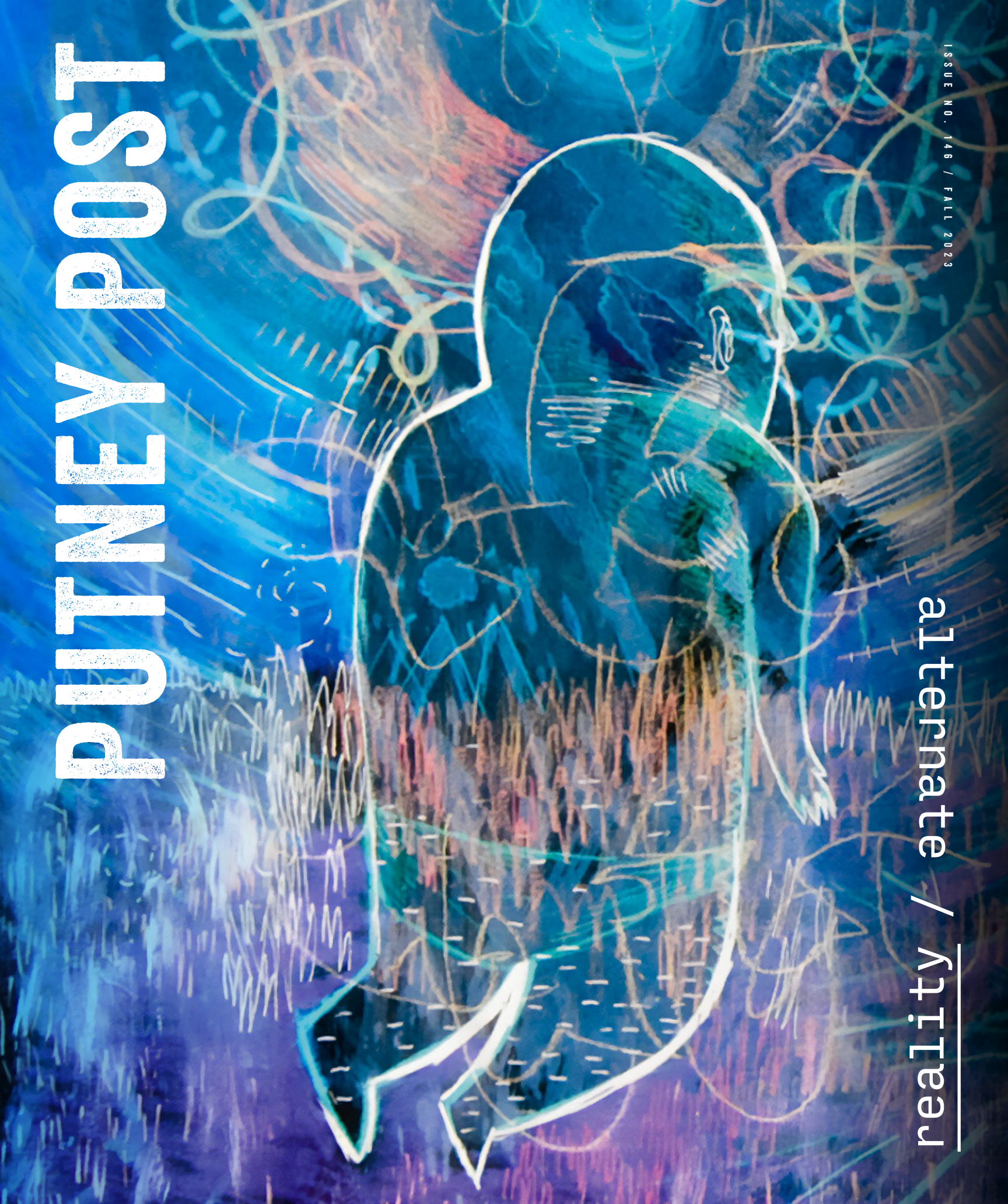


PUTNEY POST

alternate / reality

ISSUE NO. 146 / FALL 2023



They say Old Boys started out a chicken coop.
I can believe it, looking at the gritty path in front,
Recalling heads that poked out from the upper windows
To keep an eye on all below who walk that way.
Were there water balloons sometimes hurled from above?
I'm certain there were.
All that hard, young, male energy in those tiny rooms,
It had to find an outlet, some way, somehow.
There is a hill runs parallel to the dorm,
That ends at the library, which stands above it all.
The hill ascends a thousand feet in winter,
Icy and treacherous, impossible to conquer,
Cold and hopeless as the angst of youth,
Yet by mystery transformed to grassy softness in spring light.
A girl in the distance danced on the lawn in a long, ruffled dress;
Couples lay in the clover, eyes closed, bodies touching.
There were readers of letters, of books, of the Times,
And a boy who read a poem to a girl,
An impossible, high-blown, exhilarating, passionate poem
That swept away all else in a flood of emotion.
Other, bitter poems that follow will someday puncture this sweet memory,
But that day all things were possible, and love conquered all,
And the winter of her discontent was made glorious summer.


BY BETSY SMITH EISENMANN '72



The Putney School

The winning poem from our Old Boys/
Old Girls poetry contest. Photo of Old
Boys dorm by Geoffrey Goodridge '89

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Jonas Fricke '99 described his art as "illustrations of the experience of consciousness and the adventure of the human condition." He died last March. See more on p. 18 and at jonasfrickeart.com.

Darius Shaoul '18 explores the convergence of art and technology

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ALUMNI CONNECTIONS

DEAR READER,

Here we stand, on a windy hilltop in rural Vermont—one of the last states to get the iPhone, and where you still won't see billboards—trying to hold a balance between the past and a future that offers convenience and progress. This ever-present and ever-changing tension fascinates us.

Putney people frequently ask how the school responds to the important topics our society wrestles with. Equity and inclusion, climate change, rising tuition costs, and more. In the last year, the questions have centered, overwhelmingly, on artificial intelligence and the recent explosion of ChatGPT and its ilk.

What on earth will we do about this? How do we teach our students to use

technology responsibly? *Is it an asset or a threat?* In this issue, we dive into that question.

To put it simply, we write here about the old and the new. As we fleshed out that idea, someone said “What if you read the magazine from both sides?” *What? Cool!* Alternate / Reality. The theme fell into place quickly: the “reality” side of the magazine pulls on the end of the rope that is steeped in the traditional: brilliant use of language, tools, work that is wary of the threats technology introduces. From the “alternate” end, we offer stories about the way technology and “progress” can be good, literally turning the question on its head.

In this balance and tension, we see the slow, ingenious work of Bronwyn Maloney '09's

The Main Building at Putney, captured at night by Geoffrey Goodridge '89

hand-made animation, and the innovative creation of a fully AI-generated film by Darius Shaoul '18. We appreciate Lydia Davis '65's observant, smart writing, and offer a piece that celebrates language's evolution toward inclusivity. We see students building things, from barn doors to prosthetics. Also peppered throughout, speaking of old, are remembrances of Old Boys and Old Girls dorms, both of which are enjoying their last autumn housing students and faculty. Lastly, the magazine would be incomplete without mention of Geoffrey Hinton, dubbed the "godfather of AI," and Putney founder Carmelita Hinton's grand-nephew, who made headlines in May when he quit his job at Google and sounded alarm bells over the threat of artificial intelligence. Old and new.

Alternate / Reality. Underlying all of this is a clear-eyed ethos from us at the *Putney Post*: a commitment to integrity, to telling your stories and listening to your questions, to not taking shortcuts. Your work continues to inspire us.

We had some fun with these theme, and hope it raises interesting questions in your brain the way it did in ours.

If you see a typo, you'll know it's us.
Happy reading.

DARRY MADDEN
Publisher

ALISON FRYE
Editor

“ Underlying all of this is a clear-eyed ethos from us at the *Putney Post*: a commitment to integrity, to telling your stories and listening to your questions, to not taking shortcuts.”



Lydia Davis

An Appreciation, With Q&A



In true Putney spirit, alumna Lydia Davis '65 rejects corporate control and joins the fight against climate change. Davis shared memories of her time at Putney, and the local activism she is now committed to, with me recently. My experience of her writing, as well as Lydia in her own words, follow.

BY BETH STICKNEY P'23 ✱

Lydia Davis '65 might be the most celebrated writer you've never heard of. A trailblazer of flash fiction and an esteemed translator, she has achieved a kind of otherworldly acclaim. Not only has she been awarded a MacArthur "Genius Grant" and the Man Booker International Prize, France has declared her an Officier and Chevalier of the Order of Arts and Letters. When asked to speak at Putney's graduation some years back, however, Davis offered bits of surprisingly down-to-earth advice, such as "do spend time with your grandparents" and "wash your feet every day."

There was also this: "Don't pick up a nervous cat when you're wearing a nice sweater."

The line reads like one of the very short stories for which Davis is best known. Sensible yet unexpected—a tad off—and therefore bubbling with comic tension. Also comical is the implied visual—claws meet cashmere. But if you are an over-thinker, as most of Davis's (not so?) fictional narrators are, you might imagine a well-dressed young alum, heading to their first job interview, inexplicably seized by a desire to grab the nearest stray, showing up for the appointment late, in tatters, doomed to failure. What begins as a *jeu d'esprit* ends as a cautionary tale, gently delivered by a woman who sounds like your favorite aunt, who no doubt possesses a nice sweater or two, not to mention a healthy appreciation of human absurdity.

But I'm getting ahead of myself. Here's a very short story Davis actually wrote as a very short story, titled "Tropical Storm:"

**Like a tropical storm,
I, too, may one day become
"better organized."**

This is quintessential Davis. She revels in the possibilities of ordinary language, especially when used in surprising contexts. Of course, we probably have heard this term used in weather reports, though we tend to think of a person as being well or poorly organized, and would reach for different words to describe a large-scale meteorological event. What if we flip the comparison around? If a tropical storm can be like a person—better organized someday—in what ways can a person be like a tropical storm? By playing with context, Davis explores the work that an ordinary phrase—"better organized"—might do in eliciting a story, even in the space of just two lines. We end with aspiration tempered by recognition of certain unspoken realities. (In fact, the more time I spend reading Davis, the more clearly I see this tension between different kinds of order and messiness running through her writing. More on that later.)

Even when the length of a story is conventional, say, eight or nine pages, the literary imagination revealed in the work is never so. Generally stingy with plot and generous

with introspection, rendered plainly without symbol or artifice, Davis's stories feed on the mundane peculiarity of daily life. In Davis's world, a story arises around the inner lives of mice residing in the walls of old houses or the intelligence of cockroaches ("such nimble rascals, such quick movers, such clever thieves"). Closely observed husbands and neighbors, in-laws, and strangers—doing what they do and saying what they say—provide Davis, and her reader, with opportunities for recognition and wonder, consternation and delight.

Writing in *The New Yorker* in 2009, when her first *Collected Stories* was released, James Wood described the hefty volume as "a body of work probably unique in American writing, in its combination of lucidity, aphoristic brevity, formal originality, sly comedy, metaphysical bleakness, philosophical pressure, and human wisdom."

I came upon Davis rather late in my life as a reader of fiction. In early 2010, my old friend, Susan, brought her to my attention, inviting me to a reading Davis was giving at the SUNY Albany campus. At the time, I was the mother of a five-year-old boy, and still feeling unsettled by an identity crisis that began in 2003, when I left an academic career (and a very nice apartment) in NYC and followed my then-boyfriend to unemployment (and a very old house) in Vermont. I wasn't unhappy with this new life, just surprised by it. My new routines were mostly quite pleasant, but I missed some of the old ones, such as reading on the subway. I had always considered myself well-read, typically consuming at least a novel a week on the R train from Woodside to my office in midtown. But my reading atrophied those first few years in Vermont. Gone was the daily commute, and then the baby came. (Little did I know how easily I would find kinship with at least one of Davis's narrators.)

Eager for a road-trip, even one to Albany, I purchased Davis's *Collected Stories*, and Susan and I set off in my black Honda Fit. It was the first time I'd traveled on my own without my son; even though it didn't have to be an over-nighter, I insisted on dinner reservations and a hotel room. I was going to make the most of it. (Spoiler: Wine was consumed.)

More than the specific pieces Davis read that night, I remember the sound of her voice. She reads carefully and in a tone that might be described as deadpan, which sometimes creates tension between her delivery and her subject matter, but is also especially well-suited to the kind of humor sprinkled throughout her work. I also remember feeling intimidated when I presented my book to her for signing at the end of the evening. She was so damn *smart*. Wanting to engage with her, ever-so-briefly, I couldn't imagine anything to say, other than (for inscription purposes) my first name.

