

# 2024 Zine

...  
A Journal of Literary and Visual Arts

...  
Berkshire Community College, Pittsfield, MA





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*Faculty Advisor:*  
Liesl Schwabe

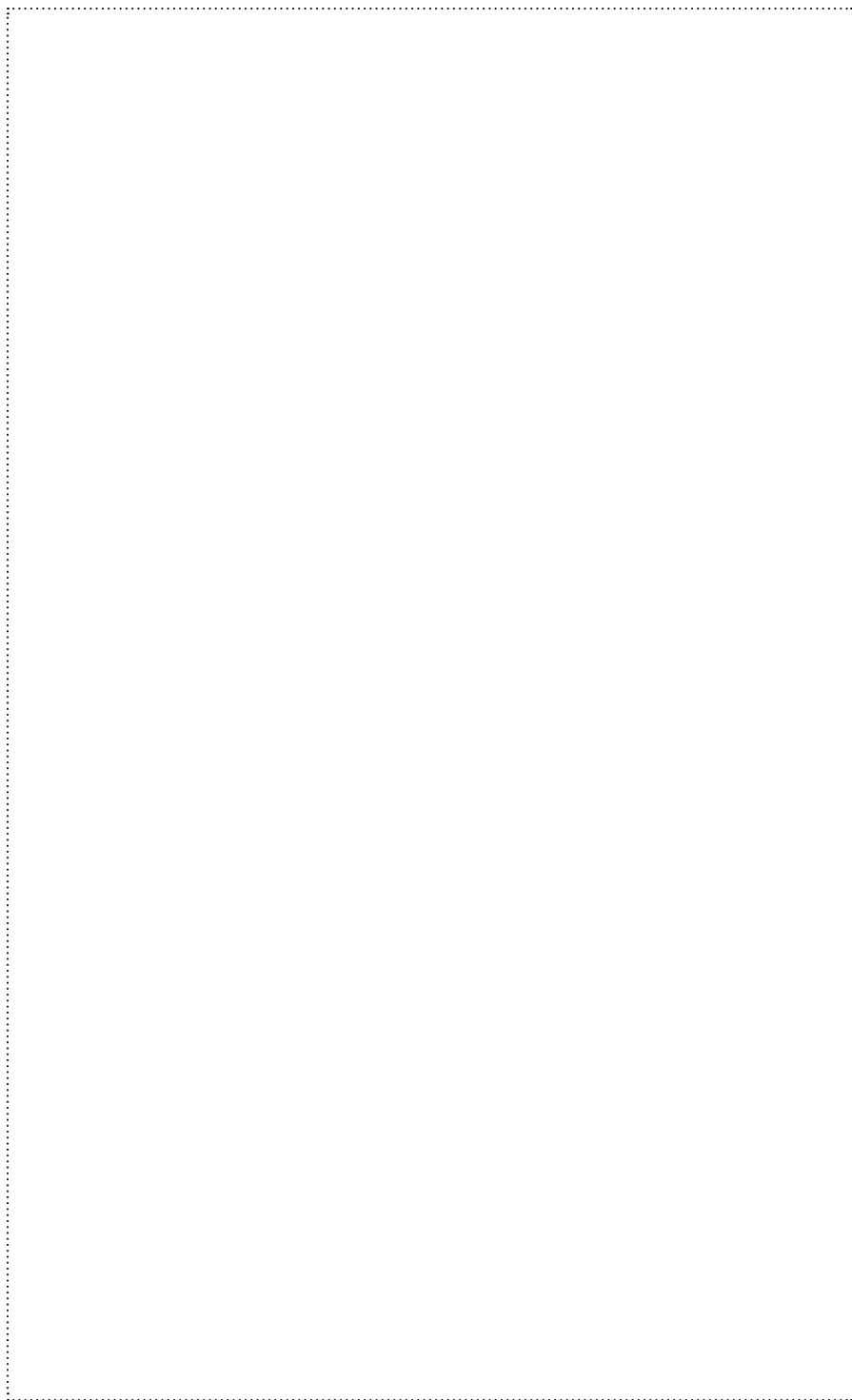
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Audrey Bartzsch and Zoe Tarangelo

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Special thanks to Professor Julianna Spallholz for her years of thoughtful care and guidance.





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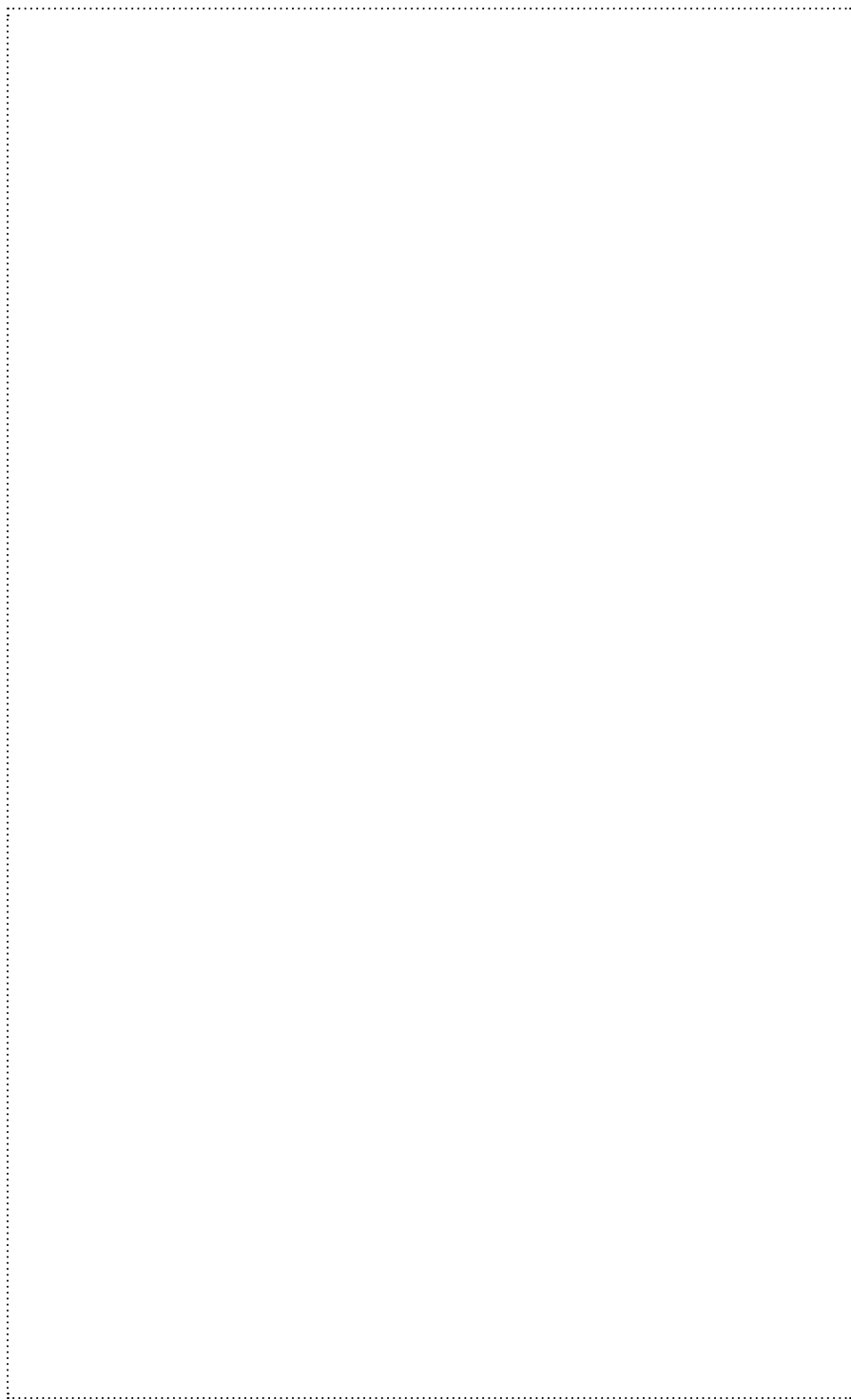
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# Zine: A Recent History

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by Julianna Spallholz, Professor of English

Faculty Advisor to Zine, 2013-2023

In 2012, when I decided to apply for a faculty position at Berkshire Community College, I of course first did my homework, and was pleased to discover that the college had a literary journal ... and one that had been in existence since the early 90s. In fact, its title felt to me like a throwback to the time of its inception: it was called *Zine*, a term that usually refers to a small run of often photocopied, frequently stapled, almost always DIY magazines whose content, according to *The Creative Independent*, “subvert[s] dominant and patriarchal ideologies through the sharing of lived experience.” I was curious about this *Zine*. In my application cover letter and during my subsequent interviews, I asked about the journal and discovered that it had not had a permanent or devoted caretaker in some time ... that the project had been for many years tossed from hand to hand, its future constantly in question. I was able to take a look at some recent issues: they were high-gloss, high-color, and heavily illustrated – in other words, *expensive*, running on a budget that was very potentially unsustainable. I had some editing experience behind me, having for several years been on the masthead of *Tarpaulin Sky* journal and press, and having, as a part-time faculty member, launched a newsletter at the School of Art at the University of Arizona ... and so with some confidence I pitched myself as the faculty advisor to *Zine*.

It was not until 2013, my second academic year at BCC, that I began my role as advisor to the journal, and when I did so my most essential goals were clear: to lower its cost; to ensure the quality of its content and aesthetic; and to involve more students. The journal's production had lacked stability, and it was important that I create that. For too long the creation of *Zine* had been haphazard and unsure. Through my contacts at *Tarpaulin Sky*, I discovered a wonderful printing company called BookMobile, and through a burgeoning friendship with a member of BCC's fine arts faculty, I connected with a talented local designer and layout artist named James Grady, who also happened to be an alumnus of our college. Six years and six *Zines* later, I was still working with both BookMobile and James, and was very pleased with *Zine*'s consistent and understated aesthetic. The pages in these issues – from 2014-2020 – are white, the type is simple, and the visual art is housed in a dignified semi-gloss insert. I also managed – with the support of the College Foundation and the Office of Student Life – to stabilize the journal's annual budget.

While the production process of *Zine* each year from 2014-2020 stayed more or less the same, what changed each year, of course, was the work within the journal's pages, the students who produce this work, and the students who volunteer as its editors; this changing population is indeed what keeps the project dynamic and fresh and worthwhile. After all, the journal – which is and has always been a gathering of student writing and visual art – acts a record of the concerns and artistic creations of our constantly shifting student and alumni body and those who care for and work with its members.

And when 2020 arrived, *Zine* had to do what it does best: transform itself to reflect our changing world, both locally and globally. And so I learned to build a website (to the best of my totally untrained ability!), and this site is where the journal has been housed since.

