

THE GADFLY

St John's College
Annapolis, Maryland

Midsemester Madness

November 7, 2024
Vol. XLVI, Issue 4



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Letter from the Editor

In the depths of the semester, a certain madness falls upon the College. Applause rings out randomly in the dining hall, classes sit half empty until five minutes after their starting time, and seminar dress becomes increasingly eccentric (see: robes for Augustine, devil costume for acts, etc.)

At the same time, the day to day operations of the College continue unchanged: the BVG meets to announce more financial struggles, Public Safety tries again to stop people from smoking on the quad, and B&G addresses the Sisyphean leaf removal project. In this issue, you will find the madness and the method together: Prank next to sustainability, Spirit Halloween next to counterpoint.

I would also like to note that this issue includes a far too brief commemoration of Eva Brann, whose passing touched everyone at the College. She will be sorely missed.

Your faithful editor,

El'ad Nichols-Kaufman

THE GADFLY STAFF

COVER Helen Felbek

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF El'ad Nichols-Kaufman

ASSISTANT EDITORS Vivian Miyakawa

Tamar Pinsky

Louis Rosenberg

Willa Rothenberg

Molly Sprout

Amha Worku

STAFF Reagan Bottomley

Helen Felbek

Gabriella Forte

Natalie Goldman

Marit Hendrickson

William LeBeau

Seohyun Lee

Sadie Lewin

Tarik Mahmud

Andy Manne

Lainey Rendelman

Madame Quiznos

CONTRIBUTORS Helen Wagner

ART AND Helen Felbek

PHOTOGRAPHS Tamar Pinsky

THE STRUCTURE

Λόγος contains news and factual investigations into issues that impact our campus community.

Συμπόσιον is a space for students to submit essays that reflect on the wide spectrum of ideas we discuss at the College and in our day-to-day lives.

Πόλις serves as a platform for elevating voices in our community. In our agora you will find opinion pieces, small personal reflections, poems, reviews, horoscopes, and cartoons.

Board of Visitors and Governors Meet on Campus

Reagan Bottomley, College Leadership Correspondent

Two weeks ago, the Board of Visitors and Governors met for their fall session here on the Annapolis campus. After several days of meetings and committee hearings, the week culminated in the public plenary session on Saturday, where each committee gave its official report to the Board as found below. In the previous meeting this past June, then-All College President Mark Roosevelt stressed the importance of careful stewardship as the College looks ahead to lean financial years. This meeting under President Nora Demleitner ran much the same, with an even stronger emphasis on enrollment and retention of new students. The College is well capable of weathering the years ahead, but it must do so carefully and it can expect finances to be tight.

Annapolis President's Report

This year saw a record high enrollment for the Graduate Institute on both campuses, but the Annapolis freshman class is smaller than expected at 130 students. This decreased size is impacting the college's financial outlook and slightly increasing the forecasted deficit for next year. The college is having some difficulty in finding undergraduate applicants, particularly among international students, whose enrollment rates fell very low this year. Much of this is expected; interest in a four-year college degree is declining nationwide, and this is especially true for liberal arts degrees. College applicants are pivoting more towards career-focused and high-salaried degrees, boxes which every Johnnie knows our college doesn't exactly check. Demleitner stressed that we aren't seeking to check those boxes; St. John's must keep the Program at its core; this is not debatable. The focus cannot shift to incomes and outcomes like at many other schools, but the College must figure out how to target and reach potential students who seek a Johnnie education.

Santa Fe President's Report

Coming into his new role, one of Santa Fe President Walter Sterling's main concerns was the campus atmosphere as upperclassmen and staff returned to campus this fall. Given the divisiveness and

frustration on campus last spring during the student attempt to unionize, nobody was really sure how the union would play out this semester. President Sterling is pleased to report that campus is quiet and there is no apparent unrest, while the union exists quietly in the background. Echoing Demleitner, Sterling stressed that our commitment to the Program is the core of St. John's and must not be compromised as we seek more ways to attract student applicants.

Annapolis Dean's Report

Dean Susan Paalman opened her report by noting the strong retention rate of last year's freshman class, with 86.4% returning as sophomores this year. The high retention rate as well as the high attendance at the latest athletic events and lectures show strong and enthusiastic signs of life within the college, despite this year's small freshman class of 130. The senior class this year is also unusually large at 121 (last year had 100), largely due to the pandemic which delayed many college applications. With such a large body of students leaving the college this year, it puts increased pressure on admissions to ensure we have enough freshmen in the class of 2029 to financially support the College. In other news, the bookstore and coffeeshop in Edensword are finally opened, with an enthusiastic reception by students and faculty. Paalman had especially warm words for bookstore manager Melinda Rooney, who along with "a small army of students" and volunteers successfully managed to get the bookstore up and running in only three days before the ribbon-cutting. Even with several snags and scheduling delays, Rooney managed to set up a beautiful new space that "stokes our love of books" and proves an excellent addition to campus. Looking forward, the library is now planning to renovate the reference room, which should be another helpful support for students.

Santa Fe Dean's Report

Santa Fe Dean Sarah Davis likewise opened her report with statistics, citing a similar 83% retention rate for last year's freshmen. This year the Santa Fe campus has 470 students, 370 in the undergraduate

program and 100 graduate students. The college is planning to push more resources into Summer Academy, which is proving a “vital pipeline” for incoming freshmen. 28% of the class of 2028 attended Summer Academy, and if the program is expanded hopefully this will also increase enrollment. With the 60th anniversary of the Santa Fe campus happening this year, Dean Davis is encouraging the campus to focus on its traditions and unity as they move away from the tension over unionizing this past spring. Students have organized to read lectures by Eva Branna and Jacob Klein in well-attended events, and their library plans to host a museum exhibit about the history of the campus.

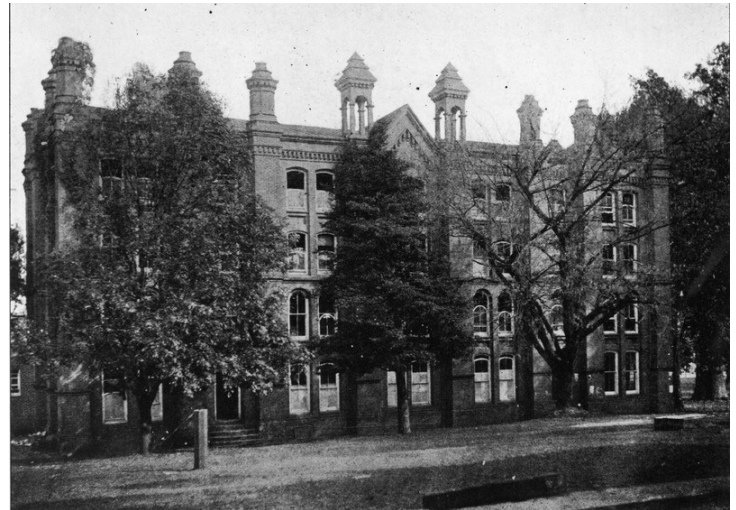
Enrollment Committee

Continuing the theme of financial concerns, the Enrollment Committee has been advised by their consulting firm to raise tuition costs by 4% this upcoming year, which is the same as last year. However, costs to the college are expected to increase more than 4%, and so this will not provide for all increased expenses. This comes alongside more general enrollment challenges, which are shared by many colleges. Fewer students are applying to college, less are interested in the liberal arts, and more are likely to drop out in their first year of college. This “represents a significant challenge” to colleges nationwide, and St. John’s is no different. This year we are below the committee’s enrollment goals, although our metrics for diversity across several spectrums are quite good. Moving forward, Enrollment is working on a new outreach strategy that blends new methods of advertising with empirical data from past efforts.

Financial and Investment Committee



Freshmen Bow and Curtsie before President Richard D. Weigle at Convocation



Pinkney Hall

Since the June meeting, the projected deficit for 2024 has sunk from \$5.5m to \$5m. Several one-time gifts to the college will help offset this, but these cannot be considered reliable sources of income. The projected deficit is \$6.5m in 2025, \$7.5m in 2026, and \$6m in 2027. As stated by Finance Chair Richard Lincer, “we remain pretty challenged” financially. We have “exhausted all of our pots of money” in order to cover this year’s expenses, but we have managed to cover it successfully. In better news, the S&P upgraded St. John’s bond rating from BBB+ to A- this year, an excellent development that also reflects the good work the college is doing on the financial front. (According to their website, the S&P bases their metrics on the college’s relatively steady past enrollment, low outstanding debt, and the robust fundraising campaigns that recently contributed to campus renovations). This means we have been doing very well thus far, but the committee has several concerns moving forward. The smaller enrollment for this year, combined with increased allotments of financial aid and higher insurance and utility rates, presents a financial challenge that will require careful management to resolve. In response, the Finance Committee has proposed to temporarily increase the college’s draw from the endowment. This draw has consistently remained below 5.5%, and this plan would bring it up to 6%, still below the maximum 7% allowed by Maryland law. This increase will not harm the college in the short term, although it is not sustainable for a long period of time. All in all, the Finance Committee acknowledges several challenges ahead in the next few years, but has workable plans to face them.



Board of Visitors and Governors Meeting in the King William Room, Annapolis, Maryland

Facilities Committee

Pinkney Hall will receive maintenance work next summer, mostly on its electrical and plumbing systems. Much of this will be to deal with ongoing moisture problems that Pinkney residents are very much aware of, and the plan is to resolve these by the fall semester of 2025. Further in the future, there may be a state grant available to partially renovate the BBC. (Maryland grants are generally not for use on dorm buildings, but may be given for class buildings or other spaces. Hence the choice of the BBC over Paca or another dorm). On the Santa Fe campus, extensive renovations to the Pritzker Student Center are making good progress, although budget restrictions have caused some of the original plans to be cut down. Our sister campus is likewise building a new bookstore and coffeeshop space! Most notably, an extensive solar panel project (including several EV chargers) was just completed on the Santa Fe campus that is projected to offset 100% of the campus's carbon footprint. The Annapolis campus has also applied for a solar power grant, and will hopefully be able to install a set of those soon. This will be incredibly helpful with utility costs continuing to rise. Already the utility bill for the Santa Fe campus is in the \$140k range, while the Annapolis campus requires \$6-700k per year. The Facilities Committee is also responsible for the History Task Force Report, which details the history of the buildings and working of the College with a particular emphasis on how slavery has played a role in our past. This report was released to the Polity on November 1st for review and commentary.

Polity Review Committee

The St. John's College Polity and Charter is a 35-page document that functions largely as the school's equivalent of a constitution. This committee has found its organization highly cumbersome, along with the process generally used to amend it. It has proposed to split the Polity into one main document that is less than half the current size, and two ancillary papers for the Board to use alongside it. This is planned to help the Board "be flexible where it needs to be flexible, and frankly, permanence where permanence is needed", according to the committee's vice chair Joel Klein. This amendment was originally supposed to be voted on during this October meeting, but has since been delayed until the February meeting over faculty concerns. Updates on these amendments and what they might contain will be published here in the Gadfly as soon as they are released.



*Scan this QR code to read the
Charter and Polity of the
College*

Conclusion

In the words of Board Chair Warren Spector, "We're like a household that's fixing up the house but still has to pay the monthly bills. We're doing very well fixing up the house." Whereas in past years the emphasis has always been on some repair or renovation that was imminently necessary, the College is now in a much more comfortable place with the state of its campus. While repairs do still need to be done, nothing is threatening to fall apart and on this front there is room to breathe. Now, however, emphasis must be placed on fundraising and donations for the general upkeep of St. John's. Enrollment and rising prices are causes for concern, but the Board is confident that with careful stewardship and robust fundraising it is able to steer the College through the years ahead.

Breaking News: Prank Committee ARRESTED

TF, Investigative Reporter

Early in the evening on Tuesday, October 15th, something went awry at the Delegate Council meeting held in the Mellon Conversation Room

DC minutes report that at around 7:15pm, “a variety of people in sunglasses and a variety of other ludicrous costumes” arrived to present the Senior Prank budget. Minutes say that members of this committee threatened the DC President and the DC members with physical violence, and tried to blackmail the Polity Attorney. Additionally, an individual dressed as a clown dragged themselves over the table throughout this whole display as a way to intimidate the Council.

Shortly after the beginning of the hearing, Officer Teon Wells of the St. John’s College Public Safety Office arrived and apprehended five of the six offenders. Reports say that they have been charged with several misdemeanors including: one count each of Threat of Violence against a DC Officer, one count each of Falsification of Blackmail Evidence and Slander of the Character of a DC Officer, one count each of Intent to Launder Money, and one count each of Failure to Dress like Actual SJC Students.

Investigations into this matter were conducted, and the results may shock you. Security camera footage from the Chasement Laundry Room clearly show the so-called Prank Committee engaging in illegal behavior: laundering money and creating devious schemes.

This footage was no doubt used by SJC Public Safety to build a case against these dangerous perpetrators.

These arrests come at the heels of some damning allegations against the Prank Committee being published in the media. An article accused them of improper use of funds and creating an un-fun environment. These condemnations have been shown to be



Former members of the Prank Committee laundering money. Photo provide by author.



Former members of the Prank Committee creating devious schemes. Photo provide by author.



