Spiritus Mundi
A Collective Memory
Honors Literary Magazine
Colorado State University
Spring 2016

Cover Art:
Allison Allum
“Stonecold”
Table of Contents

“Stonecold,” Allison Allum ................................................................. Cover
“elephants,” Sophie Gullett................................................................. 2
“Dog Paws,” Cienna Semsak ............................................................... 8
“A Quiet Moment in Trinity College Library,” Anna Eick ................. 9
“Fault Lines,” Olivia Claxton ............................................................... 10
“Discover,” Connor Craddock .......................................................... 12
“Hourglass,” Lauren Hallstrom .......................................................... 13
“Two Places At Once,” Lindsey Paricio ............................................ 14
“Sunset at Grand Mesa, Colorado,” Anna Eick ................................. 16
“Everyone, Deep in their Hearts, is Waiting
for the End of the World to Come,” Jessy Knaus ............................ 17
“Swinging,” Lauren Hallstrom ........................................................... 18
“Two-Step Waltz,” Jessy Knaus ......................................................... 20
“Angel Annie,” Kayla Ashland ........................................................... 21
“The Woman at the Window,” Jessy Knaus ....................................... 22

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Thoreau once wrote, “The world is but a canvas to our imagination.”
This edition of Spiritus Mundi is dedicated to the creative spirit
and celebration of art in its many forms. We hope you enjoy.
elephants
Sophie Gullett

i remember it vividly
it is late afternoon

a dying light streams in through the kitchen window
illuminating the yellow curtains
and filling the room with a warm glow

i am sitting at the table
holding a crayon in my hand
coloring the elephants in my coloring book
which my aunt bought me for my birthday

i remember eagerly tearing the pink paper
away from the shiny red cover
and beaming at the zoo animals

i carefully try to stay in the lines

my mother is washing the dishes
my father is reading the paper
and my brother is playing in the yard

the phone rings

my father glances up
and looks at my mother

she shakes the water from her fingertips
the suds running down her wrists

she wipes her hands on a dishcloth
and crosses the room to the phone
her skirt swishing softly
her heels clicking against the linoleum floor

my father returns to reading the paper
i wait anxiously
listening
as she holds the receiver to her ear

a childish fear fills me
i know it is my principal

i said a bad word at school today
and billy told the teacher
who told the principal
who is telling my mother

she twirls the phone cord
twisting the black cable around her finger

she frowns
and turns to stare at me
but i cannot hold her gaze

i quickly look down
and stare at the elephants
which i have foolishly decided to color red

there is a tense quietness as she listens
and as i listen to her listen

i hear the murmur of my principal’s voice
the soft crackling of the popping soap bubbles
the rushing whisper of the passing cars

until finally
my mother apologizes
thanks the principal
and says goodbye

she hangs up the telephone with a click
and returns to the sink
my father
without looking up from his paper
asks who it was

his voice is bland and uninterested
his thin face is blank and indifferent

my mother tells him
and
shares what I have said

my father sets down the paper
pushes his glasses up
and turns to me

he tells me
that girls don't talk like that
that I should stop using those words
that I am acting like a boy

he tells me
that girls should be refined
that I should not cuss or curse
that I am not acting very ladylike

he tells me
that girls shouldn't say those things
that I should stop using boy language
that I should stop acting like my brother

I continue coloring the elephants

my father stands up
and pushes his chair back

the waxy red residue sneaks outside of the lines

he places one finger beneath my chin
and forces me to look up
the red crayon snaps in my hand
half of it hanging limply from the thin paper jacket

and my father tells me
that i am acting like a child
that i need to grow up
that i need to be more ladylike

i hear my crayon fall to the floor
i hear the plates clank against each other in the sink
i hear my brother playing in the yard
and
i hear my father telling me to change

i hear
but
i do not understand

i have heard my father use this language
standing on the porch
holding a beer
talking to the neighbor about politics

i have heard my father use this language
crouching in front of the sink
holding a wrench
mumbling about the leaking pipe

i have heard my father use this language
laying on the couch
holding the remote
yelling at the television about the football game

my lips drip with unspoken words
that die in my mouth
like
crippled moths

i thought he would accept me for saying these things
when my brother cusses
    he always laughs
    and pats him on the back
    and jokingly reprimands him
        but
        instead
    he is telling me to change

my mouth becomes a cage
    for a thousand questions

    but i do not speak out
        or
        protest
        or
        object

    instead
    i keep my tongue in check
    and lock up all of the questions
    that flutter through my mind
        like butterflies

    i preserve them
    and pin them up
    by the paper-thin flesh of their immobile wings
    for display within the dustiest confines of my mind
    where they will stay
    for years to come

    every comment about my words
    my language
    my
    identity
    sends me rushing back to these thoughts
    where i will press my nose against the glass
    and stare
feeling just as bewildered as i first was
wondering what i have done wrong
and why it isn't wrong for my brother
and why it is only wrong for me

my father lets go of my chin
and
with one final meaningful look
returns to his seat

with a rustle
the newspaper goes back up
a wall of words between us

an unwelcome breeze blows in from outside
it flutters the curtains and tickles the back of my neck

i reach for my box of crayons

the light from the window no longer feels warm
it has been replaced with a cold artificial dimness
a buzzing fluorescence

i pick out a fresh
unbroken
gray crayon

my mother pulls the plug in the sink
and all of the swirling soap and suds and bubbles
are swallowed up by the gaping drain mouth

and

i continue to color the elephants
Dog Paws
Cienna Semsak
A Quiet Moment in Trinity College Library
Anna Eick
Fault Lines
Olivia Claxton

