Clamantis is a biannual publication for the Master of Arts in Liberal Studies program at Dartmouth College. We showcase the strongest creative and critical work submitted by current MALS students as well as MALS alumni. We believe that by selecting and integrating work from all four of the program’s concentrations, we will promote intellectual engagement, fruitful questioning, and honest discourse within the realm of liberal studies.

If you have any questions, comments, or are interested in writing a feature, please send your e-mail to: The.MALS.Journal@dartmouth.edu.
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Dear Reader,

To be that voice crying out, to shout, to claim—to chase down the truth wherever it lies—these are the qualities of Dartmouth MALS students. From the solid foundation of past editors and contributors, The MALS Journal is ready to grow and re-invent itself with a new name and graphic identity that reflects our program’s vitality and mission. We’re proud to introduce Clamantis: The MALS Journal. You’ll recognize Clamantis from Dartmouth’s motto: *Vox clamantis in deserto*, which means “the voice of one crying out in the wilderness.”

Beginning with the Spring 2016 issue, Clamantis: The MALS Journal will present the best writing our program has to offer, with a re-invented design and exciting new cover art for each issue. Thank you to Justine Kohr for heading up the creative parts of the project. Your vision and leadership produced the journal worthy of our program. Clamantis: The MALS Journal is lucky to have you as editor-in-chief beginning in Fall 2016. Ken Davis—your Spring 2016 cover is inspired. We are grateful to have such a talented, nationally recognized artist within our ranks.

We’d like to congratulate all the MALS students whose work appears in this issue. Your dedication to craft and scholarship represent all of us in the MALS program. Special thanks to the heart and soul of our program—Professor Don Pease and Wole Ojurongbe: your leadership continues to challenge and empower the entire staff. Much thanks to faculty advisor Anna Minardi—your beautiful and kind spirit brings out our best. We are so grateful to Amy Gallagher and Maisea Bailey in the MALS office, and Jackson Schultz for managing our online presence.

We’d like to acknowledge the contribution of our talented assistant editors who dedicated their time to read an overwhelming number of submissions: Justine Kohr, Brittany Murphy, Katherine Emery Brown, Maria Semmens, and Amira Hamouda.

We hope all MALS students past and present see themselves within the pages of our journal. This publication belongs to us—students always
ready to cry out, to shout, to claim, to re-invent. The truth is out there, and our voices are determined to find it.

Sincerely,

Emily and Amanda (Spo)
“Tom” by Justine M. Kohr
I was sweating in a small room in Baker-Berry that was tight with strange people. One thing I had noticed about Dartmouth’s beautiful, charming buildings—with lunette windows, tall archways, and uneven wood floors, I felt like I was in a Fitzgerald book—was how excruciatingly hot they were, even in the dead of winter. When it was hot, I got anxious. And when I was anxious, I got hot.

I hunched my back and leaned forward on the wooden table in front of me, twisting my arm in an awkward position to hide the red blotches that sprawled across my neck and chest. I tried to listen to the blonde girl next to me as she described her many travels around the globe, but I was really rehearsing what I was going to say. Hi, I’m Justine, and this is my first MALS class. Hi, I’m Justine, and this is my first MALS class.

“And that’s basically it,” said the girl, who seemed much more composed than I was—but that was nothing new in my world. This is why I wrote; so I didn’t have to express myself aloud.

The professor, Tom Powers, suddenly looked to me with folded arms. He nodded his head gently in permission. It was time. Though I was still anxious, something about his stoic expression soothed me. He was steady, his blue eyes kind with wrinkles. His mouth not pressed together or smirking—just resting. Before class, I had read online that he was a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and the author of several books. But the man in front of me showed not even a flicker of ego.

I inhaled and in one breath said, “Hi, I’m Justine. And this is my first MALS course…. ” Exhale. Hardest part over. I went on to say that I was pursuing the creative writing track of MALS, and was looking forward to getting back into writing.

Phew. You did it. Pat yourself on the back. Anxiety is a bitch and you will defeat her.

“What kind of writing did you used to do?” he asked. His arms remained crossed. His face, cool.
I had not been prepared for this next line of questioning, but I went with it. “Well, a lot of short stories. I started a memoir that I never finished. And I used to write a lot of poetry. Stupid, angsty teenager stuff,” I said with a laugh. Self-deprecation was my secret way of getting out of any kind of uncomfortable situation.

“Okay, but what did you write about in your poetry?”

I paused. Should I lie and say, “Oh just a bad breakup?” Or should I tell the truth? No one in the class had yet gone beyond the typical introduction, and I didn’t want to be the first one to break the barrier. I could feel my face flush in anticipation of what I was about to say.

“My dad,” I blurted out. And anxiety, and my eating disorder, I had thought, but didn’t say.

“Tell me more about your father,” he said calmly, not moving one inch in his chair at the head of the table. I looked around at the unfamiliar faces then looked down at my left arm, a disconnected limb that served as a point of focus.

“Well, he was an abusive alcoholic. I mean … He’s still an alcoholic, but I don’t see him or talk to him anymore.”

Was this what graduate school was like? Would all classes begin in this soul-baring, uncomfortable way? I thought back to my first days in therapy, when my psychologist had asked the same innocent question. I had very matter-of-factly told her about my father in the same way—something I had rehearsed many times—and added that I had no desire to talk about him.

“Abusive to who? You?”

“My mom. And me, but mostly my mom,” I said, my voice quivering. “But I don’t want to write about him anymore. I’m happy, very happy. And I’m ready to write about other things.”

“And you don’t have to,” he said, leaning forward in his chair. Just like that, in the span of about three minutes, this man had dug up my great secret.

Without ever saying it directly, I knew Tom wasn’t going to let me settle for writing stories about a really cool red chair I once had. And so, I didn’t. I wrote about my father. Not at first, but slowly. It was an emotional and vexing process, trying to, on paper, make sense of the conflicting feelings I had towards him. But I finally had the courage to do so.
And I wasn’t the only one. Tom pushed each one of us—very gently—to reach into our subconscious to find that thing, that one thing, we had been wrestling with. “But what else?” he would ask. “You almost have it, but give us a little more.”

Many classes ended in tears—not just from the authors but from their readers too, who knew exactly how much courage it had taken to write about that one thing.

I think about Tom’s class often. Since that January in 2015, I’ve written an entire novella about my father, and will probably continue to write about him until I’m done with the wrestling. I probably would have written about my father eventually, but Tom forced me to confront my thing right away. He is a capital T, capital S, Truth Seeker. And he made a Truth Seeker out of me.

“I am really, really nervous to interview you.”

Tom chuckled. “Nervous? You have nothing to be nervous about.”

This is how my interview with Tom Powers began. Tom Powers, a long-time investigative reporter who won a Pulitzer Prize in 1971 for National Reporting at the United Press, who has written nine books—including The Killing of Crazy Horse, Heisenberg’s War: The Secret History of the German Bomb, and Intelligence Wars: American Secret History from Hitler to Al Qaeda—graduated from Yale, and who has been teaching as a visiting professor at Dartmouth since 2004. Hell yes, I was nervous. But it had to be done. With him retiring from teaching at Dartmouth this summer, I needed to learn as much as I could about him.

We were looking at each other eye-to-eye in the middle of a faux-Starbucks café in the Dartmouth Bookstore. I started my recorder. He leaned back in his chair. And so it went.
Q & A

FIRST REPORTING GIG

Tell me about how you first got into journalism.

Well, I was born in 1940 in New York City. I got my English degree from Yale. ... graduated in the spring of 1964, and then immediately went into the army. I knew I had to get the army out of the way somehow. You could not ignore the army, because you would be drafted. I never knew anyone who wanted to go to the army, so we were all trying to get out of it and I was too. I joined the National Guard and spent six months in basic training, and then I was out and free to go wherever I wanted. So, I went to Rome. I got a job at the Rome Daily American. ... It was a small team, and we were paid a very modest amount of money, but a modest amount of money in Italy was plenty. It was heaven. ... I still go back all the time with my wife.

BURGLARS SOUGHT

And where did you go after that?

From there I went to England, and that was where I first wrote a real freelance piece. I wrote two long articles for The Observer for their split page. It was about burglars.

I took out a classified ad in The London Times, which at that time used to be on the front page of the paper. The ad had a very simple message: BURGLARS SOUGHT. The first person who called up was Scotland Yard who wanted to know what I was up to. ... The second, third, fourth, and fifth people who called were journalists who wanted to know what I was up
to. And then the seventh through the twentieth people who called me up were burglars. It seems crazy but, we would agree to meet, and then in the first few minutes they would just decide, “I’m going to tell him everything.” And they did! Each burglar was different. Some of them had been safe-crackers. Some of them had been second-story men. I remember one guy who had a specialty: he was robbing jewelry from his mother’s friends.

So I sent over the article to the editor at the time, and he sent over a telegram: “Great copy.” And you just can’t imagine the weight and anxiety that lifted when he sent me that. It was one of the kindest things I had witnessed.

**A MAN NAMED RICHARD HELMS**

*You’ve written quite a bit about intelligence work. When did you first become interested in it?*

I worked at the United Press in New York for three years. Everything I’ve written on the whole sort of developed out of things I was doing at the time. At UPI, I wrote a lot about the anti-war movement and the Civil Rights movement in ’67 and ’68. The government was taking a very serious and hostile attitude toward people in the anti-war movement because they were gumming up the works and making it more difficult to carry out policy. There was a great deal of surveillance going on, arrests, and examples of provocation where officials would stimulate people into doing illegal acts so they could be arrested. It all got very ugly and complicated. That naturally got me interested in questions of intelligence work because the people who were pursuing the anti-war movement were people engaged in intelligence work.

“This is impossible. How am I going to go down to Washington and get all these intelligence operatives to tell me their secrets?”
And then, an editor at Rolling Stone asked me to write a story about Richard Helms, the director of Central Intelligence. He had been indicted for perjury for having lied to Congress about a planned covert action program in Chile. … At first I thought, “This is impossible. How am I going to go down to Washington and get all these intelligence operatives to tell me their secrets?” Turned out, it worked fine because I came along at just the right moment.

The first generation of CIA people were beginning to retire, and as soon as you leave that secret hermetic world, everything gets different to you, and things that seem terribly secret when you were still in it, all of a sudden seem completely harmless and easy to talk about. I showed up and I had never heard any of their stories, and I was eager to hear them all. So they got a chance to tell me all their stories that they had collected over a lifetime of intelligence work. I spent hundreds of hours sitting in suburban living rooms in Virginia and Maryland talking to these guys. Very often I would notice that their wives and their children would linger around the room, and then eventually sit down and listen too because they had never heard their husbands and fathers talk about this stuff. They were fascinated.

*Note: Tom went on to publish a book about Helms in 1979 called The Man Who Kept the Secrets: Richard Helms and the CIA.

**THE WEATHERMEN & THE PULITZER PRIZE**

Tell me about the national story you wrote which won the Pulitzer.

It was 1968 in New York, and the Columbia University chapter of Students for a Democratic Society [SDS] took over a building. They occupied Low Library and other administration buildings. They refused to leave until the university complied with a whole bunch of things that were more or less impossible for them to do. This organization became increasingly revolutionary.

These [SDS] groups, through an internal process of radicalization, gradually decided that they had to become real revolutionaries. They couldn’t just be white kids who were going to stand on street corners. They had to go
out there and put their lives on the line. So, they concluded that they had to make bombs and kill people. This radical faction called itself the Weathermen.

One day, in [New York] in March 1970, a bunch of people were in a townhouse … and they were wiring up bombs, and a young woman named Diana Oughton incorrectly attached a wire, set the bomb off in her hands, and blew up the building. I knew one of the kids who had been in the building. As soon as the bomb went off and I heard about it, I knew damn well it was the Weathermen. … It was only natural that I do a story about it. People were very interested in this at the time. UPI distributed five articles … and they were published all over the country, probably in thousands of newspapers. It got a tremendous amount of attention. There was a lot of stuff about these kids that no one had managed to put down on paper before. So naturally it was a consideration for the Pulitzer in National Reporting. And it won one, which was a brilliant stroke of luck.

**FOUNDING STEERFORTH PRESS**

*How did you end up in Vermont?*

My family has owned a farm in South Royalton, Vermont all my life. So it was a natural place for me to come. In 1982, my wife, kids, and I moved to the farm. At the time, I was writing largely about nuclear weapons and military policy. I had a contract with my publisher to write a book on nuclear weapons. I felt this was a good place to do that, and it was.

So, I just went on writing, and I had established a relationship with the *New York Review of Books* just about that time, and began writing articles for them. … There was always plenty to write about.

As I was living in Vermont, I met a whole bunch of people, and a friend of mine, Mike Moore, said to me one day, “Let’s start a publishing company.” And a few months later, I had lunch with Alan Lelchuk who called me up to basically invite me to teach in the MALS program. He said, “We should start a book store! And I said “Yes, that’s a good idea.” And he said, “But not just a book store, we can do a bit of publishing! So we can publish the books
and sell them in the bookstore.” And I said okay, as a matter of fact I have a friend who’s interested in starting a publishing company. Eventually we took on a fourth publisher, Chip Fleischer, and we created this little company called Steerforth Press.

*Steerforth Press was founded in 1993 in South Royalton, Vermont by Powers, Lelchuk, Moore (1941 – 2014), and Chip Fleischer. Its manifesto declares, “Our interests fall into no category, no field, no niche; our tests of a book’s worth are whether it has been written well, is intended to engage the full attention of the reader, and has something new or important to say.”

**TEACHING AT DARTMOUTH**

*So, you began teaching at Dartmouth in 2004. What made you accept Lelchuk’s offer to teach in the MALS program?*

It was a source of secondary income, but I was also just curious—curious about whether kids today felt about writing and literature and had similar ambitions to the kids I knew in college. Was it roughly the same, or profoundly different? And to my amazement, it’s pretty damn similar. People had the same kind of aesthetic interest and desire to engage in a deep way in the meaning of their own lives.

Every year, there were about 12 people who wanted to take the course [“Telling True Stories”], and in that group there were usually two or three dazzlers, with just a natural gift for spinning gorgeous language. Pretty much all of them were plenty smart enough to write interesting things. … I felt that in every class, every student, got some kind of rich ability to confront their own thoughts and preoccupations. Most of them were not going to become professional writers, but when you really tackle it seriously,
you develop a capacity to go about it in a sort of broader, richer, deeper, more comprehensive way. And it takes on a seriousness. It’s something substantial. It matters. And I thought it was an important thing to try to help people learn to do.

*I’ve noticed in your classes that you really hand the reigns off to the students, and let them run the workshop. You’re very hands off. Why is that?*

One of the hardest things as a writer is to get someone to read your stuff. You can’t just hand your writing to someone and ask them to give it a serious reading. But students will do it, and so it’s an incredible opportunity to see what other people are doing and have them respond to what you’re doing. If you learn to listen to what they have to say about your work—and not quarrel with it in your mind—just listen, you actually see how they’re responding to what you’ve done. You can see the parts that they’re missing, or that they don’t like, or that they’re bored by in a way that you can’t figure out on your own.

They’re in their world. And I come from a very different world with different particulars—it’s very antique. And I’m not sure there’s any particular value in me telling anybody how to write a perfect story for *Esquire* in 1965. Whereas they already know what they want to do, or they’re learning how to know what they want to do. The most important things in writing are to pick something you care about, and second of all do it. Just actually do the whole thing, whatever the thing is.

If it was helicopter mechanics, I would want them to know how the carburetor works. And I would feel that there’s only one way. You have to know the right way. But when it comes to writing, nobody knows how the carburetor works. Every way kind of works.
In nonfiction, I started people off writing about themselves, so they didn’t have to do a lot of ancillary research. They’ll figure out how it works with each other. And I think that actually happened.

You really help students break down barriers and confront their own truths. Even on the first day of class, you’re digging for that truth. Talk about that.

Typically, a few people in class think they can just slip through and be invisible authors on the sidelines, and write about their dog. Pretty soon they realize they can’t do that, and they don’t want to do that. … I want to encourage, from the very first minute, that people are going to start bringing some stuff up, and none of us know what that stuff is until it begins to emerge and you actually identify it.

Part of the reason of doing this is getting your hands on it—see what it is that’s really working in there. … People tend to gravitate towards things they really care about. … You have to have the courage of your own interest and just pursue it and try to bring it to the front.

Do you have a favorite moment from teaching, that’s really gratifying?

There’s a moment with every student where there’s some kind of a real exchange. Just for two minutes you know that person, and you understand that person. That person understands that you’re paying attention. There’s an exchange there that is emotionally significant. I’ve always liked that.

The things that I remember about my work life are the deeper connections I’ve established and the people I’ve written about in a serious way. I can talk about, in considerable length for example, the people I met while writing The Killing of Crazy Horse. I spent ten years on that. And within those ten years, I established some really close relationships with people whose lives are a part of my life now.
*Tom’s book The Killing of Crazy Horse was published in 2011 and examines the Great Sioux War and what really happened in the final months and days of Crazy Horse’s life.

MAKER OF THINGS

What’s something people would be surprised to learn about you?

I like to make things of all kinds. I tend to make things out of wood. I like to draw. I like buildings. I like old buildings, and I like how they can be brought into communication with each other so they create an interesting environment and can have an effect on the life of those around it.

Did you make the case around your neck?

Yes, it’s an eyeglass case. I made it using an edge-beading technique and colors that were favored by the Lakota.

I made a lot of stuff when I was working on the Killing of Crazy Horse just to get into the mood of the time. The leather came from the hide of a deer I shot in 1964. I never shot another but never needed to—I’ve still got some of that leather, and when this case begins to fall apart I’ll make another. The one you see is probably the fifth or sixth.

