(1350-1400; Middle English, Latin, for derivative of esse to be)

Ese

2017

Fine Arts & Literary Magazine

or excusing tr

2.

The Intrinsic or Indispensible qualities that serve or identify something or someone.

3.
The inherent, unchanging class of things.

4.
One that has or shows spiritual or incorporeal qualities as if highly developed.

5.
Something that exists or persists, or something indispensable.

It is.

or human. It is.
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Essence Fine Arts and Literary Magazine is a collaborative effort of Kutztown University students who express themselves through various artistic mediums. The works contained within are considered, by Essence staff members to be some fine examples of creative and literary expression. The Essence staff expresses appreciation to all its contributors and readers for sharing in this publication.
YES AND NO
MORGAN BRAJKOVICH

Pawn over me like the girls on sixth street
Looking for a hit.
Just a tip, just a slip, just one more,
Says the girl with Oklahoma smiles and
Alabama breath.

Through the window see 'em struggle
Barely standing, slightly snarling
Darling, sweetheart, where have you gone?
Left yourself in San Jose,
Tried to find your missing teeth
In different states.

Opening up to Channel only
To be locked out of yourself
Unable to get in touch with
The remains under your skin.
A sin it is to be this curious
About things found forbidden.

Your sister's hair lapses with mine
A sweet Christian losing—
Her drone-like mind, to
Bigger hands than her 'man'
Florescent fingers so bright
Only a book has ever seen them.

Backwoods mother
Yelling to the spit falling
From her flapping lips
As she twists up some gin
Fabric starts to bust in hot
Pursuit, tell 'em yes
If you can find your tongue.

Grantville girl finds her place
In the world of no
Tears dig the grave she deserves
Sprinkles pills and bottles
Into dark dirt, watering the sprouts
Hoping to grow a better body
To withstand the toll
Of messed up humanity.
UPON SILK STRANDS AND PAPER WINGS
CAMERON WERTZ

Like silk strands and paper wings
her hair flows in the wind
and the siren sings
A hum in my ear
And the song bird sings
A sound to draw me near
The winds of fate
blow the sands of time
and our lives entwine
find me among the willows
and I'll see to it your heart is mine

HEATHER FOX | TEACUPS | WATERCOLOR
WHAT’S LEFT
CEZANNE COLVIN

The wheel spins smoothly under his weathered hands, worn down at ten and two. He pulls a cigarette from the soft pack sitting in his flannel front pocket and puts it between his lips, pausing.

“Mind,” he asks.

“I used to smoke, you know,” she says. He flicks the flint, and smoke slinks around the car, coiling under her nose. She cranks the window down, and the wind tugs at her wild hair like a butterfly net, flooding the backseat with a swell of sangria curls.

At last, his cigarette glows at the filter and flies forgotten down the highway, so she rolls the window back up and rests her head against the glass with a sigh. Blue stretches in every direction, nary a wisp of white—this wasn’t in the forecast. She shifts in the passenger seat, peeling the backs of her thighs from the hot grasp of the leather.

He slams on the brakes to avoid a crossing deer. When the car stops, he notices his arm is in front of her like a roller coaster bar. She opens her mouth, but he turns the radio on and up. Fog, trailing from between his fingers fills both their lungs again as she gazes at airplane wings overhead. After the tires tap the curb and the door opens and closes, he says, “I know.”

When he gets home, he stands in the shower even after the water exhausts its heat, pooling around his ankles as it sifts through the scarlet strands tangled in the drain.
HAPPY BIRTHDAY
KELSEY BINDER

