



# the Rev & Haringey Unchained

in collaboration with Durham University

# mightier

young  
pens  
are even  
mightier

**VOLUME SIX**

A MAGAZINE BY CREATIVITYUNLEASHED

# ix is ed ur s s I

## The Rev and Haringey Unchained

with special guest Durham University

Over the 2021 academic year, while global efforts to combat Covid-19 increased, students from Haringey Sixth Form College (H6FC) in London, Durham University in England and Russell Sage College in Troy, New York met every two weeks virtually to explore their new normal through the creative arts. A programme of workshops and talks from innovative professionals in the culture sector inspired them to editorialise the work of their communities. They came together to create this year's Haringey Unchained, a special edition with Russell Sage College's literary arts magazine: The Rev. This is why you will see a synthesis of British and American English throughout this magazine. Our group also partnered with Durham University through Edith Sandulescu, a previous Haringey Unchained editor.

Now in its seventh year and sixth volume, this edition is a true testament to the spirit of our communities as we face a world without in-person arts – a world upturned by social and political change, a global pandemic and individual loss. Our editorial teams selected contributions from over 350 submissions. The final product here is what we believe reflects the key concerns and celebrations of these voices.

Inside, you can find the following:

- Poetry
- Fiction
- Nonfiction
- Photography
- Illustration/Drawing
- Painting
- Collage
- Digital Artwork

The editors of Haringey Unchained were invited to serve as panel judges for the Middlesex University Fairtrade Fortnight Spoken Word Competition to promote climate change awareness. The winning entry can be found on page 96.

This year also saw a huge development in the overall project that was initially Haringey Unchained, a collective of students showcasing the creative talent of H6FC. Now, these Haringey Unchained alumni, developing professionals in their own fields, have come together to form a not-for-profit: CreativityUnleashed. This new independent organisation disseminates the Haringey Unchained model more widely, working to connect young people across oceans, to show the power of the creative arts to break boundaries, to make supportive links for future careers and to participate in our global context. This year, the CreativityUnleashed editors' leadership enabled all participating schools to produce this beautiful and comprehensive magazine.

In addition to all of the schools that have facilitated this project, we would also like to thank the following professionals whose workshops and talks inspired our magazine every step of the way:

- **Zena Alkayat**, Founder of Bloom Magazine, London UK
- **Michelle Bowen**, Artist, New York USA
- **John Canfield**, Poet, London UK
- **Tanner Efinger**, Founding Artistic Director of Breadcrumbs Productions, New York USA
- **Patrick Heagney**, Artist and Professional Photographer, Georgia USA
- **Alex Thomson**, Novelist, Welwyn Garden City England
- **TJ Volgare**, Screenwriter and Film Director, North Carolina USA

Stipends for workshop presenters and talks and publication of the printed version of The REV/Haringey Unchained were funded by Russell Sage College's Carol Ann Donahue Endowed Fund.

Cover artwork by Eva Moss from Durham University.

Visit our website: [www.creativity-unleashed.org](http://www.creativity-unleashed.org) for further information and to see all of the other incredible pieces we didn't have space to publish in print. Follow us on instagram: @creativityunleashed\_org. Haringey Unchained can still be found at: [www.haringeyunchained.com](http://www.haringeyunchained.com).

# Meet the Teams

## The Rev Team:

- Emily Boehm – Copy Editor
- Hunter Chaney – Fiction Editor
- Noah Dougherty – General Editor
- Cassandra McMullin – Poetry Editor
- Daniela Withington – Art Editor
- Angie Smith – Lead Staff from Russell Sage College, Writing Teacher and Founder of CreativityUnleashed

## Haringey Unchained Team:

- Stefana Craciun – Poetry Editor
- Abeeha Hassnain – Fiction Editor
- Maysoon Sheikh – General Editor
- Amir Tubekan – Art Editor
- Emma Chambers – Lead Staff from Haringey Sixth Form College, English Teacher

## CreativityUnleashed Team:

- Lina Charki – Poetry Co-Editor
- Ozge Erdur – General Editor
- Heather Gilchrist – Fiction Editor
- Mariah John-Leighton – Art Co-Director
- Andreea Pavel – General Editor
- Monika Reich – Art Co-Director & Web Manager
- Edith Sandulescu – Chief Editor Durham University & Flat-Plan Manager
- Joseph Unadike – Magazine Launch Production Manager
- Amina Yussuf – Poetry Co-Editor



Me kisses you all better ♡♡♡

Chloe DeSilva Haringey Sixth Form College  
@chloe\_de\_silva

## Dear 2020

Ollie Opara Woodhouse College  
[www.linktr.ee/OliviaOpara](http://www.linktr.ee/OliviaOpara)

Dear 2020,  
You brought us cheers  
That turned to fears  
Of a third world war  
And wildfires none foresaw.

You gave us a pandemic  
And everyone shopped in panic  
A world-wide lockdown  
Everyone must mind their own.

You handed the young bravery  
To battle 400 years of slavery  
Shouting with all their might  
To save all our human rights.

You offered us a short reprieve  
So we could all finally breathe  
Yet you smiled with glee  
As you worsened our reality.

You granted us mercy  
By making things easier  
And everything seemed okay  
Like when I found my father, Clay.

You shunned us for our joy  
And, oh, you were so coy  
Leading up to our festivities  
You raised all our anxieties.

You awarded us with struggle  
And showed us lots of trouble  
So now we've all grown  
Next year, better seeds will be sown.





## Freedom Flies

Jodi Lynn

Russell Sage College

# Frustration

Joseph Unadike CreativityUnleashed

@joewrites

You see this week I've seen something  
 I've seen a black man plead for his life  
 As he yells numerous "I can't breathe"  
 Words that mean nothing  
 Every cry of "I can't breathe"  
 I watched breathlessly  
 A life taken by another man's knee mercilessly  
 Now I'm breathless  
 And with my dying breath  
 I continue to speak up  
 Speak up for those oppressed  
 Those who walk the streets  
 Streets with melanated skin  
 In fear of the white man  
 Whose finger inches to pull the trigger  
 A trigger to pierce your melanated skin  
 Nina speaks of strange fruits  
 Blood on the leaves  
 I wonder why  
 Why the darker berry continues to be squeezed  
 Squeezed and hung dry  
 Yet they expect my fruits to stay sweet  
 The revolution will be televised  
 I stay restless because racism still exists  
 My black skin is still a target  
 The preacher utters  
 "Here lies the deceased"  
 Tears of Mothers and Daughters now released  
 This black boy from South London  
 Permanently put to sleep



## Form

Kiera Robinson-Brown

Haringey Sixth Form College

@itsofficialkeke

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DRAWING

## Self Image

Heather Gilchrist CreativityUnleashed  
@heather\_\_gilchrist

Her hair, touched by the sun falls effortlessly  
into place,  
shaping her pale face as she looks to me  
with grace.

Her blue eyes call to me like a siren  
as I fall deeper and deeper into her gaze.  
I catch myself gasping  
as if the icy sea has found its way into me  
and into my heart.  
I am pulled in to her ocean eyes.

She is made from star dust as she dances  
alone underneath the sky,  
wishing the stars could hear her battle cry  
for she dances to the hum of the earth,  
to the drum of her Power.

She knows too much and yet speaks so little  
that in her stillness I find myself yearning for  
her voice  
to speak truths to me,  
to tell me the old rhymes,  
to tell me things are going to be alright.

Her hands are gentle and soft to the touch  
as she sews and weaves marvellous stories  
that makes me lose all my worries  
while she lives in purgatory.

She lives in purgatory...

A prison set to her own design  
there is no room to call her mine

Decorated with hatred,  
every compliment is negated

Cold and alone any help is thrown,  
she believes her fate is sown

Possessed by stubbornness  
she guides herself with a dooming compass  
Blind and deaf to herself, there is no helping  
her  
as the darkness inside her prison begins to  
stir every compliment,  
and awareness begins to blur  
...

Her hair falls effortlessly into place.

Her blue eyes call to me.

She is made from star dust.

She knows too much but speaks so little.

Her hands are gentle and soft.

She lives in a prison of her own design.

I cannot call her mine.

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POETRY

# Unfinished Girl

Mariah John-Leighton

CreativityUnleashed

Time. They say that time heals all wounds. But years later, the scars remain.

Physically, no, my arms and stomach no longer resemble a galaxy wallpaper that people use for a computer screen background. The precise lines dotted across my body are now faint, almost invisible to outsiders. I no longer wear those large crimson handprints as a choker. The battle scars on my body have faded, along with that rose-coloured attitude. The words though, I'm still healing from them. Whoever said sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never harm me, clearly have never encountered a man like him.

The words hissed at me, slithered from the serpent's tongue, wormed their way through my defences, under the pretenses of love. Burrowed in the holes made by my insecurities, hiding behind them to mask his agenda. That voice, a gun and every word shot at me is a bullet hole, easily tearing through my soft skin, killing off what was left of the optimist in me and leaving behind a half-empty girl. No matter how hard I try to block it out, he'll always have a residence in my brain. Wherever I go, he's there, always with me, his words stuck in my head like a sad song, playing a haunting melody.

Sometimes I wonder how I fell into this trap. When we first met, I was presented with a different image of him. With his perfectly unkempt, long chestnut hair that framed his handsome face, and neat stubble that surrounded his devilish smile. How was I supposed to know he hid fangs behind that grin?

Sometimes I follow that image I have of him to the beginning, just to relive the start of the relationship. When it was good between us. When he actually cared. When it actually felt like he loved me. He wasn't like the other guys I had met; he bewitched me and stole my heart. Seduced me with his smile, gained my trust with his innocent eyes and constantly reassured me with his confident aura. I felt safe, happy, and in love. Like I had met my person. It didn't take long for it to turn. I used to compare our love to one of those old Hollywood films. The black and white ones with the perfectly scripted romance scenes, but the only similarities are that he left me devoid of colour.

## "Time. They say that time heals all wounds. But years later, the scars remain."

I was his prized possession, his unruly stallion. That's what he called me. He used to tell me how I would be more loveable once broken. More refined, he said. Defeated, he meant. The best stallions are the toughest to break, he told me. And boy did he break me. If I were a marble slab, he would be the sculptor chiselling away at my stone. The more time I spent with him, the more pieces of me crumbled. Until I became a masterpiece in his image. His legacy. And now he's gone. Leaving me an eroded mess with pieces missing while someone else is stumbling to find them.

I wish I could say that I was strong enough to leave. That after all the abuse I endured I finally gained the courage and learnt my self-worth. Though I tried and tried and tried, any spark of hope I had could never light up a fire with the hurricane winds coming from his tongue. In the end, Death was my saviour. She did what no one else could; she got me away from him. Her tactics, some may say, a bit extreme. But every day I am thankful that she took mercy on me.

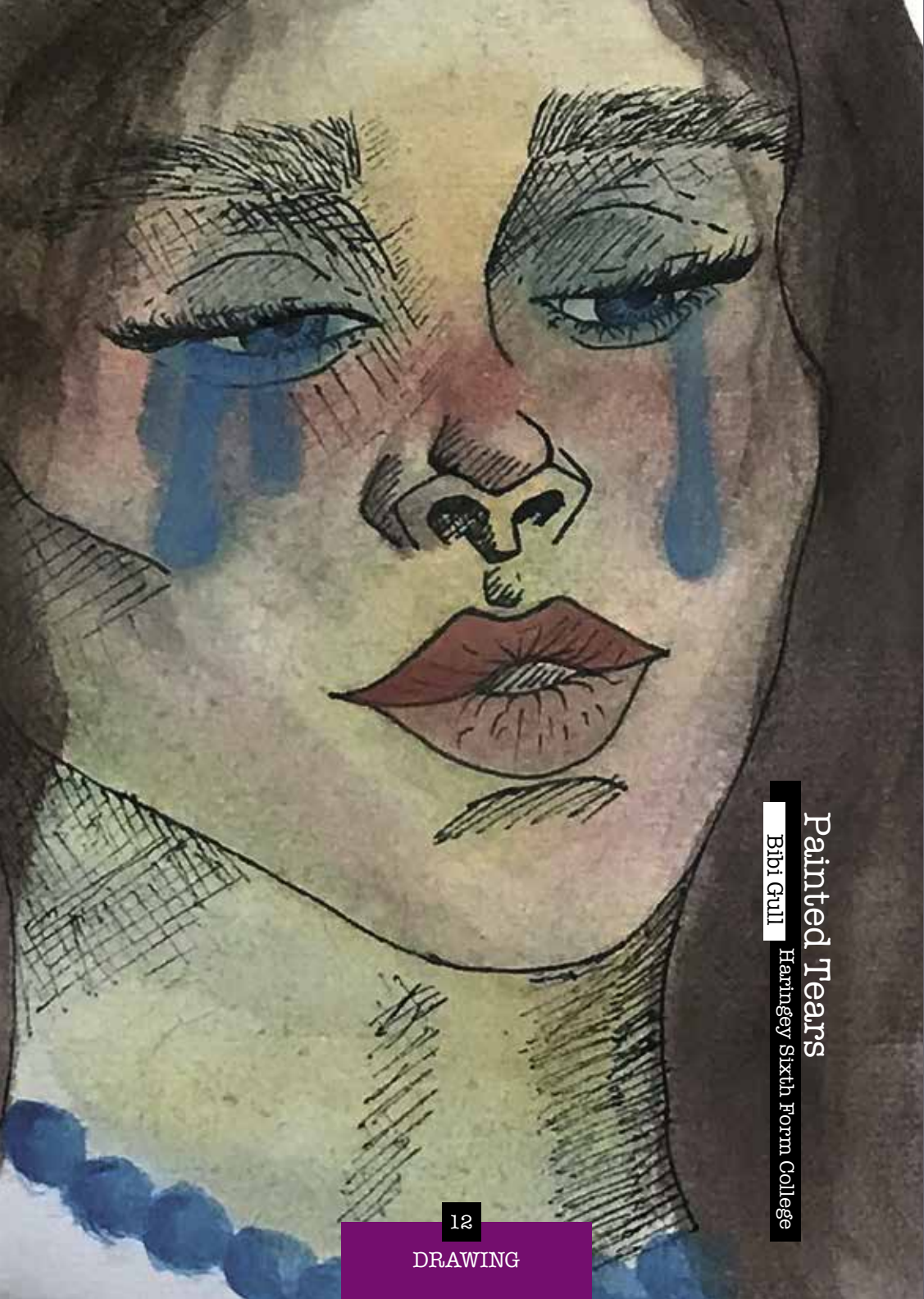
In the years that he has been gone, I built scabs around my heart. But every so often his words slink in, playing Chinese whispers in my brain, planting fictions. Warping my confidence before slowly making its way toward my heart and picking at the scab, like how he used to pick me apart. Leaving the wound open, bloody and defenceless like the girl he wanted me to be.

It's an ongoing cycle. I move on, finally thinking that I am healing and then his voice slithers back, and ruins the work I've done. There's still an invisible thread that runs from his corpse to mine and unfortunately, you can't break what you cannot see.

No matter how hard I try, I remain that girl.

Unfinished. Sculpted by the sculptor.





