

Robert D. Clark Honors College

Creative Arts Journal

Spring 2014





## **Spring 2014**



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### A Letter From the Editor

The theme Back to Basics was chosen to establish the roots of Ephemera in the Robert D. Clark Honors College once again. Many do not know that this annual publication began in 1976 as a stapled, much smaller version. While the appearance may have changed over the years from the loving touch each individual Editor-in-Chief and staff gave, the content has remained the same: an astounding collection of poetry, prose, and visual art from students in the Honors College.

Just as our time here is ephemeral, so is the work we craft. The following pages are an attempt to preseve a moment in time of great inspiration and beauty between covers that have been coffee-stained with purpose. Back to Basics is a mission to bring the journal into the heart of the Honors College and celebrate the Old School magic that Ephemera holds.

Enjoy these pages with a cup of steaming hot coffee or tea and let the creativity that pours out from them inspire you to transcend beyond the ephemeral into the permanent in your daily life.

Thank you,

Molly Hover

**Editor-in-Chief** 

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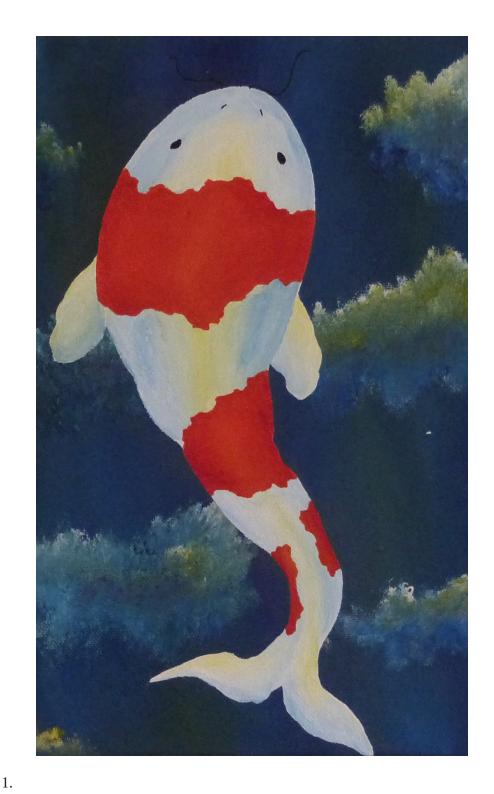
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# Ephemeral Aimee Fritsch

Fleeting
Like the sunset from the PLC balcony
Or the challah bread, hot on the oven
Minutes settling into memories
Brightly colored patches of our past

Ephemeral
Like her hair on the green cement
sprawled on the dining room floor
basking on a warm spot
as I run my finger through her locks

Too soon, someone will go long welcome-home hugs and daily giggles will become infrequent visits the unsatisfying practice of trying to cram a lifetime of living into one weekend

For now
I hang on to these mundane miracles
savoring each passing moment of this beautiful friendship
before it slips away

Left: Flying William Crowley





### Red

#### **Emily Zwier**

By the time Marlow entered the line at Starbucks for his morning coffee, he was exactly three seconds ahead of schedule—the perfect amount of time to be early. Anything more than three seconds, and he would have been wasting time; anything less than two seconds, and he would have run the risk of falling prey to human error. And all the people here reeked of human error.

It was the same every morning from 8:45:09 to 8:58:34, when Marlow was confronted with the slobbering mass of humanity: the clothing with visible stains, the chipped nail polish, the lazily-shaved cheeks, the scuffed shoes—he had no choice but to turn his attention toward all such imperfections. They were everywhere he looked. The sugar packets spilling across three of the circular wooden table tops, the frayed fabric corners of the booth cushions, the five chairs that wobbled from uneven legs, the piece of gum stuck to base of one of the wooden columns. Marlow twisted the watch around his wrist, letting the smooth metal pull at his skin as it moved. When it had completed its third rotation, he glanced down at the time out of habit rather than necessity. He knew every second that he was in at all times, and so the Rolex on his wrist was more of a fancy comfort than anything else; it fed his ego to see how accurate his own mind clock was.

Marlow could say without hesitation that waiting in line for his morning coffee was the most excruciating part of his entire day. And, he could say with the same amount of conviction, that it was completely unavoidable. It wasn't due to any lack of barista skill on his part; for he had studied the methods and measurements of his particular cup of coffee and he knew he would have no trouble replicating it himself. Therefore, the most logical step would have been to buy his own coffee maker. However, after weeks spent trying to rearrange his morning, which quickly spiraled into rearranging his entire week schedule—which consisted of reweaving an entire time matrix of stoplights durations, REM cycles, and other

such time nuances—it soon became clear that a personal coffee maker was entirely impossible.

And so here he was, wading through the most agonizing 685 seconds of his day in this festering waterhole for the pretentious teenager, the anxious intern, the high-maintenance single woman, and the middle-class man on his break. The only redeeming quality of this particular Starbucks was that it happened to be in the lobby of his company's building—otherwise he might have forsaken caffeine altogether. But even this convenience did bring with it drawbacks and annoyances, which today manifested in the two women standing in front of Marlow. The messy ponytail of one; the cheap pink skirt of the other—secretaries.

The women turned around to greet him. Edith and Amelia. *His secretaries*, apparently.

"Good morning, Marlow," said the woman with the messy ponytail, her smile, like her voice, stretching with sickly sweet sincerity. "How are you?"

"Edith," Marlow said with a curt nod.

There was a pause while Edith waited to see whether or not Marlow would respond to her question. Her lips twitched at the corners for a moment, but then she took a breath and her smile stretched even farther, if that were possible. Marlow cringed inwardly, knowing that she was about to speak again.

