Archarios is published annually and unveiled in the Spring. The magazine publishes student poetry, short stories, artwork, and design. All work is judged twice during the academic school year by Archarios staff and faculty volunteers. Find Archarios on any of the teal racks located around campus, or feel free to come visit our office in room 204B of the Lib Jackson Student Center.

For information on how to submit please email us at: archclub@g.coastal.edu
TEMPO
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EDITOR’S LETTER

Every Friday, John Barth took a break from writing fiction to sit at his desk and craft fine essays. The culmination of his output would produce a series of books: The Friday Book, Further Fridays, Final Fridays. In a similar, yet vastly different fashion, I have dedicated my Fridays for the past few years to being someone I am not.

But this may be unfair; John Barth was not being someone he was not. Analogously, I would posit that, perhaps, I was not, either.

What I mean is this: Every Friday, I put my books and priorities to the side, to venture out and experience things that, generally, make me feel uncomfortable. That is, nightlife, hypo-social interactions, and all the like — things I’m not necessarily hard-wired for; but still, things I find unendingly interesting. It’s an active method of people watching, but I can’t wholly title it “people-watching”, because I am an active participant. And I enjoy it — I love it. Hence, why I chose “Contemporary Culture” for the theme of my first magazine as editor.

And as editor, I have been lucky. This year’s Tempo staff has been nothing short of amazing, and I thank them ceaselessly for sticking with me through the ins and outs of my hazy explanations and visions for this magazine.

Against the will of a heavy-hand, I will spare you of anymore introduction. As John Barth says: “On with the story”.

[Signature]

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FALL 2013 Volume 16 Issue 1
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Tempo is a student-produced features magazine, offering publishing experience to some of Coastal Carolina's most talented writers and designers.

Opinions expressed throughout the magazine do not necessarily reflect those of Tempo staff. That said: we wholeheartedly support individualism, and in that regard, we do not publish a single word we regret.

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CARA BLUE ADAMS

CARA BLUE ADAMS seems to have seen it all. She was raised in the snows of Vermont; educated at the University of Arizona, where she earned her MFA; and served as editor of The Southern Review, in Louisiana.

Now she is here, at Coastal Carolina University, where she teaches creative writing. Fall 2013 was her first semester, and already, she loves it. Professor Adams discovered her passion for teaching the first time she stepped into the classroom environment at the University of Arizona, where she was amazed by how much her students taught her.

This symbiotic treatment to learning seems effective. Student Brian Nguyen thinks, “Professor Adams is a wonderful addition,” adding that her teaching style is both “unique and creative,” as it “engages her students to learn in an enjoyable fashion.” “She brings fresh ideas to class unlike other professors that I have had before,” Nguyen comments.

Professor Adams believes in order to be a good writer, one must be a good reader. She explains how, through reading, one discovers new ideas and methods to use in their own writings. She enjoys engaging her students in writing activities that help them think in ways they normally wouldn’t, in order to expand their skill set. Her own passion for writing came from reading stories like Donald Barthelme’s The Balloon and Amy Hempel’s “The Harvest.”

Professor Adams’s work has been published in: Mississippi Review, The Sun, Narrative, The Kenyon Review, and Epic, just to name a few. She is currently working on two books: At the Appointed Hour, a collection of short stories, and Removal, a novel — neither of which have a release date set at this time.

With her publications and experience, Cara Blue Adams is a great addition to Coastal Carolina’s English department and a wonderful source of knowledge for aspiring writers.

Fun Fact:
Cara Blue Adams, as a child, was not allowed to watch television. She attributes her love for books to this.

Words by Rachel McFall

CARA BLUE ADAMS’ 5 RECOMMENDED BOOKS

DISGRACE
by JM COETZEE

DRINKING COFFEE ELSEWHERE
by ZZ PACKER

THE BRUTAL LANGUAGE OF LOVE
by ALICIA ERIAN

SAM THE CAT
by MATT KLAM

REASONS TO LIVE
by AMY HEMPEL
**COASTAL CAROLINA’S**

**AQUA LEAGUE**

While most students have hobbies like photography, knitting, scrapbooking or cooking, there are others who like to break away to the deep blue.

*Words by Alexis Belinsky  
Photos by Lauren Aicholtz*

Just this year, two CCU students, Michael Flannery and Tim Carrara, created The Aqua League: a means to assist students in obtaining their Scuba Certifications, as well as an opportunity to join other students on diving opportunities.

“We saw it as a great chance to meet new people and make a lot of diving buddies,” says Flannery, the league’s president.

This year the Aqua League is planning dives off of the South Carolina coast to the Bill Perry and BP-25, which consist of a sunken tugboat, tanker, and New York City subway cars. Additionally, a trip is being planned to Crystal River, Florida for a long weekend of swimming with the manatees. Multiple local dives and another trip are also being worked for the Spring Semester.

Founding The Aqua League has been a long process. Throughout the past year, current members have been busy recruiting freshman at their orientations.

“Starting as a new club has proven to be difficult, as it has taken a lot time to plan what activities we are going to do and how we are going to run the club to make sure it is a success, and that all members are satisfied,” says Flannery. He adds that “[they] have had a lot of help from Andrew and the awesome guys down at Scuba Express, and [they] could not have done it without them.”

Sara Kelly and Matt Shuttleworth, two Divemasters from Coastal Carolina, who also work at Scuba Express, have also provided great help in launching this new club.
Aqua League meetings take place at the William’s Brice Building on Monday nights at 7pm, and many members are willing to carpool on dives. Meetings are a great place to meet fellow divers and new like-minded friends. Throughout this year, Flannery and Carrara hope to establish a bond with members as they host beach, marsh, and reef sweeps. Recently, in a display of camaraderie, they held a cookout, offering free hotdogs, chips, soda, as well as various water-related activities. The club is currently planning their upcoming beach camping trip, which will include kayaking, paddleboarding, cookouts, and Discover Scuba classes.

The members are hopeful the Aqua League will be a long lasting club here at CCU, and are working hard to ensure its success. Each member of the club is a contribution toward the group’s overall success; they all work together every step of the way.

Michael Flannery confirms: “I would not really say one or the other of us is in charge — everything is a team effort.”

For salt-water lovers, regardless of age or expertise, The Aqua League is the ultimate getaway, offering multiple opportunities year-round for students to dip their feet in the water.

---

**SCUBA DIVING CHECKLIST**

1. Diving mask
2. Snorkel
3. Diving fins and booties
4. Diving suit
5. Buoyancy compensator
6. Regulator
7. Pressure gauge

*list provided by scubaportal.net*
IS MULTITASKING REALLY YOUR FRIEND?

On this bright, warm morning, instead of lying by the pool, here I am, sitting at my desk, diligently preparing for a test. Soon, my phone buzzes; it’s a text from a friend. Study more. A notification beeps.
You see, I happen to belong to that 98% of people in their teens and twenties that use Facebook, daily. Naturally, I uploaded some weekend pictures on my page earlier, not forgetting to Instagram a couple of them, as well. The beeps continue.

Sometimes, I just glance at my phone and disregard a message, but sometimes, the technology seduces me and captures my attention for ten to fifteen minutes. Then, I hear an incoming Skype call — a friend from afar. I can’t miss that; we see each other so rarely. After each distraction, it takes me an additional moment to re-concentrate and briefly review what I may have managed to learn. For a moment, I entertain the thought of muting my phone, but then, I tell myself that friends are an important part of my life, and I have to keep in touch. After some time spent in this manner, I get hungry; I get up to grab a snack, adding a third activity to the mix. Determined to finish the chapter, I put my head down. Oh, hold on — an email from a professor.

So, how much do I actually remember from what I was trying to learn? Turns out: disappointingly little.

Maybe, to multitask effectively, I need another pair of hands, and eyes, and a spare head. You may think this prior scene was fabricated, but I find myself in these situations where I wonder, how in the world did it take me so long? — more often than I wish. Ironically, during one of those periods of irresponsible distraction, I came across this post on Facebook:

“Does anyone else get easily distracted while doing homework?”

I’m not the only one struggling! At this point, a question arises: does multitasking really benefit you? I mean, multitasking sounds so wonderful. Isn’t it super cool — to be able to complete two, three, or more things at once? Even little kids in the commercial, realize that faster is better!

So what, exactly, is multitasking? Many argue that the term is a misnomer, and in fact, we are not splitting our attention in two equal streams devoted to different tasks; our brain is simply not wired that way. Instead, we are withdrawing our attention from one matter and directing it to another. After a short glance at a text message or a Facebook post, we transfer our attention back to whatever we were doing, hoping the information we previously focused on is still there. Thus, you can actually call it multi-switching, with a higher degree of accuracy. Besides, are multitasking and taking on a lot of responsibilities the same thing? Again, no. Many students have diverse interests that keep them busy throughout the day: sports, clubs, hobbies, an overload of classes — but those activities are sequential rather than simultaneous, and thus do not divide a person’s attention at a single moment.

Naturally, there are critics and defenders of multi-tasking. But as digital multitasking — jumping from one media to another — is still a new thing, there is not enough research data to reach a single conclusion.

An often-cited Stanford University study goes as far as to claim that multi-tasking, or multi-switching, renders the brain unable to concentrate, even on a single task efficiently. Let alone several activities at once. These investigators deny the human brain has a natural ability to efficiently divide its stream of attention. The small scale of this research, however, makes it unreliable. Another group of researchers from the University of Utah discovered, contrarily, that there are, after all, people who are wired to multi-task; however, a very small number — only 2.5%. The rest of the test subjects performed worse when engaging in more than one activity. Other studies report that people who multitask regularly have shorter attention span and tend to switch activities on their own, even without distractions, about every eleven minutes, thus making a deep, productive concentration nearly impossible. In addition, interrupting one task to suddenly focus on another can be enough to disrupt short-term memory.

The research of David Meyer, professor of psychology at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, shows that multi-taskers lose precious time; as much as 50% of it, as well as accuracy, when switching from one activity to another. Multitasking activities involving critical thinking, such as writing, learning, decision-making, or even talking, are especially error-prone. Now, add a 40% loss in productivity, and ask yourself: isn’t it a lose-lose?

Consider those emails you typed while talking on the phone; remember the amount of errors in them? Plus, don’t kid yourself: the person you were talking to could, clearly, hear your disengaged, if not disinterested tone.

And, of course everybody knows how dangerous it is to multitask while driving. Eating, applying makeup, talking on the phone, texting. Facebooking — they are all distractions. Every year, over 800-thousand fatal motor vehicle accidents worldwide are attributed to attention diversion. Curiously, in a University of Kansas study, 83% of students admitted that they recognize the dangers of texting and driving; 98% reported that they are doing it anyway.

We realize this. Digital technology is hard to resist. It is one of those comfortable wonders of civilization you just don’t know how you ever lived without. You know, however, it is not worth the price you might have to pay for giving it too much attention. If you feel pressured to utilize commuting time with matters other than the commute, listen to audio books or the radio; it is much safer. Speech comprehension, studies say, is the safest way to stay busy on the road.

The topics of multitasking and stress are equally important. Many people feel like the pace of life has accelerated, and they have no time. However, technology is as much a time-gobbler as it is a time-saver, and technological multitasking at work or school — besides the issues of productivity and accuracy mentioned above — often makes people feel like they are frantically jumping from one activity to another. It even increases their heart rate. People work faster, but produce less; that alone is stressful. While engaging in one activity, they keep thinking about the other tasks they left unfinished, and an incomplete task in the back of the mind can suck the energy from a person.

Relationships, both professional and personal, can also deteriorate, due to multitasking. When your body is there and your mind is not, you lack presence; you lose the connection in a relationship. And when we — as in students — permanently attached to our cell phones, reach our workplace, these problems are bound to plague us. Streamlining your routine now can become a cornerstone to a successful and emotionally satisfying career.

So, how can you harness the power of multitasking to boost your productivity? It is crucial to keep in mind that multitasking simply does not fit every person, or every task. In some situations, partial concentration is OK — meaning you can probably combine a phone call with some little household chores, or organizing your office. Similarly, we can do a couple of things at the same time if they are routine. For some people, combining work (or study), and leisure activities has the potential to be effective.

A better approach to this whole dilemma seems to be grouping.

Have a bunch of calls to make? Complete them all in one seating. Email overload? Set a time in the day to answer the whole pile at once. Need to tend to things away from your desk? Do it all in one trip, that way, you have to get in the task-specific mindset only once. If you start something, it is best to finish it, as the mind has difficulty getting back to where it was.

Ultimately, there seems to be no need to multitask. Unless, of course, it feels comfortable and productive for you. We all have different personalities; therefore, it is important to know your personal limits. Tracing your effectiveness with and without multitasking may be a good way to start. Perhaps you could, as an experiment, mute your phone and other devices, and wholeheartedly concentrate on the task at hand. Slowing down to speed up is not entirely a paradox. These moments of concentration help the mind focus, therefore assisting in producing a better end result.

And after you knock out the most important to-dos, you deserve to do what you have been waiting for. You deserve to reply to all your Likes and Facebook messages — maybe even post an update praising your productivity in finishing that research project.

Words by Yulia Yaganova
Imagine this: It’s your first week at CCU, you’re walking across Prince Lawn, and you see an array of tables, chairs, and tents set up everywhere. Along with all of that, the area is buzzing with students and faculty. As you walk around, you notice each table is dedicated to a different organization; each of which wants your membership.

How do you choose?

I mean, Coastal has such a vast amount of clubs and organizations, it’s often difficult to discern what will be best.