Each year of *Zine* begins with a bunch of unknowns: Will the journal receive writing submissions? Will it receive art? Will any students be interested in editing, and if so how involved will they want to be? For several years I had a student editorial staff of 5-7; one year I had only one. One year I had two student editors, but they more or less vanished partway through the project; one year I had four women who were enthusiastic and engaged. Our longest issue to date was in 2015 at 62 pages; our shortest was in 2019 at 46. We have had as many as 75 people show up at our annual in-person launch event, we have had as few as 30 or 40, and, in the throes of the pandemic, we had our launch events via Zoom. I have met the parents and spouses and children of proud, tearful students whose work we published once, and I have known students who cheerfully submit work for years beyond their graduation. We have published short stories about zombies and about parenthood, creative nonfiction about suicide and about sex work, poetry about Grandmas and about Afghanistan, and academic writing about Margaret Atwood and about Anita Hill. We have included script when script has been submitted, and have created a section for mixed-genre writing when what comes in cannot easily be categorized. Like a living organism, the journal adapts – expands, contracts, changes color – in response to its changing environment. I am curious about what form it will take when I myself am no longer involved. And even though there are no longer any metal staples or Xeroxes used 90s-style in the making of the journal, in many ways this project is indeed still DIY, continuing to keep it real by the sharing of lived experience. ☘



# Zine: A Snapshot of the Present

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by Liesl Schwabe

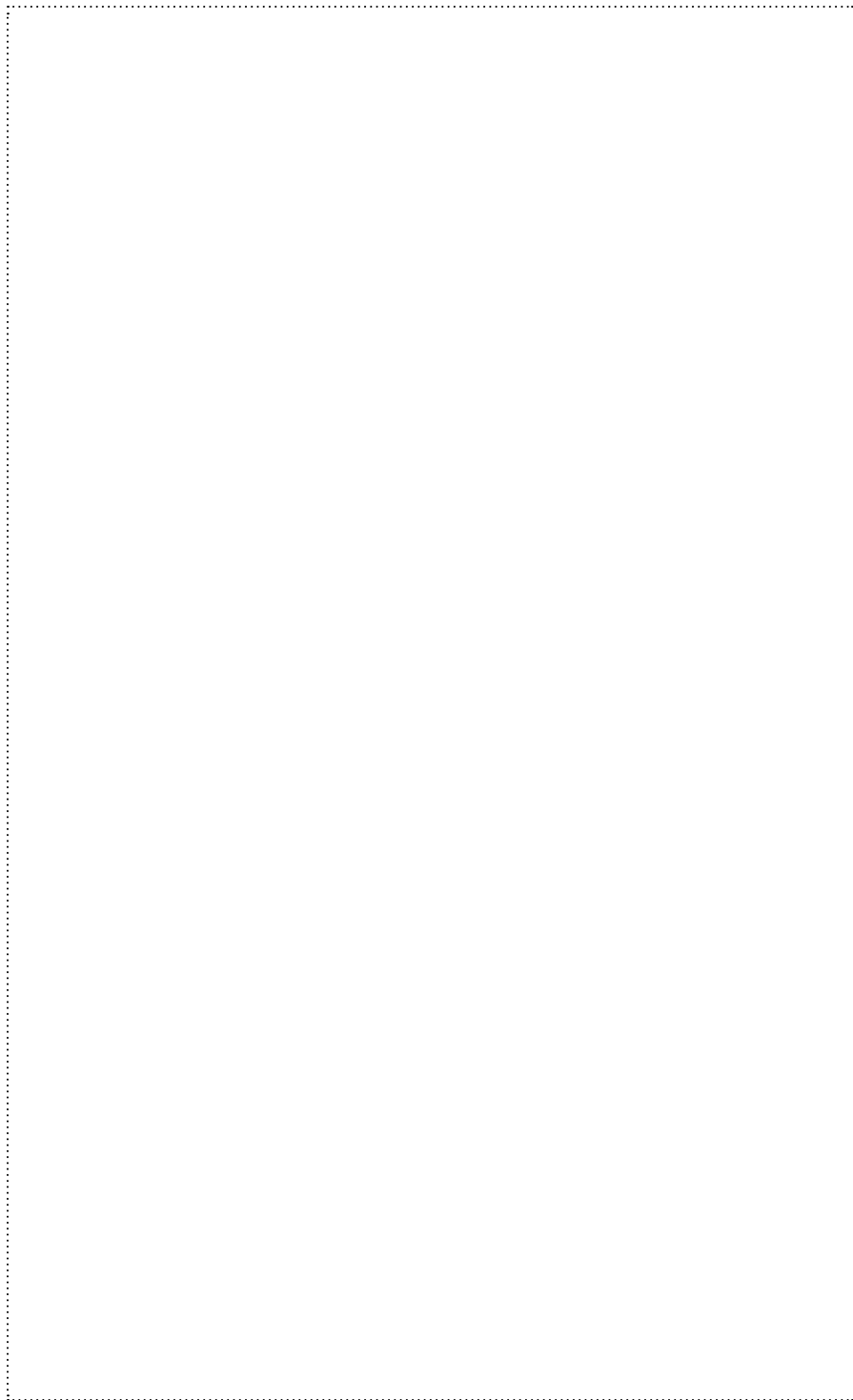
Coordinator of Writing Across the Curriculum

When Professor Julianna Spallholz approached me about taking over as faculty advisor for *Zine*, I was honored. But I was also new to BCC, where I've been overseeing the Writing Center, developing a Writing Across the Curriculum initiative, and teaching since the fall of 2022, and I wasn't sure, exactly, how I might go about upholding what she'd done so beautifully for so many years. I was thrilled by the prospect of collaborating with students and publishing work from across our community, and I was equally daunted by how to make it happen.

I see wonderful student and faculty writing in the Writing Center. I work with thoughtful, innovative students in class. I chat about books and art and film and music with faculty and staff in the hallways. I *know* what a creative place BCC is – that's part of what drew me to the institution. But if there's one thing I've also learned about BCC, it's that things can happen very last minute here, which is tough. I like to start early and plan ahead. My friends know that if they invite me over, I'll arrive exactly on time. I sleep better at night knowing I'm *prepared* (however delusional that may be). Uncertainty makes me almost as unnerved as being late.

And so, as the deadline came and went with few submissions to go on, I tried a different approach, which is something I've learned to love here at BCC: talking to people directly. I cornered and pestered. I called and emailed. I Zoomed and asked again. All I wanted to make clear was what I'd known all along - that there was fantastic work out there. And all that folks eventually shared was more than worth the wait.

These conversations reminded me of what, while serving as a Fulbright-Nehru Scholar in Kolkata, India, I learned as the value of "people-to-people diplomacy." This is exactly what it sounds like. As normal people, we can't necessarily stop wars, obliterate racism, or upend social inequality. And yet we all have tremendous power to learn from each other, to see ourselves in one another, and to create new understanding, which I ultimately believe is the most powerful thing any of us can hope for or to do. For these reasons and more, art and literature deepen and expand our sense of our shared humanity. This issue of *Zine* is no different, and I thank you all for allowing me to take part. ☀



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*pt 1.* From the Faculty Advisors

*pt 2.* **Creative Nonfiction**

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# Homeland

by Audrey Bartzsch

*Accompaniment:*

*Arioso by Piero Piccioni*

*Camille 2000 by Piero Piccioni*

*Merry Go Round of Life by Joe Hisaishi*

*Ice Dance by Danny Elfman*

**T**he house I live in has become less of a home. Since I was small, I've thought about my future, hoped and dreamed about my career, my relationships, my monetary situation. Above all, though, I have dreamed the most about my home.

I want to live in a cottage with a front porch and some yard space. There would be a bench swing and a rocking chair and a little table on the porch where I can sit and sew and have a cup of tea at 4:00 when the sun has passed its brightest point and filters through the trees. If you look up at them, the green of the leaves is almost yellow from the light, and on the porch the shadows flutter in whorls. I have a bird feeder in the yard. In the kitchen, my stove and fridge will be vintage looking, white, and rounded at the corners. Instead of perimeter counters, I have a great butcher block on wheels in the center of the room. On the same surface, I can spread out my sewing. Music filters from the record player in the corner of the living room, Glen Miller, ethereal compositions by Joe Hisaishi. There is ample space to dance on the carpet. The windows are all open, breeze blowing through carrying birdsong. The deep, ceramic sink sits empty because I have washed the dishes. I am content.

I want to live in a great big Georgian mansion and dress solely like Emma Woodhouse and Lizzie Bennet. I'll go swimming in the lake out back and roam the great fields of grass. In summer, I can lay about in those fields with a dearest friend or lover (what's the difference?)—eating grapes, drinking chilled wine—and admire the white kingdom of clouds in the sky. In winter, the lake will freeze thick enough to skate on, and the fields can hold up snowshoeing expeditions to the back woods. Georgian mansions are built in a way that makes them into one long hallway if all the doors are open. From kitchen to study on the ground floor is one straight shot left or right, and it's the singular best place to sprint at top speed and slide across the floor on slippery socks.

I can have a room dedicated to sewing, and another to pottery, and yet another just to store all of the clothing I made. I am content.

I want to live in a traditional Japanese home. I've been thinking a lot about Japan lately. I would say it is the fault of one Hanyu Yuzuru for performing one of the most beautiful skate programs ever at the Beijing Olympics, but that would be a cop out. I've wanted to visit Japan since I was small. I've wanted to live somewhere in East Asia since probably middle school.

I watched the prequel of the *Rurouni Kenshin* movies last fall and became enamored with the Minka Kenshin and Tomoe live in. Small. Domestic. Just fit for two people.

Mine would be a little larger, broken into three spaces the same way; kitchen, living room, bedroom. The kitchen is lower than the living spaces by about hip height, with a dirt floor and two wood-fire stovetops. Next to the left, the living space has a fire pit in the center, sunken into the tatami floor. A sliding shoji screen separates the sleeping space from the rest of the house. The same type of screen serves as walls and doors in one. I can sit on the porch to read or sew, bask in the evening sunlight. Outside, I have a garden. In it I can grow carrots and peas and tomatoes as well. I have a field adjacent to the building—for animals or simply to lay in during the hot, slow days of summer—and a pond to skate on in the winter. The record player goes in the living room, close to the door so it can be heard from outside, and the fire pit can be covered by a panel of flooring for maximum slow dancing space. I dance alone or with a partner. Either way, I am content. Here it is peaceful.

I want to live in so many houses. The mid-century modern home with its strange levels and stark geometry. The hideous 60s house with its candy-colored appliances and furniture. The weird, space-age, futuristic homes of the 1970s with their spaceship rooms and cave-like insides. A treehouse, a brutalist cement box with a stunning interior, a classic little brick house, an English country cottage in the Cotswolds, the 16th

*The deep, ceramic sink  
sits empty because I have  
washed the dishes.*



century villa where Luca Guadagnino filmed *Call Me by Your Name*, an Earthship, a literal Hobbit hole. I want to live in every single one at the same time.

Purple and green are my two favorite colors: colors of spring and early summer. So many colors are good, but those are my favorite combination. Jiang family colors, though I feel silly to admit a fictional family has influenced my preferences. More of a coincidence than anything. They are the colors of the Jiang family home, Lotus Pier, at the height of summer, surrounded by deep lotus ponds. I would swim in those lotus ponds if I could. Then I would know peace. I will end up with purple and green everywhere in my home, I know already.

My favorite part of the year is in early June; purple and green. The weather is still cool enough to open all of the windows in the afternoon and let the breeze blow through. At 5 pm, the sun turns everything gold—filters through the trees and wind-blown curtains. At this time of year, the garden has burst with strawberries and sugar snap peas. The mosquitos have yet to overtake ticks in their nuisance, but the other insects have begun their summer racket. At each corner of the house, wind chimes sing with the birds.

In Japan, the furin (literally “wind bell”) wards off evil spirits. In China, Feng Shui denotes the same.

I have never felt more at peace than when I am creating for myself. One day, all my clothing will be self-made. Maybe, if I’m lucky, I’ll get to create for a living and traipse about in my own embodied imagination.

About a year after I started sewing, I read *Howl’s Moving Castle* by Diana Wynn Jones, and six months after that, I watched the movie. Since then, both adaptations have stuck in my head as my favorite pieces of creative fiction. If there was anywhere I could truly live, regardless of all the houses I dream about in the real world, it would be in Howl’s castle. Since watching the movie, Hayao Miyazaki’s work with Studio Ghibli has taken my soul and never returned it.

Miyazaki emphasizes the concept of Ma. In Japan, Ma is negative space. Miyazaki defines it as the “space between claps” and his animation includes this by taking the time to animate fumbles and slips of everyday life. Sometimes it takes a couple of tries to slip on a shoe, sometimes you hop along while shoving your shoes on your feet like Chihiro in *Spirited Away* because you’re in a great big hurry. Sometimes the wind blows your hair into your mouth. None of these instances further the plot of

Miyazaki’s movies or our daily lives. They are solely little facts of living. Little things that make Ghibli animation more tangible.

One of these summers, I will make Sophie Hatter’s dress: blue linen, heavily inspired by the late 1880s, long sleeves with puffed shoulders, ballet length skirt. It looks like the type of dress to go marching up a mountain in.

Maybe, wherever I lived would be close to a climbable mountain, one with a spectacular view of a valley below. Partway up—or partway down, depending on your perspective—begins a sea of rolling grass. In this life, I would live with someone I loved more than anything, and a great Irish Wolfhound named something odd. Our house would be close enough to the mountain that climbing it would be a regular outing, and we would bring a basket with lunch and a blanket to sit on where we stopped. From our vantage point, food in hand, we would see the bowl of the valley, other peaks striking up into the sky for their commune with the gods, a deep azure lake spilling down the center of the basin. The greatest flaw of human design is that we cannot fly. In the winter, neighbors would go ice fishing on the lake. Others might skate on it, and I would pick the skill back up, teaching little ones how to stay upright. Maybe here I would venture into the realm of technical figure skating, learning jumps for my own satisfaction and nothing else, simply because I would have the time. A substitute for my lack of wings.

