Froma’s 90th Birthday
Liber Amicorum
ODE TO FIZ

Any ode to FIZ
will stop in the doorway.
We all stopped in the doorway,
(each in travaile)
“I am I”
each would cry
and she, looking up through cigar smoke,
just snapped her sails.

(Contributed by Anne Carson)
The year was 1991, the season autumn. I was a Member of High Table at King’s College, Cambridge University, courtesy of the sponsorship of our mutual and beloved friend, Simon Goldhill. King’s prides itself on being non-hierarchical, but there are subtle codes, opaque to outsiders, that mark distinctions. I was sitting one afternoon, a couple of weeks after I’d arrived, in the Senior Commons Room, where the teaching staff (I’m not sure how else to call them) gather for tea or wine. It is an elegant room, and I felt vaguely out of place. No one paid me the least attention, though I had casually met a few people. I imagine that they didn’t recognize me, though greeting bare acquaintances is not customary there. Conversations were conducted in low murmurs, which emphasized the stillness in the room. I was on the point of leaving, rather abashedly, when in walked Froma.

Froma advanced upon a very eminent scholar, whom I will call Neil (not his real name), and as she did she caught sight of me, off to one side, a bit shrunken in my chair. “Neil!” Froma cried out. “There’s David Konstan. Why aren’t you talking to him?” Neil looked up in alarm, looked over toward me – he had indeed noticed that I was there – and made slight gurgling sounds. Froma drew me over, and said, “Now you two talk to each other. And by the way, Neil, are you still wearing that old sweater? It has a hole in the elbow.” Neil tried to see his elbow, and at the same time say something to me, as instructed.

By now, the entire room had changed. Where silence had reigned despotically, there was a welcome sense of noise. Chairs shuffled, people spoke a little louder, everything was more colorful, like Froma’s bright dress and jacket. Neil and I began to chat – he was, in fact, quite a genial fellow, underneath that self-conscious reticence – and when Froma saw that she’d broken the ice or rather shattered it completely, she smiled cheerfully, and said: “Neil. I need to buy shoes. You know the good places. Come, take me!” Neil tried not to show that he was squirming, and Froma kindly said: “Not now, you’re relaxing, and besides you’re talking with David.” Neil glanced at me sideways, as though I’d somehow done him a good turn. I smiled at Froma, and she at me, and all three of us were embraced by that penumbra of spontaneity and fun and warmth that is Froma’s personal aura.

The Senior Commons Room was from then on a different place for me. I waved cheerily to colleagues as I entered, smiled goodbye as I left, conversed with this one and that one, even if I had to initiate contact myself. Neil became something of a friend, I was at ease, and it was all due to Froma, who had lifted the veil and made the Senior Commons Room a human place for me.

(Contributed by David Konstan)

I remember well my first meeting with Froma nearly forty years ago. I had read her articles in the journal Representations and was very impressed, so when I heard she was in Israel where I lived at the time, I
tracked her down via the Israel Classics Association and offered her lunch at a Hungarian restaurant in Tel Aviv. Never having met each other nor having known much about each other, we sat down to lunch at about 12 and talked until 5; we never stopped talking after that (And it was only later that I learned that Froma didn't like Hungarian food.)

After a couple of decades of friendship on many levels, we found ourselves together at the WIKO for a year in Berlin. Riotous times ensued since Froma's hall window led into the hall outside of our apartment. We had no elevator and it was up 83 steps and Froma had an elevator, so much of our groceries went up the elevator into her apartment out the window of hers into the hall and thence into the door of ours. Re-enacting the Goldbergs, there was quite a bit of yooohoo'ing going on that year. We celebrated there Froma's 80th birthday. Live long and prosper Froma!

(Contributed by Daniel Boyarin)

Froma and George in Crete, 2009. (Contributed by Tim Whitmarsh)

Happy Birthday, Froma! Before we met in 1990, I was already an admirer of your scholarly
writing and you were an enthusiastic supporter of Josh's work, so I was eager to get to know you. When we arrived from Montana—totally green on Ivy League/East Coast life—you and George were the first to give us a warm welcome to Princeton. I fondly remember spending an afternoon in New York with you at the Guggenheim Museum admiring Kandinsky's paintings. Your dinners were great fun—dazzling conversations on far-reaching topics, superb jokes, and lots of laughter. One hilarious late night in the kitchen, you gave the us guests a pop quiz on the mystifying functions of a seemingly endless supply of random cooking implements. Your encouragement of my writing means the world to me. I knew I would miss you when we departed for California. So I'm delighted that we still keep in touch on Facebook—and I hope you know how profoundly I cherish your intense intellect, keen curiosity, and generous heart.

(Contributed by Adrienne Mayor)

I don’t have an old photo, but three memory pictures.

A cheroot in one hand, a Tab in the other, Froma peering over her glasses at the text of Aeschylus.

George and Froma in the swimming pool with their prescription goggles.

Froma, in her Marais apartment that offered a view through the windows of an Orthodox Shul, serving up two versions of chile con carne – *ce ragout extraordinaire* -- to her French friends who’d never had anything like it.

And there has been nobody like her.

My cherished, indispensable friend, happy birthday! Love and kisses,

David

(Contributed by David Quint)
Froma J. Zeitlin retired from Princeton University in 2010, where she was the Charles Ewing Professor of Greek Language and Literature in the Department of Classics and Professor in the Department of Comparative Literature. Dr. Zeitlin received her B.A. from Radcliffe-Harvard in 1954 and her Ph.D. from Columbia University in 1970. She is a specialist in Greek literature from Homer to late antiquity, with particular interests in epic, drama and prose fiction. Her publications include Under the Sign of the Shield: Semiotics and Aeschylus’ Seven Against Thebes (1982; 2d ed. 2009); Playing the Other: Gender and Society in Classical Greek Literature (1996); and an assortment of edited or co-edited volumes, including Before Sexuality: Structures of Erotic Experience in the Ancient Greek World (1990); Nothing to Do with Dionysus? Athenian Drama in its Social Context (1990); and Narrating Desire: Erotic Sex and Gender in the Ancient Novel (2012).

CC: How did you come to Classics?

FZ: I grew up on the Upper West Side in New York, and in high school I had a wonderful Latin teacher. When I got to Radcliffe in 1951, I took Ancient Greek. I graduated in 1954 – can you believe I just had my 65th reunion? I’m not quite sure why I signed up for Greek, except that I always liked antiquity. From my family I had a very strong Jewish background, but I didn’t want to go into Biblical Studies. I didn’t think that was a good field for a woman. But Classics was a wonderful, small department at Harvard in those days. You really got to know the professors. Everyone in the years around me at Harvard became a professional Classicist – Michael Putnam, Kenneth Rockford, Jim Coulter, and Charlie Segal were all my classmates.

CC: What was your family like?

FZ: I came from a very traditional Jewish family who had emigrated to New York before the First World War. My parents spoke beautiful Yiddish. I had a remarkable education in Hebrew and Jewish Studies, which has served me all my life. I went to public high school, because I didn’t do well enough in math to get into Hunter. We were all girls at that school. When I look back on it, we accepted a lot, because we didn’t know any better.

I got married in my senior year of college. My husband George was in the army. We had been going together for a few years, while he was at Columbia and I was at Radcliffe. He was drafted one month before the Korean War ended. It was George who pushed me to go back to graduate school, after we had children. I had meanwhile been raising our family – I even learned how to use a sewing machine! – but he thought it would be a waste if I didn’t go back and get my degree. I took nine years off, but then I went back to Columbia and got my Ph.D. in 1970.
Figure 1: Froma Zeitlin in 1954. Image used by permission of Froma Zeitlin.

CC: What were you interested in working on in graduate school?

FZ: I always wanted to work on Greek literature. Columbia was an odd place for me to study, because many of the people who had been my classmates were now professors. My academic age has always been out of step with my chronological age, because of raising my family. But I was excited about literature: Aeschylus, Greek tragedy, but also Petronius, Lucan, and Vergil. I had three children, and as a result my time was really worth something. When people didn’t prepare, it drove me out of my mind, because I’d had to hire a babysitter and juggle schedules.

CC: Tell me about your first job.

FZ: My was job at Brooklyn College, a one-year position filling in for someone on leave. I was still writing my dissertation when I got the job at Brooklyn, so my time was divided. Then I got a job at Rutgers, where I worked from 1970 to 1977. While I was at Rutgers, I won a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Meanwhile Princeton was looking to make a senior appointment. The department was changing and becoming less of an old boys’ club. It used to be A for Athletes, B for Hoes, and C for coeds! The Princeton faculty invited me to come and give a talk. I had nothing at stake, because I already had a job, but they were impressed enough to ask me to come first as a visitor for our mutual benefit. I was commuting from New York, which made the change easy. In those days you could pick where you wanted to be.

CC: What was it like to be a woman at Princeton?

FZ: The situation was unusual, because in 1976 when I arrived there were three other faculty members in the Classics Department who were women. One of them was Lois Hinckley, who had been a student of Kenneth Rockford. She was the ultimate flower child, a folk singer, who used to have all her students sit on the floor of her office when they came to talk to her. The second was Ann Bergren, who was very taken with deconstruction. And the third was none other than Janet Martin, the first woman to get tenure at Princeton in Classics. And then I was hired. For the time period, that was an amazingly high number of women in one department, although Hinckley and Bergren, still untenured, left a few years later.

CC: What was your experience in the department?

FZ: Well, I expected to be put down. It didn’t faze me. I also had a family, and children to bring up. I never expected the world to give me anything.
CC: What subjects did you teach?

FZ: I taught Greek literature, especially epic and drama. I also taught gender studies and mythology. I liked to use images in my mythology class, which was considered a fairly new methodology at the time. I am not sure I would have gotten through with today’s demands for extensive publication, but I loved my teaching. The best thing that happened to me was getting that NEH Grant in 1975, because it meant someone thought my work was worthwhile. I always yearned to make a difference in whatever I published, whether on Petronius or Greek tragedy.

CC: How did you get interested in working on gender?

FZ: That was a piece of cake! For me it wasn’t only about politics, it was about heuristics. I asked, why do things happen the way they do in Greek tragedy? Here was an area that was unexplored, that I could look at from a whole new perspective. Gender was the tool. When I wrote my article on misogyny in the Oresteia in 1978, I found a new way into a very old work of art.

![Figure 2: Froma Zeitlin in the 1990s. Image used by permission of Froma Zeitlin.](image)

CC: Did you consider yourself a feminist?

FZ: I’ve never been a rebel on the ramparts. I went to the sit-in at Low Library at Columbia in 1968, at the beginning of the second feminist movement. I left behind three children and a hysterical husband, just to see what was going on. I didn’t burn my bra. I stood in the back. I’m not a risk-taker, personally. My scholarship is more rebellious. I was once on a prohibited list at Oxford, which I take as a badge of honor.

In my opinion of myself, I vary between two extremes. One extreme is how people see me, which is as some kind of icon. At an SCS conference a few years ago, a student asked to take a picture with me. I almost fainted! On the other hand, everything I’ve done I’ve worked hard for. Nothing came easy. For instance, I spent three years on my paper about Euripides’ Hippolytus, because I knew there was a way into the text and I just had to find it. Working on Aeschylus’ Seven Against Thebes was also one of the great experiences of my life. I knew that there were secrets in that text. There are still more secrets there, ones I didn’t find!

Later in my career I started working on the Greek novel, because I was interested in intimacy. The Greeks do not have a language of the intimate self in the same way that the Romans do. The Romans love privacy: the interiors of houses, walled gardens, personal letters. By contrast, the real emotional register of the Greeks is tragic, and everything important takes place in a public space.
CC: Can you tell me more about your work with the French school?

FZ: I went to France many times, starting in 1975. I was really part of a family of scholars in France, with Pierre Vidal-Naquet, Marcel Detienne, Nicole Loraux, and of course Jean-Pierre Vernant. Vernant, in particular, was instrumental in my intellectual development from the moment that I discovered his work, whether on tragedy, mythology, religion, or the status of the image. The work he did with Detienne on métrie in their collaborative volume on the nature of cunning intelligence stands for me as one of the finest pieces of scholarship I know, the source of endless ramifications beyond the limits of that study.

![Figure 3: Froma Zeitlin and Jean-Pierre Vernant in the 1990s. Image used by permission of Froma Zeitlin.](image)

CC: Do you think things have changed for women in Classics?

