

2010

IU Southeast Review

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The IU Southeast Review is funded through student activity fees.

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Untitled
Oil
Aberlyn Sweetland-May

Lounging Angel

Russell Jackson

Lounging angel,
impose yourself as my muse,
charms as fleeting as you make them.
Stretch your sumptuous curves
subtle Venus,
demanding Ishtar,
make of yourself an archetype.
You have won
your immortality in strokes of my pen
simply by coming near
luxuriating within my vision,
seeing immortal ink and paper in my grasp,
and passing along
forever from the realm of my knowledge.
You have worked divine charm most artfully,
so I sing your praises, as commanded;
but beware he who beholds
this sarcophagus I've scribed you,
not so enraptured as I
by either your beauty or your intent.

Hooked

Selena McCracken

Distant whispering, flickering tempest
whose twinkles spear the supernova in my eye
with a silver ping, making my ears ring
making breath too painfully intense.

Earth crust crunching under my stunned stumble
guided in circles by the moon halo
pushing out the waves with a sonic blast,
proving the powerlessness that I must own.

Is the weight on my chest, looking up like this
from trying to breathe in all the free air at once
or is my heart exposed to its magnetic match
and if I linger too long,
life could be crushed under the force of it.

But they enthrall me so, that I am snared pitifully
they glisten in my peripheral,
like white gold to a gravedigger
and sing that pinging ring, like blades sharpening
attacking my emotions,
so I feel their nothingness and chaos.

I would scream at them if I weren't choking
and it would make me feel so lonely
as I am certainly outnumbered
and captured, it appears, atop this frozen sphere
by their gaze, as if to say
when you engage us, you cannot escape us.

Now Back to Our Regular Programming

Ian Uriel Girdley

Oh, flippant thumb, how quickly you become so sore
stroking the remote back and forth between broadcast
and cable news shows, there is a man, I presume, a suit and tie, in the least,
another the same with different stripes, and ladies, I'd say,
different colored pant suits, all with necks splayed from the collar
and atop these necks, guess what? The same pair of lips.
Now these lips to my dreary eyes do not appear on unique faces,
but in place of the faces, sitting squarely on the acme of the body,
the otherwise adeptly beheaded stump: gigantic, head-sized mouths,
but the mouths do not belong to the necks, no, they are not real mouths
but electronic replicas, thumb, see the wires coming out of the back
of each one, leading back across the studio to some central server
telling each one to say the same thing, sure they are wearing
different shades of lipstick, and some louder, some frowning
some grinning, well, it's still ones and zeros, that's just good programming.
Flip faster thumb, spinning these yarns together, if you're not too numb,
not to spurn the semblance of words but make the hyperreal lips kiss in a
blur,
tightening my ears between a sensational vice, where only the most
frightening
words are heard in some experimental-noise-fiction-remix, oh how I miss
the old television set where I could pinch the knob between you and my
forefinger,
slightly turn so the channel sets in the peaceful valley between two stations,
tuner tuned to an indecipherable signal, the unique fuzz of nothing,
return to my apathetic cornflakes and receive my white noise properly.

Baking Lessons

Christina Davidson

I ask her
about meringue
how to keep it from
weeping;
because another friend
is going through hell
and Auntie knows
the perfect recipe
for round lemon
fluffy floating heaven
one can place inside a paper box.

Auntie says,
Add some cornstarch
if you got any
don't worry
if your peaks ain't proud yet
or your lemon curd
don't make the mouth
twinge with a grin
like mine.
Soon your pans will be
scarred
your fingers,
wise.

You'll get
plenty of practice honey;
with so many reasons to
keep a crust
waitin' in the fridge,
chances to nod,

sayin' your daddy
was a decent,
hard-working man
or I hear so and so
is hiring again
Yes love,
you'll make
a thousand pies.

And I will,
each time pausing,
allowing the grieved
to hold a moment
of goodness.
With every forkful,
sorrow pangs subside,
as a sweet reminder
lingers on the tongue.
We will weep,
but not alone.

Fire from the gods

Brandon Stettenbenz

A starless night,
grave darkness
swallowed by
neon violence,
slashing brilliant
fleeting scars,
across heavy
summer skin
silent strobing fires,
glowing veins
in midnight gloom.



Untitled
Digital Photography
Rebeka Trapp

Old Man

Amanda Trent

The cane scraped raggedly against pavement
icy wind tugged and pulled.
Snow clung to the ground, refusing to give up.
A shaky hand held tightly relying on the cane
hoping to win the battle
that these forces drew out.
Step by step down the driveway.
Cars sped by so inattentive,
to the struggles
of a pained, withered face.
Completely alone
disease controlled, taking obstacles
head on.
The frail figure made its way to the road
body convulsing as it reached
one hand out, the other gripping the cane
A simple task became a war.
Balance tried to overtake
with the cane held between his feet
hunched over, and grimacing
he won
the everyday process
of getting the mail

Squatters

Ian Uriel Girdley

All of the cabinets were empty. Beside the door, a gallon jug of store-brand spring water sat three quarters full on the checkered linoleum floor. A faded valance still hung over the window behind the sink but no curtains. The knobs of the sink were turned on, but no water flowed out. On the counter just to the left of the sink, a sparse collection of pork and beans, ravioli, beef stew, Spaghetti-O's, and tuna were gathered--food that could be consumed straight from the can. The can opener sat on the stove, its tip dirty from the juices of whatever meal was last eaten. A spoon, bowl, and pocket knife accompanied the can opener, the only sort of kitchenware in the house. No bulbs filled any of the light sockets.

The bathroom sink was painted in hairs from the grimy razor that sat next to it. Rust stains ran down the basin from the faucet. The toilet was stained with urine and fecal matter--no toilet bowl brush, just a bucket, almost empty, with "Flush Water" written across the side. An empty toilet paper roll held two dirty toothbrushes. There was no toothpaste.

So long since its last steam cleaning the odor of dog urine began to seep up through the carpet and now fully permeated the bottom half of the house. The crème walls of the living room held a collage of large and small smudges and penciled notes of phone numbers and gibberish. In the shadows of the floor empty beer cans sat as makeshift ashtrays; empty junk food bags littered around the milk-crate-makeshift-chairs; three piles of dirty blankets made up three separate beds. Sand, hair, used cigarette butts, and miscellaneous debris floated on top of the stained carpet, showing the common pathways where the nap had turned brown and matted under the heavy travel of unclean feet.

The yard seemed the same as every other on the block-- the grass half dead, half overgrown, covered in fallen limbs, weeds tangled around the “For Sale” sign from this or that realtor that had long ago abandoned it. The street was empty--a ghost suburb.

From the street one could see that the outside of the house needed nothing but the dust washed off and a gutter, hanging still from a storm some months ago, put back up. From the street one could see that one of the upstairs bedrooms must have been a nursery because the ceiling fan was painted in primary colors. From the street one could see that the other rooms were free from smudge marks or graffiti (as they weren't used except for private moments with lovers or to cry alone).

From the street one could see the bright eviction notice still hanging on the door. From the street, by the last light of the setting sun, one could see five shadowy figures pass a ten dollar box of red wine above their heads, taking their drinks in turn.

Always, Never

Madison Fay

I have always been amused by my tiny ears. You were never unforgiving. I lined up words in a way that made you seem at fault; you weren't, yet you always took the blame. You couldn't imagine a life without me. You couldn't imagine a life without my goading or my affected humility. You cried when I did. We had strategies to make it through the hum-drum, but those were huh-drum, too. I never can remember why I first noticed you.

On hot days we stayed inside. On cold days you were sad. We always talked about things we weren't sure of. I always tried to pass along a sentiment. You were always telling jokes. When I looked away I almost never meant it. I always had ticket stubs in my back pocket. You never wanted to be alone. I would watch the trees outside for hours and you said that since you met me you noticed the sky. I try to compete with everyone. I do not want to end up normal. I am always just leaving. I never have time to see my little brother. I am always just leaving. I am tired of going through doors. I'm not very tired. I'm dead.

You have a pile of my gifts stored away. You're a squirrel protecting his winter ration. You are friends with your father. You moved things out of the road. I was lazier than I let on. I tried knitting. I tried cooking. I weighed my options too often. I wanted to be great by being the antonym of that word. I never thought I'd end up by a stove. You never thought you'd end up behind a desk; at least not one that wasn't covered in knobs and flickering lights.

We made our hegira to the northeastern sea where the wind was too strong for you, but just right for me. I made a glass mobile for Timothy. You walked always several feet ahead. I felt that I was always never one with you. You were unnaturally perturbed by his heavy breathing. I would pull off his socks every

night and they would be wet with sweat. He had your same heavy eyes. We bought a horse but he was allergic. I rode the horse and remembered a deep part of me I'd missed. I worried we knew each other too well.

The places where we couldn't meet he filled. Soon we had to buy new shoes every few months. We felt accomplished but didn't know why. You stood always by the back porch swing and watched the birds peck. I was always cutting vegetables. You loved running baths but hated taking them. You tried not to think about anyone, not even me. You wondered why you couldn't remember dates. I was always thinking how I would've seen things.

The world eats our footprints. And still, I wake up every morning waiting for you.



Portrait in the Name of Self
Digital Photography
Rosella Pearl

Custodian

Scott Brewer

There are words hidden in the silence under the skylight this morning, with nine o'clock mass still a few hours away. The trickle of water echoing cavernous from the baptismal pool. A fitting prelude to hymn and prayer. I can place my hands, before the space is filled with lungs, sniffy noses and the sudden surprised exclamations of little children, I can place my hands on the time-worn tops of the pew and feel the fingers of fifty years beneath mine. Feel the faith inside those hands, left lingering on the wood, echoing footsteps in a house built beyond brick and mortar.

My friend, with whom I make sandwiches every morning in the food court, when he describes the 1999 bombing of Belgrade to me, it is not in hushed tones. There is no funerary tint to his description. I cannot smell embalming fluid as he speaks of climbing hills in the night air with his friends, age ten, to watch missile meet city. I can see the memory of giddiness in his eyes, the faces of children watching fireworks. Hearing him speak of it, in the same awed tones I reserve for Thunder over Louisville, I am removed from the destruction. I was taught to fear the fire that erases names from maps, taught to fear the falling buildings but, when you are very small, even ballistic missiles are Fourth of July party favors worth cheering for. Food service really opens your eyes.

She's talking about Tyler Durden to me, again, even though he isn't the narrator, with her eyes half closed. We are trying to find the meaning of clean slate.

Whatever it is, it means a lot to the slate, she says.

When my eye glows for a moment with that old fire.

For the longest time, I wanted to see the slate clean. I wanted that fire for everyone, everywhere. That smile when you

are too near the flames, your lips pulling back, that animal grin. I wanted to wash the plastic globe in my classroom with lighter fluid. It was all too complex. It couldn't be saved the way it was. I wanted to cauterize the human race. So I agreed with Durden, siding with the porcelain visage of the devil, when the angel so obviously wins in the end.

The first manager I ever worked for in the food court told me to mop until the floor looked dirty. He was a Clint Eastwood look alike. Man incarnate complete with a penchant for cigars, see "seegahs," in his gunslinger's dialect. He said there were imperfections beneath the grime and, when I was finished mopping, we would be able to see nothing but the white tile and the immovable stains beneath. They were cracks in the floor from where the building had grown and shrunk over the years. The natural marks of age that any building has to bear. His excuse, the oldest excuse, was that a new floor would have been too expensive.

We don't get to see the sun march across the pews while we're working. See those mote filled rays as silent metronome and you'll start to feel like an instrument, woodwind maybe, something that breath inhabits for a moment, before becoming music.

Buildings contain very specific silences. The lack of sound is tuned by the people who pass through during the day. Filing in, filing out. Schools echo after hours with their locker conversations. The hallways, sweet smell of floor cleaners, the dust odor of the school library down one way, and the scent of chlorine down another. All underfoot, all beneath the quiet, the silence that hangs in lieu of bells, in place of catcalls and shouting. Hours after band practice and orchestra tuning has ended. The silence barely broken by the custodian's music player, or years ago, his favorite music piped through the loudspeaker system. The thirty-eight catching a bit here and there, because he has to hear Elton John when he's locking the doors at night, listens to it every evening. Cleaning the same floor for twenty years.

Somewhere a senator stares at his parking space. His name proudly emblazoned on a plaque there, a little weathered at this point. He's been at it a long time, and all he can see through his thick glasses are the deep down cracks. From where the building has shifted since he signed on. Still, he picks up his mop and bucket, and goes to work.

Beneath the eyes of icons I burn, at evening mass, build better worlds behind my eyelids for smaller hands to inherit. "This is a chemical burn," I whisper beneath the calm gaze of the wooden Madonna. I worry, and she knows I worry, that they'll always remain there, built beneath my closed eyes. As he describes the shells exploding in his city he's whittling away at weak foundations, because no matter what you build, children will make angels in the ashes. "And it will hurt worse than you've ever been burned."

She's standing at the end of the driveway, beside her shoes, the captive queen Cassiopeia is hanging upside down above her, chained to her chair, and she's wondering why everything comes back to *Fight Club* for me. It's real, she says, but so dark. We build, she says, we build for a time when nothing falls. There are always going to be those kids who kick over sand castles for no reason.

Build them anyway, she says.

I am reminded of Alan Moore's Eden image of Anarchism. She is Eve, in the moonlight shadow of her house. Calm, and on the offensive against the darkness. Love with a hammer in hand, for her the world is bright and full of loving people assaulted by the broken few. She is Intent to build simply to spite the shadow. And while she speaks I am made a caricature of that other side. Love with a box of matches. One of the broken few but looking longingly on the light. Wanting desperately to believe the world wants to move. Wasting my breath defending the dark. A grinning mask, and cheap façade next to truth.

So I spent time building my fire, found a steady supply of kindling in Anarchist literature. Considering Parliament with a fistful of gelignite. I read the ire of Emma Goldman, railing against marriage, men, the State. Flailing after she was wronged as a young girl. Coming out swinging on all sides at a world of darkness and evil men. I read Proudhon, with his sweeping condemnation of apathy, his fear of a world consumed by lax law, run by the few, wringing their hands in dark rooms. I read Kropotkin's odyssey from burning markets to Siberian rivers, his loss of faith in the Russian state, and discovery of the European writers. I read Thoreau's impotent shouting in a world that operated out of the reach of his verbiage. I read Chomsky, last, and tasted how dark the world today can be, learned to fear the television.