"Did you get the memo I left on your desk about the meeting on Tuesday?" she asked. "The one about de-bugging the new software? Or something like that. Gerald was very technical when telling me even though he knows how I am with your programming lingo—"

<sup>&</sup>quot;—Yes, I did." He stared at her with dead eyes.

"Oh." This seemed to put a permanent dent in her smile. But then he saw her lips twitch with speech again. "I should have that paperwork you asked for in by eleven," she said with a wave of her hand, her eyes bright and wide to overcompensate for her sinking smile. "Well, I'll see you upstairs then."



Social, persistent, and overly perky—Marlow wanted to vomit.

Edith and her companion turned back towards the counter, but not before Amelia threw what she thought to be a petrifying glare Marlow's way. "Why do you even bother?" she whispered loudly to Edith with a snap of the turquoise gum sloshing about in her mouth.

Why indeed? Marlow pinched the bridge of his nose and sighed.

524 seconds.

523 seconds.

Marlow let his mind sink deep into the clockwork tick of his head, and put the information streaming in from all other senses on hold. Or at least he tried. There was a screaming baby—Why is there always a screaming baby?—and a mother that could care less. A business man haughtily arguing on his blackberry in the third booth along the windowed wall. Marlow turned his attention to the man for one second. But no, his poorly-tailored suit gave him away—a fourteenth floor gremlin, and therefore a second wasted. Anyone who worked below the twentieth floor wasn't worth acknowledgement. Marlow's office suite was on the twenty-ninth floor.

Fifteen seconds passed. Marlow moved three steps forward in line. There was a young woman at one of the circular wooden tables closest to the line erratically typing away on her laptop and absentmindedly smacking her gum with a disgusting fervor to rival Amelia's. Whoever invented gum should be—Marlow paused to decide on the most fitting method of torture—drawn and quartered.

507 seconds. An intern bolted through the back door that connected the Starbucks to the lobby, hurtling forwards through

the array of chairs and tables with such a heedless frenzy that he barreled straight into Marlow, who reeled forward as though he had been stuck with a live wire. He whirled around to face the perpetrator, only to realize that he was no stranger.

"Goddamn it, Neil!" Marlow shouted much louder than he meant to. "Didn't I fire you already?!"

Neil did not respond. He only stared up at Marlow with a glare that achieved what Amelia had not been able to. But that was only for two seconds, and then Neil turned and hurried out through the front doors and was lost in the flood of people.

Marlow let his breath hiss out through his clenched teeth, adjusted his tie and jacket, and turned back in line to face the counter. *Incompetent dunce*.

486 seconds. The final person between Marlow and the counter stepped to the side.

The young girl with the smeared red lipstick was behind the counter this morning. Marlow sighed. It was a good thing he had accounted for human error. She always took her sweet time with those three extra seconds.

"Hi Marlow," she said as he approached the counter with a smile that was brighter than was polite. "A grande caffe mocha, no sugar, no whipped cream, extra dry, with half skim, half full milk, right?"

"Jeez, let the man talk," said the other teenager, a boy, over his shoulder as he rinsed out a blender at the hopper sink behind her. His tone of voice made Marlow unsure whether he was reprimanding or joking, but the boy's broad smile that followed made him guess the latter.

Marlow saw the girl blush. "You're just jealous because I'm a

people person," she said through half-pouted red lips.

"Oh, of course I am." The boy dried his hands and moved to take his place next to her behind the coffee machine, and, in the process, he came very close behind her for a moment—closer than Marlow thought necessary—and squeezed her shoulder. Marlow saw the girl's sharpie pause for a moment as she wrote his name on the cup.

"That'll be three dollars fifty seven cents," she said to Marlow. He pushed the exact amount towards her.

"But we all know who has the mad brewing skills here," the boy said as he nudged the girl's shoulder with his, evidently not dropping the already pointless conversation.

The girl stretched out her hand to pass the paper cup to the boy, but just as he reached out for it, she flicked it out of his grasp with a little laugh. They did this several more times before the she finally let the boy have the cup, and he began to brew Marlow's coffee.

452 seconds. Marlow swallowed hard and clenched his hands at his sides.

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When the explosion came, it was nothing like Marlow would have expected it to be. The force of the blast knocked Marlow to the ground and sent him hurtling backwards several feet until he collided with the back wall. It all happened so fast. Marlow couldn't breathe. He couldn't see. He couldn't move. He couldn't hear. But he could feel.

He could feel the frenzied beat of his heart thrashing against the walls of his chest—panicked, erratic, but an intact heartbeat, nonetheless. He must be alive, then. Yes, he could feel the pain now. Pain stretching from the back of his head to the bottom of his tailbone—a deep dull ache from colliding with the wall. A sharp twinge of pain in his left ribs as he took a first gasping breath, and blinking, he slowly remembered how to open his eyes.

The first thing he noticed was the amount of dust. The air was thick with it and, because he was not yet able to control his violent gasping, it coated the inside of his mouth and throat. No matter how many times he blinked, it still clung to his eyelashes; it still grated against his eyeballs. The dirt was there in the long cut along his forearm, and he could taste blood mixing with the dirt in his mouth. His ears were ringing—he could feel a drop of blood trickle out of his right one—but somewhere underneath the ringing Marlow could hear the metallic screech of the radio through a single mangled speaker and the voices. He had never heard such terrifying, guttural screams; they clawed through his shocked ears and rattled around in his brain, so loud, so disturbing, that for a moment, Marlow had the overwhelming urge to clamp his hands over his ears and scream with them.

