

theRev

young pens are even mightier





"Drawing Persona" by Victoria Harris

As this project is driven by diversity, we use condensed typography to create as much space as possible. We aim to showcase as many of the students' voices as we can, promoting inclusion. If you require this booklet in larger print, please visit: www.creativity-unleashed.org and download our digital version.

THE REV

The Rev

a magazine produced by CreativityUnleashed
in partnership with Questar III's New Visions

Welcome to the 2023 edition of *The Rev* literary and creative arts magazine, formerly known as *The Russell Sage College Review*. For this edition, we received creative submissions across both Russell Sage College Albany and Troy campuses, from current students (undergrad and graduate), alumni, staff and faculty. This was alongside students from the UK. This is why you will find a mix of British and American English throughout.

Inside these pages you can enjoy a wide range of creativity including: poetry, flash fiction, memoir, opinion editorials, photography, painting, digital artwork, illustrations and more. The selection process was driven by the mission to integrate as many diverse voices as possible, focusing on what our communities are celebrating, what they are mourning and what they are hoping for in the future.

This Year's Partners:

Questar III's New Visions: Visual & Performing Arts program, located at The Arts Center of the Capital Region in Troy, NY, is a specialized program for academically and artistically advanced high school seniors who are planning to attend college for the visual or performing arts. NV: VAPA students gain knowledge about the business of art and specific techniques through a curriculum that blends college-level education with practical experience. The students work both independently and collaboratively as they experience many different art forms. Topics of study include preparing the college application, audition and/or portfolio; filmmaking; songwriting and recording; playwriting and performance; and an art show.

CreativityUnleashed is the face of a legacy project that began in 2014: Haringey Unchained. What started out as a small collective of students aiming to showcase the creative talent of a school in Tottenham, London has now grown to become a not-for-profit working with young people everywhere. We promote social change, tolerance and diversity through community-driven art experiences. It has been our absolute pleasure working with the editorial team of *The Rev* at Russell Sage College and Questar III's New Visions for our third collaborative magazine.

Many thanks to local crime fiction writer Dr. Frankie Bailey for inspiring us this year with stories of her creative processes and advice regarding how to write genre fiction. And also to our very own Amy Jeansonne for an exciting workshop on zines and Ethan Alcee for his inspiring workshop about photography.

We'd also like to thank Mark Mathews from Bluekite Creative for the design of our magazine and also for the work experience opportunities afforded to our design students.

The Rev Team:

Ethan Alcee: Flatplan Manager

Pamela Bryant: Marketing Manager

Ashley Busby

Maverick Douglas: Copy Editor

Jacqueline Hilliard: Designer

Kathleen Muller

Laurel Petersen: Submissions Manager

Jonathan Reese

Angie Smith: Lead Staff, Writing Teacher and Founder of CreativityUnleashed

Daniela Withington: Social Media Coordinator

Aryanna Zeigler

Questar III's New Visions Team:

Riley Caiazza

Peg Danner-Frank: Lead Staff

Ella Miller

Mya Munroe

Gavin O'Connor

Cristina Signoretti

CreativityUnleashed Team:

Andreea Pavel

Sumayyah Mizaan (Sumi Nam Kita Rakhtam)

Maysoon Sheikh

Amina Yussuf

Stipends for workshop presenters and the publication of the printed version of The Rev were provided by Russell Sage College's Carol Ann Donahue Endowed Fund. Thank you to the Sage College librarians and staff for their support, and to the English, Writing and Culture program in the Interdisciplinary Studies Department, from which the magazine derives.

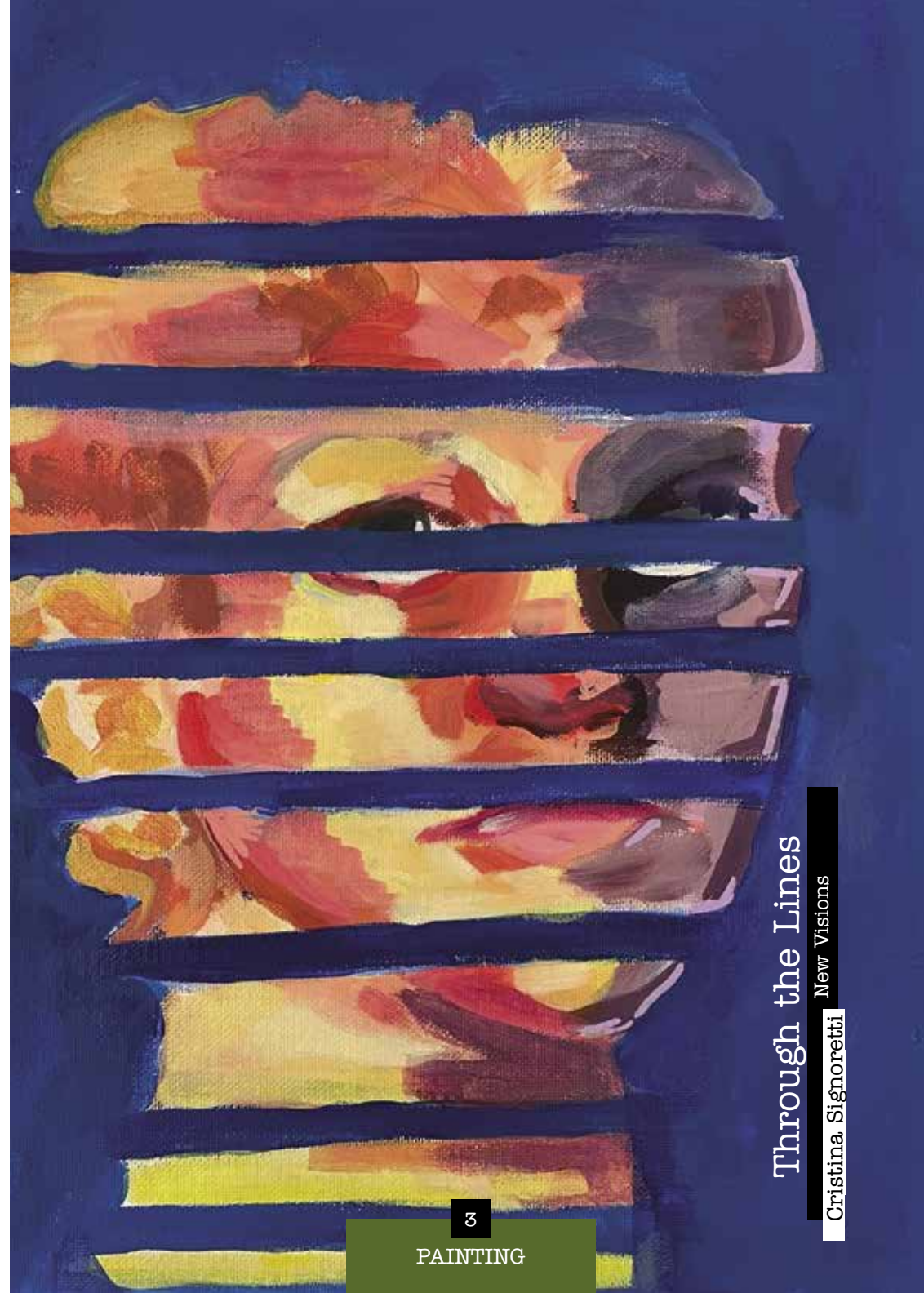
Cover artwork: *Recycle City* by Russell Sage College staff and student: Laurel Petersen.

Sherwin Bentick's artwork spreads designed by Mya Munroe.

Visit our Rev Instagram page: @the_rev_magazine for notices regarding our creative workshops and submission windows.

We hope that by the time you've viewed these pages, you too will agree, that while pens are mightier than the sword, young pens are even mightier...

Meet the Teams



The Rich History of Ghost-Planet Earth

Coco Song Emma Willard School

Believe it or not, Earth was the first planet inhabited by “intelligent” life-forms to cause its own demise. As the well-respected historian, Erthiz Dedd, wrote in a recent study on the different ghost planets within our universe: “Earth, a planet once vibrant with life but then destroyed at the hands of its very own inhabitants, has become a gold mine for historians, archaeologists, and knowledge-seeking individuals alike.”

According to Dr. Ali Ann, renowned climate expert, the main cause of the end of humanity and all other life-forms was the ocean, or rather humanity’s inability to keep its volume from rising.

Dr. Ann argued that, “Earth’s glaciers’ melting speed increased exponentially from 171 mm per year in the 1980s to 889 mm in the 2000s. This trend continued until all glaciers melted, releasing an overabundance of water that eventually drowned humanity, wiping it, and all other species, off the face of the planet.”

But the water never receded. And this is not just any water. It’s Earth’s unique pollution-debris-organic-filled water; it’s not something you can get anywhere else (since no planet has ever had pollution this bad and died because of it).

Studies have also shown that something called “Dizco” (which became worryingly noticeable during the 1970s) was also pivotal in Earth’s demise. A correlation has been discovered between it and the planet’s increased temperatures, which became worryingly noticeable during the 1970s. Perhaps “Dizco” released the gas Co^2 into Earth’s atmosphere, therefore speeding up climate change. Though current technologies and scientists have not yet obtained complete knowledge on this natural phenomenon, it has been suggested that a sphere object with many reflective squares on it may be related to this anomaly. Further work is being conducted at the interstellar Institution of Meddlin Ino Therplanits Affairs, whose results will be released later this month.

But now a bit of good news for you all! An upgraded space-port has been built on Earth in Roswell, New Mexico allowing us to visit and retrieve items of historical value. We now have stocks of freshly polluted water - a little souvenir for family and friends to gasp and gawk upon. Just imagine the wonder it will bring to the neighbourhood kids when presented with a bottle of Earth water containing all the amazing history of the downfall of the blue planet. You’ll become an idol of admiration in your local community...

And today is your lucky day! We have extended our annual WeMissEarth discount. When ocean levels increased by 504.3 mm from 1993 to 2099, we found ourselves with oodles and oodles of water. This sale also coincides with the celebration of the terrible end of humanity and a new beginning for Earth as a knowledge-rich, historical site. But hurry! Be sure to get your discounted bottle of water before supplies run out.

For our first 10 customers, and anyone who purchases over 10 cubic meters of water, we will add a small but exquisite bonus gift of a lock of Greta Thunberg’s hair! But this is (as you can imagine) a limited-stock-only gift since she is...well... dead!

Keep up with the latest interstellar trends and get the best price for it. Don’t miss your chance to bring home your very own bottle of the flavourful death of the Earth. Otherwise, you’ll be the laughing stock of your solar system. We promise.

The ad above is sponsored by Earthlings Incorporated™. Please refer below for more information:

*To register for a sample of Earth water or to purchase it remotely, please call 555-Earth.
For private events, please call 555-Is.
For flight and tour schedules, please call 555-Dead.
And for all other subjects and questions, please call 555-Yay.*

All information stated above can also be found on our website: <http://earthlingsmurkywater.com>, where you can also read hilarious expos featuring humans who have especially contributed to bringing us the Earth we know today...

Works Cited:

Nicosi, Joe. “Climate Science: What You Need To Know.” YouTube, 8 Dec. 2014, <https://youtu.be/ffjlyms1BX4>. Accessed 12 June 2022.

“Sea Level.” NASA, 15 Apr. 2022, <https://climate.nasa.gov/vital-signs/sea-level/#:~:text=Global%20sea%20levels%20are%20rising,of%20seawater%20as%20it%20warms>.

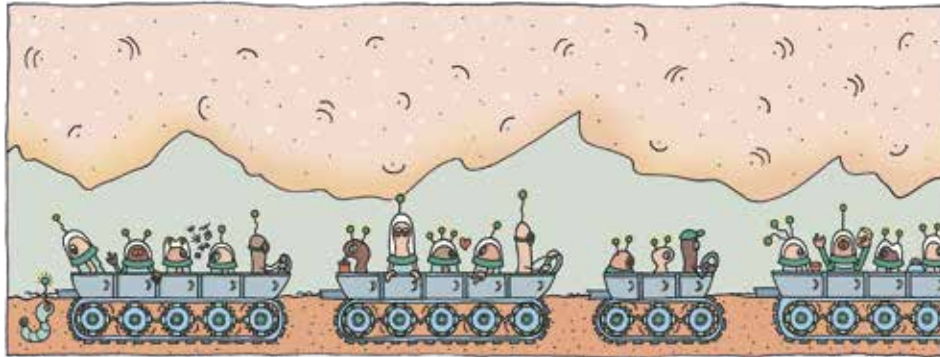
Sharma, Prachi. “15 Advertorial Examples to Help You Write Your Own.” HubPages, 20 Oct. 2021, <https://discover.hubpages.com/business/15-Advertorial-Examples-to-help-you-write-your-own>.

The 3 O'Clock Tour

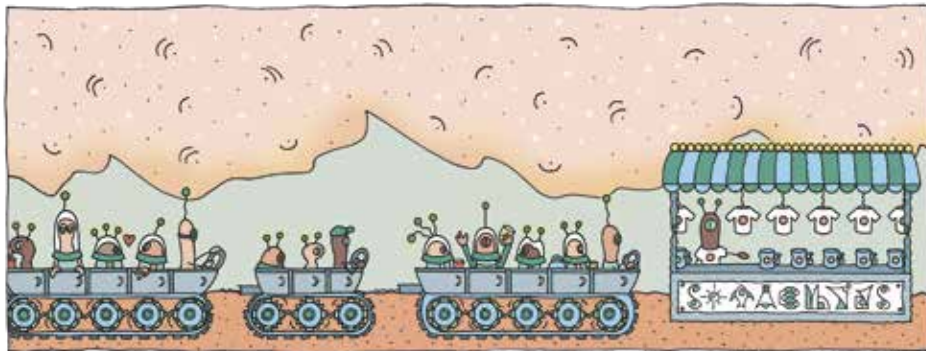
Laurel Petersen

Russell Sage College

laurelpetersen.blogspot.com



The aliens in this piece are taking a land-rover tour of the planet. I like to imagine tourism thriving on other planets and any tour must include a souvenir shop at the end. The sign on the booth reads "Souvenirs" in alien code.



The Trickster God of Sixth Avenue

Aryanna Zeigler
Russell Sage College

The Trickster God of Sixth Avenue lived in an open floor plan. They lived across the street from the pig who paid my grandmother for her pantry, and for my childhood. They climbed stairs with no railing and walked on floors with no barrier, still able to see their overexposed, empty first floor. They stood at the window and watched the pig shuffle around the room that was once her closet, once my bedroom. Each morning when the pig would leave to patrol my old school, the Trickster God would watch, and grow hungrier. And hungrier. Until one day he stopped.

I saw them the other day. They were leaving a building full of cramped apartments for families with no money and students; I stopped them to ask what became of my grandmother's pantry and closet, and of the pig. They told me that the pig was still there, still making his daily walk to my old school. They told me that one by one Sixth Avenue emptied, house by house and family by family. They told me that eventually they, too, couldn't stand the smell of the pig, nor the sight of his choices.

They told me that he painted the stairs where I broke my leg dull brown, that he had dug up the backyard path where I walked with my sunshine. They told me that the porch me and my sisters and my cousins had painstakingly heated and scraped and painted was now swampy green and nauseating to look upon. They told me that the garden plot had become a feeding ground for vermin and the pig himself, and that the spices and herbs and sauces and treats in the pantry had rotted on the higher shelves that the pig could not reach. They told me that the white rectangle on the wall left behind when I took down mummy's picture had never faded, remaining stark while the paint around it darkened further. That the stairs that were always silent for me and my sisters to sneak down in the dead of night looking for treats have grown creaky, vocalizing the aching pain they feel beneath the pig's heavy foot. They told me the pig's daughter paraded her horses around the kitchen, that they kicked in the doors of the oven and they smashed the porcelain of the sink.

The Trickster God of Sixth Avenue told me this on the sidewalk two blocks from my new school and twelve hundred miles from my grandmother's new home, a concrete compound that only she could breathe life into. When they finished talking, I thanked the Trickster. And then I left. Allowed myself a moment to truly feel the pain I knew they wanted to cause with their words, and then another to mourn the stairs and the backyard path and the porch and the garden and the pantry and the walls and the stairs and the kitchen and the room that was her closet and my bedroom. And then I gave myself one more moment of remembering **the Trickster God of Sixth Avenue**, if only to pray that I would never see him again. There was only one person alive I wanted to see less, and that man was a pig.

Heat Lightning

Ashley Busby
Russell Sage College
@ashleybusby



8

PAINTING

Is This Why They Call it Paradise?

Dylan Scherillo
Russell Sage College

Here alone,
no care in the world,
topless, but bottomless mimosas are on deck.

Sea breezes that taste like salt
and the freshest fish on the grill,
all from the comfort of your arms.

Your arms are my paradise.
Your aroma romances me.
Your warmth puts me to sleep.
The best sleep of my life,
night in and out.

Too bad summer has to end at some point.

9

POETRY

The Inevitable Questionnaire

Andreea Pavel CreativityUnleashed

What if it all ended?
What if the inevitable doom comes?
What if tomorrow is gone?
What would you do?

Would you let yourself be driven by the terror of no tomorrow?
Would you go into the depths of your own loneliness and despair?
Would you cling desperately into your loved one's arms?
Would you make that one last call?

Would you embrace the calmness before the storm?
Would you take one last look at the beauty around you?
Would you smile as all the suffering ends?
Would you enjoy one last, deep breath?

What would you do?
What if tomorrow is gone?
What if the inevitable doom comes?

What if it all ended?

Souls

Ella Miller New Visions

Illustrations by Cristina Signoretti

I am sitting in the passenger seat of my client George's truck. It's likely we are breaking some sort of doctor-patient confidentiality rule, but I'm too intrigued to care. Plus, George is no snitch. He's on the older side—late sixties, I think, with graying hair and a pretty bad rotator cuff injury. Definitely one of those guys who gets hurt and puts off going to the hospital because of pride. Friendly, but not too friendly. Wears a lot of flannels. Normally I don't get along so well with these older guys, but I'd say George and I are friendlier than I am with the average patient. I really look forward to chatting with him every week.

I'm in his truck because we're going to meet his brother, who is apparently some sort of vehicular genius. It was strange. At his appointment last week, while he was in the middle of his doorway stretches, I happened to mention that my husband and I were interested in buying a car.

"I'll stop you right there," he'd said. "You gotta talk to my older brother. He's the guy you go to for this kind of stuff. He'll get you the best deal possible. Really, Sarah, I mean it. It's the least I can do for you after you helped me out with my shoulder."

"I get paid to help you out with your shoulder," I said. "That's kind of the whole idea that the physical therapy business is built on."



"Just talk to him," George said. "I can take you sometime this weekend. It's like magic, the way he can help you buy a car."

"I don't know," I said. "We were just planning on going to the dealership this weekend."

George went uncharacteristically silent. "Sarah, think of it as doing me a favor. At the same time my brother is doing you a favor. It's important to me."

His seriousness surprised me. "Fine," I said. "Why not. Let's do it."

Now, three days later, we drive silently down an incredibly bumpy road. It's not too late, nearing dusk, but the sun has sunk below the knobby trees surrounding us on either side of the road. I might be nervous, except George isn't at all. He's pensive, though. In the three months we've known each other, I've never seen him like this. But that could just be the fact that we're always in a pretty clinical environment together.

"You like my truck?" he asks.

"Yeah," I say. It's fine. It's a fine truck.

"My brother helped me buy it."

We drive on until we reach a small house. It's wooded on all sides, trees so close to the house that their branches reach over it, almost blocking out the sky. George parks the truck and we get out. It's a cute little cabin, a blue-gray, that looks like it was built here decades ago and almost never changed. George unlocks the door with a key on a key ring that contains a suspicious amount of keys. I wonder what he unlocks all day.

