

Chestnut Review

VOLUME 1 NUMBER 1 SUMMER 2019



FOR STUBBORN ARTISTS

Chestnut Review

Volume 1 Number 1 Summer 2019

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Cover: Claire Elliott, "Pink Varietals"
Oil on Canvas, 24" x 30", 2018

Introduction

Welcome to our unexpected beginning. I say “unexpected” because, of course, this was supposed to be the Autumn issue. But fate had better things for us in store. As we reviewed over a thousand submissions, it became patently clear that we wanted an interim issue, a place to hold these amazing works, because we could not possibly fit them into what we planned for October. A typical problem when you are faced with reams of good, solid literature and art, but one that is emotionally difficult to deal with. And so we struggled, trying to fit it all into one issue, to make hard decisions, before we realized that we simply didn’t want to. So we broke our own rules. This can’t happen again, of course, because otherwise we’d be publishing every month, but this once we can pull it off. And so, here is the Summer issue, our first ever.

We kept to our principles: though we were completely prepared to refund submission fees for work which was considered for longer than a month, we stayed on task and made decisions within that window for each and every one. That, to us, means something. That we have committed to this model and mean to see it through. While the vast majority of those submissions had to be rejected, and rejections are never fun to receive or to send, we consider it our responsibility to inform you as quickly as we can

so that you can send out your next batch. I hope you feel we met that goal. By the way, for those of you who like to know these things, six of our artists this month submitted work during our free submission period, proof positive that you don't have to pay a fee to have your work selected.

On to the richness: **Alana Benson** describes meeting a singular young man in "Jared." **Laura Johnson's** "in the garden" envisions the kind of growing many of us are guilty of. **Deb Nordlie** captures the trials and tribulations of young love in "David Dunston once threw a rock at my head." **Eric Roller** vividly depicts the breaking of a family in "The Vacation." **Carl Boon** describes a moment between fear and revelation in "Rivermonsters." **Annie Stenzel** brings heartbreaking emotion to "On learning of the suicide of an 11-year old boy I didn't know." **Robert L. Penick** hits on parts of life that aren't lost with age in his "Things We Don't Get Over." **Brendan Connolly** had us in stitches with his "#20" sketch, and **Laura Gill** lyrically examines sisterhood in "Mary and Martha." Our cover art, "Pink Varietals," is by **Claire Elliott**, and we are pleased to feature the painting "Corner of the Hemingway House" by **Timothy F. Phillips** and the lovely photograph "Spring-tide" of **Nam Nguyen**.

We're grateful to these artists for taking a chance on us, considering that before May, we didn't exist. We hope you'll spend time with all of these pieces, and appreciate them as much as we did.

Until autumn, then. Keep creating, and being stubborn about it all.

James Rawlings

DEB NORDLIE

David Dunston once threw a rock at my head

David Dunston once threw a rock at my head.

Everyone was gone when his snowballs
began to pelt my window
and from my gate, I heard his love call,
"Debbie is a Pickle-Head. Debbie is a Pickle-Head."
That's when I knew he loved me.

Before going outside to throw a snowball at him,
because, you see, I loved him too,
I changed my shirt, then my pants.
I brushed out my hair and polished it into a neater ponytail,
even adding a red ribbon left over from Christmas.
Not satisfied with the arrangement or sheen of my tresses,
I started again, the ribbon left on the floor—it had to be just right.
My darling was outside.
Waiting.
A dab of Mom's Chanel #5 would cinch the deal,
so I touched its cold glass stopper
to my wrists and throat.
Then I was ready to be Juliet to his Romeo.
Oh, visions of our future life were clear to me:

all the kids at school would finally know how much I was adored.
He'd hold my hand at recess.
We'd live in his father's motel,
moving from room to room at will,
and eat only at his father's restaurant.
I would never again be bothered with dishes.
He was irresistible.

