

Winter 2015

## Pathos, Winter 2015

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An abstract painting with a woman's face on the left side. The background is a mix of orange, red, and white, with a large, textured, vertical shape in the center that looks like a piece of wood or a torn piece of paper. The overall style is expressive and somewhat somber.

# pathos

LITERARY MAGAZINE

**Winter 2015**  
**Volume 9, No. 2**

# WINTER 2015

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## writing

- 2 "Ode to Rikki" by Maria Martin
- 4 "100s" by Alana Diener
- 6 "Hats" by Jessica Moore
- 8 "Chrono Trigger" by Hunter Ferreiro
- 11 "Ipseity" by Rahnia Beuter
- 12 "Smooth Hands" by Alan Scott Holley
- 13 "In Italian, Stanza Means Room" by Jessica Moore
- 14 "Morningtide" by Alan Scott Holley
- 18 "Soul Quilt" by Beverly Orth
- 21 "Finally" by Cristina Martinez Gonzalez
- 22 "In the City" by Bethany Umbarger
- 24 "My Story, by Yash Ere Singh" by Jon Raby

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## on the cover

"Memory" by Melissa Armstrong

## visual art

- 3 "Portland Spring" by Kathy Krisinski
- 7 "The Gathering" by Brian Parker
- 10 "Land Escape" by Natalie Graff
- 15 "Barricade Shopping" by Tatyana Ostapenko
- 20 "She Takes a Train" by Richard Omier
- 23 "Reading with Sasquatch" by Erika Schnatz
- 27 "Mill" by Richard Omier

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## community spotlight

"Professor Susan Kirtley on Comics, Feminism, & Genre"  
by Corinne Gould  
Page #16

# Ode to Rikki:

## THE SPRING OF OUR OFFERING

Maria Martin

You were the closest thing to naked  
I had ever seen. Laying there by the pounding surf in a blue gingham cotton dress from the Goodwill, your emerald eyes  
pouring  
forth the confessional. I knelt beside you, envying  
your peeled back beauty, words germinating in my sandy pockets.  
Spring breaks and we drove  
my Pinto to Santa Barbara the next day, fogstrained sight and rain gushing through the hole in the floorboards.  
Dylan was saved and we sang "Slow Train Comin'" and "Solid Rock" til we reached Ventura,  
All we had was a mattress On the floor, turntable, vinyl,  
sandalwood and vanilla incense.

I was a South Bay mall gypsy, all made up in Cover Girl, hoops, and trinkets, and you perfect in your skin,  
unshorn, unpinned by mores. You rose  
while the sun was low and the sidewalks cold,  
darting up and down De La Vina in your barefeet (crazy laughing angel) yanking oranges from innocent trees with  
guilty glee, as if these were free offerings.

I brought home forty-nine cent bread and strays:  
Tommy the Puppet Man, and Thaddicus, and Ray the Vietnam Vet any beggar stepping off the 24 from Isla Vista. We drank  
Darjeeling  
and read The Sun Also Rises out loud on the deck. We kept the boys out  
of our beds until we'd finished The Brothers  
Karamazov and had our fill of Tupelo Honey and clove cigarettes. And after that On the Road. Yes. Yes. We tried to  
proselytize with the holiest hymns we could find, Joni's Hissing of Summer Lawns, you baptizing the boarders in Blue  
Like Jazz but nobody really caught what we had,  
Rikki. Until I put my hands around the chest of your singing bird, I'd no idea how rapid her heart beat.

We popped into The Pentecostal Church one Sunday on a whim, raising our hands on commands, trying hard to outwit them with delphic tongues, to do the holy roll,  
but that lunatic was heading for us, hepped up on coke, one fiery palm on our pocket and one gonna slap us to the floor.

We bolted out in holy terror, hearts and feet  
pounding up State Street, knowing then, we were safer than saved.  
A week later we hiked up to the waterfalls behind the glistening adobe mission and prayed on a rock  
without a word. You sang "Solsbury Hill" and Springsteen's "The River" and dove beneath a circling pool, the quiet white  
rings of your wake  
left me breathless, undone, by its temporal beauty.  
We waded in that Spring, by the sun spooning the shadowy white  
Santa Barbara hills, dripping at dusk like dark molasses. It was the only time of day I missed home.

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Above:  
**PORTLAND SPRING**  
**Kathy Krisinski**

## 100s

Alana Diener

I never thought I'd be here. I knew it was bad, but I thought I knew Danny, and this isn't something I ever would have predicted. Yet somehow, I'm not mad at him. Right now, I'm just scared. I'm afraid of what I'll see when I go inside, what ruins I'll find myself in the middle of. On the outside, everything looks the same, picturesque and suburban. It's a peaceful neighborhood. Things like this don't happen here. Once I step in, I can feel the grief. It's crushing. It presses down on me. Immediately I know I'll never escape it.

*The campus is massive and unfamiliar, like an alien planet. I take a seat in the back of my English classroom, because I have no desire to participate in first-day-of-high-school introductory activities. Two latecomers amble into class, meandering through the rows of desks. One trips over my backpack and knocks my books to the ground. His doppelganger quietly apologizes on his behalf. I scrutinize them as they gather the books. Same sand-colored hair and stoic expressions, rail-like bodies and eyes the color of dark chocolate. They introduce themselves as Danny and Grant. Meena, I tell them, still searching for differences.*

Nobody comes to the door. They've left it unlocked and even though they're expecting me, I know I'm uprooting their silence. I hate myself for it, for every click of heel against hardwood floor as I ascend the staircase, the longest walk I've ever taken. It's like there's a gaping wound in the center of this house, a raw nerve I rub with every step I take

toward Grant's bedroom. I am not family, and I do not belong here in this sacred memorial that still holds the scent of his clothes and his old baby pictures on the walls.

*In the past, I was always a bystander to his pain. Danny has had issues before, and I'm sure he'll have issues again. He's not the only one. I'm not thinking about it now. Our years have just expired on our licenses, and I'm sitting in the passenger seat of the car the twins share, the window rolled down and the wind blowing through my hair, dark and curly and unkempt. Grant's in the back, talking about college applications, our strange, surreal futures that hurtle toward us as Danny speeds us down the 101 like he's late for something once-in-a-lifetime.*

I pause in front of Grant's door. I keep expecting Danny to appear, wondering what's happening. Grant's not the only one suffering, but I know it's not right of me to think that. I was Danny's friend, but I wasn't family. I pull my hand away from the doorknob like it's been burned and slip into the bathroom to collect myself. If I'm crying, it'll only make Grant worse. I will my face into an imitation of the unreadable masks the twins always wore. A blanket is taped over the mirror. Shards of glass cover the counter and the floor.

