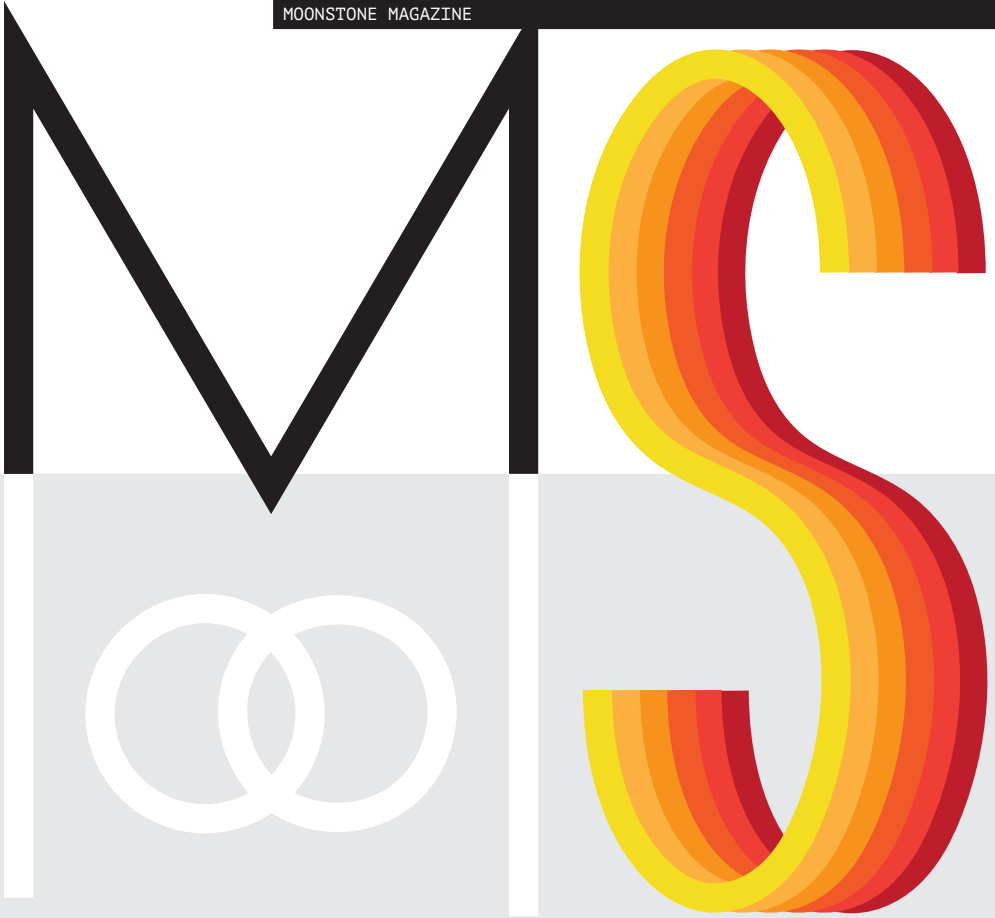


MOONSTONE MAGAZINE



ISSUE 01

ISSUE 1

moonstonemag.com

TABLE OF CONTENTS

6 Letter from the Editors

Art

8 *The Falling Man*, Nichole Africa Mendoza

12 *Refraction*, Lewis Osborne

27 *Starved For Salvation*, Jesse Sanders

30 *I Hear Voices*, Anthony Christopher

44 *You're On My Mind*, Mendes Vanermen

45 *Lie Detector*, Jesse Sanders

53 *Dancing Lovers*, Nikodem Szewczyk

Poetry

10 *[Looking to get my name written on]*, Mike Soto

11 *Ampersand Kings*, Mike Soto

28 *Ohne Bezug*, Sam Grayck

41 *Symposium*, Jack Tsukibara

42 *Germ*, Christina Manubag

Fiction

14 *Autoscopy*, Stewart Finnegan

46 *Masha Meyers' Last Day On Earth*, Camille Larkins

Essays

32 *The Future of Human Value*, Stefano Cagnato

54 *On Books, Libraries, and The Self*, Alexander M. DeTillio

Dear Reader,

Moonstone began as a curatorial project with a design edge. We wanted to create a printed literary magazine that featured art, where all the works fit together in meaningful ways. It wasn't a novel idea—there are many other art / literature / poetry magazines floating in cyberspace, with some amazing work by talented humans. Where we differ is in our idea to have standalone issues, whereby each issue would be designed by a different artist, and could vary by any measure. One issue could be printed in recycled A4 paper, while the next could be a glossy pocketbook. One issue could be covered in marginalia, the next could be sober and Scandinavian. The design of the issue becomes part of the artistic value of the object, and it makes it that much more important for the magazine to be in print form.

There is merit to the idea of letting a written work or a piece of art to “speak for itself”, but we see anything, even a blank page with black text, as a design statement. Anything from the typeface to the margin space, from the layout to the color on the page—everything contributes to our experience of reading, of viewing a piece of art. By creating deliberate designs, and having the freedom to change those designs with each issue, we can make an artistic statement that brings even more meaning to the pieces within the magazine.

In our first issue, we have art, poetry, fiction, and essays dedicated to provide a look at humanity at present with an eye towards the future. What truths can spill out of our subconscious when we examine the possibilities of future events? The future is ambig-

ous. We are uncertain about the course of history, the approaching inevitable successes and failures of humanity. This universal uncertainty simultaneously brews hope and despair—such strong emotions are vehicles through which some of the most fascinating art is created.

We have selected pieces that we believe touch on these themes in refreshing ways, and each piece has been contributed by an artist or writer who believes in the idea behind *Moonstone*. In Stewart Finnegan's “Autoscopy”, we learn that in the near future, desire can still rule our lives. Mike Soto's featured poems are Jodorowsky-inspired hallucinations that echo loss: “soon enough a town that survives / like a fire at the bottom of an ocean / became a memory of the future.” The combination of earth tones and glitch art in Nichole Africa Mendoza's *The Falling Man* supports a perpetually-falling Vitruvian man, a perfect emblem of helplessness in the coming episodes of humanity.

This first issue is a modest representation of our objectives, and we hope it will allow the project to grow to its full potential. We believe the pieces we selected are truly worth experiencing, whether or not we were able to create the perfect space for them. At this point, *Moonstone* will live online for those who find value in its concept and wish to champion its cause.

And now, without further ado, we present: *Moonstone*.

LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

THE EDITORS



***The Falling Man*, 2018**
Digital, 3508x2480 px

Nichole Africa Mendoza

[Looking to get my name written on]

Looking to get my name written on
a tiny skull, I chose Consuelo's instead.
Paid the vendor with a hole in his hand,

that coin slot bribed barely, but this time
for good. Walked away from his smile,
let the sugar dissolve on my tongue,

& soon enough a town that survives
like a fire at the bottom of an ocean
became a memory of the future:

where a gate keeps the lunatic eyes from trotting down,
where the feast wolves want in the yards is bound to happen,
where the wind that trickles down-hill to breeze through
plumage is God,
& branches hold the sleeping hens that blink in & out
of my dreams like devices.

BY
MIKE

The stones we skipped, cymbals
struck for every step we walked

them on the water, the ringing trails
& turns we took dedicating throws-

this one for El Mero Leon Del Oscuro,
& Gusano del Cielo, & Nariz de Estrella,

this one for Conejo Negro, & Chupatierra,
& Chapo the first Topo of drug lords-

& kept tossing until we saw nothing
but silver on the belly of the stream,

until the lack of light became a lack
we unlearned, & we were ampersand

kings, & when one of our throws ramped
the water to reach the other side, the other

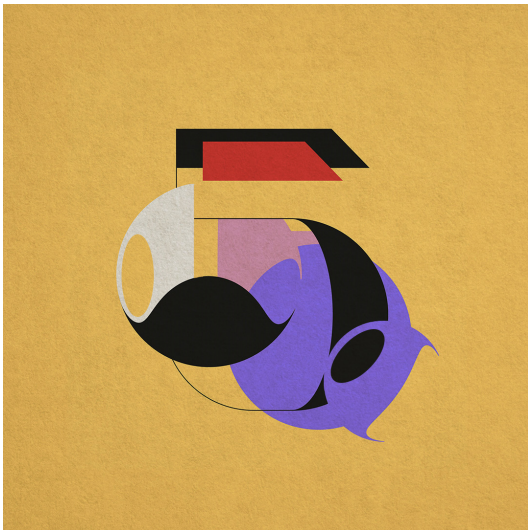
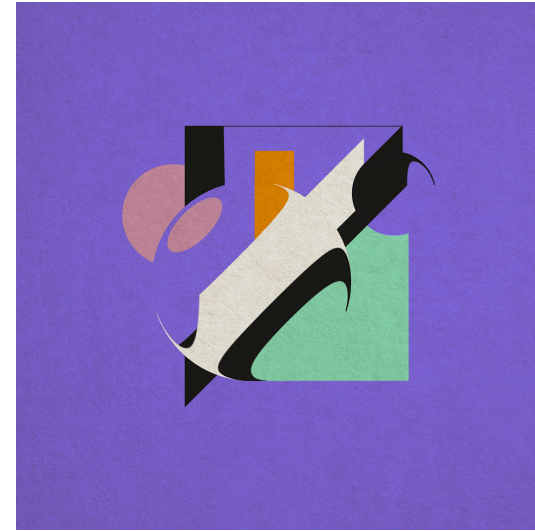
side became possible, lit with the eyes
of shadows that started barking

or laughing- we couldn't tell, & always
assumed the golden throw a stolen

piece of our broken angel's head.

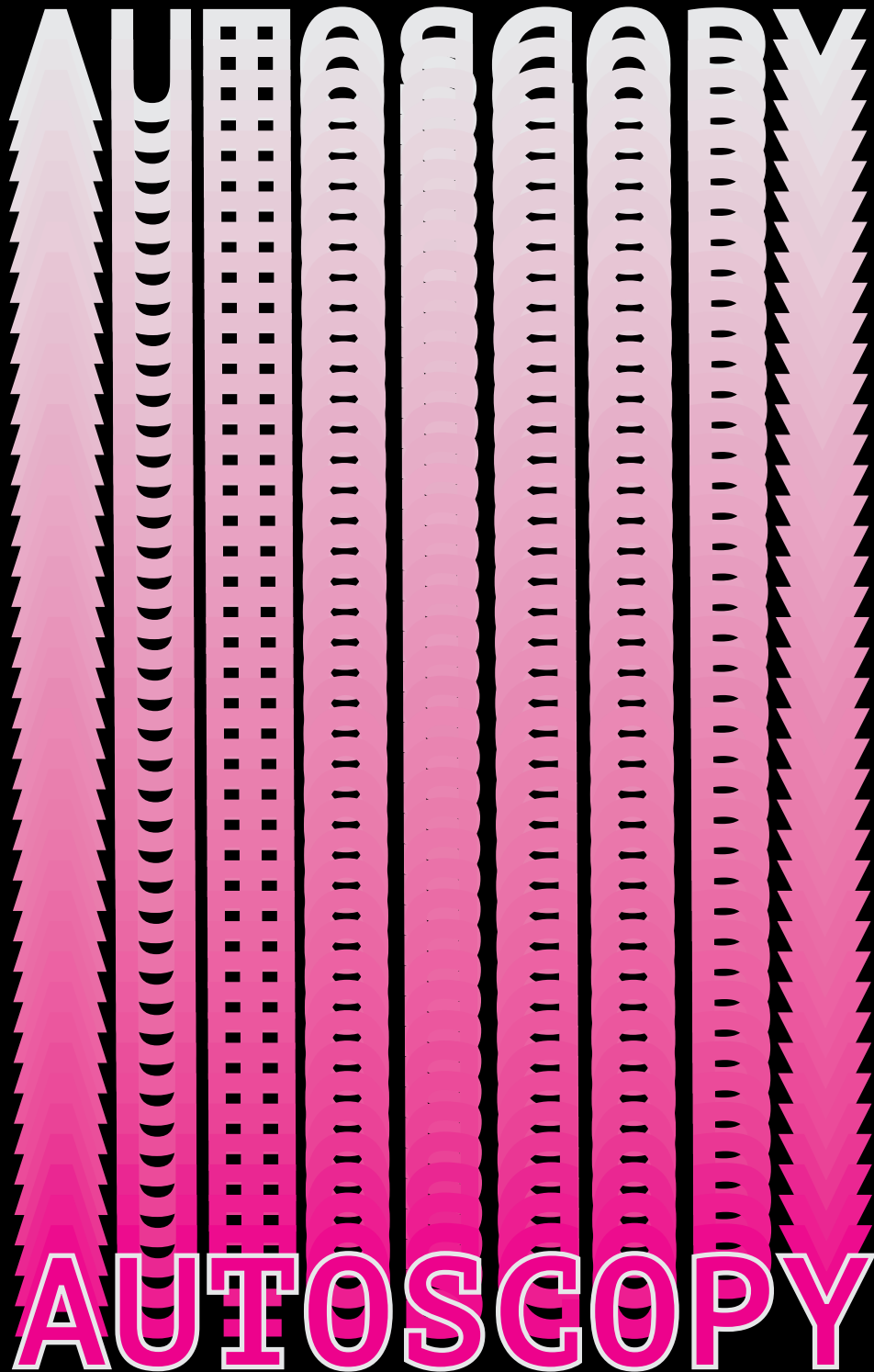
Ampersand Kings

SOTO



Refraction (3, 5, 7), 2018
Digital, 1080x2080 px

Lewis Osborne



AUTOSCOPY

By Stewart Finnegan

August 4th, 2053

Boy, not a great Trevor day.

It started out real nice, which makes it worse, I think, the way it ended. He's always been behind on kinesis—Sadie's a year younger and powering a cow's aorta—but today he moved the glass three millimeters and change, a personal best. We still don't know his tether, but maybe this could get us there. Maybe.

So I wanted to reward him, and since I was out of brownies, I took out the cards. He likes cards, even if the program stopped caring about them, and they're easy for him. 2D, bloodless, none of the shifting focus you need to play with neurons. I had a Two of Clubs and thought he'd know right away.

But he just kept saying Jack of Hearts. I thought he was joking, but when I told him it wasn't, when I showed him, he got real mad. Kept sinking into his arms, like they were sandbags.

I tried a different card, Three of Spades, but he kept getting it wrong too. And then he guessed Jack of Hearts, like he was testing me. I told him to try again, though I hesitated before I said it, and he must have heard the hesitation because he shut down. Full-on static. No psis at all, just cortisol and noise in the amygdala. I was scared for a second that he was going to pull out the spike-probes, but he didn't. He was just quiet.

"It's okay, Trevor," I said.

"You're lying," he said.

But I wasn't. I really wasn't. I had meant it.

Hadn't I?

August 6th, 2053

"Your tires are low."

That was the first thing Carol said to me all day, and it was after dinner.

"Thanks," I said, meaning it, and how pathetic is that? She throws me a bone—the tiniest possible bone, a metatar-

sal, broke in half—and I slobber all over it. I slurp down the marrow. "Trevor's seemed off lately."

"Oh," she said, real quick. And that was it.

