



Building Ourselves from Borrowed Parts

A 25th Reunion Speech

By Kirk Varnedoe '67

Every 25th Reunion class thinks it's different, special. But at our 20th, when we sat in the sun in the science quad five years ago, and listened to the speaker from the class of 1962 — when we heard about their humongous reunion gift, and listened to the stats of their average credentials (one wife for life, 2.5 kids, income figures that sounded like phone numbers [some of them with the area codes], records of stably directed wholesome lives of responsibility, leadership, etc.) — then, friends, we knew we were different. Between them and us, the shadow fell.

That shift began when we entered this place in September of 1963: We were the first of The New Williams, the guinea-pig kids of the Angevine Report, the first to live and eat in “college owned and operated facilities.” We were thus unsuspecting pioneers in what would become the new wave of generics, the ones expected to develop loyalty to and nostalgia for something called “residential units” — don't those syllables still still give you a little catch in the throat? — the ones who saw the classical world of greek letters — KA, AD, PsiU — beaten back by the onslaught of invented traditions and neologisms, Fort Hoosac, Garfield, and the like.

Amidst all the promise of those brave new beginnings, we felt a sadness then, for something worthy that was disappearing. For we were those who also saw the last of the dinosaurs of the *old* Williams, and the dying glow of what would now be called a resistant subculture, closer to postwar than postmodern (in fact, I believe Phi Gam — a legendary outpost from which we were banned, where they were usually eating pb&j sandwiches for lunch and dinner in order to pay their back beer bill — still had some G.I. bill people lingering in dark corners of their basement). In the spring of our junior year, in the *Record*, Hal Crowther wrote the definitive epitaph for that world:

“The great and glorious revolution which has taken place at Williams in the last few years has swept away many quaint and charming folkways. Along with fraternity silliness, the magic new system ‘that breathes heterogeneity, individuality, and intellectual and cultural stimulation into the college community’ has been the kiss of death for the night people.” Crowther

remembered that “It was once a common experience to go downstairs for a glass of milk at four or five in the morning and hear the jukebox's distant wail, or the slamming of the basement door. In the morning, cigarette butts and illegible names on the beer list were the only signs that ‘they’ had been there.... In common, they had only the knowledge that life was sad and sleep difficult.... A typical gathering was not large, more often three than six, and often contained outsiders — a pledge showing off, someone taking a break from an all-night paper, a groom from the track picked up at Cozy's....” Crowther closed his rumination with the valedictory lament, “The last disciples of the night people have graduated, and a revival seems unlikely. Footprints (and often handprints) in the dewy grass no longer perplex freshmen on their way to their 8 o'clocks...It's over...nobody up here watches the test patterns any more.”

That's a Williams I remember and cherish. The premise of the Angevine report had been that it was fraternities that bred anti-intellectualism here; we in the class of '67 showed them that the problem went a lot deeper. Anti-intellectualism was a crucial part of our development, in self-defense against the bristling armada of knowledge that was being thrown at us; I hope and trust this kind of resistance still persists. Sports were only the most acceptable, sanctioned instance of this escape from thinking, this search for other ways of being in the world. I for one will never underestimate the importance of the input we received from what you could call the college's “shadow faculty”: from sources such as Snapper Joe Altot, or (in our especially formative early moments) Louis Lefevre, the janitor of

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Williams Hall. A special kind of trust was placed in the pragmatic knowledge of such grown-ups who had no evident investment in the standard pieties of the system, and showed no deference to — even a healthy scorn for — intellectual authority.

The big difference post-Angevine may have been the shift in *styles* of anti-intellectualism: a shift from the tribal animalism of frats to a more modern style — that is plural, and individualist — in the ways in which we sought to reject rationality and maturity. We were thrown back on our own resources, and this led in a couple of paradoxical directions. One of them was, in these beautiful but isolated surroundings, toward a self-enclosed inwardness of a kind that I think was particularly colored by the time. Tom Stevens, the class speaker at graduation the year after us, in '68, speaking just after Robert Kennedy's assassination, in fact, remembered this place not so much as a community of scholars, but as what he called a community of loneliness. I wonder if his words don't ring true to what we knew, too:

