June 4, 1989, was quite a day.

As the sun traveled around the globe, the world awoke to find the People’s Liberation Army clearing Tiananmen Square in central Beijing of the student-led pro-democracy demonstrations that had been taking place there since the spring. Newspapers and television broadcasts around the world carried scenes of Chinese soldiers firing on crowds around the square and the iconic moment of the day was a lone man trying to prevent a column of tanks from passing. China experts around the world predicted that the crackdown at Tiananmen might well be the beginning of the end for the communist regime.

Later that day came news that the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, supreme leader of Iran and implacable foe of the United States, had died the previous night. American newspapers were filled with speculation that whomever Khomeini’s replacement turned out to be, he just might move towards thawing the Iran–United States relationship.

Then, to the surprise of many who followed the course of Mikhail Gorbachev’s reform campaign in the Soviet Union, Western news organizations were able to report on a major disaster in the USSR. Two trains passing one another in the Ural region of Russia threw sparks onto a leaky natural gas pipeline. The ensuing explosion killed more than 500 people and wounded more than 600. That this disaster was first reported in Soviet media (instead of being denied) seemed proof that Gorbachev’s policy of glasnost (openness) had taken root and Gorbachev’s hold on power was strong—or at least strengthening. In short,

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The College of Humanities and Social Sciences is a cornerstone of learning and research at George Mason University. Programs of study at the graduate level provide opportunities for career development and advancement, professional education, personal fulfillment, and participation in research. Through course work that emphasizes writing, research, technology, reflection on the past, global awareness, and leadership, undergraduates gain a broad foundation of disciplinary and interdisciplinary knowledge. All programs promote direct or indirect exploration of contemporary issues, as well as opportunities to apply learning in the community.

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CORNERSTONE
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Cornerstone is intended to keep alumni, the Mason community, and the public informed about the activities, growth, and progress of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences. Articles reflect the opinions of the writers and not those of the magazine, the college, or the university.

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Dear Alumni and Friends:

As a college student some 40 years ago, I saw our country transformed by the civil rights movement and later divided by the war in Vietnam. Watching these transformations—from the acceptance of the status quo to a desire to change things and even to engage utopian ideas—made me interested in studying the many facets of political revolutions. In college, I devoted much of my course work to various aspects of the Russian Revolution, but in graduate school, I turned to the French Revolution of 1789, the subject I have researched and taught during my three decades at Mason. The interest in the French Revolution has led me to think a lot about not only human potential and the desire to increase the vistas of that potential, but also the importance of restraint. This issue of *Cornerstone* deals with the concept of potential: potential application of research, potential for a peaceful world, personal potential found best when working for the community, and potential in nature.

The French Revolution began with a clear idea that all people are created equal. In 18th-century France, such a notion contrasted completely with rule by hereditary monarch whose political systems did not include any commitment to democracy as we understand the term. Although the French revolutionaries began with idealism and compromise in mind, resistance by the established political and social elite drove them to embrace a purer idea: patriotism and democracy without question. So strong did this tendency become and so entrenched the resistance to it, that eventually the revolutionaries would embrace terror to repress those who did not agree with them. The revolutionists lacked restraint in their pursuit of ideals. The reality of their struggle overcame the nobility of their aspirations.

What’s the lesson here for this issue of *Cornerstone*? Achieving goals can come with risks, and we should be attendant to them. For example, in some places after revolutions, reconciliation committees have shown restraint and pacified countries. Other places have not been so successful. Revolutions fail at times. The French Revolution cannot provide us with a perfect guide, but it does cast its light in favor of change while it counsels us at the same time to be wary. Of course, we all embrace the advantages of democracy, but we observe the manifestations of its excesses as well. This theory of potential and restraint can be applied to many concepts. Revolutions can create feelings of nostalgia for the past coupled with lack of clarity for moving forward. In contrast, the potential, the hope for a better way, keeps revolutionaries moving forward. Potential can provide inspiration.

As always, at this time of year, I consider the future of this year’s Mason graduates. I review the research of our remarkable faculty. I see potential, and I see change. It’s these hopes cultivated through education and matured by experience that can make a brighter day.

Jack R. Censer, Dean
Belief in Change

By Alexander Gudich-Yulle, ‘09

Integrative Studies major with a concentration in organizational administration and minors in business and conflict analysis and resolution

I believe universities have a responsibility to cultivate within their students a passion for creating a better world. Unlocking the change-making capabilities of universities and the people who occupy them has been the goal of the Changemaker Campus Initiative, a new program being implemented by the global nonprofit organization Ashoka: Innovators for the Public.

