

TROY HILL

By Emily Breeze

There is a neighborhood that sits on the border of Pittsburgh called Troy Hill, it's tiny, there's like three thousand people there or something, it's on this literal hill, and it's a relatively small neighborhood on the edge of this big but also small city. I don't think they filmed *Mare of Easttown* there, but I don't know.

Troy Hill has the Heinz company, like the ketchup, and the Eberhardt and Ober Brewery. It also has St Anthony's Chapel, which currently houses over 5,000 relics, making it the largest collection of saint shit outside of the literal Vatican.

Bones, teeth, entire limbs, toes, fingers, hair, full skeletons, vials of blood, skulls- 5,000 venerated body parts and accoutrement are sitting next to the most famous ketchup factory in America because a single Belgian friar got really into bone collecting in the 1800s and decided the best place to keep them would be the suburban farmland of the best country for religious extremism in the world. He gathered most of his saint bits from Germany, during the Kulturkampf, which means culture struggle, when many Catholic institutions were at risk of dissolution. Germany has had several "culture struggles", including but not limited to a lot of genocide, but the one we call the Kulturkampf was mainly a struggle for the separation of church and state during the 1870's. Major issues included what to do with the children of mixed marriages (Protestant-Catholic mixed marriages), leftover resentments from the 1848 revolution, and the recently released dogma of infallibility, in which the Pope announced that he, by definition, could not be wrong.

Technically, the Pope didn't announce it himself, the First Vatican Council, convened in 1868 by Pope Pius the IXth announced it in a lil pamphlet called the *Pastor Aeternus*. Pope Pius has the longest verified Papal reign of all the big Catholic daddies, and personally sanctioned the kidnapping of a young Jewish boy, Edgardo Mortara, from his family, because his babysitter had secretly baptized him. Pope Pius was also responsible for writing *Ineffabilis Deus* in 1854, which was the first time the Catholic Church made immaculate conception official dogma. Mary wasn't officially a virgin until after the publication of *Bartleby the Scrivener*.

Which is a long-winded way of saying I think all this shit is connected. I think a man declaring women incapable of magic unless they are sexless is related to declaring himself infallible is related to a culture war between church and state is related to the fetishization of body parts is related to Pennsylvania real estate and it's all manifesting here, now. And obviously, this country was built on bones, there are so many bones underneath the foundation of every institution here, but there's something different, or specific about the way this country is also a refuge for bones. This is the place the zealots bring their bones to worship. This is the place people build temples to the apocalypse. This is the luxuriating paradise of murderers.

And who the fuck was I to imagine it ever wasn't.