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Please make all literary submissions to highgrade@mines.edu as a Microsoft Word document. One submission per document. Note any special formatting needs. Art and music submissions will be handled through the High Grade office.

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HIGH GRADE 2014

The Colorado School of Mines Journal of the Arts
2014

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Dear Reader,

It's approximately 10:30 A.M., on Wednesday, March 10, 2014, and I am writing this letter from a small, stuffy office on a mesa in Northern New Mexico. Outside my window is a 50ft satellite dish rising high above a frosty piñon forest, and it's tracking something. To look at it, you would assume this glistening behemoth is stationary, but if you forget about it, if you get lost in your work and go about your business, you will look up an hour or two later and see that it has pivoted by a few degrees north or south. Someone is listening. Listening to what? I'm not exactly sure.

I've come up with a few theories as to what would enthral an earthly audience, varying from the blandly technical to the purely outlandish, but my favorite explanation thus far is that the small group of scientists piloting the dish have located the disembodied spirit of J. Robert Oppenheimer, twirling like a banshee through the upper atmosphere above the desert Southwest.

Every morning, the scientists bundle themselves in jackets and scarves, packing tight into the receiver housing at the base of the dish, all so they may listen to Oppenheimer's ghostly wail. The signal's mostly dissonance, a combination of cosmic background noise and crackly mariachi music ricocheting between the earth and ionosphere, but occasionally, they'll hear the maddened ramblings of the tortured genius rasping through.

Once, the group of scientists was able to secure time on a radio transmitter and broadcast a list of questions up to Oppenheimer's shade. “How do we attain greatness, a fame that outlasts our physical form? What is the secret to channeling the cosmos and unlocking the secrets of our universe? Does physics answer the ultimate questions of existence? Or is there something greater, an explanation that is as terrifyingly complex as it is beautiful?”

For a moment, there was complete silence. And then, as soft and chilling as snowflakes drifting between piñon branches, Oppenheimer responded, “I don’t knooooOOOOw. AAASSSSSK FERRRRRRMIII. OOOooooOOOH!!!”

A muse may come in any form and is just as handy to the physicist as it is to the poet. Like Horace’s proverbial Fons Bandusiae, though, any perceived control we have over the fountainhead of creation is the result of our own egotistical self-deception. Fortunately, when we find ourselves in the desert, dying of thirst, the fountain will provide sustenance to us in its own time.

So, let us drink from its cool, clear water; let us bask in the harsh light of the desert sun, defying its crushing intensity with our perseverance. And let us listen, with ears turned skyward, for those maddened ramblings of the universe.

Ian Stone, Editor and Cheif
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Additional Fiction Pieces published at highgrade.mines.edu:
» Medication / Kelsey Kopecky
» With Fire in Her Eyes / Ginny Premo
» Bounty / Benjamin Elliott
» Butts Meets Roger / Elijah Thomas
» Man’s Head Explodes in Barber’s Chair / Logan Gee
I am that acid trip in Kansas,
Right along this sea of summer
corn rustling in the soft
realization of mortality
push along by some
vague notion of the
face of god, with
white fences and
chicken coups for
teeth and the
black earth
for voice.
I am this illusion of human importance in a Kansas winter wheat field.
Drawing 2
Robin Hoover
What if the universe is infinite, but only contains a finite number of particles?

In our ever expanding world, eventually all matter and energy will dissipate into nothingness

Consider an orb of light floating through space. It has broken free from the gravitational pull of the rest of the universe

Traveling untethered, unrestricted
In the void of deep space, there are no paths

But what is movement without something to move relative to? It is like grasping at smoke, or the passage of time in a dream

The body slowly decays, draining into the infinite sink until finally, it melts into nothingness

I am an orb, floating through the supermarket, where strangers dare not look at one another

They are stars and planets. It is quiet, and their lights are dim and distant

It happened without me noticing, because light lingers long after one is gone. It sneaks up on you. You need the pull of others to exist
LINGERING SHADOWS

Sydney Rajchel
Another white winged whale drifts by. It hums a soft lament, an endless lullaby for sleepless children. Their tears drown in blood-covered bed sheets from sporadic nightmares. Perhaps soon, they will meet their dreams.

The peaceful creature floats along buoyant sky, protecting us like an angel. But your father said not to go outside, lest it thinks you are wandering unsafely. You will only give our friend more work, and humans need to be more considerate.

You hear persistent footsteps of other orphans heading along the rubble-swept mile to math class. Then – an explosion in the distance. You look out the tattered window to where the watchful guardian is, its blowhole billowed in grey stardust. The heavens must be celebrating again.
Suburbs

Anna Ristuccia
“What civilization created the first phonetic alphabet?”
Silence, no hands shoot up. No one knows or cares to speak.
“It was the Phoenicians, yes. The Phoenicians.”
In the distance a muffled bang interrupts the teacher and a violent tremor shakes the classroom showering the children in a snowstorm of dust. A mixture of screams and mumblings, the children are confused. The teacher’s eyes bulge out beyond her eyelids and her mouth tightens to a thin terrified pink line. Over the school wide intercom the voice of their principle trying hard to remain calm his voice rises several octaves higher than usual. “We are under lockdown, I repeat lockdown, do not let anyone in or out of your classroom.” Static echoes through the room as the intercom cuts out.

“Get down Children, under your desks and be quiet!” Her voice cracks, as she rifles through her cluttered desk in search of the room key. The unanimous scrape of thirty two chairs and Ms. Block’s 6th graders are under their desks mouths sealed shut and eyes focused on the classroom door left slightly ajar. The room is quiet, except for Ms. Block’s increasingly manic search for the key. Papers fly through the air and scatter across the front of the classroom. She hurls boxes of unused chalk from her desk’s drawers, they crash open against the wall. Her breath comes out in sporadic bursts and her face is reddening from the effort. The clack, clack, clack of an automatic rifle breaks the teacher’s trance as she turns to face the door. In a moment of clarity she catches sight of the key lying underneath papers tossed halfway across the room. She grabs the key on the run, her arthritic joints popping and cracking as she lunges for the knob. It’s nearly shut when four fingers of a black leather glove wrap around the door’s edge. Ms. Block throws all her weight on the door, but slowly it opens. Her trembling legs give way, the teacher crumbles to the ground. Her jaw is shaking and her pupils are dilated. She pushes herself back sliding along the tile floor never losing eye contact with the man from outside, a low moan issues from her lips, her backs against the wall, there’s nowhere left to crawl.

I fling myself under my desk tucking my legs underneath to get as low as possible. I can see out into the hallway through the open door and our teacher’s frantic legs tramping over yesterday’s homework. It’s just like a lockdown drill except no one’s talking, no one’s cracking jokes, or punching their neighbor.

“Hey Delilah,” Poking her in the ribs just like we’re out on the playground. “Hey Delilah, are you okay?” No response, her gaze centered on the door. “Hey Delilah,” more poking but no responding.

“David, shush up!” Jonathan’s nasally voice scrapes against my eardrums.

“You shush up!” I say.

“If you keep talking were going to get in trouble,” he says. I rotate onto my side facing Jonathan, I cross my eyes and stick my top teeth out over my bottoms. “We’re going to get in trouble.” I mimic.
Another rotation and I’m back facing Delilah. “It’s going to be okay, please say something.” Her eyes lock with mine, they’re watering and wide just like the night we got lost in the woods near my house.

It was getting dark and the trail we took out was nowhere to be found. I grabbed her arm and ran screaming through the trees. Barreling through bushes and brush pulling her along with me. We got out, covered in scraps and mud. The street lights were on, we were supposed to be home hours ago. She was scared then and she’s scared now.

I grab her hand and give it a gentle squeeze. She squeezes mine back. I pull myself up next to her under the desk and we watch the front of the classroom.

Ms. Block grabs something off the ground and slams herself into the door. It won’t close and someone is slowly prying it open. Ms. Block falls to the floor. She looks scared, like people in those horror movies my parents watch and I steal secret glimpses of. The bottom half of a man wearing black construction boots and fraying blue jeans stalks into the room. Delilah starts shaking and I grip her hand even tighter. Ms. Block slides away as the man slowly advances. Every eye in the room following her progress. She’s up against the wall, he’s standing over her. The low moan of a trapped animal escapes her lungs, my stomach lurches like it does at the top of the swings. Her eyes are trained on something out of sight above the desk, they flick this way and that. The moaning stops and it’s quiet.

A thunder rips through our room bouncing off the walls and ringing in our ears. Ms. Block slumps to the floor, red begins to pool beneath her. I shut my eyes and we scream.

“Shut up! Shut up, you little sacks of shit!” Another blast, the glass cabinets shatter showering the back row of desks in tiny fragments.

It’s silent except for muffled whimpering issuing from all corners of the room. Delilah’s shivering bad now. Shivering worse than you’d shiver on a snow day spent going up and down the sledding hill by the lake. She’s shivering like you’d just pulled her out of the lake. Her face and lips blue. Little icicles gripping her eye lashes and her coat and snow pants sopping wet.

“Good,” he starts pacing back and forth following our teacher’s familiar path “I’d like for our time together to be short, easy. Wouldn’t you all like that?” Silence. “Yes? Alright then. Get up!” His voice is raspy like he’s chewing on rocks. My muscles tighten, jaw clenched, tongue cemented to the roof of my mouth. “I said get up, you all wanted it easy, so do as I say.”

There’s movement to my right as Jonathan pushes himself out from under his desk. I grab for his arm but he slaps it away. I hear his athletic pants crumple as he straightens his legs to stand. Delilah grips my hand still tighter.

Thunder ricochets through our classroom. There’s an empty thud as Jonathan’s body falls to the floor. Warm liquid covers my back sinking through my shirt like water from super soakers in the summer sun. Something pools around our ankles and swells towards our faces. I know what it is but I wouldn’t open my eyes for anything. There’s no screaming this time but the crying is louder and now I’m shivering too.

“That’s a good boy, anyone else?” Silence. “Get up!” His voice shaking with rage. “No one?
Well I guess it’s the hard way then.” I throw myself over Delilah briefly breaking our grip. Our hands rejoin as the clack, clack, clack of his rifle riddles the room. The cackle of shattering glass and cracking wood overwhelms me. The air is thick with dust. It’s moist and smells like the slaughterhouse I visited on take your kid to work day. My daddy’s the floor manager. The screams of my classmates. The clacking, the crushing. The noise consumes me. Delilah tries to run but I keep her pressed down beneath me. Debris pushes against my body, some sharp with splinters and other bits soft. And then silence, my ears ringing, my eyelids straining to stay shut. I can feel her breathing, in and out, in and out. I give her hand a tiny squeeze and I get a squeeze back.

I can hear the rhythmic fall of his boots. The riotous crash of a shattered desk tossed to the side. The crunching of glass, his footsteps getting closer. I can hear him breathing. I feel him behind me. His gaze burning through me. I hold my breath and fight the shaking. The hot end of his rifle presses against my back. Its touch scalds my skin. I may be dead. The rifle moves up and down tracing patterns in Jonathan’s drying blood. The muzzle jabs my lower back several more times, then quickly as it arrived, it’s gone. The labored breath and heavy footsteps move away and out into the hallway.

I breathe again as gurgles come from beneath. Delilah, face down in a pool of blood, choking. I push myself up, and pull Delilah up too. Her face is red as the summer dress she wore for Fourth of July fireworks and for my birthday party too. I told her how pretty she looked in it as we danced with sparklers across the playground blacktop.

