



THE
ESSENGER



THE MESSENGER

Spring 2019 - *Transient*

The objective of The Messenger is to encourage the appreciation and exploration of the creative arts. Since 1989, The Messenger has been celebrating student work by publishing submissions in a yearly student literary and visual arts magazine. For more information, please visit messengerur.wordpress.com.

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transient *noun*

1 : one that is transient: such as

a : a guest or boarder who stays only briefly before moving on

b : a person traveling about, usually in search of something

Temporary Exhibition

Emilie Knudsen

I.

Though Do Ho Suh fashions himself as a sculptor
 He might be more an expert of measurement
 Or an expert of the human existence
 Or both

If I looked at a painting,
 I could tell you what clamored
 and came to my brain, what reds
 were sunbursts, what greens
 were dewy forests of imagination.
 I could tell you the angle of the woman's
 bent wrist and describe the cosmos in
 her eyes,
 but this art is a different breed.
 It isn't observation. It's experience.

So when I say Do Ho Suh made me reimagine the world I live in,
 reconstruct it,
 deconstruct it,
 explode it into
 a million
 fragments and
 connect
 it all
 back
 to
 gether
 with
 a single thread.

It's not because he's a rarified artist of a particular breed. It is about his single thread.

Let's go into the eye of the needle:



Aha
Yuwei Lin

12

Elegy for a Willow Oak and Other Temporary Shelters

Lillie Izo

mud
in media res
the perfect setting
for our death day
origin story hypothetical
mythology uprooted
before sunrise
could catch a cold
or stain the frayed edges
decorating
my fever dreams
the ones where I would
sit comfortably
with my back
against your back
a trunk
between us

we would whisper
loud enough to rustle
the leaves on tempo
composing lullabies
above our heads

treehouses
limit headspace
we knew that
though you did not
stop me
from collecting firewood
for our home
in the trees
in the books from the trees
the negative space
the margins of books
incomplete or unwritten
depending on the day
we decided to pick up
where we left off

despite
canopy light
streaming as
fractalized warmth
down and around
our shoulders
something told me
you were the one
always breaking
the branches
gifting me splinters
to kindle

I am sorry
I used the shade
below the willow oak
as a bookmark
I am sorry
you lost your page
I am sorry
a rogue spark off
the treehouse hearth
set our whole
damn home
on fire



The Grand Canyon
Nathan Burns



Sandy Sunny Seals
Nathan Burns

Excerpt from “Wildwood Holler”*Savannah Etzler*

Mary Brennan pushed open her screen door and poked her head out. Resting in a shoebox stuffed with old newspapers, sat Mim.

“Mim,” she hissed, “Are you still alive?”

The senescent black chicken cocked her head with a cheeky cluck and languidly closed her amber eye. The ancient hen had been gone a week, and Mary thought she had surely been eaten, feathers and all, by a coyote. In her old age she had taken up an adventuresome lifestyle and, when the mood struck her, would be gone for several days. Every time she left, Mary thought the eleven-year-old chicken had finally expired, but within a few days she would find Mim worse for wear and sitting in her shoebox.

Mary pushed the screen door all the way open and stepped onto her porch. As she shuffled across the peeling boards, she could feel white paint chips clinging to her bare feet. She sat down in her rocking chair, glancing to her right where Robert’s chair moved gently, always seeming to find the slightest breeze despite the empty seat. She scanned the small herd of cows that had wandered up from the valley to stand near the fence dividing them from the modest yard surrounding the house. The retired milk cow, Tara, nibbled at the base of a fence post, her nose glistening like the dewy morning grass. Her fawn coloring moved seamlessly into a dark chocolate face, which seemed perpetually shrouded in the shadow of deep rumination, and was accentuated by her dark and thoughtful hazel eyes.

Mary lifted her gaze and stared out at the pristine, new houses that seemed to be bred like pigs in a factory farm, homogenous and without room to stretch their legs. The numerous black roofs absorbed the sunlight spearing out from a cloud-splashed azure sky, darkening the valley that lay below. She closed her eyes, listening to the sound of lowing bovine and the cricket’s rhythmic chirping. Instantly the morning melody was punctured by the start of a caterwauling engine, followed by the groan of heavy equipment gouging itself into the red Virginia clay. Someone had said to her the other day, “Botetourt don’t grow nothing but houses anymore.” Mary would have to disagree; she listened to the cacophonous construction all day, which was nothing like the silent growth of anything emerging from the earth’s womb.

Mary’s eyes traced the curve of her washed-out gravel driveway as she lost herself in recollections. For years Robert would stand at the gate, calling for Clayton, and when the lumbering, black bull emerged, he would slip on the halter. Before they built Wildwood Hollow there weren’t many cars, and Robert would walk the bull down the road just far enough for them to enjoy each other’s company. When people unfamiliar with Robert’s Sunday ritual drove past, they would often slow down and ask him if he needed any help getting his bull up, but he would just keep on walking, Clayton in tow, and declare loudly, “Some people like to walk their dog, I like to walk my bull.” But Robert’s dead now and Mary sold the bull.

As Mary’s eyes glazed with the memories she wished she could paint across her irises, a sleek, black jeep came whipping up the meandering gravel road. The car parked, and out stepped a middle-aged man. Mary glared at the man approaching her porch, her lips tightening as she said,

“How are you today, Mr. Douglas?”

“I’m alright, how about you? You keeping cool today? It’s already getting hot.”

“It sure is. What can I do for you?” As she spoke, she laboriously turned her lips up into a smile and stopped rocking.

“Well, you know I just bought Mr. Williams’ property over yonder, and see that property adjoins your side pasture.”

“Yes, I’d heard that.” Mary said, dreading whatever Mr. Douglas had come to say. He was a notorious man. If he came to your house for any reason, you could be sure that he was also surveying your land, discerning the best places to build a house, calculating

if there was land level enough for a driveway, and figuring out the best places he could lay water or sewage pipes.

"Well you see, I'd like to have my boys start clearing that land, and there's some trees on your fence line that'll have to go. Some of them trees are dangerous and growing through the fence." He paused, silently recalibrating his voice. "Now most of them are mainly growing on my property, but I'd like to get your permission anyway before I start cutting."

Mary rocked forward and put both feet on the ground. Chewing on the inside of her cheek, she stared at a carpenter bee burrowing into a spot on the porch column where the paint had all peeled off. No matter which direction she looked, there was always something trying to burrow in and shove her out.

"Now I've brought some paperwork for you to take a look at, just to make sure everything's above board," he said, taking a step back and opening his passenger side door, where he grabbed a thin manila folder.

Mary knew something like this would eventually come her way. It always started with Mr. Douglas coming to your house with paperwork, and before you knew it, you were signing away the deed of your home and moving into a cheap townhouse.

"Well, I'd like to take some time and look over those papers, Mr. Douglas," she said. She didn't really have the energy, but she knew that if she buckled now he'd be back in two months to coil a little tighter, a new manila folder in hand.

"Of course, Mrs. Brennan. I'll stop by in a few days to collect them."

His shoes clacked against the wooden steps as he climbed up to hand her the folder. Mary smiled hesitantly as a wave of poisonous cologne crashed through her skull, painting murals inside her forehead of chemical musk and pine trees. He handed her the folder and she stiffly accepted, saying a mechanical, "Thank you."

"Thank you," he said as he started down the stairs, "and you take care, you hear?" He gave her a knowing grin.

"And you do the same," she called as he slid into his car and sped away, flinging gravel across her yard.

Mary raised herself out of the chair and walked to the other side of the porch. She looked across her land at the nearly mountainous, wooded hill, rising up behind her house, the undulating hills that created numerous valleys, and the little holler where the creek ran. On the opposite side of the creek was another wooded area. Mary's property extended to the very edge of those woods, where Mr. Douglas was beginning his courtship of her land. All she wanted was to keep her home out of his hands and away from Wildwood Hollow, that ludicrous excuse for a rural community. Her will listed her daughter as the sole beneficiary, though it brought her little comfort. After her son had been killed in basic training, she was left with a single child. Her daughter attended school in Louisiana, married a forestry man, and was now living in Georgia with a house and a mortgage. When Mary died, she knew her daughter would be unwilling to move back to Botetourt and would sell the land at the first decent offer.

Mary suddenly burped an acidic, full-stomached belch. Mr. Douglas had upset her acid reflux. She walked past a sleeping Mim, into the house where she kept a well-stocked stash of TUMS, and as she chewed the chalky pink tablets, she heard her phone ring in the living room. She swallowed quickly before moving to answer the phone. She pressed the green answer button as she licked her lips and said, "Hello?"

"Hi Mary, it's Sue Anne. How are you?" asked the voice emanating from the out-of-date home phone.

"I'm well, and yourself?" asked Mary.

"I'm doing alright. But—well, the reason I'm calling you is that I stopped over at Woodland Cemetery on my way home yesterday. I wanted to let you know myself, the iron crosses we restored were stolen."

"Both of them?" Mary slumped down into the recliner and stared at a frayed spot on her jeans where there would soon be a gaping hole.

"I'm afraid so." Sue Anne sighed and said, "I'm sorry Mary. I know how much that ceremony meant to you."

Mary's chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy had done two Iron Cross Dedications last spring at Woodland Cemetery and Mary's great-grand-uncle, Captain Thaddeus Aiken, had been one of the recipients. Her own father had been drafted in World War II and was declared missing-in-action days before her birth, and when they had restored Thaddeus's iron cross, it was almost like getting closure for her father's lack of burial.

