



# Spiritus Mundi

A Collective Memory

Honors Literary Magazine  
Spring 2016

Colorado  
State  
University

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*A Collective Memory*

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Cover Art:  
Allison Allum  
“*Stonecold*”

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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.  
Whaiaipo, 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.

***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—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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