



# COMMUNITAS

Spring-Summer 2024

## ON GUILDS

WHAT THEY ARE AND WHY WE HAVE THEM



*By Clarke Mitchell, Instructor and Guild Coordinator*

It is a well established half-truth that a liberal arts program educates the whole person. While it is true that an education in the arts of the mind is concerned with the principal part of Man, the education of the whole person must have an eye to the whole of life and not the mind only. He might come out of the Cave head first, but his body must not remain behind. A true education of the whole person, therefore, should also order the other activities of life in a manner harmonious with the activities of the mind. Thus, the principal part of Man may indeed be the principle that orders all other activities, including those very necessary “servile” activities, sometimes called the “servile arts.” (This distinction comes over from pagan antiquity when certain activities were beneath those of a free man—hence the original division between “liberal” and “servile.” This essay will alternate in using “productive” and “useful” instead of “servile.”)

This is all the more necessary in our current age, where an engagement in the productive arts has been severed from Man’s contemplative—that is, his spiritual and rational—activities. “Such activities,” they say, “might all be well and good at home or among friends, but they have no place in the workplace.” There one must forget the abstract and idealistic notions of Western civilization and focus on the task at hand. What has Slough to do with Athens and Jerusalem?

Still, the desire to know is as firmly rooted in the nature of Man as it was in the days of Aristotle. This includes that desire whose fulfillment is practical wisdom: to learn how something is made, improve the process through the use of our reason, and then share our knowledge with others. The desire to learn and share crafts is, if anything, more present in the electric age of Internet forums and YouTube. Thousands of good souls instruct, advise, and encourage others on a daily basis for no obvious reason; unless it be simply that their husbands, wives, and neighbors have refused to hear any

more about how their sourdough starter is doing.

To educate the whole person, therefore, we must discover (or rediscover) the proper way of ordering our active life in a way consistent with the ordering of the life of the mind through the liberal arts. At Thomas More College, we have looked to the wisdom of the past for guidance and have adopted the model

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# COMMUNITAS

A COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

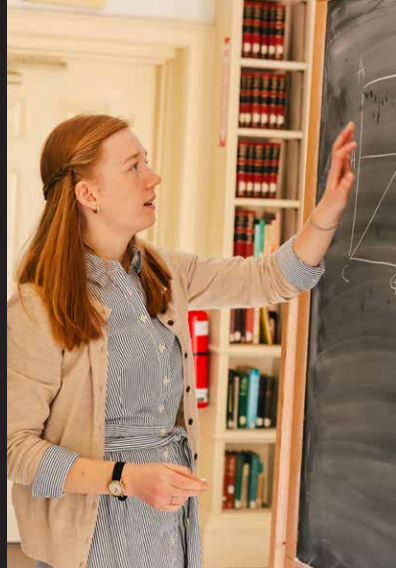
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# ON THE WAY OF BEAUTY

By Katherine Yost, Instructor

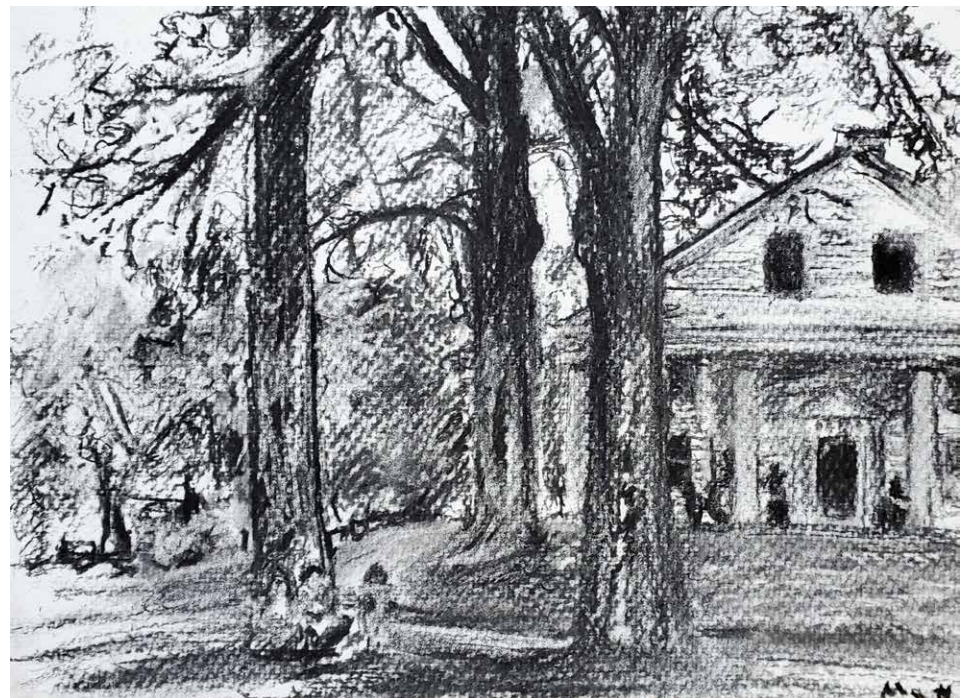
I am always amazed at my good fortune in being asked to teach a course with such a title as the *Way of Beauty*. Could anyone, especially a stereotypical artist type, ask for a happier job? It is exciting to walk up the library stairs each week, with a prayer to the Holy Spirit, and join a roomful of ebullient, good-humored young people for a couple of hours spent in the pursuit of beauty.



professors; David Clayton in earlier years taught iconography and church art, and with his colleague Paul Jernberg, sacred choral music for the Mass and the Liturgy of the Hours. The vision was to provide young people openings to the realm of beauty, particularly sacred beauty, through the study and physical practice of drawing and singing.

