

THE GADFLY

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Photo by Shayna Jenkins

THE STUDENT NEWSPAPER
OF ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE

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

Opinions expressed within are the sole 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.

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Yo Ho, Yo Ho, An Examined Life For Me

Catherine White A'16

In his *Pensées*, Pascal claims that we “never truly live in the present,” but instead we are constantly “wandering around in times that do not belong to us.” It is something that we are all guilty of—using the past and future to excuse ourselves from the present, that as he says, is usually quite painful. Pascal acknowledges the impossibility of living entirely in the present, though in his typical cynical manner he attributes it more to human weakness than any goodness in the actions themselves.

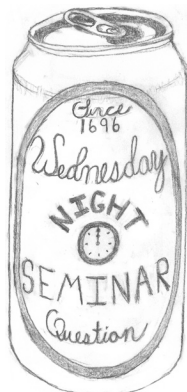
Reflection and planning are certainly essential to growth, but here at the college especially it can be difficult to truly detach ourselves from the anxieties of the future and the past. With the often daunting workload and the constant pressure to improve, it's easy to slip into planning how you'll divide up the seminar reading during the rare boring moment of math, or to agonize over something dumb said in seminar. Despite the importance of being present in class discussions, it's often really hard. It's why, I think, extracurriculars play such an important role in Polity life; everyone needs an escape from thinking about their never ending to-do list, and it's the reason I've stuck with sailing since freshman year.

Sailing is a beautiful and delicate coordination of the mind and body, a constant balancing act between simple physical acts like keeping your boat upright or adjusting the sails, and being constantly aware of the conditions around you and factoring them into your strategy. You're also conveying all of these things to someone else in the boat and trying to communicate a strategy to them without cursing them out (there's a reason for the phrase “curse like a sailor”), and you're probably crouching in the bottom of a very small boat to boot. Sounds stressful? It is, but a very different stress from the intellectual rigor brought about by class and homework. There is no future, in a sense; while you hope your strategic decisions will set you up for the rest of the race, your mind is almost entirely focused on the next mark rounding or the finish line. There's not a lot of room for worrying about homework or how you did in the last race, and it is a wonderfully freeing sensation. To be so intensely intertwined in a moment that, as Pascal says belongs to us, is a rewarding and unique experience. It doesn't matter that the future is often quite painful (and will leave bruises to remind you), because the present is so urgent and consuming that it demands all of your attention.

Obviously, no one can sail all the time. Eventually, we return to dry land, and with it, the responsibilities and strains of normal Johnnie life, but hopefully rested from the diversions. While I'm still not sure if anyone can live life thinking only of the present and experience what Pascal thinks of as happiness, being able to lose yourself in sailing comes pretty darn close. The satisfaction and refreshment tinged with exhaustion that comes after a good practice is indicative of something that is good and right for us as humans. So even if for some bizarre reason you choose not to partake in the pirate's life that is St. John's Sailing Club, make sure go to a soccer game or waltz lesson and know that Pascal would probably do the same. ♦

From the Editors:

Thanks to the glorious efforts of the Polity, the pages missing from our last issue came shooting towards us at incredible speeds in the form of electrons! Although most Johnnies have not had Junior Language, and thus have not learned to read the language of these subatomic particles, we, the *Gadfly*, have lovingly translated it into English so that even the groggier Freshmen and Sophomores will be able to understand it. Once again, our thanks for beaming so many wonderful contributions at us! ♦



Q: Would you be roommates with Xerxes for a year if he promised you half of Greece? ♦

A Letter From a Quad Trashcan to the Polity

Quad Trashcan #3 Trashcan

Dear Polity,

You use a lot of cans. And recently your trash-producing debauchery has reached such heights that come Thursday morning I find myself wondering if you even know what virtue is.

I mean, come on people! I'm no tree-hugging, Birkenstock-wearing, save-the-earth kind of guy. I was made in China for crying out loud! But even I am starting to feel little pangs of guilt (the kind you get when you eat the last cookie in the cookie jar) when my recyclable contents are sent off to landfills.

I'm sure you've seen *Wall-E* and you know how this ends (if you haven't, spoiler alert: with rampant obesity and a Death Star style space-ship planet). Nobody wants that (except maybe the Death Star Planet, that would be cool). But seriously—nobody wants that!

Polity, it's gotten to the point where you are left with two options: find a recycling bin or face rampant obesity.* And for my own sake, I urge you to go with the former.

Sincerely,
Your Humble Quad Trashcan

P.S. While we're on the topic of trash, I'd like to dispel a rumor. Contrary to what some misguided readings of the freshman lab manual would suggest, a red Solo cup planted in the ground will not in fact produce a tree. The ground does not appreciate your recyclables any more than I do. FIND A RECYCLING BIN.

*There is no scientific evidence linking failure to recycle to rampant obesity, rather these are the wholly creditable and unquestionably legitimate ideas of Pixar Animation Studios.

Tutor Is Horse

George Ward A'18

The freshmen of Mr. Braithwaite's bi-weekly seminar class arrived with fire in their hearts and with minds ready to learn. But when they looked upon the playful visage of their much-revered tutor, so that he could serenade them with his knowledge and insightful wit, they were shocked to see a face that was not only playful, but equine in nature.

"Hello, class," Mr. Braithwaite said, stroking his thick, fluffy beard. "As you can all see, I am now a horse."

The room was full of silence. The tension could be cut with a knife. Everyone watched Mr. Braithwaite, wondering what would happen next.

Seminar with Mr. Braithwaite continued as normal that day, but our reporter noticed an air of intense uneasiness in the room. "The tutor is a horse," people whispered. "Why is he a horse? What is happening?" What, our reporter wondered, did it all mean?

“The room was full of silence. The tension could be cut with a knife.”

One student who witnessed these events wished to remain anonymous, but agreed to an interview. "I think Mr. Braithwaite is a horse as a commentary on Ancient Greek society as a whole," he said, stroking his chin thoughtfully. Our reporter was enthralled. He stroked his own chin, equally thoughtfully. Their eyes met. They stroked their rugged chins thoughtfully.

They stroked each other's rugged chins, and as they stared into each other's eyes, they thought rugged thoughts. A bond was forged.