In my winter coat,
I raced to the front door and opened it,
propelled by his siren's song.
With the joy that comes
from greeting one's own true sweetheart,
I leaned over to gather the most perfect white snow to lob at my
beloved—
because then he'd know how much I adored him.
But Cupid's snowy arrow
clobbered me first: hard and sharp,
for inside his rounded cannonball of affection
was a jagged grey rock, hidden, unlike his love for me.

It pierced my head on the left side—
the same side as my heart—
but my devotion for him
was more potent than my pain.

My blood splattered into frosty pools
gaudy on the snow,
my red dripping onto the white field of winter.
The drops rained
and created my own personal Rorschach test,
its pattern open to his ten-year-old interpretation.

There by my front steps
was exposed my garnet bouquet of love on the glittering ice.
For him.
For him.
He laughed. "Debbie is a Pickle-Head. Debbie is a Pickle-Head."
I had never known such worship.

I tell you all this because Nancy, my sister-in-law,
wanted to know why my hair is always flat on the left side.
"Oh," I answered, "it's because David Dunston once loved me."

The Vacation

In Gettysburg, PA
we stand on a pond bank
pretending to watch
the walleye
nip at the stranded damselflies

Mom picks up a rock
throws it into the water and
says what I already know,
what I have known for a long time:
I can't take this anymore.

"Not here," Dad says,
and before the rings melt
back into the water,
pushes me from the scene:
"Go play."

I stumble over the pond's
sandy berm and loll
toward a brass horse
rearing on its haunches
beneath a sycamore.

The Union cavalryman bayonets
holes into the humid air
with a metallic fury on his lips.
His Confederate enemy
hides in a bed of ivy
reaching out in surrender.

We sit together
the three of us
pleading,
our scenes
unfolding and
eventually settling.
Treaties are made,
pacts established,
and then a customary resignation
seats itself
amongst the monuments.
I am ready to broker
the compromise.

Back at the truck
Dad anticipates my question:
"She's taking a little vacation," he says
waving at the road behind us.
I turn and see her
walking,
her right arm balancing
a leather suitcase
bouncing tightly
against her left hip

BRENDAN CONNOLLY

#20

at a bar in brooklyn late at night, a woman taps me on the shoulder and asks if she heard me correctly, that i/d seen hamilton twice?

i had made a joke to jackie the woman overheard and apparently she took it very seriously

well, i say, only once really. the second time tom brought giselle and the kids, but they started crying and we had to leave early

excuse me, she says, tom and giselle?

yeah, i say sipping my beer casually, my cousin tom. you might know him, tom brady?

on the subway back to her apartment, jackie leans her head against my shoulder and i can see her reflection in the glass across the car

you know, she says closing her eyes, in the whole time i/ve lived here, i dont think i/ve ever seen someone so likely to be stabbed for a good reason

Right: Nam Nguyen, "Springtide"

Photograph of cacti garden, Honolulu, Hawaii, April 2001



Rivermonsters

Dean Jones had a theory.
Dean Jones had acne on his shoulders
and was tall, so we believed him
when he said that there were monsters
in the river and more—
ghosts of hobos in the old plantation house
off State Route 38, the Old Savannah Highway.
Being a storybook boy, I believed
they were the same, dead slaves
who'd returned to draw catfish out of slumber
then frolic where their masters had.
So it rained for a week, the remnants
of the Sea Islands hurricane,
and Dean Jones said when the sun comes back
we'll go down to the Bottoms
in boots and see. They put me in charge
of the sabers and sandwiches, his brother Len
the map, and Sadie Tomlinson the spells
because she never smiled and her mother
was a witch. Expecting busted shackles
and bits of Sherman's clothes, perhaps a whip
or a gourd that rattled, I went in first.
What amazed me were the ladybugs,
shields of them everywhere like poppies

in the spring, black and red, and when
I told them it was beautiful, when I told them
it was like a dream, they wouldn't believe me.
Perhaps the hurricane made them;
perhaps some unnamed mother
brought them forth to remind us
there was some joy we'd missed, some power
that even the United States of America
failed to conjure with their real bayonets
and dark blue jackets. Another century
was coming, and among our ham salad sandwiches
that afternoon we believed—even Dean Jones
believed—that it would be better than the last.

