



*Spiritus Mundi*  
A Collective Memory

Honors Literary Magazine  
Spring 2010



# **Spiritus Mundi**

*A Collective Memory*

**Honors Literary Magazine  
Colorado State University**

**Spring 2010**

Cover Art:  
Brooke Stanke, "*Nude Study*"

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Tara Reilly – *Biology*

Brooke Stanke – *Art*

Rachel Survil – *Journalism*

Denae Worcester – *English*

Drew Zilary – *Microbiology*

*We hope you enjoy reading our 2010 Spiritus Mundi collection. This publication is dedicated to alumni of the University Honors Program from 1957 to 2010. Your commitment and loyalty has left a lasting legacy to the Honors Program and Colorado State University.*

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***Blackberry Jam***  
**Kristin Olsson**

Mother shoos us out the screen door, from  
the kitchen into perfumed august morning, equipped  
with buckets and bowls, to pick  
blackberries for piquant jam. Her voice,  
with the whirl of sanguine summer, tells  
her flock to mind that we don't eat them  
all. Five of us, small and chirpy under brilliant blue.  
Little needles of the bush poke to protect, but we  
are clever baby birds, licking juice from our purple fingers.  
Leaping from the haven of home, into open sky we learn  
to teach ourselves. Mama should know that summer  
will pass; she should know that august  
will always return. Mother should know never  
to count her blackberries.

***Royal Monologue***  
**Denae Worcester**

“Oh! Kind sir, you have saved me! I would have stepped into the mud for certain. Think what a pity it would have been to see filth cover the pearls upon my shoes. You shall declare your undying love to me, and I will say how devoted I am, and we’ll marry and live happily ever after!

“Because you saved me, sir, and that is the order of things.

“Marriageable age? Oh, you flatter me, sir! I am nearly twenty. Well, in five years I will be, so you can court me until I am older. I’m certain you can be patient. Such a gentleman!

“I can call you ‘sir’ if I wish; I don’t care what your real station is, though I’m certain once you come to the palace while you court me you won’t smell so...ungentlemanly.

“Exactly! Like a, a horse! Um. Are those the hairy ones with tails? Anyway, that doesn’t matter, you have saved me, and my pearl shoes, from a muddy puddle no less!

“Oh, sir! You have a sense of humor, though I am not quite sure what the joke is. You smile at me so that I think you are jesting.

“I can’t understand why you even ask that question. Of *course* you’ll need to save me from other dangers. The mud is only the first step. My husband will be the best hero. You’ll have to continually prove your worth and undying love for me, the beautiful princess!

“After the mud? I believe you must next save me from falling, like if I were to faint; we can try that one today. Sometime later recreant knights might steal me away. My cousin hired some good ones last autumn; I must find out who she used. Yet, she’s only a duchess, so I’ll have to do better. I know. Eventually, my brave sir, you would have to rescue me from a dragon!

“Really? How considerate of you to point out such a marvelous feature! I suppose you are a wise sir. Momma queen says that grey hair makes a person wise. You must be very, very wise to have so much. Momma queen says I’ll never have grey hair. Ohh!

“You saved me again! I nearly tripped and you were so quick as to rescue me from falling into that mud! It’s so hard to find a man who is willing to think of the ladies’ dresses. Sir, you may hold my arms as long as you like. Your grip feels so safe.

“What? But I do not even know the name of my rescuer! Surely you will stay a while? Perhaps you’d like some tea?

“Do say something else! Your voice is so forceful!

“Oh, my! Young sir, you’ve saved me. You are my new *true* rescuer! That grey-haired man over there tried to push me into this muddy puddle. I will have nothing more to do with him!

“Oh, kind sir. Catching me as I nearly fell into the mud *and* protecting me from the wrath of that wise man is saving me from two types of disasters all at once! I am so glad you happened along, even though you are not as *wise* as he is.

“Unwell? Dizzy? Good sir, I thank you for asking about my well being, sign of a true hero, but I don’t believe I hit my head. In fact, I feel quite secure now that you’re holding me. I shall not fall and muddy my clothes as long as you are around. You will make a better rescuer.

“Why, that sounds so exciting! I don’t really understand what you mean, though, to *leave* and go *sailing*. If it has you and me together then I will be happy. I will hold you forever.

“What? My word. You can’t have said what I thought I heard because it is an improper way to speak to a lady. You mustn’t use such language around a princess! Oh, don’t set me down. What do you think you’re doing? And where are you going?

“How callous! You must walk me home like a proper suitor. We are a whole ten steps from the palace gate, and a princess should never go out unaccompanied. You haven’t rescued me from the dark! Or an ogre! Where do you think you’re going? I’m not moving until you escort me home! Oh, men.”

