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## Editors' Note

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## EDITORS' NOTE

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While selecting and editing the articles for the fourth annual volume of the *Laurier Undergraduate Journal of the Arts*, one question seemed to surface again and again: What role, if any, should diversity play in academic publishing? It is a question that seems to be on everyone's minds, with advocates on both sides of the issue. As academics, is it our ethical imperative to present viewpoints from as ideologically and culturally diverse a group as possible? Or are we rather obliged to present the best scholarship irrespective of the author's discipline, race, creed, or any other factor external to academic merit? And perhaps most pertinently, what does this all mean to LUJA?

The answer to these questions lies in the delicate interplay between two of LUJA's foundational principles: representation and excellence. On one hand, LUJA was established to provide a voice to arts undergraduate students, a group that previously did not have an outlet for scholarly writing. On the other hand, LUJA was intended to showcase the finest scholarship those students could create, plain and simple. To be published in LUJA is a rarity. Each year we receive hundreds of submissions, only a handful of which we have the space to publish. Since we can only include a limited number of papers, some might feel we owe a certain amount of space to important hot-button topics and previously underrepresented groups or that we ought to give equal representation to each of the various arts disciplines. This critique would seem to be especially pertinent given that the term "the arts" encompasses a diverse range of disciplines, each with further diversity inherent in its ideological and theoretical approaches. While this sentiment appeases the representational demand, it also threatens to undermine the standard of academic excellence. A true meritocracy is, by its very definition, diluted when diversity becomes a criterion unto itself. For that reason, even though a diversity of viewpoints in academia is essential, artificially imposed equitable representation is self-evidently antithetical to the principle of academic meritocracy.

Indeed, LUJA was founded to provide a voice to the previously voiceless, but it is not and never has been a platform for academic equity, at least not as equity is increasingly being understood in the university context. Insofar as equity is

defined simply as impartiality, LUJA wholeheartedly endorses it. However, insofar as equity is understood as the amelioration of the previously disadvantaged, LUJA opposes it. The representational aspect of LUJA is essential, but diversity ought not to be pursued at the detriment of merit. LUJA exists precisely because undergraduate student writing can stand on its own worth, not because undergraduates need to be proportionately represented in academic literature. The paucity of published undergraduate scholarship was a problem only because deserving research was going unseen. That problem was solved through the efforts of LUJA's founders, a group of motivated individuals who noticed a scarcity of publishing opportunities for undergraduate research and chose to address that lack. Now Laurier has an undergraduate-level arts journal dedicated to the most exceptional scholarship the student body has to offer. The articles in the fourth volume were chosen because they represent the best of the best. The quality of their research and the eloquence of their arguments elevated them above the other submissions. Whether or not they show a particular ideological slant is irrelevant. As per LUJA's policies, the views espoused in the articles do not represent our views or the views of the editorial board. We simply agree that the eight articles published in this year's journal present their arguments in a more compelling fashion than the other submissions we received. No more, no less.

Addressing topics as seemingly disparate as theatrical voyeurism and global fashion trends, the articles contained herein are each unique. Characterized by a plurality of methodologies, disciplines, and voices, they are reflections of the individuality of the authors who created them. Sarah Best, Toby Finlay, Victoria Ledezma, Annalisa Lochan, Erica Parnis, Emily Sider, and Katherine Ziomek: each brings a particular approach rooted in a distinctive set of experiences. However, one overriding trait links their articles. Each epitomizes the kind of academic rigour LUJA exists to recognize. Though they come from different disciplines, the articles bear the mark of excellence, a commonality that places them in esteemed company alongside both their venerable academic forebears and their own immanent successors.

In recent years, the university has evolved in ways previous generations could scarcely have imagined, though whether for better or worse is yet to be determined. In the eyes of some, the erstwhile hallowed halls of academia no longer shine with the same lustre they had a century ago when the very notion of diversity, whether of ideas, class, or even academic discipline, was repugnant to the ivory-tower cognoscenti. Higher education has changed since then, with many institutions now embracing diversity of all kinds wholesale, occasionally at the expense of the intellectual culture. LUJA stands athwart such tendencies. The journal is

strengthened by the broad range of disciplines it covers and the unique perspectives its talented authors present, but diversity itself is not the ultimate goal. LUJA has always aspired to display the heights of undergraduate academic accomplishment bar none, and with the publication of the fourth volume, that goal is alive and well. Times may change, but as long as strength of research supersedes momentary ideological whim, the university and its publications will remain relevant in the perpetually evolving landscape of education.

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