On learning of the suicide of an 11-year-old boy I didn't know

The first response is incredulity: eyes wide in hope of having misread the message. Salt scratch-leaps to make tears; throat catches because breath won't pass through paralysis. Pity and sympathy hand in hand with horror.

By the time true compassion comes, I can't un-know how altered that poor family's life will be, split into before and after, never resuming its former course, each year the landmark anniversary with its mountain of wreckage.

Into the echoes that separate me from true grief, my hands lift to wring and plead. I want to shriek at the phantom youth: oh, child! you have murdered the wrong person. The boy you killed was only a stranger passing through whoever you were going to be.

The Things We Don't Get Over

Like the ankle sprain in high school that returns in your fortieth year or the ex-lover who pops up in the obituaries when you are grayer than ghosts, we have these records sorted and filed away, of every bruised bone or wounded heart, each exhibit cataloged and boxed, stashed, only to find them spilling out to us, like the memory of your first dog, years ago, scratching at the door, wanting back inside.

Mary and Martha

“Preachers or scientists may generalise, but we know that no generality is possible about those whom we love”

E.M. Forster, Howard’s End

I grew up going to church, but I never learned the story of Mary and Martha. More specifically, I never knew there was a Martha at all. I knew there was a Mary, but I never knew she had a sister Jesus didn’t like. In the story, Jesus visits their house and Mary walks over to Jesus and sits at his feet. Martha continues to cook and clean. When Martha asks for her sister’s help, Jesus tells her: “you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.”

Say “Martha.” Martha forces your tongue between your teeth. You need to get the air just right, too—it requires a minor strain. To say Mary, you only move your lips; your mouth need not deal with the muscle trapped inside it.



Growing up, I did know that I had two older sisters and a younger brother. They were bodies with flesh and bone. And yet, they were also constructions of my own making—people connected to me whose formation formed my own. One of my sisters was eighteen years ahead of me, and so it was my immediate older sister whose construction I had at the ready—an older sister is not just an older sister but a person to follow, to see which parts of oneself measure up or don’t. Growing up, I wanted to be my sister because she was older. And I wanted to be my sister because she had blonde hair and light eyes and an athletic body. I had dark hair, a stomach I could never “suck in,” and a bottom lip my sister often told me was “too big.”

My sister was not just good at sports, she was good at performing in school plays, and both things brought her confidence. I wanted confidence. I didn’t know how to get it without her build and her looks. I only knew how to be overwhelmed by what I did not know. I remember being in sixth grade, and not being able to stay in the room when the class had to dissect a frog. I did not know how anyone could move their tiny hearts to see what was below. I often found my head separated from the rest of my body; at a dance or on a sports field, I’d feel like I was floating above the crowd. I hated reading out loud, and would often mumble—not because I didn’t know the words but because I wanted to get to each one too quickly, without knowing exactly what they meant.



In Joan Didion’s essay about Georgia O’Keefe, the essay closes with an image of O’keefe and her sister, Claudia,

walking into the Texas sunset, “away from town and toward the horizon.” As they walk, her sister throws bottles into the air and then shoots them. Didion is right when she says “in a way one’s interest is compelled as much by the sister Claudia with the gun as by the painter Georgia” because it’s true—I can’t stop thinking about Claudia. I watch her throw her bottles into the air, and I imagine them shattering. I see the glass shards flying in the big pink and orange sky.



It’s too easy to say that all sisters are Martha and Mary, and it’s too simple to say that Martha had no Mary and Mary had no Martha. And yet: I wonder if every woman, sister or not, has to at least reckon with Mary and Martha because they do seem to be everywhere within me: Martha tells me to clean the house when guests come. Mary tells me to let it be. Then, they wrestle, and distract me with their intertwined legs, as they pull at one another’s hair. I wonder which one is hurting me.

Martha:

Hebrew meaning: bitter.

American meaning: bitter.

Aramaic meaning: lady.

Biblical meaning: one who becomes bitter; provoking.

How, then, to become a lady?



