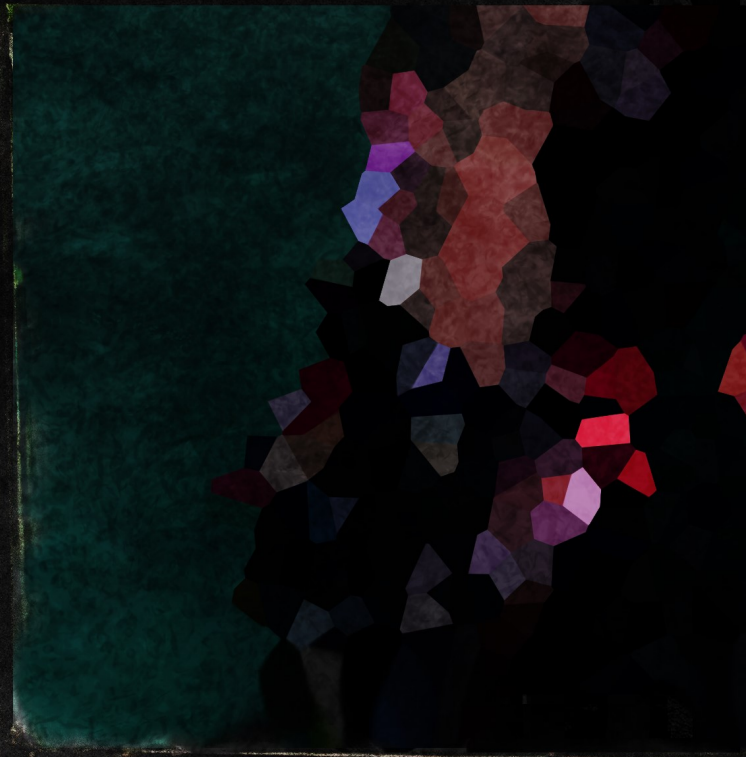


VENTANAS



FALL 2018

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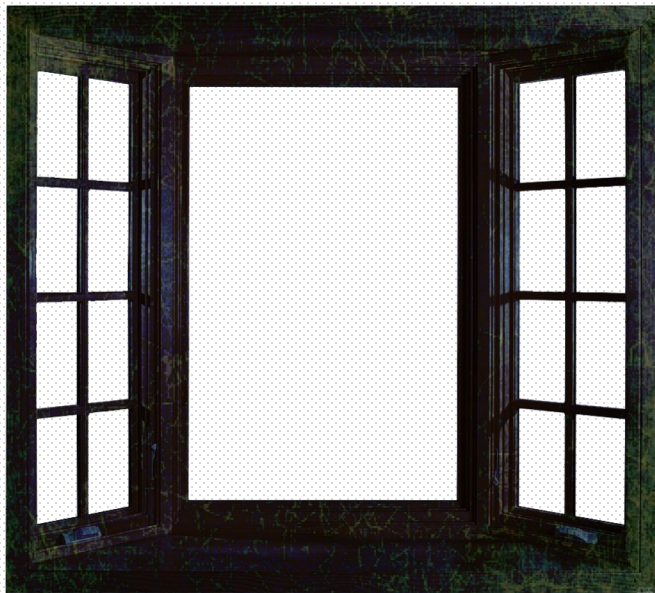
WELCOME TO VENTANAS

Ventanas: Spanish for “windows.”

noun, often attributive

win·dow \ 'win-(,)dō \ : a means of entrance or access; especially: a means of obtaining information. — a window on history.

We are *Ventanas*, a southwestern publication made up of horror fans looking to legitimize the genre as a “window” that allows us to view, express, and reflect upon our societal fears and anxieties. We want to push the boundaries of what is considered “horrific” and “truly” scary within our current world and rescue the horror genre from its mainstream conditions of whiteness and heterosexuality/normativity so that it can be pulled apart to expose the tensions within that often go ignored. That being said, issues/topics that we are particularly interested in exploring are (but not limited to) race, gender, sex/sexuality, class, identity, civil/humans rights, “otherness,” and many more.



Death By Apple by A. J. McEvoy



A.J. McEvoy is a writer, musician, and photographer getting her bachelor's in English at New Mexico State University, where she is a senior. She enjoys quiet nights in with books, music, and movies, with the occasional cat for company. She also has a guitar named Ginsberg, and has ambitions to move to Portland, Oregon. For more of A. J.'s photography, you can visit her Flickr [aj_mcevoy](#).

Untitled

Quenenie is a 22-year-old English major studying at UC Berkeley and is interested in the grotesque, the inexplicable, and the unknown. They enjoy taking long walks into the abyss.





plantain



eyedentitytheft



manicpanic

Marinna Shareef is a 20 year old Trinidadian multimedia artist who manipulates both digital and physical media to portray the magnitude of her emotions that she experiences as someone who has bipolar disorder. Using visual imagery to organize her thoughts into a way that she can better understand, she aims to take viewers out of their world and into hers so that they can have a better understanding of the illness. You can find her digital work on Instagram, [@mahrinnart](https://www.instagram.com/mahrinnart).

Diné Bahane

by Oscar Zamora

Anselmo watched Dr. Sauer's unconscious body, trying to make sure he was still breathing. The electric shocks had messed with his muscles, but he was able to keep himself standing. The creature across the table spoke to him.

"Pick him up," it said in its strange, wheezy voice. "We need him for the ritual."

Anselmo, unsure if he could move his body, felt the thing ooze into his mind, forcing him to grab the small man and throw him over his shoulder. He couldn't remember if this was a dream. Everything felt real. Since he had been thrown into this asylum a few weeks ago, his mind had not been the same. At first, he had thought it was the pain medication and the psychotic drugs mixing badly, but soon he realized it was something else altogether.

When he slung the body over his shoulder, he was back in the Filipino jungle. He smelled the bleach and other chemicals used to clean the asylum, but he also felt the cold rain soak his body through. The wound in his gut was there too. He was being dragged through the mud. He saw Tommy Gun and Phillip's backs, also soaked through with rain. They hadn't left him, even though they probably should've. He heard a faint whisper, a voice he had heard before, but not in this jungle.

The bleach smell was strong, but he now smelled the blood and the mud and the fucking hell of a jungle. He heard his dog tags clink as they moved him, and the fire in his stomach was unbearable. Every time he got snagged and they had to pull a little harder, it felt like his body was gonna rip in half. Then they dropped him, and his head hit the mud. He knew why they dropped him the first time he was here, but this time he didn't hear any shouts in Japanese or gunshots.

Before he knew it, the rain stopped, and he was back on the piss-stained floor of the jail cell he was in a few days ago. He heard the Sheriff shouting that he was a dirty Injun and would get drawn and quartered for what he had done. Another voice, one he would probably never forget was there, was his Ak'éeí, her old voice telling the Sheriff he was a good boy. She had not been alive for twelve years, so hearing her talk to a man he had met a few days ago was unnerving.

There was a gunshot, and when he tried to get up, someone kicked him in the ribs. The pain knocked him into a different land. He was standing on a large rock plateau. It was an island of rocks over a vast grassy plain. Not too far away there was a settlement. He couldn't understand why but he could see its inhabitants. Not people, but creatures that were neither human nor animal. Then, quickly, dark clouds and lightning formed above him and circled out towards the village. There was fear and worry on the faces of the creatures.

In the shadow, he began to see wings and could make out the silhouette of a large bird. It looked like a vulture, but he could only make it out when the clouds lit up. The sound of the feathers was so loud it made his head hurt. He fell to his knees just as the creature was about to push out of the dark clouds. He heard the screams and cries from the others below him.

His body was screaming; he couldn't move. He was sweating all over. Somewhere over the din of the thunder and the booming wings, Anselmo heard, "Inject him!" Just as the creature was poking its beak out of the black clouds, a rush of euphoria took over his body. The fringes of the world shook, and he was back in his bed, strapped down. Nurse Thomas was injecting him and Dr. Sauer was observing his reactions, jotting things down.

The world went dark and someone whispered, "You are one of my people."

Anselmo heard whistling in the void. The song playing from the radio was about a shoe shine boy from Chattanooga but he couldn't place who sang it. Then the doctor spoke, "Your actions have consequences, Mr. Rodriguez." He could see himself in the bar, the whistling still loudly coming from the jukebox. Three men were standing around him and shouting.

"Do you know who that boy you hurt at the bar was?" Sauer went on. He had spoken to him about this a few nights after his arrival at the hospital.

"I've hurt a lot of people inside bars since the war Doc," Anselmo said. "You're gonna have to be a little more specific."

Dr. Sauer wrote something down on his notepad. "Can you answer the question?" His voice drifted in the air like smoke.

The men stood in front of Anselmo, untrained and without his anger. He broke one's arm, and shoved the other over a table. He tackled the leader and began punching him over and over in the face despite his screams. He heard a different voice as he continued to hit the man, but suddenly found himself in the hallway of the hospital.

"They call him El Doctor de los Gritos, Indio Fuerte. Be careful." Ramon, the hospital janitor, stood over him, with his kind, wrinkled face, unfazed by the blood. He began mopping around him, swishing the blood. Anselmo looked down and saw his own face, the he had looked after months in the prisoner camp. He looked like one of the Día de los Muertos skeletons his aunt would decorate their house with.

Anselmo's shoulder hit a wall, popping his eyes back into focus. He was in the abandoned hallway headed to the basement. Dr. Sauer was on his back, wheezing. A fog had been lifted for a moment. What am I doing? he thought. He didn't want to continue forward but the voice came again: "You are one of my people."

Anselmo felt it again, the presence in the room with him. It pulsed from the corner of the room. The first night he was here, he saw the big eyes like those of a bird watching him. He'd sworn to himself that it was just the pills they had given him, doing their work on his brain. When the voice spoke, he figured he'd completely lost his mind.

"Tsela Rodriguez, you are one of my people." Nobody had called him by his middle name since his grandma passed away.

He always remembered how cold it was the night his father was cast out of the tribe. Not even a full week after the funeral of his mother, they came and told them he had 'till dawn to be off their land. Most were angry but as the elders said, those were the rules. "Our land," they said, looking through him. As if Anselmo didn't belong even though it was just his father they were kicking out. They knew Rodrigo wouldn't leave his son, a creature the elders viewed as an abomination. The bitter cold invaded everything: the land, the house, the people, but not his grandma. Her voice was warm. She couldn't stop them, but she would not be a part of it. They gasped—she was a respected elder—but where Tsela went, she would follow. For many years, she took care of him while his father threw himself into his work to avoid the grief of losing his wife and the mother of his son.

"Tsela, you are my people," the voice repeated, but this time it wasn't in his head. The shape in the corner shifted towards him. He could make out its head; it looked like the head of a dog. If he said anything, Dr. Sauer and the whole hospital would know that he was truly and utterly crazy, but even so, he didn't want the voice to keep calling him by that name.

"My name is Anselmo," he whispered to the shadow in the corner. The sound it made was half between a choke and a wheeze, but he was certain it was laughter.

"Call yourself what you wish, but you are a descendant of the Naayéé[®] Neizghání and Tóbáíshchíní."

Those names were very familiar. His grandma would tell him stories when he was a boy about how these twins, both heroes of their people before time even existed, had rid the world of the monsters that had come after the creation of their world—the fourth world. Anselmo hadn't believed those stories then, and he was having a lot of trouble believing them now.

"I know you are filled with pain, Anselmo," the figure said. "You are filled with anger, confusion and fear."

"No shit. I'm talking to a shadow." He hadn't meant to say it out loud, but the words left his mouth before he could stop them. The shadow with the dog's head made the laughing noises again. Anselmo asked, "If you are one of my people, why are you speaking English?"

"I am not. You understand me in the only language you know because you have been lost."

That last word made him upset. He wasn't lost. They were cast out because they weren't welcome. After losing his mother at the age of eight, he lost everything else too: The friends he grew up with, the only other family he knew. They had to abandon everything to move to El Paso and move in with his uncle and aunt.

Anselmo didn't want to talk to the shadow anymore. He yelled for the nurse despite the horrible pain in his bruised chest. She probably wouldn't come, but the yells from the other patients might

spook this thing away. The creature pulsed in the corner while he yelled again. He closed his eyes against the throbbing in his ribs. Soon everyone in his wing was yelling something or other, a cacophony of crazy hoots and hollers.

By the time it died down and he opened his eyes, the creature was gone, but he wasn't strapped down, he was in an alley. The bullies from his school screamed his name, running towards him. He ran, as he always did, to avoid them. He tripped and as they kicked and punched him, the world shifted and he was in his old kitchen. His Ak'úi, cleaning his wounds and telling him of the bravery of the Twins. She spoke of how the Nayenezgani had defeated the Tsenahale, a horrible vulture-like monster, and then she turned to dust.

