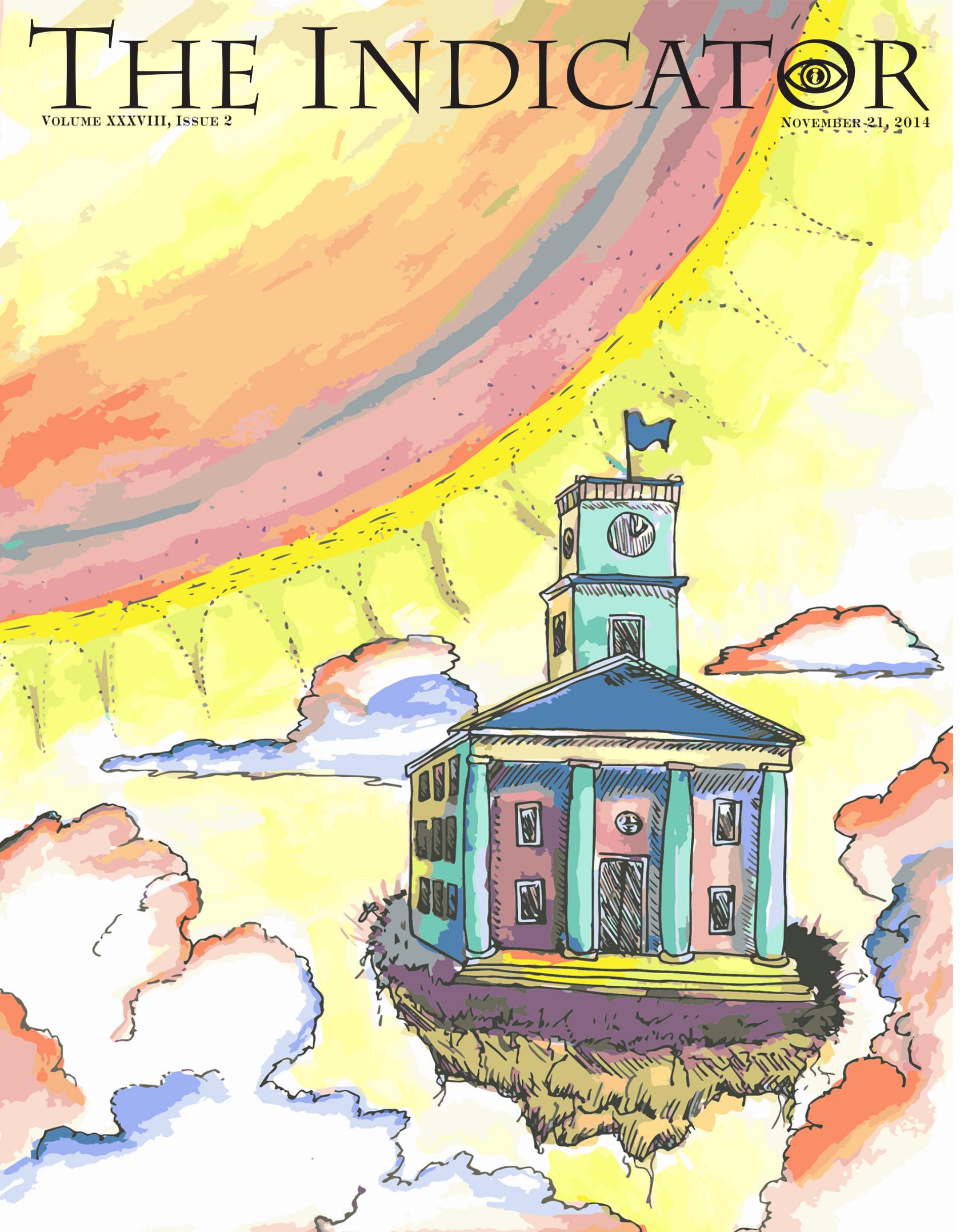


THE INDICATOR

VOLUME XXXVIII, ISSUE 2

NOVEMBER 21, 2014



Letter from an Editor

The Amherst College Republicans' response in *The Student* a few weeks ago to the "All Lives Matter" incident said many things—among them, that they "believe many issues raised by Black Lives Matter Awareness Week ought to be addressed" and that Republicans "have been active on issues of police brutality"—but it was silent on one thing: black lives. This silence is telling. For while it concedes that it is a troubling issue that "disproportionately affects individuals of color," and seems to make a move to engage with the issue, it skips over the actual incident that was the cause of the protests and spends three lengthy paragraphs discussing how many prominent Republicans also oppose police militarization.

But this oversight—whether a misunderstanding of the issue, a refusal to listen, or simply a decision to ignore the actual substance of the controversy—is not what should worry us. It is far less distressing that the author of the article missed the heart of the matter, than it is that many more students, though in disagreement, will read the letter and find themselves nodding along, sympathizing with the plight of the silenced and oppressed Republicans.

This sentiment is widely and lightly passed around. Some think perhaps our fellow students have been *unfair* or even *childish* in protesting recent speakers. That perhaps we have an obligation as a community to greet these opinions, and debate them on their terms; an obligation to sit through Patrick Moore's or Dinesh D'Souza's talks to the end, clap respectfully and thank them for coming to our campus. The thought goes: We owe it to ourselves to hear the opposing argument.

I've heard many friends, whose opinions I've always respected, take this position. This is the position, after all, of intellectual openness and integrity: an open-minded willingness to engage even with opposing viewpoints that we passionately disagree with.

But we forget all too often that not all arguments are worth engaging with; that not all conversations are equal in terms of their substance and quality. We forget that as the Amherst community, we should have some standards.

I do not mean that this standard should silence controversial or conservative opinions, or that we shouldn't invite speakers who have said controversial things in the past. I mean only that we as a community must not welcome substandard opinions with open arms. Patrick Moore or Dinesh D'Souza may say what they want, but we don't have to listen. Yes, walking out can be childish when done in ignorance. But when thoroughly considered, to walk out—as both a symbolic expression and a decision to discontinue an unproductive conversation—does not injure our intellectual integrity. On the contrary, it would be precisely *in defense* of our intellectual integrity that we must walk out.

Not all perspectives are equally worth our respect. We all recognize that some arguments are, at best, simply silly. Yet still there's the common misconception that there's always a place for a devil's advocate, no matter how absurd. After all, they start discussions and allow us to fortify and rethink our position. But if a devil's advocate advocates a preposterous view, to say that he is nevertheless necessary to foster debate is to chicken out from real debate. It kindles only uproar. The devil's advocate is a false opponent that allows us to pretend that we engaged with opposing views, and then to live in the illusion that we have thought thoroughly about our position by being open to diverse perspectives. To stand for "intellectual openness" would cease to mean anything. We do not need straw men to tear down; we want real, thoughtful adversaries, who can provoke serious thought and pose real challenges to our beliefs.

Of course, we have to fall back on our judgment to draw the line of what constitutes worthless. This is the danger: We could easily reject an idea as undeserving of our consideration because it seems foreign, thus solidifying our ideological bubble. But this is what scholarship is about: we do not simply throw our judgment out the window and blindly argue with all opinions because we fear that we might be mistaken in our judgment. We should err on the side of caution, but we must exercise our judgment nevertheless. This could mean that we need to sit through a talk even when friends walk out. But more importantly, it means that sometimes, we must refuse speakers the platform to present their opinions as worthy of our respect. This is our individual responsibility, ultimately, and the responsibility of groups bringing in speakers. If the Republicans were serious about conservative ideas, that's what they would do.

Not only this, we also have the responsibility to reject speech that seeks to advance itself at the expense of another group's humanity. This, after all, was the problem—not vandalism and the obstruction of speech, nor the content of the "All Lives Matter" campaign, but the insensitivity and polemical offensiveness of drawing an equivalence between abortion and black lives, between the walk-out of Moore's event and the taking down of "Black Lives Matter" posters. This is not about whether the Westboro Baptist Church has the right to express themselves at funerals; it is about whether they should and whether a community should tolerate it when they do.

This then leads to a third reason why our commitment to debate cannot be absolute: We have a responsibility to act.

But what can we act on, except settled opinion? To act implies the end of thought—as activists say, the "debate is over." I am sure this is what many of us flinch from. Yet despite the uncertainty of meteorological modeling, we still act in face of an approaching storm. The climate change denier's claim is epistemologically sound: We don't really know the future. But the climate change denier stands as the man who refuses to heed an evacuation order when scientists predict, based on models, theories, and solid observations of rising smoke and telltale trembles, that a volcano is about to erupt. Likewise, when we claim that we can't make a judgment on what happened in Ferguson, because we can't really truly ever know what happened between the police officer and Michael Brown, because we can't judge with certainty the police officer's guilt or motivations, we ignore the fact of rampant inequality and the pressing crisis of humanity in our nation and community.

There is today at Amherst College an alarming misconception of the meaning and significance of free discourse, a blind and uncritical exaltation of "discussion." When we as students clutch on to the idea that anything can and therefore must be debated—the idea that there is never place or time for action, insofar as argumentation must never cease—we risk becoming paralyzed, forever mired in thought and debate.

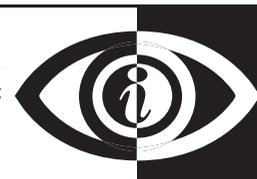
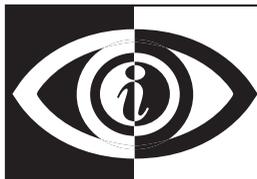
A conversation that denies or undermines the dignity and humanity of our fellow students is a conversation that we may not have. A conversation that so baselessly advances a preposterous and unfounded argument is one that we need not entertain. And a conversation that stands in the way of necessary action, without which the very condition of continued conversation might be undermined, is one we cannot afford to continue. The hurricane is approaching—it is already here—and we must act.

John He '16

Write, Draw, or Edit for *The Indicator*

Send questions, comments,
letters, or submissions to:
theindicator@amherst.edu
or AC #2046

Subscriptions are \$20/semester, \$35/year.
Send checks made out to *The Indicator* to:
The Indicator, Amherst College
AC# 2046, Keefe Campus Center
Amherst, MA 01002-5000



Editors-in-Chief: Elias Baez
(GoPro Hero 4) John He

Senior Editors: Ricky Altieri
(Cruise ships) Jeffrey Feldman

Associate Editors: Joely DeSimone
(Christmas trees) Robert Galley
Liz Mutter
Melissa Sheth

Contributing Editors: Connolly Bottum
(Emma Stone) Nick Bruce
Mia Kaaber
Obinna Ukogu
Sara Schulwolf
Karen Yi
Sally Yuen

Art Editor: Monica Cesinger
(Tornado Warning)

Features Editor: Jesse Pagliuca
(Kendra Wilkinson)

Cover Art: Monica Cesinger
(Christina Kim)

Indicartoonsists: Annalise Nurme
(Jasmine Baker found) Ryland Webb

Contributing Artists: Darya Bor
(2:15 a.m., Nov 17) Matt Buonaguro
Madison Carbone
Monica Cesinger
Maria Darrow
John He
Annalise Nurme
Alexis Teyie
Ryland Webb
Yelim Youm

Letter from an Editor	John He	2
IMPRESSIONS		
That's Racist	Jeffrey Feldman	4
False Assumptions	Aedan Roberts	
On Social Clubs	Lilia Paz	
COMMENTARY		
Shut up and Listen	Elias Baez	6
The Internal Divide	Cheyenne Pritchard	7
Life Lessons from an Acting Class	Derya Demirtas	8
Defending Ideas	Anders Lindgren	9
Boy Friend & Girl Friend	Liz Mutter	10
Beyond Lord Jeff	Sam Wohlforth	12
Reclaiming Number One	Molly Jordan	13
Soon It Could Be Too Late	Pete Suechting	14
REVIEWS		
The Savage Detectives	Ricky Altieri	15
ARTS		
Energy	Nick Bruce	16
"The Optimist," "The Pine Tree"	Chris Tamasi	17
FEATURES		
From <i>The Indicator's</i> Archive of Holiday Tragedies		18
The Report Card		19
Biddy on Tinder		20

Click below:
[http://
theindicator.
amherst.edu](http://theindicator.amherst.edu)

The Indicator is a journal of social and political thought at Amherst College. Originally founded in 1848, it was resurrected in the spring of 1996 after a 145-year hiatus. *The Indicator's* primary mission is to provide a medium for discussion of local, national, and international issues within the college community. The journal appears four times during the fall and spring semesters.