*The first time I see one twin without the other is in our second semester of sophomore year. It's jarring, like seeing an amputee. Grant tells me in the hallway, leaning against a row of lockers, his French textbook pressed to his chest, that Danny has finally accepted their parents' offers to get him a therapist. His eyes shine like a lighthouse. He tells me that Danny couldn't get out of bed this morning but that his first appointment is tomorrow, that he thinks this might be a turning point, the beacon of light leading his desperate twin to shore.*

I promised myself I wouldn't fall apart, but I do. Grant's knuckles are wrapped in gauze; he punched the mirror. He can't look at himself because all he sees is his twin, the moment suspended in time when all the little shreds of hope unraveled like frayed, loose threads. I hold him like he'll slip through my fingers if I let go of him for a single second. The rise and fall of his chest is a steady, grieving anthem. With blank eyes, he stares ahead to the strange and lonely future that will not slow down for his sorrow.

*Danny's arms are covered in scars that cross each other like the lines of a roadmap. They overtake his body like a cancer, down his arms, his calves, his torso, tangling with each other over the ridges of his hipbones, elbows, knees. Grant and I discover them in our second semester of freshman year.*

*He is numb with his own sorrow, overcome with grief he can't explain. He mutilates himself with knives, razors, his fingernails. He scrapes away at his skin like he's trying to peel it away in pieces, and he feels. I am not disgusted. I am terrified.*

The air in the house is stilted with hopelessness. He holds me like I'm the last solid thing left. We are still for what feels like hours, held down with the weight of our own grief and I understand now what it must have been like for Danny, to have despair resting on his chest like an anvil he had to lift every morning just to rise from his bed. It was not a selfish act. I stare at the wall, trying to fathom this dull and unreal future that will collide with our shiftless bodies, our constant, immovable selves.

*I am called to the twins' house at nine at night. I stand helpless in the hemorrhage of this perfect thing, dangling from the ceiling like an effigy, spinning slowly like a mockery, two days away from eighteen. A ceaseless cry plays vaguely in the background like a screeching funeral march. There's a note, I realize somewhere in the back of my mind, and I reach out for Grant like he's the last inch of rope as we fall away from each other. I reach out for Danny, feeling in his limp hands that vast and glimmering future slipping away.*

# HATS

Jessica Moore

My grandma gave me a hat from a vacation in Austria she went on with my grandpa  
I never wear it but it's  
Adorned upon your head and mine  
A mischievous hat  
But the tinsel wrapping it can choke those most choleric  
A thistle-eyed with smoking graveyard ears hat  
A hat on the man's head, plaid-clad and penny loafer person  
A hat on the man's head, penny pitching with a plastic bottle between his fingers  
Anyways, the wind will make both of these hats  
Fly off  
Or I could attempt at donning the Helm of Hades, wisdom and translucency when I'm  
trying to run away from blood stained bed sheets or from Rockland  
Imagine your lips pressed together, then imagine  
the Tyrolean being placed upon you, and your lips part slowly, reclining against some  
somehow warm concrete, maybe squinting at an urban florescence  
Maybe it's a kind of cutting tooth type of time signature where she told me to reckon excessively with those filled in hats in  
the treble but they were a void  
They were silence and they make me uncomfortable when my piano teacher spat on the  
keys, tapping her pencil on my pages of music,  
"Rest. Rest. Rest. Rest."

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Opposite:

THE GATHERING

Brian Parker





# CHRONO TRIGGER

Hunter Ferreiro

No audio cassette tape in existence records more than 60 minutes of audio on a single side without having incredibly thin magnetic tape. Unless you have invented an audio cassette with three, four, or eight sides, the maximum amount of time your ordinary audio cassette can hold in total is 120 minutes.<sup>1</sup> The audio cassette I am holding is one year and seven months old, exactly. Precisely 833,760 minutes. The musician dubbed “Milo” embroidered his musical endeavors onto this cassette. Side one of the cassette, things that happen at day, holds 24 minutes, 8 seconds, and 108 milliseconds of time recorded onto it. Side two of the cassette, things that happen at night, holds 25 minutes, 42 seconds, and 648 milliseconds of time recorded onto it. Each side holds greater than 23 minutes, but less than 30 minutes of recording. Because of this, I am able to conclude without documented proof, that the cassette I am holding is a C60 model, capable of recording 30 minutes of audio on each side.<sup>2</sup> Thanks to my trusty music Scrobbler,<sup>3</sup> I know for

an irrefutable fact that I have listened to things that happen at day 83 times, and things that happen at night 33 times. In total, I have listened to this cassette for 2,817 minutes, or 47 hours. I know, literally, how much time I’ve spent listening to this cassette, but have no idea how many aimless hours I spent in my youth wandering through the sewers in Chrono Trigger on Super Nintendo.<sup>4</sup>

When I was a small child, cassettes were on the brink of extinction. On trips in our old blue, hand-rolling windows, piece of shit van my father bought off of the side of a free-way in El-Paso, TX, we used only cassettes for music.<sup>5</sup> Not because we couldn’t afford compact disks, but predominately because this dated van could only play audio-cassettes. I have a creeping suspicion that my parents preferred cassettes, not because of the car, but because of nostalgia. A suitcase full of old cassettes, both musical and vocal recordings, that I found behind my mother’s couch, confirms this suspicion. And now, someone who signatures “Milo” on my cassette, wanted to bring cassettes back to life for his musings. I can only assume he did it because he has the same nostalgic tendencies my mother does.

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1. A quick Google search of “Cassette Tape Fun Facts” proves evident that there are absolutely no “fun facts” about audio cassettes.

2. The most common model of a cassette tape is C46, holding 23 ( which is 46 divided by 2) minutes on each side, the next most common size is C60. The possibility of this audio cassette holding 26 minutes exactly on each side (just enough to hold Milo’s music) is feasible, but given the industry of mass audio cassette tape production, and the available tape memory sizes (5, 10, 15, 20, 30, minutes and higher), makes this hypothesis unlikely. Making C60 the most probable model size for my cassette.

3. “To “Scrobble” a song means that when you listen to it, the name of the

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song is sent to a Website (for example, Last.fm) and added to your music profile.”

4. Chrono Trigger, on super Nintendo, was developed by a company entitled “Square” (or Square-soft and Square-enix in later years). It is a turn-based game like the Final Fantasy series, and has a time-machine titled Wings of Time, central to the game’s plot.

5. Compact disks have been commercially available since October of 1982.

There's a violent gash that diagonally grazes the transparent top of the cassette case. Don't worry, I didn't record the measurements of the gash. I didn't measure how many millimeters deep the gash goes, or how many inches long the gash is (although that would be very interesting).<sup>6</sup> The case that holds the cassette tape dates the actual tape by over twenty years. I had taken the case from my mother's suitcase full of cassettes. This case more specifically, held a copy of *Crossroads* by Tracy Chapman.<sup>7</sup> I had broken the previous case for my cassette by dropping it.