I made some hat bands and shoulder straps (for bags) as well, using old designs that I found in museum catalogs and the like. One hat band was based on the design of a rifle scabbard alleged to have belonged to Crazy Horse—I came across it in the Buffalo Bill memorial center where he was buried on Lookout Mountain just west of Denver—very beautiful colors and a simple design. It was on loan from the North Dakota Historical Society and I per-
suaded the folks at Lookout to remove it from the case so I could photograph it properly—you can imagine how much conversation that sparked.

I got an education looking for old shirt designs like a great one from a shirt that had belonged to Short Bull, a friend of the Great Chief—I used it to make a strap for a shoulder bag. In the same way I looked obsessively for Indian photographs of the 1970s on eBay—I got to the point where I could recognize a hundred or more faces—I thought of that process as internalizing the world I was trying to understand and write about. As a research method it consumed a god awful amount of time, but there was a reward—I woke up interested every single day for ten years. Now I wake up interested in my father.

THE FUTURE FOR POWERS

So, you’re retiring from teaching. How come, and what’s next?

Well, I’ve done this for quite a while, and it just seemed like a logical time. I’m also in the middle of writing a book about my father. I’ve been working on it for some time, and I just started chapter 32. It’s very different from anything I’ve ever done.

Most of the stuff I’ve done has had some sort of topical urgency to it. But a book about my father has zero topical urgency—nobody needs to know what’s in it and I don’t have any large point to make. I’m simply trying to make a character live on the page. It’s a very complicated exercise. To understand another life is very demanding. The closer you get to it, the more slippery it seems in some ways. You’re not sure if you’ve got it or not. Even though you have a ton of information, you’re connecting the tissue
between the various nuggets of fact is never 100% clear or sure. There’s no obvious answer. I knew my father until I was nearly 50 years old, but the process of writing about him has made him emerge in my mind much more clearly than he ever has before.

One of the things I’ve learned to have a lot of respect for is the immense difference between a book that is written, and a book that is not written. To take the unwritten book and write it, is a positive thing.

*The full audio interview with Tom Powers will be made available on the Clamantis website.*
one can never consent to creep when one feels an impulse to soar...

(helen keller)
I was a child of God, once, in a time that was simple and comforting within its complexities and constraints.

The Deckers and Slades, my two namesakes, were not Sunday Mormons, but every day Mormons, and we bathed in the precepts of our religion from sun up to sun down. From the time I was old enough to listen to the stories told around the dinner table and sing along to the hymns during Sacrament meetings, I knew who I was and the long sacred history that I represented. I was a child of God, with an ancestral heritage going back to the Kirtland Bank, the Zion’s Camp, the Haun’s Mill Massacre, the Mormon Battalion, the Nauvoo Legion, the formation of the Relief Society, and the seemingly impossible Hole in the Rock Expedition.

From the age of three to twelve years old I attended Sunday classes known as “Primary.” Every Sunday until I can remember, I sang along to the hymns and internalized the messages which still hum in my head, reminding me that “I am a child of God / and he has sent me here / has given me an earthly home / with parents kind and dear.” I knew that pioneer children “sang as they walked, and walked, and walked” and that as their progeny I would put my shoulder to the wheel and “push along” doing my “duty with a heart full of song.”
In my parent’s home I read the journals of my ancestors and absorbed their convictions through these pages and the songs that their endurance created. These were the histories molded into my identity before I could speak my own name, and from them I knew that the church was true, and that the *Book of Mormon* was “another testament of Jesus Christ here on the American continent.” I knew this, because I was a Mormon and our church’s founding prophet, Joseph Smith, said so.

These memories of my divinity and my battle to reconcile them with my dormant lesbian desires are bound in pages of scrawled thoughts, inspirational quotes, drawings, and collaged pictures. Stacks of these journals fill multiple storage containers, and from time to time I pop the lids to run my fingers through the catalogue of my history. This is a practice of meditation that allows me to enter into the pockets of truth that float between the synapses of thought and crafted faith. I use these erratic timelines to pinpoint the difficult decisions and choices that I have made, and the ones made for me.

This practice of record keeping is a habit that I have acquired from my ancestors, and like them, I have been keeping a record of my life since my pre-teens. The oldest journal I have is a brown hardbound book with lined pages. This was purchased for me at Deseret Books – the media arm of the LDS church. The first entry is dated May 9, 1992. My family had moved to the bone-dry country of Round Rock, Arizona after living a year in Kayenta. I was ten years, one month and twenty days old. I had an expressive mind and a hopeful heart.

*The wind is blowing very hard today. And I don’t think a piece of stele [sic] could last. It was raining hard like golf balls. . . . I had a good time today even though my life isn’t that existing [sic]. . . . I hope that every one [sic] will have sweet dreams tonight. . . . I wish my family good lives. I hope that every one [sic] that is in the world will change from mean to nice, and that my family will learn the true meaning of love and friendship. I really hope that my dreams will come true. My life is a desater [sic] now. I hate so much that my life [sic] will change. I know that my*
parents care alot [sic] for me, and I wish them the best of life they ever dreamed of.

I’m not sure what inspired me to write this, but I do know that by this point in my life I was very much depressed. I found release through writing, but the sadness remained in the recesses of my knowing. I continued to keep a journal until the age of twenty seven. The thread of transformation, continual improvement, and perceptive observation permeated these pages. I felt that it was my sacred duty to maintain these accounts of spiritual instruction and personal trails for my inevitable offspring. Getting married and having children was not an expectation, it was a commandment. My role as a woman and mother someday was to “be fruitful and multiply,” to find a husband, to get married in the temple, and to live together as a family in heaven for time and all eternity.

When I think of the litany of laws, etched forever on my psyche like the Codes of Hammurabi, the pages turn to an old photograph exposed in sepia tones. It’s an image of me on a variegated royal blue afghan with an edge of white fringe. The texture of the blanket rises and falls, as it is spreads out across the brown multicolored polyester carpet of the living room floor. In this scene I am learning to lie on my belly and lift my head – practicing and perfecting a milestone that will lead me to my first attempt at crawling.

I am wearing a baby blue romper and my fingers are entwined in a near perfect prayer. A smile broadens across my face revealing the outlined contours of round cheekbones and plump lips. I stare with an awareness of my existence and look like the wise Yoda with my large ears pointed to the ceiling. At this moment in my life I am not a tabula rasa, none of us are. Others have already pressed their stamps into my soft skin writing out in crude cuneiform the person I am to be.

In our two-story sandstone home I am the youngest of seven siblings living on a dirt road dubbed “Decker Hill,” by locals and residents. Nearly
everyone on the eastern tip of County Road G is either a Decker or related to one. Within this collective hive of generations, I am not an individual, but a Decker first, and a Mormon incontrovertibly. This family and this land, nestled in the canyons of the San Juan Mountains, is the epicenter of my universe and for the first seven years of my life everything that I ever wanted or ever needed was there on that dusty dirt road.

From the photograph it’s hard to tell who else is in the room, but I like to imagine that my immediate family is all there enjoying a momentary reprieve—laughing in unison with all the worries and problems shuttled out to the corners of their respective concerns.

In this memory, I pretend the photographer is my mother and at that moment she is watching something with everyone else as they sprawl out on the sofas, chairs, and available floor space. With seven kids and two adults ours is a full house. When we all gather, couches and chairs are a luxury afforded only to the adults and quickest legs. My older brothers, Kenny, Matt, and James are fighting over the last spot on the couch. Their younger sisters, Carolyn and Laurel have already claimed their place on the coveted couch and the boys know better than to harass them, especially with mom and dad in the room. “Stop that damn racket” my dad tells them and the eldest boy, Kenny, sits as the victor with his legs outstretched to each corner of his cushion. James and Matt, the next in the family line, sulk to the floor and lie on their bellies. They arrange their faces in comical gestures as they use their elbows to prop their heads up.

The TV is on. It must be later in the evening because otherwise everyone would be out in the garden, the milking barn, or the alfalfa fields working. My childhood home is in the Mancos Valley of southwest Colorado, and for this I am grateful. When I look outside to the west across my family’s fruit orchard, the sacred flat top of Mesa Verde stares back at me. The spirits of my ancestors and the Ancient Puebloans before them vibrate on the wind. The world moves on, but they are not forgotten. At this moment, I am too young to appreciate the bucolic setting, but its beauty and history will wrap around my heart, and its roots will grow deep. They will keep me grounded when the earth below gives way.

For now, my foundation is on sure footing. I am the youngest of seven, the daughter of Ken and Gloria, and the spiritual property of my Heavenly...
Father. My significance in this hierarchy is transcribed onto the lenses of the camera as my mother’s attention is drawn to her two youngest daughters.

I stare straight into the camera with brown eyes gazing up. I am over a year old, and my sister Linnea next to me is barely three. She is wearing a short sleeved shirt with the same blue color as my own outfit – no doubt it was cut from the same cloth. She has her hair done up in two ponytails with white and yellow barrettes clipped on each side. Despite these measures, her blonde hair puffs out and dangles around her face.

She is laughing at me and I am smiling. Her head is turned away from the camera, but I know that she is laughing because of the second photo snapped during the next moment. A dim light from the camera’s flash illuminates the brown paneling on the walls, making some of it the color of congealed honey while leaving the rest in shadows, the color of wet Red Mesa clay.

In the background on top of a white Formica sideboard, held together with its peeling edges, our RCA sits with its pregnant screen. The photograph is too blurred to make out what is being displayed, but I want it to be Elvis in his white jumpsuit singing “You’ll Never Walk Alone.” I want it to be Elvis, because he was my mother’s rebellion against her father’s decree to never listen to that “sinful man with his swinging hips.” I want it to be Elvis, because I hold an unconfirmed inclination that she married my dad, not only because she loved him, but because his mutton chops and deep crooner’s voice reminded her of that which she should not have. He was a “Jack” Mormon known infamously for his wild and worldly ways. He was a divorcee with a one year old son, but still she wanted him. I thank her for this rebellion.

Elvis slowly delivers his tune to all of us. His voice at first is low, and it lingers in the room accompanied by a melody quietly plucked on piano keys. “When you walk through a storm / hold your head up high / and don’t be afraid of the dark. / At the end of the storm / there’s a golden sky / and the sweet silver song of a lark.” In the next stanza the piano chords fall harder and I look up when he reaches the crescendo of the second verse, “Walk on, walk on with hope in your heart / And you’ll never walk alone.” The choir joins in and my mom snaps the photo. We are together as a family, at least in these tender minutes.

I suspend reality in this memory, because it could not be Elvis. He died five years before I was born, on my sister Laurel’s third birthday. But maybe
this is an anniversary TV special and the reason why we have all gathered. Why she took this photo I can only speculate. Maybe she wanted to record this moment because I was her last child. During her pregnancy with me she was so sick, how sick she will never tell me, but my dad figured that she was sick enough, that as she rested from the near-death ordeal, he wandered through the hospital corridors until he found a doctor willing to give him a vasectomy. Maybe she took the picture because this was the first photo of her last baby’s first smile.

I positioned this photo of myself in a brown leather book with unlined pages. On the front cover I taped an illustration of the ubiquitous mountains of Colorado, along with cut out letters from a magazine that read: THiS iS the PLACE. On the back cover I attached a black and white photograph of two men and a yellow lab running buck naked into a lake. Their shining white butt cheeks and straw hats stand out against the shadows. The dates from this journal range from 1/25/2005 to 3/31/2005. In this short amount of time I had filled 140 pages. On top of this grainy magazine image I added a cut out quote by Henry Miller that reads: “It’s good to be just plain happy; it’s a little better to know that you’re happy; but to understand that you’re happy, and to know why and how . . . and still be happy in the being and the knowing, well, that is beyond happiness, that is bliss.”

At this point in my life, I already came to terms with the inescapable reality that I was a lesbian. This awakening was not joyous, and like most members of a conservative religious culture, it manifested into a reformation from the foundations of my faith. At its arrival too many confirmations of attraction had occurred for me to ignore their origin and validity. It is an uncomfortable acceptance, but one that I am willing to work through. At twenty-two my future depended on me, and I wanted to have one with meaning and truth driving it. With this aim in mind I begin to re-record my history.

I use this image of me to step back to a time when I could pinpoint no corruption. How could it be that I was born this way? I trace the outline of that smile as the child I was looks back at me. I follow her gaze past the hand-plastered ceiling and slick aluminum roofing of our sandstone home in Mancos where it beckons me up to the night’s sky and I get lost in the possibilities of the stars.
The journal closes and the soft focus frame exits from this moment in time when I am all smiles – innocent and wide-eyed.

I was a baby with eyes that looked up, smiled, and wondered. In this captured second, I am able to look back at me. We lock eyes and in the flecks of light I see my beginning and my undoing.

I was a child of God then.
“The Long Room Library” by Amy Millios
LAST NIGHT IN OXFORD

You know, you said,
you have beautiful hands.
I looked at you
without looking at you,
remembering that moment
you threw your head back
and laughed
( it was a lesson on truth
versus fact in memoir ).
I twisted my silver ring
around my finger, catching
the lights overhead
and we both watched my hands
flat on the table,
square palms
long fingers tapping.
It took us weeks to be alone
and despite an ocean
I was convinced,
though I didn’t know where
or how or when
we would kiss.
AN OPEN DOOR

Jennifer C. Cormack

Clouds hopscotch
noonday sun. Light blinks
as shadows sculpt
a clerestory hall.
Arthritic hands need
ivory keys.

Notes hover.
Harmonious
with muscle memory
poised between jubilee
and forgetfulness—
Like a River Glorious.

Melody swirls.
Weaving between columns,
gliding through open doors,
dancing on window panes.
Soaring into vaulted ceilings.
Knocking on skylights.

Before caregivers arrive.
Before she wanders. Eats rocks.
Chips her teeth. Before she forgets
to breathe in the lap pool,
needing grace on both sides
of the River Glorious.
“The Neighborhood” by Anonymous
EVERYBODY ELSE’S BUSINESS

Anna Boarini

While working on a routine story about a dog arrest, a young journalist uncovers a bit of a mystery in her small town in Vermont. She’s an outsider that’s trying to understand the life and times of Manshire, the main town she covers and her new home. Along the way, A, our narrator meets the odd assortment of locals and flatlanders who make her town unique. Some prove helpful and others want her to keep her nose out of their business. She struggles with breaking and bending the rules of journalism, while staying true to her own quest for the truth.

Mrs. Rosenthal’s house is not your stereotypical old lady house. It is like a museum of the weird and unmentioned. In the front room, with the big picture windows and lace curtains, there’s a shrine and memorial to her late husband Edward. He died practically the year I was born. And unfortunately for her, she went a little Miss Havisham after he made his trip to the spectral plane. As legend tells, she never really cleaned up after his funeral. She left out the pictures and the flowers and started to add life-size cutouts of him playing golf.

In the room that most people serve dinner, the Rosenthals had a putting green installed. When the lady of the house got the life insurance check, she expanded it. Currently, Mrs. Rosenthal’s lining up a put and I’m admiring her handiwork.

“A woman should always be able to play golf. Makes men respect you. You’ll get more respect for your golf game than you ever will with some big knockers.”

She sinks the shot and turns to me.

“And you can quote me on that. Golf is going to land you a better husband than knockers ever will.”

I nod and pretend to scribble. She leans on the putter and has a look of smug self-importance. It’s hard to take her seriously though. Instead of wearing ladies golf gear, Mrs. Rosenthal has on a men’s golf shirt, along with
men’s golf slacks. The pants are belted so tightly they create a ripple of fabric around her waist. The cuffs of the shirt and pants are rolled and she tops the whole ensemble off with a string of pearls the size of gumballs.

I don’t really know how to proceed. I called Mrs. Rosenthal up yesterday, asking for an interview about the dog breaking and entering. She told me to come over at ten this morning, because yesterday was her “quiet day.”

“I don’t really do much talking on my quiet days,” she said over the phone. “So you’ll just have to come over tomorrow. Then I’ll have some words for you.” She had slammed the receiver down and I made a note to myself to head over to her imposing Victorian the next day.

When I first showed up on the doorstep of The Journal, I was used to the grind of a daily paper. I didn’t know how to handle the slower pace of a weekly. So I started to adjust by reading books during my shift and trying to file stories online daily. I live-tweet meetings. The select boards of most of the towns don’t understand Twitter, so it keeps them on their toes. Some days, I ask inane questions of government officials just for something to do. The boss likes it because I always bring him stories, even if the subject matter is pretty dumb. Our front page is typically filled with debates over what constitutes a drive thru and why adding one to a coffee shop would mean the town is on the road to hell. Seeing that it’s a small town daily, it’s always news when a local farmer grows the largest turnip in a three county area. That’s when I find myself perched on a ladder, trying to fit the whole vegetable in the picture.

Sometimes, I even write so much that all the stories can’t make the physical paper. Last month, we could have printed two papers, so we did one full online edition. There was a long debate in multiple towns about the size of hen houses. Typically, when your editor refers to a special edition as “Operation Hen House,” some kind of brothel or sex ring is being broken up by the Feds. In our case, our special edition covered nothing but chickens. Not necessarily something I wanted to write home about. Newsprint makes the boss happy, and Tweets, grams and digitized quotes up on a screen make the big bosses on Madison Avenue happy.

So I can accommodate the eccentrics in town and work around their bananas schedules when I need to. This works to my benefit for the most part. I don’t have to step on any toes, playing the pushy journalist, but I can still get
the stories filed on time. Which is why I let crazy old loons like Mrs. Rosenthal dictate the time and place of the interview and watch her put on the green before I get to ask a real question.

“So Mrs. Rosenthal, if you don’t mind, I was wondering if you could tell me what happened that night, from your perspective?”

I smile sweetly, pen poised above the page, ready to write down her every word. I learned quickly that most of the locals here wouldn’t agree to my recorder. They want me to write it all down instead.