"I remember long night walks, snow slowly falling. The 3 o'clock in the morning freight train down behind the field house. You only hear it when you're alone. I remember cold grey days without end, cigarette butts in coffee cups at dawn, trying to sleep through the faceless afternoons. Did you study in the lower reading room late at night, with the empty chairs and the silent, dark men, long-dead, looking down from their places on the wall? And the fluorescent lights buzzing...? Sometimes you could walk down Main Street so late that no cars came...and listen to the sound that your shoes make when no one else is up..." Tom remembered all the things he learned in the classroom, but he drew to conclusion by saying "one day in a classroom I watched the snow flakes swirl past outside, white and brittle and cold. The philosophy professor was talking, something about Plato. And what is Plato to me now? Only a shadow on the wall of somebody's cave. I remember the snow flakes, though, and the community that they were part of. And I thank the college again, doubly grateful, for that community of loneliness."

But there was also a happier and more social side to the inventive anti-intellectualism of our New Williams. On that side, we learned important things from each other and the idiosyncratic "sophistications" we all brought from our strange diverse cultures. We may have sometimes mistrusted and resented the flashy classroom skills of our peers, but we stood in easier awe of useless talents like skateboarding and pointless, un-institutionalized knowledge, about the flip sides of old rock 'n roll records, or in deep theorizing about more timely concerns, such as the identity and motives of the one-armed man on

The Fugitive. And we marvelled at what we now know was nascent entrepreneurship, in useful inventions and devices, such as Al Kirkland's reverse aqua-lung, a combination of an inverted clorox bottle, tape, and tubes that allowed a constant supply of whisky sours with total autonomy and mobility; Bob Olson's forward-thinking Tums belt, dispensing constant prophylactic pills against the dreaded technicolor yawn; and one of the most-used, the "magic drawer" laundry technique, a sort of pre-ecological compost-heap approach to recycling dirty clothes, augmented in the case of true sophisticates by baby powder (dry cleaning) or, for those hard-to-fight cases, a sprinkle of Old Spice. (This economy on the laundry end of things has allowed me to preserve, over 25 years, two still-unopened pairs of "Thunderwear," which I show here, for those who recall this "underwear for men of the 'go' generation.")

But these things are local and particular. And the development office has warned me that no matter how much money we've raised, we aren't allowed to bore the hell out of everyone else at the meeting. So for the remainder of this talk I'll try instead to reckon not just what it all meant to *us*, but also to worry out how the particulars of our experience can mean something to others: what we learned, here and since, and what we can do with it.

Older and younger Ephs, please be patient while 1967 contemplates its collective navel (that little sucker is harder to find than it used to be). Bear with us, because, like it or not, we're the slightly padded leading edge of the baby boomers, and we may, God forbid, be symptomatic of something.

Now, I looked at a lot of these reunion speeches, and the one consistent note since the early '70s is that every speaker seems to feel in the middle of a uniquely disordered and disorienting period of change. The only difference is I *know* this is true. It's a total banality, since 1989, to remark that the world is changing at a mind-boggling clip. The newspaper headlines read like some April Fool issue of the *Record*: Berlin wall falls; Soviet Union dissolves; Mandela freed, apartheid voted out; Red Army faction seeks reconciliation with Bonn government; and so on. Thus I really wasn't that surprised when I found this story buried on page three of yesterday's *New York Times*: "Amherst Admits Second-rate Nature as Institution, Transfers Endowment to Superior College to West."

It's an amazing privilege to be alive to see all this. But unless I miss my mark, we don't *feel* history's tremors now the way we did in '63 to '67. The Berlin wall going down seems very different from that same wall going up. *Why?*

Maybe in part because America is a spectator, out of the action. At a point where our system of finance and government



is being taken up by others, and our culture of blue jeans, movies, MacDonalds and Disney is running rampant in every corner of the world, we feel more than a little stagnant, and out of touch. The motto of the 1968 Democratic convention, "The whole world is watching," means something different when it's Ted Turner sending out the Clarence Thomas hearings and smart-bomb videos.

Maybe the signal difference is that this time profound political and social change has just happened, bloodlessly for the most part, and without the advent of new ideologies, and without any mind-bending cultural changes or big fanfare of new ideas.

