THE HIKE: A PROCESSION
for UVM Class of 2020

Ascend a leaf-covered path past embankments
Of low-lying wood sorrel, beside a brook
Whose faucet’s full blast in mid-spring rinses
Both trout and winter sorrows, past a graveyard’s books
Of stone planted in another century, whose faded
Covers and divergent tales arc to the same point.
Advance uphill as sunlight animates those sacred
Plots. Piebald shadows of pines disappear then rejoin.
Pinned for a moment on a map’s switchback, breathe long
Into your lungs all the names behind you, that caravan
Of the living who foresaw your future, who held you aloft
And passed you along like a cupped butterfly from hand
To hand. Once maligned, garter snakes know the mistake
Of beginnings is the idea of Eden, that a mind of paradise
Arrives after steady trudging. Pulling an epic tide
Of wilderness, robins and sparrows strike like bursts
Of russet through clotted woods to announce
Your coming, and a few steps more set off
A chipmunk’s calls. Proceed with bewildered grace
Being almost there. Squirrels rustling in the duff
Suddenly pause then rise to a standing ovation
And the boughs above your head nod their approval.
It’s leaves’ follow with gentle clapping and recite
Your chapters, your unwavering gait at such heights,
For you have entered a tall clearing, cloudless, spacious,
From whence to size up more trails ahead, more laurels.

--Major Jackson