



Edge

VOLUME IV | SPRING 2015



On the Cover

Hot Spring in West Thumb
Geyser Basin, Yellowstone
National Park

KRISTINA MONTVILLE '14

The *Alumni Arts Review* is supported by
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Editor's Note | SANDS HALL

Within the pages of this handsome journal, Volume IV of the *F&M Alumni Arts Review*, you'll once again find photographs, poems, essays, paintings, and stories from alums who graduated as recently as last year, and from those who graduated in the 1950s; from some whose art is their vocation, and from those for whom it is a hobby; from those who earned their degrees before F&M became a coeducational institution, and from those who graduated from a college with an excellent recycling program.

| 2 | Each year, we ask interested alums to explore a particular theme. A big part of my job, as editor, is very close reading and viewing of the resultant work; these ideas can, at times, seem to both shape and mirror my own life. Our first year, it was TURNING POINTS, a marvelous metaphor for the grand experiment represented by the journal. Our second issue, DOORWAY, offered any number of "portals" as we continued to adapt and learn. During year three, SHIFT, I was amazed to find how often the word came into conversation, and how many shifts the year included.

By now, you'd think I'd know that this dense engagement with a particular word can affect a life perspective!

And so we come to EDGE, the theme of our current volume.

Brink. Verge. A line or a border at which a surface ends—or begins. The place where a horizon might open out, or a chasm drop down. The thin, sharp side of a weapon—or a tool. It can mean sharp, and keen, describing a voice or a perspective. There's also "edgy": work that challenges social norms, or reveals a darker side.

Once again, our alums responded to the theme in most thoughtful ways, and it was particularly difficult, this year, to decline some of these

submissions (which we must do, or each issue would be thicker than a *Webster's*). As you make (or edge!) your way through this volume, you'll find essays regarding online love and a scary fall, poems about a murder case, the loss of a father, and God. Stories take us to mythical Greece and contemporary Turkey, and along highways bounded by emotional as well as physical geography. You'll examine the shape of happiness and of seashells—and the power of objects.

Amongst dozens of images, you'll find skeletons and keys and landscapes both beautiful and austere. What edge might be represented by a child swinging? Or by a couple sitting side by side at two tables? Our gorgeous cover appears to depict one kind of edge, but check the inside front cover for its title: you'll be surprised.

It's difficult not to describe every piece selected for inclusion, as each one moved, inspired, troubled—demanded attention. As we made those decisions, and as I began to work on editing the poems, stories, and essays—as their authors and I exchanged two, four, sometimes as many as ten drafts—I realized, perhaps as a result of working so closely with these ideas, that I was a bit “on edge.”

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Which has made me quite conscious of the theme we might select for our fifth volume. We could choose JOY, or SATISFACTION, I suppose, but that leads me to ponder: aren't we often pulled to a work of art because of dissonance, the *un*-resolved (the desire that something *be* resolved), the danger, the, yes, *edge*?

What makes us step closer to a painting, replay a CD, return to a poem? Often it's the struggle *toward* SATISFACTION, or HAPPINESS, or the fact of having lost such a thing and the effort to find it—to recognize it—again that keeps us engaged. The clash of notes or intentions, the hope that we'll return to harmony, is part of what keeps us listening, reading, looking.

And so: EDGE. I hope you have a wonderful, and sometimes edge-y, time engaging with the pieces in this volume.



Icarus | FERN PAGANO TAVALIN '76

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Weathered | DONALD KANDEL '78



Life and Death at the Edge | DAVE NOBLE '52

Coming West

SYDNEY PIERCE '13

These mountains rise up
as my ancestors, raised on
pine and fire ash above an ocean
of a plain, ancient fog drifting like smoke
from hard scrub gullies.
Coming West feels like arriving
at the edge, a great border
beyond which—sky. A confrontation.
Coming West is a breaking
open.

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I don't believe
in God, but I believe he has been here
with his hands in the earth, I believe
I have enough of sadness.
Let me wash my face
in the ashes;
I come back here to mourn.



Off the Edge | NORM FESMIRE '64

The Mouth of the Snow Dragon

JEFFREY TRUBISZ '70

Those of us who roam the mountains have a saying borne out of experience:

“When bad things happen, they happen really, really fast.”

One cold March day in the White Mountains of New Hampshire, Ron, Jill, and I ascended Mt. Clay. A freight train wind roared above our heads, impossible to ignore, intruding on quiet thought and turning conversation into a shouting exercise. Rumbling howl, steady scream, gusty whoosh, it altered pitch but never curbed its insisting voice. The mountains seemed displeased by our presence.

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Elated at reaching the summit of the 5,533-foot peak, we endured the wind as we took in the dynamic view south to neighboring Mt. Washington. Swirling sheets of snow rose from the Great Gulf, an enormous ravine between the two peaks, even bigger than Burt Ravine, which had lurked beside us on the ascent. After celebrating with hot chocolate, we started down, with Ron leading, Jill last, and me in the middle. The chance arrangement probably saved my life.

Soon we came to two angled snow patches, brief interruptions in the maze of rocks. Both pitched to the left and down into Burt Ravine. Long white fingers, they were the only variables on the Jewell Trail's stony route and a welcome respite from balancing one's way with ski poles across the rocks. The vast majority of the route crossed boulder fields and icy tundra, so we'd opted not to carry ice axes—a “Law of Averages” decision that I've never forgotten.

The higher snow patch glistened and darkened as gusts propelled the clouds around us. We sensed the ravine's expanse, the snow dragon's frozen maw, lurking below, just beyond a low ridge. The wind punched and relented and punched again. I was ten steps behind Ron when a stronger gust heaved at me and I went from upright and striding to sliding face first down the slope, my nose and face plowing the snow's hard surface. My arms flailed and my legs seemed confused, curiously useless.

Behind and above, Jill's voice pierced the air; she'd seen me fall. I punched at the surface to gain purchase, but the ski poles encumbered my hands. My self-arrest training kicked in. I began to swing my legs around, trying to lurch to my feet while digging in with my hands. But my legs were askew, held in an invisible grip—in the fall, the crampons on my right boot had planted into the inside of my left knee and snagged in the cloth.

And I was gliding now, slowly gaining speed.

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A frustrated helplessness began to grow in me. My hands pounded the surface, seeking solidity, finding powder. The ravine's lip glittered with ice, getting closer. Going over would mean being airborne. My mind revealed no time-frozen moments, no swirling vortex showing me my past. There was only sick surprise. I could see it all too clearly: I'd go over the edge feet first, grabbing futilely, falling through space and down until I hit something solid.

Suddenly, Ron met me in a jarring collision. Hearing Jill's cry, he'd judged my descent and launched downslope to meet me. We both continued sliding a few feet, then stopped. Hearts pounding, we rested for a long moment while a cold updraft whipped over us. Twenty feet away, the mouth of the snow dragon yawned.

We moved carefully at first, not wanting to slide again, respecting the closeness of that sharp white rim. Snow plumes rose from the

ravine, seething and retreating. Jill called to us from the trail and we acknowledged.

Dull pain emanated from my left knee and I looked down to see my right foot nestled into my inner left knee, two crampon points there and blood on the wool pants. After getting disentangled, I stood carefully, testing the weight. The leg proved sturdy.

Several times we turned to measure the distance to the edge. The urge to move closer and peer over nagged at me, but I shuddered it away. Time to focus on the descent: once we reached the trailhead, a few miles of skiing awaited. Stepping carefully, heavily, we angled up and off the snow patch, joined Jill, and headed across another boulder field.

My knee bears two puncture scars from the crampons; the dragon's mouth left its mark.



Rough Around the Edges | TOM MUSANTE '80

Surfaces

DAVE TAYLOR '81

The water is deep here in Atlantic Canada's Bay of Fundy, often dropping several hundred feet not even a quarter mile from shore. An entire food chain swirls through the invisible canyons below, driven by the world's highest tides. Larger, inhabited islands form massive boundaries, and smaller specks of rock covered with plucky evergreens serve as landmarks that help us find our way.

We are hunters today in these cold blue waters, seeking ancient kin, hoping for a few seconds of proximity with creatures four times longer than our boat and weighing as much as a small house. Our search is for fin whales, the second largest whales in the world, reaching 70 feet in length and gliding somewhere beneath the same water we're skimming across. We're looking for a telltale spray of mist, a glimpse of a glistening back, or even better, a booming gasp of air as this enormous creature arches above the waves for a quick exhale and inhale.

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What we hope for most is a sense of connection with these great beasts, some proof that our intersection is more than random and is, perhaps, mutual in its curiosity. Ahead of us, knifing through the water at all angles, countless porpoise leave no doubt about this possibility. They are chasing herring, but as we ease up under low power they break off in ones and twos and circle the boat, just a few feet from our bow. One slows and tips his body to one side to get a better view of the creatures looking down at him. He loops around again, takes a breath, and shoots away with a thrust of his tail.

Yet his moment with us is the brief nexus we crave. He chose to come closer. He looked us in the eye. It was a wordless exchange, without fear, each of us safe in our own worlds, even as they aligned for just a

moment. It is the two surfaces—air and water—touching each other that allow this. On land, if a twenty-ton giant were to suddenly rise from the forest floor and pass within a few feet, most people would tremble or run. On the water, we peer into the infinite ocean and hope to glimpse a massive wild animal rising gracefully toward us.

The sun swings its arc and we spot our quarry, a large fin whale we'd seen earlier in the day, feeding on the swarming krill that draw the whales to this area. The krill are gone now, and our whale is on the move. We set a parallel course about 200 yards to his right, well beyond the 100-yard limit inside which it is illegal to approach a whale.

A whale can be hard to track; it moves in three dimensions, while we can only move in two. Our boat's motor drones on at a slow but steady speed. We scan a broad area for any sign. Many minutes pass. "He's probably far away now," my daughter says to break the silence, hoping she is wrong. And she is. Despite our vigilance, or perhaps because we are looking well ahead, we're stunned when the whale blows a giant, glorious breath just 15 feet from our boat. Our hearts leap as he slices across our bow. Sparkling ocean droplets scurry off his wide back. We see his entire body slide by just beneath us in a steady, seemingly perpetual motion. Everyone is gasping and exclaiming in one or two word bursts. The whale—our whale now—has given us our prize.

I pull the throttle into neutral. We watch as he surfaces twice more on a line directly in front of us, as if to say, "follow me." And we do, for another mile or more, but this will be as close as we get to our distant cousin. He moves on to deeper water, leaving us with the thrill of a new experience to share between us, and the gift of a brief connection to another world.



Malibu Beach | SUSAN ARMENTI '77

Small Stones, Collected at Nantasket Beach When Covered at High Tide

ROGER HOOPER '62

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Nantasket

Beach disappeared at noon. I collected
small stones in the thin, lapping water by
the wall. Some bathers stayed and swam: others sat
backs to the sea, watching
the roller coaster across the road.

You
went walking with your daughters as I selected,
until six filled my palm and fingers:
 one brown egg with an orange eye;
one grey square that showed the signs of scratching
by some huge earth-movement; one fat finger, blue,
tapered at each end; one cream-and-dust brown
lump; one dull rock that at its tip, revealed
a hidden strain of red surprise inside;
one large soft brown pebble

.

When I looked down
the waves against the wall, there were a few
loose people scattered on the flooded beach.
You and your daughters came back.

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I concealed
the small stones in my closed hand. The girls tried
guessing what I had, and when they saw the few
stones I held out, piled in my palm, each
picked some out and threw them back in the sea.



Treasured Memory | ALAN MACNUTT '68

I-55

WILLIAM HUGHES '59

When he left the Interstate in his rust-riddled camper the sun was just rising, but he knew where he could find beer and breakfast. Bonnie and her boy were behind him somewhere on the big highway. She was driving the U-Haul with all her possessions.

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He wondered if Bonnie would follow him down this sidetrack. She no doubt suspected he would turn off the main road here, and she surely knew why. The byway led back to his past, not hers, so she would probably stay on course, figuring he could catch up with her in Tupelo. The three of them were going there to stay with her father, whose lungs were failing.

An hour east of the Interstate the two-lane blacktop wound along a ridge, then descended through scrawny pines and past abandoned shacks as it traced the long slope to the low country and the tobacco fields he had worked as a boy.

He entered the valley along with the morning light. At the edge of town he skirted some workmen setting up to fill a pothole. He came to a stop on the grounds of a small roadhouse, but at some distance from the building. He kept the engine running while he weighed his options.

Henderson's familiar Dodge sat off to the side of the roadhouse, in its usual spot. He checked the clock on the dash and figured the old man would soon open the place for business. He cut the engine and dozed off.

The sound of a car door closing startled him awake. He lit a cigarette and watched the driver walk to the building. He made him out to be a farmer, like most people in these bottoms. He thought there was something familiar about the man, but no name came to him. He waited until the farmer returned and drove off, then he went in.

Henderson stared at him from behind the bar. Neither man spoke, but the old man drew him a beer from the tap, then went to the telephone on the wall by the side door. Ray watched as Henderson dialed, waited, and finally hung up without speaking. The old man was noticeably annoyed when he returned to his place behind the bar.

"What are you doing here, Ray?"

"Just passing through on my way south. I been stayin' up near Cairo."

"If you're thinkin' of goin' round to see Alma, just forget it."

Ray didn't respond.

They were silent for a while, and uneasy with each other. Ray didn't know what else to do, so he ordered some food. Henderson didn't react, except to look away. Ray was hungry, but he didn't care about the food. There was something he had hoped to settle with the old man, if only he could think of what to say. He started to speak, but decided against it. He didn't have the right words, and Henderson's attitude told him this wasn't the time.

Three men from the road crew came in. Their noisy entrance interrupted the standoff. Henderson moved to the far end of the bar to see to them. Ray finished his beer, carefully counted out some money, put it on the counter. Without waiting for his food, he slipped out the side door. He drove to the state store and bought a pint of whiskey, then moved on.

He drove out of town and nosed his rig down a narrow dirt lane. Ahead was a clearing in the pines. The cottage would be just around the turn. He saw it still needed painting, but someone had patched the roof. He stopped and got out without closing the door. He took the whiskey with him. Entering the house without knocking, he glanced around, then went into the kitchen and looked out a rear window. Alma was out back scattering corn for her chickens.

He took two glasses from a cabinet and sat at the table. A small cat came into the room and drank some water from a bowl under the table. Ray poured himself some whiskey.

He surveyed the room where he had fought so many battles before he just gave up and retreated to Cairo. The plank floor had been scrubbed. He could smell the ammonia and pine oil. A blue vest with its Walmart patch hung from a nail hammered into the wall, right next to a calendar displaying wildlife of the Hatchie River Valley.

The cupboard door was propped against its frame, unhinged from the night he had kicked it in. That had been the final blow-up with Alma. Back then the squabbling never seemed to stop, except when they were in bed.

Somehow the sex kept them together—off and on—for years. It's what always brought him back. This time, though, there was something else he needed from Alma. If he was going to move on, that is.

Alma came in. She was surprised but not alarmed. "I didn't think I'd be seein' you around here again," she said. "Not that I ever wanted to."

She was wearing faded overalls and a skinny-strap undershirt. He noticed traces of sweat on her bare shoulders and arms. Her dark hair was short now, and curled. He liked it better when it was long and straight. But she looked good to him.

"I was passing through on 55," he said. "Headed for Mississippi."

He started to fix her a drink, but she stopped him.

"I don't take whiskey for breakfast since you went away."

He shrugged. "I went by to see the old man on my way through town."

"My step-daddy? You know, even with all the problems he always thought you and me could make a go of it. But I guess that was just one more thing he got wrong."

"He must've changed his mind about us. Anyway, I just needed to try and explain myself. I guess he thinks I let you down. And the girls, too. But he wouldn't talk to me, except to warn me off, so I didn't linger. I think he tried to call you about me."

"I been doin' outdoor chores all mornin,' so I wouldn't have heard the phone."

The cat rubbed against Ray's leg. "I see you got a new cat. Where'd he come from?"

"He came one morning and just stayed. Like you did."

"What happened to the big fella you used to have? The orange one I got for you."

"Tom. He wandered off, or maybe got killed."

"What do you call this one?"

"He's Tom, too."

"Does that Ben Morley still come around to see you?"

She turned and busied herself at the sink.

"Not lately," she said.

"Where's your girls?"

"Gone. Jolene's with her dad for a while. He's got a new job over by Memphis. He thinks he can find some work for her, too. Trish is out on her own. She has a room in town and the old man lets her wait tables. I miss 'em, but it's better this way, I guess. . . for them, anyhow."

She faced him again and took a step in the direction of the table as if she might join him. But instead she eased back against the counter.

"I don't know why I'm even talkin' to you," she said. "It's been hard for me. And you bein' back here in my kitchen don't help."

Ray poured himself some more whiskey and gestured toward the other glass. This time she nodded and pulled up a chair.

They didn't talk while they finished off the whiskey. Then they went to the bedroom.

After they finished, Alma said, "Ray, why are you here?"

"I just needed to know for certain what I done wrong, Alma." His voice was low, his speech hesitant. "Before, I mean."

"You done most everything wrong," she said, adding a rueful laugh. "Except maybe the sex. You aren't smart enough to mess it up with a whole lot of talk and fine sentiments like those boys from the college. You always stick to business."

She thought about it some more, and then she spoke again. "If you really want to know, Ray, you were no damn good for me or my girls... Or anybody. And I thought if I was rid of you somebody would come along who was better. Somebody steady, with prospects. Who wasn't drunk half the time."

Ray considered what she said, but had no reply.

He noticed a work shirt slung over a chair, and wondered whose it was.

She continued to talk for a while, about work and people they knew, but he had stopped listening. He was thinking about Mississippi and Bonnie and the boy and her sick old man. Maybe he was no good for them either.

Later he split some firewood for Alma while she prepared them a meal. After eating, Ray finished the beers that Alma had in the refrigerator, and then he dozed off for a while. The sun was setting when he got up to leave.

Alma waited until he reached the door before she spoke. "Now listen, Ray. Don't you get the wrong idea from this," she said. "I don't want to see you back here again. Ever."

He turned away and went out. The cat followed him through the door and disappeared into some shrubs.

Ray had trouble starting the camper, and then the motor stalled twice when he released the clutch too quickly. He cursed himself under his breath for looking like a fool, but he got the thing in gear and drove away, resisting a backward glance. He negotiated the deep-rutted lane and made his way back toward the town. He paused by the entrance to the churchyard cemetery where his mama rested, but decided to move on to the nearby Pay n' Pump, where he refueled and purchased a carton of Marlboros before swinging through town one last time.

He switched on the radio. Dylan was singing "Things Have Changed." Then came Little Willie John doing "Need Your Love So Bad." A self-promoting deejay interrupted the music. Ray listened for a while, then opted for silence.

It was night when he approached the Interstate. He slowed to check the signs and chose the ramp pointing him away from Tupelo. He headed due north, toward Chicago. He wasn't gonna harm someone he didn't know.

As he merged onto I-55, Ray glanced at the rearview mirror. It was dark and he could make out nothing behind him.



Edge of Night, Honfleur | RICHARD DRAKE '68

Cold Case

MICHAEL RITTERSON '62

We still cringe to turn her body over:
Maybe a ritual, the crime-scene
experts said,
a search for smuggled
drugs, a pregnancy
hacked away.

Days until they found
her name, found
she was only twenty.
What makes a person age that way?

Signs she must have struggled,
got high,
got wasted,
got lost.
They all lost track of her.

No DNA in their toolkit back then.
Evidence did show
she may have lived through
the bludgeoning to see
her butcher circling back.

Body dumped just
off the game lands road;
they don't know where the killer
gutted her.
From the roadside you can look
downhill and almost
see her crumpled there.

| 29 |

Photos later released by the family:
a gawky kid in a group shot
from someone else's wedding;
another: full-face
but vacant, not seeing us.

You'd never know by looking
that she was ours.



Rain over Salish | JENNIFER GRIMM DE MELLO E SOUZA '92

On and On Forever

GREG NOVEMBER '02

In the rain and dark we wait for our rides. This late, there's only two of us. We stand on either side of a bench that neither of us occupies because it's wet, although when it's dry I've noticed he prefers to sit. The PATCO station is locked and the sound of rain and the night cold whips away my travel sleepiness, leaving in its place a dull sort of alertness, like I could, if provoked, dart from the platform and hurl myself headlong through the mostly empty lot and toward the road and the pharmacy there, the one open late, where I could leap the fence and jog the rest of the way home. I know what my body can do.

| 31 |

By the light of a humming lamp fastened to the brick behind us the man next to me scolds a folded, soggy newspaper. The rain comes in slanting shifts that move across the parking lot. The man looks fiftyish—not quite twice my age; he mutters something and flips water from his paper.

“Nothing good, huh?” I say.

The man looks my way. “Nope,” he says. “Nothing good at all.”

He looks back to his paper.

“We never talk,” I say.

“Nope.”

“Why is that?”

“You know?” the man says, “I just don't know.”

"Name's Lerner," I say, extending my hand. "Bob Lerner. Wife's running late, as usual."

"Melvis," the man says, armpitting his paper. We shake.

"That your first or last name?"

"I'm called Melvis. Just Melvis. It's a nickname."

"Okay, Melvis. Your wife running late, too?"

"Not married. But, yes, my ride is running late."

"As usual, huh?"

Melvis regards me for a moment. He looks toward the lot then back to his paper.

