On a recent morning in early spring, an informal procession of students, employees, parents toting still-waking toddlers, and one Development Office employee could be seen ambling along one of the sun-dappled white marble walkways of The Rockefeller University (RU). The Development Office employee dawdled as the minutes inched closer to nine o’clock. She really should have hurried along, but she felt that the scene around her commanded attention. Above: the towering and majestic London plane trees, with their speckled bark, all over 80 feet tall, and many of them more than 100 years old. To both sides of the path: manicured lawns bordered by neatly trimmed hedges of cotoneaster and yew. Down the driveway towards the iron front gate where others trickled slowly in: swathes of purple and pink blooms cloaking lush azalea bushes.

Even the white marble walkway was a striking feature of the campus setting that morning. For this, the RU community had the late seminal landscape architect Dan Kiley to thank. Kiley, who counts among his other notable projects the Gateway Arch in St. Louis, Fountain Place in Dallas, and the courtrooms for the Nuremberg trials he designed while working with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers during World War II, designed the RU campus in 1956. Besides RU, Kiley has also been responsible for the surroundings of a number of other major cultural and commercial institutions, including Lincoln Center, the National Sculpture Garden, the Chicago Art Institute, and Independence Mall in Philadelphia.

One of the many notable innovations that Kiley brought to the field of landscape architecture was his use of fine materials—like marble—in his designs, where others may have used concrete. He also subverted traditional notions of classical arrangement by planting hedges and allées in unexpected patterns and using plants typically not found in garden design, such as ferns.

Kiley’s idea for the RU campus was that it would imitate the idea of outdoor “rooms.” He once wrote that a designer’s greatest contribution is to “link the human and natural in such a way as to recall our fundamental place in the scheme of things.” Kiley was interested in creating a novel type of functional landscape architecture that answered the needs of people in cities and suburbs, while acknowledging
the harmonies of nature.

Influenced by such varied sources as Ralph Waldo Emerson and William Blake, Dan Kiley cleverly found ways to meld indoor and outdoor spaces. Preserving this design aesthetic as an integral part of the identity and feel of the campus in the midst of alterations and additions has proved to be of significant importance to the administration over the years.

The Peggy Rockefeller Plaza at the south end of the campus—designed by Thomas Balsley and dedicated in May 2000—incorporates plantings, lawns and trees in geometric patterns. The multilevel space was organized to consist of the kind of outdoor rooms featured in Kiley’s design for the north campus. At the center of the plaza is a ginkgo tree grove surrounded by a fountain composed of a low, circular granite wall with slots and channels through which water flows. According to Balsley, ginkgo trees were chosen because they were hardy uprights that wouldn’t create a huge canopy, allowing as much sunlight as possible to flood the area. The trees provide a grove-like effect without too much shade. There is also a medicinal, healing component to ginkgo trees, which are the oldest known living seed plants. In the Plaza, accent lighting highlights the trees, fountain and other important elements.

In conjunction with its loyalty to a design aesthetic that integrates natural and manmade settings, indoor and outdoor spaces, the Ru community has tried to maintain a healthy relationship with the natural environment, and a willingness to be as unobtrusively present as possible within it. To this end, Ru maintains its 14-acre campus by using green horticultural practices. Only organic fertilizers are used in tree and shrub beds and on lawns, and all plantings are mulched regularly with organic compost material. Only organic pesticides are used and they are applied sparingly when necessary. Living organisms, including beneficial worms and bacteria, are often used as a natural alternative.

Steps have also been taken to make the campus hospitable to various kinds of wildlife. A butterfly garden was introduced in order to attract native species of butterflies to the campus, and a family of ducks can be seen in the Philosopher’s Garden fountains when the weather grows warm.

Fifty-four years ago, Dan Kiley made his vision of a campus setting characterized by harmonious interplay between human and natural spaces a reality at Ru. Walking the grounds in spring, one can’t help but look around at the immaculate lawns, the regal London planes, the carefully pruned bushes, and the clean-swept walks, and not feel a little bit like dawdling.
OF MICROSCOPES AND MOVIES
Aileen Marshall

We are very lucky here at Rockefeller University (ru) to have access to core facilities that both provide us with help for our experiments and meet many of our scientific needs. Many of us may not know about all the different forms of support available and just how extensive they are. One such core facility is the Bio-imaging Resource Center.