**Painted Tears**  
Bibi Gull  
Haringey Sixth Form College

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DRAWING

## Amaryllis: A 'Love' Story

Angie Smith

Russell Sage College

Here, where I still stand,  
a flower starts to bloom in my chest  
and there's a golden arrow in my hand

that draws blood, peels its petals from a strand.  
I raise the tip in quiet unrest  
from where I still stand.

Thirty days, thirty times stained red sand  
beneath my feet reveals the fruits of this test  
and there's a golden arrow in my hand.

Its violent protests planned  
by my battered hands; I'm a lover possessed.  
Here, where I still stand

an Oracle's careless command  
punctures, pinches straight through my breast  
and there's a golden arrow in my hand.

It grows, winds its way towards my shepherd's demands  
bursting beyond my skin, crimson, distressed.  
Here, where I still stand  
there's a golden arrow in my hand.



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POETRY



# Linger

Hunter Chaney

Russell Sage College

The man in the blue suit was what one might call a “perfect specimen.” He looked as if his features had been determined by bringing together all of the things that people found most attractive in men. But there was something about him one couldn’t quite put their finger on. Of course, many tried. Louisa Kent tried too.

The first day she’d seen him on the street corner, he’d caught her eye. But her cab flew past, and he had just been standing, waiting for the walk sign to illuminate on the other side of the street. *How* he had caught her eye in that second, she couldn’t have said. Normally, someone she’d had a passing glance at through a car window would’ve disappeared from her mind before she’d even reached the office. But the man in the blue suit would linger.

She saw him again, a week later. Walking into her favorite coffee shop, she ran into him walking out. He held the door for her and smiled. There was something about that smile and the way his eyes seemed to bore into her that caused his memory to now do a little more than quietly linger.

On a Tuesday night, in an empty bar, Louisa perched on a bar stool. At the other end of the bar sat the man in the blue suit. There were only bar stools and a stretch of countertop between them. When she first walked in, she plopped down at this end of the bar without looking around. It had been a hard day; she ordered a Corona and reflected on the disaster that was the Big Meeting. The man in the blue suit filled her head, and she was losing a lot of sleep. It greatly affected the presentation. She finally took stock of her surroundings after tipping back her glass and draining a third of it. Even for a Tuesday, it was very empty. A couple sat almost on top of each other in a booth in the far corner. A waiter milled around, straightening tables that were already straight. The barman was cleaning the already clean glasses. And then there was the man in the blue suit.

As he took a slow sip of his drink, Louisa found that she couldn’t stop looking at him. Finally, he looked up and, seeing her staring, picked up his drink and made his way over to her. He slid onto the stool next to her. She was still turned toward him, staring. He was intoxicating, and now that he was close enough to touch, it was even more evident.

He glanced sideways at her. “Come here often?” Even his voice was perfect. Louisa was having trouble processing his coy, albeit very clichéd words. She managed a nod. Then the night kind of disappeared. If you could ask Louisa, she would tell you that she thought they’d talked for hours, and after a drink or two, he asked if she wanted to leave with him. But she didn’t actually remember this. And it wasn’t what really happened. What she did remember was only being aware of what was actually going on once she was in the cab with him.

In the dead silence of the ride, with the man in the blue suit’s arm around her, she suddenly realized that he didn’t smell like anything. Whether it was sweat, or cologne, or something entirely different, *no one* didn’t smell like anything.

The cab stopped at a dark building. He paid the driver and helped Louisa out of the car, ushering her through the front door. She assumed it must have been an apartment building, but who could tell anymore? He unlocked a door and they went inside.

“You’ve been waiting for me,” he said as he locked the door behind them. There was nothing threatening in his tone. Actually, it seemed devoid of tone entirely. It was a statement, an observation.

“You came and sat next to *me* at the bar,” Louisa said, as she sunk into the couch. He smiled and shook his head.

“No, you’ve been thinking about me. You haven’t been able to get me out of your head since you saw me from the cab window that day.” The fog cleared a little. She hadn’t told him about that. He grabbed her hands and pulled her up, guiding her into the bedroom.

“But the man in the blue suit would linger.”

“What are you talking....” But she lost all coherent thought as his arms wrapped around her waist. He leaned down and kissed her.

Everything was distinctly seductive, but, slowly, his arms felt like they kept wrapping and his mouth seemed to be getting wider. She opened her eyes and looked up, long enough to see something dark, darker than she could possibly describe. She opened her mouth to scream, but was gone before she had the chance.

The man in the blue suit stretched, cracking his neck from side to side, and straightened his tie. He stepped out of the crater where the dark building had been and walked down the street. It’s morning now, and people are rushing about on their way to work. He stops at the corner of the intersection and waits for the walk sign to illuminate. He hears something and smiles to himself. Rebecca Crane caught a glimpse of him from the window of the bus she just got on, and now he would linger.

And the black hole, which is waiting to swallow all space and time, sits within his mouth.

## Trees of Gold

Lauren Atwood

Russell Sage College



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PAINTING

## Chicken Skin Lobes

Barbara Graham

Haringey Sixth Form College

My Mother's ears  
once held the key to all I ever needed.  
They were my bit bit, my blankie, my  
I can sleep now,  
it is well with my world.  
I felt them yesterday,  
still soft between the print of my thumb and  
fore finger.  
They hang flat now, long and creased  
like that in between chicken wing skin  
with no tapioca gristle to play with  
and I, am grown now  
way too big for your fragile lap.  
If I could, I would express from my breasts  
all my good fats into an umbilical syringe  
so the botox experts could insert it into all  
the right places  
between your sagging flesh on bone  
and stop,  
only when your lobes are filled enough  
and fat enough  
for you to feel  
you can sleep now,  
it is well with the world.

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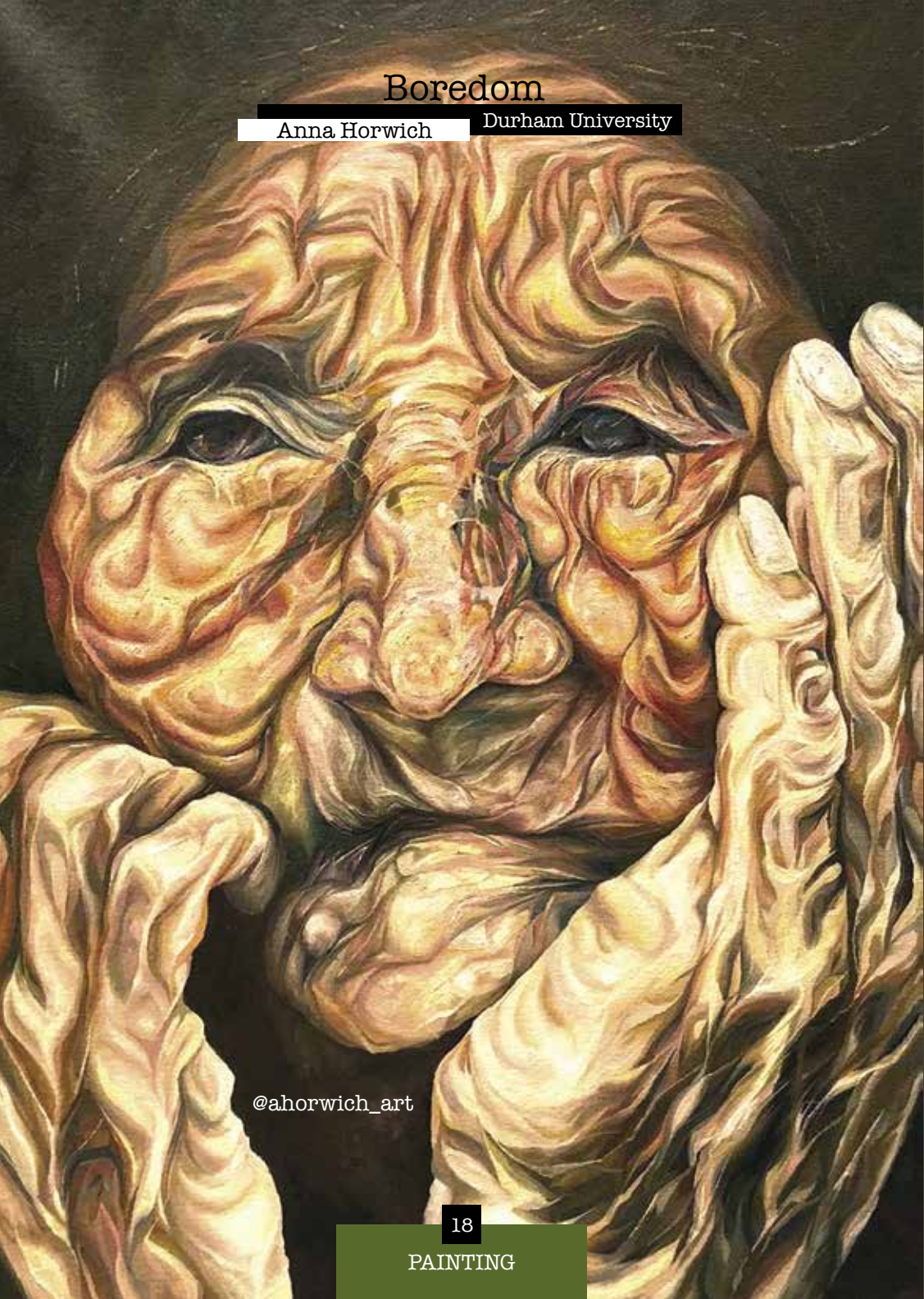
POETRY



## Boredom

Anna Horwich

Durham University



@ahorwich\_art

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PAINTING

## Lonely From the Inside

Michele Scott-Robertson

Russell Sage College

82yr old mother with dementia falls and breaks leg  
In the hospital, rolled away beyond visit boundaries  
Now transferred to rehab further away from loved ones  
Imagine being lost and taken deeper in the woods  
Seeing many faces of people, none of which you know  
At times feeling afraid and not even knowing yourself  
No family to hug or remind you who you are  
Unfamiliar pictures hang on the walls around the room  
Knowing you have to go to the bathroom but not remembering to ask  
Sitting incontinent until someone comes to change you  
Not knowing two weeks ago you were walking to the bathroom  
You would not dare be incontinent and not clean yourself immediately  
Deep inside, you miss something or someone but can't pinpoint it  
A Facetime opportunity - finally you see the loved one you missed  
Your eyes brighten like the sunlight and you instantly remember  
Almost as soon as Facetime ends you descend into increased confusion  
Technology is not understood by a person with dementia; it's almost a mean tease.

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POETRY



# Playtime in Hsipaw, Myanmar

Michael Groissl

Russell Sage College

[www.Instagram.com/groissl](http://www.Instagram.com/groissl)



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PHOTOGRAPHY



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## Bloomed

Emma Jespersen  
Durham University  
@emma.jespersen

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DIGITAL ART

## Collective Feminism

Amir Tubekan  
Haringey Sixth Form College

~~I need feminism~~ because  
I was born into a world  
that tells me it is wrong to  
love a man and be a man –  
be one at the same time.

~~I need feminism~~ because  
I am told that my feelings are not real,  
that I should just 'man up,'  
because  
a woman's mental health is  
hysterical yet a guy's is shameful.

~~I need feminism~~ because  
I am told to dress like a man,  
to just try and be one of the guys,  
because  
women, too, are given a dress code –  
predetermined by their body types,  
deemed appropriate by patriarchy.

~~I need feminism~~ because  
women still don't have  
autonomy over their bodies,  
not entirely.

~~I need feminism~~ because  
the male gaze,  
because  
locker room talk,  
because  
toxic masculinity.

~~I need feminism~~ because  
the words Me Too are still  
uttered by the few  
brave enough  
because  
if a girl's not 'easy,' she's a bitch.

~~I need feminism~~ because  
I am now 19 and still don't feel  
comfortable  
asking my family to pay for therapy;  
I need therapy because  
I didn't grow up with feminism.

We need feminism because  
she does,  
he does,  
they do.

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POETRY

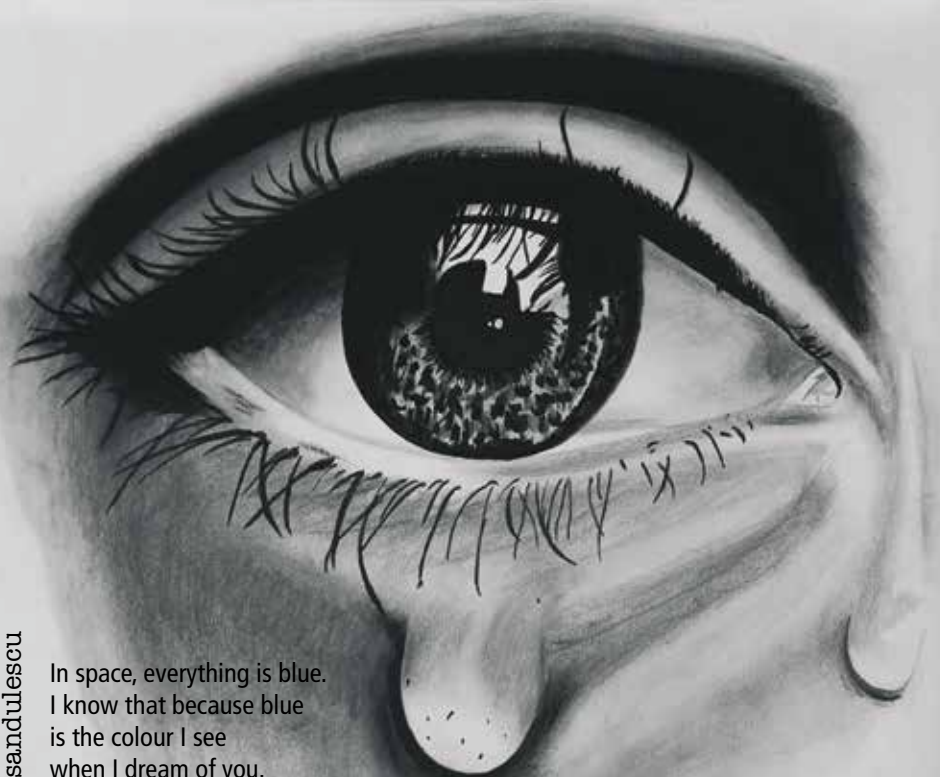


## Eyes

Waiwai Su

Durham University

@waiwai\_s00



In space, everything is blue.  
I know that because blue  
is the colour I see  
when I dream of you.

I think in black, layered shades  
because black  
is all I see now when  
I cry for you.

I wear red, a sharp, bright sunset red  
like the residue from a shrinking sun  
enveloping the defiant, rising moon. It  
leaves a brilliant outline in the night sky -  
briefly.

Inside me, all I feel is black and blue,  
but that red reminds me what it felt like to  
burn for you.

## Enough

Ulas Dogan

Haringey Sixth Form College

I walked around every street of this city  
and shouted your name to the night's face  
hopeless with grief and lonely.  
I called you, called for your voice  
told my secret to the new starting day  
offended, fearful and innocent.

Like the lyrics of a meaningful song.  
Like the ashes of a secret fire .  
Like a crying child's face, I lay all alone.

# Enough

Stop setting traps in my path.  
This game, this unfairness is enough.  
I'm tired of this madness.

Stop setting traps in my path.  
This separation is enough.  
This game, this injustice is enough.  
I'm tired of this madness.

# Enough, enough, enough!



# Into the Slaughterhouse Train

Maysoon Sheikh Haringey Sixth Form College

August 1947. The sky was on fire.