Before I knew about Mary and Martha, I thought of my two grandmothers as Mary and Martha, even though I didn’t yet know roots of those archetypes. My father’s mother was the Mary, and my mother’s mother, the Martha. My father’s mother would dote on us, and smother us with kisses. She always seemed impressed with our accomplishments, trivial as they were, and we called her Granmére because she loved to sing French lullabies to us as we fell asleep. My mother’s mother was called Nonnie, and even though that name is derived from the Italian, Nonna, she was not Italian, nor particularly interested in Italy. She hated garlic, and was interested in using one’s hands as much as possible—to sew, to knit, to cook, to change sheets, to pick the towels up from the floor.

And yet, there were crossovers. For one thing, they both married people they weren’t “supposed” to; Granmére, a Presbyterian, married a Catholic before graduating from college, and Nonnie, a twenty-eight-year-old nanny, married her employer’s older brother, sixteen years her senior. And so, looking back, I can see that it wasn’t so simple after all. One time, Nonnie danced to the trumpet in a barn in Switzerland; Granmére raised seven children.



Susan Fenimore Cooper was an environmentalist and a writer during the 1800’s when there weren’t many women who were environmentalists and writers, and she wrote about what she saw in nature as a way to justify women’s subordination. When it came to sap trees, she saw them give and give and give, and remain “perfectly healthy,” saying “one would think that the loss of so much sap would

necessarily injure the trees; but it is not so, they remain perfectly healthy, after yielding every spring, gallons of the fluid.”

In some ways, Susan Fenimore Cooper was right: the sap does arrive again, the trees are able to give year after year. At the start of spring, sugary water drips out of their centers, and into cans, making a pinging sound as its droplets hit the bottom. But I wonder: what did she make of the tapping—the sharp object needed to puncture the bark, to rip at the skin? Does every tree recover?



My friend is a teacher and he says that when he sees girls being mean to one another, he gives them the same speech. He tells them that their fighting is what “the man” wants. He tells them about the pervasive patriarchy. He warns them against fighting one another because then they will have not have each other as allies. He tells them that their bitterness will keep them down.

No one wants a bitter woman at all.



What Mary’s name gets that Martha doesn’t is the “sea”—it means “sea of bitterness, sea of sorrow.” Some say, it means a “drop of the sea,” a “star of the sea,” “the wished-for-child,” the “mistress of the sea.” Her bitterness is washed away in the sea; her sorrow is full of deep blues and greens. There are creatures within her that live and breathe underwater, full of feeling.



“How’d she do it?” People often ask, when they talk about Granmére, and her seven children— “How’d she manage to do it all, and with such grace?” Grace seems to be code for beauty or something like beauty—the kind you can only achieve if, along with a small frame and high cheekbones, you can also smile, laugh, and be generous with others. “How’d she do it?”

No one wonders how Nonnie did it. No one wonders how she “did it” because, in a way, she didn’t “do it.” Yes, she raised her children, took care of the members of the town, cooked, travelled, cleaned, read the newspaper, and went to church every Sunday, but she did not “do it” because she wore her grievances on her sleeve, and she did not hide her discontent. She was also slightly overweight, and never seemed to care.

Nonnie wanted all her granddaughters to become teachers. My sister became an actress and comedian, and I became a teacher. I invested all my creative energy into lesson plans, class activities, and feedback forms. I decided the part of myself that enjoyed writing was the same part of myself that enjoyed teaching, and so I stopped writing. I was a practical woman, with a practical life, and practical work. I was not frivolous. I was fraught.



In Vermeer’s “Christ in the House of Martha and Mary,” Mary sits at the foreground, in a blue-grey skirt and red, long-sleeved shirt. Her feet are exposed, and her legs cover Jesus’s shins. Jesus’s legs are spread, and he is tilting

back. A royal blue blanket covers his lap, and part of his left shoulder. His right hand points toward Mary, as his face turns toward Martha, who stands behind him, setting down a basket of bread, her face turned away from the light. If you didn't know the story of Mary and Martha, it would look like an image of two women waiting on Jesus, ready and glad to meet his every need. He looks so satisfied, as if he's just won a match. If you know the story, you know that part of what is bringing Jesus satisfaction is actually what he is saying to Martha as he points to Mary, saying: "this, this Martha, this is the right way to be." And yet: the bread looks so warm and sturdy, and Martha's white sleeves are radiant. Even just to look at the placement of Jesus's body, the way it is almost split in half between the two women, tells a different version of the story. Both are needed. Both are good. At least in the eyes of a man. He has a wife and a mistress.



