Rocinante
Warner Pacific College, Portland, Oregon
Spring 2004, Number 3

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Rocinante
Don Quixote’s Horse
A Letter from the Editor

The task will qualify. This is not always true. Sometimes the task disqualifies and leaves the laborer lying on the floor with shackles on wrists and eyes glazed over like those of music theory students at eight in the morning. (Who teaches music at eight in the morning?) Stand firm o’ Rock (not the wrestler). While working on this year’s magazine I often times felt as if we were fording a vast glacier, not unlike an expedition to the South Pole. Every step brought hunger and fatigue until the editors began to stare at one another and say, “I will eat you alive,” over and over and over again. Be still my soul! But at times when I thought to extinguish myself, drop the baton, unlace my shoes, and turn in my parka, my comrades in arms would rescue me, carrying me like an ever-faithful Rocinante. My thanks to them. Cheers.

This year we make history. Some changes have been made to our beloved magazine. Changes we hope are for the better. For one, this is the first letter from the editor ever to appear in the Rocinante. The second change the reader may notice is that this year’s magazine is shorter. When the editors first met we made it our goal to raise the bar. We are lucky in the sense that is the third installment of the Rocinante for we have the good lessons of previous years to learn from. Standing on their shoulders we grasped a better view of the message and purpose of our creation. Now I suppose you want me to tell you what that is. Well, I’m not going to. But I will make a suggestion. There are no fillers in this magazine. The editors had a tough job of weeding out some very good submissions in order to help our publication find the right voice. I suggest reading the magazine from begging to end without stopping. Reading it thus I cannot imagine that these pieces of art and literature will fail to touch the stoniest of hearts or the dullest of minds.

Happy reading,

Simon
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IF YOU LOVE ME, RUN ME OVER
Urban Jack

Vanessa never asked for much. She just assumed it would happen. I was going to be her husband and she would stop telling me things like, “You’re so full of shit,” which I was. Someday her dastardly scheme to change me into the perfect specimen was going to work. I was going to stop taking our relationship so lightly. I was going to bring her flowers. I was going to show some sort of positive gain towards convex emotion. Didn’t happen. Not until I was already engaged and she stood in my arms pouring tears on my shoulder. It was the first time that I had held her and meant it. Poor girl. But now she is happily married to some one cheesy and snoogley-woogley and schmoopie-woopie. He brings her flowers. She reads him Cosmo and tells him how to have sex.

I’ve now told the entire story but failed to mention how it happened. It happened on a Thursday. Vanessa and I were watching the Grammys at her little apartment when she finally asked me what was the matter. I hadn’t realized, until she asked, that anything was the matter. I stood there a moment then responded, “I think we should stop seeing one another.” I was surprised that I had said this but agreed with myself nonetheless. I was tired. I had been her teddy bear for four months and it was high time she found something interactive...like Tickle-Me Elmo. She didn’t take it as well as one would hope. She was driving that night and, before taking me home, kidnapped me to the parking lot of Bayshore Elementary School. I spent my entire childhood at Bayshore Elementary School. Our mascot was the bald eagle; the most beautiful and regal bird that you will ever find eating out of a dumpster. The post-pubescent me has been back to visit some teachers there. They still remember the curly, blonde kid who was so sweet and always so polite. He was the one who wrote those silly stories and made up raps for red headed girls with braces. Now here he is stuck in the car of a red head gone booga-booga hoping that the recess duty will come over and break things up. No duties came but we were visited by a cop. Some three hours later I finally made it to the safety of home. I don’t know what she did for the rest of the night. I went to sleep.

I became engaged, quite unexpectedly, the next day proving once again that love is quite mysterious. I assumed the responsibility of reporting my newest adventure to Vanessa. This, I believe, was the friendliest thing I had ever done for her and there certainly was no mistake in my mind that the one to tell her should be me. So I did. She reacted as girls like her react. She tried to run me over, I knew then that I had done the right thing. Our dating had become destructive and it was my natural instinct to fight or flight. I flew because it was now very clear that our relationship was not one built on friendship and trust but more like a fish caught on a hook. Oddly enough it was the hook who walked away.

We are friends now. It’s much easier since we’re thousands of miles away and not communicating, but we did share some good laughs before parting. She even came to my wedding reception. She gave us squirt guns.

Suburban Love Song Andria Cotton
Jillian Wylie
Random Cognition
Chad Boberg

Time to journal
A gloomy and rainy day
Thoughts become eternal
Read and remembered in dismay

A light bulb clicks
There are no limits
Enlightenment hits, the mind plays tricks
Time goes by minute after minute

Still I sit
My mind will wander

Trying to make everything fit
Left to ponder

Does this make sense?
Trick of the brain
Writing at an expense
Yes this is sane

"Wait, thought come back!"
Finish this piece
Creativity I sometimes lack
Done with this poem, "RELIEF."

Trial of Beauty
Chad Boberg

A deceiving lie,
Self inflicted.
It catches the eye,
Shallow and temporal,
Never fulfilling.

A few are lucky to be born with it.
Many try to adopt it.
There is no quick fix.
Only one solution:
Eons spent in the prison of pain.

A multitude of inmates,
Torturing themselves.
Serving a sentence,
Despite their innocence.
Feeling guilty.

A seasonal wave,
Destroying and eroding.
Drowning victims in a sea of disillusion.
High tide comes at the beginning of the year;
The seasonal summons for the court to begin.

A longing for a jury to notice.
The case was built on false hopes and beliefs.
They prosecute themselves.
Who is the judge?
Doesn't matter, they're always guilty...

Untitled
Jeremy Bench
Limitations of the Age

Andria Cotton

Kier gazed outside the third story window at the old woman walking her dog. Her exposed breasts were almost touching her naval. “You can get away with just about anything these days,” he thought while surveying the other nameless faces that made up his neighborhood. Kier was only fifteen, but displayed the composed demeanor of a Victorian gentleman. When he walked down the street, one might mistake him to be standing still on a moving track, because his upper body remained so placid, as did his serious visage. Kier had perfectly straight, indigo black hair and wore a collage of designer suit pieces that he had found at the Upper West resale stores. Regardless of his manners, hair and clothes, he could only sustain the appearance for as long as he could remain inward. It was when his thoughts met sound waves that his graceful air was obliterated and the primitive, devourer unleashed. Kier’s eyes wandered from the old woman’s sagging appendages into a blur of sidewalk where he fell deep into a stare. He loved getting lost in a good stare.