Let me explain what I mean by culture in this latter sense. We know ourselves in part by the representations we accept as being appropriate to our sense of the world. We depend on them — music, literature, pictures — to do some paradoxical things. First, in what I'll call long culture, we want things that go slower than nature, slower than the seasons, the years, our bodies — things that don't age and die, but stay fresh, that connect us at closer and more distant removes, beyond our mortality, with other lives, past and future — that console us, enrich our sense of not being alone. Williams brought us into *that* community of culture — of Keats, of Proust, of Plato and Nietzsche and Bach, of Faulkner and Blake and so many more — and we are more grateful than we can express.

But, especially in modernity, we also want what I'll call short culture. We look for things that go faster than nature, that cut free of the cycles of the seasons and the years unpredictably — things that surprise us, heighten our sense of being alive, make us feel our moment in time is unique. And this we got from '63 to '67, in spades.

From *I Want to Hold Your Hand*, which was the hot pick on the juke box when I first discovered sour hour at DeAndrea's, to *Sergeant Pepper*, which came out the month before we got out, from *Blowin' in the Wind* to *Positively Fourth Street*, a new album, and a new world of experience with it, came every few months. This was an incredible burst of inventive energy, and it synched up with the arrival and spread of what seemed like a whole new era of science's revolutionary benefit in our lives: I refer specifically to the birth-control pill. (You remember the old movies about the eager bobby-soxers and the churlish parents who said "give those kids rock 'n roll, and the next step is sex and drugs." Well, we lived that threat, and loved it.)

And matching that incandescence, there was a parallel sense of onrushing crisis and debacle — from the Berlin wall in '62, and the missile crisis, through Kennedy's assassination, and then on to the perpetual obsession with the draft, Tonkin, My Lai, and the whole nine yards of late-'60s craziness, there was a mounting sensation, constantly reinforced, that everything was going to hell in a handbasket. And we took it for granted that this emerging world, about whose highs and bummers we were naturally entitled experts, had virtually nothing to do with, and never again would even faintly resemble, that of our parents.

Looking back now, I think that we can see that in this overweening sense of constant change, our physical growth and stumbling rush to intellectual power seemed to be echoed in the twisting and jumping of every social structure around us. We seemed to be living in what I would call a hormone/history interlock. In this, and in our narcissism and in the Wagnerian

morbidity as well, the world seemed to be adolescent when we were — one big Berkshire spring of ice breaking up, shoots popping out, and big-time storms.

But, as Garry Trudeau said when he took a little leave to rethink *Doonesbury*, it's a long way from draft beer and mixers to cocaine and herpes; and he might update that now to say it's longer still to crack and AIDS. That was then, this is now. What happened? Then there seemed a big, maybe unbridgeable gap, a choice to be made, between long culture and short culture — to belong to the high tradition or to get high on the moment. But in fact we have survived to see the stuff we thought was short assume a length of its own: what was the quickening pulse has jelled to masquerade as the consoling tradition.

In one sense, what I mean is that the lawn party lasted a lot longer than we thought it would. I went to a Rolling Stones concert two years ago at Shea Stadium, with about 50,000 other people of ages between roughly 20 and roughly 40, and everyone knew the words to every song. The idea that in 1967 we would have lined up side-by-side with our parents for a concert of the hot band of the mid-1940s is absurd. In this and deeper ways, we're still living in what I would call a "culture bubble" that started forming in the late 1950s, and picked up speed in the early 1960s. The good news is that this means we don't seem to have the same gap between ourselves and youth that ruptured open between us and our parents: we share a lot of the same music, and some of same "new" problems. Liberated sex, drugs, and rock 'n roll are fond memories as well as problematic parental challenges.

