Spiritus Mundi

A Collective Memory

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We hope you enjoy reading our 2007 Spiritus Mundi collection. This publication is dedicated to alumni of the University Honors Program from 1957 to 2007. Your commitment and loyalty has left a lasting legacy to the Honors Program and Colorado State University.
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chipotle tango
Erin Wurtz

there’s a man sitting across the chipotle from me
eating his burrito alone
a sea of empty chairs, tables
parts us
a lone couple –
 apart
hiss, fry, spatter,
kitchen clatter,
and a mexican melody
serenade us . . .

the angular chairs begin to dance
a late-dinner jive
the room warms to the trumpet
and we dance, joining the celebration
a lone couple –
together
the thrill of music
fanfare
crescendo . . .

there’s a man sitting across the chipotle from me
eating his burrito alone
folds his paper
shares my glance – a recognition
and i wonder,
what would happen if
i approached him and asked,
“sir, would you care to tango?”
chopin disk
Laura Rosen

00:00 – push play . . .
from a silent circle, suddenly sound
a single definitive stroke and it has begun
fingers giving birth to a thousand transient lives
(notes are born damned, their lives short and fleeting)
weaving into my soul, covering heartaches and troubles
like a scrolling aural blanket, a healing bandage made of
nocturnes and ballades etudes and barcarolles
preludes and waltzes polonaises, mazurkas
the language is music that speaks to the soul
notes of black and white circles and lines uniting
creating an endless parade of crescendo and diminuendo
a galloping journey, along invisible paths to my ears
then drifting down to settle deeply into my heart
there’s no joy like nocturne in c-sharp minor
every piece plays endlessly in my head
chopin’s piano lives long after
the music stops
Vaseless
Amanda Bell
Chimes and Clocks
Laura Rosen

i.
spring breezes spill the sound
of wind chimes over the air
harmonizing with mockingbirds,
cardinals, titmice, crickets, cicadas,
coaxing summer into view

wind chimes remind me
of a childhood past –
summers on a screened-in porch
to the tune of wind chimes,
chosen, hung by my father

a man who could only find happiness
in the yard – in snow, or leaves,
or bringing a new garden to life.
who showed us simple joy in a stream,
flowing freely once we cleaned away debris

now his yard is filled with birdsong,
flocking to feeders draped from trees
and when the wind blows, one chime sounds,
mournful and haunting, somehow like a shipyard-
there is something longing in the sound.

ii.
our house is filled with clocks
the chime of a ship’s clock at eight bells,
and every half hour in between,
and the grandfather clock, every fifteen minutes

on the hour, the house will ring with the sound
of st. michael’s or whittington chimes,
the sound reverberating against the hardwood
and strangers ask, “how do you sleep?”
but my father’s clocks are like a heartbeat,  
the soul of the house, a sound as familiar  
as frogs croaking me to sleep on summer nights-  
i’ve had to learn to live without both.

my great-grandfather, a painter, used to ruin  
pocketwatches, and gave them to my father-  
broken toys, but beloved, from a man  
like a second father.

for us, sunday night was time to wind clocks-  
(daylight savings, more than a chore)  
traveling around the house with a watch,  
turning golden keys, making time right again.

iii.

in my new apartment, where i live alone,  
i received a package one day, unexpected.  
it was a gift, from my father-  
but for no reason, just because.

a wind chime, metal and plate glass,  
with handpainted flowers.  
we hung it together, in front of the window  
where i keep two birdfeeders for finches.

maybe some day, i’ll have a clock,  
sitting on the mantle, chiming westminster  
on the quarters, filling the space with memories,  
and i’ll know i’m home.  
daughters and fathers are not so different.
Leap of Faith
Amanda Bell
Graveyard Etiquette
Amanda Bell

I was on a run once and at the end of the road was a cemetery. I slowed to a jog, and then, because I felt disrespectful passing so many lives so quickly, I began to walk. I passed Gonzalezes, Smiths, Pimples, Rubias, Goldings, Winterbournes. As I walked, I noticed the ages on each tombstone. Tom Rapin was 56, Gloria Shour was 34. I saw Rosa Ray was only 11 months and she had 11 flowers at her grave for the 11 years she’d been dead.

I walked through the rows, leaves and twigs snapping and popping under my feet. Seymour, Whitman, Weinstein. I came to an overturned urn and underneath it was the contents of the urn-spilled, purple plastic flowers, supposedly belonging to a one Maude Manson, dead since 1899. How odd.

One tombstone had a notch sticking out from the rest of the granite, and I stopped. Thomas Sander had only been dead two weeks. There were still helium inflated balloons tied to the corner of the notch. I kneeled, curious. It was a little compartment with an angel as the pulling tab. The “We Love You” balloon kept nudging my elbow, egging me on. I opened up the small chamber, no bigger than a child’s heart, and saw a piece of paper. I glanced at the balloon; it fluttered jovially in the wind, bouncing, like it was tied to the wrist of a toddler. I unfolded the paper. There was a crudely drawn turtle and under it, “Remember?” No, I didn’t.

I followed the paths through the rest of the cemetery, until I decided it was time to go, after seeing a few tombstones and graves that were oddly familiar in name and craft.