Mugshots of the arrested seniors. Left to right, top to bottom: Harrison Dewalt, Cass Desmond, Emily Caswell, Rylee Bain and Isaac Vail. Photo courtesy of the St. John's College Public Safety Office

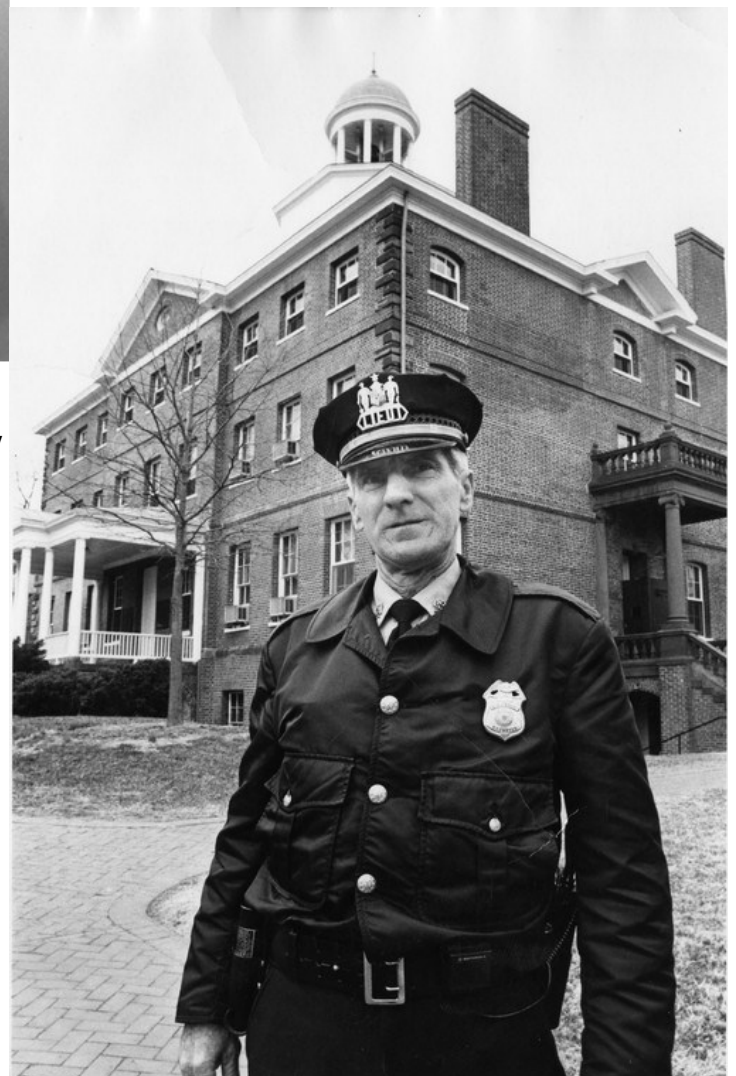
true and accurate, given these recent developments.

As only five of the six perpetrators were arrested, one is still at-large. The member dressed as a clown was able to evade campus security. This investigator was able to unearth a photo of this individual from a video taken at the scene of the arrest. This fool remains free, and it seems like the investigation can't be

closed until they are located.

Regardless, Prank seems to have met its definite end as the majority of the planners are now in custody. There will be no prank this year.

Still from footage of prank committee member still at large. Provided by the author.



Walter Rausch, Chief of Security, in front of McDowell, 1977. (Photo unrelated to article)

Energeia: A History

Natalie Goldman, Arts Correspondent

Energeia is a known and loved publication at St. John's. The Polity looks forward to its release each semester, and much time and attention is spent poring over the art and writing in the magazine once it's been distributed. But how much is known about Energeia's history? What were its origins and how did the magazine's style develop over time?

I met with junior Riley Ferver, one of this year's three Energeia archons, to find out what she knew about Energeia's enigmatic past. But even Ferver, well versed in the issues of old, isn't certain exactly who first decided to publish the magazine. The oldest issue in the archives (both physical and digital) is from Spring 1982, and it doesn't credit archons—only a simple list of editors. So, unfortunately, the particulars of Energeia's genesis might have to remain a mystery for the time being.

What is able to be studied (and is worth studying) is the gradual change in the content and curation of the magazine from that auspicious 1982 issue to the ones we know now. In its early days, the vast majority of the works that Energeia published were academic essays, with a couple of poems and a handful of translations thrown in. Aside from cover art, no visual art is featured in the early issues at all. It's not until the late '90s and early 2000s that the transition into an artsier style began, and it became more popular to publish creative nonfiction pieces. Ferver then identifies the period from 2006-2014 as a distinct historical period: photography becomes a favorite medium, writing submissions include much more poetry, and academic essays became less common. That leads us from the time between 2015 to the present day. Energeia has cemented itself on campus as an arts magazine, publishing everything from musical compositions to mathematical proofs, with strong roots in poetry and illustration. While review meetings are already done

for this semester's issue, next semester is the perfect opportunity for Johnnie artists to put themselves out there. Everyone is encouraged to submit, and anyone can be on the review staff. Who knows—maybe a brand-new era of Energeia is upon us.

Past issues of Energeia are available to the public in the St. John's Archives online. Energeia also has a substantial collection of physical copies of past issues, ask Ms. Ferver or one of the other Energeia

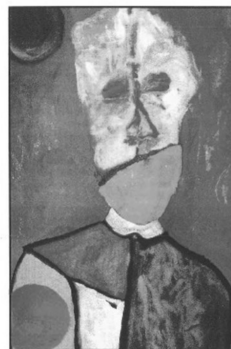
archons to take you to the office and you're welcome to flip through them.

SPRING 1982



ENERGEIA

ENERGEIA



2002

ENERGEIA
Winter 2022



ENERGEIA



DATE DUE

energeia
spring 2012

Covers of Energeia from (Left to right, top to bottom) 1982, 1992, 2002, 2012 and 2022

Interview with Ethan Garofalo, St. John's New Student Activities Coordinator

By Willaim LeBeau

LeBeau: When I first returned to campus, I remember the discontent surrounding the lack of Donuts After Dark on Thursdays. After your first week in the office, the Donuts returned. Was it a priority for you to restore Thursday Donuts? Are there any other traditions you want to revive in that manner?

Garofalo: I think that traditions are what make this campus as beautiful as it is. The opportunity to immerse yourself in this campus and its community, whose intimacy and size other institutions can't replicate. Coming here as a GI, that's what I recognized as making this campus so special and was one of the major reasons it appealed to me. Taking that together with my job being to cultivate an environment where students are able to maximize their experience here. Ultimately, having an occasion after class to continue their conversations and carry the night forward instead of returning home alone was very important to me. It's about providing a space for students to enjoy their time and socialize in conjunction with their academics. I was very happy to see the enjoyment the polity felt. As for other

traditions that have fallen by the wayside, I am not privy to them yet. I am extremely open to reviving traditions that help them to be proud of what it means to be a Johnnie.

WL: Are there any events you have on your mind for implementing as something new this year?

EG: I've definitely been thinking about a few things. My onboarding being in the middle of the semester has been a lot of learning how things were before my arrival. Once I have a good understanding of how the community facilitator and events have operated, I intend to explore new options and traditions that can be created. But a lot of the first month was trying to organize and uphold past events as the first priority.

WL: How do you consider the role of the community facilitator as a whole? Is it reactive to the needs of the student body first, as you just described? Or is it closer to what you, individually, can innovate and provide new ideas and events for the college?

EG: My role being new, this mixture of Ms. Munsey's duties and my involvement in intramurals has allowed me to be immersed in the community more than I expect past facilitators have been. I'm seeing students at the Friday fares and our weekend events, and also at their intramural games throughout the week. It's a privilege to get a better sense of the students' personalities and their larger social life within the polity. I think the hope is that it's not strictly reacting but also having some insight into the soul of this campus, the overarching desires of the polity, and being proactive in providing that.

WL: How do you view your relationship, and the school's relationship, with student clubs?

EG: I went to Arizona State for my undergrad, a campus of 100,000 students. Almost all of the



Entrance to the FSK, ca. 1970

connections I had came from different clubs and from discovering friends through our common interests. So much of my undergraduate leadership experience came from those clubs, from throwing events to drumming up attendance for intramural games. I find it very important for others to have the opportunity to develop those leadership qualities. I find that my main role with clubs is to empower them to be creative and pursue what they're passionate about. To take my personal experience with their passion and needs and communicate that to faculty to help achieve what the students desire. So it becomes something the whole school can be proud of, by building a direct connection between students and administrators. Whether that be throwing certain events or giving underappreciated clubs the spotlight they deserve.

WL: So, you've settled into the position a little bit, a month into your onboarding. What has surprised you the most about your position so far? What have you enjoyed the most?

EG: My favorite and most surprising is definitely how personal it has become, how often I recognize faces around the campus. I started as a GI in January, so there were 4 months where I was only really interacting with the graduates in the BBC. But now, seeing and knowing so many undergraduates has really let me deepen my connection to the school. Even the simplest conversations about differences in the GI and undergraduate readings have been great. Being immersed in the campus in a very different way from my graduate experience and seeing the college in a whole new way.

WL: Why do you think the campus needs a community facilitator? What can you do in your role to best provide that?

EG: I think the best thing I can offer is my full effort. By that I mean being open to any student's conversation and any idea that I may come across. It's important to be able to hear and care about these things and then offer all the resources I can to help realize the needs of those students and the student

body. To be the person who can marry the ideas of the student body with the connections and resources of the college, you need to be open at all times to speaking with anyone.

WL: You've inherited a group of students to assist with your work, in the past known as "Munsey's Minions". You have emphasized the importance of your personal interest in the college and events, so what do you consider your relationship and managing style with these students?

EG: They're great. I want to do everything I can to make the job easier for all of us. A lot of that is putting my trust in them to accomplish things and that my presence is not necessary for them to succeed, I'm mostly at events to better understand the polity. I know I can lean on them and that they are just as empowered as any student to dream up events that I can help them with. They're in an even more intimate relationship with the campus, they're getting to know the polity better than I do, and that perspective can be really valuable in inciting change. A lot of them were here before me, working with Ms. Munsey. They've run most of these events before, so I can turn to them and ask "How was this done? What worked? What didn't? How can we improve it?" and know that I'm getting a good answer.



Grace McNeley and Charles A. Richardson Seated on Bench in the Quad during the First Summer of The Graduate Institute

SHAPE NOTE SINGING: An Interview

Continued from my article in the Collegian Vol. II Issue IV.

Helen Wagner

A few weeks ago, Eric Stoltzfus hosted a session of shape note singing in the pendulum pit. Lots of singers showed up from the DC/Annapolis/Baltimore shape note community, as well as several Johnnies (including myself) at varying levels of experience. Afterwards, I sat down for an interview with some of the more seasoned singers. Once the conversation got going, it ended up turning into a full-fledged seminar—I hardly even had to ask questions. We talked for thirty minutes, so I decided to publish an abridged transcript here. Included in the interview were Susan and Richard Green (a married couple who met at a shape note sing in the 70s), RB Bartgis (a 2009 Annapolis alum), Topher Lawton and Thomas Ward (two DC-based shape note singers).

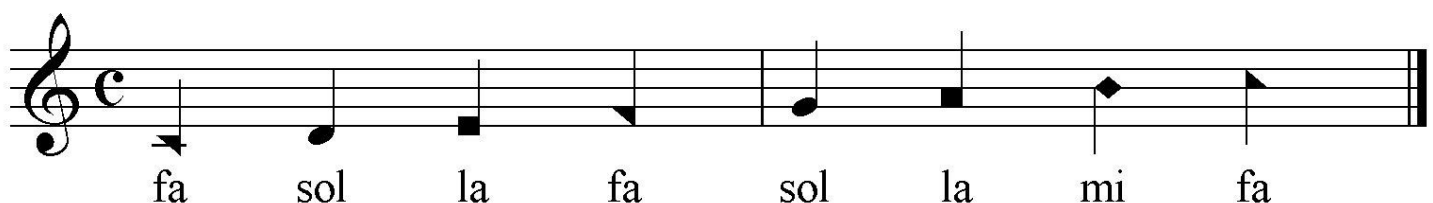
Shape note singing is a traditional style of singing with unique notation. In it, the notes of the scale are represented by four different shapes which correspond to different musical syllables: rectangles (la), triangles (fa), diamonds (mi), and circles (sol). Each shape denotes two different intervals on the scale, except for mi, which is always the seventh. At a singing, the voice parts are arranged similarly to our Wednesday Sicut Sings: each of the parts faces the others sitting in a square formation, with the leader in the middle. Leadership rotates around the room, with everyone getting the chance to choose and lead a song.

How did each of you get involved with shape note singing?

Richard Green: Susan and I have sung since the fall of 1979. When we were in graduate school, we went to a singing at a professor's house, and they were singing this stuff called Sacred Harp, which we had never heard before. At the time, our understanding was that shape note singing was not widespread—it had dwindled to basically south Georgia and Alabama and maybe parts of England, but it was a very small community. Since then it's grown quite substantially and spread all over the place.

RB Bartgis (A09): Back at Winter Collegium in 2005, Mr. Stoltzfus' madrigal choir sang a shape note piece called Samanthra ("This is My Beloved"), and it was just the weirdest craziest thing I'd ever heard. It stuck with me, and after I graduated I went to the DC shape note sings a couple of times—that was my first time experiencing it. The first time that you sit in the square and have the music hit you is really amazing. My husband and I ended up having "This is My Beloved" sung at our wedding. He was in Mr. Stoltzfus' madrigal choir and that was part of how we met. I finally emailed Mr. Stoltzfus this summer and said, "hey—do you remember that song you sang, like 20 years ago? I wanna come back and do this for the students."

Susan Green: I'm Susan Green, Richard Green's



C major scale using shape note notation, with names for each note. Fa is the one and four of a scale, sol is the two and five, la is the three and six, while mi is the seven.

wife, and he told the story of how we started singing at the University of North Carolina. I think what drew me to it was that it was a tradition that reached back into the 19th century. My family were southern country people who always talked about harmony singing. And also just—the community was bound together by these songs and this tradition. There are so many aspects of the tradition, like standing up for the parting song and giving the parting hand—everybody would go around and shake hands. I used to love how the old men—often the strongest singers—would sit on the front row, and you’d see young kids come up to lead and when they sat down the old men would give them a dollar. Anything to make them feel appreciated. And dinner on the grounds was a big deal. There used to be a guy that would make fantastic, gigantic vats of fried chicken livers. There were so many traditions that I could talk for hours about. They happened the same way every year because everyone loved it.

