

THE COUNTY COLLEGE OF MORRIS' AWARD-WINNING STUDENT NEWSPAPER YOUNGTOWN EDITION

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A letter from the Editor

SARA LIM

Editor-in-Chief

Welcome, dear reader, to the 2025-2026 installment of The Youngtown Edition!

First and foremost, I wanted to introduce myself! My name is Sara Lim, and I have been writing for The Youngtown Edition since last Fall Semester! Writing and publishing my work has been a defining feature of my time here at CCM, an opportunity to think, formulate, create, and ultimately share my thoughts with the world. Student newspapers are a microcosm of society; akin to a public forum that strengthens and reinforces a community, student newspapers are vessels for expression and sharing of information, a medium that I find central to a flourishing campus. Our mission is to stand as the campus community's trusted beacon of news, insight, and meaningful dialogue. We seek to deliver content that is not only timely and accurate but also compelling and reflective of the diverse experiences, interests, and voices of our students, faculty, and staff. Through our coverage, we strive to inform, inspire, and connect, enriching campus life while fostering thoughtful conversation and a deeper sense of community.

The story of student newspapers is, in many ways, a chronicle of the shifting place of young voices within society and the ever-changing land-

scape of media. From the pioneering publication in Utrecht {originally described as "scissors in the hands of children," by professors} to the oldest continuously running student newspaper in North America {The Cor-

nell Daily Sun}, these journals have not merely reported student life but actively shaped it. They have served as vital conduits of information, as creative arenas for expression, and as rallying platforms for dissent and

transformation. Their legacy reaches far beyond their early beginnings, leaving an indelible imprint on the evolution of modern journalism and affirming the student press as a crucial force in confronting defining issues and historic turning points throughout American life.

Thus, I want to encourage you to participate in this beautiful history. I would like to open this newspaper up to you; if you feel inspired to submit writing to the newspaper, please do not hesitate! Is there a topic that you are particularly passionate about? Do you have opinions that must be expressed? Do you want to research and then present your findings to an audience? Are you searching for information on campus events? Send us your writing, and we will happily welcome you into our community! Writing and publishing as a group is a beautiful process that I would like to honor and celebrate during my time as the Editor-in-Chief of The Youngtown Edition! In short, newspapers exist to inform, engage, and inspire – while keeping things professional and respectful. We are committed to supporting journalistic excellence built on integrity, fairness, and respect, ensuring our newspaper remains a positive and reliable presence on campus... and I want you to participate in upholding this beautiful mission!

Please contact us at youngtown-media@student.ccm.edu for more information.



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Punk's not dead — at least, not in New Jersey

LOGAN CONNOLLY

Staff Writer

From house shows in New Brunswick to punk shows at Montclair's Meatlocker, the punk scene in New Jersey is thriving. Cynics say the punk scene is dead, but ask a punk, and they'll surely set the record straight.

Billy Kasper, a dance major and business minor at Montclair State University, frequents local punk shows in northern New Jersey. "You have to support your community when art is being created," said Kasper. "Supporting your friends is important, even if you don't necessarily enjoy the genre."

Community support is a foundation of the flourishing underground scene. Informal gathering spaces allow communities to flourish. A big one for New Jersey punks is the Meatlocker, a venue that provides punks a

place to collect and connect with like-minded individuals.

The atmosphere is comparable to that of CBGB's, sans the bar. It's gritty, loud, and communal. Stickers and graffiti cover the walls, and the smell of sweat hangs in the air.

Jumping off stages, moshing, and screaming lyrics are a couple of ways Kasper actively participates in his scene. "It's a rush," he said. "I've never been religious. I never followed God. I did not like Catholic school. But when an artist I admire gets on stage, I feel like I'm at church. It's as if they're a preacher. It totally feels religious," said Kasper.

The religious feeling Kasper describes is not a unique one. When in a collection of people, united by common beliefs and interests, it's impossible to deny the religious parallels. A well-attended show, led by an impassioned front-person, is sermon-like. In many religious settings, it is encour-

aged for one to love thy neighbor; the punk scene is no different. Lifelong friendships are made at these underground shows.

Lydia Hyde, 20, of High Bridge, New Jersey is a loyal supporter of her friend's bands. She shows up to every show and always cheers her heart out. "It makes me feel good showing up to support my friends," said Hyde. "It's like — wow! Someone came to support me! It makes me happy to be there to comfort my friends when they perform." Hyde expanded upon this, saying her own experiences of performing have made her realize the value of seeing a familiar face in the crowd. Even if only five people show up to a house show, one's friend being one of those faces is an instant confidence booster. "A lot of the people I see look and dress like me," said Hyde, "They share the same values and political opinions, which is refreshing. It's cool to be in a place where I fit in."

Even in alternative scenes, the human desire to find community is universal.

Jesse Sayner, 20, a psychology major at Montclair State University frequents local and touring shows in the tri-state area. "It's important to attend local shows because that's where every band starts out," Sayner said. "Without that, those bands would just stop playing and never get big." Sayner elaborated, explaining how every band starts somewhere. Nirvana, The Smashing Pumpkins, Pavement - they all started by playing small shows. Sayner is sure he has found the community where he belongs. "Seeing my friend Jack's band, Rotoscope, grow, get bigger, and better over time" has been formative for Sayner.

