CONCRETE CONSCIOUSNESS

As of September 2024, the demolition of the Boston Center Garage is almost complete. The disappearance of the 1960s brutalist concrete structure is not only a relief to the inhabitants of Boston who found it incredibly ugly, but also desired by developers who want to rebuild on its valuable land. Where one half of the old garage once stood, six new towers will take its place. The remaining half of the garage is retained, creating a dialogue between a newborn character and an old one, co-existing on the site. The tension between the optimism and the dissociation of each is palpable...

How it feels to be concrete: The point of conception is when three ingredients come together: aggregate, water, and cement. At the moment when these elements are combined, an irreversible chemical process is initiated and the many specks of sand and dust and hydrogen atoms and oxygen atoms transform into one new thing: a solid, monolithic mass of concrete. In other words, a new, singular soul has been created from the many. Each continuous pour of concrete is a new character, a new consciousness originated from that singular moment of hot, chemical process. The arrow of time and lived experience for that concrete flows out from this point of origin.

I am the new concrete, freshly-poured at the old site of the Boston Center Garage. Still warm from the chemical process of hydration, I feel whole, intact, and strong.

Concrete's physical being is extremely strong and could outlast almost any natural rock; besides the slow natural weathering of being exposed to the elements, it is practically indestructible. The natural wearing down of concrete granules is gradual and relatively painless. But concrete, from the moment it was poured into one continuous soul, actually retains a piece of its consciousness in every fragment that is broken off. In instances of human-powered demolition, which is abrupt, violent, and results in the creation of many concrete fragment orphans, the experience is extremely painful and soul-splitting.

I am the half of the concrete that survived the demolition of the Boston Center Garage, but I feel half-alive. The other half of me, the one that is missing, was shattered into pieces and taken away. Every fragment still contains a piece of my broken consciousness that I continue to inhabit. I suffer from the splitting of my identity into multiples: I am the large, jagged chunks in the Middleborough landfill 45 miles away, but I also am the multitude of tiny granules in the road paving Highway 93 in East Milton, and I

am also the crushed pieces in the rose garden in Gagnon Park... and on it goes.

SCRAPS

It sometimes seems that that story is approaching its end. (1)

Do you have old furniture, appliances, electronics, tires, construction debris, or yard waste you need to make disappear? (2)

Hence it is with a certain feeling of urgency that I seek the nature, subject, words of the other story, the untold one, the life story. (3)

We make junk disappear! (4)

Histories, pictures, stories, anything. (5) It is the story that makes the difference. (6)

. . .

For sale by owner > materials

Bowling Alley Wood RECLAIMED BOWLING ALLEY WOOD (7)

Octagon Window
Cool Octagon Window. Opens. (8)

1.5" thick Formica countertops

Used countertops for new life in garage or basement workshop areas. (9)

Ladder A shaped

About 6-7 feet. Gently used. Wooden. (10)

REDUCED MAILBOX SLOT

PROTECT YOUR MAIL FROM BEING STOLEN WITH THIS NEVER USE STILL IN ITS BOX NEEDS LITTLE LOOKING AFTER AND DOES NOT DEGRADE IN APPEARANCE OR FUNCTION WITH USE (11)

Various Used Lumber Board

```
Purchased and used in September only once. (12)
Sink stainless steel 25"
Gently used. (13)
Huge Victorian Birdseye Maple Fireplace Mantel
This was removed from an upstate N.Y. Home earlier this Summer where it had
been since around 1890. The largest mantel we have had in years. (14)
Framed and beveled mirrors
Recovered from a Boston Ice Cream/Sandwich shop (15)
Antique cake, muffin, pie stand
Great for thanksgiving (16)
Red bricks City Hall pavers
Installed for a few weeks, but the color did not match our intentions... (17)
...a way of trying to describe what is in fact going on, what people actually
do and feel, how people relate to everything else in this vast sack, this
belly of the universe, this womb of things to be and tomb of things that were,
this unending story. (18)
1 Ursula K. Le Guin, The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction
2 1-800-Got-Junk? The World's Largest Junk Removal Service
3 Ursula K. Le Guin, The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction
4 1-800-Got-Junk? The World's Largest Junk Removal Service
5 Ursula K. Le Guin, The Dispossessed
6 Ursula K. Le Guin, The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction
7
https://boston.craigslist.org/gbs/mad/d/bowling-alley-wood-multiple-sizes/7791
307044.html
https://boston.craigslist.org/bmw/mat/d/hudson-octagon-window/7788056720.html
```

https://boston.craigslist.org/bmw/mat/d/grafton-15-thick-formica-countertops/7785327057.html