"They really should install an awning or something here," I say. "It's not right to leave people to just wait here in the rain when their rides are running late. With the station locked and all. Doesn't that strike you as irresponsible? Irresponsible and disrespectful. Who do you think's in charge of putting in awnings at the train station? You think it's PATCO? Or is it the city? Someone is always in charge. I wonder about these things, Melvis. I really do. It gets to me, you want to know the truth. I mean, here we are, just standing like two dopes getting wet and nothing would do us more good than a simple covering over our heads. Or, I guess, maybe if our rides were on time it would do us good. Am I right? What do you think? You agree with me on this or not?"

Melvis doesn't look up from his paper. "You know," he says, "I just don't know."

"I tell you, a simple awning over our heads would do us, both of us, a world of good."

Melvis flips over his waterlogged paper and begins scolding the other side.

"That ride from the city's a bit herky-jerky, isn't it? I mean, all the stops and starts. It would be nice, don't you think, if they somehow coordinated the stops a train made with the time it departed Grand Central, so everyone on the train would be getting off at similar spots.

You know what I mean? I don't know. Maybe that idea isn't my best one. I guess there's the whole issue of transfers. The Amtrak people and the PATCO people and so forth. But you see what I'm getting at, don't you? That ride down from the city could be better. Am I right? I mean, in terms of mileage, what's it, eighty, ninety miles—tops—and how long's it take? Close to three hours? This time of day, close to three hours. I'm glad I know your name now, Melvis. How long have we been waiting here like this, just you and I, taking the same route, making the same transfer in Philly, waiting right here for our rides? A few months, probably? Two, three times a month for the past few months. Am I right? Sure, there's other folks here sometimes, waiting with us, but it always seems like you and I are, if not the last, two of the last folks here—every time. And we've never talked before. You recognize me, don't you?"

Melvis looks up from his paper. "Sure," he says. "Sure, I recognize you." He looks back to his paper, flips it to the original side, folds it and then begins tapping it against his other palm. He looks my way and for a moment I think he might say something. He appears nervous, perhaps on account of the rain. Growing up, my dad told me stories about jungle rain that made me nervous. So much rain it rotted your feet. Socks, he used to tell me. Thank your god, whoever he is, you got a near never-ending supply of dry socks. Melvis watches me sidelong. Maybe he's got his own sock stories. He draws his overcoat tighter, bounces a few times, the heels of his wingtips clacking on wet pavement.

"Your socks getting wet?"

"Sure," he says. "Raining, right?"

"Those are some nice shoes, though. I hope they're not suede."

"They're not suede."

"What are they, you don't mind my asking? I mean, who makes them?"

"Kenneth Cole."

“Sure, sure. He makes a good shoe, Melvis. One of the best, you ask me.”

A car pulls in at the far entrance to the lot, only its headlights distinguishable in the dark and rain. The headlights weave through the lot, which, because of a design flaw, is the only way to get from the street to the pickup zone in front of the station. Melvis and I watch the switchbacking headlights. At a certain point, an outline emerges from the dark, a young woman driving. Melvis takes a step forward. The car pulls up, a new model Passat with wipers muscling water from the windshield. Melvis makes quickly for the car and when he opens the door, the driver, a girl of about seventeen, leans over and waves at me. “Hi there, Mr. Lerner,” she says cheerfully. “Mrs. Lerner on her way?” Melvis quickly shuttles himself into the car and mutters something to the girl, who straightens up and doesn’t say anything further.

“See you,” Melvis says through the open car window.

“Hey, Melvis, you mind leaving that paper with me?”

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I hold up my hand as the Passat drives off. It meanders back through the lot and then it’s gone. I attempt to read the paper but it’s too waterlogged and also written backwards. Some of the words, at least. Not backwards—inside out, maybe. The words, skeletons of tiny, sailless boats, flail recklessly and knock each other off course. I used to love reading, though it’s a shame knowing only one language. Of course, I can recognize Arabic and have memorized some phrases, but I can’t actually read a lick of it. There didn’t seem much need for me to know more than was necessary to shout at folks from the busted-in doorways.

Briefly I hold the paper above my head but it doesn’t do any good. It now seems like a burden and I’m sorry I asked Melvis to leave it with me. A quick survey of the pickup zone reveals one trash can by the entrance to the locked station. Why do they lock it? Inside there are some chairs to sit in, vending machines, ticket dispensers, transit maps mounted in glass cases on the wall. The lights are still on, although two

or three of them have burned out and one is flickering. The whole place has the air of neglect. As I slip the paper through the trash can's metal mouth, I spot something, just inside the can that catches light from the station lamps. Bending to look closer I see it's a glossy plastic hat, a rain hat of all things, crinkled and lying next to a wadded fast food bag with ketchup smeared on the outside. Reaching through the can's mouth I retrieve the plastic hat and withdraw it slowly, so as not to snag my coat sleeve on anything jagged or metal. With the hat on my head, I feel a degree of instant relief from the rain, and return to my spot by the bench to wait. I keep waiting.

What a story this will be. I'll tell it to friends, and possibly even some future wife. The "rainy night in Collingswood" story. I'll explain to them that my first marriage came to an end when Natalie refused to pick me up one night; how she told me she would be there but instead she packed her things and drove with Finchy to her sister's and I was forced to walk to the nearest motel and there, wet and cursed, begin to reassemble my life. I imagine people will at first find it sad and will comfort me and say Natalie hadn't deserved me to begin with, how she had always been a flake and probably wasn't faithful while I was gone. But over the course of time these affirmations will subside and the ridiculousness of the situation will seep out, bleeding over the painful details, hiding them from view.

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A car swings into the lot, its one headlight flickering as it weaves its way toward me.

"Sorry," Natalie says when I open the door. She's wearing a heavy raincoat and pajamas. "I couldn't find Finchy's pacifier."

In the back, I see Finchy is asleep in her car seat, all puffed up in rain gear with her head slung awkwardly to one side. The pacifier hangs half in and half out of her mouth.

"You got her up in rain gear? Why did you get her up in rain gear?"

“It’s raining.”

“Yes, I noticed. I’ve been standing in it for the past half hour.”

“Oh, it hasn’t been that long. I told you, I couldn’t find her pacifier. Without it she might have greeted you all vomity and crying.”

“I know about her carsickness, Natalie.”

“I know you know.” Natalie peers at me, sideways, like Melvis had. We drive through the wet streets. A few other cars are out but the rain hides the drivers.

“I liked your hair better when it was long,” I say.

“Oh, come on,” Natalie says, patting the back of her head. “It hasn’t been long in years.”

“It was long when I left.”

Natalie shifts in her seat. She turns us off the main drag and into the darker neighborhood streets, where the car’s interior is illuminated only periodically by street lamps. Passing under one, she says, “Hey, where’d you get that nifty hat?”

“The trash.”

Natalie pauses before she says, “Well, take it off now that you’re in the car. And make sure to wash your hands before you touch Finchy.”

“I know about washing my hands.”

We drive on. I palpate my exposed head, edging around the hairless spot in the back, running my fingertips over the raised line of skin. Natalie stares through the windshield, one hand gripping the wheel at its bottom. She’s always been a rock solid driver. In high school she had a charcoal Celica with buttery rims that I installed and when she got that car to speed, her lion’s mane of wicked, red hair blew about like in a vintage heavy metal video. Now I can make out the shape of her skull.

“What did they say? Did they have any news this time?”

“No news,” I say. “No news from the big boys up top or the small boys at the bottom or even those rotund little suckers in the middle.” I smile; I know I’m speaking gibberish. I don’t have any better ideas of

what to say, but I'm not ignorant of what lacks sense. "You look like a time traveler," I say.

"A what?"

"You look like you've traveled from some other place to be here, in your coat and pajamas. Finchy, too. You both look like you've come to this night from some other place, like maybe you were caught off guard or something, and, ploop, here you are on a rainy night in New Jersey and meanwhile I've been here the whole time and I'm dressed for the occasion. Hey! Did I tell you I found out the name of that other guy who waits with me at the station?"

Something like a grin eases across Natalie's face. Only it's not a grin. She's crying.

"What's wrong?"

Natalie wipes her eyes. She shakes her head.

"Come on. Natalie, dear, look at me. Stop crying. Come on. There's no need to be upset. I'm only fooling around. Look, it's nothing. I'm not even angry about waiting in the rain. Maybe I'm a little angry about it, but it's nothing big. If you say you couldn't find the pacifier, I believe you. I'll get over it by the time we're home. I promise. I'll wash my hands, bring Finchy to bed, and then we can finish that bottle of South American wine your brother sent us—see, I remember that—and I'll tell you about my day."

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"We finished that wine. Last week. We drank it with the McMurphys."

"Okay, yes. Of course. I remember now. Sorry. Last week with the McMurphys. Janie finished second in the Haddonfield 10-K."

"That was Gail McCauley."

"McCauley, McMurphy—what's the difference? I mean, what's it matter? Goddamn it, Natalie, I made a whole trip today for nothing." Attempting to tear the wet plastic hat in half my hand slips off and bangs against the door. In the back, Finchy unleashes a kind of whimpering sigh.

“Please keep your voice down,” Natalie says, peering again at Finchy in the mirror.

“That was my hand,” I say. “Against the door here. I wasn’t shouting.”

“Well, we’re almost home.”

“I know where we are.”

For the remainder of the ride we sit in silence. It’s funny, where we live. Our individual domiciles amidst the larger plan of a community, each of us with our own carved out space—egg sacs in a giant womb—but couldn’t we just as easily all live together, overflowing from home to home, sharing property and responsible to our neighbors for the upkeep of living. But I suppose it’s the boundaries we’ve drawn, the edges demarcating yard from yard, that allow us to rest with the great comfort that we have something to defend. It’s a big place, the world, and in it we seem attached to unnatural boundaries, those drawn on maps, through deserts and jungles. On and on forever, it goes. That’s from an old song, or should be, I guess. On and on forever. Set it to melody, watch it rise, like flames in the night, boot tread, body armor.

After pulling into the garage, Natalie unstraps Finchy, who’s starting to come awake, making sucking sounds, and slings her against one shoulder while shutting the car door with her rear end. Finchy was born while I was gone and I don’t know if she knows yet who I am.

“I’m going to put her to bed,” Natalie says. “Why don’t you change into some dry clothes and meet me on the sofa?”

Natalie takes Finchy into the house, momentarily leaving me alone in the oily garage with the ticking, wet car. For a panicky few seconds, I feel the floor surge and have to grip the side mirror to remain upright; everything is sucked into a sandstorm. But soon my balance returns and my vision clears and I follow my beautiful wife and daughter into the house.



Release | DAVE APPLE '12

In the Bathroom

KEVIN BROWN '12

Porcelain enough for tea
cups and stainless steel
that housewives have
in model houses, this
bathroom at work
makes first world ache
when third world would
kill to live in here.

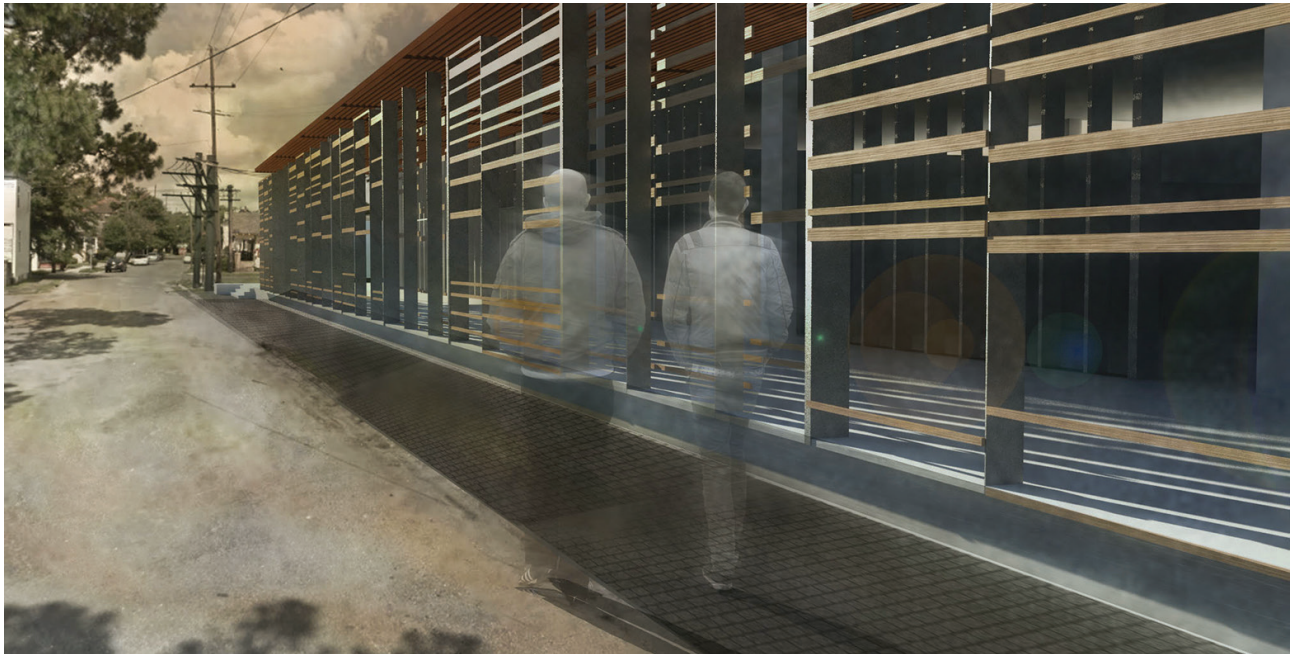
And I lifted the toe
of my polished calfskin
oxford, ready to rid this
palace of a ready pest.

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So urinal flush splashed
water on my slacks,
and zipping up I looked
down, saw a dock bug
there scaling the wall,
ribbon of slime behind,
a mucus rainbow.

Yet, at summer camp once,
I pissed on a moth in the
outhouse, watched powdery
wings turn mush, like
ash heaps after summer rain.

Now the stainless steel
had slime across its face,
But I lowered my foot,
thinking, "It's only a bug,
and this porcelain's here
for everyone."



External Rendering Down Saratoga | PAUL ZAMORANO '13

Outside the Inside

LISA BROOKS '85

“I want to stand as close to the edge as I can without going over,” Kurt Vonnegut writes in his novel, *Player Piano*. “Out on the edge you see all the kinds of things you can't see from the center.”

| 42 | Living the routine day-to-day, in mid-life, is living in the center. Work, raising children, caring for aging parents, saving for retirement, paying for college—all of these create a centripetal force that spins us inward. Moving within that tiny diameter, it is easy to lose sight of anything outside the inside.

Missing moments by being absorbed in the task at hand, and then the next task at hand, is the disease of middle-aged America. When I became a single parent, for instance, it was necessary to stay focused on what was in the middle, right smack in front of my face. In the process, I lost sight of what was on the edge—which increasingly seemed very far away.

And living as I do in the center of a big buzzing city, it was easy to pretend that life was being lived. Arts and culture abound in the vibrant community that is Houston. But attending these marvelous events became just more appointments on my calendar.

And then came the ten-year anniversary of winning a battle with cancer. The lessons I learned during those ten years were difficult ones. I realized that in spite of knowing I needed to take moments to care for myself, especially for my psyche—that I needed to step out of the spinning and observe what was going on around me—I hadn't really done that. I came through the journey, necessarily focusing on getting well, and then on keeping life moving. But that focus meant that I didn't experience all the wonderful and terrible things; above all, I didn't actually experience a life that for a long time I wasn't sure I'd get to stay around to enjoy. Realizing that shook me, and I resolved to do something about it

And just about that time, a wise friend told me that he draws and paints to slow himself down. To do this well, he says, you have to observe the details. It is not a fast activity.

I am an artist. I know what he's talking about. But slowing down like that feels as if I am yanking against that centripetal pull, that I am moving out to the edge, beginning to see what I can't when I'm spinning at the center. But it feels risky: *What if I don't...? What if I can't...?* Biggest of all: *What if I fail?*

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These questions rise even as I know that life on the edge is beautiful. It is miraculous. Looking in from outside can reveal what is hidden in plain sight. Looking through a macro lens may reveal every flaw; it can also reveal the beauty.

This wise friend suggested I take my camera to a sculpture garden near my house. He suggested I photograph what I saw there, focusing on capturing mood and feeling. And so, one rainy, melancholy morning, I took his advice. Carrying my camera, I forced myself to just be and observe.

Little by little, the wet morning washed away the busy hustle. Raindrops trickled down the faces of the statues. They were weeping. Watching the raindrops, looking at the reflections in puddles, letting the

cold soak into my bones, awakened something that had been missing for a long time. The cold and the wet, and above all the slowing down, seemed to restore my soul.

Taking that time to stand on the outside looking in, taking time for art, taking time to observe, allowed a recreation of me.

And what a great surprise it's been to find that slowing down has made me more productive, less tired. I'm not the automaton worried about keeping up with what is careening toward me at breakneck speed, forcing me to get the job done and stay standing. I don't need to keep all the plates spinning, and I don't need to worry if they fall. Instead, I have learned to look at the shards of pottery of fallen plates as a mosaic, a less perfect but just as beautiful configuration.

When those questions rise, which they will and do—*What if I don't...? What if I can't...? What if I fail?*—I know that of course I'll make mistakes. But I'll be all the richer for taking a few risks, out here on the edge.



Danger Highway, Transamazon Rally, Columbia | JIM YESCALIS '68



Hard/Soft | CONRAD NELSON '81

The Edge of Happiness

CONSTANCE RENFROW '12

Robert's edges are the first I see. It's during his gallery opening they appear. At first there is nothing, only hanging frames and oversized abstracts, and then of a sudden, someone is mouthing words to him, is pointing at the painting he'd once been too tired to finish, and Robert begins to glow. A blurred white border that clings to his skin and isolates him from the crowds circling the room.

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Walking home to the Harlem brownstone will take much longer tonight, because Chelsea galleries are farther south than the antique store desk on the Upper East Side, where I point to Edwardian sapphires and vintage chiaroscuro. Most customers already know their provenance; they tell me I pronounce Lladró wrong, that of course this brooch is retro not Art Deco. I don't tell them that their noses are dull, their eyelids inelegant, that they could have never inspired the masterpieces on their walls. Still, it's noon to six, enough money for rent, time to draw before and after and when business is slow. I'll be back there tomorrow; back to sketching the visages that scowl in period oil paint—over and over

on recycled 8 ½ x 11s—each time the door closes on patrons who care nothing for this century’s art.

But this evening I’m walking, because the apartment’s too cold and a Metrocard swipe is now \$2.75, and besides, my sketchbook has stayed empty for weeks. No matter that New York is known for its many faces, its slouching beauties; they keep crossing before the light turns green, keep sipping from cups—I haven’t even wanted to draw them.

On Ninth Ave, I pass a young mother listening to her toddler’s shrieks. As I get close, I see how her expression contorts at his pitch, and there around her, is an outline like Robert’s, insubstantial and white. And when she picks up her kid, he finds his edges, too. They merge together, become almost blinding, and I don’t wait to see more.

On Eighth, so many leftover businessmen wander toward Penn Station, toward home and the LIRR—even though it’s long past five p.m. Some have borders; other’s silhouettes stop at their suit jackets. I watch how one drops some dollars in the hat of the girl belting out show tunes under the overhang. Some amount poorer, he has edges now; some amount richer, she does not.

As I cut east along 31st, wondering why I’m seeing these lights like auras, a street psychic knocks at me between the lettering on her storefront. When I turn back, she opens the door and steps out into the darkness of the late-November evening.

“Hey, miss,” she says, and I see how her edges are first hardly there and then flare white, sliding down her sweater and thighs, cascading from her shoulders in tandem with her curls. Against the black shadow of Madison Square Garden, her outline is eerie, or maybe just unearthly. I’ve passed city psychics enough to know their standard line—something is troubling you—but instead what she says is, “I can tell you why you’re seeing outlines. Why you don’t have one.”

For the first time I examine my hands, my jeans. She’s right. I see only what’s normal of me—freckles and too-fancy seams. She points to

the writing on the glass. “A Tarot reading is only five dollars.”

I say, “I don’t need any faces on cards.” I tell her I know what the future holds—I just want to know why I’m seeing outlines like bad reception, or shitty CGI. Like everyone’s standing in front of a green screen but me.

She leans in close, her eyes the slate gray of pencil lead, and on her sweater I smell nicotine and spearmint. When she clutches my hand, her edges don’t spill onto me. They touch my skin but never spread.

“Okay,” I say, and she pulls me in past the door painted to say: *Readings by Miss Cleo.*

The room is the size of a phone booth or an anchorite’s cell—what she tells me is her office. Prisms dangle from a mirror, a zodiac is pinned beside it, and she sits me at a table so small that our kneecaps collide. The walls are daubed with red.

I see the whiteness that surrounds her. The nothingness that outlines me.

“These edges,” I say. “What are they?” Because the mother seemed unaware that she was trapped in translucence, and Robert did not know his was there to tell me how it feels. “Is it a sign of something?” I ask Miss Cleo. “Or does it hurt them to be set aglow?” Or does it mean—and maybe this is what I want to be true—that they are lesser than I who have no edge, that they have taken the first path presented, settled for mediocrity, and have now only to wait and wait and wait for anything more.

I tear at the skin on the side of my hand, where ink and charcoal have long stained into the creases. But I’m the one waiting now.

