



THE  
DAPHNE  
REVIEW

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WINTER 2022



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“The Daphne Review”  
“Winter 2022”

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“There’s just something beautiful about walking in snow that nobody else has walked on.  
It makes you believe you’re special.”

—*Carol Rifka Brunt*



Yulin (Rain) Zhai expresses the emotions he feels on a daily basis through poetry and art. He is currently in Grade 11 attending St. George's School in Vancouver, British Columbia.

Rainzha



## Stardust

### INVINCIBLE

I remember when Jesse, Addie, and I would go to Triangle Park and lay our backs on the soft grass. The first thing I would do when we got there was to look up at the night sky and find the moon. It was a crescent moon this time, a small sliver of white against an expanse of deep space blue. I brought my thumb up to the little arc, moving my finger from left to right. Now you see the moon, now you don't. It was always there, my little anchor. Space was big, bigger than the mansion left of Triangle Park—infinite. Even though I didn't fully know what space was at the time, other than some faraway stars and the moon, I was mesmerized.

It was cold out there, especially with the grass dampening our clothes, but I didn't mind. Being a kid meant that you never got sick. You were indestructible. Practically eternal.

When Jesse and Addie wanted to go back home, I went along with them, even if I wanted to lay in the summer darkness forever. We would have gotten at least three mosquito bites each, but it was worth that little moment of childlike freedom—and reflection.

We crept back to our porch and to the warmth inside. My stomach grumbled like the growl of the mountain lions I saw at the zoo, but the grilled cheeses soon satisfied the beast.

After dinner, we went outside to wind down. I brought a book with me, but I wasn't allowed to read since the porch lantern didn't give off enough light and my eyes would go bad. We ate Bomb Pops, the ones with American colors that make up a French flag. Addie liked the cherry part, Jesse the lime, and me the blue raspberry, so we all switched popsicles when the time came. When we had to go back inside, the bottom portion of my face was dyed cerulean blue. My friends said it made me look like an alien, and I smiled to show them my sapphire teeth.

### VULNERABLE

It was a full moon this time. I was lucky to even be able to see it since it had rained most of the day. Swollen droplets pattered on the roof like those musicians in the street who pelted empty cans of paint into a chaotically organized rhythm. God was crying, mom said, but I knew it was just the hydrologic system doing its thing. Besides, today was a momentous day. Today was history. God should be happy.

A light drizzle sprinkled my face now as I looked into the light pewter sky, the petrichor flooding my nose. Maybe I could see Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin on the surface of Earth's satellite as they planted the little American flag—but no, that would be ridiculous. Only a baby would think that. I went back in when my hair started dripping and making little rain of its own.

I would catch a cold, mom warned, because of my damp hair. That was just an old wives' tale, I told her.

A couple of days later, I got pneumonia. I expectorated apple-sauce-like phlegm (maybe I was an alien). My chest was an Indian tabla, a hollow Easter bunny chocolate. I felt like having chocolate, not that I was allowed to since that made my throat worse. Addie and Jesse weren't allowed to see me, so they passed me notes through the gap under the door. The curtains in my room shut me out from the outside and the moon. I was too tired to call out for anyone to open them, anyways.

I wasn't space. I wasn't cosmic. But I was still resilient enough to survive and imagine what infinity could look like.

## EVERLASTING

You reminisce about these memories in a honey-colored haze, like the faded old pictures you have of yourself with your family and friends. You hold the photographs dusted with age and look at that wide grin you plastered on your face, the one with your two front teeth missing. Your eyes drift to your hands, wilted petals with streams of life running through them, sectioning off into the deltas near your knuckles.

You put away your souvenirs because even if you get a warm feeling from remembering, your eyes get a little wet from thinking of your life in the past tense, like living backward. You breathe in the musty air, tinted with the recycled paper box you keep your trinkets in, and heave a sigh, the action reverberating in your tabla lungs.

You purse your pale lips as you get up and push your foggy hair from your face. Your knees creak like the floorboards that led up to the porch of your childhood home. You remind yourself to take your calcium tablets.

You bundle yourself in a scarf and a cardigan and venture out to the balcony of your apartment and glance up. Sure enough, your moon's still there, emitting a faint, ghost-white glow. You picture Jesse and Addie staring up with you, bringing yourself back to Triangle Park. Addie is all you have left from those times. You could call her to come and join you, but you wouldn't want to wake her from her sleepy dreams. Instead, you send her a message on the new phone that your kids got you, smiling as you type out "Hey Addie you still kicking? Thinking of you." You pull the cardigan even closer around you and peer back up, past the clouds.