Another witness approached by our reporter, however, declined to comment on how Mr. Braithwaite is a horse. "My feel-

ings on the issue are...inappropriate," she said. What a comment! A comment worthy of speculation.

A comment that, like the transformation of Mr. Braithwaite itself, demands much speculation indeed. ♦

Love Poem

♦ Anonymous

Balled fist of fabric the tension eases

Shocked release while sense teases

Love's pretty picture promptly pleases

in measured sway the pains excreted

Fates path not fixed and yet moves quick

Driving math made passion's pleasure trick

Power realigned with energy's intwine flick

Happiness to fire brightly burning tragics

She saved a soul and made a friend

My love wont stop till the very end

Times constraints can keep it then

Loves warming glow more than friend

A souls beautiful bond till infinity spends

Loves fat purse of beautiful ends

Alumni Profile:

Tobin Herringshaw, A'07

As a teacher in a 12th grade humanities program, Tobin Herringshaw has used the skill of considered questioning for many years. In this profile, he outlines a few paths that future Johnnie teachers can take to enter the field.

(Visit his website at <http://afterwebseries.com>)



What is your current job?

I currently work, and have done so since graduating SJC seven years ago, at Glenelg Country School, an independent K-12 school in Howard County, Maryland. I teach the 12th grade humanities program, which includes Modern World History and our capstone course, Integrative Seminar. Johnnies would find this class familiar, as I based the current version of it off of much I learned at SJC. The course includes readings and seminars on what it means to be human as well as a five month process of writing a senior thesis. I also teach a digital media course that introduces multiple forms of digital media creation including photography, audio recording, video production, and animation using the Adobe Creative Suite.

Did you attend other schools after St. John's?

I am about to graduate with a master's of science from Full Sail University. The program I am in, called Education Media, Design and Technology, helps teachers develop skills to learn, incorporate, and propagate the emergent technologies including Web 2.0 and multimedia creation. I waited for some time to go back to school, and found Full Sail's online program suited my life best.

Did you know what you wanted to do while attending St. John's?

I had a strong direction. I came to SJC with storytelling in mind. I had a desire to write and direct films, but have dialed back those dreams since then to more independent filmmaking and writing. I teach what I love to do and am quite content with the way things are for now.

Did St. John's help prepare you for work in the field?

Definitely. When I was hired to teach for Glenelg in May of my senior year, I was told I would be teaching Ancient Greek and Roman periods of history, literature, and art. But a month before school began, I was switched to Western Civilization. While SJC doesn't always cover context with the texts students read, I felt strong enough with the ideas that I was well prepared to teach the history. I could analyze a text quickly, discuss effectively, and present confidently. These skills are directly attributed to the daily reading, seminars, and tutorials that I experienced at SJC.

What didn't St. John's prepare you for?

While at SJC, like-minded people are all around you. But in the intellectual world outside of the community of Johnnies, ignorance, close-mindedness, and an inability to argue and persuade are often met. SJC didn't do the best at helping me understand how to still communicate with people who

did not share my intellectual background. It was a period of adjustment before I could sense when and where to "go all Johnnie" during a conversation.

Any specific disadvantages to a St. John's background?

I really don't see any significant disadvantages. Sure, you might need to catch up with some particular science or math when pursuing a professional degree after SJC, but you will be in such a better place to do so having experienced the SJC education.

How did you feel you compared, in graduate school or early jobs, to people from different educational backgrounds, particularly those with field-related degrees?

At first, as in any job, I felt intimidated by the other teachers. But I quickly learned this was only from a lack of familiarity. Once I got my bearings in the school and with teaching, it became clear that I was more open to ideas, more creative in my assessments, and could discuss and communicate better than some who had been teaching for many years. But what I have come to appreciate about other educational backgrounds is that the good backgrounds share similar skills, even though they might have concentrated on a smaller subject area. And it becomes a two-way street of sharing when I find someone who can offer me a deeper content understanding, while I help them discuss and argue better the points they make.

Can you describe a general track someone from St. John's might take to get into a career in this field?

If you are interested in teaching, you have two main tracks: public or private schools, especially on the east coast. If you are interested in teaching, you should try to get experience with teaching while still in school. Tutor, be placed as an intern in a local school, and work with kids whenever you can. Once you have some resume building, you'd make a strong resume (with the help of the career services at SJC) and join a placement service like Carney Sandoe or Southern Teachers. They will help seek out the jobs and submit your application/resume on your behalf. If you are interested in public school teaching, you'll need to seek out more education, particularly a master's in education, and get certified.

Any general advice, especially for an upperclassman who is interested in this field but is not quite sure what to do?

Get some experience in teaching or similar experiences working with kids while still at SJC. Think about what subject(s) you'd like to teach, and build an excellent resume. Use the

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SJC alumni network to visit teachers in the area to see the job first hand, the job firsthand.

How did you market yourself with a St. John's degree?

For my current job, I used my resume and the interview process. My resume was well crafted to inform any reader of the great experience and ability that a SJC graduate comes with and the interview process was a time when I could capitalize on the breadth and depth of my knowledge. Because I applied for a humanities position, it was easy to talk in depth with teachers who were teaching the *Iliad* or Aristotle. I could also suggest other readings that they might not have considered. Moreover, I'll never forget that I probably got my job based on my love and ability to expound on interpretations of Virginia Woolfe's *To the Lighthouse*.

How would you characterize your field as a whole? Is it accessible to newcomers or difficult to enter? Stable or fluid? Etc.

This field needs more SJC grads. Too many teachers are closed-minded, single-subject teachers who do not see or want to participate in the future of education as it spreads into integrative, technology-heavy learning. SJC graduates have a distinct advantage in this field because they already have been practicing the core skills intensely for four years. The field is quite welcoming and accessible to newcomers, especially the independent and private schools.

What was your senior essay topic?

I wrote about transformation (*metabole*) in Aristotle's *Poetics*, finding that the transformation that occurs in the reversal and recognition moment of a story is something akin to the *telos* of a story.

What is your favorite book on the Program?

Aristotle's *Poetics*.

Do you find that you lead a philosophical life?

