

estuary

acadia's creative arts magazine

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Simpson, and Brandon Johnston with
special thanks to Billy Ogilvie and
Braeden Way

Marie

We sat together
Speaking perfect English
But occasionally stopping
To include a man who could not
Awaiting the next bus together
And when we heard the engine
I panicked because I thought it might be your turn
But it wasn't, not yet
And what was left of our little family marched out to that bus
Like soldiers ready for battle
And we all had to say the one word we wished we didn't
And the bus started to creep away
I never heard pain make a sound 'til then
And running was no use for anyone
And then what was left of our family
Which wasn't much
Went back to our home
Which was no longer a home
And I sat there in silence
Because I knew that you were next
And when it was time I carried your pillow
And I couldn't even look at you
Because if I looked at you I thought about what it would be like
When I couldn't look at you anymore
And I held it in all the way to the bus
Where I looked into your eyes
And ugly sobs escaped my throat
Even though I tried so hard to stop them
And you tried to hug them away
But they just kept coming
And I couldn't breathe
And our little sister was crying too
And you got on that bus
And I looked up at you
And you made a funny face
Trying to make me smile
And a hysterical chuckle escaped my lips
Along with twice as many tears as before
Because you always had a way to do that
And then the bus started up
And it took you away

And I couldn't breathe worse than ever
And I want you to know
That I still can't breathe
Not one bit

~Samantha White

Revolution

Each moment could have been
an ending.

A disaster.
All we wanted was a revolution.

Because we're all standing
in the rain waiting
for the lightening
to strike the bell tower,
so that we can engrave the stones
with our names so that
all will remember
and know
who the tragedy
belonged to.

we've said too much
in too many words,
revealed our secrets.

They've pried open these cabinet doors,
this cage of bones and spear points
to unravel the heartbeat hidden within

Vulnerable, our hopes exposed,
the layers peeled back and
tattooed into our veins
like marks of self-destruction,
we will stand in our soaked skins,
waiting for the march to begin,
our malleable bones clutching our flagstaffs
and banners, the frayed edges rippled
by wind
and moonlight

each breath held
in anticipation,
crystallized and palpable
in the moment before
the storm breaks

~Jennifer Galambos

Healing Hymn

Remember, remember;
The pain that seems to last forever
Will only exist while you're willing to suffer
Will plague but a fraction of your existence
An instant
Unless you choose to reminisce in it.

Restart, restart;
From broken arm to broken heart
And all-but-shattered sense of self
Look forward
You've a lighter load to carry
For everything is temporary.

~ *Malia Rogers*

Beneath A Mirrored Mask

Beneath a mirrored mask I hide,
little more than a figment of your illustrious imagination.

You strove to change me, and believed you had,
deceived by my mirrored face, which showed but yours.
What else am I to be but the lover of you, the Narcissist.
Our lips meeting under the illusion of your face, what love is this?

~ Asia Forbes

The Stare of Inanimate Objects

My curse was not sure-footed.
It rather took my hand in reaching for something else
and guided me into that room
as if I were an infant led by an uncertain sibling.

But when I saw him sleeping there, I knew what pushed me,
recognized the language my muscles spoke, and acted in an aggression
that can only be described by the sudden expansion of a cat's pupils
or the flaring of an eagle's plumage.

It seemed a shame to perform in front of so many witnesses.

The mahogany chair, carved by a southern artisan,
born into a wealthy family, now spritzed
by my own swift whittling.

The afghan, knit with the greatest intentions
hopes of bringing warmth to a newborn
on an elderly woman's lap
only now to drown in a saturating puddle of rose.

The lamp, the mirror, each photograph and knickknack
all watching, judging silently, waiting, holding onto breath
so that mine is the only one heard.

His has been long gone now.

And there lies my guilt,
not for him,
but for the room

that I forced myself into and violated.

This room whose role and purpose I so drastically,
easily changed in an instant
now shivered its walls under my cloth and chemicals
as I stripped its skin of my crime.

But this room would not forget.

I bargain, suggest a new paint job or maybe re-carpeting

But I see that it has been traumatized

And there is no saving it.

~Sadie Moland

Four Walls

The walls were breathing;
Inhaling the world and spitting it back out at me.
I sank within its ribcage.
Enveloped in warm bones,
Lying in the wake of distant pulsations
Of a beating heart keeping time.
Its oscillating vibrations
Making conversation with my eardrums.
Eyes dancing to the tune,
Tracing a maze to nirvana
While nearly losing my footing
On the stairs of its spine.
Climbing up, up, up
Into a labyrinth of knowledge.
I waved to a smiling face
Amongst a vision of memories.
A door to the right read, "do not enter."
To the left, "approach with caution."
So I continued forward,
Enclosing myself in the boxcar
Of an awaiting rollercoaster ride.
Plunging over a cliff, I gasped
Swallowing a sweet taste
Of my new destination.
A crystal lake bordered with a white picket fence.
Soft moonlight fading with each passing moment,
I turned to leap off its diving board into unknown.
The gatekeeper nodded and said,
Always keep your head up,
Unless you're swimming in the sea."
To which I responded,
Everything is divine."

