MEAT FOR TEA

VOL 8 ISSUE 3
THE VALLEY REVIEW

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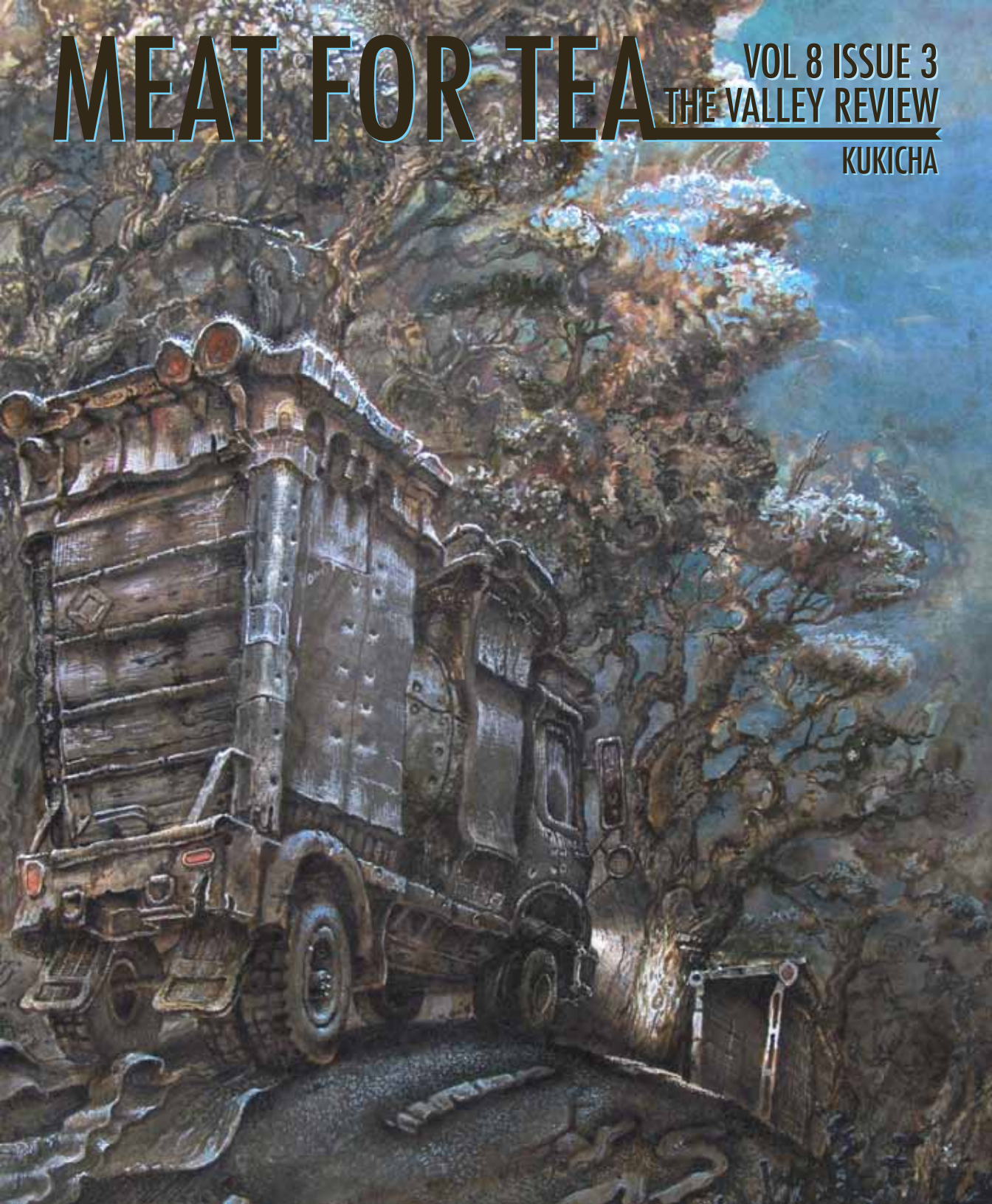

Meat for Tea: The Valley Review

Meat for Tea: The Valley Review was founded by Elizabeth MacDuffie and Alexandra Wagman. We are a non-academic affiliated magazine committed to recognizing and featuring the work of the artists, writers, and musicians living in western Massachusetts and beyond.

