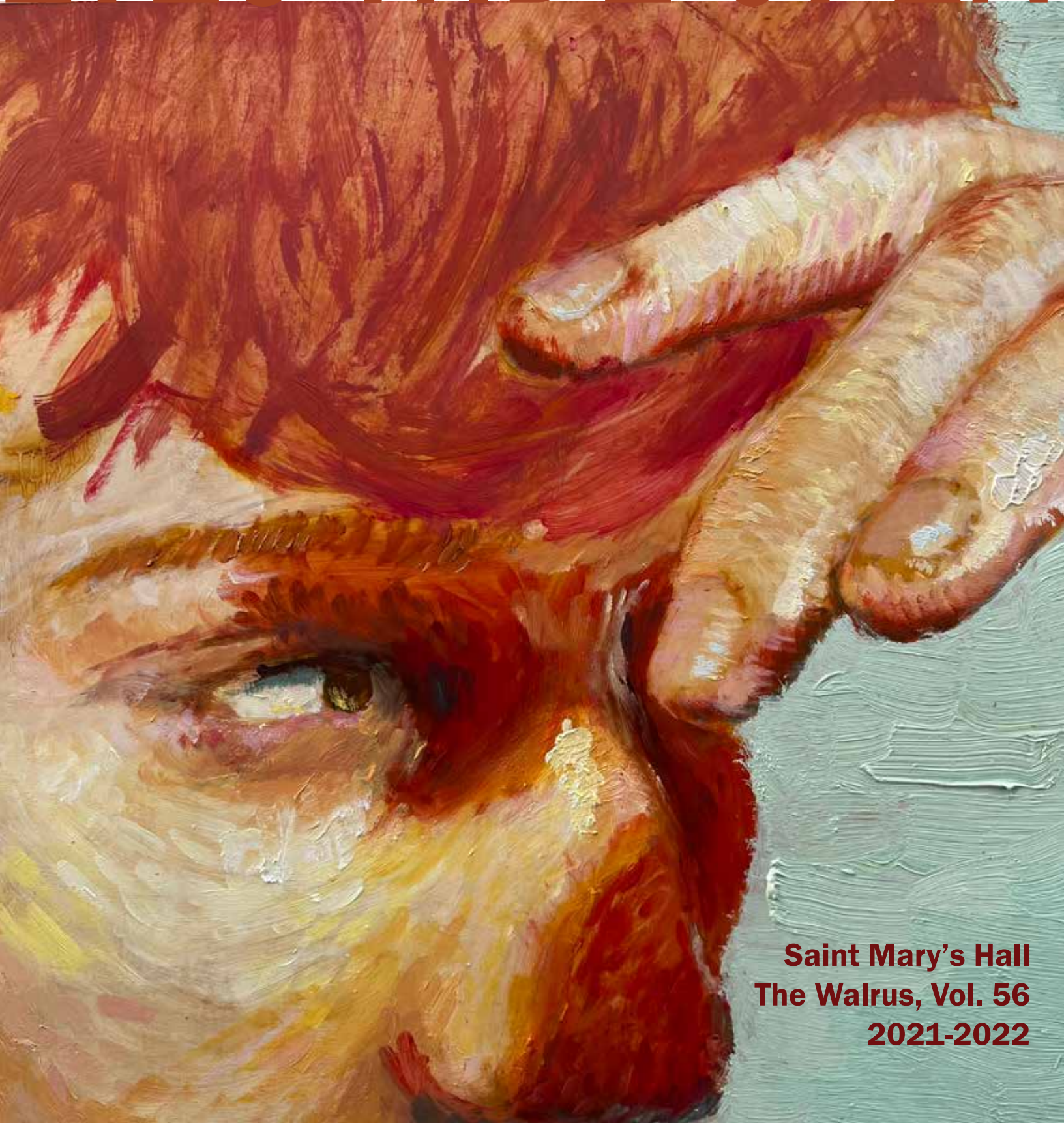


EYES WIDE OPEN



**Saint Mary's Hall
The Walrus, Vol. 56
2021-2022**

Gabe Chbeir (12) | The View | Oil



EYES WIDE OPEN

The Walrus, Vol. 56

2021-2022

Saint Mary's Hall

9401 Starcrest Drive

San Antonio, Texas 78217



A NOTE FROM THE EDITORS:

Writing may be the hardest thing for anyone to do. It is the arduous task of baring one's soul on the page and can become all encompassing, even overwhelming at times. Yet humans continue to do so. We write because, despite its costs, writing presents us with the deepest connections to ourselves and the world around us. It requires our willingness to struggle and our acceptance to the enthralling act of it all. Inspired by Ocean Vuong, this year's magazine is a testament to the vulnerability of writing, to allowing oneself to surrender to the written word, and to doing it all with eyes wide open.

*"...I didn't know the cost
of entering a song--was to lose
your way back.
So I entered. So I lost.
I lost it all with my eyes wide open."*

Ocean Vuong, "Threshold"

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Alex Riebe (11) / Look At Me / Gouache on Mirror



Content Warning:

This magazine is intended for Upper School Students. Because of this, there are some pieces that may be upsetting to some because they contain violence, harm, or abuse to the self or others. Please read with caution and look for a + in the table of contents as a trigger warning.

Disclaimer:

The content of *The Walrus* does not reflect the judgments or opinions of the Board of Trustees, the administration, faculty or staff of Saint Mary's Hall. It is solely an student driven publication.

Editorial Policy:

The Walrus editorial staff reserves the right to edit minor errors such as grammatical and spelling problems, while other submissions may be returned to the author for other requested corrections or approval for editorial decisions.

I Want to Write Like Honey

Sofia Zavala (12) | Poem

I want to write like honey
With words of golden drops
Slowly rolling down the tongue
Over fingers, knuckles,
The bump of a wrist bone.
Languid and thick like humid sea air
Brimming with life
Lazing under the sun.

I want to write like honey,
Make my thoughts sticky,
Enduring and sweet like the Greats before,
Their words pressed into the seams of history.

But unlike a honeybee's work,
I want them to flow easily,
For them to drip and bead
From my pen, my hand, my lips, my mind
Like the caress of a lover,
Memorable through a haze.

I want to write like honey,
Soothe aching throats
Hacking up spines and clots of hatred.
I want to be a balm,
Cool and comforting.
I crave it, that heavy, lazy peace,
Eyes drooping and breaths deep.



Berzhia Mizani (12) | Golden Glitter | Digital Photo



Cuatro Morrill (9) | Does Insurance Cover This? | Silver Gelatin Print

God Bless These Broken Roads

Camila Alvarez (12) | Personal Narrative

I see the town that breathes so much life into me.
Life I didn't know I needed.

I was born in San Antonio, but I was raised on Kingsville roots. This small, ancient, sometimes-forgotten-about town was the home of my ancestors after they arrived in the United States from Mexico and Spain. Kingsville is the bookcase that houses the volumes upon volumes of my family's deepest secrets and fondest memories. But as a child, there were pages I read that I wish I never had. Like the chapter about my grandfather's sudden death before my birth, or the story of my grandmother fleeing from her abusive father who held her and her mother captive. Every page is indicative of the blood running through my veins, and I look forward to building a life and family and adding chapters of my own.

With the houses held up on cinder blocks, and every building in need of a fresh coat of paint, it is easy to understand why most people pass the town as they drive down the highway and

never look back. Or why those who were once raised in those almost-collapsing houses escaped the town they are too ashamed to call home. But what I will never fathom is why anyone would want to leave the heart of Kingsville. The part that breathes life into the town—the people and places that make the town as comforting and welcoming and safe as it is. These small, seemingly unimportant aspects are the intricacies that make it far more meaningful to me than most.

~

Kingsville shaped me in my earliest stages of life, arguably the most important stages. My first Christmas, my first time in real snow, and my first time ever being licked by a goat were all gracious gifts of Kingsville, Texas. The most special memories in my

life were crafted in Kingsville. From falling off of the giant lion at Dick Kleberg Park to speeding down the highway at midnight with my friends to make sure we got to the Party Barn before closing time, each Kingsville memory will forever live on.

When I was a little girl, I always felt that warm, excited sensation when we exited off the highway and were finally in Kingsville. But I never knew why. Passing the old, rundown houses speckled with chipped paint, I wondered why the little kids outside were sitting on the grass playing with sticks instead of playing inside impersonating superhero toys and Barbie dolls. I wondered why my friend had to sleep on the floor in a room with her four other siblings. I wondered why this place that didn't seem like an ideal home was where I always wanted to be.

This place that didn't have much, had everything I needed. Anytime I felt pain of any kind, I longed to go there—when I was diagnosed with my epilepsy, when I suffered my first heartbreak, when I felt alone, empty, or ignored, I always knew



Sasha Glast (10) / Metamorphosis / Silver Gelatin Print

Where I'm From

Sofia Zavala (12) | Prose Poem

I am the bridge between
two different cultures,
different lives.

I'm from dirt floors, small meals, from a tiny house overshadowed by *La Sierra de Monterrey*. I am mariachi music, Christmas and 2 a.m. runs to *El Cabrito*, and the determination and strength of a hundred suns, the same ones that would have mercilessly beat down my grandfather, my aunts, my uncles had they stayed in Mexico. I am from back to back shifts at a run-down county hospital, from aching feet, and a tired mind. I am from bright lights,

Kingsville would make me feel whole again.

~

It was not until I was about fourteen years-old when I started to understand why my parents wanted me to spend time in Kingsville. Of course, I never fought them when they told me we would be taking a trip there, but I always wondered why my time there mattered so much. It wasn't so much the time there as much as me getting to know what Kingsville was really all about. Why it wasn't just some old town in the middle of nowhere. It's because when you get to know Kingsville, when you get to immerse yourself in their culture, in their ways, it's like a breath of fresh air. Time just stops and all your worries float away. The people in Kingsville make you feel so loved, like you are their own, like you are one of them, even if you've never visited a day in your life. But that's what they do. They love.

Kingsville has taught me how to really live. And it's because the people there know how to live. They cruise down the streets at 30 mph because they don't live their lives in a hurry. They eat El Pastel Pan Dulce and Pizza Parlor pizzas to their hearts' content because life is too short to diet. They gather at the Country Luau Saloon every Saturday night to dance with their friends and family because they know to treat every day like it's their last.

At eighteen years old, I look to the town crippled by neglected homes and broken roads and see so much more. I see the town that saves me from crumbling. I see the town that breathes so much life into me. Life I didn't know I needed. It has become the place I go when I need a break from my life. A place that gives me more than just some time away. A place that encourages me to live life to the fullest and not take it so seriously sometimes. A place I want to share with the love of my life, and someday, our children.

And nothing is more comforting than knowing I always have a place to call home.

rubbing alcohol, and the scent of books. I am from travel, from a boxing ring. I am a collection of Olmec, Incan, and Aztec relics, a representation of my ancestors. I am from harsh discrimination, Chief Residents, and broken bones. I am from passion, incredible intelligence, and drive.

Yet, I also come from the prairie, where golden wheat and cotton grow as far as the eye can see. I am from tornadoes, kicked up dust, and burns from the Texan sun. I am from corn, cattle, a white barn dog, and fourth of July firework fights. I am a tractor, as steadfast, and sturdy as the people driving it. I'm from Tim McGraw, Garth Brooks, and George Strait. I am rocky soil, a world war two fighter plane, and mulberries. I am a setting sun, a cool breeze. I am growth, empathy, and kindness realized through generations of misguided beliefs.

I am the bridge between different cultures, different lives.

Ancestry

Grace Phillips (11) | Poem

Tree branches are blue veins
roots: a tangle of dry vessels
without a heart to pump
warm blood, shriveling
its red blooms.
Through aching limbs
it reaches for my face,
clutching at my brow, my nose
screaming that I had stolen it.
And I had stolen.
Fall litters my chapped lips
with its artifacts:
scraps of paper, notes,
old leather, lost pennies
a house that shakes with draft
whispering “Thief”
under the crinkle of fallen leaves.
In the summer it bears fruit,
my favorite tree:
rotten white apples, black cherries.
I tear through grape skin
and abandon the cores
to be swarmed with tiny soldiers
and stolen, stolen
by some awful war.
The taste still stings my eyes,
smell festers in my teeth.
I can feel gnarled fingers, still,
caressing my cheek.
Listen!
Among littered bones
some bitter wind rattles:
Thief!
Thief!

tulips

for my mom

Penelope Luna (12) | Poem

soft lines and pastel colors
she blooms softly
subtle and unnoticed
whispering to me
beauty hidden
guarded by petals
that hug tightly
around the stem

in full bloom
her color is striking
she is purple
prominent
and proud
holding power both
majestic and strong
she is selfless
comforting & kind

is her peace
a field of tulips
blowing in the wind
as the sun admires
the natural beauty
of her and her tulips
hand crafted by the universe
ever perfect creations
teaching me what it means

to be eternal
forever graceful
forever beautiful
forever loving
forever mine



Southern Comfort

Leah Dooling (12) | Poem

1.

Time meets its paper trail when I return to lost family ties
Loopy roads with flashing shadows cast by longleaf pine
With age comes ancestors, so I sit and listen
The stories that catalog the adventures of mine.

Losing became loving, cousins, aunts, and uncles
escaped with time
Familiar, I learned to love how motion and memory would leave them
Escaping at the mercy of some higher power
And so, I learned that love can never last,
Learned to love leaving.

Leaving my small family and sleepy southern towns
Flesh and blood, old stomping grounds
Tradition, tradition, there was never a time without
Fleeting reminders of love and its levity.

2.

This summer was different, a sticky air of the deceased
Ordinary days became calendar markings of compulsory grief.
Bathing in loss until my toes crinkled, the luxury of borrowed time.

I suppose it makes sense to look back with love
Remember, remember! Do you have any respect?
I may have loved once, but it is hard to surmise
Why preserve something already fated to die?

DNA is a purist potion, lacking complexity
Equal parts inherited from family ties
Science could never lie, but can it explain why
I bear no resemblance to mine?

