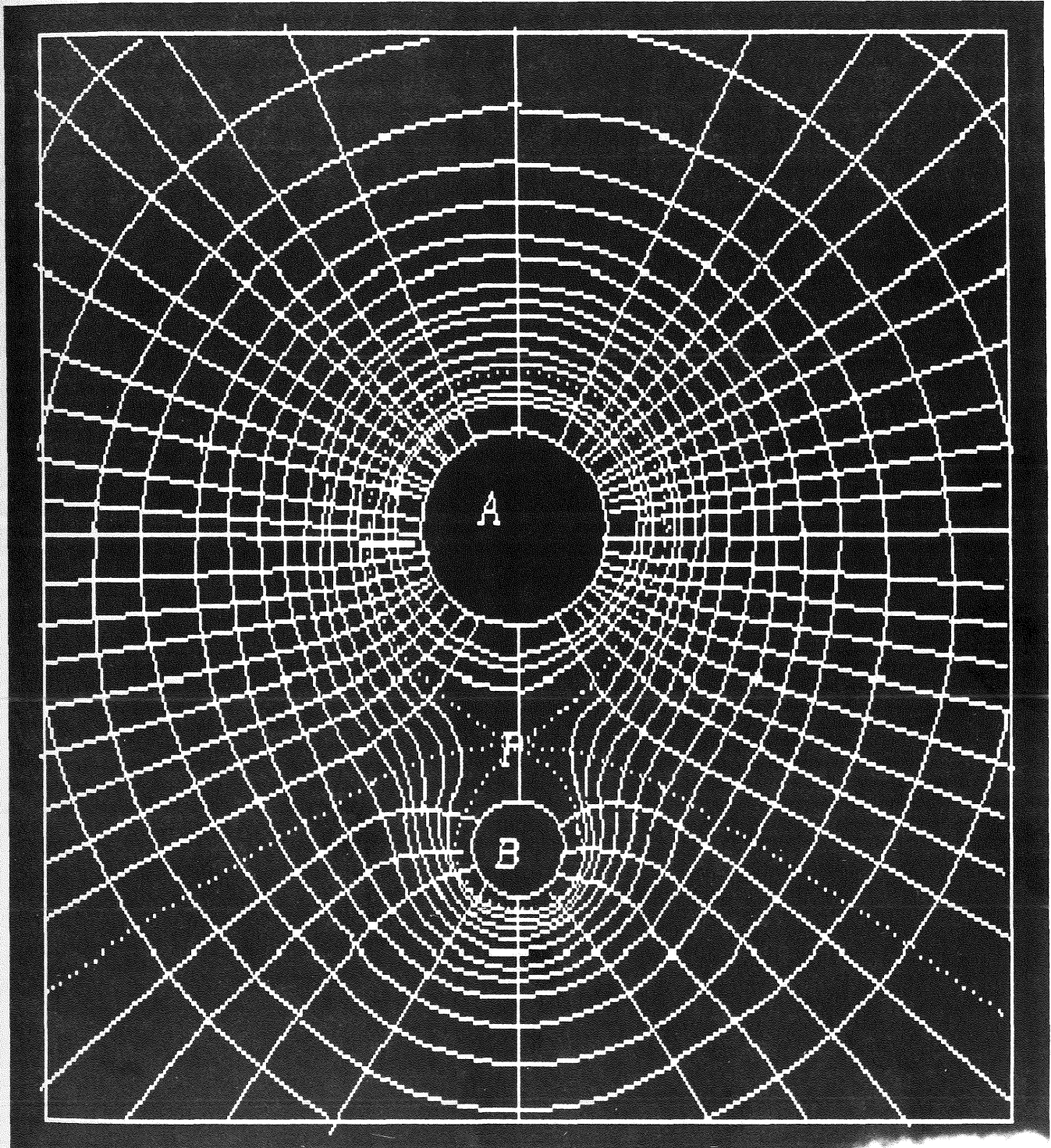


The Gadfly

St. John's College Independent Weekly
Volume X, Issue 9

Annapolis, Maryland
November 15, 1988



Letters

Praise for SCI

Dear Editor:

The Student Committee on Instruction, in its reply to Dean Slakey's "Unofficial Proposal Concerning the Program" (*Gadfly* Vol.X, Issue 6), was unnecessarily modest. It does not seem to me true, as they said, that their "criticisms are limited by a one-sided student perspective." Indeed, the whole SCI reply shows that a student perspective can be balanced, judicious, articulate, and informed with a strong understanding of the internal connections of the Program. Though I do not agree with all that it says, I think it is an excellent and impressive piece of work, and Mr. McNeill and the SCI deserve the thanks of the whole College.

The Faculty, in its October meeting, spent almost two hours on the Dean's proposal; but I must say that we did not scrutinize it with anything like the specificity and concreteness of the SCI. As always, the tutors of St. John's can learn much from their students.

Sincerely,
Jonathan Tuck, Tutor

McDowell clarified

Dear Editor:

I would like to make a small correction to Ms. Leighton's article on life without McDowell Hall (*Gadfly*, Vol. X, Issue 7). Plans now call for the Randall Dining Room to remain open all the time, and for the lobby of FSK to be closed (along with the rest of Mellon) at 1:00 am. Even these times, however, are subject to change.

Sincerely,
John Verdi, Assistant Dean

The College's moral burden

Dear Editor:

Mr. Virgil, in his objection to Mr. Sparrow's article, seems to say that the College does not have a function in the moral education of its students. This is, however, a false assumption about the purpose of this school. He says, "As soon as the College begins to assume the responsibility of "improving" its students through imposing criteria of moral virtue, it has taken on a role of dogmatism which can only destroy its intended goals."

What Mr. Virgil believes the "intended goals" to be is unclear. But to assume that the College does not, or should not, be responsible in educating the students in moral virtue of the students is false.