**6:9**  
**Kevin Jensen**

our father Where Art Thee?  
who art Your Prophets And Where?  
in heaven? High Upon The Air?  
hallowed be Thy Deeds  
thy name Is Heard On High  
thy kingdom, Promised Glory  
come, thy People, Die!  
will, be Neither Fair Nor Free  
done on His Behalf  
earth as Finite As You Or Me  
it is Our Destiny  
in heaven (At Heaven?) We Laugh



*A Picture's Worth*  
*Nicole Mikoni*

*Dualism*  
Drew Zilary

I am the moderate extremist;  
The truth within lies.  
I am everything and nothing;  
The seer with no eyes.  
I am joy within woe;  
The push to your pull.  
I am the fleeting eternity;  
A luminescent black hole.  
I am the lenient dogma;  
The forgiving reaper.  
I am the subject and the object;  
The Mahatma Hitler.  
I am the sweetest disgust;  
The truth you can't trust.

*Prayer of the Crippled Warrior*  
Steven Medberry

Sometimes I curse this strange disease,  
Sometimes I mourn my shriveled limbs,  
Sometimes I beg and plead with Him,  
To lift the burden of this curse  
But then I remember how much worse  
This uncertain fate of mine has been.  
For I've been tossed by Satan's whims,  
Darker times than this, I've lived so see.

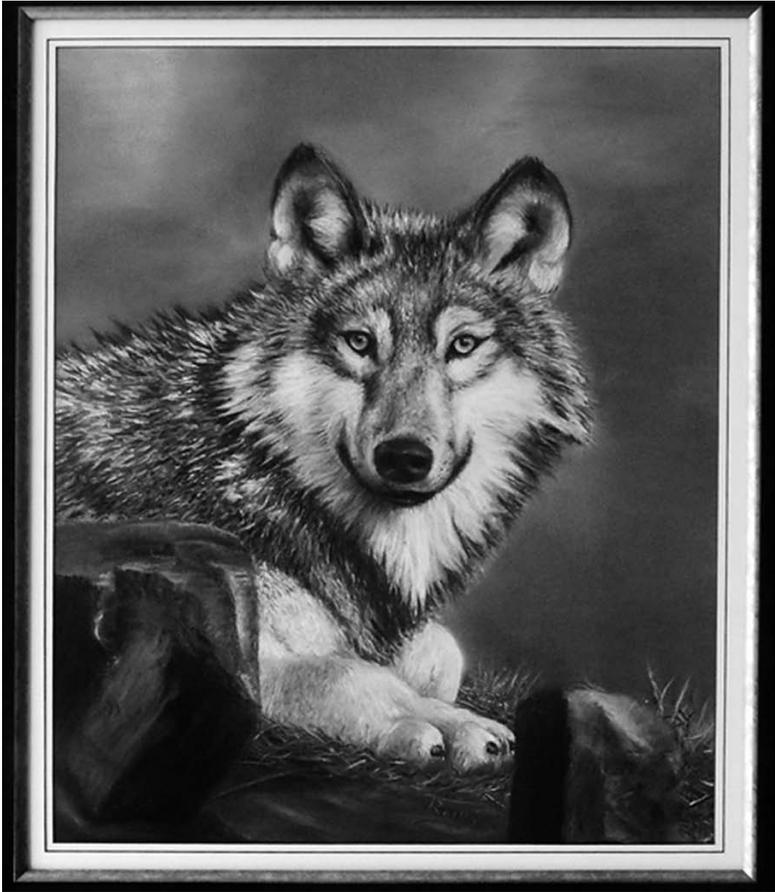
Suddenly it isn't quite so bad  
That I can't fight the way I could,  
Or that I can't love like I thought I would  
Because I've known times when I couldn't walk,  
When I was obsessed with shadows and couldn't stop,  
So it's really hard to be too sad  
Because I know that God has been so good  
To give me much of what I had.

Compared to the weakest I've ever been,  
I'm superhuman strong.  
And even though I don't belong,  
I have done what I never thought I'd do.  
My strength is tireless, my will is true.  
And though I have lost near everything,  
Just look at the mountains I have trod upon  
And the giants that have fallen to my sling.

I have climbed from depths you could not know.  
I have earned what God gave you for free,  
So don't you dare look down on me.  
I may be weak, but just know this:  
I fought tooth and nail for every inch.  
I haven't let my frustration show,  
But I still remember the old me;  
Every day, I miss that long ago.