Kier shook himself out of the stare and looked up into the sky. Judging from the sunset’s different shadows and colors that had transpired he presumed that at least half an hour had gone by. He could no longer justify soaking in the nothingness. He walked over to the wall that was covered by shelves of books.

Standing in front of the bookcase, Kier ran his hands across the smooth leather bindings, until he came across a navy book with beige lettering. It was one that his father had passed on to him right before he left home. He opened the book to midway through the Existentialism Is a Humanism lecture and began reading. But, given that man is free and that there is no human behavior for me to depend on... Kier knew this passage by heart. He remembered when his father first read it to him. Kier was eleven years old and it was the first hot day of the summer.

“... and that there is no human nature for me to depend on, I cannot count on men whom I do not know by relying on human goodness or man’s concern for the good of society. Kier. Kier are you focusing in on this?”

Kier usually enjoyed his father’s lessons. They were more interesting than Dr. Parker’s or any of the other teachers of the community’s. It was a beautiful day, though, and certainly warm enough to swim in the river that ran along the edge of the community.

“I need you to hang with me, bud. These are the founding principles of the community. It’s a sin that your peers won’t get to it until their teen years.” His father never raised his voice, but his words were subduing. Kier knew it was an offense to misbehave during Sartre, so he tried to hide his restlessness. He looked outside the kitchen window and saw Marique running towards the river trail in her two piece bathing suit. All of the other parents of the community found eight hours of studying to be enough for one day, but not Kier’s father. Most everyone in the community was happy with the chosen set of standards that had been collectively chosen. Kier did not understand why his father had to be the one to disagree. It was out of his father’s noncompliance that Kier’s family ended up in the Neo-Sartrean community. Kier was too young to remember when they moved. He knew very little of America, the world outside, except that his parents didn’t like it much.

One thing Kier did like was that his father did not have rules. He believed that if Kier was educated, it was his right to decide for himself. This made the other kids jealous, although none of them had that many rules anyway. “The biggest asset you have is your mind,” his father would say. “All the answers are right there.”
If this was the case, then why did he feel so paralyzed? He knew too much to ever go back, but not enough to move forward. He knew how to think and how to behave, but he knew very little of how to talk to Marique, his fourteen-year-old wife. Marique had grown up in the community as well. They had been primed for each other since their preschool years. Marique had a very petite frame that seemed disproportionate to the wild mahogany hair that she threw up into braids and knots. She wore outfits full of flowing fabric that she had sewn together. She and Kier had often competed in the classroom. He loved and hated her for it. “How is it that we compete so well, but relate so poorly?” he asked while taking a step back from the bookcase. The books did not answer him, so he relocated to the kitchen.

The kitchen was a tiny square within a square of an apartment that he and Marique shared. Kier roamed around the kitchen looking for something to postpone his hunger until Marique was home from the clinic. It was her first day as a pediatric nurse, so he anticipated her wanting to go out to some expensive place to celebrate. Kier hated to spend over forty dollars on a piece of meat, but if he had to he was not going to spoil his appetite beforehand. He ravaged cupboards and drawers sorting through an amalgamation of organic, earth-friendly, health fare and low class, hydrogenated junk. “Ramen?” he thought. “No, takes too long. Toast.” He reached for the stiff package of butter in the fridge, and put the bread in on high speed. After sitting down at the table with the toast essentials, he cut into the butter and watched it yield as he spread it over the warm bread. Staring at the butter he thought, “People used to spend hours churning this stuff and I won’t spend the time it takes to boil water.”

Kier took a bite of the toast, but could not really taste it. There was something so raw about the way he was feeling that the toast just passed through his mouth and went straight to his stomach. He didn’t want Marique to come home. It was too hard. Each conversation they had was only a reminder that they weren’t going to make it.

Kier shoved the rest of the toast in his mouth and swallowed it whole. It scraped his throat all the way down. “Why can’t Marique and I make it?” he thought. “There was a time when kids were expected to be married by fifteen, and they seemed to be all right. What did they have back then that we don’t have now? Or was it what they didn’t have? Maybe it was that they didn’t have to decide which swanky restaurant to take their wife to, or how to ignore the people staring. And they didn’t have the luxury of taking their whole lives to grow up, they had to do it right then and there. They didn’t have to endure all of the empty minutes at the dinner table, struggling to fill them with something interesting so that she wouldn’t get bored and leave. They wouldn’t even need to worry about empty minutes. They’d be too busy churning butter.”

Kier took the knife over to the sink where he began cleaning it off in hopes of changing the subject with himself. It was no use, though; he had already unleashed the monster. “Why did I marry her in the first place?” he thought. “Well, there were the obvious reasons; I liked the way she made me feel, I wanted to live up to my parents’ expectations. But really, there was nothing left for me to do in the community except marry Marique and leave. So, why do I stay?” Kier looked again at the butter. “Why did those kids who had to churn butter stay? I guess they didn’t really have a choice. They didn’t even get to choose who they married; their parents did. They were stuck with who they got and they needed each other for survival… but I can survive just fine without Marique. Maybe better.”

Kier heard the rustling of keys outside the apartment door. Marique was home. She made her entrance into the room, wearing a white, hospital smock over a pair of loud pulatso pants. Kier stood up when he saw her, as he always did when a woman walked
into a room. Marique made her way over to
the kitchen, and set down the bouquet of
flowers and the bottle of wine that she had
walked in with. “She bought herself
flowers,” he thought, “That was supposed to
be my job.” They both took a seat at the
table, he with his one leg crossed over the
other, hands clasped in his lap; she with her
knees on the chair, elbows hunched over the
burnt orange tabletop.