For if this is not the case, then why must the students have permission to host coffee shop parties? Why must they pay for breaking school property or for losing library books? Why does the school give out a Student Manual? It would be against the intended goals of the College government, and government in general, not to educate its students in moral virtue. Is not the end of government to help society live well? How can students live well, both intellectually and morally, if the College does not assume the responsibility of imposing criteria of moral virtue???

Mr. Virgil continues by saying, "We have to be rational about the role of the College in the moral education of its students...St. John's is a place where the individual has to ask and come to terms with the most important questions of his life. I alone can decide what sort of sexual lifestyle is correct for me."

It is not clear how the College must be rational. Is the College rational by "in no way allowing itself to take a stand?" He seems to say that the students can obtain

moral virtue through reading books. Didn't Aristotle make a distinction between moral and intellectual virtue? Intellectual virtue comes through teaching, and moral virtue comes through habituation. Of course they read about moral virtue in the seminar, but that only answers why they should be moral. How to live morally comes from outside the person. That is why governments establish laws, and it seems to me that laws are formed to help people live morally. It is against the "intended goals" of St. John's not to impose a criteria of moral virtue.

Fornication and sodomy are unjust acts, but not because the Roman Catholic Church prohibits them, but because, to the best of my knowledge, they are illegal between unmarried people in the state of Maryland, along with such acts as the consumption of alcohol by those under 21 and taking mind-altering drugs. Making condoms available encourages fornication. Not to all, though, but to those who already believe that such acts are not bad. And those are the students who need most to know what moral virtue is.

Sincerely,
Gerard Sparaco '90

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News from the outside

by Theodore Merz '89

The Election

George Bush handily defeated Democrat Michael Dukakis in the Nov. 8th presidential election receiving 54% of the popular vote and rolling up 426 electoral votes from 40 states. Although it was a comfortable win, it did not approach the 1984 landslide when Reagan received 59% of the popular vote and 525 electoral votes. Political commentators have concurred that Bush's win does not give him the mandate Reagan had in his first term and that voters inclined toward Bush primarily to preserve the status quo -- something which may limit Bush's ability to forge new directions and define his presidency. Polls also indicated that people voted against Dukakis more than they voted for Bush.

Although Bush appeared to win easily, Dukakis was gaining momentum during the last 10 days of the campaign and many of the key Dukakis states were lost by close margins. In spite of what Ray Gifford has called a conservative political season, Dukakis might have won this election had he not made tactical mistakes which widened the margin for Bush. The Dukakis campaign suffered from hesitancy and a lack of momentum. He delayed responding to Bush's attacks and thereby allowed the Vice-President to define him and the issues. He refused the advice of his staff to engage in "negative campaigning". Power struggles among the Dukakis staff and poorly targeted TV ads also contributed to the Dukakis defeat, but perhaps most damaging for Dukakis was his staying at home in Mass. during the month of August. He thought that he could sit on his lead coming out of the convention. He couldn't.

Now to voice a few of my own feelings about this election. In spite of the popular propensity to lament the lack of "real" choice both Dukakis and Bush are eminently qualified to hold the office of the

presidency of the United States. Both have spent most of their adult lives in government service. There were differences between the two men both on issues and in character, and these differences came out. In short, there was a clear choice. Yet there was a record-low voter turnout (barely 50% of the voting public). In the wake of such apathy people can hardly blame politicians for a perceived lack of substance in the campaign. Politicians will, after all, do whatever it takes to get elected. If we demand that they discuss issues, they will.

Congressional Races

All of the members of the House of Representatives were up for reelection and 99% were reelected. Some commentators pointed out ironically, that the turnover for the House was less than it was for the Supreme Soviet.

The only real shock in the Senatorial races was the defeat of three-term Senator Lowell Weicker from Conn. Mr. Weicker was defeated by Dem. Joe Lieberman.

The Transition

The day after his presidential victory George Bush adopted a more conciliatory tone, saying that he wished to be everyone's president. He named a transition team to aid him in filling the 3,000 governmental positions which must be occupied by the time he takes office in January. Mr. Bush also immediately announced his appointment of James Baker III to Secretary of State. The Baker appointment could signal some departures in foreign policy, especially in Latin America, where Baker has advocated a more diplomatic approach to the conflict in Nicaragua. Before going on a 4-day vacation, Bush met with leaders of the Afghanistan resistance and reminded the Soviets of their promise to withdraw troops from that country by Feb. 15. Bush also toned down his campaign rhetoric. During the campaign he repeatedly said, "read my lips -- no taxes", but

after the election he said he has no plan to deviate from holding the line on taxes. Bush promised to reach consensus with the Democratically controlled Congress.

Computer Virus

In what has been called "the hack heard round the world" a young Cornell grad student, Robert Morris, created a computer virus which was programmed to spread itself through an international computer system by travelling through electronic mail. The virus did not wipe out data, but by taking up the space computers use to store information it slowed them down to a standstill. The virus, which was not intended to do harm, eventually spread to 6,000 computers around the world and has prompted a polemic about computer security.

The East Bloc

■ A bill presently before Hungary's parliament, if passed, would allow for political parties and trade unions to be formed. It would signify a change in the policy of the ruling Communist Party which has held a monopoly on power in the country since 1948.

■ A group of Lithuanians, Latvians, and Estonians signed petitions against amendments in the Soviet Constitution which would limit the political rights of the various Soviet republics. The grievances were presented to a commission of the Supreme Soviet in Moscow.

■ In Poland, several one-day strikes were launched at small shipyards in Gdansk to protest the government's decision to close the Lenin shipyards and the government's failure to hold talks concerning the future of the banned trade union, Solidarity.

■ Police in Prague arrested a number of dissidents on Nov. 10 in an attempt to disrupt a weekend meeting with Western writers, academics, and human rights activists.

■ Nobel Peace laureate Andrei Sakharov is in the US to attend a human rights conference in Washington. He told journalists that Gorbachev's programs in the Soviet Union could result in domestic unrest and eventually threaten world peace. This is the first visit to the West for Sakharov since he was freed from internal exile two years ago.

