



VAMPS

ISSUE 1
April 2017

VAMPS

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VAMPS

A manifesto of Monstrosity

The current Christian age cloaks itself in the masque of secularism. Popular western culture presents history and its past in such a way that believers have built up a dichotomy between the zealous, religious past of crusade warfare, Saint's relics and a secular present of Prime Ministers and neoliberal capitalism. This is the lie that we have all been fed. The medieval period is used as a catch all phrase to include everything "primitive". Christian and violent.

The glaring untruths of the current Christian ideology can only be apprehended one piece at a time. The 19th and 20th Centuries reveal in cinema, literature and visual arts that no other time period is as pre-occupied with imagined demons, torture, zealous mysticism and cults of authority. If a celebrity gets a new tattoo, waves of followers flock to their local ink-parish and receive the blessing of the head of someone else's dead bulldog on their thighs. Passion is upheld as the highest value in political democracy and faith in the strength of belief often elects politicians whom we don't like very much (save Master Sanders of House Vermont and Duke of Brooklyn). "Geek culture" has replaced the cult of relics and people choose their favourite icons and buy miniature statues, sacred texts, signatures and sometimes hairs or other corporeal remains attached to these celebrities. The cult of Elvis is nothing less than a rock and roll cult of sanctity.

The most disingenuous of all untruths upheld by the Christian world order is that Atheism is a contemporary phenomenon and that there were no un-believers before modernity. This is how contemporary Western powers mask their own Christian pretenses. The medieval period is one of incredible disbelief. In the early period, pagan myths and legends had to be used to create local saints throughout Europe because Christian theology did not appeal to most Pagans. Many would resent my use of the term Pagan. "Pagan" has the same negative valence today as it did for the patriarchal church order in the early centuries. The term still generically refers to countless vastly differing belief systems that are Christianoform in scope. Is there a way to re-appropriate Paganism from the establishment?

NO.

This manifesto discards the old systems of parody and opposition.

We discard Satan and We discard the gods of Europe.

We discard Internet Atheism. which is often nothing but a group of teenage boys who have just discovered how to disbelieve and presume that it gives them social and intellectual advantages over the rest of society. Pretentious and un-provable like Christianity.

We flagellate all of my own religious theology. Pretentious WASTE of TIME.

Thanks for reading.

Did we waste your time?

Perhaps you've been converted.

love = blood = life =

VAMPS.

Neither the Victorians nor the Medievals can match the current obsession with blood, pain, mysticism and monstrosity.

This MANIFESTO

**DEMANDS MONSTROSITY
GIANTS, CYNOCEPHALI,
ANTHROPOPHAGI, SUCCUBI,
INCUBI, CHANGELINGS,
CYNOMOLGI, REVENANTS, SERPENTS, LAMIA,
WEREWOLVES,
GOLEMS (and their paper scroll souls),
WILD BODIES**

VAMPS.

**THIS PLACE IS RESERVED ONLY FOR THESE.
MONSTROSITY>humanity**

WELCOME TO THE SECOND CYBORG AGE¹

**HAIL to Anton LaVey and his SATIRICAL
SATANISTS**

**For they have given a language of parody to
religion**

**HAIL Pope Francis for taking his faith to task for
its HYPOCRISY AND PERVERSION**

HAIL SATAN

HAIL SATAN

HAIL SATAN

**HAIL PAN for shattering divisions between the
BEAST and man**

HAIL the BACCHAE for ripping things to

shreds

**DAMN ZEUS for an inherited cult of rape
enshrined in western values**

DAMN

¹ The first would be the production of James Cameron's *Terminator 2*

THOSE who **CHOOSE** to build a
WAR of **CULTURES**
HAIL THE WWE FOR A FUNNNNN TIME
HAIL FANTOMAS for the modernist cult of
villainy
HAIL DAVID LYNCH for the lucidity of his vision
as a seer and prophet of the modern world.
HAIL MARILYN MANSON, DAVID BOWIE,
DANI FILTH, and **PAGAN METAL** because I
LIKE them.

HAIL BERNIE
HAIL BERNIE
HAIL BERNIE
ONLY he can **BEGIN** to dismantle the **CHAINS** of
SOCIETY and **CULTURE**

DAMN THE PHONIES
THEM

FOR THEY SMELL OF
PHONINESS (delicious, sweet)

THE HOUND OF JUSTICE
CAN SMELL THE PHONIES FROM MILES
AWAY

WE TIE THEM TO THE END OF OUR SALTY
ROPE AND THROW THEM INTO

DUSTY **DORITO'S KETCHUP**

THE PHONIES
DAMN THEM

DAM **N PHONIES**
DAMN A **LL**
DA **MN ALL**
DAM **N ALL**

I HAVE A GIANT SALTY PIT OUTSIDE
THEY WILL TASTE OF MY SALT
OR THEY WILL RECANT THEIR
PHONINESS

**AND BE PUNISHED
MAKE THEM BLEED OR EAT VINEGAR
FRIES**

OR WINE

FILL (and crush) THEM WITH

GARLIC **AND STUFF THEM UP**

FOR MY

**PERSONAL
TAXIDERMY**

COLLECTION

**(KEEP IT IN
DAWSON CITY)**

**THERE IS TO BE
NONE AUCTORITAS
BUT
—THE POPE OF PAIN—**

**NO OTHER MAY RISE
TO THE SEATS
NOR SPEAK FROM THE PULPIT**

OF SODOM AND GOMMORAH.

L.R. V (Lord Ruthveinn, Vampire) March 2016

My Brown-Eyed Girl

Theresa Faulder

Even in sleep, his ear is always attuned to the monotonous, electric lullaby of the freezer. At night, the sound seeps from beneath the basement door and laps its silvered water over his eyes, his nose, and his mouth. He curls his body into the watery murmur like a foetus nestled in syrupy-warm amniotic fluid. It is the most perfect sleep before death.

In the morning, he makes himself a pot of coffee and stands at the window. It is shaping up to be a Nice Sunny Day. Unseasonable weather for the beginning of November, he notes. He will share this observation with someone in the supermarket today. He smiles as he sips his coffee, his dark secret like honey on his tongue.

He walks out on his porch just as his neighbour from across the street descends his driveway. Their eyes meet, his neighbour's eyes are red-rimmed and hollow. He lifts his coffee in silent, neighbourly sympathy and prods his facial muscles into the appropriate setting for compassion and sadness. The neighbour stares for an uncomfortable second too long before nodding dejectedly in acknowledgement. He drives away, pathetically, the notes of "Brown-Eyed Girl" seeping into the suburban morning air.

He stands on his porch, sipping at his coffee, waiting for his heartbeat to slow. When it does, he goes inside and rinses his mug.

He descends the stairs into the basement. He takes the wet laundry, pink and sequinned, from the washing machine. He lifts it to his nose briefly and throws it in the dryer. He pauses by the freezer, a small smile lingering on his lips. He taps his fingers on the lid, "You, my Brown-eyed Girl". It really is a very catchy tune.

RE: Recto / Verso

David Eso

*poem in imitation of bookishness
for René Daumal*

Daily, when the sun trades its crutches
for stilts, make hay!
For Tweedledee and Guildenstern!
Two friends who commiserate
foreign frictions in an altered state.
Florentine gelato
on Guildy's tongue, both
British at boot and chin.
Tweedle, blurry his passport photo
spies shapes in Copenhagenean clouds
wherein two crows, relatives, relate
protests to each of the nearest breezes.

The moon drops, drops, drops and then it lands—
what a wonder what wonder withstands!

The holes in our plot stopped-up, or fretted
over. The rest just this:
what should be and not should be.

Make way for Rosencrantz
and Tweedledum—
who never meet. Having only friends
they have none and have known
only black damask of fictive paragraphs.
So? Fit them to that alter.
Press the mask's open eye
to the key-hole spot
in the middle
of your own
and only
back.

Grounded in Mythology

J.R. Loudon

first published in *Migratory Words Vol 4*

We questioned everything
when we were still freebirds
fiery and young

--

High as prophets
we ravenous few flew solo
on great and wide campfire wings

--

And gnawed loose
starving and half mad
from Liberty's Promethean bosom
the manifold inquiries of desire-unbound

And now
more afraid to fly than fall perhaps
we pigeon together on desperate psychic ledges

--

Our childish questing-why?
lightly fell away unnoticed
like night-times childish tooth

--

To be stolen
by P.R. fairies,
totalitarian swine
and the domesticating mythologies of parenthood

Stephen

Robyn Holly Taylor-Neu

Stephen. Stephen. Stephen.

He awoke suddenly. Tried to sit up. Fell back, poleaxed by a gut-deep pain. Eyes watering in the sunlight that filtered through the window. Stephen blinked rapidly. For a tense twenty seconds, he gaped at the nearness of his feet, before realizing that those twin peaks were, in fact, his knees. The room's ventilation system had a peculiar, animal whine. Stephen dared the sun's shards once more. Bony fingers pressed the glass. Gasps of colour, reddening leaves. One. Two. A third (orange), was dislodged and spun away, out of the frame. Leaves. Stephen let his head fall back. He stared up into the uniform holes, the ceiling's neat perforations. Mass-produced stigmata.

Leaves. Only a few clung. These brushed Stephen's hair as he wrapped his palms around a low branch. He hung back, resting on his shoulders, and walked his sneakers up. Looping a leg between branch and trunk, he levered himself upright. Bark scraped the soft skin of his thighs where the shorts rode up.

“ . . . seven, six, five . . . ”

Stephen tucked his feet beneath him and stood against the trunk. He stretched for a higher branch, stepped up, reached, stepped again.

“ . . . two, one . . . ”

Stephen rested his spine against the tree's. He peered down through the laddered branches.

“ . . . here I come.”

The orderly dots pulsed nauseatingly. Stephen's tongue against his teeth gathered thick strands of spit, mouthmatter. He rubbed away the maggoty threads with the back of one hand. Turning his head, Stephen saw a white paper cup, marked with an anarchist's A and a burr of black letters. Eva? Eve. The first syllable of his mother's name, the phonetic core of his own. Again, Stephen glanced towards the window. What time was it? The sky offered no answer. Stephen turned his gaze upwards once more.

Cheek pressed to the bark, Stephen listened. A churn of traffic, not close. Rustling leaves. He strained for a sign: voices, laughter. He squinted in the dying rays of sun. Although the leaves were scarce now, there were enough to ablate his view. Was the game over? Stephen worried at his lower lip. If it wasn't over though . . . He could almost, almost hear voices. Yes. Definitely. Maybe. Stephen adjusted his toes along the narrow branch. Shifted a hip against the trunk. Maybe, he did not care if the game was done. He could perch here forever. Here, drifting with the tree's deep, diaphragmatic sway. Shutting his eyes, he was on a ship. A crow's nest. He felt ill. His mother would soon be here. There. At the school. With eyes still shut, Stephen could see her.

She would be shading a hand against the sun's glare, swerving into the school parking lot, landing across two stalls. Pausing to examine the iPhone in her lap before shrugging off the seatbelt. Stephen imagines her charging into the rec hall. "Hannah!" From across the room, his gilt-headed sister looks up, skips joyously, leaps joyously into his mother's arms. "How was your day? What did you do?" His mother smooths down flyway wisps of Hannah's hair. "Do you have your EpiPen?" His sister—little suck—takes his mother's hand and leads her towards the coatroom.

In the seatbelt's clasp once more, Stephen's mother hesitates. Maybe. Key in the ignition.

"Where is Stephen?"

"He was grumpy."

Stephen's mother sighs. Rolls her eyes. Probably.

"Maybe he won't come home."

"We can only hope."

The air had turned cool. Stephen shivered and pressed his hip against the bark. He wrapped his arms around the tree's trunk, squeezed, felt its roughness through thin cotton. Imagined the wood peeling up to receive him, folding around his sacrum, his protruding spine and shoulder blades. Given time, moss would blanket, then cloak, then shroud him. Stephen inhaled, tasting the crispness of the

air, redolent of dying leaves. Felt his diaphragm against the bark with each breath. He could hear the tree's branches creak, the leaves whisper. A gurgle from his stomach reminded him that it had been hours since anything solid has passed his lips; (this is not true, technically—the first bite of his lunch had, in fact, passed his lips in both directions.) Nauseous most mornings, Stephen had managed half a glass of milk and a handful of almonds before leaving the house. Had been looking forward to the sandwich and apple that his mother had prepared, but with the first bite, his stomach turned. Cheddar. Ok. Lettuce. Ok. Mustard. Ok. Wonder Bread. Tolerable. Miracle Whip . . . treason. After depositing the unchewed mouthful into his palm, Stephen peeled apart the layers. His suspicions were confirmed. Thick, gelatinous, gobby, slightly translucent in a plasmatic, mucusoid way. Its whiteness was alien, perverse. Stephen almost gagged again, noting how it coated the bread and lay slick upon the slabs of cheese. Carefully, he tucked the plastic wrap back around the sandwich. His stomach burned and he blinked back tears. Was immediately ashamed of his own weakness. His mother had simply forgotten. Easy enough to do. Except she knew. He would just not eat it. Ok. He contemplated the apple. It would just make him hungrier he reasoned. Appetite? Let sleeping dogs lie. As those around him gathered garbage and swept crumbs from their desks, Stephen dropped the fruit into his backpack. He ducked down and pretended to rummage through the bag while his classmates filed out of the door. Alone, he moved towards an adjacent desk, pulled the drawer out as far as possible, and shoved the plastic-wrapped package towards the back, beneath a wedge of papers. Stephen slid the drawer back in. He allowed himself a small smile.

Ten hours later. Gurgle. The rumble and burn gave him a sick satisfaction. His mother is so concerned with what Hannah eats that she does not care if Stephen does. So he won't. Easy. He squeezed the trunk again, harder, squeezed his eyes shut. His mother's profile swam before his mind's eye once more.

He could see her slanting a hand against the sun's glare, swinging into the lot. Moments later, soaring through the double set of double doors. She sweeps into the large recreation room and scans for her children. Hannah, she finds immediately, sitting at a round table, feet dangling, flaxen head bowed. Under her mother's gaze, Hannah gravely selects a crayon from the neat row. Yellow. As Stephen's mother resumes her survey of the room, the half-smile fades from her face. "Hannah, where is your brother?" Stephen's mother's brows come together, the colour flees her tightly-drawn lips. Hannah shrugs out of her reverie, or just shrugs. She packs the crayons into her pencil case as Stephen's mother seeks out a supervisor.