But there's a down side to this, too: because another way to look at it is that creativity did not keep pace. The albums, and the string of new worlds, stopped coming. And it's not a longer lawn party that extended the spring, but (more realistically for the Berkshires) an endlessly protracted mud season. The prime brute index of our "special difference" turns out to be that there are just more of us. Our generation is the proverbial pig moving through the python that swallowed it, deforming every part as it passes through. And thus the short culture that we proved inclined to buy is still being sold to us, often as packaged nostalgia, reassuring proof of our evergreen youth. Everything that was volatile and dangerous becomes cute and commercial — (*I Can't Get No*) *Satisfaction* as elevator music, John Lennon as back-up for running-shoe commercials — with the notion that you can have the mellow feel-good part without the destabilizing hormone rush and whiff of real upset. The consumer invitation is to believe you can have the ideology of change and the reassurance of continuity in the same thing. That old narcissism thus gets heavily reinforced, in ways that must be increasingly stifling and oppressive to others.

And meanwhile, instead of the active cataclysm that seemed just around the bend, we got a deeper downer of creeping cynicism and lowered expectations. We began as a group for whom mistrust was a defiant tool of reforming pride — don't trust anyone over 30. But there are important shades of difference between critical mistrust, then skepticism, then paranoia, and finally corrosive disillusionment; it seems we got proportionately more of the tail end of that list. And in retrospect, the key launching point in that devolution happened here, not in the lessons of a philosophy or history class, but in the unexamined confoundment of a particular lived moment.

For me, it was in the freshman quad, that uncommonly warm Friday after the end of the football season, tossing a few passes when someone walking by casually sprang the joke for which I couldn't — and still can't — figure out the punch line: that Kennedy had been shot.

This event did not *have* to mean that much — history could have turned out differently, and that weekend might have just been a blip in our collective psyche. But as it was, with the gunning down of King, and Robert Kennedy, and then the Tonkin Gulf, and Watergate, and more such sickening history, the JFK syndrome took on symbolic power as the pivotal marker of a different sense of what it was to be a citizen of this country.

The defining event of that national wake, and then the Warren Commission (all revisited recently), emphasizes, for me at least, that the single most depressing, lingering aspect of it is the never-to-be-assuaged *doubt*. Something happened in broad daylight, in full public, with cameras rolling; it has been documented, witnessed, and endlessly scrutinized, yet it leaves us absolutely no access to certainty. We would accept any theory that would buy us out of this colossal dark absurdity of history — that our lives could have been so altered by such an unintelligible assemblage of fools, contingencies, and screwed-up occurrences.

Does this roller-coaster series of imprinting experiences suggest, in part, why change now doesn't come to us with the same sense of hope or anticipation that it once did? We saw so many promises short-circuited, we were so jerked around by the hyped-up semblance of change, its strutting and posturing non-fulfillment, that we have no affect left with which to respond to the real thing when it happens to us — whether that real change is the worldwide triumph of the model of capitalist liberal democracy, or whether it's the coarsening corruption of public discourse, the virulent resurgence of racism and the drastic alteration of balances of wealth. At the same time we feel blunted in our capacity to separate the ideological and symbolic changes that parade themselves, from the silent persistence and entrenchment of problems that have not gone away at all. The result is often an accelerating numbness that increases our tolerance for the intolerable — homelessness, crime increasing, a continuing collapse of urban fabric, the ruination of the economy.

Hence the collapse of cold war can appear to *us* now not solely as great victory but in some sense as the end of a giant hoax. In every step of our lives, from bomb shelters to intercontinental missiles to Sputnik to Vietnam to the moon walk and on, our sense of ourselves was constructed on an opposition between them and us that now seems to have vanished like so

much frost on the windshield, leaving a kind of identity void. We've had it drummed into us ever since books like *The Ugly American* that we can't believe in ourselves and our goodness; we got used to that. Now — when we have damn near bankrupted ourselves, and set crucial national priorities aside because of it — we find we can't even believe in them and their badness. What we experience instead is the real disorderliness of history, undisguised, and unaided by the constructions of packaging ideas — which leaves us searching for new anchors and guideposts.