She tells me to take three cards, and so I slide three from the deck. My palm holds them facedown against the tablecloth, their futures pressing into the fabric. Their pictures don’t matter, their meanings. They’ve told me the same things before: a change soon, something you

love will leave you, buy magical trinkets and be healed. Thirty dollars, just for you.

Her long fake nails, made of plastic and glue, scrape against my skin as she pulls the cards from under my hand. Taps them against the deck.

The Fool, Miss Cleo flips first. “New beginnings.” She tells me I’m looking for something new to believe in that isn’t capturing in ink the way people yearn at night in the city—their muscles straining, their bodies pausing, because the galleries have closed and even the bartenders have gone to sleep.

The Tower next, and I’m made to know that my dreams won’t come true. That my castle in the air is crumbling, has broken into dust upon the salt waters below. That the antique store is draining away my soul’s images, because of its out-of-date aesthetic and dreary faces that no longer hold any interest for me.

“Excuse me?” The words are stilted, rasping. I didn’t tell her how I make rent, or what I moved to New York to do.

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As she rubs her fingers down the corners of her lips, her edges merge, spilling into the gaps caused by the movement—still one continuous, ethereal outline. She says, “That’s what’s in the cards.”

I tell her this is bullshit, that none of this answers why outlines are emerging, surrounding the people who know nothing about them—who don’t feel the energy or see the luminescence of their skin. I tell her I want to know where my edges have gone, or if I ever had them.

Miss Cleo reaches for the final card, dropping her shoulders down, draping herself. She looks at me with those lustrous eyes through curls that have fallen across her brow, that twine down her cheekbones and cover the furrows in her skin. In the shadows the details hide. I think then I will remember her tonight, when I’m back to crouching on the floor, pen in hand, over an empty sketchbook page.

She says, “You know you flickered just now?” And her fingernails pry up the Nine of Cups. The card of “yes” and everything’s possible.

I know every line, every pen stroke to render on the page my sneer.
To depict skepticism, scorn.

“You’ve had edges before—even right then.” She does not respond to how I laugh. “And you can have them again, but you’ll have to build up new dreams.”

So no more of the ones gone down with the Tower A new job—and haven’t I been considering a nine-to-five?—with artistic coworkers and creative surroundings. But all I can envision is how a street scene is established from skyscraper to office building to the corner Starbucks I’ll have to visit each morning at eight forty-five.

“If you can do that,” she says, “you will be incandescent.”

So basically, out with the old, in with the new.

Obvious.

Prosaic.

Expected.

There’s five dollars left in my pocket. I drop the ink-smeared bill atop the Fool because that, at least, feels symbolic. I stand up—her elbow knocking into mine as she grabs at the cash. When I push my hand against the glass door, she says, with a voice dropped an octave, but still throaty and charged with the mystical, or maybe just smoke, “That’s what you’re seeing, you know. The outlines. They mean people are happy.”

I make a noise somewhere between cough and cry. Remembering the mother with her raging brat and the businessman leaving the office far too late. “You mean they gave up, because that’s what they were told to do!”

I don’t mean to howl it, but it comes out that way.

Miss Cleo wraps her arms across her chest. Her outline grows like a shield, and she insists again, “It means they’re happy at the time.”

My shoulders go slack. So I’m seeing their joy. It emanates from their skin like body heat and can’t be transferred through touch. If it did, I’d

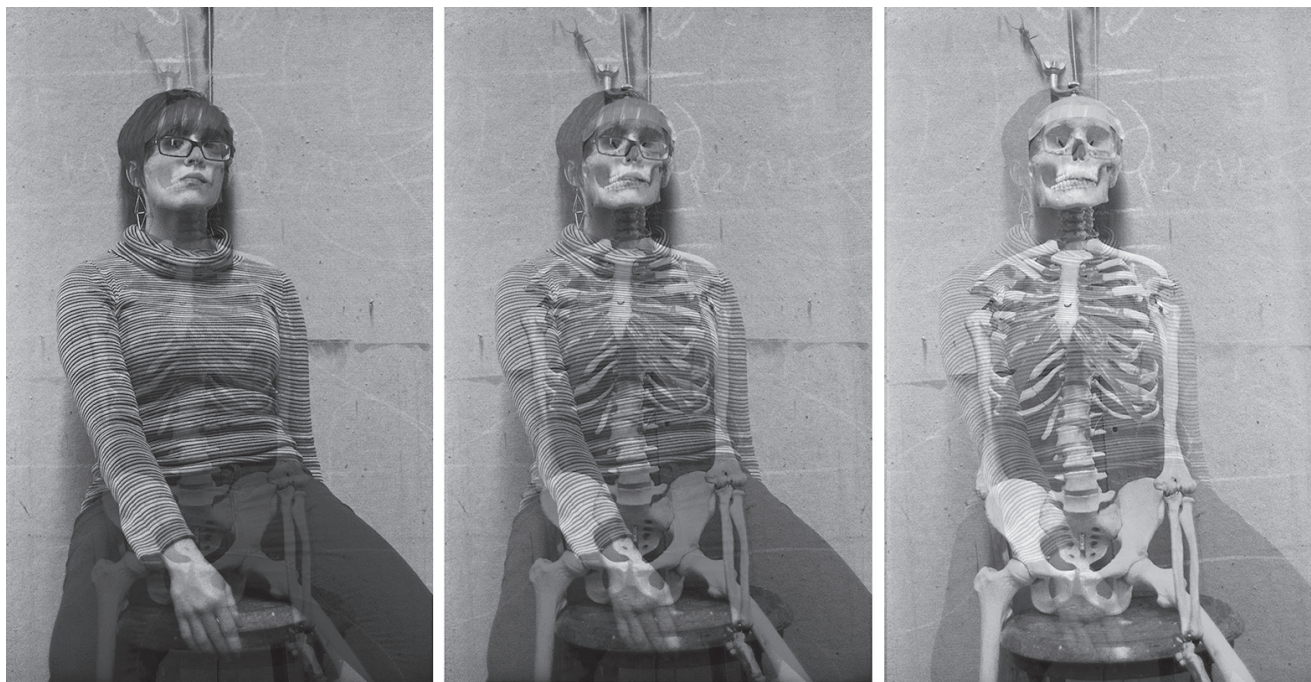
have been happy when Robert hugged me goodbye, when Miss Cleo took my hand outside the store.

Robert, then, was exultant. The street singer, I suppose, was not. The psychic stares at me with her all-seeing eyes, and I drop my gaze down to the Tarot, still sprawled across the tablecloth—face up now, grinning at the inevitable. I don't want her to see how I had hoped to pity her—how I had thought, maybe, I was meant to.

"The outlines come and go," Miss Cleo says. "It's to be expected—good fortune is temporary." And then, after all: "But I can show you how to use energy crystals to heal yourself so you'll glow too. Fifty dollars a set."

But I shove my way out the door, leaving behind the guilt fiction of the psychic's hotline, pushing in front of the cars and construction and tourists lost on the side roads. I see outlines—contented, joyful—on some, and some have only the broken slabs of their New York fantasies to keep them warm.

I think, maybe, tomorrow the cards will be right, after all, and maybe then I'll search and apply, and cast out the dried-up and decaying faces on the walls. Maybe I will draw Miss Cleo's jawline, try to capture the way her profile gleams, so maybe my own will shine for a time. But the sky has long grown dark, and amidst the low beams and lights of city dusk, edges are glowing and their owners are radiant, and tonight it makes me sad.



Invisibility | SALINA ALMANZAR '13

One Night's Work

JOHN HAMBRIGHT '62

When Harley died, I slid the tie off him.
Put it with his others in the drawer.
Then closed the door.

He has some beautiful colored ties in there. More than enough
to make a quilt like that woman's on
TV. She said it was nothing.

You cut them in two. Stitch the sides
together one by one
and, bingo, you end up with one
big—well, umbrella, like.
Big and round. Pretty.

Like the skirts we wore long ago.
Like an explosion.
Blown to bits.
I could do that.

Sewing. Knitting. Nothing to me. Sweaters. Mittens. Caps.
Harley liked me being occupied.
Called me Busy Bee all those many nights when
he left me
for his—
meetings.

*Buzz, Buzz,
Busy Bee!*

Buzz, Buzz!
And out the door.

Called me Nellie the Knitter. Oh, yes,
and Madame Guillotine. Me with my needles.
Him with his—
games.
Hooch. That other bore.

*A quilt of my ties! That's to die for,
Nellie Guillotine!!*
Booze. Bruise.
And out the door.

One night's work. No more.
Will they put me on TV?
The Eyeopener.
Explosion in my lap?

What sweater will I wear?
Which cap?

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I'll say this, though. One thing
I do know. I wouldn't sleep
with this pretty quilt. Ever.

I'll put it on Harley's bed.
In Harley's room.

Spread it out in there over
Harley's big and round
pretty colors nevermore
place where his
face used
to roar.

And close the door.



48 Years | HARRY ROTH '80

'Til Love Do Us Part

MARK MILLER '74

I'm such a fan of romantic comedies that from the moment Jessica and I met, I realized our relationship, like so many depicted in those movies, was not a match made in soul mate heaven. Not even soul mate heaven adjacent.

She had a prestigious executive job; I was a writer constantly scrambling for work. She lived in a beautiful home in the Hollywood Hills, with a swimming pool and luxury car; I drove a used Ford Taurus and got a break on my humble Fairfax District apartment's rent by doing assorted managerial tasks. She loved having deep discussions about weighty topics, theater, opera, and sharing innermost thoughts and feelings, while I was more into popular culture and keeping things light, comedic, and on the surface.

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Since we were so different, yet attracted to each other, Jessica proposed: why not just enjoy being with one another—date each other regularly even as we continued searching for our one and only? And as soon as one of us met someone who was a closer match, we'd inform the other and end our arrangement. The only unknowns would be how long we would last together and which of us would end it. But until then, Friends With Benefits *while* looking for one's soul mate? Suggested by the *woman* in the relationship? What planet are we on and where do I sign?

And then, about nine months into this relationship, I met Sarah. Unlike Jessica, Sarah was a parent, as was I, so there was that common

ground. She was lighter in personality and temperament, more the sit-com, where Jessica was the drama. She had a heat and a passion, contrasted with Jessica's cool nature. Finally, Sarah laughed out loud and frequently at my jokes, which of course is catnip for any man, especially a comedy writer. While my relationship with Jessica was pleasant, secure, and affectionate, the one with Sarah awakened my heart and energized my soul. There was real connection and intense attraction.

I realized it was time to let Jessica know and make good on the back end of our relationship arrangement. I would never have anticipated Jessica's response: tears. I was stunned to discover that Jessica did not want me to leave. She was not dating anyone, nor had she even been looking to date anyone while we were together. Apparently, she had grown to love me and wanted me to stay.

I reminded her of our special dating arrangement, which, I added, had been her suggestion in the first place.

| 58 | And then, Jessica surprised me again. She attempted to make our sweet deal even sweeter by revealing to me her dream of us living together as a couple, travelling the world. She'd pay for everything and support my writing career. I could forget worrying about bills or a day job.

Oh, man! One woman tempts me with passion and laughter; the other with lifelong financial security and international travel. Isn't there some mad scientist who could breed them together and create one cloned woman who had it all—a financially secure, passionate, emotional laughter?

One day, as I was attempting to unclog a tenant's garbage disposal, I started having visions of a more upscale future life with Jessica, a life befitting a world-class writer wannabe. We'd vacation in some charming little flat in Paris. I'd write away, while she read the works of Victor Hugo on the sofa. Occasionally, I'd look out the window at the moon coming up over the Eiffel Tower. Off in the distance, a street musician played "La Vie en Rose" on the accordion. We'd wander down to dinner

in a charming, cozy, very French cafe in the Latin Quarter, the same place F. Scott Fitzgerald and Zelda had frequented in the 1920s. Jessica would teach me about Pinot Noirs and adjust my beret to the perfect angle. Rent? Job search? Credit card late payment fees? Things of the past! My main job would be to love Jessica. It didn't take a genius to see the appeal.

Later, at my computer, having received a rejection email for one of my articles, visions of my future life with Sarah appeared. We appeared in clothing from Target rather than the Macy's outfits I'd be sporting in my Jessica visions. Our song would be less "We're In the Money" and more "All You Need Is Love." Earning a living would be a challenge for both of us. I could still be a writer, but the writing would have to be done at night and on weekends, wedged in around a day job. And yet, there was no denying that with Sarah, I'd have what I wanted even more than financial security and luxurious European trips—non-stop, passionate, full-throttle love and laughter. And there it was. I decided that those were the things I didn't want to live without. Couldn't live without.

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Do I have regrets these days? Honestly, yes, from time to time. Especially when things get tight financially. But those regrets are short-lived when I consider Sarah's priceless laughter, love, and passion. At any income level, that's the only kind of match made in true romantic partner heaven. Cue "La Vie en Rose," as Sarah and I slow dance under a streetlight, and she adjusts my baseball cap to the perfect angle, in our humble Los Angeles neighborhood.



Smooth Pieces | LIZA MUNK '14

Medusa

CAITLIN CIERI '12

“**Y**ou don’t look bad with your eyes closed,” he’d said. So I kept them closed. After years without a proper visitor, I wasn’t going to turn him to stone.

When I was a young girl, people could look at me all they liked, and they liked looking. My friends daubed themselves with oils and paint, but I just washed with clear water. Some admirers called my beauty god-given, others lied and said that I gave it to any who asked. Even after I refused a nobleman’s proposal and chose religious life, the talk continued.

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Rather than be one of those fools who spend their lives looking in the mirror, I served Athena, aiding those who sought wisdom. Most days the temple would be filled with young men seeking not only Athena, but her priestess. I ignored them, continuing my work with pride: praying, weaving robes, overseeing festivals.

One summer night, a tanned man, biceps rippling like waves, strutted in and seized my hands. As I tried to pull away, his grip tightened, eyes lit like a tempest. No man had ever been so...direct.

Desperately, I wrenched my arms free and ran, screaming, for the other priestesses. As I sped through the halls, the floor rumbled under my feet and behind me; something crashed.

“Do you refuse Poseidon, woman?” a voice boomed.

I turned to see a wave broiling with sea foam careening through the hall. Pillars collapsed beneath its wrath. I slipped on wet stone; the wave hammered me down and pulled me into a whirlpool. I screamed, but only bubbles escaped. I prayed to Athena for aid or, if not that, a swift death.

Yet even under the punishing waves, I felt my face swelling and my teeth shrinking and shifting apart in my gums. I felt a weird stretching and twisting of muscly cords atop my scalp. Something fell across my cheek: was that a snake? I shook and yanked but it held fast, pulling against my head like a braid. I grabbed it with more force, trying to dislodge it from my head. My efforts were only met with gripping pain and blood in the water. The ocean receded, grumbling, and I fell to the floor, sore and sopping.

I heard screaming. “Medusa! Are you all right?”

I turned to answer, wiping salt water from my eyes, but saw only a statue of a young woman, a hand extended toward me, every fold of her robes and curl of her hair perfectly carved and perfectly familiar. Others came, wide eyed, arched bodies attending mine. I saw them flinch when a snake tried to strike them, but Athena be praised, they kept their hands extended. I stretched my arms toward the help they offered. When I met their eyes, all became exquisite marble.

In shock, I crawled among the statues surrounding me, legs sloshy and bruised. My cheeks felt oddly tight, and thick monstrous coils constantly shifted atop my scalp. I looked for a mirror to see how badly I was bruised. But each time I came across something reflective, my body would not let my head turn toward it. So I searched instead for someone to tell me what was going on. Shock and horror crossed the face of each one I met; then they petrified. A snake nuzzled my cheek but its eyes would not meet mine. My shaking fingers traced along its back, finally resting on my own scalp. My hands scrambled across my head, finding nothing but tailless snakes embedded into my skull.

Desperately, I threw a heavy cloak over my head and ran to the village. The citizens offered no useful counsel. Not a single one lost their flesh for stone. I had learned from the temple not to let my eyes meet theirs.

For five days, I cleaned the temple and prayed for guidance. There was enough food for me and my head of voracious serpents. If they were not fed, they would strike at anything that moved, including my own fingers. I adapted—until the village talk turned ominous.

“You’re female?” one villager asked.

“Yes,” I answered, head covered and eyes lowered.

“You know the value of modesty. Others flaunt their beauty.” He sipped from his flagon. “Like that priestess, Medusa.”

A merchant added, “Nikkos saw her embracing a man in the temple of Athena!”

“Romance in Athena’s temple?” a leathersmith laughed. “No shame.”

“Heard she was with a god!” a fourth scoffed.

“Defiling one god’s temple with another!”

“Zeus’ll strike her down with lightning!”

“She’d deserve as much!”

I threw off my robe and faced them.

“Say that to my face!” I shrieked, as if their stone tongues could talk. On swollen feet I chased those who tried to run.

“Look at me!” I shouted, “Look at me and tell me I’m vain!”

They shielded their eyes, but my locks of serpentine hair lashed at them. When they turned to swat the snakes, they froze forever in those poses. I left a village of statues: screaming men, stunned women, scrambling children, scuttling rats, crawling insects.

I had been praised in one breath, scorned in the next, and finally condemned for another’s crimes. Even taking the veil permanently, I could never live within civilization. I loaded an abandoned boat with unspoiled food from the empty markets. After burning one final sacrifice,

I pushed the boat offshore and began rowing. I would have no mercy from men, but perhaps some kindness from the gods.

I paddled in terror, never looking into the sea's reflective surface. With closed eyes, I fished, submerging my head so the snakes too could grab at passing marine-life. When they had nothing to hunt, their hunger would give me migraines. After three days, a rocky island rose up from the horizon. I moored my small boat and clambered among its stones until I found a cave. I collapsed, exhausted.

This would be my home for the next five years.

There were intruders, warriors tromping into my lair seeking Medusa's monstrous head. Cleverer ones kept their mouths shut and footsteps light. I awoke one night to find a stone man above me, holding a dagger against my throat. All went into the ocean, a gruesome underwater gallery. I wouldn't live among men, petrified or otherwise.

One stormy morning, when the waves were their fiercest, salty foam splashing from the rocks, a man came stepping silently, as if on air. Staring into his shield's polished surface, he inched around the cave. I crouched against the back wall, snakes coiled tightly. Had the sea god decided to kill me?

But this intruder did not have Poseidon's build or cold glare, or even his age. The boy in the cave was fourteen at most.

"Who are you?" My voice was pumice against a bare knee.

He faced a wall, held his shield aloft and stared into it. I could just see a snake's reflection wriggling on the surface. I was certain he could, too.

"Are you Medusa?" he asked.

"Yes, and you are here to slay me."

He nodded, the gold curls on his head bouncing more vigorously than my living locks. "Our king is marrying my mother and has commanded your head as a wedding present."

"Really. My head?"

“He only asks for it because he hopes I’ll die in the attempt. But if I fail, I will be banished from my home; my mother will have no one.”

I laughed aloud, snakes spitting gaily, “I’d make a terrible present, except to a sculptor!” I shifted my eyes to his back, away from his shield.

Still gazing into his shield, he edged closer. “I conquered the Gray sisters and wield the weapons of the gods!” he said, his free hand clutching his sword.

“Keep your weapons. I’ve had my fill of gods.”

“What’d they do to you?”

“You first.”

“Mom bore Zeus’ son.” He indicated himself with the sword tip. “Her father tried to drown us both because the oracles claimed I would cause his death. I hope I never meet him, or in a fit of vengeance I might fulfill that prophecy.”

“People are awful,” I shook my head. The snakes bobbed theirs in agreement.

Bizarrely, I was enjoying myself. Though I abhorred man’s prejudices, I also craved conversation—even with this brazen youth. As our conversation shriveled, I considered when I’d have to throw him into the ocean.

But he was inching forward, slapping around his thigh until he caught hold of a purse tied to his waist. He put bread and a hunk of cheese on the ground and receded.

“I have plenty for the trip back,” he said, never looking from his shield.

I squatted and raked a nail through the soft cheese, popping a fingerful into my mouth. A pleasant change from fish, gulls, and bugs. “You’ll have to feed the snakes, too.”

He laid out dried meat, taking his own meal against a far wall. The serpents seemed disappointed in the already dead meat, but ate it just the same.

We talked about our childhoods: swimming and tree climbing, defying parents, broken bones, and lamb dipped in honey. He handed me a rag to use as a napkin. A snake coiled around his finger; he let it rest there. We were stumbling into camaraderie, or worse, friendship.

“Why haven’t you tried to kill me yet?” I used a fingernail to scrape cheese off my teeth. “You’ve come all this way and gathered such fine weapons.”

“You used to be a woman, didn’t you?”

“Still am. Hideous deformities don’t change gender.”

He let out a chuckle. “I mean you were mortal like me. The bards say you were so vain you seduced Poseidon in Athena’s temple, that your ugliness is punishment for your hubris.”

I scratched the chin of one of my snakes. “And?”

“I want to hear your side.”

Grateful, I went through it all, the temple, the throngs of male pilgrims, the attack and self-imposed exile. “My only sin was wanton ignorance of the world’s evils.”

He said nothing, no sympathy or derision. He opened his mouth, closed it again, opened it, and finally spoke.

“Can I look at your face?”

I threw my head back, laughing, the snakes shrieking and whipping through the air.

“Stop!” he snapped, “There must be a way.”

“Why would you do that?” I guffawed. “Punishment for your sins?”

