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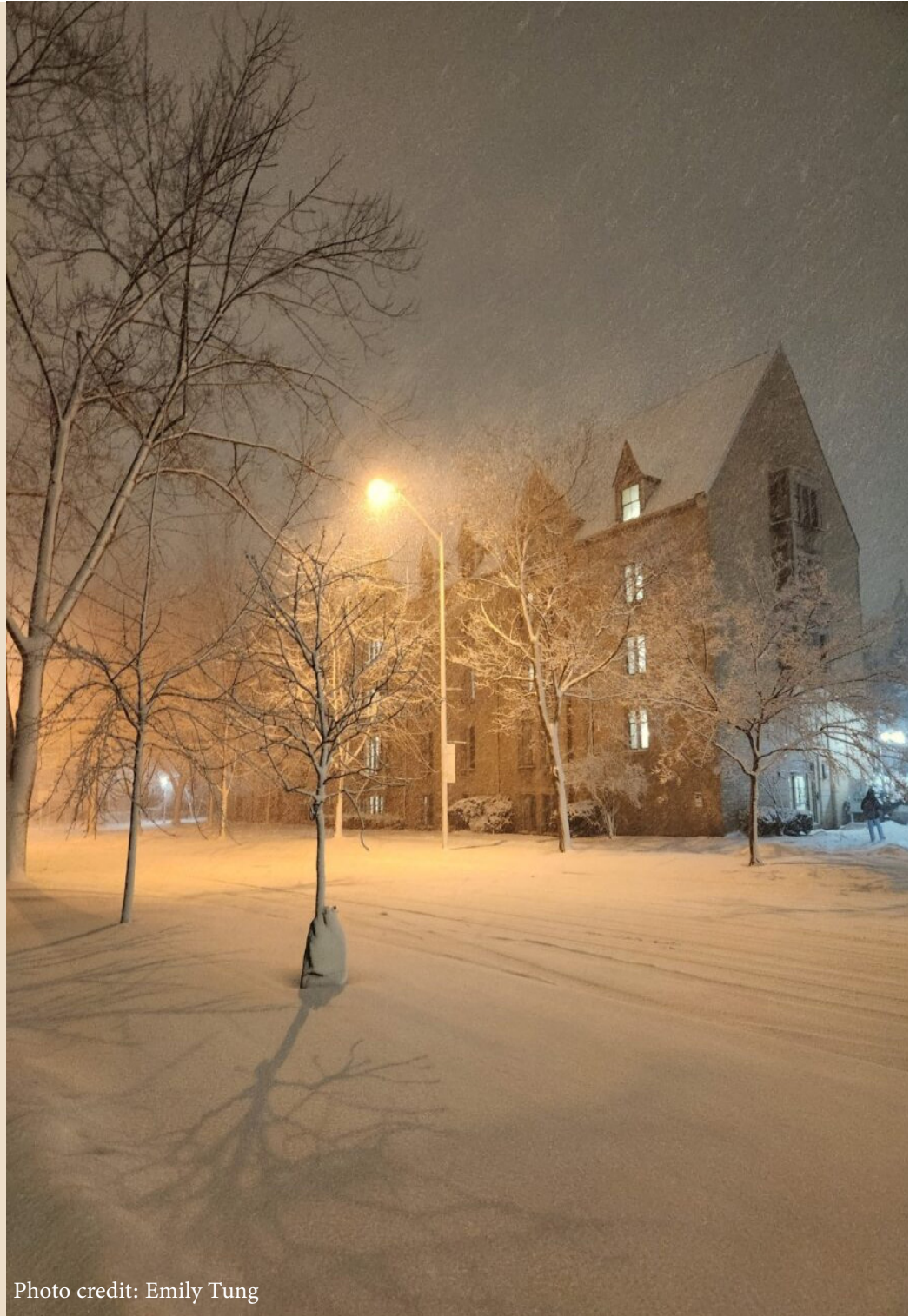


Photo credit: Emily Tung

# The Meaning of Advent

Preparing for eternity in the darkest time of year

Para Babuهران  
Logos Editor

Romano Guardini has a profound meditation on time in *Sacred Signs*: "In the morning we have a lively and agreeable sense that life is starting and is on the increase; then obstacles arise and we are slowed up. By noon for a short while we seem to stand quite still. A little later our sense of life declines; we grow weary, recover a little, and then subside into the quiescence of night."

We can apply this to the seasons of the year. Spring is like the morning, a time of fresh energy and new life. Summer is like midday, when we meet the pure present amid the noonday glow. Fall is like the evening, a time of completion and death. As the year comes to a close, we are reminded of our own fragility and mortality, the ways in which we fell short of our hopes. Yet, we are hopeful for a new year, a fresh start. It is with these sentiments that the church year launches into Advent.

Advent is the season of spiritual preparation before Christmas. With patient longing and expectant delight, we look forward to Christ's second coming at the end of time, before remembering his first coming in the fullness of time. In the Northern Hemisphere, Advent is most fittingly a time of long nights and dark desolation. Aware of our own dependence and need,

we can either draw closer to Christ, the "Radiant Dawn, splendour of eternal light, sun of justice," or seek material comforts to consume and be consumed by.



Photo credit: Max Beck

It is platitudinous to complain about the commercialization of Christmas and its excessively early anticipation. It is, however, telling that we continue to put effort into what remains a Christian feast. It proves the inadequacy of secular holidays, as Josef Pieper argued. Still, we have forgotten how to celebrate well, and we are likewise unable to anticipate well. We want to celebrate Christmas as soon as we can, but we cannot savour Christmastide when it comes.

Advent — when it is not confused and conflated with the Christmas season — is an unwelcome gap that allows us to prepare, recollect, and discipline ourselves, so that we can face death confidently and delight in the full joy of Christmas. Especially at this time of year, Christians are called to be joyful, expectant witnesses to eternity. Ed Condon writes in *The Pillar*, "Ours is a culture that constantly demands the next thing to avoid thinking about the last things."

Pope Benedict XVI said, "in this time of Advent, let us ask the Lord to grant that we may live less and less 'before Christ,' and certainly not 'after Christ,' but truly *with* Christ and in Christ: with him who is indeed Christ yesterday, today, and forever."



