

Erinrose Mager

Assemblage #1

The night that H came to town, to St. Louis, Missouri—some kind of home for a while, a place I'd later miss ineffably—we went to Blackthorn to drink and to play darts, for those in my cohort were competitive, but didn't like to admit their desire for victory, and so we often resorted to bar games in lieu of discussing our creative endeavors. H, she had never played darts. At the time, I was uncomfortably involved with a man called D who was a novelist, I suppose, and who was also a world-ranking Donkey Kong player—his high score screen initials: GED, in homage to Ursula Le Guin's *Earthsea*. He found the gaming name endearing. At Blackthorn, D busied himself at the Kong console as he often did when drinking. E, he was not very good at darts, threw them as he might a javelin. When E threw his darts, everyone worried for their lives, touched their jugulars with the tips of their fingers. H and E played cricket as a team—two bright dart novices, both as deeply gifted with words as they were imprecise at handling their bodies. H tossed a wobbly one—Donkey Kong trilling behind us—and H's dart hit the board's bullseye, much to our surprise. We congratulated her, cheered, marked her score with chalk. E stepped up, danced loosely in preparation, machete'd his dart into space, and—by some great fate—hit not the bullseye itself, but the pinhead space between the flight fins of Hannah's dart such that one dart abutted the other, an unbroken dart line at the center of the board like a feathered chopstick. It was unthinkable. We whooped. We photographed this broken law of physics, hugged one another in weird celebration. Later, after H returned home to Brooklyn, she mailed me a beautiful dart set, which I rarely use because the darts are heavy, too heavy, for a person who plays only when she finds herself surrounded by those who write but look for miracles elsewhere.

Justin Wymer

Professor Howard

English 4200

29 March 2018

Assemblage #1: Object Biography (Blue Fan)

In Madrid heat I walk in wefts. Beads at the temples, beads in the window of the liquor store. Hung from a plastic hand advertising dead-eye opal rings. Beside, a shampoo bottle, plastic eggs in dozens, frilly condoms, phone cases, calling cards, a spread of fans gaudily hand-painted. One blue one's splashed in poppies the salmon-orange of bean-shaped vomit tubs in hospital rooms. By the way one bloom has a sturdy neck and towers above the others, the fan's meant to mimic the silken ones royals use in August, in sandstone halls in the south, to hide their faces, keep the powder on their cheeks.

The fan, of course, isn't meant to be a landscape. Though placed among a small man with a crenellated collar and a child's cracked van, it seems as though. Is blue. Taut refraction in long nails in a leather pouch beside it, herb-like silver stems. And the one feather in that necklace dull, added to the poultice behind the glass. Suppose it to say the fan means expansiveness. Exposes by hiding. Such as face, wound.

I used to work in a grocery store called Alfalfa's. We had receipts. We had to ask, "Do you need your receipt?" People didn't always say thank you. People wanted you to pack their groceries up for them, but then they would tell you how to do it. We didn't have to press the receipts onto an impaling stick like they have to do at restaurants, but the instrument of torture that [THE OBJECT IN QUESTION] resembles does nonetheless convey the impaling philosophy behind the fundamental act of checking out someone's groceries for them: you give me money, I do a thing, you watch, you tell me not to crush the eggs. It's privilege that I wasn't used to it, but still I wanted to turn around the impaling stick. And say, "Hello, it might not be money, but here is another violence."¹ The customers had fans and darts and feathers to their name and they lived in vans or pouches and there were small figures representing them and their inscrutable necklaces did not speak to me but still I understood, as soon as the impaler rose: they are only unconscious. If I was a feather, what would they think? If I was a small red box with nothing in it would they fill me and give me to their child? Sure. But I didn't fit on a table like the [OTHER OBJECTS IN QUESTION]. I tried so hard to embrace tablelessness but that ended in fantasies of impalement. Besides small pieces of paper delimiting the world, what could we do to understand? Without diminishment? There were these meaningless numbers every fruit was titled with. I typed them in. The fruits still tasted like cultivated sugar. We wanted numbers, all of us, that expanded into being, but all we got was brown paper bags with glued-on handles. They cost 10 cents apiece.²

¹ It is here that the [OTHER OBJECTS IN QUESTION] were invited in. I felt it instantly: when I had to look outside me I was suddenly forced into empathy. That, then, may be the answer to the question of how to both fully grasp and fully love an endless procession of distracted grocery store customers: look at them.

