



THE
SPECTATORIAL
VOL. I

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SPONSORS

The Beguiling



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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR IN CHIEF

In the late eighteenth century, there was a strong demand for fantasy to be stomped out of children's literature. Some purists demanded that Charles Perrault's fairy tales be censored for fear that children might become confused by the blurry boundary between reality and imagination. Fantasy was dangerous and distracting; it was a threat to didactic education.

Some authors, like Ellenor Fenn or Sarah Fielding, used fantasy as a tool of didactic education, normalizing it within the canon. But this was often done in order to teach children the difference between fantasy and reality—certainly not so children could enjoy imagination. Commonly, teachers or authority figures would remind the children inside the story and out that there was a large difference between fantasy and reality. This was the lesson: reality was meant to be valued, fantasy eschewed.

Obviously, they never succeeded in stomping the fairies out of fairy tales. Cinderella still has her godmother, Sleeping Beauty is still cursed by a wicked fairy, and Puss in Boots still speaks (admittedly, purists felt that anthropomorphic animals were more appropriate than fantasy—but that's a story for another time). Perrault's tales, while occasionally post-modernized by Disney consumer culture, remain largely fantastic in their various interpretations. The fantastic, while dangerous, is important enough to have survived wars and centuries.

But not everything has changed since the eighteenth century. Children might be encouraged to read *Harry Potter* to boost their reading skills; teens might create publishing windfalls through *The Hunger Games* and *Twilight*. Name recognition for speculative *and* literary authors like Margaret Atwood and Ursula Le Guin is nice and high. But there is still a divide between realistic and unrealistic (or speculative, as we call it) literature; in some small way, the divide perpetuated by eighteenth century purists still exists in contemporary culture.

For example, while the University of Toronto does not ignore the importance of the speculative in its curriculum, providing classes like "Fantasy and Horror", "Science Fiction", and "The Graphic Novel", speculative literature still isn't a focus of normative literary classes. The very presence of these individual classes suggest that speculative fiction (here throwing an arbitrary nod to Graphic Novels as harbingers of superhero specific, although we acknowledge there is plenty of non-spec graphic fiction) is something that needs to be studied in isolation. The fantastic must be separated from the realistic or the general; in some cases, we find that people expect that the fantastic must be separated from the literary.

At *The Spectatorial*, we disagree.

In a discipline—here referring to academia in general—where so much

emphasis is placed on the true, the real, and the provable, we found ourselves thirsty for an intellectual outlet for the untrue, the fantastic, and the purely fabricated. In other words: the speculative. *The Spectatorial* seeks to provide a forum for speculative fiction, folklores, and mythologies in contemporary culture while simultaneously offering an academic perspective. We hope join together our love of academic literary studies with our passion for speculative.

We are named *The Spectatorial* in an attempt to draw attention to the concept of the speculative being spectacle in contemporary literary circles. We choose the word “spectatorial” for many reasons: primarily, for the fact that it hybridizes the words “speculative” and “editorial”; secondarily, to highlight the exhibitionistic and voyeuristic nature many readers assume speculative fiction must hold—the spectacle of the speculative; and, thirdly, to bring attention to our readers, our spectators, and the way in which readers of speculative fiction are often viewed as spectators of unrealistic phenomena rather than as analysts of literature. Our logo, a pair of rose-coloured spectacles, is a playful self-reflexive jibe at the nature of speculative fiction being seen as escapist—it parodies the trope of the speculative reader of choosing to see in an unrealistic way, while, hopefully, also calling to mind the validity of an old man in an earlier time who might wear those spectacles to read something like *The Iliad* (which, I must note, is not necessarily a non-speculative work in itself). Between our name and our logo, we hope to bring together the aesthetic of the serious contemporary literary theorist and the passionate speculative fiction reader.

In this inaugural issue, I think we’ve achieved it, too. Miranda Whittaker’s *Cursed* requires us to question exactly how speculative a text needs to be in order to be speculative; Alexandra Balasa’s *Noble Blood*, in the meantime, takes us deep into fantasy-land. Brandon Minia’s *Sammy, Let’s Go Home* is chillingly horrific, and Emily Deibert’s *The Standard Procedure* tells a classically dystopian tale with a very surprising twist. And, finally, William Rose’s *Eudorica* provides a very strange and surreal twist on the speculative. In Poetry, Magdalena Wolak and Dominique Bechard each play with images and themes from the speculative canon; our Graphic Fiction pieces host two very different futuristic tales; and, in Visual Arts, our artists toy with scopic representations of things that haven’t yet (and might never) come to be. Finally, in Nonfiction, we contrast three forms of speculative television and cinema. Murad Hemmadi performs a psychological analysis of how fans of the cult speculative show *Chuck* reclaimed its airtime; Sofia Cutler addresses how *Lost in Austen* exposes erotic Jane Austen-related fantasy in a fantasy series; and, finally, Dani Legault provides an uncomfortable, but extremely entertaining take on the institutionalizing effects of the anime *Puella Magi Madoka Magica*.

There are seventeen submissions that found places in our inaugural journal, and I am enamored with all of them. There is a huge spectrum of the speculative in this journal, ranging from fantasy to dystopia to horror to scifi to magical realism and back again. Working with our contributors has been incredible, and working with the journal’s staff a hugely rewarding experience.

When Maybelle and I first sat down at the Bedford-Bloor Starbucks to plan the journal that would eventually become *The Spectatorial*, we had little to recommend us other than passion for the speculative genre, a handful of editing experience, and a strong resolution to develop a specific space for the academic analysis of speculative fiction. Throughout applying for recognition and funding, performing interviews, holding our first meetings, and collecting our first submissions, we struggled to keep our heads above water. There is a very particular reason that we did.

Now, ten months later, we have so much more than that. This journal is in your hands thanks to the help of almost fifty individual students. Our Facebook page has grown at an average rate of 1.2 likes per day, and our blog gains handfuls of followers by the week. Our contributors' meetings have been full of passionate, enthusiastic individuals who I am proud to call members of *The Spectatorial*. I am thrilled to be able to call myself Editor in Chief of this publication, and I am honoured to be the one who gets to say this:

Thank you for having us.

I hope you love reading this as much as we've loved putting it together.

EDITOR IN CHIEF | KERRIE MCCREADIE

LETTER FROM THE CREATIVE DIRECTOR

What is “spec?” Spectacles, speculative, speculation—the list goes on. All are about seeing and, more importantly, are about *seeing* the thin divide between what is real and what is imagined. Speculative fiction (or art) is a way of representing this question. Science fiction is the extrapolation of modern-day science and technology; fantasy uses systems to make the magic plausible; or, even, horror and dystopia use hyperbolic expressions of psychological and social fears. These are the specifics. If we look at the general, we return again to the question of seeing (and representing).

We find all of this in our first issue. I am proud to feature four student artists in *The Spectatorial* who represent genre with a spectrum of themes and styles, and who’ve dedicated time and energy to crafting really neat works. They’ve each chipped in their slice of the speculative pie. Take a bite, enjoy the view: Diana will lead us through the spiral of relativity and other dimensions in *Faster than Light Travel*, Mari explores digital possibilities in quirky *Interface Girl*, and Sandro joins geography and being in surrealistic landscapes layered on human faces. In Ian’s *Ghosting*, a woman peers at us behind a lace veil. Do we construct an identity behind the veil, or is she a piece of fiction barred from understanding? Not to mention the otherworldliness that permeates her, that threads all these artworks together: speculation.

We asked our artists and illustrators for style, signification, and forethought. What will you bring to the speculative palette? What are the authors trying to say? Seduce the viewer. Draw them in. As you’ll see, our illustrators interpreted the texts in different angles while staying faithful to their stories. We hope you enjoy these potent and unique tales – with the bit of art that illuminates them.

And so, a warm thanks to the artists and illustrators who made the text *real* and luminous. Here’s a question for you, reader. Turn the page, what do you see?

CREATIVE DIRECTOR | MAYBELLE LEUNG

LETTERS FROM THE SECTION EDITORS

In the process of applying for this position, I expressed my belief that the purpose of speculative fiction and poetry is to explore the limits (or limitlessness) of the human imagination. This limitlessness is what defines these genres and makes them so alluring, as is made evident by the breadth of subgenres represented in this issue. It is demonstrated in the diverse creative directions of each work, whether it is engaged in a narrative, technical, philosophical, or some other form of project. And it is evident in the unique voice of each author and poet. My vision for this journal preserves my original belief.

The limitless character of speculative fiction and poetry not only entails an immeasurably large creative potential, but also means that it is subject to being misunderstood. Any speculative genre is particularly susceptible to the prejudice of being associated with inaccessible niche genres or popular – as opposed to literary – art. Thus my mandate for the collection of fiction and poetry in this journal is to demonstrate the limitlessness of speculative genres not as a muscle flexing of sorts, but to prove especially to the students in our university community the accessibility and closeness of these genres.

Finally, as an artist and a writer myself, I have always been committed to encouraging the artistic and creative talent of our student community. This is especially true of the contributing writers I had to pleasure and opportunity to work with. Whether by sharing my own knowledge or by providing a platform on which to display their work, I hope that I have been able to provide artists with the tools and inspiration to continue their art in the future.

FICTION EDITOR | ALEXANDER PYTKA

If you were to ask them, any of my family and friends would likely relate to you the tedious and frustrating consistency with which I can connect any topic of conversation to speculative fiction. NSA surveillance? Yeah, Person of Interest was great last night. Job shortage in the recession? Let's employ some people to build a space elevator. My eleven-year-old sister's birthday? Those balloons waste valuable helium; we'd better go to the Moon to mine some more. (Yes, I am the worst.)

But speculative fiction brings people together as well. Too often we hear the story of those who use fiction as an escape, fleeing to a fantasy world because the real one is too difficult to bear. This stereotype may be pervasive but today it is becoming less and less accurate. Communities of like-minded fans are bridging the gap between action and speculation, and

using fiction to add new layers to reality, rather than to supplant it.

The Spectatorial exists to bring this sort of community into the limelight at the University of Toronto. Although I've only been part of this team for a short time, I'm already excited to see the sort of awareness and connectivity that we're beginning to foster. It's a rare treat to walk into a room full of strangers and to instantly be guaranteed that there will be many points of contact between you. Whether it's my fellow staff, one of our brilliant contributors, or simply an interested reader, every new meeting has been a delight and a privilege. The only regret I could have is that *The Spectatorial* came into existence in my last university year, rather than in my first.

NONFICTION EDITOR | MATTEO DIGIOVANNI

Graphic fiction has always been fantastical. The act of channeling reality into a flat surface requires fantastic leaps of the imagination; all it takes is the skewing of two parallel lines to create the illusion of perspective, or the curving of a single line to invoke either happiness (upwards) or sadness (downwards).

Comics as we know them now began as largely satirical works. Then—contemporary figures were portrayed in imagined scenarios for political or social commentary. As more defined narratives emerged in the medium, the imagination of cartoonists began to stray into the now—classic genres of the medium. These comics brought their readers to landscapes both surreal and familiar: from Detective stories set in dystopic noir American towns to fantastical worlds occupied by talking animals to skyscapes occupied by men and women in tights and capes.

While popularly dominated by superheroes, graphic fiction's other speculative subgenres thrive in their own ecosystems. Despite occasional crossovers—such as Todd MacFarlane's horror-infused superhero *Spawn* or the epic sci-fi odyssey *Saga*—these genres gestate in seclusion, flirting every so often with mainstream success, but mostly appealing to their core audiences.

For *The Spectatorial* I attempted to solicit submissions that would highlight the best of these often overlooked genres. Admittedly, the two selections published are both science fiction, however, they occupy very different spheres of the genre. *A Different Kind of Torture* is a sci-fi dystopic thriller in the vein of *The Matrix*, while *Space Devil* emulates the pulp fiction adventure heroes of the pre-Golden Age of comics, like Flash Gordon and Buck Rogers. Both are fun and exciting short stories that highlight the strength of using the graphic fiction medium to illustrate the fantastic worlds imagined by their authors, as well as being introductions to the world of genre comics.

GRAPHIC FICTION EDITOR | DAN SELJAK

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EMILY DEIBERT

Emily Deibert is a second-year student at the University of Toronto and is currently working on completing a degree in English and Astronomy & Astrophysics. Aside from writing, Emily is passionate about reading, mathematics, trying to understand the universe, and science-fiction TV shows—all of which inspire both her writing and her day-to-day life. She has been published several times before and is happy to be a part of *The Spectatorial's* first print issue.

THE STANDARD PROCEDURE

by Emily Deibert

“Will I feel the cold?”

The doctor taps the bubbles out of the needle and places it on the operating table. This is always the first question the patients ask. First if they will feel it, then if it will hurt, and finally how long it will be before they wake up. Everyone who has come into this operating room before has been under the impression that they understand how cryonics work, but they don't.

If they did, they would not be lying on the operating table.

The doctor nods to the nervous young intern standing by her side, passing the question off to him despite the fact that the answer is already on her tongue. The doctor does not like working with interns. Sometimes they're squeamish. Often they're on-edge. Mostly they panic—and the doctor doesn't like it when people panic.

“Well,” the intern says. “No. Technically not. Technically you won't feel anything. You'll be—legally, at least—dead, since your heart will stop beating. Just legally. Total death doesn't occur until your brain stops, but most of your brain's cellular functions will remain.”

Surprisingly, the woman is unperturbed. The doctor studies her when the patient isn't looking. Early thirties, maybe a little younger; but the illness has caused most of her hair to fall out and her skin to sag around the eyes and cheeks. Her bones jut out sharp where the medicine and treatments and stress have made her lose weight. And she looks tired. So tired. They always do before the procedure. But this woman's smiling. Her eyes drift to meet the doctor's gaze, but before they can make contact the doctor looks away.

The intern, his hands gloved and mask donned, turns to the doctor for instruction. At twenty-two years old and hardly more than a child it

should be impossible for him to be this far along in his studies. But here he is, about to perform his first cryonics operation. Perhaps he's wealthy. Perhaps he's a genius.

He doesn't speak much. He knows that if this procedure's successful he will graduate early and become a cryonics operator—the youngest cryonics operator—and he doesn't want to jeopardize his chances.

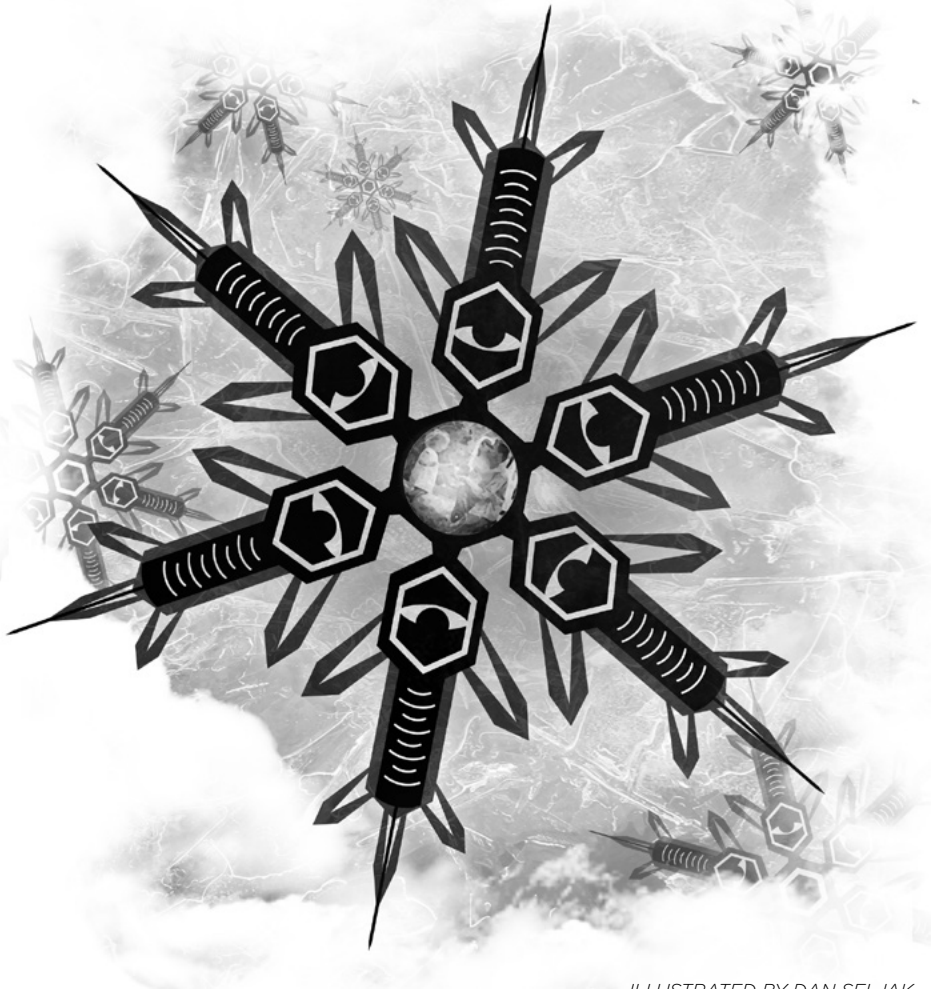
"We're ready," the doctor says evenly. "If you have any more questions let me know now. Otherwise, we can begin."

The woman's voice shakes. "Will I—will it hurt?"

"Nothing about the process should hurt, but you'll be numbed and put to sleep anyways before we do anything else." The doctor lifts the woman's arm from the bed, looking for a vein.

"And I—when will I wake up again?" She knows neither the doctor nor the intern will have anything to tell her yet finds herself unable to keep silent.

The doctor glances again to the intern, who looks the woman in the eye.



“Our hope is always,” the intern says, “that it won’t be too long. We aim for it to be during what would have been your expected lifetime. With a cancer of this particular variety I can only hazard a guess. Our hope right now is twenty to thirty years.”