All semblance of order that the coffee shop had previously clung to had been stripped away in an instant. The wall that had been closest to the explosion had buckled completely. Fragments of cement, wood, and drywall spilled out into the lobby that they had once concealed. The chairs and tables were mangled and scattered every which way, like a child's dollhouse that had been shaken one too many times. A chair was embedded in one of the few walls still standing and the long serving counter had been split down the middle by a jagged crack—chunks of granite falling away, like a twisted, broken spine. And the bodies—they were lying limply across the rubble; there were arms poking out from behind beams and legs shifting under broken tables. And faces made gray with dust and tears. Marlow felt the bile rise in his throat, and he had to close his eyes.

When he felt that he could move, Marlow pushed himself off of the ground, but with more force than his shaking knees could account for. Marlow lurched forward on fragile legs, arms stretched out in search of something to steady himself; his hands grasped the crumbling countertop, and his torso bent and collapsed across its uneven surface. He closed his eyes, and pressed his face against the cool slab of granite in an attempt to keep himself from vomiting.

But then there was a sound, a rustle, a whimper, and Marlow became aware that there was something lying in the rubble near his feet. He opened his eyes.

She looked yellow. Not because of the dust, though she was covered with a fair amount of it, but because she had grown incredibly pale, and it was mixing horribly with the fake tan on her skin to give her a yellow-ish tinge. This probably had something to do with the fact that she was lying on the ground like a crumpled paper doll, impaled through the abdomen by some large piece of metal that looked as though it was once part of the hopper sink. Marlow stared down at her for...five seconds? Or seven? Watching the blood ooze in rhythmic gushes from the gaping wounds in her stomach—red and wet, just like her smeared lipstick.

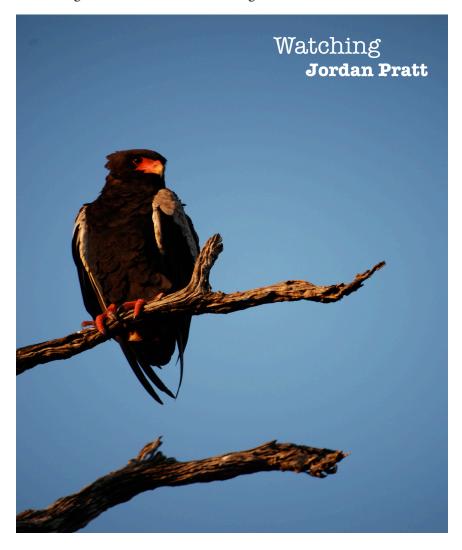
Her grey eyes stared up at him, so wide that he could have tumbled head first into them. She was blinking long and hard, trying to focus on something, on anything. On his face. Marlow knew the moment that she saw his face, really saw his face—he saw the recognition flicker there for a moment, and then sink deep into her dark grey eyes.

Marlow tried to breathe, to move, to run and hide—but he couldn't find the seconds in his brain.

Then there was a gentle tugging at his pant leg—a bloodless hand scrambling at the hem of his pants—barely enough movement for his brain to register, but enough for his legs to buckle underneath him once more. Marlow sank to his knees beside her, his pant

legs soaking up the blood pooling around her waist. She had only seconds to live, but how many seconds?

Pressure. That was what you were supposed to do with lacerations, right? Apply pressure. Marlow stared down the girl's abdomen, so soaked with blood that he could hardly see the wounds any more, save the metal shrapnel sticking out. Breathe; Marlow wanted to take a breath before he had to touch her, but time kept passing, and he couldn't find air. Slowly, he stretched his arms out over her and brought them down until his fingers touched warm, wet blood.



Her exposed organs were soft and slippery under his fingertips as he pressed his hands down around the wounds, throbbing gentle with every fragile heartbeat, squeezing more and more blood out of the gaping lacerations. His arms were soaked in her blood, down to the elbows, and she was so pale.

"It's okay. It's okay. It's okay." Marlow didn't know how long he had been saying this, only that the words kept tumbling out with every breath he took in and let out. He pushed down harder and harder, but the blood kept coming. "It's okay. It's okay."

Help, he should call for help. 911. Marlow took one hand off of her stomach to pull his cellphone out of his coat pocket. But his shaking hands were so slick with blood that the cellphone slipped out of his hands several times before he was able to hold onto it, as if he were trying to pluck a fish from water. But then Marlow felt something cold flop down on the hand still on the girl's stomach and let the phone fall to the ground.

It was a hand. It was her hand—so cold, and so pale, come to rest on top of his. He felt her fingers twitch slightly, curling around the back of his hand with an infinitesimal amount of pressure. Marlow glanced back at her face, at her smeared red lips forming a soft little 'o', and saw more fear in her grey eyes than he had ever felt in his entire life.

But then her entire body grew still, and Marlow knew she was dead.

Light streamed in through the heaps of rubble as the fire-fighters and policemen broke through the wall of destruction. Marlow watched them flood into the room—paramedics, policemen, firemen, engineers—as if they were caught in slow motion. He saw them on the edges, lifting up beams of wood, slabs of drywall, and chunks of concrete. He heard them coming closer, shouting orders to each other, speaking forcefully to the faces of the living and softly

at the faces of the dead. He could hear it blaring from all of their radios, the same phrase over and over until it was echoing in his brain. *Amateur terrorist attack*.

They were touching him now, lifting him to his feet, pulling him away from her body and out through the rubble. They were shining small lights in his eyes, cleaning him up, checking him out, taking his blood pressure, asking him questions, making sure he was still responsive. Still alive. He was given a blanket, a bottle of water, and told to rest on the curb until he was cleared to leave by the police officers.

The sun was brighter than it should have been. It had warmed the piece of concrete curb that he sat down on and caused him to squint around at the street before him. The entire block had been roped off in yellow caution tape with policemen standing at intervals to direct pedestrian traffic and keep the crowd at bay. It was a small crowd, though, for they all stopped, but only the rare few stayed. Marlow watched as most of the people paused for a moment to gawk at the horror, and then turned to follow the waving hands of the policemen ushering them back onto the pathway of their lives—knowing deep inside that he would have been one of them.