I think it would be hard not to lead a philosophic life after St. John's College. I still get lost in thought, argue the small points that many no longer care about and generally like to think about almost anything. I find that I look to the Stoics during times of struggle, and still wonder about the author whenever the *Iliad* or *Odyssey* is mentioned. ♦

You Did What?!

Leslie Howard A'15

Are you interested in exploration and discovery? Have you ever wondered how those scientists did it? Here at St. John's College, we provide you with six semesters of authentic scientific experiences.

We start you off very benignly in the freshman year with the careful observation of the outsides of plants and animals. Things aren't always how they appear, though, so you will quickly move onto dissection. One of the more exciting practices is the sheep lung dissection. Don't worry—you will certainly get a full hands-on experience: gloves are provided (sometimes), but not required. In this practicum, you are encouraged to inflate the sheep lungs by closing your fist around the trachea and blowing into your fist; however, I have seen it done by merely closing the mouth around the trachea, instead. There is no wrong way to do science. Often, freshman laboratory tutors conduct a field trip to the Mellon courtyard during this practicum to show the adverse effects of cigarette smoking on lungs. They encourage one of the smoker students to begin smoking a cigarette, making sure to exhale into the sheep lungs. After about three consecutive cigarettes over the course of just a few minutes, the lungs are very disgusting, and you will have all learned an important lesson.

During the second semester of freshman laboratory, you will explore the beginnings of chemistry in all its glory. One important thing to remember is that acids taste sour and bases taste soapy; be sure to take advantage of this once in a lifetime opportunity to taste-test all the chemicals in the laboratory. You will also get the chance to burn many substances and observe the colors of their flames. You are discouraged from staring at the combusting magnesium, but, as you will discover, it will be impossible to look away.

We provide all of sophomore year laboratory-free so that the rising sophomores can recover from mercury poisoning.

First semester of junior laboratory is very tame. You will spend that time mostly crashing hard bodies into other hard bodies and swinging metal balls on strings. Things pick up the pace in second semester, where you will get to play with electricity without knowing what it is or how it works. This will allow you to get a genuine experience like that of the one scientist who got a big electric shock and "thought it was all up" with him. It is in this semester that everyone is encouraged to ground charged bodies by sticking a metal probe into an electrical socket; and it is in this semester that everything your parents taught you as a child crumbles away into dust.

Finally, you will arrive at senior year. A word of advice from someone who knows: make sure to wash your hands after the electrodeposition of copper experiment. Cupric sulfate solution is not a pleasant thing to get in your eyes, but you might not know that if the manual does not explicitly tell you, because, after all, you're only a twenty-something with no background in laboratory safety. You will also conduct an experiment using an ultraviolet lamp. Take a chance! Use this unique opportunity to see what getting skin cancer feels like! A bonus of this practicum is that your eyesight will never be the same.

I have not yet embarked on the final semester of laboratory at St. John's, but I expect no less than the wonders and joys of the previous semesters.

Your parents always used to tell you how "things were different" when they were kids. No one cared if they played in the road or climbed big trees. They didn't worry about toxins or sun damage or strangers. If you attend St. John's College, you will be able to tell your own kids the wonderful stories about how your lab assistant sucked mercury from a tube, or how you could smell the ozone in your classroom after an exciting afternoon playing with the Wimshurst machine, or how you touched the outside of the Faraday cage just because you were told not to. What other group of Millennials can say that? ♦

“Your parents always used to tell you how ‘things were different’ when they were kids.”

I Walk the Line

Matthew Linck Tutor

Earlier this summer I was fumbling around for a substantial novel to read. (My waning interest in novels having been reinvigorated earlier this year after reading *The Brothers Karamazov*.) After a few misfires, I scanned my shelves for books I had failed to get through but wanted to revisit. A book I had tried many times to surmount stood out—Thomas Pynchon's *Mason & Dixon*—a book that had been on those shelves for seventeen years and had moved with me to five different homes. When *Mason & Dixon* was released in 1997, I was already a confirmed Pynchon fan from reading *V.* and *The Crying of Lot 49* (my failed attempts at getting through *Gravity's Rainbow* notwithstanding), and I didn't know *Mason & Dixon* was going to be released until I walked by a favorite bookstore on Washington Square and saw a hundred copies piled up in the window. I walked in and bought one on the spot.

And of course I started reading it right away. How far I got that first time, I can't remember, but I made it at least as far as the talking dog. (More on that below.) I recall making another attempt a few years later getting somewhere near to the 150th of its 773 pages. Other attempts have faded from memory. I say all of this to indicate that finally finishing the book feels like paying off an old debt.

Why should you care about any of this? No reason in particular, but I think it turns out to be a happy accident that my reading of the book was delayed until now, for many things that I have learned at St. John's College came in handy while navigating *Mason & Dixon*; principally, astronomy—one of the main threads through the book—but also electricity and magnetism, and things Newtonian.

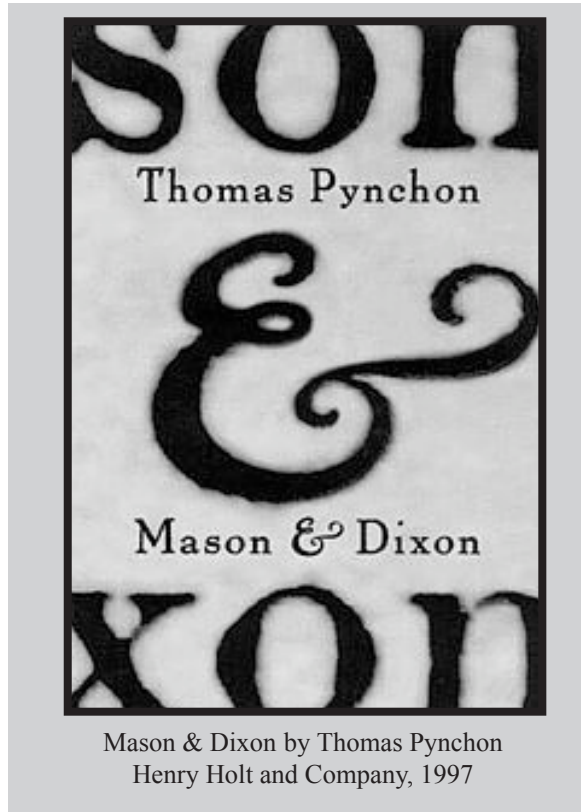
You might wonder why some knowledge of these things would come in handy in reading *Mason & Dixon*. The short answer is that Pynchon's book is, in some sense, a true story. Charles Mason was a professional astronomer and Jeremiah Dixon was a surveyor, and the main actions of the book require and make constant reference to these practices. The first action is Mason and Dixon's work in observing the transit of Venus in 1761, and the second is their surveying of the eponymous line between 1763 and 1767. (Many obscure references to things astronomical and magnetic would have been hopelessly obscure without some familiarity with these matters.)