The course presently involves readings from Josef Pieper and Benedict XVI, some poetry, and watching Sir Kenneth

Artwork is lovely and various. Silliness adds spice. I shared a favorite choral piece of mine, “*Heyr himna smiður*” (literally “Hear, smith of the heavens”), a medieval Icelandic hymn, which three freshman classes have now learned and sung in the library atrium. This piece inspired two students (a bow of thanks to Christopher Cain ’27 and Owen Barber ’27) with the superabundant enthusiasm to research, write, and hand out for us an orthography and transliteration of the



ARTWORK BY (L-R): SHUYUAN “LYDIA” HE ’25 AND SAMUEL MATT ’27

How do we pursue beauty, and why do we do it? Because we long for Heaven. Beauty is mysterious, and its connection to Heaven is a gift which cannot be predicted or described. Yet, if we provide space and good will, like a delicate but boldly colored bird it delights us by flying down and alighting, trailing a gossamer thread from the bright land.

What is the *Way of Beauty*? The course began in conversations between three friends—William Fahey, David Clayton, and Stratford Caldecott—and combined the study of order and harmony with the students’ making of art and music, particularly the sacred and liturgical. The course has had various emphases as led by the particular talents of different

Clark’s *Civilisation*—beloved of the great teacher John Senior and our own President Fahey, who wrote a delightful article on its merits. Students have art journals that include both weekly drawing and painting exercises, and poems and notes from our readings. We listen to beautiful music—in recent years, Stanford’s “The Blue Bird,” Stopford’s “Lully, Lulla, Lullay,” Bach’s “Komm, Jesu, komm,” the Allegri “Miserere,” Biebl’s “Ave Maria,” “Komm süßer Tod” (Bach and Knut Nystedt), and Britten’s “A Hymn to the Virgin,” among others. Students sing chant, psalms, and seasonal hymns and anthems.

There are many happy memories of this class. Discussion is always lively.

Icelandic, which we used in learning the hymn in its original language. Students seem to find it satisfying to know hymns and songs from memory—there are some that we can sing with eyes closed, focusing on blend and tuning. Word has it that the round “Death is a Long Sleep” has made it to the echoey halls of the Villa in Rome.

Students from years past enjoyed having morning prayer as an “assignment,” and were moved by the practice of chanting Paul Jernberg’s setting of the St. Michael Prayer while facing the icon itself in the chapel. For me, seeing music that I love inspire others is a joy. Luminous moments

*Continued on page 14*

# CURRICULUM

## On the Work of

**By Fred Fraser, PhD, Fellow and Guildmaster**

Every fall, the Sophomores translate Cicero to culminate their intensive study of Latin, which they undertake in their first year at Thomas More College. In fall 2023, the Sophomores translated one of Cicero's later orations, *Pro Marcello*, which he delivered on the senate floor in Rome in 46 BC. After the civil war between Caesar and Pompey, Caesar granted Marcellus a full pardon despite his adamant loyalty to Pompey, in return for which Cicero delivered this speech to thank Caesar for his magnanimity.

The students' work of translation was unremitting; nevertheless, the fruit of their efforts was their knowledge of how Cicero maintains his blend of high-level thought with much feeling and affection. To provide an example of what the Sophomores did, here is the opening sentence of *Pro Marcello*:

*Diuturni silentii, patres conscripti, quo eram his temporibus usus, non timore aliquo sed partim dolore partim verecundia, finem hodiernus dies attulit, idemque initium quae vellem quaeque sentirem meo pristina more dicendi* (Today brought an end to the long silence, senate fathers, which I had kept in these times, not from any fear, but partly from grief, partly from shame, and the same [day] brought a beginning of saying in my former manner what I wished and what I felt).

Cicero refers here to a six-year period of silence during which the Roman Republic dissolved into civil war. This speech is an opportunity for young minds to see how a true statesman, like Cicero—who did not side with Caesar in the war—rises above political preferences and, for the sake of a greater good, praises the victor's virtue.

The main purpose of the course, however, is to learn Latin, and to study

its grammar. A student's translation provides me, the teacher, and the rest of the class with an account of how he understands the Latin sentence. In his own words, he provides an English sentence that represents the grammar and vocabulary of the Latin one. In this way, the class and I may know whether a student has correctly identified the meaning of clauses and words. In instances where a student is mistaken, we can go back and identify the origin of his mistake, which could be simple (for example, misreading an accusative for a nominative) or complicated (for example, mistaking a relative clause for an indirect question). It is through the students' translations that I, the teacher, may see the evidence of their minds working with the classical language.

After the students in my section read and translated *Pro Marcello*, they translated a sermon of Pope St. Leo the Great, which he delivered on the feast of Sts. Peter and Paul. Like *Pro Marcello*, the sermon is a work of praise, and the similarity of genre made the transition between authors a little less abrupt. Here is a sentence that the Sophomores translated:

*Verumtamen hodierna festivitas, praeter illam reverentiam quam toto terrarum orbe promeruit, speciali et propria nostrae urbis exsultatione veneranda est, ut ubi praecipuorum apostolorum glorificatus est exitus, ibi in die martyrii eorum sit laetitiae principatus* (But today's festival, beyond that reverence which it has earned from the whole world, must be honored by the special and particular exultation of our city, so that, where the departure of the foremost apostles was glorified, in that place on the day of their martyrdom there may be the seat of joy).

Pope St. Leo's Latin conveys his faith and hope. One cannot help but be amazed that he wrote the best Christian Latin—

per Pope St. John Paul II's Latinist, Fr. Reginald Foster—in arguably Europe's darkest time: forty years after Rome fell to barbarians, and when the Huns were overwhelming the continent. That these Catholic virtues shine forth in his language seems to me to be an indication of Latin's ability to communicate sacred things in addition to human thoughts and feelings.