“I want to see you for myself,” he insisted.

I caught my breath and calmed the serpents. “It’s eye contact that’s fatal.”

He grunted in thought. “So if you close your eyes, I can look then?”

“Cast your weapons aside,” I said. “I’m lonely, not stupid.”

The sword landed near the cave entrance.

“Shield, too. I don't want the reflection when I open my eyes.”

“But if I'm not protected ...”

“I'll warn you.” I kicked aside the clattering shield, closed my eyes and told him to look.

Silence. For a second, I feel something thin pressing against my neck. I flex the muscles in my eyes, not quite opening them. The thin pressure leaves my neck, with a clang against the ground.

I thrust out my arm, groping but finding neither flesh nor stone. “Still alive?”

“You don't look bad with your eyes closed.”

My swollen palms find fleshy knees and arms. They jerk back. No shield.

“I mean, you need some sun, but I see the old beauty. And the snakes make you exotic.”

“I'm going to open my eyes now,” I warn, but he's already leaving the cave, shield and sword in hand. He climbs down the seawall and seats himself in a long boat.

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“I'm going home,” he calls. “I'd like it if you came with me. Much as I despise my ruler, I promised to bring back your head.”

I inch toward the cave's entrance. “And yet here I am, head and body still connected,” I call back.

“He never said the head couldn't be attached to a body.”

My back shifts against a jutting rock. “Why would I return to the world of men?”

“You must be getting tired of seafood.”

I follow him into the boat.

During the leisurely journey, we make conversation while I stare at the fine golden hairs on his back. He holds my legs when I dunk my snakes. One day, we tie up to a lonely boulder. I enjoy the boat's rocking while he forages for food. He returns instead with a pretty young lady

clad in broken chains. She addresses me respectfully, always keeping her eyes lowered, and tells me my snakes look beautiful.

Finally, we approach the port of a large, silent kingdom. We tie the boat ourselves for lack of dockhands. Before stepping onto the shore I wrap myself again in a heavy cloak. Despite my fears, the streets are abandoned and the livestock absent from the farms.

“We must have returned on the day of the wedding,” Perseus says. “The King will not suffer his subjects to work during a holiday. Those who do so are arrested.”

“But you’d at least expect to see a goat grazing on such a nice day,” Andromeda muses.

“The farmers lock up their animals on holidays,” Perseus says. “Looking for lost livestock could also be considered ‘working’.”

We enter a palace whose pillars touch the sun, and begin to hear the voices of men.

The wedding is ostentatious: long tables of food, wrestling, minstrels playing lyres, and dancers twisting in diaphanous robes. A beauty, just beginning to show her age, fidgets at the head of the largest table. A man arrayed in bronze breastplate and crown grips her against his cold, armored torso. As we enter, she sees us, and wrenches out of the king’s grasp.

She approaches, sobbing, and clutches the boy as though he might evaporate. “Perseus, I thought you’d died!”

Perseus presents the girl, his right hand entwined in her left, “Mother, this is Andromeda. I rescued her from the Kraken.”

The girl bows, cheeks coloring, and the mother hugs her just as tightly as she did her son. Then the grand lady turns to me, extending arms in welcome. Perseus lunges between us.

“Mother! Whatever you do, you must never look upon this, Athena’s best priestess, who was so devoted to her patron’s love of purity that she refused the advances of gods.”

She draws back and offers a reverent apology. I accept it.

Perseus raises his hand and lays it on his mother's shoulder. "Now return to your groom. We'll be together again soon."

While the party rattles on I ponder my decision. I have no illusions of a happy life. I had vowed to sacrifice myself for others and then passed years hiding from those I'd committed myself to serve. But Perseus showed me kindness, and for him I will make the ultimate sacrifice. I would live proudly, boldly, in the world of men.

As we approach the dais, I smell wine on the king's breath and hear the fearful mutterings of the wizened man sitting with him.

"Great King Polydectes," Perseus shouts, raising a goblet of wine, "whose power renders the lives of men mere die to be cast, I have completed your impossible task. It sent me on quite a quest, oh supreme Lordship, but I have returned with a gift that I hope you will find adequate for your nuptials!"

"Perseus! Your mother and I are wed. You will call me *Father*," Polydectes booms, aping the boy's gesture with his own glass. "Now, render your dutiful service!"

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Perseus steps aside to reveal me, veiled. The king looks with confusion, contempt, and finally impatience, but I wait until every pair of eyes, save three, are upon me.

I step forward and remove my cloak.



Straight Lines | LUKE OEDING '03

The Nature of the University

ANDREW FURMAN '90

The splendid live oaks gracing a mostly barren campus—small copses and stranded individuals here and there—captured my immediate attention. In between the unattractive academic buildings and vast expanses of stiff grass, these stately old trees crouched solid on the earth, their muscular branches swooping down toward the ground and outward before stretching toward the sky. Sunlight glinted silver against the undersides of their small leaves with each gust of wind. Upon closer inspection, the rough, furrowed bark on some of the older specimens hosted numerous additional flora, including bromeliads, ferns, and Spanish moss, which dripped like something molten from certain horizontal branches. Small birds flitted within the canopies.

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It was 1996 and I had just arrived at the state university in south Florida kind enough to offer me tenure track employment. Most of the oaks, I would learn, were planted in the 1970s by a math professor and his large band of student, staff, and faculty volunteers. They had rescued several of the largest, most impressive, specimens from the tree-obliterating path of the rapidly approaching I-95 construction project,

where traffic heading to and from Miami, Fort Lauderdale, and West Palm Beach now roars within earshot of campus.

Like most university professors, I've spent an inordinate amount of my time as an adult on college campuses. So I suppose it's only natural that my environmental consciousness owes a great deal to the natural spaces I've encountered across these precious parcels. These groves and gardens and woodlots, and their often curious stories, have shaped my perspective toward the constructed and unconstructed landscape, and our proper place within these places, to at least the same degree as the classes I've taken and taught in the climate-controlled warrens between these canopies of green.

Higher education for me began on the small but leafy campus of Franklin & Marshall College in the urban-ish setting of Lancaster, Pa. I was something of an uprooted tree, myself (a "transplant"), having grown up in the San Fernando Valley of Los Angeles. So my eyes were particularly alert to the novelty of the East Coast trees that thrived all about the campus, even though it might have behooved me to pay a bit more attention to my calculus textbook too. The umbrella-shaped canopy of a particularly large tree outside the infirmary was the first strange specimen I noticed. What type of tree is that? I asked a classmate. An elm, she told me. Sure. Elm. I'd heard of them. This beautiful tree compelled me to look at all the other impressive flora about. When I took my time, I noticed a plethora of giant specimens that I would later identify, through the help of more well-informed peers and professors. Hickories, tulip poplars, and maples, oh my! An old white ash outside Distler House was called the Protest Tree, as various college administrations through the years encouraged the exercise of free speech (mostly signage, plus the occasional effigy) upon its weathered trunk and branches. A significantly larger campus awaited me as a graduate student at Penn State University, nestled amidst the more rural environs of Happy Valley. Instead of one campus elm, a phalanx of elms greeted me as I walked onto campus,

gargantuan specimens that shaded my walk pretty much all the way to my comparatively bleak GTA cubicle indoors.

The green spaces cultivated, or simply left alone, on university property frequently offer a crucial buffer against the more constructed (and sometimes blighted) suburban and urban blocks beyond the edge of campus. Yet it's just as true that universities daily enact the same tortured negotiations between various environmental and human interests that vex our local town councils. The same "real-world" pressures that drive unsustainable development and habitat destruction off-campus daily threaten the most verdant patches of university property across the country. Student populations grow, as does demand for student housing, parking garages, classroom buildings, recreation centers and football stadia. Trees, and their on-campus advocates, often get in the way. To wit: if the splendid live oaks on my south Florida campus rescued from the oak-decimating path of the I-95 construction project might be said to be keeping a dirty little secret, it's that the university administration in the 1970s wasn't at all pleased to welcome them onto the grounds.

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"They put up all sorts of roadblocks," the retired math professor, Jack Freeman, confided to me a few years ago in the months just before he passed away. "They didn't care about native trees at all." Groves of trees planted here and there, they feared, might get in the way of their ambitious plans for building up their new university. It was only after Freeman wrote to the governor of Florida at the time, Reuben Askew—"Now, he loved the idea"—that the university administration was forced to cooperate, or at least get out of Jack's way.

It might be fairly argued that our nation's colleges and universities have taken the lead when it comes to ecological sustainability, as we ought to take the lead—given our shared mission to prepare the next generation for responsible global citizenship. The Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education vigorously promotes its mission through manifold initiatives, which include an online resource center,

self-assessment tools, an annual conference, and four newsletters. Many institutions of higher learning have seized upon the AASHE goals, instituting well-funded sustainability offices charged to envision, plan, and help implement sustainable institutional practices ranging from facility designs to financial investments and curriculum development.

Yet, it worries me that the word “green” increasingly morphs into a figurative expression in these campus discussions, discussions between professors and students in the classroom and between presidents and trustees during Strategic Planning sessions. In our zeal to construct LEED-certified dormitories and classroom buildings, to institute trayless cafeterias and reduce the food-miles of offerings, to tap into renewable energy supplies and develop water-conservation and waste-minimization practices—crucial initiatives all—we shouldn’t forget the equally crucial and complementary role that the university landscape, itself, plays in our efforts to model and teach sustainability. The grandest green initiatives on campus will stand little chance of gaining the hearts and minds of our students (and the larger university community) if we overlook the admittedly less glamorous opportunities to preserve and cultivate parcels of literal green between, within, and, in some cases, instead of, our new LEED-certified campus buildings.

I recently visited the websites of the institutions that hosted my undergraduate and graduate educations to explore their current land-management practices. In both cases, I was pleased to discover a substantial level of commitment to the campus trees that left such a deep impression upon me. Curiously, both Pennsylvania institutions—a small private liberal arts college and the state’s flagship public university—have recently fulfilled plans to designate, establish, and maintain Arboreta on their campus properties. Recognizing that its 1000+ trees (representing 168 species) play a critical role in preserving the integrity of the Chesapeake Bay watershed—in addition to their historic importance and intrinsic beauty—Franklin & Marshall designated a 52-acre

portion of its 202-acre campus the Caroline S. Nunan Arboretum in 2007. Its Campus Landscape Master Plan of 2009 sets forth a thoughtful and detailed vision to preserve and enhance its landscape amid the increasingly urban environment of Lancaster. The inventory and management of campus trees is an important component of its larger Sustainability Master Plan, adopted in 2012.

Efforts to build the 370-acre Arboretum at Penn State, immediately adjacent the campus, began and stalled in the 1970s, gained momentum in the 1990s, and currently enjoys vigorous development across its three stages. Importantly, the arboretum features various botanic gardens, a 10,000-square-foot conservatory, a larger education center, agricultural research and demonstration areas, and abundant natural areas, including woodlands and fields. These transitions between woodlands and managed gardens, managed gardens and agricultural research areas, agricultural research areas and educational buildings model the interdependent—rather than oppositional—relationship between nature and culture that Wendell Berry advocates in his influential essay, “Getting Along with Nature.” Berry writes, “As we return from our visits to the wilderness, it is sometimes possible to imagine a series of fitting and decent transitions from wild nature to the human community and its supports: from forest to woodlot to the ‘two-story agriculture’ of tree crops and pasture to orchard to meadow to grainfield to garden to household to neighborhood to village to city—so that even when we reached the city we would not be entirely beyond the influence of the nature of that place.” Berry, it seems to me, imagines what our post-industrial world might look like if we set about wearing away the increasingly well-defined edge between nature and culture, between the unconstructed and constructed environment.

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The university campus represents one of the more promising sites upon which we might enact Berry’s vision. In the years that I was a graduate student at Penn State, I was particularly captivated by one of its Heritage Groves. In a near-wild woodlot near the Arts Buildings,

called the Hort Woods, I glimpsed white oaks, black oaks, pin oaks, hemlocks, pignut hickories, red pines, white pines, red maples, sugar maples, and several trees I never got around to identifying. Even to my novice eyes, it was clear to me that many of these trees must have predated the university. I tended to seek out these trees often during the course of my week. I found, and continue to find, that standing beneath a canopy of big old trees even for a short while usefully puts things in their proper place. As Berry suggests in his essay—and what so many years ago I appreciated on a visceral if not intellectual level—it was the proximity of the woodlot to campus buildings that contributed to its power. Here was a “fitting and decent” transition, which allowed the natural realm entry into my everyday social realm. To put it another way, I didn’t need to “escape” beyond the edge of campus to nature as nature was so close at hand. Exploring on Penn State’s website the precise locales and names of specific trees I remember gazing upon in the Hort Woods gave me that fuzzy nostalgic feeling that many people experience after tracking down old high school friends on Facebook.

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Off the Internet and back in the real world of my current university campus, I see plenty to grouse about (e.g., newly planted thatches of environmentally unsound St. Augustine grass), but also celebrate more hopeful developments, even the small ones. Most recently, the university constructed a walkway connecting my academic building to its newly opened gold-level LEED-certified dormitory, which features a small food court frequented by students, staff, and faculty alike. The cement walkway might have been laid out in a direct, uninterrupted line, yet its designers punctuated the simple sentence with two circular islands, several yards from each other, planted generously with coonties. Coonties are slow-growing plants native to Florida that look something like ferns but are actually members of the distinct order of cycads, which ruled the plant world during the early Permian period of the dinosaurs. Which makes them living fossils. Florida’s indigenous peoples harvested the

plant's large storage root and extracted the edible starch to make bread; later, white settlers more lustily harvested the plants to manufacture arrow-root biscuits. By the 1960s, coonties—and the dazzling blue-and-black atala butterflies that rely exclusively upon the cycads as their host plant—were nearly extinct. Thanks to recent efforts by private citizens, conservation groups, and various state agencies, coonties and their atalas currently enjoy a modest comeback.

I love that these two coontie islands are planted smack in the middle of the walkway rather than off to either side; that faculty, staff, and student passersby must follow the cement trail clockwise or counterclockwise as it sharply veers around both islands; that rather than careen thoughtlessly between buildings—on foot, bicycle, or skateboard—the circuitous path forces us to pause before these native plants and take their measure. I make it a point to stop and admire the coonties for a minute or two each time I pass, partly to inspect their spiky leaves for atala caterpillars and partly to provoke (lamely, perhaps) the curiosity of others. Every once in a precious while, a colleague or fresh-faced undergraduate, having no idea what they're in for, will stop and ask me what those strange plants are called.



Guggenheim Museum 1 | STEVEN ROSNER '73

The Question

MARC STRAUS '65

Rabbi Feival Rosenstein is short and very overweight. Black pants push down below his protruding belly and a white shirt always has a lower button popped open. His deep narrow black eyes are set above puffy dark underlids, and his long straggly beard is mostly grey. It's difficult to know his age but I hear he has seven children, most younger than ten.

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Up and down the aisles he walks, twisting his arms right and left to make a point.

“What does Rabbi Hillel say? And what is the view of Rabbi Shammai?”

Talmud class is all morning, and only boys can attend. The Talmud is in Aramaic, the original language of the Talmudists in exile. With the entire morning spent on the Talmud we study no Hebrew language, Jewish history, wars, literature, not even Israel. Meanwhile, the girls study Home Economics, whatever that is.

It's 1954 and Israel is six years old. Everyone is an ardent Zionist but they don't know why. It's just automatic. Jews have strong opinions about everything. These days it's the McCarthy hearings. But perhaps relief is coming. The Senate might censure him, and then it will be curtains for Joseph McCarthy. Nothing would make Dad happier.

Rabbi Rosenstein patrols the room, a wide wooden ruler fixed in his right hand. "Only weaklings favor Hillel's wishy-washy viewpoint," he is saying.

By now I know that it had taken more than five hundred years to create the document known as the Talmud—started by rabbis exiled in Babylonia. Our studies begin with Mishnah, their early writings. On the same page there are commentaries from Hillel and Shammai who ran the two opposing academies and overlapped the time of Jesus. And if that's not enough of a headache there are later commentaries on commentaries and we have to know all of it. There is no end to how many ways a cow can get into trouble and what the penalties are.

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Rabbi Hillel is more popular. He's the guy who said, "That which is hateful to you, do not do it to your fellow," an early version of what Jesus supposedly said. But Rabbi Rosenstein invariably sides with Shammai's stricter approach.

Even though I'd transferred to Yeshiva Central Queens just last year, I may be the best Talmud student in the class, probably as a result of all the weekends I've spent studying with Rabbi Charney, who is the school's principal. Rabbi Charney was delighted I'd be in Rosenstein's class. He says Rabbi Rosenstein may be the best Talmud teacher in any lower grade Yeshiva. But with Rabbi Rosenstein, unlike Rabbi Charney, there's no room for disagreement.

Yet arguing is the whole fun of Talmud. It's what Jews do from birth.

So I'm totally bored. It's my sixth week and I'm daydreaming when suddenly my hand is slammed really hard. Rabbi Rosenstein stands there

with his large wooden ruler held aloft ready to strike again. “Show me the place with the finger,” he screeches.

I hurriedly try to find it, settling somewhere mid-page.

Whomp! down comes the ruler. “The finger on the place!” he yells again.

The class is totally silent. I catch a glimpse of Kenny Siegel. He is feeling very sorry for me.

“Finger on the place! Now!”

I stare up at Rabbi Rosenstein. All of his uneven lower teeth are showing, making me think of a snarling dog.

I become very still. I keep my finger in the same place and glare up at him. He grimaces and pulls the ruler up above his shoulder. Paul Slater cringes like he’s the one about to be slammed. Every breath is sucked in and the class is a tomb and. Finally he says, “Go see Rabbi Charney immediately!”

He repeats it twice, each time more loudly. Slowly, I get out of my seat and leave.

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Thankfully, Rabbi Charney isn’t in. I wander outside onto 104th Street and spend the rest of the morning playing handball at a cement court one block from the school where there are always kids playing hooky. Unsurprisingly, they are very good at handball.

Days and then weeks pass. I attend Talmud class about two days a week, but no one ever says anything. Not even my friends. One day, Rabbi Rosenstein, pacing furiously, swings around and points at us. “What do we know about Jesus?”

Johnny Applebaum answers. “Jesus was a Jew who was crucified and Christians celebrate when he was born on Christmas.”

Rosenstein ignores him. “Who were his father and mother?”

Only Ira is willing to respond. “Mary and Joseph.”

“Two simple Jews,” Rosenstein says. “The father was a carpenter.

And Christians say that Joseph was the father of Jesus, but then they say Jesus was the son of God. Which is it, boychiks?”

No one says anything. Before coming to Yeshiva Central Queens, I'd gone to Chestnut Street Public School where almost every kid was Christian, so I know very well what they believe, but I don't raise my hand.

“Does this make any sense? Either Joseph is the father or not.”

Most of the boys nod their heads as if they are following the argument.

“And they say,” Rosenstein scoffs, “that his mother, Mary, gave birth without having a father plant a seed in her. Do you know what that means? Pregnancy with no man except Hashem in heaven. Is this possible?”

Shakes of the head no in unison.

“And they believe this mishigas, this utter nonsense. Hundreds of millions believe. And that he was killed on a cross and three days later rose from the dead. And for that they left Judaism?”

| 82 | Rosenstein fully extends his right arm, aiming his index finger at us like a bayonet. “And do you know who the worst was? Saul of Tarsus! He ran after Jesus calling him a false prophet and then he becomes Saint Paul, a new big title. And where is this wonderful loving Jesus now, boys? Has he come back as promised? What did he do for anyone by dying for their sins? The Christians! What they did was kill six million Jews, olaf leshalom.

I'm sitting in the back row, as usual. “Where was God during the Holocaust?” I blurt.

Rabbi Rosenstein wheels around. “What? What did you say?”

“I said, where was our God when six million Jews were murdered?”

“How dare you?” he screams, taking two quick steps toward me.

“What did he do for us?”

Rabbi Rosenstein stops abruptly. His whole body shakes. “Blasphemy against Hashem? You. You will be erased as a child of Israel!”

“Where is the God of the Chosen People? Tell me that?”

I stand and walk out.

I thought I'd go to Rabbi Charney's office but instead I'm three blocks down Jamaica Avenue. A subway train screeches by overhead. I don't know where I am headed or what I will do. It is cloudless. A man on the far corner is hawking wool hats and scarves.

Toward the end of the semester I hardly ever show up. I find I actually love the cold and my hands are really calloused from so much handball. I play on cement courts against lean tough kids in sneakers. I'm not fast. But I'm accurate.

Fortunately, I've got Mrs. Rosenberg for sixth grade English. She is slim with shoe polish black hair down to her shoulders and deep blue eyes. She likes me because I read a lot. We had a big discussion during recess about Queequeg, easily the most interesting character in *Moby Dick*. The son of a king on a South Sea Island, he's covered in astrological tattoos and is the best harpooner. Mrs. Rosenberg says his story could be a modern morality tale. Queequeg comes from a society of cannibals and he looks different than British white men but he is honest and hardworking. *Moby Dick* was written in 1851, after the British abolished slavery but fourteen years before the United States would fight a war about it. And one hundred years later Negros have to sit in the back of the bus and are not admitted to many hotels.

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The best news is that Senator Joseph McCarthy is done for. The Senate voted against him; even most Republicans. Dad is really happy.