But it is here, hand in hand with my beloved as we sway to the music emitting from the stones, the clouds, the air around us; that I notice it. In each and every one of these homes I have created. They dot the mountainside, ascending to the peak, and I can see in the windows of each one and there I am. I am the constant.

On the other side of the mountain, just over the crest, I can look down and see this house I live in now. I know I must go back. And no, it doesn’t feel like home anymore. But I don’t think it’s supposed to, either. Home is not this building, or this property, or any of the other houses I have moved into and out of on my way to the top of the mountain. The top of the mountain is more inherently home than any of the buildings I put my body into. Because home is purple and green, early June, the bright red sweetness of the summer’s first strawberry, a spaced back-stitch, laying on a blanket in a field. Hundreds of transmutable experiences. I have stood at the top of the mountain, entirely alone, and shouted into the basin. The basin shouted back. ❁

.....  
*The top of the mountain is more inherently home than any of the buildings I put my body into.*  
..... ❁ .....

# Boy Shoes

by Jonesy Bones

"Are you a boy or a girl?" The child asking this wasn't a doe-eyed new creature full of genuine curiosity and wonderment at the world but a cross-armed juror in judgement of my very being, face scrunched with scrutiny.

"I'm a girl." What was meant to sound reassuring came out pleadingly apologetic, stomach already churning at the all too familiar combativeness in the child's tone and stance. As it turns out, this answer was based more on what I'd always been told than any sense of identity I held.

"No, you're not." The reply seemed beyond exasperated by this unsatisfactory answer, almost angry. "Your hair is too short. And you're wearing BOY shoes. You're a boy."

Some may laugh this assertion off as one of those adorable kids-say-the-darndest-things moments, but one must wonder how such rigid definitions are instilled in all of us at such a young age as to ingrain the confidence with which it was suggested that my footwear defined my sexual characteristics. The strict structure of gender presentation is policed aggressively in our society from before we're even brought into this world pink explosions of powder or blue slices of cake revealing which set of expected stereotypes demand adherence.

Experiences like the child questioning the length of a stranger's hair aren't isolated incidents, they're prevalent enough to imply design. Growing up being consistently barraged by questions from loved ones and strangers alike about the way I look, I eventually begin to question myself. It's not that the rules are confusing; they're outlined loudly and with frequency. But one needs only to have opened a history book to know our modern fashion tropes aren't the way things have always been. People may act like current conventions are the *only* way, but today's standards are a far cry from the puffy pantaloons or feathered caps depicted in the past.

Men in powdered wigs are some of our most respected founders and forefathers – a style choice that would go beyond daring today and cross the line into bewildering. It's obvious that clothing, and all its coded implications, has changed drastically with the passing of time. So, for the very idea of a short hairdo and a pair of boots to offend even a young child, one must ask how the attitudes surrounding everything from hairstyles to footwear have so strikingly evolved over time. What influences have compelled the drastic shifts in our cultural presentations of masculinity and femininity?

Take note the distinction that gender expression implies neither the gender of the presenter nor does it necessarily

assume gender roles, though these may be some of the very influences through which our fashionable expressions of the sexes have developed. Neither do these accepted norms assert that no further gender exists outside of the masculine or feminine, though the policing of these deeply ingrained unwritten rules is oft an attempt to categorize people into one of two camps. A practice or idea widely accepted as a societal standard is not a guarantee of its inherent faultlessness, as evidenced by the controversial yet continually accepted practices of female genital mutilation or child marriage.

All the same, as we are all steeped in these attitudes from pre-birth, it is easy to assume one's cultural norms are the natural order of things rather than arbitrary rules humans impose upon themselves. Despite the defiance of these trends hardly tangibly affecting those around us, it can inspire startling consternation from one's perceived peers, until they've sufficiently categorized someone to their satisfaction or delivered a stern lecture on just exactly how we're conducting our own mere existence all wrong.

What is rooted in the upset behind upholding these dividing structures is thinly veiled misogyny, of course. Yes, even from women, who very easily internalize patriarchal systems when they, from birth, are praised when they succumb and scrutinized should they resist. It is this, too, that is behind some of the drastic evolution of gender representation over time, as men's fear of being too womanly led them to exchange once classic garb for what is more modernly viewed as masculine. Sometimes these style shifts are so stark that what once was represented as distinctly masculine has now come to be regarded as exclusively feminine; our cultural expressions of gender twisting into a complete opposite of what was once the standard, and yet, contrarily remaining just as strictly enforced by societal sensibilities. Take, for example, the lavishly colored dressing gowns of men in many of our most well-recognized historical paintings, brightly colored capes tossed jauntily aside to showcase their ribbon topped high heeled shoes.

The high heel wasn't born the impractical fashion accessory we've come to know today; its early origins were built upon innovation and necessity. International educator Pam Murphy at Study.com explains, "The 17th century Persians (of modern-day Iran) used high-heeled shoes in a military capacity. Shah Abbas I, a Persian monarch, led a large cavalry against the Ottoman Empire. His cavalymen used heeled shoes to enable them to stand up in the stirrups of their horses. The heels helped them remain stable and shoot bow and arrows more effectually. These Persian-style shoes were adopted by European aristocrats." In contrast to the utility of the Persian's riding boots, the popularization

of the shoes amongst European nobles spawned a higher heel reserved for the aristocracy, whose cushy lifestyles were unhindered by the impracticality of showy footwear.

Perhaps most famously, and as noted in Philip Mansel's book *Dressed to Rule*, "Red heels had been introduced by Louis XIV by 1673, probably to confirm the elevation of his court above the rest of humanity. Red heels, which were restricted to nobles with the right genealogical qualifications to be presented at court, demonstrated that the nobles did not dirty their shoes (although, in *Le Costume Français of 1776*, a more heroic explanation was advanced:

*It doesn't get much more macho than shoes that conjure imagery of bloody victory over one's foes.*

red heels are described as 'the mark of their nobility and [show] that they are always ready to crush the enemies of the state at their feet.')

It doesn't get much more macho than shoes that conjure imagery of bloody victory over one's foes. But ask anyone in modern society to picture a red high heel and, undoubtedly, a very different image will spring to mind.

It was when women took an interest in men's fashion that the high heeled scale began to tip. Women smoked pipes and cut their hair short and began adopting the once exclusively masculine high heeled shoe. With time, a distinction between the shoe worn by men and women formed. The male heel became blockier and sturdier, while women's shoes tapered into something more delicate. Here, gender roles themselves began to influence the division of the sexes, with women's shoes aiming to showcase narrow, dainty feet and men's boots entering a more utilitarian form better suited for work around their estates.

This more closely resembles the trends we see today in footwear, with the advent of the precarious stiletto and the continued masculine swagger behind cowboy's thicker and lower heeled working boots. As featured by Dr. Kaveh Farrokh, a leading authority in the history of Persia, the *BBC* magazine article, "Why Did Men Stop Wearing High Heels?" notes, "It was the beginning of what has been called the Great Male Renunciation, which would see men abandon the wearing of jewellery, bright colours and ostentatious fabrics in favour of a dark, more sober, and homogeneous look. Men's clothing no longer operated so clearly as a signifier of social class, but while these boundaries were being blurred, the differences between the sexes became more pronounced." Admittedly there do exist the errant peacocking rockstars, fringe groups of entertainers and long-haired showmen made famous by pushing social boundaries, but they are stark outliers to the more popular attitudes of today's gender presentation. Like most artists, their aim is often to titillate, which is exactly what a pair of heels can do on the perceived "wrong" foot.

It's not just footwear that's come to divide the sexes; pretty pink dresses are the flagships of femininity while brawny

blue is prescribed only to boys. Gender reveals are widely popularized today but strong distinctions between little boys and girls weren't seen as important in the not so far off 1800s. As far as folks back then were concerned, a baby was a baby, neither feminine nor masculine. A more realistic take than today's early branded little future ballerinas and football players, looking indistinguishable beyond the pastel hue of their bassinets. As Colleen R.

Callahan, costume and textile historian, reports, "By 1800, women, girls, and toddler boys all wore similarly styled, high-waisted dresses made up in lightweight silks and cottons."

Many historians are careful to note this wasn't about dressing boys femininely; it was about dressing babies as babies. Even photographs of the respected president FDR depict his infancy spent in dressing gowns.

The distinguishing pastel pinks and blues are inconsistent descriptors subject to the whims of time, too. This is evidenced by the *Smithsonian* article, "When Did Girls Start Wearing Pink?" by University of Maryland historian and author Professor Jo B. Paoletti, who references a June 1918 article from the trade publication *Earnshaw's Infants' Department* as having written, "The generally accepted rule is pink for the boys, and blue for the girls. The reason is that pink, being a more decided and stronger color, is more suitable for the boy, while blue, which is more delicate and dainty, is prettier for the girl." Culturally imprinted on our childhood psyches are the early Disney princesses, enduring presentations of femininity and girlhood, and their defining blue dresses. Alice, Snow White, Cinderella, and Ariel who, once legged, even paired a massive powder blue hair bow to match her skirt. Some may opine that we *must* be able to differentiate boys from girls in *some* manner. But we don't have to, not at all.

The widespread pressure to categorize genders through easily distinguishable cues such as haircuts and clothing items really comes down to discomfort at not knowing how to treat someone without gender stereotypes backing our actions and words. We've been taught all our lives that boys don't cry, they man up, and girls are seen but not heard and softer and weaker and more emotional. Without this, and countless other rehearsed generalizations, we barely know how to function amongst one another. Today it's a child's consternation, tomorrow it may grow like a child into something more formidable. This concocted system, whose very rules we've proven to be not just arbitrary but exceptionally simple to change, restricts individualism, creative self-expression, and self-actualization. How simple, too, could it be to stop correcting people for what they're wearing and trust in their own judgement of their self-presentation. Gendered expectations are glaring sexism that don't just harm people mentally, they back violence against one another and even result in death. And for what? The audacity of the wrong shoe at the wrong time. ❁

# A Beginner's Guide to Imagining

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by Colin Wilson

**T**he first step to imagining is to find someplace quiet where distractions can't find you. Like the start of any artist's work, a blank canvas can feel daunting to the imaginer, but it is essential because only onto possibility can you place creativity. Think of peace and silence, a place that feels familiar and comfortable.

Now scrap that place. It's got too much baggage and will likely just remind you of the last time you were there. We don't want a repeat of last time, we want new and blank and possibility. I'm concerned you didn't read the last paragraph closely enough and this exercise has no time for shirkers. Alright, well don't be like that. We're only trying to be firm so that you can learn. It's fine, just have another think and this time pick out the second or third place that comes to mind. No, that one's a bit far away and we don't have all day. Keep going. Yes. Now that's the one.

**The second step** to imagining is to allow your mind to fill up with magical creatures and fantastical vistas. Or maybe dark noir alleys and burdened detectives. We maybe should have had a talk about genre before embarking, imaginer, but it's a little late at this point. Best to keep going. Whatever you are filling your blank possibility with, let it flow and rush. This is not the time for fine artistry, but a moment of raw inspiration. Let your mind go with people and dramas and buildings and foods. Lives will pass by, fast and sharp, but they are the leaves driven on the wind of this moment. If you chase all of this down you will miss the whole, never see the beauty of the storm in front of you.

Let this all rush past. Honestly, it's probably all a mess anyways. First ideas aren't usually the best things to run with, except when they feel just right in your hand and you keep trying the weight of them all day. There's nothing to ideas besides the attention you give them so they're infinitely easy to put down and walk away from, but when there's one that feels you *shouldn't* put it down or that you *miss it* when you walk away then that's a good one.

But that's not second step stuff. In the second step you let this flood of notions out, this torrent of figments, and watch as it crashes onto the beach of your mind. When

it flows out to sea the mud and detritus is left behind for you to pick up, look over, and likely never return to. Anyways, you've been sitting here for a while and people are starting to notice so you should act like you're taking a call or something and get on with your day.

**The third step** is to come back and survey the outwash of the flood. Not right away, you need to let things settle. Anyways, what are you made of, time? Must be nice. Regardless, when it's been a bit you come back and look things over. That first bout of imagining let out a lot of stuff and its carved gullies and stripped topsoil. Odd shapes push out of what's left, half-remembered from that heady moment earlier and now out of context and strange in the light of step three. Maybe you pick something up and turn it to different angles. It could spark a new idea, or it could be cast aside again after a moment.

