

# THE MUSE

Reflections, Memoirs, & Vignettes  
From Cornell University



VOLUME I 2005

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*The end of our exploring will be to arrive where we started and see the place for the first time.*

- T.S. Eliot

THE MUSE  
VOLUME I 2005

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Generously supported in part by the Department of American Studies, Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies Isaac Kramnick, the John S. Knight Institute For Writing in the Disciplines, and the Student Activity Fee.

## EDITOR'S NOTE

A graduating senior once lamented to me that he was only beginning to understand this place. "Cornell is so vast," he said, "that it is not possible to grasp it sooner."

Now that I am graduating in a few short weeks, my friend's words ring true. As each day of my senior spring passes, I find I am learning more and more about this place, and in the process, myself.

I ultimately find Cornell to be a paradox. It is public, yet private. Intensely large, it feels unexpectedly intimate at times. It has the attitude of a city in the middle of a countryside. And it is able to simultaneously embody the nature of many different institutions: the technocracy of a cutting-edge research university, the pastoral tranquility of a liberal arts college, the unchannelled energy of a large state school.

Cornell does not make you. Just as the first students at Ezra's university helped construct the buildings they studied in, you must make Cornell for yourself. It is for this reason that we cannot possibly understand this place until we have finished our own time at Cornell. There is no definitive Cornell experience — every experience here is unique and tailor-made by the individual student.

In encouraging graduating seniors to write about and share their experiences, *The Muse* hopes that students may be able to come to a greater sense of understanding and appreciation towards their undergraduate years here on East Hill.

MPN  
Ithaca, New York  
April 2005



## WATCHING A SQUIRREL DIE

*Chelsea Holden Baker*

One of my greatest moments at Cornell was watching a squirrel die. I was struggling up the Slope; he was struggling in the grip of a red-tailed hawk. The chimes were ringing like mad — an unwitting dirge, even if the tune was “Here Comes The Sun” — I don’t remember. I do remember my heart pounding, imagining the little squirrel heart beating furiously and the hawk beating his wings as he tried in vain to fly away with his still-live prey. Considering that it was the bottom of the Slope, this squirrel was probably plump on Ivy Room discards — he was certainly more than the hawk had bargained for.

And although I can admit I did take momentary glee in the torture of a squirrel, I’m not all that cruel. The whole scene, which at this point had gone on almost unmercifully long (fuzzy squirrel tail still flapping), had started to make my stomach turn when I heard an ungodly sound, like a screaming banshee. But this banshee was raging *against* death, not just warning of it. Sounding something quite like a screeching raptor herself, a girl appeared half running, half tumbling down the Slope, forcing as much sound as she could muster out of her lungs while alternately clutching and releasing her flopping backpack to wave her arms wildly. For a skipped synapse, I could not connect the two events — and then, in a flash, I realized that this crazed kid was trying to prevent the death of the squirrel.

No matter that a hawk needs to eat to survive, no matter that there are precious few things that unite our diverse campus (even if it is out of hatred: think winters, hills and squirrels), this girl was ready to take on the forces of nature. Sadly, she didn’t succeed. Her performance was just the push the hawk needed to get

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himself and his lunch off the ground. But it's really no matter, because I was stopped as dead as an unlucky squirrel in my tracks. This berserk girl was completely impassioned and ready to fight for what she saw as right — which is about as Cornelian as it gets. Cornell breeds what the world needs: people who are always ready to throw down against stiff odds for a just cause.

## THE PICTURE

*Shiri Sandler*

We all have a first friend. The guy who was standing in the hall as we moved in, already locked out of his room, the girl who stared at the ground as her parents argued in front of their SUV as we struggled with our mini-fridges, or, for me, the boy who happened to be standing closest to the registration desk as I signed in for the Pre-Orientation Service Trip (POST). His red hair and freckles reminded me of the kids I had grown up with - of theater camp, of my high school friends, and of the familiar but vastly cooler version of myself that I imagined finding at Cornell.

I have a picture from the first night of POST. It's from the digital camera I got for high school graduation which is now decidedly broken. The six POSTers in it are something of a motley crew, none of us looking like we belong with each other, but all of us trying our hardest to fit in. We stayed up late that first night, playing Taboo in the lounge and talking until our heads began to lean and our eyes began to close. In the picture, our faces are huge, smiling and wide-eyed. It was the first of what we would come to know as those freshman year "sleep be damned, I'm going to make friends" nights. We took the picture before we finally went to bed, in commemoration of our bravery and the first night of our new lives.

Many of us in that picture would grow to define parts of each other's Cornell experiences. Some of the people in that photo I love dearly. Others used to mean the world to me, but we grew apart, became too angry at each other, or hurt each other too badly. Those first friendships, like the first years at Cornell, materialized and then changed so quickly. The picture reminds me of the smiles that led to the friendships, even the ones that ended in yelling and tears.

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In that picture, some of my closest friends have amusingly frizzy hair, Abercrombie fashions, or retainers. Parts of our appearance may have changed, but many of the friendships are still the same. A few weeks ago, I jumped up and down ecstatically when one of the boys in that picture got into Cornell's MD/PhD program. I reminded him that the man who will one day be a doctor got kicked out of Evolution for trying on a multi-colored feathered jacket and locked himself in a glass display case at Boyton Middle School. Another boy in the picture, who sat up nights at POST reading children's books with me, is now reading briefs at NYU Law. One of the girls in that picture slid down stairs at Boyton in her sleeping bag with me. I walked with the other, terrified, to register in Bartels and she consoled me when I forgot my net-ID on the walk back to Balch. She is getting married in August, and I'm going to be one of her bridesmaids.

On one side of me in that picture is the red haired boy, grinning puckishly. He and I lived on the same hallway in Risley and auditioned for plays together. Later on during our college years, we didn't speak for almost a year. Then, one night on a Collegetown porch, we began to share again. This morning, the red haired boy and I interviewed POST team leader applicants for POST 2005. He remembers the things I remember; we've come a long way.

## EXPLODE

*Brooke Kaye*

From the computer lab in Uris Library I can see a girl in the “fishbowl” below. She’s frantically cramming on this, the eve of the last day of final exams. Her notes and textbooks and red TakeNote printouts are spilling over into the two carrels on either side of her. Her eyes scan the text in front of her, back and forth, back and forth, machine-like. Her headphones envelop her ears and hang behind her neck. She takes big bites of a bagel and sips something hot, and pauses now and again to addictively smear pink chapstick on her lips and rub a lavender lotion from Bath and Body Works on her hands and neck. All the while her eyes don’t stop their methodical back and forth movement over the text. Her legs pump rhythmically, frantically, under her chair. I think she’s going to explode.

## THE ART OF FALLING

*Christine Rhee*

One of my most enduring memories of Cornell was my very first day of class as a lowly freshman. I recall that the weather was perfect – bright, summery sun with a hint of a cool fall breeze. I was standing in front of the northern entrance to Goldwin Smith's first floor when it dawned on me that I was really embarking on my college years. With a burst of pride for getting into such an illustrious university, I bounded up the stone stairs to the building's entrance. Then, in an amazing feat of awkward body positions, I placed one of my Docs dangerously close to the other, tripped, and fell.

As almost all of us know, trips and falls are as integral to Cornell culture as baseball and apple pie are to the United States. No matter how carefully a Cornellian tramps about campus, the stumbles and spills are inevitable, often inexplicable events, whether one is merely catching one's foot in a damaged part of the sidewalk or falling flat on one's ass somewhere on campus or in Collegetown. And even if a lucky individual happened to have the best sense of balance and coordination in the world, come an Ithacan winter, forget it. He or she would be a goner attempting even a few steps on Libe Slope.

Because every Cornellian has experienced at least one (but more likely four or five) trip and/or fall during his or her college career, as seniors, we have come to humorously categorize them and rehash the stories to amuse friends. One day this year, my housemate decided to call everyone in her cell's phonebook (including me) to announce that she had just witnessed the campus unicyclist eat pavement somewhere between the Arts Quad and Libe Slope.

A type of fall that deserves the utmost distinction from the random sober fall is the ubiquitous drunken fall, which generally occurs after a long frat party or bar crawl. Usually, drunken falling can be described as a group of friends making a Herculean effort to hold up one intoxicated person, whose body has taken on the characteristics of a wet herring. (A warning about drunken falls coming from actual experience: drunken falls usually result in drunken injuries, giving Gannett a significant amount of business in the way of sprained ankles.)

Our ability as Cornellians to laugh at any instances of falling over the years is not motivated by cruelty; rather, it is a badge of honor for veteran fallers and the last rite required to truly become a student at Cornell. For instance, my friend who laughed at the unicyclist possesses a pair of jeans she nicknamed her "death jeans," which bear a large hole at the knee, marking her own freshman year spill. Thus, we Cornellians are all united in the art of falling in Ithaca.