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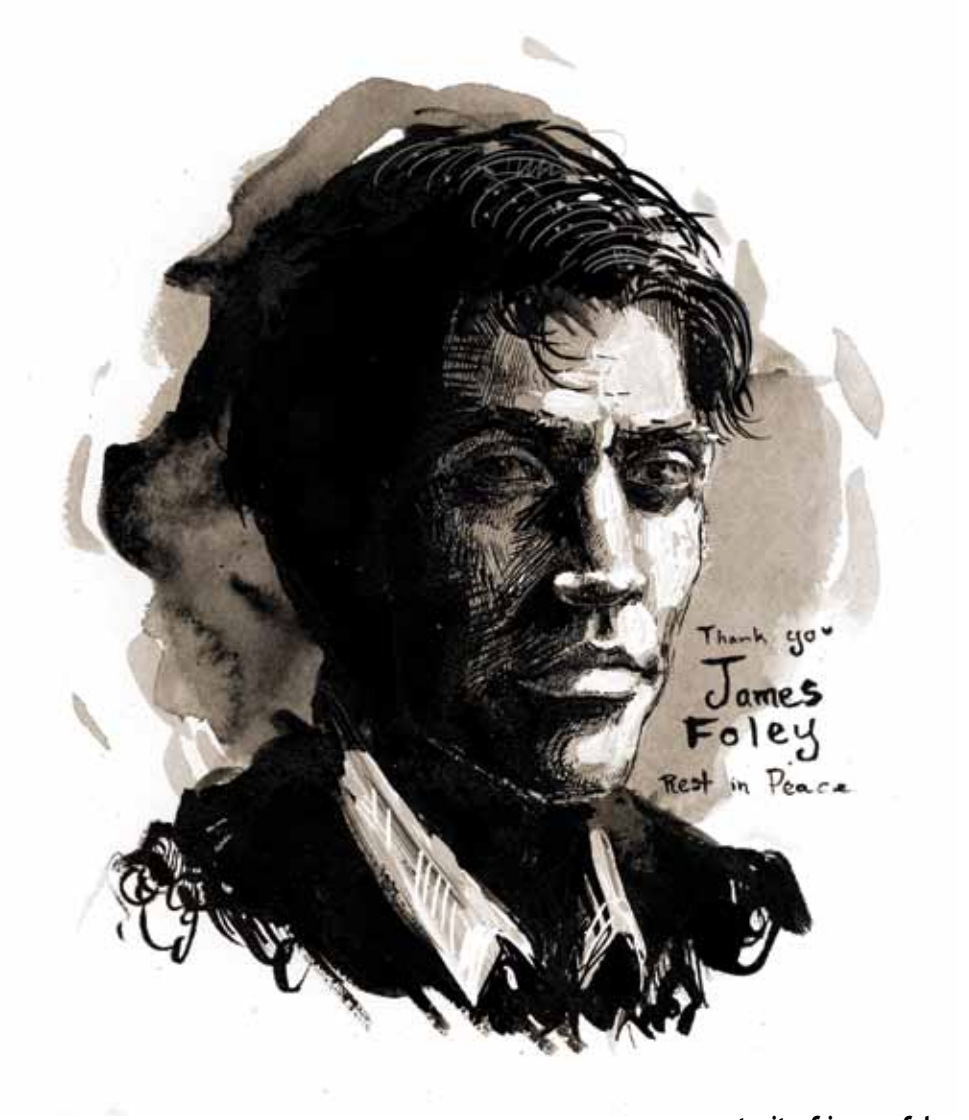
salutations from the editor

This is a poignant issue of the magazine. A few short weeks ago, the world was rocked with the sad news of the death of Jim Foley, a former colleague from UMass. I decided to dedicate the first part of this magazine to his memory and gathered up remembrances from his other colleagues.