“Take me out,” she said leaning in closer.
Her hind end was swinging back and forth
as she waited for what seemed like an
uneasily long time.

“No,” he said. Her butt stopped swinging.

“What?”

He stared her straight in the face, “No, I
will not take you out tonight.”

“Why not?”

“Marique, I don’t want to…”

Marique was getting frustrated. “Don’t do
that, Kier. Just tell me.”

“Well, let’s think about it for a minute.
You are fourteen years old and you work at
a doctor’s office. It seems to me that you are
playing nurse. You have all the knowledge,
which is just fine, but you don’t have the
experience. I don’t think that this cute little
act is an advancement for you or society.
You are now responsible for the lives of
innocent babies, when you’re practically a
baby yourself.” Kier was now sitting up
further in his chair, his palm was pushing
down hard on the table. “And, I don’t see
how all of that validates us wasting our
money on overpriced food, at some
pretentious top floor restaurant just so you
can show them all what a fucking sensation
you are. You know you’re better than
everyone else, so why do we have to go
waste an evening reinforcing it?” Kier
exhaled and eased back into his chair.

Marique looked puzzled, but was not ready
to give in. “At least I’m working. I don’t see
you doing anything good with your life.”

“You’re right, I’m not. But at least I’m not
confusing myself for something that is so
extraordinary that it deserves to be
celebrated.”

Marique slowly slid her knees off the chair
and sat normally, with her head bowed like a
puppy after an unexpected spanking. She
reached for the saltshaker and began pouring
the little white flakes onto the table. Her
eyes remained fixed on the salt as she
removed the grains one by one. She
swallowed, and then in a soft voice said,
“You’re pretty hard on people, Kier.”

“Well,” Kier paused, “I’m pretty hard on
myself, so I guess it’s fair.”

Marique got up and went to the freezer
where she retrieved two microwaveable
dinners. Kier sat unmoved. “Why did I say
all of those things?” he thought. “Why
couldn’t I have just stayed inside myself and
taken the girl to dinner?” Kier was getting
restless. “Why do I stay? I can get up and
leave right now and never come back if I
want... but that isn’t a good enough answer.”

Kier looked long and hard at the back of
Marique. She was hastily grabbing for plates
and silverware. “I’m not sure how we ended
up here,” he thought. “What I do know is
that I need Marique. It’s unsettling. I don’t
even know what it is... but if I leave now,
I’ll never know.”

Marique set the plastic food plates on the
table, and lit the three candles that were in
the center. Kier noticed how she always lit
matches the wrong way by folding the cover
of the matchbook over onto the match and
pulling it out quickly. Her tangled curly hair
was falling from the ponytail into her face.
She looked more beautiful than ever, with
the slight worn-out look in her eyes, of one
who just realized that they were not going to
live forever. As Marique sat down at the table, Kier stood up. He took the warmed microwaveable meals from the table, covered them in foil and put them in the refrigerator. Marique sat silent, and motionless, afraid of what was coming next. “He hated the microwaveable meals,” she thought. But she was so tired.

“I was going to eat those frozen meals for lunch tomorrow.” Kier said. “Let’s just go out for dinner tonight. Besides, I want to know about your first day of work.” He looked into Marique’s watery eyes, and it hurt. He knew it was a pathetic attempt on his part to make up for what he had said. “You have every reason to say no.”

Marique didn’t answer; she just looked up to the ceiling, then back down to the tile floor. He could tell she was confused, but then again so was he. She finally opened her mouth as if to speak, but before she could reply, Kier knelt down beside the chair and laid his head in her lap. He rested there for a moment. Then lifting his head, he locked eyes with Marique. What he saw went on forever.

Marique stared back at the frightened teenager. “I’ll grab my coat,” she said.

They walked to the bus stop and stood like children waiting for the school bus. Kier reached into Marique’s pocket and held her hand that had been hiding from the cold night air. He felt the same tingle that he had when he touched her hand for the first time. Kier and Marique huddled together, trying to keep warm.
Idolized Shoes
Andria Cotton

At the orphanage in Calcutta
Another pair of shoes that comes in
is another pair of shoes that go out
that Mother Theresa won't be wearing

At night her mutant feet
echo monsters in her dreams
She wails in her sleep (if she sleeps at all)
Blood
    trails
    behind
children running in the streets

But Mother Theresa isn't the only one with a shoe problem

My sister Kate is in a crisis
red
    leather
    stilettos
set her back two twenty five
and they make her feet ache like Mother Theresa's

"I want to be like Mother Theresa," Kate announced
applying her third coat to ignorant toes
that never felt the gravel's bite
Kate likes to sleep at night
"There's no fucking way you want to be like Mother Theresa."

Sestina: Our Reservations
Andria Cotton

In a barren land of brown, brittle grass
where nothing but peyote plants grow,
and children haven't a place to play
is where they send the brown people.
To places called reservations.
I wonder if they'll mind?

There's a pale man on a date who doesn't mind
that the restaurant is packed like blades of grass,
because he has reservations.
He watches the envy on faces grow
as he escorts his date past the hungry people,
loving the social games they play.

Meanwhile, visions of extinction play
in the tribe's oldest, wisest mind.
He worries about his people
and deeply inhales the peaceful, pipe of grass.
Hatred, hunger, and hopelessness grow
as they're left to die on the reservations.

The pale man has reservations
about which slot to play.
He can't wait to see his wallet grow.
Exploitation weighs light on his mind
as he deeply inhales the brown man's grass,
and puffs away guilt laden reservations.

It gets easier and easier to replace people
with meetings, dates and reservations.
Mow them over like blades of grass
Easy to play
out in land where no one wants to pay mind
to the ones cut off, whose worries still grow.

And the gaps between us grow
and the people are no longer people,
and children go hungry, but we don't mind
that problems are sent to reservations.
Then only in sleep can the children play
slumbering deep beneath the brittle grass.