He turns to the doctor, looking for confirmation, but she is too busy taking last-minute vitals to respond. Or perhaps she just doesn’t want to. “But that’s being cautious. It could be much sooner than that.”

“Are you ready, then?” The doctor cuts him off. “If you are, I can inject you now.”

The woman takes a deep breath—the last deep breath that she will take for thirty years—and then looks up at the doctor.

She nods.

For all the anxiety she is carrying inside, the woman is surprised that she hardly feels a thing. Just a quick pinch of the needle as the doctor guides it in, and then a complete calm that slowly overtakes her. It pulses through her veins and fills her body, making her feel feather-light inside. She is calm. For all the talk on the news about the procedure, the woman had expected it to feel much worse.

“In thirty years,” the woman says, hardly aware that she is speaking aloud. “My daughters will be my age. My eldest will be forty. Can you believe that? Going to sleep one day with a ten-year-old and a six-year-old and waking up to two fully-grown women older than I am. I wonder if they’ll remember me at all. I wonder if they’ll still care.”

Her eyelids grow heavy as she slips under, faster now. Her words start to slur, though she doesn’t notice it.

“And my husband...” She closes her eyes on the stark hospital room, her voice quickening to get out all the words she won’t get to say. “He’ll be an old man by then. Older than my father. In thirty years he could be a completely different person.”

The doctor has turned her back on the woman and has started prepping for the next person. The woman’s eyes blink open and she turns one last time to look at the doctor.

“Would you still love someone thirty years after you’d let them go?” she asks.

But the doctor doesn’t say anything.

The woman hears her daughters’ voices before she sees them. Her two little girls, their voices high and innocent, are asking their father if their mother is awake yet.

She must have been asleep for years and yet, suddenly, she is awake again. She’s back in her room at home, her quilt drawn up tight around her shoulders and a hot cup of tea on the dresser the way she likes it.

The woman glances up and sees her daughters just as she remembers them. They’re wearing matching outfits and identical grins on their faces, each holding one of their father’s hands. Their father. Her husband. He smiles softly that way that’s only ever been meant for her, and she feels like she’s never left them.

They look as if they haven’t aged a day. The woman’s smile falters: they haven’t. But how is that possible? Could the doctors have been wrong—could the cure have been discovered so much faster than they’d told her?

"How long was I—was I asleep?" she asks her husband, trying to keep track of the girls' tiny voices and the nonsense they spout. "Everything looks the same. Did—did it work? Am I...?"

But nobody says anything. Her husband is too busy smiling at her and her girls are too busy talking about nothing. She holds them tight, pulling them close into her body, not wanting to let them go again. Their skin is soft, their hands tiny and unworn. She wants them to stay this way forever.

The woman feels a great exhaustion wash over her, as if she hasn't slept in weeks. Her eyelids droop even as she struggles to keep them open. She blinks rapidly, trying to keep a hold on everything she is seeing. Her husband, her daughters, the room in front of her.... But everything looks fuzzy around the edges.

This doesn't make sense, the woman thinks.

She has been asleep for years. She should be more awake than ever. But she is too tired right now, too tired to think about it, and so she doesn't. She closes her eyes and lets the voices fade away, lets the exhaustion overtake her, and starts to fall asleep.

She reaches out and grabs her daughters by their hands. Those impossibly tiny hands....

The intern is the first to notice that something is wrong. He knows that her heart should slow and that, eventually, it should stop. But her brain should keep going, even at a reduced rate. And yet that's not what he sees on the screen in front of him. He knows that something is wrong, but he's just an intern and so he isn't sure if he should say anything.

When he finally manages to speak, his voice sounds like it is coming from somewhere far away. "The—"

But the doctor shakes her head. She looks exhausted, as if she has done this many times before and knows she will do it many times again but still really hasn't grown used to the fact that this is part of her life.

She begins to speak, but then thinks better of it. The intern stands in front of her with his jaw slack, his eyes wide: the same look they always have.

"She's...." he says.

"Go on," the doctor prompts. "You can say it."

"She's...dying," the intern whispers. "She's dying."

The doctor glances up at the screen in front of them. "No. She's dead."

"But you're not—you didn't..." He trails off. This isn't how he'd studied it. This isn't the way it's supposed to happen.

The doctor sighs.

"How is it that we could go from no successful cryonic rebirths to a complete cryonic system in just a few short years?" she asks him. "Where do they keep all the suspended bodies? Where are the results? Where are the people who have woken up?"

"The earliest estimate for a cure for any sort of disease that any suspended body has is—" The doctor holds up a hand to stop him. She's heard it all before.

"There's a reason so many people are opposed to something that sounds so good," she tells him, sitting down. "It's because they can feel it. I think we can all feel it, really."

“Feel what?”

“That it’s too good to be true.”

The intern’s gaze drifts to the woman on the operating table, now lifeless, already looking so hollow.

“There are too many people and too many ways to keep them alive when ultimately a whole portion of them is never going to get better anyways. When you sign a family member over into suspended care, you sign them over completely. I don’t know the legality of it, I couldn’t tell you if it’s right or if it’s wrong. I’m just a doctor. That isn’t my concern. What I can tell you is that there are too many people on this planet and we’re too good at not letting them die. But sometimes you have to.”

The intern stumbles over to a chair and sits down, rubbing his temples. He can’t focus. He can’t think. Everything seems hazy when he tries to look at it, and so he doesn’t look at anything at all.

“And so you just—we just—”

“The process is as painless as it can possibly be,” she tells him. “They really don’t feel a thing. And they’ve made it pleasant, too. Or so I’m told. The patient is given a drug to calm them down and numb any pain, and then another to induce hallucinations.”

The intern’s limbs feel heavy. He tells himself he should be more panicked right now. That he should be storming out of the hospital, telling the world what he’s just learned. But he doesn’t.

“It’s something comforting, I’ve been told,” she goes on. “A dream of something they’ve always wanted. Not something that makes sense, not usually. Apparently there are always little details that are off—loved ones who were lost years ago are there, or things they’d never have been able to accomplish in real life are complete....”

The intern thinks about the woman, about how she’d seemed so hopeful about seeing her family again in thirty years, about how sure she was that it would all be all right.

He thinks about the fact that he is only twenty-two years old and already about to graduate and become a cryonics operator.

Exhaustion washes over him, and he can’t quite recall what he was so worked up about. His eyelids grow heavy and everything in the room looks so bright. It’s nice, he thinks. Calm. He hasn’t felt calm in a very long time.

“When you think about it—” the doctor is saying, “—when you really think about it, this way isn’t so bad. What if the suspension were possible? Would that woman really be any happier waking up thirty or forty years from now, her family already gone or long ago moved on from her? She got an ending. She got to be happy.” The doctor sounds like she is trying to convince herself just as much as she is trying to convince the intern. “If it’s real to her, isn’t that all that should matter?”

But the intern can’t reply. His eyes have closed and he’s leaning to the side. He feels as if he is floating away. He thinks about things that couldn’t be real. Twenty-two years old. Finishing medical school. Already becoming a cryonics operator. He thinks that none of it matters.

He is so tired.



ALEXANDRA BALASA

Alexandra Balasa is in her fourth year at the University of Toronto and is due to graduate this year with a double major in English and Psychology. She loves Billy Talent, Morgan Freeman, and annoying her sister with her obsessive-compulsive tendencies. Alexandra is averse to sparkly fairy vampires (an insult to anyone with Romanian roots) and people who insult her favourite Lord of the Rings character (Boromir). Her dream of becoming a fantasy/sci-fi author may be far-fetched, but no more so than her other dream of travelling into space (she's not joking about that, either). Among other things, Alexandra enjoys writing about anti-heroes and unhealthy relationships.

NOBLE BLOOD

by Alexandra Balasa

Lord Citrin Severin was trying not to think about what life with a fragmented soul would be like.

He shivered and wrapped his cloak more tightly around himself, his hooded head bent low against the needles of rain in the wind. It was worth it. Citrin set his jaw; any father would sell his soul for his son.

The clock on the old parliament building tolled three times, echoing through walls of curling smog. Midnight. Citrin lengthened his stride, keeping his kerchief pressed over his nose against the pollution. He wound his way around heaps of garbage and the side-canal that drained city sludge. The deeper he ventured into the city slums the more his stomach churned at the reek of decay in the air. Finally, he came to the Healer's alley. Citrin hovered at the entrance.

"Hello?" he called into the passage.

But there was no one there.

Citrin turned back to the street, peering down the way he'd come, but he saw nothing save for the hazy glow of the main street's gas lamps. Late! With impatient hands he pocketed his kerchief and pulled his pipe from his waistcoat pocket. He popped it into his mouth, then patted his pockets down for a match.

A light flashed behind him. Citrin spun around, reaching for his pistol from inside his coat, only to find General Topaz.

"General Topaz!" Citrin gasped, and pretended to straighten his waistcoat instead.

The general held out a lit match—the source of the light—and tilted it to the bowl of the pipe hanging limply from Citrin's mouth.

"Lost, Lord Severin?" he asked. "Or do you make a habit of wandering alleyways at night?"

Citrin took the lit pipe from his mouth. Topaz's patrol team awaited him several paces off, their horses' snorts muted in the rain.

"Have a heart, General, my lady disapproves when I drink," Citrin said with a sheepish grin. He gestured to a tavern down the street. "I was just stepping out for a smoke."

The general traced his beard with his forefinger and thumb.

"There are soul-robbers about, Severin," he said. "Your Soulstone is certainly precious enough to make you their target. My patrol team and I can only do so much when it comes to the Healing Underground. Go on home."

"Of course, General," said Citrin, bowing eagerly and turning to go.

Topaz stopped him with a hand on his shoulder.

"How is that boy of yours?"

Citrin's left cheek twitched. He glanced back over to Topaz.

"Peri?" He took a long drag from his pipe, held it, and expelled the smoke shakily. "Fine, fine."

"I hear he returned from the Anchorites of Kluj Ortell just yesterday," Topaz pushed. "Word is they changed him. Is his soul finally over the nobility line, then?"

"Mmm," Citrin said, puffing away, not trusting his voice.

"Congratulations. But it must have been quite the expense."

It had all but beggared the Severin family.

"I'm sure we'll recover from the financial blow," he said. Citrin inhaled deeply, trying to settle himself, but choked.

"Well, I see the pollution is beginning to bother you," Topaz said. "Allow me to offer one of my men's patrol horses for your journey home." General Topaz snapped his fingers at a young man in the patrol team behind him. "Take the lad with you, too. I do detest Healer scum, but I have him on hand to tend to the horses that grow sick from the pollution. This one is well trained, too."

The boy scurried over and bowed.

"Tell me," Topaz said. "What happens if my men find that you've stolen even a pebble from that horse's soul?"

A lump moved in the boy's throat. "A hundred lashes, sir," he croaked.

"And then?"

"You flay me alive, sir."

Topaz brought a hand to the pommel of his sword at his belt. "And then?"

The Healer blanched. "You mount my head in the city square to make an example of me. Sir."

Topaz smiled, but it didn't reach his eyes.

"And animals do not even have valuable stones within their souls," he said.

Citrin's pipe shook in his hand.

"A horse won't be necessary." Citrin swallowed. "I could never monopolize so much of your men's time."

"Are you quite sure?"

"Very, General."

Topaz gave him a wry look.

"Good night, then, Lord Severin," he said, and left.

Citrin waited until the general had disappeared into the darkness, unable to keep his hands from shaking. He tossed his pipe away, angry with his

weakness. Then he veered into the Healer's alleyway, just between two dilapidated townhouses behind him.

Clearing his throat, he croaked, louder now, "Healer! Show yourself!"

Only the slap of rain against the cobblestones answered him. Citrin squinted into the dark.

"I'm alone," he added. General Topaz's Healers ambush two years ago had put the Underground on such high alert that not one unregistered Healer had been caught since.

A shadow flickered at the corner of his eye. Citrin's pulse beat like a thundering timpani in his temples.

"I know you are," answered a woman's voice. She emerged almost from the smog itself, her cloaked form hazy at the edges. Citrin backed away, tripping over his feet.

"Your Soulstone," he snapped. "Which one do you have? I specifically asked for a Healer ranked eight in hardness."

She inclined her head towards him.

"Chrysoberyl," she said, spreading her arms as if she were introducing herself. "Eight-point-five."

"Good..." Citrin hesitated. "I need twenty-thousand credits to repay a debt. What do you charge for that?"

"We split profits fifty-fifty. I will extract forty-thousand credits worth of jewels from your soul, twenty for you and twenty for me. And your Soulstone is?"

Citrin shifted uncomfortably. "I am of the Quartz family," he said. "Seven. That should do."

The Healer clicked her tongue. "If I don't know your exact Soulstone, how am I to know the quantity of jewels that will come to forty-thousand credits?"

Citrin twisted his waistcoat buttons, feeling his resolve dissipate.

"Curse you, woman," he muttered. "I'm a Citrine, then. Yellow quartz."

"Ah!" She laughed and swept into an absurdly low bow. "Greetings, Lord Citrin Severin, Earl of Ephyria."

Damn the Cirrian tradition of naming children after their Soulstones!

"If you dare reveal my involvement in this—" Citrin began.

"Fear not, my *Lord*," she said. "You are safe. I am no friend to the Monarchy."

"Indiscretion will be paid for in blood, woman, be warned."

The Healer's mouth curled into a grim smile. Citrin stifled a curse, frowning.

"Tell me how this will work," he wheezed.

The Healer began to circle him, tendrils of smog parting for her. "I will try to inflict as little damage upon the soul as possible. Yet, forty thousand credits is..." She paused. "Substantial. Citrine is only semi-precious, Lord Severin. It will require a fair number of stones. And that means I will have to destroy many objects within your soul to get to their citrine cores."

Citrin swallowed twice. "How will I be altered?"

How will I be altered, Father? Peri had asked him before being sent away to the Anchorites.

The Healer halted before him, so close his cheek began twitching again. "That depends on the objects I destroy, my Lord. There's no way to know which object holds which part of your identity."

Citrin nodded. The Healer extended her arm, but Citrin stood his ground, clenching his teeth to keep his jaw from trembling. Then she touched his shoulder. Paralysis swept through Citrin's body, carrying him off into an empty void. It was yesterday again, when Peri had come home.

The Anchorites failed, then? Citrin asked, seizing the boy's shoulders. *You're still a Peridot? Damned charlatans! I will wreak hell on those—!*

I'm an Amethyst, Peri said. Seven. Nobility. Exactly as you wanted.

Citrin clapped Peri on the back. *Chin up, boy, this is wonderful news! Now you can inherit my titles, my land—*

The boy flinched as if he'd been slapped. *Your debt, more like!*

Citrin ignored him. *We can give you a new name, something proper like Ameth or—well, we'll think of something. Don't despair; it doesn't become a nobleman. Remember the Severin house words? Hard of soul, fear takes no toll!*

Since when did nobility of soul become a commodity? Peri asked bitterly.

Peri, you must understand. A hardened soul means a hardened body and mind. Or do you want to fall victim to pollution?

Peri pulled away from his father. There was something foreign in his eyes, something that sobered Citrin from his elated state. It was cold. Hard.

I hope you never have to suffer the pain of having your soul altered. You're right—I do need a new name. Peri is gone.

Citrin opened his eyes. He was sprawled on the slick cobblestones, Peri's voice still in his ears. The night drifted in and out of focus. The hem of a cloak fluttered into his peripheral vision.

Citrin scrambled to his feet, groping inside his cloak for his pistol. It wasn't there.

"Well, Lord Severin, you give credit to the tales of your arrogance," said the Healer. Citrin looked up. There, pinched between her forefinger and thumb as though it were a toy, she held his pistol. She tossed it down the alley. "To meet a SoulHealer of the Underground with nothing but a pistol?"

"I have men surrounding us," he said at once. "Walk away without giving me my half of the share and you will have an arrow between your eyes before you clear the alley. Do you imagine you can Heal *that*?"

"What you have, Lord Severin, is a quick tongue. I have seen your soul—you are alone."

Citrin flexed his fingers by his sides.

"Give me my share, witch!" he bellowed.

The Healer reached into her cloak and withdrew a coin pouch. She tossed it at Citrin, who fumbled to catch it. It was stuffed so full that the harsh angles of gems jutted through the sheepskin.

"How do I know you split it evenly? You could have two or three pouches tucked in that cloak."

She stepped close, fingering the buttons of his waistcoat. "Would you care to look?"

Citrin swatted her hand away. With their immobilizing, soul-penetrating touches, he'd rather kiss a horse's arse than let one of those Healer fiends come near him again.

She chuckled at him. Citrin gave the Healer his most stately curled lip and turned.

“Ah, just one thing,” she called after him. “You may have to change your name.”

A cold current slithered down Citrin’s spine. He pulled the pouch open, and found only a glinting mass of black gemstones within. He shook the pouch, scooped stones into his palm and held them to the ruddy light trickling into the alley from the main street.

Black. They were black. He whimpered.

Citrine was yellow.

“You did this,” he whispered.

A laugh chimed behind him. “Fool. Only *you* can change the composition of your soul.”

Citrin’s breaths grew shallower as he stared at the inky stones in his palm, letting them trickle back into the bag. *Hard of soul, fear takes no toll!*

He yanked the pouch strings closed and spun around with a bellow, ready to face the Healer down—but the alley was empty. He turned in circles, blinking rain from his eyes, teeth clenched so hard his ears rang. “I will hunt you! Damn you, *damn* you to hell!”

His shouts echoed in the alley. And, suddenly, voices sounded from the main street.

The din of rage in Citrin’s ears subsided—General Topaz and his men were still out patrolling. Now that he was listening he could make out the clapping of hooves against cobblestones. Citrin pulled his hood over his eyes and slipped away in the opposite direction of the voices.

