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LONG RIVER REVIEW 2019

UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT

Long River Review

***lrr* 2019**
22ND EDITION

A Collaborative Project

*Creative Writing Program
Design Center Studio
Counterproof Press*

University of Connecticut

Founded in 1997, the *Long River Review* is an annual journal of art and literature staffed by undergraduates at the University of Connecticut. Today, *Long River Review* is dedicated to championing the best work from emerging writers and artists across the globe in our annual print and online journal. We want to publish work that electrifies, work that moves us, work that breaks the world and makes it feel whole. Here at the *Long River Review*, we want to publish new voices, voices from the mouth of the river and beyond, voices drowned out by other voices, voices that might not have otherwise been heard. We want to publish work that is bold, unique, inventive, and most importantly, in *your* voice.

Acknowledgments

For their generous support of student writing and art at UConn, we thank the Collins, Hackman, and Gill families. We also thank Brenda Brueggemann, Aetna Chair in Writing, and The Hartford.

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All the UConn students who kindly
submitted their work for our
consideration

Masthead

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Contest Winners

All contests are judged anonymously by committees of faculty and outside authors. Special thanks to all who submitted, and congratulations to this year's winners.

THE WALLACE STEVENS POETRY PRIZE

Given by The Hartford for the best group of poems by a graduate or undergraduate.
Kerry Carnahan, 1ST Place
Matthew Ryan Shelton, 2ND Place
Christine Byrne, 3RD Place

THE JENNIE HACKMAN MEMORIAL AWARD FOR SHORT FICTION

Awarded in memory of Jacob and Jennie Hackman for the best work of short fiction by an undergraduate.
Courtney Haigler, 1ST Place
Ellen Fuller, 2ND Place
Christopher Gardner, 3RD Place

THE EDWARD R. AND FRANCES SCHREIBER COLLINS LITERARY PRIZE

Given by David and Emily Collins for the best poem and best prose work by an undergraduate.
Sean Cavanaugh, Prose
Veronica Schorr, Poetry

THE AETNA CREATIVE NONFICTION AWARD

Given by the Aetna Chair in Writing to support excellence in creative nonfiction
Natiel Cooper, Co-winner
Andrew Kucharski, Co-Winner

THE AETNA TRANSLATION AWARD

Xin Xu

THE AETNA CHILDREN'S LITERATURE AWARD

Madeline Eller

THE LONG RIVER GRADUATE WRITING AWARD

For the best piece of writing in any genre by a graduate student
Sophia Buckner

EDWIN WAY TEALE AWARD FOR NATURE WRITING

Ellen Fuller

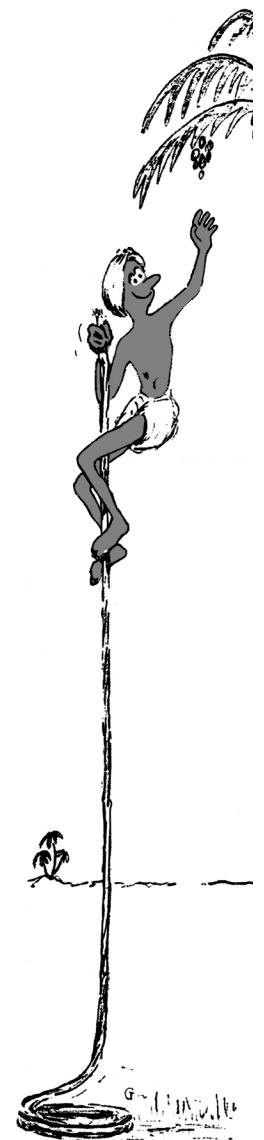
THE LONG RIVER ART AWARD

Lauren Valledor

Gloriana Gill Art Award

Given in memory of Gloriana Gill for photography (preference given to black and white) and painting, drawing, or cartooning. Gloriana Gill's life was one of toil (she was a dairy farmer's wife in Pomfret, CT) and tragedy (she lost one son to a hunting accident and another in a car crash). She found a way to deal with her difficulties through art and humor. She adorned her walls, windows, and even the interior of their barn with paintings, cartoons, and stencils. She painted portraits of local farms, drew cartoons for a Putnam newspaper, and, when their dairy herd was sold off, worked as an illustrator and graphic designer making educational films. From a gnarled piece of wood transformed into an elf, to scraps of cloth made into comical dwarf-sized figures, she could make almost anything into art or amusement. The Gloriana Gill Awards are intended to encourage the students of UConn similarly to discover the importance of art and humor in life.

ISABELLA SARACENI, *Illustration*
OMAR TAWEH, *Photography*



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Letter from the Editor

SIOBHAN DALE
BRIANNA MCNISH

Earlier this year, twenty-one new staff members commenced work on the 22nd edition of *Long River Review* with a sole intent: to be more daring, experimental, and inventive than ever. We wanted to push ourselves to play with language and to interrogate what works move us. And now, in its third year since accepting submissions from an international pool of writers, *Long River Review* is caught in a strange flux between its identity as an undergraduate-affiliated journal and an international one. It begs the question of what is *Long River Review*'s inherent "voice," and what constitutes not only our identity as an undergraduate-led literary journal but as a journal with a new staff entering uncharted terrain. The latest issue steeped us in uncertainty. Yet, there was a strange comfort in traversing through this liminal space of who and what we wanted to be this year.

In the end, we accepted stories from emerging and established alike, ideally capturing our vision to publish electrifying prose and poetry. We chose pieces that urged us to engage both their content and form. We chose pieces that demand readers to look beyond their experiences to immerse themselves in a new viewpoint. Take, for example, Franziska Lee's "Flotsam," about the trials of girlhood and growing up. She ends her personal essay with the following challenge: "Who do you want to be?" Indeed, Lee's expressed wish to become a "diving woman" who "want[s] to fall into something that doesn't care" brims with the same daring question of possibility and release; it asks us, as readers, to reevaluate all the things we could be.

Ultimately, we hope to champion that question — *who do we want to be?* — by leaving these artists' poetry and prose as an answer. The art collected in our latest issue is a testimony to the potential and depth of the human condition. As we fully acquaint ourselves with intermittent sunshine and rainy weather of the new spring season, we encourage you to hold these words close, let them talk, and make them yours.

I Cannot Know

AIN JEONG

Whose footsteps are these
That form the shape of paulownia leaves
Making vertical ripples through the still air as they fall silently

Whose face is that
Which is seen in glances following a rainy spell
Blue gaps interrupting the black clouds herded by westerlies

Whose breath is this
That brushes past the blue-green moss of a deep forest devoid of flowers
A mysterious scent blown over the top of an ancient tower

Whose songs are those
Which ring out from roots and stones of sources unknown
As an unending and slender stream pours over them

Whose poetry is the sun at twilight
Perched on the sea on heels as light as a lotus
Propped up by hands as persistent as jade

The ashes that conclude the burning of a lamp
Becomes the fuel for another one.
Whose night is it
That my heart guards like the faint flame of this lamp,
My heart which refuses to cease its burning.

Flotsam

FRANZISKA LEE

Picture these personal prompts like reporters, microphones to my face, asking me, *So what do you do? What do you want from life? Over here, Franziska — what are you passionate about?* I write, *Am having an all-life crisis. Will get back to you later.* Backspace backspace backspace. I like nonfiction more than memoir because memoir makes me so *uncomfortable*. In English class we generate sample after sample of our “developing styles.” Write about your mother’s eyes. Write about your deepest fears. Write about the day you got your dog — okay, that one’s fine. It’s just the need to be present in my head that bothers me. Science says your voice sounds different on recordings because when you speak the vibrations in your skull lower the pitch to your own ears. Science says, Franziska, your inner voice is ridiculous. Examining my own thoughts is as bad as studying the workings of the human cell. I don’t need to know what’s going on in there. That’s none of my business. Write about yourself: *I don’t know what to say during ice breakers. I don’t know what to do with my hands.*

A few years ago, my family got a seasonal pass to the state beaches. We made the forty-minute drive to Rocky Neck, our favorite, sometimes twice a week. We’d stand on the silken strip where the ocean meets the land and dig our toes in. After a wave came, you could see little fading dimples on that strip — fat sand crabs that had been unearthed, tunneling back down. If you were fast, if you dove at the ground and clawed through it, you could catch one. We had a big yellow bucket full. They ranged from cicada-sized to bigger than my littlest brother’s fist. There was something discomfiting about their barrel shape and their blind scuttling, but I don’t remember being afraid.

My mother, with the umbrella that always blew away trapped between her knees, Googled them. “They live,” she announced, “in the swash zone, and use tiny antennae to feed.”

We paused for a moment to appreciate the term “swash zone” for where we had been standing. A train hurtled by, a streak of blue-red-silver, here and then gone.

My father was digging a hole. On his back was the ghost of my mother’s hand, the pale gold outline of fingers where she had applied his sunscreen two weeks ago. The rest of his skin was rose-tinged and tanned. He took that same metal blur to Boston for work, so I asked him if he could see the people on the beach when he passed. He said yes. He tugged down his sunglasses — the ones we said made him look like Keanu Reeves. “I always wish I was on the beach.”

"Do they wave? The people on the beach?"

"Sometimes."

He got in the water the way he always does. He waded up to his knees, stood there for a while, then ran at the horizon and fell in all at once, back first.

I want to take a nap. I want good, clean work, natural light, and time to be lonely. I want the burning peace when every muscle is tired. I want to live in that feeling.

I sleep a lot, and I sit in my yard and watch the wind like someone in a Studio Ghibli film, the reason people move to the suburbs. I'm passionate about the way my hair is soft, the way girls are nice to each other in public restrooms. But these are not the answers the reporters are looking for because lots of people like girls and trees and sleeping. The only thing I adore wholly and unusually is the ocean. It's in my bones and maybe in my blood.

My father and I were born in Texas and Illinois, in landlocked cities, but his parents are from a peninsula. Last summer, in Maine with my mother's relatives, my father told me to try raw oysters. "If you're really Korean," he said, "you'll like raw seafood." We ate out in the yard on the chipped picnic table, toes in the wet grass. *I love oysters.* They taste like salt and go down too fast, ugly and visceral on my tongue.

The Korean women of Jeju made their island a near-matriarchy in the midst of a Confucian kingdom. The livelihood of the isle depended on their diving, without equipment, into the ocean to harvest various seafood. The *haenyeo*, the diving women, were feared and respected for their strength and perseverance. April 1948: The South Korean Labor Party in Jeju started a rebellion against the Korean and American military government. The end result was the government's massacre of ten percent of the island's people. *Strength and perseverance.*

Today the *haenyeo* are old women, with broad prune faces, stout and sunspotted in their black wetsuits. The last of their kind, they are subject of documentaries, on the shelves of a museum. They are no longer relied on, and still they dive.

The Korea my grandparents left in the late 60s to finish school is not quite the one they visit now. Their ancestral home is carved away like dead skin, tradition discarded, architecture only barely preserved. Interesting: the dilution of other-blood. The slow disappearance of a tongue. Even in the Korean language, hangul, linguists note, imperialism has stuck its fingers. "Today," writes researcher Hyu-Yong Park, "the expectation of Korean parents that English counts as social capital is unconditional." More Koreans speak English, more and more Korean words are rubbed out, replaced instead by English approximations — *ca-ma-ra* for camera, *do-nut* for donut, *A-see-a* for Asia. And there's me, with my mouth that stumbles over their syllables. Me — writing, over and over again, about a language I can't speak and a country I've never seen and grandparents I don't know. What can I give to my children?

My grandfather traded his own traditions for Americana in the shape of Evangelical Christianity. He hopes to pass that on to us. It's already too late for

me to take up organized religion. I was raised with Christmas trees for their own sake, the disparaging atheism of affluent liberals, and the true American lack of heritage my father wanted when he was a teenager.

In an exhibit at the Yale Art Gallery, on artists in exile, I put a peg in an interactive map on the wall over New Haven, Connecticut. The string I cut wasn't long enough for all of the Atlantic and Eurasia — shift the map east and maybe it would have reached Korea. (I'm always reaching, haven't opened my language-learning app in months. Pressing my cheek against the mirror, *These glasses make me look more Asian — good or bad?* We get it we get it we get it you're Korean calm down.) All of the oceans flow into one another. It's the land that's the trouble. I put my toes in the water. I go in slowly, strip of skin at a time.

According to etymologists, the phrase, "Blood is thicker than water," might have come from the idiom "The blood of the covenant is thicker than the water of the womb." The water of the womb, for me, is very thin indeed. There are so many things in this water. It dilutes, conducts, dissolves. And I don't believe that there's a moment when you fall in love. It's like growing into your grandmother's dress, the lace like foam. It's like going to sleep. If I didn't always love the ocean, I was always going to.

What do you want to be? I want to be a *diving woman. I want to fall into something that doesn't care.*

The Lost City

FATIMA SIRAJ

"It's *na shukri* ungrateful to say no to Allah's *rehat*." My mother reminded me when I turned down the second marriage proposal that arrived at our house – packaged as my grandmother's friend's youngest son.

"Do you know what happened with *na shukra* people?" She gave me a moment to breathe, before continuing. "They were met with Allah's *azaab*, he turned cities upside down."

"Like this one isn't." I stormed off and shut the door to my room.

That night, I didn't cry.

I didn't shout.

I fell asleep.

I woke up to the portrait photograph of the man I had rejected yesterday, his eyes staring back at me. Chartered accountant with a house of his own and minimum chance of infidelity. His name was written on the back. I traced the ink on the glossy surface, rubbed it in between my fingers to feel the warmth. I muttered his name, on repeat, hoping the next syllable I uttered would make my heart skip a beat.

X kilometers from Karachi, is the small district of Las Bela where I had been conducting research on Cultural Mapping. The van drove along the rocky terrain, lined with a mountainous façade on either side. I was carrying with me a copy of *The Chachnama*, history of Sindh. Its Urdu translation slowed my reading pace, but it was still good. It made the distance seem shorter. I dropped my bag at the guesthouse which was a stuffed room and had a bathroom with a toilet that doesn't flush. Camera, notebook, phone, chador. I say *salam* to the caretaker. He says *salam baaji*. I leave to discover the city which had once been trodden by Alexander the Great. Modern Las Bela, where Alexander founded an Alexandria at the principal settlement of the Oreitae.

I walked on the dust track and my slippers accumulated dirt between my toes. The sun was unmerciful that day and there were no signs of life until a random motorbike whizzed by, taking up half the road. I followed the instructions I had been provided from the shopkeeper, until I reached a banana plantation that stretched confidently into the horizon. To my left were a series of rows of a crop sown and ploughed. A bead of perspiration trickled down my spine. I remembered Akbar, and the way he would trace his finger down my arms. *I think we belong in the Mughal-e-Azam*, he would say, but, unlike his name, there

was nothing royal in our temporary rendezvous'. Finally, my lungs exhaled the confrontational past and acknowledged the pale blue-green dome resting at a distance. A light blue pastel, the same color I would have wanted my baby boy's room walls to be painted. I left the dirt road and began the walk through the fields. The crops had barely sprout. In a distance were a few cows tied to the trees, roaming side to side, much like its guest – restless. The *mazaar* was situated on a series of steps, leading to a main door. I left my slippers on front and heard a woman's voice from behind.

"Don't leave your slippers there." She frowned. The woman was an old lady seated on the edge of the *mazaar*'s entrance, who I had completely missed.

"Assalam-o-Alaikum. Sorry." I adjust the *dupatta* to my head and keep the slippers near the stairs.

A rectangular verandah encapsulated the *mazaar* from all four sides. I noticed a grave right at the back. It didn't have a name but was decorated with crimson red and green chadors, shimmering with gold lace boundaries and verses from the Quran. I completed a clockwise round of the verandah and entered through a low entrance. Pakistan's landscape is dotted with a myriad of shrines but this one was unlike the rest. There was no point of entrance for light or air and the ceiling was low. There were four graves to my right and another series of smaller ones to my left. The latter carried chess-like pieces and like the one outside – nameless. The only point of reference was the *shajrah* on top of the mihrab. The old lady entered.

"Astaghfirullah." The lady whispered, shaking her head.

"Jee?"

She looked up momentarily.

"What happened, aunty?"

"Astaghfirullah, this could have been an invitation, to your city being turned upside down." She was referring to my *chappal* placed too close to the shrine. Everything seemed to be a cautious warning in this neighborhood.

"Who are you?" She asked me.

I introduced myself with a brief hug.

"Whose *mazaar* is this?" I asked her, my eyes looking around for a sign.

"Karrhyo Pir." She pointed at the *shajrah*.

"And the one at the back?"

"That's Karrhyo Pir's sister."

I made a small prayer, added a hundred rupee note in the donation box and moved outside with aunty. The *shajrah* read that Hazrat Sheikh Karrhyo was the disciple of Ghaus Pak who had lived in Baghdad from 1077-1166. It also stated that Hazrat Sheikh Karrhyo had travelled around the world and finally settled in Bela afterwards. If my mind had formed the correcting chronology, I guessed that he must have arrived in Bela somewhere in the twelfth century.