Shackles
Barnabas Omulokoli
Come Away
Kat Haaland-Ramer

Come away
To the realm of the Fae
Where the grass is green
And the rowans sway
Come away
'Fore the break of day
Through the faerie ring
Is the quickest way
Come away,
My child,
Come away

Leave your place of toil and tears
Lay aside all doubts and fears
Come join the dance
And sing the chants
Know only lightest touch of years

Come away
Where we flutter and play
We own meadow and wood,
The night and day
Come away
To the heart of May
Drink our magik and
You'll always stay
Come away,
My child
To the Ever-wild
Come away,
My child,
Come away

And Turn and Turn About is All Fair Play
Kat Haaland-Ramer

My Gentle Knight, I ask how now is this?
Why do you turn away from Eros' smile?
How do you fear a simple maiden's kiss
Whom dragons felled and Sphinx would fain beguile?
And what is this that dances down your cheek?
Mayhap your salty sorrow's truest form.
Through loss of love, your appetite should pique
If to heart's gates a lady's army storm.
Pull not away your arm from my light touch!
Let not your virtue bar you from embrace;
Therby deny your wounded spirit much
In comfort. O, what good is mournful grace?
Your honor nothing ever could betray
That hid remains between us come new day.

The Night Awaits
Kat Haaland-Ramer

The night awaits My Lady's fair command
The city streets for her alone do lay
Let cabbies in straight lines as chessmen stand
To speed us two along our merry way.
May no bulb flicker in its lamp tonight
May each one, steadfast as my heart, be true;
And may the moon, though hid by city's light
Not keep, my love, Her blessings bright from you.
"Rejoice!" is what the speeding buses sing;
Romance lies warm within the very air
That stirs your breast and takes my heart to wing
As glassy towers down upon us stare.
Let's not hold back for fear of found regret!
We'll let tomorrow pay for this night's debt.
Il Cortegiano
Zach White

Wear Abercrombie and Fitch, gel your hair
When you have an itch that must be scratched
Walk through the door, wait, act so unaware
Of what’s afoot, hide your time, outmatched
You are, an hour yet, then it’s time to move
With slurred speech, she’ll fall into you, catch her.
If she’ll do, smile knowingly, it will improve
Your chances to get her another Liquor
One more perhaps, to crush all resistance
For tonight you shall Blitzkrieg her virtue
Say she’s pretty, for prosy words of persistence
Somehow veil the bloody butcher in you
With sprezzatura guide her in the cab
Think nothing of those who so care for her
Daddy’s little girl is your sweet lamb. Have
No care for love nor her lonely lover
Inside hold her up, lean in, kiss her still
Vodka flavored lips, it tastes like CPR
No matter, keep the lifeless contact, feel
Her brazen, baser side and gild it gold

Afterward in the foreign hotel room
While she sleeps off the liquid demon swoon, take
The prized intimate red lace garment for soon
You shall forget her human face, the quake
Of her heart you never heard, full of fear
For this world and her role, like a thief, you
Cherish the action. In fourteen lines. Sear
The garment into your heart, as you do
It becomes Quixote’s precious linen.
 Held by a matador you chase this red
Lace. Spearing the cloth, while tired lids fasten.
Now sleep good heart, on the bestial bed
In the morning if she asks for them, smile
And say you’re not sure but it’s time to part
She’ll dress quickly not looking wondring awhile
Just what she’s done, what a strange fickle heart
On the street in the morning sun just go
Separate ways, don’t say a word, she’ll know
Sounds oh so simple but listen to me
Hit only the clubs where the girls drink for free

My Duel For a Young Lady
Urban Jack

The fresh fog that hangs
on my coat sleeves
pulling me
down
with the tight and frigid air
I am not the wind
and the wind
has long forsaken me
I am not the sun
and the sun
has long forsaken me
I am open
despite this feeling of
oppression
Having forsaken
no man
nor beast
nor nature
have I devoured and spit out
but have kept it in my bosom
Revenge
I have sought none
but sit here and
bleed
Blood that cries
Iona

Regret
Kenneth Edward Keyn

When looking back upon my history
I wince in pain and wish to cry. It seems,
My future is but lost in mystery.
A wish, that in the distance brightly gleams

I shed my tears for lost and fearless youth
My memories burn deep inside my mind
As I search long and hard for simple truth
But never close am I, I feel, to find

Why do I feel this loss in my sad life?
Though honor, peace, and faith do live in me
I am but still tormented in my strife
To be myself. Fear not what I could be.

Why so? I know that though I go on still
I’ll be, you’ll see in me, the free in will

Matador Barnabas Omulokoli
Eyes of Wisdom

Chad Boberg

Born on a farm in 1918,
To a family struggling to survive.
Here his eyes first witnessed valuable lessons.
Lessons, he would carry on for life.

One pair of tattered blue overalls,
Hand sewn by a loving mom.
A Bible for all the hard times,
And a deep ambition to press on.

Every morning he drank rich, sweet cream,
Skimmed straight from the bucket brim.
He saw a special significance in his chores.
A value he could keep deep within.

Forced to quit school at grade seven,
Learned just enough to get him by
Basic arithmetic, read and write
(But he did take the seventh grade twice.)

"Hey Dick, hey Dan," he shouted.
Cracking the reigns with a twitch of the hand.
Oh how this boy was forced to grow up early,
Forced to become a man.

Sweat dripped down his brow; he was tired of the plow
"There had to be more to life than this."
"Why waste a life? Use common sense!"
So he began his journey down Route 66.

Getting a family started out west,
Put him and his faith to the ultimate test.
Parking cars and picking peaches,
Didn't leave much time for California's beaches.

He later found out he was good with his hands,
Became a mechanic and soon after, the tractor dealer man.
Years of knowledge and wisdom he'll freely give.
For his eyes have witnessed a lot through the life he's lived...
Welcome to the Park  Barnabas Omulokoli

Wandering Recollections
Ried Woodlee

The eternal spring of my purest thought flows forth with an open mouth and a mind that can stop time to spot a flawed perfection on a blade of grass.

The growth is never witnessed until it dies and we remember, with nostalgia, that we planted history without thinking.

