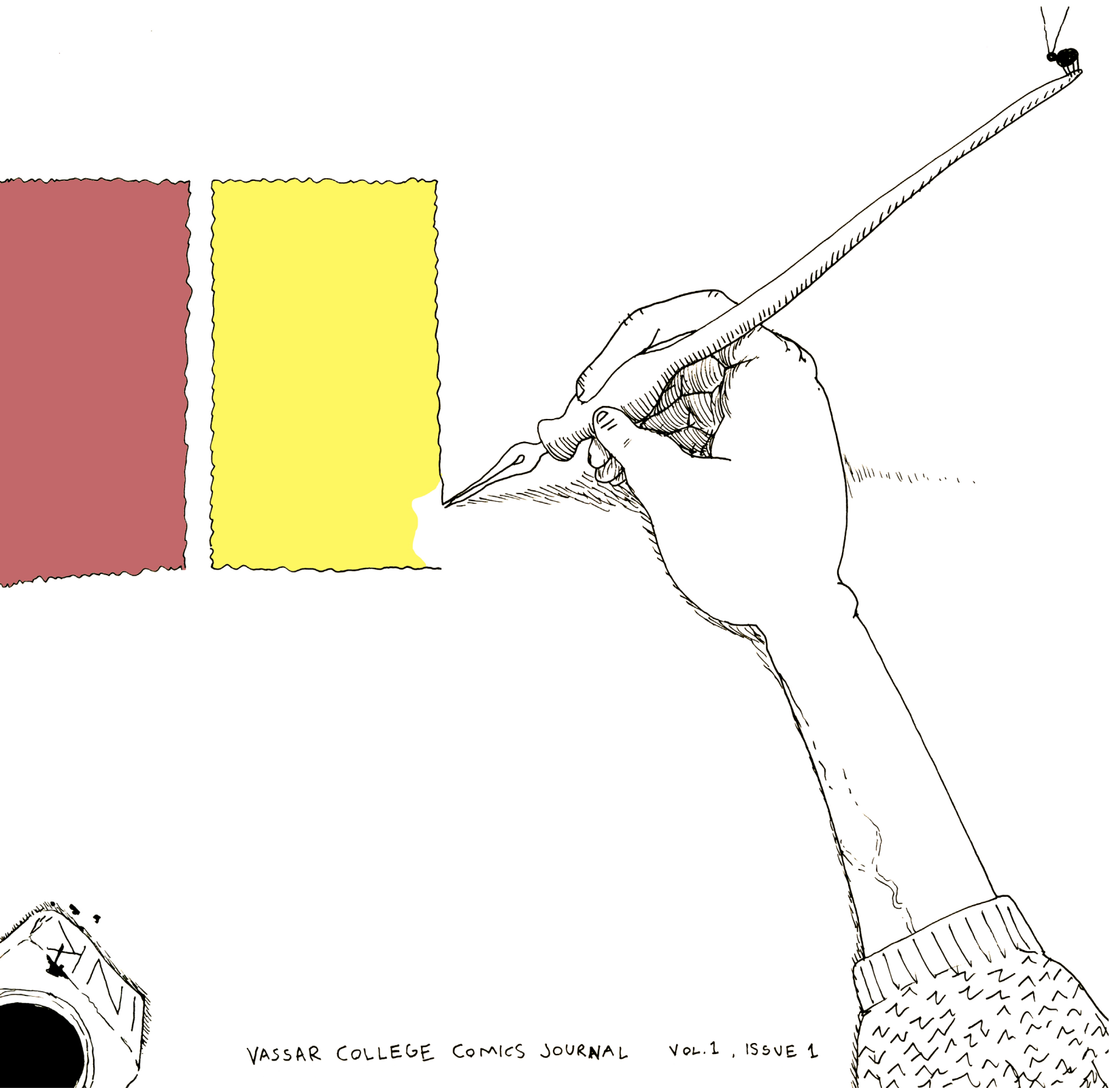


FUMETTO!



# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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for your amazing contributions

SINCERELY,  
EMILIA PETRARCA



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much  
less floppy

excellent







your belly is very  
soft. I like playing  
with it.

Don't play  
with my belly  
fat, please!

Why do you always  
call it "belly fat"?! It's  
just your belly.



June 29, 2013. TOM & I  
WENT TO WICKER PARK TO EAT  
DONUTS FROM "Glazed and Infused."  
I GOT VANILLA WITH ESPRESSO GLAZE  
AND TOM GOT BANANA WITH CREAM  
CHEESE FROSTING. TWO DONUTS  
COST ALMOST SEVEN DOLLARS. WE  
SHAMEFULLY INSTAGRAMMED  
THEM BEFORE WE ATE  
THEM.



I know,  
we're  
assholes.

I hate  
u.s.

Where  
did you  
grow up?  
Richie-Rich-  
ville?  
hehehheh  
just  
kidding.

AFTER THAT WE WALKED  
OVER TO QUIMBY'S. WE  
LOOKED AT THE NEW "Hot  
Doug's" BOOK AND  
DISCUSSED THE VARIOUS  
HOT DOG TATTOOS.



TRIBAL-ESQUE HOT  
DOG TATTOO

(IF YOU GET  
THE HOT DOG'S  
LOGO TATTOOED  
YOU CAN  
EAT THERE  
FREE FOR  
THE REST  
OF YOUR  
LIFE!)



SOMEONE THOUGHT THIS  
WAS A GOOD IDEA;  
DOUG'S GIRLFRIEND?

WE HAD A FUNNY/WEIRD  
CONVERSATION WITH THE  
WOMAN WHO WORKED THERE  
ABOUT MACS AND PC'S.  
THEN WE TOOK A PICTURE  
IN THE OLD BLACK AND WHITE  
PHOTO BOOTH AT THE BACK OF  
THE STORE. I'M SO PALE  
THAT THE FLASH BLURRED OUT  
MOST OF MY FEATURES. IT'S  
JUST EYES, A MOUTH, AND TWO  
NOSTRILS FLOATING ON A  
BIG WHITE MOON FACE.



I LEFT FEELING  
INSPIRED AND A  
LITTLE DISCOURAGED.  
THERE ARE SO MANY  
PEOPLE MAKING COOL  
STUFF! AND A LOT OF  
PEOPLE MAKING STUFF  
THAT'S WAY BETTER THAN MY STUFF.



EARLIER  
TOM HAD BEEN TALKING ABOUT  
GETTING A CHICAGO FLAG  
TATTOO, BUT I SAID HE  
SHOULD JUST GET A CHICAGO-  
STYLE HOT DOG INSTEAD.

June 30, 2013

# A FEW DREAMS

I WAS AT THE GROCERY STORE AND THERE WERE HUNDREDS OF VARIETIES OF OREOS. I KEPT WALKING AROUND GOING:



I'm going to work in Oreo research and development!

I FOUND THIS:

INGREDIENTS  
BUTTER;  
CHOCOLATE  
CHIP COOKIES

A MAN CAME TO EXAMINE MY LEGS. HE TOLD ME THAT, PROPORTIONAL TO MY SIZE, THE AMOUNT OF MUSCLE IN MY CALVES WAS "ABSOLUTELY EXTRAORDINARY."





I DREAM MOST NIGHTS. THAT'S WHY  
I TEND TO HAVE TROUBLE WAKING UP;  
I NEVER WANT TO LEAVE MY DREAMS,  
I HAVE TO SEE THEM THROUGH TO THE END.

\* HEAVY METAL  
GUITAR CHUGGING \*  
\* SOFT PIANO  
UNDERTONES \*

FOR A FEW YEARS NOW THERE'S BEEN  
THIS RECURRING THEME IN MY HEAD;

I'LL BE STANDING  
AT AN ICE CREAM PARLOR,  
READY TO ORDER...

FLAVORS THE LIKES OF WHICH  
I'VE NEVER SEEN IN LIFE WOULD  
TAUNT ME FROM BEYOND THE  
FROZEN GLASS...

Can I help you?

10%  
MORE  
FREE!

NOW, I'M A GLUTTON IN THE  
WAKING WORLD TOO, SO IT DOESN'T  
SURPRISE ME THAT I ALWAYS TRY TO  
FIT AS MANY FLAVORS INTO MY BOWL AS  
INHUMANLY POSSIBLE.

How will  
you be paying  
for that,  
ser?

Uhm...

(Sometimes  
end up  
dressed  
oddly  
in my  
dreams;)

(but that's another story.)

Have  
an ICE  
DAY!

"BUT THE RESULT IS,  
I NEVER GET ALL  
OF WHAT I ASK FOR."

BUT THERE'S  
ALWAYS A  
CATCH;

EITHER MY BOWL  
IS TOO SMALL,  
OR MY WAIST  
IS TOO  
THIN...

Th-thank you.

I HAVE PLENTY OF DREAMS  
WHOSE MEANINGS BECOME OBVIOUS  
TO ME WHEN I WAKE UP, BUT  
THIS ONE...

IT'S A SCENE THAT OCCURS  
IN EVERY DREAMSCAPE; IN  
EVERY CORNER OF MY MIND IS  
THE SAME PECULIAR STORE.

AND WHAT DOES IT MEAN?  
IS IT A HINT AT SOME  
UNFULFILLED DESIRES IN MY  
LIFE? SOME PERCEIVED  
INADEQUACY ON MY PART?