Before that reading, I had only had time to dip in and out of the stories. The more I read of her work (and about her for this piece) the more convinced I am that, given time enough and proximity, Davis and I would be great pals. After all, we have much in common. It seems that we both enjoy a glass of white wine and are quite fond of public transportation. Neither of us has read the entirety of *Don Quixote* and we find the *Harry Potter* books overrated. We aspire to kindness, but sometimes treat our husbands badly. Surely, many friendships are based on shallower affinities.

"Glenn Gould" is one of my favorite stories, perhaps because it is the one in which I felt the strongest flash of recognition, that kinship with the narrator I mentioned earlier. It's impossible to satisfactorily summarize, because it interweaves two narrative threads—or possibly even three, depending on how you count—but here goes: The narrator, who bears more than passing resemblance to Davis, is a newish mother, transplanted from a city to a small town. She develops a daily routine with her young son, walking him in the stroller to the library, the hardware store, the post office, the park. She always makes it home in time to watch *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, in its syndicated reruns. She learns through a friend with whom she is corresponding (one thread of the story) that Glenn Gould, a pianist she idolizes, was also a fan of the show (in another thread, we learn quite a lot about Gould and his eccentricities). This knowledge gives her obsession meaning. If Gould loved the show, it must be worth watching. And watch she does.

"At the end of the half hour I am sorry the show is over. I hunger for more. If I could, I would watch another half hour, and another. I wish the baby would go to sleep and my husband would not come home for dinner."

We know that in an earlier phase of her life, the narrator was devoted to the piano, not as a profession, but for the pleasure playing gave her (this is true of Davis). Clearly, practice is

no longer part of her daily routine. Instead, she communes with Gould in this very abstract, slightly absurd way, through an icon of pop culture—Mary Richards, single and childless. In a world where mothers of young children are supposed to be selfless in their devotion, Davis's narrator feels the tug of divided attentions. She writes:

"I want to stay in that other place, that other city that is a real city but one I have never visited. I want to go on looking through a window into someone else's life . . . someone else's apartment, a friend coming in the door, a friend staying for supper, usually salad, a woman tossing salad, always neatly dressed. There is order in that other world."

(If you, too, were a fan of the show, you know that the unnamed friend is Rhoda, and you can readily picture Mary in the tidy kitchen of her tidy studio apartment, tossing salad.)

"Mary says that order is possible and, since she is gentle and kind if somewhat brittle, that kindness is possible, too. The friend who comes down from upstairs and stays for supper is not so tidy, and is not always kind, but sometimes selfish, so there is also room for human failing, and for a kind of recklessness or passion."

As with the tropical storm and the possibility of becoming better organized, I see shifting perspectives here. On the one hand, the narrator aspires to Mary's tidiness, even though, perhaps, it comes at the cost of brittleness. But in Mary's kindness, the narrator—as unnamed friend—finds something like forgiveness (a word Davis might reject) or at least, kinship.



Lydia holding her grandson, Asa, summer 2023

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Your mother was a writer and your father taught at Columbia University. You would have had many good options for high school.

What brought you to The Putney School? I was living in New York City with my parents at the time we applied to Putney. A primary motivation for seeking a boarding school in the first place was probably to get me out of the tight space of a smallish apartment and expand my horizons after five years of a good day school but over confined city life. I know my mother researched schools in Europe as well as here, but I don't remember visiting any other schools besides Putney. I was at heart a "country" girl, and also very keen on classical music in all forms, so it was a good fit. My parents and I were probably also enchanted by the beauty of the hilltop.

I immersed myself very completely in the musical program at Putney—violin lessons, piano lessons, music theory classes, orchestra, chorus, Friday night Sing, and madrigals. It was all immensely fulfilling and satisfying. The rigorosity of Norwood Hinkle's instruction was a good fit for me. The English literature classes were also enriching, and the evening activity of simply reading was a deep pleasure. During my senior year I became very serious about keeping a journal of ideas, drafts, notes, one that I continued over the years. The library was a great resource—I remember vowing to read all of Benjamin Franklin's many-volume autobiography, though I didn't get far. Some of my closest friends were deeply interested in literature then, and are also writers now. Writing for schoolwork, however, never quite left the realm of a difficult school task, to enter the realm of delight, as music studies did.

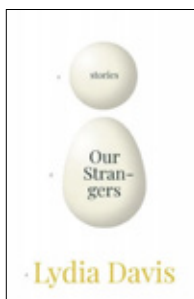
What might you say to Putney grads today (as if you were speaking at graduation)?

I did give a graduation speech at Putney a few years ago, and it was a most interesting challenge. I talked about my Putney days (of course) because some things have changed, such as lights out times (early, then) and smoking (seniors were allowed to then). I talked a little about college and what to expect. I talked from the teacher's point of view. For instance, I said teachers could see quite clearly what was going on in the back row. I also told them not to be shy about going to office hours—professors sometimes just sat there waiting! But of course the typical Putney student probably wouldn't be shy about taking advantage of what a teacher had to offer. Then I ended with the traditional offerings of advice, some of it serious and some of it not—do

spend time with your grandparents; don't pick up a nervous cat while you're wearing a nice sweater; wash your feet every day. I told them the good friends they had right now would quite likely still be good friends in another fifty years—that has been true for me and my Putney friends.

What can you say about your decision not to sell your next book, *Our Strangers*, through Amazon? How is that even arranged—what are the mechanics of that?

Over the years, I've come to be more and more deeply disturbed by Amazon, its ruthless business practices, its poor treatment of workers, its outsourcing to irresponsible companies. Long ago I stopped buying anything through them. Then, two years ago, when my last book came out, I decided I did not want to have my next book sold by them. Of course, given the structure of the publishing and bookselling industry at this point, I knew this would probably mean smaller sales and a smaller readership, but I had no hesitation. Amazon is a destroyer of community, whereas an independent bookstore is often the heart of a community. The publisher I had had since 1986 certainly wanted to bring out my next book, and



they tried to see how it could be done, but their hands were tied by contracts—they could not have bypassed Amazon. The same would be true for a number of other larger publishers. My agent—who was completely on board with this move—decided to speak to Andy Hunter, of Bookshop.org, and ask for his thoughts, since he had founded that organization as a way to provide an alternative to Amazon. To her surprise, he offered to publish the book himself. This would be his first print book. He had to think of a name for his imprint—Bookshop Editions. The publishing process has gone well so far, the book will be out in October, it will be available only in independent bookstores, libraries, and select online retailers, though not Amazon!

I read that you have decided not to travel internationally—or by plane—any more. For someone who is in love with languages and other cultures, that seems like a major decision. Can you say something about that? This was born of principle, too. A few years ago, just before Covid, actually, I made

the decision not to fly anymore because of the dire situation of the world regarding climate change and the huge carbon-emission cost of flying. I had made my share of trips to Europe, especially, but also around the U.S. when I traveled for a reading or residency. I felt it was time to stay on the ground. I do have family and friends in England, and I will miss France, but at this point I don't believe we can live the same way, do the same things we did years ago, given the real emergency of our present global situation. I only wish we all had the resolve to go on general, universal strike until radical change was put in place.

What can you say about your civic involvement where you live? What I regretted leaving out of my graduation speech at Putney was the importance of community involvement. I think I was not as involved myself, then, as I am now, and maybe that's why it wasn't at the forefront of my mind. Now—again, because of the urgency of climate change—I am very involved in my village and surrounding communities. We have formed a Climate Smart Committee, and we have embarked on various projects within two very effective New York State initiatives: the Climate Smart Communities program and the Clean Energy Communities program. Since we are aware of the loss of biodiversity and what a crisis that is, in itself, one of our projects has been to create parks and garden beds of native plants around the village, as heavily planted in wildlife-sustaining plants as we can manage. We are working on five different sites at the moment. But we also host a speakers series, have prepared an emergency response guide, and join neighboring towns to host repair cafés—which are wonderfully inspiring and even fun events. (Some people love to fix things, most of us like to at least watch!)

What can you say about your friendship with filmmaker Errol Morris and the fact that the two of you are classmates AND MacArthur fellows? (I wonder how many other high school classes have had TWO MacArthurs?) I thoroughly enjoy that remarkable fact, and I'm sure he does too. It helps that we were friends at Putney. We both had our ups and downs at school. He was more eccentric than I was—for instance, he wore a tie, white shirt, and formal jacket most of the time, in the days of jeans and lumber jackets. He talked incessantly (and brilliantly) to his friends late into the night, annoyed his teachers, and did not keep his eye on the conductor's baton during Orchestra (he played the cello; I played the violin). As for me, I was not a diligent student in all my



Lydia Davis in 1973

subjects, and I rebelled in certain ways which I won't identify . . . But I like the fact that two not-stellar students nevertheless later proved to be hard-working and determined in our two fields! I'm sure Putney had some wonderfully beneficial effects on both of us. I don't know about Errol, but I certainly loved my time at the school—the beauty and freedom of it, compared to life in New York City, and the constant stimulation of the long day's schedule; I actually couldn't wait for vacations at home to be over. Errol and I have remained friends, but we don't see each other often. We had a plan to get together and rehearse a cello and piano sonata someday—I can't remember which one. But life always intervenes.

Beth Stickney lives in Bellows Falls. The young son she mentions in this piece, Gerrit Blauvelt, graduated from Putney in June and will attend Middlebury College in the fall.

“All the News
That’s Fit to Print”

The New York Times

‘The Godfather of AI’
Leaves Google and Warns
of Danger Ahead By Cade
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NEW YORK, MAY 1, 2023

\$2.50

‘The Godfather of AI’ Leaves Google and Warns of Danger Ahead

TORONTO — Geoffrey Hinton* was an artificial intelligence pioneer. In 2012, Hinton and two of his graduate students at the University of Toronto created technology that became the intellectual foundation for the AI systems that the tech industry’s biggest companies believe is a key to their future.

On Monday, however, he officially joined a growing chorus of critics who say those companies are racing toward danger with their aggressive campaign to create products based on generative AI, the technology that powers popular chatbots like ChatGPT.

Hinton said he has quit his job at Google, where he has worked for more than a decade and became one of the most respected voices in the field, so he can freely speak out about the risks of AI. A part of him, he said, now regrets his life’s work.

“I console myself with the normal excuse: If I hadn’t done it, somebody else would have,” Hinton said during a lengthy interview last week in the dining room of his home in Toronto, a short walk from where he and his students made their breakthrough.

Hinton’s journey from AI groundbreaker to doomsayer marks a remarkable moment for the technology industry at perhaps its most important inflection point in decades. Industry leaders believe the new AI systems could be as important as the introduction of the web browser in the early 1990s



understand and generate language, but it was inferior to the way humans handled language.

Then, last year, as Google and OpenAI built systems using much larger amounts of data, his view changed. He still believed the systems were inferior to the human brain in some ways but he thought they were eclipsing human intelligence in others. “Maybe what is going on in these systems,” he said, “is actually a lot better than what is going on in the brain.”

As companies improve their AI systems, he believes, they become increasingly dangerous. “Look at how it was five years ago and how it is now,” he said of AI technology. “Take the difference and propagate it forwards. That’s scary.”

Until last year, he said, Google acted as a “proper steward” for the technology, careful not to release something that might cause harm. But now that Microsoft has augmented its Bing search engine with a chatbot — challenging Google’s core business — Google is racing to deploy the same kind of technology. The tech giants are locked in a competition that might be impossible to stop, Hinton said.

His immediate concern is that the internet will be flooded with false photos, videos and text, and the average person will “not be able to know what is true anymore.”

He is also worried that AI technologies will in

and could lead to breakthroughs in areas ranging from drug research to education.

But gnawing at many industry insiders is a fear that they are releasing something dangerous into the wild. Generative AI can already be a tool for misinformation. Soon, it could be a risk to jobs. Somewhere down the line, tech's biggest worriers say, it could be a risk to humanity.

"It is hard to see how you can prevent the bad actors from using it for bad things," Hinton said.

After the San Francisco startup OpenAI released a new version of ChatGPT in March, more than 1,000 technology leaders and researchers signed an open letter calling for a six-month moratorium on the development of new systems because AI technologies pose "profound risks to society and humanity."

Several days later, 19 current and former leaders of the Association for the Advancement of Artificial Intelligence, a 40-year-old academic society, released their own letter warning of the risks of AI. That group included Eric Horvitz, chief scientific officer at Microsoft, which has deployed OpenAI's technology across a wide range of products, including its Bing search engine.

Hinton, often called "the Godfather of AI," did not sign either of those letters and said he did not want to publicly criticize Google or other companies until he had quit his job. He notified the company last month that he was resigning, and Thursday, he talked by phone with Sundar Pichai, CEO of Google's parent company, Alphabet. He declined to publicly discuss the details of his conversation with Pichai.