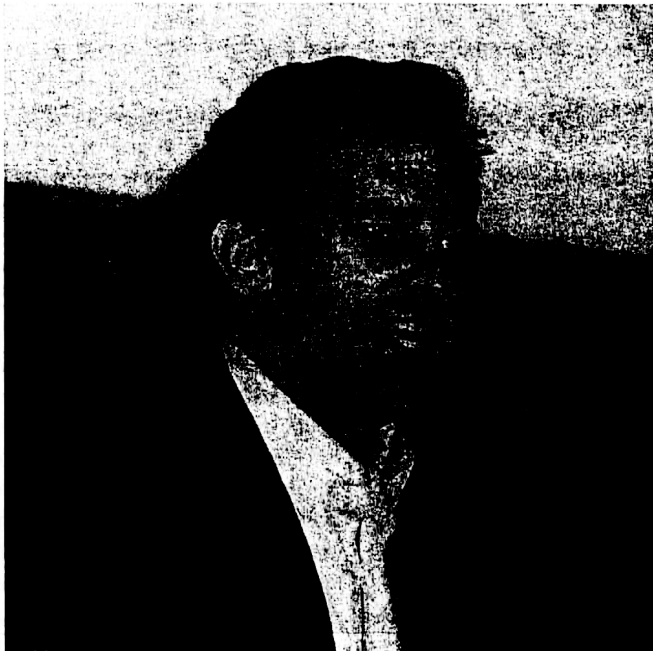
In this sense, too, the world has provided us with a mirror of ourselves. No longer the dramas of adolescence, but the normal process of aging, and of losing the illusions of youth, has, these past years, been magnified, reinforced, and projected onto a global/historical stage. In a sense, the world feels like it has gotten less trim, staler, more cynical, more doubting and less sure of itself, as we have.

And when we look to present society to provide something as bastion against this disaffection, what is it? At a moment of international fireworks, it's often a miasma, on the right and on the left.

First, entrenched conservatism is out on new witch hunts now that communism is absent, in search of other usable "conspiracies to destroy American values." These voices reject any "deviance" in name of putative "family values," in a country where the infant mortality rate is abysmal, and the broken family virtually mandated by the way we render social welfare. We hear cynical appeals to "traditions" by people who would gladly sell all the redwoods for toothpicks, and calls for national unity by people whose livelihood, with gems like the Willy Horton ad, depends on fomenting discord

and division. Cloaked in the cynically perverse appearance of a desire to reduce governmental interference, these self-styled conservatives actually seek to politicize, in a negative sense, every aspect of our national diversity. Protesting their defense of reason, they depend on emotive, irrational appeals to slanted facts, waving sexually provocative photos around the Senate in an effort to cancel even the paltry percentage this country invests — and with enormous benefit — in the baseline existence of its arts.

Then, on the other side, we find a narrowed, pinching schoolmarmism on the academic left, changing what had been communitarian instinct into a bureaucratic battle of fragmented micro-political interests. What had begun in the New Left of the 1960s as a liberating challenge for real change at the center devolves now into whining demands for rules and dispensations that will shore up the preciously inviolate "identities" of a thousand special interests. Yeats's "the center cannot hold" has



become a command, not a lament; all centers are taken to be hegemonic, controlling, oppressive. A masturbatory sense of entitlement has, in the '80s and '90s, replaced the worst of the "me decade" with an even more socially corrosive "us decade," in what the critic Robert Hughes has called "the culture of complaint," where everyone must claim his or her absolving status as victim.

And in all this, fellow members of '67, one thing is clear: neither of these sides like *us* — all male, mostly middle-class, mostly white graduates of a New England liberal arts college. On the one hand, for the conservatives we are the privileged, pampered limo liberals of the Eastern establishment, the "cultural elite," so treacherously out of touch with genuine heartland values. For the left, we are mostly not perhaps DWEMS (Dead White European Males), but certainly NYDWAMS (Not Yet Dead White American Males) — both victims and propagators of the most powerful, most sinister ideology on the planet, all walking around with that alien demon of liberal western culture in our innards waiting to leap out and claim another victim.

What is common to both of these attacks is a combination of too much, and not enough, regard for the power of education. The right and the left share a grotesque notion of the power of words and images to pervert us or corrupt our minds. This is a kind of "magic thinking," in which the representations we're exposed to take control over our souls, and override our will and responsibility (porn films will make you rape; a core curriculum warps your mind indelibly). This outlook lacks any faith in the complexity of responses to fictional models, and ignores what learning, it seems to me, is really about.