Anselmo reached for her and found himself being punched in the gut in the barracks, landing on the floor, his drill sergeant shouting in his face. Before he could do anything, Tommy Gun stopped him, telling him it wasn't worth it. Tommy dripped with blood next to him, then burst into geyser spray. The drill sergeant turned into a creature of complete darkness and swallowed him whole.

He was in his bed again, Nurse Thomas talking to him as he ate. This was real, he thought. This is happening, or at least happened. His hands weren't restrained, and the scars were fading from where he was cutting. His leg felt strong enough to stand on. She didn't seem to notice his fear as she told how she arrived in New Mexico. Her father needed the arid climate and he had picked Albuquerque; she had followed because he couldn't afford a nurse. She was a thin, tall woman but her face, although slightly worn, was kind. She told him that once he passed away she needed a job and this was the only place hiring.

He discussed his grandma with her, and his feeling of abandonment in a place that wasn't his home when he was eight. He told her that fighting was all he was good at, and it was a good thing the gods had made him strong and tall enough to hold his own. Nurse Thomas laughed but what came out of her was the wheeze of the monster, and the room shrunk around him. He felt his body shrink too. He was a child again. But now he was sitting and facing Dr. Sauer, his desk large and looming despite the man's actual stature.

"The men whose eyes you popped out," said Dr. Sauer, "were none other than the good Sheriff of Sandoval County's deputy... and his son, Roger Jones Jr."

The anger in him boiled. "Poor Roger Jr. isn't going to be shooting straight anymore then," Anselmo said.

The doctor chuckled, wrote some notes down, and continued, "Have you always had your temper?"

Anselmo couldn't remember a day since his mother's death that he didn't have to fight tooth and nail against people who hated him for one reason or another.

"It's been more than a few years since the war," said Dr. Sauer.

"It hasn't been enough." Sauer said nothing, just held Anselmo's gaze. "I've had to fight my whole life, but I tried to avoid it if I could. Since the war, I've tried to avoid fighting less and less." It was the first time he had actually said something real to a person of authority.

"That was an honest answer, Mr. Rodriguez. I see we are making progress."

The words lingered as Anselmo tore down the boards blocking a long-abandoned door. He felt the splinters in his hands but the pain didn't register. He braced himself and kicked in the door. A dank, rotten smell hit him hard.

"It is time," the voice said as he picked up the doctor and carried him into the dark room.

It was the recreation room. He sat at a table alone, in his wheelchair, reading a novel by a man named Fitz. Everyone stayed away from him. The natives in the corner were terrified of everyone, especially the orderlies. One got called out to Dr. Sauer's office for a session; his body shook when they escorted him out. Anselmo pretended not to notice but anger simmered underneath his skin. Some of Ramon's stories played in his head. He couldn't pay attention to the novel, but he continued to try to read. He felt someone sit in front of him and his muscles tensed.

"I heard you popped out that little brat's eye."

He looked up to see the man they called Big Joe. He was a native man. He hadn't been with the others; nobody could say what tribe he was from and he never told them. Anselmo nodded. Big Joe stuck out his hand to shake it but when he grabbed it, Big Joe's arm became an angry rattlesnake and his body exploded into big black beetles. Anselmo leapt back just as the snake tried to bite him, but it was too fast and it bit right into his forearm. He shook the snake off and stumbled backwards, poison digging into his chest. He couldn't hold himself up and collapsed backwards onto the floor.

The landing transported him in his room with crutches under his arms. The pain from the bite travelled to his legs when he pushed himself to walk again, with the help of Ramon and Nurse Thomas. The pain proved too much and he yelled at them, collapsing into his bed. Nurse Thomas gave him some meds and ushered Ramon out of the room. Something lingered in the corner.

"You must help your people." The voice was distinct, like an animal trying to speak through human vocal cords. It was wheezy and made weird clicks on certain sounds.

"Good evening to you too." Anselmo had a problem with authority, but now he knew that he definitely hated ghosts more.

"I am not a ghost," it said, reading his mind. He liked this creature even less now. "I have done great things for all mankind, but now I need your help. You have been chosen."

"Not a big believer in prophecies, friend. Sorry."

"You are quick to wit and anger but deep down you know you are different. She told you

you were different. They both did, and they were both right." This had to be another hallucination. The nurse had told him the pills might do that to him. He could call for her if it wouldn't go away, but he was curious where this was going.

"Let's say I am different. How am I supposed to help you when I can't even walk?"

"We are patient. We know you will be better soon enough." The response had been quick; it obviously enjoying that he was toying with the idea.

Anselmo questioned, "What am I helping you with, if I may ask?"

He felt a strong pulse from the darkness when it answered, "You must free us, and with that we can assist you to take back this land from those that have stolen it from you."

Anselmo didn't hate the idea but he didn't trust it. This thought followed him into the present as he lit the last candle in the basement room.

Candlelight made the room look worse. He had done what it had asked and brought everything he needed. With Ramon's help he had acquired candles, red chalk, and a bowl. Ramon had been curious but Anselmo told him he wanted to draw after hours, like he had when he was a child. They didn't allow pencils, so the chalk and black paper was not out of the ordinary. When he asked about the bowl, he just shrugged and Ramon didn't ask again. The creature also needed some of his blood. He cut his hand with a scalpel from the good doctor's room of fun. He poured it into the bowl.

It was across from him now. It had the head of a coyote, a slender man's body but with large paws for feet. The thing's hands, though, were almost like talons with how long and sharp the fingers were. It told him it was Coyote. His Ak'éei spoke of Coyote in many of her stories to him.

"Aren't you a trickster?" Anselmo asked.

"I am. But I am also the one who helps our people the most." The demigod looked very pleased in the candlelit room.

Anselmo began to chant the words, "Lirach Tasa Vefa Wehlic, nítch'i bida'iiniziinii." The phrase felt clunky to him, but he chanted it three times as the creature dragged Sauer to him. He put the knife to the doctor's throat, then realized Sauer wasn't breathing.

"He's dead," Anselmo informed the creature, who let out a roar. He heard feet shuffling behind him, but before he turned around, someone was already saying, "Que demonios haces?!"

Anselmo looked at his friend Ramon standing outside the door. Neither moved, not knowing what to do next. Everything froze around him and the voice of the creature in his head told him to bring Ramon into the room. He wanted to refuse. Anselmo felt doubt again, as he had in Dr. Sauer's office earlier that evening.

The good doctor and Anselmo had reached the end of their first phase of therapy. The therapy had had no screams despite what Ramon had said. Sauer had given him a few days off before they started their next phase on the night of the harvest moon. The creature had told him that it, too, needed to recharge itself to be ready for the ritual. Anselmo spent the days without the creature among Ramon and Nurse Thomas. He was even able to visit Big Joe and play chess with him.

The days had been filled with laughter, and games. His anger faded. He felt the hold the entity had on him lessen. On the eve of everything, Nurse Thomas, who had finally introduced herself as Judy, brought him some late night Jell-O. She sat and told him some funny anecdotes of the hospital, stories of patients saying hilarious things or orderlies doing dumb things. Sometimes she would call the hospital "the watermelon," like the others, but mostly they just called it the asylum. He told her about his grandma and his father and how they were both good people that were plagued with tragedy.

His grandma had gotten what the doctors called *dementia praecox*. It came so suddenly that she was a different person almost overnight. All her stories and all the knowledge she held inside her were gone almost instantly. His father, never able to deal with his mother's death, had welcomed the long hours and late nights in the factory, making sure they had a roof over their heads and food on the table. (This had led him straight into an early grave when he had a stroke at the age of 50.)

He told Judy what he hadn't told anyone: he cried the day he was given the letter. He cried not only for his father's demise but that he couldn't say anything when they buried him.

Judy said, "I'm sorry," and her sincerity made him feel something that wasn't anger or cynicism. When she left he felt doubt for the first time. Maybe there was a different way, maybe this was too much. He had no dreams that night. Listening to Dr. Sauer praise their progress, he tried to remember what had led him to commit to helping the creature and he thought of Big Joe.

Ramon rushed into his room, almost collapsing on his bed. He was sweating. He was going to have a heart attack if he didn't calm down.

"Sabes, what happened?" Anselmo asked.

Ramon always mixed languages when he was excited but Anselmo, although not having spoken fluent Spanish since after the war, understood him perfectly. He shook his head.

"Big Joe just lost his eye," Ramon said. "In group therapy, Ricky started yelling about whispers and lunged at him with a shank. Dr. Sauer did nothing while he stabbed his arm."

Anselmo was silent. Big Joe had been the only patient to treat him with respect.

Ramon continued, "After he stabbed him in the eye they pulled him apart. Vez, I told you they always disrespect the indios. The screams I hear at night are only indios."

Anselmo grew dark with fury. Ramon, knowing his mood swings, told him he had work to do and left quickly.

Anselmo closed his eyes and fell into a deep, anger-filled sleep. In it, he saw his two best friends when they met in basic, being shipped overseas, then the long walk. Like before, he felt the rain and the blood dripping from his stab wounds. His two friends, told to leave him, dragged Anselmo despite their own wounds and fatigue. Before he reached his friends' horrible demise, he was put into a different procession of lost souls. Except on this walk, women and children also suffered, not just soldiers. They walked next to people who walked like zombies on vast plains completely different from his jungle. A mother and child collapsed next to him, but before he could reach out to help the mother, she was shot in the back by a soldier on horseback. He lunged for the soldier instead and was shot in the chest. He fell to the floor, being dragged to other massacres. He witnessed them as both a victim and a killer. He wasn't sure if this was all true, but it seemed too real to ignore.

When the creature came back and whispered his name to him, Anselmo asked one question. "Are these stories real?"

Without hesitation the creature responded, "Yes," in his grandma's voice.

The air around Anselmo moved again and Ramon tripped into the ritual room. Anselmo told him, "Stay out!" but Ramon was yelling at him in Spanish about playing with dark magic. Coyote had disappeared.

"Calm down," Anselmo said, but Ramon kept yelling at him. "I can explain," he added. Ramon stopped for a moment and Anselmo began telling him about what happened in the Doctor of Screams' office.

The doubt was eating Anselmo as he sat across from Dr. Sauer. He could also not understand why Coyote had abandoned him for so many days. Once Dr. Sauer opened the hidden side door, the doubt began to wear off. Anselmo felt uneasy about the meeting now. The session began to feel like a set-up. He felt how a cow might feel as it was led to slaughter.

Sauer immediately moved him into a second room adjacent to his office. It looked like an examination room with a patient table in the middle. Anselmo felt uneasy, but he never doubted he could take the doctor if he tried anything hinky. He barely had time to realize how wrong he was when the syringe pricked his skin. He was lying down and strapped in no time. As he sat there, unable to move, he felt the nodes the doctor placed on his head.

"Now," said Dr. Sauer, "this is a little experimental, but you have made such good strides in the mental therapy that we need to double our efforts to fully cleanse you of the sickness affecting your mind. Your kind," he added, "are the ones that respond best to this." Sauer turned on a machine close to his head. He could feel the hum. Dr. Sauer put a mouthpiece between Anselmo's teeth and the first shock made his entire body shake. The second shock was worse than the first one; it made Anselmo see dots in front of his eyes. The third shock came strong and lasted longer than the other two.

Pain and anger blended. In his mind he begged for Coyote, and he arrived, but not until four more shocks passed. On the last shock his mouthguard slipped from between his teeth and he re-

leased a deep yell. Now he truly understood why Ramon had come up with Sauer's nickname, and he was not happy with the revelation.

"Let me fully into your mind," Coyote said as he was shocked again.

"Yes!" Anselmo yelled, feeling his body pulse, a stronger wave than the shocks. He ripped off the straps.

Startled, the doctor tried to shock him again, but Anselmo pulled off the nodes. He held down Dr. Sauer as he placed the nodes in the places he thought would hurt the most.

"Stop," the doctor begged. "Please. It's for your own good."

Anselmo shocked him for longer than he meant to, listening to the doctor scream with agony.

"Enough! *Enough!*" Coyote yelled. "We need him! Blood and sacrifice for a new world."

Anselmo didn't like that thought but it was too late to stop. The creature was inside him.

He felt a slap and he was back in the ritual room. Ramon hadn't cared about his story.

"Stop this!" Ramon yelled.

Anselmo wanted to tell him he would, but he could say nothing when he saw Coyote behind him. The creature had transformed: it was half woman, half owl. The same long, talon-like hands were now attached to the torso of a hag with long, stringy black hair and saggy breasts, her flat face bearing a screeching beak instead of a nose and mouth.

