In the Creation Series II I have deliberately juxtaposed disparate text and photography-based images. Familiar text from the first several chapters of Genesis is combined in each piece with a separate—yet suggestively related—photograph. The photograph in each piece is of pre-20th Century New England vernacular architecture that reveals the Golden Section ratio.

—Donna Stanton, Assistant Professor of Art
darkness covered the abyss and the spirit of God was stirring

this house stood on Route 100 in southern Vermont

it was abandoned when I took the photograph in 1996

I had passed the house many times prior to taking the photograph

shortly after I took the photograph the house burned to the ground

about 20 years ago I read in a magazine that Route 100 in Vermont was beautiful

Route 100 is becoming a commercial enclave of ski resorts and shopping plazas

darkness covered the abyss and the spirit of God was stirring
## ON THE COVER

Rock Teapot, Pedestal
Series #1. Handbuilt, High-fired Ceramic. 8” x 7” x 12”, from Preston Saunders’ contemplative Metaphoric Vessels (pages 15–18).

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Bridgewater Review
Editor’s Notebook
The Higher Ed Roller Coaster
by Michael Kryzanek

One of the benefits of being an “old-timer” here at Bridgewater State College is that I possess what is commonly called an institutional memory. Even though I have an occasional senior moment, I still have the capability to remember what the college looked like and how it operated over the last thirty years. As I reflect on my career as a faculty member, I have an unending supply of memories of students who were the first in their family to go to college and saw in this college the opportunity they needed to reach their dreams. Public colleges like Bridgewater are America’s great equalizers; they are the avenues of professional careers, personal fulfillment and social mobility for those of modest means. I am most proud to have been part of an educational experience that gave students the chance to follow that dream.

Also in my memory bank are the academic colleagues I have been associated with. As I look back I am simply amazed at how faculty at Bridgewater State have balanced teaching with research. Despite classroom demands that were double that of private college faculty, Bridgewater instructors have maintained their scholarly integrity writing books and professional papers, presenting artworks, theater productions and scientific studies and engaging in the widest range of community service, consulting and educational activities. From a standpoint of productivity, the Commonwealth has gotten more than its money’s worth from this faculty.

Finally, I remember how the administrative leaders of this college have taken this small teacher education normal school and transformed it into the largest, the most comprehensive and the most attractive state college in Massachusetts. Bridgewater today offers its students all they need to succeed in terms of programs, facilities, technology and of course a tradition of excellence. This has been no easy task for those entrusted with leading this college, but they have succeeded in building a real educational gem.

I must admit, however, that too much of my institutional memory is laced with a recurring vision of a higher education roller coaster. Bridgewater State is much like the lead car on a roller coaster chugging slowly up to the pinnacle of state support and then quickly descending into fiscal uncertainty. I remember always wondering why a state where public education was born would take its colleges and universities on such a wild and potentially destructive ride. Coming from the Midwest I never cease to be surprised at how the government officials in all those “less sophisticated” states are the biggest boosters of public higher education. They take personal ownership in building a strong college and university system because they know that the graduates of their institutions will contribute to making the state wealthier and more competitive. Here in Massachusetts, however, governors and key government officials spend too much of their energy passing budgets that seek to educate the youth of this state on the cheap and then criticize faculty and administrators for doing a substandard job with far less than they deserve. And when they aren’t trying to save money, they are working feverishly to reorganize higher education, most of the time with schemes that have a shelf life of a month or two.

Today in public higher education we are again at the top of the roller coaster and headed downward at a dizzying speed. After a few good years when the state was flush with money and in a generous mood, public colleges like Bridgewater State are facing another round of slash and burn with a reorganization thrown in for good measure. No matter that Massachusetts public higher education sits at the bottom of the ladder among the states in governmental appropriations. All that does matter is targeting higher education because someone new in the corner office has bought into the stereotype that private must be better than public.

After this latest blow to state colleges like Bridgewater it will be a slow and difficult climb up the roller coaster tracks, a journey that may take years. Too bad that a large chunk of my institutional memory has to be wasted on the constant push to remake the heart and soul of public higher education instead of concentrating on the thousands of student success stories, the contributions to scholarship of a productive faculty and the dedication of administrators to bring efficiency and vision to these great halls of learning. I never did like roller coasters.

—Michael Kryzanek is Editor of the Bridgewater Review
In 1916 John Dewey wrote that the formal education of his day encouraged students to be passive, focused on cognitive skills to the exclusion of other abilities, and discouraged students from reflecting on or making judgments about ideas. Dewey thought that genuine learning could take place only when people focused their attention and energies on solving genuine dilemmas. He argued that before students could think, they had to experience something. Only when they saw that their actions had consequences could they reflect on the relationship between those actions and abstract ideas.

Dewey’s critique sounds all too familiar to some contemporary students and professors who feel frustrated by focusing on dry facts and theories disconnected from real life. A number of faculty members, including some at Bridgewater, have devised ways of using real-world experiences to enhance student learning. Such “experiential learning” encompasses a variety of activities including internships, service learning, foreign study tours, and field research.

In experiential education, the activities in which students engage are not simply enhancements to their education but are an integral part of their education. When students perform unpaid work as interns, conduct research for clients, or volunteer on service projects, they have an opportunity to participate in the genuine learning that Dewey advocated. What they are studying and learning really matters to them because they are analyzing real problems and trying to solve them. Involvement in issues outside of the classroom helps students create coherence in their education. It encourages them to make connections between the knowledge they gain in different places and different times and to apply it in tangible ways to real events. Unlike cramming facts for an exam and quickly forgetting them, these learning experiences engage students on multiple levels and help them incorporate the knowledge in deeper, longer-lasting ways.

The fact that students can learn in different (and some would argue superior) ways based on real world experiences is not the only factor sparking an increased interest in experiential education. Most colleges and universities include in their mission statements their commitment to community service. State-related institutions such as Bridgewater base that commitment on two factors: we are supported by public funds and we exist to serve the citizens of the state. Many forms of experiential education are directly tied to such a service mission.

Take, for example, the current debate about civil society. According to some observers, contemporary life in our culture is plagued by an unraveling of civil society, the absence of social bonds among groups, and a sense of atomism. In venues from political science journals to the nightly news, observers discuss the social ills of a lack of community. The popular press reports incidents of highway rage and children left home alone while academic studies report on increases in one-person households and people bowling alone. In fact, the title of the well-known book Bowling Alone by Robert Putnam has become a kind of shorthand for the unraveling of civil society.

At the same time, there is a growing body of work on factors that can strengthen civil society, especially focusing on what is usually called “social capital.” Social capital consists of social ties, social norms, bonds of trust, and other organizational features that help groups create and maintain cohesion. Putnam himself as well as other researchers have pointed out that communities with strong social ties among residents tend to have strong political and economic institutions as well. One important component of social capital is agency, or the ability to make a difference in the world. Some recent research points out that simply being a member of an organization does not necessarily give people a sense of efficacy. If people identify with a group and work collectively to solve problems, however, they can replace feelings of powerlessness with effectiveness and learn the habit of participating in public life.

Colleges and universities that encourage experiential learning can contribute to and support social capital in their surrounding communities. In a growing number of college communities, including Bridgewater, teams of faculty, students, and residents work together on research devoted to solving problems and improving the quality of life. This teamwork provides valuable learn-
Students engaged in such real-world experiences, too, benefit from their engagement with the community. Engaging in experiential education can be a powerfully transformative moment for students, assisting their intellectual development by giving meaning to their education. As a faculty member, I regularly heard from students such statements as, “I learned more in that one [internship/research project/service learning project] than in all my coursework put together.” Initially dismayed by that statement, I learned to recognize that allowing students to apply their knowledge off campus helps them mature as learners and encourages them to take responsibility for their own development as scholars. The students also gain a sense of pride as they move from being recipients of knowledge to contributors.

Public institutions of higher education should have a special interest in real-world learning. In addition to fostering the intellectual development of young people and perhaps some sense that we should help them learn practical skills, public institutions also have an obligation to educate future citizens. Although the term may sound old-fashioned, there is currently a renewed interest in and commitment to education for civic virtue. Widely read publications such as The Chronicle of Higher Education have published articles arguing that institutions of higher education are responsible for educating citizens to be thoughtful, active participants in the nation’s political and civic life.

Higher education can influence students’ civic identities because developmental psychologists suggest that adolescence is a critical period for developing a sense of citizenship. Opportunities to participate in off-campus organizations and projects during high school and college can, they hold, help young people develop lifelong values and character traits such as honesty, justice, social responsibility, and tolerance. These traits encourage students to value citizenship and to make positive contributions to civic life as adults.

Service learning programs are a particularly good way of making connections between students and community groups. Service learning consists of participation in organized projects that meet identified community needs while permitting the students to reflect on their activities in a way that furthers their understanding of course material. In service learning programs, students may provide direct services to populations in need or they may perform research, education, advocacy, or outreach for such groups.

Service learning is different from both volunteer work and internships. It differs from volunteer activity because it is structured so the service is part of the curriculum, not an extra- or co-curricular experience. In service learning courses, community service is integrated into credit-bearing coursework so the service activity is a learning opportunity related to other assignments. Students are encouraged to reflect on how the learning they gain in the classroom affects and is affected by their community experience. Service learning differs from internships because internships are pre-professional experiences in which students prepare for future careers. Although it is possible that students might subsequently enter a profession related to their volunteer

BSC students participated in a Spring Break Habitat for Humanity project in Florida in 2001.
experience, their status in a service-learning project is that of an educated amateur rather than a junior professional. Many service-learning projects are conducted in teams of students, often from different majors with different skills and interests, so the students have the opportunity to learn from each other and to develop as a team, fostering a sense of social responsibility.