My own fall on my very first day of class taught me one of the most important lessons I have learned from my experience at Cornell, coupled with sheer and utter embarrassment. Immediately after plummeting to the ground (by tripping over my own feet, no less), I was completely mortified, scrambling to my feet and praying to any and every god that no one recognized me (or would laugh at me). But three years and more than a few bumbles later, I have learned to laugh at not only my physical clumsiness but also my academic shortcomings, failures, and mistakes. By constantly tripping me up, Cornell has taught me humility and the ability to laugh at myself.

## **BIG RED EMBARRASMENTS**

### *Humiliating moments from The Hill*

I once went into Barnes to turn in a scholarship application. I spent about half a minute trying to push open the door before the woman waiting behind me suggested I try pulling. She turned out to be the person I had to give the application to.

Twice, I stayed in a class that I knew was wrong for me and I would not do well in. Twice, I had to round up all of the necessary signatures and appropriate paperwork to withdraw in the last week of classes.

My cell phone. Going off. During a final exam.

I was climbing up The Slope with my sled in tow: In front of a hundred people I repeatedly slid backward down the hill.

I once ran out of clothes to wear during a particularly grueling finals week. I had to wear a long-sleeved shirt with shorts to a back-to-back exam session. Between my outfit, the pitiful condition I was in, and the three cans of Coca-Cola I kept as refreshment during the exam, I must have never looked quite so ridiculous.

Unsuccessfully chasing a squirrel on the Arts Quad.

For a photo shoot, I once spent half an hour splayed out on the main staircase of the Hotel School's lobby, with my ass in the air and the crotch of my pink panties showing. A lot of people came by while the pictures were being taken, but it wasn't really *that* embarrassing.

Serving five months on the Student Assembly.

On move-in day, during freshman year – while all the other freshman girls were in peak aesthetic form, I had just returned from my Wilderness Reflections backpacking trip and was slowly making my way up to North Campus with my raggedy clothes, a five-day stench, and poison sumac all over my legs.

Once an annoyed student woke me from a nap in the A.D. White Library. He claimed I was “snoring really loudly.”

Looking like a mess, – hadn't shaved, hair tousled, terrible breath, dirty clothes – then bumping into a friend, seeing her smile, watching her kneel, place her books to the side, and begin tying my shoelaces.

This is a mean question – suffice to say I think I embarrass myself everyday in some way or another.

I nearly had a panic attack when my Earth Science 101 group partners were "fabricating data" during a lab and the professor had to come over to calm me down; I'll never forget the bewildered, concerned look on her face as the veins in my neck surged during my passionate defense of scientific integrity.

Taking the walk of shame... in my Halloween costume.

Choking on water in the dining hall.

My friend and I hosted a Thai dinner for a couple of our Astronomy professors. Unfortunately one of them did not eat Thai, so it was a good thing I had picked up a baguette as backup. They were also kind enough to bring ice cream for dessert, but we inadvertently pulled the wrong ice cream out of the freezer. They were kind enough to not point this out, but I still get embarrassed thinking about it.

## CONSTELLATIONS

*Phil Lane*

When I was a kid, I had the embarrassing habit of assuming that certain things were obviously true. My formal introduction to the contrary began at East Elementary where students came in two flavors — chocolate and plain. Every day at lunch we would shuffle past the milk fridge and select a carton from our respective stacks. I was always chocolate. A carpet mural of a pasture occupied the space on the wall above the milk canteen. It must have been forty or fifty years old and was probably there when my parents assumed their roles in life as either plain or chocolate citizens of the cafeteria. Two cows grazed in the faded plush pasture among herds of dust bunnies. One cow was white and the other, naturally, was brown. Now, I have to admit, I was pretty stupid as a kid. I mean, I don't think I was unusually stupid for my age; I was just more honest about it than most. So when I decided that dead people went to live with Jesus somewhere out west, or that babies were the result of an exotic form of urination, or that white milk came from white cows and brown milk came from brown cows, I of course shared my conclusions with anyone who would listen.

My entire first grade class listened and, to my mind, was convinced until our teacher Mrs. Thomas decided to air a correction.

“You all do realize that both white and brown cows make white milk and someone just adds the chocolate later, right?” she asked the class, with special emphasis toward me. The class laughed as if any other possible explanation had always seemed ridiculous to them.

I was crushed partly because I had intended to marry Mrs. Thomas at some point in the distant future but mostly because my beautiful theory about the nature of the universe suffered from the unfortunate limitation of being false. I mean, come on, they add it *later*? Life was becoming too complicated already.

I guess Chris is the reason I brought this up. Chris was an animal science major, which meant that he spent half his time in barns cleaning up after animals and the other half actually inside the animals themselves. Chris had been taught how to gain entry into a cow through almost any orifice — some not created by nature. I don't mean this in a filthy way, of course. Apparently cows are completely helpless. They need people to check the junk inside their stomach and their crap and even mate for them. So, this is what Chris had done for the last four years. It was my custom to greet him with a nod.

“So cribbing to a horse is a lot like nail biting to people. They do it when they're nervous and under stress,” Chris said.

“I imagine nail biting would be a bigger issue if the ground was covered in feces and we used our hands to walk,” I said.

“No, well, not like that. They usually bite a fence post or something and then sorta blow. Anyway, it's really bad for their teeth.”

“And maybe worse for the fence?”

Chris did research on how to keep horses from acting out their nervous behavior. His group had tried using foul tasting substances, high-pitched sounds, food rewards and Pavlovian conditioning to separate horses from the visual display of their frustrations.

"We found that sound works pretty well at the right frequencies," he said.

It was one of those sunsets a day or so after a snowstorm. The face of Libe was a solid white that suggested blue somewhere just below its surface, the way a frozen ocean might look. The Clocktower and Uris and Morrill and those other buildings I've never been inside stood like cardboard cutouts against a cloudless sky. Their stone facades blushed in the last red rays of the sun and their windows, burning fragments of the western sky, advertised flames dancing in their halls. Why is it that places are their most beautiful by a dying light?

We walked past Baker, and Chris continued his lecture on the bad habits of farm animals. I wasn't really listening. It wasn't exactly that I didn't care, but I had heard it before many times. He only talked about this when he had nothing else to talk about or was otherwise nervous. I wondered what it would be like to ring a bell at just the right note and have him suddenly stop mid-sentence and start talking about something normal.

We eventually got to CTB unaided by the inch and a half of rock salt tossed over the shoulders of maintenance workers to ward off the evil spirit of old man winter. Since I'd moved to Upstate New York, I had not once fallen on ice, but had slipped and embarrassed myself at least half a dozen times on rock salt.

"They'll never cancel class because of snow, right?" Chris asked.

"Not unless the snow is actually anthrax raining down from an angry god," I replied.

CTB was crowded. It was a Friday evening. By the time I had my coffee and Chris had his pizza bagel, the subject on his mind had finally changed. I almost wished it hadn't.

“So, we’re graduating,” he said.

“Yup, that’s the rumor.”

“So do you know about the whole ‘life’ thing yet?” he asked. Again. He actually used air quotes, too. Which is always annoying.

“Well, I’m sure it’s bound to happen one way or another if that’s what you mean.”

“I don’t know, I’ve really enjoyed college, but I feel like I’ve missed out on a lot of things, too.”

“I’m sure most people feel that way.” I sipped my coffee realizing it wasn’t hot enough to drink black.

“Did you know that like fifty percent of Cornell students marry other Cornell students?” he asked. “I just feel a little behind schedule, you know?” I was thrown off for a number of reasons.

“This coffee needs milk.” I got up and he followed me. A less persistent person might have waited at the table. “Besides, I’m not sure I believe that.” *Skim or two percent?* Life is full of challenging questions.

“You don’t think it’s really half?” he asked skeptically.

“God no, more like two percent.” I said.

“What?”

“I mean there are more important things. Chris, don’t worry about it. Life’s really not so short, going into it. And we’re both just starting off, you’ve got tons of time,” I reassured him.

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I told him that finding the right person is a lot like solving a Rubik's cube. Every big change in life is like another turn and you find yourself surrounded by new people, by these new squares. Usually, something's off. They aren't the right color — I mean, metaphorically. And so this whole graduation deal is like another big turn and, who knows, all his squares might end up in the right places next time.

"That's the biggest load of crap. Who says stuff like that?" he responded. I knew he had bought it and already felt better. This was his way of thanking me. But he was right about it being crap.

So we finished up and went out into the brand new weekend. I promised I'd call him later about what I was up to — parties or bars or whatever. Chris's expectations were always bigger than he was. In some strange way, he had spent his undergraduate career building a crib for a giant only to give birth to a midget in the end. I was pretty sure I wouldn't call him. Our conversation had gone slightly past boring. It had been depressing but not because I thought I also was behind schedule.