The beast shot its taloned hand through Ramon. When the claw hand emerged, it was holding his heart. Ramon looked at Anselmo with a mixture of sadness, pain and confusion.

"Say it," the creature compelled him, and Anselmo recited the words again backwards. It dropped the heart into the bowl and then the world truly shifted, the ground beneath him shaking. He fell backwards. The floor exploded upwards and hideous creatures burst forth, some a terrifying mixture of human and animal, others unrecognizably bizarre.

Without even a second glance at him, they made their way towards the rest of the hospital. Anselmo leapt at the bird-woman. Talons slashed at his chest as he began stabbing it repeatedly. It screamed in pain and rage with him.

Anselmo kept stabbing. Flames danced around him; the hole in the floor had set the walls on fire. The beaked lady bit into his shoulder; he didn't react to the pain. He was able to bring the scalpel up and stab the beast right between the eyes. She wasn't expecting that, and the look of shock on her face confirmed it. Before she died, she tried to invade his mind one last time, and he could see what the demons were doing.

He could see the men being torn apart by the different creatures, and then he could see that many had been released and were being rushed through the door to the next wing by Judy and Big Joe. The monsters were hurtling toward them as they were saving lives. One cut down Jimmy the guard with ease, since he was frozen in his chair.

He willed Judy to get through the door. She finally entered after Big Joe. They slammed it shut behind them. Judy held it, a look of complete fear on her face visible through the small window. Anselmo knew the door wouldn't hold the monsters for long.

Suddenly he felt the mind of the witch shut down completely, and he was staring into its dead eyes. He had caused this. He had let his rage and pain take him hostage and he had given himself to this lying creature. Anselmo looked over to Ramon, whose face still frozen with betrayal. A thought occurred to him. He wasn't sure it would work, but he couldn't think of anything better.

He pulled the scalpel out of the bird monster, grabbed the beast, and held it like a drunk date. Then, with his free hand, stabbed himself in the gut, and pulled it to the side, making a large wound, screaming as he did. He stood over the portal into the horrible hell.

He thought of his Ak'úi, of his father and mother, of Tommy and Phillip and Ramon and Big Joe, and finally, Judy. With that, he felt a certain peace. Surrounded by smoke and fire, he let himself fall into the hole. His last thought, before he was swallowed by the portal, was that hell was a lot colder than he'd imagined.

~

Filmmaker, Actor, and Writer. **Oscar Zamora** was raised on the border in El Paso, Texas. The son of two Mexican immigrants, both his parents are filmmakers although his mother chose to be a stay at home mom for many years while he was growing up. Following in the footsteps of his parents, he studied Digital Film at New Mexico State University where he earned his bachelor's degree. Having a passion for writing Oscar has written several scripts including his senior thesis and a TV Pilot that was filmed in Las Cruces, New Mexico. Academically, he continued his education by acquiring a Masters' in Pedagogy & Curriculum from New Mexico State. He has been the Director of Photography on two feature films and is getting ready to direct his first feature film in New Mexico. He currently lives in Burbank, California where he does freelance work for several film companies including Epic Pictures and Borderlands Media.

HEREDITARY



Luca Cameron is a 19 year old student from and based in Chicago. They're a sophomore currently attending school for a BFA in illustration with a focus in character concept art.

For more of Luca Cameron's work, please check out their Tumblr @pudding-ish.

Replacements

by Shaunia Grant

Brass Wire, Copper, Birth Control

Compact

Birth control is a polarizing topic. The act of taking birth control, to protect against pregnancy or to manage a chronic illness, can seem like a political statement. The right to do with one's body as they wish seems like something that is self explanatory but is a battle many people struggle with under the government. While the government tries to reduce access to this medication under religious reasoning, people who require it for any reason struggle.



Shaunia Grant is a BFA student focused in metalsmithing. Her work focuses on themes related to the body, death, and chronic illness. She is interested in mixing contemporary techniques with historical iconography.

For more of Shaunia Grant's work, check out her Instagram: [@unloadedmindset](https://www.instagram.com/unloadedmindset).

Hollie Foscett: Art and Body

Review by Tobi Northcutt-Bates

What does it mean to be unapologetically big? Hollie Foscett's must-see paintings and portraits consciously center the daily life of fat women and how that experience is ever-changing—from vulnerability to contentment, from feeling empowered to feeling broken and beaten down—the experiences captured in Foscett's painting encompass familiar undertones of what it's like to be a woman. Foscett highlights all the sides of fat women that society wishes were invisible with vibrant watercolors and bodies that nearly take up entire pages, refusing to be hidden and refusing to adhere to the rules of the "good fatty."

I love this piece not only because it's fun, but also because it's pervasive in the way that it invokes an image of body and mind coexisting: You can be fat and smart, which is a reality we aren't often told. I also can't help but think about the differences between this painting and the original sculpture by Auguste Rodin; Rodin was an artist of tradition, while Foscett seems to be challenging a past of centering male bodies and minds.



The Thinker ft. Saggy Pants

(Also, the riding up underwear and loose butt cheek feels so, so relatable.)

Foscett's art ascends the present in some respects as well. The body positive movement of today has evolved into something unrecognizable from its start in the 1960s, but Foscett's art consistently re-centers the narrative back around the radical bodies that are pushed to the peripheries of society. Foscett breaks down the erroneous assumptions that are made about living in a fat body—she opens a window to show us how it feels and how it really looks. Foscett's characters are not in denial, they are not sick or thin people waiting to get out, they are familiar with what it's like to live in their own bodies. These lived-in experiences don't try to tell us what is and isn't okay to feel, they show us the full spectrum of emotions and experiences that fat women live. By doing this, Foscett celebrates the bodies that have been historically and contemporarily discriminated against.

What state are fat women allowed to exist in?

When a woman steps out into the world we seem to think that this is an invitation—to criticize, abuse, mistreat. Being a fat woman isn't safe or easy. And yet, when I see "body positive" art I only see one side to a woman's existence—one where everyone is smiling and embracing each other, surrounded by love and flowers. There's nothing wrong with that kind of art, of course, but it does reinforce specific ideals of what a woman's relationship with her

body should be. Foskett doesn't try to make us think that women should be positive or love themselves all the time; no one is perfect and happy all the time, ready to kick ass and take names when the abuse starts raining down. Fat women especially are pressured to maintain this image, that nothing can hurt them and that everything is fine.



Crybaby



The journey behind has lead you to the choices ahead



A tidal wave of emotions or a washing machine of feelings?

Foskett tells the truth. Being confident doesn't change the horrible way the world treats you. It doesn't change the fact that there are countless people out there that hate you, wish harm onto you, because your body is big. Foskett's art intimately expresses the pain of what it feels like to be wounded and vulnerable. The colors are heavy, the white spaces isolating and cold. Sometimes it's okay to break down; sometimes the most powerful thing you can do in a world that tells you fat women don't have feelings is cry.

This unrealistic idea of unbending confidence won't make the world more women-friendly. But learning how to value yourself will. Let yourself shatter if you must, but don't forget to forgive yourself and to advocate for yourself. Your feelings are real—not ugly, or obnoxious, or uncalled for. Cry because you're human too. Foskett reminded me that the solution isn't to alienate my body, but to accept it as it is—



Inner peace must first endure a restless heart

I want to end this piece with a statement from Foscett herself regarding this last artwork:

I would say they are all very personal to me but the one with the most backstory is the one of the girl in the bath. I had just broken up with my boyfriend of 8 years but we were still sharing a home, I would beg him to hear me, wish for him to love me and to miss me and he never did. I remember lying in that bath for hours until well after the water had gone cold, listening to harrowing music on repeat crying and crying until eventually I started to feel silly and so melodramatic that it made me laugh. Imagine all that heartbreak and then laughing? I was liberated, it was like being me again, getting some strength back. And although things weren't perfect and the months to follow were incredibly draining, that moment of crying in the bath reminded me that I would be okay. That I would get through this sadness.



That time when I was having a melodramatic cry in the bath to every song by Kodakone.

Find more of **Hollie Foscett's** must-see art and her available commissions at her Instagram **@bitsifind**. Hollie also has an Etsy shop called **bitsifind**. (<https://www.etsy.com/uk/shop/BITSIFIND?ref=seller-platform-mcnav#about>)

Tobi Northcutt-Bates is planning on graduating from NMSU with a Bachelor's in English next spring. She can be contacted at **tobinorthcutt@gmail.com** for inquiries and collaborations. Her Instagram is **@cactuscakescart**

Elegy for Our 5th Grade Cells

by Taylor Fedorchak

We wrote as if asked
to describe the same scene, as if
there had been some agreement
to collaborate. Water and silence showed up
throughout the collection, and our words
did not match the world. We said crystal
clear, as if we could see
our reflections, not a basic outline.
Her Facebook now says “remembering.”
She (Emily) asked a lot of questions
then (2002) but like the rest of us,
she also wrote about water. Her cause
of death is missing—
nowhere (probably
heroin). Before
he (Ryan) brought a gun
to her house, he wrote
about crickets chirping, about being
alone. The moon appeared
in both of their poems. He (Chad)
wrote about the river. When he fell
from the tower, the ground did not
bounce him back like the trampoline
he described. The blue cover
with three sketched sunflowers (before
I had any sunflower
stories). Now I think of
the single one, held in a plastic
water bottle, the first
he gave me. It survived
the collision. Wilted, in better condition
than the hood of the van, stronger than
these older connections.

Taylor Fedorchak is an MFA candidate in poetry at New Mexico State University. She currently lives and writes in Las Cruces with her boyfriend Bradley. In 2016, she received her BA in English from Salisbury University in Maryland. Note: “Elegy for Our 5th Grade Cells” was first published by OVS Magazine.

“My Mother Should Have Been Home By Now...” by Samantha Clarkson

The story that follows was recovered from the computer of a young man who was found with a bullet through his skull. He was sitting upright in a living room chair, the gun in his hand. There was no sign of forced entry or a struggle. Therefore, we have strong reason to believe he did it himself, and this is his suicide note. The investigation surrounding this young man’s family life and the circumstances that led to his death is ongoing, and despite the disbelief many of my co-workers express at the more improbable aspects of this document, it is undeniable that it provides crucial insights to his last few days. I know several of the men on this investigation have requested off after reading it, while it encouraged the others. The video footage from the cameras mentioned in this account has not been released, therefore I could not tell you whether what is on it denies or confirms what is written here. Regardless of whether or not one believes the contents of this document are true or not, there are still numerous unanswered questions.

—

(10/03/18)

I live at the end of a long, windy road. It takes us about ten minutes to drive down it, sometimes more. It’s a dirt road, with tall trees to either side. We own the land all up and down it, so there are no other houses on the property. We never stray off the path, we never get out of the car, and we never drive it at night. Our property was surrounded by an electric fence, and a sturdy gate across the road. We don’t have guests over and we are very strict with our “no trespassing” rules.

But tonight something is wrong. My mom had to go out for something. I don’t remember what, I was doing homework when she told me. She left around five, and it wasn’t until the chimes went off from the living room that I realized I hadn’t heard her in the house for some time. Those chimes have been there for as long as I can remember. They go off at sundown, and that’s our reminder not to travel down the road or stray into the woods.

I jumped out of my seat and hurried into the living room. It was empty. The chimes had stopped ringing, but I could still hear them in my head. I went to the window and pushed the curtains to the side. My car was still there, but my mom’s was not.

I don’t know why we’ve never been allowed to stray from the house after nightfall, but the ominous shadows that the trees cast reminded me of the fear that has been ingrained into me for years. I grabbed my phone from my room and checked to see if I missed any messages from her.

Crap.

My car broke down in the driveway. I need you to come get me asap.

Are you coming? I’ve only got half an hour before nightfall, hurry.

COME GET TO ME NOW

It’s too late. I’m spending the night in the car. Lock all the doors and windows, if you hear anything don’t investigate. I’ll see you in the morning. I love you, never forget that.

Crapcrapcrap.

My mother was stuck on the driveway, a many-mile long driveway, and I'd essentially stranded her there. I looked outside again. The darkness had fallen quickly, but I could still see across the yard fairly well. I couldn't make her stay out there all night, right? I mean, that's been the one main rule in my house since I was born. Don't go outside after sunset. I didn't know what happens after sunset, I just knew it couldn't be good. I always assumed it was some kind of wildlife, but I never actually saw what was so dangerous out there. At least, not until tonight.

I tried calling my mom, but the signal wouldn't let the call go through. Instead, I sent my mom a text.