Crescent moons speckle the universe of your fingertips. You are born from the supernovas of stars. You are not forever, but you got a chance to experience a piece of it. And for you, it tasted a little like blue raspberry and felt like landing on the moon.

## Stained Glass

If I close my eyes, the first thing I see is the polished surface of the pews in front of me. Rows and rows of them, as shiny as freshly minted pennies. They were slippery too—and hard. No wonder people would get up and stand whenever they got the chance.

If you could measure religion, my parents and I would be pretty low on the scale. I didn't pray before I ate; I never made it through the Old Testament; I could only name one of the apostles, the betrayer one.

I picked a hymn book from one of the wooden slots nailed to the backs of the benches and flipped through its pages, golden with age. That's when I met you. You asked if we could share, since there were no more books left. We sang together, mouthing out the words we didn't understand and belting out the few that we got the hang of. We whispered to each other in voices that were too low for adult ears and munched on the Cheerios they gave to us in paper cups.

Then the man in the pulpit would bring his solemn voice to the microphone and asked us to bow our heads.

**I bow my head now. I spray the stone with Windex and crush the ants that dare crawl over the inscription. *In loving memory of...***

**I look at the ground and hang my head like a painting. I see two kids rolling down the hill, grass and twigs getting caught in their hair. I used to be one of those kids, ignoring the names they rolled over, inhaling the sweetness of the green and the golden. You were the other. They laugh and smile to show their crooked teeth and run back up on stained feet. They don't realize that the hills they summersault down were built on caskets and remembered ghosts.**

**Weeds stretch over the marble, and I tear those up. I shove red carnations into the pot, because red was your favorite.**

Every week, we would find each other in the same row. We clasped our hands together, like when the teacher asked us to, making sure we weren't hiding anything under our desks. Ten fingers interwoven, braided together. They formed a staircase, leading towards heaven we guessed. We sat so close to each other that our hair wove together, a mix between ink black and chestnut brown.

Tangled hair, crinkled church dresses, scuffed shoes, long socks that itched.

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And when I stopped going to Sunday school and Sunday service, because I was busy, too busy for preachers and God, we met in the park next to my house.

My legs were sore because I grew an inch, but you were still taller than me.

“It hurts to grow up,” I said.

“It hurts to stand still,” you responded.

We gave names to the things we saw in the sky and tried to define clouds into something we understood, or thought we understood. A dog, a butterfly, the face of your mom who you hadn't seen in a year.

We looked until the sun burned our faces and our eyes, until it made us see little black dots.

**After days of rain, the weather decides to clear up. The sky is so clear that it looks squeezed from a store-bought tube of paint. Little utopian clouds glide through, like the ones we claimed looked *much* more like an eagle than a butterfly. I close my eyes but still see the remnants of the golden sun imprinted on the inside of my eyelids. It would've been better if it had rained, if the background was gray and cold and damp. It would've been better if the sky mourned like me, so I didn't feel so alone.**

***The world won't stop for you. It is up to you to live your life and journey through it. That's what the pastor said once, and we thought that was so obvious. A roll your eyes moment.***

**I wish it would pause for me. I wish that I wouldn't have to resume without you.**

They said that thunder was a sign that God was angry, but we knew better than that.

We knew about the water cycle and of big words like atelophobia and precipitation. We learned about evolution and fertilization and all of the -tions.

Weren't we so smart? Smart enough to stay at my house when your dad's eyes drooped, when his words melted together, when the air around him smelled sour and ancient.

But I still prayed at night. I prayed about upcoming tests and for a fancy bike with the straw basket and for the dark lump in my grandfather's stomach to go away. But praying was like a letter you sent to another country or the list I used to send to Santa. I was never sure if He got them and I never got a response.

But even if I was talking to the ceiling, I still recited what I had memorized long ago.