Her eyes are watery and wide. She’s scared and I’m scared. I grab her arm and jump to my feet bringing her with me. The classroom’s in shambles. Torn posters in pieces half tacked to the walls. Papers litter the floor. Desks filled with holes and screaming in the distance. One look, her lip’s shaking, her eyes are swelling, she’s frozen. I pull her towards the door. The linoleum tile floor is slick with blood and my sneakers slip and slide as we blaze around corners heading for the hallway. The fluorescent white light mutes the lockers and dulls the classroom doors. The hallway floor burns bright like fresh snow. Sprinting full speed, our shoes squeak like on a basketball court and we leave behind a muddy red trail. Distant clacking echoes from the other side of the school, we keep running. The windows of the exit have been shot out and we squat down to crawl through. My knee catches on a bit of glass, it stings. I reach back for Delilah, grabbing her hand, she’s through alright and we start sprinting for the creek just outside the woods. We fly past the abandoned swings and monkey bars, over the blacktop court, and through ball field. There are flashing lights and police men in the far parking lot but I don’t feel like stopping. I yank Delilah’s arm and we keep running.

We sprint up and over the final hill. I collapse on the sandy shore of the creek. My lungs struggle for air. Wet sand between my bloodstained fingers and blackened nails. I thrust my hands in the shallow water and scrub viciously at the reddened skin. A shudder shakes me from my task. Behind me Delilah, her face caked in blood. Thin rivers of skin were tears have fallen. Her eyes are dry, their dam finally burst. She drops to her knees. I catch her in my arms. Thunder rolls and dollops of rain drop on my back. She’s shivering again, I pull her in tighter I’m shivering too. “It’s going to be okay.” I wrap her hands up in mine. “It’ll all be okay.” I squeeze her hands and she squeezes mine back.
Darkening skies brew with late summer thunderstorms. Two children emerge from the locked down school. One just a boy and the other only a girl. He pulls her along as the police rush in through cafeteria doors on the schools other side. Smoke plums from windows and the fire alarm wails. Vans marked News 7 and Channel 6 screech to a halt beside flashing emergency lights. cameramen and suits brandishing microphones leap out of car doors. They rush towards the school, officers pushing them back. They want the story, but it’s gone. The boy and the girl disappearing into an ocean of grass swaying in the rising wind of the coming storm.

The children tear hand in hand down the hill. Following the winding path to the sandy creek bed. The boy rushes forward leaving her standing. He frantically scrubs his hands in the shallow stream. She lets out a shudder, he turns. She falls, he catches her and wraps her up in his arms. Lightening cracks over the woods and thunder rolls over the children. They’re shaking and rocking hidden by the hill. It’s starting to rain and over the clatter there echoes the school’s final bell. This school day isn’t over, though the clacking has stopped.

Tragedy strikes close to home this afternoon. A pair of gunmen entered Forest Shadows Middle School at around 1:30 p.m., opening fire on students and faculty. Police reports indicate there were two explosions. The first in the library and the second in the cafeteria. Following the second explosion police entered the school engaging briefly with the gunmen who ultimately took their own lives. Channel 6 source’s with intimate access to the shooting estimate that twenty five students and three teachers lost their lives along with thirty five injuries making the Forest Shadows Tragedy one of the worst public shootings in recent U.S. history. The names of the gunmen and their victims are yet to be released, tune in at ten o’clock for further developments. (Switch to camera two. Janet turns, smiling, she shuffles her papers.)

The county fair is just around the corner and you won’t believe which country music quartet will be performing at the Harvest Season Concert. We’ll fill you in right after the break, but first let’s turn it over to Marty with your five day forecast.

Thanks Janet. Well that late summer sun we’ve all been enjoying is on its way out. Thunderstorms rolled into the Tri County area early this afternoon. Expect it to stay dark and gloomy with plenty of rain for the next week. Hopefully that system will be on its way out in time for the county fair this coming weekend....
Mountains

Becky Reeve
Love is the roots of that
High Colorado Plateau Grassland

Calin Meserschmidt

I am that scent
of Sentinel grass
flanking this red stone house, that is cooled
by my burdened Plains voice,
Birthed in the void
of that red cellar
under the burden
of roots of summer grasses
or that cooled
cut and laid stone
along side this stone,
so rejoice
in these cooling waters, hear that scented
call to the grasslands
of our forefathers of the lowland
like some illuminated madman
that has sown
some heavy grasses,
so he may voyage,
atop scented reeds
in that same cooling
wind that is caressing
these burning
pine floors scenting
this pulsating stone,
and growing that voice
like wild grass
in our broken gravel
we found cooling
in the hollow of our voices
so burdened
with the brick stone
for this self-made
house, surrounded by Sentinel grass burning
but cooled by this, our stone voice with your lemon grass scent.
In this photo you are young, unwrinkled, newborn-small girth, a crawling quickly cosmos somehow suddenly showing its age. The snapshot makes us more secure in our understanding of speed, of how you began with a bang, a real hullabaloo, and oh how time flies, how quickly you grew.

This photo is a birth certificate—no fake ID catching you 80 million years younger—you flash at scientists who card you at the door. You are more mercurial than mysterious dark energy, more dark matter and curves growing from your flattened chest.

Winking from your baby picture of fossilized light and sound, there’s a twinkle there, a nod towards this cosmic victory of knowledge.

We have our telescopic eyes on you mapping radiation—the ultimate background check—from the early universe, now a 13.8 billion year old teenager asking for the car keys, extended curfew, more allowance to spend just to keep up with sub-atomic inflation. Plotting the sky, examining light remnants and sound echoes we are coming of age in your shadow, your sudden, blinding burst is now just the hint of a smile, of when you were young, brand new, unscathed light playing in the angles of darkness, your baby giggle ricocheting across time.
I am so happy
to hear that crying baby
after that rough patch
Stratus

Alysia Nelson

Shit. Shitshitshit. Red and blue stars dance in my rearview mirror. I’m sure there is a siren but I can’t hear it over the Disturbed song scaling back and forth between the front speakers. I’m already late and this ass-hat is just sitting in his car. I roll the volume knob to the left, bringing the volume to an inaudible whisper. It’s been five minutes since he pulled me over and he’s still just sitting there. I grab the handle and throw the door open. The cool air startles my skin and goose bumps jump from my arms. As my boots slam into the pavement he opens his door, panic smeared across his face. “Miss, get back in the car!” I can taste his fear from here. It’s a combination of the salty sweat pouring from his brow and the metallic sweetness of the blood pounding through his veins. “Make me, asshole!”

The surrounding buildings fade into a thick black fog but I see his hand move. It fumbles along his belt until it finds the gun. The fog is rolling in, thicker, covering his face. All I can see is the silver badge pinned to his chest quivering and the gun. I don’t see the second set of lights or hear the sirens scream as backup arrives.

Cold steel against my temple ushers the fog from my peripheral. I can’t quite see the dipshit on the other end but I know he’s there. I can feel the tingle of excitement radiating off of him. Overwhelming heat shoots up my neck and blows through my skull. I can see the cops screaming, angling their muzzles toward the ground and back to my face, but I’m deaf to their demands. I am engulfed by the heat. I reach up to the closest officer. Crimson drips off my fingers into the frigid fog swirling just above my waist. Transfixed, my eyes follow its journey into the abyss. Focus returns to my hand; I lose the rest of the world.

I pull the hand close to my face and trace the slick surface with the fingers of my other hand. Every crevice is filled with the thick warm liquid. There is a pool contained by the mountainous ridges of the scar on my thumb. The investigating hand is similarly coated. Slowly the fog claims each finger and my hands, gloved in blood, are gone.

My eyes drift to the spot the closest officer occupied. He’s gone. A car blows past as if nothing has happened. I sway in its draft, struggling to find balance. “Miss, get back in the car!” My eyes fight to focus on the origin of this instruction, the ass-hat. The sun glints off his badge, blinding me momentarily. My knees duck under the steering wheel. My nostrils fill with the day old coffee sitting in the cup holder. My hand is bone dry as I grab the handle and ease the door shut. I drag air deep into my lungs, hold it there, and watch him approach in the mirror. Shit.

His breath fogged the small rectangular window. The doctor wiped it clear with his rough white sleeve, buttons clacking against the glass, and stepped back. “She isn’t really showing any signs of improvement.” His eyes traced the dark bags under the mother’s eyes. Every Tuesday for three years she had come to visit and was clearly still losing sleep over it.

Slowly, she pressed her eyes to leave the sterile white hall and focus on her only child. The door handle resisted her attempt to release the latch and the doctor quickly leaned in with the keys. Her subtle perfume was a heavenly escape from the peculiar warm eggs scent that haunted the halls.
PAPILIONACEOUS BREATH

Kelly Euser
moved fluidly with the door into the room. Tears filled her eyes as her long fingers danced through the soft short curls perched atop the girl’s head. “Hi, sweetie.”

The girl’s hand slid down her face from the eye it had been resting under, momentarily warping her skip. She reached for mother’s silver hair and mimicked the dance taking place in her own. Tears slipped from her glazed-over eyes and raced to the cracked-lip finish line. Her pink tongue flicked out and caught the winner. Forcefully she ripped her mother’s hand out of her hair and pressed it to her face. A fire lit behind her usually dead grey-blue eyes.

The doctor lurched forward from the doorway but was halted by the mother’s hand shooting up, flat palm facing him, screaming for him to stop. Her dark chocolate eyes never looked away from her daughter. She exhaled the frightened breath she had caught. She didn’t need protection from her own child. One or both of them was shaking but she couldn’t discern the source of the tremors.

The daughter’s eyes were brighter than they had ever been in her 24 years on this earth and they were in agony. Her nostrils flared suddenly, accepting that sweet maternal smell. Straight white teeth dove deep into her bottom lip. She pressed her face harder against her mother’s hand, sucked all the oxygen in the room into her lungs, and sighed contently.

Five Finger Death Punch should write the soundtrack for my fucking life. Deep voice belting out that’s why they call me bad company, I won’t deny? Shit yeah, that’s perfect. But really, what the fuck just happened? I got out of my car and some weird-ass shit went down then none of it really happened? Am I’m losing my fucking mind? I pull my stinky, day old coffee up to my face and mom? The smell of her perfume wafts out of the cup as if it belongs there. It curls around my face and caresses my hair. I’m going 100 mph down a frontage road and a ghost-like vision of my mom appears. She’s in pain; I can see it in her eyes. Mom. Mom, please don’t cry. Please mom, I can fix it. Tears are pouring down my face and splashing off of my shirt. The fog is galloping toward her from every side. Mommy.

The mother’s lips part slightly as they press against her daughter’s forehead. A tear drips into the wild forest of hair. A powerful fist grasps her heart, squeezing tight inside her ribcage. Her breath comes in ragged, choking draws. Both hands grasp the sides of her daughter’s face as she watches the fire in the grey-blue fizzle out and die. Silently she pleads for just one more minute but her daughter’s hand returns to its home under the blank eye and she is lost again.
How naive I was
to think we could go
strawberry picking again
when you were half a world away
with your chest split half open

While the surgeon cracked your ribs,
there I was thinking
about plucking
those strawberries from the vine

How selfish of me to grab
those lingering memories,
to unearth my child’s paradigm
as you lay immobile
in that dingy room
And to ask:
Can you still taste the sweetness
bursting in your mouth?

I always knew where you were
amongst the rows of the strawberry field,
There was a sound emanating
from your heart
Not a beat
but a calling of my name
to come see the biggest
strawberry of all.

But you were betrayed
by your heart,
the same heart that filled
the room and our stomachs.
In my heart
I carry yours.
Nothing
can take your sunshine away.

But now I finally realize
we do go strawberry picking
together
every time I close my eyes
every time I remember you
I am that little girl,
with her face stained red
by the juice
of the strawberries,
running to hold your hand.
Corn Exchange, Leeds

Ryan Asensio
It is a nice café, the menu well-chosen, the food well-prepared, the service impeccable, the view superior. Three perfectly ordinary generations sit at the table, enjoying their weekly family dinner. The child squirms about, trying to escape the watchful eye of his grandmother and wondering whether he will ever return to his tree house with his friends. The family is at dinner, and he has been here for hours. Meanwhile, his grandmother wonders at how quickly everyone inhales their food and how rushed conversation is. Dinner is almost finished, and she has been here for only a few minutes. The boy’s parents, the grandmother’s son and daughter-in-law, admire between themselves the perfect timing of the restaurant’s staff. Dinner has been precisely ninety minutes, exactly the length the couple wanted.