Topher Lawton: I’ve been singing since around 2003 or 2004. My first exposure to this music was actually a music camp in New England. We’d sing a little before dinner, each day of this weeklong music camp, for several years in a row. I spent about a decade chasing this music, living in place that didn’t have big singings. Finally, I ended up in DC in 2017. I found an amazing community in DC— at one point I was going to a singing every week, either at somebody’s house or in a bigger organized sing. I absolutely fell in love with the music and the community.

Thomas Ward: I was almost the opposite of Topher, who said he was chasing the music. I feel like shape note music was chasing me for about a decade. I first heard a CD of shape note music sung by Anonymous Four, which was a very strange way to encounter it because they mainly sing medieval music, but they did this CD called *American Angels* that had a lot of shape note music. I loved it—kind of a cool piece of Americana. Several times over the course of the next ten years, I would randomly encounter some shape note music. One day, I happened across a recording

of the Western Massachusetts convention, which was very raucous sounding. And I thought, oh wow, people could really get together and sing this. But I didn’t know there was a whole community, around the country and around the world, of people who get together, and for whom singing is really as much about that community as it is about the music. Lo and behold, I was living in Philadelphia at the time, and there was a singing on my block that week. And I never really looked back, although it wasn’t really until I moved to DC that I really got into it. I had moved to a new city, and I didn’t know anyone, and it was a wonderful way to meet people. Singers aren’t all the same, but it’s a weird enough hobby that you find people who like the same weird thing together. That creates a real kind of community.



Singing at a College Christmas party, 1950

What do you love about shape note singing?

TW: A lot of people come to it for all different kinds of reasons, and have different relationships to it. This isn’t necessarily a religious thing. You don’t have to be religious to do it. You can be, but there are believers, nonbelievers, and everything in between, and I think that’s one of its strengths

RB: As a Johnnie, I really like this form of singing, because so much of what is done at St Johns, in the context of freshman chorus or St. John’s chorus, is

more about singing traditional baroque pieces where you get together every week and practice the same thing over and over again and give a performance at the end. But this is a method of singing to teach basic music theory principles and get everyone up to speed as fast as possible. So you can sing a piece in four part harmony with basically no rehearsal, and you're also not performing it for other people. It's kind of the anti-St. John's chorus. It's also different from the music theory we study in sophomore music in particular. Shape note harmonies are based more around fifths and different intervals from what you would see in Mozart. It's a really different way to feel it in your body and experience different combinations from you would get in Bach—this is not something you're gonna find in the St. Matthew Passion. I find it really invigorating. Also, the shape note community is really similar to a Johnnie community. When I travel, I usually look up Johnnies in the area and try to connect with people, and with shape note singing it's the same way. When I travel, I try to find a local group. Especially if you're on an extended trip, it can be very overwhelming and lonely, but you can go to a town you've never been to before and meet people you've never met before, and they're incredibly welcoming, just like Johnnies are.

TW: I've heard it described as AA for music. But really, it provides a really important support network for people looking for community. Being in a strange place, I look up and see whether there's a singing, and that can be a really powerful thing. You meet really interesting people around the world that way.

SG: The thing about it not being a performance is really important. We're singing for ourselves and each other and it's really in the moment. When you're singing and it gets really good, you'll catch other peoples' eye, and you don't have to talk about it, and everybody is feeling it. That moment is so precious.

TL: On the same thread—I led a demo sing with the unitarian fellowship that hosts my local singing. We set up the chairs in a square, congregants came and

sat among our singers. Many people commented on how fearless we were. I think you can carry that spirit on into your day-to-day life. What does it mean to show up, without rehearsal, and still make good music for each other and for yourself? You talk about learning things as an adult, and often there's this fear of failure and what happens if it crashes and burns. I'm sure we've all been to songs that maybe didn't work out that well, but we just keep going. On to the next one—there's always that next feeling. I think that's something I try to take from the music and bring to my life. This notion that it's okay if you sing something and it crashes and burns; on to the next one!

TW: Also, if people are reading this and thinking, "I don't know if I want to join this weird singing cult," you can definitely just show up and listen and hang out.

RB: St. John's is already a weird singing cult.

RG: I sing in choirs, and other groups where there is more musicology applied, and more performance, but I love this, because it's different. You sing full-throated, the harmonies are beautiful. It supplements everything else I do. For me, they all work together

SG: Plus the poetry is beautiful.

RB: The lyrics are often things that you don't hear about a lot in our greater culture. "Ah, young ones, you will die someday," and corpses... and all of that. But it's nice to get in touch with that. I've found myself singing a lot of shape note songs around when loved ones have passed, because when you're feeling a lot of things those words really hit.

TW: I think in our culture there's a lot of euphemism about death-- we call funerals "celebrations of life" and things like that—but in shape note music, the words provide people a way of coming face-to-face with that.

SG: The words come to you when you need them.

TL: I've seen singings where the leader gets up and is vulnerable and says, "I'm not gonna be able to get

through this.” And you look at that front bench of tenors and they’ll support you. There might be someone who stands up to co-lead, but if not that’s okay. You’ll lead with tears streaming down your face, in the middle of this square with a wall of sound coming at you. I think there’s something cathartic about that.

SG: There’s totally a dispensation to cry.

I’m curious about the leading aspect of shape note singing. What’s important about the fact that everybody can lead?

RG: In a big group in particular, leading is sort of your privilege for that song, to be there in the middle and hear everybody. And everybody will lead you if you’re not getting it-- everyone wants the song to go well. If you stumble or are having trouble, it’ll get picked up anyway and go.

TL: We all want the song to go well, and we’re gonna put you in the center to help get that experience, because we want everybody to share that joy.

SG: In the old days, people—especially the older people—really wanted to bring the young people along. They would encourage the kids. When we got back into singing, our oldest kid was about 4 years old. And there was an old man, Virgil Philips, and he would sit and point at every note for her, and she really learned fast, and they would lead together. There was very much this feeling that the grandparents were helping everybody, it was very supportive.

TW: Yeah. If you have a guest at your house, and they don’t know the manners or conventions, it would be rude of you as a host to make them feel bad. And I think there’s the same feeling in shape note singing. It would be the biggest taboo of all to make someone feel stupid or bad for not leading a song well. That would be very much against the spirit of the singing.

RB: I like that the pedagogical method gets people up and running as fast as possible in the hopes of

being able to lead. It’s very open to getting people involved as much as possible to become better musicians.

TW: I’d also like to observe that shape-note singing has become a surprisingly queer space. It is really interesting, and I think maybe part of it is the welcoming spirit, and people can sing whatever voice part they want to sing. We have people who are transitioning or whose voices are changing, and they can sing any part. And you might wonder why this southern singing tradition could become this queer space, but that has been the case.

TL: But also, it’s a living tradition. So even more broadly it’s important to talk about that. Yes, it’s historically informed, but we’re not trying to do renaissance madrigals exactly as they would have been performed in the 1630s. There are historical antecedents to this music and you can go back to the first New England school (even before the shapes were patented in 1801). And yet, even if we’re still singing that music, we’re not trying to be just like them.

TW: And also it’s a living tradition in the sense that there are still composers, there are still people writing this music. There’s a new book coming out in a few months that’s gonna include a lot of new pieces.

Where can these books be found?

RG: It’s a Shenandoah Valley based publication, Valley Pocket Harmonist.

TL: The marylandshapenote.org site has links as well. You can get the Sacred Harp, which is still in print since 1844, and they’re working on a new one for 2026.

Eventually, we ran out of time for conversation and ended the interview here. Mr. Stoltzfus plans to host more singings in the pendulum pit on the first Saturday of every month. Come give it a try!

Oktoberfest in Photos

Wild, whirling polkas, flower crowns, dirndls and more on a beautiful October (not, as would be proper, September, but such are we Americans) evening.



Photos taken by Molly Sprout

In Memory of Eva Brann

Eva Brann, tutor, former dean, and, most importantly, thinker, passed away last week, and with her went an era of the College. I must admit that, like most current students, I never personally knew Ms. Brann. I came just in time to hear her last lecture, on memory, delivered virtually, and never spoke a word to her in person. Therefore, I cannot speak about her as a person, as she doubtless deserves.

However, her writing remains, and largely speaks for itself. Perhaps the most proper way for the Gadfly honor her memory would be to reprint one of the many essays she submitted to the paper. In these dozens of articles across decades, her humor, intelligence and articulate speech come across clearly, and paint a picture of this woman who meant so much to many at the College.

Below you will find an essay entitled “Finding the Words: Living an Articulated Life,” published in the Gadfly on September 28th of 2012.

When the editors of the Gadfly graciously asked me to write something for their Homecoming issue, this little homily came to mind. Not that our alumni, our nurslings, need it. (For those whose Latin lags behind their Greek, “alumni” are people who have taken “aliment,” nourishment, from their school.) They, we hope, need it less than most. I wrote since I really wanted to articulate what follows to myself, its very theme being articulateness.

I want to claim (returning alumni and present students are welcome to accost me on this when they see me on campus) that sixty-six-and-two-thirds percent of the world’s despondency stems from word-poverty—not to speak of much of its mayhem: think of Larry in *Of Mice and Men*, or Cain, or Ajax, or the Cyclops, or someone in your life.

My theme here is ordinary, prolonged, unassuaged—and unnecessary—misery, the mildly grey sort. I



Eva Brann, ca. 1984

think that Socrates means this grey misery when he says—not really “the unexamined life is not worth living” but actually—“the unsearched-out life is not livable,” or simply, “not lived.” He’s saying that unless you lead a double life, once as just a happening and a second time re-viewed as a Telling, you’re not all there; you’re a grey shade, in Hades before your time. What he says seems to me extensible into imagining; you can re-view and search out in pictures as well as in words. It is a sort of internal myth-making, in which mere occurrences become Events.

So our alumni are wandering around the campus meeting their ghosts, even where new buildings block the venues of their past. How much happier a stay for those who learned to articulate themselves to

Elaboration on Counterpoint

Tarik Mahmud

Considering its utmost importance to the music we study here at St. John's, which really cannot possibly be overstated, I have found that the music program rather neglects the study of counterpoint. We are given a summary description of first species (simple) counterpoint, with some exercises, and are taught the three kinds of dissonance encounterable in Renaissance polyphony, and that's pretty much it, unless your class was particularly interested in Zarlino. We do not cover diminished counterpoint (except insofar as it generates the aforementioned dissonances), imitative counterpoint, or even counterpoint for more than two voices (which is almost all counterpoint); not to mention the myriad other topics to be covered under the study of counterpoint which the curriculum in no way has time for, such as cadences, canons, invertible counterpoint, cadences, formulas for imitation, fifth and sixth voices, pedalpoint, and cadences.

More particularly and more urgently, I find that the music program here neglects the transition from two-voice counterpoint (which is rather rare in 'real' compositions) and counterpoint for more voices. It is true that there is not much essentially different between them, but it is an important leap that I feel would be better attained with guidance than by chance. I must tip my hat off to Mr. Allanbrook, who, instead of thrusting harmony at us with an otherwise unintelligible notion of 'chord progression', tries to make us see the natural development of harmonic progression from counterpoint for as few as two voices (though I must admit my continual dissatisfaction with his dismissal of the coherence of modal harmony). However, given the insufficient acquaintance we are able to acquire of counterpoint, I cannot help but feel as though this transition could be made smoother if only we took more time with the study of counterpoint;

from which we could develop a sense of the seamless and necessary relation between counterpoint and harmony.

Thus my motivation for starting a series on counterpoint. In this series I will take a single cantus firmus and apply different kinds of counterpoint onto it, in order to explain the different levels of complexity and textures encountered in the study of counterpoint, and the transition from coincidental melodies ('horizontal thinking') to a progression of triadic harmonies ('vertical thinking'). It will by no means be completely rigorous, but will cover the main points from which I hope many of my fellow students will be inspired to study this art further. I furthermore admit that I am no master at counterpoint, so forgive me if my examples are lacking in the subtlety of those of the great composers—I trust that if I attract the attention of one looking for better examples, they will be found with ease in the works of Zarlino, Fux, Bach, and others. I hope here merely to create a concise and accessible description of the large points, so that people might be directed towards a more complete study.

The first couple articles in this series will not go much further than what is covered in the sophomore manual; though I will take care to go over it carefully for those who do not have a very strong memory of it or who have not yet done Sophomore Music.

First, we must define what exactly counterpoint is. Counterpoint is a compositional technique whereby two or more melodies are sounded simultaneously, generating a harmony between them. What is then required is for one to know how one might go about producing a countermelody that will accord with a given melody or cantus firmus. Once this is accomplished, one may write one's own melodies which accord with each other. The rules of counterpoint are those forms whereby the great composers (in this case, of the Renaissance) were able to produce the contrapuntal music most suitable to their tastes. These rules remained so prominent for centuries (from the inception of Renaissance music all the way

through the Common Practice Period) because they were at the same time loose enough to produce an infinite variety of music, but strict enough to induce great creativity and highlight artistic genius; they simultaneously included within them the seed (whether those original contrapuntalists of the fifteenth century were aware of it or not) wherefrom the whole of tonal harmony germinated. It is thus critical for anyone studying the music of the Western tradition or composing in its style to become quite familiar with counterpoint.

