

In the

Center



By

Levi Platt

WHY WE LIKE IT: *breath taking:*

- a) an intake of breath when confronted by something beautiful*
- b) exciting (for example the essay 'In the Center'), thrilling ('In the Center' is a thrilling read!)*
- c) very great (as in Levi Platt is a very great talent)*
- d) astonishing (Levi Platt's 'In the Center' is truly astonishing).*

Related adjectives are stupendous, penetrating, literate, staggering, cogent, powerful, poetic etc.

Five stars

IN

THE

CENTER

"Every single time I look at a sunset it's 'Oh, David.' You can't put that behind you."

-Ginger Masters

David Masters once sat bound to a creaking, rusted metal chair on a urine soaked floor, in a condemned apartment building. He never knew what the apartment he was taken to smelled like, his nose at that point was too full and stopped up with viscous globules of half dried blood and mucus. He'd been bound at the wrists by industrial plastic zip ties that ground and tore into swollen, tired flesh as they left his poor hands with only the faintest burning sensation at the tips of his fingers. Twenty-four hours before he would choose to be murdered by multiple injections of cocaine, David Masters had to endure being physically tortured by his assailants as they tried to get him to pay six months of backed rent with money he didn't have. His assailants were 23, 27, and 48 respectively. David was fifty-two and had seven children.

He left them in a house called Wardell.

Scott Sanders says in Writing From the Center, "Though I speak of the Midwest, my deeper subject is our need to belong somewhere with a full heart, wherever our place be, whoever our people may be."

Sanders is speaking about his native Ohio, and by extension the whole of the midwest. I too, am from the midwest, from a place called Macon more specifically. Unlike Sanders though, I have almost none of the mentalities or culture from the place I grew up and call home.

But still--

I carry Macon with me, in me. I have stripped-mined hills and the infinite fields of wind kissed white oaks and maples, curiously bent under the angry caress of midday. I still breath the humid fatness of the air. I hear the shutters of overgrown brambles outside the trailer where I grew up as the night huddles into the landscape; it's filled with the cacophonic trillings of

cicadas in late summer. I still walk the small, blasted out wasteland towns, never growing, never shrinking, never changing.

According to the Atlantic Paranormal Society, there is a type of haunting categorized as “Residual”. Residual hauntings are described as “the activity [of a person or people] repeating itself. Like a tape recorder playing itself over and over again...Always following the same pattern.”

Here are names, homes, buildings, streets; people I knew, people who died, who lived, who still live in Macon. They have done the same things, lived the same lives, been the same faithful people their parents were before them. I sometimes think that if a man were to drop dead while digging a ditch in Macon, another man, similar in age, stature, and sensibility would take up his place and carry on his work with little or no incident. Thus is the nature of the place. But this isn't some pseudo-anthropological/cultural study, or a lament about how “backwards” or “quaint” my home is to me.

This is “writing from the center”.

There's an empty, and long silent office space on old Prairie Street in Macon. The front of the office is adorned with a large glass window trimmed with ornate dark crown molding. The door to the empty space is made of an equally heavy and mysteriously dark wood, and has a single window that cuts the door in half starting just a few inches above the oxygenated brass door handle. The feather gold lettering has been scraped off the dirty glass for nearly two decades, but in the right light, one can still see the impression of a once hopeful title: Law Office of David Masters.

Prairie Street is one of the two oldest streets in Macon, and it shows. Its pavement is no longer a pristine and saturated black punctuated by loudly struck yellow ribbons; it's been worn gray, cracked, and tired over decades of slow use and lack of care and attention. A few blocks north from the law office of David Masters, is Ashley's Apple Basket Cafe. In front of the cafe is a large crack that was born some undetermined time ago, in an age before people kept track of things such as canyon-like scars in the middle of a main street. The crack in the road stretches nearly from one side walk to the next, and opens to about six inches at its widest. At night if you watch from one of the studio apartments nestled in between the abandoned office and the cafe, you'll more than likely spy the occasional drunkard wandering up from the only bar in town "Bojangles" a few blocks south on their way home. They never (almost never) see the crack. David Masters once was found face down a few feet from the town canyon, passed out. His face purple, brown, and swollen from catching his fall the night before.