Still mopping the floor in the kitchen at my university. Feel-

ing that the cracks in the floor defined it, rather than the paint, the stone. Feeling as if the world could catch at any moment. A tinderbox waiting for another assassinated Austrian Archduke. I wanted to build from ashes, rather than refurbish this old flammable world. Mark on a clean slate, rather than scribble in the margins.

He will click off the lights, lock the doors on his way out once Elton John stops spinning. Hang his mops to dry, and shut up all of that knowledge behind bars as if to say, here we have something worth protecting, or, here is something to be kept caged. The building stands behind him in the evening, broken in places, but its architect, a man or woman of antiquity, did not envision him as the one to see that it remain standing all these years later. He is its overseer in a way more intimate than the principal, the dean, or even the teachers.

So I exhausted Anarchy. As an ideal it amounts to a dark optimism. Anarchism is to politics what Evangelism is to Christianity. You wish for the world to sublimate, suddenly the masses rise and choke off the few who decide how many ballistic missiles to produce this year. You hope for this uprising while at the same moment, displaying in writing exactly how bad everything is. As if naming the darkness is enough to move people to fight it. Naming a disease never made anyone feel better, never healed the sick. Waiting for the people to suddenly declare peace is the political equivalent of waiting for the rapture.

It is not in the cracks of institutions that we find truth, or in the clean kept swaths of perfect flooring. In the last year I've learned that institutions stand, or fall, not by their leader's whim, but at the hands of the lowest cleaners and brushers. The people, who wake up before the sun and keep the wallpaper hanging, replace light bulbs and check the air conditioners. I wanted those people to control the world, take power from the administration and give it to the custodians. Shows how blind I was. The people already have all the power. It is in our hands to wash or let rot the buildings we've inherited.

A Different Bar

Ian Uriel Girdley

This wasn't the Video Saloon. Dennis standing in front of a dartboard asking the players to wing darts at him. "Don't hit me man." Everything wood and red-brick. Hipsters playing pool over pitchers of Amberbock, poets buying tequila shots for destitute artists and off-duty strippers, chatting about in the dim lights and haze of smoke and pheromones. And pretty girls. The kind of pretty girls that don't wear make-up or bother combing their hair much. Pretty girls in toboggan hats and army pants, in short skirts and big black boots. Real, sexy girls. Blonde girls with dreadlocks, disheveled brunettes, red-heads with pig-tails that will fuck the soul out of you if you are lucky enough. The Vid with the cheapest beer in town, but hordes of us would still file out of the bar, around to the alley, to take shots off an Old Crow bottle or toke on a communal joint. We would file back in to that holiest of holy bars only found by its halo of second story neon beer lights and a little plaque by the door listing the hours. We march through the glass door up the stairs like an army of beer ants preparing for winter, ants with lost souls baptizing ourselves with libations, hoping for some kind of cool salvation.

But this wasn't the Video Saloon where I had spent so many nights in my younger Bloomington days. This bar had too much ventilation. The smoke never lingered, but was sucked out into the night air. There was one pool table occupied by one couple. No crowds lingered watching and waiting for next game, a line of quarters on the rail to mark their turn. No one drank from pitchers. No one seemed to be coming or leaving or coming back with bloodshot eyes or a whiskey cough. Dennis wasn't here and I didn't know anyone. This wasn't even Bloomington and no one seemed hip. Jeans and T-shirts, or a sexy dress with too much makeup. The place was too damned bright and smelled like perfume.

This place had the bartenders going for it, though, the closest thing to friends you could find here – attractive females with nice curves, faces holding that natural kind of beauty, the kind found in the imperfections. They weren't supermodels but girls you could ask out and probably get shot down.

A trappy bleached-blonde bar patron fell onto me. She wore a silky shirt with lace down the cleavage and tight, faded jeans that must have had holes pre-torn in the knees when she bought them.

“Is that my drink?” she shhlurred, pointing to my fresh Maker's and Ginger on the table.

I sat alone to avoid confrontation with unwanted patrons, including her boyfriend with the red-splotchy birthmark like a burn across his face. He wasn't in the room, though. Must've been ordering another round or flirting with the bartenders. I sure as hell wasn't giving this girl my drink, no matter how hot she thought she was. I patted her on the leg.

“No, honey, you must've left yours somewhere else.” I winked and gave a smirk disguised as a smile. She stumbled away with her face contorted into a sour mash pout. She would've been fuckable with a good face-scrub and the knowledge that the world didn't owe her batting eyelashes a damned thing. I sucked my drink down, moved to the other room and took the closest seat at the bar.

The closest seat happened to be beside a slender brunette. She wasn't one of the bartenders, but she looked like she could've been. I lit a cigarette and shot her a quick smile to let her know that I was just here for the drink, that I was sitting in this seat only because it was the closest one at the bar. She was looking at me. I ordered my drink and took a pull off my cigarette like Humphrey Bogart. Here's looking at you, kid. I lifted my glass from its bar napkin coaster and took a sip. She continued chatting with her rotund friend to her right. I really didn't listen and pretended to completely ignore her sip after sip until the bourbon-ginger ale concoction dipped below the ice, ignore her until she spoke to me. I wasn't here for that, anyway.



“What is that?” she screamed, pointing past my glass to my left hand as if I was holding a snake. My thumb and pinky twisted



Chaos
Mixed Media Drawing
Rebeka Trapp

my ring in circles around my ring finger.

“It’s my wedding ring,” I replied, nonchalantly. I took a sip of my poison and placed another cigarette between my lips.

“I got married in June.”

She flung herself from the barstool, almost fell off of it. In an act of hyperbolic drama she hid behind her friend in the next stool over; whimpering. Her friend simply smiled and continued the conversation where it had been left off. We had been conversing inexplicitly. Run of the mill stuff like where do you work, what’s your major, are you good in bed.

“I’m a writer and a pizza delivery driver; I’m an English and Journalism major; the last question was a joke, right?”

As the conversation wore on with the new friend--we’ll call her Friend Two--a man approached Friend One hiding behind her. They spoke for a brief time between flirty laughs, then he disappeared to the back of the bar. The larger of the two friends blushed slightly and leaned in to speak quietly.

“We took him to a hotel and shared him a couple months ago.” She said it like she was reassuring me that he was nothing to compete with, that her friend remained available.

If this was the Video Saloon I would have invited them to a motel for shots; my instincts told me I could’ve. I probably would’ve slept with Friend Two just to get a taste of the first. I would have slid my wedding ring off when I entered the bar. No. If this was the Video Saloon I wouldn’t be married. I probably wouldn’t have money for a hotel either, but I would have had a handle of whiskey stashed outside. I would’ve awakened in a strange bed with the two of them, ruing the one and not remembering much about the other—or the night in general, for that matter.

But this wasn’t the Video Saloon, and I just came in for a drink. I continued spinning my wedding ring as I finished the last of the watery brown cocktail. Truth is that the Video Saloon was no longer the Video Saloon: there was a whole new crowd there dressed in Urban Outfitters and Abercrombie; there was no smoking since the city banned it; most of the old people, the hipsters and scenesters, have been kicked out because we’ve all gotten too drunk on at least one occasion; the pretty girls were all pregnant or working in offices; and, most importantly, I was not

there; I was wasting my time here.

Entertaining the thought of a threesome with the two nameless friends was as meaningful as watching a movie of someone I no longer knew. I said my goodbyes, and walked into the cold, lonely streets. They wouldn't last long--the streets, that is. Soon I'd be snuggled in bed with my wife and three dogs, a warm serenity that wouldn't leave me empty and disoriented in the morning, a new kind of salvation that I couldn't have known in my youth.

Picture Window

Ian Uriel Girdley

I held his dick in my hand, stuck it in the plastic pee bottle to let him empty his bladder. We did not talk; he only communicated in grunts when he had to use the bathroom or wanted turned on his side to watch the squirrels out the window. This is how he wanted to die, on a hospital bed in front of the large picture window where he had spent his life quietly watching squirrels amidst the clamorous circus of raising five girls. When they spawned thirteen grandchildren the noise did not dissipate, and he only grew quieter. Now he was wordless, communicating as the apes that he didn't believe we had evolved from.

He would buy us candy at the general store, and change would fall through the hole in his cupped hand where the second half of his ring finger had once been. His wedding band got caught on the edge of a slide popping the top two segments off like a dandelion bloom in a kid's game. The remaining stub was useful for thumping our heads when we were too loud in church. Now the fluid around his heart rendered even this stub, the punisher of loud children, useless. The only movement, the only life, was in his eyes as he watched the squirrels chase each other up and down the gray maples in the front yard.

It was futile to tell him I was sorry when my aim was off, splattering a small amount of urine on his pajama pants. It would dry in a few minutes if he even knew it was wet. Maybe he would appreciate the moisture. His skin was so dry; even his moles were dry. His liver spots looked like paintings of brown prunes. My mother, aunt, and grandmother gave him frequent sponge baths, rubbed lotion onto his arid flesh.

He was so skinny and weak, with arms like ostrich legs. And pale--that hit me the most. My mother once told a group of coworkers, when she caught them telling racist jokes, that her dad

was black. In the middle of summer he could have passed, riding his lawn mower around shirtless, thick red clay arms and his taut moles the color of tar bubbles. Now he was a sickly yellow gray, the color of office walls. His breathing, also, seemed as shallow as the pigment of his skin.

He didn't even smell right—he smelled like an old man. He had always worn a unique musk, not that of an old man but of a hard day's work—his own brand of sweat mixed with the odor of an old pickup truck, a freshly dug ditch, and a hint of indistinct sweetness. That smell lingers, still, in his bed and on his pillows. Sometimes I hope to smell it on mine, to remember him, to be him. Most of the time my blankets just smell like sex and whiskey sweat, the lazy odor of education, of not having to dig ditches in the hot sun and seldom mow a yard.

It was important for us to get an education, though, for him, a man who dropped out of school after eighth grade to support his family in lieu of his deceased father; a man who had trouble reading his bible and only managed to through sheer tenacity, a man who wanted a better life for his grandchildren than semi-literacy and manual labor.

Education meant guilt for me. I felt guilty for every time I replied “nothing” when he asked what I learned in school that day, guilty for every time I slept through a class at college. But the guilt didn't hit me until I sat beside his death bed, as I missed a week of school to return home to tend to his dying body, to hold his pee bottle.

I imagined that he would consider this an excused absence, though, since he chose to come home and knew that we would have to take care of him. I was the most likely candidate as school was easier to take off than work.

He didn't want to die in a hospital, even if it increased his odds from two weeks to two months. He hated the fluorescent light, the beeping monitors, the code-blues over the loudspeaker. He wanted to hear the whistling birds and watch the squirrels with sunlight washing over him. He wanted to spend the last of his time with his family. Mother took her last week of vacation to watch him the first week home; I came for the second when she had to go back. Other relatives popped in from time to time to sit and chat, to touch him one last time while blood still flowed through his veins.

I took his hand in mine and asked if he was comfortable. I had just returned from emptying the bottle into the toilet. He grunted and managed to make a quarter nod. I wanted to tell him about my girlfriend, Beth, and nights out drinking with Mike. I wanted to brag to him how much more I could drink than Mike, whom I considered a seasoned pro. I wanted to share the feeling of an anvil head atop a rubber neck, of wobbly legs and a liquid courage that enabled me to talk to anyone and expertly flirt with girls. I wanted to tell him about the first kiss Beth and I nervously shared on the bench outside her dorm and about the first time we made love. This might have made him more uncomfortable, though, more than piss splatter on his pants.

I wanted to know about him as a young man. I had heard stories.

He quit drinking after a night spent puking out the bedroom window of his mother's house. Hours straight hoping not to get caught by a disapproving holy mother, but still awaking with that sick taste of guilt, the same taste I knew so well, like a metallic paste inside his mouth. Sometime before that he had outrun the police on his drive home from the bar, putting a '38 Buick up on two wheels, squealing and burning rubber, drunk and without a proper driver's license.

My grandma once told me, "They used to say if you wanted to find Frank Girdley you could find him at the bar." He didn't just drink, he was a drinker, a barfly, a rebel hero of my imagination.

I wanted to know more, to understand the man he was before becoming this family. I wanted to ask him what he had preferred to drink; my choice was 100 proof vodka straight from the bottle. I imagined him to be a beer and bourbon man like I am now. I wanted to make him more like me if I could not become more like him, but it had to be true. I had to know who he was beyond the comic book super-drunk I pictured in my head. I needed him to tell me his passions, his mistakes, and the mistakes he regretted never having made. But he was a quiet man now, a dying man. The best thing I could do was to hold his hand, comfort him, and try to get all his urine into the bottle.

My aunt and mother managed to get more time off work to help my grandmother take shifts watching him. They sent me back to school after that week, but I visited on weekends, went over the

stories in my head that I wanted to tell him, hoping that he would somehow hear them, absorb them through our clasped hands. On a particularly bright day when the squirrels were chasing each other in circles around the tree, playfully trying to steal the other's nut, when every songbird in my grandpa's small town sang out in unison, and when I was sitting in a lecture hall trying my best to pay attention and take notes through a hangover, six weeks after he came home from the hospital, the life left his eyes and he went to sleep.

Anthropology

Katelyn Wilkinson

We slept in that room on many occasions, and I will always remember the dust. You could see it in the air when the morning light found its way through one small window; see the particles twist and turn in an invisible breeze. It settled on everything; the lampshades, blown up against the corners of the hardwood floor; on stacks of CDs and magazines. Dust even rested on us, on days we chose to remain in bed. It gave the room an ancient feel, as if the door had been hidden away and locked for many years and we, though its occupants, had become just another artifact to clutter the room.