When I got back to my place on Eddy Street, my apartment mates were already drunk off their asses. They all had multiple prelims during the previous week and voted unanimously that five PM was today's earliest possible drinking time. To me, this, like mass jaywalking, was one of the truest forms of democracy. Everyone spontaneously decides that the laws of orderly conduct no longer apply and proceeds accordingly. Two hours of beers and shots later, they were all pretty alarmed when I, a sober person, entered the room. They looked at me like I had shown up at a nudist colony wearing a parka... or at a parka party completely naked, for that matter. The apartment was freezing and I was the only one who seemed to notice. This was very unusual. My apartment, a hole in the wall above Souvlaki House, usually caught enough heat from the underlying kitchen to sustain

nuclear fusion. The meat furnace downstairs made the place quite toasty in the winter and unlivable in the summer. The first summer I moved in, I would have to turn the window fan on at nine in the morning. This would draw the cooler air in along with the mingled scents of roasting lamb from downstairs and the fumes from the pothead neighbor upstairs. I gained ten pounds that summer.

“Souvlaki’s closed because their stove broke or something. You’ll have to improvise to stay warm,” said Emily, my next-door neighbor. She gestured to the kitchen table now populated by bottles of liquor.

“Where’ve you been? So far behind! Here, drink this,” demanded Jeff, my roommate. Jeff had been fairly strait-laced through high school and was a stranger to alcohol until freshman year Slope Day. But once the two had been properly introduced, it had been the start of a caring, long-term relationship. He handed me a red drink in a tall glass that tasted first like oranges, then like peaches, then like cranberry and then faded into the non-flavor of orange jello. It might have come straight from Willy Wonka’s liquor cabinet. I finished it just as my friend Jess called me.

“Get over here, we’re having a party and we need a custodian,” my phone said on her behalf.

“Ok, I’ll be there in half an hour. We’re making s’mores using flaming Bacardi.”

“You might outdo me yet. See ya,” she said. I knew I could never outdo her.

So a few s’mores and drinks later, I bundled up and made for the door. I promised my apartment mates I’d call them later and then I went downstairs and into the street. The night was cold and

clear and loud with drunken shouting. As I made my way down the hill, I thought of what my apartment mates might say in the morning. I knew I probably wouldn't see them again until then.

When I got to Jess's, I was a little miffed to find that I was one of four people there. She promised me that it would fill up but needed my help getting ready. A large mop bucket sat on the table with "Bucket O' Gin" written on it in magic marker.

"Observe the process," she said. In one hand, she had a bottle of Wegmans brand seltzer and in the other a large plastic jug of gin. This last item filled me with dread. Generally, if you drink something that bounces rather than shatters when it hits the floor you'll want to die in the morning. After a moment of false deliberation, she squeezed both violently into the bucket and stirred with a turkey baster — to be used later for rapid delivery of the mix. In a way, drinking gin is a lot like drinking a Christmas tree since it smells like an evergreen forest. The mop bucket magnified this strangeness and made me think that I might have developed a taste for Lysol had it delivered the same physiological benefits.

"Here, you carry this around and freshen people up," she said. Commissioned with the task of squirting spirits directly into the mouths of strangers, I immediately became both the sketchiest and most popular person at the party. Jess's place began to fill up until that certain critical mass was reached where the volume of people's voices suddenly elevates and a gathering becomes a party. After the bucket ran ginless and I was voted off the table in Survivor flip cup, I decided to start having random conversations with people I didn't know. This one girl was more than eager to talk about her personal life.

"Hi, what's up?" I said.

“Guys are assholes,” she replied with gin-propelled directness. So far, so good. “Are you an asshole, too?”

“It depends on who you ask,” I said. “Though rumor has it, I’m not.”

“Good, because this guy who hasn’t called me is an asshole,” she said.

Turns out her bedtime acquaintance of two weekends (a substantial portion of a Cornell student’s romantic life) had gone MIA and wasn’t answering or returning her phone calls. She was nursing her cell phone all night and still no reply. Camille (that was her name) was also as lewd as she was honest and told me all about what they had done together — presumably to prove that she was in fact worthy of being called back. Maybe he was just a collector, a gatherer of names. Maybe he saw it as a game and he was one Camille away from Bingo. Or maybe he’d just changed his mind.

“Wow, whoa. Well, it seems to me that mystery pays dividends, and you gave away the principal too soon,” I said. I had her figured for an AEM major.

“Well, not completely. I just don’t understand them. Why don’t guys realize if they call me back I’ll give them something good?” Camille said. It was time for me to go.

“Well, I hope your asshole calls you back,” I said while looking at my watch. He probably would, too, once two or three o’clock in the morning rolled around to prove that nothing better would turn up. Not for another weekend, at least. I needed a distraction or else Jess would put on a big performance about me leaving. “Where are you going? We don’t ever do anything anymore. You

hate me," she would say, partly in jest but inconveniently and embarrassingly nonetheless.

Some big drunk guy backed into the flip cup table during a heated round and knocked the whole mess over.

"Party foul!" half a dozen proclaimed.

"Party foul? That's a fucking party felony!" said a very pissed off Jess. She started yelling and pointing at the door, but the offender gathered himself off the floor more slowly than a beached whale. Jess decided to provide more motivation and came at him swinging the empty Bucket O' Gin. I fled to meet my friends on State Street.

When it comes to parties, I am a nomad, as I think most college students are. When given options, I will invariably exhaust all of them. It's a sort of manifest destiny — something to do with the human mind's obsession with the place that's out of view. On my way down State, I passed a few clumps of people headed in the opposite direction. I said hello and they said hello. Everyone's your friend at one in the morning. The spray-painted imperative "Dig All Jive" was inscribed on a passing wall, but with no instructions on how to comply.

When I got to Pete's, he was sitting at his kitchen table with Jason and Leo. They were having a heated argument about public healthcare, so I knew that they were also drunk. They only feel comfortable talking about things that they suspect might matter when they've been drinking. Alcohol makes people feel intellectual, and loud.

"Oh, look, the libertarian has showed up," said Jason, a "socialist."  
"Let's ask the laissez-fairy what he thinks."

"I never thought you'd advocate George Bush owning your body," I said knowing that it would have the desired effect.

"Fuck Bush! We need a revolution!" Jason is crazy. This means that he is hilarious and a good friend.

"Yes, revolve. It's the most creative way to get right back where you started," I said.

"Are you still going to submit something for the magazine?" Leo asked.

"Yeah, I have something in mind. It's mostly true, too, just the ordering of events and who said what is jumbled around," I replied.

"That's OK. Our lives are built around half-truths anyway. Vonnegut called them *foma*," Leo said.

We decided to go out into Collegetown to look for something more exciting than ourselves. We headed up Eddy and then up Cook where we heard a party going on in the ground level apartment of a house. Perfect. It was loud enough and late enough that it was acceptable to go inside without knowing anyone there.

The first thing I saw was a guy wearing a tuxedo and a beak. There were a few people dressed as princesses and a guy carrying a pitchfork and wearing a paper Burger King hat.

"It's way too late for Halloween," said little Pete.

This girl comes up to me in her lingerie and snacking on peanuts.

"So what are you?" she asked.

"I'm, uh... Pete." I said. "What are you?"

"Oh, lucky. Well this is a P Party, so you figure it out," she replied.

I looked around the room. There were people dressed as policemen and Peter Pan and Prince (the artist formally known as) and even a plus sign. There were also a lot of girls in lingerie — proof that the world's oldest profession is also its easiest costume.

"Who's your friend?" she asked.

"He's Pete, too. Little Pete."

"OK, now you're cheating," she protested. Leo and Jason vouched for us. Jason said his name was Paul and that Leo was Puff the Magic Dragon.

Little Pete was having a conversation with the lingerie girl. The plus sign came over and interrupted him to ask the prostitute a question. The result made Leo, Jason and I laugh hysterically.

"I wonder what's on the other side of that equation," I said.

This girl who had apparently just escaped from her terrarium at Ecohouse walked in smelling like garlic with flesh-colored paste held onto her by Saran Wrap. "It's hummus. It's my Tahini Bikini," she said. She claimed to be an organic prostitute.

I was then approached by a female police officer who threatened detention if I didn't kiss her. I declined and then she brandished her cuffs.

"What, am I not pretty enough?" she asked.

“No, you’re very pretty,” I said.

“So what? You’re gay?” she challenged. “Is he gay?” she asked Leo.

So I kissed Officer Haley. Faces close up are never quite what they are advertised when a few feet away. They are always some ridiculous caricature of a person you know in a different context and who you would never even think of kissing. I always forget to close my eyes. God it was awful. She then demanded the same service from little Pete. I suppose she didn’t realize collecting another Pete wouldn’t get her any closer to Bingo. Little Pete declined and Officer Haley took the extraordinary measure of grabbing his back pants pocket and ripping his jeans open to reveal his left ass cheek. We decided to leave the P party.

I left the guys at the bottom of Cook Street. I turned right on Eddy and they turned left with little Pete running away from the cold and the embarrassment and Leo and Jason laughing uncontrollably behind.

The night was clear and cold and the street lamps buzzed in the quiet of early morning. I was already preemptively missing this place. I wondered what I would say about my college years a decade from now. I wondered if I would remember all the time I felt I’d wasted. I wondered if I would feel like I had been behind schedule. I doubted it.