Sorry sorry! I just saw these. I'm coming to get you.

Immediately her typing bubble popped up and a second later her text came through.

NO! Absolutely not. Stay home. Stay safe. Don't go outside.

I looked outside the window. It was almost completely dark, but I could still see where the trees started. We have an electric fence surrounding our yard, and motion sensor cameras and lights set up everywhere. One time I remember there had been something that had set off the cameras and lights. The next morning I'd walked in on Mom watching the footage. She turned off the screen and quickly ushered me out of the room, but not before I caught a glimpse of what was on it. It looked like a man, probably middle-aged. The video quality was poor and my glimpse was so brief I couldn't make out any details, but I do know that something was unsettling about it. Something was off about that man. When I'd asked about who was trespassing, Mom just told me not to worry about it and called the company who did our fencing.

I was torn. Mom told me to leave her, but what if something happened to her? Her texts were urgent, and I knew something was wrong in our woods. Something dangerous.

But this was my mom! Whatever was out there, I couldn't leave her.

I grabbed my keys and went to the door. My stomach was queasy and there was some sort of lump in my throat, but I ignored it.

I took a timid step outside and gently closed the door behind me. I'd been outside at night before, but my mom was always home, it was never for more than five minutes, and I never went past the fencing. Honestly, I'd barely been outside of the light cast from the porch and windows.

I told myself that didn't matter and climbed into the car. Somehow I felt both safer and like I was even closer to danger. I quickly slid the keys into the ignition and started the car. My headlights came on and I sighed in relief. The light was like my safety blanket. As long as there was light, there was hope, even if I was surrounded by darkness.

I slowly pulled away from my house and started down the driveway. Our long, twisty, horrible driveway.

The ride was bumpy and slow. I'd never driven this road at night. In fact, I've driven at night only about twenty times in my life, and I wasn't coming home those nights. The road is unpaved and I can't remember where all the holes are. I don't want to accidentally hit an animal, or my mom, or my mom's car.

I drove the first two miles without seeing anything. I don't know where Mom broke down, but she had to be far enough away that walking would be too risky.

I kept going. Two more miles. Then two more. Nothing. Another two, still no sign of her. Finally, I reached the gate. I never saw her and I never passed her car. There was no way I could have missed her. Our driveway was only wide enough for one car to be on it at a time, and it was lined on both sides with not only tall trees but a single string of barbed wire. There was no way I'd driven past her.

Maybe she wasn't on the driveway. Maybe she'd broken down somewhere else and I'd just messed it up in my head. I pulled out my phone and checked the messages. I read them once, then read them again just to be sure.

My car broke down in the driveway...

She had to be there. But she wasn't. My stomach was starting to fold in on itself, and I looked anxiously out my window at the dark trees that surrounded me. For the first time, I locked the doors.

There was just enough space here for me to turn the car around, so I did and I began the slow trek back to my house. I had only gone about a mile when I noticed something moving out of the corner of my eye.

My entire body filled with dread, and I could feel the blood draining into the lowest parts of my body. But still, my head kept saying it could be my mom, even when the entire rest of me said I should keep going no matter what. I forced my foot to press on the brake and my car came to a stop.

Whatever was moving out there was just out of clear eyesight. It hovered just outside of the headlights, in the shadows of the trees. I was somewhat aware, in the back of my mind, that there was no car around, and nowhere to hide a car.

It was hard to see exactly what was moving out there. I forced my head to turn and my eyes to focus on it. It was tall, on two feet, but too small to be a bear. I wish it was a bear.

I watched in frozen terror as the thing came into the light. It was a man, I think. It was shaped like a man. Maybe it was the lights, but his skin was pale, like almost white. His clothes were dirty and his mouth was slightly open. He slouched and as he drew closer, I saw that he walked with a funny lurch. But that wasn't what was truly horrifying.

His eyes were gone.

It looked like they'd been clawed out, perhaps recently, as his face glistened with fresh blood. Or maybe he clawed at his face regularly, because the gaping holes were much bigger and went farther back than they would have if just his eyes were gone. But it looked like most of his face had been torn. There was a dark stain on his hands, as if he'd done it to himself

I don't know. All I know is that I slammed on the gas and drove as fast as I dared back home. I jumped out of my car and raced inside, where I locked every window and door into the house.

My mom still isn't home, I'm not sure where she is. There is one thing I'm almost certain about, though.

I think I passed at least two other figures on the hectic drive back. One was small, and one was about the size and shape of my mother.

—

(10/04/18)

I barely got a wink of sleep last night. I locked every window and door, closed every curtain, and hid in my room. I didn't plan on sleep, but the preset alarm on my phone was what woke me. I rushed to the window and looked out at my driveway. There was my car, clearly parked in a rush from last night, and that was it. I checked my phone for any messages. There were a few Snapchats from friends and a message on Instagram, but nothing from my mom.

I was gripped with a fresh wave of fear. She said she would see me in the morning, and yet nothing. Everything was still locked in the house, I went through and checked. I went into my mom's room last, which was where the monitors were.

It only took me a second to see that no one was in the room, but my eyes landed on the screens, currently live-streaming the cameras outside. I paused in the doorway, and the thought occurred to me that perhaps I should check the cameras. My Mom would check the footage every morning from the night before. I was never allowed to see the footage, but mom did tell me that if there was ever an emergency there was a sheet with instructions on how to view it in one of her drawers.

Up until this point I had somehow avoided thinking about what had happened last night, but now the images started flashing in my mind. An eyeless "man", blood, figures in the woods. Had I dreamt it? For a brief but wonderful second I almost convinced myself that it was a dream, but that moment passed quickly.

I was pretty sure this counted as an emergency, so I forced my legs over to the monitors. I felt like a pre-programmed robot as I took a seat and began looking through the desk drawers for the instruction sheet.

Finally, I pulled out an envelope with my name written on it in black marker. It was thick, but not stuffed. I ripped it open and pulled out the contents. It was three sheets of paper stapled to-

gether. The first two were handwritten, but the third was typed out instruction. I skipped to that one. I knew I needed to read the note, but I felt that seeing what was on the monitors was a more immediate concern.

Following the steps on the paper, I selected the time I wanted to start viewing the footage, then set the playback speed to 2x. I watched as my car came speeding into the parking lot, then as a clearly shaken me leapt from the car, slammed the door shut, and raced off camera to the front door. After that there was no activity for a while. For some reason that just made me more anxious.

Then, around two in the morning, something caught my eye. My breath caught in my throat and I frantically pressed the key to play it at regular speed. I leaned forward and studied the screen.

It was something at the edge of the woods. It was barely noticeable at first, but it got closer and became clearer.

It was a human figure, just like what I'd seen last night. The distance and the image quality of the night-vision camera made it difficult for me to make out any details, but there were two large and very noticeable dark stains on its face.

There was a lump in my throat that I felt I was lucky to breathe around, and there was no doubt in my mind that this was the same thing I'd seen in my headlights last night.

It hovered around the edge of the yard, wandering back and forth along a small portion of the electric fence. There was no audio for the footage, and I wondered if it was making any sound.

I watched in horrific fascination as it eventually made it's way to the driveway, where I knew we'd had the most difficulty with reinforcements. A second movement then caught my eye, and I saw a much smaller figure hovering around the fencing on the other side of the yard. It had long curly hair and wore what appeared to be an old and tattered dress. Just like the manly figure, there were large dark holes where her eyes were supposed to be. Unlike the man, she didn't move around much. Her face was angled directly towards the camera. I got the unsettling feeling that despite her lack of eyes, she knew the camera was there and was staring at it for a reason.

I was so entranced by its, or should I say her? stare that I forgot to watch the man. My heart jumped a little when I saw that he had somehow made his way past the fencing and was now slowly making his way towards my car.

Involuntarily, my eyes shifted and fell to the handwritten letter that I had previously ignored. With shaking hands I picked up the pages and began to read, keeping a watchful eye on the monitors.

If you're reading this, it probably means I'm not there to watch the monitors myself. I know you probably have a lot of questions, so I'll do my best to answer them here.

For the sake of my fingers, I'm not going to type out everything that was written in that letter. I'll instead paraphrase it and explain what I learned as well as I can. Hopefully, this will help me fully understand it myself.

I had always thought I was an only child and my father had walked out on us before I was born. I learned that both of those things were false. Not only did my father not leave us intentionally, but I had a big sister. She was about six at the time.

Apparently, when my mother was pregnant with me, she and my father had a big fight. But instead of him walking out on us like she always told me he'd done, he went into the woods to clear his head. When he came back, he wasn't the same. He looked sick, and wouldn't speak a single word to my mom.

After a dinner he didn't eat, he did something truly terrible. I could tell the memory of it still upset my mother, because her handwriting in the letter became shakier and more difficult to read. He'd begun scratching at his face earlier in the night, but it rapidly got worse. Both his hands started clawing at his eyes, getting more and more frantic. My mom and my sister both screamed at him to stop it, but it was like he couldn't hear them. Soon the blood started flying from my father's face, and that's when my mom grabbed my sister and dragged her, kicking and screaming, into the nearest bathroom, where they locked the door and eventually fell silent.

They stayed in there for several days and nights. My dad never made any sounds of pain, but they heard him shuffling around the house. At one point my mom opened the door and tried to see what was going on. His eyes were completely gone, fresh blood still seeping from the wounds. He heard my mother and began coming towards her, forcing her back into the bathroom.

While they were in there, Mom called Dad's father, desperate for help or information. He knew nothing, but agreed to do some research and found out that our land, which we had bought from the previous owners, was supposedly cursed. Every time the land changes hands, a new horror emerges.

Finally, my mom and sister watched as what was left of my dad found its way out of the house and into the woods. My grandfather flew out to stay with them for a while and try to figure out what was going on, and they began the process of putting up electric fences and gates.

My mother and grandfather were under a lot of stress, and they did everything they could to keep my sister safe. But one day, after the construction workers had left for the day, she snuck out, supposedly to look for dad. My mom was on bedrest and my grandfather didn't have the best eyesight or hearing, so no one realized she was gone until Grandfather was making dinner.

They searched the house for her, but couldn't find her. Then, after an hour of looking and yelling, they saw her approaching from the woods. Her eyes were gone, blood streaming from her face, just like my dad.

In the letter, my mom didn't talk about how I knew she must have screamed and cried. Instead, she just said that she sent my grandfather home the next morning and continued to have the fencing put back up. Over the next few months she learned that the eyeless ones — her name for them, not mine — only became active at night. She installed the chimes in the living room, put up barbed wire and security cameras, and drove herself to the hospital when she went into labor with me.

She didn't have the means or the heart to leave, so she stayed and raised me here.

As I read the letter, I slowly forgot to keep an eye on the monitors. When I finished and looked up, my heart fell to my stomach. There were three figures in the yard now. My father, my sister, and... oh God... My mother. Her eyes were now gone, too, just like the others. Her favorite shirt was soaked in blood, and her curls were filthy and limp.

I hear something outside now. I've spent too much time writing this and not enough time getting ready for another night alone. I'll update this document when I can, but for now I have more important things to do.

—

(11/09/18)

4:25 P.M.

It's been about a month.

A month of me being on my own.

I still go to school. I'm not getting good grades, though. I expect the principal to send a message to my mom at any time requesting a meeting. Needless to say, she won't be showing up for one.

I had to get a job to support myself. I can't figure out how I can get access to my mom's accounts, but for now I think I can keep it up. I don't know how long for, probably not long. I guess we'll see.

You're probably wondering about my family. It was almost impossible for me to get through the first few stages of grief. The anger bit was particularly destructive. I'm still finding shards of glass in the kitchen. I must be in the depression bit now, because I feel nothing. A customer at work commented on the circles under my eyes and I just shrugged my shoulders and kept bagging his items. My friends at school have tried to find out what's wrong, and why I didn't show up to classes for almost two weeks. I just said a family issue, and refused to expand when they pried further. We're not really friends anymore, and I don't care. I so wish I cared, but it's like a switch has been turned off.

I've seriously considered joining my family in the woods more than once. Sometimes I turn off the electric fence after nightfall and sit at the window, waiting and hoping they'll show up. Sometimes they do, sometimes not.

When that wasn't enough for me, I took to my car. I've driven down the darkened road three times now. One time I parked the car, leaving the engine running, and waited. My sister was the first to show. I could feel the bile rising in my throat, choking me, but I refused to look away. They all walked the same, with a lurch, limp, and stagger. It was almost painful to watch. Her eyes were gone, of course. Ripped from her head, I assume by herself. She wore a dress that was probably

once blue. Her shoes were all but nonexistent. It was impossible to tell with all the dirt, blood, and grime, but I liked to imagine we had the same hair color.