Z was a young lady who welcomed me into her home. A series of *charpoys* were lined against the think mud walls, complemented with an open roof in the verandah. At the time I arrived, around 2.30pm, there were only women and children present in most of the houses. "The men have gone off to work." Z informed me as she offered me a glass of water. It was my first interview

and first introduction to an unfamiliar territory. The young lady was very welcoming and comfortable, unlike me who didn't know where to start or finish the conversation. She spoke with ease and would steal a smile on her face every now and then. She stood while I sat. On the *charpoy* opposite me, and the only other one in the room, was her *bhaabi* brother's wife sleeping. She narrated the mythology with humbleness and with direct references to her grandmother — the aunty I had met at the *mazaar* earlier.

Devoid of any physical descriptions, Karrhyo Pir was a saint, and the city of Armabel was suffering from a lack of religiosity. To serve the cavity in the city's spiritual aesthetics, Karrhyo Pir would send his disciple to preach the message. The disciple would knock on the villager's doors, asking for something.

"Food, Money ... we don't know!" remarked Z.

The disciple would visit every day and no one except one lady would offer him a piece of bread. The disciple returned and informed the happenings to Karrhyo pir. Curious and surprised, Karrhyo Pir decided to visit the village himself. He discovered that the villagers were sinful people. He only warned the old lady who would offer food to his disciple that he's about to turn the city upside down as a form of punishment for the stubborn people; therefore, she should leave.

"Are there any other people I can speak to, to learn more about the *mazaar* and *kalti shehr* upside-down city?" I asked Z.

"There aren't many elders in the city, there's an old man who found a coin from the *kalti shehr* upside-down city but he lives really far."

"Coins?" My nervous system lit up.

"In monsoon, people travel here from far villages to collect coins."

"Did anyone find anything?" My curiosity sent a tingle to my shins, like a bird with fettered wings, I began to yearn for things that shone of gold and silver.

"Not many, only pious people find them."

Z took me to another house where they narrated the same story. It appeared that this myth was embedded within the socio-religious framework of the city and it was more than just mythology. I realized that mythology may be a word that is too insensitive to the beliefs that have embedded the social structures. These are not mere stories, but a support system to hold on to.

Taking me as a foreigner, the old gentleman offered his hand to me for greetings and ordered one of the women to make me a cup of tea. I politely refused, saying I must leave in a while. With a glint of hope in my eyes and suspicion in theirs, I asked the gentleman if anyone had ever found any coins around here, to which he said no.

"Some *angrez* foreigners came here a few years ago, they dug a hole. They were also looking for treasure." He said. When I asked for more information, he mentioned that the villagers made it difficult for them to stay and sent them away.

Some need an intermediary, others are afraid to ask for God. Belonging to the latter half, I found myself walking with Z to the upside-down city of Armabel, which now resembles a neglected mound, possibly resonating with an archaeological complex.

Towards the end of the interview, the young lady asked "*Kia aap log mantay ho?*" [do you believe in this?] leaving me with something to think about.

I was thankful that I wasn't part of the civilizations God had turned upside down. Under the scorching heat, in the middle of nowhere, a civilization was turned upside down so I couldn't complain of a broken heart. Red pottery shards here complained of an existence long forgotten, traces of people who sinned and left. I noticed the hole that resembled a well and attempted visualizing its reflection, but it did not make sense. Nothing made sense in Bela and that's what I loved the most. Nothing was defined in this city, unlike the value systems we carried from birth. If this city had indeed been met with God's wrath, then why didn't it send tremors down my lower spine? Why didn't I tremble at thought of finality of life? According to the interview with the old gentleman, the word *karrhyo* supposedly refers to boiling milk, like the anger of the Pir who had turned this city over. But my mind wasn't satisfied, I failed to register the word *karrhyo* because it's constantly echoing with Karia. I could not forget Alexander marching through this very city and his encounter with the Queen of Caria. I was not skilled enough to delve further into this narrative, but my heart says there's a connection with the Greeks and with the ancient city of Alinda. I could not fathom for this city to be otherwise.

I stood atop the mound and noticed a series of bulges in the landscape, most probably mounds. I picked up the pottery shards — some with holes, another with black designs and a few reminiscences of parts of vessels. I collected them in a bag with hopes of understanding the city's material culture. I wanted to gather these little shards that made no sense and return in monsoon with hopes for coins. But the idea was as bizarre as finding true love. Because girls like me can only dream of discovering sites like these, we wander around and call it field research when really, we're only trying to find ourselves. Girls like me, learn about themselves through their resemblance in their child's eyes. We make a home, not adventures. These places, they won't let us be safe, people won't look into our eyes when they speak, they won't call us back to visit and catch up over a cup of tea to discuss a shard they discovered while harvesting this season's crops. Girls like me are okay with compromise because we know their intentions are ill and it's better to make a home with a man who promises loyalty than a man who promises adventures.

I sat there with the sinking realization that this was an abandoned site. That places that are big and empty and echo are not safe for girls like me. I stayed there until the happiness had dissolved and I feared the mound swallowing me whole, each crevice of its fold invading the personal space I was way too cautious of. I let my heart sink and knees tremble and discovered that happiness was an emotion that was one of many and I must be thankful.

Until my lips uttered *Alhumdulillah* and I was met with another morning.

Cempasúchil

BENJAMIN RADCLIFFE

La boca de una niña llamada
Flor se mantiene abierta por el
Viento, o un tope de puerta.
En el umbral ella observa
Sonidos otoñales. Ella espera
Por el niño llamado
Picaflor (¡Picaflor!)
Inspector de las Flores.
En ti el nombre tararea (¡cucú!)
En ti las Flores cantan y mi alma en ellas
Frunce el ceño cortésmente,
Trata de discutir el clima:
¿Qué caliente los rayos de Dios hoy?
¿Desde cuándo una Flor llamó a veinte?
Ella rió el viento mientras él bebió el
Néctar de la tarde
Antes de darse cuenta
De que alguien estaba
De pie detrás de ellos.

Twenty Petals and a Desperate Song

English translation of Cempasúchil

The mouth of a girl called
Flower is kept open by the
wind, or a door stopper.
On the threshold she observes
autumnal sounds. She waits
for the boy called
Hummingbird! (Peekaboo!)

Flower inspector.
"In you the name hums (Cuckoo!)"
*"In you the flowers sing and my soul in them
frowns politely,
tries to discuss the weather:
aren't God's rays hot today?"*

Since when did we start calling one Flower twenty?

She laughs wind while he drinks the
evening nectar
before they realize
someone is
standing behind them.

Border

BENJAMIN RADCLIFFE

I. *Hold*
the interior of a ship

hold a candle to hold water
a nonphysical bond by which something is affected

of responsibility
to enclose
of distinction
to keep from falling
prevent from some action
hold one's peace
countdown
grasping

hold court to have a position
prison to have as a mark
on hold to
 a delay in a

to think in a particular way

to be able to consume easily to resist the offensive advance of to cover with
one or both hands

HOLD WHO GOES THERE
HOLD THE LINE

a sudden motionless posture at the end of a dance

II. *Thresh*

to separate seed from (a harvested plant) mechanically

to strike repeatedly

III. *Threshold*

To have a high
low threshold for
The place or point of entering or beginning

A level above which something is true or will take place and below which it
is not or will not
The point at which a physiological or psychological effect begins to be
produced
The plank, stone, or piece of timber that lies under a door

IV. *Border*

She struggles to hold the candle.
The *Coyote* smells.
Like her father, she wishes she
Had brought a book.
He finds a document and blows her out.
She looks out at the black sky
Like it was trussed up by a falcon's talons, held overhead
By *saguaro*s, the extinguished *cirios*.
The muted sound of rubber rolling over stones
Does not comfort her.
El diente de león, el cempasúchil.
Lion's teeth.
She thinks about all the different gods that had to name these things
And who they belonged to and then the meaning
Of the word thresh-hold.

ELEGY WITH PINE NUTS IN ITS MOUTH

DANIELLE PIERATTI

In my mouth the words are first

a gag, a memory of fur. Then,
echo of birdsong

arriving through old growth. Is

that you, *th?* And where have you been,
dialect I might

have earned? You words called axes,

you sap, driven and well-sprung, tapped, you
un-grieving daughters?

The way to lose him wrongly: remember his dismissal like
the mean dart meant for me it was.

returning
then to highways
gray as bone
already you unsalt
what water weaned

you (no you
was ever needed
by a stone)
no light unbraided
over pines or screened

(though floating
out of sight you

might have seemed)
without a child-
hood blessed

ballooning taut
and floating
out of sight you
might have seemed
to fast your eyes

inherit hunger thought
(between graffiti'd
overpass and sky)
some thought

That he conjured cookie wrappers; sometimes drove
recklessly; the seriousness of swan dives.

Italian Stone
pinecones take 36
months to mature
and can grow
to six inches long.

When they age and finally
dry and flay
open, two firm, oblong
seeds loosen

from under each
woody leaf, with shells
streaked powdery
brown.

These a child
can easily
shake or pick out
with her fingers or gather
from piles
along roadsides and break
open with a small, flat
rock and eat.

Sometimes
the seed yields, deeper
gold and translucent
and visibly sour.

And sometimes
she welds the rock
too hard, learns
a vexing
lesson in restraint.

Manifesto in ten syllables for nature: my school skirt after
recess. Forgetting as testament.

I remember the Catacombs
of Priscilla I remember most
of all I remember the tiny
guide in her gray habit
her skin like gold marble her
eyes always lowered her smile
but for the grace of God
and the echo of her slow
liquid voice in eight

languages through tunnels
for miles how it was the kind
of voice I wanted
to chew on and how
her gentle wand
tapping the image of Jesus
in the first-ever portrait
of the Virgin Mary made
a sound like the perfect give
of chalk on a sidewalk and
oh how I longed to hold it

What form becomes an elegy for him: a sleeve, delivering
its hand, turned wrong-side-out.

6,000 years \ magpies spread them \ Romans
planted \ and Ottomans \ and Cezanne \
Egyptian \ Hindu \ and Assyrian
God(s) \ Chicomecoatl \ and Dionysus
all \ with pinecones \ "The Pigna"
fountain \ Temple of Isis \ Ancient Rome \
three stories \ the Vatican \ the Pope \
his staff topped \ with a pinecone \
and with snakes \ iconography \ various
cultures \ Masonic lodges \ crop circles \
Adam and Eve \ also were tempted \ returning
then \ without you to \ the treed city \ where you
were my father \ I pocket \ the shells \
from a roadside \ we walked \ remember
bus routes \ leaving \ photograph the \
fountain then too \ close for meaning

GLORIANA GILL AWARD



Psychological Spaces
Charcoal

ISABELLA SARACENI

GLORIANA GILL AWARD



The Supernatural
Photography

OMAR TAWEH



(In)Complete
Pen and Ink

LAUREN VALLEDOR



The Young Sufferer
Mixed Media

JOHNNY KOEKEE



Eucalyptus

CASSANDRA QUAYSON

Wednesday mornings are steam and oil, cigarette smoke and other unpleasant smells, which is to say that Wednesdays are really no different from Tuesdays or Thursdays or any other day except Sundays.

Elle doesn't work on Sundays. Sundays are freshly fried omelettes and matcha tea and Christmas candles.

But today is Wednesday, and so Elle runs the pads of her fingers across the bumpy strips that sit on the edge of the Metro's platforms, steps carefully over the crack between the platform and the train car, and boards the train from 34th street at exactly 7:57 AM, only pausing to make sure that her dog, Abby, is following, and that her jacket, which is puffy and purple, is zipped tight.

Wednesday mornings are steam and oil, cigarette smoke and other unpleasant smells, which is to say that they are rarely ever eucalyptus.

The person sitting in the seat next to Elle is writing something very intensely and smells like eucalyptus with a similar intensity. She can tell from the incessant scribble of his/her pen against the paper that; one, he/she has messy handwriting, and two, that when he/she lifts a hand from the paper, every word will be pressed into its back, raised and satisfying like the bumpy strips that line the Metro platforms.

Elle wants to touch that paper. She straightens her sunglasses on her face, turns towards the direction of the ferocious writer and asks, "What are you doing?"

He/she turns about to be a he, and a he that replies right away, at that, "Reading."

"And writing?" Elle presses. Against her legs, Abby shifts and sniffs the air. Either the eucalyptus is interesting to her, too, or she thinks Elle should stop being so nosy.

"I'm keeping tallies of how many times the author uses the same words," the eucalyptus man explains with a voice that is young and confident and steady. "I'm a quarter of the way in and she's already used 'smirk' seventeen times."

"Is it romance?" Elle asks.

"Isn't everything?" he replies.

Elle considers this for a moment. "What's it called?"

He tells her the title and returns to scribbling. Elle checks to make sure the other end of Abby's leash is secure and still wrapped around her hand.

At 8:02, the train shudders its way into a stop. The man who smells like eucalyptus says,

"Well, this is me."

"Well," Elle agrees.

That night, after she gets off the train and makes her way home, Elle downloads the audiobook and listens to it as she makes herself dinner. The author is fond of the word "smirk," among many others.

It only takes her two more train rides, from 34th street and back, to finish the book. It's the worst thing she's ever read and she thinks she loves it. On Sunday, she lights a candle that smells like Christmas and has an omelette with tea and reads it again.

On Monday, she wears her jacket, which is puffy and purple, and she and Abby board the train at 7:57 a.m. again, like Elle does every day except Sunday. She goes to work and goes back home and does the same thing again the next day, and there are no strangers who smell like eucalyptus and press their pens too hard into the paper to distract her.

Somehow, she's distracted anyway.

December leaves, and with it Elle's collection of Christmas-themed candles that smell of gingerbread and cinnamon and other things that aren't eucalyptus.

January passes slowly, like a voice that is confident and steady and says the names of romance novel titles the way honey pours.

February comes and goes in much the same way, except with heaps of snow that press into New York city streets like pen on paper.

The weather is far warmer by the time March comes to a close, and yet Elle still wears her winter jacket, which is puffy and purple. She thinks, I would remember a puffy purple jacket like this, if nothing else at all. She tells herself it's the kind of thing that would stick in one's head like, say, the aroma of eucalyptus.

Today it's Wednesday, 7:57 a.m. on an almost April day when Elle boards the train from 34th street with Abby. She's sweating in her jacket, which she'd tugged on this morning with resolve, decidedly ignoring all reports claiming sunny weather and high temperatures.

She's trying to recall other good aromas, like the air before summer rain hits the hot pavement, or thin-crust pizza from the best spots in Brooklyn, when someone sits down beside her and something familiar tickles at her nose.

A moment passes — a long moment that feels to Elle like all the winter months combined into one — and then the person begins to scribble.

Elle angles her face towards where it seems like the other person's face is and says, "Did you sit next to me on the train on December 22nd?" Beside her, Abby shifts.

For a second there's no response — at least, not from a mouth. But she hears him fidget, feels his seat move against hers. Finally, he says, "I remember your coat."

"I'm blind," she blurts, as if this is an explanation. It is, of sorts.

There's another moment of silence, where she thinks he's nodding — stupidly — in understanding.

"I write poetry," he replies. As if this is an explanation. Then, "did you read that book?"

Of course, Elle wants to say. She read that book every day for three months straight even though it was so bad, even though its author most definitely needs a thesaurus. Instead, she shrugs. "It was terrible."

He agrees. "There just aren't enough beautiful sentences in the world."

"Well, if you want, I can recommend you something better," Elle offers. She tries her hardest to give the words weight, to make sure he knows she's offering more than just a reading list.

"Is it romance?" He replies, and because of this she knows he understands.

Elle grins. "Isn't everything?"

And this time, when he leaves the train he leaves a number, too, programmed into Elle's phone under the name Sam.

And spring comes, and then summer, and Elle's mornings are still steam and oil, cigarette smoke and other unpleasant smells. But slowly they become other things, too. Things like eucalyptus.

This is one scent that reaches into Sunday.

Mary, the Magdalene

MATHIESON BYER

On Tuesdays I am Mary,
the Magdalene
with wrinkled skirts
and bruised vagina.
I hide in The Tomb and hold onto things
until they cut into my hands and
I only cry when I smell sweat.

On the other days I am Paul,
holding corpses to sunlight
until they hear sky.
I keep my legs wrapped around
the stomachs (of horses)
and when She passes smoke
to my lips, I tell Her to be silent in the churches,
lest another rock get caught between Her teeth.

If I could spend a night with Mary,
the Magdalene
I would take her into tombs
that smelled of frankincense and marijuana:
Transubstantiation,
Sodom and Deborah.
The gardener hears Her in the dark hours
of morning, he mistakes my long hair for holiness
and Her lost clothes for angel wings.
Resurrection
resonates from behind the rocks, but
the man who had been inside (of Her) has bled out
by his hands and feet.