I begin by introducing a cantus firmus, with which we shall work for the remainder of this series. It is composed of 16 notes, and is a simplified version of the first line of the familiar round “Dona nobis pacem”:



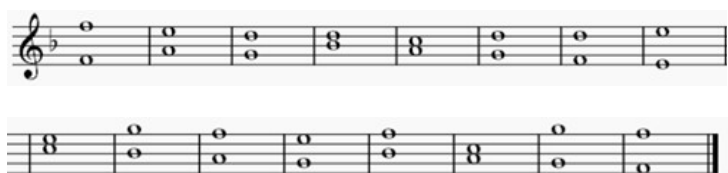
Let us take a moment to look at the overall contour of this melody, since this will impact our countermelody. For the sake of brevity, I will assume the reader to be familiar with the general concepts of melody and scales, including the modes (Dorian, Phrygian, Lydian, Mixolydian, Ionian, Aeolian). This melody is clearly in the major (Ionian) mode. We begin on the 1¹, with a repeated ascent of a third. On the eighth note of the melody, we descend just below the 1 to the 7, where we pause, this being the halfway point of the melody—needless to say, this 7 presents a great incompleteness in the melody. After this pause we ascend all the way up a sixth to the 5 (in the original melody, we leap up a seventh to the 6, but I have modified it here), which is the highest tone in the melody and the most intense part of it. From here we gradually descend back down to the 1. Notice furthermore that whenever there is a leap in the melody, it is immediately followed by a stepwise motion in the

¹ These numbers should ideally have circumflexes (^) on top of them. Unfortunately, this has proved impossible to do adequately. If readers are concerned about this, they may feel free to draw them on themselves.

opposite direction to sort of ‘balance out’ the leap. This is a recommended, but not strictly necessary, movement that we should take into consideration when writing our countermelody.

The first species of counterpoint will consist in writing a countermelody in a 1:1 rhythm above or below the cantus firmus. In writing this countermelody we ought to follow the general rules of writing melodies (particularly, no leaps of a seventh or a diminished/augmented interval, and no leaps over an octave), but must in addition avoid dissonant harmonic intervals. These are intervals which are not allowed to exist between the two voices of our counterpoint. The dissonant harmonic intervals are: seconds, fourths, sevenths, and any diminished/augmented intervals². The reason why these intervals are not allowed is that they carry with them a sense of conflict, or if not, a sense of instability. Thus, if we wish to include harmonies that sound unstable to the ear, we must be able to resolve them into stable intervals (consonances), with which resolutions we will deal later. We would also like this melody to have a unique contour, different from the cantus firmus; this will allow our countermelody to stand out as a melody of its own and not just a harmony in service of the cantus firmus. Finally, we would like both the beginning and ending harmonies to be a perfect consonance (a fifth or an octave), which will give the composition a solid start and resolute end. With that in mind, let us try to write a countermelody:

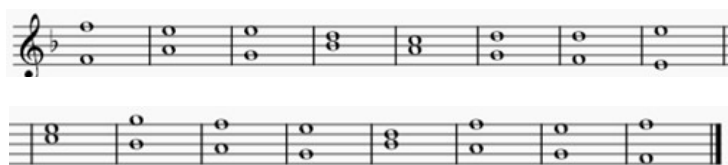
² It is true that there is some subjectivity to the notion of stability. For instance, in the *Istitutioni harmoniche*, Zarlino argues that a fourth should be treated as a consonance. There is, however, virtually no music by reputed contrapuntalists that treats the fourth as a consonance. Zarlino does cite a passage from Josquin’s *Missa l’homme armé sexti toni* as a counterexample, but this one instance (in an already somewhat unusual composition) is so differentially small that it hardly seems a convincing argument to me; this fourth also immediately resolves into a third, if my ears are not mistaken. I am not aware of the “Master of the Notes” using an unprepared fourth anywhere else, and generally instances of composers treating fourths as consonances are so vanishingly small that it is always taught as a dissonance. There are instances where it is always treated as a consonance, but these will be dealt with later.



There are a couple problems with this counter melody. These problems for the most part stem from a lack of independence between the two voices. In order to make these two voices sound like independent melodies, we must favor contrary motion over similar motion. Contrary motion is simply when the two melodies move in opposite directions, as in measures 5-6, while similar motion is when they move in the same direction, as in measures 13-14. Parallel motion is a particular kind of similar motion where the two melodies move together in the same direction and the same number of scale degrees, as in measures 4-5, where each voice descends a step. Oblique motion is when one voice moves, but the other doesn't; this may be considered as one of the voices simply holding its note.

Two perfect consonances are never allowed to be in parallel motion. In measures 2-3, we see a fifth moving in parallel motion (E/A - D/G), so that must be amended. Additionally, in the last two measures there are parallel octaves, which also must be corrected. It is also disallowed in two-voice counterpoint to approach a perfect consonance with similar motion, so we should amend measures 12-13. All these rules may seem daunting, but they are necessary to ensure that the two melodies flow freely and create interesting harmonic progressions.

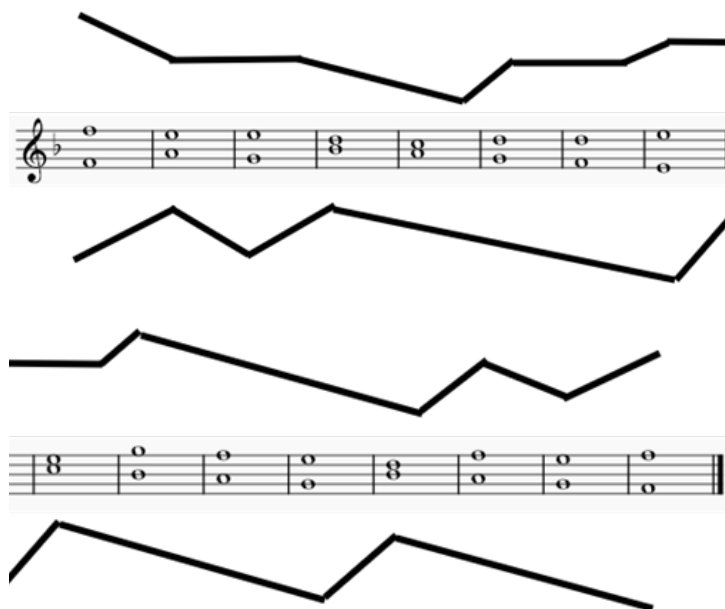
Let us try again, then:



The offending voice leading errors have been amended and the two melodies go more nicely with each other. Note particularly the way the ending (called a cadence) is approached: we end on an octave and in

contrary motion, specifically with a major sixth on the penultimate step. This is the simplest and most common way to make a cadence; even cadences with many voices almost always have this major sixth (or minor third) followed by an octave (or unison).

To further elucidate the separate interacting melodies, I have made a little chart using my exquisite mouse-drawing skills showing the contours. This highlights the points where the two melodies are distinct, and also where they line up (as in measures 10-12). Notice the distinct contours:



We could make them even more distinct if we decided to add more leaps in our counter melody, though I wanted to keep most of the motion stepwise.

For those of you who have gone through Sophomore Music, I would like for you to take a look at the “stations” associated with each measure of our counterpoint. One can see that for counterpoint as simple as ours, one can still identify the basic structure of a harmony, particularly that we start and end at a “1 station” and approach the end by means of a “7 station” with various “4s” and “7s” in between. As our counterpoint becomes more complex, we will see that the harmonic structure also becomes more definite and coherent.

Walls of Jericho: The Cult of Fortification

El'ad Nichols-Kaufman

One of the more recent developments in the campus discussion about the bike path on back campus is a proposal that, seemingly, addresses many of the safety concerns students have. The idea includes building a gate on the ends of the path, and putting lights and cameras along it. It sounds like it could be a simple way to keep students safe, and thus maintain the secure atmosphere of campus, while also opening the bike path. However, even as a major advocate for the construction of the bike path, I am concerned by this proposal. The seemingly innocuous gates are, I worry, a sign of a phenomenon that has spread deep within our society, a phenomenon that St. John's has been partially, although not entirely, immune to. This is the spread of what I call the cult of fortification, the belief that the only way to prevent the violence that appears¹ increasingly prevalent in our society, is for every individual and institution to wall itself behind its own walls, and to cut off extraneous contact with wider communities, and that anything can and should be sacrificed for the sake of these "safety improvements."

The development of this cult can be seen in a microcosm at St. John's, where students generally share a sense of safety on their own campus that is unusual in today's society, and may have been more common years ago.² Students are generally comfortable walking around the campus as their own

¹ Whether or not there is any truth to this appearance is an entirely different question, and largely irrelevant for advocates of fortification. Nationally, violent crime rates have been decreasing since 2020, and on a larger scale are at record lows, between 1993 and 2022 down 71% according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, or 49% according to the FBI.

² Polling has revealed a paradoxical contrast between decreasing crime rates and increasing perception of prevalence of crime. According to Gallup surveys, the percentage of Americans who believe crime is increasing went from 47% in 1993 to 77% in 2022, even though crime had decreased substantially over that period of time.

home, at night as well as during the day. Strangers are frequently present on campus, but they are not usually treated as a threat just because they are not known; students will talk to them or their dogs, building a community around the College that is flourishing and healthy. For my part, over the past four years I have found myself in several continuing conversations with Annapolitans about four leaf clovers, sea shanties and Kant, and the faces of Prince George Street have become quite familiar. Despite all this openness, violent crime on campus is practically non-existent,³ with the exception of rape, which unfortunately is a problem purely internal to the College, not caused by strangers, but by faces familiar in seminar, waltzes, and parties in dorms. Our open, communal college remains safe, and I do not believe this is an accident, or that the campus is simply inviting something to shake itself out of its complacency. Instead, I think this kind of openness has been vital in building the conditions of safety on campus.

A healthy society relies on trust. While at some level, the threat of violence from the state does keep order, the sword of the state cannot be, and is not, continually present. Moreover, the collaboration between individuals necessary to create anything beyond the abilities of one individual requires a kind of trust: if I believed that the only thing keeping members of my seminar from killing me and taking my belongings was the presence of a police force, I don't think I would be capable of investigating a philosophical work with them. Jokes of this kind aside, there is something paradoxical about preventing violence in a community by means of violence, and to have a safe society that avoids this absurdity, a trust between its members is necessary.

A campus like ours, with no walls, shared facilities,

³ Public Safety's annual Security Reports show, between 2018 and 2023, the only violent crimes to be rape and sexual assault, with the exception of one robbery, of someone not from the College community, in 2020, and one assault with a knife in 2019, which was an incident between two students. No violent crimes were committed by "strangers" against members of the College community.

events like concerts and museum exhibitions that welcome in the community, invites such trust. With the exception of a few thoroughly ignored ‘no crabbing’ or ‘no pets’ signs, our campus signals to people in the community that this is, to a degree, their space. It is not just the abode of scholars who live in lofty isolation, it is a place for them to walk their dogs, to fish, to play their pipes, or to take photos. Our campus, as much as it is an integral part of the St. John’s community is also physically an integral part of the neighborhoods around the College. This mutual relationship gives a signal to people in the area that an attack on the College community is, in some ways, an attack on their own community. Further, the openness of campus shows that we are not hiding away, hoarding wealth; we are simply coexisting side-by-side with both wealthy Prince George Street and impoverished Clay Street. This lack of fortification implies, then, that there is nothing worth stealing, that our possessions are no more worthwhile than anyone else’s, and that we trust that insofar as people are concerned with the safety of their own property, they will be concerned with our safety.

The objection I expect to this account of the campus’ general security is that the College is in a wealthy, relatively safe neighborhood, and that if we were in a place where crime is more frequent, no degree of building trust would keep us safe. This, however,



Walls of the BBC deck under construction

could be seen as patently untrue, if the objector looked, instead of down Prince George, over to Bloomsbury square, which, along with the nearby Clay Street community of the Old Fourth Ward, has a disproportionately high rate of poverty and crime for Annapolis. Spend any time on back campus, and you will see it is not the case that people from these communities never come on campus, and that our lawns are purely the domain of yachtsmen. Instead, kids from Bloomsbury square run around back campus, and adults are often crabbing or fishing on our docks.

These speculations on the safety of our college are at the end of the day, mere speculations. However, I think they provide a good glimpse into the potential that an unfortified space, such as our college, holds. What we can see more concretely is what happens when public goods are sacrificed at the altar of fortification. At the College, where so far only a degree of privacy has been sacrificed for security cameras, this is not immediately obvious, but as we consider beginning the process of walling ourselves off from the world, it may be worthwhile to draw examples from a place dear to my heart, the secondary school.



It is a place with a good reason to wall itself off from the world. This makes a comparison with St. John’s, where the fears are largely imaginary,⁴ seem belittling to the very real tragedies places of these kinds have undergone in the past few years. In writing this, I do not wish to minimize the horror of any sort of school shooting. Rather, as an extreme

⁴ I do not mean that there are no reasons to fear, but that actual prevalence of actions of violence is minimal, and the very serious actions of violence that do occur are of a nature that cannot be addressed by fortification. For example, concerns about safety from sexual assault on campus are very real, but no amount of lighting or outdoor policing will reduce it, most sexual assaults take place in dorm rooms, and there is no correlation between darkness and assault.

case, I think the case of schools shows very well the way in which fortification does very little to stop problems and brings high costs. St. John's is a small, familiar case of the cult of fortification, but one that does not give the full scope of its effects. By looking at these more extreme cases, I hope to establish more clearly the way in which the desire to be safe leads to a kind of irrational walling off with very high costs.

Attacks on schools target the most vulnerable in society, and those with the most life yet ahead of them. Schooling is also a fundamental common experience in a way few things in our fragmented society are, with an overwhelming majority of Americans having attended a school, or having sent their children to a school. An assault on a school, then, feels like a personal attack on much of society. The kind of trauma caused by such an attack demands a response, and given political conditions surrounding gun regulations, this response is generally one of fortification.