This room was sanctuary; our own personal archaeology reflected in unwashed laundry and dirty magazines. Someday the excavators they will knock, no, wrench the decaying door from hinges long rusted and step inside flashing lights and choking dust. They enter cautiously at first, side-stepping torn cd jackets and crushed beer cans. To the left they survey the dresser, now decadent, touch a black tie that crumbles in their hands and wonder; *who were they?* Would such a definition be found in half-melted dvd's of Fight Club or archaic vhs tapes of Rage Against the Machine? *Surely they were anarchists, dissidents* the men would shake their heads and murmur. *Surely they knew better.* They would investigate the rags of clothing long bereft of bodies laying piled by the door in perpetual want of detergent and a pocket full of quarters. The men might turn and catch their reflection in the grit of a television set piled high with broken bourbon bottles and whiskey-stained shot glasses. *What filth!* they would mutter in disgust. *indolent children...* *surely they knew better.* Their eyes would turn upward to study the awkwardly purple walls, graffiti-stained with spray-painted street stencils of what some urchin would surely call 'art.' The paint would have cracked in places and molded in others where the

runoff of some primordial rainstorm had dripped unceremoniously through the ancient and rotted ceiling. The bedside table would be investigated thoroughly, the yellow butane lighter, discovered. *Ah*, they would nod, *yes, it is beginning to make sense. They must have been unholy deviants, foul-mouthed criminals. Surely they knew better.* These men, they would trip over an antique electric keyboard with its cord still plugged uselessly into the socket, send the white keys scattering against the dark floor. They will warily eye a cherry outline in the corner; the rusted shell of a guitar, its strings unraveled pathetically across the fingerboard. Above, perhaps still hanging would flutter the yellowed pages of countless poems, their ink long faded. *Ha*, they laugh, *they fancied themselves passionate musicians, artists, poets of the century. Surely they knew better.* Past the clutter, past the dust they would find us side-by-side; mummies an eon ago. With your shriveled fingers still draped gently around my waist they wave their high beams in our faces, as if we might respond. The blankets, moth-eaten have fallen away to the foot of what used to be a bed... our bed. The light from the lonely smudged window falls dimly on us through cracks in the glass. With locked legs we rest; no breath to disturb the dust around. Your head still lies in the hollow on my shoulder like the memory of a kiss. The men are silent now, unsure if the very same act of God that condemned us to this place might somehow send us back in retribution for interfering. Without a word these men turn and leave, embarrassed for intruding. *Oh*, they cry, *now we understand. For such an affair, they must have been lovers. Surely, they knew better.*

Commute

Thomas Olges

The sun sticks, half-risen
Hangs like the frozen gaze of a pin-up girl
Behind a thatched wall of bare November branches
It seems to slide, sideways, clinging to the horizon
As if seriously debating whether or not to bother fully rising

While it deliberates
It floods the surrounding countryside with a wash of tepid amber
light
Turning parking lots and office fronts into hackneyed sepia-colored
flashback scenes
Its indecisive illumination flattens the lawn in my front yard
So that the live grass and the dead grass lose their contrast

I sit behind the wheel, engine running
Shoving my wooden fingers into the vent's steady stream of slowly
warming air
My mind idles, and I wonder if the sun might give today a miss and
retreat below the horizon
I scan the radio as I wait for warmth
Signaling my complete indifference on the subject

Ancestry

Christina Davidson

Some of you
I have only met in visions,
antique daydreams,
embracing sweet leathery skin,
burrowing my face
into worn aprons
or soft flannel jackets.
Sorrowful once my eyes open,
finding myself alone.

Is it madness?
That when I wipe my face
with your flowered handkerchief,
I imagine it is your hand
our gloriously long fingers
intertwining through time
to perform this act of tenderness.

I carry you
inside a pocket watch
strung around my neck.
My chest rises
and falls beneath it,
creating a bitter illusion.
Opening the metal clasp,
the only face staring
back at mine is one
arranged with numbers.

You are not inside
the talc canister
or the whittled pipe.
The heirlooms gathered

in my home are
solemn reminders
of a time when you stood
in this same kitchen
and coaxed a fiddle
to cry out the melody
heavy within my chest.

Red Pepper

Madison Fay

In fine crisp ribbons and spongy white centers,
Tossed with stained and ravaged shopping lists.
Its name wet
Bleeding into milk.
Writhing in hypnagogic visions
Under the roof of its summation
On the floor of the wastebasket.
Limbs hardly attached,
Flayed open to expose
Backwards anatomy.

I see your guts in his.
You invade my hallways,
My containers
With your robust flesh.
You're not as easily played.
I can't pull your
Heart out-
Let it alone.

Called Home

Thomas Olges

They were good Christians, all.
Millions of men, women, and children
from all walks of life
from every nation
(or at least all the ones that mattered).
They began their ascent to heaven on a Thursday afternoon
at about a quarter after 3.

Initially, they felt merely energetic
vaguely euphoric.
After a few minutes, though, they started rising
slowly
into the air.
Moving along a gradual incline
(roughly 35 degrees)
like riders on an invisible escalator.

Their pace was slow at first,
hesitant,
hastening as their fear dissipated.
Some of them were trapped
against the ceilings of offices and shopping centers.
Forced to crawl, awkwardly,
like new-born Spider-Men
toward the nearest open windows.

They rose rapidly above the rooftops
a joyous religious spectacle
attracting a crowd of stunned and earth-bound heathens.
The incidence of collision
with low-flying aircraft
was well below statistically probable rates,
tacitly affirming God's love and involvement.

Above 2500 meters
barometric pressure drops significantly
reducing the amount of oxygen available with each breath.
The first stages of acute mountain sickness set in
(including headache, disorientation, and loss of appetite)
brought on more quickly than usual by the rapid ascent.
They were masked by the general sense
of rising euphoria
and ignored.

At this point there was little doubt
in any of the participants' minds
that this was, indeed, the Rapture.
Many of them began singing
hymns of praise
or simply prayers
(in what mountain climbers might have called a waste of precious
oxygen).

At 5500 meters
the highest among the faithful
blacked out from lack of oxygen.
It turned out that ascending to heaven
(much like flying, for Peter Pan)
relied heavily on happy thoughts to succeed.
The unconscious,
no longer really thinking of anything at all,
began to plummet back toward the Earth.

Euphoria gave way quickly to terror;
hymns and prayers turning shrilly into screams.
This did nothing to improve overall positive thinking
causing others to cease their ascent.
Within minutes, they were all falling--
the conscious, screaming,
the unconscious in eerie silence.

They reached terminal velocity very quickly,
their descent much faster than their climb.
They were soon raining down
over the cities and country-sides of the world
a barrage of fleshy bombs.

Most crumpled upon impact
collapsing into unrecognizable wads.
But some of them collided with hard surfaces--
cars, rooftops, or stretches of asphalt--
and actually exploded in great gouts of red.

The whole affair took minutes
but left billions of dollars in damages
and millions dead.
The aftermath was strangely silent,
save for the wail of sirens and the crackling of unchecked fires.
Among the survivors, none remained
to offer the casual reassurance,
“The Lord works in mysterious ways.”



Mother, Father, & Child
Mixed Media
Aberlyn Sweetland-May

No Lettuce

Scott Brewer

You took your sandwich
without comment
cry foul
or mayonnaise

You took your sandwich
without a word
not looking me in the eye
because beneath the brim of my hat
I could not
feasibly
be building worlds in which
we stalked deer
with bows and arrows
sharpened sticks
your suit and tie
forgotten

Your PH.D only
letters that we had long ago
swallowed
replaced with simpler
syllables

short
staccato words
full of meaning the way
small tomatoes
are full

Jasmine Rice

Madison Fay

For Adam

You don't know me in my dusty grave
Under the flaky cry of trees.
Tetanus caloric beefy girl
Ashamed to show her legs.
Cat urine hair, and a pale guitar
Geriatric in the corner.

We flew through the bleeding lofty
Trees,
And maimed the elevated highways
With our cries of silence,
And of mercy.

Back at the café:
A table
Piled with the strata
Of all the festering mouths before.
Neatly assembled;
Troops poised for the butcher.

God! Mother's milk is strong!
Sinewy rivulets make love
To my blood;
Blood like wine
Like rice
So small, and tight, and white.
Jasmine rice-
Sphere
Navel line
Brown like mine.

A child in a tantrum.

Flourish to the street.
You pale, and uncouth urchin!
Grabbing at the 8-fold path,
And the sun's wobbly lines.

“Christ it's cold!”
So cold we shake
We bundle ourselves
In doughy wads,
And make sleep bags
Of our pockets.
Only fingers make sense
By the wrist I'm lost.

Rickety rackets ride.
A million wasps descend...
No,
No, wait...
Birds!
A million scaly greasy hollow
Birds!
Copse of dots
Opaque
Opaque, and writhing
Linking claws, and pecks
A prickly dotted cuneiform.

As all the life whistles
Out of me
In decompression
In hot gas
In leaky tires
In tired, papery laughs.

Those two soft mesas
Landing on my knee...
You are no fellow scribe.
A little banked cod,
I some soft musky mud
To indent upon your soul
And lie calmly in the thicket
There.

Raw

Melanie Smith

*we shut our eyes we stretch out our arms
and whirl on a pane of glass
an affixation a fix on anything the line of life the limb of a tree
-Patti Smith*

I want to epitomize beauty raw and unmasked,
not the beauty born of vanity
but the beauty of bareness,
triumphs & tears & layered identities intersecting
beyond physical laws or societal constructions...
Like you, Patti Smith, your street-sylvan power emerging
in electric spirals, screaming raspy with stale cigarettes and broken
beer bottles,
swaying your jagged hips with incisive sensuality and spitting on
your admirers,
decades of anger and celebration carved in your face
Disciple of Whitman, Rimbaud, Burroughs, Ginsberg
Foul-mouthed New York poet who loves and rages without
boundaries

You are no painted hot pink siren, Patti,
with your stringy hair and your lightning stare,
a smile as wry as an ancient twisted tree trunk,
constellations of thought burning
for miles and ever evolving through candlelit skins,
growling me into wakefulness,
howling across generations of oddly-shaped flowers,
Emerson's words swirling through our dancing shadows of
thought
Beauty is its own excuse for being.

The interior minds of artists burst through bubblegum bricks
to breathe wildly on page & canvas & stage

streaking through my synapses,
the blood and oxygen of the pulsing soul
stretching straddling the pelvis of thought
where you stand your voice a squall
urging us to stand up and release
our own beauty raw and fierce and louder
than any billboard or bomb

New Albany, 6th and Spring

Katelyn Wilkinson

On a windy afternoon
I watch a girl
in pink (maybe orange)
from across the street
girl, in orange jacket
rides pink bike
in circles around
the parking lot
of the abandoned
Coyle Dodge.
girl circles and circles
around
pulling behind her
a plastic kite.
kite, that bobs
and swings wildly
on weak string,
then dips and crashes
into old cracked pavement.
girl circles and circles,
pink bike and kite, then
turns and pedals
down the pavement
in want of hills.



The Inevitable Future
Digital Illustration
Greg Truesdell

Catching Eurydice

Scott Brewer

There's this story about a guy; and he's pushing a really heavy rock up a hill.

She shook her head, “No. It wasn’t making headlines any longer. The news dropped the story when the big agencies all lost interest.”

“It was earlier than me, by quite a few years actually. I was only just cleared for immigration, and it would not have looked so good for me to show so much interest in a fleet mishap. Looking for a job as pilot. I didn’t need suspicion, and I did need my shipping license. I was in a hurry, you know.”

Amaya didn’t.

Semyon took his hand off the wheel. A panel began to tick as he drifted out of the shipping lane. The smooth grain and steel accents that shone from the steering column were cool to the touch. He leaned back in the seat, enjoying the creak of broken in leather.

The ship embraced him, held him close to its heart, nourished him with oxygen and nitrogen as it parted the thick cloth of deep space outside the cabin. He enjoyed the sensation, not being able to distinguish who was the captive lover. Captain or craft.

“Captain?”

Amaya had been waiting for a response. She wasn’t sure if he was still listening. She could see the back of his chair, the shocking white hair, liver-spotted skin of his neck barely visible over the antique upholstery.

Those rare signs of aging held her gaze, “There never has been any ‘official’ inquiry after the fact, is all I mean.”

“What’s past is past, it’s history now, I’m no bleeding heart,” he took hold of the listing wheel. Stars stopped sliding off the screen and settled in the firmament. A single bright point in the

center of the screen grew brighter.

She took a moment to understand the old phrase, “Nor I, Captain. I spent quite a few... a couple years in the fleet before I met Bakar and went civy, before shipping started to sound like a good move. All I meant by it is, history proves that the biggest accidents often aren’t so accidental. The Santa Maria’s engine failure happening when it did. Where it did.”

His neck tightened, “If history is so interesting, why not-“

But the words died in his mouth. He wasn’t cruel enough. It wasn’t yet time. It never was.

“It looked like sabotage really and, well... they... actually... it was quite a while back... it’s an old conversation... back before I was even...” she looked to the twirling machinery at the bottom of the ladder, denoting the relative ship-time, “Your right Sir. Not good deck conversation. This is all off the record, right? Sir?”

Semyon relaxed a bit, he was glad she had dropped the topic, his leg had begun to ache again, “The ‘Sir’ is always unnecessary, Amaya. As far as I am concerned small talk is off the record. Be easy, eh? Three months in transit now and I’m still Captain Sir? Call me Semyon. Be a little more familiar. You... You and Bakar, should relax.”

“Three months? We were really cooking past Mars Central.”

He leaned forward, his hand gripping his knee, “We certainly made good time. I know a man who runs a decent lodge in New Prague. Know him pretty well, it’s full of... civies, as you say, but still nice. They have a pretty wonderful music festival this time of year, I’ll put in a word for you, Amaya. Better accommodations than you would perhaps expect out in the... what did you call it last week?”

“*Inon ere ez...* The middle of nowhere, sir Semyon, somewhere boring. It’s a very old saying,” she balked at the suggestion of lodging for her *and* Bakar.

“To me, it doesn’t sound so bad,” he set the ship to pilot itself for a while and watched the screen viewing the back of the ship. Watched large meteors flow away from him like strange fish down a primordial stream. Roving bodies, miniature antique worlds haphazardly wandering the outer Solar System.

Amaya didn’t feel like she should try to hide her

relationship with Bakar from Semyon, it wasn't a very large ship and it would have been a wasted effort. There was still a tension she couldn't place... It was awkward having Semyon speak of their plans. His paternal demeanor had grown on her in the months they had traveled together and, it was just strange.... when he was so much the older captain.

Semyon gently turned the wheel to correct their course, imagining the gyroscopes at the ship's heart twisting, spinning away, keeping them true to the shipping lane. Homeward bound.

But the rock kept falling back down on him.

The ship hurtled. It careened. Caromed across the night skies of the inner planets. It saw the sun dim from fiery inferno, to faraway candle, down the dark corridor of inner system space. A narrow path set aside as a transit lane between the few bright pockets of light and life in an increasingly crowded solar system. Jupiter rose from the darkness to their left like the husk of a forgotten god, despairingly huge. It lingered in the mind. The idea of erosion. Three hundred mile per hour winds. Continent sized bursts of lightning jumping between colossal storms.

Wave after wave of energy blew like wind across the ship's hull. Scoured the seals.

They began the long circle that would take them safely across the immense gravity well. The speed at which the planet's iconic bands were passing paid testimony to the immense power churning at the heart of the ship.

And then there's this other story about how a famous thief stole from the Gods themselves.

