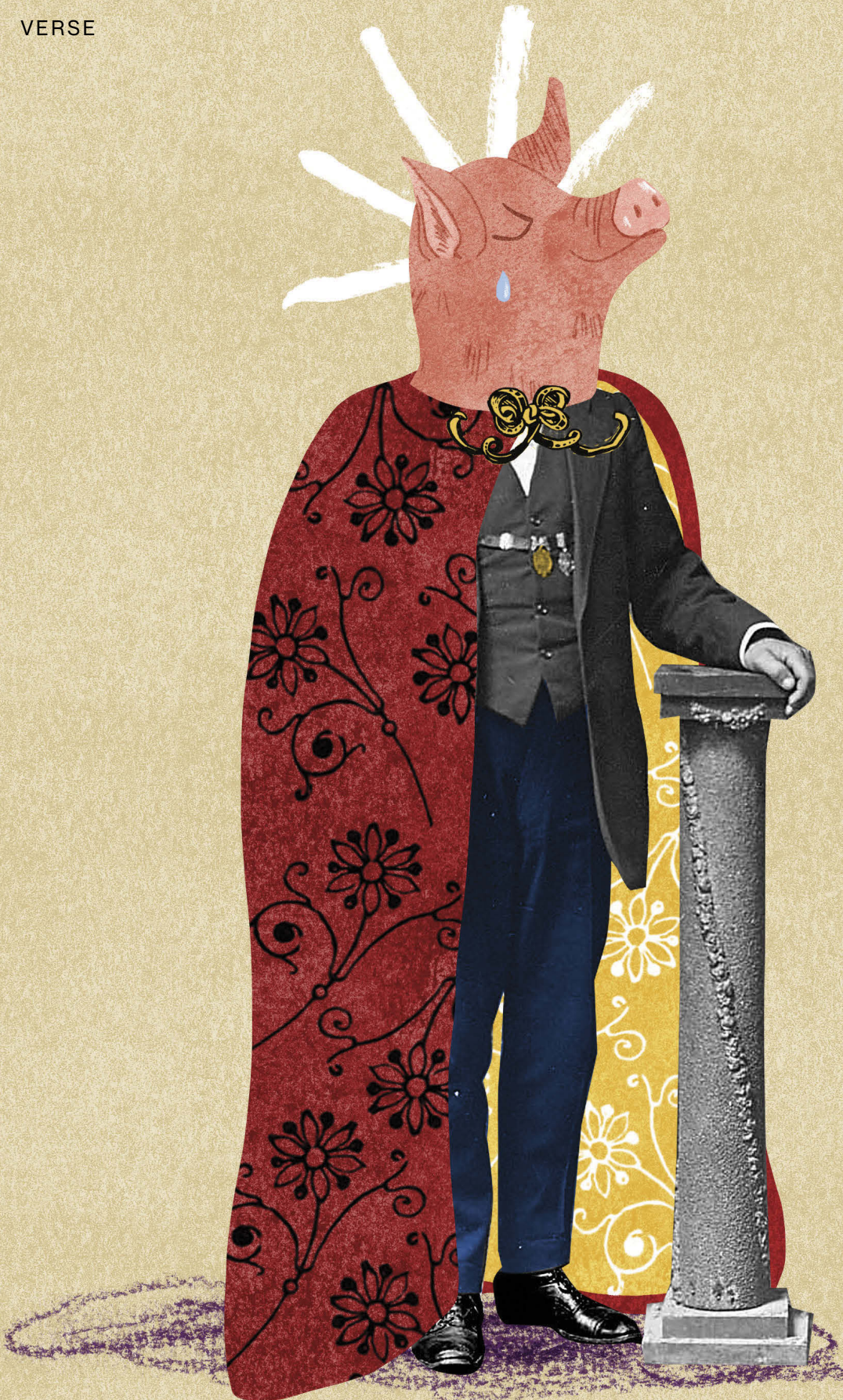


VERSE



LET'S JUST BE HOGS

A Cento

BY GREGORY EMILIO

SAINT ANTHONY, PATRON OF SAUSAGE MAKERS,
guide my pen and unkink my tongue. I sing
of a hog theater where hogs performed as men,
had men been hogs—dolphins of the backyard,
frolickers in the grey and eternal muck, the holy
ones like Christ, who will befriend their destroyers,
whose heaven is the only one worth wanting,
where cue-joints rise through smoke and glow,
each tongue ready to map the ramshackle
rib or rump, dry-rub or ketchup, bacon,
chitlin, crackling, sin: the eternal terms
of future pork roasts fattened toward
oblivion. But this is not about love.
Once a pig is hung and cut straight,
cut from rectum to neck, step inside
her death like it is a room: that is how
to touch her now. The Lord said, *You must
not eat their meat or touch their carcasses.*
Then came the end of the rib. Don't dig
on swine, that's all. But bacon tastes good;
pork chops taste good. The great chain's links
alive and hermetic as bone. From the sweet
glues of the trotters, come the sweet kinks
of the fist. Everything flowers from within,
though sometimes, it's necessary to reteach
a thing its loveliness—as Saint Francis
put his hand on the creased forehead
of the sow, and told her in words
and in touch the long, perfect loveliness
of sow. So every word reverberates
and mystery's sown again. *Sooey*
sooey: this is how we are civilized.
Hogs streamed out of the theater
crying, only hogs, only hogs.

Illustration by Natalie Nelson

*Editors' note: A cento is a poem composed entirely of lines from other works.
The sources for this cento are: Russell Edson, Rodney Jones, Rebecca Gayle Howell,
Galway Kinnell, William Matthews, Jake Adam York, Philip Levine,
Honorée Fanonne Jeffers, Kevin Young, Leviticus, and Quentin Tarantino.*

*Gregory Emilio is an Atlanta-based poet, critic, and cook.
He teaches English at Kennesaw State University.*