s almost required to say this, as if in apologizing for the crime you’re about to commit, you absolve yourself.

Perhaps this pre-emptive mea culpa is nothing more than a particularly graceless attempt to trojan horse whatever point they feel is so damn relevant that they can’t help but not bring up, akin to the old rhetorical move, “I would

say X, but that would be cruel, so I won’t.” But what really interests me here is the fact that the stock phrase “not to be pedantic...” is but one of many in a rotating cast of phrases that students at St. John’s always seem to start their points with. You may have heard some variations of these others: I’m not sure if this is correct, but... OK, it seems to me that... Sorry if we’ve already addressed this, but... etc. etc. etc. The compulsion to ritually apologize for whatever it is you’re going to say/do is so strong it can make a seminar feel like listening to two hours of Stolen Land Acknowledgements. Maybe the only way to avoid this whole conundrum is to simply be unapologetic about it all: trust your own judgment. If you think something is relevant, go for it. If you think you have an understanding of the topic at hand that might be incorrect, it doesn’t matter. Say it like you mean it.

At this point I’d like to admit something. If you couldn’t already tell by the general tenor of this article, I’m something of a pedant. Instead of engaging in an apologia for myself or my brethren (who I take no responsibility for, I must add) I’d instead like to tell you a short anecdote. I’m in Junior Math, we’re talking about Newton. Someone makes a point. “Not to be pedantic,” I say, trailing off, catching myself in the act. Trying to salvage the situation, I decide to lean in—to totally own it. “Actually—no—to be pedantic...” and so on. This gambit, that of shamelessly accepting the shortcomings of whatever it is you’re going to say and saying it anyways—in short the advice given above—has its dark appeal. Unfortunately, it doesn’t work. As it turns out, neither apologizing or refusing to apologize for your crimes can absolve you of the act. Who’d’a thunk.

Up to this point, I’ve taken the necessity of “being pedantic” as given. “Caleb,” you might say, “you could just not be pedantic, you know. Sidesteps the whole issue

at hand, really.” Well... (ok, I lied earlier, this is where the pedantry apologia starts) ... not really. You see—this is where I’m destined to lose some of you—who gets to decide what is and isn’t pedantic? Perhaps it’s easy to identify—like pornography you just “know it when you see it.” The way I see it, pedantry has two defining characteristics. The first comes down mainly to tone—how politely are you insisting on a given distinction? The second comes down to the relative magnitude of the distinction being drawn.

These two obviously feed upon each other—the more insignificant the distinction at hand, the more of an ass you’ll come across as for insisting upon it.

The thing is that different words have different meanings, and even more so in dense philosophical texts. In short, some distinctions matter. I’m by no means advocating for insufferable language-policing (as the foremost proponent of what I like to call enlightened pedantry, I insist that manners always come first) but I think it’s at least worth considering that a conflation of two separate concepts in seminar might lead to confusion and poor understanding. The fact of the matter is that a lot of the texts that we discuss are hard. If anyone claims to fully understand a particular author—to pick a totally random example, Kant—they’re either delusional or trying to sell you something. For two hours, you and around 20 other people are going to be grasping around more or less in the dark, and a lot of what you say is going to be shrouded in uncertainty and ambiguity. If you had a full understanding of all the concepts of a text and their relation to each other, you’d know whether or not a distinction between concept A and concept B is substantial or just rank pedantry.

In this environment of collective confusion, it becomes clear why it is that so many start off their sentences by apologizing—they don’t really know whether or not the point they’re going to make is right or wrong, whether or not their correction is meaningful or pedantic, but something within them has led them to believe that it has value, that the discussion would better if it the point was made as opposed to not. They might be wrong. So what. We’re all living on stolen land, anyways. What’re we going to do about it? Give it back? To whom? Move elsewhere? Fat chance.