I know she's got a stressful job, okay? You, this journal's fine imaginary audience, *know* that I know. I don't have any problem that she's higher-ranked, or makes the good money, or works with wunderkind Sadie while I've got, fucking, Trevor. We all, all, *all* know that. So I say, with confidence, that what I'm feeling about her behavior isn't coming from resentment and it's not coming from jealousy: it's coming because this shit is shitty and I'm not happy about it.

I just want to have a conversation with my wife. That's all. I'm charming, and clever, and got perfect teeth. So what gives?

August 8th, 2053

Trevor's still been off. I don't think he's getting worse, or I'd be making a fuss, but there's something up. And I asked him, direct, "is something up?" and he said no, and I'm not sure I believed him, but he's the psychic, not me.

And I say that, but I *did* believe him. He didn't hesitate none, but also didn't overdo it, use too much force to show how real he meant it. It didn't feel like a lie to me.

So I believe Trevor. He's been moody, but just a regular sort of moody. My working theory is girl troubles—he's got a thing for Sadie, plain as day—but nobody's torturing him or nothing. And, hell, we still don't even know what his tether is, so it's no surprise that his whole internal life is a little opaque.

I gave him a brownie. I remembered this time. And I do, you know, care about Trevor. He's my project, sure, and he's a shitty project at that, nothing that's going to land me the big promotions. But Trevor's a good kid, kinda funny, kinda

clumsy, likes kickball but sucks at it, or at least liked it before he got here. Shame about that, that there's no kickball here, no sports of any kind. Too risky. Makes me wish we didn't have to open up their skulls.

August 10th, 2053

He keeps staring at Sadie, at meals and such, Trevor does. Carol told me, and I'll cop to some resentment there, since I don't know if she's just saying this is my responsibility or if she's saying it's my fault, but this is some serious shit and I'm not going to be so petty as to ignore it.

When Trevor was done running cups for the day, I employed some of what I like to call "stern jocularity."

"Heard you been starin' at Sadie," I told him, like I'd practiced. "You gotta cut that shit out, bud."

And he was cagey at first, but his eyes told the whole story. He confessed, and soon as he realized that my knowing meant Sadie knew, he started crying. I almost felt bad for the little creep.

"I just like her so much," he said.

"Liking someone's fine," I said. "So long as it doesn't make them uncomfortable."

I remember that I said that. I was proud of thinking it up.

"I'm not in control around her," he said, and I remember *that* on account of how troubling it was.

I told him that men have been excusing our shit with that feeling, that powerlessness feeling, for ages. And I told him he wasn't powerless, that he was in control, and that control meant responsibility.

"Yeah," he said, sheepish. "I just think she's my tether."

And that, dear imaginary reader, was awfully easy to remember.

Because I had checked for Trev's

tether, night and day. Some of the kids have tethers that kinda make sense—tides, phases of the moon, sine functions—but Berlanti's kid's tether is, swear to fucking god, the strength of the Belarusian ruble. I thought Trevor's might have been the price of sugar, but nope. Then the cricket population in St. Louis, but that was a dead end. I got excited about the weather in Capetown, then really excited about the weather *forecasts* in Capetown, but neither of those had any effect on his psis.

I told him, even if that were true, he had to be more respectful, but, I'll admit, I was getting excited.

August 11th, 2053

I checked over Trevor's psis. He might be onto something.

None of this makes creeping poor Sadie out okay, okay? But it seems like, when she's having a good day, Trevor is too. And not just in her psis: one of his psi peaks lined up with her birthday. There are a few of Trevor's peaks that don't match up with anything I can see, but that doesn't mean much. We don't even know if the kids' tethers are all recorded phenomena, so it's not rare for some numbers to miss the mark a little.

So when I told Carol about it, and she damn near laughed it off, well, that was an indignity to bear.

"She is *not* his tether," she told me over dinner.

"It's worth a look."

She looked at me like I was the silliest piece of slime on the planet. "She's not."

And, you know, my friends, this isn't very charitable, but *I* thought that *she* thought I was jealous. Like I was trying to mooch off Sadie's success, off Carol's. Maybe I'm imagining it, but it makes sense, doesn't it? That she sees me as this bottom-feeder?

I was going to ask her if I could look

at Sadie's records, maybe even talk to Sadie, but I'm not going to do that if Carol's just going to mock me all the way there. So I ate my pasta, and when I was done with that, I cut into the brownies. I asked Carol if she wanted some. She said yes to that, at least.

August 14th, 2053

I got a call from Cassandra.

"It's Cassie," she said, first thing, which was silly on account of caller ID. Though, admittedly, I'd deleted her number. Though, admittedly, I had it memorized.

"Hey Tom," she said, and I drank down those words like manna. "Hey."

We didn't talk long. And there was something tentative, something incomplete about it all, like she was afraid somebody was listening in. But nobody was listening in, and Carol wasn't home yet, and it was just me and Cassandra's voice and heat enough in my gut to make a soufflé.

Not a blip since I left Washington. And then this, out of the goddamn blue. Which is funny, since I've spent these last two years just waiting for her call. Leaving the candle in the window for her. And I'm not proud about that, of course I'm not, but there's been that thrum, that resonance, and I've just wanted her to resonate with me.

I could have called her myself. Two years I could have, but I didn't. And I never slept with Cassandra, okay? I never slept with her. Not once. But there's that scratching in my belly, like something's alive in there, burrowing deeper, and I don't know how to pull it out without dying from the blood loss.

August 15th, 2053

I snuck a peek at Sadie's charts—Carol brings work home with her—and saw that her sinusoid was hitting its apex

and her psis would be at full blast. So I was a little more ambitious with Trev today.

I brought in an ant.

The boy doesn't like bugs, and he's made sure to tell me. And the ant was dead, but that didn't seem to make no difference to him, since he still stared at it like it would pop up at any moment. Which, admittedly, was what I was asking him to make it do.

"Now Trev," I said, "I just want you to take a look at the thing. I just want you to think it over. It's not a big deal, okay?"

He looked at the ant, didn't even look at me, and Jesus fucking Corpus Christi, I tell you, the ant twitched.

Not full-on moved. It wasn't jumping or dancing, and it didn't speak the way some kids get the ants to speak, bit of a whine and a lot of scream, but it twitched, legs and antennae and thorax.

This shit's not easy. Moving something inorganic is relatively simple, since the atoms pretty much stick around, but orgokinesis's got to account for the psi of regular synapses, decay and entropy, electricity that's kinda just stored in the muscles, and that's just for a dead damn animal. So a twitch, even a tiny one, is huge.

I gave the boy a brownie. He ate the whole thing fast and it smeared on his fingers.

He did ask me something kinda weird, though. He said, brownie all the fuck over his face, "did you bake these or your wife?"

I don't wear a ring in here. And with the dampeners at full blast on my side of the room, he shouldn't have any window to my head. Maybe he's just guessing, just being a kid. I put it in my notes anyway. And when I told him that it was me, that I made them, he just laughed.

August 16th, 2053

Been thinking about Trevor so much that, well, now I'm thinking about Cassie.

Cassie and I'd met through work. I mean, she didn't work for the program—that was part of the issue—but she was a teacher at one of the fonts. I was on a liaison assignment, so I had a guest office in the school and an apartment in the suburbs. This was Washington, state, far as fucking possible from home. And I just want to, for the sake of my own self-conception, reiterate the ease with which I could have slept with Cassandra, in my very singly mine apartment on the opposite end of the country from Carol.

We—Cassie and me—met in some mixer, PTA or something. I was jetlagged and cranky, but we still got along. She was, and this was not unique to this night, gorgeous, though gorgeous in a way that always made me feel a little sad. Like a, I dunno, sunset, which I tried to explain to her, but just the once.

We talked. Just shot the shit, about the weather and the kids. I was lying about my job of course, which was standard procedure, but I got the sense that she knew what I was anyway. I mean, there must be rumors, right? It's not like the program's subtler than gossip.

She started stopping by my office. Then I started dropping by the break room with dessert and get the whole faculty on my side. I'd joke that I was bribing them, and we'd all laugh and have a brownie, and I'd keep looking over at Cassie to see if she liked them, which she did, from what I saw.

I scared her. At least, I think I scared her, just a bit. Not for herself, but she knew I was vaguely associated with the government, even if it was just the state of goddamn Florida. And I was, she must have surmised, a danger. I was this new thing, like a virus on a meteorite, but I

was also a good old boy who she'd flirt with effortlessly, and I think that left her in an interesting spot.

As for me, I liked it, more than I wished I did. I liked being kinda scary, since I don't feel all that scary back home. And I sure liked the idea that I could be scary that would be attractive.

So I guess I thought she knew that I was a recruiter for one of the psi institutes. Like, on some level, and I thought we were playing around it. But then I found Trevor and, well, that was that.

August 17th, 2053

I told Carol about the ant, how it jumped, and it knew it wasn't real impressive to someone dealing with Sadie on a daily basis, but this was one hell of a win for me, okay?

And, you know, I wanted her to notice the timing.

"How was Sadie?" I asked her, and she put her fork down. She took a deep breath.

"He's still creeping her out," she said.

My heart damn near broke.

I asked if he was still staring at her, and she said that he was, but now he'd gone on to tell other kids she was his tether.

"But that one could be true," I told her, and she looked at me sour.

"Even if it is," she said, all measured, "it's giving him an excuse to go after her."

I swore up and down that I'd talk to him, get him to cut it out, but it was clear I wasn't comforting her, not really. She looked down at her food.

"She deserves more than being his muse," she said.

"She sure fucking does," I said, and I worried I said it with too much force, but that did seem to reach her. "She's nobody's muse, okay?"

Carol was staring at me. She wanted me to keep going. So I went.

"I'll tell him Sadie's not his tether," I said, and, folks, Carol out-and-out smiled. First time in a long time I'd made her do that.

And then, and this is wild, she reached out to touch my hand. "Thank you."

And I felt good about doing that, and felt good about it for the rest of dinner, mostly. But then I started to get frustrated. I wouldn't have asked Carol to hamstring her project for the sake of mine, and she's wanting me to do it for her? And then, what, is she going to stay embarrassed by her fuckup husband, all while making sure her husband's a fuckup? That's not right. Not one bit.

But, then, she's right. Trevor's crossing lines, and Sadie doesn't owe him anything. She shouldn't have to put up with this so he can make the ants move, you know?

So I'm writing this in a state of real conflict, internally so. I'll be true to my word, tell Trevor that Sadie's not his tether, that we got it all wrong, even if my whole heart won't be in it.

But there's some comfort, seeing as, you know, *I* know.

August 18th, 2053

I didn't talk about Sadie at first. I didn't want to influence his performance. But maybe I wouldn't need to worry about that, since he tanked it anyway.

The ant wouldn't twitch. The cup moved, but not much. I brought out the cards and he was alright with those, better than that one day, but still missed at least a fourth of them. Sadie's sinusoid is on the way down too, so this doesn't mean she's *not* his tether, but it was discouraging.

Then, when he missed three cards in a row, he hit the table and knocked the ant away.

"That's not how we want you to move

it, pal," I said, going for gentle.

"I'm the worst," he said, just so fucking miserable that I felt half-manipulated, though the other half was breaking for him.

"Trev, I can't do this at all," I told him. "You're a better psychic than me. Hell, you're a better psychic than most of the world."

He looked pretty dedicated to feeling bad, but he did kinda glance up at me.

"We're pushing you because you've got so much talent," I said, which was kinda true. "You're gonna grow up and have to do all this on your own."

And that was totally true.

"And hey, we all have bad days. I burned the brownies today."

He was trying to hide disappointment when I told him I bought more.

So I pulled those out and he started chowing down. And when he had brownie crumbs stuck to his face, I figured that was as good a time as any.

"Listen bud. Sadie's not your tether."

He stopped eating for a second and looked up at me. I couldn't read his expression. Maybe he wasn't feeling it yet.

"Yeah," I said, "I was thinking that any day where Sadie got cake would be a good day for your psis, but I was wrong. She had some today, and today wasn't your best ever, you know?"

He was looking at the table now, meekly, at the cards and glass. "I can do better."

"No, pal, that's not it," I told him. "This isn't about doing better or worse. It's just about finding your tether."

"Jack of hearts," he said, looking at the deck.

"Trev..."

"Jack of hearts."

I flipped it over. Three of spades.

He started to cry.

August 20th, 2053

It's all so weird, because when I first found Trevor? I thought I'd hit the jackpot.

I got sent to Washington after they picked up some weak psis at the school, but the longer I stayed, the stronger they got. I didn't know who it was at the time, just a list of three hundred names or so, but a few weeks in, we were seeing levels as high as Sadie's.

Then I found him.

It was recess, and the kids were playing kickball, as kids will, and Cassie was supervising them, and I was out there researching, but mostly I just wanted to talk to Cassie. She started on her ne'er do well brother, a bit, but stopped herself when she realized the kids might be listening. Then I was telling her all about my wasted youth getting drunk in boats, and she seemed a little nervous about that, too, on account of the kids, so I toned it down a bit. She still laughed.

Well, it was Trevor's turn to kick, though I didn't know his name at the time, and he goes to the plate, and he kicks the regular way and it goes a regular distance, but he gets stuck, legs swung up and arms swung out, like he's frozen. And then, shit you not, he starts to float, just a bit but enough to tell for sure, until he comes crashing down and audibly cracks his ankle. All this happening like he's attached to some pulley or something. All this before everyone's eyes.

When I checked in on him at the hospital, the psis were wild. Just huge. I thought he was gonna be another Sadie. What happened?

August 23rd, 2053

Well, ladies and germs, folks at home, my imaginary audience, I've got a real choice plot twist for you today: Carol and I had sex.

We were talking over dinner, and with my project harassing her project, we actually had something to talk about, you know? So we were talking and she said that Sadie hadn't said anything about Trevor since I'd talked to him, and when she'd checked in on the boy, he was on his best behavior. She thanked me, not profusely or nothing, but in a way that I believed.

And, now, I've been matching Trev's psis against Sadie's even after I'd talked him out of it, and the numbers are promising, though I'll be the first to admit they're not conclusive. And here, with Carol thanking me for giving this whole thing up, I felt kinda low for looking into it. But I told myself it was just knowledge, that it wasn't hurting nobody, that it was better for me to know than no one to know, and that helped with the guilt.

"He's even eating again," Carol said. "At the cafeteria."

And I smiled at that. "Ah shit. That might be even worse."

"I caught a whiff—just a whiff—of soup the other day?" she said. "I almost threw up."

"Chicken noodle shouldn't smell like fish," I said, and that got a bona fide laugh out of her.

"Hey, do you remember the oatmeal at FSU?"

And it did—runny when hot, a goddamn brick when cool—and then we started reminiscing about the good old days. Bad food, inconstant air conditioning, yours truly mixing schnapps in the cake batter and immediately regretting it—it was nice. And then one thing lead to another, and, well, we had sex.

And it had been a while—a *while*—since. And, honestly, folks, it kinda reminded me why we didn't have sex for so long to begin with. It was...now, look, I am a modern man who understands the value of open emotions, but I'm also

an adult human being, so I don't want to say the sex is scary. I'm not *scared* of the sex. But there's something goddamn vertiginous about the whole deal, gross and acrobatic and exposed, and I am just about as content to be watching vids as I am to doing the fucking myself.

