

# ILLIAS'S NEWSLETTER

Including:

- new font notes
- winter quarter blues
  - book reports
- terrarium redesign
- thoughts on the bus
- our trip to Madison
- plus... a stunning revelation abt Hellmann's Mayonnaise...

**JAN  
JUN  
2024**

This font is Cardo. It was designed by David Perry based on the type cut for Aldus Manutius in the 15th Century. Manutius was a publisher and humanist who wanted a typeface that resembled everyday handwriting as opposed to more traditional manuscript styles. He commissioned the typeface in both Latin and Greek and is credited with inventing italic type and the precursor to the paperback.

David Perry is a classicist who designed Cardo based off of Manutius's typeface (and probably also other more modern and copyrighted typefaces but shhh) specifically for "classicists, biblical scholars, medievalists, and linguists." It also includes Hebrew characters, which I have never had cause to use, but if I need them, they're there. He has a very charming website at [www.scholarsfonts.net](http://www.scholarsfonts.net).

I like Cardo because I can use it for both English and Greek. It is a little old-fashioned, but I don't mind that. I have been using it exclusively since the beginning of the year. It feels cleaner than Alegreya but more approachable than Ibarra Real Nova, which were my previous everyday fonts.

**NOTES  
FROM  
WINTER  
QUAR-  
TER**

This has been a pretty rough quarter. For one thing, it is SO dark in Seattle in the winter. We are coming out of it now – Juno says we will get direct sunlight in our apartment in another couple weeks – but it was very dire there for a couple months. The other factor is that I sort of accidentally ended up taking 4 classes rather than 3 and I should not have! I am considering this a learning opportunity. In the fall I spent about 11 hours/week on all of my work outside of class, but this quarter has been consistently around 18. I'm looking forward to doing less work in the spring.

My favorite class this quarter has been Organization of Information and Resources. All of the core classes in this program have terrible names that no one ever remembers, so they are referred to by course number – this one is 530. It has been a very chaotic class because our professor didn't know she was teaching it until a couple weeks before it started, so she copy-pasted the syllabus from the other professor teaching it this quarter. Which is an extremely reasonable thing to have done, but the other professor has a pretty disorganized teaching style and his notes reflect that.

So she has been sort of building the airplane while it's in the air, but the subject matter is very engaging! I love to go to class and work on little cataloging exercises with my friends. It is about 50:50 people who are enjoying it, and people who think it is boring and/or confusing. I think the other half of the class is frustrated by the fact that it is impossible to create a knowledge organization system that definitively classifies every resource it will encounter, but I find that very freeing. If the task is effectively impossible, I get to just choose what I think is important and go for it. And in the context of a class exercise, there's no way for those decisions to come back to haunt you.

It does also probably help that it is the class I have with friends, where friends means people I sit with consistently.



These few months encompassed both my + Juno's birthdays. I have not celebrated my birthday since covid, bc by the time January rolls around it feels like a bad idea to be Gathering Socially. Juno had a party, though, and it was really nice! We sat around + talked, ate pizza + snacks. It was nice to see people we hadn't seen in a while, and I met Juno's rock climbing friend Quinn for the first time, which was nice.

She wanted a durian for her party – she wants to establish it as a 30<sup>th</sup> birthday tradition, but it's a hard thing to accomplish when you only have one 30<sup>th</sup> birthday. She was very happy to have it, though, and she also got some durian ice cream in addition to the mixed-berry cheesecake she asked me to make.

I have read, as of March 22, 5 books this year. I stopped reading outside of class almost entirely this quarter. In January I read J. August's *A Shrine to Saint Ann* with a book club of a few online friends. It has the worst seo of maybe any book I've ever seen? The Catholics just really have a stranglehold on St Ann(e), I guess. But I really enjoyed it. The characters represent a variety of viewpoints within the fantasy world, and they are all charming. There are a Couple of dei ex machina at the end, which one member of my book club took issue with, but I enjoyed it!

I also read C. L. Polk's *Even Though I Knew the End*. I have read a weird amount of lesbian paranormal noir detective fiction? I am thinking about Stephanie Ahn's *Harrietta Lee* books, and Stephen Spotswood's *Fortune Favors the Dead*, but Alexis Hall's *The Affair of the Mysterious Letter* is only slightly less noir. So I'm not sure what's up with that, but this was a fun addition! It could have easily become too much, but because it was so short, it was just a fun time. Definitely I was left with some questions about the religious implications, but what are you gonna do.