Finally, over the course of the semester, the Sophomores and I memorized a nineteen-line passage by Vergil. In the passage, the poet celebrates the farmer's life as one of toil, leisure, worship, and joy. Here are three lines from the end of what we committed to memory:

*Hanc olim veteres vitam coluere Sabini, / hanc Remus et frater; sic fortis Etruria crevit / scilicet et rerum facta est pulcherrima Roma* (The ancient Sabines once cultivated this life / Remus and his brother [cultivated this life] / in this way Etruria grew strong, / and certainly Rome became the most beautiful of things).

These lines, written after much civil upheaval (the civil war between Caesar and Pompey and the revolt of Brutus and Cassius), remind readers of Rome's humble beginnings. Vergil seems to say that the simple things that made Rome at one time great are still available to those who want them.

The Sophomores' work of translation in fall 2023 culminated their study of the fundamentals of Latin, but it also put them in close contact with the thought of three ancients who, despite the darkness of their times, raised their own minds upward toward permanent goods and through their language elevated the minds of those around them. The quality of their language reflects the depth and clarity of their thought and, centuries later—after a little bit of training in Latin—we too can see what they were thinking, and be fortified.

# HIGHLIGHTS of Translation

By Magdalena Dajka, Class of 2020

“I knew that, unconsciously, I had always longed for this sort of firsthand knowledge of the beautiful.” These words come from an article by Paul Beeching entitled “Learning Greek,” which the late Dr. Patrick Powers would have his students read at the beginning of his classes. I had read those words several times during my time at the College; however, it was not until I returned to them after several years of teaching Latin that they struck me with a deeper force. In a sense, everything I could say about translating Latin is encapsulated in that phrase: “firsthand knowledge of the beautiful.”

It was the experience of translating Vergil’s *Georgics* in a tutorial my junior year that first helped me start putting that idea into words. I chose the tutorial because I enjoyed Latin and wanted to improve my skills, but halfway through the semester, I realized that something more was happening—I was starting to enter into the poetry of Vergil’s words, and to hear their music. Translating was no longer just an academic exercise; it was an experience of beauty.

Although on the surface the *Georgics* are a handbook for farming, many deeper themes are contained within their pages. Various passages speak of the hard labor required to produce anything good, the sorrow and suffering that is the lot of mankind, and the curse of civil war, but also of the joys of country life. A favorite theme of mine, which runs through all of Vergil’s descriptions of the work of a farmer, is expressed most clearly in *Georgic* 3.290: the author’s purpose is “to bring honor to humble things.” Not only does Vergil employ dactylic hexameter, the meter of epic poetry, to describe the sowing of grain and the battles of bees, but also, through his language and imagery,

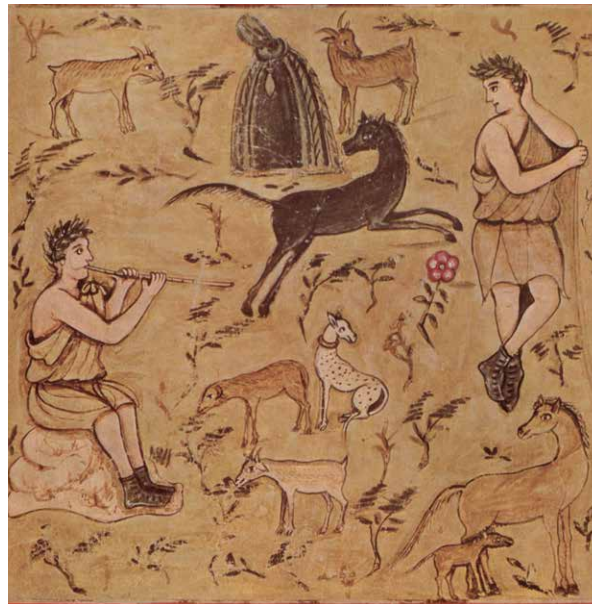
he draws the reader into a world where ordinary things are wondrous, endearing, momentous. The crops are not just a source of necessary food; they are “happy crops.” To grow an orchard, one does not simply transplant fruit trees from the forest; one must “tame the wild fruits.” Bees have their own little kings and civilizations, ravens delight in the coming of spring, winds rush together in battle, and frogs “chant their age-old lament in the mud.”

The way Vergil anthropomorphizes plants and animals helps re-enchant the world for his readers. It hints at the

immoderate, incessant,” to describe the labor that conquers everything. Yet, with the help of the gods, the work bears beautiful fruit; the farmer gathers his crops, reveling in their bounty, rejoicing with his friends, pouring libations in thanksgiving, surrounded by his children—a taste of the golden age. Reading passages such as these, one understands what St. John Henry Newman wrote concerning “the medieval opinion about Virgil, as if a prophet or magician; his single words and phrases, his pathetic half lines, giving utterance, as the voice of Nature herself, to that pain and weariness, yet hope of better things, which is the experience of her children in every time” (*Grammar of Assent*).

Just as Vergil’s poetry can bring a richness to ordinary life, so can his language, which has become the language of the Church. Translating Latin helped me gain greater insight into the works I studied at Thomas More College and led to my becoming a Latin teacher, but most importantly, it led me into a new current of beauty, a current that originated in Rome but has irrigated many soils, enriching the particular spirit of each. As we experience “firsthand knowledge of the beautiful” through Latin, we find that some of the Roman spirit, baptized, has infused and added a

tang to our own lives: there is a peculiar power in the words “*Magnificat anima mea*,” whether they are sung breathlessly while marching up the last hill of the Auriesville pilgrimage, wonderingly while overlooking the city of Rome for the first time, or exuberantly while sitting in the autumn sun at Robert Frost’s farm. Standing in a New England country church by candlelight, it touches the heart to hear the entire congregation singing the “*Alma Redemptoris Mater*,” in a language that is foreign, and yet our very own.



