

The Acta Diurna

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The Holiday season has always been my favorite time of the year. There is nothing quite like being surrounded by loved ones and celebrating! Thanksgiving in particular always reminds me of my many blessings: family, friends, my church, my school, and many countless others. I am immensely grateful for the numerous service opportunities I have had, particularly my involvement with the Lakeshore Foundation. The summer of 2016, I began volunteering my time at the Lakeshore Foundation, an organization serves adults and children with physical disabilities. I have had the opportunity to become deeply involved in the youth athletic and aquatic programs. When I submitted an application to this program, I had no idea how much of an impact it would have on my life. Simple acts such as leading games, assisting with swim lessons, and making potato

Editor's Letter

Emily Hardwick

race cars have led to precious memories and meaningful relationships with participants and fellow staff members alike. Whether it be teaching a child how to correctly roll a bowling ball or laughing to the point of crying at lunch with fellow staff after an event, Lakeshore truly has changed my life. Before Lakeshore, if you had told me that I would be teaching middle schoolers how to fish, I would have laughed. Now, despite my only fishing experience being in the trout tank at the Bass Pro Shop, I would enthusiastically offer my limited experience. Lakeshore has forced me to abandon my comfort zone; at times, it has felt like baptism by fire yet every experience has ended up being positive. To me, volunteer work isn't about being good at whatever the task is; it is about being there and being willing to try. Sometimes, the most important thing to do is simply offer encouragement. One of the greatest gifts you can give is service, and in our current society there is certainly not a

shortage of opportunities. As 2017 comes to an end, I encourage the Altamont community to commit to making 2018 a year of service, however that may look for you.

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What Are You Thankful For?

Amrita Lakhanpal

As Thanksgiving has just passed and the holiday season is upon us, I interviewed students of Altamont to find out what they are thankful for this joyful season.

McNair Shah (5th Grade):

"I am thankful for the opportunities given to my generation, and all the wonderful technological advancements of the 21st century. I am also thankful for the ability to travel long distances across water, land, and air."

Sohana Caplash (5th Grade):

"I am thankful for the people around me and food."

Ava Lefkovits (6th Grade):

"I am thankful for my family and my dogs."

Iman Zuberi (7th Grade):

"I am thankful for my family and friends."

Austin Lyall (8th Grade):

"I am thankful for sports, nature, and my family."

Frances Isom (9th Grade):

"I am thankful for the good education that Altamont is providing me, and for the solar panels."

Sameer Sultan (10th Grade):

"I'm thankful for my friends the most. I mean, this has been the hardest year in terms of work and they suffer right there next to me. Especially around exam time, I need people to complain to. They make Altamont so fun and lively. I don't know what I'd do without them, and it's kind of scary to think that I might have to go to college without them, but I forget all that when we argue at lunch time, which is easily the highlight of everyday"

Daniel Elston (11th Grade):

"I am thankful for my Altamont family, naps, food, and the free market."

Ellie Guyader (12th Grade):

"I am thankful for the opportunities afforded to me by my parents and family."

Response to Opposition to NFL Kneelers

Asher Desai

This is an opposing viewpoint to the one provided by Maya Guru in her article last quarter, "An Open Letter to Players of the NFL Who Continue to Disrespect Our Country."

Dear Opponents of Kneeling for the National Anthem,

There is a long tradition of free speech and protest in this country. Events like the Boston Tea Party, considered acts of "gesture politics," have been around for centuries. When America gained independence, and soon formed its constitution, the right to free speech was enumerated within the Bill of Rights: one of the very first ones, in fact. Whether or not one agrees with the message of these NFL players, one must admit that they have the explicitly stated right to kneel, and with the latest jurisdiction from the NFL, there will be no direct consequence of doing so.