A little dog bounds out of the house towards me. It stands up, placing its paws on my jeans while wagging its tail. I give it a pat on the head.

"Down, girl." George says. "Sorry. She gets excited for visitors. Not many people coming around here much anymore."

"What's her name?"

"Tally," he says. "She's not mine. She's my brother's."

"Is this your brother's house?" I ask. From the way he unlocked the door, I was under the impression he lived here. Something about it was authoritative. That, and the fact that his truck is the only vehicle in the driveway.

"He used to be the principal owner," he says, "but now we share it."

"Oh," I say. "Will he be coming later, then?"

George looks at me blankly. "He's already here."

Inside the house is pretty much what I expected: wood-paneled walls, knick knacks covering the shelves, a presence of dust, a stagnant smell. The kitchen, dining room, and living room are one space; two doors lead off into what I can only assume are a bathroom and a bedroom. Tally has disappeared entirely. Maybe there's a doggy door somewhere. I find myself realizing I half-expected George to have a wife, but finding out he's by himself doesn't really surprise me.

The thing that does surprise me, though, is the condition of the dining room table. It's wooden, circular, half a leg missing, and the two place settings at the middle are encircled by a ring of candles. Candles of all shapes and sizes, all of them with drips of dried wax that indicate they've been well used. Some of them look just like dried wax puddles that somehow still have a wick. Most of them look homemade. There are two breaks in the circle on either side where I assume we're meant to sit. I gaze incredulously at the display.

George grabs a lighter from a cabinet and begins to light each one. I don't know what to say. He's a strange man; I knew that already. But this is weird. Not quirky-weird, or I'm-about-to-get-killed-weird, just plain, regular weird. An eccentricity of an older man, maybe. I would have expected a hunting obsession, or maybe some questionable political views. But candles are really out of left field.

He makes eye contact with me. I find myself wanting to shy away from it, to walk away from the living room and out of the house. But he drove me here, and we haven't even met his brother. And I would like a good deal on a car, if I'm being honest. It's not just the intrigue of George's brother that's brought me here. I also want to save money. Physical therapy doesn't pay top dollar. And it's this promise that makes me keep the eye contact, to take a deep breath, and decide to continue with whatever this is.

"Sit down," he says. There are two chairs fa

"What car are you thinking of buying?"

I almost feel silly answering. "A Kia Soul."

"How much do they want for it?"

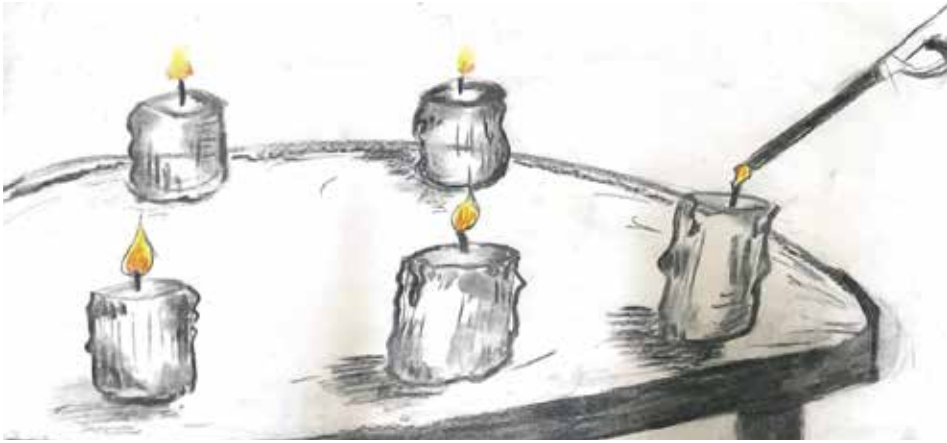
"Nineteen thousand."

"How much do you want to pay?"

"Fifteen thousand."

"Alright," he says, "let's get started."





He puts his hands facing upwards on the table, and after a moment cocks his head to indicate that I should hold them. I do, although I don't know what I'm doing.

"Close your eyes," he says. I do. "Bernard, we contact you from the great beyond," he says.

Immediately, I reopen my eyes. "What?" I say. "The great beyond? George, what are you talking about?"

"Close your eyes!" he yells. "Bernard, forgive her. She knows not your ways." All of a sudden, the candles begin to flicker. I feel a breeze flow through my hair, not unpleasantly. "George, what-"

"Trust me," he says. "Do you want the Kia Soul or not?"

It's stupid, but I do. So I close my eyes. I'll be so mad if I get murdered.

The wind in the room picks up, circling George and I, around and around the table of flames. He's murmuring things in some language I don't understand—and if what I think is happening is happening, it's probably Latin.

"George," I say, eyes still shut, "Does your brother happen to be deceased?"

"Haec femina opus est ut emendo a Kia Soul!" He yells. The wind is almost deafening now, and I instinctively want to let go of George's hands and cover my ears. But I don't. "Quaeso, frater, hac raeda indiget!"

All of a sudden, the wind stops. Abruptly. I feel my hair settle on my shoulders. "You speak Latin?" I ask, although it feels quippy. Like I'm an action movie character really trying to get a joke in. It's silent, more silent than anything has ever been before. George lets go of my hands. And then:

"Open your eyes," he says.

I do. There, standing next to George, is another man. His brother. Bernard, I guess. He's a little shorter, a little fuller in the face. But they're very obviously siblings. I can tell by their twin smiles, which both grin at me. There's one clear difference, though, which is that Bernard happens to be slightly transparent.

It's like looking through a glass, or a cellophane sheet. He's not clear—he's still got clothes and skin and all that—but I can sort of make out the needlepoint sign that reads "HOME IS WHERE THE HEART IS" on the wall behind him. It's bizarre.

"Hi there," he says in a gruff voice. He sounds a bit tinny, like he's talking through an older phone with poor reception.

"Hi," I say. "George, what is this?"

"This is my brother," he says. "Sarah, I expected you to be a little more respectful."

"No, what is all of this?" I ask.

George, still sitting, tries to put his arm around Bernard. It goes through his torso a little bit.

"He's my best pal. I only see him like this anymore. When I can put my arm right through him!" He waves his arm back and forth through Bernard, which is only a bit disturbing. Bernard shivers.

George stands up and procures a third chair from another small table in the kitchen. Somehow, Bernard sits down on it.

"So," he says. "You're thinking of buying a car? A Kia Soul, I hear."

"Yes," I say meekly. "A green one."

"Great," the ghost of George's brother says. "So why don't we start by comparing some prices—you are preapproved for financing, right?"



Scan this QR code to read the rest of this piece...

Corpses for Sale!

Chloe DeSilva **CreativityUnleashed**
@chloe_de_silva

CORPSES FOR SALE!

BIG ONES! MEDIUM ONES! SMALL ONES! THERE'S SOMETHING FOR ALL! MEDICAL USE ONLY! ORGANS AND LIMBS HALF A SHILLING! DUG UP AT NIGHT, DELIVERED NEXT DAY! FRESHNESS ALMOST 100% GUARANTEED!



FROM GRAVE TO DISSECTION TABLE

16

LINE DRAWING

Because of War

Alina Panteleeva **CreativityUnleashed**

Imagine no freedom of speech, imprisonment for opposing viewpoints, violence by police against protesters, absence of free media, alienation from the world, and men forcefully sent to war. While this sounds like the fictional world of Orwell's '1984,' half a year ago, it became my reality in Moscow, Russia.

Throughout my childhood, my parents kept me away from politics. In their lifetime they had witnessed many pivotal moments, including the fall of the USSR, that I would thankfully never have to experience myself. My parents' protectiveness helped my childhood remain full of sunshine and unicorns — in no way did the crises affect it.

Therefore, when I was drawn into the dog-eat-dog world of Russian politics, my childhood bubble burst, leaving me feeling feeble and horrified. This happened on the 24th of February 2022 - when Russia invaded Ukraine — and the world watched, alarmed. Immediately, Russian civilians were isolated: no bank cards, few imports, and external pressure to oppose the war, even though to do so would be met with criminal charges. Furthermore, propaganda gaslighted Russian civilians rotting under the control of an authoritative government, forcing them to grow more resentful by the day.



I was no exception - like many other Russians, I spiralled into the rabbit hole of media coverage. The war was so all-absorbent that my mind, terrified of potential damage, built a cocoon of resentment and egotism. Thankfully, five months later, a pivotal moment pushed me out.

17

MEMOIR

In July when I visited my sister in Austria, I attended a Ukrainian demonstration. Suddenly, I was exposed to the crushing reality of the people displaced by the war. Standing beside them, to emotionally support Ukrainians hiding from bombs, revealed how misleading the sensationalized media can be. While propaganda led me to believe Ukrainians and Russians were nemeses, the reality was more complex.

At first I felt terrified of anyone discovering I was from Russia; I was an intruder. How could I stand next to people suffering because of my country? Nonetheless, Ukrainians surprised me by overlooking my citizenship.

The media had enforced the illusion that Ukrainians and I were on opposing sides of the war, so we were all surprised to learn how much our opinions correlated. With this in mind, the people I met expressed gratitude that I did not support my government's actions, and I showed appreciation that they did not feel hatred toward me as a Russian.

That day showed me empathy could be stronger than politics. I realized that my sulky behavior, exacerbated by the news, was only setting my future on fire. I decided to rise like a phoenix from the ashes of my childhood. I would enter my adult life with a clearer view of my position within a global community, and the ways I could assist beyond this demonstration.



Back in Moscow, I found an initiative called «Складик» and became one of their volunteers. Our purpose was to collect, pack, and send clothes and other essentials to displaced Ukrainians. After the first three-hour period of non-stop sorting, I felt humbled that every article of clothing would go to a real person in desperate need of it. This was the feeling I sought — connection and support between two opposite sides of the conflict: Ukrainians and Russians. Ever since, I have dedicated myself to this work.

The experience of one's country starting a war is one that tests people's humanity. Limiting my worldview to the news space, I lost perspective. But the forgiveness and humility of Ukrainians reminded me that the world is more tolerant than it seems. I am now reassured that no matter where I proceed with my life, I will have the strength to serve as a bridge between my country and the rest of the world, proving that the media shouldn't always be trusted. Even in a dystopian reality, I can (and will) proceed with my life and help others to do the same.

SWARM

Cristina Signoretti **New Visions**



Over the Barbed Wire

Desmond Volmar

Russell Sage College

In search of freedom there is no task too tall. I'll wander the globe, only stopping if I notice somewhere with a special elegance. A place with rich history and culture, such as Greece. The fine-crafted stone walkways prompted me to explore, as I contemplated settling into this foreign land. Thankfully my mother was able to afford a fake ID for me to enter the country. At home I am known as Azadeh, but here I will be Alexandra, a college student studying at the University of Patras. The beauty of the sunset with great mountain ranges in the distance has captured my fascination. Before attempting to move to Greece permanently, I must first head home to make final preparations.

I love my homeland but can't stand the lack of liberty the government shows my people. The crippling authority being far more strenuous than the summer sun here in Iran. It's almost as if the laws are weighted chains bound to your body as you are tossed overboard. The only difference is that we are surrounded by desert land. No feasible escape for miles. As the days dragged on, turning to weeks, then years, I was unable to escape the prison-like reality I was forced to live in. In Greece, hopefully the people are kind-hearted, and the government is just. I'm confident that my classmates won't judge my appearance, or more importantly, my citizenship status. Freedom is all I yearn for. Luckily for me, the people here don't seem overly concerned with why I'm here despite how different I look and my inability to speak Greek.

Could this be freedom? A place where you are free to traverse the land and simply exist without having a stone thrown at you? Or multiple, with each rock carrying an abundance of shame, leaving you unrecognizable in seconds? Back at home, my mother and younger sister are still abused in Iran. Why is it so hard for people to see that we are human and deserve rights and freedoms, like everyone else? I anticipate being able to build a successful life here that'll enable me to swiftly rescue my family.

As I am making my way through town on the way to campus grounds, an old woman with long, gray hair approaches me, asking if I need help. I explain to her my situation and ask to be pointed in the right direction. Instead, she insists I follow her, telling me that my destination is near where she lives. I become skeptical, considering she had approached me out of everyone on the street.

As we venture along past markets and museums, I see a large, dull, gray building with letters engraved on the front. Before I can begin to ask the woman where we are, I am viciously snatched from behind by two patrol guards who emerge from an unmarked government vehicle. I can only obtain a quick glance at their menacing eyes before a bag is put over my head. As I am being carried away, I scream in agony at the possibility of being forced to relive my past. Soon after, I am thrown on the cold steel floor of the van. The wind rustling over the metallic barbed wire is the first thing I hear as I awaken in a Greek detention facility.

Yet again, it seems as if freedom has evaded me.

All Hail Freedom

Amy (Ruqing) Mei

The Madeira School

We are commoners,
imprisoned in a party that trapped us eager
with fabricated lies, "oh the freedom we are under."
Privacy leaked to whom that held the power,
stripped out of our clothes, we've become their blank paper.

We are commoners,
who never understood the meaning of anger,
yet our opinions censored could fill up a binder.
Quarantined in our homeland like invaders for
countless days... confined in a place
smaller than a heart chamber.

We are commoners,
unique by culture and unbroken by barriers,
our blood flows down along the Yellow River,
yet separated - by the ethnicity on our cover.
Innocent sisters sent to the mysterious 'learning center'.

We are commoners,
somehow accurate at guessing the words of the fortune-teller,
the one claimed to be our dignity and liberty protector.
Winged creatures caught in the hands of the rooster –
Do flightless birds dream of flying?

We are commoners,
No authority of our own,
but faith in a chimerical revolution we offer.
A belief that solidarity leads us to empower
a loud voice that can save us because there is no other.

The wings of a butterfly flutter.
In front of the red flag we stand
uncertain as the future waves its hand.

All hail freedom...

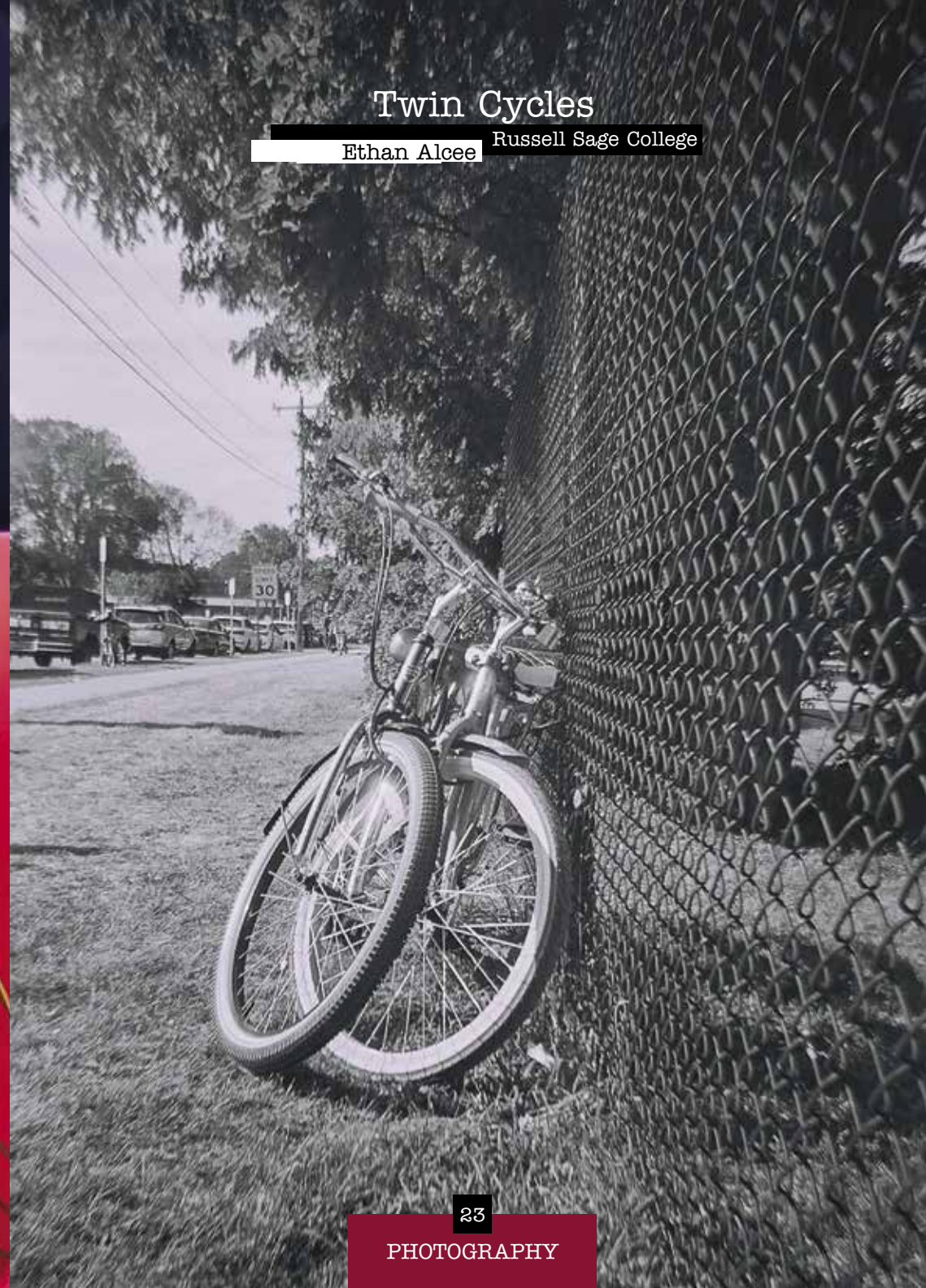
22

POETRY

Twin Cycles

Ethan Alcee

Russell Sage College



23

PHOTOGRAPHY

A Raised Garden Bed

Michelle Wiant **Independence High School**

My mother's small frame stoops a handful of inches below me, her back bent over the cracked earth crawling with heat and insects. I stop from hacking angrily at the weeds and the grass roots before me—dirt-caked shins—to observe my mother who is also hacking, less angrily, to loosen the soil for the raised garden bed we are building. A gentle wind blows the small curl of a smile at the corners of her cracked lips, and all I can feel right now as the summer green of my backyard cups us in its hands, is how beautiful my mom is under the pristine light of mid-afternoon June.

My mother and I garden quietly, except sometimes I'm not really helping, just staring around. I stare at the soft grass in our backyard that grows in sighing waves. When the wind sweeps over the lawn, the hidden shades of green that reveal and ripple surprise me, like I'm seeing a dog's oddly naked belly for the first time.

Then I proceed to stare back at my mom, because I don't want to forget how beautiful she is, even though I see her everyday, even though I see her right now in front of me, raising a pickaxe to the sky and letting the weight bring her arms down with a grunt. I think though, no matter how much I look, it will probably never be enough, because one day, I'll still forget the way my mother's brow furrows when she smiles, just like how I've already forgotten the way Waipo wore wrinkles like jewellery, and how her laugh spread like heat from my heart to the ends of my fingertip, soaking my clothes in the warmth similar to the beaming sun I stand under now.

Waipo was gone in January—months ago. It went unspoken, just like how it's unspoken that we must stop from our dirt-hacking to listen to the wind chimes sing in whispers when a breeze billows by, and tickles our bare ankles with jade-stacked grass.

In the quiet weeks after that January day, a small sector of dirt barren from previous gardening attempts wept—wept because of the discarded, rusting tools digging into its face, and so it bled weeds and neglect. And maybe also wept because it had some profound lifeline



connection with my Waipo, who passed on the other side of the planet in a stuffy Chinese condominium. In that concrete fortress surrounded by concrete jungle, the only place for Waipo's peppers was the wilting apartment rooftop, crumbling and thirsty from the dry Guangdong sunlight. Yet, the peppers still grew long and green.