On the second floor of the Bronk building is a wealth of help for all your microscopy needs. There are currently 13 different microscopes, all with varying capabilities. They, and the demand for their services, have grown from the single confocal microscope that was available when the very helpful Alison North was recruited, ten years ago. Getting service is as easy as going on-line, where you will be asked a series of questions to help determine how best to achieve your goal: Are you doing time-lapse? Do you have fixed cells? These questions will direct you to the most appropriate microscope for your requirements. The goal is to help you be the best microscopist you can be.

New users often arrive at the facility wearing a look of terror. Alison finds it very rewarding when, after a two hour training session, this look of terror melts into a look of satisfaction. Alison received her Ph.D. at Oxford and was a Wellcome Trust Career Development Fellow in Manchester, UK, specializing in electron microscopy and live cell imaging. When first recruited by ru, she was hesitant. With the impression that all Americans are workaholics, Alison made a list of what she thought would be impossible conditions, such as “must have an open air tennis court.” Imagine her surprise as she passed the tennis court on the way in. She was also pleasantly surprised by how nice and accommodating everyone was here at ru. She says she is now “hooked on Rockefeller” and loves the support staff here: “I have never come across such helpful, positive people, and it makes my job a lot easier.”

The Bio-Imaging resource center is the most heavily used at ru, currently by about 65 labs. An advantage of having a core facility is the opportunity to try out several pieces of equipment (in this case microscopes) before investing in a single one that may not meet all of your needs. To this end, the facility is constantly upgrading both their equipment and capabilities. As a result of this, and the fact that their charges are the lowest in the area, scientists have come from as far as suny Downstate in Brooklyn to make use of the facility.

There is of course more to microscopy than the equipment itself. Over the past decade, many varied and interesting specimens have been photographed at the center. Alison thinks the most fun is to be had in making movies, termed live imaging: “You can’t stop watching.” She once photographed a tadpole with green fluorescent nerves, using a motorized stage, for the Brivanlou lab. That image got an Honorable Mention in the Nikon Imaging awards and was used as a billboard for the International Center for Photography.

Some of you may have noticed that the microscopes all have names, but what you might not know is that these are all characters from a series of English Claymation movies that most famously include Wallace, a befuddled inventor, and Gromit, his very intellectual dog. Alison is a big fan of these movies, something that is clearly well known at ru. She once received a call about a workstation that had files labeled Gromit, wanting to know if they were hers. Alison says that now “the problem is I’m running out of characters.” She did, however, find a name for the new Olympus microscope they are beta testing: Fluffles (a poodle). Perhaps Alison’s legacy will go beyond ru and the resource center, as the company has now adopted this name, though only in private of course.
AMY C TO THE LEMONS: A STORY ABOUT MY BIRACIAL NANNY FROM TEXAS.

Jeanne Garbarino

If it were like any other weekday over the last two years, I would be making a mad dash for the finish line, with the finish line referring to having two dressed, fed, and freshly diapered little girls so that they could start their day with their stand-in mom. But, alas, this arrangement, like all good things, was at an end. How can I fully thank the person who mothered my children as if they were her own? I suppose letting everyone know about her is a start.

It all started back in 2008. We had spent several long days interviewing potential nannies. Most of the people who responded to our posts were older and seemingly strict—sort of the super-nanny wannabe type. Although these women had pages of references and master’s degrees in early childhood education, their personality types just didn’t seem to fit our parenting philosophy and approach. But, when Amy showed up, it was like a ton of bricks had been lifted from our shoulders. We knew at once that she was the missing piece of our childcare jigsaw puzzle. Unlike the other interviewees, Amy made immediate eye contact with our then 18-month-old daughter Gwen and proceeded to put Gwen on her lap and engage her in conversation. The fact that our toddler had absolutely no hesitation in interacting with Amy was a critical factor in our subsequent decision. Unbeknownst to Amy, she had just taken the ultimate test and passed it with flying colors.