At first I was content with her there in my headlights because she was a safe distance away. But she got closer and drifted more into my path, and my anxiety started to grow. When she was close enough to almost touch my car, I panicked, jerked the car into drive, and took off. I almost hit her. I wonder now what would have happened to her if I had. Would I have killed her? Can they be killed? Should they be killed? Do I even have the courage to kill them?

Right now, I'm sitting at my desk. All the lights in the house are off. I can't afford to keep them on for long, I don't think. My mom didn't teach me much about bills, unfortunately. I'll probably open some of the mail that's been delivered tomorrow. I'll make some calls, see if I can pay anything from my mom's credit cards or bank accounts.

The uncertainty that stretches in front of me is probably more terrifying than the bloody family members that wander my land. So many questions circle in my mind constantly. That's probably why I haven't been feeling any emotions lately. My body shut them off because it knew that I'd be even more of an absolute mess if I was allowed to feel them all.

I've done a little research on the history of the house, but I didn't learn more than what my mom mentioned in her letter. Every time the land moved out of a family, there were more stories about the house. The details were really vague, or maybe I just don't remember them. I looked it up when I was half asleep and crying.

I guess I should want to get off the land. I mean, this place has killed my entire family, even the family I didn't know. But this is also the only place that has anything that even resembles my family. Plus, what would happen if I did leave? What horrors await the next owners? What would happen the monsters that were once my mother, father, and sister?

There's a gun in my mom's room. Two, actually. One's a handgun, the other is a rifle. I don't know much about guns, so I don't know their specific names. I'm sure my mom bought them as protection, but I've started to wonder if I should use them for something else.

This is a bit all over the place, isn't it? Doesn't matter, I guess, it's not like anyone's going to read what I've written.

It's dark now. I can't decide if I should turn the electric fence on or not. Do I want to see them? In the back of my mind I know they're not really my family, at least not anymore. But the majority of me doesn't especially care. I think I'll leave it off for now.

11:42 P.M.

My heart is racing and I want to throw up. It's been a few hours. I moved to the living room to watch out the window and somehow fell asleep. I woke up to a loud banging on the door. I don't think I've been this scared since that first terrible night on my driveway. I jerked my head up and stared out the window, straining to see as my eyes adjusted. I guess the motion lights weren't

working for whatever reason, because, well, they weren't on.

I fumbled in the darkness to turn on the porch lights, then went back to the window to see what in the world was banging on my front door. My blood ran ice, ice cold, and I swear I almost screamed and burst into tears.

It was the male creature, the one that was supposed to be my dad. He was standing on the porch, slouching and bloody. His face was angled towards the window, like he knew I was going to be there. Not only were his eyes missing, now the skin from his jaw was, as well. His teeth and part of his skeleton shone yellow in the porch light.

Even though he didn't have eyes, the way we stared at each other can only be described as eye contact. Then, in an eerie, knowing way, he raised his hand, bloody and disgusting, to beckon to me like he was asking me to come outside and join him.

I managed to tear my eyes away to see my Mother coming up on the steps behind him. My sister was standing in the grass. They all seemed to be staring at me.

I threw up. Right on the floor. I moved away from the window in time to make it just out of view of the creatures outside before I let the remains of my supper spill onto the carpet.

After that I sat on the floor for a few minutes, next to the pile of puke. It stank. It stank almost enough to cover the smell of rotting flesh that was coming from outside. The banging never ceased. It actually increased the longer it went unanswered.

I don't think I can live like this anymore. It's too hard. I can't leave, I can't stay, I have no one to turn to. I can't join the creatures on my front porch, but I can't stand their presence every night. This is my final testimonial. Isn't that what they call it? Doesn't matter. It also doesn't matter if whoever finds this believes what I've written here or not. I've warned them.

I wonder how long my body will be left to rot in this room, and what those monsters outside will do if they manage to figure out that I'm not moving anymore.

I've been writing for too long. The banging is becoming intolerable. It echoes horribly through the house. I'm going to get the gun.

This is where the document of this young gentleman ends. I've been ordered not to reveal the location of this property, nor the name of the family that once occupied it. As far as I'm aware, nothing especially unnatural has been found on this property, though as I mentioned before, the video footage is extremely confidential, and I don't believe any overnight expeditions have been ordered.

~

Samantha Clarkson is the self-published author of four books and numerous free, online works. She is also a tennis instructor and is opting out of college to learn marketing through the Discover Praxis program. She loves her cat, her bed, coffee, and all 20+ of her notebooks.

“The Whiteness of True Blood and the Bad Things that Happen to Queer Black Folk” by Shiane D. Jacocks

Tara Mae Thornton sits outside of Sam Merlot’s bar, holding an entire bottle of whiskey. There are tears in her eyes, as she takes big gulp. Then, two white men step out of the bar, drunk and whooping. They break a bottle into the woods. Tara swallows down more whiskey as she looks at them head toward the spot where Benedict Talley (Eggs) had been murdered. One of the them says, “hey, this is where it happened, dude. Andy put that serial killer nigger down right here,” and they both piss on his grave.

What’s lost to the writers of this show, is the context of this scene, of the context of the story of the only two Black main characters who live in Bon Temps, a predominantly white environment, both human and supernatural.

But this is part of the plot. This is what drives off Season 3 of HBO’s *True Blood*, and this is the framework of the so-called sexy vampire lore: every character must suffer.

Tara Thornton (played by Rutina Wesley) is angry, and validly so, but her anger is treated like it’s a problem, framed in a way that if she would just accept herself, if she would learn to love the people around her, if, if, if, then, she would be happier. Black women’s anger is often seen aggressive and irrational. For most of her life, Tara lived with her abusive mother, who had been dealing with her own anger and alcohol abuse. But like Tara’s anger, none of this is explored. We see the surface: Tara can’t hold down a job, she can’t keep a boyfriend, she curses, she brings up slavery, she complains about the “white man.” The writers have made her into the angry Black woman.

The show does not take in account all that Tara has dealt with and continues to deal with. Black writer and activist Audre Lorde wrote extensively about anger, stating that, “women responding to racism means women responding to anger; the anger of exclusion, of unquestioned privilege, of racial distortions, of silence, ill-use, stereotyping, defensiveness, misnaming, betrayal and co-option.” Next to Tara’s cousin, Lafayette Reynolds (played by Nelsan Ellis), and a few other nameless side people, these characters are the only two Black people mentioned in this show. I want to count Big John, and I do, but he is rarely seen and spends most of the time in the kitchen at Merlot’s (unless he is singing at a funeral centered around another white character’s death).

There is no room for Blackness unless it is centered around whiteness.

Tara is Sookie (played by Anna Paquin) Stackhouse’s best friend, but it’s often been one-sided. It’s all about protecting Sookie and it doesn’t matter the trouble she brings. It doesn’t matter that her telepathy contributed to Eggs’ death. It doesn’t matter that the vampires she continues to help, captured and tortured Lafayette. It doesn’t matter that Tara, in trying to protect Sookie, gets shot and turned into the thing she most hates. Nothing matters, because white person’s problems always matter more.

Black people are often sacrificing their time, their energy, their lives for white people. In the scene where Lafayette confronts Sookie about telling Alcide that she murdered Debbie, it’s treated as

if Lafayette is the mean one, and that we should feel sorry for her. But if Lafayette — Black, queer, genderfluid, went to jail, it would be different if Sookie did, and he wouldn't have a cop for a brother to save him.

In the *Behind the Scenes*, the writers said that, Tara suffered a lot, so making her a vampire was a way for her to regain control. I would say, that this has made her even more vulnerable. The same goes for Lafayette and the magic he gets. Tara is also the only Black vampire in this series, seen as a main character. However, she is terrified of this new body, one that she no longer has control of, and she is in command of a white maker. In her final scene, it is because she is a vampire that she dies. Again, she sacrifices in order to protect others.

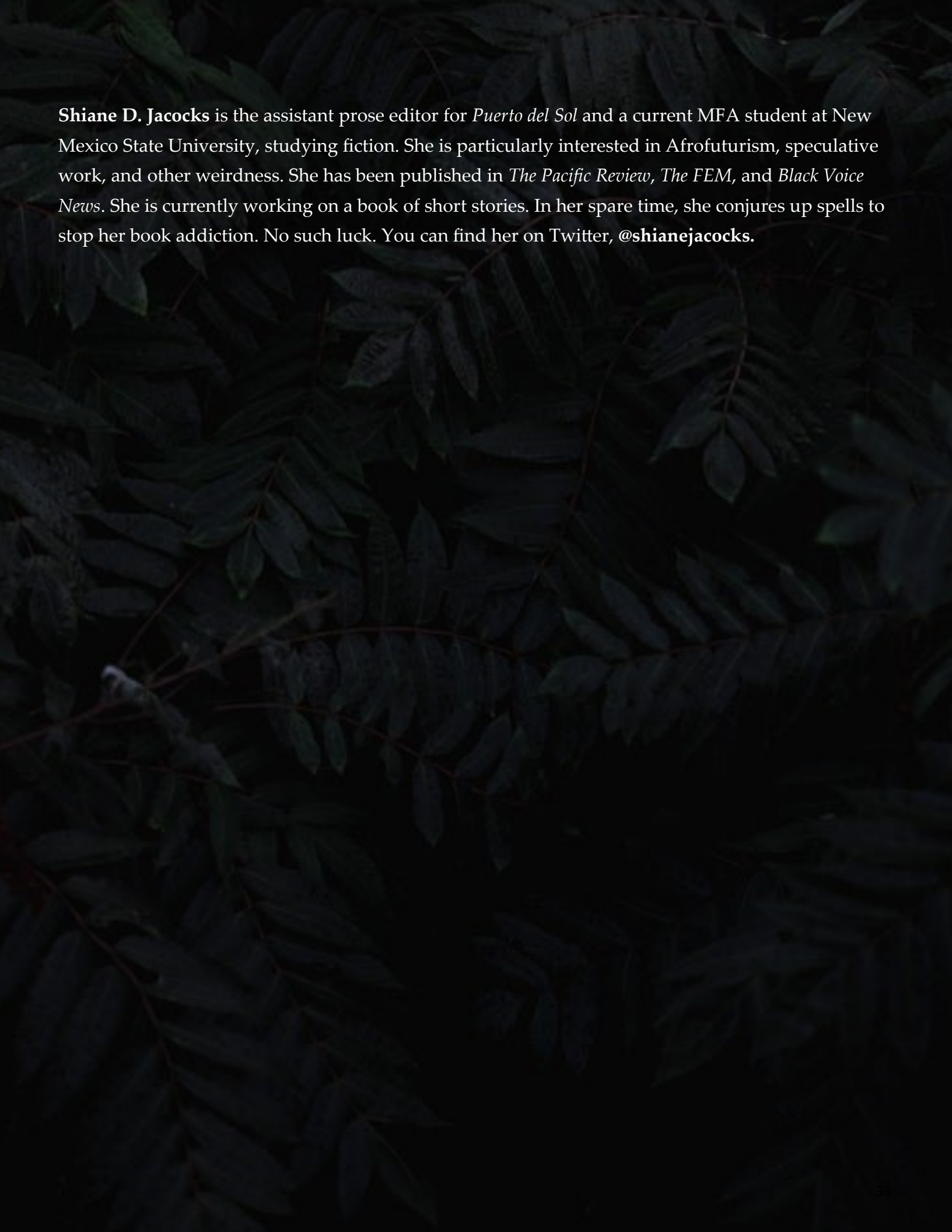
And if there is no room for Blackness, there is definitely no room for queerness. Though, Lafayette is queer and appears genderfluid, this isn't talked about either. The graphic sex scenes, which this series is notorious for, doesn't show Lafayette and his partner, Jesus, intimate at all, only brief make-out sessions. Then, in Season 4, when Tara is in a relationship with a woman (after being raped by a vampire), it is pointed out that her girlfriend is Asian (Pam calls her "yellow" before threatening to kill her), and the sex scene between these two women are more pornographic and aimed toward the male audience.

All characters in this show suffer, but the writers do not recognize that these characters of color have *already* suffered and continue to suffer daily. The difference between Tara suffering and Sookie suffering, is Sookie always has someone to turn to. She gets to escape the suffering for a little while. She gets a break.

Sookie may seem like she never catches a break because her fairy blood attracts vampires, but this also makes her appealing, beautiful. It's the reason she is protected. We see this throughout the season, and as Tara says, "[Sookie] is always alright because there'll always be some fool willing to take a bullet for her." These characters are constantly in a space where they are not accommodated, surrounded by, not only white racist, homophobic humans, but also racist, homophobic supernatural beings that want to kill and eat them.