I remember him thusly: Jim came into the grad English program a few years after I did. He was in the MFA program and I was in the Ph.D. program,but his was a pleasant presence in the hallways, and we discussed lesson plans and teaching ideas on a number of occasions. I knew him to be a thoughtful, caring, teacher and a smiling, kind, person. I was more of a friend of a friend to him and was closer to people who started in the grad English program the same year I did, for obvious reasons. Still, I knew him well enough to admire his courageous actions and to be devastated by his violent, untimely death. I can only imagine the pain his family is enduring and I humbly hope that giving them an issue of the magazine celebrating the man he was helps ease their pain in some small way.

I am excited for Le Cirque de la Main, however, this night will also have a poignancy to it since a number of the readings will be remembrances of Jim. This bittersweet event has art on exhibit by Ben Sears, Bruce Kahn, Perry Carter, and Elizabeth Stassinos, films by Ben Tobin, and Alottle and Sunburned Hand of the Man shall bring the rock. I hope to see you there.

Love,
Elizabeth MacDuffie



portrait of james foley

Molly Crabapple

getting the news

Samantha Wood

I wasn't a personal friend of Jim Foley's. I don't want to be mistaken for pretending an intimacy. This is all about proximity and physics: sometimes we are closer than we think.

I am a news editor. I first learned of James' death on Twitter, my most consistent source of news. The first mention of it stopped me, silent. I thought immediately of some of his closest friends that I know. If this report was credible, I told myself, there would be more.

There were more.

FB Post:
Journalist James Foley is reported to have been killed by ISIS.

Jim had gone through the UMass MFA program, finishing a few years after me. Then he headed into journalism. I did too, but at a desk in a newsroom in the U.S. I have never been in a war zone. I have watched every news event since July of 2000 unfold without turning away. I understand Jim's ethics, because I share them. His heroism, placing himself at risk to get the story, is nothing I pretend to know. But I understand why he did it.

FB Post:
Staring down deadline
Everywhere I look there is Jim Foley - my friends' gutted posts and emails, when I turn on the radio, every single one of the professional associations I am linked to, and when I get to work, there he is in my editorial meeting and on the front page of tomorrow's paper - where I look at his face off and on, for hours. This will rip us apart again and again. Then we will either make something of it or fail. I owe you all a drink my friends. Now, to work.

The news is so troubling that people sometimes cannot bear to read it. I don't have that luxury. News of Jim's death and the response to it was my job.
I felt like a distant relative, holding him in my hands.

FB Post:
Walking up Bank Row this afternoon I thought: If I stand in front of where Ray's Cafe used to be, maybe Daniel Mahoney will come out on the sidewalk and we can maybe get a drink and fix things with time travel.

Mahoney's response:
ahhhh Sam. If I was there and you were there and Ray's was there we'd all be there and we could hug and buy each other drinks and tell lies to strangers and play pool and listen to Amie over and over and fall in love with whoever came in.....ahhh Sam Wood....ooxx

