the Gadfly

St. John's College
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THE STRUCTURE

Logos typically holds news reports and narratives of immediate relevance to the Polity. The purpose here is to develop a shared reservoir of information relating to campus life and the community. The Managing Editor for Logos is El'ad Nichols-Kaufman. His email is eanicholskaufman@sjc.edu

Symposium offers the opportunity for our readers to thoughtfully consider contrasting opinions regarding a particular topic. The Managing Editor for Symposium is Luke Briner. His email is lbriner@sjc.edu

Polis serves as a platform for elevating voices in our community. Here we find letters to the editor, columns, cartoons, and submitted pieces. The Managing Editor for Polis is Daniel Nathan. His email is ~~djnathan~~@sjc.edu

THE COVER

Photo of Christopher Turney, taken by Liz Dowdy

From the Editor's Desk:

Dear Polity,

In this issue you'll find an interview with the new athletic director Ms. Fleming, a report on the SCI's first all-college seminar (which I hope you all attended), a mysterious message from the "reform party," a fascinating and helpful "reflection on the notion of straightness" by Mr. Gu, a consideration of Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*, a reflection on Homer and family history, a movie review of *The Man Who Killed Don Quixote*, a horoscope (if this offends your sensibilities, as it partially does mine, I encourage you to attend the observatory whenever it is open next and to write in about what the stars seem to be saying to you), the long awaited seminar fashion article, and a colorful reflection on the nature and purpose of the Delegate council by the newly elected Daniel Nathan. There are also two original comics, one by Cassie Desmond and the other by Tamar Pinsky.

It's quite the packed issue, and I'm happy to share it with all of you.

Don't forget to write in with any questions, thoughts, communications, or submissions that you might have. The best way to reach us is by email: either at sjca.gadfly@gmail.com or at my own email (cekoch@sjc.edu). Submissions for the next issue should be in no later than the 1st of October, though earlier is much better.

Sincerely,
Craig Koch

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Interview with Rachel Fleming

Rachel Fleming is the new Athletics Coordinator at St. John's Annapolis campus

by El'ad Nichols-Kaufman '25

How does it feel to come into this kind of administrative role, being the athletic coordinator, after having graduated from Saint John's? What does coming back to campus feel like?

In my first few days coming back and starting to see the students on campus, even though their faces were unfamiliar, they still had the familiarity of Johnnies, and it really felt like being back at home. Every corner I would turn around, there would be something that would make me feel a lot of joy.

I think one thing that's really made me have that perspective, is that during the pandemic, I took a hard reassessment of what I wanted to do, in terms of career. The pandemic really made me think about who I wanted to be surrounded by, and what I wanted most for myself and my family. What it came down to was community, and I can't think of any better community than this one.

What's been going on in your first few weeks? What have you been working on during the transition into this role?

Well, there's a lot of time spent setting up my computer. I'm assessing inventory; things that we have, what is still the same?

I think making connections with the students, with young alumni is really important, as well as with our volunteer coaches, coaches that are important to our teams. [I've been] working on those relationships and keeping them strong and healthy. I was reaching out to a lot of them and making sure that they knew who I was and that whatever they needed, I could help them with.

Then there's a lot of administrative stuff: setting up gym assistance and the management of the different sports leagues. There's more that goes into that than you would really expect.

For students like me who might only see you being a referee at soccer games, could you explain what a day at your work looks like now?

It's interesting because I think [my work] kind of relates to the many different bosses that I have. On the one hand, I have my administrative hat: I'm trying to liaison for the administration and make sure that we're able to adhere to guidelines that they have and understand exactly what the makeup and relationship is between, say, the athletic budget and overall administration.

There's also meetings where I'm working with advancement or donors and things like that to build programs, and then there's communications for all those marketing things that we put out, as well as admissions.

There are a lot of different little things, but the thing that I'm most happy about is that every half an hour to 45 minutes some student will step into this office. They just plop themselves down on the couch and be like, "So, how's it going?"

We always just have a very lovely conversation and I might ask them about class, they might tell me about Hegel, or they might talk about their Don Quijote seminar. To me it's just so satisfying that I get those little interruptions through my day. That's one of the reasons I think why it's just so nice to be back here, I think the students are the best part.

What are your ideas for the athletic program? What kind of traditions are you planning to preserve and build? Do you have any plans you're working on?

The one thing that I will strongly adhere to is the intramural program. The intramural program runs itself. It is a well-oiled machine at this point, and I have been just so impressed by the captains' diligence, by their leadership and knowledge of the student body and what it takes to come out to a game and understanding what it's like to be a freshman coming to the campus. That's not just coming out to a sport, it's becoming part of the community. So that's one thing that I want to maintain.

I'd say I aspire to increase our participation. I would love to see more women and non-cisgender students come out to play sports for the intermurals with co-ed teams.

I want to see more participation in terms of them being the ones on the field at the end of that game when it's close and tied. I want to see more of the spirit of the Coed league.

And that's just for intramurals, because I have to take a step back and remember that I'm not just the intramural person, I'm the athletic coordinator, and I'm the head of the athletic department, so I can't just be thinking about that one program. I have to think about the whole picture.

One of the ways that I really want to bring that into focus is that I want to increase Kunai participation. It. Kunai has the unique ability to bring out players, people who don't mind goofing off a little bit, but also don't mind kind of leaving it all in the field as well, even if it might feel like a silly

thing to do. It has this ability to allow the people who play to be competitive and also have a really good time.

I really enjoyed the first practice that we had. One of the changes that I made was that I asked my sister, Ms. Lasell, to come join us because she has a lot of soccer experience. So, our first practice/scrimmage was focused on learning the skills for 20 minutes or so, and then we scrimmaged. I think it's that ability that kunai has to slow things down a little bit, and not throw people into a game immediately.

Kunai has this ability to say hey, we can stop and we can take a different path for learning. I think it's really nice that the captains that are in charge of Kunai right now are really thinking about the people that are coming out that maybe are a little nervous to come to Intermurals, or they want a space where they can kind of be goofy easily, or they are just really wanting at the end of the day to walk off that field and feel really good about what just happened. I think that's one of the things that I really would love to encourage and make sure it grows and becomes more fruitful, and that we get more freshmen out in that environment because it's its own community.

The other thing that I'm overseeing is our historical sports that we compete in. Crew and sailing, croquet and fencing, those are also part of my oversight. I want to hone in on those as the sports that have us go places. It's not just about competing, it's about the process over the entire semester of the season of preparing yourself for that race. I want to revisit that as a person because it's been a while since I've been in that environment and remember why those things are so good to have, especially as part of the Saint John's program. That's something that I would never want to take away from a student, and I want to make sure that everyone understands that they have the opportunity to do that.

Listening to the students is really important for me, having been a student itself. Really thinking about how to help individuals in terms of their reasons for maybe being shy to come up sports or being shy to come to the gym and trying to reach more people in that way.

My next question is a little bit of a cliched one, but I like asking anyway because I think it's one of the things that I find most interesting about our athletic program is that there is this sense that it is strongly enmeshed with the academic program. I would like to ask what you think the nature of that connection is and why it's so important for Saint Johns to have the kind of driving athletic program it does?

People talk about the classroom as a collaborative environment where you're creating ideas and you're building on this idea and you're coming to this intangible thing that you've sort of collected upon, and the athletic program is absolutely reflective of that. Both in its structural integrity and that we as a community and you as students have built something so cohesive. Through agreement, disagreement through collaboration and conversation have come to this point. We know what we want as students and as leaders we can provide it for the incoming freshmen.

One thing that I always think about when I think about athletics is why St. John's students make such awesome athletes is that they're willing to take a risk. They're willing to come out to a game or try a new sport even though they don't have prior experience. They're willing to make mistakes because in the classroom they've already done that. They have that experience of putting themselves out there, putting an idea out there, going up to the board and demonstrating a proposition, even though they're not quite sure of the ending or how it really works. That vulnerability makes a wonderful athlete. That's why we have such a great participation rate in our athletic program. So really, I think it's the St. John's academic program that actually makes the athletic program so great.

What would you like to share with Johnnies about yourself, and about your vision for the athletic program as you start in this position?

I would say one final thing about myself. I spent six years as a stay-at-home parent full time. That's the hardest job, and you really see just how much work goes into having a child grow from a baby to a child to an adult. When I see the freshmen arrive at campus I realize just how much work their parents put into them getting there, how much work that they probably put into getting there, and to make their parents proud.

But what I really want to see is them trying to make themselves proud, and St. John's with a great place to start. You don't have to do specific things that people are asking you to do. You can really just ask yourself: what do I like to do, what am I interested in? What really speaks to me in the program? You might surprise yourself.

The other thing that I've thought about alot as a person going through life and having life's challenges happen is that it's really important you realize you're going to make mistakes. The best word of advice I got when I was applying for this job was from Leo Pickens, who was the athletic director when I was a student and he said, "I made every mistake in book."

That, to me, was probably the best thing a mentor could have said, as someone who had such a long span of leadership at school. It really allowed

me to think, "hey, OK, it's OK to do that." I think that's something I've really brought to this job because I know that I will also make a lot of mistakes. I'm going to try my hardest not to, but it doesn't always result in the best outcome.

I think it's important, when you see someone come out on the athletic field or at the gym and they're trying to make a shot and they miss over and over again, to congratulate them on trying, on being able to let themselves do that, allowing that vulnerability and coming out and not being afraid of missing half their shots, missing all their shots, but just trying.

Just sort of that ability to take chances, to give it a go, it's something I really, really want to get across to the students. Especially now, after this pandemic has happened. There's a sort of feeling, If I do something wrong, is everything going to blow up? What's going to happen? I just want students to know it's OK. It's OK to try things.

{STUDENT LIFE}

SCI hosts first All College Seminar of the year

An opportunity to learn like none other

by El'ad Nichols-Kaufman '25

A beloved St. John's tradition has returned to Annapolis this fall. On Friday, September 9, the Student Committee on Instruction, or SCI, hosted their first All College Seminar of the year, on Chekov's "House with a Mezzanine." This unique St. John's event, which fills in for a Friday night lecture a few times every semester, is a unique opportunity for students of all classes, tutors, and members of the administration to gather together to discuss a great work.