The Maldives

An attempted coup in the Maldives was unsuccessful. The coup, which was led by Sri Lankan mercenaries, killed 14 and wounded 40. The mercenaries, who escaped the island by

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The problem of tutors failing to 'tute'

by Anne Leonard '89

We all know that at St. John's the quality of a class depends upon much more than the quality of the material; it depends as well upon the group dynamics. I, and, I am sure, every other member of the community have suffered classes that drag on and on without anyone learning anything. Although occasionally that is a result of the material, more often it is a result of the class, of the interaction of students with each other and with the tutor.

Sometimes there is just plain bad chemistry. This cannot be helped. We can do things to influence the class, but

"But all the same there is a teaching problem, a problem of tutors not tuting"

when the minds of the people in the group function in such radically different ways that they cannot respond to each other in any sort of adequate fashion, there is nothing we can do. We can all learn classroom etiquette. When the discussion has turned into argument with the various sides merely repeating themselves without saying anything new or insightful, the conversation can be turned. But good mechanics of discussion, as necessary as they are, cannot help an individual to understand an idea which is completely alien. There are certain things one can do to facilitate a good conversation, but sometimes, with the mix of people in the room, a lively and thought-provoking discussion is just not possible.

Bad class chemistry is a problem that we all have to live with. Neither are the mechanics of discussion what I wish to address here. Rather I wish to discuss the problem of poor tutors, tutors who do not know how to "tute." We must acknowledge the fact that just as there are poor students, there are poor tutors.

I am not being at all frivolous when I say "tute." Tutors are called tutors and not professors precisely because the method of learning here is different from the standard college form. We are told in the catalogue that the tutors are merely "the most advanced students in the class." This is the ideal that we, the students, were seduced by; this is the hope that we cling to.

And, as with any ideal or hope, it turns out to be far more rare than we believed. I have of course had some excellent classes; I don't think there is a student here who will deny that he or she has learned and has had at least one excellent tutor. But all the same there is a teaching problem, a problem of tutors not tuting.

This manifests itself in two forms: the lecture and the guessing game. Certainly for some classes--Greek and French grammar particularly--it is important to have the tutor be knowledgeable; it is quite possible for a student to be wrong, even at St. John's. Where there are rules to be learned and followed, it is essential that the tutor have a grasp of them which is at least equal to, if not greater than, the grasp of the students. But the lecture is something different altogether.

Almost everyone likes to talk. We all know students who would talk for hours if they were permitted. Tutors are not alone in lengthy speeches. And I can certainly see where the temptation lies. But the students are both intelligent and educated; we have probably over 150 years of education between us in the average tutorial. With our own education and intelligence, we are able to help each other out with concepts, to go beyond the rules. If posed a question, we are able to thrash out some sort of answer in a group discussion, and generally that answer is one which we will retain much longer than an answer which we did not come to ourselves.

And yet there are tutors who will tell us the answer, who will explain what is going on, who will talk for twenty or thirty minutes without a break. These tutors are all extremely intelligent and knowledgeable individuals; often what they have to say is informative and interesting. But we, by submitting to the lecture, are being deprived of two things.

The first of these is the most productive use of our brains. Our thinking

muscles atrophy. We learn how to absorb and not how to create. We stop learning how to ask questions; our mind stops looking for errors and starts to take what we are told as truth. We are in effect given only one half of a dialectical process. And once this begins, we are trapped in a vicious cycle; we stop knowing how to learn for ourselves and so become dependent upon the lecture for knowledge.

The second and perhaps more crucial loss is that of interaction with our peers. Heads get turned to the tutor and not to other students; the conversation falls easily into a sequence of questions

"And yet there are tutors who will tell us the answer...who will talk for twenty or thirty minutes without a break"

addressed to and answered by the tutor. Instead of those 150 years of our education, we are relying on the tutor's twenty. We no longer teach each other but instead are taught. Our knowledge becomes less valuable, and we begin to feel that what knowledge we do possess is insufficient to help one other. Authority enters the classroom in the person of an individual and not a work.

It is precisely in avoiding these things that tutors swing to the other extreme, the guessing game. This consists of "I have an answer to this question and you will all try to guess until you hit upon it." It is Socrates with the slave-boy. It can occur in any class, even seminar. It is a result of the tutor's effort to get the students to learn. It is an attempt to start a good conversation. It is well-intentioned.

But students rapidly see through the subterfuge. We are not deceived as to the

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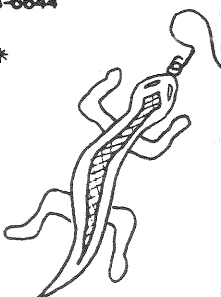
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An objection to the SCI's response

by Rhonda Datcher '89

I am writing in response to the SCI's reply to Dean Slakey's proposed program revisions. I agree almost entirely with the SCI's assessment of the consequences of each individual change for the program as a whole. They are right, for instance, in taking issue with the plan to do away with junior mathematics by placing the calculus portion in sophomore math and a scaled-down *Principia* segment in junior lab. It makes sense to ask how it is that room could be made for even a little of Newton's *Principia* in an already over-stuffed junior laboratory. Further, as the SCI puts it, "the program as it now stands depends upon a complex series of correspondences, in any given year and between all four." To tamper with the rather delicate and fragile structure which has been created -- by mixing infinitesimal calculus with Thomas Aquinas and Plotinus -- is to lose the good of cohesiveness, which is one of the program's strengths.

Upon reading Dean Slakey's pro-

posal, I am not, however, left with the SCI's questions of "why this?" and "why now?" I disagree with their view that from a student's perspective the difficulties of the program are not serious enough to merit rather radical revision. Is it not the case that many classes--the SCI cites freshman lab and sophomore music and I would add junior math and lab to the list, if not more--are frequently cited as problematical, if not downright deadly? (Come on, students, how many classes have you sat through where few, if any, people were prepared and the great majority had little sense of what was going on?) Is Dean Slakey not rightly troubled that students who do put forth their best efforts--or even just good efforts--over long periods of time often find little reward in what they are able to grasp? And is it not all the more troubling that, having been frustrated so many times in the past, those same students stop trying and do not even attempt what is within their reach? (How many seniors would describe themselves as just trying

to coast through one or more of their classes with little hope of ever understanding what the great mind for the day --Hegel, Einstein, or whoever--is saying?) What is the necessary result of continually reading extremely difficult books and scientific papers at breakneckspeed with no time for reflecting on them or for working through difficulties with them?