The opinions and ideas expressed in *The Indicator* are those of the individual writers and do not necessarily reflect the views of *The Indicator* or of Amherst College. The editorials are a product of the opinions of the current Editors-in-Chief of *The Indicator*. *The Indicator* does not discriminate on the basis of gender, race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or age.

The Indicator welcomes contributions in the form of articles or letters to the editor from the community-at-large. For further information regarding submissions, contact us at:

The Indicator, Amherst College
AC #2046, Keefe Campus Center
Amherst, MA 01002-5000

Subscriptions to *The Indicator* are available at \$20 a semester or \$35 a year. Checks addressed to *The Indicator* should be mailed to the address above.

INDICARTOON



"Let me recommend to you an excellent book by Ilan Stavans."
—Ilan Stavans

Privileges & Presumptions

That's Racist

“You can go talk to him, but I don’t think you’re gonna get a lot out of it.” Pete’s brother, who was slated to go on after Heems and who had been hanging out with the rapper backstage, was the one who offered this portentous advice. It was 10:45, and Heems was fifteen minutes shy of an hour late when he stumbled onto a raised platform at the front of the Powerhouse, outfitted with some speakers and a laptop.

Like much of Heems’s music, the video was captivating and funny—and it, too, was a trenchant, in-your-face critique of neocolonialism.

He positively commanded the room’s 30 or so students, those excited enough to stick around but whose excitement was noticeably attenuated by the wait. “Everybody step like... one foot back,” was his first among many exhortations to let him do his fucking thing. “I have anxiety.”

Earlier in the day, Heems had given a talk to students on racism and academia in post-9/11 America. By now, though, he was very drunk, and when he got onstage, he made a joke about Williams. He’d made a similar joke at his lecture—“What? I do my topical research!”—saying that it was at Williams and not at Amherst where the “All Lives Matter” incident took place. But “All Lives Matter” was at Amherst, and so was he, the guy who once rapped, “Black and blue at school where white kids call me dune coon.” Heems, a Wesleyan alumnus, is well aware that, far from being a site of cultural understanding, the liberal-arts college is the kind of place that would compel you to cheer for a genocidal colonialist in order to show your “spirit.”

He spent a lot of the concert hunched over his laptop in hazy indecision about which song he would play next. Occasionally, his attention would drift to the mesmerizing video montage of found footage that was projected overhead. Heems had spliced together Indian ads for skin-lightening products and videos of white people doing yoga alongside clips from old Bollywood movies. Like much of Heems’s music, the video was captivating and funny—and it, too, was a trenchant, in-your-face critique of

neocolonialism. Looking up, his back turned to us, he would say over and over again, with a touch of irony, that he’d made it “for the Whitney Museum.” He was proud.

This kind of irony cropped up again and again: “No dancing at my shows,” “I was screaming into the microphone during that last song because I am afraid of expressing my true emotions and want to distance myself from them.” In the face of blond kids in peacoats demanding that he play “Michael Jackson,” an old Das Racist tune, he joked about being hurt that no one wanted to hear his new music. Irony characterizes both his art and his engagement with his audience, and it’s what

allowed Heems to fully express himself while avoiding the risks that come with sincere vulnerability. How else could you deliver the line “White people love me like they love Subaru” to a crowd of people who Heems’s former collaborator Kool AD might describe as “failed Marxists, stale heartless hailed artists, frail, sensitive, pale sales targets”? Heems—like so many students here—experienced real success in making it to Amherst, yet is again and again impelled by the institution and those who dominate it to pursue his success on *their* terms. But, always one ironic step ahead, he was determined to subvert and overcome such attempts at domination.

He told us to take another step back, and we listened. Some people continued to dance while Heems disinterestedly knocked two microphones together, reveling in the cacophonous reverberation that resulted.

When I ran into him later at the Zū—he had been shepherded there by a group of well-meaning students—he was about to begin an all-night bender, having taken Xanax “this guy on the Megabus” gave him, smoked a couple of joints, and drunk a bottle of wine. He seemed a little more comfortable here, even as he was surrounded by the very fans who, an hour earlier, he demanded get away from him. For some reason, I went in for a hug. He acquiesced. A couple of days later, he would tweet: “Amherst, I loved y’all.”

Jeffrey Feldman ’15 is a Senior Editor for The Indicator. 

False Assumptions

I’d just sat down at Val during Orientation and was wondering why everyone complains about the food (I now realize it’s a dull, cumulative pain) when a conversation at another table caught my ear:

“Did you know economics has the lowest GPA of any major?”

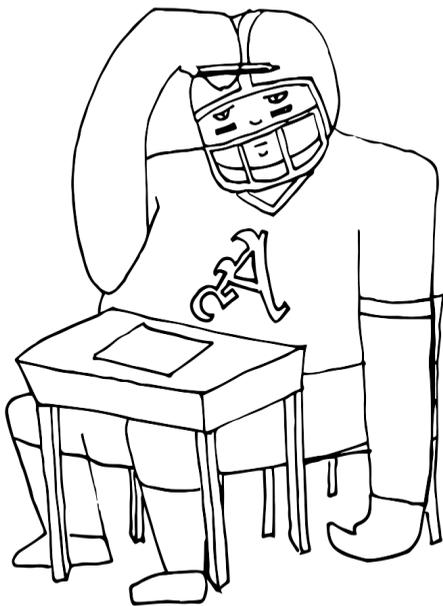
“That’s because so many athletes do it. They should honestly just make football a major, it would boost the GPAs of the rest.”

I didn’t really think about it at first. But after hearing countless subtle remarks and casual jokes, it became obvious to me that the culture of Amherst is saturated with an inherent assumption: Athletic recruits are generally stupider than everyone else. To be fair, the idea makes logical sense. After all, the recruitment process does give a serious boost to an application. But it bewilders me that, in a place so cognizant of prejudice, this topic seems to remain so untouched. In fact, the discussions I’ve heard that *do* arise around sports apply the stereotype as a starting point, for example to what extent Amherst is jeopardizing its academic prestige by focusing on varsity athletics.

Whether or not the assumption is true, it’s important to mention how this taboo aspect of Amherst culture can affect a freshman recruit like me. As a runner I escape the worst of the stigma—it’s more often directed at the sportiest sports, like football and baseball—but it’s still had a resounding impact on my transition.

Granted, being a varsity athlete can make the social shift to college a lot smoother. On the first day I immediately belonged to group of great people and had plenty of upperclassmen to ask for advice. However, the transition has been a lot more difficult to stomach in the classroom.

It’s not an experience that is confined to athletes, of course. For almost every freshman, Amherst is likely the most challenging, most demanding, most competitive environment they’ve ever been in. Most first-years are used to being extremely secure in their own intelligence. People have been praising their exceptional minds their entire lives, and now, suddenly, every other student in the classroom seems to be just as brilliant, if not more so. It can be extremely uncomfortable at first, and doubting one’s own ability is a natural part of the transition for everyone. Questions like “Do I really belong here?” and “Can I really handle four years of this?” will pop up into most heads before the end of the first semester.



On Social Clubs

I walk in alone, perhaps a mistake. The meeting is at the Powerhouse on a Thursday evening. I'm a minute late and it seems the only people here are former fraternity brothers and the committee, none of them looking particularly excited. People trickle in and the chairs are all soon filled. Someone plays with the lights as if prepping for a party. Finally, we delve into the social clubs. A shadowy committee of club leaders, athletes, and former fraternity leaders has created this initiative as an alternative to Greek life. The programs are somewhat modeled after eating clubs at Princeton and social housing at Bowdoin. Social clubs can be single-sex or coed, have a "transparent" application process, must hold one open event per semester and must engage in some community service. Members can only belong to one club and are required to have a minimum GPA and go to a set number of events. If you're rejected the first time you apply, you're guaranteed acceptance the second time you apply to a social club.

The committee held this "introductory" meeting to garner feedback and modify the program accordingly, but they want to unroll the program next semester. Considering that

But who chose the committee in the first place, to do the thinking, deciding, and hearing for the entire student body, for whom, supposedly, the social clubs are being created?

they began working on this last semester and throughout the summer, it seems very late to ask for student input on a social program that they hope to start in two months. It's too soon. The committee itself is heavily—almost entirely—athletes and former fraternity members. If the goal really is to bridge divides, then why has the conversation skewed towards one set of voices from the very beginning? These voices are necessary but so are voices from the Green Amherst Project, Pride Alliance, and the BSU. Judging from the audience, many clubs have been absent from the process, probably unaware that it was even going on until now—unaware of the incredible impact social clubs could have on the Amherst social scene, especially if it is a white, athletic, male voice that dominates the decisions. The committee's attempt to invite us into the conversation now is too little, too late. Any attempt to solicit student opinion by the committee will already be set on unequal footing, founded upon a hierarchy of those do-

ing the asking, and those doing the answering. They are at the table, having already decided on a proposal; we are in the audience. They, then, will hear our opinions, consolidate them, and decide how, if at all, to incorporate them. But who chose the committee in the first place, to do the thinking, deciding, and hearing for the entire student body, for whom, supposedly, the social clubs are being created?

Before we continue with social clubs, I must ask: What's wrong with the clubs we already have? Why not reinforce and improve the clubs that have already been long-established on campus? Provide them with more funding and allow them to plan larger events. What makes a social club distinctive from a club? What unites the members in a social club if not a common interest? Loyalty, a sense of brotherhood? Here, we err painfully close to what Greek life constitutes. Prototypes of social clubs are, at this point, totally unclear. The committee itself seems to only have a murky idea of what exactly a social club will be. It will be up to the first round of social clubs to decide what to center themselves around and what precedents to take. Clubs on campus are open, and they already host events that are always open. They are dedicated to serving the community, forums for discussing one's identity, activities of complete leisure, and many other purposes. What material could the social clubs broach that is not already covered by

our present club life? By introducing social clubs, we create another hierarchy

between social activities, another competition for funds. It's another space where the institution can dictate what is important and what a student should do in their free time. Why do we need the administration to further govern and administer even our social life?

The social clubs could easily go awry and merely re-create school-approved Greek life. Princeton's eating clubs are notoriously white and privileged—a message that flies in the face of our "diversity." If the proposal is not radically modified and its implementation not postponed, and unless those at the table forming the proposal actually represent the student body, the social clubs will simply formalize the cliques that exist on campus and perpetuate the social gaps that make the typical Amherst student even more lonely than the average college student.