In the early days of deep space travel the emphasis on speed had outweighed all other considerations, health over the long term, personnel safety, environmental impact, effect on indigenous populations, everything fell by the wayside once the space race started again. The new furnaces of progress took fire, pulled mankind further from earth than even the most starry-eyed futurists had dreamed. Expansionism became more than a political gambit; it

was the beat to which the whole of mankind marched, and once the technology was perfected humanity spread like a brushfire.

But the people eventually realized why the Gods had chosen to hide certain things.

Semyon pulled at the corner of his seat beneath the felt cushion and found a beaten tag displaying the brand of the chair. *Hello*, he thought, *you've come a long way from... Nebraska. Haven't you?* He stuck it in his pocket, this little piece of Earth. Not his home. Not his language. But still...

Still fellow traveler, beaten a bit. Frayed and smooth to the touch by long service, many captains before him, who didn't pull the tag, dig under the leather seat a bit to find this little epitaph.

He thought back to the sterile fleet vessels of his youth, their sharp corners and subtle sloping floors leading to the control decks, the exposed innards of the ships always getting in the way, falling out of compartments when left untended. So very different from the soft, carefully accented womb he traveled in now. There were no tags hanging from the chairs of military ships. Whole fleets would be fabricated in the same factory. Serial numbers swimming under the acrid smell of freshly pressed metal. All of the pomp of machinery to make something nearly indestructible. Cold and timelessly shimmering.

As it often did when he was lost in thought, Semyon's right hand found the line between flesh and metal above his knee. He ran the hand back and forth, feeling that odd sensation that was not quite pain. The prosthesis was not perfect, the false nerves still translated the touch as a dull ache. The leg, a reminder of his time with the fleet, was a constant memorial; a token, testament, terrible malignancy. A carefully chosen constant in a life where little remained set for long.

Terrible Malignancy, thought Semyon, *that's what it comes to, cancer; tiny imperfections made obvious by the passage of time. Small things, the littlest things catch us. Telomerase in our blood, the lining of our jeans. Everything unravels. Nothing stands still. What was it in the schools?*

... *And now doth time waste me?*

Amaya was still standing below him in the command module; he reached forward to bring up his display, "I have some final checks to run on the cargo, Amaya. You should check in with Bakar and let him know about that inn. We should be arriving within a few hours once we cycle the engine. If you'd please make sure he's watching the engine when I cycle up to burn to New Prague when you head back."

"Sure, S- Semyon."

She smiled as she turned, partially at the dismissal which she had been waiting for, and also at the archaic *if you pleases*. Amaya was glad to retreat down the connective passage back towards where Bakar was likely not performing his function as the engineer for their tripartite crew. She liked Semyon, his old way of speaking was strange, even somewhat beautiful to her, it reminded her of... something warm, the sensation of a prickly beard under her fingers. Sad music somewhere. That sense of nostalgia she could never quite place, could not quite attach to a face. His leg disgusted her, though, made her feel uncomfortable. It made her feel like a comedian who stumbling across a funeral procession.

She floated back along the central corridor which served as the ship's spine, pushing off the walls. The living quarters were housed in two habitats that circled the ship on separate wheel structures. She slowed as she passed B Hab, where she and Bakar were quartered, and moved on to the third module which currently held a cadre of compartments full of grain and wildlife. *Freeze-dried pigeons*, she thought, *some genetically precise cow the colonists can graze on glowing wheat, or whatever passes for wheat in their climate controlled domes. Different every year to account for mutation. Everything's tailor made. No chances for famine, drought. Everything's grown to company specification.*

She had read the dossier for the cargo lift before agreeing to come along. As far as Amaya was concerned, this would be her last deep delivery. She could vaguely remember serving in the fleet some time ago. According to her documentation, she was open for retirement again at the end of this run.

As she floated through the ship the lights clicked on in front of her, anticipating her movement. She let her right hand drag



Rock fight and gRowing
Digital Photography
Rosella Pearl

along the wall, luxuriating in the seamlessness, the smoothness of the carpeting that ran the length of the ship. It was small when compared to some of the big freighters that moved people or machinery between colonies, but the big engine could burn at the same speeds as the passenger ships, though the big liners seemed to get slower every year.

As she continued to drift through the core of the ship, Amaya heard regular sounds emanating from the engine room. Bakar was usually catching a nap near the instability monitors. She swiftly forgot about Semyon in the command module, lost in his reverie. As she came into the last few meters of the hall, muffled explosions echoed from the chamber.

Goose-flesh rose on her arms and she felt her hands and feet numb with adrenalin. Sudden and alien panic tugged at the edges of her vision, sharpened her, her heart raced. She flipped mid-drift and propelled herself feet-first into the cabin, ready to jump back up if she detected the slightest touch of fire or the freezing ache of true vacuum.

Her mind was shouting that there should be some sort of alarm in the case of internal fire. She landed in a crouch on a bank of machinery and saw immediately the source of the noise. Bakar had left his personal computer on, and it was playing a song that involved cannon fire as percussion. She pulled the gadget from its dock on the wall and flipped the inlaid power switch. The trumpets died away down the corridor.

He had anchored a sleeping bag to the wall to facilitate his nap.

He opened one wry eye, "It's not... what it looks like," his hands were two roving bumps hunting for the zipper. Amaya caught them before they could reach the opening and she pulled the sleeping bag from its velcro fastenings, kissing his nose.

"It's not, hmm?"

He found the zipper despite her ministrations and pulled himself free of the bag. It bumped off the plush wall behind him as he stretched out.

Bakar noted the perspiration on her forehead and the timing of her entrance, "So maybe I choose a more placid overture for my notifications."

“Maybe, you should, I hate that classic stuff,” Amaya was again watching the analog dials whirl and spin describing the nature of the matter currently being coerced into doing decidedly un-matter like things in the extra-solar engine.

“You hate all the music I’ve ever showed you,” he floated up behind and above her, walking along the ceiling. He took a quick glance at the dials which, even upside down, still betrayed all manner of information about the ship’s current power draw and output. Familiarity, years, decades of experience made his job simple despite the extreme complexity involved in extra-solar engineering. He looked from the readout to her face, admiring again the smoothness and structure of the bone beneath. She seemed lost in thought, staring at the machinery.

So sculpted. So obviously crafted in the image of some bygone goddess, an ancient painting that she chose specifically, some beatific martyr. Her lips perfectly set, not a sign of age but for the pause, now and then to access chemical memory... *old chemical memory,* when she spoke.

And her eyes. Of course, he had been there when she’d gone through that, only a few years ago, it was when they’d met. Decided to keep her eyes original, just a quick retina swipe to stimulate new growth. The same blue eyes he’d been in love with for a while now... for... *a long time. A few years now. Long enough. Long enough for her to be at least a little impatient,* he conceded.

They both had gone through regulation bone density enhancement, and the complementary facial and epidermal reconstruction surgery. Without the follow-up reconstruction the recipient of the density increase ended up looking like a Neanderthal, all angles, chin, and forehead. The top layers of bone, the original tissue, had to be sloughed off with surgery to restore the original facial structure... or improve upon the original, as was often the case.

Wealthy captains, travel executives, particularly affluent businessmen, were renowned for their striking visages, tailored to mimic their favorite pop star. Bakar had one memorable professor whose face had been a near perfect replica of a late 21st Century cult leader named John Lennon.

Amaya noticed Bakar staring at her face and looked into his

eyes. He looked back to the panel. *How many times has he had the chance to ask, she thought, how many months. Years?*

But then, she was amused with herself. Years where? On what planet? I haven't used a twenty-four hour day in... a long time now. If I have a measurable age, the only people who know it are the officers who recruited me and...

Amaya's hand went unconsciously to her face and then there was the sensation of her forehead being kissed.

Was there another? That prickly sensation under her fingers... The Blues. She couldn't remember. Decided it did not matter right now, not with his lips on her forehead. She didn't like the blues anymore anyway.

Bakar lowered himself from the ceiling so his lips brushed her ear, "I think Semyon is going to--," but Bakar's whispered thought was cut short by the crackle of the intercom.

"We are three hours out of New Prague radio contact. I have a bottle of non-recycled for whoever catches the signal first... I am shutting down the heavy engines and going to liquid thrust, buckle in please, turnover in three minutes. You both may wish to pack anything else you need for shore leave, five hours before we reach local space and come full stop."

Amaya smiled at that. Semyon was so much the old man. He had obviously denied most of the rejuvenating treatments, as far as she knew, and his body had begun to deteriorate accordingly. That white shock of hair. His left leg, the real leg, had real arthritis in it, she suspected, from the way he moved around. This too was almost unheard of, and even stranger was his dismissal of the pain medications or neural blocks that were so cheap and easy to install these days.

Amaya herself retained only about thirty percent of her original body mass, if she took a moment to think about it perhaps she would have remembered the long list of operations and surgeries she had undergone to retain her youth.

She didn't think about it.

She suspected that Bakar's body contained an even higher percentage of Prop parts. She even wondered, sometimes, when she lay awake in the too-light pull of gravity in B Hab where she and Bakar had separate smaller bunks than Semyon's, that part

of his brain may have been replaced in the new neo-cortex survey procedure of which even she was skeptical.

“Real Immortality Today!” the slogans touted. They were always followed up with variations on, “See a sales representative for a pay plan that suites your budget.”

Amaya and Bakar hooked themselves to the sides of the compartment and braced for the increased G’s from the transition to liquid thrust. Bakar’s hand found hers in the glow of the instrument panels as the main cabin lights flickered under the added energy draw as they ignited the huge in-system engines. She looked at his hand in the half-light. Her eyes steady under the flashing lights.

Semyon had noted that the newest rejuvenating programs had pay plans that extended well beyond two-hundred years into the future. Semyon supposed that was faith in your product. At the moment re-growing artificial brain tissue was not on his mind, however.

What captured Semyon’s full attention was that somewhere ahead of him in the dark lay New Prague. A gem glistening somewhere around the edge of Jupiter’s radiation belt.

His right hand sought that line, and he felt the strange not-pain that emanated from below his right knee. The contrast between that feeling and the hot ache of the arthritis in his left leg brought his teeth together and he grinned a strange, sad grin at the darkness beyond his false window. He pushed in a button on the edge of his chair and a small readout, extra ersatz amidst the wood inlays and brass work appeared in the air before him, cast on a haze of smoke. The readout displayed the cargo chamber of the ship. Semyon sat staring through the translucent display at the arc of Jupiter’s nearer moons as they passed by. He could see the moon that held the colony now, dim but growing brighter by degrees as they drifted closer. They were still moving at terrible, mind bending speeds, but only crawling on the scale of the massive system of moons surrounding Jupiter.

The clouds of cast off material drifted past the ship now, slag material from the station’s creation. Decrease speed and prepare for landing. A malignancy, *a terrible malignancy. What a*

curse, thought Semyon, pulling out the seat's tag again. Reading the back.

No serial numbers. No lingering smell of molten metal. Just a line of words, succinct, describing the city of origin where a human being, not a machine, had tooled the chair into existence. *You and me kid*, he thought, staring through the smoke and glass at the stars. He leaned forward, pocketed the chair's tag, and watched New Prague grow brighter.

There is another story, about a sailor on a wide sea, who didn't understand that the bird was sacred until it was dead.

Bakar knew how Amaya felt. Knew her right hand had grown light, that she was looking at him more and more to make a move. The only move that mattered to her.

He had known for a long time.

He had not yet attempted to explain his aversion to the institution of marriage, as he thought of it, as he couldn't quite remember why he disliked the idea beyond his general distaste for organized religion. He did not lack religion though. No sailor is without a god to call upon in the storm.

He killed it one day and has suffered since.

Bakar's mind, like the monitor he watched, ticked away, moving ever forward. The ship moved the last few thousands of miles between Earth and New Prague at the slow pace set by liquid fuel.

Bakar's grasp of time was fading.

Sans History.

The past was losing its form, becoming the suggestion of actions, fading into the vast white slate that was his future, which daily grew toward the horizon. He'd wanted this though, this was the plan. One day he'd stop fearing the night. Sleep would sustain him. There would be no more, *if I die before I wake*, only untroubled rest, and the concrete certainty of waking to an endless tomorrow.

Amaya was right about his body and mind. He had recently



Osiris
Acrylic on Canvas Board
Emily King

had his frontal lobe uploaded onto a shock proof and, if advertising was to be believed, nearly indestructible gel-form replacing the physical tissue.

He had slowed to a crawl then. He knew Amaya wanted marriage. Wanted the wedding, the white dress, the cake the rice and flowers.

Antiques, he thought, more useless than antique spoons.

Urgency was for military men, Bakar was a tech guy at heart and would prefer to settle down on some fabrication colony and supervise for a few years, somewhere with mountains and plenty of volcanic soil. Start a vineyard, maybe. *And then?* He didn't know. *Settle down, well maybe. Just not yet. Maybe, maybe after the next couple of runs. Start a family on some colonial outpost far enough away from the Earth to avoid any new political nonsense, any rushing. Just settle into the rhythm of the land.*

They were close. Semyon could see the lights of the cities spread across the surface of the moon. Mining the inner moons had been lucrative, and setting up permanent colonies outside of the radiation's reach naturally followed. The pattern of light across the moon's surface, the tilt of Jupiter's face on the aft-facing screen, all of it hummed in him like childhood hymns. Summer Sundays. He brought up the multiple radio signatures coming off the collection of light that was New Prague and dialed in their landing zone. His mouth turned up as he reached for the intercom again, his other hand producing a thin metal box from his pocket.

Most importantly, though, there is an old story about a famous musician who watched the woman he loved leave his world.

So he journeyed to the underworld to save her.

"What's that?" she froze, her eyes hard in the dark.

"A kazoo?"

"No... no, it's a harmonica... that's..."

"The blues? Yeah, it came back in a big way in the colonies about fifty y--"

The brass speakers made the instrument wail around B

Hab. Bakar trailed off. Silenced by something he could not place. He'd never been a fan of the blues, but... This was different. A soulfulness so deep, so broken and lonely... he rolled over on his bunk, turning from the noise,

“You think this is it for our fearless captain?”

They were both dressed for disembarkation. Their necessities packed for a few days of rest before the long haul back. They'd decided to sleep in separate bunks when in transit. A rule Amaya had insisted on after a bad argument a few hauls back. It was easier to focus, with sex somewhere ahead of them, and not between them on the ship.

“He doesn't look like he could make many more deep runs like this. I've got a feeling that he's been looking forward to this though,” Amaya tapped the wall beside her bunk and the wall shimmered, letting in the light of the city as they descended through the sparse cloud cover.