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Moving past the argument of free speech, which is hardly the most controversial of the issues regarding the kneeling, we now approach the message of these athletes: racial injustice. They claim that it is difficult for minorities to prosper in the same way that whites can. Using the blanket term “minorities” is not right, since different ethnic groups in America have had different experiences. My father’s family, an Indian immigrant family from Kenya, moved to England with only what they could carry. After receiving his education in England to become a doctor, he moved to the United States. When he arrived here, he did face prejudice. He had more trouble finding work and was not paid as much as his fellow employees who were non-immigrants. But overall, his experiences were not such that they hindered his prosperity. After all, he came to this country with an MD, and he received a good salary.

Other minority groups in America have had different experiences. Most of the protesting football players are African Americans. The African American experience is much different from the Asian immigrant one. After enduring slavery for hundreds of years, they faced discrimination from Jim Crow laws, the effects of which still last to this day, even though the laws are no longer in practice. For example, in the early twentieth century, housing districts were drawn to force low income people, who were majority African American, into certain areas. Those areas were given significantly less funding for public works like education. The current situation of poverty among many African Americans is still due to these housing districts. It is wrong to say that even though some minorities have prospered in America, that all minorities have the tools to prosper in America.

Next is the issue of the troops. Many conservatives constantly use a straw-man argument to imply that the protesters hate American troops. This is simply not true. In no way does the National Anthem solely represent the armed forces. The National Anthem is a song that has historical significance to this country and is a symbol of our freedom. If some believe that this country is not free, then why should they have to recognize the National Anthem? It is the same argument that when one wants to reduce defense spending that it must mean that he hates the troops. Again, this is not true, and these statements are simply efforts to undermine the credibility of those who have different views. Though I cannot speak for all of them, these protesters do not necessarily hate the members of the military just because they do not stand for the National Anthem.

Lastly, there is the hypocrisy. Some argue that it is hypocritical of these athletes with multimillion dollar salaries to speak about racial injustice. This is the same argument that white people cannot talk about race issues else they commit “cultural appropriation”! This is another attempt to undermine the opinions of the protesters. Many of these athletes came from humble backgrounds and experienced poverty as children. Football was their way out of the cycle of poverty. They not only have the experience, but also the means and opportunity to discuss the effects of racial injustice on the lives of Americans, so it is within their right to do so.

In conclusion, there are arguments that the players should stand, which in some case are sound arguments. These athletes live in the greatest country on Earth, and they are disrespecting it and being ungrateful to their homeland. This is true, but cannot we, as a people, instead of holding on to our current greatness, strive for an America that is greater still?

The Altamont Book Club: Easy as ABC...

Anabelle Davis

Last year, Anna Kate Lembke and I started the Altamont Book Club. Our club has one goal: to encourage students to read. We noticed that students had a lack of incentive to read outside of class, and we wanted to create an open forum for discussion of peer-selected books. So that's exactly what we did. ABC meets roughly twice a month. At the first meeting of each month, we meet to discuss book suggestions and vote to decide on a book to read. Anyone can suggest a book, and this mode of selection allows members insight into the preferences of our peers. At the end of the month, we meet to discuss the book. Our book for October was E. Lockhart's *We Were Liars*, and this month we discussed Laura Ruby's *Bone Gap*. Last year we read and discussed five books, including Tommy Wallach's *We All Looked Up* and Kimberly McCreight's *Reconstructing Amelia*. We encourage everyone, students and teachers alike, to join the book club to discuss books selected by students! Look out for an announcement in the morning report about our selection meeting for December.

For more information, contact Anabelle Davis, Anna Kate Lembke, or Ms. Rogers

Hallways: How to Not Block Them

Matthew Hamrick

The 3:20 bell has rung. People are tired. People have places to go, like dressing out for track or basketball, packing up their bags quickly to make it to a piano or guitar lesson, or talking to a teacher before they leave at 3:22. What's the worst thing that could happen? Turning to the corner to see a wall of people in the locker hall.

Seriously. STOP! Stop blocking out the entire hallway talking about how someone said something stupid in class, or about whatever new and terrible album came out, or whatever band is coming to Tennessee for a concert! It slows everyone down for no reason at all other than you're too impatient to move your conversation party of twelve to somewhere that's not smack-dab in the middle of the hallway.