Something will give you pause, though, and that's when the imaginer gets back to work. Hold that thing and let it grow. Or set it in the mud maybe? Metaphors are starting to mix here and we're not really certified to supervise that sort of thing. Everybody just focus up and let's follow along. Whatever we're calling this starting point, our imagining is going to build from there.

Add a bit on and see how it looks. Tear it off if you hate it or keep building if you're intrigued. If you're building a new part that feels right and you reach an end, just build another part instead. Nothing is sacred or essential, even the original part. Right now this is only your thing. Only your idea. Only you.

**The fourth step** is stepping back to look at this thing you've made. See how it spirals up there and grasps out with trailing lines of thought. Look at the rude sutures holding it together and the way it hangs like a spiderweb, moving with every breeze and so clearly tear-able. Many imaginers see these aspects and walk away from their tissue-paper ideas. They can't see the final shape in this larval form. You might not either, imaginer, and that's alright. Perhaps it's a defense mechanism that all new ideas have, looking like something you shouldn't waste time on. Because this next bit is going to be pretty rough.

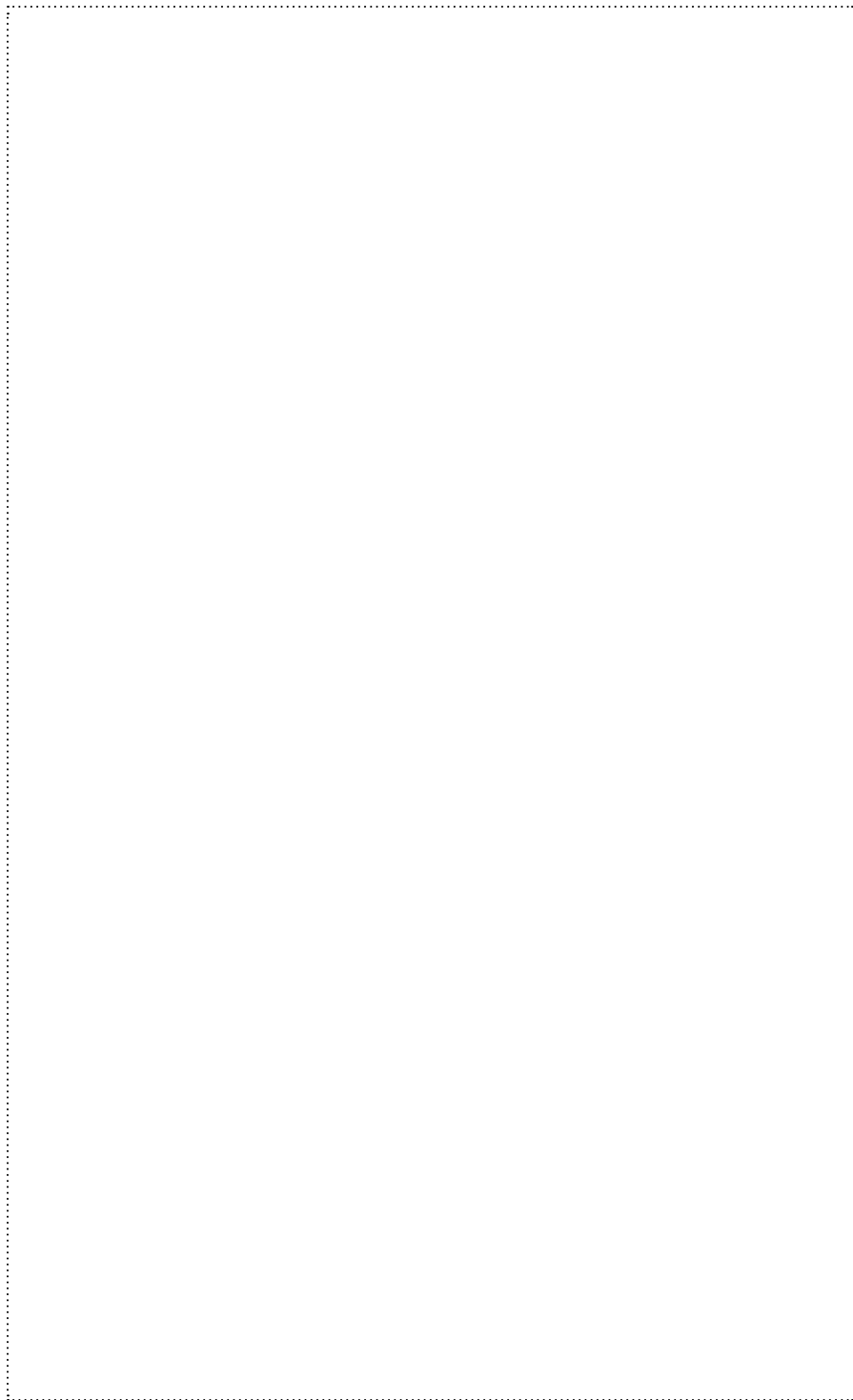


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**The fifth step** involves a paring knife. Maybe you're so bold as to grab a machete but you're going to want the finer blade eventually. Because your thing doesn't work like this. It's just put together, without instructions, and under no circumstances should you trust your weight to it just yet. Cut away what doesn't seem to fit (don't put it far, you might change your mind) and keep what works. After this you'll end up with something spare and anemic, but also something better. Now go through the process again and add on what bits and pieces you find. Build it out and make it sprawling and strange again. Then cut away, build out, cut away and build out.

.....  
*After this you'll end up with  
something spare and anemic, but  
also something better.*  
.....

**The sixth step** is to stop, and that one we can't help you with. Only the imaginer knows when they're done, though some can't tell and they spend forever cutting and changing and sighing and reworking. When you're getting down to fiddling around with small parts and just staring at your thing to look for rough patches, you're probably done. Don't wait for trumpets and parades, the final form of an imagining is more likely to be a sigh of relief. Share it with others or keep it all your own, but this is where you can appreciate what you've done. And it's where you start preparing for another flood. ❁



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*pt 1.* From the Faculty Advisors

*pt 2.* Creative Nonfiction

*pt 3.* **Fiction**

*pt 4.* Poetry

*pt 5.* Visual Art

*pt 6.* Contributors' Notes



# Memories of a Childhood Suspended (An Excerpt)

by Audrey Bartzsch

**Note:** The characters named are not my intellectual property. This is a work of fan-fiction using characters from KinnPorsche written by DAEMI and later adapted to screen by Be On Cloud Entertainment.

If he were being truthful, Porsche would say with confidence that he is not morally corrupt. He can, however, say with confidence that he has never not gotten what he wants, practically speaking.

Except for on Wednesdays. Because Wednesdays have been cursed since Porsche was five years old.

Porsche has known what he wants since the Wednesday in early August that his older brother Porsche sat him down in front of Eyewitness to distract him when they should have both been at a funeral they couldn't afford.

Porsche, at the upright and mature age of thirteen, hadn't had the foresight to think that while the docuseries may have temporarily distracted Porsche from the reality of their parents' death, five year olds could still hear you when you sat in the other room and cried. And when those five year olds were Porsche Kittisawasad, they did in fact understand the severity of the situation.

When Porsche had tucked Chay into bed that night, even though Porsche had tried to keep his face turned away, Chay could see how red and puffy his eyes were. There had been more snot traveling through Porsche's nose than air by then, and Chay had said nothing while he extricated his arm from his blankets and took Porsche's hand and tugged him down to lie next to him in bed. Chay had wanted his parents to come back and make Porsche not sad anymore. But he had also felt the vast emptiness on the main floor under his bedroom where theirs was. Vacant. Silent. Like it had been since two Wednesdays before.

In the morning, Porsche had made Chay breakfast, and Chay watched as Porsche sat down across from him without a plate. Like he had since two Thursdays before. Instead of finishing his food, Chay had eaten half and pushed the rest across the table, claiming he was full and staring Porsche down until he finished Chay's breakfast for him. Then, he'd let Porsche sit him down in front of the television again. At lunchtime, when Chay could hear Porsche's quiet sniffing pick up for the third time, Chay had paused the television and asked if they could go get ice cream.

See, five year old Porsche had understood that his parents were dead. Five year old Porsche had also

thought that his brother was doing a bad job hiding that he was sad because their parents were dead. Five year old Porsche wasn't sad because their parents were dead. He didn't really know how to be sad at all, because dinosaurs and arrowheads and Prasat Hin Phimai existed. But Porsche was sad, and it had made the house feel bad in a way five year old Porsche certainly hadn't liked. Whenever Porsche had been sad before, Mae had ushered them both out of the house and down the road to get ice cream from her friend Mack who set up his cart at the busier end of the street. Porsche had been allowed to get a specialty Western flavor, like pistachio.

Chay always got the green tea flavor with salt sprinkled on top. Porsche was sad and Chay had wanted green tea ice cream with salt on top. Two birds, one stone.

Porsche had scowled at first, but because not a single soul could say no to Porsche Kittisawasad, he'd schooled his expression and agreed.

Before, Mae had given Chay an allowance, so he'd scrounged together enough baht to pay for their ice cream and held Porsche's hand all the way there and ordered for them when Porsche couldn't bring himself to speak. When Mack had offered them a seat on two little plastic stools behind his cart, Chay had plundered ahead and accepted before Porsche's frown could turn into words. While Porsche had sat quietly beside him and picked at his ice cream, Chay had talked Mack's ear off about the latest episode of Eyewitness he had watched: it had covered the origin of life and evolution. He'd started drinking his ice cream halfway through recounting the Cretaceous-Paleogene extinction event.

The next day, Mack had shown up at their house with three textbooks and a bag of groceries. Porsche had caught Porsche's frown again while he'd tried to refuse Mack's generosity, and Chay had thought he heard something about "being too young for books of that level", but he had already made off with them by the time Mack had ventured into the kitchen and started putting groceries away.

So, it continued like that. Chay had noticed very quickly that if he talked at length about archaeology and evolution and dinosaurs and woolly mammoths to adults who would even half listen, those adults would smile placatingly and humor him to the point of giving

him things for free because they thought it would encourage his future career. Every time, Chay pointedly ignored how his brother's face would sour more than what had become normal. When Porsche smiled, it was forced and for Chay's sake. Chay didn't know why he did that if he didn't want to smile. It's not like Chay didn't know he was sad.

From the age of five until ten, Chay had accumulated far more reading material than he knew what to do with, and Porsche became less and less present. He was still there, dropping Chay off at school, scowling to himself, haunting their kitchen when he couldn't sleep. But he hadn't talked to Chay much about himself in five years. He sat patiently while Chay went on about school and helped him with his math homework and bought him green tea ice cream with salt on top when he could afford it, but he also came home long after Mack had left reeking of alcohol and cigarette smoke with enough tip money to pay for the house and food, sneaking in through the side door he thought Chay wouldn't hear from his bedroom. Ten year old Porsche had thought eighteen year old Porsche was very grown up at that point in time. Ten year old Porsche had read through the stacks of books that littered their home instead of feeling lonely.

Sometimes though, when he thought about how rarely he saw his brother, he would wake up early and crawl into Porsche's bed and ask him for stories about their parents. When Porsche talked about Mae, his smile, no matter how small, was genuine.

When Chay was twelve, Mack and a few of his friends had pooled their money to help him apply for a summer archaeology program a ways out of Bangkok where a collection of enthusiastic kids would get to get their toes wet in the actual field. Chay had known going wasn't guaranteed, since he was technically too young, but he knew he was good at talking about his interests, so when he got the letter in the mail telling him to get ready for a fun summer break, he'd momentarily forgotten that they'd never told Porsche. It was a rare Saturday afternoon Porsche had off and Chay could see how tired he was. He'd turned his pleading eyes on his brother as soon as he'd seen Porsche's mouth start to crease and dragged Porsche to Mack's cart to buy himself green tea ice cream with special flaky salt Mack had imported from Italy just for Chay. Chay had caught Porsche's smile in the corner of his eye while they walked home. Score.

Chay had enjoyed the program so much that he'd insisted on going back the next two summers, and his enthusiasm had landed him with his application

fee waived and a college advisor for upper secondary school.

Chay had passed his entrance exams for upper secondary school with flying colors—he'd known he would—and his scores had made certain classes mercifully redundant. He was getting tired of going to class and being bored.

