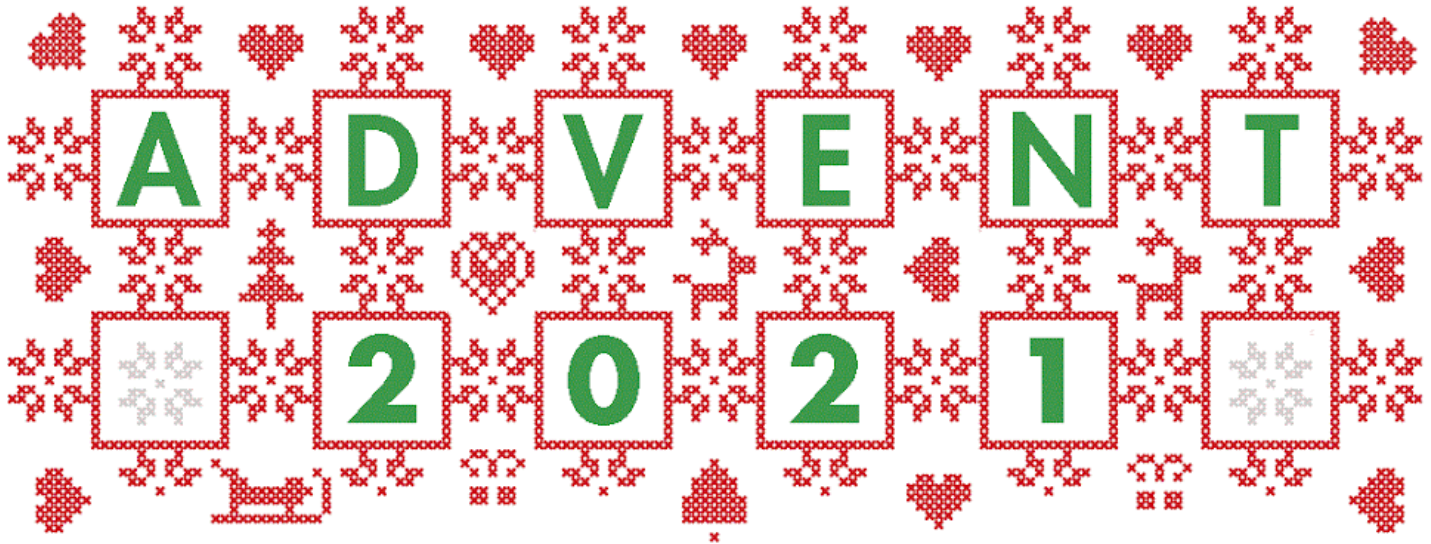


# Essay Daily



Wednesday, July 18, 2018

## Another June 21st from Matthew Vollmer

JUNE TWENTY FIRST, TWO THOUSAND EIGHTEEN

Woke up. Turned on phone. Watched a dead leaf butterfly open and close its wings. Wife announced that she had been up since 3:30 am, at which time she smelled that the dog had had another accident. Went back to phone. Phone told me that quantum mechanics says multiverse is real and that Christina Aguilera posed topless on Instagram and that I should eat these carbs to eat to lose weight and that a woman died in a closet and that a 15-year-old can draw animals from memory and the results will blow my mind and that J. Crew just launched some exclusive, extra-comfy underwear. Why are Americans so sad? Don't know. Didn't read article. Also: Canada legalizes marijuana, parasites can mind-control other animals without infecting them, and Ronaldo is grooming himself to resemble goat. Eventually got up, drank a cup of coffee with sugar and half-and-half. Made two eggs. White cheddar. On toast. Checked World Cup scores, watched Ronaldo's header goal. Got in argument with wife about whether or not I should clean up shat-upon dog bed. Lost argument. Put shit stained dog bed in trash bag. Put trash bag in trash. Tried to wash shit stain off large woven mat that lives—or lived—at back door of basement. No dice. Got email from friend saying "XXXTentacion may have been killed by Soldier Kidd. Then sent something about an article that said Spotify users around the world streamed XXXTentacion's music 10.4 million times—breaking a record set last year Taylor Swift for the most streams by an artist on a single day." Friend said "half were just streaming to see what he sounded like." I texted back: "same." Drove to office on campus. Noted grandmother of son's friend at the smoking deck—a place by parking garage where smokers gather—and thought briefly about son's friend, whose name is Harold and who lived with his brother up the street where we lived during our first ten years in Blacksburg, before his father, who studies sustainable biomaterials, moved the family to Vancouver, where apparently many Chinese billionaires also live, and whose Lambos and Bugattis are parked up and down the city's streets. In office, tried to read book by woman whose materials I agreed to review in exchange for \$100 and the knowledge that I served as a good literary citizen and member of the professorate. Wished I would've been given something to read that wasn't so boring. Took breaks to look at Facebook and Instagram and Twitter, reminded myself that I should take a look at that Chelsea Hodson book. Texted my friend Evan to say hey can I borrow that Chelsea Hodson book and he said yes and I said are you at home or Shanks, and he said I'm coming in around 11. He came in around 11, preceded by Bucky the dog, who jumped up on the couch where I had been lying, wearing a hoodie because I keep the air conditioner turned to frigid in my office. Wife texted, said I had hurt her feelings when I argued with her about not cleaning up the dog bed. Texted her an apology, and she said she was probably tired and grumpy. Talked to Evan about his wife's head injury. Took a dump in the bathroom. Halls on fourth