Somehow, people find more ways to slow tired Altamont students down, so if you ever find yourself in the following situations, try to be more aware of your surroundings:

1. Sitting in front of a locker that isn't your own

I've been profoundly confused by this. Instead of finding a chair, y'know, in the library, in the Hames Gallery, or in the Student Center, these sadistic people would rather sit not only *on the dirty floor* but also *in front of someone else's locker??* This is especially annoying in the morning. I'm tired in the morning; I don't need my day to be horrible *before* first period! While it hasn't happened to me this year, I faced this stupid situation for at least an entire school year. Every day, I'd get to school, and I'd have to ask people to move out of the way, as if *having to get to my locker* were a new thing *every day*. They'd even look up at me and realize, "Oh, this is *your* locker," before begrudgingly sliding forward. (P.S. On the subject of the locker hall, please don't be one of those people who sits in the locker hall with your legs fully outstretched and does nothing when someone's tottering over you trying pass without stepping on you. If you get stepped on, it's your fault. Also, no, it's not cute.)

2. Walking in a single file line across a staircase

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I'm walking up the staircase. Two or three people are walking down the staircase. No problem? WRONG. They're taking up the entire staircase talking about that concert in Tennessee. So, when I walk up to this lovely blockade, I get nearly trampled down the stairs because they don't even bother trying to move out of the way. What did I ever do to them? Do they not realize that people, like sound can travel in all directions and that they could walk downstairs single-file like *normal, sane, and nice* people? It's like *I'm* the crazy one for wanting to go up the stairs.

3. Clipping a corner

Generally, at Altamont, people walk on the right side of the hallway. It's like we drive on the right side of the road in this country. Anyways, if I'm turning left around a corner and hugging the wall, how do you know I'm not about to run into someone? Exactly, *I don't*. Take the extra second to make sure you aren't going to take someone's lunch and imprint it onto his/her clothes. I've heard that getting baked chicken grease stains are hard to fix during a school day.

4. Head-to-head collision

Situation: You're walking down a hallway, and someone else is walking straight towards you. You have to pick a direction to avoid them. Which direction do you pick?

To begin with, it's simply ludicrous that you have to even *pick* a direction because it should be obvious to turn right no matter what. Then, if for some reason both of you pick the wrong direction, you engage in this weird, lame dance-off as you proceed to pick another direction by coin-flip about three times until you awkwardly slide past each other. You know what's worse than us not being able to do that? *Boats* have this figured out! Boats about to collide "head-to-head" pass each other "port-to-port," which means they pass each other on the right. Boats are apparently ahead of the game; I never realized.

Now, this might sound like Matthew going on a useless, angry rant. And you're partially correct; this is my seventh year of frustration being spilled onto two pages. However, by taking the time to think about your situational awareness, you're making sure that you're not putting someone in a bad mood by slowing him or her down. In this light, that extra second means you're increasing everyone's happiness for very little effort on your part. On top of that, situational awareness is extremely important, particularly while driving a car, so practicing it isn't that bad of an idea for ~~some~~ most of you either.

Or, if that bit was too serious for you, just embrace your inner boat and you'll do just fine. And have fun at your concert in Tennessee; we'll miss you.

Solution to: The Black Hat / White Hat Problem

Matthew Hamrick

If you haven't seen the Black Hat / White Hat Problem from the First Quarter edition of the *Acta Diurna*, read no further!

The solution for this puzzle is simple, yet elegant. To understand fully, you must focus on these four key facts from the original puzzle:

1. The prisoners are blindfolded, bound, and gagged, but they are not deafened.
2. The prisoners are not blindfolded when they call out their answers.

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3. The prisoners can see every other hat other than their own while on the staircase.
4. There are only two colors of hats.