College had done little to clarify the mechanics of the world, of nature and of people. But it had provided a better view of some of its far-flung constituents. When presented with words, people will always find a story. When presented with sound, they always contrive a composition. When presented with a past, they will always construct a history. The pieces fall where they do without much cause or consideration. The meaning is always added later.

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The lights down in Ithaca were twinkling that night. The faraway constellations of streets and neighborhoods mirrored the epic mythologies of the night sky above. Below, each glittering speck seemed like a little dying light.

## I BELIEVE

*Alyson Greenlee*

*Well, I believe in the soul, the cock, the pussy, the small of a woman's back, the hanging curve ball, high fiber, good scotch, that the novels of Susan Sontag are self-indulgent, overrated crap. I believe Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone. I believe there ought to be a constitutional amendment outlawing AstroTurf and the designated hitter. I believe in the sweet spot, soft-core pornography, opening your presents Christmas morning rather than Christmas Eve and I believe in long, slow, deep, soft, wet kisses that last three days.*

*- Kevin Costner's character Crash Davis in the movie "Bull Durham"*

Well, I believe in the soul, the gorges, the snow, the use of Uris Library over Olin, impromptu Frisbee, Friday night Shabbat, and that Slope Day was better without the band. I believe that Cornellians need to revive the simple practice of asking each other out on a date. I believe in frequenting the farmer's market, shunning frat parties, striking up conversation with strangers, making a fool of oneself for the Ho Plaza webcam, and breaking diets to eat Bavarian Raspberry Fudge in the middle of winter. I believe there ought to be a constitutional amendment outlawing the long-distance relationship. I believe in Cornell Bhangra, the midnight scream, sex in the library, the North Campus Initiative, the couch on the fifth floor of the Johnson Museum, and I believe in ringing the bell in the Plantations as loudly as humanly possible.

## TELEOLOGICAL

*Ann Hubert*

When the fall semester of my senior year began in August, I found myself back in the usual routine of student life: playing soccer, going to classes, somehow managing all the homework. One night my housemate Kelley forgot her sweatshirt in Olin Library. When we returned home with it, I noticed that there was only one spot still available on Blair Street in which I could park my car, and it was going to have to be a parallel park. I don't want to suggest that I can't parallel park, because I can. But, that night, through what must have been some sort of divine inspiration, I performed the parallel parking job of my life, and jumping out of the car I exclaimed to Kel, "Did you see that? That was the teleological example of a parallel parking job," a comment to which she responded by exploding into laughter.

I never suspected that the lecture Isaac Kramnick gave to Government 161 about Aristotle, *telos*, and "chairness" would become one of those themes that pervaded my college education. But I suppose my friends and I were over-impressed freshmen, or maybe just really big nerds. Either way, *telos*, or "the end," has really played a significant role in our college fun, as it has popped up in some of the most unexpected places.

Perhaps the most unexpected use of the root *telos* occurred three days after my excited exclamation to Kelley. I was in the elevator in Olin Library when I bumped into one of my classmates. On the walk over to Goldwin Smith he asked me what I thought about the critical essay we had to read for class. I told him the usual, that I had liked it, that I had really agreed with this point, that I had wished the author had developed that one more fully. He nodded and told me that he had really enjoyed the essay, that he

felt it was the closest essay he had ever read to being “the teleological example of a piece of critical writing.”

Not surprisingly, I didn’t know what to say. Was this comment the product of a Cornell education, or was it a sign that I had found my soul mate? Sure I had thought over the last couple of weeks that the guy across the room was kind of cute, but this was unprecedented. I had just found someone who used the word “teleological” as if it were common parlance in day-to-day conversation. And the fact that I actually considered myself compatible with this guy based on this comment alone — was that the indication that I have truly convinced myself that academia is my only viable career option? Or is it the confirmation that I am clearly following an instinct that will result in a church date with a white dress and lots of falling rice?

“Well Ann, maybe you should talk to him, you know, instead of always ignoring him, when he talks to you in class,” my housemate Alex suggested to me soon after the incident. I’m glad I have Alex in my life because she always offers me the obvious conclusions my overly analytic mind frequently forgets.

“I know, Alex,” I replied, “but really, shouldn’t he know I’m still in fifth grade when it comes to boys and crushes? Shouldn’t he know that my ignoring him is a sure sign of my crush on him?”

Through the suppressed smile on her face, Alex answered me sarcastically: “Of course, ‘cause that works every time! Ignore him! Right...!”

I knew I had to do something practical. I was going to see him on Thursday, but on Monday, when you have a crush you really want to see, three days feels like an insurmountable amount of time. I walked into the kitchen where Katie was washing some dishes:

*THE MUSE*

"Hey Katie..."

"What's up, Ann?"

"I've decided you have comment privileges."

"What?"

"You know...if in the course of conversation with [various hand gestures] the opportunity to drop my name comes up, tell him I have a huge crush on him."

"Are you sure?" was her excited and giggly response.

"Absolutely! You see him way more often than I do!"

But was I really sure? Even up to this point, in fact to this very moment, I'm not sure if this was the best course of action. Granted, it was more practical than my prior approaches — for instance, driving past his house and trying to look into the main floor window without crashing my car, or hoping that he'd come out of his house in the thirty seconds it takes me to walk down Cook Street to Blair. When it comes to relationships, I've always relied more on the random chance that something might happen than on the outright "Hey, ya wanna grab lunch sometime?" approach.

I suppose it was only appropriate now that I had found the words, that I could not find my crush for the entire week. A bit concerned, I met my friend Kevin — who, incidentally, was the recipient of my first profession of love — for lunch. He was right down there in the trenches with me, but encouraged me nonetheless. "Yes, it was shocking," he told me, when I had revealed my love to him, "but really, it was just the foundation for what became a great friendship. So either way, you're not going

to lose out.” He was right, and his words were exactly what I needed to hear.

Finally, one day I found myself in what I consider my second home - the seventh floor stacks of Olin Library — needing a study break. Going down to the café, a step or two before entering it, I noticed my crush sitting at a table with his back to me. This was advantageous for two reasons, primarily because he didn’t see me freeze and think, “Oh my god, do I actually go in there now,” and secondarily, because if he didn’t happen to see me, and I was too nervous to go over to him, nothing would be lost. Armed with a slice of bread and an apple from Libe Cafe, I for once won the raging battle of ‘To talk or not to talk’ that constantly runs through my head. I asked him how his reading was going, he said to pull up a chair, and we finally had our first true conversation.

## SYMPATHY AND GREETING

*Walter Chen*

For two years, I wrote music articles for *The Cornell Daily Sun*. My colleagues and I saw contemporary music criticism as static and worthless. The technical details of the music infused little understanding, and attempts to opine on the significance, impact, or longevity of a record a week before its national release seemed impossible at best. Instead, we decided that personal affectation was the only way to go. At the time, we thought of our work as ridiculously clever; most of it just seems kind of dopey now.

As a freshman, I often turned my music up loud and then sat in the middle of my dorm room floor, head between my knees, rocking back and forth as if straitjacketed in a padded room. I imagined myself a sane man among the loony, drooling masses, but looking back, it was probably just the opposite. Once, my roommate came in amid one of my most tortured moments; I got embarrassed, shut off the music, and never did it again.

I soon found out, though, that at Cornell no need existed for the orchestration of personal catastrophes. There are undoubtedly hundreds of stories of break-ups on Libe Slope where the shock causes you to backslide all the way down the hill as a Chimesmaster plays the Righteous Brothers's "Lean on Me".

Oh wait, that happened to me: Junior year, reading the letter from that one true love who writes, "I have only written about how I miss Tomasz and long for him to tell me its okay," then realizing that my name isn't Tomasz while freezing my little fingers off, sitting on that bench overlooking West Campus with an inscription that reads:

*To those who shall sit here rejoicing  
To those who shall sit here mourning  
Sympathy and greeting  
So have we done in our time.*

Despite my computer science major, I had the opportunity to take part in a book club put on by the English department. The first book we read was Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49*. A bit intimidated, I sat in complete silence while listening to the various attendees debate the meaning of a few sentences from the first paragraph:

Oedipa stood in the living room, stared at by the greenish dead eye of the TV tube, spoke the name of God, tried to feel as drunk as possible. But this did not work. She thought of a hotel room in Mazatlan whose door had just been slammed, it seemed forever, waking up two hundred birds down in the lobby; a sunrise over the library slope at Cornell University that nobody out on it had seen because the slope faces west; a dry, disconsolate tune from the fourth movement of the Bartok Concerto for Orchestra; a whitewashed bust of Jay Gould that Pierce kept over the bed on a shelf so narrow for it she'd always had the hovering fear it would someday topple on them.