For any freshman that isn't a recruit, the questions can be dismissed by recognizing the difficulty of the work and by reminding themselves that they were accepted into Amherst for a reason. But when things first started getting tough for me a nagging voice would echo in the back of my skull: "The only reason you're here is because you're great at running in circles." I tried my best not to believe what it said, but every bad essay, every perplexing reading, every time that one kid gave an impossibly eloquent speech in a class discussion only swelled the pool of evidence to support those words. A dark cloud of anxiety ballooned into existence above my head, and it only grew larger when I realized that the general consensus of the community is that I'm probably out of my intellectual league. I started wondering if I was smart enough to go to Amherst. I started wondering if I deserved to go to Amherst.

The cloud began to dissipate as I began to grow more comfortable in the environment, and my successes in the classroom began to gradually chip away at the power of the voice in my head. In a couple years time, I doubt I'll be able to relate with anything written in this article. But I think that the Amherst community could do a lot more to make recruited freshmen feel more comfortable in the classroom. Because the truth is this is a D3 school. No matter how good someone is at running in circles, or kicking things into nets, or hitting balls with sticks, no one gets into Amherst unless the admissions office believes they can be academically successful. Everyone at this school is brilliant, and recruits can achieve at the same academic level as any other student.

Aedan Roberts '18 is a Contributing Writer for The Indicator. 

Lilia Paz '16 is a Contributing Writer for The Indicator. 

Shut up and Listen

Elias Baez

ebaetz15@amherst.edu

The need to acknowledge our own blindnesses.

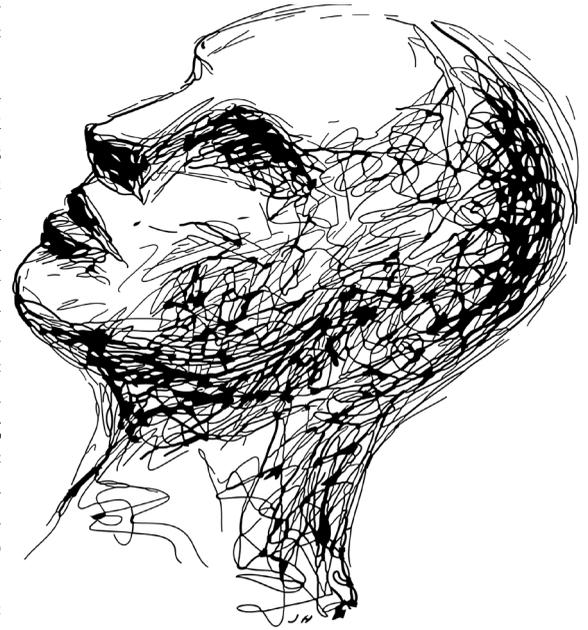
I can't decide if I'm beseeching or demanding that you listen. It's hard to even define who you are, since I'm addressing those same people who think that they don't need to be addressed. You use the language of support for the marginalized, but you perpetrate the same violence you purport to reject. Your privileged position truly blinds you. You may not see or feel them, but I promise those blind spots are there. You learn to see the blindnesses in others when vigilance is the only way that you can protect yourself. And my problem is that I like you, and I know that you're a good person, but I can no longer reconcile that with your refusal to listen to me. You listen until it applies to you. You listen until it's dangerous to listen, because your sense of self is threatened. I'm not telling you that whiteness is a crime, that wealth is a crime, that manhood is a crime, or that heterosexuality is a crime. All you need to do—all I'm beseeching/demanding that you do—is examine yourself and acknowledge the ways that these identities have informed your experience of the world. The good in your life is not undeserved simply because you have grown up with certain privileges. No one is saying that. It's about understanding the experience of others, which is nothing small or flouncy. Ignorance of your own privilege enables you to inadvertently inflict your blindnesses upon others. Ignorance of your own privilege allows you to single-mindedly define the spaces you occupy on *your* terms, which, being rooted in blindness, are unreal, ungrounded, and oppositional to truth. These are forgivable offenses as long as you do not deny that they are offenses when that fact is pointed out to you. Finally, as much as the critical discourse that Amherst espouses necessarily complicates the notion of "truth" as something identifiable and universal, experiential knowledge is real—rejecting such as invalidly "anecdotal" allows individuals to *literally* reject reality when it is convenient to them—and a lived experience delimited by an intersection of marginalized identities leaves no room for convenient, self-justifying fabrications about the nature of privilege.

Individual experience is necessarily derived from and reflective of the much larger man-made systems and institutions that structure the chaotic world into something livable. It is essential that the contours of these structures are defined by humans-with-power along ideological lines derived from their beliefs. Man-made systems serve specific interests. I came to Amherst College because the ideological laws that define it—the open curricu-

lum, small classes with great professors, a focus on deliberate diversity—fell in line with my own beliefs and best interests. Upon arrival, I was able to identify with the system-at-large and believe that it had me (well, the collective that includes me) in mind when big choices were made. Since then, however, I've grown increasingly alienated from the school and its culture. It happened quietly and largely unseen. Now I understand that an internal war of attrition has been taking place between my desire to love this place for what it has given me and the siege of arguments that just fucking wear you down from students who are blind to their privileged positions within the systems we occupy. By my lights, that is the nature of privilege: the freedom to identify with the system, to believe in it. None of us exist in a vacuum. We navigate a near-infinity of public spaces—small gatherings with friends, our families, the towns we live in, our voting districts, our nation, etc.—spaces in which we are seen and spaces in which we fluidly adopt (or highlight) different features of our private identity. There are rules to each of these spaces, things you can and cannot reveal. You wouldn't talk about sodomy at Thanksgiving.

What happens when your identity itself is wrong in these spaces? When your illegal sexuality is a secret you have to keep from your own mother? When the national systems that govern your life systematically declare that your skin is wrong, your family is wrong, your childhood memories of growing up in the ghetto are wrong? What happens when the systems that control your life are actively oppositional to you? Privilege allows one to grow up without ever having to ask these questions. Worse, privilege allows one to ignore these questions when they're asked.

I grew up in an apartment complex in Yonkers, NY. It had been a bastion for wealthy white people until upwardly mobile minorities began to move in. At seven, I remember the day my mother's car was keyed, and the day my older brother told me how an old white woman spat "spic" at him from a car window as she drove by. I got older and we moved further upstate, into a rural area with literally no library. Later, when I happily told my mother about my first girlfriend, she told me the story of my sister's childhood friend, Timothy Ruiz, shot in the chest in our local mall's parking lot by a veteran police officer. An Old Navy manager, he was walking to his car after work and murdered at 22 for dating a white woman. My mother had



to fear for her son's life over something so small, and raise me to see the prejudice in others. At 15, your life is at risk in parking lots. These stories are not at all unique, only particular. And when I say system, I am referring to spaces like my apartment complex, the area we moved into, and the larger culture that accommodates such wrongs. Small infractions against these systems can cost you your life, and your parents are tasked with guiding you through the minefield of simply being alive. It isn't paranoia, it isn't a victim complex. It's real. As a minority of any kind, you are forced to shore your identity up against the deluge of devaluations and diminutions you face every single day. When you attempt to reject that experience, you are only the latest in a series of wrongs.

The promotion of diversity has brought people like me to Amherst. I'm not here to educate the privileged; I'm here to receive an education. I shouldn't have to write a word of this. You need to take the time to acknowledge the systems that you've grown into. It's that simple. It has taken me until my senior year to overcome the silence you shove down my throat when you insist on arguing against the reality of privilege. You will never disrupt or disprove that reality with empty arguments against those of us who've lived it. The real secret is that you've never actually won any of those arguments; you've just proven yourself to be someone unwilling to listen, and we have been raised not to bother with that anymore. 

Elias Baez '15 is a co-Editor-in-Chief of The Indicator.

The Internal Divide

Cheyenne Pritchard

cpritchard16@amherst.edu

Experiencing the student/athlete divide

I grew up watching my older brother Jesse play basketball. If he went to Wisconsin, I went to Wisconsin. If he paid \$1.25 to work out at the City Hall, I paid \$1.25 to work out at the City Hall. College ball was my goal, and the feel of a basketball in my hands, the swish of the net, and the routine of a hard work out drove me through an ACL surgery and brought me to Amherst College, where #44—my brother's number—is still on my back. I am proud of wearing #44, but I do not want to be #44.

From the seating divisions in Val to exclusive weekend mixers, it is apparent that Amherst College provides two very different experiences, one for athletes and one for “normal” students. I chose Amherst because it was the highest academic level I could achieve, I want(ed) to win a National Championship, and I thought there would still be time to branch out and try something new. I thought all athletes were students first; yet, within the first week of freshman year, I found myself introduced as a “freshman basketball player from Iowa.” Suddenly, I felt as if a bold line had been drawn between me and 60 percent of the student body.

Throughout my freshman and sophomore years, I experienced the infamous student/

And everyone, or so it seemed, was still making the grades.

I was labeled an “athlete” and the musician, artist, and traveler within me was kept hidden. Yet, wasn't I getting exactly what I wanted? I chose Amherst because I want(ed) to play with and against the best, and Amherst College Women's Basketball has a high expectation for success. Second is not good enough, and talented players are constantly battling for starting spots and playing time. My first goal was, and

I thought all athletes were students first; yet, within the first week of freshman year, I found myself introduced as a “freshman basketball player from Iowa.”

is, to succeed on the court and develop a relationship with my teammates. But during my first two years, some students read “Amherst Women's Basketball” across my chest and decided that was all they needed to know. Some of my favorite professors questioned my dedication to academics because of my passion for basketball. Despite having supportive teammates and a clear winning record both seasons, I was unhappy, unfulfilled, and lonely. I felt categorized, and instinctively, I began to question the College and the athletic program. I wrote a social psychology paper proposing a solution to our divide.

I imagined “sister” and “brother” groups where teams partnered with different student groups, supported each other at events, and met throughout the year to expand their social circle.

After sophomore year I decided to make a change. Unsurprisingly, my conscious effort to break from the athletic comfort zone and focus on my academic

experience helped. Thus far, my junior year has been my favorite. I live in Newport—without a “basketball roommate,” take Jazz vocal lessons, make lunch dates with non-athletic students, work as a Psychology TA, and can now wave at students in every section of Val.

I am disappointed that the student/athlete divide exists. However, I believe much of this has to do with circumstance. In my opinion,

teams sit together at Val because they walk there right after practice. Team parties are important for social cohesion and, quite frankly, teammates like each other. I wear sweatpants because I own a lot of them, I am exhausted, and I know that I will have to workout again in a few hours. Sometimes athletes have to miss class for games, but this dedicated and competitive nature of Amherst athletes might be what makes our program so successful. Coming from someone who has tried to stand on both sides of the line,

it is much easier to stay put.

I was asked this semester to be on the Athletic Director search committee and am so proud and thankful for this opportunity to speak. I am advocating for a director that understands the difficulties of being an athlete, continues our winning legacy, and most importantly, encourages us, collectively, to develop as human beings. Nonetheless, the internal division persists, and rather than being one person, one student-athlete, I still find myself flipping between mindsets and personality traits, just so I can feel like I belong.

Simply, there is not enough time in the day to be all I want to be and experience all that Amherst offers. Perhaps this is true for all of us. It is possible to be a student-athlete and participate in a variety of groups. But for me, it's not possible to do well in all of them. Eventually, sleep catches up and failure happens. I have failed numerous times at Amherst, academically, athletically, and socially. Not a day goes by where I do not feel a sense of insecurity or alienation. Yes, I am here because I choose to be here. I am proud to be an athlete. I get to play the game I love, have a strong social support and job network, and realistically chase my goal of winning a National Championship. Yet, I, like many athletes, have been physically and mentally challenged to the brink of burnout. I still find myself envying the students who are equally dedicated—but to a different goal—and have more freedom to explore. I still find myself asking, “What do I do next?” But I understand the choice is mine. 

