

Four Versions of Citizenship
Sue Goyette

visitor

The wisteria has leafed out already. The lilacs, drooped and fading. This city is an hour behind but weeks ahead of our city. It demands a sort of time travel.

I watch myself in conversation speak as if I know what I'm talking about. We will all do this, apparently, assert ourselves with confidence,

in the future and after the lilacs. The server sees how I perk up when he carries in the pizza. I've ignored the asparagus, the artichokes. This big city is brazen

and shines a light on the private terraces of our conversations. Even its trees are eavesdropping. Everyone is speaking of "reality." The cheese on the pizza

is a thick mozzarella married to the tomato sauce but newly married and still engaged. I'm no connoisseur but it's good and relieves me

of talking. Someone takes a picture of it to show later when conversation veers towards pizza or good food or food that is round, whatever. This makes me

reach for another piece. It's the only way I can be here when I'm longing to be anywhere but. Which makes the server happy. His father made

the pizza and eating it is the highest form of compliment. Too easy, I think, complimenting wolfishly. In our city, wolfishly would easily trump the eating.

participant

Google Henry Moore's *Falling Warrior*. Notice how this body is not yet on the ground but resisting. Inhale that resistance. The potency won't be as strong online but, nonetheless, it's better than nothing. Be careful.

It will feel as if nothing has changed. You'll be tempted to lean into your screen and take another hit of the space between bent knees and ground, the triangle of shoulder blade, elbow, hand/hip. All of it a gateway drug to action.

The way the head is turned but still held, the lean to make the rising up again easier. Weeks ago, in Halifax, I noticed a man in the same position at the end of a driveway. There was a thick current of traffic between us so I lifted my voice

and let it bird over the cars: *are you okay? No*, he said. No. Luckily, sculptures by Moore are double-jointed and, though I had yet to encounter his warrior, I recognized the posture of this comrade as fallen. It took all of my weight

to get the man upright. He had scraped the side of his head and his bleeding electrified the moment. He told me he's eighty-six and the sidewalk sometimes curls up like a wave disorientating him. He had a backpack

and was wearing hiking boots. I wanted to say something meaningful which is a weakness of mine. Something about mortality or fear but he was impatient with me already, walking ahead and insisting he really was

alright. *But you've fallen* I said, trailing after him. Only later, in the company of Moore, will I recognize my mistake. That right angle of arm supporting the body is ferocious. This is our potency. May it serve now

by helping you back up.

recipient

Let's say a fox decided that you're to be the recipient of a shoe in your garden every night. This is happening in another city.

In our city, we receive our shoes in dreams. Often, they are worn by our dead and leave no trail. In some dreams we spend our time

watching these shoes approach then wake, bereft, at not having spent enough time watching the beloved face instead. This is, perhaps, why

we sleep so much. Sleep, as Haligonians know, is a kind of train station that reschedules our farewells. In the other city, the recipient of the shoes

has set up a table in her yard so people missing a shoe may peruse. It isn't that we aren't as generous but, understand, the shoes we receive

in dreams are worn by our dead so we keep them, clutched to our hearts, so we may hear their footsteps again to make their claim. A request, perhaps,

or a sort of release.

hive

No one has noticed the bee, hovering until you stand.

How long has it been there, you wonder and someone who's been watching says at least five minutes.

It's as if the bee is trying to ascertain which direction is the right direction. *Comrade bee*, we drunkenly address it, *though you are eye-level, you best match our hearts*.

But we are not drunkenly, you protest, it is breakfast, the day so fresh and clear. The bee is ancient, someone else insists. *Comrade and holy bee*, we address it aubadely, *though you are eye-level, you best match our hearts*.

The bee's concentration is such that it doesn't register our presence which, at first, we take as a challenge but then decide to take a picture instead.

We will show this picture to anyone who defies our patience and our speed. This picture is "shared" and "liked" numerous times amongst our "friends" and in this way we continue to feel connected.

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September 2014*

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