Want my advice? Don’t overwhelm yourself. Find something you’re passionate about and will be good at, and settle in, slowly. My mistake was wanting to be so involved that I tried signing up for everything — clearly the wrong way to go. You don’t want to overdo it and fall short in your academics. The organization or club you’ve chosen to be part of should enhance your college experience, not make it a drag.

That said, I’d like to broaden your knowledge of a club I’m particularly fond of. Though I’m not a member of the CCU chapter, I am a member of the large-scale organization, and being a part of it has changed my life.

The mantra: “Kiwanis is a global organization of volunteers dedicated to changing the world, one child and one community at a time.” And I couldn’t agree more.

I first joined Kiwanis in Leesville, Louisiana, roughly a year ago. I joined, initially, because my small town didn’t offer much in the form of entertainment, and as a self-proclaimed busy body, I needed my days filled in order to feel some sort of purpose. I’ve always loved to be involved and help out in the community, and after doing some research into what the area had to offer in the charity department, I stumbled upon the Kiwanis Club of Vernon Parish. Intrigued by their mission statement, I emailed them. A week or so later, I attended a meeting, and was swept away.

The members were from every age group and every walk of life, and all of them were so passionate about their cause. I couldn’t help immediately feeling the same. I felt like a part of their family, even before being initiated. That was my initial reasoning behind joining. About a month after initiation, I went on a trip with the club president and several other members to learn more about the Kiwanis and what they stood for. I only had a rough idea: Kiwanis believed in helping children on both global and local scales, but I didn’t realize how much. At the conference however, I learned about the global project that Kiwanis had taken on.

The project is known as the “Eliminate Project.” Joining hands with UNICEF, the overall purpose is to rid the world of Maternal and Neonatal Tetanus, a preventable disease that third-world countries lack the resources to fight. Each year, the disease claims over 60,000 human lives — mostly women and children. I encountered mothers who couldn’t hold their own child; the child in so much pain, that a single touch was too much to handle. My heart was broken, knowing that such a disease, one that is 100% preventable, is still plaguing so many people in our world. But because of these two amazing charitable organizations, much has already been accomplished in eliminating the disease completely.

Imagine a world with one less disease to worry about. That’s the kind of world Kiwanis wants for people, and they’ve already dedicated so much effort to the cause.

Passion, dedication, love: these are a few of the many reasons I’ve stayed so long. I’ve had the opportunity to help schools, put together fundraisers for the Eliminate Project, and more. It’s a great feeling to be involved with a group of people who want to do so much good in the world. With so much bad news today, it’s great to have a little good to spread around.

Words by Denielle Griffin
Photo by UNICEF Sierra Leone/2011/Thomas
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THE STRANGELY ENDEARING CULT OF

CHIVE
As a content agoraphobic, the prospect of a Chive Meetup was not altogether enticing. First, I needed an explanation of Chive; Pat Siebel, Editor-in-Chief of this magazine, and inviter of the Charlotte Chive Meetup, laid out the site’s more exciting features. A few of the site’s main pages (in no particular order) are titled: VIDEO, FUNNY, RANDOMNESS, DATING, and GIRLS.

My initial interaction with the site was rather lackluster; I clicked around, looked at some selfies, watched some “Fail” videos, and eventually found my way to the STORE page. I don’t want to sound like an old curmudgeon in this essay; that said, my interests parallel closely with those of a hermit, so, from the invitation, there was a level of inevitability in my resistance to enjoying the Meetup. I don’t necessarily like this about myself, but c’est la vie.

All of that being said, the Chive Store is what’s up.

I’ve been privy to a certain experience in life more than a few times. This experience, in essence, is my ignorance to a cultural phenomenon, and upon my introduction to the phenomenon, I can’t stop noticing it all around me. The easiest example of this (though I imagine I am not unique in this experience) is the way I learned of the music festival, Lollapalooza. I heard the word in conversation at the dinner table because my dad was going to attend in a few weeks; and upon hearing the word, unique as it is, it started to stick out in other places. Suddenly, I heard the word “Chocopalooza,” and was startled by it; later, watching the movie Old School, the concept of Mitch-A-Palooza was introduced. These references only had impact on me after I’d become cognizant of the original event. What I’m getting at here is that the ubiquitous nature of Chive references only became clear to me after I’d learned what “KCCO” meant.

You’ve seen these emblems, I’m sure. Green T-shirts with the “Keep Calm and Chive On” mantra; black shirts that sport Bill Murray in 3D glasses; “KCCO” graffitied in bathroom stalls (true); all these things became clear to me after Pat’s introduction. However, despite these realizations, I was still peripheral in my Chive interest. That is to say, I was interested in it because I was to attend a “convention” for the website in a matter of weeks, and needed to familiarize myself with, at least, the basics of the site. What I came to understand about the site is it’s eclectic nature, and, in turn, the duality of that eclecticism.

The site itself was first introduced in 2007 and quickly gained attention for publishing “embellished” (some would say fake) news stories that were then taken by major media sources and reported as true. One such hoax is known as the “Teen Texting Disaster,” performed by the site in 2008, in which a young woman was said to have sent a text to her father (accidentally, of course) detailing the virginity she had just lost on a beach. National news sources like Huffington Post, The Today Show, and many others ran the story after Chive’s publication, obviously, without bothering to check the facts themselves. And this was exactly Chive’s reason for running the story in the first place: Bringing to light the fact that news being reported in America is not entirely dependent on things like facts, or reality.

Chive quickly digressed, became, again, a “Photo Blog”, and assured their audience they wouldn’t stage any more news hoaxes in the future, bringing us to the Chive of present day, and this dichotomy of eclecticism. The eclecticism is easy to see; the site, itself, is liable to have photo albums with subjects ranging from beautiful women to pictures of people riding the backs of sharks; or from photos of luxuriant landscapes to photos of people with
various pop culture figures shaved into their hair — Bob Marley seems to be popular. Chive doesn’t have a particular focus; it’s interested in captivating people and entertaining them with photos. If there is one unifying theme at Chive, it is beautiful women posting scantily-clad selfies for Chivers everywhere to gawk at. Admittedly, I had anticipated (hoped, even) that these women would make up the majority of the Meetup audience. I should clarify: I was optimistic about the possibility of females outnumbering males at this Meetup — which was being held between a bar called Tilt on Trade and an adjoined Hooters — but I was acutely aware of the inherent characteristic in males to anticipate such possibilities, and then, stampede these settings, thus turning the ratio on it’s head. And this (a stampede of males descending on Trade St. in Charlotte) is precisely what Pat and I took part in.

We arrived in Charlotte around six p.m. — a good two hours before Tilt on Trade was opening their doors. After parking in a garage adjacent the bar, we had a few slices of pizza, then stationed ourselves in a Starbucks to discuss what we were about to see. Pat, agreeing with my “male-stamped” theory, noted that, at the last few Meetups in other cities, there had been (from what he could discern through photos) a ratio with plentiful female support, and minimal male attendance. It felt encouraging, but, as is my wont, I shrugged away his optimism and perpetuated my prospective gloom. I have to give it to Pat, here; in spite of my apprehension and all around shit attitude most of the time, he continues to invite me to do cool things. I felt like that was worth noting. (Editors note: I feel this is worth noting, as well.)

I’ll skip our pretentious (the majority of which came from my end) dialogue about the kinds of people we expected to see at the Meetup. The time came to make our way back to the bar and get down to whatever was going to be gotten down to. I still wasn’t sure what we were going to be doing; I planned on drinking a lot of beers. There was a slight line assembled in front of the two venues, so Pat and I took the opportunity to post up on a bench outside the bar and either confirm or deny our predictions. For the most part, these predictions were denied; the majority of people who merged into the line looked like us, which was disheartening. The irony was not lost on either of us. The outfit-of-choice appeared to be
A couple in their 50’s had brought two horse-head masks to the Meetup, and had been an attraction secondary only to the dunk tank.

— a literal gathering of people who visit the same website — and that I was, whether I wanted to admit it or not, peripheral in my enjoyment of Chive, I started treating the Meetup as what it begs to be treated as: a life experience.

In essence, Chive is a celebration of life. All aspects. Community; Nature; Food; Sex. Life is represented, unfiltered, on Chive, and the Meetup, I think, looks to capitalize on this unfiltered reality. The patrons of a Chive Meetup are the ones to blame if they don’t have a good time, and this is a beautiful opportunity.

Two in the morning, the final song had been played, and most everyone had filed into the hot night. Before leaving. Pat and I took advantage of an opportunity that presented itself to us. A couple in their 50’s had brought two horse-head masks to the Meetup, and had been an attraction secondary only to the dunk tank. The man holding the masks was dressed in all black. Black jeans; black t-shirt; black beanie; white handlebar mustache.

“Mind if we get a picture with the horses?” I asked him. Of course he didn’t mind; he snapped a picture of us, and asked if we wanted him to take another one.

Words by Owen Macleod
Photos by Tori Jordan
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n establishing some sort of pathos in an economical argument — especially this one — it’s far too simple getting wrapped up in truisms such as “times change”, or other-handedly, taking sub-sophomoric routes through surface-scrapping Marxism. Both routes, ultimately, tend to leave people either completely overwhelmed, or the equally awful: complacent, and therefore unaffected. It’s frighteningly difficult to establish a good reason why anybody should bypass the market’s best prices of anything — let alone something as costly as airfare.

It’s no small secret that Spirit Airlines is the leader in low-fare air carriers. This business model seemed a genius and unrivaled response to the recession — one that has been mimicked, but not duplicated; one that warmly invites the American pejorative: cheap. A recent article in The Los Angeles Times spotlighting Ben Baldanza, Spirit CEO, was quick to explain “[C]heap is not an insult. It’s a business philosophy championed by … Baldanza.”

But this particular cheap isn’t exclusive to ticket prices: it’s a one-word mantra reverberating company-wide. “We don’t over-spend,” Baldanza explains as he is interviewed.

Then we are provided with a scene — something human, something rare for a chief executive: it seems at the moment the interview is being conducted, it is suddenly urgent for Baldanza to furnish his personal vacuum cleaner from the closet. He boasts that overspending on superfluous such as maintenance is not “part of [Spirit’s] culture”, as he goes about tidying up his office. Other Spirit Airlines Corporate employees follow Baldanza’s lead by cleaning their own personal spaces as well.

I must momentarily digress.

I’d like, for a moment, to revisit the word cheap, and perhaps, attempt a validation of something I almost feel silly for asking — but who, at what point, decided traveling “the cheap airline” was a good idea, anyways?

I’ve never bungee jumped — I’ve always wanted to — but I remember it being a thing to poke fun at the discount jump advertisements. Like: Hey, what do you say we do the $19.99 BOGO bungee deal? (This is accompanied by either laughter or a conspicuously sarcastic tone.) Personally — and this is just me — I’d prefer not to take the discount jump hundreds of feet above, you know — the ground. One could imagine the discount bungee cords and discount harnesses these attractions supply. It being so cheap and therefore financially accessible — how much tension has been endured by the bungee over time? and at what lengths do they take to insure our safety under a budget provided by budget jumpers? Somewhere, something is skipped over in order to provide low prices; this just seems terribly obvious. So why do we conveniently forget this while searching for an airline (it seems important to note that Spirit Airlines, in order to squeeze the most juice from the lemon, operates their aircraft on an average of thirteen hours per twenty-four hour shift — the industry standard being some four hours less)? It’s rhetorical; you tell me. I refuse to provide a chart displaying the risk differential from bungee to aircraft. If you need figures, it’s somewhere in the range of 30,000 feet.

But there is a less-obvious problem with the Spirit Airlines business model.

Let’s revisit Baldanza: “Don’t buy our low fare and complain that we don’t have legroom,” he tells us. But he hasn’t realized what he has done here. The terse one-sidedness to this logical sophism trickles down throughout the company. On a large and generalized scale, it is very much the Leader/Follower type situation. The employee’s sympathetic sense is pointed inward, as his or her service begins to cater exclusively to his or her own needs, i.e.: having a job. It quickly becomes working for the sake of working. A lack of compassion renders workers useless, and should come as no secret, as the airline is ranked dead last for customer service.

This epidemic of bad service calls for more investigation, though. It’s simple to point fingers at Baldanza, to say that his particular brand of brashness is contagious — this, as I stated, is a generalization. However, generalizations tend to skip over or ignore the real fundamental problem(s) at hand.

We do more with less: this, theoretically, is the core of any budget-business model (it is also a business model that has taken on proponents in the recession, and proven to be fruitful and cost-efficient). For a customer, the bells and whistles have all been wiped and the customer service is often — the following is charitable — disagreeable. For the disagreeable servicers, the demands of their jobs have risen significantly to account for furloughed heads and consolidated jobs (see: Baldanza’s vacuum). Also, deserving to be noted is the — the following is charitable — disagreeable pay: It’s no small secret this sort of viral disagreement can/will has lead to some serious tension, but the real virus — this bigger problem I mentioned — is the contagion of the whole affair.

As in: when does post-industrial America lose its service sector?

The most relevant entry in the Oxford English dictionary defines “service” as: the act of helping or doing work for someone; “help”, itself defined as: [10] make it easier for (someone) to do something by offering one’s services or resources; but rarely have I caught wind of an interaction with Spirit Airlines described as being easy.

In this sense, is Spirit operating only on an incessant level — its own benefit being the only benefit in its peripherals?

We shouldn’t complain, says Baldanza.

“When people are complaining about the structure of the business model,” he explains, “to me that is akin to someone walking into Chik-Fil-A and screaming ‘Why don’t you sell hamburgers?’” I don’t find it necessary to point out the flaws in this argument, but nobody is approaching their counters wanting anything they don’t offer.