This can be seen most obviously in the fabric of the schools themselves. Most historic schools in my hometown, Indianapolis, have had their old wooden doors torn out and replaced with thick, bulletproof black doors that automatically lock, which are placed in pairs to create a "secure" entryway where, after the first pair of doors is opened remotely from the front office, a person entering the school has to wait for the second pair to be opened in the same way. Metal detectors are placed at the entrances to the high schools, guarded by armed police officers, and concrete bollards are placed between entryways to the building and the streets. The architectural line between school and prison becomes increasingly blurred as these developments continue, a confusion which spills over into the very operation of the school, where students are herded from one class to another, with strict restrictions on behavior in the slivers of free time they receive.

When treated like prisoners, I think it is no mistake that children begin behaving accordingly. At my former high school, I have seen a process continuing



Liberty Tree surrounded by a fence, 1938

throughout my time at the school, and into my younger sister's time there, in which the prevalence of violence increases alongside fortification. As more and more control are exerted on every element of a student's life, the more they chafe at restriction, and their expressions of individuality appear in the extreme cases they are warded away from. Further, shielding them for their own protection only breaks down any trust that might exist between them and their teachers: if a teacher treats a student as if they cannot be trusted to go to the bathroom themselves, what incentive does the student have to show their teacher that they can be trusted? Beyond the usual effects that a lack of student discipline causes to actual teaching, this effect destroys the trust necessary for education to truly take place. If students' free time is policed as harshly as their time in class, the time in class loses any special

significance, it is just another time in which adults constrain students. There is no reason to believe that a teacher should, at that time, be concerned about you actually learning something, when the rest of the time they are mostly concerned that you don't go outside, or talk to your friends in the hallway.

This is not to say that students have only started misbehaving when schools began to fortify, that would be a ludicrous suggestion. However, I have seen, just in the years I was at school, a substantial "hardening" of school environments, and, I believe, a corresponding, subconscious, shift in attitude amongst students. This problem extends beyond the classroom, too.

As outsiders are walled out, and members of the community are banned from hosting clubs for students, not to mention holding unrelated social events at the school, a wall is built between children and their community. Not too long ago, schools functioned as a kind of community center; my high school's old yearbook is filled with mentions of concerts coming to the school, ice cream socials. This traffic went both ways, students were also encouraged to patronize local businesses and spend time in the community around them. This, however, is actively discouraged both directly by messaging from parents and teachers, and by physical walls between playgrounds and parks, locked doors for high school students at lunch, and impossibly byzantine systems for people who want to visit schools. The community is set aside as a "dangerous," other, and the school is set apart from it. As students are walled off from their teachers within the classroom, they are walled off from their community without, leaving children to increasingly socially fragmented formative years. I do not think increasing social isolation can solely be blamed on this kind of fortification, but I also think it would be foolish to say that the two are unrelated.

We then have a case where trust and social connection, and therefore education itself, has been offered as a sacrifice. What have the gods of

fortification offered in return? A continual increase in school shootings, with 327 in the 2021-2022 school year. Not only is the number still increasing, but our walls have not made students' lives safer when they do happen, there were a record 81 deaths in the same year. Our very human desire to be "safe," whatever that means, has led us on a course that has made our schools substantially worse, with no actual improvements to safety. Indeed, no wall or camera can address the causes of gun violence. The same thing can be seen in many places in our society. Government buildings, which should be an open forum representing our democracy itself, have turned into impregnable fortresses, where government stability is enforced not by collective trust of citizens, but by violent force. Our places of worship, particularly synagogues, have become unfriendly castles, in which worshippers serve the ends of bigots by distancing themselves from the wider society.



What, then, can be done? Devotees of fortification might respond to this article by decrying my naivete, that I would call for us to tear down our walls and open ourselves to the brutal violence of the twenty-first century. I do not call for us to be careless. However, I do think that senseless construction of walls, gates and cameras is not the only way, in fact should not be a way at all, to take care. Instead, I believe the College offers an image of an unfortified society, which is threatened by violence in the same way as any other small college, but by means of its trust and community, is protected without offering any blood sacrifices. This is precisely the reason I fear the construction of a gate with the bike path, it looks to be a first step towards the destruction of a precious, rare anachronism: safety built on trust. Building trust is much more difficult than building walls. However, the more I see the consequences of building walls, the more I am convinced that the difficult, painful and long process of building trust is the only alternative left to us.

Cutting Cost and Carbon: Why St. John's Should Put Efficiency First

Helen Felbek

With numerous construction projects nearing completion on campus, a significant but often overlooked issue deserves our attention: St. John's College's energy consumption and CO₂ emissions. In a way, this issue seems more secondary, some might even argue that it is a luxury problem as it does not seem to touch the student experience directly. Perhaps some even think that we should not be overly concerned with the college's CO₂ emissions if we are running a deficit in the operating budget. However, I would argue that changing the college's energy consumption goes beyond the supposedly abstract goal of sustainability. A decrease in energy consumption could simultaneously solve a plethora of campus issues and also make our campus more attractive to environmentally conscious prospective students. While I personally believe that lowering

energy consumption for the sake of decarbonization should be motivation enough, positive financial effects (i.e. saving money) as well as good press could serve as further incentives for reducing energy consumption.

At this week's BVG plenary session, the facilities chair Tia Pausic (A86) shared the plan to renovate Pinkney Hall over next summer as well as long term tentative plans to renovate the BBC. Ms. Pausic also reported on the solar panel installation in Santa Fe which is finally completed and operational. This sparked questions from board members regarding the fiscal implications of that news.

The solar panel project was ignited by the results of an energy audit funded by Santa Fe's Class of 2019 senior gift and the installation was funded by an anonymous donor. It entails the installation of 1,670 solar panels, as well as 20 electric vehicle charging stations. According to the college and its partner AMERESCO, the new energy efficiency measures, including campus-wide interior and exterior LED lighting retrofits, re-roofing and rooftop HVAC retrofits, boiler and air handling unit replacements and water infrastructure upgrades, reduce Santa Fe's carbon footprint by 858 tons of CO₂. According to AMERESCO's calculation this is equivalent to the annual electricity consumption of 167 households, delivering over \$100,000 in annual cost savings.¹ CFO and treasurer Ally Gontang-Highfield curbed enthusiasm regarding Santa Fe's energy bill and the prospect of making money off selling electricity. So far, the EV charging station has generated a negligible revenue and Santa Fe continues to have to pay for utilities.



Old heating plant, 1940-1950

¹ <https://ir.ameresco.com/news-events/press-releases/detail/568/st-johns-college-santa-fe-and-ameresco-announce>

Ms. Gontang-Highfield explained to the board and interested visitors that the college has signed a 25-year power purchasing agreement with AMERESCO. Before the project the annual utility cost was between \$140,000 and \$150,000 in Santa Fe. Ms. Gontang-Highfield is estimating savings of roughly \$1 Million over the next 25 years based on an average utility escalation rate. Due to the power purchasing agreement, the college will be paying a locked-in rate which means that it will not be subject to inevitably escalating electricity prices.

During the plenary session of the BVG Jack L. Kinzie (SFGI16, EC23) asked about the electricity bill of the Annapolis campus. Ms. Gontang-Highfield cited between \$600,000 and \$700,000 for the campuses' annual electricity bill. For 2023, the bill was closer to \$700,000. Ms. Gontang-Highfield is worried about skyrocketing utility rates in Maryland. For context, between August 2023 and August 2024, the average residential electricity price rose from 16.39 cents per kwh to 17.84 cents per kwh. This is an increase of approximately 8.85% which lies way above the overall inflation rate.

During the BVG plenary session, Finance Chair Richard Lincer outlined financial challenges that make energy savings more pressing. St. John's anticipates a projected \$6 million deficit in the coming fiscal year, primarily due to lower enrollment. Despite a philanthropic funding model, fewer students will still impact operating budgets. Efficiency measures could help close budget gaps, aligning financial necessity with the environmental responsibility embedded in energy conservation.

With this in mind, it becomes clear that the college has financial reasons for becoming more energy efficient. From an environmental standpoint, the good thing about energy efficiency is that it necessarily goes hand in hand with decarbonization.

From the college's electricity bill, the carbon emissions of our electricity consumption can be extrapolated. This is by no means a perfect approximation and I will outline clearly the

assumptions I made to arrive at these figures.

If we assume that for the year 2023 the College's electricity bill is approximately \$700,000 we can divide this by the average price per kwh to arrive at the college's electricity consumption. For this calculation, one first needs to determine the cost per kwh. The average cost per kwh of electricity in Maryland in August 2023 was 14.14 cents.² But perhaps the college is paying a rate that is closer to the average residential cost in Maryland running at 16.39 cents per kwh.² Using the cross-sector average the college's electricity consumption would be around 4,950,495 kwh (4,950.5 Mwh) per year. Using the residential electricity cost average it would be 4,270,897 kwh (4,271 Mwh) per year. To put this into perspective, an average Maryland household consumes 10,728 kwh or 10.7 Mwh annually (number for 2023).³ In other words, using the higher number, the college consumes the same amount of electricity as 461 Maryland households. Using the more conservative estimate, the campus runs on the equivalent electricity consumption as 398 households.

In 2022, nuclear energy and natural gas generated 75% of Maryland's total in-state electricity. Maryland's only nuclear power plant accounted for about 39% of the state's total net generation. Coal's share fell to 12% in 2022. As of mid-2023, there were three remaining coal-fired power plants which will end burning coal by 2025. Maryland uses about 40% more electricity than it generates, and the extra supply is delivered to the state over the regional grid.⁴ In 2023, electricity generation of 1 Mwh in Maryland generated 558 pounds of CO₂.⁵ This number might actually be higher, as Maryland imports electricity from states with higher carbon energy mixes.

It is important to keep in mind that beyond the fact that these calculations are imperfect estimations

² https://www.eia.gov/electricity/monthly/epm_table_grapher.php?t=epmt_5_6_a

³ https://www.eia.gov/electricity/sales_revenue_price/pdf/

⁴ <https://www.eia.gov/state/analysis.php?sid=MD>

⁵ https://www.eia.gov/electricity/state/maryland/table_5A.pdf

based on some bold assumptions might only make up part of the campus's carbon footprint. I have not considered what is commonly called scope 1 emissions as I am not aware of any energy generating activities on campus. So, at best the estimates are Scope 2 emissions. Scope 2 emissions are indirect emissions from the generation of purchased energy. They paint an incomplete picture as they do not take into account any indirect emissions (upstream and downstream) such as emissions from commuting, waste, business and student travel, etc.

Using the carbon emissions data for the state's electricity generation, we can estimate that the Annapolis campus' electricity consumption generates between 2,762,379 and 2,383,218 pounds of CO₂. This is between 1,253 and 1,081 metric tons of CO₂. Our undergraduate enrollment as of fall 2023 is 484 students. This means that electricity alone means that there are between 2.589 and 2.233 tons of CO₂ per undergraduate student. In comparison, the average US-American emitted 13.8 metric tons of CO₂ in 2023.⁶ On top of that, the college purchased in 2023 about \$80,000 to \$90,000 worth of natural gas. There is also heating oil in a very large tank that has not been refilled recently. This further increases the carbon emissions per student.

In comparison, Loyola University in Maryland has an annual electricity consumption of 30,831,823 kwh (June 2022 to May 2023).⁷ In fall 2023, they had 3,987 undergraduate students.⁸ Using the same 558 pounds CO₂ per Mwh (for 2023) we can figure out the carbon emission of Loyola university's electricity consultation. Loyola emits 17,204,157 pounds CO₂ which is around 7,804 tons of CO₂. This is 1.957 tons or 4,314 pounds per student.

This is not to say that the college has not already considered environmental and energy efficiency measures. With much foresight, Gillian and Spector

⁶ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1049662/fossil-us-carbon-dioxide-emissions-per-person/>

⁷ <https://reports.aashe.org/institutions/loyola-university-maryland-md/report/2023-12-21/OP/energy/OP-5/>

⁸ <https://www.usnews.com/best-colleges/loyola-university-maryland-2078/student-life>

Hall have geothermal heating. In addition, there have been efforts to reduce electricity usage by installing more efficient LED lights. Further, both Edensword and Fielding-Rumore Hall have now high efficiency variable refrigerant flow (VRF) heating and cooling systems. Edensword Hall even allows residents to have some control over localized temperatures in rooms. The campus also has building automation software (BAS) to remotely monitor room temperatures and set run times for large air handlers based on scheduled uses, reducing the amount of power spent during off-peak times. Generally, it can be said that all recent renovations have had some energy efficiency objectives and that even just replacing old systems with modern ones already increases efficiency significantly.

All of these efforts are text-book low hanging fruit projects to increase energy efficiency. They might not be as exciting as Santa Fe's solar panels, but energy efficiency should absolutely be part of any institution's journey towards sustainability.

That being said, in praxis there seem to be limitations to these energy conservation efforts. From personal experience, I can attest that the temperature in both dorm rooms as well as academic rooms is hard to control. This leads to the unfortunate situation in which it is necessary to open windows in the winter because the rooms are too hot and for some reason individual controls or distant controls fail to keep rooms at an acceptable temperature. This is problematic in terms of energy waste as well as potentially harming the energy system. Similar things could be said for the warmer months. Perhaps it is the European in me, but I would argue that the AC is too cold if I need to wear a sweater in Mellon when it is 95 degrees outside. There are still buildings on this campus that are supplied with heat from our own power plant which is apparently part of the reason for why Mellon Hall is so unbearably hot in the winter and Chase-Stone House is relatively cold.