As an example, participation in a Habitat for Humanity project could be done as volunteer work, as an internship, or as service learning. As volunteer work, the type of participation probably most familiar to us, students would donate time as laborers to help build a Habitat house in the spirit of community service. As an internship, a student in marketing could develop a marketing campaign for Habitat to apply his or her classroom knowledge and gain practical professional experience. As a service-learning project, students could work in teams to assist families about to move into Habitat houses, to help develop ways of making the houses more environmentally efficient, to develop an outreach program for Habitat to recruit volunteers, or any other set of activities that would be useful for Habitat and provide a learning experience for the students.

Carefully constructed service learning projects can open students to many civic issues of which they would otherwise be unaware. When I lived in upstate New York, I was asked by a relief agency to recruit a team of students to conduct focus group research on refugees' experiences being resettled in Rochester. My team of three students had to learn not only how to conduct focus groups but also something about the cultures of Bosnia, Haiti, and Viet Nam, (the three countries from which large numbers of refugees were going to Rochester) how to deal with resettlement bureaucracies, and probably most significantly, how to adopt a division of labor and ensure that all the work was accomplished. Because they were accountable to an outside agency, they knew that their deadlines were real and that their product would have an immediate impact on people's lives. In their reflections on the project, the students stressed how much they matured as people and how much they learned about refugees, a population previously invisible to them as middle-class, suburban students.

One other aspect of experiential education appeals to me greatly: it can make faculty work more collaborative and integrated. Traditional research, especially in the humanities and social sciences, tends to encourage a faculty member to carve out a niche shared with a few other colleagues around the nation or the world rather than to engage with others on the same campus or in the community. Even when a faculty member is a good teacher and a productive scholar, it is easy to become isolated in one's own classroom, lab, or library.

Experiential education, on the contrary, encourages faculty to work in teams, to collaborate with colleagues in different disciplines, and to extend their expertise to the surrounding community. It encourages and demands that faculty learn from students about how to integrate action components into coursework. It helps faculty stretch the boundaries of their own intellectual inquiries and broaden out rather than narrow in on their areas of interest.

Experiential education can also contribute to faculty satisfaction by helping faculty members integrate the disparate demands of teaching, scholarship, and service that are expected in the profession. Rather than feeling frustrated and pulled in three ways, faculty members can build on their scholarly interests by incorporating them into their classes in a way that provides active learning for their students and a valuable service for an off-campus constituency.

Since joining the Bridgewater community last summer, I have learned that many BSC faculty members incorporate experiential education into their courses. Space will not permit me to list here all of the individual faculty members who are contributing to experiential education, but I am in the process of collecting the information and would welcome any contributions. I hope we can publicize the extent of Bridgewater’s community engagements, including service learning, applied and interdisciplinary research, internships, collaborations with K-12 schools, professional development for off-campus clients, performances, exhibits, study tours, economic development projects, and other experiences. I extend my congratulations to those who already use this powerful learning tool and encourage others to “experiment with experience.”

—Nancy Kleniewski is Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs. This contribution is adapted from her article, “Changing Communities and Changing Universities: Why Should We Care? What Can We Do?” In Community Politics and Policy, edited by Nancy Kleniewski and Gordana Rabrenovic, JAI Press, 1999.
When James walked into the kitchen, his mother looked up from her newspaper and said, “Boy, you’re going to freeze before you get anywhere near school.” He was wearing his new imitation leather jacket that didn’t have a lining. The temperature was in the low forties, she told him, and it was supposed to rain. James took a biscuit from the table and bit off a small piece. “I’ll be warm enough,” he said, but a short while later, after walking only half a block, he was shivering and his school was a mile away. Luckily, he wasn’t going that far.

At the intersection he crossed the street and entered a three-flat with most of its windows boarded. He went to the third floor, stepping on cigarette butts and mouse droppings along the way. He knocked on apartment six. After a brief pause the door opened to a frail, middle-aged man everyone knew as “Uncle Joe.” James followed him into the living room and sat on a couch that smelled like sour milk. The walls were covered from floor to ceiling with glossy pictures, torn from the stacks of *Hustler* and *Playboy* that lined the room like sandbags against a rising tide. There was an actual tide a block away, which James could see through the window, a fairly scenic stretch of Lake Michigan known as Rainbow Beach. Only two years ago, when he was fourteen, he still swam in its blueish-green water, untroubled by its smell of raw sewage, or the shocked-looking trout whose dead bodies bobbed against the shore.

“So, how many you need?” Uncle Joe asked.

“Just one,” James said. He took a dollar from his jacket pocket and handed it to Uncle Joe. Uncle Joe disappeared into a back room and returned with a plastic sandwich bag full of thin, crumpled joints. He sat across from James on a wicker chair. There was a coffee table between them holding several crushed beer cans. A roach darted out of one of them, waving its antennae. “This shit’s strong,” Uncle Joe said. He’d fished out a joint and now tossed it to James. “It’ll warm you up a bit,” he added, “you look kind of cold.”

I’m all right,” James responded. He had his lighter out and was about to light the joint, then changed his mind and put both in his pocket. Maybe he’d just go home and smoke it in his room. His mother should be gone by now. His father always left by six.

“That ain’t real leather, is it?” Uncle Joe asked.

“What?”

“Your jacket. That real leather?”

James shook his head.

“Didn’t think so. Had one like it once. Actually, had ’bout forty of them. Ripped off a clothing store.” Uncle Joe grinned. A smile spread on James’s face. Uncle Joe left the room and returned with a half pint of Wild Irish Rose. For the next hour he shared his wine and stories until James, longing for a little adventure of his own, decided to leave, only there was nowhere to go, except to school, which he was just drunk enough to do. His drafting class was mildly interesting and started in thirty minutes; if he hurried he could get there before the second bell. He thought about going into the bathroom to splash cold water on his face, but from prior experience he knew that there were things in there he didn’t want to see or touch, so he settled for slapping his cheeks and, once outside, inhaling mouthfuls of brisk March air.

He missed the second bell. The halls were deserted except for a group of boys standing near the stairs, twenty feet away. One of the boys flashed him a gang sign as he approached—the middle and index finger curved toward the thumb—though James had already identified them as Disciples by some of their pierced right ears. James wasn’t a Disciple. He wasn’t anything.

“Who you represent?” asked the boy who’d given the sign. He and others were moving forward now. James lowered his gaze. He resisted the urge to run. Let them do it right here, he thought. He braced himself as someone shoved him.

“Represent!” he was told. “I’m neutral,” James stammered. “I’m neutral.” An open palm slapped his face. But that was all. They let him pass after that. He headed for the stairs. He didn’t run.

When James opened his classroom door, Mr. Meredith cleared his throat loudly. He was seated at his desk. He had been grading papers but now watched James move
across the room. “Well, well, well,” he said, “look who’s here.” Some of the twenty students did look but most remained huddled over their drafting tables. James glanced at a couple of their drawings as he passed, but he couldn’t figure out what the assignment was; everyone seemed to be doing their own thing.

He went to an empty table and decided to sketch a house. He had made good progress by the time Mr. Meredith appeared at his side. “Glad you could join us today,” he said. James squinted at his roof line, pretending not to hear. “Any particular reason you’re late?” This time James tapped his tongue twice with the point of his pencil. And then he belched, startling them both. “Come with me,” Mr. Meredith said.

They went to the storage room, set off in the corner. Mr. Meredith’s hands were on his hips. “You smell like liquor.”

“That’s not liquor.”

“What is it then?”

“Cough medicine,” James said, and coughed.

Mr. Meredith started to speak as there was a knock on the half-closed door. He and James turned to see a girl in a white blouse and a blue-jean skirt, bobby socks neatly folded on her greasy-looking shins. She held out two ragged dollar bills. “Can I get some M&Ms?” she asked. “With nuts?”

The storage room was full of them, crates upon crates. Somehow James hadn’t noticed. But he wasn’t surprised. Mr. Meredith coached the basketball team and was always trying to raise funds. He opened one of the crates and removed a box of candy, exchanging it for the girl’s money. After the girl had gone, he looked at James and said with great pity, “You’re a fool.” He took James by the arm and led him from the room. Neither of them spoke during the long walk to the administrative offices. When they arrived, the secretary waved them into a back room where the principal sat at a square oak desk that was covered with stacks of paper and three-ring
James hunched his shoulders.

“Don’t you want to go to college?”

It was a question James had never been asked. His parents hadn’t gone to college and, judging from their silence on the subject, they didn’t expect him to either. But maybe he should go. As he considered the possibility, an assortment of kids strolling past gothic buildings flashed in his mind. This was pretty much his only notion of college, courtesy of the faded brochure that was taped on the cafeteria’s bulletin board near where they posted the daily menu. He had never given the brochure any real consideration, and now doing so made him nervous. All those kids made him nervous, the thought of being among them in basically foreign land. He did not want to go to college.

“Of course I want to go to college,” he said.

“Good, but first we have to address your drinking problem.”

“I don’t have a drinking problem.”

“Then why are you drunk?”

“I don’t have a drinking problem.”

“Because drinking makes me that way.”

The principal smiled and calmly said, “Surely college material can come up with a better response than that.”

James took a moment to gather his thoughts. “The thing is, my mother recently died. I guess I’m having a hard time dealing with it. It’s not easy, I mean...sometimes... well...okay... all the time, it hurts.”