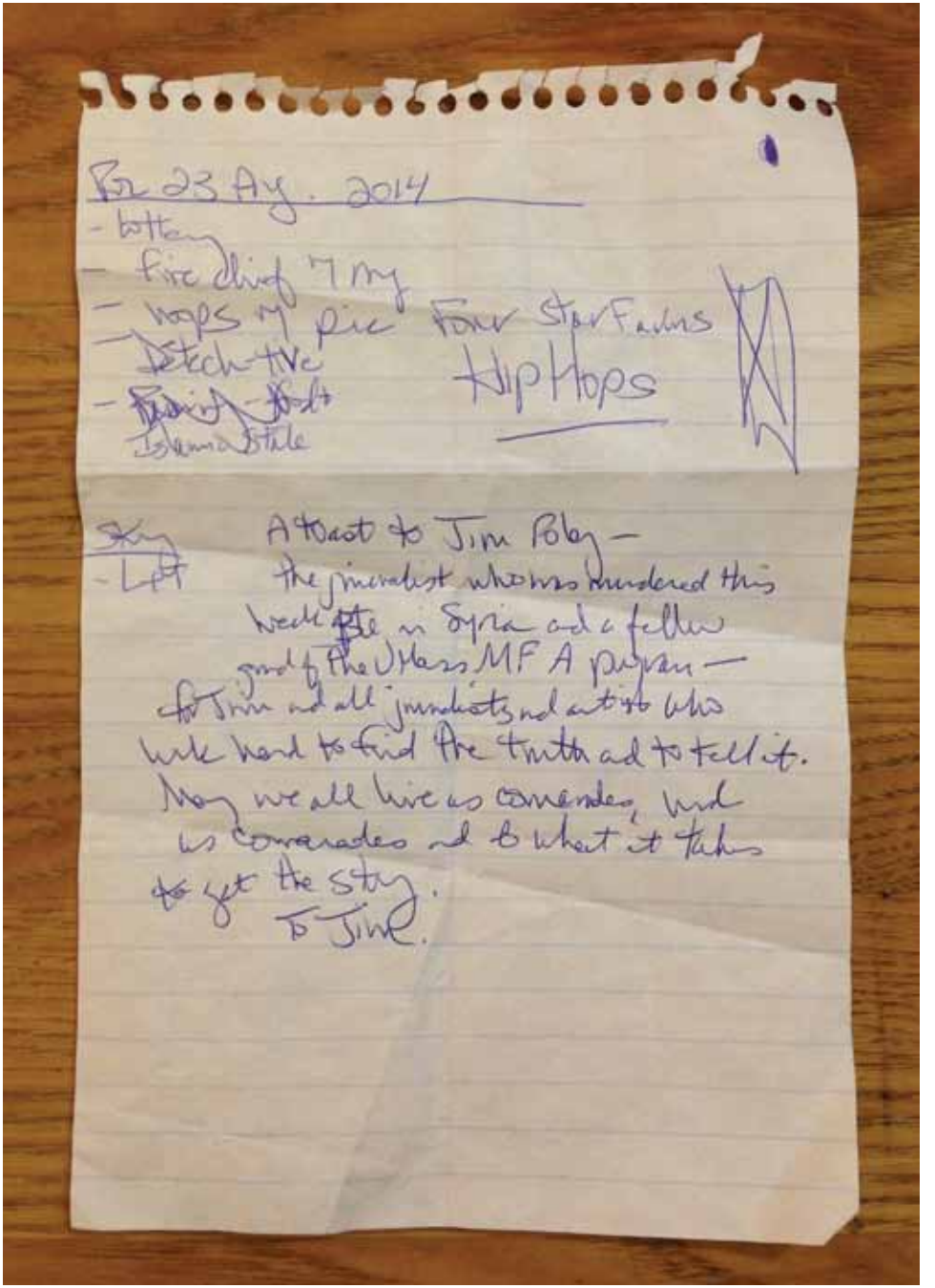
A toast drafted on deadline:
I scrawled my toast for Jim at the bottom of the list of Page 1 stories left over from the editorial meeting earlier in the night. It was the end of a long shift after an interminable week and I had just realized there was a small cluster of journalists in a bar, some of whom I had never met, waiting for me to show up and do something.