“Yeah,” Bakar lay his head back, looking past Amaya's silhouette at the city lights, “I think the old guy's probably gonna send us back on auto. He's definitely got something here.”

“You think he'll stay then? Keep it?”

“I do. I mean... He seems the type, doesn't he? He reminds me of a character in a story. Coming home to die.”

“I don't really know the type anymore.”

She moved across the dim chamber to turn down the wall speaker. She lay next to Bakar. The harmonica continued to cry out softly from the speaker as Semyon guided them gently into port with one hand.

She pictured Semyon's face with a beard.

An easy laugh.

Black hair and a grin.

A love of the blues.

“Are you all right?” Bakar held her gently as she cried.

Facing away from him. He had never seen her like this. Never seen her unguarded before in all the years they had been together. She suddenly was filled with a terrible beauty he had never known in her, as she shook. He fancied he could see lines encircling the edges of her eyes.

“No, Bakar. Goodbye, and good luck.”

She rose from the bed as the ship fastened to the dock. She stepped through the doorway, leaving Bakar alone in the bed.

She sprinted through the ship, hearing the exit hatch opening, the ramp extending. Semyon was moving his luggage through the aperture. She caught him at the bottom of the stairs. The docking bay smelled wonderful. The colonies always had people hocking fresh food at the freighter making a haze of cooking smoke perpetually tax the cooling units. A fine mist of condensation was everywhere from the ship's entry.

He was walking away. Heading for the terminal. That slow gait. That shuffle step. And that glint of steel between the fingers. An unassuming piece of metal and soul.

“Semyon!”

Semyon turned. His leathery face glistening in the misty air.

He opened his arms
Dropped the harmonica
And caught her

This time, however, she doesn't fade, doesn't fall forever, but runs to him from the dark. Eternity meaningless between them.

Family Planning

Thomas Olges

There's a mob of protesters outside the clinic, and I try and keep my head down as I push through them. Legally, they aren't allowed to impede my progress, and if they get disorderly the cops can break them up, so they have to settle for saying hateful things to me in a conversational tone of voice as I pass by. "You're a murderer, you know," offers one older gentleman. "And a terrorist," adds his wife, helpfully, nodding to me with raised eyebrows just to emphasize the point.

I don't ever look at them directly. Eye contact would just invite further discussion, and I'm afraid that if I pay too much attention to what they're saying I'll knock out someone's fucking teeth. I know my rights, and I won't be intimidated by a bunch of half-witted right-to-lifers.

Besides, I can't help but note that just about everyone in the crowd is wearing protection. Respirators, goggles, ear-screens--the whole range of Anti-Impregnatory Gear is in play this afternoon. That old bastard can take his re-breather off if he wants to call me a murderer. We'll see how his convictions hold up after sucking down five minutes of unfiltered outside air.

A woman standing apart from the crowd catches my attention. It's her outfit that catches my eye; she's wearing enough money to pay off my mortgage. Her hat and coat are both fur, and both her shoes and purse appear to have real diamonds on them. She's draped in gold jewelry--anklets, bracelets, necklaces--and has achieved a look somewhere between 1930's Hollywood mega-starlet and Egyptian mummy.

I know she's a Surrogate even before I see her Caesarian scars. As it is, she has two obvious sets, both unconcealed by hair or make-up and unmitigated by plastic surgery. One makes a dull pink star-burst on her right cheek, just in front of the hinge of her lower

jaw. The other forms an angry red “x” across her clearly-sightless left eye, which is white and opaque and stares unblinkingly forward.

She isn’t wearing any AIG, either. Not only has she carried two births to term, she might go home with another on the way. She’s already more than twice the man I am, and if today’s Spore Counts are high enough she’ll make it a hat trick.

I falter when I see her, and for a moment my gaze comes to rest on her working right eye. She doesn’t spit curses or accusations at me, she just speaks in low, steady tones. “You can still choose life, you know.”

Her voice has a weird, echoey quality to it, and I wonder what an MRI of her sinus cavities would look like. Mammoth Caves, I suspect, or maybe the Grand Canyon. With a shudder, I move on.

A wave of dizziness hits me as I make my way up the steps, and I have to pause before opening the door. It isn’t bad, really, I could do worse to myself by spinning quickly in a circle. It’s caused by fetal pressure on the Eustachian Tubes, and it’s a fairly common part of morning sickness at this stage of the game. It’s nothing a little elective surgery won’t fix.

Inside, the clinic lobby is spare and clean. The walls and floors are all a clean cream color, close enough to white to appear sterile but not bright enough to seem harsh. I take a seat in a cheap but comfortable chair, glancing at my watch. Two minutes to my appointment, if everything’s running on time. Nausea creeps over me, completely unrelated to my morning sickness. It won’t be long now until all of this is over.

I glance over the magazines on the table in front of me, but none of them grab my attention. I can’t help but notice that they’re all dated, and that nothing from the last 26 months or so is represented. I suppose that’s only reasonable, though--stories about Immigrants would only make this business more awkward for everyone.

My eyes wander over the other people in the lobby. Nearest me is a young couple, both clean-cut and dressed in dark professional attire. He’s in full AIG, she’s obviously expecting but showing no signs but a ruddy face. The people outside would say that she was glowing, but what she is exhibiting is properly referred to as “Flush.” Whatever you want to call it, it’s strictly a first trimester



The Young Woman
Charcoal
Aberlyn Sweetland-May

phenomenon. At this stage her incubating fetus hasn't quite made nice with her immune system, so her body thinks she's constantly ill. Consequently, blood flow to the "infected" area is increased, and she's running an around-the-clock low-grade fever.

On the opposite side of the room is a slightly older woman by herself, and she's much further along. The entire right side of her face is painfully swollen; her skin is stretched as tight as a drumhead over a rounded hump on her jaw the size of half a grapefruit. I can't help but notice that her right eye is bulging slightly out of its socket, and is incredibly bloodshot. She's leafing through a magazine, but I'd be surprised if she can read anything without closing her right eye. Actually, I'd be surprised if she could get her eyelid to stay closed with her eyeball under so much pressure.

I'm not a doctor, but I'd wager that she's well into her 3rd trimester, a good 5 to 6 weeks ahead of me. She was probably a willing surrogate who freaked out and lost her nerve when the bones of her skull started to warp like old wooden floorboards. She's lucky Congress didn't pass the Immigrant Rights Act--it would have outlawed these late-term abortions in all but the most dire of circumstances.

Looking at her makes me wonder what I would look like with my skull all bent out of shape, so I promptly stop doing it. I'm still around the 22 week mark, and I'm just barely showing. There's a small lump about the size of a robin's egg just behind my left ear, and the skin on the left side of my jaw and neckline tends to get red and puffy. My hand strays behind my ear even now, to gently prod the tender flesh just below my hairline.

"Mr. Rhodes?"

At the receptionist's voice I almost jump out of my seat, propelled by the force of my own pent-up nervous energy. I make my way somewhat stiffly to the glass screen in front of her desk, smiling broadly and without any trace of real feeling. "Yes, that's me," I manage to mumble, and then add, "I'm him," just for good measure.

I can tell by the way that the receptionist's respirator moves that she's smiling at me from underneath it. "Good morning, Mr. Rhodes." She gestures for me to put my face against the retinal scanner, and while the computer is verifying my identity she starts

typing very quickly and determinedly at her keyboard. After about thirty seconds her computer issues a satisfied sounding “beep,” and she gives me another concealed smile. “Okay, Mr. Rhodes, it looks like all your forms are in order, and you’re ready to go. Did you have any last-minute questions?”

I wrack my brain, but I don’t find anything, so I just shake my head at her through the glass screen. “No, I don’t think I do.”

She gives me a slow, encouraging nod. “Okay, then. Citizenship and Immigration Services requires that you undergo Final Consultation before your procedure. We have you scheduled in conference room 3, which is just down the hallway, second door on your right.”

A buzzer sounds from somewhere I can’t pinpoint, and a door a few feet to my left swings open. I give the receptionist a final, grateful wave, then stumble hesitantly on my way. My stomach does a little back-flip, and I can feel my palms start to sweat.

I’ve been dreading Final Consultation since I decided to get an abortion. It’s a program USCIS started just a month or two after the first abortion was performed, when it became apparent that the legality of the procedure would take a long time to determine. On the surface, it’s just a conversation, a talking-to from a government worker to make sure you know what you’re doing before you block some Immigrant’s birth.

You hear horror stories about it, though. It’s rumored that Immigrants themselves make appearances at Final Consultations, to help “persuade” people not to get abortions. And while it’s technically illegal for an Immigrant to empathically manipulate a U.S. citizen, the common consensus is that that’s what they’re doing behind those closed conference room doors. A lot of Surrogate parents had had every intention of aborting, right up until their Final Consultation...

I breathe in, deep, steeling my resolve. *It’s my body; goddamnit, and it’s my mind. I’m not letting some slick G-man or his pet Immigrant ruin either one.*

I push open the door to conference room 3 and try my best to swagger inside, but another wave of dizziness hits me and I kind of sway through the doorway instead. The room itself is pretty nice—big oak table in the center, cushy black leather chairs all around,

even a colorful tropical fish tank against one wall. I flop down immediately in the nearest chair, breathing deep while I wait for my balance to return to me.

My consultant is already in the room, standing in front of the fish tank. He's human (which is quite a relief), probably in his early 50's, wearing a dark blue suit that hangs on him like it's been custom tailored. He has close-cropped black hair, still full but completely gray at his temples, and a neatly trimmed little mustache that would make a smaller or less confident man look like Hitler.

He's a Surrogate, too, although even his Caesarian scar looks classy. It's a single line, thin and white, shooting straight back from the corner of his right eye and stopping just short of his ear. There's a dark circle under his right eye, like he didn't get enough sleep on that side of his body, but the organ itself appears to be undamaged. It's the same color as his left eye, and it tracks movement just like his left eye, so I can only assume that it's an original and not just some fancy glass prosthetic.

My consultant comes around the side of the table and gives me a firm, respectable handshake. "Good morning, Mr. Rhodes, my name is Frank Milton." He pulls out the chair nearest me and sits down, opening up a manila folder and placing it on the table in front of him. "I'm here, Mr. Rhodes, to make sure you understand the consequences of your decision. To make sure you don't do anything you might some day regret."

Mr. Milton's tone is dry, confident, professional. If I had been a woman the government might have tried a different track; a Surrogate/mother might have hugged me at the door crying and shown me pictures of her biological children playing in the park with the Immigrant she'd carried. Or maybe I'm not giving the government enough credit. Maybe it's always someone like Mr. Milton. More importantly, maybe it's never an Immigrant, after all.

Milton pulls a sheet of paper out of his folder and slides it across the table in front of me. It's covered it blocks and blocks of text, with a little "x" and a line at the bottom for me to sign. "First things first, this is just a form verifying that I've talked to you. Regardless of what you decide, you signing that form lets the government know that I did my job. You can sign it now, or you can sign it later, but the clinic will need one copy of that form before they put

you under the knife.”

I sign it now, without bothering to read it. I’ve read the Consultant Release online, anyway, and know more or less what it says. Milton watches how quickly I sign with one half-cocked eyebrow and a small smile on his face. His smile makes me nervous.

“I won’t waste a lot of your time, Mr. Rhodes, but there are a few facts that I’m obligated to inform you of before I can leave here. I trust you know about our Surrogate Support Fund?”

Milton takes a pamphlet out of the folder and pushes it toward me. I glance down at it, but I don’t need to read it to know what’s inside. The Surrogate Support Fund is just a giant ball of money they try to throw at people to convince them not to abort. It’s part of a deal the USCIS made with the Immigrants; the U.S. government gets access to Immigrant tech, and in return they pay their citizens to carry Immigrants to term. It’s how the Surrogate mother of two outside is able to dress herself so opulently.

It’s also bribery at best, and prostitution at worst. I shake my head. “With all due respect, Mr. Milton, I’ve read all about the Surrogate Support Fund. I don’t need *money*: I just want my body back the way it was. I just want this thing out of my head.”

Milton continues to watch me with that sly half-smile, and it continues to make me uncomfortable. “How far along are you, Mr. Rhodes? 24 weeks? 25”

“Just over 22.”

Milton nods. “22. Early enough that you probably didn’t do this voluntarily, but late enough that this must have come as a surprise. Am I right?”

I nod. I’m not legally obligated to tell him anything, but I get the impression that things will be over more quickly if I do. “I was injured at work. A cut in my hairline. The on-site medics sealed the wound, but evidently they didn’t get it in time, or they didn’t do it thoroughly enough. Spore got in through the cut.”

Milton listens, nodding. “At work, you say.” He glances down toward his folder, either reading a fact sheet on me or pretending to read it. “That’s at...what was it, Hamilton Neo-Fab? What is it that you do there, Mr. Rhodes?”

This is something else I don’t have to tell him, but probably something he already knows. The question makes me uncomfort-

able. "It's a machine shop. We mostly make custom pieces for local factories when they get retrofitted for Immigrant tech. I mostly weld."

"And do you enjoy your job?"

My stomach goes sour. I'm beginning to regret telling this asshole anything at all. "It's honest work, Mr. Milton. Good enough that I'd just as soon not miss a month of it while I lie around in a hospital bed, hoping the doctors can put my fucking skull back together."

Mr. Milton holds up a head, nodding. "Fair enough, sorry. But you know, your company is making parts for Immigrant tech contracts, they'd almost assuredly understand if you wanted to carry your pregnancy to term. And if you wanted to work there afterwards, I'm sure they could find a job for you. Even if there were... complications."

I scoff a little at that. "Complications? Like if I lose hearing in one ear, or if my sinuses collapse and I have to breath through my mouth for the rest of my life? Or if blood flow to my brain gets compromised, and my language centers start to atrophy? Mr. Milton, I know what can happen to Surrogates. I could be fucked up for the rest of my life."

Mr. Milton shrugs, closes his manila folder. "You could, Mr. Rhodes. You could. In all likelihood, though, you wouldn't. Caesarians are a lot less risky than they were even a year and a half ago, when I got this." He points to the demure scar line next to his eye. "The fact of the matter is, a clinic operating independently has a higher chance of disfiguring you than a hospital performing a C-Section under Immigrant supervision. Even at 22 weeks, you could go home from your surgery here in a lot worse shape than me."

I hold up my hands, plaintively. "Just stop, please. I've read the propaganda. I know my 'chances.' And I'd rather have a 22nd week abortion than carry to term and have a Caesarian." I shake my head. "I don't know where you come from, man, but most people aren't as lucky as you were."