Ask a punk, any punk, and hear the same answer: Punk's not dead. And for those who claim otherwise, the roar of the next New Brunswick basement show might just prove them wrong.

Upcoming events on campus

Upcoming events:

Celebrate Constitution and Citizens Day (Today) – Celebrate with the Student Government Association for the Ballot Bowl Kickoff on Thursday, September 18, at 12:30pm, in the SCC Davidson Rooms.

SGA/SAPB Study Group – Wednesday, September 17, until 1pm, LRC Café

Suicide Awareness Event – Thursday, September 18, 12pm to 2:30pm, LRC Patio

Planetarium Show – Featured is a brand new show "Messengers of Time and Space." Visitors can get an in-depth look at how large telescopes are mapping the universe in unprecedented detail! Check out the free show in CCM's Planetarium, Thursday, September 18, 1:30pm, CH 207

SGA Ballot Bowl – Voter Registration Event on Thursday, September 18, 12:30pm, in the SCC Davidson Rooms

LGBTQ+ Be Yourself Presentation – Tuesday, September 23, 1pm, in the LRC Café

Donuts With The Deans – De-stress, ask any questions and get FREE food with the Deans on Wednesday, September 24, 4:00 to 5:30pm, in the LRC Café

SAPB Open Mic – Come perform or enjoy snacks and listen to some great entertainment on Tuesday, September 30, 6pm to 9pm, in the SCC Lobby

Club Meetings:

InterVarsity Christian Fellowship – Wednesday, September 17, 12:30pm, SCC Lobby

Trading Card Game Club – Wednesday, September 17, 12:30pm to 5:30pm, SCC Lobby

Business Society Meeting – Thursday, September 18, 12:30pm, CH 124

Chess Club Meeting – Thursday, September 18, 12:30pm, SCC

Debate Society Meeting – Thurs-

day, September 18, 12:30pm, DH 251

Student Activities Programming Board Meeting – Thursday, September 18, 12:30pm, CH 100

Trading Card Game Club – Thursday, September 18, 12:30pm to 5:30pm, SCC Lobby

InterVarsity Christian Fellowship – Monday, September 22, 12:30pm, SCC Lobby

Chess Club Meeting – Monday, September 22, 12:30pm, SCC

Chess Club Meeting – Tuesday, September 23, 12:30pm, SCC

InterVarsity Christian Fellowship – Tuesday, September 23, 12:30pm, SCC Lobby

Photo Club Meeting – Tuesday, September 23, during college hour in DH 210

Student Government Association Meeting – Tuesday, September 23, 12:30pm, DH 118

Trading Card Game Club – Tuesday, September 23, 12:30pm to

5:30pm, SCC Lobby

Athletics - Come to a Game and Support the Titans:

Women's Volleyball CCM vs. Delaware Tech – Wednesday, September 17, 6pm, HPE Gym

Men's Soccer CCM vs. Northampton – Saturday, September 27, 12pm, Soccer Field

Men's Soccer CCM vs. Brookdale – Tuesday, September 30, 4pm, Soccer Field

Resources:

Food Resources: Need Groceries, Meals or Snacks? – Visit <https://www.ccm.edu/student-support/center-for-student-wellbeing/resources/>

Tutoring & Academic Support – <https://www.ccm.edu/student-support/tutoring-academic-support/>

- o Math Center
- o Science Center
- o Writing Center



PHOTO BY DENISE BOUVIER

Vendor tents and fairgoers fill the sidewalk on Main Street in Succasunna, New Jersey, at the town's annual street fair.

Olde Suckasunny Day festival spotlights community spirit

DENISE BOUVIER
Features Editor

Community spirit radiated once again at the annual Olde Suckasunny Day street festival in Succasunna, New Jersey, held Saturday, Sept. 6. Volunteers representing multiple civic, school and religious organizations lined Main Street under pop-up canopies, while live performances replaced traffic with family-friendly entertainment on the closed-off street.

Food available for purchase along with homespun games for children were aplenty, giving opportunity to monetarily support the many nonprofit clubs and religious organizations in attendance. The aroma from grilled sausages and peppers prepared by volunteer members of the Roxbury Rotary Club filled the air. Parishioners from the Succasunna United Methodist Church fired up their grills to fill orders for hamburgers and hot dogs. Tables of homemade baked goods were sprinkled throughout the sidewalk, with candy serving as prizes for participating in the multitude of kid-friendly games.

Roxbury's uniformed firefighters, EMTs and first responders

who are all exclusively volunteer-staffed, had their trucks parked along the street. The Roxbury Public Library enlisted helpers to offer free crafts for children and a free Zumba class for the adults. Local businesses were present, and vendor booths shared the space for those looking for a shopping experience. Local government officials made themselves available to engage with attendees.

