

Wag's Revue presents:

A COMPLICATION OF FIVE PIECES OF CREATIVE MICRO NONFICTION

There is some debate about whether we are the first journal to premier this genre of Creative Micro Nonfiction, though it is definitely a fledgling genre by any measure. Here, five authors of various creeds and esteems offer you brief dips into their wholly nonfictional worlds.

In the bookstore on Eden Quay, I had a book in my lap but I wasn't really reading it anymore. I was reading one line from an interview with Philip Larkin over and over again—he's asked, "How did you arrive upon the image of a toad for work or labor?" Larkin: "Sheer genius."

A woman in a red pea coat walked over to the shelf beside me, and I turned my head and glanced at her. She dropped the book she had just pulled out and said, "Oh! Jesus. I thought you were a model. A mannequin."

What could I say? I'd made the same mistake before, taken statues for security guards, lampposts for men, been startled by dresses hung in the doorframe to dry. But now I was the object come to life, and could only laugh and turn back to my book, an emissary from the world of things.

Travis Smith

I went to a fetish event in New York. The woman throwing the event put me on a leash and I followed behind her holding her drink. I was still kind of sick from the flight. As I get older I don't travel as well. I've started feeling nauseous. And my memory's going. I write lists and forget to look at them, set reminders for myself, hug people when I can't remember their name. Sometimes, I'll get an email from someone and I'll have to read through other emails to figure out how I know them. I'm talking about people I've spent time with.

Anyway, that's not the point. It was my first time meeting this woman. She was wearing purple latex. It was that kind of party. But I was bored. There was a man in a plastic suit, the ruffles sprouting off his chest like gills. I swear he was looking down on me because I was on a leash. He looked like a bug, his chin disappearing inside his face, which was pinched together as if with invisible binder clips.

Toward the end of the night I had a long conversation with the woman's husband. I was holding my own leash and her drink while she wrapped a woman in bubble wrap on the stage, encased her in a body bag, and then a gas mask with a long snout. The husband and I talked about relationships and money and aging. He said if you start early enough you can make a lot of money doing what you want. I disagreed. I told him my last girlfriend was also married, in an open relationship. I said our relationship broke up their marriage. I tried to take it back, told him the marriage was already broken when I came into it. But it was way past time to go.

Stephen Elliott

The kelp is sometimes fifty feet long and stretches just enough for the best games of tug of war, delicate bubbles clinging to the sinews, flies scattering. There's the occasional paralyzed seagull carcass, picked clean by the nighttime fogs and crabs. Maybe a dead sea lion, for dogs to roll in.

One time, there was a humpback whale.

"There's a whale on the beach," everyone said to everyone else. Everyone went down one at a time. The kids' mittened hands folded into their parents'. Everyone walked around it and couldn't say much. There was something special in it, something educational. "This is a whale," everyone said to everyone else.

Even sadder than its death was the creepy, blasphemous feeling the whale gave us. It wasn't supposed to be there, the way that the largest tree in the world shouldn't show its roots, the way an ocean liner shouldn't flip over.

If they'd left her on the beach she would have exploded and the beach would have been uninhabitable for three years, everyone said, not knowing who'd said it first. Maybe one of the local ecologists, maybe the Park Service. The fire fighters put on their turnouts and lowered their visors and the contractors lent their chainsaws. The fisherman tied chunks of her blubbery gullet to ropes and dragged it out to sea. I went back down to the beach later that day and it was all intestines.

Eve Hamilton

I'm standing in the backyard in the fading light, surveying the empire, wondering how we've managed to accumulate so much crap—broken water guns, decapitated dolls, cracked Frisbees, beach buckets and shovels—when a squirrel comes scurrying over the top of the fence, falls into the leaves and drags itself across the yard directly toward me and plants itself at my feet. Backing away, my dog Dingo's like what the heck is this, so I take him inside and go back out to check on the squirrel. His hind legs have been flattened by a car and his body is crusted with blood. I'm not sure what to do so I back away, but he drags himself to me, all the while gazing intently, yes *intently*, into my eyes. He's pleading with me. Maybe for help, maybe companionship. I back away again, and he drags himself to me again. I have no idea what to do. I fetch a bowl of water for him but he doesn't drink any. He's dying, and the only thing I can do for him, the only thing he seems to want from me is to stay with him while he passes. So I stand there in the fading light murmuring words of comfort to a dying squirrel.

Last winter friend Ron the famous painter got thrown out of a local bar. That he'd been a regular there couldn't have helped. Ron tends to get carried away in conversation and not make any sense. And when he's been drinking it's even worse—hyper-confrontational nonsense. So it's not hard to imagine the circumstances leading up to his being tossed. Nonetheless, his feelings were hurt. So out in the parking lot, in the dark and freezing cold, he took off all of his clothes and went back inside the bar dick-naked and said “See what you did to me, do you see?”

I bury the squirrel and sit on my deck and try not to cry.

Doug Brown

The Twin Spans are in imminent danger. A freighter, bearing a Jenga tower of giant cargo containers, goliaths down the river toward the bridges, blotting out the lights of street and bar and home on the opposite bank, one by one. Even the moon—fat, low, an ominous canyonstone ochre—is obliterated by the encroaching shadow of its hull.

We exchange glances, share a grin of terror and thrill. The ship is much too large to clear the spans, mere bathtub toys beside this mammoth. Still, its sooty engines lumber on, charting a collision course, disaster inescapable. All we can do is ready ourselves to be witnesses, prepare the story we'll tell for the rest of our lives: how we went to the river for a walk, how it all seemed to happen so slowly, how there was nothing we could do.

In the end this is just skew perspective: the vessel, shrunken by distance, passes safely under, leaving a wake of Marigny lamplight across the water. And the moon rises, blanches, crosses the sky in the ordinary way—another trick of light and eye undone.

Winston Daniels