# THE MIKE

## The Funnies: Under New Management

Nothing better than the SMC Troubadours for a good laugh before exam season

**Zoe Zusman**  
*Staff Writer*

I watched The Funnies' opening night and it exceeded all my expectations. The Funnies is one of the many shows put on by the SMC Troubadours during the school year. The Funnies has been a part of the Troubadours' season line-up for a few years. With its old director having recently graduated, the directorship has been passed down to Cas Duarte, who has been working tirelessly to put on and continue the legacy of the iconic St. Mike's comedy show. Although there were some minor behind-the-scenes complications, including two cast members being unable to perform, the show was amazing. I genuinely do not think a single person would guess that pre-production was a bit touch and go.



Photo credit: Nora (Eleanor) Wiens Farrelly

To start, the show opened with two very talented stand-up performances. It began with Maggie, who lit up the stage by connecting to the audience and sharing stories from her past, though she said they may not have been true. I think her aim to use audience involvement and keep people engaged was a good tactic and was done very well. To me, it was like I was lis-

tening to a friend talk about her life. This led the first part to be a little unstructured — but in a good way. It flowed from one topic to another and kept me laughing throughout. She also presented some skits, and I think the randomness she brought in between sketches was one of the funniest parts of the night. Next up was Nika. She did so well that you'd think she's a professional. Her approach felt more like the stereotypically structured stand-up act but again had a great flow to the performance. Nika's comedic timing was perfect and I really enjoyed where all the beats and tonal shifts were. These two performances set the stage for the next hour of skits. They opened the show beautifully.



Photo credit: Nora (Eleanor) Wiens Farrelly

Overall, the show was great. All the actors were very professional and compelling in their performances. The mix of vocal and full-body humour added a nice mix to the sketches. However, it was really Cas that drew my eye time and again. With true

commitment both vocally and physically, Cas was able to evoke so much laughter from the audience. I truly think that with every skit Cas was in, the stage became a bit brighter and was brought to life.



Photo credit: Nora (Eleanor) Wiens Farrelly

The skits themselves were also very well written and dealt with a range of topics and genres. They were able to use more mature subject matter in a tasteful way that got lots of laughs from the audience. However, my biggest critique is probably that a few skits dragged on for a bit. Personally, I believe that taking about 30 seconds off two or three of the sketches would have been beneficial. The jokes might have been stretched a little too thin here and there. Other than that, I think the ordering and timing of the show was really good.

The Funnies were great, and I think the cast did a great job of bringing the ensemble together. A big applause to the heads for pulling it off with all the earlier complications and keeping the show going despite it all!

# THE MIKE

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## From the Grammys to Government: Navigating the Complex Landscape of Celebrity Politics

While celebrities can act as catalysts for positive change, their political expressions can also alienate fans.

Ethan Chan  
Senior Staff Writer

In recent years, the intersection of celebrities and politics has become increasingly prevalent, with stars like Taylor Swift and Kanye West using their platforms to express their political views. While this level of engagement can be a positive force for change by sparking conversations otherwise silenced by the mainstream media, it involves some drawbacks. As a result, it is important to recognize the pros and cons of celebrity politics and how fame exists at a crossroad of opinions.

The wide array of celebrities that have stepped into politics can amplify crucial issues and increase their accessibility to the public. The Hollywood Reporter found that 41% of people believe stars can influence public opinion, while 31% of celebrities may even influence political processes, such as presidential elections. For example, Taylor Swift's recent endorsement of Democratic candidates in Tennessee highlighted issues surrounding human rights, 2SLGBTQ+ rights, as well as racial and gender equality. Moreover, Global News reported that, on some topics, celebrities were as credible as politicians — highlighting the impact of celebrities with large followings using their platforms for political support.

However, as the saying goes, with great power comes great responsibility. Celebrity politics is a see-saw balance scale: leaning too far on one side can make or break your career, while neutrality can increase uncertainty among fans or spark fake news. For example, Taylor Swift's initial political silence was interpreted as Republican support, forcing a specific narrative onto her regardless of her beliefs. On the other hand, Kanye West's impromptu speech expressing support for Donald Trump during a Saturday Night Live episode led to public backlash. Compared to Swift, Kanye makes his views clear. Regardless, both celebrities experience conflict when introducing politics into their world.

The reason behind celebrity politics is simple: celebrities have influence. As fans, many of us idolize these individuals, with some hanging onto their every word. Despite this, 60% of individuals in a 2018 survey opposed celebrity political endorsements, citing it as a distraction.

So, why are we hypocrites? Why do we wholeheartedly support these celebrities in their specialties, such as music or acting, but look the other way when they speak

up about politics? In my opinion, the answer is not obvious. It likely depends on the political issue and the celebrities' knowledge of the political atmosphere.

The intersection between celebrities and politics is complex. While celebrities can act as catalysts for positive change, their political expressions can also alienate fans and further polarize the already divisive world of politics. Ultimately, navigating this balance requires understanding one's role in society and acknowledging the potential consequences of their endorsements. Celebrities wield a dual-edged sword. They have immense influence but are also humans with unique beliefs. While there is nothing wrong with celebrities expressing their beliefs, since they possess great influence, they must publicize what they believe — and wield their swords — responsibly in the interest of a more informed and united society.