Mr. Milton steeples his hands over the manila folder and stares at me, levelly. His eyebrow is no longer raised, and his little half-smile is gone. "Okay, Mr. Rhodes. I've done my part. Before you go under the knife, though, I'd like you to do one more thing."



Self-Portrait
Chalk Pastel and Charcoal
Rebeka Trapp

He pauses for what seems like a full minute, and I'm about to speak again when he finally opens his mouth. "I'd like you to speak with my son."

I look around the room at first, verifying that Mr. Milton and I are the only people in the room. It's empty, of course, just us and the furniture and the fishes. The door is still closed, and there are no other entrances into the conference room, and I wonder briefly if I'm supposed to be talking to Milton's son over the phone.

I realize that he's referring to his surrogate son at about the time Milton Jr. makes his appearance. He hops up onto the table in one fluid motion, appearing as if by magic from a concealed position behind one of the chairs. It's the first time I've ever seen an Immigrant in person, and his startling entrance takes me aback. I push my chair away from the table, a good six inches or so, and initially all I can do is stare rudely at Frank Milton's son.

He stands about 16 inches tall, from the bottoms of his feet to the tip of his smooth, oversized head. He's thin, and wiry, with delicate limbs and spindly, 4-fingered hands. His skin is a uniform gray color, and his mouth and nose are little more than a series of thin slits in his face. He's wearing his own miniature version of Frank Milton's dark blue suit, like some avant-garde ventriloquist's nicest dummy.

Apart from the suit, and his size, he looks for all the world like a turn-of-the-century tabloid depiction of an extraterrestrial--from back in the days when everyone just assumed that they'd travel through space in ships. Well, that isn't completely true--his eyes aren't the featureless black orbs you used to see in all the artists' recreations. They're a lot like our eyes, really, with whites and irises and pupils. Milton Jr.'s are a light blue color, and I realize that they're very close in color to his surrogate father's.

He smiles at me, to the extent that that's possible with no lips, and gives me a little bow from his position across the table. His politeness makes me remember my manners, and I scoot my chair forward and stop gaping at him. "It's a pleasure to meet you," I stammer out, and I'm too stunned to think about what a stupid thing that is to say.

Milton Jr. takes a few steps toward me, taking a position in the center of the table near his surrogate father. "Indeed, Mr.

Rhodes. I just wish it could be under better circumstances.” His voice is high-pitched, but not without its own strange richness. It sounds over-represented in my ears, like it’s being simulcast out of surround-sound speakers instead of just coming out of the Immigrant’s mouth.

I wonder briefly if he’s talking to me through my mind, and try to remember the anti-telepathy tips I read on the internet. Some of them were too complicated to be practical, like making lead-lined helmets or setting up fields of radio waves to serve as mental interference. Others are simpler, but seem unnecessarily rude: avoiding eye-contact, for instance, or humming constantly under your breath to keep your mind preoccupied.

Milton Jr. is smiling at me. “Relax, Mr. Rhodes, I’m not going to try and read your mind.” He holds up his hands, plaintively, and the gesture is so disarmingly human that it only makes me feel more uneasy. “And I don’t need telepathy to know that that’s what you’re worried about. I take it this is your first time meeting an Immigrant?”

I feel a little like a rube, but I nod. “Before now, I’ve only seen you on TV.”

Milton Jr. nods. “I see. If I were in your shoes, I’d probably be worried about the same thing. It’s against regulations, though, for me to employ any variety of telepathy during a Final Consultation, and the consequences are rather severe. So relax, Mr. Rhodes, I’m not going to brainwash you.”

I don’t relax, of course, but I do finally release a breath I didn’t know I’d been holding. “Look,” I start, uncertainly, “I don’t know how much you heard, but I think Mr. Milton has already said everything that needs to be said--”

Milton Jr. waves a hand at me, and I stop talking. “Just hear me out, Mr. Rhodes. Please. I understand that you’re in a delicate position, and your objections to my father’s arguments are all very reasonable. But I’m not here to try and reason with you, Mr. Rhodes. I’m not here to inform your decision, or offer you payment.

“I’m here, Mr. Rhodes, to plead with you.”

Milton Jr. is crossing the distance between us, and by the time he finishes that sentence he’s standing about a foot away from

him. At this distance, I notice that he has a few wispy hairs at his temples, just above where his ears would be if he had external ears. They're black, just like his surrogate father's. At this distance, it's impossible for me to speak. All I can do is sit there, stunned, and listen to what the Immigrant has to say.

"You're carrying a life inside you, Mr. Rhodes, and I'm begging you not to terminate it. Even now, one of my brothers is germinating in your head, recovering his strength after his long dormancy, borrowing your body so that he can re-grow his." Milton Jr. shakes his head. "I know it's invasive, and I know you didn't invite him, but if you can just suffer his presence for a few more months, you'll be giving him a shot at life."

A spark of indignation flares up inside me, and I finally find my tongue. "Are you fucking kidding me? Yeah, I'd say I didn't invite him in. Jesus Christ, all I did was get injured at work, and thanks to some faulty fucking medical work, I got a spore in my head. And this *thing* is going to more than double in size before they can take it out. Some people end up *paralyzed*, man!"

Milton Jr. shrugs, sighing. "Mr. Rhodes, I have personally gone through four planetary migrations in my lifetime. For the first three, we were able to impregnate residents on a strictly voluntary basis." He holds his tiny hands out, palms up, helplessly. "Sadly, it just wasn't something we could do here on Earth. I'm sorry. We were in jeopardy, and there just wasn't enough time to make contact. There isn't a day that goes by that I don't regret that fact."

I know the history, of course, and I've read the Immigrants' public apology. At least Milton Jr. had the decency to give me a personal one as well. I sigh. "For what it's worth, then, I'm sorry, too. I wish I'd never been impregnated. It isn't fair to the Immigrant inside me."

Milton Jr. furrows his tiny gray brow. "It's only as unfair as you make it, Mr. Rhodes. Listen, we only had time to get our best and brightest off planet before the catastrophe...the life you're incubating would undoubtedly be an asset to both of our races. Look at the technological advances we've already made...look at the economic advances just in your own country. Before we came here, the United States was on the verge of economic collapse, now you're a world superpower again! Just a few more months of inconvenience,

Mr. Rhodes, and after that everyone wins!”

I stand up, quickly, and the comfy leather chair slides off behind me. “A few more months of *inconvenience*? There’s a living thing growing in my skull, leeching off my blood for nourishment! And when it comes to term, if I’m not in a hospital, it’ll tear its way out of my head and assuredly kill me. You people act like I’m walking around with a fucking tooth ache or something. There’s a goddamned *alien* in my head!”

Frank Milton wriggles uncomfortably in his chair at the sound of the slur, but Milton Jr. ignores it. “What you’re describing is *life*, Mr. Rhodes. Everyone always describes it in romantic terms, but life is bloody, dangerous, and brutal. Your species’ women have been dying in childbirth since the dawn of time, Mr. Rhodes. The risk comes with the territory. So now you bear your young in hospitals, to alleviate the risk, but you never stopped reproducing--”

“It’s not the same,” I say, a little more loudly than I’d intended. “Women are giving birth to their own children, their own flesh and blood. They’re continuing the species. They’re starting *families*.”

Something flashes over Milton Jr.’s face, almost too quick to catch, but it’s twists his little slash of a mouth down into a particularly ugly snarl. “I am a forgiving man,” he says, and I can hear a tremor in his voice now that I hadn’t noticed before, “so I won’t hold your ignorance against you. But I will not allow it to persist.

“You say that your race’s reproduction is worth the risk, because it’s a continuation of the species? What about my species’ continuation? I lived on my last planet for longer than your species’ has existed. What makes your race so much more important than mine? I’ve admitted that we should have asked your permission, but I think we’ve done more than our share to make up for it. Your entire country would have already collapsed without us. Your world would still be spiraling into a worsening energy crisis if not for our technology. Your entire race might be at war.”

Milton Jr. closes the rest of the distance to the edge of the table. Now that I’m standing, he has to crane his neck up while he’s speaking to me. Somehow the effect is still intimidating. “Some of you people are unbelievably selfish. You have a life inside you, Mr. Rhodes. A being of great intellect and power, who has existed

for millions of years. If you decide to carry him to term, he'll be eternally grateful, bound to you for life by bonds of love and respect that only the most sensitive members of your race can even understand. His work will undoubtedly better both of our races, and improve the planet on which we live. Furthermore, your own government will reward you handsomely, and you'll live the rest of your life in wealth and comfort.

"But you don't think it's worth the risk. You don't want to jeopardize your health. A few months of discomfort and a relatively safe surgery are just too much to ask for you, who would rather retain his safety and security as a middle-aged, unmarried factory worker. Well, I can't force you to not be stupid." Milton Jr. shakes his head, grinning. "It's against regulations.

"But don't you ever suggest to one of my race that what is happening to you is somehow inferior to the method by which you *people* reproduce. Gambling with another person on your conjoined genetic information to churn out some naked, squalling, unformed thing with less regard for the world around it and the people who made it than a dog rescued from a shelter. What's happening to you, Mr. Rhodes, is an *actual* blessing."

I want to say something in response, but I can't think at the moment. Something is happening inside my head; the fetus behind my ear is moving in a way it's never moved before. It feels like a family of mice is tunneling it's way toward my brain, although there's no actual pain involved. Just pressure, of a type truly unlike anything I've ever felt, and a wave of dizziness so acute and powerful that it sweeps my feet out from under me.

I crumple to the floor in a heap, managing to avoid braining myself on the legs of my comfy leather chair. I hear Milton get up from his own seat to come to my aid, but it's his surrogate son who crosses the distance first. The Immigrant leaps gracefully down from the table to kneel beside me, his hands moving quickly and gingerly to my pulse and to my forehead. His touch is cool, dry, and gentle.

He's speaking to me again, but all the anger has gone out of his voice. There's nothing there but concern now, and regret, and when I look at him I see that he's on the verge of tears. "Mr. Rhodes, I must apologize. I forgot myself." He shakes his head.



Skull Alley Writers Retreat
Digital Photography
Rosella Pearl

“To speak like that to a man in your condition...it’s unconscionable. How do you feel? Are you okay?”

The dizziness is passing, as well as the strange pressure inside my skull. There’s a weird ringing in my ears, but other than that I feel okay. I don’t try and sit up yet, though, just to be on the safe side. “I think I’m okay,” I manage, “I just lost my balance.”

Milton Jr.’s hand goes to the lump behind my left ear, gently examining the area. “Not surprising, considering how close he is to your inner ear. Really, you’re just lucky he didn’t shift like that while you were driving or going down the stairs. Are you sure you’re okay?”

I take a deep breath. The ringing in my ears has changed pitch, slowed down, resolving itself into a single, rapidly repeated tone. It reminds me of a woodpecker making a hole, and I wonder if the fetus is banging on my eardrum. “There’s a weird sound in my ear,” I say, “but I don’t feel any pain or dizziness.”

Milton Jr. lays his head briefly against my left cheek, and I hear him choke back a sob. When his face floats into view again, there are actual tears flowing from his eyes. “Mr. Rhodes, I...” He sighs deeply, swallows hard. His voice is thick now, on the verge of breaking up. “Mr. Rhodes, it’s your son...he’s wriggled his way over to your auditory canal. What you’re hearing is his heartbeat.”

Milton Jr. drops into a seated position on the carpet and begins to cry, openly and loudly like a widow at a funeral. Milton drops down into a crouch behind his surrogate son and places a hand on the Immigrant’s tiny shoulder. His eyes are full now, as well, and as I watch a tear picks its way down the older man’s cheek.

I feel myself giving in to peer pressure. I’ve been crying a lot in the last few weeks, I think because my pregnancy has fucked up my biochemistry somehow. The tears flow especially freely from my left eye, where I suspect that fetal pressure has had some strange impact on the function of my tear ducts.

We sit there like that, in a huddle, crying on the floor, and I listen to the high-speed trip-hammering of the Immigrant’s heartbeat in my head. The government agent, his alien son, and the pregnant man, crying on the floor of an abortion clinic’s conference room. I can only imagine what someone would think walking in on us.

For my part, I'm too exhausted to think anymore. All I can do is lie on the floor, listening. Milton Jr. is still sobbing, although he isn't as loud as he was initially. His father is trying to console him, speaking vaguely to him under his breath in a way that conveys more meaning through tone than through words. And under it all is the constant, rhythmic beat of the alien heart inside my head.

Except...how can anything that close really be alien? I pull myself into a seated position and watch Frank Milton reassuring his surrogate son. Appearances aside, their behavior is the same as that of any father and son in their position. Frank Milton could be me, in a year and a half, if I were to walk back out to the lobby right now and tell them I don't want the abortion.

I'm speaking up before I even know it, shaking my head and looking into Frank Milton's eyes. "I can't do it," I say, sighing, and then speak up again when I have trouble believing my ears. "I won't go through with it. I'm sorry, both of you. I'm sorry for everything."

Milton Jr.'s face has lifted. He's still crying, but he's smiling now as well, and his eyes have lit up like a Christmas tree. His father's expression is one of such palpable relief that I can't help but grin at the pair of them. "You won't regret this, Mr. Rhodes," Milton Jr. is beaming at me now, "I assure you."

I stand, shakily, and Frank Milton lends me an arm by way of assistance. "I'll put you in touch with the Surrogate Support Fund, Mr. Rhodes. They'll see to it that you're tended to. I assure you, you've made the right decision. You'll see, soon enough. The sacrifice you're making is nothing compared to what you've done for the world, and both of our races. You'll see, Mr. Rhodes."

I feel giddy as I leave the conference room. I wonder, almost as an afterthought, if Milton Jr. used some kind of telepathy on me to make me change my mind, or if it was just some combination of reasoning and behavior that convinced me. Maybe it isn't important. All I can focus on now is the quiet, rapid humming of the life that's growing inside me, tapping out a constant high-pitched rhythm against my eardrum.

All I can do is listen to the sound of my son's heart, beating.

The Fantaisiste

Russell Jackson

He opened the sliding glass door, blurry with condensation from the heat outside and cold within. It gave the morning landscape an illusory visage of the most beautiful morning fog, but in truth there was none. It did not matter; today, the infinite sky of dreamy, periwinkle clouds, where might have rested the heads of angels awaiting pink dawn, would be enough. The distant, still verdure of the tree line, which always seemed a door to endless possibility, was enough. Indeed, this latter area gripped him. He wanted to float down from the crude balcony to the refreshing, dewy grass of the park below, and wander through the arboreal barrier into the splendor of another world.

There, he thought, try that one.