“Well,” she starts, fluffing her hair with her left hand, “It was all very shocking and really threw me for a loop. My sister was coming up for dinner from the country and I saw the most beautiful steaks at the market. And they were on sale—you know I can’t resist a sale—so I snatched them right up and knew I would make my sister and I the most delicious supper.”

She exhales long and slow and turns on her heel, motioning for me to follow. Mrs. Rosenthal leads the way over her putting green and back to the kitchen, talking all the way.

“So my sister’s in the kitchen, preparing some potato salad and green beans for supper and I go to light the grill. Steaks like these, you have to grill them, cooking them in the broiler would just ruin everything. So I start the grill and then come inside, prepare the steaks—I’m not going to tell you how I do that because then Louise Martin would have my recipe and she’s been after that for thirty-five years.”

She pauses at the sink, where she pulls a small jelly jar off the windowsill and fills it with water. In one long gulp, she swallows the contents. She repeats the process and while she slams down the second jar of water, urges me in the door of the kitchen and points to a chair, up next to the Formica table.

“So I take the steaks outside and put them right next to the grill on my little table. But I forgot to take the tongs to flip the steak—you mustn’t leave a steak too long or it’s all ruined,” she takes a deep breath, “And when I return, it’s like the scene of a crime. Smashed plate, drippings everywhere. I was completely distraught.”

Mrs. Rosenthal opens up a sugar bowl sitting in the middle of the table and pulls out a cigarette and elegant silver lighter.

“Do you mind?”
I wave my hand, indicating she should light up and continue on with her story. After a drag that curled away half the paper on the little stick, she carries on, the ash precariously hanging in midair.

“I started yelling and my sister ran out. She told me to stop all the fussing; we could still have a great meal. But I felt violated and called the authorities. They were the ones that discovered that mangy scoundrel with the remnants of my perfect steak.”

Mrs. Rosenthal belongs to that special group of people who have enough self-assured righteous indignation that they always believe they’re right and end up running for political office, even though they never could master simple tasks, like spelling “definitely.” She sat there in her kitchen, seething with rage over a dog that grabbed a steak. I would have been annoyed, sure, but I wouldn’t have called the cops. Yet here she sits, smug look on her face, smoking in her too-large men’s wear get up, sure of her right to call the cops on the dog next door.

“They did a, whadda you call it,” she says, leaning forward and snapping her fingers. “A perimeter search and found Rex over there in the backyard. He was gnawing on the boney piece of one of my steaks.”

She just sits for a moment, steeping, her rage getting stronger like a bundle of tea left too long in water. I let her sit. This is the moment where you’re not exactly sure what will happen in an interview. The person talking can just go completely off the deep end and you’ll end up with garbage not pertaining to your story. Sure, it’ll be interesting garbage, but still, trash that just ends up collecting dust in the bottom of your brain, a snippet you pull out for family members when they grill you about why you’re still a journalist and not a dental hygienist with paid time off and actual insurance. Or if you wait it out, let the dust settle and the temperature of the anger fall from its peak, you get gold. A nugget of truth that sets off a cascade. The one sliver of information that makes it all comes together, even if you don’t realize it at the time.

“After it’s all said and done though, the police just had the family next door pay for my steaks and suggested they put up a bigger, stronger fence,” she sighs, but held her mouth in a funny way, like she wasn’t finished speaking.

“Is there something you would like to add Mrs. Rosenthal?”
I was pushing it, but she was holding back. And like the dog with that steak, I was going to gnaw at this until I got what I wanted. It may seem silly to care about this story so much, but I’ve got to learn somehow. While I might not be writing for a big time daily, hopefully I’ll be out of this mile-long town at some point and these skills will make me a valuable member of a real news team.

Mrs. Rosenthal raises her eyebrows and finishes the cigarette. Her eyes flick to my phone resting casually on the table. Then they flick to my hand, pen poised above a grungy reporter’s notebook, ready to write down whatever she came up with. Her eyes rested on me for a second and I knew what was happening. She was weighing what it meant to go on record. An internal dialogue wondering if she wanted to be the one to reveal the great—to her—information. Or if she wanted to sit on the gossip and wait for another day to spill the beans. Knowledge is currency here and spent wisely. Yankees are notoriously frugal and even dole out their gossip sparingly. But, I waited her out. Mrs. Rosenthal is a notorious gossip and I knew she had something that was going to overcome her resistance to telling me.

“Well,” she says breaking the silence, “there was just something funny about how their house was always shut tight.”

She opens the sugar bowl and grabbed another cigarette, lighting it. I waited for a minute, letting her take her time. Now I was intrigued too. This could be absolutely nothing. People like Mrs. Rosenthal always think newcomers in town are a little weird. She’s not completely local. At one time, she too was a flatlander. But she and her husband moved here over sixty years ago and became staples of the community. So while the Rosenthals might still be considered newbies by real old school Vermonters, they considered themselves local. She finishes her cigarette, the lingering smoke curling in the air. Instead of saying anything, she slides her chair back and walks to the sink, washing her hands. I decided to go for a question here. I may have lost my moment to collect some little nugget of gossip lodged in Mrs. Rosenthal’s brain.

“Had you ever met your new neighbors before this whole steak thing?” I ask, the high pitch of my voice hanging above the patter of water into the sink. She turns around and leans against the sink.
“Come to think of it, no, they never wandered over here to introduce themselves. I don’t even know their names.”

“Well I guess that’s all I have to say about the dog issue. I just hope it doesn’t happen again,” she said, wiping her hands on the front of her pants.

There was an absent-minded look in her eyes, like she wanted to say something else. I picked up my bag and dropped my notebook inside. But I felt like I couldn’t leave yet. There was something left unsaid in the room.

“Mrs. Rosenthal, I don’t mean to pry, but is there anything else you’d like to say? You seemed like you didn’t tell me everything about the people next door.”

She hesitates. Maybe I overstepped. I was about to backpedal when she opened her mouth, taking her time, the words almost visibly forming on the tip of her tongue.

“Well, I don’t want this recorded,” she says, methodically and slowly. “There’s something else. But it’s probably nothing at all.”

She absent-mindedly picks at the fabric bunched around her waist with the cinched belt. Her brow is furrowed. She seems genuinely distressed. What did I walk into here?

“The other night, I noticed, well it was strange. I think it was about a week ago,” she says, spinning her wedding ring around on her finger.

“What was strange about that night?” I ask, intrigued.

“Normally their house is shut up tight, but the other night I was sitting out here organizing my gardening tools in the shed. It was so mild I wanted to enjoy the evening before the snow flies. All the curtains in their home were open. I don’t think they live here all the time, they seem to commute from where ever it is they came from.”

I could feel my stomach sink. This is where I have to sit through nonsense and get nothing. I swear, if I had a dollar for every time an old woman tells me she heard something interesting about town government and she told me the select board chair’s wife bleaches her mustache, I could have paid off my student loans long ago.

“I wasn’t snooping, but I was curious what the house looked like inside. After it was purchased, there were contractors in and out for what seemed like months. And none of them were local, which seems like pretty bad form. Well
anyways, I was eyeing her new sink, it was one of those ceramic farmhouse ones they always show on the TV.”

I smile and nod, pretending to be paying attention, but really hoping I can leave and get back to real work.

“I got a little scared, because the doorbell rang, so I jumped back and was about to turn for home when none other than Will Drummond walked in. He brought some papers and that sniveling little son of his.”

This made my ears prick. Will Drummond is a local business owner and my own personal nemesis. He’s one of those ultra big fish in a teaspoon sized pond. You know the type, they’re always wheeling and dealing and seem to be nice, honest men on the surface. In reality, he’d stab you in the back for a freaking coffee. Drummond and me, we’ve had run-ins in the past over stories or how I’ve covered his meetings. He’s the chair of Manshire’s DRB, the board that decides who can build here and what the development can look like. Coincidentally, he’s also the town’s and county’s biggest developer. And he doesn’t like to be reminded of that fact during meetings, on the record. I vowed to end him, whatever form that may take, when he patted me on the head at last year’s Town Meeting. Like I was some kind of friggin golden retriever that barked at the mailman or something.

She moves back towards the sink, looking out the window that overlooks her neighbors next door.

“It was the strangest thing. He and little Willie were there for about 15 minutes. They seemed to sign some papers and then they left. I haven’t a clue what it was about, so don’t you even ask.”

Then almost like a spell was broken, Mrs. Rosenthal seems back to her normal self.

“Well, I think you’ve got enough for your paper there, missy, and I’ve got to get back to working on my short game,” she walks to the back door out of the kitchen and I follow.

“Thanks again for speaking to me, Mrs. Rosenthal. The story will be in this week’s Journal.”

I smile and wave as she watches me cut through the alley that runs in the back of her house and back to the main drag of our small town. I check my watch. Noon. I could go back to the office and write or I could walk over to
my apartment and eat some lunch. I stand at the street corner, looking down the residential side, where Mrs. Rosenthal’s house sits, next to her neighbors. It won’t hurt to knock, right?

When I reach the small brick colonial, I notice right away it seems very closed up. Like she said, the house seems to be hiding something. There’s nothing to suggest end of summer yard work in the grass. The beds where flowers should be growing are bare, but neat. Hedges are trimmed. The windows are closed off with shades that seemed to be tacked to the bottom. I walk up to the door and ring the bell. After waiting for a few moments, I go through the bell routine again, this time also knocking. Nothing.

I cut through the side yard, separating the house from the mansion of golf and the dead next door. There’s evidence of a new fence soon going up, new posts and piles of lumber. But no sign of a dog or any actual life. The yard here is neat like the front, and aside from the large sugar maple in the left hand corner, bare.

I walk back to the front of the house and after one long last look, head back to the business district towards the old Victorian converted into a bookstore sometime in the 20s. I live at the very top, in a small apartment that used to be the shopkeepers. It’s only two rooms, with a teeny tiny bathroom, but it’s perfect. My little perch on the parapet of this house gives me a perfect view of everything happening in town. I can see the leaves turn in the fall and the fishermen on the river in the summer. I have a view of the police station, so I sometimes see the car’s lights before the call goes out on the scanner. It’s not much, but it’s home to me.

I climb up the shaky old fire escape bolted to the outside and eventually make it to the top. I’ve nearly slid down the four stories of the house on my way up before in the ice and snow, but in nice weather it’s actually quite pleasant. When I get to the door, I push the old skeleton key in the lock and lean my whole weight against the door to get it open.

The first room, the kitchen, is round and the exposed beams of the highest turret create unique bookshelves for my ever-expanding collection. There are windows all around. The second room was built on at a later date, connecting the turret to the old widow’s peak. It was covered over and built
into a small apartment when the bookseller got married and moved himself and his wife up here. Apparently, they raised six children in these two rooms.

I move into the kitchen, looking for something to eat and settle on some cheese and crackers. I get the coffee brewing and while I snack on my treats, think about what Mrs. Rosenthal said. “They seem to be hiding something.” On some level, I understand completely. Living in a small town, especially as a newcomer, is extremely vulnerable. Everyone wants a piece of you. If the story you tell has any variation, it will be turned over and dissected by the town gossips until you feel like a criminal at Nuremberg the next time you run into someone at the market. While it can be upsetting, eventually the shiny newness will fade. People learn where you’re from and you insert yourself into the community, becoming part of the scenery. Like when the town painted the new benches green instead of the usual black. At first, there was uproar, but now no one even notices.

What makes no sense at all is the meeting with Drummond. He’s obviously doing some sort of deal but it’s hard to know what. The thing about Drummond is he has a finger in every pot. He owns the biggest bar and restaurant in town, as well as the ice cream shop and small café. The building and land both small grocery stores in town sit on are his, as well as the space the farmer’s market calls home. He has a shuttle bus company that takes tourists to and from the mountain. And like every evil villain in a small town, he owns a controlling stock of railroads in eight states in the Union. So either he’s bringing these flatlanders into town for something or they’re bringing him into some game from outside. Either way, I want to know.

I sit thinking about what it might be and pour myself a coffee. I take in my little apartment. Other than books and newspapers, it’s pretty bare. There’s a poster of an opera that I picked out in Italy when I was younger and the dishes from my grandmother’s kitchen, the ones with red apples along the edges, stacked on the shelf. Otherwise, my place is pretty much devoid of personality. My odd assortment of books stacked everywhere seem haphazardly aligned, but really they’re organized in a complex system of what I’m currently reading, what I’m going to read and what I’ve read but either am still thinking about or need to get rid off. There’s also a whole section devoted to
the books I’ve checked out from the library, also arranged by what’s coming and going.

As I scan my little place, I think more about the new people next door. To stay secretive for so long and keep your home locked in a community that doesn’t even close their front doors, that is a bit strange. I don’t know what it is about Mrs. Rosenthal’s comments but they’re sticking with me. She’s such a vibrant woman. But when she talked about the neighbors, she seemed dimmed, like some of the color drained from her being.

I’m still turning all this over in my head when the chirp of my cell phone breaks my thoughts.

“This is A,” I say, answering the phone.

“It’s me. How are you on the dog arrest? We gonna have it for tomorrow?”

It’s the boss. Always checking up on the story.

“And you’ll have the story from the meeting tonight?”

I swallow the hunk of cracker and cheese in my mouth.

“Yep. I talked to the old lady today and I’m going to try and get a quote from the family. No one was home today and their number is unlisted. I’m at home right now, but I’ll be back at the office in a bit. I’m going to stop in before the meeting and get some work done.”

“Perfect. I’ll see you when I see you.”

Silence. He hung up.
ABSENCE
Katherine E. Brown

Is it pain that creates permanence?

Scratch the skin
with a needle
until ink
mixes with blood.

Look down
upon a scar,
reliving the time you fell
in Paris.

Or maybe it’s slightly further in—

Scar tissue
inside your ankle
forever hindering
its movement.

Is there a wound
in your brain
where tissue blocks
and builds?

A physical mark
deeply buried?
Burns left behind
by a death or a lover?
Perhaps the only permanence is absence itself.

A hole where someone used to fill you up.

You used to fill me up.

Don’t you want to measure the lines on my face?

Trace the creases beginning around my eyes?

Who will keep track of them if not for you?

Who will inhabit the scar of my absence?
“Forsyth Park” by Amy Millios
for Danny

I followed the flower seeds
past the ax and over the carpet
of bark and splinters,
to fetch the cat
to his new home.
I heard his cries even before
I opened the door
and breathed that smell
that lingered
between wood smoke
and squalor. I could not take it in,
how you were gone
and still there—
in the pile of clothes,
your leather pack,
the bits of egg in the pan,
and the mass of sheets
on the mattress on the floor.
When the clot broke free
I imagine you collapsed
on that spot of red
and I suppose
the cat’s keening started then,
but I wonder if
he licked and kneaded
you who were there and not there.
I wept as I thought of
how you left us—
alone, drowning in your lungs,
the chimes outside
blowing in the March wind.
“At the Bottom” by Justine M. Kohr
It all started when some guy came in off the street and walked into a little office, my office, my nothing-special, dumb-schmuck office, an office as quiet and pedestrianly dull as a tombstone, or a grave. Life’s adventures are often wrapped in the mundane. Looking back, the best thing that could have happened to me that day would have been a big, long piss that kept me from answering the door.

My wife and I lived and worked in southwest-by-God Virginia, in a tiny, rural mountain town, by a river, not far from the West Virginia border. (Know why the baby Jesus couldn’t be born in southwest Virginia? They couldn’t find three wise men and a virgin.)

I grew up in that little town. When I was a kid I played football in the meadows and read the King James and Playboys from the tops of old oak trees. On a clear day I could see forever, deep into the heaving bosom of the old Blue Ridge. When the sun was bright, she looked like a thousand shades of sapphire.

My wife and I had an apartment at the base of a small mountain to the west of town. The town had a population of fewer than 2,000, if that.

There was a fast-food restaurant, a diner, a discount mart, a couple of gas stations, a TV repair shop, a few scattered homes and churches and old abandoned buildings, and that was about it. (“More possum than people,” was the joke.) The primary employer was a large factory that made acetone fibers. It made the whole town smell like nail polish.

If I didn’t grow up there, I would have hated it. I don’t know how I talked my wife into moving there. She was a sage and sensible Jewish girl from a good family in northeast Pennsylvania. We met in college in a religion class and got married a year after graduation. At the little cafe on campus we’d order tall, strong coffees and talk spiritual matters late into the night. I swear to God I’d fall into those eyes and see divinity itself. She was a philosophy major, whip-smart, jaw-dropping, with long legs, striking blue eyes, and a swan neck,
like a Modigliani. She had a light cocoa complexion and an ocean of black Semitic hair. It bounced when she walked like a sheet in the breeze.

My wife loved my hometown as much as I did, maybe more, in that unique way newcomers to a place see more in it than the natives do. Something in that inbred redneck mountain air has a way with people. People either can’t wait to get away from it or can’t imagine being anywhere else.

We lived in an old bank building, one we converted into a business and living space.

A wealthy land baron built the place in 1905 and ran it as a brothel. Someone turned it into a bank around the mid 1930s. (From brothel to bank. Isn’t that funny? Way I see it, you’re screwed, either way.) It closed in the early 1980s and stood there unloved and unused until my wife and I gave it life again. It was two stories tall, brick, with a gable front and a wooden belfry. It sat on a little clearing. There was an old dogwood there and it caught a gusty wind and it whistled and chattered in the night.

Listen:

There was an old drunk in town who lost his mind and money to homemade gin, and in the middle of the night he would pound on our front door. We called the sheriff the first couple of times, but once we realized the poor bastard thought our place was still a bank, one that would hand out cash to old drunks at all hours, we just put up with it. To this day, I believe if I could turn every bank into a place that hands out money to old hillbilly drunks in the middle of the night, I’d do it.