“Our Father who art in heaven,”

**We dipped our heads and crossed our hands, like how you cross your hands on your wooden table, like good students.**

**“Hallowed be thy name,”**

**I remember that summer we cut our palms on a severed branch and held our hands together. Blood sisters. You scrunched up your nose when I said that, so we pledged to be blood siblings instead.**

**“Thy kingdom come, thy will be done,”**

**The church was like the inside of a castle. You loved the windows and how the light that came through was dyed in blues and reds. We were like those windows; our faces were stained glass. Shattered, uneven shapes of conflicting colors, pieced back together into something like art. We fit together like those jagged fragments of compressed sand, and it made me forget how broken we were in the first place.**

**“On earth as it is in heaven,”**

**If we didn't believe in a heaven, we still believed in an After. And in this After, you said you would be a different person. I laughed at that. *Why would you want to complicate things like that,* I asked. *I would live in a glass palace, where it's always sunny and bright. You would be there too, obviously.* I pretended not to notice how your smile didn't meet your eyes, and how it hadn't met them in a while.**

**We went back to fantasizing about our After, daydreaming about death. And I kept on pretending that this was just a guessing game, that I was just imagining how serious your face got.**

**“Give us this day or daily bread,”**

**I didn't notice the gray under your eyes when we looked at the sky. I didn't see your bitten fingernails and how tired you became. We talked about something; I heard everything; I listened to nothing.**

**“And forgive us our trespasses, and we forgive those who trespass against us,”**

**I saw the changes in the way you dressed, the way you hunched your shoulders, the way you lowered your voice, the way you stopped telling me secrets.**

**I didn't hear the screams in your whispers or the lies in your pinky promises.**

**“I don't belong with myself,” you murmured before falling asleep. “I don't belong in this self. I feel wrong.”**

**“I don't think any teenager feels like they belong,” I reassured you.**

**I didn't understand you.**

**“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil,”**

**Buzzed hair, crinkled shirts, scuffed shoes, long socks that itched. Sleepless sleepovers, wide eyes, frown lines, quiet voices.**

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“For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,”

**They found broken glass on your bathroom floor, stained in your favorite color. They found other things too, but I plugged my ears. I shut my eyes like when we played hide and seek and I counted to twenty, because I wasn't a cheater. And I let you hide, away from me.**

“For ever and ever,”

**Forever is a joke with a failed punchline. It was what the pastor cracked in the beginning of sermons. It's what we had engraved on our split heart pendants we hung around our necks, the ones that connected like a puzzle. Forever is what we judged time by when we were young, multiplying it by infinity and dividing it by Sundays. We didn't realize that forever is a long time, and even glass has an expiration date.**

**I must've spent hours staring at your stone name. You were right; it was all wrong.**

**When I looked at you, I was looking at my best friend. But I never truly saw you.**

**Not until they gave me the other half of the heart, as cold as your hand. Not until I read the note that said you were sorry, that this is what you wanted.**

**Not until you signed it with your true name.**

“Amen.”

BIO: Barrett Ahn is a senior at Le Lycée Français de Los Angeles. She has been recognized by the National Scholastic Art and Writing Awards, TeenInk, the Decameron Project, and more. She completed her debut novel, *Of Swords and Seasons*, which will come out early fall. When she's not writing, she's either reading or eating her favorite Korean dish, sundubu.

## Things Unsaid

By Mabel Chen

The definition of lying is vague, varying per person and dictionary. It might mean stating the opposite of the truth or masking the truth. From the beginning, things were left for me to uncover. Big things. I was abandoned in a public area for someone to find, not to claim. Taken into an orphanage, I met others like me. Admittedly, it made me feel better about myself; I wasn't the only unwanted child.

With my roommate, Jasmine, and three boys across the hall, we made a home at the orphanage. We grew up together, went to school together, and saw each other's ups and downs. We were a family. But every family has its secrets, and ours was no exception.

It popped up like a surprise, shattering our perfect glass world. We thought we were simply lost kids with no home. Correction, only four of us five thought this. As close as we were before, the apexes and abhorrent challenges of high school taught us to love each other through thick and thin. Together, we got through a time where classes mounted homework in front of our child-like faces and standardized tests loomed over our small stature. But we were together and that was all that mattered. We would always be. As kids, we planned our future after we graduated and merged with others into society. We would go to the same college, room together, and find jobs together. We even planned to rent a small house--before it all came crashing down on the first warm spring day of senior year, as if the fine weather wore a mocking smile.

We were walking through the front door of the orphanage, laughing at Mark's spot-on imitation of the physics teacher.

"And what do we have here? A sleeping student in *my* class! The audacity!" Jasmine and I crouch down, holding our stomachs in laughter. Asher shoots a spiky glare at Mark through his aviator sunglasses, with no effect. "My friend," Mark says as he lifts the shades from Asher's face, revealing startling ocean-blue eyes, and slides them on himself, "These should only be worn by the stylish." Jasmine and I laugh even harder. I grab my Nikon, always on a weathered leather strap around my neck. *Click!*

"Hey! Give those back." Asher rips them off Mark's face, placing the sunglasses on top of his head of messy brown hair. "It's not like you can blame me, Mr. Stewart's class is boring as heck," he says as he gives me a hand, helping me back up. I lock arms with Jasmine and we pull ourselves up. "I can still hear his voice in my head. 'Well well Asher, would you care to tell us the details of projectile motion?'"