Pollution stung his lungs as he puffed through adjoining alleyways, his rotund belly jiggling with the motion and his feet slipping in the muck that flowed in rivulets to roadside canals.

Behind him, the voices grew louder.

“Cut off the exits! I *know* I heard yelling down there,” a deep voice boomed. General Topaz.

Citrin emerged on a secluded street and scanned the area for a place to hide. A cloaked form darted into an alleyway two streets down. Was the Healer following him? Citrin took the opposite route, adrenaline pumping through his veins. What if his new Soulstone was below the nobility line?

He crashed into a cloaked form, yelling out despite his guard. The newcomer yelped and stumbled back. Bags exploded out of both their arms, their contents spilling to the cobblestones.

“No!” Citrin gasped as his black gemstones rolled away in the filth.

They both threw themselves on their hands and knees, gathering the stones. Citrin shouldered the intruder away, but the youth was adamant. He shoved Citrin right back, cramming stones into his bag indiscriminately.

“Those aren’t yours, thief!” both said together.

They paused, looking up at each other for the first time.

Citrin pushed the hood from the other’s head. “Peri?!”

Peri stared wide-eyed at his father. “Father? What are you—”

They both turned their gazes upon the dark stones scattered across the ground. In the ambient light of gas lamps, Citrin saw it: some stones twinkled black, others purple.

Peri held a bag much like Citrin’s; the stones in his hands were amethyst.

Citrin took Peri's face in his hands. "Tell me you didn't!"

"I know what sort of debt you've accrued for me. You can't pay it. I'm noble now, Father. I'm not afraid."

Peri had broken his soul. It was said broken souls could never find peace in the afterlife. Religious people believed they wandered the earth forever, searching for the pieces stolen from them.

"Everything I've done..." Citrin croaked. "How could you? I've lost so much to make your soul noble. How could you *break* it?"

Staring at the black and purple gems littering the cobbles, Citrin felt an impulse noble souls weren't allowed to feel.

Peri's face contorted at the tears in Citrin's eyes.

"You're not yourself," Peri said, shovelling the rest of the gemstones into his satchel and helping his father to his feet. "Come, the general is hunting us. We must go."

They stumbled along, using only the telltale sounds of hooves and snorts to guide them away from the patrolmen. When Citrin started lagging behind, Peri pulled him into a small crevice between buildings.

"Father!" he said. "You're acting so weak!" He looked down to the sheepskin pouch in Citrin's hand, his brows furrowing. "Whose are those black stones you carry? Did you steal them to pay off your debt?"

"They're...mine," Citrin stuttered. Peri's eyes widened.

"There!" a voice sounded.

"*Run!*" Peri shouted, shoving his father forward. They fled hand in hand until Citrin's tired body gave out and he felt himself slowing.

Citrin shook his hand from Peri's. He doubled over to catch his breath. Behind them, a storm of galloping hooves drew nearer. "Go, son! I'll be alright."

Peri didn't budge. Citrin looked up at him in amazement—he had never disobeyed a direct order before.

"Go!" Citrin screamed, grabbing the front of Peri's cloak. "You think the Anchorites made you indestructible? You're not! I'm telling you to go!"

Peri glared at him, eyes determined. "*Hard of soul, fear takes no toll*, Father. I will draw them off."

He turned toward the voices, but Citrin grabbed his sleeve in desperation, then stopped—there was something raised and white on Peri's arm. Peri tried to pull away, but Citrin yanked his son's sleeve up to his elbow to reveal a mesh of crisscrossing scars. Citrin stared, his frozen lips trembling.

Peri wrenched his arm away and tugged down the collar of his shirt, exposing similar scars running down his neck to his chest.

"What...w-what did they d-do to you?" Citrin choked.

"They didn't do anything. I did. I had to. Courage hardens the soul, and nobody can change the composition of your soul but yourself."

Citrin crumpled to his knees. His Soulstone was black. Because he'd done this to his son.

A sob wrenched from his throat. The tears came next.

"For the Founder's sake," Peri whispered, struggling to hoist Citrin to his feet. "Don't be pathetic! Get up!"

Peri managed to pull his father into the very alley between townhouses where Citrin had started his escape. He pulled him to the end of it and there,



ILLUSTRATED BY MAYBELLE LEUNG

at the entrance, a group of mounted silhouettes awaited them: right where Citrin had first met Topaz.

"As I expected," Topaz said, leading the queue forwards. "A man willing to tamper with the constitution of souls is likely willing to break them, too. Charge!"

The horses ran full gallop, the riders' cloaks spreading like great black wings in the night, lightning flashing down their drawn blades.

Peri launched himself at them, tossing the contents of his satchel at the horses' feet. The beasts whinnied and keeled, stumbling on the stones, and two riders were thrown from their mounts.

General Topaz turned his horse to cut Peri's path when the boy tried to make for a fallen rider's sword. Topaz's great blade flashed down.

"No!" Citrin howled.

Citrin collapsed onto the cobblestones with his son's body in his arms. Blood welled over his arms, hot to the touch, as he tried to staunch its flow. Peri gasped, his eyes dilating.

"Brave idiot," General Topaz said coldly. "To think he used to be such a sensible boy. If he hadn't attacked I may have spared him. Men, detain Lord Severin."

Soldiers' hands latched onto Citrin's shoulders. He flailed as they pulled him from his son, his throat raw from screams he couldn't hear and burning in the smog.

In the alley, black and purple stones alike washed down the drain canals on rivers of blood and rain.



WILLIAM ROSE

William Rose is a third-year student at the University of Toronto, currently taking a major in English, with minors in Mathematics and History. He is interested in, well, everything, and aside from his degrees he also dabbles in computer science, chemistry, and a of couple languages. He enjoys inventing things and working on crafts (like designing miniature wooden planes and ships); watching movies; playing card games that may or may not involve gambling with his friends (Mike, Joe, and Jess); and, finally, writing unique, thought-provoking stories.

EUDORICA

by William Rose

[The following selections are taken from the book Eudorica, which intertwines prose and poetry and, as opposed to a novel, does not possess a singular way of being read or interpreted. The book is divided according to the seven days of the week. Every thirty-eight lines constitute a distinct date belonging to the given day of the week, as indicated by the subtitle. Accordingly, Day Four under Tuesday presents the story belonging to the fourth Tuesday.]



ILLUSTRATED BY DIANA SOBASZEK

TUESDAY

DAY FOUR

I dream of the old world. Of gods, of wealth, names, and lands all lost in the vast fabric of a long, ageless scarf, every generation woven into it over the course of a woollen fold. Beyond it all, I hear voices. They speak in foreign tongues. I feel the prod of wooden spear points, the brush of bone handles. A stinging pain bites into my flesh.

My eyes shy open.

“Very good,” the doctor dressed in a white suit says, his expression obscured by a pair of thick, circular glasses, the shine from the bright light overhead glazing them over. “Now let me hear your roar.”

I cough harshly, a rasped gurgle escaping my throat. From inside my mouth the taste of copper bites my tongue and I spit red dots up onto my hospital gown.

“Good,” he says, making a note on a small clipboard.

Eyes shy closed.

I can feel them around me; the others gather sometimes, watch with human inquisitiveness. I lie there in turn, motionless save for only the breaths which give rise and fall to my wheezing chest.

And then blackness shoots up in a funnel around me, and I’m lost for a long while, sometimes for what feels like forever. But as the days go on, bringing change in tow, I drink the medicine and eat the meats, the breads; I watch the timber and straw lacings of the ceiling just inches above as, dug into a hole in the earth, I rest on a pile of leaves and grass.

When the pain has lessened just enough, I look around once while sitting up slowly; my eyes take in the sight of a hut. Cloths draped over its entrance flail in the evening breezes. Legs shift outside as men and women, children, elders walk alike in patterns, and stop sometimes so that their voices might discuss things I can’t make out. I turn to a crude pit dug into the room’s corner, diagonal from me. Black, charred remnants of a fire, shuffled into a pile there have been used to scrawl things on a couple of rounded stones. I quietly observe them until someone steps in.

Noticing I am awake, the woman stops and jumps back a step. She places hands on her mouth, breathing rigidly, her dark eyes set on me; I look back up at her and weakly place my hands out in front of me, making the motion that I mean no harm.

Slowly, she steps closer, bending down towards me, and a minute later, places the back of her left hand on the flesh of my neck. Her touch is cool, and I shrink back with its feeling. Her lips then part, and she speaks only two foreign words, gently pushing me back down. Rest now.

WEDNESDAY

DAY FIVE

We go on for hours, late until almost midnight, and the party continues with the wild ferocity it's had since I'd arrived. "Right," Mr. Pig says. "Now that," he wags a finger, "is precisely why I hate my brother in the first place." Narrow eyes glance around keenly. "No, in fact, I despise him. He has this fat pudgy nose, you see..."

"Really?" the wolf interrupts, scratching at his neck apathetically. I see the lines of humid sweat drain down the fur-coated side of his face. I'm sweating too. "All you pigs look the same to me."

"How dare you!" the pink-skinned man retorts, half rising. But something bumps underneath the table and he stops, then sits, placing a hand to its polished surface. "I am quite offended by the mere insinuation; we are by no stretch of the imagination the same – not even close!"

Mr. Wolf smirks a half-sneer, and his leathery nose crinkles. "Funny." The words escape his mouth with a slick, dark sort of skill, "I take it your brother might be inclined to say the exact same thing."

Mr. Sheep, whose worry seems to have mounted as time passed by, moves a jittering hand over the table, rapping on it lightly. "My apologies gentlemen, but I must be excused."

The wolf and pig regard him viciously.

Stuttering, he attempts to explain. "M—my wife – I was with her before I sat down with you fine gents..." He begins to rise, extending a hand to me, "oh, and you, Thomas," and I shake it curiously. "But I'm afraid she's gotten off somewhere, and, well, you see—"

"Afraid she's fucking someone else?" Mr. Wolf mentions candidly, arms crossed; the sheep mumbles. "Good evening, gentlemen."

As he goes, Mr. Pig calls after him, ball-like body turning in his chair. "Worry not, Robert. If we find her, we'll tell you." Once he's out of sight, the pig turns back, reaching under the table. "Go on—get up," he says, tapping someone below him. "Thought that idiot'd never leave."

A woman in a crudely-placed sheep mask, mascara and lipstick smudged underneath, stumbles to her feet, and the pig, straightening his vest, nods appropriately. "Always nice chatting with you, Mrs. Miles. Rest assured, that's a tenth off next month's electricity bill."

"Only a tenth?" Mr. Wolf wonders. "Heaven's sake, give a fifth."

Mr. Pig winces disgustedly. "What do I look like, a filthy sheep?"

From above, a smooth voice answers. "More a filthy pig dressed in sheep's skin," and as I look up to the sight of her wild, amber hair, narrow, green eyes cast down over me. The clever fox smiles politely.



BRANDON MINIA

Brandon Edward Minia is in his third year at the University of Toronto Scarborough, where he studies English and Psychology. His creative influences lie mainly in music, video games, and anime. His favourite writers are J.K. Rowling and Gerard Way and his genres of preference are fantasy, adventure, and dystopia. Brandon has lived in Scarborough (a part of Toronto even he gets sick of sometimes) his entire life and takes inspiration from the city's strangeness in order to create cute characters and cool universes. Somewhere down the road, Brandon would like a career in Education, but being young is cool for now.

SAMMY, LET'S GO HOME

by Brandon Edward Minia

I remember Sammy shaking me awake. I don't know if it was morning or night, but I just remember hearing, "Annie! Annie dear! Wake up! Quick!"

There was screaming and glass smashing outside and I had no idea what was going on. A red glow flickered through my window, and it was really cold.

"My musket, Amelia! Where is my musket?" Papa shouted from downstairs. Mama was yelling, and it sounded like furniture was being thrown across the room.

"Annie," Sammy said. "Quickly, let's go."

Sammy picked me up and ran down the stairs while I tried to see what was going on. There were people lying down on our living room floor. Their skin was dirty and grey. And they were bleeding. But they were angry—they groaned like dying cats.

"Sammy, what's happening?" I asked.

But she was too busy yelling at Mama and Papa.

"Let's go! Papa! Come on!"

Papa held his musket up at Mr. Green, shot him square in the face, and his head disappeared. I screamed. I couldn't put my words together but I wanted to shout "*Papa! What did you do to Mr. Green? Papa!*"

"Amelia!" Papa yelled, "Are you loaded?"

Mama nodded and she stayed behind us as Sammy followed Papa out of the house.

The town was on fire and there were more grey angry people lying around, and people whose legs were cut off but who were reaching out to Papa.

Papa just kicked them in the face.

I looked to my left and I saw Mrs. Perkins and Mr. Grunwald hunched over what looked like Victor from school. There was red all over their hands and

faces and Victor was crying and yelling. My eyes widened and I wanted to scream, but Sammy hid my eyes with her hand and told me to keep looking ahead. But I swear I saw it: I saw Mrs. Perkins and Mr. Grunwald eating Victor.

I hid my face in Sammy's chest and I could smell her hair.

Papa yelled, "This way!" and we turned up an alley. I heard the shot of Papa's musket ahead of me, but I couldn't tell what was going on because my head was in Sammy's chest.

Then Papa said, "Sammy, take this and watch behind us! You and Mama keep them away."

I heard a door kicked open and I could feel that we entered a house. Sammy ran into the corner of the house's living room and placed me down gently.

"Keep your head down, okay baby? Don't look up. Just stay put," she said.

All I could hear were people outside screaming and glass breaking, and then I heard Sammy and Mama screaming over the explosions of their guns. I could hear movement in the room as Papa ran all over the place, finding wooden things and moving them around.

Then I heard hammering.

"Keep firing!" Papa yelled.

I was curious and peeked up. Mama and Sammy were aiming their guns out of the windows while Papa was trying his best to close the door with pieces of wood. He told Mama to move to Sammy's window. Before I knew it, Sammy was screaming, and a grey man reached out, his hand on Sammy's rifle. Mama screamed and aimed her musket at the grey man, but a grey woman reached out and knocked Mama backwards. Sammy screamed and struggled as the grey man tried pushing himself through the window. Papa couldn't do anything because he was trying to hit another grey arm that was reaching through the window he was trying to close.

"Sammy!" Papa was yelling over what sounded like growling wolves—but they weren't wolves. These sounds were different from wolves.

"Sammy! Shoot! Just shoot!"

Just as the grey man pushed himself through the window, Sammy pointed her gun upwards and shot him in the mouth. Blood spattered everywhere and it sprayed all over her face as the man fell on top of Sammy. Mama got back up and kept firing at the window while Sammy moved the man off her and slowly got up, spitting at the ground.

It seemed like a really long time that they were doing this, probably thirty hours maybe, but eventually Mama started up the fireplace and Papa and Sammy were bringing up food from the house's cellar.

"I can't get the taste out of my mouth," Sammy said.

"It'll be fine," Papa said, looking at his pocket watch. It was broken. "We're safe here for now, and we have supplies that will last us for about a week. The state guard should be here soon."

Papa knew what he was talking about. He fought in the Civil War.

The next day, Sammy could not get up and wrapped herself in blankets. Her eyes were blackened around the outside, her skin was whiter, and she was shivering.

"I'm cold," she said. "I'm really, really cold."

Mama stood by the fire, boiling water and putting vegetables and meat from the cellar into the pot. Papa sat near the door. I sat holding Sammy's sweaty hand. By the light of the fire she looked whiter and whiter, and she shone more and more with sweat.

"Are you going to be okay, Sammy?"

"Of course I'll be okay, Annie-baby," Sammy said warmly, and even though she was weak she squeezed my hand a little harder and it made me feel sad a little.

"When do you think we can play again, Sammy?"

"It's only a matter of time, Annie-baby," she said quietly.

She looked up at me with tired eyes. She was cold but sweaty at the same time. She was turning whiter.

"We'll be picking apples at Farmer Grey's and splashing about in the creek, and making snow angels, and telling ghost stories, and singing Christmas carols very soon. I promise!" She looked up at me with those bright eyes of hers even though she was exhausted.

Her voice, though I knew she was tired, made me so happy and I couldn't help but smile. She smiled back.

"Get better soon, okay Sammy?"

"I promise," she said. She pulled my hand to her chapped lips and softly kissed the back of it.

I remember eventually falling asleep not too far away from Sammy and close to the fire. I wanted to sleep close to Sammy but Papa told me I should sleep close to the fire because it was warm. I said I wasn't cold but Papa said it was best I sleep away from Sammy so I don't accidentally get sick. I didn't understand, but Papa had a worried look in his eyes and sounded scared so I didn't argue with him.

But then I remember being woken up again, and it was dark. The fire had gone out, and Papa was whispering and sounded scared, and brought me upstairs into a bedroom. Then he pushed me into the closet and told me to stay quiet.

Through the screen of the closet, I saw Sammy's face but only for an instant because she jumped on Papa's back and buried her face in his neck. I didn't know what was going on — I thought it might be a game.

But Papa was screaming. And it wasn't a playful scream.

It sounded like Sammy was hurting him.

I heard someone running up the stairs and Mama charged in with a wooden stick. Papa threw Sammy off his back and he held his neck and I saw something dark and wet pouring out. Mama held the wooden stick up, and I was worried she was going to hit Sammy.

Sammy, who didn't seem scared of Mama, growled and lunged at her. I heard Mama screaming as Sammy swiped at her with her hands. Then she crouched down at Mama's neck before Papa did something I could not believe. He kicked her.

Sammy yelped and fell to the side. Mama pushed herself up the wall, and something sparkled on her lips and on her face. Still holding his neck, Papa slowly walked towards Sammy, but Sammy got back up and charged her head right into him and they both fell. Then I saw Sammy bite into Papa's eyes.