"It's a gathering for the community, and it's been going on for 37 years," said Fred Hall, current councilman and former mayor of the township. "It started out as a very, very small street fair, and it's grown into this. And over the years it's gotten bigger and better. We've gotten more vendors, more people getting involved, and it's become a real community event."

The festival, open to the public, kicked off at 10:00 a.m. at the library's gazebo with an American flag salute and the Pledge of Allegiance led by Boy Scout Troop 54 and Girl Scout Troop 98652. Roxbury Mayor Shawn Potillo welcomed the large crowd followed by the Roxbury High School Marching Gaels' performance of this year's competitive show in front of the

First Presbyterian Church of Succasunna.

The church acted as center stage for the entertainment portion of the street fair, including routines performed by local dance schools and gymnastic teams. Members of Master Lim's Taekwondo from Succasunna, New Jersey, concluded the lineup by showcasing a martial arts demonstration.

The Rev. Tim Clarkson referred to his church as the quarterback of the event and referenced its commitment to live into their mission statement of partnering with the community. Clarkson embraced the opportunity to look around the festival to see so many people coming out to appreciate children participation and the community joining together for a day of fun.

Community involvement was happening well before the event took place. As long-standing neighbors that share the Main Street address, volunteers from the SUMC and the library joined the Presbyterian church in spearheading and promoting the annual festival.

Dana Dyrness-Haughey, one of the coordinators and member of the Olde Suckasunny Day Planning Committee, volunteered her time to

blueprint the event while also acting as a representative for the church. "We coordinate all of the entertainment on Main Street and all of the vendors and crafters who are in our parking lot," Dyrness-Haughey said. "We all pitch in with the overall stuff, so I was helping with publicity, getting advertising out in certain areas, posting banners and working with different town organizations."

For Carla Dexter, a longtime resident of Succasunna, New Jersey, attending Olde Suckasunny Day with her son Logan has become a tradition which he loves. And while he enjoys looking around while reveling in all the snack options, Dexter views the festival through an alternate lens. "I attend because it's a good way to connect with the community, to see what the community has to offer," she said. "It's so nice to see so many people doing so many things in the community. It's eye opening."

The festival will return next September along with the return of the popular dunk tank that generates additional funds for the community. "I am the king of the dunk tank," Hall said. "I've been in the dunk tank every year it's been here, and I will continue to do it."

OPINION: The importance of keeping up with yourself

ASHAYLA RIVERA SOLIS

Staff Writer

Although it's been only 4 weeks into the fall semester, it still feels off adjusting to a new routine as a college freshman straight out of high school. That may not be the specific case for all students here at CCM. Whether we're new to the school life routine or used to it. There's one thing I feel many of us leave last in our to-do list: taking care of ourselves. As silly as it may seem to us, it should be one of our top priorities.

Why self-care should be a priority

For starters, neglecting self-care doesn't just affect mood – it directly impacts academic performance, mental health, and overall long-term well-being. According to a survey by United Health Care, 77% of college students reported either they or a friend had encountered at least one behavioral or mental health concern in the past year; stress or anxiety was reported by 55%, depression by 41%,

and suicidal ideation by 13%.

Starting college or being in college is a major life transition. A study published by the PIT Journal found that among first-year students, more than half reported moderate to severe anxiety. Stress levels were high, ~64% of freshmen scored in ranges indicating moderate stress. Lack of coping strategies, poor sleep quality, and negative emotions like fear or anger were linked with higher stress.

Moreover, loneliness and isolation are common: in a survey of about 1,100 U.S. college students, almost 65% felt lonely, and ~29% reported severe psychological distress. I'm not sure about you, but to be honest, I've been there. Times get tough, but you can't build anything without a base. We need to get back in the loop and start by taking care of ourselves. The investment for a brighter future starts with YOU.

What students lose when they don't keep up with themselves

Academic decline: Stress, anxiety, and poor sleep reduce concentra-

tion, memory, and the ability to learn. When our mental health suffers, our grades often can suffer too.

Physical Health Problems: Sleep deprivation, poor diet, lack of exercise, and immune system weakening. These can snowball over time. Why not prevent it now?

Burnout & Emotional Exhaustion: Without a fair amount of rest, self-reflection, and boundaries, many students can feel exhausted, overwhelmed, or even depressed.

Long-term effects: Habits formed early on often are the ones that stay for the long run. Neglecting self-care now can lead to chronic stress, worse mental health, or more serious consequences.

What self-care looks like (and how to do it)

If you made it this far, here are some concrete ways to start putting self-care at the top of your to-do list.

1. Sleep!! – As much as you make yourself believe it isn't necessary, it is. Your trusty Celsius won't be able to keep you up all your life. Aim for a consistent schedule; avoid all-nighters (for those who can't.) Sleeping 7-8 hours can make a HUGE difference in focus and mood.

2. Physical Activity – Even a light exercise like walking around campus, on your free time, or even stretching can help reduce stress; it helps reduce endorphins (a hormone in our body that can act as a pain reliever and mood boosters!).

3. Time Management – Plan ahead, break your work into smaller

tasks, use a planner (I personally use Google Calendar and Notion!) This can help you feel things less overwhelming.

