

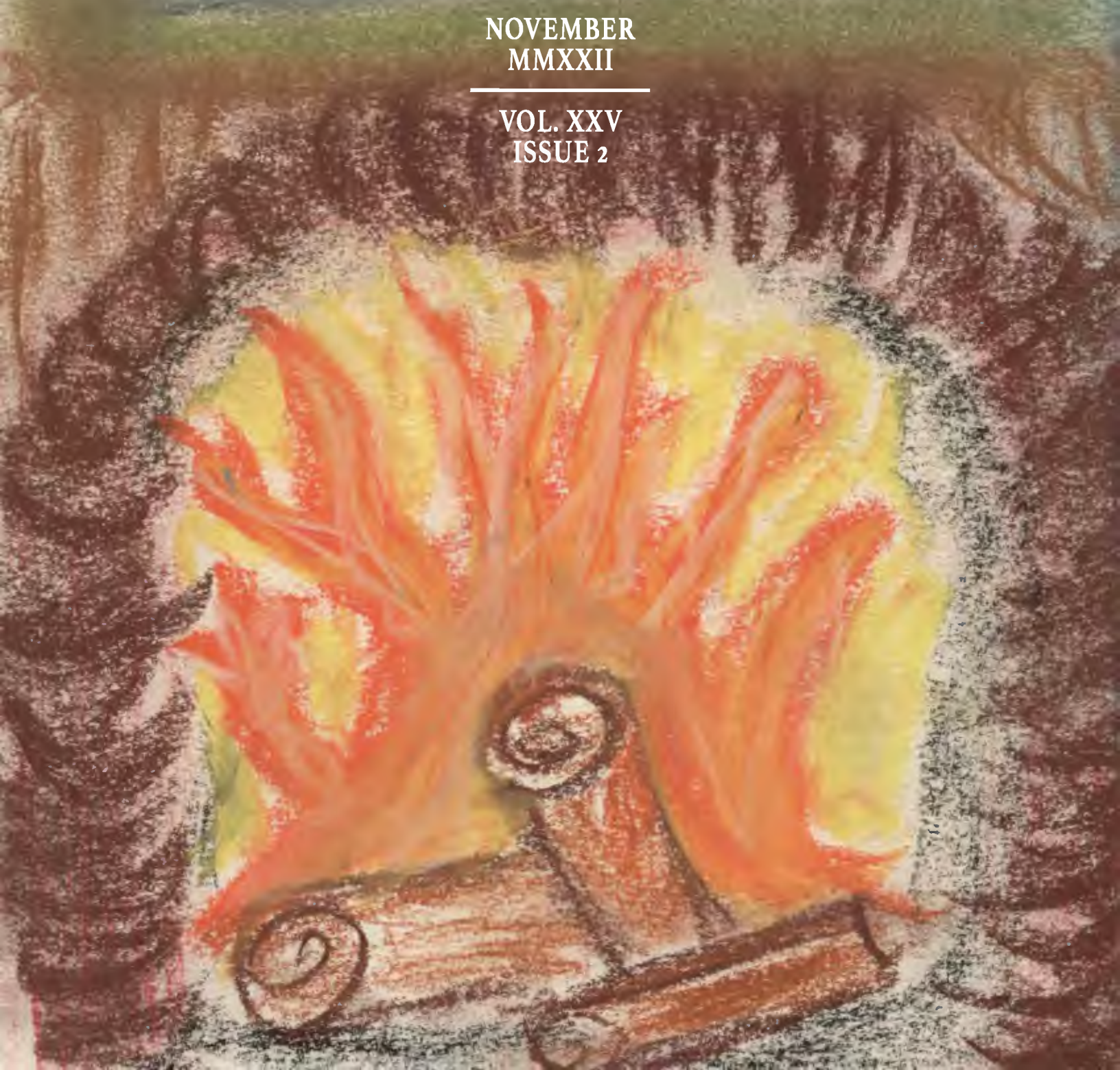
the moon



"THE AMERICAN PEOPLE THOROUGHLY DESPISE AND HATE THEIR NEWSPAPERS."
-UPTON SINCLAIR

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STATEMENT OF THE MOON

Founded in 1983, *The Moon* is the free monthly, independent, student-run newsmagazine of St. John's College-Santa Fe.

Any opinions expressed in *The Moon* are those of the author(s) expressing them. *The Moon* publishes news, opinion, literary works, satire, photography and art, and other feats of journalism by the SJC community. We do not accept bullying, harassment, or libel in any form, and we have the right to reject any piece on the basis of this policy.

Submissions sent to *The Moon* should be emailed to themoon@sjc.edu as a Google or Word doc. The deadline is midnight on the 3rd Wednesday of each month.

CHRYSOSTOMOS ANNOUNCEMENTS

Ever wanted to tear some guy to shreds in a field? Then this one's for you. Come see *The Bacchae* on November 19th & 20th in the Great Hall.

Come see *The Importance of Being Earnest*—a trivial comedy for serious people. We will be performing Wilde's brilliant comedy in the Great Hall on December 3rd and 4th, times TBD. Don't miss our brilliant cast (and the only comedy on the docket for this season of Chrysostomos plays.)

but his ask would hover

between our heart s

never voiced or said tender I

ZOHAR NA'AMAN ('24)

Editor in Chief
Bridget Lynch ('23)

Editors

Luca Brewer ('25)
Katherine Kennedy ('24)
Theo McCormick ('25)
Kabita Sen ('23)
Felix Tower ('25)

Collagistes

Luca Brewer ('25)
Elena Hochheiser ('24)
Katherine Kennedy ('24)
Theo McCormick ('25)
Tobias Smit ('25)

Cover Art

Nicholas Budwine ('23)

Art

Syd Whitten ('23)



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NEWS

OH, CARTER SNEAD

NATALIE MICHAELS ('26)

FRIDAY OCTOBER 7 – Scarved and smiling, O. Carter Snead led an eager crowd of St. John's students, parents, alumni, and tutors through a rigorous session of logical Zumba. Returning to his alma mater, the renowned bioethicist and Professor of Law at Notre Dame delivered a long-awaited lecture illustrating the thesis of his latest book, *What It Means to Be Human: The Case for the Body in Public Bioethics*, through a series of anecdotal and legal claims.

After building an "inductive, anthropological inquiry" into the nature and vulnerability of the body at its various levels of capacity to exert the will of the mind inhabiting it, Snead concluded with an appeal to communal obligation: we must protect the most vulnerable members of our community and deny the expressive individualism that pervades our culture.

Some, aware of Snead's Catholicism and public role as an anti-abortion activist, arrived at the Great Hall expecting an inflammatory debate about his argument against *Roe v. Wade*. Others came with a genuine interest in his logical framework regarding the legislation of human agency. In the end, they all had questions.

Dean Walter Sterling noted the exceptional turnout at the post-lecture question period. While a typical lecture yields 12-16 inquirers and the question period following a popular talk might fill the Junior Common Room, Sterling says he was stunned by the 100+ audience members who stayed. "People were energized," says Sterling, "I saw that in the room." Some speculated that enthusiasm during the question period was evidence of frustration. Because Snead refused to acknowledge the religious premises of his thesis and avoided the question of abortion in his lecture, attendees wanted to press on his claims.

Sterling maintains that Snead made a measured choice to focus on logic. "I think he probably makes decisions about what he's going to present based on the audience he's going to be with and what he thinks will be most fruitful," said Sterling, "And coming to St. John's he wasn't primarily interested in engaging in speaking as a Catholic to fellow Catholics or something like that which I'm sure he does, sometimes."