The now never really exists—only the bittersweet inklings of our recollections turned to blurry goals that are never fully reached; only altered.

As my mind spins on the concept of time and my pen pauses to grasp an idea with the precision of clarity, the moment slips by with a laugh and a nice try.

Meanings become obscure and futility sinks in and I try to block my mind from thinking of my end...and...what is it all worth?

But, in the end, it’s for me: the vanity to express myself with other people’s words that one day they’ll be mine and, then, people will then sip the wisdom of my wine that will flow until the end of time.

Or pause timelessness and ride life out twofold and become a half-life to be dissected, because this dialect will never be uttered in the shifting breaths of reinvention and innovation.

Mute as the hieroglyphics, charted with the stars and undecipherable as the night sky with its starry brail: untouchable, but there nonetheless.

And people can ponder, a brief speculation, which could last a lifetime, a blip on the screen of eternity, the infinity of a moment blinked by the eye of the universe.

I am wide-awake and sleep half the night. And at daybreak when the cock crows to rejuvenate the sun that brightens the mundane ness and recycles energy, I begin to cloud my days with things I must do.

I fill my calendar like I fill words with meaning to express a point and utter something absurdly important to make me alive and complete my solitude and reconfirm that once again I wasn’t heard.

But it doesn’t matter so long as my voice leaves a residue of sound to ring softly along the channel of sense plowing a path so I can clog my head with daily routines of a constructed reality built on the imagination of the necessity of want.
Thief
Andria Cotton

The lazy, warm wind
ushered in another Kansas afternoon.
Most mothers took their cue
and drew their children in for midday naps.

But one mother just rocked back in her chair,
knowing the battle all too well.
It made her weak to think about
playing an unwanted hide and seek,
chasing him around the bed.
Curled, girlish screams
were sure to wake the good children up.
She surrendered early,
and kept on rocking.

Down two layers of carpet blue stairs,
past the glass
sliding doors.

Down one more flight of red cedar stairs,
under the deck
in the muddy moist.
He gathered his tools, and
played with intent,
his mind wouldn’t rest.

He hammered away at the stolen planks
taken from the unfinished house next door.
Nails he swiped from his dad’s handy belt,
a filched Ken doll from his sister’s closet and
crimson lipstick from his mom’s top drawer.

The warm winds picked up and turned pale green.
He drove rusty nails through orange plastic hands
and smeared red lipstick blood on the smiling man.

Then he raised the mangled, broken tree,
and sat next to the cross like one of the thieves.

Christ
Joneen Pomeroy

Scenes fall on my eyes:
Dirty rags and shacks
Dust and dryness; drought
Poverty, hunger, and thirst
Conflict, abandonment, and addiction

I see:
Smiles, laughter, and joy
Service, humility, and generosity
Strength, unity, and love
Contentment and fulfillment

I see:
Beauty and Glory

Alleluia
Gloria a Dios
Glory to God
Cantare de tu amor por siempre
I could sing of your love forever
Amen.
Somewhere in the midst of the fake cobwebs of a flopped Halloween party I stood screaming, “I know that heaven’s not far my friends!” No, I wasn’t drunk and no, there were no drugs (I told you this party flopped). I was screaming to be heard over the raging noise that ripped out of Nathan’s amplifier.

Mike and I had been taking a break. No one was there except my wife and her friend, Janelle. Not exactly a wild bunch. Popping in and out were a few odd balls Stephan claimed as friends but they didn’t look much like the type that their own mothers would claim. I had barely sat down in the next room when Jerrad —now only to be known as Aries Delano— and Nathan started to recycle this tune they’d jammed months ago. I heard it and just stopped. That was it! That was the tune! I rushed out there and immediately began to improvise some lyrics. When it was over we three just stared at one another. Nathan began to laugh, I grinned approvingly and Jerrad let out a triumphant, “YEAH!” Three musicians + one virgin tune = magic.

I have come to terms with the fact that not all people are the same. We all do things just a little bit differently. My brother Zack for instance, he’s a tenor, sings opera. I will tell you now that I doubt if there are many who enjoy the performance of live opera as much as I, but I could never sing it. That may be because of my lack of skill or training. It may be because I no speakaddie italiano. It may simply be because I’m not fat, but I believe that it has mainly do to the fact that I can’t find the magic in performing other people’s music. As I write this I realize how hypocritical this may sound. It is. I love so much music and I sing other people’s songs all of the time. I just don’t perform their music. I’m lying. I sing in choirs.

Now is where we draw the line (I knew this would get to a point). You see, there is music that I enjoy and music that I love and then there is the music that keeps me sane. That latter kind is my passion. I am not partial to or even necessarily enthralled with this music. It is not always good. At times it is mediocre and often it is just plain bad. I can recognize this and yet I cannot stop singing it. I cannot stop it from consuming my thoughts and distracting my time, attention and, more often than not, my money from all of the nouns that they should be diverted to. The music I speak of is, of course, my own.

I am Simon the songwriter. You can call me Egotistical and Artsy Fartsy. I play in a band. We have to play my music. I write songs. They cannot be stupid three chord pop songs like the abominable crap on the radio. My songs must be artistically intriguing and no less than a headache to learn and rehearse. Once in a while I write a good song; but it never says anything about me. Only the bad ones mean a thing. Find the worst of all of my creations and you will find the deepest thoughts of my mind being sung to an out of tune guitar. I’m lazy.

I don’t smoke. I don’t drink. I don’t do drugs. I am addicted to four things: Food, kissing my wife, writing music and food (If I had my way I’d eat twice as much as I do). It is a problem when it comes to my musical studies because I refuse to learn other people’s music. I don’t throw the book back in the teacher’s face but somewhere in my subconscious I am running around naked next to my mother’s piano screaming, “I don’t have time for this! I have to create my masterpiece!” I am Simon the songwriter. You can call me Egotistical and Artsy Fartsy.