Ashley's Apple Basket Cafe occupies the oldest commercial space, on the second oldest street in Macon. An old drug store that was retrofitted with a back kitchen and stuffed with cheap particle board tables adorned with red gingham polyurethane table cloths. It's old caretaker, some ten years before Ashley would take the mantle, was Merle. Merle was a humorless man who loved two things: fried chicken, and The Apple Basket Cafe. His appearance was equally as humorless as his disposition: Balding crown, short, grave mustache that slept like a watchful dog underneath his nose, and stirred only when something was amiss or Merle was agitated. The faithful companion would twitch and shudder as Merle would bring his brand of monotone fury down on unsuspecting children and teenagers who happened to give him a cross eye or sideways stare.

Merle wore sensible, tiny, wire frame glasses that stooped at the tip of his nose, teetering on what sometimes appeared to be nothing but the air swirling out of his nostrils. He had a panache that told the story of three decades sitting trapped at a desk in a middle school computer lab, lying in wait to catch preteen boys daring enough to look up porn at school. When he did (and that was often) catch someone looking at something they had no business seeing, he would lay into them with the full force of his vocabulary. He emphasized words that needed no emphasis in a way that made each syllable sound like an accusation of guilt. Sitting on the receiving end of his terse, staccato syntax didn't just mean suffering the shame of being caught. It meant the shame of breaking down and crying in front of your already horrible peers under the weight of Merle's verbal execution. It was akin to feeding a wounded fawn to a den of rabid, spiteful, sarcastic hyenas.

Merle's true love was his restaurant.

The Apple basket is unnecessarily divided into two dining areas by a ham-fisted drywall partition. The seats of the Apple Basket are all uncomfortably well worn and cracked in their fading seafoam shade of green. Each chair has the indentation of a single individual who has marked the chair as theirs through decades of use and weight gain. The same three dozen or so customer's frequented the cafe at least twice a day: once in the morning for free coffee with any order of biscuits and homemade gravy and again at dinner for the Apple Basket's daily special. The secret about the daily special was that it never changed, it was always Merle's favorite dish and second love: Half a chicken, double breaded and double deep fried in his own personal spice mix, served with a heaping helping of his family's honey-pepper gravy. Merle had eaten the dish every Sunday until he left home, and every Monday and Friday after he closed the Apple Basket.

On a Friday, before cleaning up to leave, Merle made himself his favorite dish to sit and eat at his favorite booth in his cafe. The booth was positioned adjacent to the massive front window of the cafe. Merle liked to watch the sun set on a row of beige columns that lined an old post office turned studio space across the street from him. He liked to watch as the sunlight would crawl into the street's canyon to sleep for the night. He liked to argue with his daughter, Carrie, who would sometimes join him, about whether they should just fill the crack in the street, or if it was important to simply be left alone. Carrie always rallied to fill it, Merle liked to believe the crack was like a scar on the face of the beloved town where he grew up and never wanted to leave. It needed to be left alone, it was one of many things that made Macon special to him.

It could have started seconds, minutes, hours, days, months, years, decades before, but in the pale and unflattering illumination of the Apple Basket white fluorescents, Merle felt something. An invisible hand reached into his chest and squeezed down on his heart until it stopped its happy, chicken fried ticking. Carrie found him quietly, peacefully, face down on the table with his head resting, as though it was always supposed to end this way, next to a cold plate of double-breaded, double-fried chicken drenched in congealed honey-pepper gravy. There were only a few timid bites of food left behind to imply Merle had once been there.

In 2019, Ashley's Apple Basket Cafe opened. It has a four and a half star rating on most travel websites, many of which start with the exclamation "BEST HOMEMADE FOOD EVER!". Its menu, decor, and seating have remained the same under the new management.

The Wardell Mansion is the oldest home and non commercial building in Macon. The townsfolk say it has changed owners almost as many times as there are decades since it was

built in 1890. The Wardell house as it is locally called, was said to have been built by the town's founder Nathaniel Macon--that is of course, until he was murdered during a home invasion in 1900.

After Nathaniel's murder, the Wardell house turned into a boarding school for girls for roughly ten years. The school then suddenly closed with little notification to the townsfolk. Girls simply started showing up back at their homes on a Thursday afternoon (some people contest it was a Sunday, and the girls all showed up during church services at the town chapel). Bewildered and frankly aghast at the lack of notification, the good people of Macon demanded an explanation.

And that's where it starts to get muddy. The local chapter of the Historic Society for Macon disagree about what exactly happened, all three members.