APOCRYPHA

J. KATES

A virus appearing from nowhere
And dwelling in Adam
on the terrace of the Garden of Eden

A virus causing pain
Crushing his loins,
Coursing through his blood
The invisible virus

And the stunned Adam
leaves the Garden of Eden
Leaves on his own
for the bitter earth of labor

Wulf and Eadwacer/Daylight Is Our Evidence

KERRY CARNAHAN

What surfaces? A sacrifice of words
People he was a gift he threw his body into it A grace-gift
alive Touch violence become it I'm nothing like you
Wolf became one island I the other now dirty water surrounds us shallow rivers run
fast a deep pool dammed what's slain at bottom They want islands My Wolf hit
They damned us Touch violence become it I'm nothing like you
the road I suffered my beliefs then it was rainy weather I shrieked and
hid When that pervert called me out ready to fight our embrace a tree engulfed in flames
I spoke truth it felt right to burn I hated it
legs my song is sick for you starved for ideas And you now Watch
me! Divider of nights our cruel quick thing drags itself to the woods It's easily torn
that which never healed The riddle of we two as one

Of the fact this night will end You may hear nothing all night this night in which
fractured speech O gently gently something cries but is overcome
Alert in the night to movement and scent I scent myself with jasmine to smell myself coming
I will hunt myself here I weep in rainy weather drag myself from the woods like those
hunters who dragged the limp doe out by her neck I heard a child in the woods shivering at
the touch and wind and rain and a shallow river.
You may hear nothing all night If you say blood and really mean it all that cheapness
shuts up you don't hear it stop but for a moment it stops See the trees come to light
white and terrible See the blank face I face now in the mirror There is a tyrant in full
dress in a windowless room the tyrant of our time cannot precisely be named don't
look it in the eye I smell a whip
and still feel yourself pursued

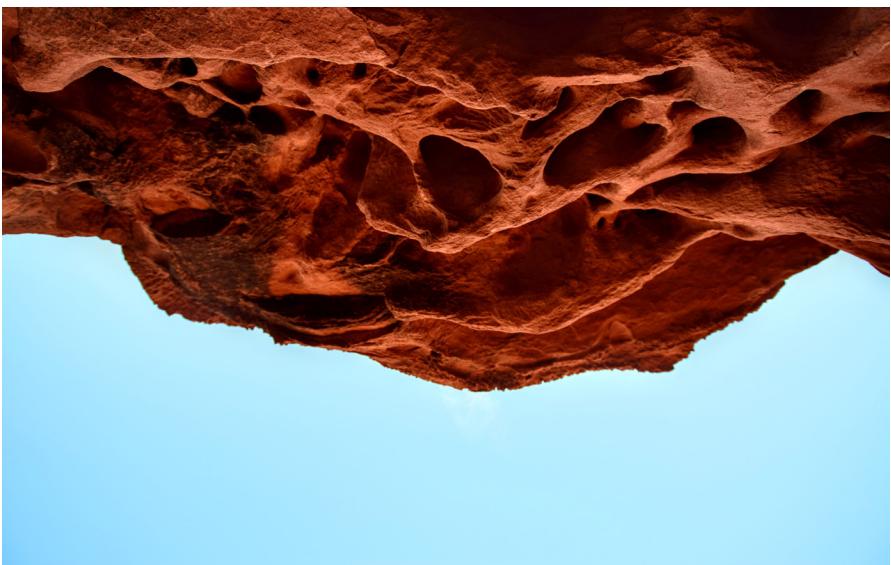
How many dimensions to that rain drops on tin roof slow hiss of steam green
You Benedict Arnold, you cunt taunts one bird *yadda yadda yadda* says the other
The rock and hard place of that rain was being on each others' tongues unsayable
You took my body you claimed your divide mixed that stuff with oil or water and
pressed me a kind of crayon that blackened out our eyes *Look at all this black in*
bloom we laughed fools at bottom of a black river.
We slide through the silver marshes sun pale edged in clouds I myself vacant all
eyes like a child to go to you now could be wise my friend you could loosen and be
wise so I took a chance at the wrong stop and we came running as if no history
prevailed upon us to restrain ourselves Medallion sun when we finished speaking
Then silence of regard for one another's loneliness You never know who you brush
past who you'll lose down that long lit corridor of night

I walked to the river as the sun went gold
past the corn growing tall to my right
one foot in front of the other I made way down that poorly hidden path marked *private*
crossed the tracks under forest cover Nothing forbade me
that cold flow My blood ran with you still
biting insects who would part as I passed smelling something exceptional
dangerous brightness I bent and dropped my
head to the current I waded freely into dark water
that is true? What can I tell about this
you drain from me and I had no choice in the matter yet even in that
There is only some truth or how well you tell it in this place still hung with wild grapes

Go to the window wait for day if he has no window please look here What
admits huge light by day admits a dying by night we're reconfigured If you're
imprisoned your window not a window breathe your bright burning breath into your open
hands But he is not glass he's burning matter Breathe burning on burning think
breath on black glass You in that black What's the shape of your pain?
What admits huge evidence of a world? Hello I shouted but she couldn't hear it
how the wind shakes a tarpaulin is violent in trees She had no evidence the earth
spins the moon hangs that even in the most colorless night the moon is shedding
such evidence That so much brightness we can't see She was sick without window
she may die alone You rested your hand then I was alone When night
traps you alone remember what I said there's so much brightness you can't see
it in our hands Go to the window wait for day Daylight is our evidence

Black wick me he is what flickers His medicinal grace my desire
They'll serve his head on a plate if he meets the hunt our bodies torn apart
Wolf you are I am that striking grasp of opposites Islands blood-rich Islands worth
our lives His head on a plate if he meets the hunt our bodies torn apart
Wolf-eyed my wanderings my dreaming it dogged me Again?
Rainy weather and I wept and rested When the untranslatable I fought my way out
some meaning was won some joy yet even that brought me grief
Wolf my Wolf I lacked for no meat it was my pining for you sickened me your
intermittance soaked my heart hear me out And you! Vigilance
committeel You all watching your property your itchy trigger finger why must our young
endure such cruelty? That man easily destroys what never was in union Our
song together

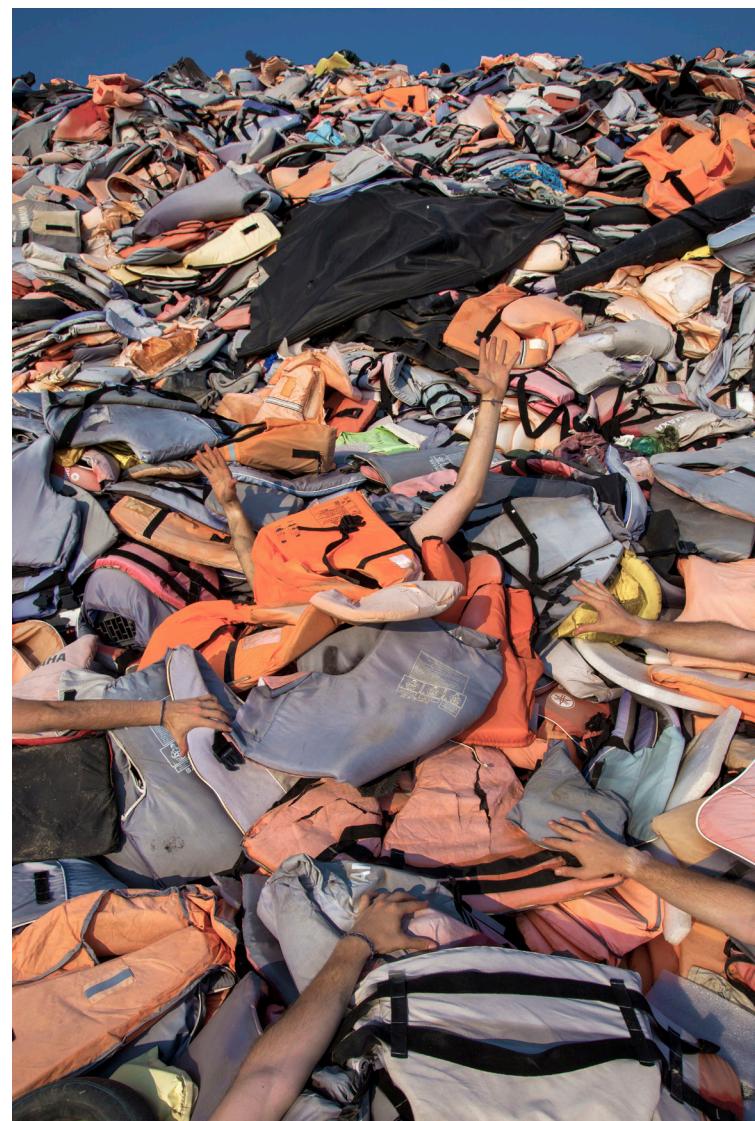
Crimson drops in the snow my skin a blotched mirror I wept you Wolf
you slunk away with no tracks just a shadow a thickening I am tired of weeping
Coyotes here they say are part wolf they beat air draw arcs of migration with
leashless hands baring teeth to represent violent interbreeding So a taste of
catastrophe plays itself out don't piss on my leg and call it rainy weather You
a wound bit and licked yourself Now you say I broke you
Your broken body I once swept to shore so powerful my passion and patience
Your mind exhausted by pain I held tight I twisted fingers in your fur grasped your
scales gritted teeth when you burned me no matter I didn't let go Wolf my
Wolf I believed it I bore it are you a wolf am I what a wolf fears Wolf
my Wolf down on all fours I cry out; you are too close to see what you are breaking
The shadow of no wolf lengthens across snow



Underside

Photography

JACOB McGINNIS



Drowning in a Sea of Aid

Photography

OMAR TAWEH



Starstruck Obsession
Markers

KA YING (ANGELA) KWOK



Sleep
Photography

JACOB McGINNIS

A Conversation with Kerry Carnahan

SIOBHAN DALE

A Conversation with Kerry Carnahan

"There is only some truth or how well you tell it"
—Kerry Carnahan, "Wulf and Eadwacer."

This year's winner of the Wallace Stevens Prize, Kerry Carnahan, received the award for her series of poems titled "Wulf and Eadwacer". The poems translate an eponymous Old English poem, found in a single copy in the 10th-century Exeter Book, that is notoriously difficult to interpret. "Wulf and Eadwacer" is one of the few Old English poems written in a woman's voice; like the Wife's Lament, which appears in the same manuscript, it is a mourning poem in which a woman describes her separation from those she loves and the threat of violence she endures. It is a poem about trauma, fear, and loss. In recent years, a host of distinguished poets has translated "Wulf and Eadwacer", including Fiona Sampson, Bernard O'Donoghue, Paul Muldoon, and Vahni Capildeo. Kerry Carnahan's extraordinary version brings new perspectives, both formal and political, to this enigmatic poem; we are very lucky to publish it in the Long River Review. We are also fortunate that Kerry kindly agreed to join me for a conversation about translating "Wulf and Eadwacer", on which I report below. My account is not a direct transcript of everything we said; our conversation was wide-ranging and diverse, touching on many aspects of contemporary poetry, the representation of trauma, the difficulties of translation, the problem of violence, and the ethics of depicting suffering. I have condensed and paraphrased in order to create as full an account as possible of our discussion.

"Wulf and Eadwacer" is a poem consumed by violence. From the poem's setting to the events that it narrates, it is a poem drenched in blood. Kerry's translation raises a key question: Is it the translator's task to mop up that blood? Should a translation redeem the violence of the original in some way? When working with traumatic language, it is important not to dilute its pain to make it easier to digest or friendlier to readers. In addition, since "Wulf and Eadwacer" is one of the only medieval poems written in a female voice—i.e., since most women in old English poetry are silent—it raises particularly pressing questions about freedom in translation: does altering the original text of "Wulf and Eadwacer" in translation effectively silence the female speaker's voice? As a translator, it's hard to figure out your role in

the poem. Was she a wolf? A witness? A part of the landscape? Or did she play another role entirely? That uncertainty is an artifact of working with traumatic language; it forces the translator to question who she is, what she has done, and what she might become as a result of continued exposure to violence.

I asked Kerry how the violence in "Wulf and Eadwacer" affected her creative process while translating the poem. She revealed that the first draft included as many as thirty sections, but in revision she cut the work down to seven segments. After the intensity of drafting the poems, Kerry had to distance herself from her draft in order to revise as an objective observer. A traumatic poem like "Wulf and Eadwacer" demands delicacy and care from its translator: its violence shouldn't be compromised or mediated, but neither should it be delivered in such a way that it re-traumatizes readers. It sounds counter-intuitive but writing traumatic language has to break the traumatic cycle.

As a reader of Kerry's work and as a poet who works with trauma in my own writing, I agree with her claim. Traumatic language is a system of re-coding and re-naming. It fragments violence, transforming it into new words, new sights, new sounds. Poetry has the capacity to end the traumatic cycle by recontextualizing violence. Recasting the language of a traumatic experience in poetry translates the lived traumatic experience to readers, thereby creating empathy. Empathy is performative; it is a learned adoption of another person's point of view. Just as trauma has a language, so too does empathy; each relies on the other to produce affective change in readers. Poetry is a distinctive mode of writing that engages the senses on two levels, both in the content of the poem (what its words mean) and in its form (the sound and rhythm of its language). This sensory engagement allows poets to recreate trauma as well as consolation in a visceral way; readers not only think about a traumatic text, they feel it in their bodies and with their senses. As a result, poetry is uniquely suited to representing the unrepresentable: pain, suffering, trauma.

Kerry asks me about my own work with traumatic language. What is my investment in the translation of trauma? In my poetry, I tell her, I work with faux-snuff films. These films, commonly known as "torture pornography," depict the destruction of the body—usually, but not always, the bodies of women and children. My poetry focuses on the body's construction. By body I mean not only the human body, but also the body of work that an artist creates. The "body" constructed by snuff films is a body that traffics in its own destruction. The "body" constructed by poets is a body that plunders the world of art—its conventions and forms, its stories and ideas—in order to forge a distinctive and unique voice that can create empathy in readers. Empathy, I tell Kerry, is not aroused simply by reading about beautiful experiences or looking at beautiful objects. If you undergo something horrific, you won't want to read a book about abstract ideas like "truth" or pleasurable pastimes, like gardening. Planting the seeds of beautiful things can only take you so far.

As we discuss our work, Kerry and I realize that "Wulf and Eadwacer"

and faux-snuff films share a revealing set of similarities. Both are stories about women that have been used to oppress women. Both texts depict worlds permeated by violence, in which violence begins and ends the temporal and geographic spaces and place in which women find themselves. We both think that “Wulf and Eadwacer” may be early torture pornography. How do we as poets cope with this kind of art? In the case of faux-snuff films, is “art” even an appropriate word to use about them? How do we make sure that what we do in our own work does not simply repeat the violence in a way that is exploitative?

Everyone who writes intensely about traumatic experience has a different set of rules for coping with the extreme emotional distress that this kind of material can produce. Kerry tells me that she was alone when she translated “Wulf and Eadwacer”, and that she wrote in short bursts, taking frequent breaks from the project. She waited to revise until she felt she had an objective eye for her work. Crucially, she didn’t attempt to change the linguistic fragmentation that had emerged during the initial drafting stage. The fragmentation stayed as it was; there wasn’t an objective way to recreate the traumatic ruptures characteristic of the original text. Kerry feels she has a debt to repay, not just to the voices in the poem, but to the women writers who have inspired her, and finally to the women throughout history who have endured trauma in silence. *We all have debts to repay*, I tell Kerry. I think about all the women and young girls whose rapes I watched in faux-snuff films, their bodies tortured and destroyed. I think about the actresses in some films who begged to have their scenes cut, who spent months in hospitals recovering from the violence they endured while filming. I think about the actress who killed herself after a faux-snuff film was released. How can such a debt ever be repaid?

As Kerry and I talk, however, I realize that writing poetry about trauma and violence cannot be only about the payment of debt. The debt is too great; no writer could ever compensate for the immensity of violence in the world and in the past. But also: I’m an optimist, I say. I don’t like to think that our efforts to represent, compensate for, recast, and re-create trauma are doomed to fail. Granted, trauma and violence are never going to disappear. It doesn’t matter how well you write; you are never going to end trauma. *But what can be ended, I say, is the exploitation of traumatic experience.* Everyone working with trauma has a different set of rules, but there is one standard everyone should follow: proceed with extreme caution when dealing with acts of violence. Make sure readers and viewers understand the consequences of violence, the suffering and pain it creates, the sheer human cost of trauma. Both Kerry and I have counter-examples to this ethical principle in mind. For instance, faux-snuff films are careless; the women in these films are never named and rarely have a story beyond being tortured. The camera techniques they deploy actively work to disrupt the empathy a viewer might feel for a character’s pain and suffering. Similarly, Kerry tells me, some recent translations of “Wulf and Eadwacer” have exploited its violence by claiming it for white nationalism, a terrible distortion of the medieval original. In contrast, Kerry describes her relationship to the original. Instead

of claiming the poem as her own she wants to begin a dialogue on violence that opens us to understanding the pain that permeates the poem.