What do you do when all that is left to trace is genetic traits?
Familial fabrics are loose stitches, just places, places.
Frayed memories, pictures on paneled walls.

What do you say to loss when you feel nothing?
Nothing from the stories your grandma recalls,
Withering tears from her old memories of him,
Tears I have yet to shed.

Their time on earth is not mine to claim
A thousand miles makes love hard to sustain.
Yet convicted in guilt I try to connect
Borrowed memories, the subject of my studies.
Constantly reminding myself to remember!
Remember, because one day I will look back and feel love.

3.

After that summer, I saw blurred faces.
I forgot and only remembered what once was.
Pawpaw’s perpetually lost wallet,
Grammy’s eyebrows painted on like black boomerangs.

Sometimes I feel like my Pawpaw,
Fighting against the tides of loss to remember
Because who am I if not bound by my roots?

Sometimes I feel like my Grammy,
Taming the tides, begging everyone,
Keep it together! Don’t you remember?
Life is still happening.



Genevieve Seeligson (9) | Boots | Silver Gelatin Print



Juliana Cavazos (12) | Snow Fall | Digital Photo



I've Been Missing

Alex Schroeder (11) | Short Film

I've Been Missing is a story about a young man struggling with dissasociation, dealing with the strain of parental relationships, and figuring out how to live life. This film teaches the importance of being a part of the world, not just going through the motions. *I've Been Missing* was created with the help of the Saint Mary's Hall Studio Practice and Cinema class. Note: The medication in the film was prescribed by a doctor and is taken in accordance with medical guidance.



Writer and Director:
Alex Schroeder
Executive Producer:
Will Underwood
Starring:
Ethan Parkhurst



14 | Eyes Wide Open

Chip off the Old Block

Bailen Ganeshappa (11) | Short Story

This place fed upon misery.
It sucked the life out of you no matter
which side of the glass you were on.

“You remember how you begged your mother to play?” he asked his son, knowing it would get a much needed spark out of him.

“You know I remember. And I would gladly get grounded a thousand more times for that season.” His father laughed.

“Your mother only gave in so we could finally have a family dinner.”

“Gotta do what you gotta do, Pops. What was that movie she made me watch?”

“The what? Sorry? I can’t hear you. It’s so damn loud in here.” His son barely acknowledged his father’s complaint, coldly ignoring the cacophony.

“That dumb movie she made me watch. The one about concussions.”

“It’s called *Concussion*. And never speak ill of a Will Smith movie.”

“Momma really thought the Fresh Prince could give me a fresh perspective,” the son quipped.

“Who taught you to be so corny ‘cause I know it wasn’t me?” They laughed together before sharing a comfortable silence to recollect themselves.

“So, what have you done this month?” the father asked.

“Just getting by,” the son replied as he began picking at his thumb with his finger, something he had done since he was a toddler when he wasn’t being entirely truthful. His father knew.

“I think you should see if you could take some classes, get your mind right.”

“I go to the library sometimes. It isn’t that big. Most of the books have probably been here since Christ was alive. Half of them are missing covers.”

“You picked up a book?” His father’s face expressed genuine surprise, which quickly turned into a teasing smile. “You must be really bored here.”

“Yeah well, I still go hoop when I can, problem is no one here knows how to play.” The mention of his son still playing basketball warmed the father’s heart.

“Ha! Yeah ‘cause they weren’t trained by me!” A moment of silence passed. The worn-out phone popped and crackled. “So besides being a bit bored, you’ve been doing alright for yourself, I take it. Not getting into trouble or anything, right?”

“No, I really just...”

“It’s time Mr. Watson.” A stern voice brought a terse reminder that he could no longer talk to his son without being closely monitored.

“I’m safe, Dad. Really. Say hi to Momma for me, will you?”

“I will, Son. You know I always do. New flowers and a

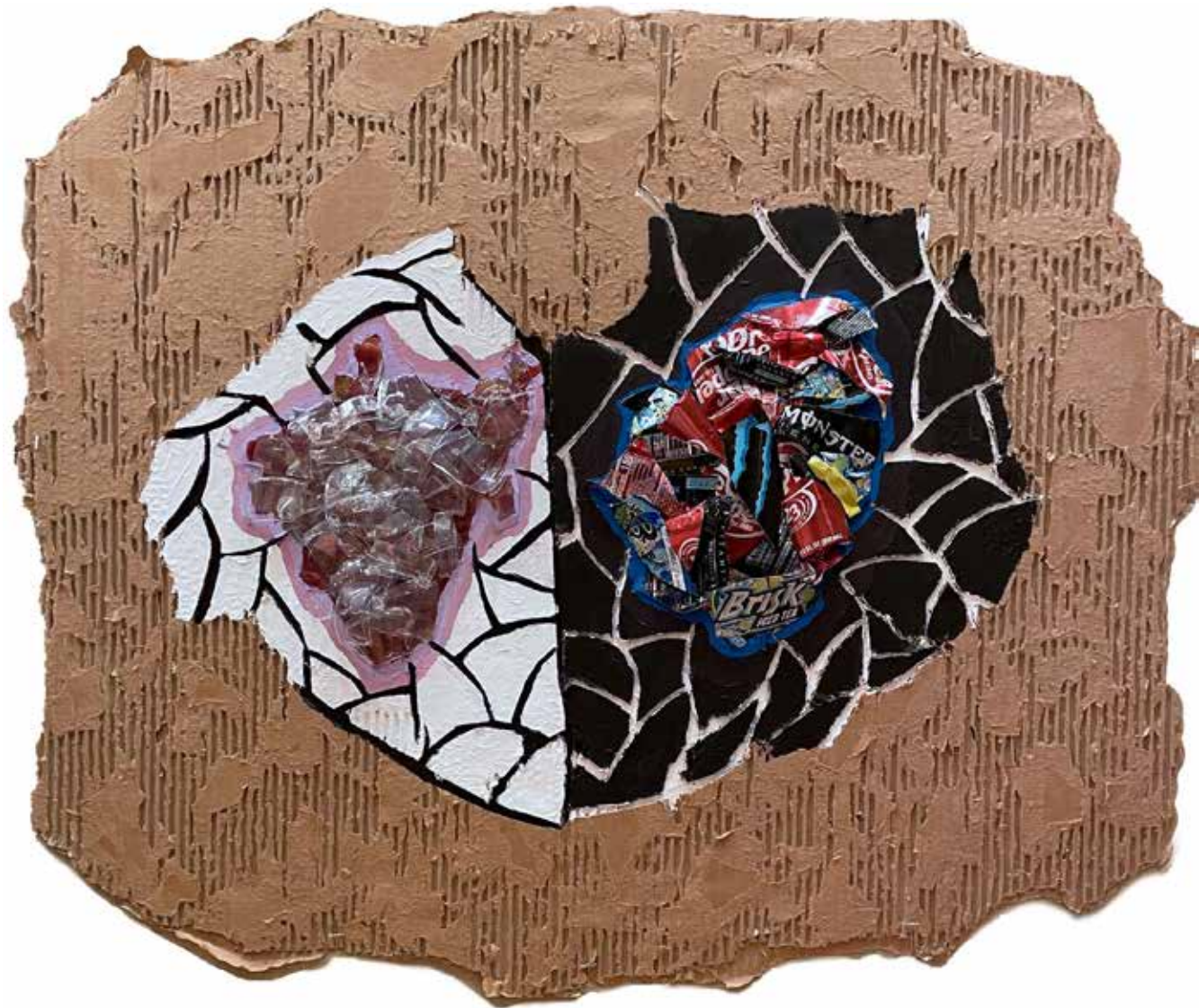
candle every other night.”

“Later, Pops.” He held the handset to his ear for a brief second before hanging up and pushing back his chair.

“Bye, Son,” he said as he pressed his palm against the plexiglass, the window where he would watch his son grow old. His eyes followed him as the guard handcuffed his boy once again to the chain around his waist. He was then led around the corner and out of sight, the last glimpse of his bright, oversized garb swept over the grey slabs and through the doorway. A pang of deep pain struck the father’s heart. His mouth curled and his eyelids squeezed shut. Finally, he put the handset back onto its hook and slowly rose from the tiny, dirty stool. As he walked past the countless booths, the world came back to him. Laughter, tears, whispers, mixed signals of human emotion crossed paths like no other place he knew. The outside corridor was filled with families waiting for their turn. Mothers were dressed in their best coats, trying to impress who knows. Children, wide-eyed and clinging close. This place fed upon misery. It sucked the life out of you no matter which side of the glass you were on. The father joined those eagerly waiting to leave. Husbands, wives, friends and family, all walked rigidly as if this was their first time. This wasn’t his first time. He knew he would learn this walk, its twists and turns, its walls and gates, well over what decades were left of his life. What life was there left to return to, anyway? He had his freedom, but it didn’t mean much to him anymore.



Cuatro Morrill (9) | Ashtro | Silver Gelatin Print



Max Huddleston (11) | Anima / Mixed Media

Gemini

Sofija Dudhia (10) | Sonnet

I am not just a sister, but a twin.
If I get burned, my brother is my aloe
Wherever one goes, the other must follow.
We are not split, but rather yang and yin.
Sometimes my mind drifts to other great twins
The sun and the moon, Diane and Apollo
Both shining in skies and skills of an arrow
All silver and gold, and closest of kin.

I look to Diane; all silver, not gold
The moon pales in the presence of sun
Unequal parts, but still two halves of a whole
Forged by Leto, their paths interwoven
But together they glow, apart undone
And together they grow, stuck to their roles

The Cup of Dignity

Luz Elena Chapa (11) | Personal Narrative

We are all sinners in some way or another.

The day was as warm as any other in McAllen, Texas. My grandfather sat in his usual maroon leather chair, loudly contemplating the concept of life. I waltzed into the room and plopped next to him.

“How’s school?”

“Good. I like my English class. We’re reading *To Kill A Mockingbird*. It’s the one that you like with the lawyer whose arguments are phony and unrealistic.”

“That’s good, that’s good.”

I glanced over in his direction only to see him swishing his glass of wine with one swift movement, downing a prolonged gulp. Drinking became his pastime, ruining his years of hard work. He retired, categorizing the law as too progressive, but we all understood the unspoken truth that even though he outdrank them, the younger lawyers seemed to outshine him in the courtroom.

“How you been, Grandfather? Are you keeping up with your reading?”

“Ah, you know. Same ole, same ole. Your grandmother’s riding me about things that don’t matter, while I’m drinking my years away.”

He shook his head with a helpless look in his eyes, as he picked up his wine to finish the remaining sip. And, I knew that he would rather bury himself alive before showing any sign of emotion. My heart ached for the withering human in front of me.

“Listen, kid, this world is filled with two types of people, the ones who are too weak to actually defend themselves and ones who will stop at nothing to reach the top. The only way that I could defend those dealers out of Mexico is by accepting that I wouldn’t end up with a good conscience, but I would end up with money

and influence.”

His movements danced with the alcohol in his cup, and my head swirled with thoughts as I blankly gaped at him. Why was he saying all this to me? How could he think this way when I know that he goes to church? Is this really the man who encompassed my dreams in a single person? How could I love someone who feeds into the corruption of politics?

I nodded my head with the hope that he would redeem himself in some form or fashion. But, the hope proved to be just as empty as his glass.

“I’m no liar and you know that. So, don’t let yourself get wrapped up in all of that guilt because it will eat you alive until you don’t have a soul left. We are all sinners in some way or another. So, baby, don’t let anything get in the way of what you want. You deserve the world, so go out there and get it.”

I felt tears in my eyes as he spoke, but I dismissed them as if they were nothing. That is what he taught me after all. But, it’s okay. I just need to make him proud and if that means stepping on others in the process then so be it.

“Hey kid, you know who loves you? I do.”

I leaned over to kiss the top of his head and I felt my heartbreak as I did. I watched as he refilled his glass to the brim, rinsing away his dignity. I wanted to grab him by the arms and shake him until he realized that this isn’t who he truly is. Instead, I just plant myself in my spot without showing any signs of actual emotion. As he speaks, I smile, nodding along, but inside, I am broken into pieces that only he can puzzle together. But, that is just another empty promise because the liquid clouds his judgment, making him unable to pick up a single piece.



Berzhia Mizani(12) | Melted Memories/ Silver Gelatin Print



Alex Riebe (11) | Submerged Landscape | Acrylic

By the Gardens

Anna Albrecht (11) | Poem

1. The House

There was a house up by the gardens
I liked to park my car at when I was afraid
Of everything around me, and inside
There were bookshelves and lighters and bottles of lemonade.

The first time I went up to the house there was a bird at the door
And a dog sat triumphant right next to one mangled wing.
I wondered how long that bird had been around this house,
What weather blew it in circles, what songs it used to sing.

Evenings spent in the house were decorated
With the coo of a grand piano and tapestries and magazines
(Sometimes I still hear it and all its haunted glory)
Days were spent in peace, avoiding thoughts by any means.

Replacing turmoil with words and text and sounds
That fell too far into my memory,
But left an open corridor of feelings to unlock,
For me to run through, barefoot, like I was back in elementary.

I think there was lavender and potted plants in those halls,
But mostly, I remember amber, the whole supply,
Shoved into the eyes of a boy, leaking down his cheeks
And yet in it, I saw my future personified.

2. The Time

The house has been ours for almost three years now,
To most that isn't a lot, but for us, it is enough
To be in this house with all its garnered refuge,
Even as the lemonade ferments and the edges become rough.

It is enough time to count the stars once or twice
Or three times over, to record the ones that combust.
Enough time to worry that my eyes have turned to mirrors,
And that's why when you look into them, your cheeks flush.

Three years is enough to have me pecking at the seams of wood
With one arm and my feral nails, painted navy blue.
Enough to make the shelves splinter and the floorboards thin -
The amber: a running tap down your face,
The picture of innocence is outgrown.

I stumble around the corridor, dragging my shoed feet,
All the doors are locked, and the piano never falls quiet,
I look around just to see that I am alone.
Except a lighter,
Unignited, it still glows,
And then the house goes up in flames,

By a hand that looks too much like my own.

