

THE WAKE FOREST REVIEW

VOLUME 1 // SUMMER 2023



Jane D. Attilman

The Wake Forest Review is a literary magazine showcasing the creative talents of the Wake Forest, North Carolina community.

Cover Art: Jane D. Steelman, "*Silver Sea.*" Alcohol Ink, 6 x 6 x 0.5 in

Editorial Board

Katelyn Andell
Ashley Hogan
Caden Halberg

Editor's Note

Dear Readers,

In January 2023, I met with Sue Lucey and Kelley Barnes at Page158 Books to discuss my vision for a community literary magazine. What began as a few pages of notes and a lot of question marks has blossomed into this collection of art and literature. It is with immense pride and excitement that I present to you the inaugural issue of *The Wake Forest Review*.

The Wake Forest Review is different from most literary magazines. Instead of casting a net across the nation or the state, I plastered local shops with flyers and bookmarks and advertised on Facebook. I reached out to local schools and organizations. Word spread from friend to friend, from teacher to student, from storeowner to customer. The artists, writers, and poets featured in these pages are your neighbors--34 of our 40 contributors live in the Wake Forest area, while the rest either hail from the larger Triangle region or have strong ties to our town.



Carol Andell, "Bedtime for Frances."
Watercolor.

At the heart of this magazine lies the belief that every individual within our community has a story worth telling and a vision worth sharing. Our mission is to bring our community together in the spirit of creativity, open-mindedness, and love for one's neighbors.

We are honored to feature the works of both seasoned writers, poets, and artists and emerging talents who have poured their hearts and souls into their craft. For this first issue, each writer, poet, and artist has their own page with a short biography. Perhaps you know some of them, while other names may be new to you. You may even find inspiration in the words of a former teacher, employee, or workout buddy at the YMCA.

As we embark on this new adventure, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to: our contributors for their talent and their willingness to be vulnerable; Ashley Hogan, Director of Creative Writing at Meredith College, for her incredible insight and expertise; Caden Halberg, honors student at Elon University and proofreading extraordinaire; Mary Petretich of ARTS Wake Forest and Kathy Street of the Wake Forest Guild of Artists, for introducing me to Wake Forest's rich art scene; and to Sue Lucey and Kelley Barnes of Page158 Books, for your encouragement, help with marketing, and for providing a local space for literature lovers to gather.

Finally, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to you, our readers, for joining us on this literary journey. Together, let us cherish and celebrate the power of local art and storytelling, and continue to cultivate a thriving community of voices, ideas, and inspiration.

Warmest regards,

Katelyn Andell, Founding Editor

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Todd Kreisman, "Meet Me At Shorty's."
Acrylic on canvas, 12x16"

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Sara Roberts, "Cones at Grove Park"
Mixed Media

scenes from a house well-loved

Leandra Lee

the new water stain on the ceiling in my mother's room, above the four-poster bed that she and my father used to share on summer nights when the fan was on the highest setting, mum still sweating, running hot from stress and north carolina summers and her cheating husband.

the old water stain in my siblings' room, four beds bunked in twos, where we had to replace the t.v. because we ran out of VHS tapes and where they spent 10 years growing from the middle until their outstretched toes touched the white footboard of their childhood beds.

the broken blinds in my bedroom, two floors down from everyone else and behind the garage, where i watched food network until three o'clock in the morning and cried and dreamed of the life i lead now.

the bikes that are being loaded into a stranger's trunk, all three sold for ninety dollars and assurance of removal, the sea-foam green cruiser with the pleather seat took me around campus, rain soaked and occasionally frozen to my thighs on the days where i wore skirts in winter.

the twelve mason jars but only nine lids from my job on the island where i let the owners walk all over me for four years in exchange for free pimento cheese samples snuck behind the counter in between customers, knowledge of beer and wine before i was 21, a family, and cumulative hours of crying on the kegs in the walk-in cooler.

the baking pans and cookie sheets stained and burned and calloused with batter from birthday cupcakes and cookies made out of boredom and an abundance of flour, sugar, and eggs.

the sand that gathered in the grooves and grouts of the entryway tile from years of salty, gritty toes running to the shower after the days spent on the beach, baking in the sun and playing mermaids in the water as a reprieve from the heat, and reading and re-reading nantucket blue.

the small lighthouse just beside the door to the porch, foggy with the humidity and condensation of the brackish air where the a/c mixed with the summer heat at the threshold of the doorframe. it is filled with things that strangers lost and we found on the beach.

among the debris:

a set of rusted keys; a pair of readers whose lenses are scratched by bits of sand and time; a small spongebob figurine with faded yellow paint; a sticky, stretchy salamander missing his faded red tail; and countless memories of a house well loved and an adolescence well-lived.

Leandra Lee is a poetry and non-fiction writer whose day job entails marketing for a mortgage company. In her spare time, she spends moments laughing at nothing (and everything), discovering new art, reading, watching (or re-watching) good (and bad) movies, listening to records, and digging holes in the backyard of her new home for tomato plants to inhabit. She lives in Wake Forest with her partner, Jason, their three cats, Earl, Binx, and Butterbean, their bearded dragon, Cheeto, and too many plants to count. This is her ninth publication.

Terry Prace

American Folk Art Works

Carefully handcrafted in the same fashion as the utilitarian artisans of old, **Terry Prace** uses his woodworking skills as a folk artist, creating beautifully replicated weather vanes, whirligigs, and trade signs. His pieces are sourced from 100-year-old reclaimed heart pine salvaged from turn-of-the-century tobacco barns through a process he calls "reinbarnation." While Terry takes pride in the historical accuracy of his work, he also enjoys injecting whimsical elements and his own unique sense of humor. Each piece is hand-carved using traditional methods and antique hand tools. First, the surfaces are treated with layers of milk paint before being worked and weathered to provide an aged look. The bases are crafted from reclaimed wooden newel or bed posts. While each piece is individually handcrafted and produced for resale, custom work is welcomed. To inquire about his work, contact him:

americanfolkartworksnc@gmail.com



"Sail away" is a schooner weather vane created from both wood and roofing tin from an 1880's tobacco barn on Jenks Rd. in Apex. It is set on an antique bedpost finial depicting the Hatteras Lighthouse, and the base is reminiscent of a craggy shoreline.

Introspect

Mary Boyer

Sometimes, I think I'll turn me inside out
and wear the other side awhile.

To even out the sweater snags
that pull so threadbare thin
And show the holes that grow in time
to show too much -
and make the patching harder
when the time comes.

Somehow, I never get around to
mending all those holes
that need repair so badly.
They just pull and tug to stress the seams
and make the wearing plain.

There's comfort in that wearing though.
Hug-touch-hold
and home to me.

Mary Boyer is a native North Carolinian who has lived in the Wake Forest area since 2012. After a long career in the nonprofit sector, Mary is now semi-retired and remains an active civic and community volunteer.

Home

(the year I lost my mother)

Mary Boyer

We are eternal,
never born
never dying.

Called to
called from
a lingering place of memory-
Home.

Just behind an achy fog so familiar,
you can taste the tang of the pine
in the air,
the stolen, sticky sweetness
of the honeysuckle.

Whoosh whoosh of the attic fan lullaby.

Wisteria, so blue

So

Blue

hangs heavy.

Nicole Sarrocco & Veronica Markey

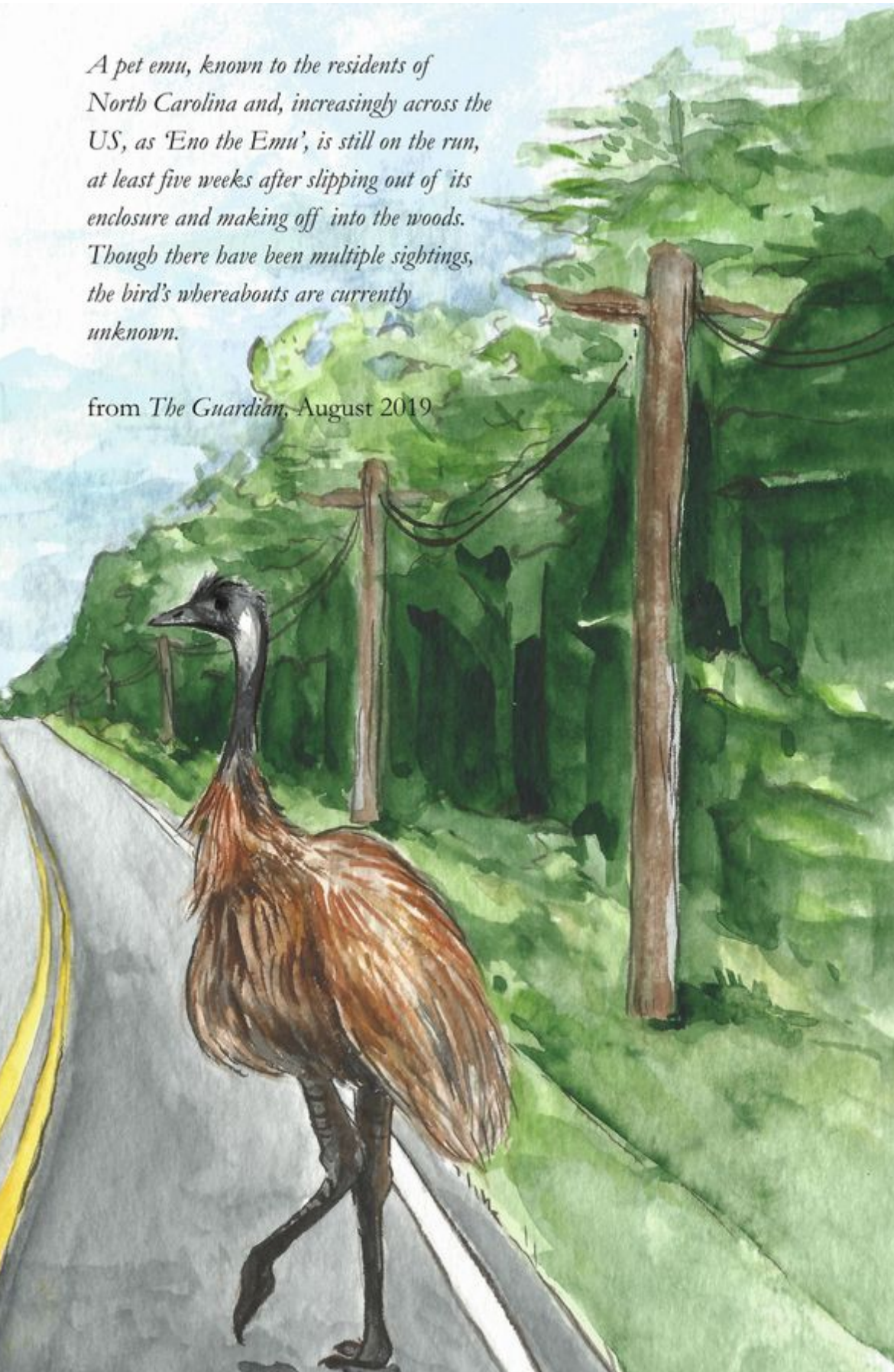
Eno Emu

Before fame, out there on Jones Ferry
pecking his way up the double yellow line
spiky hair, all legs
like a Chapel Hill rock star
headed to the Cave
to open up for the next last late great
beautiful boys and girls
a legend before he made it
to town, man, before he could
get a burrito and a George Jones belt buckle
he was got by the cops.
The outlaw looked me in the eye once
Jones Ferry bright in my mirror
work still fogging my sense
beak-blessed, fumbled the phone
the only evidence the unlikelihood of it all.
Ladies and Gentlemen, lovers of groundhogs,
I propose Emu Day
on which things happen
that have never been before
and a tall boy always sees his shadow
and goes out anyway.

Words by Nicole Sarrocco
Birds by Veronica Markey
2021

A pet emu, known to the residents of North Carolina and, increasingly across the US, as 'Eno the Emu', is still on the run, at least five weeks after slipping out of its enclosure and making off into the woods. Though there have been multiple sightings, the bird's whereabouts are currently unknown.

from The Guardian, August 2019



Memory / Reality

Streeper Clyne

News reports said missiles landed last Saturday
 On a plateau in the Golan Heights
 While local villagers sought safety in bomb shelters.
 Was that hilltop where we stood a month before, in early March?
 American tourists.
 Swathed in our false sense of security.
 Smiling as we took selfies. The Syrian border arcadian behind our faces.

Did the sisters killed last Friday drive the route we took through the West Bank?
 Were they headed, as we had been, to float in the Dead Sea?
 To bask in its buoyancy?
 My sister and I had laughed, feeling the sun-warmed, salty water on our skin.
 Did those sisters feel the bullets ripping through theirs?

We returned home profoundly changed.
 History and place. No longer abstract stories, vague geography.
 We had touched antiquity, walked the Via Dolorosa.
 We agreed, my sister and I, that we'd return to Israel in a heartbeat.
 Before last week. Before reality excised our fragile naivete.
 And others' lives.
 Senselessly.
 On that desert road, drenched in sorrows.

Streeper Clyne is a writer living in Raleigh, NC. She and her sister traveled to Israel in March of this year. It was magical, incredible, and left them profoundly changed. Two news reports in April--the first, of Syria bombing the Golan Heights; and the second, of two sisters tragically killed on a road in the West Bank--cut them to their cores. This poem is an attempt to mourn and make sense of the senseless--the tragic and sorrowful loss of human life.

On This Day

James Kornegay

Norman hiked along the sidewalk, which hadn't seen maintenance since at least the nineties. White oaks and sugar maples towered over him, and their roots dug under the concrete, displacing it so that Norman's walk was more an exercise in balance than anything.

The town tried to keep some semblance of a level sidewalk by shaving down the sides where the roots made the path uneven.

But it didn't work.

Instead, it made a ramp every few feet that Norman had to navigate. More than once his foot caught and almost sent him tumbling over himself.

He wouldn't trade an even walk for the trees, though. On a warm fall day like today he welcomed their shade, and he liked the idea that they'd been there longer than the town itself. They were part of its history.

It wasn't a big place, as towns go, but like so many suburban havens it had suffered growth as the bigger cities spilled over into the outskirts of the county.

This path he'd taken dozens of times. As a child, his parents had taken him trick or treating along this street. As a teenager, he'd made the trek to the corner ice cream shop. Now, as an adult, he waged battle against his cholesterol while his daughter was taking dance classes, wearing a path into the concrete from above while the trees burrowed from below.

He approached the corner to turn, where the post office was, when he saw it.

A cast iron plaque, screwed into the brick wall that ran along the yard that read "On this site in 1891 nothing happened."

Norman paused in front of it. The sign made his head whirl, or maybe his body needed to recover from the last concrete on ramp.

The house looked as old as the others. Huge pillars stretched their way to the roof, looking over the thin planks that lined the deep porch space between the railing and the side of the house. It was an old, beautiful Victorian thing.

But surely *something* had happened here.

How had he never noticed this before? It was funny, to be sure. The rest of this street had houses with noted history. Sanders Cottage, built in 1832 by Reverend Sanders who led some Southern Baptist group. The old Jordan general store, established back in 1904 before the town made a regulation about what could and couldn't be sold in that area. And of course, all the buildings associated with the college before it left the town for greener pastures.

Norman had seen enough plaques on this walk alone to last a lifetime, and seeing this one made him chuckle.

But that sign couldn't be true. Something had happened there in 1891.

"Can I help you, friend?"

Norman's gaze shot from the sign to the porch. A man stood there, leaning over the rail, looking out at the yard like it made no difference if it was green and lush or if dandelions had freckled the place like a pox from hell.

"Oh, I was just admiring your plaque here. Pretty funny."

The man smiled. "Yeah, we thought so too. Put it up when we moved in a few years ago."

Years. How could he not have noticed this sooner?

"So, uh...you from around here?" The man asked.

"Yeah. Born and raised."

They sat in silence for a beat.

"Well," the man said, "You have a good evening." He stood up and turned for the door.

"Hey!" Norman said.

The man looked back.

"This, uh, this isn't true, right? I mean, something happened here, right? This house has some sort of history to it?"

The man raised an eyebrow. "Well, we don't know, actually. Someone built it, sure. Just don't know when exactly. Or who or why."

The man slapped one of the porch pillars. "She's a beauty though, isn't she? You have a good night." He turned and went into the house.