Mark steps in, “And you know what he said? ‘I actually do care. If you wouldn’t mind kind Mr. Stewart, I’ll excuse myself to the nurse’s office to cure myself of boredom.’ And he left the classroom just like that!” Jasmine and I fall over again, this time Dawn helping us up.

After agreeing to leave for the park in five minutes, Mark yells, “We’re starting the timer!” Jasmine and I lock gazes and roll our eyes in unison, racing to get ready. Jasmine, never without a full face of makeup, quickly reapplies her blush and gloss as I find something to wear for us. I pull my sandy blond hair into a messy bun while Jasmine ties her brown-black hair into a french side braid, all in record time. We maneuver the tiny dorm like professionals, getting ready in a record five.

“Come here, let’s capture this success with a mirror pic,” I tell Jasmine as I motion for her to come closer. We strike model-like poses, one leg coming out and our heads tilted at different angles, creating the perfect image for a collage. *Click!* Jasmine drags me to meet the boys as I scrutinize my appearance in the photo. At the bottom of the stairs, the boys are waiting, stopwatch in hand. The moment our feet hit the floor, the click of the button rings through the room. We wait for Mark to say the time. “Five-o-five.” The boys start clapping and cheering, slapping each other on the backs. *Click!*

“Oh come on, five seconds,” Jasmine says as she holds up five fingers. “That rounds down to five!” She turns to me and moves her eyes back, in the direction of Dawn.

I loop the camera strap of my beloved vintage model over my neck as I step up. “Dawn, it was only five seconds, that was the time it took you to--” I cut off as he slams his hand over my mouth. Asher and Mark look at us in interest, “Took him to what?”

I smirk. The hook is set. I step away from Dawn and place my hands on Asher and Mark’s shoulders making them bend down to eye level with me. I whisper, “That was the total amount of time Dawn’s first ki--” I’m cut off again, this time by Dawn abruptly spinning me around and bending down to look me in the eye, before proceeding to blow in my face. “Eww, go away,” I groan as Dawn laughs and steps away.

“So, five seconds?” Dawn’s smile immediately falls. Contemplating, he runs his hands through his blond hair, causing shining locks to frame his movie-star face. *Click!* He turns to Mark and Asher, “They’re good. They made it.” They gape at him.

“What?!”

“How could you just ... how could you betray us?” Asher says dramatically before placing his hand over his heart. *Click!* Jasmine throws her arm over my shoulders. “Told you Daisy works magic, especially if it’s Dawn.” She shoots him a smirk. I laugh as I hook my arms through theirs, linking us together, “Let’s go.”

We have fun at the park, splashing and pushing each other in the river. I catch moments on camera and walk ahead of the others, eager to develop the image in my make-shift darkroom. When we return to the orphanage, our clothes drip on the floor. It was a wonderful time, laughing, smiling, and gossiping together. Yet, life doesn’t linger on happily, and crushing news will flip us sideways.

Ms. Blaine, our parent figure, greets us with a worried expression. She looks tired and a bit unkempt - her always perfect hair frizzy around her face. As she removes her round tortoiseshell glasses, she meets



us with compassionate eyes, saying, "Let's go to my office." We glance at each other worryingly. No matter what trouble we get into, we never go to her office.

As soon as we sit, she starts, "I don't want to break this to you guys but Dawn's--" He speaks, cutting her off. "She's here." It isn't a question, it's a statement. The rest of us exchange looks, who's here? Dawn abruptly jumps out of his chair to greet an elegant woman in designer clothes with oversized sunglasses and a broad-brimmed sun hat.

"Mom." There is pin-drop silence.

"Mom?!" Mark repeats. "You have a mom? You *know* you have a mom?"

Dawn turns to us with a mellow expression, "I ... she couldn't take care of me so she left me here." He pauses before continuing, "She reached out a few months ago, asking me to live with her. I ... I met up with her a few times." As he talks, I feel pieces of my heart fall away. My camera hangs like a lifeline around my neck as I tighten my hold on it.

"So what now, you're going to leave us 'cause your mom married some rich guy and wants you back?" Asher asks.

"Asher!" Ms. Blaine exclaims. "Be polite - she's our guest."