The key to solving the puzzle is to understand the role of the first prisoner. By key facts 2 and 3, he can see every hat except for his own, but his hat isn't important. The knowledge of the other hats' colors is the most important information he can leave his fellow prisoners. All he must do are these two steps:

1. Count the number of black hats.
 2. Answer "Black!" if there is an odd number or "White!" if there is an even number.
- (Note: there are slight variations of the answer but they follow this same logic)

This provides everyone with enough information to survive! Let's imagine this as a simpler problem. There are five prisoners with hats in the following sample sequence:

1. Black
2. White
3. White
4. Black
5. Black

The first prisoner counts the hats below him calls out "White!" because there is an even number of black hats below him (2 black, 2 white). He is shot, but he's provided crucial information to the rest of the prisoners, as (by Key Fact 1) the rest of the prisoners now know that there are currently an even number of black hats. Now, the second prisoner counts the number of hats below him (2 black, 1 white). He counts an even number of black hats. If he has an even number of black hats, then (by Key Fact 4) his hat *must not be black*. If it were black, then the first person would have called "Black!" instead. Therefore, his hat is most certainly white. The third prisoner goes through the same thought process as the second. The fourth prisoner counts only one black hat. However, the third prisoner answered as if there was an even number of black hats. Therefore, he must have a black hat on. The fifth prisoner knows that there are an odd number of hats remaining, so he answers "Black!" as well.

This process can be extended from the smaller case of five prisoners to the larger case of one hundred. The beauty of it is that, assuming that the prisoner's voice can carry forever and the prisoner can distinguish hats from such a distance, that this solution could be applied to any number of prisoners! The only prisoner that's at risk in each case is the first one, escaping as savior or perishing as a martyr.

One skill you can learn from this problem is looking at a simpler example. Sometimes, puzzles can be hard to fathom simply because they contain a massive number of moving parts. By reducing the number of prisoners to a meager five, the solution became more apparent and can then be applied to magnitudes.

The History of Puns

Henry Chang

What time does the man go to the dentist? Tooth-Hurty

If you understand the epigraph, you are probably writhing in pain and disgust, thinking who on earth could have possibly come up such a cringe inducing phrase. If you don't understand, be prepared to have your life changed. What you just experienced is called a "pun". Loved or hated, a pun, also called paronomasia, is a form of wordplay that exploits multiple meanings of a term, or of similar sounding words, for an intended humorous or rhetorical effect. Often time, when people hear puns, they are trapped between two polar emotions: the want to punch you in the face with full force or the desire to burst out laughing on the floor. If you are lucky, it will be the latter one. Despite the common use of puns, many people are unaware of the long profound history of puns.

The earliest account of puns was in ancient Egypt, where they were heavily used in the development of myths and interpretation of dreams. Other long-lasting civilizations such as the Chinese and Mayans also utilized puns to help pass on stories and teachings.

However, despite all the historical usages, puns never reach their full potential until the development of modern English. The English language includes multiple phrases from different languages thus allowing for more overlapping sounds and a bigger vocabulary to craft puns from. In fact, one of the most successfully user of puns, William Shakespeare, also created 1700 words in the English language. Shakespeare is known for his comedies, tragedies, and his invention of new words. However, he is less well known for his puns. Often times, he imbedded them deep within the play, waiting for the readers to discover the puns for themselves. One example is in *Romeo and Juliet*. After being lethally stabbed, Mercutio declared, "Ask for me tomorrow, and you shall find me a **grave** man." Soon after, puns became fully integrated into the English language. The well-regarded Benjamin Franklin also used puns to help unite the founding fathers before the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Ben Franklin said, "We must all **hang** together or assuredly we shall all **hang** separately." Newspaper includes puns within their titles to help capture the attention of the readers. Pun competitions are hold throughout the cities and towns to crown the puniest champions. They are used in academic classes to help students remember boring facts and to bring joy into the classroom. You may think about chemistry jokes **periodically** but when you tell them to your friends, there are **no reactions**. Most importantly, puns are used to break the ice when you meet new people.