I do not mean to say that nothing good happens in classes at St. John's or that everyone is always feeling demoralized and ill-equipped for the tasks set for us. I do, however, mean to say that I myself and, I would suspect, many others have these same feelings far too often. Sometimes we say that we are failing the program. I would like to raise the possibility that the program, though not failing us (that would put it too strongly), does too much to engender a false mistrust of one's own abilities. Perhaps, for example, Maxwell's equations at the end of junior lab might, indeed, be accessible to the majority of students here. But with

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The end of election season: an appraisal

by Hallie Leighton '92

Much of the conversation circulating around campus on the eve of the election, Democrats included, was focused on keeping Bush alive, healthy, and in office. Never did Democrats ever think they would reach such a point of desperation (before Quayle). Never did Republicans get to laugh at watching a Democrat renouncing liberalism so vigorously. Others had an elaborate plan to impeach Bush, then Quayle, then Wright, then Dole, and then eventually maybe the list would wheedle down to someone that people liked and could even get excited about. Others expressed concern that the list would wheedle its way down to Dave Pissarra. Then there was the popular dream that maybe we could start over. Basically people were unen-

thusiastic about an event that was unaffectionately dubbed the 'battle of the midgets'.

The election did not help pique the interest of the many people who were apathetic to begin with. Even activists seemed to adopt an attitude of indifference. Most people who did vote felt that they were choosing the lesser of two evils and the only choice they had in the matter was deciding who they didn't want in the Oval Office. And many didn't vote at all. But when people actually did break down and discuss issues, the main issue was deciding whether they wanted a conservative with two eyebrows or with one. Democrats looking for a liberal had to make do. Republicans looking for an exciting, fearless leader also had to make do.

However, the apathy that extended beyond disillusionment was not to be ignored. There is a sentiment here among some of the student body that if you are reading about a Philosopher-King or studying Locke or Montesquieu, the exploration of the foundations of democracy suffices and that actual voting is not necessary. I've heard people saying, "I'll be a student now, I'll make my contribution later." St. John's students are known to have their head up in the clouds, too enamored and consumed with their great books to be concerned with subjects as modern and mundane as today's problems. Are these people's ideals really too high, their dreams of America's future too lofty to trouble themselves with current events, or is it simply sloth? Is it just the confirmation of the stereotype that St. John's students have difficulty committing themselves to any simple practical action that may yield results? Not that voting always yields desired results, but it is a simple unadorned action, which may not be in the spirit of St. John's.

Many people who did vote made their statement by writing in a candidate. They were upset by the tendency of the candidates on both sides to be crowd-pleasers and not state how they really felt. Many are simply putting their hopes aside until the next election, when maybe a charismatic candidate will appear on the

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The liberation of science: Mr. Simpson

by Ray Gifford '89

On the first day of junior lab, when the tutor attempts to thumbnail sketch the coming venture into mechanics and electromagnetism, he or she will reverently talk of the year's culmination with "Maxwell's Equations." Though the equations remain oblique in meaning, at least the esteem which they are afforded keeps alive through the ensuing year the lab student's hope that indeed this calculus might ultimately make sense.

Upon arrival at the laboratory of English physicist James Clerk Maxwell, the wearied junior lab student's hopes rise -- "Finally, the odyssey will end; Maxwell will raise me from this phenomenal chaos. My ability to understand the natural world will be redeemed." Such was the foolish state of mind that possessed me last May. These mythical equations would redeem me from the morass of electromagnetic phenomena. I met my redeemers; they appeared thus:

$$\begin{aligned}\text{Div } \vec{H} &= 0 \\ \text{Div } \vec{E} &= 0 \\ \text{Curl } \vec{E} &= -\frac{1}{c} \frac{\partial \vec{H}}{\partial t} \\ \text{Curl } \vec{H} &= \frac{1}{c} \frac{\partial \vec{E}}{\partial t}\end{aligned}$$

To be sure, they proved a great blow to my Cartesian pretensions for clear and distinct truth that would be accessible to even the most mathematically inept. Maxwell's analytic mathematics confounded me, while the equations themselves seemed so disembodied from the phenomena that they became meaningless.

Lest I despair, filing Maxwell away somewhere between *De Anima* and *The Parmenides* among the 'incomprehensibles,' St. John's tutor Thomas Simpson hit me with a startling claim about his study of Maxwell: "I want to read Maxwell as literature."

Taken aback, I asked him to explain further.

Specifically, Mr. Simpson sees Maxwell's sense of rhetoric and utilization of rhetorical structures as revealing how "a scientific concept itself takes shape." Maxwell gives a source by which we can examine what it means to attain knowledge in the sciences. Through examining Maxwell's unfolding of the electromagnetic wave theory, Mr.

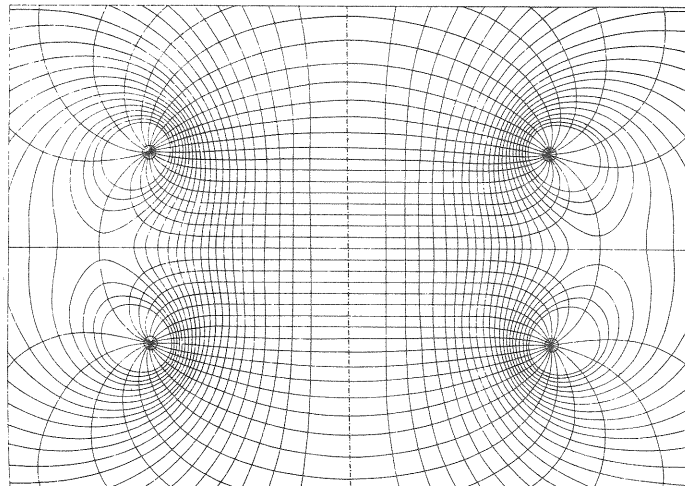
Simpson maintains, we see the very idea of science unfold.