I wrote a song over two years ago that I have performed on numerous occasions. Sometimes I play it well. Other times… Floperoo. There was one night when a friend of mine had come over to my house and asked me to play a song. This happened not long after I had written the song in question so I decided to try it out. I sat down at the piano with sweaty palms and a small crumpled notebook I used to write lyrics in. I played it like I always play things, as if I’m in front of fifty thousand fans that have been waiting all night to hear this one tune. When I was done there was a moment of silence during which the thought occurred to me that my friend must not have enjoyed my performance; but she came and sat next to me and said, “Your music is going to touch a lot of people.” Over two years have passed and I can probably count on one hand how many people my music has touched in that time. I think that the only thing that keeps me going is that I am the thumb.

Beautiful Harmony
Barnabas Omulokoli
1:32 a.m.

Urban Jack

Normally I would have said it was a red dust that came blowing into my face. But dust, just like most everything, doesn’t have any color at 1:32 a.m., which is exactly what time it was. 1:32 a.m. and nothing else to do except check the time. I just sat there on the steps of the front porch staring at the glow-in-the-dark hands and numbers of a watch that I completely detested. I used to think it came in handy way out here, out of town with no streetlights and no front porch light. That watch used to sit up on my nightstand right next to the reading lamp each night as I climbed into bed. Glowing green in my pale, moonlit room, its hands pointing this way and that, I could always look up and see what time it was.

I’ve never been to a real bar before and that is only because of my watch. If not for my watch I would have been in a bar getting sloshed, me and Candy both would have been there, dancing, playing the juke box, shooting pool, who knows? Instead, I sat on that porch staring at a glow-in-the-dark watch that Candy had given me for my birthday just a year earlier. I was turning twenty. That’s the difference between twenty and twenty-one: at twenty you get a watch, at twenty-one you get sloshed. But not me. For my twenty-first birthday I sat on Candy’s front porch staring last year’s birthday present in the face.

I can’t blame this all on my watch, though. Rabbits also played a big part in that night’s events. In any farming community one eventually has to come to terms with rabbits. Farmers have to be able to understand that they’re never getting rid of them because they populate faster than the human race. All except the Mormons. In 1838 Missouri passed a law that made legal (and highly promoted) the extermination of the Mormons. Today there’s millions of them everywhere. So what makes Candy’s father so dead certain that he can exterminate the rabbits is a puzzle to most folks. He’s tried everything short of burning down the farm or introducing weapons of mass destruction. I suppose the only reason for the absence of biochemical genocide is he can’t get his hands on any of the right artillery.

Despite my former pacifist attitudes towards rabbits, since that night I have shot and killed every rabbit in sight. I had never been a hunter or one for handling a gun before, but after the evils committed by a suicide squadron of highly trained and lethal bunnies, I learned quick so I could clear the road of them. I wonder what the Mormons ever did to vex those violent Missourians?

I had already been on the porch once that night. Candy made me wait there while her mother finished hemming her dress. She and her mother had made the dress special for the occasion. It was devil red and strapless, which went fabulously with her dark black hair and deep blue eyes. Candy was, most of the time, fairly plain and no exhibit of grace or beauty, but she sure could clean up nice. She had long firm legs from all the swimming she did and breasts big enough to start a dairy farm. So I was floored when I saw this sassy little party dress she strutted onto the porch in.

The moon smiled down on her like a Broadway stage light—carefree, innocent, and seductive. That old stone bachelor, I thought he must have been jealous or maybe happy for us. Either way, nothing can capture beauty like the moon. The sun does an exposé on everyone beneath its glare. No wrinkle or blemish may hide beneath the daily sun. The moon always looks on the good side of everything. Even in her ratty, old work clothes, smelling like mud and manure, Candy looks beautiful in moonshine. All the more so wrapped up in her new dress. Red carpet here we come.
Her parents said their “goodnights” and “be carefulls” and shut the door. Just as the door clicked shut Candy wrapped both arms around me and gave me a long, soft kiss. “I want tonight to be special,” she said. To say that I was on cloud nine at that moment would be to assume that there exists no tenth. So full was my chest of youthful lust and unhinged excitement that I felt kind of sick. Nauseous.

I grabbed her hand and dragged her in her high heels to my motorbike standing in the gravel driveway. She giggled the whole way and kept bouncing while I was trying to kiss her again. I was playfully frustrated sliding my hands up and down the soft fabric of her dress. That dress! It made my usually plain date look like a sexy film star. My fingers fiddled around her waist and she laughed and wriggled free. She then grabbed my helmet off of the handlebars and put it on my head. I grabbed her helmet but she declined. Her hair had taken hours to fix.

Allen Wendle used to come out riding with me until his fatal crash. The crash was not fatal to his life but to the life of his bike. Landing palms down on the pavement also proved quite fatal to his hands. Allen had tough farmer’s hands (I’ve seen him bend needles between his thumb and forefinger) but every calus, every tiny skin cell that once covered those dirty, manure-stained palms, was stripped off by that thoughtless pavement. After sliding along unslippery blacktop for about ten or twenty feet, he stood up and looked at his hands. I looked at them too. All I could see was bone and blood. Allen then knelt back down and fainted.

That’s why I wear gloves, black leather riding gloves that are cool and tough. Tougher, even, than Allen Wendle’s calluses. I slipped them on and Candy and I hopped on the bike. She rode sidesaddle because of the shortness of her dress. She was a pretty modest person, which may have something to do with her looking plain most of the time. It took a big occasion for her to put her face on. Having somebody ride sidesaddle can be screwy on a motorbike because it shifts the balance to one side and you have to be extra careful when turning and such. I was a great rider, though. I could ride through windstorms and hurricanes and you’d never know I was feeling a difference.

My foot flipped down the kick-start. This was my favorite part of riding a motorbike: starting up and spinning out. Candy screams with delight every time. We would ride the roads like two warrior Indians on our way to be killed by John Wayne. This night had us feeling like my helmet was a Mohawk and Candy’s makeup was war paint. The last of the under-aged drinkers giving up the ghost to a grown man and his squaw. We were white men turned savage by our youth.