The churchgoers, with their newly returned daughters in hand, made their way from one end of the town down the main road lined with stern, red-bricked store fronts with names like "Drexl's Rx" and "Olde Towne Theatre", down to the town basin where the Wardell house sat at the very bottom. There were shouts, and angry voices colliding and mingling with each other as the body of the town undulated down the basin, settling just outside the threshold of the property with furtive and nervous energy.

What they were first greeted with was the property itself: An austere, and angry looking house in the center of a nearly circular plot of acreage, lined with young sycamore trees at the edges. A single dirt path cut through overgrown bluestem grass. The tips of the thick stocks of grass were split into erratic smaller ends, making them look like tiny hands beckoning the town to "enter".

At the end of the dirt path sat a crumbling on the outside, Queen Mary home. The front facade wore a crown of cracked, peeling lattice work on the cap of the roof. It came to a drooping point with two other smaller domed points on either side it. Under each point of the roof were large, brittle windows covered by sagging wooden overhangs, sun blasted and soft from decades of aggressive and persistent extremes of temperature.

A third story balcony also could be seen. It too was warped and crumbling upon bent support beams barely able to uphold the weight of wood made heavier by the overbearing humidity. The platform looked like a tent being draped over poles too thin to support it at the corners. Yet, sure enough standing on the balcony, looking out at the besieging churchgoers--was a person. The individual was dressed in a dirty red nightgown and more alarmingly, wore a rough burlap sack with eyes cut out of it on their head. The mask's existence is hotly--and often--debated by the Macon Historical Society, but they do agree, there was a person on the balcony.

A paralysis fell over the mob transfixed on their silent greeter. Quietly, maybe ominously would be better, the figure pointed down at the open front doors of the house, then turned and disappeared into the darkness of the door behind them. There are eternities that exist between the people of Macon then, and the decision to take their first step past the threshold of the property. What they got for their reward was first a smell. A putrid, crawling, slithering smell. It did not buffet the town as it inched nearer to the front doors of the Wardell House, it simply kissed the noses, insinuated itself into the space between nose hairs, and perched in the empty place where their sinuses started reaching out to the back of their throats. A scent that dug into the throat and caused unease and nausea.

The house itself was empty.

No masked greeter to be found anywhere.

Cupboards left silent, and peacefully undisturbed and full.

Floors were clean, with only the faintest of dust just beginning to rest like a transparent sheet on the wooden floorboards of the entrance.

The interior of the house was pristine, except for the attic.

In the attic, Macon found the bodies of six girls (at some point the number of girls was just one, but history and memory have dictated that number had to be, needed to be, bigger). None of which belonged to any parent of the town, or that of any of the surrounding towns of Moberly and Atlanta. Their bodies were dismembered and blood drained from them. Each limb had been tournequotted off neatly, precisely. The parts were arranged in the attic of the Wardell house in a crude pentagram.

In reality, Nathaniel Macon died in 1834, fifty-six years before the Wardell house would be built. If a casual enthusiast of local history were to find themselves in the dim yellow lamp light of the basement archives, or dwarfed in the shadows of magnifying machines from the seventies of the archival room in Macon's public library, they would find newspaper clippings from the town paper, "The Macon Tribune", that go back as far as 1873. There are no police reports, news stories, clippings, journal entries, to be found in their brittle, sepia tone ramblings. There are no mentions of the grisly and sensational scene of the "Wardell House Murders".

There are obituaries lovingly written by family and friends. Of parents, children, best friends scattered amongst brown and black stenograph-like pictures of yearly parades and county fairs. Andy Buck wrote of his lifelong friend Claire "how I wish for one more evening of laughter with you". At the very bottom of Macon('s) library are keen observations about the changing landscape of the town as it started to grow during the late eighties. There's even a

“letter to the editor” by one Aileene Ward about the smell that has permeated the “downtown” (a single city block with a factory and drugstore) of Macon since the ConAgra processing plant opened the summer before. She bemoaned the factory saying it made the town smell like “bad reheated t.v. dinners”. There are no stories of the Wardell house of yore, recounting any murder, or really any story until 2005. The very same year that one David S. Masters, then owner of the house, would be found ditched in a muddy creek bed still bound and gagged, blue, purple, and lifeless two hours north of Macon.