"She is *not* our guest - that's for sure." Mark says as he points at us. He turns his finger to Dawn, "But she sure is his." He drops his arm, "Let's go." The four of us make our way up the stairs, through the twisted hallways, and to our rooms. I curl up on my bed, hugging my legs to my chest. Jasmine lays next to me and the boys stand, hovering over us. Our faces all say the same: we're in shock. Steps echo through the hallway. Dawn.

He crouches down to eye level with me. "I'm so sorry Daisy. I didn't think it would turn out this way. If I had a choice, I'd stay. I'll visit you, I promise. I love you and please remember, you'll always be my little sister." He kisses my forehead and ruffles my hair before slowly getting up. His eyes linger on the camera next to me before he smiles sadly and leaves. My eyes follow his figure, thinking how just two hours ago, we were laughing together. How times change.

Dawn's departure left me raw with emotion. The full impact didn't hit me until the next morning. I missed his annoying antics - his complaints about breakfast, his tricks to get the passenger seat with the most legroom, and the way he screeched to songs we played in the car. He disappeared from our world, leaving an empty space. We were never the same: our banter was gone - and when we tried to keep each other smiling, we knew there was a missing part.

The next week, we graduated. We took our grad pictures, the four of us throwing our caps in the air. We hugged, laughed, and partied hard. That was the last moment of us four I caught on camera.

18 years. That was what we had together. 18 years and everything we knew fell apart. Dawn's departure forced my eyes to open to reality. Our dream was unrealistic, and time proved it true. We weren't together and even the four of us went to separate colleges. The memories of him were still fresh, soon to turn into

scars. I wanted to tell them that although things would never be the same, we could still be together. But I couldn't. Every time I called, it never left my mouth. It remained shut, locked in a prison.

"Snow was falling, so much like stars filling the dark trees that one could easily imagine its reason for being was nothing more than prettiness (Mary Oliver)." I look up to the window. It's not snowing - it's California. However, it is winter break. Everyone left yesterday, leaving me the remaining soul in the student apartment. There's none of the usual noises from the coffee machine, clanking of plates, or chatter of three girls. Yesterday I helped them pack and drive them to the airport, saying goodbyes. I was never good at saying goodbyes and still am not.

There's a week until Christmas and I've been delaying gift shopping. Holiday shopping means I have to think of *him* and I don't want to. Even if we do go to the same college. Imagine my shock when I received a birthday present in our freshman year with a return address of one of the college dorms and the name "Dawn, forever your brother" scrawled on the front.

I'm going to a nearby campus store, the perfect place for Christmas shopping. As soon as I take a step onto the cobblestone, I recognize my first mistake. Everything is closed. It depicts the image of a dark, abandoned alleyway parents teach their kids to avoid. However, Christmas lights zigzag across the sky, illuminating the small shops and overwhelming me with nostalgia for the good days. I shake my head. Now is not the time to think of them. I lift my camera, the same one from three years ago, snapping a picture of the brightened sky.

Making my way through the street, I stop at a corner store. The bright Christmas tree overshines everything else in the window, including my reflection. Ugly. Why do I look so different from college girls on TV? I take pictures of the shop, trying hard to not be in the frame.

"The window is a mirror," I mutter quietly to myself. I think back to the time when Jasmine and I took photos before the mirror, imitating models for fun. My finger unconsciously hovers over the button on my camera as the corners of my mouth lift. *Click*. I immediately frown. I look down at my smiling photo - the dimples, curve of my mouth, seeking eyes - the way my whole face looks lighter. Happiness. *Feelings*. It's beautiful.

Looking at today's developed photos, a question hovers in my head. When was the last time I looked like this? And it hits. When Dawn left. Shockingly, I don't frown when I think of him. I take out my photo collection, glancing at moments we were together - laughing, glaring, imitating, having *fun*. And the smile appears again. We look good.

Over the following week, I go out every day, visiting my favorite coffee and gourmet food shop. I find myself smiling more, greeting people with "Hi, how are you doing?" instead of walking past them with my head down. Leaving for a small errand, I stop in front of the mirror for a quick outfit check.

"Wow you look nice," I compliment myself as I do a small twirl and smile at myself in the mirror. I take a picture of myself and send it to the others. As I walk back home, I notice the colors of the world. Green, red, and white. Green for the nature I see. Red for the Christmas sweaters. White for the snow I so desperately want.

Per our tradition, the four of us gather at my place for Christmas. *Ring!*

“And here she comes, late as always,” says Asher, not even bothering to look at the door. I roll my eyes before getting up and opening the door for Jasmine.