In the small, late evening times we sit.
The spaces yawning and
The silences breaking in waves,
Pieces fall into place.
Words melt onto the table
Like candle wax, dripping off
The corners of lips, and
Pooling on the surface.
I reach a hand out over them,
And with bitten-down fingernails
I pick at their cool, waxy edges.
Then, on the way home,
I endeavor to remove fragments
From underneath nail-beds.
I have to use the edges of my teeth
But it works out.
And every moment after,
They burn me.
There are incendiary bits
Around the crevices
Of my nails and lips.
Walking on hot pavement,
My arches crackle.
In the hallways and on the porch steps,
There's a fire that won't be quelled.
In my hairline, they lurk,
And on my fingertips, like glue,
They reside inside of fingerprints.
Unique, they fit the mold.

Until it consumes.
With every breath, a roaring enters,
Pulses, shakes, and then demure,
I crouch. Stand.

Eyes closed,
I fumble towards the light switch,
But it’s already flipped on.

My hands find the rounded curve
Of a chair. So I sit,
Lean back, sigh with mouth slightly open,
And yawn.

For a few moments, I’ll sleep,
Then wake to find myself
Across the table, in the late evening time,
And it will start again.
Discover
Connor Craddock
Hourglass
Lauren Hallstrom

Hourglass: a sonnet
You told me time was precious, I
can't argue, but must also bring to your
attention the wind in your hair. It flies,
straining toward tumbling leaves before
dropping limp. You say the trees are hourglasses,
reclusive roots reaching downward through soil
as branches stretch to snatch opportunity that passes.
Aging, arranging, changing where and how we toil.
Converse with clients, not squirrels,
reheat spaghetti O's, not inspiration
Who is to judge the line between these two worlds
when hourglasses overturn? You say, make use of this creation.
    Despite the clock, I soak in Nature's powers—
    Sure, time is fleeting, but it is ours.
Two Places At Once
Lindsey Paricio

A language known, but unfamiliar.
A people welcoming, but new.
A city beautiful, but strange.
A culture similar, but with different rules.
Kia ora, hello.
What do you do when your head reminds you that you are far from home,
But your heart whispers that to go home,
you don't have anywhere to go.
I wish I could be in two places at once.
Pakeha, foreigner.
There are two countries, but only one of me.
I have two feet, but can only take one path at a time.
I can go to two universities for a single degree,
But I cannot be of two minds about this.
Transitions are painful.
Uncertain.
Uncomfortable.
Untried.
But they are untethering.
Wewete, free.
To let go and start again new.
without ropes shackling and binding you
tight to the ground.
The sky, sunset, waves, and mountains open to your embrace.
I wish I could be in two places at once.
Whaiapia, love.
In this country with the greatest degree of freedom,
I am learning how to be free.
Free to explore.
Discover.
Learn.
Delight.
Fear.
Meet.
Desire.
Create.
Laugh.
Love.
Dream.
Hope.
And remember.

Remember where I came from
and where I am.
Where I want to be.
How I got here.
How I want to get there.
And the people who got me from place to place.
Who I was.
Who I am now.
And who I want to be.

I wish I could be in two places at once.
Mahara, remember.

I need to remember the gift it is
to be able to choose one from two.
To think about the limits of freedom.
To recognize that it is okay to be
uncertain and afraid. And to embrace that home is a collection of places.

Because I already am in two places at once.
Huirua, two at once.
Sunset at Grand Mesa, Colorado
Anna Eick
Everyone, Deep in their Hearts, is Waiting for the End of the World to Come*
Jessy Knaus

There's a restless temporariness in playing hide-and-seek.
Hearts race, fingers brace anticipating the end of the game,
being found, starting over, just a game.
We like losing to fabricated fear.

Run to the far reaches of the house,
aimless, and pretend you don't want to be found.
Pretend you're devastated to not be truly, permanently, lost.

Run, hide, hold your breath, pretend it's life or death—
But when we're found, when it's done, we laugh instead of cry.