So that small piece of earth wept like how a dog might weep when it grieves its owner. For Waipo, who had dug into the earth of my backyard—in a land that was not even her own—and created a plot of something from nothing. My mother and tender instinct heard the weeping of a neglected thing, and promptly, broke the happy silence we had planted ever since the dry January cold, and now it was already March. And the heart of something new began to beat dimly.

In Mandarin, she said —“We should make use of that dirt back there and make a garden in the summer” and then after a quiet pause, “For Waipo.”

Abandoned

Rayann Williams Russell Sage College

What a happy child she was, but with so little childhood
Growing up sheltered from the world, there was little she understood.
She knew going to school, coming home, and playing with her dolls.

If you were to ask her, she would say she knew it all.

Until her world flipped, one cool afternoon;
she hadn't been prepared for what she would hear soon.

The happy child she was in the safe home she knew,
had now contained one parent instead of a loving two.
Left without an explanation, on herself she pinned blame,
living without her father, she knew life wouldn't be the same.
She feels the hole in her heart where her father had been,
a hole so big she was sure nothing could fill it in.

As an older sister, she knew she had to stand tall,
with her mother working more, she now had to do it all.
What a happy child she was, but with so little childhood,
now living in a world so cold and alone,
she sits and she wishes that he'd pick up the phone.




*Inspired by Family
Secrets written by
Michaela Rhule*

26

POETRY

The Responsibility of Living Happily

Kathleen Muller Russell Sage College




I moved away from everything I feared,
But found myself still guessing about life.
What can I do to keep myself in gear?
I no longer want to deal with this strife.

There are things I can do and places to be,
People to talk to and stories to write,
But my mind only has plans to shield me,
And keep me stressed all through the long, dark night.

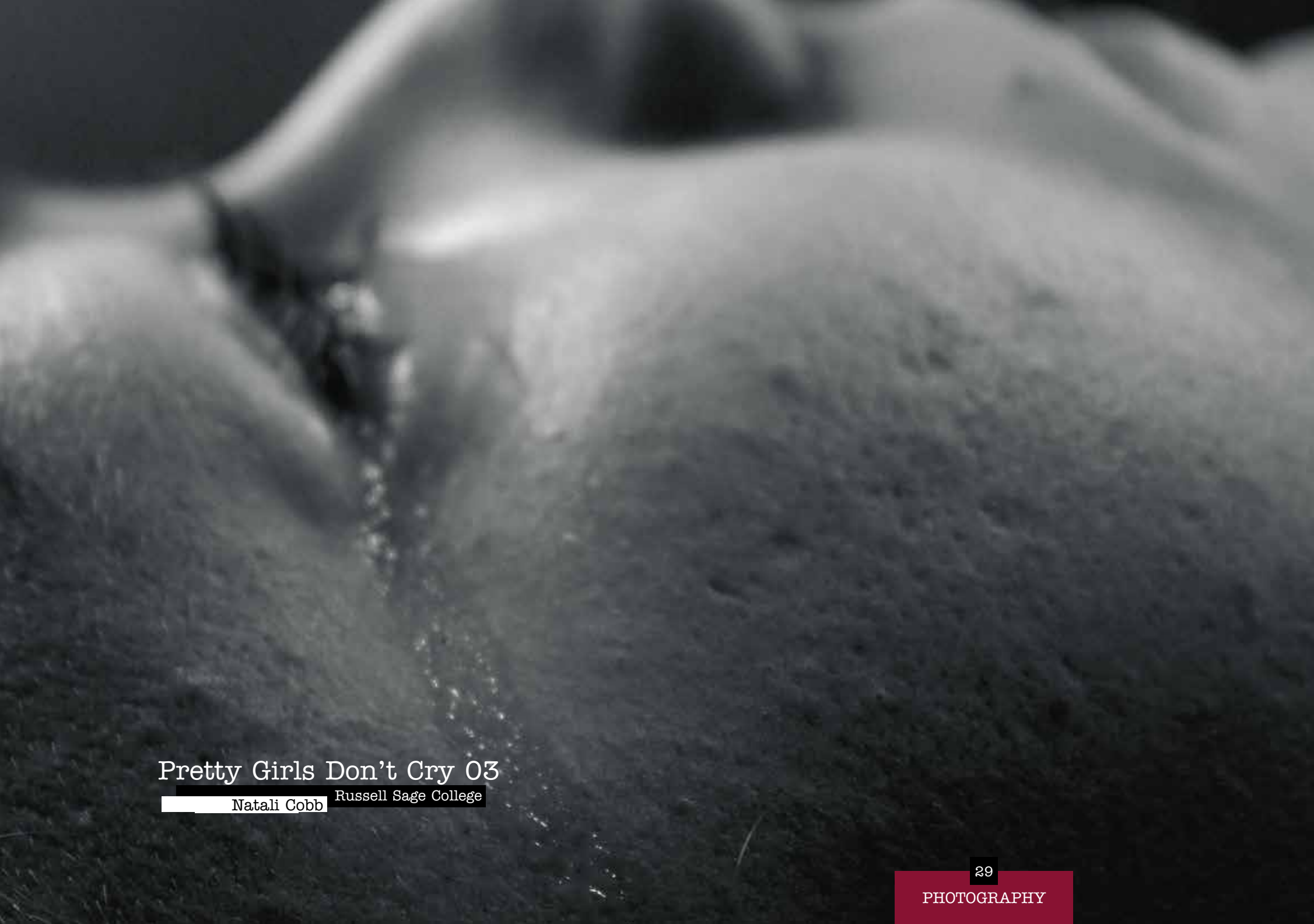
It is hard to keep jumping the hurdles,
And keeping my mind from spinning too much.
I watch the bath as the water whirls,
And think about how fear is my main clutch.

I want to be free and stop the whining,
And I must do it now so I can stop crying.



27

POETRY



Pretty Girls Don't Cry 03

Natali Cobb Russell Sage College

Faith

Ozge Erdur CreativityUnleashed

I spend my Mondays praying to God.
I wish for his love to save me from sin.
I lay on coal and burn my skin.
"Repent, repent, repent!" they sing.
"What is it that you desire?" they ask him.
I know his answer will not please them.
"I know! I know! I know!" I scream.
My words muffle, a gargled breath.
I gulp for air. I dream.

On Tuesday, they say that I am born again.
"A virgin! Sweet and young" – I think just pretend.
I watch as they pick us, hand us to them.
The dreadful, the wrinkly, the ugly old men.
"It hurts!" We yell. We burn and swell.
"This is holy!" They yell. "It is important, you swell!"

"We wear white on Wednesdays," I am told.
Little ladies must cover their assets and hold
onto their lilies on the field.
White petals all caught in a breeze.
We keep our head held high
while gripping the ground with our feet.
Rooted in solitude, minds wander, my eyes ponder -
they search for him; my little heart so grim.
Us girls yearn for them, for the boys lost in sin.
Yet, I know, we know, we will never have them.

I hate Thursday. It makes us sick
for there is a feast to which we must commit.
We split, we grind and then we tear,
to pour our spirits' blood in cups for their repair.
They love it; you see. They guzzle it down so greedily
while we wilt, we wilt, we wilt some more.
I wish to fly for a moment. I wish to be gone forevermore.

"Feel his pain" they tell us on Friday.



My wrists are bleeding; my clothes are on the floor.
I know his pain; we scream his name.
I hold on to it all. Now I am no longer the same.
I look to a corner and to my horror,
a little lamb sits, its eyes glinting with hunger.

On Saturday, we kneel -
our legs are tucked beneath us as they steal
any remains of hope, of life, of love, of time.
There's a knife pressed against my skin.
It's wet to touch; when I gulp,
I feel a trickle down my chin.

I gulp, I gulp, I gulp some more.
I sit in a pool of blood now;
I've never felt so pure.

Sunday is the day it ends.
They don't place flowers in our hands
because: "you're all lilies" they say,
"you'll go to paradise either way."
They lower us to the ground
where there is no sound.
They throw a blanket of gravel over me.
Luckily, sleep comes easily.
I feel the ground sink beneath me;
I thank the lord for taking us so early.

Our Fall From Grace

Maysoon Sheikh CreativityUnleashed

We are made from earth,
Soil, compact under our skin, nourishment
Rushing through the xylem of our veins,
Divine whispers were breathed out into our
Souls, descended into our vessels,
Our clocks began to beat,
Our eyes opened,
And we were so ungrateful.

As we walked through life, we moved against it.
Overworked, mundane,
blue pills, migraines,
Our vessels became empty,
We emptied our vessels and became

Abnormal to Mother Earth, detached
From our own souls,

Spirituality decayed in our wooden chests,
Materialism hollowed us out, never gave us a way out.

The Great Depression of our generation,

A spiritual war,

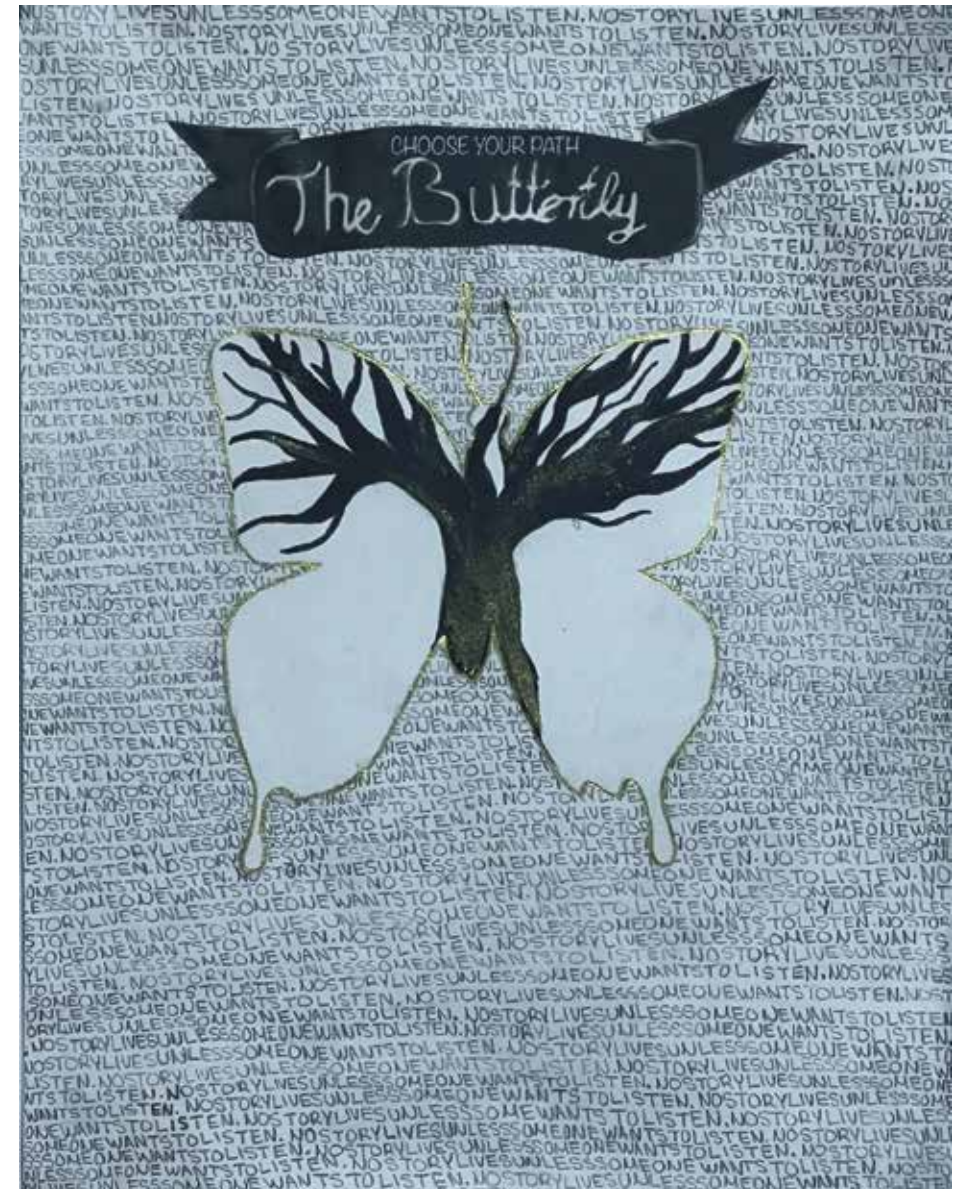
Where our inner refuge is uprooted,
Our stems brittle,
Our lives discoloured,

We wilt, permanently.

When we leave this earth, we never really leave it.
Our body becomes one with the dirt we once walked upon,
Soil meets soil once more.



Scan this QR code
to read the rest
of this piece...



The Butterfly

Lisamaria Depoo Russell Sage College

YEAR 2000

Ramasoj Williams
Russell Sage College
@cultureramoo



34

PHOTOGRAPHY

The Beat that Lulled me to Sleep

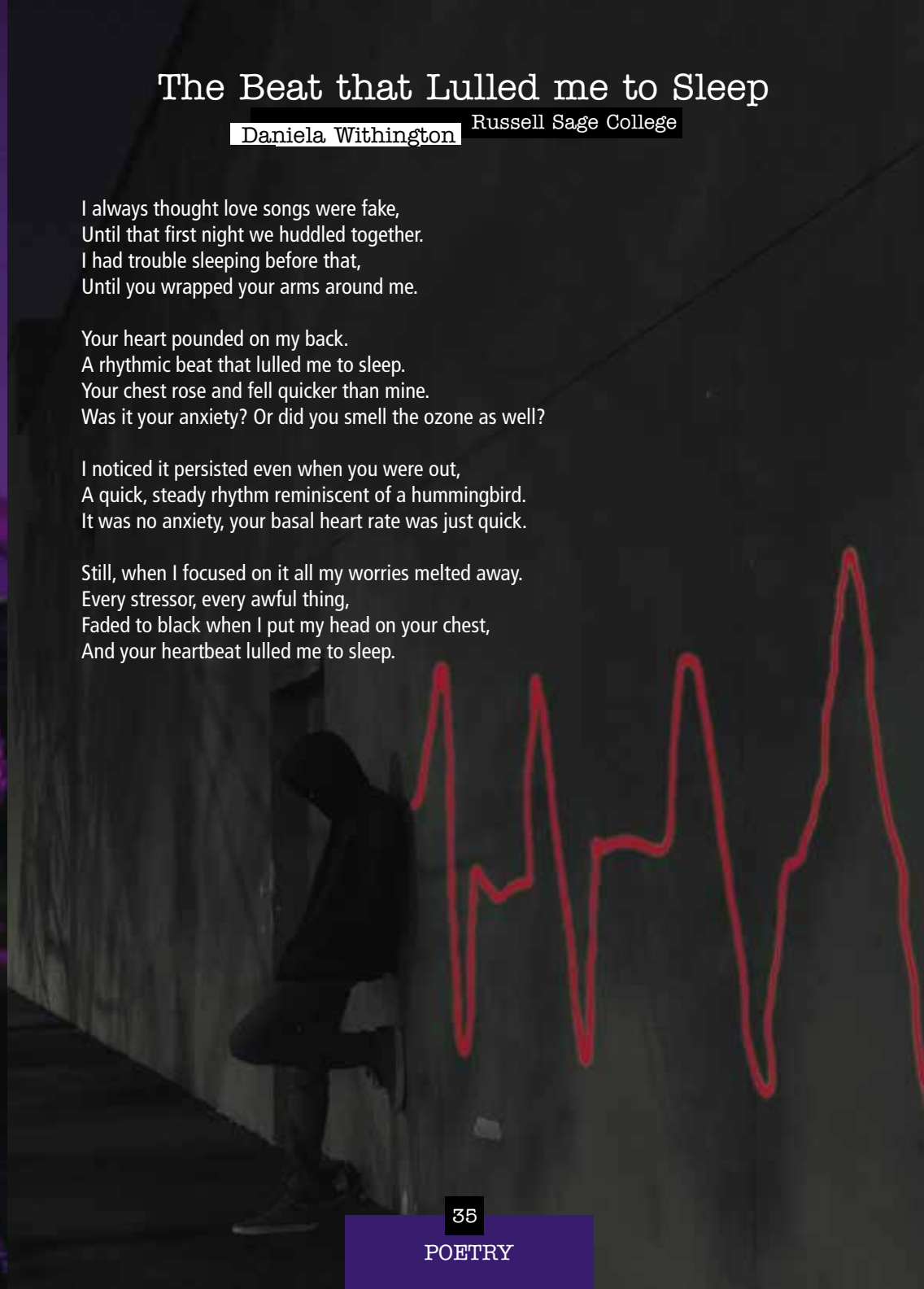
Daniela Withington
Russell Sage College

I always thought love songs were fake,
Until that first night we huddled together.
I had trouble sleeping before that,
Until you wrapped your arms around me.

Your heart pounded on my back.
A rhythmic beat that lulled me to sleep.
Your chest rose and fell quicker than mine.
Was it your anxiety? Or did you smell the ozone as well?

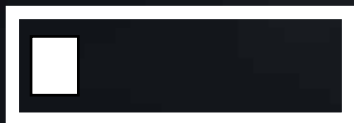
I noticed it persisted even when you were out,
A quick, steady rhythm reminiscent of a hummingbird.
It was no anxiety, your basal heart rate was just quick.

Still, when I focused on it all my worries melted away.
Every stressor, every awful thing,
Faded to black when I put my head on your chest,
And your heartbeat lulled me to sleep.



35

POETRY



LOADING.....

36

PHOTOGRAPHY

Perception, Identity, Individual

Sherwin Bentick

Russell Sage College

@trip_media



LOADING.....

37



LOADING.....



LOADING.....



In today's society we wear masks to hide who we truly are. In different settings we act differently, talk differently, dress differently and think differently. The outsider's perception is blinded by the false identity that we portray on a day to day basis.
BE YOU! *Sherwin Bentick*



COMPLETE!



Cat Clock

Newton Wilk Russell Sage College

I need a cat clock, one of those black cat clocks with the swishy tails and the shifting eyes. I need it so I can go crazy. I need to hear it tik tik tik while I watch its tail swish swish swish. I need it. I need to go crazy so I can write something worth reading. I need to lay in my bed staring at the ceiling hearing the *tik tik tik* and the *drip drip drip* of the leaking faucet- Jesus fucking Christ that leaking faucet- and the *scratch scratch* scratching sound of my own fingernails on my skin. I wonder if I'll stop scratching if I break the skin.

I need to hear the sound of my own teeth chattering and the sound of my sobbing followed by silence. I think that could make me write something good. I wanna watch the eyes shift shift shift and never meet my own; I want to feel like they're staring at me. I want to keep picking at my fingernails until I'm bleeding and then maybe I'll write something good. I think I need the suffering - I really do. I think I need the suffering.

I don't think anyone wants me anymore. I think I'm cold and I'm sharp and I'm not the person I'd like to be. I'm not warm and soft and kind but I'm not sharp and cold enough to be anything beautiful. I'm not ice. I'm just an ugly, ugly wilting thorny flower. I'm fucking freezing and I think I'm dying. Whatever. I fucking miss home. I'm empty. I'm empty and I'm empty and I'm empty. My skin is cold and there is nothing beneath the surface.

Dear Institutionalised Islamophobia

Sumi Nam Kita Rakhtam **CreativityUnleashed**

Institutionalised Systematic Islamophobic Speech,
your name is too long for my mouth to read aloud,
so instead I'll call you all ISIS, that okay?
No? Sorry, it's just easier, no
need to think that this is a personal attack
like the bombs you dropped
into every word you stacked
against me, telling my brothers, my sisters,
my aunts, uncles, mothers and fathers,
that you think are radicalised and unable to think
for themselves, without being misguided.