On the one hand we have the complacent argument that culture, and education, should validate our prejudices or known interests, rather than challenge them; and on the other we have the piously paranoid notion that the only *real* use for learning consists in honing our strategies for exposing the insidious power-plays under every image or text. Most tellingly, these self-styled conservatives and radicals always show a strong unwillingness to allow any room for creativity, either by clinging as the right does to ideals of inviolable tradition or by insisting, as the left tends to do, only on negation.

It is true, of course, that we have been shaped by our education. Experience provincializes us, and intense experience can provincialize us intensely. But what is the alternative? No education yields not freedom, but worse tyranny. And the saving grace of the breadth and depth of a good education is that it can increase empathy and imagination, help us think beyond our terms and argue against ourselves. This is where our experience can empower us, rather than enfeeble or infantilize. Rather than accept accounts, positive or negative, that deal with the traditions we've learned in terms of their origins and past history, we need to think what can be *done* with what's been given, its usefulness.

Let me try to make this a little more concrete, by speaking from personal experience. Among all the different things that we of '67 have become, I must have landed in one of the stranger places. Working in modern art, I pass my days in a rarified world of weird faces and blank shapes, giant soup cans and displaced urinals, fur-lined teacups and blown-up comic books, and all of it often cloaked in several layers of esoteric theory and mumbo-jumbo jargon. I can't pretend this is broad

common experience, that I easily share with all my friends here. Nor can I deny that this world is emphatically culture-bound: that is, it bears the scars of modern Western European history, from colonialism to communism and beyond. To try to rewrite this history to make it seem more rationally purposeful, or to put into the picture of its origins a more acceptable roster of minorities, for example, risks seeing history the way Stalin used to see the photos of past reviewing stands at May Day parades — as something to be tinkered with to validate current agendas as history's only true business.

The key question is what can be *done* with this legacy? What can be made from it that is both true and useful? When I think about modern art in that way, I see a remarkable set of examples of individual imaginations producing multiple new cultures, of strange private languages rising to become the most effective shared tongues of modern expression. And the lessons I see in those stories are — not surprisingly — not dissimilar from some simple things I was instructed to learn here, by men like Faison and Stoddard and Gifford and Rudolph and Burns and many others. They include recognizing that difficult things, knowledge that only comes with applied effort, need not just be about snobbery and privileged enclosure, but can be keys to a broader, more open world; and conversely, that some of the most powerful revelations lie in common places we've ignored and taken for granted, if they can be made newly meaningful by the force of an individual vision; and most important of all, that Western culture, for all its quite real and vile failings, has an aspect that is the confoundment and frustration of all its enemies — a remarkable tolerance for self-criticism, a curiosity as to what can be learned from alternative ways, an ability to constantly challenge itself with its opposites, and to emerge altered from the encounter, often in unlikely forms. In short, the crucial ability to change and reinvent itself.

No cultural ideal, no set of myths, no institution, no life ever turns out to yield what it seems to promise; in that sense all histories are in some measure records of disappointment, but also of surprise. And some — some ideas, some institutions, some lives — set themselves apart from others because they have built into them the capacity to recognize and admit when and how far the target is missed, and the initiative to move on in ever-altered ways, to pursue a centering, constantly reevaluated set of values and ideals without getting stuck in fixed categories.

All of us are involved individually in different versions of these challenges, in our families and in our jobs. We're also all involved in an important couple of such traditions collectively. This institution, this place — the old Williams we saw, the New Williams we lived, Williams now, changed beyond recognition — is one of them. Liberal democracy is another of those traditions — one of which we now find ourselves, surprisingly, senior custodians. Institutions and ideas such as these try to ground themselves on the promises of reform more than on the romance of revolution or on the guarantees of entrenched ways. Such traditions, which live not in the security of certainty but by their flexibility and capacity for reinvention, are constantly vulnerable, and under attack. And this puts a burden on those who believe in such values: the burden of making all that we have learned — including our doubt, uncertainty, loss of illusions — into tools for reform; and the imperative of keeping alive the discomfort of confrontation with the pains, and real

gains, of genuine change. Those are the opportunities that are the payoff for the responsibilities that come with age, the potential powers that compensate us for the loss of other fires. Let us live up to them, and make something of our education in all its senses.