We would do whatever it took to have her sign on with us, but this was a business relationship after all, so we started with a reasonable offer. Thankfully, she agreed. Thus began a very exciting ride with Amy Clemons, who had introduced herself to me that day as Amy C to the lemons.

At first Amy and I had a very professional relationship. Even though we talked and joked around here and there, it was only for about 10-15 minutes during the morning. Clearly, this was not enough time to forge a real relationship. Additionally, I think she wasn’t sure how much she should share with me, her employer, and, in turn, I wasn’t sure how much I should share with her. Would she judge me for the occasional expletive? Could she tell me about the party she attended on Saturday night? It didn’t take long for the line to grey though. I would say that the employee/employer relationship was overtaken by friendship with the start of the 2008 presidential election. It was at that time that I began to learn about the real Amy Clemons.

It was quite apparent that we were on the same political team. I was rooting for Barack Obama because I truly believed that he was the one who was going to implement change, change for the better. Although Amy believed in a similar political policy, her connection with the now president runs much deeper. Like President Obama, Amy is also half white and half black and was raised solely by her white mother. Born in Galveston, Texas, Amy was raised in a loving and nurturing environment despite the obvious hurdles that come with a single parent household. However, the fact that Amy looked so much different from her mother and much older half-brothers was always in the back of her mind. It was strange for Amy to resemble someone that she did not know—she inherited so many of her traits from her father, including very thick and curly hair. She recalls her mother trying to tame her hair for years. Amy would sit every night while her mother tried to figure out what to do with it. It would always end up becoming a frizzy mess, big and fluffy. But, at age 8, Amy took matters into her own hands and learned how to do her own hair. She has described this day to me as being one of the most liberating experiences of her life!

She always knew she looked different but as time went on, Amy began to question why this was the case. For a long time, she was convinced that she was adopted—she would always say to her mom “just tell me the truth!” and her mother would try to assure her that Amy did indeed come from her womb. Looking different at home was one thing, but looking different at school was another. Amy didn’t quite fit in at her predominantly black middle school. She would get teased about her light skin and long, curly hybrid hair. And, one day when she was talking with a few of her friends on the school bus, another little girl walked up to her and told her in a loud voice, “Your mama better teach you some slang!” It was at this point that she started to understand how difficult it was going to be for her to identify with a particular race.

Teasing notwithstanding, Amy pulled good grades. As a result, she was able to test into an excellent high school; however, the demographic of this school was the polar opposite of her middle school—the student body was predominantly white. As one might expect from our society, especially with the “Mean Girls” cliques found in almost every American high school, she did not escape the consequences of her looks. Although she made friends, the parents were clearly aware of her biracial background. For example, Amy was not accepted by the parents of her first boyfriend, who was of African American decent, because she wasn’t “black enough.” But, it didn’t stop there, the parents of her second boyfriend, a white boy, didn’t like her either. It was a lose-lose situation. This certainly point that she started to understand how difficult it was going to be for her to identify with a particular race.

After graduating high school, she attended Southwestern College near Georgetown, Texas for a mere two weeks before deciding that she was in over her head. Although she got good grades in high school and was a well-rounded student, she was convinced that the only reason she
1. How long have you been living in the New York area? I was born and raised in Newark, NJ, a good 32 years to be exact, but have been commuting into the city for about 13 years. Does that count?


3. Which is your favorite neighborhood? My favorite neighborhood would have to be the Lower East Side. The bar scene can’t be beat. I mean really, where else in the city can you get Porslap Ale on draft, a bacon martini, followed by bread pudding in bacon cream sauce, all within a four block radius?

4. What do you think is the most overrated thing in the city? And underrated? The most overrated is the NYC housing racket. Renting a one bedroom in a three bedroom "pre-war" apartment with a shared bathroom for $3k is ridiculous. You can get a lot more for a lot less in Jersey! The most underrated are the craft breweries in NYC: Brooklyn, Chelsea, Heartland, Sixpoint, etc. Why do West Coast breweries get all the fun?