4. Social Connection – Stay in touch with friends/family, join clubs, do things with classmates help reduce overall loneliness. (I'm still working on that but nowadays everyone seems to want to be left alone.) There's no harm in asking how your parent(s)/siblings or long-distance friends are once in a while!

5. Mental Health Resources – Make use of the counseling center here at CCM if necessary or try downloading an app to try meditating! You need to breathe a little, you know?

6. Take a break – Even as little as being able to catch up on sleep, calling a day off at work, or taking a long shower can help you refresh your brain and give some time for yourself to just be. Not everything has to be a leap into the unknown, baby steps.

College can be challenging, and neither is it less time-consuming at times. New expectations, new people. It is easy to let everything but academic work, homework, social life slide. But self-care isn't optional or shouldn't be – it's foundational. When you take time to care for your mental and physical health, everything becomes much more attainable: brighter moods, better grades, stronger relationships and simply a better grasp of life. If you can put yourself nearer to the top of your to-do list, even just a little every day, you'll be better off not just this semester, but in all that follows. Don't forget yourself, you're your priority.

THE YOUNGTOWN EDITION

The Student Newspaper of the County College of Morris

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All students are welcome to contribute articles to The Youngtown Edition either in person or via e-mail. However, students cannot receive a byline if they belong to the organization on which they are reporting. The deadline for articles is the Monday prior to a production.

The Many Sketches of I

By Isabel L. Stearns

*When morning calls my dreary mind
And yesterday's been left behind,
I'll peer through a looking glass and find,
That my appearance has been, re-lined.*

*I'll think of how my soul will soar,
So different than it was before.
As if my old mind had been torn
And built anew yet much, much more.*

*But yet on 'morrow morning still,
Once again my thoughts will fill
Of how my heart will change until,
My soul itself makes up its will.*

*Yet oh the people I could be!
If my heart was but yet set free.
Oh how soon that I would see,
How many ways I could be me.*

OPINION: The fabric of fashion is fraying the Earth

MARIANA SIMIONI

Staff Writer

At County College of Morris, the fashion conversation is shedding its polyester past for a sustainable makeover. The once-whiplash rhythm of fast fashion trends is slowing as students increasingly opt for sustainability over shopping hauls.

"Many of our fashion students feel that fast fashion is a great concern—they recognize the harmful effects not only to the environment but also the social ladder," said Professor Kelly Whalen, chair of the Department of Design and Media Studies at CCM. "Younger generations are starting to recognize quality over quantity."

The numbers back them up, but more importantly, so does the rack at their local thrift store. As awareness of fashion's environmental impact grows, students are turning away from brands like H&M and Zara in favor of second-hand shops and sustainable alternatives. The shift isn't only aesthetic—it's ethical. And in many cases, it's also a way of reclaiming identity through style, rather than subscribing to the one-size-fits-all algorithm of Instagram fashion.

"I think the mindset of thrifting is interesting," Whalen said. "Students are becoming smarter realizing that a lot of times through consignment and thrifting they have access to more affordable, better-quality, environmentally conscious garments."

Still, fast fashion has a way of sweet-talking people with the siren song of online sales and next-day shipping.

"It's hard," said Madeline Taipei, a radiography major at CCM. "You know what the right choice is, but then you see a brand online drop a sale and there's 10 things you want for under \$40. It's tempting."

Whalen understands this dilemma.

"I often find that students still support businesses like Shein and H&M," said Whalen. "You fall victim to those price points and trends."

And the cycle continues: full carts, empty wallets and closets filled with clothes that unravel after one wash—a sartorial version of buyer's remorse.

"I used to think buying clothes on sale was just smart shopping," Taipei said. "Now I realize if it's that cheap, someone [or something] is probably getting exploited."

The cost of a \$5 crop top doesn't just show up on the buyer's debit card. According to the United Nations Environment Programme, the fashion industry contributes approximately 10% of global carbon emissions—more than international flights and maritime shipping combined annually.

The industry also consumes an estimated 93 billion cubic meters of water each year and produces roughly 20% of the world's wastewater, primarily from textile dyeing.

Synthetic fibers like polyester and nylon, staples of fast fashion, are derived from fossil fuels and take hundreds of years to decompose. According to the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, more than 60% of clothing materials are synthetic, and only 1% of garments are recycled into new clothing.

"We know that through manufacturing and creation of fabric there's leaching properties," Whalen explained. "For example, rayon and polyester are oil-based fabrics, and when they become wet or you sweat it in, those chemical elements leach into your body. Your skin is the largest organ."

It's not what someone wears — it's what's wearing on them.

"When doing testing, they'll check for flammability; they'll check for toxicity," Whalen said.

"I'm sure these fabricators are well aware of the effects, but they're never going to publish a report that discredits or discounts what they're doing."

At CCM, education is part of the solution. Fashion design and fashion merchandising students are taught to evaluate garment construction and fabric types as part of their curriculum. A better understanding of the life cycle of a piece of clothing is the first step toward reshaping the system that made it.

"We definitely implement steps for students to evaluate garments," Whalen said. "Learning about the structure of clothing is crucial."