But, to call these the main actions of the book already presents a problem, for it might just as readily be said that the main action of the book is the cultivation of a friendship, or the (perhaps ambiguous) emergence of enlightenment in the modern world, or the delineation of something called America prior even to the revolution. I think it might be one of the great accomplishments of Pynchon's book that it does all of these things without ever mentioning them as such. (The main ac-

tion might also be about working out a tremendous grief, a subject that is tackled directly.) Instead, we see Mason and Dixon at work and at play, at home and abroad, together and sometimes apart. Mostly we hear them talking, with each other and with a wildly diverse set of characters: sailors, Dutch colonials and their slaves, Royal Astronomers, tavern dwellers, Benjamin Franklin and George Washington, New York City thugs, Native Americans, and a panoply of others as Mason and Dixon clear the line heading west.

Oh, yeah, I was going to say something about that talking dog. I don't want to spoil the fun too much, but will say that while he goes by Learned English Dog he prefers to be called Fang. (He's a Norfolk Terrier.) And, to dwell on the talking dog would leave no time to mention the marvels of the mechanical duck (and his relationship with an exiled French chef). Or the giant vegetables. Or the watch that doesn't need winding and might be alive.

I haven't yet mentioned that *Mason & Dixon* is written in 18th century idiom and spelling and capitalizes most nouns. Or that the book is narrated by a certain Reverend Cherrycoke, and addressed to members of his extended family. Or that the narrative frame has an often uneasy relationship with the (apparent) main story. I also haven't mentioned that page-for-page the book is difficult, but the previous sentences might suggest some reasons why. There are others. But the book is also, sentence-by-sentence, paragraph-by-paragraph, at least interesting, never ordinary, and of-



Mason & Dixon by Thomas Pynchon
Henry Holt and Company, 1997

ten beautiful. The following gives some sense of what might be found in the book's use of language:

"Tis withal a Snowy Owl Year,— the Lemmings having suicided in the North, the Owls are oblig'd to come further South in search of Food,— and suddenly white Visitors from afar are ev'rywhere, arriving in a state of Mistrustful Fatigue, going about with that perpetual frown that distinguishes 'em from the more amiably be-Phiz'd white Gyrfalcons. At the peaks of Barns, the Tops of girdl'd gray Trees, Gleaners of Voles soaring above the harvested Acres, with none of your ghostly hoo, hoo neither, but low embitter'd Croaking, utter'd in Syllables often at the Verge of Human Speech."

The episodic, set-piece character of Pynchon's storytelling can make it difficult to keep up one's momentum in reading; his (deliberately?) bad jokes are no doubt too off-putting for some; his whimsy can strain against what seems serious and grave. These are among the reasons that I recently told someone that while I enjoyed and admired the book I couldn't recommend it.

But I've changed my mind. You should read it. ♦

Looking for a Job?

Kira Anderson A'18

Money does not grow on trees. Shocking, I know. And everything appealing in the world seems to cost money—nice clothes, books, cars, that one thing online that you check the price of regularly to see if there's a sale on it yet; all of these require some form of currency to purchase. So, as The Simpsons aptly puts it, "You can use money to acquire goods and services." So where does money come from, if not trees?

Jobs. Unfortunately, we must work. We must slave away. For those of us not absorbed into the corporate body, an introduction may be necessary. To help those who wish to have money, and wish to acquire that money through a job rather than robbery or picking up spare change on the streets, (only when it's heads up, of course) I have started a list of local places hiring.

Annapolis Ice Cream Company is looking for part-time help to work through holidays and weekends. They sound very serious about you being there for holidays, since I looked at the application, and that part was bolded and several fonts larger than the rest. Annapolis Ice Cream Company makes its own frozen cow juice, and is beautifully decorated in penguins and spoon-art created by customers. Enquire inside the store for the application.

White House Black Market is looking for an "In-Store Visual" worker who "is primarily responsible for creating and maintaining a visually brand-right boutique," (whatever that means) according to the job website. If you've got the basics (a GED, are over 18, a good worker) and 2 years' experience in visual merchandising, then this job may be perfect for you! Learn more at jobs.chicos.com/whbm.

Wheat, a store that sells children's clothes, not grains as one might come to expect, is also looking for workers. Outside of this quaint little blue and white painted building, there is a sign in a very bold font, "Help Wanted! Enquire Within." If you are not offended by the erroneous capitalization in the sign or the fact that a store named Wheat does not, in fact, sell wheat, then take a short walk downtown and enquire within!

Joss, a sushi bar and café, a very interesting, fairly priced Japanese restaurant, has hung a sign requesting help for quite some time. Perhaps one of the reasons that the sign is still hanging there is that they are requesting experienced servers, and they are not in great quantity here in Annapolis. In fact, there seems to be an experienced server shortage, if one is to believe the signs strewn across town. Perhaps another reason the position is still unfulfilled is because the advertisement is written in marker on computer paper and tacked to a slanted window which faces another store. Enquire about the job inside, and get a serving of green tea ice cream while you're there. It's worth it!

If you wish to get in tune with your inner Grecian and bathe in olive oil before slaughtering a hecatomb to some god that will probably kill you anyway, look into a position at "**seasons**." The store name is not capitalized. That was not an error. On tap at seasons, you can get innumerable combinations of olive oil and vinegar. This unique store has a finely printed request for part-time help, proclaiming that seasons is "A FUN ENVIRONMENT," and you can apply within or call Mary at 443-905-0040.