I have no idea what Talmud book we're now studying. Rabbi Rosenstein and I have a tacit pact: we ignore each other. One day he starts talking about different types of Jewish laws. Between drifting in and out I understand that some laws are First Level: they must be followed and God doesn't explain why. Then there's Second Level: laws

that under certain circumstances don't have to be followed; for instance, during the time of Roman Occupation, the Jewish High Court, the Sanhedrin, never invoked capital punishment: they always found some reason to lessen the sentence. Third Level is something that's worth doing but there's no strong punishment if one does not.

I'm surprised to hear that eating kosher food is a First Level law. No outs. Of course Rabbi Rosenstein should be asked many questions but the class is too intimidated. But I wonder, has the definition of kosher ever changed? What if a new animal is discovered and it's not certain whether its foot is cleft, which is necessary for it to be kosher? What if we clone pigs that chew their cuds? Ha! I would like to ask him that one.

Rabbi Rosenstein tells the class that we don't know why God intends us to be kosher. He says those Jews who break this law rationalize it by saying it's really about cleanliness, but the Bible doesn't explain the reason. So we must accept it.

He also goes on about charity. A First Level law is that if a man's wealth exceeds a certain level, he must give away at least ten percent of his income every year. There's no trade off, no way to avoid it. Charity is a requirement.

I wonder how they determine that income level, and how it's measured today compared to two thousand years ago. But I don't ask.

Rabbi Rosenstein also tells us that as long as the recipient qualifies, a man can choose where to give his charity. He can give it to a synagogue, or to people who are poor. Which is based on what they earn. The man of wealth must commit to where the charity is going and he must carry out that commitment within the year, the Talmud says. No dillydallying.

Vows are also a First Level law, says Rabbi Rosenstein. If a man makes a vow, there is no retreat. If he says, "I vow to buy your cow for one hundred shekels," then he must do that. "I vow to give Feinstein one third of my business." There's no other option. "Since Goldberg is

poor, I vow to give Goldberg one hundred and fifty shekels as part of my charity.” He must follow through or violate a First Level law—which is almost as bad as killing someone.

Also, a man who is not poor must not take charity. That is also a First Level law.

I am immediately struck by a problem. I really hope I’m right. If I am, then Rabbi Rosenstein will be stuck. If I am wrong—well, there is hardly much worse he could think of me.

I raise my hand, which I haven’t done in months.

Rabbi Rosenstein doesn’t appear to see it. As far as he is concerned, I am barely a ghost.

I keep it up. Several of the boys turn toward me until Rabbi Rosenstein has no choice but to look where the rest of them are looking. “What?” he says.

“I have a question.”

“Yes, yes, I see that.”

“So in order to be poor and qualify for charity a man has to have less than a certain amount of wealth?” I ask.

“Yes, of course. I think you weren’t listening, as usual.”

“Okay. Let’s say a rich man commits to this poor man. He says to the poor man, ‘I will give you my required charity. I will give you one hundred and fifty shekels next spring at Passover.’ Can the rich man do this? Defer this a few months?”

“Yes, sure,” Rabbi Rosenstein waves dismissively. “So long as it’s within the year.”

Kenny is staring full bore at me. He might know where this is headed since he has played many games of chess against me.

“And let’s say the rich man goes to the poor man and says ‘I vow I am going to give you one hundred and fifty shekels.’ Can he do this—make a vow?”

Now you could hear a pin drop in the room.

“Yes, he can make a vow. Where is this going?” Rabbi Rosenstein lifts up and down on his shoe tips and says in a louder voice. “I think if you don’t pay attention for three months I should vow not to answer.”

Everyone laughs.

“But here’s my question,” I say, before he can turn away.

“Finally, boychiks, he tells us there’s a question!”

Everyone laughs even harder, which he clearly enjoys.

But I won’t let this go. Not now. “Let’s say the rich man says, ‘I make a vow: I will give you one hundred and fifty shekels just before Passover.’ The charity and the vow are both a First Level law, right? He can’t withdraw it.”

“Okay.”

I take a slow breath. “And the poor man accepts. He qualifies.”

“Yes, yes, yes.” He squints, perhaps beginning to sense that a shoe is dangling above him, ready to drop.

“So the rich man vows to give the poor man one hundred and fifty shekels in a few months and the poor man accepts. But in that interim the poor man has an idea for business. He is immediately successful and makes a lot of money. By the time the charity must be paid he is not qualified. He is now rich.”

Rabbi Rosenstein frowns deeply. He begins to pace.

“Now, the poor man must not take the charity since it violates a First Level law, yes?”

“Go on,” Rabbi Rosenstein says, pulling on his beard in long strokes.

“And the rich man must give him the charity since he made a vow. He must!”

Rabbi Rosenstein stops and rocks back and forth, looking at the floor. The class is deathly silent. A thin smile crosses Kenny’s face.

“So we have two First Level laws in absolute conflict. Neither one

may violate it. They are obligated to adhere to it. But one must break the law.”

Rabbi Rosenstein rocks. We all wait and wait. Finally he looks at me. “Yes, this is a shailah, a question,” he says. “I am going to see Rabbi Charney. I demand quiet until I return.”

I suppose he will ask Rabbi Charney to kick me out of school. He will tell him that I don’t even come to class half the time and now I ask a question just to make trouble. I shrug. I don’t like school anyway this year. What’s the point? All I am getting better at is handball.

The door swings open. Rabbi Charney takes large steps to the front of the room. A much smaller, wider Rabbi Rosenstein follows.

“Moishe,” Rabbi Charney says, sternly. “Rabbi Rosenstein is in to my office to tell me that you are asking a Talmud question.”

Even Rabbi Charney has given up on me. I know he doesn’t want to, but he is the principal.

“Rabbi Rosenstein says you have asked a true shailah and he does not have an answer. I want you to repeat it.”

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I begin slowly and then more eagerly and finally come to the end.

Rabbi Charney has his eyes lifted as though the answer will dance down from above. I know he is this way when he is thinking really hard.

Finally he says, “I have to give this question a great deal of thought. Off the top of my head, I don’t know. Next week I will come back to the class.”

Class ends and there is great excitement. Even Rabbi Rosenstein is in a good mood. Kenny pats me on the back. He’s always unhappy for me when I’m in trouble. He prefers I am here every day so we can play chess over lunch. I am not expelled.

Rabbi Charney does not return until late the next week. I have been in class every day. Rabbi Rosenstein calls on me constantly. It has not been easy to catch up.

“I promised last week I would report to everyone on the question posed by Moishe Straus,” Rabbi Charney says. “I gave it so many hours but I cannot see a solution. He has two vows in conflict. One must be broken. Finally I took this question to the Talmud Assembly. We hear questions that can’t be solved and then we debate and offer our opinion. Almost always we can answer it. Jews can find exceptions. We have other laws to call upon. Rarely are we stumped. But in this case, that is what has happened. We have no answer.”

He looks at me with a deep smile. “Rabbi Rosenstein is to be congratulated that a young student has asked a question that the Assembly can’t answer. No one can recall such a thing.”

Rabbi Rosenstein is very happy but doesn’t look at me. It’s just as well.

“Boys,” Rabbi Charney goes on. “Talmud is a direction, a living tool, to teach us to be good humans, to think. This is cause for a celebration. It shows us that as Jews we celebrate thinking. Soon is Chanukah and then after we return from the break, in the second week of January, we will have an assembly for the entire school. Moishe will be given a prize for asking this question. The head of the Assembly will join us. Okay, back to your studies.”

I think he winks at me. Does he know that I asked this question only to annoy Rabbi Rosenstein?

Everyone seems to feel special but inside I feel empty. I have won a hollow victory.



Prayer Flags, Bhutan | RONALD M. DRUKER '66

Beer and Religion

ANTHONY HERMAN '07

Swerving in a hipster bar on Commonwealth,
downing \$4 beasts and Wild Turkey,
Cesar talks transubstantiation and crunches pretzels
loudly. He says authentic life blooms
in connection to God.

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God and I are at a stand-still.
We turned our backs, and I'm not looking first.
I can't eat the body, but I'll drink the blood.
My authentic life blooms when nachos slide in,
when the cute bartender winks.
Blacking-out slightly, swirling the growler now,
I try to get flat beer to bubble. "Religion shapes us
in very different ways," I slur syllables, mid swig.

Cesar scratches his beard and lowers
his head as if in prayer. I tell him my sister
learned Latin at Princeton Seminary,
got a Masters of Divinity, found
God on the Hudson at sunset. And my dad
teaches his Sunday school class,

shined penny-loafers scraping linoleum.
He cups his hands tightly when he prays,
then philosophizes about the sermon afterwards
over bagels. Growing up, every Sunday
morning, Mom yelled church!
I slunk up, flattened my cowlick, and obeyed.

Chips in basket is all the wafers
I need, and 2 a.m. comes quick.
As the pub filters out,
Cesar sees me sober up.
One last swig, my sacrament, and
I catch the Red Line back to Cambridge.

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Next morning, sunshine pries through curtains,
and skin slides on plush cotton,
shadows cloak my body, sheathing me in warmth.
Hiding my eyes from the sun's glare,
I long for my father's answers.

Immortal Bird

ROBERT N. ROTH '50

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!

No hungry generations tread thee down;

The voice I heard this passing night was heard

In ancient days by emperor and clown...

—Ode to a Nightingale, by John Keats

Perhaps it's an oversimplification, but it always seemed to me that in college, as an English major, I read literature, while in graduate school I read about the literature. The first thing I had to do when I entered the masters' program at the University of Virginia in 1950 was to learn that the word "bibliography" in that institution did not refer primarily to a list of books or articles which served as sources for a term paper. Rather, it referred to the "science" of how books and manuscripts through the ages were produced and put together and could be analyzed on quite another level from their literary content and meaning. Scholars engaged in working with literature this way were irreverently called "comma counters," and spent hours doing their work in front of microfilm

machines. In this way were attempts made to determine the unblemished “Ur-texts” of materials which had very likely become contaminated through the various copyings and reprintings down through the years.

The high priest of this approach was the legendary professor Fredson Thayer Bowers, who in his lifetime produced, for starters, an incredibly long list of editions of 15th- and 16th-century playwrights, plus editions of other authors up through the 20th century, not to mention *The Dog Owner’s Handbook*, and countless record reviews for the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*. And taught courses and supervised graduate students, and.... This is one of the professors under whom I began my graduate study, and whose incredible intellect I tried hard not to let overwhelm me.

I did not go the “bibliographical” route as my major avenue of study, but I did become bold enough to submit to Professor Bowers, for publication in his prestigious “Studies in Bibliography” series, a study I did as a byproduct of a course on John Keats. I became intrigued with the conflicting opinions on whether or not the so-called “Houghton-Crewe Draft” of Keats’ “Ode to a Nightingale” is indeed a first draft of the poem. I laid out all the speculations and evidence of each scholar’s theory, pointed out their mistakes and inconsistencies, and then offered up my own ideas on how Keats might have arrived at the existing manuscript we have today. I had no new and concrete evidence, but I pointed out that my theory seemed to be more logical than anybody else’s. (I was even so bold as to point out in a footnote that the poet-biographer Amy Lowell had erred in her account. This gave a strange little boost to my ego.)

Professor Bowers read my piece, commenting favorably on it, but saying that it wasn’t “evidential” enough for his volume. He suggested that I submit it to the Bibliographical Society of America for publication. To my delight they accepted it. I had some “separates” made and gave them to friends, one of whom commented that it looked really impressive

because there were an equal number of footnotes on each page. Maybe I was on my way to becoming an eminent scholar-professor?

But life took a different turn. I was also a musician—an organist, to be exact—and I found myself becoming more and more interested in Johann Bach than in John Keats, and more at home in the organ loft than in a library carrel. I put my volume of Keats' poetry on the bookshelf and out of my mind until years later, when my wife and I were introducing our sons to the riches of England, and Cambridge in particular. One day, during an especially slow punt on the Cam, I asked to be dropped off to go to the Fitzwilliam Museum. It wasn't long before I encountered what I'd read twenty or thirty years before, but seen only in reproductions: the actual "Houghton-Crewe Draft" of "Ode to a Nightingale." Though I had never seen it in the flesh, I had already fearlessly written a scholarly treatise on it! With a sense of awe and deep humility, I examined it slowly in its display case. Because I had arranged to meet my family outside the museum at a certain time, I hurried through the rest of the museum, still in a daze from my Keats experience. But my altered state was quickly dispelled when I encountered the family waiting on the steps of the museum, my wife laughing and thoroughly drenched from a fall from the punt into the river.

After having seen the draft, I had, of course, to see the place where it was created; so off to Hampstead I went when next in London. When I stepped out of the Keats House into the garden, I was overwhelmed by the realization that this was the very spot, according to an eyewitness, where Keats had written his masterpiece. At this moment, the power of the ode's language crowded out in my mind all questions and concerns about first, second, or even third drafts of the poem.

I had one more Keats encounter: during a visit to Rome, when we found ourselves by accident at the Spanish Steps and the Keats-Shelley House where Keats died. Naturally we sought out the small and simply

furnished room where the poet had met his end. In the stillness of that room, sheltered from the hustle and bustle of the piazza below, the starkly plain plaque on the wall spoke volumes about the tragic, premature death of one of England's prime romantic poets:

IN THIS ROOM
ON THE 23RD OF FEBRUARY 1821
DIED
JOHN KEATS

But Keats' Nightingale still sang on in my heart, and in 2009, my son told me I must see the film *Bright Star*, an imaginative reenactment of Keats' romance with his first and great love Fanny Brawne. I was especially eager to see it, but my excitement was even higher when I discovered one of the key scenes in the movie to be Keats' composing of the ode—his actual putting of pen to sheets of paper just like those I'd seen in the Fitzwilliam. To top things off, the photography revealed the shiny, wet ink of his pen as he wrote. This unblotted ink of the manuscript was a key element in my theory of how the sheets had to be laid aside and not turned over until dry, which, I'd argued so long ago, accounted for the unusual order of the stanzas on the pages. Maybe I'd really been onto something in my little article of many years past!

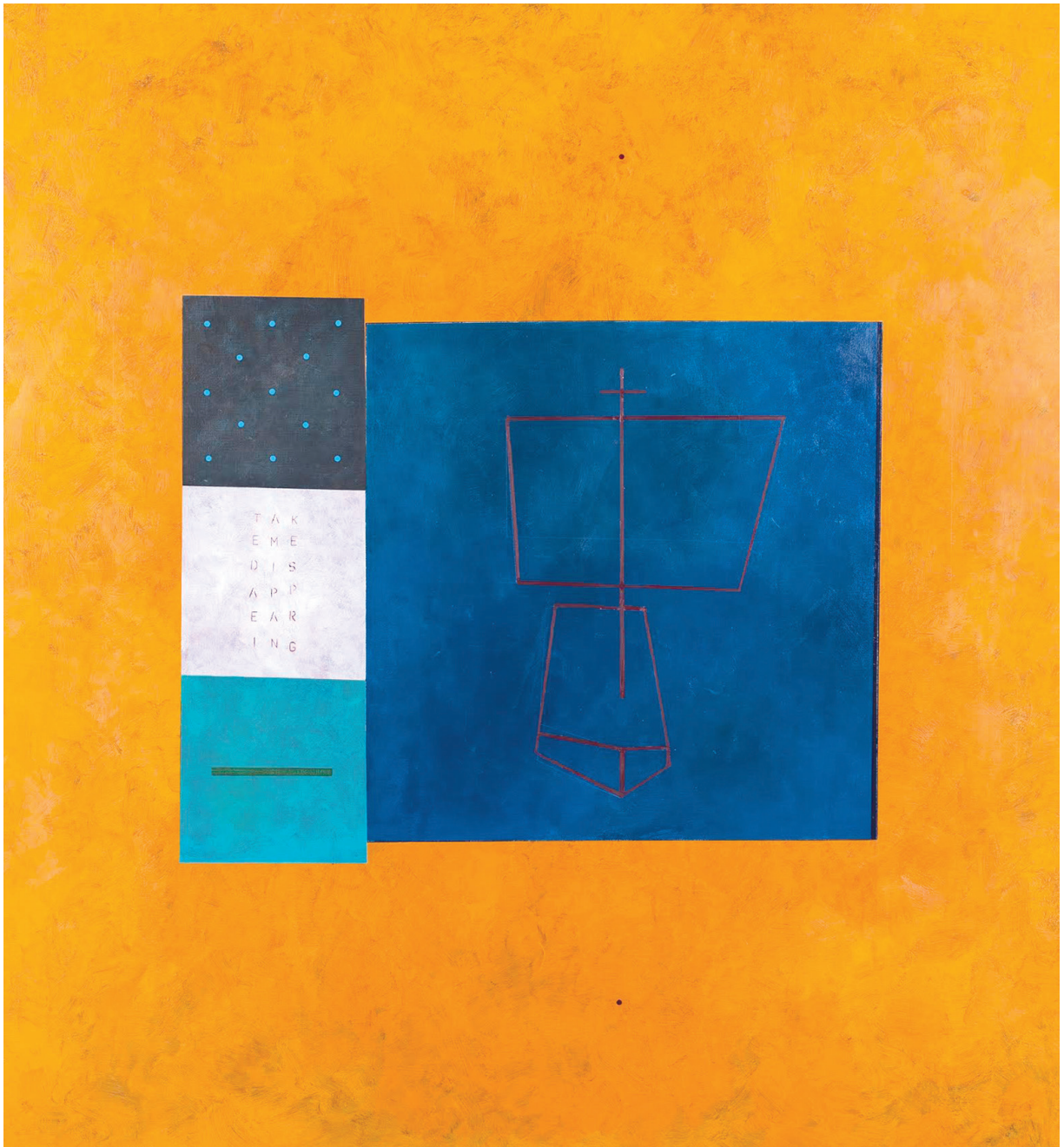
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Which brings me back to what effect, if any, my piece in the Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America, Volume Forty-eight, First Quarter, 1954, had on future Keats scholarship. Being out of the academic world for nearly sixty years, I did not expect to hear about any revisions, even minor, in the scholarship surrounding the very small subject I dealt with. But in this amazing world of Google, I found, while searching under my name for some music I'd published a year or so ago, a small item which began something like this: Scholars for years have debated inconclusively the question of whether or not the "Houghton-Crewe

Draft” of Keats’ “Ode to a Nightingale” is a first draft; but Robert Roth has suggested a possible solution...

I don’t know why I didn’t pursue that entry right away; but something distracted me, and I thought I could easily return to it later. Alas, like so many things on Google, it was not there the next time I searched. I may sometime grit my teeth and look again, this time going through the countless entries under my name (but mostly not me), Keats, nightingale, and even Houghton-Crewe. If I have no luck, I’ll know that at least at sometime, someone, somewhere, cared.

*Adieu, Adieu! Thy plaintive anthem fades
Past the near meadows, over the still stream,
Up the hill-side; and now ’is buried deep
In the next valley-glades:
Was it a vision, or a waking dream?...*



Take Me Disappearing | WILFRED BRUNNER '70



Contact Sheet: Keys | SAMANTHA PERRINE '14

Talbot's Radio

BRUCE KILSTEIN '86

Princeton University Summer, 1953

“**T**ell me about Talbot. Tell me!”

Professor Burlingame crushed out his cigarette and shook his head. “You should never have opened the box, Brian. There isn’t much to say about Talbot...he’s gone, his work was...controversial. Besides, you are running out of time. The students will be here in a few weeks. What results do you have to show me so far?”

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The transmissions were coming faster. Voices through the static. Brian struggled to make sense. Everyone wanted results—Burlingame, his department chair; the government men who kept showing up threatening to pull his G.I. Bill funding. What would he do then? He needed more cigarettes. He needed more time.

He was working through the nights, through the summer heat that rose to fill his small, fourth-floor lab. He emptied the last of the coffee from his thermos, loosened his tie and leaned out the open window hoping to catch a breeze—the empty quad below—students gone from campus in pursuit of summer fun. He needed to finish his dissertation before they pulled the plug. He set his cup on the windowsill, lit his last Chesterfield, and dropped the match to sizzle in the dregs of the coffee. He welcomed the hot smoke filling his lungs, anticipating the nicotine

rush to his blood. More static from the transistor radio: eight miles of wire and he could barely get WFIL out of Philly. Crickets buzzed in the heat—in his head—Les Paul and Mary Ford sang through the confused frequencies the world is waiting for the sunrise. He mopped sweat from his head, he needed more time, everyone was waiting for RESULTS.

Footsteps in the corridor. That would be Gary wanting him to go down to the diner so he could ask Valerie on a date—no—Brian was supposed to ask her, he couldn't remember. "I know, Gary," Brian called, "You want to go down to Sid's. Feed the jukebox. Ask Valerie to the Rialto. I don't have time..."

But the man who stepped through his door was not the clean-cut friend he expected. Instead, a short figure bounced in as if spring-loaded: a cloud of wiry hair sprouted in all directions, buttons popping. "Professor Einstein!" Brian flung the cigarette butt out the window. Probably start a fire. That's all he needed. He needed results. He needed to focus. The transmissions were coming.

| 100 |

"I don't know this Valerie. Is she beautiful?" Einstein asked calmly, as if he were a regular visitor to Brian's lab.

Brian made an attempt to focus. He tried to make sense of the words that came from behind the visitor's bushy moustache. This wasn't happening. "How can I help you? I'm Brian Murphy."