At the time, I nodded my head along with interpretations that mirrored my own conception of Cornell University: land of ironic heartbreak. Sometimes when I wonder whether the experience of joy requires periods of despair, I think that I can be happy for the rest of my life. As much as I would like to, I can't pretend that it was all bad — because every day I trudged up the hill, I also walked back down. But I also don't think it's as simple as walking up and then walking down; Cornell's confused campus has taught me that as well. I guess my views are a little more convoluted nowadays: as in this smile on my face, as in my inability to write a meaningful narrative, as in this essay.

## CAMPUS METAMORPHOSES

*If you could be any part of Cornell's campus, what would you be and why?*

Either the statue of Ezra Cornell or Andrew Dickson White, as I like to exchange high-fives when virgins walk by...

The IthaCloud™. After Ithaca and Cornell are long gone, it will always be here.

The sundial on the Engineering Quad, because only something as ill-conceived as a sundial in Ithaca could possibly compare with the irony of my existence.

I would be Risley, because most of its bad reputation is true, but I love it anyway.

A branch floating in Cayuga Lake, because sometimes I just have to get away.

A parking spot — they are such a rare and valuable commodity.

I would have to be Sage Hall: so unique, so well-dressed, so historic, so equipped with nice bathrooms, so reddish purple, so spacious, so full of good-looking foreign men.

The Zamboni machine because it's the pedestal that carries Dave — the most creative costume man on campus ever.

The Naked Guy's penis — because that thing has gotten more play than any of us.

I would be one of the trees on the Arts Quad, a playground for all of those friendly squirrels.

One of the rocks in the mineral garden in the Engineering Quad. It would be incredibly nerdy to be on display in a garden of metals and mineral ores.

I would want to be the Holstein cow on top of the Dairy Barn. Why? Big udders.

I would be me, which I am.

The southwestern wrap from the Statler because then I would be absolutely delicious.

One of those crazy-looking stone faces that come out of the walls of Uris Library... they are just so... funny looking.

A bell in the clocktower — my ring would be famous the world over.

The sundial, so I would always know what time it is.

The gorges, because then I would have bikini-clad co-eds exploring my every nook and cranny...

I would be the Foucault pendulum in Rockefeller Hall, because then for once, the world would revolve around me.

## THIS IS COLLEGE

*Christian Polman*

There's no doubt that my college years will hold a dear place in my heart. Our college is, was, and will always be Cornell, and I will have countless experiences in common with many Cornellians.

Cornell will live on in our minds in many different fashions. It could be a ridiculously themed party, or it might be dancing in someone's sketchy basement. Our college experience might be defined by waking up at nine a.m. to start drinking on the last day of classes, launching apples from a giant sling-shot, or throwing a TV off of the top floor of someone's house. College is hopefully an endless stream of crazy stories, each as or more interesting, unique, and insane as the last. And because of this, Cornell will undoubtedly be a place, a time, and an event that I speak of for years to come. It will be a source of hundreds of future conversations, and it has certainly taken my life and steered it in all kinds of fascinating ways. It has given me friends and a home.

While every story of ours is different, they have all briefly converged here at Cornell; every student here contributes to the Cornell story. And now each story will each take a new direction as we part our fair Cornell.

## THE DISH IN THE JUNGLE

*Kelley M. Hess*

My question to you: How does one go about choosing a good coconut? I have had my share of going to the grocery store and picking out bad ones. Conceivably it is excusable in California (we specialize in avocados), and certainly in the Northeast. But how can one not pick up perfectly beautiful coconut in a Puerto Rican grocery store?

Ah, spring break...usually spent in a snowstorm, either in Ithaca or Colorado Springs but this year I escaped the dreaded freezing temperatures. But now Arecibo! The Dish in the Jungle. El Radar. I have officially decided that I never want to go back to Ithaca. Not only do I have a new mission to establish the criteria for judging coconuts, but there are far too many galaxies to discover for me to ever leave. And if those excuses don't work... um... I'm chaining myself to the receiver inside the Gregorian dome. Just don't turn on the radar...

So if you haven't already gathered, I spent this past spring break at Cornell's Arecibo Observatory in Puerto Rico. Having driven my housemates crazy the previous night with my countdown ("Hey guys... 14 hours till I leave for Puerto Rico!" ... "Hey guys... ten hours till I leave..."), I finally departed with a fellow astronomer to catch a seven a.m. flight out of the frozenness that is Ithaca. We arrived in sunny paradise a little after four p.m. AST.

I had been told that most people in Puerto Rico speak at least some English. Nonetheless, to make it easier at Burger King, I tried to order in Spanish — which, I should add, I have never studied. (Maybe surviving four years at Cornell makes you believe you can do anything?) Then again, all I wanted was a number six (*numero seis*). This was easy enough, except that when

she responded with a question in Spanish I (a) didn't understand and (b) instinctively wanted to tell her I did not understand *in French*. Nevertheless, we eventually were able to communicate that I, in fact, wanted honey mustard sauce as opposed to BBQ.

The drive to the observatory from San Juan was gorgeous. There was a noticeable lack of snow, and an abundance of green. The landscape is closely packed with steep limestone peaks, leaving narrow valleys through which the road winds, twists, and jumps. The road is a roller coaster with overhanging trees and plenty of blind curves. I learned that the proper Puerto Rican way to negotiate these roads is with speed. Do not slow down for anything: not the dog on the shoulder, or the oncoming car. It's a challenge, but worth the adrenaline rush.

By the time we arrived at the observatory the sun had set, so we settled into our respective rooms at the visiting scientist quarters until it was time to tackle our first run of observations. The time that was allotted to us fell between 11 p.m. and five a.m. Each observation is done as a "fixed azimuth drift scan", which means we park the telescope at one spot and watch as the sky drifts by. As a result, each night we observed a strip of sky at a fixed declination (like latitude, only in the sky).

Our observations, which are still ongoing, use the new ALFA (Arecibo L-Band Feed Array) receiver, and consisted of a series of 600 second scans, followed by a one second calibration. This introduces noise into the system, so we could understand how the telescope, electronics, etc. are responding.

As observers, the most labor-intensive part was the set up. We simply pointed the telescope in the right direction and configured the hardware to process the data the way we wanted. Throughout each night we kept a log of scan numbers and dealt with any random problems as they came up. The first night we fried a chip,

WAPP 2 (Wide-band Arecibo Pulsar Processor), and were forced to end our observations early. Other than that though, things were pretty uneventful during observations. To summarize each day: observe till the wee hours of the morning, go to bed, wake up sometime in the early afternoon, eat lunch, explore, eat dinner, and repeat. I figure our crazy sleep schedule at Arecibo was not far off from a typical undergraduate weekend.

One afternoon, I decided to go for a run. Naturally, being the crazy person I am, I found the steepest hill, and booked up it. In all honesty, the hills around Arecibo make Ithaca feel flat. At the top I found the *Contact* house: picture a wooden bungalow with a porch and faded, peeling green paint. Heading back down the hill I had nowhere else to go, but to The Dish. I nearly tripped over my mouth, which fell open as I ran down the road and got my first full view of this wonder of radio astronomy.

“No words to describe...” — you really need to be in its presence to appreciate the magnitude of the single largest radio telescope on the Earth. Any attempt to capture it on film is futile. The primary reflector spans 305 meters across, and the platform is suspended 500 feet above it, all surrounded by lush Puerto Rican vegetation and the beautiful shot imprinted in your mind’s eye does not come remotely close to fitting inside the 35 mm field of view. Still in awe, I took a couple of laps around the one-kilometer trail that runs around the circumference of the dish, constantly looking over my shoulder, reminding myself of just where I was. And then I began to plot how to avoid going back to Ithaca at the end of the week...

**A WRITING SEMINAR OF  
EP(ILEPT)IC PROPORTIONS**  
*Chelsea Finn & Michael Van Wert*

This is what happened the day our graduate student had a seizure:

He had invited his entire freshman writing seminar class to a poetry reading he was giving at the Big Red Barn. A number of us decided to go and support his artistic endeavor, so we made our way up to the event on a chilly evening. He got up behind a podium to read. He seemed particularly fidgety — though he normally *was* jittery due to his diet of cigarettes, insomnia and caffeine (he made it a habit of telling this to us on a regular basis). He was reading his first poem (something about his father and a difficult childhood), occasionally giving a dramatic pause and looking to the side. A few lines into the poem, he stopped to give what we thought was another one of his theatrical pauses, when suddenly he started shaking. One arm was outstretched, tremors starting in his fingers and traveling inward until his entire body was convulsing. The audience just stared, awestruck — many of us assumed this was part of his act.

But the next thing we knew he collapsed onto the podium and proceeded to slam his head upon the grand piano directly to his right. Oddly enough, it made a rather melodious chord. Then he fell to the floor and began to shake harder. About ten seconds passed before anyone did anything or even realized what was going on. Eventually, a few other graduate students jumped in, removing the podium and all other obstructions. At that point someone called the paramedics. After they arrived, our grad student regained consciousness. While another graduate student held his hand, he asked what had happened. The ambulance took him away and we walked home uneasily in the dark.

