

thinking that the eucalyptus has a will of its own now. That it's more than just a thing, but a willful being I can't comprehend. Instead of me staring out, what if it stares in— 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. And what does it see? Me sitting at my desk, whittling away my life, surrounded by books and printed rough drafts—scribbling ink onto its murdered cousins pulped into paper, another relative sliced and glued into a shelf. This eucalyptus has been here for decades, the witness to how many sunrises? Ten thousand? A hundred car crashes? Five hundred wannabe actors? At least. In its presence, hummingbirds and hawks come and go like the morning dew. Unless lightning or some pest strikes, it will live here for decades more, long after I leave, biding its time, thinking perhaps: You quick-moving bastard, your work is but a breeze, and your window on this world is small. It will close much sooner than mine.

Ben Pack moved to Los Angeles in 2002 and has lived there ever since. Currently, he teaches undergraduate writing at the University of Southern California, and with his colleagues he coleads a creative writing workshop for former prisoners in the surrounding neighborhood. His previous work has appeared in the *Rattling Wall* and the *Los Angeles Review of Books Quarterly Journal*. The eucalyptus tree mentioned in his essay has now grown to within inches of his window; it watched him write these words.

ANDREW JACKSON

Grow Houses, 2017
Oil on board, 16 x 20 in



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