On the outside, Spirit appears both amiable and fun. Their website often welcomes you with some pop-cultural reference — I’ve seen cartoons of Tiger Woods in a crashed SUV, a multitude of suggestive Anthony Weiner references, etc. cetera. Their “cheap fares” are boasted of in bright colors. I got an email once detailing their MILL (Many Islands Low Fares) Sale. It’s strangely misleading and curiously ironic that you can giggle while buying tickets and whimper at boarding time when you are turned away because you carried an extra bag for your medicine.

Baldanza seems to have a penchant for contradictory ideological agendas. I mean: he seems incapable of remaining devout to his thrifism re: himself. He speaks of his adoration for the McDonalds business model. When he adds that he doesn’t eat their food, though, I could only wonder if he would fly Spirit planes — for vacation purposes — or if he prefers his aircraft like he prefers his restaurants: sit-down (have you seen Spirit leg-room?) and made-to-order.

Some things, however, are much clearer.

Take this picture for example, if you are a picture person, like myself. Picture Ben Baldanza in 2012 driving his BMW down the road with his base salary of some $470,000 buckled into the passenger seat and his bonus (it should be noted that bonuses are often incentive for a spendthrift year) of $2,500,000 strewn across the back. When I picture Ben Baldanza though, I like to picture him with his vacuum in his trunk; because God forbid a break-in at Spirit HQ where some tidy bandit sneaks off with Baldanza’s vacuum cleaner, forcing him to purchase a new one, or worse: hire a janitor.

Words by Pat Siebel
THE HEROES REVIVAL

Why College Students Worldwide Are Suddenly Flocking to the Side of Superheroes
With the stress of change, the pressure to succeed, and the uncertainty of today’s world, college students, worldwide, find themselves suddenly flocking to the fantasy of idealistic heroes.

It seems like only a decade or so ago that an obsession of comics and the like was cause for ridicule and mockery, but this seemed to fade with the 2000 release of X-Men. Since then, there has been a shift: the die-hard comic books fans are no longer lingering around dimly lit rooms — the notion of superheroes has become a worldwide cultural phenomenon. And this isn’t just hipsters ironically watching classic Batman shows; people of all different backgrounds, all different social circles, are flocking to midnight premiers and early morning matinees. It seems strangely common for anybody to dedicate his or her Friday night to a tub of popcorn and a new superhero flick on the silver screen.

What exactly caused this drastic change from underground geek culture to mainstream?

Perhaps, people feel that whole “great power coming with great responsibility” thing, and they just need a little direction and encouragement. Every college student undergoes drastic life changes in their first few months away from their nest, and the thought of someone the same age overcoming significantly larger odds can create a sense of solace in anyone’s day-to-day life. Maybe others are striving to be something “more than just man,” and need that extra push. No student pursuing higher education has a goal of failure, but the challenges that come along with attempting to make something out of yourself can be overwhelming. The simple thought of someone, or something, greater can be comforting. Still, in these times, people may just be searching for inspiration and comfort in knowing “anyone can be the Batman.”

Every college freshman experiences that first few months of living out on his or her own, where they’re given, just about, absolute freedom, and the power to make their own choices. Should I go out tonight, or stay in and study for my organic chemistry exam? These types of questions are abundant in the student’s head, and the day Welcome Week closes, everyone is left to decide how to delegate their time and how to answer all these questions, all by themselves. This brings upon the risk of underestimating responsibilities. Students who are new to this type of self-delegation and freedom may look toward superhero characters like Spider-Man for guidance. While this may seem silly, the subconscious mind works in these silly types of ways. The teenage web-slinger explains that when you have the ability to do great things, no matter how miniscule they may appear to the rest of the world, you have a responsibility to do them. The message here is profound, and while it may seem laughable to some, solely based on its origins, this person (who laughs) is missing one of the most important lessons college, likely, will never teach him or her.

As students move further into their college career, they are forced to start thinking about their future, and enrollment in college is evident enough that one’s desire is some sort of success. Only, this doesn’t simply mean one should find a job and acclimate themselves to a post-grad life, making money and doing what people with money do. Some may say this is enough, but at some point, it seems most college students are pursuing something grander and more memorable. This may be writing the next great American novel, or receiving the Nobel Prize in Theoretical Physics — the idea here is to be set apart from the rest. The diploma should be like an “S” on your chest as you seek a challenging rewarding career. This is where upperclassmen take a cue from the Man of Steel, and the concept of becoming more than man. In today’s dawn of endlessly shaping innovation, students are striving to make that unparalleled mark on the human race and be remembered forever.

Tackling a mission of that magnitude is enough to drive any student mad, but the encouragement of unrecognized power in characters like Superman can be just the push students need to press forward.

Taking that step into late-junior, or senior year, students start to take a closer look at the world around them: life seems to spill from the little college campus you have called home for years into a much wider, weirder, and more daunting world. There is no lie big enough to cover the uncertainties of any given day. Between wars, economic crisis, shaky political relations, nationwide ethical disagreements, etc., students preparing to embark into life outside of the cozy campus are terrified. They are looking for encouragement in any way possible — many times taking to less honorable routes as a means of escapism. It is here where the concept of the superhero transcends the notion of an actual superhero: you don’t have to be part of a radioactive accident, or be a child from some powerful alien planet to save the world; you just have to be a human willing to change things.

The common lives of modern college students have changed over the past fifteen years, and this can be seen, simply, by looking into the reason behind cultural shifts. The pressures that come along with being out on your own for the first time can drive anyone crazy without the understanding of power and freedom vs. responsibility. Trying to get out into the world and make something of yourself, something memorable, can, and will, seem impossible if you don’t believe that you can be more than just any man. The world all around us can appear impossibly difficult if we lose sight of the idea that everyone, anyone, can be a hero. Superheroes are no longer just for the quiet, nerdy, or geeky kids. Truth is, everyone, no matter his or her social status, intelligence, appeal, or strength, can use, and can be, a hero.

In a time where you cannot even flip a television on, or scroll through your Facebook feed without a bombardment of bad news, the idea that any moral goodness is something super; and that any agent of goodness is, in some sense, a hero, is an idea worth pursuing.

Words by Alexander Mosier
I recently watched an interview of Kendrick Lamar and was thrilled with what I saw. He didn’t fit the mold of your typical rap artists; he’s kind of blue-collar and mild-mannered.
He dressed relatively normal: hoody, jeans, Tims. He’s one of the only rappers whose birth name is his rap name – first and middle. At some point he went by KDot, and he still might for some, but the fact that he reverted back to what he knows best is commendable; it shows he understands the value of authenticity. It’s like he’s saying the music is a direct reflection of him, which should be the ultimate goal for any artist.

I was most impressed with the creative process that goes into his music, and the artistic mentality he presents. At one point he says, “an artist is somebody who can actually create and structure things and have a mental note on what type of colors are drawn from the song, while writing it.” This perception is far different than what mainstream rap offers (when I say mainstream, I’m referring to a certain style or energy that the public is familiar with. As far the term public, I am referring to the younger generations: ages 12 to 25. Most likely there are older and younger ages that listen to mainstream rap and are affected, but the spectrum that I have presented are most influenced).

Mainstream rap, to me, is energy music, glamorizing a way of life that the majority of its listeners are unfamiliar with. There are two sides to this lifestyle that popular rappers depict: the struggle they endure before reaching stardom, and that of the present—giving the listener an inside look as to what it’s like to be rich and famous, highlighting a mentality that one person can be better than another because they have more: more money, more women, more things. More.

After listening to the interview, I analyzed Lamar’s most popular song, “Swimming Pools.” I’d heard the song numerous times, typically from the radio, or the bar, or a friend’s house — always in environments where alcohol was the focus.

The song itself is perceived as a drinking song. That was my perception and the perception of the people around me. By what Lamar states in the chorus and the hook, I could make the argument that the song promotes binge drinking. But, by simply listening to the lyrics and paying attention to the song as a whole, I began to understand that Lamar was hitting on something different.

The song begins with the hook. A deep, computerized voice speaks over a drum clap and an ominous instrument that’s difficult to describe. The deep voice says “Po’ up,” then, a different voice, one that is high-pitched immediately follows telling us to “Drank.” The two voices go back and forth, and establish a dark repetition that illustrates, in its simplest form, the routine for getting wasted. This repetition gives us the impression that the song is simple. We automatically think this because simplicity is an element of mainstream rap. I could list hundreds of examples of simplistic songs, but I suggest listening to the radio for your own firsthand look.

In the first verse, he mentions his Granddad’s addiction to alcohol: “Granddaddy had the golden flask/Backstroke every day Chicago,” and then three reasons why people pick up drinking. He states that his own motivation to drink was to fit in with the popular. We see elements of peer pressure and a long-standing history of alcoholism. There is something to consider here.

When the beat speeds up, Lamar reinforces the darkness of the song, placing himself in an isolated setting, rapping his stream-of-conscious: “I was in a dark room/Loud tunes/Looking to make a vow soon/That Ima get fucked up.”

Here, he enters a fantasy. He is at a party, noticing a routine: like a record on repeat. A stranger then approaches him, and the chorus begins. The stranger calls Lamar out for drinking too little, and for drinking too slow: “Nigga why you babysittin’, only 2 or 3 shots.” The stranger tells Kendrick he is going to show him how to turn it up a notch, which brings us to the metaphor and the title of the song. The stranger tells Kendrick one thing: he needs to get a swimming pool full of liquor and dive in it. This is a momentous visual — a perfect symbol for excess and an alcoholic’s morbid fantasy. The chorus discreetly switches from 3rd person to 1st person, allowing KL to visualize himself jumping into the pool full of liquor. He even expands by envisioning himself waving bottles, while watching women dive in behind him. What has happened is this: the stranger’s idea of having fun, or “turning up”, has now etched itself inside Lamar’s head, leading him to fantasize about a pool full of liquor, and the women who want to jump in that pool.

This is what mainstream rap does. It fills our heads with outrageous glamour that we cling to, and try to emulate, but are unable to. We can emulate these rappers on a smaller scale through getting drunk and banging girls, but we’re never satisfied, because we are constantly in search for opportunities that will bring us closer to the lifestyle we hear in rap. Two years back I was introduced to the song “No Sleep” by Wiz Khalifa, and fell in love with the feeling it generated. It was one of the many songs I listened to that led me to fantasize, giving me a false sense of who I was as a person. I would picture myself raging, submerged in a crowd of my friends, jumping around and smiling, girls dressed promiscuously, holding bottles of what knows what, myself and those promiscuous women doing whatever my sick mind had to offer.

And that’s really all it is. Putting yourself in their shoes, doing the baller things they do. It’s a trick because I don’t have the means to buy out a penthouse, or provide weed and booze for tons of people, yet the idea calls on cravings to get fucked up, and to find babes, and live the way Wiz lives: not sleeping, binge drinking, smoking pounds of Cali Kush, and getting laid. Wiz doesn’t explain the consequences that follow these actions, and highlights only the positive. He doesn’t say anything about hangovers, or STDs, or debt. Wiz is not concerned with how the listeners are influenced by his music, but how his music can sell. Now the question I have is: should we blame him?

The truth is most rappers don’t come from money. For the majority, their upbringings are unpleasant, to say the least. And sometimes, the only way out is through music. So they have to know the market. What music sells? The radio is evidence. So are bars and clubs. What do the kids want to hear?

Lamar grew up in Compton, California, and comes from similar circumstances, where gang violence, addiction, poverty, and the underlying misery of inner cities are experienced on a daily basis. What separates him, though, is his mentality and empathy. Compton made Kendrick Lamar, especially as an artist. The city flows inside him, but he has grown.
Intelectually throughout his rise to fame. His music and interviews express an introspective man. He has a rare ability to analyze the past, understand how he was then, and how he has changed, giving him the opportunity to maneuver through different moments of his life in order to present his revelations to the public. That’s a lot to handle at once. It takes a heightened awareness toward what you are saying and whom you are saying it to. In his interview, Lamar said once he knew his music wasn’t just for him, that’s when everything changed.

Only after analyzing “Swimming Pools” did I begin to notice people’s misinterpretations. One of my friends, Ray, who actually introduced me to Kendrick Lamar, became confused when I denied a shot of whiskey from him. I remember him looking at me saying, “you like the song ‘Swimming Pools’. You gotta take a shot.” And it took me a second to realize that it wasn’t too long ago where that made sense. But after listening to it thirty or more times, I knew that wasn’t the case. I still took the shot, but not because I liked the song “Swimming Pools.” I took it because everyone else did too.

I tried explaining my findings to Ray and the other people present, but it seemed like no one wanted to hear it. Maybe the timing wasn’t right. People tend to be stubborn when it comes to letting go of one perception in order to accept a new one. My opinion was that Ray didn’t want a new way of looking at the song. One possible reason being that he viewed “Swimming Pools” in his own way for so long, that he was incapable of changing; another being that the majority of people share the same perception as him, and changing would not only be uncool, but also a reminder that the majority was wrong to begin with.

In an almost identical setting, only different people this time, “Swimming Pools” randomly came on at a party. Again, I couldn’t help myself. I saw people singing and dancing. Guys were bobbing their heads, girls were moving their hips, and when the chorus kicked in, everybody sang. Each time it came around, they sang, most times putting emphasis on the line turn it up a notch. I observed, alone, from a love seat that was placed in front of a beer pong table. When the song was over, I asked the question to the entire room: what is that song about? One of the owners of the house yelled: “It’s about drinking.” The one person there I knew looked at me strange, wondering why I would ask such a thing. Again I tried to explain that the song isn’t promoting drinking, but doing the opposite, and again no one wanted to listen, which I can’t blame them.