Google's chief scientist, Jeff Dean, said in a statement: "We remain committed to a responsible approach to AI. We're continually learning to understand emerging risks while also innovating boldly."

Hinton, a 75-year-old British expatriate, is a lifelong academic whose career was driven by his personal convictions about the development and use of AI. In 1972, as a graduate student at the University of Edinburgh, Hinton embraced an idea called a neural network. A neural network is a mathematical system that learns skills by analyzing data.

"The idea that this stuff could actually get smarter than people — a few people believed that. But most people thought it was way off. Obviously, I no longer think that."

At the time, few researchers believed in the idea. But it became his life's work.

In the 1980s, Hinton was a professor of computer science at Carnegie Mellon University but left the university for Canada because he said he was reluctant to take Pentagon funding. At the time, most AI research in the United States was funded by the Defense Department. Hinton is deeply opposed to the use of AI on the battlefield — what he calls "robot soldiers."

In 2012, Hinton and two of his students in Toronto, Ilya Sutskever and Alex Krizhevsky, built a neural network that could analyze thousands of photos and teach itself to identify common objects, such as flowers, dogs and cars.

Google spent \$44 million to acquire a company started by Hinton and his two students. And their system led to the creation of increasingly powerful technologies, including new chatbots such as ChatGPT and Google Bard. Sutskever went on to become chief scientist at OpenAI. In 2018, Hinton and two other longtime collaborators received the Turing Award, often called "the Nobel Prize of computing," for their work on neural networks.

Around the same time, Google, OpenAI and other companies began building neural networks that learned from huge amounts of digital text. Hinton thought it was a powerful way for machines to

time upend the job market. Today, chatbots such as ChatGPT tend to complement human workers, but they could replace paralegals, personal assistants, translators and others who handle rote tasks. "It takes away the drudge work," he said. "It might take away more than that."

Down the road, he is worried that future versions of the technology pose a threat to humanity because they often learn unexpected behavior from the vast amounts of data they analyze. This becomes an issue, he said, as individuals and companies allow AI systems not only to generate their own computer code but actually to run that code on their own. And he fears a day when truly autonomous weapons — those killer robots — become reality.

"The idea that this stuff could actually get smarter than people — a few people believed that," he said. "But most people thought it was way off. And I thought it was way off. I thought it was 30 to 50 years or even longer away. Obviously, I no longer think that"

Many other experts, including many of his students and colleagues, say this threat is hypothetical. But Hinton believes that the race between Google and Microsoft and others will escalate into a global race that will not stop without some sort of global regulation.

But that may be impossible, he said. Unlike with nuclear weapons, he said, there is no way of knowing whether companies or countries are working on the technology in secret. The best hope is for the world's leading scientists to collaborate on ways of controlling the technology. "I don't think they should scale this up more until they have understood whether they can control it," he said.

Hinton said that when people used to ask him how he could work on technology that was potentially dangerous, he would paraphrase Robert Oppenheimer, who led the U.S. effort to build the atomic bomb: "When you see something that is technically sweet, you go ahead and do it."

He does not say that anymore.

—Cade Metz

You Must Alter Your Relationship With Time

Award-Winning
Filmmaker
**BRONWYN
MALONEY '09**
on the Illusion
of Time and
Hand-Drawn
Animation

ANIMATOR AND FILMMAKER Bronwyn Maloney '09 is at work right now on an animated sci-fi film about a young woman who's being repeatedly cloned, and therefore her life cannot progress past a certain point. She's reborn again and again at the age of 11.

"What is interesting to me about it are the ways in which a person's perception of time would be distorted if you were removed from the timeline that everyone else was living in. That is so interesting to try and portray in animation because to animate, you must alter your relationship with time."

For an artist asking these futuristic questions of her art and actively bending an unbendable construct, the process through which she explores is a long, tedious, detail-oriented, precise, and entirely by hand—you must alter your relationship with time in order to animate because it takes years to create seconds worth of time in the work itself.

MALONEY GREW UP in Manhattan, seeking out corners of space and quiet and time in a frantic, restless city. For her, Putney was a refuge. Space and time were abundant. The woods surrounding her cabin were quiet. Simple tasks, like barn chores and splitting kindling, were part of her daily routine. Weaving taught her to relish a project that was a large commitment. It was at Putney that she began to realize her calling as an artist connected with this pleasure in repetitive work.

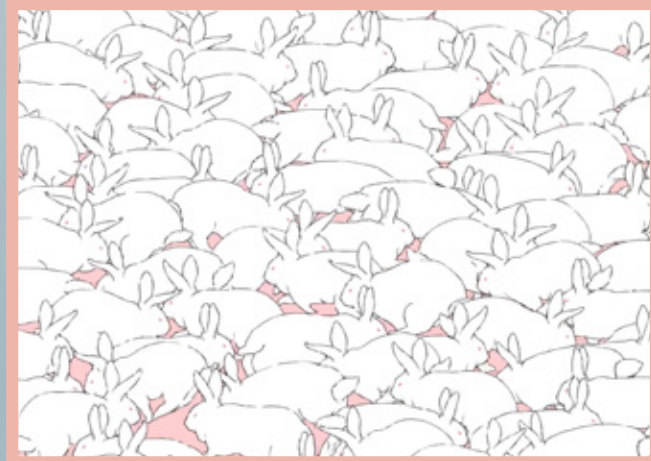
She came slowly, thoughtfully, through a stint in theater, to hand-drawn animation. What she creates now others have described as "poetic film." She calls it "experimental animation."

That being said, she no longer spends too much time trying to nail down what to call what she makes.

"I went to Putney and then Bennington College. Both schools have a lot in common, and I was taught at both schools



“I don’t make explicitly narrative work. However, I’ve seen so much narrative work in my life that my brain always wants that element. It feels unsafe without it. But I get frustrated when I try to include it.”



Still frame from the animated film, *Serpentine*, in which Maloney created, by hand and one frame at a time, morphing images that will delight and haunt you.

that, whatever your interests are, they’re probably more connected than you consciously think.”

At Bennington, the process was even more explicit. Majors are self-designed, and reflection on their various connected parts was ongoing.

But, says Maloney, a lesson she walked away with was perhaps counterintuitive to the educational design: Sometimes you are drawn in two directions, and you don’t have to name the connection. In fact, many of her films and projects have two seemingly unrelated ideas at play. As an artist, she says, “I have to practice having trust in those connections.”

HER FIRST FILM, *Serpentine*, went to festivals all over the world. It won the Helen Hill Animation Award at the New Orleans Film Festival in 2018.

“As soon as I was finished with it and had to start something else, I was terrified again, because I had to either

replicate it or preferably do something different and better,” she said.

One area of complication for Maloney is narrative.

“I don’t make explicitly narrative work. However, I’ve seen so much narrative work in my life that my brain always wants that element. It feels unsafe without it. But I get frustrated when I try to include it.”

She does not work from a script or, even, recognizable characters. *Serpentine*’s themes were about aloneness and introspection, sex and self-identity. She knows from having screened it all over the world that many viewers understand the themes precisely without the efforts of explicit narrative.

MALONEY IS NOT a luddite. She relies on technology to create her work. She draws each frame in Photoshop. At the same time, it is essentially the original, analog process of inking cells,

painting cells, layering cells, and photographing them one by one.

The variability in technology gives her apprehension.

“My perspective on technology and art is still developing,” she said. “It will probably continue to change my whole life, because things are going to change.”

She has also seen really interesting work come from an artist’s exploration of software. Another filmmaker she knows, Ted Wiggin, designs software as part of his artistic practice, makes a film with it, and ultimately releases the software for other artists to work with.

“Software simply isn’t trustworthy,” said Maloney. “It changes so frequently.”

Ultimately the question about art and technology is a question, like animation itself, about time.

See Bronwyn’s work at bronwynmaloney.com.



1959, 1963, and 1964: Front: Penelope Parkhurst Boehm '64, Joyce Walworth '64, Tony Seeger '63, Tory Bryer '59, Neilson Abeel (Tory's husband), Back: David Shelton '64, Dorcas Gray '64, Eugene Walsh '63, Tom Fels '63, Parker Donham '63, Peter Coombs '63, Nora Kelly '63, Ben Moore '63



1976 to 1978: Note: The 50th reunion for the classes of 1977 and 1978—combined—is on the books for June 11-13, 2027. Mark your calendars now! Front: Jody Fein '77, Heston Scheffey '77, Jonathan Herz '77, Second row: Annabelle Hoffman '76, Dorian Yates '78, Rachel Trumper Debasitis '77, Jack Sherman '78, Margie Serkin '77, Jen Just '77, Carrie Peacock Colan '77, Liz Cobbett Williams '76, Back row: Ethan Pettit '77, Mark Lyon '78, Fric Spruyt '76, Nancy Blickenstaff, Nat Scrimshaw '76, Stephen Into '78, Bridget Cole '77, Alan Tuthill '77, Melisa Gillis '78, William Heller '79, Stacy Leon '77, Melissa Johnson '77, John Bidwell '78



2011 to 2013: Front: Natalie Silver '12, Mitchell Stone '11, Joey Keogh '11, Emily Cuerdon '13, Middle: Andy Cooper Ellis '11, Lilly King '11, Xia Reyes '11, Blythe Beard-Kitowski '11, Anna Snipes '12, Back: Tommy Friedman '12, Marley Reed '11, Max Berlow '11, Alex Theisen '11, Max Kruger '11, Zoi Barnes-Scott '13

2017 and 2018: Front: Olivia Rother '17, Carrie Brautigam '17, Ha Huynh '17, Rei Marshall '18, Romina Beltran Lazo '17, Simone Geary '17, Middle: Juliet Auguste '17, Sarah Young '18, Asa Marder '18, Aaron Leather '17, Molly Cameron '18, Back: Jake Stevenson '18, Luke Cuerdon '18, Gabe Feal-Staub '18, William Parkman '18, Darius Shaoul '18, Becca Blumenstein '18, Lindy Harris '18, Delaney Bullock '18



1973: The class of 1973 had record-breaking reunion attendance. Here, they re-create the photo taken their senior year. Hats off to you, class of '73! Seated in front: Katie Rawson, Sarah Spurr, Diana Krumholz McDonald, Jono Scherbatskoy, Carol Clurman. Standing, from left: Victor Lewis, Sam Dashevsky, Diana Krumholz McDonald's son, Ross, Dirk Mendel, Jared Shapiro, Dave Lucey, Barbara Andrews, Kathy Bernstein, Emily Van Evera, Stellavera Kilcher, Lisa von Ziegesar Whip, Kitty Fair, Paul Karasoff, Patti Cohen, Marti Straus, John McLaughlin, John Tagiuri, Morris Earle. Standing, rear: Kevin McDonald (Diana's husband), Chris Benfey, Michael Lasell '71, Kevin Mathewson, Cercie Miller, Chuck Stevenson, Leslie Gimbel, Ellie Schlefer, Tim Weiner, David Fitzpatrick, Amy Dingley, Chris Pfohl, Clare Lattimore, Jens Kastberg, Evan Schwartz, Karen Fraley, Mark Connors, Margaret McCarthy, Sverre Caldwell, Chris Landis, Karen Falk Sugden



1986 to 1989: Front: Tasha Byus '88, Amelia Lawrence Darrow '86, Alice Luhrmann Laughlin '87, Jenny Todd Taylor '87, Beea Benedict '89, Shelly Clevidence '87, Kate Osgood '87, Nathan Brauer '86. Back: Jeffrey Burt '88, Helen Coatsworth '89, Hannah Burnes '89, Jessica Tuteur '89, Bruce Beinert '87, Jacob van de Sande '88, Chris Syrett '88, Zach Weinberg '88, Elizabeth Harris Warner '85, Emily Weinberg, Peter LaBrusciano '88, David Sergenian '89



1992 to 1994: Front row: Luke Potosk '93, Nat Williams Taylor '93, Robert Andrews '92, Back row: Kate Strully '94, Becky Karush '94, Amanda Townsend Terwelligar '94, Liza Cassidy '92, Diana Brewer '92, Colleen Cortes '93, Nkomo Morris '94

REUNION



2019: Front: Cooper Johnson, Sabine Geary, Olive Rowell, Middle: Max Chapman, George Corrin, Maia Wolf-Livingston, Shyra, Alex Billingsley Back: Ollie Rosand, Quentin Byus, Izzy Snyder



2020: Front: Lila Miller and Lily Davenport, August Mellowship, Bench: Max McKee, Ethan Cameron, Rose Keller, Eric Printz, Will Egan, Corn Cook, Back: Fabian Brauer, Li Ding, Helena Dasappan, Travis Meggiolaro, Aryn Rivers, Olivia Nelson, Mila Glassman, Lily Stevenson

Aubin Niragira '16 with Naomi Lindenfeld in the ceramics studio during Reunion 2023



IN MEMORIAM

Christian Moe '47 died January 20, 2023, after a series of illnesses. Through his long career, Chris was a recognized playwright, director, and scholar of theater. He was a dedicated, tireless, and beloved mentor to countless students at Southern Illinois University and elsewhere. Chris was born in New York City and graduated with a concentration in history from the College of William and Mary in 1951. With the U.S. Navy, he was stationed in Japan during the Korean War and afterwards served in the Naval Reserve. During his Navy years, he read and studied dramatic literature, including all of Shakespeare's plays. After active service, he completed his education at the University of North Carolina and Cornell University. He did additional studies at Columbia University and the British Drama League in London. Chris was known for his quick wit, gregarious and amused demeanor, and an indefatigable and adventurous spirit. While in college, he met the love of his life, Carolyn Forman. Married in May 1952, they remained devoted lifelong companions for over 70 years. Together they traveled globally, entertained famously, maintained myriad friendships near and far, and took pleasure in theatrical and musical performances worldwide. Chris was also an eager tennis player, swimmer, and participated in amateur boxing in his younger days. Chris was a warmhearted, encouraging, and loving husband, father, grandfather, and uncle.