But--

Ask any local in Macon, and sure enough, their voices will drop to a low and emphatic whisper, they’ll recount the tale with wide and dilated pupils waiting for the perpetrator himself to appear to punctuate the truth of their tale, they’ll then recite how their mother’s-mother’s-mother’s aunt was in the mob the day it happened.

Macon is a cliché of the midwest. It is every bit as sleepy and dusty as the average individual can imagine it being. It is all rolling hills, intricate and exact systems of farmland, and Bunyanesque forests that look older than the land they inhabit. It’s people have “salt of the earth” sensibilities, they gossip about the incomings and outgoings of their neighbors when they have no business to, and are wary of life in bigger, faster, louder places. They have a keen sense for the inherent immorality in a place where everything is so accessible and less simple.

At least once a year, the town gathers for the pageantry and communal bonding of the local high school's homecoming parade. Clowns paint faces. Parents drive cars pulling trailers decorated with every imaginable form of papier-mâché. The elderly dress up in tiny red hats and drive tiny red cars. It is even been said that the dead shamle down the hill where the cemetery is

in Macon, to clap inattentively with their loved ones as they all watch the parade line of no more than eight floats make its two mile “U” shaped pilgrimage from the school, to main street, and back.

But, there’s more to a place like Macon than homecoming parades, and mythical, geographic beauty, isn’t there?

Take the foothills creating a natural border around the town, for instance. From behind tempered glass, winding down dust filled unending back roads, moving just fast enough for the contours of the landscape to go by in a friendly blur, you would never see them. Dotted the languid ebb and flow of emerald waves occasionally divided by outspoken patches of yellow, purple, and white flowers, are the hemic entrances to coal mines. Some of the mines are closed, but many are left gaping open for any passerby to find and to wonder why scars of that magnitude exist in a place so picturesque.

Macon was never really a coal mining town, but early in the century, a number of farmers, in an ultimately unsuccessful attempt to generate income for their failing farms, allowed mining companies from St. Louis to press, drill, dismantle, and wound their grazing lands. The endeavor was short-lived. State and federal officials ordered the companies cease and desists after harmful toxins, such as arsenic and lead, began appearing in the water sources used for irrigation and feeding animals. Those chemicals were direct byproducts of the mining process, something the farmers at the time had no idea about. That is of course up until their crops and animals started dying in rapid and grand fashion mere months after the mining began. The gouging and tearing of the foothills stopped just short of five years. In that time, a paltry amount of coal was actually found, but the damage done is still largely irreparable.

Many fail to notice the pockmarked hills if you're just passing through. You have to pause, you have to look for them. Most people, even in Macon, can't recall the names of the farmers who lost everything in that epoch. What the town does retain is a few vague details, animosity and distrust of outsiders and people from St. Louis. Macon doesn't remember names like Eckternecht, Poe, Schrum, Freeman. But if you venture to the poorest part of Macon, sitting at the southernmost point of the city, where an interstate highway bisects Macon from east to west, there's a small square mile of flood lands. In the perennial swamp, there is a collection of crumbling and near uninhabitable double-wide trailers. The trailers sit slouched, lined in a single row, on an unfinished road with no name. There are no signs indicating a trailer park should be there, no generators of electricity, nothing but four trailers surrounded by soggy mire. There you find the families that occupy the sad collection of rusted sheet metal and rotted particle board-- Eckternecht, Po, Schrum, Freeman.

Arol (or simply "Jr.") is the current head cook and part owner of the Sub-Stop. Sitting at the very center of where the old and new parts of Macon separate laterally, the Sub-stop is one of the last buildings built in Macon that wasn't part of the influx of outside businesses starting to sprout next to the fresh vein of highway built at the very edge of old Macon's city limit. Every Sub-Stop dish is plated in wire mesh lined with green and red checked wax paper. The food is a mixture of southern comfort and midwest barbecue: sweet breads, fried meats, and a large portion of your dinner doused in *some* sort of homemade sauce. Wings, ribs, brisket, pizza, burgers, slaw, sweet and unsweet cornbread (for the "old timers"), there's even fried turkey on thanksgiving for the errant trucker or roustabout who finds themselves without friend or family, or simply a kind place to sit and be.

There are no sub-sandwiches to be found on the menu of the Sub-Stop. On the outside of the restaurant is a sign proclaiming “BEST WINGS *EAST OF THE MISSISSIPPI!*” in bold, kelly green.