There is no part of the pain in faux-snuff films that I want to claim as my own. I would rather not admit to the pain these films have caused me. *In many ways, I tell Kerry, I feel like it's irrelevant. I wasn't bound and gagged and crying for my life. I wasn't tortured. I just watched other women perform — and sometimes endure — that suffering.* This conversation with Kerry, however, has made me realize that a full dialogue about trauma can never emerge until those who speak and write about it can talk honestly and openly with one another. *When I read your poems for the first time, I tell Kerry, there was this call out to me. Even though I didn't fully understand the words, I knew exactly what you were conveying.* It is inspiring and in part healing to witness works like Kerry’s that deal cautiously with trauma. When reading Kerry’s poems there’s no sense that these are translated experiences. The trauma in “Wulf and Eadwacer” seems unmediated, witnessed directly, person to person. Her language is infused with detail, precision, grace, and even beauty in that blood-scape. Reading Kerry’s poems has changed me. I tell her: *My own work has been difficult. I'm not going to lie about that anymore. I think pretending that the violence of the films had no effect on me only diluted their destructive power. It trivialized the traumatic effects of witnessing extreme violence against women. But talking with you and reading your poems has shown me the ways in which being a “witness to violence” can enable the critique of violence, something all artists should undertake.*

“Wulf and Eadwacer” covers a landscape consumed by blood. Faux-snuff films take the viewer inside and underground, to blood-drenched abattoirs that serve as sets. You can find your way out of that landscape or out of that room, but you’re still touched by that blood. *Touch violence become it.* How do we cope with the fact that in order to write about violence you yourself have to witness violent acts and create a violent work? Kerry’s poems answer in fragments. Look to the men in those rooms. Look to the wolves in those woods. Look to those perpetrators in the present day. Speak to them. *Say: I'm nothing like you...you are too close to see what you are breaking.*

What Was Carved in the Birch Tree

ALYSSA GRIMALDI

Greta grew up with the grass and the roots, with the grasshoppers and the tree trunks. She could spend hours finding branches and bark and mud to mix together into her divine potions, concocting intricate salves and elixirs with unknown purposes. On a kind of day marked by honeysuckle in the morning and fireflies at night, Greta stole a carving knife from the kitchen and etched a crooked heart into her favorite birch. She managed to add her first initial in her sloppy, youthful hand before her instrument was removed from her grasp. Greta's mother scolded her and snatched the knife from her daughter's hand, all a flash of auburn hair and gray eyes. That was what Greta remembered the most about her when her mother was gone. She imagined her mother as a figure waving to her from the shore, all auburn hair and gray eyes, and Greta was on a ship, floating out to the disarming sea. But that day, her mother was not a distant silhouette. She was a controlling tyrant desperate to ruin Greta's tenth summer.

As twilight crept forward, Greta was soaring through the air on her rope swing, the one that was slightly frayed. Her sullen rage at her mother's earlier interference was muted along with the sun, which was slowly disappearing below the remote horizon. She secretly wished for the worn rope to snap while she clung to it. Bruises were tough and so was she. Greta could see her mother in the window, brow furrowed, glowing in the light emanating from the antique lamp next to her. A mosquito whined near Greta's left hand, the one not gripping tightly to the rope, and she swatted it away without much urgency because the dull hum was part of her personalized summer orchestra. Her mother was still watching Greta repeatedly ascend into the air, but now she had the matte black house phone cradled on one shoulder. Greta's lips curled up into a half smile. The gentle darkness was hers again. Her mother wouldn't call Greta to come wash up for bed for another twenty minutes at least.

If Greta squinted hard enough, the neighbors' distant porch lights were delicate fairies, dancing in the softness of the evening, pirouetting up, up, up to the stars. The slivered moon, guardian of all below, was their ultimate destination. It was Greta's too, she felt as she pumped her legs more vigorously and felt a breath of wind caress her hair. She was pondering whether the moonlight fairies would accept her as one of their own when a shadowy movement near her birch tree startled her. One more slight motion, and the obscured figure had vanished completely. Startled, Greta

abruptly concluded her journey into the sky, scuffing her new Converse on the dirt in her eagerness to remove herself from what was now a night not enchanting, but corrupt with insidious intentions.

After safely barricading herself in her bedroom, Greta pulled back the blush-colored voile curtains to the sheer layer beneath. She could see her birch in the backyard, adjacent to the rope swing tree. It looked like there was a figure crouched there, surreptitiously attempting to rest with what appeared to be their head against the bark. She swallowed, blinked, and peered through the window again, her nose just touching the glass, her distressed breaths decorating it with fog. There was no one there.

When Greta's hummingbird alarm clock chirped its good morning at nine, Greta was prepared to confront whatever the sunny day had to offer her. Crepuscular lurkers were no longer her concern, and she wondered if she had conjured the shadowy form with her sleepy brain. She didn't allow the previous night's dread to manifest itself in her mind until she was halfway through brushing her teeth. She spit out the disquieting thoughts with the bitter mint toothpaste and washed them all down the drain.

Greta's mother was preoccupied with what looked like a grocery shopping list, scribbled out in her messy scrawling letters. She offered Greta a half smile and a brief greeting as the girl scampered out the back door for another day among the daisies and bumblebees.

At first glance, Greta's backyard wonderland was in the same state she left it the previous night. But as she scrutinized every detail of the area, she noticed some peculiarities. Her rope swing was swaying back and forth as if someone had just dismounted, but there was no wind to explain the movement. The wildflowers near the tree line looked trampled, as if someone had stomped over them in a hurry. Greta was about to reluctantly explore, thinking it was maybe the neighbor's cat, when she saw a girl about her own age emerge from behind the rotting shed Greta's mother kept saying she would eventually remove. When she saw Greta noticing her, the other girl tentatively stepped out of the shadow of the shed, her bare feet ever so slowly edging forward. The girl was slightly shorter than Greta, her dirty blonde hair slightly longer. She wore a stained T-shirt with a rainbow centered on a white background, and her jean shorts were ripped in a few places. There was something familiar about the girl, but Greta could not place where she previously encountered her, or if she really ever had. Greta realized she was staring in a way that could be considered rude, so she quickly directed her gaze towards the peeling, faded, robin's egg blue paint of the shed before addressing the girl.

"Hi. W-what are you doing here?"

The girl shyly lowered her gray eyes and began twirling a strand of hair. "I saw you playing here yesterday, and you looked lonely. I'm lonely, too. We could be friends."

Greta considered this comment, uttered in the girl's soft, reserved voice. She supposed she could appear lonely to an outsider, but she had always been content creating and ruling her own secret worlds alone. Although, she could not deny that a playmate might add something, might instill a

fresh perspective into her games. When Greta responded, it was in a tone that was only slightly suspicious.

"What's your name? Where are you from?"

The girl bit her lip and seemed to ponder the questions before she answered.

"My name is Maeve and I'm from around here."

"Around...where? Aren't your parents worried that you're gone?"

Maeve's marble-like eyes shifted to the side, and she suddenly had an expression of such woe that Greta wanted to embrace the girl.

"Around here. And no. They used to be. Now they're kind of used to it I guess."

Greta found Maeve's situation a bit odd, but she knew better than to judge her peer outright and kept her further questions to herself. Instead, she plopped down, not caring about any potential grass stains on her new white shorts and gestured for Maeve to come closer. When they were both sitting across from each other, Greta began demonstrating how she made delicate fairy houses out of dirt, twigs, and leaves.

When the architecture of the tiny structures was strong enough to withhold the vigorous breath of air Greta directed towards them, the girls began to gather daisies and gently place them in patches of dirt adjacent to them. After the houses were sufficiently decorated, Greta took one of the more vibrant and less droopy flowers and positioned it behind the other girl's ear. In the process, she accidentally grazed her knuckle alongside Maeve's cheek, and promptly dropped the daisy in shock. Maeve's skin was so smooth and startlingly icy, evoking the same sensation Greta felt when she touched the marble countertop in the kitchen that her mother meticulously scrubbed every day.

Both girls stared in sorrow at the crumpled daisy, a wrinkled corpse in a grave of dusty and scarred earth. Greta did not have the words to articulate what it reminded her of then, what it represented, but years later, in a daze, staring out an office building window, she almost spilled coffee on her blouse realizing the daisy conjured images of her once strong and magnificent grandmother in a hospital bed. A life reduced to ruin.

But on that day, Greta had yet to experience death, and she simply didn't like the feeling the discarded daisy gave her. In one movement, she shoveled another daisy out of the dirt and stubbornly jabbed it behind Maeve's ear, rendering both the flower and their friendship immortal in some way.

The rest of the afternoon found Greta and Maeve exploring a variety of activities, including racing each other through the edge of the woods, giggling and shrieking and leaping over tree stumps and branches. Greta thought Maeve's laughter was something like magic, probably akin to an actual fairy's display of mirth.

For some reason, Greta didn't tell her mother about Maeve at dinner that night. Or the next night, or the night after that. She wanted Maeve to be her secret; the other girl was too special to be discussed over leftover meatloaf. Somehow, having Maeve to herself made every day they spent together more enchanting. She resolved to tell her mother about her new friend the fifth day they played together.

On that fifth day, Greta and Maeve were leaning against the birch tree, exhausted after a rousing game of hide and seek. Suddenly, Maeve let out a deep sigh and told Greta, "I wish I could stay here every day with you. I've never had so much fun. But I know I need to go. I don't belong here. When the sun is setting, I will be going, but you can follow me part of the way."

No matter how much Greta begged and pleaded the other girl, Maeve continued to insist on her departure. *She had somewhere else to be*, she said. Somewhere someone was waiting for her.

As the sun was in its early stages of descent, Maeve stood up. She was regal and solid in the hazy glow of the afternoon. Years later, when Greta's mother tried to convince her Maeve was never there, or just an imaginary friend, Greta saw Maeve's radiance on that day again and knew her mother was wrong.

Greta and Maeve held hands as they ventured into the forest together, Greta not minding the coldness of Maeve's clutching her own one bit. The trees almost seemed to diverge for the two girls, and they continued their romp through the brambles and bushes until they reached a small clearing. That was where Maeve released Greta's hand, and picked something brightly colored up from the ground.

"I have to go now, but this is for you."

Before Greta could sufficiently react, Maeve had folded the object into the palm of Greta's left hand, and pranced away, her steps making no noise and her movements following some elaborate dance that only she knew. Greta uncurled her hand, and recognized the object as a colorful beaded bracelet, five of the beads spelling out the name "Maeve", the others various heart and flower shapes. She carefully inched the bracelet over her wrist, admiring the vibrant hues of the beads in what was left of the daylight. Greta was suddenly incredibly sleepy. She leaned against the closest tree, and promptly fell asleep.

When Greta woke up to the sounds of dogs barking and people yelling her name, she had no idea where she was or how long she had been there. Her voice felt feeble and strained when she yelled out an "I'm here!" after she felt a dog's wet nose nudging her bare leg. Immediately, there were flashlights all around, and people with their faces pale and eyes wide all attempting to take her hands and help her stand. Greta recognized her mother and a few police officers in the mix, and her mother was the one to finally aid Greta onto her feet. She was in her mother's tight embrace when she heard one of the policemen yell out to the others that the dog had found something.

When Greta thought about the days following her night in the woods long after, she didn't often think about the policemen and how they questioned her, asking her how she ended up at that spot in the woods, if someone had taken her there, if she could describe them. She didn't even think about the way the brunette, soft-spoken woman's face transformed into a picture of confusion and disturbed comprehension when she told the nice lady she had been there in the woods with Maeve, saying goodbye to her new friend. She only thought about how they had taken the bracelet from her and how she overheard them speaking in hushed conversations

when they thought she was sleeping. They talked about how they had found Maeve hidden away, nestled under a patch of dirt almost like she, too, had fallen asleep somewhere out of reach. They talked about how the little girl had been missing for two months and how now at least her family had some answers. They talked about how the man who had brought Maeve there was locked away now. Years later, Greta would find a newspaper clipping her mother kept hidden in a chest under her bed with Maeve's face, the face Greta would never forget, plastered on the front. Maeve held a teddy bear in the faded and pixelated image, and the caption read, "Kidnapped Girl's Body Found."

As Greta grew older, the image of the colorful bracelet in her mind faded more and more until she didn't know for sure if it had ever existed but knew that it didn't quite matter. Maeve had existed, and still did, vivid in Greta's dreams. They could take the bracelet from her, but they could never take the memory of her playmate, or the sloppy "M" Greta found in the heart next to her own initial on the birch tree.

An Interview with Jodi Picoult

LAUREN ABLONDI OLIVO AND RYAN AMATO

It's hard to write an introduction for a person who is nothing short of a household name. Jodi Picoult is an award-winning author who has written over twenty-five novels, including *My Sister's Keeper*, *Nineteen Minutes* and *Small Great Things*. Picoult's work is always pushing boundaries; she often tackles controversial, sensitive or politically charged topics in her novels, and tries to use her platform to shine light on voices that are so often unheard. This is why we, the team at the *Long River Review*, thought that she was the perfect person to highlight for our first interview of the year.

Her newest book, *A Spark of Light*, focuses on the ripple effect that occurs after a gunman opens fire in a women's reproductive health clinic, taking all of those inside as hostages. Picoult is able to put a human face and story on the tragedies she writes about, making her one of her generation's most prolific and standout writers.

We were able to speak and correspond with Jodi over email. While we expected someone of her status to only be able to answer a few of our questions, she answered every single one with clarity, attentiveness, and with that certain something that has made her work so meaningful to so many.

LAUREN ABLONDI OLIVO AND RYAN AMATO: Hi Jodi! Thanks so much for speaking with us.

Firstly, our magazine is geared towards unpublished and up and coming writers who are still in university. Do you have any tips or words of wisdom for getting your work out there early in one's writing career?

JODI PICOULT: I recommend taking a workshop writing course. You don't need an MFA but you DO need to learn to write on demand to give and get criticism, and that's what workshop courses teach you. Also - read. A ton. It will help you figure out where you belong in the literary canon. Finally, I do not recommend self publishing. It's the easy way - and faster than getting an agent (I myself had over 100 rejections) but it's also seen by traditional publishers as giving up... not putting in your dues. Moreover, self published books don't have the marketing heft that you can have if a traditional publisher is behind your work.

LAUREN AND RYAN: Your newest book, *A Spark of Light*, focuses on a controversial topic that affects our country today. What inspired you to write this novel, and more importantly, what do you want your readers who may not share similar views with you, to take away from your book?

JP: I believe that women's reproductive rights are under attack and we will likely see *Roe v Wade* overturned, or at least attempted to be overturned. For that reason I really wanted to raise awareness about what happens when you look at the actual women making the decision to terminate a pregnancy — rather than hear about it from a politician's mouth. The book presents very balanced examples of those who are pro-choice and those who are pro-life, and my hope was to make readers take a short walk in the shoes of someone who does not espouse their own beliefs. Ultimately, what I hope people take away from this is that women who terminate pregnancies are not evil, are not using abortion as birth control, and they are at the end of their rope. They are your sisters, your mom, your next door neighbor, your teacher, etc. I also wanted to point out that there are ways to reduce the abortion rate (which is in everyone's best interests, really) but we never talk about those! For example, free and easily accessible birth control; laws that raise the minimum wage; universal health care for mother and child; federally funded day care... How come all we do is discuss *Roe v. Wade*, instead?!

LAUREN AND RYAN: The characters and plot of *A Spark of Light* are beautifully interwoven, despite the book being written in reverse! What did you write first — the beginning or the ending — and what do you feel was the most challenging part about writing this book?

JP: I wrote it exactly in the order you see it, but I had a 48 page outline before I wrote a single word. The most challenging thing was keeping it all straight as I went backward in time. It nearly killed me!

LAUREN AND RYAN: All of your books feature a variety of different opinions/attitudes/etc. regardless of how you personally feel towards a topic. Would you say your work is an initiator for important conversations or a vessel through which those conversations happen? That is, do you feel your books help spark conversations or do they help make those conversations easier to have?

JP: Both. I think that my books allow us to talk about difficult topics people don't like discussing — it's somehow easier to talk about characters in a novel than to sit down and discuss racism, for example. But I also believe that fiction provides a springboard for us to have those conversations in the first place. It's like a back door approach to wading through controversial topics.

LAUREN AND RYAN: Random question we are asking all of our interviewees: what are you currently reading right now?

JP: A YA book called *Uprooted*.

LAUREN AND RYAN: And finally, is there anything you can tell us about your next project? What can we expect from you in the next year or two?

JP: In 2020, *Book of Two Ways*. It's about hospice, and Ancient Egypt, and that's all I'm saying!

Roots

FRANZISKA LEE

On Orange Street in New Haven, Oriental Pantry sits tucked behind a tiny weed-choked parking lot, sandwiched between Anna's Gourmet Takeout and a tattered three-story house. Peeling gold letters spell out the store's name on the awning. Perpetually waving cats and shelves of tea bags line the windowsill. The signs plastered to the brick walls warn DO NOT BLOCK THE DRIVEWAY in foreboding red letters, but the interior has a clean coziness, and a picture of the elderly Korean owner could accompany the dictionary entry for "grandmotherly." Google reviewers Ho Kyeong Jang, Gerardo C.D., Tom Auer, and I are in consensus about her overall cheerful sweetness. I really wish I knew her name.