3. Confessional

There was a house up by the gardens
That I watched go down in amber flames,
And the fire singed every corner of my head,
Because where else could it have gone?
It only existed there. Instead of being physical, it was shoved
In closets of my mind like a worn-out piece of jewelry.

I will tell you about the house and its sounds and its books
And how I dreamt that it burned to the ground
But I won't describe the fire or the smoke or the ash
Or the suffocation that ensued
As I watched you go with it.

I will forget to mention how I fell to my knees at the door
Clawing the smoke-torn air, my voice sounding out like a plea.
My pupils filled with water, threatening to explode,
(Maybe if I had let them, you wouldn't have burned)

Someday, I will tell you theories about the inevitability of it all,
About how I fear my eyes were leaking gasoline
Since I first entered the house - our house, mine.

I hope my wooden skeleton won't scare you away,
Or the way I light a candle, or pour you lemonade,

But if tear stains freeze on your cheek at the sight,
I know a place up by the gardens,
That's bare and smoldering and preserved,
Where a bird sings, even at night.
To most that isn't a lot, but for me,
It is enough.



An Act of Contrition

Penelope Luna (12) | Prose Poem

I.

*My God, I am sorry for my sins with all my heart.
In choosing to do wrong and failing to do good.*

Glass windows stain every pew with the red blood of Christ. How dare I kneel under His crown of thorns while I disobey the laws He has set? His eyes follow me from His bleeding body on the cross all the way to the cheap wine which hurts my nose as I repeat the only word which will supposedly heal my soul: Amen. Amen means I believe. I believe in God. The one true God. The God who loves His children and promises eternal salvation for everyone, except for people like me. Still, I am told to say: Amen. Amen will save me. Amen will heal me.

Amen will fix me.

When my heart races at the sight of the blonde girl, Catholicism whispers to me that confession is held on Saturdays. When my prayers turn into stolen glances with her, the congregation prays for our souls.

Her blue ribbon is always tied in a perfectly neat knot, while her curls refuse to be tamed by the comb. She never looks the Priest directly in the eye and always mumbles the holy prayers and the Apostle’s creed. Her very existence is an insult to the church, but then again, so is mine. Her painted white nails and ironed peach dress make her appear young. But if you look closer, the chips on her nails and the wrinkles in her dress tell a different story. The corners of my mouth turn upwards as I observe her mother glaring at her for wearing mismatched socks into the House of God. As if God cared more about her socks than the contents of her soul.

II.

*I have sinned against you whom I should love above all things.
I firmly intend, with your help, to do penance, to sin no more,
and to avoid whatever leads me to sin.*

After my first confession, the Church no longer reminded me of midnight mass on Christmas Eve or beautiful melodies being sung on Sunday. Instead I saw a man-made trap under the forged name of God. I saw blonde hair and blue hair ribbons which filled my body with shame. I saw blue eyes and fair skin which made my cheeks flush red during the Hail Marys and Our Fathers. I saw God, disappointed, knowing that many of His children were frightened by the lies told in His church.

I cry during every confession. Do Priests cry during their confessions too? I like to imagine that they do. They can recite old Latin hymns in front of congregations who believe that God died for them, but their long robes of cotton cannot shroud the unspeakable things they have done. The young church boys watch with careful eyes as the Priests close the doors to the church after mass; they pay the price for a religion based on fear and not love.

Grandmother told me that the fires of Hell would burn me eternally if I did not follow the rules of religion. She never knew that by that logic, I was damned the moment I was born. She rises early each morning to attend the eight o’clock mass, bowing her head as she prays for her own salvation. However, the crisp, white pages of the Holy Bible she carries each day mock her supposed devotion. The priest, deacon, and church members know her face, but I doubt God even knows her name.

III.

Our Savior Jesus Christ suffered and died for us.

Contrary to popular belief, my skin does not burn when I dip my hand into the holy water on Sundays, and I do not hiss and screech when I hear prayer. The devil does not appear when I hold her hand. Angels do not cry when we share a kiss.

The congregation murmurs and the walls of the church seem to bend when I enter the mass; I never knew I had so much influence on such an ancient institution. Why does the church bend to the ear of man instead of quieting itself to hear the whispers of God?

I no longer cry during confession because I do not go. I confess my sins to God, not a man who plays God on the weekends. I no longer pray to the God of fear which my church seems to worship. I pray to the only God which I know. A God of mercy and love. I pray for girls who like girls and boys who like boys and people who love people, regardless of their identity. I pray to the God who painted her rosy cheeks and fair skin. I pray to Him for her. I pray to the God who created me exactly as I am.

I believe in the God who decides that we are worth saving.

VI.

In His name. My God have mercy.

Wildflowers

Ally Carter (12) | Poem

I am tired of inspecting every grain of salt
That I sowed in a field I meant to leave long ago.
I have been neglecting the basket-flowers and white poppies
Beyond this barbed fence.

I have watched cars passing this old country road,
Always wishing I was sitting in the passenger seat.
I have been ignoring the fact that
I have two legs and a will of my own.

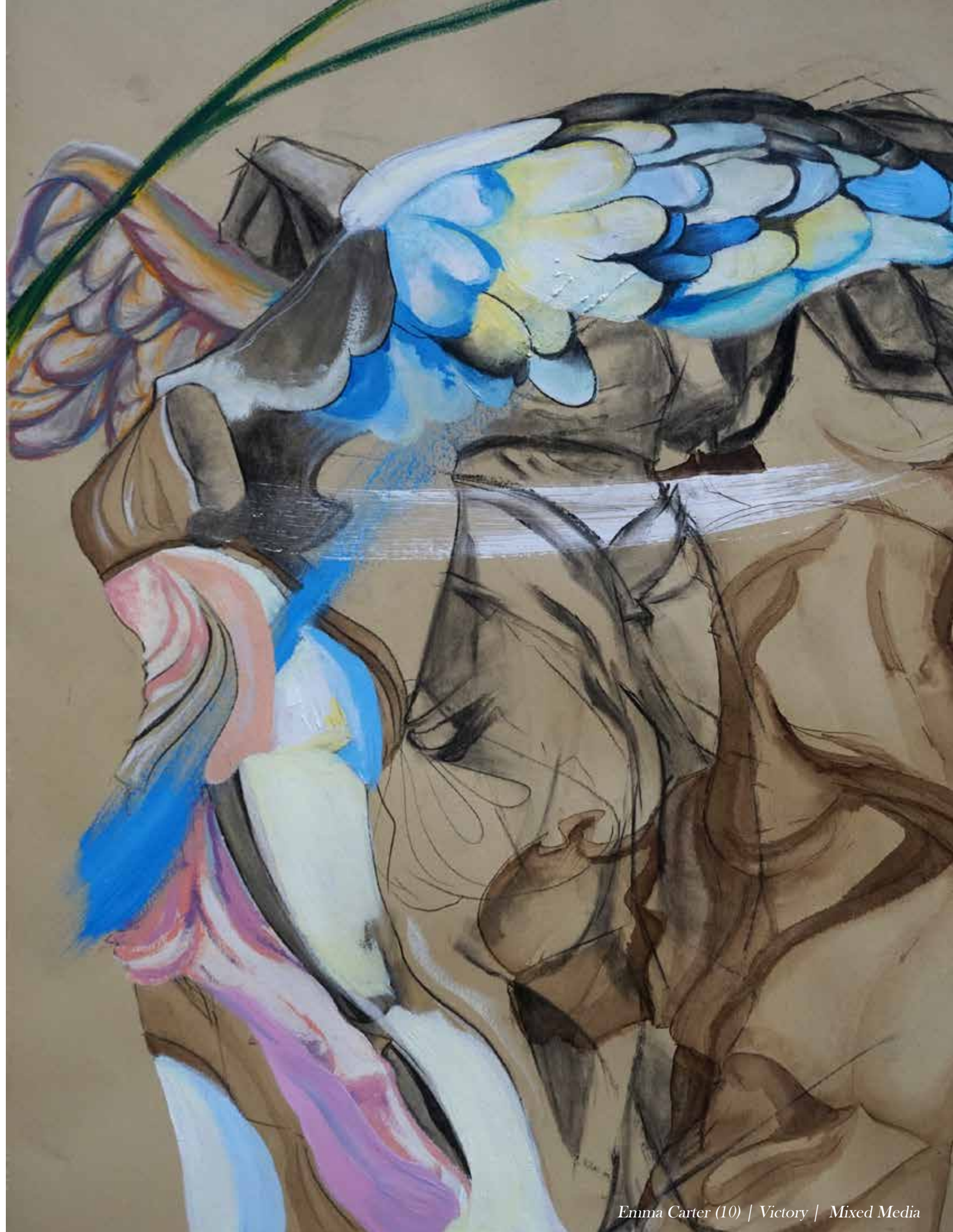
I meant to jump these fences long ago,
I was afraid it would hurt.
This place is all I have known,
Of course it would try to keep me.

But the Indian paintbrushes sway gently in the wind
And buttercups look so lovely.
I can hear bluebells chiming just for me.
Even the cactus flowers have begun to bloom,
Turning to await my arrival.

I think it is time for me to go.
This world was not made for me,
Nor I for it.
But we will make it work.
The wine cups have assured me of that at least.

I can see color through the gaps.
The Blackfoot daisies wait for me,
And the blue-eyed grass has begun to blossom.
I long to cradle the spotted beebalms and gayfeathers.
I am done with barren earth and choked sky.

Winters will still come and go.
I will still be haunted by my own destruction.
But the rain lilies will call me back,
And the butterfly weeds will embrace me.



Enma Carter (10) | Victory | Mixed Media

Monstera

Bailen Ganeshappa (11) | Poem

Fui un regalo pequeñito y desahuciado,
Mi casa, a penas una caja; mi raíz a penas una lombriz.
Hemos hablado sin palabras tantas cosas.
Mis frutas no te sirven, pero te dan felicidad.
Como el invierno que a veces en mi corazón gobierna,

Nivea, blanca, y eterna,

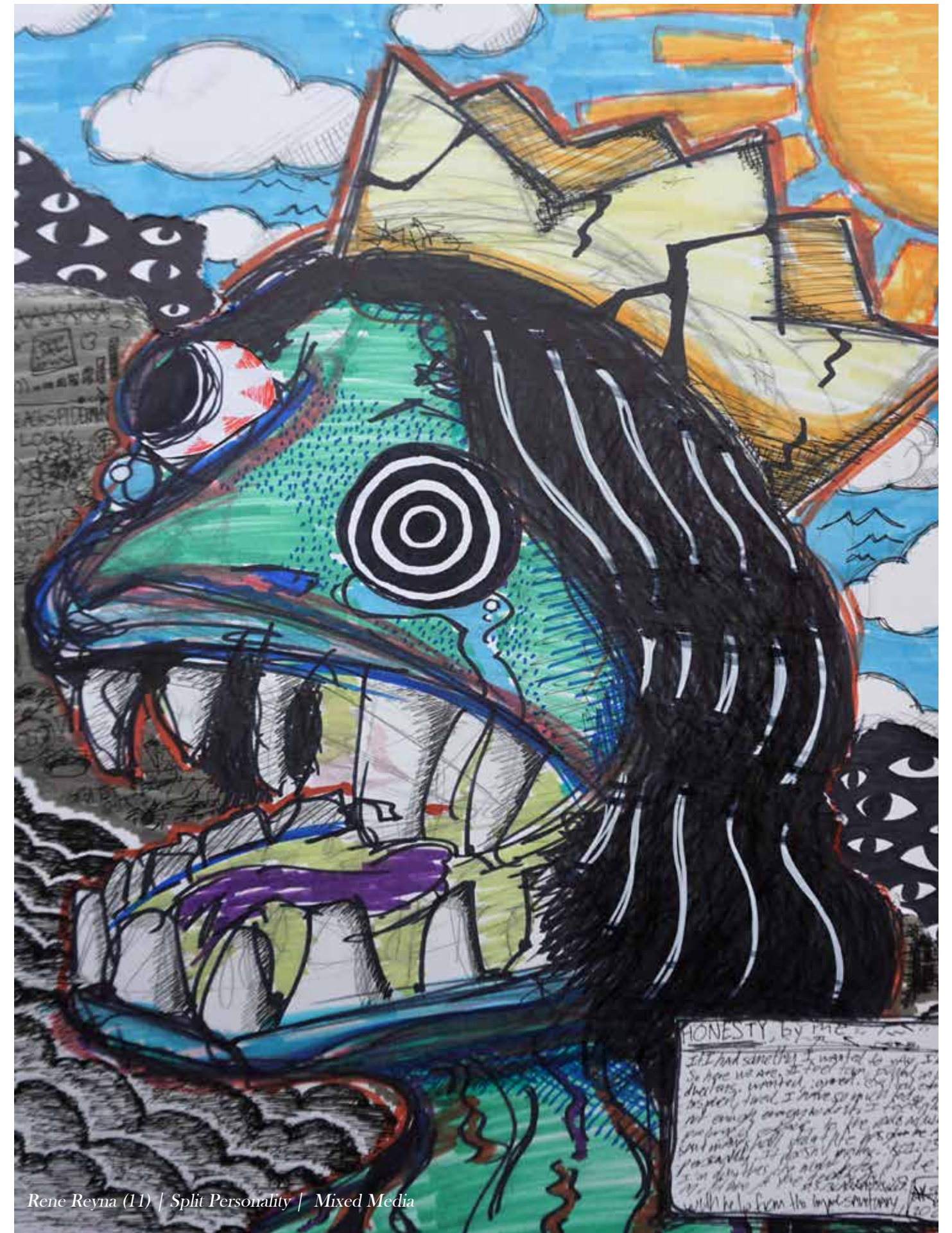
Vuelves cálida y generosa a alimentarme con aquellas gotas,

Ale transparente y diáfana.
 Como el manantial, tu amor emana.
 Eterna es la vida en mis días.
 Vuelves ágil en la primavera,
 De colores y experta.
 Vuelves fértil, con amores, desamores,
 Y para ti, mis poros están abiertos.
 Tu juventud no resiste al paso de las primaveras,
 Y me ves con envidia, celosa de cómo brillo,
 De mi tallo, mi entereza.
 Porque el tiempo inclemente ha venido
 Para llevarte de vuelta a la tierra.
 Grietas y cortes en tus pétalos han crecido.
 La primavera no es más eterna,
 Ni tu presencia en mi vida.
 Pero esta plantita todavía te querrá
 Porque incluso cuando te marches

Me das vida
Porque la verdad, sin ti
Mis días los pasaré contando gusanos
Hasta que, como tú, cierre mis pétalos
Y regresa a mi casa, apenas una caja
Mi raíz, apenas una lombriz



Scan to QR Code for translation.