Brian followed the Professor as he wandered around the lab, tracking the tangled array of wires, circuit boards and tubes that glowed hot, an oscilloscope vibrating green patterns, Brian's heart skipping fast with caffeine as Einstein approached the blackboard crammed with equations. The radio crackled. He felt his hair stand on end.

"What are you working on, my boy?" Einstein ran his fingers lovingly over the powdered surface of the board.

Was Einstein really here? How could he explain anything succinctly to this giant of physics, this man who'd changed the world with a thought, this visionary ghost visiting his lab? The effect of the ionosphere on radio

transmissions, the way gravity waves would bend broadcasts from, let's say, some hypothetical ship or satellite (things the Russians were surely working on), the pressing need for RESULTS—the way Einstein's equations broke down when one factored in quantum concepts (which nobody really understood but they, the quantum theories, seemed to work and that had to upset the Professor—if they, the quantum physicists, were leaving Einstein behind then how could Brian be expected to...) and the signals he was getting from—where?—he wasn't sure—and needing TIME and all he could manage to answer was, "Radio."

Einstein nodded as if the one-word answer made perfect sense. He took up a piece of chalk, scanned the equations and began making corrections. The other radio, Talbot's, the antique, began to buzz. Could Einstein hear that? Could anyone except Brian? Einstein was busy erasing with one hand and writing with the other. The rumor was that Einstein wasn't very good at math, just broad concepts—BULLSHIT—finished, he set down the chalk and absently wiped his hands on his pants. He turned to Brian—Talbot's radio buzzing louder—the room was getting hotter—the Professor didn't seem to notice.

| 101 |

"You need to pay more attention to the varying aspects, the effects of gravity on time." Sweat filled Brian's shirt, noise filled his head. Einstein's grooved face furrowed deeper with concern. "Maybe you should go to the diner. Talk to that girl. When was the last time?..."

Brian stared past the speaking lips, hearing only static, the blackboard, the black coffee.

BLACK.

Brian fought his way back to consciousness. As his vision cleared, a familiar face swam through the static. Gary was standing over him. Brian was on the floor.

“My God, Brian, how long have you been lying there? When’s the last time you were out of this room? It smells like an old attic.”

Time?...what day was this? Brian picked himself up and brushed dust, chalk and ashes from his clothes. He handed Gary his empty thermos. “Coffee. Cigarettes. Almanac and yearbooks.”

“What are you talking about?”

“Go to the library for me. Get an almanac and the yearbooks from 1920 through 1929.”

Gary looked around a room gone mad, knew better than to ask questions of his eccentric roommate. He threw up his hands. “Scientists: go figure.” He left to fulfill the request.

Gary returned and tried to clear a cluttered table for the food and books. He tossed Brian a fresh pack of Chesterfields.

Brain poured coffee and pulled sandwiches from the paper bag and tried to appear normal. Maybe small talk would help. “Did you run into Valerie at the diner?”

Gary just nodded.

Brian alternated hard pulls on the cigarette, big bites of sandwich and gulps of coffee. With a full mouth he said, “You go ahead and ask her out. You have more TIME. You’ll get better RESULTS.”

Gary picked his way through the cluttered room. “I brought the books you asked for; although I can’t imagine what a bunch of old yearbooks would have to do with whatever it is you’ve got going on here.” The radio started to crackle and hiss. Distant voices mumbled through a low electric moan. “That’s annoying,” Gary said

Brian swallowed the last of the sandwich. He lit another cigarette, sucking in the smoke like the old radio pulling music, announcements, and murmurings through distant air. “You can hear that?”

“Of course I can. It sounds awful. And what’s with that antique box? Looks like something my dad used to have in the living room. With all this gear, I thought you’d have hi-fi sound up here. The jukebox at the diner sounds better. They’ve got Patti Page and Perry Como.”

Brian had no time to answer. He couldn’t explain the voices coming through the box, coming through his head; the bizarre notes left by Talbot, a man nobody would talk to Brian about. He couldn’t explain it to Einstein, for God’s sake. The best he could do was, “It was Talbot’s.” He found a coil of wire, attached one end to the back of the antique radio and gave the rest to Gary. “Give me a hand. Hook up your end to the wire outside the window.” He adjusted the knobs on the radio, the oscilloscope flared green indicating a new flow of current from the other pieces of apparatus he had wired to Talbot’s relic.

Gary poked his head out the window. Fresh summer air greeted him. A few people strolled across the grass. He’d have to get Brian outside for a few hours. Below, a single burnt bush stood out from the hedgerow. “Looks like you had a fire.” He found the wire that dangled from the roof but hesitated in touching it. “I’m not going to get electrocuted, am I?”

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Brian hadn’t considered the possibility. When had he last checked the grounding to the roof antennae? When was the last time he had a shower? Tell me about Talbot! “Not a chance,” he lied. He watched Gary twist the ends of the wires together. “Now pull slowly on the rope, it’s attached to a pulley on the roof.”

Gary propped open the window. He tugged on it apprehensively and, as the wire rose, static exploded from the radio. Brian made adjustments, and the voices became more clear. “OK, hold it there.” He boosted the signal and patched it through to large external speakers:

The Tigers have no answer for Coach Stagg’s Maroons...

Thomas is chugging like a locomotive, three touchdowns so far... Signals!... He takes the hand off, wait, fumble! Fumble!

Hardy recovers... I can’t believe it...

"All this trouble to listen to a football game?" Gary said. "You are starting to lose it, man. I'm worried."

"It's a football game," Brian said, "But it's not football season, is it?"

The score 18-13. Signals! Owen hands to Crumb...

"I hadn't thought about that." Gary scratched his head.

The game droned on. Brian fought for focus: the clearer the radio signal, the more the voices fought for bandwidth in his head.

"Pick up that almanac, Gary, and look up the Maroons football team. Who was Coach Stagg?"

"Don't have to," Gary said. "Amos Alonzo Stagg was the famous coach of Chicago. But that was...when?" He selected one of the yearbooks and flipped through the pages. "Owen...Owen...Crumb. Here. Wow, look at those uniforms. But that's 1922 when they played Princeton. So what are we listening to? Some kind of recorded broadcast?"

"It's not a recording," Brian said. "It's complicated, I know. But Professor Einstein showed that electromagnetic waves travel at a constant speed, the speed of light..."

Stagg calls for time!

"...but time! it's Time, you see, the signals sent in '22 are traveling at a constant speed, they're still out there, but gravity bends time like a fabric, so it's like always 1922 someplace, twenty-nine years away from here the signal is just arriving there..."

"What? Then why are we listening here?"

"That's the funny thing," Brian said, "...I really don't know. But I can only get reception on that one radio, Talbot's radio. I've tried using the same model Philco, different setups, nothing, nothing works." He flicked ashes into his cup. His hand shook.

"So it's, what, haunted?" Gary asked "Brian you have to take a break. It's summer and..."

"I found it in storage. Also a bunch of Talbot's papers. Great stuff. Nobody talks about him... Burlingame won't tell me... The circuitry had

nothing to do with the original Philco, the diagrams made no sense, and when I took off the back, there were these cubes I'd never seen before, no tubes. And it's all temperature-dependent, time-dependent—I'm not sure..." he trailed off.

Give the ball to Thomas... Princeton holds the line! Can you believe it?

Transmissions were coming faster. Brian adjusted to the radio. The government guy had promised things, assuming the results continued to come. Talbot's equations were making strange sense but Einstein's corrections on the blackboard seemed to be in Brian's handwriting. Gary was dating Valerie now, visiting Brian less, he brought her around once (hadn't he?). He tuned the radio dial to a new frequency. Loud music howled: some nasal guy complaining he couldn't get no satisfaction. Who could?

"What kind of nastiness is that?" Gary asked.

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Brian jumped. How long had Gary been standing there?

Gary stared at the contraption. He was reminded of the movie *Frankenstein*: a weird assemblage of incongruous parts. He imagined the frayed wires as if they were his friend's unraveling nerve endings. "You must be pulling in some way-out stations on that thing."

"Your kids will probably love it."

... and that's latest and greatest from 196...

Brian switched off the radio.

Talbot's journals. The librarian said some of the boxes were missing. There were some rambling entries, bits of philosophy, nothing about the device. But when Brian traced the circuitry in the back of the radio for the twentieth time (he was afraid to take it completely apart for fear of damaging the strange components) he noticed something taped to the inside frame. He removed it: a rapidly drawn diagram illustrating

the strange cubes, temperature notations and an extra cube. Great. He could take the cube to the physical chemistry guys to analyze—but how would he explain where he got it? He could go to Einstein—Tell me about Talbot!—but what if the Professor had no idea who Brian was?

He couldn't tell anyone, not yet. He did go to chemistry building, where a disinterested grad student heard him out about testing radio components at low temperatures: "One day we may need to send messages from space, you know." The grad student couldn't care less but did supply him with liquid nitrogen, a pair of thick gloves and advice: *Don't spill any on your skin; it'll boil it right off. I hope you have steady hands, spaceman.*

The buzzing in his head grew worse. The coffee. He got some of the pills they give to pilots to keep them awake. Voices murmured. He turned on the current. He applied his multimeter to the cube. Nothing. How could there be no resistance? Actually, the instrument read negative numbers, which was impossible. Maybe the meter was wrong. He popped one of the pills, tried to focus, put on his gloves and poured the liquid nitrogen into a dish. The supercold fluid mixed with the warm room air and created a thick fog. He put one of the cubes into the smoking dish and waited for the room—his head—to clear. He waited for RESULTS. TIME to ask Valerie...no, Gary had already—when the cube rose from the dish and hung in midair he was finally convinced that he was hallucinating. Voices stopped. He dropped his coffee, poked at the cube with tongs—it rotated freely—no strings attached, ha, he applied the meter, still nothing... crap!—try reversing the connections—a new voice... Einstein? Talbot! He looked around the room. Gary? Nobody. Calm down. He smoked and watched the cube gently settle back into the dish when the nitrogen evaporated. No resistance. A supercold, superconducting...why didn't anyone else know about this? The Russians? Talbot? Tell me about...maybe they didn't listen to Talbot—maybe he'd become an eccentric outcast, like Einstein, tolerated, past his prime.

He took the next step, supercooled the whole radio to see what happened. He worked quickly. Take your TIME! a voice said.

Brian struggled to make sense of it. Now thousands of transmissions were coming out of the radio. The sound quality improved but the voices were layered, competing for space. He narrowed bandwidth, eliminating languages other than English. Sports. That was a language he understood. He correlated broadcasts, scores, results, teams and players with past years in the almanac. He was able to assign specific stations with specific years. But how about the names and the teams he did not recognize? Einstein had posited the concept of space-time: anything with speed or energy or mass tore the fabric, warping the universe. But the quantum physicists were showing that at high-energy, particles and places just pop in and out of existence. How could that be? Maybe it was like the voices that popped in and out of his head.

He set up experiments, working constantly, varying temperatures and currents, the pills helped when the coffee gave out, it was hard to control the shaking—the voices guided him, he gave up caring who was speaking, where they came from—who was Seaver? Who was Namath? Tell me about Talbot—he was getting RESULTS, using the almanac, he could set up stations to receive the past, he extrapolated...if he could listen to the past, then why couldn't he listen to the future? There was no TIME for sleep.

Brian knew that nothing he was saying was making sense. Ranting about TIME and government men and Einstein. He had stopped shaving. Couldn't look in the mirror but he'd seen the alarm in Gary's face the last time he'd come by, when was that? (Forget Einstein, Gary's voice in his head said that he had never seen anyone up in the lab).

But, he couldn't take a break, the things that came out of the radio were fantastic:

Moscow—the Soviets announced today that they have successfully launched a satellite called Sputnik into orbit around the earth.

President Eisenhower released a statement that the U.S. would not...

President Eisenhower? That couldn't be right. And what kind of music was coming out of that machine? The Russians had made it into space? Bastards.

Brian continued to work, tinkering, adjusting, smoking, spilling more coffee than he drank, struggling to keep his hands steady as he soldered connections, the voices guided him—strange times, odd news, a place called Viet Nam, a president Reagan (surely not Bonzo?). The government men had stopped visiting. Was this a good thing? Maybe they already knew about the Russians. Brian was running out of summer, running out of...the voices said he could dial in TIME to Talbot's radio. He had to estimate future years, newsmen rarely mentioned what the year was in a broadcast unless he happened upon a New Year's Eve program, but that was like finding a needle in...he did though, and using his slide rule, making assumptions, splicing wires, nerves peeling until...

...another visit from Einstein, "Yes, yes, TIME does not flow from past to present like a train from a station. No, it flexes in all directions with space. It's a fabric. Don't you see?"

But Brian noticed that Einstein wore the same suit, same stains, same shirt each visit. Did he not like to change clothes (a possibility) or was he a hallucination (not impossible)? Did it matter?

He finished his algorithms as the fall students began returning to campus. Burlingame would have to accept his thesis, the marvelous work, these RESULTS. But Burlingame had known Talbot. What had they

discussed? Gary had ditched Valerie—summer flings. Freshmen were flowing into Princeton from the best towns, from the best families, no need to be tied down, keep your future open.

Brian could now pinpoint any year he liked on Talbot's radio. Talbot had laid an impressive foundation but Brian/Einstein's adaptations had been...what would they call it on that station from 1967?—mind-blowing. He could listen to the future. The government would be very interested in his work even if Burlingame was too jealous to accept it. Brian would get his own lab, his own funding, his own women. The amphetamines, coffee and lack of food were giving him an ulcer. He coughed blood. His heart skipped beats. A few beats, a few stations on the dial, it was all worth it. Some group from '64 called the Beatles was going to be huge, people would keep rocks as pets, carry phones in their pockets, women in space (he couldn't make this stuff up), maybe that's why nobody believed Talbot. The future seemed impossibly stupid and scary. Many of the names and places made no sense to Brian, but Einstein said that frame of reference was everything. Brian had wandered out of the frame.

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Brian's elation withered as fall classes started; he hadn't prepared a single lecture. Burlingame called him to the office. Parents were paying big money. Okay, he would get right to it, but he was finally getting RESULTS, didn't he understand?

But then Brian found something disturbing: as he moved up the dial, up the years, eventually he found there was only static. There were no signals after 2015. He got snippets of sound. Some Irish guy named O'bama warning about the Chinese...collapse...economy...then nothing.

He was out of cigarettes. Out of his mind. Nothing he did changed his RESULTS. Years stacked up neatly on Talbot's radio, then a vacant hiss. Maybe civilization had just stopped using radio after 2015. Some

other technology—computers, lasers, whatever, took its place. But could there be such advances in so short a time? He took comfort in the possibility, but when he examined some shortwave bands, cooling the radio to extremely low temperature, hoping not to crack the cubes that made the thing run, he heard faint pleas for help. Was anyone out there?

Work slowed. He was expected to teach. What was the point? Nobody he taught would have a future. Students complained about his loose grip on reality. Rambling lectures, messy appearance, wasted tuition. Einstein was visiting more frequently. The only answer that seemed to fit was that there was no...planet...no TIME.

Brian had stopped answering the door, stopped picking up his mail, and so a letter was slipped under his door informing him of his termination from the university. They had pulled the plug. Professor Burlingame would be by with some “colleagues” from campus security to help him vacate his lab.

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When Gary arrived with food and a change of clothes, he found Brian face down on his desk. Next to him were an empty bottle of pills, the termination letter, and a sealed box. A handwritten note was scrawled on the back of the letter:

Gary,
Take the radio.
Bet everything on a team called the Mets in the '69 World Series.
Spend all winnings.
Trust me,
B.



The Edge of Night | DIANE WYNshaw-BORIS '77

Life in Cups

SAM PRICE '09

can you be anything up a staircase
but a child, a lurching form, a broken glass

in my grandmother's childhood
the sparrows shadowed the milkman
| 112 | pecking the bottles
for the top-risen cream

I told my favorite coffee mug
that it's silly to have a favorite
it was morning, and still dark

I was caught
in the back of the bar
waiting to run out
of beer again

longing for the sound
of tea in thunderstorms
steam hissing off ring roads
alit with streaked neon
against dripping shadow

a glass slipped from steady
fingers and turned them trembling

a glass slipped, slipped then rolled,
milk on beige carpet, blood on clear glass

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all shook with thirst, a glass raised
on rags and bandages
turned to face another



Lost in Between | RICHARD BIDGOOD '76

Floating on the Edge

DAN BAILES '67

As we're loading the car—books, camera, yoga mat, drumsticks and practice pad—Helen calls from Maine. “It’s Charles,” she says. “He’s getting worse.”

Sharon takes the phone, and talks to Helen while I finish loading suitcases and the dog: after a five-year absence, we’re heading to Maine. As we join the herd of cars escaping Washington, D.C., Sharon tells me, “Helen hopes that he’ll at least make it to Thanksgiving.”

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We are silent for many miles, thinking about Helen and Charles and their busy life—they married late, celebrating in one of the gardens he’d designed and built. He was an artist, Helen a PBS science producer. Our summer home was just a few miles from their blue, wood-frame cottage. For twelve years, they’d been part of the gentle summers we’d enjoyed in Maine.

Then money grew tight. We had to sell our house and leave good friends behind.

As we head ever north on I-95, I wonder if Maine will reclaim its hold on us. We were lovers once, entranced by its brilliant light, cool evenings and sweet serenity; and I loved it when we had two lives, the Capitol Hill townhouse and our Maine retreat. The hustle-bustle of our urban ways—the culture, the crazy mix of people and places, food, films,

museums and music—was exhilarating, and perfectly balanced by our time in Maine, which stirred my blood, offered space, air to breathe...

That balance made me whole and each summer, had helped me find a path back to myself. Could the magic happen again?

Sharon, the pragmatic one, reads my mind. “Earth to Dan!!! We can’t afford two houses. Not to mention, Washington is getting way too expensive.”

We’ve had this conversation before.

“But we live in a great area,” I say. “There’s so much to do and we can just hop on the metro and go.”

Our dog leans on me, as she does when I drive. Sharon strokes her lush fur. “And our house was built in 1890! The maintenance is killing us. I want to enjoy our time together and not worry about how we’re going to live...and let’s face it, we don’t have that much time left.”

I think about those past summers in Maine, so rich with friends, shared meals and laughter. A billboard welcomes us to the state, bringing me back to what awaits us.

The edge of change is not razor-sharp. There’s no road sign, no officer at a border crossing, demanding you stop and state reasons for exiting one space and entering another. No, the edge is fluid, thick like molasses—something you ooze across—and it’s easy to get stuck between where you’re coming from and what you see in front of you.

We arrive and settle in. Maine’s sunlit days warm my skin; the air is fresh with the scent of sea, stone and pine, and with the distant cry of osprey, circling high in a sky so blue. But the shadow remains: Charles hovers on the edge between life and death.

“He has good days and bad,” Helen tells us. “It takes a few days after chemo before he starts to feel like himself again.” Her smile is tight; her whole body is tight, hunched against the coming coldness.

She's teetering on an edge of her own—between the Zen of now and so much looming loss: her man, her love, her lovely life in Deer Isle, still bathed in the glow of summer's brilliant days.

There's comfort in their space as they hold on to fading moments. From their back porch, I look down to the water. In a graceful, lilting dance, golden maple leaves float to earth.

Charles's face shows the ravages of chemo, the bloat of his illness, puffy, sagging cheeks. Watery eyes, just wisps of hair, no longer lush like the flowers gracing their Maine cottage. He always loved to laugh. A big man, his chortling came from deep within. To keep the darkness at bay, I try to get him to laugh.

We speak for hours. There is so much I want to ask, to learn. I want to know how he faces each day. Does he think about his leaving, about nothingness? Is he frightened? Does he believe in anything after?

He still paints every day. I hope that's a solace.

As we talk, a hummingbird joins us. I remark on it, watching it flit about this way and that, unsure which way to go, yet seemingly propelled by a force greater than its tiny body can contain.

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Our daughter-in-law, Annie, calls from New York. It's been a tough pregnancy, but she's due any day now. Once her baby comes, both of our kids will have two of their own. Another scene change: as a baby enters, Charles makes his way toward his exit, stage right.

You see what I mean. While sometimes an edge looms suddenly, as often as not, it's a process. When we're in transition, whatever choice we make, we win a little, lose a little. As we age, we give up some things, like free, easy movement: bending my knee is harder, no matter how much yoga and weight training. We also get something in return: I don't care as much about all the crap that bedeviled me when I was younger.

And my life is still expanding. My body says, "Whoa, I'm feeling a little creaky here," but I just climbed a small mountain. I write, do

yoga, work out, lift weights, and play drums in two bands. Rock'n'Roll will never die, right?

We'd hoped to see Charles and Helen before we returned to D.C., but she called to say he wasn't feeling well. What remains is his crinkly smile and a quiet, lovely afternoon on his porch, watching a hummingbird: hovering, darting, wings flapping so fast, so fast.

On our way back down I-95 Sharon and I again speak of our future: what to do, where to go. "What I'd like is to thrive," I tell her.

"Thrive?"

"Just that—let's go somewhere we can thrive."

Maybe that sounds too frivolous. After all, I'm 69—throwaway age in America. It's hard to say with a straight face, "Dude, I'll soon be 70 but I'll still be rocking in the free world." But that's what I want.

Sharon nods. She understands. And she sees that I'm finally letting myself be open to leaving our home in the city. I'm almost ready, not yet, but soon, to leap beyond the edge of what's comfortable and familiar and embrace the great unknown: the next chapter of our life.