MEISTER DES VERGILIUS ROMANUS,  
“DIE GEORGICA DES VERGIL, III. BUCH,  
SZENE: SCHÄFER BEI IHREN HERDEN,”  
COURTESY OF THE YORCK PROJECT

childlike view of life that Christians strive for. But if Vergil’s presentation of nature strikes close to our own experience, so do his descriptions of the human condition. The life of the farmer is by no means easy. In a turn of phrase that all men can relate to, Vergil uses the adjective *improbis*, meaning something like “wicked, naughty,

# ON THE CRAFT OF WRITING

*By Michael Yost, Class of 2018, Senior Admissions Officer*

The writing program at Thomas More College of Liberal Arts has been a feature of our curriculum since the College's founding in 1978. One of the earlier descriptions of this part of the program calls these classes "an introduction to the nature of language." Our current catalogue states, "Our knowledge of human things is bound up in monuments, images, sounds, and, especially, words . . . In the Humanities sequence, there is, most appropriately, a focus upon the word." Our writing program is therefore in partnership with our study of the Great Books; a kind of homage, an opportunity to imitate and work alongside the great authors we read throughout the curriculum. We also offer these courses so that our students can receive the fullness of a liberal arts education: our *Writing Tutorials* have a focus both on rhetoric and grammar, complimenting the fullness of the trivium and quadrivium that buttresses the rest of our curriculum.

From the perspective of an alumnus, this program sets up our students for success in several ways. Most novice writers will approach writing intuitively, especially if they are creatively inclined. This is natural, since the artificial and learned act of writing is so closely linked with more natural human abilities, such as thought and speech. Speech and thought may be natural to man, but grammatical speech, beautiful language, and cogent thought are learned, often only over the course of years. By honing the natural potential that we carry within us to speak and write with clarity, harmony, and due proportion, we not only make our thoughts beautiful to others, but actually approach the truth more nearly as we write, whether we are weaving together the lines and rhymes of a sonnet, or chiseling into existence a precise philosophical definition.

This is a skill with a very broad application, possibly the broadest application of any skill it is possible to learn. This is because human society is built on nothing more or less than our ability to communicate the truth to one another. Our laws, our inner thoughts, our prayers, our speculations, our relationships with each other are constituted of words. There is no area of human life that is not touched by language, since even to think about something means using words and concepts we inherited from our ancestors. To endear, command, agree, persuade, declare, admit, pray, or think, we have to use language, so we need to use it as well as possible. If we neglect the artful use of language, we are neglecting our ability to reason and perceive truly, as well as all other aspects of what it means to be human. (In addition, to be able to manipulate the network of language has always been a skill with a high "return on investment," whether or not one wants to be "a writer.")

In addition, this writing program is an offering unique to Thomas More College. Our particular program sets us apart from other institutions not because we offer such a program, but because it is a requirement for all of our students. In addition, it is not merely theoretical, but practical as well. We do not content ourselves with reading Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and assuming that *theoria* seamlessly translates into *praxis*. Reading about the philosophy of persuasive writing and speaking does not make you an excellent writer any more than reading about sound investment strategy makes you a millionaire. Writers, like all artisans, have to learn by doing, and by receiving constant and sound critique from more advanced practitioners. I would also add that we make sure that many aspects of writing are covered: from the various genera pertaining to verse, public speech, narrative, and the essay, students are given the opportunity not only to understand, but to practice what they

have understood. As a published author of prose and verse, and as a former teacher, I can say with certainty that I would not have any real skill in beautiful writing or intelligent reading without having been formed by the education at Thomas More College on the whole, and by the *Writing Tutorials* in particular.

Our program here also inspired me to pursue a Master of Fine Arts (MFA) in writing. One of Aristotle's observations in *Poetics* is that man is mimetic, or imitative. We do things (like writing) because we have a desire to imitate others in what they do, and then by doing those things we learn more and more about how to do them. The *Writing Tutorials* expose our students to a variety of authors who can be used as models; in turn, the students attempt to model their own writing after them; as they imitate, they acquire the craft of writing well themselves; until finally they have it as authors in their own right. But this further learning also always calls the true craftsman to continue refining his skill. After the *Writing Tutorials* at Thomas More College, I had learned enough about writing to know that I still required further instruction, and because of that, I applied to the University of St. Thomas's excellent creative writing program, where I recently submitted my thesis (a manuscript of poetry written and edited during the two years of the MFA program) and received my diploma.

I'd like to end this essay by including a poem from my thesis. It was inspired by another book I read at Thomas More College—namely, St. Augustine's *Confessions*, and Book XI in particular. The formal model being imitated here is George Herbert, one of the greatest religious poets in English. I tender it to the reader as a small example of what an education at Thomas More College can do, and in appreciation for the fruit that an education in the Great Books and liberal arts has borne in my own life after graduation.

# “On Memory”

It is the place where everything consigns  
 Itself, is settled, sieved. At times, it lies,  
 And patterns out experience in signs  
 Traced only from itself; or sounds and plies  
 Deep stresses, rhymes, ellipses, pauses,  
     And periods to cover  
     And to discover  
 Its secret causes.

For memory is what we are, at least  
 As far as personality's concerned.  
 Or, rather, memories: for like some beast  
 Out of some bestiary, joined and turned  
 From many others, we are drawn  
     From every love and hate  
     That soon or late  
 Is added on.

It is one thing, perhaps. But what defines it?  
 It's one and many, single yet refracted;  
 The origin of foresight, habit, wit,  
 Both changing sense and stillness mixed, compacted.  
 So like a mirror it reflects  
     The world in all its works  
     And colors, murks,  
 Its craft and defects.

It is a dam against time's ebb and flow,  
 Creating depths, and the establishment  
 Of cities, energies, and life below;  
 In peace, and in the time of discontent  
 Alike. Yet it can store up wrath  
     Against the day of pride;  
     And make shame's tide  
 Its aftermath.