Shortly after, I started to wonder what it is that Lamar does to create a song such as “Swimming Pools,” and have the purpose fly over our heads. Is it possible Lamar designed “Swimming Pools” in a way that infiltrates the bubble of mainstream rap, while also criticizing it at the same time? I find it strange that we binge drink to a song that depicts binge drinking negatively. I find it unsettling that we demonstrate the repetition Lamar demonstrates. While we listen, we are active within the routine presented in the song. Sometimes I think he might be mocking us, or at least the people that strive for those lifestyles.

It’s uncertain to me what Lamar’s intentions truly are, but it’s his ability to satirically portray his generation’s mentality that listeners have trouble grasping. These reasons stem from his creative process, which involves time and grind. They come from how he sells himself. In the interview, he voiced concern about over saturating his music, meaning he wants to be in demand at all times. It shows that the quick buck is too simple for him. He wants longevity within the rap world, for people to remember his music after he is gone. That’s one of the few certainties. Now I ask: what does Kendrick Lamar’s music say about us? Have we become programmed to overlook substance in music because much of mainstream rap lacks it? Has mainstream rap corrupted our ability to conceptualize anything anymore? I don’t think we’re oblivious. I just think we can be.

Words by Jake Hibbard
Photos by Flickr user EWatson92
ARMADILLOS AND GASOLINE, DEFICIENCIES AND INCOMPLETENESS

We depart, westward.

If we had an itinerary, it would have looked something like: A Shitload Of Time In South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas. It would have said we would drive there in one straight shot, stopping only for armadillos and gasoline. It may have told us that it is not uncommon among southern interstates to not see a gas station for a hundred miles. But we are not as smart as some — certainly not proactive enough to preplan anything, and along the way we are still planning exactly what to do on our arrival.
“Jesus Christ, there is so much to write about,” Owen says to me, “and we’re supposed to focus on just what exactly?”

The vast breadth that is our reason for driving twenty-something odd hours is “Contemporary Culture;” the real reason we are driving such lengths is David Foster Wallace, and more precisely, the David Foster Wallace archives in Austin, Texas.

“I’m still thinking,” I tell him, “I’m thinking about studying the liner notes on his manuscripts.”

“It’s just a wide topic — culture,” Owen says, “really wide.” And I agree with him. It would be wonderfully liberating to walk into the archives under no confines — explore as we wish. I’d submit, however, that our boyish curiosities likely wouldn’t have met university standards, nor those of the archive at University of Texas (who had turned down Owen’s prior requests to visit). Fact was, however, behind whatever research we were to accomplish, there was a certain degree of pretense. It was no small secret, at least between the two of us, that we were going to spend a lot of time reading his unpublished work. That, and just, you know, absorbing the manuscripts. Taking them in on a purely sensory level.

And so that is what we had. We both knew we would have to write, and write a lot, but our indecision was stubborn. I threw on a Robert Johnson CD; I guess to prime my thought toward lost prodigious talents, and took notes on my phone: bayous; asshole drivers (maintain good relations with those driving around you, karma only exists on the interstate); beginning of essay should parallel beginning of Infinite Jest; despite whatever lengths we have already traveled, I have yet to see a tumbleweed, a cactus, or, really, anything significantly noteworthy — is southern America just a story?

Robert Johnson: landmark “Delta Blues” musician. Prodigious Bluesman. The bluesman. Sold his soul to the devil at the crossroads, and for good reason, too. It’s easy to understand the story and its believability, just listen to the records — quite simply, there seems to be no other option. And so, we’re burning rubber against the southeast, cruising a needle’s width below speeds well deserving of imprisonment, listening to Johnson’s “Crossroads Blues.” Dusk has fallen over the south, and we are lost in a lapse of conversation, the only noise being that of Johnson’s old Gibson L-1, and the dark strain of his voice.

One of us, we still playfully debate who, finally suggested the trip.

“We need to go to the crossroads.” Something along those lines.

I still think it was me; he thinks otherwise. The details are chillingly vague and unclear. I keyed the town’s name into the GPS, ETA: 11:40PM. Midnight at the crossroads is the time to strike a deal. It all seemed to align perfectly, to me.

Then came Owen and logistics: “Well, we have X amount of dollars to last us however many days we’re going to be here. Y has already gone into the tank.”

I realize he is right, that there is no way our funding could cover that kind of detour, and if the devil is a no-show, then, well, I’m out an opportunity to barter my soul for gas money, though I sensed gas money had nothing to do with Owen’s own personal reasons for wanting a deal. All joking aside, it surely wasn’t mine.

Keying Austin back into the GPS, we continued on, trading stories we had heard about Johnson, the devil, and whatever seemed loosely relevant. I told him a story my father had told me, about how he truly believed he witnessed the devil play music at a gas station somewhere when he was touring in a band. I hadn’t seen my father since I was four, and he was never — from what my family has told me — prone to honesty, but the story always resonated. He, on his account, had stopped to get gas; I remember the proceeding
descriptions with scrupulous clarity, them being the first, strangest, and only story I can recall him ever sharing with me. Two men were sitting on a large stone out front of a closed down gas station. One was irresistibly beautiful; the other, hideously deformed, stunted in growth. The story assumes a sort of cliché as the tall, slender man, pale in complexion, eyes an otherworldly shade of blue, begins to run his bow across a fiddle. My father told me how the other man (though I remember he referred to him not as a man, but as something else) clapped his hands to keep rhythm. The fiddle stopped my father’s heart, he said he lost himself, and only after the man’s inquiry: “Was that good for you?”, did he seem to resume his place in his own skin. The rest of the story is caught in a nebula of years, retelling the story to myself, both trying to remember, and inventing new endings. I don’t recall what happened after; I don’t recall how my father came to the conclusion of either man being anything inhuman, but he was positive, and no personality withheld, I have trouble denying that kind of unwavering positivity.

Too many hours can pass on the road, unaccounted for; it feels deceitful, being betrayed by memory in that regard. We talk, of course, about our writing: our writing about writing. We talk about David Foster Wallace. We reach specifics regarding our trip’s aim, and what we wish to accomplish. These plans are wildly interesting to me, but my mind, as it tends to
operate on whims and shotgun interests, is caught in other tangles. The devil is on my mind, and I want to strike up a deal.

We pull off at some lonely exit, the only one we’d remembered seeing in far too long, intending to relieve ourselves; it takes no modest amount of coffee to successfully drive halfway across the country. There is an old gas station down the road; it seems like a decent place to hide our units from population: 0. Owen wastes no time, unzipping right as he steps out of the car. I walk around the backside, pull my pants down, and I scream.

I yell to Owen, telling him in no finite amount of obscenities to hurry back here.

Back here: we are both stepping on, and surrounded by, a severely uncomfortable number of red, legless lizards. Anything snakelike and I tend to lose it. The old brick backside of the store is slithering in every direction; I realize I’m still holding onto my penis. I don’t realize until Owen recaps the moment later, but I’m jumping up and down, alternating legs at such rapidity that it seems I never touch ground. The scene still strikes me as humorous, and I wish I could have been Owen in that moment — for his collected sense of composure, and his visual of me I’ll never have. Mostly, however, I wanted Owen’s eyes as he looked behind me, past the cornfields in the background, as he told me we had to leave. Like, now.

“There is a man in that field, walking towards us,” he says.

I’m in a petty state of panic, already, and I don’t need his confirmation that we need to leave. I didn’t need a man to be approaching me, be it the devil himself, or a phallocentric farmer, looking to get a solid peek at a college boy, to hightail back to Owen’s car. I didn’t look back; I didn’t need to see the man. Perhaps, I’m even glad I didn’t see the man. I’m not saying it was anything; then again, I’m not saying it wasn’t anything. Likely, it was someone who didn’t like the looks of whatever we were doing. It’s something to tell, however: a story, despite its deficiencies and incompleteness — and a story, regardless of its inherent truths or untruths, is no dismissible matter.

Back home, after two full days of driving, three days of careful eye-straining research in Austin, and hours upon hours of sitting in my office chair, contemplating where to start regarding this whole thing about David Foster Wallace and culture, I opened up a document on my computer and began to write. What I wrote was exactly what I expected, which is to say that every word stung me with its own individual triteness. These universal concerns: suicide, depression, culture — they are difficult to discuss without assuming those paternal platitudes that nobody, including myself, wants to hear. I surely wouldn’t want to be the person writing it. I thumb through essay books for some sort of formula; it’s a true call for help. How does one do this sort of thing? I poured myself a glass of whiskey and dropped down to me knees in the middle of my office, alone, saying, “Please Devil, if there is a devil, give me something to say here.”

Words by Pat Siebel
I’m going to ask that you do something that has potential to make you uncomfortable, but follow me. Consider suicide as a choice; one reached after significant contemplation. From the outside, suicide is a “last resort” for a person who is struggling indescribably with the banal occurrences that make up the majority of life; but what if suicide wasn’t considered a “cutting-off” of future years, but rather, a decision made consciously by a person who does not want to live anymore. This argument requires its contemplator to be conscious of depression as a chemical imbalance, leaving the victim of its symptoms helplessly persuaded by a brain that does not hold its own best interest in high-regard.

The depressed mind has a way of rationalizing things the “normal” mind finds objectionable; and when suicide becomes an option for the depressed mind, isn’t it plausible that it sees suicide as a release from the symptoms of life that are inhibiting it’s (the brain’s) full enjoyment of the world? In his writing, David Foster Wallace considered death and suicide at great lengths. He published three novels, two essay collections and three short-story collections before he committed suicide on September 12, 2008 at the age of 46; it is near impossible to read his work as perpendicular to his life.

David Foster Wallace published his first novel, *Broom of the System* in 1987, but he wasn’t recognized as a significant force in the world of contemporary fiction until the release of his first collection of short stories, *Girl With Curious Hair*, in 1989. The collection put a buzz through the literary world, and when his mammoth work *Infinite Jest* was published in 1996, the world was turned upside down and Wallace was on top. The novel is a masterpiece (for the sake of brevity, I promised myself I’d not mention any details of “IJ”) and it ascended Wallace to a level of notoriety within the literary community that he, frankly, wasn’t prepared to handle. Again, for the sake of brevity, I’m not going to bog down this essay with details of Wallace’s struggles with depression. It may be, contextually, worth knowing that Wallace suffered from depression for more than twenty years before his death, and had been taking a host of prescribed antidepressant medications throughout those years.

There are no instances of the depressed mind rationalizing suicide more conspicuous than Wallace’s short stories, “Suicide As A Sort Of Present” and “Good Old Neon.” From his early writings, it is clear that death, and specifically suicide, is something on Wallace’s mind. “Suicide As A Sort Of Present” is published in Wallace’s 1999 short-story collection *Brief Interviews With Hideous*. 
Men. The story focuses on a “Mother who had a very hard time indeed, emotionally, inside” (241). Wallace dissects this mother’s inner-workings, tracing her self-loathing to the mother’s own parents’ severe lack of discipline and direction for their child. The story turns when the mother’s child is introduced; the child is exceptionally difficult for the mother to contain, and “every time the child fell short, [the mother’s] natural inclination was to loathe it” (242). I’ll not go into every detail of the story, but I will explain the culmination. The mother’s inclination is to loathe her child, but she knows that any good mother is incapable of anything but love for her children; so, instead of projecting her frustration outward, she turns it on herself and builds up even more self-loathing. Wallace explains that she is almost entirely filled with self-loathing, but is unable to express it. The last line of the story is one of the more devastating that I’ve ever read. Wallace has built up, throughout the piece, this assurance that the only way the mother can truly express her self-loathing is to kill herself, “And so the son—desperate, as are all children, to repay the perfect love we may expect only of mothers—expressed it all for her.

This story, particularly the ending, demonstrates the inner-workings of a depressed mind. The mother is consumed with attaining perfection, both in herself and her child, from an early age. She finds that perfection is rarely attainable, and this realization triggers more self-loathing. The mother is caught in an ouroboros of depression, sinking deeper with each decision and experience she encounters in life. She loathes herself so much by the time her child is born that she cannot help but project her fantasy of perfection onto it, unattainably high expectations the child is consistently falling short of. So, what can a reader learn about the depressed mind from this story? The development of the mother is a blueprint of depression’s symptoms; but the actions of the child are more intriguing than anything. Wallace shows the child, in scene, terrorizing her neighborhood (bashing cats against buildings, stealing his class’s UNICEF money) and not being disciplined for his actions. This lack of action in the mother is crucial; she is perpetuating the parenting style that her own parents raised her with.

This is one of the best examples of the decisions the depressed mind can rationalize; the mother is aware (we are told this, early on, in narration) of her parents’ faults in their raising her; she conceives that her parents never disciplined her, and that their reason for not disciplining her was because she (the mother) disciplined herself so heavily without her parents’ input. The mother is acutely aware of her parents’ shortcomings, and yet she parents as an impersonation of her own parents. Anytime the mother’s child does something horrible, the mother’s reaction is to unconditionally love the child, and turn the hatred on herself. The mother’s depressed mind rationalizes that the child’s actions are her fault, a direct cause of her shortcomings as a mother. This story is still, relatively early in Wallace’s career; for a more in-depth (and first-person) account of depression and the way it plays on a mind, consider a story from Wallace’s 2004 collection, *Oblivion*.