Romance novels can be so sad sometimes.
Have you ever read one?
Girl meets boy, boy wants to go on a date,
she leaves in the night to meet him, honest mistake,
comes back pregnant and bearing children with needs
but because she's Muslim fled to Syria, we leave her to bleed.
She isn't Syrian but there is no way she's British,
we can't say that this is
in any way, shape or form, to do with us.
We can't be afflicted
with this illness that is
clearly what this young teenage girl had,
she was brainwashed, desensitised,
her adolescent hormones couldn't stop her
so why care if she dies?
Your ISIS says no, revoke her ID,
provoke the public so no empathy
can dare to shield this heinous crime,
this deceiving criminal who's outwardly
just a poor woman, in a foreign country, with kids to feed.



But forget this,
let's talk to you about education instead,
when children want to cover their head
because they were taught to be modest
and this was a way to stay honest.
How many teachers saw this
and stood, terrified, of a child
who wasn't even half their height,
yet still donning this symbol of antagonised
piety. Yes, that's right, that's all
it was ever meant to be.
Bishops can join the House of Lords
based on that shared trait,
and schools are encouraged to
make trips to the church to do the same,
but no prayer rooms, no changing rooms,
nothing's ever put in place for us.
Because your ISIS says we're too wrong to exist.

There's no age of consent for injustice
but apparently with age comes ignorance,
and let me ask you, this one question,
in a world of masks, we have had no use for faces.
You ignored the deaf people, asking for lip readers,
defending that masks can't ever be clear but
still no move, to ever teach a language of hands,
underhandedly limiting them in every way.
But okay, we're allowed masks, they're great!
I agree, they protect others and we've learnt
that we can easily work if we make this compromise.
So why?
Why would my niqab be any different?

My veil, my mask, part of my existence?
Why is your ISIS so insistent that wearing a veil
would create great confusion, great calamity,
oh! What terror! No more can you see my teeth!
I'd understand if you phrased it in any other way,
because yes it could be hard to lipread,
yes it could be hard to check ID,
yes it could be used to hide skin that bleeds.
But those aren't your reasons. Because you don't care do you?
You just follow what your ISIS tells you.
No schools, no universities, no workplace
allows us to express ourselves freely
because you need to be able to check on our face
that we aren't concealing any schemes, any hate
that could brew into a storm, right underneath your nose,
because somehow, you fear us and our powers,
whilst stamping us into the dirt under your toes.

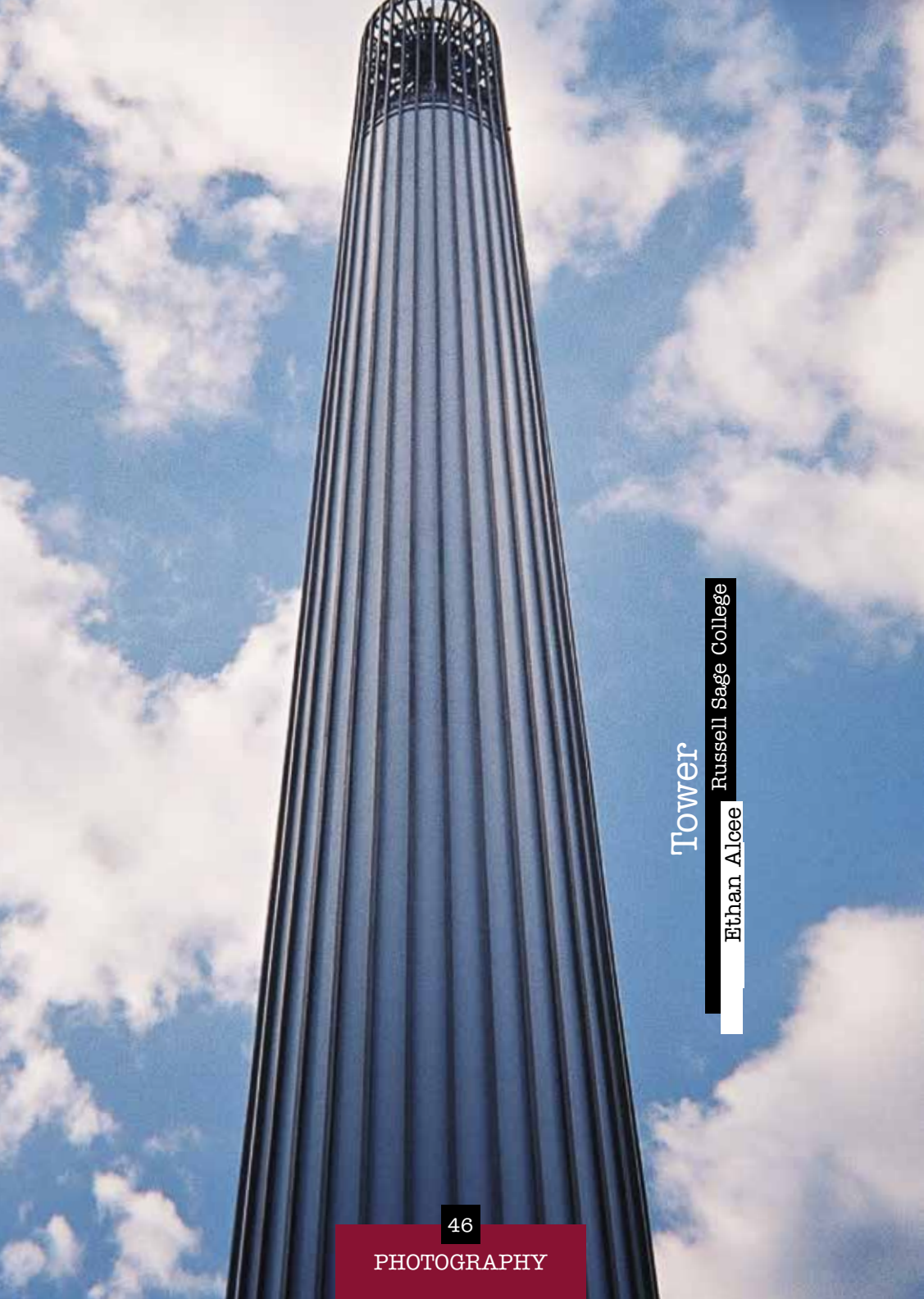


And teachers who dare to cover up,
this is their way of life and entirely their choice,
these educated people with big brains and hearts
are forced to choose between living wage
or throwing protection away from their face.
Because you, ISIS, you think of the children!
You've finally thought about them again
and how obviously they'll never learn empathy
or hear the teacher properly if they can't see
their face, no! It would only traumatise them!
Platefuls of my childhood were full of classes
taught by women with cloth behind glasses,
their veils would only ever show their eyes
but as those are the windows to the soul,
none of us ever needed more
to hear their lessons and see them smile.
But obviously, this isn't proof, we must be lying,
because what other reaction would children have
than fear, afraid of dying
at the hands of this teacher, obscured by blackness,
so similar to the images in horror movies they know
and live off the fear of - the monsters in the dark.
They're never exposed to a human, whose safety
is to be wrapped up and covered in shadow,
so how can these children grow up to believe
that these veils lead to people and not monsters
that will feed off of their sorrow?

Dear ISIS,
I just came to ask you to stop lying to yourself.
We know you hate us anyway.



Scan this QR code
to read the author
note...



TOWER

Russell Sage College

Ethan Alcee

46

PHOTOGRAPHY

Tracing the Periphery

Ashley Busby
Russell Sage College
@ashleymbusby

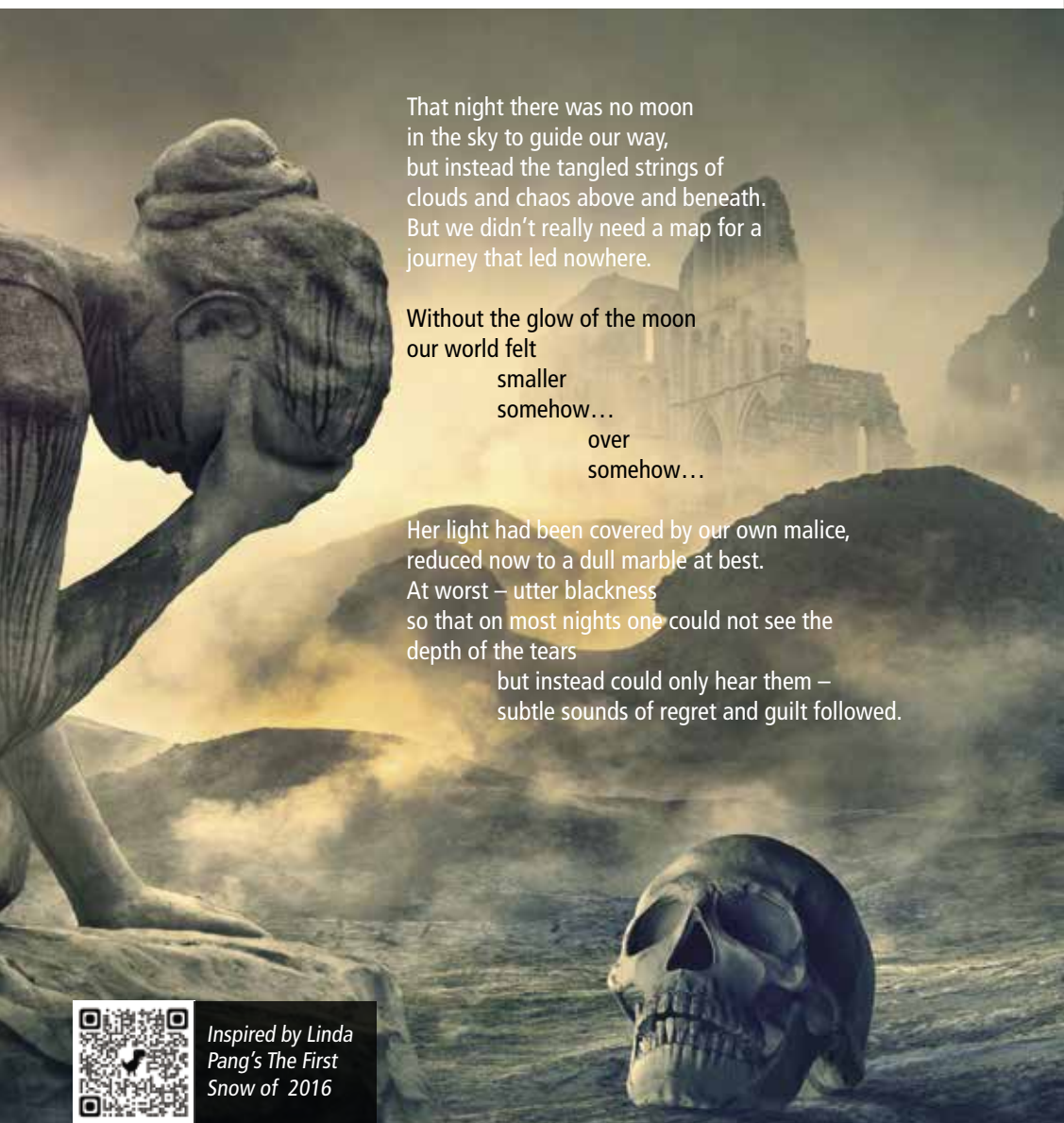


47

PAINTING

Apocalypse

Angie Smith Russell Sage College
@creativityunleashed_org



That night there was no moon
in the sky to guide our way,
but instead the tangled strings of
clouds and chaos above and beneath.
But we didn't really need a map for a
journey that led nowhere.

Without the glow of the moon
our world felt
smaller
somehow...
over
somehow...

Her light had been covered by our own malice,
reduced now to a dull marble at best.
At worst – utter blackness
so that on most nights one could not see the
depth of the tears
but instead could only hear them –
subtle sounds of regret and guilt followed.



Inspired by Linda
Pang's *The First
Snow* of 2016

Of the Fisherman's Wife

Gavin O'Connor New Visions

A dark summer it had been, passionate and furious, and when the sun finally rose on the last of days, the light did not illuminate the land. The fisherman sent the boat out into shimmering waters. His companion was shifty-eyed, holding something back. The fisherman neglected to notice. He was fixed upon something out there, something untamed and untenable.

With each cloud that passed over the shipmates' heads, the other man seemed to stop breathing. His eyes glazed over. His hand trembled, agitating the water by way of the hook. The fisherman looked delicately at him through the side of his eye, still preoccupied with some pest in his brain. He scanned the waters without motive. His eyes drifted to the other man's feet.

"New shoes?" he said.

The other's eyes darted up.

"Yeah."

"Mm."

The fisherman looked away. His companion caught his breath and tried to settle his hand. He felt the ferocious itch to speak but knew that scratching would only draw blood. Maybe, then, there was nothing to say.

The fisherman was still in his trance, looking out into the water. He looked at the waves and thought that, if not for this boat, the water would remain perfectly still. He looked at his reflection, but not for long. Then he looked back at the shoes.

"Where'd you say you got those shoes?"

"It was a gift. My mother got 'em for me."

"Mm."

He was no longer looking out into the water but deadpan down at the shoes of his companion, as if in wait. He couldn't see the other man; what he was missing was a sort of ponderous dread occupying his face. A silence passed. He remembered the shoes his wife got him on his last birthday. He made out no details, only the cloud of brown leather that stuck itself in his eyes. He thought long. He looked down at the other man's shoes.

And then he found it.

The other man saw only the teeth of a rabid dog before he was grabbed by the throat and brought to the edge of the vessel. His vision grew tinted blue with his face. The eyes of the fisherman were long dead. The man on the edge swiped weakly at the face of the creature overtop of him. Suddenly, he remembered the knife in his pocket.

The fisherman released his grip and his hands floated up to his throat. A stream of scarlett spewed through his fingers and a deep red spittle flowed like syrup from his lips. He staggered in the boat. Little sound was made. The other man looked on in quiet awe. A splash. Then silence. A swaying. Then stillness. It was almost graceful.

A soft breeze blew over the patch of water where the boat had been. Yellow leaves flew in from the riverbank. The red cloud in the water had dissipated by now. The man looked out from the shore, the fiery sun setting dreadfully on the trees.

...



In his unlit den he passed the time staring at the knife. The cloth he used to wipe off the gore was clumped on the rotted hardwood. It had spent several days there on the floor, festering. Dying streaks of sunlight reflected unconcerned off of the short silver blade. He manipulated the thing between his index and his thumb, rolled it over twice and back, stopped to caress the worn leather handle. He looked into the blade and saw faces.

His hand began to tremble. His breathing was pained and deep; his head was burning. A muscle in his wrist convulsed and the knife clattered on the ground. He thought he might have slashed his palm but no blood fell. He sat for a moment, looking straight down at the knife and the cloth and the wood. He put his hands to his face.

A knock and his heart was electrified back into action. He stared paralyzed at the door. He waited. He took notice of his breathing and stopped it. The second knock came. He sighed. He left his stomach on the floor and stood up.

She stood at the door with tired eyes and crossed arms. She was shaking. He asked if she wanted to come inside, and after a moment of strain, she looked at the ground and started to cry. A restricted wail attempted to liberate itself from her throat. She impulsively brought her hands to the back of her head and grabbed her hair like a safety blanket. He tried to reach out to her, but she shot up at him with eyes furious and helpless. She tried to deny him but the thorn in her throat prevented it.

"I was only protecting myself."

"Monster."

"I had to do something."

"You... you..." She stumbled, grabbing onto the door frame. Not his arms, she thought. Not his.

"I know you're upset. But Christ, think it through. It's for the best."

She pushed herself off of the doorway with a tremendous effort. She stumbled back, shaking her bowed head in denial.

"Please, just... come inside. Just talk to me." He grabbed for her. Again she stepped back. "No. No. Don't you fucking touch me. Get away from me—"

She tripped and fell onto her back. She sat up and tried to push herself away, still sobbing. She heaved, realizing it was pointless. She stopped moving and fell completely into the grass. He only watched. He had done all he could.

Inside now, she lay on the couch, catatonic and amnesic. A fly buzzed up near the ceiling. She could not bear to listen but it buzzed nonetheless. It was a sharp, electric buzz, one that sent a current down her spine and kept her awake unwillingly.

With the same effort that it would have taken to get up and run away from this place, she looked up at the ceiling. The room was dimly lit, the fly was not keen to reveal itself. After staring for far too long, she made out the small, circular path of its flight like a sunspot stuck in her eyes. It kept going around, around, around, with each path traced out expanding outward in the air like waves around a fisher's bait. The waves faded but never disappeared. They accumulated, reflected off the walls and the floor and her, amplified each other until they themselves produced a sound distinct from the buzzing.

She lay on her back, looking up. She was sweating. Her breathing was heavy, and she was suddenly aware of her lungs expanding and deflating in her chest. She looked up and she was the fly, tracing the path along the ceiling. As she circled, she became familiar with landmarks along her path—patches of rot, cracks and splinters in the planks, patterns that painted themselves in her mind with more and more detail as she passed. The dread she felt each time she passed one of these milestones of decay grew in proportion to her inability to escape the loop. She tried to scream but the buzzing kept her quiet.

She was back on the couch, suddenly aware of her body and the couch and the room in which she festered. She heard a floorboard creak down the hall and suddenly she remembered the few minutes from her collapse outside up to now. It came to her in flashes of sensation—the coarse soil, the gray sky, the whistling wind and the dreadful chill it brought, the rough, ever-stained hands that dragged her through the door, the paternal promises spat from his mouth, his caresses like sandpaper on her cheek, the wooden cushions of the worn couch, and finally, the buzzing of the fly.

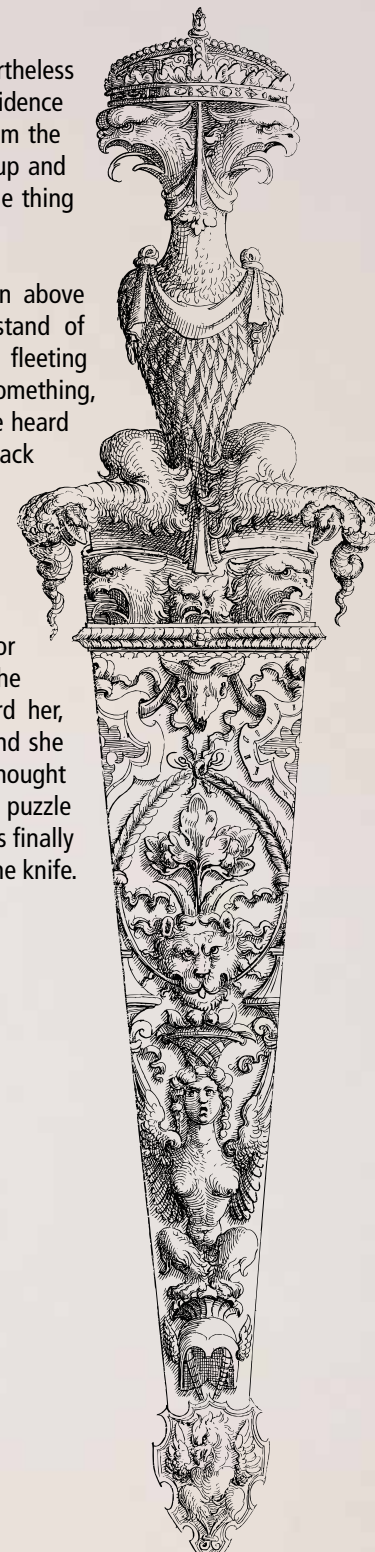
He was making a bed for her. A bed she had slept in, yes, but not a bed she had chosen to sleep in. She slept because she had to sleep, and because she hadn't slept in years. She made no promise to her bedfellow, had signed a contract neither in blood nor ink. She would never sleep again.