Oriental Pantry is where we buy *gimbap*. The store owner makes it herself, like she does all the goods not air-sealed and shipped from an ocean away. Korean cooking is meticulous, exhaustive, and merciless. Chopping, dicing, rolling, and slicing can occur on a minuscule scale, and many dishes have more than ten ingredients cooked separately and then combined in various manners and sauces. Each component is integral. It's a balancing act.

Gimbap, which literally translates to "seaweed rice," resembles — and was in fact adapted from — Japanese *norimaki*, sushi rolls. It was called *norimaki*, too, until the government burned every word not native from Korean tongues. The rolling syllables brought back the memories of Japanese imperialism, none of them happy. For example, my great-grandfather, a scholar who had worked for the Korean government, was forced to flee to China. By the time he returned he had lost all his toes to frostbite.

However, regardless of linguistics, by the time the Japanese withdrew in 1945, *gimbap* had become distinctly Korean in flavor.

The *gimbap* we buy has a seaweed exterior, a layer of rice, and a center of spinach, fried egg strips, carrot slivers, pickled daikon radish, and cucumber. It's the perfect food, an artful combination of tastes and hues. The outer layer of rice and seaweed is chewy and salty, a sharp contrast to the bright explosion of vegetables, from the misty coolness of the cucumber to the sweet, crisp, highlighter-yellow radish. Good *gimbap* should be like springtime in your mouth. Halmeoni, my grandmother, made *gimbap* a few years ago when she came to Connecticut, and it might have tasted like springtime, but I have no idea. I ate it right after a dentist appointment, in a sun-baked car. Novocaine had brought winter to my tastebuds.

Also during my grandmother's visit, we went to the Korean grocery to

buy shrimp crackers, Pocky sticks, and homemade dumplings. Halmeoni apparently knew the owner back in Korea. They had gone to college together in another world. Now one of them plays golf and takes theology courses while the other one cooks *bibimbap* and *dukbbokki* for homesick Yale students. I don't understand how they recognized one another — or what they said to each other, for that matter. I never learned Korean.

Halmeoni wants me to learn the language, apparently. Her desire is new, as is me seeing my paternal grandparents twice in the span of twelve months. She has a sudden interest in connecting with me through means other than buying me sparkly Bibles and new clothes. The other day she offered to pay me to do her theology homework. I'm terrified this new effort is because Halmeoni thinks she's going to die soon. She told me once that she pushed my father too hard, that she failed him spiritually. She said this immediately after showing me a forty-five minute documentary on Korea's rebirth after World War 2, which made me cry. I mentioned the video to my father once and he looked exasperated. "It's really important to her," he said, "that nationalism stuff." Halmeoni, too, had cried while watching it, the endless slideshow of shoeless empty-eyed children, hollowed-out women, uniformed men.

My father's relationship to Halmeoni, and by extension, the rest of my family's, is one of wearied affection and mild antipathy. Halmeoni Skypes us three or four times a year: "Oh, you are so pretty. How are you? We are good. Play lots of tennis." I had been enunciating so she could understand me better, and she said, "You speak very, very well. You could be newscaster." I'd thank her and we'd exchange *I love yous* and goodbyes and that would tie us over to the next birthday.

The gap between my grandparents and my immediate family exists because my father is not an Evangelical Christian or religious at all. Because he gets exasperated on the phone with Halmeoni after five minutes and then paces back and forth, and punches a wall. Because he speaks mainly English and she speaks mainly Korean. I don't want to be her second chance.

Halmeoni says my father is too cold. My father says she is too late. They are both too proud, too fierce, too unbudging. You have to be, if you're an immigrant or a child of one. It is a tug of war, and neither can give an inch. It is a balancing act.

In his early forties my father has become deeply interested in Zen Buddhism. On the subway he listens to the Heart Sutra, and all he reads are the works of monk philosopher-poets. After a long phone argument he discovered Halmeoni had "gone through a Buddhist phase" in her teens. We both would like to know that young Halmeoni and what had changed — my grandfather, I think, or motherhood, or a country so alien from the home she knew. Even if she went back to Korea, it would be unrecognizably different from the quiet village she grew up in.

The only thing my family agrees on is food. A while ago I told my mother she should get *gimbap* instructions from Halmeoni. "Too difficult," she said. I wasn't sure if she was referring to the making of *gimbap* or my grandmother. I didn't ask.

Sea Change in English

SOPHIA BRUCE

1.

What really matters now is ceremony:
the inflection in your "r's"
as you *row* your boat on the *river*,
and I *rinse* my hands at the sink.

These are two separate actions
by two separate people—
each with nouns and verbs their own.

2.

God *raptures* my Christian father
from where San Francisco's Filbert Street
converges with another dimension. This is God's
favorite sentence. God's favorite language:

the colloquial slang of California.
The maraschino cherry
we first tied tongues around
in an airport terminal.

3.

And in my father's *rental* car.
"Car" being the noun and "Rent" being the
musical I've never seen.
Read me every license plate
in your exotic Eastern American.
Cal-FORnia, Cal-FORnia,

4.

FOR you I went ten miles above the limit
and with no seatbelt. *FOR* you and fear of rapture.

5.

Tell me why it's wrong to enunciate
each syllable in your name separately.
Teach me again how two actions

converge. You *row* your boat on the *river*
and I *rinse* my hands in that same *river*
and we converge. Like a highway. Like lovers
on a highway. Like Street Freaks of San Francisco meeting at a subsonic
crossroads:

like you and me
walking straight up the steepest street of all
and into the stratosphere.

Fragility: A Night Terror

ANNA ROSE STROSSER

When I was little, I'd watch you with your tiny black eyes; no, they're not black they're the color of the crying sky, and I wasn't little, I was just younger than you. You scared me with your bizarre stories of the Beginning and the End of Time and your hands shook because your noisy head made your veins twitch. You used to write the most maddening stories about *The Apocalypse and The Creation* all in italics because you liked the way the slant made the letters look like they were leaning, like you had to catch them before they fell and swallow them before they dissolved; you taught me how to fear. You were, You are, My Older Brother. You were, You are, The Illumination of my Brevity as I sleep dreamless wondering if it's really sleep if I'm not dreaming or just an absence of motion; is it sleep if it's not rest? I quit killing time with closed eyes so you can read me your proclamations with your overcast eyes and yell at me for not being haunted by what came before and what will come after; you mistake my fearlessness for carelessness, my youth for ignorance. Years have passed and I'm still younger than you but you no longer mistake me as little. I'd be just as happy to be listening to you talk of the star's conspiracies as I prance in a paper crown but I haven't seen you since that conversation we had on your Thinking Swing: the place where you go to argue with yourself. I told you it was okay, we all argue with ourselves. I told you it was okay, the magnitude of the prelude and the presage of the unknown doesn't make you any smaller. You cried to me about how you hated how the great works that have come before you make your italicized stories less loud; you screamed about how the stories that will come after you would quiet you. You were on that swing when you wrote me your final story which you titled *Fragility: A Night Terror* when the sky was the color of your crying eyes, no, you weren't on the swing you were on the train that you boarded that galvanized the unknown. You began by thanking me for reading all your ludicrous stories all in italics before scolding me for never yanking you off that Thinking Swing. You said all of the arguing with yourself had exhausted you and you had thought yourself mad but that you still love me in my paper crowns but couldn't corrupt me with your mind-clang any longer. That day you wrote me your final sentence dispelling your fear of *The Apocalypse and The Creation: Fragility is but a night terror; the grander of time must not make you feel small. We are the determinants of the unknown.*

You are younger than I, but you are not little.

House Fly

STELLA KOZLOSKI

What wicked things
Does the house fly dream
When he rubs his paws together?
Bad weather.



Wake Up Oni
Mixed Media

JOHNNY KOEKEE



Dnt s8y th^t (in public)
Foam, Plaster, Wire, Projection, Sound

DAN CRIBLEZ



The Trade

Mixed Media

JOHNNY KOKEE



Next Boyfriend

Photography

JACOB McGINNIS

Contest Winners

The *Long River Review* is happy to showcase some of the selected winners of the University of Connecticut's annual literary contests, hosted by the Creative Writing Program. These contests award prizes to exceptional works of both prose and poetry by undergraduate and graduate students alike. The winning pieces are selected by a panel of University of Connecticut faculty members, and outside authors.

To read all the winning pieces, please visit longriverreview.com

Night of the Entangled

An Excerpt

SEAN CAVANAUGH

It was two in the morning when I was shot by a jerking impulse out of my in-laws' guest bed and onto their carpet. I breathed an uneasy lungful of air conditioning as I steadied myself on the ground. My head was throbbing. There was a little bump forming where it hurt on my forehead and it felt hot and firm under my thumb. I pressed it in for a second, and recoiled from the pain. Once I groped my way to the frame, I clutched the hardwood under the bed blanket and lifted myself onto the mattress. She was awake now and startled. My toe twitched again, like it did when I was a kid. There was a hard-to-place itch inching its way up my arm.

"That sounds bad."

"Strangest thing. I should make an appointment when we get home."

There were footsteps in the hallway a brief hushed disagreement. Three curt raps on the door and they were with us in the room. I pulled the duvet up to my chin and grimaced to make out the faces, but it was simply too dark to say who was who.

"We heard a thud, is everything okay?"

"He's fine, it was just a little spasm."

"I'm really okay. I'm a restless sleeper."

"Michael Fredericks at St. Agatha's is on Ambien."

"There's melatonin under the sink in the bathroom. Sweet dreams, you two."

"Goodnight, Mom. Goodnight, Dad."

"Goodnight, sweetie."

"Night."

"Goodnight, Mr. and Mrs. Ericson."

"Goodnight, Dennis."

"Night."

They bickered softly behind the curtains on their way to the door then they were gone. For a moment, I was too bewildered to notice I was scratching at the itch on my arm. My wife rolled over laughing on her side.

"I'm losing it here, Kim."

"Grab some melatonin and take a leak. Goodnight, Dennis."

A *sense of humor*. That's what she would say when I'd ask her how she dealt with them. That wasn't right. I have a *sense of humor*, *Dennis*. That's more like it. She was probably right. I shimmied out of the covers and rolled over to face the wall. My in-laws were pretty funny, after all. They were

like a duo from a failed marriage sitcom. My eyes shifted to soft focus, the temperature-controlled bedroom wrapped around me like a sheath. My twitching toe was going to drive me crazy — and the lingering itch wasn't far behind.

A fast black dot shot across my view. I went rod-straight in the bed, then remembered who was lying next to me. I did the breathing exercise from that seminar they made us go during college. It was some sort of worm. Maybe three or four feet away from my face. I could feel my gooseflesh rubbing up against the comforter. In a silent instant, I swung the base of my palm toward the dot on the wall and felt it squish off to the sides around my wrist. The bed skirt was coarse as I wiped my hand on its surface, and I didn't feel right even once I was clean.

"Go to sleep."

"There was a bug."

"Well, go to sleep now."

I rolled onto my side and wrapped my arms around her waist. My wife's fingers wound inside mine and found their new resting place in the webbing of the gaps. I tried to ignore the incessant itchiness that was creeping up my forearm, bring my attention to her body. Her belly moved in, out, in, out, with her breath under my hands. I synced my breathing with this rhythm. In, out. In, out. Her hair smelled like her dad's shampoo. I raised my hand to tuck a lock behind her ear. Her skin was supple, but air-conditioned cool by the big open McMansion around us. She yelled and scrambled to a sitting position.

"What's that shit on your hand?"

I squinted at my palm and wrist sticky brown from the worm guts.

"I'll go wash them."

"I mean, Christ, Dennis."

"I thought I'd wiped it off."

"Uh-huh." I frowned and slid onto the carpet, and hunched over into my best David Attenborough.

"A beautiful waltz of death was danced today... and though the victor seemed clear, sometimes nature has another plan." This made her chuckle. I probably lit up like a Christmas tree when I saw her laugh.

"Very cute, but there's no victor in a waltz. You'd feel better if you took a melatonin."

I floundered through the dark to the bathroom and pawed at the wall looking for the light switch. There was something absolutely demeaning about the act of sidling along a bathroom wall in the dark, praying you don't stub your toe on the toilet. Finally, I hit the switch and the mirror flickered to life with perfect horror movie timing. *Ah, it's hideous!* My posture was slumped, yet freakishly strung-out like Lon Chaney in *The Phantom of the Opera*. The jowls didn't help either.

I craned my neck to view my face, and my profile. I looked at myself over the shoulder. There were a million different angles from which to be viewed — some as intimately familiar as the dead-on mirror appraisal, some rare enough to make my own form feel — But there wasn't a single angle from

which I didn't look like a balding boy who had gotten puffier and saggier with age. There was a wilted midnight sort of comfort in the idea that I wouldn't have to age forever. That this was all headed somewhere.

All of a sudden, the itch in my arm became unbearable. I doubled over onto the wash basin and dug in with my elbows, using the little extra bit of torque to really get my nails under the skin of my arm. The itch turned to a rough-hewn sort of burn, and I let go. After a moment of quiet, the rawness subsided slightly and the itch made itself known again. I raised my forearm up in front of my eyes and angled it beneath the fluorescents. Under the gooseflesh and the redness of my skin was a small form, maybe an inch in length and half an inch in width, with a shape not unlike a crescent roll. The thing raised the skin that it slept under and attracted a fresh-grown colony of hives. I told myself I was childish for even considering that it might be one of the worms from around the house.

I wrapped my hand around my forearm and pressed into the shape with my thumb and but it shot slithering up my arm and under my shirt. I dumped my shirt onto the throw rug. The skin on my chest was worked up by the irritation, scored with sets of erratic red scratches. Underneath the redness, however, was crescent shaped worm after crescent shaped worm, like some possessed child had been doing macaroni art just under my surface. There had to be a least three dozen of the things, wiggling ever so slightly and searching for something on my insides. Like their bodies and my mind were working together to make me squirm. I felt faint, so I pulled my shirt back over my body and turned off the lights. I groped for the melatonin under the sink and bit one in half. There was a sudden presence at the door.

"Glad you found the melatonin. I'm tellin' you, that stuff is like magic." Just outside the door frame stood two vague human shapes huddled together against the dark.

"Yeah, thanks a million. Hopefully this'll do the trick."

"Yep. It's late. Sorry we keep bumping into you."

"We're just so glad you're here sweetie."

"It's ju — excuse me. It's not a big deal."

"We were just talking about how smart you are. We know you'll make the right choice."

"Bethany can't wait to be a grandmother."

"And the place next door is going to be the perfect fit for you and Kimberly. Once you see it, you'll fall in love."

"It's a looker alright. Besides, you can't beat a free babysitting service."

"Edward, that's going to be their choice."

"Well, thank you guys so much for the offer. It means a lot to us."

"I know it's their choice, but it's a clear choice. They're a working couple."

"I'm sure they'll make the right decision. Right, Dennis?"

"Yeah. We make a good team."

"Good night, Dennis."

"Night."

"Good night Mr. and Mrs. Ericson."

The two shuffled off to their pitch-black bedroom having some unparsable conversation. I tried another breathing exercise before I left the bathroom, but it was hard to pretend that this was going to do anything for me. I found my hand searching to feel the bumps under my shirt, but I stopped myself before it reached its destination. What I saw a minute ago was a delusion. I always had bad skin; it was probably just another one of my rashes. It was so like me to find a way to try and turn a little bit of irritation into *The Fly*. Something about this house made me into a neurotic mess. When I made it to the guest bed, I wrapped myself tightly in the blanket and imagined it was a membrane between myself and the whims of the home.

"Goddamn."

"I was sleeping."

"They really want us to move in next door, Kim."

"That's why we took this trip, isn't it?"

"I don't know. I like myself and I like having you. A whole second couple is a lot to work into a marriage."

"They'll watch the kid. Anything else they ask of you, you can say no."

"I feel like I'm going feral in here. Do they have a bug problem?"

"Average stuff. House worms."

"House worms?" This made her chuckle and roll onto her side. She placed her hand on my shoulder and did a little circular motion on my skin with her thumb. For a moment I forgot about the itch.

"You're just freaked out because it's an adult entanglement."

"I never said it was an entanglement. It's just a different way of life they have. It's a mind-meld."

"You're being dramatic. It's all about knowing when to say 'no' and how to find it all funny."

"It is funny, I'm just scared. It was always going to be the professor and his wife, and suddenly it's *Everybody Loves Raymond*."

"Don't be scared. There's still Dennis and Kim. There'll still be plain ol' Dennis. Everyone ends up in different arrangements." She rolled back over with a fatalistic sort of confidence, like this was the ending that had always been in store for us. Maybe she was right. For so long, we were a two-stroke machine, a pair of autonomous individuals who chose to make goals that benefited the other. Two good lives, productive lives. Now, there was going to be a baby and we both worked full time. A set of two individual careers, one fairly involved marriage, and now an entire dependent life that wouldn't happen unless we *made it* happen. Or at least someone made it happen. The deal with the in-laws made it hard to escape from. You simply couldn't be a single person with a life until you die, what would that even look like? But maybe the sovereign breeding pair was a delusive idea from the start. Certainly, with my salary it seemed that way.