Ella Harel, one of the archons of the SCI, explained that after a pause on the seminars in 2020 and 2021, the return of the tradition feels significant. "In my freshman year, all the college seminars were really formative, because it was so helpful for me to have the example of the upperclassmen. I also think it's such a beautiful display of community, everybody comes together, irrespective of what class they're in, or if they're faculty. It's such a nice gesture of communal learning."

The SCI celebrates a successful All College Seminar

Several freshmen attending the seminar also had a chance to learn from upperclassmen and tutors. "It was super informative, and a good reference. It was fun to see how people who've been at St. John's longer really talk with each other," said Sidney Solomon. "There was a lot more silence."

Sasha Peterson agreed. "People thought a lot more about what they were going to say, so there wasn't much repetition, and we made a lot of progress in understanding."

Although the most important element to these forums is polity participation, the choice of the text matters too. Harel explained that "usually the members of the SCI will all throw something out. I suggested a poem, and another person suggested a Chekov poem, and then we just have a conversation. All the works that are suggested are always super interesting. There's also considerations about the formatting of the all college seminar. We only have an hour and fifteen minutes, and we also want to keep the reading on the shorter side, since people have so much homework to do. I think what we look for is a shorter source that is packed with things to discuss."

Chris Turney, a member of the SCI, summarized the importance of the seminars succinctly. "You get to talk to underclassmen and tutors alike. It gives you a sense of the greater community outside the "daily grind," so to speak. There's something big here, and great."

{STUDENT LIFE}

A new party aims for change

The face of change at St. John's College

by Caleb Briggs '25

Mr. Joshua Bozorth (A25), the official 'face of Reform'

On September 2nd, the polity held its annual Delegate Council elections for sophomores and upperclassmen. Our elections have long been non-partisan affairs that boil down to little more than voting for those candidates with the best name recognition. This, however, may be on its way out as a new intra-campus political party, the Reform Party, has taken root in the sophomore class. On September 2nd, in an uncontested election, the Reform Party won 50 percent of the seats for Sophomore Delegates. Mssrs. Alexander Paden and El'ad Nichols-Kaufman both won handily in Friday's election. Mss. Helen Felbek and Rylee Bain won the other two seats. Felbek signaled her support for the Party's platform, while Bain declined to comment. Outgoing Delegate Mr. Jackson Green is also known to support the Reform Party.

But what is the platform that the Reform Party runs on? "Reform" is the resounding answer given by Chairman Peter Quinn of the Reform Party. When pressed, he did elaborate slightly by saying, "reform and change." When asked "why this ambiguity?", Quinn insists it is nuanced and that it fits in with the Reform Party's desire to be the party of change.

Further prodding for concrete details revealed that the Reform Party aims to change the Delegate Council's structure by redistributing powers among the officers of the D.C. to streamline the bureaucracy. Paden also expressed the wish to "implement a note of [Reform] Party members [on the ballot] so people can vote down the ballot in future elections." Fellow Reform member Nichols-Kaufman suggested a "party song" for the coming campaigns and rallies.

Anger also seems to be a reason for the party's success. "Aren't you angry? Don't you want change? Vote Reform!" was the campaign call of Paden before his victory on Friday. Indeed, both he and Nichols-Kaufman have expressed frustration with the D.C.'s slow legislative pace and the ongoing mystery of the missing $30,000 in allocated club funds. Whether their calls for change will be heeded remains to be seen. While the party has done well among sophomores, they have only garnered 13 percent of the seats on the D.C. Thus, the passage of their agenda will rely on their success in caucusing.

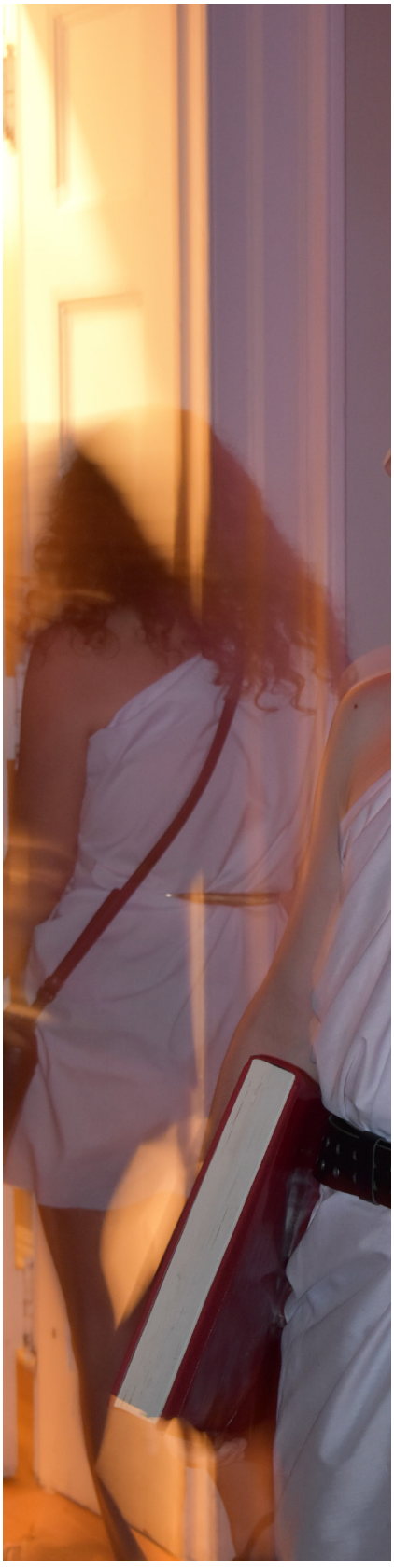
The party's success leaves many wondering about numbers. As evidenced by Quinn's statement, it appears there is no record of the number of members within the party: "Membership is a fickle thing. Our ranks grow hourly. What matters is that our people turn out to vote." When asked further if he had actual numbers, he declined to elaborate.

The future of the Reform Party remains murky as it is hard to pin down exact levels of support, and if they have much of a plan outside of their calls for "reform and change." Perhaps the Reform Party is a new face of the non-partisanship that has long been a staple of our political system at St. John's. Everyone wants change for the better and without those pesky details regarding how to enact it, the Reform Party looks very attractive.

{CAMPUS EVENTS}

The Achilles Rager

photos by Liz Dowdy '23



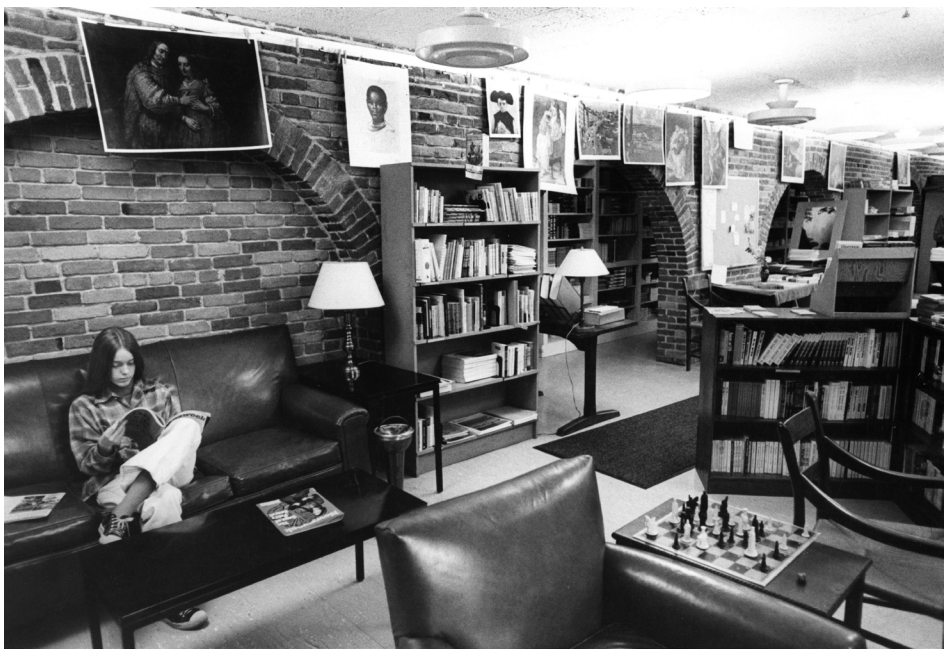
Finds from the Archives

Liberty Tree -1999

A tall tree outside the Barr-Buchanan center that used to occupy a large area of front campus. It was sadly torn down in 1999 by Hurricane Floyd. I have been unable to find why it was called the liberty tree (though it is consistently referred to as such)—if you happen to know, please write in.

Student Seated on Couch Reading "Newsweek" in the College Bookstore

A look into the bookstore as it stood in the 1950's. Leather chairs, a comfortable couch, modernist coffee tables and what feels like twice as much space. I hear that the chess club has been petitioning for the chess board to return.



Portrait of the St. John's College Class of 1977

1977

The 70's were far out, but they need not be far away. In this image we see the class of '77 pose together. How is the graduating class of this year? How is it different? Can you spot anyone in the photo who reminds you of a current student?

This week's *Finds* are brought to you by senior Sachin Stanislaus. Everyone give it up for Sachin! Speaking of giving up things you found, does anyone know if they found the life-size cardboard cutouts that went missing from Randall? Let us know!

Friday Night Lectures

Freshman

The Virtue of Recollection in Plato's Meno, Peter Kalkavage, 2015, St. Michael's College

Reading Plato's Meno Online, William Braithwaite, 2020, Graduate Institute Summer Lecture Series

Sophomore

God and Ostrich's: Queer Birds in the Book of Job, Ron Haflidson, 2020, Annapolis

Junior

The Problem of Absolute Knowing, Abraham Greenstine, 2015, Annapolis

Senior

The (Plato's) Cave, and the cave beneath the cave, in Hegel's Phenomenology of spirit, Jonathon Hand, 2014, Annapolis

The Pursuit of Happiness: Four French Thinkers on Our Restless Quest for Contentment, Benjamin Storey, 2019

Thinking Straight

A Reflection on the Notion of Straightness and Postulate 4 in Euclid's *Elements*

Lijun Gu

Many of us are surprised and unsettled when we see in Lobachevsky's geometry that two straight lines can asymptotically approach each other while remaining parallel. It seems to violate two fundamental notions that we have taken for granted: straightness and parallelism. Lobachevsky has demonstrated that the latter is closely intertwined with a postulate. The question now is: what about the former? Can the notion of straightness stand on itself, or does it also depend on a postulate? These questions are the subject of this short essay.