But when I think about my world  
Since strength and body parted ways,  
I must remember every day  
That sweat is mightier than tears.  
And through every long and labored year,  
Though I am lost at every turn,  
My heart and soul are here to stay:  
They always will, and always were.

Though sentenced to failure, look at me now,  
For I have danced on crippled feet,  
I have trekked on icy streets.  
I have wrested back the strength to stand,  
And I have known how it feels to run again.  
I've held an angel as the stars shone down.  
I have roamed the nights of this moonlit town.  
But most of all, I've never settled for defeat:  
I'm the most badass cripple you will ever meet.



*Majesty*  
Tara Reilly

**Mama Maria Sestina**  
**Maya Benko**

Quiet hypocrisy, those are the words  
My Mama spoke at dinner each night.  
They fall from her mouth like cold smoke  
choking out truth and leaving the lies.  
Like the bittersweet smell of damp, rotting leaves  
the smell of her words lingers on after her.

One day I will follow and tell her  
the things in my heart too dark for words,  
the way my stomach feels when the man leaves  
or how the moon is lost in the night.  
But all I would be speaking is crafted lies  
While the world around me goes down in smoke.

She calls us for dinner, as the smoke  
from the kitchen wafts around her,  
and she races from the room, face full of lies,  
promising the smoke alarm will stop soon; just words  
that linger and foul up the night  
and suffocate us as she turns to leave.

Outside my sister plays in autumn leaves.  
Inside my father sucks in smoke.  
Outside the velvet of the night  
threatens to consume her,  
but she doesn't care or notice that my words  
have no affect on her. She will go along with Mama's lies.

Mama thinks that her quiet lies,  
her preached odor will reach the man when he leaves.  
She knows that somehow her food forms of words  
must be just right, if only with a little smoke,  
so that a pot roast can speak for her  
and she can eat quietly, hypocritically tonight.

Yet tonight is the night  
she gets up from dinner, mouth closed to any lies,  
walks across the room, with her  
rotting silence, cold smoke, molding leaves,  
following behind, and with *just* one of her words,  
she takes the night and her last “goodbye” with her,  
Lies stream through her teeth like fire through smoke,  
She leaves, and will never know the smell of her words.



*This Too Shall Pass:  
The Oak That Survived Katrina*  
Rachel Survil

*Ode to My Kitchen Sink*

Kristin Olsson

Deep and wide  
bright white  
with silver lining:  
A cloud  
in my kitchen.  
Dirty dishes  
stacked  
reflective of  
the day's events  
unquiet,  
waiting for  
a nod  
of recognition.

Sweet, bitter  
scent of soap  
each drop  
a small sun  
in my palm  
blooming  
into a lather  
foam graced waves:  
An ocean  
in my kitchen sink.  
My hands  
submerged  
in heated amber  
embraced  
by a lover:  
A paramour  
in my dishwasher.

The sun is  
hidden  
behind the rain  
dancing

at my window  
inviting me  
to be  
like them. Delicate,  
brambly  
scouring pad  
meteor from afar  
shattering essences  
of earth  
to be swept away  
by the disposal:  
A propeller  
in my drain.

I finish my day  
honoring  
my kitchen  
my mind  
refined,  
sparkling  
like finest crystal. Divine,  
austere  
furnisher of peace  
every moment  
an emollient  
to my soul;  
A seraph  
in my evening chore.

Though my soul  
is unquiet  
my reservations  
recede  
with the sullied  
water  
spiraling into  
the night  
leaving only  
me.

## *Daffodils*

Caitlyn Metzger

“Really, you never cry?” her voice chimed. It only took one cup of coffee for him to love that voice. “It’s embarrassing how much I cry.” Her laughter rang around him like silver bells in a spring shower, made ripples in his espresso. Her slender fingers held onto the rusty red ceramic mug embossed with rosettes, absorbing the heat. Her hands were always cold and a cup of Early Gray was a great solution, especially, she said, a free one from a handsome stranger.

“Thanks,” she murmured as they stood in the doorway to the café, autumn rain pouring off the eaves around them in miniature waterfalls, their breath forming clouds between their close bodies. One of those elegant fingers tucked a loose strand of golden hair behind her ear. “That was, without a doubt, the best cup of tea I’ve ever had.” Her pink lips parted in a smile, and the smile sparkled in her blue eyes as well.

\*\*\*

“I love this play,” she whispered. He held one of her hands in his lap, warming it in the shadows of the box’s balcony. The glow of stage lights illuminated the curve of her rosy cheek, the line of her neck. Her other hand clasped her great-great-grandmother’s blue and silver silk fan, her favorite and most prized possession, she said. As they watched an angel visit Prior Walter, he heard a sniff. Tears trickled down her face. Momentarily letting go of her hand, he wiped the tears away as his other hand fingered the black ring box in his pocket.