Marlow glanced down at his watch to check the time, as his brain-clock had not yet kicked back into gear. But the glass face of his watch was cracked from the explosion and her blood had seeped through the cracks, so he could not see the time.

He watched them pull bodies out from the building for... well, he didn't know how long for. Some were on stretchers with braces and bandages on their bodies; some were simply covered with white sheets. Some walked out of the building as he had, and were taken to the back of ambulances. The boy was one of them, the teenage boy who had been with her behind the counter. Marlow saw him standing by the back of the ambulance, shaking off the blanket the paramedics had tried to put on him and pushing away

the hands that were trying to take his pulse. Marlow saw him reach out at the nearest officer, grabbing the officer's arm and shaking it violently until the officer paused to answer his shouts that Marlow almost rose from his seat and ran to the boy. But he didn't.

"Mr. Wallace," said a voice from somewhere above him. It was one of the officers, come back to talk to him. "Mr. Wallace, the woman who you were found with, can you tell us her name? For identification purposes."

Marlow just stared.

He could have told the officer about the nail-polish on her right hand, chipped away from a nervous biting habit, or how annoying her voice had sounded calling out his coffee order. How she never seemed to manage to make a drink and hand it to a customer without spilling it. How her coffee making skills had never warranted his tip. How her nametag was always pinned crookedly to her apron. And how her eyes had filled up with fear.

But no, he could not tell the officer her name.



### Ukiyo-e Bethany Kaylor

Images come like dreams.

The stench of wilting honeysuckle, in August, the elegy of the bullfrog at dusk. And then the swing set, its wooden limbs splintered and sagging into the dark soft womb of the earth, the blood of walnut hulls staining hands green like aloe, like algae, like malachite, like grass.

Recollection takes root.
Your father's song
as he presses spatula to griddle.
The neighbor's half-dead cat
dragging itself across the hot asphalt, mewing.
A photograph of a young man
on the pier in late October,
suit thrown over his left shoulder.
Water lapping wood,
wind whistling Vivaldi.

Ukiyo-e.

Pictures of the floating world for sale. Memory is the holiest garage sale, half-stories bloodied and sacrificed, scattered around the altar.

# Left: Palm Perspective Hannah Fuller









# Pete the Greek William Wittenbrock

Years ago, When I first rode Pete, his owner said He won the Santa Anita In a minute and forty-seven seconds.

"He would've kept winning If his leg hadn't broken."

In the afternoon's haze,
Pete's hooves touch the ground
Like a dancer's toes and his gallop blurs the field
Into watercolor strokes.
The reins fall away and I clench
His mane—almost flying—

A few years from now, Pete's leg will go lame And his owner will say

"He's just too expensive."

Standing in his stall, Pete will chew carrots and sugar cubes As poison rushes to his heart In a minute and forty-seven seconds.

# Fragile Beauty Hannah Fuller





#### Son

### McKenna O'Dougherty

He pulls her chair out before she even steps in from the garden.

He washes carrots and onions and lights the stove.

He sits with her while she chews.

They don't stop smiling.

It's an invitation, a duet.

The daylight settles around the dust and she closes the windows for the day.

He collects her napkin and

rinses her spoon.

She isn't old enough yet to need help to her reading chair

but he knows she will be soon

so he asks to hear a story and sits at her feet.

She tells the one about the rabbit

about the carrots and onions and the perpetual sunburn on his father's face.

He could be 16 years old or 43

he would listen just as closely.

She squints into the bowl of his woven hands.

He tucks her in

out of love

and anxiety.

She hasn't slept well since the rabbits nibbled her garden.

He hasn't needed coffee or an alarm in years.

When he opens the gate at sunrise

there are eggs on the stove

there are rabbits in the garden

there is a smile in the kitchen. He pulls out her chair.

He could be brand new

or marbled and wrinkled.

They won't stop smiling.

It's an invitation.

A duet.

The sunlight stirs around the dust as she opens the windows for the day.

# Left: Labor of Love Aimee Fritsch

#### China.

### **Emily Zwier**

Miss Annie was most certain that the time from eight in the morning to about five in the afternoon was God's only gift to her. It was the time when she knew for certain that Herbert was officially gone for work, with no chance of coming home unannounced. It wasn't that she didn't love her husband, but the house seemed happier when he was gone.

At this time the sun was just high enough to peek through the topmost leaves of the apple tree, which grew right alongside the kitchen window. She would stand there every morning, barefoot on the cold tile, watching the sun inch its way into the kitchen until the white walls were colored the shade of yellow she had always wanted to paint them. Though she had not seen many other sunrises, she firmly believed that there was no other shade of yellow like it. Franklin, Georgia was just far enough from the smog of the big cities that the yellow of the new sun could come in clean and pure. It was such a beautiful color, so rich when it flooded the kitchen that she thought she could almost feel it wash over her. She wanted to twirl in the ecstasy of the morning. On the rare occasion when she could muster up the courage, she actually did.

Most mornings, though, she would just stand there for a moment of perfect stillness until she felt she was ready to continue with the rest of her ritual. The kettle was first; the knob of the stovetop set halfway between the number five and six so that she would have just enough time to make six finger sandwiches before the kettle began to whistle. Only the creamiest peanut butter would do, taken from a jar hidden behind cans of sardines at the back of the pantry and spread evenly across two pieces of Wonder Bread. Annie thought discarded crusts looked like little lumpy hills when she swept them to the edge of the cutting board. When the whistle of the kettle signaled it was time, she would wash her hand twice before pulling out a blue box from the cabinet under the kitchen sink that held her china tea set.