I could find out how long C60 magnetic tape lasts until it deteriorates, or how many times I can play this tape until it breaks the cassette player. I could envision it dwindling in a congregation of thrift-store items 100 years from now, I could envision it in a museum with a plaque dedicated to its name. But I care not to, to do so would be to objectify it. The tape's existence is pointless, but its existence is not meaningless.<sup>8</sup> Finally, there is a quote that Milo left us with, printed onto the inner fold of the cassette's cover art: "I spun, on the loom of time, my web: they held it to be not worth looking at; yet everything makes progress openly in time." - Aeschylus, Prometheus<sup>9</sup>

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6. Our old blue van once had flat tires in the middle of some desert (??) in Chihuahua, Mexico. I can remember my father pulling to the side of the road, and stuffing dry grass into our tires so we could make it to a town with an air-pump. My father has always had a strange, voodoo-logical, yet engineer-like, problem solving mentality. I can recall another time when our gas-tank was hovering on empty for nearly an hour, music was playing and my father was singing along. I think he genuinely believed that the music fueled our car that day, and the louder he sang, the farther we could go. Although, my brother and I held a belief that if you played your game-boy color with the volume on, the battery would drain faster.

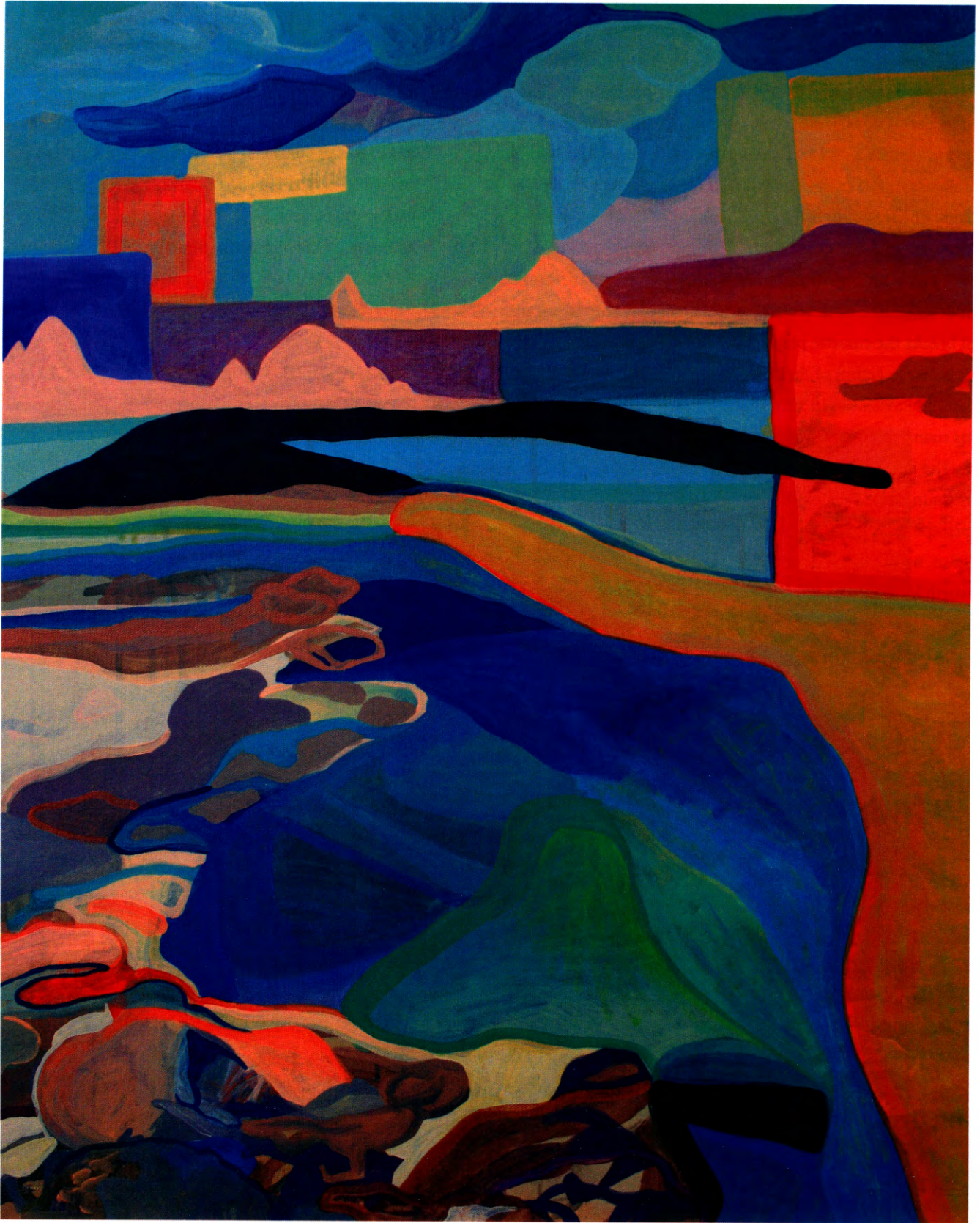
7. *Crossroads* was released in 1989

8. "I tried to make something knowing that everything is pointless and nothing is meaningless. this is how you rap with a hammer." - Rory (Milo) Ferreira

9. Just this week, I had broken a hand-made bowl that my aunt Susie made, before she had died. When I broke it, I was overtaken by guilt. I wondered if this would happen to all of her things, if all of her journal entries would be burned someday. And then I wondered the same thing about myself.

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# IPSEITY

Rahnia Beuter

*"We have lingered in the chambers of the sea  
By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown  
Till human voices wake us, and we drown."*

-- T.S. Eliot

I am a selkie  
my seal skin, locked in a trunk somewhere and I, pinned to  
the land, languishing  
while the waves churn  
threatening a tsunami .

I am Athena  
sprung into existence fully-formed  
never a child, yet the mother of many with her sea-colored  
eyes

sharp eyes and sharp claws ragged and enduring.

I am an albatross  
slope-soaring, face to the wind meandering over mountains  
returning home, like Wisdom,  
to lay another egg and lay  
in the comfort of my life-long mate.

I am Athena,  
the world's first shipwright  
opening us to the ever-changing expanse of the sea  
inspiring explorers to chase new horizons  
sailing off the edges of the atlas.

I am an anchor  
drowning myself so others may float they, steady on a  
serene surface  
me, dreaming of buoyancy.

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Opposite:

LAND ESCAPE  
Natalie Graff

# SMOOTH HANDS

Alan Scott Holley

My father used to speak of love  
the way an artist gives his final bow:  
with pause, with remembering,  
with a salute to all who came before,  
and with tribute paid to the one  
who was his inspiration, his joy of the craft.  
He said their love was a masterpiece.