5. What do you miss most when you are out of town? This really is The City That Never Sleeps. Bars, clubs, restaurants, public transportation, you name it—there’s always an excuse to break night. Try that in the southwest, where everyone goes to bed after the 9 o’clock news (sorry Wifey).

6. If you could change one thing about NYC, what would that be? Implement NYC Congestion Pricing! (ducks) Get the cars out of the streets, and use the funds to expand pedestrian plazas and the NYC Subway. I love trains!

7. Describe a perfect weekend in NYC. The perfect weekend would involve taking a nice long hike along the Palisades Interstate Park in New Jersey, having a picnic, catching fish to provide for the Wifey caveman-style, and soaking in that clean, country air. But the best part, is having the NYC skyline as a backdrop. Breathtaking.

8. What is the most memorable experience you have had in NYC? It was a warm, summer day. I was dressed to the nines in my most dapper suit, when I decided to take a walk to Roosevelt Park for lunch. Upon sitting down on a park bench, I could feel myself landing on a nice, gooey wad of bubble gum. A cute little tree-hugger from Chicago experienced the whole episode, and laughed out loud as she tried her best to help clean it off. It’s been love ever since!

9. If you could live anywhere else, where would that be? I hear the beer in Germany is good…

10. Do you think of yourself as a New Yorker? Why? Even though I live in the NYC metro area, I do not consider myself a New Yorker because y’all won’t let me! But I’m ok with being that distant cousin from Jersey (not Joizee).*

was accepted to this college was because she was able to check off the "black" box under the race category. As a result, she decided to pack up her things and move to New York. Amy, who has an angelic voice and had always participated in her school’s theatre productions, decided to audition for entry into the American Musical and Dramatic Academy in New York City. Her admission was near instantaneous. Thus she was on a new path—a path to live out her dreams. With most new beginnings, there was a huge element of exhilaration. Not only was she living away from her family, she was doing it in NYC! Her classes were fresh and her new friends were exciting. But, as time ticked, Amy was faced with the harsh reality of trying to "make it" in New York. Her daily auditioning schedule was grueling and the drain on her pocket book was devastating. Because of her looks, Amy was limited in terms of which role she could go for. She could never be the ingenue; she would always have to go for roles written for minorities. Luckily, her light skin allowed her to pass for several races and did open up some doors. However, she still was not having much luck and had to make a major decision: act or eat.

Having had experience working at a preschool in Austin, Amy began to work at New York Kids Club on the Upper West Side. With her bills mounting, her need to work was starting to overshadow her desire to audition. Finally, the day came when she had to pull out of school and stop auditioning altogether. Life was confusing. She didn’t know where to go or what she was going to do with her future, a future that obviously did not involve any Tony awards. Her worries about her life and career came to a drastic halt as Amy was forced into a tragedy. In 2008, Hurricane Ike swept through Galveston, clearing everything in its path. Sure Amy had a few things that she had collected in New York but her home base and everything that was tangible had been destroyed. Her childhood was literally under water causing her emotions to dive into a tailspin. She had to fly back to Galveston to help her mom, her rock, figure it out. While everything was being assessed, her mom had to stay with friends. It made no sense for Amy to stay so she decided to come back to NYC. And boy were we lucky that she did.

Several days after she came back from Texas, Amy responded to our ad for a nanny position. She was with my family for almost two years, including my entire second pregnancy. My kids are now almost three and one years of age. Being a full time working mom has really worn me down at times, and Amy has always been there to help me recharge. She has also taught me so many valuable lessons on being a good parent, even though she is not a parent herself. I have been so blessed to have had her in my life as she provided my children with genuine tender loving care. Neighbors and friends who have watched Amy in action have approached me telling me how well she takes care of the girls—how she approaches me telling me how well she takes care of the girls—how she

Amy C-Lemons and I hope we continue to share our life experiences, no matter where we are. After all, we have no excuse considering we live in the era of Skype. *
Governors Island
Eugene Martin

