



The Mercury
The Student Art &
Literary Magazine
of Gettysburg
College

Volume 2022

Article 10

May 2022

Trees with Veins

Hannah Evans
Gettysburg College

Follow this and additional works at: <https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/mercury>



Part of the [Art and Design Commons](#), and the [Creative Writing Commons](#)

Share feedback about the accessibility of this item.

Recommended Citation

Evans, Hannah () "Trees with Veins," *The Mercury*. Year 2022, Article 10.
Available at: <https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/mercury/vol2022/iss1/10>

This open access fiction is brought to you by The Cupola: Scholarship at Gettysburg College. It has been accepted for inclusion by an authorized administrator of The Cupola. For more information, please contact cupola@gettysburg.edu.

Trees with Veins

Author Bio

Hannah! Evans has been writing her name with an exclamation point since first grade. She's currently a Senior English Major with a Writing Concentration and Educational Studies Minor. As a lover of the multidimensional, Hannah! considers herself a writer, an artist, a thinker, a creator, and more, and she hopes to follow her inspiration into a career which involves many things. She hosts poetry recitations and analysis on twitch.tv/hannahex.

Trees with Veins

HANNAH! EVANS

Can something be considered alive, real, if it won't breathe with you, bleed with you, be with you?

|
In the dream I don't tell anyone about, I break it all up, I mess up everything. I run through my chances. I cut down all the bridges.

And then I find my way to an imagined forest and desperately try to find some sense that I'm not alone. I look into leafy thickets, searching for faces; I run my eyes across the distance, the wavering greens and browns and patches of light. I run my fingers gently over the ridges and broken-up roughness of the bark on each tree I pass. It feels familiar.

|
Sometimes people say things about forests to freak each other out. They like to say that even when you're alone in a forest, you're not really alone; you're always surrounded by life, from the thousands of miniscule microbes, insects, crawling creatures, to the endless variety of animals who hide in boroughs and thickets and nests and high places in the branches, watching, to the plants which spring up everywhere and make up almost everything.

It's easy to forget all this when you're actually in the woods, though. It's easy to see the forest as a location and not a living, growing thing. It's easy to ignore what you don't see, and even what you do.

It's easy to convince yourself that the only living things that matter—the only ones that have any real weight—are only to be found in cities and suburbia.

It's easy to find yourself questioning whether these insects and animals and trees, these inhuman parts of nature, can even be considered alive, real.

If they're not going to breathe with you, bleed with you, be with you, then how do you know they're alive, real, *there*?

If something isn't there, how do you know if it's *there*?

Above all, when you feel alone, it's easy to keep feeling alone.

|
The blurry exposition of this dream is that I go to the forest

to shake off whatever it was that was troubling me. I can never remember quite what, but I go anyway, to find myself outside of where I was. 'A change of scenery' seems on-the-nose, but not inaccurate. I seek a distance which will give me relief and clarity.

But then I walk and walk for miles, farther, and deeper, and slower as time catches up, and I find that it's not working. Nothing's working. Being here only highlights what *isn't*. I'm dissatisfied, and what is there to do, but wander more, dig my heels deeper into the soft ground littered with leaf decay.

There's no other fix, no solution right now. So I walk, so I stand in front of redwoods and tulip poplars and stare, as if they could become something else, as if my act of looking could do such a thing, as if it might happen any second if I look away.

|
When you're in a dream like this, you have to figure out how to end it. You have to figure out how to get to some *moral*, some *meaning*, or you have to do something to break it all up.

|
You take hold of the large, dull ax which is now in your hands. Take a deep breath, face the great and massive oak in front of you. In a strong, practiced motion, though you've never practiced this in your waking life, heave this ax into the air, and then bring it down in a perfect arc, which ends with a destructive crunch. Splinter away, and it only takes three or four of these to reveal the beating insides of the tree. Peel and scratch open the edges with your fingernails, then take a step back.

Now, you're here, now you see the pumping blood, oxidizing to red when it hits the air. Now you see the veins which stretch and pull through the entirety of the tree, through each of the trees surrounding you, for miles and miles around, everywhere. Now you see reflection: beating heart bare to the world, opened up and left that way.

|
The axe falls to the ground with a physical thump, and you just turn and walk away.