“Good Old Neos” is often cited as Wallace’s best story; certainly it is his most haunting in the retrospective of his suicide. The story is a first-person account of Neal’s (the narrator’s) decision to crash his car into a bridge embankment and kill himself. The beauty of this story, as is the case with a lot of Wallace’s work, the conceit of the story is plainly clear from the beginning of the piece. Neal, on the third page of the story, is recounting banal statistics about his life (where he works, his general frame of mind, etc.) when the reader comes to, “I know this part is boring and probably boring you, by the way, but it gets a lot more interesting when I get to the part where I kill myself and discover what happens immediately after a person dies,” (143). The reader has no choice but to shift in his/her seat and, in my own case, reread up to that point in the story, sure that I’d missed something drastic before this statement. But I hadn’t missed anything. There was no context for the line, and this is what makes it so authentically depressed. The depressed mind is capable of being distracted, however temporarily, from it’s depression; Wallace’s Neal demonstrates lucidity and clear thinking when recounting his last months that led him to this decision of suicide; and in these moments of lucidity in recollection, Neal does not address his depression, but all of his thoughts are framed by it. Neal describes his family, while meeting with a therapist, and the resemblance to the Mother in “Suicide As A Sort of Present”’s parents is striking.

Neal says he was, “never yelled at or abused or pressured to hit .400 in Legion ball or anything, and they took out a second mortgage to send me to an elite college when I could have gone scholarship to U.W.-Eau Claire, etc. Nobody’d ever done anything bad to me, every problem I ever had I’d been the cause of” (145). Neal makes sure the reader knows that he is a calculating, fraudulent person from the first line, “My whole life I’ve been a fraud” (141).

Wallace establishes Neal as an untrustworthy narrator from the beginning, and this can be seen as a parallel with the environment a depressed mind creates. Neal is acutely aware of his contrived personality, and instead of making a change in his character, his mind folds to his depression, conceals under it’s weight. He is an intelligent, productive member of society; but none of this gives him any enjoyment and his mind has convinced him that there is something irrepairably wrong with his mind.

Neal sees a therapist, but feels he is more intelligent than the therapist, so his sessions become games of cat-and-mouse so that he (the therapist) eventually feels he’s made progress with Neal. Neal’s existence in his final months has been predicated on making others feel that they’ve made an impact on him, until he reaches his end. What’s particularly mesmerizing about this story is how close Wallace’s gets as the narrator. The narration is so exact and expressive, it sounds like Wallace himself is telling the reader what his depression feels like. The story, like all of Wallace’s writing, utilizes the “stream of consciousness” in voice that shows his mind working on the page; finding out exactly what it means to him when someone decides to end his or her life.

And what does it mean when a person decides to end their life. “Decides” is where the definition becomes subjective. I don’t consider suicide an inevitable end to a depressed person’s life; rather, I consider suicide a decision some depressed people make in full awareness of the “consequences” it will bring. Keep in mind, I don’t consider this decision as being made in a clear mind; “Good Old Neos” should clearly demonstrate the “muckiness” of a depressed mind. A depressed person is liable to consider their own health secondary to happiness (happiness which, to the Mother in “Suicide As A Sort of Present,” and many other depressed people, is eternally out of reach); What if a depressed mind considers it’s own end to be happier than the torment it lives with daily? When thoughts in this vain emerge in the depressed mind, rationalization is already one of the mind’s greatest attributes (whether positive or negative is dependent on perspective).

Wallace gave the world an incredible breadth of knowledge to consider in his absence; his work is unmatched in its honesty and attention to depression, from a variety of perspectives. As sick as Neal’s mind is, he comforts the reader’s concern; “The reality is that dying isn’t bad, but it takes forever. And that Forever is no time at all.” (180).

Words by Owen Macleod
I am seated in a room, surrounded by scholars and the busts of dead authors. My posture is somewhat indecisive as I take great pains in looking half as studious — do I smell like alcohol? — as those around me. The glass-walled room in the Harry Ransom Center at University of Texas (Austin) would appear cringingly pretentious from the exterior; these feelings would disappear as I passed the secretary-administrative-whatever woman, who seemed to exhaust herself trying to keep us outside her little glass castle.

I am in here.

My purpose, still, at this point, is unclear. My purpose, months later — fast-forwarding to a real-time present tense, — is still unclear. I have notes, and these notes sadden me. I am hesitant to write about them; it feels intrusive, or perhaps invasive — intermeddling in places that seem too hush-hush for public discussion.

And then I think about a quote from John Barth; I bounce this quote around all the time for myriad purposes: “The more closely an author identifies with the narrator, literally or metaphorically, the less advisable it is, as a rule, to use the first-person narrative viewpoint,” and once again, I remember what I already know: so many of these feelings have already been translated — or transfigured — in some form, in his narratives. The details of personal situations have already been made public; I can merely provide textual support to these previously made claims at his life — what made him who he was/how he was. That is, in his words: his default setting, his hard wiring. He would spend his life discussing ways in which one may bypass his or her own wiring and acquire a more universal understanding, but as with near everything, this notion falls under the cliché of “easier said than done.”

It is nearly impossible to read Wallace’s work exclusively as fiction, and given what I know of him — we have what I consider an impersonal, yet close relationship (as do most of his readers, I’d assume) — many of his characters lived a life uncomfortably parallel to his own. So as I’m going over a few handwritten pages from the Infinite Jest manuscripts I asked the more-helpful-than-the-secretary-administrative-whatever woman man at the help desk at Harry Ransom make copies of for me, and I revisit the last two sentences I read during my visit. They didn’t belong in the narrative; but they were written at the top of the page:

“I CAN’T BELIEVE I LET MYSELF GET SUCKED BACK INTO THIS”

and “Lesson: Short-term relief with Mary breeds long-term pain! 1.”

It is simple to see ways in which these might stir the soul; especially while holding onto the pages, knowing what he would do less than twenty years after writing them.

I have two pages of my own handwritten notes, both written in the smallest script I could manage. I remember sitting under the lamplight with his work, trying to take it all in. There were boxes upon boxes of the pages that would become his tomes, and there being so much to see — I never could have examined it all in the time I had there — I did not want to waste time getting up for new paper; my point: I recorded much more of the like. Such as a few pages where he decorated the margins with frowning faces — a sad contrast to the large smiles he would draw alongside his signature while signing books, and the margin-note “I AM JEALOUS AND UPSET.”

Though these words had no place in the story, it is not impossible to assume

1 A necessary synopsis of the Wallace/Karr connection is this: Wallace meets Karr, a poet, in rehab, falls in love, tattoos her name, plots to kill her husband with a gun he tries to buy from a fellow addiction-recovery peer, eventually dates Karr, eventually falls away from her.
STUDIES IN TENSION | FEATURE

“I CAN’T BELIEVE I LET MYSELF GET SUCKED BACK INTO THIS

Words by Pat Siebel

This would seem like an impossible offer to refuse, for any David Foster Wallace fan, but I refused — in a battle not so much head vs. heart, but two equally combatant sides of the heart. I thanked the man again and looked back down:

“HELP.”

That’s what it said, the note. It was simple, yet so desperate; I read into the subtext and nearly lost myself. I flipped a few pages:

“I DON’T WANT TO BE WRITING,” then, again: “please help,”

I felt like a friend who had arrived too late. And regardless of the unrealistic stretch that is, and the fact that if nobody else could prevent this, there is little reason to believe I could have, I had no desire to continue on with my studies. There comes a point where interest and objectivity become too blurred for research, and I had reached it. I needed distance.

It was 4:45; the archive would be closing their doors in fifteen minutes. I looked over at the table where Owen sat quietly, frozen; quite obviously disturbed by something I cannot claim to be unfamiliar with. I pointed at my watch in the pure undisturbed white noise of absolute silence. Together, we reorganized the manuscripts in the order we received them and brought them to the counter. I realized I may never be this close to David Foster Wallace again, and peeked inside for one last look. The page was marked 6/1/91, and said, “I am sad,” and I left, twenty-one years, eleven months, and two days later than that, sad as well.
A day after visiting the archive, nursing an incapacitating hangover, Pat Siebel and I emerged from our hotel room.

Pat is the editor of this magazine, and the one with any real notion of a “plan” for what we’re doing on this trip. We made our way to a Domino’s and had it out with them as to why they couldn’t deliver to our hotel room, which said room ended up being a spit from their delivery radius. We came away with two larges and a two-liter, retreating to the darkness of the room.

Our room, one of the lowest prices we could find while maintaining a short distance to downtown, was unexpectedly pleasant. Not the room we got the first night we came into town; that room was a nightmare, roach-in-the-tub nightmare. We stayed a grand total of ten hours (4 am - 2pm) and the only reason we stayed there at all is because we’d driven almost twenty-four hours straight, and had already tried sleeping in the car on Guadalupe St. to neither of our spines’ pleasure. That place aside, this new hotel we had brought me solace. Austin, and the entire Southwest, for that matter, is goddamn hot in August. I imagine this isn’t hard to believe — I feel like noting a specific example, anyway.

Our first full day in Austin, we decided to take our bikes out and explore the city. This went really well for about an hour; we dipped in and out of traffic and indiscriminately toured Austin. Things quickly turned when we came upon a very steep hill — steep enough to make biking an overexertion. From what I remember we tried biking anyway, and about halfway up, I peeled off from Pat and took a seat on a curb outside a church. I’m not exaggerating, here: I do not remember what happened next. Last thing I can picture is Pat coming back to me, then I look down at the road and close my eyes. I don’t remember biking another half-mile or so to Chipotle on Guadalupe St, but that’s where we are when I finally get the feeling back in my eyes. If one thing is learned by the reader of this essay, learn this: drink more water than your body is capable of holding while in a desert-Southwest summer.

From that point on, our room (with it’s constant temperature never above sixty degrees) became the only place where I did not sweat constantly (which is not to say I didn’t sweat in the room; it just wasn’t constant [I’ll stop talking about how sweaty I am, now]). This characterization, hopefully, gets you to see that I near-dreaded leaving the room; which, it probably doesn’t need noting, is the point of any trip to a place one has never been.

On this particular day, a day after we visited the archive, you’ll recall, it became clear to me that I was going to have to seriously budget the second half of this trip. I’d spent somewhere in the ballpark of $300, already; a combination of gas, lodging, and a $140 bar tab. This bar tab was worth every penny, that’s all I’ll say about it. So Pat paid for the Domino’s and we made our way back to the room, which I was already missing.

“We should go see those bats,” Pat said.

The bats were something we learned about on our first night in Austin. At our hotel, there was a map of the entire city, and one of the pictures on the map, over a bridge, was a black cluster of bat wings.

“What’s with the bats?” I asked the hotel concierge.

“Largest bat colony in North America is under the Congress Ave. Bridge,” he said. “You head up that way around sunset, you see about two million bats.”

When Pat mentioned going to see them, it was something that seemed it would stand in for the whole trip. We made our way to Congress Ave. around six, and after finding a parking spot on the street, (I feel this on the street distinction is worth mentioning: I have no way of knowing how hard it is, typically, to find a street-spot in Austin, but being from the New York City area, a parking spot on the street is something you write home about) but after finding this spot we walked down to the bridge, and realized we’d emerged from our room much too early — the sun was going to be up a good two hours from our arrival. We decided the best place to take shade was underneath the bridge; there’s a wide path around Lady Bird Lake (the body of water the Congress Ave. Bridge crosses) that’s heavily traversed by runners, bikers, vagabonds, general-wanderers, etc. The smell under the bridge was not what you’d expect. Then again, maybe it’s exactly what you expect. The first thing we noticed, going from
the uncovered air to standing directly underneath the bridge, was the tangible change in humidity. The air under the bridge is heavy, and thick with the sweet smell of guano; looking up, the bats had caved themselves in the breaks between sections of concrete. They were loud; high-pitched screeching like that squeak mechanical pencils make, except louder by countless decimals. For some reason, as Pat and I stood under the bridge, people felt we were there to answer their questions about the bats.

“When are they coming out?” one woman asked us. I explained to the woman that we weren’t sure. That we were in town from South Carolina for a magazine assignment, and this was our first experience with the bats, as well. I learned, quickly, that it was easier to tell people, “Eight pm.” Around seven, initial layer of perspiration in full force, Pat and I sat on the bank of the river and just watched the people walking/running/vagabonding by us. Eventually this guy (who looked exactly like Dave Eggers) came up to us; we’d seen his dog swimming in the lake just down the way from the bridge.

“You guys wanna feed the squirrels?” he asked us.

“Sure,” Pat said, getting up and approaching the man. It should be noted, though it’s irrelevant, this is why I love Pat. He’s really spontaneous and always willing to get into weird situations. If someone’s feeding squirrels: Count Pat in.

“They love nuts, man,” the guy says, brandishing a soggy Ziploc of almonds.

Pat went over and placed a few almonds at the base of a tree in front of us, and after hearing the man’s synopsis of his forty-seven years on this earth, not one had been eaten.

“I gotta run back to my room, man, but I’ll see you guys up there once the show starts,” he said, walking away from the bridge.

Here, again, I kind of lose exactly what happens next. I remember looking down at my feet on the bank of this lake; all kinds of life going on around me, and yet it feels like my focus was on myself. My role in all of this: Being a part of the life.

I looked up after a while and didn’t see Pat anywhere. We’d been calling each other all week coordinating our positions with each other, making sure neither of us was lost. For some reason, it didn’t matter to me where anyone was. I pushed up from the bank, wiping the seat of my pants with dirty hands. I found a staircase leading from the path up to street-level, where the bats would be most prevalent. I took my time climbing up there, running my hands through my hair and, in that moment, realizing it was much too long. About halfway up, a mob of people on one side of the bridge became visible, shouting and pointing down at the lake. At any other time, I’d have run to the other side of the bridge and asked what was going on; tried to see what everyone else was seeing. But I couldn’t see it from over here where no one else was: A black, screeching wave peaking over the bridge then flattening out, trained on Downtown Austin. The wave just kept getting bigger until it seemed there was no choice but to concede to its power; let the bats sweep you away, over the city.