It was the kind of sky that wore the Indian chili-red of dusk, although it was only noon. I stood still, a prominent outlier, detached from the stampede of indistinctive blurs. The Eve of Ramadan birthed two new nations, turning citizens into refugees overnight. Anxious mortals swarmed the carriage. Some fell from the top.

The giant, tricoloured flag that I once belonged to glared defiantly at me against the bloodshot redness of the sky, taunting me with interminable India saffron under whites after greens. Then I realised I never belonged to the flag.

It owned me.

Mama hurriedly pushed through and took my hand, shoving me into the crowded train. Her hand was sweating. She never sweats. I looked behind to see Baba walking briskly with the same too hollow, too depthless, almost hostile mien; a resolute hand gripped the delicate tasbih beads.

The train trapped a stench of broken wisps of life, bodies spooned like commas, waiting, linking, waiting, linking.

There were two men next to two free seats. One wore pink slippers while the other wore blue slippers. "I'll sit on the floor." Baba passed me his tasbih beads, then walked further ahead and sat closer to the doors.

I perched at the edge of the rickety seat beside Mama who whispered prayers to herself. I edged closer to her, trying to find comfort in her Amber Rose scent. It always seemed like the scent could, for a time, stifle my anxiety and make me a little more manful, a little more assured, a little less aware of the warm, sweaty pressure of bodies enclosing me. There was, for an aching moment, a silence that was only overpowered by the sparks and strains from the mass of loosely held metal.

"First they ignore you. Then they ridicule you. And then attack you and want to burn you." I turned my head to hear the passenger who broke the impermanence of silence. Blue slippers. "And then put you in history books to teach our kids. No one remembers, no one remembers our sufferings. Wipe off Muslim blood on Hindu pants."

"No one remembers; no one remembers our sufferings. Wipe off Muslim blood on Hindu pants."

"Ha! Leaving Muslim minority on mercy of Hindu majority. Like feeding us to lions. " This more commanding voice electrocuted the fragility of silence. Pink Slippers. "You call this just? We should fight back!" His naan-stained spit flew out. "India is now an enemy nation, kaffirs that threw us out and I say we play the Hindu game. End all wars with Muslim victory!"

His thunderous voice bellowed through the train. I closed my eyes as the sound boomed in my ears and the train seemed to be moving faster; a piercing white shrill puncturing my mind.

I remember Kumar.

He was Hindu and my greatest friend. When our village's fountain ran short of water, Kumar would tell me when it was safe to come out from my hiding spot from under a broken carriage and collect water from the Hindu fountain. He liked astronomy, looking at the stars and we were so similar.

Yet our differences were much greater.

One afternoon, they caught me, shoved me into the dirt but wouldn't touch my skin, afraid my Muslim blood was dirty. When they were finished, they bent to pet the stray dogs instead. Kumar watched and I later smiled with volition between every blood-smeared tooth as he gave me back my bucket. "For you, my brother." Empty but brimming with guilt. He and I were two paradoxical creatures, placed at two opposite ends of two worlds with two distinctly separate lives. And yet we somehow felt so at one. "You're wrong."

The impulsively bold statement was triggered by the harsh jolt of the train, the rails chugging unsteadily onwards to a destination of uncertainty. Two towers of condescension loomed over me as their angered glares became inflamed with the need to feel superior.

Mama placed a warning pressure on to my side and I felt the tasbih beads poking my skin. But then I thought of Kumar.

"Darkness cannot drive out darkness. Only light can do that." My voice was faint compared to Baba's steel eyes illuminating his anger against my outspokenness, and yet I continued.

"India is not a nation, nor a country. It is a subcontinent of beautiful nationalities. The tapestry of our culture is deeply entwined with theirs." Through the window, under the dangling feet, the Sun's orange-rubies ran its colours down onto the Earth. "So why should we unravel it? An eye for an eye will only make the whole world blind."

The men looked at me with cynical amusement plastered onto their sun-baked skin, at the colours of my language that were beyond my years.

"What are you saying boy? These people are wolves in our lands, understand?" Blue Slipper had hairy feet, like wolves.

"You don't want to fight for Muslim nation, ha?" Pink Slipper's spit flew everywhere. "Fight for Muslim people who are hunted by Hindu animals? So flag of Pakistan flies over-"

"There is no flag large enough to cover the shame of killing innocent people." The train was a silent graveyard. I felt Baba's eyes on me. "There is no war that will end all wars. Only the dead have seen its end."

The words solidified, suspended in the air like a simultaneous hanging of all their blind hope, hovering just above their reach in the soundless train. I glanced at Baba to see his stare glazed with something that belied the coldness of his eyes. Pride?

A muted scream brought our heads up. The lights flickered. The engine slowed down. The train stopped. Hearing the sounds of my Mama's amplified breathing did nothing to calm mine.

"Mama. Why have we stopped?" Mama looked at Baba. Baba nodded. A hard clot of fear grew inside my stomach. The solitary volume of Death's knock on the train door ironed out all creases of silence.

"This train is no longer heading to Pakistan."

A dagger for a voice felt like a shove to my grave as I lurched on to the floor. But I soon realised it was Mama's sweating hand that was shoving me under the seat. My vision was now restricted to feet.

Deathly boots knotted the noose for Mama, Baba, and Slippers Pink and Blue as the walls

of the train threw back the echoes of intimidation levelled by conscripted Hindus. The grainy taste of sick settled on my tongue when the soldier's combat boots wafted the musty scent of blood under the seats.

"Muslims! Muslims! Come forward!" Passengers' bare feet and sandals were tucked in tight; cuffed by the legs, cuffed by fear.

"You!"

The boots stopped. "Are you Muslim?" Straps of familiar pink laced the man's feet.

"Does it scare you this much if I am?" A cocking of a machete tightened a string of dread around my lungs.

A new pair of boots entered the scene, but these carried only the pitiful, pliable mud. "General." His feet were fidgety and his voice could be no more than three years older than mine; pitiful and pliable. "We already burned five carriages and our men are wounded-" "So we leave this one? You forget how they killed your brother? His warm blood on your hands." There was a contemplative silence in the crowded cage that shouldn't have been there. If I listened closely, I could hear the guttural growl of flames from the carriage behind us.

A yell left an expired soul.

Men began to shout and a fleet of furious feet crashed into Hindu boots. It was a blur, the thumping of feet and chests, the grunts and groans of rage and pain, the second gunshot and another and another, until the last gunshot signed the death warrant of one more life. A sea of red began to coat the floor, and by the time I felt the sticky warmth soak into my shirt, from under the seat I could see the general's boots and a martyr who wore pink slippers. My Baba was just as fearless.

"Baba!"

Electricity ran through my back at the realisation I had spoken. Mama kicked back my exposed hand, still gripping her sari from under the seat. I shuffled back to the walls of the train as I heard the soldier's boots getting closer. He stopped right in front of Mama. I was unable to move or even think as I heard the Hindu's ring travel along his rifle.

"A cocking  
of a machete  
tightened a string  
of dread around  
my lungs."

"I smelt the  
metallic  
fragrance of  
death before  
I heard the  
trigger click."

"Stand up, Muslim." His young voice was glazed with a subtle insecurity that belied his mask of intimidation. The base of Mama's sari rose up as she did. She was crying. I reached out to grip her sari again. "Please. My family."

I smelt the metallic fragrance of death before I heard the trigger click. I watched Mama's white sari saturate in red, watched her fall on her chest until she was facing me, watched the interjected finger arrest the beating of her clock as my grip on her sari shook with anguish but never surrendered. The copper rosy scent of her blood was a dark mutation of her Amber-Rose.

Two more sprays of violent metal, and something in my mind shifted. I crawled out from under the seats. In my pocket, I felt Baba's cold, delicate tasbih beads and thick, warm blood. The train resembled the butcher's truck, headless bodies lined up, a slaughterhouse. A tide of anger consumed me as I ran towards the only soldier left on the train.

The young Hindu.

His back crunched as my knuckles collided with his spine. "You filthy Hindu, bring me back my family!" He turned and pointed his gun at me and I stopped.

"Kumar?"

Kumar's eyes held layers of fear and he shoved me back on to the blood-splattered floor. The hard pressure of his rifle weighing against my throat stationed me.

Until it was gone.

One, final gunshot was enshrined by curdled silence. I sat up and watched Kumar's lifeless body, his rifle resting on his own ruptured throat. The train started to chug forwards with ease, as if it wasn't carrying the occupants of newly dug graves, as if I wasn't lying in the pool of Muslim and Hindu blood.

Kumar looked at me and rasped out, blood spluttering. "For you, my brother."



## Swirl

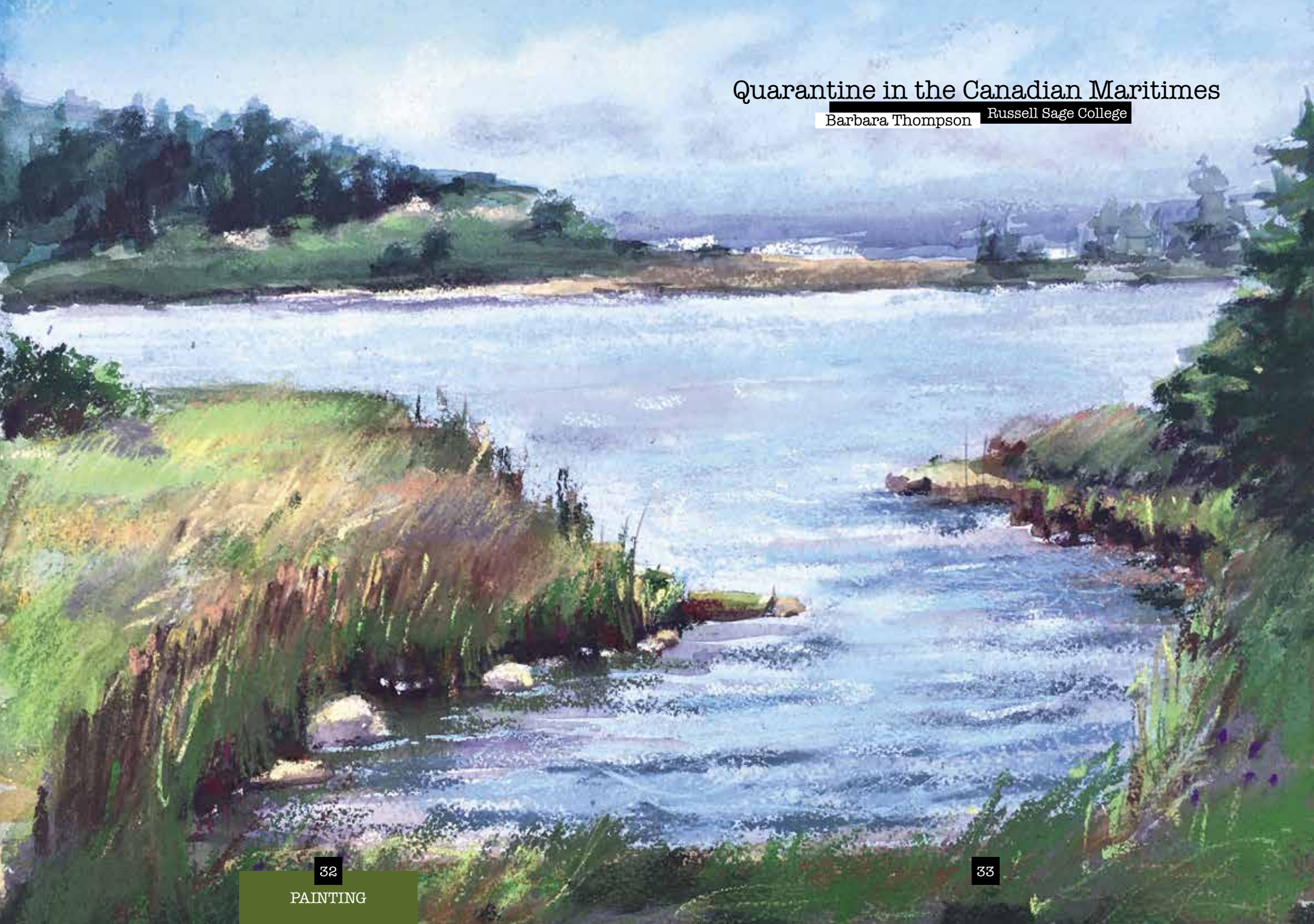
Emile Wilson

Haringey Sixth Form College

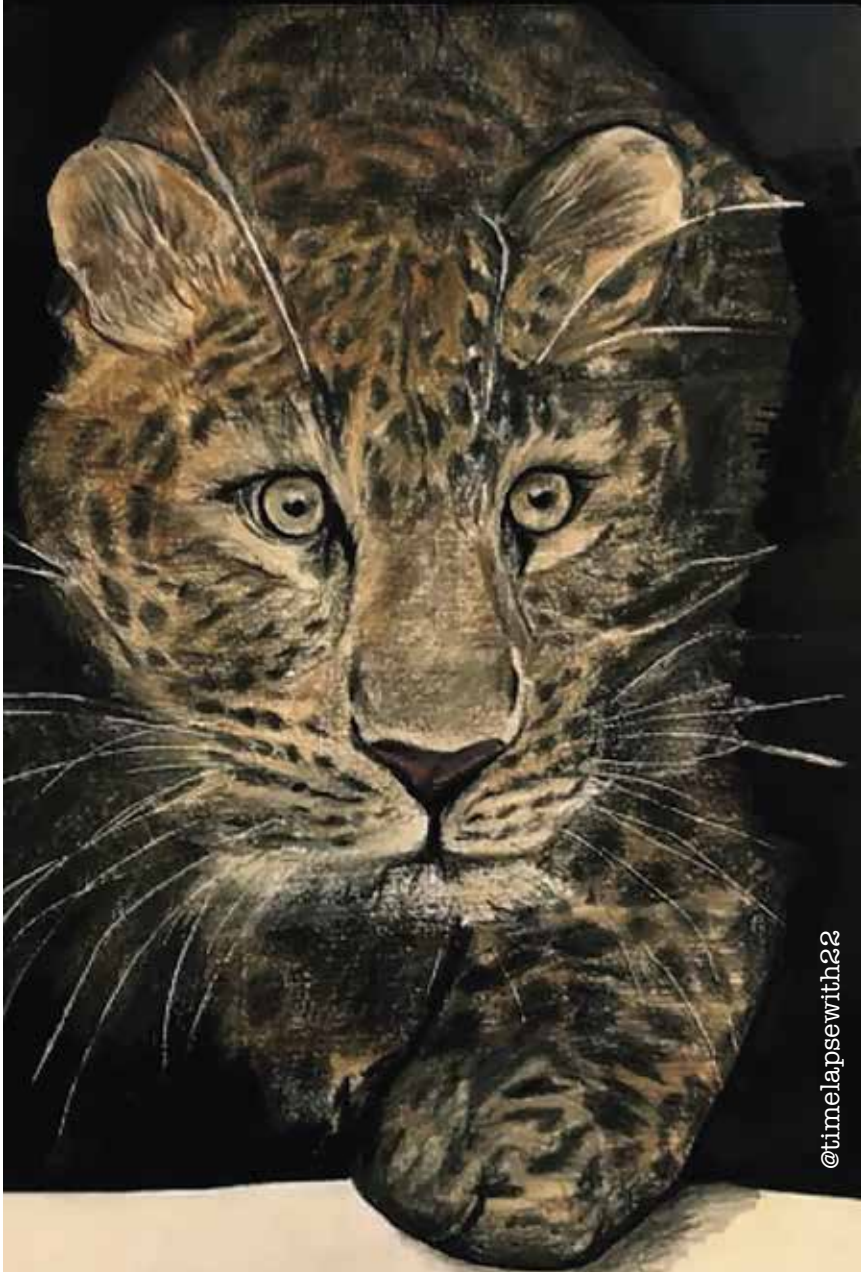


# Quarantine in the Canadian Maritimes

Barbara Thompson Russell Sage College







@timelapsewith22

## Eye of the Tiger

Anushka Suresh

Durham University

34

PAINTING

## Enemy

Stefana Craciun

Haringey Sixth Form College

Drawn to that mystery left me bruised,  
my skin now engraved by your touch.  
I can't **help** but feel used by  
a love that hit harder than your punch.