At any rate, the bank was home. Our apartment was on the second floor. We ran a modest graphic design studio on the first. I handled the creative end of the business while my wife, a natural and astute mathematician, kept the books.

It was a good life, our life in that little whorehouse of a bank.

I fell into graphic design by accident, several years earlier.

I was a young newspaper reporter, fresh out of journalism school, newly married and working at a small weekly paper in northern Virginny, near D.C.
One day I walked through the production room to file a story with the managing editor, a salty old former Associated Press reporter who worked in a back office. Most days he would drink a half a bottle of bourbon by the time the paper went to press at noon. He saved the other half for when he got home. His office had no windows, no art on the walls, no family photos on the desk. He had a big round head and a comb-over and wore sterile ties with thin, short-sleeve dress shirts. I never learned his name.

Along the way to his office, I met the production director, Andy, a good-natured man in charge of the layout of the newspaper. Andy was tall and gaunt, late 50s or older, with long, white hair in a ponytail that brushed against the nape of his neck. He wore loose-fitting shirts across broad, skeletal shoulders, giving him the appearance of a scarecrow.

They say when Andy was 19 he dropped out of college to move west and attend art school in California somewhere, probably in L.A. or San Francisco. Years later he was a top art director at the Washington Post when he got fired for rolling big fat ones in his office. Then he ended up at a fishwrapper weekly in Nowheresville, Virginia. Life is such a meandering, nonlinear ride. It’s chock full of princes and peckerheads. Hard to tell which from which.

Andy supervised a group of three young designers. They sat side-by-side at a long table behind Macintosh computers (the Power Mac 8500 series, circa 1995). The large monitors bathed the room in blue. I was in awe of the technology and the digital art on display.

Two of the designers were in chairs, drinking coffee. One chair was empty.

“We have an opening,” Andy said. “Looking for a job?”
I smiled. “I guess I’m always looking for a job.”
“What do you do now?”
“I’m a reporter,” I told him. “Freelance. Steady work would sure be nice.”

“No design experience?”
“Oh, no. I wouldn’t even know how to turn one of those things on.”
“How about art experience?”
“Well,” I said, “I can draw.”
“Perfect!” Andy said, extending his hand. “You’re hired.”
Simple as that, a journalist became a graphic designer.
I soon learned design was a good fit for me, well-suited to my introverted nature. Reporting was not. Within six months of graduating with my journalism degree and working as a reporter, I knew I wasn’t cut out for it.

There’s a big difference between being a writer and being a reporter. I was a good writer. I was a bad reporter. I couldn’t cold-call sources all day and press people for quotes and insider information. There was a lot about being a reporter I couldn’t do. I was indebted to Andy for introducing me to design.

Graphic designers are visual problem-solvers. There is a famous design story about Steve Jobs, the founder of Apple, who had been fired from Apple and was starting a new technology company, NeXT. Jobs hired famed designer Milton Glaser to create his new company logo. After meeting with Glaser for an afternoon at his capacious California home, Jobs asked when he could expect to see samples.

“There will be no samples,” Glaser said. “I will solve your problem, and you will pay me. Whether you use my solution is up to you. But I will solve your problem, and you will pay me.”

Being paid to solve visual problems fascinated me. I taught myself the art of design, working in print and web (a new technology at the time).

I picked up my grungy aesthetic style from the raw, do-it-yourself art movements of the 70s and 80s punk scene. I collected flyers and posters—the Clash, Sex Pistols, Black Flag, Dead Kennedys, and so on—and soaked up the rebellious creative energy. Soon, mixing in a sprinkling of abstract art technique, I had a style all my own. I developed it at night doing freelance gigs while working deadly boring design jobs during the day.

From the job at the newspaper I moved on to a large healthcare corporation, creating web pages, posters, advertisements, flyers, and so forth. The work was godawful but the money was good. My wife and I put enough away to move back to my hometown and open our own studio.

On my desk was a sign I created myself with custom illustration and hand-lettered typography:
I will solve your problem. And you will pay me.

II.

One afternoon, a man came in.
He was in his mid 50s, with short-cropped, salt-and-pepper hair, and a tired, chiseled face. He was brawny like a farm tractor, with gray-brown eyes. He wore a simple cream-colored dress shirt and jeans.
He walked into my office and greeted me first. “Hello there,” he said, pleasant and affable.
I said hello back and we talked awhile of the weather and high school football, the language of men. He was a kind man, articulate and thoughtful. I liked him immediately.
“What can I do for you?” I asked him.
“I guess what I need is a logo,” he said, a bit sheepish. “I don’t know much about this sort of thing. I don’t have a clue where to start.”
This sounded promising. “The best place to start is anywhere,” I said, trying to put him at ease.
I took him to a small, sturdy wooden table at the back of the studio, one covered with posters and flyers. The whole thing was a set up. I never worked at that table. I kept it covered with some of my best work and would take potential clients there for meetings, hoping they would ooh and ahh over what they saw.
We pulled out two metal chairs and sat down. Warm today, isn’t it? Sure is. Fall will be here soon, won’t it? Sure will. Coffee? No, but thanks just the same.
The man told me he was president of the local chapter of a large national non-profit. The local group was small, he said, but passionate about the cause. He told me the national organization had extensive resources, and gave him a decent budget to work with to get started. He thought the first thing he needed was a logo. He wanted one that would grab attention.
From his left shirt pocket he pulled out a sandwich wrapped in a thin paper bag. The paper crinkled as he opened it. From another pocket, he pulled out an apple that looked like it should be eaten that day or thrown out.

“Do you mind if I eat my lunch while we talk?”

“Of course not.”

He smiled and I poured myself a cup of strong black coffee, my typical lunch.

“Dugan,” the man said, holding out his hand.

I introduced myself.

Over the next half hour, Dugan and I talked about the process: the work that went into a logo, the creative steps of a designer, my expectations of the client, what the client could expect from me, and of course, the cost of the job: $450. It was my standard non-profit logo fee, half what I charge the big corporate boys. I told him I could get started right away.

Like a good sentence, the best logos are simple. Brilliant, deceptive, captivating, and simple. They may be figurative or abstract, one color or many. But the good ones are always uncomplicated, designed to be memorable and to convey feeling or emotion. I told Dugan a designer’s rule of thumb is this: the finished logo should be something that anyone could scratch in the dirt with a stick.

“Now on to your logo itself,” I said. “I need anything you can give me to work from. For example, an icon or symbol you’d like to be part of the design, things that inspire you, colors you like, as much information as you can give me about your organization and its goals, that sort of thing.”

“Sounds great,” Dugan said. “I know for color schemes, I tend to like red and black.”

“Excellent. One of my favorite color combinations. Wonderful contrast. Any art or symbols that inspire you?”

“As a matter of fact, there is. There’s a symbol I’d love for you to work into the logo if you can.”

He reached back into another pocket and pulled out a folded sheet of paper. He unfolded it in front of me, flattening each crease.

His fingers were calloused, nails dirty and bitten down close to the tip. He opened up the sheet of paper, revealing a notorious symbol, like a vile
secret. The simple image had strong lines, angular features. I recognized it immediately, as most anyone would:

A swastika.
Excerpts from

THE NEXUS: ENERGY SECURITY IN THE AGE OF GLOBALIZATION AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Michael Rodriguez

The first component of energy security is availability.

Availability refers to having sufficient resources and reserves of energy that helps enable energy independence or security.

Somewhere in the Arctic Circle

Wow, this ice is thin. In a couple of years you could probably drill for oil and gas once it melts.

Energy resources are different from energy reserves.

Energy resources are detected quantities that cannot be recovered profitably due to geology or limitations of technology.

Energy "Reserved" on the other hand represent a portion of total resources that are recognizable in form and are both currently technologically and economically possible to recover.
Affordability implies that the cost of procuring fuel stock (or energy) is not more than what can be possibly generated.

$50 per week in gas to drive to work and earn $300.

$100 per week in gas to drive to work and earn $300.

Whether it was neolithic humans looking for wood to make a fire and keep warm...

...or modern man having to buy fuel or electricity for their vehicle or home, said energy must be affordable and worth the cost to be paid.

Issues associated with affordability and cost of energy are important for economic development too, since shares of energy expenditures are passed down to consumers. If cost becomes too high economic recessions can occur.
The third pillar of energy security is technology development and efficiency. Technology in the past has been viewed as the answer for many energy security challenges including availability of supply and environmental stewardship.

...as well as, the research and development of new and more efficient technology...

...making proper investment in infrastructure and delivery of quality and reliable energy services.

The safety and reliability of energy generation...

...and the efficiency and energy intensity also make up indicators of technology development and efficiency.

Oh yeah it gets 35 miles per gallon and has a hybrid mode too!

So does what is the gas mileage on this, does it have any miles per gallon?
Fatalities associated with energy related accidents total to almost 200,000 between 1987 and 2007. Of the 171,216 people that have died of hydroelectric dam failure, nearly all of them are associated with one event.

The energy source responsible for the most of total fatalities is hydroelectricity.

In 1975, Typhoon-Nina had brought so much rain that it caused the Baguio Dam and Shimantan Reservoir Dam in Henan, China to collapse and then released a tidal wave of water across the country side killing over 100,000 people.

A majority of these energy related accidents occurred from 1978-1987 totalling to 90, over the course of a 5-year period...

...both the Three Mile Island incident and the Chernobyl malfunction occurred during this period.
Another way to examine energy efficiency is to look at fuel efficiency of vehicles.

Fuel efficiency is important because of the role that motorized transport plays in facilitating globalization.

In the United States average fuel economy has nearly doubled what it was in the 1970’s and 80’s. Cars have experienced an improvement of 13mpg, while trucks only had an 11mpg in gains.

Since the 1980’s a majority of vehicles have boosted 20-25mpg in gas mileage.

The United States has the lowest with only a 35 mpg standard for certain vehicle types.

Currently in both Europe and Japan new vehicle standards include 45-50mpg ratings, while China has slightly lower standards of only 35-40mpg.

It is expected that by 2040 nearly every region of the world will have a 40 mpg standard or higher.
“Untitled” by Michael Rodriguez
“90 Miles” by Brad Mindich
I first saw Constance as I waited in the customer service line of a New Hampshire Walmart. The lengthy delay gave me time to observe her manner—the way she smiled at everyone, the way she treated everyone with polite respect, and the calm presence that seemed to extend all around her.

I was intrigued, so I fell out of line and approached her. I was collecting stories of retirees who returned to work for an oral history piece for graduate school. I felt drawn to her and I had to know her story. She gave me a firm smile and a nod when I asked, ineloquently, whether she would share it with me. Then she took her break and walked me to the back of the store.

We settled down at a plastic table and chairs. Employees chatted around us. Constance took her lunch out of an old blue cooler. I pressed “record” on my device and she began. Under the pale fluorescents, I listened to her words, uttered with loving conviction, and everything else faded.

I was born in 1940 and I remember some of the depression. That’s the Great Depression. I’ll be 74 next month! I’ve been workin’ a job since I was 19, but I grew up on a farm. Dad had cows and horses and sheeps and goats, all the chickens and stuff, all the rabbits.

When I was young I used to help with the hay. We’d have the horses pullin’ the wagon and they’d put little me up on top to stomp it down. They used a pitch fork to throw it up there, back before it was baled, when it was loose hay. We’d go back to the barn and dad would shovel it all off and sprinkle it with salt to make sure it wouldn’t burn.

I went to college for about a year. Graduated with honors. (smiles)

Then I worked at an office job in Cornish. My husband worked out on the floor where they were building drawers. I was in the office doin’ the
figurin’. What size stay you need, what size panel - you know- and the men would go and do it. It was interesting work. I was good with the numbers. My husband and the boss used to fight like crazy! They got into it one day and that was that.

I took a break from work when I had my kids in my 20’s. They were in school when I started working again, as a janitor, durin’ their school career. I was working at their school. The kids didn’t care for it! They were the only ‘Kenneth’, ‘George’, and ‘David’ in the school. If I heard one by that name was getting into it, I knew it was mine! I caught my son doin’ somethin’ he wasn’t supposta be doin’ too. He was in the boy’s room and I happened to step out back and saw him. (laughs) He knew he was in trouble then.

After that, I went to work for a medical billing company. I used to get the mail and sort it, make sure it got to the office. I’d walk to the post and pick up the big bins we had then. They used to send the papers straight from a doctor’s office to the billing company. Lots of times I’d find the patient, or whoever was payin’, would staple cash to the papers! Not nowadays.

You’ve been working your whole life. Are you interested in retirement?

Retirement for me depends on how sick my husband is. I took care of him myself for a while ‘cause he died twice! They brought him back and put two titanium valves in his heart. He’s had a small stroke too.

He’s taking care of himself at home while I work. He keeps bangin’ himself up and gettin’ all bloody. He has a tendency to go over [fall over]. He’s a diabetic and he has to take shots five times a day. Insurance covers most of it, until you reach the whole. We’ve reached the whole. (sigh) After that you pay the full amount. Just one bottle of his insulin is over $100!

I’ve been working here 12 years last week. I get tired, but I’ll keep doin’ it until I can’t anymore and I have to stop to take care of my husband. You do the best you can with whatever job you’ve got and always do it with a smile!
“Lost Havana” by Brad Mindich
In the heat of an August afternoon, flush from moving the boxes and furniture that have coalesced into a nomadic conception of home, I turn my attention to the mostly bare cabinets and cupboards in my new kitchen. Well, it’s not technically mine. My girlfriend is the one who bought the house in a Boston suburb. I’m simply paying rent, making me a tenant of sorts, though we’re using pronouns like “our” and “we,” the language of shared ownership, when discussing the house with friends and family. Also, to call the kitchen new would be a little more than misleading. It’s small, with old wooden cabinetry running down just one wall and very limited countertop space. There isn’t even a dishwasher. The kitchen is new only insofar as it’s new to “us.”

The cabinets and drawers will be replaced in time. The kitchen is second on the list of our planned renovations, preceded only by the structurally unsound, unusable deck. For now, unlike those that are empty around it, the small drawer to the left of the sink houses a handful of booklets, including manuals for the older refrigerator, stove, and water heater. There is also a packet of turkey lacers, which I didn’t even know were a thing, kept in place by a piece of yellowing cardboard. At the bottom it says they were “Made in British Hong Kong” in 1984. The booklets make sense to leave behind for new inhabitants, but I have my doubts about the turkey lacers.

All I know about the previous homeowner is that she was an elderly woman who passed away in January. Apparently, she had lived in the house since 1965. I know that towards the end of her life she had trouble getting around, as evidenced by an awkward half-bath situated off the kitchen in a former closet and closed off by an accordion door. I know her children showed
up at closing to hand off the house to my girlfriend, that those same children painted all the walls, refurbished the hardwood floors, and installed new windows after she died in preparation to sell the house, but that’s about it.

And so it is fortunate that last year’s homeowner’s policy was left behind with the booklets and lacers, too. It’s through a local insurance company, and it’s how I find out her name: Erika. Erika was the previous homeowner. There is also a generic April 2015 postcard from a local real estate company representative addressed to a “Daniel” with the same last name as Erika. Her husband. Erika and Daniel must have bought the house back in 1965. Erika’s children would have been well into the process of shopping for realtors by April after her death in January and maybe the house ended up on some master list, but I can’t shake the feeling that the postcard is representative of something predatory. Perhaps the real estate company knew this house would go on the market because of her passing, that dropping the line “If you’re thinking of selling your home, now might be the right time,” might actually be accurate. Maybe it’s absurd to suspect a real estate company of inquiring into the property holdings of local citizens who pass away, to suspect they’re like blood-sucking hearse-chasers that hang around funeral homes. It just strikes me as fast.

At the very bottom of the drawer, there is a small “Top Flight” notebook. It has a solid blue box running down the middle, beneath text that exclaims “80 SHEETS” and “STENO.” It is also Gregg Ruled, as opposed to college or wide, and the spiral wiring runs along the top. A small fragment of the original orange sticker price remains, dead center, although the twin processes of fading and peeling have obscured the price.

I flip open the notebook, expecting to find it empty. It isn’t. On the inside cover, way down at the bottom, there’s text scrawled in quick handwriting. I’ve tried to recreate the spacing:

Pacific Ocean
3 Locks, gravity
Royal Caribbean
vision of the seas
March 3rd, 1999
Giana + Anthony
The first two lines are written in black ink, while everything after, including the misspelled “Royal Caribbean,” is in blue. It seems to me, since I assume that the last four lines refer to a cruise, that the first two lines are notes taken at a later date. And, given that the Caribbean and the Pacific don’t technically touch, I strain to see a connection. The last four lines in blue, being on the inside cover, could go one of two ways: Either the writer was on the phone with a Royal Caribbean representative at one point and just scribbled down the name and date of the cruise on the closest available surface, or this is the title page of a journal.

I turn the notebook over. The first three lines of the first page, way at the top and nearly touching the spiral wiring, as if the writer expected he or she would need every single millimeter of space in the 80 page notebook, read as follows: “Lisa picked us up at 6:15 A.M. Left Logan Airport at 9:30 A.M.” These lines, in combination with the use of at least three different pens, a brief description of a flight to San Juan, an in-depth description of the surprisingly generous in-flight breakfast, mention of a “Theatre Tour” and “Comedy show,” and lines that read “went swimming St. Thomas” and “7:00 walk on deck,” all on the first page, suggest it is in fact a journal kept while aboard a cruise in March of 1999.

One particular line sticks out on the first page, just after the writer describes swimming at St. Thomas: “going shopping bought Danny panama audio video.” I haven’t the slightest clue what “panama audio video” might be referring to, but the affectionate mention of “Danny” leads me to believe that Erika is the writer. Was her husband still alive in 1999? It’s possible. And who are Lisa and Giana and Anthony? I want to know more, so I Google Erika.