*Quote by Haruki Murakami
Swinging
Lauren Hallstrom

Sticky with time,
the air sits heavy—
her feet don’t quite reach far enough
and so she drags
two parallel lines
with the tips of her toes
to break the reverie of
time’s haze.
She is a pendulum, swinging back and
forth through what-ifs and what-could-have-beens
but at this moment, for her, there is only what could be.
She wonders at the ladybug on her shoulder, and—
how can life be so big?
She dreams of burnt sugar, glazed in possibilities,
and maybe if she closes her eyes,
someday she will go
up and over.
The trees clap for her,
shaking their paper-thin maracas and bowing
until the warm summer’s night deepens
and constrains,
and, sloshing, the world turns on its side...
The lines of the swing set show through
the clouded window that raindrops cling to,
and through the glass,
though her laughter still buzzes within me,
I can no longer make out her face.
Removed from it all,
the dull taste of memories lingering
in my mouth.
If only.
The glass is a smooth sea against my outstretched fingers,
almost like a mirror,
and the trees still dance for her.
Feet firmly planted on the floor,
I am inside four walls, sitting by the fire,
but somehow,
I feel as though I am on the outside,
looking in.
Two-Step Waltz
Jessy Knaus

Red Barons, White Russians, gold-cymbaled percussion.
Call us in, check the list, line us up, take the hits,
Race the waltz,
Tight-lipped.

At the bar, eyes blank, “Sazerac?” “Sure, thanks.”
Empty laugh, clock-check, small talk, cheek-peck.
Hand-in-hand,
Rock-step.

Rim hits, Walker shots, cherry stems, fox trots.
Two-step, tight lace, bottoms up, white space.
Yellow cab,
Check mate.
Angel Annie
Kayla Ashland
The Woman at the Window
Jessy Knaus

I first saw her when she was a few people ahead of me in the TSA line. Later, I saw her drinking a cup of coffee and reading a book at a shop near my terminal. Now I see her again near the entrance of my gate, sitting on the floor. She's leaning her back against the giant glass windows that look out at the planes on the tarmac. Maybe we're catching the same flight.

She looks older than me, maybe in her thirties, and she's dressed like a business woman. Tight slacks, button-down shirt, silvery blond hair twisted back into a bun. I'm sitting in a row of the black fake leather chairs, hiding my face behind an open newspaper and staring at her over the top of it. I want to know what book she's reading, where she's from, where she's going, who she is. I wonder if she's as curious about me as I am about her. But I don't think she's seen me. I shift in my seat and feel heat rising to my face. I want to talk to her but my legs are suddenly glued to my seat.

She's still looking down at her book. I clear my throat loudly and rustle my newspaper, keeping my eyes fixed on her silvery blond head, trying to get her attention. No response. I try again, clearing my throat more loudly and rustling the paper so hard it almost rips. Nothing. I frown. Maybe I'm too far away. I stand up from my seat and grab my carry-on and move to the row closest to the windows. Now I'm facing her, almost right in front of her. This time she looks up at me. I meet her gaze and stare, trapped in her almond-brown eyes. She raises her eyebrows and starts to smile, uncomfortable. I shake my head to break my stare and apologize with a laugh.

“—I'm sorry. I, um—” I need an excuse to justify my sudden entry into her space. Her smile fades and she stares at me attentively. But she isn't making eye contact anymore. She's looking somewhere just below my eyeline. I self-consciously wipe at my mouth in case it's a bit of food or toothpaste she's looking at.

“Um, do you have the time?” I stammer at last.
She squints at me, not responding immediately. Then, as if there is a five second audio delay, she starts to nod with a smile and holds up one finger. She sets down her book and pulls her phone out of her purse. She holds it up for me to see 10:47 illuminated on the screen.

“Oh, thank you,” I say. She clearly doesn't want to talk. “Ten forty seven, got it.” I nod and give her the thumbs-up. I feel stupid for doing that, so I laugh uncomfortably and add, “thank you,” one more time.

She only nods and smiles and goes back to her book. I open my mouth, then close it, then open it again. When she turns her head down, the sunlight catches on her hair and it almost shimmers. Her perfume smells like sugar and springtime.

“What book are you reading?” I blurt. I roll my eyes at myself, quickly so she won't see when she looks up.

But she doesn't look up. I tug at my tie and then rub my hands together. Am I being that nosy? I lean forward with my elbows on my knees. I clear my throat and prepare to try again, a little louder this time. She looks up at me before I’m able to.

“Oh, sorry, I was just wondering what book you were reading?” I gesture towards her book. Now that I look at it, I can clearly see that she is reading *Great Expectations*.

She hesitates for another moment and then makes an “oh” shape with her mouth to show me she understands. Tapping the cover with her finger, she mouths “Dickens.” Ah. Now I understand. I tap my ear and then point to her, raising my eyebrows. She smiles and shakes her head with a slow blink, signaling that she's not upset that I just now put the pieces together. She points to herself and then touches her pointer finger from her ear to her mouth. I’m deaf.

I feel a prickly hot panic crawl up to my face. “Sorry,” I mouth with a smile, feeling stupid. She waves her hand as if she’s clearing my “sorry” away and she rolls her eyes jokingly. I nod and go back to my newspaper.
I pull it up past my eyes this time so she can't see me mentally kicking myself in the face. I looked like some ignorant idiot in front of her, I'm sure. I should get up and leave, I should – something taps my leg. My stomach flips. I fold my newspaper down in my lap to see the woman holding out a wrinkled scrap of paper to me. It's covered in cramped black ink:

I'm Hannah. Are you going to Tokyo?

Even before I finish reading, my cheeks sneak upwards into a smile. I nod and then look up to meet her eyeline. I keep nodding.

“I'm going to Tokyo,” I tell her.

We're going to Tokyo.
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