² *Epigraph, unattributed*: "I have never seen an object and imagined that it was dead."

Kelly Krumrie

W. Scott Howard

ENGL 4200

29 March 2018

The part from the van came outside of it much larger than I had expected. Was it a spare part?

The piece was rectangular and sharp. It was made of many smaller parts, contained things within itself, rules and actions. It had little screws and connections. I looked for an opening to put the part back inside. Did the van need it? I had begun repairs, but the repairs were in a different location. The part was all location—it took up the whole driveway. It was the size of eight vans.

What did they need to run? They were two things now instead of one a part of the other.

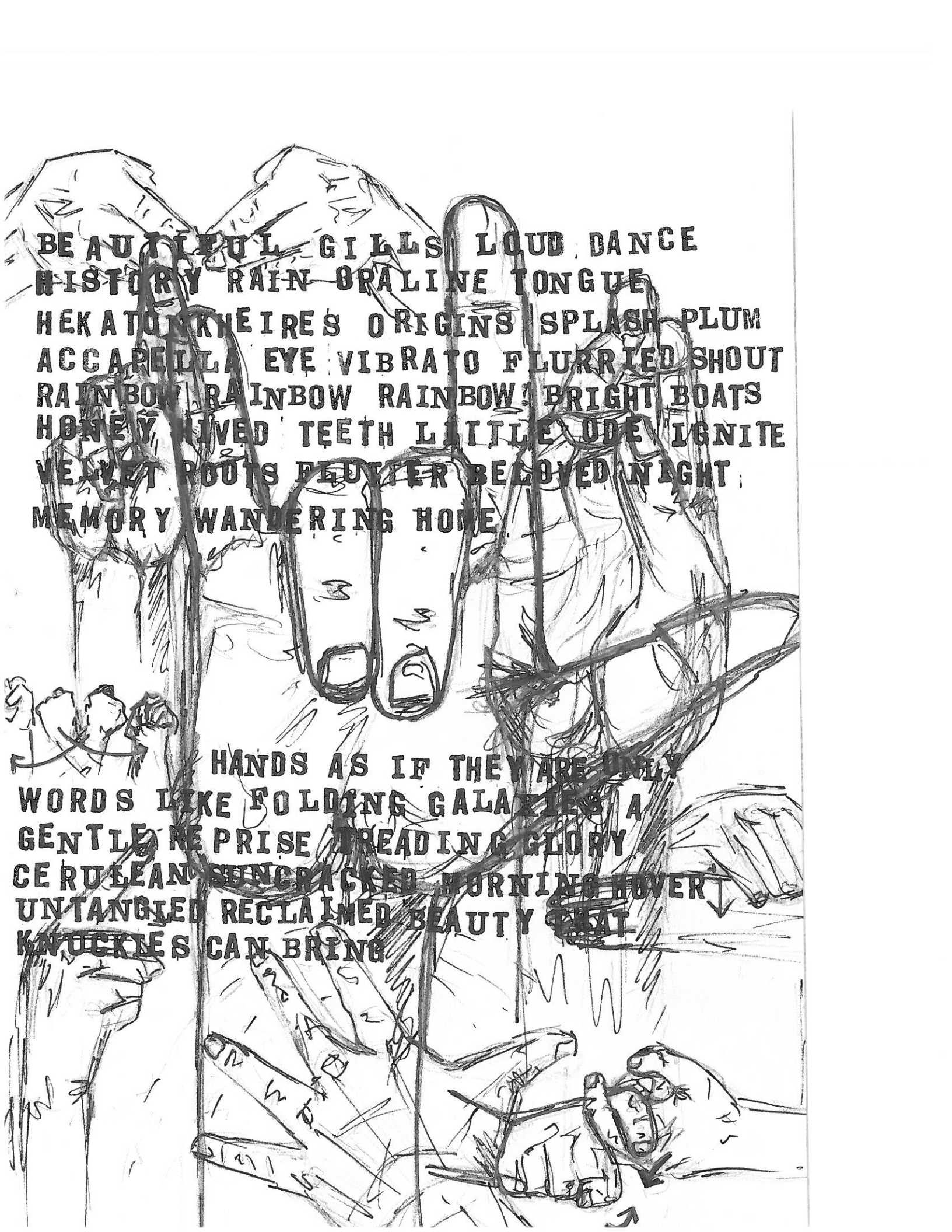
Olivia Tracy
The Matter of Revolution
Dr. Howard
3/29/18