Yet it can also recreate a new  
 World from the old world's engines, tumbled towers,  
 And holy places; build remembrance true  
 As can be, raised up with decaying powers,  
 That may still stand to shelter the soul  
     From Death's all blasting gust,  
     A while. It must,  
 To make us whole.

Thus in a way it frees us from the past  
 And from what is to come. It brings us, then  
 Into eternity at once, at last,  
 Where there is neither how, nor where, nor when,  
 But only an immediate now  
     That sees and knows all things.  
     Such good it brings  
 If we allow.



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# ON THE ART OF POETRY

By Amy Fabey, PhD, Teaching Fellow

*Bard, scop, troubadour, rhymer*—there are many terms for the poet, but perhaps my favorite is the medieval Scots “makar,” a term literally derived from the Greek ποιητής (*poiētēs*). To be a “makar” of poetry necessitates careful study of the thing made, as well as mastery of the skills and techniques required for the making.

At Thomas More College, we believe that all liberal arts students should have experience in not simply reading and studying but in *writing* verse. And so, in *Writing Tutorial II*, students move from reader to “makar” or, as the medieval Cistercians would say, from *sciendum* to *experiendum*—from what must be known to what must be experienced.

After careful study of the formal, stylistic, and thematic elements of several poetic styles, the students compose their own poems in three genres: the riddle, the sonnet, and the ballad. These poetic labors culminate in a public recitation night, in which each student recites one of the three completed poems for the assembled students and faculty.

Here, for your delight and edification, is a small sampling of the garden of verse produced by the Class of 2025.

## “THE BALLAD OF PETE CARBONNEAU’S WATER”

*The following is a true story of Peter Carbonneau of Littleton, New Hampshire, a stubborn Yankee of French-Canadian descent.*

“What have you done, you foolish boys?  
What have you done to me?  
With vicious strength, by wicked ploys,  
My mountain’s blood spilled free?”

“’Twas God who made the waters flow  
And freely it did well;  
’Tis truly free in rain and snow,  
So who are you to sell?”

“Old Pete, please see the good we’ve done  
In light of coming days.  
By men like us the future’s won,  
And nothing passing stays.”

“We bear in mind the common good,  
Our system’s good for all;  
If old ways could remain, they would  
But now we see them fall.”

“You wicked men have bled away  
The blood God gave the hills.  
The water first did upward spray  
But now it slowly spills.”

“Against your ‘system’ I will fight,  
So swiftly now, and soon:  
I’ll rig your pumps with dynamite  
And blow them to the Moon!”

“Old Pete there is a coming day  
When you’ll forget your spring.  
You’ll thank us for this steel we lay,  
(A blessed modern thing).”

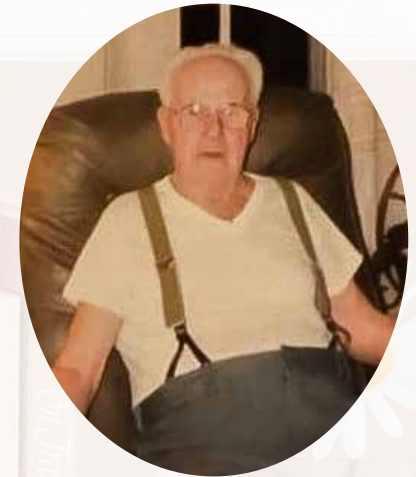
“Old Pete we understand your plight,  
So we will make amends;  
We do not want to feud or fight,  
We sooner would be friends.”

“Think not of water as thine own,  
For it belongs to all.  
It nurtures flesh, and blood, and bone—  
All things that grow and crawl.”

“I will not pay for what you took  
And neither will my wife.  
My water’s free, just like the brook,  
As long as I have life.”

“Now Pete, now Pete, just stop and think  
Of how some people, they  
In desperate thirst will need to drink  
And handsomely they’ll pay.”

Because old Pete would be no slave,  
He was prepared to fight.  
Now rain falls down upon his grave,  
And God sends dew at night.



THE STUBBORN YANKEE IN QUESTION, AUSTIN HASTINGS’S GREAT-GRANDFATHER

—Austin Hastings ’25



# O E T R Y

## "ON BERNINI'S LONGINUS"

He stands alone upon a stony ledge,  
 Firm heart that blindly followed orders dire!  
 A spear in hand, how sharp that slivered edge,  
 That piercèd Christ so deep, His heart afire.  
 Poor wretch that did not know the Lord adored!  
 To pagan gods he still owed flattery.  
 Oh, he that let the blood that Christ outpoured  
 Upon th' infertile soil of Calvary!  
 Yet now that Roman helm is thrown on stone,  
 His arms outstretched in image of that King  
 And eye, not blind, now turned on Him alone,  
 In one lone moment do his bold words ring.  
 Let me, with him, to Christ thus turn my eye,  
 And, "Truly, Thou art Son of God" we cry.

—Margaret Six '25

## "IN DARKNESS DEEP, WHERE MEM'RIES SLOWLY WANE"

In darkness deep, where mem'ries slowly wane,  
 Her mind's bright flame now fades in bleak blight,  
 Dementia's touch, a cruel and cold pain,  
 Steals cherished names, in ever-dimming light.

Her past dissolves in fragments, lost to night,  
 Like whispers in the wind, they drift away,  
 Yet hope persists, a never-fading light,  
 A beacon in the dark to guide my way.

Though chains of mem'ry falter, weaken, sway,  
 The heart's devotion stands unyielding, true:  
 In silent moments, love still has its say,  
 To bridge the gap where recognition grew.

In this sad struggle, hope and strength I find,  
 As love endures, transcending loss of mind.