Gordon Gould Jr. '48 passed away peacefully in his Manhattan apartment on February 26, 2023. He was 92 years old. He will be remembered not only as a talented professional, but also as a loving family man and friend. Gordon joined the *Chicago Tribune* as a feature writer in June 1956. Gordon was awarded the 1961 Edward Scott Beck Award for Excellence in Foreign News Reporting for his story of an adventure-packed, four and one-half month trip in which he and 11 others were the first to drive passenger cars—three bright red Corvairs—from Chicago to the Panama

Canal along the Inter-American Highway. At the time, the route included a then-unfinished link through the virtually unmapped Darién jungle. Growing up before the advent of television, Gordon yearned to be a radio actor. But by the time he was old enough to be one, radio dramas had largely disappeared. When he moved to New York, he was overjoyed to discover the CBS Radio *Mystery Theater* and to be invited to join its pool of actors. Gordon eventually played in 60 episodes of *Mystery Theater* from 1974 to 1982, and was the last American actor to portray Sherlock Holmes on a nationally syndicated radio show. Gordon played villain General Veers in the radio adaptation of *The Empire Strikes Back*, alongside Mark Hamill (as Luke Skywalker), Billy Dee Williams (as Lando Calrissian) and John Lithgow (as Yoda). The program first aired on NPR in the United States in 1983. Gordon was the voice of countless radio and TV commercials. And over 34 years, Gordon brought books to life for the visually impaired, recording more than 600 Talking Books for the Blind for the Library of Congress. Gordon was also a regular on-stage presence. Gordon and his beloved wife of 51 years, Mary, were avid patrons of the arts, particularly opera. They regularly traveled across the United States and Europe to attend operas and music concerts. Their Manhattan apartment was a modern-day Parisian salon with friends gathering regularly to listen to music (including a recital of all of Chopin's piano études) and exchange ideas. They frequently discussed the arts, travels, and global affairs. Gordon's career and mind were impressive, but no more so than his gentle, loving nature. He was predeceased by his wife, Mary, and his dear son John Kinzie Gould. Gordon is survived by his beloved daughter and grandsons, Nell Gould, and Cooper and Griffin Gould.



Robert Stainton '49, 92, of Los Altos, CA, born November 14, 1930, passed away quietly on April 8, 2023 in the care of Sunny View Retirement Community. Bob was laid to rest at a small gathering held at the Gate of Heaven Catholic Cemetery, Cupertino, CA, on April 24, 2023. He was a devoted husband, brother, uncle, and friend. Bob was preceded in death by his wife of 48 years, Frances Muth Stainton. He is survived by his sister, Margot Stainton Pulver, brother-in-law, Michael Muth, nine nieces and nephews, and numerous grand-nieces and nephews living across the United States. Bob and Fran were known to their family for their thoughtful and humorous greeting cards, gifts and regular phone calls. He and Fran lived an active lifestyle participating in hiking groups, dance, and exercise classes. Bob loved sailing, photography, traveling, reading, music, and bird-watching beside Fran. He was active in his church where he especially loved singing in the choir. Bob graduated with a bachelor of science from Marlboro College, and a master's degree in business administration from Babson College. He enjoyed a long career as an operating systems programmer with Stanford University. His early computer programming training was obtained while enlisted in the United States Air Force. Bob and Fran lay side by side at Gate of Heaven Catholic Cemetery, St. Andrew Garden, Cupertino, CA. They were thought very fondly of by their family and friends, and will be dearly missed.

Lisa Dodd Nicholson '52
Honored member of the English Harbour, Antigua, community, Lisa Nicholson passed away peacefully at home on the March 20, 2023, surrounded by loved ones. Lisa was born in Manhattan in June of 1934 to Roxana and Edward Dodd. She was raised in Cornwall, CT, and educated at Putney and Radcliffe College. She met her husband, Desmond Nicholson, on the sailing yacht *Freelance* while cruising with her family in the Caribbean in 1956. Together they built

a life devoted to family, community, and the development of the yachting industry in Antigua. She was an active member of many community organizations, including Friends of Holberton Hospital, The Sunnyside School, and The St. Paul's Crisis Intervention Group. Singing was a passion throughout her life and she was a devoted member of Expression Choir. A strong advocate for the protection of the natural environment, Lisa was a founding member of The Environmental Awareness Group. Lisa is predeceased by her beloved husband of 50 years, Desmond Nicholson, and their son, Christopher Nicholson. She is survived



by her sister Roxana Dodd Laughlin '54, her brother Ted Dodd '58 and his wife Elena, as well as her three daughters and their spouses, Sarah Nicholson and Roger Reed, Nancy Nicholson '81, Celia and Scott Kelsick. Lisa

is also survived by nine grandchildren, Kelsey '03, Lia '05, Kai '09, Louis, Marley '11, Alex '12, Emma, Ria, and Zara, and her great granddaughter, Amaya. She truly loved her 88 years here on earth and now flies free to join her late husband and son.

George Yang '53 lived full-throttle for most of his 88 years. He enjoyed recounting how he was kicked out of or put on probation at every school he attended until he finally got to college. From there he studied literature, parasitology, organic chemistry, biochemistry, and ended up as an MD. After completing his residency in neurosurgery, George was sent to Vietnam in 1969. As a naturalized citizen, originally a refugee from the Sino-Japanese war, he originally felt duty-bound to serve. After being "in country" for a month, he began to wonder about the actual war, but served his full year and the rest of his commitment. He was in charge of neurosurgery for the 24th Evacuation Hospital at Long Binh immediately post-Tet, and was deeply affected by what he saw and did while there. It haunted him, especially as he was dying. As a neurosurgeon George had a sharp appreciation for the irony of his final situation . . . he died after three brain tumor surgeries. He did manage to stay at home for most of the

last three years, and he received hospice care while situated under the skylight in the beautiful octagonal library he designed and built. George had four children, two from his first marriage and two from his second. His first wife, Ann Robertson Yang '56, died at age 36 of ovarian cancer in 1974. His second wife, Janet F. Yang, has been widowed by his death. George had an enormous heart that he protected with a sometimes prickly exterior in the early part of his life. By the time he retired from medicine in 1994 he was starting to relax a bit. He planted about 250 fruit trees (thankfully they didn't all survive), built a home, and continued to revel in his orchards until the last three years of his life. George remained friends for life with his two high school roommates, Abijah (John) Reed and Steve Addiss. Abijah decided to take control of his own death after a diagnosis of ALS a few years ago. The bond between George and Steve grew stronger after their mutual loss and they spoke often on the phone until Steve's death last year. After moving to the San Juans, George and Janet saw another Putney compatriot, Lynn Frothingham Folsom, who lived in Anacortes, where the San Juan Island ferries depart and arrive. When they missed the last evening ferry (a number of times), it was fun to take Lynn to dinner and stay in her guest room until the morning boat. She is also gone now. George was an unstoppable force of nature and Janet will always feel lucky to have had 48 years with him. His last Putney Reunion was for the 50th anniversary of his class's graduation, quite awhile ago now, and they had a wallop good time!

Melinda Townsend Vail Killenberg '56 died on June 18, 2023. Melinda was born in Mt. Kisco, NY. After Putney, she graduated from Connecticut College. She was employed as a social worker in New York City, Philadelphia, and Cleveland, before moving to Durham, NC, in 1972. Melinda was raised beside Peach Lake in North Salem, NY, surrounded by her beloved Holstein cows. Melinda learned to fish on Peach Lake and shared that lifelong interest with her husband and family. On vacations to Emerald Isle, NC, she could be found surfcasting for pompano in the early morning, alongside her children and grandchildren. Melinda was a genuine sports fan, passionate about golf, tennis, the

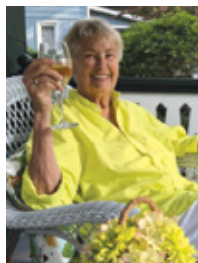
Boston Red Sox and, especially, Duke men's basketball. Watching sports with Melinda was a delight for her friends and family, as she cheered with unrivaled excitement, rooting for her teams and players with every



ounce of her energy. Melinda was a member of three bridge clubs, and regularly played with friends and family, having taught the game to her children and grandchildren. She was an avid reader and enjoyed daily crossword puzzles. Her appetite for fun was unparalleled. Melinda believed in hand-written notes and regular phone calls and had a unique capacity for keeping track of and genuinely caring about an enormous amount of people. She was the center point of a broad extended family. She believed that any job worth doing was worth doing well, and she meticulously lived up to this belief whether she was organizing an event or decorating a Christmas tree. She was an active volunteer with the League of Women Voters, Durham Congregations in Action, Meals on Wheels, Women in Action, and Friends of the Library in Durham. She was committed to her community and gave her time freely to support equality and social justice endeavors in Durham. She was preceded in death by her husband, Paul. She is survived by her three children and their spouses, Christopher, Timothy, and Jennifer, as well as six grandchildren, including Mason '26.

Mary Witherell Trevor '56 came to Putney as a freshman from Peoria, IL. She was already a full-fledged harpist, having spent several summers at the National Music Camp at Interlochen, MI. (A fellow NMC student, Dotty Rose Gonson '56, followed her two years later.) At Putney, Mary immediately joined the Norwood and Cornelia Hinkle music scene, performing with the orchestra and playing at Friday night Sings and Sunday evening meetings, often with the other future professional musician in our class, Jayn Rosenfeld (and occasionally, on her second instrument, the piano, with me.) She was part of the delegation headed to Radcliffe and Harvard from Putney '56, although she stayed only a year before decamping to Philadelphia and the Curtis Institute of Music. At Curtis she studied

with Alice Chalifoux, first harpist of the Cleveland Orchestra. Even more excitingly, Mary was among the elite students who were invited to study with the legendary Carlos Salzedo at the Summer Harp Colony in Camden, ME. Mary married Harry Hoffman, with whom she had two children, Anne and John. She continued her musical career with the Hartford Symphony Orchestra and other groups. After divorcing Harry, she reunited with her childhood sweetheart (and here I always thought I was her childhood sweetheart!), Leigh Trevor. She moved to Cleveland, but because of increasingly severe arthritis, had to give up her profession as a harpist. Undaunted, she completed a degree at Cleveland State University, and had a second career as a



clinical psychologist. After Leigh's death in 1999, she rediscovered another old boyfriend (neither I nor Ross Harris '56 was on the market at that point), this time her Curtis classmate Max Rabinovitsj, who had

by that time retired as concertmaster of the St. Louis Symphony. Mary and Max retired to Naples, FL, where they were immersed in the musical community. They moved back to Granville, OH, during the pandemic to join a Continuing Care community and to be closer to family. Two days before her death on May 22, 2023, she welcomed her beloved grandson, Davey Kete, and her first great-grandson, Joey. Besides Davey, she left three other grandchildren: Anne's daughters, Madeleine and Emma, and John's son, Christopher. And she left many friends, at Putney and beyond, for whom her radiant smile will remain embedded in our hearts.