Rene Reyna (11) | Split Personality | Mixed Media

Who I Really Am

Aly Khanmohamed (11) | Critical Essay

The most memorable part of a first impression, people’s respect for one’s name is essential for them to be able to present themselves genuinely in social settings.

My name, “Aly,” comes from the name of the first Imam, or Islamic leader. Since I was in elementary school, it has been challenging for people outside of my religious community to pronounce my name correctly. My name should be said by making the sounds of “Uh-Lee”; however, as a child, it was usually pronounced by others as “Ally.” To avoid this issue, as I did not like being called “a girl’s name,” I began introducing myself as “Ollie,” a continuing trend even today. Each time I would switch between school and my place of worship, I had to remember to change my pronunciation, withholding the other side of my life.

As I got older, I realized that altering the pronunciation of my name had removed a part of my culture and individuality. Still, subconsciously, I would be embarrassed when my parents would say my name correctly in front of people from school, as they would give me questioning looks and glances, wondering how to actually say my name. All individuals inherently take pride in the aspects of their lives that comprise their personality and uniqueness, and a name can be a direct door into one’s identity. Although they are most commonly used to get one’s attention, the name of a person is much more than an identifier because categorizing it as such disregards the connection to an individual’s heritage, culture, and importance to their identity.

The impact a name has on an individual is impossible to be overstated. The most memorable part of a first impression, people’s respect for one’s name is essential for them to be able to present themselves genuinely in social settings. A name is consistently and inevitably interwoven with a person’s reputation, as each individual is judged based on their accomplishments; always desiring to be viewed in a positive light in the eyes of society, everyone takes pride in their name as a general publication of their identity – the aspects of one’s life that comprise their unique experiences and perspectives. However, it is important to note that the incorrect pronunciation of a name does not include variations in accents, as these minute differences are not the issue. The real problem lies in the fact that too often, the pronunciation of an individual’s name is taken for granted, ruthlessly ignored and undervalued, with not even an effort made to find revisions. If this dilemma continues, a name will be reduced to a mere title, losing all its power and influence across the world.

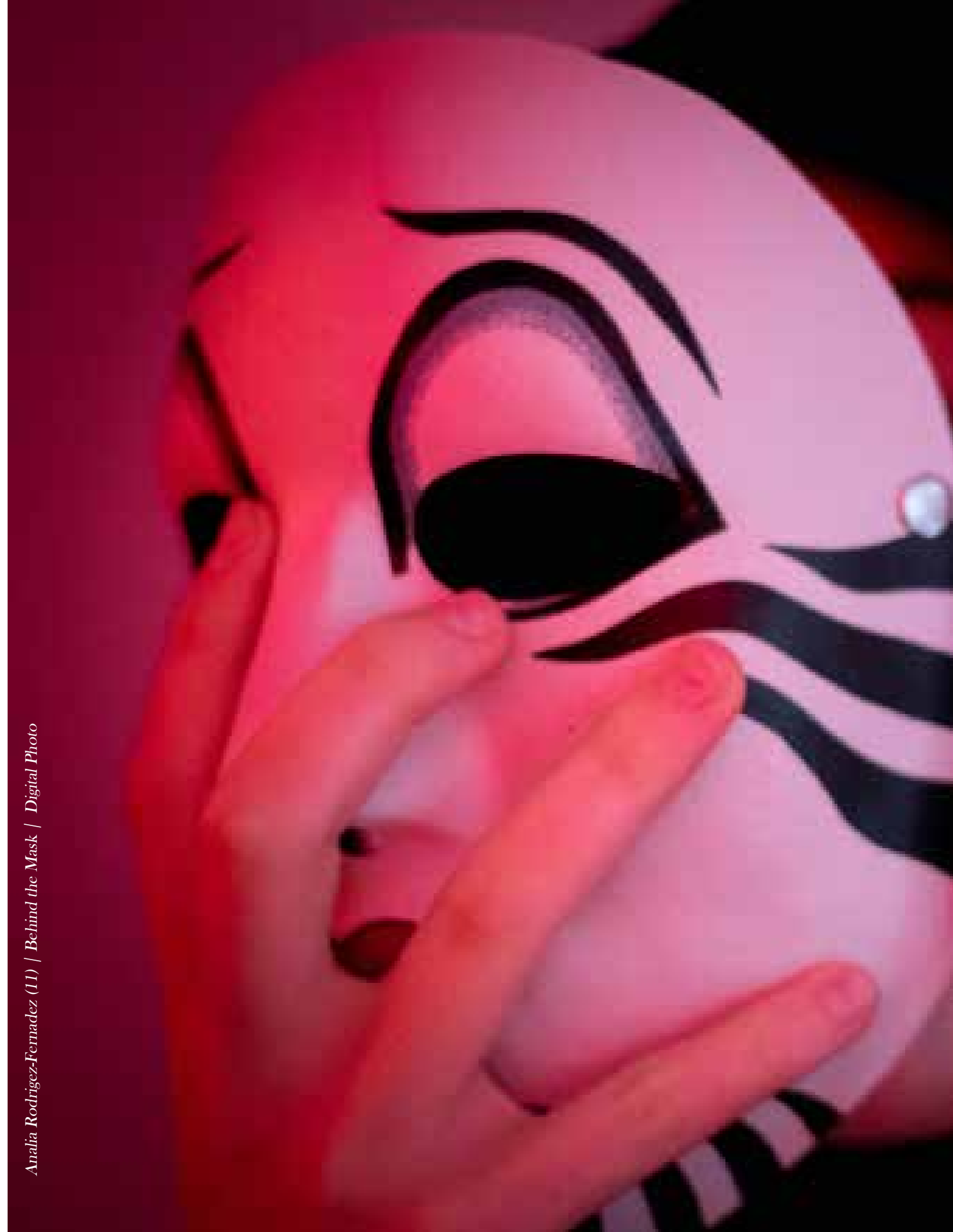
An individual’s name is a direct declaration of that person’s culture and whom they desire to be, which is critical in obtaining a social awareness and comprehension of their background. Athletes are common illustrations of this situation, and two prominent examples are Muhammad Ali and Chris Jackson. With the birth name of Cassius Clay, the world-renowned boxer Muhammad

Ali was raised as a Christian early in his life. However, following his personal beliefs and values, Ali refused to enter the draft to fight in the Vietnam War, and he was constantly tormented by the negative symbolism attached to African Americans in society. Seeking a change in his life amid struggles with mental health, he decided to convert to Islam in the middle of the 1960s, switching his name to display his respect for the Muslim culture that had guided him through his difficulties and obstacles, as his religion became inseparable from his identity. Choosing the name “Muhammad Ali,” he immediately became an advocate for American Muslims across the nation, empowering them to take pride in their name and customs that are reflective of their religion and background. Due to his popularity and influence, humanity accepted Muhammad Ali and embraced his name change that comprised part of his personality; however, Chris Jackson did not experience the same results. Much lesser known than Ali, Jackson was a young, star point guard in the NBA for the Denver Nuggets, but in the middle of his career, Jackson also became a Muslim. Taking pride in his decision to adopt Islam, he changed his name to Mahmoud Abdul-Rauf in the early 1990s to celebrate his new Muslim faith. Unfortunately, during this time in America, many individuals inside the NBA and other fans did not support Mahmoud Abdul-Rauf’s decision to change his name, as they did for Muhammad Ali. League management was unwilling to accept a player whom the public had begun to despise. Abdul-Rauf had been mentioned as being a possible All-Star and as one of the top thirty players in the league, so it is apparent that been Abdul-Rauf’s talent was not the factor that prevented him from obtaining a contract. Nonetheless, he was forced out of the league due to racism that no NBA administrator wanted to admit or confront. Since he was not a prestigious and well-known figure, individuals refused to acknowledge the importance his name change had on his character. If humanity continues its disinclination to fully support the individuality of people from varied backgrounds, the potential arises for forms of discrimination that would divide society altogether.

A little closer to home, I asked one of my former chemistry teachers, Mr. Kenny Hoang, about the origin of his real ethnic name. Mr. Hoang’s first name is not actually Kenny, but Huy, meaning “splendid” or “majestic” in his native Vietnamese. Mr. Hoang learned early on that “Huy” was unpronounceable to the American tongue, so to pass as an American, he began introducing himself as “Kenny,” allowing him to avoid some of the racism he experienced due to his Asian ancestry. Eventually, Mr. Hoang be-

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Analia Rodriguez-Fernandez (11) | Behind the Mask | Digital Photo



came desensitized to the incorrect pronunciations of his real name and the racist comments that accompanied them. Pressured to assimilate to American culture, he arrived at the conclusion that limiting deviations from the everyday American’s understanding would be necessary to minimize mistreatment, even at the expense of the Vietnamese roots that are core tenets of his identity. Sadly, this reality is the tax that may immigrants pay to avoid alienation in American society, as it is seemingly impossible to completely halt the racist remarks that silence those who come from different cultures. If these individuals continue to be censored, there is a dangerous potential of isolating them and losing the bases of their personalities forever. As inconsequential as a name may seem, a person’s name is sometimes all an individual has. In the era of the media and instant communication, it is more important than ever to respect how people’s names are pronounced before it evolves into a sense of normality, as society cannot afford to overlook a part of a person’s identity that allows diversity to flourish.

In addition, a person’s name is a direct door into one’s ancestry, family values, and geographic roots that comprise an individual’s identity and history. An example of this situation is one of my classmates, Ben Cruz, whose full name is actually Anatolio Benedicto Cruz IV, directly derived from Russian that was later translated into Spanish. It was the name of his great grandfather first, who served bravely as a rebel soldier in the Philippines, defending his home and saving countless lives by resisting Japanese presence.

The name Anatolio Benedicto has been passed down through his family to his grandfather, father, and now to Ben. He is very proud of his ancestry and who his forefathers came to be, as each member from his heritage sacrificed an easier path for themselves and strived to make a difference in society. Ben aspires to live up to his name and follow in their footsteps. Ben’s grandfather, a successful surgeon who saved the lives of many, and his father, an admiral who defended the Pacific coastline, both selflessly put others first, seeking to better their community before bettering themselves. Ben hopes to use the name Anatolio Benedicto more often, as it serves as a reminder of the accomplishments his family has achieved, preserving the memory of his predecessors. By using a family name, an individual can feel as though their relatives are always with them, providing support through the challenges of life. Giving them confidence to succeed in any endeavor, a name inspires a person to be the best version of themselves.

Furthermore, I interviewed another classmate of mine, Ferzine Sanjana, and asked her about the source of her name. Ferzine, meaning “beauty” in Farsi, stems from Iran and other Persian areas of the world. Struggling to embrace her name as a child, Ferzine believed that her name was too complicated, as her peers and teachers always struggled with its pronunciation. Eventually, due to the fear that most individuals would never correctly pronounce and understand her name, Ferzine contemplated changing it, simplifying it to avoid awkward interactions and to please others, as she had

seen one of her friends do in the past. Sitting at the dinner table one night, Ferzine told her parents about her desire to change her name; however, they immediately rejected her request. They explained the name’s attachment to ancestral and geographic ties, and, as she matured, Ferzine gained insight of the importance her name has to her family and to who she is. Due to her experiences and conversations with her parents, she has come to terms with the significance of her name, introducing herself with its correct pronunciation regardless of how others react. Now, comfortable standing out in American society, Ferzine is fully convinced that her name is part of what makes her unique, allowing her to convey her individuality and share her identity with the world. It is crucial to be indifferent to the bitterness and criticism of others, as staying true to oneself is the purest form of self-expression. A person’s name is an integral part of their authenticity, and not appreciating one’s name and personality disregards their foundations as a person.

Of course, some individuals, especially those with a more common name, would argue that it is solely used as a formality, an identifier with no emotional or cultural connections. For example, I questioned my advisor, Miss Brittany Wallace, about the meaning of her name. Miss Wallace told me that she was given the name “Brittany” solely because her parents admired it. Additionally, each of her younger sisters, Michelle and Hannah, also received their names because her parents adored how they flowed with the last name of “Wallace.” Names such as “Brittany,” “Michelle,” and

“Hannah” are not difficult to pronounce, and most people could verbalize any of those names with ease. Because no one is expected to prioritize the pronunciation of their names, individuals with ordinary names may see it as unfair to endure such an inconvenient struggle. However, introducing themselves to people from other cultures and exploring the origin of another person’s name can allow for more members of society to comprehend the principles and values of others, limiting the spread of ignorance and giving humanity the opportunity to reach genuine pluralism and the elimination of prejudice from each community.

The proper pronunciation of names is vital for creating an inclusive society. When one does not feel comfortable sharing their real name, they are not able to express their real identity. The continued depreciation of one’s name by others will cause an individual to experience internal strife, tarnishing their self-esteem. Ultimately, to terminate conflicts regarding people’s differences in identity, all of humanity must respect each other, regardless of variances of backgrounds and cultures. If individuals sacrifice their authenticity due to a desire to follow the majority, society will only be filled with like-minded people, resulting in a most ineffective community, as no different perspectives will arise with a desire to create change and reach its full potential. Individuals who have the courage to put their full uniqueness on display are truly the most powerful in society, and hopefully, eventually, I’ll have the confidence to stop introducing myself as “Ollie,” and remember who I really am – “Aly.”