~Jillian Savoy

Home

The sudden rapping at the bathroom door shakes me from my stupor. “Miss? Miss? I’m going to have to ask you to return to your seat now!” The flight attendant instructs me through the door. I start to breathe slowly. You can do this. It’s fine!

“I’m coming out!” I respond. I grab my belongings all scattered around the tiny airplane bathroom and shove them into my canvas bag. I could’ve just worn my nice outfit for the whole plane ride, but plane clothes always feel gross to me after a few hours. I push open the door and shift awkwardly out of the bathroom as the flight attendant blocks my path. She shimmies around me and my large collection of things. I place my bag directly in front of me and slowly make my way up the aisle. I sit down and quickly do up my seat belt as we are about to land. The man in the middle seat looks at me incredulously in my floral dress that fits me as if it were custom made. When I left I looked like a homeless person who you’d find sleeping on the train, and came back looking like a high class prostitute. It’s the first time in months that I’ve done my hair and makeup and his reaction tells me that it has had the desired effect. My only rule in life has always been dress the way you wish you felt, and in this outfit you’d never know I nervous-vomited three times in the bathroom while getting ready.

The plane jostles about during its landing and I quickly think I could still crash and not have to do this. But it lands safely and I can feel the vomit rise again. I’m scared to look at my phone. I grip it so tightly in my hands I’m afraid the screen will break. We start to taxi the runway and the flight attendant tells us we can turn our electronics back on and my finger is already desperately smashing the power button. The apple flashes and mocks me taking forever to find service. My phone starts buzzing incessantly as my inbox floods with text messages asking to make plans. I sift through them looking for the one I want. I don’t see it. I put my phone back down and start to pull the canvas bag out from under the seat ahead of me. Once we’ve stopped I race to the front so I’m not caught dressed to the nines crying amongst a bunch of strangers. As I wait for the doors to de-pressurize I feel my phone buzz in my hand. It’s him. All it says is “Welcome Home.” I smile and walk up the ramp like it’s my runway. My heels clomp towards the future. I think he’s right. I’m finally ready for a home.

~Meaghan Smith

The Drunk

...the smell of stale gin and morning bacteria greeted me like the distant call of an old lover. I opened my weary eyes and stared at the white ceiling above as it rotated slowly. I blinked, shook my head, and finally made my way to the bathroom so I could rid myself of this fond, spiteful nostalgia trip. I cleaned myself; teeth, hair, cock, and skin, washing last night's sweat down the drain. Then I carelessly wrapped an unlaundered towel around myself and made my way to the kitchen.

Orange juice. Vodka, 2 oz. A scripted sort of greeting to a wife whose passions I had stolen some years before. She claimed I had made an ass of myself the night before. I had no recollection of this. I rebutted by claiming that it wasn't that I *was* an ass, but that I *am* an ass. She smiled. So did I. And then I held her around the waist and kissed her. She smelled something like the bacon grease that clouded the room and day old Kraft Dinner. She smelled wonderful, and we parted ways.

I made myself a bacon sandwich, and ate it with the news on for background. There was something on about the building feeling of terror over another string of stabbings in the city or something like that. The news presented itself with such sensation as to command little empathy from me. I hated it, and so I turned it off, deciding to look out of the window instead. The street was completely empty, and still it was more intellectually fulfilling than that black box of despair.

Back in the kitchen, washing plates, I decided that this was going to be the big day. Another vodka in and I thought I might go out for a walk. Maybe today I would find the inspiration I was looking for. I dressed myself in clothing from the night before, slipped a hip flask in my jacket pocket, and set off looking for the next fleeting euphoria of idea. The street was still empty. I walked to the local brook. I made myself a peaceful if conceited spot under a willow tree, and the far off sound of young lovers fucking made me all nostalgic again. I stared at the water flowing by, sipping intermittently from the flask. For a moment, I thought I might have detected the ghost of a decent thought before I realized that it was just some bullfrog croaking its impotent rage from across the stream. I sat there for a long time.

On the way back home, I took the final drink from the flask. Something hit me. I said it aloud. "I'll get clean tomorrow." Then that old Perry Como song started playing back in my head and I started to sing along with the bastard. Then I was home. Then I was asleep. Then...