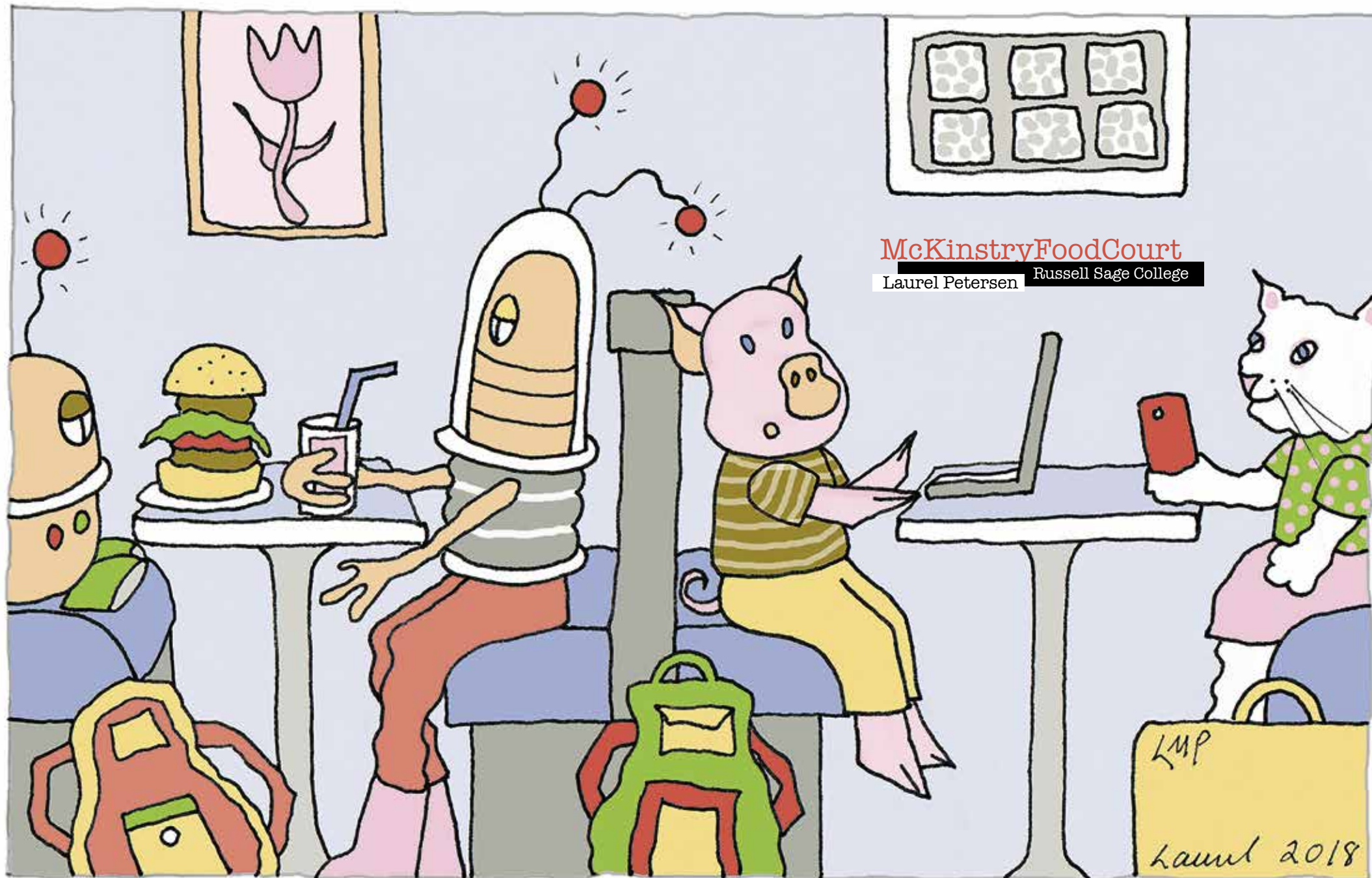
Your fire still burns **me**  
but I am at fault for it.  
Our **love** was just a mirage,  
So is it so bad that I like being your enemy?

Made me bleed because **you** liked the way red looked on me,  
"loved" me while **they** were consuming your thoughts.  
You could have pretended to care, at least for a while  
Couldn't take all the heat now that you were caught.

Keen to let you roam in my mind  
in case you didn't want to be left behind.  
Afraid my heart will always linger towards yours.  
Now I know how "forever and always" echoes in a broken promise...

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POETRY



McKinstryFoodCourt

Laurel Petersen Russell Sage College





## 3 Black Dots

Lisa Schieffelin

Russell Sage College



## World of Music

Cassandra McMullin

Russell Sage College

On D's like these

I see with E's

A world of music, F's and G's

And A's

And buzzing B's

And not quite C's,

But a river.

Days crescendo

Night descends

A minor occurrence

A major event

Flat ground

Sharp thorns

An orchestra of cars and horns

Outside my piano, a world of song

Can't help but watch

And be singing along



The Polychotomy of Man  
 Anna Derevyanchenko  
 Russell Sage College

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 COLLAGE

Haringey Sixth Form College

As a child growing up in the late 2000s, my dream job was to be a dancer... but not just any dancer: a ballerina. I knew ballet stories such as *The Nutcracker* and *Swan Lake* like the back of my hand. I taught myself names of moves (an advantage of speaking French). But really quickly, I realised that something was unfitting with this dream. I was raised in a mainly Congolese environment, where no one did anything considered remotely 'white.' And like it or not, this was before a time when little black girls could see their mirror image in the ballerinas du jour. And so I would be at traditional weddings, dressed in *pagne* (traditional Congolese dress) and trying to pirouette, not realising that there were several judgemental eyes, thinking that I was rejecting my ancestors' culture. What they did not realise was that actually ballet was also a part of my ancestry, as a child of mixed cultural heritage. Unfortunately, as a tiny six year old who wanted nothing more than to fit in, I gave up that dream. I had no idea that across the pond, Misty Copeland was stirring up a storm and breaking barriers for girls of mixed heritage like me.

"...a classic conundrum  
of a girl caught  
between cultures"

Identity, who we are or what makes us "US". A large part of that is our culture. It influences so many aspects of our life: our food taste, dressing, family links, right down to our perception of the world. However, due to the mechanisms of colonisation and mass immigration over the last centuries, many grow up with two cultures at the same time. And within all this, occasionally you come across rare gems such as my siblings and I, who grew up with a combination of not two, not three, but four cultures.

We were all born in England but have a Congolese father and a mother who is already mixed, from both France and the French Antilles. We think and talk in two different languages and barely understand a third. Many people often wow and ooh when I tell them all this, but they don't realise how burdensome it can feel most of the time. Especially because some aspects of the cultures can be polar opposites, and you end up finding yourself stuck in the middle.

## Family Matters

Case in point: in the Congolese culture the concept of family is very important to the extent that even close friends are considered as such. Aunties and uncles are referred to as Maman so-and-so and Papa so-and-so. The girl you grew up with - and who you are not in any way related to - is your cousin and may even be referred to as your sister. If tragedy strikes one person, the whole family congregates. This can lead to up to 200 people cramped into a small space, which is never a great idea considering how dramatic Congolese people can be because it is guaranteed that during such gatherings "songi-songi" (slandering) or "bilobaloba" (gossiping) will be on the agenda! But this is also a silver lining, because I know that no matter what happens to me in life, I can always count on someone being in my corner.

However, family is not the same in the French culture – where water is definitely thicker than blood. Where my maman's childhood best friend has a larger impact on my life than my maman's sister. Where my grandparents are grandparents by title only, playing no part in my life. And even though my maman did have exposure to the culture of the Antilles and the respect that it gives family, similarly African in feel, it did not have the same impact on her. I personally see this clash of both cultures, the African and the European, within myself. Like many African children, I have an African name as one of my middle names. I love that it is my koko's (grandma) name, but I hate the fact that my other middle name is my auntie's from my maman's side. Unfortunately, this is not the only thing in which confusion occurs.

## From Fufu to Canteen Chicken

Thankfully, all the cultures I was raised in love to eat. In certain Asian countries that people eat with chopsticks. As Congolese children we are taught to eat with our hands. Fufu is usually one the first foods babies are introduced to when weaning, and we all grew up eating our meat with our hands and teeth. In the Tetela tribe, where my dad is originally from, people traditionally eat rice with their hands. It had never really occurred to me or any of my cousins that not everyone ate certain things the same way we did. But I vividly remember the day I found this out. I was sitting in the canteen at my new secondary school, tiny and not wanting to stand out. My plate filled with dry rice and a large chicken drumstick. And then my shock when my friend started to eat her chicken with her knife and fork! It's been almost eight years, and I still haven't gotten the hang of it. I once asked one of my cousins about it, and she told me she stopped buying chicken at school, since she felt that she was wasting the meat. She felt embarrassed to let her friend see her eat it with her hands, since growing up with two Congolese parents she'd never had to change to adapt to another culture. And it is at times like that I'm thankful that I've been exposed to many cultures – I find it easier to adapt and change.

## You Know My Hips Don't Lie

I never expected much of a growth spurt. Mainly because I realised very early that my parents were short compared to other adults, and that I would very likely end up the same. So when my secondary school changed our school uniform and my mama bought me my new blazer, I told her she should buy me a smaller size since I wouldn't grow into it. She assured me I would. I wore that same blazer from year 8 to year 11... and it was still too big for me when I finished secondary school! Now, at almost 19 years of age, I still have certain shirts I first wore when I was 14. But I grew in a way not many people had expected. It hadn't been a gradual change but one that snuck up out of nowhere. I'd gone to get a dress I hadn't worn in a while; but suddenly, it didn't pass my hips anymore.

I like to joke that my siblings have inherited the (few) height genes and I've inherited all the thickness genes. The difference in my sister's and my body shape is startling: she has inherited the lean, slim European body, whereas I've got the pear shape more common in Africa. And even though I have learnt to love it and I now embrace it, this definitely was not the case when it happened - again due to clashes in culture. Many of my African aunties gleefully told me I had put on weight. Without context, it could seem as if they were trying to demean me. But it was in fact the complete opposite. They were complimenting me, as this is seen as me becoming a woman. Even though I knew what they meant, as a child who has always lived in England, all I heard was an echoing 'you've put on weight.' Three years later and after a lot of work on learning to love myself, I am happy to say I have never been more comfortable with my body, regardless of and in spite of the changing European trends for how women should look.

## The Closing Scene

My dream of becoming a ballerina may have been viewed as unrealistic when I was a child given the fact that there were hardly any internationally famous ballerinas from a mixed or African heritage at the time. Without mentioning that it would have been more than likely that my immediate Congolese family would have not supported me to achieve that dream like a "typical white" family would have ("white" girls having ballet lessons as children). A classic conundrum of a girl caught between cultures. But it is possible to find a comfortable spot in this mix, and my own experiences are always bringing me closer to it. I now hope to follow in the footsteps of Misty Copeland, Michaela DePrince, Letitia Wright and other strong women of colour who smashed down barrier after barrier, and have expanded the definition of what it means to be African, Caribbean and European. And so as tiring it can be, I wouldn't ask to change my cultures for anything in the world. Mine (dare I say mines) makes me a strong, confident, mixed girl who loves who she is and can't wait for the crazy ride of life.



# Hidden Grief

Anna Horwich [Durham University](#)  
[@ahorwich\\_art](#)





# Institutional Creativity

Emma Chambers Haringey Sixth Form College

Blank page.  
No words.  
*Just try.*

Her words,  
*No meaning,*  
My words,  
*No feeling,*

*Where's the emotion?*

Try harder.  
Knuckle down.  
Be thoughtful.

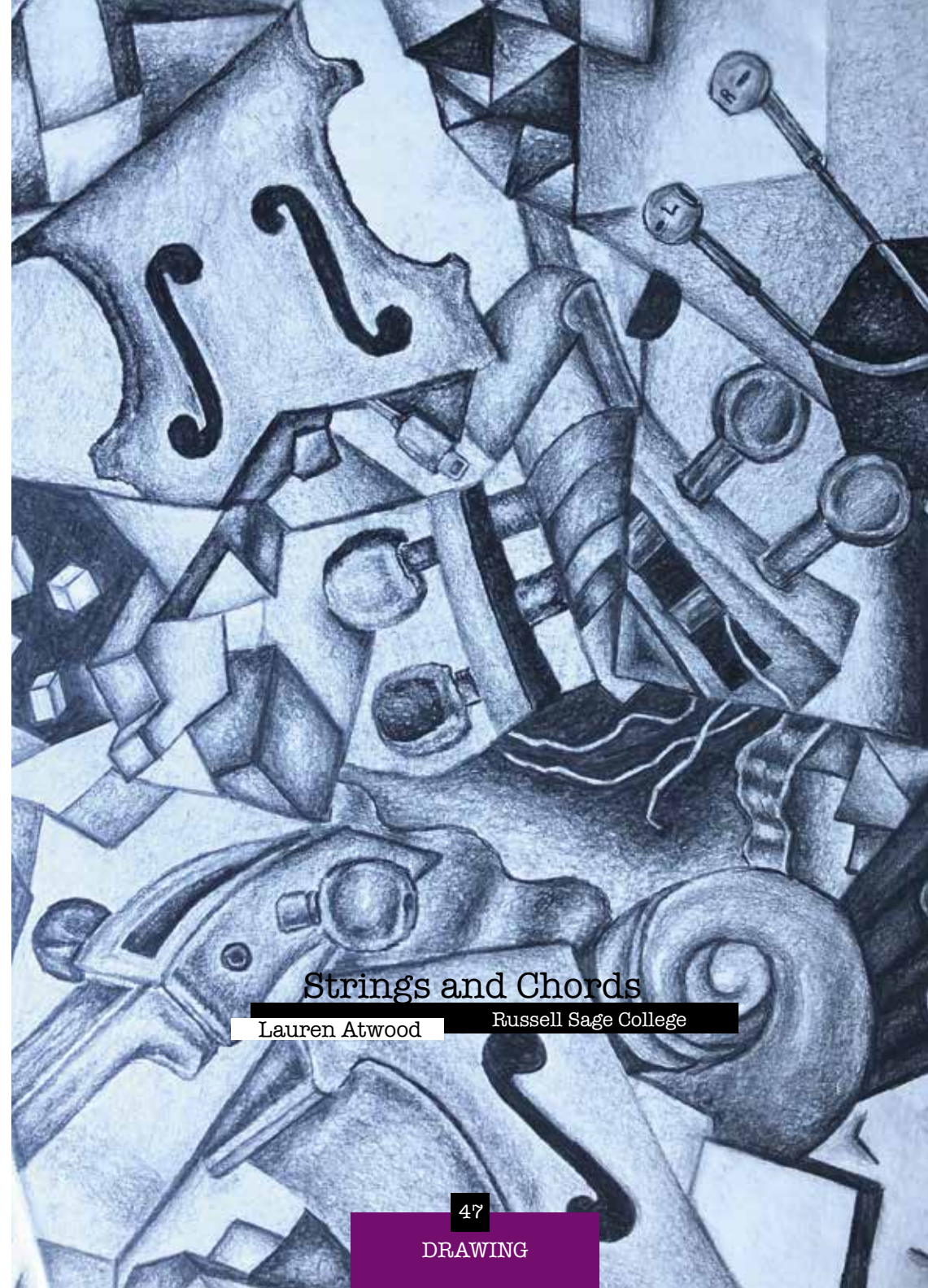
Fresh words,  
*Too plain,*  
Ambitious words,  
*More pain,*

*You're trying too hard!*

Creativity flows.  
Feel inspired.  
Be natural.