Someday you're twenty three and it's your own choice to go
to that second cousin's eighth birthday party or not.
Sometimes you're at home, cooking breakfast and you decide to go.
You're there with a dollar store card and
a bunch of people who look older than you remember.
And there's a scent of vanilla and young lilac in the air
that takes you back to when the orbs of our eyes were filled to the brims
with honey and evergreen.
When the middle of the universe was always right here,
right in this moment.
You begin to think of all the trips you have planned
and the places you've already been,
except you can hardly remember the time in between,
and it's sad and intriguing all the same.
Suddenly you feel out of place in your skin, and your age is an illusion
because you think time can't possibly go that fast,
But trust me, it does, I've traveled it.
The lights go thin, the cake comes out glowing
and you remember the sparklers, the games, the forts the hats.
Happy birthday to you.
'I'll visit Mom today,' you think. 'I'll finish that painting,
finally write that damn story,' because suddenly
sand is running down the chute
and you're watching it pile in heaps around you, happy birthday to you-
ankles already covered.
You're noticing your hands, the violet rivers beneath your skin,
'which indent on your palm is the life line again?'
Everyone's voices are out of key and so is your patience,
'when did that happen?'
Happy birthday dear,
Alas, the song is winding down, the wind picks up outside the window,
flirting with curtains happy birthday to you and the candles are spent.
The lights come back on. The song is done. You're going to
breathe in and out.
You're going to eat some cake.
You're going to be okay in about three minutes. I promise.
ASHES TASTE BETTER WET
MORGAN BRAJKOVICH

Spaghetti hair caught in tremendous lies
Sprawled over the passenger side
Holding swollen breasts
trying to catch escaping breaths.

Toothy grins led to “see you later(s)”
White laces strolled up
pumice pavement
Curly hair bobbed in calm air
An injustice she does for Dylan

Sometimes
Minds think of murder
Of deer road side
brains on tires that only squeal apologies
or they don’t say anything at all.

These arms hang onto questions
and mislead bones
I swear her shadow was smiling
as she turned the corner.

Wilting beauty fell from her face
Her puckered pathologic
mouth pointed high
I was a viewer
Slowly watched the switch
go off in her messy head
Changing blue to red.

Shaky fingers lit a stick
Slid into the car that now felt exposed
with a smudged windshield filled
with smoke.

Red falling into smiles saying
“honey, blow your nose”.
I swear.
It was the “it’s all planned”
and “everybody knows”

That held my face under water.
From the driver’s side,I heard teeth
knock against words rehearsed
Multiple.
Personalities.
Exposed themselves to my windshield.

The borderline pulled her out legs first.
My mouth flew open like storm shutters
No words worth escaping.
Wondering
how her nose,
reminiscing cocaine
led to a brain begging for belt buckles
hanging from shower rails
to parties with poets.

DANIEL BEARD | MR. PINK | ACRYLIC
EMMA OSLE | SHIBARIBABY | WOOD, ROPE, ENAMEL PAINT
CRAVING THE SILENCE
ALYSSA HUGHES

The piercing screams of anguish
Echo throughout my mind
As the darkness tries to overcome me.

The waves of self-deprecation
Crash and pull,
Tugging me under.

Drowning, drowning not in water,
But in my own doubts.

My body convulses as the freezing
Tides of sorrow pull me even deeper.

Then light, and the screaming stops.
The tide is calm and all is quiet.

The waves have gone,
There is only white.
It is, she tells us, hardly a disorder
To want your home in perfect order
With every surface sparkling, clean
As if torn from a magazine.
Though real ones with their glossy covers
And photos of well-suited lovers,
If left open, go in the bin
Never to be seen again.

Nor is it mad to hardly eat
'Till bones know only myths of meat,
Reddish strings from lifelong fast
And fat a dream of childhood past.

Yet
She lives an enviable life
As mother and well-funded wife.
Her husband is her dearest friend.
With him, hours she'll freely spend.
And riches spend on things she likes:
Yoga, treadmills, shiny bikes.
Also cookbooks, stacked and neat.