As we face innumerable local and global challenges from poverty and environmental degradation to diseases such as malaria and HIV/AIDS, the globalized and interconnected nature of our world means that these challenges, and their solutions, are no longer relegated to one specific locality.

The distribution of information and ideas, regardless of borders or geographic distances, allows solutions in one location to be transported and applied to similar problems in vastly different settings. In this way, the potential individuals have to effect change is infinitely multiplied; no previous generation has ever had more opportunities to change the world.

Ashoka sought out four universities along the eastern seaboard to participate in the pilot year of a program that would attempt to transform college campuses into hotbeds of social entrepreneurship and innovation. Social entrepreneurship is a concept coined by Ashoka founder Bill Drayton that describes taking entrepreneurial approaches to social problems. Ashoka also defines it as “innovative solutions to society’s most pressing social problems” and “new ideas for wide-scale change.”

George Mason University, Cornell University, Johns Hopkins University, and the University of Maryland were selected as the pilot campuses based on their size, location, proclivity to innovate, and the anticipated support the program would receive from the schools’ top administrators. Interdisciplinary teams of students and faculty were then chosen using Ashoka’s strenuous selection criteria that looked for traits such as ethical fiber, entrepreneurial capability, and creativity.

Mason’s Changemaker team comprises undergraduate students Whitney Burton (Government and International Politics) and Alex Gudich-Yulle (Integrative Studies at New Century College); graduate students Thomas Klump (Peace Operations) and N. Ryan Merrit (MBA in social entrepreneurship); doctoral student Diane Lebson (Public Policy); English professor Paul Rogers; and Public Policy professor Philip Auerswald.

At the heart of our mission has been the notion that ordinary people, if given the proper resources, inspiration, and guidance, can set out to make powerful and impactful changes in the world. We passionately believe that we are working in the best interests of Mason, its students, and society.

This past year has served as a priceless course in institutional transformation, and I will take the lessons I have learned with me throughout my personal and professional life. Mason has a vibrant community of passionate, caring, and hard-working individuals who want to change in the world.

Meeting and working with these changemakers of all ages has made me steadfast in my belief that Mason will live up to its vision, put forth in President Alan Merten’s Vision for a New Century, of being “the university needed by a region and a world driven by new social, economic, and technological realities.”
From left to right: Dr. Paul Rogers, N. Ryan Merrit, Whitney Burton, Bill Drayton, Alex Gudich-Yulle, Thomas Klump, and Phil Auerswald. Not pictured: Diane Lebson

CHANGEMAKERS IN ACTION

Over the course of this past academic year, the Mason Changemaker team has promoted the awareness and application of social entrepreneurship. The highlights of this year’s activities include the following:

- The Mason Leadership Institute, an annual event run by the Leadership Education and Development Office, this year focused on a dedicated social entrepreneurship track that featured Lennon Flowers, an associate of Ashoka’s University Programs, and a session on communication and social change by English professor Paul Rogers.

- The first-annual Mason ChangeMaker Fellowship was introduced. The fellowship seeks to identify and reward aspiring and current social entrepreneurs within the Mason community. Faculty, staff, students, and alumni were asked to submit stories of their ventures, products, or innovations that had improved the quality of life of individuals locally and globally. A total of 10 Fellows were selected for their exemplification of the potential that George Mason University community members have to impact significant changes and contributions to the world.

- Mason Changemakers submitted a Quality Enhancement Plan as part of the university’s reaccreditation process. The proposal would enhance student learning by giving students the opportunity to apply disciplinary knowledge to real-world problems through social entrepreneurship in curricular and extracurricular settings.

ASTERS

Not that they flourish in hoarfrost, or flare up, bract to bud, from blacktop cracks (I know none will keep), but that each petal glisters without meaning to, spreads its spiny roots through chaff, unfurls in cold clusters, tussocks shaking, feeds on ditch water, the sweet decay found there.