FZ: Lately I have been thinking a lot about women who transcended the issues in our field. Jane Ellen Harrison, an early pioneer, for instance, blew my head off when I first read her work. Certainly, there used to be a much more normative, gender-inflected set of attitudes in academia. Women were supposed to be quiet, while men asked the big questions. My aim, however, was to discover original points of entry into a text on my own terms. I never wanted to be ruled by a single ideology, even the ideology that women are equal to men. Ideology stops you from thinking freely.

CC: What advice would you give to your younger self?

FZ: I have no advice, because I don’t think I could be a role model for anyone. I’ve been just so lucky. I’ve been in the right place at the right time, over and over. I was helped by others. I had a wonderful home life and a husband who was very supportive of my work. And during it all, I was afraid. I was a coward. I used to dream about being lost, and that my big sister would find me – I haven’t had that dream for a long time – but I was always waiting for it all to go wrong.

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Claire Caton caccio is a scholar of ancient drama and its modern reception. She is currently writing her first book, which explores memory or solo actors' songs in the plays of Euripides. She has published on the imagery of dreams in Aeschylus' Oresteia, on singing heroes in Sophocles' Trachiniae, and on the transformation of the myth of Orpheus in the Broadway musical Hadestown. As a dramaturg and director, she has worked extensively with modern stagings of ancient texts. She teaches as a member of the faculty at Georgetown University.

(Contributed by Judith Hallett)
Froma is the fourth person from the left in the first row standing. She is wearing a striped shirt. This picture comes from the International Conference on the Ancient Novel (ICAN) V, held in Sept. 2015 in Houston, TX

(Contributed by Gareth Schmeling)

I expect the word inspiration will recur again and again, but I will never forget how Froma took in hand my unwieldy project, *In and Out of the Mind*, on - roughly - "Ideas in Greek tragedy of what is inside the mind and body". I had been writing it, as a huge book, for what seemed like ten years, supposedly for OUP. She listened, said briskly, *mega biblion, mega kakon*, and sent me off to Princeton Press. I emerged happily a few years later with *two* books, manageably sized. Her energy, fearless curiosity, kindness and friendship as well as her ideas and scholarship down the years, have been with me ever since. Yes - even though everyone else will say it too, inspiration has to be the word. But also, she is enormous fun and I have loved her company.

(Contributed by Ruth Padel)

If I have taken my time in responding to Ariel's request, it's because I don't know how to sum up the joy of having Froma as colleague and friend. There were lots of good things I expected when I joined the Princeton faculty at the beginning of this century; Froma has been a person, a friend, a wisdom beyond anything one could expect. Happy happy birthday and love from Nick and me.

Leonard

(Contributed by Leonard Barkan)
These two photos were taken when Froma came to England in 1993, to give a lecture at Durham. I was there on a year’s fellowship; with typical generosity she invited me to stay a long weekend in Paris (where I had the best croissants I have ever eaten!) but she also took me shopping in York (picture with the Minster) and we went sightseeing in Hexham (picture with the daffs).

(Contributed by Chris Kraus)

Way to go, Froma. You are a force of nature. It's been an honor to be working in the same field these many years--from Aeschylus on.

Fondly,

Nancy

(Contributed by Nancy Rabinowitz)

Dearest Froma, have a very Happy Birthday! We owe you a very great deal for all you have taught us. With very good wishes,

Richard

(Contributed by Richard Hunter)
Froma, I remember a dinner I had with Bryan Cheyette in Ann Arbor years ago. You came to the table. The topic turned to Jewish literature, much of it around the Holocaust, and you took the floor and began a mini-seminar on books you loved or hated, with fully formed reasons why. Your memory and your energy were inexhaustible, while we were exhausted! I watched as Bryan, the professional scholar of Jewish literature, slid slowly under the table, overwhelmed by this deluge of information. I had no stake in the field, but it was clear that you had a secret (or as I later learned, not so secret) second expertise, even a potential second career, that had nothing to do with classical studies. That’s all very you. It’s been such a pleasure living alongside you, learning, marveling, being gobsmacked and humbled by your larger-than-life presence. You’ve are a unique phenom in the world. Happy 90th, and wishing you many many more birthdays to come.

Love,
Jim

(Contributed by James Porter)

Happy Birthday Froma! I have very fond memories of my M19 bus journey in Berlin, meeting up and hanging out and enjoying the sights and the sounds of the German capital! I can’t wait to see you again - either side of the pond! Big hugs and lots of love, Dan xxx

(Contributed by Dan Orrels)

Quatre-vingt dix balais ! Jamais trop tard pour apprendre (je suppose) une expression bien française! En souvenir du chaleureux accueil que tu m’as réservé à Princeton, cet autre monde.

André

(Contributed by André Laks)
It has always felt *beshert*. I had read Froma’s celebrated article on Aeschylus’ *Oresteia* at a crucial point in my PhD research; I had met her when she gave her first paper in Europe, and she had invited me immediately to send her work and meet in New York; I was dating Shoshana, Judy’s best friend from school – who knew? – and Jono was a colleague at King’s, where I worked. That first paper in Europe was indeed the beginning of a friendship that has now lasted over forty years. A friend – and a mentor and a role model. I have giggled continually throughout as one does with friends: trying to go for a walk with Froma in the Canadian rockies (‘Where is the room service?’), trying to walk with Froma in Lisbon with George bellowing ‘Froma!’ every ten yards to keep her on track; holding up the traffic on Brooklyn Bridge as Froma stopped dead in the road to make a point about tragedy. People often have rather trivial hopes for role models and mentors. Froma fulfils that role with an unparalleled richness. Her intellectual generosity is an ideal to live up to; her gathering of people together who she thinks will fire off each other; the seriousness – without pomposness – of her academic commitment; her recognition that while ideas matter deeply, nourishing people intimately too is fundamental to good work; her continuing openness to new ideas -- and deflation of pretentiousness and trendiness when it is just that; her profound feminist ideals that are always combined with kindness and maturity and a lack of self-righteousness; her flair. As I have just written the introduction to Froma’s new volume of essays, which she read with her usual critical eye, I know how much such praise will make her cringe. But it is important to record not just how much friendship is an intimate pleasure and a long trusting engagement, but also how much the interaction of friendship and intellectual work is a heady, learning, growing experience, and how impoverishing current naïve demands for professional distance are likely to prove. Froma and I have often joked how we are now like *mishpacha* without the *meshugas*: certainly our families are intertwined enough to be *mishpacha*. No *meshugas*? I can’t imagine life with Froma without some *meshugas*, but it is the very best sort.

*(Contributed by Simon Goldhill)*

Dear Froma,

I am finding it impossible to pick a single memory or anecdote to recall with you. Every time we see you it is the stuff of legend. And rather than looking back I would rather look forward to all the times we have yet to share— but not without saying how much it has meant to me to be your student, your colleague, and your friend. Happy, Happy Birthday!

Andrew
Froma and Jin (student) and Kevin at their wedding on 12/12/21.

Froma flew all the way to Half Moon Bay, CA along with her daughter Judy, to attend Jin and Kevin’s wedding. She was gorgeous, spirited, and everyone loved meeting her!

(Contributed by Jin Yun Chung)

There are hundreds of wonderful stories that I could tell about Froma—both humorous and uplifting—which I am sure that others have already told you. Never, for example, has the gigantic Liddell & Scott Greek dictionary been made the object of such a wonderful moral lesson as the that she instituted with it! I myself have used it to great effect with our own granddaughters. But there are countless such Froma tales, all of them well suited to star in the ancient novels that she explicated so brilliantly for the rest of us.

All the very best,
Brent

(Contributed by Brent Shaw)
Socrates said ο δέ ανεξάταστος βίος ου βιωτός ανθρώπω "the unexamined life is not a life for mankind." Froma, you have exemplified the words of Socrates, always pursuing understanding and pushing the limits of knowledge. You have shared this with your family, friends, colleagues and students. But moreover, throughout the decades you have been a nurturing, stimulating, exciting friend to us, mentor to students and colleagues, and cherished by all who know you. When Bernice and I first were married you and George encouraged us, found us a schul, but more importantly gave us a friendship that has lasted 60 years, so far. We have so many wonderful memories, from hearing your melodious rendition of the haftarah at our schul when you visited Honolulu, to the many meals at your table, and the vibrant house where interesting people came and went. You have truly made the world better than you have found it.

(Contributed by Robert Littman)

Happy 90th birthday to dear Froma from Angela and Glenn!

(Contributed by Glenn Most)
As I think back over the nearly forty years since I first met Froma, and the twenty-five-plus years since I became her colleague, the memories crowd in, too many to process, much less recount. But there is one memory that is especially vivid, and right for this occasion. In May of 2003, as the Classics Department was ending its exile on Prospect Avenue before returning to beloved East Pyne, Froma’s friends and colleagues gathered in the small seminar room to raise a glass and offer a toast in celebration of her as she turned seventy: it fills me with inexpressible happiness, twenty years farther along, to celebrate my unique and brilliant friend as she passes a new milestone. Te amamus universi, carissima!

Bob

(Contributed by Bob Kaster)

I have known Froma since 1987, when I was writing my dissertation on Dionysus. I went to see her in Princeton, since I admired her work - my first trip to the US. The US should become a place to which I felt very close, especially in matters of scholarship.

We soon met again at the Dionysus conference in Virginia in 1990. Tragedy, Dionysus, and a bit later the ancient novel always brought Froma and me together. Our ways crossed at numerous conferences, meetings, etc.

I went through some of my pictures - I was always bad in putting them in order. I attach two nice photos (one with our dad, one with her, Gareth, and me) from the unforgettable conference ICAN IV in Lisbon (2008).

In 2010/11 I spent a year at the IAS with my whole family. During the year in Princeton Froma and I became close friends and we were all sad when the year was over. I remember a nice grill party in her garden - perhaps you were also present. Once I had her as a guest in Basel (2013) and I visited her in Berlin when she stayed at the Wissenschaftskolleg.

(Contributed by Tony Bierl)
Froma est la première collègue que j'avais invitée, devenu prof. de langue et littérature grecques en 1985 à l'Université de Lausanne, avec un séminaire qui commençait à 8h du matin! Froma n'avait pas manqué de s'étonner des habitudes matinales des Helvètes. Quoi qu'il en soit, au-delà d'une distance temporelle désormais de près de quatre décennies, c'est une intervention dont le souvenir reste vivace, point de départ d'échanges qui furent aussi constants qu'ils furent fructueuses.

Merci pour cette belle initiative.

Bien cordialement,

Claude

(Contributed by Claude Calame)

Dear Froma,

My warmest congratulations! ad me'ah v'esrim shana!

Much love,

Milette

(Contributed by Milette Gaifman)

My favorite Froma story goes back to grad school. One day in seminar, Froma asked a new student what he thought of the reading, Euripides' *Hippolytus*. The young man replied that he didn't really care for it and that tragedy left him cold. At the end of the class, she said to him, "You'll be glad to know that we are reading Plato next week." He replied, "Don't get your hopes up. I don't like him either." Without missing a beat, she asked, "What do Tiggers eat for breakfast?"

Froma -- all best wishes for your 90th. Bis hundert un tsvantsik!

Thanks so much!

Deborah

(Contributed by Deborah Lyons)
Engagement with Froma has been at the center of my intellectual and personal life. I still am amazed that the two of us, unbeknownst to each other, came to write dissertations on ritual in tragedy at a time when the subject had become largely dismissed in English speaking, if not French, circles. And Froma’s ability to import those French scholars to Princeton so that I could meet them at conferences was equally significant. That was only the beginning of many exchanges not only on the subject of gender in antiquity, but on issues relating to gender in our profession. In this case we were part of a larger team of women who really did make a difference, but having someone like Froma visible and active at Princeton was critical to the project at its early stages.

Froma’s myth course and slides have had a long journey from her office to mine to Debbie Steiner’s to my students. And her ability to negotiate the internet and acquire seemingly inaccessible material is remarkable. I have also enjoyed visiting some of Froma’s zoom classes in recent years, though I can always see from her face that she had something important to say that I was missing…

Equally important in a different way was a friendship that grew to include our families, especially during events at 315 Central Park West, the very place best place to watch fireworks on a New Year’s eve. All three of us miss George, but are always glad to catch up with your children and grandchildren whenever we can. Froma, you may be frustrated about walking. But everyone knows that your mind has not aged a bit, and we all look forward to sharing many more events and conversations in the future.

Love,
Helene

(Contributed by Helene Foley)

Dear Froma,

You are a goddess: thank you for all your inspiration! I hope you have a wonderful time on this milestone birthday, and many hymns sung.