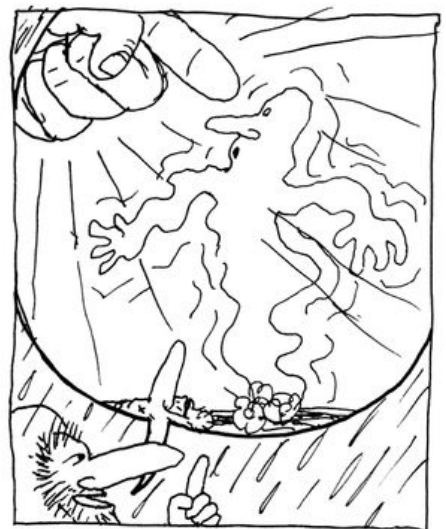
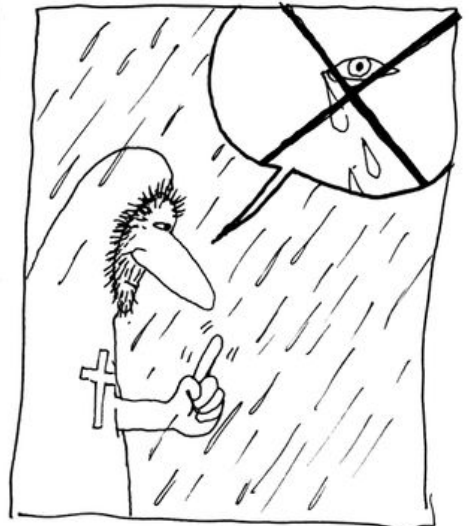
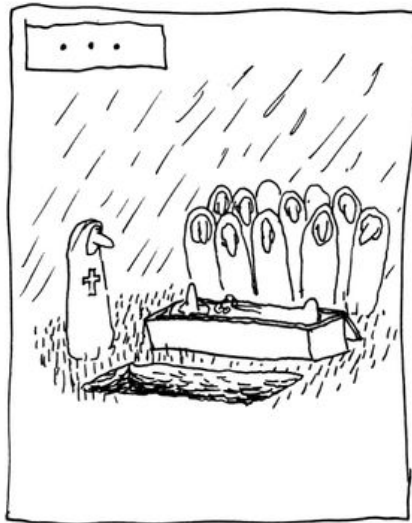
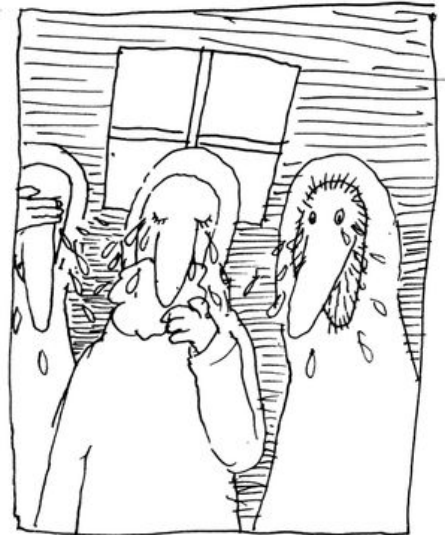
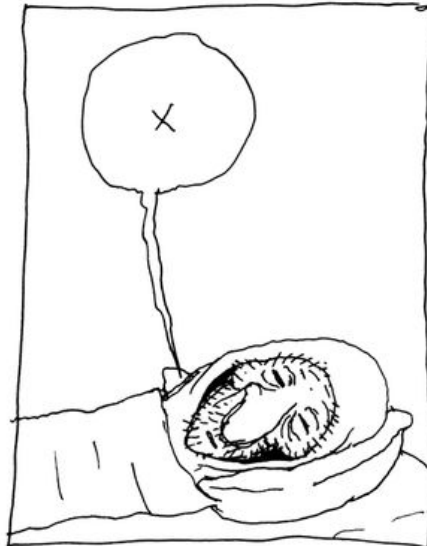
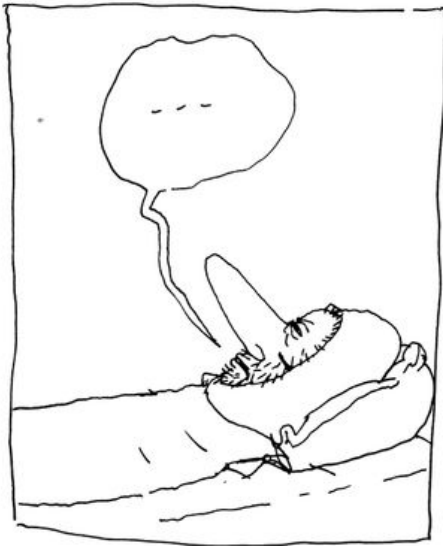
O,  
the  
Anguish

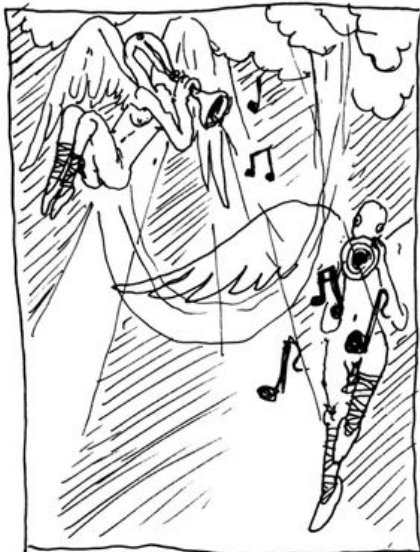
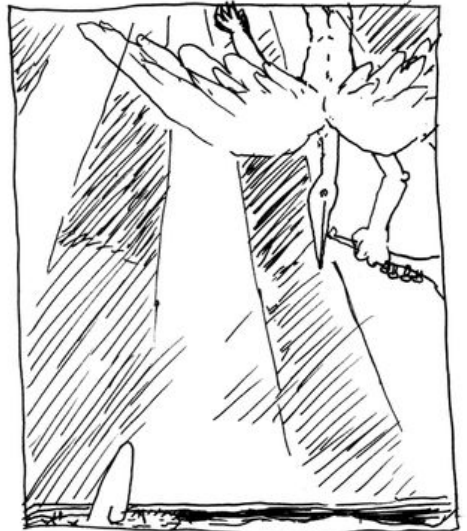
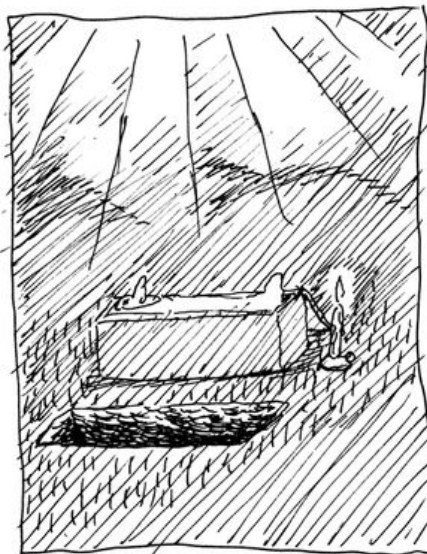
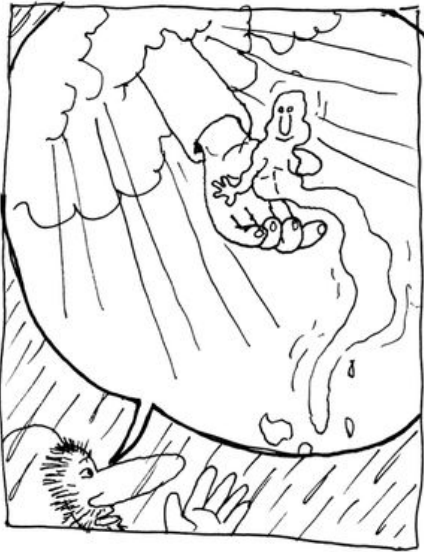
ANYWAY, AS FAR AS NIGHTMARES GO, THIS ONE ISN'T TOO BAD. I CAN LIVE WITH MY TERRORS ICE DREAMS.

THE  
END

META

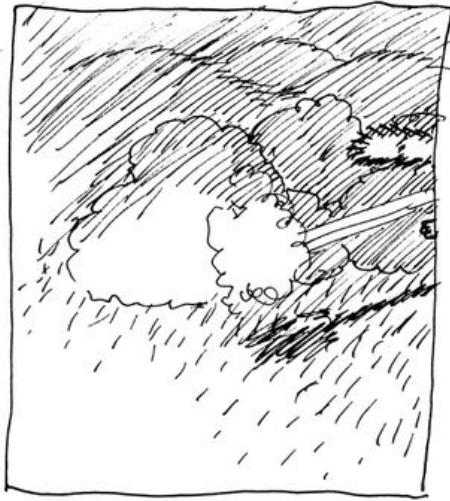










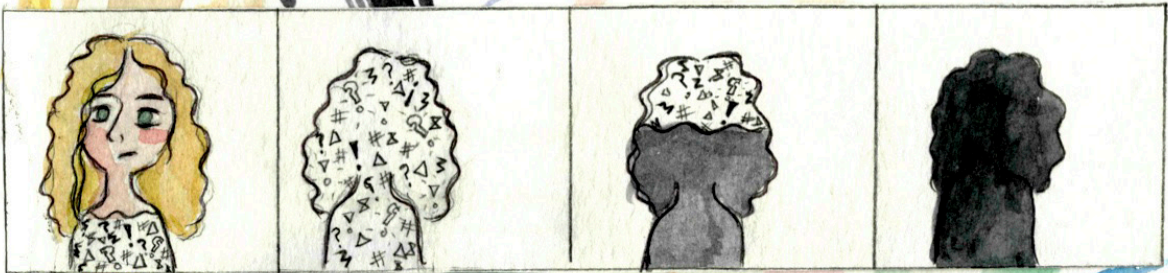


KRRNCH

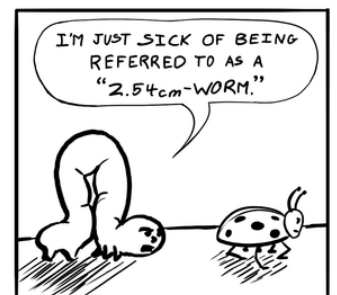
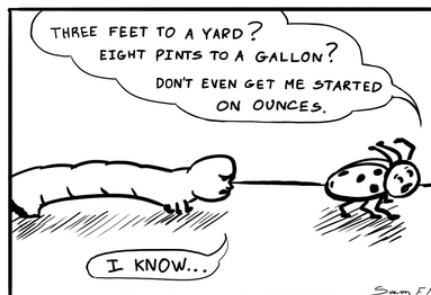
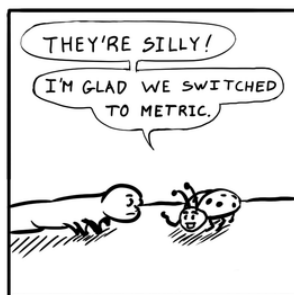
KRUNCH

GULP.

