

Social Sciences

The past academic year was quite ‘bumpy’ with the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic outbreaking and spreading throughout the world. Millions of people were either influenced by, infected with or even died of such an ongoing global pandemic. Both the writing and editorial process for STARR 2020 were affected by the unexpected pandemic as we worked from home virtually. For writers, they worked hard at home, composing their articles and making numerous revisions in response to peer-reviewers’ and editorial feedback. A few of them have been struggling with mental health because of the lockdown; however, they overcame and survived those hard days. For the editorial committee, several meetings were organised online to discuss the issues and progress of each writer. I felt very proud of being a member of such a cooperative, energetic and committed editorial board. The editors, such as myself, tried our best to maintain a frequent line of communication between writers, editorial board and peer-reviewers. Although it took more time and was more demanding to contact people and handle issues than anticipated, each of us were devoted to overcoming these difficulties.

All of us had to give up planned events and adapt the way we live, adjust to a different level of social contact and different practical and psychological challenges to achieve our common goal: make the STARR 2020 a reality in time. I want to take this opportunity to thank everyone on this year’s STARR issue, as well as all academic and administrative staff at St. Anne’s College. It was our joint efforts that made this year’s issue possible. I, personally, felt very proud of working throughout this academic year for STARR journal and very much look forward to the publication version soon.

SPARK Reviews

Established in STAAR Volume 9 (2019), SPARK Reviews are short 1500-3000-word reviews of any art form or critical text. One Editor of SPARK Reviews is appointed annually to manage the SPARK Review section of the Journal. This Editor is not beholden to the University, College or STAAR Editorial Board in the outcome of decisions made concerning publication or prize-giving. The SPARK Review section of STAAR is managed in accordance with the Privacy Policy (<https://www.st-annes.ox.ac.uk/privacy-policy/>), and Equalities Report (<https://www.st-annes.ox.ac.uk/current-students/equalities/>) stated on the St. Anne’s College website, which address concerns including GDPR, data protection, equal representation and inclusivity. SPARK Reviews follow a rolling-publication model and are not subject to peer-review. This in order to maximise opportunities for students to publish reviews alongside their studies on an accessible, online platform in addition to the Journal’s annual printed editions. The Editor of SPARK Reviews is solely responsible for sourcing, editing and publishing SPARK Reviews. Authors are given at least one month to compose their piece and receive guidance and

feedback from the Editor via email. As with the rest of the journal, the SPARK Review section of STAAR is completely open access and is licensed under a Creative Commons CC-BY licence, which is detailed in the Intellectual Property and Plagiarism section of the St. Anne's MCR website (<http://st-annes-mcr.org.uk/staar/general-information/>).

The purpose of SPARK Reviews is to enable students to creatively and critically engage with artforms which ignite inspiration. SPARK Reviews are designed to be inclusive, interdisciplinary and intersectional writing opportunities which enable students to explore the work of artists from all backgrounds, many of whom may not traditionally feature on academic syllabi. Whilst being critical and evaluative, SPARK Reviews should not employ discriminatory or offensive language. We welcome submissions from the JCR, MCR and Alumni of St. Anne's College and encourage writers of all backgrounds to review artforms which are of greatest interest and importance to them. The 6 SPARK Reviews which feature in STAAR Volume 10 engage with a diverse range of artforms, topics and communities, including the scars of slavery, African American LGBTQ+ experience and the effects of covid-19 upon theatre and ballet. A Firework Competition with a £50 prize for the most original SPARK Review has also been introduced in STAAR Volume 10. The Firework Competition is judged by the SPARK Reviews Editor in corroboration with the Editor-in-chief and one of the Humanities Editors. To ensure an unbiased and impartial decision, the Editor of SPARK Reviews ultimately selects the winner of the Firework Competition based upon the following criteria: creative thinking, stylistic flare, penetrating and personal engagement with an art form/critical text, originality, sharp analysis, strong argumentation, and sound research.

Written by Daniel Mercieca,

Editor of SPARK Reviews for Volumes 9 & 10 of STAAR.

Sciences

The past academic year has been a roller-coaster ride for most of us, but it should be a matter of pride that we have so cooperatively adapted how we live and work such that we may continue to learn, create, and collaborate in different ways. Our authors, who have slaved over their work through its inception, creation, and the endless cycles of editing and peer-review thereafter, truly deserve all the praise we can offer them. They have been rigorous, diligent, and an absolute pleasure to work with throughout the process, in spite of the many commitments they have had to juggle and the various pressures that the present pandemic laid upon them. The situation affected not only their personal plans but also the editing and review timelines, which indeed turned somewhat chaotic as the Science section had particular difficulty in finding reviewers who had time to offer comments on the articles during these busy months. We were, however,

somewhat lucky to work with articles and reviews that contribute to the current healthcare crisis conversation. On that note, we must express our deepest gratitude to the academics who were kind enough to offer valuable input to the authors – their contributions have unquestionably refined the work presented in this section.

For us, the editors, this has been a novel and challenging experience as well – one that we are grateful to have had the chance to undertake. It was strenuous and long, but thoroughly satisfying; we have indeed learnt a lot along the way and done many things for the first time. In consideration of the circumstances, we did our best this year to be flexible with deadlines for the authors, communicate regularly with them, and offer timely edits and updates. We did struggle at times, as with the difficulties in ensuring that the articles have sufficient reviews or with the overlap of the extended timeline with our dissertations, but we were able to work together effectively and ensure that the process ends on a positive note. We thank everyone that we worked with for being understanding and helpful through our journey, and are thrilled for those who will see the fruits of their labour in print very soon.

Humanities

For this edition of STAAR, the Humanities section comprises an article on Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Sonnets from the Portuguese* and a travel report describing one Stanner's experience of the International Colloquium on Loneliness at the Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Lisboa. Since initial write-up of both pieces took place largely during Hilary term and editing and review was carried out during Trinity term and the summer holiday, the timeline for work done on these contributions to the journal aligned squarely with the Covid-19 outbreak and related developments. As our editing team, authors, and reviewers have been spread across numerous countries (and even continents) during the pandemic, we've been affected in unique ways and to varying degrees by our regions' respective lockdown restrictions and other circumstances impacting daily life and work routines. Despite this, we're proud to say that everyone who participated in this project did so with great dedication. It's a testament to the commitment of all involved that we're publishing this edition of the journal on schedule, particularly as in recent months several contributors had challenging family and personal matters to which they needed to attend above and beyond their usual workload.

We're grateful to STAAR leadership and to the rest of the journal's staff, too, for flexibility displayed in adjusting to inevitable delays to the writing and editing process. Covid's most significant impact on this edition's compilation took the form of obstacles to the meeting of original deadlines and more difficulty in tracking down available peer reviewers than might have been expected under other circumstances. We're very grateful to the six people who stepped in to review the Humanities pieces in this issue even while dealing with various 2020-specific

disruptions to their schedules, and we thank both them and our two authors for the hard work they put in to meet the non-negotiable deadline for final drafts. Our contributors were quick to respond to input and inquiries and maintained a positive attitude throughout the drafting and editing stages, which made the process a pleasure to manage as editors. It's been encouraging to witness our peers' perseverance throughout the pandemic, and we consider it a privilege to have participated in a truly international effort in bringing this year's edition of STAAR to print.