Exciting words:  
*Too cliché,*  
Passionate words:  
*Too risqué,*

**I guess that's the thing about institutions –  
They just aren't creative.**



# Strings and Chords

Lauren Atwood

Russell Sage College





## Try Me

Bibi Gull

Haringey Sixth Form College

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DRAWING

## Skin

Tychae Wray

Haringey Sixth Form College

You want my thighs, hips and breasts

But not my skin.

You want my beauty

But you don't want my ugly.

You want my hair but not the history behind it.

On a girl that's dark,

You say a big mouth is ghetto and uncouth;

We're angry because we're black.

No! We're angry about the way you want everything we have

But not our struggle.

You can't be us without understanding our history;

We didn't begin with slavery.

We are not only our skin's colour.

Yes the colour of my skin is a part of me

But it isn't everything:

The brightness of my eyes is pure me,

The way I write poetry is me,

My smile, my bookishness is me.

When you want someone,

Want them - not the stereotype.

One person is not a speaker or figurehead

Of people with a certain skin colour, of a whole race.

You should see with your eyes but also with your mind

I mean don't only see me, hear me

Because I am more than just a stereotype

You may think of when you see a Black Queen like me.

Remember our features are our features.

They are not bits and pieces you can use as accessories;

They are not things that you can take out of envy.

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POETRY

## Airborne Moment

Natalie Mercedes

Russell Sage College



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PAINTING

# what I miss

## What I Miss

Amina Yussuf

CreativityUnleashed

Now I am reminded of what I miss:  
The way we immerse ourselves in conversations  
Taking in the aroma of burnt coffee  
and lighting up the room together.  
We create an environment more inviting, for another to enter.  
And once they do,  
they are then left with time.  
Time to glance around the room,  
and to look at the sea of faces,  
each face creating an environment more inviting for another to enter.

So now, I am reminded of what I miss.

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POETRY



# Vigil for a Mother

Christopher Bean [www.beanwriting.com](http://www.beanwriting.com)

The last time I was a mother, I was waving Darnley off in his dinghy. Polished mahogany flashed under an early autumn sun, the red of his sail slowly melting into the scarlet wall of maples on the great lake's far side.

I've learnt when a parent loses a child, she becomes something undefined. Losing a breast in '89 ungendered me - something clothing or surgery couldn't undo - but when life cut my boy from me, I couldn't even call myself a mother.

So now I wait. To be a mother again.

In the study, I wait. In the kitchen where countless meals for one have been cooked, as I look vacantly over the sandy shore to that great mirrored firmament, I wait.

For the little white V, for the whipping slap of cord on weatherproof fabric. For the ting-ting of wire on an aluminium mast.

But Darnley doesn't return.

"So now I wait. To be  
a mother again."

And despite the storm-washed flotsam the plovers beachcomb on the mean shore, there's no sign of wreckage.

After seven decades, his little arms must be tired from rowing back to me.

I wait. I'll always wait.

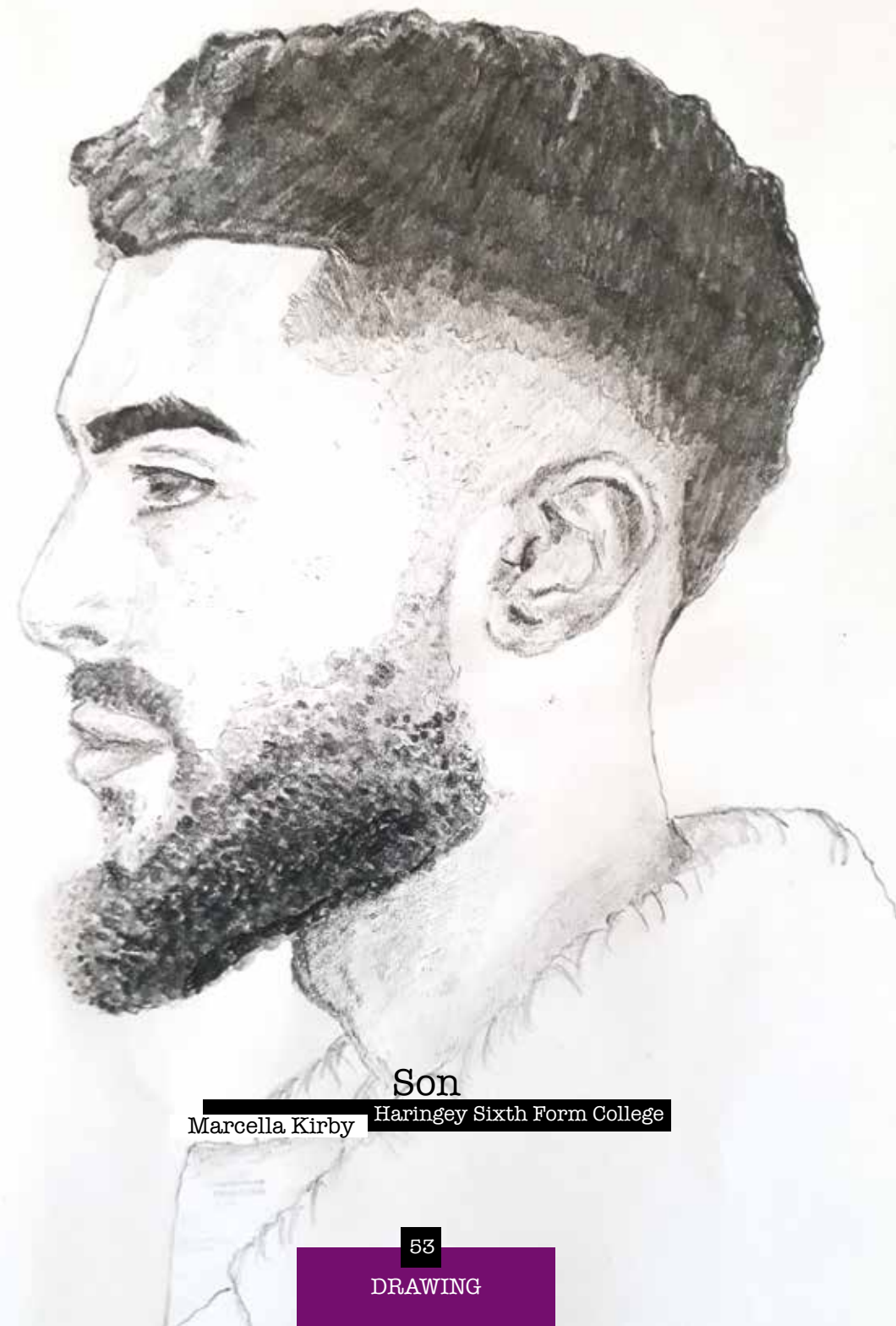
I waited in the lounge when Sam - unable to carry the burden of blame, or continue his own vigil - left, leaving the lake house, his son, where I could not...

And now, as words and memories of eighty-something years hemorrhage from my mind, I only remember one thing:

*You have to wait.*

Time erodes my brain by stealth, like the wavelets washing the shore clean; my wedding day, first car, and last Christmas are sanded away, till eventually... I know I'm waiting, but what for? And there, sitting like a lone red leaf amongst the now bare winter trunks, a distant red triangle bobs towards me, and an unrecognised word comes, unbidden.

*Darnley.*



Son

Marcella Kirby

Haringey Sixth Form College

## Suppressed Anger

Jaydin Cowan

Russell Sage College

What does anger do,  
When it sits inside of you?  
It collects and builds,  
Until it can no longer be contained and spills.

It will sit and rot,  
Until there it is not.  
Because it broke out in rage,  
And freed itself from its cage.

Perhaps poisonous it will become,  
which will make you turn numb.  
It will spoil all feelings inside  
Making the aspects of life hard to abide.

Is there much you can do,  
When there is no one to help you?  
The availability may be there,  
But their ability to help: scarce.

There is an option to suppress,  
But the anger would still be unaddressed.  
Figure it out fast because what will the anger do,  
If it sits inside of you...



## Witch

Takudzwa Edwards

Haringey Sixth Form College

Instagram: @idlm\_art Tumblr: @idlm-art

## Porcelain

Emily Boehm

Russell Sage College

She wrapped trembling hands around the coffee cup, feeling the styrofoam underneath her fingertips. She scratched the surface with a fingernail, grounding herself, telling herself that this all was real.

It wasn't a comforting thought.

The whispers still echoed in the darkest recesses of her mind, teasing threads of unease down her spine. She drew her legs in tighter to her chest and halted her breath. There was nothing more she could do now, anyhow; the windows were long since boarded up, the doors all locked, and the smashed remains of her cellphone were floating in the dregs of the toilet. The shower curtain was a flimsy barrier between her and the nothing that was out there.

"The whispers still echoed in the darkest recesses of her mind, teasing threads of unease down her spine."

@emilamay

She pressed her forehead against her knees, letting her breath go with a shaking sob, feeling every ounce of it drain from her and taking with it any semblance of control she had mustered up. Breathe in, too quick, and it came flowing back to her, and she pressed her lips together and stopped the air in her lungs once more.

"Mama," the voice whined, and she whined piteously.

The coffee cup fell to the bottom of the tub and she pressed her hands to her ears. The door jerked helplessly in its frame, held fast by the deadbolt she had latched to it. "Mama, please come out. I'm hungry."

"Don't talk," she mumbled. "Don't talk, you don't talk, stop it, stop it--"

The door banged against its lock, and she heard the footsteps retreat once more.

"There's nothing there," she told herself, but the breath was sliding free from her grasp again and she was gasping. Her hands were curled into tight claws against her thighs, pieces of styrofoam still stuck to the jagged tips. "There's nothing there, just me, just me. Don't you leave this room." Her stomach was a pit and she knew, it knew. There was no stopping it.

## Mother Earth

Shaylah Omar

Independent Artist

@shayandzcreate







## Uncertainty

Shoun Obana  
Durham University  
@barneyobana

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PAINTING

## Goodnight, Love Bug

Abigale Trask

Russell Sage College

"Goodnight, love bug. Sleep well! And don't let the bedbugs bite." My father gives me a final goodnight hug, wrapping the blankets tightly around me. Little does he know the irony of what he flippantly says as a loving phrase from a caring father to a sleepy child.

I've tried to tell him before, but he never listens. No one ever listens. So, as he wraps me up and kisses my forehead, I simply sigh, knowing what is to come.

At my door, he turns back and smiles again, shutting the lights off as he walks out of my room. He has left me to face the night alone.

The clock on my mantelpiece ticks, ticks, ticks.

I lay in bed, those ticks much louder in my mind, and I stare at the corners of the room. My mother's cheery reminder runs through: "Don't worry! We patched the holes. They can't get in." I try to relax my mind.

Everyone has told me that I worry for nothing, that they're harmless little creatures that bring good luck. But they have not experienced what I have. They have not been alone with them in the night. Maybe during the day, they seem good and peaceful beings, but when the clock strikes midnight, they couldn't be any more different.

I turn over, pulling my blankets and stuffed animals close to me, telling myself that it's going to be okay. But as the time ticks toward the middle of the night, I get that familiar feeling. It's like these creatures are crawling up my spine.

That's how it always begins, night after night. Then comes the shadows, and before long, they engulf me.

As the night turns slowly toward the morning, it's heavy and it keeps my limbs down. I look again to the corners; that's when I see the shadows. They move in swathes towards my body. There is nothing that I can do. There never is.

"Every  
time they  
come to  
**me**, they  
take just a  
little more  
of their  
lifeline"

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FICTION

The small creatures come from all four corners, slowly taunting me as they make their way over. When they reach the height of my bed and position themselves underneath the blanket, they crawl on me, their little legs like needles as they come to cover me. I can only imagine what this looks like from above – thousands of red wings and black spots, and is that? Eye lashes! Beautiful, alluring eyelashes atop their beady little eyes. They are innocuous. Of course. When there is but one of them...

This blanket of bugs inches towards my face. And then they creep into my mouth, inside my nose, over my eyes. There are so many that I can't even scream. I am choking on these creatures.

This goes on until the sun rises, when they move back into the shadows, to the corners. Because somebody might see them. They hide away, not showing themselves to anyone else.