Annie's Momma had given it to her as a wedding present, because "every new wife needs a proper china set for entertaining." Though, when Annie first opened the satin-lined box, she was so breathless she could hardly touch the cups, saucers, and tea pot, let alone use them for serving. They were perfect: the purest shade of white with a curling array of tender peach-colored blossoms; each individual petal was so delicately painted that if someone had told her they had been done by faeries, she might have believed them. So vivid that every time she looked at them, she could almost smell them—just like the little peach flowers that had grown along the path of her elementary school. There wasn't another possession of hers that she loved more than that china set. Nothing else gave her the feeling she got when her fingers curled around the delicate porcelain handle as she brought the teacup to her lips and back down to its matching saucer. She would be perfectly content to sit in the sun and do nothing but drink from those beautiful china teacups, if someone only let her. Nothing captured her imagination more.

She only had two cups and one saucer left. She lost most of the set during a fight with Herbert seven months into their marriage. There were still some china fragments behind the arm chair from where he had thrown the set against the wall, even though she had cried. Her Momma once told her when she was a little girl that God only gave a person so many tears to cry with, and that she shouldn't waste them on things that weren't important. She cried so much around Herbert that she worried about how many tears she had left. But she loved that set so much, she couldn't help but cry. She didn't think he knew the importance of crying.

It wasn't all bad though, she would remind herself whenever she thought of that night. After all, if she didn't feel the need to hide the tea set, she wouldn't have only used it when Herbert was at work. She would have never discovered the most magical moment of the morning. The only real difference was that they had Sunday dinner at her Momma's house, and not the other way around, so she didn't have to lie about the china. Another little blessing, for Herbert was always on his best behavior in company, especially

her Momma. Besides, in most situations, Herbert did her share of lying before she was even put in the situation to lie. He was one of the most convincing liars that she had ever met; he lied with the same swift precision that he made decisions with, so that she hardly ever found herself questioning him. In fact, last night at dinner was probably the first time that she had questioned him since their first year of marriage.

It had taken him a half an hour to notice that she was barely picking at her portion of chicken breast, though she was surprised that he said anything at all. "Why aren't you eating anything?" he had managed to say through the half-chewed chunks of chicken.

Annie didn't answer until he repeated his question; Herbert rarely asked questions, though he often made statements and demands that appeared as questions.

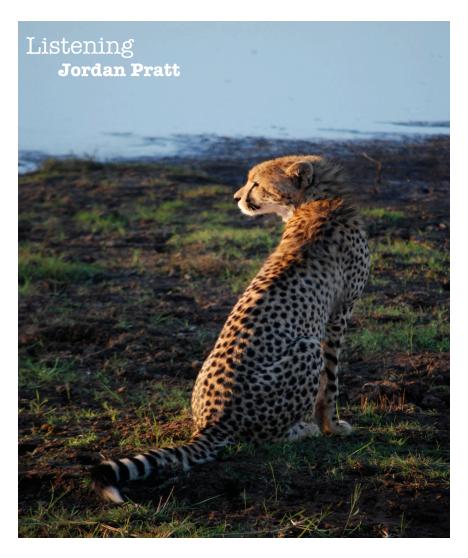
"I'm just a little nervous about tomorrow," she mumbled, shrugging her shoulders to appear nonchalant.

"Annabelle, how many times do I have to tell you that this is what is best?" His fork came down with too much force, screeching across his plate. It gave her the perfect opportunity to cringe.

"Don't you want me to have your baby?" she said, reaching over with her own fork and knife to cut his chicken into smaller pieces.

"You will have my baby when I say you are going to. Which is not now. I am not going to waste money on a mistake baby." He waved her hand away from his plate, sending her fork and knife clattering across the table.

But, Herbert, just think about it," she said, scrambling to retrieve the silverware and wipe away the bits of food they had flung all over the table. "We've been married for long enough that if we don't have a baby soon people are going to start to talk."



"Jesus, I should have had this done weeks ago before you got all hormonal. You are going to start taking a pregnancy test every week now so we can nip this thing in the bud if it ever happens again." He pounded his fist against the table, sending vibrations through Annie's arms and deep into her chest.

"I'm thinking about you—your reputation," she whispered, reaching out to quiet his hands, which were poised to strike again.

"You know nothing about my reputation!" He grabbed her wrist then, causing her bracelet to cut into her flesh.

Herbert said a lot of other things after that, but she didn't say another word. Annie twirled through the rest of the night in a blur, limp and helpless like a marionette doll. She wasn't even sure why she had said anything in the first place; she didn't want his baby—but she knew she would have loved it anyways, if he had given her the chance.

The remnants of the evening—the scattered silverware, the knocked-over chair, the bits of food flung across the table—they had all be removed by the time Annie awoke this morning, and replaced by a bundle of brilliant lilacs cradled in pale pink tissue paper. She didn't need to look inside the little white note next to them to know they were from Herbert. On one of their very first dates she had mentioned how much she loved lilacs, and somehow he hadn't forgotten. They had become his white flag, his apology, his profession of love, and his eraser to wipe the slate clean.

She could smell them even now, all the way in the kitchen where she was slowly cleaning the last china cup. The cup almost slipped out of the towel when the doorbell rang in the foyer, earlier than she had expected. Stan wasn't supposed to pick her up for at least three and a half minutes more.

"I'll be right out," she called over her shoulder as she tucked the china back into its box and put it back in the sink cabinet.

Annie paused in front of the mirror in the foyer on her way to the door to examine her appearance one last time, fumbling to smooth down the hairs that had come loose from her long blonde braid. It was too hot for the long sleeve blouse that she was wearing, but after last night with Herbert she couldn't rightly wear anything else without setting the whole town to whispers. It was a good thing that she had never had much tolerance for the sun, she thought as she pulled the cuffs as far as they could over her wrists. She could

easily blame the blouse on her skin without it being a complete lie.