On Uncertainty

By CHARLES DANG

It is as true in life as in nature that uncommon clarity often quickly follows utter chaos. A tempestuous storm leaves behind a world which glistens under a shy sun, who peaks his face from behind the cloudy curtain as if to ask whether the worst is over, and in the stillness finds his issue reflected all the better. So too may Reason find laid bare the battlefield of conjecture, for want of that cloud of ever-shifting confusions and conundrums which inevitably gather around us all with time. There is—if but for a moment—clarity, as if our warring doubts have set down their arms and declared an uneasy truce, finding amidst the blood and bruises a reprieve sadly won, if not from ultimate concord, at least from temporary exhaustion.

In this silence one may find a world laid bare of pretense. In such untempered light, those problems of life toward which we had once fruitlessly bent all our mental faculties now slip apart like a child's simplest playground knot, and one is left to wonder whether Newton had not been onto something when he formulated his third law. But hard-won clarity is clarity, nonetheless. Whether it is the clarity one desires is another matter entirely, for though the philosophers may claim that Truth is the same as the Good and likewise most pleasing, life far more often finds us to thrust away an unpleasant truth and to embrace a pleasant lie; and for every piece of knowledge that rests sweet against our tongue and sets our heart aflutter there is one which cuts in its acidic tartness and gives us fleeting glimpses of our final, lifeless state.

Rarely is the knowledge for which we have engaged in great internal struggle unaccompanied by such bitterness. That on which we may easily lay our hands, whether pleasant or not, may readily be taken up or discarded as our mood inclines. Those truths, however, for whose effluence great wars must be won are inalterably bound with the sting of the effort

necessary to procure them, and whatever pleasure—even great!—such truths may bring bears with it this blemish.

Yet truth, however bitter, is still truth; and for all our reticence toward those truths we find most repulsive, even they are a far preferable prize to the unending tempest of uncertainty. War may be fought in ordered ranks, each side advancing towards the other in strict formation, their strategy and aim foremarked by their commander. But so too may the ultimate clash turn ordered ranks to general chaos; and in the roar and choking dust all rational thought is lost to the present struggle with foes both real and imagined. Could anyone adduce the sovereignty of Reason to explain their actions in such a fray? No—no more than could one claim that a drowning man clinging to scattered timbers, who through heaving seas finds himself cast at last upon a friendly shore, owes his deliverance not to mere chance but to the superior abilities of his intellect in matters of the stars.

There are times in our lives when Fear and Doubt usurp our highest mental seat, and from it conjure an endless litany of formless truths with which to torment us. Uncertainty is their native earth. Its bountiful furrows spring forth that bitter harvest which Reason in her exile can only view aghast, helpless to act until that moment when she can cast those twin jesters from her rightful place. And thereupon the enemy is routed. The battle won. There is only left to count the dead; and though it may be found a pyrrhic victory, the sure knowledge for which such struggle was waged will in the end serve a far better stone on which to walk than any uncertain ground.

*Being Kind? Miss me with that Bullsh*t*

By ANONYMOUS

With such a vagueness to the purpose of this college, one must find out for themselves exactly why they ended up going here. After a semester and a half I have come across a few possible answers: to become a free thinker, to be able to come to my own conclusions, to be more open-minded, and definitely to become a better person. And with my own bias stemming from my (Johnnie alum) mother, I include kindness as being a part of that pursuit of goodness. And while I certainly do not plan on forgetting the drive to be kind, I might be making a few revisions to what that means for me personally.

Being a woman comes with a lot of extra responsibilities. While I was not surprised when I got my first period, I was in fact quite in awe at the limits a woman encounters in trying to be nicer. Like many young girls, I was quite good at being warm to strangers around me. I was a bit of a pro in the realm of smiling, asking how their day is going, not avoiding eye contact, and sometimes even flirtatious giggling. But still in the stages of becoming a woman of my own volition, I've been stopped short in my attitude towards the world, and for good reason.