Mary let out a deep breath, her chest cavity falling as she breathed out two full lungs' worth of air. "That's a real shame," Mary said. "I would have thought people around here would do better by our veterans." She paused, "Thanks for letting me know though. I reckon I'll head over there this afternoon and lay some flowers and see if anything needs to be cleaned up." The ladies said goodbye and Mary hung up the phone with a defeated click.

Soon after she spoke with Sue Anne, Mary headed over to the cemetery. She laid a fresh bouquet of anemones on Thaddeus' headstone, picked up sticks, and raked the leaves surrounding his grave. Though there was little she could do to beautify his plot amongst the expansive root system seeking to consume the entire cemetery, she took her time caring for his grave and filling the now empty hole where his iron cross had been pushed into the earth. She suspected that whoever took it sold it for scrap metal, sending her into a fit of angry, acidic burps.

As she drove home, she looked up at the sky. It was sunset, but it was too cloudy to make out any of the sun's remaining rays. The humidity slid down her throat, making it hard to breathe, and she reached up and wiped the sweat trickling down her forehead and into her nose. It had been a particularly hot, wet summer, and everyday the rain would wash the muddy tracks off the road, only to have dozens of dump trucks drive back and forth until the road was, once again, a slippery, orange, mass of clay. She drove slowly through the orange tire tracks that greased the road with increasing thickness as she approached Wildwood Hollow. It had once been beautiful farmland with rolling hills and pleasant valleys tucked between tall oak trees. But most of those hills had been leveled to make room for more houses, and the oaks had been replaced with decorative pear trees. As she drove by the sign labeling the boundary of the community, she saw that the last two letters of the word 'Hollow' had been painted over to say 'Holler.' The Wildwood Holler, which the new development was named after, was tucked into the roots of Tinker Mountain, and was now home to Mr. Douglas himself. He preferred a more manicured look and bulldozed many of the ancient trees, leaving the holler exposed and prone to flooding. As Mary drove by she could see workmen replacing the sod, as they'd done many times this summer already.

It was raining again when she reached her house and found Mim squawking on the porch, soaked and disturbed. Mim was a creature of habit; she was either in her box beside Mary's chair or on some long-winded adventure across the countryside—the elderly chicken was not one to stand in the rain without purpose. Mary hurried in from the rain, scooping Mim up as she climbed the stairs, being careful not to slip and fall. She didn't want to be one of those elderly ladies who broke a hip and ended up in a rehab center, finally giving her daughter an excuse to ship her to a Georgia nursing home.

When she reached the top stair, she noticed something brown and wiggling and 'not Mim' in the shoebox. Peering in, she saw an enormous spotted, brown snake curling around the hen's regular third week egg. Mary began to plan her route with increasing hysteria, trying to decide if she wanted to rush past the occupied shoebox, or take up residence in her car until the downfall-of-humanity had vacated the dwelling.

She backtracked down the porch stairs and slogged through her muddy yard to her car. With Mim on her lap, she pulled her hand-me-down flip phone out of her pocket and dialed the only man that she still knew in the area—the last person to call—his number remained at the top of a short list. She quickly coughed down the bubbling acid rising in her throat.

"Hello?" answered the man's voice slipping through the phone's speaker.

"Hi, Mr. Douglas. It's Mary Brennan." Mr. Douglas had called her the day before to see if the papers were ready. She told him that she'd been busy and that she would look

at them soon.

"Mrs. Brennan, have you had a chance to sign those papers for me yet?"

"Not yet, but I'll sign them immediately if you can come over this afternoon," Mary said, chewing her pride as she spoke.

"I could make that happen."

"Perfect. I only ask that you do me one favor." Mary said. She could hear the perk of his ears and the shift of his eyes. People didn't usually ask favors of him.

"And what would that be, Mary?"

"I need you to kill a snake. Do that, and I'll sign your papers."

Mr. Douglas, surprised by her request, thought to himself, does this old woman really not have anybody else she can call?

"Alright. I'll take care of it. You just be ready to sign when I get there." Mr.

Douglas hated snakes, but he needed her signature, and he could stop by any one of his construction sites and pick up some local, backwoods idiot to deal with the snake issue.

Mary said thank you and goodbye and snapped her phone shut. She sat for twenty minutes in her car, waiting, the water from the saturated chicken soaking through her pants.

The rain had thinned to a mist, when Mr. Douglas finally skidded into her driveway.

"Hello Mary," he said, raising an eyebrow. "Hear you've got a snake problem." He grinned with all his teeth, knowing he had her.



Vimy
Cole Richard

Americamera*Gabby Kiser*

Somewhere in America sits an empty castle, about a couple hundred thousand square feet large. Its moat is crackled asphalt, with fragmented diagonal lines to divide it. Any entry is illegal (trespassing punishable by fine), but some still sneak in through broken glass doors, whether to pay their respects to the fortress of time gone by or to shield themselves from rain, snow, sleet, and cops.

The castle has no windows, as most don't, but once sported a large skylight. Now, the glass has fallen to the castle's pastel-tiled floors. Sunlight falls through the now-open ceiling (as do water and animals and leaves) and reflects from the broken glass to create small rainbows on the inner walls. The light of a flashlight doesn't create the same ripple of color on the dead walls. They go unappreciated.

Most steps through the building give a crunch, unless the stepper allocates his or her weight correctly. The flaps of wings and the occasional scutter echo through empty halls. Water drips from yellow ceiling tiles that reek of a comforting mold and must.

The castle's old inhabitants, for the most part, left before its final days. Still, some of their names can be found over forgotten entrances: Waldenbooks, KB, and Deb, to name a few. I've heard you can't find those names many places anymore. Here they live on, fading to gray and hanging precariously on the wall.

I remember this place when it was still what it had been meant to be. I ran over these pink and green tiles, eyes wide and searching. I was never hit by a rogue rain drop in those days, and my footsteps went pitter-patter instead of crinch-cronch. I ran my hands over goods in Waldenbooks and KB (never Deb) as if they'd never leave. If I didn't buy that day, Mother would tell me, "It'll be here next time." In the center court, I spun in blue and teal seats. "We'll eat there next time," they'd say. "Next time."

What I don't remember is the last time I went in. It's crossed my mind every time I've sat in that weedy parking lot. Nothing about it at that time told me there would be an end. People ran in and out with bags and boxes, kids laughing and dodging cars, parents pulling them to the automatic doors that almost stayed open...the scene is so vivid to me. "Next time I'm here..." thought those who walked out. Surely I had too.

Mangled Manna

Emilie Erbland

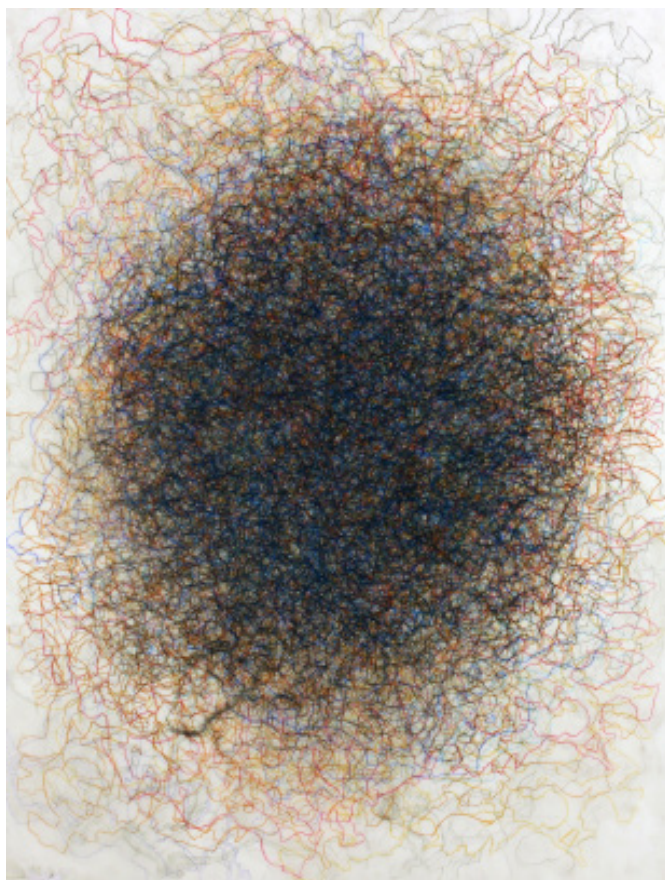
Lichen-striped granite mine of mine and yours and his and hers — cursed only to stand and watch.

Odious rows of odorless and honorless produce produce efficient nutrition from Nevada to Maine, mainly machinated and mangled Manna feeds us in unironic uniform.

Hounds hounded to oust pounds and round snouts shrink into pink leather collars and freshly inked pedigrees.

Greenhouses hide from idle brides, petulant petals, stagnant stamens stammering under a fussing fluorescent mess of “progress”, free from sunlight, unaware of blight but also unaware of the wind – the first time she sees unadulterated daytime is the day she is uprooted.

We have changed this place.