After an evening stroll, a couple say their goodbyes. She wishes he would go already, for they have lingered so long and after wandering for hours. He wishes she wouldn’t rush him off her doorstep so quickly, for they have just arrived and were only out for a short stroll. Both love each other equally and pleasure in each other’s company to the same extent. But, both are right about the length of this goodbye.

In this world, time changes pace as it passes. It is like a cart rolling down the hill with no brakes. At first, it slips slowly, a few centimeters at a time. As it descends, it picks up speed, and by the time it reaches the level ground at the bottom of the hill, it is but a blur.

For children, time crawls; for adults, it walks; and for the elderly, it gallops. This is not a trick of their perception: as time goes by it really does speed up. Everyone’s time is different from everyone else’s time and no one experiences quite the same rates. Even the couple, separated in age by only a few years, experience the variation.

While the children agonize over the time it takes to accomplish anything worth doing, the adults complain over how their children rush through everything. Meanwhile, the aged would give anything to slow the acceleration. For, as they all know, the faster time flows, the closer one is to death. The world of death in this place is one of infinitely fast time, time so fast no one can remain conscious of the happenings around them.
Usually, the acceleration is uniform. As a year goes by, then two, then five, time gradually speeds up from the sluggish ramble of childhood to the frantic sprint of old age. Sometimes, though, the acceleration is wrong. A toddler asks her mother why the day is so much shorter now. The mother is instantly inconsolable, for she knows her child will never live to graduate school or to become a mother herself. The girl’s time already rushes too rapidly past. Family members gather around the old miser’s bedside, as he tells them of the monotony of long days in bed. The heirs groan: their uncle will not be shuffling off the mortal coil anytime soon if he can speak of monotony.

There are those who obsess on the passage of others’ time. They make a morbid game out of predicting who will reach their limit first. Upon making predictions they feel very superior, until their predictions indicate they are next. Others say it matters little, and that nothing can be gained in the endeavor. They too pride themselves on this approach, until someone they love is gone with no warning.
I am
a curl of mercury-vapor
dusting blades of sagebrush,

Borne east from the city,
electricity, swept
down Colfax,

bright pillars of dappled ochre,
effervescent ribbons of copper,
gold sinews whipping east,

to Kansas,

And here, yellowed
fingertips heap asphalt
into hills warm as flesh,

As I gather in ten-foot drifts
in ditches, and snatch
on coils of barbed wire.
Toby
Adele McKenna
If I don’t let the disobedient m&m leave my sight then it’s mine, safe in five seconds from counter to ground. We all learned in grade school that Pop Tarts and Chips Ahoy are different than frosted cake—there is a protocol for dry versus sticky saves. These guidelines give us a sense that through our own made-up rules and rituals we have some control over the wishbone of good and bad, that we have not become dogs hovering for escaped pleasures and the lost bits of joy on the floor.
We played along the empty dirt road surrounded by yellow fields dotted with cattle. His mother yelled from an ancient mobile home, "A comer!"

We ate the freshest tortillas ever tasted from the cleanest plates in the entire world. His father, sweat-stained and covered in mud, "Otro día"

By day, she cleans our houses. He manages the ranch. By night, they sing and laugh and dance. Sometimes, they tell the story of how they moved here, hiding inside canvas bags.

He is one of the smartest in the class, super strong and wicked fast. He’s Philbrick’s Mighty, and I the Freak. Hermanos

His parents never missed a game, the biggest fans and dearest friends of every soul in Trinidad. Vecinos

By day, she cleans our houses. He manages the ranch. By night, they sing and laugh and dance. Sometimes, they tell the story of how they moved here, hiding inside canvas bags.
Halfway to Broadway,
It’s tense on the highway.
Weavin’ through the field of those
not goin my way.

The wheel under my fingers
ain’t slick like the ‘lac’s,
but It’ll take me to “B” for now,
since now I don’t have jack.

Piece of shit I drive
will one day be gone;
in its place’ll be my baby:
that Cadillac, nice and long.

I’ve perused the lots.
Dreamed behind every window.
Picturing the perfect bliss of
Making that steel go.

No doubting that i’ll get there.
Bust my back to get that check.
That’ll put me in the driver seat,
Slammin’ the pedal to the deck.

Knowin’ the hard work now
will some day come back,
In the form of chrome
and fins runnin’ way down the back

1960 Eldo drop top:
my classy blast from the past.
As old as the values
of always bustin’ my ass.

My sights are set,
That emblem becomes my soul.
My fate becomes the guide
To show them white walls where to roll.

Quick lines and chrome;
Foam: plush beneath the seats.
Pleasing to the eyes and tush
Whose tush’ll be next to me?

That girl of my dreams,
Or that girl who’s playin’ me?
Will she be diggin’ up the gold
planted deep within these seats?

Hard questions to come
To be answered only then
For now I hold firm,
Glued strict to my plan.

My plan to get the dough
My plan to beat these odds
Doin’ what my parents never did,
Underneath my convertible top.
Dickey. My kids hate it when I call him that. But then, they’re teenagers and have their own sense of humor, if you can call it that.

There I am, tending bar in this remote tourist area. Usual stuff, chatting with the customers, pouring drinks, wiping down the bar, singing to myself to help pass the time, collecting tips. It’s a nice enough place. The local ‘pub’. We have pink bulbs in the Victorian-style wall lamps. Sets off the cherry-wood scrolls which reflect nicely in the back-bar mirror, a nice enough touch to go with the classical or old-time rag which usually plays. Besides, the owner had heard that pink is flattering to a woman’s complexion.

I see a pink cab, complete with checkerbox signs on the side, drive past, and then two men come in, sit at the bar and order drinks. It’s odd to see a cab in this part of the mountains, be it yellow or pink. But then I think no more about it and go on about my business, singing to myself, chatting with the customers. . .

These two guys sit there, others come and go, we talk occasionally, usual stuff. I’m getting off soon, and the first guy offers to buy me a drink. That’s usual too, and I’m not ready to head for home yet, so I say “O.K.”.

So we’re sitting there at the bar talking, the second guy isn’t saying much. The first guy turns to me and asks, “Did you see Goodbye Girl?” I say “no” because I hadn’t. He says, “Did you see Jaws?” I say “no”. He asks about another movie whose name I can’t remember; I say “no”. He looks at me kind of funny, and asks, “Have you ever heard of Richard Dreyfus?” I say “no”, and then he really looks at me funny.

So he says, “Well, I’m Richard Dreyfus. I’m an actor”, and I say, “Hello, my name is Anna,” and we shake hands.

We talk on a bit. He talks about his physique (short and dumpy), we talk some about movies and acting. He asks if I don’t find it odd that some guy would rent a cab and drive all the way into the mountains and stay for as long as he had. Not having questioned the ownership of the cab, I still agree that it is odd. We go and sit in the cab, leaving the bodyguard sitting on the stool. Apparently I had passed inspection. He talks about the frantic pace of California, and of his desire to “get away from it all”.

After a bit I tell him I have to get home, and he asks if he can join me. That’s usual too. I tell him no, and that I have kids at home. So he asks if he can meet me for breakfast someplace, and I say “O.K.” I set the time and place, and then off I go.

I really don’t expect to see him the next morning, but as I come singing into the greasy spoon, accosted by the rancid smell of grease and the overall feel of filth, there he sits, all smiles. I say hello to some guys I know from the bar as I pass their table, sit, we eat, we talk. God knows what possessed me, but I invite this stranger up to the ranch house where I’m living. I mean, this is totally against all my care-worn lists of do’s and don’ts!
So anyway, we climb into the four-wheel drive pickup and head up the hill, and I inevitably get us stuck. We get out, throw some rocks in the back, supposedly to give the truck traction, and remain stuck. So much for heavy-duty mountain girl! Richard leans over and quietly asks if I would like him to try. We change places, and this city-slicker, unaccustomed to mountains, snow and ice, pulls us out as easy as if he were on some California freeway!

Halters and bridles impede the progress through the front entrance, dust bounces off the leather couches and chairs to dance in the beams of sunlight streaming in from the south-facing windows, the view is a collage of white on white, with occasional splotches of pine-tree green. Barren, unless you don’t live there. Outsiders usually say stuff like “Spectacular! Beautiful!”, but then, they come and go.

Richard is easy to talk with, comfortable to be around. I do such romantic things as laundry, dishes, or some other provocative pursuit as we talk. He asks if I would live with him if ever he got a place in the mountains, a “getaway”. I want out of this mountain womb where nothing ever happens except an occasional underplayed murder; I want to get INTO life, smell the city, get jostled by a million people, turn a corner and just slide right into a theater, stand in awe at some god-awful art exhibit, eat an ice cream cone while strolling on hot pavement. Like, this bartending trip is only one step on the path, not the end-all-be-all. I tell him so. We remain friends. He gives me a gold necklace, 14 karat of some eastern design or other which, of course, has some special significance that I don’t remember. Afternoon comes, I agreed to meet him in Denver in a few days, and take him down the hill to his car, a Cadillac this time.

A guy I’m seeing with some regularity tells me I’m crazy. “What would Richard Dreyfus be doing in the mountains this time of year anyway? Probably just some weirdo from Denver”.

So I think, yeah, my friend is probably right. No-one in their right mind would be in this part of the mountains at this time of year, especially if he had enough money to be anywhere else.

So I do the only honorable thing. I stand the guy up. Like before, there he is sitting in a restaurant, only this time in Denver, waiting for me to appear, all smiles. I return this weirdo from Denver’s necklace via a friend, and out he walks.

So I think no more about it. Oh, sometimes I mentally toy with “...what if?...” nah, couldn’t be. How naive can you get? Usually I find myself uncommonly clever in avoiding another weirdo. But then I see Jaws.
The damp and the cold cannot keep me away
I love your autumn fading
As much as I loved your spring hopes, and summer glory
We’ll lie together in the winter, too
Your lips will burn through the ice and the snow

These seasons, they’ll come round again

Remember, when I was a baker, in Stuttgart
and you a nun, forced into the convent?
I heard your night songs
from behind the convent walls
and baked secret messages into my bread
delivered to the sisters
every morning at dawn.

Remember when we were emperor and egg
in the Antarctic winter?
I sheltered you through months of darkness
and you gave me a reason to live,
to draw another breath in the aching cold.

Remember when I was a fly caught in your web
and you a tremendous, iridescent spider?
You saw me and knew me
Cut the web and set me free.

Remember when we were two cedars, in Lebanon?
For a thousand years we shared the sun,
our branches entwined
When the wind blew we sang to each other
When the air was still we drank each other’s silence
Gilgamesh and Enkidu passed at our feet
Secret lovers, handsome warriors,
traders, bandits, wandering musicians
We sheltered them all.