Surely anyone able to find literary value in the above equations ought to be compelled to write a book about his insight, and Mr. Simpson is doing just that.

The book is to be part of a series, "Guided Studies of Great Texts in Science," edited by Mr. Flaumenhaft. Mr. Simpson is writing it during the academic year with the help of a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Specifically, Mr. Simpson's book will concentrate on three of Maxwell's scientific papers in which Maxwell evolves the idea of electromagnetic waves, culminating in the third paper with the revered equations above.

The first paper Mr. Simpson will consider, "On Faraday's Lines of Force," is key to understanding the elucidation of a "scientific idea." In the paper Maxwell is dealing directly with the work of Faraday, and Faraday's idea of there being actual lines of force surrounding electromagnetic agents like a magnet. These "force lines" become evident when iron filings are scattered around a magnet. The filings are arranged around the magnet in such a way that lines issue from either end of the magnet and make concentric ellipse-like patterns from the magnet. In fact, the lines of force look something like this:




Maxwell's diagram of lines of force about circular currents

In attempting to understand this and other phenomena where lines of force become apparent, Maxwell constructs a mental image. That is, in beginning the evolution of the scientific idea, Mr. Simpson says, Maxwell resorts to the use of analogy. Maxwell speaks of a "per-

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fectly incompressible fluid as a means of conceiving the electromagnetic field." Mr. Simpson adds, "but it is only an idea, it can not be a physical hypothesis."

Thus, in Maxwell's geometrical imagery, the lines of force become lines of flow propagating through fields of pressure in a permeable medium.

What's more, Mr. Simpson points out, is that Maxwell makes very limited use of mathematics in this first paper. He restricts himself to "constructing this explanation in the

geometrical imagination of his reader." Why, though, would Maxwell write an entire paper with a premise that can never be acceptable? What good is his idea if it will only serve as an analogy to the phenomenal occurrence?

Mr. Simpson sees Maxwell's purpose

on Maxwell

as rhetorical. In positing the mythical fluid surrounding the lines of force, "Maxwell provides a metaphor around which thought can cohere. He points the way to a physical hypothesis." In building this analogy, Mr. Simpson believes, Maxwell begins the evolution of a scientific idea which comes to fruition by the third paper. But, by assuming this rhetorical starting point, Maxwell brings up

In positing the mythical fluid surrounding the lines of force, "Maxwell provides a metaphor around which thought can cohere. He points the way to a physical hypothesis"

questions as to the validity of understanding through analogy and how this relates to true and certain knowledge of the natural phenomena. Clearly, to Maxwell it is the proper place to start: before we can regard the idea in its full majesty we must be conditioned for it by the use of analogy and mathematical imagination. Maxwell himself is only searching for the appropriate understanding, Mr. Simpson asserts.

Besides these overarching questions in the work, Mr. Simpson sees a joke in this first paper. By consciously avoiding analytic mathematics as he does in the first paper, while claiming what he's doing is the hieroglyphics of math, Maxwell sort of "thumbs his nose at the traditional conception of mathematics," Mr. Simpson says. In this way Mr. Simpson claims that Maxwell vindicates the supposedly non-mathematical approach of Faraday in this first paper. But, alas, this imaginative, metaphorical world of Faraday must be abandoned.

Thus Maxwell continues to the second paper.

The second paper, "On Physical Lines of Force," doesn't actually make a physical hypothesis, but entertains a physical as opposed to mathematical idea. This step from the mathematical to the physical, signals to Mr. Simpson an evolution of the idea. Maxwell resorts to looking at a model for the force lines which, in principle, could exist. Unlike the fluid in the first paper, the hypothesis in this paper posits a physical media which has mass, inertia and energy; it is endowed with physical attributes.

For Mr. Simpson this new hypothesis brings up a key question in understanding the idea of science. What is the advantage of the physical explanation offered by this second paper over the imaginary fluid explanation of the first? How can we claim that this new physical hypothesis is more valid than the purely 'imaginary' one?

It is the third paper, "A Dynamical Theory of the Electromagnetic Field," which "yields a strategic advance in the theory. While describing a dynamical system, he does not commit himself to a physical model." This fact, Mr. Simpson holds as key to understanding Maxwell. In this third paper, wherein the equations make their heralded appearance, Maxwell only metaphorically speaks of physical quantities. "He walks a careful line between the physical mechanism of the second paper and the stark formalism of the first," Mr. Simpson says. In doing so, Maxwell avoids assertions which go beyond the limited physical evidence -- his is the theory of a good skeptic.

In this third paper Maxwell begins with the mechanical equations of Lagrange -- equations which characterize in the most general of terms any conservative and connected mechanical system. From this general mechanical case, "Maxwell sifts down to specify the elec-

tromagnetic case." Thus he arrives at the formal mathematical theory of the field. Later, in bringing this idea to fruition, Mr. Simpson finds it significant that Maxwell makes as little use of analytic mathematics as possible. Ultimately Maxwell even goes so far as to say that his formulation of electromagnetism loses nothing essential without the aid of analytic mathematics.

Mr. Simpson sees that Maxwell ef-

Maxwell evolves a concept of "what the world might be like -- perhaps what the world should be like."

fects a rhetorical triumph in this final paper. According to Mr. Simpson, "Maxwell was able to utter as much truth as what can be uttered without going beyond the limits of assured knowledge." In restraining himself from resorting to solely an empirical model and using the power of metaphor analogy, Maxwell evolves a concept of "what the world might be like -- perhaps what the world *should* be like."

Science for Maxwell becomes in this sense a problem of rhetoric. But, in becoming a rhetorical endeavor, Maxwell does not ignore practical consequences. The field theory yields the electromagnetic theory of light -- the discovery that light itself is an electromagnetic process.