Both of the principal’s eyes located James for an instant, then went their separate ways. His shoulders slackened. He leaned back in his chair and spoke, for a very long time, about his parents, both of whom were deceased, and then about dead black people in general and James’s responsibility to them. He arranged for James to see a counselor, recited a touching verse from Psalms, and...
then sent him away with a three day “personal leave” slip and a stick of chewing gum.

James heard music and cheering coming from outside the building as he approached one of the exits. He opened the door and saw a large gathering of students watching cheerleaders and pompon girls dance. A stupid pep rally, he thought. He headed in the opposite direction, pausing to unzip his jacket. It was much warmer outside now, maybe somewhere in the fifties; the sun had emerged and felt good on his skin. He slipped his hand into his front pocket and fingered the ring of keys, wondering what they opened.

The clock on the stove read 11:32. James’s mother wouldn’t be home from work for another six hours, his father not for another nine. He made a turkey and spicy mustard sandwich before going to his room. For the rest of the day he did what he did pretty much everyday, lie on his bed reading his favorite writers, lately Hemingway and Cheever, now and then closing his eyes to imagine himself in a scene.

It wasn’t until almost midnight that he remembered the keys. He had an instant impulse to ignore them. He continued reading for several more minutes before he snapped his book closed and called Uncle Joe. Fifteen minutes later James snuck out of the house and waited around the corner. Uncle Joe picked him up there in a rusty station wagon with a missing headlight. Motown played softly on the radio. James’s heart raced as they headed toward school.

They parked in back of the main building near a dumpster overflowing with garbage bags. Across the street, an army of bungalows squatted silently in the darkness. James opened his door. Uncle Joe didn’t open his. He lit a cigarette, exhaling in James’s direction as he talked about his parole, sore left knee and suspicions of car thieves in the area.

“Maybe you should wait here,” James suggested. “That’s what I’m thinking.”

“Got a flashlight?”

“It just so happens.”

There were four keys. The third one James tried unlocked a service entrance not far from where the car was parked. He went straight to the home economics room on the second floor. The same key fit. There were maybe forty typewriters, Smith Coronas with long black electrical cords nearly as thick as sailors’ rope. James spent the next half-hour carrying ten of them to the car. When he brought out the last one, his arms were rubber. Sweat ran down his face and neck. By the yellow glow of a street light, he could see that his shirt was streaked with dirt and oil and spicy mustard. Uncle Joe started the engine and put the car in drive. As they pulled away from the building, James told him to stop.

“What for?”

“M&Ms.”

“M&Ms?”

“M&Ms,” James repeated. “With nuts.”

There were a few dozen crates. James figured there must be a safe. He didn’t mention the safe to Uncle Joe, only the candy, for which Uncle Joe said he had no use. They agreed to meet in the morning.

As soon as James reentered the building he realized that the flashlight was still in the car. He had his lighter, though, and used it to guide himself to the drafting room on the third floor. The door was locked but the master key worked. He stepped inside and maneuvered past the tables and stools, a streetlight near one of the windows illuminating the room just enough for him to see.

The storage room door was locked. This time the master key didn’t work. None of the other keys worked either. But there was a transom and James reached it easily after mounting a table. The transom squeaked open without resistance. James stuck his head through. He couldn’t see a thing. He extended his lighter into the darkness and swore as it slipped from his hand, making a faint thump on something below. He leaned back and examined the opening. It was small. He would have to enter head first.

A moment later, lying on his backside, surrounded by a half dozen toppled crates, James remained perfectly still, as if waiting for someone to tell him he was okay. He was okay, though his left shoulder hurt a little when he finally moved. He struggled to his feet and rubbed his hands along the wall until he found and turned on the light switch. There were about fifty crates of M&Ms. There wasn’t a safe, but there was a shoe box resting on a file cabinet, stuffed with money. His hands trembled as he scooped up the bills.

The first thing he did when he returned to his bedroom was to count the money. It was three hundred and fifty-three dollars, all singles and five’s. Tomorrow he would buy a couple of books, and maybe some Reeboks, though he didn’t need any new shoes. He put the money under his mattress. He shook his head as he undressed, marveling at what he had done. He wished he had someone to tell.

—Jerald Walker is Assistant Professor of English and a graduate of the Iowa Writers’ Workshop. “James” is from a short story collection in progress.
The images on the movie screen are terrifying, especially because they are real. The security camera footage from Michael Moore’s Oscar-winning documentary film, ‘Bowling for Columbine,’ shows students and teachers at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado scrambling to escape from Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris. On April 20, 1999, the two young men used four firearms to shoot 35 people, killing 13 of them, before taking their own lives. For Moore, the Columbine tragedy raises questions about violence in the United States and the role of guns in that violence. By generating controversy and debate over the issues, the film may revitalize the debate over guns in American society, the ‘Great American Gun Battle.’

The debate over guns actually encompasses several specific controversies, all of them fiercely contested and all with important social, political, and policy ramifications. Opposing sides in the debate disagree vociferously over the Second Amendment to the Constitution, the United States as a gun culture, the costs of gun violence, and—centrally—whether the availability of guns causes high levels of violence.

Gun rights advocates argue that the Second Amendment protects an individual right to own and bear arms. They maintain that the availability and use of guns saves lives and money; deters criminal attacks; and does not, in itself, contribute to higher levels of violence in the United States. They correctly point out that, in spite of tragedies like Columbine, schools have become safer in recent years and crime rates have declined during the 1990s. Since 1993, the violent crimes and homicides in the U.S. have dropped significantly, as Figure 1 indicates. They argue that, ‘guns don’t kill people, people do.’

Gun control advocates argue that the Second Amendment protects a collective right to bear arms in a governmentally organized militia, not an individual right to personal ownership. They stress that the Second Amendment—however interpreted—does not preclude gun regulation. They suggest that the availability of guns—especially handguns—contributes to...
high levels of lethal violence in the United States. Arguing that gun violence is an epidemic, many view handgun control as a public health issue aimed at reducing risk, rather than a political issue. While acknowledging the declining crime rates of the 1990s, they point out that rates of lethal violence, especially homicide, in the U.S. are still much higher than in other industrialized societies, as Figure 2 makes clear. They argue that ‘guns don’t kill people, but they make it a lot easier.’

Both sides in the ‘Great American Gun Battle’ draw on social science research. Gun rights advocates draw heavily on research by Gary Kleck, Professor in the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice at Florida State University, and John Lott, an economist and Resident Scholar at the American Enterprise Institute. Gun control advocates rely more on research by Philip Cook, the ITT/Sanford Professor of Public Policy at Duke University and Franklin Zimring, the William F. Simon Professor of Law at the University of California at Berkeley. These scholars, their collaborators, and many others have produced important and solid research on guns and gun violence. As a sociologist, I hope that empirical research can resolve or clarify the debate over guns as a tangle of research and advocacy, suggesting that research and debate on gun control is a ‘morass’ or ‘quagmire,’ waiting to snare the unwary. In addition to difficulties arising from the shortcomings of data sources and the complexities that bedevil any research, the controversies in the gun debate involve strong emotional beliefs and basic values. The cultural gap between the sides in the debate often seems unbridgeable. Political scientist Robert Spitzer suggests that social regulation policies that aim to regulate individual behavior often generate outrage and controversy. Gun control is one such policy. Advocates of different approaches often seize on research that supports their prejudices and explain away or ignore findings with which they disagree.

Last year, I stepped into the morass of the Great American Gun Battle. Carter invited me to work on Guns in American Society: An Encyclopedia of History, Politics, Culture, and the Law, which provides information on all facets of guns to ‘researchers, teachers, students, public officials, law-enforcement personnel, journalists, and members of the general public.’ Publishers put out numerous such encyclopedias to provide basic information and resources on important topics. I joined the Editorial Board of the encyclopedia and, in the process of writing numerous entries, immersed myself in the research on guns, gun control, and gun violence.
This project strengthened my understanding of the gun debate. It also convinced me that, despite the snares awaiting those who would navigate the quagmire, the debate is too important to avoid. Debate over guns and gun policy should rest on an understanding of the issues informed by the best research available. That is especially true of the core question in the debate: whether the availability or prevalence of guns in American society contributes to our high levels of lethal violence. I think the balance of empirical evidence supports such a link, but the question is not simple, and other social scientists disagree. Certainly, no one would suggest that gun availability alone causes higher rates of lethal violence, but it does seem to be one important contributing factor, among others.

Unfortunately, advocates on both sides of the gun debate, as well as some scholars, often provide misleading sound bites, rather than balanced summaries of the relevant research. They often oversimplify complex research and treat tentative findings as if they were conclusive. Such oversimplification and politicization often characterizes debate on the causal links between guns and violence, especially in discussions of recent research on laws allowing people to carry concealed weapons and on the uses of firearms for self-defense.

In their book, Crime Is Not the Problem: Lethal Violence in America, Franklin Zimring and Norval Hawkins (1997), argue that focusing on ‘crime and violence’ as a single problem muddies the debate. They suggest that lethal violence is our real problem, not violence in general or crime in general. Crime rates in the United States are similar to those in other industrialized societies, except for our much higher rates of lethal violence. (Again, see Figure 2). Zimring and Hawkins argue that gun availability contributes greatly to our rates of lethal violence.

In addition to higher rates of lethal violence, the United States differs from other industrialized societies in two other gun-related areas. First, we have many more guns than most such societies. Americans own over 250 million guns, of which at least 90 million are handguns, and the stock of firearms increases by over 3 million a year. Although handguns account for only about a third of guns in the U.S., criminals use them in about 75 percent of gun-related violence. Second, we have weaker gun control laws than most similar societies. You may have heard that the U.S. has 20,000 gun control laws. Gun rights advocates use this figure to suggest that further regulation is unnecessary and that we need only enforce the laws we have. That figure is probably a myth. The actual number of gun laws in the United States differs from other such societies, except for our much higher rates of lethal violence. (Again, see Figure 2). Zimring and Hawkins argue that gun availability contributes greatly to our rates of lethal violence.