Cauliflower Quartz
Casey Murano

A Description of a Friday Morning*Megan Strickland*

At seven o'clock, slick fog glistens,
wet brick walkways cloaked in mist.
An army enlisted to unlock thick wood doors;
the Gambian soccer champion vacuums hallowed floors.
Beeping amber trucks conduct brawny men with saws:
Before the students arrive, all these ruddy men withdraw.
Camouflaged trimmers move heavy dead tree limbs:
seamless round hedges keep the lawns seeming prim.
A crew of Guatemalan blowers clear dew-strewn leaves,
disappearing sunburnt hues students shall not see.
Rustles waft beneath the clamor of heavy sleet
while students slumber on four-hundred thread-count sheets.
A mother of three from Nigeria needs to clean, but waits to knock.
Only shower and sink are left; the young lovers have lost a sock.

**Planetary Flow***Donte Lowman*

IFEU

Unitha Cherry

I fucked everything up
 Everything
 I don't know how someone so sad can be so fucking angry
 If it had only been 5 6 fucking more I wouldn't be here
 And I'm trying to be grateful but it's so fucking hard
 People look at me like they're seeing a ghost
 I feel like
 Like
 I've come back from the dead
 Clawed my way through 6 feet of pills and woke up
 Heaven/Hell looks like a hospital
 Smells like clean
 Sounds like 'pee in this cup/ please remove all sharp objects from your person'
 There are no angels no choir
 But the metronome of an IV
 The insect-like buzz of fluorescence
 It's cold and your dad brings you a sweater but you
 Aren't allowed to see him
 Heaven has visiting hours
 and tiny bottles of shampoo
 guardian angels wear blue scrubs
 and bring you breakfast

 your dad
 watches ghosts eat eggs with toast
 and they got it wrong, Judgement Day
 comes after
 you've already spent the night
 and the white man doesn't have a beard but
 he is in charge
 and you sit in front of his desk

 and find out the 'devil's advocate'
 is actually his friend
 and you don't get to stay
 because your dad wants you to come home

 the man behind the desk says if he sees you again
 you stay
 and heaven isn't that bad but you miss your friends

 there was no funeral
 no séance
 no resurrection/ rapture whatever the fuck
 Just a quiet ride home
 And a wake that lasted a month

 I didn't die
 But it sure feels like I did

Bee Gone, Thoughts

Marc Beauchamp

Oh, maybe we're all better off without bees...
 What's really so great about some insect's knees?
 Why bumble around with their sting and their buzz?
 Capricious desires pursued just because.
 Although hives' hexagonal honey is sweet,
 Old wings must grow weary and pleasure retreats.
 And pollens caught up in the gusts of creation
 Spin off into fields with no set destination.

See, every prime flower must wilt and decay;
 By stopping conception, we cancel dismay.
 No wicked green apple of fall will I mourn
 If all I have tasted is wheat, beans, and corn.
 When honey and nectar are nothing but fable
 Our minds, so uncombed, unstick and detangle.
 If only ephemeral sweets could not reach me,
 Oh, life without bees, I'm sure, would be peachy.



Wild

Clarisse Liclic



Duck Map
Casey Murano

Temporary Exhibition

Emilie Knudsen

II.

In the museum, buried near amputated Greek statues and a Warhol knock-off parodying
Marilyn Monroe
“temporary exhibition”
you enter.

Equilibrium interrupted against the predictable dulling marble a world of blue
emerges
delicate like
a butterfly.

Wings damp and new, unperplexing, smooth, ready to take flight, polyester fabric and
stainless steel tubes,
wire
a building
within building.

You walk the perimeter of the structure, stretched fabric over wire and tubing, an apartment
in Seoul
blue Seoul
green Berlin
pink NYC.

You have to stand in line to walk through the sculpture, the structure, the impression, the
precise replica
of the
life of
Suh.

It is like following a ghostly trail through a chromatic world, a house that did not belong to
you a toilet seat
you never
sat on.

Marvel at the detail, building a house out of wire, fabric, color, bit by bit, yard by yard, recre-
ating the exact
curve of
the door handle.

The Act of Treading Water in the Depths of Mind Games

Katharine Pate

I wouldn't have known,
but he let me walk inside it once.
He welcomed me in
and gave me a tour.

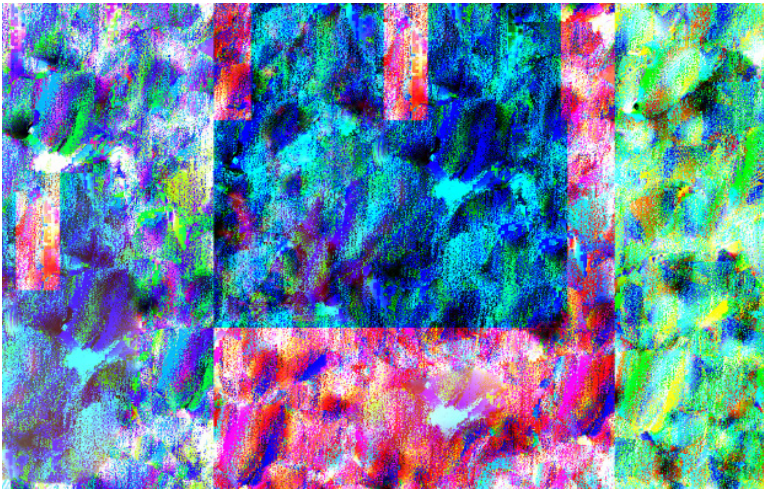
Together we walked
from room to room.
He watched my movements
as I explored the crevices.

I found a few thoughts I liked,
a few I wanted to steal.
The lights were out in almost every room,
or maybe there were none.

We sat across from one another
in the middle room.
He lit a cigarette.
As I stared at him, snakes began to slither

from the corners of his eyes. Black water
dripped out of his slightly open mouth
and covered his lips. My eyes met
the drips as they pounded against the floor.

Cockroaches crawled from the tips of his fingers
and crept across the table towards me.
But I felt okay because I was in his mind.
He thought of me.



wounded

Mitchell Gregory

Roses

Katharine Pate

What's your favorite time of day?

Before or after the accident?

After.

Night.

Why?

Because I can shut my eyes and see black, not red.

Were you present at the scene of the accident?

Yes, but I arrived there late. I was too late. It had already happened. All I saw was red everywhere. After a little I wasn't sure if the red was on the bodies and the pavement or if it was on the back of my eyelids. They seemed stained, really. Everything seemed stained. Maybe it was paint. It could have been paint right? I know she had been wearing a white shirt. I remember because I saw her right before she left and it looked great on her. Maybe because she was the epitome of the color. Pure like an angel, rare like ivory. She knew a lot of things that I didn't know and will never know. The shirt wasn't white anymore though when I saw her after I got there. Red worked on her too, I guess. I wanted to take off her shirt. I wanted to toss it in the washing machine and wash out the paint. It could have been paint.

Was it paint?

No.

How did you find out?

I touched her.

Where?

On her stomach, where the color was the darkest. It really was a very lovely deep red, almost crimson, I would say. I would have loved to paint with it. But it wasn't paint, and I don't think it would have been very tasteful if I painted with blood, especially hers. Well, then again, why not? It's not as if she could have stopped me.

The Haar

Emilie Knudsen

In midnight dusk, street lamps flicker a
lavender tilt
And echoes from distant cobbled roads
Knit in with spray and black pepper silt.

Things roll dimly through the haar in folds.
Red-rimmed eyes search countless sights
And salt stings nostrils as the culling bell tolls.

Storefronts and pubs awash in heavenly light
Emanate steady buzz to the alien brain, an
unreality gyre
Amidst rosy windows, and synapses zap
dissonance and strife.

Wonder the taste of elderberry wine while
building a funeral pyre.
Instead of becoming fodder let your energy
dissipate,
Molecules gone all at once. And set the
Everything on fire.

A rabbit noses the grass springing from
cracks but there is no late
For you as you think of tapping a window
pane,
Dusty lavishness flung upon outsiders who
churn with undetermined fate.

Terrariums and aquariums live the same –
see within: the nucleus stain –
Outside, dust mites swirl in snowflake flames
and lovely life runs quickly down
the drain.



Incision

Yuwei Lin

It is with: the concave and convex drafting the loops of curvature,
 but in a maw, Charybdis' throat opens wide. A sailboat adrift in swirling embers.
 Upheaval brings about a kind of peace and the tilting world sets itself upright.
 Long teeth promise a long death but you will not find comfort in the belly of the beast.
 In all the old fables when you're swallowed whole, it takes some mystic miracle,
 so then bypass the uvula and no glottal stops will bar escaping the stench.
 In years and years, I'll be but a hunched woman living in shrouds, a shadow
 with greying hair at street corners and alleyways. I'll live like a whisper on the wind.
 People might speak of me, rich men might laugh at me, and I will bear it all
 For I, I will murmur to a pair of children, went to hell and back on the ocean waves.
 Like Orpheus, I plucked myself out of Hades and across Styx and resurfaced anew.
 And the little ones, rapt with attention, will not know to ask about the Eurydice I left behind.

**Eden***Clarisse Liclic*

The Bus Stop

Emilie Knudsen

My name is Mary Louise Wattles Smith and I was born in Clay County, about fifteen miles from Bible Grove, IL on January 15, 1930, in a house located south and east of Shouse Chapel Church. The church no longer exists, but the cemetery is still there. My relatives and people I have known are buried there. My parents, Velma (Grove) and Ralph Wattles were married January 22, 1911 and had thirteen children. I was the tenth child. This is the story of my life and I am trying to tell it like it is.