Beyond the classroom, the reality of fashion consumption continues to evolve. The average consumer now purchases 60% more clothing than in 2000 but keeps each item for half as long, according to a report by McKinsey & Company. The Environmental Protection Agency estimates Americans discard approximately 80 pounds of clothing per person each year. Globally, the fashion industry produces an estimated 92 million tons of textile waste annually. Most of that waste isn't biodegradable. It's either burned—releasing greenhouse gases—or buried in landfills that leach dyes and toxins into the soil and groundwater. A 2023 Greenpeace Germany report found that 96% of garments from major fast fashion brands were made from synthetic materials. Many of the items tested failed basic durability benchmarks, including seam strength.

Beyond environmental damage, the human cost of fast fashion remains staggering.

The Roundup, a sustainable living publication, reported in 2023 that 93% of brands surveyed do not pay garment workers a living wage. In factories located in Bangladesh, Vietnam and China, workers—many of them women

and minors—often earn as little as \$3 per day. Working conditions are frequently unsafe, with few labor protections and long hours.

Whalen said she hopes to see more industry oversight in the next five to 10 years.

"Ideally there'll be more regulations with the material and how it's manufactured," Whalen said. "We still hear of sweatshops. There's still a lot of child labor happening, low-wage positions—even at the most grotesque level of designer wear." Experts argue that while consumer awareness matters, it's not enough to fix a broken industry. Stronger laws and corporate transparency are needed.

In 2022, New York lawmakers proposed the Fashion Sustainability and Social Accountability Act. The bill would require fashion companies with global revenues over \$100 million to map at least 50% of their supply chain and disclose environmental and social impact. Noncompliance would result in financial penalties. Despite strong support from labor unions, environmental groups, and some fashion brands, the bill ultimately stalled in the state legislature, hindered by the challenges of enforcing such sweeping transparency in a notoriously complex and opaque industry.

"Consumers shouldn't have to play detective every time they shop," Taipei said. "Transparency should be the norm, not the exception."

Until broader legislation is enacted, sustainability advocates recommend shopping second-hand, repairing garments, avoiding impulse purchases and supporting brands with ethical practices. While these choices may lack the immediate allure of a flash sale, they offer long-term benefits for both wardrobes and the environment. In fashion, every purchase is a stitch in the future—careless or considered, disposable or deliberate.