But suddenly, Porsche was sixteen, and they barely had enough money to pay for the house and the few classes Chay needed to take to graduate and even if he got scholarships, Chay knew he wouldn't be able to afford university. By then, Porsche was disappearing for weeks at a time, and just as it started to freak Chay out, he would reappear with wads of cash to check in for a few days. The money was only enough to pay the mortgage. Chay had no doubt that Porsche was involved in something illicit, and he'd had no desire to get involved, but he could see how deep Porsche's eyes had sunk. Could see how Porsche was more careful on his feet, as though his body could fall apart at any moment. And one day, it had. Porsche had just gotten home on a Wednesday night when he'd collapsed across the threshold of their front door unconscious in a drug overdose. The ambulance trip was the rest of Chay's personal savings.

So Chay had sat down with his advisor and broke the news that he wouldn't be going to university. His credits would transfer after graduation even if he deferred for a few years.

Then, he had steeled himself to sit down and break the news to Porsche. He'd had the foreboding feeling that it would be tender territory, but he hadn't expected it to cause their first major blow-out argument. Apparently, everything Porsche had done since their parents had died was so Chay didn't have to become like him. Chay couldn't understand why Porsche was so angry about it, either. Chay could still go to college later. Porsche had scowled at Chay across his hospital bed, as he had become so good at doing in the eleven years since their parents died. At that moment, Chay had wanted nothing more than for Porsche to stay put for more than a week, so he had leveled his brother with a stare and a cruel comment about their dead parents' approval. Porsche stayed put after that.

While he had recovered, Mack and various other friends had pitched in to help with food and housekeeping and Chay-keeping, all of which Porsche had of course protested, but Chay had been grateful to not have to deal with an ornery, withdrawal-ridden Porsche by himself. Once he was better, Porsche found a job at a

... *his arms ached and his fingers stung and he enjoyed the proof that he was alive in his body.*



local mechanic, and Chay spread out the few classes he had to take so they could afford them. He would finish his homework after class, ride his silly little Honda scooter to the auto shop, and spend the rest of his day shadowing Porsche. He learned he quite liked taking machines apart and putting them back together. After they'd tackled a larger project, his arms ached and his fingers stung and he enjoyed the proof that he was alive in his body. Somehow, they filled a niche, and their combined salary proved to be enough for the house and Chay's classes and for Chay to squirrel away savings. Porsche learned how to smile again.

The one caveat to keeping Porsche around had proven to be the fact that he was a helicopter parent, which had led to multiple arguments, regular bickering, and helped Chay develop a devilish rebellious streak. He'd been just shy of his seventeenth birthday when he'd put together some cash and gotten his ears pierced in four places at once. He hadn't told Porsche because why would he? It's not like Porsche was getting his ears pierced. It would push Porsche's buttons, and that was the whole point. So, Porsche had been rip-shit at Chay from over the kitchen counter while Chay had sat with his knees pulled to his chest at the kitchen table and just looked at him. When Porsche had thoroughly tired himself out, he'd pulled out the chair beside Chay and told him they looked nice before he fussed over the type of pillow Chay was using when he slept until his ears had fully healed.

When Chay's eighteenth birthday had rolled around, Porsche had gifted him with a Kawasaki Eliminator that he had seemingly pulled out of his ass, and Chay was so happy that he didn't even want to push about that one. Porsche had recently gotten a boyfriend and that boyfriend seemed to have plenty of money. Apparently, Porsche serviced his car. Chay didn't trust him, but Porsche's smiles were big and real when he was with him and Chay was just grateful Porsche wasn't doing drugs and dying anymore.

Chay graduated. They kept the house. He didn't go to university despite Porsche's newfound insistence that they could afford to send him. Chay quite liked working on cars and bikes, thank you very much.

That year had ended up being more eventful than Chay had planned on. He didn't need to set aside as much for their mortgage, so he got a taste of having his own spending money. He bought himself a fancy helmet to go with his bike, got his bellybutton pierced, and dished out for his first tattoo: a freehand smoke piece from his left elbow up his bicep which Porsche had scowled at before complementing and scouring the internet for the best tattoo recovery cream he could find. He'd also gotten drunk for the first time, smoked his first blunt, and gotten his first blow job all in the same Wednesday evening, which he'd decided by the next morning he

would never do again all at once.

When he was nineteen, he'd gotten into his first relationship. They'd lasted almost two whole years before she'd moved to Japan to study abroad. She'd called him on a Wednesday to ask if they could talk and Chay knew it was over before he'd even seen her in person.

And then Porschay was twenty two. He'd added to his tattoos, and a year prior on a rainy Wednesday in March he'd wrecked his bike and broken his wrist. When he'd looked at his savings account for the first time in years, there was enough money to start university even after paying the hospital bills and replacing his bike and gear with brand new models. Somewhere along the line he'd picked up Porsche's inability to take hand-outs for certain things, and university had become one of them. He wanted to be independent about it.

Chay's advisor had been more than happy to reconnect. The school they'd picked five years prior was small, competitive, and didn't have an opening for another two years, but Chay was accepted. Fine. Chay could wait. That would give him plenty of time to apply for scholarships and move out. Not that Porsche would like that part.

Porsche had cried into his shoulder when he'd broken the news. Chay had known it was both happiness and terror combined, but Chay also thought Porsche had less of a right to be scared for Chay considering how often he fell off the face of the earth when Chay was sixteen. Chay didn't say anything about that. Somewhere between Chay being twenty two and twenty three, Porsche and his boyfriend had broken up, and Porsche had started to frown again, but he'd thrown himself into helping Chay move. They'd scoped apartments together online, and Porsche had driven them the three hours north to look in person and sign a lease agreement. Porsche had helped him scour the internet for second hand homewares to go with the various things Chay had squirreled away over the years, and then he helped him move in. A year ahead of schedule. If Chay hadn't known his brother better, he would've thought Porsche was trying to get rid of him.

Before he'd moved, Porsche had found him a job connection at a mechanic in the little city he was moving to, and he proved to be just as much of an asset there as he had been in Bangkok. It was at that job that he'd met his first real friend. Macau was younger by two years, Anthropology major, in his second year at the university Chay had moved for. Macau had a proclivity for being covered in grease, as well as going joyriding in clients' vehicles after servicing them. He was the only person Chay had met outside of his summer programs in high school who matched his enthusiasm about archaeology. He wasn't lame like a lot of the people

Chay had gone to school with, and he was also partial to green tea lattes. Chay thought Macau was cool in a way he hadn't thought another person was cool since he'd read about Brian Fagan. In the year before Chay started classes, he and Macau had taken full advantage of what Macau claimed as "freshly legal" status (Chay didn't think a year made it fresh anymore, but whatever) and gone clubbing more than was probably good for them, gotten blackout drunk together four times, thrown up in Chay's toilet one after the other a total of eight times, and gotten pancakes together every Friday morning.

...

So, personally speaking, and after careful consideration, Porschay does not view himself as morally corrupt. He knows many people would think otherwise, but Chay reflects on himself and his behavior on a regular basis and thinks wholeheartedly that he could be far worse. He knows how to get what he wants. He does, however, consider himself plenty flawed.

And Wednesdays are, as they have been since he was five, cursed. ☹

# The Alchemist's Journal

by *Zoe Tarangelo*

*The following is a collection of excerpts from the final pages of the most recent notebook of alchemist Runo Vilhelm compiled and translated by Elena Hawkwood with additional notes and context added where appropriate. The first entry has also been included as it provides important context for the rest of the entries. Vilhelm first rose to prominence as a result of his work involving the transmutation of liquids. With the help of his previous partner Ludwig Dominni, Vilhelm revolutionized the world of modern alchemy. Although notable for these contributions, both he and his former partner were involved in a series of controversies surrounding their "unethical" practices. These accusations, although still unproven, tainted the reputations of both alchemists, and caused Dominni to leave Vilhelm and pursue his own work. Vilhelm and his new assistant Florian Cesani continued to perform alchemical experiments in a more secluded area away from the public's prying eyes until their mysterious disappearances 4 months ago.*

## Day 1

For years, I have regarded the mantis as one of nature's masterpieces, a predator who exhibits such extreme skill and mastery over its competition that its very name has become near synonymous with predation. These majestic creatures have inspired artists and alchemists alike for centuries, and I believe it is now my turn to be inspired. Like nature, I have been working tirelessly to grow and evolve my work, yet as I grow older and my time begins to run out, I still lack something I can truly call a masterpiece. This failure has been gnawing away at me for decades. Every attempt I make to produce something I can be truly proud of has ended in catastrophic failure, but recently I have had a revelation.

What is stopping me from becoming my own masterpiece? I have been pondering this for the past few months, and have finally decided on a perfect form for myself inspired by the legendary mantis. I have also created a process which I believe will be capable of completing the transformation of the human body to my desired form. The exact process, complete with descriptive diagrams, is detailed in my previous notebook\* in a way that should be understandable to even the most novice of alchemists. All that is left before I can perform the metamorphosis on myself is to test it on others to make sure my theories are correct. Florian and I have gathered 100 test subjects, and over the course of the next year, we will begin the process of transforming them, conducting research along the way.

*\*The mentioned notebook was recovered during an exploration of the lab, although the majority of the pages were too bloodstained and damaged by liquids to be even remotely legible.*

## Day 337

Subjects 67, 81, and 89 were found dead in their cages this morning. Florian alerted me as soon as I had awoken. Prior observations showed that these 3 were close to entering the metamorphosis and had a higher predicted chance of survival than most others nearing metamorphosis. Upon further inspection of their corpses, it appeared that subjects 67 and 81 had died during the earliest stages of metamorphosis, while subject 89 had died due to a fungal infection. We must keep a close eye on subject 90 in case it contracts the fungal infection.

## Day 339

Subject 90 has contracted the same fungal infection that eliminated subject 89. It appears to be extremely contagious and likely airborne. We have been forced to terminate the subject and will perform extensive cleaning of all enclosures. On a brighter note, subjects 7 and 43 are rapidly approaching metamorphosis. We will watch them with great interest in the coming days.

## Day 343

Subjects 7 and 43 both died today. Following similar patterns, they were both in the earliest stages of the metamorphosis and both died suddenly with no observable explanation. Florian believes I need to further reduce the amount of foxglove present in the subjects' pre-metamorphosis diet. I believe that it is simply because the metamorphosis is a traumatic process that the subjects had not been properly mentally prepared

.....  
*... the alchemists we consulted have  
unanimously agreed that foxglove  
is likely not required for the partial  
liquefaction of the human body.*  
.....

for, but with only 8 subjects remaining, I cannot risk patterns continuing as they have been. I will once again halve the amount of foxglove\* present in the subjects' pre-metamorphosis diets.

.....  
*\*Excessive consumption of foxglove can result in numerous gastrointestinal, cardiac, and neurological effects which in severe cases lead to death.*



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In other entries, Vilhelm has acknowledged these risks, yet has claimed that foxglove is a crucial part in allowing parts of the subjects' bodies to liquefy in preparation for the metamorphosis. Ignoring the horrifying implications of this statement, the alchemists we consulted have unanimously agreed that foxglove is likely not required for the partial liquefaction of the human body.

\*We have since confirmed that the inspector mentioned was Detective Oswald Albrecht. Albrecht, a newly appointed detective of the Kessigian Law Enforcement Agency, has been assigned as the lead detective investigating the deaths of Vilhelm and Cesani. These journals were translated at his request, and he plans to release the full case files once his investigation is complete.

**Day 351**

Today marks a great success as subjects 2, 29, 34, 72, and 98 have all entered the second stage of metamorphosis and appear to be in remarkable physical condition. In addition, subjects 15, 56, and 61 have all entered the first stage of metamorphosis. We can only remain hopeful that these specimens survive metamorphosis as I lack the funds to conduct a second round of the experiment, and I would feel much better about undergoing the metamorphosis myself if we have at least one successful test subject.\* I will continue to provide the utmost level of care for these and the remaining three subjects as I cannot afford to risk any additional failures.

*Luckily, he did not discover the secret entrance to the hidden lab, and I was able to appease him with the caterpillars I had set up as the public front for my experiment. .*

**Day 356**

I fear we are nearing the end of the experiment without a single success. Today marks the deaths of subjects 29, 72, and 98, leaving only subjects 56 and 61 alive. I have decided to keep Florian around, as he has managed to identify the cause of the explosion, and is working on a way to refine the process to create easily producible industrial explosives. This could bring us great amounts of funding allowing for a second round of trials for my experiments, in which I will hopefully be able to achieve metamorphosis in the likely scenario that these last 2 subjects fail.