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“It’s so perfect! Don’t you think?!” she exclaimed as she ran through the empty rooms of the white ranch house, a daffodil from the backyard in her hair. A white dress with light blue polka dots bounced around her supple frame. He smiled, enjoying the summer light pouring through the windows, making the fabric sheer. She laughed her chiming laugh. Her joy was conta-

gious. Weeping in delight, she dashed up to him, jumped, wrapping her hands around his neck, her legs around his waist. He caught her, held her against him as they spun in the doorway of what was now their home.

\*\*\*

“It’ll be ok... It’ll be ok...” she muttered. Her eyes shined as the doctor bowed his head. He sat next to her in a stiff chair, hard despite its cushions. The blinds were white, making the room bright, sterile. Callous. As they stared at the open folder, he heard a familiar sniff. Though this time it was different. He wiped her tears away as his other hand clasped hers. Her hand was cold as death.

\*\*\*

“It’s great. I love it,” she grinned, holding the sapphire knit beanie. Her chapped lips pecked his cheek. He knew she liked it, but she missed her hair. That was the hardest part, she said. He knew she was bluffing, but he wouldn’t dare call her on it. He tried to smile as she stood before the mirror, her body now thin, her hands skeletal.

\*\*\*

“Start with a clean slate. Start anew like a phoenix, rising from the ashes.” Blue veined and translucent, her hand squeezed his. “Don’t let me hold you back. That’s the last thing I would want. I *want* you to live. Heh,” she laughed quietly, the chiming only a single bell in a desert breeze, “Live enough for two lives.”

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“Promise you’ll cry for me.” There were tears, but she didn’t cry. She was calm, the essence of grace. He held her hand the entire time.

\*\*\*

It rained. He laid a bouquet of daffodils at the base of the marble tombstone.

\*\*\*

He stands, still in his suit, his hands hanging useless at his sides in the now empty house. Empty of her laugh. Empty of her joy. Empty of her.

Someone left a few vigil candles on the coffee table, an open pack of matches next to them. That morning he set down a cup of coffee on the table too and forgot about it, so now it sits waiting and cold. It had only taken a single cup of coffee for him to fall for her. He knows it will take more than one to get over her.

He grabs a bottle of scotch from the cabinet next to the bookcase. With trembling hands he unscrews the top, brings it to his lips. But he can't do it. She hated the stuff, hated its smell. As he lowers the bottle, he catches a glimpse of blue and silver. Sitting on the shelf is her second favorite prized possession, the silk fan. One of his hands fingers the smooth opening of the bottle as the other reaches into his pocket, pulls out the white gold diamond ring. Catching his breath in his throat, he sets the ring next to the fan. A quivering smile crosses his face. Behind the fan is a picture of her, white daffodils in her hair. It was the first day she wore that ring, the only day she wore that white dress.

He clenches his fists, the knuckles turning white. His vision blurs. He sniffs. He reaches up with the hand holding the scotch, rubs his nose. As he does, his fingers shift, momentarily letting go of the bottle. As if in slow-motion, he watches it fall to the ground, hit the white carpet, spilling everywhere. His nostrils flare, his brows furrow, he grimaces. A sob escapes his lips.

Before he realizes it, tears cascade down his face, staining his cheeks and collar. He doesn't care. He stands there, his shoulders shuddering, defeated and downtrodden, feeling as if life is an abyss devoid of any meaning. He feels dead too.

The amber liquid soaks into the carpet as tears patter around it like the beginning sprinkles of autumn rain. Somehow, through all the sniffing and sobbing and sighing, he hears her voice.

*“Anew like a phoenix, rising from the ashes... Don’t let me hold you back... I want you to live.”*

She is distant, but he still hears.

Tears still stream down his cheeks, but now they leave his vision clear. He seizes the fan, the ring, and the picture off the shelf before snatching a match off the table. With a flick, a flame dances in front of him. Stepping back off the wet carpet, his gaze switches between the fire and the spill. His fingers part. The match falls.

He steps over the budding fire and out the back doors of the house.

His breath still catching in his throat, he steps into the humid night. Orange-gold firelight illuminates the backyard, growing, casting his long shadow across the damp grass. Mud clings to his polished shoes as he goes over to the flower row.

A daffodil in hand, he crosses the yard, leaving behind the burning house, leaving behind the ashes of his former life. Crying.



*Andrew and Brooke's Window*  
Brooke Stanke

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