I let up on the brakes, releasing the wheels from their captivity. The rocks and dirt started flying every which way as the back tire searched for some solid ground to grip. When it finally gripped, we sped off so fast that Candy screamed almost as much from terror as delight. But to me it was a war cry. Faster. Right out of the driveway and onto the paved road lined with corn stalks planted by Mr. Shelton, Candy’s father. Corn wasn’t all they grew. Corn was actually one of their smaller crops. They mostly grew cauliflower.

Just as we pulled onto the road I checked my watch to see how long I had with my wild, Indian princess. I was supposed to have her back by 1:00 a.m. It was only 9:46. That was all it took, one short glance at my watch. A blink really, no more than a passing second or two. When I looked back up there were lots of little glowing marbles hopping across the road two by two. They stared into the headlight from soft, furry faces. We came on them fast, too fast for them to get out of the road and I pulled hard to the left to miss them, too hard. A gash in the road, a small canyon, a trap left by the local cavalry—the front tire caught it sideways and the handlebars were jerked from my hands. The motorbike flipped, its
tail end bucking Candy and me through the warm night air. I landed on my shoulder while my head bounced upon the cracked and broken road. My eyes closed themselves and waited.

I awoke with a headache but nothing else that I could really complain about. I took my time getting up, assuming that I must have been more injured than just a minor headache. Turning to the left I saw Candy. The night was perversely dark by now and I was seeing blue spots. All that was visible was Candy’s shadowy outline, her body crumpled up and motionless on the side of the road. I could hear her breathing. Good sign, still breathing. I ripped the gloves from my sweaty hands—not a scratch. All calluses accounted for.

“Candy?” I whispered. She remained silent as I crawled to her across the black pavement. My hands scanned her body to decipher head from tales. They found blood. Warm, sticky blood that I could see as I raised my hands to the moon’s light. He showed them to me, two bloody hands that moments before I thought were perfect. Two hands that now not even the moon could make beautiful. I moved quickly now; lifting Candy into my arms I noticed my shoulder was a bit sore but I could carry her alright. She was a petite girl weighing no more than 115 pounds.

I carried her all the way back into the house and set her on the sofa of her living room. After a bit of groping, I found the light switch. I wish I had never found that light switch. I wish the world would have remained dark, the mystery never to have been discovered. At that moment I would have begged for the pitiful eyes of a blind man to have been my own, or that by turning on the light I could have restarted the entire night. But there was no magic button. Just a switch that sent charges to a couple of sixty-watt bulbs. My pupils dilated. When Candy came into focus I started yelling. I don’t know what I was yelling, but I was yelling. Maybe even screaming. The dogs started barking and Candy’s parents came rushing in. The scene that ensued was total and utter chaos. Candy’s mother was screaming too while her father snatched the phone off of the wall and dialed for an ambulance. He then came to me with some towels and a first aid kit. He was talking to me, talking real fast but I didn’t hear a word. I was yelling. Candy’s mother was still screaming. The dogs were still barking. The next thing I remember was Candy’s father pushing me out onto the porch. He wasn’t kicking me out for what had happened but for not being able to control myself when I saw Candy covered in blood. He needed a man to help him in a time of crisis. Someone who could keep his head when the girl he loved was bleeding rivers, her skin ripped and destroyed in a way that only pavement can do. Her skull cracked. He needed the brave warrior that had pulled into the driveway that night ready to face the danger and do the impossible. I was just a boy.

I stood on that front porch a long time without breathing, without a pulse. Then I sat down. Then I cried. I stared at my hands as if they were the cause of all my troubles, turning them this way and that, scanning them for evidence, for clues that would betray them. Only then did I look at my watch. Its glowing hands pointed to 1 and 32. It made me shiver with disgust just to look at it so I ripped it off and threw it into the driveway. The warm air blew into my face carrying dust from the fields. The wind and the dust made me angry, furious that the world would dare keep turning. I clenched my jaw until I thought my teeth would break. The night was so dark and there was no porch light. That made me angry too. I looked up to the heavens as most people do when they’re angry. Most folks only look up when they’re angry or feeling abandoned. I did the same out of some inborn habit, expecting to see writing in the sky. I saw the moon and it made me shake with rage. He was just sitting there, all smug and smiley-faced, staring back at me like he didn’t have a care in the world.
Decipher a Cipher
Saymore

This rhapsody may turn into a cipher,
Rupture, undertake, and decipher this cryptographic,
Who utilizes phonetics and genetics to map it,
Try and script it out and see what I’m about...
Grasping for the wind, tossed and blown by the sea,
No matter how far I run away it still gets me.
Strewn so seriously I’m brought right back to the attack.
I sit with a tight grip and I spit venom in my own bones,
Walk back home and roam in distance from waves that I crave to be thrown,
Alone asking what is it Lord that I’m not being shown?
An ill Bedlamite in a soul pool of genocide,
Soon I’ll disappear like a Sodomite.
I know what the Truth says; I almost got it read,
Sometimes it doesn’t sit in my head and on its living water I cannot tread.
Instead it fattens my neck like bread and I speak out of it.
Living in my frontal lobes, the weak end of it,
Where I pattern my own emotions and try to hide them from my spirit,
That thinks of the sensations as flagrant.
Inside me vexing, nesting, and sometimes overcrowding,
Cannot rest for every time I think, I put it to test.
Head to head it always gets the best.
A nebulous kingdom of metaphysics visits me,
And I can’t help but ponder and aim to see what it means,
Why things are the way they seem,
But linger at sea without a rudder.
Deliver me from this clutter for contradictions cannot exist in nature.
So what means do these bacon-engineered philosophers deem,
Steered into a wave of imposters,
I’m left hollow and foster;
The most august like Poe in Eureka,
Humboldt in Cosmos,
Unknown authored epistles drifting in bottles,
Kepler, Chompsullon, Emerson,
All accurate in their individual ardent imaginations.
Branded a transcendentalist or idealist,
Just a mental gyration on my heels.
Little by little they will be cleared of their chaff of inconsistency,
Still respected credibility’s,
Just arguments between worlds of mistaken validities,
To me the choice became a difficulty.
Finally, no variety found between the only two possibilities:
Life or death of the spirit in me.
A Synthesized Soul
Ried Woodlee