While the polity should of course be mindful of energy conservation and adapt their behavior

accordingly (including the obvious things such as turning off lights when leaving a room), we cannot blame residents and users alone if proper energy controls do not always lie in their hands.

The campus could greatly benefit from an energy audit to more clearly identify avoidable energy waste as well as explore conversation solutions more effectively. Other colleges like University of Maryland College Park or even our own sister campus in Santa Fe have demonstrated what a difference energy efficiency can make.

In the fall of 2017, the Environmental Sustainability Task Force was created at the college by then-President Panayiotis Kanelos to “analyze best management practices and explore new opportunities for St. John’s College.” In connection with the establishment of this task force which consisted of 18 members and met bi-weekly, the college joined the Maryland Green Registry.⁹ Perhaps we should consider restarting some sort of formal group dedicated to sustainability issues on campus to live up to our commitment to the Maryland Green Registry.

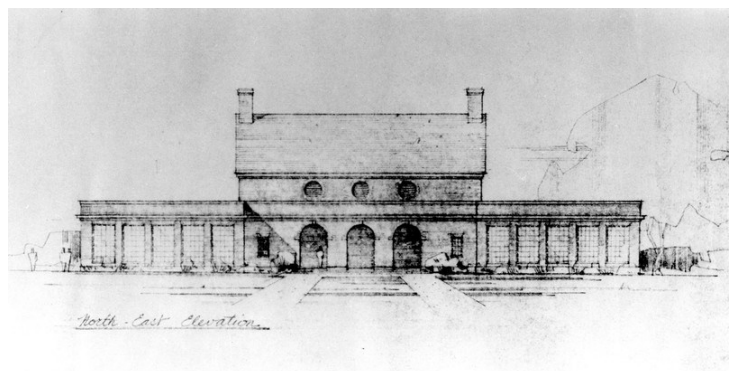
There are aspects of the Annapolis campus that make energy conservation more difficult such as older buildings with old windows that oftentimes cannot easily be replaced due to historic preservation regulations, however, there are more creative low-hanging fruits projects in terms of building improvements and energy efficiency that could be implemented speedily. For example, one could consider processing heat utilization from the kitchen to heat other parts of Fielding-Rumore Hall. Historic preservation regulations complicate things but insulation of buildings and perhaps retrofitting of insulation glass, the addition of thermal curtains or window insulating film could be considered. Furthermore, we could consider the development of user-guidelines (this could even include the prohibition of certain particularly inefficient energy

consumers such as certain space heaters) as well as environmental training for staff, faculty and students. Other universities, such as the University of Maryland, College Park, have made energy efficiency a priority. Their recent projects are projected to save 6.7 million kWh annually, cutting energy costs by over \$800,000 per year.¹⁰ We can also take inspiration from our sister campus. Even before the solar panel installation in Santa Fe, the campus’ buildings already achieved LEED certification.

Beyond energy efficiency, the college continues to explore renewable energy generation opportunities. At the board meeting, Ms. Gontang-Highfield shared the exciting news that they are planning to apply for a grant that would allow the college to install solar panels on the roof of Mellon Hall. If this project comes to fruition eventually, it could be the perfect opportunity to marry efficiency and renewable energy generation to achieve the most sustainable outcome possible.

But even before that, we should consider some other more immediate measures. Ultimately, the greenest and cheapest energy is the energy that is saved. I believe that energy efficiency initiatives would align with values of responsible stewardship and critical inquiry. By committing to energy reductions, we address not only financial constraints but also our environmental responsibility. In the face of rising costs and climate challenges, energy efficiency should be seen as a necessity, not a luxury.

¹⁰ <https://homeenergysavings.pepco.com/md/business/customer-success-stories/university-maryland>



Blueprint for the new heating plant, ca. 1950

⁹ <https://mde.maryland.gov/MarylandGreen/Documents/St.John%27s-College-Profile.pdf>

Distant Music

Tarik Mahmud

I have very sensitive hearing. I am usually quite aware of all the sounds going on around me—this AC, those people talking, that airplane, these birds singing, this clock ticking—so that things that require concentration can become tedious tasks, namely reading and listening to music. I take great effort when doing these things to remove any extraneous noises from my ears, particularly when I am listening to a piece of music I have not heard before; and become quite frustrated when the silence is broken. All this is to say, When I'm listening, I don't want to hear anything extraneous to what I am listening to.

The same goes for ambience. Though I am a great listener of music, I am also a great noticer that music ought not to be listened to excessively; I find that listening to too much music is very wearying for the ears, and I often find that once I take off my headphones after listening to much music, the ambient noise is as gratifying as the music itself. In fact, I often find myself listening to ambience as intently as I listen to music, and when that ambience is interrupted, I become quite irritated.

I speak most emphatically of the sounds of nature, which are too often maimed and mutilated by vociferous industrial sounds. But interruption on the part of music presents a particularly interesting case. For the sound interrupted and the music are often both things that I would not like to be interrupted themselves, and when they do interrupt each other, there is a cruel acoustic battle that seems to take place. It seems at first that music simply does not belong among other noises—the other noises must be shut out, or the music must be turned off.

On the other hand, it has occurred to me that music can not just coexist with ambience but be a part of that ambience itself. I was sitting in the Mellon

courtyard, enjoying the splendid weather of an idyllic afternoon, when through the windows came to me the sweet notes of a piano being played. No sound in the world could have possibly been more suitable to this ambience than that piano. Nor did I listen to the piano music itself as such—but I listened to it as sound and as ambience.

This reflection has led me to the interesting realization of the strange sublimation that music undergoes as it traverses the space between our ears and our brain. For music heard is not mere sound, or 'noise' as we call it, but something entirely different not only in attributes, but in substance; it is similar to the auditory distinction between speaking and other noises, but far less lucid in its cause. To hear music as a part of an ambient sonic environment is to make oneself forego this natural inclination and to hear the sound of music as sound rather than as music. If I have leisure, I may further explore the sublimation of music in another article, but consider for now the condescension of music to ambience and noise, which may be no less beautiful.



Squirrel in a tree with berries

The Scarved Woman

Molly Sprout

The mornings are 40 degrees again and I am, for the 20th fall in a row, stuck hating my life for those first few hours of being awake. My bones hurt and even just getting out of bed is a Sisyphean task. All I can do is pity myself in the cold mornings, and it hasn't even hit 32 degrees yet. But regardless of my whining about this new weather, it has birthed a new joy: seeing people in scarves.

I feel largely confused about my love of people in scarves- what is it about these scarves that make people, in my opinion, more beautiful? I see these beautiful people in these knit scarves and feel back at home. But what home am I referring to? I'm from North Carolina and that makes no sense. No, the scarf phenomenon has reasons below the surface. With it being a part of female clothing in many cultures, it begs the question of why society, as a whole, moves to the scarf.

A few ideas:

1. The cozy woman reminds us of the mother and of home: Could a warm woman immediately bring the mind to home; to being cuddled in a blanket, to Christmastime, to warmth, to hugs?
2. The act of covering up implies something enigmatic about the woman: Could having something hidden create a mystery for the viewer? Like a present waiting to be unwrapped, does the scarved woman hold beauty and mystique unknown and desired?
3. The scarf is holy: As head coverings are used in many religions, could the scarf itself turn a woman into my Beatrice, a holy woman? Do we now want to use this woman as a vessel to God?

Either way, keep being you, women in scarves!



Photo provided by author



Woman in a scarf from an illustration in the 1912 yearbook

THE AM RADIO

PRESENTS: Get in the Halloween Spirit, brought to you by Season of the Witch by Donovan AM

It's that time of year again. The pumpkins are starting to rot on the porches. The candy is all quarter-priced, and some of the more enterprising stores are starting to pull out the evergreen and reindeer. It's the week after Halloween, and in just a scant 358 days that fateful day will come again. And next year we have to be ready. I am not saying that the polity didn't get into the holiday spirit this year: the Reality Halloween party was very well done, and sure, there are a few jack-o-lanterns about, but one night and some squirrel-bitten pumpkins simply won't cut it anymore. Where's the pizzaz? Where is the spooky spirit? Where is the twelve foot Home Depot skeleton looming over the quad?! Even the costumes are falling a little flat. If I see one more anthropomorphic fox, Star Wars couple, or "low effort but sexy variation of popular media/concept" I am going to start putting real entrails up on the walls. Of course there are still standouts, but the people who hand make elaborate program related costumes and hand draw their friend's elaborate tattoos all over their bodies aren't going to be around forever. In the age of credit card fraud and stolen amazon packages, getting a good costume is a daunting challenge— and on a college student's budget and timeframe I understand why so many of us take the easy way out. Therefore, I propose a simple but elegant solution: allow the now empty coffee shop in McDowell to follow the course that all liminal empty spaces with a nearby parking lot must eventually take and turn it into a Spirit Halloween. This will require very little effort, as the Spirit Halloween will simply inhabit the space come late September, provided it is left empty save for a libation of fake blood and a child's sacrificed candy basket. And by early November it should

migrate on for its summer hibernation in the bowels of a Hot Topic. Now, as for the benefits to be gained from such a venture I can personally attest. In search of the feline half of a Calvin and Hobbes costume a good friend and I braved the harrowing trek to the current Spirit Halloween next to the Trader Joes, and what a pilgrimage it was! A veritable mecca of cheap polyester and paint splattered plastic it was everything we had hoped for. It was the final hour of our quest, and we were not disappointed. A tiger costume in both sexy and footsie pajama variety? You just can't get that anywhere else and also come away with a Viking helmet, fishnet tights, and an animatronic demon witch that screams at you for good measure. I don't mean to say that it was all moonlight and corpse-flowers, however. The uber over was not cheap, and while the costume might have been so, my endlessly fickle companion was not satisfied with the figure he cut in his chosen costume and had to make a second trip. Now, imagine what could be done if we had a Spirit Halloween at our very doorstep. Easy access to last-minute costumes, plenty of decorations, and a festive campus hub for the autumnal months. No more half-heartedness, we will finally be able to live up to the gothic dark academia aesthetic that so many prospies envision for us. And if that isn't enough to sway you, consider the natural order of things. If by this time next year the old coffee shop isn't in use again, or the faculty lounge gets busy, then we may not have a choice in the matter. The Spirit of Halloween is a hard one to exorcise.

*Image
provided
by the
author*



Μουσείον: “Franny and Zooey” and the Dissolution of Self

Gabriela Forte

How does one escape the world for a spiritual life? And, more importantly, how does one do so without falling into the same ego traps that worldly life introduces? In the J.D. Salinger book, “Franny and Zooey,” Franny Glass struggles with her place in the shallow, New-York-elite-pseudointellectual-Ivy-League realm, insisting, “I’m sick of not having the courage to be an absolute nobody.” She bemoans the individuality complexes of the people around her: “I’m just sick of ego, ego, ego. My own and everybody else’s. I’m sick of everybody that wants to get somewhere, do something distinguished and all, be somebody interesting. It’s disgusting.” Yet are these efforts helping her escape the world, or is she reinforcing her own ego in the process?

Franny is obsessed with the book “The Way of a Pilgrim,” in which a Russian wanderer prays so deeply and constantly that the rhythm of the prayer integrates itself into his heartbeat, so that he is never separate from it. She is dedicated to achieving this herself, but the flurrying emotional torment she is experiencing seems to be inhibiting real progress. She is a wreck, spending all day sleeping or sobbing on the couch, refusing to eat, making a martyr out of herself. The feelings of repression and isolation she experiences come from a very real place—half of her family is either dead or out of contact, she was a very precocious child raised in the public eye in New York City, she is trapped around private-school academic socialites who spend their days talking about nothing—but is her emotional response enough of a rejection of these pressures? Can she escape them this way? When Franny wants to become an absolute nobody, when she wants to escape ego, is she doing it for spiritual fulfillment, or is she implicitly differentiating herself, making herself feel a little more special, a little more holy, a little less lost? She seems partial-

ly aware of the trap she is caught in, saying, “the worst part is, if you go bohemian or something crazy like that, you’re conforming just as much only in a different way.”

Her older brother Zooey pushes against this notion—that one conforms no matter what, just in a different way—claiming Franny is seeking out spiritual fulfillment for the wrong reasons, and this is misdirecting her. He insists outright that she is too caught in her own head, that the work that she is doing is purely for ego reinforcement and that it will not free her from the world that she feels so imprisoned by.

“I’ll tell you one thing, Franny... if it’s the religious life you want, you ought to know right now that you’re missing out on every single goddam religious action that’s going on around this house. You don’t even have sense enough to drink when somebody brings you a cup of consecrated chicken soup— which is the only kind of chicken soup Bessie ever brings to anybody around this madhouse... Even if you went out and searched the whole world for a master- some guru, some holy man- to tell you how to say your Jesus Prayer properly, what good would it do you? How in hell are you going to recognize a legitimate holy man when you see one if you don’t even know a cup of consecrated chicken soup when it’s right in front of your nose?”

While this upsets Franny, I do believe that her brother is right. Taking part in these good, beautiful things shouldn’t be done merely to differentiate oneself—the detachment from the self should come first. While the differentiation from the crowd will happen as a result of pursuing spiritual things, doing it for the sake of anything other than the good and beautiful will leave you stuck exactly where you left off, if not worse. Now, you are hyperaware of everything—how

alienated you are, how “holy” you are, etc. And in this hyperawareness of the self, you miss out on the beautiful, holy things around you, those things that permeate daily life, those things so many people merely pass by. This places you more intensely in the grips of ego than ever before.