Academic Teams

Caroline Lee

Academics are one of the most important parts of Altamont, but not everyone is aware of what Altamont academics are doing out of the classroom. Altamont's many academic teams continue to excel through their many activities. Altamont has a wide variety of academic teams and clubs: Speech and Debate, Math Team, Scholar's Bowl, Model UN, to name a few. By being a part of the academic teams, Altamont students take on extra work, in addition to their course load. Mrs. Berdy, the speech and debate coach, says on the topic of the lasting effects

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of Speech and Debate: "The overall effects (of Speech and Debate) are enormous. You learn people skills, you learn speaking skills, you learn how to condense information, you learn how to summarize information, you have to have a firm grasp of rhetorical skills in persuasion." Altamont's Speech and Debate team is currently ranked fourth in the state, only trailing behind much larger, public schools, such as Vestavia and Mountain Brook. Another huge success in Speech and Debate is the power team of Izzy Coleman and David Zell. The team was one of the first teams this year to qualify for the Tournament of Champions, or in Mrs. Berdy's words, "The Super Bowl of debate tournaments." Congratulations to Izzy and David, and we wish the best of luck to them and the entire Speech and Debate team as they progress into their season. Also, the Model UN team has been very successful this year, and are making great progress as the season carries on. Sophomores, Suneeti Chambers and Wei Shiow Fong, said on the topic of the most recent Model UN event: "It was so fun, and it's a great way to learn about foreign policy and what the United Nations face every day. I would highly recommend it to anyone interested." Along with Speech and Debate and Model UN, both the Scholar's Bowl teams and Math teams have also been very successful. In their latest tournament, the JV Scholar's Bowl team placed second, and they are looking forward to advancing further this season. Additionally, three Math team students placed first, second, and third in their latest competition. Congratulations to all the academic teams at Altamont, and we wish all of them luck as they progress through their seasons. Go Knights!

The Psychology of Serial Killers

Maddie Thomas

"I don't feel guilty for anything. I feel sorry for people who feel guilt." was said by one of the most prolific serial killers in American history- Ted Bundy. Over a period of four years during the 1970s, Bundy likely killed more than thirty people. To this day, however, his exact victim count remains unknown, and could very well be much higher than what he confessed to. His crimes were gruesome, inhuman, unimaginable- but they were not unique; Bundy's ability to get away with them was. But what makes someone a killer? Why were Bundy's crimes so carefully planned? Why did he (and so many others: Pichushkin, Manson, Wuornos, Dahmer, Gacy, Gein, etc.) turn to such an intense form of crime? What was broken in their moral compass?

Well, while we don't necessarily know all the answers to those questions, behavioral science and crime psychology has come a long way from where it was in the 1970s. Through profiling and interview, after interview, after interview, the FBI now knows what might set a potential serial killer apart from the rest of society.

Trends show that serial killers typically fall into one of two categories- psychotic or sociopathic (after this they can be sorted further into 'organized' or 'disorganized', and even further based on what their childhood was like, whether they had been in prison before, etc.). While the terms are often used interchangeably, sociopaths and psychopaths are inherently very different. Sociopaths are anxious, and easily agitated- they're prone to emotional outbursts (*especially* fits of rage). They are more likely to be uneducated and hold lower positions in society- as opposed to psychopaths who are normally high functioning. While

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sociopaths *can* form ‘attachments’ with others, it’s more difficult for them to maintain such a relationship. They are haphazard, volatile, and spontaneous- and this reflects in their crimes. One famous example of a (supposed) sociopathic serial killer is Jack the Ripper- whose identity is still unknown to this day. Sociopaths are usually created by their environment and upbringings and are considered less dangerous because of the way they commit crimes- it’s easy to catch a sociopathic criminal.

Psychopaths, on the other hand, seem to be the polar opposite of sociopaths, when in fact they are quite similar. While sociopaths experience spontaneous outburst of emotions, most likely anger, psychopaths are almost... empty. They lack a conscience, a way to differentiate between right and wrong. They’re manipulative, and good at pretending to be charismatic, charming, and trustworthy. But nothing excites them- they get bored too easily, and people appear just as pawns in a game. To ask them why they murder is to ask them why they would squish a bug beneath their foot. It’s almost like they do it because they can, and they’re almost always good at covering their tracks. Bundy only got caught because he got lazy- he wanted attention from the media. Psychopathic serial killers are the most dangerous, because they’re exceptionally hard to catch. Some of the most famous psychopathic serial killers include Bundy (as mentioned above), Gacy, and Rader. Psychopaths are usually a product of genetics, and psychopathy can be inherited (think of it as nature vs. nurture).