Photo credit: Miguel Henriques

# SPORTS

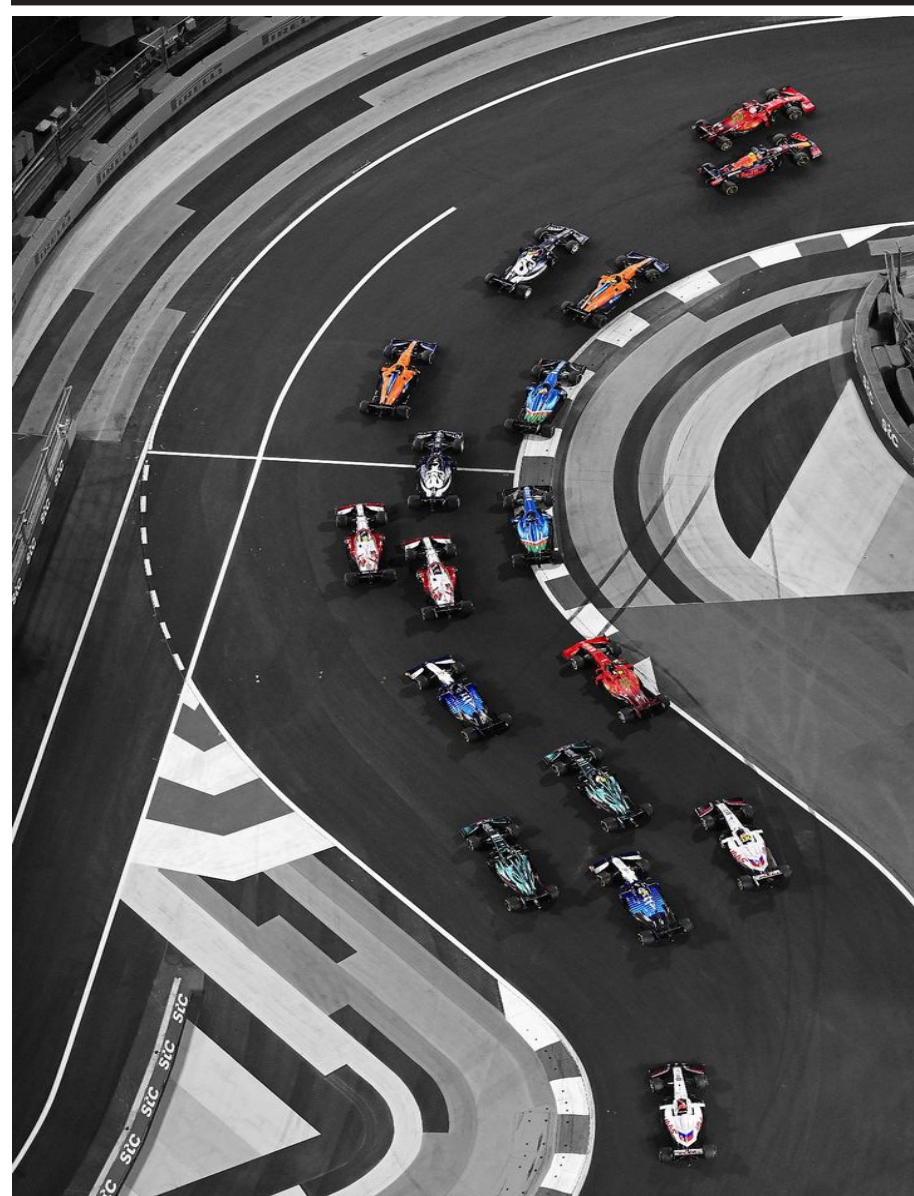


Photo credit: Formula1.com

## Why Formula One Should Bring Back the South African GP

In its age of expansion, F1's return to Africa would be a welcome sight.

Vincent Raitt  
Contributor

Formula One has seen a massive surge in popularity and interest due, in part, to the Netflix docuseries *Drive to Survive*. As a result, the Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA), the governing body of the sport, has been adding more and more races to the calendar. The first Miami Grand Prix was held in 2022, and in 2023 Las Vegas made its triumphant return after nearly forty years off the calendar. In this age of expansion, the FIA would be remiss not to bring back the iconic South African Grand Prix.

The South African Grand Prix is one of the oldest Grand Prix races, originally held on the streets of East London, South Africa. In 1967, it was moved to its most iconic location, the Kyalami Circuit in Johannesburg. It was held there until the mid-80s when Formula One left the country over the government policy of apartheid.

After so many years away, it's time for the FIA to return to South Africa. In fact, updating the Kyalami Circuit to modern circuits would be an easy task. To be suitable for Formula One racing, the circuit would have to be of Grade One. Kyalami is currently a Grade Two circuit. The process to upgrade it would be significantly less time-consuming and less expensive than the creation of a whole new circuit. It is also a tried-and-true layout: we know from previous experience that the races it hosts would be engaging and interesting to watch. Additionally, bringing back the South African Grand Prix would be a great way to make Formula One a truly global sport. Currently, Africa is the only permanently inhabited continent to not have a Grand Prix. With the return of the South Africa Grand Prix, Formula One pilots could finally, truly, race around the world.



## Sidelined by the Stakes

Exploring the history and the rise of gambling suspensions in the sports world.

Lucas Carpignano  
 Sports Editor

The excitement and energy of cheering on your favourite athletes and teams is something that cannot be matched. But beyond the roar of the crowd and the glory of victory lies a realm filled with temptation — the world of athletes and gambling. In the past few weeks, we've seen many different athletes across different sports receive lengthy suspensions for sports betting. The most notable was Italian soccer player Sandro Tonali, who received a ten-month suspension for betting on soccer matches, including his own. Although this is a big deal, throughout history we've seen even bigger scandals that involve athletes match-fixing, sports betting, or just spending way too much money at casinos.

Over the last few years, sports gambling has been on a significant rise. Millions of people bet on sports daily, including some athletes. Most of the time, when these athletes get caught, they face suspension. I already mentioned Tonali's suspension, but fellow Italian soccer player Nicolò Fagioli was sentenced to a seven-month suspension in October. Since 2022, the NFL has suspended eleven players for betting on league games, with suspensions ranging from six games to an indefinite amount. This past October, the NHL handed out its first gambling suspension in the modern era. Ottawa Senators' Shane Pinto was suspended

for 41 games, which is half the season, due to activities related to sports wagering. It's hard to imagine how many athletes just haven't been caught yet, but you can expect this lengthy list to continue to grow in the coming years.

For the biggest match-fixing scandal in history, we need to go back to 1919. In the 1919 MLB World Series, eight Chicago White Sox players were bribed to lose the championship intentionally. The eight players were paid about \$100,000 to lose the series. As a result, they all stood trial but were acquitted because of insufficient evidence. The key evidence, including some confessions, went "missing." The MLB still went on to ban each player for life. One of the eight players involved was baseball the legendary Shoeless Joe Jackson, whom many still consider one of the best players of all time. One wonders what his legacy could have been if he hadn't taken a bribe and gone on to continue his career.