Making my way out of the place, a strong wind tugged my running shorts against my legs. Leaves darted past me and swirled around my shoes, circling me as if I was about to be sacrificed. Somehow, it was soothing, almost as though a huge sigh escaped from the graveyard.
The wind died down, enough so that an unfamiliar crunching caught my attention. Six deer stood grazing to my left, in the midst of a few rows of graves. They were eating the flowers off of tombstones, the grass off of the graves, even plastic flowers meant to last all year long. They looked at me, chewed, and looked away. They knew.

I kept on, ready to run again, but was distracted by the Saturday morning mourners smiling and looking at the unaffected wildlife. They leaned against their car doors, or had their hands resting on the stone slabs. Steam curled out of their mouths, whispering upwards.

As I passed by Rosa Ray on the way out, I stuck a small scrap of paper into her array of flowers. It said, “Remember?” On my way out, I thought I should’ve grabbed a plastic purple flower for her, too. Maude wasn’t going to miss it. She didn’t even know what plastic was.
“I would rather die than grow old.”
Paige is twenty, perched on the edge of a twin-sized bed
with a broken mattress spring;
she must take my silence for acquiescence.
as she follows Ponce de Leon, flipping, dispassionate,
through young and modern pages of her magazine.

But when is that, exactly? when does it begin?
that age ceases to be glowing candles on cake,
I want to ask.
so we may mark it on our calendars,
face the firing squad confident and poised
until blood gradually weeps onto deserving green grass?

Of course not;
we wait.
offsetting superficial symptoms of an inevitable disease,
unwilling to bequeath possession, emotion, and memory;
accordingly, we wander a maze of fine lines and the fine print
of an agreement we don’t remember entering.
Daffodil
Sarah Frankel
I saw a fox the other day in a neighborhood park. Mangy, looking half-starved despite his close proximity to a children’s playground. Should tear down some of these fences; see how the fat, idle, suburban purse poodles fare when confronted with the need to survive. Come to think of it, how would the fat, idle, suburban man fare when taken outside the walls of his climate controlled home. My guess is he’d be cold. We live in the comfort of 70 degree winters, defiant of the reality outdoors until the ass-puckering pajama dash for the morning paper. (And you smug bath-robed coffee clenching stoics who stroll to the curbside with the dignity and gait of a Caribbean drug lord aren’t fooling me; you’re as cold as the rest of us.) The Eskimos find shelter in continuously sub-zero (Fahrenheit or Celsius, take your pick) temperatures not in their teepees or igloos, but primarily in the clothes they wear. The Eskimos heat a small area around themselves with their own radiant body heat. In the suburbs, we have expanded our shelter to 1000 square foot plots heated by coal, wood, and natural gas. Isolated from both the strip mines and clear cuts of the countryside and the smog and grime of the city, we are willfully ignorant of the ecological consequences.

I continued walking, following the course of a stream, skirting the paved sidewalk where baby-laden strollers careen past, half-guided by young Ipod deafened moms, and jump-suited businessmen bark into their cell phones, lagging behind their 8 year old son who rollerblades ahead trying to impress a disinterested audience. After all, what good is a paved sidewalk as a nature trail? You can’t experience nature without getting your boots dirty. You might as well put a paved road in; make it another National Park featuring drive-thru nature. And what’s the use in sidewalks along major roads? The only action they see is the occasional jogger and Fourth of July spectators. Because who the hell walks to get anywhere when they have the choice of
two, three, four cars to drive? Walk along the major thoroughfares in suburbia and you will suffer the bombardment of suspicious stares, surreptitious locking of doors, and drivers unaccustomed to pedestrian traffic. Driving a car is the most likely way to die in America but walking among them might be even more dangerous. People in the suburbs drive mostly to commute. Their jobs/schools are too far for them to walk or bike to. Well damnit, I say it’s time our tax dollars stopped catering to the lazy by adding lanes to our streets and widening our doorways. (Don’t kid yourself Ms. Full Figured; you need a dress in size “fat.”) There are two solutions to traffic congestion: less cars or less people. Why not both?

I come unexpectedly upon a group of ducks who sound their indignation as they scatter from a cove. What were they after in there? Ah yes, the American Dream. Trapped among the vegetation I see discarded action figures, Starbucks cups, golf balls, tennis balls, apple cores, beer cans, parking tickets, grocery bags, hairspray cans, toothbrushes, socks, a pair of unmatching gloves, a radiator cap. Someone should clean this place up, care about it, give a damn. On the other hand, why?

I follow the stream of sludge (no longer in the park) where it doesn’t trickle but oozes over concrete slabs (prevent erosion) to a pond hedged in by an office building and the intersection of two six-lane streets. Water mounted speakers playing bird calls attract goose shit from hundreds of yards away. A possum lies facedown in the water, unmoving. Could be playing dead, but it looks like another suicide.

No wonder that fox didn’t look well.
Mind’s Eye
Jessica Sullenberger
Remember Africa
Naomi Gheen

The vibrant stamp of clapping palms,
The chant of a hundred voices strong,
Bodies swaying line by line,
The rhythm and cry of an African song –
The pulse of the soul of Africa.