Stan was waiting by his car with the ease of a man who was more than used to waiting on a woman. "Good morning, Miss Annie," he said with a flourishing bow when he saw her slip out the front door, as had always been his habit in the presence of a lady. But for all that, in his smile she could still see the dirty little boy that he had been when they were kids, who took delight in chasing the girls on their block with his latest collection of bullfrogs.

"Good morning, Stan," she replied, smiling as he swung the car door open for her. "Thank you so much for driving me."

"Oh, don't mention it!" He grinned widely, offering his hand as she slid into the back seat. "Especially on a day like today. Lovely weather we're having, isn't it?" he continued, once he had settled into the front seat and started up the car. "Course this probably means we're gonna have another record-breaking summer heat. If we get another one of those, I don't know if I can keep affording my water bill, what with my wife and her prizing winning azaleas. I swear if it were a choice between me and them flowers, I know I'd lose...Why, Miss Annie, you're paler than a polar bear! You sure you're alright?"

Annie had stopped forcing herself to smile somewhere in the middle of his chatter, thinking that Stan wouldn't see. But of course, Stan had driven through this town for so long that he could probably do it backwards, and he was too polite of a person not to glance in the rearview mirror every now and again.

"Hmm? Oh, I'm fine. I just don't particularly like riding the train," she said with a bit of laugh, rubbing away the deep marks her nails had made in her palms.

"Are you sure you don't want me to drive you all the way to wherever you're going?"

"Oh, I couldn't ask you to do that. Besides, Herbert already bought me a ticket."

"Well, you just tell Herbert that I'd be happy to drive you anywhere next time," Stan said, looking at her in the rearview mirror again. "It ain't right for a lady to be taking the train all by herself when she's got a husband to take her, if I'm speaking my mind. Now you've got my home number, so don't be shy about calling if you need me to pick you up from somewhere, alright Miss Annie?"

"Of course." Her smile did not falter this time.

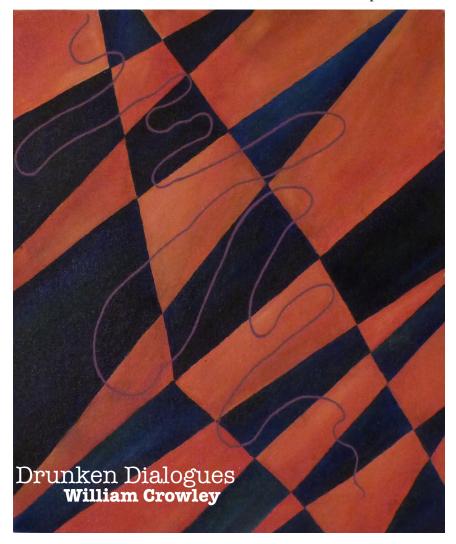
At least not until she had waved a final goodbye to Stan once they had reached the train station. The morning rush had ended about an hour ago, leaving her car virtually empty. Annie quietly slipped into her seat alongside the window.

She had been married to Herbert Butler for a little more than three years, but everyone still called her Miss Annie. The only time she was ever Mrs. Annabelle Butler was on the bills and legal papers that Herbert kept in the drawers of his desk, and she was only ever Annabelle when Herbert talked to her. He was the only one who called her Annabelle, except those rare times when her mother had scolded her as a child. She couldn't say that she altogether minded that people still called her Miss Annie. It made her think of that October night when they had called her name over the microphone to announce her as Homecoming Queen, and how she had glided up onto the stage with her pink satin dress swishing about her ankles. People had told her how much she looked like a real queen that night, and she had had no doubt because she felt like one. She knew that was why she had married Herbert. He was nothing like the man she had ever pictured marrying, but he had called her "lady" when they first met, and kissed her hand as though they were in an old movie. She didn't need much more to marry him.

It wasn't as though she hadn't had her share of suitors before Herbert in high school, more than a girl could hope for in a small town like hers. But then Herbert had swept into Franklin, a distant relative of Mrs. Sally Butler come back from Harvard to "reflect on his roots." With his shiny new business degree and a prospective internship at a large corporation (which was located in one of the tallest buildings that Annie had ever seen) right in the middle of the city, Herbert was larger than life. Everyone swore she would be a fool not to marry him, so she did. And just like that, Herbert became not only her husband, but the biggest man in town—a staple figure of success at every town party and function, with Annie as the glittering jewel at his side. Yet, for all his success, she never understood why he always came up with an excuse not to attend any Harvard functions, whenever the invitations came in the mail.

The train ride to take her into the city lasted a little over two hours, a time that Annie lived through in a state of inner turmoil, simultaneously hoping the train would stop early and keep going on forever. With every bump in the track, she hoped that something in the train had broken down, prayed that her car would go flying off the track and roll down into some ditch far away. The clacking sound of the moving train reminded her of horse hooves hitting stone; she glanced out the window every so often, almost expecting train robbers to be outside, the way she had seen them in the old westerns that Herbert would watch. Only in her mind they had very real guns, and would kill everyone on the train. When the train came within sight of the city, Annie clenched her eyes closed and stayed that way until one of the train attendants tapped her on the shoulder to tell her that, unless she wanted to leave the state, she would have to disembark. Herbert had only paid for a ticket that would take her this far. Herbert had said that this was the only clinic far enough away that no one from Franklin would find out, which it probably was, but his office was in this city too. She knew that he would have never let her go any farther away from him. Clutching a small paper map close to her breast, Annie made her way out of the train station and into the city.