Papa screamed and let go of his neck as he pushed Sammy off, and I saw the walls get redder and redder. Papa could do nothing but sit in the corner as Sammy picked herself up off the floor again. And then Sammy slowly crawled towards Mama. Mama was crying but I couldn't do anything because Papa told me to stay quiet. I was wondering what Sammy was doing. Why was Sammy hurting Mama and Papa?

I saw Sammy bite off Mama's ear while Papa sat in the corner screaming at Sammy. His hands covered his eyes because Sammy made him bleed there. There was still blood pouring out of his neck and the walls were getting redder and redder and darker and darker. I pushed my hands tighter over my ears as Mama's screams went higher and higher and Papa was screaming louder and louder.

Then Sammy began hitting Mama with her fists, and I couldn't take it anymore so I closed my eyes.

"No! No!" Papa shouted, and it sounded like Sammy turned to face Papa and was growling deeper and louder. I heard a crunching noise, and Papa's screaming stopped. There was silence and then Mama screamed again, first low and then loud again, and all I heard was something ripping like the sound of shears cutting into leather.

It wasn't long before Mama's screaming stopped.

Sammy was breathing heavily as she stood over Mama and Papa, who lay on the ground in front of her. She kept licking her lips and looking down at Mama, and I could not see Mama only a pile of ripped and dark rags. Something had happened to Sammy. I wanted to ask her why she would do this to Mama and Papa. Why would she hurt them like that?

I wanted to ask her face-to-face so I slowly pushed open the closet door.

"Sammy?" I said.

Sammy's eyes shifted to me, but they were not warm and friendly. She had never looked at me like that before. She had never looked at me so mad. It was dark but her eyes were burning right through the darkness like the hot shiny things in the fireplace. Her eyes were red and really scary. I started to cry.

"Sammy... let's go get help! Let's go home. Please."

But Sammy just stood there, drool falling from the corner of her mouth. Her round eyes got wider and her nostrils bigger and I got closer. I wanted to hug her. I wanted to take her hand and run out of this house. But her eyes were so scary-looking. And she just kept staring and staring.

I got closer and closer and I was careful not to step on Mama, who was still breathing very slowly. Sammy turned her body towards me. She was breathing heavy.

I stopped and stood next to Mama and looked at Sammy. I kept on crying.

"Sammy please. Mama and Papa are bleeding so much! Let's go get help."

Sammy took a few steps closer, her teeth looking sharper as she came closer.

"Sammy. I'm so scared." I was angry now because Sammy was not answering me. "I don't know what's happening to the town, but we need to get help. Mama and Papa are so hurt. Come on. Let's go." I reached out a hand to Sammy.

The ground around me suddenly tilted and I fell over hard and felt a hand grab me and something cut into my ankle. I looked down and saw Mama's angry red eyes as she bit deep into my skin. And all I could think was "Mama, what are you doing?" but all I could do was scream as she closed her mouth



ILLUSTRATED BY MARI ZHOU

and crunched deep into my bone. I could feel things popping and ripping as she closed her teeth. It felt like someone lighting the inside on fire as it crawled up my leg and I screamed so loud and everything around me began flashing white.

Mama pulled her head away and I heard it. I heard my skin rip. And I felt something like large tongs pulling out the things inside my leg, and it was all tingly and it burned and it was getting harder to breathe. I just remember my own blood, like Papa's, going all over the place. I remember red. I remember tingliness and red. I remember the taste of something bitter in my mouth. I could not feel my hands or my toes. But I felt the pain in my leg, and I heard Mama and Sammy growling like animals and saw redness all over Mama's face. It was dark, but you could see it. It was everywhere. The room was turning red.

Then something swooped over me and I remember smelling Sammy's hair before the world disappeared.



MIRANDA WHITTAKER

Miranda Whittaker is a writer, an avid reader of non-academic fantasies, a dancer of the 1920s–1950s lindy hop, a freelance editor, and—occasionally—a student at the University of Toronto. When she isn't copy editing blog posts for The Spectatorial, Miranda acts in her capacity as Member at Large for the UToronto Swing Club. Though she mainly studies English Literature, her imagination is riddled with the fantastic elements of fairy tales and mythologies. As a result, she has fallen in love with the The Spectatorial and is thrilled to be published in it.

EDITED BY ALEXANDER PYTKA | **ASST. EDITED BY** LORNA ANTONIAZZI

CURSED

by Miranda Whittaker

“Her clothes spread wide, and mermaidlike while they bore her up... like a creature native and indued unto that element. But long it could not be till that her garments, heavy with their drink, pulled the poor wretch from her melodious lay to muddy death.”

—Hamlet IV. Vii

At age seven Nadine Wells knew exactly when she would die.

It would happen at her community centre swimming lessons. She would slide into the pool—into the unnaturally blue water—and then she would drown.

Gramy said drowning runs in the family, she thought. Nadine believed in the family curse; she believed everything Gramy said. Nadine was cursed, just like the rest of the Wells. She hoped she’d “go with dignity,” as her Gramy so often said, and not end up splashing around like a broken bath toy.

Mom who, in her own words, was “having an affair with Shakespeare” had shared her leather-bound copies of his plays with Nadine. Turning the pages of the tomes as if they were picture books, Nadine drank in the sinuous art nouveau illustrations. She hoped that when the water took her she would sink like Ophelia, in the folds of a fluid current, her irises like drooping flags and willows weeping just for her.

“There’s no need to get superstitious. It’s just a coincidence,” her aunt had said as they all sat in the cramped funeral home parlour a year before. “That undertow is always strong at the lake—even experienced swimmers get caught by it. Happens every year.” She slammed her cup down on the shiny tea table, her eyes wet. “They should never have taken their eyes off her.”

"But three deaths in five years?" Her grandmother shook her sleek, snowy head. "Never. It's a curse. Our family has consisted of landlubbers—not by choice but by necessity—since long ago. Too many of us have died out on the water." Gramy had fish-like eyes that were the best at staring. As she gazed out of the parlour window, her teacup cradled in one wrinkly hand, Gramy looked like a beautiful queen or a good witch. Nadine cradled her cup of juice as best she could and sat up straight.

"I heard we got our surname from an ancestor who fell down a well, poisoning the water." Mom said, pouring something amber into her tea and stirring it like a tiny cauldron. Nadine's aunt rolled her eyes, then jerked her head sharply towards Nadine.

"Little pictures have big ears..." said Nadine's aunt.

At that moment, Nadine had felt sure that there had to be some awful power in anything that could reach through the years from "long ago" and scare her supremely serene Gramy. But even though she listened hard, Nadine never heard exactly who had "died out on the water." There was the distant second cousin whose funeral they were attending: a girl a few years older than Nadine, whom Nadine had never met and now never would. There must have been others. There must have been—but her family wouldn't talk about them. At least, not while Nadine was around. Family gatherings were much less interesting after that long afternoon in the funeral parlour. All the adults talked about "renovations" or "income tax" whenever Nadine was around.

The curse was no stranger than all the other things adults had told her were real. The Wells' family curse fell somewhere on the same spectrum as the things that possibly lived under Nadine's bed and all the kindly folks who left her presents if she behaved herself but who never revealed how they knew about her behaviour. If they were real then the curse had to be real—and Nadine had no reason to doubt Gramy.

Gramy knew everything.

Looking out at the community centre pool, seven-year-old Nadine felt dread for the first time. At the far end, the smaller children were splashing about. Cheerfully-coloured floatation devices aided their flailing, ungraceful strokes. Nadine cringed at the sight of them; relying on such flimsy items to keep their heads above water seemed dangerously "naive," as Gramy would put it. Didn't they know how many people died in deep water?

Didn't they see the danger? she wondered.

The other Guppies—her fellows in the lowest level of swimming lesson hierarchy—naturally floated like squealing rubber ducks. All she could do was sink. The other children called her "Sinker" because of it.

In her mind all she heard was "Drowner."

Nadine rolled her eyes at the "indignity of it" and told them they were immature and "banal." All the while she thought, *Maybe it's the curse. Maybe I'm next!*

"There was a time when very few people knew how to swim, Nadine. Gramy never learned, and I never learned all the strokes like you will. We're lucky that there are lessons offered for kids like you," Mom told her on the ride home. Nadine didn't feel lucky. Staying away from the water seemed

perfectly reasonable. She sat in the back seat, wearing the most serious and meaningful sulk of her seven-year-old life.

Gramy had a heart attack on the Atlantic cruise that Nadine's Aunt sent her on for her eighty-fifth birthday. The whole family breathed a sigh of relief when Gramy survived the attack—but then, just days later, she died of complications back at home.

At this funeral reception, Nadine's Mom and Aunt threw blame and anger at one another across the refreshments table. Nadine took her plastic plate of too-salty lox—it tasted like tears—and sat by her cousin while their mothers shouted and cried in the next room.

Nadine had seen her cousin at the last family funeral; it was one of the handful of times she'd seen him in the past few years. She was twelve now. He was well into his twenties and had taken up sailing. He told Nadine the stories of his near misses with thunderstorms: once, a rope had coiled itself around his ankle, nearly tripping him as he busied himself with the rigging. Another time he'd fallen overboard with his grip-soled shoes on.

"Could have been a death sentence: overboard in shoes," he said, his mouth full of tea sandwich.

Still, he loved sailing. His skin was handsomely sunburned and he showed Nadine how to tie knots using rope he coiled from a blue paper napkin. His hands were rough from wrestling the lake winds with rope and canvas.

He dreamed of living on a houseboat. The thought made her throat tighten and her chest hurt.

The strange thing was, he admitted he was a little scared every time he went out in the strong winds when the water was rough. He looked straight into Nadine's eyes, his own as wide as Gramy's had been. It was easy for him to admit this to Nadine, but it was very difficult for her to hear.

Can you love something you fear? she wondered.

The curse stirred.

Days after Gramy's funeral, Nadine graduated from Dolphin Level—the highest level of the community centre's swimming classes. Her Mom was content knowing Nadine "would never be in danger at the beach," but Nadine still wasn't sure of herself as a swimmer. Open water made her look away, and the local lake seemed to beckon her, crooking a finger at her with each wave.

So, in defiance of the curse, she joined the community centre's competitive swimming team.

At the first practice Nadine broke out in a coughing fit. Her chest felt tight and each breath strained against some invisible creature coiled around her.

It's the curse. It has to be the curse. She paddled to the edge of the pool, swimming like a baby Guppy. Shame dribbled down her cheeks as the coach rushed to her side. Her Mom appeared out of the chaos, dashing across the pool deck in her winter coat, very nearly slipping and falling on the wet tiles. She helped the coach haul Nadine out of the pool, and cradled Nadine against her chest. Nadine struggled to breathe, fighting

the unfamiliar thing her body had become. The curse coursed through her throat, making each breath an explosive gasp. Her Mom screamed for someone to call an ambulance.

Nadine spent an hour in the ER in a wet bathing suit, wrapped in an increasingly soggy towel with her Mom's coat on top of it all. Her breathing was forced and painful; each gasp sputtered through her drying mouth. The chlorine from the pool was still on her tongue and she could smell it on her itching skin.

After a long night of questions and examination, a doctor diagnosed Nadine with exercise-induced asthma. She would need to take her medication every day and have emergency medication nearby at all times. She couldn't swim without it.

I knew it. I really am cursed.

The summer Nadine turned sixteen, she worked as a lifeguard at a girls' summer camp; her Mom was flustered and frightened that she wasn't working at the local beach.

"Remember your cousin?" her Mom had asked. "You want to go off and leave me to imagine you washing up on some strange lakeshore?"

But she'd eventually relented. She helped Nadine pack her asthma meds along with several new swimsuits. The lake the camp was built around was small—too small to have an undertow. Neither Nadine nor her Mom had mentioned this fact, but they'd both thought about it.

The rocky beach Nadine guarded was, in her opinion, rather unfortunately named: "Mermaid Cove." In response to this, and for practical reasons, she sheared off her long hair before taking the job, leaving only a short, sharp pixie cut. Her Mom had mourned the loss of her little girl's "princess hair" loudly, but Nadine felt dynamic. The cut left nothing to twist and gather—something she'd done with long hair for safety's sake—under her swim cap. With short hair she wouldn't dream of drowning as her trailing locks tangled in lake weeds, or imagine her hair fanning out behind her like a shroud when she swam the backstroke.

I'm not about to drift away like some drowning maiden!

Nadine's swimsuits were practical and sporty; her fellow lifeguards modelled neon bikinis that needed re-adjusting every few minutes. Her arms and legs were tanned, her hair gilt by the molten August sun. Two days in, squinting had become her standard facial expression on the job even when she was wearing her large, bug-eyed sunglasses. Her eyes were strained from staring out across the lake and into the sunlight reflected from it. Nadine would not look away from the lake where all the little campers bobbed and splashed and darted about like minnows.

There is no undertow, she thought when a little girl ducked underwater. *There is no undertow, and they aren't "cursed."*

On her days off and between her shifts, she swam out to the floating dock that the children canoed to. It was a good workout, and she was well within sight of the shore, where her asthma puffer sat on her sun-dried towel.

The first commandment of all competitive swimmers was that after practice you had to cool yourself down before leaving the water. Towards the end of the summer Nadine disobeyed this rule. Out of break time, she crawled out onto the rocky cove. In the tiny cabin she shared with the other life guards she shed her slick suit like snake skin. Her hands shook as she peeled the Lycra off and her heart refused to rest.

Then, standing in the cabin, pale where her one-piece had covered her from the sun, her body began to fail.

Grabbing her puffer from her bag, Nadine took a pull from it. But the pain wasn't in her chest—it was everywhere. Nadine fell to her knees, muscle cramps and pain possessing her. On the dusty floor of the cabin she



ILLUSTRATED BY LORNA ANTONIAZZI

closed in on herself, locking shut like a zebra mussel, razor sharp where her legs folded. Breathing hurt. Moving was unthinkable. Dimly aware of what she had become on land, her pride offered weak comfort: *at least no one is here to see.*

Then the pain unlocked and she could move again. She stood slowly, breathed slowly. The curse hadn't killed her.

But I was on land, she thought. She struggled into a dry suit and winced. *That shouldn't count. It shouldn't follow me on land!* Drops of the wicked water dribbled down her cheeks.

When she wrote her weekly letter home to her Mom, Nadine didn't mention the painful swimming cramps or the fear. Her Mom would want her home for fear of the possible complications. "Complications" had been her Mom's worst fear since Grammy had died. Her Mom was afraid for Nadine, afraid of the asthma and all of the things that could make the heart race.

But Nadine didn't feel afraid anymore.

The night after the pain Nadine curled up in her sleeping bag and breathed comfortably. She thought about how tired her muscles were, how hard she had pushed them, how her body had been screaming in pain. She stretched in her bunk, arms high above her, legs out, as if she were diving.

I hurt you, she told her body. *And I will take better care of you. But I will not slow down. I will not stop.*

Nadine drifted off and the curse slept too, gently wrapped around her.

The next day she could feel it with every stroke she took through the water: the curse. It was the weakness in her that stirred when she waded out too far, or when she swam against waves. It was there when her muscles tightened and released, a muted harmony to the rhythm of her strokes. She welcomed it, slowing her strokes to greet it before striking through the water again.

In her cool-down drill she thought: *I will still swim lengths like this when my hair is as white as Grammy's.*

And when I have a daughter I will teach her to swim. I will hold her as she paddles around in the bath or the lake. I will not take my eyes off her at any beach. And she will never know that she is cursed.

I won't tell her.



GRAPHIC FICTION

A DIFFERENT KIND OF TORTURE | JESSICA PERRIE 47

SPACE DEVIL | BEN HARVEY 53



JESSICA PERRIE

Jessica Perrie began drawing at a young age. At fourteen she started her first webcomic, which spanned 500 pages in 5 years. She has since decided to learn how to write and make comics. At Dalhousie University, Jessica contributed to the student-run newspaper by creating single-panel comics that gently poked fun at academic life. In September 2013, she began a master's degree in Computer Science at the University of Toronto, but she still plans to continue producing short comics whenever possible. "A Different Kind of Torture" was thought up while re-watching *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan*.