A synthesized soul
Bangs to the beat
Of a syncopated step
Rhythm in stride
Conjoined with ancestral voices
Affects individualized choices
Conformed to generalized directions
The structure of my freedom
Breeds havoc upon the chaos shaped for instruction
Lamp light dims and spreads organically
No need for sleep induced chemically
Sprinkled dust particles contain no substance
When set against a nomadic thinker.
Wandering, searching for the thread
That used to connect dreams to reality.
The futility to live non-fictionally
Creates friction, and hope gets burnt.
For reasons yet unknown I throw words
From a metaphorical platform
To take flight in the midnight hour
To recapture the brink of imagination.
Icons to images equalizes idols
Basically I failed and we all take it literal
Stamped my thoughts signified makes literature
Spoon-fed fictional obesity
Played out in reality
Creates sweaty bastards with a heart problem
Can’t dance to the beat
Let alone translate
Interpretive dance patterns become mechanical
Can’t mirror the opposite;
Recreate
But, it’s impossible to regenerate
The image when we can’t see straight.

So, I evoke spirits when I walk
Training wheels that pattern my talk
Rummaging through banks of remembrance
Stencils to trace around the blanks and
Connect the dots of permanence.
We have a lifetime to remember:
History.
One lifetime to make a memory
One lifetime to make it
Life is what you make it
Life is what I make it
Life is what we make it.
Just don’t fake it.
Deception: Self imposed weapon.
We are not transformers in disguise
We can’t hide from what matters
We know
We know our individuality is exposed most when alone
Because I remember
You remember
Say a word—We remember.

Chronic Hatred
Saymore

Hatred is a funny thing,
Versified in private,
Then from the wicked eye it sings.
Practice makes perfect,
But is being an impeccable hater really worth it?
You claim to be spiritual,
But don’t notice the evil inside your mental.
Taking a swift stroll up and down,
Then end your vexed look with a frown.
Why take the eternal time to hate me?
When you know God don’t like ugly.
I used to let it bug me,
Now it renews me,
Because I take your simple mind as a sign to change me.

Untitled
Transform
Ried Woodlee

I can’t help but to expose the wandering meanings that meander through the minds of generations.

Optimus in prime example of deception.

Hope in a package with out answers.

Revolt against the time of emptiness——
An undetermined inertia waning and waxing against nothingness.

Planetary solutions to solitary solar systems: A brief encounter with a star.

A sun that burns with the shadow of the night.

Questions that answer the deepest desires of expressive assumptions that condition our walk.

A relationship with the unknown that tells all.

Our ticket to the Promised Land that is unheard of.

The transcendental train to paradise.

An electoral vote: popularity at its purest most indecent hour of misgiving.

Hoping that reality is a figment of the present of life.

Awake from the living, chained to Past’s presumptions and dream of tomorrow.

Feb. 5 and all’s well
Urban Jack

I’m stone cold in a house with frozen walls and a mind that ticks and talks faster and faster and faster and slower and slower when the lines cross there will be blood or love and maybe the former after the latter or the farther after the nearer but surely not the other way around my house I once thought of as blue but there is a little grey in it too not that that matters unless you are actually one who combs their hair in the morning but I think that is going out of style and the hard work comes in making your hair look like it wasn’t combed and never was combed and that you had no intention of combing it I hear that girls find such efforts to be sexy but sex is not as appealing as it used to be I’m a liar sex is over done and made gross by those who wish to shock audiences and audiences that wish to be shocked when all it really used to take to shock somebody was to leave your hair uncombed which is kind of ironic considering how much cleaner modern society is and how beautiful everybody wants to feel and everybody is but some people aren’t and what is even worse than that is that some people who are really aren’t and that some people who aren’t really are and some people who are lovely and beautiful think that they’ll never find a mate while others who don’t deserve a mate marry rich ones but it’s better off this way because rich people are rarely worth marrying unless you’re into that kind of thing which I am so long as she’s beautiful in the way that I think is beautiful which my wife is but she is not rich and together we are rich but we have no money honey
A Case of Cartesian Vertigo

or

‘I too suffer from mid-pointery’

-a prayer-

Jay Garrette

I haven’t been listening I am not present to this conversation I wonder about my wonder I “raising a giant” wonder if anybody really knows my head if I want them to I if I want her to if I want to don’t know how to love, how to still, myself believe how to I don’t can’t think of God of God of eternal of Mystery can’t orient myself to forever still thinking always thinking still thoughts rambling ringing droning through my “inner city school” head wonder what good all this thinking does will do if how is done wonder if what good I can be could be will be would be to other minds other hearts other thoughters who thinking or not thinking casually live their lives in happy pursuing happy keep off the grass clean ignorance and get their safety jobs job’s security happy and I here angry “counterpoise national inequalities” and angry and not knowing muddy ambiguity resembling ignorance thinking here while running running living wonder while my hamster wheel world goes no where despite my urgent thinking and musing and pondering about my thoughts and I wonder why I think about the thinking so much without considering the thoughts intellectual emotions splattered on the walls of my mind making no sense just euphoric thoughts that burn and smolder in my chest while I on the outside “callers on talk radio” wonder what is the commotion on my insides thinking forever thinking thoughts that thinking cannot handle human nature so full of thinking emotioning I cannot trust but am tired like so many kids and adults who live say tired, tired can’t wait till my work will let me sleep without the suffocating nag of my conscience muffled under the pillow of my “liberty” choice “a bunch of dead guys controlling the living” God tell me don’t tell me how to live just at ease before you beautiful most terrifying God.
A mind unclaimed, is thankful unclaimed.
A body pure and healthy, avoids much pain.
A soul, restless, leaves the world unconnected.
A mind wasted, is an experience untested.
A body, unkept, comes from an attitude unapplied.
A soul, scared, comes from words and actions that are harsh.
A mind, repolitico, is full of thoughts that are tangled.
A body, used and abused, turns into garbage.
To keep your soul at peace is the greatest moral to keep.