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The debate over DGUs is especially acrimonious. It focuses on the incidence of DGUs. Estimates range from 100,000 to 2.5 million a year. The National Crime Victimization Survey, a standard source of crime data, yields the lower estimate. At the high end, Gary Kleck’s research with his colleague Marc Gertz yielded the 2.5 million estimate, generally considered the highest credible one. The polemical nature of the DGU debate rests in part on its usefulness for advocates, such as Charlton Heston, actor and past-president of the National Rifle Association (NRA). In speeches and interviews, Heston regularly refers to 2.5 million DGUs a year in an attempt to weaken arguments for gun control.

Most scholars point out the need for caution in estimating DGUs from large surveys. Harvard University public health researcher David Hemenway notes that large sample surveys may generate inaccurate estimates of DGUs. In a sample of 5,000 adults, about 25 will have used a gun in self-defense while 4,975 will not. The 25 may answer truthfully that they used a gun, or they may say that they did not, yielding at most 25 lies, or false negatives. The 4,975 may acknowledge that they did not use a gun for self-defense or they may lie, leading to the possibility of 4,975 lies, or false positives. The possibility of false positives heavily outweighing the false negatives may generate overestimates of DGUs.

Beyond the question of how many DGUs occur, there are other important issues. Philip Cook points out that, whatever the number of DGUs, it is not clear that they add to public safety. What goes on in DGU situations? Could the use of guns for self-defense lead to shootings of innocent bystanders? Is it conceivable that a person carrying a concealed gun might misread a situation and shoot someone who intends them no harm? These questions bring up another controversy involving John Lott.

In More Guns, Less Crime, Lott states that in 98 percent of successful DGUs the armed citizen has only to ‘brandish’ his or her weapon, rather than fire it. If true, this would assuage some concerns about concealed carry laws and DGUs leading to indiscriminate gunplay. However, various scholars asked for the source of this—very high—percentage. Lott has given varying and unsatisfactory answers. At this point in the concealed weapons and DGU debates, healthy skepticism seems prudent. Research so fraught with controversy and uncertainty provides a poor basis for social policy. Better data and more carefully designed research will enhance our understanding of gun violence and provide a more solid foundation for gun policy.

One source of better data on lethal gun violence will be the National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS), under development by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in collaboration with Harvard School of Public Health researchers. The NVDRS is a comprehensive system to collect data about violent deaths. It will collect data on various aspects of each violent death, including the type of weapon used, the source of the weapon, the relationship between attacker and victim, and where the incident occurred. Perhaps surprisingly, we currently lack such a system. This data should contribute to both gun violence research and policy.

Recent research by William Wells, of Southern Illinois University-Carbondale, demonstrates how using innovative data can lead to better designed research. Most DGU researchers rely on sample surveys, with their problem of false positives. Wells was studying a group of convicted offenders being processed in a diagnostic facility, when he realized that the data would allow him to study DGUs, which were not his primary topic, in a more nuanced way than survey research allowed. Letting the offenders tell their own stories, Wells used those stories to construct a detailed picture of the situations in which they used guns for self-defense. His findings suggest that in designing better research on DGUs, scholars should consider the sequencing of events in self-defense situations, the possibility that some self-defense situations may be unnecessary, and that there may be an overlap between attackers and victims in these situations.

More data and better research can help resolve the debate over guns, the ‘Great American Gun Battle.’ However, the Great American Gun Battle can refer not only to the debate, but also to the actual gun battles in our society, the lethal violence guns can produce. The American Gun Battle as debate has momentous consequences for public policy and for the actual gun battles. It also leads to questions about the type of society in which we wish to live. Do we want a society in which gun ownership and use remain widespread or do we rethink our attitudes and values in relation to firearms? Do guns contribute to higher levels of lethal violence, or do concealed weapons and the use of guns for self-defense create a safer society? Is an armed society a polite society, as some gun rights advocate suggest?

I hope that better data and research will enrich the gun debate and help scholars, advocates, politicians, and the public to think through and answer the key questions about guns, gun violence, and gun control. Such research may help us to make progress toward resolving the Great American Gun Battle in both of its senses.

—Walter F. Carroll is Professor of Sociology and Chair of the Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Criminal Justice. Parts of this article have been adapted from his entries in Guns in American Society: An Encyclopedia of History, Politics, Culture, and the Law, edited by Gregg Lee Carter (ABC/Clio, 2002).
With the enormous challenges and opportunities in the field of education in Massachusetts, faculty members in the School of Education and Allied are making significant contributions to the quality of instruction, the formation of curriculum and the preparation of administrators. Dr. Joanne Newcombe, the Acting Chair of the Secondary Education and Professional Programs Department, is one faculty member who has taken up the challenges and embraced the opportunities as she works tirelessly to improve education both here in Massachusetts and in the international community.

Dr. Newcombe’s primary interest involves working in the area of international education. She has spent considerable time abroad helping to build educational and cultural ties with educators in countries such as Mexico, Italy, Turkey and Brazil. Dr. Newcombe is convinced of the importance of developing relationships with educators, students and the general population in other countries and breaking down the walls that often separate people. In the coming months and years she will continue her globetrotting as she assists school systems in less developed countries.

When she is not traveling the world Dr. Newcombe has developed a number of key initiatives to enhance education in southeastern Massachusetts. Recently she formed a “support group” for regional superintendents as they grapple with their complex and demanding jobs. She meets with a group of twelve superintendents twice a month and provides both a comforting sounding board and the source of problem-solving expertise. During these difficult times for education in Massachusetts, Dr. Newcombe’s “support group” has become critical for local administrators.

Added to these responsibilities Dr. Newcombe has a busy schedule at the college as she serves as a thesis mentor for those involved in the Educational Leadership program. Many of her students have gone on to attain their doctorate through the University of Massachusetts at Lowell program, an accomplishment that she is quite proud of. Dr. Newcombe is also involved in broadening the Certificate of Advanced Graduate Studies (CAGS) program to communities such as New Bedford, Barnstable, and Plymouth.

At the core of Dr. Newcombe’s professional expertise is her involvement in educational leadership. She is the co-chair of the Center for Public School Leadership at the college and coordinator of the Curriculum Leadership Center. Both of these centers serve as valuable resources to educators and administrators as they seek to strengthen the quality of education in Massachusetts. Dr. Newcombe is certainly one of the key players in bringing about education reform and enhancing educational leadership in this region.

In talking to Dr. Newcombe it becomes obvious very quickly that she is passionate about her work and has no intention of cutting back on her involvement in an ever-growing range of duties. Her real passion, however, is international education and particularly the advancement of educational opportunities for women. She has formed a relationship with the University of Madras in India where she has read four dissertations written by female doctoral students. Dr. Newcombe's commitment in the future will likely be to use her experience and her expertise to provide new opportunities for women through higher education. It is a daunting task, but with her stellar record of achievement, there are no limits to success.
Metaphoric Vessels
by Preston Saunders

In the last few years, I have noticed more and more our society turning away from nature to rely on computers and technology. Living in the fast lane, we may take for granted where we are and what we are doing. We have begun to lose respect for nature and the precious moments it can give us. My work stems from these observations...

Tea with Rock (2000). Raku fired, 10” x 6” x 8”
The intention of this body of work is to construct metaphoric vessels that are concerned with ceremonial presentations and that are referential to nature and our busy society. By using the form of a teapot combined with influences from Chinese Scholar Rocks and the Japanese Tea Ceremony, I am making visual and historical connections to the Japanese Tea Ceremony and the philosophies associated with Scholar Rocks. The Japanese Tea Ceremony is not only a time of reflection and contemplation but it is a time of social interaction among family, friends or even colleagues. It is often viewed as “one moment in time never to be repeated.” Scholar Rocks have been collected and valued...
as representations of nature for thousands of years. By combining these traditions, ideas and forms I am illustrating the idea of slowing down not only to appreciate nature, family and friends, but also to become more aware of the simple pleasures of life and realize that they may never be repeated.

As I continue to work in clay I am reminded even more of why I was first attracted to it: it was the ability to produce objects which inherently were meant to be used; the idea of sharing a moment with something that is hand made. I enjoy learning from our history and integrating it with thoughts of the future. The forms I make suggest a mystic presence found in the past but produced in the present.

—Preston Saunders, Assistant Professor of Art
**Functional fixedness** is a handy psychological term that describes a mindset which locks us into viewing objects (including software applications) from the perspective of their usual function. This mindset interferes with finding unique and creative solutions to problems and robs us of exciting discoveries along the way. The increasing availability of instructional technology at BSC has presented multiple opportunities for faculty to explore innovative practical applications of this technology. An exciting application of *Blackboard*, a popular course management software system used at BSC, has recently allowed the college’s Counseling Programs to “go paperless.”

To understand how *Blackboard*, the BSC Counseling Programs, and overcoming ‘functional fixedness’ relate to each other, an overview of the Counseling Programs will be helpful. We offer five distinct programs: three at the Masters level (Mental Health Counseling, School Guidance Counseling, and Higher Education Counseling) as well as a Certificate in Advanced Graduate Studies (CAGS) program in Mental Health Counseling and a Post Masters program in School Guidance Counseling. The Counseling Programs prepare students to work with children, teens, and adults in a variety of settings, such as mental health centers, health care centers, hospitals, schools, and a range of higher education settings. The five Counseling Programs must follow multiple state and national licensing bodies and standards. Regulations can change quickly and information must be transmitted rapidly, accurately, and efficiently to students.