How could the man be so...so...*cavalier* about this? This street had an order to it. A systematic cataloging and documenting of its existence and history and this man had spit in the face of it.

Surely they interviewed these homeowners before selling? Someone on the town council, checking that the new owners would uphold the integrity of the system.

He checked his watch. There was still a good forty-five minutes before he needed to pick up his daughter.

He turned back the way he had come and set off at a quicker pace than usual, careful not to trip over the uneven concrete.

This time he cut through the seminary campus. Easier than going around on the sidewalk, which followed the road, which had to make a circuitous route around the seminary, as though the campus stood as an immutable mountain, placed by God.

Norman waddled through the grounds. He felt like one of those Olympic walkers, pumping his fists, his hips swinging with each step.

A few students eyed him as he passed. He offered a friendly wave, but from the looks on their faces he guessed they thought he had been possessed by a New Testament demon.

No matter.

A few minutes later he arrived on the doorstep of the town's museum, set right in the middle of the historic Elm Avenue. Another old house—this one was one of the original university buildings. It was situated on a beautiful plot of land, with a yard that was almost a field, and old southern trees casting their shade everywhere.

Norman saw an older woman—gray and just starting to hunch, but still spry—closing and locking the door to the museum.

“Glenda!”

The woman turned and sighed. “Norman, not now, I don't have the—”

“Sorry, just give me a moment, please, it's just...did you know there's an unidentified house on North Elm?” He gave her the address. “They're even being cheeky about it. Have a plaque out front that says ‘On this site in 1891 nothing happened.’”

“I'm tired,” Glenda said. “And we're closed for today. Why don't you come back tomorrow and we can look it up, okay?”

“The owner didn't even know. He didn't know the history. Who built it, or why, or when.”

Glenda opened the back door of her car and put her bag in.

“That address is within the historic district, isn't it?” Norman held his hands out like a beggar.

She slammed the door and turned to him. “Yes, Norman, yes it is.”

“Then it’s under your purview. You must have a record of it somewhere. And it’s important that—”

“Look, we don’t know everything about every house here. There’s a rich history in this place, but we can only share what we know. And sometimes, Norman, we *just don’t know*.”

She might as well have felled one of the old oaks right on his head. *Don’t know?*

She got in her car and drove off, the spray of gravel almost peppering him.

He put his hands on his head and looked around the yard-field as though the answer hid among the foliage. Did the museum have a security system? He could break—no, that was getting ridiculous. Right?

He checked his watch. Thirty minutes to get his daughter.

Well, he could just do his own research. That would be the most sensible thing.

A few minutes later he was at the coffee shop on the street that ran parallel to Elm. He’d stopped by his car to grab his laptop.

His decaf soy cinnamon dulce latte was a little too hot, but he sipped at it anyway. The museum had a website with some interactive features, but he wasn’t sure what sort of records they would have on a scandalized house.

The coffee shop hummed with the conversations of its patrons. Friends leaned in, engaged in some conspiracy. A girl ignored her homework while she scrolled through her phone. The man at the table next to Norman bent over his Bible, tracing each line with a finger.

First Norman checked that the house did, in fact, rest within the bounds of the historic district. Glenda had said it did, but obviously her commitment to the situation was questionable at best. The first result listed the house’s sell date, price, square footage—

Wait.

The house had been sold in 2002 at a listed 2905 square feet, then sold again just two years ago to a Fred Ardwin with a listing of 3115 square feet.

There had been an addition.

That, surely, would have been approved by the historic committee. These houses couldn’t just...just... *change* things. They were near-perfect in their inception, and adjustments must be carefully considered and rarely accepted.

He found the number for the town’s permit website and called.

“Our office is open Monday through Friday from...”

He slammed a fist on the table and his latte jumped along with half the patrons in the place. He looked around and offered what he thought was his most placating smile.

What do people do in emergencies like this though? Surely there was an...an after-hours number for the permit office? Someone on call?

But the rest of the message only said to call back during business hours.

Just wait until Glenda hears about this.

Norman rested his elbow on the table and bit at his thumbnail.

What could he do? The police wouldn't help. They never had before.

"The comparison of John 1 and Genesis 1 is interesting. Both accounts of the beginning of creation..." Someone had joined the seminary student and they were obnoxiously loud, as though people would accept the Gospel of Christ just by overhearing their theological ramblings.

Norman checked his watch. Ten minutes, and the dance studio was just next door.

He left the coffee shop and paced the street, breathing in the cooling evening air.

Most of these commercial buildings, like the one housing the coffee shop, were privately owned, and from his understanding the tenants had very different experiences with their landlords. The east side of the street had some of the oldest shops in town, including the hotdog shop that had been there since the '50s.

But it had a history to it. A record of its coming into existence and change and growth. And you could be damn sure they had acquired the proper permits and permissions for changes.

If there wasn't order, a way to make sense of it all, then what would the town come to? Shops popping up wherever they wanted. Houses being renovated without a thought of the repercussions.

When he looked up, he saw the plaque. Some unseen hand had guided him back to this same spot.

On this site in 1891 nothing happened.

So irreverent. The sheer insolence...

He took the steps two at a time. A Queen Anne style porch, to be sure. Probably built in the late 19th century then. Maybe even in 1891.

He scoffed when he saw the doorbell. One of those camera things. Why didn't they just paint the front of the house a lurid neon color?

A moment later a man was at the door, the same as before.

"Can I help you?"

"I need to understand your flippancy about this situation, Mr. Ardwin."

“What? How did you know my—”

“Was there an addition to this house?”

The man shook his head as though it would make him understand. “What?”

“Did the owners before you alter this house from its original condition?”

“Um, yeah, they pushed a wall out in the back den and added a bathroom—I’m sorry, who are you?”

“I’m apparently the only one with any sense left in this town. Were you aware, sir, that this house is within the historic district?”

“What does that have to do with anything?”

Norman stepped back and put his hands in the air, then rested them on his head. His heart tried to beat through his ribcage.

“What does it have to do with anything? It’s everything. You can’t just be in this location without abiding by the rules. Without adhering to the...the...”

The porch was spinning now. Norman was vaguely aware of the man saying something, but it was too much.

He stumbled back down the steps. Something nagged at his mind. But it was foggy, like a boat adrift in a hazy sea.

“You alright, pal?” The man called from the porch.

Pal. If the man had any care for others he wouldn’t have put up the damn plaque.

The plaque.

Norman went back to the brick pillar where the sign was hung. He put his fingers in it, digging between the mortar and the iron, pulling with all his might.

It didn’t budge.

“Hey, man, I need you to leave.”

Norman kept digging.

The plaque was unbothered and unmoved. It sat there as though some supernatural malevolent force wanted it to continue to spread its lies.

A crowbar then. Or maybe a drill. That was it—he would just come back and—

His phone vibrated in his pocket, but he ignored it. This was of the utmost importance.

His fingers bled now, the rough brick surface having dug away at his skin.

Still, he clawed at the thing.

The man on the porch had disappeared. Maybe he had finally come to his senses and was getting some sort of tool.

His phone buzzed again, but he barely felt it. What mattered now was the plaque.

His nail ripped but the pain didn't phase him. He whirled around. There must be a branch that had fallen from one of the big oaks. Or some debris on the street. Something.

He found nothing. Instead, he kicked at the plaque. Again. Again.

Then he felt someone grab his arms. They pulled him back. He saw the red and blue flashing lights now, invisible just a heartbeat before.

The phone in his pocket vibrated again as he felt the cold steel of handcuffs close around his wrists. He was vaguely aware of the officers saying something.

Mr. Ardwin stood on the porch with a wicked grin across his face.

Then, Norman looked through the window of the police car at the plaque. Unmoved, unchanged. Standing there in its blasphemy for all the world to see.

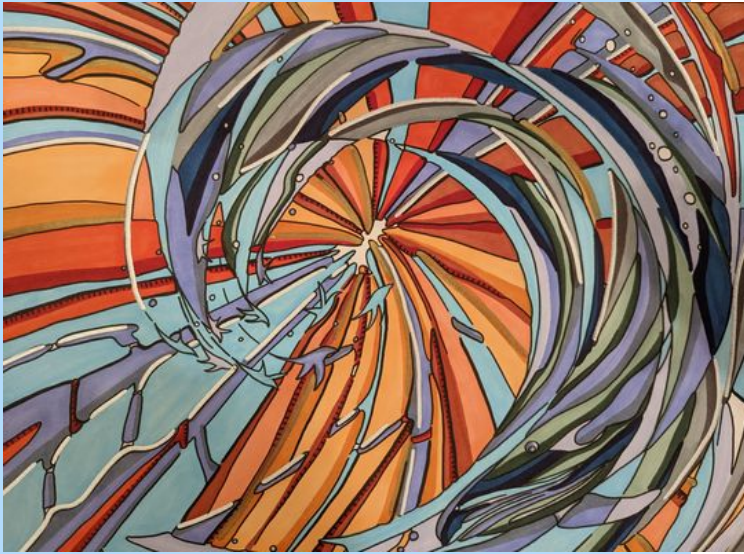
On this site in 1891 nothing happened.

James Kornegay was born and raised in Youngsville when "going into town" meant a drive into Wake Forest, where he and his friends enjoyed trick or treating on Main Street, going to Hardees, and attending Meet in the Street.

After finishing graduate school at State, James and his wife moved back to the Wake Forest area, where they've been the last thirteen years. He taught English in local schools before getting into school administration. He loved helping students see the beauty in prose, the way authors develop intriguing characters, and the elements of a strong plot. Even better, sometimes he was able to help them put that into their own writing and creativity.

Though he no longer works in schools, he continues to support students and teachers through a market research firm, where he manages, edits, and delivers reports and projects for school districts across the country. He is the father to three amazing kids whom he loves with all his heart even though they appear hell-bent to remove every item from every drawer, shelf, and closet in the house and throw them wherever their spirits lead. But at the end of each day, he gets to tuck them into bed and read them stories, and his mind seems to forget all their mischief.

Robyn Scott



"In the Wave," pen and ink.

A giant wave starts at the bottom middle of the image and swirls over to the right hand side and back into the middle of the image. At first glance, the wave is an abstracted pen and ink image of blues, lavender, celadon green and pale gray. Upon closer viewing, there are birds flying (or are they swimming?) out of the giant wave. Hidden within the lower right hand side of the image, in the largest part of the wave, is a Blue whale. Only this whale is not just blue, it's also purple and green just like the waves. The background of the image is made up of a rainbow of stripes in various shades of orange, yellow, and red with pops of blue. It suggests a swirling sunset (or sunrise?) is moving from the edges of the image towards the center, where all of the stripes meet in the middle of the image at a small area of white negative space.

In this stylized pen and ink image, green and orange pitcher plants and venus fly traps grow from the lower left side of the image reaching towards the middle to locate their prey. From the upper right hand corner of the image, zinnias in various tones of pink, rose, green, and blue reach back towards the venus fly traps. Throughout the image are both flies and bees looking for a place to land. They are getting confused! Flies are wandering off into the zinnias and bees towards the pitcher plants.



"Sting," pen and ink.



"Golden Hour," pen and ink.

This pen and ink image starts with a stone pathway leading from the lower right hand corner of the image towards the center. The stones are various shades of turquoise, purple, and blue. Towards the end of the pathway is a wooden bridge leading over a small purple lake that is abstracted in style. On the bottom half of the image a large stylized grassy area flows up and down with dark green and lime green color blocking with reflections of blue and orange. On the left bottom side of the image are dark brown stripes suggesting muddy tire tracks have driven through this otherwise idyllic setting. On the top right part of the image pale brown seagrass grows tall up into the sky and in the background purple clouds float through the sky, emitting waves of turquoise and bright orange suggesting a storm has just come through and is opening up the sky to the golden hour of sunset.

Robyn Scott studied studio art at the University of California, Irvine (BA) and the Winchester School of Art in the UK (MA). She currently serves as the Artist Coordinator for Arts Access in Raleigh, hosting a monthly meeting for artists who self identify as having a disability. She lives and practices art in Durham, NC. In the past, she worked as an art teacher for grades 3-8 in California.

Robyn's work focuses on the lived experience of having invisible illness and how that informs interactions between her and her community. Invisible illness and disability lead to a number of misunderstandings and missed connections in an environment that is built for healthy people. Navigating this world is an adventure: sometimes traveling through a maze, an upside-down world, or one with no gravity at all. Her work contains hidden images, reflections, and light where shadows should be. The negative and positive spaces become one and the same throughout the process of creating these pieces to play on the lack of depth of field in real life. The viewer may see multiple elements of the drawings eventually noticing that what was hidden is now in plain sight.

working class

David Eliot Leone

I have no connection to the working class
who I see in my everyday jaunts, haunts, stops and starts
At the lunch counter I watch your banter from behind the counter bar
but I don't understand what you're saying
There's no connection, only personal reflection, lost in my own thoughts
You, who often make more money than me
you, who have bought me beers when I'm on my last dollar
you, who live hand to mouth, paycheck to paycheck
but seem to enjoy the spending of it so much more
I see you at the pumpkin patch with your children
Sandburg's Hungarians on the riverbank with their beer and accordions
You barbecue, you fiesta, you point up at fireworks and smile
On weekends there's football and church
then, if you don't work Sundays, you start the cycle all over again.
I am not a member of the working class
I build nothing, my work is fleeting
What designs are mine are gone in a week
My hands are soft, my body, softer
the wheels in my brain never stop turning
I am jealous of your camaraderie
I am in awe of you, and afraid of you
always finding myself lost among you,
an alien out of his own culture and point of reference.

David Eliot Leone is 52 and lives in Wake Forest. He is a native of Buffalo, NY, but has lived in NC since 1995. David was a weekly newspaper reporter, photographer and editor for 20 of those years, including 12 in Wake Forest (2007-2018). He now works at Play4Life Comics in downtown Wake Forest.

Edna Bailey's Remains

Rebecca Henry Lowndes

Edna Bailey rides the West End Loop every other Thursday morning. She waits, hatless in all weathers, on the corner of her block in the Village. Elmer the bus driver has never heard her speak. Pulling herself up the handrail, she deposits thirty-five cents in the till, and drags her vacant gaze across his Adam's apple and along the grimy brows of empty seats. One of them takes her as the bus lurches into gear again.

The fingers of one hand curl absently around the square handbag, flat and stiff in her lap, while the other arm lies across her small round belly. The endstage brown of fallen leaves, her ratty hair hangs past her chin in dispirited strings. The collar of her blouse, a mushroom print, juts crookedly out of the lumpy corduroy coat that billows 'round her brittle frame. The coat hangs open, its lone button a-dangle at the waist. Weary kneesocks puddle in the heels of her thrift shop loafers.

She has forgotten how to sit like a lady.

Not even sighing, she watches the bleak highway scenery loom and recede, and the heavy clouds squat lower. She considers, languidly, the double purpose of her journey. First, she'll stop by the old corner bank downtown where, between covert, hissing conversations, the snooty tellers huff around their stall. Having settled her business, she'll proceed to the Hot Dog Shoppe, there to sit at the long white counter for coffee and half an hour's oblivion.

The corner of High and Hanover is always windy in November. The last one off the bus, Edna clutches her coat tightly at her throat; the rest of it swells and flaps in the wind as she heads for the glass doors of the bank. Despite its lingering echo, the bank is undistinguished, its early charm having been gutted back in the 'Sixties in favor of fluorescent light and blond wood.

The expression on Edna Bailey's chalky face doesn't change as she takes her place in line. "The Welfare Line", as it is called, is rowdy and interminable. From time to time, she is jostled by her jocular companions there, but no one addresses or seems to notice her. When she gains her turn at the window she places on the high counter her lowly sheaf of documents: check, food stamp voucher, identification card. Reluctantly, then, she raises her eyes to the teller.

Ravaged eyes they are, mottled, brown, huge and protuberant, glazed by some unspeakable haunting. Miss Weller stifles a gasp. Her thin “Good morning” catches and, unnerved, she hurries to count out her customer’s cash and a short stack of food coupons. Blankly, Edna nods, averts her eyes, and with parchment hands slides her allotment off the ledge. At that, the woman next in line elbows her friend, whose leathery, scar-tracked cheeks balloon in amusement. Edna turns to go, and their guffaws trail her out to the sidewalk.

Without pausing, Edna makes her way up High Street, staring sightlessly into the steamy shop windows. She edges away, at the corner, from the bored and grinning young men under the awning at the Sole Brothers Bootery. She is trembling inside and wants to sit down.