"It's not that he doesn't believe the other stuff, but he wants to be able to engage in an arena of reasoned discussion and evidence," Sterling continues, "And I think this is what we do. I think he's a Johnnie first and he's this other thing second. I felt like the person we saw there and the kind of conversation that was had—that felt to me very Johnnie."

Students vary in their interpretations. Some felt that Snead's claims were life-affirming and applauded his avoidance of polarizing topics with the potential to obscure intellectual dialogue. Others felt that this maneuver undermined Snead's argument and made him untrustworthy. Alejandro Ross ('23) attends most of the lectures in the *Dean's Lecture & Concert Series*. "I knew nothing about Snead before the lecture," Ross says. "I was not aware of his political or religious stances. He actually sounded quite like a liberal college professor during the talk; he mentioned systemic racism as a decided fact at one point."

It's been difficult to gauge the Johnnie response to Snead's lecture because faculty and students have been hesitant to speak directly about their reactions. Several untutored faculty members declined to be interviewed when approached, citing concern for their careers over what they perceived to be Snead's friendship with Sterling and the political nature of Snead's work.

"You don't have to be pro-Socrates and anti-Gorgias," Sterling promises, "But if you're going to engage really actively in politics, you are going to get involved in debate. You're going to get involved in other kinds of rhetorical styles that don't really have a happy home in the interior of a liberal arts classroom or the interior of the St. John's classroom."

Sterling argues that St. John's is a community detached from broader politics. "Most observers would say that if you sat in on our classes, and you went to the dining hall, and you looked at the bulletin boards, and you looked at the events, we would look like a relatively apolitical community in the sense that you just wouldn't see, hear, and feel as much of the electricity of the moment, the headlines, the most agitating issues, that you'd see on another college campus."

However, the question period eventually turned political. In response to a question about abortion from Paul Laur (GI '95), CEO of Spartina Biotechnologies in Santa Fe, Snead began his response with a preface about the importance of understanding perspective, "I have a commitment to discourse that I think I learned at St. John's". Snead said, "Everybody is defending something they regard as essential in life. As fellow members of the community, we have to be empathetic."

Ross remembers the moment this question was posed. He says, "I was worried about wading into a really politically charged field. But Snead's answer surprised me; it was extremely long, thoughtful, and emotional, clearly meant to lower the political temperature, and though he didn't ever baldly state his position, it was pretty clear that the conclusion of the many arguments he had made would be an anti-abortion stance."

"Every day, every day I wish I was wrong about what I think about abortion," Snead concluded, "And so every time I debate this question, every time I read about this question, in a way, I'm kind of wishing to be persuaded away from the position that I hold. But I've not found those arguments and I don't find them persuasive," concluded Snead.

HAVE YOU EVER HEARD OF AN "ITALIAN TUNE-UP"?

CAMPBELL LOZUAWAY-MCCOMSEY, ('22), COMMUNITY
FACILITATOR FOR INTRAMURALS (CFI)

In the most literal sense, it means to run a car's engine hard enough to heat the engine so hot that it cleans itself and, afterwards, runs better.

Bryan Ward wrote on his website, *Third Way Man*, that he woke up one day feeling like, "everything was wrong, everything was broken, everything was unfixable." To change this, he modified the Italian tune-up to suit his person rather than his car. In one day, he had burgers for breakfast, bathed in ash and woodsmoke, played frisbee, and climbed trees with his sons before going home for an ice bath. His vim and vigor returned.

If you're feeling a little stuck or weary, you too might consider such a tune-up at one or both of our coming tournaments.

On the afternoon of Saturday, November 12th, we will play three consecutive frisbee games.

On the afternoon of Saturday, November 19th, we will play three consecutive soccer games.

It is, by design, a lot: a way to blow out the build up from most of a semester of playing one or two games a week. We *could* do a tournament over a few days, but we want the biggest and the best single day we can make. We want a champion to be crowned the same day we begin. And we want to feast in a field.

This is a way to sweat out the tired past and ready ourselves for something new. Come join us as we go well beyond the normal and shed any lethargy. Staff, students, and faculty are all invited to come to break the mold.

As fall comes to an end, and two breaks loom on the horizon, why not make space for them by leaving it all on the field?

POLITY NEEDS YOU TO GIVE A DAMN

NATALIE MICHAELS ('26)

TUESDAY OCTOBER 11 — Mary Claire Fagan ('26) and Aidan Shannon ('24) introduced a Town Hall-style discussion period to the latter portion of Polity meetings. Their maiden forum focused primarily on the importance of community engagement. While few members of the St. John's community were engaged in the meeting, the Polity Council and affiliated chairs/board members took the opportunity to engage in a passionate discussion about the need for establishing a system of accountability.

"Mx. Fagan and I helped set up this Town Hall as a way for students to take more time to discuss the issues that really matter to them," Shannon explains. "We're trying to figure out how to motivate the student body."

Polity was most concerned with the dismal state of the smoking areas and the dishevelment of public spaces after parties, especially in Uppers Commons. Malcolm Morgan-Petty (Student Events Coordinator) relayed faculty statements to the Polity Chair regarding the litter and loose cigarette butts strewn about the Lowers Smoking Area. If the tidiness of the area doesn't improve, faculty may petition for its removal.


Trash was another concern when discussing post-party clean-up. Christine Guevera (Executive Director of Campus Health and Wellness) expressed concern about the state of Uppers Commons and asked Polity to address the messes that often remain on Mondays. Instead of requesting another \$1,300 wooden trash can and suggesting that students clean up after themselves, Polity brainstormed ways to assign cleaning duties to specific partygoers. To handle clean-up, they entertained the implementation of a party-specific cleaning raffle. For the sake of ensuring that a network of safety resources exists for party attendees, Jimmy Camacho ('26) agreed to lead a committee of "Party Bubbass," assigned to circulate between groups of parties and make sure they feel safe.

More than punitive action and administrative complaints, Polity fears apathy will be the detriment of student life. Our inability to make it through a meal with a trash-free compost bin and the dishware theft from the Dining Hall were added to the list of concerns at the second Town Hall on October 18.

"We're talking a lot in Polity about collective responsibility," says Fagan, "We are a very small campus but large enough that not everybody knows everybody." Fagan feels that the student body needs to reach a level of mutual obligation and shared concern. This is a fine line to walk. "The blame game is really ineffective. What benefit do we

gain by pointing fingers, alleviating [ourselves] from all blame, and then othering people?" says Fagan.

Fagan argues that students need to adopt a philosophy of, "It's not my mess, but it's my space" and take initiative to clean up for the sake of fostering community. "That little shift in the way we understand problems promotes a really special community atmosphere."



What do we think about when we think about New Mexico? Some of us think of the smell of juniper and sage, chiles roasting in the fall, balloons soaring around Albuquerque, or the birth of the atomic bomb. But Iranian artist Shirin Neshat thinks about home: a home she has been exiled from since 1996. For many years, Neshat ruminated on her nostalgia through a series of works denouncing the effects of the 1979 Iranian Revolution on women's rights. But after so many years removed from that conflict, she realized that "everyone is conditioned to a different form of tyranny." As someone who had to flee her homeland, she found a similar reality in the people of New Mexico. The physical beauty of the land, the diverse population, but also the disparity, reminded her of the home she had lost.