A toast to Jim Foley – the journalist murdered this week in Syria and a fellow graduate of the UMass MFA program – for Jim and all journalists and artists who work hard to find the truth and to tell it. May we all live as comrades, works as comrades, and do what it takes to get the story.
To Jim

Even the bartender had graduated from the UMass MFA program. She turned off the music and asked everyone to be quiet. The whole place turned around and looked at me. Usually this bar is kind of quiet late on a Friday night, but it was filled with people that night -- some had gotten out of a jazz show across the square and others were just out late having a good time. I couldn't tell if anyone could hear me. It came out different than what I had written an hour before in the newsroom, and I added something about the MFA basketball team. But mostly, while I was speaking I was acutely aware that Jim would have been better at this than I was, and that I better do it for that reason alone.
Because when people like Jim Foley leave this Earth, someone has to raise a fucking glass and say something.

And then total strangers reached their glasses out to me.

FB Post:
Basic schooling should teach us how to compose a toast on deadline to be delivered in a hushed bar, that both captures the gravity of a horrifying circumstance and inspires people to carry on with gusto. I'd never tried to do it until last night. I hope I never have to again. To Jim.



Samantha Wood

remembering jim, commemorating james

Cathy K. Schlund-Vials

Remembering Jim is easy; commemorating him is difficult.

Jim Foley was someone I met during what, in retrospect, was one of the happiest periods in my life. Specifically, we met one another at the University of Massachusetts. He was pursuing a graduate degree in fiction; I was admittedly more lost. I had traveled north from Austin, Texas; he had journeyed south from New Hampshire. We were the same age. I would end up getting a doctorate in English (with a focus in Ethnic Studies and American Studies); he would become a renowned journalist. We knew, through graduate school happenstance, the same people. We traveled in the same circles. His friends were my friends. Although we were far from close, there was an intimacy that comes with being in the same cohort.

To be sure, we never talked "shop." Instead, our interactions were often brief, sometimes sustained, yet always warm. He was someone I welcomed seeing – in the dark corridors of Bartlett Hall, at a post-reading Northampton party, and in the smoky confines of the World War II club (a local hangout). I admittedly knew nothing of his journalistic aspirations; I occasionally inquired about his latest experience in workshop; I was, in hindsight, less curious about him than I should have been. He, on the other hand, was curious about not only who I was but others around me. He was frequently a man of few words, a person who knew just when to interject the right turn of phrase. He was, quite simply, the ideal writer: one who was able to read a mood, respond to a moment, and make you see something familiar anew. Jim, for me, is wonderfully stuck in time – he will perpetually be linked to what I now consider a home place. I did keep up with him after we both left – through infrequent Facebook updates. It was in a virtual space that I found out about his abduction; it was also here that I discovered his passing.

This is, in part, why commemorating him is so hard. He was, in many ways, what Gandhi famously urged all of us to do: to be the change we wanted to see in the world. His work consistently embodied a hopefulness in the face of despair; he went to places so that we could know them and act judicially. His willingness to document those existences outside the comfort of Western Mass and graduate school was not only great; it is in many ways immeasurable. The personal memories I have of Jim are fragmentary, built on a series of moments that culminate in a snapshot of two twenty-somethings in the same place at the same time. Nevertheless, his life was much richer, his significance much fuller, and his legacy much more impactful.

james foley (1973-2014)

Connolly Ryan

I am sorry for my loss
even though it wasn't really mine,
It was the loss of a friend's life
but it was not my own life
or anyone else's. The chorus
churns: we are sorry for
your loss, but it was not my loss
or anyone else's. It was his.
Please, no more apologies.
If you are sorry then it is for him,
not his friends and family.
They will live in barren sorrow,
remembering how they had loved.
But they will live.
He has died.
His end is his, not ours.
If we are lost, it has little
to do with our particular losses.
Please no more apologies.
We are all sorry for our loss,
but no one is sorrier
than you are or I am.
I am sorry for my loss.

requiem for a friend whose life was stolen

Connolly Ryan

He knew what he was getting into,
intuited the psychotic and chaotic
turn which at any moment
his investigative endeavors could take.
His journalistic objective was to report
the horror of war with clarity and intelligence,
and he did. His correspondences and photo-essays
reflected the despicable banality of massacres
as well as the sobering temerity embedded in survival.,

Kidnapped in Syria from a car by four masked religious
zealots two years ago, his friends and family prayed
for his release and return; but anyone versed, as he was,
in the pathology of patriotism, had already pegged him as a goner
and waited, miserably, for the inevitable.
The inevitable arrived yesterday
in the form of a videotaped beheading.