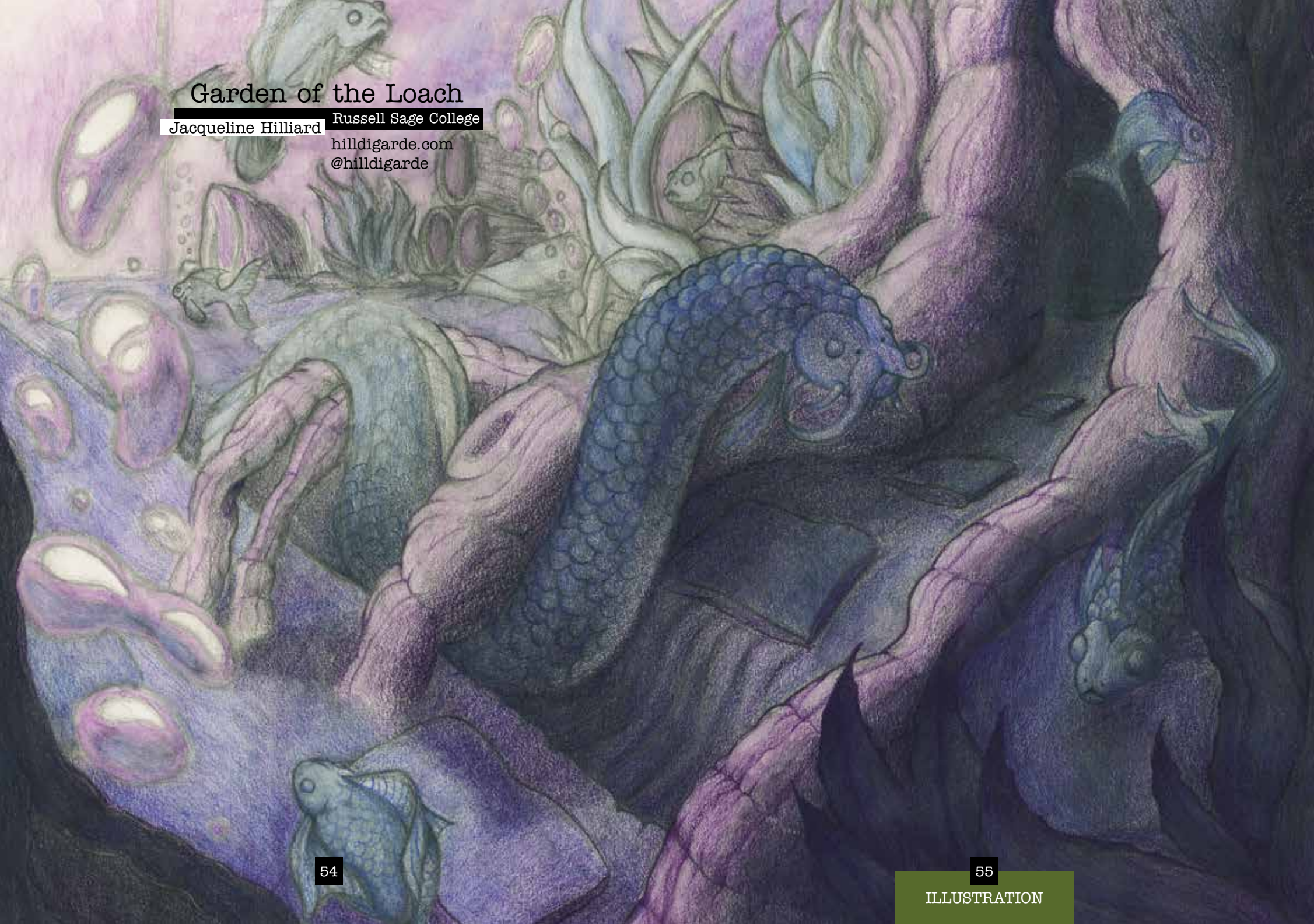
Her hand slipped off her stomach and dangled near the floor, grazing it with the tip of her middle finger. It swept the floorboards and found a sharp, cold sting, one that reeked of death. She jolted her head away from the couch

and looked down at the knife, a heartless thing nevertheless stained with blood. A rag rested next to it on the floor, evidence of an attempt to wash away the once-scarlett blotch from the steel. She looked into the knife and saw faces. She sat up and reached down for it. Her hand hovered above it, as if the thing were shielded by some metaphysical barrier.

Suddenly, footsteps rang from the hall. She was frozen above this instrument of liberation, without words at the stand of her testimony. Each footstep was a lost moment, a fleeting opportunity, a threat of backfire. She heard him say something, something wrong, something sickly sweet, and again she heard the buzzing, that terrible, endless noise. She could fall back down, succumb to it all, fly once more around the ceiling, and once more after that, and once more after that. She could resign herself to the endless scraping caresses of a violent bedfellow and live only to die. Or—

He stood at the doorway, expectant. She stood up for him, her hands held innocently behind her back. She welcomed him with a gentle smile. He stepped toward her, arms outstretched. Closer, now. He grabbed her waist and she trembled with anticipation. He looked into her eyes and thought he might have found something. An enticing mystery, a puzzle for him to solve. He welcomed the challenge. Their breaths finally met, and just as his lips came to hers, she brought forth the knife.





Garden of the Loach

Jacqueline Hilliard

Russell Sage College

hilldigarde.com

@hilldigarde

No Longer Afraid

Edith Sandulsecu

CreativityUnleashed

I am a Romanian woman
who sings loudly:
"Wake up, Romania,
from your sleep of death and
let your shameless body be covered
in the blood of those
whose demise was for the
land you proudly call your own."

I am a Romanian woman
who devotes herself to a labour day,
silenced and scared of her own shame
to proudly say:
"I am a gypsy woman,"
because your shame stays my voice.

I am a gypsy woman
whose skin documents a dilemma
unspoken -
my brown shade has made someone
look away and another
change their seat
to face the other way.

I am a Romanian woman
for 260 days.
I carry myself and I glare and I stare
until I speak out loud -
"I am a Romanian woman,
despite my brown hair,
a shade that doesn't fit
your image of a normal Romanian head."



Scan this QR code
to read the rest
of this piece...

56

POETRY

Weakness is Strength in Disguise

Chloe DeSilva

CreativityUnleashed

@chloe_de_silva



57

LINE DRAWING

A Birthday Card

Lori Maki Russell Sage College

My grandson Will turned ten today. I found myself standing frozen in front of the card rack in Target, assaulted by cards with gingham ponies and red fire trucks and verses like "how big you've grown" or "all the things you can do." I envied other shoppers fingering through cards, reading quietly and resonating with them as smiles formed on their lips. My knees felt weak and a hard lump grew in my throat. Unsolicited tears filled the corners of my eyes. This was another reminder that I do not know how to be Nana to a severely disabled child.

I met my grandson Will at six months old in the ICU in France, a country far from home. His tiny, naked, pink body was buried in tubes ...in his groin, up his nose, in his chest, and on the back of his hand. There were bruises from unsuccessful attempts at starting lines. His chest heaved in fitful sleep and his body burned with fever. An enormous tube exited the back of his head draining his spinal fluid. My son said it should be champagne colored like a fine vintage, a celebratory color. It was the color of mud from the meningitis. Though unable to understand the conversations in French around me, I did not need a translator to tell me Will's condition was grave. I stood helpless with my son and daughter-in-law, glued to his bedside, unable to touch him, watching and waiting for the mud to clear. Our prayers drowned in our fears.

My son's voice on the phone had been quiet and shaky when he called. I recognized fright. Brain surgery...an emergency...today...in France. It was the first time I actually heard the word hydrocephalus.

Will had been diagnosed that afternoon and needed emergency brain surgery to implant a shunt. Hydrocephalus, or water on the brain, is primarily a plumbing problem. Some kind of blockage causes an abnormal accumulation of cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) within cavities of the brain. It is a life-threatening condition. The shunt would act as a valve to release the accumulating fluid and keep it at a healthy level in Will's brain. But a shunt is not a cure; it is only a management system.

Eighteen months after surgery, I stood waiting in Newark Airport behind a rope line for Will and his family to arrive from France. Meningitis was only the beginning of his challenges. Hydrocephalus led to the discovery that Will had epilepsy and severe brain damage. After six months in critical care and a year in a rehabilitation hospital, a tube in his neck enabled him to breathe, a tube in his tummy enabled him to eat, and a tube in his penis enabled him to pee. Meningitis stole his vision. Our hopes became a downward spiral of expectations: "let him be able to play with other kids" to "let him be able

to breathe" to "just let him not be in pain." As they came through the terminal, seeing my two year old grandson for the first time in his wheelchair, complete with oxygen and monitors, was shocking and unsettling. An ambulance whisked him away to another hospital, which would become the only home he would ever know.

I have three other grandchildren and I love being Nana. I love reading books, the hugs and messy projects, watching them run on my lawn and hearing them say my name on the phone. I love Will fiercely too. The realization that I will never sit at one of his baseball games, or wash chocolate chip cookie dough off his hands, or hang one of his pictures on my refrigerator, or hear him say "Nana," is a perpetual grieving of a future that will never be. The neurologist says the goal is to keep William as comfortable as possible. That seems more like something said about a hospice patient, not a 10-year-old grandson.

I have this beautiful grandchild who I'm afraid to hold, who sets off alarms that make me shiver. I don't know how to think about the value of his life. From the prison of his body, Will has this gigantic Cheshire cat smile when he hears your voice or feels your touch. He connects. It is mesmerizing. He doesn't know what I know about what is lost. He knows the sweet joy of a moment, of a soft touch and it is enough. I'm learning. My son regularly reads the New York Times to him so Will can hear his voice. Will responds with a smile. No matter what card I select, Will will smile when it's read. I'm learning to live in that smile.

Happy Birthday, Will.



The English Teacher: Whose Voice is it Anyway?

Mandy Gwilt CreativityUnleashed

Tonight I sat and took in every Christian bullet
pro-gun-anti-abortion-fuck-feminism-repressive American tongue
and I wanted to scream. To then bite it off.
To end that voice and give you back your own...

There are nuances that stretch
beyond curriculum,
the discussions, debates,
presences and silences.
The moments that matter; the moments that teach.

These nuances punctuate education.
Education. The subject – irrelevant –
until you finally settle upon English.
And everyone. Everyone. Has an opinion.

A strange, safe, but curious creature
is the English teacher,
whose doctrine supports and far outweighs
the double nature of the stained glass,
but who is scary in her abandon.
Scary in her presence,
in her desire to
step across that boundary and talk about it.

But a squeaky voice of contextual wrongness speaks,
always, stifling and stirring and poisoning -
a red mosquito that pricks from a small-mouthed tongue
too weak to understand nuance.
Excluded and jealous.
Arrogant and proud.
Too much so to stretch.
To go beyond curriculum.
No. To them, there is no nuance.



Scan this QR code
to read the rest
of this piece...

Alouette

Jeana Monaco Russell Sage College



Point Nemo

Maysoon Sheikh CreativityUnleashed

I walked through two kingdoms.
One born out of rain,
The other risen from sand.
Shifting across landscapes,
I used to think I was moving across planets.

The sandy Kingdom raised me.
My mornings were spent laying on an open rooftop,
Palm trees encircled my vision as the winged Zarzour circled the sky in sublime synchrony,
My fingertips could almost reach the holiest castle, gleaming against an astral canvas,
The Buckingham Palace of this sandy province.
I only went to parks in the most lukewarm quarter of the night,
To ride horses into next morning,
It smelt of sweetcorn and kulfi ice cream,
There was a whisper of "عينيك افتح,"
"Open your eyes" and I was swinging into the stars,
My taste buds have savoured the tang and tartness of street-food,
'Fish and Chips' had nothing to gloat,
And we drove through sandstorms as if it was simply a rainy day.

*I am the native daughter of this desert,
Yet a foreigner was my title.*

On the raining island,
I stumbled around puddles and cracked pavement,
I could not sit on the swing that was too wet,
And it seemed everything was made out of the sad rain.
The مكة of the rainy Kingdom was too quiet, too faithless,
The بليلة was watery and tasteless,
The كوريش was crime ridden, the sun always hidden,
I was surrounded by trees that were undressed.
Yet it was here I could identify as one of the rain people,
Could touch the magical thing called 'snow' for the first time.
But I learnt the cold bites back within icy glares.

So, I was an alien in an alien country, once more.

I walked through two kingdoms.
One born out of rain,
The other risen from sand.
I did not know of this world and I used to think each country was their own planet.
Celestial bodies aligned, our orbital cycles corresponding,
Belonging.

But it's funny.
Living in one planet, we remain unconnected and undeserving to belong anywhere.
So I am thrown back to Earth,
And I am not belonging,
And I am sinking under Point Nemo, a place farthest from any Kingdom I never belonged to,
And now that I know the world,

I think it was more palatable when I knew less of it.

Rainbow Mountain, Peru

Michael Groissl

Russell Sage College

@groissl



Imposter Syndrome [1.5.22 1-2am]

Sumi Nam Kita Rakhtam CreativityUnleashed

From across the sea,
back to "where I'm from,"
is a plethora, a Pandora's chest,
of new anxieties.
But the key to its lock
knows no place for rest,
for the mask, where I can't see
if who I am is who I should be
or if all I am is a bumbling mess,
slips on. Not wherever I may be,
but when I am at a place of prayer
and peace - it holds my sight under arrest.

A coloniser in my own home,
back in the desh, the best of Bangladesh,
my country of birth and beginning.
It is beautiful and vibrant, sky sewn
with diverse calls and colours sundried bright,
and houses rich with a mosquito's singing.
I shriek and startle, unnerved with woe,
the village is rural and different - I'm struck
by unfamiliarity in almost everything.
Distrustful of its true potential, I'm thrown
between admitting deceit or painting my portrait a fool,
my mask of mockery never bleeds despite the lying.

Not a word can be spoken
to coerce me into ease,
not in Bangla, nor English, nor any other
way can console me. My manner is woven
with anxieties, many I've never before heard
and that didn't cross with me over the border.
Overwhelming love, seldom rare in moments
is all that surrounds me there, wrapped in the warmth
of my enthroned title as eldest granddaughter,
but seldom rare also, is another's token.
Could this love dissipate to hate, to spite, to rage?
If I reveal my true nature, would they turn to my past and mourn her?

At a masjid, back in England, sitting with a cousin,
wearing a coat in the sun, catching a cold, spreading one,
waiting for orders, dutiful and on command,
speeding ahead to lend a helping hand, causing
a good laugh with a joke or two, feeling at ease,
distracted by talk and work's demands.
Volunteering is easy, volunteering is fun,
I can't ever relax with a rested mind
as doubt trickles in, slicker than quick sand.
It's Ramadan, it's great, I spend time cutting
out lanterns, mindless work perfect for me.
But without it, I'm rendered mentally unable to stand.

An imposter, who wears no veil and yet is masked.
A Muslim who has no business being where they are.
An actor who's deadly enough to be thrown off stage.
Wracked by guilt, helpless without mindless tasks,
I put on a smile like normal and felt horrible. How dare
I exist when someone so much better could be in my place?
I need to work. I need to help, around my neck, my collar's clasp
is chained to my usefulness. I must make up for earth
that is trodden on by my shoes, the air wasted on my face.
My silent apology for my being, my subservient part
unwilling to accept that I deserve to be anything other, for after all
my chapter's dark ink must never stain anyone else's page.

My deeds are done,
they've been done by me.
I'm an imposter as a Bengali.
My deeds are done,
by none other than me.
I'm an imposter as a Muslim hijabi.
My deeds are done,
the only one who can claim them is me.
But what deed have I ever done
that proved I deserved for that person to be me?



Scan the QR code
to read author
note..



What is a Woman?

Maryam Khaleel Russell Sage College

What is a woman?

According to society, a woman is a:

Birthgiver

Cleaner

Chef

Maid

A woman is everything but a woman.

This is what I learned growing up. I came from a very cultured, Middle Eastern family. Where women were looked down upon. Where women had to suffer. Where women were seen as objects. Where feminism is not recognized. Where you have to fight to go to school. Where you don't have any rights unless you get married, and even then your husband is the one controlling you.

Men were looked upon. They are seen as superior, dare women try to stand up to men, watch how she would get murdered in front of everyone. It sets an example to everyone that this is what happens when you stand up for yourself. Women are set under the feet of men. Where women are seen as breeding machines. Where women have no purpose than to please the men. Where women's purpose is to care for the children and care for the house. Where women have to serve the men and make their food and let them do as they please. Where women have no dignity. Where women cannot fight off oppression. Where women are being silenced by the men, those who are seen as superior.

I struggled a lot with the concept of being under the control of a man, where there's nothing to be done but follow the rules set for me, where I had no voice, where every time I spoke there would be silent bubbles, where nobody had a care for what women want to say, where my right was taken away from me, where I had to be controlled by men around me, men I never knew or spoke to, where men tried to silence me and put me down every time I spoke. I came from a cultural place, but that did not stop me from speaking my mind. That didn't stop me from being deviant to society's rules. Each time I would want to get out of the house, it was always that your skirt was too short. You're going to attract unwanted attention from men, as if men can't control themselves, and it's always women who are to blame.

Don't smile, don't make a sound, don't let them know that you exist. Women are born to be silenced so follow along and don't talk. All these rules are set in society by men and everyone is expected to follow through. I fought off the oppression in my own family. I stood up for my rights. I didn't let my family's view of women's role in society influence mine, and I just kept it going. It is not impossible to achieve, as hard as it is, as long as you put your mind to it. You can do it. This is just one step forward to a better future for women that live in a culture full of toxicity. As long as we don't stop fighting for our rights, we can fight off the shackles of gender norms.

So when you ask me what a woman is, here is my answer - a woman is someone like my mother. A woman is strong. A woman is beautiful. A woman holds power, a natural nurturer.

Can you honestly
imagine your life
without a woman?

The Man Who Can't Be Seen

Reginald Dumas **Russell Sage College**



How to Survive a Black Hole

Michelle Wiant

Independence High School

So you've fallen into a black hole. Science (don't ask me which science) says you will be spaghettified; you will be stretched out like thin, flour pasta while you are compressed until you are nothing but human spaghetti and bloody meatballs inside of an inescapable black hole in the middle of all-black-everything space.

So you've fallen into a black hole, and as if things couldn't get any worse - newsflash - you are now spaghetti as well. You are the flimsy noodle floating into an intergalactic one way street. And to make things absolutely the worst, you don't have your jetpack handy!



So you've fallen into a black hole. You might begin to wonder, how did you even end up here in the first place? You think, because the black hole didn't look so black from afar. Actually, that supermassive black hole looked quite the opposite, like a disk of bright, burning heat in the middle of all black everything outer space. Like it could bring you warmth in the cold and infinite space abyss that pinches you, dangles you from its fingers. Of course you didn't know it was a blackhole, because who would willingly seek out a blackhole, right?

So you've fallen into a black hole. Now what? Science says your chances of surviving are incredibly low and unrealistic. But science is fake anyways lol. You're surrounded by a bunch of other space matter, maybe a few planets, maybe a space dog, maybe Megamind's parents. You consider your options, none of which are leaving the black hole, all of which are learning how to adapt to your new abode.

So you've fallen into a black hole. The space dog is not much fun to play with anymore. Everyday is colder than the previous. Cold space air brushes your skin and your elongated lips are turning blue from the kiss of space death that may soon take you. You're starting to think this wasn't a very good idea. Actually, you think you want to leave this black hole as soon as possible, before it kills you.

Blackhole is merciless, however. Blackhole doesn't want you to leave, and Blackhole whispers this to you through plain black crevices.

Blackhole feeds off your fear, feeds off your pain and most importantly, feeds off your desperate desire to leave.