He told me: *Someday you'll see her,  
your very own, and you will hold her softly,  
and she will wonder where it is you have been.*

I watched him on those warm spring afternoons  
when he would sit with the sun on his back,  
tie unfitted, freely plucking away  
on six strings that erased ten years  
of hard labor with every song.  
And her, with those dreamweaving eyes, gazing off into some distant elsewhere, already gone.

Now, his words trail the heavy smoke  
of his cigars, his tired hands rest  
at his side, softer now  
with the ghosts of calluses.  
I ask him if he still believes in love. He says: *I haven't played my guitar  
in years.*

# IN ITALIAN, STANZA MEANS ROOM

Jessica Moore

Sipping the warm rainforest rainwater  
dancing down the oil-slick  
woven bark of bay rum trees  
from a veil of Mardi Gras sky into  
the trenches made from her  
hunted and hollowed, illuminated  
skin wrapping the bone.

Absorbed with ambition while  
mapping the madman's mirage  
through required readings;  
rehearsed in paper cuts, Portland's  
sky is orange at night and she  
indulges in orange slices found  
on the cutting board.

Night as a curling  
eyelash that can cauterize spotted-slug speed saffron flowers, found in those  
hollows, dripping with dew  
but hiding from hoping or

night as a solitary  
and frightening freedom  
whose seductive,  
cloistered, lattice walls  
slowly glissade inward,  
a room she dared to run through.

# MORNINGTIDE

Alan Scott Holley

For I have learned to look on nature, not as in the hour of thoughtless youth,  
but hearing oftentimes the still, sad music of humanity.”

-William Wordsworth

Daybreak spills  
across the serenade of the earth's wide awakening.  
Soft, almost hidden within the distance, the world withholds its revival.  
The stirring fervor, the restlessness,  
the swelling underground  
waits anxiously, ready to burst forth into breathing, into bloom, into dance step and prayer,  
into smiles sprung from heart fissures, and the fever  
torn from the walls. Into kisses drawn atop the irreverent heads of lovers, held endless and sky-scraping,  
treating moonshine like wedlock, their lips  
laced with everlast, their God, a transient admirer.

And yet the daylight presses on, shedding itself everywhere  
from the symphony of birdsong, to the blasé of stillness,  
from the empty bags of seed, to the immaculate rhododendron blossoms, from the stagnant vagabonds and the abandoned  
hymnals,  
to the hotblooded martyrs tearing lightning from their throats.  
Because the morning is no fool, it is not ignorant. It knows  
the sheep, the wolves, the children, all together  
speak the language of pressed flowers, the prose  
of engine-grease, the poetry of wildfires.

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Opposite:

BARRICADE SHOPPING

Tatyana Ostapenko







Photo provided courtesy of Susan Kirtley

## COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT: PROFESSOR SUSAN KIRTLEY ON COMICS, FEMINISM, & GENRE

Corinne Gould

*Susan Kirtley is an assistant professor and the Director of Rhetoric and Composition at Portland State University. Her book Lynda Barry: Girlhood Through the Looking Glass was awarded the Eisner Award for best educational/academic publication, and her other works have been included in Webbing Cyberfeminist Practice, Computers and Composition, Rhetoric Review, Academic Exchange Quarterly, and EXIT 9: The Rutgers Journal of Comparative Literature, among others. Kirtley is currently developing a Comic Studies program at PSU.*

**Can you tell us more about your roles as assistant professor and Director of Rhetoric and Composition, and describe some of the courses you teach?**

My various roles at PSU keep me very busy indeed. As the Director of Rhetoric and Composition, I oversee our composition curriculum, and I work very closely with the Graduate Teaching Associates. That is a wonderful part of my job—seeing great students become great teachers. I also direct our new Comics Studies program, and it has been very exciting to see the passion of the students as well as the interest from the local comics community. I love teaching, and I've been particularly lucky to have the opportunity to teach a variety of classes at PSU. I get to teach classes like Writing 420/520: Process and Response, in which students have the opportunity to explore writing in a variety of genres, and ENG 490/590: Visual Rhetoric, which explores how we make arguments through image. I am also teaching a Comics class (ENG 449/549) that

focuses primarily on the study of comics as an academic discipline.

**In your experience what is unique about the Portland comic community? Why does this literary and art community flourish?**

I think that Portland has a delightfully quirky and independent spirit, which certainly encourages creativity. Furthermore, the comics community in Portland is incredibly supportive and inviting. I can't think of a better place to study, read, or create comics!

**Your 2012 title, *Lynda Barry: Girlhood through the Looking Glass* explored Barry's groundbreaking feminism and was an Eisner Award winner. You have also published an article with *Webbing Cyberfeminist Practice*. To what extent do you view your work as activism? How do you hope to see female representation in comics, digital literacy, and academic pedagogies progress?**

All my life I've been something of an activist. I remember quite distinctly when my fifth grade class held a Native American celebration called a potlatch, and we were told we needed to elect a boy to be our leader. I was furious and complained, "Why couldn't women be the leaders?" I was told that was just the way it was. I marched down to the library and conducted a research project to prove that there were, in fact, female leaders in Native American culture. I presented my work to the principal, and the teacher was forced to allow female candidates in our election for

the potlatch leader. Of course, the meanest, most popular girl in class was elected and she proceeded to mock me for being a nerd, so my project backfired in many ways, but this is a very long way to say that I've always been drawn to research projects that I feel have the potential to change the way people think and act. I do think that representations of females are changing in comics, but there is still more work that needs to be done. I'm judging the Eisner Awards for comics this year, and the entries demonstrate a wide range of female characters (as well as female authors and artists, for that matter). I'm encouraged by strong role models like Ms. Marvel, and the inspirational stories for children like El Deafo and Zita the Spacegirl. And I'm hopeful that these creative works as well as the scholarly projects highlighting these changing perceptions of women and girls will have a positive impact.

**Your work has been described as shifting between fiction, memoir, comics, literary fiction, fantasy, and reality. How do you approach the idea of “genre” in your work?**

I am interested in genre and the slippage between genres in my own writing. I bristle at the notion that academic research cannot be creative, that scholarly work must be dry and lifeless. The more I write, the less I'm interested in fitting neatly into a certain category of writing. As a writer I prefer to move between personal introspection and critical

examination, citing Batman and Boccaccio and embracing the liminal space.

**Speaking of, which writers and artists have influenced you recently? Who are some of your old favorites?**

I grew up reading anything and everything. I loved Ursula Le Guin, Jane Austen, and Marvel Comics. Actually, I still love them! If anything I just realize how much more great stuff there is to read, and how behind I am. In terms of comics, I really enjoyed Richard McGuire's *Here*, the *Black-sad* series, *Ms. Marvel*, *Captain Marvel* and *The Shadow Hero*. I'm also reading *Soldier Girls*, and for a little break I love P.G. Wodehouse—so it's a mix of old and new that I'm reading right now.

