

Spiritus Mundi

A Collective Memory



Honors Literary Magazine
Spring 2013

Colorado
State
University

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Cover Art:
Jessica Lederhos
“*Mirror*”

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Authors

Alex Arvin

Kayleen Asmus

Haley Broth

Colleen Canty

Jeff Geiger

Jessica Lederhos

Chelsea Pitonyak

Krista Reuther

Kyle Troksa

Matthew Weiderspon

We hope you enjoy reading our 2013 Spiritus Mundi collection. This publication is dedicated to alumni of the University Honors Program from 1957 to 2012. Your commitment and loyalty has left a lasting legacy to the Honors Program and Colorado State University.

Traveler's Chant

Krista Reuther

Remember

I am an
adventurer

my soul
lingers in
ancient literature
swallowed
by
dust

Thirsty for
knowledge
and
endlessly curious
I roam

Unfit for
mediocrity
I am
a child of the
stars.



*Montmartre as seen from Musee d'Orsay
in Paris, France*
Jeff Geiger

The Sunflower
By Haley Broth

You are the sun, and I am the sunflower,
longing for the echoes of the west.
With each passing minute, I age by an hour,
a forgotten letter without an address.

Longing for the echoes of the west,
I sing the songs of days to come.
A forgotten letter without an address,
a steady beat without a drum.

I sing the songs of days to come.
My words are slivers under your skin.
A steady beat without a drum
that forgets where it goes and where it has been.

My words are slivers under your skin,
elusive as the minutes that fade into hours.
They forget where they go and where they have been,
while you are the sun, and I am the sunflower.

A et Au Travers
Colleen Canty

Soil felt foreign to the bottoms of my feet.
Yet my skin seemed to melt when washed in sun's heat.
Does there exist a place where heaven and earth meet,
Hope and creation, death and decay greet?

A brass key lay dormant in my chest,
a tabernacle of glory robed in flesh.
The divine trapped within its walls
lay prisoner in these earthly halls.

Dangling from the sky
or tethered to the ground,
I knew not to which I was bound.

By morning my groaning seeped from my bones,
stained black this temporary home,
slinking back to its depths calling below.

Simultaneously billowing in plumes of green
the symphony of trumpets began to teem.
Ripping through my limbs came this hysterical scream:
"Glory, glory, glory!"

Dangling from the sky
or tethered to the ground,
I knew not to which I was bound.

But like a butterfly's emergence,
or a magician's trick,
this agonizing dichotomy of existence
suddenly flipped.

My hands and feet bound in flesh
sunk like lead to the ground,
while the light from above
hung for my head a dazzling crown.

Back crippled, arms chained,
legs prisoner from where they came,
neck strained to the sky, seeking for the sigh
when skin rips, shoulders burst
and the butterfly is at last released on high.



Berlin Wall Graffiti

Kyle Troksa

Boxing Out

Kayleen Asmus

My world bounces. Always has. I see it in the crowds of people walking the street everyday, passing me as I play. They're always going up and down. They lift a foot up then bring it back down. Lift a hand to sip their coffee, then lower it. Cellphones go up to ears then come back down with goodbyes. Eyelids flicker up then blink back down. Up and Down. Bouncing, my world goes by.

The man bouncing up and down in front of me is a delicate looking sort of person with a sympathetic face and ignorant eyes-a Tenderfellow. He snaps pictures of me sitting against the fence with the ball under my arm and my shoes airing out next to my feet.

"Easy, Tenderfellow." I say this calm, even when the man sticks his camera under his eyebrows and takes a picture of me scratching at the tangled hairs on my knee. He clicks, he snaps, he thinks he captures me in that plastic-crap camera of his. I stand and carry a shoe in each hand while I cross the street, clapping the soles of my sneakers together and leaving sweaty footprints on the pavement for the man to follow. He bounces up and down, talking to the recorder clipped to his shirt pocket and pressing the camera to his eyes. I walk slow so he can bounce from the sweaty footprint to footprint before they disappear into the cement. The top of his head comes to about the middle of my chest and he has to tilt his camera to see my face. I wonder why he wants pictures aimed straight up my nose, but he keeps on circling me as we cross the street with his camera clicking away.

I stop in front of my box but Tenderfellow, trying to navigate the corner with his camera covering his eyes, topples over it. He falls, sticking out his hips so that they hit the ground first while he holds his camera up with one hand. It reminds me of someone saving a basketball from flying out of bounds, diving

across the court with his hand stretched wide. A bubble of snot bursts out of my nose because I snort when I think about Tenderfellow trying to play basketball.

He stands and brushes dirt from his pants and then presses his camera harder to his face and triggers the shutter release. I don't shove him when he bends to touch my box, that's how people like me get taken away, but I have to squeeze my hands together tight, like I'm praying, so that I don't.

You can find boxes like mine under every bridge and in every alleyway in every city. They're not hard to come by, the long, soggy boxes with molding cardboard and thick black tattoos of writing. But the sweat stains on the bottom belong to me. They came from my elbows and my knees-the parts that I use to push myself up.