PANIC



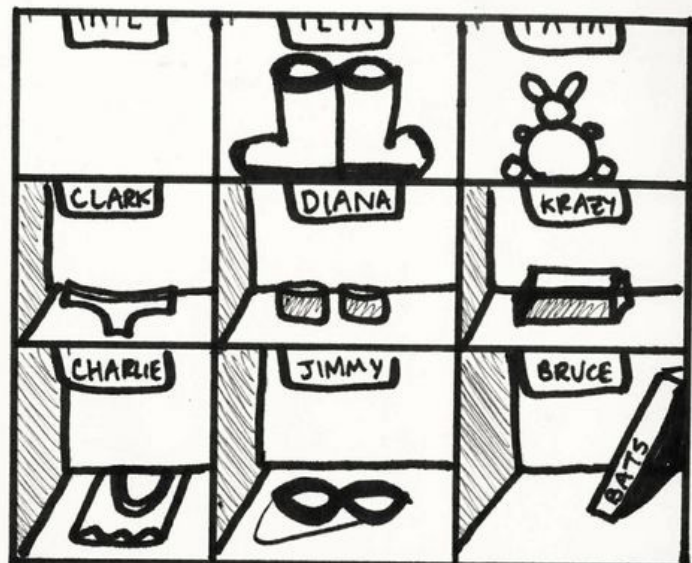
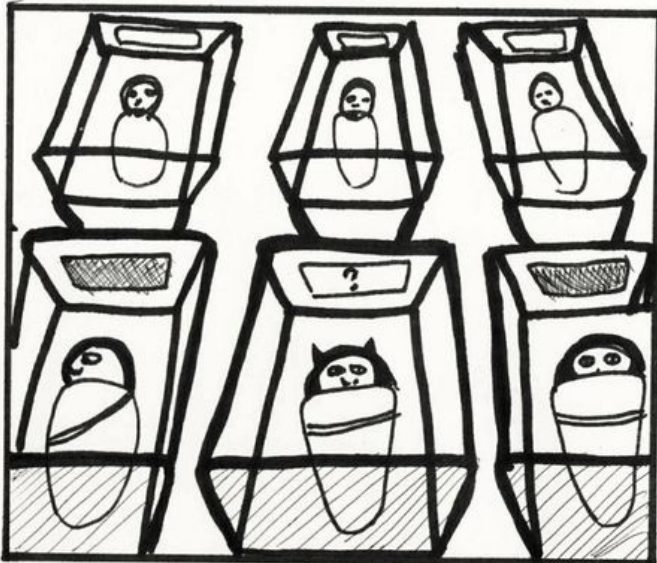
by Cyndi Bonacum '16





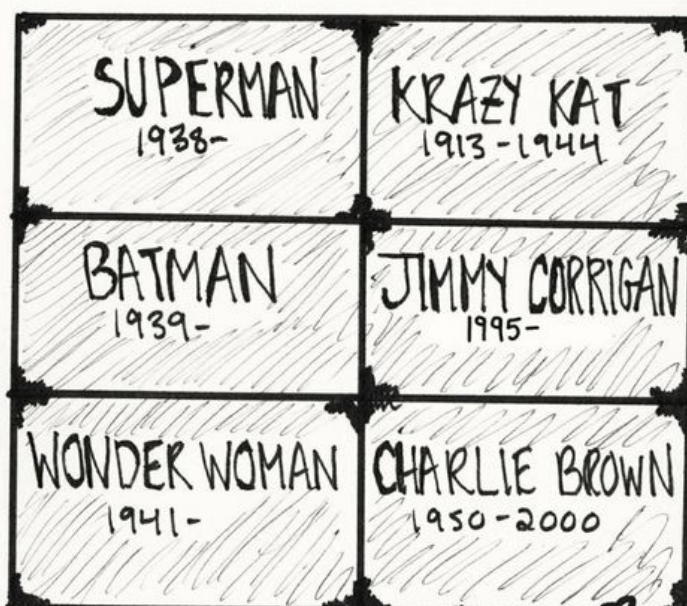
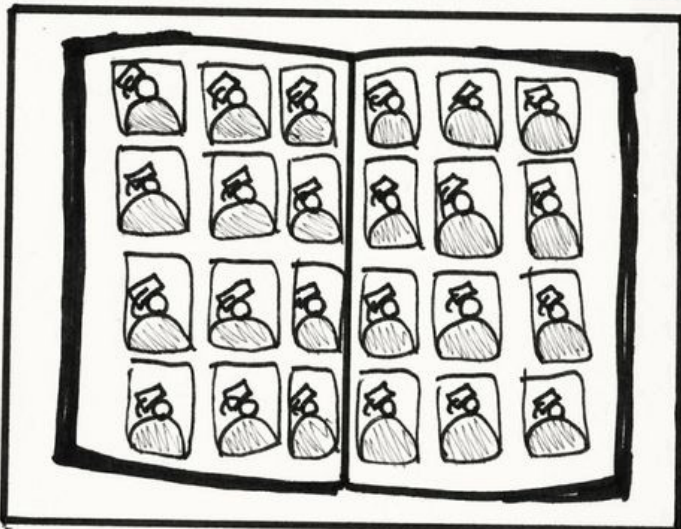
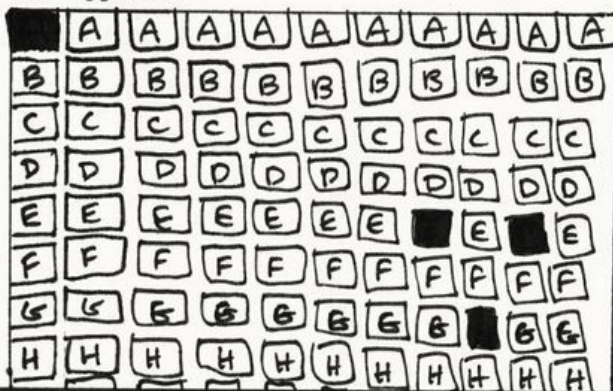
# THE PANELOPTICON

BY EMILIA PETRARCA



## STANDARDIZED TEST

NAME:



Quinn Milton  
ENGL 362  
P. Antelyes  
12/13/13

## Disfigurement: The Problem of Death in Comics an experimental comic-essay

An internet search of "death in comics" brings results primarily about the impermanence and apathy of death in the Superhero canons. "Comic book death" is a trope wherein an apparently deceased character returns by some miracle. Despite the triviality of death in Superhero comics, there is a more interesting impossibility of death in the medium predicated upon the continuous-present of comic's temporality and the representational limits of the figure. The iconographics of death stand in for what cannot be depicted. Every image is a representation that includes within it the act of negation of what is not represented; the most un-depictable shadow of the figure being non-existence. But approaching the grand-zero of all representation—death—is disfigurement. As I use it in this essay, disfigurement is the mode of transgressing the representational limits of the figure when it tries to endure death. Disfigurement is a particularly apt word; it is both the marring of a surface and an undoing of figuration which is established on the body.





Superheroes must be immortal and ageless to function as reconstituted, mythic characters whose stories are constantly rewritten and consumed. The superhero body cannot retain any permanent mark or defacement. Similarly, most newspaper strips do not deal with mortality as the characters are constantly reproduced. While this is genre-specific, all comics are unfit to contain the definity of death since images are ever-present, permanent, and transforming. Panels contain space on a page with simultaneous realities, and the reader performs the movement of time that discloses their differences. Death is the future-without-present, an event that is anticipated but can never "arrive"; so it is uneasily contained within panels which are constantly "arriving". The actual moment of death becomes difficult to locate. It can seem to occur abruptly as a sudden absence, or cinematically, where the moments are subdivided. Either way, the divisions of panels continuously deflect the actual moment. It occurs in the purgatory space of the margin, where the reader must "fill in the blanks".

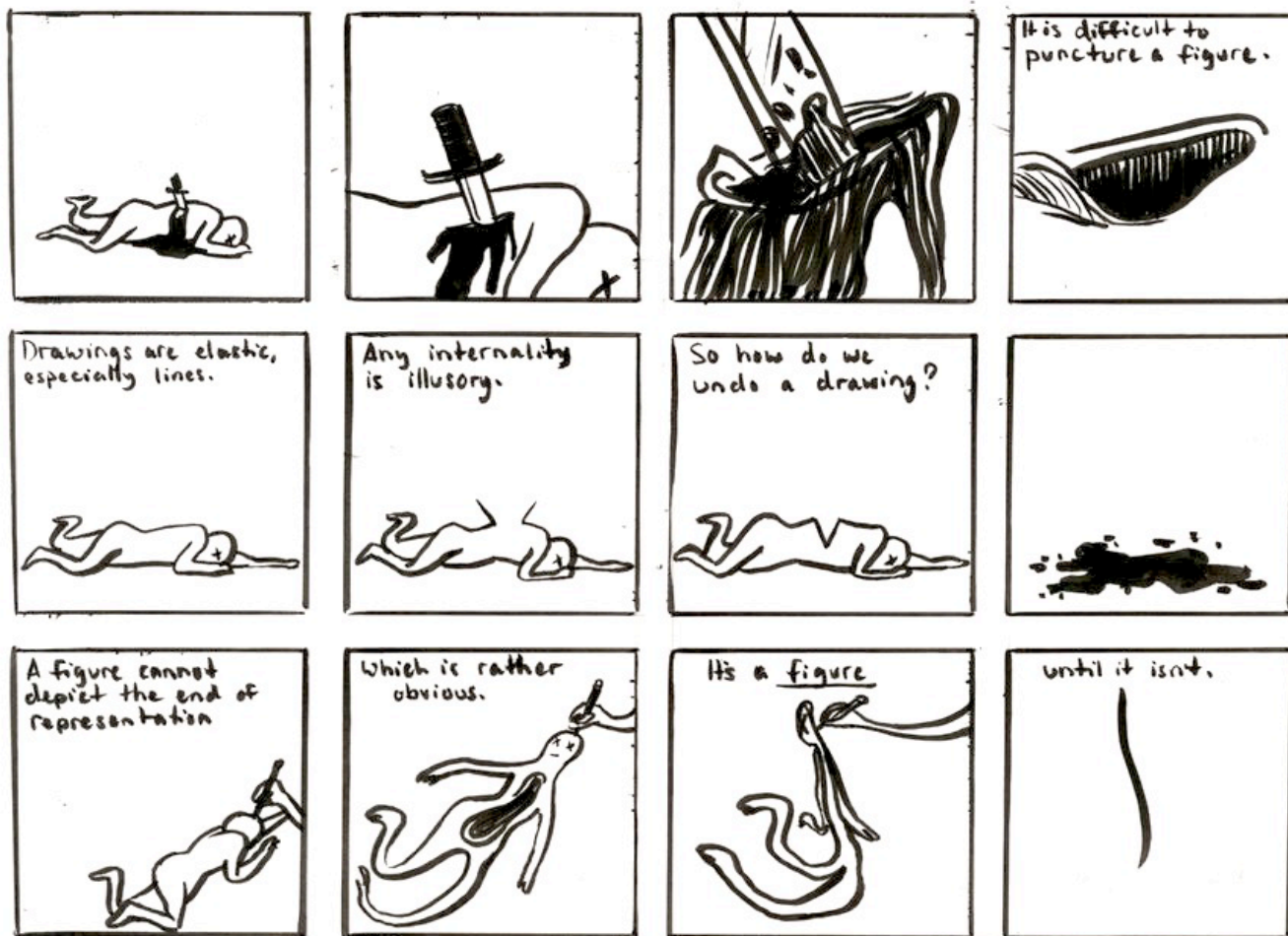
#### An Abrupt Death



#### A Cinematic Death



The penetration of the figure is a mode of disfigurement preoccupied with the surface of drawings. Although we assume the characters have flesh, bones and organs underneath the "skin" of a drawing, it is all surface. What is actually beneath a drawing? The "underside" of a figuration in comics is everything it fails to signify, not the muscles and bones that would float on the same surface were they drawn. A drawing "is not death either, because it manifests existence without being, existence which remains below existence, like an inexorable affirmation, without beginning or end—death as the impossibility of dying."<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup>. In this quote Maurice Blanchot is referring to literature but it is applicable to other representations such as comics.