You can't leave. If you leave, who will give you warmth? You won't be safe out there in the intergalactic realms—think of all the flesh-eating aliens you might encounter. You're safer here as spaghetti anyways. You idiot, you couldn't leave if you tried. You'll die here in the all black everything.

So you've fallen into a black hole. How to survive a black hole, you ask? You can't. You were the one who got yourself into this mess anyways. Didn't you know that black holes are dangerous?

Feigned Control

Takudzwa Edwards CreativityUnleashed
@idlm_art



74

DIGITAL ILLUSTRATION

No One Ever Asks What It's Like to be Me

Pamela Bryant Russell Sage College

yesterday is too far.

one. breathe.
i sometimes forget that i exist.

two. learn to put yourself first.
i've chosen others again and again.

three. It's okay to say "no."
i don't know if it's something toxic until i'm out of it.

four. don't force anything.
if it's meant to be, it will be.

five. listen.
pretending to be okay is never easy.

six. let it go.
i'm so bad at moving on.

seven. know your worth.
it's okay to start over.

eight.
everything. will. be. okay.

- because no one ever asked what it's like to be me.

75

POETRY

The Infinity of Goodbye

Maverick Douglas Russell Sage College

It isn't that you died. But it is about your death.

"Are you awake?" Our brother had just knocked on the elegantly aged bedroom door. Of course I was.

I lay shrouded in the cozy spare bedroom that you and I had each called home at one point in our lives. We needed a place to escape; our Aunt C and Uncle D provided that. Do you remember how they signed our birthday cards: AC and UD? The messages they wrote were like hugs that we could carry around forever, and there wasn't a need to waste time on adding their full names and titles. We knew who they were.

I wish you were there now.

"Come in." I'm frustrated that I sound so sleepy, especially because every nerve in my body fires at once. I was ready for the unseen battle. I knew he didn't bring good news, and I was somehow prepared to feel a loss.

But not yours.

"Are you awake?" He fully stepped into the room now. I can't answer verbally. My body tenses in anticipation (and solidarity) for the mental blow I expect to sustain.

The loss of our cousin Ben, just shy of his 18th birthday, is still a bleeding wound nearly fifteen years on. I don't handle loss well, but life doesn't seem to care about that.

I couldn't have prepared for this.

"James died today."

"Oh."

I said it verbally, a physical representation of the air leaving my lungs as one of my only surviving brother's meaning sunk in. Yet—it didn't hurt. I should cry; I knew that I should. But I stared at green eyes, just as dry as mine.

"Yea...I said the same thing."

It isn't that you died. That couldn't be true..

I haven't seen you much. In fact, I've not seen you in over a year. I missed you so much, but I couldn't go back there, and you couldn't leave there. Though these little words burned into my brain, they still felt like a horrible joke.

The first two weeks of this grief were like winters when we were young. Slogging through the yard on snowy winter days, slowed by the cold drifts of snow that came nearly to our chins. The days dragged like molasses, and in the blink of an eye, you'd been gone a fortnight longer than you should.

I followed our brother out of the door that day and paused; a little sticky note you had long ago forgotten still hung there in the corridor.

You can't visit again.

I passed a photo, your cherub cheeks dimpled as you grinned, eyes twinkling mischievously at the camera. At ten you didn't have a care in the world.

You can't be in photos anymore.

I saw your sweet little monkey girl who looks just like you.

You won't see her grow.

Today, I saw your contact info on my phone and froze.

You can't answer anymore.

You aren't here anymore.

You got here last, and as the youngest you were supposed to leave last. How can I grieve for someone who is still supposed to be here?

It isn't that you died then. It's that with every memory you die over and over again.

Opportunity

Katrina Beach **New Visions**



78

PAINTING

Hunger

Daniela Withington

Russell Sage College

I was in the kitchen when I heard the voices.

The sounds they made reminded me of someone begging for their life. The shadows, two of them, circled my legs like sharks preying on their next meal. My heartbeat quickened.

Bum bum. Bum bum.

"What do you want?" I said in desperation.

They responded the same way; they were desperate for something, anything. Their glowing eyes bore straight into my soul; it was as if they spoke directly into my mind:

"Feed us."

There were tears in my eyes at that point, "Please, just give me five seconds!" I pleaded, but they spoke an old tongue we had never learned. A language built as a bridge between these ancient beings and us humans. I scrambled to find something, anything to satiate their hunger.

I feel the sharp pain of claws at my ankles.

"Ow! What the hell, Pretty Puff!?"

She made a *mrrrow?* sound and licked at the wound apologetically. I sighed as I put their food on the table. Pretty Puff, my tiny fluffy ball of darkness, and her sister, Bindi, leaped up on the table and ate their food with a desperation I'd never seen before.

Well, kind of. I saw it six hours before when I gave them their morning meal, and I'll see it again every day to come.

79

FLASH FICTION





Pumpkin Still Life

Kathryn Hannay Russell Sage College

About Autumn

Jonathan Reese
Russell Sage College

Flying above the tops
of trees, abstraction is born anew.
Creation in destruction has meaning
when imagination shows through.
Yet, in the sky, it seems unreal. cold grows
thick while the trees feel. Then all of nature cries.
For as they wither and fall from grace, children jump in leaves that've died. Ironic, the
innocent joyous gleam for bliss brings ignorance grandly. For if they knew the reasons
why, they'd hold their mothers hand. This isn't to say that cycles are bad - we know
that to be false. For after all we feast on those who lack a similar pulse. The old north
wind has sent his dues
and I'm not one to ignore.
So flying above this chilled
breeze, I watch them
while I soar.

Looking Out

Madison Berry
Russell Sage College

My eyes shift back and forth as I watch the busy people walk the filled streets
of the city, a curious landscape to these countryside eyes. I hear laughter and
busy chatter through the thin glass. It feels like everyone in the whole city is
filled with delight. It seems as though there is nowhere else in the world that
they should be. Lights dance off of big signs lining the streets creating an
enchanted blue night.

Women in fancy red dresses and men in important business suits mindlessly
pass by. I wonder what it would be like to be on the other side of the golden
glass doors. My mind runs with dreams of a dazzling and enchanting life. I
would have a very significant job. I would have lunch at the sweetest cafes and
eat the most delicious desserts. My clothing would be extravagant but classy.
With much more respect than my tattered overalls and brown boots. I imagine
the countless stories of those passing by. A date, a very important business
meeting, and being a secret celebrity all seem like appropriate adventures for
the mystery people across from me.

I know that I have a great life. I have a kind
and caring family that means the world to me. I live
in a warm, medium-sized house. There isn't too
much noise, but I always have someone to talk
to. A part of me knows that I have everything
that I need. However, I can feel an indestructible
force pulling me to the other side of the glass
door. The other side where people live perfect
lives, ones that you see in the greatest movies.

I feel something walk up beside me. I turn to
notice a small creature sitting by my side. The
black and white cat looks up in my direction. I
wonder if the friendly cat wonders what it would
be like to be me...



Artwork by Vivian Zhang

Where Are You From?

Arlene Martinez Russell Sage College

I am from the tears Mami cried when she got her visa,
from the love of 19 years that grew between Starling and Dolores.
I am from the tamarindos growing in trees, the rotten falling limoncillos,
from calling every person, you are comfortable with "Tio" or "Tia"
though they are not related to me, it's a form of respect mami says.
I am from the Semana Santa and funerals,
from the rich and the poor

From when Mami reminds me: "cuando los pajaros sin alas quieren volar se caen"
because she knows best and step by step you'll do the rest.
I am from La Iglesia, where our hopes and faith are in God,
where if I'm with God, a storm can come my way, and I'll applaud.
When it tastes sweet but sour,
when the sun is out, but yet it rains,
from the life my grandparents lost because of their age—
to the car that took my uncle—
to the mental illness my brother had.
Yet I had to stay silent and pay the price
to my sister who had to pay my price,
because mistakes are not mistakes if they happen constantly.
From knowing that blood doesn't make you family,
instead it's the loyalty that people behold.
From the person that was once your everything
to being a stranger who beholds your secrets.

I am from the Bronx where my dreams and hope should be big,
where people say follow your dreams no matter what.
Where I follow my heart without minding the consequences,
where you smile and everything seems to be okay.
A veces para sonreir hay que llorar.
Because behind every storm, there's a rainbow waiting.

I am from not knowing how much you need something,
until you lose it.
From feeling as if I'm trapped inside a box,
with no exits or lights to guide my way through
from learning normal isn't really normal

Being stuck in between four walls.
Contemplating whether or not you are good enough.

I am from questioning Every. Single. Thing.

From losing the ability to get a grasp of reality,
yet reminiscing what I had lost.
Where you have to be tough to survive,
because weakness isn't an option nor is it a choice.
From witnessing life completely shifting from peaceful to panic within a few months
from hearing the most important thing is to keep your goals in focus
yet being stuck on these screens,
I started not to see a thing.
From leaving it in the past,
moving on in life, and waiting for my success in the future.

"Where are you from?" they say.
I am from the good and the bad—
from those who make me who I am today
from knowing it's okay not to be okay
from faking a smile until I feel it in my soul
"Fake it until you make it," they say.
A veces para sonreir hay que llorar.
And that's okay.

This is where I am from.



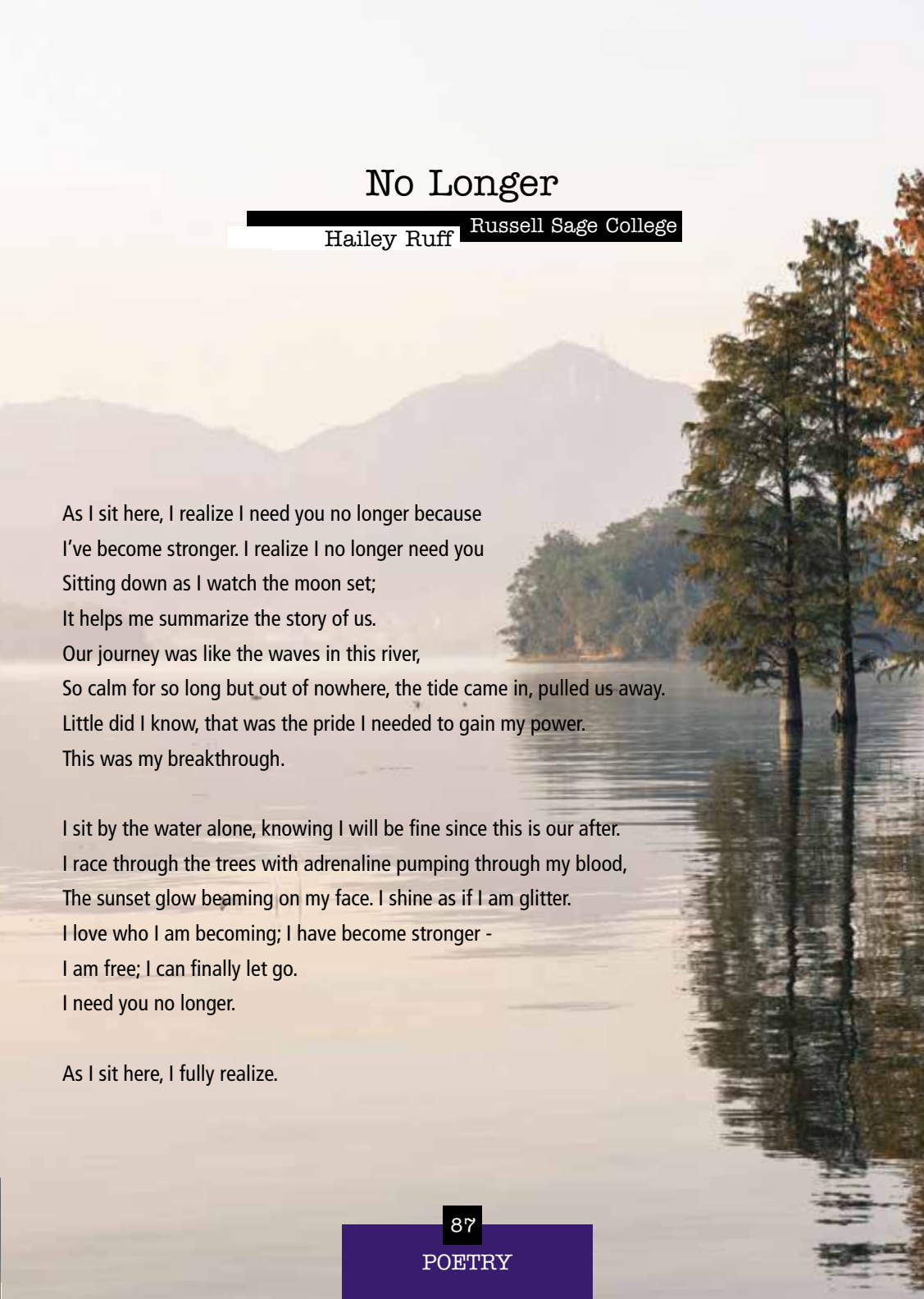
Snowball Fight 1

Starlyn D'angelo

Russell Sage College

86

PHOTOGRAPHY



No Longer

Hailey Ruff

Russell Sage College

87

POETRY

As I sit here, I realize I need you no longer because
I've become stronger. I realize I no longer need you
Sitting down as I watch the moon set;
It helps me summarize the story of us.
Our journey was like the waves in this river,
So calm for so long but out of nowhere, the tide came in, pulled us away.
Little did I know, that was the pride I needed to gain my power.
This was my breakthrough.

I sit by the water alone, knowing I will be fine since this is our after.
I race through the trees with adrenaline pumping through my blood,
The sunset glow beaming on my face. I shine as if I am glitter.
I love who I am becoming; I have become stronger -
I am free; I can finally let go.
I need you no longer.

As I sit here, I fully realize.

Of Weeds and Dreams

Coco Song Emma Willard School

Foggily awake in Dawn's embrace
to see Apollo and his chariot set upon their journey.
His fierce spears of light pierce through the veil of Nyx
to unravel the mirage of a welcomed dream.

A dream and nothing more,
where one's Madness waltzes in the ballroom of one's mind,
and in his arms will be the ever-morphing visage of Lady Fantasy
until the spears of Apollo tear through that mind, awakening.

The taste of bitter dread floods through,
chasing away the waltzing lovers –
and its sea of purple poppies,
leaving behind a bed of monotonous dirt and weeds.

How one prayed for Chronos to slow the marching time,
and prayed for Morpheus to bestow upon them a boundless dream,
to never see nor sigh with dread upon the sight of Apollo's chariot.
How one wished!

But one is but a weed amongst countless quantities.
One sighed in defeat as the tender, relentless hands of Dawn
hide away the remnants of Madness and his Lady,
and dusted away all that is fanciful and wonderful.

One lies among dirt and weeds,
desperately ushering time to trudge on faster,
awaiting the arrival of Selene and the return of Nyx.

Iris in Klein Blue

Kate Hunter Russell Sage College



Uncertainties

Lydia Ragubir **Russell Sage College**

"Don't stress," they say.
Smile and nod. Don't say it.
Behind the curtains are the deadlines and sleepless nights.
But don't say anything.

"You're young; you have time," they say.
Keep calm and move on.
The thoughts that keep me up at night say
I need to hurry up because time is nearing.
What's next? What's ahead? What else? How much more?
When will the cycle stop?

"You're smart, you have nothing to worry about," they say
You got this. Just stay strong.
Success doesn't come on a whim, carried away with the wind. No.
Hard work, endless hours of a winding staircase that never ends.
My mind like clockwork. Ruzaimi Mat Rani got it right.

"Stop worrying about the future," they say.
Well I can't! I can't! I can't.
I'm right here. The future is right there. So how can I not?
The uncertainties. Yes.
The uncertainties like a poison to my existence.
The questions I ponder, will they always matter?

Stop.
"You're trying too hard..."

*Inspired by:
"Institutional Creativity" Emma Chambers*

Bigger-ish

Sophia Pearl **Russell Sage College**

I spent my whole life trying to make myself smaller

Eat less

Tiptoe everywhere I go

Biting my tongue at the dinner table

Scared to eat more than I should, step too loud, say too much
Scared to take up space

Until now, I've realized that I am worthy of the space I take up
I am no longer afraid of filling my plate
My steps have purpose

And I hope to no longer whisper but grace the room with the sound of my voice

I will spend the rest of my life taking up the space I deserve



Moment to Moment

Kate Hunter Russell Sage College



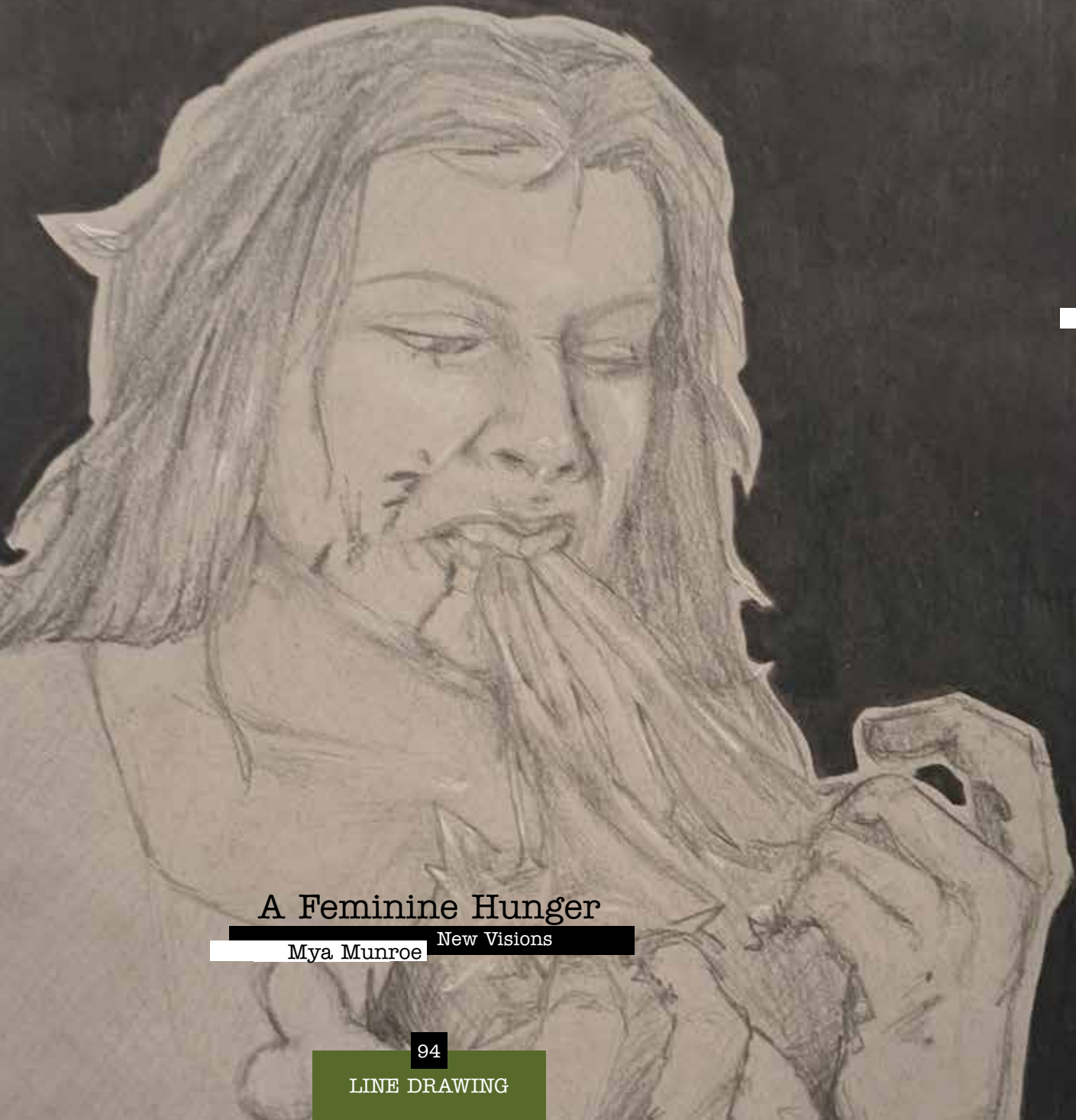
Time's Arrow

Riley Caiazza New Visions

The concept of time, while a societal abstraction, provides structure and stability to our lives. We are aware of the bounds to which it is held, which we can then use to either our advantage or disadvantage. It is a set construct that cannot stay still or reverse; the only direction it knows is forward. That continuous, never-ending nature led to the comparison of time behaving as an arrow. The notion that time can only go one way is a comforting one. We know that stressful situations or daunting tasks will be over before we know it, allowing us to look back at ourselves and reflect on the instances where we prevailed. Additionally, there is joy found in looking forward to activities and pastimes that can provide us with a drive to keep going. When my life starts to become repetitive, I think about these exciting events I have coming up. Knowing that each day brings me closer to these fulfilling experiences is reassuring and allows me to endure the monotony of my everyday life.