When my sister got her first boyfriend, I wrote him a letter, telling him to stay away. I wanted to be like my sister, but I also wanted her attention—I didn't appreciate his infiltration, and how he took her from me. It made me sick to watch her flirt with him, and even more uncomfortable to see how she enjoyed it. I wrote it in a fury. They were sitting in her room, chatting, and I was sitting in mine, crying and writing. I couldn't figure out if I was jealous of him or of her and, of course, it was both. I never gave him the letter, and I never showed it to my sister. I tucked it away in a notebook in my desk.



A family friend asked, "How are you doing?" and I said, "Good." "Then your sister," she said with a look of concern, "cannot be doing well." She was a social worker, and she said, in her experience, "sisters are always cancelling one another out. Both are rarely happy at the same time."



Some sap trees take longer to recover than others.



In *Howard's End*, the sisters, Margaret and Helen, are rarely happy at the same time. The book starts with Helen announcing a hasty engagement, and Margaret's attempts to be sympathetic through worry and concern. She sends her aunt to suss out the situation, and by the time her aunt gets there, the engagement is off. Margaret is relieved, and Helen, too, for a time. After Helen returns, they host dinner parties full of heated conversations about the suffrage movement, inequality, and politics, and then, Margaret decides to marry Henry—the older, richer neighbor, who embodies all of the stereotypes of the old guard, with his stodgy, stuck-up ways. The sisters become estranged; they don't seem to understand one another anymore. In the film version, Helen receives a letter from Margaret, and says: "This isn't Margaret." A few scenes later, Margaret receives a postcard from Helen and says, "The postcards don't seem to have come from her, that's not her." It's as if

the sisters believe they know one another better than they know themselves.

When Jesus came over, did Martha look at Mary, and think, “Oh stop it, that’s not you.” Did Mary look at Martha and wonder, “Why this show? Just relax a little bit.” Or did they let it go, knowingly understanding their roles, and who one another might play.

In the film version of *Howard’s End*, Margaret is played by Emma Thompson, and Helen is played by Helena Bonham Carter. A few years after making the movie, Emma Thompson’s husband, Kenneth Branagh, left Emma Thompson for Helena Bonham Carter, and I know they are playing sisters in the film, I know they are not really sisters, and yet, it feels like a different kind of betrayal when you know they acted as sisters, and that they played those sisters in particular.



Martha doesn’t want to be Mary. Even after Jesus tells her that Mary’s way is right, Martha does not change. She doesn’t become doting and docile. In fact, she challenges him, after her brother, Lazarus, dies and Jesus arrives to help. She steps out of the house and says, “if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” It isn’t that she doesn’t believe in Jesus, or doubts he will be able to perform a miracle, it’s simply that she’s angry, and she needs him to know. Even when he goes to resurrect the body, she cannot hide her frustration—she says, “but Lord, by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days.” It’s the kind of thing you say when you want to say something else— “well, now the food is cold,” you say,

even though you know you can warm it up again, even though you know what you want to say is: “I’m annoyed you’ve come to dinner so late.”



On my recent birthday, my father told me, “you saved the family.” On each birthday, he has said something similar: “you really made us want to have another,” “you were just such a bright light, a real joy.” There is a part of me that feels badly for my sister when I hear that, and another part of me that is proud I was such a “joy.” My sister, who came two and a half years before me, was not a “happy baby.” She is often described as a “grumpy baby” and a “stubborn baby” and a baby who took the energy out of my mother. Her first word was “more.” My first words were “ball” and “duck,” and I was often happy to sit in a chair and observe the world around me.