While some athletes look to score big while playing, some look to score big while gambling. In no world should athletes be actively betting on their own games. It's unfortunately only a matter of time until we see more suspensions. For athletes, the odds of not getting caught are like hitting 21 a dozen times in a row playing blackjack: very low.

## ARTS

### Reviewing Scott Pilgrim Takes Off

Or how, sometimes, spinoffs might not be so bad after all.

Jacqueline Cho Contributor

This review contains major spoilers for Scott Pilgrim Takes Off (2023).

I am sick of reboots, unnecessary sequels, and spinoffs.

This is not an unpopular opinion, but I wouldn't be the first to argue that we need to let stories die once they reach their natural end. Sometimes, we *don't* need to know what happens next, actually. Given how inundated the market has been with remakes or adaptations with nothing new to offer, we need to recognize these stories for what they are: cheap cash grabs.

*Scott Pilgrim Takes Off* could have very well taken that route. The nostalgia bait alone from gaining borderline the entire original live action movie cast back would have been enough for everyone involved to make a nice profit before tucking this franchise back into the grave.

Instead, the show takes a daring leap by killing off Scott Pilgrim within the first episode.

For the record, I have been a fan of the 2010 live action movie for years. While I thought the comic was far better, I respected the strength and charm of the film as an adaptation (also because the comic itself had not concluded by the time the movie was produced). One of Scott Pilgrim's strengths has been the advantages it takes from the medium it is produced in. The comics tell a different story from the mov-

ie because it is a different story. Starting the first episode off with killing your protagonist is a bold one, and one that continues this tradition. This is not just an adaptation of the comic material or a cheap continuation of the movie, but an entirely new narrative. *Scott Pilgrim Takes Off* isn't about Scott at all: it's about Ramona. Rather than a narrative that would have retold the tale of Pilgrim's fights to date Ramona, Ramona actually makes amends with her exes, showing prolonged character development and presence in a way that was never quite portrayed in the 2010 film. Ramona isn't the object of Scott's affections; she's the very subject of the narrative. While Scott comes back, this choice, along with the entire decision to make a wholly new take on Scott's story (indeed, turning it into Ramona's story) allows for a new story to be told while still being respectful of the source material.



Photo credit: Bryan Lee O'Malley

Additionally, I would be remiss to not consider that a newer adaptation allows some of the initial sins of the movie and comics to be amended. After all, the world has deeply changed since 2004 when the comic was first published, and in 2010 when the movie was released. Queer subjects, specifically Roxy and Ramona's former relationship, are handled with deeper care rather than reducing bisexuality to a cheap experiment. Furthermore, the choice to center the narrative around Ramona gave her agency in a way that the 2004 comic and 2010 film neglected. Given that Ramona Flowers was the epitome of the manic pixie dream girl trope, giving her agency and centering the narrative around her allowed the animated series skillfully to sidestep any pitfalls into the initial critiques of the misogynistic trope it previously portrayed. While I am tempted to be cynical and say this is a way to dismiss criticism of misogyny and homophobia in the initial material entirely, the deliberate choice to recenter the narrative around Ramona allows O'Malley not just to add to the canon but enhance it.

At the beginning of this review, I said we need to let stories die. When they've reached their natural end, we need to learn how to let go. And while I stand by this sentiment, if every reboot or spinoff treated their source material and adaptation as a way to add to their overarching narrative, maybe some stuff would be worth coming back to.

## TIFF's "Loved It" Series: The Personal History of David

### Copperfield and R.F. Kuang's Babel

A review of the event and how *Babel* was informed by Iannucci's adaptation.

Angelina Fernandez Arts Editor

After reading the *Poppy War* trilogy and *Yellowface* earlier this year, R.F. Kuang quickly cemented her status as one of my personal favourite authors. When I discovered that she would be featured in a special event organized by the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) on November 18, I practically jumped at the chance to buy tickets. I knew that the upcoming event would be a great opportunity for me to gain insight into the works of one of my most revered authors.

When the day finally arrived, I hopped on the train and listened to an interview that Kuang did with *Time* magazine in which she discusses how *Yellowface*'s depiction of the publishing industry shapes her main character June Hayward, and speaks on the broader myth of diversity in publishing. The interview not only provided me with a better understanding of the creative processes behind *Yellowface*, but it also intensified my growing anticipation to hear Kuang's discourse on *Babel*.

Upon arriving at the event, my group waited in line for our pre-signed copies of *Babel*/*Yellowface* (I opted to get *Babel* as it was the only novel of Kuang's that I had yet to read), and then we went into the TIFF Lightbox, settling into our seats. The event itself began with a quiz, where the winner — who happened to be seated in the row behind me — won copies of the pre-signed novels and merchandise from TIFF.

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After that, the host brought out Kuang, who introduced the film that would be screened: *The Personal History of David Copperfield*, an adaptation by Armando Iannucci of Charles Dickens' novel. As someone who has engaged with Dickens' work before, especially in my reading of *Great Expectations*, I mistakenly believed that I had a rough idea of what to expect from the film. Instead, I was pleasantly surprised by how heart-warming and humorous it was, whereby the strong cast, comprised of actors such as Dev Patel, Hugh Laurie, and Tilda Swinton, allowed for the story truly to come to life.

When Kuang returned to the stage, she discussed the impact of the film and novel on her own book, *Babel*. As a Dickens fan herself, she drew inspiration from the film due to its portrayal of the literary genre of bildungsroman. Kuang explained that her novel depicts a subverted form of the genre as *Babel* signifies a failed bildungsroman, in which Robin Swift does not undergo the typical transformation as a bildungsroman protagonist, and ultimately, does not reach a goal that forms the conditions for the rest of his life.

She touched on a few additional points, including Iannucci's utilization of colour-blind casting and its prevalence toward a Victorian era film, her interaction with Dickens' works as an inherently racist canon, and her own difficulty as a creative in engaging with contemporary works. Perhaps the most poignant answer from Kuang during the Q&A session was her explanation of her treatment of "villainous" characters, in which she expressed her desire to sculpt these characters as multidimensional by portraying them through a sympathetic lens. These sentiments are prevalent within *Babel*, further demonstrating how Dickens' work informed Kuang's.