In the middle of the next block is the Hot Dog Shoppe, where the grill never stops spitting and popping from ten-thirty ’til seven. Office workers jam the front area, waiting for their takeouts, and frazzled women cram the booths with their unruly young on one side and their blinking, blue-haired mothers on the other. On the wall opposite the counter hangs a long mirror, pocked with smeary memoranda, for the waitresses to simper at. But the counter is longer, and Edna is always willing to wait for a stool in the back.

The help all know her here. They call her Rosie, mildly mocking, and on a good day she might, almost, curl her lips at the joke; but all she cares about is the fragrant fog she’ll breathe from the chunky china mug when it arrives. Huddled over her coffee, however, late on this Thursday morning, Edna doesn’t realize that she has, instead, *held* her breath, to listen. Too timid to turn around, she quakes inside to the din’s sharp echo. The rattle of plates and clink of cups; the tinny collisions of forks and knives; below the blare of lunch-hour chatter the sucking sound of rubber soles as the waitresses tromp to and fro. Harmonic or strident, the voices of the children bounce crazily in her head which, like her heart, is hollow, too bare-to-the-walls empty to absorb so much noise.

A sudden thud followed by a splash somewhere behind her: spilled milk, and a chap-cheeked toddler sets to wailing. Edna Bailey shudders. She wipes at her nose, but her eyes are streaming too, and the balled-up linty tissue from her pocket is quite useless.

Living in public housing, alone and on the dole, Edna and the remnant of her life are twin charred husks. No one would believe she’s only thirty-one: furrowed with desolation, she looks fifty. Sometimes she drinks, pink catawba or grape wine, and gradually enters a stupor where she can almost bear to think about Ellen and Artie. But the stupor runs a dead-end course, and ever at its bottom swell the roar and

blast of fire, thrashing agony, and the sudden thud and spill of timber as the roof caves in.

Edna Bailey is on her feet, wild-eyed—smoke! She flails her arms and stumbles, bellowing. Commotion spirals in her wake, gasping and confusion. But before the others can begin to move, Edna lurches across the room, hoists a breathless child under each arm, and charges the panicked crowd by the door.

Flames are licking at the hood of the grill, and greasy black billows grope along the ceiling. Deadly in the midst of shouts and shoving, Edna Bailey wedges her body through the doorway and explodes onto the sidewalk. A heartbeat later, from within erupts a brilliant flash, and the plate glass window shatters.

Fire engines and ambulances are arriving, the street's blockaded, hoses buck and gush. Veins snake along the backs of Edna's hands as, staggering backward, she clutches the children's faces against her shoulders. Her mouth is contorted, and all the demons of her private hell are writhing in her eyes. In the middle of High Street, she feels herself butted this way and that, but it is a manic clap on her shoulder that rouses her.

"Give me my children!" a woman wheezes. Her chest is heaving and blood dribbles from a wound in her head. "My babies!" She grabs at the little ones, grimacing, and Edna numbly surrenders them. Thirty feet away the restaurant burns out of control with people still trapped inside. But the holocaust in Edna Bailey's eyes has guttered and died.

"Look at you!" The mother accosts her, hysterical. "You're nothing but a bag lady, a tramp...a...a child snatcher!"

No, no, Edna shakes her head: not so...not true! Though tears spray from her eyes with the force of her denial, her voice, a feeble creaking in her chest, fails her. Then, abruptly, the woman turns away. Dazed and reeling, she drags her babies along, crying "Mother!" and "Robbie!" Now Edna, too, wanders off, still shaking her head, utterly overcome by what she has done.

Her purse is gone – burned up, no doubt about it. She winces, halts. There is a sharp pain in her head, cleaving her skull, and in its flaming center the screams of her own dying children. The floodlights, the bullhorns, the ambulance beacon sweeping a blue path through the air...She had only gone out for some cigarettes, just down the street, while her husband attended his club meeting. Only just down the street – five minutes! – calling out to her neighbor Maggie as she passed her open window, "Keep an ear out for my kids, OK?" But Maggie, she realized too late, hadn't answered, and

now they were trapped. Two policemen had restrained her, and her struggle was fierce and terrible. A month after the burials her husband had left her, took off for God-knows-where and stayed there. By this time her health had seriously deteriorated. She applied for aid, and received counseling but no comfort; public assistance, but no forgiveness...no healing.

At length, her vision clearing, Edna Bailey's feet trudge back up High Street toward the tiny bus station. Onlookers shrink from this spectre with raw and ravaged eyes. When the West End Loop swoops into its berth, Elmer swings the door open and gives Edna Bailey a long and penetrating look. Her cheeks are smudged, her button is missing...her arms, empty. He beckons, and she approaches the bus.

"You in that fire, ma'am?"

Edna nods, and a sob convulses her throat.

"Lost your things?"

A beseeching look from Edna Bailey.

A pause. "Well, come on then. On the house. You can't stay here in this wind."

This time, pulling herself up the railing, she meets his eyes.

"Thank you," she whispers, "for your kindness," and sinks into a seat, tasting absolution.

Rebecca Henry Lowndes is a retired real estate administrator who relocated to Wake Forest from Pennsylvania in 2011. She is married to Chris and is the mother of Nathaniel and Zachary. Rebecca is a writer of poems, mostly, and has kept a journal since 1968. Her first book of poetry, *Years and Other Leavings*, was published in 2018.

Clockwork

Rebecca Henry Lowndes

No turning from this: the wheel begins slowly,
 The wayfarers eagerly mount their steeds.
 They grasp a brass bar or split reins of stained leather;
 Machinery clanks and bucks and whines;
 And the gallant great stallions with wild eyes and cunning
 Toss their manes restively: ready are they.

I watch you go 'round; you go 'round together,
 My small nimble sons, bearing surfeit of days.
 You raise your soft hands, the calliope blares;
 The music's seductive cacophony builds;
 And the grinning, the gilded, giddyup stallions
 Shall carry you all away.

Your father appears, to steady your hold
 As the ride glides along in the glaring, relentless
 July-fiery heat. I lose count of the circuits
 Your eyes have described; I lose count of the years.
 And the jubilant, festival, foamspewing stallions
 Shall carry you all away.

It crests in a moment, this stunning epiphany,
 Freeze-frame and timetravel, swift and indifferent;
 While I, fast afoot on the sawdusted ground,
 Unwound and entranced, am not given to choose.
 And the freightlathered, crackpeeling, clockwork stallions
 Out of my reach shall steal you all —

Shall carry you all away!

22-Year-Old Diana Ross and 70-Year-Old Groucho Marx on the Dance Floor Doing the Frug at Bobby Darin's House in Bel Air, 1966

Nicole Sarrocco

he leans like Pisa
 she arcs like triumph
 their arms in a preambled embrace
 the gods' wild rhombus
 shaking isosceles knees
 nobody but some flowered pants
 sees the gold thread
 stretched between their fingers
 the net to catch the falling world
 they look into it and smile
 at love, safe in a hammock of song
 and they rock it
 rippling beyond this dance floor
 Bobby still floating upstairs
 dreams of sharks with cigars
 and sunglasses
 cutting sinewy parentheses
 into the cantilevered swimming pools
 of high Hollywood hills

Nicole Sarrocco's books include the novel *Lit By Lightning* and her most recent collection of poems, *Casino Lounge Gospel*. A native North Carolinian, she moved to Wake Forest last year with her mother Diane, who has not lived in the area since the 8th grade but who remembers clearly when their fancy neighborhood was a place called the Harricans.

Lost Cities

Nicole Sarrocco

The singer can't sing
because she is smiling
breakfast hot
coffee hot
and black but cooling
the spoon rests
on the folded newspaper
the egg in the cup
still whole shell smooth

the singer is tucked
in the sheet
like the croissant
in the napkin
undisturbed
somebody placed it for her
by hand
she is saving it
for later

but really it's gone
it's not
in the basket anymore
none of it on my table
the egg the pot the coffee
the newspaper
it's all history now
if the cup survived
to a museum
under a glass
it's never touched

I wonder
if this is how
salvation works
if I save you
at breakfast
this breakfast
smiling
would I remember you
singing
in your real hand
the saucer
straight and steady

eagle on branch: mixed media: nagasawa rosetsu: 18th century

Clayton Walker

a predator preens fields, sinks talons
into a calf's back, and endures
the weight. when muscles tire, tremor,
the eagle crooks its claws, pulling the yearling
up and into its chest. the eagle manages,
knifing its wings in the wind, leveraging
against each of the calf's dangling kicks.
but the blood in each talon
has gone needle numb. the eagle is tired,
and the nest is on the far side of the highway.



Nagasawa Rosetsu, Eagle on a Branch.
18th Century. Ink, color and gold leaf
on paper. 73 x 58". Public Domain.

Clayton Walker received his MFA in Poetry from North Carolina State University, where he was awarded the 2021 American Academy of Poets Prize. He is the recipient of the 2023 Dorianne Laux Prize in Poetry, and was awarded honorable mentions for both the 2022 and 2021 James Hurst Prizes in Fiction. His work appears in Poets.org, Passengers Press, and SB Magazine's Contemporary Biker Fiction. Currently, he teaches secondary English in Wake Forest, North Carolina. As an educator, he strives to facilitate community based learning that develops students into global citizens.

David A. Nies

David A. Nies was born and raised for the first 18 years of his life on the southside of Chicago. After college, he returned to the Chicago area where he and his wife raised three children. Today he lives in Wake Forest, NC.

Several years ago, David lost sight in his left eye and was advised by his doctor to paint or draw to help with depth perception. He is self-taught, never having had an art lesson, and enjoys painting. He started with wildlife subjects, but has expanded to landscapes, portraits, holiday themes, and beach and bar scenes. He can be contacted at nies.dave@gmail.com.



"Breaking Bad."
Acrylic on canvas portrait, 8" x 10"



"Winter Moose," Acrylic on canvas. 11" x 14".

Haiku

Evan Sonnenberg

In a foreign land
The romantic is at home
Still splitting the wood



What I want from life
Aspiring contentment
Leads too far from here



The mind of a dog
Never strays more than his heart
Wherever he pees

Evan Sonnenberg is an amateur poet whose work focuses on free verse and haiku. He also writes science fiction short stories and flash fiction. He lives in Wake Forest with his wife and two daughters.

Erin C. Day



"Lacey's Day," Oil on canvas



"Autumn Colors," Soft pastel on panel

Erin C. Day considers living, working and growing in Wake Forest a sweet gift from the Lord. As a child she grew up driving from eastern to western North Carolina to visit family by way of Highway 98 through the quaint little town of Wake Forest, always daydreaming of what it would be like to live in this small town. Fifteen years of living here has proven that it is a vibrant, diverse and wonderful place to be and raise a family!

The Tree Shall Be Known By Its Fruit

Susan Rivers

I would say that my mother began to lose her mind shortly after the millennium, but that wouldn't be entirely accurate. Her mental processes had never conformed to standard measures of normality; during my childhood she functioned with very little sleep, a condition that allowed her to raise four daughters while working full-time and compensating for a husband who managed his time in order that he spend almost none of it employed. Having been born "hypomaniac," the diagnosis made by a psychiatrist once the court ordered her to live with me, also meant that my mother existed as a solipsism, free of constraints or expectations placed upon her by the outside world, and so confident in her decisions that she lived permanently in a worry-free zone.

"Tomorrow is another day," she would say when "today" had wrecked on a reef and there were no survivors. (Scarlett O'Hara is the fictional embodiment of hypomania, obviously.) Her sternest criticism of me was that I was a "worry-wart." If she wanted to express her disapproval, there was nothing she could say with more withering effect than "Susie, you're just like my mother."

There was plenty to worry about. Like many families, ours imploded under the stress of trying to reach consensus on the state of our eighty-five-year-old mother's fragile mental health. When my sisters and I couldn't agree on a plan of action, she was taken into guardianship. My siblings pursued litigation while my husband and I agreed to work with the authorities to obtain medical treatment for Mary Jo* and incorporate her into our lives in North Carolina. As survivors of those afflicted with Alzheimer's know, there is no happy ending for people with this condition. It's a good thing we didn't fully understand that at the time; otherwise, we wouldn't have agreed to relieve my family of all responsibility for her.

I fixed up our spare room for Mary Jo, installing a telephone and television. My husband found a shop selling manual typewriters and bought her a sleek little Olivetti: my mother had always been the fastest typist on two legs, and we were hoping she'd feel the urge to type up some of the stories from her childhood that she never tired of sharing. But the typewriter befuddled her by this stage of her illness, so my daughter and I took turns being her scribe while she dictated a series of wry, snarky observations of long-dead family members. (*"My Uncle Frank had a pile of money and I don't know what he did with it. He lived in a big house in D. C. with his dentist friend and the dentist's two sisters. Now you figure that one out. Is it too early to start drinking?"*)

We brought her to events at senior centers and to services at our Unitarian church where she was always brilliantly gregarious; we included her on vacations to the Outer Banks and on daytrips to museums. In the course of so much venturing out, we shared many happy moments together. But over time, the stress of caring for a seriously ill parent who is convinced that she's operating at the peak of her powers began to take its toll on me: I lost sleep, lost work, and started drinking too much. With my daughter leaving the nest, I made the rash decision to return to college, as well, and enrolled in a graduate program at a local university.

That's when my mother manifested the strangest effect of her dementia. She stole my identity. I returned home one morning from a few rushed hours of research to hear the in-home care provider telling me what an interesting life Mary Jo had led before moving east. This amiable woman marveled that she had spent the morning with a former playwright who had traveled all over the country staging productions of her works. This writer had transitioned into non-fiction feature writing, apparently, and was still very busy with the creative work she did on the side.

I nodded, marveling too, and when I'd seen the care-giver out, I suggested we have lunch. My mother said, "I wouldn't say no to a hot fudge sundae."

Over our meal I encouraged her to tell me what she'd been discussing with the aide, but having forgotten she'd ever met the woman, and having eaten her soup, she told me a bit crossly that she couldn't waste her entire afternoon chatting. She had writing to do in her room.

My mother moved into a care facility a year later, her disease having progressed to a risky tipping point. She was falling a lot while simultaneously making runs for the border, telling the confused cabbie she summoned by phone to drive her to Mexico, a trip of sixteen-hundred miles. I hoped the move to Courtyard in the Pines would ensure her physical safety while easing stress on her deteriorating mental state. As for myself, I was expecting to address some of the goals I'd set before she'd moved in: completing a novel, earning my Master's degree, finding steadier work and spending more time with my husband.

Although I hated to admit it, her purloining of my identity affected me more than I expected. In the past, no matter how inadequate I might have felt in my roles as a mother, wife, or employee, it had always been clear to me that I was, first and foremost, a writer. This is how I thought of myself, and it shocked me to see how precarious this vision of my purpose on the planet was, in actuality, when I wasn't working more actively toward validation. I may have established my roots as a writer quite solidly, but at the time I wasn't producing much fruit, and my experience caring for Mary Jo made it painfully clear that many trees stop bearing long before they wither and die. Through her own suffering, she was demonstrating for me the real-life equivalent of "use it or lose it," and lacking publication, I certainly wasn't using it.

Despite our lives descending into chaos with the coming of the recession in 2008: jobs lost, house teetering on the edge of foreclosure, an imposed relocation and new austerities, I pushed forward with my novel, completing a draft in 2010. When I shared the news with Mary Jo on one of my bi-weekly visits to The Courtyard, she asked me how long it was. I hedged, admitting that it needed some trimming, but told her the manuscript was currently six-hundred and fifty pages long.

"Oh my!" she responded. "I guess some people don't know when to shut up."

She passed away on Valentine's Day, 2014, in the midst of a freak snowstorm. At that point I had been her sole family caregiver for twelve years, and when she died, I experienced the bereft, appalling sensation of being completely divorced from my emotions. Not grieving, but succumbing to exhaustion. Feeling emptied, spent. I was teaching college by then, so I had plenty of work to keep me occupied, but I wasn't taxing my brain in that regard. Or my heart. I was no longer a daughter, and now, with no buyers for the novel, I no longer identified as a writer.

I'm not sure how that changed, or why. Several months after her death, while teaching summer school, I came across an item in my local library's archives that gripped my imagination and would not let go. I penned a few notes, sat down to put them together, and remember nothing about the fourteen weeks that followed except that all my students passed and I was writing again. Writing became as essential for me that summer as breath. It was my food. My fever. It was me.