His hands felt like they belonged to a weak old man. They trembled as he brought pen to paper, trying to capture the way into Skyldia, the mystic forest realm of vibrant, colorful life, where hooting monkeys leapt from tree to impossibly tall tree above vast, shaded fields of clover and ivy, cool and breeze-swept. There, the kind and lovely Skyldic tribes lived in simply harmony with all around them, hunting with spear and bow, eating the vibrant fruits that grew fat on the branch, drinking the clear water that sang as it poured over mossy stones and pooled beneath waterfalls. They tattooed their tall, graceful bodies with sacred forest symbols that paid tribute to the cycles of nature at work all around them, and crafted no weapons. In their eyes was a refreshing awareness, and none spoke but was listened to carefully and considerately by his or her fellow.

In the vivifying calm of Skyldia grew healing herbs that could take his pain away, if he could but dream his way to them. The shaman would bring him into his moss-roofed hut, where bits of wood and stone hung as chimes in the windows, and the

shelves were stocked with a formidable array of plants, cures and incenses, their scents combining into a dizzying odor that would take a lifetime to describe. The shaman would feed him the mixture to patch his heart and soothe his mind, and he would dwell there evermore, lounging in the gentle humidity of a woodland paradise, where the sunlight never streams through the whispering leaves the same way, where all manner of buzzing insects crawled beneath prehistoric ferns, if he could but dream it so...

He put down the pen with a quaking sigh. There would be no more Skyldia. He had explored the depths of the woodland bordering the park before, which amounted to nothing more than a barrier separating one unit from another in the small apartment complex they had called home for more than a year.

Oh, by my gods, he begged the muses, give me something else, please.

He looked into the sky, but he thought immediately of angels, and that was too much to bear. Looking across the park as the morning sun rose, he saw a single street lamp remained, glowing ethereal white; the other were all that ugly urban orange, but had long switched off with the coming dawn. He stared at the incandescent orb that, from a distance, seemed to float on its own above the ground, magical as the light bulb within had likely seemed to the first who had witnessed its invention. The world swirled around that shine, and he put pen to paper again, with more confidence this time.

The white glow gave him a gateway to mist-haunted Gnudsk, city on the coast of an ancient polar continent where distant glaciers shimmered in the sunlight with a timeless brilliance, a throat-tightening luster that no diamond could rival for all its perfect facets. There, within the Orichalkos walls of the antiquated metropolis, he would walk among the bustling chaotic wonder of the marketplace, a locale with a busy timelessness all its own. Here, beings from the remotest corners of Antediluvia had ended their harrowing journeys across green seas of iron in the massive ships, tall and dreamy as far-off castles. These same folk, mammalian, serpentine, or any form besides, called out in a multitude of tongues the prices for their innumerable and exotic goods to buyers equally diverse. Soldiers in redoubtable, ornate armor patrolled

the streets there, grabbing hold of the occasional thieving urchin, but otherwise with little order requiring their efforts to keep. It had always been a peaceful city of cooperative souls on a lonely, unrivaled landscape, where the adventuresome few could wander in reverie with no fear of highwaymen or natural predator; cold the only danger by nightfall. The bizarre and good-humored rustics of the rolling farmlands produced incredible crops that drew water, rather than demise, from the diurnal frost, and glowed in the dawn whilst they fed. At the day's close, one could return home to a house of monolithic stones, where he could watch the glacial sunset through the thin dusk of an obsidian window, with...

His hands shook uncontrollably; the pen clattered to the wooden boards of the balcony. He slammed his left hand down on the wrist of the right, closing his eyes and squeezing them tight until he could concentrate again. But concentrate was not the right word. It was... ignore. Block out, suppress, pretend. Fantasize.

Where next? he thought, mocking himself. *Mount Thumecro? Gal-Dazra? The plains of Munon, whose grasses glow like gold beneath the high, hot sun?*

He laughed briefly, a series of self-deprecating snorts at his own vocabulary and subject matter. How archaic was he? No one wanted to waste their time with splendid visions of ancient vistas and dreamy landscapes. "Not 'dark' enough," said one editor, a man who had clearly never read the Anglo-Saxon elegiacs, or the works of Blackwood or M.R. James; he had probably only given Poe a passing glance. "We need something with a bit more of a 'modern' feel," said another. "Modern" apparently meant the literary equivalent of a snuff film, complete with cannibalism and genital torture. "Classic," then, meant a story about a serial killer loose in the woods, told to children around a campfire. "What does it say?" said the literary editors, calling it "self-indulgent," as their condescending elitism dripped from every word of their equally self-indulgent rejection letters. "Too purple," said the fantasy editors. "We're looking for something more *Tolkien-esque*." He released a painful chuckle from deep within, a self-deprecating laugh that was as hopeless as it was humorless.

At least, he reasoned, he was finally laughing with everyone else.

Shaking his head, he leaned forward again, picked up the pen. The sunrise threatened to take the sky away from him. Those illumined clouds had moved into the east, burning now like dreams tossed into a spiritual furnace. Nothing else appealed to him; he might as well give in. Maybe he could control the vision, not let it take him where he knew it wanted to go.

You don't have that power, and you know it.

He watched the vanishing clouds as the light came up, and felt an emptiness over his whole body. Not weightlessness, for that would suggest too much the lifting of some earthly burden, and the past night had only added a weight unimaginable to his flimsy frame. No, it was emptiness that gave him buoyancy, that allowed him to drift ever upward to those dreamy pillows of the cherubs, to the incredible vastness of the sky world Halurandos; here flew macaws, and elegant swans, and the mournful killdeer of the lonely fields, who nested amongst the foggy platforms of the clouds and had no need of their famed feign of injury to lure away danger. In graceful flocks the former flew, dipping and curving about the vapor landscapes so inured by the flooding sunlight with gentle color, disappearing behind and within clouds successively more soft and lovely.

And here flew people.

The vision was on its own power now. He could not stop it.

He saw all those he had lost in his unhappy life, mostly family, his beloved grandfather an especially touching sight, and the few friends that had lucked out even worse than he, or who had borne a burden so much greater than his that they could stand life no longer.

Oh, no, he begged the muses, please, don't do this to me.

And among the once-sorrowed latter, there she was. In the full radiance of her beauty, so fresh, so recently torn from life. Her dark hair falling down past her curving waist, her deep onyx eyes freezing him solid in his awe of her, as he had always been in awe of her, as he had never been able to convince her. Those soft, full lips curved into the warmest smile he had ever known, a smile just for him. Instantly he was on his knees in the cloudy turf, and she was down before him, pale and wonderful. She lifted one hand, free of marring bruises or calluses of toil, to touch his face, still smiling. Here there lingered no guilt, no self-loathing, no nightmares of

wrongs done to her by him or malignant others. Here there drifted in the lofty heavens of her heart no great tempest of doubt, no growing feeling of worthlessness that had gripped her, incurably like a plague, until it took her life away, and his as well.

They embraced, and every muscle in his body first tensed, then fell limp. It was her smell, her very smell, curling up around him as he wandered in the landscape of her shimmering hair. Like fragrant agaloch in the autumn eve, burning in the first freezing snow. Every hot summer night he had held her by the open window, his nose buried within her locks, fingers running over her body as they did now.

Or, as he imagined they did.

He threw down the pen and paper, stomping them to a heap from his seat, and cried out over the morning park for all to hear his anguish. Several windows opened; he did not care, nor see them. The sun had risen, his eyes blurring it from the burn of Sol-warmed tears without, and the cold, the impossibly hopeless cold within. He dropped his face into his hands and wept, loud and recklessly, beyond care for the world. His sobs echoed over the park, surely haunting every ear they blighted. His pain was the pain of death.

Only one vision of horror remained, blocking out all others, despite their beauty and true heart. No muse, not one spark of creativity was required by it, for it was a vision within walking distance. Elissa, his love, lay in their porcelain bathtub, with blood lapping at her pale breasts. The onyx eyes that sparkled, the soft, full lips whose touch could make him shiver, lay still and would forever be. Her hand would never touch him again, her warm and curving body never slumber against him, pressing into his enveloping arms and feeling affection through the gates of dream, ever again. The burdens of earth had been too much, had weighed so great on her fragile and beautiful mind, that she had departed forever for those cloudy reaches he had so often described for her in his fantasies, grown from overflowing emotions he had first learned to feel through the love in her touch. She left him only with visions of grotesquerie where once was beauty and awe, of shallow fear and anguish where once dwelt love.

The fantaisiste could not dream away the invading, bloody horror, and that was his only power.



Ceramic Horse
Sculpture
Rebeka Trapp

The Weight on Your Shoulders

A Review of *Women, Food, And God:
An Unexpected Path to Almost Everything*

Nicole Trobaugh

Nearly everyone who has access to a television set or radio has heard about America's overwhelming problem with food. Turn on the television, and one will be bombarded with advertisements for the latest diet program, miracle weight loss drug, or pain-free exercise plan, all in the hopes that the overfed public will dish out more money to find the "easy" solution to their problems. Despite the fact that the American society seems more obsessed than ever with having the perfect body, the national obesity rate has skyrocketed in the last ten years. An inquisitive person may ask: "How did this happen, and is there any hope for fixing the problem?"

Geneen Roth, author of New York Times bestseller *When Food Is Love*, has written a book that attempts to answer these questions by capitalizing upon her experience as a retreat leader and analyzing her own disordered eating patterns, as she admits to being both extremely overweight and dangerously underweight during her life. *Women, Food, and God: An Unexpected Path to Almost Everything*, published in 2010, dares to take an honest look at America's supposed national eating disorder. Unlike other books in the realm of "self-help," Roth combines elements of common sense, meditation, and psychoanalysis, without any mention or regard for calories, fat grams, or glycemic index, to offer a refreshing view of how to fix America's perpetual weight gain.

By drawing upon her experiences as a workshop and retreat leader, in which she counsels those who claim to struggle with food obsession, Roth maintains that a person's relationship with food travels parallel to his/her relationship with everything else in the universe: God, parents, children, friends, careers, etc. According to Roth, the problem with food obsession arises from a fear of feeling

pain and emotion that nearly everyone seems to possess in today's society. By fearing hurt, people are spiraling into an obsession with food that manifests itself in both overeating and restricting, as both processes serve to numb the pain that every human being must deal with at some point in his life. As Roth asserts, when humans believe that pain will destroy them, they seek salvation in anything that will preoccupy them and allow them to not acknowledge their own suffering.

This may seem to be a daunting problem to the reader, but Roth's solution is a simple one: Eat when you're hungry and stop when you're full. However, simplicity does not presuppose ease. As Roth explains, this one guideline for recovery is often misunderstood, or even abused, by those who seek an easy solution to their food issues. After many years of ignoring hunger cues, it is hard for one to identify the feeling of true hunger, and it is especially difficult to differentiate between emotional pain and hunger pangs. As a result, one may consider this guideline as a given license to eat whatever he desires in any quantity he wishes, which often leads to significant and unhealthy weight gain.

Meditation is an important part of Roth's solution to this problem, though the type of meditation she describes is not the type that one may immediately consider. Her form of meditation involves "arriving at oneself," or forcing oneself to recognize the emotions he feels. According to Roth, by centering yourself and taking an honest look at what you are feeling, you take the power away from the pain, and soon, you realize that pain will not destroy you. This "centering" style of meditation is essential to recovery from any pattern of disordered eating, since it forces one to refuse to numb his feelings through the overconsumption or deprivation of food.

Roth writes in a form that immediately establishes a rapport with the reader, at times using light profanity and proactively addressing common reactions to her ideas about food obsession. She also writes in plain language that is easy to understand, abandoning the use of arduous psychological terms and complex nutritional theorems, as both are normally found in abundance in such "self-help" books. Indeed, Roth presents her revolutionary ideas about food obsession in such a way that it immediately

disarms the reader, who would normally approach the subject with guns blazing.

Though Roth does present her ideas quite repetitively, occasionally in an almost-meditative manner, she seems to understand how emotionally charged the idea of food obsession is, and she seeks to present her information in a friendly, peer-to-peer manner. As Roth continually states, “It’s not about the weight, but it’s not not about the weight.” Weight is definitely an important part of life, since it is essential to keep it in a healthy range, but a person’s relationship with food seems to be independent from weight in general. Roth succeeds in describing this complex relationship, and she gently hands the reader her tools for defeating an eating disorder. *Women, Food, and God* is relevant to any person who must eat daily to sustain life, whether or not one has ever struggled with food obsession or disordered eating.

Gogol Bordello's *Trans-Continental Hustle*: A Music Review

Melanie Smith

I first heard Gogol Bordello in an odd but incredible movie called *Wristcutters: A Love Story*. The band’s song “Through the Roof ‘n’ Underground” plays repeatedly throughout the movie, and I couldn’t get that song out of my head. Through the digital transfusion that is the internet, I listened to more Gogol Bordello songs, and I was hooked. The band, composed of members from various nations including the Ukraine, Russia, Ethiopia, and Ecuador who are based out of New York City, combine cultures and styles to create a unique and intoxicating sound. Branded as *gypsy punk*, Gogol Bordello’s music utilizes a mixture of rhythms and melodies that are exciting and addictive, and the messages of community and celebration are infectious. Being as they have been making albums since 1999, I thought it was a crime that I

just now became aware of them. In the last year and a half or so, I have listened to these albums have been blaring from my speakers almost daily, and now, with the April 2010 release of *Trans-Continental Hustle*.

As with each album they have recorded, *Trans-Continental Hustle* signifies an evolution of Gogol Bordello's sound, this time highly influenced by lead singer Eugene Hutz's experiences living in Brazil. I had the pleasure of hearing several of these songs live in August, and it was a concert experience like no other. There were people ecstatically jumping and shouting everywhere, and I danced so feverishly that I walked around like an old lady for a couple of days afterwards. Gogol Bordello is a band that is clearly passionate about music and relishes in raising the energy of its audience, interacting with and hyping the crowd, and their passion is evident on their albums as well. My two sons and I have made dancing in the living room to *Trans-Continental Hustle* a major part of our exercise regimen. This album will make you want to move and celebrate life and, even better, it will make you think. In the beautiful ballad "Universes Collide," Eugene Hutz describes the slums of Brazil and admits, "I was gonna come/when I heard your drum/And you screamed your head off into the night/I grew up around different part of town/But even the universes collide." This song illuminates the destructiveness of hatred but also evokes the interconnectedness of human experiences regardless of ethnic background. Many of Gogol Bordello's songs emphasize music's ability to transcend personal differences and bring people together, particularly the folk music of various cultures that persist in the face of the corporatization of the music business. Another highlight is the rousing "Raise the Knowledge," which opens with the declaration, "Revolution is internal/ Help yourself at any time." This song proves that the members of Gogol Bordello are expert trans-continental hustlers, blending musical traditions from all over the world and underscoring the ability of music to bring people together regardless of background. If you want music that transcends boundaries and moves your body and your mind at the same time, check out Gogol Bordello's *Trans-Continental Hustle*, available in vinyl, CD, and digital formats. You can even listen to it for free on gogolbordello.com. Give it a try and see what you think.