Book 3 was *The Martian*, which I did enjoy. It is tricky bc I so recently read *Project Hail Mary*, which I think is just a better book. Obviously unfair to compare him to his future self, but he has improved and so I am significantly less impressed by his older work. Those are the breaks! That said, I did enjoy it, even if the pacing was slightly weird.

And then in the past couple days I read two Courtney Milan books. *The Duchess War* was a reread, though I didn't remember much of it. My previous review from 2016 is harsher than I would be today. I said that too much of the plot was revealed at the beginning, and the mystery could have been drawn out more. Certainly that is true. All of the problems of the book were solved by the 75% mark and there were many times I looked perplexed at the percentage remaining and wondered what was going to happen to fill that space.

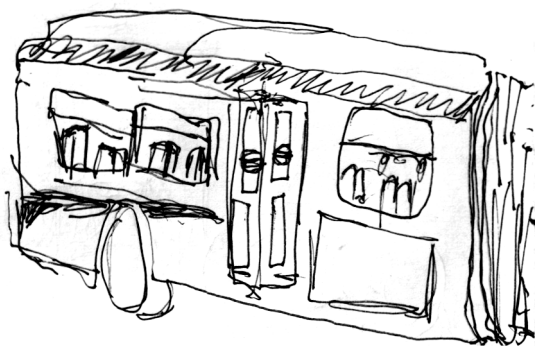


**NOTES  
FROM  
SPRING  
QUAR-  
TER**



We got a humidifier for Horatio's terrarium, because the hygrometer was consistently reporting too-low humidities, but it turns out the hygrometer was broken. Which is good, because it means he hasn't been too dry (or at least not excessively dry), and probably it's good to have a humidifier for him anyway. We also planted some new plants in there for him which hopefully will do better than the last ones. I think these should need less light. The issue is that Horatio explicitly does not want a lot of light, so any plants that live with him have to be the shady sort.

Previously, I had put some pothos + tradescentia pallida in there as plants that in my experience are difficult to kill, but they got extremely leggy and obviously unhappy. So now I separated a dracaena from the group I had previously, and also just moved the staghorn fern in there because hypothetically high humidity and low light should be perfect for it? I didn't plant that one, though, just moved the pot in there so if it doesn't seem like it's having a good time, we can always just remove it.



One of the biggest changes I made in Spring Quarter is that I have been taking the bus instead of the train to campus. I was initially motivated just by the fact that my classes this quarter happened to be in buildings that are closer to the bus stop than the train station, but as the quarter went on, I am convinced I just like it better. Here are some pros + cons:

**pro:** I wait for it at the bus stop outside rather than the train station underground. This means that a) I don't wear a mask while I'm waiting, which is nice, and b) even though there is only one bench at the bus stop, it is more consistently available than the four benches at the train station. Also it's just nice to be outside.

**pro:** Similarly, bc it runs above-ground, I can look out the window and see different buildings and plants and streets and bodies of water.

**con:** Once, on my first day of a class, I was on a bus that had to wait for a drawbridge to close behind some boats, which did make me late. On the other hand, got to watch the drawbridge do its thing, which is always fun.



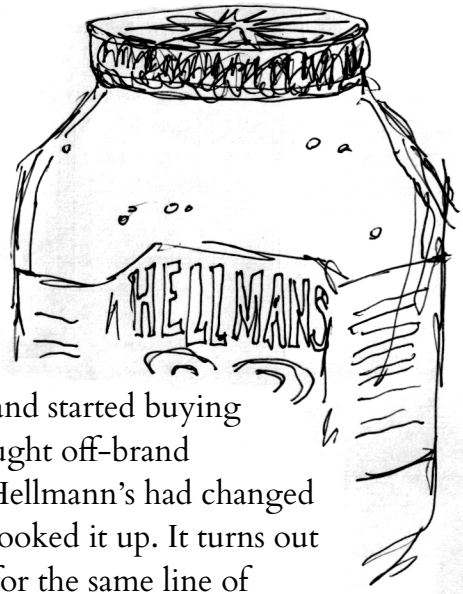
**pro:** The bus stop is about 66% of the way to the train station from our apartment. Obviously, the walk on the other end varies, and probably there are places on campus far enough away from a bus stop that I would take the train instead, but the consistent point is a good one.

**con:** The bus is slightly slower. It obviously depends on where exactly I'm going, but in general I give myself an hour to get to campus, while I'll allot 45 minutes on the train. Also, the bus comes every 15 minutes, while the train is supposed to come every 8 minutes. I do feel like the bus is more reliable, strangely. They're always doing maintenance on the light rail which changes its schedule and there are so many more people on it, especially if there's an Event downtown.