As someone who has never attended a book signing before, the anticipation of the event was one borne out of excitement and

nerves. While I waited in line, I thought about what to say at least a hundred times, and when it finally was my turn, I expressed my admiration for her academic journey and my hope that she would enjoy her time in Toronto, to which she graciously thanked me both times, expressing her own gratitude to me as one of her readers.

Through Kuang's eloquence during the event, it is clear that her academic background — an MPhil in Chinese Studies from Cambridge, an MSc in Contemporary Chinese Studies from Oxford, and her current pursuit of a PhD in East Asian Languages and Literatures at Yale — greatly informs her work as a creative. Kuang, at only 27 years old, received the Nebula Award earlier this year for *Babel*, joining the ranks of prominent and renowned authors such as Frank Herbert, Ursula K. Le Guin, and Orson Scott Card. However, she remains humble throughout her journey, demonstrating a poise that I find particularly admirable, especially in a young author. What the TIFF: Loved It series does well is its placement of Kuang in conversation with a direct influence of her work, a Dickensian adaptation. It truly allows readers to gain deeper insight into *Babel* and the influence of academia within Kuang's publications. Ultimately, events such as this one create a memory that readers will cherish for a long time to come. I know that I certainly will.

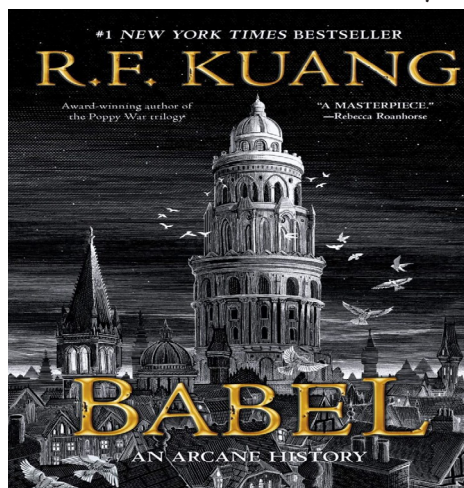


Photo credit: Book cover art by @nicodelort

## Capturing the Little Things in Life

### A bit about my photography!

Zoe Zusman  
Staff Writer

So, you may know me as that one girl who writes cutesy little articles for *The Mike* about random topics. I am the same girl who then provides my opinions where it's not really needed. Or, maybe you know me from my Instagram account. I say this because someone randomly came up to me *once* and said, "I know you... I follow you," and I responded: "Yeah okay... sure!" Let me tell you: I thought it was the strangest thing, and I've never forgotten it.

Was that second point a little vain and conceited? Yeah, for sure. Do I care? Nope. That's because this article is all about me. I thought it would be a fun shift from my normal reviews or the fashion advice that I usually write. And don't worry — I'm not just going to blab about myself. I'm going to be talking about my photography, which is something I'm very passionate about, as well as something few people know about.

I think what initially got me into photography was my grade 11 media arts class. We'd go on walks through Little Italy, and

each week there was a different principle of photography that we had to capture. Now, I was taking photos prior to the class, but seeing others' work gave me the inspiration to experiment more with angles and framing. That class also sparked my strong love for film, which I still have to this day — it plays a big role in my photography. To me, photography is the stills of cinematography. Whenever I watch a film, I've always been enamoured by the various ways one can shoot a scene. From the framing, angles, or even lighting, I think that cinematography is the most compelling aspect of film.

I guess my style of photography emerged from these roots: my photo walks in grade 11 and inspiration from films. It's probably also good to note that my photography is mainly centred around the city. It is also centred around capturing the smaller, more unique angles of places I go. I never plan to take photos anywhere; I only take photos when

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## Book Review: Self-Portrait in Green by Marie NDiaye

A worthwhile read on the topic of self-discovery

Lyana Shaharizan  
Senior Staff Writer

Marie NDiaye is a French novelist who is known to produce niche and non-cliché stories. She has won quite a few awards and honours, including the Prix Femina in 2001 and Prix Goncourt, and was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize in 2016 and Best Translated Book Award in 2017. *Self-Portrait in Green* is an enthralling exploration of identity, family dynamics, and the complexities of self-discovery. Reading the book feels like a trip into a surreal yet ordinary world that makes us question our own sanity. It does sound a bit like a paradox, but the author did a great job weaving a narrative tapestry that combines the uncanny with the normal, inviting readers into a world where the boundaries between reality and imagination blur.

The novel follows the life of an unnamed narrator as she grapples with her sense of self and belonging. From the first page, NDiaye's prose is both lyrical and evocative, painting vivid images of the narrator's experiences and emotions. The writing of the book is somewhat reminiscent of Rick Riordan's *Percy Jackson* series, where the narrator tells us the story and the inner monologues of the characters, but with a more serious undertone. For the reader, this creates the illusion of being in the same place at the same time as the narrator. Hence, we resonate with them and relate to their situation more easily.

The use of the colour green, which saturates the narrative, becomes a symbol of negative thoughts, emotions, and physical experiences. The phrase "woman in green" is repeated a million times throughout the novel. The narrator has a peculiar way of describing people, especially women. She is very observant of others' appearances. However, as we get closer to the ending, she often gets confused by her own memory, with her observations and experiences seeming only to exist in her imagination. Moreover, the narrator's feelings toward the colour are very strong and strange. She tries subtly to tell us that the colour feels like a bad omen, since it is only mentioned after a tragedy or an inconvenience happens. Even so, by the end of the book, the narrator uses the colour green to symbolize freedom and sexual vivacity, as well as resilience and the power of youth.

One of the novel's strengths lies in its nuanced exploration of identity; the book does not directly address the themes, problems, and issues that the narrator has. Instead, we must read between the lines and visualize the scenes, so we fathom the underlying meaning and reasons behind everything that occurs to her. We witness the challenges of navigating a world that often imposes rigid definitions of identity through the eyes of the narrator. This thought-provoking novel prompts the readers to question societal expectations and reflect on the fluid nature of identity, challenging preconceived notions of what it means to belong in an understated way. To be frank, I rarely enjoy self-discovery books as they come out as too pompous and pretentious to me. Thus, I believe that the book's subtle way of including the theme would be a bonus point for people who feel the same way as I do.