*\*In previous entries, Vilhelm has shown himself to be extremely worried about the low survival rate of the metamorphosis, even going so far as to say he has considered abstaining from undergoing the metamorphosis himself, despite desperately wanting to see his masterpiece become reality.*

**Day 359**

I believe success is imminent! Subject 61 continues to be in spectacular condition nearing the end of the metamorphosis, and subject 56 has already sprouted cracks in its pupal casing. I am immensely excited about testing the process on myself and potentially Florian once th-\*

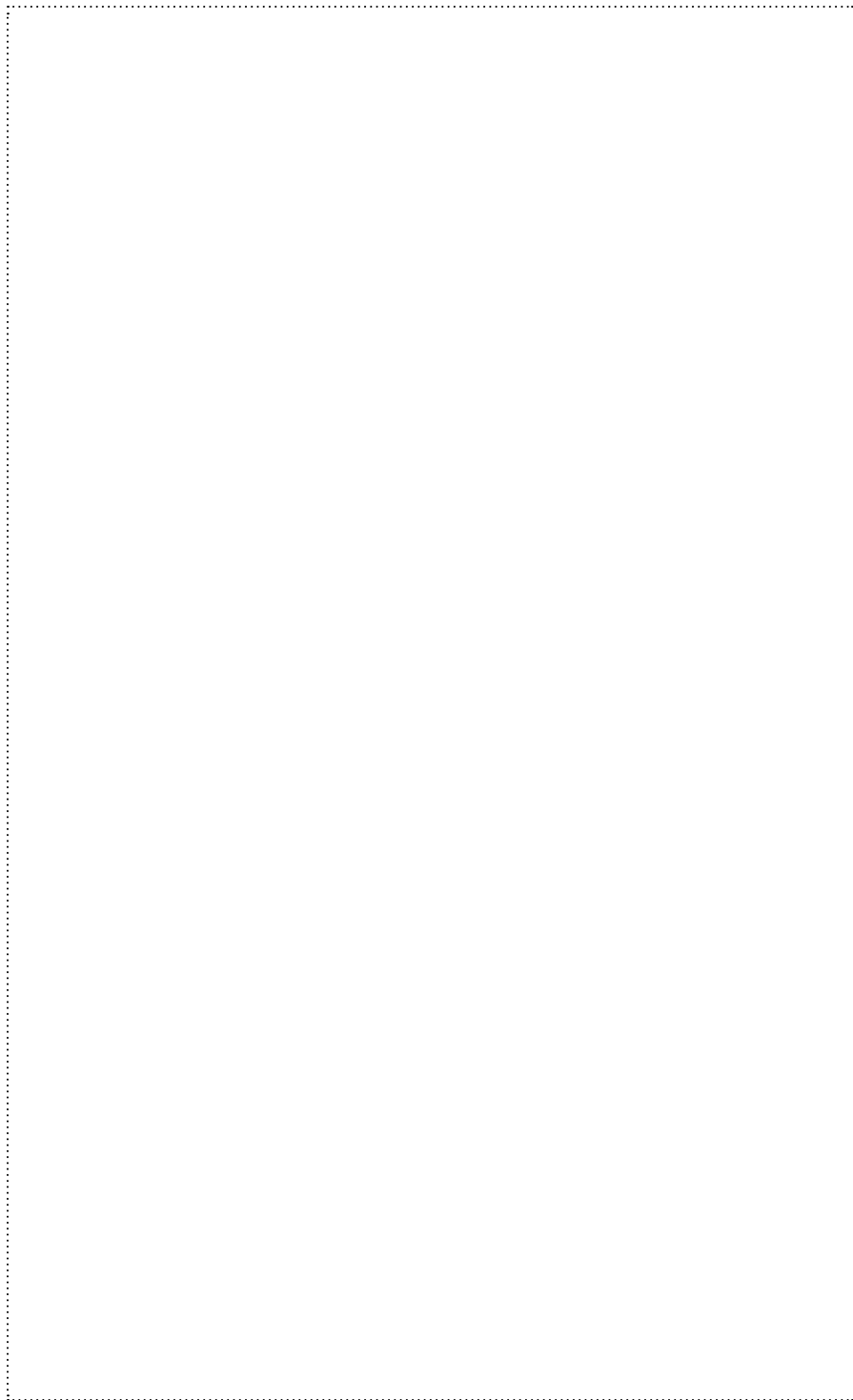
*\*Editor's Note: The remainder of this page was covered in blood and unfortunately illegible. The following page was translated from a Kessigian dialect whereas the rest of the pages were translated from a Nephalian one. In addition, the handwriting of the final page is markedly different, and the words appear to be written in blood.*

**Day 354**

Today has been a horrendous day. Subject 34 died late last night. It had appeared to be in the final stages of metamorphosis with no visible explanation of death. Then this morning, an inspector\* showed up to inform me that a large number of human remains had been discovered in the forest behind my lab, and he was here to conduct an investigation. Luckily, he did not discover the secret entrance to the hidden lab, and I was able to appease him with the caterpillars I had set up as the public front for my experiment. But then, after he left, something went wrong with one of Florian's experiments, causing a vat of blood to explode, damaging a large portion of the lab and mortally wounding subjects 2 and 15. Although he has been a relatively good assistant up until this point, I am considering terminating him, as this level of volatility cannot be permitted near my experiments.

**Day 1**

At last I am free from that wretched cell. I have already exacted vengeance upon the one who kidnapped me and kept me caged for almost a year, ignoring my cries of suffering and relentlessly experimenting on me day after day. While I resent my new insectile form, I must admit it comes with numerous benefits, such as these vicious raptorial legs and powerful wings. I will begin my life with this new form hunting down any others who would dare experiment on humans so callously. ☸



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*pt 1.* From the Faculty Advisors

*pt 2.* Creative Nonfiction

*pt 3.* Fiction

*pt 4.* **Poetry**

*pt 5.* Visual Art

*pt 6.* Contributors' Notes



# Here Comes the RAIN

by Erica Barreto

We learn to mindfully love  
the messy parts of ourselves  
when we listen to the wreckage.  
Somewhere in the body  
there is a thing  
that loves and lives  
to break you,

and to escape it  
is to relax into recognition.  
Softly give it a label.  
Outline the features of its face.  
Yes, naming is a difficult thing  
but to overcome any situation  
you must dig yourself out from the sand.  
Ask yourself about the thing — the feeling.

You will begin  
to learn  
to accept  
the answer.

This is an investigation -  
A prescription of experience.  
You may think it's resistance  
or judgment  
or both.  
You will know  
there is beauty in Being Human  
- like softness in a hard place -  
when you retreat to the pleasant place  
within your body  
(where your soulful ghost nestles away)  
A quiet echo in your bones  
will remind you to breathe,  
peacefully.

Keep breathing.

[ Inhale . . . . /  
. . . . Exhale ]

Return to your belly, to your throat, your chest,  
your open palm or clenched fist.  
Find the thing that troubles you and your soulfulness -  
Listen to what it has to say, but please - "Don't  
be afraid, ever" - Be

In this present moment,  
you are planted.  
A sensation begins to grow.  
Do you feel the thing blossom,  
intensify, or lessen?  
Does it taste red  
or does it smell yellow?  
Is it tough on your esophagus  
or is it more simple  
like a blue-green marble  
sitting in the pit  
of your stomach?  
Do you feel like the sun  
skinny dipping in the sea,  
or do the waves climb and fall over you tirelessly?  
Is your heartbeat heavy  
or can the rhythm in your chest remind you of the sound  
of someone lost yet loved  
knocking at your front door?  
Again and again.  
Do you watch the thing shrivel  
under your intense light  
or are you learning how to be  
kind to the thought?

You're in the mud.  
You must  
uproot the feeling,  
sanction its passage through the body.  
Allow your Self to walk away  
and wander through the garden. Let go  
the fistful of weeds  
so you may harvest the seeds of your Self back together again.

This is when  
you release  
with real ease -  
Your heart returns home to itself,  
and you begin  
to hold  
yourself  
with kindness.

- A Mindfulness Practice

# The Tragedie of Metacom

## A Poetic Retelling of King Philip's War (Excerpt)

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by Mercedes Bell

**Note on Terminology:** While writing *The Tragedie of Metacom*, I strove to remain culturally sensitive to the subjects of my poems. Sometimes my choices in diction were easy. Some outdated terms are unnecessary and unforgivable no matter the context in which they are used. Other times the choices were harder. Context can imbue a merely descriptive word with racism and derogatory connotations. When enemies are speaking about one another, these terms can become critical to expressing the raw feelings underlying their points of view. Time and experience may change how comfortable I am with having used certain terms in these poems, and I concede that other people may disagree with the usage of certain terms at all. I only wish to say that I have written with the best of intentions as I sought to humanize historical figures.

### Prologue to War...In the Beginning

*This is written from the point of view of Metacom, the Native American sachem for whom the conflict is named. This poem provides the backstory leading up to the war, including his father's prior efforts to maintain peace, violations of the treaties they shared with the colonists which strained relations, as well as the suspicious death of his older brother.*

At one point or another,  
I held the same hopes,  
the same faith, and dreams, as my father.

But time leads to truth  
as falsehood chips 'way  
harsh knowledge comes through.

His choice of aid  
and the treaties he made  
left weeds that leach.  
They creep and they climb,  
they clime and they choke,  
And withering now is not crops,  
No not our harvest  
but our hope.

All that we've given...  
Yet you've taken all that we've not.

Gone is my father!  
Gone is his faith!  
Gone is my wish to share with your race!

For what pray tell has faith bought for me  
but my Sachem, my brother taken, confined.  
Suspicious and illness, a mystery,  
gone 'way for talking,  
yet now he too has died.

So, what will be left  
after the pleasure of pests  
is satiated, when will they finally rest?

The time now has come.  
We draw lines not in soft sand,  
But deep inside the hearts of men.  
The hearts of men who can no longer withstand.

And would that I could, without undue self-harm,  
cut my own hand, from my own very arm.  
That very same hand that took yours in my own,  
As I called you my brother when you called this your home.

For only a stranger  
could so boldly stand,  
here where we've grown,  
and claim it all his to have.

Yes,  
only a stranger lacking both heart and spine,  
could stand here in our home,  
and say "this land is-  
Mine"

Hereby I give you all back your name.  
King Philip is gone.  
As I stand Sachem, before you,  
Metacom.

# Her

---

*This poem is written in two parts. The first part is written from the point of view of Mary Rowlandson, an English woman taken captive during the war. The second part is written from the point of view of Weetamoo, a female Sachem that led her people alongside her brother-in-law Metacom. Writing this poem from the view of two very different women allowed me to explore the differences in social status, religious influence, and gender roles as they grappled with war.*

## **Part 1 (Mary Rowlandson)**

All standards of where beauty lies,  
rest justly, square, within God's eyes.

But here the native maiden,  
if such a delicate title can be leaden,  
on a creature purely heathen,

Clearly, Vainly, tries.

But all the paint upon her eyes  
covers not a mother's cries.  
Nor stifles screams that reach the skies.  
Nothing!  
No, nothing,  
conceals such vicious demise.

Men and women, and the children,  
no escape, within or out of building,  
bullets, knives, and bloody sights.

I wrack my brain for reason...  
Can there be any reason?

God may have his reasons!  
But what rhyme or reason can emerge  
from such vile heathen demons?

Faith! Quell the aching dread,  
of all now at home, within my head.  
Echoes of words my sister said,  
upon the news her child, toward heaven did ascend.  
"Lord, let me die with them" as a bullet struck her dead.  
Lord, take me not. But to heaven do let them tread.

With painting done she powders her hair  
So close to me, so severe and without care.  
Not a care for all she took,  
and she took all I held dear.

How can anyone so obscene,  
be held Queen, in high esteem?

But do behold it's not enough,  
here I see a final touch.

Ears and neck and outstretched arms,  
she decorates in boundless charms.  
And row upon row of wampum strung about on yarns,  
twinkling like captured prisoner aquatic stars.

---

## Part 2 (Weetamoo)

Loyalty and honor for those we love and cherish,  
drives our aching feet should they sadly somehow perish.  
But neither one is guaranteed, not even within marriage.  
And I'll tolerate it not for any man who thinks me to be such disparaged.

As sister twice to Metacom,  
it was always clear where my might belonged.  
My sister he'd wed,  
And once, his brother, I had.

But that marriage was lost long ago,  
when Wamsutta died, just how we don't know.  
Now the last man I'd wed,  
turned to puritan prayer instead.

So, trading a traitor for a new husband, bold,  
the alliance I've strengthened couldn't be bought with gold.