A key part of the real magic of what humans do seems to lie in this: the ability to draw from the particularities of an individual's or a group's experience, at a given moment in the chaotic contingencies of history, an idea, a form, an institution that goes beyond its circumstance to inform other minds in other times and other places — and that helps, in some mysterious way, the world to keep being new.

The remarkable thing is how much of what we learned here still has to do with our lives, with our sense of how to live the rest of those lives. The paradox is that, while we must demand representations, cultural and political, that will be equal to the complexity of our lived experience, we recognize that we often know that experience most keenly through the forms we learned from others. We build ourselves from borrowed parts; many of us here owe something crucial to someone else sitting here, and to professors and classmates now gone. And we have the solace of sharing some basic parts, such as the beauty of this valley.

I remember a crisp sunny day in Griffin Hall when Fred Rudolph asked his callow and jaded class whether they felt anything when they heard *The Mountains*. To the chorus of hardened sneers, he said, quietly and knowingly, you will, you will. He must have been about as old then as I am now, and I do, I do.

In closing, I want to pay tribute to this place, to the people who shaped our lives here, and to the way, by the gift of education as we grow, long culture also turns out to be short culture, too — to the way traditions of the past can bring us into keener touch with the present, and focus our response to the particularities of life. I will borrow some sections of a poem by Wordsworth, written almost 200 years ago when he returned to a place he had loved as a young man. Wordsworth recalled how the beauty of that place had, in the din of busy cities, consoled him, and how he felt it had come to form an important part of all that was good in his moral nature. He said:

And now, with gleams of half-extinguished thought,
With many recognitions dim and faint,
And somewhat of a sad perplexity,
The picture of the mind revives again:
While here I stand, not only with the sense
Of present pleasure, but with pleasing thoughts
That in this moment there is life and food
For future years. And so I dare to hope,
Though changed, no doubt, from what I was when first
I came among these hills; when like a roe
I bounded o'er the mountains, by the sides
Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams,
Wherever nature led; more like a man
Flying from something that he dreads than one
Who sought the thing he loved. For nature then
(The coarser pleasures of my boyish days,
And their glad animal movements all gone by)
To me was all in all. — I cannot paint
What then I was. The sounding cataract

Haunted me like a passion: the tall rock,
The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood.
Their colours and their forms, were then to me
An appetite; a feeling and a love,
That had no need of a remoter charm,
By thought supplied, nor any interest
Unborrowed from the eye. — That time is past,
And all its aching joys are now no more,
And all its dizzy raptures. Not for this
Faint I, nor mourn nor murmur; other gifts
Have followed; for such loss, I would believe,
Abundant recompense...

...Therefore am I still
A lover of the meadow and the woods,
And mountains; and of all that we behold
From this green earth; of all the mighty world
Of eye, and ear, — both what they half create,
And what perceive; well pleased to recognise
In nature and in the language of the sense
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
Of all my moral being.

Nor perchance,
If I were not thus taught, should I the more
Suffer my genial spirits to decay:
For thou art with me here upon the banks
Of this fair river; thou my dearest Friend,
My dear, dear Friend; and in thy voice I catch
The language of my former heart, and read
My former pleasures in the shooting lights
Of thy wild eyes. Oh! yet a little while
May I behold in thee what I was once,...

...and, in after years,
When these wild ecstasies shall be matured
Into a sober pleasure; when thy mind
Shall be a mansion for all lovely forms,
Thy memory be as a dwelling-place
For all sweet sounds and harmonies; oh!, then,
If solitude, or fear, or pain, or grief,
Should be thy portion, with what healing thoughts
Of tender joy wilt thou remember me,
And these my exhortations! Nor, perchance —
If I should be where I no more can hear
Thy voice, nor catch from thy wild eyes these gleams
Of past existence — wilt thou then forget
That on the banks of this delightful stream
We stood together; and that I, so long
A worshipper of Nature, hither came
Unwearied in that service; rather say
With warmer love — oh! with far deeper zeal
Of holier love. Nor wilt thou then forget
That after many wanderings, many years
Of absence, these steep woods and lofty cliffs,
And this green pastoral landscape, were to me
More dear, both for themselves and for thy sake!
(From "Tintern Abbey")