As many women can relate, I recently had a less-than-pleasant situation with a #man. After being openly warm to a bartender, eleven years my senior, I was told by someone else that he "could not stop staring at my tits" and that while he would like to get to know me, he really just wanted to kiss me. Horrified, I quickly left the situation. I should add that I got out of this situation because my best friend, who happens to be a non-smiling and generally intimidating man, happened to come across this interaction and was willing to intervene on my behalf.

While I'm well aware that this is not my fault just because I was being "nice" to some older man, I do know that

this is what happens when you're willing to humor an inappropriate interaction. This led me to question myself. How far was I willing to let the creepy conversation go before I left the situation on my own accord? Because I know for a fact that at the moment I did not have any plans to. I certainly wanted to, but my own fear of coming across as a rude woman stopped me. This moment terrified me. Not just because I was afraid for my own safety, but mostly because I did not allow myself to prioritize my own wants all for the sake of a man's feelings.

Bringing it back to the question of kindness and the possible dangers of an excess of it, I encourage any readers to look within themselves whenever they are pushing themselves to be nice to the world. Is it because you think that everyone deserves a certain level of it, within measure? Or could it be that you are afraid of what will happen to your image if you are not outwardly kind? Because realistically, from my own experience, coming across as strong (and possibly a little bitchy) has much more value than coming across as kind without limits. In the spirit of the St. John's, a life walked all over is a life not lived for yourself or for your own sake and care. Martyrdom is just a glorified version of self harm that helps absolutely nobody. It doesn't help these disgusting men—unless help can be defined as a license to be predatory—it does not help the world, and it certainly does not help you.



Love in the Time of Counterintelligence

By NAT MARTIN

How an international student found herself with a government agent

We all have stories about love and casual dating and the modern conception of it that comes out of a technologically and politically aware world. My friend's story may serve as an example of this to some, or as a warning to others. On November 11, 2022, my friend, let's call her Alexa, went on a weekend getaway with a government official—unknowing of the danger that existed alongside it. There were signs of danger leading up to this harrowing event.

"I understand that as an international political figure, in the past and present, and who comes from a country with a political alliance with Russia, I 'must be cautious of what I say and what I do in this country,' but I never thought that this rule should be applied to my dating life also," said Alexa. "When I went out with Duke, I had expected that we would have our differences considering that he's 31 years old, but I was hoping that I would get a sense of what a mature relationship would be like. Never did I think that I would experience something this fucked up."

Duke's interests were all too conveniently aligned with Alexa's political life. He knew much about the current events of her country. He asked, from the beginning, about Alexa's family and her political ties to her country. He even warned her that he would need to add her to a United States government database.

"I was sitting in his Mercedes, and he was in a suit after work; in his suit, he turned to me and took my hand and said that he would need to add me to a database. After that date, he connected with me on LinkedIn. From there, I found out that he has worked in the Government's many intelligence agencies and had a lot of experience in counterintelligence.

I thought that it was cool and something exciting." Alexa then exclaimed, "He had three phones, and they were all the newest iPhones!"

From the beginning, Duke told Alexa about a special date. This special date was the date he wanted to plan with Alexa when he was moving into his new apartment, and this was denoted as a special and sacred date by Duke. Alexa thought it was because she could finally visit him—he could not have her over at his previous place for unknown reasons. He was insistent on him seeing her this specific weekend, the weekend of November 11th, 2022.

Now, reader, it is common sense to mistrust seeing someone for the first time outside of a date context. Here, Duke faulted in being mindful of the safety precautions Alexa wanted to take to feel protected.

"My roommate, from the beginning, always warned me of getting into Duke's car. She said that I could not trust strangers and their motives. When I told her of my weekend getaway with Duke, she was insistent that I take an uber to Duke's place," said Alexa. "When I told Duke that I would take an uber, and asked for his address for that uber, Duke became very aggressive over the phone. He told me that 'a good relationship cannot be formed on mistrust.'"

Alexa was thus coerced into a trip to an unknown address in Washington DC. When she arrived at this place of great mystery in anticipation, she was greeted by a polished, cleansed, and disinfected white apartment, which reeked of chlorine and bleach. It was empty except for some boxes and a Twin XL-sized bed in the middle of the bedroom.