One of the first results is an extensive obituary posted by a nearby funeral home. It includes a remarkable amount of information. I learn that Erika was born in 1922, meaning she was 93 when she passed away. I learn that Daniel, her husband and potentially “Danny,” did pass away before her, that she had three daughters and one son, Daniel Jr., that she had three brothers and one sister, Giana, that she had eleven grandchildren and six great-grandchildren. It makes sense for the Giana from the notebook to be Erika’s sister. I do a quick online search for Anthony, using Giana’s current hometown and married name as listed in the obituary, and upon reading an article about a
convenience store that his family has operated for generations in another Bos-
ton suburb, it stands to reason that Anthony is Giana’s husband. It’s likely that
Erika’s sister and brother-in-law accompanied her on the cruise.

On the obituary page, there is a warm depiction of Erika’s life, from her
pride in working at a defense plant during World War II, to her love of cooking
and reading and the Bible. There are four pictures posted by one of Erika’s grand-
daughters. One has Erika seated before a cake, surrounded by six of her grand-
children. What’s written in pink frosting on the cake faces away from the camera
but looks to include the number “91.” Erika wears a green sweater and she smiles
off-camera. In another, she sits by herself in a pink sweater, a cross dangling from
her neck. The next has her embracing one of her great-grandchildren in an open
field, and the last shows her leaning on a chair by herself, smiling ear-to-ear with
a red sweater on. Another cake sits in front of her, but the text is too small to see.
It’s easy to see kindness and care in her glasses, wide nose, wavy reddish hair,
slight frame, and propensity to wear sweaters. She looks like a grandmother.

I remain curious about the notebook, though. Why did Erica’s chil-
dren leave it behind? I guess the turkey lacers and real estate postcard indicate
they didn’t necessarily think all that hard about what they left in that drawer,
but the appliance booklets suggest some concern for the new homeowners.
Maybe they just assumed the notebook was empty? I find it hard to believe
they didn’t open it.

Erika only wrote on three other pages in the notebook. She took dili-
gent notes about Costa Rica and the Panama Canal. Her line, “Gravity makes
the ship go up. Very interesting,” provides some clarity concerning the brief
note on the inside cover about the “Pacific,” “locks,” and “gravity.” With im-
ages of her fresh in my memory, I picture Erika wearing a light shawl and
sunglasses, listening intently to a cruise representative explain how the canal
works on the cruise ship’s deck. Or maybe she forgot her sunglasses in the
cabin and is forced to use her right hand like the brim of a baseball cap. The
breeze ripples through her thinning red hair, and she looks back and forth be-
tween the canal locks and the ocean, overwhelmed by gravity and mysteries
in plain sight that, she feels, we neglect to be awed by.

Erika also describes going to the casino regularly to play $5 at a time.
She wins $20 once. I imagine her tentatively walking up to a blackjack table,
wearing a blue cardigan and gripping a $5 bill in her hand. *It’s just for fun*, she tells herself while following a few hands to gain a sense of the game. She observes the calm confidence of the dealer and the assured movements of the players, all of which highlight her own diffidence. The dealer smiles at her, and she smiles back. He gestures to an open seat in encouragement. She thinks to herself, *What’s $5?* and sits down, keeping her purse strapped to her shoulder. After watching another hand and reaching into her pocket, she guides a five-dollar bill to the felt.

Daniel plays at the casino, too. At one point, Erika says, “hanging onto Dan’s 10.00,” and the only circled line on any of the pages she wrote is “Daniel won $55.00.” These lines confirm that a Daniel was with her on the cruise, along with Giana and Anthony, but since I now know that she had a son named Daniel Jr., I do a quick online search for her husband. I don’t find a full obituary, but after sifting through the myriad websites devoted to ancestry and “confirming” the information via a couple different sites, it seems that Daniel passed away in 1994 when he was seventy-seven years old. Daniel, her husband, could not have been on the cruise, so “Dan” and “Danny” is probably Erika’s son.

Wouldn’t Daniel Jr., at the very least, want this notebook? In my hands I held Erika’s attempt to capture something, to hold on to an experience. She was seventy-seven years old in March of 1999, five years removed from the death of her husband, and she had a little less than sixteen years left to live. It’s not a particularly compelling account of a cruise, but it covers days Daniel Jr. most likely shared with her. It shows a mind, a human being recounting something significant that happened to her, and all of that was inexplicably bequeathed to us.

I close the notebook and look around at the house, at the freshly painted walls and new windows and refinished hardwood floors. In these ways, our house is already not the house that Erika and Daniel built a life in. In others, in the untouched fireplace, glass doorknobs, and the ornate little lamp at the base of the stairs, Erika and Daniel are still there. I imagine a much younger Erika tucking her children into beds beneath mobiles affixed to the ceiling. I see her standing in the kitchen, in an apron, rapidly whisking eggs in a large bowl. I watch her carry unused toys to the oppressively warm attic, tak-
ing a break and sitting down on an old chair to consider the passage of time. I see her planting flowers in the backyard under shade of the massive oak trees.

Neither signing a paper nor being handed a set of keys is enough to fully exchange ownership of space. I’m not sure when it ceases to be Erika and Daniel’s home, and I’m even less sure about when it becomes ours. It’s undeniable that they remain in and around all that we plan to knockdown and rebuild. It’s also true that as the years pass they’re likely to be pushed more and more into the background.

I like to think of the notebook as a snippet of Erika’s voice, a gift, a call for us to adjust our tone when discussing how to make the house our own. It’s a reminder that fifty years in the same house has to mean something. Perhaps, in this particular case, it’s this: I imagine one of Erika’s daughters driving home from work a few years from now. She sees the sign for the highway exit that loosely translated to “home” in her childhood. There’s nowhere she has to be right away, nothing to hurry her, so she takes the exit. She wanders down familiar roads, struck by how close all the homes seem to be to each other. It all looks crowded. She is pretty sure that some of the houses have changed color since she last drove through. Up on the right, sooner than expected, she catches her first glimpse of lime green through the maples. She slows the car. As she approaches, she notices the bushes in the front yard have been pulled out. She almost comes to a complete stop, and the home she grew up in looms, now flanked by unfamiliar cars and fronted by oddly colored drapes in the windows. In that moment, in the memories I dare not venture at, the house becomes hers again. Our cars and drapes and selves are scraped out of view, separated from the house as if it were all poured through a giant colander. It’s only a moment, but it matters. It matters, and then she drives away, returning us to the hardwood floors and brand-new kitchen. The exhaust from her daughter’s car lingers, and I decide to place Erika’s notebook back in the drawer.
“Bath Abbey” by Amy Millios
Shooting stars, incandescent vehicles for space dust. They glow for a second and fizzle out, or crash into corn fields becoming metaphoroids. Some fade in and out of the invisible atmosphere, Earth-grazing fireballs. 15,000 metric tons of residual leftovers every year without time to discover or appreciate half the good nuggets. Still, we find ourselves searching the dark sky, all this star debris, the parts that break off, ejected from the Moon or Mars, as we scramble to capture it, to write it all down, as if the impact of our words could carve a crater the size of a blue whale in the desert in Arizona and so what if they did? All that remains is a big hole in the ground.
“Viva Cuba” by Brad Mindich
NAMELESS RABBIT
Jennifer C. Cormack

I chanced upon nameless rabbit
discarded in a heap
of tired toys and worn out dreams—
my heart then gave a leap.

I snatched his floppy downy form,
made haste to wash him clean.
Then burrowed in his ginger coat
to will away the dream.

Like cries miscarried in the night
when babes need lullabies,
his fuzzy shape pressed close to mine—
softened all my whys.

Perched next to stiff old faceless bear,
whiskers twitch, heart quivers
at the vacant room down the hall,
longing to hold wonders.

Calmly he waits—for night to droop
its spent and weary day,
to feel the pulse of life within
snuggled close, tucked away.

I squeeze and tug his tender heart,
nose his fur, soothe his sighs.
Poetry

Pillow his body under mine—
Silent, he gratifies.
“Omen” by Justine M. Kohr
1.

“If there’s anything I don’t like, it’s driving a stagecoach through Apache country.”

— *Stagecoach* (United Artists, 1939)

[Two scenes from a novel in progress]

The wind came down off the high mountains, carrying the dust and chaff, the bits of feather, horn, and bone from above the tree line. It came through the high pass leading towards the valley, through the ponderosa pines and the fir and spruce, and it made a rushing sound like water in the pine tops and a cracking like gunshots in the deadfalls. It flowed down the valley gathering heather, sage, birchsmoke and straw. It blew across the alkali flats white with talc and it dusted the orange groves with a bitter baker’s sugar. It nuzzled down the canyons, finding the old ways through the hills, and gathered speed across the wide flat bottom cradling the sunstruck city. It blew across the low rooflines, and in between the buildings, and down the streets where the people were waiting, and they could sense the salt tang of the ocean, and smell the pine tops and the sage, the straw and the orange groves, and feel the dust in everything, all the time, so that the wind had a texture, and a taste, and a name. *Santa Ana*.

A boy wove through the crowd, his brown jacket greyed with dust, his tongue furred with it so he had to spit, and a woman *tsked* him, but he was busy rubbing the dust from his eyes. When they were clear he made his way towards the station, threading between the people, the men standing in
their dark suits and the women in dresses bright as heather. The men from the offices wore their hats in the sun, and the men in for the day from the groves and fields wore their hats, and the workingmen in their coveralls, and the servicemen in their uniforms. All the women wore their hats, too, shaped like seashells or birds and decked with a feather or a bow. The boy had no hat but his father, somewhere in the crowd, was wearing his. He didn’t know about his mother. She’d gone away when he was littler, and had yet to come back.

The crowd got thicker as the boy moved forward, so now he was threading between people, sometimes bouncing off a hip or a knee. Once he got a slap on the back of the head as he passed a man in a suit, which sent him stumbling two steps forward, but he didn’t look back because right then he caught a glimpse of something bright just beside a woman’s brown shoe, the kind with buttons on it, and he bent down and plucked a hot nickel from the pavement.

The boy stood and looked at his treasure. It was a new nickel, bright, heavy in his palm. He spit on it and rubbed it clean. On one side he saw an old Indian and the word Liberty, above 1939; and on the other side a buffalo, heavy and still, above the words FIVE CENTS. He reached down to put the coin in his pocket, and at that moment a man came out of the crowd and grabbed him under both his arms, lifted him up high as the startled boy shouted in fear, and dropped him down on his shoulders.

“Can you see all right?”
“Sure.”
“What’s happening up there? Any weather to speak of?”
“Nothing, Dad. When are they going to do something?”
“Shhhh, listen. There’ll be a speech.”
“Lookit,” the boy said, and passed down the new nickel.
“Well, that’s fine. Who gave you this?”
“I found it, it’s mine.”
“I guess this rolled outta some fella’s pocket and right into your possession. It’s your lucky day.” The man passed the coin back up, felt it plucked by invisible fingers. He gave the boy’s knees a squeeze and felt him squirm, reliably ticklish, or maybe just antsy in the heat and the waiting.
They stood with the crowd in the road. Close behind them cops directed traffic on Alameda Street. In front of them the train tracks passed by at street level, bright new steel reflecting heat back up in waves. There’d been a procession of old coal locomotives earlier in the day, chuffing slowly by with men hanging from the engine and the coal car, and once with a man astride the old cow-catcher holding up an antique sign saying The Union Pacific – bound for Los Angeles. On the other side of the tracks there was a platform set up for dignitaries’ speeches. And right behind that was the new station itself.

At just after 11:00, when the speeches were down to the last few round phrases, a modern diesel engine rolled serenely down the track, its bell going without pause. It pulled several passenger carriages, each full of people waving out the windows at the crowd. Up at the head end the pilot bore a large placard advertising the Santa Fe line, and on both sides the engine wore a red banner with tall yellow letters spelling out RAILROADS BUILD THE NATION. There were American, Californian, old Republic, and Santa Fe line flags sprouting from the pilot and back along both sides above the banners. Crowd, dignitaries, press, train crew and passengers all were aware of their moment in history, as the train slowed to a crawl and finally to a stop and prepared to disembark the first passengers at the new Union Station.

In the third car from the front Augustus Bell worked the latches lowering the heavy window and put his head out to get his first whiff of Los Angeles air, receiving for his trouble a diesel-smelling gust of fumes and grit. It was the same air he’d been smelling since they’d left Chicago on Saturday, and he was getting sick of it; an oily queasiness had invested his nose and throat in a way that reminded him of the cod liver oil his mother had introduced him to early and often.

He hoisted the window shut, gathered his coat, his hat, and his travelling bag and then stayed sitting until the train took a last lurch, and the conductors up and down the cars began to sing out like a tipsy choir, off key, and out of unison: Los Ang-a-lees, une-ee-on stay-shon. Lasss top Los Ang-a-lees…

Augustus shuffled off the train, the crowd going much too slowly, then broke into a stride down the sidewalk to the baggage car. He wondered that there was no platform like in stations back east. Here, the train rode at street level, and people milled around and in front like livestock. He could see how
someone might easily be run over, and he resolved to keep his eyes open. It would be no credit to Father Lowry back in New York if Augustus were to lose an argument with a locomotive before he could even begin his new work of “safeguarding the moral life of movie-going America,” as the letter he carried in his inside pocket put it.

At the baggage car he signaled for a Redcap, and a small, very dark-skinned Negro stepped up quickly.

“How many we got, boss?”

“There will be two bags and a steamer. I mostly need the help with the steamer,” he added unnecessarily, and then felt ridiculous.

“That’s all right boss, we all need a little help sometimes,” the man said.

Augustus looked at him closely. He wore the red hat and dark blue jacket, with the gold piping and brass buttons of the porter’s union, and despite being spry Augustus could see he was old. His face was deeply creased and lined and his eyes were red-rimmed and bright. He was sweating freely in his uniform but seemed easy with it, like a man who sweats while working in the sun, who then goes home to a drawn bath and a glass of cold beer, who puts on clean old clothes and sits with friends, maybe a wife, or a woman who cooks him a meal and rubs the knots out of his shoulders. Gus looked up and down the platform. Women in bright dresses and coats with hats of all colors flocked around him, chatting happily, holding the arms of sisters, husbands, brothers. He felt a rush of excitement. It had been a long trip but now he was here. There would be no more endless days of endless texts, endlessly torturing meaning, logic, and cold beauty from endless other texts. He had left the seminary. Now he would enter into the life of the world like other men.

Augustus spied his bags among those being lifted out of the baggage car by the Pullman men and pointed them out to his redcap, who wheeled his cart over and hoisted them up. He handled the trunk as easily as lifting a child, and Augustus decided on the spot to gift him an extra tip once they’d got them stowed safe in a taxi.

He followed the redcap with his cart through the crowd to Alameda St., where the old man put two fingers in his mouth and produced a whistle so piercing people all around turned their heads. A cab leapt forward, had to slow
for the people in the street, and finally idled up to the curb where they stood. Augustus looked down the road, thronged with cars, trucks, and taxis now that the ceremony of arrival had occurred, and into the city stretching ahead to the mountains in the distance. He seemed to feel a truck’s air brakes engaging as a sudden change of pressure cupping his ear, rather than hearing the screech of the hydraulics, or the squeal of tires on the macadam. He did hear, in the empty bowl of silence that followed, a small thud like a book dropped on the floor, and then a woman in a red coat and a small black hat screamed right in front of him. People were backing away from the street, ordering themselves in a circle with some kind of animal instinct of crowds. The redcap brushed past him through the ring of people and Augustus followed him. He heard the old man gasp and say, “Ahh, damn!” and then finally Augustus saw the man lying in the street, a tiny man in a dusty brown coat lying with his arms and legs splayed and bent like he’d been caught dancing, one shoe on, the other a surprising distance away, still laced, and then he realized that of course it was a child, a small boy with his head crushed like a fruit and leaking onto the street. Police were keeping the crowd back. Two cops were gripping a crying man by the arms and talking to him and Augustus thought they ought to let him go, let him through. The redcap and Augustus and the crumpled boy and the driver of the truck were the only ones inside the circle, and they were all still, like actors waiting a cue. “Ah, damn” the redcap said, again. Augustus wondered why no one was tending to the boy. Shouldn’t someone do something? He edged closer to the little one. There was blood by his head and a coin in the street and what looked like teeth but the boy’s face, under a cap of fine blonde hair, was unrecognizable. Augustus felt a wave of revulsion, and he bent down and placed his hat over the ruined face, murmuring “reliquem aeternam,” and then he crossed the street and threw up at the feet of a cop. He kept trying to vomit even after his stomach was empty, bent down on one knee. The wind blew streaks of spittle back into his face, and with that and the flying grit and his tears everything looked a blur, and for that he thanked God.
2.

“I wouldn’t give two cents for all your fancy rules if, behind them, they didn’t have a little bit of plain, ordinary, everyday kindness.”

—Mr. Smith Goes to Washington (Columbia Pictures, 1939)

At 5:15 Friday afternoon MacNally got up from her desk, walked to the library, turned on the light and began rummaging for the liquor. She liked to keep the bottles on the cart by the door, but someone kept moving them to an upper shelf and she had to stretch awkwardly and move a box of paper to get to the Rye. No one but she called this room the library anymore. To the staff it was the file room, but it had been the library when she started working for the Code office five years ago and she couldn’t bring herself to change now. She thought it was probably Susan who made things difficult for her with the liquor, and she resolved to say something to Mr. Breen.

Jeanne MacNally was a fixture at the Production Code Administration, always mentioned with affection by Mr. Breen at Christmas and anniversary parties, and she felt her opinion carried weight. If truth be told, however — and it was nothing she could put her finger on definitely — she felt less and less a part of the daily pulse of life at the office.