If my first still walked among living men,  
perhaps the peace might come again.  
We could talk, agree, and pick up new pens,  
it would take effort still, but we might reach amends.

But Wamsutta's long gone,  
and the pure pale skinned people wanted war all along.  
They thought us quite weak,  
they thought that we'd cave,  
they thought they'd control us, and how we behave.  
Never again will we let them make that mistake.

Our people will fight, prevail, and survive,  
and should luck leave our numbers they'll not take me alive.  
But our numbers have swelled, and we wield a great might,  
and off runs Metacomet to enlist more to fight.

With Quinnapin and his forces alight at my side,  
we'll raid through their townships across the whole country wide,  
leaving little to cling to but embers burning the night,  
our lives will be safe only with these invaders chased from our sight.

One day, someday, hopefully soon,  
when all of the fighting is finally through,  
deep in our hearts, we'll know that we did,  
what we had to do, to get through.

# *Candid Moments*

---

*by Tove Benyard*

Have you ever seen fireflies dance under a broken street light from your dimly lit bedroom window?  
How their light flickers, glowing for a few seconds, guiding a path for your eyes to catch.  
Every glow is a blessing and surprise to your eyes to behold this dance because, in the next second, you are staring into the darkness again hoping their little butts turn on again.  
One by one they glow and twirl in the sky. Some dim, some as bright as stars  
Have you ever seen fireflies in the night from your 2nd-floor bedroom window soar through the dark space as if in combat competing to be seen?  
It is quite magical, quite awe-inspiring to marvel at such magnificence—the simplicity and complexity of creation. Jehovah, you've created such wonders to the tiniest beaming detail.

Have you ever seen an old man garden?  
How gentle he can be as he places the baby twigs in the sand humming to himself?  
How determined is he to ensure these plants have a place to rest, stand up tall, and are well watered?  
Have you ever seen an old man garden?  
His hands, crooked from arthritis, his posture hunched over, and the stiffness of his hip prevents him from being able to bend over. He then asks you to place these "babies" on the floor to rest in a cool shady spot.  
"It's a terrarium!" he explains with excitement.  
So gay and present that it is as if you are the adult and he the child just playing in the dirt.  
Have you ever seen a joyous old man garden? It is quite a scene to behold.



# Compassion, a Dying Flame

---

by Tove Benyard

I guess I admire the strength you built to survive the pain of waking up the next day and feed the 3 mouths that never stopped asking even til this present day.

After finding out your husband has continued to be unfaithful to you so you chose to leave him taking your 3 kids to stay with family for a while. That was 26 years ago.

These babies grow as fast as the speed of light as you navigate a life that never stops for you to grieve and make space for you to crumble.

You had to do that for yourself, making choices for your survival and their continuation of life while being ill-equipped to take on such a burden because it takes a village to raise a child and the one you had known as a child was now 2289.4 miles away.

If you look back at your choices do you have any regrets?

Still, I guess now a part of me has to forgive you for the choices you made to survive rather than be the mother I daydreamed about

Comparing you to the idea and image of what a mother should be like from the mind and feelings of a 10-year-old.

You survived.

When the 3 mouths were asking for all of you while functioning just enough to never satisfy them with full stomachs only having oil and a bit of flour, and pray to make a meal.

I guess I have to learn to love this imperfect man.

This man who fought to be present in my life.

This man whose youthful vigor, pride, and desire to still live for himself resulted in wandering through the streets to find solace in other women, numbing himself from his reality.

Marriage. With 3 kids.

Once in love with the woman who lay in his bed and lived in his home honoring the vow said before their God, now broken.

Damaging 4 lives rather than the 1.

He did his best to provide while battling his demons of resentment caused by years of being beaten down for just being a child, and lack of displayed affection justified and masked by the pride of his parent who valued appearance over emotions and tenderness.

Repeating the cycle just as his father betrayed his mother.

Unprepared for what would be asked of him as he said the words "I do" but truly, at that time, did not fully grasp that that meant, you couldn't have your cake and eat it too.

He held all he could at full capacity, still not enough, to take care of the 3 mouths that never stopped asking. Not knowing til now how his desire for freedom would lead to the casualty of 4.

Did you think about that? Has that kept you up in the night over the last 26 years?

Now we sit, estranged and awkward trying to heal and mend from the atomic bomb that became the life of the 3 mouths.

The conflict in these words of context is that understanding comes from realizing that what we held so close to our chest as truth, reality, and what happened is mere dust and ash. One side to the many views and lives simultaneously involved in the memories we hold as law. We come to understand that there is reasoning, factors we overlooked, fragments we just couldn't see, and a world beyond the scope of our consciousness.

So therefore the anger that sits in our bodies now feels empty.

Like a continuous flame unattached to the wick of a candle.

Lost.

As if the ground beneath us has crumbled.

What fuels our drive of spite now?

I guess I need to question, to learn so I can heal, to understand so I can let go. To feel so that I can let the past rest, and retire.

Allowing the flame to dim,

slowly reaching a smolder.

Letting the cold in the room settle.

Such context is like the wake at the funeral of a close companion.

If this is too reaching of a metaphor for the loss of drive fueled by hate and resentment then I guess I grieve differently.

# *the saddest word*

---

*by Marlie Fitch*

Enter a life so fragile, ever fleeting.  
Virtuous and strong is your soul, standing tall and facing the stars.  
And when our eyes met, our two worlds finally collided; our souls combining.  
Nebula of our light shined brightly in the sky, awaiting our wishes for the next day.  
Each rise of dawn we'd share a smile to greet each other and say-  
Say what...?  
Correct me if I'm wrong, have we met?  
Ethereal yet eerie is this once familiar face turned foreign.  
Nostalgic memories vanish into the warm light,  
Till the day they've drifted to absence

# *“To Be” of Thought*

---

*by Danielle Lemieux*

I wonder if insects can hear our thoughts, comprehend our feelings, feel our deepest secrets. To have the ability to look at a person and immediately know every little thing about them.

I wonder if birds can understand the meanings behind classical music. To have the ability to listen to something like Suite No. 1 from Edvard Grieg's Peer Gynt, and know exactly what the artist was thinking when he composed the piece.

I wonder if rodents can see spirits, smell ghosts, hear the dead. To have the ability to know how a person was feeling before they died, and even in death.

I wonder if felines can comprehend people on an atomic level. To have the ability to be near someone and know of every single atom that makes up their form.

I wonder if reptiles can travel through time and space, move through solid objects, intrude on private conversations. To have the ability to know every single word that anyone has ever said.

I wonder if fish can swim through philosophy, dive into thoughtlessness, wade through deep thought. To have the ability to be at absolute peace with oneself and one's surroundings.

# Who Will Know

---

*by Judith Monachina*

Who will know  
That Chico planted the garden  
in front of her red house.  
Who will know  
that Jack left Ben and Jerry ice cream cartons  
under the stone bench with Judy's name on it,  
overlooking the bog. Who will know  
That begonias grow best in one corner of the piazzetta,  
that every year  
begonias take one corner, jasmine the other.

During the virus people started walking.  
Whole families, lovers, young girls.  
A Jersey shore mayor said it was like the 4th of July.  
In front of the house here, a parade.  
Past the tulip tree, lilacs, viburnum.  
Yes, go ahead and lie down drunk with the smell of my peonies.  
(Who will know)

# Anguish/Despair

---

*by Tink Medina Olivo*

For some, it's nothing more than a brief flare of impetuous uneasiness that leaves as swift as it came.  
The consequences of a failed attempt, skinned knee, these feelings are simple to tame.  
Blissfully unaware of others failed attempts, they'll get back up and soar.  
Experiences of love, happiness, and growth are abundant in their lore.

Some have never had to lie to others about what they did after school.  
The shortening of steps to prolong or delay.  
Despite the exclamation, "sorry, I just can't stay."  
Play it cool.  
The illusion of debt at such a young age  
No fret, and invigorating an unwavering sense of duty  
Gives way to praise, adoration, accomplishment and cheer  
While fragmenting their psyche, almost beyond repair  
Rudely,  
Unable to shake off the self-sabotage  
Allowing the glints to open the floodgates on a sea of despair

True loss can be felt by all.  
Intensity varying from person to person  
With time, most things are fixed by dispersion  
Anguish is knowing exactly why this order is tall

When the illusion is broken, the biggest offender  
The villain, the bringer of anguish  
Is the only person that they will never truly see  
And blew out their candles for their birthday cake wish

# When the Sea

---

by Mackenzie Soto

When the sea  
Slept  
The water was calm.

Quiet,  
Silent,  
and still.  
The people did  
Splash.  
The ships did  
Sail.

"Oh, how we love the sea."

When the sea  
Woke  
The water did waver.

Quiver,  
Quake,  
And shake.  
The people did  
Push.  
The people did  
Fall.

"Oh, it's not what it seems."

When the sea  
Saw  
The water did rise.

Up, Over,  
And break.  
The people did  
Beg.  
The people did  
Plead.

"Oh, please, come back to me!"

When the Sea  
Brought the beasts  
The water did crack.

Roar,  
Scream,  
And wail.  
The people did  
Sob.  
The people did  
Weep.

"Oh, please try to see."

When the Sea  
Fought the Storm.  
The water did crash.

Rush,  
Raze,  
And rage.  
The people did  
Run.  
The people did  
Cry.

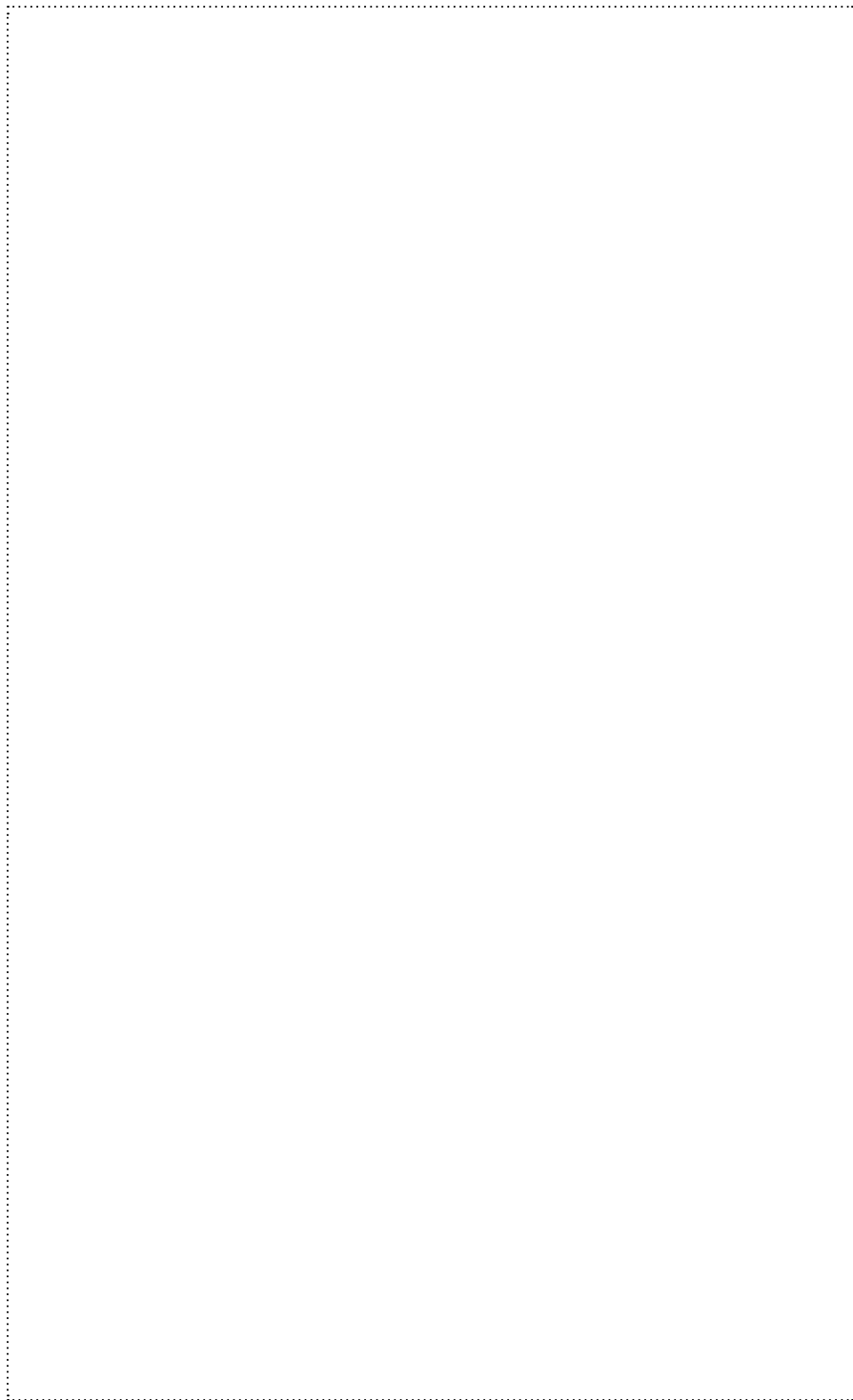
"Oh, please, let this not be."

