

Do our lives follow grooves that the dead have run out with their fingernails?

I. Reginald Wallace. (2010)

“Someone’s been shot in Edgehill.” Seated at my kitchen table in Ballinteer, we’d been poring over immigration forms and making plans. He opens his laptop to check on his flight and wonders aloud what the weather awaits him back home. He starts abruptly, draws in a sharp breath. On the screen, a news reporter stands in an alley. Crime scene tape drawn taut. A police officer has killed an unarmed man.*

“Right there, right where she’s standing — that’s my back fence.”

This house is now home —
I remember his name when
I open the gate.

* On March 12, 2010, Metro Nashville Police Officer Joe Shelton responded to a 911 call about a home burglary in the Edgehill area. Shelton, a white officer, would later say that as the black suspect, 40-year-old Reginald Wallace, ignored orders to surrender and tried to flee he reached toward his pocket. Shelton saw a shiny metal object and fired on Wallace, striking him three times in the side and the back. Wallace died, and the shiny metal object turned out to be an iPod. After an internal investigation, the Metro Nashville Police Department said that Shelton had not violated any policies. No disciplinary action was taken against him. Today, as Nashville is reeling from the second fatal police shooting of a black man by a white officer in less than 18 months, Shelton is working in the MNPd's training academy, teaching prospective new officers.
- extracted from article by Steven Hale, Nashville Scene, August 31, 2018.

II. Sophia Conn. (1866)

On July 25th – in broad daylight – Rev. Ament, described in the aftermath as a “prominent” and “most estimable citizen” of the county, shoots a woman in his corn field, killing her instantly. Ament does not speak, nor give any warning to Sophia before executing her.

This field became streets —
where history keeps beating
this drum: Bang! Bang Bang!

*County: Davidson. Assailant: B. C. Ament. Injured: Sophia Conn (col'd). Date: July 1866. Nature of attack: Murdered. Comments: Ament is at large under bail of \$5000, has never been tried.

- extracted from the Records for the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Tennessee; Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1869; National Archives Microfilm Publication, M999, Roll 34; “Report of Outrages, Riots and Murders, Jan. 15, 1866 - Aug. 12, 1868”