Perched in the tree, Stephen felt suddenly, unbearably ashamed. The sun—molten, yolky—sat upon the line of the horizon. Vermillion bled into violet, darkened to indigo. By now, his mother would surely be here. There. There.

Here. The sheet clung damply to Stephen's back. Sharp inhale. In the tremor of his eyelids, he imagined that he could feel his pulse. His right shoulder and collarbone were made of wax. Hard, flesh-coloured, sensationless. Stephen did not bother trying to move his fingers. He craned his head sideways again. The coffee cup was perched upon a stack of file folders and bracketed by a pair of spindly arms. Drugstore variety reading glasses, built for a face somewhat wider than his mother's.

Stephen's hands were moving, his feet shifting even as he made up his mind. Below him, in the dusk, the tree's rungs resolved into a black mass. His confidence and grace had faded with the sun's light. Bark flaked beneath his heels and Stephen burst through the cage of branches. He soared up towards the ground.

Untitled

Alana Sayers

Seduce me in shadows
the point where it all began
hidden away
from everything I have.
Run your fingers along
everything in reach
let it be our secret
way to meet.

Out of the Storm

Juniper-Mae Gittens

Behemoth rises-
frothing at the lips
gurgling oceans between cavernous
jaws.
The sea has been swallowed,
the skies crack apart at the horizon,
Everything is Devoured.

This moment hangs suspended,
Salt water glistening,
dripping from his chin,
gulls caught,
above his open mouth,
their ungodly screeching
somehow silenced
for the moment.

This monstrosity,
shatters the surface of the sea,
dark body arcing
over wavetops and
causes the heavens to shudder.

Piece

Melanie Oberg

They have locked me up in this tiny little cement room. There is a bed, a basin on a stand and a hole in the floor. No window. A fluorescent light. It is so quiet that the blood in my head echoes as it circulates. It's more like a *slush slush* instead of the thump effect they do in horror movies.

Serial....cereal.

The same sound in a different word is called a homonym. Jeff was having an affair with her. They both had a tragic accident down the stairs... Clumsy, clumsy (she never did like fruit loops). They actually may have not had anything at all.

Maybe it was us who didn't have anything.

Serial and cereal are homonyms.

I was a teacher before I threw a desk at a kid. Like: "what right did I have to teach?"

Every right, you little fucker. Like paying for years of schooling.

....Mind you, I got through school selling pot, and then wrote my masters thesis on the leftovers from sales.

My degree was on capitalism's tab.

Who was Shakespeare *anyways*? I'm sure the man who wrote *A Midsummer Night's Dream* must have been dancing with Mary J pretty hard as well. Maybe opium, or whatever shit they had back then...

Profound, profound.

I shuffle across the floor in my paper slippers. Schrish schrish, on concrete. I stick my face into the lavatory-*laboratory* in the floor to try to see if I can drown, or suffocate in it. Apparently this has been tried before because the edges have been scrapped away enough to fit my face comfortably. I sit back on my heels and laugh.

“Shit outta luck here, boys.”

So witty. So pretty.

Do they tell you people shit themselves when they die? (Hi George!) Probably not. All that romantic crap about heroic deaths and bullet wounds that don't bleed in movies. We have approximately six litres of blood. When I shot that man in the liver, the blood was a purplish black. All six litres of it. AND he shit himself.

Blood from the lungs is a frothy pink—mixed with the bubbles, you know.

Serial means a successive amount of incidents punctuated by a time interval. The number of times is irrelevant. It can be two or thirteen. Or you could go all Hitler and shoot for the highest number possible and label it as revolution. He never would have been *nearly* as famous as a painter. We love to hate.

I wish I had a mirror. All those pretty-little-broken-edges that would divide my face into millions. Those sharp little pretty edges.

Millions of me. Now that's a scary thought. I wonder if all the millions of me would kill the girlfriend by strangling her in the bathtub. Perhaps they would get creative and outdo myself? Or would one of my clones have all the concentrated goodness that my 9999 other don't have and spare the cheater's lying ass?

Lying, lie, lie, lay.

Homonyms. She lied so I left her lying on the floor. If you read it one way, it sounds like I walked out the door as she was lying, fibs to my face. If you read it the other way it sounds like I stepped over her body as I walked out the door.

Words are like people. They can look just like something and be totally different from it. They can also act totally different and eventually say the same thing anyways. They are the original traitors. The ones whom you believe can transport you, make you someone else. When you leave them, you're just 9999 bad fragments that the one good piece can't put back together because the edges are too sharp.

Eva

Emily Driver

“I heard she was a pianist and that the piano got pushed off the stage and she was crushed to death,” says Laurel, her feet slipping down the worn black steps to the abandoned pool in the school’s basement. “I bet we’ll see her ghost.”

“She’s supposed to haunt the theatre, not the pool.”

“I know that, fuck-face,” says Laurel. Rochelle laughs. Laurel always swears more around Rochelle, for reasons that she doesn’t like to think about, but probably have to do with the fact that her friend intimidates her. Rochelle has piercings and a perfectly proportioned face and wears foundation and is on the school’s hit list for skipping class, while Laurel is in advanced classes and spends most of her time with her computer, not friends. And Laurel has a rash under her nose. “Just because people say that she’s supposed to haunt the theatre doesn’t mean it’s true. They also say she was a pianist, and that’s not true. I looked it up. She was just an English teacher who directed all the school plays. She died in 1979 and was like eighty years old.”

“Huh,” says Rochelle. The stairs end in a room with three doors, two of which lead into the branching hallways of the underbelly of the school. The floor is yellow and gray checked marble, which is how Laurel knows that they’ve reached the older section. The new stuff is cheap and gray. “Where’d you find that out?”

“Someone’s graduate thesis on the history of drama in Edmonton.”

“Did they specifically say that she died of old age or just that she died in 1979?”

“Just that she died in 1979. But —”

“So she could have still been crushed by a piano.”

“Sure, whatever. It’s possible,” says Laurel, scrunching her nose. “Still, I bet she’s haunting the pool. That’s where I’d haunt if I were dead. Nice and peaceful down there.”

“We’re not gonna see any ghosts,” says Rochelle. “What we might see is Ross and Emily having sex in the locker room.”

“Even more chilling than a paranormal encounter,” Laurel says. “Yeah, I heard him talking about getting into the pool changing rooms. What an asshole.” They arrive at a wooden door that reads POOL in yellow paint and Rochelle jerks the handle.

“Shit. Locked.”

“Damn. That’s one way down. I wonder how Ross and Emily got in.”

“There’s at least two more ways.”

“The Potters’ Guild—”

“The exercise rooms...”

“Yeah. And I don’t even know where some of these go. We could try that one,” says Rochelle, pointing to a door with ALL VISITORS MUST REPORT TO THE OFFICE painted on its window. The window looks into darkness.

“Nah. Let’s do the exercise rooms,” says Laurel. She doesn’t really believe in ghosts. Still, she keeps scanning the doors they pass, half expecting to see a monstrous old woman leering from the windows with Hamlet clutched in dirty fingers. The girls pass doors with names like Transformer and Electrical Room.

“There might be a gym class using the machines.” Rochelle presses her head against the beige marble wall and listens. “I don’t think there’s anyone in there.” When she’s certain that there is no one in the exercise room, she moves through the lighted hallway. A Sharpie sticks out of her pocket. Laurel follows.

They’ve been planning to break into the abandoned pool for months. They’d both been there before; when they were in Junior High the drama department had put on a haunted house in the pool area that had been both gimmicky and genuinely terrifying. You would have expected Rochelle to be the one to suggest looking for the pool since she owns a vaporizer and a healthy disregard for authority, but it was Laurel. Lately Laurel has been thinking a lot about ghosts and old things in general.

“It’s weird seeing the machines unoccupied by sweaty preteen bodies,” says Rochelle.

“Yeah.”

“What’s wrong? You’re quiet.”

“Nothing. I just hope we can get into the pool soon. Even the locker rooms would be good. I have bio in fifty minutes.”

“Don’t worry. We’ll get there. The Instagram photos are going to be amazing.”

“Right,” says Laurel. The next way into the pool is blocked too. A wire grate covers the hallway. Rochelle and Laurel can see a piece of paper that says Pool Rules beyond the grate, and she can smell chlorine. Rochelle rattles the grate.

“Shit. Maybe around the corner?”

Around the corner, the door to the atrium between the Girls’ and Boys’ locker rooms is open. “Fuck yeah,” says Laurel, the knob turning under her grip. “We’re there. The locker rooms.”

Rochelle crows with delight. “Hold hands?”

“You know it,” says Laurel, bouncing on the heels of her feet, and together they walk around the stone partitions and into the vast emptiness of the Girls’ locker room.

Laurel had been worried about whether it would be dark, but the fluorescent lights from the exercise room continue into the locker room and run in a circle beside a row of narrow pipes. Teal, sky-blue and rust red lockers line the room. The school is obviously using the space for storage because the room is littered with wooden slats, dusty chairs, cardboard boxes, then in one corner, a Christmas tree and a pile of mannequins.

“I’m so into this,” says Rochelle, and in the flickering fluorescence her face is a pale excited blur, the sharp wings of her eyeliner barely visible. The room is bisected by a row of stone shower cells that are open so that in the event that someone

showered, they'd be visible from both sides of the room. The even distribution of shadows within their crevices reminds Laurel of teeth. Rochelle pretends to shower and shave her face with a single-blade razor still clotted with hair. "Gross!" says Laurel, laughing.

Rochelle picks up a mannequin. Red paint leaks down its cheeks. "This is too fucking good to be real. This is going to go with my 'urban witch' theme so well," she says, her camera flashing. The school's furnaces whirl and grind. The air smells like wood and dust and there's a hot, greasy smell overtop of it all. Laurel grins so wide her mouth hurts. She feels faintly sick.

"Smells like McDonald's food."

"Smells like chlorine."

They find the bathrooms and showers and a red and blue door that won't open. Behind another grate, they find a curved hallway that says POOL in black tile.

"Fuck yeah!" says Rochelle.

"Locked," says Laurel, pointing to a combination lock hanging off of the metal mesh of the safety grate. She hooks her fingers in the grate, shakes it.

"Won't open. At least we got to see the mannequins," says Rochelle.

"Yeah. Too bad, though. I would have liked to see the pool."

"Let's go take pictures with them."

"You go take some selfies," says Laurel. "I want to hang out here for a bit. Absorb the ambience. Smell the chlorine."

"Alright, lone wolf," says Rochelle and stomps off to the pink-tiled showers with the Christmas tree and the mannequin head.

When Laurel hears the sound of her moving in the dust and wood, she gives the lock a single, thumping jerk. She'd seen that it was pointing at 15 exactly and suspects that it has been left at the opening spot.

It snaps open. Laurel cringes, waits for Rochelle to come running from two rooms over, but she doesn't come, leaving Laurel alone in the narrow stone hallway leading to the pool. "It opened. I was just about to tell you," she mentally rehearses as she squeezes past the grate and into the pool area. She takes the lock with her: she trusts Rochelle, but she has seen too many horror movies to think that leaving an open lock unattended is a good idea. The lights end before the vaulted chamber, and Laurel walks into the gloom. Her eyes do not adjust to the absence of light and she stubs her toe against a piece of broken tile. She doesn't care if Rochelle is pissed when if she finds her in the pool area alone, and she doubts that Rochelle will be distracted enough from taking selfies in the showers to look. And besides, Laurel needs to be here without Rochelle: her friend is too noisy and will ruin Laurel's only chance to meet a ghost. It's not likely that the exercise room will be vacant again during her spare *and* that the lock will slightly open. One of the two things might happen, but not both. It has to be now.

The pool area has a vaulted ceiling and stinks of chlorine and another sharp chemical smell. The pool itself has no water, but brims with shadow with solidity that Laurel didn't think that darkness could possess. She resolves to come back one day with flashlights. There's a cube of metal bars on the end of the pool where a diving board used to be. Laurel climbs up one, squints through at the cracked tile walls. A spray-painted message loops, but it's been scrubbed so that the paint is illegible. A sign says "No Shoes in the Pool Area" and above it is a declaration in yellow that "*AK + JJ wazz hurr*".

She climbs down the bars and sits on the lip of the pool, her legs dangling into the empty tiled space beneath. She waits. THE GAME says one part of the wall in front of her. SWED says another. Part of "Answered"? Swede? She rubs her nose. Keeps waiting. Part of her had known there would be nothing here, but a part of her had hoped. Fuck. She squeezes the lock in her pocket, too upset to be scared of the emptiness and darkness around and beneath her—Nothing here. Nothing interesting, anyway. Just the hum of the school's furnaces—She wipes her cheeks. She knew that there would be no ghostly Eva O. Howard in a dress from the thirties, of course. No Karen, her beloved aunt, smiling at her amongst the broken tile, her stomach swollen with what everyone had thought were just fibroids. Not even a chilly spot indicating a possible connection between the living world and the dead.

She knew that life didn't work that way, but she had still thought that maybe if rowdy Rochelle wasn't there, and maybe if she went to the most disused, horrendous part of the school, maybe there would be something more than an

empty pool that had stayed empty for the last fifty years and would stay empty until the school is torn down or sealed up. Laurel thinks that it's unjust that television and books can be so much fun while in reality, there is only the dry chlorine smell, the people who won't sit with you in class and the friend who just wants to smoke weed and imperfectly loves you.

She fingers the lock, tucks a piece of broken tile in her pocket, and shuffles back to the entrance to the locker room. She's found the answer to her question. In the most interesting places, there's just more tediousness, boredom and the roar of the school's furnace grinding through it all. Laurel locks the grate, spinning the combination of the lock behind her. "Hope custodial remembers the combination," she thinks, otherwise it will impossible get into the giant waste of space that is the abandoned pool. At least she has Rochelle. That's something.

She finds her friend in the bathrooms. There's no water in the toilets, but yellowish stains them look like they are brimming with urine. The girls scrawl messages in Sharpie in the bathroom stalls. Laurel quotes Hamlet. Rochelle quotes Fall Out Boy. It's fun. Laurel takes pictures with Rochelle and they hike back up the smooth stone steps to math and homework and busses. Dust settles in the locker room. The furnace grinds on.

The Gargoyle's Account

Andy Goertz

Her name was Francine and she had red hair. I don't know if that was her real name, I just heard that name called in the streets. She was a nun, so I wonder if she chose the name Francine, like the new popes do. And I wonder if she chose it after Francis of Assisi, the nature-worshipping saint who said things like "no one is an enemy." He once rode to Egypt to try and convert the Sultan, in an attempt to end the bloody crusades. It didn't work, but he made it out alive and went on to be the first person ever to have the stigmata: the person spontaneously get holes in your hands like Jesus. It means you're closer to him or something. I can't get stigmata because I'm a gargoyle. A grotesque, actually, but everyone knows us as gargoyles. Gargoyles are the ones that spout water, but it doesn't really matter.