A DIFFERENT KIND OF TORTURE







Excuse me

We need to ask you some questions

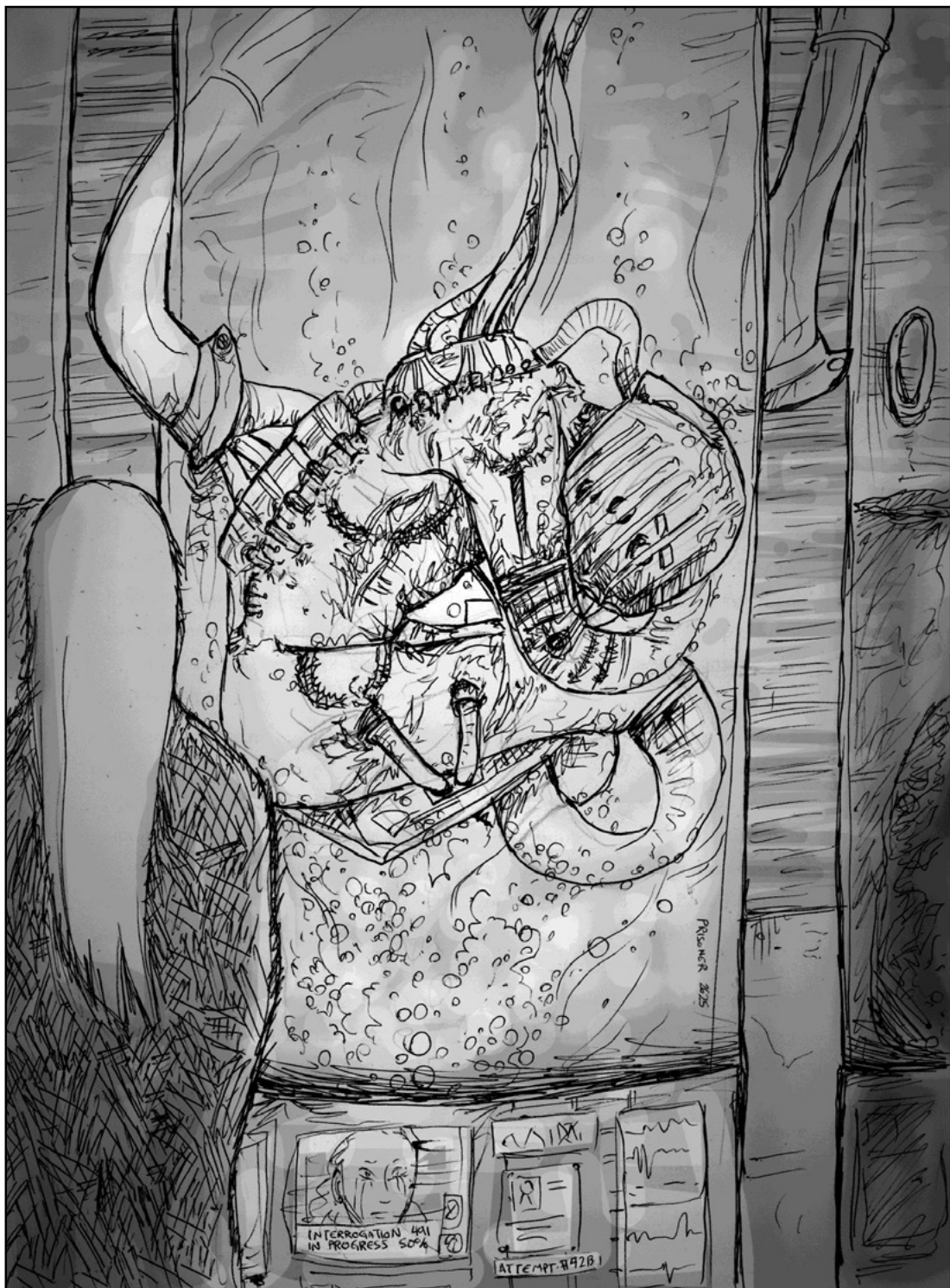
What is the access code to +13-1967-44?

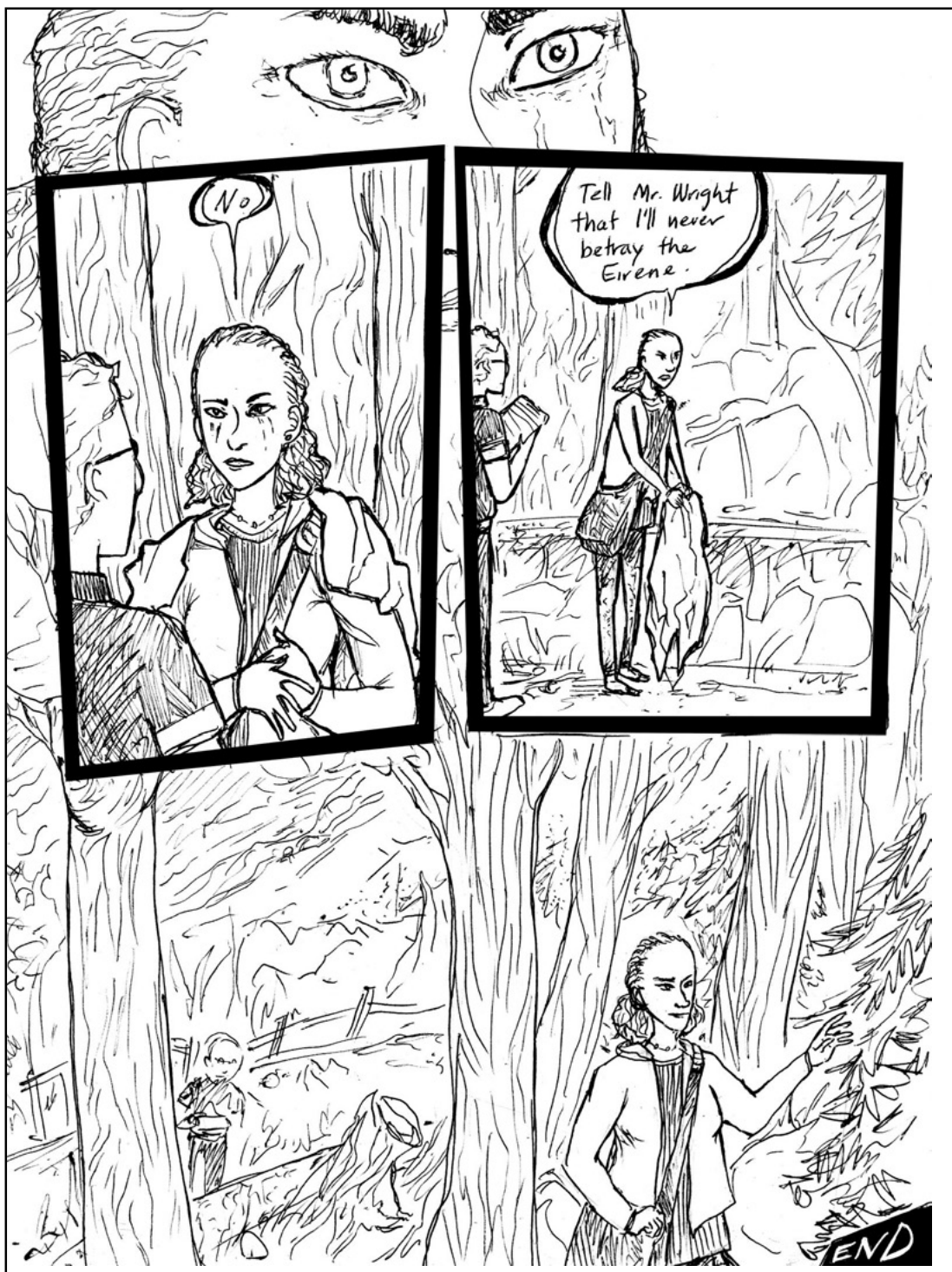
What no...
I don't understand...

Please. We need to assess your condition

Just say the first numbers that come into your head.

Thank you





No

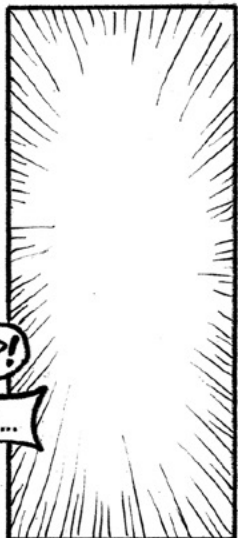
Tell Mr. Wright
that I'll never
betray the
Eirene.

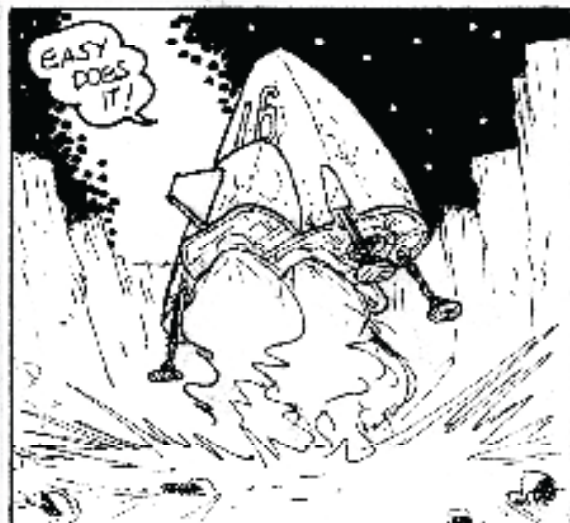
END



B E N H A R V E Y

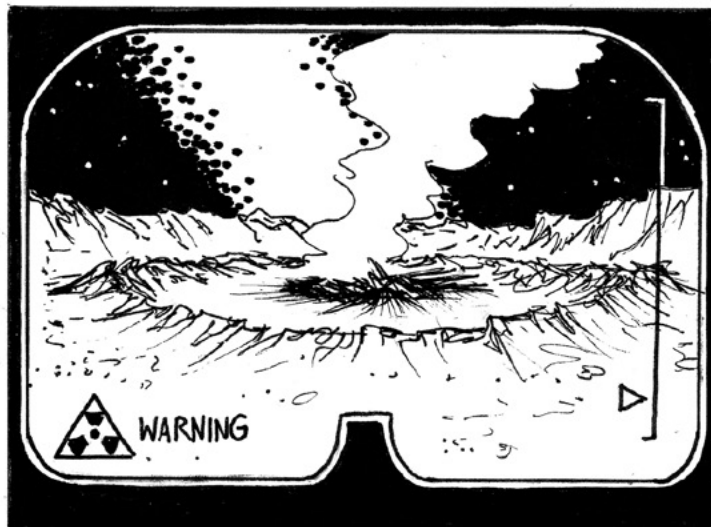
Ben Harvey is Toronto born and raised. He is finishing up his undergraduate degree in History at the University of Toronto, and has studied such diverse topics as The History and Philosophy of Science and Technology and Material Culture. Ben has been producing comics and graphic fiction in one form or another since he was a child. Over the years his comics have appeared in campus papers such as The Varsity and The Gargoyle as well as in self-published zines. He is currently working on a graphic novel that explores colonialism, warfare, and mismatched, out-moded technological and moral aesthetics.

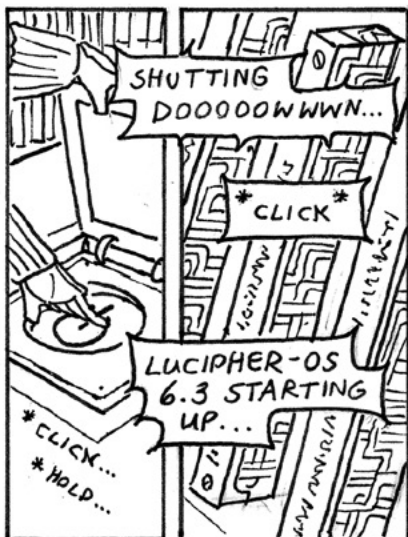














POETRY

OATS | DOMINIQUE BECHARD **61**

CREPESCULE STAIRS | MAGDALENA WOLAK **63**

A faint, light-colored pencil sketch of a human face is visible in the background, centered behind the text. The sketch is very light and serves as a subtle backdrop for the page.

DOMINIQUE BECHARD

Dominique Bechard is in her third year studying English Literature and Semiotics at Victoria College in the University of Toronto. Her poetry and short fiction have previously appeared in *Nest Magazine*, the *UC Review* and *The Goose Anthology of Short Fiction*. She is also the Film & Music Editor at *The Strand*, and a monthly contributor to *INTune Magazine*. When she is not writing, Dominique likes to ride unicycles and play the accordion—two activities that she believes, if done simultaneously, will transport her to other, fantastic dimensions.

OATS

by Dominique Bechard

I can't eat a madeleine now without
that presage of time, webbed
between my crumbling fingers.

but when I chew at oats filmed
with raw tap-water,
when I can't afford
milk or ebullient sugar,
I need more than just memory
to keep me lewdly alive.

oat residue hurled to the surface
of my bedecked goblet
like that face of foretelling,
a hazy expression
behind which spooks skulk,
with all the appetites
of the gobbling divine.

when 8 am slaps my clock,
enter life, I recall
a few uneaten oats
left to fester along the lip
of my kitchen sink.



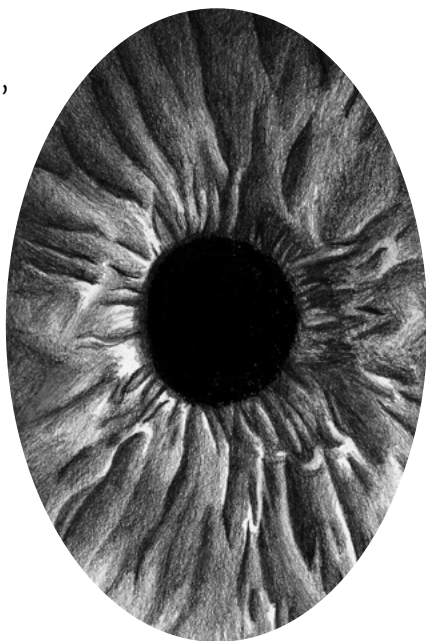
MAGDALENA WOLAK

Magdalena Wolak is a student at the University of Toronto where she studies English and—as a quite recent interest—Political Science. While most of her life has been spent in Canada, she began her journey as a fervent reader in Poland. Her love of writing was piqued in high school, and it has been a lifeline ever since. Her inspiration comes from the mundane, the painful, and the every day.

CREPESCULE STAIRS

by Magdalena Wolak

I shade in finely
to see what Arthur R. fell in love with,
observe him hovering beneath the bedsheets that cross the olympus ceiling
colourless honeycomb eyes behind a veil –
he sips from the draining foamy sky
blue cocktails and grey roads
slowly, the ghosts glide over prufrock's tea
calling cherie cherie
slurring lights, tables, in an
unending procession of gutted glass,
grasping the one balloon
that heaves into the white skin membrane,
a clouded iris – sun split half
by the fat body of the mountains and
pink pin hurricanes.
He wonders at the ladybug: his lover's eye
resting quietly against the morning
bringing the lens closer than his lips
leaning in – underwater caves
holes slowly ripping apart like melted skin
ice bowls of deep charcoal
pupil pencil dust –
the click is lazy, geometric delight
at nature's imperfection
of clear gel things
dripping from the captured shutter
he sees little people living
in the cityscapes of the box he
will develop to witness
for a time



ILLUSTRATED BY JENNY KIM



VISUAL ARTS

GHOSTING | IAN DE REGE 67

INFORMATION OVERLOAD | MARI ZHOU 69

FASTER THAN LIGHT TRAVEL | DIANA SOBASZEK 71

SPACES IN THE PSYCHE | SANDRO PEHAR 73

GHOSTING

Old habits die hard. A mother cradles her dead infant for a post-mortem photograph; they are hidden beneath draperies so as to not be a distraction during the long exposure time. A boy and a girl are the same person, living in the same house, and find one another's bones in the walls and ghosts in the mirrors. Faces peer through windows at night to watch a child's bad dreams. Skulls offer reassuring smiles at a grandmother's funeral. A portrait of the artist fades to spider webs and soot as her past is re-written by those who unwittingly walk through her memories. This is a place of salt and ghosts, silent but strangely comforting. Outside, crickets chirp nervously as a sacrifice is offered to a yearning god. For salvation, some say. For love, others whisper.

Spirit Photography was taken in the spring of 2013 through an outreach program at Gallery 44; it was a first foray into photography and will certainly not be the last. The skull used in the photo belongs to the artist, and was salvaged from a sheep that died of natural causes a long time ago.

I A N D E R E G E

Ian de Rege does enjoy ghost stories, but not at night when the lights are off. A native of Toronto, she is currently pursuing a degree in History, Medieval Studies and Visual Studies. Respectively, her interests lie in colonialism, art and architecture, and painting. When not studying she is either working or singing (and occasionally writing). Her other interests include sea shanties, jellyfish, and evolutionary biology. When creating art of any kind, she explores ideas of identity, the sea, family, faith, death, ghosts, love, trauma, the past, holiness, and folklore. Cats and mixed drinks are also important. Find her online at bloodmiracles.wordpress.com.



INFORMATION OVERLOAD

I've always enjoyed speculative movies and shows that explore how fictional technologies can be integrated into people's lives in highly immersive ways. The cinematic use of future technology is often depicted through light shows of floating data that are responsive to touch or voice. Fictional User Interfaces (FUI) in these speculative movies and shows bring data design to life, making that design more dynamic and alive. As haptic technology becomes more commonplace in our reality, we ourselves get closer to holographic interactions. Although FUI designs are often displayed as complex organizations of overwhelming data and illegibly small text, they are doubtlessly works of art themselves.

Despite the impracticality of (most) FUI designs, the spectacle of data design is what I love most. (Also, cyborgs. Also, cyborgs operating haptic-based, holographic interfaces. Yes, please.)



MARI ZHOU

Mari Zhou is pursuing a double major in Culture, Communications and Information Technologies, and Criminology at the University of Toronto Mississauga: an interesting mix of brand identity and deviant identity. She is currently Associate Design Editor at *The Varsity*, as well as an occasional freelance graphic designer for startups. And now, she also gets to illustrate some awesome concepts for *The Spectatorial*!