So, then, how do we detach and stay satisfied? A simple, almost too simple answer seems to be to not get attached to detachment. Escaping worldly life is done for something greater than the self, and it seems that the first thing one must do before detaching from anything else is to dissolve the self, detach from the ego, and exist for the good and beautiful, rather than for the sake of being or appearing so. I am aware that

there are many people who are uncomfortable with these ideas, especially after having discussed Epictetus’ “Handbook” in sophomore seminar, but I think there is a fundamental misunderstanding of how this detachment factors into our lives. I think for many it is a remedy for the self-centered lives we lead, whether we are aware of it or not. I believe that the first step exists outside of ourselves; until then, we will continue to turn a blind eye to the beautiful things all around us and remain entrenched in turmoil that we ourselves created.



Student (left) and Mera J. Flaumenhaft (right) reading in the Woodward Hall library

City of Pigs: Acqua al 2

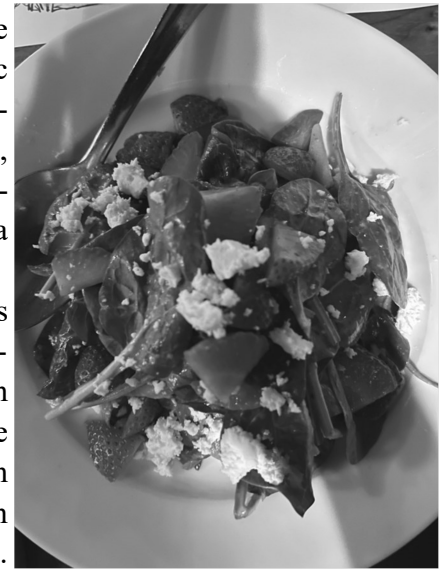
Molly Sprout, Restaurant Critic

I'd like to start this off by mentioning that Daniel Nathan (my beautiful date for the evening) and I planned on going to Harry Browne's for tonight's review. We made a reservation and everything, but on the way to the restaurant we passed by Acqua al 2. The restaurant had warm, beautiful lighting and was relatively full for a Sunday night. I immediately regretted my Harry Browne's decision but ultimately decided to stick to our reservation. That is until we walked in and were met with the cold and harsh lighting of a shitty, expensive restaurant that only my grandparents would want to go to. We sat and then promptly left for what we hoped would be a better dinner. This last-minute decision—was it worth it?

The environment at Acqua is quaint and intimate, despite its large space. It smells of my mother's cooking, rich and garlicky, and has a friendly yet professional staff. It has a distinctly romantic feeling, with warm lighting that could make anyone attractive. Our hopes are high as we start to peruse the menu. The menu, might I add, is all in Italian. A part of me doesn't like this-- it seems like a ploy to make the restaurant seem more authentic than it is, having the white liberal couples struggle and laugh to ask in a terrible Italian accent for the "penne alla vodka". But that's beside the point; the menu is divided into appetizers, salads, pastas, and main courses (fish, poultry, veal, steak), as well as sides (the main courses are serves a la carte). We start with a salad and are slightly disappointed not to see a Caesar option, but we are both obsessed with Caesar salads and understand the world does not always agree that a Caesar option is nonnegotiable on a menu. We ordered the "insalata di spinaci": a spinach salad with strawberries, pickled red onion, feta cheese, and a champagne vinaigrette. The salad was not great. It was so simplistic that it was left wanting. There was nothing offensive about

it, but the vinaigrette was purely acidic without the necessary oil to balance it, and spinach is unfortunately not a complex-enough green to have on its own-- in my opinion. Both the onion and the feta were powerful but both being acidic again left it unbalanced.

The fresh strawberries did not complement it in the way they should have, so, all in all, this salad did not impress either of us.



Insalata di spinaci. Photo by the author

Moving on, we ordered pasta to share. We ordered the "bucatini al mascrapone e funghi", which is bucatini pasta in a creamy mascrapone sauce with porcini mushrooms. Again, I was disappointed. The pasta itself was cooked well, and there was nothing offensive in the sauce. But the predominant flavor was salt, without enough complexity for something 22 dollars. The mushrooms were obviously sautéed well, but I only got a vague umami flavor and nothing punchy. I wonder if the mascrapone was simply too creamy and light, requiring the use of so much salt that it drowned out all accompanying flavors. I was left thinking that I could make something of equal value myself at home for about 4 dollars, and I'm not a very good cook.

For the main course we decided on the chef special, which is three smaller portions of the house steaks. On the plate was a filet mignon with a balsamic reduction, a filet mignon with a blueberry sauce, and a ribeye on a bed of arugula, grape tomatoes, and parmesan cheese. We ordered this medium rare, and all three steaks were cooked closer to rare. I don't mind this much as I only ordered it medium rare to appease Daniel, but I did think it was odd to have such rare



Chef special. Photo by the author

steaks. Starting with the filet mignon with a balsamic reduction coating it. This was a beautiful dish. It was a good steak, extremely tender and with a salt and pepper crust around it, but the star of it was the balsamic reduction. It was rich and quite sweet, and I wonder if I would have liked it so much if I had eaten an entire portion of it. Nonetheless, it was incredibly good and decadent. Next, the ribeye was not bad. The actual steak was good, but the salt was a bit overwhelming without any other flavors coming out. I preferred filet mignon to ribeye, but it was still a good cut and cook. I certainly do not think I would order it as a full meal. The last steak was the filet mignon with a blueberry sauce. This was absolutely the best thing we ate. The steak was tender and rare with a good sear on it, but what I am left amazed by is the blueberry sauce. When eaten alone, it was almost off-putting and much too savory, blueberries and salt are not on their own good together. But somehow the steak with this sauce is delicious. I can't really explain how it was so good, if I'm being honest. I prompt everyone to try it at some point, as it is nothing an amateur home chef could do without a recipe-- at least in my eyes.

Lastly, we had tiramisu and maybe I am just still thinking about Luna Blu's, but this was just okay. It's tiramisu, so it can't be bad, but it wasn't anything I would rave about. Overall, this restaurant was okay. We spent 132 dollars with tax and tip included and I can't say I would spend it again. None of the food was bad but none of the food, besides the blueberry steak, was something I couldn't make myself nor was something that blew me away. Though, the ambiance

and staff are very nice, and I think this would be a good place to have an anniversary. I wonder now if Daniel and I made the right call by switching our reservation at the last minute. Is it worth it to have a nice ambiance if the food is just kind of okay? Both of us were full and smiling when we left, despite our ambivalence about the dishes. But that may just be because we're young and in love and got to stare at each other over candlelight for 2 hours. Either way, Acqua al 2 is certified "just okay".



Daniel Nathan perusing the menu. Photo by author

THIS MONTH IN HOROSCOPES (NOVEMBER 2024)

Madame Quiznos

As the weather gets cold and the outfits get cozy, there's a looming sense of overwhelming loneliness as days grow shorter. I think the kids call it 'cuffing season.' As an astrologer, it is my civic duty to dabble in matchmaking. This month, I have a series of missed connections and personal ads submitted from around campus. I hope this will help someone find what they've been looking for.

Yours, Madame QUIZNOS

ARIES (March 21-April 19)

"Our hands brushed in Home Depot as we both reached for the same box of industrial grade mouse poison. I was nervous about the moral implications of using such an intense pest-control substance but when I met your gaze all my doubts melted away. Brutality cannot exist in a person as beautiful as you. I chuckled nervously, you insisted I could have it, but I was too focused on your smile. You have teeth like a military cemetery. You asked me what someone like me needed such a powerful product for, I responded, "my dorm is 200 years old," you chortled and said, "old buildings am I right?" I saw our whole lives play out in that moment. I saw our first date, first kiss, proposal, our spring wedding, our first, second and final child. I saw them grow up, I saw us age and die, I saw us entering eternity together. This experience was so profound, I didn't even realize that I was crying. You looked alarmed. You waved goodbye, still looking alarmed, leaving me in aisle 12, holding a box of industrial grade mouse poison. I haven't washed the hand you touched since. I need to see you again, and I need to wash my hand. Means of contact PO box 6743."

TAURUS (April 20- May 20)

We made eye contact in line at Auntie Anne's in the

Annapolis mall. Female, mid 20s, redhead. Simple as that.

GEMINI (May 21- June 20)

"How dare you look at me the way you do. You are an endless, black pool that screams to me 'welcome home, beloved!' It makes me sick. Who are you to deny us of each other?! Do you recognize the lifetime of pure devotion and adoration that I look at you with? I am your provider and yours to provide for in turn. I have dreams about you. Last night we were in a small boat on a great sea, a marlin jumped out of the blue darkness, flopping around our raft, and gouged out your eyes. You didn't panic, you held my face and told me you'd be ok. The sun emerged from the ocean, water poured off it, creating great waves that sent you, me and the fish flying. When I washed up on a strange shore, you were gone, it was just me and the fish, your eyes still skewered across its swordlike nose. The fish and I walked along the shore, he told me of his life in the ocean, about all the other fish he knew, about all the places he'd been. We sat in a cafe for a long time, trading stories and feelings I had never had the courage to tell anyone else. Your eyes moved around the cafe as we talked until the sun sank back down into the sea. We left, disappearing back into the ocean without paying. I woke up giddy at the thought, that should you really lose an eye, you'd have a glass one made. I would steal it. I would carry your empty gaze with me everywhere, just me and your glass eye. I don't think I'd even need to speak to anyone again. Your eye would follow me as it did in the cafe with the marlin, I'd live a happy life, watching you watch things. Please stop looking at me the way you do, it is giving me strange urges that my therapist openly shames me for. You know who you are."

CANCER (June 21- July 22)

"I have been in this class for 600 years. Empires have risen and fallen around me in the time since we started this one-sided multi-party lecture. My hair has grown long, I am bearded now, my nails are so long they curl upwards and around themselves in ornate,

yellowing loops. My skin sags, I feel the water pooling in my wrinkles, dragging my whole body down further into the uncomfortable wicker chair. I sometimes think about my friends and family on the outside, but hoping in such an environment will only bring pain. I don't know how anyone can bear the weight of such hellish torment. I can see my fellow captive out of the corner of my eye, scribbling something across the garish neon cover of the lab manual. I hear the light drag of your ballpoint pen as it dances across the paper, I follow the lines intensely. My sentence isn't shortened, but I am offered some solace watching you doodle. Little animals, one weirdly realistic eye, crude characters of classmates, aimless spirals all cover the margins surrounding walls of indecipherable text. You are the tally marks that dress the stoney walls of my cells. Please never stop drawing, watching you improve daily makes my day and makes class a little more bearable."

-woman bored to death in Mellon 203



Midcentury seminar

LEO (July 23- Aug 22)

"The essay was due 20 minutes ago. My name and cursor are the only thing on the google doc. They mock me. I went to the vending machine, where you and two other stoned-smelling dudes were rocking

the machine, cursing out the snacks you had reaped but not sowed. After a particularly hard sounding slam against the glass, you turned to me, holding your shoulder, looking a bit pained and said 'Doesn't work' before you and your posse headed back upstairs. I don't even think you live in this dorm. Honestly, I have a boyfriend I'm very happy with, but you dropped your Jimmy John's stamp card, and you were one sub away from a free sandwich, and I'd like to reunite you. Please inquire within Edensword 213."

VIRGO (Aug 23- Sept 22)

"We met in the Paca historic garden. You didn't see me, but I saw you. I saw you in the most profound way a man can, I saw into your very essence and the beauty was blinding. You, an older gentleman with an air of wisdom about you and a very strange hat; me, a younger gentleman who longs for wisdom in an equally strange hat. I am hypnotized by your movements. You looked so assured and confident in your lack of direction, waltzing around the garden, stopping at your own discretion, unbothered by bees or tourists. Every movement was spontaneous but calculated. You moved like the wind. There was no doubt, I have never seen someone who has no ounce of doubt in their own footsteps. I want so badly to have that same kind of self-assuredness that I'm afraid only comes with age. Did you feel like this once too? Part of me thinks that no one is ever truly confident in themselves, you just get better at lying about it. But then I see people my age who seem so organized, who know themselves and what they want to be and where they want to go. Do you think they get the same bile washing up in the back of their throats when they think about the future? I can't imagine they do, but then I guess everyone is struggling in their own small ways. Let's roam the garden together, I have a lot of questions about growing up. PO box 32766"

LIBRA (Sept 23- Oct 22)

"I didn't understand Hegel before you. In the middle of my point about the unthinking conscience, you in-

errupted me. Your confidence was overwhelmingly attractive as you loudly corrected me. As someone with a social life in high school, I was never able to truly dive into the building blocks of philosophy the way you were. I am so aroused knowing that this is your third time reading this book. As you continued to speak, you ended up repeating my point, albeit in different terms. We share a mind, we are of one soul, you and I; cut of the same cloth. I know every fiber of your being. Within me is the roadmap to your hopes, dreams, fears, anxieties and treasured memories. I was born with the building blocks of you deep within me. Call it recognition. I knew at that moment, as you regurgitated my words back to me in a condescending tone, using words I'm not entirely sure I knew the definition of, that I had to pick your brain, to completely understand and dissect you. I must recall what makes me myself from the elements I pick out within you. My mirror! You are the most interesting man I've ever had the pleasure of meeting. I want you. I need you. You are my shepherd, and I burn with passion at the thought of having you follow me around post-seminar continuing to explain Hegel to me, interrupted only by you blowing cheap cigarette smoke in my face. It sticks in my hair and to my clothes, it's like I can carry you with me. I sit catty-corner to you in seminar, please reach out to me soon."

SCORPIO (Oct 23- Nov 21)

"Man seeking large, abandoned mansion for the benefit of the polity. On campus living is a bore, and most of the properties in Annapolis are technically AirBnBs, empty most of the year. Me and three to seven assorted men are looking to squat in one of Annapolis' premier bachelor pads. Ideally with a balcony or a deck, as we all enjoy chain smoking and reading very publicly. Don't worry about utilities, one of our boys is a crafty little devil. This will be to the benefit of the polity, of course, as we'll use it as a place to store only the finest kegs, a proverbial beer hall, open to all. The music is bangin' and the women are thoroughly okay looking. I've heard tell of a similar feat pulled off my freshman year and would like

to see if we could do it again. Please contact hpreuben@sjc.edu should you have any information or leads on a suitable space."