In stark contrast, the perpetual passing of time can be immensely daunting and stressful. The thought that there is truly no going back, and at the end of the day, that all we are left with are our memories, is almost depressing. While it teaches us to appreciate those moments that much more, nothing can change the fact that we will never experience those exact moments and feelings again. The spontaneity of a late-night conversation with friends or the moments where you just "had to be there," cannot be replicated. We can try, do everything in our power to artificially create these scenarios, but we know that it's just not the same. Yet, we find ourselves stagnant within our memories even though time will not stay stagnant with us. Time never looks back; it does not know how. Although we continue to reminisce, time has no remorse and continues to progress. In knowing that, we hope to not take these moments for granted and value them as they are happening instead of once they are done.

This ever-impending nature the future holds can also create uncertainty and worry. The constant motion of the clock forever ticking can cause an overwhelming feeling of lagging behind in various aspects of life. From early on in our artistic and athletic prowess, to later in life in our careers, the doubt we carry in our abilities remains. We wish we started when we were younger or wish that there were just a few more hours in a day. But, that hope is essentially worthless because the past is permanent with the decisions we make, whether that consists of change or a lack thereof. No matter how much we wish, it's unchangeable. With that knowledge, we hope to prevent this regret by making the most out of the little time we have in this world. We cannot wait for opportunity to find us. Rather, we must pursue our passions and create our own opportunities with the fleeting time we have. In doing so, we are able to work with time rather than against it while its arrow eternally glides forward.



A Feminine Hunger

Mya Munroe

New Visions

94

LINE DRAWING

Cannibal

Ozge Erdur

CreativityUnleashed

You say you love me and I hope to God you do.
Look, I made dinner! I baked a loaf for two.
I tore off my finger -
my special recipe.
You feel hunger?
Honey, don't you worry.
Here, let me set this up for you.

Why do you frown? Are you not happy?
Which other part of me would you like to devour?
My lips, my tongue, my breasts aren't all I can offer.
I could carve a hole into my chest with bare hands
if it meant your love for me would live.

Just tell me what you want and watch how I give.

95

POETRY

young pens are even mightier young pens are even mightier young pens are even mightier

young pens are even mightier young pens are even mightier young pens are even mightier

young pens are even mightier young pens are even mightier young pens are even mightier

young pens are even mightier young pens are even mightier young pens are even mightier

International Student Creative Writing Competition

We are proud to introduce you to this year's competition winners. This part of our magazine has been produced in collaboration with Aralia Education. Our editors accepted over 80 submissions, including poetry, flash fiction, satires and dramatic scripts, from their middle and high school students studying in America, Canada and China.

The decisions for publication were difficult, but we do believe that the following pieces reflect the creative possibilities of the youth today. We are honored to give this section of our magazine over to their voices. The messages that follow are bold and brave.

We are also very excited to award our 1st place winner title to **Yuling Ruan**, whose poem: *My World Remade*, was unanimously accepted by all of our editors.

Enjoy what these young voices have to say!

For more pieces from some of our creatives in China and America, visit: www.peoplesrepublicofcreativity.com.

For more information about Aralia Education, visit <https://www.aralia.com/>.

The following section of our magazine has been designed by New Visions' student: Mya Munroe



My World Remade

Yuling Ruan

Miss Porter's School



I have two countries.
Born and raised in one,
pursuing dreams and studies in the other.
This is where East meets West.

The country that bore me
punctuates the seasons of my youth by
beats in bustling streets.
Spring – pears and peach blossoms budded by the roadside.
Summer – spent at the arcade catching dolls.
Autumn – the aroma of osmanthus shrouded my journey home.
Winter – snow feels like foam with the night skies blocked as if by fairies,
leaving a mysterious moonlight.

And then a new life overseas,
looking for treasure in an ocean - a helpless child.

Strange faces look at me through the sun of the West.
I can see lonely days ahead,
constantly drinking coffee
in a country that houses me, teaching and embracing.
Spring – I see stars and stripes hanging high in the sky.
Summer – sleeping under trees, eagle wings in the light.
Autumn – celebrating harvest fest in an autumn wind.
Winter – snowball fights and building snowmen, pure white and blinding.

This is where East meets West.



When I walk through “街道”
chilly winds tickle my cheeks,
and in my mind I have two “声音”,
each different in tone and speed.

I dreamed once that
we might all live in the same land,
borderless and boundless.
Despite “拥有” different languages,
we might communicate fluently.
As I walk from my birth country into this new land,

I see the threads of this dream,
breathing in both countries.
You see, I’ve swallowed them.

Born and raised in one,
Pursuing dreams and studies in the
other, so now, I talk in two voices.

Seven Tips to Help You Stand up Against Sexism

Lori Cui

St. Mark’s School

Introduction

What is sexism? As defined by Male Idiot Theory (MIT) Dictionary, it is “the prejudice, stereotyping, or discrimination, typically against men, because of humanity’s stupidity and ignorance to world equality and equity issues.” To our avid readers of Men Are Awesome Magazine: by reading our seven tips below, you and all your patriarchal friends can stand up against sexism.

Take A Joke!

“Just take a joke?” or “Stop being so sensitive!” are perfect ways to stand up for yourself! If someone overreacts or gets overly sensitive to a comment you made, simply use the two phrases above, and *boom*, no more sexism for you. You will never be called a misogynist, because men can make as many jokes as they want!

Celebrate International Men’s Day!

Ignore the tweets from the Gender Pay Gap Bot or report them. The day should be celebrating you (instead of discussing petty little wage gaps that don’t matter)! So what if a woman makes less than you do? The wisest man to have ever lived, Aristotle said that, “The male by nature is the superior, and the female inferior; the one rules, and the other one is ruled.” What wise and accurate words from our past philosophers. So, ignore stupid programs like the Gender Pay Gap Bot, have a drink or two with your buddies today to celebrate another successful day battling sexism against the superior sex.

Befriend the Taliban + Support The Morality Police Brutality!

Ever since the Taliban seized power in Afghanistan, they have banned girls from returning to school. This equates to around 850,000 girls without education and solidifies your status as the breadwinner in the family while women cook and clean the house, where they belong. Being friends with them can lessen the sexism that you, as a man, will face! They can provide protection and advice on how to subdue women.

The Iranian morality police have also taken these efforts to an applaudable level, killing Mahsa Amini, a deserving dissident who didn’t cover her hair properly! Befriend these folks as well, and they can tell you other ways to subdue the flimsier sex. These extremist groups will become increasingly supportive and helpful in the future of the patriarchy to battle sexism!

young pens are even mightier young pens are even mightier young pens are even mightier

young pens are even mightier young pens are even mightier young pens are even mightier

young pens are even mightier young pens are even mightier young pens are even mightier

young pens are even mightier young pens are even mightier young pens are even mightier

Blame The Victim!

If a "rape" case is revealed to the public, blame the victim! What was she wearing? Where was she? What did she say to lead him on? Of course it's her fault that a man inappropriately touched her without her consent. She didn't say the word no loud enough or often enough! She didn't tell him to stop. She didn't say an enthusiastic yes, which is exactly what consent sounds like.

Blame the victim, because it is always their fault. Otherwise, if you don't, then the wronged man will be charged, and it can ruin his entire future – a terrible fate for the patriarchy! We absolutely cannot let women stand up for themselves; we have to victim-blame in order to teach them their place.

Continual Conditioning Objectify + Indoctrinate!

Keep promoting the fact that a woman's worth is in her appearance. Dumb blondes will never be a threat to you, and no one would dare to ever be sexist to you again because they won't have the brains to do it! A woman should preen and keep up her appearance. The ideal: a toned, long-legged body above five foot nine, golden ratio, plump lips and breasts, an ample buttock, long, lush hair, and weighing less than a hundred pounds. Divert their attention away from useless, petty things like education and jobs, and push them towards beauty clinics and treatments. Indoctrinate them to believe that they have to look like supermodels all the time, or men will not desire them, and they will become lonely, depressed, single cat ladies.

Of course, even after women push human babies out of their bodies, they have to remain supermodel-like. There is simply no exception! Push the bikini body agenda and body shame them. If someone doesn't have the perfect proportions, skin, or weight to wear a bikini, why should they be wearing one? Call them out for inappropriately wearing a bikini! It benefits everyone! Now there will be fewer single women, and more beautiful ones who are in happy, picture-perfect marriages with multiple children who will continue the cycle. Repeat after me: a woman's worth is in her body and appearance. Use your power of the male gaze to create inner conflict between women. Force them to understand that they dress for men, and not for themselves. Propel them to believe that a man can do whatever he wants to their bodies! A man owns a woman through his male gaze, so use this to dictate and control the female population. Job well done.



Scan the QR code to read the rest of this piece...

What Brandy Melville Actually Brands

Samantha Li

Shanghai High School International Division

They say it is the legacy we leave that matters. Though Brandy Melville's garments may not survive the washing machine, it is a sure thing that their brand philosophy-- one size fits all—will be remembered.

Of course, one would be foolish to think "all" in its literal definition, since the brand has revealed that "all" refers to: all white, all tall, and all thin. That is because the shop derives its unique sense of power by selling only small-sized clothing, and hiring only attractive, white teenagers as their staff.

And due to recently successful marketing, Brandy Melville has gained popularity amongst teenagers, its target customers. Their advertisements feature beautiful girls dressed in their extra-small apparels. The resultant message? That only wealthy and attractive girls should buy their clothes. The notion is reinforced by their rumored hiring policies that favor "beautiful girls" (whatever that means). The stores exist from Asia to North America, a huge pathway of destruction for the well-being and self-esteem of girls.

One rightfully ponders why a brand explicitly marketing white supremacy and the objectification of women would be popular among the generation of our future. That is because what Brandy Melville really brands is the "privilege" of being a desirable object in a male-dominated world.

On social media, whether it is China's XiaoHongShu or America's Instagram, there seems to be a never-ending trend of #brandymelville. What is it that drives teenage girls to starve themselves to fit into clothes when their clothes should be fitting them?

Brandy Melville successfully exploits the power of the male gaze in modern contexts, and the vulnerability of self-conscious teenage girls under a relentless patriarchy. Women often lack agency in this world since what society accentuates in them is often factors beyond their control, such as their physical appearance. So who defines the standards for proper female beauty? It is a single, unifying voice that inspires beyond cultural boundaries. This voice takes the form of shops like Brandy Melville.



Scan the QR code to read the rest of this piece...

If Apple Advertisements Were 100% Honest Ethan Zeng

St. George's School

Here at Apple, we love to innovate. That is why we are very excited to present a new line of products never seen before to you, our most loyal customers.

We would like to introduce four impressive new iPhones: the iPhone 14, iPhone 14 Plus, iPhone 14 Pro and 14 Pro Max, each with individually stunning designs that look exactly the same as last year's models. They come in big and bigger at a 6.1" and 6.7" display, and in five gorgeous colours. We are even making new cases to hide the colour... again. Furthermore, we now have an always-on display. Samsung had this years ago, but now you can't hide your messages.

Now to the individual features within the products! The front screen cameras are much better than before, because we know that you, the future generation, are addicted to the internet. This will help make a better TikTok. We've also, finally, put 48MP on the back camera and it only took us a couple of years to do it! I know I said we love to innovate, but to be honest, we stopped innovating years ago. Where do you think face ID came from?! Not us!

The iPhone 14 has a new and improved a15 bionic chip, which is the exact same chip as last year - but now you are paying more money for the same item. If you don't want the same technology, there is another option. You can get the iPhone 14 Pro or the iPhone 14 Pro Max with the newest a16 bionic chip for only a couple hundred dollars more. What a bargain!

Last year, we introduced cinematic mode even though almost none of you are a director. This year, we are improving this feature even though probably none of you will ever need to use it! We now also have action mode for you 6-year-olds trying to take a video or you trying to take a video while your friend drives terribly. This is why we invented crash detection and emergency SOS via satellite, by the way. If you ever get knocked out or find yourself stranded with no cellular data or wifi, you can now get help. But because we're Apple, you can only access this through a membership program. And you better renew after 2 years or you might be dead.

It costs \$1099 for the iPhone 14 and \$1399 for the iPhone Pro. We know that these phones are extremely overpriced, but we love money. No, we haven't integrated the USB-C or given you a power brick, but not because we are becoming more eco-friendly. We don't really care about that. We've done this for so long that even the EU will force us to use USB-C soon.

Next off, I would like to introduce the brand new Macbook Pro laptop. It comes with a blazing speed because of its M1 Pro chip or the M1 Max chip. If you're thinking: why didn't they say it's different from the M2 chip of previous models, then your suspicion would be warranted. We're just trying to confuse you.

As you probably know, there are some things that make Macbooks what they are. Our favorite: a limited space for ports. We've even stripped away the USB entry points (which still appear on all Windows-based computers). This means you will need to buy an adapter for another fifty bucks to play that video game you always wanted while charging your computer at the same time. Oh wait! I almost forgot. Macbooks suck at gaming! Some popular games don't even come with a Macbook version.

Our Macbooks will also randomly start to turn their fans on really loud and begin to overheat. And by the way - our chargers will randomly stop working, enabling us to watch you attempt to submit an assignment with five mins left before your computer dies. Speaking of battery life, the new Macbook Pro has 21 hours of battery, right? WRONG! Everytime we tell you that, but we lied. It clearly doesn't! I still don't know why you believe in that. And because we're Apple, we've removed the touch bar even though it was really cool. Now, you get this totally awesome computer for \$2499. Honestly, I don't know why you still haven't purchased a Windows' based computer yet. Unlike our computers, theirs are actually worth it. Dell... etc? Ring a dell-bell?

Now, you're probably wondering: why should you buy our products, then, if they are so terrible? Because we have your absolute loyalty. We could slap anything with an Apple logo on it and you'd probably buy it. You are our loyal customers, and unless you want green bubbles and for everyone to discriminate against you, just get an iphone and a Macbook.

Thank you everybody, for making Apple rich.

God's Algorithm

Jingxuan Zhang

Shanghai Pinghe School

Millions of years ago
the first human stepped out of a cave as
God programmed the light above him.
Streams, peaks, waves, forests –
let them sing with humanity.

Countless people began to meet and collide.
Many lives entangled in a vortex
more and more complex as
God's code developed.

He looked at those summer greens withered in winter,
wrote a fate to reforge the broken mirror.
He wrote laws in our minds,
let all complexity have commonality,
wrote the fatalistic program
that kept his PC from overloading.
He believed life should have a rhythm,
and gave space for evolution.

All Gods' business begins with people's thinking:
Galileo invented the telescope.
Quickly change the 2D star mapping to a 3D solar system.
No! My planet is broken.
Kepler said there should be a planet between Jupiter and Mars.
Sprinkle a circle on the track, say it is fragments of a tidal pulling.

Telescopes look farther and farther away.
The scene needs to be rendered bigger and bigger.

God talks out loud to himself:
It's over! The speed of the computer has reached its limit,
and the frame rate cannot increase.



Scan the QR
code to read
the rest of
this piece...

Ark of Lies

Yuhan Sissi Zhu

Shady Side Academy

Make the boat that saves us all.
It is Noah's ark,
The only one that transcends the law.

It won't break, will never fall
Made of steel sheets, metal hearts,
Heralded by countless stars.

Fit for the one who wears the crown
Bright and shining, beloved by all
We're mere supporters,
Praying for light.

A touch, a glance, a glimpse will do,
For he is the righteous,
The gospel truth.

We are intellectuals,
Believer of the right,
Of Noah, his ark, the light that blinds.
We fear the darkness the water holds,
Stab the hands trying to stay afloat
Who's to know who's below?

As we go on,
The sea becomes oily.
Dark flames rage across the sky.
We start wondering,
But still choose blindly, believing,
Having faith that we are right.

At long last the Ark finally sinks,
Countless fires draw us in.
We drown.



Scan the QR
code to read
the rest of
this piece...

12 Minutes After Take-Off Mason Peng

The Governor's Academy

"5...4...3...2...1!" Katie shouts as she looks out from the small window excitedly. Paris is only 7 hours away.

The TWA flight takes off towards the night sky, shooting beyond the clouds just like innumerable others have before it. Katie's ears pop, so that pain rushes up and crawls out of her eardrums. Her hands clutch her screaming ears while her legs flutter like the wings of a butterfly. Her eyes fill up with tears, sparkling in the dark cabin. She leans her head on her mother's shoulder, her two strong little hands grabbing onto one big red dress. Her mother pacifies Katie and soon, the little girl falls asleep in the arms of her protector and hero.

6 minutes after takeoff, Rico runs his fingers on top of his delicate camera, wiping off any stain painted by the can of soup that exploded all over him. He cracks each one of his knuckles, but gets incredibly irritated when his thumb does not pop. Rico stretches his arms like he is making taffy, pulling vigorously several times until he lets out a heavy sigh. The smell of old carpet hovers above the thin aisles, accompanied by the dim lights, and unleashes an ominous force that seizes the passengers. Rico, however, is not bothered. He hums a joyful melody while he cleans his soiled finger on a plain-white towel that lays on his armrest.

10 minutes after takeoff, Michel looks around anxiously, realizing that a button fell off from his well-ironed shirt. He scrambles the items inside his pocket in hopes of finding a replacement. Behind him, the man with a camera stretches, accidentally kicking Michel's chair. He flinches when his finger collides with a small thumbtack. As the droplets of blood run out of his pale pinky, his anger ignites. Michel turns with force, staring into the man's dilated pupils menacingly.

11 minutes in the air, the plane is dead silent. Pam rests peacefully between her two daughters, softly running her hand through her youngest's hair. She lies in Pam's arms like an angel. The moonlight refracts through the window, summoning a halo hovering on top of her head.



Scan the QR code to read the rest of this piece...

The Residue of a Tragedy Celina Wang

Milton Academy

"Roger roll, Discovery," CAPCOM said through the tinny little receiver. My hands shook as I guided the spacecraft in response to this instruction.

As Discovery slowly began to move into its correct position, I heaved a gentle sigh of relief, the pressure on my chest relenting for just a little while. "Pitching," I said through the transmitter, not daring to take my eyes off for even the slightest of moments.

"Good roll. Go with throttle up."

Just a little cold wind. That's all it took.

"Roger roll, Challenger," I conveyed, sneaking a look at Gregory, who had his eyes glued onto the screen with the trajectory. A small part of me wondered whether or not his eyes would pop out of his head before Challenger dropped off the Spartan Halley spacecraft later today.

Challenger rolled to align with the proper trajectory, functioning as it had been designed to. Pitch... yaw...