The new novel was published early in 2017. An ice-storm crippled the state just as the book was about to launch, forcing adjustments to the signing calendar. One of the earliest events scheduled by my publisher was at a bookstore in the Sandhills, where the effects of the ice had been minimal but where I didn't know anyone planning to attend. I needn't have worried, because a radio interview I'd done the day before meant that my event turned out to be crowded and lively. I made my presentation and sat down to sign books.

The first person in line asked me to sign the novel for "Dorothy." This was my sister's name, the one closest to me in age. She was also one of the two sisters who cut ties with me after our mother was taken into care. Dorothy was diagnosed with breast cancer and died in 2015, but not before I called her to reconcile. We spoke for a long time before she had to ring off; it was the last time I heard her voice.

I signed the woman's book and greeted the second person in line. This woman asked me to personalize the book for "Martha." Goosebumps rose on my arms. "That's my sister's name," I said. Martha, the baby, was the sibling most resolutely estranged from me. I signed with a lump in my throat.

When the third woman stepped up to the table, I nervously joked that her name had better not be "Laura," the name of my eldest sister. She shook her head. "My name is Annie," she told me. "Not Anne. A-N-N-I-E." I signed the book, but my handwriting looked shaky. "Annie" was my mother's pet name for Laura Ann, her firstborn.

●

If I am ever able to overcome my WASP-ish antipathy for tattoos long enough to have one burned into my skin, it will go on my right forearm, my writing arm. It will be the comment made to me in a critical moment by one of my graduate instructors, a comment that came back to me as I walked out of the Sandhills bookstore on that wintry night and looked up at the sky. I was searching the cold darkness for a single brilliant star, feeling the connection to my mother more deeply than I had since I was a child.

My teacher said: "*Writing is tricky and mysterious shit.*" It occurred to me that this could also be said of love. And when you think about it, aren't they really the same thing?

●

** names and place names have been changed*

Susan Rivers's writing career began in regional theater, where she received the Julie Harris Playwriting Award, the New York Drama League Award, and was an NEA Writer-in-Residence. She is a veteran of the Playwrights Festival at Sundance Institute for the Arts and the Eugene O'Neill Playwrights Conference and has crossed the country working on productions and workshops of her plays. After moving to North Carolina, Susan wrote features for print media, producing nearly 150 pieces on a wide range of topics that were published in *The San Francisco Examiner*, *Fine Gardening*, and many regional publications including *Charlotte Magazine* and *Carolina Gardener*.

Susan's focus shifted to fiction while she was living in Charlotte; she holds an MFA in Fiction-Writing from Queens University of Charlotte (2007). Her debut novel, *The Second Mrs. Hockaday*, published by Algonquin Books, was a *People Magazine* "Best New Books Pick" and a *Woman's Day* "Editor's Desk Pick" in 2017, as well as IndieNext, Library Reads, Winter OKRA Picks and WNBA Great Group Reads 2018 Selection. The novel was a finalist for the Center for Fiction's First Novel Prize 2017 and for the Southern Book Prize 2018.

Although Susan no longer lives in Wake Forest, she has been known to visit Page158 Books and host writing workshops when she's in town. To read more of her writing, visit www.susanriverswriter.com and check out her blog, *Where the Catbird Sings*.

Kaley Coppola



Kaley Coppola started her wild ride back in 1990 and it wasn't long before she started exploring the right side of her brain. Now, at 33, she is a new resident to Wake Forest and beyond excited to join the artistic community. She has a particular fascination with the human face. As a portrait artist, she finds a thrill in bringing a person who doesn't exist into existence, and enjoys the introspection of staring into their faces. Others may find it creepy, and that's just as great. These paintings are the first of her ongoing series of portraits, where she attempts to create a gaggle of gals that inspire self-reflection, exude charm, or simply creep out their audience.



lemon ice cream

Madison Doss

lemon ice cream
 sitting too long in the freezer
 crystalized:
 more like ice
 and less like cream
 burning my tongue
 tart, puckering mouth
 but I don't stop eating
 hoping the sharp edges
 will dull my pain,
 sugar over my grief,
 create peace
 instead, sticky counter
 stinging papercut
 & a lemon drop shot
 because it works faster

Madison Doss is a current high school English teacher and, like most of us who teach English, dreams of becoming a published author. In addition to reading and writing in her free time, she enjoys playing with her toddler, running on the Greenway, and testing new recipes.

Haikus on the desecration of nature

Madison Doss

haikus about earth,
 animals, trees, and water
 are traditional

but what about me?
 my body is nature too
 trashed like nature is

you treated me like
 humans treat nature: abuse
 take advantage of

you carved out my soul
 took what you wanted from me
 my slow destruction

there is nothing left
 for future generations
 an oblivion

Dreaming of Fire

Jennifer Memolo

Henry?

He woke up from a dream and tried to remember it; something about a fire and he knew where the extinguisher was but couldn't get to it.

Henry?

A quiet voice, thin and questioning, came through the darkness on the baby monitor next to his bed.

Maybe she'll go back to sleep, he thought, but he knew better.

Henry.

He sighed and sat up on the edge of the bed, shaking his head. His dream stayed in his mind, that feeling of frustration and impotence lingering like a bad taste in the back of his mouth.

Henry.

Okay, he said. His voice was low and gravelly. He coughed. I'm coming. Hold on.

He stood on cracking knees. Bone on bone, his doctor told him. He needed knee replacements, gifts of his years playing baseball as a college student and later for the YMCA older, not-quite-middle-aged but too old to play with 20-somethings team, but he had no time for that now. He stood for a moment, making sure the knees would hold him. Then he stepped into the bathroom, urinated in the dark while leaning on the wall with one hand, and washed his hands.

The beagle, Roger, lifted his head from what used to be Ev's side of the bed.

Don't get up, he said to the dog. Roger shook, his collar jingling, and jumped to the floor anyway.

Henry.

I'm coming, he said. The landing had a nightlight since he'd tripped too many times on Roger's bones and he'd knocked his toes on the catch-all table on the landing, so he was able to navigate easily without turning on lights. Ev's room was next door. Since she had become more restless at night, and since getting her in and out of bed had gotten more difficult, they'd opted to rent a

hospital bed and put it in what had been their daughter's room. At first Henry thought he'd miss sleeping with Ev too much, that their California King would seem too large, but he was almost guilty to admit he enjoyed the space, and he appreciated not getting kicked, shoved, and jostled in the night as Ev tried desperately to get comfortable.

He stepped into the dark room and saw her silhouette under the covers. She was twisted, shoulders one way, legs another. She was so skinny now, all bones and sinew. Everything was atrophied, and she was nothing of her former self, which he had never described as skinny. She had never been overweight, but she was full and round in all the right places. Nice ass, full breasts, curvy hips. Now, nothing of that remained.

I have to pee.

He nodded. First he had to get the slide board, a long, sanded and varnished piece of wood that allowed him to slide her across from the bed to the wheelchair without picking her up. He had to pull the wheelchair closer to the bed, then sit her up on the edge. Her muscles were all tone and stiffness, and it was hard to get her joints to bend such that he could get her upright with her feet on the floor. She was past being able to bear weight on her legs, thus the slide board, which he had to position under her buttocks and angle in the direction of the wheelchair. In one go he slid her from bed to chair, then unlocked the wheelchair brakes and rolled her to the bedside commode. Their house was not handicapped accessible, and that especially included the bathrooms; there was no room in either of their bathrooms to slide Ev from the chair to the toilet, so she had to use a commode in the bedroom, and Henry had to empty the removable bucket into the toilet after she used it.

Hurry, she said.

Henry slid her deftly to the toilet, shifted her weight to the right and then the left to shimmy her pants down, and handed her the toilet paper. He had to stand behind her in case she had a spasm and jerked off the toilet seat, so there wasn't much privacy. There was a time when Ev wouldn't even brush her teeth in front of him.

When she was done and he had cleaned her up and pulled up her pants, and he had transferred her to the chair and then to the bed, she breathed heavily with exhaustion. He positioned her on her right side, facing the wall, to redistribute her weight. Her last physical therapist had warned her to change positions in bed frequently to avoid bed sores, now that she was unable to move herself in bed as easily.

Roger, who had watched the whole affair from the doorway, perked his ears as Henry climbed into the small hospital bed behind Ev, curling up against her body. He could feel her bony hips against his belly. He draped his arm across her brittle waist and felt for her hand. The bones felt like a small bird, too easily crushed.

I'm so tired, she said.

The bed jolted as Roger jumped up, not easily, into the bed to join the group. He curled up between Henry's feet.

Have you thought about it?

What? he said.

You know what.

He didn't say anything. He thought about the orange prescription bottle on the kitchen counter with Ev's name on it.

What can I say? he said.

I want you to say you're okay with it.

I don't think I can say that.

There was a long pause. He thought she had fallen asleep; her breath was deep and slow. Then she said, I'm not afraid.

He had started to drift to sleep himself, and he shook awake at the sound of her voice. Moonlight highlighted Ev's frame, and he could just see the outline of her cheek and forehead against the pillow. She used to have long, dark hair, but it had turned salt-and-pepper in the last few years and she had cut it short to make it easier to wash and comb. It bristled against his nose and cheeks. Her hair smelled fresh. He had just washed it that morning.

I am, he said. She squeezed his hand and he could feel every bone.

Another long pause. He closed his eyes.

Then she said, You'll be okay. You have Liz and the kids, and Roger. It'll be easier for you. You deserve that.

I'll miss you too much, he said, his eyes still closed.

I know, she said. But you'll be okay.

I don't want to talk about this, he sighed. I'm tired.

I'm tired, too. I'm tired of all of this.

What will I tell Liz?

She's a smart girl. She sees what this is, what this is like. For me. For you. She'll understand.

He sighed again.

I can't stop you, he said.

That's true, she said. He could hear her smile. He imagined her laugh lines, the crinkles around her eyes. He thought of how she smiled the day they married, how happy they both were, how life lay before them like a wonderful gift to be opened slowly and with anticipation.

There's nothing to it, she said. I'll just go to sleep.

Let's go to sleep now, he said.

I need you to say it.

He breathed in the smell of her hair, of her skin. He felt the warmth of her body against his. Roger snored quietly as he slept curled up against Henry's feet.

Okay, Henry finally said. Ev had been holding her breath, and she let it out when he spoke.

Not tonight, she said. Tomorrow.

Tomorrow, he agreed.

Jennifer Memolo is originally from Birmingham, Alabama, but she has lived in South Carolina, Idaho, and Nebraska. She loves the ocean, painting, horror novels, and traveling. She lives in Youngsville, NC with the love of her life, her two kids, and her two Boston Terriers.

Old Friends

John Bare

Funny bones aren't that funny.
 Honey isn't runny.
 Which part is partly sunny?
 Old friends don't get old.
 They just slip away one day.
 Old friends always look the way
 they did the day
 when we fell in love with them.
 Laughing 'til will cried
 singing Leonard Cohen hymns
 setting differences aside
 dreaming how we'd do the town
 like Jackie Gleason at Toots Shor's
 or Sinatra at the Copa.
 But then we never got around
 to seeing all those places.
 Nowadays you see it on our faces.
 Wisdom of the aged.
 The places we hold dear
 are the one we find right here
 laughing with old friends again
 at the lies we told ourselves
 and lies we told to her and him.
 Unspoken, but the truth we know
 is this could be the last laugh.
 Or at least we're down to short rows.
 We linger past last call.
 Soaking in the all.
 We'd trust these people with our lives.
 But Lord help us, don't let me cry.

Old friends don't get old.
 They just slip away one day.
 Old friends always look the way
 they did the day
 when we fell in love with them.



"Sarah and Maddie"

John Bare is a child of North Carolina. Journalism, pre- and post-Internet. Film student. Research methods. Fell in love with Chapel Hill. Nonprofit gigs, Miami Beach, Atlanta, Paradise Valley, Montana, and beyond. 2020, COVID ended 28 years of marriage to Betsy Ross Bare. Current loves, Isadora and Winston, rescue dogs who rescue me. Writer: stories, poems, lyrics. 2021 novel, *Fair-Skinned Brunette with the Porcelain Shine*. 2019 album, "Lassie James Songbook Vol 1." 2022 chapbook, *Words & Things From Lassie James*. Visual artist: photography, clay, metal, wax, paint. English teacher Mom. Math teacher Dad. Sisters, one older, one younger, both smarter. Previous experience: driving school bus, planting peach orchard, janitor. Taste for genmaicha tea, biscuits, whiskey. Fan of bitternut hickory autumn gold.

Wilson Cycle, A Poem in Three Parts

Suzanne Beaumont

A Good and Fertile Darkness

seeds begin in the darkness
seeds are sewn into the darkness
where it is understood to be good, and fertile

we say, when we understand, that we see the light
just like the slender shoots poking through

we say, when we put it all together, that we've had a breakthrough
like every living thing in spring

we also say, when understanding is so profound that there is no return
that we have broken wide open

do you see that these words speak of growth
and that growth happens in us, of us
we break open until our light of understanding
shines in the old darkness in which
dreams are curled tight, waiting their turn

In the Season of My Words

In the season of my words, I reap and sow in one continuous motion.

Sometimes it is springtime, and my words blossom, beautifully wound around the pistil and stamen of meaning, ready for whatever other minds pass by, to pollinate while gathering the nectar before moving along to make their own poetry and honey.

Sometimes it is summer, lush with the sensuous joy of round verbs, languidly moving along the page, in no particular hurry, ripening with possibility as ideas unfold.

Sometimes it is autumn and I pluck up words that germinated long ago and have now become perfect, their flowers grown into something nurturing and good.

Sometimes it is winter and the words stay buried deep inside, taking their rest as if they understand the work the other seasons will ask of them.

In all the seasons of my words, there is a dedication, an honoring of rhythms and the evolution of meanings, of knowing the lifetime of each word.

On the Glory of Morning

I hope by now as I write this, you have been in the fields, run your hand along the horse's brown and fuzzy strength, reminded the dog that you are still here, and in the quiet of it all marveled at the beauty of birds and the mystery of the grasses.

The sky brightens slowly, waking with us, only a few steps ahead. The pines and poplars and oaks stand tall to receive as much light as they are able, but perhaps not even as much as tomorrow.

Us groundlings receive the day amongst the trees, rejoicing at their elegant yearning and eternal strength. What is it within us that reaches so high, higher every day to widen our embrace of this world, this life?

It is gratitude, and I am grateful to know that sensation and abide with it. When we are young we try so hard to understand life's mysteries, our eager hearts beating beneath our "Life is Good" t-shirts.

It is not until decades later that we understand, profoundly understand, that declaration. For some of us, decades come compressed with catastrophe and loss, accelerating our desire to lose track of all time by living in complete communion with the natural world that made us.

So now, on the cusp of old days that precede ancient days I have an inkling of where my yearning has been leading me. Not toward a person. Not toward a place. Toward a full engagement of myself, the years and experiences finding the hidden levers and gates until I stand, wide open.

Suzanne Beaumont has lived in Wake Forest for 24 years, has raised three beautiful children here, and has been writing for the past seven years. She writes to simply know herself and explore the world around her. She studied writing with Natalie Goldberg and is currently studying haiku with Clark Strand. In addition to writing, Suzanne works full-time as a software architect. She writes most days just like she runs most days; these are her practices that keep her grounded and moving forward.

This poem cycle was written over several months. The middle poem, "In the Season of my Words," was inspired by a poet farmer friend who uttered that phrase during an early morning conversation. As Suzanne reads or listens, phrases will often catch her attention and she'll discover a poem or essay that she didn't know was inside her. So it goes.

At Twelve, I Cook Cottage Pie with My Grandmother

Zachariah Claypole White

She holds communion
of the thin knife;
her cardinal-quick fingers
and mine, filling the sink
with potato peels.

In the evening's
easy warmth, she is tin
and chopping board—
ten years safe from the wheelchair.
Every bulb—I swear—is a moon
circling the gravity
of her wrist.

She saves even
our scraps: compost
for the March flowerbeds.

Soon I will forget
these recipes; remember
only her hands.

But today, my mother and I
clean the oven top,
gather skins and stalks
to warm the freshly
turned earth.

How tender is a kitchen?
Guarding the lean roots
of what might still grow.