Setting aside the fact that it's a bit disquieting to see anyone (let alone an authority figure) have a seizure, the event proved to be rather appropriate considering the context of the class. The writing seminar was entitled "Reading the Body" and focused on how the human body is portrayed in literature. We read a number of works (including *Lolita*) about the relationship between the body and sickness, sexuality, and nature — how the human body can be transformed into a literary work. Hence, when our teacher had a seizure *during* his reading, he became a physical manifestation of the subject matter of the class. Not to mention it was just plain bizarre.

Following the incident, there were a few more classes left in the semester, all of which were a bit more awkward than before the seizure. Since the final class, he has become somewhat of a specter. We don't know what happened to him after our Freshman Writing Seminar ended that fall. The following year there was a possible sighting in New York City, but even now we don't know if it was actually him walking the windy metropolitan streets that day. There was also some suspicion that he had returned to the Cornell campus — perhaps to finish his Ph.D.? Beyond these mirages there have only been rumors.

In conclusion, we do not, nor have we ever known the whereabouts of our exceedingly quirky teacher from freshman year. However, we would like to think he is well and has received his degree. We will end with a Walt Whitman quotation that we read in class and that we believe he would appreciate:

*I depart as air, I bequeath myself to  
the dirt to grow the grass I love.  
If you want me again,  
look for me under your bootsoles.*

## HILLY TERRAIN

*Sheena Alexis Lee*

Upon reflecting back on my four years here at Cornell, there is one thing that seems to stand out as a significant part of my undergraduate career: the hills (a.k.a. slopes, mountainous bulges, pristine peaks, etc.). Let's just say that the amount of mountain climbing Cornellians have to do in a day far surpasses that of students on flat college campuses. Walking up hills in the winter when you're already fifteen minutes late to class is very aggravating and quite burdensome — but at least opportunities to engage in physical exercise here on campus are never lacking. And furthermore, the scenery is quite beautiful. Cayuga's waters are truly "gorges."

Because the hills do have their obvious benefits and drawbacks, to me they represent the ups and downs of life at Cornell, from the new friend you just made in class to the test you just bombed. As naïve little freshmen we embarked on a four-year journey from the bottom of the hill to the top. We are now experienced, mature seniors (or at least that's what we like people to believe). The view from up top is great.

The hills that we have to climb include living on our own, managing a budget, choosing classes, prioritizing our lives, and ultimately deciding which direction we're headed in. There have been struggles along the way (I have definitely fallen down more than once in an attempt to scale the icy slopes), but that is all part of the learning process. Believe it or not, there's more to this learning thing than just reading a textbook. We make mistakes, learn from them, and move on. College is a time to explore options and find new ways to navigate through challenges — for instance, maybe it's best to take the bus when the ever-popular "wintry mix" graces Ithaca. Each step up the hill represents a

stage that we have to pass through: taking a prelim, attending a sporting event, meeting diverse people, trying new things.

Sometimes we experiment and attempt to walk up a different path, but in the end we always wind up at the top. At the apex, we achieve success, which is something that a die-hard Cornellian is always striving for. We can stand at the top and reflect on our efforts throughout the past four years, sharing some laughs and shedding some tears.

Now that I've finally reached the top of the hill, all of those torturous treks don't seem so awful after all. Some days have been more difficult to get through than others, but in the end I have been able to persevere and grow as an individual. I can embark on the world with not only a sense of accomplishment but with some decent-looking calf muscles as well.

## SOMETHING ABOUT FOSSILS

*Daniel Robert McAlvin*

By no means do I consider myself a wilderness man, so it is generally humorous that in the summer of 2003 I would resort to satisfying the fraternal elements of my soul hundreds of feet below the surface of our campus in bi-weekly activities loosely defined as “polar bear swimming.”

Now, it is granted that the Polar Bear Swimming Society, of which I was proudly an inaugural member, did not meet all the criteria of typical societies bearing the same name. Firstly, our ranks did not hold one gray-haired Finnish man in a red Speedo. Also, as is already obvious, ours was not a winter’s penetration into glassy fjords, but in actual fact, a ritual 7:30 a.m. descent below 400 million years’ accumulation of Appalachian sediment, ending with a hesitant cannon ball into the muddish depths of Fall Creek.

A squirrely fella I had befriended during my freshman year had fallen into the unknown reaches of my social network before emerging in the prelude to that summer. He tore me from a semi-rigorous calendar I had arranged in preparation for the August MCAT, arranging for me, instead, a Tuesday and Thursday early-morn appointment with other like-minded pioneers beneath our dear suspension on the chilled shelves of Devonian rock.

Cast into this crew as well was a champion of gumption who spearheaded our ardent group of creek-blazers. He and I did not formally discuss the society’s philosophy of tooth-clenched naturalism until all were assembled shoulder-deep in the frigid birthing of an upstream pool. The males present spoke a full octave higher. Our prefect repeated the verses of Whitman and Genesis through his unbroken smile as we all challenged each

other to jumps, swims, and climbs of impeccable vigor. Sublime is a word used on these occasions.

This continued in clockwork fashion for weeks we refused to count. If it were to shower the night before, our congregation knew to expect a challenging velocity and temperature at the pool. We found a battle within our ranks, within ourselves, to demonstrate our very human existence in the sport of being the one first to submerge; and there, along the creek's edge, the geological formations structured the contest most perfectly, allowing pale-bodied masses only enough shelf to wade knee-deep before the reluctant soul should have to commit his entire being to the liquid rush.

Each dip redeveloped our tastes. Shock and panic were eventually subdued and our countenances gave way to some silly mix of baptism and Buddha-works. We shouted platitudes in Latin, drank the abandoned beers chilled by the night, and confronted the wild hawks and snakes sharing our retreat, their lives begun and ended within the waters.

In September we returned to the surface.

## EAST HILL REGRETS

*Is there anything you would do differently if you could do it over again?*

Should have taken wines.

I wish I had joined the Cornell Outing Club or a similarly outdoor-oriented group since it would have gotten me out of my room more. It would have been a good thing to leave my computer and explore the areas of great natural beauty that surround our school.

Once, just once, sung in front of a crowd... Slope Day here I come?

I would have been a part of the Pep Band. It looks so much fun, they can go to the hockey games for free, and they get to wear t-shirts to make them look like Waldo from *Where's Waldo?*

I would have joined the Bhangra dance team.

I wish I took a class on Babylonian cuneiform so that I could come closer to achieving the ideal of being a Modern Major General. After all, I already understand equations, both the simple and quadratical, and I can tell a Mauser rifle from a javelin.

I have always wanted to take Animal Science 290 (Meat Science) because I always wanted to learn to recognize different cuts of meat.

I wish that I would have auditioned for Bhangra, because I love how beautiful, energetic, and sensual the women in Bhangra are.

Been an English major.

I wish I had played more intramural sports!

I would have joined The Society for Creative Anachronism because it has a posh sounding title... plus I remember seeing their jousting practices outside of Risley.

I cringe at the mention of the Women's Ice Hockey Team, because I have always regretted not trying out for the team.

Studied Architecture.

I always wanted to work the land at Dilmun Hill, the cooperative student farm, the sweat on my brow mixing with the dirty, brilliant glow of the late afternoon.

I wish I had taken more Phys Ed classes so that I wouldn't lose my breath walking up a hill.

I am on the women's varsity soccer team. That's enough for me.

I wish I had taken advantage of the climbing wall on campus. Then I could use my mad climbing skills to scale buildings around campus. Though illegal, it's very cool.

I did it all.

## A KINGDOM

*Tyler Bru Peck*

that paper that you made me on  
i am not so thin and flimsy,  
my arms extend outside the boundaries of the page  
and my ink bleeds into large rivers that course to the sea

where the sun is more evident to me  
and its light fills me with confidence,  
this water constitutes the vastness of opportunity  
that i have been shown and gifted in hope and encouragement

from this kingdom upon the hill  
made of stone, open spaces, and streams that remind us of  
something greater,  
my friends are jesters, wizards, noblemen, and kings  
i am the apprentice to a great man

who wishes to give me his kingdom  
and all the lands that i desire,  
in his court the land is an infinite, grassed field  
and a cool sea breeze directs my nose forward

towards a mountain with a golden sphere at its peak  
where all my dreams and the dreams of this kingdom focus,  
i am dark and beautiful and symbolic  
far different from some flagrant markings on a page

## THE ISLAND OF LOST CHILDREN

*Jonathan Shadmon*

I spent the spring semester of my junior year studying abroad in Italy as part of the Cornell-in-Rome Program. As anyone who has been there can attest, Italy is a grand and sensuous country, one full of history and passion, with bustling cities and an achingly beautiful countryside. Spending an entire semester there, despite a nominal course load, was really less of an academic semester than an extended Cornell-sponsored vacation. It was a wonderful time: living in an apartment in the center of historic Rome, attending classes in a grand 17<sup>th</sup>-century palazzo, conducting fieldwork in the neighborhoods of Rome and traveling to all corners of the country — both as part of Cornell fieldtrips and on my own with friends. Evenings and nights were spent together either cooking an Italian meal or eating out at a restaurant, then taking a walk through the charming old streets and lively piazzas, stopping by a gurgling fountain, licking gelato or just stopping to stare, once again, at the ever-inspiring Pantheon.