**What are you currently working on?**

I have so many projects at the moment! I'm working on a new book, which is a study of several long-running comic strips created by women, and I'm hoping to get back to that in earnest this summer. In the meantime I'm writing several essays on rhetoric and comics and, of course, working through the massive reading list for the Eisner Awards. I'm not complaining, though! What a pleasure and privilege it is to read the best comics of the year. You'll also find me at various conferences and events, usually nattering on and on about writing and teaching and comics.

# Soul Quilt

Beverly Orth

I touch the crisp finish of the folds of fabric, smooth and taut around their cardboard core. Yes, this could be the one that yearns to join its cousin, resting languidly in my basket. I pull the bolt from its perch, freeing it from its regimented position among the greens. So many greens: the deep forest green, the soft sage, the pert lemony green that shouts, "Look at me. I am fresh and young and I want you to know that. Look at me!"

The outside world retreats. I have left behind the noisy, exhaust-filled Cambridge street and passed through the portal to this tiny fabric shop, my sanctuary from the hectic world outside. Calm and peace prevail in this small space. The disorderly colors of the fabrics are contained, controlled, in orderly rows. The bustle of occasional shoppers interrupts my deliberations, but their overheard chatter is brief. I brush aside their temporary disturbance and focus on my goal.

This green in my hands speaks to some part of my brain, some part of my soul. (Do I have a soul? I have not decided.) This green has lights and shadows and touches of burnt orange and cream and mustard. This green is a riotous splash of chevrons, intertwined, almost. Not in perfect formation, freer than perfection. Maybe it is like me, trying to follow the rules but rebelling in subtle and not so subtle ways.

My hands place this green into the basket. Decision not yet made, but closer. Does this green like its cousin, a cream with small gold and emerald and rust medallions? I think maybe it does. Let me hear how they communicate.

In my mind, I see green and cream playing, dancing. I hear them singing in harmonious tones. But the song is not complete. They need a companion, someone sturdy who will ground them, center them, keep them from flying off. I seek out orange, my "go to" hue.

Orange seems flighty, but it isn't. When you know it really well, as I do, you find it is reliable. Not like red, who argues and demands too much attention. Orange can blend or it can divide, but it knows its role and performs it well.

Here, then, are some candidates. Neither the bold patterns, nor the whimsical ones. Green and cream need a strong foundation and some texture, nothing more. Texture for the eye, a soothing place to rest between the not-quite-perfect chevrons and the tidy medallions.

I touch a few, my fingers seeking what my eyes will confirm. I am hopeful and a little giddy, wondering if the one I seek is here, my head spinning with possibilities. I control my breathing, with discernible effort. My fingers stop. This one. This one is a little shy, hidden among its bolder brothers. Yes, this one might be the one. I release it from the friction of bolt clinging to bolt on either side.

The basket is too confining. The fabrics need room to breathe, to converse, to harmonize. Cradling them in my arms, I lift them onto the table and lay them side by side, back to front, front to back. Green, cream, orange, then cream, orange, green.

Now I notice that teal wants its turn. Teal has been waiting coyly within the green and the cream, not assertive, biding its time. Orange declares, "I play well with teal, too.

Find me a teal.”

And so I gaze among the orderly rows of color and form. Teal can be deceptive. It might frolic with the greens. It might be tucked among the blues. I need to coax it out so I can understand it better, hear the timbre of its voice.

This one attracts me. I carry it to the table. No, it is not the one; it is too blue. It fights with the green, and I pull it back from my chosen ones. Two more meet with similar fates.

A fourth teal, neither living with the greens nor with the blues, but cavorting with an extended, blended family, has the right tone. It is serviceable, lively yet subtle. It could meet the requirements. Yes, it finds acceptance on the table. The song begins again, this time accompanied by the teal’s strong baritone. It is a pleasant song, full and complete: the lilting, playful melody of chevrons and medallions, supported by the balanced chords of orange and teal.

Reality interrupts my peaceful reverie. I have made a promise to be elsewhere, to leave my sanctuary and return to earth. I must be prompt. I must be dutiful. (Why do I feel resentful? I am the one who made the promise. It was not required; it was not necessary. But once made, it must be respected.)

The music fades, making space for decisions. How many yards, how much per yard? I perform the necessary mental calculations. Mindful of another earthly reality, I cast out the teal, reluctantly. I tell myself, it is not so special. No, there are other teals that are not so dear. They may even be resting, waiting, among my stash for this opportunity. I will give them a chance.

I return teal to his family, avoiding his sorrowful, disappointed gaze. Yes, you are attractive. You almost excite me. I am tempted to give in, but, like others, you are merely one who could be, not one who must be. I’ve known others like you, making a good argument but not quite grasping my inner core.

Not even I understand my inner core. I prod, I poke, I test. Sometimes I think I have reached it. But it strikes out and startles me. Why did I say that? I didn’t mean to say that. Now I have to explain it, reconcile it with my history, my beliefs, my goals, my mission statement. (My what? Did I really say that?)

I ask the clerk to cut my chosen ones. Three yards of this, one yard of that, one yard of the other. The smell of cotton fibers, clean but faintly inky, permeates the air. I sigh in satisfaction, relieved of my burden.

As dusk descends upon the outside world, more shoppers arrive, looking for a diversion or a necessity on their way home. My sanctuary sheds its silence, comes to attention, and graciously accommodates the intrusion. I leave my interior world, nodding to the others, engaging in small talk, sharing the space I had coveted, selfishly, for only myself. I don’t mind now, the deciding is done.

I leave the bright bolts behind, carrying my cuts of chosen ones to the cashier. I promise to return some day, but not soon. There are many chosen ones that have come before, waiting patiently for me, waiting for my ruler and scissor, needle and thread, waiting to be joined together. They rest and wait, still and quiet, waiting for the song to resume.



# FINALLY

Cristina Martinez Gonzalez

You closed the door to my house, and although you didn't say anything, all I could hear was a resounding "Fuck you!"

Jesus, I never thought you would leave. I was starting to think that I would have to be with you in this house forever. You were not only at my home, but also at my work, when I hung out with my friends, when I was on my morning walks, when I rode my bicycle, even when I was in the shower. Seriously, you should learn a thing or two about boundaries....

Over the past few months I have been feeling so exhausted, so out of breath every time you were around. You were stressing me out. Just thinking of you around me all the time, breathing down my neck, it was just annoying. How did you think that would make me feel? Did you think people felt good when you mistreated them like that? When you despised them like that? When you treated them like they are nothing, as if they do not matter?