Let us start with the concept of perpendicularity and ask the following question: when two straight lines meet and make adjacent angles, what are the possibilities in terms of the angle amount? Three possibilities, among others, readily present themselves.

1. two equal adjacent angles
2. two unequal adjacent angles that add up to two right angles
3. two adjacent angles, equal or not, that do not *appear* to add up to two right angles from *a certain privileged view*

Of these, Possibility (1) appears as a definition, namely Def. 10, which states:

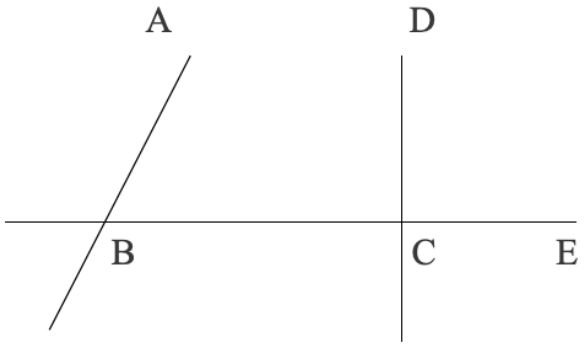
> *"When(ever) a straight line set up on a straight line makes the adjacent angles equal to one another, each of the equal angles is right, and the straight line standing on the other is called a perpendicular to that on which it stands."*

Possibility (2) is demonstrated in I:13, which states:

> *"If a straight line set up on a straight line make angles, it will make either two right angles or angles equal to two right angles."*

Now the question is: what about Possibility (3)? At the first glance, the very formulation itself seems strange, for, did we not just cite Proposition 13, which states that when two straight lines meet, they will form angles that are either two right angles, or equal to two right angles? Wouldn't this conclusion automatically rule out Possibility (3)?

Yet, this possibility is precisely what Postulate 4, which states that "All right angles are equal," is hinting at. Since a postulate is a request, one is free to either accept or reject it. If we choose the latter, then we are left with the possibility that not all right angles are equal, some may be greater or smaller than others, even though they are all right. We will illustrate the implications of this rejection with the following figure:

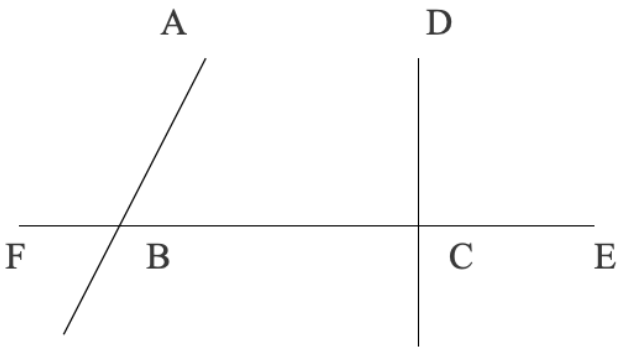


In the above figure, all lines are straight lines as defined in Definition 4. Then, according to Proposition 13, the angles at B add up to two right angles, and so too do the angles at C. However, if we reject Postulate 4, then we'll be left with the possibility that the "two right angle" amount

at C could be unequal to the "two right angle" amount at B. Therefore, to a person at B (the privileged view), even though the angles at C are called right angles, they might be greater than the right angles at his location, namely those at B. The same holds true for a person at C if we make his view the privileged one. To him, even though the two angles at B are called right angles, they might appear to be smaller than the two right angles at his location, namely those at C. Hence, we can see that without Postulate 4, we might end up with a situation where even though the intersection of straight lines makes adjacent angles equal to two right angles, these right angles might appear from a privileged view to be unequal to other right angles produced by the same process. The apparent absurdity of Possibility (3), therefore, disappears.

Now we introduce Proposition 14, which states:

If with any straight line, and at a point on it, two straight lines not lying on the same side make the sum of the adjacent angles equal to two right angles, then the two straight lines are in a straight line with one another.



If we use the same figure, this proposition can be summarized as the following: if line segments BC and CE make angles equal to two right angles with CD at C, then BC and CE will be in the same straight line. Similarly, if FB and BC form angles that are equal to two right angles with AB at B, then FB and BC will also be in the same straight line. To put it differently, the straight line FE won't bend at B or C. This is the converse of Proposition 13 and it connects an angle amount (two right angles) to straightness. Following this proposition, we will now apply the same connection to what is said on the previous page. Since to the person at B, the "two right angles" at C appear to be greater than the two right angles at his location, we can assert, based on the above proposition, that the line at C does not appear to be straight to him. Similarly, to the person at C, the line at B does not appear to be straight to him since the angles there appear to be smaller than two right angles at his own location. The straight line FE will then bend at B or C, depending on which view is privileged. This assertion holds true even though both A and B can each simultaneously claim that the line is perfectly straight at their own respective locations, and rightly so.

From this we can draw the following conclusion:

The straightness of a straight line cannot be readily considered universal.
It is merely a local phenomenon.

To put the above in a slightly different way: the universal characteristic of straightness of a straight line is merely the result of a postulate. In other words, that a straight line is straight *along the entirety of its length* is true only if we accept the postulate that all right angles are equal.

This, of course, is a rather surprising conclusion and has far reaching implications. For example, if straightness is a local phenomenon, then how many straight lines can one draw from a given point to a given point? If one can no longer be certain about that, it leaves open the possibility that between two points, multiple straight lines can be drawn. If this is the case, what happens to the "two straight lines with the same extremities cannot enclose a space," which underpins the validity of Proposition 4 of Book I of the *Elements*? If Postulate 4 plays such an important role in this early part of the *Elements*, can one still claim that the first 28 propositions of the book belong to the *absolute* geometry?

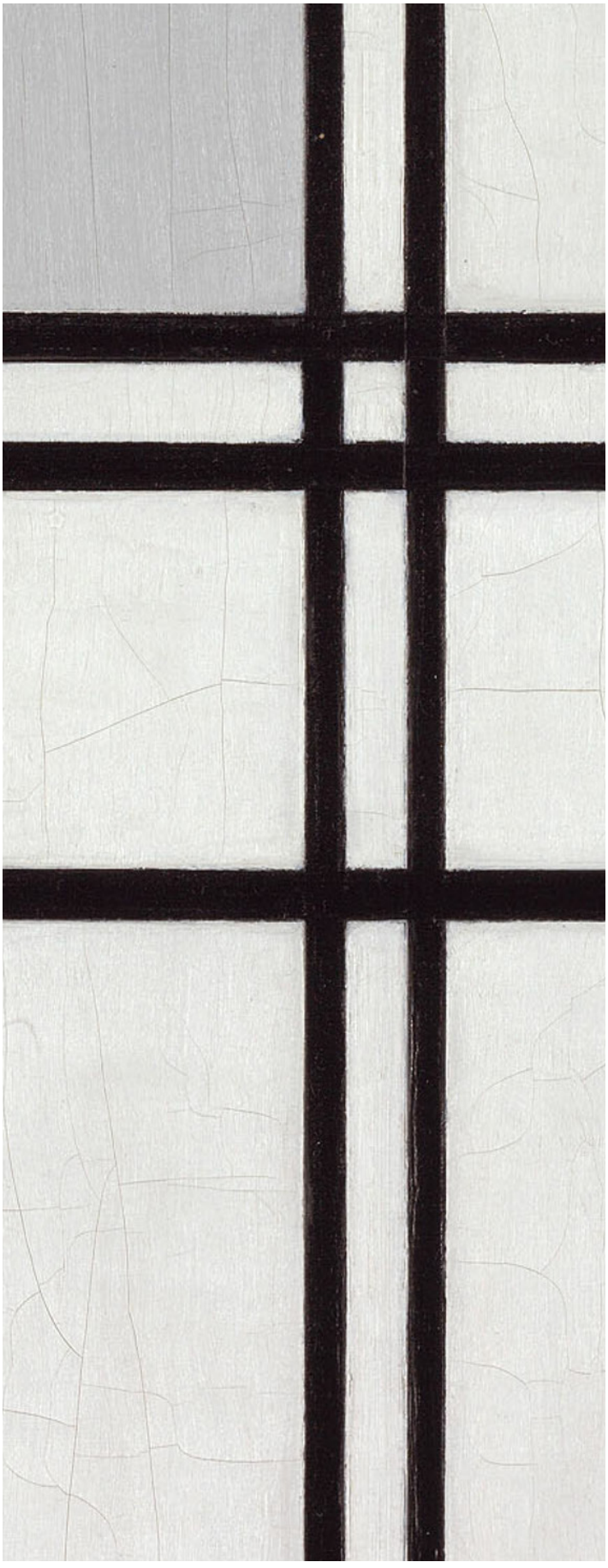
Even if we leave aside these implications, the strange conclusion itself feels offensive to us. After all, if the lines that form these angles are straight lines, will the straightness of these lines itself not guarantee that all the right angles they form are equal, regardless where they are? To translate this into a more formal formulation, shouldn't the *being* of straight lines (the "lying evenly/equally") and their *mutual interactions* (the inclinations) be consistent with each other? In other words, shouldn't a straight line's "lying equally" lead to its "inclining equally" toward another such line? And since equality is a universal concept and does not vary according to locations, wouldn't it be reasonable for us to expect that the former equality (equality of the lying) should *universally* lead to the latter equality (equality of the inclining)? It is this type of reasoning which often makes us feel that we are entitled to the following two statements: that straight lines form right angles universally, and that right angles generate straightness universally. Now, however,

we have come to see that it is not necessarily the case. The "lying equally" does not necessarily lead to the "inclining equally" because without a postulate, the "lie equally" itself becomes a problem. To put it differently, underneath the "lying evenly" lies a postulate.

This conclusion seems to be validated by the strange way in which Proposition 14 is formulated. For, Euclid could have simply said "If two lines intersect each other making two adjacent angles equal to two right angles, the two lines will be straight." However, such an enunciation would grant straightness to the lines universally. It is perhaps telling that Euclid instead chooses a formulation which directs our attention to what happens at a point, namely the location at which the right angles are formed.