The majority of matriculated students in the Counseling programs are between the ages of 25 and 50, have families and/or full time jobs, and may travel as much as four hours round trip to attend classes. Some of our students are the first in their families to attend graduate school or even college; others are recent returns to higher education, having completed their undergraduate education ten to twenty years ago. For many, coming to campus during traditional office hours is not a simple or spontaneous act, but one which may require careful negotiation around job commitments and baby sitters’ availability.

Our students focus on their academics at times which are most compatible with their lifestyles and non-academic responsibilities and commitments—whether that be at 9 PM, midnight, 6 AM, and/or on weekends. They continue to want and need timely and easy access to program documents and accurate program-related information. Although students have always had their own impressive informal grapevine, too often the information transmission process resembled the game of “telephone,” where the final message bore only a slight resemblance to its original form. At times, the student rumor mill ran rampant, requiring periodic damage control. Although the Counseling Programs had attempted to address this issue by transmitting information through our course instructors and academic advisors as well as through the use of periodic mass mailings, we knew that more had to be done in this area.

Necessity became the mother of invention, which led us to decrease our own *functional fixedness*. A desire to enhance communication with students, increase student ownership of their own educational process and sense of “connection” with their academic program, and decrease common barriers that commuting, working and other “non-traditional” students often encounter, led us to consider *Blackboard* to help us achieve these goals.

**What is Blackboard?**

During the summer of 1999, a system-wide course management software system called *Blackboard* was introduced to campus. The college’s Information Technology staff provides excellent support for the system in the form of student and faculty training and technical assistance, as well as ongoing system maintenance and upgrading. We approached the BSC User Support and Academic Services staff in October 2001 with the idea of “going paperless.” It quickly became clear that *Blackboard* could handle the additional demands that would be placed on it to address the needs of the Counseling Programs and our students at no additional cost to the college.
WHY COURSE MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE?: WHY BLACKBOARD?

Although Blackboard’s primary use on campuses has been course management, several of its features make it attractive as a vehicle for communication and dissemination of other types of information and documents. First, it is cost effective. For campuses that are already using course management software systems, a training, technical assistance, and support infrastructure, which can be utilized at no additional cost to students or to the college, already exists. Second, the software can be accessed both on and off campus. Students can log onto the system from their homes, workplaces, or public libraries. Blackboard also offers multiple electronic communication options. E-mails can be sent to every “enrolled” student at the touch of a button. The system has additional communication options which support cohort building and increase the students’ sense of connection with other students as well as with faculty and staff.

Blackboard makes it possible for students to have “24–7” access to electronically available information and program documents. From this perspective, the Program/Department office is virtually always open. This is particularly compatible with the lifestyles and needs of nontraditional, working, and commuting students, and addresses many of the accessibility issues that such students often encounter.

CHALLENGES

We did run into some challenges in implementing this system. Our students and faculty range from technophobes to those who possess significant skill, familiarity, and confidence with technology. Getting all already matriculated Counseling students to buy into and participate in the system was an additional challenge. At the end of October 2001, a one time hard copy mailing was sent to all matriculated Counseling students informing them about the move to “go paperless.” The mailing also provided students with activation and enrollment instructions, informed them of the orientation training schedule, and gave them a 3-week “window” in which to complete the two-part activation process and to enroll onto their Counseling Program-specific Blackboard site. Although many students did comply with the request, several “Johnny (and Janey) come lately’s” did not, only to surface later. We also realized that it was critical for the Counseling Programs to provide hands-on training for students every time a new component of the Program was put on the virtual site.

We repeatedly were reminded that the greatest system will not be successful if students do not regularly access the site. While missed deadlines and lack of timely course or Program information became implicit “sticks” for students, our experience highlighted the greater importance of providing ongoing “carrots” for students to enroll in and access their program-specific sites and their BSC e-mail weekly. Information that served as incentives needed to be added to our virtual site on an ongoing basis, “rewarding” students who regularly checked their site and their e-mails. Examples of successful “carrots” were job postings, scholarship and grant opportunities, reminders of important upcoming deadlines, and new course offerings.

After the initial anxieties about “going paperless,” most Counseling students now rely on the system to provide them with up-to-the-minute information. The learning curve has been dramatic; students quickly catch on to the system. They often bring their discs containing graduate program planning or fieldwork information to advising meetings for review and updating. Faculty creativity has increased as our own functional fixedness has diminished. Faculty continue to come up with additional ways to more fully utilize our virtual system, such as linking students to important on and off-campus sites, and creating an internship site database for students to peruse from the comfort of their own homes. For a program that began half a century ago, we’ve come a long way!

—Maxine L. Rawlins is a Professor and Director of Fieldwork and Training in the Counseling Programs in the BSC School of Education and Allied Studies. She also serves as Coordinator of the Counseling Technology Center.
Bridgewater State College is home to a Human Performance Laboratory in which students receive training in a range of exercise physiology and related analytical skills. With these skills students have been successfully placed in a wide range of professional job settings including major hospitals, wellness centers, division one and professional strength coaching positions, cutting edge fitness facilities, entrepreneurial personal training and various cardiac rehabilitation centers.

The laboratory contains some of the most up to date equipment available in the country, including Physiodyne Metabolic Carts, hydrostatic weighing tanks and related electronics, a Jackson Strength Evaluation system, computerized Monark Wingate anaerobic testing equipment, spirometry and oxygen measurement devices, and 3 twelve-lead cardiac stress testing stations. In addition, the laboratory provides students an opportunity to study exercise responses using a wide variety of fitness devices including treadmills, leg and arm ergometers, and various weight lifting stations. Very few colleges or universities have such an extensive array of fitness related laboratory equipment.

This equipment is housed in a laboratory room in the new Adrian Tinsley Center on the East Campus. The lab is dedicated to the Exercise Science concentration within the department of Movement Arts, Health Promotion and Leisure Studies. Students work with professors in the department and with graduate assistants to master a wide range of technical skills in the measurement of human performance, and the equipment is also used in the collection of data for primary research.

Above are some images of faculty, staff and students demonstrating the use of these devices to measure human performance.
August 24, 2002

My son and I were people who didn’t entirely belong to any one place. We had attachments to various places we had lived, but we hadn’t lived in any place long enough to have become fixed and incorporated into it. My son is a person with autism, who understands life best through pictures and through direct experiences.

So it was for these reasons that on one recent Memorial Day, we went to see a local parade in a small town where we had never lived, and in which we knew no one. My son could see the way a lovely little New England town welcomes the coming of summer.

We walked through the sunny, breezy side streets, past the big town cemetery, a combination of early New England austerity and Victorian opulence like those found in so many cities and towns in this part of the country. Other walkers preceded and followed us, all going to the town center to see the parade. Some people smiled and spoke. Most just walked along in the sunshine, the elderly at a slow pace, the youngest at a skipping run.

Everyone collected around the central town green. We could hear bright brass and thumping percussion from the high-school band, approaching just out of sight down the main road. The police had set up barriers in front of the roads leading into the central part of town, so the clear day was pleasantly free of the sound and sight of cars, with one exception. An antique Ford touring car, gorgeous with polished wooden side panels and shiny brass fittings, sat on a far side of the town green. Three elderly gentlemen stood to one side of the car, surveying it and commenting. Any one of them probably remembered a car not unlike the one they were admiring, from a time when they had been the age of the pigtailed little girl who climbed on the running board to look inside.

The parade, approaching from around a far curve in the main road, suddenly burst into view, led by a State Police car with flashing headlights. Anyone who has ever seen a Memorial Day parade in a small American town could probably close their eyes and describe what we saw: the three Selectpersons, the centerpiece of whom was a strikingly pretty woman who completely eclipsed her two ordinary-looking, sober-suited colleagues; the firemen, nodding and smiling at friends and neighbors; the Boy Scouts, the Girl Scouts, the Brownie Scouts, all in imperfect formation; the high-school band in their long-sleeved white shirts and dark trousers, eyes fixed on their instruments and on the backs of the marchers just ahead of them.

The crowd was smiling, applauding, and being generally appreciative. Any experienced paradegoer would recognize them all. The little boy riding his father’s shoulders and waving two small American flags, one in each hand, followed by the anxious mother. The elegant matron in twill slacks and silk shirt, wearing a straw hat, its crown wrapped with a scarf. The scattering of young boys riding bikes and skateboards alongside the parade, partly to join in and partly (maybe mostly!) to tease their friends who were marching.

Two puppies, one black and one white, suddenly spotted each other and strained at their leashes, yapping excitedly. The inevitable Tom Sawyer energetically climbed up a tree at one side of the common, finding one of the best seats available.

At the far edge of the crowd, in the back seat of a parked car, sat a very old man. He was leaning part way out of the open back door, straining to see all that went on. He coughed deeply and seemed to be in some pain. When the marchers reached their positions on the common, a portly, behatted matron stepped forward to introduce the speakers. She first introduced a middle-aged Vietnam vet, perhaps chosen for his military service, but not for his speaking abilities. He was clearly uncomfortable, and began his speech with a joke or two. It just didn’t work! The assembled group was not there to be entertained, even by a military veteran, their response made clear. His jokes fell flat, and he stumbled through some other remarks and sat down. The tolerant audience clapped politely, but without any enthusiasm. The speaker’s self-consciousness had blunted the sense of ceremony that the little celebration demanded.
The mistress of ceremonies next introduced a junior high school student who would read Lincoln’s *Gettysburg Address*. As the young man began to read, with intensity, something extraordinary happened. The audience listened, and then side conversations stopped. Everyone became totally focused on the reader at the podium. The first speaker had not had the needed sense of seriousness and ceremony. By sharp contrast, Abraham Lincoln had an unparalleled sense of ceremony, and an unsurpassed ability to create thoughts and words with an eternal quality to them. The earnest young student was letting Lincoln speak again, and giving the event an aura of immortality.