Tenderfellow looks to the corner where I keep a pair of shorts and an extra t-shirt tied up in a plastic bag. He smiles, sympathetically, takes it in, ignorantly, and asks me how I can be so calm, having to live like this. I take his hand – too smooth, too fragile – and push it up against my shirt. “Feel that?” My heart pumps, dribbles and bumps under my skin, pulsing and pushing liquids that I can't see. I'm always surprised when the blood that comes out after I dive across the court or scrape my knuckles on the rim is flowing and red. The blood I know of is orange. It bounces from the chest, thicker than rubber.

“That's my heart. It's not calm, can't you feel it bouncing around under there?” The man gropes uneasily at my chest either unable or afraid to feel what's going on beneath my shirt. “Listen.” I close my eyes and I can hear it, that dribble beat, dribble slap. Up dribble, down dribble, swish dribble beat. It pounds and pushes under my shirt while the man grimaces and slides his hand out of mine then wraps his fragile fingers around the safety of his camera.

“My insides aren’t calm,” I say, leaning down to talk to the microphone on his shirt pocket. Tenderfellow nods behind his camera like he understands. I open my mouth to say more but my stomach interrupts me, sending a wave of hungry sound vibrating across my shirt. I stand up straight and look down my chin to my stomach. The man unzips his bag and holds out a dollar bill.

“No thanks,” I say, showing him the palms of my hands. He pushes the money towards me anyway. “I don’t want anything from you.” I shake my head. People are always trying to give me money, holding it out of car windows as they drive past so that just the tips of their fingers and the bills stick out. I never take it. Sometimes they toss it out at my feet, but I just step over the change and let it wait for someone else.

“Get that out of my face,” I say to Tenderfellow, taking an energy bar out of my pocket and showing it to him. I take a bite while he holds the bill in front of my mouth. I ignore him until he slides it back into his pocket. “Tell you what,” I say, taking another bite of my bar, “if I’m still hungry, maybe I’ll have your dollar for desert.” I smile, feeling the bits of chewy bar plastered to my teeth.

The man frowns and snaps one more picture – one of me resting my hands on my growling stomach with the phony chocolate from the power bar glued to my teeth. Then he switches off his recorder and drops the camera long enough to give me a paper to sign before he leaves. He explains that putting my name down means that I release the rights to the contents of our interview – so everything I said to his shirt pocket and all the things he snapped up with his camera are fair game – while I take the cap off the pen. I read the paper, sign before he can finish explaining, and hand it back to him. He keeps one hand on his camera and holds the paper with the other, so I keep the

pen, tucking it into the corner of my box. Tenderfellow nods, stuffs the paper in his bag, and hurries down the sidewalk. I give a brief two fingered salute to his pocket and bow my head to the camera. I watch him bounce away until he reaches that part of the block where crowds form again. That's not where I live. I live here. Everything from this slab of cement, this box, to the bathroom in the subway station. "It's all mine," I say quietly, walking back across the street towards the courts. All mine-like the sweat stains, my heart's dribble pump beat, and the blood leaking out of a scrape on my knee.

Today I woke up and used Tenderfellow's pen to dig a piece of gravel from the sole of my shoe. Then I pulled it on, feeling my toes slip into the worn grooves of the ragged inserts. I wondered how many games I'd have to win before I'd be able to afford a new pair. I took the cap off the pen with my teeth and did the math on the side of my box.

I walk across the street and squat down to tie my shoes when Bigman bounces over and holds my neck in the crotch of his hand, between his thumb and his forefinger, and wipes my nose with a page of newspaper.

"Get that out of my face," I say, shrugging him off, but he laughs and keeps holding the paper under my nose. I grab it and use it to wipe my forehead and look down to see an achromatic face, crinkled and splotched with the sweat, looking up at me.

Even through the smears I can see that the face is mine. My hair's stiff with sweat and there's a popped bubble of snot under my nose. My feet are bare and there's energy bar crud stuck to my teeth. Beneath my picture is the smaller image of a tidy looking man, his black and white face smiling down at his byline. I know this man must be Tenderfellow but I don't recognize him until I put my pinky over his eyes where his camera had hidden them.

I toss the newspaper away and pick up the ball at Bigman's feet. He laughs and ruffles my hair. His fingers get stuck in my curly tangles so he ends up palming my head for a few seconds before he can get them out. There's a fight holding up the game on the court next to mine. I dribble between my legs and watch as fists hit heads and heads hit concrete. All three – fists, heads, concrete – are hard as stone and they'll keep at it until one of them cracks.

"I'm just here to play," I say turning my eyes back to my court. I have to swat newspapers from in front of my face as a group of players make their way towards me. Some of the guys point to my picture in the paper, calling me *Boxman*, and spitting laughter on their knees as they hunch over, guffawing. Others slap my shoulders and squeeze my neck, asking if I'm too good to play with them now that I'm in the paper. Some ask if they can have my autograph, handing me invisible pens and offering me flexed arms and shaved heads to sign. I shrug them off and flip them a finger.

