

Taylor University
Pillars at Taylor University

Making Literature Conference

2019 Conference

Mar 1st, 1:30 PM

Moths' and Other Selected Poems

Ellie Zumbach
Malone University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://pillars.taylor.edu/makingliterature>

Zumbach, Ellie, "Moths' and Other Selected Poems" (2019). *Making Literature Conference*. 3.
<https://pillars.taylor.edu/makingliterature/2019conference/cw7/3>

This Paper is brought to you for free and open access by the Campus Events at Pillars at Taylor University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Making Literature Conference by an authorized administrator of Pillars at Taylor University. For more information, please contact pillars@taylor.edu.

Moths

There are moths fluttering in the curtains. There are moths in the fire place. When I lay down to sleep at night my bed is made of moths. My blanket is made of moths. When I turn to my husband, his eyes are moths. He opens his mouth and a moth flies out. My husband is a moth. His waxy, paper-like wings brush and crinkle against the unshaved hairs on my legs. I moth to our baby's room. Where she used to sleep is only a pile of moths. I bury myself in them anyway, letting their wet, cold bodies crawl over my body and I can feel them trying to enter through my nose, my ears. One lies across my eyelid and sleeps. They cover me until my fingernails, my armpits, and my tongue are moths.

To the Man Who Never Made It to the Moon

Dr. Eugene Shoemaker,

How did it feel?

Sending men to the moon when
you knew that you would never be
able to go yourself? When you were younger

did you look through your homemade telescope
and paint pictures of yourself in that big white suit?
Instead of wishing on stars, did you wish on
yourself because you really couldn't tell the
difference between the hand-drawn map of the

sky and your reflection in the mirror?
I bet you felt the same way I feel
waiting for my ex-husband to come back,
watching my son's water-colored family
peel and fall off the fridge. I bet you

felt like the moon itself always traveling
ten miles an hour while the earth speeds
by at 1000 miles an hour.
I read that when you died your ashes were
scattered in one of the moon's craters. Is the

view like you imagined? Or does the earth
look fake from that far away?

Like a little kid's drawing of his family?

On Grandma Weller

She stares out the window from her throne,
this queen of broken rocking chairs,
this queen of knit caps, of falling down the

stairs, of pink plastic lunch trays, of forgetting
the time but remembering the song, of
Mom-you-can't-live on-your-own-anymore,

of *I-have-my-whole-life-ahead-of-me* five years ago,
of *what-did-you-say?*, of *who-are-you-again?*
Her hair has turned to cusps of dried lavender

from a river of autumn leaves. Her knuckles
into glass marbles from two trunks of oak.
The part of her mind that held her daughter's

warm hands is dust that slips through the grasp
of her ribcage. She remembers cleaning eggs with
her grandmother, in a basement that smelled like wet

fur. She was taught careful fingers, strong enough to hold,
gentle enough to not break. Warm water, little circles, repeat.
It's how she washed her son's hair, mended her husband's

broken finger, held her daughter when the first baby died
still inside. Warm water, little circles, repeat. Hours in
that basement until her hands turned to prunes and her

eyes turned to light bulbs and *Grandma-please-don't-go*
and *Mom-you're-too-young-for-this* and *Listen-to-me-damnit*
and *I'm-sorry* and *I-miss-you* and *come-back-just-for-now*.

She stares out the window from her throne,
thinking she sees her grandmother. She forgets
that in this light, she can only see her reflection.

Peach Fuzz

“Brody” was the first person to tell you that you had started growing hair under your arms. It was the summer when you were twelve, back when your family lived in Ohio in that small town you still spell wrong. He was a cashier at the grocery store your mom sent you to every Saturday before you went swimming at lake that held more small-town boats than water. You were wearing only your tank top that day with the fishes and a pair of shorts and when you reached up to grab the change from his hands—he held it up towards the ceiling instead of just giving it to you—that’s when he said it. “Looks like peach fuzz under there.” Then one finger, rough and pointed, swipes at you. “That’s means you’re a woman.” It tickled when he had touched you, but you didn’t laugh and you didn’t like it. Maybe that’s why instead of remembering how to spell that small town you think of “Brody” and how it might have been spelled with an ‘I’ and how you started shaving your armpits every time you shower.

The Baseball Poem

Inspired by a line by Sabrina Benaim

On the baseball diamond,
I feel like it's just me and Dad—
which feels like the whole world

Our family scoreboard lit up
with not the number of homeruns
but the number of fights won.

Him holding a strong lead
in the seventh inning of this summer
as we practice hitting,

swinging the bat through the thick
morning air. Every time I come in
contact with the ball, a sharp,

metallic bolt zings up my arms,
hurting my clenched teeth,
my tensed jaw. I want this athletic

scholarship like he does. I want
Mom to come back like he does.
The ball comes flying and I

swing. I miss—and the next throw
comes out of nowhere, hitting
the side of my head. I hear

a coughed apology behind
a stifled laugh. Maybe if you
wouldn't miss, the ball wouldn't
hit you. I feel blood trickle from

a cut above my eye. It turns my
vision red. Dad throws a line drive,
down the middle of the plate and

I do not swing.

I do not swing.

The Werewolf Eats Breakfast in Bed

He says that he has never ate human flesh,
never allowed himself to sink his canines
into the plump mango of a woman's thigh,
to bury his face in someone's ribcage
and call it survival. You ask, "Is that why
it looks like you want to devour me?"

He says he likes the hair on your legs,
your morning breath on his neck, the way
you can't understand his need to hold you
harsh against his chest like you have
already tried running away.

The Werewolf Says "I Love You" A Second Time

And this time you pretend you hear it. Smile,
rub noses, promise his teeth don't scare you.
My, what big eyes he has. They are even bigger
in the damp light of your cruddy apartment, even
bigger when he places his claws against the bare
skin of your stomach, the tender strip of meat
between your belly button and what's underneath.
You try not to think how your own "I love you"
sounds a lot like "I don't know."