Love from Emily

(Contributed by Emily Gowers)
Darling Froma,

I have written about you often by now, of course, but I am especially thrilled to be able to add to those earlier testimonials on the occasion of your 90th! Starting with my first book, in 1999, you have loomed large in each of my published (as your beloved French like to say) “autofictions”—for the very good reason that I would have very little to write about if it weren’t for you. When I came to Princeton in 1986 to work with you, I could never have imagined that you would become so, so much more to me than a Doktormutter: cherished mentor, irreplaceable friend, literary inspiration, invaluable model for the life of the mind and of the soul. (And you gave me a whole other family to love, too!) All I will say now that is my life—and my work—would be unthinkable without YOU—without the extraordinary influence and impact you have had upon me. For that I feel both immeasurably grateful and incredibly lucky. HAPPY BIRTHDAY dearest Froma!!!

Love love
Daniel

With Daniel in Zamość, Poland, July 2005

(Contributed by Daniel Mendelsohn)
Dearest Froma,
I am sending you all my love and admiration on the momentous occasion of your 90th birthday. That you have reached this milestone is a testament to your enormous staying power and creative energy. You have always been there, through good times and the bad, as a cherished teacher and advisor, a loyal friend, and a heartening companion. Forty years have passed since we first met, and you continue to be a powerful influence on my life and work. Reaching this milestone also attests to the love and energy you have devoted to others. The inspiration and strength you have given has kept you vibrant; you will always be a vital presence in my heart. The fullness of your life is almost impossible to describe. I am honored and grateful to be part of its overflowing bounty.

Happy birthday Froma, with all my love,
David

P.S. I look forward to seeing you soon

(Contributed by David Rosenbloom)
My connection to this wonderful lady harkens back to my graduate student days in the 80’s, and though I pursued a professional, corporate path in international branding, marketing and communications, Froma continued to be an inspiration. Her charm, deep intelligence, empathy, humor and gusto for life can go deep into your memory, into your soul.

Happily, in recent years, Froma and I have re-connected on FB, which is a distinct pleasure for me. We use the platform for entirely fun and social exchanges, especially posts of my husband James’ fabulous dinners and wine pairings. While she has said to me on FB that I should write my memoirs, I think it is Froma who should write hers, if she hasn’t already; her life is such a rich testament to what a vigorous embrace of life can generate across generations. Froma knows she has a standing invitation from James and me chez nous for dinner in Geneva, any time, and we would so welcome this. It would be great to raise a glass to her in person, and to toast her with a terrific bottle (or two) from the cellar— to you Froma, ever advisor and inspiration, and now a good friend.

(Contributed by Sue Mizera)

Dearest Froma,
Happy 90th birthday to the most amazing mentor! You’ve been such a wonderful inspiration and source of strength, and I am ever so grateful to you for all that you have done to support me over the years. I have so many fond memories, including our unforgettable visit to Sintra, Portugal where we all spent a magical day after the ICAN IV conference in Lisbon. I hope that you have a fantastic celebration!
With lots of love and admiration,

Rosa Andújar

Enjoying the sunshine, San Diego January 2019
Unforgettable visit to Sintra, Portugal July 2008

(Contributed by Rosa Andújar)
For Froma Zeitlin on her 90th birthday

For me, Froma Zeitlin has been a source of inspiration, the grand dame of the classical field. As a classicist, a Jewish intellectual and a feminist she is responsible for having transformed the dominant modes of thought and experience in leading classics departments during the 1980s. Her writing brought new ideas to the field: visuality, theatricality, femininity and sexuality. For students of the classics in the 1980s Zeitlin was proposing liberation: she gave us a new model of how to think through the prism of comparison, semiotics and structuralism. For me in the 1990s, at the time the only student enrolled in the joint graduate program of classics and comparative literature at Yale University, Froma’s work was essential encouragement, a beam of encouraging light, testimony to the real possibility of joining these two disciplines. In her influential book, Playing the Other, she formulated, through the ancient theater and mythology of femininity, new understandings of the notion of otherness: understandings not subjugated to structures of liminality and marginality. The Other, through Zeitlin, and here I think of her also as a Jewish thinker, became a constitutive source of knowledge. For me, her studies on the gaze and desire were not only illuminating, they also actually opened new landscapes for inquiry. Froma Zeitlin fully embodies the concept of a cultural agent. She created important encounters between French and Anglo-American thought and disrupted pure discourses by bringing new guests to the table. In her introduction to Jean-Pierre Vernant’s Mortals and Immortals, she quotes George Steiner’s admiring remarks on the Jewish thinker Gershom Scholem, thus allowing the two innovative thinkers to intersect. Inviting a Jewish thinker into the preface of a work dealing with the ancient Greek imaginary, Froma paved the way for thinking of classics as cosmopolitan territory where everyone, including those deemed others, become legitimate citizens. Now in a moment when all these important values are imperiled, I am thinking about Froma with much gratitude and admiration. It is precisely in the concrete present and place in which I record these thoughts, Tel Aviv, April 2023, that I want to indicate the remarkable contribution of Froma to a liberal, secular and modernist way of thinking.

(Contributed by Vered Lev Kenaan)
This little piece of paper is certainly informal (Borgeaud is written Bourgeaud), but it was crucial for me, for my destiny as a researcher. It was hand-delivered to me in Chicago, by Jamie Redfield, in the fall of 1979.

It was sent by Froma, well known as the exegete of Aeschylus and a true deity for the friends of Jean-Pierre Vernant and Marcel Detienne. It illustrates in its simplicity the warm link that Froma had created between the researchers of the Gernet Center, in Paris, and their American colleagues, the best. So many memories:

- Her birthday, in Paris, in the 80s, which she had not planned to celebrate. I was there by chance. I took her to Procope, next to the Odeon, to this restaurant that has not changed since the Age of Enlightenment.
- A visit she made to me with Georges, in Philadelphia, where I was passing through. George’s voice, his “Héllióôôôô!,” and the visit to the Amish market, in search of real, untreated and tasty apples.
- Her hospitality in Chicago, where I had to give a course on the Labyrinth. Her precision in making sure my children were well accommodated during their stay.
- Not to mention the wonderful apartment in New York, open to friends.

Froma, I owe you a LOT. Love to you,
Philippe

(Contributed by Philippe Borgeaud)
My Froma...is 90!? Well, I’m not too far behind, at 80.... But in a way, we two will always remain frozen in my mind in mid-life, in the moment we met, at a conference at UCLA organized by Saul Friedlander, the proceedings of which would later be published as Probing the Limits of Representation. The conference brought together scholars and writers from every walk of life and letters, including Jacques Derrida and Hayden White. To my shame, I hadn’t yet heard of Froma Zeitlin, who wasn’t one of those who had helped to define what came to be called Holocaust Studies. Saul explained to me that she was one of the preeminent scholars of classical literature at Princeton, had indeed helped to define the feminist exploration of that field, but that she also had a passion for Holocaust representations, in which many of us had been engaged for years.

I was to meet her, however, in a very telling way. Emerging bleary-eyed from my room after having spent a sleepless night revising my presentation for such an august audience, I bumped into an older but equally bleary-eyed woman in the corridor. After we introduced ourselves, I noted, internally, that this would probably be my fate going forward: always feeling insecure before a conference and spending the night before my presentation in frantic editing mode.

From that moment, and in the nearly three and a half decades since, our friendship would deepen and widen: through two sojourns at Princeton where the love and shelter offered by Froma and George helped to define my life (though she bears no responsibility for the fact that the second time, in the spring of 1997, my relationship with Bernie Avishai would blossom from friendship into love that would upend both our families and lead to our blessed partnership). The Zeitlin homes remained for many years our places of refuge on trips to Princeton and New York. It was a privilege to participate in the event at Princeton in honor of Froma’s retirement, and to get a larger glimpse of the other half of her career, in classical studies.

I will end with an anecdote from our front porch in Wilmot, NH, a few years ago (it must have been before Covid), when Froma was visiting us while teaching at Breadloaf in Vermont. Somewhat bored with talking about other things, I asked if she would read the opening of The Odyssey with me, in the translation by our mutual friend Bob Fagles. First she asked me, as she would, I imagine, any undergraduate student, “What was Penelope doing while awaiting Odysseus’ return?” Suddenly I felt like a student caught napping, and stuttered, “Ummm...sewing? Knitting? Crocheting?” “Weaving!!” Froma retorted, rather annoyed. “Okay, I said, “Let’s just read and you teach me!” We then proceeded to have a blessed ‘seminar’ for the next hour.

Froma loves gossip of all kinds. Nothing human is foreign to her. There is quite simply no one like Froma. It has been a pleasure to share these decades with her and George z’l, whom we miss so much, and to get to know the Zeitlin clan. Stay well, beloved Froma. The universe needs you. As my mother would say: ‘Ad meah KE-esrim!’

All my love, Sidra (and Bernie too)

(Contributed by Sidra Ezrahi)
I had the chance to meet Froma in the 1970s when, on a visit to Paris, she attended the seminars of the Center for Comparative Research on Ancient Societies and particularly those of Jean-Pierre Vernant. Froma looked at the center’s collaborators with an expression that was both attentive and indulgent, she was one of the first of a long series of classicists from the United States who found in the work of the Center a food for their curiosity and their desire to leave the ready-made path of a positivist philology. In the winter of 1977 I was lucky enough to be offered a scholarship by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs to visit American universities. I hardly knew anyone in the USA except Froma and Charles Segal and my English was abysmal. Froma welcomed me into her beautiful apartment in New York and showed me around the city; she took me to the Cloisters and accompanied me on a visit to the Museum of the American Indians in Harlem in what was for me a pilgrimage to the memory of Franz Boas and to the unforgettable description of the place given by C. Levi-Strauss in his works. Froma has become over time, and during our respective travels, a friend, this kind of person who is always present if you ask her and who opens her home to you as widely as her affectionate advice. Life is made of encounters, that of Froma has enriched and stimulated me over the decades and its wonderful sense of hospitality. Thank you, Froma!

A photo taken in Oxford for the delivery of a Doctorate to the unforgettable Jean -Pierre Vernant. (Froma and John Ma)

(Contributed by Alain Schnapp)
ex corde quo me Bacche rapis, ‘whither Bacchus, to you whirl me?!’ Horace said this of Dionysus, but I and many others could say it, with delight, about what it’s like to eat, talk, walk, shmooze, or even leaf through archived articles, notes, and files with Froma. Certainly, there’s no Pesah seder like seder with Froma and her wonderful family: songs, ideas, elbows, stories, interjections, and, most of all, friendship. Froma’s houses—whether in Princeton, New York, or really wherever she is—are true tents of Abraham and Sarah, open on all four sides to welcome visitors. When Hurricane Sandy forced me and Sarah out of our place in the Village, Froma didn’t hesitate to invite us to stay at her New York place—and what a wonderful refuge from the storm it was! Many will have such stories, and will agree with me, too, that there is no discussion like a discussion with Froma. My dear friend Daniel Barbu and I once had the pleasure of interviewing Froma about her life and scholarship, and her life of scholarship, for the journal Asdiwal (n°14 / 2019, pp. 79–88). As we spoke of times past and present, it felt to us—and it certainly felt to the Fellows making use of the Parlours of Trinity College and then Kings College—that, as is said of the discussions of the rabbis of the Talmud, we were surrounded by wheeling walls of fire. Usually, such spaces are used for reading the paper, for sipping coffee, for academic gossip, or for a nap; finally, between the three of us, it became a place for history, literature, for passion. Those same wheels of fire emerge whenever Froma gets into discussion with others: I certainly will not forget the incredible departmental seminar that she and I led together on Achilles Tatius, the best of its kind. I had a similar feeling when I was walking with Froma along Boulevard Saint Michel, in and out of the many side-streets of Paris’ fifth arrondissement, where each courtyard had its own story in Froma’s annals, which are simultaneously the annals of the most interesting, the most exciting, and still the most revolutionary developments in classical studies: the intersection of close reading—true, sympathetic, honest close reading—with the social science of antiquity. Together with my friend Theodor Dunkelgrün—who is about to take the reins of Jewish studies institute at Antwerp as the first ever professor of Jewish history in that university—I have had reason recently to go back to that Asdiwal interview, as we both contemplate what it means to be in a university that has no real institute of Jewish studies, or where Jewish studies is auxiliary to other studies. What she said there about the challenges of building such a department at Princeton is a model for us as we go about trying to do something similar. Here, as in literary studies as in life, Froma is an inspiration to me, and to so many others, and I will never forget our talks and walks together—nor our seders!