Alone in this moment, the sun turning purple, I wanted to stay there forever.

I was awoken from my melodrama by a buzzing in my pocket; Pat, on the other side of the bridge, alerting me that it was happening. I was missing it.

“I see it,” I said. “I can see it all.”

“No. Come see this guy,” he said.

I found a break in the traffic and ran across to the other side of
the bridge, where about 200 people were collected. A small pod of people had clustered around something, and Pat was there on the outside of this cluster. As I got closer, the object of attention walked out of the mass of people. A white man in his sixties, left leg slightly bowed, some tattoos on his forearms, was handing out buttons and taking pictures with people; accepting cash donations by the handful. He handed the buttons out with a little card, explaining that he was deaf, and loved these bats like children. He wore a baseball cap that he’d fastened a plush bat doll to; his existence seemed in service to the weirdness of Austin. This saying has certainly, at this point, become a cliché — “Keep Austin Weird”. But it’s true; they (the people of Austin) cultivate an attitude that promotes, not “weirdness,” but individuality. The people that make Austin what it is — the bartenders, the chefs, the musicians, etc. — appreciate that it’s a place where unique (sometimes “weird”) lives are almost necessary.

In Austin, it’s weird if you’re not “The Bat Man”.

Words by Owen Macleod
Illustration by Matthew Fram
Children in today’s society have grown up in a world full of technology. They have come to expect televisions, computers, Internet, cell phones, and tablets on a daily basis, and consider life with these objects as normal. Adults, other-handedly, remember a time when bits of technology were not available to everyone, or just did not exist, and often reminisce about their childhoods spent exploring outside with neighborhood friends. I can’t count how many times I’ve heard an adult say the phrase, “When I was a kid...” followed by a story about how different his or her childhood was without everything we have today. These tales detailing the golden days where days were spent under the light of the sun, instead of staring at a flat screen TV; where communicating meant going up to another person and speaking, instead of sending a message through a computer or phone; and searching for information meant going to the local library and finding books on the subject instead of Googling it, are all so fascinating and strange. From another world, almost. This in mind, I began thinking: Is modern life ruining childhood?
An average day from my childhood: wake up at 6:30am; school until 2:30; home at 3:05; TV until my dad got home; play outside until my mom came home around 6; homework and dinner, which took us to about 8; TV until bedtime at 9. A lot of the outside activities they have done have been within the confines of a schoolyard, and if I remember my school days correctly, no game was near as fun in school as it was with my friends. Kids gravitate toward what they conceive as fun, and stick with it. This leaves them, at least for now, hopelessly frozen in front of the largest television in the house, while they strategize on the best approach to flank incoming zombies.

I asked my dad about his childhood and how it differed from the way children live today. His first response was that they had a party line. My friend, who was over, looked curious. “What’s that?” she asked. “A phone line where several neighbors shared one number,” my dad responded. They had to take turns using the phone, and often, my dad said, they’d listen in on others’ conversations; as a result, they didn’t use the phone much to communicate. They would either walk to tell a friend something, or wait until the next school day. I’ve seen children as young as six receiving cell phones and walking around with them glued to their hands, uncomfortably knowledgeable about its functionality. Now, most normal conversations are through text messaging or Internet messaging, creating the question of whether or not the art of conversation has been lost.

My dad thinks yes. He says, “People had the best conversations sitting on a horse. Back before you had cell phones and text, weren’t you even talking on the house phone on three-way?”

He is constantly on my sisters and I back about dialing each other’s phones when dinner is ready instead of going upstairs to make the announcement, or having a phone open, texting for the majority of the day. He loves it when we have friends over, because we talk face to face to them rather than through a screen.

“How old is the internet?” “I don’t know, Google it.” This response, likely, is more than familiar. Don’t know something? Google it. Want a recipe? Google it. Can’t spell a word right? Type it incorrectly into Google to see the right spelling. Need a fun project for a rainy day? Google it. Have a project on Abraham Lincoln? Google will provide you with everything you could possibly want to know, and with internet now available on cell phones, you can even lose yourself in pictures of Abe’s beard on the road (Editors Note: please don’t do this. See pages 6-7 for more details). Children seem so used to this, that asking them to look something up in a book is like asking a bus driver to mix chemicals. They no longer have the learning experience of reading a book to try to gather information. Their searches on the Internet result in instant answers, specific to their topic, which brings about impatience on the few occasions they have to dig for an answer. See: school.

My answer to whether or not kids’ childhoods are being ruined by technology is unclear. To most adults, the answer is Yes. As my dad said, “Technology is moving so fast it’s hard to keep up. Do I want to? No!” He believes in the good old days of hard work and playing outside. To children, the answer is No. They are so immersed in technology that they know of no other way to live.

I personally miss the days of playing outside with friends; I also couldn’t imagine a life without my phone and laptop — so I see both sides. I’d imagine that, perhaps, there’s middle ground somewhere. Somewhere where somehow we get not only our technology — but our vitamin-D, as well. It’s tough, though: technology doesn’t seem to regress, and I can’t see an end in sight.

Words by Rachel McFall
E[a]rnest Hem[m]ingway’s Twitter Account

I like to watch things over the top of my head. Like planes, or watching a stranger on The Big Swings
at the fair. I roll my neck back and my stomach
drops into the ocean like Jacques Cousteau in his diving saucer.

There’s a moment soon after you put on pants
when you shove your hands into
your pockets because they were uncomfortable.

If I had the only chance to save the human species,
I can’t say that I would.
This is so horrible to contemplate that [I] shouldn’t even say it.
I copied that from the Wikipedia page on Jacques Cousteau.
I don’t think it’s that horrible.
I also don’t know if that decision is set in stone,
and I took the Cousteau quote way out of context.

He was talking about population control.
Maybe it wasn’t completely out of context.

I never liked beer, but right now it tastes sweet.
Like bitter candies. A malt butterscotch.
Adults are just children with different toys and interests.
“Is that whiskey?”
“Two-tone oxfords - this is awful whiskey.”
That was an interruption that actually happened.
I’ve documented it, and now its history
is tangible.

A friend recently quoted E[a]rnest Hem[m]ingway to remind me:
“Write drunk, edit sober.”
Then he quoted it again on a social media website.

The Well

There was a woman at a well,
thirsting - thirsting for a drop
of salvation. Trying desperately
to find an ounce of holy water
from that goddamned well.
She hoisted the bucket, hunched
from the weight of her own water.
She hoisted the bucket, and
time after time the vessel
never once showed divinity -
just her own image quivering
in the tepid water. I watched
her tarry at the well. I watched
with all of the eyes around her -
watched her struggle as her faith
pooled around her feet - released
in a great flood of water.

The Cherry Orchard by Someone Other than Anton Chekhov

I’ve been to the Cherry Orchard.
I’ve swung my axe in its sheathe
against the titanic trunks of the trees.
To some they are pale and thin,
but to me they look like giants,
and though I have never plucked
the ripened fruit from the bough,
I’ve scaled the ladder —
basket in hand — only to descend
again from a fruitless voyage.
The posy pink perched at the crown
calls to me. To taste. To writhe in.

We’ve Never Met

We’ve never met, but I saw you look at me
with faint recognition. We caught eyes as you
turned to see if I was real: when I twisted my neck
because I knew you twisted yours. And we were - I
was - empty when that glance ran its course,
like I was some pin-pricked balloon throwing its helium
into the atmosphere. But maybe we were two lightwaves
converging where we were never supposed to, meeting
at a fixed point, and travelling on. I know that if we
spoke, the world would have fallen apart.
It would have burst and bloomed like a Catherine wheel
on the fourth day of a summer month. I know we’ve
never met - not in this life, but in another - somewhere -
I’m your shadow, and somewhere you’re my reflection,
and I know we’ve never met, but I know you. I
saw it in your eyes — in that look, that fleeting look,
that shook my veins and stole a quarter note from my
natural rhythm’s score. I know I wasn’t meant to
see you. You were a bride hiding on her wedding day,
with your hair in curls and your train un-bustled
and your high heels on, but right now you’re staring
down an aisle
at a man on an altar
and your make-up’s running
and I saw that look first.

Words by Thom Madray
This is not a series of scenes, or even a single scene. This does not take place in Stan’s Diner, where Tenth Street intersects with Walnut. This does not happen at Eleven Fifty-Five on the morning of Saturday, July 6th. There is not a wife walking slowly behind her husband and mother-in-law. They are not dressed in mourning’s garments, black and heavy. The sun is not aggressive. It is not crippling, or blazing, or any other adjective that could possibly be used to describe that star’s intensity. The three, who are zero, stand in line, that is not a line, and wait for a seat inside the air-conditioned restaurant that has no literal place on the spectrum of time, location, and/or temperature. The husband and mother-in-law do not tiptoe around the ceremony. The wife does not ignore that which the other two do not say.

This is a series of keystrokes on an Asus computer. These strokes are being struck one by one at 4:24 on the afternoon of Monday, April 29th. There is, seated in front of the computer, striking—sometimes furiously, sometimes unhurriedly—at the keys, a writer and/or student. He sits inside to escape the crippling and/or blazing and/or any other adjective that could possibly be used to describe the aforementioned star’s intensity. This is a temporary document until he decides whether it is worth saving or not. This is worth saving and/or continuing (for the time being). The file does transition into a more permanent state.

This is not a family sliding into a vinyl booth. This is not the stick of skin, layered in a film of sweat, against the material. There is not a waitress at the not-diner at the corner of not Tenth and not Walnut. She does not set upon the table glasses of water, breakfast menus, or silverware, tightly rolled in napkins. There is not a wife, and a husband, and a mother in law, who, days prior, lost a not-son and/or not grandson. There is not a group of hung-over and loud students seated at the table to the left of the table the threesome is not seated at. This is not a cup of spilled coffee. It is not an uproar and/or combination of laughing and oh shits, and screams, as the non-group dodges the runoff of the adjective described not coffee.

This is a writer and/or student biting his thumb. This is a hand, driven to shake by anxiety. This is the constant apprehension, the continuous hesitation that the semi-permanent file is not strong enough and/or is too much of a gimmick. This is a mind simultaneously thinking in the present of the aforementioned file, as well as the keystrokes that have yet to come. There is a limited amount of space and/or a certain constraint in which the file must fit. This is the apprehension and/or hesitation that the writer and/or student will not manage to stay within the aforementioned constraint. This is hope despite the aforementioned hesitations.

This is not a wife who has twice that day been to the edge of her own sanity. This is not a woman who has not cried until her lacrimal glands have gone dehydrated. There is not a pounding ache dwelling behind her eyes and/or in the space between her ears. This is not the trembling of a not-mother who doesn’t ask for some God damned peace. There is not a waiter telling a joke to the students as he doesn’t clean up the spilled liquid and/or another explosion of laughter. The not-ache does not extend from the not-no-longer-a-mother’s head to her dry not-lacrimal glands. The not-husband attempts to console his not-wife. The aforementioned consolation is not helpful.

This is a series of precisely aligned pixels on the screen of a computer and/or e-reader and/or smart phone. This is the stroke of a key, and/or pencil tip, and/or pen tip [ballpoint/ gel/fountain [ nib].] This is ink printed on the glossy pages of a magazine. This is chalk scraped across sidewalks. There is and/or isn’t somebody in another house and/or city and/or state to read these strokes of ink, chalk, pixels. This is a deception (trompe) of the eye (l’oeil.) This is only marks. This is one of six thousand nine hundred languages spoken around the world. This is letters made up by the aforementioned marks. This is words made up by the aforementioned letters. This is sentences and paragraphs. This is language.

The not-wife does not have a lack of appetite. There is not a sudden wave of nausea and/or revulsion. The aforementioned waves do not spread throughout the abdomen of the not-wife, despite the not-lack-of-appetite. There is not bile and/or vomit now filling the mouth of the not-wife. The not-wife does not make it to the not-diner’s not-bathroom, but instead, settles for a not-bush outside. This is not the not-wife retching. This is not the aforementioned not-wife thinking about her not-son and contemplating whether life is not worth living. This is not an actualization and/or representation of loss. This is not the hopeless feeling accompanied by the aforementioned loss. There is not a diner with not-customers and/or not-noise. There was no ceremony. This is not a plot and/or narrative. This is not a story.

This is a story. There is a wife who does lack an appetite, and who does find the feeling in her stomach revolting and/or horrible. She has lost more than a mere thousand words, and/or the ten minutes time it takes to read this story that is not a story that is a story. This is the aforementioned writer and/or student in addition to the not-wife who is, in fact, a wife but still remains a not-mother. This is everything the writer and/or student mentioned. This is truth. This is a lie. This is a trick, a deception, a loss, a plate breaking, a bush, a wife retching, a keyboard, a plot, an essay, a poem, a story, a song, a son buried today or yesterday or the day before that. This is everything. This is nothing.

Words by Daniel Miller
$17,499 got the patient a round-trip ticket to the moment they triggered their greatest regret. A ticket to the Point-In-Time (PIT) — which PIT only became clear after (in most cases) years of self-reflection — that has consumed the patient’s thoughts near daily since the inevitable sense of loss they’ve experienced as a direct result of this moment. The patients tended to be wealthy, sometimes famous, clients. The machines that enabled the travel were invented by Dr. Wells Jeffcoat, a man with degrees from Brown, Johns Hopkins, a doctorate from Wash U. — qualified in any field he presented. The good Dr., every day of 57, decided the Venn diagram of interest in his life overlapped most on the subject of psychoanalysis, and with no family to contain his feverous work ethic, Dr. Jeffcoat made the PIT machines his primary focus. Along with Len “Bender” Bendolki, the Dr.’s trusted assistant for 20 years to this point, Wells Jeffcoat engineered the first PIT-Revisiting Machine (PIT-RM) Prototype.