**pro:** The bus is where I have been doing a lot of drawing. I like to draw the buildings we pass, to try to get the basic shapes in before they're gone.

One thing I have been thinking about recently is simile. I have been thinking abt similes as a human action of connecting a human experience to a non-human experience. I think I read about someone's hand opening like a flower and I thought about other ways that things open and I thought about how if flowers have similes, would they be looking for a way to express the feeling of opening? Would they say that they opened like a human hand? What sort of experiences are described by similes and what experiences are those similes? You know?

I was on the bus when I was thinking abt this + looking at the flowering trees along the road. We describe someone being curled up in the sun like a cat – how would a cat describe that experience? And/or are we invoking the experience of Being the cat or Seeing the cat, you know?



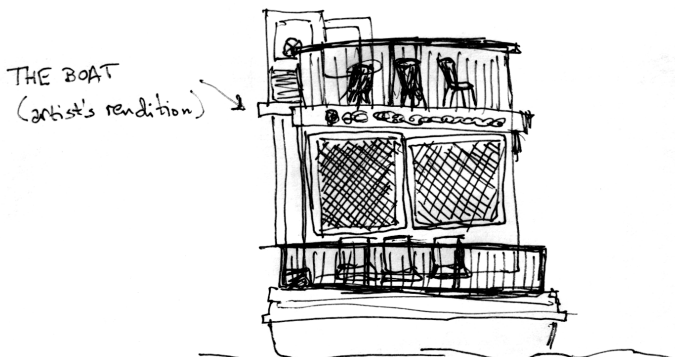
Since we moved to Seattle and started buying groceries, I'd assumed we'd bought off-brand mayonnaise but Juno asked if Hellmann's had changed their name to Best Foods, so I looked it up. It turns out they are separate brand names for the same line of condiments? They are owned by the same company which sells Hellmann's East of the Rockies + Best Foods West of the Rockies? They were two different brands that merged in 1927 and just never merged brand identity for the sake of name recognition? Theoretically the recipes are slightly different, but they are made in the same plant with the same ingredients in the same order. There is a theory that Best Foods mayonnaise contains slightly more lemon juice, making it more acidic, but it's generally assumed they're the same. They have two websites which look exactly the same except for the brand name and which both claim to be "America's #1 Mayonnaise."

I like to use mayonnaise instead of butter for making grilled cheese but I don't make any claims to it tasting better – it's just much easier to spread on untoasted bread than butter. Admittedly it is also messier.

We went to the Seattle Symphony to see them play Mahler 6, because Juno loves Mahler. It was nice. I got pretty crowd-overwhelmed, iirc, but there were several points where musicians (mostly percussion but at least once a horn) went out into the hallway to muffle their playing, which I had never seen before. It was very fun. At the end, when there is a big cymbal crash, two percussionists left the stage and came back up in the balcony behind the chorus to crash their cymbals together – one of them holding each cymbal, which was also fun – and I loved that a lot.

Juno very rarely says a funny thing once – generally once she’s said something and decided that it’s funny, she will say it at any given opportunity. This is why every night when we finish brushing our teeth, when the electric tooth brushes turn off at the same time after two minutes, she says “Huh, a tie once again.” But one thing she said months ago that I have been thinking about a lot is when she was preparing to use the old coffee grinder that we use to electrically grind spices. She was wiping it out, sniffing it, etc, and said, half dejected, half pragmatic, “Well, once a cumin grinder always a cumin grinder, I guess.” And every time I interact w it in any way now (usually when I am cleaning it to put it away), I wipe it out, detect that it still smells like cumin, and think “well, once a cumin grinder always a cumin grinder.”





We went to Madison in mid-June for Juno's Grandma Marilyn's 94<sup>th</sup> birthday. It was very nice to see everyone. She had a party on a boat, which was fun. Interesting to talk to all of her friends whom we met at her last birthday party + see what they remember about us and what we remember about them. I talked to a Wisconsin Public Radio host about the cataloging and digitization work they've been doing with their classical music collection, and to a woman whose husband is a retired soil scientist about the trips they went on for his research.

We also went to Festge County Park on a very hot day, and it was pleasant to be up on a bluff where it was cooler. Juno's brother Matthew put various pieces of food on the floor of the picnic area where we were sitting, and we watched ants eat a piece of chicken, an almond, a dried cranberry, and some cheese. It was extremely cool to watch them take it all apart.

We also met up with Juno's friend Kate and her wife Juliana, which was a lot of fun, and with my cousin Anne.

# THANKS 4 READ- ING

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