Dismemberment, as a form of disfigurement, addresses the persistence of the self even as the body is divided. There is the possibility of survival when part of the body dies, especially with the playfulness of comics where the body can easily be reanimated. Dismemberments explore when the figure is no longer itself, which necessarily asks the question "where is the self in the comic body?"

~~Comics can~~

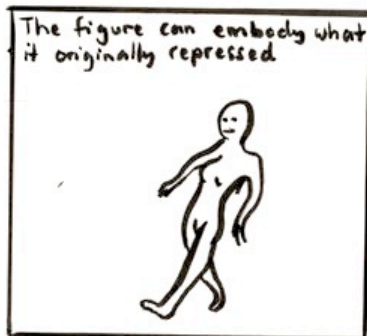
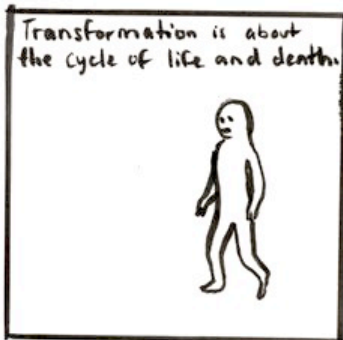


Comics can easily kill a body. In Superhero comics, gore becomes a mockery of death since bodies exist only to be violated. As opposed to a body, in the physics of comics it is difficult to permanently kill a character since they may be resurrected through re-reading. With this in mind, a true death of a character may be the erasure of its identity.



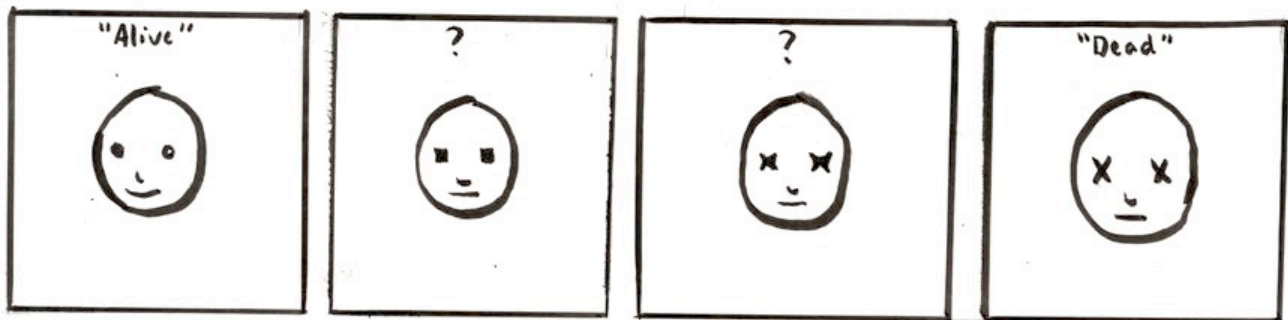


At what point is the body no longer contained by the lines that form it, and does that constitute a death of the drawing, or an undoing of representation? Perhaps the most honest picture of death is not the empty panel, but the total dissolution of the figure through drawing; lines present on the page but through transformation become antithesis to their representational powers. Transformation as disfigurement continuously destroys and recreates the figure.





The X over the eyes is an icon of death and unconsciousness that originated in comics. The "crossing out" is a mark of negation. The eyes are not only closed, they cannot be opened. They are defaced: "to mar the surface especially with writing or pictures." The primary site of identification on the face is the eyes, which are colloquially known as the windows to the soul. With nuance, the skilled comic artist renders eyes with various emotions and states of consciousness, and can even create the illusion that a character returns the gaze of the viewer. Ultimately, a drawing of an eye cannot see, but it represents a supernatural gaze that, like the evil eye or Solomon's symbols of demons, captures and banishes the gaze.

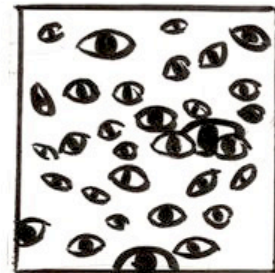


Perhaps the moment of death that can actually be seen is the moment where the light of life leaves the eyes, as in the poem "There's a Certain Slant of Light":

When it goes, 't is like the distance  
on the look of death—

—Emily Dickinson

The moment when the windows to the soul are boarded up by the X, and the gaze moves beyond what we can see.



The loss of ability to see?



Or to be seen?



The black panel is the most distilled act of disfiguration, and closely points to the issues of representation. A black panel is empty and non-depiction, and at the same time it is the overfilling of the panel with mark-making. Marks and meaning are subsumed in their overabundance; so, unlike the blank page, the black page is an active erasure through drawing. It is the ultimate loss through representation. The absence at stake in death and representation is disfigured in the black.

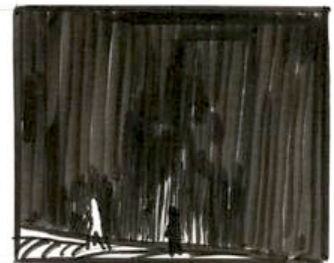
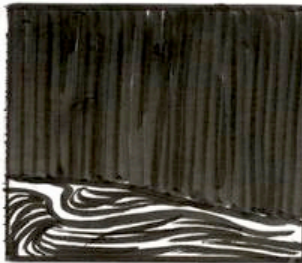
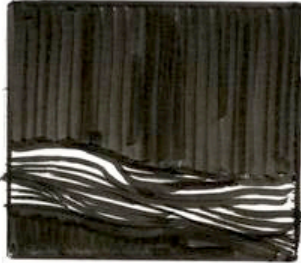


To end this essay I will turn to the story of Orpheus and Eurydice. The myth speaks to the tensions of representation and death I have pointed to — representation embodying death, the futility of imaging death, the desire to see, and the gaze that "kills" death. Representations of death illuminate the process of representation, and death is only ever represented. "Any representational discourse implies the muteness, absence, nonbeing — in short, the death — of the object it seeks to designate. Death, as the real process of division, can perhaps be best expressed through figures of liminality, figures that expressly signify allegorically and thus speak the nonsignifiable "Other" through negation or displacement."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Death and Representation p 7



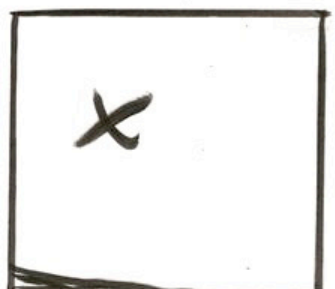
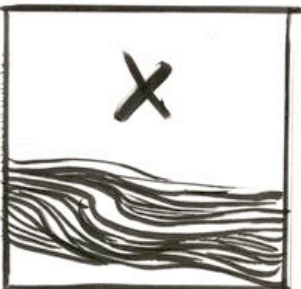
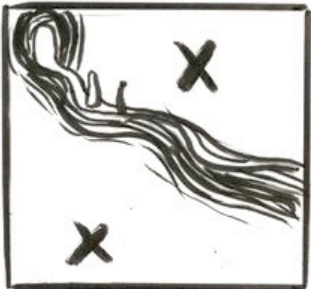
Why did Orpheus turn to look? It was such a simple plan. Did he forget the rules because of impatience or desire? "Impatience is the mistake made by a person who wishes to escape the absence of time."<sup>3</sup>



Or did he wish to bring back not the living Eurydice, but as <sup>3</sup> Blanchot claims, the forbidden knowledge of death "in her nocturnal darkness, in her distance, her body closed, her face sealed... when she is invisible."



Orpheus' gaze "does not want to make her live, but to have the fullness of death living in her." The gaze kills what is already dead, because an image banishes death...



... or can only hold death in the most fleeting glance. Orpheus "sees" Eurydice disappear, but how can you see a disappearance? Like a black hole, vision can only approach the event horizon at the edge of the unobservable.

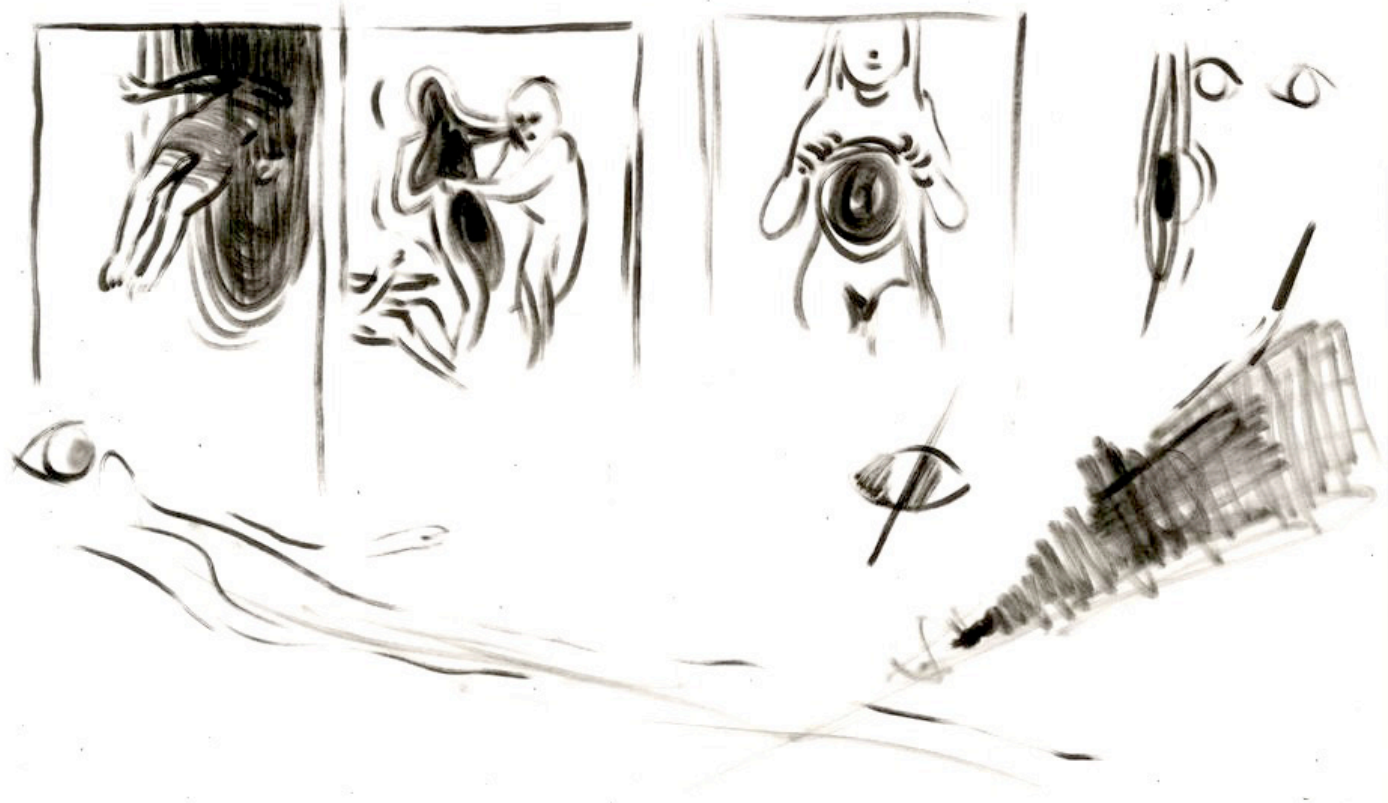




The convention of comics is to create and recreate. We can't see/image Eurydice without resurrecting her. Her death and disappearance can be pointed to with multiple devices...