There is nothing more sickening, nor obscenely reductive,
than a decapitation in the name of propaganda.
Dehumanization has always been the currency
of warfare, no surprise there, but his assassins
(desecrating the intimacy of his memories
and of those who knew him) just dumped it
on Youtube alongside the feline pianists, celebrity
meltdowns, teen phenoms and waltzing Labradors,
for anyone to see.

One cannot fathom the agonized moans of a parent
seeing their son's head being sliced off
as just another grim meme in the trivial parade
of bling, glamour, entertainment and cheap glory.
I am told that his parents did not see the video,
but the idea that it was accessible is evil enough.
Trending now: your son's beheading.

The noble and stirring attempts to rehumanize
the dehumanized Jim on social networks via personal
photographs and nuanced testimony (like this 'poem'),
in some ways only fuel the chilling and cruelly numbing
media orgy his calculating killers, after all, carefully
choreographed and anticipated.
But we are, as the saying goes, only human.

Goodbye James Foley, you were, as your crushed friend put it:
"a great fucking human being, period," And if where you are
is a different place than the stinking war-broken acre
you died in, then I guess that is something, unless it is nothing.

turn here for insulation

Tricia Asklar

Turn Here for Insulation

is a sign I pass on the way to soccer tonight in Norfolk, Massachusetts. When I get to the pro shop, the television shows the president saying we will find those responsible as several photos of James Foley range the screen. A week since the news of his death. Six days since I hear he was an alumnus of the UMass MFA program for poets and writers, like me—he graduated in 2003, I did in 2000. If I hone in, I'm at a welcoming party at Noy Holland's house. The last one I'll attend.

Holland has a generous kitchen, with a warm nook and there I sit with a tall, doe-eyed guy who asks questions. Deep, soul-reaching words that disarm me and I tell this new writer all about my ex girlfriend and how I finally let her go. I open up about little interconnections and peculiarities of my life in Northampton. How it is working for the *Advocate* or, maybe this was just after a particularly bumbling interview I had for a local sports writer position I couldn't tell the editor I really wanted. There was a keg of good beer—but it wasn't the drink, rather this earnest listening and his flow of questions that defined my evening.

I don't even know for sure if my companion that night was James Foley. I'm half sure and more than hopeful that that aura, my memory bubble of his face, that easygoingness, was his. He's a planet in orbit of a subject. I left the party that night really happy I had come—I had some trepidation about being around. I was on program fee, finishing up my thesis, bumbling through drafts and not finding a center. He helped define a center in that small space. He had an importance-maker way. That's what all my friends who knew him well say.

All I know is one hazy memory of a party I almost didn't attend and the man who heard my story as if it were riveting to him. He was what I most needed just then. Maybe it was James Foley or another bright mind from the writing program that night. What I know for sure is that I will forever attribute that inquisitiveness, the smile and responsiveness of his demeanor to James Foley. A small shared moment as I ended my studies and he was just beginning to navigate his own. Sturdy oars, good boat.

Note: I happened into a excerpt from Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass,* "Full of Life, Now" glued into the back of a journal while trying to pinpoint the time we overlapped in the Valley. I hear James Foley as the speaker:

"When you read these, I, that was visible, am become invisible;
Now it is you, compact, visible, realizing my poems, seeking me;
Fancying how happy you were, if I could be with you, and become your comrade;
Be it as if I were with you. (Be not too certain but I am now with you.)"