Although, again, she does not eat.
NOTHING YOU SAID MAKES ME HAPPIER
LACEY GOOD-WRIGHT

Nothing you said makes me happier
Not “I love you”
Not “I miss you”
Not the sweet words,
The secret language
You used with only
Your victims, your prey
Now I think, to this day
That nothing you say
Could ever make me happier
Nothing you said makes me happier
Not “Come over”
Not “Come closer”
Not the proofread lines,
Carefully exacted
For all of the moments
You planned and enacted
When my body cried
And my spirit retracted
That didn’t make me happier
Nothing you said makes me happier
Not “We need a break”
Not “I’m moving away”
Not even a whisper
Of lie and debate
Will make me happier
Than when you told me
“I’ll be dead by forty.”
LAUNDRY DAY
MORGAN BRAJKOVICH

Dragging my laundry like a dead body into the old, blue building.
A man sits peeling potatoes in his red chair, not turning.
A familiar form in the corner.
We exchange polite “hellos.”
Shoveling fabric, down shallow holes.
There are no birds chirping.
There is no sweet smell.
There are only machines.

“Out of Order” lines the rows.
Blue liquid pours from shaking hands.
Tired fingers push coins into tired slots.
Mindless drone, doing what it’s told.
Sitting on an empty white vessel,
looking at the walls of yellow.
Watching unknown fabric falling in circles.

Light pours through old panes
held up by chipping frames.
Walls bearing the weight of trembling.
Running hands into heat on jeans:
wipe stupidity from hot cheeks.
Thinking, “I can’t even do laundry.”
Sounds of a knife on a cutting board
Flinching as he peels that flesh,
without permission.
Feet dangle, looking straight ahead
past the swirling fabric, at the reflection.
Darting dark eyes chasing down light.
Dripping dulid face, covered in wet strands.
Old, blue building begging for healing.
For the tiles know more than it seems.
The dusty paintings have seen better days.
These swollen lids just want to give in
The man leaves; only trace being the skins.

As another Sunday begins and ends.
THE HYPNOTIST AND HIS SUN.
M.C.D.

3 A.M. We set sail across black seas under even blacker skies. Lindsey stretched across the back of the coupe. Her dusted hair reminded me of solid land. Unmoving, Unshaken. My head nested on her arm and my feet pressed against the left rear safety glass. Jess, passenger seat, rolled into a tide next to Dan, who navigated our vessel toward the horizon. A crew of wind-up toys outplayed their spiral spring.

4 A.M. We drove our bodies, out of fuel, to the nearest gas station. I walked into the bathroom, washed my face, and looked upon my reflection. My eyes, one open, one on its way out. The lights above seemed to vibrate, their buzzing dripping down on my head. I stumbled out to the coffee machine, 24 oz. of stimulation. We hit the low seas again. Our captain hardly shifted on the ship wheel, half-dead weight. Marbles hidden under heavy lids, the vessel neared sharpened gravel.

5 A.M. We awoke to the sound of ribs crushed under our keel. All four, wide-eyed and unsettled. Lindsey looked out the window, the passing orange beams, hypnotic with potential, her eyes slid close. Jess, was unconscious before I could even turn my head towards her. I leaned forward in my seat. Dan’s eyelids shook, his eyelashes constantly clashing and trapping his sight. I leaned back and let my eyes dust under some dozy plague.

6 A.M. The sky filled with veins of black and buried blue, a blood orange rises with not an open eye but mine to watch.
OUTLINES
EMILY SCHLOTTER

I wish I could outline the smoke,
Cigarette smoke,
Construction dust.

I wish I could outline the air
people take in,
The air people speak out,

Then the world would make
organic shapes
And people would look more
like calla lilies,
My favorite flower.
LA ROTA
KIMBERLY WINTERS

My first romance occurred at a gawky eighteen, as far from my mother as six hundred dollars would take me. He called me Linda, with a teasing smile, because he could never pronounce my name right. I half-knew Spanish from school, and he knew just three phrases in English:

Good morning.
Thank you very much.
I love you.

I whispered my life to him, safely certain he couldn’t understand.

Men never do.
CHECK FOR HOLES
MEGAN WITT

A ship sat still on the sea,
having traveled many oceans,
and housing many crews.
It set its sails for calmer waters,
but this ship was unsettling—
for its foundation was cracked
and holes from journeys before
were never patched
and water soaked through.
Day by day, water soaked through
I set foot on this beautiful ship
full of wonder and mystery.
Where had it been?
Where was it going?
I felt the sinking below my feet,
but the ship proved steady and strong,
so we course on into the abyss.