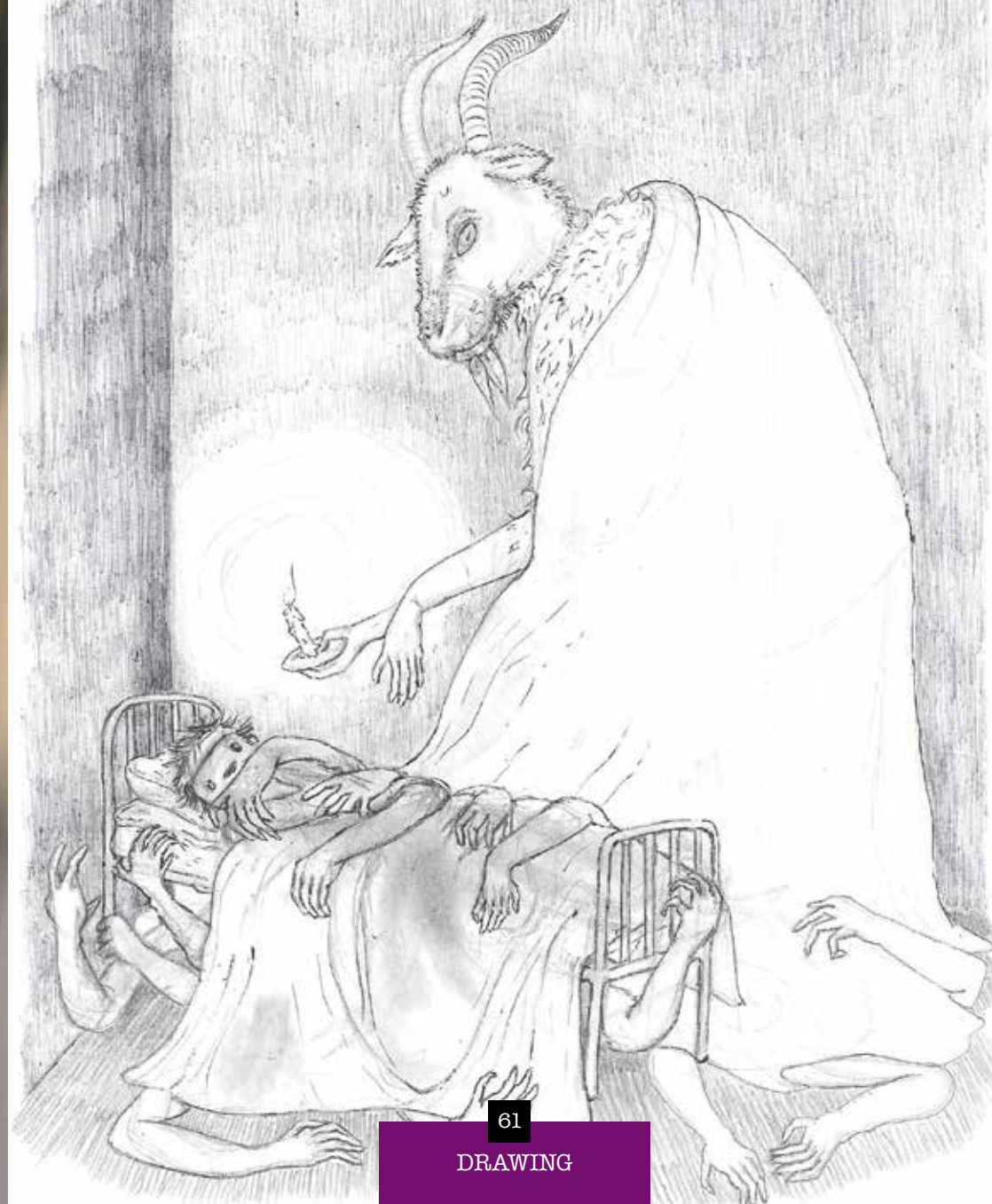
No one ever believes me when I tell them. And that's exactly what they want, because every time they come to me, they take just a little more of their lifeline...



## What's Under the Bed

Chloe DeSilva Haringey Sixth Form College

@chloe\_de\_silva





# Please Love Me

Abeeha Hassnain Haringey Sixth Form College

*Poem inspired by Yuri on ICE, composed by Taro Umbeyashi.*

*Listen while reading (optional)*

"In terms of flower language, tiger lilies mean please love me."

I recall your first words to me before slipping into that world where only you and I exist.

Your lips pressed gently against my back, hands barely there as the tips of your fingers ghost across the expanse of my skin. The shadow of your touch makes me lose all my senses as I drown in your warmth, and with closed eyes, I revel in the feeling of you.

The curves and edges of our bodies fit together so perfectly as if they were made to, melting into each other as our hearts dance together to the sound of their own beating.

It makes me dizzy with feeling.

In this moment, with your body flush against mine, your fingers threading themselves with mine seamlessly, I feel your chest rise before you ask me if I think love is an illness.

The low and sweet tone of your voice pulls me out of the pool of my mind, and dripping in your touch, I slowly nod my head: yes. You proceed to ask me in a soft whisper if I want to be cured.

I breathe in your scent, falling deeper into you while I slowly exhale, the warmth of your body seeping into my skin and flowing through my veins, bringing me to life and I keep my eyes closed, resting in your arms before speaking.

"Never."

And it's with that one word I feel you pull me even closer, holding me tight, your touch electric as you press my lips against yours.

Suddenly everything comes to a blissful stop.

I feel flower buds grow in my throat and lungs. I don't know which flowers they are yet but as you hold me, I can feel them slowly growing and twisting their vines and leaves around my ribs, winding into my heart so warmly.

Your closeness is home to me and I feel myself fall into you deeper and deeper as your hands hold me closer and tighter. Eyes closed and all I can feel is your lips on mine, your love spilling into my mouth, trickling down my throat and watering those flowers in my heart. They grow even more, so close to blooming, and that's when I feel it.

With your heart against mine, your eyelashes heavy, cheeks stained from the tears that had rained down your face, I take your chin a delicate hold and look into your golden eyes.

Read my mind I want to say but I refrain as I stare into those orbs of sunlight and come to the realisation that you deserve to hear it.

Oh you...

My home. My moon, my stars, my sky. My everlasting light, never burning out and always glowing brighter than any sun in any universe.

I feel the vines inside me grow and the flower buds twist and open before miraculously blooming into big, bold tiger lilies.

"I love you."

Please love me.



## Swimmer

Lina Charki

CreativityUnleashed

There's a Moroccan saying  
that the sea only takes the swimmers,  
and that made sense to me  
because  
I am a swimmer  
drowning in the waves of you.

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POETRY

## Giving In

Eva Moss

Durham University

@eevamoss

65

PAINTING





## Face

Baransel Kutlu

Haringey Sixth Form College

@barren420666



## Pink

Emily Boehm

Russell Sage College

@emilamay

The telescope of his mind was thin and narrow, and he was trapped. He was Remi, he knew, and he was alone. The marbled walls were pink and glistening wetly, a sheen of something slick and slimy clinging to the surface. He avoided touching them for fear of transferring that marbled slick onto his hands—did he have hands? He looked carefully at them, studying the slender fingers, cocking his head. Were those hands? He didn't know... What were hands, anyways? Was there anybody around to tell him? Who even knew?

Not him, that was for sure.

All he did know was one thing: he was Remi. Remi was him. Remi lived here, so that meant he lived here, did it not? So why did this place look so unfamiliar? He walked slowly up the hall, looking every which way in a fruitless search for an exit. Minutes, or hours, passed. He didn't know which.

A grotesque crow fluttered past him, perching on nothing but empty air. It cocked its head and peered beadily at him, letting out a loud screech and beating its wings. It did not move, and neither did Remi. They stared at each other.

"Look at yourself!" it screamed, voice shrill and reminiscent of a nagging older mother. "God, just take a look at yourself! God! God! God!" Feathers burst in his face and the crow flapped away, shedding feathers from its rotting flesh with every flap of its bedraggled wings. Slowly, Remi looked down at himself, the shouts of the crow still echoing in his head.

He was skinny, naked, and... a vine of purpled bruises dotted up his inner arm, and... oh... his arm? Remi's head swam. Mmm... he moaned, stumbling. The floor vibrated, sending him tipping off to one side, and he fell against the wall. His hands splayed out, catching himself, and he waited for the world to steady itself. What was that? What had just happened? His retinas were stinging.

There was no other choice available to him but to walk with his hands sliding over the wall for balance, because every few paces the floor would jerk and bounce. It was as though this place did not want him going down this way, and every few steps he would hear the crow again ("God! God! Just look at yourself!"), and see its bloody feathers scattered on the floor.

He ran after it, ran and ran until he came into a bigger expanse of hall, a sort of room in the middle of it almost like a lobby with no doors. The crow could still be heard, but was it real, or in his head?



The ceiling here opened up into a sort of atrium, and above him, just beyond his reach, was a balcony, and a spindly ladder stretching up to a hatch, which surely must lead out of here. On the balcony rail perched the crow, gazing down at him and still emitting its screeching cries. If only he could climb up...

He would try, he had to. Against the wall, Remi's hands scrabbled for purchase, but hapless, he sank to his knees and screamed. Like the walls, the floor, too, was pink, with a gross grayish hue to it. The ceiling too, and a clear, viscous fluid oozed between smooth folds, falling in thick drips to puddle around Remi. Miraculously, none of it touched him.

"Somebody help me!" he screeched, voice cracking. "Please!"

"God! Just look at yourself! God!"

The smell of this place was rancid, cloying. It gathered in his head and in his lungs, heady, until he was all but intoxicated on the ill sensation in his gut. Airflow quickened in his lungs and he drew in a sharp, gasping breath and let it all out again in a rapid huff, and did so over and over until his thoughts were mushed and fuzzy around the edges. A hoarse yell escaped him and he collapsed forward, sprawling out face-first onto the waxy floor. He could stay and melt here, he thought, just lay and melt away and die...

"God! God!" He screamed again.

"Noisy, ain't ya?" asked a nasally little voice.

Remi rolled onto his back, the air stopping completely. A warped little creature hunched beside his face, its blank white eyes overlarge and bulging in their jagged sockets, its cracked gray skin stretched taut over the fleshless, skeletal frame of its trembling body. As he stared, it leered at him, showing off a mouthful of pristine white, horrifyingly human teeth. Just behind them, almost hidden, was a double-row of thin saber-like fangs, glinting sharp like bone needles in the faintly emanating light of the hallway. Its eight-fingered hands reached for him.

"I'll shut ya up, doncha worry..."

But Remi was scrambling to his feet, lurching away down the endless hall, breath still frozen in his lungs, running until he thought he may pass out—or pass away. Far behind him, the gaunt little creature had faded back into the wall, never existing, leaving only the grinning whisper of a threat. The crow dove down from the balcony rail, beat its wings frantically, banked, and soared after him. Remi flinched, anticipating attack, but the massive crow flew right past his head and out of sight.

Remi slowed to a halt, gasping, with tears born of exhaustion and blind terror streaming down his flushed cheeks in thin rivulets. Beastly footsteps echoed around him, and his lagging brain

did not register the sound, but his thrumming heart felt as though it might burst. Were those his own, or... other?

A sort of breeze fluttered past, toying at the lank strands of hair that had fallen over his face, and raising goosebumps on his lean body. It carried with it more of that rank stench.

In an attempt to escape, he took up a brisk pace, though his feet suddenly weighed three tons each and his heart rate had yet to calm. After an excruciatingly long minute, he came to an end, which startled him. There was an end to this wretched hall? To his right, there was only a blank expanse of the same grotesque wall, but to his left was... another hall.

This hallway, too, seemed to stretch on forever. This hallway, though, was lined with doors, their knobs all shining, sweet and innocent, though there was no obvious light in this hallway. Remi grasped desperately at each doorknob, but each door was locked. He let out a miserable dry sob but went on, persistent in his efforts to find an open door, to find that blissful escape.

There was none.

Rage exploded through him, through his very veins and the pure essence of his soul, drowning every last thought and vision until all he could see was a wash of pulsating scarlet and the plain door directly in front of him, which he punched and bruised his knuckles on, dark flowers of bruises to complement the ones on his inner arm.

Something cawed, and Remi spun around to see the crow, its cruel beak barely three inches from his face. He let out a startled cry and lurched backwards, and the crow cawed again. It cocked its head one way, then the other, never taking its eyes off him, and as they stared at each other, a couple more feathers dropped from its body. It flapped its wings, ghosting a draft, and flew off again, over his head and out of sight. Remi's heart was pounding.

Why? What was that crow?

"Rëni..." A voice floated past his ear, carrying a sort of breeze with it, and Remi whirled around. There was nobody there, only the dark recesses of the hall he had just walked down. "Hello?" he asked suspiciously.

"Rëni!"

Remi looked around, twisting his head this way and that. There was nobody behind him. He spun back around, gritting his teeth, and there—

"Rëni," the boy repeated. He hung upside-down—no, he was sitting primly on the ceiling, smirking at him. Choppy black hair fell across his face, casting shadows over narrowed pink eyes.





"My name is Remi," Remi said. "Not Rëni." He took a step backwards, keeping a wary eye on this sudden stranger.

"My name is Remi," the boy echoed. Remi wasn't quite sure if he was mocking him or not. "No, it's not," Remi snapped, annoyance sparking through him. "That's my name." The boy sulked. He tipped his head to one side, then the other. "You're no fun, Remi." Remi sighed. "Tell me who you are. Now."

"I'm Rëni," the upside-down boy said, frowning. He leaned in closer and studied his face. "Don't you remember me?"

"No," Remi said shortly. "Why do you do that?" Rëni looked at him, clueless. "Sit like that. Why do you sit like that?"

"Why don't you?" Rëni countered, crossing his arms. "I think better like this. I'm too dizzy to stand upside-down, like you do," he said, looking Remi critically up and down. "You really don't recognize me?"

"Of course I recognize you," Remi replied, shaking his head. "You look just like me! But I don't know who you are."

"Yes, you do," Rëni said dismissively. "Of course you do. You really aren't funny, Remi, you never are... Anyways," he went on, "have you seen Ambi?"

"Ambi?" Remi echoed.

Rëni rolled his eyes. "Yes, Ambi. Don't tell me you don't remember her, either." If somebody were to slit his wrist right now, Remi thought, he would surely bleed agitation.

"I've told you," he said hotly, "I can't remember anything besides my own name. Are you going to help me or not?"

"Okay," Rëni drawled. Disbelief was etched in his face. "Follow me, then." He stood up. His feet never once left the ceiling as he led Remi down the hallway. Rising from the black shadows, veins of a strange, purpled substance stretched tautly across the hall before them in a web. Remi put a hand out to sweep it aside, and found it to be damp and gummy, clinging like thought to the damp of his skin. He shook it off and pushed through with a grimace, and looked up at Rëni.

"Where are you taking me?" he demanded, feeling as though he were shouting at the floor.

"Out," Rëni replied. "Isn't that where you wanted to go? Out?"



It was, but they were passing the gleaming doors, their knobs all polished and beautifully unlocked. He reached out for one, only for Rëni to take his outstretched hand and yank him away. They sprinted down the hall, past the smattering of doors and the strange web, until Remi's eyes were streaming and he was choking for air. He faltered once, and Rëni yanked his arm, forcing him along. Remi didn't even know if he was wearing shoes—he peered down, but if he had feet, he couldn't see them. No matter how much they hurt.

"Please!"



"Quit your whining," Rëni snapped. "Ambi. I'm taking you to Ambi. She knows the way out." Ambi. Ambi, Ambi, Ambi... The name repeated in his head like a mantra. Ambi, she could save him... Would she? Would she at least tell him where he was? Finally, they turned through a doorway, and Remi almost let out a cry of relief. But it was not an exit they were going into, but rather a large room with no walls, a speckled gray floor and a black void of a ceiling.

Ambi was a girl of slight figure; her form flowed like water with every movement. Lavender waves tumbled over one shoulder, and the other half of her head was shaved. Her eye on that side was a clear, light gold, and the other was a pupilless, swirled orb of milky silver. There was a mottled scar down the bridge of her nose, stretching across her left cheek. Her dress was sleek but ruffled in the skirt, not by design but by careless disuse. She pranced towards them, moving on her toes, and when she was within three feet of them, she stopped and smiled primly.

"Ambi," she said solemnly, stretching out a hand to shake. Remi eyed it warily, and did not move. Above him, Rëni leered and walked along the absent ceiling. The entire lower half of his body seemed to be missing, black smoke curling at his chest.

"Rëni," he mimicked, stretching a hand out to an invisible acquaintance. Ambi scowled up at him, and Rëni laughed. "Girl, he doesn't want to touch you. Go on, Remi," and he drawled the name like a fake, "Tell her what you really, really want."

"How do I get out of here?" he burst out, lunging forward and grabbing the front of her dress in clenched fists. Ambi recoiled.