Electromagnetism in its formulation, however, is what interests Mr. Simpson. Maxwell, with -- Mr. Simpson believes -- an eye to Kant, realizes that scientific formulations must meet the form of the understanding; consequently natural phenomena must be an instance of Lagrange's equations if they are to constitute an acceptable account. In essence, then, science becomes a choice to which philosophy must be brought to bear. Realizing this, Maxwell chooses his rhetorical advance carefully, forming and shaping the equations to weave the most suitable account.

Good Cartesians are undoubtedly up in arms by now. What is this talk of choice, they will ask of Mr. Simpson. Science is a matter of elucidating the clear and distinct truth of nature.

Mr. Simpson, and more powerfully Maxwell, reject this Cartesian dogma. Mr. Simpson points out that, indeed, an

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Tutors who don't 'tute'

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tutor's ignorance. We know there is a "right answer" which we can pull from the air and present to the tutor on a silver platter, to receive a gold star in return. And once again we are deprived of the privilege-- the right-- of asking and answering our own questions. Once again we are patronized, condescended to. It is rather like being on a game show. It is not only our thinking which atrophies, but also our desire for learning. We become bored and disinterested and feel as though the entire class consists only of emptying ourselves out rather than being filled with knowledge. If the answer is there in our heads, what do we learn by vocalizing it? And how do we teach each other? We teach no one, and we are once again no longer on the same level as the tutor.

Obviously students cannot be victimized by such methods unless we allow ourselves to be. We share a great deal of the blame for poor classes; we come unprepared, we do not ask ourselves any questions when we do the reading, we simply do not care. By no means do I accuse tutors of being solely responsible for bad classes. We ourselves are responsible for trying to make things better.

But at times I feel like I am struggling to improve the class at cross-purposes to the tutors. There are some things which tutors can do to make classes better without going against the students' efforts for the same.

The first and most important is for tutors to rid themselves of their knowledge except when they are asked for it. The best questions are always genuine questions. One cannot avoid having preconceived ideas before a discussion, but one can try to focus on something other than those ideas.

A second thing is to take a much less active part. Let the awkward silences exist. Students will eventually feel uncomfortable enough and guilty enough to break those silences themselves. The silence can be used to force us to learn to ask questions. Discussions are invariably better, more interesting, more stimulating, when they are instigated by the students themselves. We have excellent conversations outside of class.

A third thing is to remember that rules and concepts are different. Yes, rhyme and meter can help us get at the meaning of poem; yes, equations help us to understand a wave. But we do not rely on them. We are able to talk about how a piece of music or a poem makes us feel without breaking it completely down, and we do math without symbols in the

very beginning. I do not deny the importance of rules and formulae and technique; but we, as intelligent and creative people, can work back to them from the concepts, and I at least feel I learn far more that way.

This article was born out of a lunchtable gripe session about the guessing game. And this raises the spectre of another problem accompanying poor classes. We as students do not have any real forum for criticizing our tutors. I am uncomfortable approaching a tutor and saying, "Do be quiet and let us run for the class for once"; it is awkward and improper. Likewise a don rag or conference is not an appropriate place for such a discussion; it is we who are on trial there. True, if we have problems with a class we are encouraged to say them; but while a tutor can say, "Ms. So and So has some problems with communication. She needs to learn how to listen more," I cannot say, "Mr. Blank talks too much." We do not have the opportunity to perform student rags on dons.

It seems to me that both these problems-- poor tutoring and poor communication about it-- stem from the same thing: unwillingness to respect the students as equals. We are unequal in knowledge; we feel that keenly. But we are not at all unequal in our desire or in our ability to learn. We certainly are not immediately able to overcome the idea of a teacher as authority; we have years and years of that attitude ingrained into us. It is first the responsibility of tutors to show us they are not the authorities, and next the responsibility of students to show the tutors and ourselves what indeed we are capable of learning. We are here, after all, not so much for the sake of learning what to think but for the sake of learning.

Maxwell

continued from previous page

alternative to Maxwell's field formulation, developed in Germany by Wilhelm Weber, accounts for all the same phenomena through action at a distance. This formulation, Mr. Simpson asserts, is rejected in the broadest sense as a matter of *stylistic choice*, not empirical certainty.

In Maxwell, then, we see a choice being made, a dialectical choice as to how our world is to be understood. At stake is more than satiation of historical curiosity. Mr. Simpson sees understanding the paradigm of Maxwell as crucial to our times.

In his book he shall attempt to bring the complexity and the imposing nature of the Maxwell's theories to the non-scientific reader. For, "It is crucial in our times in which the sciences have been so deeply incorporated in the body politic that sciences be made accessible to the public in a new way. It's essential members of a free body politic be in a position to understand, criticize, and make informed judgement within the realm of the sciences."

In elucidating Maxwell and showing how he evolves a scientific idea, Mr. Simpson feels that science can be made intelligible beyond its mathematical incomprehensibility and we shall be better informed of science's capacities, insights and limits.

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Announcements

Community invited to name that trailer

Pascal once created a brilliant contest which intrigued intellectuals all over France. Nobody knew the author, however, because Pascal used an assumed name. Then, having already worked out the most elegant solution, Pascal entered his own contest--under a *different* assumed name! Being the judge as well as an entrant, Pascal won, naturally. He offered, judged, and won the contest, all without anybody even knowing that he had participated! The Campus Planning Committee and the Registrar's Office, however, are *not* assumed names. They are all too real.

And the Registrar's Office has an-

nounced a brilliant contest of its own, to be judged by the Campus Planning Committee: the contest is to name the three temporary classroom buildings (Port-o-Johnnies); the prize, one which even Pascal could afford, the honor and the glory of naming the buildings.

The contest is open to the entire St. John's Community; entrants should submit their suggestions to the Registrar's Office by noon, November 30, for the CPC to judge in their meeting that afternoon. Final results will be announced in the *Gadfly*.