Our voyage was halted abruptly
as the ship's holes grew larger.
Water rapidly engulfed the vessel,
breaking every last bit down to the core
Without warning the ship was dragging me
down, down, down until I too was drowning
The ship, once masculine and respectable
for its determination to cross the sea
had merely become a pitiful waste
No more valuable than hidden treasure
thousands of years under.

I somehow made it alive from the wreck.
A similar story is often told by others;
How a ship loved the ocean so much
it became consumed by it and
would have rather drowned than traveled
another day in the dense open waters
and I nod my head for I know the tale,
but I cannot withhold my hatred for the ship
for some of us would give anything to travel
the ocean endlessly into a forever,
instead of letting our holes get so large
that we plummet down and become
forgotten.

Now I sit in my study observing my ship
in a bottle that will never become harmed.
I stare at its beauty and marvel at its origi-
nality
This ship is still, like one I knew before
A damaged ship laid rest where it was
destined.
I'll keep my bottle forever
as a reminder to always check for holes.
WHAT COMES AFTER
CAMERON WERTZ

My feet were pattering at the base of my desk and my palms were sweating atop its cold, grey surface. It had been six years since I had seen the inside of a classroom and my nerves were touching on tremulous. The Midwest had never been a very welcoming place for me, even before everything had happened, but my mother and, apparently, everyone else in the family aside from myself felt the east coast would be different—a chance to start anew, they said. It was time to move on with my life, at least that’s what they told me. Six years without stepping foot in a classroom was too long, apparently. It had all been homeschooling and institutions since I left Arlington Springs, and the institutions felt like just that, institutions. Institutions and observations, maybe I was a rat in a maze to them.

When the classroom door opened, I wanted nothing more than to tuck my shoulder and bolt past the all-too-eager professor that stepped through the doorway. I was growing larger and the room was getting smaller. Soon there wouldn’t be enough room for all of us in there, I thought. The AC might have frozen the sweat rolling over the pores of my face if my skin hadn’t been burning up. I swear they were trying to make ice blocks out of us and my body was fixing to start a wildfire. Six years and I had dreaded the day that I could maybe, possibly, even half-slightly have to place myself in another classroom, but I guess I knew it would come. I spent the first four of a six-year stint attempting to thwart the endeavor of getting me back into college and the final two coping and slowly getting into bed with the idea, and the eventuality, of a collegiate return. I still sleep on the floor.

There’s just something about watching your friends and peers being executed that never leaves you. The shuffles of feet become urgent panic and the occasional screech of sneaker on tile become the shrill shriek of a teacher cut short. Bald-palmed and frantic, her body slapped against the cold tile. Books slamming on desks became gunshots against concrete. One time, somebody dropped their soup in front of me in the cafè line and all I could picture was Reggie’s blood splattered on Mrs. Teller’s face. “The bullet struck his brain stem,” I heard the paramedic tell his parents, “he felt no pain.” But, then all I thought of was whether it was mostly brains or blood Mrs. Teller spit onto the floor after the first shot rang out. We didn’t hear any shots before Reggie. We were testing sound waves in the lab and while 80 decibels isn’t quite enough to completely drown out gunshots, 80 decibels and a foot of concrete is just enough so that you don’t know they’re coming. For the first fifty minutes, it was a great start to a fresh-out-of-college teaching gig for Mrs. Teller. It was her first time teaching and it would be her last. A year later she would hang herself in her garage after swallowing a bottle of anxiety pills. I couldn’t blame her, I mean, who wants to be anxious with a noose around their throat. The next fifty minutes he lined us up and we played a game. Red rover, red rover, won’t the black boy come on over. Red rover, red rover, won’t little blonde bitch come on over.
MY CHILDHOOD WAS VELVET
EMILY SCHLOTTER

I remember sitting in church with my family, all the ducks in a row. My sister and I rested our young bodies in our Christmas dresses. The priest spoke with a royal voice. People always refer to blue as royal, but the priest spoke in a deep, golden tone. It resembled honey.