... but the Eurydice of Hades, the figure that tries to contain death, can only be attempted through disfigurement.

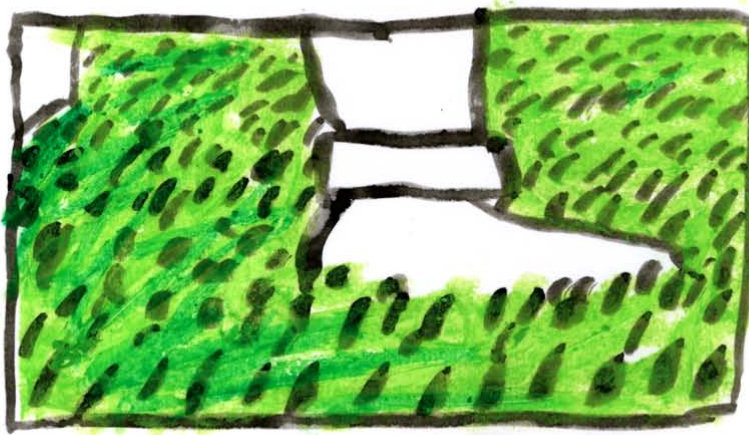
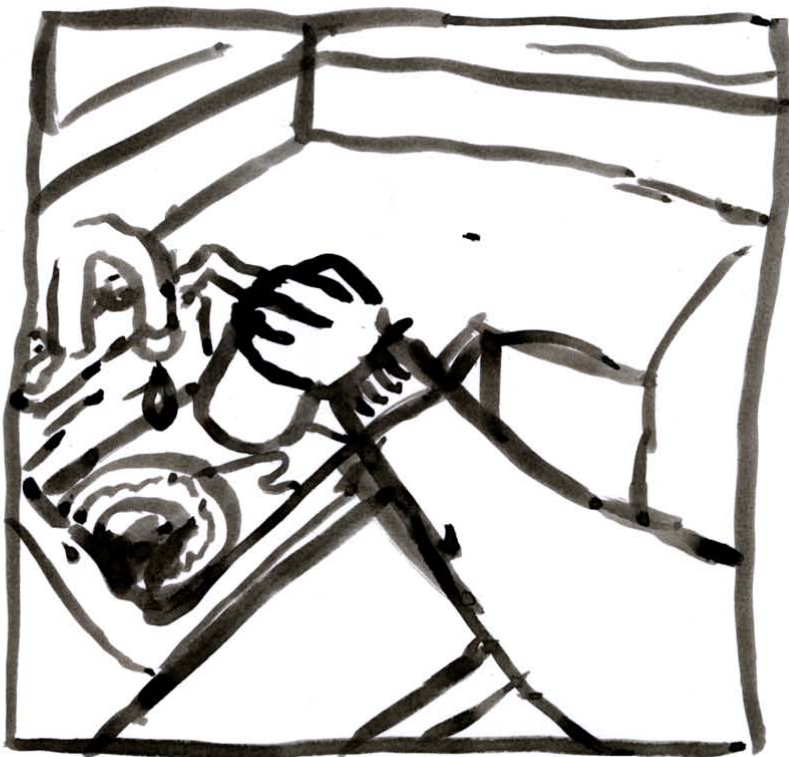