Evan Gobstob Canter, 1981

SAGITTARIUS (Nov 22- Dec 21)

"I'm one of the school's many underpaid student photographers. It's my job to go to events and take silly little pictures for Instagram and the official website. I must sell culture, diversity and a fun yet sterile environment. Investors go crazy for that kind of thing; half a dozen thin framed, modestly dressed girls reaching across a table for a plate of vegan tacos, student athletes in action, an ethnically diverse group of longtime friends studying on the quad, the usual staples. When I edit, you're always somewhere in the background. For a while, I wrote it off, St John's is so small, you tend to recognize people you've never met. But you are in *all* my photos. My school-sanctioned camera, my phone, my personal social media, you are always looming in the background. You're not even stalking, you are simply in the foreground, reading, studying, on your phone, dancing. I never catch your gaze, you're usually captured on film only in profile- a lot of people would be very envious to have such a strong side profile, you know. None of my friends know your name, either. I've been asking around, too. At parties, I'll bring up

my phone, zoomed in on your grainy image painted atop my cracked iPhone 11. They all kinda shrug to themselves, no one knows who you are. The next morning, when I go to make my obligatory post party post, it's revealed you were there the whole time. This has happened at least 6 times. Stop being a stranger, you can find me on all socials @brinos05"

CAPRICORN (Dec 22- Jan 19)

"We haven't spoken, but we share a warrior's bond. This year's seminar has been rough, we ended up with a person who has absolutely zero filter, a handful of devout recently converted Catholics, in addition to the classic combination of 'woman with dyed hair' and 'man who owns an American flag' and a rather outspoken stoner, who will ramble for longer than anyone thought possible. We're managing, but barely. You are my rock. We have never spoken, but I find endless comfort in your dead eyed, eyebrow-cocked gaze. When you're not around, I have no one to direct my vitriolic stare at, no one is alongside me to share my pain. Please come back to class, I understand it's bad but you can't just leave me here to die. Please come back, your absence is felt"

AQUARIUS (Jan 20- Feb 18)

"Meandering and self-deprecating horoscope columnist seeking a twin flame or intense, toxic and codependent situationship. I like long walks along the sea (lie), the sound of bone on concrete and expensive cocktails from unpleasant bartenders. I'm hoping you're an air or fire sign, but I will tolerate fellow earth signs against my better judgment. Water signs needn't apply. My rising sign in Virgo and moon sign in Aries means that I am neurotic and pedantic but also highly argumentative and aggressive, aided by my stubborn streak from my sun in Taurus. I'm like if an abused pitbull wore a 42DDD bra, and I hope this partially excites but mostly frightens you, as Ma-ma likes 'em scared. My Taurus nature means that I love the finer things in life, so I hope your credit card limit is high. I do expect many expensive things, and I will feel bad about receiving them, I am also highly competitive and will try to outdo you. We will both

very quickly go into obscene amounts of debt. To contact me, simply toss 3 to 5 small yet ornate coins into College Creek, howling drunkenly as you do so. I also have an email."

PISCES (Feb 19- March 20)

"We're allowed off the yard some nights you guys hold those school dances. We met each other in the snack room, you in a plastic ghoul mask, me another sailor in a sea of matching white uniforms. You ate seed speckled crackers with a generous helping of hummus, laughing with your friend who was some sort of erotic Greek senator- honestly it was confusing, and I didn't really care enough to ask them. I had eyes only for you, plastic clad ghost. You smiled at me on your way to the dance floor, where I saw you later, busting it down to Pitbull's 2009 club classic 'Hotel Room Service.' I don't think I ever really saw your face, but your laugh echoed throughout the Great Hall. You carry with you an infectious energy, you seem so unbothered and joyous, uninhibited. Let me take you out, we can laugh loudly and eat more hummus. Contact Midshipman C Clark, Third Company."



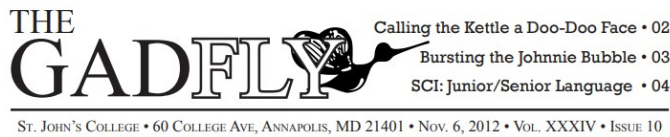
Naval officers laying a wreath at the French Monumnet



The Mysterious Doctor Sajoco #4, by Sean Stickler. Originally published in the Gadfly on February 14th, 1995

Elections of St. John's Past

In honor of election day, which will have already passed by the publication of this article, I thought it might be of interest to share Gadfly covers from previous elections.



The St. John's College Student Weekly
Volume XXII, Issue 9

THE
GADFLY

Annapolis, Maryland
November 7, 2000

Election 2000: Today is the Day

by Jeremy Brenningstall, GI
Staff Writer

Today Americans head to vote in what is anticipated to be the closest presidential election in the last 30 years. Candidates have been busy in the final days, racing across the country to try-



Al Gore at a recent rally.

ing to hit the dozen or so swing states that prognosticators expect will decide this election.

With George W. Bush controlling a large swarth of states in the southern and Rocky Mountain States, Gore's strategy this week has focused on carving a narrow electoral majority based around populous states where he is in the lead (New York, Illinois, California, Michigan, and Florida).

For his part, Bush has courted a number of traditionally democratic states, including Oregon and Minnesota, as part of his effort to return Republicans to the White House.

Third-party candidates, after briefly walking into the limelight during the 1990's with the campaigns of Ross Perot and several gubernatorial victories (Maine, Minnesota), have

struggled to achieve respectability this year. With the economy strong, the air of dissatisfaction in third-party candidates ride on has had difficulty taking hold. Their exclusion from the debates was not mourned by many in the mainstream media, although it meant some significant issues were never discussed.

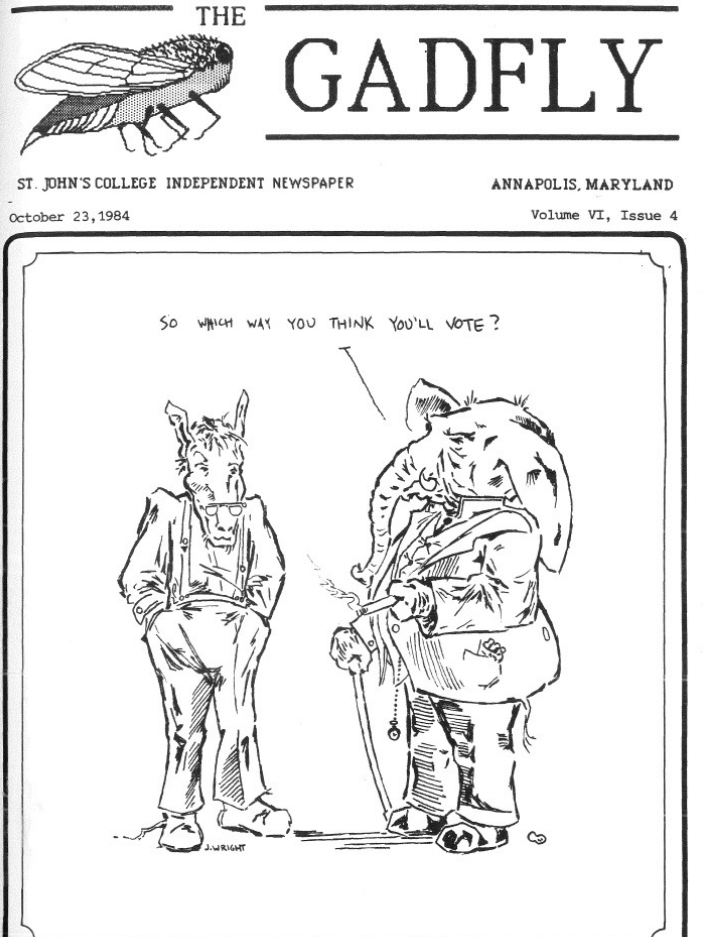
The Republican party has scaled down their message of



George W. and Laura Bush.

social conservatism this year in favor of a platform based around increased government

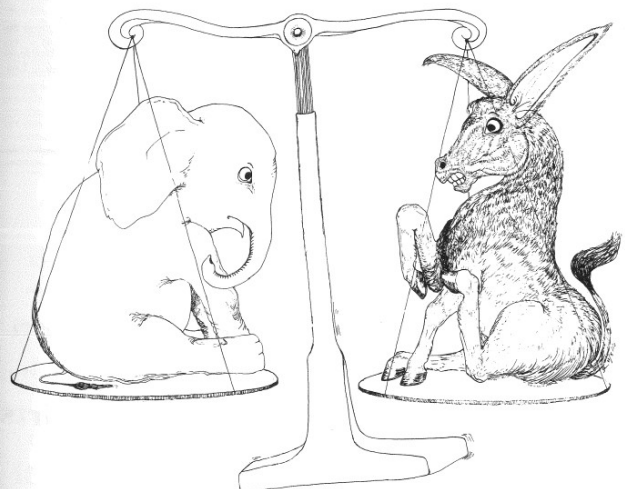
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St. John's College Independent Weekly
Volume X, Issue 8

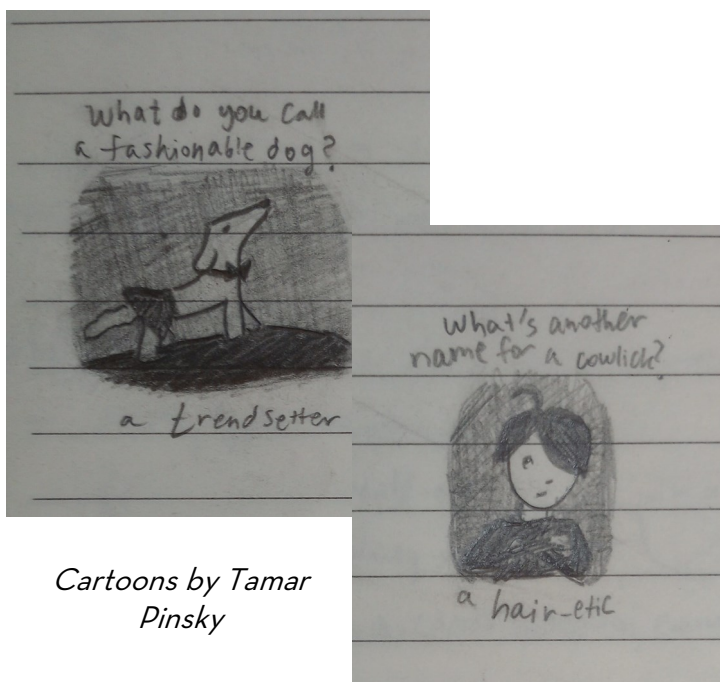
Annapolis, Maryland
November 8, 1988



robin on the railing

Natalie Goldman

I've already walked by the house
A dozen and a half times,
Trying to find a better angle,
Looking for better excuses.
Not now, I whisper, telling the truth.
Tulips will sprout around the front porch,
A robin on the railing, and I
Will eat toast, badly burned,
From the inside out.
The merit of mirrors is that they don't exist
Outside of houses, and that way
I will never see myself
Walking forth and back and forth
And back before the door, wide open—
Before the door has a shot
To shut me out from this,
My inheritance,
The one I get by loving.



Cartoons by Tamar Pinsky

Your Campus This Week

Friday, November 8th:

- Friday Night Lecture: The Philosophical Challenges of Early Art, Allen Speight. 7:30 pm, FSK Auditorium

Saturday, November 9th:

- KWP Presents: The Seagull, directed by Margaret McConnell. 7:30 pm, FSK Auditorium

Sunday, November 10th:

- KWP Presents: The Seagull, directed by Margaret McConnell. 7:30 pm, FSK Auditorium

Tuesday, November 12th:

- SCI Shakespeare in the Fall: Midsummer Night's Dream with Ms. Axelrod. 5:30 pm, Conversation Room

Wednesday, November 13th:

- Supplemental Course Funding (Formerly Pathways) information session. 2:30 pm, Hodson Room.

Seminar Readings

	11/07	11/11
Freshmen	Aristophanes: Clouds	Plato: Apology and Crito
Sophomores	Bible: I Corinthians	Bible: Romans; James
Juniors and Seniors	Preceptorials	Preceptorials

PSA on Campus Misinformation

El'ad Nichols-Kaufman

You may have noticed handwritten signs in the McDowell Basement reading “TRUMP WILL REMOVE FAFSA,” and include a link to register to vote. I admire attempts to inform the polity of the very real effects of this election. However, as a journalist, I feel compelled to point out that this statement simply has no factual grounding.

Trump’s education plans, which include dismantling the Department of Education, are vague and destructive, and should concern all students. However, he has offered no details, and has never stated any intention to eliminate the FAFSA, which is just a method of applying for aid. During his first term, he proposed cutting billions from Pell Grant funding, ending Stafford loans and cancelling loan forgiveness. The Heritage Foundation’s Project 2025 calls for first stopping loan forgiveness programs, like the Public Service Loan Forgiveness, the eventually the end of all federal loans, and drastic cuts to work study funding, but does not mention the FAFSA, and does not include all the programs whose funding is allocated through FAFSA.

It is our duty as citizens in a democracy to remain aware of the stakes of our choices in the election. In doing so, we must take an active stance against misinformation everywhere in our community.



*Harrison DeWalt post-Wagner on a Halloween seminar night.
Photo by Tarik Mahmud*

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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 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 Microsoft Word or JPEG format. The deadline for submissions is the Monday a week prior to publication.

For more information, contact us via email at gadfly.office@sjc.edu.

60 COLLEGE AVENUE
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