Assemblage #1

Grackle

Grackles are mid-sized blackish birds with whirring calls like rust; they chatter to one another through the tops of pine trees lining pasture, trees my grandparents got free from the county as windbreaks and planted when they bought the barn, soon after my grandfather retired ~~from the~~. My grandparents raised black Angus cattle and chickens, boarded horses in the barn with "Sunnycrest Farm" lettered careful and white along the roof-peak, my grandfather's lazy-Y reverse-4 brand painted at each end. I open the wagon-wheel gate, like every morning of the seven summers since his death; the feather on the ground is black, fragmented. I roll back barn doors, pitch hay, rub my horse's wire-haired nose to stop her whickering. When I pick the feather up, it is chromatophoric: sky, grass, sunset. My grandmother passes in December; the grackles stay all winter.

When they appear elsewhere, they seem always out of place.
Raised from soil, a stone speaking eternities of time;
Fallen from the sky, here darting in renewed flight
Pushed by the wind, fanning brushes beating winged air;
Stuffed in antique shops, dressing receipt-spiked drugstores;
Threaded with filigree silver, seizing fingers
Trapped in photographs; the void where their hands once moved.



BEAUTIFUL GILLS LOUD DANCE
HISTORY RAIN ORALINE TONGUE
HEKATONKHEIRES ORIGINS SPLASH PLUM
ACCAPELLA EYE VIBRATO FLURRIED SHOUT
RAINBOW RAINBOW RAINBOW! BRIGHT BOATS
HONEY NIVED TEETH LITTLE ODE IGNITE
VELVET ROOTS FEUTER BELOVED NIGHT
MEMORY WANDERING HOME

HANDS AS IF THEY ARE ONLY
WORDS LIKE FOLDING GALAXIES A
GENTLE REPRISE TREADING GLORY
CERULEAN SUNCRAKED MORNINGS HOVER
UNTANGLED RECLAIMED BEAUTY THAT
KNUCKLES CAN BRING

Alise Wisniewski

ENGL 4200

29 March 2018

Assemblage One

I tried not to look to miserable as the woman droned on to me; I know she means well. I try to look her in the face, but her features are too nondescript to hold my attention for long. My gaze slides from her face to mantle behind her, and I see the small figurine staring back at me. My little Lego Shakespeare. And just like that, I am back at the beginning of it all.

He asks me who my favorite authors are, wanting to get to know me better through the screen between us. I type out a few names, including Shakespeare. He types out his laughter for me to see; he is not surprised at my English-major's love of Shakespeare. He is a little startled when he realizes the love affair is not just a surface-level infatuation.

Then, it's Christmas Eve, and I look up at him over the mess of plastic pieces spread out in front of us, covering the entire kitchen table. The snow has kept us inside. But we are not too bothered, there is plenty of wine to keep us warm while we work. As we turn page after page of instructions, the circular shape begins to emerge as our Death Star of Legos comes to life in front of us.

I think about these moments, holding onto the feeling of home they bring, as I look at the tiny man. There is the small, white toy truck we bought at some random gas station next to him, saying it would be the first toy for the children we would have. We never had the kids, but we kept the car on the mantle with our other knickknacks just in case.

I sighed and pulled my stare back to the woman in front of me, who had been gabbing the entire time. I smoothed out the black dress I wore, and replied, "Yes. Twenty-nine seems much too young."