(Contributed by Aaron Kachuck)

Dearest Froma, Who knew you are turning 90! I thought that you and Jamie Redfield were the same age.... I am recalling fondly the first time Jack Winkler introduced us some 40 years ago at Stanford and (a few years later) the time you came to Blacksburg Virginia for the Masks of Dionysus conference, Happy birthday and best wishes always, Chris

(Contributed by Chris Faraone)
Dear Froma,

Wishing you much joy and fun on your 90th birthday! We will be thinking of you and toasting your brilliance from across the pond!

With lots of love,
Pavlos and Mimi

(Contributed by Emily Pillinger)

Everyone remembers the first time they met Froma. Our first encounter was in December 1987. I had flown over from Edinburgh to attend the APA in Manhattan, hoping to get a job. I was standing at the desk of the hotel, asking (as you had to do in those days) where the room was for the interview. The doors of the lobby burst open, and in from Broadway came Froma, surrounded by the usual bevvy of fans and admirers. She spotted me from 20 feet away, all dressed up in my three-piece suit as I was, and called out, "Look at that guy: he must be a Brit!"

Our second meeting was a lot more auspicious, as we chatted in Princeton after a talk I'd given, and I learnt that she had a shrewder and better informed take on several recent books on Latin literature than most Latinists I knew. I've been learning from her ever since. What a privilege it's been to be your colleague and your friend, Froma: thank you for it all.

(Contributed by Denis Feeny)

Some Snapshots of Froma

Spring 2004—(a first glimpse of Froma)
A one day conference at Princeton on the legacy of the classics. Froma knows everyone; she talks about tragedy; she can put on her lipstick without looking in a mirror! Amazing!

Fall 2004—(a first conversation with Froma)
She has invited me to lunch at the faculty club. When she arrives, she’s pulling a huge wheeled backpack. She’s filled it with enormous picture books about the history of gardening. (I’m teaching my first course at Princeton—on the literature of gardens—and she has lugged these books to lunch for my perusal). We talk non-stop. About Princeton, her own teaching, a little about gardens. When it’s time to leave, with an upwave of her hand, she tells me to take the books and keep them as long as I like.

undated photos—
Froma introduces me to anyone we encounter as we walk together, or anyone who goes by as I sit with her on a bench in the Pyne Hall courtyard, where she is smoking and stopping smoking
at the same time.

Froma is describing many events happening at once, some new developments—the conversation often will end with her saying Princeton is an “embarrass des richesses.” Only gradually do I realize this is very funny.

George and Dan have a weekly tennis game. Sometimes we go out to a movie or dinner with George and Froma afterward. George likes to say the wives should sit together in the back seat—“that way we will be living like aristocrats!”

July 4, many years—
Froma is running her annual garden party. A big crowd, but she has an eye out for someone stranded, anyone who could use an introduction, a plate, a kindness. She is like a hawk-eyed general taking care of the troops at the margins of the field. George is in charge of the meat. Each time he flips the hamburgers he decisively slams down the grill lid. A kind of joyful rhythm. George is the drummer of Froma’s July 4 muster.

January 2007—
A moonless night of freezing rain and I’m giving Froma a ride from my car to her car in another parking lot. She’s received news from abroad that a dear friend has died. A terrible grief. The windshield wipers swoop back and forth with their relentless punctuation. I feel as if I am trying to console her inside a cave at the end of the world.

more undated photos—

Froma recovering from her hip surgery—there in her single bed, sunlight streaming through the windows, on the phone with George, giving him a long list of books and magazines to bring to her bedside. She could use some mallomars. It’s clear she’s going to be fine.

A few of Froma’s recommendations—Felice Lazzaro, novels of Gregor von Rezzori, Gloomy Sunday, Mongolian artists, 19th century Yiddish poets, Endeavour, “no screens before dark!” she says

Only Froma knows how important this is. A woman of learning, curiosity, and courage—and three times more awake than most people.

Sending much love and happiest of wishes from all the Stewart-Halevys for this momentous birthday, dear Froma!

(Contributed by Susan Stewart)
I have so many happy memories of Froma, visiting her office in East Pyne as she smoked her skinny tan cigarettes, drinking Tab as she with stunning acuity and eloquence untangled the intricacies of a Greek text; dinners in Princeton; her teaching me how to make the most delicious pâté of all time; enjoying many meetings of the then American Philological Association; New Orleans; her wonderful talk at the Getty, another in Berkeley; meeting in Paris with our friend Michael Oborne; visiting the Vernants in Sèvres; the brunch we had in New York with Jipé; too many pleasures to list them all. The most memorable of all was our trip to the Eastern Aegean and Turkey----wandering in Ephesus, driving far into the countryside to the spa of Pamukkale, sleeping in a caravanserai, bathing in the hot springs, (George and Froma insisting to my dismay that lunch was unnecessary! as we climbed over the ruins of Aphrodisias), then on to Patmos, to Samos, to Chios. Thank you, Froma, for your amazing body of work, and for our friendship, many years of kindness and generosity and stimulating gossip about the world. I love you.

(Contributed by Page du Bois)

It somehow seems appropriate that I first met Froma through the written word. Of course, I already knew her amazing, groundbreaking scholarship. But we connected through correspondence – back in the day when that meant letters, typed out on paper and dispatched through the US mails – after her dear friend and collaborator, Jack Winkler, attended a talk I gave at the APA (as we quaintly used to call our professional association). Jack asked if I would like to contribute to a collection of essays that he and Froma were putting together. That turned out to be the hugely influential “Nothing To Do with Dionysus,” but of course I did not know that then and I was very unsure of whether I had anything worthy to say. With her characteristic generosity, and utter unwillingness to take no for an answer, Froma convinced me that a historian (at that time best known for obscure studies of Greek fortifications) really did have something to contribute to an emerging field that would soon be known as cultural Poetics.

Even more surprising: before I knew it, I found myself, against all odds, interviewing for a job in the Classics Department. In advance of my job talk I was beside myself with nervousness. Froma took it upon herself to calm me down, stroking my arm, gently but firmly, like a trainer settling a jumpy racehorse. Through force of her warm and bright spirit, at once magisterial, collegial, and maternal, once again Froma convinced me that I could do more and better than I had believed possible.

After I joined the Princeton Classics Department, I came to understand that my experience was far from unique: Through her brilliant personal example, impeccably high standards, remarkable erudition, unequalled intellectual generosity, splendid hospitality, and sheer force of character, Froma enabled her colleagues, friends, and students (often they were one and the same) to accomplish great things. Through good luck, brilliant artifice, or both, my office was right was
right next door to Froma’s. Consequently, I spent almost as much time in her office as in mine, talking (through a haze of tobacco smoke) late into the evenings about Greek tragedy and history, department politics, Judaic Studies, academic gossip, and a host of other matters. Froma made the first floor of East Pyne Hall an extension of her own gorgeous house and garden, a place that was very much more than a workplace – indeed it became a home to her extended and extensive “family of choice.” I look back on the 16 years during which we were colleagues at Princeton as a Golden Age – a time in which I learned much more than I taught, and in which scholarship and friendship were one and the same.

Thank you, Froma, for all you have given of yourself, to each and all of us.

Josh

(Contributed by Josh Ober)

Froma!

Where to begin? Let me begin at the beginning—the beginning of my coming to know her, many years ago, in Pittsburgh, where intense, creatively bejeweled, and dressed unlike any classicist I have ever met, she gave a remarkable lecture on Euripides’ Orestes. I still remember that she read the play as a “palimpsest” of the myth’s earlier treatments, introduced the new at the time idea of intertextuality, and showed me, in less than an hour, a whole new way of reading the ancients—and the moderns as well. And then dinner at a rather depressing Greek restaurant, where it turned out she knew the family of my wife, Susan, from summers on Martha’s Vineyard, and where she demonstrated the same intensity in her lighter moments as she did in her serious ones—there were plenty of both, as there have always been since that memorable evening.

To be frank, both on that occasion and for months afterward, when I was visiting at Princeton, I found Froma terrifying. She knew so much, and she had learnt it in an incredibly short time, starting her career well after most people her age in academics were already past tenure, which she was the first woman to receive in the Princeton Classics Department, and she was a good friend and collaborator of those famous and exotic French scholars whose mere names also terrified me. And she was—have I said that Already?—intense.

It took me a while to get up the courage to say hello to her. It was one evening, weeks after the semester had started, and the session of a seminar I attended at East Pyne was over Froma, as many of you know, practically lived in her office, the case of diet Cokes both nectar and ambrosia to her as far as I could tell, always by her side. Her office door was always open, but for weeks I had managed to squeeze by or leave by a different exit avoid being further terrified.

Until one evening, around 10:00 or so, when I gathered whatever there was of courage within me, walked to her door, stood half-in and half-outside the office so as not to
seem to impose, and said hello, how are you, do you remember me, and so on. At 12:15, still standing by the door, half-in and half-outside, I had to tear myself away from one of the most exciting, inspiring, open, in part rigorous, in part free-floating, bracing, and encouraging conversations I had had with anyone at Princeton so far—or since then: I shall never forget it. We talked about everything, something that has remained constant for the past forty-plus years.

And a little later, to my great joy, we became colleagues. And, really, I stopped finding her terrifying. Terror was replaced by a combination of respect, admiration, and love. I was still overwhelmed by her intense commitment to her work but I also saw how uncannily warm and spontaneous, how concerned and sensitive she was about the successes and failures, the joys and sorrows everyone who mattered to her—a huge, expansive circle that began with her family and spread out to a vast range of friends, colleagues, and students, whose lives she followed with the same interest, the same intensity (have I used that word already?) with which inspired in her the fate of the tragic heroes (“I am the only person in the world who understands Euripides’ Helen,” she told one student after another colleague, admitting he knew “damn all” about the Helen, referred him to her), the nature of theater and performance, or the issue of Pandora’s questionable box, which started its mythological life as a jar.

And she knew how to give a party. Whether it was a brisket dinner for ten or a get-together for fifty, she had an uncanny sense of who would get along with whom. She and George were uniquely able to create an atmosphere that infallibly reflected their own sparkling personalities and everyone always seemed to be their best selves in Froma and George’s house (George usually presiding from the kitchen, Froma being, like a higher being, pantachou parousa—omnipresent for the Latinists here). But, for me, our lunches were best. We met relatively often—less often than I would have liked, but only because of me, not her—and each occasion was something to remember. Whether we talked about our work, about Princeton—she knew everything that was happening, and often why—about classics, or film, or the Holocaust, or plain gossip (we did do a lot of that), or my own tattered Jewish ties, which, over the years, she has made me respect much more than I had ever thought possible, Froma was knowledgeable, engaging, sharp, funny, and irreverent. She was also, as I may have said, intense.

Froma and I worked on the Humanities Council together, and she was an outstanding member of our Executive Committee, always willing and always wise. But I need to tell you about the one time we were at some sort of loggerheads. We had to make some arrangements about the space that to be given to Hellenic Studies, of which she was one of its first and most loyal supporters, and Judaic Studies, which was her own creature, in a new building. She came to the meeting with Peter Shäfer, who was part of Judaic Studies, but whom I had not expected and with whom I had a very unfortunate exchange (fortunately, resolved soon afterward). Froma, after telling me that she suspected that I had had “a psychotic break” during the meeting, confessed, to my utter astonishment, that she had invited Peter because she was too afraid of me to argue her case directly! Struck
dumb, all I could do was kiss her. We have mostly communicated by email during the past three years or so—also through the trainer we share, who brings us news of each other—but we managed to have another lunch ten days or so ago. It was as if we had never stopped. Froma talked about her work and her new book—something well worth celebrating along with her birthday. As always, she knew everything that was happening at Princeton, and moved seamlessly between the professional and the personal, the classic and the modern, the high and the low. But she was still—I should say in case I forget to mention it—as intense as she was when I first met her, when she struck me as a mystery. She still is a mystery. That is, she constantly makes me feel that there are sides to her that I don’t yet know, that I want to learn, that they will be as charming, impressive, and fascinating as anything I have already learnt about her.

I have written two books on love, beauty, and friendship. And I believe that as long as we feel that there are sides to someone that we don’t yet know, that we want to learn, and that we believe will be as charming, impressive, and fascinating as anything we have already learnt about them—that as long as that promise of a future happiness is present in a relationship, the best name for it is—love. That is what, for the past forty-plus years, my original fear of Froma has become: Intense (of course), deep, and grateful love. Thank you. And many happy returns!

