Editor’s Note

The Editors before me have duly noted that the name of this journal, *Parnassus*, was inspired by the mountain of the same name still standing tall in the storied land of Central Greece. In ancient times, it was thought that inside Mt. Parnassus dwelt the nine muses, inspirations for Homer, Vergil, and indeed all future authors. The aim of this journal is to provide a second home for those nine Muses, here on Mount St. James.

In this fourth edition of *Parnassus*, the members of the editorial board, composed exclusively of undergraduate students at the College, have selected pieces that deepen our understanding of the classical world, how that world interacts with our past, and how it continuously shapes our present. All of these pieces stem from the Holy Cross community, spanning departments and degrees, including various voices from each class year, both in poetry and in prose.

The theme of this fourth edition is *Persona*. An informal understanding of *persona* might supply the synonyms of “character” or “role.” In fact, antiquity’s understanding of the word was situated within the theatre. *Persona*, literally meaning in Latin “a sounding through,” denoted the mask through which an actor on stage would voice his character. *Persona* ultimately can be traced back to the Greek word πρόσωπον. Though literally meaning “a looking through,” the Greek word also meant “mask.”

I would be remiss here if I did not mention that the word *persona* has a special place at the College of the Holy Cross, a Catholic institution. The Christian tradition transformed the meaning of *persona* into something sacred, calling the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit of the Trinity each a *persona*. Insofar as we too as a Catholic community believe that we are in the image of God, we are each in command of our own *persona*. The result of this theology over the course of the last two hundred years has been staggering. Perhaps no word has had a greater impact on the universal struggle for human rights than *persona*. Today, we can see this most clearly in the “Universal Declaration for Human Rights” drafted by the United Nations General Assembly on December 10, 1948, within which the rights and liberty of each individual are completely wrapped up within the language of “person” and “personhood.” It would not be a stretch to say that the language of this struggle has its roots at the theatre in Athens some 2,500 years ago.
To return to that sacred mount in Greece, Mt. Parnassus can be seen through the special lens of *persona*. Mt. Parnassus has stood for thousands of years, stretching the course of human history and witnessing famous events of our collective past. Each façade frames a different perspective, which in turn recounts a different drama.

Steep on its southern slope clutching the bare rock of Mt. Parnassus, the ruins of Delphi cling as a testament to its illustrious past as the hub of the world, cradle of alliances, and major tourist attraction for centuries. To the east of those oracular ruins the modern village of Arachova pays tribute to Delphi’s touristic legacy as a popular ski town. On that very slope in 1826 C.E., the Greek Georgios Karaiskakis defeated the Ottomans in pursuit of independence for the modern Greek state. Still further south and to the east on the foothills of the mountain range, the Greeks at the small town of Distomo suffered one of the worst massacres in World War II at the hands of the Waffen-SS, with over two hundred men, women, and children killed. In short, Mt. Parnassus has witnessed the glorious crests and the grievous troughs of Greek civilization.

The *persona* of the mountain has changed over the years in the drama of history. And yet, those rocks are the very same rocks that the forefathers of Western Civilization transformed. This paradoxical relationship between permanence and change, essence and character, is precisely what an appreciation for the Classics realizes. The classicist knows all too well how the essence of it all remains the same – the mountainous bedrock of culture and literature and politics and love of life. Yet for each woman and man, the *persona* of this bedrock changes. Thus a nuanced understanding of the world arises from the study of Classics, which, from its unique perspective on history, acknowledges the human tragedies and challenges of the past, recognizes them in the present, and looks forward with hope for the future. Classical studies, then, provide an education of how to shape the *persona* of one’s society, one’s family, and ultimately oneself.

In some way or another, all seventeen featured pieces in this edition of the journal relate to the theme of *Persona*. The first section of this journal focuses on Lucan and his epic poem, the *Pharsalia*. On the cover of the journal, Maggie MacMullin ’16 depicted a lightning bolt striking a dilapidated tree, symbolizing Caesar’s defeat of Pompey. Though they were both great men of Rome, the so-called *summi viri*, each leader had a very different *persona*. The symbolism of the stricken tree is drawn from Book
1 of the *Pharsalia*. In that same vein, Corey Scannell ’18 won this year’s translation contest on *Pharsalia* 7.7-25, a passage that characterizes the dramatic *persona* of Pompey. Three pieces follow on Lucan’s poem, each of which investigates both the characters within the epic poem and the *persona* of Lucan within the larger context of epic poets.

A brief section on Horace and Ovid follows with a brilliant series of translated poems by former Editor-in-Chief Steven Merola ’16 and with “A Passage to Oblivion: Memory in *Odes* Book 2” by Claude Hanley ’18. The editorial board also for the first time accepted a piece of artwork featured inside the journal, “Dido” by Melissa Gryan ’18. This concludes our Latin half of the journal.

Michael Kelley ’18 kicks off our Greek focus of the journal with his essay “On the Tragic Tension of Actor and Spectator in the *Trachiniae*,” which also relates to the setting of the *persona* within the Greek tradition. This journal is also proud to feature an essay entitled “A Preliminary Analysis of Coincidentia in Euripidean Drama: The Case of *Hecuba*,” written by our very own Prof. John Manoussakis of the Philosophy Department. Although the editorial board of *Parnassus* will remain undergraduate, the board welcomes any pieces submitted by the larger Holy Cross community that deepens our understanding of the ancient world. Physics and philosophy double major Thomas Krueger ’16 also shows how an appreciation for the Classics reaches far beyond the hallways of Fenwick IV with his poem “Ancient Justice.” Similarly, English majors William Weir ’18 and Alexandra Larkin ’18 grace us with their poetic talent. Finally, Corey Scannell ’18 brings the journal to a close and across history with his essay “Spencer as Daedalus and Icarus: Art, Nature and Moderation in the *Faerie Queene*.”

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all who submitted to the journal and all who worked to make this edition possible. In a special way, I also thank all those who are committed to educating and providing a space for discussion and appreciation of the Classics. The following pages are a testament to your work.

Christopher Ryan
Editor-in-Chief