There *are*, however, shared traits between psychopaths and sociopaths. Things such as regularly breaking the law or deceiving others are common traits associated with both disorders. Neither usually feels remorse or guilt (but the sociopath is more likely to feel anxious about getting caught). In both cases, signs or symptoms of these disorders are nearly always present before the age of fifteen. In a final note, while many of the most infamous serial killers are affected by an antisocial personality disorder (which encompasses both sociopathy or psychopathy), this does not mean that all psychopaths and sociopaths are or will become serial killers- this is simply what trends have revealed about the psychology of these murderers.

Athletic Teams

Abby Lee

Altamont excels in far more than just academics and the arts. Despite our small size, our Knights have always proven themselves to be strong and determined in athletics. The girls' volleyball teams and boys' and girls' cross-country team seasons have come to an end, and a successful one. The boys' cross-country team placed 3rd overall in the state with James Dixon placing 4th, Spencer Skidmore placing 6th, and Asher Desai placing 8th individually in the 2A 5k. Darian Sanders, a senior, placed 30th with an outstanding time of 18:33.22. Other members, Dylan Lyall, William Denniston, Jack Engel, David Niederweis, Francisco Carnaggio, and Wint Yerby all had scores under 20 minutes! The girls' cross-country team placed 4th overall at state, with Mary Allen Murray placing 14th, Ariel Dean placing 17th, and Adele Benson placing 25th. Arden Campbell and Sofia Gaitan-Wolfe placed 35th and 36th. Allie Ritchie, Merrit Edwards, Mary Carolyn Sink, Caroline Lee, and Amrita Lakhanpal all had times under 25 minutes! The girls' volleyball team has also done exceedingly well, defeating St. Bernard and Fyffe and Hatton 3-2 and 17-15 respectively to make it to the finals in North Super

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Regional tournament and ranking at 3rd in the 2A division. They're also the Area 10 Volleyball Champions after defeating Cold Springs. Congratulations to the team of Tiana Shelton, Eva Singleton, Chandi Patel, Kalia Todd, Sophie Cornelius, Claire Lynton, McLean Bell, Kendall Smoke, Amelia Pak, and the two seniors Marinna Dorolek and Ellie Guyader. Athletics are taken very seriously at The Altamont School and prove that our students can excel anywhere, in the classroom or on the court. Let's Go Knights!

Honors Reading Seminar

Anna Kate Lembke

Homegoing by Yaa Gyasi provides a horrific and poignant look into the long spanning effects of the slave trade. The novel starts with two sisters, Effia and Essi, who were born in neighboring villages in Africa. Their lives are dramatically different: Effia being married to a slave trader while Esi is sold into slavery. Their lives continue to take dramatically different course as Esi ends up in America via the slave trade while Effia remains in Africa. From here, Ghasi departs from the two sisters and begins chronicling the next seven generations of each woman and the hardships that follow the descendants of the two sisters. Told in short stories set in the 1700's to the early twenty first century, *Homegoing* spans an incredibly large amount of time, but carries through the same ideas of oppression and justice through every chapter. Even though the characters are less than thirty pages each, it is Ghasi's central themes that allow for easy to follow and cohesive read. The most intriguing and horrifying part of the novel was Ghasi's depictions of slavery. While many novels concerning slavery are horrific, most look at a specific person or year, but Ghasi uses a broader perspective. Ghasi paints an intensely upsetting picture of the realities of the racism and its implications on the future generations who are unable to escape from the past. Ghasi starts with the most obvious and horrific examples of colonialism and the slave trade, but horrors of racism don't subside the further she goes away from the initial chapters and gets closer to present day. While the brutal picture of the middle passage is painted, the harder scenes come in America, in the mid twentieth century, where racism was not as outwardly obvious but still dictates much of the character's lives. The story is full of lovable characters, beautiful writing, and questions that are difficult to process that stayed with me long after finishing the book. The most important message throughout the book is implications of oppression. All of the stories explore the injustice of the systemic racism throughout the centuries, but they all stem from the initial sale and marriage of Effia and Esi. All of their descendants desperately attempt to fight the chains that society has placed them in, but many are unsuccessful and are victims of the century old prejudices. The other important point that Ghasi makes is the importance of fighting against oppression. Slaves run away, mothers die for their children, wives learn to let go of their husbands, and most characters learn how to exist in a world that does not want them. Every story carried a tremendous amount of emotion and depth and each character felt real. Ghasi's novel commands readers to think about the implications of the past on the present and the future and brings attention to the remnants of the slave trade in modern American society. *Homegoing* takes a new and compelling approach to demonstrating the negative and lasting impacts of one of the most horrific parts about human history.