At 5:25 MacNally wheeled the cart, now full of tinkling bottles, out of the library and down the hall past all the administrators and their secretaries to the conference room. Her left heel tapped the parquet floor like a new Smith-Corona; her right landed with a dull thud from having been broken and mended twice. She paused to straighten her skirt — glad she’d worn the dark green today, she felt it flattered her — and opened the door.

Joseph Breen glanced up at the interruption, and cleared his throat.
“Hey, Mac.”
Her pleasure on entering, and at Mr. Breen’s greeting, was nearly
eclipsed by the sight of Susan Weaver, sitting close to him at the big table, and
looking rather too comfortable.
“If Jeanne is here it must be cocktail hour,” said Susan. “How the day
has flown.” She looked up at MacNally and batted her eyes.
“Set it all out here, I guess. Then you can ring the dinner bell,” said
Mr. Breen.
He turned back to the papers laid out on the table before them, and he
and the Weaver woman put their heads together and conferred quietly while
MacNally set out the bottles and glasses, the cobalt blue carboys, and the ice
bucket and tongs. She resolved not to let herself be hurried, though once or
twice Mr. Breen glanced up when she set something down more definitely
than she’d meant to, and her face burned.
When she was done she turned to Mr. Breen, thinking she would com-
pliment him on his tie.
“Tell you what, Mac,” he said. “Be a sport and keep the wolves from
the door for a bit. I need another few minutes with Miss Weaver. That is,” he
said to Weaver, “if you can stand the calm before the martinis.”
“You’re the boss,” she said with a laugh, while her cold eyes seemed to
Jeanne to say something a good deal more shocking.
MacNally mumbled something and backed out the door. She might
have said, “of course…need me…very well,” or she might have said, “whore…
seedy…Jezebel,” she couldn’t be sure. She felt her heart pounding insistently,
and her palms were slick and cold as she pulled the door shut behind her. As
she turned and walked back down the hallway to her desk she felt as if the
walls and floor were spinning around her, and she was aware of a roar like
wind in the treetops back home in Michigan, and then she stumbled and fell
right in front of the office of the new man, that Mr. Bell.

At that moment Augustus Bell was thinking about flies. He was thinking, with
a clarity and fervency granted to idiots, and the spiritually elect, that on the
subject of flies, if on no other, his purpose in life was plain. He carefully ap-
proached a fat specimen lolling and buzzing on the windowsill — *luuuzzing* — and dispatched it with a hard flick of his flyswatter. He sighed, knowing he was not among the spiritually elect.

He looked out the speckled glass and down three floors to La Cienega Boulevard. At three floors up he knew his was among the loftiest views in Hollywood, or indeed anywhere in this whole soup dish of a city between the mountains and the ocean. Los Angeles was flat and khaki-colored, not without beauty, not at all, but not a city in the way he knew cities. Not a forest of skyscrapers, like New York. Not a Bauhaus cathedral surrounded by cornfields, like Chicago. Not a steel mill at a conference of rivers, like Pittsburgh. So: not a city, but what then? Gertrude Stein had said “there is no there, there,” of another California town, but might it not be equally true of Los Angeles? Augustus thought he should like to find out. He wanted more than anything to get the pulse of this place, to lose himself in its bright avenues, rest his head on the shoulder of the mountain and stretch his toes under the coverlets of the sea.

He was called from his reverie, with embarrassment, by the sound of something or someone falling to the floor just outside his office. Augustus opened the door and found a heap of dark green wool, hair, and heels that he recognized as Miss MacNally, a secretary or office manager whom he had met on Wednesday along with the other staff, and not encountered since.

“Is everything all right?” he asked her, bending low and extending his hand. He spoke quietly. “Should I call someone?” Miss MacNally seemed to shudder slightly, and Augustus realized with a start that she was weeping. Crying women were rare in his experience. His mother, after his father died. An awkward girl from town, once, who’d taken a shine to him when he was eleven. Frances, twice during college. Women in the movies were always crying, but that was not the same thing. He felt something extraordinary was happening, and that something extraordinary was called for. Her face was turned away from him and he felt ridiculous with his proffered hand just hanging there. He looked around. No one else was anywhere in sight. Augustus got down on one knee, then on both knees; finally, he plopped his backside down so that he was sitting facing Miss MacNally, who looked at him blankly.

“That’s better. I think you have the right idea,” Augustus said.
“Don’t mock me,” MacNally wailed, and at that people began poking their heads out of offices down the corridor.

“No, no, no, no!” Augustus, mortified, quickly got to his feet and bent to lift the crying woman up, trying to shush her without seeming to shush her, to be competent, and consoling, but firm, and not at all the sort to make a crying girl cry harder. MacNally shrugged him off and stayed slumped on the floor, as disarranged as a dropped doll. Augustus was at a complete loss. He felt as if he were trapped in an allegory on a medieval tapestry: On market day, the village fool accosted an honest woman. He felt sure there was something else he ought to be doing, but for the life of him he could not think what.

MacNally finally stirred. “No,” she said slowly, “I don’t suppose you were. Mocking me. I suppose you were being kind.”

“You took a tumble.”

“I didn’t recognize it at first. You’re not like most people.” She got to her feet slowly, straightened her skirt, and noticed with dismay a little tear along the bottom. She regretted wearing it now.

The secretary at the desk outside the office next to Augustus was staring at the two of them. Finally she stepped out into the hall with her handkerchief, put her arm over MacNally’s shoulder, and steered her away, giving Augustus a look. Two men, Dickey and Carborough, sauntered over.

“It’s our own St. Francis,” said Carborough. “Tending to the flock.”

“Didn’t he take a vow of silence, though?” said Dickey.


Augustus had met these two, code administrators like himself, though somewhat senior to him, but had not said more than a few words to either of them. He had been in the office for three full days now, and the sum of his human interaction added to a few passing nods, and one fallen woman.

“You’re thinking of Benedict,” said Augustus. “He made the monks of his order observe a strict silence, though I guess he also made them pretty rich.”

“I knew he would know,” Carborough said. “The fruits of a seminary education.”
Carborough, as Augustus would come to learn, was a Harvard man, and liked to let you know it. Dickey, of Stanford, confided he sometimes wanted to punch him in the nose, but he never did. Augustus decided that he liked them both right away.

“Let’s go get your opinion on something,” Dickey took Augustus by the elbow and marched him into his office.

“I’m composing a letter, and there’s a question about the application of the code. It’s a question of politics,” he said. “I will read, and our friend,” a nod to Carborough, who sat in the only chair, “will provide commentary cutting to the pith of the matter.”

Dickey sat on his desk, picked up a few pages of typescript, and began to read. As there was nowhere to sit, Augustus stayed standing.

“To, Mr. Harry Cohn, President, Columbia Pictures Corporation. Dear Mr. Cohn,” Dickey read.

“My Dear Rotundity,” said Carborough. “You will please shut up now and listen for one minute of your fat life.”

“We have read the first draft for your proposed production, Mr. Smith Goes to Washington, and respectfully submit that the difficulties we sense in this story fall under the following general headings.”

“We respectfully submit we have no idea what this picture is about, and no interest in finding out. We just like busting your chops.”

“Firstly, the portrayal of the Senate as a body of politicians who, if not deliberately crooked, are completely controlled by lobbyists…”

“Look, who are we kidding, we all know they’re as bent as forks, but this’ll never fly. The lobbyists will have our heads on a pike.”

“Secondly, the unflattering portrayal of Senators from several states creates the indication that all or most Senators are willing to barter their votes for tickets to the World Series.”

“This is inaccurate and completely unfair. It is well known they will only sell their votes to see the Yankees get beat. And only if they can bet on the games.”

“Third, the generally unflattering portrayal of our government system, which might well be considered, particularly abroad, as a criticism of our democratic form of government.”
“Ach Tung! Do you want the Krauts and Frenchies thinking dey is better than us? Dey already think so, you vanna give em de proof?”

“For the above reasons, we most earnestly ask you to take serious counsel before embarking on a motion picture production based on this material. It looks to us like it might be loaded with dynamite… for the motion picture industry.”

“For Chrissake, Harry stop and think! Are you going to spend the bank’s half million to produce a picture that tells the truth? Nobody cares. You want to send a message – call Western Union. P.S. See you tonight at Chasen’s. Love, Joe.”

Dickey dropped the letter on the desk and looked at Augustus.

“You see the political problem,” he said.

Augustus couldn’t help but smile. “I’m not sure, let me think.” It seemed to him he’d been cast in some long-running play where everybody else knew the lines. The only thing he could think, at this particular minute, was that he very much wanted to belong here, but wasn’t at all sure that he did. “Could you read that last part again?” he asked.

Before anyone could react there was a knock on the door. One of the office girls poked her head around the corner and said, “Friday, gentlemen. It’s cocktails in the conference room.”

“Our political problem, Mr. Bell,” said Carborough, “is that since only Mr. Breen signs our letters to Mr. Cohn, only Mr. Breen gets a free dinner at Chasen’s with Mr. Cohn.”

“And Miss Dietrich,” said Dickey.

The young woman rolled her eyes, looked at Augustus and said, “Mr. Breen especially asked to see Gus there.”

“Who the hell is Gus?” Carborough asked. “Are you Gus?”

“He is Gus,” she said.

“I might be Gus,” Augustus said. “I can be Gus.”
“La Oportunidad” by Brad Mindich
BREAKING BOUNDARIES
Courtney L. Jackson

The tradition of boarding schools in the United States is a long-standing one that began with Maryland’s West Nottingham Academy in 1744 (A Long and Rich History). Since then, many more schools with residential components have been established and developed in a variety of ways including size, academic and extra-curricular offerings, athletics, religious affiliation, and diversity.

For decades, many boarding high schools were elite institutions where the sons of prominent Americans were sent to prepare for their collegiate, usually Ivy League, education. Student bodies were traditionally all boys, all white, and the departure from that homogenous model was slow and resistant to change. In fact, three of the oldest and most prominent boarding schools, Phillips Exeter Academy and St. Paul’s School, both in New Hampshire, and Phillips Academy Andover in Massachusetts, did not admit girls until 1970, 1971, and 1973 respectively (Academy, SPS, PA). However, due to continuing societal shifts, many boarding schools have further expanded the diversity of their student bodies as they strive to carry out their missions and have come to embrace diversity as being a core part of their identity. Milton Academy in Milton, Massachusetts, for example, strives to “[cultivate] in its students a passion for learning and a respect for others” and claims that by “embracing diversity and the pursuit of excellence,” Milton can “create a community in which individuals develop competence, confidence and character” (Our Mission). With its school motto of “Dare to be true” (Our Mission), Milton emphasizes its focus on the individual growth of each student and the diverse community that makes that possible. While the admissions offices of boarding schools like Milton still want the best students, their definition of “best” has expanded to include different kinds of diversity such as international students, students from varying socio-economic and geographical backgrounds, students from varying ethnic and racial backgrounds, and students from varying religious traditions.
By including all of these diverse elements within the school community, schools will succeed in creating multicultural and dynamic environments that will challenge and nurture their students and shape them into respectful, responsible, and active global citizens.

Some aspects of diversity that have been more recently gaining attention are those involving the Lesbian, Gay, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, and Asexual (LGBTQIA) community. With celebrities like Laverne Cox of *The T Word* and *Orange is the New Black*, Caitlyn Jenner, and TV shows like *Glee* that pushed LGBTQIA issues in mainstream media, awareness of identities outside of the heterosexual, male-female binary is increasing. Specifically, members of the transgender community have become more visible as they demand recognition and corresponding accommodations in order to make sure their rights are being acknowledged and honored. The people fighting for rights are not only adults like Cox and Jenner. Children and teenagers are a large part of the transgender movement and they and their families are advocating for changes in schools that will acknowledge their gender identity and treat them accordingly. Changes have occurred at all levels of education spanning from kindergarten to the collegiate level, and best practices and policies have been developed. Boarding high schools, however, are unique in that they blend the normal high school experience with the residential component of a college or university. What are the best practices and policies for boarding high schools regarding transgender students? To answer that, more must be said about gender – what it is and what the issues surrounding it are within the educational environment. Next, I will address what actions have been taken at both the public school and collegiate levels and what guided those decisions. Finally, I will apply legal precedents to the boarding high school environment and offer suggestions for best practices and policies.

Most people would agree that every human is born with a sex – either male or female, which is determined by genitalia. But in the chapter, “That Sexe Which Prevaileth”, from her book, *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality*, Anne Fausto-Sterling argues that there is space between male and female, which is inhabited by many people who do not fit within the two biological ends of the sex spectrum. Through her discussion of intersex individuals, those who are “born with a reproductive or sexual
anatomy that doesn’t seem to fit the typical definitions of female or male” (What is Intersex?), Fausto-Sterling shows the “weight our culture places on ascertaining a person’s correct ‘sex’ and the deep confusion that arises when it cannot be determined” (Fausto-Sterling 375). She also points out that in American culture, “whether one falls into the category of man or woman matters in concrete ways” for political and legal issues like voting rights, marriage laws, and military drafts (375-6). But, intersex people are produced by nature, which calls into question the legitimacy of the male-female binary model. Thus, Fausto-Sterling points out that the male-female binary is not based on nature but, rather, is a social construction. And, if there are more than two sexes, if there is a spectrum of sexes that exists in nature, we must rethink our social organization. The same is true of gender.

In his book, Far from the Tree, Andrew Solomon begins his chapter, “Transgender” with an observation: “Western culture likes binaries” (Solomon 599). Like Fausto-Sterling, Solomon acknowledges that we often use binaries to explain or understand things according to their opposite. And, by creating binaries, we further our ability to configure the world around us and figure out our place in it. So when these binaries get questioned or dispelled, we often react with anxiety. Gender is no exception but rather another rule as Fausto-Sterling and Solomon note, because “threats to gender are threats to the social order” (599). Still, more and more people are defining gender in new ways, resisting the male-female binary, and demanding to be included in society anyway. Soloman says that “gender itself is a slippery concept” but while “gender is hard to define, it is not hard to know” (599).

Knowing one’s gender raises the issue of gender identity vs. gender expression. According to the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN), gender identity is “a person’s deeply held sense or psychological knowledge of their own gender…[It] is an innate, largely inflexible characteristic of each individual’s personality…” (GLSEN 2). Gender expression is “the manner in which a person represents or expresses gender to others, often through behavior, clothing, hairstyles, activities, voice or mannerisms” (2). While we are assigned a gender at birth based on our genitalia, “gender is an identity that is not determined by our body parts. It is specific to our experience of ourselves and the world around us, and many of us are assigned to
genders that don’t match who we truly are” (Russo, Facebook’s New Gender Terms).

When people’s gender identity does not match their assigned gender at birth, they fall into the space outside of the male-female binary. These people often choose labels or are labeled terms like transgender, gender neutral, gender nonconforming, gender queer, gender questioning, gender fluid, or androgynous, among others. For the purposes of this essay, I will use transgender and gender nonconforming to describe people who fall outside of the male-female gender binary. Transgender will serve as “an adjective describing a person whose gender identity or expression is different from that traditionally associated with an assigned sex at birth,” (GLSEN 2) and gender nonconforming will serve as “a term for people whose gender expression differs from stereotypical expectations, such as ‘feminine’ boys, ‘masculine’ girl, and those perceived as androgynous” (2). Gender non-conforming also “includes people who identify outside traditional gender categories or identify as both genders” (2). Transgender will apply to people who identify within the male-female binary but with the opposite gender they were given at birth whereas gender nonconforming will apply to those who are outside or within the binary. Additionally, cisgender will refer to those “who feel their assigned birth gender matches their personal gender identity” (Russo).

In considering what gender is and what it does, Judith Butler can provide some insight. In her essay collection, Undoing Gender, Butler argues that gender is a performance; that “gender is a kind of doing, an incessant activity performed, in part, without one’s knowing and without one’s willing…it is a practice of improvisation within a scene of constraint” (Butler 1). Gender is, to some degree, unconscious. It is who we are. However, “one does not ‘do’ one’s gender alone,” and “the terms that make up one’s gender are, from the start, outside of oneself, beyond oneself in a sociality that has no single author (and that radically contests the notion of authorship itself)” (1). Therefore, gender is simultaneously something that is inherent in the individual and something that exists as a societal construct or understanding. As a result, individual and collective understandings of gender are merely societal norms as a result of social construction.
Norms change, however, and socially accepted notions of gender are changing. In 2014, “Facebook introduced over 50 new terms for users to select from when identifying their gender. While before users had the choice of ‘male’ or ‘female,’ with the option of not answering or keeping their gender private, there is now an expansive ‘custom’ gender section” (Russo, Facebook’s New Gender Terms). This is important because Facebook’s purpose is to be social and to give users the ability to self-identify. It is an online space where people can socially engage, connect, and be recognized. For many years, the only two gender options on Facebook were male and female. But recognizing that “many (many, many!) people do not identify with the gender that they were assigned at birth,” Facebook’s new gender options offer “more room for individual experience” (Russo, Facebook’s New Gender Terms). Western societies are largely binary, however, in how they are organized and structured. Restrooms, clothing departments, toys, bath and personal hygiene products, shoes, and even pens (BIC) are gendered. So with alternative gender identities becoming more visible, recognized, and accepted, rethinking binary structures and providing accommodations and safe spaces for those outside of the gender binary becomes necessary. By doing so, understanding and recognition will increase, shifting societal norms even further, and creating a more open and inclusive environment for everyone. The interesting thing is that “the torchbearers of gender fluidity aren’t just celebrities or politicians, but kids” (Thompson). Therefore it comes as no surprise that schools are a major space where people are fighting for the rights of transgender and gender non-conforming people.