Oh, I’ve missed you these last two centuries
and this time we hardly know each other
The frogs sleep and dream,
at the bottom of the reed pool
The skies are the color of stone
The trees are black and barren and slick with rain
Let’s walk together, and talk, and take hands
Breathe the scent of the autumn garden
and remember.
A TORTILLA RECIPE

Calin Meserschmidt

When I was very little
my grandmother
showed me the secret to making,
tortillas,

The recipe is simple,

Mi abuelo trabajó hasta que tenía setenta años,
un mexicano que sólo hablaba Inglés roto,
My grandfather worked till he was seventy
a Mexican who only spoke broken English,
worked till his hands had grown as rigid and unyielding
as those metal machines he worked,
I asked him when I was very young why he did not speak English,
He said porque era su cultura para estar en silencio,
y hacer su obra, su obra, su obra

primero a full rounded cup of flour

My grandmother married at 15, she was the daughter
of an immigrant, ella tenía ocho hermanos y una madre mexicana
who taught her the importance of work through
making perfectly round tortillas, by washing the men's
pants by hand, by keeping her home from school
when she turned 12, by marrying her off at 15,
but my grandmother learned what love was through
her work, her work, her work.

segundo a teaspoon of salt

My mother married at 16 and bore my sister at 17,
she left school at 16 to work to support my sister,
her first husband beat her, but she was the product of my abuelo's
manos, hard as those metal machines she also worked,
she married my father at 30 and bore me at 31,
and those same machines held me tight in their metal womb as
she taught me what love was through
her work, her work, her work

third a heaping teaspoon of baking powder, never baking soda

My bisabuela was the mother to 12 children, 9 grew old, the other three taught her how to turn a rolling pin round an imaginary center point to turn small balls of dough perfectly round, her husband worked 18 hours a day, but all they had were beans, and tortillas so she learned 17 ways to make beans, but 1 way to make tortillas, everyday she learned what love was through obra, obra, obra

fourth, three overflowing tablespoons of lard, warmed my measuring hands,

I am finally beginning to understand my grandmother, What she meant by you must learn how to need, How to need the creaking staircase in my mother’s house, How to need the green grass on my abuelo’s grave, How to need the warmth of my lover, How to need that brown soiled earth that is a mirror of my families tongue

The secret is in the fifth step, it is to knead, to knead, to knead
To Persephone:

John Kater

She smiles at him, her eyes glinting brightly
As he rises from sheets; ghostly white skin.
He turns to her, beckons politely
As she rises too; sweetly, with grace.
He offers his hand and she takes it within—
Her own fingers shaking, surprise on her face.
He has no doubts: if at all, only slightly—
His life has been reckless. What is one more sin?

He steps forward left-footed, she steps back with right.
The Waltzing begins, the dancing is slow
She is the sunset, he is the night
Spinning in tandem, tight like a spring,
Friction is building, she is the glow—
She is the bell which his hammer rings.
Passion runs rampant, not merely polite—
without a wound, blood is spilled on the snow.

Is she aware that she gives her heart to a villain?
Does he know by his actions her innocence fails?
How she swoons in his arms! Let it begin!
For by sunrise tomorrow, his method prevails.
Stay clear, oh daughters, of smooth-talking men;
For your heart cares not for the way its beat Ends.
The View from the Backseat of the 7pm City Bus

Elizabeth Pettinger

His remaining thunderstorm hair litters a wet-newspaper wrinkled forehead; while his raven nose perches from a stooped, thin-shouldered frame; his stained tie soaks in the luscious-bronze, stimulating coffee spilled from his Parkinson-palmed embarrassment

His wool pants jingle with excitement as his coins jump for a gray sheep skirt, the school-boy dreamt dame stumbles through the aisle with crooked dentures and cat hair-lined, claw-torn nylons

Unseen, eye contact, untouched lust,

She leans over, grasps his forgotten spilled to-go mug, and steadies herself on the fleeced bones of his piggy bank legs, raises her cat eye glasses, seals their sole universal encounter plucked from the duet of passing lifetimes' moldy daydreams
“I write for those women who do not speak, for those who do not have a voice because they were so terrified, because we are taught to respect fear more than ourselves. We’ve been taught that silence would save us, but it won’t.” – Audre Lorde

Your Grandma’s red ’95 Ford skates between the yellow lines
I park, permit hiding in wallet. We sit. 15 minutes early.
Beethoven and cigarette smoke fills the air, drowning out fear and adrenaline. Your eyes meet mine,
it’s okay I sing into your ear as your eyes fill with tears
and you burrow into my arms. nothing is easy.

I notice the chocolate milk stains across my wool dress
on your belly. 10 minutes. you have scooted back
into your seat. I count the twenties and pull at my fraying skirt
while you go over the list, again and again. Combined,
our last month’s minimum wage paychecks cover it.
I won’t ever ask for my cash back. Your cleavage frames a cross.

My hat and scarf and your Dad’s coat hide everything but my eyes. A blonde hair peaks out from my Mom’s hat on your head,
I tuck it back in. You suck in a breath of air, we walk across black ice
while we both wonder if the you calling in sick was convincing enough. My Confirmation teacher holds a sign, but neither of us look. Spit hits the jackets, I hold my head up, re-grip your arm, flip the group off.

We get into the clinic, you squeeze my arm, I wait in the lobby and read a history book I’m four chapters behind in. I cover five chapters. I hear your voice whisper,
I stand, re-position your coat, slide your arm over my head, hold you up as we face a new group of do-gooders. They don’t know about your stepfather who died in a car accident last week. Or that we made confetti cupcakes in celebration. Or that you’re going to California next week to live with your Dad who understands. Eventually we slide into the truck and I hand you another cupcake.
"You have to ask yourself, was it worth it?"

My commander asks while I slide the all too heavy corpse into the Blackhawk’s belly.

“Yes it was!” Commands the same voice, gruff, confident, all too enthusiastic.

My brother is gone
His new wife
now a widow,
but this dumb fuck over
Here thinks it was
Worth it….

Honestly,
I never replied to his question.
I will never reply.
I can’t.

I was,
always will be
too close to those trees.

A green flash of molten copper pierces one side of the armored Humvee… Only one side.

The liquid clapper,
It’s toll ominous, final,
left one soul to
Relive that deafening tone.

“Was it worth it, Ryan?”
“Was it worth it, Norm?”
“Was it worth it, Nate?”

You paid the price.
So, I ask you,
“Was it worth it?”

Your silence is resounding.

where an old vet,
tears in his eyes,
would hand me 2 cold
McDonalds cheeseburgers,
shake my hand, and
tell me
“You are home, son,
It’s OK now.”
II

Is it my responsibility to help pay this hefty bill?

Since no son of yours will carry on your family name,
    I named mine after you.

Since you can’t endure the effects of PTSD,
    I endure them for you.

Brother, you live within my heart.
    Brother, you live
    Within my heart.
    You live within my heart, brother.

“Was it worth it, Ryan?”
“Was it worth it, Norm?”
“Was it worth it, Nate?”

You paid the price.

So, I ask you, again,

    “Was it worth it, brother?”

…

Your silence,
    Deafens me.

My heart is heavy like your corpse
that warm desert night
with waking up in cold sweats at 3am
the memory of burning flesh and metallic blood
Seared into my mind

My heart is heavy because you are there.
Your memory, brother, can never be torn away,
Not the same way your flesh once was.

“What is the price I have paid?” I ask,
My voice trembling, weak.

It is nothing
Compared to the small plastic bag of politics
Your life paid for.
Sunlight glistened off the sweat-soaked brow of an officer as he scanned bright orange silhouettes distorted by shimmering heat waves atop the ground. He raised his hand to form a visor above his brow and squinted to observe several prisoners squatting in a circle beneath the shade of the prison building on the opposite side of the yard.

He continued scanning and rested his eyes on the extent of the shade the inmates were sitting in as it stretched a quarter of the way across the yard. Even during the early afternoon, a portion of the sun was still blocked by the sheer size of the facility. Its walls nearly touched the sun and seemed to reach for the heavens themselves. No prison should have been this large, yet here it stood; a tribute to a nation’s insatiable hunger for justice and wealth. At the time, both were equally as blind.

After observing these features the officer’s attention was immediately drawn to sudden movement from the huddle of prisoners he caught sight of a few moments earlier. One of the men stood with arms raised triumphantly toward the sky. A half-second later, cheering and gruff laughter cut its way through the prison yard banter to reach the ears of the vigilant officer. A sneer crossed his lips as his neck hunched forward. He had been around long enough to know where this was going.

The smell of dry grass filled the guard’s lungs as he inhaled for a heaving sigh. The day was ripe for a wildfire, and gambling at high stakes made for an ideal spark; each card pull or dice roll like striking flint. The heat of the day had already put many of the inmates in an irritable mood. Some action had to be taken.

However, the officer contemplated if he should be the one to break up the ordeal. Today his job was unique. Lying motionless behind him was a machine of goliath proportions. Its shadow would have been an ideal spot in the heat had the officer’s animosity towards this prototype not been so pronounced. At the present day, “gifts” from the government such as this were usually more in the interest of research rather than employee preference. DARPA was a familiar logo to many guards on duty, and the caption of B.R.A.I.N. warranted everyone’s concern. Such superstition had to be placed behind current workers at the prison, though, and those selected to work with the hardware often became the first to either leave, or they could remain stoic enough to continue working amidst their dissent of the government contractor.

A chorus of cicadas overlapped the electric hum of the prototype. A sigh came from the officer as he started toward the inmate huddle. “Follow!” he barked to the machine without looking back to face it. The diminished hissing of hydraulics could be heard as its legs began moving with much larger footsteps. The sound of crackling grass beneath both pairs of feet was quite volumous as the two moved toward the group in the shade.

Prisoners of every physique and attitude dropped what they were doing and unnervingly sidestepped from the path of the prison officer. He watched each of their eyes as he passed noting that none of them were fixed upon his own presence. He played the role of a fog horn that precedes the thundering motion of a ship at sea; simply the projected sound of something greater following. The expressions on the inmates’ faces were mixed. The fresh prisoners’ portrayed fear, while the experienced
replaced such intimidation with a condescending look of disgust upon the sight of the lunging automaton. The officer held himself with authority as he and his companion parted the orange sea toward the other edge of the prison yard. A few inmates reached out to touch the now scalding acrylic chest plat of the construct that glistened under the misty blue sky. A few others hung their heads. All those who managed to contact the machine’s surface were warned with a direct message, “Move out of the way, law enforcement is in progress.”

Eventually the officer and his mechanical counterpart both approached the huddle. “Be aware.” commanded the guard. The enormous machine strained its joints as it quickly halted and adjusted its awkwardly jointed legs to form a combative stance. The officer stepped forward to address the shifty inmates.

“Having fun?” The inmates stopped their chatter and turned their heads halfway. A younger prisoner with a jutting chin caught glimpse of the construct, and his eyes quickly widened. A few others noted his change in face and followed his eyes so they too could understand why a mere prison guard could be cause of such expression. Mutterts rose from the huddle and reached the officer’s ears. Half of a grin crossed his face. The largest of the inmates slowly stood up from where he was squatted around a few playing cards. Before the officer addressed this man, he peered toward the center of the prisoners’ circle to confirm his suspicions. It was as he feared. Lying on the ground at the center of their huddle were faded tickets marked “data mining time”.

The guard’s face remained unchanged, however. He directed his eyes to the inmate that had stood. The prisoner was extremely tall, but also dangerously thin. All of them were thin. Their muscles atrophied from doing just as the cards lying between them stated. It was the only real use for prisoners. Government jailing had to pay for itself somehow. “Who’s the lucky one?” asked the inmate as he tilted his head toward the mechanical bodyguard.

“Has that ever been your business?” replied the officer. The prisoner lowered his brow and cast a look of hatred upon the officer. Other inmates in the huddle began packing up and hastily leaving the spot. The tall one continued to stare until the last man had made his way back into the prison yard. The officer, while maintaining eye contact, swung his head toward the center of the yard. The inmate began moving. “You can’t blame a man for tryin’ his luck,” said the prisoner. “Specialy when it’s all he has left.” The officer continued to stare. “In’t that right, officer Magnus?” The guard’s expression remained unchanged. The prisoner moved towards the yard. “At ease.” said the guard to the robot that had been overseeing the exchange with him. Its stance lowered. The prisoner passed by the machine and quickly patted the tinted acrylic cover on the front part of its torso. “God’s mercy on ya’ brother,” he said. The machine let off the same pre-recorded message as it had before, and the prisoner disappeared into the sea of orange that churned amidst the waves of heat on the horizon.