As scholar and activist, Sara Ahmed, in her book *Living a Feminist Life*, explains, "a body can become a question mark. And we learn how questions can function as assertions." These character's bodies become question marks, their suffering justified, their identities used for humor and devices for the story. Their existence is always in question, because they are always in a sea of hyper heterosexuality and whiteness.

Their powers do not protect them. It does not protect them from the racism of *Bon Temps*. But I wanted it to, because it has been magic that has given strength and agency back to Black people throughout centuries. It has been magic to reimagine worlds that recapture the histories of Black people suffering. It has given freedom to explore what makes us angry, and to unchain what keeps us bound. It has given us a platform to explore our identities that we are told do not exist. In magic, in writing stories that show the complexities of Blackness, we can see a world that doesn't have to end in blood.



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Artist Spotlight: Shaunia Grant

by Cherokee Sullinger

On a chilly Tuesday at mid-day, I made my way to the art building on the NMSU campus. I was on my way to meet Shaunia Grant, to see her workspace for my very first time. I've known Shaunia for two years now, but have seldom taken the opportunity to get to know her as an artist, though that's arguably (and certainly currently) one of the larger aspects of her life. Once in the building, I realized I had no idea where to go. Blunt messages from her read, "Upstairs." and "It's very noisy."

So I followed the stairs and the sound of fans whirring, loud banging and general human expression to what I can only assume was the jewelry workshop. Shaunia stood at the opposite end talking to another student, her back turned to me, but as I approached and quietly announced myself she turned and greeted me warmly.

Shaunia and I first met in the spring of 2017, nearly two years ago. We were both working as peer educators for the Wellness, Alcohol, and Violence Education program (WAVE) at NMSU. My early memories with her involve standing in the February chill, borrowing one of her pairs of gloves and discussing her use of vomit in art. Two years later, and one might say that Shaunia's interest in the body has only deepened, stoked in an environment that encourages that sort of interest. On this particular Tuesday, Shaunia showed me cast resin teeth for use in brooches, and earrings made with dyed pig intestines.

Having originally worked with two-dimensional art, Shaunia is now focusing more on contemporary metalsmithing, three-dimensional work that involves a variety of media. I asked her about her focus these days: "Right now I'm working on a lot of material exploration, using things I haven't used before. I'm using silicone in that brooch, which I haven't used before in a piece. I've used it to cast stuff, but this is a completely different beast." She explained the idea of the brooch: creating rings in the copper plate, riveted onto the base. The silicone will lay over the cast teeth, which are meant to bulge out. "It'll bulge to show detail, but not enough detail as to gather as much information as the viewer wants."



The unfinished brooch in question: copper, silicone, cast teeth.

Having noticed a running theme in many of her pieces, and feeling intrigued, I asked Shaunia about her attraction to the human body as a basis for creating art:

“Yeah, I feel disconnected with my body I think, so that’s why I want to make work that’s reminiscent of the body. To kind of remind people that a body is them, but a body is not them. And there are a lot of aspects of being a body that people don’t think about. And rejecting those ideas is something that’s like rejecting your body as a thing... I think about it all the time and I never really come up with like an exact answer. That’s the closest I can get.”

Perhaps it is this fascination with the body that informs the choice of materials for Shaunia’s art. If it were up to me to label her art (and it’s not) I might describe it as ephemeral and synthetic — in the sense that she is working to emulate the body with things that aren’t the body. There is also a focus on materials which, whether she intends them to or not, degrade over a short amount of time: necklaces made of ice, or cardboard, or pills housed in a pig intestine.

With this in mind, I asked Shaunia about her pig intestine earrings. Wondering out loud whether she had brought them with her, she rummaged through one of her two work benches, finding a whole box of them as well as an unopened package of sanitized pig intestines.

The earrings are geometric, three-dimensional shapes made of copper, silver, or powder-coated nickel. Pig intestines, dyed with food coloring, are stretched over the metal, and coated with protective layer of acrylic to preserve the material for a bit longer. Still, as the intestines dry they become papery and the risk of ripping and disintegration is high.

“Eventually it’ll deteriorate but so do most alternative materials that you use... There are some things that I can’t use because they deteriorate too fast, or I can only use them in projects that are being documented in different ways.” — Such as the ice and cardboard necklaces, which you can see documented on Shaunia’s Instagram page.



Shaunia Grant models her pig intestine earrings.

Part of Shaunia's interest in such materials is that deterioration is not something associated with most jewelry — not if it's intended to be sold and worn. About her cardboard necklace, *Alternative Container*, Shaunia explained that it's meant to be cremated. "When you cremate someone, the cheapest form is direct cremation. It's like \$900 which is pretty much the cheapest you can die for... they put you into a cardboard box and then put you in the cremation thing, cause you can't just put a body in. You need a container."

Deterioration and destruction. Words that are not usually willingly associated with the body, but which are at the core of having a body. Alongside this, Shaunia's work deals with feminism and the female experience. Shaunia doesn't consider herself an activist through her art, though at times her work does align with her social and political views. When I asked why it was important that her work addresses feminism, she responded:

"I think it's natural for me because of my experience as a woman. I'm very interested in historical references and along with that comes the progress women have had to fight for to change their position in the world. I've been a feminist myself for quite some time so it naturally makes its way into my concepts. Still, I wouldn't consider my work feminist art because it's not the main point of my creating."

So what is the point of creating for Shaunia? She points to the audience for this. On the subject of bodies and grossness, I commented that it appears her work is not intended for those with a weak stomach, and Shaunia's response rather surprised me:

"But it kind of is though! It's definitely made for people who don't think about bodies, but also definitely made for other artists to view... I think it's really important to make work that is reactionary. And it doesn't have to be like, 'oh, that's gross!'... it just so happens that the things I'm into happen to be pretty gross."

In keeping with the theme of this publication, drawing attention to the socially horrific, I felt compelled to ask the metalsmith about her opinion on the female experience in the horror genres:

"I think a lot of horror has some aspect in the female experience. Oftentimes I feel [horror] may be more unsettling to female viewers because... women tend to be victims... I think there's a lot that's horrific in the world. I am a hypochondriac, which definitely informs my work. I fear for the future of my experience as a queer woman while people try to backtrack on progress."

Shaunia's work can definitely be unsettling, but it is intriguing and fascinating as well. She describes it as chaotic that is, "until it's done. And even when it's finished, it's not really notchaotic." In terms of finishing (in the polished, jewelry sense) Shaunia doesn't believe it's entirely necessary. Which makes sense, when she's working with materials like pig intestines, which affect the finish on the metals she uses. "I'm into that... deterioration, body, anything that has to do with the mouth... not quite sure why."

For those who share such a fixation on the mouth and a fascination with the impermanence of the body, Shaunia's work can be compelling and maybe a tad alarming. She has a small solo show coming up in December, which will be at Art Obscura, in Las Cruces, NM. Follow Shaunia on Instagram (**@unloadedmindset**) to see her unique pieces.

~

Cherokee Sullinger identifies as a writer, organizer, and activist. Her interests stem from her involvement in reproductive rights advocacy. She is a mentor to the NMSU chapter of Planned Parenthood Generation Action (**@genaction_nmsu** on Instagram), a group of student-activists dedicated to engaging in de-stigmatizing conversations around sex and everything that comes with it. Cherokee is also an instructor and assistant at Indigo Yoga in Las Cruces. To learn more, visit her on Instagram **@pumpkinsarecoo**

FAMILIENSTILLEBEN



“This illustration is about my relation with my family, the main source of my social anxiety issues.”

KSAMF (Barcelona, 1991).

Graduated in Fine Arts and working as a graphic designer, she combines this job with her real vocation: illustration and sculpture.

For more of KSAMF's work, please check out the following links:

<https://www.behance.net/samarf24e6>

<https://www.instagram.com/ksamf/>

WHY I DON'T WATCH TV



Racists and white supremacists scare me, especially the ones you always see popping up on the TV. Now imagine if they could crawl out of your television screen like Samara from The Ring to tell you how global warming is a hoax, that all the news you watch is fake, and that "all lives matter," especially theirs. How scary would that be?

Ricky Araiza is currently an MA Literature student at New Mexico State University and one of the editors of *Ventanas*. When he's not dabbling in prose, poetry, and the occasional digital painting, he's probably either watching, reading, or playing something scary (and quite possibly critiquing it). Feel free to check out his Tumblr: [@ricky-rawrasaurus-rex](#) and Instagram: [@rickygoesrawr](#).

The Final Girls & *Scream*

by Eleni Philippou

The contemporary slasher film has been traditionally defined as, “the immensely generative story of a psycho killer who slashes to death a string of mostly female victims, one by one, until he is himself subdued or killed, usually by the one girl who has survived” (Clover, p. 66). The slasher films, *Scream* (1996) and *The Final Girls* (2015), are **postmodern horror films** that redefine the slasher film and the “Final Girl” (Clover, p. 82). “These films are postmodern because they feature serial killers who are re-creating existing and memorable murders” (Wee, p. 46). According to Isabel Pinedo, “Like its classical predecessors, the postmodern horror film revolves around ordinary people’s ineffectual attempts to resist a violent monster—a supernatural or alien invader, a deviant transformation from within, a psychotic, or a combination of these forms” (Pinedo, p. 19). The female protagonists of *Scream* (Sidney) and *The Final Girls* (Max) break the Final Girl tradition by surviving in groups rather than being the sole survivors of the films. Neither are the “one who did not die” (Clover, p. 82).

Although the Final Girl “tends to become more and more masculine and phallic” with an androgynous or male-sounding name,” Sidney is not “marked as particularly boyish, nor is she actively differentiated from the other women in the film” (CdMScott, 2006), (Pinedo, p. 56). “Sidney is a revised version of the Final Girl” (Wee, p. 55). She has a boyfriend (Billy) “and a group of good friends” (p. 55). She is not an outcast (Carrie, protagonist of *Carrie*) “nor a boyish virgin” (Laurie, the Final Girl in *Halloween*) (p. 55). Rather than being “legitimated as ‘pure,’” Sidney has sex with Billy (on her terms) (Short, p. 23).

The Final Girl is “not sexually active;” she is the pure virgin (Clover, p. 86). “According to slasher convention, ‘sex equals death’” (Wee, p. 55), (*Scream*, 1996). Laurie (*Halloween*) follows this rule. Her female friends are killed as punishment for engaging in “unauthorized sex” (Clover, p. 81). *Scream* “rewrites the rules so that Sidney not only escapes postcoital death but also overcomes the villains” (Wee, p. 55). *Scream*, “therefore, acknowledges but ultimately rejects the rules of the classic slasher film, which demand that the sole survivor always be a lone, female virgin” (p. 55).

Scream and *The Final Girls* “display a tendency toward generic hybridity, in particular the blending of signs codes, and conventions associated with both horror and comedy” (Wee, p. 46). *Scream* “became a huge box-office success, not least because it appeared to parody films like the *Elm Street*, *Halloween*, and *Friday the 13th* series. As apparent to any fan of horror since *Halloween* (John Carpenter, 1978), the predictable ‘rules’ (many of which were incorporated into Clover’s (1996) famous analysis of the ‘Final Girl’) of who survives and who dies in slasher films are here announced by a young horror buff” (Church, 2006).

The YouTube channel, How It Should Have Ended’s video, *How Scream Should Have Ended*, is a parody within a parody regarding the rules of slasher films. The NEW rules stated by Randy are “Rule #1: Have parents that care about you. Rule #2: Don’t date crazy a-holes. Rule #3: If you are being attacked inside a house that is filled with people who are your friends, you should call out for their help. Rule # 4: If friends aren’t available do more than just run. If you know the kill...Take that sucker out! Rule #5: Don’t live where the police and investigative reporters are terrible at their jobs. Rule #6: 911and Star 69” (How It Should Have Ended, 2011).

These rules mock traditional slasher scenarios. There is not always a “woodsman” for every Red Riding Hood of slasher films; there are no men to depend on for rescuing. Sidney’s dad is unable to rescue her due to being a victim; he is tied up and gagged. Chris does not revive back to life until after Max kills Billy on her own. Sidney is dating Billy, “the crazy a-hole,” who is one of the masked killers responsible to murdering her mother (*How It Should Have Ended*, 2011). Max and Sidney do kill the slashers at their own game; Max kills Billy with his machete. Sidney kills her ex-boyfriend while wearing the costume. Dewey (*Scream*), the police officer, fails at protecting Tatum (his sister) and is not the hero at the end of the film; he is one more unreliable male. “Policemen, fathers, and sheriffs appear only long enough to demonstrate risible incomprehension and incompetence” (Clover, p. 90).