The machine was an MRI machine re-wired by Bender to a configuration he and the Dr. had worked up over the course of seven years working together (this does not take into account the work the Dr. must have done before reaching out for help). The machine was rigged with a simple panel of buttons: the first, a round green button, was to start the machine; the second, yellow and round, was to initiate the PIT-Revisiting program, and send the entire machine, with patient inside, to their desired PIT. The third button: blue and the shape of a two-story house, would take the patient back to Dr. Jeffcoat’s lab — the starting location — at any time.

These moments in time that patients deem worth visiting, they are not the day when the great sense of loss was realized by the patient. Rather, these moments are those that started the clock ticking of the life-bomb. In hindsight, the patient could see that all (or most) had been well before these distinct PITs, and all events subsequent had been a not-so-steady decline into a dark unhappiness. These moments that commenced the Rube Goldberg of ill will on the patients’ lives; they wanted nothing more than to return to this PIT and change it to their liking. What they did with a second chance in these moments, however, was entirely up to the patient.

Michael Dennis was one of Dr. Jeffcoat’s first clients. Dennis, a recognizable veteran of cinema, wanted to delve into the moment he first triggered his divorce. He knew this moment vividly: a Parisian cafe, a short brunette with pinned-up hair. The moment had haunted Dennis for the ten years that had lapsed since he and his wife’s trip to France. He contacted the Dr. one Tuesday, and was scheduled for a consultation that Friday. Dr. Jeffcoat’s lab and ‘HQ’ was located in the Florida Panhandle: at this time, one massive grey area, pharmacologically. The consultation and physical were normal, and Dennis was given an appointment for two months from then.

Tests of the PIT-RM were largely successful; the Dr. and Bender trained domestic cats to use the buttons in the machine, then, they’d transport the cats to remote PITs and wait for them to return to ‘HQ.’ Intact, was the idea. And while there was one cat (and, thus, one machine) that never returned to the lab, the twenty-four other test subjects returned to the Panhandle safely, and lacking any visible side-effects. The grey area of the Panhandle allowed Bender and the Dr. to advertise their new service to anyone willing to pay; business was slow, at first, and Dennis was the first high-profile client. He returned to the Panhandle two months after his consultation, and was shown an instructional video on how to operate the machine, as well as what to expect from its treatment. Michael Dennis brought his son with him to the office; and he (the son) sat in the waiting room reading old Sports Illustrateds, while his father was led to the back. Dennis was instructed to climb inside the PIT-RM and relax as best he could. The Dr. would give his okay, and once Dennis felt he was ready, he was to press the green button and initiate the program.

The Dr. and Bender, from behind the glass of a two-way mirror, watched Michael Dennis lay in the PIT-RM, shift his position, then stay absolutely still for three minutes

‘Ok?’ Dr. Jeffcoat said into a microphone.

Michael waited a moment after the Dr.’s word, then pushed the green button and disappeared. The only trace the PIT-RM had ever been in the room was a faint dust square in the middle of the room; a dime had also been under the PIT-RM, and it now lay in the far corner of the room. Bender and the Dr.
Michael waited a moment after the Dr.’s word, then pushed the green button and disappeared. The only trace the PIT-RM had ever been in the room was a faint dust square in the middle of the room to Paris. The Dr. caught his breath and took some practice steps before moving too far from the PIT-RM. He gained confidence in his legs and made his way from the alleyway to the main street. The street lamps were not altogether different from American models, but something about their orange burn was unmistakably Parisian. The streets were cobblestone and had a glaze of dew on the surface, which made them shine like mirrors. Dr. Jeffcoat stood a moment and consciously soaked himself in Paris. The lights; the smells; the sounds; everything was happening at once, and yet it was all distinguishable.

The cafe was emitting violin music, which caught the Dr. as odd, as he’d always associated the sound of an accordion with Paris, but he pushed in despite his trepidation. When he opened the wooden door, a small bell fastened to the top rang loud and swung all heads toward the front door. The cafe was not overly crowded, but the Dr. could not see Dennis anywhere. It was clear to Dr. Jeffcoat the people in the cafe were there regularly, acutely aware that the Dr. was not. Dr. Jeffcoat took a table in the dark corner and waited for Dennis to present himself.

The Dr., while he waited, watched the other people in the cafe, and found that he envied them. He had never done any real traveling; he was always much too busy with his work. The people in the cafe were free spirits, having highbrow conversation, enjoying fine wine and fresh bread. The Dr. felt a surge of longing; he felt he was needed in this place. Just then, Michael Dennis swung the door of the cafe open and stepped in. In his left hand was a half-full bottle of red wine, in his right hand was a stunning, smiling brunette. Dennis did not notice the Dr. sitting in the dark back corner. He and the woman took a table near the window and ordered a loaf of bread. When the woman excused herself from the table to use the restroom, the Dr. approached Dennis’s table very slowly, and touched the man’s shoulder. Dennis whirled around, startled, attracting the attention of the cafe.

‘Why are you here?’ Dennis said.

‘Why on Earth are you here, Michael?’

‘...’

‘What about your son up there? He’s been asking for you.’

‘Call his mother. My emergency contact.’

‘Just tell me why you don’t want to leave. That’s the point of the treatment — fix what you want to, then return home.

‘Do you want to leave?’ Dennis said, and this forced the Dr. to turn his focus inward, on his own desires. The Dr. hadn’t considered it until this exact moment: staying in this place, permanently. He looked around the cafe, careful to notice everything he could and try to bank it to memory. The Dr. thought of his life spent exclusively scientifically; he thought of the lives of these Parisians. There was a table near the bar that sat three attractive women, and when the Dr. stared at them for too long they, each, smiled at him and tossed their hair from their eyes.

Somewhere in his review of the room, the Dr. thought of Bender. He thought of Dennis’s son, also, but more he thought of Bender. Dr. Jeffcoat had been burdened with guilt since gaining popularity for the PIT-RM treatment because, while the plan had been the Dr.’s brainchild, it would never have gotten this far without Bender’s unquestionable devotion. In an instant, before the brunette returned to the table, Dr. Jeffcoat retreated to the lot behind the cafe; the PIT-RM was there, undisturbed. He looked at the machine very carefully, examining the matte white finish and any imperfections it offered. The Dr. lifted his head to the stars and saw more white than he’d ever seen. He re-attached Michael Dennis’s original note to the panel of buttons, and pressed the blue two-story house.

Words by Owen Macleod
Illustration by Matthew Fram
REEMERGING TRENDS
The summer of 2013 provided us with plenty of bright and extravagant fashion. Strangely, however, little of this fashion is actually new.

From crop tops and snapbacks, to leggings and flannel, there are tons of great trends that are blasting back from the past, and with so many trends and styles remerging from their graves, excitement over the vintage and thrift lifestyles are on the come-up, as well. My job is to provide you with an era-by-era breakdown of the greatest comeback looks.

Though these styles are coming back, the fashion world can only produce replicas. Many people are finding themselves outside of their usual shopping elements, and inside their local Goodwill or consignment shops, searching for authenticity. This, in addition to the DIY world on YouTube (sec: ThreadBanger, itsblizzzz), is all you need to successfully make your wardrobe vintage.

One of the biggest fashion comebacks seems to be 90’s attire: crop tops, high-waisted bottoms, plaids, flannels, jelly shoes, Doc Martins, snapbacks, and overalls, just to name a few. We have already seen the majority of these over the summer, but with the cold fronts sweeping in, the flannels and Martins are making their place in 2013 winter fashion known.

But 80’s fashion is trickling in, as well. We see this in the influx of neon colors.
The flashiness of the 80’s seems to be fighting for ranking, as excessive jewelry, color blocking neon, and a general over embellishment of clothing is appearing everywhere. Not so new, but still just as hot, leggings, both plain and patterned, paired with over-sized tops. Keep your eyes peeled for the comeuppance of superhero tees and sweaters. Two of the biggest styles from the 80’s that are sure to be seen this fall are acid-washed and leather bomber jackets.

It seems the 70’s hippie era has also had an impact on 2013’s fashion. Platform shoes, wedges, and block heels are all reemerging, as well as bohemian-style wide-leg pants and free-flowing skirts. These bottoms are a girls’ best friend when trying to be stylish, yet comfy.

The 50’s and 60’s have inspired a modernized business-chic style, ripe with pastel colors, blazers, and form-fitting pencil skirts. The 60’s also brought us the paisley print that miraculously has come back, though typically in brighter colors. Additionally, letterman jackets are back from the 50’s.

It should come as no surprise to anyone that, largely thanks to Baz Luhrmann’s rendition of The Great Gatsby, that the 20’s have made a major comeback with upper-class New Yorker chic and Gatsby-themed cocktail parties worldwide. Formality, while always having its proper place in fashion, has never enjoyed the mass appeal that it does now — both fashionable in irony, as well as its proper place.

Other trends that are big this fall are prints and patterns, print-blocking, and floral patterns (these never seem to die out). Also still in, are: pointed-toe flats, large-framed glasses, blazers, vests, cardigans, beanies, and the always-fresh army fatigue camo print.

Words by Shawnte Posley
Photos by Mat Parise
MAGIC FOR BEGINNERS
AUTHOR: KELLY LINK

Before each of the nine stories in Kelly Link’s Magic for Beginners, the follow-up to her debut collection, Stranger Things Happen, a short quote and small black and white drawing adorns an otherwise empty page. It is a man in a trench coat, surrounded by a swarm of bees: “‘Hot enough for you?’ the man said” below the shadowed figure. It is a pantless woman straddling the barrel of a cannon: “He tickled her with his funis ignarii” below the phallic imagery. Though the imagery and humor found in these introductory pages seems childlike, Link’s collection is anything but.

Link has modernized magical realism. In the world of Link, zombies crawl out of a chasm to loiter at a convenience store; children watch a pirate television show that shows up on various channels at various times; ancient people from an ancient land fit within the confines of a handbag. Each story is more surreal than the last, and yet, each of Link’s complex characters seems very real. They, too, deal with family and romantic relationships; they juggle the surreal with the real in an incredibly portrayed way.

Stylistically, Link is comical; accessible to readers of any level. She writes about zombies and television — pop-culture that appeals to Generation-X — but she does so in a sophisticated, subtle way. Perhaps you find zombie culture played out (I did too prior to reading this collection) but Link’s zombies, though mindless, seem to have their own agenda; one that does not stereotypically include consumption of human beings. Her portrayal of a television show geared towards teenagers and young adults reveals more about the characters, children and adults, than any amount of narrative exposition could.

In the land of short fiction — sometimes as surreal as her stories — status is assigned not only by who has been published in what journal, but what awards, what other recognition have been bestowed upon them. Link was included in what is perhaps the most prestigious form of recognition: the 2005 collection of Best American Short Stories. The story featured in Best American, “Stone Animals,” is placed almost directly in the middle of Link’s collection. At forty-eight pages, it is nearly a novella, and a masterful one at that. Henry, Link’s protagonist, deals with being haunted in many forms. After moving into a new house, a seemingly haunted one with ominous rabbit statues upon the lawn, Henry begins to be haunted by the early-relationship version of his wife. The story is cerebral. It manages to show the complexities of marriage, as well as the complexities of raising children through a bizarre circumstance.

Magic for Beginners is deceptively compelling. The stories suck the reader in quickly; the narratives move at a breakneck speed and, when it’s all over, leave you feeling in need of a cigarette or, at least, a longing for more of Link’s fiction. After the collection, it is clear that Link’s place in the Best American series, along with her place in magical realism, is well, well deserved.

STORIES FOR NIGHTTIME AND SOME FOR THE DAY
AUTHOR: BEN LOORY

Here are some stories. I hope you like them.” This is the author’s note; the introduction Ben Loory gives to his debut collection, Stories for Nighttime and Some for the Day. It is not a thank you to a loved one; it is not praising another writer, some inspirational hero-figure for him. No, Loory’s introduction is simple, almost childlike. And the stories that follow seem, at a surface level, simple and childlike. They are short, some not longer than a few sentences. They often contain a grandiose sense of imagination — an octopus that has traded the ocean for city life; a talking moose; a romance between sea and a house — yet through these short imaginative pieces, Loory gives something lovely, sometimes dark, and sometimes comical depth.

Loory’s collection is composed of forty short stories — the finale only added as per editor’s request. With such a variety, it is difficult to describe Loory’s writing. It is science fiction; it is romance; it is horror; it is a collection of fables; and yet, it is technical, skilled literary fiction. No single theme runs throughout the collection except, perhaps, that of the bizarre. Instead, with bizarre as a medium, Loory explores fear and trust, death and writing. “I hope you like them,” Loory notes, and with such a massive variety, chances are high that lovers of any genre will find something they adore in this collection.

While each of Loory’s stories are unique, the final tale of Part I, “Death and the Fruits of the Tree,” is one that I often find myself rereading, clutching the thin book as if it were the Bible. “A man was walking down a long, long road, when he saw a figure approaching from the distance,” Loory opens the four-page story ambiguously, ominously even. “Shit,” the man says upon realizing the figure approaching him is Death. Loory masterfully twists the narrative from the man climbing a tree in order to escape his fate into an ever-looping paradox.

Loory’s other tales offer a similar ambiguity. The characters are often simply named “the man,” or, “the woman,” “a boy,” or, “a girl.” The brevity of the narratives offers little or no exposition. Instead, the characters have experiences, pseudo-epiphanies that reveal who they are. Loory’s other tales also provide a level of craftsmanship almost unheard of in contemporary fiction. Loory proves that he is a master wordsmith, bending and twisting the narratives in a most subtle manner. At a formal level, the writing is perfect. At a conceptual level, the writing, though brief, is haunting and beautiful.