Yesterday our son called to tell us Annie had a baby girl: seven pounds, seven ounces. "Lucky seven," I said.



Factory Scape | BEVERLY BEYERS RYAN '73



Almost | JOHN MASON '60

Plums on the Pushcart

RICHARD LEIST '70

Vojin Draskovic secured a frayed length of braided line from the handle of his pushcart to the spindles of the left wheel. He moved slowly in the half light of false dawn, bent low, repeating motions he knew by heart. Fatigue and worry made the climb to this high point above Old Town Kotor more difficult than usual. He felt as if he hadn't slept in five days, ever since his beautiful daughter, Marija, had asked if he'd be willing to meet with her suitor, Branko. He had to stop and catch his breath every few minutes on the steep ascent from the wharf warehouse, bracing the fully loaded cart with his knees, wiping his brow with a cloth hung beneath the striped canvas top.

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Gusting wind climbed from the harbor far below, cold mist clinging to his hands and face, the deeply worn pavement stones shiny and slippery, reflecting the sunrise. He straightened slowly from the effort of securing the push cart, deliberately tipping his head back to surrender to the pain coursing through his age-worn legs and torso. When it subsided he eased himself onto the ancient moss-covered wall that ran along the top edge of the road, its stones worn smooth by four hundred years of rain, snow, wind, and buttocks. He bit into a juicy plum the size of a cricket

ball and willed himself to rest, pulling air into his lungs, leaning back against a mulberry bush to survey the port town. Once rested, he'd set off as usual through the narrow streets, working downhill, selling fresh fruit. Except on the way he was going to have to meet with Branko.

The air was dense with the odor of fish offal, rotting vegetables and stagnant water from the stone-lined drainage troughs that crisscrossed the town. Shielding a stick match from the wind, he lit a cigarette of Turkish tobacco rolled the night before. Rich smoke rose from his nose and mouth, veiling heavily-lidded eyes and the deeply-creased skin inherited from his 10th-century forefathers, citizens of the Byzantine Empire that once stood along the Adriatic Sea. Tourists looked upon him as an authentic native Montenegrin, dressed in his rolled-up moleskin trousers, sheepskin vest, slouching leather boots, and colorful striped shirt. They frequently paid to pose with him in photographs.

New spring leaves dotted clumps of scrub trees along the far hills, fluttering like green tassels on a gypsy's skirt. Sheer stone cliffs shimmered white, sinking in and out of shadow. Veins of fresh air tunneled small paths through the morning shroud. But in the southern sky, clouds gathered, and the horizon zigzagged with slashes of lightning.

Women began to appear from nearly every doorway in long skirts and kerchiefs, opening their shops, conversing loudly, sounding every bit like magpies to Vojin. They swept the paving stones with long-handled straw brooms, pausing from time to time to shoot furtive glances skyward. He thought about Marija, just a few blocks away, preparing to open the family spice store. The meeting with Branko was set for 8:30 a.m. and the sickening dread he felt was far greater than the approaching storm. He did not want to disappoint his daughter, but he knew perhaps too much about Branko Krajina's family.

The Krajinas were Croatian. They lived one hundred and fifty kilometers north along the Adriatic Coast in the city of Split. For generations they had been successful spice merchants, but during World

War II had fought on the side of the Nazi-backed Independent State of Croatia and the ultranationalist Fascist Ustase. When Vojin was just four years old, his parents had been tortured and exterminated by the Ustase, leaving a scar on his soul that years could not erase.

Newspapers, candy wrappers, and cigarette butts tumbled and swirled in the wind along the narrow cobblestone streets. The cart with its oversized wooden wheels and canvas top shuddered. Lost in his troubled thoughts, Vojin hardly noticed. The Krajina brothers, one probably Branko's great uncle and the other his grandfather, had been known and feared among the Serbian troops for their murderous efficiency. Vojin had fought against them. But his daughter knew none of this—only that, after her mother, Nevena, had died of influenza, her father had come home from the war to raise her.

The cart rocked again in the rising wind. Vojin wasn't worried. He knew the cart better than he knew his own bed and kitchen chair. He pulled on his cigarette one last time, weathered cheeks collapsing inward with the effort. Smoke rolled out of his nostrils. He ground the butt into the callouses of his hand and touched his tongue with an index finger to remove a fleck of tobacco. Swallows glided overhead, riding wind gusts. He studied them and wondered what he would say to Branko. What could he say? What good would it do to challenge this young man? Yet how could he let his daughter marry a man whose relatives had tortured and slaughtered not only soldiers, but innocent women and children? Compounding everything in his mind, there was the cold hard truth that Split was so far away. How would he run the store without Marija? She was his business partner. She knew how to keep books and pay bills. He did not. He could barely read. Above all he did not want to be alone. Her companionship in their small apartment behind the store was without question the most enjoyable part of his life. She talked. He listened. She shared stories about the foreigners and locals who frequented their store. She made him laugh.

Vojin pulled a dented silver pocket watch from his vest and flipped it open. The hour and minute hands on the yellowed face pointed to VIII and XII. It was time. He stepped down from the wall as carefully as he could, sharp pain searing through scar tissue from an old bayonet wound. The wind was pushing against him. Was God holding him back, telling him he could not let this marriage go forward?

He untied the braided line and looped it on the push handle. A wind gust caught the cart and made it lurch. He kept a strong hold, turning it slowly around to head toward home. The street sloped slightly downward, forcing him to lean back, pulling hard on the handle to keep it from running away. At the next corner he turned left and began to push the cart up a slight grade. Ahead, he could see the storefront and Branko's lorry, already parked along the curb. Stopping briefly to catch his breath, he rubbed his face, bracing the cart against his chest. He saw their silhouettes backlit in the dim store lighting. They were a beautiful couple, he thought, peering together into the darkness searching for him.

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The sky turned black. Rain fell in cold, pea-sized drops, thumping on the canvas of the pushcart like fingers drumming on a table top. Marija and Branko spotted him moving slowly up the cobblestone street and hurried out to help. "I can do it," he said. "I do not need your help." They paid no attention. Together the three of them shoved the cart into the tiny courtyard beside the store.

"Come inside, Papa, and have some hot tea," Marija said. She slid her arm around his shoulder and ushered him in the door. Branko tied the rope from the handle to the spokes and followed. Marija led them back into the apartment through a dark narrow hallway lined with shelves of jars and boxes, easing Vojin into his chair at the kitchen table. She looked over his head at Branko, frowning for him to sit down too.

Branko was tall and slender, with muscular forearms and good teeth, eyes nearly obsidian beneath thick eyebrows. Vojin wondered if he knew anything about the notoriety of his grandfather, how good he'd been at

exterminating Serbs—people just like Marija. The thought was difficult to dismiss, even as Vojin saw why Marija would be so attracted to him.

“What a storm, eh?” Branko said. “Doesn’t look like it will let up this morning.”

Vojin pulled a leather pouch from his pocket and tapped loose tobacco into two cigarette papers. He licked the leading edge of the first one and slid a finger to seal it, rolling it into shape between his hands. “Cigarette?” he asked, offering it to Branko across the table.

“Papa, you smoke too much,” Marija said.

Branko looked at him and shook his head no.

Vojin shrugged, lifted the cigarette to his lips, and struck a stick match on the underside of his chair, cupping the flame, studying Branko as he lit the tobacco. The young man’s thick black hair was neatly combed. He was clean-shaven, but despite the smooth shave, his beard made a heavy shadow on his olive brown skin. His shirt was clean and his trousers pressed, a knife crease holding all the way to the cuffs. Yet, Vojin wondered, had he inherited any of his grandfather’s ruthlessness? Was the same evil hidden somewhere deep within his soul?

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“You are here to make a delivery, right?” he asked, tipping his head back to exhale cigarette smoke. His words were a challenge, he knew, even perhaps offensive.

Branko’s eyes widened. He stood up quickly, looking at Marija. “Sir, yes. To make a delivery.” His breathing was fast and shallow, as if he expected to be scolded. He shifted his weight from one foot to the other.

Vojin waited for him to speak, alternately taking a drag on his cigarette and sipping tea from the cup Marija set before him. “Is there something else?” he asked.

Marija nodded at Branko, and Branko gathered himself. Suddenly, memorized words poured from his mouth. “Sir, with all respect, I wish to ask for your daughter’s hand in marriage. I love her and she loves me. We wish to have a family and to run a family business together.”

He caught his breath and added, "With your permission, of course." He nodded and sat back down, indicating he had completed his speech.

Vojin felt the harshness of weather in his bones and the agony of memory in his soul. He closed his eyes and let his chin drop. Thunder rattled against the windowpanes. The store lights flickered. He closed his mouth and filled his leathery cheeks with air, slowly blowing out through his pinched lips. He looked up at Marija and examined her face. Her eyes told him she was worried, perhaps even frightened. He looked at Branko slumped back in his chair, dripping honey from a spoon into his tea, avoiding eye contact altogether.

"Papa?" she asked. Tears began to roll down her cheeks. She turned away to hide her anxiety, stepping into the tiny kitchen to shut off the burner. Vojin leaned across the table and took hold of one of Branko's wrists. Branko, surprised, did not resist. "Is your grandfather still alive?" Vojin asked.

"No," Branko said, puzzlement registering on his face. "He died many years ago. Did you know him?"

Vojin shook his head. "I never knew him, only about him. During the war."

"I will ask my family about it," said Branko.

Vojin waved him off. "No, don't. Please. It does not matter." He looked at Marija and took a deep breath. "And when will this marriage be held?"

Branko's head snapped up. He grinned at Marija, jumping to his feet, grabbing Vojin's hand, shaking it vigorously. "Thank you, sir! Thank you, sir!" He hugged Marija. She laughed and cried at the same time. Vojin remained seated. Marija leaned over him, raining down kisses on his cheeks and the top of his head.

Vojin pushed back from the table, the chair's wooden legs scraping loudly on the red tile floor. "I know it is morning, but I am going back to bed," he said quietly. "You will be moving to Split, I assume." He walked stooped over, an unseen weight pressing his neck and shoulders.

“Papa, what?” said Marija. “Split? Why would we move to Split?” She stepped in his path as he shuffled toward the curtain that served as his bedroom door. Her beauty and directness had always been a delight to him, but at this moment his mind was swimming with sadness.

Vojin lifted his head to stare at her. “His business is there!”

“No, Papa, his business will be here.” She laughed, relief spreading over her face. “Here Papa. With us.”

Branko spoke from behind him. “With your permission of course.”

Vojin turned to address him. “You’ll run a spice store? With all that education? You have a degree in electronics, right? With your family’s business so many kilometers away?”

“Sir, I have savings and wish to start a computer business here in Kotor. My parents know this already.”

“Here? A computer business?” Vojin asked incredulously. “Why here? Who will want to buy a computer here?”

“Everyone, Papa!” Marija exclaimed, clapping her hands. “Everyone!”

“The first computer will be right here in the store, a ‘demo’ for others to see,” Branko said proudly.

“Yes, Papa. We want to call it ‘Spice Computers.’ What do you think?”

“Or ‘Pushcart Computers,’” Branko added. “Whatever you think sounds best.”

The terrible weight on Vojin’s shoulders vanished. He straightened up until he was almost erect. Outside, distant sounds of thunder and slashing curtains of rain pounded the cobblestone streets. He shuffled a few feet to his left and studied the sky through a small window in the thick stone wall over the kitchen sink. Flashes of lightning revealed the pushcart beneath the broad branches of the giant red oak in the center of the courtyard.

“And where will you live?”

Marija slid sideways to lock arms with Branko. “May we live with you until we get the business established?”



Edge

VOLUME IV | SPRING 2015



On the Cover

Hot Spring in West Thumb
Geyser Basin, Yellowstone
National Park

KRISTINA MONTVILLE '14

The *Alumni Arts Review* is supported by
Franklin & Marshall's Office of the Provost
Alumni Relations
Office of Communications
The Philadelphia Alumni Writers House

“And you’ll manage the spice store at the same time?”

“Papa, yes! Did you think I would give it up?”

He turned again to look at Branko and smiled, bushy white eyebrows arched high on his forehead, thick as a fox tail beneath his unkempt white hair. He lifted a yellow canvas rain jacket off a hook along the wall. “I am going outside to check on my cart,” he said. “Perhaps the weather is changing.”

He stopped just before stepping into the connecting hallway to the store. “You know?” he said. “I saw on television there is a business in America called ‘Apple.’ Computers, too, I think. Maybe you could call your business ‘Plum’.” He looked at them both for a second, nodded, and fastened the only buckle left on his jacket. The entrance bell tinkled on the front door and a cold breeze rushed up the hallway. He began to sing as he walked out to check on his cart.



Water Street Park | JIM YESCALIS '68



Antigonish Farmhouse 2 | NEMO NIEMANN '76

Object-Memory-Gift

KELLY SCHENKE '95

In my family, we pass things on. Tables, chairs, jelly cupboards, these are the physical representations of memory; and when memory fades, the objects remain. I can run my hands over the edges of these things; feel the rough spots, the scratches, the evidence of everyday life. The other week, my great aunt and uncle presented me with a gift: a walking stick that belonged to my Poppop. Years before, when a beloved tree had to be removed from Poppop's front yard, Uncle Jay chose one of its limbs and in his own gruff way, sanded and polished the gift of his love into the tree limb. Carefully, he etched Poppop's nickname into the walking stick, so now I can run my finger along the smooth, blond wood and the dark brown letters of the name Kelly.

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At my grandparents' 50th wedding anniversary, Poppop stood at the podium, and told us how, before they were married, he used to steal his daddy's milk truck, and sneak down the old dirt lane to visit my Ma-Ma. When he got home, he'd wipe the dirt from the truck and hide the rags in the barn so his father wouldn't know he'd been gone. Poppop told us about trapping skunks in the woods behind Ma-Ma's family farm to sell the pelts for a little extra money during hard times. He spoke of raising hogs and how he loved to watch the little grunting piglets crowd each other for a good place to drink from the bristly sow lying on her side. With adoring eyes, Poppop described his life with Ma-Ma after

they were married. Every morning, he'd be out before the sun was up to deliver mail on his rural postal route, but return home for a second breakfast so he could see his two little girls before heading back out into the snow or the rain or the bright blue of a country day. Though he loved rich, dark soil, and working it with his hands, he revealed that he treasured the winter season because it meant more time in the house with Ma-Ma and the girls. During fair weather, he farmed in the late afternoon. Sometimes my mother crawled up into his lap on the tractor, and together they crept along toward the warm glow of the setting sun.

When my cousin, Jim, was just a toddler, he and my grandparents were in a terrible car accident. They were hit from behind, and the car immediately burst into flames. Poppop ran Jimmy across the road and placed him into the arms of a neighbor who'd run outside at the horrific noise. Ma-Ma was struggling to get her car door open, her dress already on fire. Poppop pulled her out of the car and away from the vehicle just as it erupted in another fiery explosion.

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Years later, when my Ma-Ma's body began to fail, Poppop became her cane. I could not imagine a metaphor more poignant than the one he so eloquently created: He'd put his arm down straight, held tightly against his hip, and then flatten his hand and hold it twisted out to the side. I don't know how he maintained his strength from such an uncomfortable position, but she leaned into him, and he carried her forward.

As time moved indifferently on, and the sinister fingers of dementia began to wind themselves into Poppop's brain, it was Ma-Ma who did the carrying. As we began to be erased from his memory, Ma-Ma was the tether that kept Poppop grounded in this world. I wondered what it must be like, in the early stages of dementia, to ask, "Do I know you?" and to hear, "It's 'little' Kelly. I'm your granddaughter." What loss and sadness grips you in that moment? What object can you cling to, to steady yourself? Object, memory...wife. As more and more things

and names and places slipped from his mind, one person remained his constant, calming thought...Ma-Ma.

Twenty-some years after he rescued Jim and Ma-Ma from the flames of that mangled car, he rescued me. It was not nearly as dramatic. There were no flames except for the burning fear inside of me. I'd just told my eighty-something grandparents that I was gay. With pain in her eyes and her hands pressed to her chest, Ma-Ma asked me, "Have you suffered over this? Over telling us?"

"Yes," I said. "I was afraid that you'd stop loving me."

But before the last syllable had escaped with my breath I heard Poppop's voice, thick with emotion, but clear and strong. "No," he said, "That would never happen."

And, in that moment, all doubt ceased. I knew with absolute certainty that I would always be loved. This was a gift, divinely created, effortlessly given, and infinite in its power.

My Poppop was just an ordinary man, who loved us all so dearly that there was no toil too hard, no sacrifice too great, no fire he would not face, to care for us. He and I share a name, a story both common and uncommon, and a walking stick that I can hold in my hand. My memories will fade. But objects remain. The only objects I have to give back to Poppop are words, and so I put them here, as the gift of my deep and grateful love.

Returning to the Beach in Winter

JESSICA MIGLIORE '07

Today the ocean seethes with ghosts;
its dark tide advancing and then retreating –
this beach so full of years.

Father watches silently. Existing,
but not tangible. Once I find him, he disappears –
a maze of icy tide pools and distant echoes

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as continents shift: I forget. Memory as constant
as a flicker of refracted light on water.
Brief, unknowable.

It was not this sea in which he struggled;
the failing heart is a wall that cannot
hold back the flood.

We return to this water; molecules
remembering, matter gently recalling us.



Dancing Leaf | JOHN SHIRE '66

Contributor Notes

Salina Almanzar '13 (p. 53) majored in English literature and studio art, with a focus in modernist literature and figurative arts. She is heavily influenced by her family's Latin American background as well as the strength of women in her family and community. She is an active artist in the Lancaster city art scene.

Dave Apple '12 (p. 39) majored in fine arts. Currently living and working out of his studio in Bucks County, Pa., he manages to keep a healthy balance of pleasure and work in his photography and video projects. By creating the company/collective Advanced Imaging Methods, with several local artists, he is able to work with clients and creatives alike, keeping art in the forefront of his life. For more work/info visit **dapplephoto.com** or **dapple@aimethods.net**.

Susan Armenti '77 (p. 17) majored in English and enjoys the creative outlets of writing and photography. She started her career in publishing at *Vogue* magazine in New York City, and after years in the entertainment business, now owns a Los Angeles real estate firm. In 2012 she published a book, *Sensation in the Night: Waking Up to Breast Cancer*. She can be reached at **susan@holmbyparkrealty.com**.

As a writer and storyteller, **Dan Bailes '67** (p. 115) explores the creative process: how we understand ourselves and participate in the world we share. He writes *The Vision Thing*, a blog on creativity, innovation and vision, with a focus on pathfinders and the inspirational moment. After many years editing and writing video and documentary programs, he continues to consult and write for clients. He also plays drums in a Chicago blues band and a contemporary jazz band, and practices yoga and photography. He's happily married with grown kids and is looking forward to what's next.

Richard Bidgood '76 (p. 114) majored in philosophy and classics before going off to graduate school in philosophy. There, he rewarded himself with a camera the day he defended his doctoral dissertation. Bidgood recently retired from a career in banking after 30 years, but he remains an enthusiastic amateur photographer. He can be contacted at richard.bidgood@fandm.edu.

Lisa Brooks '85 (p. 42) majored in psychology and drama. She owns a home-organizing business, and also teaches, does some educational consulting, and freelances for a number of magazines and newspapers in Houston. She is the Houston Gulf Coast Alumni Chapter chairperson for the F&M Alumni Council, and a member of the Alumni Association board. Brooks, the mother of four wonderful children, enjoys writing, travel, photography, and cooking, as well as the vibrant arts and culture in her home city of Houston. She can be reached at htownlisa@gmail.com.

Kevin Brown '12 (p. 40) lives in Madison, N.J., and teaches English literature at Delbarton School, where he also administrates the writing center. He began an M.A. in English literature this past summer at Middlebury's Bread Loaf School of English. This spring, he's leading students on a tour of England and Scotland. Reach him at kbrown@delbarton.org.

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Wilfred Brunner '70 (p. 97) received his MFA from George Washington University. Information about him and other images can be accessed at wilfredbrunner.com. The title of this painting is taken from Dylan's "Tambourine Man" which can be read as exploring the edge of being and/or consciousness. The ship image provides a reference to the ancient ideas of the edge of the earth. The green square can be seen as the anchoring earth and the dots as stars for navigating that journey.

Caitlin Cieri '12 (p. 61) is currently pursuing a master's degree in playwriting at the University of Essex. She runs a drama-based radio program called The Cartesian Theatre, where she is producing student-written work such as *Tales of the Dengie* and her own play, *Boring School Days*. Samples of her play, along with previous works featured in the *F&M Alumni Arts Review*, can be viewed at cccieri.com.

Richard Drake '68 (p. 27) has dabbled in photography for more than 50 years. Now retired and living in San Francisco, he continues to explore the realms of photography and digitally-enhanced images. He can be reached via email at richard@richarddrake.com. You may view more of his images at richarddrake.smugmug.com.

Ronald M. Druker '66, P'90 (p. 89) majored in English and played varsity soccer and baseball, as well as tennis, which he still actively plays. He was a member of the executive committee of F&M's Board of Trustees. As a real estate developer, Druker has twice won the coveted "Oscar" of his industry, the Urban Land Institute Award. Active on business, cultural and educational boards, Druker's philanthropy has included endowing a lecture series on architecture at the Boston Public Library, a traveling fellowship at the Harvard Graduate School of Design (where he was a Loeb Fellow and faculty member), and the Education and Arts Pavilion at the Museum of Fine Arts.