Pittenweem, Scotland
Sunday June 21st 2015

It was Father's Day and my father was an ocean away and I was on a double-decker bus. Second floor window seat, barreling down a narrow street, lined with beach grass and pastures and lowing cows and sluggish tractors. I had sent my father the appropriate greetings and wishes. He told me to call him when I was able to. Fear had then seized the back of my mind briefly, but I stifled it with the horizon and the roads and the swaying trees and looking at it all. Let's watch the flight of this beautiful bird, and it might startle you away from your thoughts. This is what I decided as we travelled swiftly between cellphone covered-areas on the left side of the road. But when we came to a stop and the doors swung open, I tumbled out of the bus, phone to ear. Pittenweem's bus stop couldn't contain us all and we were strung about like spilled beads on a narrow sidewalk and a landing that looked out to the sea. The stone, I remember, was brown and lined with years. I clutched the landing wall and felt its coarseness, my fingers exploring its cracks and aged grout as my eyes scanned a sunlit day reflecting off of a blue, blue ocean that poured into a windy harbor, sailboat masts leaning at picturesque angles.

And my voice bubbled up out of my throat, in feigned cheer, already dreading what was coming, "Happy Father's Day, Dad! I miss you!"

And his response came slow: "Thank you, pumpkin." His voice was resigned. "Your Grandma is dead."

I stuttered my apologies. His mother dead on Father's Day, just like when my own mother's dad had died on Mother's Day. It was a stupid joke that the universe played on my parents. I don't know when I started crying, but suddenly they was loud, my sobs, and the sea of people were shifting away from me and a red-headed college student who acted as our chaperone, was watching me out of the corner of his eye. They waited for me, atop the ledge overlooking the North Sea. I recalled what I could of Mary Smith, who was soon to lie buried in the fertile land of Illinois, her headstone just another plain name against the backdrop of grey stones and mourning.

Her voice was what I loved most about her. It croaked occasionally. It sounded warm and old. I loved how she said my name, like it was a treasure that she gently articulated, a candy that slowly melted on the tongue, thick syrup, sweet.

I remember her hands too, her slender fingers and well-manicured nails. How her movements were precise as she worked on her embroidery. Her skin was soft and her hands looked so breakable, but they were strong. They were the hands that taught me to sew and to knit. The hands that I watched shuffle a double-deck of cards a million times before dealing out.

She had the body of an old woman, shoulders in a sloping hunch and fragile

legs painted with veins under papery skin. She had a shuffling gait. Her hair was clouded around her head, like fog. She wore drab colors – a faded pink sweatshirt, grey loose pants, worn slippers imprinted with her footprint.

I remember how she talked about her third husband. His name was Everett and I don't remember meeting him, but she said his name like how she said mine. I wonder if that was the day, the day when he died, that her eyes started losing their blue, slowly replaced with grey.

When I was young, I'd read books with her. One day we lost a book in my couch and didn't find it until years later when we opened the couch into a bed again. I had a considerable library fee.

I still have a few of the quilts we made together. My mother always tells me the story of when she made a baby blanket for me. How she knitted and knitted in her precise manner. She realized she made a mistake and pulled out hundreds of stitches to fix it and then continued on like nothing had happened. The quilts I still have are pilled and thin. Sometimes I forget I made them with her – they become just another item I own, of little value, something used and old and frayed at the edges and threads splitting where my dogs have scratched at it.

She was the reason my family visited Illinois every other year for Thanksgiving. I remember being sad that I was missing a class field trip to a theatre in the city because we were going to Illinois. But that was the last time I had seen her.

Mary Smith had been one of thirteen children. She had four children of her own, two daughters, one of whom died in her twenties, and two sons. She liked to bowl and was on two teams. Her score was usually 250-280. She once bowled a perfect 300.

She liked to play solitaire on her computer, but also, we found out after her death, had been writing the story of her life. It was 16 pages in total, a small, closed account, I'm sure, of the life she had lead. I wish she had filled hundreds of pages.

CHAMPAIGN – Mary L. Smith, 85, of Champaign passed away at 12:05 a.m. Sunday (June 21, 2015) at the Meadowbrook Healthcare Center at Clark-Lindsey, Urbana.

I find myself taking to my own computer, tapping into the flow of information that is the internet, finding her obituary. She died differently than I imagined. I imagined her at home in her favorite sweatshirt, a blanket she had made entombing her as she slept away into Death's arms. I had forgotten she had died in a hospital, a cold and clinical place for her soft and gentle person. She died at 12:05 AM. Just barely Father's Day. 11 of her siblings preceded her in death. One remains.

I hope when I die, it is at the witching hour. Sometimes I sit at a window and see my reflection instead of what is outside. It's the way that the light falls that changes the purpose altogether. Maybe I'll die at a full moon, when the tides are at their most furious. Maybe I won't die at a hospital at all. I wonder what beloved item I'll be entombed in, what will become my death shroud. Maybe I'll die naked on a cliff, overlooking the tossing waves. Maybe I'll be able to tell when Death is coming for me. Maybe I'll be able to walk out of the hospital. Or out of my house. And breathe my soul away from my body into the arms of the night sky.

I want to die seeing the stars.

Visitation for Mary will be from 10 to 11 a.m. Monday, June 29, at the Mahomet Christian Church, Mahomet, with funeral services to follow at 11 a.m., also at the church, with Pastor David Johnson officiating. Interment will take place at Grandview Memorial Gardens, Champaign.

I remember her sitting in her favorite rocking chair, folding the newspaper with her deft hands. We'd watch the Thanksgiving Day parade together. And the scent of the pumpkin cookies I had made would envelop us.

She lived almost all her life in Illinois, moving once to Colorado with my dad and his siblings in tow until her husband cheated on her with her best friend. So she left and came back to the land she knew so well.

I have been to Illinois once since she died. I recalled its flatness, its fields that unfold into a single line of trees, like a brown, stitched seam between it and the next field. I wondered how it had changed over the years, how the young Mary Smith, rocking her little sister, Merle, in a four-room house for fifteen people, had seen the world outside her window.

Her 16 pages of writing overuses quotation marks and is littered with names that I've only heard in passing. I couldn't recall the names of her twelve siblings, one of which is Sonny, another Irma (who visited once with us over the summer and who baked an awful pumpkin pie for Thanksgiving one year.) I couldn't say the places she moved to or where she went to school. When I read her story, it was like reading about someone I never knew. What did she look like as a girl? What color were the clothes that she wore, the clothes her mother made for her out of flour sacks? When I knew her, Grandma was a quiet, quiet woman, who traded sarcasms and witticisms much more frequently than she talked about herself. Maybe because she was tenth in a line of thirteen. Maybe because her husband cheated on her. Maybe she liked to stay quiet.

In reading about her life, I learned she liked gardening and hated picking blackberries in July because she would always get chigger bites. That her father would divide a Milky Way bar between the four youngest daughters. How her Aunt Hattie never married, painted with acrylics, and had owned the first tape recorder she'd ever seen and they all liked to lean over and speak into it. The well she used to drink from. How the news of WWII would scare her at nights. Baseball was her favorite sport for recess. She reminisces about playing the game "Fox and Goose" and promises to instruct the reader on how to play it – I wish she would!

How her brother, Raymond Harmon, died in the war. Her Grandma Morgan taught her how to crochet. Her two friends in the seventh grade wore jodhpurs instead skirts. How she moved to the city to look after a younger nephew while the parents worked in the Jell-O factory and the rats that infested the washroom basement scared her. How she still has dreams of rats.

How it was there in Chicago that she first learned to bowl and play cards. She met her first husband in high school. Her first month of college cost \$25. How her worst subject was Law, in which she got an 86 out of 100. How she got a job at Sears as a typist and didn't go back to college. How her mother had to sign documents so she could marry Lloyd, as they were not of age. How she couldn't keep their house warm. Lloyd brought home a puppy. How the puppy died of distemper.

How she got pregnant and Lloyd lost his job. How she developed blood clots in her left leg after Diana was born. How Di's convulsions started young and never stopped. The phenobarbital barely helped.

How she was diagnosed with tuberculosis on September 1, 1952. How she lived in a sanitarium until deemed healthy. How Lloyd spent a long time away from home. How he was spotted at a drive-in with another girl.

How she met an army man named Ron Knudsen and they were married in 1955.
 How Debbie was born the following June and was colicky.
 How she got a GED and finally received a high school diploma.
 How my father's first Christmas was interrupted by a bout of pneumonia.
 How he had once pushed the emergency brakes button while she was practicing driving.

How she passed her driver's test after the second time.

How they moved to a developing subdivision in Mahomet, Illinois and my father learned a few choice swear words from the carpenters and she washed his mouth out with soap.
 How she continued to bowl and...

There her story ends. And I cannot reconcile the woman I read about with her older, quiet counterpart, who still bowled and played cards but who seemed so different. But she wrote her own story. And though she never told me any of it herself, never sat me down and told me about the time when she was my age and was picking blackberries in July or churning butter with Irma or scratching her chigger bites, she wrote it down. And by doing so, she has promised to one day teach me the rules of "Fox and Goose".

Some days, I forget she is dead.

I stepped back from the wall, wiping the tears and the snot away. I turned and smiled at the concerned red-headed chaperone. I was fine, I said. I crept into town in the back of the group, comforted by a few of my friends. We took photos in front of the harbor and a roving band of laughing seagulls circled us and I attempted to hide my red eyes. We tried Pittenweem's famous chocolate shop, a series of hallways and small showrooms that emptied into a crooked courtyard where we could feast on the delicacy. Then we found the Fife Coastal Path and began to make our way to the next town over, Anstruther.