—Paul Buttenwieser '56

William Franklyn Mervyn Hicks '58 died April 3, 2023. Bill was born in Montreal, Canada. He first came to the United States to attend Putney. He attended Harvard, graduating with a BA in government. During college he took a year's break to work in the Northwest Territories of Canada for his godfather, who was a businessman, professional hockey player, and former president of the NHL. Bill went on to study law at Boston College Law School,

where he was Order of the Coif and editor-in-chief of the Law Review. He was the first editor-in-chief in the country to devote an entire issue of the Law Review towards environmental law. Bill spent most of his career in state government, where he worked for the Secretary of Environmental Affairs for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and also served as the commissioner of the Metropolitan District Commission. Bill's work with the Secretary of Environmental Affairs was instrumental in developing the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act. After working several years for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, he worked in private practice until 2002, but eventually returned to government work as general counsel to the Massachusetts Department of Transportation before retiring. Bill passed along his passion for sports to his children, including taking on an active role in coaching his daughters' little league baseball teams. Following his daughters' aging out of little league, Bill continued to be active, acting as the commissioner of the little league for several years. Hockey was a major love of his. He and a few fellow Putney classmates, some also Canadian, even built an outdoor hockey rink so they could continue to play their favorite sport while attending high school. Originally a Montreal Canadiens fan, he became a Boston Bruins fan after living in the Boston area for many years. Following the news of Bobby Orr being drafted by the Boston Bruins in 1966, Bill became a single-seat season ticket holder, later expanding his season tickets to a broader group and adding additional seats. Bill is survived by his two former spouses, Beatrice Edey Phear '59 and Susan Marie Eastham, his four children, Catherine, David, Susan, and Emily, two sons-in-law, Jim and Dan, a daughter-in-law, Holly, and three granddaughters, Grace, Findlay, and Madeleine.

Ned (Edward Rice) Eldredge '72 died March 18, 2023 after a three year illness. Ned was a self-taught, lifelong learner, but his schooling included three years exploring farming, economics, and art at The Putney School. There, Ned began to pursue and excel at his many life-long interests, including animal husbandry, agriculture, forestry, art, music, philosophy, politics, wood-working, building, boat building, bicycling,



cross-country skiing, and sailing, as well as motorcycles, sports cars, and heavy equipment. Ned completed his first tractor rebuild while a sophomore at Putney! During the same year he wrote an economic analysis of

the dairy program, and brought forward ideas to improve the long term viability of the farm. He was instrumental in replacing buckets with tubing in the school's sugaring operation. This lowered operational costs while improving productivity. "Ned's Lot" was named in his honor. Ned was a quintessential Yankee. He was famous for coming up with very elegant solutions for complicated problems—as well as coming up with unnecessarily complicated solutions for very simple problems. Ned's mathematics teachers at Putney noticed the same tendency! Ned's life was changed for the better by Putney. His sister Ra '79, followed him seven years later. When Ned was 17, he built his own house on the family farm in Peterborough, NH. A semester at Harvard proved that Ned and cities were not simpatico. He moved back to New Hampshire and started a construction company which specialized in unique timber frame and energy efficient/solar houses, and married Putney teacher Beth Blauman (Fensterwald). Over the years he built dozens of houses, barns, wooden boats, and various projects in New Hampshire's Monadnock and White Mountain regions, as well as in Down East Maine. He also worked in ecologically sound logging and forestry management. He believed in giving back to his communities with skilled labor, financial support, and time. Ned had a lifelong passion for conservation and economics. Many years after leaving Harvard, he and his second wife, Lisa Quinn Wagner (McClellan) '79, moved to Burlington, VT, where he earned a BS in resource economics and appropriate technologies from UVM in 1990. In 2003, he graduated magna cum laude from the UNH with a master of science in natural resources and the environment. Ned moved closer to the ocean in Machias, ME, in pursuit of a simpler life with fewer people, rules, and regulations. In February 2021, during the height of Covid and his medical treatments, Ned married his longtime girlfriend, Myles

Grinstead. He continued to create (furniture and boats), read and share his knowledge until his final days. Ned is sorely missed by his family and friends. Please visit www.EdwardEldredge.com to see photographs and leave messages.

Phil Walter Gerard '71 died in February after a long battle with a lymphoma. Phil spent only the year 1969-70 as a Putney student, playing the banjo a lot, but by his own description not attentive to classes. Few of us knew that his mother was dying of cancer. He finished high school requirements with another semester of public school, then spent the winter working at an isolated cattle ranch in Montana, only to be told he needed to complete his physical education to graduate. After satisfying the Board of Education by bouncing a basketball for 16 hours, he returned to Vermont, working various farm and forest jobs, often with friends from Putney, including a year as director of the school's land use program. He completed a university degree in pieces, started a dairy farm in Charlotte, then Starksboro, and married Sherry Frazier. They joined the Peace Corps as ag educators in Lesotho, and then moved to Maine. Phil and Sherry founded the Tidewater School, now in Camden, ME, and he became an adjunct professor for the University of Maine. In a memorably musical celebration, friends spoke repeatedly of his general competence in daily work, whether carpentry or wilderness travel, and especially of his immediacy. When with Phil, you knew that you and what you were doing together had his full and pure attention to a degree that is very rare. Sherry remains in Camden, and their son Isaac in NYC.

—Jim Ehrlich '71

Mark Weiner '76, a former resident of West Tisbury, MA, died peacefully on September 9, 2022, with his wife, children, and aunt holding his hands. He was 64. He had suffered a massive heart attack at the end of August. He had operated Martha's Vineyard Glassworks in West Tisbury for



27 years. He had been a longtime Vineyard resident before moving to St. Helena, CA, in August 2020. He and his wife, Michiko, had recently opened a glassblowing studio and showroom in Calistoga, CA. Mark will be missed by his wife, Michiko, their 14-year old son, Aki, and 11-year old daughter, Kiyla, and his family and friends.

Kira Madsen '85, passed away in her sleep in early May 2022 after waiting for years for an organ transplant. Born on April 1, 1967, she grew up on Long Island at the edge of a large marsh. She came to Putney her junior year after her birding mentor recommended it. She knew all the birds, and all their songs. We became cabin-mates senior year. Noyes cabin was heaven for us right at the edge of the woods. Sometimes I would find a bag containing a dead bird she had found, waiting to be stuffed. This, along with a long yellow jacket she wore sometimes, led me to call her Bigbird. Kira took a semester off from Putney to work for the SCA. Their job was to hike into the Grand Canyon and remove outdated electrical equipment with the help of helicopters. Everything after that at Putney was easy! This experience introduced her to the Wild West and outdoor adventure. After Putney she went to Prescott College, in Prescott, AZ. (also with Chris Washburn '85, RIP) While there she met her first husband, Bob Tremblay. Together they started and ran Mountain Lynx, an outdoor adventure company based in Fitchburg, MA. After moving back to Long Island, she started a successful landscaping and garden business. She was a gardener for many of NYC's wealthy second-home-owners on Long Island, and once she told me that a certain editor at *Vogue* had called her, alarmed, asking what a zucchini was! They do sneak up on you. Her last marriage was to Charles Close (not the artist, but he was one), and they spent many happy years between Key West and Long Island. Avid Maine Coon cat and jazz lovers, they also managed to get a gig cat-sitting in Paris for a few years. I will remember her laugh, her smile, and many adventures at Putney and beyond. Fly high Bigbird.

—Abby Jones '85

Jonas Emmanuel Blanchet-Fricke '99 died of a heart attack on March 5, 2023 in Tallahassee, FL, after performing his own brand of "Radical Courage Music" as If Not



I Than Who Then, his "one human choir, drum-brigade and performance art theater troupe." As a small child, Jonas said he intended "to continue being an artist" when he grew up. In this lifelong pursuit, he was wildly successful, producing an immense body of work in many often-overlapping mediums, including painting, drawing, sculpture, screenprinting, tattoos, puppetry, performance art, textiles, and music. In his own words, Jonas believed "wholeheartedly in the ability of artwork and creative pursuits to start fires of meaning, illuminate paths of quandary and curiosity, inspire change, make life more colorful and vibrant, as well as inspire others to live more creative lives." Jonas also labored tirelessly at creating space and opportunities for other artists as a curator, promoter, organizer, and founding or contributing member of several art collectives, including the Tinderbox, The Future Collective, the Buoyant Heart, and Harmony Art Collectives in Brattleboro, VT. Jonas gave of his body, mind, and soul to promote social change, continuing activist traditions from both the American Quaker and German Jewish parts of his ancestry. He was passionately committed to anti-racist, pro-indigenous, feminist, and queer liberationist causes. Inspired by the political theater of Bread and Puppet, where he interned in his youth, Jonas brought joy and imagination to public demonstrations around the country. In his daily life, Jonas practiced mutual aid, living by his belief in communal care outside of unjust systems of power. Jonas is survived by his parents, Sylvia Blanchet and Thomas Fricke, sister Lucia Blanchet-Fricke, partner Jocelyn McElroy, six aunts and uncles, a growing number of cousins, as well as innumerable friends, bandmates, and creative collaborators—hundreds of whom paraded down the streets of Brattleboro to the beat of a brass

band soon after Jonas's death, flooding the town with ecstatic fanfare in celebration of his life. Jonas also leaves behind countless young people he nurtured, taught, and played with over more than two decades as an early-childhood educator. Jonas lives on in the people he loved, the communities he fostered, and the works of art he created.

Jake Guggisberg '12, age 29, passed away on June 22nd, 2023. He was a complex person defined by no one particular thing. He was an exceptional unicyclist, a funky food fanatic, a dedicated outdoorsman, a skilled ceramicist, an avid juggler, and a passionate environmental advocate. He was our brother, our son, our confidant, our shoulder to cry on; our best friend. Jacob was a master visionary and thought on scales that we could never imagine. While he was an introverted and introspective person, if you got him onto a topic he was passionate about, it was nearly impossible to shut him up. Unfortunately, one's accomplishments bear no significance



to the abruptness of death. It shows up before you know it, and suddenly one of the best parts of your world is gone. This pillar of your life, this tower of love. But now he can finally lay

down his burdens. And how numerous those burdens were, because Jake couldn't help but try to carry yours as well as his own. Imagine every difficult moment we experience in life as stones on our path. We pick up the stone, we examine it, and, no matter how painful or overwhelming, we eventually put it down and leave it behind. Jake didn't see it that way. Instead of putting them down, he would carry them with him. And he was sneaky... Often he would reach over and silently take one from you when your burden was too heavy. Each and every last one of them he carried on his back. Along his journey Jake would paint these stones with pencils, spray paint, and markers in order to help make even the hardest moments more bearable for the rest of us. He

never complained. Jake would do exactly what Jake wanted to do. He was terrifying and bold like that. It was simultaneously awesome and infuriating to watch. He was never one to back down from a challenge or let societal expectations stand in his way. If others were marching to the beat of the drum, Jake was unicycling to the sound of someone playing a drum set with no practice at all. There is no doubt that Jake would find this whole obituary thing frivolous. He is probably sitting on a quiet mountain top, fretting over the amount of paper that was used to print this on and is currently preparing a lecture on the environmental consequences for when we see him next. For this, we apologize in advance Jake. His legacy, this fantastically beautiful boulder that is Jake, while painfully shattered into millions of little stones, is now ours to carry on with us. We will paint these stones with terrific colors and we will show them with zeal because Jake deserves no less than the praise of a titan. Jake, you leave us with more beauty and love than we will ever know. We love you endlessly, ceaselessly, and without condition. You made us so proud. Now it's our turn to make you proud. We ask that, instead of flowers, people make a donation to the environmental groups Monadnock Conservatory (monadnockconservancy.org/donate) in his name, as that is what he would have appreciated.

EDITOR'S NOTE: *Alumni for whom we don't have an obituary or whose notice of death we received as this issue was in production, as well as former faculty who died recently, are listed below:*

Manfred Hegemann '45
Barbara Fleischman '47
Peter Tandy '47
George Morgan '50
Martin Gardiner '53
Richard Evans '54
Lincoln Ramirez '56
Sarah Kerlin Gray Gund '60
George Haggerty, former faculty

PUTNEY POST

Danny O'Brien
 Head of School

FALL 2023

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John MacIntosh P'20, '23
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The Putney Post is published twice yearly for the alumni, parents and friends of The Putney School.