SHIRIN NESHAT'S LAND OF DREAMS
MOLLY MCGRATH ('23)

Neshat's newest photo series, *Land of Dreams*, she describes as a "parody of the American Dream." She suggests the American Dream has folded in on itself and become a nightmare. Bridging the gap between her role as a narrator for the Iranian struggle of womanhood and her newfound American struggle found her in open castings at hotels and pizza parlors all over New Mexico in search of people's dreams. Many of the people who participated in *Land of Dreams* were homeless or low income, less interested in her artistic process and more in the payment she was offering for the portraits. Nevertheless, the chilling black-and-white portraits of New Mexicans accompanied by her own Farsi calligraphy tell a chilling tale of the dreams of the disenfranchised.

Neshat's documentations of people and their struggles are more essential than ever, considering the rising threat of right wing white identitarianism in the United States, and the mounting revolution happening in Iran following the death of Mahsa Amini at the hands of the Morality Police. In her home country, the images and words of Neshat have become indispensable visuals to the revolution, and her American portraits have the potential to hold the same weight.

Shirin Neshat's *Land of Dreams* is on view at SITE until January 16, and a film made in tandem with the portraits is streamable on Apple TV.

ARTS &
CULTURE

5

While I was walking past Weigle I first noticed the new members of our community. They were laying down in the shade beneath a small tree with an ambitious canopy. Soon, it was clear, they would stand up and stretch a stretch that would never be satisfied. That is, the stretch that all sculptures, statues, and buildings endure as they stand against the sun. Four new statues now call our campus home: two statues, one of a man, and one of a woman, each bare-chested, hands in the air and heads bend back possessed by worship, another statue of two arms gripping each other around the wrist one pulling the other out of an unknown but familiar abyss, and finally a turtle swimming down while a child holds on, their feet playfully kicking in the air. Each of these is striking, and anything but discreet. But while their presence might be pleasing, they bring with them looming questions as large as they are: Who made these? How did they get here? And what on earth does a turtle have to do with St. John's? The answer to these was an exceptional surprise.

Victor Salmones (1937 - 1989) was a world-renowned Mexican sculptor during his lifetime. Mentored by Bauhaus Master, Hoffman, and having attended the Instituto de Bella Artes his method was traditional: an age-old lost wax method of casting principally in bronze. For someone who named one of their pieces "Cancer, There is Hope", you may not be surprised to discover that Salmones's work was primarily concerned with timeless themes of compassion, love, and humanity. Google his name and you'll see what I mean. His sculptures are displayed at many museums, businesses, and galleries, and now at St. John's College Santa Fe. How he got here, well that's not all that clear.

An anonymous donor who was a "significant benefactor to our library collection" donated the statues to the college in 2020. But it doesn't just take a generous donation to get something done here at St. John's. There is the Campus Art Coordinator, Melissa Stevens, as well as a Campus Planning Committee who hold the college to a high standard of aesthetic excellence. Ultimately, the president of the college, Mark Roosevelt, and the Chair of the Planning Committee have the final say on matters like statues. When asked about the place these statues have on campus, President Mark Roosevelt replied "if you wish, without too much effort you can find connections to what we do at the college in these statues....but you do not need to...as I think they are aesthetically pleasing... these were part of a large generous gift of art from a donor...for which we are very grateful." But while there is a general enthusiasm and grateful acceptance of Mr. Salmones's statues, St. John's SF doesn't exactly have an unspotted relationship with public art.

Covered in an extensive article last year, it was found that a mural once stood on the wall outside the Great Hall. The image depicted a woman giving birth to three children representing the three cultures that call Santa Fe home: Native, Hispanic, and Anglo. After the then-President made comments about how he believed it to be crude and vulgar it was defaced by a student with a sharp object. What's worse, the mural was made by an artist of Hispanic origin, leaving the college and the Santa Fe community wondering what kind of message this sends.

I am happy to say Victor Salmones has found a place here, not only because of his connection to Mexico and the Southwest but because his subject matter is at the very heart of our project: humanity and our place in it. It is my hope that these statues can act as memorials that invite us to reflect on what it is we do here: to exalt in the presence of wonder and beauty as the man and woman do, to remember that we are not alone and can ask for help just as surely as the hand from the earth grasps the hand from the sky, and perhaps to not forget that we too can embody the joy and trust of a child holding on to a turtle's shell taking us ever deeper into ourselves and the world around us. If you haven't already, take a moment to spend time with our new community members, whether in passing or by special occasion.

This kind of thing does not merely disappear into history. Its scars can still be seen and felt if you look closely at the wall and run your hand across its surface to find the haphazard plaster smeared over its wounds. These scars remain, but I believe that with the welcoming of Victor Salmones, they begin to heal.



After two years in a row of being assigned a poetry selection for the All-College Seminar, I feel confident saying it has been a mistake. Poetry is difficult to talk about in a group setting even under the best of circumstances, where there is an established dynamic and earned respect. In a group full of strangers, it's almost impossible to get anywhere meaningful. What one gets out of reading any poem is a deeply personal thing, and it takes a lot of effort and skill when talking about it to avoid moving outside the "common text" we value so much here. In the texts we read in seminar, there is a balance between opportunities for objectivity and subjectivity—students can read a text, agree on basic and fundamental things, and use them to build up arguments and interpretations and make valuable connections. But with poetry, even the most basic and fundamental things are up for interpretation. This can lead to wildly different conclusions for each reader, and make building a meaningful conversation far more difficult. I question how useful it is to force people to listen to others analyze something that was written to elicit emotions that will be different in every reader. It's too free a medium to keep a group of strangers grounded.

When I was a freshman, we had two All-College Seminars. The first semester we read *Amy Foster*, a short story by Joseph Conrad. This provided excellent material for conversation, because there was a structured narrative within which characters made definite actions that could be discussed objectively and lead to genuinely interesting questions about relationships and human nature. In other words, the short story provided enough of a common framework for a class of students who didn't know one another to build a meaningful conversation around.

The second semester, students were allowed in on the faculty seminar. We were given the choice between eight different works:

Xylofon

- Book Six and Book Seven of Plato's Republic: The Images of the Sun, the Divided Line, and the Cave
- Four Selected Poems by June Jordan
- "Beauty and the Beast, or the Enormous Wound," by Clarice Lispector
- The Satipatthana Sutta or "The Discourse on the Arousing of Mindfulness"
- "The Death of Ivan Ilyich," by Tolstoy
- "Church Going," Philip Larkin
- "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," by Walter Benjamin

You'll notice some of this is poetry. But critically, not all of it. I did the Plato seminar, and as someone who struggled greatly with Plato freshman year, having a mix of tutors, upperclassmen, and other freshmen working together to think through a key part of the text did a lot to deepen my understanding of *The Republic*. It was a very valuable and productive use of my time. I think offering selections for students to pick from would lead to greater enthusiasm for the All-College Seminar, because people would be much more likely to be invested in the conversation. Dean J. Walter Sterling admits in his letter to the College Community that the fact that the poet is coming to the college to speak "[was] guiding our choice" to assign this selection. And while I don't doubt the "poetic and aesthetic excellence" of Ms. Dove's work, I think we'd all get a lot more out of our opportunity to work with new people from other years if we were allowed to guide our own choices. I'll go so far as to say I don't think you'd need to hold a seminar absence over people's heads to make them go if they were allowed to choose something that interested them.