Cheyenne Pritchard '16 is a Contributing Writer of The Indicator.



athlete divide. I envied my freshman-year roommate who joined and un-joined student groups and befriended a variety of interesting students. Meanwhile, I stayed home to finish schoolwork. I hurried to practice, lifting, and personal workouts. Other students walked to Marsh Coffee Haus, joined a capella groups, hiked, visited Boston, toured museums, or attended late afternoon classes at other colleges.

Life Lessons from an Acting Class

Derya Demirtas

ddemirtas16@amherst.edu

Acting as a means of self expression.

If you have interacted with me at all this semester, there's a high probability that at one point or another I mentioned the acting class that I am taking this semester at UMass. Now I know what you're thinking: "But Derya, why would you take a class at UMass when there's already a Theater and Dance department at Amherst?" I know: Why would anyone ever want to leave the Great and Mighty Amherst bubble? What could a Five College course possibly offer that an Amherst College class couldn't? Why would anyone ever want to be reminded that there's "more to life" outside of a New England liberal arts college campus? I don't know the answers to these questions.

But when I was pre-registering for classes last spring, I knew I wanted to explore something new, something that would help get me out of my comfort zone. And acting seemed like a good way to do that. My rationale was that if I took an acting class at UMass, there would be a greater probability of me doing actual acting rather than just theorizing and writing papers about acting. I didn't want to question what it meant to be an actor. I just wanted to act. (I sincerely did not know about 'Action and Character,' offered here. Maybe I would have taken that instead.) So that's why I enrolled in this class at UMass, and I am so glad I did.

I think one of the reasons I love acting so much is because it doesn't feel like a class. I feel like I'm cheating because I get to hang out with my friends for three hours twice a week. During one recent class, we danced to Beyoncé for 20 minutes.

This is something I already do with friends in my free time. Somehow, though, I'm now getting to do this for "academic credit."

The truth is that I have never felt more comfortable to fully be myself than in this class. I act more drunk than I do when I have alcohol. I get so excited that I slur my words because my mouth can't keep up with my thoughts as I'm speaking. I am really loud, and I have screamed from excitement on more than one occasion. And I can barely walk straight, but unfortunately, that's just me and has nothing to do with my acting class.

Acting feels more like play than "serious coursework." We start each class by stretching, doing vocal exercises, and playing improv games. Though the intent of the improv games has never

explicitly been comedy, they are always hilarious. I laugh. Every. Single. Class. (Okay, maybe "cackle" or "nearly choke" are more accurate terms.) This experience has reaffirmed my core philosophy that laughter is important. I love to laugh, and I love to make other people laugh. When I laugh, I feel happy, and when I feel happy, I feel fulfilled.

It's been my acting class that has taught me the truth is funny. Because no one was intentionally trying to be funny in our improv games, they were always hilarious. When we were being genuine and open to the scene, the humor emerged naturally. We don't try to go for quick jokes because

being insincere is the easiest way to kill a scene.

As it turns out, good acting is not about how to become a star; it's not even ever about you. It's about your fellow actors. Everyone is a supporting actor. When you make your fellow actor look good and are being truthful to the scene, you will end up looking good because the scene looks good. Focus on what is needed, not on how you can look best. And when you give, you will receive so much more in return. Be present and authentic. And when you are being open and honest, you will be genuine and true in a way that is most

authentic to you.

It is this open and honest attitude I've learned in my acting class that has allowed me to be more comfortable with letting things go. I no longer try to impress people. I just try to be more of my acting class self outside of the UMass campus. I'm also more comfortable with the fact that there's a lot I don't know. I can't tell you the dates of the Vietnam War without Googling them first. I would definitely not be smarter than a fifth grader if I were ever on the show. I still don't know how to whistle.

Because I accept that I don't know everything, I am also now more willing to question things in class, like I was when I attended community college. I was so shocked when I first came

to Amherst that no one asked questions in class. I thought I was the only one that didn't "get it." Yet, when I visited my professors in office hours, I learned that other students had similar questions. So, I wasn't alone. There was just an unspoken rule that we weren't allowed to ask questions.

And yet, asking questions in class is an effective way for me to learn. Why pretend I understand something when I don't? Doing so just makes me fall further behind in the lecture. So, I continue with the method of asking questions in class because I know that it works best for how I learn. Twice,

someone has come up to me and described me as "brave" or "courageous" for asking questions in class. Aren't firefighters and heart surgeons "brave" and "courageous"? I don't think asking questions is "brave" and "courageous." Aren't we at college in the first place to learn how to question things? How can we develop critical thinking skills if we don't ask questions?

Maybe people at Amherst are more afraid to admit that they lack knowledge than people at my community college. Maybe we all worry that if someone discovers there's something we don't know our admission will somehow be revoked. But isn't a lack of knowledge what makes us human? If we knew everything, what would make us any different from our computers? Why can't we, as a campus community, acknowledge that we don't know everything?

Although my acting class has given me the confidence to be more fearless in my classes and in life in general, I recognize that acting may not do this for everyone. If I wanted to be more prescriptive, I might conclude by making a resolute case as to Why All Amherst Students Should Take an Acting Class. And I do encourage anyone that is interested to give an acting class a try. But, I also recognize that different people will find different mediums through which to express themselves. There are a variety of ways we can all attain our highest, truest level of self-expression. The key to unlocking this self-expression is just a matter of being willing to be feel uncomfortable. 

Derya Demirtas '16E is a Contributing Writer for The Indicator.



Maybe we all worry that if someone discovers there's something we don't know our admission will somehow be revoked.

Defending Ideas

Anders Lindgren

alindgren15@amherst.edu

A written argument for oral arguments.

As a senior preparing for my first attempt at gainful employment, I suffer from the same anxiety as nearly all of my classmates: I have no remotely marketable skills. And just as nearly all Amherst students will eventually experience this same anxiety, so too will they be given the same reassurance: Amherst made you smart, and things work out for smart people. With such a vague promise, it's hard to define exactly what goes into a successful liberal arts education, but here's my attempt: We become smart people because we learn to understand the arguments of others, form our own arguments, and express our thoughts clearly. And Amherst delivers beautifully on all of these fronts—so long as everything is written down.

It's time to hold faculty, students, and administrators accountable for a conspicuous gap in the Amherst education: the ability to make, respond to, and defend oral arguments. This isn't a call for more public speaking or locution classes but rather a claim that speaking instruction should permeate all of our classes in the same way that writing does. Success stories like Hamilton College's Oral Communication's Center, Barnard College's Speaking Center, or Mount Holyoke's Speaking, Arguing, and Writing Program exist not simply because these resources are valuable in and of

The reality is that you can become a better speaker at Amherst, but Amherst won't require it of you.

themselves, but more importantly because these resources are relevant to students' classwork. As it is, the vast majority of classes list the ambiguous "class participation" as their only graded speaking assignment, with a few including the odd presentation. This is terribly problematic not only because we neglect other forms of oral argumentation, but also because we are never taught what good class participation looks like, nor are we given feedback on our attempts to engage in it.

To begin addressing the problematic model of "class participation" and to lay the foundation for more sophisticated forms of oral argumentation, speaking needs to play a larger role in first-year seminars. The goal of these seminars is to bring all incoming first-years up to a threshold of writing that allows them to craft and present ideas in an academically compelling way. The seminars exist

largely because high school writing education varies so dramatically in quality across schools—a problem which is true of speaking education as well. Most schools don't have the student-teacher ratios to make individual students the focus of the classroom, while the richest high schools have the resources to encourage or require class participation, one-on-one time with teachers, and frequent class presentations. Speaking-intensive first-year seminars would serve not only to introduce students to graded oral assignments, but also to level the playing field in class discussions, which are often monopolized by those most comfortable speaking in front of others.

What's sad about the state of spoken education at Amherst is that even the limited role that speech does play in our assignments, whether "class participation" or PowerPoint presentations, is generally one of performance rather than intellectual engagement. Just as writing has become integral to the way in which we form, clarify and refine our arguments, so speaking can move beyond simply being a way to pitch our ideas. Amherst loves to stress its reputation as a school that produces good writers not only because we place value on lively prose, but also because we believe that good writers are good thinkers. Clear, concise, and powerful arguments on the page mean well-organized and insightful thoughts. But writing and speaking engender two different ways of ap-

proaching ideas, both of which need to be honed for the fullest realization of our analytical potential.

While writing papers teaches us to lay out a path convincing enough that the reader comfortably reaches our conclusion, making oral arguments teaches us to defend our ideas against whatever counterarguments our audience cares to make. It is especially important to consider the different ways writing and speaking assignments compel busy students to spend their scarce time. While both oral and written arguments, when crafted perfectly, methodically justify each logical step that goes into reaching an exciting conclusion, in the context of college assignments it is more informative to consider time-constrained and imperfect forms of the argument. A "good but not great" paper may be one in which unstable building blocks serve to prop up a relatively insightful and

worthwhile conclusion. In contrast, for the same caliber of oral argument, a student must prepare for attacks on any of her assumptions, perhaps at the expense of fleshing out her conclusion. Certainly neither is unambiguously better, but considering the importance of both allows us to develop more fully as students. So how can we integrate speak-



ing into our curriculum in a way that not only makes Amherst students comfortable with oral argumentation, but also enables us to form ideas in a fundamentally different way?

Simply put, students need to be graded on their ability to defend their arguments on the spot. They need to present ideas in front of their classes, or to their professors one-on-one, and they need

to be evaluated based on their ability to articulate these arguments and respond to criticisms adeptly. Right now this isn't a fair thing to ask of Amherst students because it's not something that we're taught. But if we teach speaking like we teach writing—using first-year seminars to lay a groundwork and progressively raising expectations in upper level classes—we can integrate speaking into our curriculum in a fair and meaningful way.

The reality is that you can become a better speaker at Amherst, but Amherst won't require it of you. Many will leave Amherst as glowing orators and engaging conversationalists because of the extracurriculars they joined, the 2 AM conversations they had with their brilliant roommate, or the professor whose office hours they attended religiously. Certainly there are opportunities to present and defend ideas at Amherst. The problem is that making oneself vulnerable to criticism is really, really unpleasant, especially if one isn't particularly good at speaking in the first place. And to get students to do unpleasant things (like write huge research papers or grind through long lab reports) we need to provide them with the tools to succeed, and then evaluate their use of these tools as a part of our curriculum. Oral argumentation is more than a gimmick, it's an integral part of the liberal arts education our college has promised us; let's hold Amherst to that promise. 

Anders Lindgren '15 is a Contributing Writer for The Indicator.

Boy Friend & Girl Friend

Liz Mutter

emutter15@amherst.edu

Opposite-sex friendships: reality, myth or MTV show?

Growing up, we're told that you're either a girl or a boy. We're told that girls and boys look different, act different, and like different things. As puberty arrives, we're more attuned to the omnipresent messages about romantic love and sexual attraction. If you're a girl, someday your Prince Charming will come to sweep you off your feet and take care of you for the rest of eternity. If you're a boy, someday you'll accomplish something great enough to attract a bevy of beautiful women seeking casual sex. And in the meantime, you'll have your friends to keep you company—friends that have the same set of secondary sex characteristics as you do.