The abortion clinic looked nothing like she had imagined: nestled in a strip mall between an Albertsons and a dance studio. She had to check the building number with the address she was given to convince herself that this was the right place. It looked more like the animal clinic in Franklin from the front, but the large letter "P" of the Planned Parenthood logo printed on the glass door shattered any such illusion. Instinctively, Annie glanced about to see if anyone was staring as she meandered about the strip mall towards the clinic. It was silly, she knew—as if it were possible that someone from Franklin had driven for two hours to shop at a chain



grocery store. But she still checked twice. There was no one in the whole complex except for a few teenage boys on a smoke break and an old woman outside of the clinic who pushed a plastic rosary into Annie's hand and said something about God's love. Annie was so startled she could only manage a hurried thank you as she tripped over the curb in front of the clinic steps.

It was a lot smaller than she thought it would be; only a few repurposed office chairs and a table cluttered with magazines made up the waiting room. From Pastor John's sermons, she had pictured some giant fortress full of tall doctors with black eyes and crooked smiles. But this didn't look too much different than the clinic in Franklin, except it was smaller and there were condoms on the welcome counter. The woman behind the counter stopped smacking her gum long enough to offer a sympathetic smile as she handed Annie a pen and clipboard. She realized that she was still clutching the plastic rosary, and quickly slipped it into her pocket as she took a seat to fill out the form. It only took three and a half minutes, judging by the large clock on the wall opposite her, for a nurse to come in and softly call out, "Annabelle?"

The ceiling of the corridor was too close and the walls were too white; she wondered if this was what Jonah felt like inside the whale as she followed the nurse into an even smaller room. Her hands had deep nail marks again as she unclenched them to smooth out the nonexistent wrinkles in her skirt, feeling incredibly exposed. The nurse's voice was gentle but impersonal, from years of having to soothe scared women. She handed Annie a medical gown to change into. When she had left the room Annie clumsily began to strip, struggling with the buttons of her blouse and the laces of her shoes. Under the florescent lights, the bruises on her arms stood out against her pale skin; the blotchy brown of the fading ones and the deep purple of the fresh ones. Blotchy and spotted, like the mutts that ran around at the edge of town.

The bruises almost covered up the small crescent-shaped birthmark on her right forearm. Momma had told her that it was

the kiss her guardian angel had given her when she was born. As a child, whenever she was scared she would touch the mark and say a little prayer. But she didn't think she could pray now. She wondered if her baby would have a birth mark, wondered what it would have looked like. Annie wondered what her baby would look like.

But then she saw all of the bruises again. This baby deserved a better father than Herbert; she hoped that the baby's guardian angel understood, if it had one already. She gently pressed a hand against the small bulge between her hips. No one deserved to come into the world already unwanted. A hot tear fell onto the smooth curve of her breast, and she realized she was crying.

There was a knock on the door, and Annie hurriedly slipped on the thin gown and then climbed onto the table. The nurse came back in, followed by a doctor with hairy hands and a worn out smile. He shook her hand and said things to her that she didn't have the head-space to understand. While he was talking, the nurse was spreading her legs wide apart and slipping them into stirrups at the end of the table. She was the marionette again, as the doctor and nurse worked together to twist her, position her, and string her up just right. Then the nurse was patting her arm gently and telling her to breathe deeply as she held a plastic mask over Annie's mouth. She thought that she had stopped breathing, but she must have been because, before she knew it, her eyes were too heavy to stay open because of the anesthesia. As her eyes blinked close, the seams of the walls seemed to blend together and shrink down around her, like a bubble of glue so thick that the sharp instruments beside the doctor couldn't pop it.

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Annie waited for Herbert on the weathered wooden bench outside the clinic for almost an hour until his car pulled up. Her bones felt brittle, as if all the marrow had been sucked out, and her hands couldn't seem to stop shaking as she fumbled with the car door and then her seatbelt.

"Sorry I'm late; my meeting ran a bit later than expected." Herbert's voice was louder than Annie had remembered, and she almost jumped when she felt his mustache bristle her cheek as he leaned over to give her a quick peck. She knew he was waiting for her to respond, but only had the head-space to remember to breathe.

Barely a minute of silence passed before Herbert was talking again. "Well, I won't hold you in suspense any longer. I closed the deal with Warnermans today!"

"That's absolutely wonderful, Herbert," she heard herself say, lips moving before she even realized she was talking, like some coin-operated toy.

"Biggest deal of my career." He drummed his fingers against the steering wheel triumphantly. "And I was thinking about getting you that dress you keep admiring in the window of Hale's. A little apology for how stressed this deal has made me." He glanced over at Annie expectantly.

Annie only stared forward, her faced stretched into the largest smile she could muster. "That'd be lovely," she said, her own voice echoing loudly in her head. She pressed her thumb deeply into the birthmark on her arm to keep herself from crying. "Lovely."

That night, when she was sure by his heavy breathing that Herbert was asleep, Annie slipped silently out of bed. In the back of the closet, she found what she was looking for. Herbert's Harvard baseball bat was worn and cracked, hardly anything more than a piece of wood, but Herbert refused to let go of the only testament to the fact that there had been a time in his life when he had been a real man.

In the kitchen, tucked in the back of the third cabinet under the sink, she found what she was looking for. The blue box had stain marks on it from the leaky sink and the ribbon that tied the lid shut was frayed from being done and undone every morning, but the satin lining inside was just as smooth as the day she had opened it. Annie carried the box and the bat out through the sliding door and into the back yard.

The concrete of the patio was colder under her bare feet than the kitchen tile, and was covered with blotchy black shadows as the moon began to peek through the leaves of the apple tree. The wind had paused its blowing for the moment, and everything was cast in the silence that comes with an absolute lack of motion. Inside the box, the glaze of the teacups and saucers gleamed in the moonlight, but the vibrancy of the peach flowers was diluted somehow and the green leaves seemed withered and pale. She thought they didn't even look like plants anymore, just a dozens of little birthmarks against the pale white china.

