

Courage Teacher

by P. Andrew Miller

What thoughts I have of you today, Danny Miller.
I need not shop for images, my memories supply them all.
I see you walking across the campus, greeting almost everyone
With hugs and handshakes. I see you in Landrum, at the bulletin board,
Holding an article or alumni note with one hand, stapler wielded in the other.
I hear your voice in the hallways, asking students how they are
And shouting words out while we play the online game in the rare breaks you took.
I see you in London, walking silent around Stonehenge, joking with students
On the tube, sitting in the train to Oxford, grading a handful of papers
With our students scattered around us. I hear you call out to the group and make
Them pose for pictures, you the only one still using film in this digital age.

I know which way your beard is pointed, what you have shown me.
I call you friend and remember the annual fireworks picnic and our brunch
And Christmas concert ritual. I call you father, and remember how three students in two
weeks once told you they had your son for class. I gave you a Father's Day card that
summer but from then on you said we were the Miller *brothers* from English.
I call you courage teacher, for you helped me to come out, to be gay and proud. You
showed me that I could be who I was and that it was okay.

I need not ask what America you had or what choice you will make once you reach
Hades' realm. When Charon quits poling his ferry and you step out upon the shores of
Lethe, that river of forgetfulness, you will say to Queen Persephone, "No, thank you,"
to the cup she offers, for you, you have a life worth remembering. And then you will turn
To the spirit standing next to you, put out your ethereal hand, and say
"Hi, I'm Danny Miller, where are you from?"