Similar to Laurie (*Halloween*), Nancy has the qualities of the passive Final Girl prior to fighting back—she is a shy girl who has little experience with the opposite sex. Nancy tells Max, “I’m the shy girl with the clipboard and the guitar” (*The Final Girls*, 2015). Nancy does not see anything special about herself. Rather than being boyish, she is the stereotypical “pretty blond—” she has a great tan, pretty hair and a “sexy” body. Prior to Max entering the film, Nancy breaks the rule of not having sex. Billy ensures she is punished.

Max fits the “boyish” Final Girl (Clover, p. 86). Being a tomboy wearing t-shirts and sneakers, she is “not fully feminine” (p. 86). The other female characters (Vicki, Gertie, Amanda/Nancy, Tina and Mimi) are fully feminine in their clothing attire (tight clothes, short shorts), makeup and hair. Paula, the Final Girl in *Camp Bloodbath* (the film Max’s mom, Amanda, is famous for), breaks the rule, “Never drink or do drugs” (Wee, p. 48). The moment Paula exits her car, she lights up a cigarette. She also has a feminine appearance; she wears makeup, tight jeans and a leather jacket. She gives the audience an impression of being tough, rather than “passive;” she is ready for “active defense” against Billy (the slasher) (Clover, p. 84).

Paula follows the most essential Final Girl rule: being a virgin. She tells the camp counselor stud, Kurt, “I’m saving myself for someone who doesn’t have a needle dick” (*The Final Girls*, 2015). Max and her friends, who are trapped in *Camp Bloodbath* and want to survive, acknowledge that Paula is the Final Girl. “She’s the Final Girl. She’s the one that kills Billy. We just have to stay with her until the end of the movie” (*The Final Girls*, 2015).

Ironically, Paula is one of the first girls to die; she crashes her car and it blows up while she is still in it. She is no longer the “only one in this movie who does not die” (*The Final Girls*, 2015). Her death is not due to punishment for being a sexually active female or opening (or taking off her top). Max and her friends are forced to use their horror movie knowledge to save themselves and the remaining *Camp Bloodbath* characters from being Billy’s potential victims. Max and her friends are notified (and are the ones who hear) of Billy’s approach through the creepy echoes.

“Repeated exposure to horror fiction constitutes a process of socialization that seasons the audience member. The competent filmgoer acquires knowledge that conditions expectations about the genre” (Pinedo, p. 28).

Scream and *The Final Girls*’ “characters engage in hyperconscious, self-reflexive, slasher-movie

oriented discussions and observations" (Wee, p. 47). Duncan (*The Final Girls*) and Randy (*Scream*) are the "self-professed slasher-film aficionados" (Wee, p. 47). While watching *Halloween* at a party, Randy reminds his friends, "To successfully survive a horror movie, you have to abide by the rules" (*Scream*, 1996). Almost immediately after being sucked into *Camp Bloodbath*, Duncan takes the lead in his group of friends through his expertise of the film. He counts the ninety-two minutes between Tina asking for directions to Camp Blue Finch multiple times; signifying the film beginning again. The final time, Duncan tells Tina, "Actually, yeah, we're counselors and we can show you if you give us a ride" (*The Final Girls*, 2015). Duncan and his friends communicating with and joining the *Camp Bloodbath* characters changes the film.

While Randy is "*Scream's* requisite self-described **virgin**" who is rescued by Sidney, Duncan's film expertise leads to his (assumed) demise (Wee, p. 55). While witnessing Mimi and the hiker's murders, Duncan explains, "Our duty is not to disrupt, but to observe" (*The Final Girls*, 2015). He is the one character who does not want to change the film and the rules. "Everything in this world is running exactly on schedule" (*The Final Girls*, 2015). Duncan presumes Billy will spare his and his friends' lives. "It's okay, he won't hurt us. He would've killed me by now, okay? I think it's because we're not actually part of the movie, he really doesn't know what to do with us. Besides, to leave, we'd probably have to wait until the movie's over, or something. Movies like this end when the Final Girl kills the main bad guy and the credits roll" (*The Final Girls*, 2015). Revealing how Paula kills Billy, Duncan changes the film's plot and Billy attempts to kill him and possibly has a new plan.

Throughout *Camp Bloodbath*, "The moment a top comes off, Billy shows up" (*The Final Girls*, 2015). Some of the female characters do not necessarily have sex, but become sexual teases. Chris tells Tina the reason she is wearing a life vest and gloves is "You're scripted to do a striptease at the slumber party, and when you take your top off, Billy comes running" (*The Final Girls*, 2015). When Nancy and Max are the two remaining girls, Nancy does a semi-strip tease by opening her top and dancing. She willingly becomes Billy's victim in order to allow Max to be the Final Girl; she told Max, "I know how to fix it. You're not the Final Girl yet, Max. Because of me. I'm still alive. You have to let me go" (*The Final Girls*, 2015).

"Horror elicits audience rebukes and warnings addressed to narrative characters ('Don't go in there'), or about narrative characters ('Heeeeere's Jason!')" (Pinedo, p. 27). Max, Vicki, Gertie and Chris have the opportunity to literally warn the characters of *Camp Bloodbath* about the murders that are to ensue. Prior to the first death, Max warns Nancy not to have sex with Kurt. Max creates the excuse, "Sex can kill you" (*The Final Girls*, 2015). Max is especially protective of Nancy since she is embodied by Amanda (Max's deceased mother).

Vicki explains when Paula, "the only one who could kill Billy," is no longer available "is why we need to nominate a new Final Girl. And I'm willing to be it" (*The Final Girls*, 2015). Vicki is already voted out due to Chris telling her, "Well, you're not a virgin" (*The Final Girls*, 2015). She questions, "What does it matter," and Gertie exclaims, "Because it just does, Vicki. You have to be a virgin in this movie in order to kill Billy, okay? And the only true-blue virgin here is Max" (*The Final Girls*, 2015).

"Postmodernism is also associated with a tendency for intertextual referencing, a propensity

for ironic or parodic humor, as well as textual and generic mixing. *Scream* and its sequels are primarily films about slasher films" (Wee, p. 46). The first female murdered victim is teenager, Casey Becker; "she receives a phone call from an unidentified male and the conversation turns to slasher films" (p. 46). She senses she is in danger when she "discovers that the person she is chatting with is watching her" (p. 46). The caller tells her he wants to know her name because "I want to know who I'm looking at" (*Scream*, 1996). He then threatens her life and her boyfriend's life through quizzing her on slasher films. "I ask a question. If you get it right, Steve lives" (*Scream*, 1996). The caller "then taunts Casey by commenting on her frenzied and hysterical attempts to escape and comparing them to the similar antics of characters in the classic slasher films they have just been discussing" (Wee, p. 46). Her lack of movie knowledge leads to her death.

Similar to Nancy (the Final Girl in *Nightmare on Elm Street*), Max and her friends "draw up a precise plan of action, timed to the very minute" (Trencansky, p. 65). Max, her remaining friends, and the remaining camp counselors use their slasher film knowledge (specifically sex leading to death) to their advantage. While the plan and traps in *Nightmare on Elm Street* succeed, Tina's (the sexually active and provocatively dressed counselor) strip tease leads to her demise; she trips the wire and her head is caught in the bear trap, all meant for Billy. Similar to Freddy (*Nightmare on Elm Street*) and Jason (*Friday the 13th*), Billy seems to be an immortal. He survives attempted murders including being burned alive and decapitation.

Another essential factor to Max surviving is the "knowledge she obtains to" Billy's "past" (Trencansky, p. 65). His past and present lives reflect Jason's; both men were victims of "neglectful teenagers" while attending summer camps as children (Short, p. 133). Jason drowned in Crystal Lake while Billy was disliked by everyone and fell victim to a firecracker prank gone wrong by the counselors. Both slashers' motivations are revenge against the counselors. Max, Vicki, Gertie, Chris and later Nancy are literally in Billy's past while Nancy narrates. While being chased by Billy in one scene, Max tells Nancy to tell the story again in an attempt to escape Billy.

Billy and Stu's (*Scream*) main motivation as the "crazed psycho killers was the negative feelings that he associated with a relationship with a woman" (Mittens, 2006). Sidney's "mother had been raped and murdered a year" prior to the masked murders (Karlyn, 2009). When Billy is revealed to be one of the masked killers, he confesses to murdering Sidney's mother due to "your mother was a slut bag" (*Scream*, 1996). Billy and Stu use horror films not only to quiz their victims on trivia, but also to frame Cotton Weary for the murder of Sidney's mother. "Watch a few movies. Take a few notes" (*Scream*, 1996). Billy is a metaphor for not truly knowing her boyfriend and as the "boyfriend who turns against his girlfriend after sex" (Wee, p. 57). Since she is no longer a pure virgin, she needs to die.

"Sidney refuses to let these betrayals destroy her, that she learns self-reliance and independence while standing up to her 'lying, cheating boyfriend,' is a particularly empowering message for teenage girls" (Wee, p. 57). The teenage female audience receives the message that teenage girls and women are capable of having control over their bodies and lives; Sidney chooses to have sex and saves her own life.

Rather than Sidney being another Final Girl, she and Gale are the two female survivors.

"Sidney and Gale remain the main characters in all three films" (Wee, p. 57). Previous slasher films, such as, *Nightmare on Elm Street*, the slasher is miraculously resurrected for the sequels with new victims and a new Final Girl. "In addition to rewriting the sexual and gender conventions of the genre, the trilogy also reverses the convention that permits the monster to return in sequel after sequel to terrorize new groups of victims; in the *Scream* sequels the victim/survivors return to face new villains with each installment" (Wee, p. 57). Sidney and Gale evolved from female rivals in the beginning of the first film to "female kinship" (Short, p. 88).

Max is the Final Girl (she doesn't have sex nor reveals her body) until the credits roll; she then wakes up in a hospital with her friends still alive. The group assumes they are out of the film until they hear the creepy echoing, see the Rubrics cube, the TAB soda and the Furby and Billy entering the hospital; Duncan states, "Of course, the sequel" (*The Final Girls*, 2015). Max reprises her role as the potential Final Girl, ready to strike first. Max has "swiftly and vigorously rejected her feminine instincts and taken on" Billy's "male understanding of violence" (Connelly, p. 20).

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Eleni Philippou was born and raised in Las Cruces and has a bachelor's degree in Women's Studies with a minor in English from NMSU. Eleni enjoys writing and has written often for Her Campus NMSU. If you'd like to read more from Eleni, visit her blog at eleniblue.blogspot.com.



Polished Beauty

This was my very first painting which was only made with nail polishes (therefore the title "polished") that I did not want to use anymore. I wanted to create something mysterious yet still touchable that included the topic of beauty, to which I am dedicated. While painting this art I've learned that it's important to know when to stop because no matter what you do it will never be perfect.

Julia-Isabella, a 29 year old make-up geek from Austria, discovered her passion for art when she was still a kid but never pursued it. After a troublesome childhood and adolescence, she found her happiness in make-up. Since she experienced a depressive phase this year, she turned her negative feelings into something constructive and began to be creative whilst holding a painting brush.

When she's not holding a brush, Julia-Isabella is busy at work, studying mechanical engineering, or travelling around the world. "In these days it's hard to be yourself without being judged but since we only have one life it's worth trying."

For more Julia-Isabella, check out her Instagram [**@missesnewintown**](#).



Bleeding Hole

I did not know where I wanted to go while painting this image. I was very hurt and angry and felt the need to let go of it in my own way. The black hole imitates the soul which is bleeding and surrounded by a construct of negativity.

Pieces

I guess "Pieces" is the only work of mine that turned out the way I wanted/imagined it to be. The neon colors symbolize agility while the black stands for darkness. It kinda represents my life: I cannot live without the darkness while I still need something that brings me to life which in my case is beauty/make-up. Therefore black and neon colors are my trade marks when it comes to my art. You will find those colors in every of my painting.



Kelpies

By Abby Current Carlson

of the marshes and sucking black peatlands,
creatures with valley lilies in their manes,
hooves whether they stand creature or person,
devil's children in their hand-me-down shoes.

and that's why mothers tell daughters
it was our own fault, not looking down,
not checking for the sweetsplit cloven feet

I know how it goes: they lure riders
only to drown them, draw them down
into the sulphuric rotting grasses
where they stack as matchsticks

I know how it feels to be deceived
mouth stuffed with bogmire
dragged down by some one who first
made of you precious and pressure
like he could lick sugar cubes from
your hand like he could carry you
over the property line home like

kelpies stand taller than me at the shoulder, they tower over
men because they are horses they are wild and harm-full they
will tell you they want to help but they are never tricked them-
selves they are the ones who pull men down
down beneath the marsh
down beneath the bones
down under the rot where

Abby Current Carlson is an MFA candidate at New Mexico State University and will graduate in spring of 2019. She lives with her husband Daniel, her dog Cassie, and about half a ton of books of all kinds. Find her on Twitter [@abbycurrent](https://twitter.com/abbycurrent).