For most of the last two centuries, Governors Island was a self-sufficient military village. Having been vacated by the U.S. military, the island became a ghost town and walking through it is now a surreal experience. At its peak, Governors Island supported over 7,000 soldiers, and the park is still dotted with all of the amenities needed to accommodate them. As you walk across the island, you walk past more than 200 abandoned buildings: Georgian-style mansions that were built in the early 19th century, schools, churches, over a hundred dormitories for the soldiers, and even a movie theatre. Last summer, many of the abandoned buildings were part of an art exhibit, allowing the island’s visitors to explore the inside of the church, theater, and empty homes. Outside, there are large grass fields, mostly without people, and certainly without the sounds of traffic, that allow visitors to relax or picnic in quiet peace. Although just a short ferry ride outside of New York City’s financial district, Governors Island feels a world away from Manhattan proper, allowing its visitors to simply unwind. That said, without the efforts of dedicated preservation groups, it would never have been opened to the public.

Governors Island is the birthplace of New York State, having been settled by the Dutch in 1624. Given its location at the mouth of the Hudson River, and the ease with which the island could be defended, it quickly became recognized as an important military site and had been primarily used as a military base since 1776. Historically, it was the site of one of the largest battles during the American Revolution, served as a prison for captured Confederate soldiers during the Civil War, and was used as a supply base and hospital during both of the World Wars. The military ceased operating from the island in 1995 when, as an effort to cut costs, the island was vacated. Within a year it went from being a fully-functional military base to being a ghost town with a skeleton crew of 60 people.

In 1995, President Clinton, during a conversation with Senator Patrick Moynihan, offered to sell Governors Island back to NY for the symbolic sum of $1, under the condition that it be declared a park and be used for the public good. Despite this offer, under Mayor Giuliani’s watch, NYC officials took reclamation of the park with general indifference, not submitting a valid public use plan to the federal government and allowing the $1 deal offered by President Clinton to legally expire. An anonymous source within the city government leaked that Mayor Giuliani was harboring hopes of turning Governors Island into a gambling destination, envisioning it as a Monaco on the Hudson that would generate “tons of money.” In response to Mayor Giuliani’s casino plans, and under the auspices of wanting to reduce the federal deficit, Congress passed a law that required Governors Island to be sold at fair market value, which was then estimated at between three and five hundred million dollars. If NY did not offer a reasonable price for purchase of the island, it was to be parcelled out and auctioned off to private and commercial interests. The $1 deal, and the plans for a new historical park, were seemingly squashed.

Land preservation advocacy groups, particularly the Governors Island Alliance, were outraged. While most of their political maneuvering still remains unknown to the public, the advocacy groups worked behind the scenes to restore the $1 purchase price and encourage the acquisition of the island for public use. In 1998, over the strong objections of Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, members of Congress from NY and NJ introduced legislation that reduced City Hall’s role in planning the future of Governors Island. In 2001, in one of his final acts in office, with a clear intent to aid in the preservation of Governors Island and deliver it back to the public, Clinton designated two historic forts on Governors Island as National Monuments. Finally, in 2002, the federal government dedicated the island to the theme of education, allowing George Bush to legally sell the island to NY State for a symbolic $1. In 2003, for the first time in over 200 years, the island became open to the public.

Governors Island remains on the cusp of change. The plans are to have the island renovated by 2012, which will likely include the demolishing of many of the abandoned buildings that currently give it its eerie charm. New York University, in a move intended to expand its campus and increase the amount of square footage per student, is attempting to turn much of the island into part of its campus, a move that is within the public use agreements mandated during the purchase of the island. If you want to see the island while it’s still relatively undeveloped, go now.

There is no admission fee to gain access to the island and the ferry is free. On June 5, Governors Island will open for the 2010 season with Family Festival Day, featuring clowns, music, and musicians. The island has one of the better vantage points for viewing the Statue of Liberty (they even have swings set up at the viewing point); they provide bike rentals, and have a number of interesting pay events on the horizon (NY BrewFest will be there on Saturday, June 19; the park will feature an M.I.A. concert on July 24).