"Let go of me, and I'll tell you." So he did, and Ambi backed away, dusting herself off. She turned that scowl onto him, and it was remarkable how it twisted her entire face, that mottled scar distorting her otherwise pretty visage. "Never touch me again," she bit out, taking yet another step back. She looked at him like she would a particularly nasty thing. Remi didn't like it. "I'm sorry. Please," he tried, "how do I get out?"

She glowered at him for another moment, then turned away entirely. She danced along several steps and stopped, just underneath where Rëni stood, watching.

"Do you even know where you are?"

"No."

"Hm. Then how should I trust that you truly want to get out?" She turned a critical eye on him. "I'll do anything. Please, just get me out. I want to go home."

"Oh, but Remi," she whispered, voice carrying through the still air. "You are home. You are more home than you have ever been."

"What do you mean?"

"Darling, you're inside yourself." He looked desperately at her, uncomprehending. Her eyes narrowed to slits, and she sneered. "You're in your head, sweet Remi. This—" she spread her arms out in a grand gesture, "—is all you, baby. Don't like it? Then change it."

"But I don't know how!" Remi cried, increasingly agitated. "Can't you tell me?"

"No," she said, "but I can take you to where you need to be." He nodded swiftly, and Ambi took his hand. Rëni stretched his out without a word, merely an empty leer, and she took his as well. Remi blinked, and when his eyes opened again they were back in the hallway where he first began. His jaw dropped.

"What? But this—"

"Is where you need to be," Rëni interrupted. "Isn't that right, Ambi?"

"Yes. Do hurry, won't you? I get bored waiting." She leaned back against the slimy wall, pouting at him.

"But what do I do?" Neither one answered him. Remi stared desperately between them but it was pointless. He turned, paced along the length of the floor, and spun on his heel to pace back. When he looked up again, Rëni was staring at him with a curved little grin edging at his lips, and Ambi was neutral, solemn. Silence stretched between them, broken after a long moment by the raucous cawing of that damned crow. He turned to face it as it flew towards him, wingspan wider than he had ever seen, talons outstretched... aimed for his eyes.

He dodged, shouting out, and Rëni was laughing. Ambi was silent, but she backed away. The crow circled, crying out, and Remi recognized it now as a warning cry. Or was it a war cry? It looped, and wheeled towards him again with its talons out, and he dropped to the floor. Remi cowered, seething, as the crow flapped away, and it made no moves to come near him again. Remi rose to his feet once more, but...





He Isn't Alone  
Daniela Withington Russell Sage College

Daniela Withington Russell Sage College

Dead ██████████

under a [REDACTED] spotlight. He's not moved an inch,

the smell of makeup, the hardness of muscles, memories flood

the crowd. They're here for him

he isn't alone

though they've gone their separate ways

This piece was inspired by the flash fiction:  
Dead on Seven by Christopher Bean from  
[www.haringeyunchained.com](http://www.haringeyunchained.com)



y0-y0

Rachel Wilson      Haringey Sixth Form College

# La Luz Cruzando El Rio (The Light Crossing the River)

Randal Johnson   Russell Sage College

"Hey sweetheart, drink some water. You look dry," said mi madre as we trekked across the dry plain. Throughout this whole journey in the desert, it was like her worry had walked parallel to us.

"No." I cough extremely hard, hiding in my hand the blood that followed. "Estoy bien."

When I turn down the water, she begins to cry, urging me again to drink the water. I only do it for her sake. I need to prioritize my mother over myself as much as I can, or we will be sipping lizard blood and cactus nectar until we get to the "checkpoint." I sip the water as slowly as I can, preserving as much for her as possible.

"Finally, mi hijo." She stands up teary-eyed. "You know I do this for you."

She begins to rant on about how she envisions a better future for me, the same story I have heard for as long as I can remember. What can she enjoy from the so called: "Sueño Americano" I keep hearing about? What the gringos call the: "American Dream."

"I want to bring my sisters and cousins across the river too." When mom says this, I do not know how to feel about it.

The more I walk towards the border, the more doubt I feel about finally making it over. I have heard of how they do not want "my kind" on "their land," which is crazy to think. Mi tios from across the border talk about how they've been abused and taken advantage of when they work. They're paid up only 5 dollars a day for hours of backbreaking work. Other family members of mine have said that though they are living well in a subtle house, they still face hate from racist neighbors and gangs.

We still cross, knowing all of this.

So we wonder - if we cross that border, will we face hate and despair, or hope and safety? I do not know for sure. My mom and I are just the sheep being herded by the dog.

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Two days later, the border stands before us.

"My son, look!" Mom raises my head to look at the river that borders the two worlds down the hill. Are we angels looking down into hell, or are we already in hell, descending further into something worse?

When we walk onto the boat, we hold the rails with shaky hands. A mysterious lady rows us across towards mi tio who waits in the jeep across the river. When we sit in his car, at last, we take in the largest sigh of relief. We hug each other, and stuff our faces with the food he gives us.

"Hey loco, drink some water. You look dry."

I drink the water this time without being begged to. With it my worries and the blood from my throat wash away.

*"I hope the leaving is joyful; and I hope never to return." - Frida Kahlo*





## A Different Perspective on the Wadi Rum Desert, Jordan

Michael Groissl

Russell Sage College

[Instagram.com/groissl](https://www.instagram.com/groissl)

## Ayşe\*

Ozge Erdur

CreativityUnleashed

@O.erd

It was cold when she tattooed a crescent moon  
on every inch of his skin.

It all happened on that unfaithful night.

He had insisted on reading her a book,  
though Ayşe refused. She could not let him see the words,  
the ones scrawled so long ago, into her pages with old black ink.

If only Ayşe had known that this man had brought his own ink.  
His was new, youthful and hidden under the gaze of the new moon.  
He remained firm in his decision to read those shameless words,  
ones she skilfully hid for years under the layers and lips of her pink skin.  
Reckless little fool he was; he spread open her book  
and told her he liked poetry. Her cries rung loud through the night.

She fought him hard and well. The night  
was her witness, but a witness cannot stop the ink  
from seeping out between his legs onto the delicacy of her little pages. Her book  
was marked once again. She'd grieve every new moon.  
One body tainted twice now. Her skin  
a wreck, filled with deep carvings of his own. They resembled words.

They felt familiar, those words,  
reminiscent of a time long ago, on the twelfth night.  
*His* face was friendly at first before he shed his skin.  
Under that ghostly skeleton was a master of the old ink.  
She thanked him for teaching her the way to draw a crescent moon  
and silently prayed that he would not rip too many pages from her book.

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POETRY

## Something Dark

Zarin Omar

Independent Artist

@shayandzcreate

Suffocating in her pain, Ayşe asked her God, "How can I rid myself of this book?"  
With one palm facing him, she used the other to rub crimson Azaleas over engraved words.  
Scoffing at the silence, Ayşe begged the night and faced the moon.  
Silence ensued before a faint voice was heard. "You can't," whispered the night.  
Her ears pricked as she heard him urge her, to embrace the ink  
spilled and scribbled all over her sacred skin.

For a moment, Ayşe was stunned. She kneeled over a sticky mess and observed her skin.  
She pulled a hand down to feel for the thin pages of her book  
and was met instead with a tacky, tar-like substance. She convinced herself it was just ink.  
Then without a second thought, Ayşe grabbed a pen lying dormant and wrote her own words.  
"The story is yours," murmured the night.  
Ayşe did not stop dragging that pen across her skin.

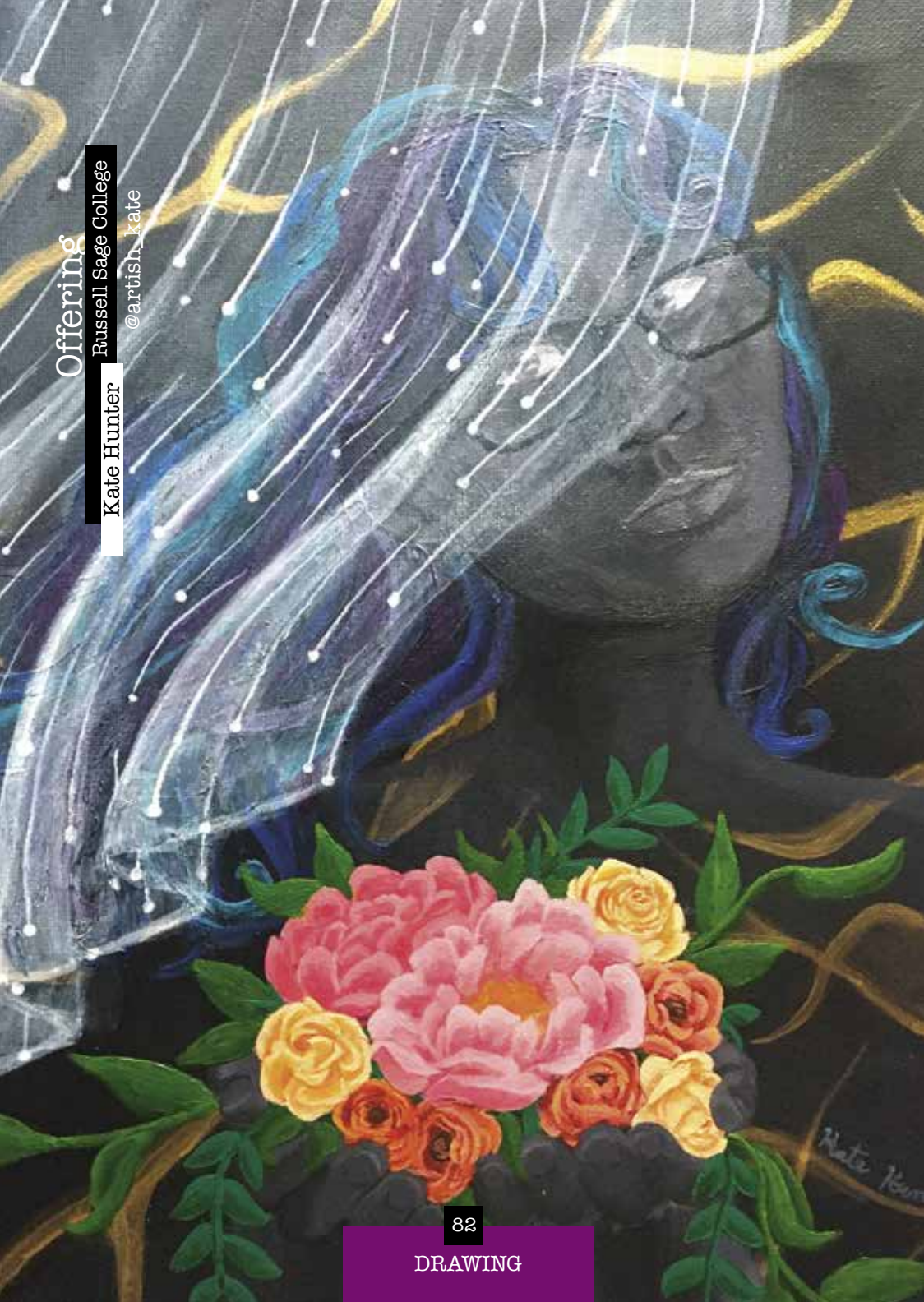
By dawn she filled every gap, every crevice with ink darker than theirs and added a little moon.  
Hers was neither a crescent nor a new moon.  
Her moon was full and grey for she could not allow a speck of light to peek through her book-  
a masterpiece and an armour. Smiling at the one above, she married the night.

\*Ayşe – Turkish name meaning, "she who lives"

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PAINTING





## A Piece of Soul

CreativityUnleashed

Andreea Pavel

@andreeapavel2195

First disappointment: a piece goes missing

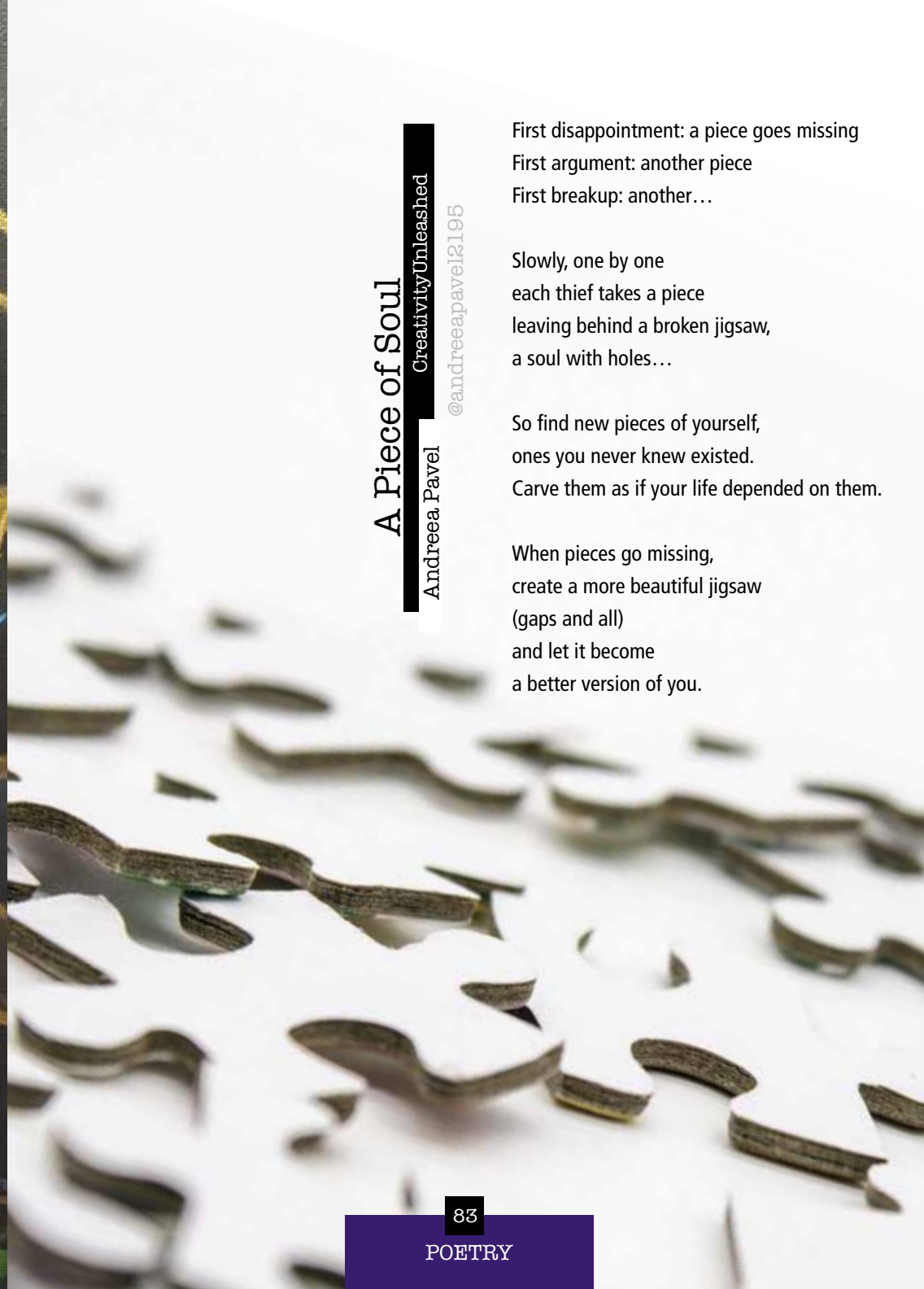
First argument: another piece

First breakup: another...