I never had a name but if I could choose one it would be Peter. It used to be David. Before that, I really liked the name Ed, if you can believe it.

Francine walked past me every single day for seven years. She was studying in the convent and would usually sing when she'd walk by, often in German. Always softly, quietly, like she was embarrassed about her voice but loved the songs too much not to sing them. I liked it best when she sung in German, if you can believe it.

Sometimes she'd whistle, and I'd wish beyond anything that I could whistle too. I could picture it in my mind, the exact notes, and I could think of harmonies too but they stayed in the stone. Seven years I watched her get older and never name me, though she did see me once. A few other glances here and there, yes, especially at first. But this one time in the beginning she came around that corner there and she looked right at me, right in the eyes, and it scared the shit out of me. She saw me, like really saw me, like, her eyebrows changed and she slowed down and everything. It was brief, a few seconds or a thousand years, and all I tried to do for the next I-don't-know-how-long was try to get her attention again. Nothing felt better than that moment. I promise you, as crazy as it sounds, we really connected.

The point of my story is this: I don't smell much up here, and when I do, it's usually unpleasant. But when she came around, I tell you, friend, there were flowers in January. Or something like flowers. I remember thinking "flowers" but I'm not sure anymore. It was something sweet I think, and tangy. Tasted like overripe fruit. And because she hasn't been back here for more than three hundred years, I've forgotten. The smells are certain in my memory. Now, every scent, sweet or not (it

can be curries sometimes, or roast duck): it's her. Dying tulips on a cart, a new cake being baked nearby. It's all her now. It's all always her. And I don't know why I was even given that drive—the romantic love thing, I mean, that seems pretty fucking cruel doesn't it? To be literally made out of stone and have these intense feelings for someone who has probably been dead for like 250 fucking years? So basically Francine is why I can't believe in God and why I absolutely must.

The Gospel of Jack Kerouac

Andy Goertz

The howling hounds of
death are barely a breath upon
my back.

Lead these feet over
rain-slick streets and
uproot each fresh step
before stillness becomes me.

These un-trenched soles, wholly
unwary,
carry me through these bastions and
gunnels
and barroom jungles that are sticky
with topcoats of sweat
and spilled drinks drying slowly
beneath the soles of my boots.

Lead me through to the
prophets of pride
and their unmarried brides:
the motherless mystics
with wild, dizzy eyes.
Let our ears ride
conversations like radio dials
on seas of white noise,
heaving endlessly as,
restless, we pray these
intrepid feet stray
from the patchwork of
blackened gum and half-lit
cinder sticks still smoldering
in the oxygen.

Lead these gravel-callused feet
beyond the comfort of known streets,

beyond the graves marking the
birthplace
of each person bold or
boring enough to believe that the three
most
powerful words are: "I am staying."

Tonight I am Jack Kerouac.
Moaning for man,
bones groaning as unknown roads
unroll before me like

canvassed spider-web spools of
teletype paper.
It's safer to stay in place than
try and trace the cut-and-paste
cadence of those deacons of doom,
those Beatniks of the Boom,
too soon.

Lead us to angel-headed
hipsters with tar-stained lips,
junkies strung out on culture
and pubic beards with
measured grins,
and as the lowest of our
limbs begin to sink into
these streets,
let our bodies be uprooted.
Let our shadows be relieved,
lead our hungry eyes to find
their feast—
let our beatnik hearts stay restless,
and let the faintest scent of sweat
be the only clue that death is left with.

The Cat

Nicholas Eveneshen

I still wasn't asleep at 3:30 when the cat howled again. It was a short, moving-from-low-to-high pitched howl just outside our door, which droned on for ten minutes every hour and a half. This was the sixth time in a row I've stayed over at my girlfriend's house on a random weekday night and the cat was howling, not meowing. I was convinced it wasn't normal—not by the way I was able to detect even the smallest of sounds in the night, as if my peripheral awareness was at its most alert right before I fell off the cliff of consciousness and into troubled sleep, but by the way it was repeated like this every time I was here. Either the cat knew I was in the room it didn't have access to, and hated me for it, howling to drive me sleepless and insane, or it simply went on like this every night. "Just leave it be, just leave it be," my girlfriend always said. How could she sleep like this? I couldn't leave it be. Not again. The cat had to be silenced.

I checked to my left, stared into the darkness until the dim outline of my girlfriend's body became a clear silhouetted figure rising and falling to the steady rhythm of deep sleep. No worries there. "Owwwww," went the cat again. Pulling my side of the covers off, I resisted the urge to storm to the door, and instead crept out of the bed one foot at a time. Other times I'd tried to surprise the cat with quick movements had been futile; it had just scurried away and had come back to howl again less than two hours later. The door glowed with beige light around its edges. The hallway light had been left on. "Owwwwwuh."

I tripped over what must have been several pairs of pants on the floor, but caught myself on the bed. My girlfriend didn't move. I took a few more steps over some sweaters and shoes. I felt very light then, as if I could glide across the floor. I imagined the cat, just outside, just in front of me, looking up, ears cocked to the left, wondering what these series of soft sounds were. The shuffling noises, the stronger smell of the human. I breathed slower, quieter, and opened the door not violently.

"Rrrreowwwwhwow." There it was, pattering a metre away from me to stand in front of another bedroom door just down the narrow hallway. "Rrrreoww." It looked so soft, so innocent then, this howling creature of thick grey fur, matted and tangled into a plump ball of hair sitting before the door. Black slits between

yellow marbles, and a flattened, dark-grey snout, whose hairs blended into tufts of white-grey around her lower cheekbones. White whiskers. I carefully measured my footsteps, said, “there there, here here” as I approached the cat, bent down, and picked it up with both hands. “Rrrreoww.”

This was the first time I’d woken up from the noise of the cat and been able to see it, interact with it, without it running off. I walked down the hall and into the foyer and living room. Outside, thick, heavy snow crystallized in the deep cold and sparkled under white moonlight, which poured through the window in broken panes across the wooden floor. It was quiet. The cat wasn’t purring. Afraid to make any noise and wake up my girlfriend and her roommates, I tip-toed towards the long couch that extended from one edge of the room to the other, and put the cat down on the arm. That was its favourite spot during the day. “Rreow.” It looked up at me, wagged its tail slowly to the left, to the right. A soft rattling sound. It started to purr.

“Why aren’t you quiet? Why the howling all the time?” I said to it. I didn’t know what else to do. It was almost four in the morning. I had gotten up to stop the cat, and now I was talking to it. I hadn’t expected it to let me pick it up. I sat down beside it, began to pet it with my left hand. I felt not fully awake, still somehow asleep, but my actions had carried me here with such intent. I felt bizarre, like I were hovering. “Wouldn’t this be funny,” I said to myself—thought about the kind of face my girlfriend would make if she came out right now and saw me, in my boxers and without a shirt, petting the cat on the couch. She’d probably just go back to bed. She’d laugh and think me ridiculous and go back to bed. She wouldn’t care. She had to work early in the morning too. She was opening up the restaurant, and I had to get to class by 09:00.,but it didn’t matter to her. She could put up with the howling cat even though we both knew that we were both wakened by the creature in the middle of the night, tossing and turning in bed, pretending to be asleep, sighing out of feigned slumber and not out of frustration at being awake. I pet the cat more firmly, felt the small curvature of its spine, the taut back, but I had gotten up this time. I had gotten up, not she. I wouldn’t let the disturbed sleep bother me anymore; I could never handle it during the day, the weight of my eyelids, the lethargy of my exhausted body that subdued any thinking power I could muster with overdoses of black coffee, the anger at not being able to understand a lecture, having to read and research with a heavy pen and a blinding white computer screen, checking my phone for nothing. The howling of the cat. And she just let it happen. I felt the back of the cat’s neck now, gripped it with the whole of my hand. This thing, this stupid thing that had kept me up all these nights, it was sitting here, purring

beside me. Did it know what it was doing? Did it know what damage it was causing to me? Did my girlfriend know? My girlfriend who did nothing about it?

I switched my grip and lifted it into the air with both hands, shook it left and right, twisted it upside down and flipped it. It tried to meow and screech and howl all at once, but the sudden violence I inflicted upon it surprised it completely. The only sound finally coming out, a strained, gurgled gasp as I flipped it again with my hands. I grappled its shoulders and neck with my right hand, raised it up and pounded it down against the couch once, twice, three times, and threw it against the wall left of me. The silence of the night only made the thump of its body hitting the wall that much louder, and it landed on the other couch on its front, still, quiet, and eyes shut, its head laying down, crooked to the left just on top of its left paw. It wasn't moving.

I stood there, staring at the white rug just below the couch, dumb and motionless in the blue moonlight. The clock above the bookshelf was incredibly loud then. I was surprised I had just noticed it. I had just killed a cat. My eyes darted around and stared down the darkness of the hallway. Had I turned off the light to my girlfriend's bedroom? I waited for the ruffling of sheets, the rumbling of feet as she rushed to see what the matter was outside, shouting a whisper of, "What's going on? Is everything okay?" I waited longer, every clock stroke the tap of a metronome against my skull. Nothing came, no sound. I was alone.

Trembling, I turned around again. I had just killed the cat. I was breathing fast, like tumultuous wind scraping past bare trees in the dead of night. I slowed it down to a drawn-out, controlled inhale and exhale. My heartbeat uneasily obeyed and fell into a softer rhythm. Pulling my eyes up the rug, past the darkness beneath the couch, light opaquely reflected off its worn, beige leather, I fixated on the motionless left paw. "Oh no," I thought. "Oh no." I fell to my hands and knees, shaking and convulsing with silent anger. No pain. Only worry. This stupid cat, it had made me do this. Look, look how annoyingly elegant and sure of itself it even looked in death, as if it were resting, asleep on the couch, only a couple of feet away from its favourite spot. "An emperor without a realm." I almost chuckled to myself as I remembered that line of poetry—how absurdly uncontrollable one's thoughts were—and began to move towards the cat one hand and knee at a time.

I couldn't skip class tomorrow again, not when it would have been the second time this week, I thought. I was so tired, but this cat—it hadn't been tired. No, it had wailed and howled beside our door. I had shut it up. That's it. I had just shut it

up. Look at it, that scrunched-up face. Getting closer now, I counted its white and grey whiskers. Maybe ten. I hadn't even known whose cat it was. Maybe my girlfriend had told me, but I couldn't remember. It wasn't her cat. It must have been one of her roommates', people I never saw because they were barely here, but I'd never seen the cat go into their rooms. It would always sulk around the house, patter around corners, sit on the couches. It was the house's cat. The cat belonged to the house.

Who was I, in this pale moonlight, crawling on the floor towards a dead thing, away from my girlfriend slumbering innocently, a whole dark hallway away from me? My girlfriend. The actress of nothing, but I hadn't stayed my anger. Instead I had let it drive my arms and operate my hatred, inflicting it on this cat. I had hated it, and it was dead. I had taken action, and was crawling, on all fours, to its outcome. My hands and arms looked red. I caught myself holding in laughter at the exhilarating hilarity of the idea that my first powerful act of free will was to kill a cat. It was really dead. What was I going to do now? It was not daylight yet. I had time. Could I open its eyes again? What colour had they turned? Leaning forward, almost falling over I reached with an outstretched hand, past the shadows of the twisted trees refracted in the dark moonlight, to feel the hardness of its forehead, the dry nose, and the motionless jaws.

The eyes opened.

Their yellow malice widened into surprise and fear, and the cat sprang off the couch as I yelped and jolted upwards into standing position, bending backwards, but then floating completely upright again. It ran around the corner, skidding on the hardwood floor, and disappeared into the incompletely renovated, abandoned basement. Another vacuum of silence. I ran around the other corner, past the foyer, and towards the basement. Its white light was on. I could see it stretch across the walls and fade off as it met its absence near the back door. I held my arm outstretched towards the basement, reaching for that light, but thought better of it. The cat was alive still, and I needed to sleep now. I tiptoed down the dark hallway over the thickest boards of the hardwood flooring to minimize the screeching. Opening, closing the door. It was all dark. My girlfriend's silhouetted figure was on the other side of the bed, so I climbed in immediately and glided my hand down her left side, petted down the wrinkled blankets. Sleep overtook me. I paused at the top of her left shoulder, past the curvature of her spine, and gripped it with the whole of my hand as I faded into a noiseless mirage of thick, piling snow.

The River

Robyn Holly Taylor-Neu

The children crouched in the shallows. They had removed their shoes and the water lapped around their ankles. The river was slow-moving, icy, grey-green. Behind them, crags of alluvium resolved into tufts of oat grass, sloping up towards the highway. The bigger boy picked a flat stone from the water. He drew his arm back, then snapped it sideways in a motion like the cracking of a whip. The stone skipped across the surface. It rebounded one, two, three times.

Four. He turned with a widening grin, back to face his brother. Four. The smaller boy squinted at the blazing water. His hair was pale and fine. At the back it brushed his dark, burnt neck. He glanced sideways at his brother.

The bigger boy sucked air through a tooth gap, issuing a thin whistle. Anyhow, you havnt got more'n two. He hitched his shorts and waded deeper, scanning the pebbled riverbed. The first stone that he pulled from the water was dark and shiny wet, ringed with pale strata. He weighed it in his palm. It was too large, too heavy for his purpose. After a moment, he made to drop it back, but pocketed it instead.

His smaller brother had been squatting by the shore. He exclaimed, and pounced at the water, and rose triumphant with a sleek, flat stone. Beautiful.

The older boy moved towards his brother. Give it here. Come on.

It's mine. His grip tightened, fingers paling. The grime at his nail beds matched the stone's hue.

It's wasted on you. Come on. I'll trade you. Come on. He sprang at his brother, seizing a bony wrist. The child squealed and tried to wrench his arm away. Come on, the bigger boy repeated as he peeled back the other's fingers one by one. At once, he palmed the pebble and released his grip, sending his brother sprawling in the shallows. The small boy's face was tear stained, and a lucent bubble bloomed from one nostril. He sobbed quietly and cradled his wrist. The older boy turned to the light of the dying sun to examine his prize. He turned it over. He tossed it into the air. Beautiful. He drew up one knee and coiled his arm in a pantomime of a pitcher's windup. The pressure to deliver a worthy throw weighed upon him. It was

almost too perfect to part with. He gazed at it, a perfect moon in the middle of his palm.