Ashley Mitchell (12) | Chains | Mixed Media

Porcelain Skin

Kate Van Zandt (11) | Poem

Of course I remember what it was like
You looked at me differently,
I was just the same as you.
Before the rashes entrapped my soul
We were blissful and young.
When my white church dress was all the cover I needed
No red differences to hide
My skin pristine like Grandma’s porcelain dolls
Held in her glass cabinets
Sheltered from the world outside
Why did you shelter me?
You told me it would never be me.
Why did you lie?

I hope they don’t know,
That the reason I keep my hair down is more sinister than insecurity.
I hope they don’t see,
The skin at the hem of my skirt that blooms like cherry blossoms
I want to feel human.
Is that too much to ask?
I look at your knees and compare them to my own.
The angry, red blossoms follow my sight.
They arch up into my arms holding me,
Gripping harder than anyone ever could.

Untie my hands let them out!
Skittering like rats across my cortex,
Digging into my sides.
But the itching never subsides
Free me.
Free me.
Free me.

And for a minute I escape.
And you are still friends with me,
Your gaze is no longer a mix of judgment and pity.
And my old church dress slips on without agitating my coarse skin.
The pink hue and bumps gone,
Gone with my anxiety.
I am pretty,
In this moment.
And then I wake up.
And the heat from my skin
creeps back
into my soul.

To Change or Not to Change:

How Aetheticism Has Deminished Contemporary Beauty

Ben Bankler (12) | Critical Essay

The beauty industry, specifically aesthetic surgery, negatively impacts the human condition by erasing distinctiveness and ethnic features and replacing it with conformity, while negatively impacting the psyches of countless distinctive individuals.

I have always understood that I was unusual. For a while, I couldn’t exactly figure out what made me unique. Was it my personality? My way of speaking? Perhaps, it was the way in which I presented myself to the world. Locating the specific reason for the ostracism and isolation that I frequently associate with my formative years was near impossible. While I unquestionably understand that my personality, along with my emotional and psychological health problems, caused me a great deal of solitude, I realized that a portion of my lonesomeness was attributed to something far more superficial and shallow: my face. I come from a long line of elongated noses, a distinctly Ashkenazi feature that I take pride in. The cliff-like descent and low-hanging vestibule of this prominent facet signifies the history of a culture inundated by conflict, maltreatment, and near extermination. My nose is not simply a nose; it is an element of survival. It connects me with the Jewish populace, who evolved these optimal noses to cope with the hot, humid air of the Arabian peninsula. Yet, when someone glances at me, these chronicles of strife and struggle are not translated. They only see a flaw. A defect. A visual mistake. I have encountered innumerable instances of ridicule, both mean-spirited and playful, about the size and shape of my nose. After years of being told that my look was not appealing, I started to internalize that belief. I desperately begged my parents for a rhinoplasty; my mother always expressed that my nose was “beautifully distinctive.” No matter how hard I tried, I could not accept that reality.

My dysmorphic experience, however, has become societally commonplace. Millions of people have been harshly critiqued and cast out for their physical appearance, whether that pertains to their race, age, height, weight, hair, or face. Pretty much every aspect of an individual’s body is dissected with unsettling, surgical precision. Our culture has attempted time and time again to locate the source of this persecution and many are left with more questions than answers. But there is a system in place that has been instigating and amplifying this already-pressing issue, to a point that it nearly resembles eugenics. The beauty industry, specifically aesthetic surgery, negatively impacts the human condition by erasing distinctiveness and ethnic features and replacing it with conformity, while negatively impacting the psyches of countless distinctive individuals.

Cosmetic surgery, a term which labels any medical procedure that rebuilds or alters an individual’s physical look, falls under two categories: reconstructive and aesthetic. Reconstructive surgeries are often connected to severe injuries or congenital birth defects, but also designate gender reassignment surgery. Aesthetic

surgery, on the other hand, has the primary purpose of altering a person’s body for the sake of designing a more attractive visual. Additionally, the emergence of social media in the last 20 years has brought with it Face Tune and cosmetic filters, additionally mutating perceptions of beauty in the new generation. These surgeries, both invasive and critical, are now in vogue, trending particularly among young adults. Many argue, from the rhinoplasty to the lip filler, the promotion of aesthetic surgeries is becoming a threatening epidemic among those with poor body image and self-esteem, an overwhelming majority.

An avenue through which aesthetic surgery negatively ventures through the American diaspora is in the prioritization and popularity of attaining desirable features, which, in turn, encourages a system that promotes white supremacy and patriarchy. Stereotypes and misconceptions about minority ethnicities and cultures have been perpetuated in American media for decades. Attractiveness has been consistently associated with white features, while ethnic features have been mocked and ridiculed. This taunt of ethnicity extends to an unlikely place: music. In the video “Jewcan Sam” by the punk band, The Groggers, the protagonist, lead singer L.E. Doug Staiman, is rejected by a love interest based on his larger-than-average nose. The video starts with the lead singer sitting in his art class, when he is suddenly interrupted by his crush, who proceeds to draw a picture of Toucan Sam, comparing the bird’s long protruding beak to his nose, with the lyrics of “I want her, but she don’t want what I am. / She says you got a beak like Jewcan Sam. / She says I only go with guys, / With perfect upturned noses, so cut yours down to size” playing in the background. The video cuts to the future, in which he has a rhinoplasty and becomes desirable. Staiman, then, is disheartened to find that his crush has a boyfriend and walks into the library to find one of his teachers, who inappropriately seduces him and expresses her attraction to his new nose, in a seemingly happy ending. While the ending is problematic, concerning, and downright bizarre in its own right, this is a blatant mockery of traditional Jewish features and the shameless product placement of infamous plastic surgeon Dr. Michael Salzhauer is, frankly, disturbing. It is almost as if they have produced an advertisement taking advantage of body dysmorphic Jews, who likely sobbed themselves to sleep after viewing this suggestion of a music video. Pressuring young Jewish adults into altering what makes them unique is not only inexcusable; it is a direct attack on the distinctive beauty of Jewishness. This derision of this culture, while outrageous and asinine in its own right, gives merely a keyhole view into the subjugation that

aestheticism imposes on society. Looking through this cultural lens hardly grazes the surface of the oppressions that this aestheticism has introduced; a feminist lens must be applied. Kathryn Morgan, in her entry in the feminist journal *Hypatia*, begins by listing a myriad of melancholic dissatisfactions faced towards women (e.g., pageants, clothing brands), eventually landing on cosmetic surgery. She sets up a scenario, in which she commands the reader to conjure up a hypothetical, in which they would go under the knife and be ensured immense beauty. This is portrayed to be a catastrophic process. Morgan ascertains that, in relation to the advancement in surgical technology, women are “[becoming] more and more like athletic or emaciated mannequins with large breasts in the shop windows of modern patriarchal culture.” Morgan notices that the only reason that women are urged into altering their looks is to please the lascivious, pornographic desires of what American heterosexual men want their lovers to look like. Her view pours more fuel onto bulky dumpster fire of women’s struggles in the midst of being treated and viewed as inferior in contemporary androcentric culture. Women, notably underprivileged women, already face a daily barrage of pay gaps, catcalls, and underestimations. Adding this ‘male gaze’ only further worsens the livelihood of womankind. It is clear, through Morgan’s examples and insights, that aesthetic surgery directly oppresses women in particular, policing and critiquing their bodies to fit what is deemed beautiful and erotic. Disadvantaged groups in the US, chiefly minorities, are constantly beleaguered in their uniqueness. Yet, these cruelties don’t just affect minorities alone.

When one visualizes their understanding of plastic surgery itself, they often picture an archetype: an older, Caucasian woman discontented with her crows’ feet, sunspots, and wrinkles, all signs of natural maturation. In demonizing the ‘ugliness’ of aging, aesthetic surgery augments the body dysmorphia and pessimism of everyone, creating colossal dread and apprehension surrounding the inevitability of age. In the medical community, there is a massive disconnect between plastic surgeons and dermatologists concerning anti-aging; author Lissette Hilton offers her perspective on this discrepancy. She analyzes the new trend of “prejuvenation” in her 2019 article for *Dermatology Times*. She explains that many 20-year-old patients, especially millennials, have desired to reverse the aging process by undergoing minimally invasive, but still serious cosmetic surgeries when they are youthful. Hilton mentions a study, published by *Dermatology Surgery*, which revealed that younger individuals who underwent prejuvenation had a perceived age of about 6.9 years younger than their actual age. Hilton chiefly sings her praises for the adeptness of these operations, even though she acknowledges that many dermatologists remain skeptical. What Hilton fails to understand is that confronting the fear of aging by eliminating the process altogether is not effective. Confronting it at its source (the taboo that comes with aging) is a more effective, cost-free method. Clinical dermatologist Fayne Frey, in her article for NBC, describes the uselessness of anti-aging products and surgeries. Expressing that aging is unavoidable and mandatory, she further supplements her view by exposing the insanely exorbitant prices that these products sell for. Additionally, once voicing her concern for the cohorts of young people that are dissatisfied with their bodies, Frey closes her article with an affirmation: “Accomplishment matters. Rectitude matters. Health matters. And none of these things come in a syringe or bottle.” Frey has a passion in promoting the beauty of aging and the importance of maintaining one’s physical health. Her devotion to promoting the natural beauty of the human race, while hardly hindering our anti-aging culture, aids the millions of individuals unable to come to terms with their mortality.

When examining any type of surgery, it is critical to comprehend the risks and complications that come with them; in analyzing the effects of aesthetic surgery on humanity, hazards must be taken into consideration. Aesthetic surgery, in its perilousness, can negatively leave the physical health of those affected in jeopardy. In her extensive *Vox* article published last year, Rebecca Jennings decodes the rise and subsequent fall of the “BBL epidemic.” She demystifies the procedures involved in a Brazilian Butt Lift (BBL), particularly in the injection of fat, which has is a significant risk of pulmonary embolism, resulting in death. Supplementing her concern is the story of patient Kayla Malveaux, who recalls the immeasurable amount of pain that she experienced after her BBL surgery, due to both the severity of the surgery and the recklessness of those involved in it, recalling that “they threw [her] in a wheelchair and then [she] must have hit [her] head.” Jennings then depicts how trends on social media app, TikTok, have further promoted the attractiveness and popularity of this procedure, mentioning lines of people in wheelchairs in South Florida airports, all recovering from BBL surgery. While Jennings’ analysis of the spread and threat of BBL surgery is compelling, Malveaux’s story is not only outrageous, but also abhorrent; while her story might seem like a freak case or a fluke, injury and discomfort have originated from these grave procedures. Clearly, the BBL business, in addition to the overarching beauty industry, has a severe problem with botched cases, unprofessionalism, and infinite complications.

While bodily dangers may be more superficial in the world of aestheticism, an underlying threat is posed to other pillars of health, emotional and mental. In his short film, *Reflexion*, Yoshi Tamura tells the story of a young French woman who is dis-

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Ansley Steele (12) | Picture Perfect | Clay

contented with her look. The film begins with the woman, after a long day, coming home and looking into the mirror, picking apart everything wrong with her face while fiddling with lipstick. After her reflection starts to laugh maniacally at her, the woman breaks the mirror, out of which her reflection emerges, as both begin to brawl with each other sadistically. This film, though not necessarily mentioning aesthetic surgery, is a perfect exemplar for the psychological impacts that beauty standards have on a person’s psyche. The struggle between woman and image represents the burden to imitate and conform, along with the struggle to be oneself in the heart of discriminating beauty expectations. Transitioning from the domain of animation and into the macrocosm of Hollywood, acclaimed actress Jamie Lee Curtis has her own perspective on contemporary beauty. In an interview with *People*, she asserts that the beauty industry directly destroyed her well-being, while recounting her decade-long addiction to opioids. After having surgery to remove the droopiness of her eyes, she was prescribed Vicodin. Curtis then declares, after years of reflection on her past with plastic surgery and addiction, that “the things that we do to adjust our appearance are wiping out generations of beauty.” While her individual story is niche to her, it is crucial to realize that the

beauty industry is petrifying, and poses harm to not only one’s physical health, but also emotional health. In bringing awareness to the influence that aesthetic surgery has on society, Curtis provides a personal lens to the world of aestheticism. On an intimate and scientific level, aesthetic surgery is a dire and hazardous decision to make. This decision needs to be thoroughly contemplated.

In evaluating the impacts and implications of the plastic surgery industry, it is imperative to consider the mental impact of changing one’s appearance, through the viewpoint of psychologists. In her 2005 article for the *American Psychological Association*, Melissa Dittmann provides insight into how surgeries effect the human psyche. She mentions a study in which it was found that a daunting 84 percent of individuals who undertook cosmetic surgery “reported satisfaction following their surgery.” This study, though not a surprising measure, reveals the main intent of plastic surgery: to increase an individual’s confidence with their body. With that being said, the question stands: is this the most reasonable choice? Clearly, plastic surgery, along with a myriad of other medical procedures, should be up to the persons own discretion. This essay is not to demonize or humiliate those that undergo plastic surgery. But the problem of poor self-image still exists.

Instead of utterly eliminating the plastic surgery business altogether, humanity must challenge the beauty principles that instigate low self-esteem and the pressure for individuals to modify themselves. Of course, body image issues will not vanish if unrealistic, impractical beauty is obliterated, but the deletion of these standards will do vastly more good than harm. Plastic surgery (aside from reconstructive or corrective procedures) will become entirely archaic when the system that causes this policing of beauty is destroyed.

