

**Sabbatical Report**  
**Fall 2015 AND Spring 2016**  
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I was extremely fortunate to have received a full year of Sabbatical from President Martin and Provost Graham as the creative project I chose proved to be no small order. Indeed, anyone taking on the novel must have more than few extra “ink cartridges” in his belt. However, I set out to write an episodic novel covering—initially seven days—observing an American couple on vacation in Paris attempting to overcome a personal tragedy and save their fragile marriage, entitled *Pairis*.

The setting of the novel began on July 11, passed through *Bastille Day* (July 14) and concluded on July 17 when they both returned to the United States—the closing scene engaged the couple on the airplane, headed back to Arizona. I spent a great deal of time generating those seven “chapters”; however, after re-reading the work several times, I began to believe that my ending was either too “bow-tied,” or—a most ghastly thought—incomplete... un-ended. What to do? Well, it was most fortunate—as I have pointed out above—that I had been granted an entire year because, and this may come as a surprise, when one is a writer the least amount of time is expended in actual writing. As I explain to my Creative Writing students, it is the thought process that will engage their minds the most. Most importantly, now I have mentioned my students, for those I teach who seek to write novels, this experience has proved invaluable for my future pedagogy.

Fortunately, the solution came to me where many of my ideas appear which is... when I am riding my bicycle 35 miles across hot and windy Kansas. I must say that when I combine my own thoughts with having just completed the Dutch author, Tim Krabbé’s, most singular and marvelous book on cycling, *The Rider*, the very last brain activity you ever wish to have “synapsing” when you are riding... is that you are riding. You must separate your legs from mind and body—they keep turning, they ache, they become... weak... But... only if you believe they are still connected to you and your brain. That being said, the revelation for the novel was that, the best way to close it was to return to its birth. So... the final chapter, entitled “Everything,” actually takes place on July 9, a full two days prior to the couple’s departure for Paris when they invite the woman’s sister and her husband over for a lengthy, and, as it turns out, rather *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf-y* dinner. The effect on all of the preceding chapters caused them to take on a deeper, and stronger meaning and by having this “beginning” arrive at the end, encourages the reader—I hope—to return for a jolly good re-read.

Toward the end of my year-long Sabbatical, I sent enquiry letters to 20 publishers of literary fiction, and—despite some gracious rejections—the “Everything” chapter has been accepted for publication, and shall be appearing in the February 2017 edition of the journal *ArliJo*. The journal is overseen by the *Gival Press* of Virginia who has, to its fine credit, published several prize-winning authors. As of his writing, I am still awaiting replies to many of the enquiries I sent out. Fingers crossed!