No personal items were displayed, and the only thing in the fridge was a chilled white wine. The eyes of Alexa scoured the rooms for signs of life.

“I had skipped lunch in the dining hall because I was expecting a feast of take-out accompanied by a promised film showing.” Alexa was mistaken. “When I asked for food, I was met with a glass of wine, and another; before I knew it, I had finished the bottle. Hunger pains stopped me from passing out from the usual tiredness that alcohol brings. I complained and told him we should get food, and it was 11:00 pm already. He said he had a very tiring day and that we should get breakfast early in the morning, so we slept instead.”



The starvation did not end in the morning for Alexa.

“In the morning, Duke woke up and took a three-hour shower,” explained Alexa intently. “I wanted to be focused on returning home to Annapolis, but the lack of energy stopped me from putting my things in my bag. How could I gain the energy to step out the door when I couldn’t even stand to pack my things. Once his shower was complete, he smugly carried out a huge cup of black coffee. No cream, no sugar. Hunger and coffee? The recipe for tortuous anxiety. We then drove an hour to a parking lot where food was supposedly close-by, but then he made us walk an hour to a bagel shop.”

Here, Alexa was fed a bagel and a black coffee, the only sustenance she received while on her weekend getaway with US Counterintelligence Official Duke. She was dropped off at the Campbell parking lot shortly after this bagel shop experience. When she arrived on campus, it was 7:05 pm. She was five minutes late to dinner. As she was wondering where to get food, Duke sent an enticing picture of Indian take-out with the caption: “You could’ve gotten this if you had stayed just a day longer with me.”

“Looking back on this experience, nothing seems coincidental anymore. How can a person who is well-versed in my country’s political affairs be a part of the US Intelligence Agency and have an undying thirst for knowledge about my country? As a side-effect to my hunger, Duke was attempting to see if I would reveal information about my family’s political ties. I believed I was falling in love, but he was just trying to turn me into data. I am more than that.”

Organic Vinegar, Perfect for Salad Dressings*

*Please do not actually eat vinegaroon juices.

By LOUIS ROSENBERG

The cardboard box was dotted with ventilation holes and labeled on two sides with neon stickers: “LIVE ANIMALS.” I went to pick it up from Public Safety. After showing the officer my ID card, he grabbed the package but didn’t hand it over right away. “You know, it says it contains live animals. Can you tell me about that?” I froze. PubSafe terrifies me in the best of circumstances — I enter Pinkney through the back doors specifically so I don’t have to walk by their office to get back to my room — and I really didn’t want my package confiscated when I had paid \$34.96 for expedited shipping with a live-arrival guarantee. “It’s for Insect Farming Club,” I said, hoping my shaking voice didn’t make me sound suspicious. “A vinegaroon.” Realizing he probably didn’t know what a vinegaroon was, I continued, “I mean, a whip scorpion. Like a scorpion, but they spray acid.” In case that sounded too outrageous, I continued, “Acetic acid. It’s like a mist of vinegar, not really dangerous.” Despite the stress, I was given the package, and retreated back to Mellon to get the insects settled in their new home.

Giant vinegaroons, or *Mastigoproctus giganteus*, are large arachnids found throughout Florida, the southwestern United States, and much of Mexico; this species is the only whip scorpion found in the United States. As the first part of their common name suggests, they are quite large, with a body length often surpassing two inches (and made even more intimidating in appearance by their large legs, pedipalps, and claws). And their ability to spray a mist of approximately 85% acetic acid from a gland at their rear gives them the name “vinegaroon.” They only do this when agitated, however, and are essentially harmless to humans. The term “whip scorpions,” which refers generally to animals classed in the order of Uropygi, like these arachnids, alludes

to their scorpion-like appearance, but they are in fact more closely related to spiders than scorpions.