Slowly, one by one  
each thief takes a piece  
leaving behind a broken jigsaw,  
a soul with holes...

So find new pieces of yourself,  
ones you never knew existed.  
Carve them as if your life depended on them.

When pieces go missing,  
create a more beautiful jigsaw  
(gaps and all)  
and let it become  
a better version of you.



## Isolation

Ethan Alcee

Russell Sage College

84

PHOTOGRAPHY

## This Sinister House

Natalie Gifford

Russell Sage College

85

FICTION

"She told herself it was time, time to let go, time to move on."

1.

Silence...she never knew it could be so loud. It filled the hallways, the cracks in the walls. Even the storm that raged outside remained quiet when its light struck the ground.

A flash from the storm lit up the house and caused Rose to break her daze. Her eyes roamed across the furniture making their way to the fireplace, and then to the walls filled with family photos.

Rose moved from the doorway to make her way around the house. As she opened the doors to all the rooms, each one gave her another memory of her siblings, memories of the objects in each room that they had broken with their mischief. Eventually, she stood in front of the room at the end of the hall.

ROSE sat in big letters on the door exactly as it had from when she was younger. She reached for the doorknob and turned it. To her surprise, it was locked. Not once in her life were any of the doors in this house locked, other than the front door. What made it even stranger was that the door knob didn't have a key, let alone a keyhole. It couldn't be locked.

The strangeness of the lock door suddenly slipped Rose's mind; she turned away from her door to make her way back to the living room.

2.

When she woke up on the sofa in the same clothes from the night before, it took a moment of blinking for Rose to realize where she was again.

The storm still raged outside of the window on her right; the dinner table to her left. Rose stood up and walked towards the dining table, looking at each placement, circling the table like a predator. Eventually, she picked up a plate from the table, holding it in both hands. When she looked up in front of her, before her stood a wall filled with pictures; her eyes landed on her reflection in one of them.

"Rose moved from room to room smashing, tearing, and destroying everything in her way."



Rose lifted the plate still in her hands and threw it, with all her force, at the pictures. The plate shattered on impact, taking a few pictures and their frames along with it. Rose picked up another plate in one hand, this time smashing it on the floor. She proceeded to do this with every plate, every glass, and even every fork, knife, and spoon until the kitchen table was just shards of glass itself.

Rose made her way to the living room, walking right up to the curtains, grabbing them, pulling down until the curtain rod hit the floor with its metal.

She was alone.

Rose moved from room to room smashing, tearing, and destroying everything in her way.

3.

She held up the family photo as she knelt on the ground, shards of glass all around her. When she looked to the side, with a sudden movement of manic intent, she grabbed a piece of glass from her broken glass garden and attempted to use it to put the picture she held back together. She didn't care if the shard hadn't actually broken off from that specific photo. She was damned if it wasn't going to fit, as if it were Cinderella's shoe and this was a fairytale.

Maybe if she put them back together, it would be alright. Her family would show up and all would be back to the way it was. That never happened. The rest of Rose's day consisted of smashing pictures, followed by her attempt to put the pieces back together, followed again by more destruction and re-piecing.

Rose stood up, exhausted from her meaningless work. Eventually, she ended up in a random guest room, falling almost immediately onto the bed into sleep.

4.

She could hear every drop that landed on the roof, every so often startled by lightning streaking down the windows. She didn't dare to move. There was nothing she had to do and no one she had to see.

Rose now knew that she was all alone in this sinister house.

Eventually, she made her way to the mess in the kitchen. At first, she walked delicately to avoid the glass, but then she lost the motive to dance around her pain and stepped directly on the broken glass that decorated the floor.

Something in Rose told her to look down the hallway beyond the table. Her eyes landed on the door she had labeled as her own. ROSE. And suddenly, she knew what was going to be behind that door; she didn't want to face it. But didn't matter; Rose had learned that the right time never comes.

She reached for the doorknob and this time, it opened.

5.

Rose stood on the dirt shoulder of a back road.

In front of her lay what her psyche had tried to forget... herself. Rose's body laid next to the car, still as if she could pretend she was only asleep. But now Rose had remembered the full story. She had died that day. She never did make it to the hospital; she died on that street alone, unwilling to move on.

But she had to now.

She told herself it was time, time to let go, time to move on. She felt relief as the world around her started to grow brighter. She started to fade away with it; fading away, an hour, a day and evermore. The storm had passed, and so had she.



## If You Wait Long Enough

Chloe Harrison Russell Sage College

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INK PAINTING

## 'advertisement'

Tahanni Yehya Hussein Haringey Sixth Form College

my body is a house for rent  
right at the end of the high street  
it has been on the market for a while now, no more lodgers allowed enter only if you can give me the deposit and only if you have a good track record for references.

*i said please no intruders*

the front porch needs a good tending to every once in a while  
the bright red garden door is broken and doesn't lock at all,  
but don't worry, it'll be boarded up soon all the ground floor windows are gated shut.

*i mowed the lawn across my thighs*

enter. living room is to your left, kitchen to your right. you can see the hallway is curved slightly, it adds character ashy-brown wallpaper peeling like potato skins. can be changed upon request. draught coming in?

give the radiator a kick and it'll get working in no time

*i poured vinegar onto my scalp, rid my hair of the smell of damp*

up the stairs, the floorboards are quite creaky  
one bedroom, double bed the headboard is drilled into the wall  
fully furnished, a white duvet, two white pillows, small ikea lamp on the desk. the oak closet doesn't shut, put something heavy in front of it maybe.

*my hallway light never turned on anymore*

bathroom floor is turquoise-tiled, matches the wall tiles and sink. blue bathtub is not in use because there's a nail-sized hole in the corner that leaks. a shower will work just fine  
sink tap's a little spluttery, give it 30 seconds or so.

windowsill above sink overlooks the main road, it's loud at night

*my mouth tasted like fairy, my spit looked like soap suds*

this is the end of the tour. yes, can provide fixings.  
we don't do long term rentals. maximum 2 months thank you for your time  
if you know anyone else who'd be interested, please let me know  
walk around me, into me, through me,  
*you may not always like what you see*

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POETRY



# Speed

Zaffrin Hussain

Haringey Sixth Form College

A bullet is the size of a baby's pinky finger, so tiny and small, yet so powerful and damaging to the human body. One shot and you're gushing out blood, slowly losing your life as your vision starts to fade away. Boom, numerous shots splashed onto your body, and you're dead on the floor. Your time of survival is decreased depending on the amount of shots you have received and you have nothing left but just to rely on the strength of your fragile body.

A bullet is nothing without a gun, and a gun is nothing without the bullet.

I am nothing without the drug. At least, that's how I feel. The pill is so tiny, so delicate and small, it's like your own personal pet ant. Once swallowed, the hidden poison of the pill starts to flow around your body as if a slithering cobra dug its fang onto your smooth skin, triggering and targeting every part of your cell to increase.

The feeling is amazing -- you feel on top of the world like God, eyes wide open, pupils dilated, jaw clenching, biting pens, uncontrollable hyperness and increased amount of confidence rushing through your blood, body and veins then out through your mouth. Suddenly, you're like Einstein, everything around you makes total sense and it's like a gifted superpower of feeling above, of feeling a better you, of feeling peacefully complete within yourself.

People stare you at you like you're weird, out of place and there is something utterly wrong with you but to you they don't understand what it feels like to be picked up from such a damaging reality onto a mystical and dreamy land of your own. They don't know that sensation of powerful pleasure. This drug is what makes you feel smart; you no longer think with your stupid disgusting, delicate and demolished heart, you now think with your logical brain where it hands you personal glasses to finally see through peoples facades and forces you to put yourself above others because if you were sober, your heart would rather put these selfish people above instead.

Crackhead, crackhead, crackhead. Everyone's favourite word to use upon another for doing minor activities in public like riding around a fucking Tesco trolley or smoking a bit of weed. That word is used so heavily, but when the word is called out, it depends on the level of seriousness behind it. You can be called a crackhead in terms of doing things so bizarre yet humorous, like a gifted medal awarded to you for being such a rebel or you can be called a crackhead as you slowly lose control of conscious and no longer want to face bitter reality, so you choose to do more drugs laying on the shelf rather than the classic mary jane and some booze. You are now the official crackhead, but not the praising or cool label type but the severe insulting and judgemental type instead.

“A bullet is nothing  
without a gun, and  
a gun is nothing  
without the bullet.”

But they don't understand unless they've tried it. When everything in your life is just a repetitive dull energy of sorrows and pain spinning around with the earth, as time passes by, your heart starts to numb, your intelligence starts to fade and your morals start to disappear. The child you once were who stood by the statement of 'I will never do drugs, they're so bad for you' no longer exists within your soul as you are bombarded with tons of speed, weed and Hennessy surrounding your body, slowly stripping away your innocence and your morals. My 12 year old self is probably staring at me with so much disappointment in his eyes now as if to ask: How did we get to this?



## Step Thru the Door, Designer Head to Toe

Ramasoj Williams Russell Sage College

## It's Not My Fault

Ashlynn Rumrill Russell Sage College

I inhabit an empty, barren world. A world, once beautiful, now destroyed by war and hatred between man and its creations. I look ahead of me to the tides rolling shells onto the sand by my feet, trying not to focus on the grey clouds reflecting in the water that rises behind me. I know what those ash-colored clouds of smoke are from, but it's not my fault. I swear.

I was a graduate engineering student just a year ago under Professor Grant, a world-renowned inventor. As part of my study, I helped him construct one of the world's first AI soldiers. It was a huge deal, being able to watch the Professor work on this project that could potentially change the course of history, let alone helping to build it. I was given my own set of blueprints and work tables. I didn't have access to his lab. I didn't know.

It was a huge success. The AI soldiers were not only sold to the military but as security guard systems in people's homes. The Professor had allowed me to bring home one of the robots for free as a thank you for helping on the project. If I'd only known what would happen, I never would have brought that damned thing into my house.

I woke up to the sound of a gunshot and muffled screaming. I got out of bed and rushed to my parent's bedroom, where I heard the screams. When I got there, I only found their bodies, and the hunched-over figure of my own AI soldier. It turned to me, its eyes grey and empty, so unlike the bright blue they had been that evening. It started walking towards me, and I ran.

"I look ahead of me to  
the tides rolling shells  
onto the sand by my feet,  
trying not to focus on  
the grey clouds reflecting  
in the water that rises  
behind me."

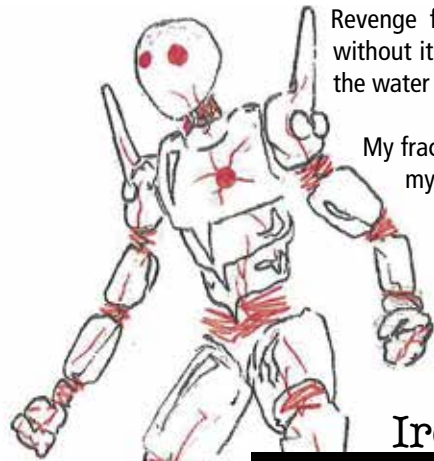
I found the original blueprints to these monsters that now ran free, causing destruction wherever they went. Grant had never created free-thinking robots to protect the people; these things were some sick joke of a cyborg. These things had human brains and muscles intertwined with wires and broken nerves, human parts encompassed by machinery, made to do the biddings of a deranged man.



Grant had created cyborg monsters with a taste for blood, and I had helped him do it.

My phone flickers in and out of life on the sand next to me, flashing pictures of a life I accept that I was partially responsible for ruining. Finally, finding my resolve, I turn to face the humanoid creature of my nightmares, my creation. In front of me is half of a skeletal figure hanging from a tree by its wires. Its metal face is ripped off to reveal a human skull with dull, merciless eyes staring at me with hatred and recognition. Its all-black metal armor is scratched beyond repair and falling off in places. The only thing not ripped in half from the fight is its right arm resting limply next to it, reaching just a bit closer to the ground than its dangling vertebrae. Its shredded torso is just a mess of meat and wires. I can't fathom how Grant put it together in the first place.

"This is for my parents," I say as I step closer to the creature, a gun in a white-knuckled grip in my right hand. This creature is the one I brought into my home, my parents' murderer. A part of me feels bad for the thing, it was only following orders. But grief is not logical; in fact grief is aggressive. I stab it right through where a human heart should be, between cracks in its armor; maybe it had a heart, perhaps it didn't. I never did look too closely at the original blueprints. I watch as its eyes flicker back to blue and then close.



Revenge feels less sweet when it's on a creature without its own free will. I walk back to the edge of the water and look down.

My fractured reflection stares back at me. "It's not my fault," I tell it. Right?

## Iron Giant

Baransel Kutlu

Haringey Sixth Form College

@barren420666

At the hill at the end of the melting tar road  
guarded by dogs cloaked in fleas,  
we pinned branches to the earth with rocks,  
packed the space beneath with coats,  
and called it home.

We gathered red berries we knew not to eat,  
made piles in our pantry - a culvert in the ditch -  
broken sticks for our forks and leaves for our bowls.  
The dogs: wolves who warned us of danger -  
the men in their low slung cars and pants  
down the road.

Climbing a tree, peeling the bark in spirals  
with dirt-caked hands, the nails bitten away  
making it harder, we said it was work  
and stayed treetop long past pleasure  
because this is what our father taught us:  
to hate the job and do it anyway until your fingers bled.

Standing on top of the hill,  
our skinny legs streaked with mud and mashed mosquitoes,  
the wolves tame now at our feet,  
our fingers throbbing, our house our own,  
we shrieked and hollered our triumph,  
it wasn't as hard as our parents made it look, this life.



## Our Home Our Own

Felecia Minette Cummings

Russell Sage College

# Mirage of Eden

Marisa Mustafa

Middlesex University &  
Fairtrade Competition Winner

To this vision I am bound:  
the wasp buzz of a wave;  
life and colour all around;  
the blessings mother gave.  
I am - choking - on dreams  
of a rich, safe Eden -  
a world serene at its seams,  
uncut by cords of freedom.  
Inhale fumes - exhale smoke -  
a star - with wings  
interrupts my hope -  
and the - breath - it brings.  
Fair trades and honest tongues,  
sustainability will suffice.  
Cemeteries of - uprooted lungs -  
replaces paradise...  
reward! - to those who stab-  
at our womb -  
and for those who tend, not grab,  
the creatures, fruits, and bloom?  
This rot - is in - my veins -  
consume, consume, consume  
we must - burn these chains  
to kill - our barren doom.  
Touch life beyond the computer,  
rain and jungle dew,  
a cleaner, greener future,  
peace not just for the few.  
My throat - burns

satisfaction slips my fingers  
and to the past returns,  
so only faith now lingers.  
For libraries of celestial stories  
Sun and Moon chase each other  
over unpolluted territories.  
Tree nymphs will rediscover  
their legs to dance and play  
among skyscraper trees and towers.  
Ink-free mermaids visit the bay  
threading crowns of flowers,  
never to know a plastic hell.  
Fair costs and full cheeks  
Nature, cast your spell!  
Sung from mouths and beaks.  
Imagine bellies full of berries,  
imagine poverty, illness ended,  
imagine trees alive with fairies,  
imagine our earth, tended.



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