OPINION

A CRITIQUE, FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE GENERAL READING PUBLIC, CONCERNING THE PROPOSED ADDITION OF SEMINAR CLASSES DURING THE SENIOR ESSAY WRITING PERIOD, THE PRUDENCE OR FOOLHARDINESS WITH WHICH THIS IDEA IS AT PRESENT CONCEIVED, THE VIRTUE OR FOLLY IN WHICH THE AUTHOR HOLDS ITS PROPONENTS AND DETRACTORS, PRESENTED HERE AS THE AFOREMENTIONED YOUNG GENTLEMAN M. WILLIAMS PENNED THESE THOUGHTS ON THE NINETEENTH DAY OF OCTOBER, ANNO DOMINI TWO-THOUSAND AND TWENTY-TWO
JOHN WILLIAMS ('23)

Please don't.

A RESPONSE TO THE EXCESSIVELY MODEST PROPOSAL OF ONE M. WILLIAMS, IN WHICH HIS PUSILLANIMOUS POSITION IS COMPREHENSIVELY CONSIDERED, AND ROUNDLY REBUKED, WITH SOME THOUGHTS AS TO THE PROPER COURSE OF ACTION TO BE PURSUED IN THE MATTER OF THE ADDITION OF SEMINARS DURING THE SENIOR WRITING PERIOD. THESE REMARKS HAVING BEEN WRITTEN ON THE FOURTH DAY AFTER THE IDES OF OCTOBER, BY THE HON. W MASON, OF THE COLLEGE OF SAINT-JOHN'S.
WILLIAM MASON ('23)

Do it.

A GRIEVOUSLY EXASPERATED RESPONSE TO THE PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED RESPONSE RESPONDING TO THE PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED CRITIQUE CONCERNING THE PROPOSED ADDITION OF SEMINAR CLASSES DURING THE SENIOR ESSAY WRITING PERIOD, AT GREAT PERSONAL EXPENSE AND TO THE GENERAL IRRITATION OF THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR
JOHN WILLIAMS ('23)

Jerk.

THE FUTURE OF ST. JOHN'S IS ISLĀM

HUSAYN AHMAD ('25)

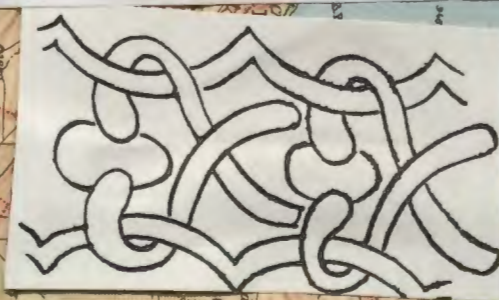
The Islamic Golden Age is perhaps the most influential period of human civilization and should be given adequate attention by a college whose mission is to track the great ideas of humanity. It is not only important but necessary to start a Middle Eastern Classics program at the college. This necessity comes from an intellectual obligation to understand the depth and profundity that Muslim and Jewish philosophy have had on humanity. This strand of philosophy is one that I was raised in as a child and continue to preserve as a practicing Muslim, and the effect it has had on me is enormous. If this life-changing project is to take place on a much wider scale, St. John's could be the perfect place to begin its journey.

It is widely accepted that the liberal arts education originated in Ancient Greece. But, in the Middle East, the liberal arts continued to flourish and find new life as Europe descended into the Dark Ages. The flourishing of the study of the liberal arts proved to cultivate within its students a great desire to seek knowledge for its own sake. This cultivation is not only compatible with the teachings

of Islām but is fully integrated within it. The Arabic word for knowledge, علم ('ilm), is an all-encompassing term covering theory, action, and education. 'ilm is not simply confined to the acquisition of knowledge only, but also embraces socio-political and moral aspects as well. This word is used in the holiest book in the Islāmic faith, the Qur'ān, over 100 times; the word for "think, reflect" is used 68 times; and the first word ever revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was اقرأ (iqra', meaning read). The pursuit of 'ilm became an obsession for the Muslim world. In his book *Knowledge Triumphant*, the Jewish historian Franz Rosenthal argues that Islām is unique in world history for having as its raison d'être, the discovery, preservation, and transmission of knowledge. This raison d'être led the Muslims to structure their education such that it included moral, intellectual, and spiritual training, and they used the structure of the quadrivium and trivium as their point of departure.

It is of note that remnants of Islāmic thought permeate our reading here at SJC. For example, Avicenna's idea of the Existent as Primary had a profound impact on St. Thomas Aquinas. Dante Alighieri mentions and exalts both Avicenna and Averroes in the *Inferno* (IV, Verse 142-144). Avicenna's medical works, the most notable being *al-Qānūn fi al-ṭibb* or the *Canon of Medicine*, deserves a lab program of its own. The methods of angular computation found in Ptolemy's *Almagest* bear no relation to the methods of trigonometry today. The six trigonometric functions were formulated much later by the 13th century Shi'ite polymath Nasir al-Dīn al-Tūsī in his *Treatise on the Sector of the Circle*. In this work, Tūsī gave an extensive exposition on spherical trigonometry, distinct from astronomy. It was in Tūsī's works where trigonometry became an independent branch of pure mathematics. The number of examples could not be contained within one article.

If one were to establish a Middle Eastern Classics program, it is important to bring to light an interpretation which I find quite problematic. A standard interpretation, pushed particularly by Leo Strauss and similar thinkers, asserts that with Islāmic texts, "much more is required of the interpreter than just the ability to read the text and the capacity to deal with the philosophical points made in it," as Oliver Leaman wrote in his essay *Does the Interpretation of Islāmic Philosophy Rest on a Mistake?* Leaman continues, "[w]hat is required is a key to understanding the peculiar way in which the text has been composed, and that key is to be found by paying attention to the conflict between belief and unbelief." This conflict simply did not exist in Islāmic civilization, because in Islām, separation of church and state is nonexistent. No such tension is present within the faith. Often times, modern Westerners assume and superimpose this tension as a result of the European experience with the Catholic Church's polemics against radical new sciences. In fact, many philosophers in the Islāmic Tradition were often given patronage by rulers and often held positions of power such as in the case of Ibn Sīna (Avicenna), Ibn Rushd, and Suhrawardī. The iconic library Bayt al-Hikmah (House of Wisdom) was given patronage by 'Abbāsid caliphs themselves.



The merits of this standard interpretation are found in its ability to situate the text in the time and context in which it was written. The major assumption of the so-called standard interpretation, however, is that writers of Islāmic philosophy were operating under unforgiving and hostile times and were obligated to represent their views as perfectly in line with established beliefs in Islām. Such philosophers did this in a way as to disguise their real opinions and intentions, and thus more is required of the reader to pierce through orthodoxy in order to arrive at the "kernel of philosophical argument" as Leaman puts it. In other words, we must assume that the author is using all sorts of rhetorical and sophistic devices and subsequently must approach each text with suspicion and wonder at what the author is really getting at. Such an interpretation is an interesting intellectual exercise, but it is not much more than that. Islāmic philosophy is not Maimonides' *Guide for the Perplexed*.

An understanding of the world is woefully incomplete without a serious understanding of the Islāmic contribution and a breaking down of this standard method of interpretation using in-depth and careful thought. It is precisely for this reason that a separate program dedicated to studying the trajectory of Islāmic thinking, from its inception with the hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to contemporary thinkers such as Ayatollah Khomeini and Allama Ṭabataba'ī, is a vital necessity. It is Islāmic thinkers who, in my opinion, have grappled with those same, important questions we encounter here at SJC and have come to new, complex, and powerful understandings therein. The future of St. John's must be Islām.