Norm Fesmire '64, (p. 10) government, is retired from a consultancy in transportation, working with clients in Japan, Australia, the UK, Germany, Sweden, and Switzerland. He was managing director of a joint venture with an old Czech company. His painting spans 30 years, concentrating on grandchildren, seascapes, and Depression-era subjects. His awards include: 2010 Mercer County Seniors Show "best" oil; 2010 N.J. State Senior Show, honorable mention; 2011 annual Phillips Mill (Pennsylvania) show; 2012 and 2014 Mercer County Seniors, 2nd place, oils.

Andrew Furman '90 (p. 71) majored in English and went on to earn his M.A. and Ph.D. at Pennsylvania State University. He is a professor in the Department of English at Florida Atlantic University, where he served as chair for seven years. He has published several works of literary criticism and creative writing. His most recent book is the environmental memoir *Bitten* (2014). He lives in Boca Raton with his wife and three children, all of whom share his love of trees.

Jennifer Grimm de Mello e Souza '92 (p. 30) majored in art. She has studied scientific illustration in Rio de Janeiro with Dulce Nascimento and at the Musée d'Histoire Naturelle in Paris. She paints and teaches art to children and adults in Edmonds, Wash. You can see more of her work at www.jenniedemelloesouza.com.

John Hambricht '62 (p. 54), a Lancaster native, completed a triple major in history, French and government, and is a Williamson Medalist. He studied as a Fulbright scholar at Strasbourg and Oxford universities and was a Woodrow Wilson fellow at Harvard. John has worked in both college teaching and government service. Now an independent scholar, he lives and writes in Chestnut Hill, Mass.

Anthony Herman '07 (p. 90) majored in English literature and now uses the brilliance of his F&M mentors to teach English to 10th- and 11th- graders at Episcopal Academy in Newtown Square, Pa. He resides in Ardmore with his amazing wife, Gemma, a 2006 grad. He also coaches cross country, basketball, and track and field. He can be reached at adh2122@gmail.com.

Roger Hooper '62 (p. 18), French, burned through three years of graduate school in France and the U.S. before finding a career in teaching and educational program development. Now retired, he volunteers at an organization protecting LGBT legal rights, and at a food program for Boston's homeless and hungry. He spends lots of time reading Early Modern French history, especially Louis XIII (1601–1643). He lives in Jamaica Plain, Mass., near his two children.

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Bill Hughes '59 (p. 21) majored in history. He did his graduate work at the Pennsylvania State University and has taught at Susquehanna University and Towson University, though his years at the Community College of Baltimore County, Md., occupied the greater part of his professional life. He is the author of *James Agee, Omnibus*, and *Mr. Lincoln*, and his articles, essays, and reviews have appeared in a wide range of publications. "I-55" is his first attempt at fiction.

Donald H. Kandel '78 (p. 7), business, was the photography editor of *Oriflamme* in 1978, and since graduating, has done photography as both a profession and a hobby. He has been professionally involved in the nonprofit community, currently as the COO/CFO of EarthShare. Living in Maryland, he received his second MBA from the Smith School in 2010. He can be reached at dhk0120@aol.com.

Bruce Kilstein '86 (p. 99) writes from Rhode Island, where he lives with his wife, Pam. His new novel, *Wise Men*, is available on Amazon.com. His first novel, *Destroying Angel*, was published in 2008 and is

forthcoming as an ebook from Crossroads Press. Recent short stories appear in *Sherlock Holmes Mystery Magazine*. He is a regular participant in the F&M alumni book club at the Philadelphia Alumni Writers House.

Richard Leist '70 (p. 121) is a loyal writing group member in West Mich., where he lives with his beautiful wife, Meg, and co-runs an investment firm. English major and Dip football co-captain, he was, along the way, a Navy fleet newspaper editor and Booth newspaper reporter. He holds an M.A. in Magazine, Syracuse University, and writes fiction. He won Honorable Mention in a *Writer's Digest* short story contest. **Orngman85.rl@gmail.com**.

Alan Macnutt '68 (p. 20) began at F&M in 1960, was drafted in '64 and served as flight operations specialist until '66, when he returned as a history major. From 1968–1972 he served with the Pennsylvania State Police, then worked as F&M's assistant superintendent of security services. 1976–80 he was public safety director at University of Bridgeport. In 1979 he became public safety director of James Madison University. He retired in 2003 and became a consultant on compliance with the Federal Clery Campus Crime Act. He was the primary caregiver to his beloved wife, Gail, a professional actor and an accomplished soprano coloratura, who died of Parkinson's in 2012. He currently lives with his son, Kevin, a professional photographer.

John W. Mason '60 (p. 120) majored in English and spent the next 35 years teaching modern European history courses in colleges and universities in England. In 2001 he returned to the U.S., settled in Lexington, Va., and became a full-time stone sculptor. His sculpture has been exhibited widely and has won many awards in Virginia and New England. His work can be seen, and he can be contacted, at **www.masonsculpture.com**.

Heather Belaga McLean '86 (p. 147) majored in business management and then obtained her master's in physical therapy. After living and working in many states across the country, she is now the inpatient manager for P.T. at the Kennedy Krieger Institute in Baltimore. Outside of work, she combines her love of travel and learning about cultures, people, and photography. She lives in Owings Mills, Md., with her husband, Robbie, and their cat, Michi.

Jessica Migliore '07 (p. 134) majored in English with a concentration in creative writing and edited the F&M student literary and art magazine *Prolog*. After working in the nonprofit world and writing freelance reviews for *ArtsNews*, she earned her M.A. in English education from Teachers College, Columbia University. She currently teaches English and runs a creative writing club at The Hackley School in Tarrytown, N.Y. She can be reached at jmigliore1@gmail.com.

Mark Miller '74 (p. 57) has written on numerous sit-com staffs, performed stand-up comedy in nightclubs and on TV, been a humor columnist for the Los Angeles Times Syndicate, and currently writes a regular humor blog for *The Huffington Post*. He recently published *500 Dates: Dispatches from the Front Lines of the Online Dating Wars*, available on Amazon.com, Barnes & Noble, or through your local bookstore. Read/subscribe to his blog: www.markmillerhumorist.com. He can be reached at mark.writer@gmail.com.

Kristina Montville '14 (cover) majored in history and English with a studio art minor. Her love of photography strengthened during her four years at F&M through studio classes led by Professor Holmgren, traveling abroad, and working in the photo lab. After graduating, Kristina spent four months working at *National Geographic* before accepting a fellowship at F&M and returning to Lancaster. Feel free to reach her at kristina.montville@fandm.edu.

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Liza Munk '14 (p. 60) is a doctoral track student in ethnomusicology at the University of California, Santa Barbara. At F&M, she also majored in ethnomusicology under the tutelage of the wonderful Sylvia Alajaji. Munk sends her love from California to the Philadelphia Alumni Writers House for nurturing her exploration of the arts in diverse forms. You can reach her at emunk@umail.ucsb.edu.

Tom Musante '80 (p.14) graduated with a B.A. in economics. Over the past 30 years he has held executive technology positions in Financial Services, Management Consulting, and, most recently, Transportation. Musante returned to photography after a 20-year hiatus, finding success with both gallery shows and published work. More of his work can be seen at www.tommusante.com

Conrad Nelson '81 (p. 46), a practicing visual artist working in multi-media in Buena Vista, Colo., graduated with a B.A. in sociology and went on to earn a B.F.A. in printmaking from Millersville University. Nelson has exhibited her work east and west, including the Lancaster Museum of Art and the Colorado Fine Arts Center. Her work is included in *The Art of Storytelling*, forthcoming from North Light Books in fall 2015. She can be contacted at www.conradnelson.net.

Nemo Niemann '76 (p. 130), who majored officially in history, and unofficially in art, has pursued a successful career in commercial and fine art photography. As a commercial photographer, he specializes in fashion and lifestyle for catalogs, editorial and advertising. His fine art pursuits include landscapes, frequently in black & white, and often taken in Ireland; a number of these photographs can be found in his fine art book, *Vanishing Ireland: A Monograph in Black & White*. Based commercially in New York City, Niemann shares a farm with his wife, twin boys, three cats, two horses and a dog, just 70 miles from the F&M campus.

Dave Noble '52 (p. 8) grew up on the streets of Philadelphia and in the woods of Morris Park, learning about life and love at home, on the streets, in school, and in church. F&M took a chance on him as part of the freshman class of 1948. During his junior year, he was an exchange student at Morehouse College. Graduating with a B.S. in geology, he worked as a geologist for 37 years, with excursions into noise pollution and impact attenuation. One of his courses at F&M was "Expository Writing," with Professor Phillips, which stimulated a desire to be creative.

Greg November '02 (p. 31) is a Seattle-based writer and teacher. While at F&M he majored in English, lived on Lemon Street, and frequented Famous Pizza. He has an M.F.A. from the University of California, Irvine, and his work has appeared in *Orange Coast Review*, *The Writing Disorder*, *Philly Fiction*, *Entasis* and *Crosscurrents*, among others. He and his wife recently welcomed their first child, a boy, into the world.

Luke Oeding '03 (p. 70) is currently an assistant professor of mathematics at Auburn University. His research in applied algebraic geometry has taken him all over the world, including recent long-term visits to research institutes in Daejeon, South Korea, and Berkeley,

Calif. He took the photo in this issue during a hot air balloon ride above wine country near Sonoma, Calif. (a birthday present from his wife, Noemi). Keep in touch! lukeoeding@gmail.com.

Samantha Perrine '14 (p. 98) majored in both anthropology and studio art. She currently resides in Stewartstown, Pa. Perrine is working as a child photographer with the company Life365 Portraits. As a part of Life365, she takes in-home photographs of infants and children, ages 2 weeks and up. In addition, she assists a local commercial photographer in Lancaster, Pa. She enjoys other creative disciplines, including drawing, sewing, and knitting. Keep in touch with her at samantha.perrine@gmail.com.

Sydney Pierce '13 (p. 9) majored in English literature and minored in art history. She currently lives in New York City, where she works as an editorial assistant for HarperCollins Publishers and spends her weekends writing. She can be reached at spierce013@gmail.com.

Sam Price '09 (p. 112) graduated from F&M with a degree in creative writing. He lives in Philadelphia.

Constance Renfrow '12 (p. 47) is an editor at Three Rooms Press; an editor and publishing consultant at constancerenfrow.com; and an avid Victorianist. Her fiction and poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in such places as *Petrichor Machine*, *Cabildo Quarterly*, *Denim Skin*, and *Restless*, and her nonfiction has been featured on DIY MFA and LitroNY. When not hanging around NYC's Merchant's House Museum, she can be found blogging at 21stcenturyvictorian.com.

Michael Ritterson '62, P'91 (p. 28) majored in German at F&M, studied at Göttingen, and earned his Ph.D. at Harvard. In retirement from teaching at Gettysburg College, he now works as a literary translator from the German. His translations—poetry and prose—have appeared in the *Alumni Arts Review*, *The Literary Review*, *International Poetry Review*, *New European Poets* (Graywolf, 2008), and elsewhere. He has published the first English translations of three works by the 19th-century novelist Wilhelm Raabe. He and his wife, Nicole, live just off U.S. Route 30 in Gettysburg.

Steven M. Rosner, M.D., '73 (p. 78) majored in biology and resides in Woodcliff Lake, N.J. with his wife, Cathy Pollak-Rosner, Esq. he practices rheumatology in Bergen County, N.J., and in his free time enjoys travel and street photography. His images have been published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* and in *The Annals of Internal Medicine*. To view more images, contact him at stevenmrosner@gmail.com.

Harry Roth '80 (p. 56) was a government major who frequently carried his camera around campus. He resides in Philadelphia, and practices law at Cohen, Placitella and Roth. His wife and three sons have learned to pace themselves during their travels as he lags behind taking photographs. His pictures can be seen at photosbyroth.blogspot.com and he can be reached at hroth@cpirlaw.com.

Robert N. Roth '50 (p. 92) majored in English. After graduate school, he switched to intensive study in the field of sacred music and spent the remainder of his professional career serving churches and synagogues as organist and choral director. In addition to choral and organ music, he has published a literary anthology celebrating the organ titled *Wond'rous Machine*, and has served as music editor of a children's songbook titled *Chatter with the Angels*. He can be reached at RobertRoth@aol.com.

Beverly Beyers Ryan '73 (p. 119) majored in psychology. She has an M.S. from Columbia University, N.Y.C., and has studied at the Corcoran College of Art and Design, Washington, D.C. She currently lives in Alexandria, Va., where she works as a painter in her studio in the Torpedo Factory Art Center. Ryan teaches painting courses at The Art League School, also in Alexandria, and is an adjunct professor in the art department at Montgomery College, Germantown, Md. Her work has been exhibited regionally and internationally. Her paintings are held in many private and corporate collections, and she is represented by Gallery Plan B in Washington, D.C. More of her work can be seen at www.beverlyryan.com.

Kelly Schenke '95 (p. 131) graduated with a degree in philosophy, and went on to receive an M.Ed. in school counseling from Millersville University. She recently self-published an Amazon Kindle edition of her novel, *Für Elise*. As always, her daughter, Kate, is magical, giggling proof that life is full of wonder and joy.

John Shire '66 (p. 135) majored in business and accounting. He currently lives on Virginia's Eastern Shore, as close to heaven as he may ever get. Although there is little that he does not enjoy photographing, he has always been drawn to and concentrated on people. He has had several exhibitions of his work including shows in Connecticut and New York's Greenwich Village, and currently teaches photography and "the art of seeing" at his local community college. www.johnshirephotography.com.

Marc Straus '65 (p. 79) is an oncologist. Three collections of his poetry have been published by TriQuarterly Books/Northwestern University Press, and his play in verse, *Not God*, has been staged several times. Straus, who's won numerous awards for his poetry, including The Robert Penn Warren Award from Yale, is also a renowned art collector; in 2011 he opened a contemporary art gallery in New York City. "The Question" is a chapter from his memoir, *The Iron Lung*. He can be reached at marcstraus@hotmail.com.

Fern Pagano Tavalin '76 (p. 4) majored in economics. Her passion for photography began immediately following graduation, owing much to the newly built darkroom facility at Steinman College Center. She currently chairs the Master of Arts in Teaching program at Maine College of Art. She received her doctorate from The University of Massachusetts, Amherst, with a concentration in creativity and an honorary doctor of fine arts from Champlain College for her pioneering work in arts and technology innovation. Contact her at ftavalin@verizon.net.

Dave Taylor '81 (p. 15) majored in English, minored in psychology, and took every writing course available in the F&M course catalog. He currently resides in Lancaster and owns a branding consulting firm. He is a regular columnist on branding and marketing for the *Central Penn Business Journal* and spends time each year watching, photographing and talking about whales to anyone who will listen. He can be reached at dt@taylorbrandgroup.com.

When not roaming the trails of the New England mountains, **Frank Jeffrey Trubisz '70** (p. 11), resides in Burlington, Vt., where he writes and photographs. Formerly an English teacher and department chair in the Melrose, Mass., public schools, his alpine experiences in

mountaineering programs in Washington and Wyoming inspired his interest in wilderness photography. His images currently appear in *DestinationVT*, a quarterly magazine, and his work can be viewed at **onthetrailphotography.com**.

Diane Wynshaw-Boris '77 (p. 111) majored in English and Italian. She, her husband, Tony '77, and their greyhound, Dexter, an 8-year-old ex-racer, reside in Cleveland, Ohio, where she continues to practice law.

Jim Yescalis '68 (pp. 45, 129) graduated with a degree in history on the eight-year plan. His serious interest in photography began in 1968 and became his profession. He retired from Millersville University as university photographer and now concentrates on exhibiting personal work. He lives in Lancaster with his wife of 44 years, Jill. Email him at **jimandjillyes@aol.com**.

Paul Zamorano '13 (p. 41) majored in art history with a minor in anthropology. He currently resides in New Orleans, La., where he is a second year master student at The Tulane School of Architecture. He is interested in the built environment and how architecture can improve the lives of everyone. **pzamoran@tulane.edu**.



Inka Terraces | HEATHER BELAGA MCLEAN '86

Acknowledgments

As with our previous volumes, and indeed the entire endeavor that is the *F&M Alumni Arts Review*, Volume IV would not stand without the pillars that support it, and I am deeply grateful to:

| 148 | THE PROVOST’S OFFICE, including Alan Caniglia, Vice President for planning and Vice Provost, whose vision so serves this effort; Provost Joel Martin; and Associate Dean of the Faculty Carmen Tisnado, whose insights and understanding have once again been essential.

THE OFFICE OF ALUMNI RELATIONS: Mary Mazzuca, Executive Director of Alumni Relations and Annual Giving, is unflappable and engaged and delightful. Many others in her office, especially Aimee Fasnacht, Associate Director; Mary’s assistant, Pat Fossler; and Kristina Montville, Alumni Fellow, are essential in dozens of ways: assisting with mailing lists, searching for lost alums, proofreading, and organizing our Publication Party, to mention a very few.

THE PHILADELPHIA ALUMNI WRITERS HOUSE: Director Kerry Sherin Wright, Assistant Director Joanna Underhill, and House Coordinator Delphine Martin are cherished friends as well as esteemed colleagues. Together, they create the creative and inclusive atmosphere for which the Writers House is known, making it a delightful place to be and work. I am grateful, too, for the materiel support provided by the Writers House.

THE OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS: Those who offer their considerable abilities to creating the gorgeous volume that is the *Review* include Jason Klinger, Director of News and Publications; Anita Focht, Production Manager; and Michael Fink, Graphic Designer, whose contributions to this particular volume are enormous. Thanks, too, to Sri Dasgupta, Director of Web Content and Multimedia—where would we be without our website!—and to Chris Karleski '01, Editor, *F&M Magazine*, for his support in celebrating the *Review* by publishing selected pieces in the *Magazine* each year.

Thanks are due, as always to my beloved English Department, and our inimitable Department Coordinator Debra Faust Saporetti '91.

And I remain deeply glad of President Dan Porterfield's enthusiasm for and belief in the *F&M Alumni Arts Review*.

One of the sparkling pleasures of editing the *AAR* is working with the students on the Editorial Board, and this year was full of iridescence: Anne Piccolo '15, Conlan LaRouche '15, and Keiran Miller '15, and Assistant to the Editor Maeve Shanahan '15, have all served on the Board for some years, and will graduate this spring; they'll be missed! I am delighted that Shi Eun Lee '16, Michele Bailey, '17, Greer Kann '17, and Assistant to the Editor Delia Pepper '16 continue to offer their editorial assistance.

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It's hard to say enough about Assistant Professor Marci Nelligan, who commented on early drafts of contributor's poems, and alumnus Lisa Seidman '79, who offered thoughts on prose submissions. What they have to say is always enlightening and very useful. Assistant Professor Kerry Sherin Wright is, as always, a backbone.

I particularly want to acknowledge Michael Fink: Not only is he our excellent graphic designer: this year he offered such valuable perspectives regarding submitted images and other matters that

I requested his permission to add him to the Editorial Board. We often exchanged daily, hourly, even minute-by-minute emails, and his contributions to EDGE are enormous and essential. I particularly appreciate our collaboration during the complicated if delightful process of juxtaposing image with writing. I am in his debt.

With each volume, I think I could not be luckier in my assistants. EDGE is no exception. Maeve Shanahan '15 took early graduation, so this autumn she not only executed her duties with cheerfulness and skill (especially regarding social media), but also took on handing over myriad duties to Delia Pepper '16. She did a great job; Delia's work this spring has been stellar. The volume you hold in your hands would not exist without their hard, focused work. I thank them with all my heart.

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But my largest acknowledgement—as otherwise there would be no reason for this volume—is of the artists and writers who submit their work to us.

As word gets out about the *Alumni Arts Review*, and as an increasing number of alums see the excellence of the work in each volume (we publish no “puff” pieces, and almost every piece of writing goes through a number of drafts before final acceptance), as well as the elegance of the magazine itself (top-notch design, the use of archival paper, top-of-the-line printing and binding), more and more choose to submit their work for consideration. This makes the job of selecting what to include a difficult task. All kinds of factors govern acceptances; for instance, we can only publish so many images of wilderness, no

matter how beautiful or stirring they all may be. I strive to balance graduating years, and even, although this is difficult, as far more men than women tend to submit to us, a balance of men and women. Also tone: humor and seriousness; formal and informal; the personal essay and those more general in nature. It's quite a juggling act at times, especially as the number of submissions grows.

So that's my biggest thank you of all: not only to those whose work is published in these pages, but to all the alums who took the time to create a piece of art and send it along. I submit my own work—songs, stories, essays—to contests and magazines, and I know what it is to get a rejection letter (no matter how politely phrased it may be), and I know it sometimes takes a real jolt of effort to submit again. But of course that's what we must do. So thanks, especially, to those who just keep on submitting. Some who didn't make it into the previous issues gave us work that this year fit perfectly with our theme. Some we've published before didn't get into these pages. So please submit away! All of us look forward to seeing your work.

One of the joys of editing the *Alumni Arts Review* is to hear from those who have perused its pages. I enjoy hearing about the impact of particular pieces, and especially when I am told that alums have reconnected as a result of what's in these pages or that they've found common interests with alums from other graduating years. So: a final nod of gratitude to you, dear reader!

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