In his *Theory of Parallels*, Lobachevski demonstrates in Proposition 17 that a straight line maintains its parallelism at all its points. The implication of this proposition is that the universal characteristic of parallelism can no longer be taken for granted without Postulate 5. His Proposition 16 only shows parallelism at one point, namely point A. Whether the rest of line AH is parallel to DC is not certain. It has to be demonstrated. Our discussions here show that similar things happen to straightness and its own relationship to a postulate. For, just as parallelism loses the certainty of its universal characteristic without Postulate 5, so too does straightness the certainty of its own universal characteristic without Postulate 4.

This close connection between parallelism and straightness should not surprise anyone. For, our discussion starts from the being of straight lines and proceeds to their mutual interactions, whereas Lobachevski starts with the interaction among such lines (cutting or non-cutting) and proceeds to their being (they seem like curves). These discussions are the converses of each other.



Composition (No. 1), detail
Piet Mondrian

Pride in *Coriolanus*

Luke Briner

Among all of Shakespeare's tragedies, *Coriolanus* has consistently been one of his lesser loved. This may be due in no small part to the ethos of its main and titular character, a Roman of distinguished blood and spirit named Caius Marcius. Bestowed with the name Coriolanus after spearheading a bloodily successful battle against the tribe of Volsci at Corioli, he proceeds to embroil himself in a bitter political clash with the Roman people and their tribunes with a brusque imperiousness not seen in Shakespeare's other great tragic figures. Here we have none of the melancholy, soliloquizing self-invention of Hamlet, the half-mad desperation and heartbreaking self-destruction of Lear, or the metaphysically meditated ambition and *amor fati* of Macbeth, but only the frank and inflexible conviction of a pedigreed patrician born and bred for the field of battle and filled with disdain for the common people. It's precisely this character which all of Coriolanus' enemies, and even some of his friends, cannot help but call "proud" throughout the play, and it's also this "pride" that serves as the basis and catalyst of its tragedy. What's the precise nature of this "pride," and, further, how can we understand the way in which pride might shape the narrative landscape of the play as a whole?

We'll start by examining the ways in which Coriolanus is described as proud throughout the narrative, and then comparing and contrasting these with the actual behavior and speech of Coriolanus himself. We can begin with the opening scene, where we observe a revolutionary rabble of Roman plebs, spurred on by an apparent food shortage, airing their grievances against the patriciate in general and against Coriolanus in particular:

> *Cit. 2*. Consider you what services he has done for his country?
> *Cit. 1*. Very well; and could be content to give him good report for't, but that he pays himself with being proud.
> *Cit. 2*. Nay, but speak not maliciously.
> *Cit. 1*. I say unto you, what he hath done famously he did it to that end: though soft-conscienced men can be content to say it was for his country, he did it to please his mother, and to be partly proud; which he is, even to the altitude of virtue.

We can compare this directly with what the tribune Sicinius Brutus remarks to Junius Brutus later in that same scene:

> *Sic*. Was ever a man so proud as is this Marcius?
> *Bru*. He has no equal.

If we take these testimonies of Coriolanus' character at face value, then we should naturally expect him to be an egotistical glory-seeker in spite of his competencies; and this is certainly the view which the people and especially their two tribunes maintain throughout the narrative. But this idea of Coriolanus being pridxeful in the sense of being *vain* or *glory-seeking* can be immediately dispelled by the fact that he explicitly expresses his discomfort and even his disgust at being praised or celebrated, and consistently acts accordingly. When, for instance, he is breathlessly praised by his fellow generals Cominius and Titus Lartius after the battle at Corioli and is actually given the name Coriolanus by them, he bluntly expresses his desire not to be celebrated:

> Pray now, no more; my mother,
> Who has a charter to extol her blood,
> When she does praise me grieves me. I have done
> As you have done,—that's what I can; induc'd
> As you have been—that's for my country:
> He that has but effected his good will
> Hath overta'en mine act. (Act I, Scene 9)

Note how this runs directly contrary to what the citizen claimed about him earlier concerning his attitude toward his mother and country. Further, he displays the exact same attitude when acclaimed by the Roman senate after his return from the campaign, immediately getting up to walk away as Cominius is again about to sing his martial praises,

and after remarking that "I had rather have my wounds to heal again/Than hear say how I got them" (Act II, Scene 2).

It's impossible on these grounds to maintain that Coriolanus is in any way driven by a desire to preen his ego with fame or praise, even that of those he genuinely respects, much to the contrary of the "popular" view of him throughout the narrative. It's precisely this disregard for esteem and disgust with flattery that allows us to understand him as "proud" in a quite different way. Coriolanus comes off as an almost perfect manifestation of *Aristotelian* pride, or magnanimity, in that he "thinks himself worthy of great things, being worthy of them" (*Nicomachean Ethics*, 1023b1-3). He only believes himself to be superior to others insofar as he *actually is* demonstrably superior to others. This is the whole foundation of his conviction that he shouldn't have to humble himself on the streets to the plebs of Rome in order to obtain the consulship offered to him by the Senate. Being born to and educated by the upper echelon of Roman nobility, and being such a transcendently excellent warrior that not even his bitterest enemies contest the fact, he reasons that he should simply be able to assert, without any rhetorical games whatsoever, his right to the position and obtain it accordingly. There is, strictly speaking, no *ambition* in this pursuit to him; he simply desires his "own desert" (Act II, Scene 3), and so he only "claims what is *in accordance* with his merits, while the others [vain or unduly humble people] go to excess or fall short" (*Nicomachean Ethics*, 1123b12-14).

This magnanimous pride, moreover, is exactly the thing which sustains and perpetuates the very excellence which serves as the ground for his greatness throughout the play. We cannot imagine, for instance, that he would have achieved the incredible martial renown he did at Corioli if he was not exactly the kind of person who would, despising the cowardice of the common soldiery, break out into indignant eloquence and charge in against the enemy himself even as his men cower in fear (Act I, Scene 9). Further, his very disregard for the praise of others, and his outright disgust with the praise of those he views as unworthy, contributes to his character rather than takes away from it. He does only what he believes to be proper and right, regardless of the opinions of lesser souls: "honor from casual people and on trifling grounds he will utterly despise, since it is not this that he deserves, and dishonor too, since in his case it cannot be just" (*Nicomachean Ethics*, 1124a10-13).

Is his disdain for the plebs and their tribunes not understandable? These democratic forces throughout the play are far from displaying nobility of character or loftiness of intention; on the contrary, they consistently show themselves to be vindictive, ignorant, and unreasonable. We've already mentioned that the common soldiery, directly contradicting the orders of Coriolanus, abandoned him to die alone within enemy walls. Further, it is they who, inflamed by the incendiary and demonstrably insincere rhetoric of their tribunes, retract the votes legitimately given him by them for consul, and are thereafter whipped into such a frenzy that they call for his death (Act III, Scene 1). But "[w]hat," we must ask with Coriolanus' noble friend Menenius, "has he done to Rome that's worthy death?" (Ibid) His chilly attitude toward the people notwithstanding, he has done absolutely nothing deserving of the slighest corporal punishment, let alone of being cast into destruction from the Tarpeian rock; this is purely the artifice of the tribunes, who are manifestly seen to act out of malice and ambition. The feeble fickleness of these plebs is even more glaringly seen after Coriolanus' death sentence has been converted to one of banishment, and he has subsequently joined the Volsces in revenge against Rome; it's easy for us to imagine their look of glassy-eyed vapidity as they, after their unanimous cries for banishment, complain to each other thus:

> *Cit. 1*. For mine own part, when I said banish him, I said 'twas pity.
> *Cit. 2*. And so did I.
> *Cit. 3*. And so did I; and, to say the truth, so did very many of us. (Act V, Scene 1)

In fact, we might in this sense consider the *people themselves* to be the truly glaring example of *vain* pride throughout the narrative. It's they who, agitated by their tribunes, conspire to oust Coriolanus for no other actual reason than his lack of cringing, gushing submissiveness toward them, and in spite of the fact that he is perhaps the ablest person to lead in the entire country. Is this not frivolous, self-sabotaging egotism, that unjustly banishes such a manifestly competent man simply because they aren't as esteemed by him as they would like? A discerning and modest citizenry, we might venture, would be able to see past Coriolanus' lack of warmth toward them, and understand that it would still likely be in their best interest to have someone as competent, strong-willed, and immune to flattery as him leading them.

Coriolanus' disdain for the plebs is then not baseless aristocratic bigotry, but an entirely justifiable opinion given his first-hand experiences with them. He disdains them not *simply because* they are common, but only because they have behaved deplorably toward him; in short, he judges them not so much by their blood but by merit: "your

people," he remarks to Brutus, "I love them as they weigh." (Act II, Scene 2). It's only because they *actually do* behave as "dissentious rogues" that, changing opinions like the seasons, "call him noble that was now your hate,/Him vile that was your garland" (Act I, Scene 1) that he considers them as such.

We must therefore think of Coriolanus as an actually *anti-tyrannical* figure. For, as Plato observes, tyranny comes about through the dialectical degeneration of democratic sentiment, in that the clamoring of the people for liberty from all authority whatsoever allows for silver-tongued rhetoricians to manipulate their sentiments to their benefit (*Republic*, 563e-564a). Coriolanus, in showing no regard for the opinions of the people and having no desire even to manipulate them, but doing only what he himself believes is proper and honorable even if doing so is extremely inexpedient, displays a character diametrically opposed to that of the tyrant. He is rather a timocratic soul living in a democratic age, and it is his uncompromising devotion to his timocratic values that leads to the tragedy of his banishment and its bloody consequences; as H. J. Oliver puts it, "[i]n this play...we have the tragedy of a man whose flaw, in conjunction with his virtues and in the very special circumstances of the story, leads to his downfall where a lesser man might have survived."[1]

But this fact might cause us to question more deeply whether Coriolanus actually persists in his magnanimous pride, and so in his virtue, in and throughout the tragic events brought about by it for the very reason that it violates the precepts of political expediency. Certainly Coriolanus' stubbornness and refusal to stoop to the common guile of politicians is the essential component to the very excellence of his character; but the question may be legitimately asked whether, in his very refusal to do what would be necessary for him to attain leadership in Rome, he actually does wrong, and thereby abandons the claim to general virtue necessary to have genuine magnanimity in the first place. Just as we can think of the plebs as being guilty of a truly vain pride in their refusal to accept a clearly superior individual as their leader regardless of his lack of affection for them, perhaps we might also think that Coriolanus is guilty of a deeper sort of pride which, while certainly holding fast to a certain kind of virtue, nevertheless doesn't grasp the expediential necessity of lowering itself for the ultimate good of society as a whole. If we consider virtue as a mean between extremes (*Nicomachean Ethics*, II.8-9), then we might wonder whether Coriolanus' refusal to make distinct his true self and his appearance to the people, and in that sense to actually be more of a Machiavellian figure (see *The Prince*, ch. XVIII), itself errs to too great of an extreme. Moreover, can we say that his virtuous pride is maintained even after he decides to vengefully lay waste to his own homeland after joining the Volsces? Or is precisely this action necessary in order to preserve his honor?