—Molly Hugo '25

DID YOU THINK YOU WOULD FIND THE ANSWERS  
 HERE? LOOK AGAIN, ON PAGE 15. WE WILL GIVE YOU  
 A CLUE FOR THE THIRD RIDDLE THOUGH:  
 "SCHWARTZ ROT GOLD."

## THREE RIDDLES

I saw lines stretched out over chasms concealed,  
 Rows upon rows of rails in due measure;  
 A creature cut open, her stomach revealed,  
 Defying men to discover her treasure.

This is a beast who is silent 'til beaten,  
 Then speaks in the rhythms of men.  
 She will give comfort, will torment, will sweeten—  
 None of these arts are beyond her ken.

She is often adored, and often abused,  
 Her furnishings wantonly broken.  
 Hers are timber and cord, in sight and in sound  
 Pray, let her name now be spoken.

—Liam Beecher '25

I am the	horse taker,
Burn maker,	neck breaker,
Chain faker,	sail waker,
And can cross	an acre.

Not found me?	Here's a look:
Bounds the book,	holds a crook,
Lead with hook,	swings I took,
And the rung	bells I shook.

By me were	shipyards wrought,
Ahab caught,	sailing taught,
Well pails brought,	and peaks sought.
By now, know	me you ought.

—Peter Shanley '25

Black storm I am, silent night  
 Like boiling pitch, brooding dark,  
 I rose and spilled, rained grimly on  
 A battlefield, blasted with war.  
 Scarlet the slain dyed scorched grass  
 With dear-bought blood; but underneath  
 The bodies, blossoms like yellow stars  
 Golden there grew; glory cradled them.  
 These three I am: the storm, the blood, the blooms.

A bird am I. But once I was an eagle—  
 I flew and fell, foes knew and friends lost;  
 Hatred and horror hewed me horribly.  
 Hate me no more, my children, not now  
 Thus striped with sorrow. Sing strongly once again.

—Marie Vyleta '25

# ON THE EXPERIENCE OF CREATION

*By Michael Dominic Taylor, PhD,  
Teaching Fellow and Dean of Students*

Unlike other raptors, the Harris's Hawk is a social hunter. Though the raptor is ever-attentive, our presence did not perturb him. In fact, Mahood—of Monadnock Falconry in Temple, NH—seemed to know that our clumsy plodding through the damp underbrush and around puddles was bound to drive out the hidden hillside life. And he was ready. He had long since learned to trust the sign of an outstretched gauntlet. And so, he descended from his noble watch and inspected each one of us as we offered him a present of raw chicken. Though he weighs in at just over a pound, from two feet away his razor-like beak and talons and even sharper stare were at once terrifying and captivating. One could not help but feel exposed by his piercing interrogation, vulnerable as a trespasser in a prelapsarian realm.

One of the distinctive traits of a Thomas More College education is experience: experience of and in the natural world. Freshmen spend their first year becoming more acquainted with the traces of God's creative activity that surround them in rural New England, and this is good. The natural world is not merely a pretty three-dimensional backdrop that we invade from time to time. The natural world is more than a remedy for modernity's solipsistic intellectual hubris—that which considers mystery a problem to be solved, wonder a sign of ignorance, and truth a possession—and for postmodernity's escapism, by which we balance our unchecked emotions through digital dopamine dosing. It is this, and far more.

St. Jerome warned that "ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ" (*Commentary on Isaiah*, PL 24,17), and so the students of Thomas More College spend their first four semesters immersed in the Bible. However, ignorance of the Scriptures is not the only form of ignorance of Christ. According to St. Bonaventure, Creation is that *first* book

of Revelation—ignorance of which is an ignorance of God that for Paul was "without excuse" (Rom 1:20). St. John's Gospel tells us that Creation was made through the reason and order of *Logos* who is Christ, and everything bears His seal as *light*. Creation shines and its light speaks to all people with the radiance of the gift of *life*, the gift of existence from



MASTER FALCONER HENRY WALTERS  
INTRODUCES MAHOOD TO STUDENTS



the triune God whose Essence is His existence, generously imparted through the Word to every fleck and feather of the created world.

This is surely what St. Bernard had in mind when he said that "woods and stones will teach you what you cannot hear from masters" (Epistle 106). Only a cursory observation of the creatures of

this world reveals what Pope Benedict XVI referred to as the "grammar" of Creation (*Caritas in Veritate*, §48): the essence and purpose in everything individually and in all things collectively, to be what one was made to be and to give oneself away for the sake of another, in imitation of the Trinity. A cursory observation ought also to engender a reverence before the mystery of even the humblest creature. Indeed, we are unable to exhaust the essence of even the smallest fly, says St. Thomas Aquinas in the *Expositio in Symbolum Apostolorum*, making a point about faith, humility, and reason: there is no mystery so deep that we cannot know some truth about it, and there is nothing we can know so fully as to eliminate its mystery.

St. Maximus the Confessor speaks of creatures as *logoi*, words in the Word that communicate the truth of their particular existence and reveal the action of *Logos* in the divine economy of salvation (*Ad Thalassium*, 2). Thus, Christ is speaking through everything He created and everything He created is speaking of Him. As sharers in Christ's priestly dignity, Creation speaks to us of our task without words; indeed, it groans in travail. Creation, we are assured, "will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God" (Rom 8:21 RSV-CE) through Christ, who will "unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth" (Eph 1:10 RSV-CE). Yet we have a role to play: to know, love, and name the created world, to lead it back to God through our lives and our participation in His mysteries, is not only to know Christ by His traces, but to participate in His life and work as a member of His Body, the Church.

As participants in a tutorial on Integral Ecology, we accompanied Mahood on his hunt and helped him find his evening meal. In turn, he helped us to remember that there was a time when man relied more on the creatures that God has given us for company on our pilgrimage, and it was good.