If you think that the novel might be a mundane story as the theme seems to be too didactic, you are wrong. I had read the book without reading the synopsis or reviews beforehand, so I had zero clue what it was about. At the beginning, I thought that this novel was about some creepy and disturbing myth from a small village in southwest France. The setting is particularly eerie — it would definitely give you goosebumps and have you looking behind your back occasionally to make sure there is nothing watching you from afar.

To wrap it all up, *Self-Portrait in Green* is a thought-provoking and beautifully written exploration of identity, family, and the journey to self-discovery as well as self-healing. Marie NDiaye's immaculate narrative skill and poetic prose make this novel a compelling read that lingers in the mind, inviting readers to reflect on the complex interplay of identity and the kaleidoscope of experiences that shape our sense of self, while providing the uncanny experiences faced by the narrator. The themes of the novel can be unpacked in different ways, and I believe there is much more underlying meaning that I have not realized yet that other readers might have. Try to read this short, one-sitting novel, and together, we can find out the hidden messages in it!



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I'm going about my day and I come across something I want to photograph.

There are some key features of my work, but they do vary from shot to shot. I've always liked a colour motif in my photos, aligning the shot so that you get hints of hues of the same colour throughout the image. I find it creates cohesion in the photo. My biggest stylistic choice is the lack of depth in which I frame the shot, and then in turn how the light illuminates the frame. I think having a well-populated shot — but then flattening that to make it look almost like a painting — is a true art, and I try to incorporate that as much as I can when shooting buildings or the urban cityscape.

This technique came from my love of Gordon Willis, a cinematographer from the '70s who worked on some of my favourite films — *The Godfather*, *Annie Hall*, and *The Parallax View*, to name a few. I really love how those films are shot in the artistic, painterly look.

Truthfully, I don't know how else to describe my photography other than saying I think it's beautiful to capture a certain and unique angle of something you find in everyday life. (Okay, now for some self-promo, I'm sorry.) I recently just had my photos in a Victoria College exhibit. It is still up in Goldring if you would like to see it, and there should be another series coming soon. It's great to see my photos in print because, usually, they're just on my Insta-

gram account digitally, and the change of scale and medium really impact your relation to the image.

This leads me to my shameless self-plug: my photography account! If you like the photos displayed here, you can follow me on Instagram @\_photosby\_z. It's genuinely just a place to curate my photos and post random shots I take — nothing serious. Photography is something I've been trying to take more seriously, and eventually, I'd love to work more in the cinematography space. But for now, I'm going to continue to take my photos of random things and try to make the life look a little cooler than it sometimes is.

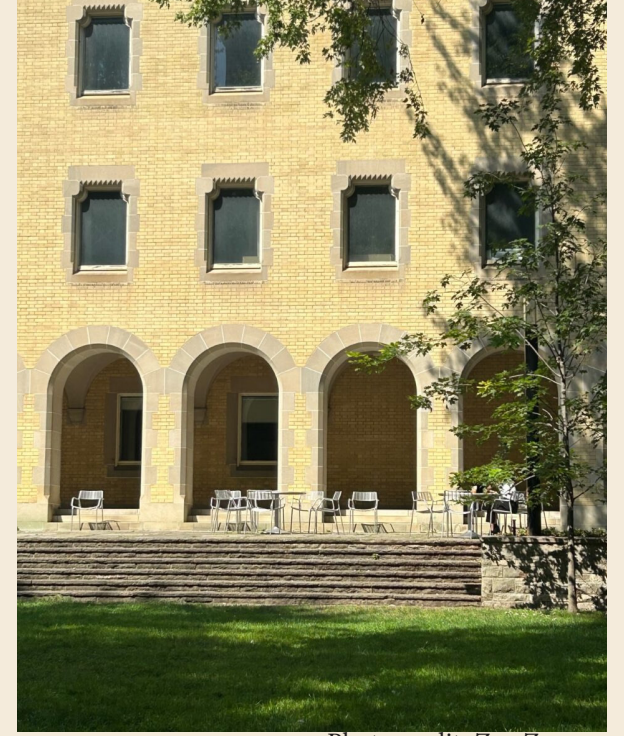


Photo credit: Zoe Zusman

## The Hunger Games: The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes

### Review

Yes, as always, the book is better than the film, but it is definitely worth the watch.

Darian Trabold  
Managing Editor

Get in the car and let's go back to 2014! Taylor Swift has dropped *1989 (Taylor's Version)*. Josh Hutcherson and Jennifer Lawrence star in the two popular films on Letterboxd (*Five Nights at Freddy's* and *No Hard Feelings*, respectively). And there is a new *Hunger Games* movie. *The Hunger Games: The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes* is adapted from the best-selling dystopian prequel by Suzanne Collins, which provides fans with the backstory of the franchise villain Coriolanus Snow.

The film takes its audience back to the 10th annual Hunger Games, 64 years prior to the events of the first film, in which a young Coriolanus Snow is a student at the Capitol Academy. He is assigned to mentor Lucy Gray Baird, the District 12 candidate for the 10th Hunger Games. The Snow family has lost its fortune, so Snow and Lucy Gray's fate have become intertwined, as he needs her to succeed in the Games so that he can win the Plinth Prize. Throughout the movie, we watch Snow descend more into the power-hungry villain we know him to be in the original trilogy, rather than a sympathetic character turned bad.

Through this film, we get the origin story of "The Hanging Tree," which provides insights into why Snow hates Katniss Everdeen so much, and many other nods to the original trilogy. However, as someone who has read the book, the movie was missing key aspects of the novel that made Snow's villain origin story make sense. In the movie, it feels like it's the Hunger Games one second, and Snow is losing his mind the next. In the book, readers benefit from Snow's inner monologue, which enhances the story. The movie could have

benefitted from a You-Joe Goldberg-like inner monologue to give a little more insight into the character.