We can see clearly now the way in which pride in each of its forms, the one seeming to shift like Proteus into the other and back again depending on the way we tilt our heads, shapes the entire landscape of the tragedy, and especially the personality which is the catalyst and centerpiece of it. The great complexity contained therein, we can observe, consists not so much in the internal metamorphoses of the soul found in other Shakespearean figures, but rather in the precise nature of a resolute and uncompromising soul, and of the tension that such a soul produces when forced to confront a world whose constitution is fundamentally at odds with its own. It is, however, the incredible ambivalence of this very nature and this very tension that makes Coriolanus such a compelling character to me, and *Coriolanus* such a compelling play.

Coriolanus with Veturia and Volumnia at the Volscian Camp, detail
Circle of Agostino Masucci
or Philippe de Champaigne

notes

(1) *Shakespeare Quarterly,* Winter, 1959, Vol. 10, No. 1 (Winter, 1959), p. 59.

St. John's Heritage:
A Message from the Past

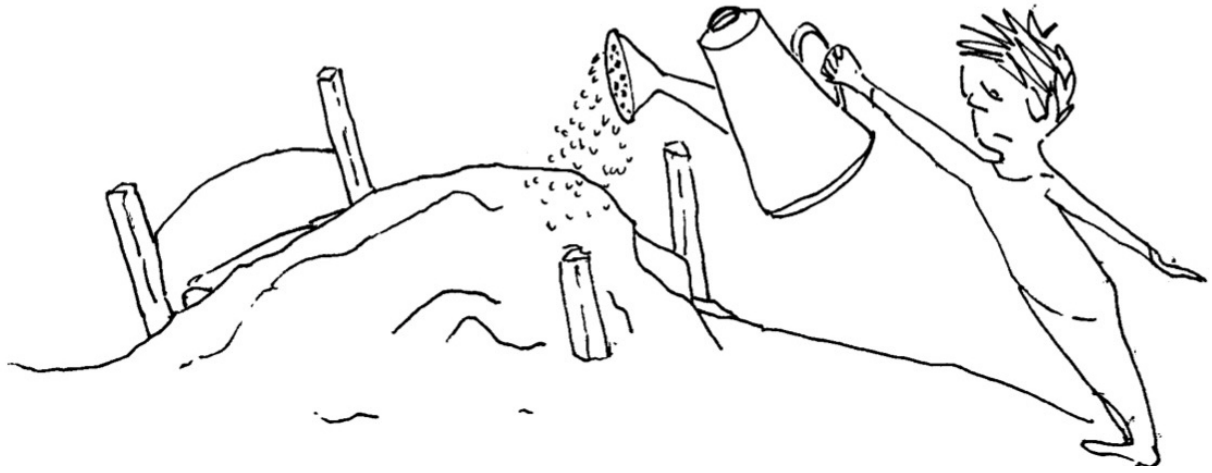
Helen Wagner

I will begin this article with a candid but indisputable statement: you would probably not have lasted very long in the Trojan War. Picture yourself on the ancient battlefield, facing Diomedes in no-man's-land, his spear poised with its long black shadow ready to usher deathly mist across your eyes. Your fate is upon you. You, like Glaucon in book VI of the *Iliad*, are suddenly called upon to recite your family heritage, hoping to find something in common with Diomedes and escape your death. But you are not up for the challenge. Thus, I posit, you will meet your end.

Could you tell Diomedes the names of your great-grandfathers, grand-aunts, and first cousins twice-removed, to convince him that you are not enemies but "sworn friends from our fathers' days till now?" (Fagles, VI.277) Probably not. In fact, it seems to me that most of us twenty-first-century-dwellers (myself included) are woefully disconnected from the lives of our ancestors. We know of grandparents and cousins— the low-hanging branches of our mental family trees— but beyond that we're not too sure. This should be remedied, if possible: surely there is a wealth of personal inspiration to be found by exploring our bloodlines. This was the case for me when I did a bit of genealogical digging this summer. In fact, my discoveries might also be of interest to the St. John's polity: they led me to the very cobblestones of this campus.

It all started right before move-in week, when I was staying in an old family home outside of Annapolis. My sister found a book in the attic with the St. John's seal on the front. It was a transcript of the dedication ceremony of Henry Williams Woodward Hall (Now Barr-Buchanan) on June 18, 1900. What was a hundred-twenty-year-old Johnnie artifact doing in my family's attic? Curious, I sat in a humid gazebo and read the book cover-to-cover.

It was a veritable historical jackpot, including a speech by Thomas Fell, a former College president, and a dedication address by John Wirt Randall, for whom our own dear Randall Hall is named. Randall indulged in a pages-long meditation on the College namesake, referring to John the Apostle as "[most] suggestive... of the relationship between a scholar and a teacher." "All scholars," he said, "should take him for an example of thirst for knowledge, docility to instruction, pureness of life and strength and beauty of character." Interspersed with praises of the College were gems of Johnnie lore (like Lafayette's famed appearance in the Great Hall), old photos of campus (included below), and even a statement recorded from George Washington on a 1791 visit to the College (then called King William's School). He proclaimed himself highly satisfied with our



Cassie Desmond

young school, wishing for its "progress to perfection... manifested in the morals and science of the youths who are favored with [its] care."

As I partook blissfully in these intellectual riches, my earlier question rose again in my mind: *why was this book in the attic of my Annapolitan ancestors*? I'd never heard before of Johnnie family ties. But then I came across a list of ceremony attendees and jumped to see Summerfield Baldwin, a thrice-great grandfather from whom I take my middle name. What was Summerfield doing at St. John's in 1900? Further digging through genealogies unearthed a revelation: Henry Williams Woodward, for whom Woodward Hall was named, was Summerfield's great uncle—my own distant ancestor. An 1820 alum, he was "a frequent sojourner under these trees, and a student of this College," said President Fell in his dedication. Two hundred years before me, a man of my very blood walked these cobbled streets, studied in the classrooms of McDowell, sang in the Great Hall, and I had no idea until now. Like Glaucon with Diomedes, I stood in front of my new school thinking myself worlds apart, but discovered instead that our histories converge, that we have been friends "from our fathers' days till now."

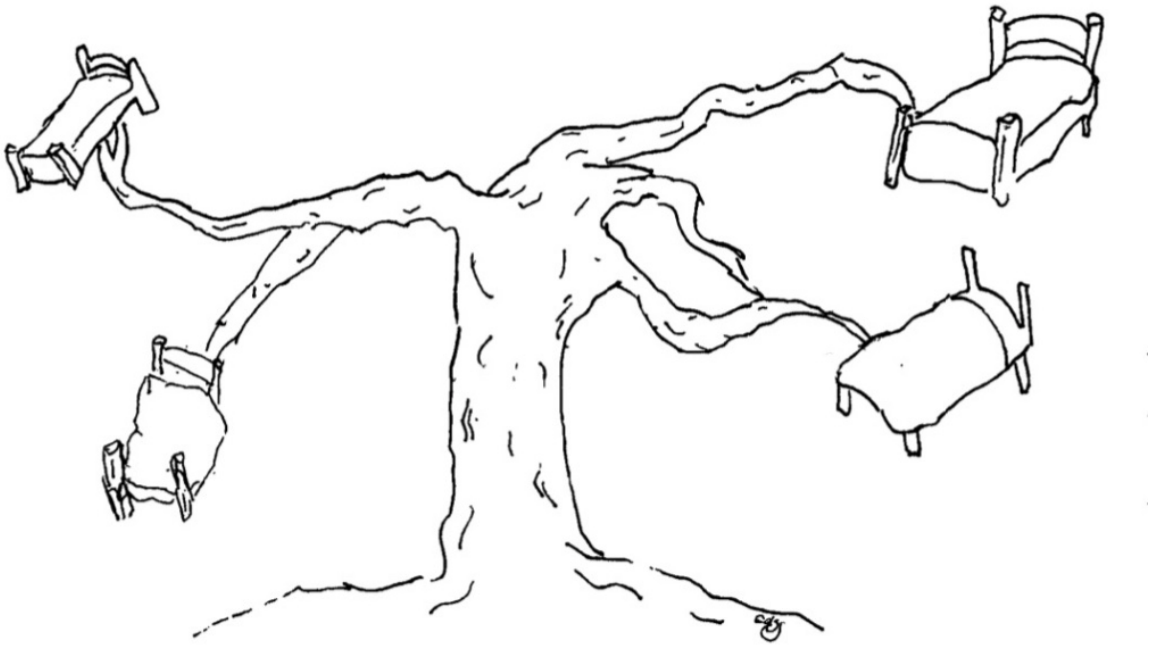
Reading Homer in conjunction with my discoveries this summer has given me a new appreciation for family history. It feels that, by studying the past, I can get to know these men and women, feel a kind of kinship with them which crosses the centuries without regard for the distance of time. Suddenly, I feel that my life reaches far into the past, back before I was born—that it began years ago with my ancestors and will continue through my descendants. My life is made longer—not shorter—by an awareness of time on either side of me. Perhaps you would feel that way, too, if you looked into your family's past.