#### Annie tipped the box over.

The sound of the china shattering against the concrete crackled through the night like thunder. Pieces of peach flowers skittered across the ground in every direction, their jagged, exposed edges scraping small, chalky white lines on the concrete. Once the pieces settled, she swept the fragments into a pile, and then took the head of the baseball bat to them, smashing and grinding them into the concrete like a medicine man until the china was reduced to coarse powder. Until every single flower and leaf was obliterated and the china was free from all birthmarks. It felt gritty in her hands as she scooped it off of the concrete, just the way she imagined sand to feel like. She marveled, and poured it from hand to hand.

A gust of wind rattled through the apple tree, pressing her blouse against her back and lifting her skirt off from her legs, but she did not bend. To the wind she threw the china powder with such reverence that she was unsure if she were casting glitter or ashes.

## Tree of Life Jordan Pratt



# Studio Del Mar #1 William Crowley



## Paint Your Mailbox Blue William Crowley

If you're feeling fucked up paint your mail box blue

Then I'll know just what to do

I'll write you letters every day, it might not make much sense

I don't always know what to say

But I'll do what I can to help see you through

Because I love you

And p.s. really I'm just as fucked up too

### Stillbirth on 27th Street Sophie von Rohr

We are nineteen and walking home
Alone in February
From Alex's house
And passing a huge jacket back and forth between us,
Trying to fit
Into it together,
Arms to arms and front to front and my chin
On your shoulder, laughing
(I seem to remember
I was afraid to stop laughing).

The stale cool smell of smoke was on us then and in our chests And when we found pussy willows
Shooting forth their furry posies in the freeze it seemed
Like a miracle of god,
So disillusioned
Were those delicate stalks
With February.

They came into our cold-drunk hands
And we consumed them into bunches,
A bouquet of improbable living things.
Between our thumbs and fingers and on our numb faces
God, they were like
The velvet-pink veneer
Of skin and fur
On the damp feet of newborn rabbits.

Right: Passage to Oneness William Crowley

I can't think just now
Which of us it was
Who realized first
And suddenly
Was terrified—
That silky, animal fur on a thing
Which grew in earth
And the hardness like tiny bones beneath
Was an aberration.
When we hurled
The pussy willows to the frosty ground we knew
They would never see the spring.



### Meet the Ephemera Staff

#### Alexander Bean

Alex Bean is a Music Composition and Organ Performance student. Aside from the time-consuming confines of practice and composition, he enjoys reading philosophy and poetry, especially works of speculative realism and conceptual writing.

#### Eva Bertoglio, Senior Art Editor



Eva Bertoglio is a junior majoring in Humanities and double minoring in Creative Writing and Comics Studies. Her interests include poetry, film, art, and anything involving H. Jon Benjamin. She can usually be found roaming the stacks at Knight Library or en route to coffee

#### Laura Brehm

Laura is a freshman pre-Journalism major who enjoys writing, "Community," and modern dance. One day she hopes to become a screenwriter and work with her idol, Joss Whedon.

Natalie Jane Edson, Senior Poetry Editor



Natalie arrived on this planet in 1992 when her UFO crash-landed in the deserts of Nevada. In 2009 she convinced the University of Oregon that she was a human female, and they admitted her to the Clark Honors College. Since then, she has been making art, doing school stuff, and infiltrating Hipster populations in order to send intelligence back to her homeworld.

MH

Molly Hover, Editor-in-Chief

Molly is a sophomore Advertising major and Creative Writing minor. She loves to explore new outlets of art and creativity. This is her second year on *Ephemera* and she is so grateful to have been the Editor-in-Chief of such an amazing publication.

EK

#### Elizabeth Kirkpatrick

A sophomore at the UO, Elizabeth enjoys spending her time outside of class reading as much as possible and making origami. Next year, she'll have the opportunity to do so while studying in Spain and visiting the rest of Europe.

AL

Ana Lind

Ana is a sophmore, currently studying Digital Arts and Animation. When it's raining she prefers reading and drinking tea in the rain. When it's sunny she prefers taking long walks and listening to music. Her goal is to one day own her own animation studio.

**Erin Parsons** 

EP

Erin is a sophomore majoring in Chinese and International Studies. She enjoys writing, biking, backpacking and running. She hopes to minor in English.

WP

Whitney Peterson

Whitney is a second year Cinema Studies major, and is also working on a Creative Writing minor. She enjoys spending far too much time watching TV shows instead of homework and will get to continue doing this in the fall in England.

#### Mark Plumlee, Senior Prose Editor



Mark is a junior pursuing an English major. He enjoys a good hamburger.

ER

Ellen Rojc

Ellen is studying Sociology and Dance and hopes to help the CHC flourish as an exciting community for students to pursue their academic and artistic dreams. She loves creating, performing, editing, and enjoying the creative arts. Through artistic endeavors, Ellen hopes to promote diversity and equality for people universe-wide!

Carly Uebel

Carly is a senior studying Biological Anthropology and Arabic Language. She is currently writing a thesis about contemporary Palestinian poetry, and enjoys French music, snow days, and perusing Craigslist for used bookstore jobs.

 $\mathcal{E}\mathcal{W}$ 

**Erin Weaver** 

Erin is a sophomore English major currently studying abroad with the Oxford Experience in England. She has enjoyed the experience that *Ephemera* has given her.

**Maggie Witt** 

MW

Maggie is a senior studying English and Art History. She enjoys cooking elaborate meals, reading about obscure artists, and talking in the third person.

CY

Corinne Yank

Corinne is a senior International Studies major focusing on law and human rights. She loves classical ballet, darkroom photography, and travel.







### Ephemera:

(pl.n.) printed records of passing interest that later become memorabilia.