She was all naked on the couch, and I had my pants off but shirt still on, looking like I'd pissed myself and needed to change, and we started going at it from behind but then Carol stopped me, and she turned around, and she lay all naked and creamy on the couch staring up at me, and she told me to take off the shirt. So I took off the shirt, but I wasn't real happy about that. The old spare tire came falling out, the chest fat pointing hard, and she was smiling but not a smile I could trust.

And thinking back to FSU, what'd started this all, I remembered how beautiful I'd been then. How I'd been able to turn Carol on without even meaning to, just rolling up a sleeve or reaching for something high, and now I was trying damned hard to turn her on but it wasn't easy, wasn't natural, and I didn't believe her. I didn't believe that this was anything but theatre, that smile, and I felt slimy and I felt thrumming. So I closed my eyes.

I didn't last long—of goddamn course I didn't last long, I'm living like a virgin teen these days—so I finished her off with my mouth. And, my face buried up there, even knowing my ass was summitting up and my legs were falling off the arm rests, she moaned and it was like a blanket, or a bass drum, or piano wire, and that's all there was around me, and I wasn't a body no more, just a sound, her sound, even if all I tasted was me.

August 30th, 2053

I got a text from Cassie. Just a picture of a pan of brownies. Just a bit burnt at

the edges.

"Not as good as yours," it read.

I'm an adult. I've got a retirement account. I change my own oil. I thought I was past being a lovesick teenager.

But I just kept looking at that text, all through the day and sneaking off to the bathroom to look at it that night. I felt it all the way through me, deep and warm.

I knew I should have deleted it. For Carol's sake, maybe even for the program's. Instead, though, I kept it saved.

August 31st, 2053

Carol got a call in the middle of the night.

"Anything I should know about?" I asked.

"You can go back to sleep," she said.

And, you know what? I went back to sleep.

It was only in the morning, when I checked my work mail, that I found out the problem was Trevor.

He'd broken out of his enclosure. Sensors picked up a burst of psis, more than any he'd shown before, enough to short the cameras and let him into another block. Sadie's, in particular.

He had tried to open her skull.

It hadn't worked, of course. He'd broken the dampener when he broke in, and so she had him crumpled up and vomiting blood before he could lay a finger on her. But he'd told her, when she'd asked, before she wrecked him. That he was there to open up her skull to find out *he* worked.

I had been ready for a nice Sunday. Relaxing Sunday. Catch up on my sleep.

When I heard Carol got back, it was still blue dawn and I was in my boxers. The house was real quiet, and her anger was quiet too but I could hear it clear. She was microwaving something when I came down, and she didn't turn to look at me.

She asked me if I'd read the work mail and I said yes. I asked why they didn't call me in, since I'm Trevor's shrink, but she didn't say anything to that. She asked me what I told him, what I taught him, and I assured her up and down that I didn't tell Trevor anything that made it seem like *this* was acceptable.

And I kept saying all the right things, okay? That I was horrified. That I'd talk to Trevor, and not in a boys-will-be-boys sorta way. That if there was anything I could do for Sadie, I'd do it, no questions asked.

"What could you do for Sadie?" she asked, and I remember that because it stung. And because I didn't have an answer, and I just stood there with my mouth half-open and my feet getting cold. When the silence got to be too much, I said again that I'd talk to Trevor.

She didn't say anything to that. She was looking past me, then away, and she turned to the cupboard to get a glass but there weren't any. She slammed the cupboard door and I really wished I had emptied the dishwasher.

"How could you let this happen?" she asked, and I remember that too. And I won't lie, I was getting pissed off at this point, because I hadn't, okay? I hadn't *let* this happen. This wasn't on me, and it wasn't fair to act like it was, and I told her as much, and she just kinda shook her head, not meeting my eyes.

"I'll just kill Trevor. How about that?" I asked, and she just kept shaking her head and I repeated myself, "how about that," getting louder and louder until I realized she was crying.

"What the fuck have I done to her?" she asked, and I felt like a real heel. "What is wrong with me?"

I told her it wasn't her fault, because it wasn't, and I told her we were doing important work, because we were, and I told her that there was nothing for us

to feel guilty about, but I wasn't so sure about that.

September 1st, 2053

I checked. Believe me, I checked. But with psis that big last night, when Sadie's psis were normal and no one was giving her cake? She's not his tether. She can't be.

I went to visit Trevor. He was in solitary, though of course we call it something different. He was in solitary, as he should be, with dampeners blasting and one-way mirrors. He looked skinny, scary skinny, like he was about to pass out or something. I guess he hadn't eaten nothing much in the cell. I was glad I'd smuggled some sweets in, if only for leverage.

"How you doing, Trev?" I asked, just like I'd practiced on the drive over.

"Tom," he said, and it didn't sound like a greeting. It was like he was just seeing that I was there. Just noting my existence. Real spooky expository shit. He said it slow, long, like a sick person wallowing.

"Can you tell me what happened with Sadie?" I asked, scripted. Not "what you did." Not "Why you did it." Keep it vague, keep it non-accusatory. I'm sure he's already seen the bad cop here, and it's hard to be both the bad cop and to come bearing brownies.

"I went into her enclosure," he said, and that bit scared me. See, we obviously don't call them enclosures in front of the kids. Rooms, dorms, bunks, etc. etc. But we do call them that in the case notes. And I don't know if someone slipped him a note, or dropped one by accident, or he overheard something he wasn't supposed to, or what. I wondered, for a sec, if the dampeners weren't really working on him all that well, and I kept my hands real still on the table.

"Rooms, pal," I said. "We call them

rooms."

He just kind of smiled at me.

"Why did you?" I asked. "Go into her enclosure?"

"She's my tether."

"She's not," I said. "We went over this already."

"She's my tether," he said, again, forceful.

And I told him, over and over, that I had checked, and she wasn't, and we'd keep looking but he couldn't do this anymore.

"I'm not in control of it," he said, and he was almost at a shout now.

And I told him he was he absolutely fucking was, and I swore, because I was getting angry here. He was acting like a menace and blaming it on me, and I know I should have kept my kept my cool, but goddammit, folks, I was so tired.

"Someday you're going to hate yourself for this," I said. "You're going to be just fucking sick with it."

"She's making me do it!" he screamed, and it was a scream, a shriek, hard to piece together because I didn't want that to be what he said. But he said it. And I wasn't going to make the same mistake, like I did with his tether. I wasn't going to believe him.

"You're letting yourself do it," I told him.

And he looked at me, red-faced, so skinny his head looked unstable.

"You're lying to both of us."

September 12th, 2053

Not a great day today. Not for Cassie, not for me, not for anyone.

Cassandra called again. Said she was in the area, which was fishy since I'd never told her where I lived, but all this time hadn't been enough to kill whatever was killing me, so I told myself to go with it.

And I felt guilty, of course I did, but...

what's there to lose? Things aren't great with Carol, not after the Trevor thing. Hell, nothing's great after the Trevor thing.

We met up at a bakery, a little place in the next town over, because I was despondent but not reckless. She was leaning against the storefront, waiting for me, skin so radiant she looked like a new coin, and a sort of half-smile that got all up in her eyes and made me light-headed. I spent the walk over trying not to remember how she smelled, and then we hugged and it turned out my memory was pretty spot-on.

"Hey stranger," she said.

"Ma'am," I said, and flashed a smile that made her laugh.

We went inside.

"I'm buying," she told me, and I protested a little but not that much. We sat.

There was something really light in me, some sort of blimp or bladder, full of air and getting towards my throat. "Cassandra," I said, not quite believing it. "What are you doing here?"

She just smiled to that.

We shot the shit. I complained about government salaries and she complained about teacher salaries and I said some lies and she said what I thought were truths. Apparently, a student had poured cleaning solution in her tea one day, as a prank, and the kid was horrified to know that was technically poisoning someone.

"Yeah, poison's got no honor to it. Next time they'll challenge you to single combat."

She laughed at that, and it was almost more of a giggle, like she couldn't help it, like we were both inhaling something and on the same high. For the first time in a while, and certainly since the Trevor incident, I was feeling good.

Then she asked about Trevor.

“You remember the kid who broke his ankle playing kickball?” she asked, and I felt a little odd on account of how poor a transition that was.

“Cody or somethin’, right?” I said. “Maybe Gerald?”

“I think it was Trevor,” she said, and it was suspiciously measured, the uncertainty.

“Yeah,” I said. “How’s he doing?”

She was quiet for a bit, looking at me in this bashful way that seemed gently embarrassed for me. She reached her hand across the table and fit her fingers through mine.

“I know, Tom.”

“Know what?” I asked, which I knew wasn’t going to work but, hell, I’m an optimist.

“You took him.”

My stomach flipped so hard I had trouble hearing.

“And it’s okay,” she said, squeezing my hand. “You had a job and you did it. It’s not your fault. You’re not bad. You’re not a bad man.”

I was sitting there like bait or something, my ears ringing, not saying a word. I was afraid my goose was cooked and, more embarrassing, that if I told her more she’d stop saying those nice things. Stop believing in me. And I wanted her to believe in me so bad I had to piss with it.

“Buffalo,” I said, I think, still sorta stunned. “We don’t want another one.”

“Of course you don’t,” she said, at some point. “I don’t either,” she said too.

“I’m sorry,” I said. I was crying now. We were in a corner of the bakery, and I didn’t actually see anyone look at me, but I was smothered by the sense of being seen.

“It’s okay,” she said, again. “It’s okay.”

“We don’t know what’s causing it,” I told her, through sobs. “We have to...do things...we don’t like.”

“I know,” she said. She might have been patting my shoulder.

“We’re doing the best we can.”

“You are,” she said, “you really are. I just want to know how Trevor’s doing.”

I started crying harder.

“Great,” I said, eventually, and I just closed my eyes so hard that the tears splashed off my lids, knowing I’d have to open them and knowing I’d have to say some more words but wanting to stave it off as long as possible.

“Tom,” she said, and it was soft and it was understanding, but it was a reprimand, no doubt about it.

“I love you,” I told her, and I swear it wasn’t a maneuver or plot or trick, I swear, I just loved her and knew it, and it felt so big that it couldn’t stay inside me, and it felt so big that maybe it would swallow all this other stuff, and I wasn’t deflecting because I wasn’t in enough control for that, I had just meant it, right then, I had meant it, and please, fucking please believe me, fucking please, because she didn’t, not at all, not one bit, none, never.

She was quiet.

“What’s happening with Trevor?” she eventually asked.

“He’s been...” I started, and then I stopped, because I realized that we were just moving past what I had said, and she had heard it, and she knew, and she’d think about it and laugh, probably, or wince, or hate me for it, and I didn’t want her to hate me, so much, I didn’t want her to hate me. “Hurt someone,” I said, finally, all I could get out.

She let go of my hand.

She started crying now, trying to keep it in but shaking with it. She was all folded in on herself, a flag wrapped up by the wind, and I reached out a hand to her shoulder, I did, but she twisted away from it, like it was fire, like it was salt, and then she looked at me with some-

thing like embarrassment.

Like she had made a mistake.

She reached back to me, and it was my turn to pull away.

“We didn’t ruin him,” I said. “This isn’t our fault.”

And she was looking at me, still crying, still with something warm in her eyes, but now with something else, too, not warm but hot. It wasn’t the only thing there, but there was hate, raw and bleeding, and I was damn sure it was meant for me.

Cards on the table, I guess.

“I want him out,” she said. “Or I go public.”

In an even slightly better mood, I’d have laughed.

“You think you’re the first person who’s tried this stunt?” I asked her. “You think I’m important enough to do anything about it?”

She seemed, for the first time, uncertain. I must have been looking kinda smug, then, because she glared at me.

“He was such a sweet boy until you... fucking...kidnapped him,” she said, the last two words fast, like she wanted to get them out of her without tasting them on the way up. “You cut open his skull.”

“You didn’t know him, then,” I said, keeping my tone even as best I could, even with so much static in my shoulders. “None of us did.”

She didn’t say anything to that, just kept crying, violently but quietly, structurally.

I had one more question. And I didn’t want to ask it, didn’t really want to know, but it didn’t feel like there was a choice there.

“How long did you know about me?” I asked, real slow about it, sure to keep my voice level.

She looked at me, steady but for the aftershocks of sobs, and her eyes had anger going in so many different direc-

tions that it didn’t seem like any of it could get out. She opened her mouth, then closed it, then opened it again. It was like she couldn’t believe I had asked that and also wouldn’t have expected anything else. You know what she did next?

She laughed.

I made the call.

Once she realized what I was doing, she tried to snatch the phone. Then she realized how futile that was, that the bell had been rung, and so she ran out of the bakery. I just stood there, at our table, realizing now that everyone really was watching, both me and the woman running to her rental and fumbling with the keys.

They picked her up before she got out of the parking lot. And once the other patrons knew what was happening—knew who I was—they all stopped looking. Just went back to their meals.

I left my brownie half-eaten.

Cassie’s was untouched.

October 1st, 2053

That last entry? I wrote when I was angry. But I’m not angry anymore.

I’m not much of anything.

Trevor’s back in the genpop again, which is good, though I hear that may just be because his psis are almost gone. They brought in a new shrink, and the conferencing afterward was apparently damn unanimous: I’m not a good influence on Trevor. But I did everything right, didn’t I? I said the right things. I followed the script. I was kind when I needed to be and stern when I needed to be too. But maybe it wasn’t anything I did. Maybe it’s just something I am.

Carol won’t tell me either way. Hell, Carol won’t tell me much of anything these days. She’s working a lot, even more than usual. I was cagey in my report on Cassie, said she was just

AUTOSCOPY

an acquaintance, but Carol probably figured it out, even without the psychics helping her. Oh well.

I know that Cassie's in a cell somewhere on account of me. I try not to think about it, though I fuck that up too.

Good news, though, kinda glass half full: I finally figured it out. His tether. Too late to do anything about it, of course, but I'm still gonna count it as a win.

I'm not gonna tell you, though. Nothin' personal. Just, I'm starting to think that the less you know, the better.



Starved for Salvation, 2018
HB Pencil on Paper, 9x9 in.

Jesse Sanders

Ohne Bezug

By Sam Grayck

Several years ago, I began to anticipate dreams which would, naturally, begin to occur in several languages and I wondered how the words would hold together; I assumed that either different dreams would be monolingual, or that sections would be conducted in one tongue or another—but the units of dreaming, themselves, would remain linguistically demarcated.

Perhaps this was naïve; I was too optimistic about the orderliness of my subconscious.