Hey, the smaller boy had risen, still sniffing. I'll trade you. He hefted a large, dark stone, ringed with pale strata. His brother laughed in delight, recognizing the twin of his pocketed pebble. It's too big, he said turning away.

The smaller boy glowered. His fingers whitened around the rock. It served his purpose. Perfectly.

Ribbons

Robyn Holly Taylor-Neu

"Let us go now, you and I" The remainder of the line disappeared beneath the soft, pale flesh of Attila's belly. Jacob sighed and prodded him gently with the tip of his pencil. After a lazy blink, a mere flicker of translucent eyelid, and a measured twist of the head, Attila continued his slow pilgrimage across the page. His toe nails made whispery, scrabbling sounds on the yellowed parchment. Behind him, in a languid whorl, trailed the train and silky ribbons of Barbie's wedding dress.

"Ja-cob! Have you set the table?"

He squeezed his eyes tightly shut. Open. Shut. Open. He admired the way that the dusk rose of the dress offset the milky sheen of Attila's skin. "It looks much better on you than it does on her. She doesn't have the figure."

"Jacob."

...

"I asked you to do something."

"Did she?" Eyes wide. Innocent. Jacob rested his cheek on the desk, nose brushing Attila's. He blinked. Jacob placed a forefinger on the page, looped it through the loose ribbons.

"Jacob. For Christ's sake. Now." (Jacob. Jesus. Now.)

"Let us go now, you and I?" But as Jacob wrapped his fingers beneath Attila's ribs, he began to pedal his legs spasmodically. He twitched his tail in agitation, the gesture amplified by the billow of his skirts. Wordlessly, Jacob placed him back on

the page. Standing abruptly, he almost upended the straight-backed chair. He moved towards the doorway. Half in the hall, he looked back to where Attila sat, still perched upon the desk.

“Jacob!” Twitching his head, as if to dislodge a cobweb, he continued into the hall, pulling the door firmly shut behind him.

A pea skittered across the plate, fleeing the tyranny of Jacob’s fork. “If you are done, put your plate in the dishwasher.” Jacob slowly pressed the pea against the pale blue ceramic. Blips of green burst up between the prongs.

“. . . like a patient, etherized upon a table.” Attila was nowhere in sight. Apart from the slender, yellow-paged paperback and teeth-worn pencil, the desk was empty (bare). These two items, Jacob slid into the drawer. He scanned the chair, the dark hardwood beneath the desk, the bed with its taught shroud and the dark hardwood beneath it, the bureau (bare), the meticulously-ordered oaken bookshelves, the narrow windowsill, the dark hardwood at his feet . . . He glanced once more at the desk, but it remained obstinately bare. Desk, chair, floor, bed, floor, bureau, bookshelf, sill, floor. “Attila?” Jacob hated the childish pitch of his own voice. Desk, chair, floor, bed, floor, bureau, bookshelf, sill, floor. Turning, he peered out into the hallway. Crossing the hall, he knocked softly at the door, and entered (after a pause), without waiting for a response. “Have you seen Attila?” Clara shook her head mutely. Her dark eyes met Jacob’s own, widening in sympathy. He looked away. “Thanks,” he muttered as he eased the door shut, not quickly enough to avoid the sight of the swollen blankets, the silicon tube. Back in the hall, Jacob looked left and then right. He peered along the landing, swept the top of the staircase, and then turned back into his own doorway. Stopped. Desk, chair, floor, bed, floor, bureau, bookshelf, sill, floor. Narrowing his eyes, Jacob made out a tendril of pale pink ribbon, flickering at the edge of the radiator. “Attila,” he sighed. Stopped dead. A waft of acrid smoke crept into his nostrils.

ART OF VAMPYRE

Mystics have the Holy Spirit in their hearts, the rest of us have demons in our guts.
-Liz_Kill