A bell resonated through the yard as extra guards were dispatched from the compound to round up the prisoners from their recreational activities. Magnus again signaled for the gargantuan automaton to follow him toward a garage door offset from the other entrances. “Random access memory fatiguing, recommend a change in organic hardware.” said another pre-recorded message from the prototype.
Robogirl
Jesse Glover
2001 SPACE ODYSSEY

Blake Beier
“Yeah, yeah.” growled Magnus as he hunched over the electronic combination lock beside the door. The eight digit passkey changed every day in case any inmates decided to be overly observant. The console beeped at the officer with every combination he input; apparently working at the prison for nearly twenty years still did not warrant him the ability to memorize the password rotation.

The squabble of the yard faded as the last of the inmates exited into the prison building. The sun had fallen behind the facility which cast a shadow over the once smoldering field of dry grass. The faint solo chiming of a cricket or two would have been heard had the serenity not been repeatedly shattered by the sound of the code box Magnus had yet to please. The last of the officers dispatched were beginning to make their way into the facility in the wake of the prisoners. One of them broke off from the group had made his way toward Magnus's position.

“You've been standing here for a while. Code box giving you grief?” asked the young officer now standing beside the prototype. Magnus's hunched shoulders raised a bit as he cringed at the voice now addressing him. “You know this robot gets all that information at the beginning of the day. Just say the word and-”

“Unlock!” snapped Magnus at the machine. The robotic construct remained idle for a few moments as a few minor clicks could be heard emitting from between its boxy shoulder joints. The machine lurched forward and lowered one of its large multi-tool like arms and began rotating through attachments. Riot hose, long range taser, then finally a small claw engaged with the forearm and began jabbing at the buttons on the box. Magnus glared at the grass; it was only a matter of time before this machine replaced him and every other officer at the facility.

The garage door opened revealing the hangar where the prototype underwent maintenance. A technician sitting at the only desk in the space swiveled his chair around and stood. “Does it need a switch?” Magnus nodded. The younger officer entered the small hangar with the machine and helped the technician attach a series of various wires to different sockets located about the robot’s carapace. Magnus remained outside.

The computer monitor lit up as it detected each of the cables had been appropriately attached. The technician sat himself down once again and began pecking at the keyboard with his bony fingers.

“I saw you use this thing to prevent a gambling riot.” said the young officer. “That’s one problem it wouldn’t have seen on its own.” He had known Magnus long enough to observe his distaste for the machine. Magnus, however, remained stoic and kept his head down.

The acrylic chest plate on the prototype’s torso began hissing as motors swiveled the shield up to reveal an inmate hung like a crucifix with a menacing, wire infested helmet covering the entirety of his head. The technician continued prodding at the keyboard. Magnus lifted his head to see which prisoner this machine had been working with for the day, however, the number on the inmate’s suit wasn’t familiar. His eyes then darted to the technician’s computer monitor. A few more pecks at the keyboard, and the spherical encasement about the prisoner’s head cracked and shot open. The face inside was covered with a sweaty blindfold and facial hair; he had been inside for far too long. The technician then delivered the final command to the console like some fiendish maestro and the inmate jolted to life. A gasp of breath came from his whiskered mouth.
The younger officer approached the inmate to take off the blindfold. “Don’t!” shouted the inmate. “Do I have to mine?” he asked.

“It says here you have eight hours of time on the data mines.” said the technician coldly. The inmate was taken aback.

“Then leave the blindfold on.”

The technician signaled for the two to take him down to the lower levels. Magnus shook his head in disgust. This prisoner wouldn’t let himself see the light of day if it were only short lived. The two officers lifted the man out of the mechanical solitary confinement to join him with the rest of his brethren mining electronic currency in the chambers beneath. For whatever bit Magnus hated the procedure, it was the only backing the nation had on the money in his paycheck.

The three men entered an elevator at the back of the hangar. The only need for an additional officer to escort the prisoner was holding the man up on his withered legs. Magnus stared dead ahead the entire way to the lift.

“One little two little three little Indians.” sang the inmate as the elevator lowered. “I never thought I’d know math in my life. Who knew a major felony was my way to a cheap education. You don’t learn the numbers any better way than having them flood your head for forty-eight hours.”

Magnus could only stare. This wasn’t the first epiphany he had heard from an inmate that underwent the procedure. Atrophy and mental inundation to the point of education; this was well-calculated goal of the government… and its people.

The elevator opened to release a gust of cool air. The entire floor was air conditioned to a frigid degree in order to keep all the electronic hardware functioning optimally. The three men stepped into a hallway lined with safety glass windows. Beyond each aperture a soul rested in dreams of numeric code. Each prisoner’s mind was a soup of ones and zeroes, ons and offs, rights and wrongs. Each mind turned into a code creator for mining a myriad of electronic currencies. The grayscale of the world reduced to a true or false question and siphoned in and out of their heads such that luck truly was all they had to remind them they too were once human.
It’s not a conscious choice
dressing to match her coffee mug,
but neither is it coincidence
her hair shares the coffees deep rich brown
why shouldn’t her shirt share the cups color
and her shorts the lids?
This is her method of worship
toward the liquid addiction.
More even, she is shaped the same!
wide at the top
straight down her sides
until her hips narrow dramatically
and her legs maintained that dimension
so perfect for fitting into a cup holder.
One arm extended out at the shoulder
and bent down at the elbow
so she could be picked up in a giants hand
and he could drink of her brain.
What he received from her in thought and matter
would be a jumble of feminine care
and mining engineering vocabulary
finished nicely with increased
neural stimuli and the latent chemical taste
deposited by years of
consistent caffeination.
Arctic Fox

Alyssa Schwarz
A hint of autumn
The turning tide of green and yellow,
Needles of vegetation strewn about.

Barren ground—
Spotted by a leper’s green:
Speckles of life in the dirt.

Patterns of dust, gray and yellow
Bales of straw, the passing of victims;
A history of countless creatures.

The skin of a child,
A necklace, a bracelet;
The feathers of a bird,
A beak, a clawed foot.
Adornments of a vulture,
Vestiges of a child.

Cat and mouse,
Thief and robber,
Predator and prey:
A game.

Banter between bird and child
Alternating
Languages of hunger,
Verses of despair.

And the only tale to be told:
whether the victim is claimed
by creature or dust.

          Nameless, either way.
It is so odd to think that
Once we shared the world.
Your walls were my walls
Your breath my very own
And late at night,
When I touched your thigh
This too, was mine.
Now, I look down at my
multi-colored
Address book; there you are,
Faceless...
One name on a page.
THE LADY IN THE CHAIR

Vincent Pane
Smiley rotund faces scattered across the floor, rolling under feet, into soda packs, one made its way behind the deli counter. Normally being very poised, Ted wasn’t sure what to do. He muttered an apology under his breath, then proceeded to bend down to begin cleaning up his mess. He lowered his head and as he raised it he bumped into something else. Looking up he saw green pants. Copper hair, green eyes, just a hint of freckles. Strawberry shampoo. Ted’s cheeks faded crimson and stammered something of an apology to her before quickly bending down to pick up more cans. He focused on those cans. Left hand, right hand, repeat,

She rubbed her head. The red mark was swelling prominently on her forehead. “I’m okay, really, it’s nothing.” She grimaced as the words came out. Even Ted wasn’t convinced. He held out his frozen beef from the freezer section. “Sorry, maybe this will help some,” it really was a feeble gesture. All Ted knew was numbers, but Star Trek told him this was the proper gesture. A multitude of episodes learning to live long and prosper, gloomy Friday nights in his basement watching romantic comedies and finally, a chance to put his training to use. Smiling she grabbed the beef and held it tenderly against her forehead. She winced slightly, and reactively, so did Ted. He hid his shame, and bent down again to pick up the last of the cans. One by one, attempting to erase his blunder by restacking the tower of ravioli.

The next aisle over a child screamed for Cocoa Puffs, and a reluctant parent stoutly refused. Hotel California played over the radio, the supermarket buzzed with conversations seasoned with accents spanning the globe, all just trying to figure out what to eat for dinner that night. In that moment, none of that mattered to Ted. He stood up to dust off his knees and attempted to re-crease his pants. The left leg looked longer than the right leg. His shoe laces were skewed to the side. After rising to his full height, he looked Ms. Green Pants right in the eye and apologized once again for disturbing her. She smiled. He couldn’t help but notice how sincere that smile was, as if the two were sharing a thousand years of conversation just in a few seconds. And then she walked away.

Ted sighed. That was it, crisis averted. No, wait, he still had time. Ted forgot about his cart, his shoelaces, his pants, his breath, even the stack of pasta cans. He jogged out of the aisle, looking both ways. No green pants. He took the nearest left, green pants, nope, that was an old woman. He doubled back and went to the aisle to the right of his crash.

"Attention shoppers: Today we have a special on Kraft American Singles in the Deli Section. Buy one get one 1/2 off!" Still no sign. He hurdled over children, dodged around carts and tangoed with a fruit display. There she was, at the register just about to sign a check for her groceries. As politely and quickly as he could, Ted made his way to the front of the busy post-work crowd to get to her. There was a morbidly large middle-aged woman riding a scooter just behind her in line. There was no way he could squeeze around that, despite running three miles each day after work in case the zombie apocalypse really did occur.
"Hey miss, I would really like to get your number." She turned around, and while surprised, gave him one of those famous smiles. With one hand she grabbed the top of his head, and with the other still holding her pen, wrote her phone number on his forehead. Ted wasn’t sure what to make of it all. The fat woman looked up at the pair; her chin, and her second chin both scowled on that inflated, greasy, bulbous face. Ted’s ears grew hot at the touch of her hand on his head. Her hand gripped slightly, both trying to feel his hair and steady his head. He concentrated on his forehead, trying to decipher the characters being inscribed almost ritualistically on his figure.

"There ya go, now we match." She winked, grabbed her two bags and receipt, and walked out the door.

Ted pulled up to the restaurant, checked his blonde hair in the rearview mirror, and stepped out. He attempted to wait casually by the entrance for Amber. Despite sitting on a bench outside, his eyes still darted back and forth for any sign of her. He drew a large breath and exhaled as slowly as he could.

He glanced at his watch, casually of course, 7:02. Two minutes late, he hoped they hadn’t given away his dinner reservations. Bernard’s, not the fanciest place in town, but something Ted could afford, he hoped. Ted felt a tap on his shoulder, Amber.

"Hey you, ready to go in?" Red open-toed pumps, her black dress ended a hand’s width above the knees, a decorative red belt splashed across her waist. Her blazing sunset hair now tied up loosely in a bun. Ted quickly stood up, and managed to stammer out a greeting.

"So uh read any good books lately?" Ted knew he had to start a conversation off somehow, seemed as good a question as any.

"Well, actually I’ve gotten into those Game of Thrones books lately. I’m only on the second one but like, wow, they’re awesome." Ted had only read all five of these and was desperately waiting for the sixth. Along with also owning the three seasons of the show on DVD and BluRay, Ted had made plans to attend ComicCon where it was rumored the author would be making an appearance.

The conversation flowed like the wine at their table. Words were devoured and ideas shared like a single noodle of pasta between two mouths. She was into everything he was. She enjoyed dance music, loved sappy movies, even had seen some Star Trek from time to time. She graduated from Colgate with a degree in biology, now training to be a high school science teacher. And Ted was a bank teller. Still, she laughed at his jokes and never looked down at her phone for a text. He considered that a victory. From time to time the waiter would bring food, or drinks, or anything to disturb them. Ted didn’t even realize his lasagna had arrived until it had grown cold.
EYES OF THE BEHOLDER

Connor Dickey
Masks

Jesse Glover
Ted looked over the table, a surely hefty bill, and two bottles of wine. Both empty. He wondered how he was going to drive home.

"Say, what if we go watch a movie back at my place? It's within walking distance." Amber's words ebbed and flowed like the tide, sweet as Ted managed a very enthusiastic yes and shoved the cash in his wallet into the restaurant's check holder.