Hatley is a store which is painted a very shocking blue. Anyhow, they are hiring a part-time sales associate. On the sign taped to their window, it asks that anyone interested call 410-280-2440 or email Annapolis@Hatley.com. Next to all this information, there is a large butterfly wing. I have yet to understand why this is on the sign, though, since there does not seem to be a butterfly theme within. Perhaps it is meant to show how jovial the store is, so jovial that they can put half a butterfly on a poster asking for help. It is a yellow butterfly, if that sweetens the pot for you.

Jimmy John's is also hiring for multiple positions—drivers, bikers, and sandwich makers. If you have a passion for such things, do apply. Their sandwiches are truly delivered "freaky fast" and are mostly palatable. Particularly if it's three in the morning and you feel vaguely pained from hunger. And if you decide you don't want to apply, remember that there is in fact a sign inside offering "free smells," so simply walk in, take a deep breath, thank the manager on duty, and walk out knowing that you inhaled the hard work of fellow students making minimum wage plus.

The Historic Reynolds Tavern, on Church Circle, has cried out for the hero it both deserves and needs right now—a full-time or part-time server. The only stipulation added is that one applying must be 18 years or older. Either apply within or email this mildly suspicious looking address- qjrx9-4686894129%40job.craigslist.org.

McGarveys Saloon and Oyster Bar confusingly put out a request for "Bussers/Barbacks - Weekend Hostess." I assume that these are meant to be read as three different things, but who knows; we live in a confusing age of dying grammar, which truly began dissolving after the oxford comma was declared "droppable," and the verb "to Google" was added to the dictionary. Anyways, the listing is on Craigslist and may be viewed there. Also the Saloon has suggested that anyone interested should apply within the building, which is located at McGarveys Saloon, 8 Market Space, Annapolis.

This is a very incomplete list, mind you, and there are always papers tacked up around campus with job offers to supplement your ongoing search. May the odds be ever in your favor, students and fellow job-searching beasts of burden. Take this knowledge and use it well, for with great knowledge comes great responsibility. ♦

How I Spent My Summer Vacation

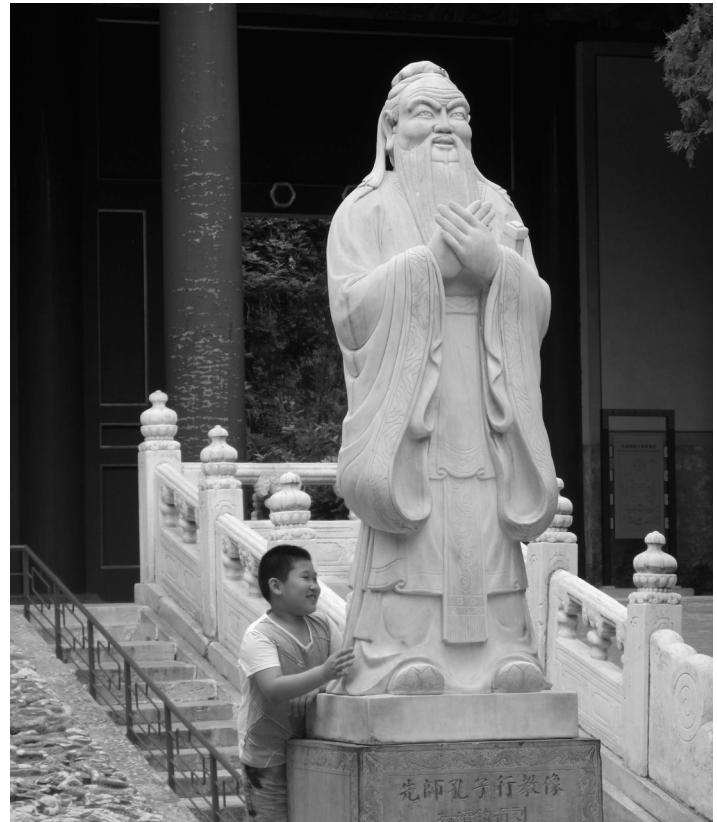
Patricia Locke Tutor

If Proust is correct, and we come to know our feelings and experience in retrospect, then it is time for me to puzzle out my summer vacation. It was not actually a vacation, but the title sets in motion the series of things done in summer time, often accounted for in school essays. This past summer, I went to China with several Johnnies to participate in Think Like Socrates seminars. We were in Beijing, under the auspices of the Project for Peace and the support of the Affiliated High School of Peking University. The Davis Foundation bought our plane tickets and paid for food and supplies, while the high school graciously offered dorm accommodations and cafeteria food. Fortunately, I met up with Ms. Chengyaquing Shi (A, '16) a couple of times to offset the cafeteria leftovers with Peking duck and traditional banquet food, including a spectacular first course dish of cold mashed yam with blueberry sauce. But I digress...

The Think Like Socrates seminars were with a group of mostly Chinese high school and a couple of first year college students, along with Indira Cabrera (SF, '16), Yue Gong (GI, '14) and Zachary Thomas (SF, '16). Back in Santa Fe, students led by Dongyu Cui (SF, '16) came up with the idea, wrote the proposal and backed us non-Chinese speakers throughout. A brand new Johnnie, Lingxiao Zhang, spent the summer before joining the College picking us up at the airport, showing us a magnificent four story bookstore and other big city delights, and interpreting as needed.

Their plan fit the Davis Foundation parameters to promote world peace. How? By having classic Johnnie-style seminars on parts of the *Meno*, *Republic*, *Nichomachean Ethics* (books 5 & 8) and Sophocles' plays *Antigone* (in part) and *Oedipus the King* (entire). It was the first time in my life that someone quoted Chairman Mao in a *Republic* seminar, and it felt bracing and new. The students were alive to the text, very articulate in English, and way more informed about injustices committed by America to its own than my out-of-date impressions of China. It was curious that their examples were almost always safely from American history (Civil War, ill treatment of native American Indians), while not one person mentioned the 25th anniversary of Tiananmen Square protests. Their biggest complaints (at least revealed to me) are internet censorship and air pollution. At this point, these students intend to study in American or European universities, and then to return to take on the rapidly changing social and economic world unfolding in contemporary China. So I felt that our thrashing out the questions of justice and friendship helped build the foundations for both the journey out into the wider world, and the return to face the increasing complexity of modern life. I know the questions hit me hard and sounded more provocative in a new context.