Summer offers the opportunity to read recreationally. No assigned 18th century European novels; no rereading Chekhov’s “The Lady With the Dog” for the ten-thousandth time in your undergraduate career. Stories for the Nighttime and Some for the Day was absolutely the best recreational reading I managed to do over the past three months. Loory will awe and scare and romance you in mere pages — an experience every lover of fiction should have.

Words by Daniel Miller
THE NATIONAL AT THE FILLMORE

On Wednesday, September 11, The National played at The Fillmore in Charlotte, NC. Before breaking into their third song of the night, “Bloodbuzz Ohio”, Aaron Dessner, one of the band’s two guitarists, made it known he “[couldn’t] believe [they] haven’t played Charlotte before.” It was clear the crowd that packed The Fillmore echoed his sentiment.

They played a total of 24 songs, spanning five records, and did so for a palpably excited crowd. Excited to see one of America’s premiere indie rock bands in close proximity, and playing some of their best songs.

“Lucky You,” “Abel,” “Mistaken for Strangers,” and “Slow Show” were just a few of the highlights. One that bears heightened recognition is their playing “Brainy” for the first time since 2011.

Of course, they couldn’t go without playing the majority of their 2013 release, Trouble Will Find Me (the reason for their Charlotte visit); this record being an incredible progression of the sound they’ve been honing over their fourteen (give or take) years as a band.

This tour marks a pivotal crossroads for The National. With the release of Trouble Will Find Me, they’ve ascended the charts of, not just indie music, but popular music as a whole. It seems the transition from small theatres and rock clubs to larger venues like arenas is inevitable; there’s just too many people that want to see this band at one time. They’ve already shown their ability to play for large audiences — a fixture in the festival scene for a few years, now. And while there’s a good argument for playing larger venues (most of them monetary), it’s also reasonable to posit that their sound is compromised in these expansive venues. Their sound (or anyone’s, for that matter) at a festival is noticeably different from their sound at a venue like The Fillmore; that’s not to say the band doesn’t play with the same energy at a festival that they do at a smaller venue — that’s not it at all.

Their sound is an intimate one; something that’s best experienced up close. It’s different when Matt Berninger’s (The National’s vocalist) deep voice rattles your ribcage — something a fan can’t experience in vast festival crowds. Berninger is worth seeing anywhere, but his energy in a place like The Fillmore is contagious. Guzzling wine, breaking microphone stands, milling around the stage (almost aimlessly) during musical interludes — his performance (and the band’s, as a whole, really) climaxes when he jumps into the crowd during “Mr. November” and spends the duration of the song merging to the back wall of the venue, then traversing back to the stage, microphone cord lapping unmindful fans’ necks before they realize to lift it over their heads. Certainly, the way the band closes their shows is determined by the size of the venue.

At The Fillmore, after a solid two hours of playing, The National turned off their amps, stepped to the front of the stage as a collective unit, and played “Vanderlyle Crybaby Geeks” for a boisterous audience that had been choiring all night. The acoustic guitars were barely discernable through the wall of sound emanating from the crowd.

Words by Owen Macleod

EDITOR’S TOP 5 SONGS OF THE NIGHT

5 “Mistaken for Strangers” 4 “Sorrow” 3 “Lucky You” 2 “Vanderlyle Crybaby Geeks” 1 “Brainy”
**The Almighty Open Mind:**
*Georgia Pine*

Are you trying to get real ignorant? If the answer is yes, *Georgia Pine* probably isn’t for you; but if you want to listen to a well-produced rap album that will have your head bouncing and your headphones bleeding, then get your hands on this album ASAP.

*Georgia Pine* is a relatively new rap album, released in August 2013 from a relatively new artist, but don’t let that deter you. The Almighty Open Mind comes out swinging from the beginning of the record; right after a pitched-down sample of *Lana Del Rey’s, “Video Games”*, The Almighty Open Mind offers around forty minutes of absolute lyrical-and-verbal command, with a cohesion that is guaranteed to capture the attention of anyone willing to listen.

Open states that, “We are not anti-industry. We are for the evolution and reincarnation of the dated and dying machine,” and with lines like, “But blame unquenchable desire in the mind of man to get high / So we plan to defy the law, no need for FBI / That’s no admission of guilt because then that would imply that I / Broke a moral code as if I cold blooded killed a guy,” he tastefully tackles relevant socio-political issues such as the legalization of marijuana, racism, and the ubiquitous “Man,” along with false information fed from the media and modern music industry. *Georgia Pine* calls for change, and Open sets that decision on the shoulders of our generation. If you’re ready to wade in Open’s lyrical waters, then climb the *Georgia Pine*, and find out what you can see when you have the right view and a different perspective. In the words of the website of The Almighty Open Mind himself: “Buy it if you like it. Pirate it if you can’t afford it.”

Taste Test: Check out, “Mighty Mouse,” “Dopamine,” and “Click Clack”

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**Volcano Choir: Repave**

This is, seriously, one of the most flawless records I have ever heard; and this ain’t my first record rodeo. Everything about the album demands attention, particularly after the band’s first go-around with *Unmap* in 2009.

Justin Vernon (of Bon Iver fame) is a very busy fellow. Outside of his “main” project, Bon Iver, Justin has also released solo acoustic music; been featured on (and sampled in) a few Kanye West songs; and released two rock ‘n’ roll albums with the band The Shouting Matches. One of which is titled *Gossum Man*.

How can you not love this guy already? This time he has teamed up with the post-rock group Collections of Colonies of Bees to form Volcano Choir. Sure, Volcano Choir has technically been around for four years, but *Unmap* was such a hodge-podge album that was more or less a noisy clash of very talented musicians not knowing what kind of music they actually wanted to make; and the nuances that are on *Repave* completely make it what it is. Usually when one talks about a song, they’ll say things like, “Hey, man, did you hear that smokin’ face-melter of a guitar riff?” or “That drum solo!” or “Those lyrics were so deep and meaningful,” which, don’t get me wrong, all have their rightful places in the realm of music chat, (and also ring true on this album) but the real art here is in the indescribable nuances; the ambient effects; the drum fills; and the crazy three-note guitar interjections that sometimes say much more than just Justin emotes in his lyrics. You really have to listen to the album to truly understand.

Volcano Choir is a completely different band on *Repave*; coming together to form a harmonious whole — anywhere from the instrumentation to the lyrics and everywhere in between: this album is absolutely rock-solid. This review doesn’t even do this album 1/100 of the justice that it deserves. Drop whatever you’re doing and go listen to this album.

Taste Test: “Tiderays,” “Comrade,” and “Dancepack”

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**Valley Maker: Yes I Know I’ve Loved This World**

Valley Maker, led by Austin Crane, who hails from Columbia, SC, recently released their sophomore LP, *Yes I Know I’ve Loved This World* in August of 2013. This release followed up their self-titled debut from 2010, which Austin originally wrote for his senior thesis at the University of South Carolina. Where *Valley Maker* mainly followed the narratives of the Book of Genesis, *Yes I Know I’ve Loved This World* deviates heavily from the religious themes of the first album.

*Yes I Know I’ve Loved This World* is Austin’s most honest record to date; and like many Southern artists, his work has turned to focus on the struggle to find
fun.: Aim and Ignite

K, we’ve all heard the atrocity that was fun.’s latest album Some Nights; or we’ve at least heard the inescapable YOLO single “We Are Young”. But Aim and Ignite was something completely and utterly different — and an infinitely better record at that. I’m not sure what happened with these fantastic musicians between Aim and Ignite and Some Nights, but I like to joke that they bought a drum machine. Though, something else drastically changed the band’s sound for the worst; they sold out — trading their orchestral violins, woodwinds, brass, and harpsichord for shitty, radio-friendly synthesizers and equally uninteresting lyrics (along with the aforementioned drum machine).

Let’s take it back to 2009. Nate Ruess’ band The Format has disbanded and fun. has just released Aim and Ignite. You’re not sure what to expect when you click the first track, “Be Calm”, other than knowing that The Format was, for the most part, an acoustic pop band. You’re expecting more of the same from fun. Let’s say you’ve really done your research, and you know that fun.’s keyboardist Andrew Dost was once in a chamber-pop band called Anathallo. Before you can ask yourself what exactly “chamber-pop” is, the accordion and violin duet that opens Aim and Ignite has captured you. You’re lost in Nate’s lyricism and voice — you think they’re both intriguing (if a bit odd), and you wonder if the rest of the record will bring more of the same. By the end of “Be Calm”, (and the high note Nate screams to reach in the closing of the song) you’re convinced to listen to the rest of the album with open ears. The next track, “Benson Hedges”, greets you with the lyrics, “Holy ghost, when do you come out to play / Cause if the Lord is gonna find me/ He better start looking today.” The song is different enough to stand alone, but is similar enough in style to mesh well right after “Be Calm”.

Aim and Ignite serves up a huge musical spectrum; from the Caribbean feel of “At Least I’m Not as Sad (as I Used to Be)”, all the way to the penultimate track, the heart warming ballad “The Gambler”, a re-re-interpretation of the Kenny Rogers classic of the same name, according to Nate, written for his parents. If all you know of this band is the mangled song structure and pointless auto-tune from Some Nights, try out Aim and Ignite and really see what this band has to offer.

Taste Test: Check out “Be Calm,” “All the Pretty Girls,” and “The Gambler.”

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Top 10 Songs of Billboard’s Songs of the Summer

1. Blurred Lines
   Robin Thicke featuring T.I. and Pharrell

2. Radioactive
   Imagine Dragons

3. Get Lucky
   Daft Punk ft. Pharrell

4. We Can’t Stop
   Miley Cyrus

5. Can’t Hold Us
   Macklemore & Ryan Lewis ft. Ray Dalton

6. Cruise
   Florida Georgia Line ft. Nelly

7. Mirrors
   Justin Timberlake

8. Treasure
   Bruno Mars

9. Cups (Pitch Perfect’s When I’m Gone
   Anna Kendrick

10. Come and Get It
    Selena Gomez

*list provided by Billboard.com

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Words by Thom Madray
FILMS.

“OZ THE GREAT AND POWERFUL”

I came away from “Oz the Great and Powerful,” Sam Raimi’s latest 3D tour de force, wondering if I’d seen anything apart from a glorified remake. I must assure you, as I’m aware that I already sound cynical, I went into this movie expecting to like it. As much as I don’t want to like James Franco (a host of reasons for this, the least of which being his overall douchey pretension when it comes to reviewing literature I like [see his Vice articles]) it’s hard for me not to at least admire the choices he makes. It’s ballyhoo to try and adapt Faulkner’s “As I Lay Dying,” notoriously thought to be “unfilmable,”; it was also ballyhoo of Casting Director John Papsidera to put Franco in the lead of this film, because he doesn’t fit. Franco’s lazy delivery of dialogue and his nonchalant body language don’t fit the world that’s being created for the viewer. Franco looks, on-screen, like he knows what he’s doing is a little goofy.

The film opens in a sepia-tinted black and white, reminiscent of Victor Fleming’s 1939 “The Wizard of Oz.” Oz (Franco) is a “magician” traveling through Kansas with a circus when a tornado (sound familiar) sweeps him away to the vibrant world that is to bare his namesake in the future. The visual experience of the film is striking; vivid fluorescent color that still doesn’t enhance a plot some seventy years old. The only really difference in this “prequel” is that Franco has replaced Judy Garland in the journey down the yellow-brick road. Franco is followed by a band of companions unfit for their journey, similar to the group that Garland led in 1939. The flying monkeys are now clearly baboons, but they’re not entirely different from the originals. It seemed, all throughout, the film tried to remake the original “Wizard of Oz,” whilst simultaneously changing the events to try and paint them as entirely original. This difference in approach to the film is, ultimately, what trips it up.

Words by Owen Macleod

“WE’RE THE MILLERS”

We’re the Millers” is one of the funniest films of the past summer. The movie stars Jason Sudeikis as David Clark and Jennifer Aniston as Rose O’Reilly. Their role as neighbors becomes intensified after David, a pot dealer, is robbed. His boss gives him one chance to make up for this mishap by sending David to Mexico to smuggle marijuana back into the United States. In an attempt to appear inconspicuous, David disguises himself as the father of the Miller family. Rose, a stripper, plays the mother of David’s fake children; a misunderstood runaway named Casey (Emma Roberts); and a lonely nerd named Kenny (Will Poulter). Predictability and profanity slip into the movie as the characters embark on the trip in a huge RV; the group becomes closer throughout the journey while continuously facing unexpected issues. Many comments and events are somewhat risqué, requiring a certain type of adult humor to enjoy the movie. However, the actors show a clear chemistry, drawing the audience into the story. Although silly at times, “We’re The Millers” will make you laugh. It is the perfect time filler for any adult in need of a raunchy comedy.

Words by Alexis Belinsky

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1. Gravity
2. Carrie
3. The Counselor
4. The Hunger Games: Catching Fire
5. Thor: The Dark World
6. Escape Plan
7. Captain Phillips
8. Bad Grandpa
9. Man of Steel
10. Pacific Rim

*list provided by iMDB.com
I want to give a huge thanks to all of the people who had a hand in making the Reemerging Trends photoshoot such a success. With the help of an amazing Tempo staff we were able to pull off the 80s theme in just a matter of a couple days. An extra special thanks goes out to all of the wonderful models that took the time out of there day to help out and of course our awesome photographer, Mathew Paris. I could not have asked for a better group of people to work with.

-TORI JORDAN, Art Director
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