Zachariah Claypole White was born and raised in North Carolina. He holds a BA from Oberlin College and an MFA from Sarah Lawrence College. His poetry and prose have appeared in numerous publications, including *Pedestal Magazine*, *Weird Horror*, and *The Hong Kong Review*. His awards include *Flying South's* 2021 Best in Category for poetry and a nomination for a Pushcart Prize.

Sara Roberts



"Blooms Over the Viaduct." Mixed media.



"Blankets at Emerald Isle." Mixed media.



"Cones at Grandfather." Mixed media.

Sara Roberts's work incorporates photographs of places and objects both popular and obscure that highlight texture and color throughout the state of North Carolina. Each piece contains between 5-150+ photographs; if the viewer looks closely, they will find pieces of NC.

Each artwork is created with a painted background, either acrylic or alcohol ink. The main pieces are created with original photographs. Elements and photo pieces are outlined in black paint. Secondary elements are created from books, menus and articles related to North Carolina. The work begins with visits to various towns, parks, and museums around the state. Sara photographs textures and colors from each area, usually spending 2-5 hours photographing a particular location. She curates each trip collection and crops and enhances photos to be printed. This process can take up to 20 hours. Backgrounds are painted 4 times and take 4-20 hours each depending on whether they contain collaged paper. She lays out photos to determine color interaction. She draws shapes and creates stencils for repeating shapes. Then, Sara cuts out photos and text pieces and outlines them in black. This process takes between 2-10 hours depending on the number of pieces. Next, Sara paints text pieces with watercolor and allows them to dry for 1-2 hours. The final process of gluing takes between 2-10 hours per artwork. Not including travel, sketching, cataloging, wiring or framing, each piece includes between 16 and 80 hours of work!

Each artwork has a list of photographs and locations located on the back and is intended to evoke a sense of happiness and nostalgia related to the viewer's own memories. The artworks' black outlines give them a stained-glass effect and invite the viewer to experience the light and beauty of North Carolina

Apocalypse Whenever

Daisy Solace

When I heard from God last night, He told me that He'd shut us down by noon.

It was light when I woke up, mid-morning, the sun streaming through our cheap blinds. You weren't in bed, but your spot was still warm, and Toby was nowhere to be seen. That dumb dog couldn't let me have one last morning of joy with you, could he?

Getting out of bed today was easier than most days. Perhaps most things were easier when you only had a few hours left to live. I walked over to the kitchen, the cold tile worth it to be able to wrap my arms around you from behind, worth it to press my face into the crook of your neck, worth it to hear you chastise me for making you jump while you're cooking with hot oil.

"I'm sorry," I said, but I wasn't. That was the best moment of my life. "I'm not going to work today. Let's have a lazy morning."

You craned your neck to look at me but you were distracted by the eggs that were almost done, so your gaze only lingered for milliseconds. I expected you to tell me that was a stupid idea, that we needed the cash for the overdue mortgage payments but perhaps God spoke to you last night too.

"Okay," you said. "At least set the table then."

"No. Let's eat on the couch."

You shot me a quizzical look but didn't argue, so I brought out plates and helped you plate breakfast up and carried them over to the coffee table. The playlist of the end of times consisted of you humming along to the *Legally Blonde* musical that had been stuck in your head for days, and the sloppy sounds of Toby eating.

You brought over the coffee and we curled into each other, and I handed you the remote.

"What do you want to watch?" You asked me, and I thought *this is the very last thing I'll ever watch*.

"I don't mind," I said. "Put on whatever you want."

So you put on *Real Housewives*, and I watched you eat, glittering and perfect with your bedhead, too-small t-shirt, and worn-out pink cupcake pajama pants, blissfully ignorant that in less than three hours, we would no longer exist. "I love you," I said, and you leaned over to kiss me. The kiss smelt of egg and morning breath, but I never wanted it to end.

“I love you too.”

We had eaten, and Toby had jumped onto the couch to join us, and the three of us had curled up, and the world had ended with my arms around you, just as we were about to find out why the other Housewives were mad at Lisa Vanderpump this time.

Later, I'll say to God: thank you. Thank you for telling me. Thank you for not telling her. Thank you for letting it end with us, with how the world was always meant to end, with you pressed against me and garbage reality TV blaring.

I'll say to God: Please let us meet again in the next one. Please let us die like this in the next one. Please grant me this. Please let every universe end like this one did.

Perhaps he will agree. Perhaps I will be allowed to die again and again the way that I have always meant to die: loved, and loving you.

Daisy Solace is queer, Muslim woman who loves all things sunny, glittery, and writing-oriented. She has had a chapbook published through Bottlecap Press as well as several poems and a short story published by various literary journals and magazines.

Jane D. Steelman



"That's Why They're Called the Blue Ridge"
Oil and cold wax, 20 x 16 x 1 in



"Peaks and Valleys 2022"
Alcohol ink



"Feels Like Fall"
Acrylic on canvas, 20 x 16 x 1 in

Born in Winston-Salem, **Jane D. Steelman** worked toward a degree in Art at Appalachian State University. She studied under Bill Dunlap in drawing and painting as well as Clyde Owen in Ceramics. She is certified in art education for K-12 and taught high school Advanced Digital Photography and AP Art History. She now teaches private art lessons in her home studio.

Dr. Steelman works in various media including pastels, charcoal, acrylic, oils, alcohol inks and stained glass. She enjoys the vibrant colors found in alcohol inks and stained glass and the blending qualities of pastel and oils. Her work varies from photorealistic charcoals and pastels to abstract landscapes in acrylics and alcohol inks. Dr. Steelman's work can be found in a myriad of public and private art collections and has been seen in numerous exhibitions; local, state and international.

Dr. Steelman has been awarded First Place in the National Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) American Heritage Art Contest in the category of Pastels for three years. Prints of her winning entries have been donated to the NC Veteran's Life Center, 1005 9th St., Butner, NC.

One of her paintings has been selected for the Spotlight on Artists Public Art Project 2021 and is on display as a mural at the Wake Forest Renaissance Center, 405 Brooks St., Wake Forest, NC.

Jane is the past President of the Pastel Society of North Carolina, a member and steering committee member of the Wake Forest Guild of Artists. She currently lives in Wake Forest, North Carolina where she has a home studio.

Mimus Polyglottos

Ericka Christie

We have more in common than not—
many-tongued mimic perched beyond
the window pane—what do you make of us?
Do you perceive our shared lot?

Brutish during the breeding season,
fruits in autumn and in winter,
drinking puddles thick with reason—
a black bill open to the world.

White patches visible in flight
male and female look alike—how
progressive yet, like us, ready
for the fight, summoning neighbors
with battle cries, brash and strong and steady

a life extended in captivity—
what sensory similarity have
you witnessed? Are we not the same, ever
caught between flight and fight—long the
victims of Juno's selfish game?

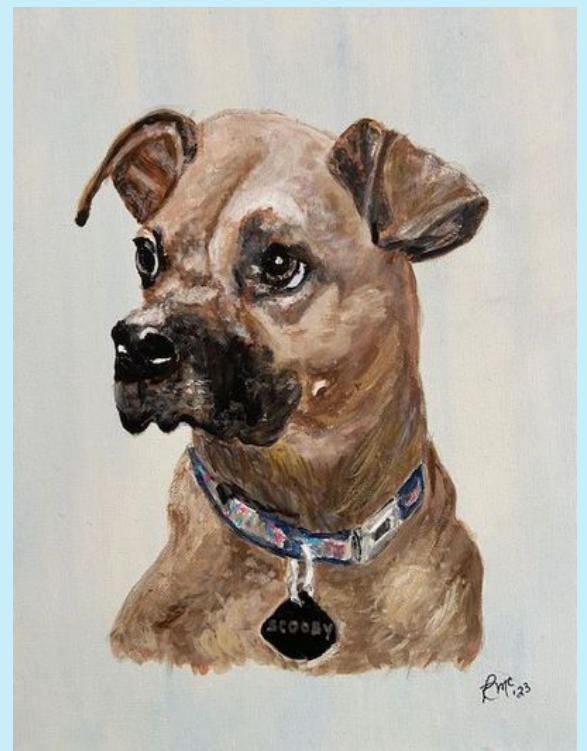
No response, save trill and wings unfurled
like us—the poets—mimics of the world.

Ericka Christie is a former high school English teacher and current doctoral student at NC State University where she studies Communication, Rhetoric, and Digital Media. She moved to Wake Forest in 2022 with her partner Ryan and their two cats, Squeak and Oliver.

Roseann Zambuto McFadden



Roseann Zambuto McFadden is a retired Therapeutic Recreation Director who applied her specialties of music and art to the field of allied health. Originally from Long Island, NY, she has been residing in Wake Forest for over eleven years. She attended the Traphagen School of Fashion in Manhattan, majoring in Advertising Art and Design and minoring in Interior Decorating. Although marriage and motherhood put her art on hold for many years (aside from murals on her child's bedroom wall), she soon cultivated her musical talent on stage in New York and in North Carolina. During her "COVID down time," she began painting with friends over Zoom and discovered a passion for pet portraiture. Her paintings act as gifts and keepsakes for friends and loved ones, and she now takes commissions for her work.



As Roseann continues down the road of her "Golden Years," she will lean on her passions for painting, music, and dog-sitting as therapeutic outlets.

The Last Weekend at Hyannis Port

Heather Bell Adams

By this time of the year, most of Cape Cod has slipped on a prim crispness. Summer's vines are browning and brittle, and the boats have been drained and covered with cinched tarps. But the Kennedy compound still teems with life. Jackie eases the screen door to the veranda closed, so as not to wake anyone up. This morning she's the first to rise, eager for a moment alone before Jack's family launches into the day the same way they do everything—full throttle.

At the end of the boardwalk, rickety from years of use, Jackie flings off her sandals and turns north, letting the wind whip her face until it stings. Now that she and Jack are back from their honeymoon, it's time they got their own place.

The sky brightens, pink warming to orange, and Jackie bends down to free the crab that's latched onto her pants.

"You're better off away from the house, I promise," she says, prying off one pincher at a time. As soon as she places the crab on the sand, it skitters away. "It's like a competition to see who can talk the longest and the loudest."

When Jackie stands, she discovers Bobby's wife, Ethel, lying below the dune. She's stretched out, her hands above her head, her tanned feet pointing toward the water. Jackie turns away. If she's quiet, Ethel won't notice her. One step, two, and Ethel doesn't stir.

"A competition, huh?"

Jackie stops, and her sister-in-law's question hangs in the crisp air.

"A competition to see who can talk the longest and the loudest, did I get that right?" Ethel stands, her chestnut bob mussed from the sand.

"Morning, Ethel. I was only muttering to myself. Or to a crab, actually."

Ethel knows a thing or two about competition. At her St. Patrick's Day party, which Jackie had attended as Jack's girlfriend, Ethel told everyone to wear black, only to appear in a shimmering emerald green gown, as eye-catching as a mermaid.

"If I could offer one piece of advice about the family, it's this—you need to relax. Don't be so uptight." Ethel begins flapping her arms like a bird taking flight.

"What are you doing?" Jackie asks.

“Calisthenics,” Ethel says. “Though there’s only so much I can do these days.” She pats her belly, then resumes her flapping. Sometime after Christmas she will have her third child.

Jackie crosses her arms over her chest. “I’m not uptight.”

“Jacqueline, you run the taps when you use the bathroom. Like you want us to think you’re a queen who’s above peeing in a toilet.”

Jackie’s cheeks burn. She wishes Jack had never told them the correct pronunciation of her name, that it rhymes with queen. Now they won’t let her live it down.

“The family looks down their noses at me because the Bouviers don’t have this kind of money—” Jackie gestures back toward the compound of white houses with their gravel drives and clusters of wide lawns—“but I’m the snob?”

With a huff of her breath Ethel drops her arms. “And another thing, when you’re in Washington, drop the intellectual airs. Vassar and all that. The party wants accessible because that’s what voters want. Luncheons and teas. Not opinions about which translation of the *Aeneid* comes closest to the original intent.”

“Thanks for your help, Ethel. I’m sure you have better things to do with your time.” From what Jackie has seen, Ethel spends her days bossing the children’s nanny around. Be a dear and wipe Kathleen’s nose. Let’s see if we can’t scrounge up something yummy for a snack.

Ethel balances on one foot, no easy task in the shifting sand, and touches the tip of her toe. “With any luck, you’ll be a mother soon enough. Jack will want children right away. Otherwise, why bother getting married?”

“I’m aware of what’s expected of me.”

Ethel switches to the other foot and counts to five. When she’s finished, she fluffs her hair until her bob falls neatly back into place. “You might want to—” She points to Jackie’s head. “Here, take this.” Ethel hands her a polka dot scarf.

“Goodness, the Eisenhowers aren’t coming for breakfast, are they?” Jackie twists the scarf around her finger. She won’t give Ethel the satisfaction of covering her windswept mane.

Ethel smiles, those prominent teeth of hers so much like a horse’s. “You won’t want Jack to see you looking a fright.”

Tired of her sister-in-law’s contradictory advice, Jackie tosses the scarf back at Ethel, who catches it before it hits the sand.

“I’m trying to help,” Ethel continues.

“If I didn’t know any better, I’d feel like one of Henry the Eighth’s wives. Make haste to get with child or off with your head,” Jackie says.

“There you go again. So proud of all the books you’ve read.”

“Didn’t you read books at Sacred Heart?” Jackie snaps. “Or were you too busy praying to Saint Gianna for a dozen children?”

If Ethel is impressed that Jackie knows the patron saint of motherhood, she doesn’t show it.

“By the way, I’m partial to Rolfe Humphries,” Jackie says as she turns to leave. “There’s a brashness to his translation that brings Virgil to life.”

Without waiting for Ethel’s response, she starts running. As the sand flicks up behind her heels, she suspects she looks like a child, but she can’t get away fast enough. If she keeps going, she might outrun herself.

That evening, as they do every Friday, the Kennedys gather to watch a movie in the home theater. Rose insists upon an eight o’clock starting time, and anyone who arrives late must crawl to their seat to avoid disturbing the others. A few minutes early, Jackie chooses a spot in the back row—she doesn’t like to crane her neck to see the screen—and places her cardigan on the seat next to her, saving it for Jack. She’s barely seen him all day.

The door to the theater bangs open, and Jack and his father appear. Jackie waves to get Jack’s attention, but he’s pinned to his father’s side, the two men’s heads bent close together in conversation. They pass Jackie’s row without noticing her and take seats beside Jean and Eunice.

“Quiet now,” Rose says in a hushed voice. She’s seated in front of Jackie, but she’s so tiny, Jackie can easily see above her coiled curls, her narrow shoulders ensconced in tweed.

Bobby and Ethel hurry in just as the gardener, whom Rose has asked to run the projector, dims the lights.

“Here, let’s go over by Jackie.” Bobby tugs Ethel’s arm, and she follows with a brisk nod in Jackie’s direction.

The movie, a recent release called “Gentlemen Prefer Blondes,” begins to roll. Jackie tells herself to be grateful she’s not sitting alone.

“Don’t tell mother, but I snuck in snacks.” Bobby hands Jackie a warm cookie wrapped in a napkin. He looks like a carbon copy of Jack, only smaller.

Jackie takes a bite and lets the chocolate melt on her tongue. Onscreen, the two main characters in the movie appear. A blonde Marilyn Monroe plays Lorelei. Jane Russell, strong-jawed and brunette, plays Dorothy. Showgirls in red sequined gowns and feathered headdresses, they beckon the viewer closer, all puckering and hip thrusting and life advice offered with a flirtatious wink.

Their banter makes Jackie cringe. It seems reductively simplistic to reduce women’s desires to money or love. Never both—and never reaching for anything more. The movie flickers across the screen as the showgirls pack hats and evening gowns, stoles and pumps, for a cruise to Paris. Up front, Jack’s sisters lean back in their chairs, their long legs stretched out, and Jack fidgets. One moment he jiggles his leg up and down, the next he shifts to adjust his back. In the glow of the screen, her father-in-law appears animated, every actor’s facial expression mimicked by his own.

“Gloria was a plaything for him,” Jack has told Jackie, referring to Gloria Swanson and his father. “Nothing serious. They had a good time with each other.”

Good time, he’d said, like a game of touch football.

On the screen, Lorelei and Dorothy stage a break-in of a fellow cruise passenger’s suite, their whispered conspiracy kept light and airy, harmless girl talk.