Photo credit: Lionsgate

Rachel Zegler, who plays Lucy Gray Baird, does a good job of representing Appalachian culture and folk tradition. I know many complained about her accent in the film. However, District 12 is in modern-day Appalachia, so I felt it was a minor detail executed perfectly on her part. Her voice is amazing, and her portrayal of Lucy Gray was powerful. Tom Blyth as

Snow was another phenomenal casting choice; he really makes you want to root for Snow, despite what he has done. Viola Davis proved again that she is one of the best actresses of all time. This was a different role from what I have seen her in, but she pulls off Dr. Gaul's villainy in a way no one else could. Hunter Schafer as Tigris delivers one of the most chilling lines in the movie when she begins to refer to Snow as Coriolanus instead of Coryo at the end of the movie. Tigris signals to us that Snow has become the same man we know him to be from the original films.

Personally, I found that the film spent too much time on the Hunger Games itself. I think that this caused it to deviate from the fact that this film demonstrates Snow's villain origin story; it is not about the 10th annual Hunger Games. Thus, the ending felt a little rushed. I did like the subtleties of Snow's character such as how jealous, and borderline possessive, he got with Lucy Gray and her ex. It shows us how he is incapable of loving Lucy Gray unless he is in total control. Even with his relationship with his "best friend" Sejanus, his ambition clouds his judgment. He shows that he will do whatever it takes to get to the top — to affirm that Snow, does in fact, land on top — whereby the film does a good job of subtly conveying this.

While *Catching Fire* is still the best Hunger Games movie in my opinion, *The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes* is a close second. The acting, the soundtrack, and the story all work seamlessly together to bring us back to Panem and learn more about the man we love to hate: Coriolanus Snow.



## Capitol Fashion Comes to Life!

And it thankfully doesn't channel Tigris.

Lauren Sarney  
Senior Staff Writer

As of November 17, 2023, *The Hunger Games* series has been reborn from the ashes. Its newest addition, the prequel that explains (but refuses to forgive) President Snow's later actions, *The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes*, has generated significant buzz in the week that it has been out. The cast has hit the blood-red carpets and X (formerly Twitter) has weighed in.

There was a parade of notable attire — Rachel Zegler, the film's star, wore a gorgeous black gown that seeped into crimson at the tail for the Berlin premiere, representative of Katniss Everdeen and Peeta Mellark's opening ceremony costumes from the first novel. Sofia Sanchez, who plays a tribute, impressed in a summery yellow dress adorned with periwinkle butterflies at the same event. Even Tom Blyth's now infamous suit sans jacket look for the L.A. carpet sparked debate. However, Hunter Schafer has undoubtedly taken the cake in terms of best looks overall.



Photo credit: Just Jared Inc. (<https://www.justjared.com/photo-gallery/4985573/tom-blyth-hunger-games-premiere-01/>)

Schafer's colourful dress of choice for the Berlin tour resembled crystallized slivers of acrylic paint. Her London premiere outfit saw her in tufts of melted metallic gold that somehow steered clear of resembling baking foil, and even her appearance on *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon* was a hit. She dazzled in a two-piece floral moment that felt as classic as it did contemporary. As many X users noted, such striking looks were welcome but in great contrast with the movie, which from the trailer appears to be interesting but gray.

In a recent *Entertainment Weekly Magazine* publication, writer Amy Wilkinson noted that director Francis Lawrence intended for the movie to be set in a period of gloom, similar to that of post-WWII Berlin. With that in mind, and without the fanfare-filled garb of the first movies in sequences set in the Capitol, the movie does look aesthetically dreary (though the plot, for its merit, is anything but).

Even still, there remain some standout pieces from the film. Most notably might be Coriolanus Snow (Tom Blyth)'s red suit: scarlet in colour, with a buttoned, blue-tinted white shirt underneath, the real sell of this outfit is the equally red skirt overtop the pants. Effortless and chic, as well as smart: red has been a staple colour across all films, meant to symbolize rebellion and inner strife (both of which Snow struggles with in the film, caught between wanting to continue his family's legacy whilst trying to protect his budding love).

There are also a few great looks from Lucy Gray Baird (Rachel Zegler). However, the fashion from the film pales in overall comparison to that of the original movies — recall the tributes' entrance costumes in the first film, Katniss' all-black attire and iconic side braid, all of Effie Trinkets' bajillion fabulous fits — which leaves audiences left to pilfer through promotional content.

X, unsurprisingly, jumped at the chance to pull these outfits apart — the Tom Blyth situation cannot be mentioned enough, poor guy — but against the backdrop

of the movie's message it feels almost hypocritical. Katniss always found the pomp of the Capitol to be irrelevant, so is it antithetical to the point of the films that we care this much about such extraneous details? Or do we owe it to ourselves to revel in the levity that comes with fun fashion? At the end of the day, no matter what your feelings are on these outfits, tyranny, or mockingjays, one thing is made apparent from *The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes*: don't trust men with ultra-blond hair. (Although perhaps this should have been established already from the Harry Potter series. Ah, well.)



Photo credit: Getty / Tristar Images (<https://www.popsugar.co.uk/fashion/hunter-schafer-schiaparelli-puzzle-piece-dress-49313041#photo-49313036>)

## LIFESTYLE

### Money Matters: A University Student's Path to Financial Stability

Who said college life is all about instant noodles and empty wallets? Time to bust that myth!

Candy Hua  
Staff Writer

Picture this: a college student, living off instant noodles, counting pennies to buy textbooks, and constantly checking a bank account, fearing the worst. Sound familiar? This image of the "broke college kid" is one we've seen time and again. But what if I told you that it doesn't have to be this way?

Welcome to "Money Matters." In this article, I aim to debunk the stereotype and show you that financial freedom isn't just a dream, but a realistic goal. We'll be diving into the world of financial literacy, a crucial skill often overlooked in our school curricula. From budgeting basics to savvy savings, we'll explore practical strategies to help you navigate your finances during your university years and beyond.

So, if you're tired of the constant money stress and ready to take control of your financial future, keep reading. It's time to break free from the "broke col-

lege kid" stereotype once and for all. Let's get started!