(The participants are all beautiful people and I'm glad they're around.)

Temporary, Full-time Campus Jobs

We need to hire ten student to help 'empty' McDowell after the close of Fall Semester. The dormitories and food service will be closed, so students who sign up to work must live and eat off-campus. The details of the jobs are as follows:

Dates Needed: Dec. 16, 19, 20, 21, 22

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Computer news

Please contact John Freeman if you want to get started with word processing. It can ease the pain of writing a paper.

The computer terminals are getting pretty busy in the evenings. However, they remain virtually unused during the day. To relieve the congestion, my hours will change to Sundays 11 am - 4 pm, Mondays 1 pm - 3:30 pm and Thursdays 10:30 am - 1 pm.

-John Freeman

Listen to lawyers

If you have any interest in having an attorney from the Young Lawyers' Section speak to your group, please contact Stefanie Takacs. There is a list of 36 topics.

-Stefanie Takacs

Diotima canceled

Alison Pullins reports that "Diotima Talks" has been canceled through Thanksgiving Break at the request of the Dean.

Notes on AIDS

Just a note:

H.I.V., or Human Immunodeficiency Virus, which eventually leads to A.I.D.S., the final stage of the virus

--can be transmitted during oral sex with either gender

--is transmitted by these body fluids only: semen or vaginal fluid, urine and blood

--cannot be diagnosed before two weeks after infection occurs and may take up to a year (though this is very rare) before antibodies develop and tests positive to the virus

--may take up to 15 years before it manifests itself as A.I.D.S.

--is transmittable as soon as one contracts the virus.

Please, if you have any questions about H.I.V. and/or A.I.D.S., contact me through campus mail or ext. 309. I attended an A.I.D.S. workshop this Tuesday November 9th and have accurate and current information on H.I.V., A.I.D.S., and testing.

-Stefanie Takacs

This **Friday, Nov. 18**

Good Lord, it's the long-awaited

ED.O.

**Album Release
Party**

The Coffeeshop will be the setting for his majesty Eliot Duhan's outlandish inaugural baptism as the crown prince of R 'n' R. *Everyone* dances - only exogenously detained offenders would ever dare opprobrium of the magnitude that missing this would cause to be heaped upon you.

SPORTS

Women's Hoop Maenads 34 Furies 13

by Leo Pickens, A.D.

The women's basketball season got off to an exciting start. The Furies had parted with the Hustlers over the weekend. Some of that Hustler magic and enthusiastic love of sport must have rubbed off on the Furies, because the women turned out in full force. Sally Fine, alumnus, played. Selah Wolbarsht '92 made her sports debut this season, as did Heather Noone '91 and Laura Melbin '92.



Ms. Wolbarsht proved to be a solid basketball player. When she got the ball inside, she made a good percentage of her shots. Because of the Maenads' stiff zone defense lead by Claire Morgan '91, though, the problem was just this: getting the ball inside. Ms. Morgan paced the Maenads' scoring attack with 20 points. Lt. Commodore, who was standing behind the scorer's table watching the action, said of Ms. Morgan, "She's 'The Force'." She's definitely 'The Force'." Ms. Morgan had help from Ms. Asmuth with 6 points, and Ms. Frey with 6 more. It looks like the Maenads are going to be the team to reckon with this season. I said as much to my official timer, Jeanne Duvoisin '89. Ms. Duvoisin narrowed her eyes and said, "Just you wait, Mr. Pickens. Just you wait. You haven't seen Ms. Hatch."

Women's soccer ends on high note

by Tequila Brooks '91

The grass was yellow and the field was covered with fallen leaves. The sky was overcast. Sirens could be heard throughout the Annapolis Metropolitan District. A flock of seagulls hovered over lower back campus. An airplane flew by.

The women's soccer season ended Thursday with the come-if-you-will all-star match. The match was played on a 5/8 field with traffic cone goals. The three spectators watched the game in shifts. Thirteen women showed up to play, and divided into two teams. Team 1 was comprised of Erika McConnel '92, Linda Hamm '89, Maureen Hatch '92, Claire Darling '92, Liz Didato '92, and Charman Levinson '92. Team 2 was comprised of Christine Barber '91, Alison Packwood '89, Susan Haines '90, Nell Sweeney '89, Jeanne Duvoisin '89, Tequila Brooks '91, and Valerie Pawlewicz '89.

Team 2 kicked off, with a forward line of Ms. Sweeney, Ms. Barber, and Ms. Duvoisin. The game was hard and serious. Players were well-guarded and, if anyone had the ball, someone from the other team closed in on her immediately. During the first half, Ms. Hamm minded the Team 1 goal, with Ms. Darling as a strong fullback. Ms. Didato, Ms. Hatch, and Ms. Levinson proved an effective forward line for Team 1, wrenching the

ball from forwards on Team 2 often before it got to the other end of the field. But Ms. Sweeney proved to be too fast and often recovered the ball to take it straight through mid-field and up to the goal. Or, if Team 1 got too close to the goal, either Ms. Packwood or Ms. Haines would recover it and send it up to Ms. Barber on the left wing so she could pass it to Ms. Sweeney or Ms. Duvoisin up on the line. But goals were difficult and far between because they had to be made below knee level and into non-regulation size spaces. And what did get near the goal was held back by Ms. Hamm.

At half-time, Ms. McConnel had scored a goal for Team 1 and Ms. Sweeney had scored a goal for Team 2. It sprinkled occasionally. As the sun began to set, the clouds became translucent orange. In the second half, Ms. McConnel scored twice, and Ms. Levinson scored once for Team 1. Ms. Haines almost made a score for Team 2, but the ball knocked over a cone instead. Ms. Sweeney scored another time and made several almost scores which were too high to be counted.

Ms. Sweeney said that Team 2 had a stronger, more cohesive offense, but that the other team was good at break-aways: grabbing the ball and running it singly up to the goal.

News

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boat, later surrendered to Indian commandoes.