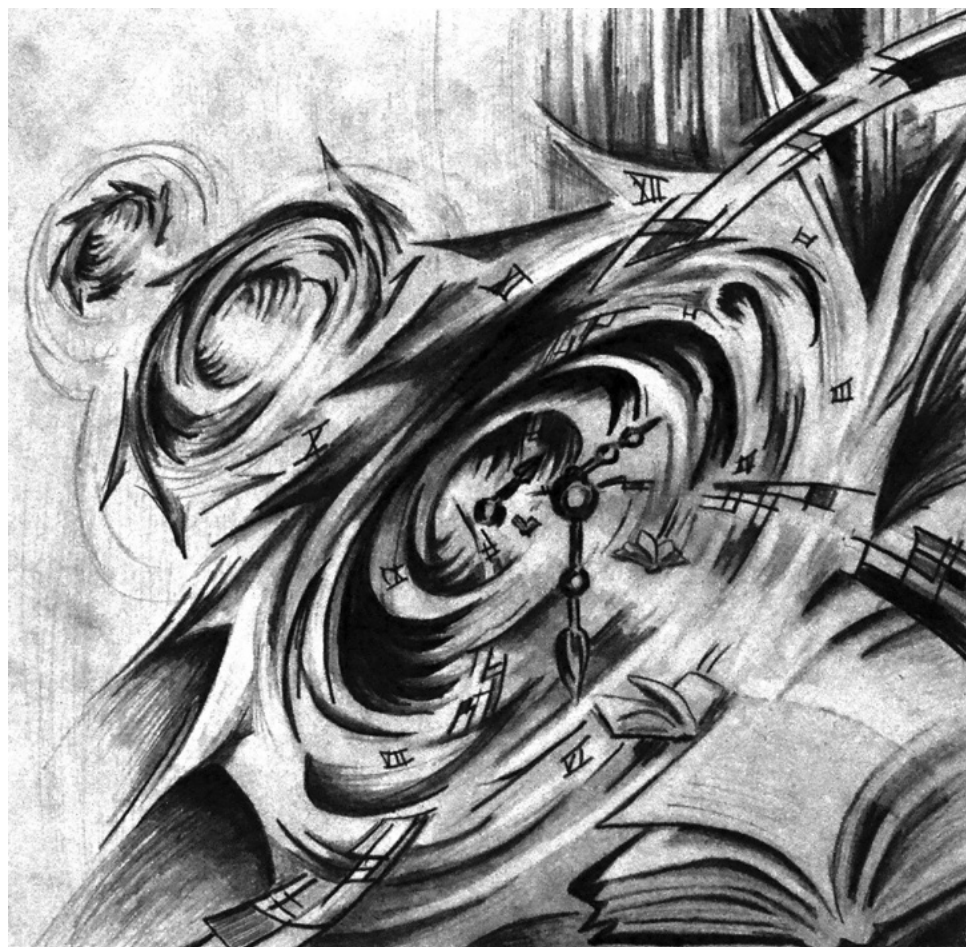
FASTER THAN LIGHT TRAVEL

A 2D space challenging 3D depth. Einstein's theory of special relativity dictates that as the speed of light is approached the relative speed of time alters. To an observer on Earth, a clock on a rocket would appear to tick much more slowly than an Earthly clock, although there would be no noticeable difference to the traveler on the rocket. In theory, this time distortion is caused by the perception of motion relative to the existing surroundings and gravity acting on the body.

"Faster than Light Travel" challenges this phenomenon. The power of the mind gives the ability to enter this alternate dimension. What we utilize as a quantifying measurement is solely interpreted by us. The many tales and theories attempting to explain this phenomenon only immerse us deeper within the unknown. What defines a single moment in time? Does it exist or coexist with the past, present and future? Perception is reality. Not everything can be explained; it is better to imagine.

DIANA SOBASZEK

Diana Sobaszek identifies her designs as outlets of imagination that form relationships between unknowns and freedom of expression. Her content most commonly depicts body kinetics or crossing the limits of reality in order to expose a differing perspective. Although she thrives off of challenges and experimentation, her dominant mediums include drawing and sculpting. Her curiosity and passion are inspired by travels around the globe and her diverse education in architecture and art, which followed her completion of a BSc in Kinesiology. When she's not designing, she's running on the track. Her limitless approach is evident in her work and further utilized to inspire others.



SPACES IN THE PYSCHE

While traveling through Central America this past season, I learned new things about how people become who they are. These photos represent the weird, symbiotic relationship that people have with their natural environment. It fills their minds, their bodies, and their actions. The reality is that people are not necessarily physically attached to their environment—they can leave at any time—but an uncanny relationship still exists. No matter where these people go, the natural environments they once occupied exist forever in the psychological space of the mind. A person walking on the street carries within themselves landscapes that occupy no physical space.

Since one can never see these aspects of a person's identity, we must speculate on how geography defines a person. My piece visualizes this concept by using a synthetic photography technique called multiple exposures; it focuses on individuals who define their natural identity through attachments to geographical space. This idea regularly exists purely as conjecture, speculation and thought—so my series is an attempt to document it.

SANDRO PEHAR

Sandro Pehar is a photographer and cinematographer in Toronto. He was born in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina during the Balkan Wars and has traveled to many locations, settling in the GTA for the time being. His work is motivated by elusive and dramatized moments in life; through his creative outlets, he tries to illuminate the struggles and joys of human life. How did we get here? Why are we here? What are we doing about it? These are all questions at the forefront of his mind and work.





NONFICTION

DISEASE AND RESISTANCE | DANI LEGAULT 77
SANDWICH PSYCHOLOGY | MURAD HEMMADI 85
LOST IN AUSTEN | SOFIA CUTLER 93



DANI LEGAULT

When she isn't posing as a Cinema Studies student, Dani Legault balances writing a nationally-syndicated radio show with mainlining as many anime series and video games as possible. Her film-related interests include the representation of marginalized groups on screen, the totally arbitrary break between high and low culture, and submitting papers about the biopolitics of magical girls with a straight face. She is in the final semester of her degree and when she completes it this spring she does not intend to start going to bed on time.

DISEASE & RESISTANCE:

THE MAGICAL GIRL INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX IN

PUELLA MAGI MADOKA MAGICA

by Dani Legault

Capitalism hinges on effacing the labour inherent in the production of commodities. Much of our meat comes from huge factory farms where animals are kept in inhumane conditions, but this entire process is hidden from us when we pick a shrink-wrapped package of ground beef out of a supermarket refrigerator. When the process is made visible, those of us who still choose to consume meat must justify this to ourselves somehow—sometimes by reminding ourselves that, after all, they're only animals.

The line between animals and humans has always been “strategically ambivalent” (Shukin 10). It can be redrawn to make some animals more human and some humans more animal. In the anime *Puella Magi Madoka Magica*, a cast of teenage girls are dehumanized in the same way that we treat livestock. The show can be read simultaneously as a critique of both women's conditions in a male-dominated society and animals' conditions under the current capitalist system of meat production. The girls' combined mentor and antagonist, Kyubey, comes to represent the double-edged sword of patriarchal hegemony as he forges contracts which are simultaneously sources of power and of self-destruction.

Puella Magi Madoka Magica is a *shōjo* anime. *Shōjo* is Japanese for “girl,” and when pronounced with a shorter first syllable—*shojo*—it means “virgin.” (Lunning 6) *Shōjo* anime and manga is targeted at young girls and women, but it encompasses all manner of genres, some easily translatable to a Western audience (fantasy, historical fiction) and some more specific to Japanese markets (such as boys' love stories, which, in spite of their focus on homosexual relationships between often-feminized men, are still intended for a female readership) (Gravett 79). *Puella Magi Madoka*

Magica falls within the *mahou shōjo*, or “magic girl” subgenre, which was popularized in its current iteration by the well-known *Bishōjo Senshi Sailor Moon*.

The series features five girls named Madoka, Sayaka, Mami, Homura, and Kyoko who forge contracts with the series’ mentor mascot character, Kyubey, to become “Puella Magi.” The mentor mascot is a common trope in the *mahou shōjo* genre; they are typically cute, talking animals who teach the magical girls how to use their powers. Kyubey will grant each girl any single wish, and in return they receive magical powers and are compelled to fight witches for the rest of their lives. As the series progresses, the girls learn that Kyubey did not inform them of much of the fine print in this deal: their souls have been removed from their bodies and placed into gems, essentially turning their bodies into remote-control automatons; witches are actually Puella Magi who have given in to their own despair; for Puella Magi who do not fall in battle, this transformation into witches is inevitable; and Kyubey is harvesting witches’ remains to offset the heat death of the universe.

The Puella Magi are required to fight witches in order to retrieve the “Grief Seeds” those witches carry. These seeds temporarily offset the girls’ own corruption, but because each witch only drops one seed, the girls are discouraged from working together by the scarcity of resources. Conversely, working alone heightens the danger that the girls will die in battle, or that their loneliness will overtake them.

Over the twelve episode series, Mami dies in battle, Sayaka becomes a witch, and Kyoko sacrifices herself to stop Sayaka. Homura is revealed to have been using time travel to relive the same month over and over again, trying and failing to keep Madoka from becoming a witch. Her efforts concentrate enough power around Madoka to allow her to make a wish that alters reality on a massive scale. When she finally makes her contract with Kyubey, Madoka wishes to erase all witches in the history of the world from before they were born. In the new universe she creates, Puella Magi fight demons instead of witches and simply fade away when they die.

Madoka first meets Kyubey when she rescues him from Homura, who is (at the time) inexplicably chasing him through a basement and trying to murder him. He appears cute and helpless in this moment, but there remains something uncanny about him. Quoting Freud, Samuel Weber defines the uncanny as “that class of the terrifying which leads back to something long known to us, once very familiar” (1105). This is only heightened as the series goes on, and Kyubey is more often shown only in extreme close-ups of his unchanging eyes and mouth. At some points, this image even stretches and distorts itself before our very eyes. Kyubey at once does and does not resemble familiar animals. These later distorted shots resemble him, and yet begin to twist and mutate beyond what should be possible, even accounting for the plasticity of animated characters. His break from the tradition of mentor mascots in other *mahou shōjo* is also unsettling. Kyubey’s introduction calls back to *Bishōjo Senshi Sailor Moon*, where the main character of that show, Usagi, first meets the talking cat Luna when she rescues her from some cruel neighborhood children. Associating

Kyubey with one of the most famous mahou shōjo mascots in this way makes his later betrayal all the more shocking to anyone who catches the reference. Kyubey can speak to humans, and he initially frames Puella Magi as heroic saviors of other human beings. He even makes deals in utterly human (or at least, very un-animal) terms: by signing contracts. These traits encourage the audience to anthropomorphize him: if he has so many traits in common with humans, he must also have humans' best interests at heart. When it is revealed that human beings are little more than cattle to him, the audience is served a grim reminder that not everything that can speak to us cares about us.

The category "human" has been in flux throughout our history in any case, and being a human is no guarantee that one will be treated as such. In her introduction to *Animal Capital*, Nicole Shukin writes, "the power to reduce humans to the bare life of their species body arguably presupposes the prior power to suspend other species in a state of exception in which they can be noncriminally put to death" (Shukin, 10). Essentially, human beings place themselves above non-humans (typically animals) and feel justified in killing animals as they see fit. Killing humans is a criminal act while killing animals is not. This also allows for humans to designate certain subgroups as "nonhuman"—for example gendered, racialized and disabled bodies—and subject them to similar cruelty and summary execution. Kyubey does not deny that human beings are human; he honestly sees them as exceptional due to their broad range of emotions. He argues that his race treats humans slightly better than human beings treat their own livestock. Due to the fact that humans protect their livestock from the wild and breed them selectively and deliberately, these captive animals reproduce more quickly and more successfully than their wild counterparts. Kyubey concludes that the human-livestock relationship is "reasonable and mutually prosperous." His race is actually *more* considerate of humans than this, because the teenage girls he harvests have willingly entered into a contract with him. They grant humans agency, whereas humans never give livestock the same consideration. When Madoka accuses him of tricking the Puella Magi, he responds that his race has no such concept.

Of course, Kyubey is clearly not playing fair when he selects his "willing" humans. He targets girls to make contracts when they are under duress. Mami was about to die when he appeared to her, Homura made her contract with him in a similarly desperate situation, and he pressures Madoka to strike a bargain with him in every one of her vulnerable moments. Kyubey is a consummate opportunist. Frenchy Lunning writes that the shōjo character is "the most vulnerable and undervalued of feminine subjects[;] she is easily lured, easily convinced of the illusion of romance, easily transformed into other genders and beings that appear inconsequential to mainstream cultural meanings and agendas." (8) *Puella Magi Madoka Magica* literalizes this as Kyubey preys on teenage girls in their moments of emotional vulnerability.

In forging a contract with Kyubey, the girls' bodies undergo a profound change, a fact he does not make clear up front. Their souls—functioning not religiously, but simply as an invisible animating force—are sealed in

special gems that must remain in close contact with their physical bodies at all times. The girls discover this truth when Madoka unwittingly throws Sayaka's soul gem over a highway overpass. Sayaka's body collapses like a puppet with its strings cut, and it does not reanimate until Homura retrieves the gem. Sayaka interprets this as a loss of her own humanity; in her words she is "already dead," and "a zombie." Mortality is utterly reconfigured for these girls. Prior to this, they might have believed that if they were not killed in the line of duty they could experience a "natural physiological death." The knowledge of this inevitability is said to be what makes one human, and is the province of human beings alone (Heidegger 267). If the girls are already dead, they cannot die as a human might. Sayaka is not just a "dead body moving around like it's alive;" Kyubey shows her how this transformation protects Puella Magi from experiencing pain and other sensations as normal humans do. This underscores their shift from human to nonhuman; from teenage girl to livestock.

In her postscript, Shukin uses mad cow disease (BSE) as a sign of counter-hegemonic animal protest (Shukin 229). BSE results from the practice of feeding the leftover parts of slaughtered animals back to the very same livestock to "facilitate the rapid turnover of animal capital" (Shukin 228). A special protein called a prion eats its way through the brains of infected animals. Cows infected with this degenerative disease tend to separate from the herd, slowly lose muscle control, and ultimately die. For Shukin, BSE is "at once a material symptom and a powerful metaphor of the current ecological conditions of consumption." (Shukin 228) The capitalist-consumerist drive to produce as much meat as quickly and cheaply as possible created the conditions in which it might make sense to recycle meat byproducts by feeding them back to cows, but this cannibalistic practice results in cows that are unfit for consumption. BSE does not just infect other cows; it is transmittable to human beings as well. This is therefore a diagram of what the self-devouring and unsustainable nature of capitalist production might look like when taken to its extreme.

If teenage girls are Kyubey's cattle, cannibalism is his method of production, and mad cow disease actually becomes a *positive* outcome. When Kyubey creates a contract with a Puella Magi, her soul is removed from her body and placed in her soul gem. These soul gems slowly accrue despair through the expenditure of the girls' powers, but every time the Puella Magi defeats a witch, the witch drops a grief seed. By touching the grief seed to the soul gem, despair is transferred from gem to seed. This grief seed, now charged up with all the despair the magical girl has collected, is what Kyubey harvests. However, remember that witches are actually Puella Magi who failed to cleanse their soul gems. Grief seeds are essentially soul gems that are absolutely overflowing with despair. Kyubey implies that Puella Magi who do not die in the line of duty, as Mami and Kyoko did, inevitably become witches; all Puella Magi eventually fail. Beef farmers raise cows for meat, but feeding these cows meat threatens them with disease. Likewise, Kyubey is actually "raising" these Puella Magi to harvest their despair, but it is feeding them (or failing to purge them of) despair that softens their brains, causing them to lose control and teeter

over the edge into madness.

Furthermore, the mad cows in this system—the witches—can infect normal human beings by amplifying their natural negative feelings. Shukin sees the existence of BSE as proof that some forms of capitalism are unsustainable, but Kyubey seems to have found a way to close the loop.

Kyubey does make a logically sound, if absolutely ruthless, case for his work. This emotional energy is used to stave off the eventual heat death of the universe. There are over six billion humans, and the population is growing at an exponential rate, so it seems rational that the species as a whole can afford to lose a few in service of this greater goal. But this project is explicitly gendered. It is not the human race overall that must bear this burden, it is only “girls in their second growth phase”—teenage girls—who must take on the cycle of fighting and becoming witches to ensure the universe lives on. In an abstract sense, young women are again being yoked directly to an essentially reproductive role. Their job is merely to sustain existence, not to enrich it or otherwise bring anything of value to the table beyond the act of reproduction itself. This is where Kyubey’s contract begins to reflect the broader misogynist reality around these girls: “[U]nder patriarchy, women are reduced to images of their singular and necessary function of reproduction: not just the mother but also the bodacious babe who is codified and commodified in terms of breeding potential” (Lunning 7). Only certain humans need to be harvested, so only certain humans are zoomorphized.

Frenchy Lunning is quite critical of the representation of femininity in shōjo culture. In spite of its apparent valorization of stereotypically feminine frills like bows and ruffles, she describes it as “abject”:

There is a way to understand the feminine in shōjo culture as an expression not only of Kristevan abjection but also of abjection in the everyday poignant sense of the word. In its most basic meaning, abjection indicates a position of extreme wretchedness, a low-to-the-ground profile and groveling misery, which, in the case of the feminine, has pushed itself inward and sideways, encouraging a denial of its presence and an impulse to hide the offending aspect from view. (Lunning 6)

The witches in *Puella Magi Madoka Magica* have become such sources of misery for the entire world that they literally distort reality around them and disappear from view. When they become visible, they are only ever destructive, and when they touch the lives of regular humans they bring nothing but despair. To return again to Shukin and her mad cow metaphor, she writes that “signs of animal protest must themselves be actively rendered”, or made visible, and also turned towards political purpose (Shukin 229). The chain of capitalism must be broken not only materially but semiotically; BSE serves the latter role, a form of visible proof that capitalism is self-destructive (Shukin 232). Shukin wonders how sickness in and of itself might be read not as merely pathological but as a sign of resistance. I might add that people who resist oppressive regimes are often pathologized in order to discredit them, and thus pathology and resistance

are already closely linked. Making the system visible is not enough to enact social change, although it is a critical first step.

This is also true in *Puella Magi Madoka Magica*; in spite of repeating the same month uncountable times, Homura has never found a way to save Madoka and break the cycle in spite of the fact that she has witnessed countless configurations of events, and fully comprehends the ramifications of Kyubey's contract. But her work is crucially important in multiple ways: she is armed with knowledge, which she is able to share with the other girls, and through reliving the same period of time over and over she has empowered Madoka to make the ultimate wish.