I realize, though, that it is a great privilege to have written records of your family. Maybe oral stories have been passed down instead, or maybe your family isn't related to you by blood. But we do have one 'family' in common here: the ancient ranks of the St. John's polity itself. Our school may be small, but it is old, and our true size is an extension through time rather than space. Great crowds of Johnnies roam the centuries before and behind us. Take a moment to look into the College archives, or even just to contemplate the portraits on the walls of McDowell Hall. A bit of sleuthing could turn those old strangers into familiar faces, friends with whom you share this school. We are used to gathering wisdom from the past— we do it every day here. But how often do we stop to listen to our own past, allowing it, too, to be our muse and teacher?

I will leave you with one such message of yore, given to us by President Fell in 1900, as he contemplated the future of our College. He is speaking to you:

> "[Let us] indulge the pleasing, the delightful hope that from within these walls, the light of science will go forth, and pervade every corner of the land, illuminating the minds of the rising generation, and imparting to posterity those blessings which learning and culture never fail to bestow."

We are his posterity. Let us receive those blessings from the past.



Cassie Desmond

The Delegate Council and Its Discontents

{What is the "Student Interest"?}

Daniel Nathan

We also accept the responsibilities, delegated to us by the College, which include: (a) the representation of undergraduate student interests to the Dean; and the communication of the actions done in pursuit of those interests to the Student Polity," the preamble to the Constitution of the St. John's College Delegate Council reads. Seven more responsibilities are named after that—all of them banal, practical, and imitating the stultifying language of Officialdom and Bureaucratese par excellence. Responsibilities taken on by the Delegate Council (DC) include the expected budgetary matters "(c) the management of funds available to the Student Polity," but also the obscure and ominous "(f) the creation and management of Polity Law." (Polity Law anyone? Ever heard of that? I hadn't.)

The constitution's sixteen dense pages (which will soon undergo review and amending) outline policies on membership, elections, and procedure for the DC. Drafted in 2019–the last innocent year of the Before time—when we were wide-eyed and carefree, simply wading and bobbing around in the lightly crashing surf, worried merely about the rise of fascism in America and the creeping infiltration of Big Tech into our daily private lives, unaware of the shark lurking beneath the surface that lay in wait.

We should've seen it coming. We should've noticed the Jaws theme song.

No one anywhere could have foreseen the seismic shift that the world would soon endure. And at St. John's, those delegates who drafted up the document did not enjoy the hindsight we have now. But the necessary and essential changes made by the college during the height of the pandemic (i.e, zoom classes, mask mandates, weekly testing etc.) would also lead to a fundamental shift in the tone of the administration's involvement with the student polity. Community organizers hover at waltzes. Admin-hired bartenders turn a profit shelling price-gouged seltzers. Significant portions of Mellon have been closed for renovations for over a year (part of a $75 million campaign in campus improvement projects, which will no doubt only further disrupt the learning and college experiences of future classes after us.) The smoking policy is both draconian and rarely enforced. The alcohol policy has turned students away from the quad and into their liquored dorm rooms. Sanctioned extracurricular announcements from Rachelle Munsey unrelentingly flood the inboxes of the entire polity (with no way out). Covid safety measures are nearly nonexistent as students still test positive nearly every week. The list goes on and on—imminent danger right alongside inconvenient, incomprehensible minutiae.

Many of the changes to the culture of St. John's are slights to the intangibles—a community facilitator checking IDs at New Years on Wednesday nights does not end the tradition, people still go, but rather, the administration's presence threatens to drown out the freedom and lack of inhibition of the unabashed drinking song tradition—and critics are not hard to find.

Many in the current Senior class, who had a semester and a half under their belts before the pandemic swept the rug out from under them, bemoan the changes. "It did not used to be like this. Before we went online, we were allowed to be college students and pretty much do what we wanted and we were still treated with respect." one Senior told me. Elias Christian, a recent graduate of the class of 2022, wrote last spring, regarding the administration's ban on "unofficial" open-mic events at the Boathouse, "I loved the old St. John's and the freedom of expression it allowed its students and the self-possession and prudence it assumed in them... This new paranoiac Prohibitionist culture being more like philosophy daycare for 18 year olds."

It may be near impossible to put one's finger on the

New and returning delegates are sworn in
photos by Liz Dowdy

pulse of the polity's general sentiments. But these days, if you were able to, you'd find that pulse to be irregular—an arrhythmia growing between those who were here Before and those that came After.

As organic, authentic culture is scrubbed and digitized, so too is the vibrancy of the discourse, along with the depths of meaning we find in each other and within texts, and so goes the basis for Johnnies' inquiring urge. With disillusionment and discontent on the ground, the DC has a responsibility to regain its footing and take "item (a)" to heart: "the representation of undergraduate student interests...and the communication of the actions done in pursuit of those interests to the Student Polity."

But the term "student interest" is slippery. It's both vague and subjective, an abstract lodestar that is meant to be wholly comprehensive and yet still subject to shifts in public opinion. Student interests cannot be met by simply providing funding to clubs and kowtowing to the administration. Pursuit of the student interest should mean truly advocating not just for those who attend school-sponsored club meetings but also those whose interests lie in the intangibles—the culture, the discourse, the community, being a college student and doing what you want while still being respected.

Knowing what "student interests" really mean—what they *really* are—seems to be a sore unknown amongst the polity and is therefore understandably lost on the Delegate Council. The term requires something of a conscious consensus amongst students on what sort of things they want from their college experience, what sort of things they oppose, and what they want done about those things. An issue arises, however, when students simply don't have much of a "student interest" at all.

Discourse on campus seems to be lacking when it comes to subjects like these—those of polity-wide importance, for meaningful change, in a non-objectionable direction. Voter turnout this year has been abysmal, hovering around one third for each class's delegate elections. Worse maybe, is the fact that for three out of four classes, only four students ran, guaranteeing candidates automatic wins just by signing up. One of the problems that adds to the silence is that while discontent is high, disaffection is probably higher. Many don't know what they're missing out on, or that they're missing out on anything at all.

What can be done? Well, it should start with our elected representatives, reevaluating what "student interest" really means and finding a consensus regarding what that "student interest" really is. Venues in which members of the student polity can communicate their questions, comments and concerns, their discontent and disaffection, their objections and their interests, to the DC are few and far between. The Delegate Council would do well to establish a recurring forum for this type of discourse between itself and the student polity they represent. From the outside looking in, and as most see it, the Delegate Council seems to exist to fund clubs and not much else, but it can do more than that and it can be more than that. And under President Tom Ni, it *should* do more to address student interests. And as a recently elected Delegate for the Junior class, I'll sign on to that—whatever it may look like.

{STARGAZING}

THIS MONTH IN HOROSCOPES—SEPT 2022

Madame T

ARIES

(March 21 - April 19)

Self care is important, Aries. Let someone else take care of you for once, because when you don't, you work yourself into conniptions and make it everyone else's problem. You are truly God's toddler. Just let someone get you a baggie of goldfish and tuck you in. Drink your apple juice and calm down. Sometimes the best thing you can do is let someone placate you.

TAURUS

(April 20 - May 20)

A return to Annapolis means one thing to you, Taurus, and that is to drain your bank account. Do not let the sushi devils tempt you, the mercury poisoning is not worth the two minutes of serotonin that from the $18 dragon roll you just scarfed down. It's crunchy, sweet, and soft body won't hold you in any way that matters. No amount of imitation crab ever will. Please Taurus, be strong, be strong for mother.

GEMINI

(May 21 - June 20)

Don't text him.
Don't.

CANCER

(June 21 - July 22)

You're visibly overwhelmed to be back on campus, Cancer. As much as I'd love to yell at you for making the rest of us nervous by proxy, I don't want to make you cry, so I'll be nice. Put on a sweater, Cancer. Make sure it's tight, you need all the security that polyester can provide you with. You are to St. John's as a small, awful dog being carried in a Micheal Kors bag is to a middle aged white woman. You are loved and supported here, even if it's by someone really, unbearably annoying.

LEO

(July 23 - Aug 22)

We know you didn't do the seminar reading, Leo. Don't even bother acting like you did by picking apart other people's points when you have no idea what's going on. People would like you more if you tried to be quiet. Maybe you would like you more if you just tried to be quiet. Self love is a fickle mistress, and your mask is cracking.

VIRGO

(Aug 23 - Sept 22)

Happy Birthday, Virgo! Your perfectly curated personality and stable energy are why people love to hang out with you. Or maybe it's when that visage melts away. There is no party like a Virgo party because halfway through the night, the top shirt button comes undone and you devolve into a feral animal. To watch you slip into an insanity of your own making is a treat within itself.

LIBRA

(Sept 23 - Oct 22)

Take a nap today, Libra. Better yet, cut out this column, tape it next to your bed and then take a nap everyday. I promise you won't miss any drama, as you (the center of all of it) will be off enjoying your long pre-winter hibernation. Finally, the rest of us can get some work done as you take some time for yourself. Get a face mask, get a Starbies(™), just leave the rest of us the hell alone.

SCORPIO

(Oct 23 - Nov 21)

Welcome back to campus, Scorpio. Are you enjoying the freedom? Does shoplifting nail polish from the CVS make you feel cool? We can tell you had a long, hard summer on Daddy's yacht, because you're drinking as if you're a soldier fresh out of the trenches, praying to a long dead god so that maybe one day you can forget those awful sounds. Maybe one day you'll be clean of the blood spilt, the gunpowder that stains your face. Maybe one day you will feel whole again. Probably not, wanna go to CVS?

SAGITTARIUS

(Nov 22 - Dec 21)

You've been looking for a sign to go a little insane this month, Sag. This is that sign. Buy that awful, gaudy hat. We all know you won't wear it, but sometimes that is what you need to do. Write a physical letter to that cute girl in your lab class, she will not write back. But this isn't about her. Whatever awful little thought is eating at you, indulge it. Sure it might ruin everything but won't it make a funny story? Isn't the point of life to traumatize yourself for the amusement of others? Actually, maybe try therapy.

CAPRICORN

(Dec 22 - Jan 19)

Just because Jesus Christ was a Capricorn doesn't mean that you're above the law. Humble yourself this month, Capricorn. The Romans may be closer than you think. Try being more giving this month, it won't save you from the cross, but people will think you're less of a jerk.