China

A Nov. 6th earthquake in a remote area of China killed 900. The quake, which measured 7.6 on the Richter scale, was the worst earthquake in China in over a decade.

Iran/Iraq

Iran and Iraq have agreed to an exchange of the sick and wounded prisoners still being held by both sides in the Gulf War. Although a cease fire was

declared in mid-August, further peace negotiations have stalled. This was the first sign of any progress in the talks to establish a more permanent peace.

The Pentagon

The Pentagon released photos of the Stealth fighter plane last week. Although the Stealth has been flying since 1983 it was previously considering secret and rumors of its existence and exact shape were never confirmed by the military.

Sources: *The Washington Post, The Wall Street Journal, NPR*

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Row, row, row your boat

by Joan Ross '91

All of a sudden, they're everywhere. They converge on the dining hall in a mob for weekday breakfasts. They can be seen wandering down to back campus in black and orange sweats. They surface at the gym at odd hours to pull away at those home-made-looking bicycle wheel contraptions, speaking in an unknown language about "the catch," "the slide," "riggers and stretchers." Fear not, gentle reader. We have not been invaded by a race of aliens. It is only the St. John's crew team.

1988 is the first year in which the College has supported an organized, large-scale rowing team. In the past, interest was not great enough to lend rowers the status of club members, and thus the benefits of a stipend from the Delegate Council. But this year has seen an unprecedented rise in the number of dedicated rowers, mostly freshmen, and the St. John's rowing club is now an official organization, albeit loosely run, having a charter and elected officers.

Bob's Quest

by S.D. Younger

Darkness settles like a thick, wet blanket over the scene. Bob takes a heavy breath.

Max Headroom Background!

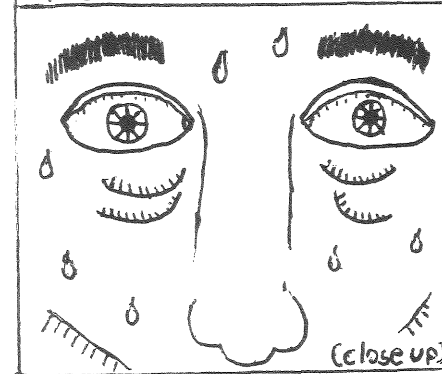


At first, he did it for a thrill on weekends, just once in a while. Everyone was doing it, he thought he could control the urge, master the beast.



Bob looking worried (stress has taken its toll)

He had lost control, and the addiction consumed all of his time. The fiery passion spread a cross his brain.



(close up)

Yes, Bob had become a complete Risk bastard.



Next week: something applicable to more than tea people maybe spelled right!

Conditions were aided at the beginning of Fall by President Dyal's acquisition of an eight-man shell, now bearing his name, that was cast off by Navy. Unfortunately, the renovations of the boathouse, shared by St. John's and the Annapolis Rowing Club, have forced the boats and equipment into the trailers and picket enclosure on back campus, where they are vulnerable to high school soccer balls. But perhaps these adverse circumstances have only brought the team closer, if I may make so bold as to compare them to the Athenians driven from their city at the Persian invasion.

One of the great mysteries of life is what motivates a rower. These unsinkably high-spirited masochists rise at 6:00 on weekday mornings to train for competition. But their efforts are paying off. The St. John's crew team has thus far participated in two separate regattas this season, sending a four-man boat to the Head of the Charles in Boston, and three boats to the Head of the Occoquan on

November 5. The day of the Occoquan race saw the women's novice eight place eighth in a field of thirteen, and the men's novice eight-eighth out of sixteen. The men's four crossed the finish sixth out of eight, to the raucous cheers of their compatriots on the bank, shouting words of encouragement in Attic Greek and chanting "Johnnies! Johnnies!" at the tops of their lungs. The team faced such intimidating giants as West Virginia University and the College of William and Mary, and they not only survived, but exceeded expectations. Our little college might not have walked away with a trophy, but we certainly took first place with respect to spirit, and St. John's should be proud of its team.

The men's eight has one more competition this Fall, on November 20, after which the team will launch into winter training and row recreationally. The end of Fall is the ideal time to give the crew a try, and we look forward to an even bigger and better season this Spring.

Assessing Program problems

continued from page 5

the short shrift given to basic algebra and calculus preparation, those equations will continue to look like so much Greek on a page, and students will continue to add Maxwell to the list of thinkers that they never understood.

In response to those who claim that technical competence is not our objective but rather the raising of fundamental questions, I say only that my point still holds. To put the work of Maxwell, Newton, Leibniz, or any other author before someone and to tell him/her to read it and work to understand it is to assert that the task is doable. As it stands now, too many of our tasks are not, in fact, doable and hence lead to frustration and a sense of failure.

And what do I conclude from all of this? Although the SCI's responses to the specific proposal made by the dean seem to me to be correct, I do not agree with their view that the status quo is not in need of major rethinking and revision. Yes, we are dealing with complex interrelationships between different parts of the program, but the difficulty of reform and revision does not justify the continuance of an unsatisfactory state of affairs. I have written this letter with the hope of furthering the discussion of

those difficulties which students face here at St. John's and which, I believe, are caused by defects in the program itself--the major defect being the attempt to do too much that is too difficult in too short a time with too little of the necessary prior preparation. I do not feel, as the SCI does, that the problems raised by Dean Slakey are more those of faculty members than they are those of students. Further, I fear that if the SCI's word on these issues is taken as the definitive student opinion, the matter will either be treated as solely a faculty concern or else will not be treated at all. We students must begin, and involve ourselves in, frank discussions of these matters.



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Correction: Rachel Boyce has been omitted from the art staff in previous weeks. We regret the error.

Founded in 1980, *The Gadfly* is an independent student review published weekly and distributed free to over 550 students and faculty of the Annapolis campus as well as the offices at the St. John's Santa Fe campus, tutors emeriti and members of the board of visitors and governors.

Tax deductible contributions may be given to *The Gadfly* by making checks payable to St. John's College and specifying it as a donation to the paper. Send checks to *The Gadfly*.

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