Because of these expectations and the human tendency to love a good story, we see opposite-sex (OS) couplings everywhere, all the time—among the people around us, but also in novels, movies, television, and our own imagination. In elementary school, no recess experience was complete without someone spotting an OS interaction and yelling, “[Girl] and [Boy] sitting in a tree, K-I-S-S-I-N-G! First comes love, then comes marriage, then comes the baby in a baby carriage!” Later, we watched Lizzie McGuire and Gordo's long-awaited kiss, and we read with glee that Hermione and Ron finally admitted their feelings for one another. If we wanted to invite someone of the OS to our birthday parties, our parents made a big deal about it. We formed friends through our extracurricular activities, which were usually same-sex (SS) groups.

Later still, we watched literally everyone on *Grey's Anatomy* hook up with everyone else of the OS; we watched *How I Met Your Mother*'s only single female protagonist date both of the show's single male protagonists; we watched movies called *My Best Friend's Wedding*, *Just Friends*, and *Friends with Benefits* that ended—much to no one's surprise—in romantic love; and we watched shows like *My Boys*, *The Big Bang Theory*, and *New Girl*, which revolved around the inherent ridiculousness of a woman spending a lot of time hanging around with a group of men. (In “defense” of *The Big Bang Theory*, it's not supposed to be funny just because Penny is a woman, it's supposed to be funny because she's a *dumb* woman and *of course* she couldn't possibly

understand the super smart science talk of the men around her, but at least she makes up for it by having social skills. LOLLLL.)

Here at Amherst, we know the ins and outs of everyone's business, and even when we don't, we're happy to speculate. “David, I saw you and Katie eating together at Val today and you both looked really happy—are you guys a *thing*?!” “No, we're friends.” “Oh, *sure*, okay whatever you say, but just know that you can tell me *anything*. WINK! [*Spins around until nothing remains but a pile of dust.*]” We make such speculations because 1) it's fun to imagine people you know being romantically interested in one another (maybe it gives us hope that one day we too might be less lonely?) and 2) we are socialized to believe that friends are people of the SS, whereas people of the OS are for *tryna fuck/date/love-unconditionally-in-the-context-of-marriage*. According to Professor Sanderson, who graciously agreed to answer some questions via email, this “general lack of trust that such ‘true friendships’ exist (and hence the perception from family/friends that these friendships are

All things considered, it's no wonder opposite-sex friendships are rare. But they do exist.

in reality dating or sexual relationships)” can present a real barrier to forming and maintaining OS friendships. If you're a straight, cisgender person, your current friend group probably reflects this gender singularity.

(If you're not a straight, cisgender person, please write for *The Indicator*. We desperately need the voices of this publication to reflect the (gender/sexual/racial/ethnic/regional/socioeconomic) diversity of the voices on this campus. You could write on queer gender and sexuality as they function in friendships at Amherst, or you could write about whatever else, regardless of its relevance to an aspect of your identity. I truly mean whatever else—one time I wrote about menstrual cups, so anything goes!)

In addition to social pressures, another obstacle to OS friendship, as noted by Professor Sanderson, is “the potential of sexual feelings in one (and not the other) member. Many relationships do start as friendships,” she continued, “so in some cases these feelings occur over time in both members and that can be a good start to a dating relationship.

In other cases such feelings occur more in one person than the other, and that can be tricky.” Undoubtedly, unrequited love hurts, and that hurt can put a huge strain on a friendship. Even just sexual attraction, though, can make it tough to appreciate someone for who they are rather than how sexy they are. In fact, a straight male friend told me that his recently diminished sex drive has enabled him to form several new OS friendships, which is both great and terrible: great that he's enjoying spending time with these women just for the sake of getting to know them, but terrible that his sexual appetite had previously prevented him from doing so in a way that it never prevented him from forming connections with men.

Exacerbating the problem of sexual attraction within OS friendships is the fact that it is not equally likely to occur across genders. According to a 2001 Social Psychology study by April L. Bleske-Rechek and David M. Buss, men are more likely than women to be sexually attracted to and desire to have sex with their OS friends. Furthermore, Sanderson pointed out that “men are more likely to (wrongly) perceive sexual interest from their female friends than women, whereas women are more likely to not recognize interest that is there!”

Consequently, women are more likely than men to have experienced an OS friend confessing romantic interest in them seemingly out of nowhere. Unless the interest is mutual, she is left with the unfortunate choice of cutting ties and seeming like an asshole or trying to remain friends but living in fear of leading the guy on—or worse, having to deal with a guy who continues to pressure her and make her feel guilty for not returning the feelings. Repeated experiences like this might make a woman hesitant to pursue OS friendships. Conversely, repeated rejection by women might make men hesitant to pursue OS friendships.

That's not the end of the odds stacked against OS friendships—there's also “the perceived threat of such friendships to dating partners of one or both friend” (Sanderson). This can certainly pose an issue, but in my experience being in a relationship actually facilitates forming OS friendships because it takes any sexual or romantic possibilities entirely off the table without anyone feeling rejected. It also doesn't hurt that along with a boyfriend comes the chance to meet the

boyfriend's boy friends. On the other hand, a person in a relationship might devote less time and effort to friendships in general, according to Sanderson: "Typically people have many friendships (and at least a few close friendships) and a single romantic/sexual relationships, so in that sense, people often put a higher priority on their romantic/sexual relationship since it is the 'only' relationship of such a type at a time."

Regardless, there are also structural obstacles to forming OS friendships. Your first-year roommate is the same sex/gender as you. Teams and most a cappella groups are single-gender. Even some majors and courses have a disproportionate representation of a single gender—"The Psychology of Food and

My freshman year, a male friend said to me, "I don't really even consider you a girl."

Eating Disorders," for example, has only one male student. Such structural factors make it easier to form SS than OS friendships because you're more likely to interact with people of the SS anyway. When it comes to meeting new people, the time when there's the greatest chance of forming new friendships—read: a Saturday night—happens to be the same time when you're most likely to be seeking out a romantic or sexual encounter. And we all know which pursuit tends to take priority. Even greater than the difficulty of meeting a potential new OS friend is the difficulty of maintaining the friendship, which results in part because of significant gender differences in the types of things one does with friends: "Men are more activity-based in their friendships (playing sports, watching TV, shooting pool, etc.)," Sanderson explained, "whereas women tend to spend more time just talking (e.g., having coffee, hanging out, catching up). Men also tend to have larger, but less close, friendship networks, whereas women tend to have smaller, but closer, friendship networks."

All things considered, it's no wonder OS friendships are rare. But they do exist. I'm lucky enough to have quite a few OS friends, and beyond the benefits like "companionship, good times, conversation, and laughter" found by Bleske-Rechek and Buss to be gender-independent, getting to know these guys has helped me understand how they each see the world—what they care about, what bothers them, what they're curious about, and how they are dealing with their shifting identities and futures. Since these characteristics are influenced by their experiences, they are also fundamentally influenced by gender identity. So, seeking to understand the views and struggles of OS friends "can provide a

different way of seeing the world, just like having friends from different backgrounds," Sanderson explained.

I also have the comfort of knowing individual men to use as counterexamples whenever generalizations about men threaten to take hold as truth in my mind. The same would apply for a man in combating generalizations about women. Guys, if you have any further doubts about why OS friendships are great, hear this from Sanderson: "Such relationships tend to be better (more beneficial) for men than for women since both men and women prefer to disclose in women!" Ladies, don't be discouraged—there are plenty of men here who are capable of being great listeners. They've probably just had less practice, since

men aren't socialized to be compassionate communicators to the extent that women are. I urge you to give them a chance to listen to what you have to say.

Finally, an ongoing campus initiative highlights the need for a cultural shift towards valuing a better understanding among the sexes, which is best achieved through OS friendships. In a recent open meeting on the vision for Social Clubs at Amherst, the issue of whether to offer SS Social Clubs was on the table. One student noted that a few of his younger teammates felt far more at ease at SS gatherings than at events where women were present; so, the stu-

dent argued, SS Social Clubs are necessary as a space where everyone can feel comfortable being themselves. This wasn't the first time I'd heard a man acknowledge general discomfort in the presence of women. My freshman year, a male friend said to me, "I don't really even consider you a girl." At first I was confused and took offense, but with time I came to understand that what he really meant was something like, "I feel comfortable acting like myself around you, which is usually a comfort level I only feel around other guys." But the words he used to frame this thought revealed the extent to which he had internalized "girls" as fundamentally different from him, such that his ability to connect positively

with me outside of a sexual context made me an anomaly. And rather than reframing his conception of what interactions with girls could be like, he instead divorced me from the "girls" category in his mind.

Well, I am a fucking girl. And I promise, us ladies do not exist to make men feel uncomfortable. Perhaps that discomfort comes from primarily being exposed to media (including porn) in which women are consistently sexually objectified and are rarely portrayed as well-rounded protagonists. But by simply talking to women without a sexual agenda, men could see that we're just as normal or weird, gross or neat, funny or boring, smart or slow, sweet or cold, selfish or caring, and excitable or blasé as you guys. And if our breasts and vaginas scare you, then it's time you grow the fuck up, because we're half of the population and we're not going away. As the marginalized group, women have had to confront and operate within the male-dominated worldview on a daily basis, so some effort to return that favor and listen to our views and experiences would be much appreciated. Being friends with us is a great first step, and gender-inclusive Social Clubs would be a great way to facilitate these friendships.

Unfortunately, time may be running out on forming OS friendships. According to Sanderson, "They are more common in high school and college, and (perhaps sadly) less common later in life, when people are often partnered and then spending time with same-sex friends and/or couple friends."

So please start now, lest you miss out. I have full faith in us. We are not the generation that will continue to let a gender binary dominate our perception of individuals. We are not the generation that will allow gender inequality and gender exclusion to persist because we can't be bothered to understand the perspective of the "other side." We are not the generation that is content to miss out on forming meaningful and mutually beneficial platonic relationships with someone of the opposite sex just because we have different sets of genitals. 

Liz Mutter '15 is an Associate Editor for The Indicator.



Beyond Lord Jeff

Sam Wohlforth

swohlforth17@amherst.edu

Must our new mascot be a poor tranquilized animal?

I think the Moose would make a stupid mascot. That's not to say I like our current mascot; I think most of us would agree "Lord Jeff" is pretty offensive. After all, Lord Jeffrey Amherst did commit genocide via biological warfare. The fact that we still use him as a symbol of pride for our school is simply absurd. On the other hand, the Lord Jeff mascot does remind Amherst College of our rich history. It serves as a symbol of our history as a great institution and our New England roots on a campus that often wants to distance itself from the more unpleasant elements of Amherst's past. The Lord Jeff has an old-fashioned cool that reminds one of the plaque in the Octagon bearing a list of donors from 1847 or the photos on B level of ornate Victorian-era dorms. Whatever we replace our current mascot with should grant Amherst students the right to have pride in our school. The Moose cannot, by any metric, do that. It has no historical meaning, no connection to our school identity or traditions (weak as they are). The only way the Moose tangibly relates to campus culture and tradition is if you count the poor moose that wandered onto campus and was tranquilized last spring. I really wish the students who are active in the Moose for Mascot campaign had chosen something else over which to rally Amherst. It astounds me that even with our school's rich history and creative student body we could not find something—*anything*—more creative and meaningful than some poor transient moose.

The lameness of the Moose is the largest obstacle I see to it being approved. Amherst College is at a crucial moment, trying to maintain its status as an elite college while discarding its past reputation of good-old-boy privilege. Much of what the administration currently does is to combat that negative reputation. The Amherst College Police Department shuts down the Powerhouse and all parties in the socials around 2 a.m. Sports teams have to sit through poorly executed anti-hazing talks and lectures during which AC police threaten to tell coaches about rule infractions. As a prime example, consider the banning of fraternities. Only on the surface does it seem weird that the administration would ban fraternities and then the very next fall institute a social club system. Fraternities with Greek letters are divisive and detrimental

to campus culture, but social clubs without Ψs or Δs are not only acceptable but encouraged? Bidy must have been ecstatic to see the "Amherst College Bans Students From Joining Fraternities" headline on the Huffington Post last spring. Finally, her school was getting the kind of positive press it hadn't gotten since she arrived on campus.