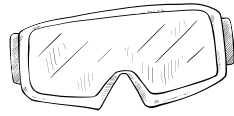
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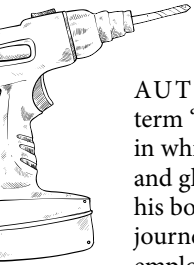
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I BUILT



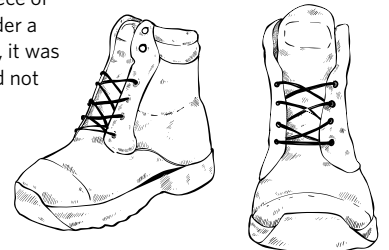
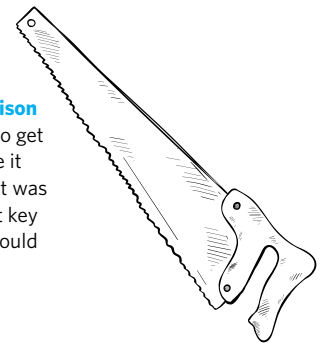
AUTHOR MATTHEW CRAWFORD uses the term “virtualism” to describe “a vision of the future in which we somehow take leave of material reality and glide about in a pure information economy.” In his book *Shop Class as Soulcraft*, he describes his journey from (disillusioned) white collar think tank employee to (deeply satisfied) repairman of motorcycles. We have this school, this experiment, where we know full well that we stand with a foot in both worlds, offering a path into a “pure information economy” and one into a “material reality.” Neither is a mandated path.

In fact, as we see here, many students find ways to explore the art of craft and using one’s hands. They find a way to do so inside the slippery walls of the information economy. It’s fascinating to watch how they learn, how they teach themselves, how they ask questions of the tools they have. The questions of the tool, for a progressive school, isn’t the thing itself, but, in the words of science teacher Ann-Marie White: “How do we use the tools at hand to go beyond the tools at hand?”



This antique great wheel was sitting, broken, in the hallway of Reynolds. **Alison Cheney '23** noticed it, and set about to get the basic tool back to work. And while it was a basic tool requiring a basic fix, it was also an old object, missing a small but key piece that no modern store or shop would ever have.

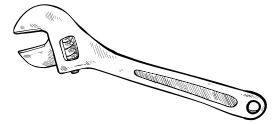
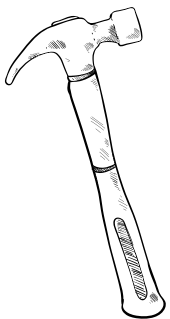
Enter **Skylar Rainier '24**, who was working nearby at the 3D printers. He was able to see what was missing, then measure, design, and print a piece. It's a small, seemingly inconsequential piece of gray plastic that could easily roll under a radiator and be lost forever. And yet, it was the difference between operable and not for the wheel.



THIS



Giulia Puppini '23 and **Eliza Kaufman '24** led a project to build new stall doors in the horse barn, changing the style from swinging to sliding. They learned all the carpentry as they went. But the carpentry was only half of it, as the concept and design (and motivation) came from their work with the horses. Ultimately, the project improved working conditions and safety for the students and the animals.



Owen Wilsey '23 spent two years disassembling, cleaning, and rebuilding the motor of his grandfather's 1942 Jeep, which had been in Owen's family since just after WWII. The work culminated in senior exhibition, and Owen drove the Jeep in his graduation procession.



The Putney School

“Where are the new buildings on campus?” is a question we hear regularly from alumni. Of course, what’s new to some might be old to others. Here’s an aerial photo of the campus, with a handful of notable buildings identified. We hope it helps you see the shape of the campus today.

Michael S. Currier Center

Site of New Black Box Theater

Main Building



Hepper House
(New Dorm Site)

KDU

Field House

Library Building

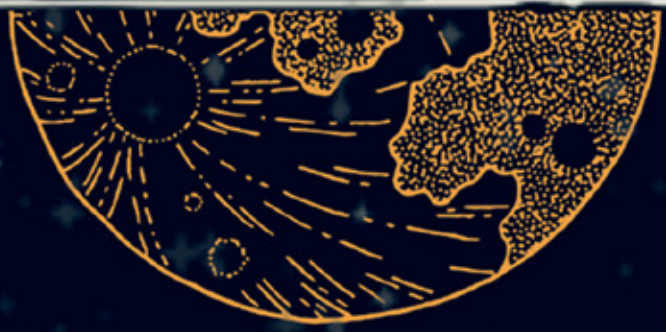
Wender Arts
(Art Building)

New Dorm on Greenhouse Site



Martin Higgins '23 entered college at age 14 and spent two years "at maximum intensity" as an applied math major. She spent her nights intensely studying in the library, and dropped out after two years, three courses shy of a bachelor's degree. Martin first visited Putney in the spring of 2021, tagging along on her sister's tour of the school. On this visit, she met science teacher Glenn Littledale. "In this first time meeting Glenn, he called me a racehorse who was blazing in the fast lane, and had never had a chance to go frolic in the meadow, and I sobbed. I had never had the chance to explore, to learn by doing, to just be a kid. Glenn saw me, and he understood." She enrolled. In that first meeting, Glenn also promised Martin she could build a telescope. Many students over the years have built a telescope with Glenn. It's hardly new news. But that itself is part of the story—year in, year out, students dig into these projects, starting from scratch. The story isn't new, but their successes and failures are their own. Growth is an individual experience. Last spring, for her senior exhibition, Martin finished her telescope, having built it from the ground up, over the course of her two years at Putney. Knowing nothing about telescopes, tools, hardware optics, or construction, she learned it all by doing it: adjustable tilt, collimation, primary and secondary mirrors, handmade L-shaped brass holders, epoxy, lasers, saber saw, bearings, mounts, and more. "It was the first time I was able to put my math and physics background into real-world practice. I combined my love for the stars with my mathematical mind, while getting my hands a little bit dirty," she said. Martin plans to study mechanical engineering on her next college endeavor. She appreciates how her Putney experience balances the old and the new: "The stars are old. Telescopes are old. The Newtonian telescope has been around since the 1600s. But it's also me building it at a progressive boarding school, putting my visions into action using my hands and tools. The juxtaposition is interesting. I came into the exhibition with a passion for astronomy and the stars themselves, and through the project veered toward the mechanical and optical side of it."

Martin peered into the eyepiece. Perched outside of the Main Building, looking out toward Monadnock, her hand-built telescope stood as both a window to the stars and a window to the soul.



I BUILT THIS

The stars are as old as time. Our reach for them, however, is arguably one of our most innovative and brave endeavors. Outer space captivates us, from Isaac Newton's creation of the first reflecting telescope in 1668, to the infrared astronomy of the James Webb Space Telescope, which was launched in 2021 and is able to see 13 billion light-years into the past.



Marin completed the telescope during her senior exhibition last spring (right and next page), and did the much of the creation work during Project Weeks her previous two years (next page, works in progress).



havoc on the state's infrastructure, a powerful hurricane approaches a small town on the southeastern coast. Kirby Lowe, an electrical line worker, his pregnant wife, Frida, and their two sons, Flip and Lucas, prepare for the worst. When the boys go missing just before the hurricane hits, Kirby heads out into the high winds in search of his children. Left alone, Frida goes into premature labor and gives birth to an unusual child, Wanda. As Florida continues to unravel, Wanda grows. She loses family, gains community, and ultimately seeks adventure, love, and purpose in a place remade by nature. Told in four parts—power, water, light, and time—*The Light Pirate* mirrors the rhythms of the elements and the sometimes quick, sometimes slow dissolution of the world as we know it. It is a meditation on the changes we would rather not see, the future we would rather not greet, and a call back to the beauty and violence of an untamable wilderness.



the backcountry on his day off, encounters a tall man with a dog and a gun chasing a small black bear up a hill, his hackles are raised. But what begins as an investigation into the background of a local poacher soon opens into something far murkier: A shattered windshield, a series of red ribbons tied to traps, the discovery of a frightening conspiracy, and a story of heroism gone awry. Populated by a cast of extraordinary characters—famous scientists, tattooed bartenders, wildlife guides in slick Airstreams—and bursting with unexpected humor and grace, Peter Heller masterfully unveils a portrait of the American west where our very human impulses—for greed, love, family, and community—play out amidst the stunning beauty of the natural world.



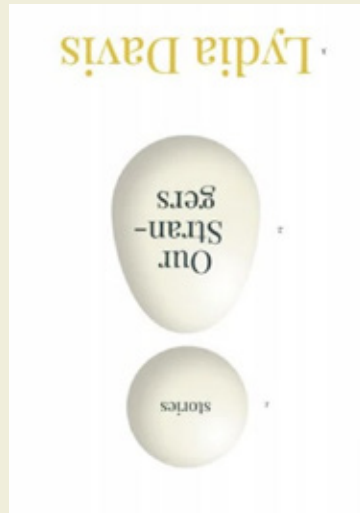
The Light Pirate
Lily Brooks-Dalton '05 / Grand Central Publishing, 2022
Florida is slipping away. As devastating weather patterns and rising sea levels wreak gradual

hates to lose. What first appears to be an open-and-shut homicide case soon becomes a tangled web of deception and danger. Maneuvering through a maze of office politics, the bright glare of the media spotlight, and his own ethical dilemmas, Mac relies on his courtroom cunning and wit as he navigates from crime scene investigation to jury selection to fierce cross-examination to a shocking verdict. When explosive new evidence is discovered, Mac faces the greatest challenge of his distinguished career. He must decide . . . will finding or hiding the truth lead to justice?



The Last Ranger
Peter Heller '77 / Knopf, 2023
Peter Heller returns with a vibrant, lyrical novel about Ren Hopper, an enforcement ranger in Yellowstone National Park who likes wolves better than most people. When a clandestine range war threatens his closest friend, he must shake off his own losses and act swiftly to discover the truth and stay alive. When Ren, hiking through

Our Strangers
Lydia Davis '65
Bookshop Editions, 2023
From one of the most accomplished writers of our time comes another brilliant collection of short fiction. Artful, deft, and inventive; Lydia Davis's newest collection of stories delves into topics ranging from marriage to tiny insects. These stories are a celebration of language and careful observation that once again confirms Davis's sincere love and mastery of the form. Only available at independent bookstores and libraries, by request of the author.



The Seneca County Courthouse Series, Book One
A.X. Foster '74 / Paper Raven Books, 2023
In this new legal thriller, a wealthy business tycoon is viciously stabbed to death by his wife. The only eyewitness is their disabled young daughter. Her testimony is the key to the case. But is she telling the truth? Top prosecutor Mac MacIntyre is calm, confident, and

Gavel to Gavel:
The Seneca County Courthouse Series, Book One
A.X. Foster '74 / Paper Raven Books, 2023

MacIntyre is calm, confident, and ing the truth? Top prosecutor Mac the key to the case. But is she telling the truth? Her testimony is only eyewitness is their disabled young daughter. Her testimony is the key to the case. But is she telling the truth? Top prosecutor Mac MacIntyre is calm, confident, and



As the tide begins to turn at schools around the country, Putney's work continues to serve as a model for those trying to align their educational programs with a changing world.

DANNY O'BRIEN

Just as this issue was going to print, I learned of the death of former Board Chair and trustee emerita Sarah Kerlin Gray Gund '60. Sarah put her energy into the things she loved, and she gave more than a decade of service to the school on our board of trustees. Moreover, her generous philanthropic support of the school—along with her husband, Geoffrey—was, and continues to be, transformational. Even in my short time knowing her, her deep love of Putney and dedication to the school's success shone through. A full remembrance of Sarah will appear in our next issue of the Post.

On the Cutting Edge for Almost 90 Years

Years ago, close to the dawn of the new millennium, I attended an education conference in New York. A speaker spoke about the twenty-first century economy, and the jobs that would be available to graduates of schools in the United States fifty and one hundred years hence.

I cannot remember who this person was, or much else of his speech. I only recall, in fact, one line, "Any job which has the purpose of finding the 'right' answer is dead," he said. "First, these jobs will go overseas, and then they will be automated," the speaker continued. The dawn of artificial intelligence only exacerbates the thesis of the speaker I remember. Many more fields will disappear as technology we cannot yet imagine does many tasks more quickly, now perhaps more creatively, and always more reliably than humans.

The main point was that the educational world needed to adjust to this reality: One school will not. The Putney School. In this new world, I believe a Putney education is more relevant than ever. Our teachers have never sought to tell students what happened or why it did; instead, they have always hoped to guide students in generating their own conclusions about the world around them; these skills will always be in demand.

I participated a few years ago in a round table discussion on this topic with Rebecca Chopp, a three-time college president in elite American schools. Chopp was regarded as one of the leading thinkers about how schools are evolving—and where they still need to go.

During the conversation, Chopp shared several disquieting points. Among them were:

Schools are not graduating students with the skills sought by most employers. Chopp cited research (she did a lot of it!) that suggests corporations are seeking employees with emotional intelligence, collaborative ability, communication skills, and an innovative sense—and that they cannot find these people. Schools should be focusing less on traditional academic subject areas and more on maximizing opportunities that result from a world where diversity and interconnectedness are non-negotiable facts. We should also teach conflict management, negotiation skills, and how to navigate complexity.