As they slipped out the front door, Amber gently took Ted's hand. Ted blushed, this was going far better than could have ever hoped for. He considered telling her how he got stuck in traffic earlier in the day because a semi had flipped over on the way back from the video game store but decided against it. He was content to listen, and she was content to talk about her life since graduating college. Dabbling in med school, disliking the professors and switching to teaching instead. Ted fantasized about little red heads running around his small house and worrying if there would ever be enough sunscreen in the world to keep them from burning up when the ozone layer eventually falls off.

Amber turned into an apartment building a few blocks down from Bernard's. She smoothly unlocked the door and greeted the bell man.

"Evening Miss Amber. Have a good night." His eyes rested on Ted. They were kind, but were wide, wild, and quivering. Ted looked away, slightly perturbed. He kept on, comforted by the closeness of the lady. She hit the floor on the elevator without glancing at the pad and after a glance from her and a bite of her lower lip, they disembarked. A turn right, three doors down, on the left. Apartment number 1306. Ted wanted to remember that number.

Amber led the way into her top floor apartment. The smell of her shampoo and lemon lysol had lingered in here after her shower earlier, and Ted was engulfed by it. The stark white leather furniture emanated a glow that seemed to bounce off the entire area. Ted swore he could almost see his reflection in the polished hardwood flooring. Each piece was supported by legs as wide and stout as a German beer stein, with a color as dark as Guinness. Floor to ceiling windows in the living area showed the city expanse flayed out around them. A deep cherry coffee table sat in the middle of the room surrounded by the pristine couches. On the side closest to the hallway was a small bar complete with stools and a wine cooler. Ted tentatively took a seat at the bar as Amber went behind to grab a bottle of wine.

He decided another glass of wine couldn't hurt at this point.

Amber poured the two glasses and led Ted over to the largest of the couches facing her even larger television. She dimmed the lights with some intricate looking knobs on the wall and took a seat. As carefully as drunk Ted could, he took a hearty sip of wine and placed it on the coffee table. No coaster, she wouldn't mind. Amber played with some buttons on the remote and a movie started playing. Gently, as if well practiced, Amber nudged up against Ted's left side, pulled her feet up to her chest, and leaned against him. Ted glanced over, almost surprised, but beaming all the while, and threw his arm around her. She was warm in the cool apartment, and despite his nervousness, Ted was
very content at this moment. The movie playing looked to be some sort of romantic comedy; he had never heard of the title. Eventually the alcohol took over, and Ted slipped asleep.

Ted awoke. The movie was off. The overhead lights were on full brightness and were painful to look at. Ted moved to cover his eyes with his hand, but his arm wouldn't budge. Confused he glanced over, hoping to see Amber sitting on it as a cute joke. His whole hand was swaddled in duct tape and tied to something underneath the couch, probably one of the legs. His other arm was the same way, and to Ted's great dismay, so were his feet. Ted struggled to no avail. All sense of reason escaped him now, this couch wasn't going anywhere, and neither was he.

Amber walked in from the bedroom, she glanced at him, then did a double-take realizing he was awake. She smiled at him, a long smile, her eyes moving wildly across his body. Her hair was no longer arranged in the bun it had been all night, but was down now. Some strands covered her face, the rest tucked behind her ears. Ted noticeably calmed down upon seeing her, but still returned her gaze intently, part fear, part lust.

"Amber, what's going on here?" Ted's voice was strong, his tone was lower than he normally used, and regrettably to him it came out as more of a bark. Still, there were undertones of fear in his voice.

"I figured it would be more fun if we do it this way." Her voice confident and seductive. She winked, and while holding his gaze the whole time, removed her panties from underneath her dress. She bunched the black lace into her right hand and strutted towards Ted, bending down to lean in for a kiss. Ted's heart was fluttering now, he closed his eyes and puckered his lips. He remembered to turn his head slightly to the side as he had bumped noses with another girl back in college during his first kiss.

But Ted's lips did not meet those of Amber. He felt a hand in his mouth as another crammed in the lacey panties. He snapped open his eyes to see Amber directly over him, forcing with her arms her full weight on his forehead. With surprising strength and agility her hand snapped around and closed his mouth. With another, she grabbed a roll of duct tape from behind the couch and with surgical skill wrapped it exactly five times. Ted screamed, but the sound was terribly muffled and all that was audible was the sound of a tea kettle simmering. He raised his eyebrows, his eyes wide in terror and confusion, not even blinking. Not even once.

Amber put on a lemon sucking smile, and after a slight nod to herself got up and left the room again. It wasn't but fifteen seconds later that she came back, balancing a shiny axe between her hands.
Ted struggled. He tugged and pulled, he simmered his tea kettle scream. The duct tape didn't budge, the couch legs were resolute, and Amber's drenched panties contained his horror.

"I wish I could stop, Ted. I really do. I thought the one before this would be the last, but then you came along. Maybe there is something wrong with me." She gave him one last thousand-year smile. Mascara had made streaks down her face with a few liberated tears, a strap on her dress hung loosely over her shoulder. The pearls in her ears glinted in the overhead lighting. Ted's mom loved pearl earrings. She was expecting a call from him today, but he wanted to surprise her with the good news of how he hoped his date would go. She sniffed and wiped her cheek, smearing more black underneath her lower eyelid. Ted looked at her with all the compassion in the world, and gently shook his head side to side, blinking a few times in the process.

"Just one more, Ted. Just one more."
Why So Serious?

Drew Lange
Elizabeth Pettinger

THE EXASPERATED SERIAL KILLER

In this over-populated urban spread you
scan the scene –
    women with blonde, brown, red, black hair strutting the streets
    men with angry, eager, lost, lustful, radiant faces sit on benches
    children running, jumping, upside down, dancing litter the city
    clowns, elderly, dogs, cats, people overwhelm –
your eyes drawn to the cool abandoned backstreet

I blend into the graffitied American flag in the alley,
and just as I step out –
    poised to carve a set of horizontal red stripes
    into your unsuspectingly beautiful semen-hued skin using
    this butcher knife to draw out the bloody streaks while your screams
    echo like the blind, alcoholic street musician’s greasy saxophone
    piercing the cool summer morning with jazzed fear –
you spot me.

In that moment, your eyes light up
with joy –
    at my perfectly ironed blue jeans, sweater hanging
    on my thin frame, thick glasses magnifying my pupils, hat holding
    a boyish cowlick in place, the fuzzy cherry on top
    of everything sealing in innocent memories of summer
    afternoon library Kool-Aid –
your mouth opens.

Two words burst from your grinning lips,
like saliva-enriched juicy fruit bubblegum,
“Where’s Waldo?!?”

And I smile. Wave even. Then turn 180° and shuffle away
so you can’t spot the tears of frustration overpopulating my face –
    knife stashed back into my pocket, biting into my leg
    gnawing at my brain how your skin glistened in the sunlight
    pulled taught over solid bones and muscle –
one again, as always, out of reach.
Writing about a writer’s block is better than not writing at all.
- Charles Bukowski

Sitting in the corner of the room
clad in dark blue silk,
strapless, floor length gown
sat my pen.

I knew I hadn’t treated her fairly.
Dropped repeatedly, thrown
across the room, scribbled
senseless maniacal drawings.

She wanted more, she
wanted to know what
it was like to create love,
to fill the void in between two souls.

It wasn’t easy for me either,
I couldn’t find the time
or motivation to dream
of waiting under an umbrella

in the pouring rain, to offer
my coat in the cold
or to play Bananagrams
late into the night.

I straightened my tie,
tucked in my shirt, walked
over to the corner of the room,
I asked her to waltz.
Table Sculpture
Laine Greaves-Smith
Riding the Rails
Russell Benson
1: “When I was just a little girl, I asked my mother what will I be; will I be pretty, will I be rich—”

2: “There is nothing to fear but fear itself.”

3: “Some vehicles need eject buttons. People say temptation only fosters recklessness, but believe me, you’ll carry yourself with caution if it’s there, and unless you’re gonna need the damn thing, you’re not gonna touch it.”

4: “The early summer months in the Deep South are characterized by increasing heat and gentle, humid winds from the Gulf. These conditions prime low-lying river valleys for a phenomenon unique to the region. In the evenings, winds calm and dewpoints rise into the upper 80’s. Air temperatures decrease little, and river-water retains the heat of the day. As a result, valleys form what’s known locally as a ‘blur’, or conditions where air, water, and blood are virtually indistinguishable.

Intrepid locals go swimming, describing the experience as being as close to weightlessness ‘as any earthbound creature can know’. Indeed, in the darkness, there are no bodily inhibitions, and warm waters are a womb for those daring enough to dive in.”

5: “A sin’s a sin, don’t matter which way you look at it.

[Scene: Night; Freeway Overpass; River noise below] don’t matter if it’s cause you’re mad, or angry, or sad, or crazy,

[Enter: Boy.] so don’t think for a second you’re the exception.

[ ‘Concrete and rebar can’t stop anything. They are the illusion of impassability.’] A sin’s a sin, and Hell’s waiting for you just on the other side.”

[Grasping the barrier, he looks up into the streetlamps. Heat-lightning flashes on the horizon.]
6: “Possessing free-will does not imply autonomy. Our actions, not our thoughts, separate us from the rocks, plants, and animals.”

7: “Oh my God. People are leaping from the windows, on live TV. Those are people falling out of the smoke. Oh my God.”

8: “He’d spend a few minutes looking each night, but in all his seven years, he’d never found a face in the shadows on the ceiling. Nothing but a bunch of chalky little bumps.”

9: “Dammit. Can’t get my shoes untied.”

10: “—Que sara sara.”
Creativity. Imagination. Inventiveness. These attributes are among a growing list of extra-technical talents that are considered vital for 21st century engineers and applied scientists to be successful professionals in a world of constant and complex change.

Thanks to the generosity—and imagination—of Colorado School of Mines alumnus J. Michael Blackwell, Class of 1959, the Division of Liberal Arts and International Studies acquired the capacity to recognize superior student performance in the creative arts with the establishment of the Blackwell Award for Excellence in Creative Expression in 2006. The Blackwell Award recognizes those who have excelled in the evocative representation of the human condition through the genres of poetry, fiction, creative non-fiction, film, music, or the artistic representation of academic inquiry. The winner of this award will have produced a creative work in the fine arts, literature, poetry, music, film, or technical arts of stunning originality.

It is a distinct pleasure to be able to showcase the work of this year’s recipient, Colton Kohnke—Geophysical Engineering, Class of 2014—whose poetry appears on the following pages.
The wonders of the physical Universe are not easily explored on three hours of sleep by a college freshman whose coffee pot broke the evening prior. I stumble around the 8 am lecture hall, a half sober stupor fighting the bedtime cat calls of the desk before me. I easily succumb as the professor who stole Einstein’s haircut and trousers takes the podium. I dream of a world filled of physics, a world where the only nuclear fission is the one breaking apart the clasp of my TA’s bra. Where basic theory is a primal attraction between male and female, from classroom to Star Wars bed sheets. Gravity is just the force pulling shirts to the floor, pulling lips to lips, pushing up your tits and down your thong. I’ve always wanted to test the spring constant of my bed and confirm Newton’s 3rd law by exciting a Green’s Function on squealing mattress coils. I wonder how much torque my lever arm can apply before your brown curls deform under the stress and strain applied by the sine wave of my hips, a frequency mirrored in your vocal chords, producing primal screams that aren’t dampened by paper thin walls or drowned by frat boys bumping bass beats down the hall. Our kinetic energy breaking headboards and increasing the internal temperature of scattered sheets, lighting a fire across exposed skin which reflects imitation candle light. The smoke from the flames erupting from my bed shakes the fire alarm from its slumber as I jump 10 feet back and come face to face with Einstein, holding a squirt bottle & wearing a self glorified grin. I could care less about pushing numbers down Physic’s throat and beating an answer from its bound and battered form Honestly, I just want to go back to bed.
Physics tells us a loop
with electric current flowing through it
creates a magnetic field.
This field
then loops
around and excites
the electrons
in a second loop,
creating an additional magnetic field.