What kind of reaction would the Moose get if it were approved? We might see another Huffington Post article, or maybe a Gawker post. Regardless, the news would come from liberal outlets, and it would probably be positive. To outsiders, it would look, rightly, like a step in a progressive direction. We would be distancing ourselves from our privileged past, and it would be a victory for liberal



The Moose is an opportunity for the administration to make a symbolic sacrifice with few tangible consequences.

student activists. Any in-depth articles from outside sources would surely reference the AC Voice op-ed calling for the Moose's instatement. It would be exactly what the administration would want: a victory for both the administration, overcoming an intransigent alumni base, and for campus activists, overcoming an entrenched culture of athletics.

On campus, the Moose would signal a willingness to work with progressive student advocates. Would it appease our progressives, given we still do not have a student on the Title IX team and have not yet divested our endowment from the coal industry? No, probably not, at least not for long. However, it might temporarily relieve the pressure the administration has felt from students and faculty on these and other matters. Our campus is clearly dissatisfied with Bidy's leadership. With

a renewed push from the students and faculty in favor of divestment, Bidy faces clear challenges. Divestment would mean sacrificing a portion of our investment portfolio for no clear economic benefit. Growing and maintaining our massive endowment is of huge importance to Bidy, and I doubt she and the Trustees will part with even a portion of it very willingly. Wouldn't it be great if she could make a token sacrifice in order to see divestment efforts wane? Approving the Moose would instantly garner support from a large segment of the student body, and it would cost little. Our school already has low school spirit and tiny attendance at sporting events. What would the Moose really change? More importantly, who would *care*?

The Moose is an opportunity for the administration to make a symbolic sacrifice with few tangible consequences, while keeping their real, more important, cards in their hands, ready to play in the coming years. Amherst College, like all higher education institutions, is at a moral crossroads. On one hand, we are more diverse than ever before: 43 percent of us identify as people of color, compared to 39 percent of the American population at large, and we provide an astounding amount of financial aid, giving an average of \$45,000 to 60 percent of our students. On the other hand, there also remains a very active, insistent culture of activism on campus, implying that many students here feel the work is not yet finished. "Black Lives Matter" was in some ways a response to the need for greater inclusion on campus. Many see that privilege is alive and well at Amherst. What does the Lord Jeff have for those people who recognize the need for further progress? For them,

the Lord Jeff is a reminder that Amherst has long been a place that did not accept the unprivileged, and so they support the Moose. The movement is upon us, and even people like me who think the Moose is an asinine choice will be willing to see the Lord Jeff go. The largest obstacle to the Moose is the alumni, who, judging by their applause for Bidy's explanation of why the Trustees banned fraternities at their panel with her last Reunion, are less intransigent in matters regarding campus traditions than we might think. The Moose's time to shine is near.

I just wish we could come up with something better than a moose. 🐾

Sam Wohlforth '17 is a Contributing Writer for The Indicator.

Reclaiming Number One

Molly Jordan

mjordan16@amherst.edu

Considering the influence of college rankings.

Williams College may be a horrible college, but for most of the last decade, the Ephs have claimed the coveted number-one spot in the *US News & World Report's* liberal-arts college rankings, the most widely read annual rankings list. With a lower acceptance rate and higher graduation rate than Williams—along with superior financial aid—why has Amherst found itself perpetually stuck in the number-two spot?

A closer look at the *US News & World Report's* ranking methodology reveals two domains in which Amherst falls short. The first is the student-faculty ratio: Williams's 7:1 ratio beats out Amherst's 8:1 ratio, allowing the Ephs to have more classes with fewer than twenty students. Weighted more heavily than faculty resources, though, is a second category called “undergraduate academic reputation.” This reputation score comes from a survey of 2,500 high school guidance counselors from across the country, and Williams prevails in this category as well.

I will say upfront that not only is it impossible to objectively quantify an educational experience, but also that these rankings are quite arbitrary. For example, assigning a heavier weighting to financial aid resources could put Amherst well ahead of Williams. (I recommend Malcolm Gladwell's 2011 article in *The New Yorker*, “The Order of Things,” to anyone interested in learning more about how little ranking calculations can actually convey.)

College rankings are a bogus game, but they are a bogus game we should be playing. Amherst should strive to be

number one. It certainly feels good to be near the top, but the benefits of a first-place ranking would go beyond the superficial. Leading the rankings would help the school achieve its more meaningful goals, particularly advancing Amherst's commitment to diversity.

College rankings are disproportionately important in the recruitment of geographi-

cally and socioeconomically diverse students. A guidance counselor at a northeast prep school is probably familiar with the nuanced differences between Amherst and Williams, diminishing the amount of consideration given to rankings. For most of the country and certainly the world, though, college rankings and guidebooks are the primary touchpoint for information about Amherst. For a student coming from a school where no one has heard of Amherst,

let alone visited the campus, a first place ranking could justify the decision to matriculate at Amherst over a brand-name Ivy.

Complaining about a second-place ranking may seem petty, obsessive even, but it is overly idealistic to act like rankings do not have consequences. Our number-two ranking—not too shabby—is the reason many current students chose to come to Amherst. One student, a junior from Canada, remembers struggling to choose among a handful of NESCAC acceptances, ultimately deciding on Amherst because “it had the highest ranking.” A senior from China, where his friends and family had only heard of bigger American universities, would repeatedly pull up the rankings on his phone to explain his “alternative” choice.

And it's not just international students for whom the college decision boils down to rankings. I contacted a current sophomore at Williams, a self-identified student of color originally from a public high school in New York City. The teachers at her high school knew little about liberal arts colleges and pushed instead for schools well known in the tri-state area, like Fordham and Columbia. “I only started to

consider schools like Amherst and Williams when I started looking at college rankings and saw that NESCAC schools were so well represented,” she said. “They would not have been on my radar otherwise.” Although there were many things she liked about Amherst when she visited for an accepted students day, she ultimately made the (unfortunate) decision to

attend Williams. As she added unapologetically, “How can you say no to number one?”

In her Family Weekend speech, President Martin boasted that Amherst is “the most diverse college.” President Martin believes that diversity is the underpinning of the best education, because diversity of background and

College rankings are a bogus game, but they are a bogus game we should be playing.

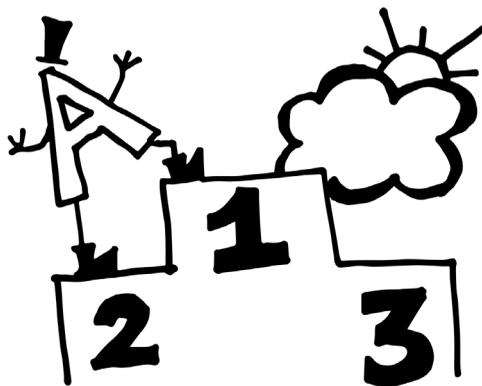
opinion is necessary to promote and develop critical thinking. Amherst needs to prove that diversity can make

the number-one school. Reclaiming the number-one spot would allow the school to recruit the very best students from the US and abroad, while demonstrating that diversity is the future of excellence. Alumni, particularly those who attended an Amherst of white males, have publicly questioned the compatibility of diversity and excellence. A rankings upset would further legitimize the mission of President Martin's administration, putting such outdated thinking to rest, while renewing the financial enthusiasm of alumni.

It may be uncouth to admit to aspirations like being number one on the *US News & World Report* list, but Amherst needs to start playing the game. I want Amherst to be the best, as it was in prior years, because being number one is a self-fulfilling prophecy. Dominating the list will bring in the best students, not to mention the best new faculty, which will maintain the prestigious spot for years to come.

So how does Amherst get back on top? Looking specifically at the *US News & World Report* metrics, we need to improve our student-faculty ratio and our national reputation. The benefits of hiring more professors are obvious—smaller classes, more seminars, more personal attention for students—and should the resources be available, I do not think anyone would challenge that move. As for improving Amherst's reputation in the US, we need to step up our PR. High school guidance counselors across the country need to know more about Amherst, for the sake of rankings and recruiting. When students across the country know Amherst for more than being the second-best liberal arts college (that may or may not be the same thing as UMass), Amherst will be—rightfully—back on top. 

Molly Jordan '16 is a Contributing Writer for The Indicator.



Soon It Could Be Too Late

Pete Suechting

psuechting15@amherst.edu

Why Amherst College must divest from coal.

We live in the Anthropocene now, with all of the problems and responsibility that that entails. A decade ago Paul Crutzen, the Nobel Prize-winning atmospheric chemist, coined the term to mark the ending of the Holocene epoch in the late eighteenth-century during the Industrial Revolution. At this juncture, ascendant human forces became the dominant drivers of planetary history, replacing the (until now) unchallenged 4.54 billion-year reign of geological and ecological systems. Holocene means “new whole,” and denotes the relatively stable interglacial period dating back ten to twelve thousand years that gave birth to human civilization. This period was mild and hospitable compared to the preceding Pleistocene epoch, characterized by repeated glacial cycles.

All of this is to say: we should not take the mild climate, or the biosphere’s provision of resources essential for survival, for granted. From a geologic perspective, humanity and the hospitable climate that makes our survival possible represent a blip in time. So when the IPCC report states that surface temperature will continue to rise over the twenty-first century, increasing the frequency of extreme heat and precipitation events and further acidifying oceans, melting ice caps, and raising sea levels, we should know and understand that, though this seems to be far in the future, on a geologic timescale, it’s not. We may try to conceptualize these changes on human timescales that do not do these forces justice, making them seem incremental when they are in fact proceeding at breakneck speed on geologic timescales.

A 2009 report published in the journal *Nature* authored by, most notably, Johan Rockström of the Stockholm Resilience Centre, the prominent NASA climatologist James Hansen, and the aforementioned Paul Crutzen, identified nine planetary boundaries. These boundaries are thresholds in the operation of essential planetary systems that, if crossed, will engender destabilizing environmental degradation. The team identifies nine thresholds, including chemical pollution, atmospheric aerosol loading, biodiversity loss, changes in land use, global freshwater use, interference with nitrogen and phosphorus cycling, stratospheric ozone depletion, ocean acidification, and, most relevant to

our discussion here, climate change. The normal operation of planetary systems can be thought of as producing planetary livability. Not all of these systems have well-defined boundaries, or tipping points. But despite the lack of a defined boundary, human activity will still undermine the operation of a system and its subsequent ability to produce stable livability. These boundaries thus define a “safe operating space,” within which humans may pursue social and economic goals without drastically altering the livability of our planet. It is known that humans have transgressed three of the boundaries: biodiversity loss, interference with the nitrogen cycle, and climate change.

Humans operate as a geologic force, though we do so unconsciously. This is the central contradiction that the Anthropocene will resolve. If we wish to be there for the resolution, we must ask the question: How do we begin to exert conscious mastery over our geologic force? The answer lies in curbing how we operate on geological scales. Though we may be intellectually aware that humanity’s existence is perched precariously on top of our industrial machinery and its adverse environmental impacts, we do not experience the threat climate change poses in our daily lives. Climate change is a wicked problem. Though scientists univocally tell us that we are changing our climate and destroying the livability of our planet, we step outside and the sky is still blue, the birds still sing, and sometimes, we get three feet of snow on Halloween.