— Brian Brodeur

Brian Brodeur is the author of Other Latitudes (2008) and So the Night Cannot Go on without Us (2007). He earned an MFA in creative writing from Mason in 2005.
Though it’s caught between the storm window and screen, I gaze up every few minutes to check its progress, admiring its persistence, the urgency and ease of its clipped flight. At least the fly has the excuse of mindlessness for living recklessly, for coupling in a hurry, abandoning its young in garbage bins. This thought depresses me, then the thought that it doesn’t depress me enough depresses me. I can’t help watching the fly preen its wings on the wire-mesh, proboscis quivering, as it circles the reflection of my face and rams its tiny head into the glass. Crawling across what we can see of the cumulus outside, it seems to have finally reached the end of sky, that blue region where the vastness of the atmosphere finds a frame. Thinner than India paper, its wings blur as it rises to the pane.

— Brian Brodeur

$10 Million Donors See the Potential

By Corey Jenkins Schaut, MPA ’07

This spring, George Mason University joined the ranks of academic institutions around the world seeking to better understand the role of human consciousness in transformational change. The university recently announced the creation of the Center for Consciousness and Transformation, established with a $10 million gift from Don and Nancy de Laski.

THE CENTER

Formerly considered the realm of philosophy and religious studies scholars, the topics of consciousness and potential from various perspectives have recently become the focus of broader academic circles. Today, scholars in neuroscience, psychology, religious studies, business, leadership studies, health, and the arts, take interest in how a person’s mindfulness can transform health and well-being in both individuals and organizations.

A team of 40 faculty members from across the university came together to plan the short- and long-term goals of the new Center for Consciousness and Transformation. Center director Lois Tetrick, who is also a University Professor of psychology and director of the Industrial/Organizational Psychology program at Mason, says the
Cornerstone

center’s team of faculty advisors and staff envisions a world-class program that will be dedicated to expanding the understanding of consciousness and potential, how they are expressed and experienced, and how they lead to transformational change.

“The center staff and advisory board have really honed our definition of consciousness and transformation,” says Tetrick. “Faculty affiliates and staff continue to explore our common interests. We’re beginning to understand how we want to study consciousness from our different perspectives.”

Such collaboration is at the heart of it all, according to Tetrick, with the center initially pulling itself together from existing classes, research, and resources from around campus. The center will eventually expand its offerings into original programming.

Nance Lucas, associate dean and associate professor in New Century College, which houses the Center for Consciousness and Transformation, envisions myriad uses for the research that will result. She cites such areas as leadership, positive aging, and posttraumatic stress disorder treatment as just a few.

“We’re socialized to think about improving weaknesses,” Lucas observes. “In clinical diagnoses, we’re trained to identify what’s wrong with a person. With a center like ours, we can shift the focus to what’s right and how we can use that positivity to lead healthier, more productive lives.”

Lucas notes that there is no center quite like this one on the East Coast of the United States. She envisions the center growing to have local, regional, and international influence.

“Our goal is to develop a vibrant community of students, faculty, and staff, and experts from around the world who come to Mason to be a part of the center,” Lucas says. “This center will affect at least 10 million people within 10 years.”

THE DONORS

For the de Laskis, philanthropy is fun. But the couple’s enthusiasm for giving back has been done with so little fanfare that few know the true impact of their generosity.

Through the de Laski Family Foundation, the couple has provided significant and generous support to arts and culture organizations at Mason and throughout Northern Virginia. In recent years, the couple’s gifts to Mason have totaled nearly $4 million, which, among other things, helped to establish the Mount Vernon Project of the Center for History and New Media, the Potomac Arts Academy, and the expansion of the Performing Arts Building on the Fairfax Campus.

After working as a certified public accountant, Don de Laski, along with his son, Kenneth, founded Deltek Systems in 1983. Their successful company continues to provide project management software to businesses, including federal government contractors. Nancy de Laski is a former realtor and broker and a longtime volunteer on a number of nonprofit organizations’ boards.

Don and Nancy’s most recent investment at Mason touches their lifelong passion for the study of consciousness, potential, and transformation. The couple has studied spirituality and consciousness for years, including their implications for health and wellness and how they affect creativity. A little over a year ago, at a seminar, Don remarked how wonderful it would be for classes on these subjects to be offered at the university level. That conversation led to discussions with various individuals at Mason, where the idea was met with enthusiasm. With a start-up gift of $10 million, the center quickly moved from concept to reality, and the couple is excited about its potential.

“Part of our vision is that a successful new center at Mason will lead to other universities providing similar courses, and thus a higher level of consciousness might be developed throughout the world,” Don observes.

Nancy adds, “We hope that by studying consciousness, students will attain more purpose-driven lives and thereby affect the world’s future in many fields—creativity, medicine, government, research, and peace.”