My childhood was velvet.

The wooden chair dug into my legs as the priest recited, “This is my body, this is my blood.” The wooden chair dug deeper into the veins of my legs. It was connected to my blood. In that moment, I smell rivers of wine breath, holy water that soothes like chamomile, and the absolution of sins. I realized that the priest is the closest I will physically get to God. The choir sings. The voices harmonize in a hazy mist of musical tones, hands to cushion the priest. I picture him falling back onto the altar behind him, into the arms of God.

If the church were the size of my dollhouse I would tilt it to the side and it would ooze a rich, milky substance. The church a beehive and religion the honey. I am governed by my upbringing, rubbing my fingers across the red velvet, back and forth.

My childhood was velvet.
SUMMER SOLSTICE
ADRIANA SOMMA

The fire escape stings the backs of my sunburnt thighs. I bite the inside of my mouth, but remembering my mother’s reprimands, I stop. Instead, my tongue rolls over the swollen scars. Soft pink edges the rooftops around us. Elaine sits next to me and our legs share a fleeting touch. I inch away. Despite our skinny frames, we’re still shoulder-to-shoulder on the narrow top step. Her hand-me-down Sublime t-shirt swallows her. The bottom hem is stained magenta from this afternoon’s adventures. She always has to pick the berries. “We’re not even allowed up here,” I say. She smirks. She knows. She doesn’t care.

Knowing I shouldn’t, I admire her sun-kissed freckled face. She notices, but doesn’t say anything. She turns to face me, hovering her hand over my arm. With our noses nearly touching, she raises her hand to my face and traces my features in the air between us. I can smell the dirt and sweat dusting her skin. My breath hitches when her finger ghosts over my lips, along my nose, my eyebrows, and the lone dimple in my cheek. She spends the longest there, thin lips tugging at the corners despite trying her best to be serious.

“We can be the sun and the moon,” she says. With a surge of bravery, I raise my own hand and linger over her tanned arms. When I move to her exposed collarbones, my fingertips accidentally brush her skin. Barely, but enough.

She hastens to her feet, retreating down the metal steps. Her tangled, fair hair rushes wildly and she turns her head, “Always passing, but never touching.”
THE POWER-HUNGRY CERTITUDE
OF HUMAN NATURE
KERRY MOYNIHAN

Decided I’m going to pick up
a piece of literature
Rewrite it to fit my views
Maybe I’ll choose the Bible
Or the Constitution, who knows

I have a lot of credentials
Minoring in politics is one
But does that mean
I can run for president?
Who knows, ask the man
who is about to be ours

No experience,
all you need is power
Power and money
Milk and honey
Roses and violets

Every human is power-hungry
They want to control
You, or I
So I must seize manipulation

I must take control
Or I will fail
Even in my twenty-one years,
have I ceased to recognize this?

Alas,
Eager to control the world
Hungry for the depths of power
We all stand alone.

Fighting against one another
We have terminated
our understanding
Now inept to our own inabilities
Provoking radicalized emotion,
little thought

I spend the money that
is laid at my feet
Drenched is she who
recognizes her wealth
Her defeat, is not her truth
She continues to fight

Through the depths of anxiety
A powerful immunity is her reign
Forever she will continue
Until humanity is resting
at her bare feet.

Resting, I emphasize
Not defeated, but enthralled
Humanity, yes, is enamored
With her beauty

But also her dear soul
She will save them
Power is used
To enact love

Leading them until
the hatred is gone
Until the laughter fills
the corridors of certitude
Her quest is true, but she quenches them
Of thirst

As they follow her footsteps
She has taken power
To create good
For she has won.
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Idioms:

in essence

By nature; essentially

of the essence

of the importance

(1350s-1400s: Middle English)