Skins as dark as the new-tilled earth,
Women stoop, and lift, and rise;
Boys with sticks in a lazy swing
Following cows ’neath radiant skies –
The beat of the heart of Africa.

Children’s faces stoned in fear,
Watching friends so cruelly die;
Handed guns and knives to kill.
Not allowed to mourn or cry.

Villages surrounded and burned;
Screams erupt into the night,
The women raped, the babies killed,
The men are slaughtered as they fight.

Eyes are hardened, slit in hate,
Others empty, hungry, wide;
Ashen circles on the ground,
No place to run, no place to hide –
The flooding blood of Africa.

Alas, the blood of Africa!

Africa! Oh brilliant land
So full of culture, color, life!
Why do your people bathe in blood?
Why the sickened, craving strife?

Why the horror? Why the flames?
Why the desperate, wailing cry?
Why the lifeless, vacant stares?
Why do your children starve and die?

Peace, oh people, peace, oh land,
Have hope, remember love.
Remember sacred beauty, life -

Remember Africa.
A Demise
Amanda Bell

You are a deadened pitch in an echoing silo
The wind scoops away your sibilant sounds
And it tastes like the smell of old cigars
God puffs his smoke
And rain shatters the wind
Ohio will never be the same

I have lied and the lateros know it
Cracked cans peak up from the stagnant water and reeds
And the silo is defiant and littered as ever
It simply won’t collapse onto itself
But it once was useful and had purpose
Like you

Bright brick and sepia cement were a proud cylinder of grain
You should jump in, but try to avoid the rust-stained and tattered cans
The wind is completed by the rain that fills in its holes
And you are like a timpani
Still vibrating, but lower now and ever softening

The wind picks up, the silo crumbles, the cans are covered, your sounds evaporate
and the lateros cheer.
Blizzard Palisade
Erin Wurtz
In the morning we go out with our nets to catch crickets and sunrise and reflections that make our eyes hurt.

The salamander lives in the sprinkler box. We name him Tiger because of his stripes and bring him crickets in the summer mornings. Tiger is lonely because he lives under the earth so we are his friends.

We dance with butterflies and use beach towels for wings across the grass.

And it smells like pool and sand and swimsuits. We are sticky with lime popsicles. We build castles with twigs and red buckets.

And we use rocks for the drawbridge.

We walk slowly near the pet graveyard and we put dandelions there. *Are there cats on the other side?* And she says the sky is purple.

And it doesn’t matter how hard I try, Tiger doesn’t smile. He sits in the box and eats the shadows.

And the grasshoppers tickle our faces in the tall grass and we are looking for a log for Tiger. Salamanders like logs and darkness. (Once we found a baby salamander, brought him out to play in the sun, but he dried up and died. She said it was my fault.)

And suddenly we feel fat rain clouds watching us and hurry home to the smell of barbeque and fish and dad in an apron on the deck.

We put the stick in for Tiger. He moves away and we close the lid. Maybe it isn’t mossy enough.

And we collect petals off the grass.
alley sunflowers (between 7th and 8th streets)
Erin Wurtz

radiating from an injured stop sign,
bright blossoms shine down on me
this morning of promise
a sun
(flowers) rise
awakes my fears/hopes/dreams.
sunflower rays shoot through –
stilling
beating hummingbird wings
brushing stomach walls.
irresistible
yellow smiles!

four weeks late
of fragrance – a wilted promise.
only left – a memory:
bright blossoms
shine down on me
this morning of promise.
vivid, bright, lovely life!
Potty training is an important part of any young man’s life, and every young man ought to know a few things before he comes to this milestone. Not the least of which is to always remember to wash your hands when you finish.

Now, most potties will be very happy to be trained, if you make it into a game; as long as it thinks it is playing, your potty will learn with joy. An excellent way to turn training into a game is by the use of treats, after you teach your toilet a skill (not a trick, that’s a demeaning term, and they can sense condescension), flush something fun down it; it might enjoy a nice bleach disk, or maybe a paper towel (just as a change of pace); however, do not flush anything with large parts down, any item too large could cause your friend to choke, and (in the worst-case scenario) even throw up. Some experts would say that treats can cause the fixture to become dependent on reward in order to maintain good behavior, most of these researches suggest instead the use of play as a reward. Perhaps once the toilet has performed the task you’ve asked it to, you can then splash around in it with scrubber toy, or simply give it a good cleaning.

It is also important to remember to take proper hygienic care of any toilet you own. Regular brushing and checkups are imperative to your Jon’s health. You’ll want to take the toilet to the plumb’s (plumber’s) office at least thrice a year. You may choose to clean your toilet at home, or take it to a professional; another option is to take the toilet to one of the self-service business which allow you to use their equipment to clean your pot.

Remember, with potties, patience makes perfect. Enjoy the process, this a very special time in any toilet-owner relationship. Make sure every day you spend some quality time with your potty so that you won’t wake up and find that you’ve missed out on all those memories that make having a toilet worthwhile.
Footsteps to Valhalla
Ravi Singaraju
Ant
Sarah Frankel
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