When Jr. was twenty-five, he married Carrie who he had met by chance while eating at the Apple Basket Cafe. He was there trying to decipher the ingredients used in the gravy he ordered, by taste.

Carrie was waiting Jr’s table on that particular day.

Water tumbling out of a faucet can sound like the calamitous surge of a river. The flux and moil of liquid coming out faster than the faucet opening is big, makes the water break and crash into itself on the way out. It sounds more violent than it really is.

In 2003, a boy of thirteen stood in the tepid and growing cold water of a baptismal font in the only Mormon chapel within fifty miles of Macon. He stood in the below-waist high water wondering why there was a mirror drilled into the ceiling above the font. He was small for thirteen, just breaking five feet. His glasses, which were usually obstructed his delicate, nearly translucent blond hair, were stuffed into his soaked pocket. His name was Sam, son of David Masters.

It could not be emphasized enough how infantile Samuel looked in comparison to the man shaped building standing next to him in the water. A jovial, red-faced stranger who would soon body slam Samuel ‘by immersion’ like a professional wrestler, in order to wash away the laundry list of crimes Samuel had committed against God.

And what an occasion for a thirteen year old.

Lined up in front of the baptismal font behind a transparent partition, were the approving and overjoyed faces of Samuel's friends and family:

-Shrub haired mother

-Weepy and soft spoken grandfather

-Carbon copy sister

Faces mouthing along to prayer, crooked, and weak fingers wiping away stray tears from under slightly swollen eyes, genuine, caring smiles and knowing looks of pride. Praise and prayers rang from warbling and croaking voice boxes. There were vigorous handshakes followed by rousing words of congratulations by adults who Samuel vaguely knew; the welcoming party of his new church. Stale husbands dragging wilting wives, mustering smiles and pats on the back of their new ward.

A one Aileene Ward, along with her husband Irvin, made sure that before Samuel's baptism, they took time to make him a welcome basket. Thus was Ailine's tradition: she would spend two weeks-- pushing through the atonic and bone splitting arthritis that was slowly arresting her hands like stone-- knitting a matching set of mittens and snow cap, for special occasions. It was always mittens and a cap, for that was all she could physically endure. Along with the items of clothing, Aileene and Irvin would also place in the welcome basket a healthy portion of plastic cups filled with yogurt, and a few worn, ziplock baggies filled with homemade, brittle, dry, sugarless granola. The set of mittens and cap were made with gaudy purple and hot pink yarn; for those were Aileene's favorite colors.

Aileene Ward was a barrel torso with limbs formed by years of consuming black forest ham for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Her hair, a frazzled and peppery splotching of dandelion wisps just barely attached to her scalp. She was a kind and fretful woman. There was a creeping

suspicion in the congregation that if she was able, each child would have been adorned from head to toe in a gaudy purple and hot pink. Irvin Ward was Aileene's hoary, hand carved walking stick with limbs and a hooked nose husband. His voice came from somewhere deep down in the subterranean levels of his chest. He was an avid bird watcher who had a particular love of bluejays. The Wards would have Samuel and his family over every year for Christmas and Thanksgiving until Irvin passed and Aileene had to be taken into hospice care. They were buried in the same section of the cemetery as David Masters.

Most people don't know this about Samuel's baptism, but there was a ghost there. No one saw this ghost, nor would have been able to fathom how the ghost found out about the event in the first place. He waited outside of the church meeting room just beyond the doors. He was nearly bald with a flat, plated forehead. His teeth were crooked and small resting set within a sparse and unkempt goatee. His suit was made of a particularly rough wool dyed in a bright petrol blue. He wore a pair of old, but well kept riding boots.

He left his car on the side of a highway in the space meant for police stops and engine trouble, and trekked down a flood ditch traversing the two foot maw of black mud and clay, and climbed up the other side of the flood ditch. He crossed a parking lot occupied by maybe nine or ten vehicles, broke the threshold of the aluminum double doors of the chapel and shambled down the short, coarse green carpeted hall stopping just outside the meeting room where Samuel was being baptized. From the crack he made in the doors keeping him out, he watched Sam between the shoulders and heads of onlookers who had no knowledge of this particular haunting.

Straining his ears to listen, he pressed his face as close to the doors as he would let himself to listen to the start of an anticipatory prayer said before the actual act of being baptized.