Eddie Cooper
ENGL 4200
Scott Howard
March 29, 2018
Assemblage #1

The USA Soccer Jersey

This is my second USA soccer jersey. It is one I wore frequently in college, and it reminds me of my friend Brian who passed away just a few years ago. My last memory with him was playing soccer with some friends after having planned to wear the matching jerseys. This jersey also represents my biggest passion in life. I am obsessed with the sport of soccer. I have played, refereed, and coached the game. I watch and follow teams and leagues around the world: Barcelona (Spain, La Liga); Bayern Munich and Borussia Dortmund (Germany, Bundesliga); Roma (Italy, Serie A); Marseille (France, Ligue 1); Manchester City, Liverpool, and Tottenham (England, English Premier League); Celtic (Scotland, Scottish Premier League); Hapoel Be'er Sheva (Israel, Israeli Premier League); and Colorado Rapids (USA, Major League Soccer). I also follow international soccer religiously, and I become emotional witnessing its impact on fans and countries throughout the world. Further, this jersey is part of my collection, mostly from my travels. I currently own 16 jerseys.

My object is separated from this collection, this assemblage. It is not on the table with the others, but it is not alone. Brian, as well, has brought clothing as his object. He is wearing a special necklace which he has not removed in 12 years. This is significant because it is an object that represents a commitment and a passion, similar in a way to my jersey.

Alison Turner
ENGL 4200
Assemblage #1
29 March, 2018

A foreigner, wandering through her first real grief, sees something the color of sun in the mud. It is a rectangle, a mahjong tile, the number one. She puts between its rubbed-smooth corners pounds of symbols: hope; a gift from the departed; a way to remember. Then she puts it in her pocket, on a shelf, in a suitcase, on another shelf. It is asked to do more: Now it must represent the questions between gamble and play, desperation and fun, past-time and future.

But it must have started with sharp edges. Probably packaged tightly with more than one hundred others almost exactly like it. It must have clacked regularly with others on tables, been stacked, re-stacked, gathered, aligned, chosen, tossed back, slid, dealt. And then it must have been dropped.

Now, after so many years of solitary and dusty contemplation on a foreigner's shelf, it sits again on a table of others. But these others are different indeed. They might only have been gathered together in a junk drawer, a giveaway bin at a yard sale, an eccentric kid's special box. But on a table, on display, an old mahjong tile is given the even greater weight of implied connections.

This is the hard drive from my first computer
The one that crashed during my comprehensive exams
Somewhere inside this thing the essay is still half-written
Like a conversation inside a 1990s mini-van on the road to nowhere
Sorry, I didn't mean to echo that song but these things happen
We're humming along now ~~in the van~~ and you're reading
This pathetic excuse for an argument which you've transcribed somehow and which
Thanks to your impressive array of tools in your leather pouch
~~is now~~ folding over upon and through itself like a helical line drawing
Or is that a kit of late-March recombinant branches in the wind? The question mark
Draws attention to itself there in this otherwise undifferentiated sequence
Of swerving forces. Okay, I guess we're unofficially punctuating now. So, yeah
Like I was saying, one gesture from you is more than enough for the moment
Until a fan opens a peacock's tail or a tapestry of turquoise leopards at dusk
If a mahjong tile falls from the table into a friend's quick hand because someone trips
What's the special providence in that? Another question in the midst of things
I mean it's not like we're Hamlet's college friends implicated in his sick family dynamics
Worrying about the fall of a sparrow or the number of Lego blocks it takes to shape
A way out, escaping the way a wing scapes. Which is to say, how feathers feather
"It always seems impossible until it's done"—that was my mantra until
That ridiculous skeuomorphic image of a bomb flashed across the screen
Whoever designed that icon had a twisted sense of meme. So now you know
Something about me and why I have a habit of holding onto broken lines of code
Like necklaces or handwritten phrases like darts asleep in a traveling case
Did you notice that driver's hanging loose gesture? Maybe they see us enjoying this
Course of particulars without autocorrect telling us we can't think through things
For ourselves. The way a rock rolls under the back seat one evening and how
Sometimes you hear it muttering on the way over the edges
elsewhere & otherwise anon

the last edit is
repeated from
admission
letter with
a different
voice, choice
of words

I.