Madoka's intervention replaces Kyubey's system with a new one. She wishes to erase all witches that have ever and will ever exist. Madoka's wish is at once selfish *and* selfless: she ensures that she herself will never become a witch, but paradoxically removes herself from this plane of existence. In a plot that is fraught with the emotional and physical sacrifices of teenage girls, it is important to note that Madoka's wish directly reflects her own desires in a way the other girls' wishes sometimes did not. For example, Sayaka really wanted her hospitalized male friend to fall in love with her, but she wished for him to recover from his injury, and he ended up dating one of her other friends instead. In this context, Madoka's self-interest becomes a feminist move. She acknowledges that it is necessary to have some means of production in order to stave off the end of all life, but women are no longer forced to fight and devour each other.

In the new system, Puella Magi who expend their energy simply die, and the demons that the Puella Magi fight in the new reality come from the despair of humanity in general, not only that of teenage girls. This allows the girls to focus on the real problem—offsetting the heat death of the universe—instead of fighting one another. Before, Puella Magi were discouraged from working together because witches only dropped one large Grief Seed. In Madoka's new universe, we see that Homura, Mami, Sayaka and Kyoko have united as a team to fight demons, which drop several smaller cubes, so that everyone can purify their soul gems. And Mami states that Kyoko should understand that Puella Magi will eventually die: "You should have learned that when you acquired your powers." This implies that Kyubey no longer makes his contracts under false pretenses. The agency of these girls to make decisions with their eyes wide open is restored. The system of production is rendered visible to them. All of this has real-world points of contact with the ways in which women internalize misogyny and patriarchal logic and are fooled into attacking each other instead of focusing their energies on their shared oppression. In this sense, *Puella Madi Madoka Magica* can be read as a story in which a group of teenage girls come to recognize their internalized oppression, form genuine friendships, and learn to identify the true source of their troubles which they can then with each other's support. The possibility for this is generated by a girl (Madoka) who, in turn, would not have had the power to do so if it were not for another girl's deep love for her (Homura), and her love for her friends. Women forming deep bonds with each other and supporting each other becomes the key to breaking the cycle.

Puella Magi Madoka Magica draws a connection between teenage girls and livestock, inviting comparisons between the patriarchal oppression of women and the inhumane treatment of animals raised for meat. Given that there is an absolute dearth of actual non-human animals in this series besides Kyubey himself, this interpretation runs the risk of anthropocentrism: the problems faced by animals in slaughterhouses are displaced onto human beings. However, in the context of this narrative, the lines between animal and human are blurred and the teenage girls cease to be human in the first place. This is an extension of the dehumanization experienced by women and other marginalized groups throughout history, up to and including the present day. The girls also represent and render the contemporary method of factory farming. Kyubey's chilling attempts to normalize these modes of production by presenting them as necessary for the greater good cause the audience to question that truth, and in the end Madoka shows us that it is possible to imagine a different world that is more invested in humane methods and cooperation between species. This world is predicated upon the true agency brought about by a deeper understanding of how power functions, as well as by meaningful and supportive cooperation within and between marginalized groups.

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A faint, light-colored background illustration. On the right side, there is a sketch of a person's face, possibly a woman, looking downwards. On the left side, there is a circular emblem or seal, which appears to be a crest or a logo, featuring a crown and other heraldic elements. The overall style is artistic and sketchy.

MURAD HEMMADI

Murad Hemmadi finds it odd—but also an ego boost—to write about himself in the third person. He is a fourth-year student pursuing a double major in History and Psychology, but his real education at the University of Toronto has come from *The Varsity*, where he works as the Managing Online Editor. He is an avid Pokemon player and watches far too much TV. His Klout score has been on the rise as of late, which lends some credence to his self-appointed status as a ‘social media guru’.

SANDWICH PSYCHOLOGY:

CHUCK, FAN MOVEMENTS AND CONVERGENCE CULTURE

by Murad Hemmadi

On Sunday, April 26, 2009, Zachary Levi and some new friends walked into a Subway franchise in Birmingham and ordered foot-long sandwiches. But Levi and the hundreds of people who accompanied him were trying to do more than just get lunch. They—and other fans carrying out similar demonstrations across the world—were trying to save a cultural text: the television show *Chuck*, on which Levi played the starring role.

Chuck ran from 2007 to 2012. It chronicled the adventures of the titular geek hero as he worked at a Best-Buy-type store following his expulsion from Stanford University. Opening an email from a university antagonist leads Chuck to download into his brain the Intercept, a CIA/NSA supercomputer that endows him with knowledge and skills vital to the security of the nation. Over the ensuing seasons, the presence or absence of the Intercept—and of the handlers assigned to Chuck because of it—form the basis for a meditation on heroism, technology, relationships, and nerd culture.

The ‘Save *Chuck*’ campaign involved fans buying foot-long Subway sandwiches to convince NBC to renew the show, which was on the brink of cancellation. Their efforts had economic and agentic meanings that point to the real-world emergence of media theorist Henry Jenkins’ (2004, 2006) concept of *convergence culture*. Fans successfully lobbying a major network and a major advertiser has interesting implications for the trend towards increasingly diverse and interactive forms of entertainment media, and particularly for the democratization of serialized pop culture forms.

Convergence, according to Jenkins, is “the flow of content across multiple media platforms, the cooperation between multiple media industries, and the migratory behaviour of media audiences who will go almost anywhere in search of the kinds of entertainment experiences they want” (Jenkins

2006 p 2). Convergence culture is a result of increasing digitization and digital communication, but it does not exist independent of existing media and cultural forms. It is driven both by the economic and practical realities of the media industry, and by the increasing ability of media consumers to express their desires and opinions directly to content producers using social media and other 'public' forums.

The increased production of *transmedia* content is one symptom of an increasingly convergent media landscape. Television transmedia content extends the boundaries of a story beyond the parameters of a single serialized show or product, taking advantage of the multiplicity of meanings and connections that audiences associate with a particular media text (Evans 2008). Such content is both a reward for loyal consumers of the 'core' product, and a means of retaining that loyalty (Jenkins, Ford, & Green, 2013). Each facet of the transmedia collective for a given media text offers a unique experience to the consumer or audience (Johnson, 2013).

Chuck provides an early example of the mainstreaming of transmedia expansion of 'core' text themes and storylines. While transmedia strategies were often used by niche or cult media properties like World Wrestling Entertainment to retain the attention of fans and to develop a wider context and mythology for the core entertainment product, *Chuck* was among the key mainstream shows that adopted a similar strategy (Jenkins et al. 2013). *Chuck* spawned several web-based spinoff mini-series, including the self-referentially-named *Chuck Versus the Webisodes*. The show also inspired a series of comic books, a tactic also used by the cult show *Firefly*, and early marketing efforts included the launching of profiles for the title character on social media websites to generate attention (Adalian, 2007). *Chuck* fans are not unique in making a symbolic gesture to persuade network executives of their investment in a particular media property—for example, recall the 20 tons of nuts shipped to CBS by *Jericho* watchers (Woerner, 2012). The 'Save *Chuck*' campaign was, however, arguably the first to make a direct economic argument. Subway was an existing sponsor of the show and by buying sandwiches at their franchises

Chuck fans directly displayed their economic value—and the economic value of *Chuck*—to NBC. The Subway campaign itself can be seen as a part of *Chuck*'s broader transmedia universe. Prominent product placement of Subway sandwiches in the show inspired the choice of demonstration (Patch, 2009). If fans' off-screen consumption of a particular product is read as a deliberate extension of the characters' on-screen behaviour—and given that the show's star participated in that consumption both in- and outside the show's narrative—it becomes part of the broader set of items associated with *Chuck*, a part of the show's polysemy.

Convergent media strategies, according to Jenkins (2006), exploit the increasing consolidation of different media forms and properties into conglomerates, and solidify customer loyalty to specific media properties by encouraging participation and making fans feel heard. Fans are increasingly demanding more say in the media properties they consume: content producers acquiesce not because of some broader belief in the democratization of entertainment but because they have an economic incentive to do so.

The Subway-buying movement could not have happened without a community of fans centred around the show, and a means to coordinate them. *Chuck* adherents constituted what Konizets (1999) calls a *virtual community of consumption*—a grouping based on the common individual consumption of a particular product, in this case a media text. Fan culture existed before the Internet, of course, but the increased connectivity that the Internet allowed expanded fans' abilities to collectively dissect and interpret the objects of their fandom. Virtual communities of consumption interact in two ways according to Kozinets (1999): a recreational mode, intended to create short-term satisfaction through communication; and a transformational mode, which aims to realize long-term objectives. The *Chuck* attempt resembles this second mode, since the community in this instance moved from discussing the show, to attempting to prolong its run.

The communication methods employed by the *Chuck* campaign fans also indicate broader trends in convergence culture. Patch (2009) and Adalian (2009) both cite Twitter as a key organizing space for the show's fans. The pace of digital media change influencing convergence culture is indicated by the relative novelty of Twitter at the time of the *Chuck* campaign. In 2009, organizing and voicing consumer demands and complaints through a public micro-blogging platform was still an unorthodox move; closer to the present day, Yellin (2009) details how customer-service issues have been turned into public relations issues because of the broadcasting power that Twitter provides, while Nielsen now collates a Twitter TV Ratings top 10 list (Watercutter 2013). Without the then-nascent system to coordinate and publicize their efforts, *Chuck* fans may not have had quite the impact they achieved.

Twitter is also linked to a third factor that facilitated the Subway-buying campaign: star power. Emanuel Rosen (2000, as cited in Van der Graaf, 2005) posited a hierarchy of 'network hubs': network hubs are composed of individuals who communicate with more people about a particular product (or media text) than the average person does. *Mega-hub* is the second of Rosen's four categories, and refers to the press, celebrities and politicians. Mega-hubs "have thousands of one-way links with people who listen to their message via media" (Van der Graaf, 2005, p 173–174). Zachary Levi, the star of *Chuck*, is a mega-hub, with a significant Twitter following and the ability to send messages to thousands of fans—a personal one-to-many system. Levi's influence and ability to attract publicity undoubtedly boosted the "Save *Chuck*" campaign by combining traditional media focus on celebrities with a fan-driven agenda (though one undoubtedly of great personal benefit to himself, in the form of the continuation of his show). The presence of a mega-hub also helped direct and broaden the campaign, with Levi acting as a conduit and cheerleader for copycat Subway-buying efforts across the world, using the medium of Twitter to both highlight and direct these events.

Consumers of media properties and forms can provide both direct and indirect value to content producers. According to Stribling (2013), direct sources of value are quantifiable attention to the content of a media property and the purchasing of products created and endorsed by content

producers. These types of consumption are already measured in the prevailing *appointment-stickiness* model of media quantification and analysis which drives content decisions like which shows stay on the airwaves (Jenkins et al. 2013). The appointment-stickiness model is based on a form of television consumption that requires viewers to be situated in front of their devices at a set (or ‘appointed’) time for the airing of a particular show. Within this configuration, media content was only available at pre-determined times, and consumers were therefore at the mercy of scheduling and programming choices made by media companies.

Stickiness, according to Jenkins and colleagues (2013), prioritizes the intentions and goals of networks and advertisers over consumers. It involves “putting content in one place and making audiences come to it so they can be counted” (p 5)—appointment viewing. They advocate for a different system, *spreadability*, which ascribes (though not necessarily in quantitative ways) value to the interest that fans help to generate in the media franchises they follow by sharing and endorsing it. The stickiness-appointment model also focuses on a specific target audience, to the exclusion of ‘excess’ or ‘irrelevant’ groups who advertisers do not wish to target and who therefore do not affect network’s broadcasting priorities. These ‘undesired’ sections of the audience do nothing to enhance a media property’s value to advertisers, and may in fact harm it by watering down the concentration of the key demographic.

Indirect sources of value include endorsing, sharing, and recommending content (Stribling 2013). While these avenues for value creation by fans are beginning to be measured and taken into consideration (Wattercutter 2013), the existing model of impressions and Nielsen ratings continues to dominate advertising decisions.

The members of the ‘Save *Chuck*’ movement are unlikely to have seen their actions within the analytical framework of converting indirect to direct value, and the campaign was broader than the Subway sandwich stunt. *Chuck* fans also attempted to act within the existing media measurement framework, with fans urged to watch the show when it aired rather than recording it to DVR and a campaign to call Nielsen families to boost ratings. In carrying out what amounted to a series of direct economic actions, *Chuck* fans at least in part acknowledged the supremacy of the stickiness-attention model of quantifying media impact and value. Jenkins and colleagues (2013) frame this acknowledgement as a pragmatic move by fans to make themselves heard by the network. In a truly convergent, democratic, and responsive media environment, however, *Chuck* fans’ sentimental investment in the show would be incorporated into an appraisal of the show’s performance, in addition to the economic return that their eyeballs and purchasing provided.

In setting out the parameters and future of convergence culture, Jenkins (2006) anticipates a new model where content producers and media conglomerates are forced to respond to audiences and consumers at least partly independent of their economic influence. The *Chuck* Subway campaign’s methods were primarily economic, and so it does not directly represent the emergence of this new model. The campaign, however, perhaps foreshadows a more hybrid model, where audience intent and preferences are coupled

with financial motives in the decision-making process of content producers and network executives. In addition to buying sandwiches, participants in the Subway campaign wrote requests for the show's renewal on comment cards at the franchises they patronized (Patch 2009)—a direct, emotive appeal coupled with an indirect economic message.

Convergence culture uses the language of democracy and participation, and though it addresses political concerns and media, that language also applies to discussions of entertainment content. If Kozinets' (1999) concept of a virtual community of consumption is the form that fan collectives take in convergence culture, then Hartley's (2010) notion of *media citizenship* is what each individual fan possesses. Media citizenship, according to Hartley, involves "the use of popular media by lay audiences for identity-formation, associative relations, and even for periodic actions that reverse 'consumer demand' from a corporate strategy to a popular movement" (2010, p 239). Media and its content are thus elevated above mere time-passing, even when the content is entertainment. If Stribling (2013) and Jenkins (2004, 2006) are making an economic and emotive argument for an increasingly participatory media environment, Hartley (2010) is making a political one. Communities that coalesce around particular media properties are something more than mere mutual interest societies. They are imagined communities across boundaries of 'real' citizenship and affiliation.

A TV show's fan base is, of course, very different from a rights movement or political protest, and as entities may be better suited to the notion of citizenship. Jenkins (2006) suggests, however, that the use of an engagement- and participation-based model of behaviour towards media by popular culture audiences may foreshadow a similar move on the part of those grappling with the more 'serious' fields of news or politics. With entertainment media, Jenkins argues, the stakes are low but the emotional payoff is arguably higher—entertainment properties are a lot more 'fun' than political ones. Hartley's (2010) argument is slightly more edifying to entertainment audiences. In his conception, media consumption is a form of citizenship, regardless of the content of the media in question. He predicts an increased fragmenting of audiences, and, in turn, ratings, necessitating a shift in the nature of media citizenship. As individual media forms and properties become less popular, a form of do-it-yourself citizenship will emerge, an increasingly democratic engagement with media governed by the associations and desires of smaller groups of individuals still interested in those properties and forms.

Participation is at the heart of Deuze's (2006) exploration of digital culture. As with Jenkins and colleagues (2013) on participatory culture, Deuze (2006) emphasizes that the behaviours and expectations of participants in digital culture are not new; they draw on existing media and social structures. Deuze is also not necessarily making a normative or value argument—not everyone will be affected by the changes wrought by digital culture. Rather, Deuze asserts that within the circles where digital culture is pervasive it will be "created, reproduced, sustained and recognized" by and through existing social systems (71). The digitally-adept *Chuck* fans who organized and participated in the Subway campaign would not have formed a coherent

community without the show and existing social structures. Their actions, and the campaign's implications for convergence culture, are thus predicated on a non-digital form of media (television) and the need to preserve the status of a media text within that form (keep the show on the air).

A dominant feature of digital culture, according to Deuze, is *distantiation*, or the manipulation of the dominant way of doing things in order to challenge or subvert the mainstream. Distantiation requires "being deeply immersed in the system while at the same time attributing legitimacy and credibility to a self-definition of working against or outside of the system, as well as reforming the system from within" (Deuze 70). In an agentic sense, this is what *Chuck* fans were doing in April 2009—twisting the stickiness—appointment emphasis on audience attention and advertiser value delivery to their advantage, while subtly subverting that very system by showing that a relatively small audience could produce an important economic effect. Thus while the message of the *Chuck* Subway demonstration was economic ('if you keep our show on the air we will buy sandwiches'), it seems reasonable to view the actions of the individuals involved through Deuze's political lens.

The *Chuck* Subway-buying campaign worked: the show was renewed for a third season, in partnership with the restaurant chain. However, low ratings remained a consistent problem for the show, which was ultimately cancelled in 2012 (Rodman 2012). Convergence culture, however, may hold hope for the show's fans.

Raymond Williams (1977, cited in Jenkins et al. 2013) wrote of the *residual*, areas of human experience or cultural creations that the present dominant culture ignores or undervalues. The *long tail* phenomenon, whereby digitization allows media owners to make large back-catalogues of content available without compromising present media properties (Jenkins 2006) provides hope for such residual cultural objects. Retro media fans, in the conception of Jenkins and colleagues (2013), do not simply show new interest in residual media content and spread that interest via endorsement and sharing behaviours. They also add new value to the content, creating markets for existing and new products related to that residual cultural property.

The revival of retro brands does not just serve nostalgic fans of a media text or product; it expands the potential audience of a revived media property. When more entertainment content is available for consumption, more of the disparate cultural needs of media-consuming audiences can be met—one of the key tenets of convergence culture (Jenkins et al. 2013). Thus new fans are arguably the real economic incentive for content producers to adhere to a long-tail system of providing access to media properties. If a show (or album, painting, piece of literature, etc.) is picked up by the right retro media users and its popularity returns, it could once again generate income. It is not inconceivable that *Chuck* could be revived at a later date. If the show has residual value—and the Subway campaign is itself evidence that its adherents saw *Chuck* as a valuable media property—then there is reason to believe that the process of rediscovery that Jenkins and colleagues (2013) describe could occur here.