I also had the opportunity to get lost, really lost, as I haven't in a while. I got to be swept up in a mass of people in the subway, headed to who knows where, and to trust that I would end up somewhere interesting and intact. Like a Parisian flâneur, I let myself go, without a cell phone, without being able to speak the language, just to see life being lived. What a thrill! People on the street showed me things, fed me, and tried to sell me outrageously priced knock-offs, while little kids pointed to my blue eyes and said, "Welcome to Beijing!" all with similar intonation. But mostly they left me to my own devices, as long as I was walking or doing tai chi in the park. The second I sat down at a café table, an



instant companion began to speak English. Each had stories, and many questions. This was the most unexpected gift of the trip. When I was tired, I just spoke the magic words: "Where is the subway?" and my way home appeared. The BJ subway is the best I have encountered: cheap, clean, extensive, and as a bonus, has signs in English. It became my sprawling security blanket in an environment where I honestly did not know what was happening most of the time. After several weeks of Think Like Socrates seminars, I spent a few days in Shanghai and Suzhou, first to see landscape paintings and then to see them come to life in centuries old gardens. It will take me a while to sort and reflect, but I wanted to let you know about it now.

This is the perfect time for you to cook up a Project for Peace of your own. What captures your imagination, at home or abroad, as a step to bring people together in ways that overcome the conflicts wrought by misunderstanding, prejudice, injustice, or war? Take a look at the website of the Davis Foundation (www.davisprojectsforpeace.org) and talk out your vague ideas or detailed plans with Jamie Dunn in Career Services. St. John's College gets to nominate a program proposal for next summer: why not think of a way to make a difference with some of your friends? Even seniors are eligible for the summer after graduation.

So put your book learning to work: with Projects for Peace, Johnnies have done health initiatives, helped with infrastructure in remote villages in Nepal, as well as leading seminars on various topics. If I may quote Confucius: "To learn and then have occasion to practice what you have learned—is this not satisfying? To have friends arrive from afar—is this not a joy?" ♦

Wal-Mart: Corporate Capitalism at Its Worst

Len Sive Jr. G.I.

"All hope abandon, ye who go through me"

—Wal-Mart's Employee Credo

I went to a Wal-Mart in Santa Fe, New Mexico, last Saturday. I had grave misgivings about doing so, knowing a little of its sordid dealings with cities in which it locates and its inhumane treatment of its employees. Still, I decided to shop there, curious to see if Wal-Mart was better in a liberal, democratic Santa Fe.

The staff in this huge store looked harried and stressed, rushing this way and that, barely stopping even to answer a customer's queries. No floor employee was smiling; only the cashier, who was safely ensconced behind her little fort. The rest of the staff seemed out of sorts, anxious and fearful, like an army outmanned, about to be over-run by the enemy (the customer).

I finally finished my shopping, gathered up my bags, and went outside to a pre-arranged meeting area with the school shuttle, which was to take me back to St. John's College where I'm a first-term graduate student.

It was a sizzling hot Saturday afternoon. Where I was waiting, there was precious little shade to shelter oneself from the stifling heat. Nearby were three male employees on their break, smoking cigarettes, and talking. I decided to ask them about life at Wal-Mart, partly to make the time go by faster, but partly out of curiosity.

They were all very friendly, courteous, and respectful. "How do you like working here at Wal-Mart," I asked them. The man who spoke up first had nothing but disdain for his employer. "I don't," he answered curtly.

"Why not?" I asked.

He was very direct and open with me. "Well," he started, "as one example: Although we work full-time, we're still classified as part-timers, so they don't have to give us benefits." I recalled that Wal-Mart often did that to its employees. I asked the other two how they felt about Wal-Mart. They also didn't like working there.

I remembered reading years ago that Wal-Mart had difficulty keeping its employees. So I asked about the turnover rate at this store.

"Most employees," one man stated, "don't last 3 or 4 months." Another be-

lieved the annual turnover rate to be about 70%. The other two nodded in agreement.

But on this I was skeptical. The numbers seemed impossibly high, even for a notorious store like Wal-Mart. I thought it best to speak with some other employees and compare answers. Two female employees nearby had just sat down for a break. I decided to quiz them.

So I walked over and introduced myself. They were very nice and friendly. We engaged in small talk for several minutes. Then, getting down to business, I

“The numbers seemed impossibly high, even for a notorious store like Wal-Mart.

asked them how they liked working at Wal-Mart. The young woman on my left looked up at me and, smiling, said, "It's a great place to work." Her friend nodded in agreement. I then asked each one several more questions about life and work at Wal-Mart. Their responses were all positive. What was going on? Were they telling me the truth? Were things really that great at Wal-Mart? From two groups of people I had two completely different, mutually exclusive accounts of life at Wal-Mart: both couldn't be true.

It was then that I noticed the girls' eyes: they were riveted on something behind me. So I turned around to see what they were looking at—and there stood two huge (and I mean big!) security men, aka "assistant managers." They moved in closer and stood right next to me, cheek by jowl. The name tag of one of them read "BIG MIKE." He was about twice my size and several inches taller. The other "assistant manager" stood on Big Mike's left. Here was a classic example of physical threat and intimidation—right there in the open, too, in front of the entrance to Wal-Mart! But why? Was Wal-Mart concealing a dark secret hitherto unpublished? Or did they perhaps think I was a union organizer—Wal-Mart's number one enemy—seeking recruits?

"You can't speak to the employees," growled Big Mike. The two young women got up quickly from the bench and hurried back to the store. I glanced in the men's direction: they had left, too. That's how you control people—fear. Wal-Mart had that down to a science. So now it was just the three of us: two burly giants aching for a fight—and me.

This entire incident was so foreign to me. I had just spent six years teaching English in South Korea and had never once experienced anything even remotely close to this. Now I'm back home in the "Land of the Free," and within a month....

Big Mike, his fierce eyes blazing, was trying to scare me. "You have to leave the premises now," he said angrily. But proud and defiant, I said: "No, I'm not leaving; I'm waiting here for my shuttle. It's coming to pick me up." And then I turned around to face the parking lot, hoping the shuttle wouldn't be too late—and wondering whether a physical confrontation was imminent.