American parents need to worry less about the name of the schools their children attend and more about the education their children receive. Chopp believes some of the most innovative and important educational changes are happening in less well-known schools.

I think about this conversation a lot in the context of Putney. It is hard not to feel good about our school. Each time Chopp mentioned a new skill students graduating from school today need to have before completing their education, I thought of the way that Putney teaches it over the course of a student's career. Conflict management? Check. Collaboration? Check. Leadership? Check.

It feels good to be on the cutting edge. I also appreciate that what feels new to many is what The Putney School has been doing for almost 90 years. As the tide begins to turn at schools around the country, Putney's work continues to serve as a model for those trying to align their educational programs with a changing world.

Warmly,

DANNY O'BRIEN
Head of School

Reunion 2023 was the largest in the school's history, with nearly 300 people enjoying celebrations and good vibes everywhere you looked. People danced and sang, laughed and learned. We send a huge thank you to everyone who joined us for the weekend, especially the class of 1973, who brought almost 80% of their class together for their 50th reunion. We also raise three cheers to the class of 2020 and their families, who returned for a heart-warming celebration—a bit of fanfare for the graduation ceremony they missed because of Covid, and some proper reuniting as well.



Class of 2020

Reunion 2023



SAVE THE DATE
FOR REUNION 2024, JUNE 7-9.
Classes of '50-'54, '67-'69, '74, '84-'85, '05-'07, '14-'16

we apply the same approach to other gendered languages such as Spanish and French?

This individual, and many other students, had the chance to hear, in Spanish class at Putney, more stories about folks who have defied for

centuries the gendered norms and the binary constructs in a small town in the state of Oaxaca, Mexico. These communities existed long before

the Spaniards arrived and colonized what we now call México. Additionally, listening to stories from Lukas Avendaño, a Muxe* anthropologist, and seeing the cover of *Vogue Mexico* featuring

a Muxe model, Estrella Vazquez, was not only a powerful and affirming moment for this non-binary student, but for every person who still held

onto the idea that Mexico was reduced to stereotypical tropes depicted in many classroom materials such as pinatas, mariachis, and sombreros.

Representation is crucial in our classrooms today. As a teacher, we must continue actively working to create safe spaces and oases. Let us

view using affirming and validating identities and pronouns for trans or non-binary individuals as an act of love rather than a grammatical error. Putney has taught me that in my 12 years

of teaching here. This is much more than just another ending to the masculine and feminine adjectives. Es un acto de amor y de solidaridad.

**In Zapotec cultures of Oaxaca (southern Mexico), a muxe is a person assigned male at birth who dresses and behaves in ways otherwise associated with women; they may be seen as a third gender.*

Es un acto de amor

examples of pronoun treatment options:

él / ella / elle [spanish]

il / elle / iel [french]

ele / ela / elu [portuguese]

he / she / they [english]

>> Abelardo, right, teaches a "Genderless Latin Dance" evening activity during the school year. Here, he leads the same activity at Reunion 2023.

Y de solidaridad.

—STORY BY—
ABELARDO
ALMAZAN-VAZQUEZ

Time Teaching, Language, and Inclusion

Abelardo Almazan-Vazquez is a Spanish teacher at Putney who regularly presents about inclusivity in the classroom at regional and national conferences. Below is an excerpted version of a longer text he shares in those presentations.

This testimonio was written in Spanish about five years ago, slightly before the pandemic. I've brought this story to you in English as an act of love and resistance directed toward my past, current, and future non-binary students and colleagues.

DURING MY STUDIES for an undergraduate degree in teaching Spanish as a

second language, I vividly remember one of my college professors telling me, "The first 15 minutes of your first class will determine how the rest of the year will go for you."

I walked into the Putney classroom on a cold morning in September. I had a triple shot espresso in an insulated mug, ready for the warm-up activity before starting the classes.

Introductions, names, likes, dislikes—you know the drill: small talk here and there, finding out who they are and where they're from. Where is home for you these days? Why did you choose this school, perched on a hilltop in the middle

of nowhere, Vermont? Why are you taking Spanish? Then, it was their turn to speak.

This person was actually a bit late. I remember their dark outfit, complemented by a stunningly beautiful and colorful handwoven scarf. They had short, dark hair, and you could quickly notice something different in their

eyes. There was fear and anxiety. The student noticed the only empty spot left and quickly sat down. We looked at each other for a moment, and I asked the first question:

"Hola, ¿cómo te llamas?"

The student said their name and proudly said: "...y mi pronombre son elle/elles."

That was the first time many students had heard someone using the singular "they/them" alternative in Spanish! It reminded me of my journey of learning, unlearning, and relearning during that exchange.

I'm a Mexican national, an immigrant, cis-gendered and heterosexual—very much the stereotypical Latino portrayed in the media, according to many of my white colleagues. I arrived in this country at 23, not knowing how to speak or write the language. I learned English out of necessity. I was given a full scholarship to pursue my master's degree at a school in Ohio.



My adolescent years were filled with stereotypes and jokes that would earn me a free pass to the famous circles in my hometown in Cuernavaca, Mexico. To be the cool guy often meant cracking a sexist joke or making fun of anyone who didn't look or sound like you. I used to buy recorded tapes with hours and hours of stand-up comedians in the "fayuca"—the black market. Consciously and subconsciously, my mind absorbed hours and hours of those sexist, misogynistic, racist, and homophobic jokes. I didn't know it back then, but those stand-up comedians were making fun of minorities, underrepresented groups, and racialized people who didn't fit their standards of normalcy.

Back to the classroom and the student introducing themselves in Spanish. At that moment, I said out loud to them:

"I want you to know this is a safe space for you. As you know, Spanish is a highly gendered language. Even if the Real Academia Española does not accept the singular 'they/them' in Spanish, and even if there are many linguists and educated voices making fun of or dismissing alternative/like elle/ellx; as long as I'm a teacher in this place, you and everybody else should feel completely empowered to use the '-e' whenever you feel it necessary. If he is 'alto' and she is 'alta,' you can say you are 'bueno' is 'buena' and she is 'buena,' you are 'buena.' The students clearly understood in those first 15 minutes that the class would be a safe and affirming space for all identities present.

Believing in a completely "pure" Spanish language is not realistic. Attempting to maintain linguistic purity is an impossible task. It is better to focus on expanding our understanding of language by recognizing the importance of dialect, geolect, and dialect. If gender-neutral language is already used in English, why can't

“It shifts what it means to be in community. We can engineer, design, and build the things we love, but if we’re in community, we have to think about the needs of others. This class pulls together so much of what Carmelita Hinton talked about.



Using your hands in service of someone else’s need.”



Recommended reading

from the *New York Times*:

About Us: Essays from the Disability Series (2019)

“Disabled Do-It-Yourselfers Lead Way to Technology Gains,” July 14, 2020

“Building Accessibility Into America, Literally,” July 20, 2020

“How to Report With Care on Disability,” February 27, 2022

Nothing About Us Without Us Reflecting on the class and looking forward, Ann-Marie offers this perspective: “It shifts what it means to be in community. We can engineer, design, and build the things we love, but if we’re in community, we have to think about the needs of others. This class pulls together so much of what Carmelita Hinton talked about. Using your hands in service of someone else’s need” John Dewey died in 1952. What does progressive education look like now? How does Putney stay on the leading edge? We ask ourselves that question often, and in this class, we saw an answer. “Let’s use our creativity to build something that’s useful for another person. If that’s not what Carmelita Hinton was talking about, I’m not sure what is.” *Nothing about us without us.* Disability advocates embrace this slogan, and have trumpeted it as they fight for visibility and work with policymakers about the decisions that affect their lives. In a basement classroom, in an old building in Vermont, five teenagers lived it, with busy hands, curious minds, and open hearts.

and useful. The precision and detail of the iterative process was invaluable in the course. The disability aspect gave the class depth and meaning—it was all about what Izabel wanted. “It was practical, and we were helping somebody. 3D-printing a silicone foot is new technology, and we came up with new ideas. The class was a mix of getting better at what we already knew, learning new things, and working as a team to have a product,” said Owen Bonneau ’23. In eight weeks, they created a prosthetic that really works. And while they are still figuring out how to get it secure around Izabel’s foot, she *can* wear it. Material cost? About \$30. The size of both the class and the client base will double next year.

An Innovative Marriage of Engineering and Advocacy

Born a congenital double amputee, with a partial right foot and a right arm ending at the wrist, Izabel Estrin, at age 23, is an NYU graduate, an actor, and an advocate, disabled and proud. And last spring, Putney's Engineering and Design class was tasked with creating for her a new prosthetic foot. "I acted as their client, as if they were an actual engineering company I hired to design a new prosthetic foot for me," reported Izabel. Students had access to scanning programs, coding programs, 3D printers, and all of the necessary materials. But first—very importantly—the students learned lessons in disability rights, history, and culture. Their worldview expanded to see that we live in an ableist society, and we go to an ableist school.

The class focused on human-centered design. How does a person's lens shift when they ask if the *system* is the issue? "We talked about sidewalks," said teacher Ann-Marie White. "You could look at someone who is physically disabled and think, 'look at that person who can't get up on the sidewalk, or you could think, 'look at that sidewalk that not helpful for all people? *That's* the shift that we made in this class."

The *New York Times* pioneered a "Disability" column starting in 2016, and in 2020, the paper marked the 30th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act with a series of articles celebrating people with disabilities, as well as reflecting on the progress our society has made since the signing of the bill and highlighting the ways we continue to fall short [see sidebar].

Izabel's advice echoed that offered in the *Times* series: don't try to solve problems that don't exist. Blind people generally like their white canes. A prosthetic arm does not necessarily need to have a hand, because it offers little use. Likewise, Izabel, born with a partial foot and an ankle joint, needs a prosthetic that gives her a pivot point, but does not need toes. Those cosmetic touches exist to make able-bodied people more comfortable. So, then, what problem did the class fix? What did the students learn?

This page, clockwise: Izabel out and about in Bellows Falls; molds and models as works in process; Opposite page: Skylar '24 uses his iPhone and the Polycam app to scan the prosthetic foot the class worked to replace



PHOTO COURTESY OF IZABEL ESTRIN

An estimated 100 million people worldwide use a prosthetic or orthotic to support a damaged limb. The expense and delay of acquiring a prosthetic create hurdles, some insurmountable, for many of those in need. But now, 3D printers and computer-assisted design programs might create a bypass to traditional systems, offering access where it did not previously exist. "The professional orthotics and prosthetics industry is almost fully reliant on traditional materials like silicone, plaster, and carbon fiber. Those prosthetics are expensive, take a long time to make, and are often inaccessible to someone without health insurance," said Izabel. "We think 3D printing could be an incredible solution to this, because if we are able to figure out prosthetic designs that actually work, we could in theory create digital files, and the client who needs the prosthetic could obtain the file, go to a local makerspace, and get a new prosthetic printed whenever they need one." Stop and think about that. Doesn't that blow your mind? How would that work?

First, a note on the equipment, as it remains unfamiliar to many of us. One could easily mistake 3D-printer filament for the coated electrical wire found in a hardware store. It's a colorful empty canvas of varying materials, spooled and ready to go. The 3D printer in the Reynolds Building lives in what looks like an empty terrarium. You almost expect to see a pet tarantula hiding in its corner. Inside this glass box, you find a crane-like structure (a small one), a handful of wires, and not much else. Students use computer programs to create designs, and presto! changeo, the printer slowly turns the design into a tangible thing.

The class at Putney used Polycam to 3D-scan Izabel's foot. These measurements went into Fusion 360, and the students designed 3D-printable prosthetics, using the scan of the foot as a reference to create molds from which the prosthetics were then built. The first prototype fit, but the material was too rigid, its sharp edges uncomfortable. Back to the drawing board, changing the

material, skimming off another millimeter, figuring out the front, and then finding the back didn't work. Prototype after prototype, the students worked for eight weeks with an eye to the needs of the client, focusing on strength, flexibility, and comfort. They had to create something both comfortable



Now we're talking. >>

"What's most beneficial to you, the client, and your individual needs and wants?"

PHOTOS BY
LAURA STEWART
AND
ANN-MARIE WHITE

Start over.

as able-bodied as possible with this prosthetic. "Wait. Scratch that."