REVIEW: *The Seventh Seal*, directed by Ingmar Bergman

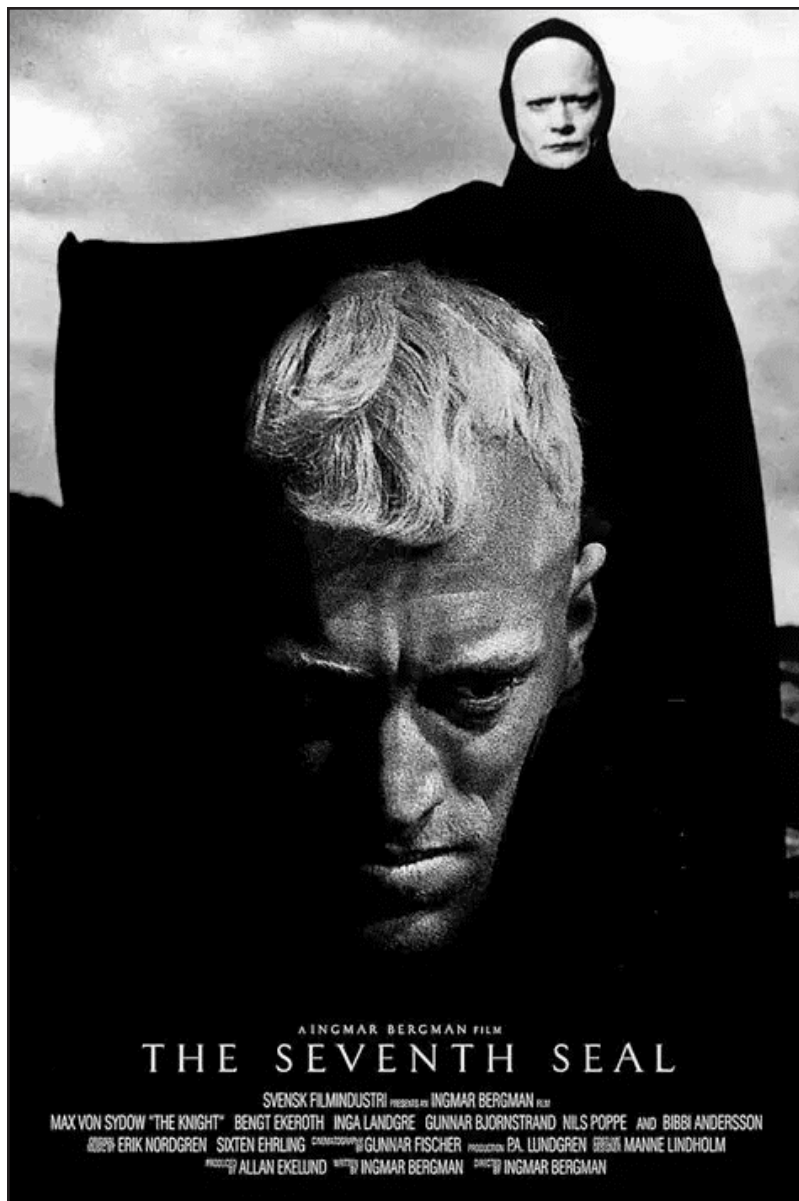
BY SARA LIM

Editor-in-Chief

The *Seventh Seal*, like much of creation, begins in darkness. Erik Nordgren's score reverberates, and rises, reaching up towards the ashen sky, illuminated in a flash of light. Immediately, there is a sense of religious awe, as an invisible choir chants "Dies Irae" {Latin for "Day of Wrath," a traditional hymn sung in a Requiem Mass} over a dissonant chord. Bergman creates a stark monochrome vignette, drained of life and color; slate-grey water laps at the cragged shore, the sky above smudged with dark shadows. The opening shots of the film introduce the film's dominant dichotomy; light constructs meaning from its opposition to darkness, life constructs meaning from its opposition to death. A disembodied voice fragments the silence, proclaiming, "And when the Lamb had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour. And the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound." Thus, Bergman begins his film {described by some as a "medieval morality play"} with an exploration of silence, both physical and metaphorical, introducing the leitmotif that will haunt both his characters and him throughout the work, that of the silence of heaven, the proverbial silence of God, "mere nothingness, mere absence...terrifying...the void."

Just as Death plays a complex game of chess with the Knight, Bergman skillfully constructs a fable in which each of the characters represents a philosophy, an interpretation of the age-old question... what is our relationship to God? How does the heavenly silence that permeates existence illustrate the connection between the spiritual realm and our own? With "the same objective interest, tenderness and joy," of a church muralist recreating tales of long bygone eras, Bergman constructs an elaborate story to address such existential questions through his character's journeys. A disheartened Knight returns to his native country

following a ten-year Crusade, only to discover a land ravaged by disease, devoid of all humanity, and poisoned to the very core by the violence of retribution. Ironically, his religious journey has not provided a response to his pleas; he is spiritually and physically abandoned in dangerous surroundings, hopelessly raising his prayers to some power above, desperately desiring redemption, ascension, and, ultimately, salvation. In his introductory depiction of the Knight, Bergman chooses a deliberately theatrical staging; Max von Sydow, as Antonius Block the Knight, half-lies on boulders, dressed in vaguely anachronistic armor, sword in hand, his gleaming eyes upturned. By him, precariously balanced on a rock, Bergman places a chessboard, its pieces stark against the somber surroundings. It is unclear how or why the Knight has appeared on the edge of the ocean, just as it is unclear whether his eyes reflect a flicker of life or are as lifeless as the crags around him. His eyes focus as he rises and immediately falls to his knees to pray, a soft light illuminating his face and his clasped hands. As the camera pans to the right, the audience once again sees the fated chessboard, laid out as if waiting for the arrival of an opponent. This arrival occurs soon after; the Knight raises his eyes to see something above the camera lens, and, unable to stop himself, utters "Vem är du?" "Who are you?" A gaunt, robed figure that seems to consist only of a ghastly face and billowing smoke glares at him from above. "Jag är Döden," it calmly responds. "I am Death." The Knight, in hopes of saving a life he understands is doomed from the beginning, offers Death a compromise — he will play a game of chess in exchange for time to continue his search for the one true meaning. Death obliges. Their contest, an echo of Swedish medieval painter Albertus Pictor's painting Death playing chess {Döden spelar schack}, which served as a central inspiration for the film, continues throughout the film, imbuing the journey with a sense of urgency and the Knight with a sense



of purpose. As the Knight and his faithful Squire adventure through the desolate lands, they strive to define their fundamental bond to death, the afterlife, and whatever mystical power controls their fates. In their search, they encounter a simpler approach to existence, displayed by Jof, Mia, and their Christ-like son Mikael, a traveling troupe of theater actors and musicians. While an intrinsically doomed expedition, it serves as a way for Bergman to reconsider and explore his own relationship with faith and the modern world. In the words of Ingmar Bergman, "In my film, the Knight comes back from a crusade, as in our time, a soldier returns from war. In the Middle Ages, men lived in terror of the

plague; today, we live in terror of the atom bomb. The *Seventh Seal* is an allegory whose theme is very simple: man, his eternal search for God, with death as the only certitude."

Chess, displayed through repeated imagery, also serves to define each of the film's archetypal characters. Painted in tones of white, grey, and black, the chessboard serves as a setting for the proverbial conflict between darkness and light, life and death. The Knight plays the traditional role of King in the chess game {distinguished by his cross}, important but hopelessly tied to his powerlessness, while Jof, the juggler, is the Knight {referred to, in Swedish,

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SEAL

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as springare, or the ‘leaper’}, in constant movement and wielding the freedom allowed him by spiritual and physical agility. Both have visions that reach beyond reality, and, thus, have the autonomy to ‘rise above the board’ they exist within, the former through the figurative ‘castling’ {a metaphor for return, finding shelter} and the latter through unconventional movement patterns. In their moment of death, all the pieces {or characters} ascend from the confines of the board, for the first time seeing beyond it into whatever the afterlife holds. Ultimately, Death robs us of our roles; Death jumbles the chessmen back into the box, to an uncertain fate.