I paced nervously up and down the sidewalk, stopping every few minutes to search in both directions for the van. And always right there next to me, attached to me like a shadow, so they could watch my every move and hear my every word, were these two scary Cyclops. They were like lions skulking their prey, waiting for the right moment to pounce. But I took some measure of comfort in being out in the open, next to the parking lot, with customers continually coming and going. "Safety in numbers," I thought.

Twenty minutes in the hot sun passed. The other "assistant manager" decided to go back inside, glad, I'm sure, to get out of the sun. But not Big Mike—there was no moving him. He was like a ship moored at dock. He had just taken up a position leaning against a nearby wall. From there he could scrutinize my every word and movement.

At last the van arrived. A door opened; I climbed up and took the last empty seat, by the window. As the van started to pull away from the curb, I turned around to get one last look at Big Mike. He hadn't moved an inch. He was still watching me as the van threaded its way out of the parking lot. Like a pitbull, he just couldn't let go.

I had gone to Wal-Mart to buy some necessities for school and dorm, but left with a first-hand understanding of the awful power of Corporate America—and feeling, too, now more than ever, how grave a threat it was to our historic way of life.

One of the most disturbing aspects about all this is that in my research afterwards, I discovered that employees in point of fact

“They were like lions skulking at their prey, waiting for the right moment to pounce.

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Who Holds the Power?

Jensen Pratt A'18

When does the exercise of free speech go too far? Where does the administration draw this line? Due to recent events in the freshman class, we may have an answer to these imperative questions.

A couple of weeks ago, a friendly freshman face by the name of George Ward decided to start a Facebook group page after realizing peers had said fascinating and sidesplitting things during tutorials. He titled the page "St. John's Classroom Discussion Quotes" in hopes that classmates and friends would have a social media page to share respectable points discussed, joke around with each other (all in good fun), and have a place to document these quotes that were simply forgotten from class to class.

Shortly after the page was created, the Assistant Dean, Katherine Heines, graciously requested to meet with Ward about said page. When asked what was said during the meeting, Ward said the following, "She asked me if I ran the page. She asked me what was on the page. I showed her what was on the page and she told me, 'In St. John's classrooms they (the staff) value spontaneity, they value the ability to say things so that the conversation can move forward even if each individual thing you say isn't very smart out of context.' She said, 'With that in mind, she thought that it was inappropriate to quote the things that people say because it might make people unwilling to speak.'" She brought up a section of the

student handbook that said that it was against the rules even with the consent of all tutors and students to film or record (audio) classes. We (Heines and Ward) at the time (during this meeting) agreed that my Facebook page was safe from that rule. However the spirit of that rule suggested that the very act of quoting something someone said might violate that same spontaneity they are worried about. She thinks it's against the spirit of the law; I think it's a Facebook page and you don't have jack."

After this meeting, Ward refused to deactivate the page but instead changed the page to have alternate stipulations. He decided to change it because he values his affiliation with the Polity and does not wish to distress students or the administration. He holds firm that he was not doing anything erroneous by fashioning an amusing and useful Facebook page, but he acknowledges why Heines and others in the administration would be fearful of a page like this. He changed the title of the page to "St. John's Quotes (NOT EVER FROM CLASSROOM DISCUSSIONS)" and changed the bio of the page as well as posted on the page clarifying that quotes from classrooms cannot be posted on the page but only quotes from outside of class. He did this in order to

preserve the spontaneity of classroom discussion and keep a good relationship with the school. Since this change, no students have posted a quote from during class time.

Shortly after this, Ward was called in for another conference with the Assistant Dean and according to him; he was "persuaded to remove the page completely" and was told, "Your

Facebook page is a place where gossip can be documented and needs to be taken down". Apparently amending the page to what it is

now was not sufficient for the administration.

This entire situation has been heavily deliberated both in the freshman class and with other classes. Many students believe Ward should take down the page as the administration has justified worries. Other students think this violation of free speech is complete bullshit. Though both sides hold valid points, where does one draw the line between the letter of the law and the spirit of the law? Is this a violation of free speech and personal social media? Is this a disgrace to the rules we agree upon coming to this school? These are just some of the questions students have had with no definite answers. As of now, Ward has yet to decide whether or not to shut down the page. ♦

“ ‘She thinks it’s against the spirit of the law; I think it’s a Facebook page and you don’t have jack.’ ”

Continued From Pg. 5

free speech—not at the work-place, and, incredibly, sometimes not even outside the workplace!

So where is our vaunted Freedom of Speech, I want to know? Is this what our Founding Fathers envisaged when they wrote the First Amendment? What kind of country have we become—where one may, in many states, legally carry a weapon into a shopping mall, a college, or even a church—and yet be forbidden to engage in a conversation at work on one's own break-time!

Thomas Jefferson is reputed to have

said, "The price of Liberty is eternal vigilance." Clearly, as a nation, we have not been vigilant enough! It is so much easier to criticize the human rights record of other nations, as we so often do, than to ensure that in our own country our commitment to basic human rights is beyond reproach.

As a nation we were once famed for our constitutional rights—rights which stirred up envy in the breasts of all those who were struggling and suffering under oppression and tyranny. This is our true history. Let us reclaim it while we

still can. Let us pay the full price of Liberty which Jefferson demands, so that our nation may once again deserve, and cherish, the world-historic appellation, desired of so many: The Land of the Free. ♦

Lucretius From Outer Space

On the Wild Beasts of the Universe

Sebastian Barajas A17

And now I shall address another myth native to ignorant souls: that far away on some distant cloud-wrapped world—or indeed, in our very woods—lives the cunning beast known as man. Of all the invented monsters that haunt the nights of the dull-witted, man is the most feared. Indeed, it is common practice in the countryside to array ditches and trip-wires to topple this beast, as though he might at any moment come tottering from the trees.

But as I shall demonstrate, man is not only a fictional beast, but by nature impossible. For he is said to stand erect like a tree, balanced upon his two hind legs, and that this is his natural state. Yet this is plainly absurd. For if indeed such a creature did exist, either it would stand transfixed in the earth with its two extremities dug in, after the fashion of tree roots, or this creature would be bound to topple to the ground, where it could not move itself, save by use of its forelimbs.