9

https://boston.craigslist.org/bmw/mat/d/westwood-ladder-shaped/7785797562.html 10

https://boston.craigslist.org/nwb/mat/d/swampscott-reduced-mail-box-slot/77903 39018.html

https://boston.craigslist.org/nos/mat/d/georgetown-various-used-lumber-board/7787965672.html

https://boston.craigslist.org/bmw/mat/d/dover-sink-stainless-steel-25-wide/779 0108662.html

https://boston.craigslist.org/gbs/mat/d/canaan-huge-victorian-birdseye-maple/7785841939.html

Post not found

https://boston.craigslist.org/sob/atq/d/hanson-antique-cake-muffin-pie-stand/7785396035.html

https://boston.craigslist.org/nos/mat/d/newburyport-red-bricks-city-hall-pavers/7791559068.html

Ursula K. Le Guin, The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction

WOODEN DOOR

Newly-formed wooden doors are coming fresh off the factory belt, ready to be put on a truck and transported to the Lowe's, except this one door, it's not identical to the others and it won't be sellable, unfortunately, so it will be put through the factory incinerator to cut costs. but a discount door will sell, it will be sold at half-price and used as the door to the basement instead, where its factory defect (a small, cut-off corner, like a dog-eared page of a book) is not bothersome day-to-day, and actually helpful when guests need to get something from the basement and are instructed to go down the hall and look for the door with the missing corner, an instruction that will be given for the next four years until the basement is renovated and the door, still intact except for its missing corner, is put out on the curb with the rest of the drywall bits and the smashed-up 2x4s so that the construction waste removal service can pick them up and bring them to the landfill. just in time for a passerby taking a walk on the street to look past the pile of trash the way that people habituated to seeing piles of trash on the street always do, but to do a double-take for a door with a little missing corner, to love that the corner of the door is missing because in a world where every piece of wood comes in a four-sided shape, this one is in a pentagon, so the

missing-corner-lover takes the pentagon home to put some trestle legs underneath it and using it as a table, it's not the flattest surface to put plates on and to pour wine into glasses on but out on the balcony the door-table's six rectangular panels hold little rectangular plant pots of basil and mint, until it's time to move and the door-table can't come along and is thrown into the big metal dumpster behind the apartment building where everyone puts the things that can't come along, the things that they don't want to look at anymore. put on Craigslist and a contractor who doesn't look that closely at the listing drives thirty-five miles out to pick up the door-table to use it in a new house that's under construction, only to realize, cussing, that the door-table doesn't fit in the Camry, and on top of that it has a little missing piece in the corner that will give away that this isn't a new door in an otherwise new house, and actually just abandons the door table right then and there by the side of the apartment building dumpster. but drove all this way and won't let this trip be a complete waste of time and money, so takes a hand saw from the car to cut eight inches off the door-table so that it now fits in the car, and this will be a big enough wood at least to close up a a hole in the living room ceiling instead, and the door-table gets to live on in the ceiling now, the decorative door-panels unintentionally making a coffered ceiling now, and the little notch in the corner not an unwelcome addition because it allows for a small light to sit inside and illuminate the triangular gap, and actually this ceiling lasts for a long time until an extreme flooding event moistens and destroys most of the pieces of the house, including the door-table-ceiling panel, and only then, finally, is the door-table-ceiling taken to the landfill and laid to rest, but just because it cannot be seen anymore, just because it's buried under thousands of pounds of debris, doesn't mean that this sentence is allowed to end...

GOODBYE, BUILDING

2027:

The cranes have arrived at the demolition site and at this point there is no turning back. The wheels of Belgian bureaucracy have been turning for decades to transform the offices of the *Radio Télévision Belge Francophone*—an old, concrete building from 1974—into its vision for a shiny, new complex. Years of planning, getting approvals, and 71 million euros have been poured into the project, meaning that no force can reverse the demolition now...