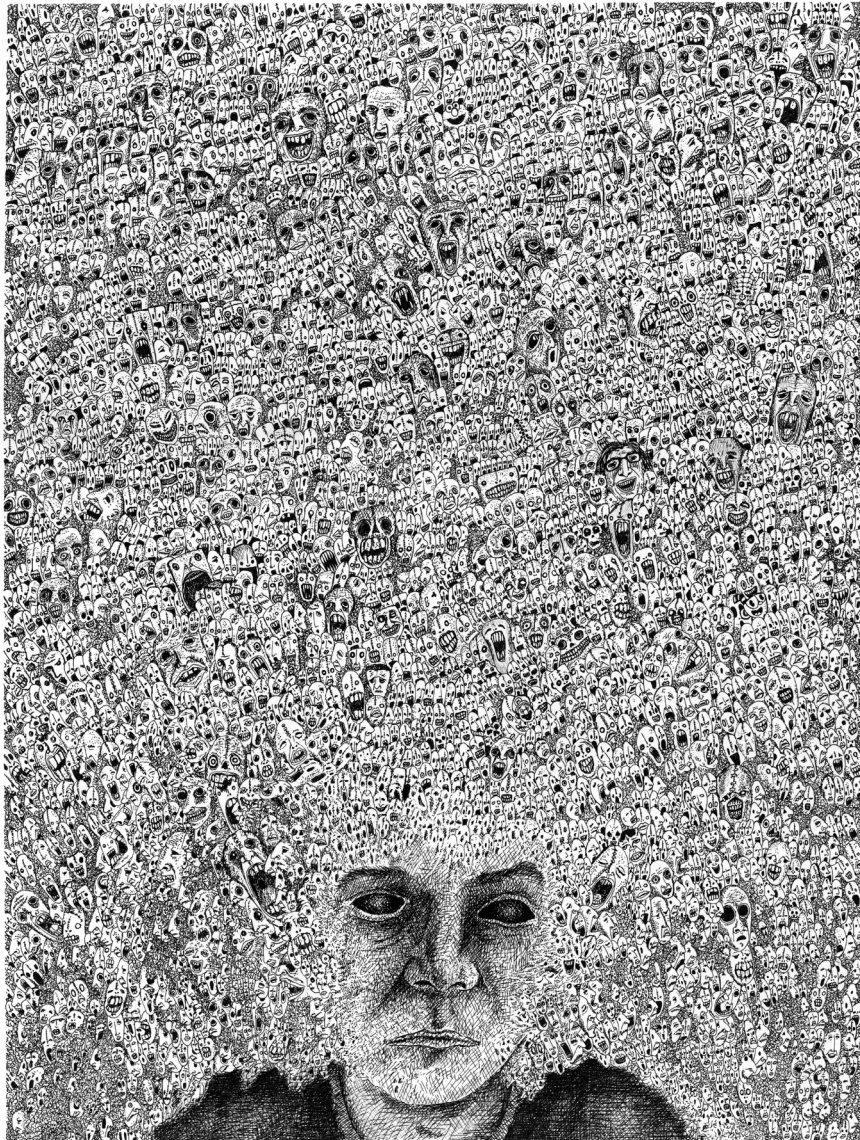
The first time it happened, I was in a café, outside of Bras-sur-Meuse et je parlais un français mais terrible quoi, l'accent était like rocks under my teeth, lodged zwischen meinen Lippen und meinen Zahnfleisch, Worte, die Im falschen Teil meines Mundes stecken und das frustriert mich! I'm a little narcissistic und normalerweise spreche ich ein perfektes Französisch People mistake me for being Belgian or French, you know, it's a kind of passing, comme un départ de moi-même aber mehr ich—keine Ahnung mais ce gars, il venait vers moi, il voulait parler de j'sais pas quoi, Moment, ich erinnere mich an...It was a question of location,

something about the wan light on the walls, [I'd been reading a lot about Eastern Europe, about Hungary and Latvia and Poland, and there's this deranged levity floating through the language, Shtetls waiting in the frozen morning light to be overrun, counting their children in the waning hoar-frost shadows.] I think that light though, is grausam grausam grausam, (was für ein gutes Wort!) Le type, il me demandait quelque chose, et je répondais comme une dingue, comme si j'étais incapable de forcer des mots into a structure, als ich hatte Sätze vergessen, like the order of speech got lost, irgendwo, hinter meinem Hinterkopf et comme il était dans l'est, et alles war ein bisschen tacky, you know, a little cheap

I just left coins on the table for my coffee and dann bin ich ausgegangen געער זיא סע סיורא (*aroyes es iz regn*) mais je pensait קשג קשג קשג (*geshemgeshemgeshem*) [That time in Israel, with my sister, her slipper-y child hand holding my wrist, we passed ליטסקטה תונה (*Chanve'et ha'textil*) thick carpets, rote Wolle in der Tel Aviver Nachthitze, ענדאמ (*modne*, ja, komisch) dass war... wir haben ein Taxi gefunden, et le type, er fragte mich בוטל לז גוס הז אל, בוטל לז גוס הז אל (*tzah soag shel retzev*, lo?) תצצומ ילז תירבעה (*Havrit sheli moavtzetzet*) but yes, קשג קשג קשג (*geshemgeshemgeshem*)]

Comme il pleuvait je me sentais un peu mélancolique, like I was in some strained Klezmer tune, you know, like heels clicking through the pain, ein gutter jiddischer Sinn für Humor, ich dachte an Tevye, quelle banalité, quelle bêtise—c'était עפיטערעטס רעשידיא (*ah eyidisher stereoteep*, *ah boyen!*) que j'étais con des fois, mais warum kann ich nicht sprechen? Nicht sprechen, kann j'arrive pas à m'articuler, words like cobbles, wie graue Steine; אָ טכיל (*ohn leekht*—aber das Licht war echt da) je comprends pas, nah? Des fils ser déroullent, zerissen, even my feet, the step step step (Schritt Schritt Schritt) immer weiter ailleurs, et le type mais que macht er immer bei mir? Sein Finger טריר ניימ דמעה (*reyrt meyn hemd*) warum macht er das? He's following me now, warum steht er da so im קשג קשג קשג (*geshemgeshemgeshem*)?

Ça va? T'as l'air gêner, un peu malalaise, mais tous va bien, Ok? Je respire et je ne parle plus ich warte eine Minute im Regen יד פיוא זלצפאק יורג (*oyf die groye kapalze oyn seder*) I let the words fall, let the hand rest on my gray shirt, the gray ground, the gray sky dripping gray water in thin gray sheets running not in fine rivulets but puddles, immature and pre-formed, le type, le gars, hat dripping, his face though is warm and smiling like Motel the tailor like alles lustig ist, er sagte mir, il n'y a plus point de reference, it's a good thing, tu t'es échappée.



Anthony Christopher

I Hear Voices, 2018
Pen on Paper, 11x14 in.

Anthony Christopher

The Future of Human Value

Redefining Work in the Pre-Automation Era

By Stefano Cagnato

Andrew Yang, a 43-year-old New York native, has been thinking about a way to fix the American economy, individual productivity and happiness, and the well-being of the world, for quite some time. After founding Venture for America, a non-profit that trains young professionals to enter the workforce, he realized there was one solution: Universal Basic Income, or UBI. But, changing the way we view the government and its role in funding our private lives would require a lot of political wrestling. In order to further promote his goals, he decided on a surprising strategy: to run for president of the United States.

Yang's campaign promise for 2020 is unusual: he offers all U.S. citizens between the ages of 18-64 a check for \$1000 every month, no questions asked. Of course, there is more to this monthly check than just "free money." It is a step toward the vision Yang has for the future of the world—a future in which robots do the unwanted jobs and humans have the time and resources to pursue worthwhile and fulfilling lives. However, UBI is not a final solution. It is a step in the right direction, a step toward undoing a lot of the inequality our current economic

system has created. In order to create a better tomorrow, a strong cultural shift must occur for us to truly begin to value human lives in humane ways.

The idea of a guaranteed income goes back a few hundred years. While it took different forms, the idea that the state should exercise compassion toward its citizens can be traced back to Johannes Ludovicus Vives¹, a Valencian humanist who wrote in the first half of the 1500s. Later, Thomas Paine proposed a "ground-rent"² that would be used to pay every person until the age of fifty. At the beginning of the 20th century, Bertrand Russell proposed "that a certain small income...should be secured to all, whether they work or not, and that a larger income...should be given to those who are willing to engage in some work which the community recognizes as useful."³ The end goal of a guaranteed income is and has always been the improvement of society at large.

In the late 60s and early 70s, UBI-type ideas were a vibrant topic of political discussion in the United States. Thousands of American economists supported a 1968 petition to Congress arguing for some guaranteed income.⁴ A year later, Nixon himself as president publicly presented the Family Assistance Plan (FAP) to support low-income families with a guaranteed income.⁵ FAP made it through the House of Representatives but failed to go through the Senate, and after Watergate and Nixon's resignation, the topic fell to the back of the list and stayed there. Since then, efforts to establish a UBI moved to Europe, where governments have slowly been introducing the concept and studying its effects. In 2017, Finland "began paying a random but mandatory sample of 2,000 unemployed people aged 25 to 58 a monthly €560,"⁶ according to *The Guardian*. However, to this day we do not have a study of UBI large enough to proclaim with extreme confidence its benefits to society.

So, why, in 2020, give every American a check without requiring anything in return? Well, to start, we are utterly unprepared for the toll automation is already taking on our job market. In the next twelve years, a third of all Americans will lose their jobs to automation.⁷ That is a dark

1) Juan Luis Vives, *De Subventionem Pauperum, Sive de humanis necessitatibus*, 1526. "Even those who have dissipated their fortunes in dissolute living - through gaming, harlots, excessive luxury, gluttony and gambling - should be given food, for no one should die of hunger."

2) Thomas Paine, *Collected Writings* (Library of America, 1995). In 1797, Paine wrote a pamphlet titled *Agrarian Justice* where he details the concept of a citizen's dividend, based on the idea that the physical world belongs to everyone. Profits that come from the natural world should then be dispersed among those who inhabit that land. This concept goes back to Classical Athens.

3) Bertrand Russell, *Roads to Freedom. Socialism, Anarchism and Syndicalism*, London: Unwin Books (1918), pp. 80-81 and 127.

4) "Economists' Statement on Guaranteed Annual Income," 1/15/1968-4/18/1969 folder, General Correspondence Series, Papers of John Kenneth Galbraith, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library. "The country will not have met its responsibility until everyone in the nation is assured an income no less than the officially recognized definition of poverty."

5) "Richard Milhous Nixon," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 2018.

6) John Henley, "Money for Nothing: Is Finland's Universal Basic Income Trial Too Good to Be True?," *The Guardian*, January 12, 2018.

7) James Manyika et al., "Jobs Lost, Jobs Gained: What the Future of Work Will Mean for Jobs, Skills, and Wages" (McKinsey Global Institute, November 2017). The report focuses on the potential for automation, meaning it does not predict exact trends within the economic market as to when

future to accept, but we have two options: do what current politicians are doing, which is nothing, or accept the reality of the current conditions of the first world and choose a solution to tackle the problem. UBI is one such solution, and Yang believes it “would provide money to cover the basics for Americans while enabling us to look for a better job, start our own business, go back to school, take care of our loved ones or work towards our next opportunity.”⁸ As machines take over the lower-skilled routine jobs currently performed by humans, we will have to discover other ways for people to obtain the funds to pay for necessary goods and services like food and rent.

Take the most popular example posed when discussing UBI. Truck drivers, of which there are 3.5 million, most of whom are men, are facing the pressure of the success of self-driving trucks. Or we can look at Amazon Go, a brick-and-mortar store in Seattle that does away with the checkout process through cameras that scan the products as you pick them off the shelves. By doing so, they are getting rid of cashiers, who currently hold more than 3.5 million jobs in the US. Even bank tellers are feeling the pressure of **losing their jobs thanks to online banking**.⁹ The blow of automation will mostly affect countries whose economies depend on low-cost production. *Foreign Policy* reports that “56 percent of salaried workers in Cambodia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam — are at high risk of being replaced by machines.”¹⁰ We must accept that it is not a matter of *if* automation will replace jobs, but rather *when*.

In an effort to help those who are or will be unemployed, some have proposed retraining programs. However, **studies show a majority of those who go through retraining either stay unemployed or do not stay in jobs for which they were trained**.¹¹ They also do not make as much money in their new jobs, making this solution seem unfair. In fact, the entire premise of retraining is flawed when we consider that the titans of the new economy aren't job creators. Forty years ago, there was a correlation between the amount of customers and the amount of employees a company had. The new business model relies on algorithms being able to service many new customers online, doing away with many of the job-creating elements of late 20th-century capitalism. To put it in perspective: in 1979, General Motors had over 850 thousand employees worldwide, according to *Foreign Policy*. Today, Alphabet (Google's parent corporation) “is the third-largest company in the world by market capitalization but has only about 75,000 employ-

corporations will make the move toward automation. However, the scene is bleak. The study conservatively concludes that fifteen percent of workable hours will be automated. Corporations will most likely be slow to adopt automation, but if we go through another recession, corporations will cut costs wherever they have to.

8) From Yang's campaign website, yang2020.com.

9) Currently, the Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts the number of tellers will decline by eight percent in the next decade.

10) Kinder, Molly. “Don't Fight the Robots, Work With Them.” *Foreign Policy*, The Slate Group, 13 July 2018.

11) Ronald D'Amico and Peter Z. Schochet, “The Evaluation of the Trade Adjustment Assistance Program: A Synthesis of Major Findings” (Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., December 2012); Chad Halcom, “Disability Rolls Surge in State.” *Crain's Detroit Business*, July 26, 2015.

12) Farrell, Henry. “The New Economy's Old Business Model Is Dead.” *Foreign Policy*, The Slate Group, 13 July 2018.

ees.”¹² Furthermore, this is a problem because the jobs that these new companies do create (and that will not be overtaken by automation) “require more education and skills than those that will be lost.”¹³ UBI takes care of a lot of these problems. With an extra check each month, those who lost their jobs to automation can subsidize their income while they choose which path to take.

The benefits of UBI are extensive. First and foremost, **giving people more economic security has been shown to improve physical and mental health while simultaneously reducing violence and domestic abuse**.¹⁴ Studies have shown that **poverty impedes cognitive function, in some cases by 13 IQ points**¹⁵; UBI would help those in dire straits from perpetuating poverty cycles. In terms of labor, UBI would give workers more bargaining power and encourage entrepreneurship. Workers would be much less likely to perform jobs that are not a good fit, leaving more time spent in creative endeavors and the formation of social institutions or organizations that aid local and global communities. And, perhaps most importantly, workers would not be encouraged to stop working. Many of us gain meaning, status, skills, networks and friendships through work, and this will likely not change anytime soon. \$12,000 a year is not enough to live on, and seeking an additional source of income will likely be necessary. UBI only makes it easier to find a job that provides a sense of purpose rather than just the bare minimum to pay the bills. So far, UBI sounds like it could solve many of our current problems. But, as you might imagine, not everyone is on board.

Most negative perceptions of UBI stem from perceived biases about the working class that are, in turn, reinforced by the media. In 2011, Fox News famously ran a news segment where they **claimed 99.6% of “poor” households have a refrigerator**¹⁶, implying you cannot be poor if you have a refrigerator, and that this kind of item provides some sort of luxurious lifestyle. On the contrary, due to automation and moving jobs overseas, consumer materials such as refrigerators and microwaves have become much more affordable, while essential services such as rent and insurance have increased immensely. *The Wall Street Journal* reports **rent has increased 18% over the last five years**.¹⁷ So, whether we talk about refrigerators, or shift the focus of the conversation to discuss cell phones and TVs, we are using the wrong barometer to measure the conditions of life for poor people in America.

13) D'Amico and Schochet, “The Evaluation of Trade.”