These fields bounce
back and forth, like red rubber
balls thrown in a sealed room,
until they diffuse as heat.

I keep wondering
how these loops
attract each other –
if it’s purely primal
or something more intentional–
and how it relates
to the curve
of your hips,
or tie
of your shoelaces.
brick and mortar the doors shut,  
cut the power and turn off the gas,  
shred the mail and scatter it  
in the street so it plasters itself  
on the windshield of passing cars.

redirect the water to seep up  
through the floor. if they want  
to drink, let them beg on knees.  
If they want to breath, make  
them hold their head just  
above the surface.

hammer a nail through the heart  
of every LCD screen and peg  
each next to the clock  
that is stuck  
permanently at 12:27 pm.

make them sweat in snowstorms  
and shiver in heatwaves. take  
away the freedom of a blue sky  
and replace it with the charcoal  
overtones of the night.

blot out the stars and drown  
the sun in embalming fluid  
so it retains its form, but not  
its luster.

do this to an entire community  
and call it: Freedom.
When Did My Life Become a Poem?

Colton Kohnke

was it when leaves started falling
and I sang the stars Elvis’ greatest hits
so they would fall asleep remembering
the cadence of rock and roll.

or was it when you kissed my cheek,
traveled the night under
bedroom sheets.
or broke my heart with the blade
forged from your stilettos.
or when I explored the dark caverns
of the misery you left, with wine
red as your Vegas Volt lipstick.

maybe it was when my dog died
and I spent afternoons eating lunch
alone in the library. Making friends
with wrinkled librarians,
Thoreau, Keats and Rowling.

a lost boy, running from life
seeking solace among the stars
wishing to travel between them.

was it when I felt the pull of the stars?
touched wind for the first time?
heard the song silence sings?
saw the bitter heat of a campfire?
tasted the waves sinking a capsized ship?

when did my life become a poem.
when did it become impossible
to live without the entire world,
all seven billion and counting,
flowing through my veins.

howling at a lunar disk missing
from the horizon, hoping
for proof that he is not alone.

was it when I left the Church searching
for something more than an invisible
man in the sky? when the falling leaves
left footprints on my heart? or the tides
washed them from my soul? Was
it when I gained faith from Nature?

like a moon, hurtling away
from its mother: desperate
to fall into the void of space
Color my soul white so I am one with the sky,
Surmounting clouds within my breast
before expelling them through my ears
as jets of steam. The thunder crashing through
my veins boiling my blood to liquid pulp.
Wind screaming though the gaps between
my fingers and tearing the foundation
from under unsuspecting houses
as I feel the tenacity of the sky.

Paint my blood blue so I am one with the sea,
Timing the rhythm of the waves to my quickening
heartbeat and the drops of rain to footsteps.
Unexplored depths generate tsunami waves, ripping
civilization and nature from its roots
and funneling them down my gullet
where they reside peacefully in my earthy depths
as I churn the vengeance of the sea.

Camouflage my body so I am one with the woods,
Mother Oak pulling my hands to the stars
and pushing my feet into the tender earth
where I build an impenetrable labyrinth
beneath asphalt. We are slow, but patient
and again the forest will come to the city.
Giants have fallen without a sound
as I shout with the sorrow of the woods.

Char my heart so I am one with the flames,
Dancing within the hollow logs
and igniting my lungs with each inhale.
The burning of smoke and transformation
to ash, heats my limbs and stimulates
my appetite. Consuming each fragment
like it might be my final meal
as I burn with the gluttony of the flames.

Ravage my soul so nothing is left,
Filling the empty crevasse
with the determination of sky,
ocean's strength, longing
of trees, and swift fire.
Fold me into your embrace,
as I become the calamity of Nature,
A reunion too long in waiting.
**Lars Andress** is a student at Mines who has found writing to be a most welcome solace from the maelstrom of information generated by the challenges of his academic pursuits and exposure to public media. Apprehensions are his forte, and what positive anticipation he does experience is typically through the life of someone else other than himself—a most terrible displacement indeed. He hopes readers do not view his work as an escape and rather as a means to understand his internalized (and more than likely self-created) adversity. If one should find his bio to be pitiful and disturbing then take heart simply because everyone has one inside their chest that beats louder when it wants the mind to listen.

**Aya Angstadt** is a junior studying Chemical and Biochemical Engineering and plans to attend medical school after graduation. She recently discovered the power of creative expression and is excited to explore engineering and medicine through this new lens. While she loves her work, she also enjoys cooking, playing racquetball and the clarinet, and spending time with her family.

**Ryan Asensio**’s main activities include dancing, reading, cooking, goofing around and shaking things up. He is also looking for a full-time job that will start in Fall 2014 (in case you know anyone).

**Blake Beier:** I’m from Glenwood, Iowa. I’m currently a sophomore in Mechanical Engineering, and I enjoy reading and snowboarding in my free time.

**Russell Benson:** I am a graduate student in nuclear engineering and a Colorado native. I love long exposure photography almost as much as I love this great state. When I was given a foggy night in Oregon, I couldn’t give up the opportunity to do some light painting. In my free time I also enjoy drinking good beer, playing guitar, and running for long periods of time.

Born in the State of Infancy in the District of Columbia, **Anna Berlin** graduated from Golden High, has lived in many and various states, and currently resides with her daughter and two beautiful grandchildren in Highlands Ranch. She enjoys hikes in the high country, reading, knitting and spending time with her extended family. A Jack of all trades, master of none (except Classics) she divides her time between teaching EPICS and being hausfrau until her daughter is well.

**Lincoln Carr** is a recovering professional dishwasher, theoretical quantum physics professor, global citizen, and sporadic poet. He teaches a course titled “From the Lab to the Page: Revolutions in Science, Literature, and Society” in the McBride Honors program. He believes physics and poetry present two windows on a Very Large Universe.

**Connor Dickey:** Life, the noblest of pursuits. Death, the humblest of victories. I, you, we. Alone, yet together in our pursuit of the inevitable. Stoic we march toward the looming end. The sweet release, at
times a fantasy, yet an ever present reality. With this in mind we exist; conscious of our place in this infinite realm, yet ever curious of what could lie beyond.

**Ben Elliot** is a writer of lies and deceptions. He was rumored to have been seen during the Y2K riots spraying incendiary graffiti on a statue of a bear while drinking pink lemonade from a beaker. Historians place this illuminating, if disputed, event at the age of seven. He is known for lambasting anything worth lambasting (everything), complaining about anything worth complaining about (politics, religion, and weather), and generally making little to no sense. He is greatly interested in reducing the totalitarian grasp of authors on storytelling, and prefers it if readers write their own endings to his otherwise terrible books.

**Kelly Euser** is a senior in Chemical and Biochemical Engineering and she has lived in Colorado her entire life. Kelly enjoys working in pastels because of the rich colors they can bring to a piece of artwork. She likes drawings a little on the abstract side because she wants people to see something in a new light or with a different perspective. Art speaks to everyone differently, and you can learn from art just as you can learn from a teacher or a book.

**Caleb Garbus** is a Colorado native studying Geological Engineering who has a passion for capturing the world through a lens. This passion for photography was inspired by his father – a talented photographer whose love of photography extended to the basement, where a dark room was built. When he is not taking photos or classifying rocks, Caleb loves being outdoors and prides himself in taking advantage of Colorado’s outdoor activities. He loves hiking 14ers, traveling, mineral hunting, shooting, fishing, and skiing.

**Logan Gee** grew up just north of Golden in the foothills of the Rockies. Some of his favorite pastimes include tennis, biking, and hiking. Logan will graduate with a BS in Mechanical Engineering in May 2014, one of his long standing dreams. In addition to engineering, he likes to stretch his mind with writing, drawing, and occasionally some sculpting.

Sláinte, **Jesse Glover** here broadcasting from far west of Wackyland. I’ve put some miles on the odometer of life and have come to one conclusion...(dramatic pause)... life is art, we live and breathe it. In every breath our soul’s strikes the anvil of this world setting the blaze anew wreaking havoc upon the monotony of what was once thought. In everything that we do we create and inspire, we emboss upon the world a part of ourselves that influences others. So strive to inspire, be who you are and make it count!

**Deborah Good** is a senior in Engineering Physics at CSM. Though she intends to pursue an academic career in astrophysics, she has always loved the written word. She served in several positions at The Oredigger, including Editor-in-Chief from March 2013 – March 2014, and was in the McBride
Honors Program. It was a McBride course that reintroduced her to the pleasures of creative writing. She is honored to be selected for this year's edition of High Grade!

Laine Greaves-Smith initially attended Webster University while working on a degree in Technical Production for theatre. Looking for more of a challenge, he came to Mines in 2012 to study robotics while still maintaining his interest in the arts. Engineering student by day and artist by night, Laine works with a variety of metals to create furniture, sculptures, and variety of decorative pieces. He strongly believes that art shouldn’t exist only on a wall, in a frame, or behind glass, but should instead be incorporated into the everyday objects around us like furniture and appliances.

Andrew Hemesath is originally from Colorado Springs, Colorado and has lived in Golden since 2010. Simple mathematics would suggest that Andrew is a graduating senior in spring 2014. This however is not the case. After taking some time off and continuing to take time off from school to race bicycles, he has around two years left. Between doing a bit of writing and doing a lot of riding Andrew will get his degree, he’s got a good feeling about this one.

John Kater is an Army ROTC participating, Cross Country running, Poetry loving, singing-songwriting Mechanical Engineering major from the north side of Colorado Springs. Often overwhelmed by his widely ranged and numerous passions, John likes to spend his spare time drinking apple cider and watching rain fall, all the while contemplating what it means to exist.

Colton Kohnke spends the majority of his time split between the Green Center and the swimming pool. As much as he loves snow, after graduation he hopes to move somewhere with a nice beach and warm water. Colton enjoys rocks combined with physics and how the physics relates to the human condition. On slow days, he can be found hiking or catching up on much needed sleep.

Jeff Ladderud is a native of Walla Walla, WA, an alumnus of Washington State University, and a graduate student in hydrology. He is happiest with a camera in his hands, with a song on his lips, or on the summit of a 14er (or some combination thereof).

Drew Lange is a freshman that plans to follow the Mechanical Engineering path. He grew up in Castle Rock, Colorado and recently graduated from Castle View High School. During the last few summers Drew helped run his Father’s tattoo shop and began to branch out into airbrush, spray paint, pinstripe, and graphite pieces. Most recently graffiti has been the major focus in his art work. Thanks to the help of his parents he has been able to get a foot into an engineering school as well as still finding a way to express himself through art work.

Toni Lefton is a poet and writer, teacher, daydreamer, endless optimist, and a cheerleader for the creative arts at CSM.
Martin Levy enjoys delving into Mines to write poetry deep beneath the surface of the Earth. When he’s not putting a pen to paper, Martin is taking a pickaxe to a fresh ore vein, trying to discover the next motherlode. From Norwich, Vermont, future plans include maple syrup farming if the mining industry ever goes belly-up.

Calin Meserschmidt writes poems and a survivor of these Mines.

Cristina Ochoa: I am this year’s music editor for High Grade! I was born in Hermosillo, Mexico and grew up doing art. Prior to coming to Mines I was accepted into Berklee College of Music in Boston as a Guitar major, but my parents said I needed to study something STEM related. So I grudgingly came to Mines looking for anything but STEM and became involved in the music department, of which I am now head technician. After the first two years of struggling in core classes at Mines I began classes for my major, Metallurgical and Materials Engineering, and fell in love. Now I see engineering as a mere extension of my typical media, canvas, and paintbrush with which I use to make art.