I felt an instant of scorching pain, but when I looked down and it was just my own nails in my skin. It was a small blessing I couldn't really see what I'd been doing to myself. There was a certain animal quality to my scratching at this itch, like the line between my decisions and my reflexes had been eroded. This couldn't really be about the stupid itch, could it? In a

sort of half-conscious state, I felt myself slipping out of bed and unzipping my suitcase. Five itching fingers tabbed through shirts, then socks, then pants, then underwear. There was a kind of sliding sensation down my arm and my hand pulled back up to the folds of my pants. *That couldn't have been...?* Stupid question, I was just anxious. I felt the crinkling of the tight-tucked rolling paper and the cool plastic of the lighter. Of course, smoking at my in-laws was a risky decision to make, but I never seemed to reach the point of decision. It was more like I was exposed to this house and the itch and the worms and my body was doing as it saw fit.

A few clumsy steps to the staircase, then I held myself on the wall and descended. There was a glow bleeding upward from the kitchen through the railing. Shafts of fading light in an array across the walls, across my body when I was standing at the right angle. Bold, strident bars of darkness divided me into slices along with the house. I needed this joint more than I realized. There was this odd behavior I exhibited when my neurosis kept me up late at night, where I'd slip into fits of dismal free-association. *Sometimes, a railing is just a railing.* I'd read that disorganized associations were a sign of oncoming psychosis. That was ridiculous. How did I let myself think such ridiculous things? I was an academic; that was supposed to mean something.

In the kitchen was a light clattering of aluminum and glassware. My father-in-law was in something of a trance at the marble-topped island, twirling bottles of rye and vermouth between his fingers like a club bartender in Berlin. There was a near-inaudible Coltrane solo playing from the smart-speaker by the Mr. Coffee, and he was swaying gently to the rhythm as he went. Once I picked up on the jazz tune, his movements snapped into a new level of meaning: The theatrical upswing of his elbow with the Knob Creek, the pure attitude he exhibited playing with the stemware, it all had a goofy fatherly grace to it. At least for a minute, he was the happy genius of his kitchen. I fingered the joint in my pocket and glanced at the back door, but I'd caught his eye when I walked in the room.

"Hope the noise didn't wake you."

"Don't worry about it." How long had I been in bed after I'd seen them? I tried my best to look nondescript as I clawed at my arms. There was a stool in front of the island, so I climbed on top and surveyed the scene: Rye whiskey, sweet red vermouth, angostura bitters, and a jar of maraschino cherries were bunched together next to the sink. He bent beneath the countertop and sprung back to action twirling a strainer and a box of toothpicks in an acrobatic display.

"I always liked Manhattans myself, when I could afford them."

"Oh, this stuff? Yeah. Just a little hobby I picked up when Kimberly was an infant." He poured the rye into a jigger cup and dumped it into a tall iced tea glass with a singular swing of the arm.

"Well you look like a professional, the way you move with it all."

"It's helped me through a lot." There was a strained heft to his speech when he said that, a tone of voice that made me gaze nervously at the bottles on the counter. The accoutrements, the jazz music, all good ways to make you forget you were drinking. He didn't seem like an alcoholic,

though. He was a little slumped over in a long-sleeve thermal tee, with a light peppering of scruff that he managed to make look dignified. The swift athletic movements beneath the pajamas gave the lie to his shabby late-night getup.

"I'm impressed you stuck with it. I've never been able to commit to a hobby for too long." This made a sly grin creep over his lips. He dumped a jigger of vermouth into the glass, then dashed bitters over the drink with a series of shoulder-swung shakes. There was ice in a bucket next to the glass, which he dumped in and stirred with a determined vigor.

"It's all about making the decision to do it. What you want, what feels good, it's all ephemeral. You do it because it's yours."

"I guess that's why you do anything, right?" He shook his head when he heard this and tried to formulate a response. There was a pensive aspect to the twirl of the strainer, the pour of the liquid into the pair of coupes. He speared four cherries on a pair of toothpicks—two on each—and dropped them gingerly into the glasses, then slid one of them over to my hand.

"It's why you get a hobby. The bigger things demand convictions." The itch was back in a big way. I sipped the Manhattan and felt a shiver run down my spine. It was absolutely perfect. I sipped it as hard and fast as I could without seeming fiendish.

"So you didn't buy this house to say it was yours?"

"I'm saying if that'd been all there was to it, I wouldn't have it in me to stick around." I tipped the stem of the coupe to the air and swallowed. The itch was still there. I could feel bugs worming around beneath my skin, slithering from my chest to my hands and back again. I was certainly moving, but I didn't feel at any time like I was willing myself to action.

"This is really something, Mr. Ericson. Strong for a nightly routine, don't you think?"

"I rarely finish them. It's the process, Dennis. Remember that."

"You're not going to dump that out, are you?"

"Would you like to polish it off? Might help with your restlessness." I snatched the glass and shot the cocktail back like cheap vodka, then slid the toothpick between my front teeth and swallowed the cherries. The worms were slithering from my core to my extremities. My movements were lighter now, like I wasn't the only one making them. I leaned in, whiskey-hardy, and attacked.

"I don't want to be rude, but I couldn't help but notice: Have you been having a problem with bugs here?"

"It's funny you mention that. I was getting worked up over a worm in my pillowcase, so I started in with the drinks to get my mind off things."

The worms were pulsing through my limbs now, gnawing at me with an interminable itch. I felt panic warming through the quake in my chest and my neck and the red in my face until my body was being flung up the stairs. My legs kept pace with my arms in a shockingly athletic display of coordination, complete with a ninety-degree swing around the bannister as my body was launched toward the guest room.

How the fuck was this happening? I wasn't doing this. My legs were and my

arms were and it was presumably my brain that was keeping me balanced throughout, but *I wasn't running*. I wasn't swinging the guest bedroom door with a confident thrust and I wasn't leaping from the threshold to the mattress and I wasn't supporting my weight with my arms to soften my fall. I was in bed now and I was still. I leered at my wrists in the dark of the room and it almost looked like my flesh was writhing beneath my skin. Could this all be the worms?

I gave myself a pinch on the wrist and turned my body toward Kim. I needed to put this in perspective: I was a little drunk and this was a difficult transition. Plenty of houses have problems with bugs, and no one that I'd ever heard of had been overrun by a colony of parasites over the course of a single night. Certainly, no one had lost control of their body to a colony of house worms—whatever that was supposed to mean. All of these fears were perfectly irrational and I was educated enough to know a midnight delusion when I thought one up. The image of my infested chest in the bathroom mirror still put me on edge, but that wasn't the first time I'd mistaken a dream for a memory in the middle of the night. Besides, Kim's dad would forget about this by the morning. I had a decent job, good drink in my belly, and my wife was by my side.

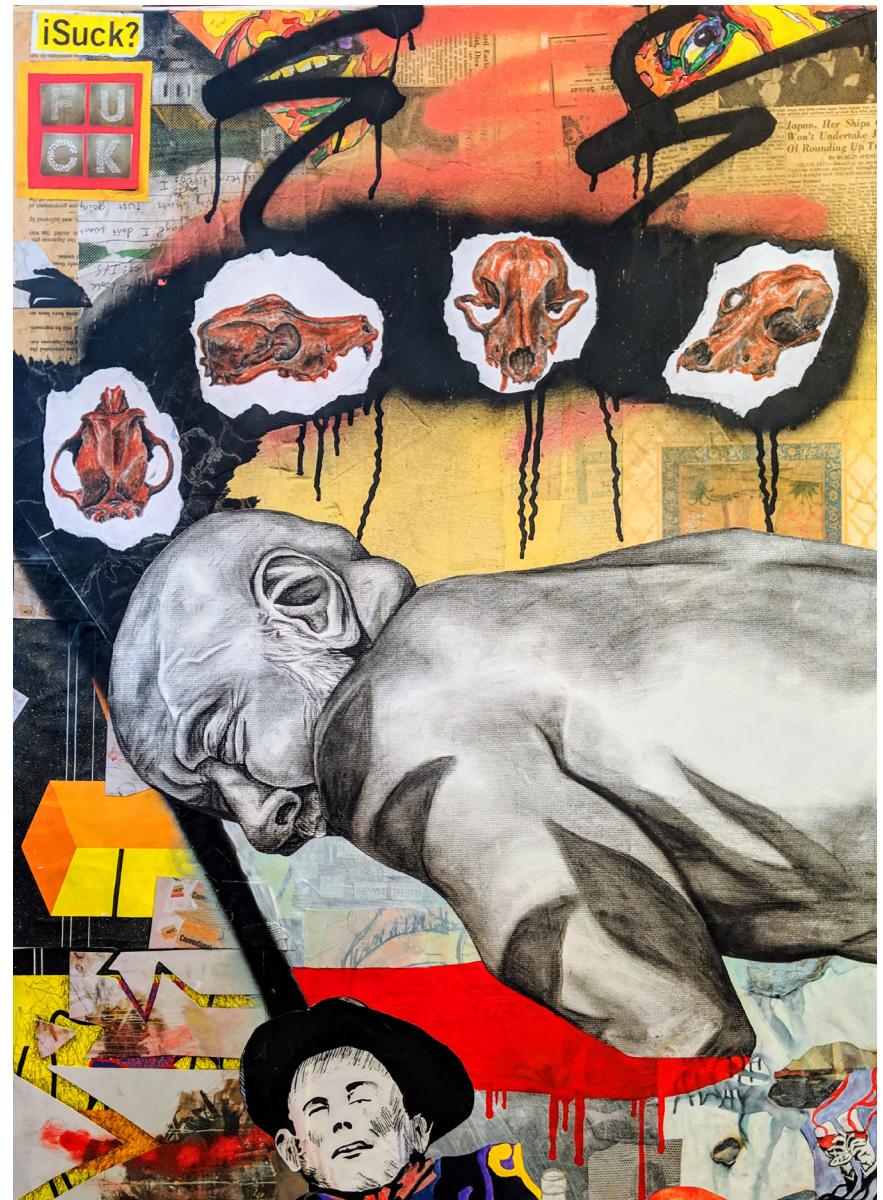
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Primal

Photograph

OMAR TAWEH



The Old Sufferer

Mixed Media

JOHNNY KOEKEE



Watcher

Photograph

TAYLOR GIORGETTI



Lantern

Monoprint

OLIVIA BALDWIN

There Will Come Hard Rains

CHRISTOPHER GARDNER

Don had only been in the country a week and half, but he already regretted agreeing to come; the climate didn't agree with him — his father had warned him about the humidity, and the rain, but he hadn't thought it could be half as bad as the old man's stories. He had come to find out, however, that it was every bit as bad, if not worse; it began to rain two days after their arrival, and hadn't stopped since, forcing them to stop filming and wait for the rains to end — Don's boss had told him when he called that rain wouldn't do, was no good for advertising, had he ever seen a travel ad where it rained? No, of course he hadn't; sunny sells! she said, so he was just going to have to wait for the rains to end and get back on with it.

Of course, by that time they had already left Saigon (no, Ho Chi Minh City now, as he had to remind his father) for the countryside — the raw, unspoiled countryside, just as his boss had demanded; she wanted people to be mesmerized by the natural beauty of the country, she said. So, Don and his team had delved deep, down unknown miles of roads that barely cut a path through the engulfing maw of the jungle and roads that were now rivers of mud. There was nothing for Don to do except listen to the sound of the rain on his tent and wait; wait for the rain to end, and for his father to say something.

It had taken weeks to convince his boss to allow Don's father to come with them; what possible reason could he have to bring his father along? He doesn't work in the business, does he? Well, no — but he's actually been there before, as it were, a long time ago. He could be a translator. But they already had a translator lined up, this isn't a family vacation, you know; it's serious work.

Don knew, but insisted, he could be a consultant; he would be the only American there who had been there before, he could help them embrace the culture and find the spirit of the country, or some such nonsense that he thought she may buy. Eventually, Don wore her down, and got the company to send his father with him to Vietnam. He neglected to mention, though, in what capacity his father had been to the country before — much like Don's, his had not been a voluntary journey.

Don didn't much remember his father before he went away to the war, he was too young. His siblings did, though; they told him stories of the man Donald Sr. had been; he was so happy, so full of life and stories and understanding, — beatific, almost. Don was vividly aware of the man who

came back, however; he smiled a little less, and told less stories, least of all stories from the war. He seemed to be further and further away, steadily, day by day and year by year, until he was what he was now: silent. Don's father hadn't spoken more than two sentences at a time in five years, and not from a lack of people to talk to, at least until Don's mother left — she couldn't bear the silence anymore. Well, neither could Don at this point. The pair were alone in the tent, the rest of the crew having gone down to the village in an effort to procure more food — they were going to be here much longer than intended it seemed. He racked his mind in a desperate search for something, anything, to talk about. Everything that came to mind fell flat. It was like trying to build a bridge without any supports; every word he tried to force across his lips fell into silence, and was washed away in the rain.

When his boss told him he would be going to Vietnam for his next project, Don felt that it was time to give his father closure, to bring him to face his demons and reclaim the part of himself he had left in the jungle. That is why he brought him, isn't it? Why else would he — why else, for that matter, would his father agree to come? Don wasn't exactly sure anymore; the rain washed away the sense of purpose from his mind, and as he sat in the tent, looking across at his father as he gazed out through the endless downpour silently with a face of stone, Don wondered why they were even there.

Don followed his father's gaze out into the drowning world outside the tent, and he saw a small figure scurrying up the hill. The person was carrying a large palm leaf over their head, and had their other hand tucked away under their shirt. As he watched, Don recognized this figure to be Thuan. She ran into the tent and gave a sigh of relief, dropped the palm leaf, and pulled her other hand from her shirt to reveal today's treasure: a pack of cigarettes and a newspaper written in Vietnamese. Don couldn't read the paper, but his father could — parts of it, at least. Thuan handed the cigarettes to Don, and turned the paper over to Don's father. He received it with a nod, and handed the girl a crumpled-up dollar bill from his shirt pocket.

Thuan was a young girl of about ten or eleven. She had met them on their first day there when Don saw her lurking around the camp. Their translator spoke to the girl and determined she was from the village at the foot of the hill on which Don and his team were camped, that she had never seen foreigners before. Thuan visited every morning since, and brought small offerings like the cigarettes and the paper, which she happily sold for American dollars. Thuan beamed at Don's father, and said something in Vietnamese that Don assumed was some form of thanks. The old man looked at her for a moment, and then cracked a crooked half-smile, and responded in a very rusty Vietnamese. Don was shocked — what had Thuan said to his father to elicit what Don had been looking for this whole time — a simple response, just an acknowledgment that someone else was there in the tent with him. He sat bewildered for a while as Thuan read the paper aloud to them. When she had finished, and was writing what to

Don were unintelligible characters in the dirt, Don mustered up the courage to ask his father what she had said. Before he could speak, though, his father looked over at him and said, "Nineteen sixty-eight."

Don stared at him blankly for a moment before stammering out, "What?"
"The year on the newspaper. Nineteen sixty-eight."

"Were you here then?" Don asked, encouraged by his startling, sudden progress.

"Yes."

"Wh- what was it like?"

Silence.

Don's surging confidence fell flat once again. He should have expected as much, but he couldn't resist feeling disappointed. His father began to watch as Thuan carved characters into the dirt floor of the tent, but the words meant nothing to Don, so he turned his gaze back to the rain. He tried to find in the unending torrents some semblance of comfort, but there was none to be had — only a cold moisture that seeped into his bones and soaked him from the inside out. He felt utterly defeated. As he watched, he saw a flash, and heard a low, slow peal of thunder in the distance. He shuddered and turned from the consuming rain, looking instead back to the expressionless face of his father. Don wondered what his father felt of the rain, tried to divine some sense of his mind through the creases of his face, but only found more of the same — silence.

Don felt now as he often had, going back into the past as far as he could consciously remember; that his father was in fact his grandfather; that such a gulf lie between them that it spanned a generation, and would take as long to cross. In his father Don found no paternal compassion, nor any sense of camaraderie; no real human connection from father to son or human to human, but no opposition either — simply what he interpreted as a will to be apart from the world in which he currently moved. Or was it the opposite, Don thought as the rain continued to fall. Was it that he wanted nothing more than to be able to rid himself of something, to rejoin the world from which he had been taken in the name of duty, the name of honor, then name of God, whatever, and to which he had been barred from returning.

His father slowly cocked his head to one side and then the other as if to crack his neck, to alleviate the building tension within his body and the world around it. As he did, he glanced at Don from the corner of his eye and snorted. "Jesus Donny," he spat out, "Why the hell you starin' at me?" Don was taken back by the suddenness and bitterness of the outburst, and more than a little embarrassed. He felt like a child again, helpless and clueless. He looked down at his shoes in the mud.