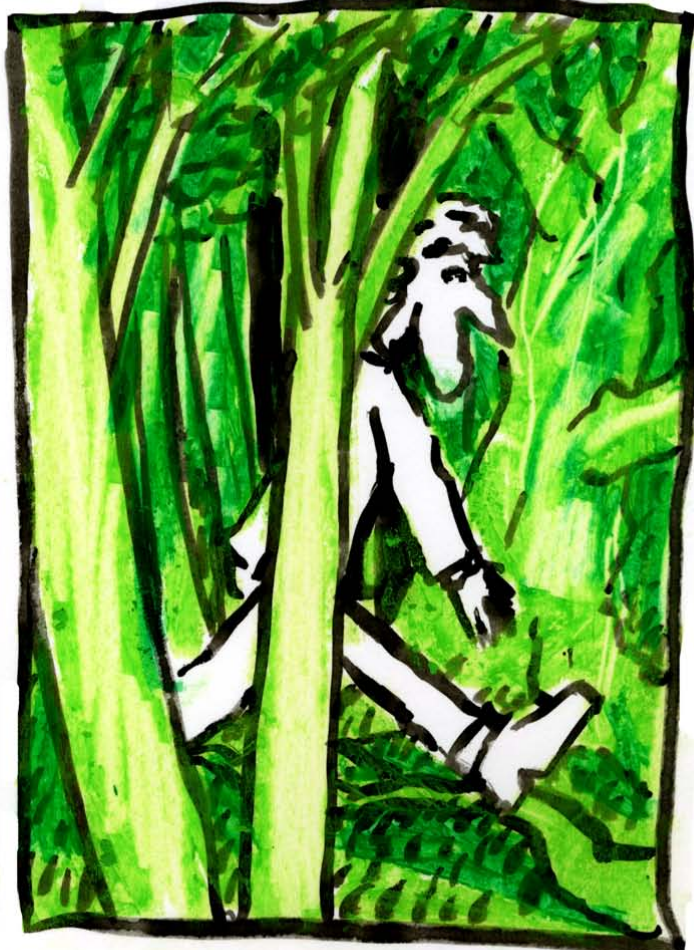








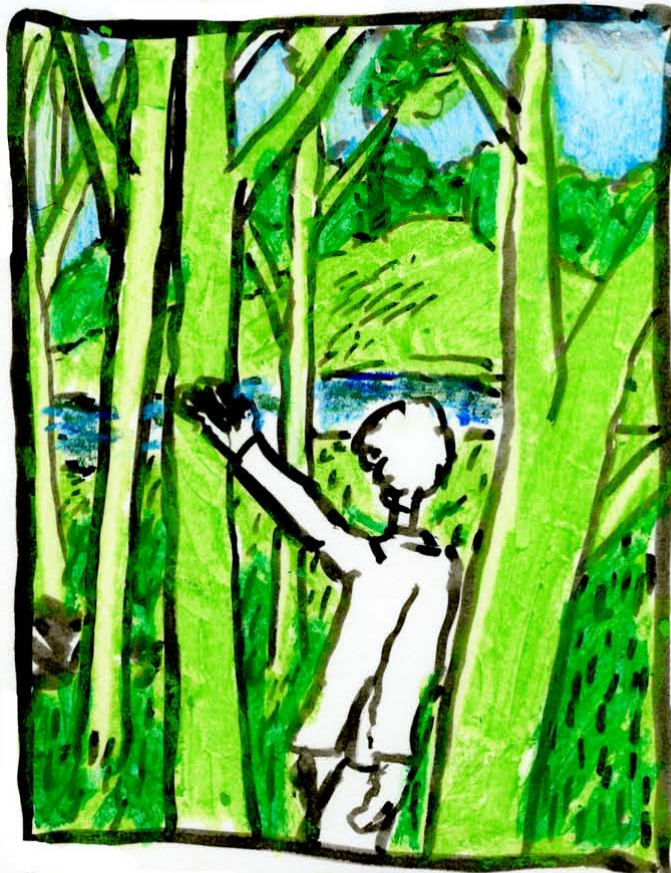




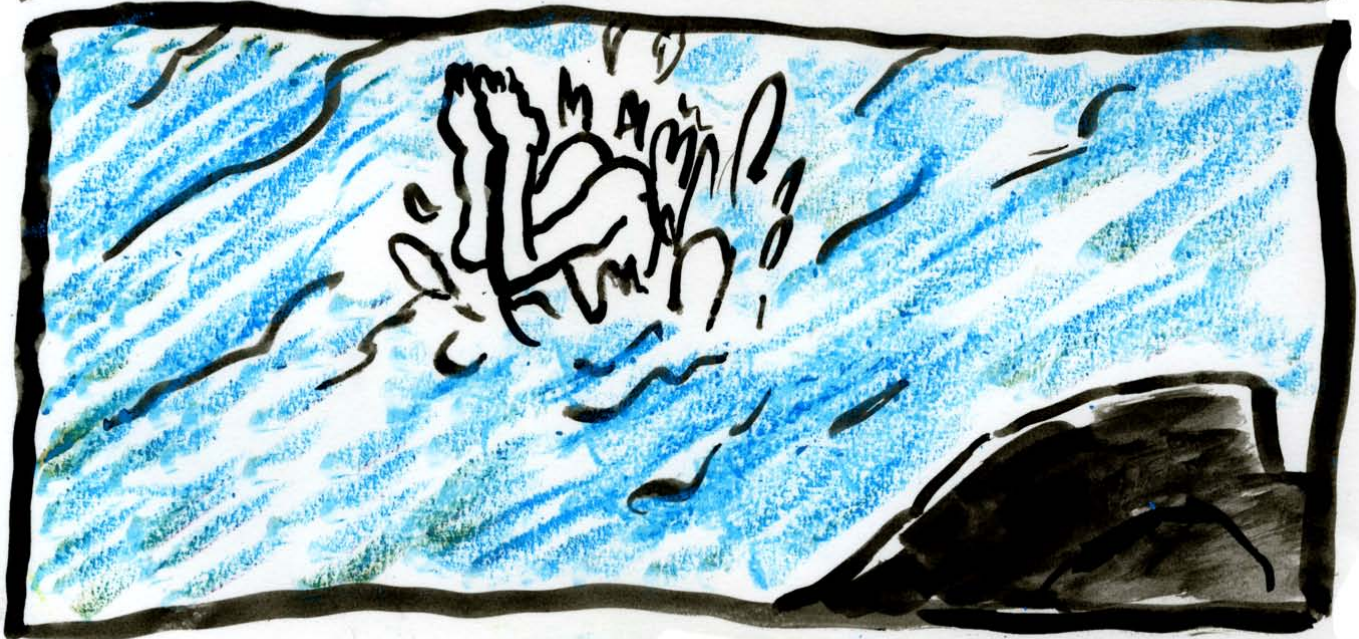




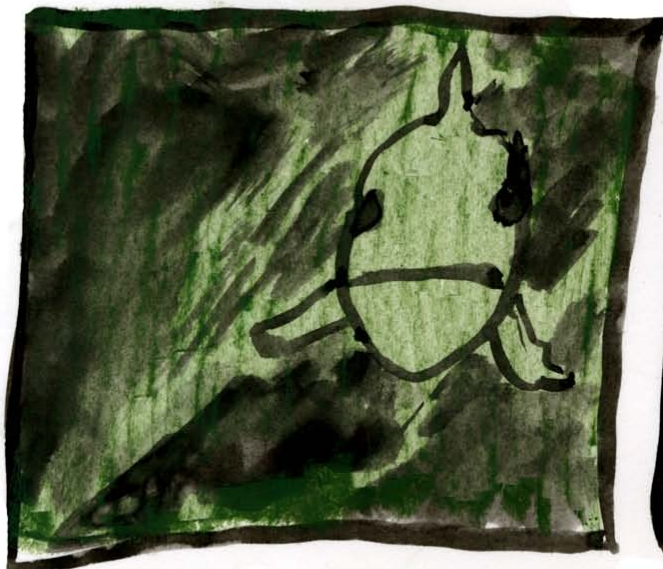












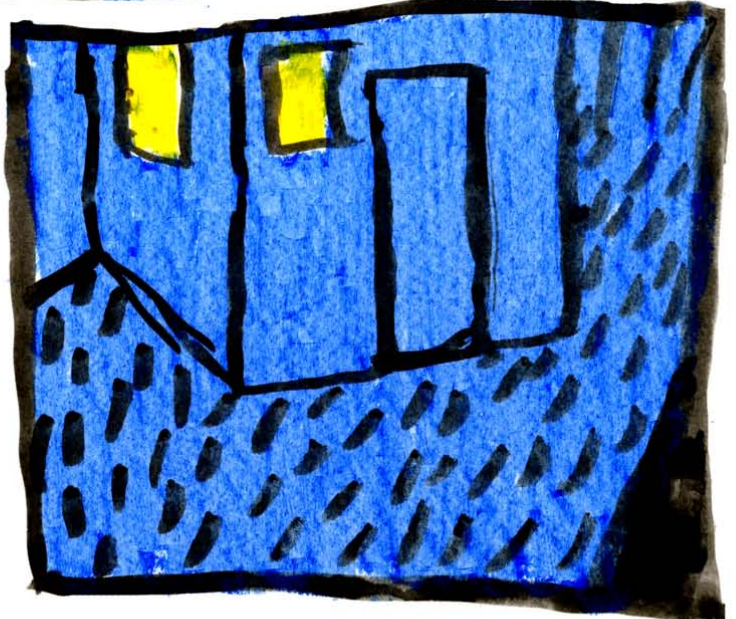
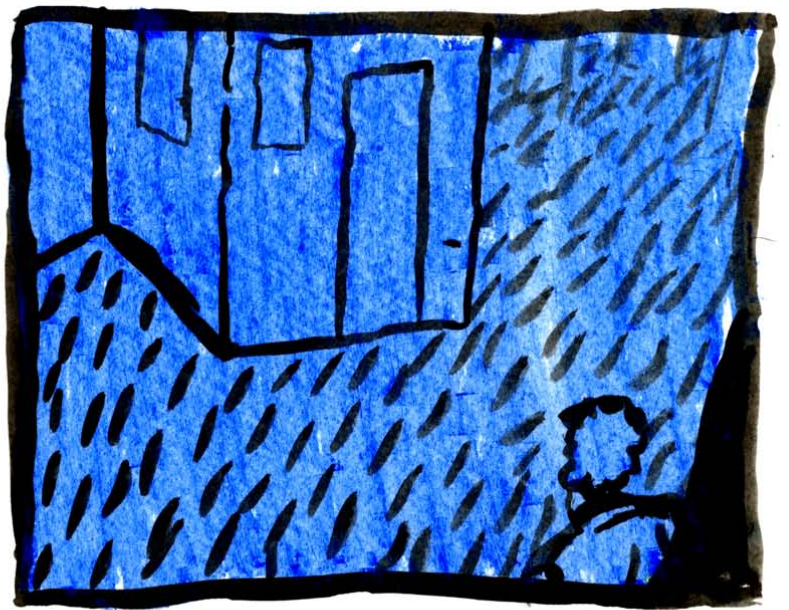




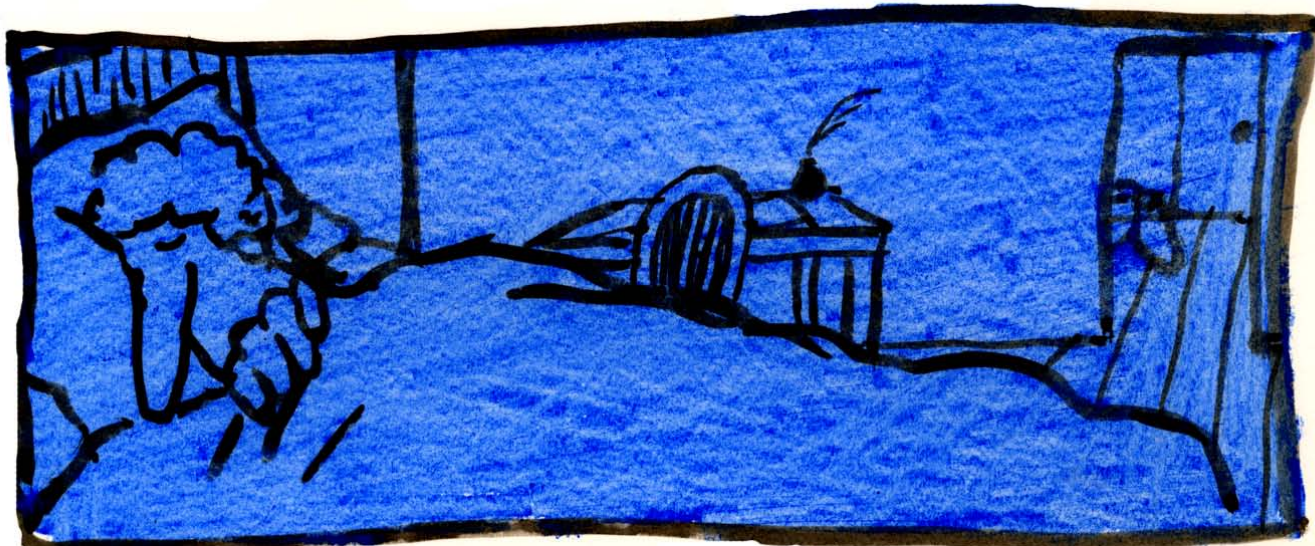
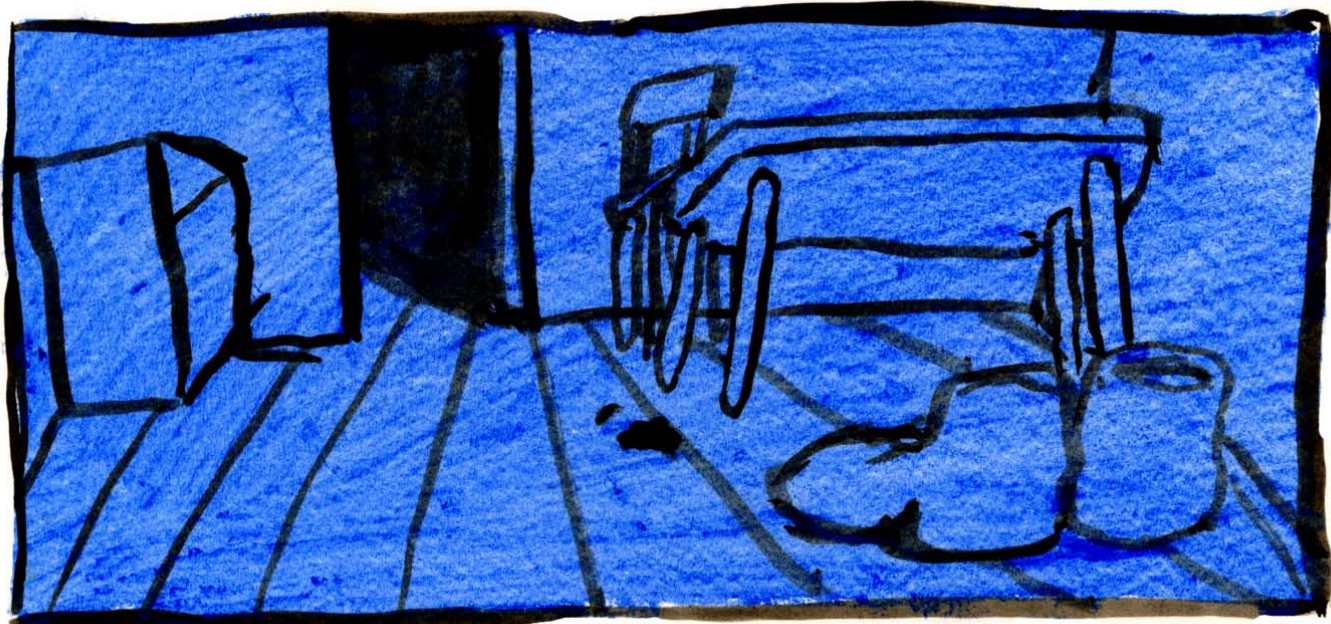














For a long while, I wrapped myself in the comforting idea

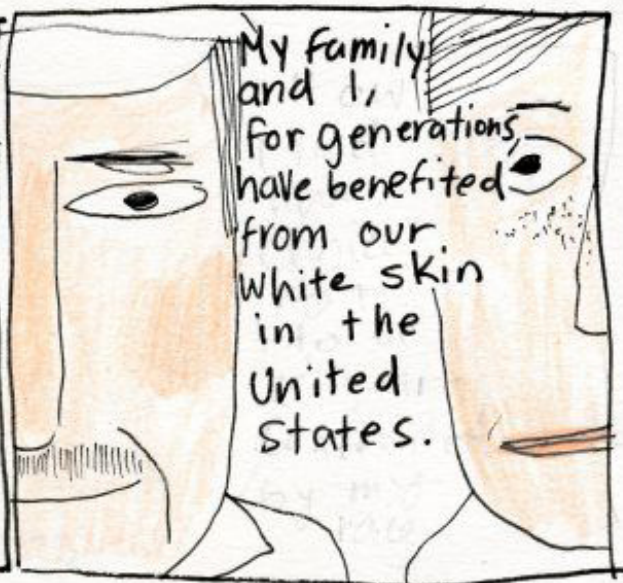


I was Jewish, not white

Protected by my people's historical persecution, I didn't have to feel any guilt—guilt about slavery, about Jim Crow laws, about everyday racism entrenched in Society.