This is another difference between the Bouviers and Kennedys. Jackie's own mother ranted and raved at her father's rumored exploits. She'd thrown a crystal decanter at the dining room wall and cursed him until her voice grew hoarse. Here, every morning Rose puts on a mask of stoicism right along with her stockings. She walks the perimeter of the compound whispering her rosary under her breath. The rest of the day she strides around with her daily to-do's pinned to her dress. An efficient conductor of what would otherwise be an unruly contrapuntal orchestra.

As the film plays, Marilyn Monroe glimmers, her platinum hair coiffed just so, poised between glamorous and girlish. Whenever she speaks, everyone on the cruise ship pauses to listen—and everyone in the home theater stares, captivated. Joe adjusts those round glasses of his, a familiar gesture. Her father-in-law is always trying to see the world closer up. Jackie finds his hard-nosed ambition, the relentless competitiveness, tiresome. Even at something simple, a game of Scrabble or charades, he pounds the table and swindles and cheats. And yet she admires the ambassador's discipline. Every day, no matter the weather, he takes a bracing swim before lunch. He limits himself to one cocktail before dinner, whereas her own father drunk himself into a stupor the night before her wedding.

By the time Marilyn's character, Lorelei, sits down to dinner in a tangerine dress, her blue eyes at once piercing and playful, Jack ceases his fidgeting. He appears to be mesmerized by every stitch on her dress, every curve filling out its shape. Lorelei explains that she can be smart when she needs to be, but most men don't like it. Flushed, Jack chuckles behind his palm.

In a later scene, Marilyn, triumphant in vibrant pink, sings about diamonds. Jack's gaze tracks her every move across the screen.

In the end, Marilyn's character turns out to have a heart of gold. She wants what every woman wants—true love. A laudable goal, and yet Jackie can't quite claim it for herself. Since she was in ankle socks, her father has told her—over and over again he's told her—that all men are rats.

The credits roll, and the gardener turns the lights back up. Jackie has seen Marilyn in some of her other films, but she's never noticed how magnetic the blonde can be. The story's conclusion is almost unbelievable in its tidiness, but something in Marilyn's performance—Jackie can't put her finger on it—transcends any doubts.

Jack's sisters blink as they gather up their long limbs. Rose marches down the aisle, her course set for her private bedroom upstairs, the small white bed with its plain coverlet, the crucifix on the wall. As Ethel stands, she groans about wanting another cookie, which she won't eat because she worries about gaining weight. One day—maybe soon—Jackie might be pregnant herself, but she resolves never to look as ridiculous as Ethel did this morning on the beach. Those silly little kicks, that tidy rectangle of sand she claimed for herself when the entire shoreline was right there.

Jackie waits for Jack, then loops her arm through his. At her touch, he startles, and she realizes he's not yet rejoined the real world with the rest of them.

"Quite the story wasn't it?" Joe winks from behind his glasses and motions for Jackie and Jack to go ahead of him as they leave the screening room.

“Was it the story that captured your attention or the way Marilyn Monroe fills out an evening gown?” Jackie says over her shoulder. She despises the flirtatious tone she sometimes takes with Jack’s father, but she can’t seem to help herself from giving him what he expects.

Joe laughs. “Say what you will about her acting, but she can hang a dress.”

Jackie leans into her husband, still silently rowing his way back to reality, and they shuffle out into the hallway.

“What did you think?” she asks with the slightest nudge to Jack’s side. “About Marilyn, I mean.”

This is his chance to carry the joke along. Admire the Hollywood starlet from afar. Pretend to wipe away sweat from his eyebrow. Quote the line about her giving men what they wanted so they can all laugh.

Jack shakes like a puppy awakening from a nap, then yawns. “I think I’m ready for some shut-eye.”

His deflection stings, almost as if he’s lied outright. “Have you ever met Marilyn Monroe?” Jackie doesn’t direct her question to anyone in particular, but of course she is most curious about the Kennedy men, about her husband.

“I’ve not had the pleasure,” Jack says.

“Me either.” Bobby shrugs. “But if she comes out here Ethel and I would gladly put her up for the night.”

“Once, in Palm Springs,” Joe says, and everyone turns to him. “She’s different in the flesh than onscreen. Hesitant, a little shy. More childlike, almost. Not at all untouchable.”

At her father-in-law’s description, Jackie’s admiration for Marilyn turns sour. Perhaps, after all, the starlet is vacuous, lacking any real talent. She must rely on her looks to get her anywhere she wants to go.

“There’s a certain appeal to Hollywood women,” Joe continues. “They’re desperate for attention. With all the competition out there, you’ve got to be more than a pretty face to make a go of it. They’ll do just about anything.”

“You don’t need to worry, Jackie. My brother prefers brunettes,” Bobby says.

“Oh, that’s right. Gene Tierney, was it?” Joe punches Jack’s arm. “A nice pair of emerald green eyes on that one.”

“It was a long time ago,” Jack says, clearly pleased by the recollection. “And I don’t remember her eyes.”

Jackie puts one foot in front of the other along the basement hallway, which is lined with glass cabinets. Each holds shelves of neatly-placed dolls, the only item Rose permits herself to collect. There must be fifty of them. A lace-up dress with leather boots for the doll from Switzerland, an embroidered kimono and tiny pleated fan for the Japanese girl. Jackie wishes she could take one from the cabinet and tilt its head forward. She wants to see if those fringed eyelashes can blink or if the dolls, with their colored glass eyeballs, are cursed to see everything. But Rose has strictly forbidden anyone, even the grandchildren, from playing with her collectibles.

Jackie pauses and slides her arm from beneath Jack’s. She leans closer to study the dolls as she never has before. Behind the glass their porcelain faces all look the same—chilly and blank. The opposite of how Marilyn winks and beckons and twirls and croons. Jackie realizes what made her performance so transcendent, how she bobbed up like an inflatable water toy above a mediocre line or obvious plot hole. It’s that Marilyn makes the viewer complicit in whatever happens.

Jackie presses her finger against the glass. A Victorian doll in a high-necked dress stares back, a perfectly-placed prop with nothing to say. In Rose’s household binder upstairs, the household cleaning schedule dictates that

the dolls get dusted once a month. Every three months, the house maid rotates the collection, shifting the dolls from the bottom row to the top. When Rose showed Jackie the binder, she'd meant for Jackie to take notes about silver polishing and supper party menus. As her mother-in-law flipped past the page about the dolls, Jackie had chewed her lip to keep from laughing. Now she sees the wisdom of Rose's forethought, the comfort it must give her, knowing that what she loves will not be neglected.

Heather Bell Adams is the author of two novels, *Maranatha Road* and *The Good Luck Stone*. Her work appears in the *North Carolina Literary Review*, *Still: The Journal*, *Parentheses*, *The Thomas Wolfe Review*, *Atticus Review*, *The Petigru Review*, *Broad River Review*, and elsewhere. She recently served as North Carolina's 2022 Piedmont Laureate.

Hannah Morgan



Hannah Morgan is a photographer and writer who likes to create art that encourages or inspires others. A graduate of Meredith College and Southeastern Seminary, she resides in the country outside of Raleigh.

Workplace Blues

Brandy Bell Carter

For years my father made paper towels.
You know – the ones in the bathroom at the convenience store, Or the cardboard
leaves that fly out of the box at the taqueria?

He often had to pull over on the way home
From a shift at weird hours to keep from
Dying behind the wheel. Maybe taking someone with him.

Sometimes I would be alone and sad in a
Public place and see the logo of his
Factory on a dispenser.

I'd pull out a piece of paper
To dry my hands and imagine him
Holding them to comfort me.

Did he ever feel the satisfaction of sending something tangible
Out into the world,
Something people need?

The labor of my father's hands cleaning up vomit,
Snot, or the mess from a bloody nose.
I never asked him how he felt on those long nights at work.

Brandy Bell Carter lives near Wake Forest with her husband and hound dog. She teaches high school English, grows flowers, and reads widely. She is inspired by the Psalms, folk music, and Mary Oliver's poems.

Washington Highway

Colby Hartog

On an overgrown gravel driveway, a 2023 Ram 1500 parked behind a 1990-something Toyota Camry, the rust along the sedan's body complimenting the variety of old iron parts scattered around the front yard. The lawn, beginning to resemble the growing foliage in the gravel, was unevenly mowed, but it hadn't been a complete disaster of a summer. However, there were definitely times when this lawn looked much neater, and the weeds had been completely absent. The turkey strips of grass led up to an old wooden porch. On the porch were two blue-painted rocking chairs, each seated with a tired man. Looking out towards the horizon, Ross MacGuire took a sip of his cheap beer and belly laughed.

"And I was jus' like, no! Hell no!"

The man sitting next to him smiled and shook his head, also holding a brown bottle.

"Let me tell ya," Ross continued, "I was flabbergasted! Y'know how much \$60 could get me anywhere else, Cory?"

"How much, Ross?"

"At least two plates of some kinda meat, collard greens, some broccoli or somethin' like that, and plenty of mac. Like Hell I be ordering a single meal for \$60!"

"Oh, okay. Yea, that's a bit much."

"You feel," Ross enthusiastically said with a sip.

The two wooden rocking chairs faced the West, away from the woods that completely concealed the East horizon. It was just about sundown, a pale blue still enfolding the hazy cloudless sky, with a gray color forming in the very middle. A yellow light seeped from the crack in the front door, with sounds from the kitchen occasionally accompanying the variety of shrill insect songs. Although they sat not far from the much cooler house, the two men had beads of sweat from the summer humidity.

Ross set down an empty beer to his side, where three other bottles had already been placed. Cory took a small finishing sip, put down his first completed bottle to his side, then wiped his clean-shaven face with the sleeve of his button-up.

"Can't go wrong with one of those."

"That's f'sure. So what kinda beer y'got out in Cali, Cory?"

"Well, tell you the truth, I haven't really tried much different out there."

"Really? They got stouts out there?"

"Oh, I'm sure they got plenty of stout in California, Ross. I just haven't tried any of the exclusive kind."

A woman dressed in a blue apron, with her hair tightly tied into a bun, stepped out from the front door holding two more beer bottles. Her appearance reflected a life of maintaining cleanliness, organization, and above all, getting up early. This lady kept Ross moving, making sure he could move fast, but her demeanor was bright and sunny like this summer season had been.

"Alright, now, boys. These are the last two cold ones. I put some more in the fridge, but they ain't cold yet. So, you better enjoy these ones," she said, handing the two men each a bottle.

"Well, thank you, darlin'," Ross happily said.

"Thank you, Mrs. MacGuire," Cory straightly told her.

"Oh, c'mon Cory, you can call her Daisy. You only known her 20 years. Tell 'im, Daisy, tell 'im he can call ya that."

"He can call me that if he like," Daisy responded, "Isn't that right, Mr. Wellington?"

"Yes, ma'am," Cory chuckled, "You know, I haven't been called that since I was at work."

"Remind me how long you stayin' in town for?" Daisy asked.

"Not much longer, I'm afraid," he responded, "Uhhhh... We leaving tomorrow at 8 in the morning, I think."

"That's sure a long drive," Ross said, "I dunno if I'd ever be able to do it."

"It ain't so bad," Cory responded, shrugging, "I might even say I like the road."

"I probably be likin' the road, too, if I ever actually got on it," Ross followed with a belly laugh.

"Well, safe driving Mr. Wellington. That goes for Mrs. Wellington, too," Daisy said.

"Absolutely, thank you," Cory nodded.

Daisy walked over to give Ross a kiss on his scruffy face and then pulled out a handkerchief to wipe some spilled beer off of his undershirt.

"And you," she gestured to the scrap scattered in the yard, "We gonna get this mess cleaned up real soon, hun."

Ross looked out to his littered lawn, then turned over to Cory.

"My summer project," Ross began to chuckle, "It didn't really go nowhere... But we'll get all this junk

up and off.”

“Then we’re gettin’ this lawn back in shape. I ain’t fix the mower for nothin’. You shoulda heard what that thing sounded like, Mr. Wellington.”

“That old red thing work even better after Daisy did somethin’ to it. She may as well be a mechanic. Ain’t you, Daisy? You think you could fix one of Cory’s fancy computers?”

“You bet I could try,” Daisy said with a wink, “You need anythin’ else, Mr. Wellington?”

“No, I’m quite alright,” Cory politely said, “Thank you, Daisy. But, tell you what, I’ll remember to give you a ring if something ever starts making a sound I ain’t heard before.”

“Alright, that sounds good,” she replied while chuckling, “I’ll leave you two at it. Don’t be afraid to holler if you need somethin’.”

Before she left, Ross stood up to give her a kiss. Daisy left the front door slightly ajar, which let the yellow light still remain on the porch. Sitting up straight and stiffly, Cory didn’t open the beer, but instead used his thumb to start wiping the condensation off of it. The other man immediately popped the cap off and took a long sip, then made a relieving sigh as he sat back down.

“Ain’t she perfect?”

“She’s a real alright lady, Ross. You done pretty right with her.”

“I can’t really believe it much. I’m not sure how I got to be her man, but here we are all this time later. It’s a blessin’. You also damn lucky, you got yours with you in Cali.”

“That’s the truth,” Cory said, holding out his unopened bottle for cheers, “To the wives.”

The two men clinked the bottles, and then Ross turned his gaze back to the view of the yard to take a sip. Now, a thin line of orange appeared on the horizon.

“You know, the other boys were disappointed they couldn’t see ya,” Ross began, “But they know that job of yours in Cali is cool. And I’ll tell them you the same as ever, just with some nicer shoes.”

“Yea, you could say that,” Cory chuckled, “What they all doing, nowadays, anyway?”

“Tell ya what, they’ve been doin’ real well. Good jobs. Promotions. Hell, even grandkids, could ya believe?”

“Really? Time is going by fast, man. What kind of jobs they working?”

“Well, similar to you. They buildin’ stuff. Messing with computers, cars, designin’, stuff of the future, really. And then, Raynell’s a store manager now...” Ross’s voice trailed off.

“Hey, that’s cool. If I’m right, Jose the one doing the computer work?”

“Yea, yea he is! Next time you out here, ya gotta go see ‘im. You two gotta lot to talk about, I bet.

I dunno really nothing about all that computer stuff. Usually, I just hit the button and hope to Hell it works!”

“Let me tell you, Ross, most of the time, I just be doing the same thing.”

They both chuckled. Setting his beer on the ground, still half of it left, Ross sighed and looked out at the sky. He had a puzzled look on his face and scratched his patchy chin. His friend looked over, noticing the change in demeanor, but didn’t say anything. Instead, Cory still rubbed his thumb along the beer bottle.

“You know, Cory, I gotta tell ya somethin’. Now let me ask you. You been down that new highway they buildin’? Called Washington or somethin’? It’s off of Main.”

“No, I don’t think so.”

“Well, alright. I’ll ask you this. You ever seen a stoplight be put on a real fast highway?”

“A stoplight? On a highway?”

“Yea, yea. For real. It’s so you can, like, turn left into this new grocery store.”

“No, I never seen something like that.”

“Look, Cory. When you get in that left turn lane, you gotta wait for it to turn green. And when you in that lane, cars are still speedin’ past you. Vroom! And it shakes your whole car. You can feel it. But you’re just sittin’ there, waiting for the light. It’s almost sorta scary. But sittin’ there, one day on my own, I suddenly felt strange. I felt as if I was livin’ in that lane, that my life was this highway. I’m sittin’ there, waitin’ for somethin’, while everybody else just zooms by, so fast that I feel myself gettin’ rocked back and forth.”

Yellow slowly melted over the sky, and as hazy as it was, the color briefly made it warm.

“And, seein’ you and that big truck of yours, hearin’ about all these monumental things everybody is doin’, it’s all sorta rockin’ me. And I’m not movin’, Cory, I’m still in this lane. Waitin’. You’re so much farther down the highway, goin’ so much faster than me. What have I got to show here? Beer I bought for only five goddamn bucks? We really gettin’ older, and this still just all I got.”

His face fell distant, and he didn’t seem to be looking at anything anymore. The yellow reflected in his eyes. Cory sat up, popped off the cap of his bottle, and took a few gulps of it. His deep breath after lowering the beer from his lips was rich with satisfaction and gratitude, and he looked at his friend with a sad smile.