The Center for Consciousness and Transformation at George Mason University will encompass scholarship and research from such disciplines as

- The arts
- Communication
- Conflict resolution
- Health
- Neuroscience
- Philosophy
- Psychology

The center will offer research opportunities, credit and noncredit courses for undergraduate and graduate students, lectures with visiting scholars, movie discussion nights, and student life programs designed to provide practical applications of the center’s work.
We asked faculty members, What is the best potential application of your current scholarly work?

**Notes from the Field: POTENTIAL**

**Debra Bergoffen, Philosophy**

Vulnerability versus Dignity

Bergoffen’s research explores the ways in which our bodies are both the source of our vulnerability and our dignity. It argues that creating effective human rights institutions require that we respect, rather than exploit, the vulnerabilities of our bodies.

**Answer:** In the contest between our capacities to destroy human dignity and our determination to respect it, two questions emerge: How can we create effective human rights institutions? And, how can or do the bodily abuses of slavery, torture, and rape destroy our humanity? Through my research, I believe I can create a human rights culture where the respect for bodily vulnerability is powerful enough to overcome the seduction to exploit it.

**Maria M. Dakake, Religious Studies**

“The Harper-Collins Study Qur’an” (2011)

Along with three other editors, Dakake is producing a study Qur’an, which includes a new translation, extensive commentary, and explanation of the relationship of Qur’anic passages to Islamic law, doctrine, and culture.

**Answer:** This project has a number of important potential applications, including the ability to create an intellectual dialogue between the Islamic world and the West. Much of the division between these two has centered on rival understandings of the Qur’an and its teachings. By offering full contextualization for all verses of the Qur’an and providing non-Arabic speakers access to the rich tradition of Muslim commentary, the study Qur’an has the potential to be the basis for more honest, informed, and fruitful engagement with the Qur’an in several arenas.

**Michele Greet, History and Art History**

Latin American Artists Contribution in Paris

Greet’s research examines the many contributions Latin American artists made to the international art scene in Paris between the two world wars.

**Answer:** I hope that my research will lead to the creation of an exhibit of the work of these artists and their European contemporaries—one that would examine the intricacies of these transnational dialogues.

**Eden King, Psychology**

Prejudice in the Workplace

King is researching the experiences of stigmatized individuals in the workplace, focusing on women, expectant mothers, ethnic and religious minorities, and gay and lesbian individuals.

**Answer:** Through my research, I hope to develop strategies that stigmatized individuals, their allies, and organizations might use to reduce discrimination. The best potential application of this research is to highlight contemporary forms of inequity and guide efforts toward equality in the workplace.

**Ted Kinnaman, Philosophy**

Study of Human Action

Kinnaman is studying human motivations and desires and how they might relate to objects.

**Answer:** The best potential for my current work is to learn how human action might be motivated by reason, independent of desire. Many researchers work under the assumption that any human action must be motivated by a desire for some object. In my recent work, I am studying the possibility that this is invalid.

**Randi Rashkover, Religious Studies**

Stereotypes in Religion

Rashkover is seeking to dismantle common ideological stereotypes about Jews, Christians, and Muslims, which she says often operate as obstacles to successful interaction between the three groups.
“The most important thing I learned at Mason was to recognize connections. It’s too easy to address each reading or class discussion individually. Instead, my time at Mason has taught me to delve a bit deeper, to explore the interrelated nature of academics. So much of life is composed of relationships, and no part of the human experience takes place in a vacuum. So, I’m forced to move from a class on European colonialism in Africa to one on Islamic intellectual trends, and to ask the question, where do these paths converge? It’s in that question that I’ve found true growth.”

—Josh Oxley, ’09, Religious Studies and History double major, minor in Islamic Studies

**Answer:** My current book project, “Freedom and Law: A Jewish–Christian Apologetics,” argues against a recent effort to distinguish Judaism and Christianity along the lines of the grace-law distinction. The book examines the role of law within both Judaism and Christianity, and gives an authentic account of the nature of divine law, one that could provide the two groups common ground.

**Zachary M. Schrag, History and Art History**

Institutional Review Board Reform

Schrag is researching what he says is a disconnect between institutional review boards (IRBs) and scholars who feel their academic freedom is being threatened.

**Answer:** The best potential application of my research is to reform an IRB system that imposes inappropriate rules on social scientists. Established in the 1960s to prevent medical researchers from using humans as guinea pigs, IRBs have expanded to cover a broader range of topics. In a forthcoming book, I have documented the accidental, sloppy, and occasionally dishonest origins of current regulations in the hopes that my work will help policymakers see the need for reform.