Planetary systems largely proceed silently and invisibly over the course of our allotted decades on earth. The vast spatial and temporal scales that they operate on dwarf the human body and life span. It’s all bigger and longer-lived than us, so we find it hard to fully understand. Now, we

have an industrial human society that is operating

on these same vast spatial and temporal scales, so we remain unconscious of its full implications. Moreover, the vastness of industrial human enterprise precludes the possibility of individual

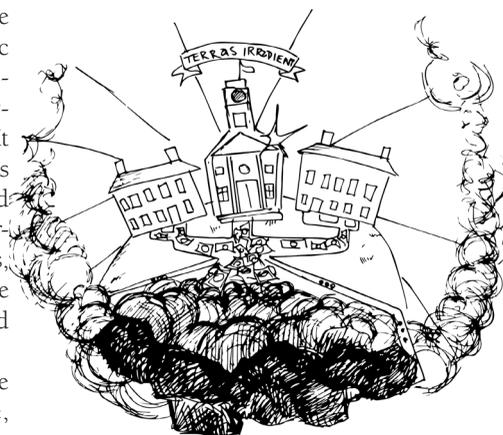
humans affecting any meaningful change in its basic operation. This is where divestment comes in, as it represents a way to intervene in this system, instilling intention into how and where it produces geologic effects. Humans create socio-historical institutions to organize themselves in lasting ways to achieve particular goals. These institutions, unlike individual humans, can exist on spatial and temporal scales closer, but still not approaching those of the planetary system. Therefore by changing how these institutions interact with this system, we can begin to inscribe intention into how humanity as a whole wields geologic force.

Amherst College is one such institution. It has been around longer than any of us and will still be around when we’re all dead and buried.

In fact, it is older even than the beginning of the Anthropocene. As an institution that exists on timescales that will be able to appreciate the geologically rapid pace of change, it is incumbent on the institution to address that which has caused our civilization to operate as a geologic force, and to confront the perturbations that have destabilized our climatic equilibrium. Coal divestment is a route available to our institution to exert collective understanding and intention in our civilization’s actions, and to act on timescales closer to that of the earth than that of humans.

Put simply, coal divestment for Amherst College means taking responsibility, and more importantly, being held accountable, for the collective actions of our civilization. Confronting a problem bigger and longer than anything we can imagine is a daunting task, but our efforts and ideas can be amplified through time and space by using long-lasting institutions as vehicles of change. Universities, colleges, religious organizations, and even municipalities have recognized divestment from coal as a means of exerting institutional will. Divestment means taking action that transcends our own lives, hopefully persisting long into the future. So let’s use the unique temporal power of our institution to help ensure that the Anthropocene resolves itself with civilization still intact, and stronger for having restrained our force. 

Pete Suechting '15 is a Contributing Writer for The Indicator.



How do we begin to exert conscious mastery over our geologic force?

The Savage Detectives

Roberto Bolaño

Anagrama

1998

A REVIEW BY

Ricky Altieri

raltieri15@amherst.edu

Roberto Bolaño's biography reads like the script of a Hollywood film about a literary rebel. Born and raised in Chile in 1953, Bolaño faced bullying in school for his dyslexia, small size, and social awkwardness. During his teens, Bolaño moved with his family to Mexico City, where continuing academic difficulties led him to drop out of school. He returned to Chile in 1973 to support the socialist movement of Salvador Allende and was briefly imprisoned after Pinochet's *coup*. He spent the rest of his life outside of Chile, first due to exile, and then later for more complicated reasons. While pursuing a literary career that prompted much more strife than it did recognition, he developed a heroin problem, and though he later kicked it, the damage had already been done: He died of liver failure at the age of 50, in Barcelona.

Though a contrarian streak against political and literary establishments runs through much of his work, there's a danger in understanding Bolaño primarily as a social critic. Much of his writing looks inward, exploring the ways in which individuals make sense of themselves—or, more to the point, fail to do so—through the eyes and ideas of others. Other parts of his writing investigate the way sex and violence can force us to reinterpret our understanding of human nature. And still other sections of his writing seem concerned with conceptual games; that is, the clever juxtaposition of various ideologies to expose unexpected satirical dissonances and harmonies.

Perhaps his most highly regarded work, the semiautobiographical *The Savage Detectives* contains elements of each of these aspects of Bolaño, in addition to the social criticism that has (rightfully) earned tremendous acclaim. The novel is divided into three parts. The first, called "Mexicans Lost in Mexico" takes the shape of the diary of a young Mexican poet, Juan Garcia Madero, whose fascination with a movement called "Visceral Realism" a fictitious version of

Infrarealism leads him into the underworld of poetry in Mexico City. Madero meets and befriends the leaders of Visceral Realism, Ulises Lima (a fictional version of Bolaño's close friend Mario Santiago Papasquiaro) and Arturo Belano (a fictitious version of Bolaño himself), and it quickly becomes clear that, in some important sense, Madero's function is to provide perspective into the lives of these mysterious figures. But something feels amiss about the way the story is told: on the one hand, we are in Madero journal, and so naturally he seems the protagonist. At the same time, his entries, which describe his sexual and literary adventures in bars and basements through Mexico City, seem always to skirt along the lives of Lima and Belano, without ever penetrating more deeply into their motivations or condition. Through this structure, we come to realize that Madero's perspective—and the perspectives of other characters in this literary underworld—construct complicated, at times incoherent understandings of Lima and Belano, that may or not reflect who they really are.

The second part of *The Savage Detectives*, the novel's core, takes the dissonance found in Madero's narrative to new heights. It is the section's peculiar form that allows it to develop this

tension: the story is broken up into small fragments, with a new narrator, setting, and time introduced whenever a new fragment begins. An unnamed interviewer has perhaps asked questions of each narrator, because the narrators address an unnamed "you," but we never see the questions, and we never learn anything worthwhile about the interviewer. Instead, we hear stories about Belano

and Lima that span two decades and four continents, through the eyes of lovers, acquaintances, employers, and friends. But the lovers, acquaintances, and so on tell stories that, structurally, seem to parallel Madero's journal entries, insofar as each narrator reveals much more about herself than about Belano and Lima. For this reason, the storyline is anything but neat, even if the interviews are mostly chronological.

But this lack of organization and focus seems to be precisely what Bolaño is after. The narratives provided by each character take long, meandering routes before they bump into Belano and Lima, and stories about violence, sex, and drugs come interspersed between much longer

stories about mundane, everyday activities: going shopping, doing the laundry, and paying phone bills. This tactic allows Bolaño to call attention to the way people around us can slip in and out of our consciousness, the same way everyday activities might. Additionally, the strategy seems an implicit reference to an age of desensitization and indifference. Because we find our attention split an infinite number of ways, and because the information presented before us comes filtered through screens and second-hand sources, the idea of "importance" becomes less meaningful—things simply happen, and we don't always have the emotional strength to assign weight to some and not to others. And the pages and pages of things simply happening, told through the eyes of too many narrators fighting for your attention and care, allows Bolaño to achieve this effect beautifully in Section Two: reading it is at once revelatory and exhausting.

In Section Three, we return to Madero's journal, and we find the novel's principal characters, Belano and Lima, at arm's reach for the first time. Madero, Belano, Lima, and another friend have now embarked on a quest into the Sonora desert, where Belano and Lima intend to find Caserea Tinajero, a poet they claim invented Visceral Realism. It is in this section that Bolaño's conceptual games come to the fore—in Sections One and Two, we skirted along the edge of the lives of Belano and Lima, through the eyes of others. In Section Three, Belano and Lima are much more closely involved in the storyline, but only because the two of them have become the investigators, rather those being investigated: they are looking for Casarea Tinajero, whose brief appearance at the end of the novel ties together the conceptual game nicely (but, for the purpose of leaving spoilers out, I'll spare you my analysis).

An expansive, carefully constructed work that captures the ethos of a literary underworld and its leaders, *The Savage Detectives* continues to grow in influence because its narrative structure so aptly characterizes a globalized and globalizing world. As we meet more and more people, and track their progress over time through internet mediums, they become thin, flimsy lines that run parallel to our own lives. It is Bolaño thorough grasp of this theme that makes *The Savage Detectives* so worthwhile, even beyond the social critiques that already merit sustained attention. 

Ricky Altieri '15 is a Senior Editor of The Indicator.



FICTION

Energy

Nick Bruce
nbruce13@amherst.edu

A stillborn electricity hung in the pressurized grey sky; it found its expression visually in the radiance of the bright orange leaves. The pressure system imbued the air with a crisp stillness that belied the unease it carved in Stanley's breast. His heart thumped in skippy unison with his long strides as if near-running in expectation towards some oncoming event, the certainty of which was not at all certain, but which amidst the electricity of the October afternoon sky seemed imminent. Pure red and naval orange leaves buzzed tenuously on shuddering branches which shook ominously, as if in fear of losing their contents, blurring each quivering leaf into a blur of autumnal intensity.

The day before had been balmy, as the hurricanes battering the southern edges of the continent had swept warm air to up the coast to the northern reaches of the landmass. A dewy mist obscured periodic gesticulations of sun; the warmth had flooded Stanley with eerie pangs of summer-lost. He had momentarily escaped the angst brought on by the pressure system; the system pounded tenderly at his sense of comfort and shook the leaves off their trees with its each gust of wind. What struck Stanley's nerves into a frenzy was the clarity with which the coming coldsnap propelled his attention unavoidably towards care for all the necessities required to survive winter. His cheeks glowed warmly, pressing up from his jowls, with the excited joy of fulfilling the challenge ahead.

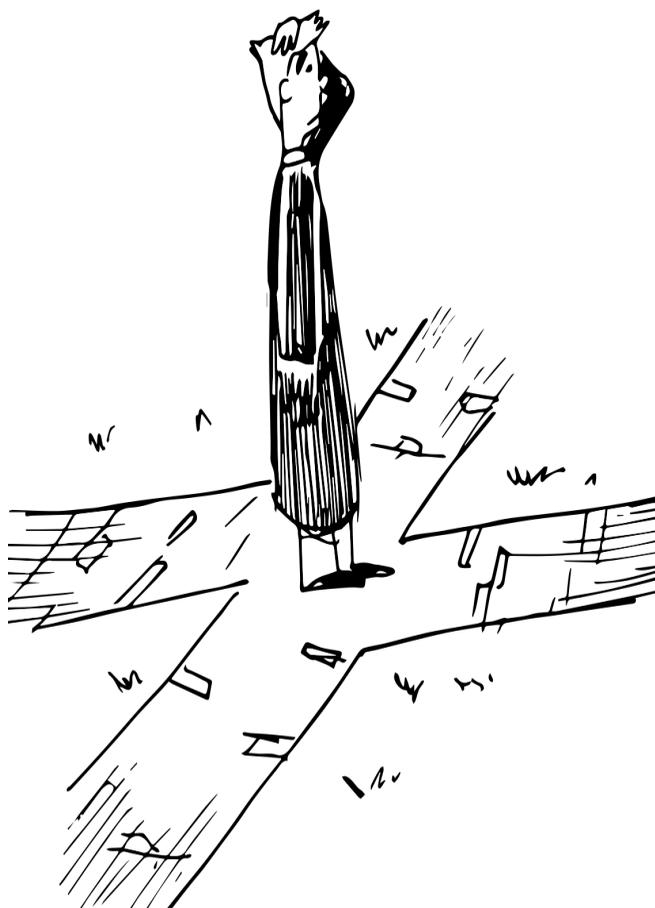
The challenge confined itself to the realm of labor—the harvest needed to be reaped; the early spring crop needed to be sowed, but not before the soil of the fallow quadrant had been turned over; a percentage of the late autumn harvest needed to be bundled for exchange and carefully discharged on the market; another percentage of the harvest needed to

be treated and packaged for storage and later consumption in the cold months; the four trees struck dead by lightning amidst that August's downpours needed to be felled and cut into firewood; his finances had to be calculated so that, in relation to the cost of his children's school tuition, he would know how much to charge for his grain on the market.