AQUARIUS

(Jan 20 - Feb 18)

Your creative streak will not go unnoticed, Aquarius. Unfortunately it will be noticed in more of an "Oh my god can you believe what they wore to the waltz?" type of way, rather than a talent scouting scenario. Sometimes less is more, Aquarius. How many statement pieces do you really need for a Target run? I promise you the Uber driver does not care. Maybe that's a good thing, though. The world is very dull (thanks, Capricorn.) Maybe some color is a good thing.

PISCES

(Feb 19 - March 20)

How are all those resolutions holding up, Pisces? You promised this would be the year of healthy relationships and no nicotine. I believe that you believe that you're doing well, but you can't 'microdose' on seeing your awful ex. Sometimes you just need to go whole hog into something, Pisces. You've never had issues committing to anything else, might as well capitalize on it.

{FILM REVIEW}

The Man Who Killed Don Quixote

Ranger Kasdorf

"The film had become a legend, and I think financiers don't want to deal with legends, they want to deal with solid things. There was talk of a curse, the curse of Quixote. It's absolute nonsense – but it made financiers very nervous."

—Terry Gilliam, interview with BBC Culture.

Terry Gilliam, do you know what the "sunk-cost fallacy" is?

That cruel little question was the opening line I wrote for this piece back when I was in a much nastier mood. That nastiness was brought about by Gilliam's 2018 film *The Man Who Killed Don Quixote*, which continues to occupy my thoughts and slash at my mind like a wine-skin five days after seeing the film. For though there is a lot to like about this film, it is also, in many respects, utterly baffling. After a few good nights of sleep and indulgence in other such vices, I've mellowed out, and I now recognize it would be unfair to open a review of a film–particularly one which, in spite of its flaws, I quite enjoyed–with a reference to its infamously tortured development history. For all the punchiness and acerbity of that opening line, it's undeniably a cheap shot, and it's not as though there's nothing interesting to discuss about this film besides its 29-year gestation period.

Still, it's hard to resist mentioning it. Terry Gilliam was trying to get *Quixote* off the ground eleven years before I was born, and he finally succeeded the same year I became old enough to vote. In the late '80s, when Gilliam apparently first read *Don Quixote*, he was a decade past his film debut, the beloved and eternally memetic cult classic *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, and was now well into a lucrative career making movies with actual budgets and all-star casts and ambitions beyond making college students laugh. He already had collaborations with Robert de Niro and Robin Williams under his belt, and would go on to work with superstars like Brad Pitt, Bruce Willis, and Johnny Depp. His oeuvre would end up containing a set of films so diverse you'd think each one was made by an entirely different person were it not for his trademark knack for absurdist comedy, which he'd honed during his time in the Flying Circus.

And yet, amid all of this acclaim and boundary-pushing and flesh-pressing, Gilliam still had, in the back of his mind, the desire to adapt this dusty, centuries-old novel. I suppose it's easy to understand what made the book appeal to him, considering that his debut was devoted to lampooning the Arthurian mythos, but it's still remarkable just how hard he pushed to bring *Don Quixote* to the screen. The fact that Gilliam continued to resurrect this project over and over when he had so many other, flashier, more lucrative irons in the fire, and that he still remained unbroken for almost three decades despite the production's reputation as "cursed"–that can only point to this being a labor of love. And the fact that, against all odds, Gilliam eventually succeeded at consummating his love–that T*he Man Who Killed Don Quixote* exists at all–makes me reconsider my invocation of the gambler's fallacy three paragraphs ago.

So let's start again. Let us think no more of how long it has taken our guest to arrive, for now he is here; let us see what sort of company he provides.

The premise of *The Man Who Killed Don Quixote* involves a young filmmaker named Toby (played by Adam Driver at his very most heelish), on location in Spain to film a *Don Quixote*-themed insurance commercial. We immediately understand Toby's character from his behavior on set and ridiculous white-suit-white-fedora-white-silk-scarf combo: he is the archetypical fauxteur, full of artistic ambition but too insufferable and incompetent to capitalize on it, prone to big promises but unable to fulfill any of them. There is a wonderful closeup on Toby's face during a meeting with his production crew and superiors; as we hear the others at the table throwing out their own suggestions for how to improve the commercial, we see Driver's eyes darting around restlessly, intimating perfectly the character's in-over-his-head anxiety.

As Toby tries to leave the meeting, he is urged to stay by his boss (played by Stellan Skarsgard), who buys him a DVD from a street merchant in an attempt to inspire him. That DVD turns out, serendipitously, to be one of Toby's old student films–an adaptation of *Don Quixote*, as it happens. After seducing his boss's wife to gain access to the DVD player in her hotel room, Toby watches this old film, and is immediately struck by the face of the actor he had gotten to play Quixote–a Spanish carpenter named Javier (played by Jonathan Pryce). He decides then and there that finding this man will allow him to breathe life back into his current project and, newly invigorated, gets right back to sleeping with his boss's wife, until the boss comes back to the hotel room and Toby is forced to sprint down the hallway nude, DVD in hand.

Adam Driver and Jonathan Pryce

The next day, Toby sets out on a motorcycle to find Javier, and discovers that he is being held captive by an old woman in the country as a sideshow act: "The Real Don Quixote." The method-acting techniques Toby apparently encouraged him to use during filming have resulted in Javier fully believing that he *is* Don Quixote, and when he mistakes Toby for Sancho Panza, he immediately insists that they set out on an adventure. In his excitement, he starts a fire, prompting Toby to mount his motorcycle in a panic and zip back to the shoot, where he is soon arrested by the local police and tossed into a squad car–along with the merchant who sold him the DVD. En route to the police station, however, the car is stopped by none other than Javier, who, just like the knight he believes himself to be, takes it upon himself to free these unjustly imprisoned men. Disaster ensues, both cops are killed, the merchant escapes, and Driver ends up at the bottom of a nearby valley, hiding underneath a discarded mattress and shouting incoherent profanities.

The events described in the previous four paragraphs take up the first forty minutes of the film, and at this point I have nothing but praise. For one thing, the film's casting is note-perfect. Johnny Depp, Ewan McGregor, and Jack O'Connell were all cast at one point for the role of Toby, but I can't imagine any of them turning in a performance as engrossing as the one Driver turns in here. This was the same year he starred in Spike Lee's *BlackKklansman*, and while in that film Lee chose to reserve the actor's more profane talents for the scenes where he had to pretend to be a white supremacist, here Gilliam gives him every opportunity to let loose, and the result is ecstatic–all volcanic rage and full-throated F-bombs.

Jonathan Pryce, meanwhile, is impeccable as Javier/Don Quixote; he plays the role with exactly the kind of manic sincerity called for, and the scenes of him remaining fully in character as Quixote while Driver refuses to be his Sancho are a joy to watch. At this point we are fully teed up for a fun, off-kilter riff on *Don Quixote*, perhaps with something to say about the nature of literary adaptation. And, well, we sort of get that first part; much of the rest of the film consists of Javier and Toby wandering around aimlessly, recreating individual episodes from the book. In that regard, the film excels; it's a sheer delight to watch so many of the novel's funniest moments play out on the screen. But in the context of the rest of the film, these scenes suffer from a persistent feeling of purposelessness.

The biggest problem with *The Man Who Killed Don Quixote* is that it is really two movies: one about a director suffering from artistic ennui and in need of inspiration, and the other a straightforward adaptation of an old book. Either of these films would be fine on their own, but instead the former has been grafted onto the latter despite the two having nothing to do with one another. Considering how hard Gilliam fought to get this film made, it's unclear watching the finished product what made him feel so strongly that this story needed to be told. For a film so entrenched in the text of Don Quixote, there is remarkably little commentary on the source material; at most, there is subversion, but it is subversion lacking any evident purpose.

And yet it occurs to me now that, in searching for some big statement, I may have failed to meet this film on its own terms. Perhaps what Gilliam aims for is not any kind of analysis or deconstruction, but instead simple narrative pleasure. The film's final scene epitomizes this: Toby, now convinced that he *is* Don Quixote, does battle with three giants, and though this scene has absolutely nothing to do with what his character went through at the start of the film, it's thrilling to see someone who was once such a jaded, shallow prick valiantly battle these giants with utter sincerity.

Ultimately, *The Man Who Killed Don Quixote* definitely feels like a film that took three decades to make. It is grossly overlong, and much of it is messy and overthought, indicative of a script that underwent a few too many rewrites and tweaks. But though it is undeniably confusing, self-indulgent, and at times meandering and boring, it is also so achingly earnest and creative that I can't help but be glad it exists. It is, at time of writing, Gilliam's last feature film to date, and if it ends up being the final film of his career, I don't think you could ask for a more satisfying note to end on. Ride on, Don Guixame; though I may not fully understand your passion project, I have no doubt that it turned out exactly as you wanted it, and I hope it satisfies you just as much as it mystifies me. *Vale.*

{THE CHITON}

Seminar Fashion

Sarah Lieberman

Attending Seminar is a ritualistic activity in nature. For many years, the students of St. John's College would get dressed to the nines, pour into their Seminar classrooms at 8pm, suck on the end of a cigarette as they discussed the night's reading, and then spill out onto the quad for a further discussion of the text.

As time went on, we lost many of these traditions. Though I am willing to admit that not all loss is bad: It is probably best that we no longer smoke indoors, and there are many benefits to having Seminar at 4pm. However, some members of our community have also stopped dressing up for Seminar. Is this an unfortunate loss of tradition, or perhaps a helpful shift towards the prioritization of comfort in class?

I decided to ask the polity what they thought. I asked 45 students whether they preferred seminar attire to be more formal or more casual: 80% voted for formal, and 20% voted for casual. When asked how many Seminars they themselves dress up for 17% said they dress up for 0-25% of their classes, another 17% said they dress up for 25-75%, 39% of students said they dress up for 50-75% of their Seminars, and finally 26% confessed they dress up for 75-100% of their classes.

Many of the students agreed that it gave them something to look forward to during the week. Rachel Hauben ('25) says, "I love dressing up for Seminar, it gives you something to look forward to and have fun with." Other students appreciate the ceremonial aspect. Agnes Galvin ('23) reports, "I love the ritual of getting dressed up for seminar! I really missed it last year with my 4-6." However, some students just don't have the energy. James Reeher ('25) states, "I think it's a lot of fun, and when I'm feeling up to it I love to, but most of the year I'm too tired."

