

Klarman Hall Groundbreaking Ceremony, 23 May 2013

By Joanie Mackowski

"The extension of [the Proto-Indo-European word for earth] to denote human beings has been variously explained as 'human' [deriving from] 'being who lives on the earth'...."

--J.P. Mallory and D.Q. Adams, "Encyclopedia of Indo-European Culture"

Rejoice! We lean into the shovel, for the earth gives.

For humanity's common ground yields more than human within us.

For we earthlings sprouted from earth, from one humble *adamah*ⁱ, a sheath of loam
the sun cast off winding the spring of time.

Rejoice! We raise the roof on the threshold and in the center, rounding our west
full-circle to the east.

For we unite avocation and vocation as two eyes make one in sight; for this work
is play for mortal stakes.ⁱⁱ

For we lean into the shovel to lean on a shovel or lean on an elbow or
back in a chair to consider more reciprocal easts and wests, leanings
and learnings, earthlings, starlings, us and vast.

For we've the confidence to welcome uncertainty's principled and ductile
evergreen horizon, and we build a stately mansion for our oversoul,ⁱⁱⁱ
and our undersoul and inter- and intrasoul: we plant soul's
kernel in this soil.

Rejoice! We stand the ground of peace. To live in a glass house, we let go
the stone; we ply our bones and brains to intangible structures.

For we build a temple for contemplation, with a green roof: for good
is as visible as green^{iv}, and we strike the earth

To stand in the clear of Klarman Hall, a translucent clothing for sound
habits of mind.

Rejoice! In our room of windows we'll entertain the sun. For the sun teaches us
to stretch beyond our reach, to be as guests in the lives of others.

For as all seedlings, we earthlings lean in to catch the sun's drift, the news
of our primal generator. For generosity (rain or shine)

Gravitates us toward the light. Generosity shelters us with a vegetable roof
so we're mindful of the ground and keeping the sky in proportion.

ⁱ This is the Hebrew word in the *Book of Genesis* meaning “ground” or “earth,” and which Adam is sifted from.

ⁱⁱ This is borrowed from Robert Frost. Frost’s poem “Two Tramps in Mud Time” concludes,

*My object in living is to unite
My avocation and my vocation
As my two eyes make one in sight.
Only where love and need are one,
And the work is play for mortal stakes,
Is the deed ever really done
For Heaven and the future’s sakes.*

ⁱⁱⁱ This paraphrases Oliver Wendell Holmes’ poem “The Chambered Nautilus,” which concludes,

*Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul,
As the swift seasons roll!
Leave thy low-vaulted past!
Let each new temple, nobler than the last,
Shut thee from heaven with a dome more vast,
Till thou at length art free,
Leaving thine outgrown shell by life’s unresting sea!*

^{iv} “Good is as visible as green” is from John Donne’s “Community.”