The sense of survival gripping Stanley blew the leaves around him, and ruffled his green wool coat as he strode determinedly away from his farm. The stone wall that his grandfather had laid disappeared slowly behind him with each passing step; the picket fence that his father had built dissipated into the distant eastern sky to his back as he strode westward. A dull orange sun melted into the tops of the trees ahead of him, struggling with the obscurant haze of the grey sky for prominence in the skyline. The anticipation of

the difficulty ahead pushed his cheeks joyfully into the squinty folds of his eyes and pulled his lips upward into a radiant smile. Blood surged through his veins and elevated his motion to a continuous sway of tingly looseness. His mind was enflamed by his sense of place and self, of his sense of the connection between the life within him and the life within the leaves falling from the trees about him. His eyes blurred with the heartfelt intensity of a life lived fully and his hips loosened reflexively with each stride as he separated himself from his farm.

His left hand held a bible and the book of hymnals and the journal in which he wrote sermons and took down his thoughts. The discourse he found most problematic was that which sought to separate the act of survival from the creative productivity and need to work with others that the sheer rawness of survival required. To Stanley, summer, so long as the air proved humid and the crop healthy, was to him the death of man's lifeblood. He had neither much energy to tend his plots nor to write; his sermons seemed whimsical and the yawns and wayward stares of members of his congregation on the hazy summer Sundays confirmed his sentiment that his actions lacked the vitality that they seemed to regain each fall. Rhetorically they were no different; spiritually, philosophically, they struck all the same chords. And on this account, and on account also of the fact that the heat itself could not be fully blamed for the disinterest of his parishioners, directed him to the conclusion toward the apparent relation between the conjuring of man's reaction to conquering the circumstances of survival on the one hand, and on the other, the conjuring of man's creative and philosophical capacity. In the summer months he fell into depressive fits; but as he was largely the clinician in town and that the Bible held no response to his doldrums besides work; that only the imminence of fall shook him from his psychological immobility, his temporary incapacity to farm or throw effort into his thinking or do anything but fake even a semblance of interest in the lives of his wife and children; it seemed more than apparent to him, af-



POETRY

The Optimist

Brisk breezes expel late summer's oppressive air—
God's change of spirit, I suppose. The days
darken much sooner and lightened leaves of trees
drift downward until they're met by fallen friends.

Bare birch branches reveal a single sparrow
unfazed by the onset of winter's chill—his eyes
fixed on the migrant flocks flying toward the light,
chasing the comfort of God's eternal warmth.

No, not the sparrow, though. For he knows where
to find the Lord's light even when it does not shine.

Chris Tamasi
ctamasi15@amherst.edu

Old Pine

She stared at a pine tree long ago and heard
him whisper tales of winter—a story that
no one else was awake to see. The burdened boughs
bent down to catch her ear—not able to hold
the load that weighed on his hardened heart for years.

He remembered those who passed him by—the hunters
the hunted—leaving footprints in the frost
that formed the night before. The sun would rise
and erase the trace of life on brittle ground,
while wind broke the silence of the vacant woods.

Surrounded by those not fit to last, he finished
his tale of winters past. The snow collapsed
from atop the tree and needles fell amid
the icy dust. The branches lifted—free—
an exhale of relief that faded into stillness.

ter prolonged self-examination, that the threat
of death threw his full energies into action,
action of mind, of body, the attentiveness to
need, summoned by need, overflowing into
and energizing his faculties.

With his right hand he unlatched the
locked door of his lean-to. Dropping his books
on the desk, he struck a match and searched in
the dark for the candle, which, within a bronze
enclosure he suspended from the ceiling with
a small fix of string. The candle blazed to life
and illuminated the four walls of the space
in which he felt most truly himself, and, in a
way, still very much among others despite the
solitude of his isolation. Within the walls of his
congregation he did not feel the pulsing energy
of what he deemed to be God; there seemed a
dynamic interpersonal energy, a power, within
the walls of the church, whose power he felt
but which he did not believe, at its essence, to
be a religiosity. That power seemed to him to
be the essence of community, of people acting
and speaking together. It was, on the other
hand, within the walls of the lean-to, absorbing
the fragrant warmth of the wood smoke,

his quill on the paper, his mind in the clouds
yet intensely focused, that he felt the presence
of what he could, in contrast to the highly
mortal actuality of life at the congregation,
describe as a spiritual experience.

The radiance of the problem shined
brightest during harvest season when the de-
mands of necessity ignited everyone's energies,
filling them with lively angst. That the church
community buzzed with the most livelihood
on October and November Sabbaths—amidst
the intensity of the harvest—and that the
communal inclination of belonging had little
chance to actualize itself beyond the literal
act of convocation—and that the constructs
of worship demanded the Sabbath be left to
nothing at all beyond this literal convocation,
bothered Stanley tremendously. Indeed, that
he snuck away on the Sabbath to conduct his
own exercises in thought stood out to him as
not only sacrilegious but as a product of the
boundless energy he possessed, mirrored in
few of his fellows. What did it mean that he,
believer par excellence, did not abide by the
code of scripture, that he, leader of his flock,

seemed the only one possessed of the energy
and ability to transform the excitement of im-
minent death into the undeniable substance
of achieved-life?

That he preached not the seedily-
uncomfortable dimensions of this problem
to his parishioners made him uneasy. He
threw his pen down and stood suddenly
from his desk—he licked his thumb and
index finger and extinguished the candle
above his head. He paced about the shack,
exited the door and walked briskly through
the wood to the pond. He lay by the bank,
breathing long, deep breaths and attempt-
ing to identify the variety of bird whose soft
trill punctuated the cold, dewy autumn air.
Another bird cawed sharply and gave sonic
life to his unease. He fell asleep and woke
at dawn, wiping the dew from his face as
he rose and walked farmward to till his
fallow plot. 

*Nick Bruce '15E is a Contributing
Editor and Chris Tamasi '15 is a
Contributing Writer for The Indicator.*

FROM THE INDICATOR'S ARCHIVE OF HOLIDAY TRAGEDIES

Social Clubs: Are They for You?

Social Clubs are coming to Amherst. What are social clubs? Will they be effective? Where did I leave my car keys? The answers to all of these questions are nebulous, but, just like that freshman in your philosophy class, we're not afraid to wildly speculate! Here is a list of clubs the Indicator has created... Which one will you join?



The Fraternity Police Club – Our all-male social club is charged with the task of ensuring that none of the barred frats continue engaging in “fraternity-like” activities. We drink together on the weekends and have a rigorous initiation process meant to foster commitment and promote cohesion within the force.

The Club Can't Even Handle Me Right Now – We are also known as the Want to Make Love in this Club (In this Club) Club.

Socials Club – All residents of the Socials convene in a stairwell in Stone. Doors always open to any new members—at least, until the alarm goes off. Every semester we host an open event called “Crossett Christmas.”

People Who Look Like and Talk Like Me Club – Diversity need not apply.

Amherst Legacies – You don't NEED to be a legacy to get into our club, but it's much, much (much) easier if you are.

Social Club Social Club – For Sandwiches looking to socialize. I see you Turkey on Rye.

Rock-Breakers Club – Pickaxes provided. Different membership tiers include Diggers, Foundation Fillers, Bricklayers, and Maintenance Staff. We meet at dawn at the location of the new Science Center. Must be willing to commit to 40 hours of “fun” per week!

The Shadow Amherst Club – Our meetings will be held at the witching hour somewhere in the bird sanctuary. Exact time and location of meetings will be posted as cryptic graffiti in the C level bathroom stalls at Frost. Don't forget your masks and capes!

Non-Athlete Girl Society (NAGS) – To apply, send us a 12”x20” headshot of you in your bean boots. Don't call us. We'll call you.

Have you or a loved one been accosted by a burrito? If so, write, draw, or edit for *The Indicator*.

theindicator@amherst.edu

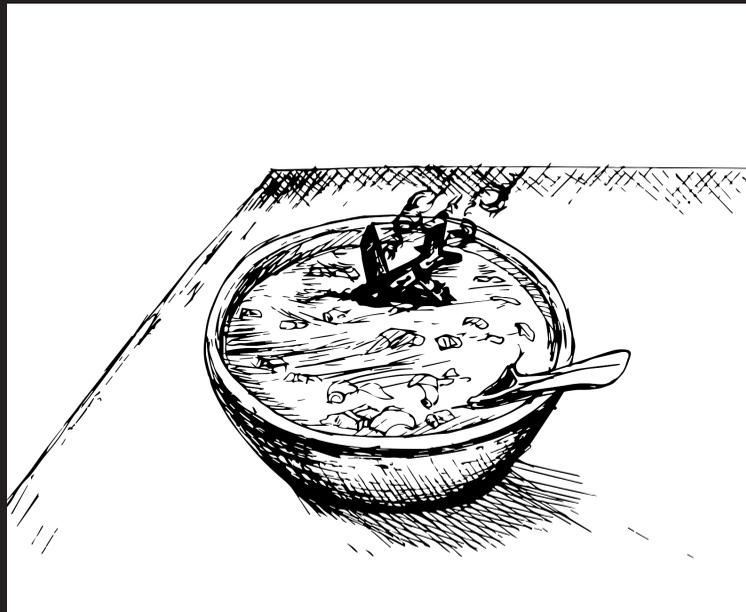
“FIRM SUPPORTERS OF GOYA RIGHTS...SINCE 1848”

The Report Card

Subject	Grade	Comments	Subject	Grade	Comments
Probe lands on comet after a decade in space	B+	I wish I could make contact with a heavenly body...	Divest Week seeks to curb climate change and save the earth	C	Movement gets overshadowed when vigilante alien group posts "All Planets Matter" posters.
JC forwards funny Muck-Rake complaint	F	JC attempt at humor leaves hundreds dead, dozens missing.	DASAC performs dance and step show	E	Don't confuse it with DA-SACS, the all-male nude dancing show run by Jeff Feldman '15.
Republican Party takes back the senate majority	R	Minorities everywhere disappointed.	Alumni return for Homecoming	A+	Stupid Williams Alums accidentally attend Amherst Homecoming.
Juniors prepare to go abroad in the Spring	A	Students already telling people how it changed their life.	Lord Jeffery Amherst named HerCampus "Campus Cutie"	;)	He still only gets laid by Amherst Republicans.
Parents weekend ends	A-	Memorial hill tired of posing for pictures.			

-JP, RA, LM, LY, NW, DC

INDICAPTION CONTEST



Submit a caption to theindicator@amherst.edu
Think about how great it would be if you won!

Done



Biddy, 63

1 mile away Active 2 minutes ago

Moments

About Biddy

Looking for a wealthy donor
If you are the type of person that would be great for a semester and then leave
don't bother... just swipe left. Been burned in the past but still open if it's the right
one #alex #suzanne ❤️❤️😘😘
Ask me about the "Moose" incident... Lolz!
Amherst College... Not Umass FML

Shared Friends (1,785)



Suzanne



Tony



Ricky



Barry



Money



Jeff



Bey