Vinegaroon anatomy is quite fascinating. Despite having eight eyes (one pair of eyes in the center of their face, and a cluster of three eyes on either side of their head), they are nearly blind. Rather than traditional pedipalps, they have large claws, which they use to hold their prey. When frightened, they may adopt a threat posture, spreading their pedipalps, raising their abdomen, and waving their “tail” (more accurately, their caudal filament). The caudal filament is dotted with little hairs, and it’s used as a sensory organ, along with their front two, antenniform legs. Their other six legs are used to walk; they are poor climbers.

Vinegaroons are also sexually dimorphic, so we know that Vincenzo, our specimen, is a female. While it would be awesome to have a bunch of little baby vinegaroons, that would force Vincenzo to meet her doom: after vinegaroons complete their elaborate courtship process and then lay eggs, they carry their egg sack for two months, and then guard their offspring until after their first molt. Because the mother does not feed during this process, she typically dies of starvation shortly after her young leave. We’ll let Vincenzo live out her full lifespan (which can surpass 7 years) — she doesn’t need that much commitment.



Vincenzo, in a temporary feeding container, deciding if she wants to eat a mealworm. Note the antenniform legs with which she feels it out.

Epistle from a Worried Thinker on Sexual Education

Dear Companions of the Flesh (Or: Dear Fuckers),

If we take our Plato seriously (and we do), the ‘erotic’ is an essential part of the liberal education. Socrates is more often in pursuit of a good time than a good life, entire dialogues dripping with flirtatiousness and sex appeal (Thrasymachus you blushing dog, you). The Symposium is no mere drinking party; it is an intellectual orgy. For our favorite party philosophers, Eros is not an aloof philosophical concept, it is the person on the couch next to you (or the snub nosed man on someone else’s couch). On the opposite end of the program, we’ve got Freud, a man who, if he did not invent more kinks than anybody else, certainly named the most.

So central is sex to the Western tradition, one wonders, why isn’t there a St. John’s Sex Ed class? (God knows y’all need it.) From hot and heavy Helen and Paris to Aristotle’s sperm, from Satan in Paradise Lost (no sex, he’s just hot) to Nietzsche’s heroic incelness, students could sex their way through the Great Books. We could all go through Odysseus’s journey: a years-long pursuit of another’s touch.

With all this philosophical weight that Eros has, I hope you will grant me one tiny, minor, little request: Never speak of sex in class. Don’t mention it, don’t explain it, don’t ask about it. It’s weird and gross and I know that Phedre is using Hippolytus’s sword phallically, and I know that Patroclus wearing Achilles’s armor is like them being inside each other, and I know that familial relationships are difficult when you’re betrothed to the son of the brother of your mother who’s also your father’s mother, Antigone. I get it! No one isn’t noticing it! (Except that one time you said Apollonius is the most erotic mathematics ever done; no one else was noticing that.) But the moment someone says ‘sex’ or ‘penis’ or ‘As a virgin...,’ we lose ourselves to the horrific duality of over-intellectualizing childishness, giggling our way through Oedipal complexes and homoerotic analyses.

If only it ended there. Lab is filled with laughs at the sucking of vacuums, the rubbing of PVC pipes, the ‘balls’ drawer. I see the red lights in your windows; I hear everything through these thin walls; I know what happens in these bathtub rooms. You ruin classrooms with the McDowell challenge; you ruin the Great Hall playing smash or pass on the presidential portraits; you ruin my life with sex. Everything would be so much better if I could imagine every last one of you as a disembodied mind.

Kindly—and for my Protestant ethic—just don’t do it.
B.S.

The Song of Ganymede

Luke Briner

I.
I sing of Love and Love attained,
From worldly loneliness detained
 To ravished Height of Heavenly embrace,
Brought up by God-inspired flight
So won through his affectioned sight
 Of mortal Virtue's hard-acquired grace.
By such Assumption was I made high *Jove's* beloved thrall
And glad attendant of *Olympus'* immortal Hall.