**Robert F. Smith, Psychology**

Adolescent Nicotine Use

Smith is studying the effects of nicotine on adolescents and how it alters late brain development and the key nerve cells involved in addiction and emotion.

**Answer:** Before we started this work, no one knew that adolescent nicotine use actually changes brain structure and function, creating what appears to be a permanent increase in addictive behavior and negative emotional behaviors. The best potential application of my research is to assist in education and prevention efforts, and to help in understanding the role that drugs play in modifying brain growth.

**Faye S. Taxman, Administration of Justice**

Correcting Corrections

Through a coalition with the Maryland Division of Parole and Probation and Virginia Department of Corrections, Taxman’s Evidence-Based Practices in Corrections Project aims to improve correctional practices through research, evaluation, and services that aim to bridge the gap between theory and practice.

**Answer:** The United States tops the world in policies that support the incarceration of nearly 5 percent of the adult population. The best potential application of my research would be in creating a safer world where everyone is connected. My research aims to improve social justice and to create equities in century-old policies and practices that dehumanize some people and disenfranchise others. Disenfranchisement comes from unfair practices, and we need to correct these practices. Democracies are strong when people feel respected, connected to others, and part of mainstream society.

**Melinda Villagran, Communication Health Care Communication**

Villagran is striving to improve communication between doctors and patients to prevent medical errors, maximize health outcomes, and minimize health care costs. For the past few years, she has been working with patients and health care providers to help them overcome the psychological, cultural, and socioeconomic barriers that limit active participation in the care process.

**Answer:** Perhaps the greatest potential for the application for my research is to find ways to make unbearable health care situations a little more bearable. My work has the potential to improve the health care system by teaching patients how to communicate about their illnesses, teaching providers about how to best deliver information, and teaching health care organizations how to create culturally appropriate messages.
1989: Looking Back, Looking Forward, continued from page 1

he might well resuscitate the Soviet state, thereby extending the Cold War for another generation.

The final news item on most front pages on the morning of June 4—and the one that received the least coverage—was word that the Polish independent trade union Solidarity (Solidarność) had won the first round of voting in the first freely contested parliamentary election in Eastern Europe since the communist takeovers there in the late 1940s. Western journalists were much less sanguine about events in Poland, believing that the communist government of Poland was unlikely to cede power to Solidarity.

Looking back at June 4, 1989, from the vantage of 20 years, it was that final bit of news that proved to be the most consequential. China’s communist party is still in power, Iranian–American relations are still bad, and the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991. But Poland—and its neighbors in Eastern Europe—are now members of the European Union with thriving democracies.

The Polish communists were the first to cede power, agreeing to let Solidarity form a government later that summer, but events in Poland set off a chain reaction that led to the collapse of one communist government after another. The most spectacular moment came on November 9, 1989, when the people of East and West Berlin began tearing down the Berlin Wall. By the end of that amazing year, grassroots pro-democracy movements had won control of the governments of East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Bulgaria. A coup d’état had toppled the communist regime in Romania, and the Albanian and Yugoslavian regimes were obviously on their last legs.

This year, Mason’s students, faculty, and staff are all paying close attention to the 20th anniversary of those important events of 1989. Our hope is to come to an enhanced understanding not only of those events, but also of how they still influence the world we live in today.

In late March, former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev visited Mason for a two-day conference called 1989: Looking Back, Looking Forward.

During his keynote address given on March 24, 2009, Gorbachev spoke to a sold-out crowd of students, faculty, and others, and offered a critical perspective on how the lessons of the Cold War should be applied to the promotion of peace.

Winner of the 1990 Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts in nuclear disarmament, Gorbachev discussed the importance of international cooperation and his global vision of peace.

On March 25, T. Mills Kelly, Associate Professor in the Department of History and Art History and Associate Dean, moderated a roundtable discussion with Gorbachev, Judge William Webster, the former Director of the FBI and CIA, and Sergey Chumarev, First Counsellor of the Russian Federation.

