printed books after swimming in the phosphorescent shallows of a screen, I have to assure myself that this is in fact a way of reading. I have to convince myself again of the value of the old routine: clock faces occluded so I don’t worry about the time; my

I’m quietly reading the products of a quiet reading, emulating how Nabokov must have sat. feet up, my back curved, my chin downturned; a fan running, or the light just right on the page. I have to mollify my overexcited nerves and set about consciously remembering how to act as the sole reader of a text. The rituals help, of course; they remind me that I’ve read like this before. That I’ll probably do so again.

And I always do remember, in the end. But it’s still a shame I have to.

If you’ve got the time, you can register for an account and submit a request and end up on a Friday morning in Houghton Library’s reading room with a two-volume facsimile of a fifteenth-century Flemish illuminated manuscript (though given this description, general interest might be a limiting factor as well).

On the facsimile’s first page—a glossy blankness—the book’s previous owner has scribbled the following: “property of V. Nabokov;” and beneath that, “butterflies identified by him.”

The manuscript, as I discovered on just such a Friday morning, is primarily interested in hagiographic imagery: Saint Veronica displays a cloth on which the shadow of Christ’s face is imprinted; Saint Anthony Abbot walks in the wilderness in the company of wild beasts.

But Nabokov, the inveterate literary trickster, has eyes only for the butterflies.

His indelicate scrawl, pressed into the page by what, it seems, had been the fine nib of a mechanical pencil, provides their scientific names: Issoria lathmia, Vanessa atalanta, Abraxas grossulariata. Occasionally a question mark appears next to a specimen, perhaps because the writer has been stumped, or perhaps (and this is more likely, as the marks are quick and cruel, almost sardonic) because the manuscript’s illuminator has whimsically and irresponsibly confected from stray colors and patterns a chimerical species.

On this Friday morning, I’m absorbed in my inspection of the manuscript. The reading room is comfortable and quiet, the air the perfect temperature and the light the perfect lambency to facilitate immersive reading.

On the few occasions that I do glance up, I can’t help but notice that there are no other undergraduates in the reading room. The desks are peopled by old men with frosty beards and willowy women in muted dresses; they inspect piles of letters and yellowed tomes with crazed leather bindings. The room is peaceful. The sibilance of turned pages rises occasionally out of the silence.

The thought occurs to me that I’m quietly reading the products of a quiet reading, emulating the very way Nabokov must have sat, the way he must have focused, his brow curled and eyes poised.

This, too, is a form of collaboration, albeit silent, protracted, and completely unarticulated. I can consider the previous reader’s presence if I want to—it is not forced upon me. Likewise I can ignore his annotations, the sediment of his prior perusals.

I feel strange pondering what must have been Nabokov’s own thought process while inspecting this manuscript. He was, after all, a master of literary mystification, and so it’s odd to find him impugning the playful creation of new breeds of butterflies that exist only in, and as, art.

He must, I assume, have fallen so fully into his reading that the whole vast mechanism of his strong literary opinions and wonted modes of analysis fell away. In their absence, a very small and ardent aspect of his mind assumed complete authority. He must have read selfishly, passionately, and without a thought for anyone else.

After a while my phone buzzes (an alarm; an appointment) and I stand up to leave and realize, to my pleasure, that I’ve been doing just the same.

But then I remember that he read alone, and right now my room is quiet and the fan is slued in my direction, and the light’s coming nicely through the window. I feel very alone.

He probably wouldn’t have cared.

A little bit later, I return to my room. There are many things I need to read: novels, tracts, monographs. They’re stacked on my desk, passive as bricks.

Sometimes I feel a breed of dread when I think of the reading I’ve got to do. I worry if I’ll be able to focus; I’m afraid that the pages and the words they bear will swirl into nonsense like the symbols and signs of an abstruse theorem.

Trained by the screen to consider the gazes of others, to react quickly and decisively to their smallest suggestions, I worry that they’ll follow me into the book, that I’ll hear their mutterings while I pick my way through befuddling syntax.

And of course, this feeling’s worse today. I’m certain I’ll have the shade of Nabokov staring over my shoulder.

But then I remember that he read alone, and right now my room is quiet and the fan is slued in my direction, and the light’s coming nicely through the window. I feel very alone.

He probably wouldn’t have cared.

Berta Greenwald Ledecky Fellow Bailey Trela ’16 hasn’t seen a real butterfly in a long time.

Sports

Rolling Along

Formidable early-season football

Before the Harvard football team kicked off the school’s 142nd gridiron season, coach Tim Murphy’s toughest foe was a familiar one: his 2014 squad, one of the greatest in Crimson history. This year, after all, could not end any better than last year’s 10-0 campaign, which culminated in a heart-stopping 31-24 win over Yale last November 22 at Harvard Stadium. During the Ivy League’s preseason
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biano, all class of ’16. Moreover, there were intriguing freshman newcomers such as wide receiver Justice Shelton-Mosley and running back Noah Reimers.