Sophomore year Bible seminars are notoriously contentious; how could they not be? The Bible's presence in Western culture is pervasive and undeniable. As a result, nearly every student at St. John's has a preexisting set of opinions on the text before they even pick up a copy from Meem Library, the bookstore, or a hotel dresser. The intimacy we have with this text can pose problems when we attempt to read it with the same objectivity we read the *Iliad*. In the words of tutor Charlie Barrett: "If we could approach the *Iliad* with the same gravity as we do the Bible and the Bible with the same distance as we do the *Iliad*, we would ultimately be better readers of both texts."

Easier said than done.

For some Johnnies, the approach to reading and thinking about the Bible is by looking at it as religious scripture. Their contributions in class can focus on deciphering from the text the religious practices and values to which they adhere, so as to clarify the bedrock of their belief. Their peers may interpret the exclusivity of the religious perspective as narrow-minded or needlessly dogmatic. While the presentation of the Bible as a religious object may pose as much difficulty for some as importance for others, this is not the only reason Bible seminars can become so heated. Present in those exact same seminars are atheists who come into class fully prepared to make their case. Some people feel that religion has been used by others to harm them—or seen it as an excuse to harm others.

When these groups go head-to-head, it results in a clash of beliefs stated as fact and dramatic statements bent on refuting them often with little care for their actual contents. This only serves to exacerbate the issue. This becomes a rapid-fire of frustrating, uncomfortable, and often unproductive questions like, "So you admit God is evil?". These are not conversations.

Defaulting to antagonization divides the class against itself. The difficulty in this is that the class must act as a whole in its pursuit of answers, as with every seminar. Cooperation is crucial when the context is fraught with conflict before class even begins. The first step is recognizing that we all come in with preconceptions and, for two hours, twice a week, we need to learn how to put them in dialogue with those of others. Set them aside—or do our best, learning with practice. We can give our peers the same curiosity and eagerness to learn that we give the text. As tutor Judith Adams hopes, "we try to read the Bible together, as the book that it is, with care and fresh eyes, and as we would read any other seminar text."

We must learn to disagree in Bible seminars: even existing in a room with someone who doesn't share your worldview is a more existential form of discomfort. Spending your time attempting to refute religion instead of engaging with its complex and world-shaping ideas solves nothing and demonstrates a lack of curiosity. Give religious people in your seminar your interest; they have just as much value to add as you.



ANOMALISTIC NOTIONS

FILM EQUATION: TENET

BY LUCA BREWER ('25)

PART I: WHY DO I LIKE TENET?

8/16/22 ~1200H: I am sitting outside Grumps Cafe in Annapolis MD, a favorite childhood eating location and employer of several friends during/after high school, eating a breakfast burrito, drinking a mimosa, and arguing with Neddy Wight ('25) about the movie *TENET* (2020). He had a few days prior watched *Bullet Train* (2022), which I along w/ Neely Van Loon ('25), Ainsley Powers ('25), and Ivan Michels (AN '25) had viewed (at a separate occasion) on 8/11/22 between ~1540H-1700H. Every one of us except the latter (Michels) had roundly disliked the film. Neddy was not in this camp. *The following is an entirely fictional conversation.*

NEDDY: I'm just trying to understand your taste. You like all these 'art films' right, and you dialogue about them at length to me and everyone else and in school newspaper columns, and yet not only do you also enjoy these schlocky, objectively not-very-good movies like *TENET* and *Southland Tales* (2006)—which is fine on its own, not every media-unit with which we interface has to be Ibsen—but you draw a distinction between the ones you personally like and deem to have value and the ones you think don't; this is a normal part of the procedure of engaging with art. But when you hold one up *TENET* on this pedestal above other movies that are easier to like and less continually frustrating other you're making some claim of merit, that its value is derived from some inherent feature. I think that is implicit in superlatives like 'one of the greatest' or 'one of the most important' that you apply so liberally to almost anything you like. And in the case of *TENET* I'm having trouble seeing where that value lies.

LUCA: *Bullet Train* feels like pastiche, I guess. Not that there's anything wrong with pastiche inherently, but when the end to which it's deployed is simply generating recognition in the audience I find that tremendously hard to engage with. If the sum total of your creative contribution is making people remember how much fun they had other movies then like, why not just watch those movies? It's this thing that I think has become so prevalent in postmodern art, the magpie-like picking out of signifiers w/o fully understanding what those signifiers are signifying in the context where they originally appeared. It's like cramming a film review article full of footnotes because you saw David Foster Wallace do footnotes, or doing Plato's arguing-with-himself-but-putting-the-words-in-the-mouths-of-real-people thing absent the perfectly calculated logic that

makes the dialectic work. But I think the negative reaction that so many people have to *TENET* is precisely because it's *not* trying to do this: it's a movie so fascinated with inventing its own structure and mechanisms that it minimizes or disregards those with which film audiences have been trained to respond. The whole affair starts as this fairly straightforward spy thriller with the conceit that some objects can move in reverse but then around the car chase the whole thing explodes: the Protagonist, whose movement through

going backward, and the entire world whose direction we thought we were tracking is now in direct opposition to him. The same scene re-plays again in the opposite direction. Every object appears twice. It's not new to treat time as subjective in film, but what *TENET* posits is that it can be objective from two different angles, and neither one of these objectivities is complete w/o the other. This is an entirely new type of film grammar, and it's one that's predicated on the audience's willingness to piece the structure together themselves. The arc of the film isn't one of character or emotion but the deployment of new information: information that can only be gained by seeing the same scene/object/character from a different angle. Every part of the film is in conversation with another part, and by extension itself.

NEDDY: But what idea is Nolan exploring in that conversation? When Joyce writes in stream-of-consciousness or molds his narration to the subjectivity of the protagonist those were novel languages, sure, but they weren't done just to do it. He had ideas about human experience that he felt the standard form of the novel was insufficiently prepared to express, which necessitated the invention of new forms. What is *TENET* accomplishing in that regard? I don't feel like it gives any greater substance to the human experience of time: I will never get shot with a reverse bullet and I have never undergone anything that I feel hadn't been sufficiently captured in art until I saw a guy get shot with a reverse bullet.

LUCA: But why does the thing need to have that kind of end goal? Why does the engagement w/ human experience need to be within the text itself? The thing that's engaging to me about *TENET* is not what it's saying but how it says it. The thrill is in the act of piecing everything together, decoding the stream of information into something comprehensible: *that's what we do*. immensely powerful feeling, putting human thought to work. I feel an almost religious ecstasy when I see the car chase from the other side and it *clicks* just exactly what's going on. Our manipulation of signs and symbols is about trying to make the world comprehensible, and here is a new world that I must learn new ways of comprehending. If I can make a diagram to help me understand *TENET* it means that what was once utterly foreign (bidirectional time) is now familiar enough to me that I can map its contours. All we do, humans, is try to make maps.

NEDDY: How is that different though than trying to understand an emotional relationship through the language of staging and blocking and dialogue? Rossellini was indubitably inventing new ways of communicating and yet you don't care for Italian Neorealism at all. Because it's not the problem-solving that interests you, otherwise you'd be experiencing "almost religious ecstasy" every time a shadow falls across a character's face in a Bergman movie. Those quiet things are as essential to the grammar of cinema as anything else and yet their purpose is to— I see. What you like is thinking about time travel or backwards boats or whatever *instead of* thinking about things that matter to people. It's escapism. It's empty, hollow spectacle. No wonder you can't watch a movie without getting drunk or high.