Latin IV Translation Project: *The Aeneid*, Book I

Otulissa Zhu

The study of the Latin language and culture requires the understanding of classics, history, mythology, and much more. The Latin IV class is taking a lead in spreading the knowledge they have acquired from Book I of much-celebrated *Aeneid* through collaborating on the composition of a full translation. It is an arduous task; yet, every single student has taken a part of Book I to translate.

The significance of this translation, once compiled, will be profound. According to Mr. Crowe, this class is “exceptional” in that this has been the first class that completed a full oral translation of Book I of *The Aeneid* for years. The full translation will act as a memento, reminding the classes to come what can be achieved. In addition, the will-be digitized translation will be a special tribute to Mrs. Whiteside, who is retiring from her post as the headmaster at the end of this school year. Before her career as a successful headmaster at the Altamont School, she was a Latin teacher who cherished Roman values as shown by Vergil in *Aeneid*. She even taught this particular class the famous “Bee Simile” from the *Aeneid* in which the hardworking Carthaginians were compared to working bees. Mr. Crowe feels that it is “appropriate to dedicate this translation to her” as a parting gift to remember her time at Altamont.

Check Your Razor

Mr. Randall

Did you bring your razor to school? Do you always carry it with you? I sure do. I take it with me everywhere I go.

Well, it's not really MY razor. It's Occam's Razor. Occam's Razor is an old philosophical tool traced back to the writings of William of Ockham and other thinkers. Today's version of the Razor is the notion that “other things being equal, simpler explanations are generally better than more complex ones.” It is a concept that is useful in fields of study such as physics, biology, and mathematics. Occam's Razor can also give some guidance when applied to decisions where one has limited or incomplete information.

On Tuesday, December 12th there is a Special Election in Alabama for the office of Senator. Now in a perfect world there would be no need to “try a case in the court of public opinion.” But the average citizen trying to determine if somebody is fit for office does not always have the luxury of waiting until some formal proceeding that may or may not even occur. The standard of “beyond a reasonable doubt” has its own failings as a barometer of truth anyway (OJ Simpson anyone?). Voters must make the best decision they can with the information they have. Period.

The allegations against Roy Moore present a conundrum of imperfect information, perfect for applying our razor. Assume that the allegations of a man in his 30s aggressively pursuing high school girls, if true, should disqualify him from office. Before you are two narratives. On the one hand, we have Judge Moore and his categorical denials of inappropriate behavior. On the other hand you have (1) the allegations of 4 women mentioned in the initial Washington Post story, corroborated by interviews with over 30 people (2) the claims of 4 additional accusers that have since stepped forward (3) reports out of Gadsden by more than a dozen people

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(including two cops) that he had dubious patterns of behavior in public and (4) parallel behavior in Roy Moore's own combined accounts of how he first took notice of his wife (when she was in high school).

If one believes the accusers, the explanation is self-evident: Roy Moore, as a man in his 30s, pursued underage girls with disturbing vigor.

If one believes Roy Moore, one must also believe that 50 people, in a well-orchestrated conspiracy of both independent action and synchronization, created these claims ex nihilo and that multiple news institutions are complicit in the effort.

What does our razor say? Which is the simplest explanation?