Sean O’Neal: Graduated May ‘11, (geological engineering), currently living in Tucson, in early October of 2010, at the King Soopers on South Golden Road I saw you, girl with the silver dove earrings. Your skin was tan, your hair was colored by the sun, and you were wearing a faded purple head band. You had just picked up a head of bok choy. I’ve always wondered what people did with those. I wanted to ask you what you planned on making with it, but then my phone rang, and when I looked up a minute later you were gone…

Edward Pancost, when not being a Mines freshman, can be found taking pictures, hunting, or enjoying fine automobiles. Photography is a way for him to show how he sees America and the wilderness. Edward is a seventh generation Boulder resident, who believes that his home is the only “piece of reality” near Boulder. He regularly wears cowboy boots, drives a truck, and corrects people on the pronunciation of Porsche. It’s “Por-scha”, by the way.

Vincent Pane: I have been carving for 3.5 years. My art is a matter of luck. It is a fruit for you to pluck. There is nothing I mean, or for you to glean. Just take it, I am a shmuck. The lady in the Chair is made of 6 different kinds of naturally colored hardwood: American holly, ebony, tulipwood, thuya burl, canarywood, and bloodwood. It has a total of 17 separate pieces.

Carolyn Pauly is a sophomore in the exploration track of the Geology & Geological Engineering major. She enjoys drawing, paper crafts, music, and other artistic pursuits.

Elizabeth Pettinger was born and raised in Fargo, ND. As of May 2014, she will have a B.S. in Geophysics/Geophysical Engineering from CSM. Elizabeth likes writing poetry and doing other artsy things.
Ginny Premo’s areas of specialty in art are fiction writing, pottery, and metal work. Ginny went to an alternative learning school from pre-school thru high school where she learned to love learning. In middle school she found a passion for pottery; starting with Dover and Porcelain high fire and then finding her true love for Raku. After high school she went to Warren Tech to become an auto technician. After 10 years in the industry she decided to return to school. Originally she started going to RRCC to begin the Mines transfer program to become a mechanical engineer. In the process Ginny found that she really loved geology and chemistry and making things with metal and gems.

Sydney Rajchel: Art is always about the artist and how they see and relate to the world. Welcome to a small part of my mind.

Becky Reeve: I art, and that is my biography.

Shane Rumley is a senior at CSM studying mechanical engineering. He currently lives in Arvada with his wife Deanna and two children Hannah (5) and Colin (4). Before attending CSM, Shane enlisted in the US Army as a Combat Engineer. Shane did one tour in Iraq where he participated in daily missions in the city of Baqubah. In the future, Shane hopes to make enough money to support his family in all its endeavors and be clever enough to “retire” at 50. Ultimately, Shane would like to pursue his passions for humanitarianism and brewing: putting the two of these together would be the clever part of this equation. Writing poetry has been a hobby for Shane in the past. He just started doing it again thanks to the motivation and patience of one of his wonderful teachers. For Shane, poetry has become a way to express himself and retell tails that are emotionally draining. It is through poetry that Shane has found some peace while also giving his version of the truth to whomever might read his selections.

Kyle Schulz is the resident dragon fanatic who loves art and fantasy in all its forms. He just graduated with a Masters of Computer Science and hopes to apply it to the field of multimedia and entertainment.

Ian Stone takes pictures, writes, and edits occasionally.

Elijah Thomas is a senior in the Geophysics program graduating in May 2014. He found a passion for writing fiction after taking the Creative Writing: Fiction course with Toni Lefton. That passion manifested itself in esoteric stories about sentient meteors, magical pet detectives, and mysterious abandoned sewer lawyers. Elijah finds inspiration from authors like Franz Kafka, Kurt Vonnegut, and Chuck Palahniuk. When Elijah’s not writing, he enjoys composing music, spending time with people, and pursuing after love and a life with God. He hopes that after reading his piece, you can feel a little bit better about the gravity of life’s problems that we all encounter—we are never alone, and the end is never the end.
Syania Tifani: A Mines graduate from the class of 2013; born Indonesian with an English-speaking tongue. In her younger years, Syania would compose cheesy song lyrics and express her angst in the form of free verse before diving into a four-year writer’s block. She emerged triumphant upon taking Poetry II in her last semester, writing about deeper issues. Now she’s into fan fiction.

Brandon Tortorelli: I am a Colorado native, born and raised outside of Trinidad, Colorado, where my family has been farming and ranching for decades. I spent much of my time as a child climbing trees, reading, stargazing, and creating contraptions in my father’s salvage yard. In 2010, I graduated co-valedictorian of 24 students from the tiny high school of Hoehne, CO just one day after winning the 2A state championship in the 800 Meter Dash. Being lucky enough to receive the prestigious Boettcher scholarship, I found my way to Colorado School of Mines where I planned to pursue the lavish life of a Biochemical Engineer. After two years of college – including one semester abroad at the University of Canterbury, located under the beautifully clear southern skies of Christchurch, New Zealand – I reevaluated my future and decided to pursue my always-present but only recently-acknowledged passion for the cosmos. I am now pursuing my B.S. in Engineering Physics along with my M.S. in Mechanical Engineering in the hopes to work in the space industry. In my free time, I enjoy rock-climbing, mountaineering, camping, running, reading, writing (poetry and novels), model rocketry, singing, and playing musical instruments with my amazing group of free-spirited friends.

Leo Weiman: I was born and raised in Aurora, CO. My mom did not stand in front of microwaves or get shitfaced while she was pregnant so I popped out miles ahead of the majority of kids from the mild ghetto of Aurora. I was smart so I came to Mines. I like dirt and blowing stuff up so I decided on Mining Engineering. Once I get some dough from telling people where to dig to find the good dirt, I am gonna buy a sweet old Cadillac. I will love and cherish that automobile until the day I die, when my ghost will drive off into the sunset in it while the credits of my life will roll, played to the music of ZZ Top. The End.

Clinton Wilson: I’m a master’s degree student in nuclear engineering. I’m from Helena, Montana. I love running and climbing mountains, and combine the two whenever possible. The kind of poetry I like best looks at something common in a new way, making it profound and beautiful.

I am Pak Chin Yong from Malaysia; currently a sophomore in Petroleum Engineering. I have been in love with photography since 2010 when I first got a Canon DSLR. Landscape and Street Photography are my interests. I would like to meet more friends who share the same hobby.
This year’s music is published and available for download at highgrade.mines.edu

1) “Foolin’ Myself”   Under Two Tables
Recorded & Mixed by Kameron Kincade and Cody Sickler at B&L Studios in Denver, Colorado

2) “The Sprint”   Kyle Tivnan
Recorded & Mixed by Kyle Tivnan in Golden, Colorado

3) “Mines Rap”   Scott Roman and the Conors
Recorded & Mixed by Conor Lenon and Scott Roman in Golden, Colorado

4) “Tough Guy”   Something Cliche
Recorded & Mixed by Dylan Chau at Seasons Studios in Westminster, Colorado

5) “Grenade Gun”   The Ghoulies
Recorded & Mixed by Jared Wright at Regis University KRCX Studio, Denver, Colorado

6) “Winter Improvisation 2”   Derek Hart
Recorded & Mixed by Derek Hart in Highlands Ranch, Colorado

7) “Jalaprang”   Rotund’jere
Recorded & Mixed by Izal, at Escape Music Studio, Bandung, Indonesia

8) “The Bends”   Pandapples
Recorded & Mixed by David Hirsch and Melissa Tran at Mines Studio, Golden, Colorado

9) “Eschatology”   Asphoria
Recorded & Mixed by Riandi Komet, at Komet Studio, Bogor, Indonesia

10) “Into the Fray”   Monroe Sky
Recorded & Mixed by Ryan Langewisch, Cody Sickler, and Paul Soldo at Mines Studio, Golden, Colorado

11) “Hopscotch”   Under Two Tables
Recorded & Mixed by Kameron Kincade and Cody Sickler at B&L Studios in Denver, Colorado
The Ghoulies are a garage punk band from Denver, Colorado. They aim to sucker punch the listener with their blues-infused, rowdy, rock n’ roll sound.

The Ghoulies are…

Young Roberts - Guitar/Vocals
Wild-Eyed Ben Mortenson - Guitar
Sampson “Mellow Jello” Washington - Bass
Ronald Carter, III - Drums

Contrary to popular belief, Scott Roman and the Conors are actually only two people, both of whom can play tambourine. Scott is the lead tambourine player, due to Conor’s lack of experience with the instrument. They also play some other instruments that aren’t as cool as the tambourine. “Mines Rap” was written for the concert in the library Scott and Conor did in the Fall, despite Scott’s protests that a rap song would be a very bad idea.

Kyle J. Tivnan was born in Boulder, CO on September 12, 1990 to John and Kathleen Tivnan and raised in Colorado Springs, CO. He attended Colorado School of Mines from August 2009 until May 2013 where he obtained a Bachelor of Science in Chemical Engineering. He moved to Snyder, TX in July 2013 to work for Kinder Morgan as a Process Engineer at a natural gas processing plant. Kyle has been a musician since the age of 9 playing Tuba in elementary school concert band. He picked up guitar when he was 16. He started recording and producing records when he was 18 and also learned how to play bass guitar and drums. He has been part of several bands that have lasted for brief periods but his passion is improvisational jamming with friends. Recently he took up keyboard and has been refining his vocal work. He hopes to one day release a self-produced original album and to form a band to do a small tour.

Under Two Tables is a Colorado born band inspired by the likes of the Dave Matthews Band, Led Zeppelin, and Frank Sinatra. The group has created their own feel for alternative rock music by introducing a unique blend of many other musical tastes. Band members include Matthew Glazier (vox, sax) Caleb Jacob (drums), Kameron Kincaide (rhythm guitar, vox), Ryan Langewisch (bass, vox), Cody Sickler (lead guitar), and Jonathan Watson (piano).
Asphoria, an Indonesian band which was formed on the 10th of July 2009 in Bogor, consists of Maulana Ibrahim Rau (vocals, bass, acoustic guitar), Achmad Fauzan Alfansuri (vocals, guitar, samples), Aria Andriyadi (keyboards, piano, guitar), and Irfan Taufik Rau (drums, guitar). Formerly composed by Maul, Fanfan, and Aria, Asphoria decided to reform itself by recruiting Irfan, Maul’s brother, in 2013. The band is typically an indie-rock based fragment that does not accentuate a specific feature of music. However, most of the contents present pop-rock/ambient/post-rock - ish sounds. The band has released four albums: Showcase09 (2009), Notes about Life (2011), Eschatology (2012), and Summary 2009-2013 (2013).

Asphoria, which stands for “as = similar” and “euphoria = a feeling of happiness (fun)”, was intentionally formed to have fun and to dispel their stresses over daily routines. Nevertheless, while having fun from blending joyful melodies, they manage to project a sense of community into certain songs which were written to increase awareness of the rising issues around the globe. Enjoying its remarkable music journey, Asphoria is looking forward to nurturing the seeds sown during the past years by producing more masterpieces for the years to come.

https://twitter.com/ASPHORIA
https://www.facebook.com/Asphoria

Rotund’jere is a unique band from Bandung, Indonesia, which mixes the use of modern musical instruments and Indonesian traditional musical instruments. What makes it more unique is that instead of having a singer, it has a dancer who performs traditional Indonesian dance moves. The band which consists of Arief (guitar), Azmi (bass), Irfan (drums), Damar (percussion), Litlit (keyboard), Gitgit (kendang), and Kadek (dancer), was formed for the purpose of preserving the Indonesian culture as it is constantly fading away nowadays. “Jalaprang”, the single written by Rotund’jere was adopted from one of the patterns of the traditional Indonesian clothing called “Batik”. It is one of the most complex patterns of “Batik” that can be made by human beings. Hence, the title represents the song pretty well since it is quite complex and rich of odd time signatures. Hopefully, Rotund’jere would be able to inspire and remind not only the Indonesian people, but also the world’s population as a whole that their own cultures must be preserved.