# ON GUILDS

*Continued from page 1*

of the medieval guild. While guilds are usually imagined as something between a trade union and a secret society, it is perhaps a mark in their favor that both Adam Smith and Karl Marx strongly argued against them, the former claiming that they inhibited free trade and economic and technological growth (*Wealth of Nations*, I.10) and the latter that they enforced a class distinction between those in the guild who could work in the trade and those who could not (*Communist Manifesto*, I). Historically, both criticisms were quite valid given the human propensity to put power and privilege at the service of greed and envy. However, in principle the guilds offered something different from both the laissez-faire capitalist and Communist methods of engaging in the useful arts in that they attempted to incorporate work with the whole of life. And while the economy and industry have grown considerably since the abandonment or overthrow of the guilds after the medieval period, the pursuit of commerce no longer yields the same benefits as in the days of Hugh of St. Victor, who claimed that the art of commerce more than any other art “reconciles nations, calms wars, strengthens peace, and commutes the private good of individuals into the common benefit of all” (*Didascalicon*, II.23).

On the other side, both G.K. Chesterton and Hilaire Belloc looked favorably on the guilds in their search for an alternative to Smith and Marx’s ideals of work. Belloc describes a guild simply as “an association of men engaged in the same occupation, and its primary object is mutual support” (“The Guild System”). He expounds on this by describing the four principles that form the structure of a guild:

1. The guild works to protect the property of the members of the guild, ensuring that the members of the guild remain autonomous.
2. The guild protects the craft by restricting who can practice

and ensures that those who do practice the art of the trade have the necessary training to do so.

3. The guild regulates the members’ morals and shields them from unjust or unfair competition.
4. The guild’s government is separate from Church and State, but operates by charter under them.

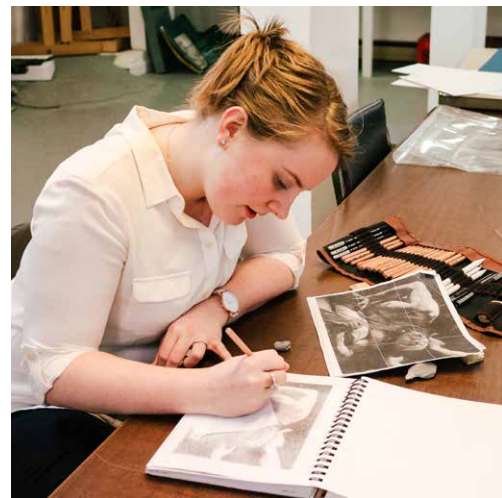
These principles seemed to avoid the Scylla of unfettered capitalism and the Charybdis of Communism, neither sacrificing a part nor the whole of society to the vices of men.

While guilds at Thomas More College are modeled after their medieval counterparts, there are two key differences. First, the College is itself already a sort of guild, insofar as it is a collegium directed toward the liberal arts. As such, the guilds focus more on the instruction and integration of the arts than on production. Second, we are not behind some nationalist movement to restore the guild as a real economic entity, but to restore the ideal of the guild for our students—to provide them with an experience of working in a community unlike those that they will find in the world at large. The guilds at Thomas More College thus have a threefold goal: to restore a proper understanding of the nature of the productive arts; to integrate the productive arts with the liberal arts; and to practice the productive arts in community for the end of practical wisdom.

There are currently five guilds at Thomas More College: Sacred Music under the patronage of St. Philip Neri, Folk Music under the patronage of St. John Ogilvie, Woodworking under the patronage of St. Joseph, Homemaking under the patronage of Sts. Isidore and Maria, and Outdoorsmanship and Hunting under the patronage of St. Hubertus. Traditionally, there is also a Sacred Art

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R: GUILDS THROUGH THE YEARS



# ON GUILDS

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Guild under the patronage of St. Luke, and a Beer Brewing Guild under the patronage of St. Brigid of Ireland, which are not currently in operation.

The common goal of a guild is to perfect one of the useful arts, which according to Hugh of St. Victor are fabric making, armament, commerce, agriculture, hunting, medicine, and theatrics.



STUDENTS WITH GUILDMASTER ANTON KASKA, PROFESSIONAL OUTDOORSMAN AND MASTER TRAPPER

These are meant to be taken as general categories rather than individual arts. Armament, for instance, is divided into construction arts and craft arts or tool-making. Hunting too is the general discipline concerned with the “preparation of all foods, seasonings, and drinks” (*Didascalicon*, II.25). Each guild is dedicated to a particular art and is placed under the

patronage of one of the saints, attempting to perfect these general arts by teaching and practice.

These guilds encourage students to engage properly in the productive arts. If Man is by nature an artist, then he must exercise this part of his nature in a serious manner; he must care for a real horse and not a hobby horse. Contemporary wisdom holds that no one would engage in these arts unless they were being paid for it. In fact, the whole point of the global economy is that we no longer have to do such things for ourselves. Why make your own music, candles, or chessboards when such things can be downloaded or ordered off the Internet? But, if necessity is the mother of invention, reason is the father. If Man is to live as a rational animal, and not merely a trucking one (*Wealth of Nations*, I.2), he must engage his reason in making for himself those external goods without which, Aristotle says, no one could be reasonably happy.

Moreover, these arts are practiced in community. Now, to practice an art in community does not seem to be unique to the guilds. After all, businesses, firms, and trade unions are communities, are they not? The difference lies in the distinction between communities of individuals and communities of friends. To belong to a guild is to be part of a whole; it influences not only what you do, but who you are. Our current age praises radical individualism, but we are seeing so many radical individuals lose their sense of self that perhaps such praise is mislaid. The ancient principle is that Man is a political animal; an individual man or woman must be either a beast or a god. And perhaps a beast only, since Christianity teaches that even God is a Trinity of Persons. But our contemporary world is wary of community, balking at the possibility of betrayal or exploitation. We fear and resent that our happiness is contingent upon the goodwill and actions of another, even as we strive to surround ourselves with such as have our goodwill at heart.