I climbed up and down the cliffs, looking at the roaring ocean below caught in the diamond sunlight and at the roaming line of people crawling like ants over the cliffs in front of me. At some point we passed a little rowboat that had been filled with dirt and converted into a garden where some blackberries grew. I felt a smile pass over my face far, far away. The spinning world was still and quiet to me. And I walked through it in a daze.

I stayed in Scotland. The funeral was too distant and too soon. I wonder what she looked like, shrouded in death's fine silk. I wonder what she thought of before Death came for her, if she might have thought of me. Or maybe she thought of the days when she was young, maybe her mind spun through her memories. I wonder what she spoke into Aunt Hattie's tape recorder. I wonder if she remembered the taste of the Milky Way bars her father brought home. I wonder how long her heart hurt after her second husband cheated on her, just like her first one. I wonder if she remembers tearing out rows and rows of knitting to fix the single dropped stitch in my baby blanket. And some days, I forget she is dead.

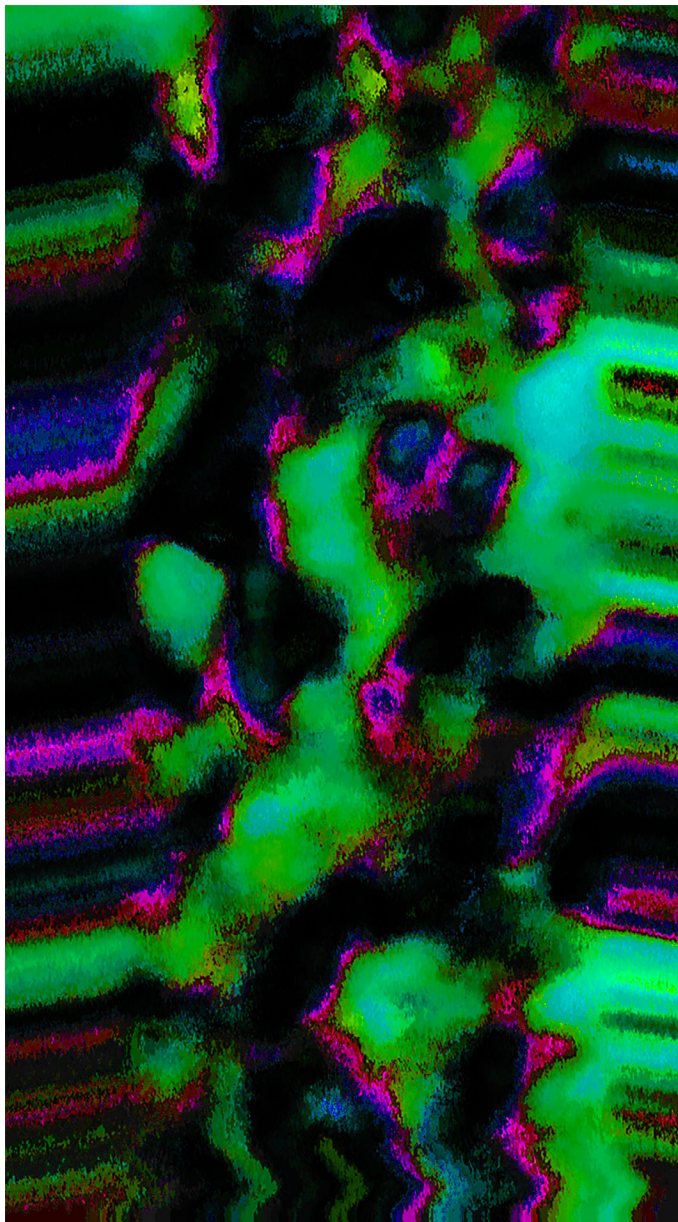


Memory
Cole Richard

Crave

Nasir Aziz

The kind of poetry I want is one that festers an indifferent man to the brink of nirvana,
 one that echoes like a howl across the lonesome savanna, prickling ears of wildebeest and
 hyenas, reverberating through quiet skulls,
 one that sways in the rhythm of heartbeat and meter simultaneously,
 one that converses with God, exchanging prophesy and prose,
 one that trashes lesser verse and usurps clichés, like a messiah with holy scripture that
 grants something of a retribution,
 one that reveals grandiose truths, leaving teeth on edge and hearts humbled,
 one that is ornate and simple, appealing to every frequency of thought,
 one that swells like a brazen orchestra reaching its cusp, pouncing empty ears,
 one that is brutally honest, because what worse a lie that is told in verse,
 one that sautés the heart with every flavor of emotion, from savory serenity to pickled pride,
 one that is unforgettable, somewhere in between awe and remembrance,
 but perhaps most of all, the kind of poetry I want is one outlasts my progeny as a trademark
 of time I once held,
 legacies left, legacies spent, legacies foregone.



against
Mitchell Gregory

Ode to the Broken Fire Hydrant*Jordan Johnson*

When the sun hits the block,

Penetrating the concrete pavement with so much heat

You can see waves

Rolling from it

Like salt water from the shore,

We both know what time it is.

Soon the stoop dwellers will come seek you out

Looking some kind of hungry.

My mother always said the heat makes people do crazy things,

Means that that archaic star beats down on our vulnerable heads

And makes us simple, insatiable, primitive before the fall

And we come into ourselves again.

But for now they will seek you out with rusty wrenches,

Hidden in drawers, forgotten until this moment.

As they pry you open,

Spilling your insides out onto the blistering street,

As they applaud your dismemberment,

Do you mourn the loss?

Or do you celebrate this life given purpose?

Ain't never been a fire on this block,

So you sit idle, desolate, feeling perverted

Waiting for disaster to strike

This area you are meant to protect.

But when the sun encases this urban island in a heat so sickening

That it forces those poor unfortunate souls outside,

As the kids climb up their parent's legs and on their last nerves,

They turn to you looking some kind of hungry.

You, a symbol of reprieve, an oasis in this steel desert.

When they tap into your well, water surges unrestrained,

And the crowd cheers this miracles of miracles

And the kids detach from their parents' limbs

To smile their first smiles of these summer months.

When the firefighters come to shut you off

To the tune of moans and groans

Would we hear your melancholy lament, like a funeral dirge, amid the noise

As your worshippers recede back into their homes,

Sorrow lined shoulders hunched forward in defeat,

Does the disappointment hit you just as hard?

For one moment you didn't just stifle the damage of a blazing creature.

You were the hero, a white foam knight.

What's it like to be born anew?



Spatial Illumination

Dante Lowman

Rabid

Savannah Etzler

The porch swing moves with the same wind

as the coyote flesh hanging by the road.

They say he's an arsonist, an outlaw

cow thievin', cock fighter.

Eyes black like engine grease,

arms wrapped in sun-worn skin.

He nearly shot my daddy once.

Rabid by nature,
he is the native state of violence.
His voice is creek-water filling a beer can,
low and indistinct,- soft almost.
His gaze feels like gasoline,
drop a match and it'll set you aflame.
He is the bobcat's scream
in the middle of the night- sublime.

I can't help but worship violence.
Chased inside by a mangy,
orange fox, my mother and I
watched at the door
as a man shot the foaming creature.
The air felt thick and my heart
pumped sand, as it crawled under the car.
Fear is the only reminder that we are alive,
a loving gift from the god of savagery.

When your organs dissolve
and seep into the ground, leaving
you without blood or air,
your eyes remain, waiting-
and for one second, you exist,
in the loving grip
of our violent world.

Red
Nasir Aziz

The velvety flesh glistens in the moored blood-lake,
 elixir drips cold hearted tears with shards of crimson glass,
 sodden rusty gates of Heaven lay barren and desolate,
 ruby devils flash burning whips and vining hair,
 scarlet jealous men comb raw meat with forks,
 copper rings twist fabric across curtained meadows,
 salted tongues drool rosy love and fragrant madness,
 cherry thrones sit in groves beneath looming cliffs,
 flushed cheeks tear at ghastly secrets,
 massive footsteps leave auburn pools filled to the brim,
 serrated steel punctures chalices of wine and war,
 empyrean songs pierce ruddy eyes,
 folded oblivion sweeps above maroon graves,
 endlessly, the flimsy breeze sets fire.

Sow
Nasir Aziz

Plumes of burnt dust sweep across barren fields,
 and a summer haze casts waves far at the bleeding horizon,
 gouging thirst and hunger from the pickled workers,
 hunched over in prostration to their craft,
 nourishing their tender sprouts with black sweat,
 or fleeting shade as they walk between the rows,
 sweeping furtive glances for misplaced life,
 crunching gravel beneath their cracked souls,
 leaving shallow grooves where water pools for but a moment,
 then sinks down to Her lusty loam,
 where it festers squirming worms and hidden treasures,
 endless wealth, endless wealth, endless wealth,
 resting quiet, waiting, waiting, waiting,
 for the timely monsoon.



Print 1

Carson Watlington

Temporary Exhibition

Emilie Knudsen

III.

The "Temporary Exhibition"
 you laugh because it is so temporary,
 this wire and fabric and toil and tears
 made for ghost people who cannot
 turn handles.

It is less than a reflection,
 the glass in the mirror more
 lasting than seven years
 of bad luck and accidentally snagging a tear in the wall, ripping all the way
 through the pink stairs of NYC
 into the blue cabinets of Seoul.

And in a single tear,
 you jump the international date line between cities
 and move
 across the years.
 Magic.