The holiday itself began during Lincoln’s time, out of an intention to memorialize young lives sacrificed in a time of national torment. For a few minutes on that town green, I had a tangible feeling of having entered a time machine and of being shown the great meaning of recurring holidays like Memorial Day.

Lincoln spoke for his time and for all time, and the people on that town green recognized it. Their applause was loud and prolonged and that applause was for President Lincoln.

The high school band closed the program with the playing of “Taps.” I had dreaded this particular memorial music because it is tied in my mind with deeply painful personal loss. This band played the music arranged, not for solo trumpet, but for full band, emphasizing the woodwinds, of all choices! The effect was baffling in its stark difference from the expected sound. As they played, I began to hear in the back of my mind the sound of “Taps” played through a frozen winter cemetery where my cousin, an Air Force major, was being buried with full military honors. One trumpeter played the melody through, answered by a second trumpeter, unseen over a hill in the background. Every single note was played with true and beautiful accuracy.

But this little band, though young and inexpert, was playing with energy. Suddenly, as they played the music, something on the fringes of the crowd caught my attention. The old man who had been sitting in the parked car was painfully pulling himself out of the back seat to stand uncertainly at attention on the grass. It was a great effort for him to stand straight, without leaning against the car, but he succeeded. He stood upright, at military attention, until the music ended. He had heard the meaning of the music as only an old soldier could have.

That old veteran’s determined tribute and Abraham Lincoln’s timeless words had fused together the patchwork images of the little town’s Memorial Day celebration, giving it a dignity and value that I can never forget.

—Jane Carter is a Visiting Lecturer in the Department of English
On April 5, 2002, the Foreign Languages Department sponsored its first symposium, entitled “Hispanic Studies, Theory and Pedagogy, Fin de Millenium.” The event was co-sponsored by the English Department, the Women’s Studies Program, the Honors Program, the Philosophy Department, and the Club de Español, and made possible with the kind support of Dean Howard London, Acting Provost Laurence Richards, and Acting Chair of Foreign Languages Dr. Thomas Turner. Drs. Duilio Ayalamacedo and Leora Lev coordinated the Symposium with the help of Ms. Lisa Shaw. After opening remarks by Dean London, panelists from the University of Connecticut, Boston University, the University of Toronto, Fitchburg State College, and the Winsor School in Boston lectured on such topics as Latin American feminism and globalization, Chicano literature, medieval Iberian court and courtesan culture, and pedagogies of foreign culture and writing. Members of the BSC Foreign Languages Department responded to the panels. The audience of one hundred fifty attendees encompassed BSC faculty and students, area high school teachers, BSC alumni, and New England college instructors.

A highlight of the proceedings was the presentation of Dr. Tino Villanueva of Boston University. Dr. Villanueva is part of the Chicano Renaissance, an established Chicano poet working in both Spanish and English. His poetry, according to Rodolfo Anaya, “reclaims the identity of every Chicano who has ever sat in the back row.” His presentation was divided into two parts, the first being a brief summary of roots of contemporary Chicano (Mexican American) literature, beginning with the sixteenth-century Spanish chronicles, i.e., diaries, journals, travel reports, poems, and religious plays written by Spanish explorers and priests involved in the exploration and settlement, between 1598 and 1821, of what is today the region extending from Texas to California. Villanueva also touched on the literature written in Spanish during the so-called Mexican period during 1821 and 1848; the latter date marks the year that Mexico, after losing the U.S.-Mexican War, ceded the tract of land which today constitutes the Southwest. Villanueva’s discussion of Chicano literature encompassed the nineteenth- and twentieth-century popular form of the corrido, the Mexican ballad that is based on the Spanish romance. He then pointed to ways in which memory has been thematized in Chicano literature and discussed briefly Abelardo Delgado’s poem “From Albu to Tucson.”

The second part of Poet Villanueva’s presentation involved a reading of some of his poems concerning memory and writing. Everyone has memory, he explained, but the writer makes use of it as inspiration for works of literary art. As examples, he read two poems from his 1999 chapbook of poems, Primera causa / First Cause.

The Symposium culminated in two splendid keynote addresses. Dr. Josiah Blackmore, the first keynote speaker, came to us from the University of Toronto, where he is Associate Professor and a distinguished scholar of medieval and Renaissance Portuguese and Spanish literature and culture. He is the co-editor, with Gregory Hutcheson, of *Queer Iberia: Sexualities, Cultures, and Crossings from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance*; the translator and editor of *The Tragic History of the Sea*, which is a compilation of translations of Portuguese shipwreck narratives rendered by the British scholar C.R. Boxer; and the author of *Manifest Perdition: Shipwreck Narrative and the Disruption of Empire*. Dr. Blackmore’s work has received international acclaim.
from such notable figures as Juan Goytisolo, one of Spain’s premier contemporary novelists and cultural critics, Harvard and Yale University scholars, and the brilliant soprano diva and performance artist Diamanda Galas.

Dr. Blackmore’s lecture, “Moorings: Portugal and Cultural Identity in the Shadow of Africa,” was the product of his previous and continuing scholarship. In the volume Queer Iberia, Dr. Blackmore and co-editor Gregory Hutcheson considered the Iberian Peninsula of the Middle Ages and Renaissance as a space of cultural, linguistic, theological, geo-political, and gendered heterogeneity unique to the European continent. This book explores the richness and complexities of Iberia’s eight-century “convivencia,” or co-existence of Muslim, Jewish, and Catholic populations, which was enabled by the great Muslim empire that controlled Spain between 711 and 1492. The volume illuminates the byzantine resistances to harsh Inquisitional logic engaged in by Semitic and humanistic Christian individuals and communities after the Catholic Kings reconquered the Peninsula from the Muslims, and instituted their hegemonic regime in 1492. The book unveils Iberia’s secret histories of rebellion against the type of tyranny exemplified by the Spanish Inquisition, highlighting the brilliant cultural, artistic, and philosophical production that resulted from the heterogeneity of the multiracial, multicultural, and multiethnic legacy of the “convivencia.” Ways in which oppressed groups such as converted but still “impure” Jews and Muslims countered the Inquisitional forces of cultural homogenization and purification are freshly examined in the book.

Blackmore’s Manifest Perdition explores the shipwreck narratives of Portugal’s imperialist expansion in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. These narratives are related by survivors, and tell terrible tales of the hardships and disasters suffered by Portuguese explorers at sea or in the untamed “New World.” Blackmore’s innovation is to discern within these narratives “a type of counter-historiography that troubles the hegemonic vision of empire evident in the canonical accounts of colonialism.” These dramatic accounts thus question and disrupt the imperialistic hubris and nationalist affirmations articulated in the more official reports of explorers and conquistadors such as Hernán Cortés, Columbus, or Pero Vaz de Caminha.

Dr. Blackmore’s keynote address drew upon this research, as well his book in progress, Moorings: Camões and the Invention of Africa. He explored Portuguese writer Luís de Camões’s epic 1572 poem Os Lusíadas, which tells of the historic navigation of a new sea-route between Portugal and India. Dr. Blackmore examined the poem’s central figure, the monster and phantom Adamastor, who represents Africa to the Portuguese explorers braving this sea expedition. Dr. Blackmore interpreted the poetic, geographical, political, and psycchocultural resonances of Adamastor within this epic poem as a means of exploring the complexities of Portugal’s geo-cultural relation to Africa. He pointed to the paradoxes of a Portuguese expansionist national self-image that both embraced its European origins, and also identified with and internalized the “otherness” of the African continent that it colonized. Dr. Blackmore’s presentation shed fascinating light on the complexities of Portuguese-African interrelations, Portuguese conceptions of national identity, and the cultural politics of colonization.

The second keynote address was given by Pedro Lasarte, Associate Professor of Spanish at Boston University. Dr. Lasarte’s teaching and research center on the Colonial period of Spanish-America, with special emphasis on textual criticism and cultural production of the Viceroyalty of Peru, although he has also been active in the field of Modern literature. He has lectured extensively in the United States as well as Europe and Latin America. Currently Professor Lasarte is a member of the Board of Directors of the Society for Renaissance and Baroque Hispanic Poetry and serves on the Editorial Boards of Revista Iberoamericana and Colonial Latin American Review.

Professor Lasarte’s presentation dealt with the elaboration of the colonial subject through satirical texts written in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in the Viceroyalty of Peru. Using various examples, he explained how the poets of that period criticized the political and social context in an elliptical way in order to avoid being persecuted by the powerful Inquisition.

The two keynote addresses complemented each other felicitously, resulting in a lively discussion session that concluded the stimulating events of the day.

—Leora Lev is Associate Professor and Duilio Ayalamacedo is Assistant Professor, both in the Department of Foreign Languages
Cultural Commentary

Exercise and Charity

by Barbara Apstein

Last fall, at a neighbor’s urging, I joined the Komen Boston Race for the Cure, an annual event designed to raise money for breast cancer research. On a pleasant September day, several thousand of us strolled (there had been an actual race earlier) along streets bordering the Charles River, for about 5 miles. The route ended in a large open field off Soldiers’ Field Road, where we listened to speeches and were awarded ‘goody bags’ of cosmetics, moisturizer and shampoo, as well as free samples of Yoplait and Ben and Jerry’s ice cream. While the Komen organizers were collecting money to cure breast cancer and generating publicity for their cause, the corporate sponsors of the event were wooing consumers.