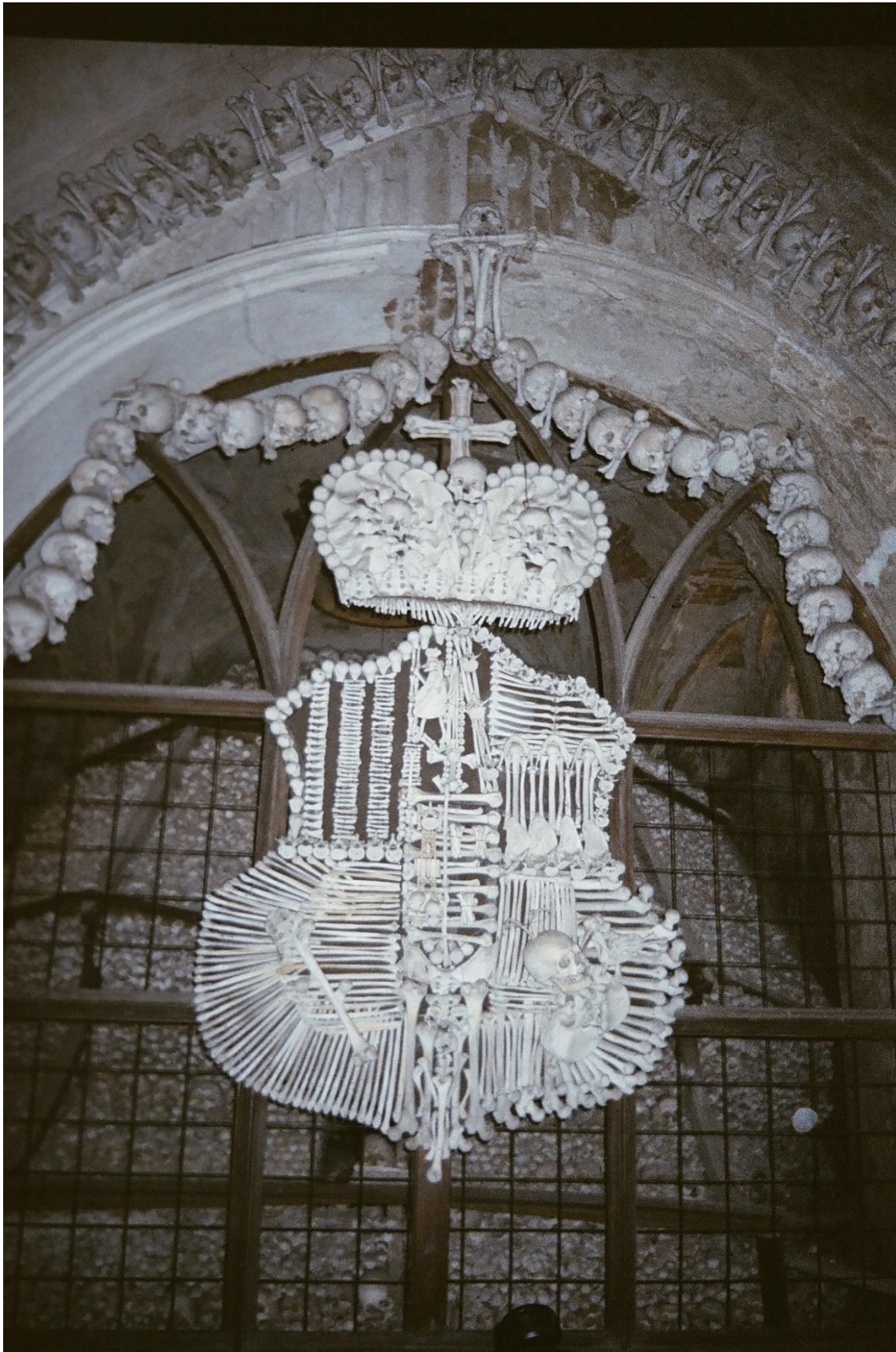
Elizabeth Hill- GUTS



THE PEDLAR – MATTHEW PUNYI



BONE CHAPEL - ALLISON MURPHY



BONE CHAPEL – ALLISON MURPHY



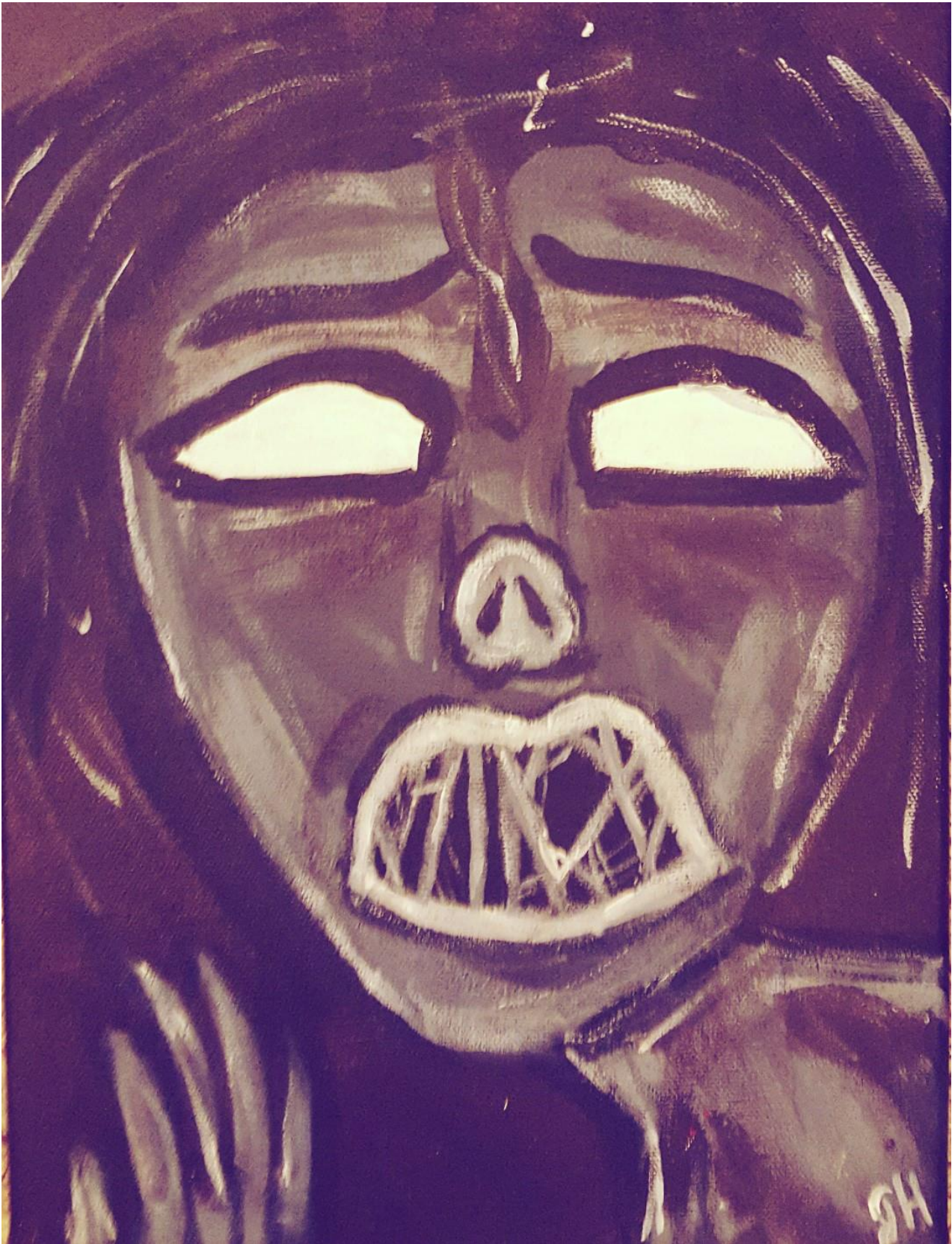
Joseph Conrad's
Lord Jim

Amy Tang 2015.3

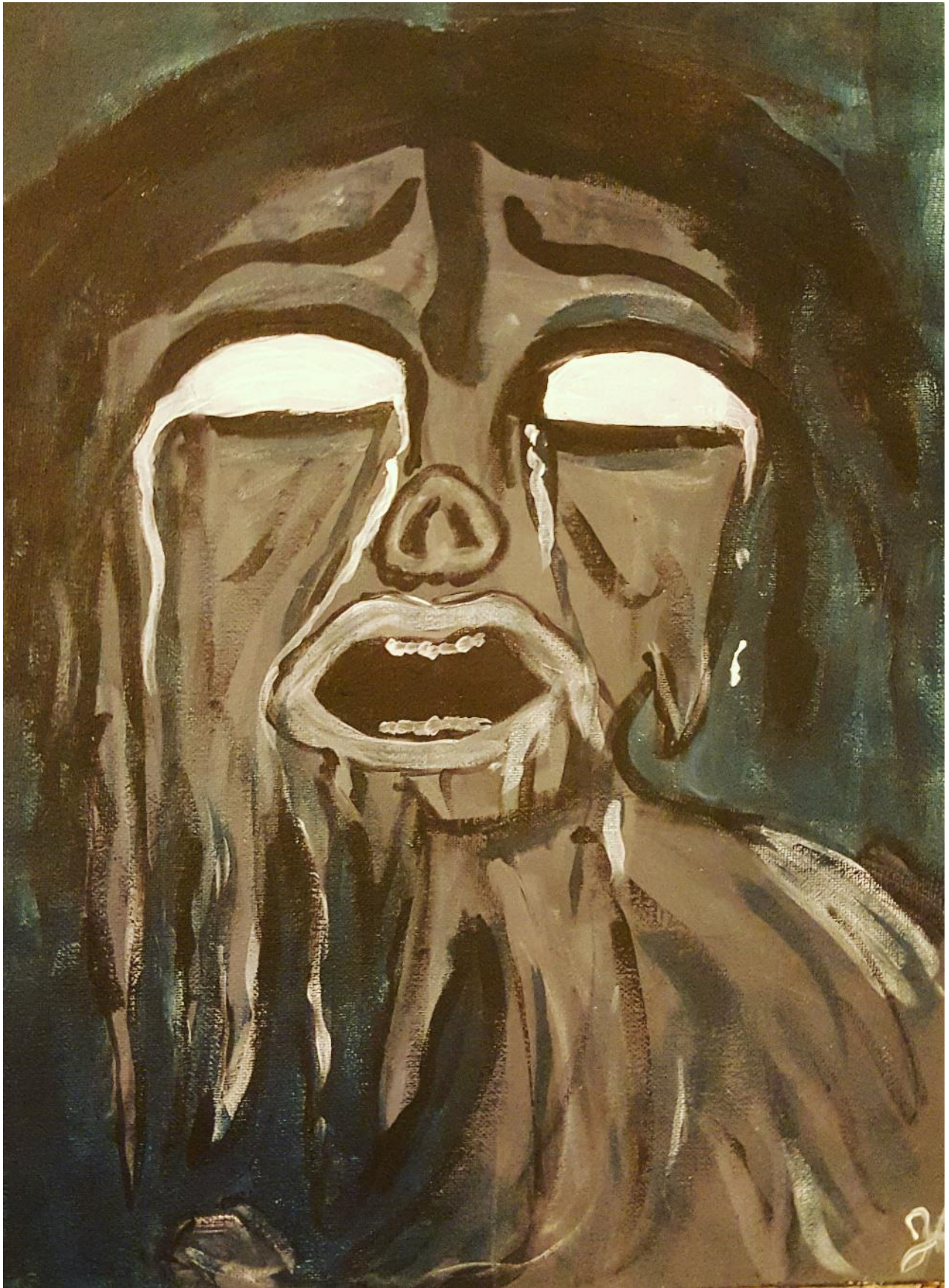
LORD JIM - AMY TANG



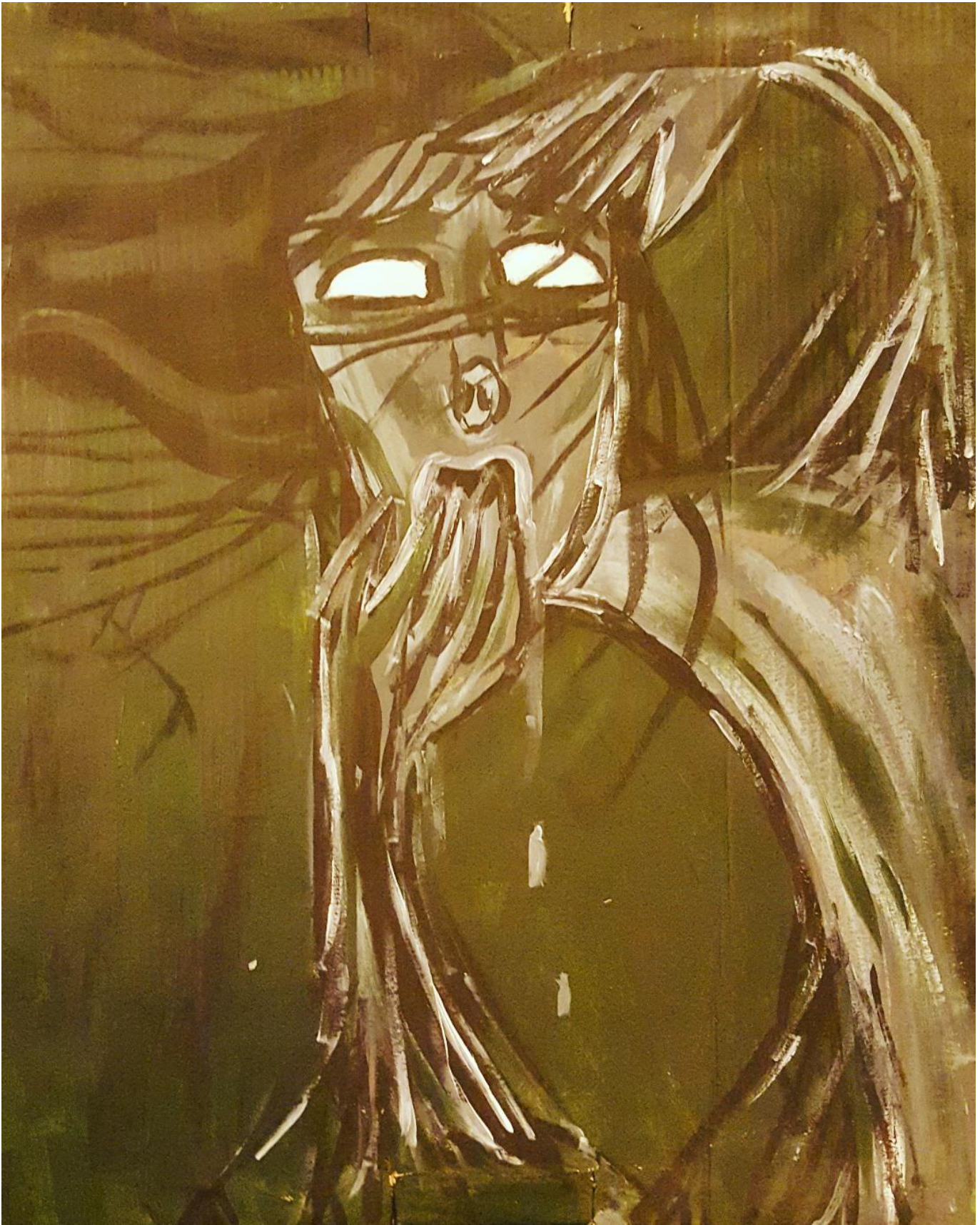
INNER DEMON 1 - JOSEPHINE HENDRICK



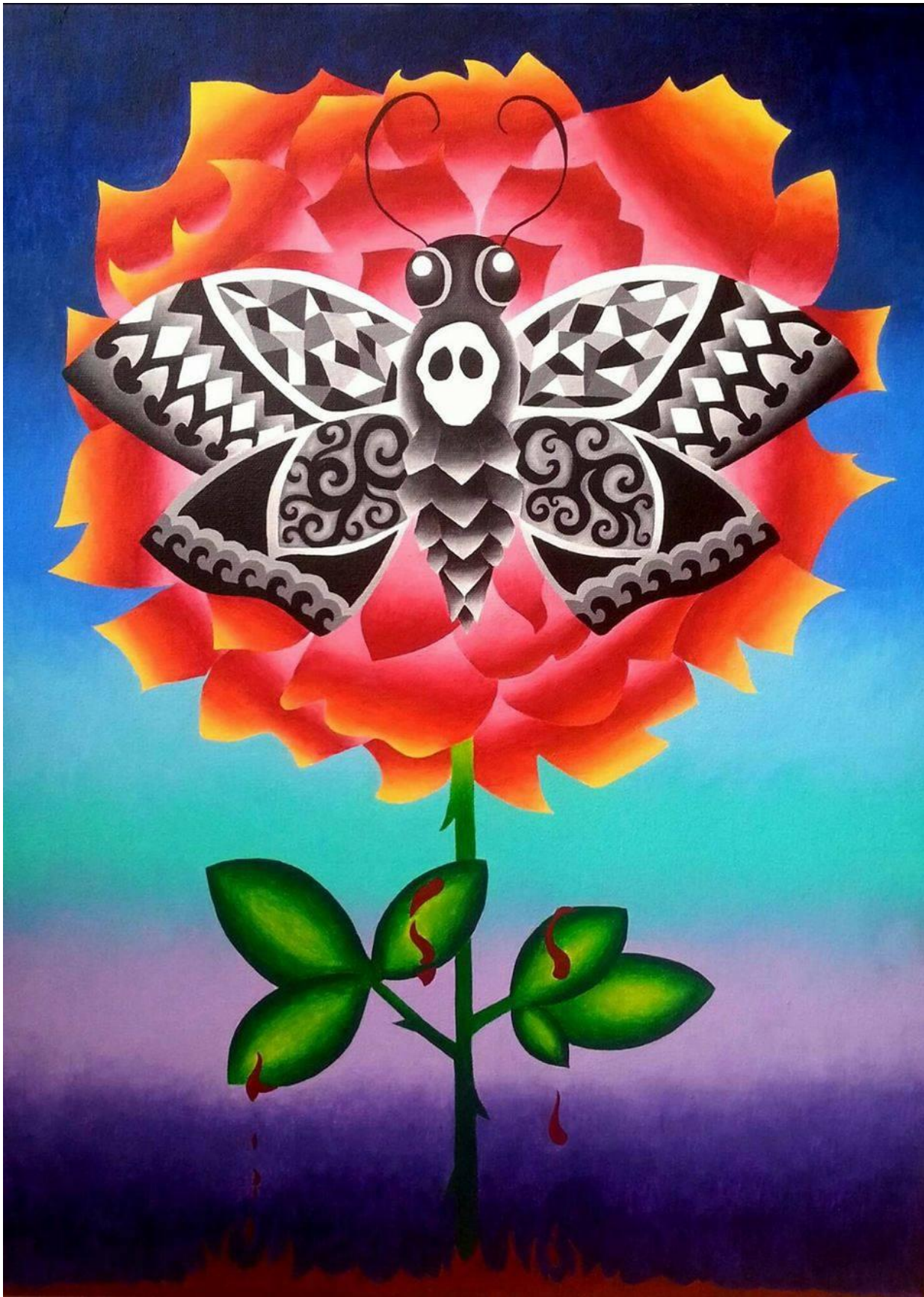
INNER DEMON II - JOSEPHINE HENDRICK



INNER DEMON III - JOSEPHINE HENDRICK



INNER DEMON IV – JOSEPHINE HENDRICK



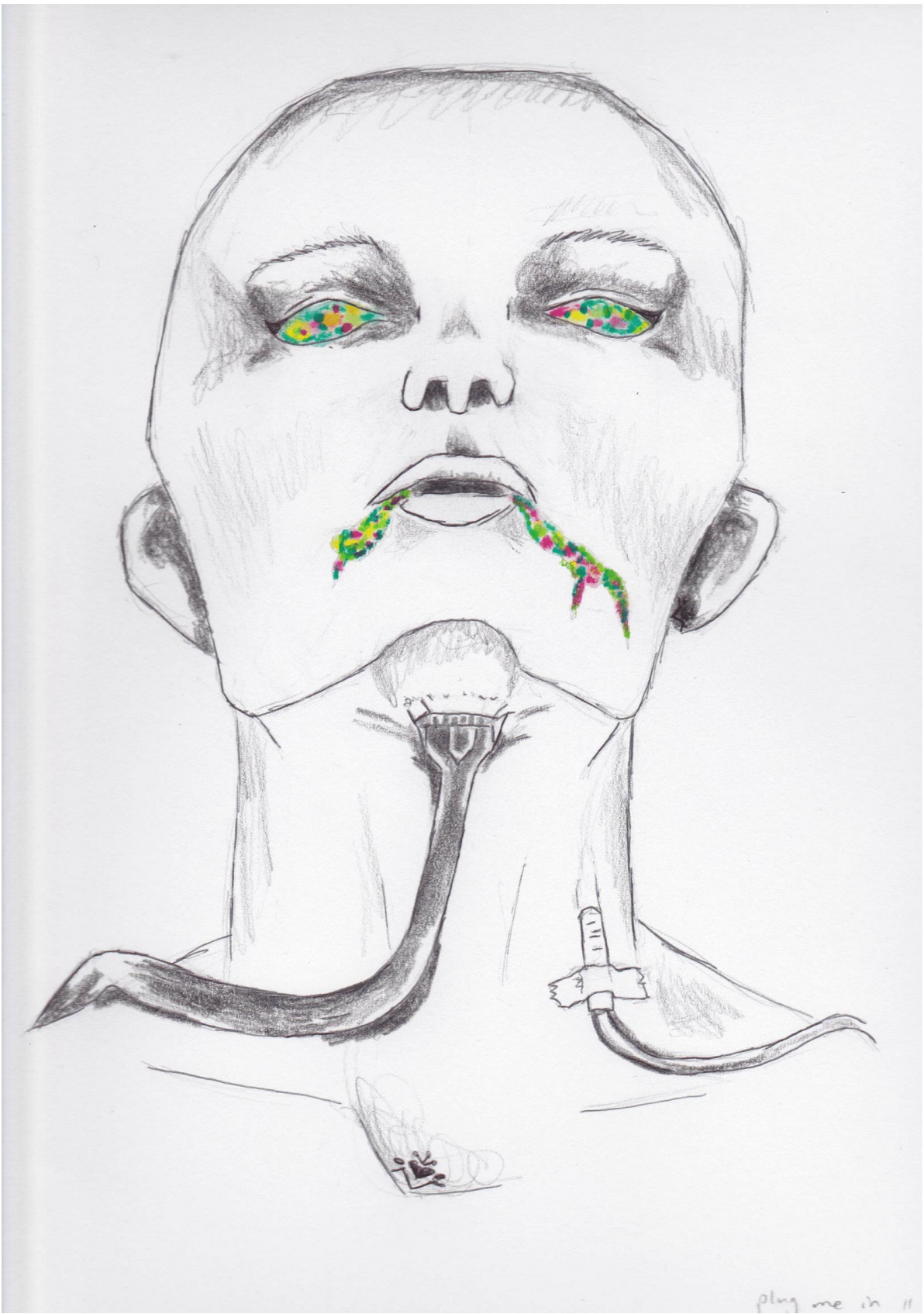
TASSHA JOHNSON - DEATH'S HEAD MOTH



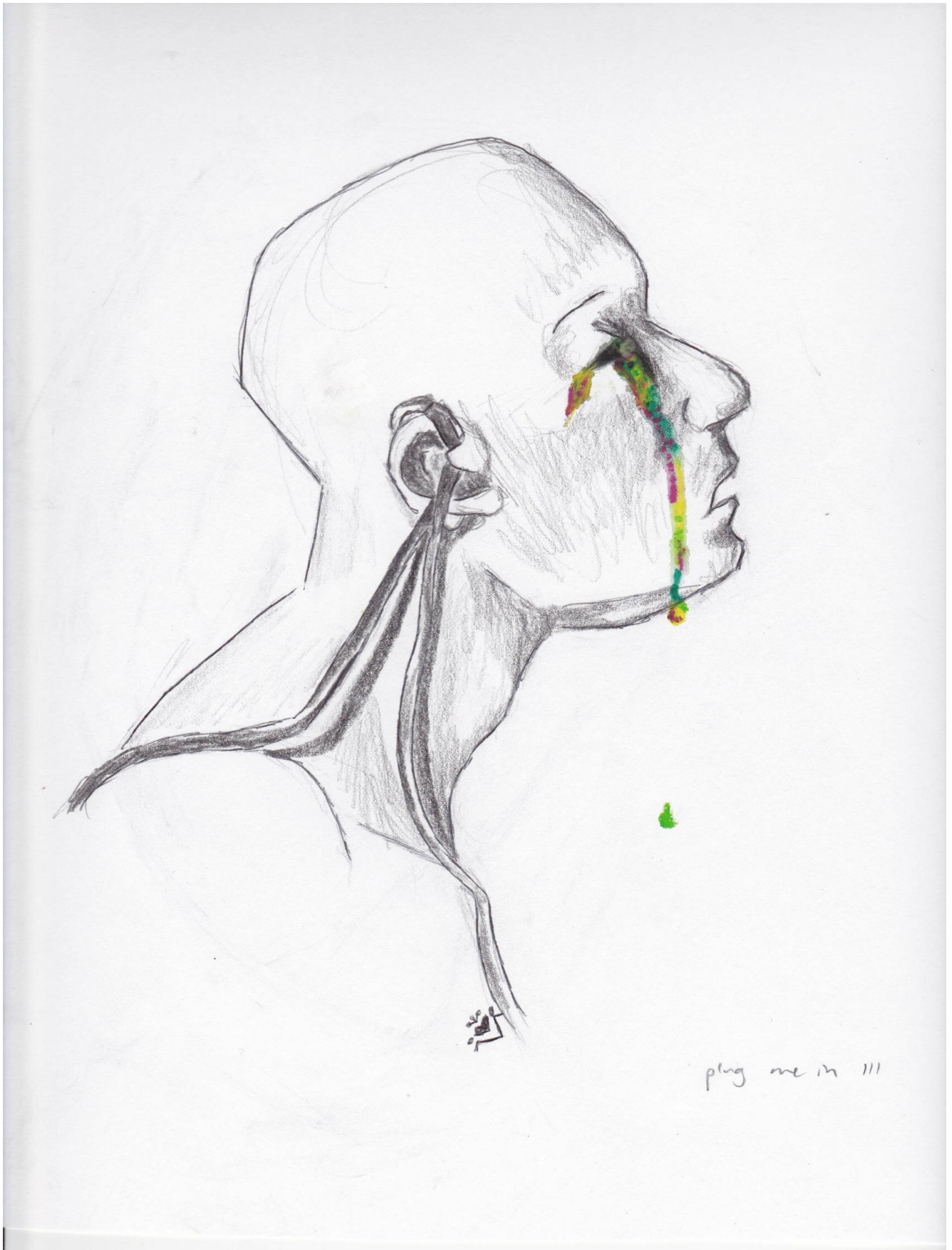
SLITHER – THERESA FAULDER



PLUG ME IN I - MELANIE OBERG



PLUG ME IN II - MELANIE OBERG



PLUG ME IN III - MELANIE OBERG

FLY

Conrad Leibel

Dramatis Personae:

Pizzzzzzz: to be played by a broad shouldered man with a sweet melodious voice.

Fly: to be played collectively by all of the insects living in my rug

Body language (no dialogue): the physical personification of body language (to be present and silently accompany the on-stage Gnosis.) CANNOT be played by a dog.

MUST be accompanied at all times by a nice flutin' boy.

Incipit

Pizzzzzzzz.....

in bed

twitching.

Eggs?

WOULDN'T YOU LIKE TO KNOW!

My tibia moves involuntarily.

Laissez-faire.

wipe cranium with tarsi

“moves my head from side to side”—body language

“should probably rip off skin”—chorus of insects

---start with crown?

My composite eyes are found sideways

of false faces and bodies.

Imposter

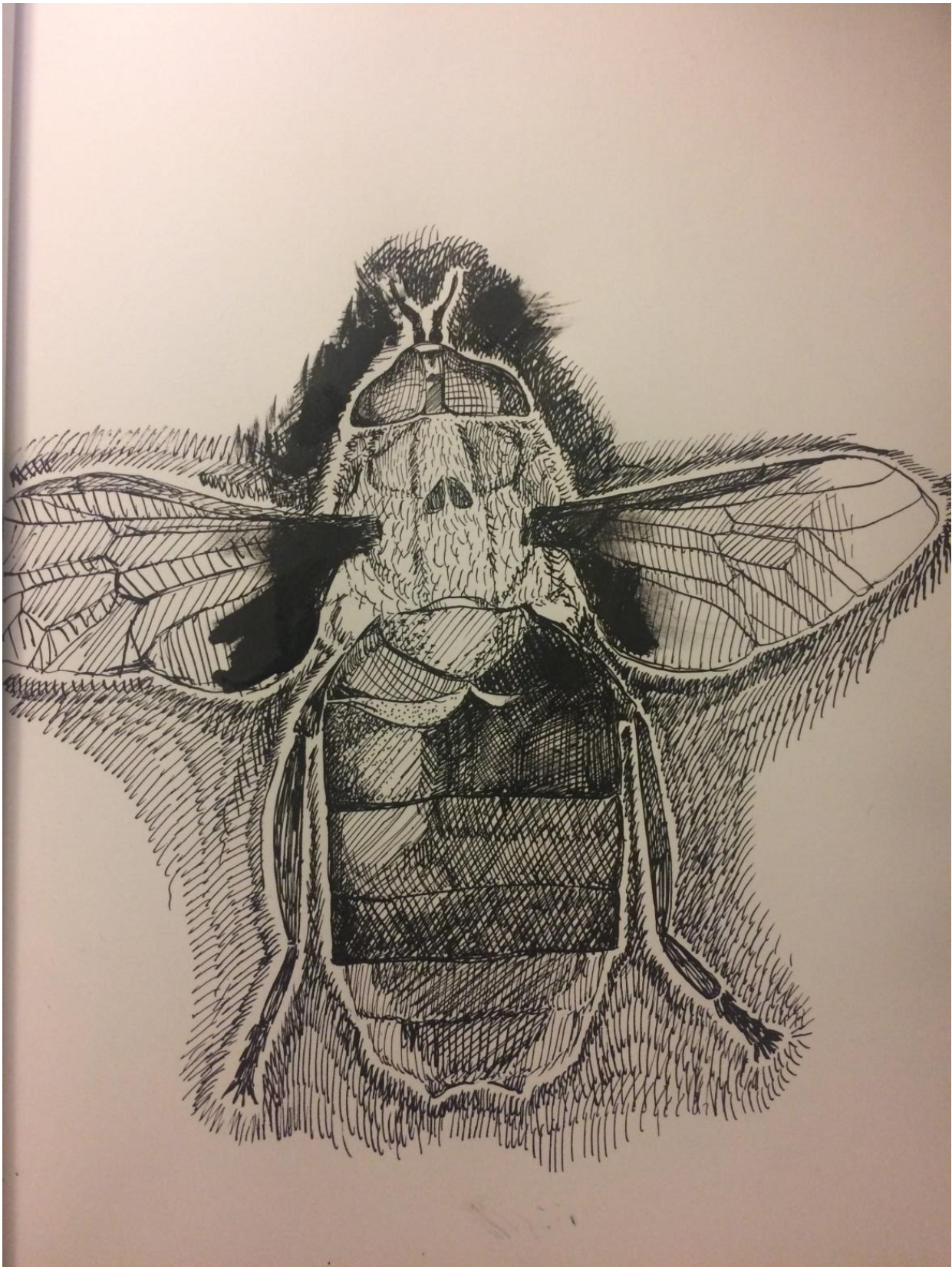
/fly/

with the delusion it

could become David Cronenberg.

Explicit

They call me Mr. Meowlo because I really like fish



FLY – THERESA FAULDER

UNFILMABLE SCREENPLAY
TOMAS ANDEL

INT. Bedroom of DARTH MAUL, Night

DARTH MAUL is sleeping on a waterbed. There is an incessant electrical hum coming through the blanket, a faint glow in the crotch area. In the window, in the distance, a DOG humps a balloon. DARTH MAUL stirs, gently, and smacks his lips two to three times.

DARTH MAUL, waking, sits straight up into a fit of laughter and turns on the bedside lamp.

DARTH

I just remembered how funny jazz is.

Outside, the DOG's balloon pops. DOG continues humping motion, staring wistfully into a nearby tire fire.

MAUL

Great. Just great. Over a week now you haven't been able to sleep.

DARTH

I can't help it. I can't stop thinking about how funny jazz is. How am I supposed to fall asleep when jazz is funny?

DARTH MAUL start to get out of bed. Mike&Ikes spill out from under the blanket. Jazz, being funny, keeps DARTH awake.

MAUL (frustrated)

So it's going to be like that, is it?

DARTH

Be nice, it'll be ok!

DARTH MAUL's lips invert and kiss themselves. DARTH and MAUL share a smile.

DARTH MAUL

Bonita.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE: to rely on a punchline here would be kind of a cop out. Like they say, the priest doesn't actually *need* the cross.

STAR WIPE TO:

EXT. THROUGH THE DOORS OF PAIN OUT BY THE RAILROAD TRACKS

Imagine time as an unbearably large object which you cannot move and in which you are caught in. Imagine... plastic, the bible belt, rust, Americana... crinoline.

DOG (still humping wildly, speaking to remains of balloon)

Nobody (ever) will understand the significance of our lovemaking. I am the one they call "Wizard" from East Jesus.

DOG has ping-pong balls attached to all "relevant" joints for motion capture. Gigabytes of data stream from his bones outwards into a world wide web, getting caught by specialized film making antennas, certain radios, and chain link fences.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. Bedroom of DARTH MAUL, Night

DARTH MAUL, now finding bebop funny, reaches into a jar on the night table and pulls a pair of socks out of formaldehyde. He puts them on, and makes to get out of bed. His glowing crotch bathes the audience in a cold, teal glow, and fills the sound stage with a ground rattling 2Hz throb.

AUDIENCE, touched by the diegetic light, now becomes part of the scene and and and also susceptible to diegetic pain.

DARTH (looking down at crotch)
Holy smokes! I think I'm in love!

MAUL

Will you get a load of that, brother DARTH! Let's measure it.

DARTH MAUL stares at his crotch through a pair of technological binoculars.

MAUL (scanning)
Let's see:
"Name: DARTH MAUL
Age: 24
Style: Strictly business.