Uncertainty dictates the Knight’s experience. As proposed in the first line of the film, “silence” defines humanity’s experience with heavenly undercurrents. Bergman introduces three central interpretations of divine silence, belonging to the Knight, the Squire, and the Juggler. The Knight is shackled by the promise of uncertainty, searching for God within all things, in the eyes of a witch, in the darkness that surrounds his every move, in the devastation brought about by the plague... to no avail. While the knight never proves the certainty of God, he never fully rejects God either, even if he might desire to do so. “Why can I not kill God within me? Why does He go on living in this painful, humiliating way? I want to tear Him out of my heart, but He remains a mocking reality that I cannot shake off,” he confesses in a hurried whisper. This silence provides no absolutes, instead gleaming as an eternal question mark upon his soul. The Knight is a fascinating depiction of how the search for certainty abandons a person in intellectual limbo; just like all of mankind, he may not have certainty that God exists, but, equally so, does not have certainty that God does not exist.

Certainty dictates the Squire’s experience. The Squire interprets the silence of God as not a mark of uncertainty, but, instead, a clear indication of abandonment. In his eyes, the silence speaks. This conclusion is illustrated through a fable-like scene in the film — embarking on their journey, the two characters encoun-

ter a minuteman sitting by the edge of the road. The Squire asks the man for directions, only to realize that he is speaking to a corpse — the dead man’s eye sockets glare at him with the intensity of fate itself. The Knight asks the Squire why the man was so quiet, proposing that he is “mute,” to which the Squire replies, “No, he was quite eloquent.” This perfectly demonstrates the dichotomy of their faith; while the Knight views the silence of the heavens as something to be questioned and explored further, the Squire considers it an eloquent rejection of all faithfulness. This silence cements absolutes, concluding his soul-searching with a distinct period.

This certainty is counterposed by that exhibited by the Juggler. While the Knight and the Squire find the universe to be a black void of silence, the Juggler witnesses heavenly visions that fill the void of silence with meaning. In his visions, he glimpses the figure of Mary frolicking alongside Jesus, a scene reflecting the relationship he has with his wife and their child. Most curiously, he explains that once Mary and the Child disappear, there is “great stillness, in Heaven and on Earth,” showing another interpretation of the omnipresence of divine silence; while silence is interpreted as uncertainty {by the Knight} and as absence of God {by the Squire}, here silence represents a serenity and certainty that mirrors something heavenly. The Juggler sees silence as an exclamation point, reaffirming his faith. After all, if the Devil is in the details, then perhaps God exists within the amorphousness afforded by vagueness within the silence.

The Knight sees silence as a question mark. The Squire sees silence as a period. The Juggler sees silence as an exclamation point. Death, too, exists within the shadows of silence.

While the perpetual plague of philosophical paradigms haunts each character individually and collectively, the vague presence of something Other stalks them with increasing vehemence — Death. It appears both thematically {through the ravages of plague and war, as well as the violence of a society searching for whom to blame} and physically {in the form of a mysterious robed figure}. Death closes in where God is forgotten, banished, or discarded,

replacing the void of nothingness with tangible terror. In his desperate search for meaning, the Knight questions a woman condemned to death for witchcraft, demanding that she summon Satan so that he can ask him about the essence of God. Peering into the woman’s eyes in search of something to hold onto, the Knight meets nothingness. As the fire encroaches, the Squire proclaims, “Look at her eyes. Her poor brain has just made a discovery. Emptiness in the darkness.” Here, the emptiness functions as a metaphor for God’s abandonment of his creations, and the darkness references the quickly approaching promise of death. Instead of God, he glimpses only the shadow of Death. Furthermore, the Squire sees the poor girl as a representation of all of humanity, saying, “We stand helpless, arms at our sides, for we see what she sees, and her terror is ours.” This terror is further elevated through Bergman’s depiction of Death as an anthropomorphized creation which physically manifests within his world. The choice to portray Death as a cloaked figure with a discernible face is fascinating; Bergman allows his audience to identify some sense of recognition {human-to-human} while still withholding enough to terrorize. Death’s face is familiar... and yet it, devoid of color, dimension, or emotion, is simply a mask, perhaps an illusionary way in which Death becomes tangible to humankind.