Exercising for charity has become enormously popular during the past decade. Instead of being approached for a simple donation to a worthy cause, these days you’re more likely to be asked to ‘sponsor’ friends, the children of friends and co-workers who are walking, running or biking to combat diabetes, leukemia, cancer or heart disease. The events offer a range of difficulty, with the three-mile Komen event at the easy end of the spectrum. For those who are a bit more ambitious, there is the 5-day Avon Breast Cancer walk. Only the physically fit are encouraged to sign up for the two-day, 192-mile Pan-Mass Challenge bike ride or the week-long, 500-mile AIDS bike race. Exercising for a worthy cause, defined broadly enough to include anything from an afternoon walk to an arduous ascent of Mt. McKinley, is surely one of the most successful fund-raising strategies charities have come up with in recent years.

The view of a disease and its victim as antagonists locked in battle is embedded in our everyday language, even when the ailment is minor, as in a common expression like “I’ve been fighting this cold all week.” As Susan Sontag detailed in her book Illness as Metaphor, this implied comparison is particularly pervasive in discussions of cancer. Tumors are described as ‘invasive’ or ‘aggressive,’ the body mobilizes its ‘defenses,’ victims are said to ‘battle’ the disease, and if they die it is often ‘after a long struggle.’ Consistent with the logic of this fighting metaphor, the charity walkers, runners, bikers and climbers are seen as stand-ins for the victims; they are fighting the victims’ battle by proxy. The exerciser is not merely participating in a race; he or she is a protagonist in a battle against a deadly adversary. The more challenging and competitive the event, the more explicit the struggle metaphor becomes: the organizers of the Mt. McKinley climb explain on their website that ‘only about 47% of the climbers who attempt Alaska’s Mt. McKinley, the highest mountain in North America, reach the summit. These are tough odds, but beating cancer can be even more difficult.’ The climber represents the cancer victim; his climb is analogous to the victim’s ‘struggle.’

Implicit in the battle metaphor is the faith that every disease can be ‘conquered’ if enough money is raised for research and treatment, and the power of this belief is reflected in the large sums that are raised. Participants in the Pan-Mass Challenge, which claims to be the most successful event of this kind, must raise $2,500 each to qualify; last year, more than 3,600 cyclists did so. In its 24 years of operation, the Challenge has raised more than $86 million for the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute.

Exercise as penance is less deeply embedded in our everyday language. You don’t hear people saying “I’m going jogging because I feel guilty and exercise will expiate my sins of sloth and gluttony.” Yet Americans’ fear that we have become a nation of couch potatoes, that we are growing inexorably fatter each year, is reflected in our vast diet and exercise industries. Seen in this light, the charity exercise events provide an outlet for communal penance, in much the same way as medieval pilgrimages did. The essence of penance is, of course, self-sacrifice. Pilgrimages were (and still often are) difficult, even dangerous journeys; during the Middle Ages, many pilgrims traveled hundreds of miles on foot along bandit-infested roads, and they were
often required to beg and fast along the way. While in many modern charity events the self-sacrifice is more symbolic than real (the Komen stroll was in fact quite pleasant), other events (biking, sometimes in the rain, climbing Mt. McKinley) can involve discomfort, exhaustion and even danger.

Pilgrimages are generally undertaken in groups, which means that there’s a social element. If we can judge from the most famous literary account of a pilgrimage in English, the one described in Geoffrey Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*, the devout and pious pilgrims were easily outnumbered by those looking for fun, profit, and, in one case, possibly a husband. Although we imagine the more serious participants quietly meditating as they ride along, there is plenty of laughing, joking and telling of off-color stories. Charity events too are typically very social. The atmosphere at the end of the walk/run/ride is festive and celebratory, with food and entertainment usually provided.

Distinctive clothing provides another link between charity exercise events and pilgrimages. The medieval pilgrim’s outfit typically included a long, coarse tunic with large sleeves and a leather belt suspended from the shoulders, from which hung a soft pouch in which the pilgrim would keep his money. He would carry a wooden staff, useful for fending off wolves and wild dogs, and wear a large broad-brimmed hat, which might be decorated with scallop shells or images of saints.

At today’s charity events, brightly colored t-shirts display at a minimum the name of the event, the city and year in which it is taking place, and the sponsors’ logos. Groups of participants can be identified by their own distinctive shirts. My neighbor Barney Hass, who rides in the Pan-Mass Challenge, is a member of the Farini Team, sponsored by Dave Farini, whose young son died of cancer. Barney wears his Pan-Mass Challenge shirt on the first day of the ride and his Farini Team shirt on the second day. Other kinds of visual imagery make a powerful statement. Among the Komen walkers, cancer survivors were distinguished by bright pink hats, and many participants had attached to their t-shirts squares of cloth printed with the names and photographs of loved ones. In the Pan Mass Challenge, a single rider on a tandem bike created a particularly haunting image, the second, empty seat a vivid reminder of the missing person.

The pilgrimage analogy breaks down, of course, when it comes to the key issue of destination. The charity journey does not end in a sacred or holy place; in fact, the destination generally doesn’t matter. What does seem to matter is that, through physical exertion and the sense of physical accomplishment, participants come to feel that they have made some very small contribution to the relief of human suffering. Drawing on the symbolism of the journey, charity exercise events tap into ancient impulses that transform a physical experience into a spiritual one.

—Barbara Apstein is Professor of English and Associate Editor of the Bridgewater Review
Sometimes only the researcher loves the research. Some friends came to dinner recently, and they made the mistake of asking me about the research trip I took this March to Kalmar, Sweden. Some while later, (I’m unsure on just how long that was) my wife, Jeanne, got me to stop explaining in detail the knotty problems I faced in the data collection by changing the subject slightly. “How ‘bout them Red Sox?” she inquired.

It’s a shame, though, that we don’t often bother with research beyond our own areas of interest or expertise. Sometimes we just can’t get past the title of a professional article. For example, would you read my research report to be titled “Attitudes Towards the Elderly Expressed by Swedish Maritime, Management and Nursing Students: Are Norms in a Socialized Culture General or Specific to Career Choice?” No! Sometimes it’s just the name of the journal that stops us. Would you read anything in The Journal of Trauma?

Well, maybe you should. I suppose there are many cases to be made for the value of reading research from a wide range of disciplines. The most common is probably that it is good for you. It broadens your vocabulary and range of knowledge. But I wish to make a different sort of case here. I argue for the lunatic originality of the research enterprise. My guide to this lesser known aspect of the research enterprise is the local institution known as the “Ig Nobel Prize.” (The name of the award is, I believe, borrowed from the comic strip Pogo by the late Walt Kelly. Kelly invented the Ignatz Nobel awards for his strip and “awarded” it to his political targets such as Spiro Agnew.)

The “Igs” are awarded each year at Harvard’s Sanders Theater and published in the science humor magazine Annals of Improbable Research. When my own reading or conduct of research becomes humdrum or wearing, (and it often does), I turn to the Igs for a shot of inspiration. These are studies that have been done with such self-assured disregard for the opinions of others as to the likely worth of the work, that their authors cannot be regarded with anything other than admiration.

So, here are a few examples of Ig-winning work, in the hopes that they will make my case for the celebration of research drudges.

If you read the Journal of Trauma regularly, you might have noticed an article published there in 1984 by Peter Barss of McGill University in Montreal and entitled “Injuries Due to Falling Coconuts.” In this study Dr. Barss conducted a 4-year review of trauma admissions to a provincial hospital in New Guinea and reported that “2.5% of such admissions were due to being struck by falling coconuts. Since mature coconut palms may have a height of up 24 up to 35 meters and an un-husked coconut may weigh 1 to 4 kg, blows to the head of a force exceeding 1 metric tons are possible.” Lest you make light of the data, two fatalities were reported in the study. Perhaps a subscription to this journal would be a prudent addition to your collection.

Not worried about coconut-induced trauma? What about those used textbooks you depended upon? They were trouble, you know. Publishing in the journal Reading Research and Instruction in 1997, Vicki Silvers of the University of Nevada-Reno and David Kreiner of Central Missouri State University examined “The Effects of Pre-Existing Inappropriate Highlighting on Reading Comprehension.” I always wondered whether the student who was the first owner of my undergraduate biology text had mistakenly used it to guide him through an art history course.

One of my favorites is an article published in 1999 in the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology by Justin Kreuger and David Dunning of Cornell University.
Their study, “Unskilled and Unaware of It: How Difficulties in Recognizing One’s Own Incompetence Leads to Inflated Self-Assessments,” should be of great concern and interest to all college teachers who want to know how to explain to a student why he or she has been given a low grade on an exam. Kreuger and Dunning found that students who scored very poorly in tests of humor, grammar and logic “grossly overestimated their test performance and ability. Although their test scores put them in the 12th percentile, they estimated themselves to be in the 62nd.” The dilemma for a teacher is apparent. Sometimes students who do terribly in an exam may also believe that they have done particularly well. Such students are in the very worst of positions to understand why they performed so badly. As the authors point out, such people “suffer a dual burden: Not only do these people reach erroneous conclusions and make unfortunate choices, but their metacognitive incompetence robs them of the ability to realize it.” How, then, should a teacher deal with a student who asks for an explanation about why they have gotten a bad grade? If you tell the student that they misjudge their own abilities, then heed the author’s advise. “Paradoxically, improving the skills of participants, and thus increasing their metacognitive competence, helped them recognize the limitations of their abilities.” Kreuger and Dunning end their article with the cautionary and self-doubting acknowledgement that they could be wrong in their conclusions or methods, but that “it is not a sin we have committed knowingly.”