Audrey (Strong Like a Lion)
Oil
Aberlyn Sweetland-May

I am (mostly) faster than gravity

Ian Uriel Girdley

I am faster than gravity.
Every time I drop an ink pen,
or cigarette lighter,
or something more breakable
like a cell phone that never
cracks against black top,
plastic popping off the back,
the screen splitting into
an unusable sunburst interface
never because a reflex
catches it every time.

I am faster than gravity.
This impresses a baby
as he lies in his crib
and I drop a red and blue ball
above his head, bells ringing
as it falls toward his face
my hand swishes under
and catches it
just before it bops
his little infant nose
and he flops and squeals
and smiles ecstatically.

I am faster than gravity.
Even when I am inebriated,
or well on my way at a tavern,
and preach to the other patrons,
screaming of my velocity,
waving to illustrate so exuberantly
that my hand clips a tumbler
it glosses over with well bourbon

preparing to kiss the bar
when my double-visioned hand
makes a quick save and not a drop
is wasted on the lacquered wood
I would weep to the bartender
if it somehow had,
“How clumsy of me, so sorry.
How could I do such a thing?”
But instead sip it down unscathed
but wonder why on the way home,
no more slow, gravity no faster,
a crack in the sidewalk
can still cause me to fall
grating my hand against concrete.

The Crazy Old Shuffle

Scott Brewer

Come fly with me

It was a pseudonym
she said
see
said
as she stood
setting aside her napkin
my name was always too long
too short to fit my self into
a tight fit
sitting still was
uncomfortable
for a long time
knowing that

you could look at me
seeing a name
where a person was
was not really freeing
so I gave it up

let's fly

just talk to me
she said
sea shells
by the sea shore
she
looked into my eyes
saying
with her lips
let's not make this
a name thing

let's fly away

so she's she
and I'm me
monosyllabic couple
on the dance floor
before the dj starts working
while everyone's silverware
clinks on china
drinks jingling
we sway
one lonely soul
two bodies
dancing crazy
across the hardwood
while the other kids eat
unaware
that two of the
infinitely old
heart
are busy
falling in love again
to Sinatra

Metalworking

Melanie Smith

Where am I in this wrought
iron mind wound with softly curving
intricacies waxing and waning like the tide
being pulled inexorably by the dangling moon?
What subtleties whisper in the far dimensions
of neurological thought beneath the droning
distortion of distraction?

This tangled web of copper sculptures,
serpentine nonsensical fury that falls
continuously in the negative space
that stretches between synapses and
hums multi-sensory perceptions,
chipped and rusted
but never sleeps.

Modern Christmas

Rachel Short

Dear plastic flaccid Santa,
twisted and crumpled in the lawn,
grinning toward the sky,
as if your magical place is towards the heavens.
Have you noticed the neighboring nativity scene
has turned its back to you?

Do you realize your un-enchanting presence
looks like garbage next to the snowman,
whom, weather permitting, still stands tall?
I don't know which is a greater tribute
to the modern Christmas --your flimsy, transparent,
un-inflated pile or the unpainted
faceless baby Jesus next door.

Where are you Beowulf, you great old bull of a man?

Jonathan Carson

Words tremble past
and past again,
shopworn monsters in mechanical suits
dangling like carrion
on clothes wire.

Ezra Pound, conversant, but
failing to realize that it need
only be a clothes line.

Plunge your hands
into pulpy earth, disrupt new
worms and old memories,
coax dirt from those hoary wounds with soundless sighs
and solitary communion,
as if beholden
or betrothed to another.



Self-love 3
Digital Photography
Rosella Pearl

Hey Jack

Katelyn Wilkinson

There is a beat path
I might travel;
a longing
to make friends with
highway signs and
mile markers,
waving passing motorists
who would give me new tennis shoes
but not a ride.
I know nothing
West of St. Louis,
but don't hold that against me.
Kerouac is waiting,
lingering in the cigarette smoke
filling a flat in 'Frisco.

Nothing but my Socks

Rachel Short

While lying under the pink lace of a tree,
admiring how her skirt decorates
the pouting puffs that freckle the sky,
a breeze wiggles adornment loose
and a petal oscillates
to land with a kiss on my breast.
Only then, I notice
two droplets of ocean water
watching me from between
the creamy V

I Sigh

Sleepless in Iambic Pentameter

Sherry Dour

More oft than thou wouldst thinke (for onne so brighte)
I'm uppe and downe to pee throughout the nighte
A single glasse with dynner's alle I hadde
And only sippes, once I am jammyes-cladde
Arounde midnichte is whenne it first beginnes
(thou'd think'st I'm being punishéd for sins)
Then up againne at twoe and then at fourre
And whenne I thinke cannot stande it more
The morninge breakes, and offe goes my alarmme
And to mine sleepe is done more serious harmme
For no more nappinge now shalle be allow'd
Tis time to get up, fight the rush-hour crowde
To go to do my jobbe inside my "penne"
And thenne, at bedtime, start it all againne.

Contributors

Madison Laurent Ignotus “Gnotty” Fay Cyr, the seventh daughter of a seventh daughter and one of thirteen children, is an honorary Gemini despite her July 15, 1919 birthday. She enjoys the smell of boiling water and removing sticky tack from walls, and her hobbies include Polish ethnic dancing, growing orchids, breeding Persian cats, and making lawn and brush-detritus sculpture. Gnotty is an active member in the local Jewish Community Center and carries the distinction of being named the underwater-singing contest winner of the Corydon, Indiana YMCA for the past three years as well as the title of Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire. Inspiration for her writing stems from her experience living with a band of Moroccan gypsies for the first twelve years of her life or, in her words, “La vie Bohémienne de l’artichaut nomade”.

Christina Davidson is a junior at Indiana University Southeast, majoring in English with a dual concentration in both Literature and Writing. Because of her childhood experience of growing up in a small town, she is most interested in representing the value of rural living in her writing. She lives in Kentucky.

Sherry Dour has a BA in Theatre from Kentucky Wesleyan College. She has returned to college after a decade and a half of office work induced malaise and is currently working toward her second bachelor’s degree so she can teach English to middle schoolers. She is extremely grateful to her husband and her parents for supporting her in this new madness and to IUS for having such a fantastic program so close to her home. There’s not much more to say, and there wouldn’t have been this much except that she is frequently annoyed by the absence of bios so this will have to suffice for anyone else who feels the same way.

Russell Jackson is, as of the writing of this bio, sitting in Perkfection's, listening to two ditzy women inanely discussing the fact that their little girls attend the same class. He is therefore considering ending the life he is currently endeavoring to describe for the *Review*, and trying to think of a clever or unexpected way to do it. He has at his disposal a tray of sugar packets, a salt and pepper shaker, an empty bag of Sun Chips and a copy of the complete poetry of Milton. The guys in the ER are going to get a kick out of this one. Russell Jackson 1986-2010

Emily King, I've been in love with art since I was a kid. I didn't really start getting serious with it until my freshman year at IUS in the fall of 2008. I'm currently a Psychology and Fine Arts (printmaking) double major, and plan to further my education by earning a Master's degree in Art Therapy. Art is a beautiful and fun way for me to express myself, and I want to share this expression technique of mine with others who may not feel comfortable, or who may have trouble expressing themselves otherwise.

Thomas Olges spends his days as a teacher, his evenings as a student, and his nights and weekends as a devoted husband and cat owner. He writes in the interest of visiting as much discomfort as he can muster on as many people as he can reach.

Rosella Pearl, I grew up in Wyoming, bored and starving to create. A child born to poor, yet hard working, parents, creativity was not an option for them or for me. So I left. . . ran into a few jails, heart aches and bruises along the way but also ran into myself and have been my souls partner ever since. I will pick up anything and create with it, art is motion to me and I must stay moving. I have a huge fear of becoming stagnant so I k e e p m o v i n g. I have a beautiful daughter Mina Violet and a loving partner Kelly Newton, both have brought light and love into focus in my life. . . And that's my story.

Brandon Stettenbenz, I'm a junior double major in writing and literature. For the next year I'll be working on a chapbook length collection of poetry with the hope of publishing before graduating from IU Southeast in Spring 2011. My future plans include attending University of Oregon as a graduate teaching fellow in their Creative Writing MFA program and to continue writing throughout my university teaching career.

Aberlyn Sweetland-May is an up-and-coming visual artist in her third year at IU Southeast. She is pursuing a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Painting at the university as well as a double minor in Research and Art History. In addition to her art studies and personal work, Aberlyn does a variety of commission based projects, ranging from portraiture to graphic design. Current work can be seen on display at the Barr Gallery, IU Southeast, and the Bristol, located on Bardstown Rd, Louisville, KY. To see a full portfolio of Aberlyn Sweetland-May's work, visit starlingart.blogspot.com.

Editors

Scott Brewer has carried antique spoons for five years now and written poetry for around seven. He has more spoons this year than last and is pursuing a Major in English Education, and Katie Orberon. The latter not being currently taught at IUS

Ian Uriel Girdley has read poetry and other works in bars, restaurants, coffee shops, book stores, art galleries, street corners, churches, city parks, parking garages, porches, basements, living rooms, shopping malls, and once in front of the checkout lines at Wal-mart, though he was quickly asked to leave. He has written in even more locations including doctors' offices, a Greyhound bus, libraries, courtrooms, and inside the Monroe County jail. This is an inappropriate medium to list the places where he has taken pleasure in other poetic experiences but you really didn't want to know those, anyway.

Melanie Smith is an English major who is (finally) approaching her senior year at IU Southeast. She equates this endeavor in conjunction with being a mom of two fascinating but rambunctious boys as the equivalent of fishing in a tsunami, but she is grateful for the love, challenges, and whimsies that this life provides. She likes swingsets, hugs, art in all its forms, sardonic humor, her dorky laugh, electric conversations, evolution, and moments of fullness. She dislikes waking from a dream and thinking it really happened, trying to see over a crowd, the nauseating aroma of sauerkraut, stagnation, institutionalized conformity, and moments of inarticulateness. She lives by her curiosity, believing it is beautiful to wonder without ever knowing the answers. Her creed is the wise words of Tom Robbins: "Our great human adventure is the evolution of consciousness. We are in this life to enlarge the soul, liberate the spirit, and light up the brain."

Nicole Trobaugh is a senior English major with a dual concentration in Writing and Literature. Born a Gemini, which is an Air sign, she is notoriously air-headed, and without fail, she misplaces important possessions every Monday morning, ranging from her wallet to her car keys. Despite the fact that she loves to talk about herself for hours on end, she feels rather uncomfortable writing a biography about herself, since she has yet to cure children's leukemia or win the Nobel Peace Prize. However, she has a true passion for writing and literature, loves walking through the forest alone (provided that there are no spiders present), and has been known to occasionally warble a few musical notes, as long as nobody is listening. She hopes to be a college literature professor one day, so that she may pass on her progressively acquired knowledge (and air-headedness) to another generation.

Katelyn Wilkinson is currently finishing her four-year stint at IUS in hopes that it will bring her one step closer to being that weird old professor with the bright red hair that likes to quote Lord of the Rings. When she steals the time, she enjoys discovering new poetry, the company of close friends and fine wine, and travelling to far-off lands such as Lexington to enjoy the deliciousness that is Punk Cabaret. Since her time spent on the San Carlos Apache Reservation in Arizona, she has begun writing a chapbook of poetry based on her experiences with the Apaches. In other news, she has recently begun wearing tennis shoes again after a long hiatus and is contemplating a change in venue, possibly University of Oregon, if they will have her.

Greg Truesdell is finishing up his senior year at IU Southeast and will graduate in the spring with a BFA in Graphic Design and a minor in Communications. His work predominately focuses on digital illustrations and the use of theatrical elements.

The editors of the IU Southeast Review would like to offer their absolute gratitude to Professor Tom O'Neal for his unwavering guidance, patience and support of this magazine.

IU Southeast Review 2011 Submission Guidelines

- Any person who is an active undergraduate student during the submission period may submit work.
- Editor reserve the right to request confirmation of current student status.
- Submissions may be made in any of the following categories: Poetry, Fiction, Flash Fiction, Creative Nonfiction, Photography, Art, and Book Review (Long form or Blurb).
- Please send all submissions to iusoutheastreview@gmail.com. We only accept electronic submission.
 - Please send submissions as an attachment.
 - In the body of the email include you name and contact information. No personal information should be included in the attached submission.
 - Written work should be sent in a Microsoft Office compatible format, preferably .doc or .docx, but we will also accept .rtf, .txt, etc.
 - Photographs (or photographs or artwork) should be sent in a high resolution. .jpg (or .jpeg) file.
- Submissions must be received by midnight of the deadline date. Deadlines are available in the IU Southeast Review Office and the Arts and Letters Office.
- Simultaneous submissions are accepted.
- It is okay to submit previously published work as long as the author retains the copyright to said work.
- You can only submit your own original work.
- We hate to be stifling, but, due to space limits in the publication, the following guidelines should be followed for length of submissions for each category:
 - Fiction and Creative Nonfiction must be 5,000 words or less.
 - Poetry must be under 100 lines.

- We consider Flash Fiction to be anything under 500 words. Anything larger will be classified as Fiction.
- Photographs and Artwork can be any size, but, if selected, will be scaled to fit the publication.
- You can submit in multiple categories but please submit no more than two pieces each in Fiction, Creative Nonfiction, and Long Form Book Reviews or five pieces each in Poetry, Photography, Flash Fiction, Book Review Blurbs, and Art.
- Submissions will be judged blindly by a panel of student editors.
- No more than two works by one author will be selected for publication within a single category
- You will be notified by email if your work is accepted. Please do not email us to find out; we will let you know as soon as we have made the final decision.
- Submission to the IU Southeast Review gives us permission, upon acceptance of a work, to publish said work in the IU Southeast Review and to use it in promotional materials relating to the IU Southeast Review.
- The guidelines above may be amended, only when necessary, at the discretion of the editors.
- The author or artist retains the rights to their work after publication.

This edition of the IU Southeast Review was printed by:

Richard's Printery
 800 Cawthorn Street
 Louisville, Kentucky 40203
 502-589-6900

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