What distinguishes a guild from a company or club is that the members of a guild associate in friendship, which

is a sort of perfection of justice, according to Aristotle. “For there seems to be some sort of justice on the part of any human being toward anyone capable of participating in a community of law and convention, and of friendship too, then, to the extent that he is a human being” (*Nicomachean Ethics*, 1161b5). They are friends who associate not simply on account of utility but on account of virtue, insofar as there is the practical wisdom or virtue of the craft. While corporations or clubs might unite for utility or pleasure, the guild has the practical virtue of the members and the virtuous practice of the craft as its end. The members of the guild are friends in craft as they are friends in class, supporting one another as they grow in the arts practical and contemplative—or at least, that’s the idea.

The guilds, then, stand as Thomas More College’s answer to the problem of training students in the liberal arts in isolation from the ordinary business of living life in the world. We hope that by participating in the guilds they acquire a taste for living and working in a manner different from that of the world—one which helps them to live in the world, but not be of the world. No matter what career lies ahead of them, they may remember that their “job” is an art and therefore can only be done well or badly. Furthermore, that which we do well is that which we do in community and for the common good, in harmony with home and Heaven.

As Cicero briefly (for him anyway) puts it, “But since, as Plato has admirably expressed it, we are not born for ourselves alone, but our country claims a share of our being, and our friends a share; and since, as the Stoics hold, everything that the earth produces is created for man’s use; and as men, too, are born for the sake of men, that they may be able mutually to help one another; in this direction we ought to follow Nature as our guide, to contribute to the general good by an interchange of acts of kindness, by giving and receiving, and thus by our skill, our industry, and our talents to cement human society more closely together, man to man” (*De Officiis*, I.22).

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# ON THE WAY OF BEAUTY

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stand out as I recall students' fervent reactions to a poem or piece of music. Energetic discussion (and argument) often follows—after reading Gioia's "The Apple Orchard," students burst forth quite passionately with their views on kinds of love, and whether or not love was even present in the poem. Quite often, the energy sparked during our listening, reading, or singing leads to my favorite aspect of teaching: the revelation of the particular individual talents of each student—gratuitous, freely poured gifts inexplicable in their charm, which could only be from Heaven, beauty's home. Each student has these gifts, as can be seen in their unique humor, their paintings of different styles, their distinctive ideas, and their voices.

Thomas More College is a place where joy happens. Time and again, graduates and students of the College speak of those moments, occasions, and places that live in their memories and are precious to them. These might be conversations, discussions with friends or readings from class, a tradition or celebration, a familiar habit or joke from a beloved professor (Dr. Patrick Powers springs to mind, with his quips tailored to his mischievous but affectionate knowledge of students' foibles).

Across the campus, the liberal arts—those arts which are beautiful in themselves—are being studied, read, written, and talked about. Outside of class, in communities of friendship, creativity flourishes, with picnics, poetry societies, concerts, Rosary walks, and jam sessions. The *Way of Beauty* class, with its particular emphasis on physical acts of creativity (along with the guilds), is an important part of this environment.

Pope Benedict XVI described human love as allowing us to "glimpse an apparently irresistible promise of happiness" (*Deus Caritas Est*, §2). Creation of art and music, like love, also involves the whole person—body and soul. This is why, beyond just discussing art and music, the *Way of Beauty* class is about *making* art and music.

Why is the physical act of "making" important? Often lacking in modern life

is the participation of the whole man, body and soul, in artistic activity. We listen to our headphones and read our screens. But standing, breathing, and singing shoulder to shoulder the psalms for evening prayer; tipping a brush into a Prussian Blue pool of floated pigment and drawing it across thick rag watercolor paper—these motions unite body and soul in creativity, man fully alive. As Pope St. John Paul II said in his "Letter to Artists," "through his 'artistic creativity' man appears more than ever 'in the image of God'" (§1).



ARTWORK BY JACINTA SIGAUD '26

Creating with our bodies—with muscles, hands, feet, and breath—makes us more human, more fully ourselves, and connects us to God. Singing the Melkite Alleluia around the table as class starts, we suspend the ordinary in a moment of supernatural beauty.

Singing with others is also an embodiment of the whole person in community—an added dimension to being fully human—because singing involves the necessity of cooperation physically, in a place, with other artists also breathing and moving and

singing. This is different from thinking or studying, which can be done alone. Musicians know that their joy cannot happen without all the difficulty of arranging schedules and transporting singers to the room where they will make music together. We long for music, but we can't make it without others. Providing the space for beauty to appear is work. Then, when we have gathered, warmed up, and practiced, the ground is tilled and the space prepared for joy to appear. Within the limits of time, we do some of this in the *Way of Beauty* class. Such work is also a preparation for joining in the sacred liturgy of the Mass, "the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed . . . the font from which all her power flows" (Pope St. Paul VI, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, §10). The practice of the *Way of Beauty*, with its space for creation and attentiveness, is (at its best) an enclosed garden where joy and beauty may visit.

Not being a philosopher, but a singer, I cannot describe the relationship between beauty, love, and joy—but certainly they are closely united. I think of Aquinas on joy and peace, as they relate to love (and love is everything). Joy springs from communion in love. Peace is security in love. Love and beauty are united in a mysterious and indefinable way, as Aquinas acknowledged. Perhaps then, beauty is what love looks and sounds like. If so, the apprehension of beauty draws a person toward communion with Love Himself. This may be why the way of beauty has been for so many the way toward God.

Ultimately, the way of beauty is the way of sacrament. When we paint, sing, speak, and write, we make visible, audible, and touchable the beauty of God. In beauty, God reaches down to us, instantly transcending reason, logic, thought. His touch is beauty and love direct. It is this meeting with Love Himself to which our moments of joy in painting, speaking, and singing aspire.



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