(Contributed by Alexander Nehemas)

Dear Froma,

I forgot most of the details of our first meeting almost 50 years ago. But I never forgot and will never forget that while we were sitting under a tree in the yard of a university (you may remember where it was?) you told me that you were the person who had more papers in the drawer of your desk than any other classical scholar in the world. And I did never forget this detail of our first meeting, because in the following decades all these wonderful papers from your drawer were published, and reading and rereading them I was continuously reminded of that sentence and of the doubts I had at the moment it was uttered.

Thanks for your friendship and the many papers of yours which for decades continued to accompany me. At the moment – while I am trying to write a commentary on Euripides’ Electra – it is your eye-opening paper on the Argive festival of Hera, which inspires me.

With all best wishes for the next decade!

Yours as ever,
Bernd

(Contributed by Bernd Seidensticker)
Dear Froma,

We met in early 1994. I was a Fellow at the Davis Center in the History Department in Dickenson, and you were of course omnipresent at East Pyne. How exactly we met, I do not recall, but I vividly remember it was love at first sight. We had an immediate ‘click’ that only deepened the more time we spent together. Our conversations were an enjoyable mix of academic discussions, talking about friends and family and loads of fun. A substantial amount of this chatting time we spent at the Annex: I was still a smoker back then, and so were you, and the Annex was a rare place where sinners like us were tolerated and could get themselves a lunch as well. When I returned home to the Netherlands, we stayed in touch, writing endless emails. My life at my university at the time was quite difficult, and you were my “wailing wall”. Your emails were a constant support and comfort for me.

In 2008, my husband Wessel and I made a trip to the USA. In the meantime, life had cleared up for me: I got a new job, at Utrecht University, I was now a full professor and had landed a huge grant that allowed me to travel a lot to present my research to colleagues. Of course, we got in touch with you and came for a visit to Princeton. Not much later, you decided to retire. It was impossible for me to attend the festivities for you in 2010, but I sent a card with the best wishes in Hebrew that you appreciated. In 2017, when I was again at Princeton for a conference, we briefly saw each other again. Clearly, you enjoyed your retirement: you were the Froma-of-old, with twinkling eyes and lucid, witty observations.

Dear Froma, being your friend has enriched my life. I feel privileged that I may join in this celebration of your 90th birthday, and I wish you many years in health and happiness with your family and friends.

Love,
Josine

(Contributed by Josine Blok)

I first met Professor Froma Zeitlin in September of 1986, nearly 37 years ago. I was 18 years old, a Princeton Freshman, and had already made one of the smartest decisions of my life: I signed up for Froma’s Freshman Seminar course entitled, “The Literature of the Holocaust”. It transformed me in ways that I will be forever grateful for – and the unexpected, enduring bonus prize was a lifelong friendship. Before Froma’s class, I don’t think I had ever read so many books in one week. The selections were alternatively addictive, shocking, devastating, inspiring, and even uplifting, particularly when considering the power of the human spirit and will to live. We grappled with such complexity, like suicides among survivors – how could someone endure the Holocaust only to take their own life years after liberation? This collection of books (which remain in my bookcase to this day) touched my mind and heart in ways that I hadn’t experienced before. Each book we discussed, each movie we watched was like repeated
lightning strikes of fascination and discovery. Froma had carefully selected a class composed of Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform Jews; Catholic and Protestant Christians; the granddaughter of a German WWII soldier; a student who had never met a Jew before. We grew together – a diversity that became one under the tutelage of the most brilliant woman we had ever encountered.

From that semester forward, I never stopped being in touch with Froma Zeitlin. I would stop by her office in East Pyne, always fascinated by the stacks and stacks of books that rose up like towers around her. The garbage bins filled with dozens of emptied diet coke cans reflected the long days and nights of her thinking, writing, advising, and catalysis. I was simply captivated by her intellectual prowess, the directions of our conversations, her interest in me and my trajectory – even though I was a major in Chemistry, not Classics. “Loren, you should read this!” “Have you seen this new film? You must!” And I did for all four of my magical years at Princeton.

I called Froma that very first reunion to alert her that I was coming to town and wanted to coordinate a visit. She immediately responded, “well, you MUST stay at my place!” And I did for every reunion on the zeros and fives that I religiously attended ever since, including just last year – when I experienced the unbridled joy of both a make-up 30th reunion and the Princeton graduation of my eldest son. Over the years, I shared innumerable meals with Froma and George at their home. She has had an open-door policy, hosting me along with my college roommate for decades. “Here’s your key, come and go as you please; remember that the kitchen is always open and you should feel free to come home as late as you like!” My favorite was returning home from reunion parties in the wee hours of the morning, only to see the light on in her office above the garage – Froma wide awake, typing away at her computer, always working on a manuscript, book, or project. I have never met anyone whose mind is as perpetually active as that of Froma Zeitlin’s. As she remains deeply engaged in conversation with you, she also has additional tracks of thought ongoing, occasionally pausing her remarks to allow some unspoken intellectual trajectory to reach completion and then start anew. Her knowledge of local, national, and international politics, pop culture, music, and the arts allows for endlessly fascinating conversations, which I would savor during each visit. When it was time to depart and say goodbye, traditionally after a photo and long embrace, I would walk to my car thinking and smiling – “she is like no other; she is simply THE BEST; and boy do I love and cherish my time with her.”

Froma remains one of my favorite people on Earth. She is a blessing to her family, to Princeton, and to her legion of students, who she clearly adores as much as we adore her. Happy 90th Birthday dearest Froma - your brilliance of mind and heart defy any numerical age and astound us at every cherished encounter with you. Here’s to many more birthdays, reunion visits, and dynamic conversations to come!

~ Loren

(Contributed by Loren Walensky) pm pm poll pm
Froma has always inspired the warmest admiration in me.

She was one of the professors of my friend André Lardinois, and that’s how I first met her, in Princeton, probably in 1994, when I had just been out of graduate school for a couple of years and André was finishing his dissertation. He was actually very proud that he could introduce me to her, since she had been a major reason for him to apply to Princeton in the first place. Froma was one of the first Anglo-Saxon classicists with a deep familiarity with the French structuralists, and in her interpretations of Greek tragedy she could use those ideas with a clarity and incisiveness like no other. He was blown away by her work. So was I! She is the kind of scholar one falls in love with.

I saw her again when I spent a year at the IAS in Princeton: at that time she was just founding the Judaic Study program, and that, too, was an inspiration for me: my mother had survived the Holocaust in Theresienstadt and in my home in the Netherlands we had all learned to ‘discrete’ about our Jewish identity, which was a source of insecurity and danger. Froma’s example of how to be a female Jewish academic in classics was absolutely liberating to me.

Everyone is a lot older now, and phenomenologically the age difference has shrunk in the meantime. She is a friend. We don’t see much of each other, although I notice her FB activity, which is always so very characteristic in tone and energy. When she came to the Netherlands to visit Jonathan (a couple of years ago, I can’t remember precisely how long), he kindly organized a little dinner party for Froma, her old friend Henk Versnel, him, and me. I still remember that evening with warmth.

Mazel tov, Froma, stay well. You have been a blessing in more ways than you’ll ever realize.

Love,

Ineke

(Contributed by Ineke Sluiter)

Dear Froma, I will never forget the first time as a graduate student I entered your office for a one-on-one seminar on Euripides. Filled with trepidation I crept in. There you sat, like the Delphic Oracle, wreathed in clouds of smoke from your favorite French cigarettes, an omnipresent fuchsia Tab can on the desk to your right, your beringed hands steepled before you as you prepared to dispense wisdom. Your laser-like gaze fixed upon me, and we began. I have no words to express how much I enjoyed those hours spent at your side, and how much I learned, digging into various texts and stretching my analytical wings. But now, many years later, on the occasion of your 90th birthday, please let me express my deep affection and profound gratitude for all you taught me through dialogue and by way of example.

Mea gratia tibi, Froma! Happy, Happy 90th Birthday! Xoxo love,

Bev

(Contributed by Beverly Graf)
Fantastic Froma

Froma and Alan joined the Classics Department as colleagues at Rutgers in 1970 to which they contributed a measure of relative sanity for a few years. It was a strong collegial and academic bond but much more than that - the beginning of a long and very affectionate family relationship which has lasted for more than five decades, in New York, Princeton, Manchester and Oxford. We have indelible memories of staying at Central Park West on many occasions while Froma and George were coping with occasionally recalcitrant teenagers and small children, and we with a tiny infant. We remember Froma and George cajoling or browbeating Jono into eating pasta which he claimed he liked ‘but not well enough to eat’. Then there was our truly memorable departure from Manhattan on New Year’s day 1977 when Alan had mistaken the 20.00 flight departure time for 10.00 rather than 8.00 p.m., resulting in Froma driving us from CPW to JFK at 7.00 p.m. and getting there with 5 minutes to spare: ‘George, move over, I will drive aggressively!’ and insouciantly hurling coins into the toll baskets as she passed through the gates at speed. We remember an indecisive Froma in Zabar’s, unable to decide which of two food-processors she preferred and solving the problem by buying them both. More recently we had the pleasure of seeing her in Oxford and trying to guide her in the right direction(s), physically and socially, not Mentally!

Family fun and domestic trivia were far from the whole picture. There was also a common core of shared interest and desire to engage with and discuss across the cultural range of literature, art, music which enriched our lives whenever we came together (alas, less frequently in recent years). An amazing intellect and an extraordinary friend, the only person we know in the classical academic world who is instantly recognisable by the mere mention of her first name.

Happy 90th birthday dearest Froma, with lots of love, and may there be many more.

Alan and Jackie xxx

George with Helen Bowman

(Contributed by Alan and Jackie Bowman)
I first knew Froma in the mid- and late 1960s, when we were graduate students at Columbia University. By then, she had already published major articles on the Aeneid and the Oresteia, and before she completed her doctorate in 1970 she had written the two pieces on Petronius and the pioneering essay on “The Argive Festival of Hera and Euripides’ Electra” that were published in 1970 and 1971. Despite our differences in age and experience, and although she was already a mature scholar while I was a neophyte, we became friends, and I’m happy to say that we’ve remained friends for the past sixty years and counting. As a graduate student I learned as much or more about Greek literature and classical scholarship from Froma as from most of my teachers. Among other things, I recall her introducing me to thinking about ritual as a pathway into the interpretation of Attic tragedy and to the work of Walter Burkert.

Here are two other memories of those Columbia years. I had joined the Columbia department as an Assistant Professor in 1968, and in 1970, although Froma and I had been students together, I was drafted to serve on the committee that would read and examine her doctoral dissertation, “The Ritual World of Greek Tragedy.” I was more than a little intimidated, because Froma had read far more tragedy and relevant scholarship than I had, and despite my anthropological interests and experience, I knew relatively little about ritual. During the oral defense, I was much younger than everyone else in the room, and though I tried to ask informed, engaging questions, I recall wondering at the time what Froma must have thought about being “examined” by someone so junior and so lacking in relevant scholarly authority. After she completed her doctorate, according to Columbia’s rules at the time, Froma no longer had borrowing privileges at the university’s main research library. To get around this problem, she and I agreed that she would become my official deputy, or proxy, borrower, so that she could withdraw whatever books she needed for her work. It seemed, and still seems, absurd that Froma, of all people, had to depend in this way on my faculty status, but the arrangement worked for as long as it was needed.

Since then, Froma has been the scholar of Greek literature who has meant the most to me for her originality, achievements, and commitment to classical studies as one of the human sciences. She has helped to renew our discipline through her distinctive close readings of an extraordinarily wide range of texts and images; the theoretical sophistication with which she has written on gender, genre, ritual, and visuality, among other topics; and her supportive pedagogy and collegiality. It has been exhilarating and inspiring to study Greek literature during the decades in which Froma has been professionally active.

On a personal level, she has been a generous friend, sharing ideas for courses, syllabi, and scholarly writings, sometimes in advance of publication, and letting me know about conferences and lectures. She has also attended, in person or digitally, some of my own presentations and encouraged my work. Like so many others, I have been fortunate to enjoy Froma’s (and George’s) hospitality. At their dinners and parties in New York and Princeton, I first met colleagues, especially French colleagues, whose work meant a great deal to me and with whom I later became friends. It happened that she and George were for some years
members of the same synagogue as my parents, and I will never forget their kindness to my father after my mother’s death forty years ago.