Everything has already been emptied out of the building: electronics, people, copper wiring, and any other materials that are still worth something. What isn't worth something is left for the cranes to turn into dust. The crane is in position and the arm is reaching for the first part of the building: the roof. They will work systematically from top to bottom until the site is a flat, dusty heap of rubble. What appeared to be a solid, immovable mass will be made to crumble like a dry cookie under the mechanical, unstoppable force of the crane.

In flashbacks, just moments before its death, the building wonders: What led to this moment? When did the demolition really start? At what point was my death decided?

.

Was it in the early 2010s, when the government of the Brussels-Capital Region drew up a Master Development Plan for a renewed, mixed, open, lively district, focused on the media and creative industries? And in the undertones of the lively words, sent a message that this old building does not fit into our vision, this old building will have to go?

Was it in 2015, when the architect showed the renderings for a new design, a shiny, white building, to replace the old one? So that no one comparing the two buildings, looking between the ugly, water-stained, gray concrete and the white, glassy facade could argue that the old one shouldn't come down?

Or was it in the early 1970s, when the original architect designed an inflexible, hulking concrete building that would cast shadows and darkness on its inhabitants, that was destined to become dated within 40 years? Was it then that the building's death was decided?

Did the death sentence come in 2020, when the results of an inspection were released reporting that there was asbestos inside of the stairwells?

Or was it in 1875, when asbestos was starting to be industrially manufactured in insulation, where the harms wouldn't be discovered for another century of humans breathing it in? Where installations of insulation were planting harm in innocent buildings everywhere, passing along the blame to unknown carriers of a disease?

.

The crane takes its first bite out of a corner where the roof meets an exterior wall. Pieces of concrete and rebar are flying off, the building starting to disintegrate at that edge.

WAYS OF KNOWING LIMESTONE

I'm in an anthropocene moment when I am in aisle 15 at Home Depot buying limestone for \$856.95 a pound. The limestone in this aisle is a square-ish block shape, intended to be used for outdoor floor surfaces or garden walls, according to the catalog photos. The blocks don't bear much resemblance to the natural stone you would find in the quarry, but they are scored and unscored units that combine to make a 3-piece system. All around me are other types of limestone blocks and pavers that aren't real limestone at all - they are concrete made to look like limestone and they have limestone in the name tag: RockWall Large 7 in. L x 17.44 in. W x 6 in. H Limestone Concrete Retaining Wall Block. The fact that "limestone" is worth calling out as an advertisement to make the wall blocks more sell-able makes me wonder where and when it was decided that limestone-esque was a desirable trait in our blocks. I don't know which quarry the blocks come from, but I do know that they are for curved or straight walls. I can return this item within 90 days of purchase but the limestone will never return back to its real source.

Other ways of knowing me: tiny fossils and shell fragments were captured in my body as sea creatures decayed and compressed on the ocean floor. You may see me as one solid entity, to be carved up for your use, because your eyes are not able to perceive the many bodies, but I know I am the combination of every creature that has been compressed to form me. I have been in the process of formation for the last 200 million years, a witness to the drastic changes to the earth and the species that live on it, but you look for consistency in my color.

LIMINAL REFUSE ZONE

A *liminal refuse zone* is a space, usually adjacent to human dwellings, designated for the temporary storage of unused or unwanted objects while the possessor hesitates about whether to dispose of the object permanently or to

hold on to it "just in case". It can also be called *object purgatory*; an in-between space where objects are neither designated as *usable* or *trash*. A *liminal refuse zone* may take up a partial or entire area of a space originally designated as *garage*, *closet*, *yard*, *or balcony*. The spaces are outside of the primary dwelling area, but remain on the property of the owner so that the objects cannot be accessed by the public or the greater community (this is a different form of object-exchange behavior, see *stooping*, *thrifting*, *Craigslist*).

The object-storage behavior in a *liminal refuse zone* differs from instances of objects being kept in the primary dwelling spaces of a human because of emotional attachment, despite the lack of function or need for that object (see *tchotchkes*) or excessive storage of objects because of the irrational inability to let go of them (see *hoarding*). Instead, this type of liminal storage behavior is found in humans that lack resources and therefore cannot afford to let go of objects, or humans that are aware of an overall decline in natural resources in the world and don't want to further contribute to the large piles of refuse accumulating in their environment (see *landfills*).

In the *liminal refuse zone*, the fate of objects remains undecided. They wait in a state of purgatory for a time in which they might be needed again.