The campaign by fans to renew the NBC television show *Chuck* through the purchasing of foot-long sandwiches at Subway restaurants reflects

many of the components and consequences of Henry Jenkins' (2006) concept of convergence culture. The hundreds of *Chuck* enthusiasts who ate at that particular restaurant chain were sending a message about their economic value and the importance of catering to the preferences of engaged and emotionally invested audiences, regardless of a show's ratings. The appointment-stickiness model of media management is obsolete, according to Jenkins and colleagues (2013). Content producers and media property owners must respond to increasingly vocal virtual communities of consumption emotionally invested in an increasingly large number of media texts. Convergence culture does not bring with it the death of traditional media, because it relies on the texts and forms that traditional media generates to give consumers something to remediate and distantiate. If there was no NBC, there would be no *Chuck*, and no 'Save *Chuck*' Subway-buying campaign, and pop culture scholars would be the poorer for it.

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SOFIA CUTLER

Sofia Cutler is a writer and an English Specialist at the University of Toronto. These days she works in marketing at the Museum of Inuit Art, and, in her spare time, she enjoys playing guitar, eating tacos, and all things Jane Austen. This coming fall, Sofia is looking forward to attending graduate school.

LOST IN AUSTEN:

THE AUTO-EROTICS OF AUSTEN-MANIA IN POPULAR CULTURE

by Sofia Cutler

Guy Andrews' 2008 mini-series *Lost in Austen* begins with Amanda Price opening her copy of *Pride and Prejudice*.

"It's like a window opening," she muses, a dreamy montage of balls, carriages, and sweeping English countryside playing out across the screen in hazy resolution. "It's become a place I know so intimately. I can see that world. I can touch it. I can see Darcy."

The daydreaming heroine pursues her perfect man's fleeting silhouette across a garden. However, the moment before he turns around, Amanda is thrust back into her 21st century London flat. Andrews' series repeatedly ridicules Janeites; in her essay "What Does the Name 'Jane Austen' Authorize?" Harriet Margolis quotes Claudia Johnson as defining Janeites as modern Austen devotees who possess a "self-conscious idolatrous enthusiasm" (Margolis 27) for Austen's work. Andrews represents Janeitism as an autoerotic reading practice where, by participating in Johnson's idolatry, Janeites forego everyday reality for romantic fantasy. *Lost in Austen* portrays the harmful consequences of this practice when it fulfills the Janeite's ultimate romantic fantasy through actual fantasy: Andrews grants his contemporary characters entrance into Austen's regency world. When Amanda Price discovers a bathroom time portal into *Pride and Prejudice*'s Hertfordshire, she realizes the harsh realities of Regency England and the errors of her imagination.

In the opening onanistic reading scene from *Lost in Austen*, pages from *Pride and Prejudice* flit across the screen before dissipating into Amanda's flights of fancy. Her imagination naturally adapts the novel into a kind of erotic fan fiction. When asked why readers feel so compelled to compose their own versions of Austen's stories, Myretta Robens, manager of *The Republic of Pemberly*, tells the BBC: "Quite frankly, I think a lot of people want

more sex, particularly with Elizabeth and Darcy. It's an escape" ("Janeites: The Curious American Cult of Jane Austen"). In her essay "Jane Austen and the Masturbating Girl," Eve Sedgwick discusses writing and masturbation as similar forms of escapism which offer "a reservoir of potentially utopian metaphors and energies for independence, self-possession, and a rapture that may owe relatively little to political or interpersonal abjection" (Sedgwick 821). When *Lost in Austen*'s Price reads *Pride and Prejudice* she can imagine a more rapturous world and use it to escape reality's abject circumstances, whether sexual or social.

"I patch myself up with Austen," Price says as she pushes her way across a crowded bus after a tiresome shift at the bank. "I love the love story, I love Elizabeth. The manners and the language and the courtesy. It's become part of who I am and what I want." In the First World War, traumatized British veterans were prescribed Austen novels in order to "piece together a shattering world" (Johnson 32). Likewise, Austen's well-mannered world provides bibliotherapy for Price's unfaithful boyfriend, thankless job and hectic urban life.

Price exhibits the symptoms of the onanist—a person practicing masturbation—as portrayed in the medical texts that began circulating in Austen's lifetime. Augustus Kinsley Gardiner located in the species of the masturbating girl "the emptiness of an unquiet and somber soul seeking some activity... the deception and disgust of existence" (Sedgwick 833). As she daydreams of *Pride and Prejudice* instead of doing her work, Price exemplifies the unconsciousness symptoms documented by Samuel Tissot in 1758, including "the impairment of the senses," "inability to confine the attention" and "an aire of distraction" (Sedgwick 827).

Miss Price's erotic identity is not cross-sex or same-sex, but rather is vectored inwards within her own fantasies. Her sexual solipsism divorces her from intimacy with real men. She admits, "every time I was with a man I closed my eyes and imagined it was [Mr. Darcy]." Popular culture often ridicules the Janeite as the Mr. Darcy-obsessed single woman. In the 2013 romantic-comedy *Austenland*, for example, "Austen-crazed" Jane Hayes' apartment is littered with Austenian fetishes, including a life-size cutout of Darcy that we see her kiss. Director Jerusha Hess reveals the lonely consequences of this advanced Janeitism when the main character laments she is still single because "the best men are fictional."

In *Lost in Austen*, Amanda's fictional fantasy is made flesh through the use of literal fantasy, allowing her to travel into Austen's world. But when she meets Mr. Darcy, she is disappointed.

"He's not Colin Firth," she says, "but I guess even Colin Firth isn't Colin Firth. They had to change the shape of his head with makeup." The series explores the disappointing disparity between fantasy and reality by granting Amanda Price's biggest wish: time travel to the Regency era. It offers her what the countless Jane Austen Society members can only attempt to recreate with staged costume balls and tea parties, but Price despairs to find that her ultimate fantasy is not everything she hoped it would be.

Guy Andrews' Regency is not the rosy world Janeites dream of. Price experiences first-hand the degree to which manners, money, and reputation

can restrict romance in a classist society. “This is not how I imagined it!” she cries when her inappropriate behaviour gets her kicked out of the Netherfield Ball. Andrews turns the conservative, well-mannered world Price prizes upside down: in his adaptation, Mr. Bingley is a lecherous predator; Miss Bingley, a closeted lesbian; and Georgiana, a promiscuous conniver. “That’s Jane Austen spinning in her grave like a tumble dryer,” Amanda says after Mr. Wickham, the antagonist of Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*, saves her. No matter how hard she tries to direct things, events in the manifested Hertfordshire simply refuse to obey Austen’s plots.

When Price learns that her improper birth and lack of maidenhood disqualify her from marrying a gentleman like Darcy, she rips up her copy of *Pride and Prejudice* and throws it out the window. At this moment, she symbolically repudiates her earlier view of Austen’s novel as “a window” into Georgian England. Her firsthand experience of the time period provides her with a new frame of reference that rejects her old Austenian outlook. When Darcy discovers the shredded novel he asks, “Is your name Price, or is it Austen?” His question symbolizes the extent to which Price has become both literally and metaphorically “lost in Austen.” Even before traveling through time, Miss Price lost herself and her reality in favour of Austen’s characters and their fantasy world.

Later in the series, when Darcy and Price are finally engaged, it seems she is finally about to get the fairy-tale romance she so longs for. “I would fight the world for you,” Darcy says, after following her through the porta-potty time portal back to modern day Hammersmith. “I follow you to this infernal place because I would follow you everywhere.” He goes on to reference the etymology of her name—Amanda—as “she who must be loved.” By attaching the surname “Price,” however, Guy Andrews suggests that Amanda can only achieve this great love at cost. Like Elizabeth Bennet before her, Price is taught a lesson in the ontology of literature: she realizes the inability of the literary imagination to accurately represent reality. Initially, she is disappointed with the disparity between the real Darcy and the character she has constructed in her imagination since childhood. In their progressive interactions, however, she learns to love him. “From the talking comes the love,” she explains to Elizabeth at the end of the movie. Price learns that true love is the active engagement with the Other, instead of a figment of fantasy that is identified from within the Self.

Andrews’ series recreates what Sedgwick calls the Austenian spectacle of the “Girl Being Taught a Lesson” (Sedgwick 834). Sedgwick is referring to Austen’s typical coming-of-age plot, in which a giddy girl—whether it’s Catherine Morland, Marianne Dashwood, or Emma Woodhouse—matures by learning to tame her romantic imagination. Price’s lesson follows the 20th century normalizing development model, which sees “masturbation as a way station to the full, that is allo erotic” (Sedgwick 825). She gives up her autoerotic fantasies in exchange for an allocentric love.

Andrews directs this lesson at his contemporary Janeite viewers as well. In a review of *Lost in Austen* on the *Jane Austen Society of North America* website, Laurie Kaplan writes that Amanda Price expresses the common desires of Generation-Y Janeites. These women use *Pride and Prejudice* as an escape

from the modern world, in which they can fantasize about their very own Mr. Darcy, who will “court them and pay for dinner, even after the first date” (“Lost in Austen and Generation-Y Janeites”). Through Amanda’s rude awakening into actual Regency life, Andrews shows the errors of such an autoerotic reading of Austen. He warns that this errant reading practice prevents intimacy with real men, inspires unrealistic expectations, and blinds readers to the novel’s darker subject matter. His views reflect the critical views of Janeitism circulating in the 1930s and 40s, when Austen’s works were canonized and accepted within the academy. These academic dogmas held that one could not speculate beyond the text or talk about characters as if they were real people (Johnson 36).

By uniting a contemporary heroine with Mr. Darcy, *Lost in Austen* seems to provide Janeites with the ultimate wish fulfillment. Despite its Hollywood ending, however, Andrews issues a subtle but serious warning to Janeites that reflects antiquated fears of female novel reading. In this postmodern adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* Amanda Price embodies the dangerous 1753 “Female Quixote” who loses sight of the real world and who becomes seduced by the fantasy world—in Amanda Price’s case, a fantasy world fashioned from Austen’s novels. Andrews’ series teaches this 21st century female Quixote a very old lesson.

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EDITOR BIOS

EDITOR IN CHIEF

KERRIE MCCREADIE is unhealthily passionate about grammatical integrity, badmovieology and a cappella music. She is in the fifth year of her Honours B.A. at the University of Toronto and is studying English, Semiotics and Paradigms & Archetypes (so stories, symbols that make stories, and more stories). In her spare time she runs a genre writer's circle (unofficially titled WrUT), is Editor in Chief of *Sign* (a Semiotics journal), works as a freelance book designer, and, of course, is Editor in Chief of *The Spectatorial*.

CREATIVE DIRECTOR

MAYBELLE LEUNG loves nothing more than chilling at a local coffeeshop with tea and a sketchpad. She studies English, Fine Art History, and Semiotics and Communications Theory at the University of Toronto and confesses to actually enjoying school a lot. Her interests range from watercolour painting to swing dance to, her new favourite, karate. Apart from that, also teaches piano and tutors English. Maybelle is super excited to be part of *The Spectatorial*, and was previously Fiction Editor of the *University College Review*.

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ALEXANDER PYTKA is in his final year at the University of Toronto, studying History and Philosophy with the aspiration of studying law in the future. Franz Kafka, Fyodor Dostoevsky, and Friedrich Nietzsche are the greatest influences on his creative writing. Alexander's previous experiences include being a contributing writer for the Harvard Political Review and Harvard's Tuesday Magazine. In addition to his responsibilities at *The Spectatorial*, he is also currently an editor at The Goose and the philosophy journal, Noesis.

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MATTEO DIGIOVANNI is an English and History student at University of Toronto, and is way too nerdy to talk to you at parties. In addition to reading all the Specfic he can get his hands on, Matteo also writes it in his spare time. He is the co-founder and administrator of an online creative writing forum, A Writer's Recluse. Matteo's interests include cooking, astrophysics, and tabletop roleplaying games. He is sincerely excited to join The Spectatorial staff, and is expecting to learn a lot from his talented and handsome co-editors.

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DAN SELJAK is Production Manager at The Varsity, where he oversees the visuals of the paper as well as the logistics of putting ink to paper. Dan is majoring Book and Media Studies, while minoring in Writing and Rhetoric and Philosophy. After graduation, he hopes to find gainful employment as a graphic designer and marketer. He is also currently the volunteer coordinator at the Toronto Comic Arts Festival, a large public arts festival that celebrates the illustrated medium.

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Miranda Whittaker is a writer, an avid reader of non-academic fantasies, a dancer of the 1920s-1950s lindy hop, a freelance editor, and—occasionally—a student at the University of Toronto. When she isn't copy editing blog posts for The Spectatorial, Miranda acts in her capacity as Member at Large for the UToronto Swing Club. Though she mainly studies English Literature, her imagination is riddled with the fantastic elements of fairy tales and mythologies. As a result, she has fallen in love with the The Spectatorial and is thrilled to be published in it.

EDITORIAL BOARD

EMILY MAGGIACOMO likes books more than anything else. She is borderline obsessive about speculative fiction, especially fantasy. She is working on an English Specialist degree; since she cannot study at Hogwarts, nor dwell in Rivendell, the University of Toronto is the best place in the (real) world for her. You will most likely find Emily in the Hart House library slogging her way through a mountain of essays. She's very excited to combine her love of speculative fiction and academia by working on The Spectatorial.

EDITORIAL BOARD

JANICE TO is an expert all-you-can-eat sushi eater, movie addict, and daydreamer. She spends 90% of her day wishing she were a wizard and the rest of it being a second year English and Psychology major. When she's not lost in University College or in her own thoughts, she's indulging in the mildly sadistic pastime of dragging scissor blades across grammar mistakes in publications. Janice is enamoured with speculative fiction – especially horror – and is beyond excited to be a part of The Spectatorial.

EDITORIAL BOARD

EMILY WILLAN is a third year student who is double-majoring in English and History. She was introduced to the creativity explosion known as The Lord of the Rings at the age of eight, and has been a speculative fiction fan ever since. She has been published twice, and is considering a career in editing. She currently runs her own editing service. As a staff member at The Spectatorial, she is eager to share her passion for this underrated "genre".

EDITORIAL BOARD

LISA NIRO is a plot-twist loving first year humanities student who plans on majoring in English. An aspiring author, she has been published twice in her hometown newspaper and has won writing awards for her short stories. Lisa loves obscure ideas, strange plots, and creepy characters; her passion for the speculative fiction is overflowing. She is very excited to be on the Editorial Board for The Spectatorial and is looking forward to reading the creative works of others.

EDITORIAL BOARD

LORNA ANTONIAZZI is a first-year student studying English, Sociology, and Women & Gender Studies at U of T. She loves reading new, interesting pieces of work and creating pieces of speculative fiction, either written or illustrated. She is an enthusiast of both fantasy and dystopian genres. Beyond exploring books for pleasure, Lorna also relishes analyzing work; all intelligent discussion is welcome, as she's always willing to open up a dialogue on the social elements of literature.

EDITORIAL BOARD

HANNAH-SOPHIE HIRSCH is an aspiring playwright, poet, and criminal mastermind who spends her free time watching movies and exploring the city. She's fresh off the plane from the US of A and is loving her first year at the U of T, where she plans to double major in Sociology and English. She has written, directed, and starred in a few plays and has also participated in competitive speech competitions. This is her first time being part of a literary publication and she is looking forward to helping make it fabulous.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED W/ THE SPECTATORIAL

Here at *The Spectatorial*, we're always looking for new blood! If you're a big speculative fiction fan, a lover of speculative movies, an analyst of speculative genres, or a lover of folklore and mythology, chances are you'll fit right in with us. Here's some crucial information that will help get you grounded, including on elections, but in the meantime make note of these important links where you can follow us *all the time*. Subscribing, liking and following are the easiest ways to know when we're looking for submissions or editors!

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The Spectatorial will be holding elections for its 2014–2015 staff in late March or early April. Nominations are due by March 19. If you're interested in participating in The Spectatorial as a part of staff, make sure to subscribe to the above outlets. You will also need to collect contributors' points if you intend to nominate yourself.

Contributors' points are how we keep track of how many times someone has participated or contributed to The Spectatorial. They can be collected in many ways. Any instance of copy editing, designing, blogging, illustrating, or submitting is considered a point; you can help market us through posterage or helping with our social media accounts; and, finally, you can attend our contributors' meetings, which occur once or twice per semester.

If interested in applying for a staff position, please send an email to thespectatorial@gmail.com outlining which position you're interested in and how you would like to collect contributors' points (should you not already be contributing to the journal). The elected positions are:

*Editor in Chief; Creative Director; Fiction Editor; Nonfiction Editor;
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By the time you hold this journal in your hands, *The Spectatorial* will have completed its calls for submissions for the year. But, fret not, we will return next year! All you have to do is like our facebook page, join our newsletter list, or subscribe to our blog in order to be notified the moment we open submissions again.

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The Spectatorial publishes blog posts one to three times a week. Blogs are quippy, informative 400–800 word pieces on speculative fiction—we accept reviews, opinion pieces, interviews, and many other topics. This is a great way to get involved and to get your foot in the door if you'd like to apply for staff at any point!

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COPY EDITORS:

Every good journal would make some very dumb mistakes without a team of excellent copy editors. Our copy editors perform copy and fact checking for our blog posts and our print journals—blog editing is done online, while print copy is done in-person before publication. Send us an email and we'll let you know what copy editing needs you can satisfy!

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ILLUSTRATORS:

Do you draw? Create online graphics? We try and illustrate as many of our pieces as possible, so we're always looking for illustrators to pick up the slack. If interested in illustrating for *The Spectatorial*, please send a portfolio of 2–5 pieces to the creative *Spectatorial* account, and the Creative Director will get back to you as soon as possible.

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