Ultimately, the propagation of contemporary aestheticism is poisoning our modern-day view of beauty. What is troubling about this corrosive toxin is that everybody recognizes it is present, slowly corrupting and warping our self-image and infecting the human psyche with body dysmorphia. We are aware of its mental and emotional strain, yet when given the opportunity to face our flaws and come to terms with the agony this industry has unnecessarily inflicted on mankind, we choose to do nothing. In analyzing the impact of beauty on the human condition, an underlying problem is revealed, completely separate from the realm of beauty: humankind, no matter how much adversity that we face, cannot recognize when it has a problem. For millenia, people

have ignored pressing issues that affect them directly, from climate change to prejudice to public health. Even in my journey to expose the dark underbelly of American aestheticism, I still have that voice in my head that is picking apart the flaws of my figure – how I am not tall enough, strong enough, beautiful enough. I am faced with a harsh reality that I have wasted years of my life hating myself due to a system of aestheticism that my own people created. I knew that this industry had amplified and created my crippling body dysmorphia and chose to do nothing. Clearly, “nothing” is not the answer. In recognizing that we have an unruly and destructive construct of beauty, humans are one getting step closer to becoming one. In a world void of beauty, the human condition will no longer be described with beauty-concerned strife and petty objectifications. We will be, for the first time since our creation, unified in our exquisiteness. So, what are we waiting for? Let us act on and object to the unfair standards that have plagued us since our birth. Our uniqueness cannot be erased. Despite the pressures and the stigma, I will not sit in silence while humanity is defined by something so trivial and void of meaning.

My nose is not going anywhere.

Her Wave of Silence

Luz Elena Chapa (11) | Poem

Shatter her to reveal this little girl behind a veil
One of lace, spun to dress her wounds
That so clearly bled all the way through

But he won’t notice, will he?
A serpent wrapping around her neck
Skin littered with violet marks blamed on the shells

Her body dragged forcefully into his depths
Washed away by a surge treading on the banks
Awaiting the night sky to lure her in again

A girl with a feeble heart - beaten through the sand
Raked over shards of sea glass
A sculpture on the ocean floor

Vicious fists pound the shore
Clutching the folds of her dress
Like netting tangled in surf stained rocks

He failed to raise a finger to drag her out of the storm
Watching her gasp for breath under his control
Mythicized as just another girl - lost in the tides

The current stayed still - no one dared still



Parker Thill (11) | Repurposed Beauty | Mixed Media

The Memory Project

Each year, the Saint Mary’s Hall National Art Honors Society partners with The Memory Project, an organization which, in its founder’s words, “[con-nects] youth around the world through art to help build cultural understanding and international kindness.

This year, students were tasked with making portraits of youth in Nigeria which were mailed back as gifts. For the SMH students and these children, the experiences allowed them to “see themselves in one another regardless of differences in their appearance, culture, religion, or the circumstances of their lives.”

For more information, visit www.memoryproject.org



Bella Muñoz (12) | Digital Art



Valeria Ramos Prado (12) | Digital Art

Memory

Grace Phillips (11) | Poem

Smooth rock is beaten away by a current of years,
curling along a quick river -
a mouth of brack-ish Chicago water, smeared
black but bright as the eyes that feed it.

Bending through concrete banks, it reflects a brother
and sister
cracking bitter chocolate between their teeth;
he beamed on a college stage and she was given a ring.

Little hands slendered as they dipped below tides,
pink nail beds turn pointy and acrylic,
typing, typing, typing little stories
no one would read.

November dries leaves
in scarlett ringlets, plaiting carved cheeks.
The river banks waste
(Oh what was his name?)
spoiling into brown Texas lakes.

The sister, the wife, the mother, the widow.
The foaming rapids ate straight through to the bone.
She had, once, a barbed tongue and velvet throat
but alas, the rock was swallowed
and in idle sea (I imagine) somewhere it floats.



Alex Riebe (11) | Graphite & Colored Pencil



Patience Locke (12) | Graphite & Colored Pencil

A Boy in a Warzone

Noor Shamieh (10) | Sonnet

I sit and look around this room of life,
Which has so much to offer and nourish,
With an environment filled with no strife,
Oh how this place of joy lets me flourish.

But through the corner of my rested eyes,
I see a daunting soldier dressed for war,
While my adrenaline begins to rise,
I feel my heart begin to leave my core.

My world breaks down before my eyes can blink,
The floor is covered with fallen debris,
And each book on my shelf has lost its ink,
One after one these stories lose their glee.

However as I look around and roam,
This warzone still makes me feel right at home.

August

Ben Bankler (12) | Poem

August fades tonight
But January brings creation day
Time flies but I
Remember scents of polished wood and slow decay
.. / .-. .- - -
Blue eyes, golden hands
From the paint on the walls of my mind
Let's just say you made a mark
Blackwater flows from foreign falls to me
I'm soaked, but parched
My head is in the sand
My heart is left behind
The shattered streetlights turn to dark
- - - / - - .-
August fades tonight
In December, she emerged
White waves leave in their wake
The fair one, amber and soft at birth
The girl you gave me, made me who I am
The tides have turned to face the sun you left her in
. - / .. -
White plaster ceilings, sliver plaques
With the countless names of my kin
Hummingbirds sip sugar from the pot
Amidst the war, the odds were stacked
We lived, you fought
Your words as sharp as poison
Your soul as thick as skin
Your hands far from soft
- - . / - - - ..
August fades today
And September starts a new age
Life tore me apart, I bathed in salt
Infinity rests on the bay
Believe me
Can you see me?
You left behind a legion and clearly
Your story doesn't end, okay?
I promise to pass the legend down
- - - - - - / - - - - - ..

Your country roads run through my veins
Can you take me home to the sunken place?
I noticed rust along your plaque
A piece of me was left in Davis
I'll call you when I get it back
- - - / - / - - - -
It may be far too wild
To wish in one palm
But amidst the calm
On the day of my child
. - - - / - - - - .
August comes alive
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Scan to QR Code for translation.



Mollie Duphorne (12) | Angelina | Acrylic Gouache

Summer Solstice Festivity

Megan Liu (10) | Poem

Nature was loud tonight

The crickets must be partying
The geysers showered the trees
The water sprinkles crackled like a firework show
The moon was waxing into something bigger

I wonder how many people gaze at the same night sky in unison

Tea would be fitting for such a night
To celebrate a long day for man and nature
We made it. We are survivors.
We have not ended each other yet.
Who knows when it is over?



Elissa Mason-Bizzell (10) | Shrouded Omen | Silver Gelatin Print

What The Cat Dragged In

William Herff (12) | Short Story

He wasn’t taking any chances with ruffians and bandits, especially in tough times like these. The inn would be safe.

The waning moon lit the damp cobblestone streets of Mandame. The small village of stone homes sat in perfect darkness above the sea, and the soft clicking of horse hoofs could barely be heard in the sound of the crashing waves below. Sweat slicked the man’s brow as he rode down the night-dark thoroughfare, alone. Rupert Tweed was a broad, muscular man with a long dark beard that came down to his chest. Now middle-aged, he had never liked making the trip south. The stifling summer heat, the uncomfortable nights spent in taverns, the brigands. The North would always be home. He was there for gold, ivory, and spices, goods he knew could fetch high prices back in Gwentor, goods he now had with

him in the back of his canvas-topped wagon. Slightly uneasy by the gloomy midnight stillness, the merchant eagerly approached the inn that stood quietly at the end of the town. He wasn’t taking any chances with ruffians and bandits, especially in tough times like these. The inn would be safe. Leaving his horse in the soft light spilling out from the windows of the common room, Rupert hastily gathered his belongings in his pack satchel and strode up to the small wooden building. The splintered sign that swayed gently in the sea breeze read, The Sun and Moon. It would do. Wiping his forehead with a handkerchief, Rupert opened the door and went inside.

It was by no means fancy. The wooden floorboards were visibly deteriorating, the whitewash peeled off the walls, and the common room was a lair of shadows created by the eerie dim glow of a few lanterns. It appeared he was the only one there.

“Hello?” Rupert called.

A rustling in a backroom was followed by the creaking of floorboards, and a thin, bony man with greasy hair stepped into the light. He wore a plain-cut woolen shirt, tattered breeches, and boots caked in dirt. A golden belt buckle gleamed proudly on the fellow’s waist, an accessory that seemed to clash with his ordinary garments. By the small apron that sat awkwardly around the man’s neck, Rupert assumed this was the innkeeper.

“How do you do sir?” the proprietor croaked.

“Just fine, thank you, do you have a room?”

The innkeeper’s dark eyes weighed Rupert carefully, his gaze clinging to the merchant’s sizable coin purse.

“I have the perfect one for you, my lord,” said the man. Again, his eyes drifted towards the merchant’s purse. “Three cop-pers should suffice.”

“Splendid, I was hoping you would be able to stable my horse for the night too.”

“Why of course my lord, we’ll take care of it.”

“Keep it safe for me, and I’ll be happy to pay more,”

Rupert said, handing the coins to the innkeeper who nodded vigor-ously before slipping the change into his pocket. “Yes, my lord, this is after all The Sun and Moon. We aim to please.”

Thump.

The merchant glanced up.

“Other travelers staying with you tonight?”

“No, just the cat making a racket again I’m afraid. We don’t get too many visitors these days. A few merchants from time to time. Mandame isn’t half the place it used to be,” the man frowned as he stared out one of the front windows. “I digress, my lord. You must be tired. Your room is the first one to your left once you get up the stairs, you are welcome to it now.”

“Yes. Tired indeed,” Rupert said, moving towards the narrow staircase at the back of the common room.

“One last thing,” the innkeeper looked back at him. “You came here alone? Did you not?”

The question struck Rupert as odd, but he figured the man was likely anxious, having not had a guest in a while, and he was tired.

“Correct, just me tonight. On my way back to my family in Gwentor.”

“Gwentor, ah, yes. A number of merchants from Gwen-tor in these parts, the reason I’m wearing this,” the man chuckled, gripping the golden buckle around his waist. “Well if you need anything else, give me a holler.”

Rupert Tweed gave the innkeeper a slight nod and retired to his room for the night. His chamber was plain like the common room. A small bed sat in the corner. There were no windows, and the only light came from a candle that flickered on top of a wooden dresser. The room smelled sour. Neither strong nor distracting, it was a faint odor that had likely been there for a

long time. A soft clicking noise floated to his ears. He stood in the center of the room and listened for a moment. Convinced it was the innkeeper downstairs, he set his pack down carefully beside his bed, before sitting down on the old mattress to remove his boots. The merchant heard only the tiniest creak of the floorboards as a warning before sharp pain shot up his leg. He forced himself up as a short and balding man crawled out from under the bed holding a dagger that gleamed with fresh blood in the candlelight. Rupert tried to cry out but fear and agony gripped him until he was numb. He watched in horror as the slender figure of the intruder flicked the blade across his face, and then he was falling to the ground, clutching his throat as blood oozed between his fingers.

~

Thump.

The silk trader who had just enter The Sun and Moon Inn looked up at the ceiling.

“Any other travelers lodging here tonight?” he asked the innkeeper with the golden belt buckle.

The innkeeper’s smile touched nothing but his lips.

“Just the cat making a racket again I’m afraid.”



Rob Pena (12) | Red Moon | Mixed Media



Catherine Remington (11) | Burning Flowers | Digital

Elegy

Alex Riebe (11) | Poem

I. In the Dry Grass

My mother sat and pressed cabbage
like a dispassionate kiss into the doe’s swollen
udder (a method learned from her own pregnancy—
from mother to mother) but it was no use:
 The gangrene had already eclipsed
 the hope we had for her survival.
She craned her neck in the direction of
the cries of her kids, but her head hit the ground
with a sullen thump.

In a matter of weeks those kids would be
sent off the land, towards a different patch of grass,
and she, like an old oak tree hollowed with age
and covered with ashy bark,
was destined to stay in the dry grass:
quiet, empty, and alone.

II. Burning

We were burning piles of the dead trees
and collected detritus of forgotten years.
From hundreds of feet away you could see the
plume of smoke dance through the air, but

“Don’t be afraid,” my father said. “It’s okay.
We need to burn to make room for the new growth.”
But I didn’t understand. My sister joined him,
almost instinctively, throwing in dead, dead limbs

like our father (like a good child does). I stayed behind.
My sister’s eyes were calloused and sharp and old
and they scolded me for not helping like she was.
I tried to understand:

When I closed my eyes, the crackle of wood burning
sounded like the falling rain, and I smiled.
But it wasn’t rain. I knew
rain did not consume the old oak tree and leave only
the smell of smoke and a thick layer of ash in its wake.

III. Land

Now, my father plants himself in a patch of grass,
hands on hips, my mother by his side, and he says,
“This is where we will build our house.” or
“This is where we will live when you are gone
and where we will die.”
 (He does not say that last part.
But I understand.)

As they stand there, a breeze makes the tree branches
shiver and my parents’ hair sways along with it.

I will leave this place soon, my cries will be barely heard
like distant rain. I will leave and it will be a
long time before I return—a long time before
the weather is just right again for us to burn.

Then, when it is time,
I will take my father by the arm
and my mother by the leg and feel how heavy
they have become in my absence.

I will remember the doe and the oak trees
and feel the dry grass scrape against
my legs and know that I must move quickly.

Then, like the good child time will make me,
I will take my father by the arm and
my mother by the leg and (quietly)

throw them into the flames.

Renaissance

Georgia Kenmett (12) | Poem

I.
I died at 16, just a few months shy of my 17th birthday. Clock
reading three a.m., alone and in the dark, my body consumed
by my duvet coffin. It was quick. A flash of lightning, ending
the three-year storm of questions, tears, lies, and what was
thought to be something wonderful. Yet the silence was only
ending; thunder about to roar.

II.
Love isn’t movies on the couch
Hiding from what he fears
Myself, an alibi to his own insecurities

Love isn’t being embarrassed by his childish antics
Turning red when an adult approaches you in public
Myself, a babysitter to the boy I loved

Love isn’t Snapchat notifications
Communicating through blue and red boxes
Myself, a girl wanting actual conversations

III.
“How are you doing?”
“I’m great. You?”
“Not good. I’ve honestly been better”
“Do you want to talk about it?”
“No.”

IV.
Love is brunch on Sundays
Laughter amongst waffles and Eggs Benedict
My mother, watching my eyes gleam again

Love is giggles at midnight
Rom Coms playing in the background
My sister, rejoicing that I am happy again

Love is music pouring from the speaker
I-10 construction blurring in the windows
My best friend, listening to me gush about boys again

V.
“Please stop contacting me. You wanted space and space is
what you’re going to get. I’m angry and don’t want to talk.
Leave me alone”

Silence. Finally...