From kindergarten through college, students and their parents are advocating for wider gender rights, and schools are responding—some in ways that strive to maintain the binary and others in ways that seek to treat transgender and gender non-conforming students with respect and fairness. Because gender is often the basis of special organization and of determining who can use certain spaces, bathrooms and athletics (teams and locker rooms) are the two main areas that have been contested in courtrooms and in the media. In the April 2014 issue of the Harvard Law Review, a section entitled “Developments in the Law—Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity” included a chapter that addressed “transgender youth and access to gendered spaces in
education” (Transgender Youth 1722). The chapter first acknowledges the rise in legal trials regarding transgender youth, discusses the goals of public education, moves on to access to gendered spaces at school (restrooms and athletics), and ends with some broader implications of sex segregation. Through all this, the chapter “argues that the inclusion of transgender students in traditionally gendered spaces and deference to these student’s conceptions of their own gender identities can help schools further their academic missions by improving scholastic outcomes and sending messages to the wider student body about diversity and community” (1723). Despite the fact that this focuses on public schools and does not address the residential component of boarding schools, it serves as a solid foundation on which to explore the issues at hand.

Given that most of the celebrities and well-known transgender public figures are adults, transgender children have recently and increasingly let themselves be known. Once children come out as transgender, however, they face a number of challenges. According to GLSEN’s 2013 National School Climate Survey, transgender youths reported “hearing biased remarks, including homophobic remarks, in school; Feeling unsafe in school because of personal characteristics, such as sexual orientation, gender expression, or race/ethnicity; Missing classes or days of school because of safety reasons; Experiencing harassment and assault in school; and Experiencing discriminatory policies and practices at school” (Kosciw). Since schools are places where it is expected that children are and feel safe, experience personal and academic growth, and respect is received when engaging with others, GLSEN’s report is startling. At school, students are supposed to be challenged and supported in order to spur personal growth and development that will not only prepare them for the next academic step but prepare them to be thoughtful and engaged citizens. Therefore, it is up to the school community to ensure the safety and inclusion of all of its students because it coincides with “the broader educational philosophy that emphasizes justice, diversity, and community” (Transgender Youth).

Still, when it comes to transgender students, including them in gendered school spaces presents challenges. The Harvard Law Review chapter sites two recent cases whose results support all schools in designing “policies that promote equal access to gendered spaces and deference to students’ own perceptions of their gender” (1728). Using the bathroom is a daily and routine
experience for all people but can present a constant disruption for transgender and gender non-conforming people, as they live with the fear of harassment and violence that might come their way when using gendered bathrooms. And, for children who are in the process of figuring out their gender identity, being given only two restroom choices can be confusing and cause anxiety (1729). Parents also add their voices to the conversation, with some advocating for the rights of their children and others calling for the denial of transgender identity when it comes to use of gendered spaces. Unfortunately, many adults in schools are not educated and prepared to lend support to transgender students. As a result, many of them are asked to use the bathroom consistent with their assigned birth gender or asked to use a single stall located in a space like the nurse’s office (1730).

It is important to note that gendered bathrooms have not always been a part of our world: “In 1887, Massachusetts passed the first law of its kind, one that separated men and women into their respective public bathrooms,” and, today, “plumbing regulations in Massachusetts limit the number of gender neutral bathrooms a building can have” (Sides). Some cities, however, are looking to change this longstanding tradition based on antiquated social norms and “have made progress in writing inclusivity for the entire gender spectrum into municipal code” (Ferro). For example, “San Francisco code encourages businesses to offer at least one gender-neutral bathroom option, and Philadelphia requires it in city-owned buildings” (Ferro). Still, the majority of schools have gendered restrooms. California was the first state to sign a bill that required “public K-12 schools to let transgender students choose which restrooms they use and which school teams they join based on their gender identity instead of their chromosomes” (Thompson), and more states and school districts are following suit.

Two recent legal cases have also done much to bring the underlying issues of the bathroom debate to the surface, and “each demonstrates the tension between deferring to students’ experiences and hewing to outdated legal frameworks that become inconsistent when sex and gender diverge” (Transgender Youth 1730-1). The first case involved Coy Mathis, a transgender first grader who wanted to use the girls’ restroom at her Colorado elementary school. While she was initially allowed to use the girls’ restroom in Kindergar-
ten, her school changed its stance given Mathis’s male genitalia and how her growth and development would end up making her use of the girls’ restroom inappropriate (Payne). But Steven Chavez, “the director of the civil rights division and the author of the decision in the case” found that Mathis had been discriminated against and “stressed the idea that sex and gender are mutually contingent” (1731). This is significant because sex and gender are often taken to mean the same thing, even in the legal system. So by making this distinction, Chavez separated Mathis’s gender identity from her biological sex and gave her the opportunity to engage in restroom use according to her core identity. Some people argue that saying someone was “born male” or “born female” is offensive; that even saying that denies individuals ownership of their identity, that calling them transgender is grounded upon their departure from the identity that society gave them at birth (Brighe). In Mathis’s case, Chavez acknowledged the difference between sex and gender and set an important precedent for distinguishing between them in legal issues. The second thing Chavez highlighted was “the social disengagement fostered by the discriminatory bathroom policy and compared the policy to the reviled doctrine of ‘separate but equal’ (Transgender Youth 1731-2). Given that schools are places where students “‘learn social skills, such as respect, communication, trust, how to appropriately interact with people from different backgrounds, and how to become a part of a community’” (1732), Chavez concluded that “denying Mathis access to the girls’ bathroom ‘deprives [her] of the acceptance that all students require to excel in their learning environment, creates a barrier where none should exist, and entirely disregards [her] gender identity’” (1732). This case was ground-breaking in the way it recognized gender identity over biological sex.

The second case that has made waves reconciled the “tension between laws mandating sex-segregated bathrooms and laws barring gender identity discrimination” (1732). In her home state of Maine, Nicole Maines, a transgender female, had been able to use the female restroom. But in 2007, a cisgender male at her school started going into the female restroom arguing that if Maines could use it, so could he (Stout). As a result, Maines’ school required her to use a staff restroom instead of the student facilities. A case was filed and ended up going to the Maine Supreme Judicial Court, where it ruled that
Maines had indeed been discriminated against given the Maine Human Rights Act, despite an older “statue mandating sex-segregated bathrooms” (Transgender Youth 1733). Additionally, the court “hinged its decision on Maines’ psychological and educational needs as determined by her doctors, family, and school” (1733). Both of these aspects of the verdict create issues between the nature of gender identity and the many of the laws that exist, which conflate sex and gender and make it difficult to enforce a non-discrimination policy. The fact that the court based part of its decision on people other than Maines is of note. By requiring other people to weigh in on Maines’ identity, the court took away her agency in determining her own gender (1734). And, even though in Mathis’ case, the decision was based on her self-identified gender, the verdict “announc[ed] too hastily that sex and gender are the same for legal purposes,” making it confusing and not really supported by any real law (1734).

The issues present in both cases are “resolved by the approach of AB 1266, which was signed unto law in California” (1734) in 2013. The bill states that “’A pupil shall be permitted to…use facilities consistent with his or her gender identity, irrespective of the gender listed on the pupil’s records’” (1735). Disregarding sex, this bill makes students’ gender identity the only thing that matters when it comes to choosing a restroom. Those who have spoken out against this law often say that this will make cisgender students feel uncomfortable. Some also assume that transgender individuals will make sexual advances toward other bathroom users. Both of these arguments against including transgender students are fallible. Discomfort often comes from ignorance and unfamiliarity with something, and, by excluding transgender students from restrooms, schools would reinforce the notion that they are different and perpetuate the ignorance that others have toward them (1737). To the second point about discomfort regarding the sexuality of transgender students, it must be made clear to people that gender and sexuality are different things. Homosexual cisgender individuals end up in appropriate gendered restrooms all the time and no one necessarily knows. And, to assume that transgender people are sexuality aggressive and abusive is offensive and, again, displays ignorance that schools have the opportunity to change through inclusive policies like AB 1266 (1737). Even if a school’s state does not have inclusive policies like California does, a school or its district can craft its own policies. The Gay,
Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN) and the National Center for Transgender Equality are two organizations that are ready and eager to help schools and other bodies craft such policies. By focusing on “education rather than exclusion” (1737), our educational ideals and goals can be better met than by excluding a whole group of people just because they do not fit into the societal mold that we currently have.

One thing that the Harvard Law Review article does not address is what happens when students are gender non-conforming. By saying that transgender students should be able to use the bathroom that is consistent with their gender identity, it assumes that they will choose either male or female. But what about students who identify as gender queer or bi-gender or any of the other gender identities that exist outside of the binary? Which bathroom will they use? This raises the important task for schools at all levels to build multiple gender-neutral restrooms, which will enable everyone to feel recognized and included. Moreover, these neutral spaces should be made available to everyone, not just gender non-conforming students, so as to not stigmatize them. By making them available to all, school communities will become more comfortable with gender-neutral language even just because with restroom signage, students who are gender questioning will be exposed to alternative identities that might fit them better than just male or female.

Regarding boarding high schools, providing gender-neutral bathrooms in a variety of spaces on campus should be a priority. Since boarding students live on campus and use a variety of buildings each day, they need to have the ability to use the restroom to the same degree as any cisgender student would. Not only do these bathrooms need to be placed in academic buildings and public spaces like the dining hall, theatre, student center, and athletic center, dormitories also need to be outfitted with single stall restrooms labeled as “gender-neutral” or “all gender”. Given that most, if not all, boarding high school dorms are single sex with similarly gendered restrooms, providing a gender-neutral restroom will be an important step in creating an inclusive environment for individual students who desire them but also for the community at large. Not only will these bathrooms provide a space for students in the community who identify outside of the gender binary, they will also provide a
bathroom space for faculty members serving dorm duty in the evening, which is important from a supervision and student safety standpoint. Just as any school would need to have facilities that are accessible to people with physical disabilities, they should also ensure that they are accessible to those with non-traditional gender identities.

In dorms, it is also ideal that schools provide at least one single use restroom that contains a shower. When students are away from home at boarding school, the school is in loco parentis, and charged with ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all students. Any schools that receive federal funding also cannot discriminate any student based on gender because of the federal law, Title IX, which used to only cover discrimination due to one’s sex but now extends to gender (U.S. Department). Even though boarding schools are private, they still may be subject to their state laws that ideally would be proactive about being inclusive and meeting both state and federal laws, if not going beyond to adopting the kinds of policies recommended by GLSEN, which recommends that schools “adopt policies that ensure fairness, respect, and safety for all students.” Therefore, if a transgender student does not feel comfortable using the communal restrooms in the dorm in which they live, an alternative option should be provided. Another option to consider for additional privacy and safety would be floor to ceiling stalls and showers. The addition of changing areas connected to each shower would also be an inclusive option.

The single sex nature of boarding school dorms is something that will probably not change any time soon, if at all, but it is worth contemplating. At the college level, many schools have begun offering special interest housing, which often includes gender-neutral housing or housing that caters to the LGBTQIA community. At the University of Vermont, for example, there are three different styles of alternative housing options for members of the LGBTQIA community (Housing Options). Other schools like George Mason, Ohio University, Oberlin University, University of Pennsylvania, George Washington University, and Stanford University have added coed/gender-neutral housing options for students (Zembriski). While some fear that gender-neutral housing might compromise student safety, Pete Trentacoste, the executive director of Residential Housing at Ohio University, reports that despite a small number of students in the gender-neutral option, “they are close-knit and led
by strong leaders,” and that there has been “no controversy” for the University as a result of students of mixed sexes and genders cohabitating (Zembriski). Still, colleges deal with mostly “adults” or people over the age of 18, and at boarding high schools, students are predominantly minors. But, might secondary schools ever adopt gender-neutral housing, even as an option to students and their families who are in favor of it?

Most would probably give an immediate “No” as their response to the above question. However, this “No” is probably grounded in the same fear and discomfort that was previously mentioned regarding student safety and ignorance of non-binary gender identities. In reality, many students, up until their arrival on campus, grow up with siblings with genders different from their own and have learned to share spaces and be respectful of each other inside and outside of the home. And, if adults are concerned about students of differing genders having sexual relationships within dorms, it needs to be reemphasized that gender and sexuality are different things and not everything falls within heteronormativity. Most boarding schools have visitation policies that govern the interactions between students of opposing sexes within dorm spaces. But this assumes that all students identify within the gender binary and that their sexual orientation is heterosexual. Adults still might view the world this way, but more and more “students will be the drivers of institutional change” (Green). These students will also call into question the purpose of sex-segregated dormitories and if they still serve a positive function in the adolescent development of students. Chad Green, Dean of Students at St. Paul’s School, said that during his time there, the climate of the school has shifted toward being more inclusive as increasing numbers of students have entered the school already with gender identities and sexual orientations that go outside of the heteronormative model. Because they are secure in their identities and maintain a degree of openness, recognizing them as fluid, they have helped change social and cultural norms at the school. Might this shift reconfigure notions of sex and gender to the point where coed dorms are possible? With the rise of transgender students being allowed to live in the dorms that correspond to their gender identities, residential situations will inevitably become “mixed.” As this occurs, schools need to focus on education within their communities to ensure that all students are welcomed and treated with respect in all areas of school life.
In the cases I found of boarding schools that have had transgender students, they let the student take the lead and do what they can to ensure the student’s experience is an authentic one that any cisgender peer would have the opportunity to have. At one school, which will remain anonymous to protect the privacy of its student and the integrity of the school’s work with him, there is a freshman transgender student who identifies as male and wants to be known as male, not transgender. This student and his family were open about this during the application process, and when asked about housing, the student requested a triple. However, the school opted to put the student into a single to see how things went, prioritizing the student’s safety and smooth transition to boarding life. Because the school has not had much experience with having transgender students, however, the Dean of Students reported that the school is relying on consistent communication with the student, his family, teachers, dorm parents, counselors on campus, and the student’s own doctors to figure out what to do and when. As a result of this team approach, the school has decided that if the student finds a roommate who also has a desire to live together, then having a roommate will be an option for the following year. This school clearly recognizes the importance of giving transgender students the opportunity to have the roommate experience and is doing what it can to make that possible. The key is to work with each student and their family to ensure that voices are being heard and needs are being met within the capacities of each school.

The other aspect of school life where the inclusion of transgender people has been contested is within athletics. At the Olympic level, athletes strive for physical perfection in their various events and physical requirements for transgender individuals involve hormone treatments and sex reassignment surgery (Transexual Athletes). Many transgender athletes have pushed back against the mandate for surgery because of its risks and the non-existent role that genitalia play in athletic competition but the policy continues to be in effect since it was passed in 2004. At the college level, the mission of sport is not perfection as it is at the Olympic level. Rather, it is more about using athletics as a means to providing opportunities for physical and personal growth. And because colleges and universities aim to be inclusive and respectful of all people, the NCAA has responded with policies that reflect that, while keeping
fairness of competition in mind. For example, the NCAA does not require reassignment surgery, but it does govern hormone use.

Even though the NCAA has done much to ensure inclusion, its team structures still operate on a binary system – men’s and women’s – with its main focus being preventing an unfair advantage from taking place. The same is true at the high school level where athletics mirror the binary structure of the college level. In her article for TIME magazine, however, Kristin Russo calls for the athletic conversation to move outside of the binary and explains why, using an interview she conducted with Lauren Lubin, who identifies as gender-neutral, and is fighting for “gender not to matter in sports” (Russo, How Important is Gender). Lubin, who was a member of the women’s basketball team at the University of Colorado Boulder, ended up leaving the team “when the inner turmoil of playing on a women’s team while not identifying as female” (How Important is Gender) became too much. Given that the athletic conversation is still governed by the gender binary, Lubin complained of a “feeling of invisibility and inability to communicate” (How Important is Gender). Lubin, who has competed in running races as both male and female, “posits that the bodies of athletes are just that: athletes’ bodies, and that, in direct opposition to what current policies dictate, training and practice are the elements that determine skill, ability, and advantage – not biology” (How Important is Gender). Lubin is optimistic about the future and what changes in policies might happen. It is important to think about what the end result might be, though. Will there eventually be just one, mix-gendered college team for each sport? Or will an additional third team be created to provide a space for those who desire to compete in a non-gendered environment?

At the high school level, it is important to acknowledge the role that athletics plays in students’ lives and let that guide athletic policy. For most schools, participation in athletics provides an important opportunity for things like physical exercise, character development, camaraderie, taking on challenges, and goal setting. Therefore, school policies governing athletics should be geared toward enabling all students to participate equally. For boarding schools especially, which often have athletic requirements for its students, policies must be inclusive and allow “transgender students to choose to partic-
ipate alongside those who share their gender identity” (Transgender Youth 1738). However, state policies regarding whether or not transgender students can participate on high school athletic teams vary significantly. Despite federal legislation like Title IX, some states still have discriminatory policies against transgender people. The New Mexico Activities Association, for example, has a policy that states, “an athlete must play on the team of the gender listed on their birth certificate.” In New Mexico, surgery is required to change a birth certificate. It also states, “the determination of a student’s sex-assignment for interscholastic athletics shall be made by the student’s school” (K-12 Policies).

For high school students, the decision to have surgery is a serious one and not something that is reasonably expected of them given their age and stage of development. Changing one’s genitalia also does not fundamentally change or enhance their gender identity. Moreover, the unfair advantage of trans-female athletes that is used to protest the inclusion on girl’s teams is unfounded given the large variety of bodies that exist at the high school level. With adolescents going through puberty at different rates and there being a variety of bodies within both male and females sexes, excluding transgender students from competing alongside others who share their gender identity is discriminatory (Transgender Youth 1740).