Because feeling that guilt would force me to acknowledge the truth of the matter.



My family and I, for generations, have benefited from our white skin in the United States.



I can choose to be  
"color blind" and not  
consider race.



NUDE  
stockings.

Guilt isn't a very  
productive emotion.

NUDE  
lipstick

Because the "acceptable"  
skin color is my skin color.

You have  
a good  
night!

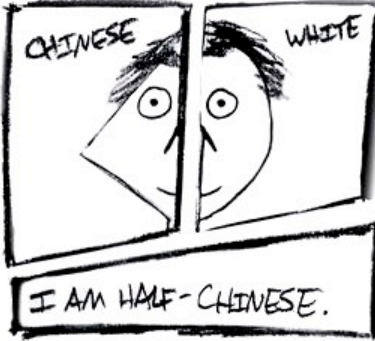
cause it makes me  
want to run away; run  
down the street safe in  
my whiteness.

I am Jewish, a part  
of an oppressed  
minority.

and I'm white.



dumplings—



KRIS - CHINESE,  
CHINESE PARENTS

MEI - CHINESE,  
WHITE PARENTS  
(SHE WAS ADOPTED)

EDDIE - WHITE,  
LEARNING CHINESE

WE SEE THAT WE FORM 2 1/2 ASIANS. A CROSS-SECTION OF IDENTITY.

I ONLY FEEL CHINESE THROUGH MOM...



INDIAN? LATINO?  
ITALIAN?

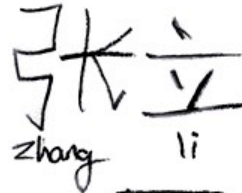
FEW GUESS  
CORRECTLY.

I FELT ODD AT THE ASIAN STUDENTS  
ALLIANCE MEETING MY FIRST YEAR.



... I NEVER RETURNED.

I CAN WRITE MY NAME IN CHINESE...



... BUT CAN'T PROUNCE  
IT. I CAN'T SPEAK  
OR WRITE IN  
GENERAL.



ACCURATE LABELS DON'T  
FEEL LIKE SECURE  
IDENTITIES.

HAPA? BIRACIAL?

I RARELY EXPERIENCE STEREOTYPING.  
MEI HAS.



I'VE GIVEN UP ON DEBATING AND CLASSIFYING MYSELF.



← CHILDHOOD  
ATTEMPT AT  
CHINESE PAINTING  
FROM CHINESE SCHOOL



← GREAT WALL  
SOUVENIR  
T-SHIRT (TOO  
SMALL, UGLY)



← SESAME  
OIL  
(TASTY)

FORK & DUMPLINGS  
IS HERESY STILL



CHOPSTICKS?  
DIDN'T MASTER  
TILL SOPH. YEAR



-Adam,  
2014

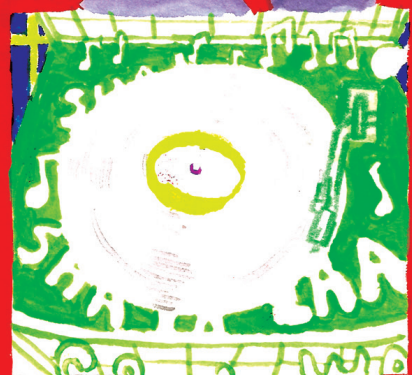
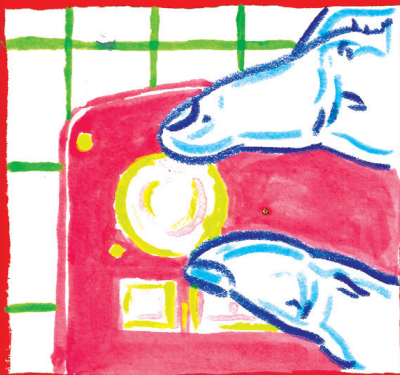
STILL, NOTHING REMINDS ME OF HOME MORE THAN CHINESE FOOD.



# VELOUR

BY SASHA S.

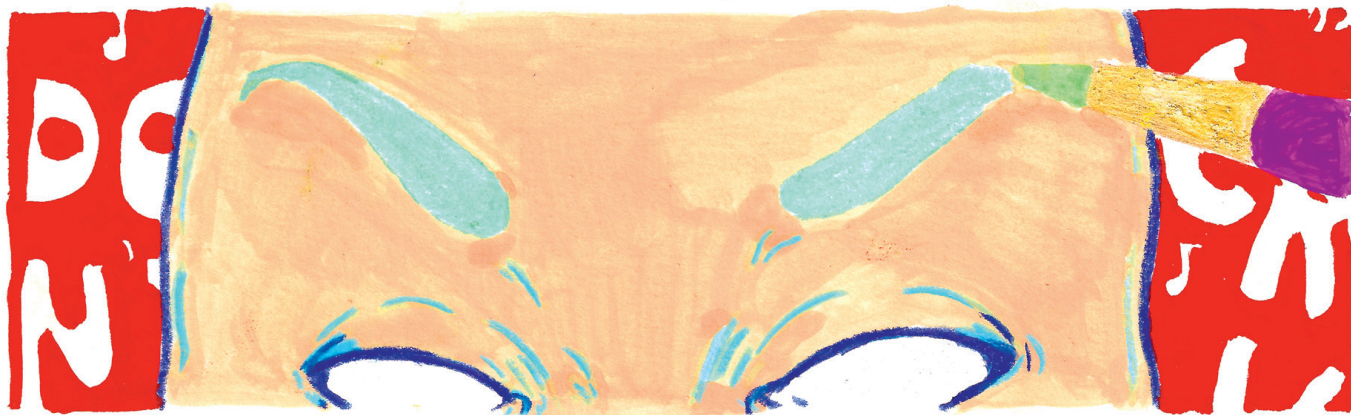
Let's  
have some  
music, shall  
we?







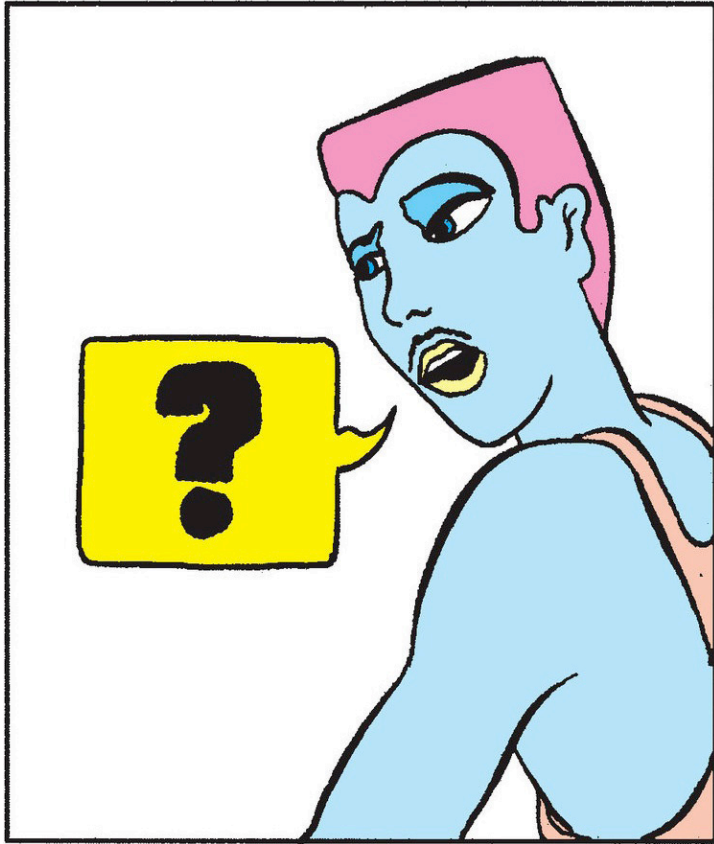












## A Conversation with

# SASHA STEIN- BERG

## Vassar Class of '09

*Sasha Steinberg is a comics artist raised in Urbana, IL. He recently received his M.F.A from The Center for Cartoon Studies in White River Junction, Vermont. He also holds a B.A. in Modern Literatures from Vassar College, where he graduated in 2009. Sasha is particularly interested in developing queer literary comics, and is currently working on an epic graphic novel about the Stonewall uprising of 1969. Sasha lives with a tyrannosaurus named Regina in Brooklyn, New York.*

**EMILIA PETRARCA:** *Thanks so much for taking the time to meet with me! Let's start in college: did you write a thesis at Vassar?*

**SASHA STEINBERG:** I did. That was the beginning of the end of academia for me [laughs]. I did a translation from Russian of a banned piece of literature. I've always been interested in gay culture from around the world and there was this novel that got banned in Russia because it had gay sex in it. People ripped it up and threw it into toilets and into the street. It was a big deal. And of course, it's completely not available in English. So, I found it and started translating it and then I decided to do an art project with it. The text was in the middle and then on the outside was philosophical commentary that talked about the struggles of translating it and offered different

interpretations on what the meaning of the piece of literature was. There were also pieces of art that corresponded. I didn't actually draw anything—it was more of a collage of images, ideas and my writing. The project was really exciting for me but also not super academic in some ways.

**PETRARCA:** *That's why you go to liberal arts.*

**STEINBERG:** Exactly. It was so welcomed at Vassar. Because I studied literature though, I couldn't read for fun anymore. Comics were my healing process. I could read them for fun. Now I can't, because I do them [laughs]. I read books for fun again.