Joseph Padgett

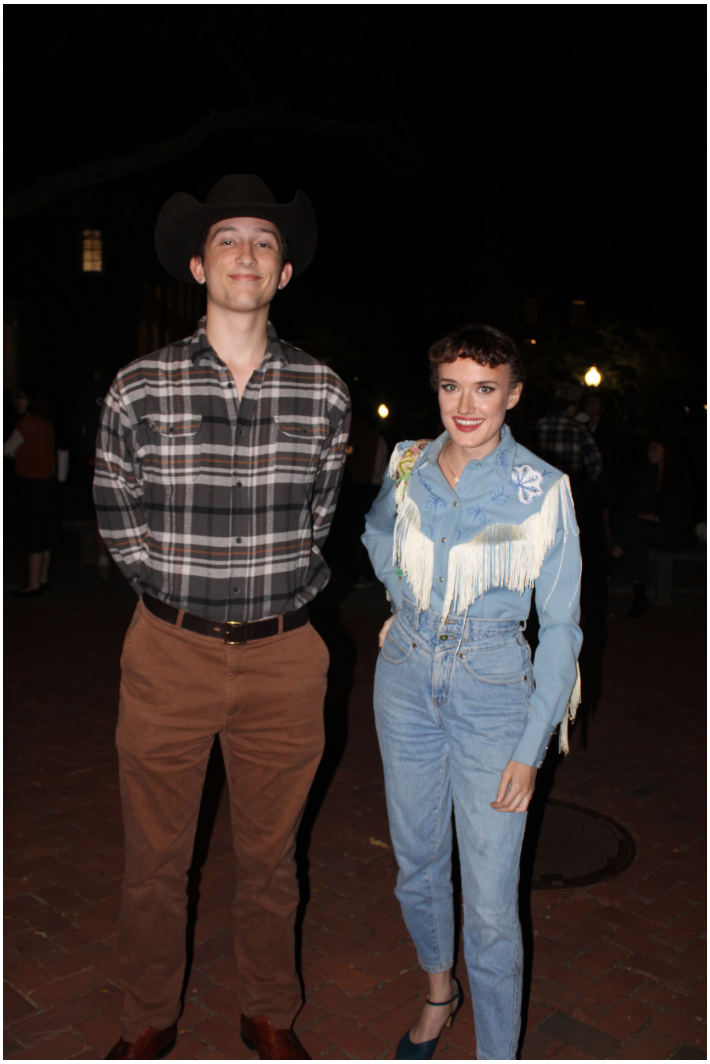
Haein Cho

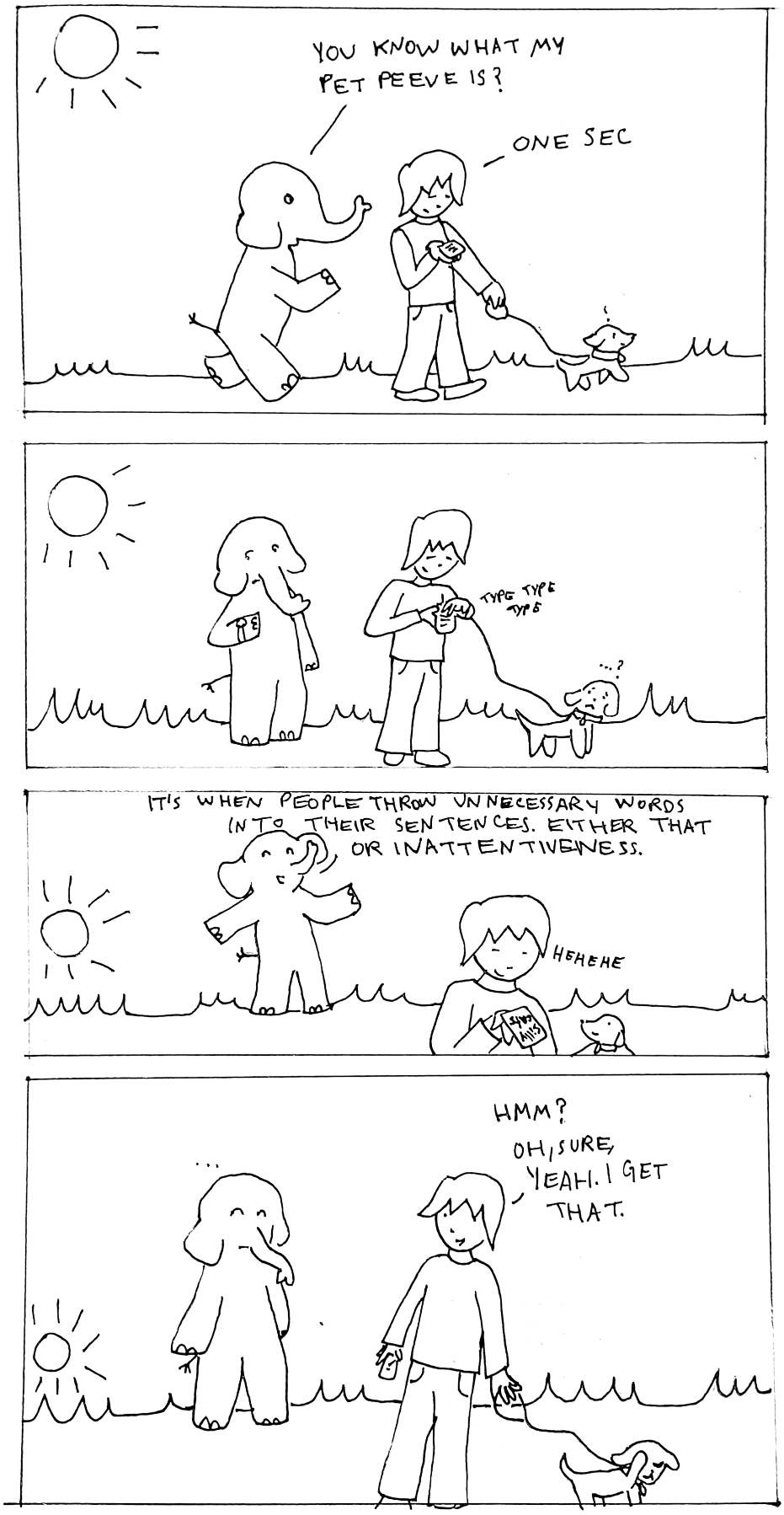
Many students are also selective about the Seminars they choose to dress up for. When asked whether or not they were more inclined to dress up for seminars on texts they enjoy, 75% of students answered yes, while only 22% answered no. So the next time you are in seminar, be sure to take notice of the students who went the extra mile. Now when it comes to dressing up for Seminar, you must decide for yourself: a fun tradition to take part in, or a rigid and outdated chore? Acacia Burnham ('24) sums up her opinion on the matter in one word: "Mandatory."

Pictured on facing page:
Top left: Jack Webb and Acacia Burnham

Top right: James Reeher and Josh Bozorth

Bottom: Naina Wagh, Hannah Glick, Antonina Schlussman, Allegra "Danger" Hall, Acacia Burnham, Silas Pillsbury, Carter Brown, and Lillian Naill





Tamar Pinsky

Polity Communications

To whom or what it may concern,

I am not certain that it is proper to claim that the Gadfly is distributed to "Alumna", as is so done on the publication's cover. Perhaps wiser men know otherwise, but I believe that as a noun preserving Latinate declension, "alumni" is a more proper forum, as the plural of "alumnus" (or, "alumni and alumnæ" if you must make it unmistakably and emphatically clear that women also read).

"Alumna" may signify there is a sole reader who is not a student, faculty, or staff, and who is female; if this is the case, consider introducing an indefinite article. It may also signify, though a neuter plural, at least two readers which are inanimate and without force, like midshipmen.

In shameful esotericity,
Jack Webb.

Members of the Society for the Restoration of the Royal Charter of Annapolis proclaimed the ascension of His Majesty, King Charles III, on Sunday, September 11th, 2022, at 11 am. God Save the King!

—Anonymous

A Daily Rosary

As many of you already know, for the past couple of weeks a daily rosary has been held on weekdays during the lunch hour in Mellon 208. Why is it held in such an inconvenient location at such an inconvenient time with such inconvenient frequency?

The location can easily be explained. There is very little availability of classrooms in McDowell during lunch.

As for the time, it is one of three possible times which make sense. The rosary could be held at 8:30 before classes begin, in order to strengthen us and prepare us for the day. It could be held after 4:00, when all classes have ended on non-seminar nights, so as to refresh our spirits. But by holding it during lunch, we refresh ourselves from morning classes, and prepare ourselves spiritually for afternoon classes.

Why is the rosary held five days a week? First of all it must be said that no one is required to come every day. Whether you commit to one day a week, two days, three, or only come occasionally when your schedule permits, you will be doing a good thing. It is the strength of the daily rosary that, with the people who compose it differing every day, the one constant is the continual giving of glory to God. Our rosary is conceived as a means of worship offered not primarily on behalf of individuals but of the college as a whole.

But the rosary depends on the people who attend, the more the better. If you are interested, please come by Mellon 208 any day Monday-Friday. We will begin at 12:25 and end around 12:43. If you would like to commit to coming regularly on certain days of the week, please email me or add your name to the sign up sheet. If you have never prayed the rosary before, come a few minutes early and I will show you everything you need to know.

Our Lord has ordained that His Blessed Mother be the instrument of His final victory over Satan. Please come and be a part of it. If you have any questions or concerns, email me at gchess@sjc.edu or talk to me in person.

Gabriel Hess

THE STUDENT NEWSPAPER OF ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE

Founded in 1980, the Gadfly is the student newsmagazine distributed to over 600 students, faculty, staff, and ~~alumna~~ alumni of the Annapolis campus.

Opinions expressed within are the responsibility of the author(s). The Gadfly reserves the right to accept, reject, and edit submissions in any way necessary to publish a professional, informative, and thought provoking newsmagazine.

Submissions sent to the Gadfly should either be in Google Docs or JPEG format. The deadline for submissions is the Friday prior to publication.

For more information, contact us via email at sjca.gadfly@gmail.com

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