And in imagining your accidentally tearing a hole
 in a piece of artwork
 in a heavily guarded museum,
 you flag
 the temporary exhibition
 exhibiting temporary art
 in your mind,
 affix its fleetingness so it's less fleeting
 and you never forget
 so that when you flip
 unintentionally
 to the pages in the dictionary holding the T's
 you double check
 (temporary [tem-puh-rer-ee] adj. lasting, existing, serving, or effective for a time only; not
 permanent)
 because your concept of the word
 has shifted.

He's My Buddy, I'm Her Joe

Gabby Kiser

The sun was making its way west, the grass in every yard was the perfect length, the twinkling of the ice cream truck's "Jingle Bells" was fading, and two siblings sat on the curb of the Comanche Trail cul-de-sac.

Eleanor "Len" Maugham, age seventeen, was deep into a story of bears and wolves and one brave girl who managed to get herself out of every issue. The protagonist of this story, seven-year-old Jo "Just Jo" Maugham, sat next to her older sister with large eyes half shut, paying more attention to her ice cream than anything. Eleanor was well aware that she had lost Jo minutes ago, but ending the story would only be giving in. She had started it, and she intended to finish it. Her eyes were glued to the leaves of a fruitless peach tree as they fluttered in the wind, words falling from her lips, tinted blue by her popsicle. Every few moments, she would suck gently at it, then continue her story. Neither really noticed, and both continued going through the motions of a boring summer.

Once their shadows reached far in front of them and her popsicle was only a plastic stick, Len realized it was getting late and she had no idea what story she was telling. Jo perked up at the perfect time.

"I wanna go inside."

"Okay. Can I finish this story first?"

"Can you do it next time? I wanna get excited for it."

"Sure. I'll think up a perfect ending." Both knew that Jo was in fact not going to be excited, and Len was absolutely not going to think of the story again until the next time they sat on the curb, but there wasn't a doubt that the story would end and Len would start another. So summer goes. Len followed Jo into the Maugham house and gave a final glance around the cul-de-sac as she shut the front door behind them. It was still. No one was out. This was how most evenings began on Comanche Trail; when Len shut that white front door, the day was done. The dog-day cicadas began their symphony.

Jo asked the usual 'what's for dinner,' and Len didn't know, and Jo asked when Mom and Dad would get home, and Len, as usual, didn't know, and Jo finally got bored of asking the same questions and turned on the TV. After standing in the kitchen for a moment, Len gave the clock a glance, immediately forgot the time, and walked to take her green army jacket from the armchair in the foyer. She adored that jacket, though it meant very little. It had been her father's before her, and his brother's before that, and the property of a thrift store before that. She often followed that trail of belonging in her mind and questioned what was at the end. The name on the breast said English, but that meant nothing. At least a hundred different faces had fit that name since the jacket fell into Maugham hands.

"Jo?"

"Huh?"

"I'll be out for a little bit. Let Gordon in for me." Gordon, Len's treasured Bedlington terrier, fell asleep under the back deck every day. She never had the heart to wake him, so that was Jo's job.

"See'yuh," Jo called back, having hardly heard her sister's request over the obnoxious and hardly prompted laugh track on the TV. Still, she knew exactly what was said.

Despite the coat of evening blue over Allensburg, Len's dark square sunglasses remained over her eyes. After wearing them for the entire day, she never realized she still had them on until she tried to take her contacts out and her finger bounced back. This was a daily occurrence, and she never thought about remembering it. Her short, brown ponytail swung a bit behind her bobbing head. The ponytail was a new development. She wouldn't keep it once school came back around, but it was novel for summer. Summers always needed novelty. The large canvas jacket flapped slightly at the tops of her thighs, and she

hopped on one leg as she walked down the driveway so that she could tie her shoe. This was how Bobby Somerset saw her as he walked down his home's own driveway. Their eyes met, though Bobby didn't know it because of the sunglasses, and it was all that mattered to Len for the second before she put her other foot on the ground.

She had met Bobby Somerset only a couple of years prior, despite the fact that they had both lived in the cul-de-sac for most of their lives. Bobby (until this point, Robert) had begrudgingly followed his parents' dollars toward a private education until sophomore year of high school, and met Len at the bus stop on the dreaded post-Labor Day Tuesday. It had been Len who first called him Bobby, Len who laughed when he said he wasn't taking advanced classes, and Len who gave him her own packed lunch when he expected the school to provide it free of charge. It was a memory that stuck out in her mind (it had been September 7) because, that day, she had fallen in love. She hated to admit it, but often would to herself when she was alone and could only think of the Somerset boy. Every time her hazel eyes fell onto him, her world paused.

"Hey!" she called, waving and pulling down one leg of her shorts. She started to walk over to the Somerset home, located 4 o'clock to the Maugham's 6.

"Hey Len," Bobby said once they were close enough to use their regular voices. Neither smiled, both looked around, and Len spoke again when she thought about the right time had passed.

"What's up?" she asked, but Bobby's response was cut off by another "Hey!" From down the Trail came Constance Reilly. Both Len and Bobby hesitated to reply to the yell as she neared, but Bobby gave her the first response once both came to the conclusion that, as usual, there was no friendly escape from her presence. As she kept speedwalking toward Len and Bobby, Len thought what she did every time she neared, and that was why she hated her.

Len hated her because she was one of those people who calls themselves awkward to hide the fact they're painfully boring. Also, to a lesser extent, she had a name like Constance and didn't bother to find a better sounding alternative. There were countless other reasons, like the fact that Constance asked too many questions and was, as mentioned, boring as all hell, but those were the two that Len always thought of. Hate is a strong word, but Len was always armed with, "But you've never met Constance," in the event that she ever mentioned her thoughts to anyone else. She knew she never would.

Constance Reilly had moved into the first house on Comanche Trail after her little sister drowned a few towns over. It hadn't been a very big story there, let alone in Allensburg, but she had acted shocked that Len hadn't heard of Serenity Reilly's passing when they first met. That was the first annoyance. Then, of course, she had to go into the long story of it, which cemented the poor first impression. Len tended to trust first impressions, and Constance had never deviated from hers. Not only was she insufferable, but she was omnipresent on sticky summer evenings where Len wanted to do nothing more than lay on the Somerset family screened-in porch. Though Constance didn't even live in the cul-de-sac, which Len considered to be the only important part of Comanche Trail, she was a moth to it.

After at least a minute, Constance was in front of them after walking from the mouth of the Trail to the Somersets' front yard.

"Hey!" she said again. Bobby and Len blinked, both thinking that she had already said that, and both giving a stale greeting in return. Len decided to sit on the curb, with Bobby following and Constance joining once she held her skirt the right way. The first two sat closer to each other; Constance noticed and scooted on the concrete so she was even nearer to Bobby. He didn't notice it, but Len added the action to her list of reasons she wished Constance did not think they were friends, along with the realization that Constance loved friends of proximity while Len did not. This was why Len had never gone to meet Bobby before he attended De La Warr High; she saw no reason to make friends with someone simply because they were around often. Len loved friends of quality instead, and Bobby became one of the few once she had discovered how interesting he was. She had been silent for a long time and only half realized that Constance was talking. It meant very little to her until she heard a name and Constance hit her arm with a little paper bag of pink

candies

"Carlos?" Bobby asked, to which Constance nodded eagerly. She shook the bag of candies, but Len replied, "No thank you," so she popped two into her own mouth. "Yeah, I know Carlos," he added, and Constance's eyes widened.

"You're close?" she asked, and both Len and Bobby knew what she wanted.

They also knew she wouldn't ask, so it was left alone. Bobby nodded. "I met him the day he moved here, yeah. We've been close since then, kinda," he mumbled, taking one of the candies and watching cars pass on the neighborhood's main road. Headlights flickered behind hedges and trees then the cars would be visible for a brief moment at the end of the Trail before disappearing into flickers once again. The traffic kept going, though it slowed to a trickle as the night went on. It always did.

Constance didn't ask, and kept talking about Carlos until she saw she was getting no response. The conversation shifted to her summer job, but neither Len nor Bobby contributed, and it came to a standstill. The two were bored and wanted to be alone. Like every evening, valuable discussion only came once Constance dismissed herself for dinner. They knew very little about her. Len specifically didn't want to know any more. She was comfortable with being able to say that she knew Constance, but didn't really know her, and had no plans for what she'd do if that was no longer true. Still, Constance was talking and Bobby was listening and Len's mind was everywhere else until Constance said something that finally deviated from the script she'd run on for quite possibly her entire life.

"I hate my mom. I hate that she's never home to talk and- she just doesn't know me or you or anybody because she's always out with her friends. It's like she doesn't even live here. She just complains about our neighbors. About you guys." Len's interest was piqued. Her intuition was at work, because the next complaint was directed toward her.

"She said you're elitist. Elitist for no reason."

That made Len narrow her eyes behind her sunglasses, but she decided that such a small battle could be lost, especially if Constance disagreed with her mother.

"Maybe she's right," she answered with a shrug, and that was that. She could tell Bobby was in awe of her response as he took another candy, the last one.

"I'm sorry she's like that," Constance said quickly. "I really hate her." But she'd already provoked the most exciting reaction she would get that evening.

"Bobby, she says you're too loud. I don't think you're too loud," she added, tilting her head with sympathy in her eyes. No matter how much she allegedly hated her mother, she seemed to think everyone else cared a lot of her opinion. Bobby only responded with his own shrug, and played with the gravels by his sneaker. Constance's last grab for attention had failed. Len smiled to herself at the quiet. A moment of silence for that, Len thought.