Some care very little for Occam's razor. Flat-Earthers, Moon landing deniers, Holocaust deniers, and 9/11 "Truthers" among others. Any evidence contrary to their predetermined opinion is either ignored or twisted to fit the narrative. Their confirmation bias is all-consuming. We are living in an era where anything that does not conform to your own echo chamber of self-selected news cul-de-sacs is dismissed as 'fake news.' It's a skepticism that would make Descartes blush.

It is the sign of a strong mind, not a weak one, that is willing to interpret new data to improve one's understandings. A strong, objective mind can overcome bias and self-serving loyalties. The Honorable Senator Jeff Flake, Republican from Arizona, recently tweeted out a picture of a \$100 check to Doug Jones' campaign with the caption "Country over Party." It would be nice if all elected officials had the same philosophy. And wouldn't it be nice if they all remembered their razors too?

The 10 Second Samaritan

Niko Tsivourakis

An excerpt from the blog post "The 10 Second Samaritan," from Gateways on Altamont.global.weebly.com

There's something profoundly transformative when people care for each other. Altruism is intuitive, not a mystery. Yet, if it's so obvious, why do we struggle to do it? (*I actually don't think we do. We are generally a really good species! But, if you're like me, we choose the person inside the car—the safe target.*)

The transaction is simple. One *sees* other people, notices a need, and acts on it. No agenda. No ulterior motive. The *other* benefits from the recognition, the concern, and the action. In a moment, spontaneous and serendipitous, we become more than isolated commuters, the "Pendulum" of the Updike poem, retracing trodden steps through life.

When we care for each other, we begin to recognize the innate value of all. Reflexively, we recognize our own value—as advocates and change agents, capable and worthy of love. Extending this line of thinking, people no longer exist in the abstract, and we become disinclined to regard them as ideas or statistics. As I interact with you, I flex my patience and empathy; that's the best way to stave off atrophy and preserve my humanity. How easy it is for roles to be reversed. And once I make the leap from solipsistic isolation, stuck in my car right next to you but eons apart, to connection, I'm sitting with you at the table. The chandelier above me, too, a halo of light encircling me, saying "I'm here."

Continued from Page 12, Samaritan.

It's too convenient to live in the abstract. It becomes easy to make assumptions, delegate, legislate, scream, fight, and speak for the divine. Looking you in the eyes, however, shapes my thinking. We create a new narrative, with a new lexicon. It's not that I'm less inclined to postulate; you in my gaze necessitates a new set of realities and ideas. In seeing you, I see a potential me. And I discover the essence of *human rights*.

Sexual Assault Must End

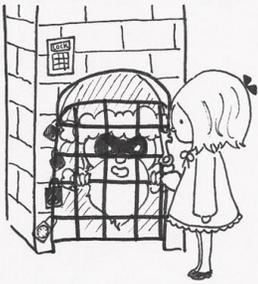
Maya Guru

Recently, several women and a few men have been coming forth with their accusations of sexual harassment against many notable figures. Time Magazine named these courageous people the collective annual "Person of the Year", and this is a title that is very well deserved. Not only have they brought justice to the people whom they have accused, but they have also begun an essential and monumental movement. By breaking their silence, they have shed light onto an idea that not many people are willing to be open about. They have brought forth the idea that sexual harassment is specific to no gender. Both men and women can be victims, and it is the responsibility and obligation of all citizens to take action against it. It is also important to denounce these notable figures that have been accused to ensure that society does not send a message of consent to these unlawful and heinous acts.

Odds and Ends

2017 XMAS

WHAT TO DO:



lock all windows and doors! Keep yourself safe!



decorate your Christmas tree



bug your parents about presents

WHAT NOT TO DO:



BBQ Santa



poison Santa



abuse Santa's minions

Comic by Fion Chang



Meme by Anabelle Davis

**Do you want to write for
The Acta Diurna?**

Email

ehardwick@altamontschool.org

for more information.

Upcoming Events:

December 20-January 4 Winter Holidays *No School*

January 8-12 Homecoming Week

January 8 Roundtable

January 12 Homecoming

January 15 MLK Day *No School*