“Ross, let me tell YOU something. There is no one I’d rather be sitting with tonight, having a beer, and laughing at everything. It don’t matter that you don’t have a truck that runs on an electric engine,

trust me. You make me feel like this is home, that this is exactly where I should be sitting and enjoying myself, right here and now. And that's rare, Ross, that's rare. So don't you sit there and think that you worth less, because you ain't."

The sky finally began to darken, and the golden color slowly dissipated back into the horizon. But as the navy blue took over, it became a lethargic serenity, a break from all the many kinds of excitement. The sky was still, and as the woods were joined by more sounds of the insect orchestra, the night became peaceful. Ross picked his beer back up and housed what was left, laughing into the summer evening.

"Oh, Cory, you gotta come back more often, man."

Taking another gulp of his beer, Cory exhaled, relaxing back into his chair and calmly looking up to the sky.

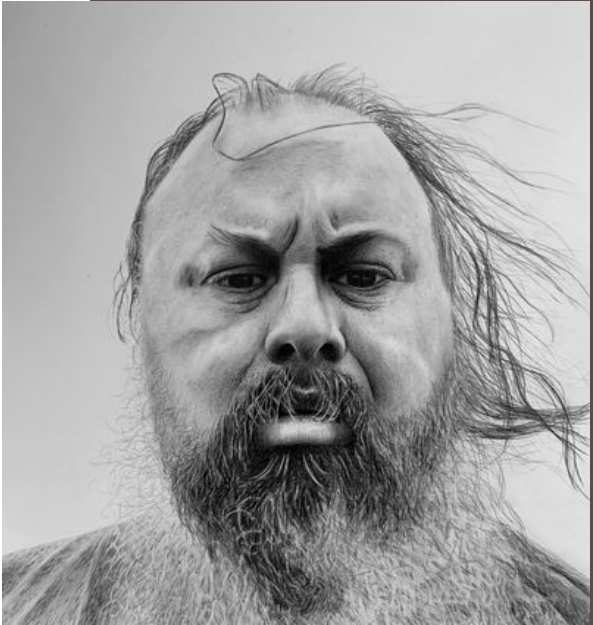
"If that ain't the truth, Ross," he chuckled, "If that ain't the truth."

Born in the desert valleys of the West, **Colby Hartog** is a writer who now resides in Wake Forest, North Carolina. Having written almost his entire life, Colby has completed a multitude of fiction works spanning genres including horror, contemporary fiction, and sci-fi. Currently working on his debut thriller novel *Stagefallen*, Colby hopes to capture uncertainty, perspectives of imperfection, and emotions that can only be explained by vivid experiences and relationships for his readers.

Todd Kreisman



"So Long, Old Friend"
Colored pencil on Bristol board, 8x10"



"Mountain Man"
Graphite on paper, 22x22"



"Car"
Colored pencil on illustration board, 8x13"

Todd Kreisman specializes mainly in realistic acrylic paintings and graphite/colored pencil drawings, but likes to experiment with styles, subjects, and mediums. Whenever possible, he tries to infuse his work with humor. He got a relatively late start in life with his artistic career, but feels that he's finally on a sustainable path. He's been a writer, a word puzzle constructor, an escape room designer, an actor, and a stand-up comedian. Basically, if there's an element of creativity involved, he's game.

Sands of Time

George Harold Trudeau

O those sands of time that slip through my fingers
and those gusts of wind on late boardwalk bike rides
to the YMCA pool lessons with my brothers
and crockpots of hot cider on Thanksgiving morning.

O those sands of time falling through family shards
those shards that fall through portrait walls and empty halls
those empty stained-glass windows of meek and mild Jesus
slipping church attendance and prayerless dinners
and to those grains of faith that free us.

To when you kissed us goodnight and read us stories from the KJV
until my sister's cry and the police lights visited our front door
O that childlikeness slipping through clenched fists
and the sins of my forefathers that bubble up inside me.

O those hours of vengeful thoughts ticking through my brain
of wishing neither death, nor torture, nor of your demise
but of your blissful non-existence
praying you away like a dandelion wish
sending you off like a Judas kiss.

O those sands of time and grains of hope falling on my head
like those Sussex County lights peering into my childhood bedroom
watching over me like my guardian angels
after reading Daniel and the Lion's den
of the faith of Mary and liberty of Moses
dreaming of beach walks after high school prom
imagining the thrill of leaving home for the first time.

O those sands of time that linger like splinters
for thou art always with me
and even when I hated you and couldn't forgive
you were always the love within my heart.

Yorick's Love

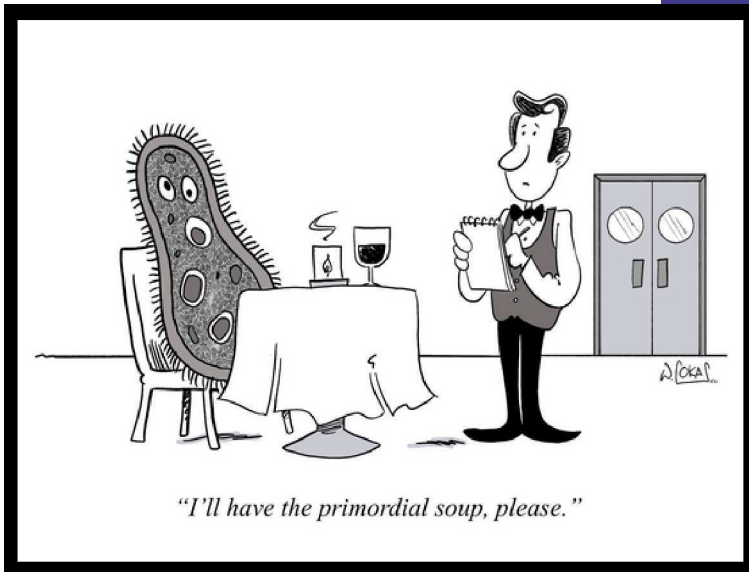
George Harold Trudeau

Your love was show
comedic tragedy
making me the main act
for your royal visit.
But when the curtain falls
actors leave and set torn
Shakespeare rolls up his play
to begin another,

All forbidden love is
is forbidden.

George Harold Trudeau is a high school English teacher. He graduated from the College of Southeastern with a BA in English where he contributed poems and short stories for the literary magazine SLAM. You can find him reading C.S. Lewis books in coffee shops, marveling the beauty of old churches, or cackling to dumb YouTube videos. Trudeau is the author of his first book, *The Jesus of Jericho: The Good Samaritan in the Public Square*. It is available on Amazon for purchase.

Bill Cokas



Maryland-born Bill Cokas was “drawn” to artwork at an early age. His first-grade teacher was impressed enough with his crayon illustration of Bert, Ernie and Cookie Monster that she had it laminated. It resides proudly in the back of his office closet to this day. Throughout his childhood, his parents actively encouraged his creativity—even when it got him in trouble at school—and since then, cartooning has remained a reliable retreat and means of expression.

While attending UNC, he produced *The Man from UNcle*, a regular comic strip for *The Daily Tar Heel*, and has published (very) sporadically in the decades since, in defunct niche publications like *Zymurgy* and *Bird Talk*, and more recently in *Woman's World*. Bill alternates drawing with flights into fiction and plans to publish a series of mystery novels in the near future. Bill's imagination is matched at every turn by the rest of his family. His wife Susan is a writer and improv performer; his son Cam is a singer/songwriter and multi-instrumentalist, and Cam's twin brother Zack is a rapper and graphic designer. He's pretty sure his dog has a journal of poetry stashed away somewhere as well. By day, Bill is a co-owner of Strategic Insights Brand Marketing, a Wake Forest-based ad agency, where he poses as a writer and creative director. More of his work can be found at margawriterville.com

Honor Among Thieves

Debbie Moose

Dave couldn't believe that the flame-red Porsche Cayenne was parked in the dimmest part of the farthest corner of an apartment building's parking lot at two in the morning. He shook his head, and Mario, in the passenger seat beside him, started laughing.

"It's like some dude wants us to steal this car," Mario said as Dave cut the lights on their black pickup and glided into place beside the expensive SUV.

"Bet he's cheating on his ol' lady with some bitch that lives here, don't want nobody to spot him," Dave said as the pair got out and grabbed a bag with the tools of their trade.

Getting into the car would be no problem. They were pros, after all, successful free-range automobile procurers who picked their targets well, either through deliberate search or by taking advantage of opportunities; always working fast. This night, they were looking for high-end SUVs at the request of their guy, Kenny, who paid them well for their prizes, rendered the vehicles unrecognizable and resold them. Mario, who enjoyed the thrill of the hunt, called it "the circle of life." For Dave, it was a way to make a living that was more lucrative and interesting than packing boxes of useless stuff in an Amazon warehouse.

As was their habit, the pair neither dithered around nor rushed. Before using their tools to get in the car, they started with the obvious. Mario felt around and pulled a magnetic spare-key container from a wheel well and tossed the key to Dave.

"Dude's married, all right. Only a woman does this," Mario said.

"Maybe it's some lady's car," Dave said, opening the door.

"Ha! That kind of car is compensating for *something*."

Mario returned the unopened bag of tools to the truck, Dave started the SUV, the radio came on and an angry voice yelled, "Joe Biden is the worst president ever!" He quickly turned it off. The Sirius XM presets were tuned to Fox News, Patriot News and Joel Osteen Radio, plus there was a Trump 2024 yard sign in the back seat.

"Shit. Some damn Republican. Bet he'll never miss this car, got five more in the garage at home," Dave said, tearing the sign in half.

"C'mon, let's move it," Mario said through the driver's window.

Dave took off in one direction with the car, heading for Kenny's, while Mario steered the truck the opposite way, going an indirect route to pick up Dave and their night's work would be done. As Dave drove carefully, minding every traffic light, he thought about the car's owner, a right-wing nut job with more money than sense, as his daddy would've said. He was glad they'd gotten that car, not just because they'd receive a tall stack of green but because the jerk deserved it. Who needs a \$72,000 car?

A few nights later, the pair were coming up dry as they tried to fill Kenny's request for minivans, and Mario was getting antsy.

"Hey, look at that one," Mario said.

"In a Mickey D's parking lot? You know they got cameras all over. Just settle down," Dave said.

"You're too picky, damn it."

"Picky keeps us outta jail."

Patience was a necessary part of the work, which was why Dave did the finding and Mario did the technical stuff. Dave was about to call it a night when, around three-thirty in the morning, he saw a Dodge Caravan in the shadows of a dead-end street which was lined with small duplexes. As they pulled closer to the van, which was the color of a black jellybean after it's been sucked on and spit out, Mario saw that the driver's side window was down.

"Gonna be easy," Mario said, jumping out of the truck.

"Better be. It's a little close to when people start getting up for work for my taste," Dave said, glancing around for lighted windows.

The van was full of the jumble that children leave in their wake. Beat-up sneakers, a dented My Little Pony lunch box, pink and gray hoodies with arms splayed on the seats as if their owners had just jumped out of them. On the floorboards, a broken dog leash threaded through a layer of toys and food wrappers. Dave picked up one of the sneakers. The feel of it in his palm made his heart turn over, thinking of the daughter he hadn't seen since her mother took off with her more than a year earlier. She'd be too big for such a tiny shoe now.

"Radio's gone, Kenny ain't gonna like that," Mario said as he tinkered to get the van started.

Dave imagined the kids creating their own sounds, making the wheels on the bus go 'round and 'round. He dropped the shoe, jumped out and grabbed Mario's arm.

"Forget it. We ain't taking this one," Dave said.

Mario drew his head up from the engine and squinted at him.

"What'd you say? "

"We're gettin' outta here."

"Why? You see cops?" Mario said, jerking his head around.

Dave stuffed the tools in the bag and pulled Mario to the truck.

"I just don't wanna do this, OK?"

Something in Dave's voice made Mario stop and get in without a word. Dave buckled in, slowly pulled the truck to the main road and flicked on the lights. Neither man said a word for several minutes, while Dave, as usual, carefully observed all traffic laws.

"Kenny would've kicked our asses if we'd brought him that hunk of junk, anyway. Someone's been trying to keep it hangin' on for a while, could tell when I looked under the hood," Mario said.

Keeping it together. Dave knew how that went.

Debbie Moose is a North Carolina native and longtime Raleigh resident who has written nonfiction for *The News & Observer*, *Our State* and other publications for many years, and published seven cookbooks. This is one of her first forays into fiction.

Nothing Left to Say

Catherine Rahm

Intensely, discreet; I watched your feet
shake and take away.
Unable to break free, I watched your knees
together as they lay.
The unrest, in your chest —
I rise, and fall, you stay.
Fingertips that found your lips
with nothing left to say.



"Peace"

War Veteran's Wife

Catherine Rahm

She spent most days behind that old apron
making our meals and providing for us.
Her weathered fingers wrinkled like raisins,
gripping the spoon and praying for solace.
Day after day in a house of discord,
protecting us from our drunken father
with her bones as shields but never a sword.
Her tired body we would never bother.
She grew old inside of that same old house.
Rocking back and forth in her chair thinking
about her life as a war veteran's spouse,
who wasn't enough to stop his drinking
before he died inside his "Sunday best."
Leaving behind for her a day of rest.

Catherine Rahm received a BA Degree in English from East Carolina University and currently lives in Wake Forest. She is a mother to two kids, Jack and Claire, with another little one on the way. She is happily married and spends her free time reading, writing, and taking photos.

Book Reviews

Catherine Hyzy

One Summer in Savannah by Terah Shelton Harris
(releases on July 4)

5/5 stars

This beautifully written debut novel left me utterly speechless, and it may be the most exceptional one I have ever read.

Terah Shelton Harris is up front in her beginning author's note about the sensitive subject matter this book covers. Our main character, Sara, was sexually assaulted as a teenager and becomes pregnant as a result. Believe me when I say this delicate plot was handled with the utmost care and sensitivity.

The assault occurs off-page and almost a decade prior to the story we read here, which allows the reader to be distanced enough from it for it to be digestible. What unfolds is a story about two families forever connected and damaged by what has happened. There are so many layers, but they all intertwine and fall together impeccably. Sara, having left home in Savannah, GA for a fresh start after having her baby, finds herself returning home with her 8 year old daughter when her father falls ill. Back in Savannah, she reconnects with Jacob, the twin brother of the boy who assaulted her. She discovers that Jacob has also returned home in an attempt to mend his broken family. I can't say much more without giving spoilers, but this book is best read not knowing too much ahead of time anyway.

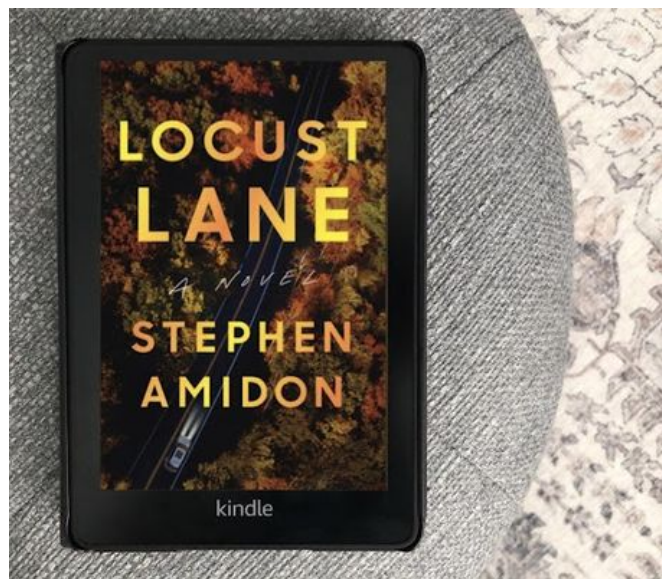
Simply put: I adored this story, and adored these characters. They will stay with me for a very long time. Jacob, in particular, will root inside your heart so deeply, he'll never leave. I beg of you not to be put off by the subject matter- what you will gain by reading this book will make it so worth it. When you reach the final page, you'll want to go right back to the first and start the book all over again. Every single word of this book is absolute perfection.



Locust Lane by Stephen Amidon

5/5 stars

This is an excellent, well-written novel that is half character-driven/half mystery that had me turning the pages at a clip. Narrated by alternating characters, the story takes place in an affluent Massachusetts suburb where a small group of parents find themselves immersed in a murder investigation in which one of their sons is accused. One could argue that this is just the “wealthy behaving badly” trope mixed with a murder mystery (the perfect combo?!), but it’s so much more than that.