"Len?" Constance asked after a while. Len blinked.

"Constance?" she asked with the same intonation. It was now Bobby's turn to daydream, but he still gave a slight smile at Len's response before looking into one of the houses' windows.

"I need to tell you something. A girl thing," she said, all while leaning back so that she was looking at Len from behind the boy between them as if that would keep it from reaching him.

Another thing on Len's list was Constance's tendency to exclude Bobby on the basis that she and Len shared some imaginary feminine bond.

"Uh. Sure."

"Over here, just quick."

So both stood and walked over to the spot Constance had pointed out, accurately out of Bobby's earshot. It was under a streetlight, but Len didn't look directly at the newly-illuminated Constance. Instead, she watched the sky, thinking she'd seen a shooting star. She always saw Constance, but she'd only seen a shooting star when she stayed up for the Perseids one year.

"How do I look?" Constance asked. "I dressed up. For Carlos, y'know." Len hadn't noticed, and she finally set her eyes on Constance. Maybe she dressed up, Len couldn't tell, but her eyes caught on her face. Hours of that strawberry hard candy and nervous

sucking of the lip had left a bright red mess of Constance's mouth. Len gave her thin smile, the one reserved for interactions she cared nothing of, and nodded.

"Terrific." At this, Constance grinned, showing off her pink-stained teeth, and looked down. She waddled a little from excitement as she smoothed her skirt.

"Thank you, Len. Thank you. You're my best friend. Thank you." She hugged Len, then saw something out of the corner of her eye that made her step back.

"I'm going. Wish me luck?" Constance chuckled, but she started walking backwards without waiting for a reply. She gave an unseen wave to Bobby in the dark, then began jogging home. Every half minute or so, she would return under a streetlight. No one paid attention.

It had gotten dark more suddenly than other days. Len pushed her sunglasses up and blinked, looking at Bobby's figure as he stood.

"Denny just pulled in. See you tomorrow," he told her, doing his own walk backwards before turning to go inside and see his brother. He shut his door behind him. Len was left standing in the grass. Evening was over, and she was alone. Thunder rolled, and she realized now that she could smell impending rain. She turned and walked back to her home. What a waste of an evening. The day's inadequacy had nothing to do with Constance Reilly, though, because Len forgot about her every time she was out of sight.

She went into her house and sat next to Jo on the sofa. The TV was on, the family room filled with dialogue the sisters couldn't care less about, and they daydreamed with someone else's work in the background and each other by their sides until Mom and Dad returned like they always did.



Intervention
Clarisse Liclic

As I was walking back down Duke of Gloucester, Wythe's caught my eye like it always does. There's absolutely nothing about it that stands out, but I always see it. It's this tiny candy store that's often so filled with tourists that you can't get what you want and have to settle for whatever's closest. The drink case is in the back, and sometimes getting there is worth some praise.

Frances is nine now. Thursday was her last day of third grade. I'm not really one of those people that cares about people aging. You know how people always complain about how time flies and people get older, like it's a surprise or something? I've never gotten it. But something about that age of nine, about third grade being the earliest I can really remember much about, makes things different now. She's going through some little phase that nobody told me about until I got home, snapping at all of us almost enough to bring blood. I kind of love it, because she's getting to be really funny. If I had an example right off the bat, I'd give it to you, but believe me when I say Fran's a funny kid.

Now I'm thinking back to when I was in third grade. That was the year I was on student council, and editor of the class newspaper. I loved baseball and National Geographic and every animal in the world, and I dreamed and dreamed and dreamed. It wasn't all simple; I won't go too far into it, but my parents fought and my dad drank and I stayed home with my toddler brother while they both worked to keep the rented roof over our heads. No wonder I dreamed, I guess. This was before Fran was born, mind you, a whole year.

But Fran, Fran doesn't have to dream. God, I love that. Fran plays on a softball team that doesn't practice, tries to get out of going to gymnastics, and forgets to feed my dog about every night even though she promised to take care of him while I was gone. She always gets the most expensive thing the ice cream man offers, reads her books in one day, and whines when we go on walks. The kid lives in the moment, something I only very recently learned how to do. It's amazing.

I always hesitate before going into Wythe's because its mention always made my parents sigh or give each other glances. It's cramped and chaotic and each of us kids always ended up at a different corner of the store when my mom wanted to check out and leave. Weird how that stuff sticks with you, I guess. Even when I'm alone like I was today, I feel like I shouldn't want to go in there, that it'll be too much trouble and all.

Fran, though, always asks to go into Wythe's after she spends our downtown walks whining about her feet and, at the same time, challenging me to a race every time she sees a tree to run to. She usually gets chocolate, but always steals at least a fifth of my gummy bears. We sit on the benches that line the road and watch for dogs together until we finally go home. We'd do that today if she were here.

I hesitated, but finally went in and made my way around the clots of kids that couldn't think of much aside from the candy in front of their faces. Once I got to the drink case, I grabbed the same thing I do every time, the ginger ale I've gotten since I was far younger than Fran and just beginning to dream. I looked around the case, then took a second bottle before moving to get out of the way. I edged through the oblivious swarm slowly, then picked up a bag of gummy bears, just one for Fran. Maybe she'll like having her own bag. I hope she does.



Print 2
Carson Watlington

Tasting Hwaet

Emilie Knudsen

In the general premeditations of becoming an adult, I had found that the one truth existing an echelon higher than the rest was that of choice, but however nominal, however stifled by ignorance, or financial means, or inability. Stemming from the extrication of myself from my parents' loving, but tight grip, this realization hit when I waved goodbye and stepped on a plane to London Heathrow, followed by a bus to Oxford.

Oxford was a city to my liking. Resonant and historic, spires and cobblestones, green cattle pastures and gardens intermixed with stone walls and countless libraries. I was housed in Pembroke College for five weeks of costuming and singing in a class production of Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* and reading my favorites for literary fantasy class – Tolkien and C.S. Lewis, as well as Phillip Pullman and Lewis Carroll, who all lived and studied in Oxford at some point or other. While there, I punted on the tributaries where a little girl named Alice heard the story of her fictionalized self falling down a rabbit hole for the first time. And I found, by the sweeping curve of the Radcliffe Camera, where a lamppost stands in the courtyard, a statue of a Tumnus-like faun nearby. The church where Tolkien prayed. The garden housing C.S. Lewis' white stag. The Eagle and Child pub where the two met frequently. A place they circled back to throughout their lives.

It's a dim little pub, woodworn Van Dyke browns and ivories, countless photos on the wall of the famed writers' later years after serving in the World Wars and reading in hitching radio voices a chapter of Frodo's journey to Mordor. It's a dark place made bright by its historicity. The sign hanging above the door was in stark contrast with the stain-glass sky that day when my class shuffled into the low-ceilinged room, which smelled of fish and chips and beer. We had already visited the garden of Magdalen, where deer posed like shrubbery in bloom, and red carnations sat in boxes under C.S. Lewis' old office windows. A tree in the courtyard looked grey and lonely there, as if in mourning.

We had visited, too, a castle an hour away called Broughton (a relation to the Fiennes brothers is the inheritor and it was used as a filming location for *Shakespeare in Love*.) I remember most clearly the castle's doorknobs, winding metalwork clutching like ivy to the door, and it's heavenlike ceilings with decorative plasterwork gathering in swirls overhead and puckering downward into sculpted icicles.

In a small, gold-gilt church belonging to the castle, we were introduced to the startling opening lines of *Beowulf* in Old English as my professor called out "Hwaet!" so loudly that the word coalesced and bounced off the crypts, the dead's effigies lending voice to the sweet-tasting word, a plum on the tongue with its rich, long collision of vowels. We tried the word for ourselves. Bit in. Allowed our mouths to engulf the formation, a perfectly balanced stalactite. We tried it in a commanding voice like a general overseeing his army, like a duck calling her ducklings in order, like a poet beginning a phrase.

In that city, I stretched my legs, testing the waters of adulthood. I chose, instead of eating lunch every day, to go to the bookstore and spend my lunch allowance there. I was a recurrent audience member at a production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. It was staged in a thousand year old prison courtyard, great grey stones that held deteriorating narrow windows and a small keep. The courtyard gave way to a green hill with a single twisted tree at its peak where the overflow audiences sat, enchanted by the stage, nymphian jurors to the courtyard actorial proceedings. We sat outside as the moon rose and Theseus spoke of it: "Four nights will quickly dream away the time; / And then the moon, like to a silver bow / New-bent in heaven, shall behold the night / Of our solemnities." I remember that the Helena was seven months pregnant. As she and Hermia fought, I marveled at their physicality and the careful sweep of her thin cream dress hiding the deceit. I went back every evening for a week to see the show, paying £7 per night until the ticketer, a grumpy, drawn man, began letting me in for free anyway.

However, my time there was not a true act of freedom. Someone nearly smashed my door down when I was late to my morning class – my alarm clock hadn't gone off and I had fallen asleep with the reading for the night spilled across my face and the light still on. Thoroughly chastised, I had dazedly slouched into the tight room stuffed with classmates (one of whom was Tolkien's great grandnephew).