You took so much from me. You took away Hawthorne, green smoothies and late night food cart sandwiches. You took hot summers, backrubs, pizza in bed, and "one more episode of Firefly?" You took Grouplove, Villagers, Ray LaMontagne, Wilco and music in general for fucksakes! I could only listen to audiobooks because every song lyric talked about you. Do you know how many hours it takes to

listen to the whole damn Harry Potter series?

You took the best of me; that part that was squishy, soft, and surrounded by floating butterflies. The part that was new and shiny and ready. So ready. So. Goddamn. Ready. Look at what you left me with, I am half the size that I used to be. I forgot how to put makeup on, to wear fancy underwear. I forgot how to shave my legs and use the curling iron. I forgot how to go to work, how to get out of bed and how to give a fuck about anything. You took so many things from me. You left so little of me. The days, that were once mine, didn't belong to me anymore. They belonged to you. You choked me with infinite sadness. You made me feel like I had nothing more inside. I could hear the beating of my own heart, but it was only elevator music. Background noises, not a living beating heart, just background noises. I could not hear myself, I could not feel myself. I felt like I was not strong enough. Not sexy enough. Not smart enough. Not pretty enough. Not anything enough.

It was nice to see you go. For the first time in months I felt that I was free to do anything. I felt like my batteries were recharged and I could go out into the world again and feel its greatness. Seeing you go was the best thing that has ever happened to me. You had been haunting me for months. I have carried you inside my spine, inside my brain, and between my legs. I am tired of carrying you around. No more haunting for me. No more of this feeling, this nothingness. You left because I got rid of you. Do not think that I will take you back. I paid my dues. I am ghost-free now. And believe me when I say "fuck you."

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Opposite:

SHE TAKES A TRAIN

Richard Omier

# IN THE CITY

Bethany Umbarger

The noise behind her grew louder. Maybe it was all in her head, just bouncing around, echoing and exaggerating all her anxieties. She turned to look, to see if she'd finally lost her mind, too. There was a group of people a couple blocks behind. They staggered, seemed to swarm like a mosh pit, arms intertwining and voices clattering like tin cans.

She shouldn't have come to the city. All the boisterous human life scared her. She felt that the more people, the less an individual mattered. There would always be more people to fill the empty places, as though those who came before never existed. So she lived out in the country as far from the bustle of urban areas as she could get, in her grandparent's old farm house. She'd heard city folks say the country made them nervous. All the emptiness, all the nothing. But she'd rather have the darkness outside of her window than a neighbor two feet away.

The concrete spider-webbed under her feet in a blur. She wished she'd worn boots instead of these fucking heels. Why would she dress up for this anyway? These weren't the sort

of people she wanted the attention of. She could wear sweat-pants, for all her brother would care.

She tried to consider the moment that did it, that caused all this. Maybe it was when they got the call about Ryan dying in a riot in Cincinnati, or the shrillness of the phone ring right before their mom answered, or the look on her face when she realized she had one less child in the world. Maybe it was something from their childhood. Maybe he was born like that and it just took a couple decades for it to come out.

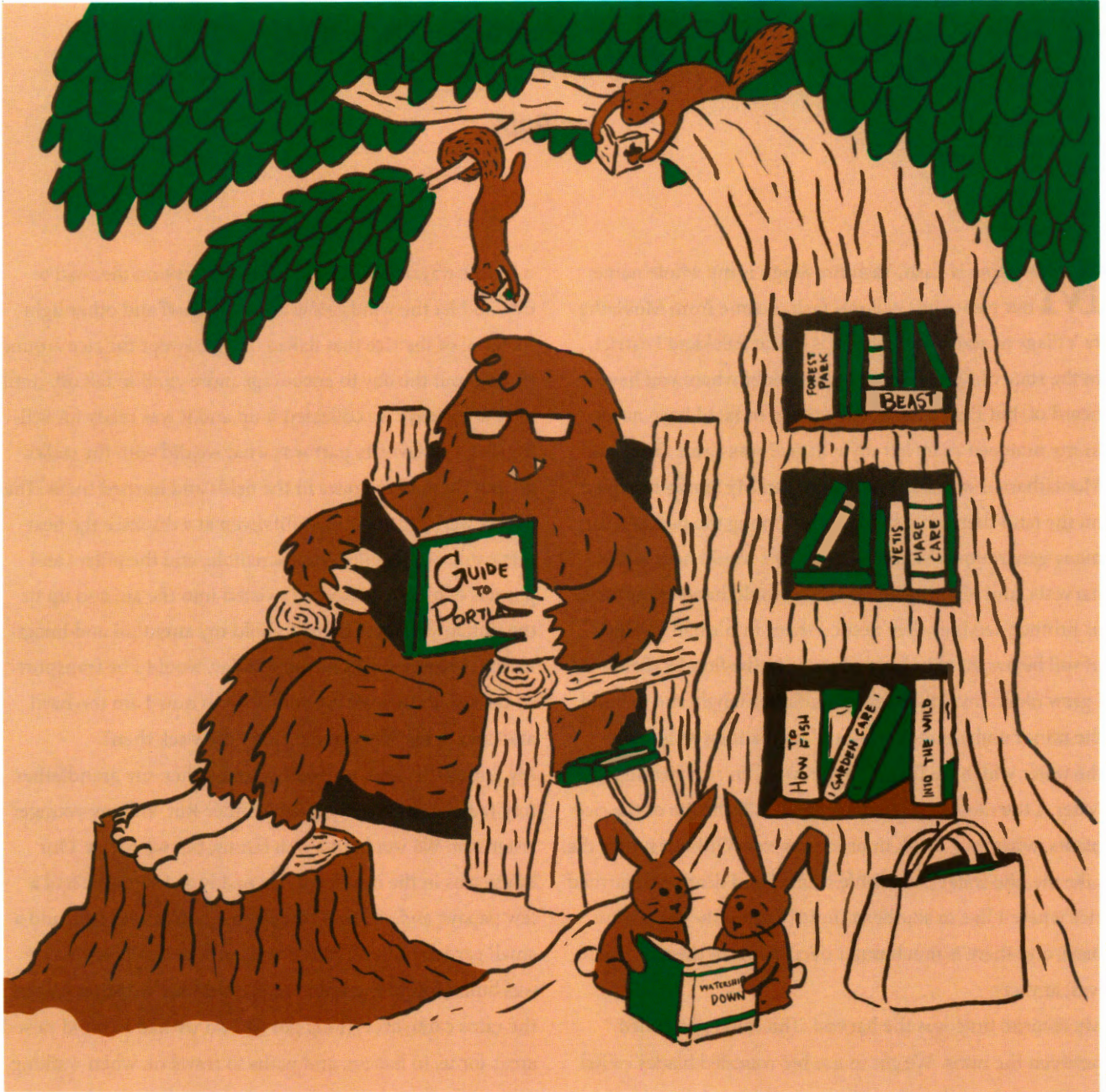
All she knew now was the smell of garbage and sweat, the constant buzz of too much humanity, and the blister that was forming on her right heel. She walked faster, trying to get away, ignoring the stinging. But what was she getting away to? The thought of what was ahead scared her just as much. She hadn't agreed to send James there in the first place, she sure as hell never wanted herself to be surrounded by the passive beige walls and the sickly atmosphere of the heavily medicated.