VI.
The next morning I woke-up earlier than usual. This was my
new beginning begging to be written. No longer tied to him,
I hadn’t a clue what to do. He was everything I knew. Ev-
erything I did. Everything I begged to be separated from, to
forget and move on. I was finally f

r
e
e.



Ashley Mitchell (12) | Wings | Mixed Media



The True Team Player

Grace Ogden (11) | Critical Essay

Sports have always been an integral part of my life, from three-year-olds’ dance classes to summer swim league, from traveling club teams to varsity athletics. As a young player, fun was the first priority – love for athletics was much more valued than scores, records, or times. As I got older, though, it was soon emphasized to me by coaches that sports were an opportunity to give to something larger than myself, that my teammates were my sisters, and that to fall short was to disappoint the people who depended upon me most. Across the many teams of which I have been a part, the common themes of camaraderie and sacrifice for the greater group have been brought to the forefront. Now a three-sport varsity athlete, I have heard the phrase “put your body on the line” more times than I can count, and I have indeed done just that; I’ve played through sleepless nights, illnesses, and broken bones for the sake of my teammates and the sports I so love.

As much as I have given up throughout my athletic career, however, I cherish the unity of participation in a team environment and the lessons that it has taught me. Functioning as a productive member in a group setting is a valuable life skill that individuals must learn in order to find vocational and social success. From group projects to friendly interactions, heavy emphasis is placed upon one’s ability to be a team player, an individual who recognizes their role in achieving collective goals and does everything in their power to fulfill that responsibility. As an athlete, I have striven to embody that image of a team player in seeking the approval of my teammates, peers, and coaches. However, through a greater personal understanding of how I am best able to suc-

ceed in a team environment, I have come to realize that the most accomplished and valued teammates do not necessarily subscribe to this level of personal sacrifice. Instead, the teammates I most admire have been able to embody true commitment without foregoing rest, self-reflection, or individual gratification. A team player is not someone who always puts the team before themselves because one must see to their own personal health and capabilities before they are able to contribute meaningfully in a group-centered environment.

The idea of a team, a group of people who share a common goal or purpose and who must work together to achieve it, can be seen across many disciplines; however, group-centered environments where the primary focus is placed on the collective rather than individual members are most prevalent in athletics. Athletic teammates are often united through the shared experiences of physically demanding practices, late-night bus rides, and common desires for team victory, making the firm bonds between these teammates ones of mutual trust and respect. Vital for fostering meaningful relationships within a group, such bonds provide compelling incentives for individuals to further their meaningful contributions, or the positive values, actions, or qualities that one can provide for the benefit of the team as a whole. Additionally, although the attributes of a team player can be gained over time, they are often difficult to develop because modern society has devalued selfishness, actions that disregard others for one’s own benefit, in favor of promoting acts of self-sacrifice. Rather, the ability to concentrate on oneself is crucial for understanding the



I’ve played through sleepness nights, illnesses, and broken bones for the sake of my teammates.

characteristics of a true team player.

Initially, while the primary focus of a group atmosphere is placed upon collective performance, one’s personal success is beneficial to the team as a whole, so a team player takes the time to develop their own skills and celebrate their own accomplishments. Most would define the “ideal team member” as a wholly selfless individual; one who takes the time to inspire, to encourage, and to enable their teammates to achieve their own personal goals. However, such a mindset of solely uplifting others often leaves one with a lack of self-confidence as they feel unable to appreciate their own successes without being selfish or uncommitted to the team. On the contrary, one’s duty to support their teammates includes a responsibility to strive for personal achievement and to acknowledge their own progress towards their objectives. Following this principle in her own leadership, one of my talented soccer teammates assured our team that “it is okay to be selfish” in regards to scoring goals. She encouraged us to take advantage of personal opportunities for success, even if that meant taking an open shot rather than passing to a teammate. While doing so could be viewed as depriving another team member of the chance to score, ensuring one’s personal accomplishment is in reality the mark of a true team player because of the benefit it brings to the group overall. Even in professional athletics, individual accomplishment is vital for a productive team environment, and NBA star Russell Westbrook is all too familiar with this concept. In the 2016 to 2017 basketball season, Westbrook was the only star player on the Oklahoma City Thunder, and he recognized what would be required of him

for his team to advance to the playoffs. After focusing intensely on his own career, Westbrook went on to have a record-breaking season. He averaged a triple-double, meaning he had an average of double-digit points, assists, and rebounds across every game, a feat that has only been accomplished by one other player in NBA history. Westbrook’s personal achievement brought success to his team as a whole – they indeed made it to the playoffs as the number six seed in the Western Conference. In a productive group environment, each member plays an indispensable role; a team player uses individual success as personal motivation to fulfill their responsibilities to the team to the best of their ability. Rather than demonstrating selfishness or disregard for one’s team, personal investment provides an individual with the opportunity to lead their teammates by their example of perseverance and self-betterment.

Furthermore, even though selflessness is often seen as the mark of a genuine team player, constant self-sacrifice is unsustainable and instead ends up hurting both oneself and one’s team in the long run. Individuals often feel that their commitment to a team transcends any personal needs or outside expectations. However, not wanting to disappoint teammates or coaches, many continue to prioritize group success even at the expense of personal wellbeing. While such dedication is indeed admirable, one can only give so much effort before doing so is actually detrimental to the success of their team. When individuals, particularly athletes, fail to address their physical and mental needs, prior health issues often worsen into serious injuries preventing them from fulfilling their team responsibilities for long periods of time. During

track season last spring, several members of the team, including myself, developed shin splints. Despite the discomfort, each of us continued running both in practice and in competition so as not to neglect our teammates. However, the continued stress of strenuous exercise only exacerbated the injuries. I was personally unable to qualify for the regional meet because I was in too much pain to perform as well as necessary. My teammates faced similar consequences; several required an entire week of rest and were unable to compete in their relays, a significant setback to the team overall because of the relay’s previous success. If we had instead taken the time necessary to care for ourselves from the beginning, we would have been better positioned to contribute as true team players. Additionally, one of my gifted soccer teammates this year recently suffered an injury to her hamstring. Initially, she had only a mild strain, and seeking to push through her pain for the team’s benefit, she continued playing despite the athletic trainer’s recommendations to rest. During the game, she worsened the injury to a fully pulled hamstring, an issue that required three weeks of strict recovery. In her extended absence, which was due to the sacrifice of her health, the team was impacted far more adversely than if she had seen to her own welfare from the onset of the problem. While it is often difficult to separate a team’s immediate needs from its requirements for long-term success, eventual and continued achievement is far more valuable and is only possible through realistic assessment of one’s health and capabilities.

Similarly, being fully committed to a team requires deep emotional engagement, so one must prioritize their own mental wellbeing before they are able to function as a valuable member of the group. In joining a team, one takes on the responsibility of attending practice and games, supporting one’s teammates,

and prioritizing team events over one’s personal agenda. Being a true team member is indeed rewarding; however, it can be highly stressful and emotionally draining if one does not take proper care of their mental health. My younger sister experienced this concept firsthand. Last summer, during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, she was thrilled to have a personal escape in the form of club track. She had competed for that club in years past and had experienced considerable success, so she was excited for the season and optimistic about both her performance and her chances of competing at the Junior Olympics at the end of the summer. However, after several difficult practices, races, and even individual runs resulted in feelings of panic and difficulty breathing, it soon became apparent that the emotional commitment to her club team was more than she was able to handle. Rather than worsening the situation by continuing to push through despite her mental exhaustion, my sister chose to drop out of the team for the remainder of the season. Through honest communication with her teammates and coaches about the situation and her needs, she was able to fulfill her responsibility to herself as a team player and take time to focus on healing; as a result, my sister has been able to continue running into high school today, allowing her to play an integral part of the Tom C. Clark High School Varsity Track and Field team. Although it is often pushed to the backburner, emotional well-being in athletics is equally as important as physical health, and a true team player takes the time to develop their personal stability before making unrealistic commitments to their teammates and coaches.

However, the experience of overwhelming emotional trauma as a result of team responsibility is not unique to junior athletics. As athletes progress through high school, college, and

professional levels of competition, team expectations only become more intense, greatly increasing the pressure these athletes feel to perform. At these higher athletic levels, the consequences of failing to address one’s mental needs can be both detrimental and devastatingly public. Last summer, for example, world-renowned gymnast Simone Biles made the decision to step back from the United States Olympic Team in order to focus on her mental health. During the 2021 Summer Olympics, Biles developed what is referred to in the world of gymnastics as “the twisties,” a sudden state of dissociation that prevents gymnasts from accurately judging their position in the air, which can lead to serious injury. Biles reported that the incident not only affected her performance at the time, but also led to severe anxiety surrounding future competition. In response to her decision, Biles faced severe backlash from critics calling her “weak” and accusing her of being a poor teammate and United States Olympic Team representative. On the contrary, Biles’s choice to step back from competition was the right choice not only for her own mental and physical health, but also for the success of the United States Olympic Team as a whole. By opening up opportunities for her teammates, Biles enabled younger athletes to gain valuable Olympic experience, as well as allowed athletes without performance-hindering anxiety to compete, leading the United States Gymnastics Team to finish second in the world at the 2021 Olympic Games in Tokyo. In order to serve as productive members of their teams, athletes must begin to accept the integral role that mental well-being plays in determining one’s capabilities.

When an individual is emotionally unable to fulfill their responsibilities, a true team player takes the necessary steps to care for themselves rather than making unrealistic commitments to a group environment. Individuals cannot support their teammates if they do not first support themselves; thus, the skill of honest self-reflection must be practiced regularly and actively integrated into one’s ongoing athletic development in order to foster a healthy team culture.

Nevertheless, despite the potential dangers of viewing a team player as an individual who puts the team before themselves, many coaches and teammates do value athletes that commit themselves to the good of the group ahead of their own interests. Indeed, this definition of a team player is widely accepted and seems logical, for a group environment cannot be successful without focused participation from individual members. Many also argue that group morale relies upon the investment of teammates towards common goals, for if any members take focus away from the collective to put themselves first, the team environment is damaged. While a constructive team attitude is vital for success and must be cultivated positively, the detrimental effects of not putting oneself first when necessary far outweigh any blows to team morale as a result of temporary disengagement. For example, one of my teammates was experiencing a difficult time last soccer season, and as she is normally a bubbly, motivational influence, she was disheartened by her inability to make her usual emotional commitment to the group. Her state of stress was apparent and saddening to her teammates, lowering team morale with worry for her well-being. Eventually, she decided to take a week off for rest and mental recuperation, which is why she is now able to continue playing as an encouraging, supportive teammate who brings a refreshing positivity to the team atmosphere. Obviously, being a team player requires some level of sacrifice of free time and personal recognition, but it does not include sacrifice of physical health or emotional wellbeing. However, an important distinction must be made between the necessity for time away from one’s team and the choice to skip practice simply because one does not want to honor their commitments. Honesty about one’s needs, both with oneself

and with others, is the paramount attribute of an individual who is able to live with a sustainable balance between health, personal achievement, and productivity as a successful member of a larger group.

Through team involvement, individuals cultivate lasting relationships that can provide much needed support in times of physical or emotional need. Rather than concealing one’s struggles for the sake of saving face, stress can be alleviated by allowing one’s teammates to offer strength and guidance, fostering a sense of trust that is crucial in propelling one’s team forward. More than just reaching athletic success, however, sustainability in one’s approach to sports as a team player allows individuals to find true enjoyment in their athletic endeavors, making them more likely to continue to play sports and to reap such benefits as increased academic performance, development of leadership skills, improved physical fitness, and heightened self-confidence. Ultimately, it is through such gain that true team players bring improvement not only to themselves, but to their communities. When one has the ability to achieve, the confidence to do so, and a network of support to provide assistance when necessary, there is no goal, neither individual nor collective, that cannot be accomplished.

The Racquet

Leo Cheong (11) | Poem

Memories filled with the past
of victories and defeats
but those did not last
Rackets creating beats
interrupted by a drill
Joy replaced by hate
and the racquet falls still
It holds no weight.

The graphite is frail
Not a sound does it make
Every ball it will fail
Not a single point it will take
The strings grey and wilt
no longer tight and straight
Cold goes the hilt
It holds no weight.

Now I stand at a crest
One direction I must fall
to find whatever is best
My every thought in a sprawl
I look to where I stand
to determine my fate
To the racquet in my hand
It holds no weight.





Windows

Ellen Meltzer (11) | Poem

1. *Morning*

Invitation into the world beyond you
Telescope to the possibilities of life each day
I gaze through your reflective surface
As rays of sunlight into the becoming of the early morning
And forecast the shadow of the setting gaze
Through your glass the tears of the sky run down your cheeks
As dewdrops turn to teardrops
Making music on your surfaces
Dripping down until dry
You harness a picture of life through a lens of ideality
Kaleidoscope of possibility
Line by line of glass
Banisher of darkness
Of emptiness
You sweep me from the sunrise
To the low afternoon
To the further darkness of the evening

2. *Evening*

In the evening when I am alone
After the day has exhausted my mind and body
And you are mine
Mine to use
Mine to decide
I use you as I please while your shadow dances in the distance
Alone with my thoughts
Not subject to your movement
I am alone
Sinking in blankets and pillows
When the comfort of the early night welcomes you
I watch you float across my life without care
In our moment, you weigh light instead of heavy
Breathing deep
Speaking soft
in the shadow of your setting reflection
In the evening you are mine
I can decide who to talk to
Who to give you to
How to use you
We are in agreement in the evening
When you are plentiful and forgiving
Drifting into an oblivion among the pillows
In the evening you are mine
Until tomorrow, when the sun comes up
Carrying our responsibilities with it
I will meet you again tonight
And we will spend you together
Come closer before the sunrise pulls you
Further and further away
In the evening you are mine



On Why Eating Cereal is Way Cooler Than Smoking

William Herff (12) | Creative Non-Fiction

Eating cereal is being the mother who decided to take her newborn baby into the mosh pit at a Drake concert. It’s risky as hell.