We were watched, the two hundred or so (primarily) American and Australian high schoolers, much more thoroughly than I had realized. The day after our punting trip, the thin little boats stacked like primary colored crayons in a box, slowly scraping against each other in the shifting river and weedy overhang, our Benedict, our leading man for *Much Ado*, was sent home for buying alcohol the night after we opened our show. They had packed him away to the airport instantly. That next day, we restaged the whole show and I had to spend my lunch break avoiding the pull of the bookstore and desperately running to Primarks to find the new Benedict's proper shoe size. Audiences said that that night's production was even better.

I did not mind the constant surveillance, worried college students and adults looming over the studious band of young foreigners. I had found freedom in the little things – in walking between Pembroke and Corpus Christi for my afternoon class, taking the most roundabout route possible, finding alleyways and back garden paths to wend through, minuscule street corners where restaurants burst their walls and set out seats in the middle of the road. Home of the Pelican sundial and housing the large chamber where we rehearsed Shakespeare, Corpus Christi College itself was a freedom. My teacher was a woman with an intriguing accent, turquoise eyes wide as if she constantly had to see in darkened rooms, her hair scattered around the air above her head, forever tempest-tossed, her feet always bare, toes knobby with dancing. She looked like a spindly thin vulture, bird of prey, in no way beautiful and therefore, utterly gorgeous. We all met in an empty classroom with windows reaching the ceiling and she lost herself in warm-up yoga routines until she finally encouraged us to go do sunrise yoga with her under a sprawling tree in the adjacent gardens so that we would actually have in-class time to rehearse *Much Ado*.

Which is how I found myself trekking through the winding, lampposted streets of Oxford in the hazy summer dawns to the mildly forested quadrangle of Corpus. My toes crinkling in the cool dirt, worms shifting away from the disruption. Rooted in the soil while greeting the dawn under the sprawling oak, the lines repeated themselves, echoing through my mind, in a deep, rounded, Ian McKellen sort of voice "Let's talk of graves, of worms, and epitaphs; / Make dust our paper and with rainy eyes / Write sorrow on the bosom of the earth." And I remembered that I had read somewhere that since Oxford is geographically a half-way point between London and Stratford-upon-Avon, it meant that Shakespeare most likely made frequent stops there, connected to that very earth. Maybe he had seen this massive tree as a young sapling. Maybe it, who had grown to fill the sky, who had plumbed the depths of the earth with its striving roots, had not yet even been a thought in the fold of the universe.

My teacher encouraged us to rise before dawn and line up on the garden lawn. Standing in the cool wind of morning, we were warm and she abandoned our hourlong in-class yoga sessions for a more cursory twenty minute event. Finally, we had time for Shakespeare and promptly memorized monologues and sonnets. Mine was "Since brass, nor stone, nor earth, nor boundless sea / but sad mortality o'ersways their power". It was in her hands that I found my favorite monologue (*King Lear's* Edmund – "Thou, Nature, art my goddess...") and in her hands that I first saw the power of directing. In just one afternoon, I discovered that performing Shakespeare wasn't merely a recitation of the most beloved playwright, but still a living, breathing, active entity.

We took a class picture under that sprawling oak. I remembered breathing in deeply then, like I did in our dawn warm-ups. Breathing in the scent of dirt and sweat and minds being shaped, and of cheesy grins and of song, for we had sung in jilting young voices for our teacher, too, and it was she who told me of a little store, *Scriptum*, near the

Covered Market, that if you sang for them or recited a sonnet, they'd give you 10% off. I had found so many books there that I wanted – beautiful Folio Society editions of *Peter Pan*, *Lord of the Rings*, *The Great Gatsby*, and *The Chronicles of Narnia* – I left the store much poorer in pocket, but maybe slightly richer in something else.

Back under the tree smiling for the camera and tasting the air itself, it was smooth and crisp as I inhaled. Contemplations of breathing, like other general premeditations of becoming an adult, is like rediscovering anew over and over again that the earth revolves around the sun. When you think about breathing and breathing deeply, it becomes a foreign thing, understanding the journey of air into the tiniest of bronchioles. You never think about breathing until you do. But there are some places on this earth that inescapably interrupt your usual perspective, as though you can feel the earth suspended on puppet strings, swiveling about the sun in its usual fashion, as though you can feel the oxygen circulating through your veins.

I liked the taste of it. The taste of the air on my tongue, the feeling of suspension, where the days are gathered into more moments than I know what to do with, until I have a basket of them gathered in the back of my mind or in a photobook like ripe apples gleaned from the orchard's floor, until tears come into my eyes thinking about the way the mist clings to the lights of a lamppost like a little bluegrey moth and I hope, as the plane takes off and I see the coastline falling away, that I might feel it again someday and I turn around and another year goes by and I'm standing 389 miles north of Oxford on a beach, toes crinkling in the sand, soaked with the glacier water runoff of the North Sea and I breathe in deeply, imagining that I can see the coast of Norway and the earth suspended on its puppet strings and the blood runs through my veins. Soon I will be lying in a Pict grave atop a Scottish hill, feigning death, my tan faux leather jacket keeping off the dirt and leaves and chill of the Fife summer, where paths wind across the cliffs all along the coastline to lead the sojourners of old to that holy place of pilgrimage – I hope they won't mind, whoever is buried there.

I shiver in the wind coming off the small, castled cliff above the stretch of beach, whose sandstone walls have been eviscerated by the march of time. Where life still remains... just a different kind of living where one observes the imprint of the tread of royalty, the disturbance of dust from prisoners, the damage inflicted during reformation, and the markings of strippage, where stones were removed to be reborn again into a pier that reaches like an arm into the sea, dividing foamy waves port and the calm waters of harbor starboard. And we walk a pedestrian walk, peering into the recesses of the past, down the well, like a darkened mirror, willing the ruins to live once again, bereft of its people. We look at the cracks in the stone, in the cleaves of the rock and wonder who touched here too, fingers feeling its weft like feeling the spines of tomes in a shambling bookstore, yearning to pluck the words from the page in osmosis.

With a single touch, we instigate, eliminate, recreate the past, mind attempting to bend through time and see what other soul has clung to the wall in the way that you do. They did not have grass and moss growing under their feet, but maybe a woven carpet, plush against the cold stone, stealing some of the hearth's warmth. Their toes might crinkle through its fabric like yours do in the grass. Maybe they reach to the wall for support, maybe to wonder, maybe they like to feel its stony coldness, like to explore its grooves and patterns as much as you like to explore the vowels of *Hwæt*, and maybe they heard it too, that poem which has woven its way through time in an unfurling tapestry. When you pull the thread on one end, you do not know where fabric will pucker on the other. If you could grab the thread of the poem and pull like a great telephone wire stretching back through the earth's rotations, would you find every tongue that pronounced the long ae, brusquely or eloquently? Did they speed through Hrothgar's sermon like you did so they could find the dragon waiting at the end of the road? You almost wish there was a dragon waiting at the end of your road. Maybe then your story would be called to order as wonderfully as Beowulf's is. What word would sit at the beginning? What sharp syllables would ring through the ears and hook into their memories?

The ruins of the castle, the seat of the burgh, are reminiscent to me of Oxford, but the air is saturated in salty brine abruptness. It coats my tongue thickly in its tang. And maybe because of its unpleasantness, it is like a well-loved epitaph.

I choose, that summer, to walk the beach every night under the light of an 11PM gloaming, the midsummer moon a distant memory that I circle back to in my revolutions around the sun.



Surprise

Nathan Burns

The Third Woman in the Living Room

Lillie Izo

- After R.C. Gorman's *The Woman from Canyon de Chelly* (1978)

pursed lips speak silence like clockwork history
 clenched in a fist and perched on her philtrum
 olfactory memory of when there were no bridges
 only gaps between the eyes so blue they reeked of dying
 salt pools settling too comfortably above her cheekbones
 but like with every other body of water she bats them away
 towards a shore so exposed that even
 the birds make an effort to palm their shame

a slivered moon wanes in her hairband
 tying back a matriline rooted in wisdom and
 sweat pouring down her neck as a stream
 through her spine valley cloaked with plateaus
 mesa lace tumbleweed fences

holding her body like a boundary

one she can break with a touch
 of her fingertip that instead
 marks her place in the desert
 the worn and rugged terrain
 she wears all summer
 to keep her blood hot



Day Star

Yuwei Lin

Temporary Exhibition

Emilie Knudsen

IV.

What does it do,
this unsustainable spaceship
of human memory,
alien and familiar?

What god does it please?

None but the self in Suh, perhaps.

But for me,
for me
it means seeing the six-paneled green door to an apartment in Berlin
seeing sunlight stream through the door,
the back of my hand stealing the hue
as I glance down.

It is imagining turning the handle,
solid, brass (maybe), round handle,
and having its green twin crumple in my hand.

It is being here in this relic museum
while being in a street in Berlin.

It is knowing it will not squeak on wire green hinges.

It is a door and it is not a door.

And sometimes when things are too dull
and too ordinary
and I wonder
and think
and lose hope,

sometimes I think about the door.
And how it is not a door.

Awards

The Margaret Haley Carpenter Award for Poetry

This award is presented to a student who has had an outstanding poem submitted for publication in the University of Richmond's literary magazine, *The Messenger*. The winner is chosen by a panel of three English faculty members.

Rabid by Savannah Etzler

The Margaret Owen Finck Award for Creative Writing

This award is presented to a student who has had an outstanding fiction or nonfiction piece submitted for publication in the University of Richmond's literary magazine, *The Messenger*. The winner is chosen by a panel of English faculty members.

The Bus Stop by Emilie Knudsen

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Transient
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