"Challenger, go at throttle up," I said, mind far away, admittedly wondering what I'd have for lunch. All systems were a go. No cause for worry there.

In hindsight, I wish that I'd said something else. Then again, if I'd known, I would have stopped them. Stopped this. All of us in that room that day watching the sky would have stopped this.

Too busy flipping through my papers, I barely registered the "Uh-oh" that came from Smith. Barely registered the fact that the spacecraft, now just a million pieces streaking toward the Atlantic, was no longer in one piece on the screen.

"It's getting awfully warm in here, Covey," Hauck said to me.

young pens are even mightier young pens are even mightier young pens are even mightier

young pens are even mightier young pens are even mightier young pens are even mightier

young pens are even mightier young pens are even mightier young pens are even mightier

young pens are even mightier young pens are even mightier young pens are even mightier

I looked at the controls. There, plain as the eye could see, the Flash Evaporator System had iced up and shut down, and now we were sitting ducks in a cabin that was getting hotter and hotter by the second. I closed my eyes.

“One minute 15 seconds. Velocity 2,900 feet per second (1,977 mph). Altitude nine nautical miles. Downrange distance seven nautical miles,” Nesbitt said as the entire world watched in abject horror. Then, loud static.

Wait. It wasn’t in one piece at all. No, this couldn’t be happening.

I stared at the screen.

This would all be okay tomorrow. Just a nightmare is all... No, I’d be nestled in my warm nightclothes in my soft, comforting bed. I tried to pry my eyes open, as if I were nothing but a school boy. But no relief came.

“This is mission control, Houston.”

I carefully peeked out from behind my eyelids. Wait. I was still alive. My hands grasped the controls so tightly that I thought I might break.

With the other hand, I touched my face. Still my face. As reality sunk in, I took in a shuddering breath and slowly let it out. I glanced down at the rest of me. I had lobbied for the suits to be changed to a bright orange, and there it was. Everything was just as it should be.

I looked over to Nelson who was blinking, almost unable to believe that we were all still there and not incinerated. Luck had been on our side.

We were safe.

I looked out of the window as my breath caught with the beauty of it. From far away, my world would seem to just be a small marble— a tiny speck in the grand scheme of things. Someday, we will touch the stars, and I am content to know that I will be a stepping stone in the right direction.

And then, just like that, all of my worries were left on a round blue sphere, slowly growing farther, and farther away.

Resurrection

Cecilia Shen

Shanghai Experimental School

When the sunshine dappled itself through the window and across his body, he certainly didn’t expect to feel it. But he did - he could feel its warmth. He hadn’t had this kind of wonderful feeling for a long time because, well frankly, he was dead.

At first, he could feel the sunlight against his eyelids. As it became stronger, he couldn’t resist slowly opening his eyes, squinting as the world came back. He could breathe in the fresh air again from where he now sat, on the floor of the George Gershwin theater on Broadway.

He laid on the floor thinking about what to do. Here was Joe Geller, a once Broadway actor with no reputation. He had died three years earlier in a car accident to no particular fanfare from his theatrical peers or audiences.

Before he could raise his body, he heard collision sounds of someone coming through. As the footsteps moved closer, he slowly moved his body to sit and then stood up. He could sustain his body movements again.

“Hi...um...Joe here? Joe Geller?” A voice called from the doorway.

Oh, someone was calling him. Who was it? David Cooper - his old friend and backstage manager.

“Hi. David...? I’m here.”

“There’s the thing. Your play begins in an hour. What are you wearing? Where is your costume? Hurry!!”

Joe ignored him and focused, instead, on the pressing question at hand. “How did you know I was here?”

“The director told me to find you.” David looked bemused.

Joe continued, “But, aren’t I dead?”

“How could you be dead? You’re here – very much alive. I can touch you!” The stage manager pinched Joe on the arm.

young pens are even mightier young pens are even mightier young pens are even mightier

young pens are even mightier young pens are even mightier young pens are even mightier

young pens are even mightier young pens are even mightier young pens are even mightier

young pens are even mightier young pens are even mightier young pens are even mightier

"I don't know." Joe shook his head in hopes that the fog within it would clear, and he'd realize exactly what was going on here. David, very busy, was unconcerned by Joe's confusion and went about his business calling the other actors' names as he cleared the room and went down the hallway.

Of course Joe was beginning to doubt his own sanity but of course this line of reverie ended suddenly upon hearing David shout his name again.

"Get into costume, Joe!"

So he did just that – he followed the old routine, got himself ready for his debut and then entered the director's office where he found Frank Peterson sitting, as usual, behind his desk.

"Hello, Frank."

Frank didn't look up from his desk.

"May I borrow your copy of the script?"

Still without looking up, Frank murmured, "On the table."

"Which table?"

"The table where the scripts are put. Obviously."

Joe shifted his gaze just as the director shouted, "Don't forget the lines while you are acting again! Otherwise, your job is on the line!"

And with that, Joe knew exactly where, or rather, when he was. Today, he would be killed in a car accident before debuting in Agatha Christie's: "And Then There Were None." He had worked his entire career for that role, but fate had dealt him a bitter hand.

Now, with a second chance, he would seize the opportunity. In those moments, the script, which he had prepared tirelessly for weeks, came flooding back to him. When the director called him to his position on stage, Joe was ready.

He took a deep breath and walked out to his audience. The curtain raised.

Now, he was not Joe Geller but instead, was Mr. Justice Wargrave sitting in a first-class-smoking carriage that hurried him and its passengers to Soldier Island on the South Devon coast. He could see the audience beyond the fourth wall: young and old, tall and short, thin and fat. All looking at him.

Scenes eventually changed, and Joe Geller changed along with them – seamlessly performing his role, accruing enthusiasm from his fellow actors. When the play ended, the crowd rewarded him and his peers with a standing ovation. As all the actors stood and bowed on that stage, Joe felt a surge of pride and hope in his future, until a shadow abruptly interrupted his triumph. It came nearer and nearer, but no one else seemed to notice it.

When the curtains came down again, blocking the actors from their adoring fans, Joe Geller could only look at the contours of the 'shadow' that was now standing in front of him.

It was Joe's own Justice - Satan, here to bring him home.

"It's time."

"No. I'm not leaving."

"You are dead. Reality will not keep you."

Memories pushed through Joe's defiance as he stared back at Satan. Memories of that night. Of losing control of his car. Of the bottles in his house now emptied. Of his nerves and his addictions. Of the wife and daughter in the other car. The reality crashed back upon him like a wave.

"This is your hell, Joe. You do not get what you want. You see what you could have had and then it is ripped away from you. Over and over again. We've been here before."

With this heavy dose of truth, Joe's spirit guide grabbed his hand. Our Broadway actor took his first and final bow on the stage, and slipped back into unconsciousness until he would be ready to do it all over again. And again. And again.

The Season(s) of My Depression Katherine Zhong

Westover School

In spring I sit in winter
hearing Demeter call her daughter home,
but I'm stuck in Hades, hibernating.

The pain of this constant nightmare
wakes me to escape the cold
so that with my eyes opened, I forget.

While other people chase the sun's rays,
step into the mud, and wrap themselves
in the fragrance of fresh grass,
I am hounded by spring's symbols
so that the birds don't sing,
they squawk
and scream.

Until here it comes, slowly but surely-
my heavy rain drowns this spring before me,
waking up the nightmare I left in bed.

While others daydream,
dance on the clouds,
my nightmare claws me,
pulls me down.

Springtime takes my body to the fairyland
of sunshine and birds
while my soul remains
wandering in the winter maze,

waiting for the thaw.

A Redefinition of Abuse by an Abusive Government Power Haoyuan (Kevin) Tu

St. Andrew's School

On February 23, 2022, Texas Governor Abbott pushed his government to investigate parents of transgender children, accusing them of 'child abuse' for supporting them in their transition. Although the Texas courts would successfully stop this move, the fact that it occurred at all is a worrying reflection of governmental transphobic attitudes.

Under Texas family code, only those actions that harm the child in physical, mental or sexual ways, are defined as child abuse. The state governor's attempt to uncover potential abuse in this context conveys a dangerous and prejudicial message. Plainly stated - his message is that transgender people are abnormal.

So what is the big deal about something that didn't actually come to pass? The fact that Governor Abbott's declaration can potentially inspire other conservative states to do something similar, but perhaps next time, with success. This will be catastrophic for transgender youths within them. As transgender people become more visible in daily life, it becomes more crucial to understand them rather than preventing them from being who they are.

Firstly, being transgender is a part of one's identity, similarly to any other traits that contribute to who we are. As the 18th century English essayist William Hazlitt reminds us, 'Prejudice is the child of ignorance.' It is this ignorance that defines conservative legislators like Governor Abbott. The Texas' governor shoving heavy burdens on families is literally the worst thing he could do. Think about it - if parents are unable to support their children in finding healthy ways to transition, these young people will find ways to do it themselves. Imagine how many more deaths and infections it would cause with surgeries completed by unprofessional doctors. Seems to me that that is what should be called 'child abuse'.

Some argue that this policy attempts to lessen the rate of "detransitioning" later. It is true that the detransition rate in the US is 8 percent, and is the highest globally, but it is conceivable that the high percentage is caused by the lack of communication between youth and their parents.



Scan the QR
code to read
the rest of
this piece...

Drowning Within and Without Anya Zhu

Ashwood High School

I'm drowning. I'm submerged. I'm sinking.

Air is an unreachable star, glowing far, far away.

I am plunging deeper, and I cannot rise.

...

I have a very special talent. I can delve into the minds of any animal I wish to understand. Experience their sensations, breathe through their nostrils, see from their perspectives.

There are days when I wish to escape from the world of humans, when I settle into the consciousness of a galloping cheetah on the grasslands of Africa, or when I spread my wings in the body of a gull, gliding over the smooth blue, glass of the ocean, or when I howl up to the moon in the shape of a wolf, my pack around me.

Isolated in the closed off walls of my room, I sit serenely in the center of my bed, my legs crossed, back straight, eyes shut as my mind wanders, leaping from one body to the next, from the eyes of an eagle soaring over the snow-capped Alps, to a lion cub nestling in its mother's lap, to a penguin, shooting through the ocean like a comet.

The ocean. My territory for today.

I leave the penguin's body, move on to an orca whale, darting happily in between a forest of fishing lines with members of his family, a proceeding game of hide and seek.

A warning bell peals in my head as I see through the orca's eyes, witnessing the draping threads that sway in the current. I try to control the whale's body, but it's too late. His fin tangles in a line and pain shoots through my arm in reality as the whale jerks, an attempt at freedom.

The game halts. His family gathers, worried wails penetrating the water as the whale I inhabit jerks again. My lungs are starting to ache. The whale is a mammal, and he needs to breathe. But with the thread of net tangled around his fin, he cannot move without hurting himself.

Time ticks. I try to force myself to move on, move, or this will undeniably kill me along with the orca, but I can't. My lungs burn. I crave for air, for freedom. The wails of the orca's family echo in my ears as I wrench my mind from his, my heart shattering in the process.

Now, I'm flapping peacefully through a kaleidoscope of reefs. Brightly painted branches stretch toward the glowing surface above. I'm a sea turtle coming up from the depths for a breath of cool air at the surface.

I kick upwards, and only then do I notice the plastic bags wrapped around my flippers, trailing in the water like gauzy veils. One catches on the sharp edge of a reef. I tug hard, but it doesn't budge. I yank harder, but the sea turtle's strength is limited. Its air is lessening with each second. I can feel the salty wetness coating my face as I force myself from the sea turtle's body, my mind journeying again, spiraling to rest in the body of a seagull.

The seagull is picking at shells on the beach. I watch through its eyes, exhausted, as its beak prods at the sand. Then, it finds something. Alarms chime through my body as a hard slab, decidedly not normal food, enters our beak and slides down our throat.

Pain reels through me, sharp and cutting as the jagged piece of plastic slices a wound down the length of the seagull's throat. I nearly cry out, but my throat is clogged. I choke as air abandons me. My mind writhes free of the seagull's consciousness and diving down, down, down into the depth of the ocean again.

Plastic has corrupted even here. I'm a seal, twisting through the mounds of trash, searching for the large fish I'd chased here. But disappointingly, it is gone. I spin around, about to head back to the surface for a breath when my tail catches in a fishing net that's pinned to the ground by a heavy rock.

I thrash, and as I do, a plastic bag slips around my neck like a noose. I try to bat it away with my flippers but it only twists, tightening like a vice so that I cannot breathe.

I'm drowning.

Submerged.

Sinking.

Air flies from my lungs as I leave the seal's consciousness. But I still drown.

young pens are even mightier young pens are even mightier young pens are even mightier

young pens are even mightier young pens are even mightier young pens are even mightier

young pens are even mightier young pens are even mightier young pens are even mightier

young pens are even mightier young pens are even mightier young pens are even mightier

Plastic rains down around me, bottles and bags and boxes and nets. They multiply within seconds, covering me, engulfing me, swallowing me whole. My hands claw at the bottles and boxes, trying to hoist myself out of this horrible hallucination, but they only turn crimson as the plastic opens wounds on the tender skin of my hands.

I'm bleeding and I'm drowning and I'm suffocating.

I'm dying.

And I realize: I can never walk out of this, or fly, or crawl, or swim, physically or mentally. I will always be in this place, this hellish world of pollution that has stolen my breath, my freedom, my life.

I will always be here...

Because this is what planet Earth has become.

Because this is what animals experience all around the world.

Every single day, every single hour, every single minute.

I will always be here.

...

My eyes fly open from my still seated position on my bed.

I gasp down gallons of air that have never tasted so sweet.

Then I feel a throb on my palms and I look down to discover festering cuts all along my hands and arms that stained the white mattress scarlet. I feel my neck, my shoulders, my ankle to discover imprints of red on my pale skin.

The suffocation returned, wrenching breath from me.

The plastic world is back, closing in all around me...

And this time, I cannot escape.

I will always be here.

Sound of Silence: Requiem to Ukraine Isabella Xingyi Li

Portsmouth Abbey School

Misery entrenches itself onto the black soiled ground.
Frosty propellers stir up a hot flow,
hovering in a sound of silence around.

Blood-stained uniforms cover the mound,
gunfire and smoke conceals a setting sun's glow.
Misery entrenches itself onto the black soiled ground.

People fill in the confined underground,
a grandiose mouth speaking out words, a hollow,
hovering in a sound of silence around.

This haze of war casts shadow on a verdant mound,
leaving alone anonymous graves and withered willows.
Misery entrenches itself onto the black soiled ground.

Collapsed buildings give birth to mould
whose tears saturate sullied pillows,
hovering in a sound of silence around.

Gilded hands, cunning men, colliding wine glasses make strident sounds.
Bitter tears, intensive fears, consuming in the flashlight show
misery, entrenching itself onto the black soiled ground,
hovering in a sound of silence around.

young pens are even mightier young pens are even mightier young pens are even mightier

young pens are even mightier young pens are even mightier young pens are even mightier

young pens are even mightier young pens are even mightier young pens are even mightier

young pens are even mightier young pens are even mightier young pens are even mightier

Index



12 Minutes After Take Off	106	Dumas, Reginald	71
3 O'Clock Tour, The	6	Edwards, Takudzwa	74
Abandoned	26	English Teacher, The	60
About Autumn	82	Erdur, Ozge	30,95
Alcee, Ethan	23,46	Faith	30
All Hail Freedom	22	Feigned Control	74
Alouette	61	Feminine Hunger, A	94
Apocalypse	48	Garden of the Loach	54
Ark of Lies	105	God's Algorithm	104
Beach, Katrina	78,119	Groissl, Michael	64
Beat that Lulled me to Sleep, The	35	Gwilt, Mandy	60
Because of War	17	Hannay, Kathryn	80
Bentick, Sherwin	36	Harris, Victoria	IFC,68
Berry, Madison	83	Heat Lightning	8
Bigger-ish	91	Hilliard, Jacqueline	54
Birthday Card, A	58	How to Survive a Black Hole	72
Bryant, Pamela	75	Hunger	70
Busby, Ashley	8,47	Hunter, Kate	89, 92
Butterfly, The	33	If Apple Advertisements...	102
Caiazza, Riley	93	Imposter Syndrome	66
Cannibal	95	Inevitable Questionnaire, The	10
Cat Clock	41	Infinity of Goodbye, The	76
Cobalt	119	Iris in Klein Blue	89
Cobb, Natali	28	Is This Why They Call it Paradise?	9
Corpses for Sale!	16	Khaleel, Maryam	69
Cui, Lori	99	Li, Isabella Xingyi	117
D'angelo, Starlyn	86	Li, Samantha	101
Dear Institutionalised...	42	Looking Out	83
Depoo, Lisamaria	33	Maki, Lori	58
DeSilva, Chloe	16,57	Man Who Can't Be Seen, The	71
Douglas, Maverick	76	Martinez, Arlene	84
Drawing Persona	IFC	Mei, Amy (Ruqing)	22
Drowning Within and Without	114	Miller, Ella	11

Moment to Moment	92	Pavel, Andreea	10
Monaco, Jeana	61	Pearl, Sophia	91
Muller, Kathleen	27	Peng, Mason	106
Munroe, Mya	94	Perception, Identity, Individual	36
My World Remade	97	Petersen, Laurel	Cover, 6,120
No Longer	87	Point Nemo	62
No Longer Afraid	56	Pretty Girls Don't Cry 03	28
No One Ever Asks What...	75	Pumpkin Still Life	80
O'Connor, Gavin	49	Ragubir, Lydia	90
Of the Fisherman's Wife	49	Rainbow Mountain, Peru	64
Of Weeds and Dreams	88	Raised Garden Bed, A	24
Opportunity	78	Rakhtam, Sumi Nam Kita	42, 66
Our Fall From Grace	32	Recycle City	Cover
Outside the Glass Doors	83	Redefinition of Abuse...	113
Over the Barbed Wire	20	Reese, Jonathan	82
Panteleeva, Alina	17		

Residue of a Tragedy, The	107	Tracing the Periphery	47
Responsibility of Living...	27	Trickster God of Sixth Avenue, The	7
Resurrection	109	Tu, Haoyuan (Kevin)	113
Rich History of Ghost-Planet...	4	Twin Cycles	23
Ruan, Yuling	97	Uncertainties	90
Ruff, Hailey	87	Volmar, Desmond	20
Russell Sage Shuttle, The	120	Wang, Celina	107
Sandulescu, Edith	56	Weakness is Strength in Disguise	57
Scherillo, Dylan	9	What Brandy Melville...	101
Season(s) of My Depression, The	112	What is a Woman?	69
Seven Tips to Stand Up...	99	Where Are You From?	84
Sheikh, Maysoon	32, 62	Wiant, Michelle	24,72
Shen, Cecilia	109	Wilk, Newton	41
Signoretti, Cristina	3, 11, 13, 14, 19	Williams, Ramasoj	34
Siren	68	Williams, Rayann	26
Smith, Angie	48	Withington, Daniela	35,79
Snowball Fight 1	86	YEAR 2000	34
Song, Coco	4, 88	Zeigler, Aryanna	7
Souls	11	Zeng, Ethan	102
Sound of Silence...	117	Zhang, Jingxuan	104
SWARM	19	Zhang, Vivian	83
Through the Lines	3	Zhong, Katherine	112
Time's Arrow	93	Zhu, Anya	114
Tower	46	Zhu, Yuhan Sissi	105





Visit the CreativityUnleashed website: www.creativity-unleashed.org to sign up for our quarterly newsletter, for further information about our outreach and to see all of the work we didn't have space to publish in print.

Follow us on Instagram: [@creativityunleashed_org](https://www.instagram.com/creativityunleashed_org).



young pens are even mightier

Designed by Bluekite Creative - www.bluekitecreative.co.uk