Let me paint the picture. I’m at a party, an absolute rager, squirming through a sea of sweaty teens and red Solo cups. The loud music threatens to rupture my eardrums. I stumble into the kitchen. My glow-in-the-dark Rick and Morty T-shirt fades, losing its flair in the brightly lit room. Dammit. One of my homies is lighting his cigarette on the stove.

“What’s good, Mr. Magoo?”

He shoots me a judgmental glance, ignoring my salutation, bumping into me (on purpose) while leaving.

I’ll show him.

I quickly find a bowl, a spoon, and some milk (2%, but it will do). There’s only one thing missing. I locate the pantry. Frosted Flakes. Score.

Making my way back into the crowd, people lose their minds. I have just played the ultimate power move. I’m the talk of the night.

The sun begins to come up, and everyone is thinking the same thing.

“Who was that edgy Casanova? We should totally hang out with him again.”

None—absolutely zero—of that happened because I wasn’t invited.

Again.

However, I imagine that’s how the evening would transpire.

After much theorizing, I have concluded that eating cereal is way cooler than smoking, and no one can change my mind. I have condensed my thoughts into three easily digestible points.

1. The Risk Appeal

Eating cereal is a dangerous game not for the faint of heart, especially when done in public. A bowl sloshing with milk, a mountain of flakes balanced on a spoon as it is lifted to the mouth, cereal munching is a balancing act that cautious nerds should avoid.

The other day I ate cereal in line at the grocery store. People actually came up to me to commend my adroitness. Upon asking, three girls even gave me their numbers, or what I thought were their numbers. Two of them were not real. The third directed me to the local mental hospital. Eating cereal is being the mother who decided to take her newborn baby into the mosh pit at a Drake Concert. It’s risky as hell. But if you don’t spill anything or like...drop a baby, you look like a total badass.

2. Customizable

Smoking is kind of boring. All cigarettes look the same. All tobacco, from my understanding, tastes the same. Everything’s the same and that is lame (rhyme very much intended). Who says, “I like chewing on a miniature toilet paper roll filled with leaves. Sorry, I meant to say, I like smoking.”

Luckily, cereal offers plenty of room for customization. If you’re a lightweight, you might mix 1% with corn flakes, while more experienced eaters may opt for Froot Loops in a chocolate milk base. However, the actual milk and cereal only touch the tip of the iceberg in terms of personalization. A library of unique

bowls and spoons can be built up that represent your personality and interests. My friend Chowder is really into this trend. Last Christmas, his entire wish list was composed of Among Us ceramic cereal vessels and Fortnite-themed utensils. To say he’s made some new friends this year would be the understatement of the century. Similarly, when I hit the town with my Chewbacca bowl filled with Cocoa Krispies, the Marlboro man simply cannot compete.

3. The High

You can in fact get high on cereal. Take it from a guy who has never smoked weed or actually been high ever.

There’s nothing like chain eating through a family-sized box of Frosted Flakes on a Friday night. With all that sugar coursing through your veins at once, it is an out-of-body experience. The crunch, the snap, the crackle, and the pop (for my Rice Krispy lovers out there), only enhance enjoyment. I don’t even need a fake ID to buy the stuff!

Your friends got marijuana? I’d rather get high on life. Thanks.

So, next time you see me at the party, don’t pass me that joint, man. Pass me that milk (and cereal) instead.



Valeria Ramos Prado (12) | Whipped | Oil

Konly Ponly: The Struggles of an American Immigrant

Shaili Ganeshappa (12) | Short Story

“I am from the village of Komaranahalli in Southern India,” he replied fervently. His pride for his home was evident.

“Welcome to America.” The young man extended his right hand and the two shared a firm shake.

Fresh off the boat, an Indian man walked into a Harlan, Kentucky DMV. There, he was greeted by a line longer than his voyage from India. The sign on the DMV Counter read “2 hours and 15 minutes.” The man sighed in exasperation. His nose crinkled as he awaited his time in passage.

“Is the wait really 2 hours and 15 minutes?” he asked in a thick Indian accent.

“Come again?” asked the young man in a southern drawl.

“Is the wait that long?” repeated the man as he pointed at the counter clock.

“Oh,” the young man chuckled. “Well, it said the same thing thirty minutes ago, and the line still hasn’t moved, so go figure,” said the young man, his shoulders lifted in a half shrug.

“Thank you.”

“Say. Your accent.–where you from?” The young man’s face expressed genuine interest about the bronze foreigner that stood before him.

“I am from the village of Komaranahalli in Southern India,” he replied fervently. His pride for his home was evident.

“How long you been living here?”

“Two weeks.”

“Welcome to America!” The young man extended his right hand and the two shared a firm shake.

“Thank you. I need to get my license so I can get to work on my own. My wife has been driving me to the hospital. I’m a doctor, but she refuses to drive me anymore.”

“Oh, that’s cool,” said the young man, with a perplexed look on his face. “You’re a doctor?”

The man finally reached the DMV counter. There was a sign on the desk that read “Division of Motor Vehicles.” The woman at the desk had a very stern look.

“Hello. I moved here from India, and I would like to obtain an American driver’s license.”

“I’m sorry, could you repeat that?” asked the woman in a thick southern drawl.

“I need a license.”

“Name?”

“Komaranahali Patel Ganeshappa.”

“I’m sorry. Koala-mahooly Battle Grasshopper?”

“No.” Slowly, punctuating every syllable with his fingers, he repeated, “Komaranahali. Patel. Ganeshappa.”

“Huh?”

“Komaranahali Patel Ganeshappa,” he retorted hastily as a flush of frustration crept up on his face.

“Sir. I’ve got no idea what you’re saying.”

“Can you pass me a pen and paper?” he asked, recognizing his efforts were fruitless.

“Sir. Your name!”

“Yes.” His eyes blazed with vexation. “My name. Pen and paper.”

“Your name is Venan Vaper”?

“No!” A muscle in his jaw twitched.

“Sir, just give me a name.”

“My name is K.P. Ganeshappa”

“Ok. Capey Ganeshappa.”

“Yes,” he affirmed, relieved at last.

“Okay. Your name is C-a-p-e-y Ganeshappa.”

“No, no, no, no. Kaaay. Peeee. Ganeshappa”

“Sir. I can’t seem to understand what you’re saying. Can you write out your name?”

“Yes! Yes, I can do that!” said the man excitedly.

The woman handed him a paper. He wrote, “K. P. Ganeshappa.”

“Thank you very much!” said the man.

“I’m sorry, sir, your whole name?”

“K.P. Ganeshappa.”

“No, sir, your entire name?”

The man pointed to the initials on the paper as if spelling out the alphabet to a toddler. “Kaay only. Peeee only. Ganeshappa.”

“Okay, sir. I got it! K only. P only,” muttered the woman.

“Thank you very much!” The man turned around and left the counter. If not for the crowded waiting room, he would have thrust his fists in the air, for a massive weight had just been lifted from his shoulders. The man left the DMV with a beaming smile on his face, triumphant.

A few weeks later, his wife hands him a package labeled “DMV.” He proudly opened the package and lifted his license to his face. His wife watched as his lashes fluttered and his forehead furrowed, wincing.

“What’s wrong?” asked his wife.

He shoved the license in her face to read.

“Konly Ponly.”



Juliana Cavazos (12) | Popsicle Popsicle / Digital Photo

My Laugh, My Laugh

William Herff (12) | Poem

Like a yellow cat, you strike with playful tenacity,
I welcome you into my life to the highest capacity,
Though your stay at my feet is brief, start to end,
I nevertheless appreciate your presence, my friend.
Your dandelion paws scratch against my belly,

Clawing

Up,

Up,

Up,

To my throat that loosens like jelly.

My lungs bob in my chest,

Woozy hot air balloons,

Dancing in my heart’s nest.

A vine of velvet tickles my tongue,

Sweet, spirited air craves a place to run.

Leaping

Out,

Out,

Out,

And away,

Now you’re too tired to play.

My ribs still ache from the purr.

I watch as you fade.

A bright and fluffy blur.



This is the Last Piece I Will Ever Write

Anna Albrecht (11) | Creative Non-Fiction

If I am vowing to never write again,
why write this out in the first place?

Before I begin writing, I will acknowledge the blinding irony already instilled in this piece. If I am vowing to never write again, why write this out in the first place? For starters, because I would like to compose a final farewell to my passion for writing, one of the proudest and most intimate chapters of my life thus far. If I didn't currently resent the devotion and all forms of figurative language, I might say this piece serves as a eulogy, an epitaph, the grave in which my passion rests forever - but I won't.

Secondly, because I continuously find ways to justify bad habits. I would like this piece to serve as a reminder, keeping me on track when I feel an insurmountable urge to write one more slightly rhythmic, highly cryptic confession or dramatic retelling of a mundane situation (a poem and personal narrative, respectively, if we are speaking in genres). Undoubtedly, I will find some excuse to write. I might even convince myself I *should* write. *Just this once*, I'll say, but if I just review this reasoning, maybe I can prevent myself from becoming too consumed. My request to you, as readers, is to help me fulfill this goal. Hold me to it. Rip every G2 Pilot out of my hands no matter how much I fight it, if that's what it takes. Here is my promise: once the final punctuation is clicked out on my computer, I will burn all my pencils and recycle all my notebooks. Maybe I'll uninstall Microsoft Word or something drastic like that. But I, Anna Albrecht, will never write again.

Allow me to tell you why.

ONE: I could never have guessed how many relationships I would watch fall apart as the result of writing. Books, movies, plays, poems - at what point did the expression of personal or universal emotions become a means to argue with the people we love? Even if we aren't directly confronting anyone, anytime we read or write anything we are ensuring that someone gets viscerally (and perhaps unnecessarily) upset over an opinion we didn't intend to be pointed against them. I've watched friendships dissipate over differing opinions on love interests in literature, and I could fill pages upon pages of situations where something I have written was unintentionally passive aggressive towards someone I cared about. Teenagers are hurling extended metaphors at each other like they used to throw snowballs - writing has replaced civil conversation among today's youth, and I refuse to further participate. Who would I be to perpetuate a healthy outlet of expected emotions?

TWO: Nothing I have written, and therefore will write, is really my own at all. This may sound like pure cynicism, but it's rooted in absolute truth. I am seventeen; I have loved writing since I was nine - over eight years I have built up a portfolio of observations and opinions that melt together in my brain to produce a variant of the original thought. How can I even say these thoughts are my

own? Everything I have read or studied has served to influence my writing here and now, so in a sense, I am just producing a restatement, a paraphrase of a collage of other thoughts and writings, that are collages of other people's - the only difference is I'm signing my name on it. Writers lead evasive lives, their work is mostly a world of smoke and mirrors in front of what they actually think and feel. No one and nothing whole exists in that world, and even then, it feels like everything important has already been said. Art does not have to be entirely original to be valued, but at what point does writing dissolve into redundancy? I no longer want to find out, so I resign here, but I'm sure you've heard all that before.

THREE: I hate it. Maybe "hate" is too strong of a word, or too simple, but it is how I feel. The smoke and mirrors cannot hide that. I hate writing because it is sometimes aggressive and sometimes polite and sometimes exclusive and sometimes entirely aloof, yet it is always there. Trying to shut it out is fruitless, because it is born from a desire for communication and connection, and people need that desire. I need it. It is proven so, because through every corner of my life, writing is there. Stuffed in the back of my closet is a pile of diaries I only half filled - writing is there. Somewhere else in my house lies a book of tracing paper with the alphabet lightly colored on it - writing is there. My mother used to keep a notebook about me before I was born - writing is there. I have used writing to express my deepest insecurities and highest accomplishments, to capture moments of joy and beauty and devastation, to personify what I love into eternal slices of life that exist only for me.

For me. Is that what I truly hate about writing? The loneliness of it. No matter who interprets it as a subversive dig towards them, or who's influence charges the blinking cursor at the top of a blank document, at the end of the day the outcome is mine to bear, to exist with, alone. Every audience I have ever written for leaves the second they are no longer reading, but as the writer, I must stare at the result even with my eyes sealed shut. I think I have it wrong.

I think what I hate is the audience, or the idea that someone should write for one at all. Writing, as an art form at least, can impact a plethora of people and communities almost eternally, and it is enhanced by the way one audience relates and another disputes.

However, if a piece is written only to be read, then it is hollow. *The loneliness of it.* I am afraid of writing something hollow, and maybe I already have, but I've spent too much time allowing you, my reader, to determine what is or is not full.

I still stand by what I opened this piece with. This really is the last piece I will ever write (for you).

This edition of the Walrus is dedicated to

PATRICK CUNNINGHAM

To the man responsible for building our community both literally and figuratively and who is known for his love of SMH, his students, and his co-workers. We want to thank him for starting everyday with his eyes open and his heart full.



Nabecha Ali (12) | Con Gusto | Silver Gelatin Print

Colophon:

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In this magazine Franklin Gothic Cond and Franklin Gothic Demi Cond was used as the title font on the front cover; Baskerville Old Face font was used throughout for copy, writing credits, and art credits; Franklin Gothic Heavy was used for headlines; Franklin Gothic Book Regular was used for the quotes pulled from stories and narratives and page numbers. Thompson Print Solutions printed the magazine at 5818 Rocky Point Drive, San Antonio, Texas 78249. Preston Thompson was the representative who worked with the staff and editors to bring the magazine to completion. Programs used included Microsoft Word, Photoshop, and InDesign, and several Dell computers.

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Submission Policy: *The Walrus* welcomes submissions from any member of the Upper School student body from August through February 14. Teachers are also encouraged to submit work for their students. All work is judged anonymously, so we ask that all submissions arrive without a name on the piece and with the required submission form. Submission forms may be obtained from Mrs. Amy Williams-Eddy via email or your English teacher's resources page. Digital submissions are preferred and are to be sent to aweddy@smhall.org along with a submission form. All writing submissions should be submitted as MS Word files or PDF files. All digital photographs and artwork should be submitted as JPEG files or PDF files and must be 300 dpi or larger for printing purposes.