Happy 90th birthday, Froma! I look forward to the appearance of the second volume of your collected essays and eagerly anticipate the book based on your Sather lectures, which were thrilling to hear in person and would be a pleasure to revisit in print.

(Contributed by Seth Schein)

Of all the many pleasant and enlivening times I have met up with Froma – in Oxford, Cambridge, Princeton, New York, Paris, even snowy Banff – I think that the sweetest was just now. We spent much of three days in each other’s company around Helene Foley’s retirement event on the cusp of March and April. After the separation of covid I found Froma not as physically agile as she used to be (nor am I), but in mind and spirit she seemed as spritely as ever. So many jokes, asides, and shrewd assessments! As we sat beside each other through the various talks, she would whisper “what the hell is he going on about?”, or “she’s got something there”, or “I just love this one”….It is so refreshing to be with someone who does not beat about the bush, who calls out bullshit, who praises independence, and generously recognises quality. And who is so unfailingly fun to be with. I regard it as a great privilege to have been nourished by Froma’s intellectual stimulus and her life-affirming energy – still going strong at 90.

(Contributed by Oliver Taplin)

Congratulations with your 90th birthday! Last time we met was in March 2019. David Rosenbloom and I spent a couple of lovely days at your wonderful home at Princeton. You received us with the same warmth and generosity I got accustomed to from you. It reminded me of all the wonderful evenings we spent at your house when I was still a graduate student at Princeton (1988-1995) with fellow students like David, Daniel, Pavlos and Nancy. We would spend evenings talking, debating and, I am afraid, a bit of drinking, at not only your, but George’s home, because he would be very much enjoying these evenings too. I remember distinctly that we watched the results of the presidential elections at your home in 1992 and that, when it became clear that Bill Clinton won, you exclaimed “a 12 year nightmare is over”. I am afraid a few more presidential nightmares followed, but afterwards the sun would also rise again. You have been an enormous influence on my life and I want to thank you for that from the bottom of your heart. I wish you many more sunrises.

(Contributed by André Lardinois)
I first met Froma almost twenty years ago, when I started as an undergraduate in classics at Princeton (in 2004). We stayed in touch when I was a graduate student in Cambridge and then in Oxford (I remember one evening in particular at the Turf). After I returned to Princeton in 2017 we met regularly (often with Josh Billings), including (memorably, for me) to watch the snowboarding at the Tokyo winter olympics (where a Princeton student was competing).

Two scenes, both involving ice cream:

The year is 2005 or 2006, around the first time I met Froma. Sam Zeitlin, Froma's grandson, was in the HUM sequence as a student with me, and we had become friends. I can't recall whether it was to entice her grandson to visit more often, or if it was leftovers from an event, or if it was just her personal stash, but I do know that Froma had a store of ice cream in the department freezer. I ran into Sam, and he brought me along for a treat: ice cream with Froma. I was stunned. It felt so unusual and welcoming to be treated to ice cream by a Famous Professor! (Later, I'd "catch" her smoking in her office with the AC fan on high, a classic student experience from those days.)

The year is anywhere between 2017 and 2022, and I've brought pizza and one salad from Nomad as is customary for our regular dinners. After the usual fast-paced chat -- which Deans are on her good side or bad, what foreign series on Netflix are worth it -- Froma offers dessert. She definitely wants me to have ice cream, a lot of it if possible. It's part of the ritual. But she also wants to be sure that I don't take too many. There's a particular bar (I'm pretty sure they're dark chocolate Magnum with vanilla on the inside) and she's worried they may not stock them again. Very warm spots in the curious experience of being junior faculty!

Happy birthday, Froma!! I already miss our dinners, but I hope we'll stay in touch, and meet in person when I'm back in Princeton!

(Contributed by Harvey Lederman)

As 26-year-old who never circulated south of Boston, I headed eons ago to Princeton for my interview, hazily influenced by Scott Fitzgerald and therefore thinking it was somewhere in New York. (Turns out it's in New Jersey.) But New York was really in Princeton (in Classics at least) in the form of an amazing woman whose liberating free-speech and ebullience were for me totally Aristophanic. Froma, you were and are the absolute heart and soul of the Department, and I for one will never forget your wisdom, inspiration, care, and generosity over those 18 years we worked together in East Pyne. Congratulations! Can't wait for the centennial celebration… Dick

(Contributed by Dick Martin)
With Jipé, Françoise and George

(Contributed by Françoise Frontisi)

with Jean Pierre Vernant (Jipé)
With Françoise Frontisi, Oswyn Murray, Jipé

with Laura Slatkin, Jipé
In the late summer of 2016 Froma and George, Harry and I, explored Northern Greece in a minivan, with Harry kicking off in Thessaloniki and ending in Ioannina, with Mount Olympus along the way (see below). Froma and I, quite separately, had long wanted to experience Salonika, but it was of course Froma who said ‘let’s do it’, so we created an itinerary and a rendez-vous and it happened. Harry did all the driving and Froma was super-complimentary. George coughed a little in the high mountains, but we thought nothing of it. It was to be his last holiday, which makes these memories especially precious.

My first encounter with Froma and George was on the terrace of the King David Hotel in Jerusalem. Someone, I can’t remember who, had said we absolutely had to meet. That person was right. It seems fitting that my treasured friendship with Froma was thus book-ended by Israel and Greece, by the Hebrew and Greek languages, by Judaism and Hellenism. In between came the huge good fortune of sharing a year (2003-4) at IAS in Princeton, which of course also introduced Harry and me to the Princeton house, to Froma’s unparalleled hospitality, to a few of her circle of remarkable and devoted friends, and to the delights of her extraordinary collections of films, books, and objects of fascination. She invited me to give a Jewish Studies lecture in Princeton University, and then insisted on finding the perfect image for my poster and turning my limp title into an inspired soundbite. I got her down to Yale when in residence there and she had huge audiences eating out of her hand.
We have wonderful memories of Froma’s hospitality in the New York flat too. We were thrilled on two occasions to be invited to do Rosh Hashanah Zeitlin-style. Thanks entirely to Froma, we could get to know and enjoy the City, both spending time there with her and George, and, once again with incredible generosity, being encouraged to stay in the flat ourselves. I know Froma has never really taken to London, but she put a good face on it when she and George came on visits that were not quite long enough, and we forgive her, and hope she will come again.

This is just a small part, inadequately expressed of what Froma has meant to us. She has had a unique place in our lives and in our hearts. Froma, thank you! Long may our friendship continue. And may you continue to enrich the lives of your family, friends, pupils and colleagues.
Although I wasn't formally one of Froma's students, I consider her one of my teachers in the most profound sense. There are many Princeton graduates who must feel the same, but Froma befriended, advises, takes interest, queries and intervenes, responds with acts of extraordinary kindness, in a way that makes you feel that you are the object of her special devotion. She is at the center of some of my most poignant memories as a graduate student, e.g. (and only exempli gratia) the seminar on liminality that I still refer to in my own teaching; the incredible Pesach seder she kindly invited me to, attended mostly by University and Institute grandees (I was by far the youngest there, and of course recited the Four Questions!), which I remember (with a bit of a shiver) every spring, including a vivid memory of the chicken soup she made, whose secret, as she announced, was the addition of chicken feet; and her overflowingly enthusiastic reaction to a paper on Greek religion I gave in the department seminar (I think she thought I knew more than I actually did, but from that moment she changed her tone to a more collegial one, which I viewed both as a compliment and a challenge). We have remained friends since I finished my degree 35 years ago. I quote Froma to my own graduate students considering a PhD, that a person's choice of dissertation topic is deeply revealing. Her generosity to me, my wife and youngest child, when we arrived at the Institute 10 years ago, was that of a hovering grandmother: bikes, fridge, food, tickets to events — without asking for a thing, we were firmly under her wing. Froma is a woman whose worth is beyond rubies.
Dear Froma,

I have admired you for so many different reasons over the course of the 36 years that I have known you—as a scholar, as someone who spoke up for what she believed in, and as someone who has a great deal of joie de vivre.

In the past five years or so, however, I have also gained a greater appreciation of your qualities as a mentor. I have always been grateful to you for the support that you gave me when I was younger, but now that I am older, and increasingly thinking about what kind of mentor I have been, and still hope to be, I better appreciate all of the ways in which you ‘micro-mentored’ me. What I mean by that is that you engaged with me not only when I formally asked you for help but here and there in small ways. You were genuinely interested in what I did and you didn’t hesitate to tell me when you thought I was doing it well, and when I was not—whether it concerned writing an article or running my life.

I understand now that this takes not only a lot of energy, but a special kind of intentionality and solicitude as well. So thank you for that—and for so much else, as well. You are very dear to me.

(Contributed by Sarah Iles Johnston)

When I joined Princeton as a graduate student, I was hesitant to approach Froma, legend that she was. I got my courage up when I heard on the grapevine that she had approvingly noted a question I had posed at a talk and asked who I was. When I introduced myself, she was, needless to say, utterly warm and charming. Thereafter, I took seminars with her, became her research assistant, house-sat, and asked her to our parties (at which she and George were, of course, the light and soul, delighting everyone).

She was to us sage-like, full of gnomical wisdom, and at the same time a maternal figure. In one seminar, a student was presenting a brilliant exegesis of the relationship between two episodes in a work. When Froma had to point out that one of those episodes belonged to a different work entirely, she mitigated the blow by affectionately observing, eyes twinkling, that yet another beautiful idea had been killed by an ugly fact. A Princeton Classics talk would not have been a Princeton Classics talk without Froma arriving a couple of minutes in, modern jewelry rustling, promptly resting her eyes, then opening them at the end to ask an incisive question.

On one occasion, Jean-Pierre Vernant came to visit, together with Françoise Frontisi-Ducroux and François Lissarrague. Vernant, naturally, stayed with Froma, and her home became the site of the feast for the imperial adventus. A friend and I, keen cooks both, offered
to cater. Froma turned her kitchen over to us and she and Vernant would pop in to encourage us, the great man warmly addressing us as “mes enfants” as he and Froma peered curiously into the bubbling pots and pans: a heady experience for neophyte Classicists.

As her assistant, she charged me, inter alia, with tidying her office. The experience was akin to an archaeological dig, uncovering a stratigraphic record of scholarly endeavours in all the various fields in which she worked, correspondence with a roster of scholarly luminaries, and a plethora of invitations to speak at venues across the globe (as well as some half-drunk cans of Diet Coke). But, of course, Froma is friends with everyone. One couldn’t get ten yards on campus or at the APA without someone hailing her and stopping to make conversation, which she was unfailingly happy to do. She was also always keen to promote her students and make introductions. And at the APA, she would still be out well after many a grad student had been defeated and headed for bed.

I offer this collection of anecdotes as an expression of deep fondness and happy reminiscence; it can’t possibly do justice to all the experiences over those halcyon years, not to mention all I learned from her.

(Contributed by Sean Corner)

I first met Froma in 1951-2 at Harvard Hillel, when I was a Freshman and she a Sophomore (?) and we have been friends since then, some seventy of her ninety years. Not friends who have constantly and intensely been in close and intimate connection—rather friends who quickly pick up and recharge our connections when we do meet and when we do correspond. One component of our shared interests has been Classics, especially studies of classical Greece, she a professional Classicist and I an amateur, but deeply immersed in the field. I have learned much from her work and she has been very supportive of mine. We also have overlapped in our attachment to Jewish life and studies—I am continually in awe of Froma as a scholar and teacher of the Holocaust.

Intellectually, she has a synoptic vision and is a kochleffel (Yiddish for a “mixing spoon) of texts and ideas, and, similarly, she does just that with bringing people together. She is also a kind of “dowser,” and with her dowsing rod discovers deep structures of texts and arguments. In these activities, she is passionate and tenacious. At one interdisciplinary classics meeting, I saw her sitting and looking very disconsolate. When I asked what was wrong, she said she was struggling with the insinuation of a beloved member of the younger generation that she is shallow intellectually! Best I can remember, I burst out with “WHAT.”

She has a photographic memory of people and texts: in 1978, she was giving a guest lecture in Boston and a friend and colleague at BU threw a party for and asked Froma to invite some of her Boston friends and I was one of those. I came to the party with my now wife, early in our
relationship. I rang the bell of the apartment and Froma opened the door. She looked at me and at the woman with me, and exclaimed, “Roberta Apfel, Brown team, Camp Modin, 1950!”—whom she had not seen since then when Froma was a counselor and Roberta(Robbie) was a camper. The two then had a doorway Camp Modin reunion.