14) Kenya's UBI experiment has increased life satisfaction and happiness, along with a reduction of stress and depression (Johannes Haushofer and Jeremy Shapiro, “The Short-Term Impact of Unconditional Cash Transfers to the Poor: Experimental Evidence from Kenya,” princeton.edu, Apr. 25, 2016). In India's UBI trial, participants reported more ease when it came to accessing clean water and obtaining regular meals. (SEWA Bharat, “A Little More, How Much It Is... Piloting Basic Income Transfers in Madhya Pradesh, India,” unicef.in, Jan. 2014). Namibia's experiment reduced the poverty rate of the participants by 39 percent (Basic Income Grant Coalition, “Pilot Project,” big-nam.org, 2014). The link between poverty and violence is more complex than is usually stated; however, these studies have shown that decreasing the poverty level often decreases the amount of crime as well.

15) Anandi Mani et al., “Poverty Impedes Cognitive Function,” *Science* 341, no. 6149 (August 30, 2013).

16) David Shere, “Fox Cites Ownership Of Appliances To Downplay Hardship Of Poverty In America,” *Media Matters for America*, July 22, 2011.

17) Justin Lahart, “For Consumers, Less Debt but Lots of Bills,” *The Wall Street Journal*, June 23, 2017.

Imagine for a moment that you believe this premise—that poor people don't have refrigerators, that poor people spend most of their money on drugs, alcohol, and cigarettes (“temptation goods”), that poor people rely on the welfare state to subsidize their lack of employment. If this is part of your mindset, how can the idea of giving everyone \$1000 a month even be considered? Yang is quite aware of these preconceptions; he has a short FAQ section in his website dedicated to answering some of the most common questions about UBI and its implementation in our current economic system. A recent study published in *Economic Development and Cultural Change* found that **cash transfer programs can actually reduce the amount of spending on temptation goods.**¹⁸

But, putting aside preconceived notions of poor people, is UBI really a facet of what we would consider part of **the better future that was promised by the information age?**¹⁹ What this comes down to is our perception of the future, which is mostly based on how the media portrays what the future has in store. Jerry L. Salvaggio argues that the media portrays new technology in ways that benefit those same corporations with the ultimate goal of **“fostering a technological ideology.”**²⁰ It is not a coincidence that CNBC and Huffington Post write headlines that promote the view of UBI as a **“cash handout” and “free money.”**²¹ This is important because these are the venues through which the public learns about innovations, whether they are technological or social. The ways in which UBI is presented in the media affects its public perception, and ultimately, its ability to become social policy and its ensuing efficacy. Robert Jacobson tells us promises of the future can be used as propaganda—**“it is necessary to ensure that the discourse about the future is not controlled by corporate interests whose main goals are efficiency, control, and profitability.”**²² By controlling the narrative, the media ultimately controls social growth.

Ideologies aren't created in a lab; they form organically through the interactions between people and social institutions. Thus, automation and further advancements in technology will not magically create a better society. As T. R. Young

18) David K. Evans and Anna Popova, “Cash Transfers and Temptation Goods,” *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 65, no. 2 (January 2017): 189–221.

19) The following analysis of the Information Age comes from a 1987 compilation of articles discussing the ideology of the Information Age, cited under each footnote. The compilation discusses the effects of new technologies on society and how the technological advancements of the 20th century would affect or be affected by capitalism and its surrounding ideologies. In this article, quoting a compilation from 1987 serves as a reminder that these ideas, grounded on strong ideological concepts, remain alive to this day. In many ways, the scholars associated with this compilation were warning us about the potential problems capitalism could create in a technological world, and we have seen many of them (rampant inequality, media bubbles, etc.) come true.

20) Jerry L. Salvaggio, “Projecting a Positive Image of the Information Society,” in *The Ideology of the Information Age* (Ablex Publishing Corporation, 1987), 146–57.

21) Catherine Clifford, “This 43-Year-Old Running for President in 2020 Wants to Give Everyone \$1,000 a Month in Free Cash,” *CNBC*, April 11, 2018; David R. Wheeler, “This Guy’s Running For President And Wants To Give You ‘Free’ Money,” *Huffington Post*, May 4, 2018.

22) Robert Jacobson, “Shaping the Information Age Policy Agenda: The California Experience,” in *The Ideology of the Information Age* (Ablex Publishing Corporation, 1987), 170–77.

23) T. R. Young, “Information, Ideology and Political Reality: Against Toffler,” in *The Ideology of the Information Age* (Ablex Publishing Corporation, 1987), 118–32.

wrote, **“Any knowledge process mediated by an existing social structure will tend to reproduce that structure.”**²³ New technologies are created to *reinforce* current ideologies. Danish professor Lars Qvortrup tells us **“technology is a tool that functions in accordance with the social system to which it belongs.”**²⁴ In essence, capitalism will create technologies that produce the same elements of the system, one of which is inequality. It is clear that capitalism exacerbates inequality. Hegel argued that capitalism was not a society of equal citizens, but rather a society of social inequalities.

Qvortrup understands the current state of affairs through a Hegelian lens, writing that “the scenarios of the information society are not consciously produced to belie or escape from capitalism. Rather, these scenarios must be understood as expressions of the very hopes and dreams that our capitalist society produces.” He concludes that “information technology is a means to secure capitalism’s continued existence rather than create a new society.” In the information sector, Fred Fejes argues, **“capitalism will flourish, and the tensions, conflicts, and inequalities inherent in a capitalist society will be intensified.”**²⁵ It is clear that, within our current system, elements of inequality will pervade society. However, there are avenues through which a capitalist society can improve for the better.

Though capitalism aggravates inequality, according to Qvortrup, it also “produces dreams of decentralization and increased life quality.” The question then becomes how to establish these values in concrete forms. Decentralization calls for a type of direct democracy, a system in which the individual has a direct vote on policies. The advent of technology will create what Qvortrup refers to as “instant democracy,” and in a world where we all hold smartphones, it is not too difficult to imagine. However, Qvortrup doesn't see this as a complete positive, claiming “instant democracy implies that the horizontal relations between citizens are eliminated, leaving only the vertical communication flows between the rulers and the individual citizens.” This leaves behind the relationships people form with each other and therefore the “social power” we have to affect policy.

Along with elements of social welfare like UBI, decentralization can help usher in the digital utopia. Currently, the Estonian government is a great example of how decentralization can work within a capitalist society. The project known as e-Estonia aims to make all bureaucratic processes digital—today, **“citizens can vote from their laptops and challenge parking tickets from home.”**²⁶ The digitization of citizens' records and government agencies allows for the labor force to exist in the cloud, so to speak. This

24) Lars Qvortrup, “The Information Age: Ideal and Reality,” in *The Ideology of the Information Age* (Ablex Publishing Corporation, 1987), 133–45. One of Qvortrup's main questions is: why didn't new technology usher in the utopia which we dreamed?

25) Fred Fejes and James Schwoch, “A Competing Ideology of the Information Age: A Two-Sector Model for the New Information Society,” in *The Ideology of the Information Age* (Ablex Publishing Corporation, 1987), 158–69.

26) Nathan Heller, “Estonia, The Digital Republic,” *The New Yorker*, December 18, 2017.

makes it easy for anyone who works for Estonian companies or institutions to pay taxes from wherever they live and in the amounts that pertain to their allowances from the state. It is a step toward a borderless society. Estonian Prime Minister Juri Ratas said in a statement that the way we manage and process data “needs to reflect our freedoms, our interests, and our values, and it must draw out out the economic and societal potential of its use.”²⁷ Toward the end of his statement, Ratas claimed we need to “rethink our entire labor market and labor relationships, our education and training systems, and our social systems more generally.”

Furthermore, we can pair a decentralized state with elements of quantified human interaction such as time-banking. In time-banking, people perform services for others in the community. In TimeBanks USA, you gain one credit to your name for every hour of service, which can then be used to request a service of your own.²⁸ For example, you could spend an hour helping a neighbor move, and, two months later, have a neighbor help you paint your fence. While our current system values work at different levels, this system always values human time equally, no matter the task performed. In the *Grundrisse*, Marx explains “the exchange of values is the productive, real basis of all equality and freedom.”²⁹ TimeBanks agrees with this notion, stating in their website that “regardless of whether we value what we do in different ways, we share a fundamental equality as human beings.” By endorsing a time-value currency, they are promoting reciprocity and the creation of valuable social networks. Moreover, they are promoting work that may not always pay money, work such as improving our families, neighborhoods, and our democracy. Time credits are excellent at honoring that work.

Of course, like any major change to a social system, there are potential negative aspects to UBI. First and foremost, it’s expensive. Oxford University professor Ian Goldin calls UBI “financially irresponsible.”³⁰ Andrew Yang’s plan of \$1000 a month would cost the government over a trillion dollars a year, but since many of those who currently receive government aid will opt for the UBI check, government spending on welfare systems will decrease significantly. Yang also proposes funding America’s UBI through a Value-Added Tax (VAT), much like European nations do, but many are unsatisfied with the proposal. Yang, however, sees it as an opportunity to kill two birds with one stone—not only will the VAT fund the UBI program; it also makes it harder for corporations to hide their profits and avoid paying their fair share of taxes.³¹ Even *Forbes* published this headline in 2016: “Of Course We Can Afford A Universal Basic Income: Do We Want One Though?”³² Still, fears about

27) The Baltic Course – Балтийский курс. “Estonian PM: Tallinn Digital Summit Fulfilled Its Task.” The Baltic Course.

28) TimeBanks USA, 8 Feb. 2018, timebanks.org/timebankingabout/.

29) Karl Marx, *Grundrisse*, 1939.

30) Ian Goldin, “Five Reasons Why Universal Basic Income Is a Bad Idea,” *Financial Times*, February 11, 2018.

31) Yang’s campaign website provides further details on his plan.

32) Tim Worstall, “Of Course We Can Afford A Universal Basic Income: Do We Want One Though?,” *Forbes*, June 4, 2016.

UBI’s effects on the economy should be taken seriously and the discussion of the economic feasibility of UBI should be at the forefront of this proposal.

Another counter-argument claims UBI thwarts the public’s motivation and ambitions. Receiving free money each month will generate a “lifetime of dependence,”³³ as Goldin claims. This dependence, however, is already a growing issue; in 2015, the Current Population Survey showed that 18% of unmarried men and 23% of unmarried women between the ages of 25 and 54 were not in the workforce. We should not worry about UBI causing this dependence, but rather if UBI will make it worse. But Yang’s campaign provides enough evidence to support their claims that UBI actually stimulates the public; with more resources and a stronger safety net, people are more likely to participate in entrepreneurship, social institutions, and actually meaningful work. Current welfare programs may sometimes take away benefits from recipients who pursue career options (for example, if you are on disability, getting a job means you are not disabled). Establishing UBI would remove the problems with participating in a society while receiving benefits. Even giving a check to the rich would help by removing the stigma from receiving cash transfers from the government—those with money are more likely to pay into a system from which they are receiving benefits.

Putting aside the counter-arguments, there are no other concrete solutions being proposed to argue against something like UBI. George Zarkadakis says we need to “reinvent democracy in a post-work future.”³⁴ Goldin himself argues that “to reverse rising inequality and social dislocation we need to radically change the way we think about income and work.” We agree on the premise that the current system values the wrong elements about human society, but we disagree on the solution. Goldin and others like him chide corporate and political leaders who postpone discussions about the future of jobs, but they, too, fail to further that discussion by not promoting any alternative solutions to the problems at hand. If policy makers cannot propose a better solution to job automation and the problem of work, we cannot have a productive discussion on the topic. Furthermore, the public seems to be willing to entertain UBI as a good alternative. As of 2017, Politico reports that 43% of Americans support some form of UBI.

In 1972, Yoneji Masuda and the Japan Computer Usage Development Institute presented a plan to the Japanese government with the purpose of creating “a society that brings about a general flourishing state of human intellectual creativity, instead of affluent material consumption.” The plan, set to be completed by the year 2000, had three stages of socio-economic impact:

Stage 1 – in which technology does the work previously done by humans (automation).

33) Goldin, “Five Reasons.”

34) George Zardakis, “The Case Against Universal Basic Income,” *Huffington Post*, February 27, 2017.

35) Yoneji Masuda, *The Information Society as Post-Industrial Society* (Tokyo: Institute for the Information Society, 1980), 59.

HUMAN VALUE

Stage 2 - in which technology makes possible work that man has never been able to do before (knowledge creation, or the amplification of man's mental labor).

Stage 3 - in which the existing social and economic structures are transformed into new social and economic systems (system innovation, whereby political, social, and economic transformations result from the first two stages).³⁵

Stage 1 is well under way. We are very clearly leading towards a world of automation where machines are doing the work previously done by humans. Stage 2, however, is not fully realized. We have software and algorithms that do work we could have not previously imagine or at a scale that was previously impossible (such as mathematical problems or network analysis). In fact, there is a current debate as to whether Google's engineers fully understand the algorithm they've created. With machine learning on the rise, we will soon live in a time where machines create their own algorithms and we might not be equipped to fully understand them.

But it is Stage 3 which we cannot forego. We must follow Masuda's example and allow for a transformation of our society toward a system that rewards what makes us human. Folks on both sides of the debate on UBI are right: *humans need a sense of purpose*. Therefore, we need to redefine work. We need to transform our current value of human life from "efficiency, control, and profitability" to some other system of value, one that values respect for one another, creativity, and quality of life. We might not be able to rid ourselves entirely of inequality or harmful ideologies, but we can work to create a world where human value is truly equal.

UBI, by itself, is not a sustainable solution. By giving people money every month we are trusting they will use it to grow themselves and support their families, but we cannot control how it is ultimately used. We must pair UBI with some sort of societal shift in which we begin to demonstrate to each other that we believe, truly, that each person's life is worth living. The reality is, technology is advancing at a faster rate than our social policies and values are. The ways in which we value each other has not changed, and therefore the value we place on productivity and efficiency remain the same. But how can we compete with the productivity of an automated machine? We must, then, change how we value each other's worth, change how societies value human life and experience, and let technology serve us under that purpose.

Frédéric Bastiat famously said: "the state is that great fiction by which everyone tries to live at the expense of everyone else." Americans value hard work and self-promotion, ambition and entrepreneurship. Giving everybody free money each month is something quite paradoxical to American values, but how are people supposed to work for their money when there is no work available, or when their jobs are taken over by automation? Will Americans redefine "work" to fit within the current standards of American values, or will we have to change the very same values that Americans currently hold? This, in essence, is the end of the American dream. Now we must dream something bigger—a cosmopolitan dream suitable for the zenith of the information age.

By Jack Tsukibara

SYMPOSIUM

do you think that
may be one day
when we're all as successful as we've been dreaming,
it could be like old times?

By Christina Manubag

First you saw them on her skin

A two-week old with tubes jammed into
veins of thumb-sized hands and feet,
eight months and twenty pounds on your thighs,
seeping out of still blind eye sockets,

The little green maggots
clung to her hot cheeks and wrinkled fists,
locked onto the respirator, to her lungs,
but even young she knew to cling to permanence.

After that you ordered your first dishwasher,
antibacterial soap and disposable towels.
At church you gave peace and Purrelled your hands
while the maggots bit into the baby carriage on the pew.

Seven years later they had laid claim to all of it:
her hair, your wedding dress, the master bedroom,
gnawing at the walls you could not defend yourself
so you packed your sterile suitcase and fled.

Every time you returned, they became a bit more bearable,
though by now they encased her body like a moss shroud,
her voice coming through faint and muffled and foreign.