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Opposite:

READING WITH SASQUATCH  
Erica Schnatz





# My STORY,

## by YASH ERE SINGH

Jon Raby

**M**y name is Yash, Yash Ere Singh is my whole name, but please just call me Yash. I come from Moolathara Village in southern India. It is in the Palakkad District, in the state of Kerala. Kerala is no doubt where you have heard of, but I have never been there, in fact I have never in my nineteen years left my village. I was a rice farmer in Moolathara. I was, but I am no longer. My family has lived on the land there, in a small house among the paddies, for many generations. When I was a boy I would help in the harvests, and planting of the rice. I would hand my mother, or brother, seeds as they nestled them into small mounds of soil below the thin layer of water in the flooded fields. As I grew older, my father and grandfather taught me to build the minor embankments around the paddies to hold in the water which we flooded them with. In rice farming the water is the most important element. It is the life of the rice plants, what they drink in order to grow. Without it they die. Like me, the water is their life source, and death. We farmed rice where I live in southern India because the rains were hard, and there is much water deep down in the soil. There was, anyway.

My favorite time was the harvest. This had to be timed between the rains. We got to use big rounded blades called scythes, and cut the rice stalks at their base. I was not allowed to do this till I was older though. I would collect the stalks and put them in piles. Later we would take handfuls of the stalks and beat the tops, the rice pods, onto a metal screen tilted at a forty-five degree angle, above a tarp. The rice would fall through the mesh onto the tarp. We collected

it in this way. Later we spread the rice out on the road to dry, and let the winds blow away the chaff and other light material of the rice that flaked off. We swept the rice around throughout the day to encourage more chaff to fall off, until after a few days we collected it up and it was ready for selling. My real favorite part was what we did with the stalks. We put them in big piles in the fields and burned them. The flames were big and powerful. Even at a distance the heat that came off the piles was incredible, and the pillars and plumes of black smoke that twisted into the air, and up to the unknown, never failed to hold my attention and imagination. I wonder if I saw them today, would I be transported back to the awe of my youth? Or if now I am too hard and cold to feel the wonder that I did back then?

My family was, me, my mother and father, my grandfather (my father's father), my older brother Rut, and my younger sister Abi. We were not a rich family, but we got by. Our house was in the middle of our paddy as I said. We had a few papaya and coconut trees, some ponds with fish, and a small garden built on raised beds of soil. Really my house was built around the water, or should I say within it. When the rains came everything got wet, so we had to build raised areas for us to live on, and paths to travel on when walking around farm. Our primary source of income was from rice. My brother did get into politics, but that was not till later. My brother is only a few years older than me, so we, my sister included, were all in school at that time. This was still ten years ago in 1993, when Coca-Cola was just moving in. They began building their factor on the edge of town,

but since we also were on the edge of town, we were quite close and could see the factory in the distance. Sometimes I would sneak out to the fence that surrounded it and wonder what secrets lay inside. Many in my village went to work for Coca-Cola when they were building, and later, in the factory. In this way many thought Coca-Cola was a friend, to give so much work to our village. But not my father, he said they would hurt us.

I was nine when the Coca-Cola factory moved into my town. There was a vote as to whether they were allowed in, but my father said it didn't matter, the local government was getting paid by Coca-Cola, so they would be allowed to build. I was young and I was excited. I said YES to Co-kah, the name we called it. On special occasions my mother bought me the sweet beverage, and I loved it. It was a great treat. So in my child mind I assumed that when they moved in next door, that I would be drinking a lot of Co-kah. That they would share Coca-Cola with me, like all neighbors share and trade what they have with each other. I figured they would be a part of our community, in this healthy and balanced way, of which I understood community. They did share with us, but it was not bottles of Co-kah, it was the waste from the process of making their many sodas.

In the years that followed Coca-Cola's moving to my village, many bad things happened. It was a slow process but the signs were always there. The factory was surrounded by a strange smell. It smelled burnt, but also mixed with chemicals and sweet at the same time. My mother said she knew the smell, she said when she was a girl her brother had been injured and lost his leg. She said it was the smell that came from his sick leg as it slowly died; gangrene. But I don't think this was accurate. When you smell dying, infected flesh, you know it is bad, but the smell that came from the factory was both good and bad. It would be like covering my uncles dying leg in sugar and baking it. It confused the senses.

There was also a stream that came out of the factory. It was very dirty. We were told to stay away from it because we would get sick if we played in it. One boy didn't listen. Maagh, a boy a few years younger than me who I went to school with. He played in the runoff often, and then one day he did not come to school. At first I thought it would just be

for a little while, but he never came back. Something went wrong inside his body, and his organs stopped working. He died after a few months. The river was blamed for his death, and we became even more afraid of it; everyone avoided it at all costs. But my father said we could not avoid the stream, that it was seeping into the soil, and that we were all drinking it because it was going into our water. He said he could taste it. Some people said there were holes drilled into the earth inside the factory fence that were filled with the same sludge as in the stream. My father's beliefs were right, but at the time he did not know the science behind it. Our whole town was connected by an aquifer that lay beneath us and held all our water. Many of us had wells, and there was a big one in the center of the village. These wells tapped into the aquifer, and yes, we later learned from studies done by concerned people like my brother that Coca-Cola was contaminating the whole aquifer.

There was also something worse than the contamination that Coca-Cola was doing to our water. They were using too much of it. In my traditions we have a kind of connection with nature. We know that it gives us life so we take from it sparingly so it will not get mad and go away from us. We looked at the water as a present from the gods. The rains that came enabled us to grow our rice and quench the thirst of ourselves and our animals. When the rains did not come we believed it was because we had angered the gods. After Coca-Cola came, the gods became angry. The rains began to slow and drought came to us.

As the years passed I grew into a man. I was married to Kavisha, my neighbor's daughter. We tried to start a family of our own, but Kavisha could not get pregnant. Maybe it was because of the sickness in the land, and a chemical I have heard mentioned called DDT. I became very poor, too. My father's lands dried up. Water would not come, and so rice would not grow. My sister had died also, over the course of a few years. The doctors did not know why she got sick, but we all knew it was from the chemicals coming out of the Coca-Cola factory. After my brother became a politician, he would show us facts of how Coca-Cola was illegally drawing too much water from the earth. That they had made six huge wells that stole 1.5 million liters of water a day. He said they were running their factory in ways not

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mandated by the government. He said that Coca-Cola saw the water as money. That they stole it and then resold it. He said the water belonged to the people and that the factory took more than their fair share. This was my brother's view though. I agreed that Coca-Cola was taking too much, but I did not care for his political ways. I thought he over-complicated it. I believed nature and I were one. I did not think water was a legal right, I thought that the water and the earth were my family. When we lived in harmony, life flowed more smoothly. The gods were happy. Nature and I shared the same gods, and we were gods by the same respect. This is what I believed, but I don't think about my beliefs very often anymore. For me there was also the reality of my situation in front of me. So I did what I could to get by. When we could no longer grow rice, I went to work for Coca-Cola.