II.
Hear now of how I was before:
Meandering that hazy shore
 Which *Phoebus* greeted early in his blaze;
Although by scion's blood its heir,
I felt as if a stranger there,
 And on more lofty birthright set my gaze;
For while in common fondness joined to my familiar sire,
A Union with some greater Parent yet was my desire.

III.
I tended then unto my flock,
Unruly brood of Nature's stock
 Which only by the staff went not astray;
By that ennobling toil sought I
To prove e'en to the distant Sky
 My merit to be freed from th'earthly fray.
So hoping, so essaying, and so fixed in high repine
Did I outstretch my aching, prostrate heart to the Divine.

IV.
And then I was by new sense struck,
As though by eagle's talons plucked
 As prey submissive from the lowly grass;
No fitful breeze of *Aeolus*
Or Dæmon tutelar was this,
 But Presence of true Otherworldly class.
By Godly Inspiration was I then, in great amaze,
Upswept forthwith from gloom terrene t'ward new World's
jocund blaze.

V.
I higher rose than any peak:
Parnassus, where the Sibyls speak
 The words of Heaven unto its lost own,
Or *Ida* blessed, on *Cretan* isle,
Which *Rhea* made the domicile
 Of my Lord ere he claimed his native Throne;
Those summits seemed to point toward a higher summit
still
And urge me to chase the Beloved with more earnest will.

VI.
Soon I had vaulted o'er the Sun
As a triumphant *Phaëton*
 Who earned Supernal sanction thus to rise
By Hubris not but spirit poor
And ardent longing to adore
 That kindred Light scarce flashed before my eyes;
So by Empyric wing I flew 'bove each enmattered Sphere
And scraped the *primum mobile* in which Kosmic turns
inhere.

- VII.
Yet as I gazed upon the Whole,
Work of the Universal Soul,
 A Whole far greater was revealed to me:
That Presence shed its pluméd form
Which it to me before had worn
 And burst into the Heav'nly Apogee.
The sudden Transformation lifted me, with it entire,
From Hylic bond to that Beyond to which I did aspire.
- VIII.
O long-lost Joy now pure and free!
O All-Transcendent Ecstasy!
 How can I with these mortal words covey
The Unity Empyrean
And Consolation held therein
 Imparted unto me that blessed day?
At once, at last, did I in that Apotheosis high
Find an Ambrosial balm for every earth-exacted sigh.
- XI.
There is in this *Elysium*
All Being in its perfect Sum
 Resounding in a grand polyphony;
I melted in its serenade
And felt my self begin to fade
 Before the Beauty that enveloped me.
In *Bacchic* exultation, drunk with Love, I was led t'ward
My highest *télos*, the embrace of my Eternal Lord.
- X.
He held me to his bosom tight,
And there, at the end of my flight,
 I poured out everything I had to him;
I was myself his nec'trous wine
And consort made henceforth Divine,
 A homecoming glad from excursion grim.
By noble spirit and above-set mind have I thus won
A perfect Union with my God, no longer two but One.



Song of Songs: Book 8

translation by El'ad Nichols-Kaufman

*If only you were like a brother to me, nursing at my mother's breast,
finding you outside I would kiss you, and no one would scorn me.*

*I would lead you, I would bring you, to the house of my mother who would teach me,
I would give you to drink spiced wine and juice of my pomegranates.*

His left hand under my head, his right hand embraces me.

*I make you swear to me, daughters of Jerusalem,
do not wake and do not rouse love until it pleases.*

...

*Who is that rising from the desert, leaning on her beloved?
Under the apple tree I woke you,
there your mother conceived you,
there the one who birthed you conceived you.*

...

*Put me as a seal on your heart, as a seal on your arm,
For as fierce as death is love, as hard as Sheol is jealousy,
Its sparks are sparks of flaming fire.*

*Many waters could not quench love and rivers could not flood it,
If a man would give all the riches of his house for love, they would scorn him utterly.*

...