“Oh my god, you guys won’t believe what happened.” There is a dramatic pause as Jasmine leans over, fishing for a reaction. Finding none, she straightens herself announcing, “First, I would like to say that this time I did leave the house on time. I simply went to get Starbucks for y’all--.”

“We all know you went to Starbucks for yourself.” Mark cuts her off as he looks down at the game. “Just give us our drinks.”

Jasmine glares at his back, bringing the coffee box from behind her. “I got everyone’s usual,” she says as she starts listing the drinks. When she pulls out the last drink, she gives it an odd look, “And weirdly still, a strawberry cream frappuccino for the unusual Mark.”

“Hey, stop trash-talking my preferences!” Mark exclaims. “And how does that make me ‘unusual?’”

I laugh, “That’s a compliment. It means you’re not average.” Mark shifts his glare to me. I shrug my shoulders before looking at the drinks saying, “You missed one.” Everyone looks at me.

“What do you mean?” *RING!*

“Talk about being saved by the bell,” Asher mutters. Jasmine’s eyes widen, realization hitting her. “No! Oh my god, you wouldn’t.”

Used to her sudden outbursts, she’s ignored as Mark opens the door, revealing Dawn who dons a kitschy Christmas sweater. Had the moment not been as serious, I would’ve burst out laughing. However, Asher all but jumps out of his sitting position, moving to slam the door in his face. Dawn sticks his arm out, preventing the door from budging. I ignore the commotion, continuing to study the Uno game in front of me. I sneak a glance at Jasmine, guessing she’s figured out what happened. She blatantly ignores me. I look back down at my Uno cards and shout, “Uno!”

Only Asher takes the bait, the other two have their eyes dead set on Dawn. Realizing he was tricked, he exasperates, “Hey, stop messing with me. My fragile heart can’t take it.” I roll my eyes, standing up to face Dawn. I don’t quite reach his shoulders; I had stopped growing in seventh grade, something that played a great role in my insecurities.

“You came.”

“I’m not one to defy you.” Dawn replies with a shrug of his shoulders.

“Yeah, you’d think we’d know all about that now,” Asher quietly mutters.

Jasmine intervenes, blocking my sight of Dawn. “Come walk with me.” When Dawn doesn’t move, Jasmine pulls his arm, literally dragging him, leaving the two guys with me.

“What were you thinking?” Both question at the same time.

I sigh, “I knew you guys were going to ask.” Both don’t waver in their stares. I pick up my latte and take a sip, allowing the sweetness of the white chocolate to take over my senses. “I invited him.” No movement. “I asked him to come.”

“We know the definition of ‘invite’ Daisy.” I let out a small laugh, still not looking at them. “We want to know why.”

“I thought about it, and I want us to be together.”

“You think we can forgive him when he left us alone for two years, not even reaching out or visiting as he *promised*?”

I ignore the last jab, “Well it’s not like we reached out either.”

“Don’t try to speak for him,” Asher fumed.

I keep my stance, “If I can get over it, you two also can. If you can’t, leave. I can do with or without you guys.” Like I have since he left. The two finally relent when Jasmine returns with a startled-looking Dawn.

“Alright,” says Jasmine as she claps her hands together, “Let’s get this party started!”

We make dinner together and blast our old song favorites through the speakers. Our attempt at a movie marathon is ruined when everyone interrupts with their opinions and judgments of the film. Throughout the night, I snap pictures of the five of us, including hopeful smiles and glimmers of dashed dreams. When everyone falls asleep, I develop them, analyzing each image. I hold back at first, but then let the tears flow. I feel the love and the losses, but I’m OK. Although it won’t be perfect, I will be good down the road, and I’ll proceed. I’m glad I was able to bring myself to be in the moment, allowing us this joy. I walk back to the living room, everyone tangled in their mess of blankets and snacks. I’m glad we’re here.

BIO: Mabel Chen is currently a sophomore at Mounds View High School in Minnesota. Outside of writing, her other hobbies including music, playing with her dog, watching k-dramas, and designing aesthetics. A member of her school’s newspaper, *The Viewer*, she is well-versed in writing and hopes her contributions can inspire future writers such as herself.



Lindsey is a junior at Myers Park High School in Charlotte, NC. She explores societal issues and self-expression through her art and writing.



## Georgetown 4th

Slowly, and in no organized manner, the brightest lights begin to fade, leaving only the dim aura of some street lights to shadow the dozen shapes along the deck. A crowd of largely anticipative spectators form, but only in segregated clusters; always leaving some space in between, created in part from respect, in part hostility. Two Asian women sit at the forefront of the deck's side, swinging their legs above the splashing water of the river. College stories, tomorrow's plans, and their dreams for the future are revealed to every listener along the river, but alas, the duo are but a section in the larger orchestra.