Since this article went to press, there have been changes in the ownership and future of Governors Island. On April 11, a deal was reached for the City of New York to regain ownership of the island. The city’s current plan is to turn 87 acres of the island into a landscaped public park, to restore historic buildings, but demolish non-historic ones, and to introduce development zones on the island’s east and west sides. For more information on the new “master plan”, see http://www.govislandpark.com/ci
Is loneliness better than companionship?

Paolo Giordano’s debut novel is a sparsely-written, well-paced, melancholic story centered on two characters: Alice Della Rocca and Mattia Ballossino. Written in short chapters with alternating viewpoints that span from 1983 to 2007, the novel starts with a skiing accident that cripples the young Alice and alters her approach to future relationships. Alice eventually becomes anorexic to regain a lost sense of control over her body and life due to the accident. On the other hand, Mattia, a mathematics genius prone to quantifying situations he perceives as anxiety-inducing or tense, blames himself for the presumed death of his mentally disabled twin sister Michela. Mattia, a self-conscious pre-teen, is embarrassed by his sister and leaves her in a park on the way to a birthday party in an effort to escape being ridiculed by schoolmates. She is not seen again, and Mattia resorts to self-harm as a way to release his panic during the search and, ultimately, whenever he encounters times of emotional stress.

Alice befriends Mattia in high school, where he avoids the outside world by studying and she, in turn, is shunned by the outside. High school being what it is for two uncomfortable misfits, there are scenes of heartbreaking cruelty and social awkwardness. Giordano does an excellent job of portraying how Alice and Mattia deal with them: by clinging to each other. However, previous emotional scars prevent them from holding the relationship together, starting a cyclical series of convergences, but ultimately ending in the loneliness that the book’s title suggests: “Mattia thought that he and Alice were like that, twin primes, alone and lost, close but not close enough to really touch each other.”

After graduating from college, Alice takes Mattia on a celebratory drive and unknowingly ends up in the park where, as a kid, Mattia left his twin sister. Mattia panics and confesses what had happened and Alice, perhaps to calm and protect Mattia or maybe in an effort to move their relationship forward, kisses him: “All Mattia saw was a shadow moving toward him. He instinctively closed his eyes and then felt Alice’s hot mouth on his, her tears on his cheeks, or maybe they weren’t hers, and finally her hands, so light, holding his head still and catching all his thoughts and imprisoning them there, in the space that no longer existed between them.”

Mattia and Alice eventually move away from each other, when he accepts a job offer at a Scandinavian university. Mattia is pushed there unknowingly by Alice, who jumps to the conclusion that he had not factored her in while considering a post that would again separate them. Even apart, they repeat their destructive behaviors with other relationships—Alice alienates herself from her domineering father, her future husband, and her photography mentor while Mattia successfully distances his collaborator at the university where he is destined to shine, his possible lover, and his parents. Alice and Mattia eventually reconnect near the end of the novel. Alice once again puts herself on the line and, perhaps pushing for a resolution, initiates a kiss while Mattia is sleeping, to which he does not object. However, after quick calculations both realize what their true destinies really are.

If you like books with a happy, or even just a tidy, ending then this one may not be for you. But if you are looking for one with well-developed, though traumatized, characters, ones that make you eventually look back and wonder about their choices, make you want to shake them to ask what they are doing, and cause you to question why some people decide their destinies rather than leave things to fate and coincidence, then this book is a very good choice.

The Solitude of Prime Numbers was the winner of the Premio Strega, Italy’s highest literary honor. Giordano’s prose is poetic at times, and shows great control, without overdone descriptions. This is quite an accomplishment for a debut novelist who wrote the novel while completing his graduate studies in particle physics as an escape from his work. Giordano has decided to leave science and pursue writing as a career. The translation by Shaun Whiteside was exemplary as well, helping portray the feeling the author wanted to convey to his readers.
Life on a Roll

Heading Home by Jessica Wright

My Playground by Adria LeBoeuf