After the lights have been on for a few hours, I wipe my face with the bottom of my shirt until it's sopping with sweat. I drop the ball by the fence and walk across the street to my box. I use my teeth to loosen the knot in my plastic bag and pull my shirt off over my head, replacing it with the clean one. I've got a water bottle from the court under my arm. I use it to soak the shirt I took off, then I dig around in the corner of my box and grab a skinny bar of soap. I rub it once across the chest and twice under each arm, then soak the shirt again and lay it out to dry.

The night is sweaty one, but I cover myself up, pulling stale, discarded newspapers over my legs. I see a dozen of my face staring up at me and the words Tenderfellow wrote tattooed in news ink up and down my body, bouncing from my chest to my ankles and back up again. I can see the last line of the article poking out near my left shoulder.

I scrunch up my face while I read, seeing all of my black and white selves tucked in tight with me in my box.

Trapped.

“That’s what you think Tenderfellow, that I’m trapped?” I laugh to myself but as I do I feel the edge of the box against my head and the laugh gets caught in my throat until I choke on it. “I’m Boxman,” I say to myself. I have nothing but a box, Tenderfellow’s pen, a couple of bucks tucked into my shoe, and one extra t-shirt tied up in a plastic bag.

I turn, uncomfortable, then reach behind my back and pull out Tenderfellow’s pen. I chew on the cap while I read the sentence again. “*Trapped?*” I spend everyday letting my heart play dribble pump beats and my body play dribble pump ball. I found my box. Nobody put me in here. I laugh to myself, tucking the pages tighter around me. I take the cap off the pen and scribble out Tenderfellow’s face from his eyebrows to his lips. There, now it looks like him. “Dude can’t see anything,” I say. Then I find my own picture and draw a big heart right where it’s supposed to be on the left side of my shirt. If I had a marker I’d color it orange, but I don’t so I close my eyes and picture it. I can see it clearly, my heart pumping orange in heavy dribble beats. That’s the way I understand it.



Icicle
Alex Avrin

Rhythm
Chelsea Pitonyak

What if I could make everything rhyme?
To create a rhythm in the passing of time
A series of curves to connect the lines
A continuous flow, no restraining sides

What if I could halt the lies?
To leave room for only binding ties
A rising and ebbing of the tides
A place where nothing has to hide

What if I could cause the dark to shine?
To show you how everything is fine
A calm inside and a peace of mind
A realization of all that is kind.

Autumn
Haley Broth

I'm thinking of autumn.

You're here, right in front of me, and my mind is awake with thoughts of dancing leaves and crisp promises of change in the air. After everything we've survived, after wading through too many broken words and distant memories, it seems cliché to revisit our first days, when happiness was enough. Back then, we laughed more than we talked, and I swear your smile rivaled the gold on the trees.

It's hard to remember why we fell apart. I always loved you, though not in the way everyone thought I should. Your mother looked at us and saw a white fence and 2.5 children, and your father was proud to call me the daughter he never had, but both of us knew better. We had each other, and that was all we needed; why complicate it with silly things like love? We were more preoccupied with catching fireflies and reveling in the Milky Way and wrestling in the mud. Your backyard was our universe, and that autumn was infinite.

Then one day, I began to notice the color of your eyes. I noticed that your hair fell across your face in perfect whispers without you even trying. I noticed that butterflies had taken up lodging in my abdomen. One glance from you and your tilted smile was all it took to send them flying. After a thousand and a half hours of denial, I realized that my feelings had changed and that love didn't seem so silly anymore. I spent too many nights wondering if you felt the same instead of sleeping.

But I wasn't the only one who noticed you in this new and confusing way. Dating girls became your new favorite game, and you were determined to win. They came and went faster than the leaves could turn, each one claiming they loved you more than the last. Nothing changed at first; maybe you just drifted away so slowly I couldn't even tell. But soon, you stopped racing me home after school. You forgot my birthday. You apologized for not coming to my graduation. The words *I'm busy* became your entire dictionary. And after years of unreturned calls and wondering when the last time I heard your voice was, I decided to let you go.

Two weeks ago, the voice on the other end was yours. *I don't have much time*, you said, and those words hollowed me out just enough to let the pain of losing you back in. Now I'm sitting here with you in this hospital room, holding your hand and loving the color of your eyes, and I realize you're the baggage I've carried with me since that first autumn we danced beneath the trees. I have spent years thinking I lost you, when in reality, I just didn't have the courage to find you. I will spend the rest of my life regretting the three words I never told you.

Autumn has never felt so cold.



Self Portrait at Pond
Matthew Weiderspon

Spiritus Mundi:
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HONORS
PROGRAM
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University Honors Program
Colorado State University
1025 Campus Delivery
Fort Collins, Colorado 80523-1025

Ph: (970) 491-5679; Fax: (970) 491-2617
www.honors.colostate.edu