~Jamison Hall

Janitor's Lesson

You learn quick what products work best for cleaning off spit and filth from the displays. Finger marks on glass: use newspaper and Windex, they'll come right off, no streaks. Boogers at ten-year-old heights crusted to banisters: Orange Cleaner, maybe 409... that stuff is My-Lord-Magic! Do you know how many people per-day, on average, hawk loogies into those Pools of Reflection? No? A *lot*. THAT'S the average. Per day. I'd say – now I can't be everywhere at once, don't quote me – 1 out of 5. People, that is. Spitting. Unbelievable. Kids who dangle threads – gobs – of phlegm as far as they can go before the thread snaps and hits them in the face and the gobs floating away to join the others. But then that's kids. Kids don't get it when they're rubbing snot on the 'Nam memorial, wiping sticky hands on Lincoln's marble shoes, flicking scabs over the waterfalls at the 9/11 sinkholes. 'Bout 45 percent of people never put their hands under the railings keeping them back from any great monument. True. But those who do usually leave a little something behind. You walk yourself right up to the rails of any great paragon of history and feel down and under a bit and BAM, you'll hit a spearmint-and-original-bubblegum-flavour barrier. Same with chairs and benches. Sometimes, it's because people want to leave something of themselves behind, stuck fast and connected to the event, the tragedy, the glory. Sometimes.

Other times it's for a different purpose entirely. Graffiti's not the worst. People who think they can topple the Washington Monument or the White House with a few short slashes of red spray-paint.

Fuck the Man.

Guy Fawkes silhouettes.

Anarchy Is The Only Way!!!

They come off real easy with a good straight solvent and elbow grease. It's the other stuff that actually topples empires. There's impotent kinds of defacement, like that – kids who won't remember in a couple years why they were so angry at the *Government*. And then there's apathy. Desensitization. Boredom. The worst. The very worst. The kind that equals dried up snot and buildups of chewed gum and people picking their noses and wiping them on commemorative plaques and leaving salami-mustard sandwiches on top of display cases. Ever lived in a world so big and great and beautiful and important that people who live in it with you get bored with the Bigness and the Beauty and the Importance? Yeah. Yeah you have. If WE weren't here, it would all go to waste. The huge social upheavals, the advances, the revolutions. We keep it clean. We keep it visible. We keep it respectable. We keep it *necessary*. We chisel off the gum and wipe down the grease and sweep away the breadcrumbs. But I can feel it; we all can. People are getting too tired to hold up the past and the present at the same time. No one ever notices the janitor.

~Ceileigh Mangalam

Regeneration

The first time he dies, his last thought is of Amelia Middleton.

Amelia Middleton is the girl who always lived in the quaint house next to his. His last thought is of her hair shining burnt umber in the setting sun, the long strands whipping into her smiling face as she laughs with abandon. It is a tiny snapshot in time – a rather arbitrary one for his mind to choose as his last thought – however, as far as last thoughts go, this one seems a rather appropriate and poetic one. He has been in love with Amelia for as long as he can remember and, just before he left, she agreed to be his wife.

(He would have married her on the spot had he known the war would tear him away from her for four long years, but that is not a nice last thought to have, so he pushes it away.)

As the fleeting image of her hair and her laugh fade from his mind, he exhales for the last time, his lungs sinking with their final breath.

He closes his eyes and all is silent.

For a total of sixty seconds, his entire body is still – not a muscle twitches, not a thought runs through his head, not a breath passes through his lips, and every organ in his body has stopped cold.

However, after those sixty seconds – that one, small minute – passes, the unmistakable *bum-bum* of a heartbeat rumbles anew in his chest.

Bum-bum.

Bum-bum.

Bum-bum.

His renewed heartbeat ripples through him and stirs his cooling blood, which begins to simmer and slowly start to move again in his veins. It creeps and crawls lethargically until fully awake and begins to flow freely to his muscles and through his limbs. His shattered ribs click back into place – snapping and locking, as would a puzzle – and new skin skates over the bullet wound in his shoulder in a translucent film that slowly becomes opaque. The cuts scattered all over his body close up as would the petals of a flower come wintertime and the purple bruises dotting his chest and knees slowly bleach to the peach of his skin. Feeling returns to his toes, scurries up his legs, skims up his stomach, burns in his hands, and climbs up his spine until his brain sparks back to life. Flashes of memories, colours, voices, faces, sounds, and words explode inside his head, his mind whirring again.

He inhales a sharp, sudden lungful of air and, with that, his eyes fly open.

That is the first time he comes back to life.

~Alexandra Fournier

Waiting



~Riley MacKinnon

Covered



~Riley MacKinnon

The following works were part of Estuary's online 14.2 edition, and can be viewed by visiting Estuary's media archive at www.acadiau.ca/estuary.

Little Sister by Malia Rogers (music)

Visitor by Theodore Saunders, McCulloch Simpson, and Brandon Johnston (film)