Four months spent in an exciting and beautiful country such as Italy produced many memories, faithfully cataloged in both my mind and the digital pictures now residing on my computer. But there is one experience in particular that still lingers with me, which I recall vividly and whose memories inspire mixed emotions. A highlight of every semester of the Cornell-in-Rome Program is the weeklong trip to Sicily, undertaken by the entire faculty and all the students as a group. The overnight train ride from Rome was romantic and fun, and we were to spend the next eight days touring the most famous cities and sights in Sicily. Stuck like an almond in the throat of the Mediterranean, Sicily, like the rest of Italy, is a land of fierce and rugged beauty, centuries-old traditions and historic cities and monuments. We began our tour of the island with two days in the capital, Palermo.

Palermo is a fascinating city, where decaying buildings and a struggling economy cannot eliminate the echoes of past glories; the varied architecture reflects the different empires and civilizations that once ruled this kingdom. The poverty of one of Italy's most stagnant regions cannot hide the warmth and hospitality of its people. In our trip, we desired to understand the social and economic aspects of Sicily in addition to its physical and natural ones. As a result, our first day comprised touring different districts and neighborhoods in Palermo.

One stop on our trip involved visiting a orphanage and social-welfare center for children, many of whom descended from the minority and immigrant populations whose ranks in Sicily and southern Italy have swelled as they have left northern Africa and southeastern Europe to search for economic opportunity in Italy. The center was attached to a church, located in the middle of a decaying, lower-class neighborhood I could never find again on my own, yet it was still surrounded by intricate and intriguing buildings that would have been beautiful given extensive restoration.

We were first brought to an immaculately and profusely decorated chapel where we were given a speech in Italian about the organization's operations, which, I have to admit, I didn't catch the half of. But then we were ushered up to a second floor to visit with the children. I can call it nothing less than a spectacular reception. The kids, ranging from infants to ten or twelve years old, were ecstatic with delight at what must have seemed to them a most regal delegation — people of importance who had come here just to see them. Despite their poverty (I would have to assume most of them owned almost nothing except a few sets of clothes and whatever else was provided them by the shelter), they were filled with nothing but the innocent and wildly infectious joy of youth. We all quickly had smiles on our faces and were soon

mingling with the rather raucous crowd of children, who yelled and screamed and laughed in our presence while trying to grab anything they could get their hands on. One child quickly made off with my digital camera, learned how to use it after a few words of encouragement in my broken Italian, and then shot a picture of one of his female friends. With olive-toned skin and large, dark hazel eyes, she stared with calm at the camera and could have been a model a few years from now if fate had dealt her a more promising place of birth. One boy of about seven or eight, his black hair in a wild mess, gleefully climbed aboard the shoulders of my friend Chris and rode him about the room, no doubt feeling like a conquering king, laughing and laughing until it was time to leave. The room resembled a carnival: One toddler girl climbed into my friend Kristen's arms and settled there quietly while another student had his sketchpad and charcoals out in a flash. Soon, an enraptured circle of children watched him fashion quick portraits of their compatriots, tearing off a finished page and beginning another one.

Before long, it was time to go. I can say that neither the children nor we wanted us to leave, but our full schedule meant we had to move on to the next item on our itinerary. A performance at the Opera House in Palermo, the third largest in Europe, later that night showed us a very different side of the island, the remnants of the old wealth and privileged aristocracy that once ruled this land. Over the next week we traveled counterclockwise around the island, visiting some of its most famous sites: the imposing ancient Greek temples of Segeste and Selinunte, the picturesque hamlet of Erice, the temples of Agrigento, the old towns of Siracusa and Catania, and the dramatic mountaintop theater of Taormina.

Spring break a week later afforded me the opportunity to further satisfy my wanderlust, as I visited Florence, Siena, Milan, Turin and Lake Como. I had many wonderful experiences in, and

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memories of, all these places as well. Yet that visit to the orphanage always stayed with me — those kids so full of joy and laughter yet with ultimately so little promise to lead a better or fulfilling life outside of their poverty. They could not stay at the center forever, but where would they go after? Sometimes the thoughts were too depressing, and knowing that there are hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of children in similar situations around the world definitely did not make me feel any better.

But back at Cornell, whenever I found myself indulging in self-pity over having to walk across the Arts Quad in a snowy, bitter cold or despairing to myself over a looming prelim, I thought back to those kids in the orphanage, how they had managed to laugh and fill themselves with joy despite their meager circumstances. I scroll through my pictures from Italy and find myself lingering over the photos I took there: that happy boy aloft on my friend's shoulders, the beautiful young girl captured on my camera by her friend. What ever happened to all these kids? What will happen to them? What are their dreams, and what will be their realities, on this island of lost children?

## ON LEAVING CORNELL

*Brooke Kaye*

We'll fill some little post office  
town of America with  
good gossip  
and love letters,  
rejoice in the complacency  
we've aspired to  
and laugh at the pedagogical liars.

## CORNELL IS GORGES

*Jessica Furst*

As a 16-year-old touring college campuses with my parents, I fell in love with Cornell's campus. It was July and the sun was out (a sometimes-rare sight at Cornell), and we had finished the formalities of the College of Human Ecology orientation, the official campus tour, and were off exploring the dorms on our own. I did not know exactly where we were at the time, but as we rounded the bottom of a large hill, I looked up at the 19<sup>th</sup>-century architecture and I knew I had found my alma mater. I remember excitedly remarking to my parents how beautiful the campus was and how I knew I wanted to apply to Cornell early decision.

When I was a freshman at Cornell, I could never quite figure out where on campus that beautiful view was, the view that made me want Cornell more than the dozen other schools my parents took me to visit just two summers before. As the weather suddenly transformed from sunny days to rainy days with worms scattered across Cornell's many paths, to snowy days with muddy footprints everywhere I stepped, I reminisced about that view. My daily trips from North Campus to the Ag Quad did not elucidate the mystery of the landscape that won me over and made me want to be a Cornellian.

Freshman year dragged on endlessly. It seemed like I had been in college forever, and as April and May came, the winter weather relentlessly fought to stay alive — I do remember many of us in winter coats and hats on Slope Day that May. That first Slope Day marked an exciting transformation for me. I relaxed for what seemed like the first time that year and celebrated the end of spring classes with my friends. We ran up and down the slope stealing beer from the six-packs students were allowed to bring that year. I quickly realized my expertise at stealing beer from my

inebriated classmates and was an instant celebrated success among my friends. As the day wore on we eventually lost count of how many beers we had stolen.

At one point, I remember looking up at the slope; it was a human collective of happy students, toasting the end of classes, genuinely having a good time — I realized that there it was, my view, the view that made me want to attend Cornell more than anything else. I saw Willard Straight, Uris, Morrill, McGraw and White from behind, from the bottom of the slope where I had stood nearly two years ago with my parents. The sun was setting and the buildings had an orange glow. At that instant, I knew I had made it; I was a true Cornellian and I loved my school more than I ever had before.

## OF AESTHETICS AND UTILITY

*Sunni Yuen*

The diligence, creativity, talent and vivacious school spirit displayed by students of all groups and colleges on the day we call “Dragon Day” will always impress me. The multi-colored plastic balls the architects tossed to the crowd during freshman year... The engineers’ phoenix hanging in all its red and orange streamer glory from the Duffield Hall construction crane... the little hairy shopping cart creature that bumped noses with the mammoth green reptile... wild pranks and costumes ranging from midnight water balloon ambushes to the resurrection of screaming teenage mutant ninja turtles and *Sailor Moon*.

Still, what amazes me more than the giant serpent’s grand procession and fiery demise is the resourcefulness of Cornellians. Last year, after a particularly vicious snowball fight, I remember watching one guy rip off a stretch of toilet paper gracing a tree and blow his nose. It was the ultimate demonstration of the harmonious pairing of aesthetics and utility. I like to believe that it’s what four years on the Hill has groomed us to aspire for in life.

## THE GARBAGE TRUCK

*Timothy Lau*

There are many times here at Cornell as a Materials Science and Engineering student — especially during that year when I had to endure the infamous second-semester junior core diffusion class used as occasion to defend the reputation of the department as well as the pressure cooker called thermodynamics and taught by a graduate of the renowned Monastery of Pasadena who got straight A's except for, what else, thermodynamics — I find myself having to pull an all-nighter. Rage, rage, must I, and my fellow pledges, whenever we undergo this hazing ritual for our fraternity, the engineering school, against the coming of the light; for Phoebus — if his divine self deems it appropriate to peep his timorous head out of the cloud cover — brings along with the yellow glow of his rays the dreaded deadline of a lab report or a prelim.