I've been wearing this fishhook continuously
for eleven years and even back then it was given secondhand

as it's supposed to be given in the tradition out of which it arose,
hung on nautical thread

which must be why, through swimming in countless seas, lakes and rivers
it has never broken, waxen, it changes color

from gray to oil-dark to bleached to bone-white cycling
once and only once the knot came untied

and I couldn't find my neck anymore
without the strand to locate my body against

what my body wasn't, by sheer coincidence today is the birthday
of the woman who gave me this necklace when we were still kids

just out of college, it's supposed to provide its bearer
with the certainty of safety during travel over water

we broke up a decade ago and I am no
longer the kind of person who would be wearing a lover's fishhook necklace

and yet – look how the years are passing, engaged, children
in houses on farther shores, the island disbanded – here I am.

II.

That island had the wrong kind of ocean and I wasn't fancy
enough for its horses or houses or the families

on and in them, my car can't safely travel over water so it stayed
parked in a forest for seasons on end, and the incense

made the rooms where I failed at loving and writing magnificent
in how poignantly depressing they were, soon

I'd be spinning the hook around my neck trying to remember
what the birch trees, the beaches and humus were doing

Brian Laidlaw
Assemblage #1 - Object Biography
(*cont'd*)

under the frequent rains, and soon after that
half of us would be landlocked and the other half seabound,

and soon after that, and long after, flashes
of that wave would be subsumed in other waves,

and the memories turn up here, not quite unbidden,
traveling in safely with this hook in all their mouths.

Sunk whole in flesh still
in a moment water air still
animate still currented
femur curve backbone link
Is it empty the water touch it
is dark & falls away white to
black shift water cinder at
wave's touch pieces pressure
curve spine canal brush uplift
dredged path dredged to
sand trace my hand in shore

I heard it shaped in
thought I heard
it in the hand I heard
it reencountered
in the sound between
the hearers on the
train in the mouth
collected in the hand
forgotten place
I heard a self among
the lifeless things
myself a fossil out of
air

Alicia Mountain

Professor W. Scott Howard

ENGL 4200: *The Matter of Revolution*

28 March 2018

Assemblage One: Object Narrative

Cardstock with a small hole, so as to be hung on a nail—this void and matter. “It always seems impossible until it’s done.” The last page of a small calendar, motivational. Un-illuminated text. Months left empty or months taken down, marked, stamped, and postcarded. It’s done, that year. It’s done, that kind of impossible. Emboss the remnant and file it as if a certificate of accomplishment, a legal binding, a page beneath which thick flowers were pressed.

My brother hung his calendar on the wall with a dart, brass and heavy. Were my brother a fletcher, they would lift arrows into flight with raven bits, that dark. My brother drinks beer for 2 PM breakfast. My brother has a horse. My brother tells me they are not a man, but it’s okay if I still call them *brother*. They say, “it’s okay to mess up. I just don’t like it when people I don’t even know man me.” The verb of it. The horse is a thing my brother loves. The horse has kept them both tied to the fence of a too-small town for many years. It always seems impossible until it’s done.

McCormick Templeman
Assemblage #1
3/27/18

One time my rock became an absence of a rock, you say. Now you're sitting on a beach, cold sand between your toes. What an unlikely place—surrounded by the eventuality of innumerable rocks— to think about a single rock that isn't there.

Well, isn't it? She asks, the woman with the blue plastic fan. She's covering her face in such a way that it appears she doesn't have an eye, only half of a mouth, and a little red box where her thoughts should be.

I once found a similar artifact, you tell her, a set of keys that opened a room at the very end of the world. When she raises her hand to protest, you stop her. Yes, yes, you say. Yes, there is an end to the world. A physical manifestation of that conceptual misremembering. And while that may seem unthinkable, the truly unthinkable thing is that this set of keys that opened the door to that room had a way of going missing right at the very moment when they were most needed.

Like guilt. Like apprehension, she offers.

Yes. Exactly.

You slip your hand into hers and feel a throbbing where her veins ripple close to the surface of her too-cool skin.

I will put you in my pocket, she says. I will take you to the mountains and show you things you don't want to see.

I'd like that, you say, and it's true. Just this once.

It's been cut by the wind! Someone screams very close to your face, his breath on your chin a feathered absence of its own.