You’re not going to find a rip-through-the-pages, fast-paced thriller here. Instead, it’s a smart and evenly-paced slow burn of a novel that peels itself away layer by layer into who these characters are and what makes them do what they do in a time of fear, desperation, and the need to protect their children. While the story does move at a slower pace, it never lulls and continually propels forward in a way that really grips the reader. I had a hard time putting this one down; I constantly needed to know what would unfold next. I didn’t see the ending coming at all, which is always a delight. I won’t be forgetting this author’s impeccable writing style or these broken, complex characters any time soon. I definitely would have read this in one sitting had I had the luxury.

*Trigger Warnings/Themes: drug abuse resulting in teenage death, murder, child loss, extramarital affair, alcoholism, and brief description of sexual assault

Catherine Hyzy is originally from Buffalo, NY and settled in Wake Forest in 2022. She is never without a book or Kindle and enjoys writing book reviews and attending local author events. When she’s not reading, she’s baking, hanging out with her two Chihuahua mixes, Maggie and Molly, spending time with her family, or cheering on the Buffalo Bills.

Library Day

Laura Bass

One minute, I was sitting in a metal desk chair in my second-grade class at Cary Elementary, and the next minute, I wasn't. Losing my balance for no discernible reason, I fell to the ground, hitting my shoulder against the metal leg of my desk on my way down. The pain was sudden and intense, and so was my embarrassment. I slowly pulled myself back into my seat, face flushed tomato-red, biting my lip to keep from crying. The classroom was in slight chaos—our teacher had stepped into the hall for just a moment—so my fall had gone unnoticed. Safely back in my chair, I expected the pain to start receding as my face returned to its normal color. Instead, I discovered I could no longer move my right arm without searing pain.

This was a dilemma: I was in enough pain to justify asking my teacher to call my parents. But it was library day, my favorite day of the week. If I asked her to call now, I'd miss out on wandering through the large, old library, running my finger down the spines of books and flipping through the pages to see if this was the one for me. I'd miss out on the excitement of carrying my chosen book down the orange-carpeted steps to the checkout desk, where I'd carefully write my name on the card in the back. I'd miss out on the secret thrill of positioning the book under my desk to read during class, glancing up at my teacher and offering answers to her questions often enough that I thought I was getting away with it.

I couldn't bear to miss out on library day. I decided to deal with the pain until I'd gotten my hands on a book. Then, and only then, would I tell my teacher I was hurt and needed to call my parents.

I don't remember what book I chose that day. What I do remember is my dad's incredulous look when he showed up to take me to the doctor and my teacher explained that I'd actually gotten hurt about an hour before but hadn't told anyone. A little bit later, an X-ray revealed the fracture in my collarbone, and I revealed the reason I'd waited so long to report my injury.

Now that I had admitted I was in pain, the tears I'd been holding back didn't want to stop. "I... didn't want to miss... library day," I managed to choke out between sobs.

"We would have taken you to the public library, Laura," he exclaimed. I knew this was true—the library was just half a block from my school, and we made frequent trips there. Library trips started with emptying the tote bag that always accompanied me. Once I'd finished watching my stream of already-read books slip down the little slide of the book return and into the mysterious office of the librarians, I'd turn right and head to the juvenile fiction section. Strolling the aisles, I'd pluck books from the beige metal shelves and add them to my tote bag until the seams were strained. Every so often, my mom would appear from the picture book section with my little sister and instruct me that I needed to pick at least two "real" books (preferably ones marked with the gold Newbery medal or on a school reading list) for every *Sweet Valley Twins* book I had chosen.

"And your room is full of books," my dad added, interrupting my daydreams of the library. This was also true. *Little House on the Prairie* and *Nancy Drew* and *The Boxcar Children* and *Anne of Green Gables* and the *American Girls Collection* all lined my shelves, along with dozens of other books. By second grade, I was reading everything I could, everywhere I could. I faked piano practice by plunking the keys with one hand as I turned the pages of whatever I was currently reading on the music stand, quickly covering it with my piano book if I heard footsteps coming down the hallway. I read as I ate breakfast and in the car on the way to school. I kept a flashlight under my pillow so I could read as late as my eyes would stay open. The books on the shelves in my room were familiar friends.

But library day wasn't about revisiting an old favorite that I could find in my room. And the school library, though I'm sure it held many of the same titles, was a different experience than the public library. At the public library, I stuck to the juvenile fiction section as instructed by my mom. I stuffed my canvas tote bag with as many books as I could carry, hoping she wouldn't cull any from my selections before I handed over my bright yellow library card at the checkout desk. At the school library, I had free rein to wander to every nook and cranny. I loved meandering through the sprawling shelves, spinning the rotating display cases, weighing my options, and choosing the one book that would leave with me that day; it was like a serial treasure hunt, and I didn't want to miss even one installment of it.

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A few days after I moved into my freshmen dorm, a group of girls down the hall arranged a *Grey's Anatomy* viewing party in a new acquaintances' room. I had never seen an episode of the show and had no desire to watch one. However, I'd come to school knowing only two other people on campus, so I did have a lot of interest in making new friends. I showed up to those *Grey's Anatomy* nights, book in hand, and made myself comfortable reading while the show was on, folding down a corner of *The Da Vinci Code* to keep my place during commercials so I could join in the conversation.

From the moment I learned to read, I never could have imagined a day I didn't have a book in my hand. Reading, for me, had always been almost as essential as breathing or eating. I'd always had a book in my car, a book in my bag, and stacks of books on my nightstand. When I found out I was pregnant with my first child, I would have been a likely candidate to head straight to the parenting section of the library, filling my tote bag with everything from the classic *What to Expect When You're Expecting* to the newly published *Bringing Up Bébé*. But morning sickness hit me hard—and not only in the morning. For weeks, I could do only the bare minimum to get through the day. And then, just when I started to regain my appetite and energy, I got a phone call. My dad had cancer—and his life expectancy was six to twelve months. In six months, I'd be having a baby. Would he still be alive?

I never picked up the parenting books. For months, I barely picked up any books at all. When I did, I couldn't focus, reading the same page over and over, with no comprehension of what I'd read. Instead of falling asleep with a book in hand, I'd fall asleep googling the accuracy of cancer life expectancy predictions, praying my dad would live long enough to meet my son.

My dad was at the hospital the day I went into labor, and not only did he get to meet my son, but he also lived months longer than expected, passing away days before my son's first birthday. In that year of anticipatory grief and new motherhood, I still struggled to pick up books for myself. But every single night, I'd curl up with my baby and a stack of board books in the oversized chair in the corner of his nursery. Every night, we'd end with *Guess How Much I Love You*.

My baby turned into a toddler, and I slowly processed the grief of losing my dad. I started picking books back up more often, but I was still more likely to be reading a board book out loud than

anything for myself. The book I'd once always carried in my bag was replaced by diapers, wipes, extra changes of clothes, and any other baby accessory I could fit in my over-stuffed diaper bag. But, some nights, I could read a chapter or two for myself.

When my second, and then third, baby came along, there were months of exhaustion and sleepless nights that meant I was back to reading the same page over and over, making my way through a book at a glacial pace my pre-mom self wouldn't have believed.

But the newborn days don't last forever, and though I certainly don't read quite as many books as I did before I became a mother, reading is still a touchstone in my life.

The bookshelves in my current home are overflowing with books of all kinds. Many are still waiting to be read, my excitement over new books often outpacing the time I have available to read them. Some are tattered and worn, like *The Divine Secrets of the Ya-Ya Sisterhood*, a book I read over and over during a lonely period of my life right after college. Others, like *The Giver* and *The Chronicles of Narnia*, have traveled with me through the years, from my childhood home to the home I am raising my children in. The *Harry Potter* books have occupied a special place on my shelf for years and are now scattered across my nine-year-olds room as we read them together. The bookshelf my four and seven-year-old share is stuffed with books I once read to campers as an evening devotional when I was a camp counselor, like *Rainbow Fish* and *Oh, The Places You'll Go*.

Library trips are still a big deal in my life. When it seemed inevitable that the pandemic would close schools for at least a few weeks, I stocked up on the essentials: groceries, craft supplies, and library books. On the last day that my kids went to in-person school for what turned out to be not a few weeks, but a year and a half, I filled one side of a double stroller with more than fifty books to help get us through the time at home. When the library finally started accepting book returns, months later, and I pulled two full cardboard boxes out of my minivan, it was like saying goodbye to old friends who had helped us through a most unusual time.

My library holds list is never empty, and it's filled with books of all genres and topics. I've read my way across the world and through centuries, into different life circumstances and viewpoints. Reading has

taught, changed, challenged, and comforted me, but more than anything, reading has been a faithful friend to me throughout the years.

Laura Bass lives in North Carolina with her husband and kids, where she fills all her free minutes with words—both writing and reading them. Her work has been published by *Coffee + Crumbs*, *Kindred Mom*, *Fathom Mag*, and *The Joyful Life Magazine*. She explores faith, motherhood, and creativity in her monthly newsletter, and can also be found at www.laurapbass.com or on Instagram.

Young Voices

A collection of art and
writing by Wake Forest-
area high school students
and recent graduates.

Water Wings

Abby Lawson

The shallow innocence of youth
Youth you knew long ago
Water came rushing in
It drowned everything you'd grown
The shallow innocence of youth met the depth of time
Even lack of oxygen began to feel divine
For time knew not what youth once did
Back when all you needed to float were water wings in the deep end
All the minutes
All the hours
All the days passed you by
Still only your wings made of water flew you high

Abby Lawson currently resides in Wake Forest and is a junior at Wake Forest High School. She won the school's Fall 2022 writing contest with her poetry submission "Watch". She is in contact with an editor to discuss the publication of her first fantasy novel. After four years of writing, she is ecstatic to finally be in the publishing process. She enjoys writing poems and has begun to love satirical works as well. Mainly, she loves to write commentaries on life, whatever form that may be.

Lauren Holding



"Driftwood"



"Catawba Fields"



"Waiting"

Lauren Holding was born and raised in the town of Wake Forest and is a graduating senior at Wake Forest High School. She will be going to Warren Wilson College in the fall to study Environmental Science. Lauren loves photographing people and nature that she sees in her travels. To see more of Lauren's photos and follow along with her adventures, follow [@lauren.hphotography](#) on Instagram.

Conversation Piece

Paige Brady

You are not a pretty girl
You may stare at other pretty girls but you- yourself will never be
You do not dance, twirl, leap, or sing and your skirt is not a glittery bright pink
Don't you care what other parents will think?
Pretty girls do not wrestle boys and shave their hair
Your shoulders are too broad and your voice only ranges up to an E
You will never be a pretty girl, despite your incorrect belief
You will forever be a conversation piece

But you are a pretty girl, you just don't know it yet
Dresses will make your heart soar and you'll spin till you land on the floor
Glitter will cover your hair and
flowers will blossom at your feet
Your favorite color will be purple and you won't care that your hair is not straight down your neck
You will keep enjoying your beauty and never look back

The world made you split into two, divided between womanhood and love
How could you have known
which to represent? With your confused heart beating louder and louder inside your head
But you are the prettiest girl the world has ever seen

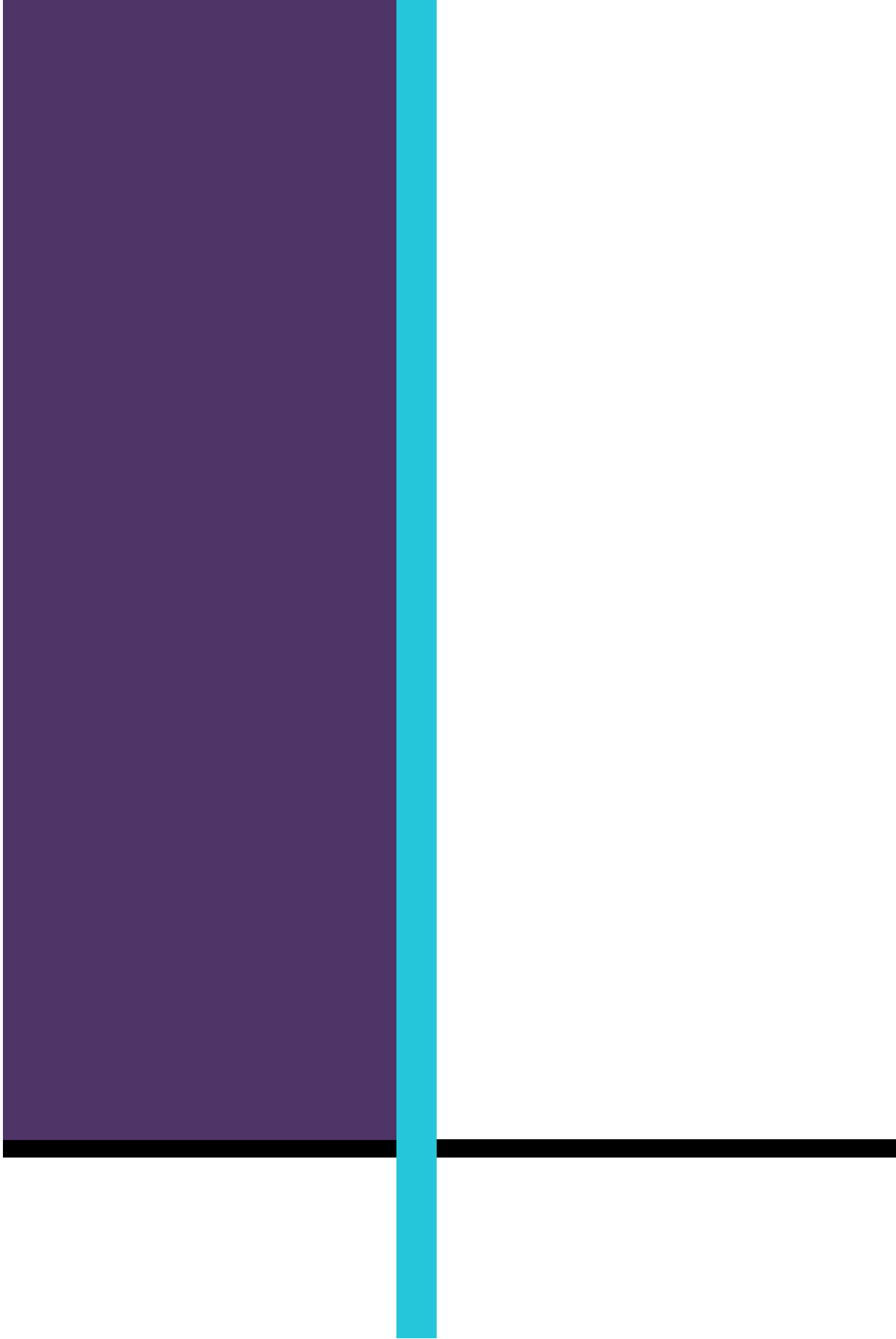
Paige Brady is a sophomore at Franklin Academy, where she is the president of the GSA and a member of the Creative Writing Club. She loves writing, music, and acting and has performed locally with Forest Moon Theater. Her recent focus has been on the past and how people change throughout time. She would like to thank her amazing mother and English teachers who have always encouraged her writing. Her poem "Conversation Piece" was recently awarded first place in a writing contest, with the theme growth, sponsored by the FA Creative Writing Club. She is very excited to be included in the first issue of the Wake Forest Review and to have her work displayed for others.

My Cat Thinks I'm Cool

Atari Elson

i'm not the person i was five years ago,
i don't draw anymore, don't read.
i'm watching my shows again,
grasping onto old threads and
hoping to find a new me.
i'm sewing together pieces,
mending the holes and trying,
and failing and tying knots.
that kid and i are nothing alike,
my healing is a roller coaster.
i'm not me anymore but a shell,
i'm trying to fill myself up.
i'm trying so hard, it's hard.
but my cat still thinks i'm cool.
i have the same heart, gentle touch.
the same fuzzy blankets at night,
and tummy to lay her head.
i'm not me, but i am enough.

Atari Elson is a Wake Forest resident and current Wake Tech student working towards their AFA in Visual Arts. They are a well-rounded person with a passion for every form of art. Poetry is one of Atari's biggest passions, as they find themselves writing about everything in their life. Most of their works are about their experiences in high school and college, but they've written about their best fuzzy friend, Izzy the cat, many times as well.



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