Susan Fenimore Cooper used the environment to justify her feelings that women had a natural place in the world. As such, she didn’t believe in women’s suffrage. She wrote, in her “Letter to the Christian Women of America,” that the natural position of woman is clearly, to a limited degree, a subordinate one.” She believed this because she believed that both physically and intellectually women were weaker than men. Beyond the physical and intellectual, she thought it was a religious duty to maintain the subordinate role. She wrote that Christianity “protects her far more effectually than any other system,” and that “pre-

cious rewards are promised to every faithful discharge of duty, even the most humble.” And yet, Jesus scolded Martha. She was not “rewarded” for feeding her family. Nor was she protected. She was told her subordination wasn’t right—it wasn’t exactly what was being called for. He wanted: a little less demanding, a little more humble, just a little more fawning.

Just a little more sap. Give from the tap a little more.



The worst thing one Mary did was to bring her pet lamb to school, and of course she wasn’t punished, really—the lamb simply had to wait (“patiently, patiently”) for her to return. The song tells us the lamb was the diversion only a Mary could create: an innocent, lighthearted one. The kind that no one really gets mad about, but simply shakes their head while holding back a smile. Oh Mary, you’re so silly—oh little lamb, you’re so sweet, your fleece is white as snow.

There aren’t any children’s songs about Martha.



My family makes maple syrup, and the time for collecting sap can be as short as two days or as long as three weeks, and when we were kids, we felt lucky if we could join the men on the truck. It only happened once or twice, but I remember being encouraged to put my mouth under the spigot and drink the cold, sweet water. It was better than the syrup, I thought, better than the gooey, thick, warm liquid they put into tiny plastic cups for sampling. I

wanted to stay there, with my head turned toward the tree and my shoulder pressing into the bark; I wanted to stay and taste the source.

What I didn’t know then is that there are other species of maple trees that make sap, and there are other textures of sap, in other trees, too. And recently, scientists discovered something new about maple trees—it turns out saplings can produce as much sap as mature trees. It turns out age makes no difference. What came before is as good as what comes after—it’s the same stuff.



I got engaged before my sister, and a few people told me they were so pleased I did. They said it in a tongue-and-cheek way, with a nudge and a wink, but I always felt strange when they said that, not just because I knew my sister wanted to be engaged to her partner, but because I had no control in the matter. I did not choose when this would happen. And she, too, felt as if, in some ways, she had no control. She got engaged soon after, and our weddings were months apart. We got married in different countries, but we both wore short dresses, and refused to have sit-down dinners. Both weddings ended in a circle, with flowing beer, and a singalong.



Martha could not replace Mary, nor could Mary replace Martha. Both are needed, and yet: we know about Mary, and we do not know as much about Martha. We seem incapable of being able to see both, or to keep both in our

collective narrative. Is that because Jesus was right, or is it because we are desperate for order and order looks like rungs on the ladder, one above the other? Perhaps it's not just a need for order, but an assumption of order, or a decision to be ordered.



The more I wonder about Martha, the less I feel that she was robbed of something. I feel simply that she was denied something, which is not to say she needed Jesus's praise, but that she could have used it, or at least a different form of it. What I mean by that is: what would it have looked like if Nonnie's type of beauty was acknowledged, as much as her knitting, cooking, and demanding nature was? What if Granmere was praised for her recklessness at times, as well as what appeared to be her calm, cool demeanor in the face of chaos? What if I wasn't just a "happy baby," but an oblivious one; what if my sister wasn't just a demanding baby, but one who knew her needs and asserted them? Most of us know there's much more to each of us than appears in the narratives we tell, so why do I care?

I care because there are many ways to praise, and so rarely do we embrace the multitude. I care because it's rare to be in a women's restroom without hearing the word, "sorry." I'm sorry for opening the door too fast, for being in the way of the mirror when you need to check your eyebrows. I'm sorry for caring about my eyebrows more than my clean hands. I'm sorry for cleaning my hands too long. I care because I am sorry for being scared; I'm sorry for not being more bold. I care because my aunt was sorry when she wrote in her journal about a huge blizzard in

1888, and though her account is full of glorious details, she apologizes for writing about it at all. She writes: "there must have been great suffering...I can't remember anything only as it affected me & family," and then she signed it, "Selfish Aunt Emma."