Tension rises as anticipation grows, accompanied by a lack of assurance and a stagnant scenery that leaves a tinge of nervousness in every heart. Beyond the number of boats that march the vast river, a great wall guards a memorial from the thousands of eyes that urgently await any signal, ready to appease their suspense. The hour seems to progress slower. "What time is it?", quickly followed up by "What time is it supposed to start?" Queued by the lack of any confident response, every shadow stared deeply at the unseeable monument.

A young Indian girl blindly blurts out an apology upon noticing she had bumped into an observer standing in front of her. Among the towering figures that cast layers of darkness, she shines the greatest amounts of energy. She alone, beams solely of excitement, untainted by worries. At once, the first set of works are shot up into the deep skies. They climb high; higher than the wall, and ring with such pride, as though the monument was voicing its presence. The loud paintings spur a beautiful unity of silence. As the quiet regained its voice, the daughter insisted, "Nani can you see? You should see - it's pretty."

I find the illuminations to be striking the first minute, rather boring the rest. A limit exists to how many times the same exotic stimuli can be displayed before it loses its eccentricity. At every pause I found a hopeful me asking if the show was completed. My thoughts of boredom are interrupted by a small passing ship, who at every break of the deck, attracts unwarranted attention through its blaring upbeat pop music. At last, the lightings release their final pompous flares prompting an eruption of self-gratuitous cheering and clapping.

Is it not cruel that I can be left so satisfied by the works of a monument that I find imperceptible?

BIO: Ryne Hisada is a Junior attending The American School in Japan. Along with the food and climate, he has taken a particular liking to the public transportation of Japan. He continues to be inspired by the impact of small events on the grander scheme of life.

## *The Gem of Solitude*

Upon a rocking chair  
Under the painting of the warm evening sun  
The air is thick with a breeze that scents of effervescent citrus  
Drizzled with the fragrance of freshly picked tonka beans

A nouveau-riche in his senectitude sits,  
While his lidded eyes gazes across the caespitose--  
Holds up his glistening ruby spinel  
laced on his fragile, china-like fingers

Chuckling upon his foolishness  
Of his naive desire to become a gem  
Glowing in solitude  
Possessing all the gleam in the world

The curtains are drawn  
While the glimmering man  
Nods into a deep slumber  
As the cascade hums him a low lullaby.

# A

Strutting on two legs,  
An A pirouettes gracefully  
Under the alluring spotlight  
Gliding across the allegedly lavish floor  
As the remaining letters  
Watches in awe--

Most everyone fancies the letter A--  
The *aristocrat*  
Which comes foremost in every sequence  
Whether it is the alphabet  
Or a letter grade scale,  
Or a test score,  
An 'A' is an indicator of success for All

Life depends  
on the number of 'A's that you possess  
A myriad of 'A's molds you into a top grade;  
Allowing access to visit several other 'A's  
Like the giant A in France  
Or the sandy one in Egypt

But once one is stripped of their 'A's  
and it is stolen by another  
Their glory days are gone  
    Their excellence,  
    Their solid affirmation,  
All deranged in an abhorrent manner  
Forced to abjure their failure

And that is why  
    I abominate the A  
Fearing its advent  
Despite the brilliance  
The letter carries.

BIO: Jennah Yoo is an 11th grader attending Seoul International School. She is currently putting together her portfolio for university. Her hobbies include running and painting, which she believes surprisingly go together quite well.





Kiyoon Suh is an 11th-grade student at Seoul International School. She uses art and writing as a means to deliver ideas, emotions, and feelings. She also hopes to use these mediums to amplify problems that are happening around the world.

## *Another Life*

Grey, or at least a faded brown,  
He was chubbier than the rest  
but no bigger in my small grip  
His ears and eyes,  
beady like a koala,  
but his nose, perfectly  
rectangular  
and stout,  
proved him a worthy bear.

Bergdorf Goodman,  
stood tall and proud, God-like, he  
peered down at my  
crimson stroller.  
I slept, too busy for my mother's  
inquiries into riches,  
my own pots of gold, three of them,  
nestled in my arms.