I worked in the shipping department at Coca-Cola, stacking the heavy crates into trucks to be hauled away. Millions of bottles of that sweet liquid I craved as a child went through my hands every day. The company sees these bottles of sugar water as a commodity to make profit by, but I see the soda as the water of life I once knew, dirtied by their process. I read once that it takes nine liters of clean water to manufacture a liter of Coca-Cola. I would rather have the nine bottles of water. I did not want these bottles of soda, I did not want to drink them. I only wanted water. But sometimes I did drink Co-kah because there was no water to drink. My brother showed me a letter Coca-Cola had written in response to his colleague's official complaint to them. It defended their water use by saying they had set up rainwater harvesting ponds which held twenty-seven million liters of water. I believed it too. The factory was huge, and in it somewhere was enough water to flood my father's

rice field. And the fields of our neighbors. In it was enough water to fill the town's wells which now held a thin layer of silt filled water at their bottoms. Somewhere in the factory was enough water for me to fill up an empty Co-kah bottle and bring it home to my wife.

So this is where my story ends. My father is not the man he once was. He is old and angry, he drinks rice wine and yells. He does very little with his time. My mother is much the same. She has retreated from life. She sits in our house, in a kind of daze. She helps Kavisha with housework, but there is not much to do, because there are not many living in my house anymore. My father and mother watch a lot of TV now. Sitting next to each other, not speaking. My brother tries to change the world. He wants to make India a better place, and he wants to fix the wrongs that have been committed to our village, and to others like it. He knows the water is key to fixing our problems, but he only sees it as tool. He lives in the city now, and drinks water from bottles. He sends money home to us sometimes, but it is not money that we need. It is purpose. We, my father and I, my family and ones like it, we need to go back to the past. We need our hands in the earth. Wet hands, our feet suctioning in the mud as we plant rice. We need to work, backs bent—hard work. We need the days before harvest, watching the sky, deciding when the rains will come, and when there will be respite from them to let our rice dry. Now there is only respite from the rains. I need to go back to being that kid watching the flames roar over cut rice stalks, and the black smoke twisting into the sky. But we cannot go back to the past, so on my walk to work, I stare at the silver pillars which protrude from the Coca-Cola factory, and I see thin white smoke wafting up into the air. It is not the same, but it is better than nothing.

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Opposite:

Mill  
Richard Omier



# WORK FOR **pathos** LITERARY MAGAZINE

## NEXT YEAR!

**P**ATHOS LITERARY MAGAZINE is seeking involved students who would like to be a part of our production and reading team. The specific responsibilities of each position are as follows:

1. **Senior Designer.** This is a paid position, with an expected stipend of \$300. Responsibilities include designing the print edition of PATHOS (three issues per year), assisting with the design and production of promotional materials, and evaluating on submissions. The best candidate for this position has a strong grasp of interior layouts. Experience working with the Adobe Creative Suite, especially InDesign and Photoshop, is required. The ideal candidate is comfortable formatting a variety of styles (poetry, short stories, photography, academic writing with footnotes, physical art scans, etc.) Ability to work under a deadline is essential.
2. **Senior Copy-Editor.** This is a paid position, with an expected stipend of \$300. Responsibilities include copyediting finished manuscripts, proofing designed documents and website materials, and evaluating submissions. The best candidate for this position has a strong grasp of editing at the line level and a good eye for detail. Ability to work under a deadline is essential.
3. **Marketing & Social Media Manager.** This is a paid position, with an expected stipend of \$300. The primary responsibility for this position is building an online presence for PATHOS: this includes managing and posting relevant content to our Facebook, Twitter, and other social media accounts. The candidate will also be involved in updating our website. The ideal candidate has a firm grasp of how marketing and social media interact, prior experience using WordPress, and is able to create an engaging online presence for PATHOS and its contributors.
4. **Volunteer Readers.** These are unpaid, student volunteer positions. PATHOS aims to represent the diverse creative endeavors of PSU students and faculty. In order to better represent PSU's artists, we are looking for 3-5 volunteer readers to help out in our selection process each quarter. Candidates can either commit to the entire academic year OR just a single term, we're flexible. HOWEVER, readers who sign up will be expected to be reliable and evaluate submissions in a timely manner.

To apply, please send your cover letter, resume, and any relevant samples of your work to [pathosliterarymag@gmail.com](mailto:pathosliterarymag@gmail.com). For more information, please visit [www.pathoslitmag.com](http://www.pathoslitmag.com) and [www.facebook.com/pathoslitmag](http://www.facebook.com/pathoslitmag).

# SUBMIT TO **pathos** LITERARY MAGAZINE

## NEXT YEAR!

## Submission Guidelines

1. **You must be a current student at Portland State University to be considered for publication.** We receive our funding through PSU and serve as a creative outlet for its students. We are happy to point non-students toward local publishing resources, but cannot publish non-students at this time.
2. **Please delete all identifying information from your submissions.** Instead, please include your name, bio (about 100 words), artist's statement, and contact info in your cover letter. All submissions are blind -- only the managing editor will know the identity of the submitter until after selections have been made. This eliminates conflicts of interest and ensures a fair review of all work.
3. **We accept only original, unpublished works.** We accept simultaneous submissions, but please let us know immediately if your submission is accepted elsewhere.
4. **Students can submit up to three (3) creative pieces of varying genres/mediums.** For example, you could submit a) three poems or b) a poem, a short story, and a photograph -- but not three works in each category.
5. **When submitting multiple selections, each submission must be made separately.** Do not include three separate works in one file. To clarify, this means you will have to go through the submission process more than once. Feel free to use the same cover letter if you are submitting more than once.
6. **Please include titles for all works.** We've received a lot of "Untitled" selections, and encourage you to take this opportunity to be creative.
7. **We only accept submissions through Submittable ([pathosmagazine.submittable.com/submit](http://pathosmagazine.submittable.com/submit)).** You can also find our submission categories there. All submissions sent via e-mail and snail mail will not be considered for publication. We are, however, happy to answer questions. Just e-mail us at [pathosliterarymag@gmail.com](mailto:pathosliterarymag@gmail.com)!

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NATALIE GRAFF

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