LUCA: The boat goes backwards.

10/12/22 2354H: I am watching *TENET*. I think Aristotle would either love *TENET* or throw himself in a very deep hole for reasons of *TENET*.

PART II: MATH GIRL

10/18/22 Part of the problem of Self-Definition is that the way you see your own personal situation is infinitely fragile: the construct of the Self in your head is truly extant only to you and under constant attack from the perceptions and realities of the exterior world. Case in point: I would prefer to think of myself as this right-brain creative type, comfortable with the ambiguities of the human emotional landscape, able to handle Themes and Ideas &c, but when the rubber hits the road I am truly just better at Euclid than at reading for seminar. Pot does not make me feel the sort of mind-freeness that its Aquarian proponents describe, instead when I am in the pot-zone I gravitate towards watching math videos on Youtube. On 10/4/22 at ~1900H I found myself interfacing w/ Neely and Asia Ferguson ('25) on the topic of "is kissing more or less intimate than dry humping" and when I relayed how the model we had created of intimacy of relation relative to intimacy of sexual act could be described as a proportion I was met with kind laughter and a type of "oh of course you, Luca (the Math Girl), would seek to describe intimacy in the context of a mathematical model" reaction that made me deeply, existentially unnerved. And yet this is one of the parts of myself that I feel most readily equipped to present to other people, despite being the parts I would least like to define the whole. It's not that I find Math Girl to be some loathsome, unappealing creature. In the abstract I find her quite the reverse. I just don't want to be her, or rather I'm scared about how much I do. To be comfortable with the unbounded nature of the world and not feel the need to impose order and structure upon it seems like the mature, reasoned approach to me. I am envious of the poets and the anarchists and the philosophers who see existence as a continuous function (and there she goes doing it again.) To say that mathematics *must be* a real, physical language independent of human thought that we are engaged in the procedure of discovering, this feels like the rationalization of a stunted or malformed mind, one that is afraid of the possibility of uncertainty. I don't know why. But I know that the main reason I'm so insecure about liking TENET as much as I do is that I feel like you could hand me anything with a structure baked into it and I would happily set to work trying to uncover and diagram it (the structure) but if the primary mode of engagement with a thing is emotional nuance well I might as well sit in the corner with a bucket on my head. I first smoked pot on 8/27/20 ~1500H and since then I have been loathe to watch a movie sober. The Apollonian I get. The Dionysian must be artificially induced. And here I am standing on the shore, watching the boat go backwards, feeling as though I have missed another one.

BAD PRESIDENTS KHUSHI SALGIA ('24)

Man #1 tried to eradicate an entire race of people from the country. Man #2 lied under oath in court. Man #3 engaged in bribery involving hundreds of thousands of dollars. Man #4 illegally tapped the phones of influential figures. Man #5 evaded millions of dollars of taxes. Man #6 abandoned his wife when she was giving birth. All of these men had extramarital affairs. And all 6 were presidents of the United States.

Why do we notoriously elect the worst presidents? History is no stranger to unfit leaders. But historically, most leaders were part of a hereditary monarchy, where the method of election was determined by bloodline. Now, when we have the option to *choose* who we put in power, we still don't always end up with a leader who has our best interests in mind. What mistakes occur when we evaluate who to put in charge of our country?

Most people think they are a good judge of character. We all have certain shortcuts we rely on when it comes to forming an impression about a person. These shortcuts are not perfect, and they fail us when it comes to politics. People are less rational when considering issues that emotionally and personally affect them. Politicians know this, and they skillfully play to this weakness.

A common mistake we make when we vote for our leaders, is when they say the things we like to hear. Politicians are notorious for making promises that they don't follow through on, and it's indicative of more than just a flaky personality. Upon hearing a promise that appeals to them, voters immediately become biased towards that politician—even if what they are promising sounds unrealistic. Things like making college free, ending world hunger, or getting rid of unemployment sound like hefty goals to accomplish in four years. But do people consider this fact, of whether or not something like this is actually achievable? No, they just hear a promise to fix an issue that personally affects them and immediately fill in the bubble next to their name on the ballot. A solid plan for achieving that goal is not even necessary. During the 2012 election, Massachusetts governor proposed a 59-point plan to fix the economy. It sounds reasonable that fixing the entire U.S. economy would be no easy task. Of course there would have to be at least 59 steps. But what were people's reactions? They thought it was ridiculous. They made fun of it and called the steps boring. People complain about politicians not following through on their promises, but when a politician *does* try to offer a genuine solution rather than a catchy buzz-phrase, they don't want it either. There's a reason politicians have catchy slogans. They seem cheesy, but they work. Human nature has an inclination to prioritize quick fixes over long term solutions.

Being a politician is like being a celebrity in many ways. Celebrities need to maintain a certain image. Part of this is for making them and their lifestyle seem aspirational. But another part of this is branding themselves so that they fit a certain archetype or aesthetic. Celebrities need to be seen wearing designer products, curating a friend group with people just as famous as they are, and posting photos on social media that fit their "aesthetic." Similarly, politicians need to be seen with a



RUFFIANS FIGHTING.

traditional nuclear family unit: a white-picket fence, and a blonde trophy wife, and kids. It's all about fabricating an image so that these politicians fit into a nicely labeled box in our head. We like what we understand. When something or someone doesn't fit an existing mental model in our head, we look at it with fear, suspicion, and judgment. It all stems from our fear of the unknown that kept our primitive ancestors alive, but harm us today. In addition to voting for what is familiar to us, we also vote for those who remind us of ourselves. If we are close with our family, and a politician preaches family values, if we care about the environment, and a politician is seen drinking out of a metal straw, or if we are a devout Christian and a politician mentions "God's will," then we are more likely to give them our vote.

This barely scratches the surface of all the tactics politicians use to gain our trust. However, based on the level of deception, lying, and flakiness that is involved, it is clear why most people would feel uncomfortable conducting themselves in this manner and from entering the field in the first place. Those who don't have the borderline sociopathic personality that politics requires, who enter the field hoping to make a genuine difference, either eventually quit as it doesn't align with their values, or adopt this personality type. Regardless, there's a reason that we elect the people we do. It's because we don't have many great options to start with. And the reason for this, is due to our biases and irrationality, we unintentionally set up the system in a way that people have to manipulate others to get elected.

THE OYSTER-WENCH ABOUT TOWN SAYS...

MICHAL KENNELL ('24)

FOCACCIA MIEI AMICI. That's right. It's bread time. You know the stuff, the breath of life.

SO, you begin with the YEAST. It's actually kinda alive but not alive enough to keep vegans from eating it so that's funky. Yeast, meaning 2 ¼ tsp of yeast in ½ cup warm water. Now this is where people complain because they say you can't hardly get the water right, but I like to put it

at just about shower temperature and that seems to work for me. Kinda steamy, but not in a weird way. Just, not boiling but still hot you feel?

Then that yeast has gotta eat and much, and like me, it has a soft spot for sugar, so you add 1 tsp of sugar in a big ol bowl with the yeast and water cause it's gonna GROW. Let it sit for like 5 minutes but try not to forget about it yet.

When it's nice and foamy and kinda looks like the foam you get on top of a cappuccino, you are ready for the next step. I'M TALKING EVEN MORE WARM WATER. 1 MORE CUP MY DUDES. Then you wanna put in some olive oil (2 tbsp) and some salt (1 ½ tsp). And then it's time for the flour. ADD 3 ½ CUPS OF FLOUR.