Froma is generous: A few years later my son Jonathan became a Princeton student and got to know Froma—he took a Classics and Feminism course with her. As his graduation neared, Froma and George offered their home to our family for the Commencement days—an amazing and wonderful gift, for which we remain most grateful. (Jonathan sends his congratulations too on your birthday).

We remain grateful too for the opportunity to get to know Judith and Wu Hung in their years Harvard, (regretfully, we lost touch).

Dy-yay-nu: suffice it to say, there is so much more to celebrate on this occasion, a graduation from nonagerian to centenarian.Bis hundert und tsvai!
With love and admiration from me and Robbie to Froma,

Bennett

(Contributed by Bennett Simon)

Dear Froma: Here’s to you- 90 years young!! You are an inspiration and a model – not just for your amazing work, which has always been so many years ahead of its time, but above all also for your special mode of nurturing those around you, and over such a long period of time. I have such happy memories of our year together in Berlin - and of celebrating your 80th birthday on K’damm on 9th May 2013: it doesn’t seem like a decade ago, does it? Here are a couple of photos to remind you of that year: they make me chuckle just to look at them as I can imagine your wry commentary in my ear and shaking of your charm bracelet!! I wish we could be there 10 years on to see you on your 90th, and to introduce you to Emily and Sebby too. I hope there’ll be another time soon- whether here in the UK or in the States. In the meantime know how loved and admired you are and enjoy your special day!

With a huge hug – and additional ones from Chris, Emily and Sebastian – Michael
Thoughts on Froma’s 90th birthday

Froma was the reason I chose to attend Princeton for my Classics & Comparative Literature, Ph.D. (1982-86), and my memories of working with her, while now forty years old, are as clear as day. I think we would all agree that Froma is a force of nature. It would have been enough (dayeinu) for me to have found an amazing female role model, and a brilliant academic advisor, but she was so much more than that.

Graduate seminars with Froma were always an intellectual feast. I still have my handwritten notes from her classes and have used them over the years to great effect in my own teaching. But the really intense discussions took place either in her East Pyne office, where the piles of books and papers were topped by a charming sign advertising “Tête en gelée” (presumably
liberated from a French butcher shop), empty cans of Diet coke, and the inevitable cigarillo remains, or in the cafeteria next door, where Froma alternated between bites of salad and profound utterances about Athenian drama, gender studies, or the newest trends in French literary theory.

More literal feasts were offered in Froma and George’s Princeton home and New York City apartment. The warm hospitality shown in both places, including festive Pesach meals with family and more casual get-togethers in her Princeton kitchen, was typical of Froma’s generosity and kindness. And she just had more energy than all her students put together. I watched with great interest as Froma began to pivot towards Jewish Studies and Holocaust literature in her research and teaching. When I mentioned a few years ago that I was working on an early 20th-century Hebrew translation of the Iliad by the Russian poet Tchernichovsky, she immediately sent me a copy of the volume from her own bookshelf. Froma is probably one of the main reasons I am now the Director of the Carolina Center for Jewish Studies at UNC-Chapel Hill.

I feel very lucky to have been supported and encouraged by Froma in all my areas of scholarship, not to mention the pile of recommendations she has written for me over the years. It is hard to believe that over four decades have passed since our first meeting. She is still just as active and intellectually engaged, even if the venue has changed from the classroom to the Zoom screen. I am honored to write this brief message in celebration of her 90th birthday.

(Contributed by Patricia A. Rosenmeyer)

Dear Froma,

We are now both in the season of remembering, after so many years of knowing each other and a short but promising and exciting period during which we were colleagues. Scholarship brought us together, not the least the scholarship for which Jean-Pierre Vernant stands, not just a great scholar and teacher, but a guide and friend whose humanity in my memory still is overwhelming. His Princeton visit, more than two decades ago, made possible by you (as so many other things), belongs among my cherished memories.

I don’t flatter myself that you still recall as vividly as I do how we met, other decades ago, when after my first APA paper I was introduced to you as a fledgling Swiss scholar? You immediately
looked at me, rather quizzically, and asked, a propos my paper: “Fritz, aren’t you flogging a dead horse?” Of course I was taken aback, and for a moment I wished I had, as a non-native speaker, misunderstood your English. Nor do I recall how I tried to talk myself out of that hole; presumably not very convincingly. Anyway, your remark has followed me since then every time I thought I had done something daringly innovative, as very healthy reminder that it might not be so. What counts more, it didn’t prevent us from becoming and staying friends for so many years, in Europe and in this country. I sometimes imagine that your remark, made with your grace and wit, was what made me immediately want to know you better and, if possible, become one of your friends. Which happened and of which I am very proud and grateful; and there were many more discussions after that – and more friends which now we have in common. Thus: great thanks, Froma, from by now one retiree to another, for what you gave me, both early in my career and later.
Yours, Fritz

(Contributed by Fritz Graf)

Walking into Froma’s office in the early 1990s. Hurdles to go through: diet coke cans, full ashtrays, so many books and papers scattered on the floor. But the reward at the end was a sparkling and generous smile an even more sparkling and generous mind. Thank you, Froma.

Silvia

(Contributed by Silvia Montiglio)

Happy Birthday, Froma, and thanks for all of your support over the years. I wouldn't be where I am today without you. The seeds of everything I have written were sown in your grad seminars on the ancient novel (1994) and on Helen (1995?). Here's to you, my Doktormutter, on the occasion of your 90th, and wishing you many more.

Yours,
Larry
Je ne trouve pas de mots pour exprimer ma longue amitié et mon admiration pour notre Froma! Je la vois toujours, il y a tant d'années, dans notre Centre de recherches comparées sur les sociétés anciennes (appelé plus tard Centre Louis Gernet), 10 rue Monsieur le Prince à Paris, à côté de nos chers et inoubliables JiPé (Jean-Pierre Vernant) et Pierre (Vidal-Naquet). Combien de fois nous avons parlé tous ensemble, et avec d'autres membres du Centre, dans une ambiance très amicale, où chacun et chacune s'exprimait librement, posait des questions, faisait des critiques, proposait de nouvelles problématiques. C'étaient des années, où la présence de Froma enrichissait toujours ces rencontres, où l'on se sentait si proche! Je toute ma psychè, j'envoie à ma Froma toute mon amitié fidèle en lui souhaitant encore une longue vie!

Stella

(Contributed by Stella Georgoudi)

From Richard Goodkin to Froma Zeitlin on her 90th Birthday

Quatre-vingt-dix années, – à peine suffisantes
Pour former le génie, la magie de Froma,
Pour créer sa sagesse, plus grande qu’Athéna,
Son zèle scholastique, ses idées débordantes, –
N’ont pas non plus omis la beauté de son cœur:
Son rire, sa chaleur, amitié, joie de vivre.
Non seulement sagesse voit-on dans tous ses livres,
Mais aussi pour l'humain une inlassable ardeur.
Peut-on nommer jamais toutes ses qualités:
L'épée du savoir qu'elle porte dans sa gaine,
Son érudition, collégialité?
Dire brillance, ce n'est en rien une fredaine!
Pour moi, apprécier si longtemps sa bonté
A été, grâce à Zeus, une incomparable aubaine!

Ninety years – hardly enough
To form the genius and the magic of Froma,
To create her wisdom, greater than Athena’s,
Her scholarly zeal, her overflowing ideas –
Have also not neglected the beauty of her heart:
Her laugh, her warmth, friendship, joy in living.
It is not only wisdom that is visible in all of her books,
But also an inexhaustible passion for humanity.
Can one ever name all of her qualities:
The sword of knowledge she carries in its sheath,
Her erudition, collegiality?
Calling it brilliance is in no way a prank!
For me, appreciating her kindness for so many years,
Has been, thanks be to Zeus, an incomparable stroke of good fortune.

Much much love to you always, dear Froma!
Bises, Richard

(Contributed by Richard Goodkin)

Dearest Froma, I can feel myself smiling simply as I think of you. My eyes getting wider. It's just a sense of joy and gratitude in knowing you. We meet in 2004, when I was a visitor at Princeton, and I knew almost no one. We fell into talk at a party—no, you found me out there, you wanted to talk about something I’d written. I remember that in talking it was as if we’d been in conversation already for a very long while. And we have kept talking since then, and sharing things, old stories, books, a movie or play, an image, a joke, a fact. You’ve always deepened
my understanding of the world, helped me to draw a larger circle, made things resonate together. I feel as if I’m part of something larger.

Knowing you are in the world, with all of your enthusiasm and force of thought, your fierce questions, your heart, your care for people, your sense of delight in things—this is a blessing.

The puppets in the photos below—they’re by Paul Klee—are raising their arms in greeting and celebration. They know what a wonder you are. Happy Birthday!

with love from both Liza and me,

as always,

Ken

(Contributed by Kenneth Gross)
Chère Froma,


Et la raison pour laquelle je fus toujours ravie d'avoir de tes nouvelles, déjà avant de te connaître personnellement, c’était notamment à cause d’un livre qui m’a tout de suite bouleversée quand je l’ai lu à Berlin, jeune étudiante en études grecques et en histoire de la religion, presque immédiatement après sa parution: ‘The ritual world of Greek tragedy,’ ta thèse de doctorat à Columbia en 1970. Ce livre pionnier m’a fait réfléchir intensément, et de maintes nouvelles façons, depuis la première lecture, comme c’est le cas, à coup sûr, pour plusieurs générations d’interprètes.

Or, à partir de notre rencontre en 1989, ce n’était pas seulement la force analytique et originale de ton intellectualité dont j’ai pu profiter, mais aussi ta générosité exceptionnelle, et dans ce domaine également, j’appartiens, depuis des décennies, à un grand nombre d’amis et de collègues qui ont fait la même expérience. C’est inoubliable, pour ne mentionner que le premier exemple, avec quelle largesse singulièrre tu m’as proposé de m’installer dans votre appartement familial situé au Central Park West, quand je passe quelques jours à New York City.

Comment te dire, chère Froma, toute ma reconnaissance pour ce temps très long d’une amitié fidèle dont tu m’as comblée? Je pourrais faire part d’innombrables échanges fructueuses, entre les Etats-Unis, Paris et Berlin, culminant pour moi pendant mes mois à Princeton en 2007 et 2009 ainsi que pendant ton année au Wissenschaftskolleg à Berlin en 2012/13 quand tu m’as aussi invitée de te fêter comme octogenaria, sans que, au cours des dix années passées, d’autres contacts amicaux entre nous n’ont manqués, ni d’autres lectures inspirantes de tes textes, qui se poursuivront.

Maintenant il me reste de te souhaiter de tout mon cœur le mieux pour ton anniversaire!

Renate

(Contributed by Renate Schlesier)
I first met Froma in 2000 at Oxford, where we both were visiting fellows, but at different colleges. Here is what I believe was her first email addressed to me:

“It was a lovely evening (notwithstanding the noisy but excellent restaurant). Sitting on the tombstone afterwards as a desperate last resort was a perfect ending, I think. Not a Homeric monument, to be sure, but appropriate enough.”

It was a French restaurant and, since the Bastille Day was approaching, the customers were asked to sing La Marseillaise. Froma was the only one who was able to perform it from the beginning to the end: for this she was awarded, I believe, a glass of wine (or was it a bottle?). It was her first time at Oxford, and she made quite an impression. She on her part was rather apprehensive, and I doubt that she greatly enjoyed the experience. But people opened to her there as elsewhere – the stern Senior Scout of All Souls unlocked for her the cupboard containing the college silver, a highly unusual gesture, and the great Martin West, quite untypically, lively chatted with her at lunch.

Since then, there have been many other meetings, also with dear George – in New York, Princeton and elsewhere in both the US and Israel, but especially in Tel Aviv. Froma’s stay here in 2014 as a Sackler Fellow is especially memorable. “I’ve loved every minute and have been so happy here,” she wrote of her “wonderful Sackler experience” later. Her excellent Hebrew allowed her to communicate with people of all walks of life and attend all kinds of events. I see her tirelessly strolling through Tel Aviv at White Night 2014, eager to attend every performance and enter every shop and in the end emerging from one of them with a 50s-style swimsuit! She discovered Ernesto’s, a lovely Italian restaurant not far away from her place at Rupin Street, which has become her favourite. “I miss you (and Ernesto’s),” she wrote to me in March 2018. “I would hope my path might lead me back to Tel Aviv again. I have such fond memories of our time together.”