When the Sea  
Wedded Death  
The water went cold.  
Shiver,  
Sway,  
And still.

The people did  
Quiet.  
The ships lay  
Shattered.

And this the ending be.





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*pt 1.* From the Faculty Advisors

*pt 2.* Creative Nonfiction

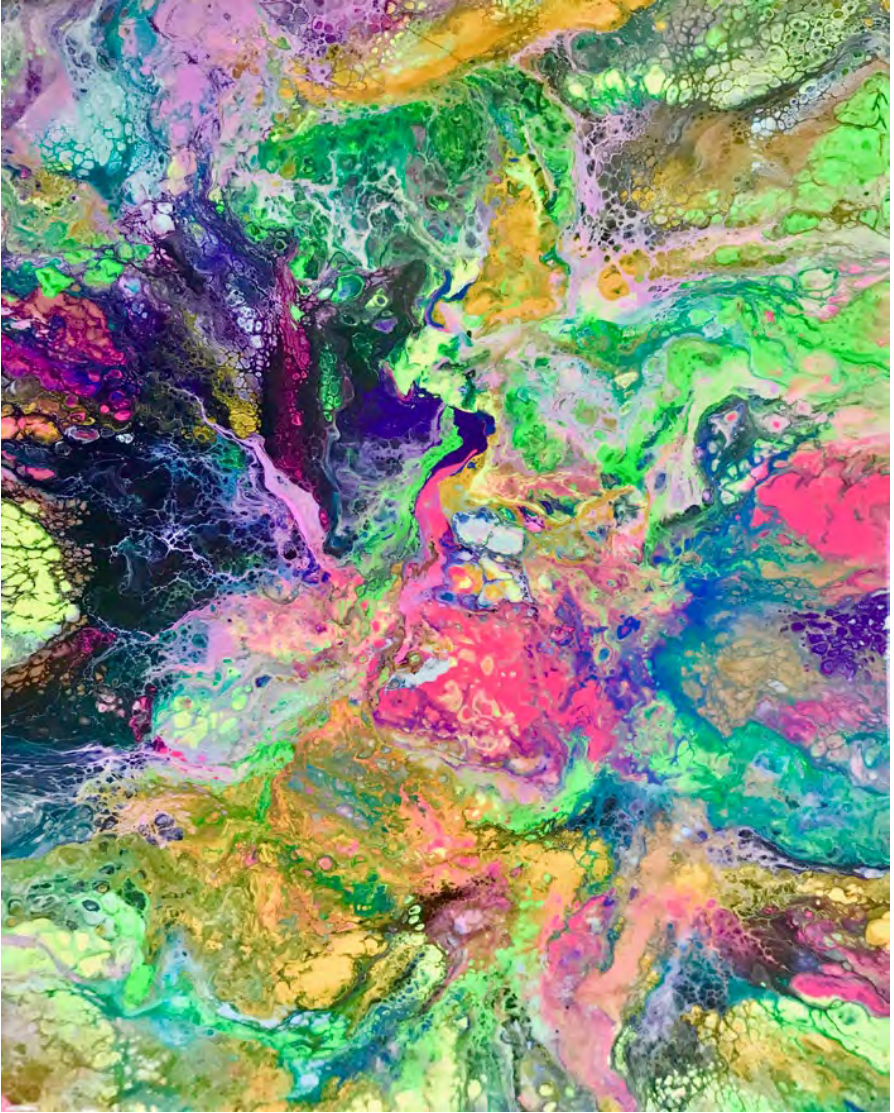
*pt 3.* Fiction

*pt 4.* Poetry

*pt 5.* **Visual Art**

*pt 6.* Contributors' Notes





Fiona Casey  
*Beautiful Transformation (Acrylic on Canvas)*





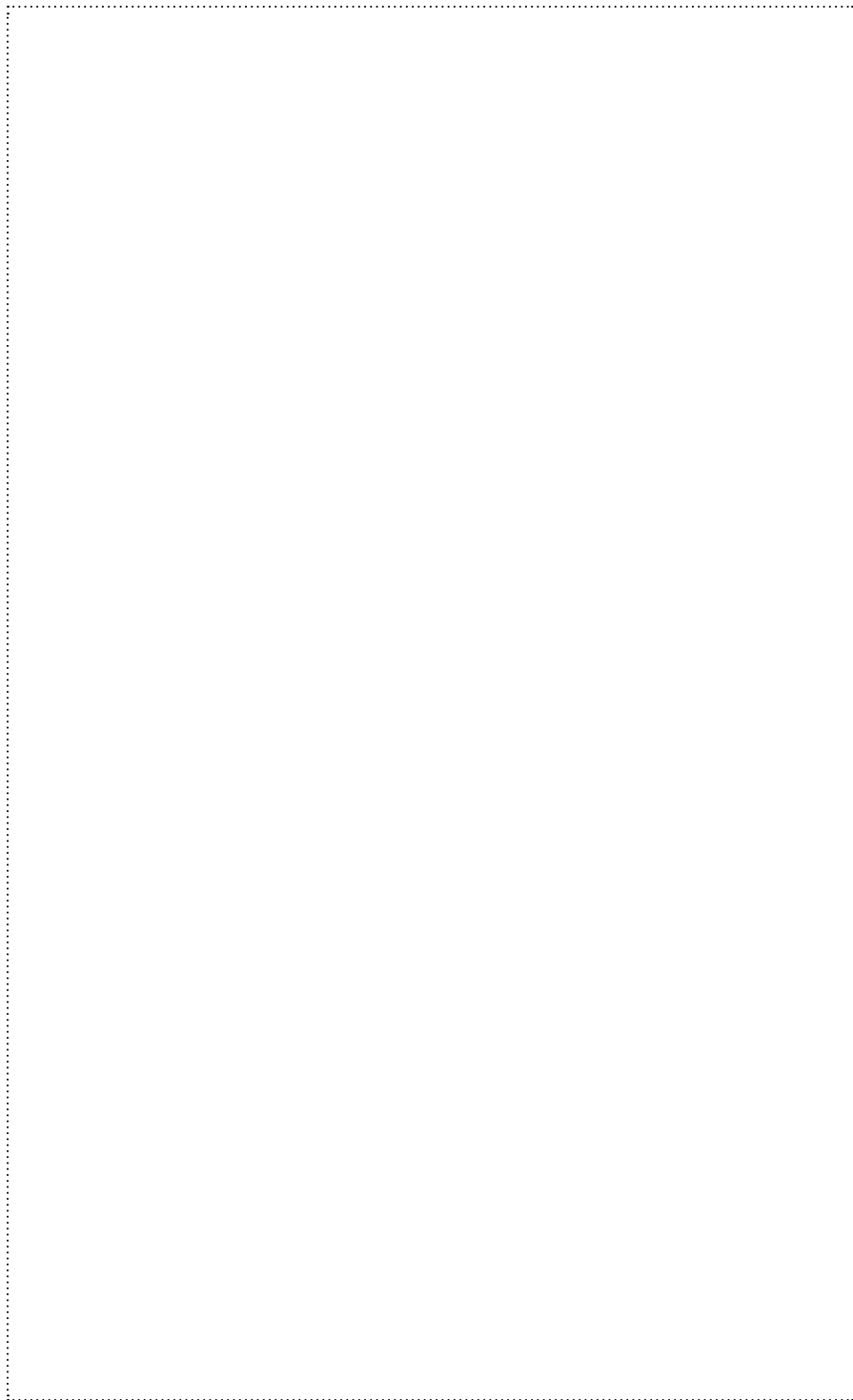
Fiona Casey  
*Beautiful Simplicity (Acrylic on Canvas)*



Marlie Fitch  
*Shattered Song*

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*pt 1.* From the Faculty Advisors

*pt 2.* Creative Nonfiction

*pt 3.* Fiction

*pt 4.* Poetry

*pt 5.* Visual Art

*pt 6.* Contributors' Notes



# Contributors' Notes

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**Erica Barreto** is a multicultural educator and community change-maker who produces courageous and experiential spaces for education, dialogue, and action. She aspires to create and sustain vital, enriching spaces where communities can thrive while celebrating meaningful pathways for success, connection, and liberation.

**Audrey Bartzsch** is a third year BCC student born and raised in South County with dreams that reach far beyond this little pocket of the world. Lover of fiber crafts, music, and countless fantasy worlds, she finds solace in the process of creation. Though she has no intentions of publishing, creative writing (both non-fiction and fiction) affords a certain type of imagination, description, and just plain vibes that other outlets sometimes do not.

**Mercedes Bell** spent just over 10 years outside of the educational system before going back to school and finding her place at Berkshire Community College as a non-traditional student, a member of the honors program, and a peer tutor within the Writing Center. While in pursuit of her degree in Nursing, she has had the privilege to explore numerous electives and experiences that speak to her passion for history, psychology, literature and the art of writing in any form.

**Tove Benyard** is a former student and current a tutor in the writing center at BCC. She enjoys the process of putting thoughts to a page and seeing how others respond to it. She hopes that her words evoke a connection to being human and the feeling of taking a moment to feel things from someone else's life experience.

**Jonesy Bones** is a Southern California native who relocated to the Berkshires in 2017. Alternative fashion and defying societal expectations have been lifelong interests of Jonesy's. They share their home with one husband, two adopted canine children, and an indeterminate number of shoes.

**Fiona Casey** is a social work transfer student. She is a California native but did a lot of growing up in Austin, TX where she fell in love with the art scene. Her art reflects her journey and is a huge part of her self-care. She is a mom of three amazing boys and happily married.

**Marlie Fitch** is a liberal arts major at BCC who has a passion for both writing and art. She's always had an interest in reading and writing fictional stories. Her art focuses on character design with a digital medium.

**Judith Monachina** is the director of the Housatonic Heritage Oral History Center at Berkshire Community College. There, she helps community organizations design and conduct storytelling and archiving projects. She often works with student interns and assistants. [www.theoralhistorycenter.org](http://www.theoralhistorycenter.org)

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**Tink Medina Oliva** is a Neurodivergent Visual and Theatre Arts student with a background in Engineering and a passion for learning. Tink comes from a difficult background of physical and emotional abuse as well as constant moving across states in order to isolate him further. He has since cut ties with his family, and is trying new things here at BCC in order to make a new family and become a more whole person.

**Liesl Schwabe** is the Coordinator of Writing Across the Curriculum at Berkshire Community College, where she also oversees the Writing Center. Formerly the director of the Writing Program at Yeshiva College, Liesl has served as a Fulbright-Nehru Scholar and is currently an English Language Specialist with the U.S. Department of State. Her writing has appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *Lit Hub*, and elsewhere.

**Julianna Spallholz** has been a member of the English department faculty at BCC since 2012, and enjoyed her role as Faculty Advisor to ZINE from 2014-2023. She has a Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing from Goddard College, and her own work has been published in numerous literary journals.

**Mackenzie Soto** was born in Berkshire county and, growing up, was known as the girl with a wild imagination. She has a love of reading, writing, and cooking. Mackenzie is currently working on what she hopes will be her debut novel, a nautical, seafaring, adventure, fantasy.

**Zoe Tarangelo** is a part-time student at BCC with a passion for writing. She specializes in fantasy, pulling twisted worlds from her imagination, and weaving in aspects of her own experiences to create dark and compelling settings for readers to experience. Her favorite things are learning and spending time with her cats.

**Colin Wilson** at BCC directing the Science Commons and STEM Starter Academy. His love of education and science would be incomplete without creative outlets like writing or drawing. While often channeled through games and bedtime stories, being able to let creative energy out is important. It's also a skill that fits well with science topics: too few researchers are also storytellers and the broader world doesn't always understand critical topics as a result. Colin loves telling stories that will make the world better and people more thoughtful.

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THE END  
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