This is easily observable in the construction of tripods and huts and other such artifacts: the minimum number of limbs required for a body to be raised above the ground is three. No cooking pot could be hung on two posts, nor roof suspended over a single wall. Even if such a configuration were carefully arranged by a subtle hand, the first timid wind would send the whole contrivance earthward. And without any mechanism for a fallen man to hoist himself up once more to that unnatural height, he would have no recourse but to remain on all fours forever.

Further, locomotion would be impossible for such a creature. Four-legged creatures, it is plain, proceed by lifting and moving one foot at a time, so as to maintain at least three legs upon the ground in order to keep their balance. But for such a two-legged animal to walk, to lift one of his legs would leave only its twin upon the ground, thus reducing man to an effectively one-legged animal: a notion so absurd that even fools must reject it.

Even if sheer chance afforded a man one—or even two—lucky strides and allowed him to maintain his ungainly height, such unreliable transport would be doomed to fail. Just as we may play at dice and win several rounds before our fortunes fail, so too must a two-legged creature eventually fall when he attempts to walk.

Further, even if two-legged locomotion were enabled by some unknown device of Nature, once a man fell, how could he be righted again? Any of his kindly fellows who stooped to help him to his feet would in turn cause himself to topple over and be doomed to crawl upon the ground as well.

And even if a man never fell by accident, must not all Nature's creatures sleep? For unless she has exempted man from this deepest necessity, he would be required to fall every night as the soft clouds of sleep dimmed his sight.

Neither would man, from his young age, be capable of growth. For from the instant of his birth, his own erect body would press down upon its lower parts, thus preventing it

from growing. As a house refuses to allow bricks to be inserted into the midst of its walls, so would man's frame reject new bone and sinew.

It is in the nature of the thoughtless to point at the trees, and to say that if these upright beings are capable of growth, so must man. In ignorance, they do not realize that trees utilize their leaves like sails to catch the wind and thus render themselves weightless, removing the strain on their lower portions, and allowing new material to insinuate itself into their trunks. By all accounts, man has no such mechanism.

As to man's cleverness, even the dumb beasts of the field would not be not so foolish as to forget the use of their forelimbs. While man's two hind feet carried him about, his forefeet would by necessity remain idle by his side—for if he extended them, they would immediately topple him.

Further, his neck and jaws—which together constitute a sort of fifth limb—could never be useful to him from such a height. How could he reach or clutch items between his teeth? How could he tear and chew his food? Indeed, the jaws could not exert any of their customary forces, or else they would cause their master to fall.

Further, how is man to quench his thirst from so great a height? Even if he were able to subsist off high-growing foliage (much like the giraffe) water does not pool in the high air, or rain down in sufficient concentration to slake a thirst. One might suppose clever man has contrived to spend his life at the foot of waterfalls, drinking from the waters that pour down from above, and eating of the vines and fish that spawn on that precipice, that he might never stray far from his only water source. Yet even this would be ridiculous, as the sheer force of the falling water would surely topple him into the pool where—with only two

limbs to propel him—he would surely drown.

There are those, too, who say that man can use his forelimbs like teeth to pick up and to manipulate the world and so contrive fantastic machinery. Such ones live deep in delusion. For how is man to touch anything with his limbs raised so high? For nothing of account exists above the ground. Perhaps from his height he might grip the trunks of trees, or plunder the high nesting places that might otherwise lie beyond an animal's jaws. But how is he to mine for metals? How is he to till the earth and harvest its low-hanging bounty? He could not, I say.

Thus I have shown that man, if he existed, would quickly die, or else revert to the four-legged lifestyle which is proper for every land-dwelling animal fashioned by Nature. In either case, the nature of man necessitates its own undoing. And as such, the only creatures we need fear are those that walk and stand upon four legs. No creature that spent its time ogling the high branches of trees and the stars beyond could survive for itself, much less threaten the livelihood of an industrious species. ♦

“It is the nature of the thoughtless to point at the trees, and to say that if these upright beings are capable of growth, so must man.”

UPCOMING EVENTS

Tuesday 10/7

Kunai
4 PM

Wednesday 10/8

St. John's Chorus, Great Hall
7 PM

Informal Lecture on Book I of
Euclid's *Elements*, FSK
2:30 PM

Thursday 10/9

Long Weekend Begins!
10 PM

Saturday 10/11

New Carrollton Shuttle
9 AM

Sunday 10/12

Gadfly Meeting,
Lower level of the BBC
7 PM

If you would like to see your
event on the weekly schedule,
please email [sjca.gadfly@](mailto:sjca.gadfly@gmail.com)
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Concert Review: Julian Lage and Chris Eldridge

Jake Israel A'17



Now available: EP Close to Picture

If you think that jazz and bluegrass cannot be successfully fused, you are mistake. At least that is what guitarists Julian Lage and Chris "Crittter" Eldridge proved on Friday night when they performed at St. John's College in the FSK Auditorium.

St. John's was the first stop for Lage and Eldridge's promotion tour for their newest album Avalon. During their performance, the duo managed to do much more than give the audience a sneak preview of Avalon. Lage and Eldridge covered many classic bluegrass songs such as *Living in the Mississippi Valley* and *Through the Bottom of the Glass*. In addition, some new songs were premiered. Eldridge commented that one song being premiered, titled *Rygar*, (named after the retro Nintendo video game) was written the day of the performance. Needless to say, the audience was gifted with both brand new material and classic songs.

What really made this dynamic duo so special was their original sound. This new genre is unlike any other and was referred to by Lage and Eldridge, as "esoteric acoustic guitar songs," which Lage stated, "Sounds kind of apologetic." But there is certainly nothing to be sorry for. This new genre can appeal to multiple musical tastes. The jazz and bluegrass fusion is present, but there is also some pop and heavy blues present as well.

What is so impressive about this new genre is how easy it is for people with different musical tastes to enjoy it. Both members of the St. John's community and the public were incredibly impressed by the performance with or without a strong interest in jazz, bluegrass, or guitar duos. Regardless, there was something in Julian Lage and Chris Eldridge's music that everyone was able to enjoy. Lage and Eldridge's four song EP *Close to Picture* is available for purchase and their newest release *Avalon* will be available for purchase on October 7. ♦