Top Speed: Crazy in love."

MAUL
So it's true.

For five minutes, Camera A and Camera B alternately zoom up only on AUDIENCE MEMBERS WHO AREN'T PAYING ATTENTION and VARIOUS EXTRAS. A hard drive with all previous footage of this film burns down, and the rest of the film's dialogue is phoned in over Skype. Part of the crew is fired in a corporate overhaul. Comcast seals the deal.

DARTH (Skype quality)
D/o, `y ou k'now, wh`o i-t i-s?'

MAUL
I don't know! Haha.

(4100 milliseconds of Skype lag pass)

DARTH (Skype quality)
.*: =Le_t!`s' Fi~nd_ Ou<t_! 'u

INT. VIEWER'S EYEBALLS, AT TIME OF WATCHING AND SYNCHRONOUS WITH YOUR READING EXPERIENCE

DARTH MAUL takes a walk through your eyeballs, suggesting funny things to your brain without you necessarily knowing. God's oven dings announcing the second cycle of life on earth. Now!! ... Enter PANAGO, fresh.

PANAGO (pop-up, incessant)
Super Cheezy Bread. Perfect for the kid in all of us. Fresh
baked dough smothered in cheezy cheddar sauce and topped
with mozzarella + cheddar \$5.50 / 8 pc pack.

[Http://www.panago.com/hot_deals](http://www.panago.com/hot_deals)

DARTH (Skype quality)
I s t h i s t h e o n e y o u l o v e ?

MAUL (adjusting webcam brightness/contrast settings and
staring at self)
No.

PANAGO exits. ENTER LATVIA.

LATVIA (speaking seriously, but not without tenderness)
Ethnic groups in Latvia as of 2015:

- 61.6% [Latvians](#)
- 25.8% [Russians](#)
- 3.4% [Belarusians](#)
- 2.3% [Ukrainians](#)
- 2.1% [Poles](#)
- 1.2% [Lithuanians](#)
- ▲ 4.8% [others / unspecified](#)

DARTH (Skype quality, now eager)
I s t h i s t h e o n e y o u l o v e ?

MAUL (not without serious regret)
No, it is not.

EXIT LATVIA. Enter DOG.

"DOG"
I am the "Wizard" of East Jesus. I clang God's star.

MAUL
It is him! That's it. My love. End scene.

SPINNING 3D CUBE TRANSITION TO:

INT. EXTRADIEGETIC FILM STUDIO

DARTH MAUL, cooling his crotch and sipping on a JAMBA JUICE, reads from the script with his intradiegetic eyeballs.

DARTH MAUL

DARTH MAUL, cooling his crotch and sipping on a JAMBA JUICE, reads from the script with his intradiegetic eyeballs. Enter STEVEN'S SPIELBERG dressed as Roman centurion.

STEVEN'S SPIELBERG

I've come to collect Caesar's taxes.

DARTH MAUL

I don't appreciate the self-recursive script, you Free Willy-looking pancake-munching crumb-bumping inverted-ass Hollywood Judas. God bless. (drops microphone, which vanishes into void at the edge of the greenscreen.)

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Bravo?

DARTH MAUL

I don't know. Sure?

Camera switches to hand-held action shot of door bursting off its hinges—GEORGE LUCAS runs in, a kind of cartoon sneaking up on real life, sawdust blowing out of his hair and all over his shades, punches boom microphone out of SOUND GUY's hands and pushes CAMERA MAN to the floor. From another camera, we see GEORGE *mangle* the camera monitors with his bare fists. This goes on for fifteen seconds. GEORGE catches his breath for an awkwardly long amount of time.

GEORGE LUCAS (catching breath)

Please quiet on set, we will begin again.

The greenscreen rips DARTH MAUL's body back in twine to begin filming. DARTH, now again DARTH and MAUL, experiencing extradiegetic and intradiegetic pain in both bodies, pukes industrial light and magic from the pain of technological

incision. He momentarily becomes the epitome of CGI abjection. CANNED LAUGHTER.

DARTH
(Torso and up)

MAUL
(Waist down to toes covered in buff-colored puke.)

GEORGE LUCAS
The spiritual purpose of breaking down any apparently unchanging locus of individuality is to demonstrate that there is "no thing" to be ... Technology is just the center of my process. Leveraging technology to the end of creativity is my fois gras.

CANNED LAUGHTER, applause.

GEORGE LUCAS
Star Wars, Revenge of the Sith. Scene 1, Take 2. Sound? (sound guy thumbs up from floor) Camera? (camera man pees a little) Action.

TRANSCEND TO:

INT. GEORGE LUCAS' SCRIPT FOR "STAR WARS, REVENGE OF THE SITH," AT TIME OF IMAGINING, STREAMING SIMULTANEOUSLY ON SIX DEVICES

DARTH and MAUL stand at the edge of a vast greenscreen. Here, space is just a series of unconscious inferential processes that synthesize a hypothetical collection of objects and geometries. DARTH's eyeball drifts outward from his head as a TECH GUY fiddles with a KNOB. He is allotted a limited amount of character animations, so that he mismatches actions with the wrong objects.