Sibile the Seer

by Susan Rother

The bicamerality of the analytical mind, at best, acts harmoniously. Consciousness and behavior do not act separately, but what if they were separate actions, ones that could act upon themselves, be their own form of communication, like if introspection to the consciousness could be relied on by itself, without the symbiotic attachment to behavior? At the basis of it all, communication relates to introspection, but the one who can see everything, the one who can find all the answers, cannot use both simultaneously because there is a force above her, one that controls her thoughts, commands her voice, that prohibits her from claiming that possession.

The one who sees, the seer, receives auditory hallucinations from these other beings, the ones who command her direction, but they, these gods, do not process that information for her, nor do they communicate falsely, for Sibile cannot listen and act with her own accord; she translates those voices to others. These voices, the ones with metaphysical energy, speak to Sibile so she can give their wisdom to others, for they do not speak for themselves, they only listen and respond through Sibile.

By communicating the voices of these gods, Sibile is granted a purpose, for her third eye, the thing that acts as a beacon for the gods, would have consumed her whole, drained her energy, and made her succumb to its will, for the thing that hunts to kill her soul, prevents her from being her own person, is forever unable to be blessed with human consciousness. However, with each premonition that she translates, she grows another eye until every spot on her skin is covered in them, all an extension of the gods' will, but when there is no space left, these eyes swell to fit other eyes within them, like a pomegranate swelling to fit seeds, and those seeds propagating until the fruit is ripe for picking. Sibile remains in a room, unable to speak, not because no one visits her, but because they cannot hear her, for her eyes, the ones that cover her body, preventing her from being conscious of herself, block her mouth and muffle her voice, but still she spoke, still she communicated the gods' premonitions, and still the eyes grew, even if they could not understand her.

What has been long noted for her inability to communicate for quite some time, has been missed by a new woman who recently moved into town. When she came to the village, this woman heard rumors that there was an active seer, but no one could hear her, so they stopped visiting. This woman, unknown to Sibile's power, demanded to know why, but the town did not explain that she grows an eye for each premonition, they did not explain how her third eye came to be, for they only told this desperate woman that Sibile's eyes were the problem. This woman marches to Sibile's domicile with a machete, frustrated for her, and cuts off her eyes, but Sibile does not speak or move, for the woman did not ask anything, so the gods did not tell Sibile what to do. Filled with bleeding divots on her body, no eyes left to translate her actions from the gods, her consciousness, the two-eyed Sibile feels.

Gasping, with a smile on her face, the woman asks, "Sibile, what luck will this new town bring me tomorrow?"

Her body, foreign to the sensation of a direct connection between consciousness and behavior, trembles. "Get out," Sibile says. She points her finger to the door, just as the gods told her to do many moons before, her hand shaking as she holds it in the air, confused about the link to Sibile's mind, and frightened with the new awareness to herself. "Get out," she says again.

The woman, not moving, angry that Sibile did not answer her question, or angry that the gods told her to leave, triggers Sibile's awakening. Sibile pounces on the woman, screeches inaudibly, her hands wrapped around the woman's ears, keeping her constrained, pulling at the base of her skull, until the tip of her thumbs, positioned over the woman's eyes, digs down into the corner of her socket, carefully carving, cutting off any connection, and pops out her eyes. Sibile holds them in her hands and squishes them to her forehead where her third eye once stood

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Susan Rother is a first generation Korean-American writer. She graduated with from Webster University in St. Louis, Missouri and worked as an intern for *River Styx*. She has been previously published in *The Journal* and *Travelicious*. Currently, she is pursuing her Fiction MFA at New Mexico State University and is a reader for *Puerto del Sol*.

HOBGOBLINS



Hobgoblinne

Goblins remain fascinating because they seem to be such a macabre parody of humanity; the things we criticize ourselves for—overeating, overpopulating, overreacting illiterates with brutal and crude control over invention and industry.

Things We Hide Behind

Sometimes we pretend to be who we wish we were.

Sometimes we're trying to be who we really are.

Can you blame anybody for not wanting to be a Goblin anymore? Or are we to blame—For what creature with such shame deserves to bear it?





Infestation

Their profanity knows no bounds
Their obscene hearts know only darkness
Queenís of depravity in filthy crowns
Rat Kingís tied by tail in the process
Man stood at Voidís mirror, corrupted and cracked
And saw their own visage when the Goblins looked back.

BibleGhost is an independent artist based in Ontario, Canada. Cartoonist; Writer. Self-taught. Working with modern fantasy, brooding gothic, occult religious, and high fashion influences. Common themes of internal conflict and self-antagonism, the virtue of hope in hopeless circumstance, and of finding a universe with an apathetic response to human tragedy.

BibleGhost is inspired by classic and modern western animation, the works of Jhonen Vasquez, Tim Burton, and of the Romantic, the Impressionist, and the Post-Impressionist painters. Rejecting the nihilism and fatalism of traditional goth and moving in new, optimistic directions bereft of apathy while maintaining its aesthetic roots.

For more BibleGhost, check out their Tumblr: bibleghost.tumblr.com and Twitter: [@BibleGhost](https://twitter.com/BibleGhost).

Ranking The Movies, Best to Worst: Saw II, Saw, Saw 3D, Saw III, Saw VI, Jigsaw, Saw V, Saw IV

by Louise MacGregor

The *Saw* franchise began in 2004, when a couple of young Australian filmmakers, Leigh Whannel and James Wan, collaborated on a low-budget, low-fi morality play-cum-procedural drama. As with the rest of the series, the first film revolves around a number of people trapped in a violent game that forces them to commit unthinkable acts in an attempt to prove their right to life to an unseen manipulator (John Kramer, as played by Tobin Bell across the entire franchise), who mostly appears in these games via voice recordings and his sinister puppet, known as Billy. The first film was an extraordinary hit, bringing in more than one hundred times its original, tiny budget, and it spawned seven sequels, with the most recent, *Jigsaw*, released just last year.

Because of the time that it came out, with the prominence of horror movies like *Hostel*, *Ichi the Killer*, and *Switchblade Romance*, *Saw* as a franchise was soon lumped in to the “torture porn” genre. And that’s simply not true. Well, for the first couple of movies, at least. What separates *Saw* from the rest of the franchises in this series is the fact that there is nothing supernatural at play here, and that these films take place in the closest parallel to our real world that we’ll see across any of these series. The police hunt for each film’s antagonist (which isn’t always Kramer) makes up a major part of the narrative for each story – the *Saw* movies have always felt more like *Se7en* than *Hostel*, focused on the practical hunt for these violent murderers and their motivations as opposed to just the violent murders themselves.

And the world at large has a relationship with *Jigsaw* as an entity, as well, with support groups formed for the survivors of the traps, and fangirls collecting reverse bear traps out of admiration for their killer of choice. Out of all the worlds that we’ll look at over the next month, this is the one that feels the most real. And that’s no small thing.

Of course, I’m sliding the point here – these are exceptionally violent films, with much of the draw for the later films coming from the increasingly deranged and twisted (sometimes literally) ways the *Jigsaw* killer forces his victims to battle between life and death. From drowning in rotted pigs to having your chest peeled open to being chucked into a pit of needles, yes, the *Saw* films are packed with gore. A commitment to handsome props and real effects renders the violence more striking and hideous than many of its cinematic contemporaries. Add to that the frequently slippery use of timelines, the genuinely twisty-turny plots, and that iconic Charlie Clouser score – is this torture porn? Not quite. That suggests the main point of these movies is pure violence, and its not as simple as that (for the most part).

Because *Saw*, and I count the entire franchise in this statement, is really a series about the complexity of morality. John Kramer, the original Jigsaw killer who casts a long shadow over the series as a whole, claims not to be a murderer – he picks people who he believes do not appreciate life, and offers them a chance to fight for it. Many of the people in these traps aren't standard cut-out horror movie victims. They're often awful people, burdened by the weight of the horrors they have committed – murder, theft, framing those close to them for terrible crimes. We're not meant to like them, which makes the fact of their death and/or injury more complex. The third movie revolves around a man who has been unable to forgive those he feels are responsible for the accidental death of his daughter, forced to make his way through a series of traps where he decides their fates. The sixth takes on heavy themes surrounding health insurance and the deaths allowed via denial of decent healthcare. This isn't a stack of nameless bodies with frameless stories.

And then you've got the complexity of the villains to add to that. This is one of the only franchises where the actual main villain is a name under which many people operate: John Kramer, as played spectacularly by Tobin Bell who I have most certainly never had a crush on nosiree, actually dies in the third movie (though his presence is echoed down through the entire franchise thanks to that unforgettable voice work) and his mantle is taken up by a variety of characters for the rest of the series.

And these villains are often driven by great gulfs of grief within themselves: for Kramer, it's the loss of his son and the medical mistake that led to his own terminal cancer diagnosis. After his passing, his loss is the one that drives the next Jigsaw killer. As the series delves further, villains are driven by seeking revenge for perceived injustices – ranging from the murder of their sister at the hands of an abusive partner to violence inflicted on them by Kramer himself. And that's interesting to me, it really is. Knowing that when the hood gets pulled and we see who lurks beneath brings a different backstory and motivation nearly every time kept me coming back for more, and gives the series a consistently loose, open feel that lends itself well to a franchise as long as this one.

And yet.

All these things are interesting on paper, and I really do want to commit to the fact that I love these films. But I also understand that, no matter how much I care for them, they are...bad. Okay, let me make amends to that: the first two films are very solid, with smatterings of quality throughout the rest of them. But they are just, often, not good. Bad acting plagues the series at large, and terrible writing is a burden it never escapes. The direction is patchy and often janky, the character work is almost consistently dire when it comes to anyone but the villains. These big ideas, however interesting, are generally poorly executed, and there's no getting away from that, especially as the series begins to sag under the weight of its own enormous mythology. The fourth, fifth, and eighth movies are genuinely nearly unwatchably bad. So I can't, in good faith, recommend these with any sense of decency in my soul.

And yet, I still love them. I really do. For me, *Saw* was an introduction to a slasher that went outside the standard modes of practice, boldly and often. Did it always do that well? Hell, no. But it did it with a commitment to producing something besides Freddy, Jason, or Michael: it wanted to be something different, and it is. From that low-budget, high-concept start right through to the ambitious but arguably disgraceful state of the series as of now, *Saw* as a franchise has attempted to push outside the box. And for that, I will defend it till the reverse bear trap.

~

Louise MacGregor is one of the writers behind nobutlisten.com who also runs a pop culture and feminism blog called *The Cutprice Guignol*, check those out for more of her work. Please also check out her Twitter: [@cutpriceguignol](https://twitter.com/cutpriceguignol) and Tumblr: ilawliet94.tumblr.com.

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KATE PROSE EDITOR



Kate is a senior at NMSU majoring in English with an emphasis in creative writing but also has a passion for guitar and photography. Her favorite scary movies are what she calls "chiller -thrillers," and they are *The Village* and *The Witch*.

TOBI VISUAL EDITOR

Tobi is a 4th year student at NMSU majoring in English and minoring in Anthropology/ Gender Studies. She likes analytical essays and making art. Her favorite scary movie is *Alvin and the Chipmunks Meet the Wolfman*.



RICKY POETRY EDITOR



Ricky is a first year MA Literature student at NMSU who is hoping to shake things up within the genres of horror and sci-fi through his academic and creative work. His favorite horror films include (but are not limited to) *Get Out* and *A Nightmare on Elm Street*.

CHEROKEE AUDIO EDITOR

Cherokee is in the final semester of her English BA and cannot answer your questions about what she plans to do next year. She's a horror newbie and is a big fan of *What We Do in the Shadows*.



SPECIAL THANKS

From the Editors:

After completing the Fall 2018 issue of *Ventanas*, we all got a little bit more respect for editors and anyone that decides to work in publishing. This project of ours required a lot of hard work, time, and dedication but ultimately we were able to create something we are really proud of and happy to share with everyone. That being said, thank you to the contributors who submitted their amazing work to our zine and thank you to the readers who decided to look into the windows of these strange and often scary worlds with us.

-*Ventanas*

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