Now it's time to get your issues out like that meme of the grinch taking yoga classes and you get to punch the hell out of some dough. Try slapping it on the table. Try folding it in half and smooshing it down. It's fun. You do that until it's all smooth and elastic, adding flour if you need it. You might need a little more... but despite my articles I'm not actually ace at baking at such a high altitude, so take this with a grain of salt. Pun intended.

Once you're done, put a little more olive oil into a bowl and place the dough in, turning it over to make sure it's got a nice coat of grease on it like Odysseus showing up to that (underage?) girl on the beach. NOW you can forget about it. Well, for an hour. You have to come back. When you come back, punch that dough like it just unironically called something 'Kantian' and press it into a jelly-roll pan.

Now leave it in time out for 45 minutes to think about what it's done. When you get back, it should be a little fluffier. Poke it all over so that you get little indentations and sprinkle it with even MORE salt and olive oil along with any other toppings/spices you wanna use. I told you last time. I don't know you. Do what you want.

This is where you're gonna wanna preheat the oven to 450 degrees Fahrenheit. Maybe go make a cup of tea. Maybe give a certain Michal Kennell a friendly gift of chocolate. After maybe 20 minutes, you should come back and shove that pan of focaccia in the oven.

LOVE IT. WATCH IT. BE THERE FOR IT.

And let it sit in the oven for 15-18 minutes until it's niiiiiice and crispy. Then devour it like a Maenad on speed. Share it with no one. Except Michal Kennell, maybe.

Bild 2. Spinett från 1564.

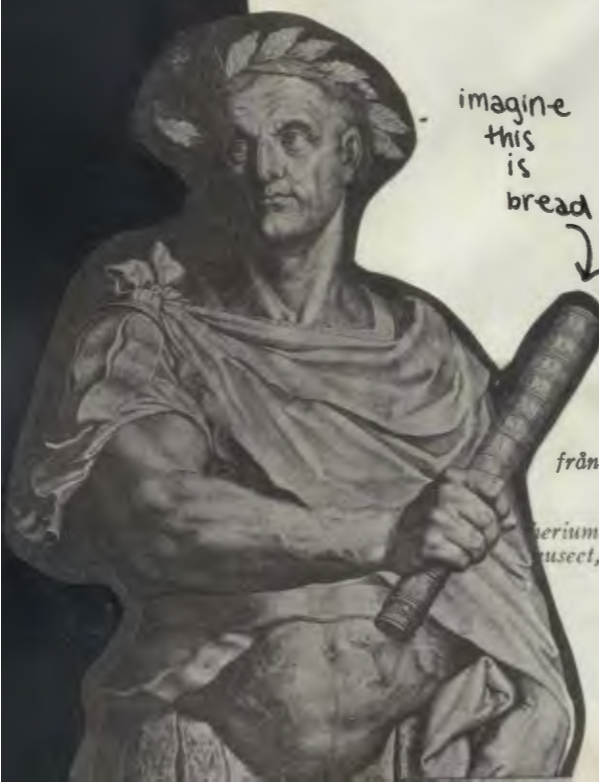
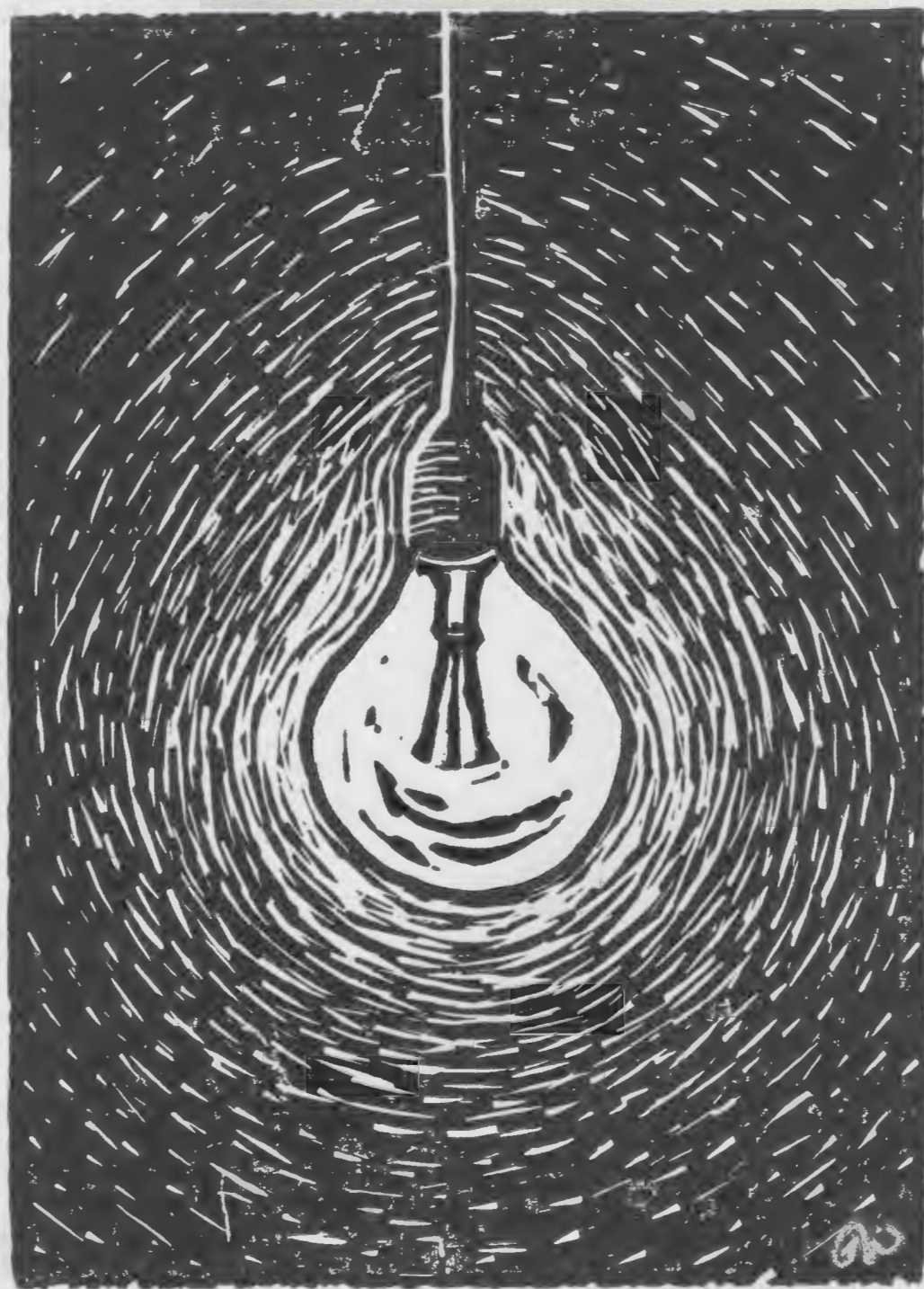


Fig. 4. "C. IULIVS CAESAR." Black and white line engraving, Aegidius Sadeler, from a painting by Titian. 13 7/8" x 9 1/2". Colonial Williamsburg

Life and Death — There is a paradox lurking behind our fear of death and dying. The more we fear and attempt to avoid death, the more we are concerned by it, and the more our life becomes oriented toward the preparation for our death. In short, death aversion only ends up amounting to a death fixation.