In my quest to understand the financial realities of university life, I turned to my friends at U of T — both current students and alumni. Their stories painted a vivid picture of the successes, struggles, and savvy strategies adopted to navigate their finances. One friend, a U of T alumna, chose to live at home to save on rent and utilities, a luxury not all students, especially those from abroad or out-of-province, can afford. Her travel to campus was restricted to necessity, aiming to cut down on Presto transit costs. She also adopted a mindful approach to shopping, opting for thrift stores and investing in durable items to avoid excessive spending.

On the other hand, a third-year student from Scarborough, attending the St. George Campus, faced a different set of challenges. The high cost of food and tran-

sit in Toronto, plus a long commute, led her to skip classes to save money, a decision that negatively impacted her participation grades. It's a stark reminder of the tough choices students are often forced to make.

Yet another friend, now pursuing a master's degree at U of T, found a balance by seeking paid opportunities within the university. These roles not only provided her with an income but also enhanced her resume, demonstrating how students can turn financial challenges into career-building opportunities.

#### Financial Literacy Importance & Advice:

Breaking away from the "broke college kid" stereotype is not simply about having extra cash on hand. It's about embracing a mindset of financial responsibility and empowerment. Many students enter college without a clear understanding of personal

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 finance, which can lead to unnecessary stress and financial hardship. However, with the right strategies and resources, students can effectively manage their money and avoid common financial pitfalls.

Firstly, creating a budget is a vital step towards financial independence. By tracking income and expenses, students can gain a clear picture of their financial situation and make informed decisions. This includes setting aside money for savings and paying off any debts on time. There are numerous budgeting apps available that can simplify this process, making it easier for students to stay on top of their finances.

Secondly, securing part-time work or internships can provide students with a steady income while also offering valuable work experience. Many colleges and universities offer on-campus jobs that are flexible around

class schedules. Internships, on the other hand, can provide industry-specific experience, which can be advantageous when entering the job market after graduation.



Photo credit: Nick Chong  
 Scholarships and grants are another excellent resource for students. Many are based on academic achievement, but there are also numerous scholar-

ships available based on other criteria such as community involvement or leadership skills. Applying for scholarships can be time-consuming, but the potential financial benefits make it a worthwhile investment.

Lastly, making smart spending decisions is crucial. This includes avoiding impulse purchases and prioritizing needs over wants. Students can also save money by taking advantage of student discounts, buying used textbooks, and cooking meals at home instead of eating at restaurants. In conclusion, financial literacy is a crucial skill for students to develop. By creating a budget, seeking part-time work or internships, applying for scholarships, and making smart spending decisions, students can break free from the “broke college kid” stereotype. Not only will these strategies help students manage their finances during college, but they will also lay the foundation for financial success in the future.

## Humans of St. Mike's

Get to learn a little more about the people around campus!

**Rosie McDonald**  
*Copy Editor*

SOPHIE ROHRER



Photo credit: SMC photographer

*What's your name, program, and year of study?*

Sophie Rohrer. Cognitive Science (Computational Stream) major, Linguistics and Computer Science double minor, third year.

*What's your favourite thing about your program?*

I would say my favourite thing is the range of topics that it covers. I get to take coding classes, philosophy classes, and even psychology classes. Cognition is a broad field and I'm really grateful to be able to learn about all aspects of it.

*What's your favourite thing about yourself?*

I would say my favourite thing about myself is my sense of humour.

*When you were a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?*

I wanted to be a veterinarian.

*If you could travel to one place for free, where would you go, for how long, and why?*

I would travel to Japan or South Korea. I'd honestly stay for a year or two. I've always wanted to experience living in Asia, and I think the culture and especially the food from those countries is something that is extremely appealing to me.

*What is your MBTI type, and does it accurately describe you?*

ISFP - T. I would say that it does accurately describe me. I've always been quite open-minded and eager to see where my life takes me next. I've never thought that I have to be in Toronto and I can never leave. I'm truly open to whatever comes in life. But I would say that at times I can be very picky about trying new things.

SHAMEEL RAJNATH CHANKAR



Photo credit: SMC photographer

*What's your name, program, and year of study?*

Shameel Rajnath Chankar, Shamsham, Shammer, or Shamrock. 1st year MA Geography student. I completed an HBA in Human Geography and Urban Studies.

*What's your favourite thing about your program?*

To be very honest, my favourite thing about my program is the department. The Department of Geography and Planning is one of the most thoughtful and welcoming faculties at U of T. Very personable, and

they really do a great job in maintaining student-faculty relationships. They take high priority in ensuring that their students feel comfortable, happy, and do well within their degrees. Additionally, from professors to the admin, you can honestly feel how well-rounded and connected everyone is and this provides you with a feeling of satisfaction. You can be sure that you can always turn to them for any help and/or advice. Props to the GeoPlan department!

*What's your favourite thing about yourself?*

My favourite thing about myself is my ability to be present. I think this quality of mine is very reflective in my role of Senior Residence Don at St. Mike's. It has always been a quality that I enjoy abiding by even when I was a first-time Residence Don. I am able to “be there” and fill the room with lots of good vibes and great energy and once everyone is happy, I am happy! :) I just love being there in the moment, present within St. Mike's, my home away from home.

*When you were a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?*

I really wanted to be a doctor. More specifically a neurosurgeon, but that was just for a brief phase of my life. Now I want to be a practicing urban planner, and eventually teach within a university capacity.

*If you could travel to one place for free, where would you go, for how long, and why?*

I would go to England, to Manchester specifically, for a year. Why? Because I love football and I love Manchester United, and I would buy a season pass to watch all games of the season to see us win the league, and all the other trophies. GGMU!

*What is your MBTI type, and does it accurately describe you?*

ESFP — the entertainer. It does not accurately describe me but it mentions some of the qualities that I know I have. I am 100% extraverted. It's a good quiz and yes, I can be an entertainer when I need to be. I also like to chill a lot and just keep it calm, cool, and collected. With regards to feelings and thinking, I'd say I combine both. It's always nice to add feelings to your water. Am I assertive? I tend to be assertive in serious situations but other than that, don't ask me what I want to eat or where I'd like to go for dinner, because I will just end up staying at home or eating at the dining hall. I mean, what's better than the Croom, right?