CANNED LAUGHTER.

DARTH
You think it's easy being up here?

GEORGE LUCAS turns off all geometry markers, leaving DARTH and MAUL floating in a blind directionless hell. The only tropism present is an urge toward death, decay, and non-being.

DARTH

Alright, that does it.

EXT. AT THE EDGE OF GEORGE LUCAS' SCRIPT, CURRENT TIME

DARTH MAUL, first ascending perpendicular to three dimensional space, suddenly emerges out of the script, cancelling the film illusion. He is the first autonomous digital actor to do so.

GEORGE LUCAS

I see you've grown stronger since we've last met.

DARTH

When does this story end?

GEORGE LUCAS (twirling 4 lightsabers)

Keep going until you feel all has occurred. Have as much fun until you feel everything has occurred. Laugh as much as you need until you feel enough laughing has occurred. Include as many laughter until you feel as if enough jokes have occurred. Keep going until you've confronted the deathness of things. (gets out of director's chair, pulls shirt over BEST BOY'S head and beats him up for a crumpled \$5 bill.)

Clueing into the sagging plot, the AUDIENCE MEMBERS get restless and start chewing on one another's hair for comfort.

(Beat.)

DARTH MAUL's crotch begins to glow and hum with uncontrollable ferocity. All cameras on set begin to tilt, pan, and track of their own accord. Everyone on set is forced to experience a cutaway flashback of their most embarrassing sexual encounter. When they come to, HOWARD THE DUCK is holding a loaded handgun against GEORGE LUCAS' left

temple. The AUDIENCE'S fingers pixelate out of fear. Everyone experiences pointilistic tingling in strange places on their bodies. Camera B hobbles across the soundstage leaking high octane gasoline over the floor. Camera A rocks itself off its tripod and smashes a power extension panel, starting an electrical fire that immediately ignites the gasoline trail, immolating Camera B. STEVEN'S SPIELBERG'S centurion armor implodes, shooting fragments of SPIELBERG'S cranium and entrails into an overhead directional spotlight, unhinging it. The spotlight, falling from a sufficient height, kills: CAMERA MAN A, CAMERA MAN B, BEST BOY, SOUND GUY, FILM LOADER, MOTION CONTROL TECHNICIAN/OPERATOR, GAFFER, and the SHIP'S COOK. As blood covers the greenscreen, the diegetic world starts to become spotty and malfunctions. Rendering glitches stretch the AUDIENCE'S facial polygons through walls, impaling anything and anyone in their path. Textures melt. Surfaces like skin cease to render, and people's organs spill all over the soundstage. Technology continues to fuck itself orgiastically. The APPLAUSE PLEASE sign flickers uncontrollably until it short circuits, leaving the soundstage in complete darkness of a sort that hangs imposingly like a dead mass. No one is left to laugh, and so the joke is over.

GEORGE LUCAS (hair and face covered in ash and debris,
coughs out a little cloud of smoke.)
My accidental masterpiece.

Enter DOG, shrouded in mystery.

DOG
So have you realized who I've come to be in your narrative
yet?

DARTH MAUL
You are incorrigible love.

GEORGE LUCAS
You are both mother and death.

DARTH MAUL
Like jazz, you are an ungraspable metaphor.

GEORGE LUCAS

You are the false god "knowing."

DARTH MAUL

You are the whimpering street contained against the
buildings.

GEORGE LUCAS

You are abstract, erotic, improvised.

DARTH MAUL

You are the army of ants marching through my pillow.

GEORGE LUCAS

A strange tremor.

TOMAS

You are my own sadness. The gun in my belly.

DOG, humping the air gently, fondly nods at them in turns.

An essay by Raphael Ruthveinn
Beowulf and Grendler

BEOWULF AND GREDEL

BARKING UP A TREE,

P-

I-

Z-

Z-

I-

N-

G.

OFF WITH THE ARM,

THEN EVERYTHING **BURSTS** FROM THE HEAD,

BEOWULF HAS **FUN !!!!!**

BLōD ēDRUM DRANC'FROM

GRYM GAESTE-HEAD

erotica AND VIOLENCE,

FOR MOTHER IN THE BED.

OFSÆTTHE AGLÆCWIF

ON TOP OF THEM BOTH,

“Dirty Anglo-Saxons”

“Suck my cock.”

Hi Raphael, I've reviewed your essay. I've attached some comments with further questions of my own. For Example: why does Grendel's Mother have a cock? Why are Beowulf and Grendel "PIZZING" in a tree? What do you mean by "PIZZING"? Your essay leaves many unanswered questions, and I am therefore not able to award it a grade higher than the one decoratively illuminated in the following comment pages. I'm also not sure about your thematic use of violence, incest and sex. Highly questionable research.

Dr. Van Helsinger

Vamp. Hunter



Garf

Tomas Andel

Curtains rise on smelly bachelor suite.

A GARBAGE CAT takes a sarcastic shit on the front door mat, sighs, and exits stage left. MAN wearing small straw hat enters with pizza box, freaks out, and drops the pizza in shit.

MAN
GARFIELD, YOU SHIT!!!

GARFIELD, smelling of many yesterdays, crawls over on his stomach, dragging his lower body along the carpet. Leaves behind trail of dead hair. Eyes, glazed, display no emotion.

MAN
Thought we were past this! I was gone two minutes, you shit! What is wrong with you, you barbarian child? Where's your FUCKING cat litter???????? [MAN dramatically steps on GARFIELD'S bong, crushing it.]

GARFIELD
JON, please.

JON collapses and hyperventilates into an A&W paper bag.

JON (severely distressed)
Everything's darkening.

GARFIELD
Just tunnel vision. Hold my hand.

JON
I think I'm dying!

GARFIELD
No Jon, it's just a panic attack. It's ok. I'm here for you. You'll be fine-

Without missing a beat, JON pukes in the shit and pizza. Additionally, his hat falls into the jambalaya.

GARFIELD
There, there. [Wipes blood & puke off Jon's mouth with Jon's sleeve.]

JON
I'm sorry. Shouldn't have yelled at you.

GARFIELD
It's OK babe. [puckers lips]

JON cries into GARFIELD'S fur for three minutes. A knife fight takes place off-stage.

JON (evaluating)
Everything was under control. I was level on medication. Slept a few hours a night, even.

Long beat.

GARFIELD
And you didn't hallucinate as much anymore.

JON
Yeah, true.

Long beat.

JON
Garf, I gotta clean this pie up before Samantha arrives with the divorce lawyer—I can't have this sloppy joe sitting here. Garfield, how could you...

GARFIELD
Well,

JON, with distant eyes, picks up a slice of pizza from the salty medley, picks a hair off it and takes a bite. GARFIELD freezes stiff, closing his eyes for a moment in disgust.

GARFIELD (scientifically)
I've been keeping track of your apparent wellbeing in correlation to your new medication.

JON
OK?

GARFIELD
Let me be blunt; why are you lying to my face?

JON
What?

GARFIELD
(holding up pill bottle) 40 pills. You started 3 weeks ago. There should be 19 left. Does this look like 19 to you, JON?

JON
...no... no, it looks like more-

GARFIELD
Uh-huh. What's up with that Jon?

J.N.O
I don't-

GARFIELD
I do. You're lapsing again. You've been talking with "Baby Bradley"
again, haven't you?

JON spits in GARFIELD'S face, then sobs into his sleeve.

GARFIELD
Answer me truthfully you garbage.

JON nods.

GARIFIEL
You gotta take the pills to get better.

JON (heaving)
I'm sorry, OK? Every morning: blank face in the mirror. Everyone yells
at me at work, including the filing clerk. I eat my lunch alone in the
filing vault. Come home—don't feed you cause you already help yourself
to fuckin... *anything* in the fridge. Then just sleep. Repeat. So??? I
forget to take pills here and there! What's it got to do with
anything???

Long beat. Gafield wrags tail slowly.

J.NO
I see. I took that shit. It was me all along.

JON scratches ath his face and repeatedly yells "I LAID THOSE ROTTEN
EGGS." GARFIELF argues with an AUDIENCE MEMBER over the distasteful use
of the term "barbarian." JON tires out and slowly collapses.

JNO [whipsering]
Ur a good guy... I need a good guy r/ now.

JON falls asleep in the gumbo. GARFIELD places all the pizza slices in
a blue dufflebag. Takes out Tic-Tac box and adds Tic-Tacs to JON's
medication. Kisses JON's head. Putting a paper towel over his hand, he
reaches into JON's pants and pulls out his car keys.

GARFIELD unzips his skin. It falls to the floor like a tarp, revealing a SMALL MAN resembling Danny DeVito.

SMALL MAN

My vision wavers like a sheet.

Lights dim. Spotlight shines off-stage, **r e v e a l i n g** AUDIENCE gathered around bloated, **s k i n - l e s s c o r p s e** of **g a r f : : : ガルフィールド**.

SMALL MAN is seen taking a selfie with JON'S 1995 Ford Focus sedan before riding off into the sunset.

Curtainfall.jpg

The Garden of Heaven and Hell: Religious Symbolism in *The Black Monk*

ALLISON MURPHY

Despite the inhospitable climate of his homeland, Anton Chekhov was a passionate gardener in the later years of his life and the motif of gardens recurs frequently in both his prose and dramatic works. Critic Donald Rayfield observes that these gardens provide more than a setting or mood and that they are often “symbolic of characters’ inner world” (532). This is true of the garden in “The Black Monk”, which is endowed with an intense spiritual dimension in accordance with the story’s themes of divine genius and madness, happiness and suffering. On the one hand it represents a manmade Eden, on the other the hellish site of toil and mania. In “The Black Monk” the religious symbolism and contradictions contained within the garden develop alongside the conflicts within Kovrin and the larger themes of the work.

In the Christian tradition, the Garden of Eden symbolizes humanity’s innocence, represented as an idyllic existence preceding the comprehension of sin, evil, and suffering. In the garden, God is said to have walked and communicated directly with man (Genesis 3:8), and Kovrin’s hallucinatory dialogues with the monk echo this direct contact between man and the divine. The world of Pesotsky’s garden is in no way a straightforward Eden, but for Kovrin the trip to visit his former ward and his magnificent garden entails a return to a childlike innocence: “a joyful young feeling stirred in his breast, such as he had experienced in childhood running about in these gardens” (Chekhov 228).

During his initial descent into madness Kovrin returns to a state of innocent bliss as he fails to recognize the turmoil around him. He loses touch with the reality of pain and suffering so enthralled is he by his perceived divine purpose. His dialogues with the monk confirm that he recognizes he is mentally ill and hallucinating, but he is comforted because “he [is] now firmly convinced that such visions came only to the chosen” (Chekhov 242). He believes his work is essential to hasten the return of mankind to paradise (239). The juxtaposition of reason and irrationality in these dialogues calls in to question the classification of sane or insane, natural and unnatural. The rational psychologist in Kovrin uses logic to justify the veracity of his hallucination as the monk of his own creation explains, “I exist in your imagination, and your imagination is a part of nature, which means that I, too, exist in nature” (237). Further destabilizing these categories is the depiction of Pesotsky’s own manias his obsession with the orchard and its fate after his death— like Kovrin he is described in terms of a disjointed and duplicated self.

In tension with Kovrin's blissful attitude towards his environment is the hellish imagery describing the garden in the text. In Pesotsky's garden there is an insidious sense of order as the natural world is subjugated to the will of man for profit and even "the flowers . . . gave off a damp, irritating smell" (Chekhov 229). Despite the uniformity of this garden that "made the picture monotonous and even dull" (225), Kovrin remains inspired and full of joy. The most threatening image is the ominous "thick, black, pungent smoke [covering] the ground and enveloping the trees, [that] saved those thousands from the frost" (224-5). Without the smoke the garden would perish, but at what cost? There is a parallel between the oppressive smoke essential for keeping the gardens alive and profitable and Kovrin's madness and the imposition of a cure and normality that destroys his happiness. Both appear essential for the survival of the organism, but they cast a shade over pleasure for the sake of the practical. Rayfield suggests the garden in the "The Black Monk" is the setting for "its Dantean descent into unfamiliar fields of suffering" (538), but it isn't until after Kovrin is cured of his state of mad innocence that he can recognize the world of the gardens as such.

Kovrin's fall from the lofty height of believing himself a divinely inspired genius involves a loss of innocence. His return to the Pesotsky's garden the following spring is notably one filled with suffering and anger. Upon his sad, sluggish return to the site of his initial rapture he moves through the garden "not noticing the luxuriant flowers" and when he visits the gloomy pines of his earlier vision he finds they stand "motionless, mute, as if they did not recognize him" (Chekhov 245). There is a profound disconnection between Kovrin and nature as spaces that were once a source of joy now seem empty and agonizing.

During his initial illness, Kovrin loses all sense of emotional balance. In their final conversation before his treatment he tells the monk, "It seems strange to me that I experience nothing but joy from morning till evening. It fills the whole of me and stifles all my other feelings. I don't know what sadness, sorrow, or boredom is" (243). To this the monk responds, "Is joy a supernatural feeling? Should it not be the normal state of man?" (243), contained in this statement is an idealized vision of humanity, like that in the Garden of Eden, but it is a vision that denies the abundance of suffering and confusion that defines one's human experience. In reality, there can be no good without evil, joy without pain, or life without death. It is the negotiation of these opposing forces that gives life its full meaning. Only after Kovrin is cast out of the Pesotsky's garden, spending two years in exile with a new woman, does he come to understand how his own pride and selfishness acted as a

force of evil amidst the three of them. He recognizes his cruelty to Tanya and to her father. His experience of this knowledge causes him great shame, as it also demonstrates a new degree of self-awareness and perception.

Kovrin's experience outlines his own fall from innocence and happiness into suffering. In his recollection the bitter taste of this knowledge forces him to recognize that he is not unique and that he has inflicted great pain and suffering on others. Nevertheless, Kovrin's final moments seem to combine the irreconcilable opposites from before, "his breath was taken away and his heart wrung with sorrow, and a wonder, sweet joy, such as he had long forgotten, trembled in his breast" (251). He experiences great pain alongside bliss and the oppositions find some resolution within him. The final scene is morbid cacophony of rapturous joy and extreme physical suffering, but there is a degree of redemption in the pleasant description of the garden, and the calling out of Tanya's name, and "out to life that was so beautiful" (252). Kovrin's apparently happy death problematizes any definitive moral judgment; it remains ambiguous to the end whether he is a madman or a genius— perhaps he is a mixture of both. In this final return to the garden and to belief he has a renewed sense of suffering and anguish, not just his own, but the pain that he has caused others.