His actual grandfather (as opposed to the distant old man seated not five feet from him) had gone to war as well — both of them had, in fact; one had earned himself a purple heart in Tunisia as Patton boxed away like a cocksure brute at the tail of the Desert Fox, and the other (his father's father) had gone down in a torpedo bomber in Leyte Gulf and had been posthumously awarded the Air Medal. They were heroes, thought Don, the whole lot of them were big goddamned heroes; greatest generation! — especially the dead ones. Was that it? Did his father wish he had gone down too, like his father before him? Maybe then he'd be a real hero; he wouldn't be this at least. Don pushed the idea from his mind; he wasn't willing to

accept that on top of everything else — he couldn't bear to look at a man who was gazing placidly now at the place he had come to die. Maybe it was the other thing; that cocksure brutality we used to win the war, that anyone used to win any war, or to create them, in Don's estimation. And it hadn't stopped, had it? The smug blindness of a fighter with bloodied knuckles standing over the man whose teeth were thrown across the floor like twinkling artificial constellations on the ceiling of a planetarium. It hadn't stopped; it had only grown, from year to year and decade to decade, crisis to crisis and war to war. And now — and now....

Don sucked his teeth and lit a cigarette, Thuan continued to write, and even began to hum a quiet melody Don could barely make out over the incessant rain drumming on the canvas tent and hissing into the muddy pools outside.

He was rapidly nearing the end of his patience; the inscrutable old man, the child drawing nonsensical symbols in the mud, and the eternal rain pressed on him like a vice, straining him to the point of bursting. Propelled by the pressure, he rallied the last reserves of his pride and said,

"Dad, why did you even agree to come back here? I know you didn't just come here to help me on this fucking commercial. So what's the point of sitting here and not saying anything?!"

Don stared at his father with a barely concealed fire smoldering behind his eyes. Thuan looked up from her writing when Don spoke, her eyes shifting back and forth between the two men uncomprehendingly and not without a little fear. After a long pause filled only with the sound of the rain, his father turned to meet his gaze with cool, almost serene blue eyes.

"I came back," he said "to see if the trees had grown back." The tension coiled up inside Don broke, and he gazed blankly at his father, who turned back to look out at the lush hills, and deflated slightly, as if he were setting down a heavy load.

He said, "Got drafted in sixty-seven, by time I got here they had already been burnin' down the trees for years, tryin' to get at the Vietcong in the jungle, leave 'em no place left to hide. I seen 'em use it once. We were out on patrol and came into an ambush, and there was so many of 'em we had to call in the jets for support. And they came through and lit up the whole forest where they were hiding, and we got out of there. Came back through a week later on another patrol, and the forest wasn't there no more — it was all burnt down to the ground. We found out why there had been so many of 'em — there was a village full of 'em right back in that jungle. We could tell by all the burnt bodies that weren't holdin' guns, and the little ones."

He paused and continued his detached stare into the darkening clouds as another peal of thunder rolled across the dome of the sky.

"I came back to see if the trees had grown back so nobody would ever have to see that sight again."

"You know these aren't the same trees, dad." He had meant to be consoling or supportive somehow, but as soon as he said it he couldn't understand why he had, and regretted it.

"Doesn't matter, Donny. At least there are trees. And kids." his father said, glancing at Thuan.

She had resumed her writing rather cheerfully after she had seen an argument wasn't breaking out, but began to grow weary and a little flighty as the thunder continued to crawl towards them.

Don looked at the girl and tried to imagine her the way his father saw her, as an absolution, and he began to well up in sympathy towards her. He called her name, and she turned quickly to look at him with bright and foreboding eyes. He turned to his father and said, "Can you ask her to do me a huge favor and run down to the village to get the crew back up here? I don't want them to get stuck down there or be out on the hill when the lightning gets here. Tell her to go as fast as possible, and get back here." His father turned to Thuan and translated the message. She looked at him fearfully and pointed to the heavy clouds looming over the hills, but Don was determined — he dug in his pocket and pulled out a twenty-dollar bill, and held it out to Thuan. She looked at him hesitantly, before finally taking the money and darting out of the tent into the storm.

The Morpheus

An Excerpt

ELLEN FULLER

Interviewing for the perfect subject was a lot like dating, in Darren's opinion. Any little flaw could immediately disqualify a candidate. Of the fifteen people that showed up that first day, three were disqualified for insomnia, four for fear of needles, and six for having suffered past mental illnesses. The last two had nothing physically or mentally wrong with them but were both uncertain if they could make the time commitment required for the experiment.

After an entire day of feigning politeness, Darren was exhausted. He could have spent fourteen hours recording nuanced changes in a rat's behavior, whereas just six hours of social interviews sucked out his soul. "I don't think we found anyone today," Darren sighed. That meant that tomorrow would be just as emotionally grueling.

"There's just one more who just signed the list. Should I bring her in?" Darren's heart dropped. "Fine, one more interview, then I'm going home." Jessica rolled her eyes. "Yes, Dr. Brown, I promise I'll let you go home to your Indian take-out and piles of car magazines. Please be nice for a couple more minutes."

The woman who followed Jessica into the room wouldn't have looked out of place at a carnival. Her enormous wedged, fluffy heels placed her about six inches taller than Dr. Brown. Or perhaps some of those inches could be attributed to her ridiculous, eighties-style blonde hair. Different colored hair extensions threatened to tumble out of the bird's nest on her head. She had piled on make-up, but apparently lacked talent for applying it; her skin resembled cracked desert sand, her lashes broken spider legs, and her eyebrows pieces of charcoal pasted to her forehead. Her plastic lips formed a rehearsed pout as she strutted with both arms poised in front of her like a tyrannosaurus rex.

"Dr. Brown, this is Melissa Aisling. Ms. Aisling, this is my project partner, Darren Brown."

"Well ain't you a cutie," Melissa Aisling said, "And call me 'Missy Sugar'. Melissa is so dang formal!" Her voice was somehow more jarring than her appearance. It was possibly the loudest sound this lab had ever heard, and the atrociously fake southern accent distorted each syllable of speech.

Darren wasn't entirely sure how to act next to this strange creature. "Um, ok. Dr. Jamison, would you like to start the interview?"

Jessica, who had recovered more quickly than Darren, sat down across from Melissa—Missy Sugar—and began the questioning.

"Can you tell me about your dreams? If you remember any of them, that is," Jessica said. Dr. Brown whipped his head towards her. The fact that she was asking this question meant that she thought Missy Sugar had serious potential as a research candidate.

"Fo' sho', honey!" Missy Sugar squealed and clapped her hands together, her three-inch fake nails clattering like the claws of a rat, "I have this one dream where I'm in a shop, like Target or somethin', and then I can't find my way out!"

Dr. Brown could have cried. He would *not* spend the next year and a half working with a woman whose most interesting dream is wandering around Target.

Dr. Jamison listened with little nods and noises of agreement as Missy Sugar rattled on about her short-lived run on a local beauty pageant as a teenager; her ex-boyfriend who was now married to her mom; and how her high school superlative had been "Most Gullible".

"Dr. Jamison," Dr. Brown said after almost an hour of incessant babble, "we unfortunately have to close the laboratory now. It was nice talking to you, Ms. Aisling."

"Oh, Doctor! It was so nice talkin' to you!"

Dr. Brown stood and extended his hand, but Missy Sugar just crossed her legs, her sequin mini-skirt riding so high that Dr. Brown wanted to offer her a lab coat just to maintain what little modesty she had left.

"Anyways, as I was sayin' before, my girlfriend, Tara, is on this new diet where she only eats green foods, and she lost 22 pounds! But then I try it, got my green food dye and everythin', and I swear, I gained some! Now isn't that something, Doctor?"

As Missy Sugar prattled on, Jessica and Darren exchanged glances—hers amused, his furious. Missy Sugar hadn't caught on to his not-so-subtle hint to leave the lab. Dr. Jamison shrugged and turned her attention back towards Missy Sugar's grueling story.

Darren focused his attention slightly above Melissa Aisling's enormous hair and tried to tune out the mosquito-like droning of her voice.

Missy Sugar was sitting on the edge of the hospital bed, her spray-painted sneakers kicking the air and scuffing the floors. She twirled a dead and tortured strand of dyed hair around her ringed claw and smacked her gum like the jaws of death. Darren peered at her through the window of room A121 with disgust and braced himself for the onslaught of stupidity.

"How are you today, Ms. Missy Sugar?" He asked in a false chipper tone. Anyone with the slightest social perception would have picked up the ill-disguised impatience there, but Missy Sugar just grinned vapidly at him.

"Oh, Doctor," Missy Sugar drawled in her fake southern belle accent. He didn't know why she kept that up—he knew very well from her file that she was from Detroit. "I'm doing just...*fine*."

During the time which it had taken her to finish her four-word sentence,

he had already finished washing his hands and prepping the needle. The sooner this was over with, the better.

"Alright Ma'am. Let's get started," Dr. Brown said.

He took a bit of sick pleasure in how her overdrawn mouth puckered in discomfort as he stuck her with the tiny needle.

"Start counting to ten," he instructed.

"One," Missy Sugar drew out the syllable for five whole seconds. Darren wondered if it was because she didn't know what came next. Her voice trailed off and she began to snore softly. He velcroed a lap belt around her—he knew, from months of watching her sleep, that she had a tendency to kick.

Dr. Jamison rapped on the door and entered without waiting for an answer. She didn't speak much as she prepared the general anesthesia and connected Dr. Brown's strange headwear to Missy Sugar's own. She muttered a 'good luck' and sat herself down to watch them.

He was in a Target, predictably. A Pitbull terrier in a Superman costume waddled past, then faded into nothing. Dr. Brown stared after it. He didn't know if he would ever get used to the experience of someone else's dream. The closest comparison he could think of was being the only sober person at a party. Without the suspension of disbelief of a dreamer, the dreamscape was disorienting and creepy. He was grateful in some ways that Missy Sugar wasn't more creative.

He rifled through a rack of clothes. He screamed as one dress unraveled into hundreds of tiny snakes underneath his fingers.

"Who's there?" a voice called.

Darren froze. In his dozens of hours in Missy Sugar's head, he had met a few people from Missy's past. Her ex-boyfriend, who had chased him down with a booger on his finger; her mother, who had yelled at him for not doing his homework. Sometimes he experienced it from Missy's perspective, sometimes he was just a member of the cast. The worst part about dreams was the unpredictability.

"Who's there?" the voice repeated, sounding scared now.

Darren had made the decision to ignore her, when something poked him hard in the back and he collapsed forward onto the snake-dress.

"Ow!" he spun to face the woman, rubbing at the small of his back. Nothing should have been able to touch him in the dreamscape. Falling onto the rack of clothes felt like nothing, the same nothing everyone knows from dreams. Perhaps someone in the real world had poked him, and Missy's mind was filling in the gaps?

But then he saw her face and his jaw fell open. It was *her!* It was Missy Sugar, but without all of the ridiculous clothes and accessories. This Missy Sugar had natural brown hair and brown eyes, rather than the alarming colored contacts the real-life Missy Sugar wore. Her clothes were just clothes, not statements. Never had someone so normal looked so ... abnormal.

"Missy Sugar?" Darren said.

The woman winced. "Melissa. Melissa Aisling. Who are you? You don't belong here."

"Dr. Darren Brown," Darren shook Melissa's hand. Her nails were bitten to the beds and she squeezed his hand a little too tight.

"What are you doing here?"

"I'm a psychologist. Missy Sugar is participating in a study about dreams using The Morpheus. I am merely visiting."

"Morpheus. The Greek God of sleep and dreams. Clever," Melissa said.

"Thank you," Darren hid his shock that Melissa, as an entity of Missy Sugar, knew that piece of trivia. "Who are you?"

"What do you mean? I told you, I'm Melissa Aisling."

"But you're so...different from Missy Sugar."

"I haven't suffered quite as much brain damage from hairspray fumes, if that's what you mean," Melissa smiled.

"You don't seem like the same person, I mean."

"We aren't the same person. While she sleeps, I have enough...room to wake. I don't know how else to explain it."

Dr. Brown didn't understand, and he hated not understanding. He knew that all brain activity was just a firing of synapses, a passing of protons and electrons like a tennis volley, and a smattering of neurotransmitters. He felt safe when he thought of the brain that way. When the brain was just another organ, it made sense. But this science-fiction alternate reality — all contained within the skull of the dullest woman he had ever met — did not match.

"Are you alright, Darren?" Melissa asked.

"Fine," Darren whispered.

"Sit down," Melissa pulled him to the ground. "Now, tell me about The Morpheus. And don't spare any details, please."

Read the full piece online at longrivereview.com

Of Lambs and Wolves

An Excerpt

COURTNEY HAIGLER

When I first came to college, I realized that I had a superpower. Kind of like the power to split the red sea if you will. All I had to do was scowl, fix my face up real mean, fill my gaze with heat, and wherever I walked, people moved aside to keep from obstructing my path. More specifically...white people moved aside. When they saw an angry black woman walking their way, whether they were conscious of it or not, they made space between them and the "potential threat."

It helped greatly for getting me places on time, but when being angry, even as a façade grew to be almost second nature, I will admit that it became increasingly lonely, especially when you went to a predominantly white college. You either smiled all the time to show them that you weren't some imminent threat, or you didn't, powers activated, and people consciously or subconsciously shied away from you. One of those options tended to be more accessible than the other, because the lord only knows that growing up in the world I did, being angry came easy to me.

But there was a clause to this super power. It didn't work on other black people. The few that I did run into ... They didn't move aside. They'd catch my eye, look me dead in it and with the smallest of smiles, tilt their head up and then back down in one swift movement. They could see the lamb in wolves clothing. The soft spot on the hard rock. They could see through the anger to the core without a word exchanged.

And in that moment, anger forgotten, loneliness subsiding, façade dissolving, with a swift tilt of my head in return I could feel a smile bubbling to the surface, because oddly enough, something as small as that made everything just a little bit more bearable

I never thought that I'd live to see the day that my superpower didn't work. I'd put it on blast this time too. Pursed lips, furrowed eyebrows and everything. And it had no effect whatsoever. Full on collision. My face went into the shoulder of his jean jacket. God my mouth was open and everything. I pulled back, a scowl on my face and the acrid taste of Nautica cologne in my mouth.

I guess I was partly to blame but you couldn't tell that from the hostile sigh that left my mouth. I squinted my eyes and lifted my head to look up into his face. He'd lain one hand on my shoulder in his own comfort. *Why is he touching me?* Baby blue eyes paired with a sheepish grin. The boy had ears

that dumbo would be proud of, but they were partly concealed by glossy, dark brown locks that fell messily to his shoulders. I almost wanted to put a comb or brush or something to it, but I settled on just feeling annoyed.

I rolled my shoulder not subtly to make his hand fall off, but as far as I could see, it didn't even phase him.

"Sorry about that, didn't see you there."

I raised my eyebrows and nodded once. "Mm hmm, it's fine." Then I made to walk around him into Fauster. I had my last class in seven minutes and if I didn't get my claimed seat now, someone acting brand new was gonna sit there and then I'd really be upset.

Jean jacket had other ideas because he leaned over a bit, mouth slightly agape like he'd come to an almighty realization.

"Hey! We had English 3407 together. And I'm pretty sure we have Guyers together too. You always sit by the windows, right?"

Even as I searched his face, I couldn't find one thing that struck any memories. I went to class, did my work, then went to my room. I didn't spend my time looking in other people's faces, when there were lessons on the board.

I tilted my head up acknowledging his statement but trailed my eyes to look over his shoulder at the glass door behind him. Yeah, I had English 3407 last semester, and Guyers this one too but did he really expect me to remember who he was I didn't have one conversation with this guy and I wasn't looking for one either.

He still had that pleasant smile on his face. Why the hell wasn't it working. I had the scowl, the eyebrows, the disinterested stance. Why was he still trying to talk to me?

He stuck out his hand for me to shake. "I'm Logan, I didn't catch your name." Logan, he looked like a Logan.

I glanced back at him, the sun's harsh rays warming the back of my neck. My tone held no warmth. "I didn't throw it." It probably would have been easier to smile and bear it, but I didn't have time for this.

Logan clutched at his heart and leaned back a bit, his face modeling something akin to pain. "Ouch." The tips of his ears turned red but instead of walking away he just pointed up at the sky. "Come on, it's a beautiful day, the sun is shining, it's warm, the grass is green. Why do you look so angry?" Oh my goodness, he had to know how cheesy everything he said just sounded. And lord Jesus if the next thing out his mouth was telling me to smile, he was gonna get the glare. I wanted to tell him to mind his own goddamn business, but I figured that would be too rude.

People walked around us, coming in and out of the building behind him, and with each swing of the door my patience was growing thinner. Why was he choosing now of all times to start a conversation?

I sighed and crossed my arms. "It *usually* gets me places faster."

Logan nodded his head. "Can't argue with that." This guy was straight up missing all the barbs I was throwing his way.