*We have a little sister, and she does not have breasts,
What shall we do for our sister on the day she is spoken for?*

*If she is a wall, we will build on her a silver battlement,
and if she is a door, we'll bind on her a board of cedar.*

*I am a wall, and my breasts are like towers,
Then I was in his eyes like one who finds peace.*

...

A vineyard Solomon had in Baal Hamon, he gave the vineyard to its keepers,
Each would bring from his fruit a thousand pieces of silver.

My vineyard is mine before me,
the thousand are for you, Solomon, and two hundred for the keepers of its fruit.

...

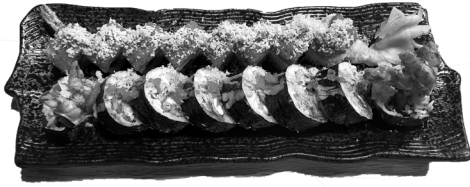
You who sits in the gardens, friends are listening to your voice,
let me hear it.

Flee my beloved and be like a deer, or a young gazelle on the mountain of spices.



A Teriyaki House or a Teriyaki Home?

By AUDREY FOX



Infamy lives on in the DTA. For what must be centuries, eons, ages older than time itself, a certain Annapolis location has served our hungriest Johnnies. It has gone by many different names: Sakura, Rockin Roll Cajun, and the most recent—Teriyaki House on Main Street. The mythology surrounding this location has weighed on me since my freshman year. How could one restaurant serve in such multifaceted ways?

I've heard tales of wayward nights that could only be supplemented by eel rolls, of impossible geometric demonstrations coming to light only under these very fluorescents. I had visited the restaurant when it was still Rockin Roll Cajun and found it to be an elusive space. There had been two different music sources playing different songs, and a jukebox app where you could pay to play even more music. I could not let this be my first and only impression of the location, and especially since they rebranded, I wanted to see how things look now. The spirit required that I investigate such sanctified grounds and learn what makes this the night spot it is.

Alongside me was none other than the benevolent editor-in-chief himself, Daniel Nathan. Parched we were, so our immediate inquiry was about their selection of "juices." But alas! They have not yet acquired a "juice" license, so this would not be a recommendation if you're looking for freshly squeezed juice. We left to find some and came back to eat. We ordered a plethora of food: two specialty rolls, gyoza, and a teriyaki bento box recommended to us by two underclassmen who we ran into upon entering the restaurant.

The food was overall fairly good, though one of the rolls, a spider roll, was a little underwhelming. The bento box had

the most bang for your buck, as you get teriyaki over rice, gyoza, California rolls, and veggies all together. The other specialty roll we ordered, the "Crunchy Tuna, Hidden Dragon," was particularly good. While I found the food to be tasty, it was nothing extraordinary. The prices were cheap but not as affordable as other downtown options. The bento box, again, is the most utilitarian choice, as they range from \$15.95-17.95.

However, I find that this place does fill a very specific niche in the Johnnie restaurant repertoire. The space itself is hard to describe. There seems to be three different interior aesthetic themes happening, and none of them work well together. The most off-putting was the nautical decorations sparsely distributed around the otherwise neutral room. I get that we are in Annapolis, but that doesn't mean every restaurant needs to have a helm mounted to the wall. As Daniel and I were eating, we were trying to get a read on what exactly the atmosphere of the place was. We were talking about it so much that we even tried to distract ourselves with some forced gossip, but to no avail. It was so sterile, yet so overwhelming in its lack of theme. The atmosphere is that there is no atmosphere, dare I say liminal.

However, there is a place for such locations in a college student's life. Sometimes, after a long day of doing schoolwork, I don't want to go to a "restaurant." I just want to grab some tasty food. This is the place to go on days like that, as the space frees itself from any true framework and allows us to make it what we need it to be. If you're planning on taking a special someone here, I would caution that this is a third or fourth date location. Again, there is no "vibe" at all about this place. If you're looking to impress, find something else, but if you need a quick, reasonably priced meal, this is the place to go.





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