He heard the sound of Samuel being submerged in the water, the whoosh of his boy coming back up and out-clean, happy, and new.

I didn't know the man I saw hurrying across the parking lot into the flood ditch to get to his car was David Masters. At that point, he didn't look anything like any of the photos Sam had of him in his house. No one knew he had gone to his son's baptism. No one paid enough attention to see it. I wouldn't find out who he was until I saw a more recent photo of David in the newspaper after his body had been found.

David Masters was just a set of slumped shoulders hobbling down a flood ditch, out of view, into an abyss of mud and clay. I guess he never climbed back out-- he never learned for all the times he'd fallen in. He's still there I think, sloped shoulders and wobbling, unsure footfalls, a head sinking down past my line of sight into nothing.

Carrie bore the awkwardness that accompanied children as their bodies make the transition from child to teenager. She walked with an uncomfortable, lanky gait. Her skin was often covered with a thin sheen of oil, even when freshly washed. Her lips could never really hem in the metal brackets that only served to distend the natural line of her smile. Carrie was in essence, a greasy, uncomely teenage girl.

Agent Orange: a herbicide used for deforestation during the Vietnam War. The Vietnamese government estimates that the use of the chemical has affected nearly four million people with birth deformities, cleft palates, extra fingers and toes, mental disabilities, stillbirths, spina bifida, and even toxic breast milk for nursing mothers. There are pictures of children born

without eyes, and where sockets should be, it looks like their foreheads have grown over the spaces, leaving only small concave spots of skin. There is even a picture of a woman whose face looks like it was captured, mid process, melting off her skull. The reality? Her face was just riddled with oversized, bright red, tumorous pustules. Agent Orange is also a cruel nickname for a greasy, uncomely teenage girl.

Merle once found his only child unresponsive, laying on her side, teetering on falling off her the plush, powder blue comforter covering her bed. The front of her blouse matted itself against her skin, soiled in her vomit. Merle held her head while she convulsed as both of them waited for emergency responders to arrive at their three room, one and a half bath craftsman home. Carrie was fifteen at the time.

The smell of knotted and kinked hair stayed stuck to Merle's shaking fingers even after they would end up in a corner hospital room with no windows and only one lamp. During the rest of the night, any time Merle would start back awake in a lurch of *bête-noire*, he kissed the smell still lingering on his knuckles from Carrie's hair. In the fog of half sleep, he latched on to a stray thought of comfort: if Carrie was still there in his hands, she would still be there in the hospital bed in the morning.

A year before Merle would take the last small bites of his favorite meal, he walked Carrie down the aisle, bright-eyed, proud, completely perfect.

Fields bellow and groan as the air settles irriguous into the grass reeds and soil. Trees strain their stiff limbs up towards the sky, shuddering at the nipping of the slightest breeze. Frogs croak with authority, crickets tick and chirp to dispel their nervous energy, and if you pause, if

you listen, you'll hear it. A timbre, many timbres--fireflies, faint and just barely there under the cover of trees, animals, and the night. Ozark lore says they light the way for the dead who can't find their home in the afterlife. They light the path for the few who stumble into ditches and cracks in the road, or the ones who linger in restaurants long closed.

The smell of the grass there is a comfort, like a cooing. It hushes sweetly as we're buried: "You were always meant to return to me," it says,-- "you belong."

I keep it here.

I won't put it behind me.

AUTHOR'S NOTE: *I have an updated draft of this essay milling about in my folder. It's more tightly written, the thesis is sharper, more present, and I hate it. It lacks the choppiness and sincerity in this draft. There's a love here, bewilderment too. I don't articulate it very well, but there's an intuition towards something sacred I think my younger self was getting at. So the only changes I made were largely grammatical.*

I have always been in love with Warton, and Cather and finished reading Winesburg, Ohio just as I started the original draft for this essay, and I think it shows. More importantly, I think this was the first essay I ever wrote about place, and if you were kind enough to have read my previous one, it's a theme I can't quite get away from. So, if you got this far, my apologies for making you go through my particular brand of naval-gazing yet again.

AUTHOR BIO: L.W. Platt currently resides in Pennsylvania and is a recent graduate of Utah Valley University, though Missouri is where he writes from and will always be home to him. He's taken to preoccupying himself with that space where language braces up against living and then completely fails. Sometimes he finishes what he writes.