Now fourteen years after that, you return to the hospital,
her arms wrapped, tan but cold,
all the green hacked off with a thumb-sized razor,

rejecting permanence,

sick and small with a face like yours.



You're On My Mind, 2018
Mixed Media, 1200x960 px

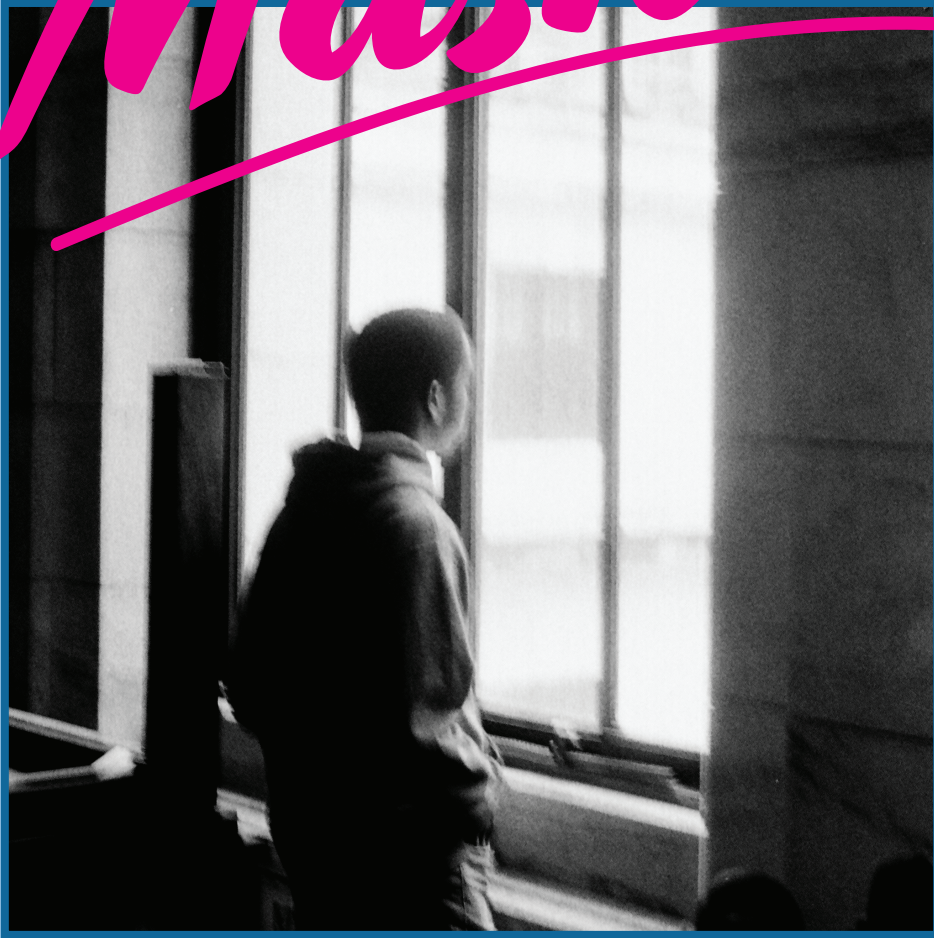
Mendes Vanermen



Lie Detector, 2018
Oil Pastel and Micron, 7x7 in.

Jesse Sanders

Masha



Masha Meyers' Last Weekend on Earth

Camille Larkins

Not to be born is, beyond all estimation, best; But when a man has seen the light of day, This is next best by far, That with utmost speed he should go back from where he came.

— Sophocles, “Oedipus at Colonus”

Since we’re some of the first people to arrive, Jackie and I claim one of the bedrooms upstairs with a queen bed. She likes the slanted ceiling and won’t stop talking about how cute and old everything is, even though I stopped responding to her remarks minutes ago. Laying on the bed, staring at the wood above me, I wonder how many people had died in this room.

“Oh my gosh, look at this little hearth. It’s so old. And the little chimney, so cute,” Jackie says. She’s taking off her t-shirt, hanging it in the closet with her other clothes and putting on a pale pink tank top.

“Yeah, it’s adorable. Not that we need it. It’s so goddamn hot and this fan sucks.” She pads over, turns the standing fan on a higher setting and starts trying to take my shirt off. I tell her to quit it, that I wanna go downstairs and get a beer.

“Okay, just let me finish unpacking first,” she says, sitting on the bed and scrolling through her phone.

“Baby, Jesus, do you need to unpack? We’re here for two nights. Let’s go,” I say as I get off the bed and head downstairs.

The doorways are small, built two hundred and some years ago for undernourished people, and I have to bend my neck to leave the room. House music and voices float through the narrow stairway but there’s only one girl in the kitchen taking groceries out of overflowing tote bags and putting them into the fridge. She uses my name when she says, “hi” to me and I don’t know hers but I remember her from somewhere, probably the girl-

friend of one of my buddies in college, and the whole thing is uncomfortable so I duck into the ancient fridge to get a beer, open it with my lighter, and try to smile at the girl when I hold it up and head into the backyard.

There are more people here now than when we arrived but the house still isn’t full. From the outside, it is gargantuan and gaudy, and when I had remarked earlier that I didn’t even know they made houses this big two hundred years ago, Jackie told me that the guy who owned it probably had slaves. I think about this for a few seconds and watch some guys that had been on the swim team with me finish their game of cornhole. As one of them comes up to me, I take a sip of my beer but the bottle is already empty.

My friend Bruce is shirtless and sweaty when he claps me on the back and says, “Long time no see, man. Where’s Jackie?” His hair has grown long, nearly to his shoulders, and he’s worked up a good tan like he always does by the end of the summer. We take a seat on a picnic table. He lights a cigarette before offering me one. He’s talking about his day-to-day, working at his dad’s downtown architecture firm in the afternoons but still making it out to the Rockaways most mornings, how the waves have been sick because of the hurricane systems moving through the south, but dude, the sea levels are really rising, at high tide the waves sometimes flood the basketball courts at Jacob Riis, and isn’t it so hot right now? I agree that it is hot, but it’s late afternoon, late fall, it’s supposed to be. But he’s shaking his head for a long time, running his fingers through his hair, saying that there’s no way in hell it should be this hot in November, when Jackie walks up and puts a ceramic plate of food and a glass of pink wine on the table.

“Hey, Bruce,” she says, the red fingernails on her left hand bright on his chest

as she wraps her other arm around him. “Xavi, are you smoking?”

I tell her to calm down, that Bruce had insisted, and she just stares back at me. She thinks you should only smoke if you want to die. Coughing and citing a need to go talk to Masha, whom none of us had actually seen yet, Bruce leaves us alone at the picnic table and I start peeling some white paint off the wood.

“I don’t want this weekend giving you any ideas,” Jackie says. She looks like she’s going to cry and when I ask her if she’s drunk she blinks rapidly but doesn’t touch her eyes. “Christ, no. I just don’t know how everyone can be playing cornhole right now. I’m not even, like, her best friend but I somehow give more of a shit than your whole group.”

“I didn’t get any ideas after Brandon’s party, or Emma’s, or Clay’s in the spring, did I?” I respond after some time. She hands me a carrot stick and I take it, mumbling something about needing another beer. The carrot is rubbery and bitter so I drop it in the grass as soon as Jackie can’t see me anymore and think about whether it will ever get the chance to decompose or just be snatched up by a deer later tonight.

Even though it’s hot enough to break a sweat just standing outside during the day, it’s late autumn and the clocks fell back last weekend, so the sky is turning purple and green and it’ll be dark soon. Finally, for the first time in months, I see Masha. Somehow she is more radiant now, fitter and glowing, surrounded by tons of more people who have arrived and gathered in the kitchen. Even though they are technically talking amongst themselves, everyone is looking at and speaking to her. Masha stands a whole head taller than the girl who was putting away groceries earlier. She sees me and finishes dumping an entire bottle of tequila into a pitcher with ice

and something that looks like lemonade. Nearly singing my name, she slides out and embraces me.

“Xav,” she says again, “I’m so glad you made it.” She is breathing deeply, kissing my jawbone, and people are pretending not to look at us as I sink my fingers into her side, her lower back, finally allowing myself to smell her neck, thinking about the probability of Jackie walking in. Masha may never have to deal with the repercussions of this weekend’s events but I would, for a while at least.

Cold air from outside hits us. Somebody must’ve opened the door and the temperatures out there are plunging now, going to fall below freezing in a couple hours at most, and I remember a time when the weather wasn’t like this but it was a long time ago and I don’t want to stop touching her but I do because I have to, at least for right now, and I stumble over my words when I ask her how she feels about her impending suicide.

“I can’t explain it,” she says. “It’s like the night before graduation or something. You know it’s going to happen and you’ve known for a while but it doesn’t hit you until it actually does. Maybe it never will. It could be better that way.”

For a while, I just look at her and realize that I haven’t wrapped my mind around it either, that it’s her this time and not just Emma or Brandon or Clay. She knows I want to say, “You don’t have to do this,” but I don’t. Masha mentions something about a sick DJ that’ll be spinning downstairs tonight, her friend that had come from Berlin for her last weekend on Earth, and asks me if I want a bump of anything but I just shake my head and tell her that I need to put on a sweater. Jackie finds me downstairs later, after it has been dark for a long time, and kisses me on the mouth, hard, wild eyes searching my face. She’s nearly

comically bundled up because the basement is only a little bit warmer than the air outside and her hands are fluttering, the whole of her body moving slightly with the music.

“Come dance with me, Xavi!” Her teeth chatter as she says this. “You have to come see the lights by the booth. They’re super crazy.”

“Baby, what are you on?” I ask. She pinches my arm and laughs, either smiling or snarling at me. I can’t hear her response over the thumping music, which seems to have grown even louder since she cornered me, but it sounds like she’s asking why I’m smoking again. With my head between my knees, I finish the cigarette and watch the strobe lights hit the floor. It’s weird to see Jackie like this: she’s never been into dark dancefloors or “this kind of music.” Bruce comes over and gives me a key covered in ketamine and there must be over a hundred people when I look out at the dance floor, all hideous and unrecognizable under heavy coats and green lighting. My nose burns but I’m starting to relax, swallowing down the thick medicinal drip in my throat until my beer is empty. I hear Bruce talking about taking a trip down to Central America together this winter, bringing our boards and trying to see some rainforest while we still can, and I want to respond but I feel like I’m underwater and it takes too long so he says, “You okay, man? You know she just wants us to have fun this weekend.”

The next morning, I find Masha alone in the kitchen. She seems to be trying to clean it but the mess is so overwhelming that most of the time she just looks around, shuffling groceries into one corner of the bar and cups into the sink. I ask her if she’s slept yet and she says she doesn’t see the point. People are

either still downstairs dancing or sleeping, some in beds and couches, others in their cars or tents they brought. She asks me if I want to take a walk and I follow her.

This is the way it has always been, with her in the front and me a couple steps behind, asking few questions, content to be anywhere with her in my sights. We walk far enough from the house that only with great effort can we hear the heavy bass rising from underground. Most of the leaves have fallen from the trees and we rustle them with every step through the wooded backyard but are otherwise silent. I want to say, “You don’t have to do this,” but before I can she puts her hand over my mouth.

“Do you remember that time we slept on the golf course behind my house?” she asks. “And we went to the driving range and filled our jackets with as many balls as we could, just because we could, and we brought them back to our sleeping bags and didn’t even know what to do with all of them?”

“Yeah,” I say, swallowing hard. I do remember that night—we were fourteen and had ended up throwing the golf balls at a black swan until it ran at us with its wings raised in anger, honking and spitting as we retreated to another green. By the time we felt safe enough to go back, the sun was rising and our sleeping bags were soaked by the sprinklers. “What am I supposed to do after this, Masha? What am I supposed to do?”

“What are any of us supposed to do? Have you looked outside lately, Xavi? The world is going to shit. Not eating meat, not driving, none of it’s enough anymore. We’re all taking up too much space. I have to do this; I’ll be with Clay again, I’ll finally do something good for the world. All I’ve done is take and take and it’s just too much.” She’s rambling, exhausted, bleary-eyed.

Not wanting to cry, I say nothing. She speaks again, this time using words that are not her own: "Humans have the unfortunate distinction of being the most destructive and harmful species on earth. This movement is important. Voluntary population reduction is vital."

"You're fucking delusional," I say, my voice cracking. The walk back to the house is uphill and the crunching of the leaves under my feet isn't loud enough to cover up the sound of Masha crying.

I don't want to go into the basement or be outside in the heat any longer, so I climb the stairs, pull the curtains in our room shut and lie down in bed next to Jackie, who must not have really been sleeping because she opens her eyes and smiles a little when she sees me. She looks tired and when I smooth some hair out of her face and ask her how she's doing, she says, "Better now." I fall asleep for a while after we have sex but I'm awoken by a piercing headache so I take half a Xanax and have dreams of Masha getting hit by a train.

When I wake up again, Bruce is sitting at the foot of the bed, massaging Jackie's feet as she laughs, in the middle of telling the story about the time she had a UTI for three months. I ask what time it is and Bruce takes his hands away from her, saying, "Oh, hey man. It's gonna get dark. I think we're doing the cake and some pictures outside pretty soon." Unable to find my boxers, I walk naked into the bathroom, slam the door behind me and take a shower so hot that my skin turns red. When I can't see through the steam anymore, I get out.

No one thought to bring candles for the cake, but it's not like it's her birthday or anything, so we just stand around and look at her for a while, waiting for Masha to say something or cut it or both. Eventually, she says, "Thank you guys

for being here. I really, truly love you all. My life has been so full and I owe it to you." The cake is huge but there are so many of us that the pieces are only a couple of bites. Overwhelmed by the smell and the too-happy murmuring by Masha's shitty friends from work, I leave my plate on the kitchen table to go outside and throw up.

People look over at where I'm sitting as they file out with champagne glasses. They start taking pictures of each other in different combinations and poses, everyone competing to get photos with Masha, who has showered and changed and is stunning in a low-cut black top, the one she always wears to go dancing. No one comes over to me. The only voice I can make out is Jackie saying, "Oh my gosh, send me that one!" After some of the guests have gone back inside, Masha walks over to the picnic table, flanked by Bruce and Jackie and some of the other people that made up our friend group in college. They are complaining about the crazy amount of randoms here now, how someone's brother invited his friends from Bennington and the whole thing has turned into a shitshow and Masha says that she kinda likes it. Bruce passes me a joint that's going around and I try to hide how shaky my hands are.

I speak for the first time in a long time, saying, "It looks like your last sunset is going to be beautiful, Mash," and then everyone is quiet, listening to shrieks and glass breaking and doors opening and closing until it's dark.

Jackie and Bruce leave, wanting to put warmer clothes on and check out whoever's DJing. One of the guys from the swim team asks me for a cigarette. I don't remember having a pack in my hands and I certainly didn't bring one to the house but I end up giving one out to everyone left at the picnic table. Looking at me, Masha begins laughing uncon-

trollably and says,

"I'm sorry, Xav, but are they sleeping together?"

I realize she's talking about Jackie and Bruce. They probably are, and I'm starting to laugh too, telling the group about how he was giving her a foot massage this afternoon and none of us can stop laughing when two of the guys from the swim team do their best impressions of Bruce in bed. Even though it's too dark now to make out faces, I watch the red ends of everyone's cigarettes bob up and down, picturing the smiling mouths behind them, and put my arms around Masha. The two of us breathe in the warmth until everyone is quiet again.