Additionally, some might advocate for the mandate of puberty blockers, but hormone treatments are expensive and mandating them for all trans-gender high school athletes would be discriminatory from a socio-economic standpoint. It is also important to acknowledge intersex individuals and the need for their inclusion in this conversation as well, when their biology is not clearly male or female and yet the athletic realm rests upon sex segregation. Boarding schools should, therefore, stay consistent with their missions of athletics being an important part of adolescent development and their community life, and develop policies that are inclusive and preserve the rights of all student athletes. Model policies can be found on TRANS*ATHLETE’s website as well as GLSEN’s, and both of those organizations will work with schools to craft policies that work for their specific communities.

In terms of locker room access, similar policies that govern restroom access need to be put into place. If a high school has non-discriminatory policies in place and provides appropriate spaces that make those policies enforce-
able, locker room access should be provided to transgender students according to their gender identity and private restroom stalls, showers, and changing areas should be provided. Again, TRANS*ATHLETE and GLSEN can help schools with this.

Outside of accommodations regarding restrooms, dormitories, and athletics, community education is the main issue that schools should make a priority, especially given how education and awareness can spur cultural shifts necessary to make policies palatable to all parties. Boarding schools are unique in that they are not bound by state mandated curriculum and often have the spaces, both within the academic calendar and physically on campus, to engage the community in conversations around inclusivity in a variety of ways. One way to do so is through school-wide programming such as all-school guest speakers like Alex Myers, who attended Phillips Exeter Academy and went on to be the first self-identified transgender student at Harvard. Myers has recently visited both St. Paul’s and Choate Rosemary Hall, a boarding school in Connecticut, as part of larger diversity initiatives. Chapel, or another all school gathering forum, also provides the opportunity for the entire school to hear a message that can easily pertain to issues of diversity. Residential Life and dorm programming is another area of school life where smaller scale groups can engage in conversation and learning. Clubs focused on addressing issues in the LGBTQIA community and raising awareness around campus also are valuable. Connecting with other schools around common values, challenges, and initiatives is also a possibility that more schools should pursue. Choate, for example, has a club called SMASS (Sexual Minorities and Straight Supporters) that hosts an annual interschool conference. At the 2015 conference held in April, their students were joined by others from “Deerfield, Taft, Hotchkiss, Lawrenceville, and Cheshire Academy” (PBS). Addressing LGBTQIA issues and other aspects of diversity in school curriculum, namely the humanities and sex education can also help to educate school communities and break down barriers of ignorance. Finally, educating the adults on campus, namely faculty and staff but also parents, will be crucial in creating inclusive environments where those in charge are well versed in content as well as methods of action to ensure that policies are enforced, constructive conversations can happen, and the students’ best interest is always at the forefront of action.
The big question that all of this raises is: Should we move away from gendered spaces? With developments all over the country and the increasing inclusion of those with gender identities outside of the binary, it is likely that we will move away from gendered spaces and that doing so proactively will be better than doing so slowly out of fear of what might happen. For boarding schools, however, change will probably happen slowly and on a case-by-case basis until there is more precedent off which to guide action. Still, some schools might take advantage of their independent nature and push the boundaries of existing models and end up setting the example that other schools will follow. This will most likely happen in dorm life given the shifts that have happened in public schools surrounding restrooms and athletics. It is an exciting time for members of the LGBTQIA community, and that excitement will hopefully continue with advancements in the educational setting helping to create a more inclusive and accepting society.

A Small Selection of Guest Speakers/Consultants/Organizations:

Alex Myers (http://alexmyerswriting.com/)
A transgender male who is armed and ready to help school communities better understand issues of gender. Alex was born Alice and attended Phillips Exeter Academy, where he was the school’s first transgender student when he came out as such his senior year. Alex went on to Harvard University where he was, again, “the first openly transgender student” and “worked to change the University’s nondiscrimination clause to include gender identity” (Alex). Two recent visits Alex has made were to St. Paul’s School and Choate Rosemary Hall where he shared his experience in order to educate the school communities and help foster an environment of inclusivity.

Alex Scott (http://alexscotconsulting.com/)
A transgender female, who, after years of service in “independent education…as a school head, teacher, coach, Academic Dean and counselor,” has become “the Director of Development at the National Center for Transgender Equality” and an “educational consultant…” (Scott). Her services include “all or part day workshops around transgender and gender non-binary issues…public speaking and conversations with students, faculty, and parents” and “training
and workshops for students, faculty, board, administration, and staff around emerging transgender issues in schools” (Scott).

**Everyone Is Gay (http://everyoneisgay.com/)**

Everyone Is Gay works to improve the lives of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning/Queer (LGBTQ) youth using a three-ponged approach: providing honest advice to these youth while keeping them laughing; talking to students across the country in an effort to create caring, compassionate school environments; and working with parents of LGBTQ kids to help foster an ongoing dialogue and deeper understanding” (About Us, Everyone Is Gay).

**GLSEN (http://www.glsen.org/)**

GLSEN wants “every student, in every school, to be valued and treated with respect, regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. [They] believe that all students deserve a safe and affirming school environment where they can learn and grow. [They] accomplish [their] goals by working in hallways across the country -- from Congress and the Department of Education to schools and district offices in your community -- to improve school climate and champion LGBT issues in K-12 education.”

**Teaching Tolerance (http://www.tolerance.org/)**

“Founded in 1991 by the Southern Poverty Law Center, Teaching Tolerance is dedicated to reducing prejudice, improving intergroup relations and supporting equitable school experiences for our nation’s children. [They] provide free educational materials to teachers and other school practitioners in the U.S. and Canada. [Their] self-titled magazine is sent to 450,000 educators twice annually, and tens of thousands of educators use [their] free curricular kits… Tolerance is respect, acceptance and appreciation of the rich diversity of our world’s cultures, our forms of expression and ways of being human. Tolerance is harmony in difference. [They] view tolerance as a way of thinking and feeling — but most importantly, of acting — that gives us peace in our individuality, respect for those unlike us, the wisdom to discern humane values
and the courage to act upon them” (About Us). Each magazine can be viewed online as a pdf for free.

**Visions Inc. (http://visions-inc.org/)**

VISIONS works with public and private educational institutions from the elementary school level through graduate/professional schools. They “believe that learning happens best in a diverse, inclusive, academically challenging, safe and respectful environment” (Education). They aim to help schools “discuss and effectively address challenging issues surrounding diversity and inclusion, attract, retain, and inspire talented personnel, engage all student more deeply in learning by discussing ‘the personal and institutional impact of race, class, gender and other differences on their daily lives,’ and ‘increase students’ respect and sympathy for others who are different from them’” (Education).
WORKS CITED


Green, Chad. Telephone interview. 9 Nov. 2015.


I screamed when I saw it.
I knew it was dead.
It was on its back.
It didn’t move.
It was dead.
It had to be.
But even if it wasn’t, it wouldn’t be a real threat.
It’s a mouse, or was.
And I’m a man.

I knew there was a reasonable chance this would happened when David, the landlord, scooped the cheapest peanut butter Dan and Whit’s sold onto the mousetrap the previous afternoon, but, still, I screamed.

And I don’t know why.

Maybe it was because I’d look closely at the mousetrap while David set it up and when I saw its razor-sharp tip, I looked away,

maybe it was because I had never seen a dead mouse before and my base instinct was to respond to something I’d never seen before with fear,

maybe it was because David chuckled when he set up the trap and said, ”Where there’s one mouse, there’s a hundred! But we’re going to war! Don’t worry, we’ll get ’em all!” and then I imagined 100 dead mice,

maybe it was because I thought that that dead mouse in whose murder I was complicit did not choose to be a mouse; she or he was nearing my Apple Jacks
Poetry

and Honey Smacks inside my well-heated kitchen for the very reason they existed – for sustenance, for warmth,

maybe it was because it reminded me death is not an abstraction. One day soon, I’ll be dead, reaching for sustenance, for warmth, for something, and it’s highly likely no one will know or care I was here – well, there – after I am disposed of.

This morning, I screamed when I saw a dead mouse.

I don’t know why exactly.

I took out my roast beef to make a sandwich for lunch, but couldn’t.

I threw away the meat.

I just ate the bread,

and the cheese.
**BIOGRAPHIES**

Editors-in-Chief

**EMILY HEDGES** grew up in Muskogee, Oklahoma and now lives in Lebanon, New Hampshire with her husband and three children. She came to the Upper Valley from Minnesota where she worked as a freelancer, contributing regular articles to ECM-Sun Newspaper Group in the Twin Cities and managing blog book tours for authors. Prior to that, she worked in editorial marketing for TV Guide Networks, the Tulsa Philharmonic, and a small ad agency. She entered the creative writing track in the MALS program to elevate the quality of her writing and to prepare for a second career as a high school and college teacher. She is currently working on her thesis—a collection of linked stories about a county fair in Kansas.

**AMANDA SPOTO** (primarily known as Spo!) is a 2014 alumna undergraduate from Dartmouth College with a major in English and a minor in Native American studies, and is now on the cultural studies track in MALS. Her thesis focuses on Post-9/11 American culture and memory through the lens of the horror genre, namely the show *American Horror Story*, and superhero films in order to make a larger claim on the degeneration of American exceptionalism. She has a strong interest in law school, and may soon pursue a PhD in either cultural studies, American studies, or English literature. She will be start work at Paul Weiss in NYC as a corporate paralegal in June 2016.
Authors

**ANNA BOARINI** is entering her second year at MALS in the creative writing track. Before coming to Dartmouth, she graduated from Saint Mary’s College in Notre Dame, IN, with a degree in history, political science and international peace studies. A nosy creature at heart, Anna worked as a reporter for a weekly newspaper in southern Vermont, *The Manchester Journal* where she covered breaking news, local politics and anything else that might happen in the area. When not reading or writing, she likes to eat quesadillas and practice yoga.

**KATHERINE EMERY BROWN** graduated from the NYU Gallatin School of Individualized Study with a concentration in “Visual, Verbal, and Literary Aesthetics.” As a MALS student, she focuses on continental philosophy, poetry and poetic theory, and women’s and gender studies. Her poetry has also been featured in Dartmouth’s *Mouth* magazine and she recently presented a paper entitled “The Concrete Literary Imagination: Reading Beauvoir Against Sartre on Literature” at the Northeastern graduate conference “The Imaginary.”

*Also served as an assistant editor.*

**BRIAN CIBELLI** graduated from Hobart College in 2008 with a BA in English. He holds a MAT from SUNY Cortland, and he has taught English at independent schools in Connecticut and Massachusetts for the past six years. A summers-only student, he began the MALS program in the summer of 2012 with a concentration in creative writing.

**JENNIFER C. CORMACK** lived in Germany and traveled abroad in Europe during her primary years until age six. As a young adult, she returned to Europe for a yearlong study of architecture in Paris, graduating from The Georgia Institute of Technology in 1991 with a BS in architecture. Together she and her husband operate Cormack Architectural Design Group in Conway, South Carolina. Jennifer has been teaching art since 2002 and currently works with students ages
three through adult in the Myrtle Beach area. Her favorite art contest for students is the Federal Junior Duck Stamp. Her credits include: 129 South Carolina winners including the 2016 Best of Show, two Alabama, one Iowa, seven North Carolina, three Tennessee, and three West Virginia. Since 2009, she has also been designing and teaching challenging curricula for homeschool students in English literature and composition for grades three through twelve. Her passion for teaching writing led her to pursue the MALS degree at Dartmouth.

KEN DAVIS is a writer and artist. He earned a bachelor’s degree in journalism from Virginia Tech in 1994, and was awarded the John Eure Award for Excellence in Journalism the same year. For many years he worked as a daily newspaper reporter and stringer for the Associated Press, doing freelance work on the side as an editorial illustrator for newspapers and magazines throughout the United States. His 2013 cover illustration for Sojourners magazine earned the prestigious Ozzie Award for Best Cover. Currently he is a MALS student at Dartmouth studying creative writing and world literature.

*Also served as cover design artist.*

JENNIFER DECKER is currently finishing her degree in the MALS program with a focus on cultural studies. She is originally from southwest Colorado and is an alumna of Fort Lewis College where she earned her BA in humanities in 2013. As a graduate student at Dartmouth, Jennifer enjoyed working with the Frommers in their oral history course because it provided her with the opportunity to speak to long-term residents who make a living in the area. Hearing their stories is what drove her to build the narrative of her thesis. She is excited to be graduating this year and looks forward to taking MANY vacations to the beach with her wife Sarah “dactyl” Decker and son Benton.

S. M. DECKER is a graduate student at Dartmouth College in the MALS program with a focus in creative writing. She will graduate in June alongside her supportive wife Jennifer. She completed her undergraduate work at Fort Lewis College in Durango, Colorado and graduated in 2008 with a BA in English literature. Decker loves living in the Upper Valley, but still has fond mem-
ories of her southwest home. For a long time, like a strong pot of ephedra tea, Decker has been steeped in the Mormon culture. Her piece in this publication is a light sip from this deep well of tradition and heritage. As a professional writer, Decker has her sights set on future publication, along with intentional and unintentional notoriety.

**JUSTINE M. KOHR** is a freelance writer and a marketing and communications manager at Dartmouth’s Tuck School of Business. She is on the creative writing track of the MALS program. She has written for the *Hartford Advocate*, the *Valley News*, the *Quechee Times*, *Here in Hanover* magazine, *Image* magazine, *Dartmouth Now*, *Tuck Today*, and others. Prior to Dartmouth, she was an assistant editor at LongHill Partners Publishing, Inc. in Woodstock, VT. She graduated from Westfield State University with a BA in communications and journalism. She is originally from Western Massachusetts, but now lives in West Lebanon with her husband and five pets.

*Also served as artistic director.*

**STEPHEN P. HULL** is currently an acquiring editor with the University Press of New England. He earned a BA from Boston University and was accepted to the MFA fiction program there. He elected to defer admission “for a year,” and is now gratefully picking up where he left off 35 years ago as a second-term writing student at MALS. In the interim he has been a book publisher, once going so far as to launch and run his own publishing house, for which hubris he was chained to a rock where an eagle visited him daily to dine on his liver.

**COURTNEY L. JACKSON** is a New Jersey native and secondary school teacher. After graduating from Lehigh University with BAs in history and philosophy, Jackson served as a Teaching Fellow at St. Paul’s School in Concord, NH and then as a member of the English Department at her alma mater, Peddie School in Hightstown, NJ. Jackson is in her first year of study in the MALS program and plans to resume her teaching career in the fall of 2017.
ROBERT KAUFMAN graduated from Brown and served as a Fulbright Scholar in Oslo. His writing has been featured in Blaire magazine, Extract(s), FD magazine, and Fjords Review. Robert is currently a MALS student at Dartmouth studying poetry.

AMY MILLIOS is on the creative writing track in the MALS program. Much of her work is focused on drawing attention to the patient experience of chronic illness. In 2015 she attended the University of Oxford Creative Writing Summer School, as well as the American College of Rheumatology’s Advocates for Arthritis conference in Washington, D.C. where she spent time on Capitol Hill advocating for legislation to benefit those living with rheumatic diseases. Her oral history project “Making the Invisible Visible: Women’s Stories of Living With Ankylosing Spondylitis” was published in the fall 2015 edition of the Dartmouth College Oral History Reader, and her photography has been featured in The Collapsar. She is a bibliophile, anglophile, lover of dark chocolate, music, and travel.

MICHAEL RODRIGUEZ is a freelance illustrator and graphic novelist. Prior to attending Dartmouth, Michael served two years in the United States Marine Corps as a rifleman assigned 1st Battalion 8th Marines, which had been part of the 2nd Battle for Fallujah in November 2004. Michael, for injuries received in combat, was awarded the Purple Heart, and later received the Navy Achievement Medal for his time as a liaison at a Navy medical hospital. After being retired from the Marines, Michael attended Colby-Sawyer College where he received his bachelor’s degree in history, society, and culture. He was also awarded for his thesis capstone paper that explored the impact of munitions on the United States’ water resources. In the two years following, Michael worked in public education and helped advocate for climate and energy security issues for Operation Free and the Truman National Security Project. In 2011 he enrolled in the MALS globalization studies program, where he later helped to create the Dartmouth Graduate Veterans Association. Michael is currently working part time in the library while finishing up his graphic thesis which examines energy security in an age of globalization and climate change.
Assistant Editors

AMIRA HAMOUDA graduated from the University of Sfax in June 2010 with a Maîtrise (BA) in English. She passed the Agrégation national exam in 2011 and taught English at the Preparatory Institute in Literary Studies and Humanities of Tunis until she was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship and joined the MALS program at Dartmouth College. Currently, she is working on her thesis which is a memoir about home: Tunisia.

BRITTANY MURPHY is a Florida native, hailing from a small town in South West Florida. She graduated from the University of Central Florida with dual degrees in humanities and religion and cultural studies, as well as a minor in mass communications. Brittany worked in the nonprofit sector after receiving her BA and is now in her first year of the Dartmouth MALS program with a concentration in cultural studies. Brittany’s research interests concern the areas of queer theory, gender studies, U.S. popular culture and the intersections of race and class. After the MALS program she plans to pursue a PhD and return to a research-driven nonprofit.

MARIA SEMMENS is a New Jersey native and an alumna of Rutgers University where she majored in women’s & gender studies. She has recently dived headfirst into the thesis stage of her MALS at Dartmouth; her topic utilizes selected novels from author Neil Gaiman, contextualizing them in order to create a foundation for a postmodern analysis of American culture in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. The specific perspectives that Semmens wishes to deal with include the relationship between the formation of an American sociocultural collective memory and its subsequent influence on the creation of a mythos of modernity. In her spare time she serves as her Graduate Student Council’s web chair, and as minion to her two cats. Her future plans include surviving her thesis and moving back to NJ for the continuation of her academic studies.