The Knight attempts to embody the Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard’s interpretation of faithfulness, referred to as the Knight of Faith, to become a person who has taken a “leap of faith,” fully committing to a relationship with God without relying on logical proofs or societal validations, and existing simultaneously within irrational bounds of logic and rational bounds of morality. He is a metaphorical representation of Ingmar Bergman’s inner struggle with the irrationality of faith. Yet, this religious doubt is tinged in fear. In his confession, the Knight muses, “Is it so cruelly inconceivable to grasp God with the senses? Why should He hide himself in a mist of half-spoken promises and unseen miracles? ...What is going to happen to those of us who want to believe but aren’t able to?” Ultimately, Bergman found a response, perhaps a path to worship, or perhaps a path to certainty in doubt. From the very beginning, his relationship to reli-

gion was tied to art and depictions of faith which would echo throughout his filmography later in life; “While father preached away in the pulpit and the congregation prayed, sang, or listened,” Ingmar wrote in his autobiography *Laterna Magica*, “I devoted my interest to the church’s mysterious world of low arches, thick walls, the smell of eternity, the colored sunlight quivering above the strangest vegetation of medieval paintings and carved figures on ceilings and walls. There was everything that one’s imagination could desire—angels, saints, dragons, prophets, devils, humans...” Just as storytelling traditions of mythology and folklore have historically served as humankind’s method of grappling with the unknown, Bergman channels his desire for knowledge into his work. “My beings laugh, weep, howl, fear, speak, answer, play, suffer, ask, ask. Their terror is the plague, Judgment Day, the star whose name is Wormwood. Our fear is of another kind but our words are the same. Our question remains,” he writes. As a child attending church, he lost himself within the world illustrated on the walls. “In a wood sat Death, playing chess with the Crusader. Clutching the branch of a tree was a naked man with staring eyes, while down below stood Death, sawing away to his heart’s content. Across gentle hills, Death led the final dance towards the dark lands,” he describes. These images echo through *The Seventh Seal*; the film is a recreation of the church that Bergman sat in as a child, profoundly connected to his relationship with God. Bergman viewed himself as the Artist in the Cathedral, his creativity fundamentally intertwined with his faith, both in humanity and in some spiritual power outside of it, describing himself as a medieval church painter, illustrating the endless complexities of belief. Even after his personal struggles with faith, Bergman often signed his scripts with the initials ‘S.D.G’ (Soli Deo Gloria) — “To God Alone the Glory” — just as J. S. Bach did at the end of every musical composition. I close with Bergman’s illustration of his vision: “Thus, if I am asked what I would like the general purpose of my films to be, I would reply that I want to be one of the artists in the cathedral on the great plain. [...] Regardless of whether I believe or not, whether I am a Christian or not, I would play my part in the collective building of the cathedral.”

College students sound off on early MVP candidates in the NFL

BY JACOB LEIBOWITZ
Sports Editor

The Associated Press Most Valuable Player, which is awarded to the best player in the NFL, is given out by the AP, which is made up of 50 different national media members.

Marko Vasillic is an engineering major from Jefferson Township who attends the New Jersey Institute of Technology. Vasillic is a big-time football fan and has input on who he thinks should win the MVP. "I'm a big-time Denver Broncos fan, so I don't want to say it, but Lamar Jackson should add another trophy to his trophy case," Vasillic said. "He has so much dual threat ability, and it requires so much game plan and it's too hard to stop."

Jackson is the dual threat quarterback for the Baltimore Ravens,

drafted pick #30 in the 2018 NFL Draft. Jackson has won his fair share of rewards in the past, including the 2016 and 2017 Heisman trophies, which is the MVP award of college football. In 2019, Jackson won MVP in his sophomore season in the NFL and won again in 2023. Jackson is coming off a successful season, recording a total of 5,087 total all-purpose yards, but ultimately he may fall short of the award to Buffalo Bills star Josh Allen.

Dwane Moncion is an electrical engineering major from Jefferson Township also attending NJIT. Moncion has a lot of insight from following a lot of football throughout the years. "I love watching Josh Allen, his tall and big frame with that cannon of an arm," Moncion said. "Allen is just a freak of an athlete, and he is the reigning NFL MVP. Allen can do whatever

he wants without [the help of] an amazing team, so that's what I think."

Allen is the quarterback of the Buffalo Bills and the 2025 reigning MVP. He finished with 4,262 yards and 40 touchdowns. Allen is another dual threat quarterback; he brought his Bills to the conference championship but ultimately fell short to the great Kansas City Chiefs, led by quarterback Patrick Mahomes. After winning his first MVP, the star earned himself a massive contract extension. Allen will try and earn himself his second MVP and his first Super Bowl victory.

Brandon Cabrera is a sports management major from Sparta Township who currently attends St. John Fisher University. Cabrera is a running back for the Fisher football team and lifelong Dallas Cowboys fan. "I may be a big-time Cowboy

fan, but I am a running back," he said. "So, I must give my flowers to Saquan Barkley. Barkley is coming off one of the best running back seasons of all time and should've had a shot at winning himself an MVP."

Barkley is the starting running back for the powerhouse Philadelphia Eagles. Barkley was let go by the New York Giants, and the Eagles jumped right on the train and gave Barkley an offer he couldn't decline. Barkley broke the Eagles' single season rushing record by a total of 398 yards. He recorded 2,005 yards and finished third in the MVP voting behind Jackson. Barkley recently earned himself a massive contract extension with his record-breaking season. Adrian Peterson was the last non-quarterback to receive the MVP award back in 2012, and Barkley looks to change that this season.



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