"I miss Clay and Brandon," someone says.

"They did what they felt was right," Masha says. "Their lives meant something."

I say, "Hopefully you'll be partying with them tomorrow night."

"I might be too hungover," she says. It feels good to laugh again until we all decide that it's too cold to stay outside any longer. As we descend the stairs into the basement, Masha asks me if I'll actually dance with her tonight. Because it's my oldest friend's last night on Earth, I say I will and she smiles when she bites off half a pink pill that looks like a skull, putting the other piece in my mouth with her long, dark fingers.

This is Masha's favorite place: a dark basement surrounded by graffiti and dingy couches and underage kids whistling with the rises and falls of techno music and I'm thinking of all the stairs I've descended, in Montreal and Brooklyn and Hamburg, to see her this happy. It's strange that our last night is here, in a two hundred year-old mansion in Vermont that was mainly attractive for its large cellar, but I realize she purposefully chose a place so far removed from

our lives that we would never need to come back to it again.

I'm grateful that Jackie and some guys from the swim team come up to us, interrupting my thoughts of logistics and how many hours we have left.

"You look happy," Jackie shouts over the music. I am suddenly aware that my cheeks are sore from smiling and I try to relax my jaw as I nod and say, "Yeah." Her breath smells like cigarettes when she kisses me on the cheek and tells me she loves me before walking into another corner of the room.

We don't realize how quickly the time has passed until we ascend the stairs to the kitchen to get a drink of water. Masha curses when she sees the beginnings of sunrise, runs a hand through her hair and rests her palms on her face.

"It's almost morning," I say incredibly slowly.

My heart is pounding and the music is still thumping through the floorboards and if I'd eaten anything today I might throw up again. I'm trying to breathe, to calm down, to feel for a second like I'm not the one who's dying, when Masha kisses me. Once, we were experts at kissing each other. But now in this kitchen we're too clumsy and eager and I'm crying, wondering why Masha started hanging out with people who kill themselves for the good of the planet, why we stopped doing this together, why we always felt like we had so much to lose, why I've wasted however many months kissing Jackie when all I've wanted is her.

"Xavi," she says. "Xav, I love you so much."

"I hate you," I reply, sobbing. "I hate you for leaving me."

She hasn't slept in days and it shows. "Please, don't. Just don't ruin it."

"Don't ruin it? You're the only one who gets out of this, don't you get that? We're

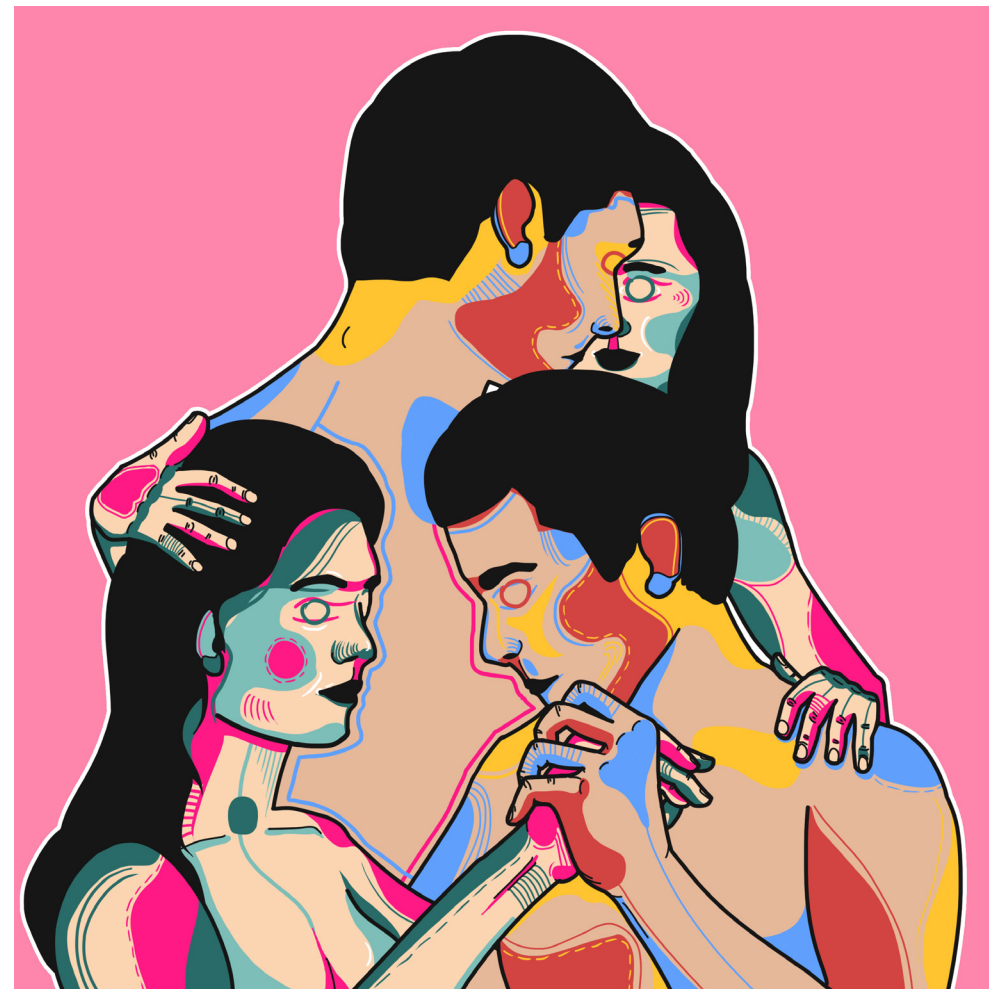
MASHA

stuck here and we have to think about you every day and you think you're so goddamn righteous but you're not because you're evil and selfish and I hate you." I'm spitting words at her but I don't care. "You'll go to hell, Mash. I hate you, Masha. I hate you."

She starts crying so I watch her until I can't anymore and I hug her again and say, "I love you so much."

She wipes away tears. "You're not stuck here."

We kiss until the pink light of sunrise becomes distracting. From the little kitchen window, we watch the sun come up with fervor and dread that can only come from two almost-lovers who would never be on the same planet again.



Dancing Lovers, 2018
Digital, 3000x3000

Nikodem Szewczyk



ON BOOKS, LIBRARIES,

& THE SELF THE SELF

BY ALEXANDER M. DETILLIO
BY ALEXANDER M. DETILLIO

In the beginning of Alberto Manguel's *Packing My Library: An Elegy and Ten Digressions*, he writes, "I've often felt that my library explained who I was, gave me a shifting self that transformed itself constantly throughout the years."¹ This idea of a "shifting self" captures how I have felt in reference to my intellectual pursuits and pleasures, and the books that have guided me through such transformations; our "selves," while perhaps always and forever shifting no matter what, are moved even more so when we are constantly in relation to reading and thinking about books. It's as if each book is a portal to an alternative realm where we can interact with alternative selves. But I'm getting ahead of myself; like Manguel says, "I digress... [h]owever strong my initial intention, I get lost on the way... I become distracted by questions that are alien to my purpose, I am carried away by a flow of associations."²

Having kept a day-to-day record of what I have been reading since the beginning of 2015, I have a document which attests on the surface to a desire to *know* about the world. Reading has largely been for me an attempt at gaining knowledge and understanding about the world in a rather abstract, scholarly sense. But recently, growing suspicious of the limited scope of such a project, I've come to see reading and thinking in a new light: in effect, it seems to me that one reads and thinks not just to *know* about the world, but also to *live* in it. And to live in the world is something that happens not just in a theoretical realm of the ideas within the words in books (as, for example, a theoretical sign-signifier-signified chain), but happens just as well in relation to the objects, their places, their history, other people, and the memories we attach to them—thus, both moving forwards and looking backwards. As Soren Kierkegaard says, "It is quite true what philosophy says: that life must be understood backwards. But then one forgets the other principle: that it must be lived forwards."³

In Tim Parks' recent book, he writes about how he associates "jargon-ridden works of literary criticism" with his stern and scholarly father, which leads him to claim that "[m]y family created a situation where I went to books for fresh air, not scholarship."⁴ For Parks then, books are a gateway to new, open life, not just stagnant ideas. Hence, instead of the following essay being focused solely on ideas and how they work abstractly in relation to the books they are housed in, I also pay attention to my experiences of buying, reading, moving and packing, and actively thinking about books. Contrary to the usual, largely academic idea of books as purely tools to learn from (think of the old, worn down and ugly text books from elementary school), I want to think about them also as artifacts, as objects that also tell a story materially. What is the intersection between the ideas and the objects? How does this intersection change the reader?

I am writing this essay as I start to pack up my apartment to move back home to Columbus, Ohio after spending a year of graduate studies at the

1) Alberto Manguel, *Packing My Library: An Elegy and Ten Digressions*, 5.

2) *Ibid.*, 6.

3) Soren Kierkegaard, *Papers and Journals: A Selection*, 161.

4) Tim Parks, *Where I'm Reading From: The Changing World of Books*, 42.

University of Chicago. As the year is winding down, I'm growing more reflective about the role books have had in both my intellectual and existential formation, especially over the last ten months. Have I just crammed my head with more information, or have I changed as a person? In other words, has my experience as a reader been one that has validity outside of the institutions and ideologies that have supported it? Is the life of the lover of books, as Albert Camus would say, a "life worth living" *in itself*?

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As she sarcastically glanced across the table, she said, "You have so many, they are overflowing into the kitchen." For some reason, books in the kitchen seemed strange. "A portion of those are cookbooks," I replied, not directly to her, but into the public sphere, as if to defend myself in court. But what's so off about books in the kitchen? In the morning, I can lazily peruse old textbooks while the coffee slowly drips. In the evening, perhaps something more vulgar, like Guillaume Apollinaire's *Three Naughty French Novels*. I bought this book down the street from my apartment for four dollars, according to the handwritten pencil marks on the first page. Almost 450 pages of French naughtiness for four dollars—is there even a price to be put on such delight? I flip to a page and a line sticks out: "That evening, I nonetheless went home alone. I had some vague thought of writing." Vague, or burning? Alone, or with an idea? Every library has such an eccentric shelf, where books that don't really fit the logic of the rest of the library end up, but which are still crucial to one's formation as a reader: we need these erratic shelves to open up new stories and possibilities.

"Every bookshelf tells a story," I once read on a bookmark that I found in a second-hand copy of Jules Verne's *Journey to the Center of the Earth*. A single story? No—many stories. There's the stories *in* the books (what they "are about"), the stories *of* the books (the textual coming-into-being of the physical objects), the stories of the books *in relation to* the reader (the subjective experience of a person in the event of reading the text), and the stories of the book in both *the history of books* as material and cultural objects (which traffics largely in ideas about material processes like printing) and in *the history of ideas* (how the ideas in the book have affected people over history). Depending on the size of the shelf, and whether the books are stacked vertically, horizontally, or even arranged two or three deep, these stories multiply. If your library is like the one in Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* (the first time I can remem-

5) At the end of each reflection, I list books I am packing in order to shine a light on some of the material objects passing through my intellectual and existential orbit. Within this list, I mention what kind of book they are, whether I have read them, and occasionally comment on how or where I got the book, who recommended it, or where I read it. I'm interested here in how books have changed me as a reader in a holistic and personal way, and these lists relate the abstract ideas to actual material objects. In a sense, I do also hope that someone might read the following and feel some of the feelings and think some of the thoughts that I have had and be able to reflect on their own life in relation to material books—and maybe even make some connections based on these words.

ber seeing such an archetypal example of a library) this could be hundreds or thousands of stories, all within one pictorial frame of existence. So many stories, so many perspectives, so much time and space.

The prospective reader here, staring at a shelf as I currently am, can become a traveler of both time and space, able to—"finally!" Kant might yell—transcend themselves, moving into the world of art, history, philosophy, sin, pleasure, and salvation (and of course cookbooks!) through these portals of paper and words. The reader finds themselves confronted with the world of human existence outside of her limited, subjective experience of it: the world attached to a history we all are defined by (as Heidegger would have it), but perhaps doesn't have as much import in our lives as the sunshine of spring or a conversation with a friend deep into the night; the world which, whether due to World War 3, the drying up of natural resources, or the fast and unforgiving march of technological advancements, might not exist much longer—that is, unless we strive to keep a connection with the dusty and forgotten words of those long gone. Miguel de Unamuno says in *Tragic Sense of Life* that this desire to not be forgotten is a key motivation to write, and is the desire behind all others; it's the desire to live, to continue on, to still feel the sunshine and hear the words of friends long after our time has come. By writing down our feelings about sunshine and friendly conversations, such experiences can be immortalized beyond our physical end directly and without pretense. Is it not the power of writing books to stretch our condition out just a bit longer? Perhaps at least until humanity itself (as a collective beyond the individual death) is extinguished?

Speaking of such things, I shift my perspective to another shelf. This one is in my bedroom, and begins the non-fiction section. About two-thirds down the first column is my nature and science shelf, which, admittedly, is far more full of naturalistic and transcendental writings than anything truly "scientific." Between Emerson and Thoreau, and stacked vertically with some other such books, is Allen Weismann's *The World Without Us*. This book was recommended to me as an example of what might actually be considered the beauty of such a world after humans are gone. A few months later I started reading it at a café in Portland on the day when the rest of my school peers were waiting hours in line to be handed their diplomas back in Ohio. I was imagining a world without humans—a world different from the anthropocentric one we know so well—on a day when many of the people I knew were being handed a piece of paper that was going to be a big reason for their success in that very anthropocentric world. My life, in this moment, was comprised of all these angles of this book: its story (as both a material object and the ideas it contained), its relation to me, and its meaning in the history of objects and ideas. What I think of and value most, however, is my subjective connection to the book and its ideas: I remember reading the book because of where, when, and in what state of mind I read it.

When I scan my shelves now, I think of all these stories and their multi-level connections; I imagine them emanating out of these material objects, giving them a life of their own. Their many-layered and storied life leads them, as I when I read them, to transcend themselves outwards into space, as if all the type—the little black marks on varying degrees of white paper—hold within each miniscule mark a whole world of life bursting through. And this *transcendental* life of the book stretches through space and time, beyond the clouds, and out into the cosmos. When the monster in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* is reading Goethe's *Werther*, for example, he is not just getting a 19th century, British education—he's tapping into this cannon of literature and thought as a way to delve into the human experience, in all its glory, love, and cosmological (in)significance. He's not *being taught*, but *learning* about what it is *to be*, and the very act of reading and fondling the books themselves is a part of that process. As life is not just the idea of it but also being it in physical existence, so too is a book not just the concepts within it but also its physical instantiation. Thus, like life, a book is both conceptual and physical in its essence: it resides in the space between Plato and Aristotle's pointing in Raphael's famous painting.