**PETRARCA:** *Can you tell me a little about your **Stonewall series**?*

**STEINBERG:** I started researching Stonewall post graduation and pre grad school, when I spent a year living in Poughkeepsie. I was really surprised to learn that the people at the forefront of the riots were drag queens and trans women who were homeless and not white. I thought that was really important information that isn't usually shared when people talk about Stonewall, which is all the time now that the community is fighting for marriage and different kinds of equality. I feel that trans people are actually excluded from a lot of gay rights stuff and it's bothered me for a long time. When I discovered this fact about the Stonewall riots I just thought it was so important. I was really curious about how many different stories there were of Stonewall. When I started researching I learned that no one really agrees with each other about what happened—even the people who were there. So I decided to do some different story lines to show different perspectives of the narrative.

*Miss Venus* is about the trans women who were at the forefront of the riots. I tried to capture their world, and show how modern and honest it was, but simultaneously kind of messy and childish.

Everyone in the story is real except for the main character, Venus. They're all based on people I researched. Their names are their real names and their appearances are based on photos that I found. And then I put it all in the style of this real artist, Tarpé Mills, who was one of the first female comic artists. I took her original art and tried to imitate it. To a certain extent I stole body poses and then re-did them. I really wanted to get her weird, tiny hands and other details like that.

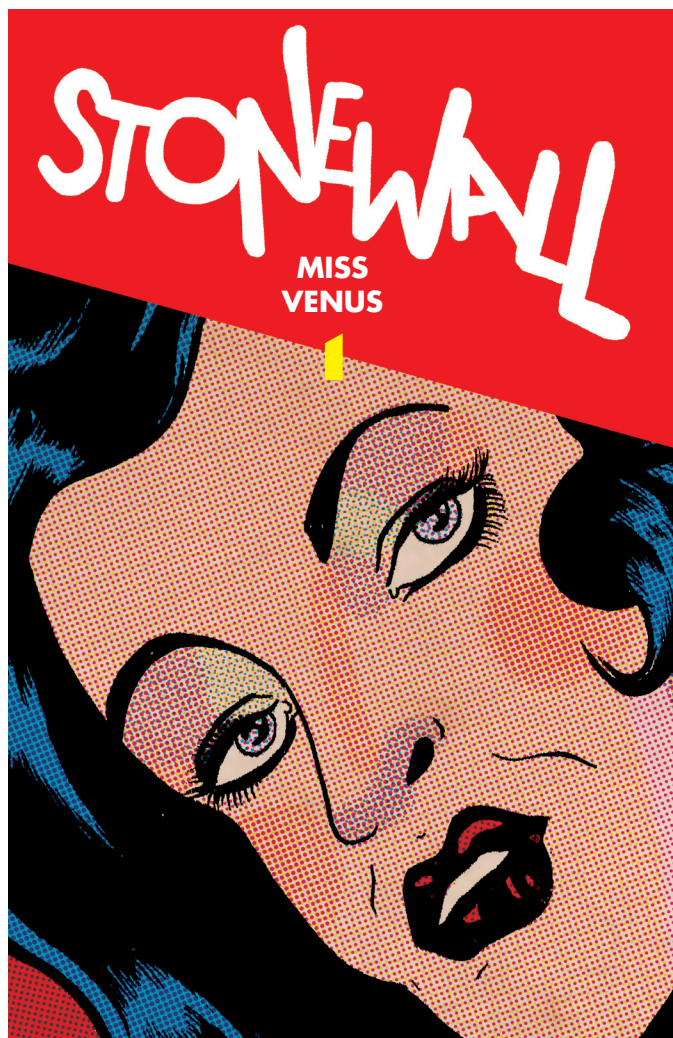
For the second one I wanted to do it from a different perspective—someone who's not part of the gay community. How did he see this event and why? I think that the media helped to turn it into a milestone. Everyone was really excit-

ed about Stonewall, even though it was about gay people. They twisted the story a little bit though. The character is a taxi driver who takes photographs. He ends up at the riots and then sells his photographs of the riots in the next book to the *Village Voice*.

**PETRARCA:** *How many books are there in the **Stonewall series**?*

**STEINBERG:** I want to do nine total—three for each character. There's another storyline from the police's perspective. It's going to be black and white in noir style. I've got the plots laid out but we'll see what happens.

*(Interview continued on next page)*





**PETRARCA:** *Do you have a style of your own, or are you still trying to figure that out?*

**STEINBERG:** I'm still trying to figure that out now a little bit. For an anthology called *QU33R*, available from Northwest Press, which came out this past winter, I used watercolor. They wanted everything to be autobiographical and I've performed in drag in Vermont and Illinois. The editor, who has seen my Facebook and all my drag pictures, asked me to do a story about it. Sasha Velour is my drag alter ego. So, I did something about my time in Vermont and Michigan. I wanted to make it funny. She's stealing things from Wal Mart like pantyhoes and chocolate and a coat. But also dealing with these peoples' reactions to her. Some people are positive, some are negative, some you don't know what they mean. She also has magic powers. I had a lot of fun doing this style—very fantasy and in color, rather than on the computer.

**PETRARCA:** *How would you define this aesthetic?*

I really like two different styles of drawing: the European, clear-line style where it's just trapped colors versus the super dramatic shadow-y American style. Both of them are really romantic to me and match how I see the world a little bit. Either a weird 60's fantasy or a dark murder mystery [laughs].

It's a little bit like drag. Pre-existing styles of art can be for a cartoonist what those those past ideas of femininity are for a drag queen. We exploit them, and show them to be a little false. It all breaks down the illusion of an original style. No artist has their own original style—everyone is copying someone else. Every single person I went to school with is copying someone and making it their own. That's normal.

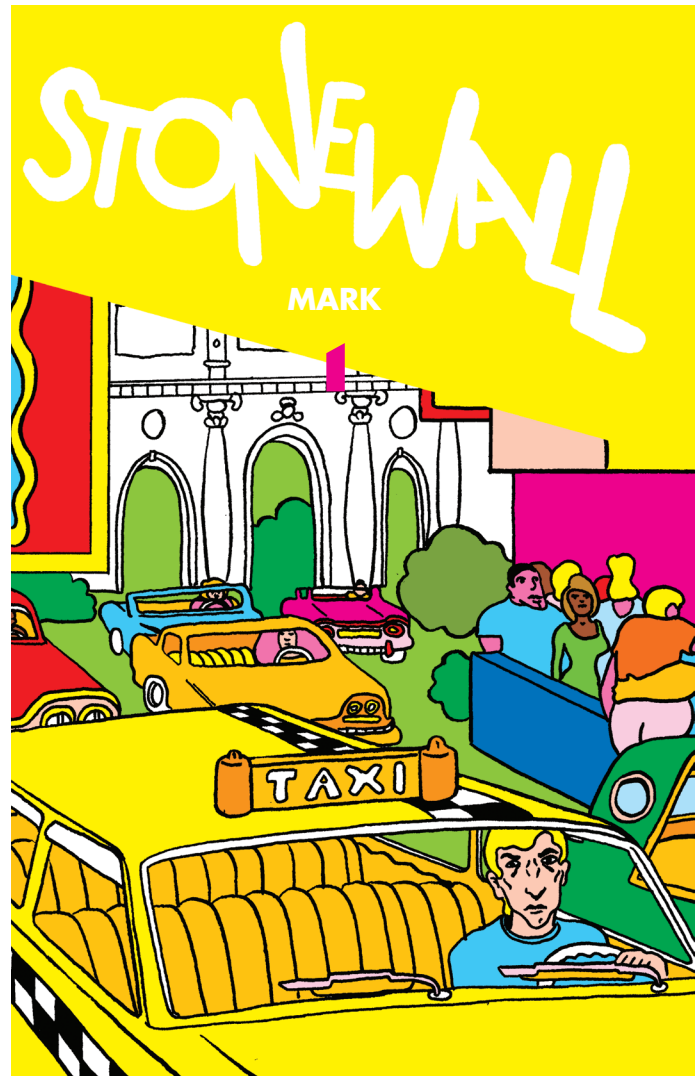
**PETRARCA:** *Do you see comics as a way to inhabit different characters as well?*

**STEINBERG:** For sure. Comics is like theater in some ways. When I was at Vassar I was in Woodshed. I was very much a theater person.

Comics are like a play that's all me [laughs]. I'm writing and performing every role and designing it.

**PETRARCA:** *How did you train yourself to draw?*

**STEINBERG:** When I got to school I was imitating different artists the whole time as a way to



learn how to draw different styles. I trace poses and I study the way that fabric looks. I also use Google SketchUp.

**PETRARCA:** *What made you decide to do an MFA at The Center for Cartoon Studies?*

**STEINBERG:** To be around other people who are taking comics seriously is really important. I think an MFA makes you focus mentally.



Even if I had tons of free time [in New York], I don't think I would be able to focus the same way. It was like my job. It was fun. This program is one of the best deals and the town is very cheap. I really recommend it for people who want to do comics.

**PETRARCA:** *What do you do in New York City?*

**STEINBERG:** I teach comic classes for Japanese speakers and I teach one-on-one English classes.

pages of an ongoing story.

I'm reading some Agatha Christie to get me in the mood [laughs]. *The Secret of Chimneys* is my favorite.

**PETRARCA:** *Have you found comic communities in New York?*

I've met a lot of people going to comic conventions, which is where I sell things and make connections.



Japan's an amazing place for comics because it's a really normal thing. It's respected. People read comics on the subway. Here in New York, even I feel a little weird reading comics on the subway...it's just not common.

**PETRARCA:** *What are you reading now?*

**STEINBERG:** I'm working on a murder mystery right now for a serialized comic anthology called "Maple Key Comics." My story is called "The Disappearance of Pepper Stein." Every two months we have to create another eight

**PETRARCA:** *Do you think you'll continue with queer subject matter?*

**STEINBERG:** I haven't done anything that isn't. I could totally do other things. But I think it's becoming less and less niche as a subject matter. The audience is changing. People outside of the community are interested now. There's a long history of feminist comics too and those aren't niche anymore either.

**INTERVIEW BY EMILIA PETRARCA**



# ARTIST BIOS

CYNTHIA BONACUM

Sophomore  
Westchester, NY

ADAM BUCHSBAUM

Senior  
Los Angeles, CA

RACHAEL JOHNSON

Junior  
Westchester, NY

REBECCA KATZ

Class of 2010  
Brooklyn, NY

ADRIENNE LANG

Senior  
Chicago, IL



**SAM FABER MANNING**

Sophomore  
Putnam Valley, NY

**QUINN MILTON**

Senior  
Berkeley, CA

**JOEL ORLOFF**

Senior  
Cambridge, MA

**EMILIA PETRARCA**

Senior  
New York, NY

**SASHA STEINBERG**

Class of 2009  
Urbana, IL