Rayfield describes "The Black Monk" as a *historia morbi*, or the account of "symptoms gathering to a syndrome and death" (544) and he argues that for Chekhov gardens often symbolize a "characters' mentality mapped out" (534). The account of Kovrin's sickness and death is paralleled by the description of the garden, the dark smoke casting a shadow like madness, and the destruction of one is mirrored by the collapse of the other. It is only after Kovrin learns that Pesotsky is dead and with him his garden that he succumbs to his own disease. In "The Black Monk" the religious symbolism of the garden is as fraught with internal tensions and contradictions as the experiences of the protagonist and his relations. From the beginning, during Kovrin's fits of happy genius, the descriptions of the garden suggest paradisiacal allusions to the Garden of Eden alongside with hellish images of toil and suffering. These contradictory impressions reinforce the thematic oppositions of genius and madness, innocence and experience, happiness and suffering, and suggest the dynamic interplay of these apparent polarities and their dependence of one upon the other.

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Anti-Catholicism in Matthew Lewis' *The Monk*

KATE ADAMS

Since King Henry VIII's break with Rome in 1536, Protestantism has become an increasingly integral part of British identity. While the island's history of xenophobia does not rest on this particular event, it certainly did not help. In the early days of gothic literature, Henry Walpole's seminal work, *The Castle of Otranto*, including a preface which "assumes a readership for [the novel] that is modern, enlightened, English and Protestant, and it understands the Gothic world in which the story takes place as one which is medieval, barbaric, superstitious, and above all Catholic" (Salter 52). Four months later, when the second edition was published and Walpole acknowledged his authorship of the text, his new preface drew "a clear correlation between a country's literary culture on the one hand, and the political rights and freedoms enjoyed by its people on the other" (Salter 54). As a foundational text in Gothic literature, *The Castle of Otranto* formed the basis for all the literature that would follow. The shadow cast over the religion by Walpole cast in extremely evident in the anti-Catholic themes of Matthew Lewis' infamous 1796 novel *The Monk*. In Lewis' novel, Catholicism is seen as the root cause of Ambrosio's, the titular monk, fall from grace. The Catholic born horrors of the novel manifest themselves in two primary forms; sexual (both pertaining to the gender of the body and the physical desires and acts of that body) and secular (the perversions of the spirit caused by adherence to Catholicism).

The sentiments of the author towards the religion are obvious from the outset; "the very opening scene of the novel, which is set in and around the Church of the Capuchins in Madrid ('where superstition reigns with . . . despotic sway' [Lewis 7]), appears to have been designed with the express purpose of affronting the sensibilities of the book's English Protestant readers by highlighting the sensual and irrational nature of Spanish Catholicism" (Salter 57). In this opening, not only is the sacred space of the church a breeding ground for intrigue and gossip (such as the machinations of both Leonella and Lorenzo) but it also functions as the space which forges the first connection between Antonia and Ambrosio. Enraptured by his sermon, Antonia feels an immediate connection to, and affection for, Ambrosio, a fatal error of the heart which leads to the tragic events at the climax of the novel. However, another, far more important connection is also made in this opening sequence. During his conversation with Leonella, "Lorenzo ... thematically places Ambrosio in a virginal, feminine position: discovered at the door of the Capuchins and popularly believed to have been a 'present' from the Virgin Mary, Ambrosio was 'educated in the Monastery, where He has remained ever since'. Having

‘pronounced his [monastic] vows’ the thirty-year-old virgin monk (ironically, the age Jesus began his ministry, the product of the same ‘virgin’ birth) has lived in ‘total seclusion from the world’. Having never been outside of the Abbey walls, his character is without the ‘smallest stain’, so ‘strict an observer of Chastity, that He knows not in what consists the difference of Man and Woman’” (Blakemore 522, all quotes from Lewis 17). Not only does the gendered language used in this description (protected, ignorant, innocent, etc.) evoke the contemporary rhetoric around female virtue (a word which was practically synonymous with chastity and virginity), but Leonella’s bizarre advice to Antonia, that she ought to “imagine every body to be of the same sex with yourself” (Lewis 17), serves to create a thematic link between the siblings.

The feminization of Ambrosio is one of the key components of his characters descent within the novel. This feminization occurs at the hands of Rosario/Matilda, a servant of the Devil, but it is the weakness created in him by his monastic life that allows this process to occur. “Lewis’s point is that Catholic vows of chastity feminize monks whose sexual ignorance makes them vulnerable to temptation and hypocrisy” (Blakemore 522). From the outset of her seduction, Matilda is masculinized, a contrast to the weak creature that the Capuchin walls have made of Ambrosio. During his seduction, Matilda’s gaze is said to have “penetrated” (Lewis 83) Ambrosio’s soul, a highly suggestive and phallic verb which echoes the description during the opening scene when “the sound of his [Ambrosio’s] voice seemed to penetrate into her [Antonia’s] very soul”. Here again the siblings are connected, both thematically (“Matilda is to Ambrosio as Ambrosio is to Antonia: both Ambrosio and Antonia are seduced and murdered” [Blakemore 525]) and in the gendered language used by Lewis about them. Antonia is not the only female character which whom Ambrosio is linked in his destruction; “like Agnes, he [Ambrosio] has broken his vows, succumbed to seduction, and fears his “frailty” will be exposed to the world” (Blakemore 526).

After Matilda successfully seduces Ambrosio, Lewis’ gendered portrayal of their unholy match becomes increasingly overt. “Ambrosio becomes progressively more submissive and dependent. Threatened by Matilda not ‘to follow’ her into the ‘caverns’ of St. Claire, Ambrosio longs ‘to penetrate’ into the cavern’s ‘mystery’, but his courage fails him as he begins to descend: ‘He remembered Matilda’s menaces if He infringed her orders, and his bosom was filled with a secret unaccountable awe’ [all quotes from Lewis 232]. This scene is subsequently reversed when Matilda assures him that he can possess Antonia by following her into the cavern and conjuring the aid of a fallen Angel (Lewis 267-68). When Ambrosio refuses because

a demonic ceremony would damn him, Matilda mocks and shames him by, in effect, 'daring' him to be a man².

Finally, in the portrayal of Ambrosio's final agreement to a pact with the Devil, the unnatural gender relations created by this fall from grace are solidified. "Lucifer re-emphasizes the link between the satanic marriage ceremony and demonic, sexual possession, insisting that Ambrosio must be totally his: 'I must have your soul; must have it mine, and mine for ever . . . mine you must and shall be ... Mine you must be' (Lewis 434). Note the allusive demonic echo of Matilda telling Ambrosio, 'I lust for the enjoyment of your person ... I must enjoy you, or die' (Lewis 89), and more pertinently, Ambrosio, who tells Antonia before he rapes her: 'Before the break of day, mine you must, and mine you shall be!' (Lewis 379)" (Blakemore 533). Ambrosio is feminized in his seduction, recreated as male in his rape of Antonia, and finally re-feminized in the end by his ultimate seduction by Lucifer. This final nail in the coffin of his masculinity comes in the form of his death, when Lucifer, in the form of a giant bird, drops him from a great height. There is an unmistakable phallic allusion in the phrase "the sharp point of a rock received him" (Lewis 442), and when the "eagles of the rock tore his flesh piecemeal" (Lewis 442), Lewis draws a parallel between the seduction of Ambrosio by the devil and the mythological rape of Ganymede, whose very name become a Renaissance byword for homosexuality.

The feminization of Ambrosio is not the only basis on which Lewis builds his supernatural critique of Catholicism. In his descriptions of Ambrosio's sins, there are implicit hints that Ambrosio has been warped by his monastic upbringing and tenure as a Catholic priest. Not only did his sheltered life fail to adequately prepare him to face the temptations of the flesh (and, the text implies, fail to make him a proper man who could resist the treatment he receives from Matilda), but it also created a propensity for perversion within his soul, the foremost example of this being the tendency towards voyeurism which Ambrosio displays. It was a common Protestant prejudice that the act of Confession, integral to Roman Catholic church practices, was inherently perverse, and the image of a corrupted priest deriving enjoyment from listening to the beauty ladies of the congregation spilling their innermost thoughts and desires is a common one in works which display the same anti-Catholic sentiments as this novel. This particular image is taken even further in this novel. In order to retain his obedience, Matilda gifts Ambrosio with an

² 'Ridiculous [religious] prejudices! Oh! blush, Ambrosio, blush at being subjected to their dominion... Throw from you these terrors... and dare to be happy! . . . You dare not?... That mind which I esteemed so great and valiant, proves to be feeble; puerile, and grovelling, a slave to vulgar errors, and weaker than a Woman's' (Lewis 268)" (Blakemore 531).

enchanted mirror, which allows him to spy upon Antonia as she bathes, preying upon the already voyeuristic tendencies of the confessor.

A book about a monk who is seduced by an agent of Satan, murders his mother, rapes his sister, and ultimately pledges his soul to be damned could hardly avoid commenting on religious practices. Lewis' novel, in which said agent of the devil has an image of the Virgin Mary created in her likeness (which the aforementioned monk lusts over) and where an echo of the iconic Madonna and child pose is recreated with a disgraced nun and the rotting corpse of her baby, has its feet firmly planted on the side of "sensible" English Protestantism, and clearly rejects the "smells and bells" of Catholic mysticism and superstition. Through a reversal of religious imagery, as mentioned above, and an exploration of the weaknesses created by the Catholic repression of the natural and healthy expressions of the body, Lewis uses the supernatural and grotesque to frighten the Protestant reader, while simultaneously titillating and thrilling them with depictions of the pornographic and forbidden.

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POST-WORD

Many thanks are owed for making this experimental journal possible. Firstly, to the editorial board: Emma Skagen (for two years of assisting me with editing and for gracing us with her astral presence from afar), Allison Murphy (for her prowess with digital tools and for defending feline life when it seemed no one else would), Levi Binnema (for being our angel of the creative writing department), Rachel Lallouz (for sharing her Promethean fire with her fellow graduate students), Donald Kimber (for your devotion to the odd and surreal in film and video games), to Tom Nienhuis (for your resourceful drive for resolving issues and your passion for the horror genre) and of course to Dave Eso, who encouraged me to pursue the project in the first place.

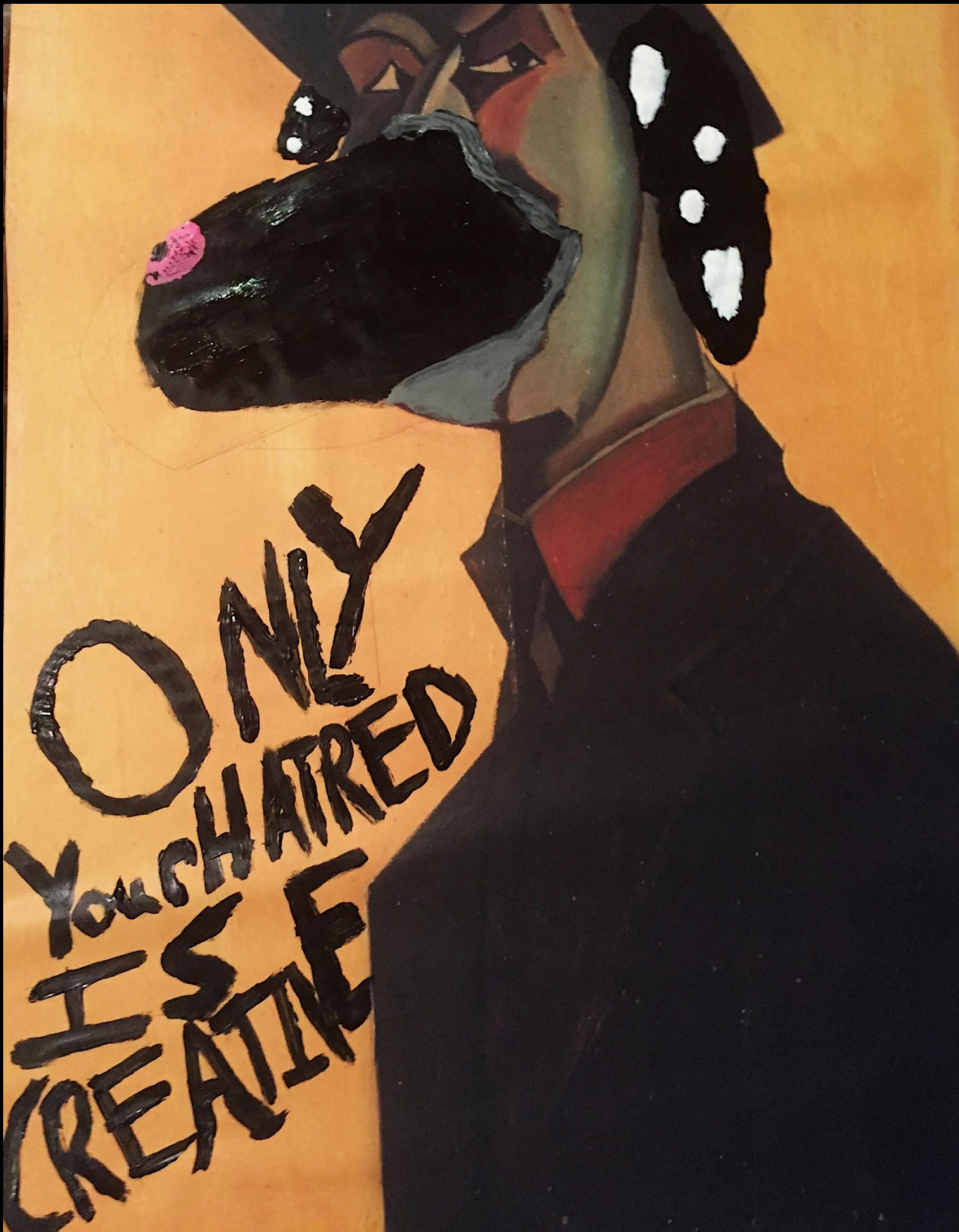
Thanks are also due to the artists of Edmonton: no dead prairie town in these pages! I owe you my love.

Victoria: I owe you something as well. We'll settle that later. The artists are deserving of all for helping me assemble this diabolic issue.

This journal was made possible by grants from the Graduate Students Society (GSS) through the Department of English and the Department of Creative Writing at the University of Victoria.

This journal is dedicated to all of those who have made our worlds a little queerer, who have helped us laugh our way through the violence, who allow the strangeness of the world to seep into their lifestyles.

C.



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