Still... who would replace Hempel? The main candidates to start at quarterback were Scott Hosch ’16, who as the primary backup in 2014 steered the Crimson to six wins, and Joseph Viviano ’17, whom Murphy termed “probably as talented a kid as we have recruited at that position.” In pre-season drills, the 6-foot-5 Viviano made a strong impression—until he broke his left foot in a non-contact play and needed surgery. By default, Hosch was number one.

Murphy continually lauds Hosch’s “high football IQ,” and the latter’s intelligence as well as his touch were on display on September 19 during a 41-10 victory over Colonial Athletic Association member Rhode Island at Kingston. The 6-foot-3 Georgian completed 18 of 27 pass attempts for a career-high 336 yards, spreading the ball deftly among a half-dozen receivers while tossing for three touchdowns, a performance that won Ivy League player of the week honors. (It helped mightily that the offensive line allowed the Rams pass-rushers to get no closer than Woonsocket.) The first score, a 25-yarder to Ryan Halvorson ’17 (yet another tight end), came on the game’s first series and just 3:26 into the season. Early in the fourth quarter the special teams came through, with Peters blocking a punt; cornerback Kolbi Brown ’17 picked the ball up and scampered into the end zone. Then came some magical punctuation. In mop-up duty at quarterback entered Hosch’s fellow Georgian Jimmy Meyer ’16, who took a snap at the Rams 37, dropped back, and let fly. The ball sizzled like a howitzer shell and whistled into the hands of Shelton-Mosley in the end zone. It was Meyer’s first pass in varsity play, and the first catch for Shelton-Mosley. A new placekicker, Kenny Smart ’18, was six for seven on extra-point conversions.

The next week, the Crimson opened its home and Ivy schedule under the lights against Brown, a team that usually gives Harvard all it can handle. Perhaps the Bears (and a crowd of 15,804) were too gobsmacked by the Crimson’s newly unveiled, Nike-designed home uniforms—black (not crimson) jerseys with crimson numerals and (most jarrringly) reddish pants—to put up much of a fight. The final score, 53-27, obscures how one-sided the game was; at one point in the third quarter, the Crimson led 53-6. The contest featured a rarity: two safeties. Playing his usual efficient game, Hosch completed 12 of 19 pass attempts and threw for three more touchdowns in little more than a half, cementing his status as Harvard’s Bart Starr. (As old-timers recall, the Green Bay Packers’ Hall of Famer was never flashy or a gunslinger; he just won.) Stanton rambled for 89 yards and a touchdown on 12 carries. The evening also boasted hard hitting by Gibson (three solo tackles and an interception that set up a touchdown), and a quarterback sack by Ahern that enabled Lindsey to scoop up the ball at the Brown 11 and run it into the end zone—the first Harvard fumble recovery for a score in five years. The blowout

Another Saturday, another victory for Crimson quarterback Scott Hosch ’16, who passed for three touchdowns and a career-high 336 yards against Rhode Island.

To receive weekly football reports, sign up at harvardmag.com/email
Taking Her Shot

Post-surgery, a top athlete reestablishes herself.

In basketball, a three-point play (a three-point shot or a two-point shot, plus a free throw) is an accomplishment. A four-point play (a three-pointer and a free throw) is rare. A five-point play is virtually impossible—but that's what the Harvard women's basketball team accomplished last January, in a 17-5 win over Brown. The Crimson scored six touchdowns, all on the ground, the most impressive being Stanton's 37-yard, second-quarter scamper. Reimers got into the end zone thrice on short runs and flashed some nifty open-field moves, once even hurdling a would-be Hoyas tackler. The defense made another fumble-forcing sack (by lineman Miles McCollum '17) followed by a runback (by Koran). And in what was becoming a signature, there was for the third straight week a punt block, this one by defensive back Tanner Lee '18.

Murphy pronounced this walkover "the end of the preseason." Six Ivy League games loomed, including all the top contenders. The outcomes would determine whether during next year's regular season Murphy would invoke as inspiration the names Hosch, Stanton, and Koran.

Tidbits: With the victory at Rhode Island, Harvard is 117-23-2 in season openers...The win over Brown brought Murphy's record in Ivy League games to 11-0...Thirty states are represented on the 2015 roster: California leads the way with 10; Texas is next (12), followed by Ohio (11) and Georgia (nine). Traditional suppliers Massachusetts and New Jersey have furnished six each. ~DICK FRIEDMAN