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# Navigating DisOrientation, armed with PJs and a fannypack

by Samantha Herron · September 17, 2015



I had planned to get drunk at Disorientation in order to best immerse myself in its local culture so that my account of the event be made as authentic as possible. Unfortunately, I made the mistake of Disorienting myself a day ahead of schedule, resulting in Franzia-flavored vomit and an early end to my Friday night at the Barn's Sleazefest.

For me, nothing so readily inspires existential reflection as the shame and sickness brought on by a night of alcohol-induced puking. I like to imagine that purging my insides of box wine poison is strangely similar to Catholic confession: both are possibly healing, both are potentially embarrassing, and both abide by the old adage, “it’s better out than in.” Perhaps, then, it is no wonder that I feel spiritually compelled in the days after to purify my life of its other ills, say, french fries and EDM and godlessness. In my ideal world, “faded af” read in reverse would spell something like “silence” or “raw vegan,” but alas, it is the same word backwards as forwards, a symbolic reminder that alcohol, even in reverse, is not the answer. Regardless, my drunken mishap prompted a mind toward the clean and chaste. As such, I was very sober, both alcoholically and emotionally, for the fateful first Saturday at Swarthmore’s humble frat houses.

Arrival at the frats in that headspace and without the liquid crutch of Natty Light encouraged mental images steeped in a romanticized and strobe-lit ennui. I predicted the night would include at some point a moment in which I would stand alone, frozen in the center of a throbbing jumble of sloppy first-years Making Friends, Making Out. But hey, I was in the mood for a

sweaty, poetic disaster. In search of a sense of moral superiority and material for this Phoenix article, I entered the grimy beacon that is Disorientation, wearing my PJs and a fanny pack.

Disorientation represents one of the few endeavors by Swatties to map our perceptions of Real College Parties onto our quaint, nerdy, liberal arts surroundings. It's an attempt made in order to prove that Swarthmore goes as hard as you convinced yourself it would when you decided to go here. You hope that afterwards you can finally stop feeling jealous of that random girl you knew from middle school who cameoed in a Get Shmacked video or of your friends at UMich getting shitfaced on a Wednesday. Bizarrely enough, however, Disorientation attendees are so eager to do the College Partying Thing that it actually kind of works. On that night, as on the same night last year, the frats were far more populated and energetic than we can reasonably expect for the rest the academic year.

I am contemptuous of Greek life but adoring of high spirits and a good effort. It is because of this that, despite the cynicism and asceticism I had spent all day harboring, I surprised myself by really enjoying Disorientation. Though I had planned to feel annoyed at our dedication to the stereotyped Animal House

version of college, I instead found myself celebrating the enthusiasm with which that goal was taken on. That Phi Psi asked its guests to descend into their basement and grab a fruit punch wine spritzer — to literally “drink the Kool-Aid” — was likely an unintentional metaphor on their part, but I took a sip for research purposes and it wasn’t so bad.

While at first I went through the motions of partying only for the sake of journalistic integrity, the “good vibes,” as the kids say, were infectious. I danced with my friends and I cheered for the handful who found someone to go home with. I giggled at beer spills and speculated about the sexualities of hottie 2019ers. I sent off blurry Snapchats of frat boys standing on tables. Disorientation did not, and will never, come close to approximating the Turn Ups of giant state school lore, but there were enough red solo cups, ambulances, hormones, and shenanigans present to convince the average Swattie, including myself, that they do, in fact, attend a Normal American College with Real Parties, Wow!

A part of myself would love to scoff in exasperation at the shameless school-wide commitment to the cliché that is frat parties, but my holier-than-thou facade doesn’t stand a chance against this humble truth: I am a 19-year-old American college

student who likes to dance and do dumb things with my friends. I did not Disorient myself at Disorientation – I couldn't handle another night of Catholic confession – and I would rage endlessly against the existence of fire hazard-packed frat-a-paloozas if I thought for a moment that Swarthmore was at risk of having them happen at this level every week, but I was endeared by the one night of collectively playing make believe at Real College Life.

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**Samantha Herron**

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