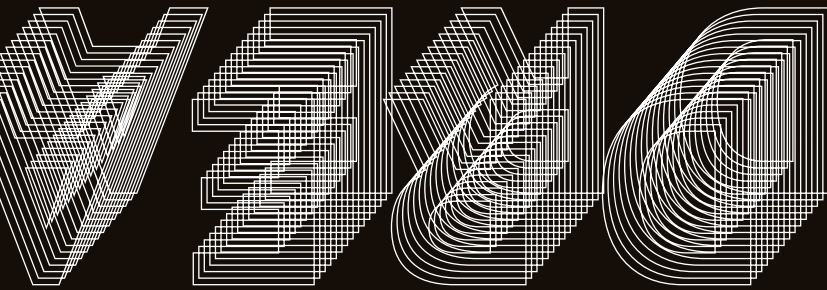
Power

Prosthetic

STORY BY
ALISON FRYE

"Let me fix your disability and make you

HIS AWARD-WINNING AI FILM



The forest that surrounds his family's home in

Dummerston is deep and wild.

Darius Shaoul '18 was on break from college last

summer, home again in Vermont, amidst the tremendous trees, the art, the instruments, and the creative chaos in the house. He was home again in Vermont, amidst the back-to-the-landers, the craftsmen and artisans, and the counterculture ethos that raised him.

Over the summer, he was also bound for Spain, where his recent AI-generated film (created with collaborator Gabriel McKee), *Extreme Access*, won an award at the first AI film festival in Europe.

The concept for the short film is, says Shaoul, is an experiment in free association with the new—and to many, controversial—technology.

Shaoul, aged 23, comes to this art form from an interesting vantage point, and he brings to it a philosophical take beyond, it seems, a college student.

"This technology can be celebrated or detested. But it's important to remember that it's just one of many technologies—it doesn't stand apart from other technologies in the past," said Shaoul. "I think that it creates this response in people means that it has the potential for changing minds and opening the understanding of technology's relationship to our own efforts as humans."

The film he made opens on barren landscapes of caves, featuring billboards of barren landscapes of caves. Barren landscape upon barren landscape: a stark beginning-of-time feeling reflecting on itself. It moves through the mundane (commenters on trains scrolling endlessly) to the religious (cardinals at a photoshoot), and the profane (AI's version of an orgy), to the sacred (a mother birthing a baby in a green meadow).

He describes the process of prompting the software and engaging with its feedback as "dreamlike," which is an odd word for a topic for which others might use "dystopian." The description that accompanies the film reads: *After waking from a dream, it is often difficult to tell how you managed to get from one moment to the next, yet you feel as if there was an urgent moral that tied it all together, a moral that was grasped the very moment you woke up but can no longer be resurrected. Extreme Access has taken the form of*



Darius Shaoul '18 at his family's home in Dummerston, Vermont.

this dream, a collective dream that is reproduced in the unconscious technologies we use. Rather than take a stance on this seemingly autonomous technology, we hope the viewer will join us in experiencing it as a product of our humanity.

Shaoul, a musician, started his college career studying anthropology and computer science at UVM. During

Covid, he found himself at a fork in the road—buckle down on a career path or follow his impulses to make and study art. He transferred to The School of the Art Institute of Chicago—new city, new trajectory, new medium.

Although, he says, "I think about Vermont all the time," "I think specifically about the old hippies, the ones who moved here in the '60s and '70s, who experienced the counterculture and back-to-the-land movements. I think a lot of my interests might be a reaction to that, but I also really resonate with the spirit of the people who live in Vermont—the DIY, and setting a path outside of the mainstream institutions."

Art, he points out, has adapted throughout history alongside technology despite art's resistance. At the same time, he observes, art and technology occupy the same space as humanity's highest achievements. "And yet," he said, "They are in constant opposition. Why is that?" Technology divides the art world, and for Shaoul, they naturally move together. "You can't really try to oppose them in any way. The question is whether or not you can see both of them as the product of human intellect."

Laura Stewart

Portraits by

Darry Madden

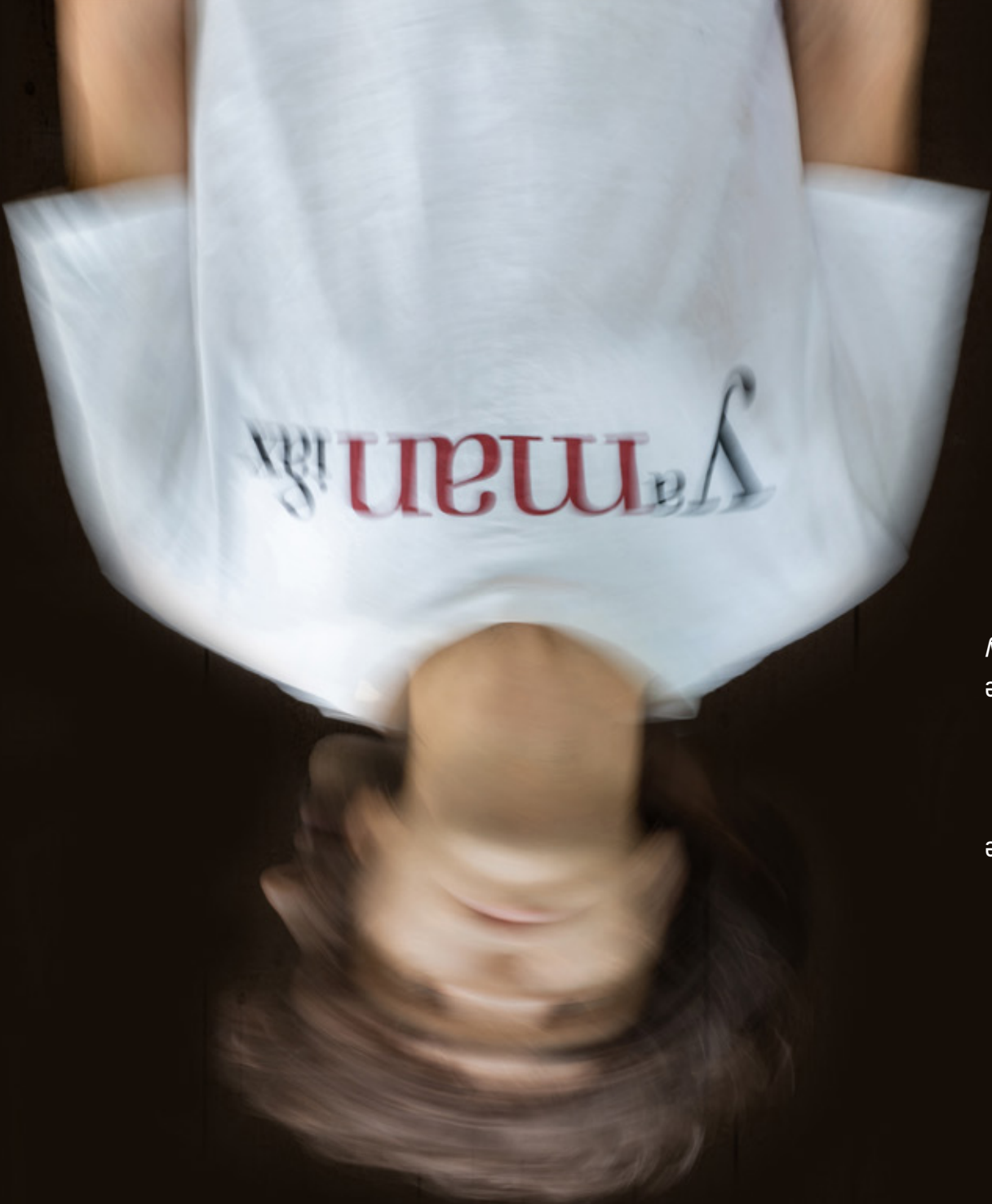
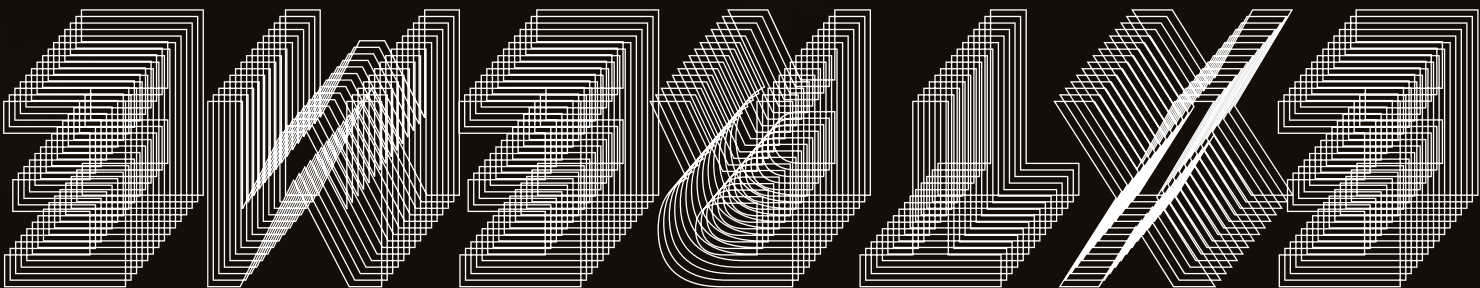
Story by

—end quote—

These scenes build an image of a half-awake mind that has taken on the form, content, and pace of an increasingly stupefying media delivery machine: the Internet is simply more perfect public-access television. The dreams we conjure up to enhance reality become more and more real. At this stage in history we can now make a short film without the need for cameras.

—quote—

DARIUS SHAOUL '18 ON ART, TECHNOLOGY, AND



DEAR READER,

Greetings from The Putney Post, your window into the vibrant world of The Putney School, where we strive to embody progressiveness, climate-awareness, and a profound engagement with the arts, farming, and public service. As we gather here for another exciting edition of our magazine, we are humbled by the opportunity to reflect on a topic that ignites curiosity and sparks spirited debates – Artificial Intelligence.

In this rapidly evolving era, the creation and integration of AI have become pivotal forces shaping the very fabric of society. As an educational institution that values foresight and introspection, The Putney School recognizes the urgency to address the unique questions posed by this technological marvel. Our focus in this issue lies in exploring how AI will impact learning, education, and the generations that grow up in its presence. Now, as we delve into the depths of this subject, it is natural for us to confront an array of fears and hopes that surround AI today. Many fear that AI will replace human jobs, diminishing employment opportunities for future generations. The rapid advancement of AI also triggers concerns about its ethical implications, potential biases, and data privacy breaches. As we seek to embrace technology responsibly, these apprehensions compel us to tread cautiously.

On the other hand, the promise of AI also inspires great hope and excitement. Many anticipate that AI can

revolutionize education, personalizing learning experiences, and making them more accessible to all. The prospect of AI-driven advancements in healthcare, environmental conservation, and sustainable farming fills us with optimism. The power to augment human potential through AI offers a glimpse into a brighter future, ripe with possibilities.

As a community rooted in intellectual exploration and compassion, we acknowledge that the integration of AI in education brings both challenges and opportunities. We are determined to nurture open dialogues, fostering an environment where fears can be acknowledged, and hopes can be amplified. We believe that understanding the potential impacts of AI will empower us to harness its benefits for the betterment of society.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our contributors, who have shared their insights and experiences, making this issue a compelling read. Together, let us engage in this exploratory journey, navigating the uncharted waters of AI with a spirit of inquiry and mindfulness. Thank you for being an essential part of The Putney Post community. Your curiosity and dedication drive us to pursue excellence in every aspect of our magazine, and we eagerly anticipate your feedback and contributions.

With warm regards,
A robot posing as Allison Frye, Editor
and Darryl Madden, Publisher

THE ROBOTS ARE COMING

with clear-cased woofers for heads,
no eyes. They see us as a bat sees
a mosquito—a fleshy echo,
a morsel of sound. You've heard
their intergalactic tour busses
purring at our stratosphere's curb.
They await counterintelligence
transmissions from our laptops
and our blue teeth, await word
of humanity's critical mass,
our ripening. How many times
have we dreamed it this way:
the Age of the Machines,
postindustrial terrors whose
tempered paws—five welded fingers
—wrench back our roofs,
siderophilic tongues seeking blood,
licking the crumbs of us from our beds.
O, great nation, it won't be pretty:
What land will we now barter
for our lives? A treaty inked
in advance of the metal ones' football.
Give them Gary. Give them Detroit,
Pittsburgh, Braddock—those forgotten
nurseries of girders and axels.
Tell the machines we honor their dead,
distant cousins. Tell them
we tendered those cities to repose
out of respect for welded steels
bygone era. Tell them Ford
and Carnegie were giant men, that war
glazed their palms with gold.
Tell them we soft beings mourn
manufactures' death as our own.

BY KYLE DARGAN

"The Robots are Coming" from Honest Engine.
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reality / alternate



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ISSUE NO. 146 / FALL 2023