Many Lenses — Worldviews are like filters: they emphasize and make visible certain qualities of things while blurring and obscuring others. To get a more complete picture of the world, one needs to cultivate a large collection of lenses through which to filter things and to have a decent enough memory in order to compare them.

Art of Philosophy — Concepts do not mark a breakthrough into some truth. Models, systems, and theories are excellent tools by which to analyze the world and our experiences of it, but none of these are concrete manifestations of truth or reality. The concepts are the palette of the philosopher, who creates, blends, meshes, and erases them. Any time a concept is mistaken for the thing it is used to understand, a foreclosure of possibility occurs, and the mind becomes locked and constrained. Any concept, no matter how accepted, sanctified, or important, should never be considered immune to destruction, or its analysis and editing be forbidden.



CHAPTER I: THE PROBLEM

Mina Harris had a problem. Calling it a problem might have been a bit dramatic—it was more that Mina had a nagging, unshakeable sense of unease. The feeling started after she moved into her new apartment.

Finding the place was nothing short of a miracle. It was in a nice part of town full of old historic houses, and somehow the rent was low enough that Mina wouldn't have to sell a kidney to keep living there. She was unloading her boxes into the living room—still swept up in the giddy high of finding the place—when she met her neighbor for the first time.

She knew there was another tenant—the house had been split and refurbished into two separate apartments. Her new next-door neighbor let himself in through the open front door.

"Howdy!" Mina almost jumped out of her skin; bent over an open cardboard box, she hadn't even seen the man come in. At first glance, nothing about him should have caused the gnawing feeling that would later settle in her stomach. The faded blue jeans, the tucked-in flannel shirt, dark hair slicked back—it was all very normal, if not a little odd, on someone who couldn't be older than twenty-six. The longer Mina looked, though, the harder it was to pin an age to him.

"Hi," she said. It came out as more of a croak. She cleared her throat.

"I didn't mean to startle you," He didn't laugh, but the corner of his mouth twitched. "I rent the other apartment. I'm Henry Tanner." Henry came a few steps closer and held out his hand to shake. Mina accepted. His grip was firm, but his fingers were ice cold.

"I've lived here for a while now," He said when Mina didn't reply. "Let me know if there's anything I can do to help you settle in," Mina nodded and cleared her throat again.

"Will do, thanks," She said. Henry smiled. He remained unmoving in the front hall, but didn't say anything more. "I... should probably finish unpacking," Henry gave an understanding nod. He turned back toward the open front door, but after taking a few steps, he stopped.

"It was very nice to meet you, Mina," He disappeared around the corner. Mina frowned. She hadn't told Henry her name. It was possible that the landlord had mentioned her, but unease still started to settle in her stomach.

Mina hurried over to close the front door, the mirror she'd left propped up in the hall reflecting the brisk movement of her feet. It was only after she closed and locked the door that she felt a chill run down her spine, her hand still clenched tight around the doorknob. She hadn't picked up on it at the moment, but when Henry first appeared on her doorstep and when he left, his legs left no reflection in the mirror. It was most likely a trick of the light, or Mina was just dizzy and tired, but the bad feeling still poked at her. She made sure the front door was locked.

The rest of the day was spent unpacking, which left plenty of time to dwell on the strange encounter. It was already dark by the time she curled up on her couch to watch TV on her laptop from where it was propped on a moving box. Tired from worrying over the interaction with Henry—she'd checked at least once every hour that the front door was locked—Mina fell asleep on the couch, her head slumped on her shoulder.

It was still dark when she jerked awake to the sound of howling dogs. With each passing second, the barking seemed to gain intensity, becoming more like the baying of hunting hounds than the cries of neighborhood dogs.

Mina listened, still half-asleep but frozen on the couch. Every second, she told herself the barking would end, but every second it did not. Unsure whether it had been minutes or hours, Mina pushed herself off of the couch and crept toward the front windows. Maybe there was something in the street making the dogs go crazy—a stalled car, a family of deer. She peeked out the window, the curtain pinched tight between her fingers. The street was empty, and the dogs were still howling.

As she watched, hardly daring to breathe, Mina saw movement in the shadows. The closest street lamp was several houses down, and Mina squinted into the darkness, her nose pressed against the cold glass. It was almost like a piece of the shadows was breaking away, severing itself from the rest. She couldn't make out anything else apart from the fact that the moving shape seemed to simply be shadow and that it was coming towards her.

Like a rabbit staring down a fox, some base animal instinct urged her to run, but she could not force herself away from the window. The shadow left the street, sweeping up the front walk, accompanied by the cacophony of neighborhood dogs. It came within feet of her front door, and Mina still could not pull herself away. Up close, the figure was no more distinct than it was in the street, nothing more than a swiftly moving dark mass. At the last moment, before it reached Mina's door, the shadow turned, passing in front of the window and around the side of the property—towards Henry Tanner's apartment.

Mina breathed a little easier with the figure out of sight, but she was still glued to the window. She thought she heard a faint click, like a door opening and closing nearby, and the barking stopped. The street was quiet again, sleepy and mundane. Mina pulled away from the window, giving in to her instinct and running with surprising speed through the apartment's halls and flinging herself onto her bed.

She lay there for a minute, eyes closed and face smashed into her pillow, heart racing. Mina thought again of the odd moment with the mirror and Henry Tanner's cold, strong grip. Together with the dark figure in the street it painted a dreadful picture, bringing to mind a word and an idea it was too much to speak aloud.

Mina opened her eyes, rolling onto her side to stare at her bookshelf. She'd spent far too long unpacking it and fussing over the books. Now when she looked, her eyes fell quite without meaning to on one title in particular: Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. A dog howled outside.

Cancer: Last month the stars warned you of the curse. They were serious. If you did not follow their instructions, watch out. There is still hope, however. Make sure you do [REDACTED] and all will be well.

Leo: The stars highly advise steering clear of all maritime activities this month. Don't go kitesurfing, speed-boating, or enter any regattas. Trust me, it's a bad idea.

Virgo: It's time for a fall clean-up, Virgos! Throw out all you don't want, clothes, furniture, or people you can't stand to be around! The stars assure you, it's necessary.

Libra: Buy a self-help book, reinvent yourself, and live your *Eat, Pray, Love* fantasy! It's the first step to becoming a version of you that is tolerable.

Scorpio: Get into carpentry this month! Build something from scratch, join a construction company, or fix a Johnnie chair on campus. Not only will you be thanked for it, but it will also be incredibly satisfying. Good luck, friend!

Sagittarius: Go with the flow, ride the wave, and take life as it comes this month. You may find yourself engaged, moving, a part of a pyramid scheme, or even playing for a minor league sports team! Let it happen and be glad for whatever comes your way.

Capricorn: Go see *Pinocchio* this month. Maybe you'll finally learn that lying is bad.

Aquarius: Your electronic devices may stop working this month. Take it as a sign: throw it all away and rebrand yourself as a Luddite. (It is all the rage at the moment!)

Pisces: Keep a log of your dreams this month and be sure to tell *everyone* about them! The stars are sure that everyone will listen intently and laugh hysterically when you tell them.

Gemini: Life may be incredibly boring this month, but it's a good thing! No need to worry about the inconsequential or consequential! The stars promise it'll be good in the long run.

Aries: The stars recommend making friends this month! Introduce yourself to everyone you see on campus, and eventually, someone might like you. No promises, however.

Taurus: Whatever you do, don't eat the leftovers in your fridge. They seemingly have an agenda against you, so say the stars.

NATASHA POTEPMKIN ('25)