



















Ordinary Monuments

My dad didn't go to Yale. And sadly he died eight years before I moved to New Haven as an MFA candidate in Graphic Design. Yet he still managed to leave something here for me. Parents are funny like that. Dispatching psychic connections that seem to precede almost every step we make. Sometime around 1985, in a photograph of him standing beside the statue of Nathan Hale, my dad left his smile for me right here on the Old Campus of Yale University.

Struggling recently to find an audio recording of the sound of my dad's voice, I remembered this photo of him. At the time he and my mom were in New Haven visiting friends they had known from Canada. The photograph was taken by my mom, and I can hear her voice naming his lovable smirk at that very moment, "Smile!" So while I clearly remember his voice, I only have silent images like this as a surrogate for the absent sound of him speaking.

Where in the body is the voice located anyway? We like to describe the skin as the body's largest organ, but a voice extends the boundaries of the body. And a smile is one of the key features of the vocal armory of the mouth. My dad's smile was a part of his voice and seemed even to be part of his arms when he embraced me. His voice is clearly present in things that he wrote to me. And traces of his voice are most definitely extended into my life. Alive in my voice in fact, and therefore in everything that I am telling you here.

Guglielmo Marconi, one of the early pioneers of radio, believed that sound never dies, that it continues to diminish slowly across the cosmic vaults of space. Before Marconi died, he dreamed of a device that would let him listen to the lost sounds by allowing him to tap into their eternal frequencies. I like to think of my dad's voice as one of Marconi's sonic celestial objects, a satellite of love. Meanwhile, back here again on New Haven soil, I want to present in a more grounded way, as a kind human radio, the genetic echo of my dad, alive in the grains of my own voice.*

*Earlier this year my mom sent a package containing one of my dad's favorite books and shared that the book included some of his favorite poets and poems. I knew that he was an avid reader, but not of poems. For the tracks on this "album," I'm reading a selection of them.

The Poem: An Anthology, ed. by Stanley B. Greenfield and A. Kingsley Weatherhead, Appleton-Century-Crofts, (1972).