Perhaps you caught an article in the journal Psychological Medicine in 1999 entitled “Alteration of the Platelet Serotonin Transporter in Romantic Love.” In it the researchers examine the possible biological processes regulating romantic love. They find that in biochemical terms romantic love, especially in the early phase of a love relationship (the part when you lose your mind and act like a blithering idiot, if you recall) may be indistinguishable from obsessive-compulsive disorder. Though the article is full of talk about things like “serotonin (5-HT) transporter” and other terms designed to throw the reader off the scent of a valuable discovery, the Ig Nobel people were not fooled, and gave the authors of this research a prize in chemistry a year later. I only wish this data had been available in the 1960’s when I really needed it.

You may have noticed that I did not list the names of the authors of the article on the biochemistry of romantic love and a certain psychotic disorder. The reason is that, as with so many articles from the physical sciences, this one has too many authors. In fact, in 1993 an Ig Nobel Prize was awarded to the a paper published in the New England Journal of Medicine that had 976 co-authors. Being only a brief article, it has the distinction of having had 100 times as many authors as pages. (By comparison, the article on romantic love only had four co-authors, but they were all from the University of Fisa, and their names were too hard to type.)

For those of you who like to cook and are always looking for new recipe ideas, there is the research conducted in 1971 by Richard Wassersug of Dalhousie University and published in The American Midland Naturalist. His study, “On the Comparative Palatability of Some Dry-Season Tadpoles from Costa Rica” put me in mind of Farley Mowat’s primary research on the diet of some northern wolves. Mowat’s work was published in the semi-popular book (and later, movie) “Never Cry Wolf,” in which Mowat eats a goodly number of mice to demonstrate that wolves can survive a winter on just such a limited diet. It is probably just an accident of poor publicity strategy that Wassersug’s work never received the relatively wide distribution that Mowat’s did.

And, though I could go on lauding these studies for a very much longer time, let me end with a few titles (for the sake of brevity, sans authors, sans elaboration) that I hope need no further explanation. From the Journal of Perception in 1993, “The Possible Pain Experienced During Execution by Different Methods.” From the British Medical Journal in 1994, “Effects of Ale, Garlic and Soured Cream on the Appetite of Leeches.” From Weatherwise in 1975, “Chicken Plucking as a Measure of Tornado Wind Speed.” From the Scottish Medical Journal in 1993, “The Collapse of Toilets in Glasgow.” And, from The Journal of the Norwegian Medical Association in 1999, “Unnyttig Om Urinprover.,” which focuses, according to the folks at the Ig Nobel Prize, on the kinds of containers that patients choose when submitting urine samples.

Now, who wants to hear about how difficult it really was to measure attitudes towards the elderly among maritime, management and nursing students at Kalmar University in Sweden? Good! Well, to begin with, it was a dark and stormy March.

—William C. Levin is Professor of Sociology and Associate Editor of the Bridgewater Review
Talk to the Trees and Guess What?
The Botany of Desire:
A Plant’s Eye View of the World
Michael Pollan

by Charles F. Angell

A popular book of the 1970s The Secret Life of Plants argued that “evidence now supports the vision of the poet and the philosopher that plants are living, breathing, communicating creatures, endowed with personality and the attributes of a soul. It is only we, in our blindness, who have insisted on considering them automata.” Such notions led to wondering whether houseplants adapted in different ways to the musical tastes of the homeowner/horticulturalist. The theory held that plants responded far more favorably to Beethoven and Mozart than to the Red Hot Chili Peppers and Meat Loaf, to rondos rather than riffs, andantes rather than acid. Michael Pollan has given these theories a new spin. Working in his vegetable garden one May afternoon, he envisions a “coevolutionary bargain” between himself and the plants: “…the garden suddenly appeared before me in a whole new light, the manifold delights it offered to the eye and nose and tongue no longer quite so innocent and passive. All these plants, which I’d always regarded as the objects of my desire, were also, I realized, subjects, acting on me, getting me to do things for them they couldn’t do for themselves.”

Pollan explores this symbiotic and reciprocal relationship in four chapters devoted respectively to the apple, the tulip, marijuana, and the potato—fruit, beauty, toot, and root. “I’m interested,” he writes, “not only in how the potato altered the course of European history or how cannabis helped fire the romantic revolution in the West, but also in the way notions in the minds of men and women transformed the appearance, taste, and mental effects of these plants.” Pollan engages the traditional American notions that humans are at war with nature, what he terms the “heroic story,” or that we merge spiritually with nature, the romantic story, or even that we have transgressed nature, the environmental story, to tell a “different kind of story,” one that relies on a web metaphor of reciprocity between humans and nature. This I might call a very contemporary take, a sort of networking story that hardwires humans and nature into a complex circuitry where human desire provides the energy and natural selection dictates the outcome.

Using the apple to illustrate his meaning, Pollan follows the meanderings John Chapman, a.k.a Johnny Appleseed who planted orchards along the Ohio and Mohican Rivers. The apple’s evolutionary advantage lay in its sweetness which attracted animals that devoured the sweet flesh and transported the seeds further and further afield. “The blandishments of sugar,” Pollan suggests, “are what got the apple out of the Kazakh forests, across Europe, to the shores of North America, and eventually into John Chapman’s canoe.” Yet sweetness, in a sugar poor country, wasn’t the apple’s only appeal; fermented apple sugar becomes the alcohol of hard cider, the drink of choice in rural Protestant America. Pollan dismisses what he calls the Disney saccharine version of Johnny Appleseed, an Americanized Christian saint, and considers him “the American Dionysus.” Like Dionysus, Chapman moved between the domesticated and the wild bringing the wilderness into domestication and the domesticated back to the wilderness. “John Chapman’s millions of seeds and thousands of miles changed the apple, and the apple changed America.”

If Chapman’s hybridizing of the apple species allowed the apple to adapt to the new world, hybridizing the tulip created its own brand of Dionysian frenzy in the old world. Pollan’s chapter on the tulip explores how between 1634 and 1637 “tulipomania” sparked “a speculative frenzy that sucked people at every level of society into its whorl.” Horticulturalists hoarded the bulbs and sold them at extravagant prices. The tulip responded to its human admirers by allowing itself to be cloned in ever more beautiful forms; its survival depended
upon the human regard for its beauty. What we see in not just the tulip but flowers generally is “the very heart of nature’s double nature—that is the contending energies of creation and dissolution, the spring toward complex form and the tidal pull away from it.” For Pollan this “complex form” of floral beauty incorporates both the Apollonian and the Dionysian, the desire for order and the poignancy of its impermanence.

In his chapter “Desire: Intoxication Plant: Marijuana,” Pollan considers forbidden plants and their “power to change the subjective experience of reality we call consciousness.” Plant evolution depended in large part on chemical toxins to defend against animal and insect predators; some of these toxins, nicotine and caffeine for example, produced agreeable psychoactive effects on certain predators, humans among them. Cannabis clearly fits this category so well that in the US it’s become an outlaw plant despite efforts to decriminalize its use for medicinal purposes. Pollan regards the legal campaign against marijuana as the result of its “close identification with the counterculture” of the 1960s. As so often the case with political interventions, the drug war against growing marijuana, principally in Mexico, led to unintended consequences, namely a large market for “domestically grown marijuana” and a “triumph of protectionism.” American growers, in their efforts to find a strain of cannabis that would grow in more northern climates, discovered that by crossing the equatorial strain of cannabis that would grow in more northern climates, discovered that by crossing the equatorial strain of cannabis that would grow in more northern climates, discovered that by crossing the equatorial strain of cannabis that would grow in more northern climates, discovered that by crossing the equatorial strain of cannabis that would grow in more northern climates, discovered that by crossing the equatorial strain of cannabis that would grow in more northern climates, discovered that by crossing the equatorial species Cannabis indica with the frost tolerant species Cannabis sativa (indigenous to Afghanistan) they could combine the “smooth taste” of sativa with the “superior potency and hardness” of indica. When the Reagan administration in the 1980s went after the growers in California’s Humboldt County, the producers moved offshore to a more hospitable Amsterdam and indoor plant experimental laboratories where the “Dutch genius for horticulture going back to the tulip craze” hybridized cannabis strains with until then unimagined potencies. Pollan theorizes that psychoactive drugs appeal to our desire for pleasure of the moment, for “fulfillment here and now,” an appeal that undercuts the Apollonian.” And so, as I walked behind my rototiller in early May, I felt after reading Pollan’s book, a new enthusiasm for the task, that even though I was preparing the soil as I had done for many prior years, I was intellectually pollinated for an adventure whose outcome despite my Apollonian mindset and given the presence of a Dionysian woodchuck was always uncertain. The Botany of Desire made me see things anew, and after this long, cold winter, desire the spring.

—Charles F. Angell is Professor of English
Poetry
Twilight
by Christiane Ferreira

I am waltzing in winter’s blue twilight
with no one but the moon to see
the frozen tears upon my cheek.
Waltzing, remembering your arms
and the shine of your hair,
opalescent in the moon’s soft glow,
Your laugh rings through the air
as we step on each other’s toes
then stumble, tumbling to the ground.
Tiny pieces of light speckle your lashes,
blinking as your lips meet mine.
I am waltzing, eyes shut tight
to the winter’s blue twilight
with no one but the moon to see.

—Christiane Ferreira, a resident of East Bridgewater,
is a member of the class of 2004. She was a student
in Dr Philip Tabakow’s poetry class.