While I'm on the topic of Shelley's book, my copy of *Frankenstein* (the original 1818 text, of course) stands between an unread copy of Shelley's *The Last Man* and a very old copy of Bernard Shaw's *Man and Superman*. I wonder: if Frankenstein's monster could have and did read Shaw's book, would his fate have been different? If I had read Shelley's book in high school when most people read it, would my connection be different? Of course. For not only has my world changed since then, history itself has marched on. And every time I open a book, my connection to that eternal movement of history is both confirmed (I am a creature in a culture and history of books) and denied (in this selfish act of reading, I, like Kierkegaard, refuse to be swallowed by an impersonal abstraction). Like the properties of the books themselves, the act of my reading them is a moment (an "event," in phenomenological language) which spans both abstraction and reality; I travel through both time and space.

On the back of my copy of Miguel De Unamuno's aforementioned *Tragic Sense of Life*, is what I take to be the motto of the SophiaOmni Press: "Great Ideas Endure Forever." The irony of this phrase adorning Unamuno's book is that he takes this idea of living forever, at least in the physical realm, to ultimately be a folly: writing our mementos does not fully assuage our true, spiritual desire to live beyond our physical limits. He explains that one day, perhaps when the universe extinguishes itself, such a writ-

Packing: Arthur Nersesian – *Unlubricated* (Fiction, novel, unread, but read *The Fuck Up* by him just after high school), Anton Chekov – *Ward No. 6 and Other Stories* (Fiction, short story collection, unread, but have read some of the stories elsewhere), Molière – *Eight Plays* (Fiction, drama collection, read "The Misanthrope"), Paul Auster – *The New York Trilogy* (Fiction, novel, unread, another recommendation from professor Knowles).

ten work will also necessarily perish (not to mention all the more realistic perils books have gone through throughout history like the burning of The Library of Alexandria, which Manguel mentions a few times). For Unamuno, great ideas *do not* endure "forever." Well, at least not in their written form. But what about the abstract ideas and meanings in the work? Could they endure forever, beyond the material life of the book and author?

Everything from Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* (which, though heavily marked and read, I still have little opinion on), to Heidegger's *Being and Time* (which I've read and loved for years, though still find it hard to *really* grasp), to Norman Holland's *The "I"* (a find of last year's Hyde Park Book Fair which has stared, unread, at me since), tries to convince me of some idea of what it is to be "a self." Althusser, Foucault, Descartes, and Simone de Beauvoir all chime in, among others. Yet I remain consciously unconvinced of any formulation in its entirety, and what's more, I am currently drifting away from any concise, philosophical definition. However—perhaps more unconsciously—I have a dim feeling that these books have in fact seeped into my being and become a part of me. Though I flip through annotated "Xs" of disagreement, heavily underlined and highlighted lines, and pages without marks (did I skip that page, or just not have any reaction to it?), I find prescient moments outside of the act of reading the book when a few words will pop into my head. It's as if, though my conscious mind didn't wrap itself around such big and totalizing systems of thought when I was in the act of reading them, my unconscious mind (my spirit?) drank up every word. The ideas in these books, whether I am consciously aware or not, have become a part of my "self." Perhaps this quasi-spiritual connection to the ideas of old, dead, (mostly white) men, is what lives on beyond their physical being and their writings. Maybe one day, when I am walking down the street and a moment from Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* pops into my head, I will turn to the person I'm walking with and communicate that moment. And thus, the idea will live on. And, one step further, maybe I'll even get home and sit down and write out that thought. And thus written again, through my subjective lens, the idea will take a written form and continue on.

This idea of writing being an act that transcends itself—that goes beyond the moment it is written—is the spiritual power of writing. The idea that the words do not just emanate out of the book in the present moment of being-in-relation to the reader (as I said above), but which then coalesce in that reader, only to expel themselves yet again in perhaps a new formulation—this is the mystical weight of the written word. To move between lives, times, and objects, to *create a connection* beyond itself, is writing's modus operandi. A book is then the physical

Packing: Pierre Bourdieu – *Acts of Resistance* (Nonfiction, interviews and little essays, read most of, bought at Powell's), D. H. Lawrence – *Selected Short Stories* (Fiction, short story collection, read), Umberto Eco – *Travels in Hyperreality* (Nonfiction, essays, unread, but have read bits of *The Open Work*), Max Frisch – *Man in the Holocene* (Fiction, novel, read most of), Hinrich Fink-Eitel – *Foucault: An Introduction* (Nonfiction, philosophy, read), Edited by Louise Westling – *The Cambridge Companion to Literature and the Environment* (Nonfiction, essay collection, read excerpts).

instantiation of the metaphysical—it is the moment when heaven comes down to earth.

In one of his few interviews ever given, Cormac McCarthy said “books are made of books... The novel depends for its life on the novels that have been written.”⁶ Fittingly, this is the title of a book about McCarthy’s influences: *Books are Made of Books*. In this study, Michael Lynn Crews attempts to trace McCarthy’s literary influences, from Faulkner and Joyce to Camus and Nietzsche, claiming that indeed McCarthy is largely rehashing many things already written (or at least reorganizing them). Yet, as time has shown, McCarthy has been considered one of the greatest American novelists of the late 20th / early 21st century. But is McCarthy just unoriginal? On the contrary, perhaps McCarthy is just sharing the secret of every story: we are all in conversation with each other when we write, whether we know it or not. All the connections made before our own bare on the present. Perhaps we could go one step further: it’s not just books that are made of books, but selves that are made of other selves. This points towards a life that is not just “a life,” but “Life” in general. And the literary world is a part of that existence.

I bring this up partly because there’s a stereotype of the lover of books as always in solitude. We think of the monk in a deep dark chamber pouring over old manuscripts, or the single woman with her cats reading on the sofa to assuage her loneliness and lack of love. While it is perhaps true that books can be a friend when you have no others, it’s more accurate to say that the world swirling out of the book (with all its parts mentioned above) is actually what is being connected to. Nobody reads in a vacuum: there’s always a dialogue with time and history, with other books and ideas and people. In this sense then, great ideas *do* endure forever: as long as there’s readers, there’s a conversation, and as long as there’s a conversation, there will be books influencing that conversation.

The question “what are books for?” seems the wrong one to ask. “For”? As if all books did was work towards an end. As if books were just a means, tools without a joy in themselves. For some—and maybe most—I think this seems true: it’s a common point in many studies on the history of books to point out that the most common uses of writing and publishing are (and have been) for utilitarian purposes. Recently, *Kafka’s Office Writings* were translated into English for the first time.⁷ Though the scholar may wish to pull out clues to his fiction writing from such a collection, I can’t help but imagine Kafka aimlessly and frantically wandering through a maze of

6) Michael Lynn Crews, *Books are Made of Books*, 1.

7) Franz Kafka, *The Office Writings*, Edited by Stanley Corngold, Jack Greenberg & Benno Wagner.

Packing: Baruch Spinoza – *Ethics, Selected Letters* (Nonfiction, philosophical essays and correspondence, mostly unread, bought for research on the origin of “affect”), Edited by Michael Martin – *The Cambridge Companion to Atheism* (Nonfiction, essay collection, read excerpts), Edited by Graham Bartram – *The Cambridge Companion to the Modern German Novel* (Nonfiction, essay collection, read the essay on Kafka), Vaclav Havel – *Living in Truth* (Nonfiction, essays, unread, bought based on reading Tony Judt), Terry Eagleton – *Ideology: An Introduction* (Nonfiction, literary theory, read bits of and read *Literary Theory: An Introduction* for my thesis).

offices and sterile corridors in The Princeton University Press to try and make this stop. “But this will be a great tool for the scholar to understand you better, Franz!” Max Brod would say. A tool, yes. But where’s the pleasure in pure utility? Do books “do” more than aid us towards a simple end?

What about a dictionary, surely that is a book which is just a means to an end? I keep a few handy at all times: *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary* (11th Edition), *Webster’s New French Dictionary*, *Webster’s New Explorer Spanish-English Dictionary*, and *The New Fontina Dictionary of Modern Thought* (a favorite) all sit around my apartment in handy places. Sometimes, I open them randomly to read for pleasure. In Manguel’s eighth digression, we learn that *Flaubert, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Vladimir Nabokov all read the dictionary for pleasure.*⁸ Likewise, I have a friend who claims he started reading the dictionary when he went to public high school to make up for all the words he never learned in home school. He would then get caught up in the pleasure of the act, becoming enthralled with new words which he would joyfully deploy in casual conversation with his peers (he still does this). The effect of this strategy, perhaps to his chagrin, actually further alienated him; imagine a high school student casually using the word “bombastic” to describe a more enthusiastic friend. Of course, this is a strange sort of pleasure, one which I’m sure has plenty of import on learning and using such words even if we do just approach the act for leisure. So maybe, reading the dictionary is pleasure and utility all in one. Perhaps that is the ideal.

But, as Manguel suggests, dictionaries also tap into something else: “A dictionary... is in itself a paradox: on the one hand accumulating that which a society creates for its own consumption, hoping for a shared comprehension of the world; on the other, circulating what it amasses so that the old words won’t die on the page and new words are not left out in the cold.”⁹ The former signals the utility: understanding words in order to create a shared space; the latter points to memory: part of the pleasure found in dictionaries (and the words within them) is their dogged insistence on the past. And this idea of a book with its plot, theme, characters, and tone focused solely on words and the memory they carry strikes me as a possible answer to not only the “what are books for?” question, but also to the question of what books “do” to the reader: they make us remember.

Last summer, I decided to reread some of my favorite books. The most impactful was Ernest Hemingway’s *A Farewell To Arms*. I first read Hemingway’s masterpiece over ten years

8) Manguel, 103.

9) Manguel, 111.

Packing: Rosalind Hursthouse – *Beginning Lives* (Nonfiction, philosophy, mostly unread, bought after being introduced to her in a Philosophy of Ethics class), Raymond Bellour – *The Analysis of Film* (Nonfiction, film theory, read most of), Mladen Dolar – *A Voice and Nothing More* (Nonfiction, theory and philosophy, read the essay on Kafka; he co-taught a class I was in), Anthony Storr – *Solitude: A Return to the Self* (Nonfiction, philosophy and nature, unread, recently found in a free library box a couple blocks over from my apartment), Richard Rorty – *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (Nonfiction, philosophy and theory, read the chapter “Proust, Heidegger, and Nietzsche”).

ago, fresh out of high school. At that time, I was taken by the descriptions of war and love that I had no subjective connection to. But reading it this time around, I felt Lieutenant Henry's feelings towards Catherine. It made me remember. I remembered the feeling of waiting ("an arrival, a return, a promised sign," as Barthes puts it in *A Lover's Discourse*¹⁰) for the consummation of love and a future promise of happiness. I recalled the pain and joys of love. This novel brought me back to a life I had, both ten years ago when I first read the book, and earlier last year when I felt some of the feelings portrayed in it. That is part of the power of books: to transport us not just to the world of the text and the ideas and stories within, but to other points in our own life, to recreate the act of being in the world—both our subjective world and the outside world we live in.

Toward the end of Mathew G. Kirschenbaum's *Track Changes: A Literary History of Word Processing*, Kirschenbaum writes, "This is what we mean by materiality... not just the presence or absence of information, but the lived struggle to reclaim and to recover it, to remember, to experience, and to know—to be known. This, in the end, is always what remains. What else really matters?"¹¹ This desire "to be known," and its connection to knowing, which creates a synthesis between the individual and the world, is the strand of thought that relates to the desire to write and live within the realm of books and the libraries that house them. In effect, it is a curious type of "materiality": it is—to hazard an immaterial conjecture—the core impetus we all share in wanting all living to continue beyond the present, material aspects of being. Abstracting another step, this connects once again to Unamuno's thought about why we choose to write: "That is to say that you, I...wish never to die and that this longing of ours never to die is our actual essence."¹² It is in writing, archiving, storing, and safeguarding our mementos that those of us who are dedicated to knowledge and the written (or typed) word attempt to assuage and enact this desire to live forever. In a secular age, one of doubt and criticism—especially towards religious ideas of transcendence—perhaps we can immortalize ourselves in our written work.

By dedicating one's life to books and writing and the expanding world that emanates from them, and by such a dedication aligning with this fundamental desire we as humans have, such a life is worth living; despite an ever-changing environment, the bibliophile and the writer are the types of people who grab a hold of this fundamental desire and enact it continually. And their struggles are in fact then immortalized in their reading and writing. Thus, "the self" of the literary lover is a

10) Roland Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse*, 37.

11) Mathew G. Kirschenbaum, *Track Changes: A Literary History of Word Processing*, 234.

12) Unamuno, 29.

Packing: E. M. Forester – *Maurice* (Fiction, novel, read), Naomi Klein – *This Changes Everything: Capitalism Vs. The Climate* (Nonfiction, ecological essays, mostly read), David Mitchell – *The Thousand Autumns of Jacob De Zoet* (Fiction, read half, one of a few novels in years not finished once started; I loved *Cloud Atlas*), Immanuel Kant – *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals* (Nonfiction, philosophy, read most of), Mary Wollstonecraft / Mary Shelley – *Mary and Maria, Matilda* (Fiction, novels, read *Maria* for class).

self lived authentically in view of the human condition. As I quoted Manguel at the beginning, this self is shifting in relation to one's books and writing, but below such a shifting surface is the connection to a more essential core, a core which is our condition. And the books we surround ourselves with are the material reminders of our fundamental being, as one which desires to live in relation to everything else that populates the world around us—while still being individual selves.

In a month, I'll be finishing my packing. The time will come when my beloved collection of books on Albert Camus will have to be relegated to a bland, cardboard box. Cormac McCarthy's oeuvre will go next to Camus, covered over in the end by Ernest Hemingway. I imagine these three men in conversation with each other, perhaps the only thing in common being their love for short, declarative statements. Yet, what these books and the ideas within them also have in common is the marks they have made on me, a middle class kid from the suburbs of Columbus, Ohio. Could I find my own story written somewhere, maybe weaseled away in a dimly lit stack in the Regenstein Library? I don't think so. For while I could surely find everything I want to know about Hemingway, and much on Camus and McCarthy, my story has yet to be told. Or better, while maybe the above attests to some of my thinking and feeling, the book of my life ("of my wounds, my joys, my interpretations, my rationalizations, my impulses..." as Barthes says¹³) has yet to be written. As Manguel remarks, "I know that my full, true story is there, somewhere on the shelves, and all I need is time and the chance to find it. [But] I never do. My story remains elusive because it is never the definitive story."¹⁴ What I can say, however, is that my self has been "written" in one sense; all these books and stories and ideas have changed me, some even reaching down and plucking a cord of my essence. Thus, through this inscribing on my being, I am connected to a world that simultaneously defines and transcends me: the world of books. And through this connection, I reach out into the larger human community. I reach out beyond my self, and stretch into the cosmos.

13) Barthes, 93.

14) Manguel, 6.

Packing: Ken Kesey – *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (Fiction, novel, unread, given to me by a good friend, who quoted Roald Dahl in the inside cover: "A little nonsense now and then, is cherished by the wisest men."), Sebastian Knowles – *The Dublin Helix: The Life of Language in Joyce's Ulysses* (Nonfiction, literary criticism, only read some excerpts, though I had three classes—one on *Ulysses* specifically—with the author), Christopher Isherwood – *A Single Man* (Fiction, novel, read), Hermann Hesse – *Narcissus and Goldmund* (Fiction, novel, read), Nancy Milford – *Zelda: A Biography* (Nonfiction, biography, unread, given to me by my speech teacher at Columbus State Community College almost ten years ago after I did a presentation on F. Scott Fitzgerald).