We stood there for a second. Me with my arms crossed and him standing there looking like he was having a casual conversation with a friend. I

looked at the clock on my phone. There goes my seat. The crowd thinned, and things settled on the outside of the glass doors as students made their way to their classes. I pointed to the doors, one arm clutching the red book bag on my shoulder.

"I have class...so..."

Logan nodded his head vigorously, his eyes darting to the floor and back again. "Yeah, sorry. I guess I'll see you in class..." He was waiting for my name. A hopeful expression on his face. I definitely wasn't being the nicest person, and I was fully aware of that and I'm sure he was too. But something in his demeanor made me feel just a tiny bit guilty about my snippiness, even though he'd cost me my seat. Grabbing the door handle, I pulled it open.

"...Tiana." I gave him one last look, his smile had come back, but I didn't expect much out of this altercation, so I turned and went to class. And as I predicted, my seat was gone.

I swear to god the universe was laughing at me. Logan was in two of my classes, and in both of them, he'd taken to sitting in back of me. For the first week he didn't say anything, but wave in greeting. Then he tried to start conversation. At first, I gave him one sentence answers, hoping he would be discouraged and let me go about my business, but I'll tell you something, this white boy was persistent, either that or he was a masochist. Every day without fail. Until it became a commonplace thing, there he was with that smile, that irritatingly warm patience. His messy brown hair.

I could feel the exact moment where all hell shifted and all I could think was "damn."

"Psst."

"...psssst." Oh my goodness.

"PSSSTTTT." Here we go again. I slowly rounded on him quietly as not to disturb the rest of class, my eyes slightly widened, and my lips pressed tight together. When I'd turned around as far as my torso could go I met his eyes and let my head drop a little to the side.

"Can I help you with something?"

Logan linked his fingers together, rested his chin on them, then tilted his head to the side, mirroring that angel pose photographers from the 90's usually had kids do. My mother made sure that each of her kids had a picture like that hanging proudly on her living room walls. He smiled real sweet, making me lean back a little in distrust. It was always something different with him

"Hello Tiana, you're looking especially radiant today." What? I looked out of the corner of my eyes then back at him. My mind blanked. His smile widened.

My eyebrows furrowed then loosened again a few times until I could come up with a coherent thought.

"...uh...thanks?" I turned back around to my desk slowly, trying to work things out in my head, but I could feel the grin still on his face. I rounded on him again, this time with a little bit more speed.

"Don't think I don't know what you're doing. You're not gonna kill me with kindness."

Logan raised an eyebrow, leaning back in his chair, folding his arms loosely across his chest, stretching out and crossing his legs at the ankles, disturbing the person behind him, I'm sure. But his smile had a twinge of smugness in it.

"We'll see."

He'd somehow wormed his way in. My superpower had failed. *Huh*. Had he seen the lamb too?

—
"I want to meet your family."

My head snapped up until I was staring him dead in the face. "What?" Logan sat on my dorm bed, soft blue eyes staring warmly at me. He held one of the teddy bears from my bed cradled in his lap. I always teased him about it, the fact that he seemed to do it subconsciously when he came over and he'd always toss it to the side, like it'd damaged his masculinity, but I didn't have the chance to today.

He ran his hands through his hair. He did that when he was nervous. "I mean I told you I loved you a month ago and we've been together for five months but we've never brought it up, but I've been wanting to introduce you to my folks for a while now and...I was kind of hoping you'd want me to meet your family too..." He was speaking faster than normal.

I bit my lip. Had I been avoiding this? Not entirely no but... "I just think it's a bit too soon."

Logan's whole face fell, and he looked down at the floor, like the gray tile was suddenly so interesting. A heavy weight settled on my heart. How the hell was I supposed to tell him, every frustration, the constant anger of systematic oppression, the fear of rejection of my friends my family...his, or of the guilt that ate at me because sometimes when I looked at another black person, and I was with him, it somehow felt like I was doing some great betrayal even though I know I hadn't done anything wrong, and Logan was a good guy. How was I supposed to tell him all of this and have him understand? I didn't know. Nothing was coming to me.

"Are you ashamed of me?" His voice was quiet, like he'd only ever said it to himself. "You won't hold my hand for longer than a minute in public. You back out every time I want to bring you out to meet my friends or introduce myself to yours."

I looked up at the ceiling. "I'm not ashamed of you—"

"Then what is it? Is this about the court decision? You've been on edge ever since they didn't indict that cop on the news. Why does it feel like you're mad at me? Did I do something to upset you."

I sighed heavily and shook my head. Looking everywhere else but at him. "No, I'm not upset with you—"

Logan slid off of the bed, making the sheet slide a little off of the edge. He rested both of his hands on my elbows, leaning down a bit to look into my eyes. "Then why are you so angry. You won't speak to me, and it's killing me. Don't shut me out again. What's bothering you?"

That gnawing feeling was back, but this time it was insistent. So much so it felt like an itch that needed to be scratched.

The words bubbled to my tongue and left my mouth with a lot more force than I'd planned. "You're white! Okay! You're white and I'm black and I know you see the looks people give us, you know what they say behind our backs." I could see it in their eyes when we walked by, like we were committing some grave sin. It was the 21st century and every time we even leaned close to each other it was like we were suddenly on display for the whole world. If they weren't making a big deal about the difficulties of the relationship, their friends were making jokes about "swirling" and all of their kids looking like neither of them. It grated on you.

Logan pinched the bridge of his nose. "So what. You're black, I'm white, so what! Were just two people who love each other, why is that such a big deal?!"

I pointed my finger at him. "You know why it's such a big deal."

"Why do you care so much about what other people think about our relationship?! If they don't like it or whatever the hell else, then they can just piss off. It's as simple as that."

I shook his hand off of my elbow. "It's not that simple. Would you tell your mother to piss off if she thought this relationship would "screw you over?" No, you wouldn't, and I wouldn't want you to anyway."

Logan huffed, rolling his head. "No, I wouldn't tell her to piss off, I'd tell her that you make me happy and I hope to all hell that I make you happy too, and that is *again* all that matters. Besides when you meet her I know she'll love you just because I do." He didn't give up.

"Come on Tee..."

I bit my lip, my hands fumbling over each other.

Read the full piece online at longriverreview.com

Because Even Titanic Sunk

VERONICA SCHORR

and that's how Fabrizio died, poor
bastard: the metallic taste of smokestack
in his lungs, *con niente*,
the scene a ball of baitfish. I imagine
being schizophrenic before Seroquel
was like the fifteenth of April, 1912.
All that noise,

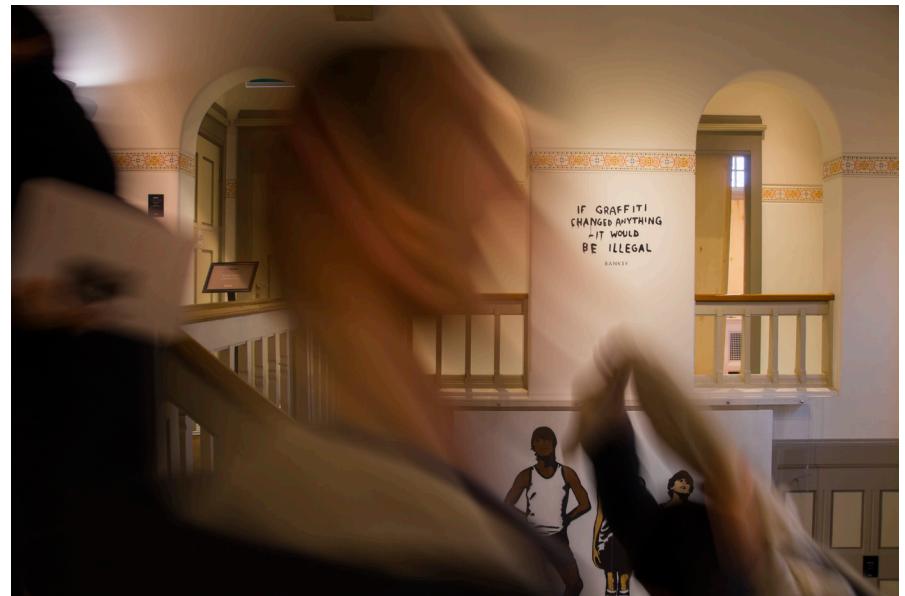
then nothing.



How Much Can You Take

Mixed Media

JOHNNY KOEKEE



Mush

Photography

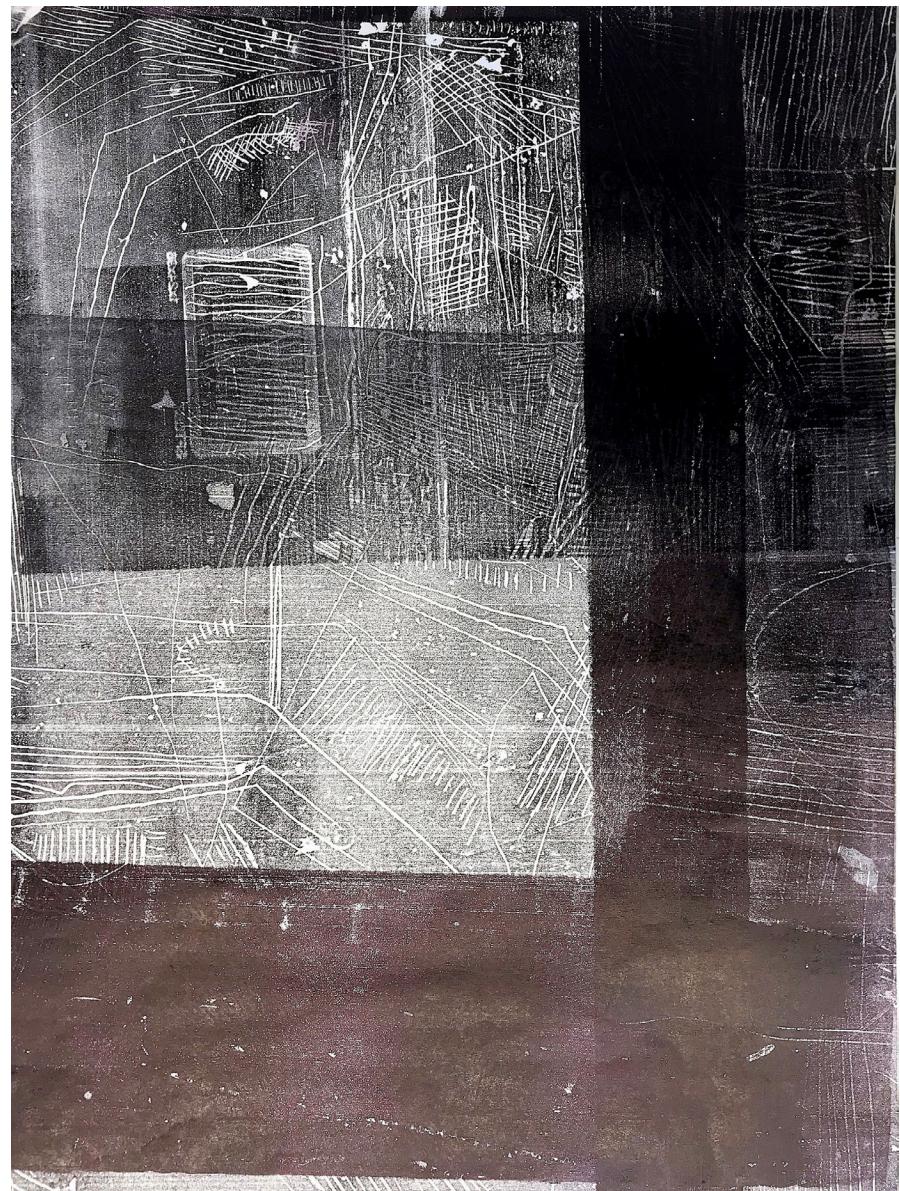
OMAR TAWEH



Recycled Art

Mixed Media

JOHNNY KOEKEE



Look Back

Monoprint

OLIVIA BALDWIN

Contributor Biographies

SOPHIA BRUCE is a high school senior at ACES Educational Center for the Arts in New Haven. She likes train rides and alphabetically-ordered lists.

MATHIESON BYER is a sixth semester student studying philosophy at the University of Connecticut. She grew up in New York, but plans on moving west after graduation. She enjoys logic and debate, and hopes to become a litigator in the future.

KERRY CARNAHAN is from Kansas. After a decade working as an environmentalist, she now pursues doctoral studies in English at UConn where she is translating the Song of Songs. Her poems have appeared in Boston Review and she was a runner-up in the 2017 92Y 'Discovery'/Boston Review poetry contest. She is a former Fulbright Scholar and MacDowell Fellow.

SEAN CAVANAUGH is a junior at University of Connecticut. He studies English and psychology, but spends his free time working on creative writing projects and performing with the University of Connecticut's Reckless Gents Improv Troupe.

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ALYSSA GRIMALDI is a sixth-semester English major at the University of Connecticut. She is passionate about literature and hopes to one day work in the field of publishing. She is inspired by her time travelling abroad, especially her time in the Scottish Highlands and Iceland.

COURTNEY HAIGLER has published literary essays in James Hillhouse High Literary Magazine on humanity and prize winning essays "Who They Really Are" and "Black Lives Lost" in the area as well. She is working toward her bachelor's degree in creative writing from the University of Connecticut.

AIN JEONG is a second- semester English master's student at the University of Connecticut. She is studying multicultural American literature with interests in Asian American studies, digital media, and visual culture. She enjoys other people's poetry but does not consider herself a poet, aside from the occasional fun haiku.

J. KATES is a poet and literary translator who lives in Fitzwilliam, New Hampshire.

STELLA KOZLOSKI is a second semester student at the University of Connecticut studying studio art. If you hear a cover of a Leonard Cohen song floating out of the Buckley lounge, it's probably her.

FRANZISKA LEE is a high school junior at the Educational Center for the Arts in New Haven. Her passions include the ocean, prolific female writers, and comics. Right now, she would really like to get into college.

DANIELLE PIERATTI is a first year PhD student in English at the University of Connecticut. Her first book of poems, *Fugitives*, was published by Lost Horse Press in 2016. She teaches high school English and lives in Connecticut with her husband and two children.

CASSANDRA QUAYSON is a seventeen-year-old high school senior and aspiring author who will be studying English at NYU this fall. Her motto is, "The trouble with having all these notions of what I'd like to read is that no one's written it yet. So I'll write it myself."

BENJAMIN RADCLIFFE is a senior at the University of Connecticut with a dual degree in English and anthropology. After he graduates, he plans on becoming a deckhand and sailing the open sea.

ISABELLA SARACENI is a multi-material visual artist whose current work explores memory and experiences of womanhood. She is a senior studio art major concentrating in painting with a minor in art history.

VERONICA SCHORR is a senior pursuing a double major in psychology and English with a concentration in creative writing. Most recently, she was published in *Chronogram* magazine.

FATIMA SIRAJ is a fourth semester student at Habib University in Pakistan. She is studying social development and policy, with a minor in history. She has a keen interest in writing and conducts poetry workshops in schools to encourage young students towards the literary world. She hopes to contribute to Pakistan's literary landscape.

ANNA ROSE STROSSER is a 4th semester English major at the University of Connecticut. She writes poetry and enjoys reading Charles Bukowski and Philip Larkin.

OMAR TAWEH is a senior with a dual degree in neurobiology & psychology, and a minor in human rights. His photography comments on the individual impact of societal expectations.

LAUREN VALLEDOR is a senior undergraduate student studying English with a minor in biological sciences. She plans to attend law school in the fall of 2020. Her hobbies include climbing, crocheting, and reading.

OLIVIA BALDWIN is a visual artist and a current MFA candidate in studio art at the University of Connecticut. She received her BFA in painting and photography and BA in English and creative writing from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Her work, which spans painting, sculpture, and installation, has been exhibited in solo and group exhibitions in Austria, Italy, and throughout the United States, including A.I.R. Gallery, Boston University's Faye G., Jo, and James Gallery, and Jane Lombard Gallery.

DAN CRIBLEZ is a graduating sculpture major at the Lyme Academy College of Fine Arts. Dan has created a body of work consisting of different mediums of art including: film, installation, sound, painting, and sculpture. Experimenting within those mediums has brought the abstraction of his mind to life. He will be releasing his debut short film depicting the relationship between the realism and abstraction of the human mind and sound album this coming summer along with his paintings and sculptures. Dan plans to move to Bushwick, Brooklyn after graduation to continue his art and film career.

JACOB McGINNIS lives in the woods of New Hampshire with his family, just off of the long river.

TAYLOR GIORGETTI is a second year fine arts student at the University of Connecticut. Interested in both graphic design and photography, she enjoys showing people the world around them through new perspectives that might have otherwise gone unseen.

KA YING (ANGELA) KWOK is a business major who has never stopped her love for the arts. While she is not studying and working hard, she is holed up in her room drawing and writing, and posts successful pieces on her dorm room door, offering joy to those who walk past.

JOHNNY KOKEE is an artist from Connecticut. He is interested in fine arts, writing, comedy, and television. In the coming year, he hopes to continue developing his art style as well as publish his first book.

Colophon

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