Students, faculty, and others were able to ask questions, offer their own perspective and opinions, and interact with these influential leaders during discussions and other sessions during the event.
Our celebration of that remarkable year began on March 24, when Mikhail Gorbachev came to campus for a sold-out two-day conference: 1989: Looking Back, Looking Forward. Throughout the spring semester, the Center for Global Studies and the Department of History and Art History staged a Post-Socialist Film Series, showing more than a dozen films from China, Eastern Europe, and the Soviet Union. And in the fall 2009 semester, the Berlin Wall will rise again, this time across the Mason campus. Students will have the opportunity to add their own graffiti to the wall and before tearing it down on November 9, commemorating the events in Berlin 20 years earlier.

While the emphasis of the European part of the 1989 story is on the positive—the end of communist regimes, the integration of Eastern Europe into the European Union, the end of the Cold War standoff between the United States and the Soviet Union—viewed more globally, the legacies of 1989 are much more mixed.

On the day I finished the draft of this article, the news from China was about the 50th anniversary of the Tibetan revolt against the Chinese government that forced the Dalai Lama to flee his country for India. Over the past several months, we have witnessed the growth in a petition drive in China, modeled on the Charter 77 petition in communist Czechoslovakia, calling for the communist government to live up to its obligations under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Already, more than 2,000 Chinese citizens, many of them prominent intellectuals and others, just average citizens, have signed the charter. Despite this public pressure on the regime, the Chinese government shows no signs of bending to popular calls for freedom and democracy.

In Russia, a country that looked as if it was moving rapidly toward democracy after the end of the Soviet state in 1991, the government has systematically stifled dissent and weakened all political opposition parties to the point that they no longer constitute an effective voice in Russian society. Prominent opponents and critics of Prime Minister Vladimir Putin are harassed, arrested, or in some cases killed—alleged murders that never seem to be solved.

Once upon a time, we believed that capitalism could only exist in a democracy. In 2009, it is less and less clear that capitalism requires democracy. The strength of the Chinese regime’s grip on power and the increasingly rapid slide of Russia toward a one-party state have caused more than a few commentators to question whether the events of 1989 to 1991 were really a grand transformation—the “end of history” as former Mason professor Francis Fukuyama put it. Instead, these scholars argue, we are witnessing the rise of a new type of state—the authoritarian, capitalist, great power.

As a historian, who is all too aware of how messy and disordered the past is, I am loath to predict what we might see when we look back at 2009 from the perspective of 2029. Will the economic crisis that began in 2008 be the death knell of the Chinese regime? Will radical Islamist groups be strengthened by the economic problems we see now, or will their potential supporters turn away from radicalism to focus on pragmatic considerations such as remaining employed and feeding their families?

If we’ve learned anything from the past two decades, it is that even the happiest moments such as the fall of the Berlin Wall do not necessarily lead to an ever-happier future, and tragic moments such as September 11, 2001, do not mean an era of disaster is at hand. My own view, predicated on long study of the past, is that the future is simply impossible to predict.

AMMONITE

From the grey interrupted world comes bird-cry, a song the ocean makes
when it sucks at the angled sand and leaves its own imprint on rock, sullen
as groove, abraded shell, stone flaked and tintless. I come to the end
of a world where air dissolves its darkened tapers, recedes
on each arrival. The beating of wings, new wings, becomes both entrance
and retreat, the armored wind flouted. Each window I walk through
closes behind me like an omen. But here where the earth permits attrition
there is neither stasis nor redemption, only the wizened sea repeating its endless name
as it re-forms itself: live coral to bone, spiraled shell to mold, to fossil.

—Ramola D

Ramola D graduated from George Mason University in 1991 with a MFA in Poetry. Her poems, fiction, and essays have been published in numerous literary journals. “Temporary Lives,” a short fiction collection is forthcoming from the University of Massachusetts Press in Fall 2009. Ramola teaches creative writing at the George Washington University.

Submit your creative work to Editor, Cornerstone 4400 University Drive, MS 3A3 Fairfax, VA 22030 or chssmag@gmu.edu.
Gift

All that is wrought and beautiful comes on its own, without warning. From somewhere else. A place we have never seen although we come from there ourselves. Each time the wind loses us. Each time the day forgets. We rise from each plateau of denials not knowing the climate has altered, our arms are rising. Worked veins and blood, a filigree of light. Think of it. We never imagined such rising. It is certain and complete. We come without knowing we are whole—wood eaten to web, we think, and it fills like water in a cup; the new day, it swells into the palm and waits for our dark to lift even as we will ourselves from sleep.

— Ramola D

George Mason University is proud to give so much to its students and its graduates. Giving back is an important part of continuing Mason’s strong traditions. Thank you.
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