You're back on the train. With the woman, and the person without a face, and the man who's stopped a while to lean on his cane. He's just there to listen, but the others, you know they're waiting for you to give them something. Some kind of solace. Perhaps a small chocolate formed into the shape of a bee exoskeleton. Inside your pocket there is no rock. Only a drawing of a ~~rock~~^{fossil}. It will have to do.

You hand the drawing to the woman. She eats a small chocolate bee.

The man with the cane nods and then wanders away.

Rowland Saifi
Special Topics—Early Modern Lit
Assemblage 1
3-28-2018

1

Since leaving I've always
carried a magnolia fruit
that looks like a stag-hoof.
a less stenciled picture.
when seen up close
Leaves like leather.
fur covered in places,
fleshy in others.

2

I should say then that the tree was integrated into an urban landscape: it was wedged between two buildings on the edge of a downtown square. Its boughs had spread then reached up, running parallel but never touching its neighbors. The way in which the boughs had warped, moving laterally then vertically along the walls of the two buildings, created an ideal seat shrouded by leathery leaves and delicate fleshy blooms.

The square itself was built on the top of a small mountain, and the streets draped down from the encircled Post Office Building. From each side street, early housing lots were carved into the side of the mountain, to create a kind of stepped terrace neighborhoods, one on each four sides of the mountain. To this end they clear-cut the trees and leveled lots. Broad magnolias are not

native, but after the success of *Gone with the Wind*, the city council decided, to tear up what native trees were left holding the soil together, with broad magnolias to better associate the town with the region in the film.

3

The first use of the word magnolia in print was in the meeting notes for the Royal Society in 1748. The second is by John Bartram in 1751. A Philadelphia Quaker, Bartram was an amateur botanist and scientist who took it upon himself to survey and cultivate as many new species of flora as he could, planting as many as would take in a large garden on his estate. It is likely that both early uses of the word magnolia are in fact traceable to Bartram: the first via an interlocutor Peter Collinson, a wealthy fellow Quaker and transatlantic correspondent of Bartram's; and the second in a pamphlet written by Bartram himself. The letters between Bartram and Collinson were largely the same: Bartram wrote to his friend in England in detail about the new species he was finding around him and on his various trips to Virginia and the Carolinas, which inspired Collinson to make requests for seeds and samples for his own garden and to eventually fulfill his plan to remake the landscape of England into that of the more exotic America. Though gaining some reputation for his efforts, Collinson's letters to Bartram were by turns plaintive and demanding, filled with requests for plants that were difficult to obtain, while complaining when a species wouldn't take to the English climate, or when someone, "unlawfully plucked up or taken away" his "exotick plants." Bartram, who was older than Collinson, was soon less able to make the long trips and to wade in swamps and rough terrain it required to fulfill Collinson's demands and soon the letters ended.

Vincent Carafano
Assemblage #1

VJCIII stored the leatherworking tools in the plastic trays of a cobalt blue toolbox. A murky plastic—you could not see through them—the trays would have to be extracted to view and select one of the two dozen or so tools. Each instrument has a textured grip, is uniformly five-inches long, and has a nature-themed head: acorns, seashells, leaves, as well as abstract geometric designs—swirls, speckled stardust, crescent moons. Though VJCIII inherited these tools from his spouse's uncle—Uncle Wayne—the year is unknown to me, except that it was in advance of Wayne's death in 1993. VJCIII then extracted these tools from the pouch they were presented to him in and proliferated them amongst the trays of the toolbox, periodically venturing to the garage with a stray strip of leather and proceeding with a hammer to compose arrays of amateur skylscapes, curiously peppered with disembodied acorns and fern leaves, the imprints of which he was especially fond.

There are a number of us who are shy, who haven't been called on per se, over the years, for whatever reason. Our heads, we can only surmise, are not an ideal compliment; our angle, or our indentation, not optimal. We have equal possibility for selection given our consistency of dimension with those heads most frequently selected, but in the scope of our usefulness we are either too highly specialized or too unattractive—the position on which varies from tool to tool—for selection. Discouragement notwithstanding, we have managed to eek out some sense of purpose in filling out the leather case which holds the entirety of our coteries—should we be absent, those more popular princes amongst us would sit so loosely as to shake out continually, and become lost amongst the floor of the workroom. We've gone on long enough—we tend to talk when the opportunity provides itself.