I'm not sure a woman could have written *Howard's End*, and by that I mean—perhaps a woman could have written *Howard's End*, but I would venture to guess it would end differently. In the book, the sisters choose one another over their other lives. Margaret does stay in her marriage, but only because her husband has a change of heart about Helen, only because he grows to accept her sister into their life. The film ends with a shot of Helen in the field, with her baby attached to her chest. She looks happy, and we are meant to believe that happiness is connected with Margaret's. It's true that many sisters choose one another, but it's also true that we are raised to think of that as perhaps an unhappy ending, one we might not choose if we had the choice.



I don't love maple syrup, but my sister does, and when my family moved back to Connecticut from Los Angeles, she was excited not just to be able to make maple syrup and taste it as it came out of the boiler, but to also embrace everything our family had in abundance: land, cousins, fresh air. I, on the other hand, was devastated, and eschewed what we had at the ready, every chance I got.



When a friend of mine had her second child, she asked her husband why her first was angry at the baby. She understood why he might be upset about change, and therefore upset at them, but she didn't understand why he actually hated his new brother, and her husband said: "all of life is a fight for resources, and now he has half of what he had before." It occurs to me now that it's not simply a fight for resources, but also whether or not we can accept and appreciate the resources we have available to us, the ones we have at the ready.



When I first tried maple syrup from the boiler, I took it down in one gulp, just as my sister had. I hated the feeling and the taste, but I said it was delicious and smiled. Then, I threw the plastic cup away.



Timothy F. Phillips, "Corner of the Hemingway House"
Acrylic on canvas, 2019.

in the garden

i did not plant tomatoes this summer; i think this is what disturbs me the most.
steaming hot, fresh from the garden - from my hand –
there were no
sweet tart rounds to offer you.
these ninety days marked a darkness of soul, a peculiarity
in spirit entwined
by weedy roots that conquered the raised bed.
now i may not forage to find sun, wind, rain, soil contained in an imperfect late season
globe.

i'm guilty of non-planting.

i await my sentence.
a holy requirement willfully ignored deprived us of our expected
caprese and fried greens –

i am to blame.
heirlooms – glorious in rainbows – did not stretch out
branches.
no cherries or grapes
to pop

in the children's mouths
when
they visited.
a wondering wandering spring gave way to narrow doubt
and clouded vision.

i failed.
this nightshade is not malleable – smashed to the floor, a
bruise, a burst – unhealed,
unhealable.
water soaked days and the fruit may have proved plump
and pleasurable.
no keeping corner for the unrooted – is it lost if i never
had it?
i have burgled time of its rightful offspring,
too late thoughts require absolution that
will
never come.

Jared

I'm a substitute for a high school art class
when a deep-eyed boy tells me
he saw my painting in a dream.

He says it in passing, in between
a fire drill and informing me that my fears
of bull riding are unfounded,

that you never get hurt the way
you think you'll get hurt,
and that lunch is an extra
15 minutes long today.

I can't tell if he is making things up,
if someone really broke into his house
and shot at him, whether
he saw that in his dreams too.

I can't tell if he's sleepy
or just sounds it, likes
scaring the new teacher
or just likes her—

but he speaks with a slowness
like daylight fading, like evolution,
like cleaning a gun with care,

uncoiling the slow remembrances
of dreams, of paintings, of bulls
that almost got him, but didn't.

CONTRIBUTORS

Alana Benson is a freelance writer living in Lander, Wyoming. Her work is reflective of location: Wyoming's Wind River Mountains, small-town Kentucky, Vermont in winter, and downtown Athens. She has been previously published in *BlazeVOX* magazine and the University of Vermont's literary journal *Vantage Point*, and has also published six non-fiction books ranging in subject matter from identity theft to birth control.

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