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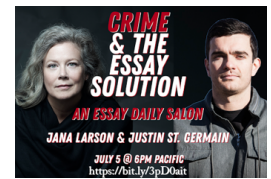
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floor of building where office lives were vacant. Wondered where everyone was. On vacation? At beach? At home? Went home. Transferred boxes of son's old toys from garage to garage attic. Disassembled tent that son and son's friend had planned to sleep in but didn't, found a popcorn bowl plastered with dog hair and butter and earwigs. Thought of son at work installing blinds in building where son's friend's dad works as contractor. Thought about blowing off porch, which is always strewn with pine needles, thanks to the neighbor's towering pines. Didn't. Ate leftovers from night before: a kind of make-it-yourself taco salad. Listened to two scientists talk about dinosaurs on NPR. Announcer reminded everyone that dinosaur meant "terrible lizard." Retrieved mail: TIAA-Cref envelopes, junk mail from Suntrust bank, the new David Lynch bio. Read first few pages of David Lynch bio. Read first two essays in Chelsea Hodson book. Got in car. Partially composed email to fellow colleague who wrote prequel to the Godfather but now was waiting to hear back from his agent who was waiting to hear back about novel submitted to publishers. Drove to the ABC store, bought a liter of cheap vodka and a fifth of Maker's Mark, reminded self to retrieve bottle Evan and I threw into the air the night before so as to shoot with handheld CO2 cartridge-powered BB gun. Dropped bag of liquor at car, went grocery shopping at Kroger. Went home. Paid phone bill via app on phone. Texted with Evan's kid who said he'd go see Hereditary with me. Said good because your dad is a wuss. Evan's kid texted back haha and crying laughing emoji faces and wondered if I'd bought any Jordans lately. Told him I'd ordered a pair of black obsidian Jordan 1 Re2pect high tops but had to send them back because they were too big. Evan's kid said he was more into Vans. Went to the Vans site and concurred that Vans were cool, especially the SK8 HI high tops, which Evan's kid said weren't really his style. Wife returned. Said vet wanted to keep dog overnight, blood sugar low. Said ok. Thought about working on book manuscript. Opened Spotify. Listened to a few songs from the "Chill" list, remembered XXXTentacion from day before, and how good it was, so typed XXX into search bar and rest of name came up, hit enter, then clicked "follow" which seemed stupid since he was dead, or purported to be dead, what did anybody know for sure, then thought maybe he had some unreleased tracks or another album in production, so maybe not all that stupid after all. Opened Scrivener. Worked on book manuscript. Went to retrieve son from job where he works installing mini blinds in new town houses. Bought dog food—Taste of the Wild—and wondered if I would need to take it back, supposing dog somehow didn't survive through the night at vet. Son sized up my clothes—T-shirt, flipflops, Adidas sweatshorts—and asked if why I was wearing pajamas. At home, opened pork chops, cut potatoes and put them on to boil. Chopped broccoli, tossed in olive oil and salt and pepper. Microwaved butter, squeezed minced garlic from a tube into bowl, along with sage, rosemary, and thyme. Salted chops, then slathered them with butter garlic mix, used tongs to place them in hot cast iron skillet heated on outdoor gas grill. Finished dinner, remembered that Evan had the tent we were to borrow over the weekend for a camping trip to Grayson Highlands, where many of the ridgetops are bare, and where I once hiked with a man who, with his big ruddy face and beard and his cheerful demeanor, resembled the character Yukon Cornelius from the stop-motion Christmas classic Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer, a man who, because his wife didn't like living where they did, in a round house in the middle of nowhere, and longed to return, with the son to whom they'd recently given birth, to Orcas Island, which they did, after the man quit his position as an Associate Professor of English to become a Harbor Master. Texted Evan and as soon as I hit send a text from him appeared nearly simultaneously. "Wtf" he typed. "Jinks," I typed. "You owe me a Coke," he typed. Drove the six minutes to Evan's. Went down into his basement. Six giant heavy duty plastic bins contained thousands of dollars of camping gear, which Evan and his wife had used when they'd gone to Burning Man. That's from the playa, Evan said, brushing dust off the tent bag. Upstairs, Evan opened his laptop and found an instructional video. Returned home. Popped corn. Watched Westworld finale on phone while son played Fortnite and wife watched whatever show she was watching. Probably a mystery. Probably something British. Told son not to stay up too late. Son said okay. Crawled into bed, where wife was already asleep. Shut eyes. Slept.

The #Midwessay



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(For more information on the June 21st project, see [here](#); apparently we're still publishing the occasional straggler...)

Posted by Ander at 11:44 AM

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