Some of these nights seem never to end, as though the flow of time has stopped, and the hands of the clock stand transfixed in their position, immobile as an ancient Egyptian temple carving. It is during those nights that the searing agony never ends. One might be suffused with the caffeine of Stella's till the toxin brims out of his mouth, and there is nothing left in him save his Will which says, "Hold On," yet will he be tempted to forget all dignity and blurt out, "Hold, enough, MacDuff! I am damned already! O, Mr. Kipling, 'if' this makes a man, then a man I'm not! Just give me sweet repose, all two hours of it; the dying stars counsels sleep." But with the persistence of the Furies pursuing Orestes or Nately's Whore hunting Yossarian, his conscience hounds him till he completes his finite elements project, runs to ACCEL Lab to convert it into .pdf (Heaven forbid he shall keep an illegal copy of Adobe Acrobat on his computer!), and submits it. Only then can he visit his bed — the sanctuary — and collapse into a death-like

stupor, only to perform this infernal choreography again, perhaps as soon as the next night. Some of the nights are exactly the reverse, and time has breached its dyke, sweeping its victims away. Strike up that famous overture of Rossini, insert what imagery of a race you like, the inexorable whirl of time gallops on, leaving the poor and weary student to breathe its trail of thick dust. Problem set to the left of him, project to the right of him, midterm in the front of him, volleyed and thundered, and yet time would give him no reprieve, squeezing his body till he chokes out the necessary results. But could the engineering student ever be dismayed? Nay, to do and die is his lot, not to question why.

However, despite the buffets by the whim of my professors and of the Engineering Deities, ever fickle in rewarding labor, I can always look forward to one comfort. For between 3 a.m. and 6 a.m., without fail would the garbage truck come to take out the trash, as though a stubborn function like  $e^x$ , indestructible to the blows of integration or of differentiation. And the “beep beep beep” sound it gave as it went about its task seemed only to affirm its cheerful diligence; even those most weary, most tired, most desperate, most defeated cannot but take inspiration at its existential exuberance and redouble their efforts at this friendly wake-up call. The garbage truck, herald of the coming day, serves too as a beacon of optimism that, just as Odysseus (or, if the classical reference pleases you not, your luggage put on your US Airways flight) eventually got to Ithaca though the path was torturous and the arrival long delayed, the adjournment that will liberate us from our terrible midnight conference with our work will inevitably come, whether we have gone through the agenda or not. It is a reminder of the transience of our days and lives that tells us to treasure the remaining hours of the night or the remainder of our stay here at Cornell as undergraduates while the dripping sand accrues at the lower bulb of the hourglass. Indeed our encounter of the garbage truck is a form of congratulations, for success requires us to hazard all we have, that we have the self

respect to forgo one night's rest for a morsel's gain of precious knowledge and in so doing take a small step to a better future. It is a form of commendation that while the fashion of the world is to avoid cost, we have the fortitude to encounter it by our initiative, greeting our enemies, adversity and our physical desires, with determination and subjugating them to their proper master, our intellectual will.

I would try your patience, dear reader, if I do not quickly conclude within four sentences this essay already riddled with excessively tangent thoughts, inordinate subordinate clauses, clumsy participial phrases, and sub-par, obscure references. So while the ubiquitous garbage truck might seem mundane and unappealing to most people, it has, with its tenacity and dutiful punctuality braving the winter chill, as well as the summer's scorching heat, forever branded itself as that enduring symbol of Ithaca and the one comforting constant in the vicissitudes of my life at Cornell. Soldier on, my garbage truck! May you forever provide the same gentle and loving reassurance to the desperate and the tired!

**THE BRONZE SEATED MAN**  
*Emily Renee Adelman*

The bronze seated man  
looks out over his tradition,  
laid out on towels on a grass patch dotted with oaks.

Tours are coming through on the paths,  
clumps of young bovids grazing on his legacy, witnessing:

An honors candidate, having climbed  
onto the lap of the patina great,  
bent over  
screaming, "Give it to me!"  
slapping his big red rump,  
wearing a Cornell t-shirt.

They'll commence out here  
on this lawn,  
folding chairs melting to the bottoms of parents,  
and then they'll become the world's

Amen.



## CONTRIBUTORS

**EMILY RENEE ADELMAN** from Delray Beach, Florida, is pursuing her degree in Spanish and Latin American Studies in the College of Arts and Sciences. She lived in Argentina for two months doing research for her senior thesis.

A History of Art major in the College of Arts and Sciences, **CHELSEA HOLDEN BAKER** calls North Yarmouth, Maine home. She possesses a cockamamie scheme to become a pro kite-surfer within the next five years.

**WALTER CHEN** loves Cornell without words. A Computer Science major in the College of Engineering, Walter is from College Station, Texas. He would like to thank Glenwood Pines for conceiving the delicious Pinesburger; Cornell Cinema for showing *The Saddest Music in the World*; and the new Engineering Quad for giving pretty girls a shortcut on the way to the Statler.

**CHELSEA FINN** is a psychology major in the College of Arts and Sciences. She is from Washington, DC and hopes to go to graduate school... eventually.

From Great Neck, New York, **JESSICA FURST** is a Biology and Society major in the College of Human Ecology. Although she is premed, her true goal in life is to become a professional dog walker in Manhattan.

Born and raised in Poughkeepsie, New York, **ALYSON GREENLEE** is graduating from Cornell with a degree in Industrial and Labor Relations. She took a leave of absence during her junior year to work in Oakland, California, and she hopes to one day permanently return to the west coast.

**KELLEY M. HESS** is a native of Thousand Oaks, California. She is a Physics major concentrating in Astronomy. When she is not staring up at the stars, Kelley is playing in the midfield for the Cornell women's varsity soccer team, or competing on the piste for the women's varsity fencing team. She also answers questions from curious people as an "Ask An Astronomer" Participating Scientist.

**ANN HUBERT** is double majoring in English and Classics in the College of Arts and Sciences. She makes her way to Ithaca from the wilds of New Jersey. She often forgets how to spell her middle name; that's why it is not in this blurb.

**BROOKE KAYE** is a Natural Resources Major in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. She grew up in rural North Dakota. While at Cornell she was active member of Meinig Family Cornell National Scholars and Kyoto Now! After graduating she plans on being a Peace Corps volunteer before attending graduate school in plant physiology.

**PHIL LANE**, a South Carolinian, studies Atmospheric Science in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. Next year, he is going to graduate school to study prehistoric hurricanes.

*Contributors*

**TIMOTHY LAU**, who hails from Los Angeles, is a Materials Science and Engineering major in the College of Engineering. The reader should note that his essay, although not written during an all-nighter, was started at about three a.m. And yes, the author did have an encounter with the garbage truck while penning the piece.

A student of Policy Analysis and Management and Human Development in the College of Human Ecology, **SHEENA ALEXIS LEE** was a short-lived child actor, best known for making a sad “boo-boo” face in a Pampers commercial when she was two years old. From Ballston Spa, New York, she is half-Dutch and half-Chinese with an Irish first name.

The President of The Order of The Mallet: The Croquet Club at Cornell, **DANIEL ROBERT MCALVIN** is a Neurobiology and Behavior Major in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. He is from Suffolk County, Long Island.

**TYLER BRU PECK** states: “I am an Architecture major, I am from New Paltz, New York, and I am undecided as to how I feel about the oh-so-stylish Italian male mullet.”

An Urban and Regional Studies major, **CHRISTIAN POLMAN** has also pursued a concentration in International Relations. Having grown up throughout Europe and the United States, Christian considers himself to be a resident of the Western world.

**CHRISTINE RHEE** is an economics and history double major in Arts and Sciences. Hailing from Hillsborough, New Jersey, she has been a tap dancer for more than ten years and would like to settle in either New York or London.

**SHIRI SANDLER** studies history in the College of Arts and Sciences. She is from Connecticut and twirled fire for the CTA production of *The Miser* during her sophomore year.

Boston is home for **JONATHON SHADMON**, an Urban and Regional Studies major in AAP. He may be one of the few people of which it can be said that there is nothing truly interesting about them.

Philosophy and Psychology have been the academic pursuits of College of Arts and Sciences student **MICHAEL VAN WERT**, who calls Silver Spring, Maryland his home. Hint of lime chips are his heroin.

Hailing from Calgary, Alberta, **SUNNI YUEN** is a student of Economics and Innovation Theory in the College of Arts and Sciences. Upon leaving Cornell she will dearly miss Cornell hockey, the Dairy Bar, frozen waterfalls, Olin Hall B-46, and avian ballet performances on Beebe Lake.

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*The Muse* is published by the Der Hexenkreis Chapter of the Mortar Board National Senior Honor Society.

*The Muse* is but one activity the chapter pursues, which aims to enrich the Cornell campus and the surrounding Ithaca community through thoughtful leadership, service, and academic pursuits. The chapter and its activities are funded in part by the Cornell Student Activity Fee.



*“So I said I am Ezra  
and the wind whipped my throat  
gaming for the sounds of my voice...”*

*A.R. Ammons*