And she did come again in August of the same year, this time with her daughter Judith, to attend a family event in Jerusalem. The three of us spent an evening at Ernesto’s and raised a toast to George who had passed away a year ago. Then we walked a little through the Bauhaus compounds of downtown Tel Aviv. I hope we’ll do it again.

(Contributed by Margalit Finkelberg)
Froma—

My strongest impression of you is your remarkable generosity, both intellectual and personal. My very first memory of you was from my time as an undergraduate, years before I met you in Princeton. I had wandered into a talk of yours at my undergraduate college—a version (I now realize) of your remarkable essay, “The Dynamics of Misogyny.” The talk was electrifying; I remember being transfixed and riveted by it. Every subsequent conversation I have had with you about Greek literature and ideas has been the same; you shoot off ideas like sparks, and set my brain buzzing. When I was a graduate student, you also had an uncanny knack for suggesting things for me to read—both primary texts and scholarship or theory—that turned out to be absolutely essential and formative for my thinking. And I have vivid memories of your personal generosity as well: making pesto in your beautiful kitchen in Princeton, with basil I had filched from my landlord’s garden in the early 1980s. My first exposure to pesto, and to your amazing cooking! A few years later, when I was in Tübingen on a DAAD, you insisted I come visit and stay with you in Paris—because I simply had to experience Paris. Since then and through all the time I’ve known you, you’ve consistently wanted to share amazing experiences, ideas, books, food, jewelry, gossip—all the richness of life. I am so grateful to know you. Happy 90th, and many happy returns!

Much love,

Leslie

(Contributed by Leslie Kurke)

Happy birthday to Froma, my dear camarade for more than four decades. There are too many memories to recount, including conversations over the years in her apartment with George on CPW, at my apt in NYC, in Santa Cruz, in Paris (a hilarious evening with J.-P. and Simon G. at her apartment in the Marais, in 1985), in Chicago, in upstate NY, at conferences (in various locales), where we laughed non-stop.

I am sending all my thanks to Froma -- a mentor to so many of us -- for her forensic intelligence, her stylistic brio, her utter panache, playing the other while always inimitably herself; for her spirit of hospitality, for her priceless encouragement over the years; for so generously sharing her friends (introducing me and others to Nicole L., Simon G, and many more) and her beloved family. As I’ve had the pleasure of being on the editorial team for her forthcoming volume of collected papers, I’ve continued to learn from her passionate engagement and openness to argument, and from her profoundly interdisciplinary disposition that has remade the field of Classics. Her ongoing vitality and curiosity are an inspiration -- bis hundert zwanzig!

(Contributed by Laura Slatkin)
Dear Froma,

I was just remembering with you the first time I didn’t in fact meet you—I had come out to Princeton as I was thinking about graduate schools, and I guess I thought that I was going to try to stop by your office and introduce myself; the door was open, I could tell you were there, but I couldn’t see you; on the edge of the desk was a can of Diet Coke. I think I walked by the door a couple times, but I didn’t manage the courage to knock. How special, then, to share this photo, of you and Astrid at about six months (July 2017), almost two decades later; I remember we met on the Upper West Side in the afternoon. I cherished then, as I do now, your warmth and wicked sense of humor and smile in the midst of it all, through good times and hard ones.

With warmest wishes on your 90th,

Brooke

(Contributed by Brooke Holmes)
Froma has, in a way, been with me all my academic life. She took a punt on me when I was offered my first job in Princeton, after falling asleep in my job talk. I saw her mind in action when I set a graduate exam with her for the first time and some of the questions which we discarded still reappear in my own teaching twenty years later. I survived my first car journey with her, from New York to Cornell, as did a number of lucky cyclists and pedestrians between Grand Central and the George Washington Bridge. Her love and scrutiny and mentorship made being a classicist possible for me. She offered feeling one of the family for many Thanksgivings at Maclean Circle, and I am grateful for the friendship that allowed me to be part of it at times of joy and of sorrow. She was among the first to arrive at the hospital when Lucien was born. I love her for saying that what she appreciated about the Classics Department was that it was not gossipy. It made me happy to see her so often on screen during lockdown, diet coke and cigarette in hand during seminars, which was made possible by Zoom. Thank you for spending a long UK evening with me and some of my students talking about Greek Tragedy as they were staggering towards taking Finals online during lockdown. She has made me think hard, and a better scholar, and she’s given me an idea of the good academic life. Thank you, my lovely Froma, and a very very happy birthday to you. With love from Constanze (and Gavin and Lucien)

(Contributed by Constanze Güthenke)

Here is a picture of me and Froma taken when I interviewed her for the "Woman who inspired me" series at Royal Holloway University of London in 2009. She really did inspire me. She taught me you could be a mum, be glamorous and hilarious as well as an academic!

(Contributed by Edith Hall)
Darling Froma,
Before I ever met you, I was warned... Phyllis Furley said “I want you to meet Froma, she is the most interesting person I know.” Phyllis, as we all know, was right. So with this introduction we first met in 1987. I could say the obvious things about you -- about your brilliance, your sense of the absurd, and above all your loving kindness. You have been wonderful to my two daughters at various critical times in their lives, for which I shall always be grateful. You and dear George have often rescued me when the world seemed rather dark (sometimes with some mad project: I recall going round a sculpture garden with you which was mind-boggling and hilarious). But perhaps the point is better served by three stories. I think I was still an innocent in respect of modern classical thinking in the ‘80s (philosophers are, as you know, rather cut off from reality...). You explained to me that I needed to be a member of a college during my time in Princeton, and introduced me to yours, Rockefeller, where we used to go and have lunch together, amid crowds of the energetic young. There we would sit and talk for hours. One moment, however, sticks in my memory (why would it not?). You were explaining something to me and told me a story, designed (I think, but I fear I have long since forgotten the point you were making) to tell me about matriarchies, and you described, in your wonderful throaty voice, and rather loud (remember the hordes of energetic young around us), a society (was it real or fictional? I have no clue…) where vaginas were thought to wander the world on their own, defeating enemies with their teeth. I have preserved the memory as a kind of feminist Empedocles (of course you will remember his description of body parts wandering about on their own, at one critical point in the anthropogony). But I have also preserved, and adore seeing every time, the moment when you say something that is going to make me roar with laughter, and your complete poker face, followed several beats later by (again) your throaty laugh. Your timing is impeccable. Do you remember Mark Morris? He is a dancer (of sorts) and was much admired at that time. We went to a performance at Macarthur Theatre, and he was prancing about on stage in a suit to bad taped music (I think it was Purcell). There was a dancer sitting upstage, simpering, and he pranced around her, getting closer and closer... and you leaned across and whispered in my ear ‘He is going to bite her...’. We both collapsed in giggles, which persisted not only throughout the performance, but afterwards in the face of all the admirers in the foyer cooing about how original he was. Those brilliant moments of helpless laughter have been repeated, oh so often, over the years, alongside the wonderful gift of your friendship. And, despite the fact that our work seems often far apart, I sometimes get to see your intellectual joys too -- I recall very recently talking to you about the Gerôme Pygmalion in the Met, which I was using merely to illustrate a point about personal identity in change. We sat at your kitchen table, and you talked about it – and its versions and its impact and its interpretations – in ways I could never even begin to approach. It took my breath away. You always do. Love you dearest Froma, have the happiest of birthdays, and massive love from all of us – Martin, Kate, Poppy, Mark and Daisy and Tom. And me.

MM

(Contributed by Mary Margaret McCabe)
Dearest Froma,

Mazal tov and kudos! The fact that I don’t remember first meeting you is symbolic; my life at Princeton has been suffused by your presence ever since I can remember. You have always been there for me – as a companion, for dishing and “catching up” on fiction, art, tv, movies, food (and did I mention colleagues?) as a fellow woman/scholar/mother/wife who somehow survived it all; as a sage advisor, coaching me as I prepared to teach Homer, Sappho, or Aeschylus; and as a visionary leader of Judaic Studies – or Jewish Studies, as we once called it - who planned vibrant curricula, opened the door to new ways of thinking and making, hired with inspiration, and warmed every gathering with wit, heart and camaraderie. I love your fierce intelligence and spiky opinions, and your capacity to laugh at the human comedy, of which there is no shortage in the circles in which we move. And you love flamboyant, out-there jewelry as much as my mother did. Perhaps you have never heard the adjective “Fromaesque,” but I can assure you, it is widely used. Froma, you are sui generis as well as sui generous.

Our time together in Tel Aviv was memorable, and bittersweet, since George was there for all of it, and as always, enhanced the delight. This photo was taken during that visit. After the museum, we went to Neve Tzedeck where you spotted a ceramic animal in a shop and decided you MUST have it. You and George exchanged glances and it was obvious that George would be carrying it back to NJ. He submitted to the task so graciously – sitting patiently with his backpack on while the shopkeeper rolled it around and around in bubble wrap and newspaper and finally crammed it into the backpack. George smiled at her, at me, and at you as we left. Froma, you chose deftly in the husband department, and George made out like a bandit in the wife department.

Your 90th birthday is both momentous and the day after yesterday. I’m toasting and cherishing you today as every day. May all your days be fulfilling and rich in thought, health, and love. I am so grateful to have you in my life.

Love,
Starry
Froma, dearest. Ralph Hexter here, one of your many fans in distant Davis in California. Manfred and I send you the heartiest best wishes for your birthday. We wish we could be with you. We have so many vivid memories of the time we shared when you were out in Berkeley as the Sather lecturer and I had just arrived. We remember the splendid house you lived in high the hills and with a “two bridge” view. I remember day trips with you and George. And then of course, I recall with great pleasure many dinners over the years at the annual APA conferences, when it was still the APA. All our love and again best wishes for your birthday!
Ralph

(Contributed by Ralph Hexter)
I am honored to add my felicitations to Froma on this occasion, and I have good reasons to do so: I have it on very good authority (hers) that I owe my appointment to Princeton to her support: I applied as one of a fairly strong field of Hellenists, and as she considered her vote, she asked our dear friend, Piero Pucci, if I was for real, and she trusted his “yes.” The greatest consequence, for me, was that I was given an office opposite hers in East Pyne and for countless nights we spent the evenings (often after a dinner in Rockefeller college—she favored the chicken) back in the office working late into the night with the light from her open door encouraging me. Often at the end of the night she would offer me a ride home, which was hardly necessary (I lived 500 yards away) but which I accepted eagerly. There in the idling Lexus we would talk (yes, and smoke) about this and that, about scholars and ideas to be sure, but also about everything else imaginable, as all who read this will appreciate. We had some disagreements (there was a time at a reception when she threatened to throw a glass of water in my face (not even wine!), but the deep appreciation and sympathy for each other as human beings was never in danger of being disturbed by local weather. Like so many, I am sure, I realize that having known Froma has been a major part of who I am and so, having been blessed, I send blessings.

(Contributed by Andrew Ford)

Divine Epiphany

When goddesses appeared in the ancient world – to speak wisdom and confer blessings – their worshippers supplied heady incense on smoking altars and liquid inebriation: the divine appearance was mediated by the inspired descriptive words of their devotees. When Froma used to appear – in a cloud of her favourite cigarette smoke and high on the caffeine of a hundred diet cokes – scintillating elucidation of the visionary world of antiquity, delivered with wit and clarity, was showered upon her waiting audience by the goddess of her field.

(Contributed by Jaś Elsner)

Dear Froma, As a prose guy who used to feel out of my depth in the verse realm, I missed out on much I might have learned from you at Princeton. Si mens non laeva fuisset…. But I’m proud to be one of the many “Fromettes” (as we’re known) you’ve helped make their way in the field. Thank you, dear Froma, for the great model you’ve given us all, and for your writings, so full of your honesty, insight, and depth.

--Jamie

(Contributed by James Romm)
Here are a few of my favorite Froma stories, from when I was a grad student and after:

Some unimpressive classicist gave a talk and afterward we were grousing about how boring it was. Froma's response: "The man doesn't have a literary bone in his body – he might as well have been a plumber."

At a party at the beginning of the semester, when Froma had just come back from Israel, where she gave a lecture and was deemed afterward by a group of female audience members as "very cerebral." She told this, bemusedly, to a group of us, then paused and concluded, "Very cerebral – I guess I am."

Daniel, Iakovos, and I were staying with Froma while attending a friend's wedding. We returned late from the rehearsal dinner to be greeted by Froma, waving a new book that she had just received (maybe *The Culture of the Copy?*) and asking, "Do you have any thoughts on duplication?"

All the best, Nancy
At the Barnard conference in honor of Helene Foley's retirement, April 2023

(Contributed by Nancy Worman)