I woke up to the busy sound of  
city air, bustling around the comfort  
in my arms.  
Lighter, I realized,  
too light.  
I peered up, twisting like a snake  
around the chair, caught her eyes;  
“teddy?”

for days, years,  
until i stored my other gold pots  
away in a dusty chest,  
we made phone calls to Goodman's men,  
who never bore good news,  
never cured my insomnia,  
my first taste of death

but i trudged on,  
as I'm sure did he, perhaps  
he lived another sweet life with one like me  
now nestled tightly  
in a pink cabinet, beside  
another collection of gold.

## Thailand

The squeal of the “kiddies”  
Echoes through the lengthy hallway;  
seven bedrooms wake up  
To the ocean’s soft hymn.

The older ones go out for a dive  
But thanny and i prefer our ritual: vanilla milkshakes  
And some angry birds

We listen to men rave about golf, as they bombard the pool table  
and the rest  
Help grandma out the beach  
Bruno Mars plays on Zach’s sophisticated JBL,  
And some build a sand castle for the crab  
Discovered in our pool

We head over to the ping pong table  
The big guys shrug our pleads off  
And we sulk on the coaches, and advance through “Subway Surfer”

We hear our aunt’s shrill voices  
ordering around the maids  
“Grandma likes it this way”  
“Grandma can’t eat cold things”  
“Only fries and chicken nuggets for the kiddies”

I look out across the sandy shore,  
And see Claire and Sydney with their phones,  
Envious of their age,  
I order our fourth milkshake  
For Thanny and I.

## Roommates

My father believed  
they were reindeers hooves,  
capering on our roof,  
and them bearing sweet word of merry,  
bidding dear time 'till season.

but I knew from  
Their all-too rhythmic clatter of Walk  
Their hovering spirit above me,  
when with each step, lights dimming,  
as i would Walk through the long lasting hallway  
it's end unalive;  
I knew from the sudden aches  
in my head  
when they awoke,  
the hasty chill, raw and intense,  
in the heat of summer, in the brink of the night,  
I knew from the creaks  
from rooms unoccupied, the dead meals  
beneath my porch, and  
their solemn wails coming from the attic.  
I knew too well.

BIO: Jia Dunsby is a freshman attending Seoul Foreign School. She is currently working on her writing portfolio for university. She uses her writing to open a conversation and a way to think differently about the world.

## Six<sup>1</sup>

At six, she washed utensils, cleaned up the house, and mothered her younger siblings. Her sick mother laid on the bed trapped with pneumonia all day long whilst she did the laundry and cooked food with her little hands.

At twelve, she had accidentally stapled her tongue with a stapler and encountered a cobra in the verandah of her father's house, the latter happening on the alternate day. She had chased it as she had known about how to chase along.

At eighteen, she had passed her high school exams with a decent grade even if her father came home drunk every night, and she hid behind the curtains only to block out the noise emanating in her parent's room.

At twenty-four, she had just finished off with a degree in elementary teaching and had her first stipend dedicated to her dead mother. After teaching at the local elementary school in the day, the lunch hours lured her to the intimate privacy of her home, where she often relocated by foot because it was only a block away.

At thirty, she'd spoken to a forty-two year-old, divorced man on the phone on her father's liking and cried because he said two things or nothing altogether. Later finding, to her surprise, there was the talk of marriage. In the pitch-black night, when the Indian houses slept in the embrace of the daunting darkness, faint silhouettes formed against the landscape in the yellow porch light of their house. She and her father were arguing. She had wanted the dear earth to swallow her up.

At thirty-six, her daughter was six years old. She had already let it go by that time, so crying, a more ubiquitously known phenomenon, was not an issue. No, it wasn't that she was crying because the timing had been wrong, and she'd found her husband naked with a stripper in their bed in the daytime. No, it wasn't her fault. She had simply obliged to them and never had a confrontation with her husband regarding it. Instead, they had slept in the sheer tautness of their room with their daughter sleeping safe and sound in between them as if she were not to wake up the next day. As if they were the two forts and she was the kingdom.

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<sup>1</sup> The number 6 is believed to be the number of domestic happiness, harmony and stability, according to numerology.

At forty-two, she had tried to kill herself once. So it went; she started going to therapy because that's what most people did. That's what the teachers in her elementary school had suggested to her: *Oh honey! Don't be sad. Go to therapy. Don't cry. It will be alright. Go to therapy. It will be fine.*

At forty-eight, she almost had sex with her therapist. He felt a lump in her left breast when he tried fondling it, leaning across her from the table. Her menopause had just begun to flaunt, and any symptoms of PCOS were out of the question. An appointment was set, and so it came, like a thought growing inwards—a sudden pang preceding a pop sound—she was diagnosed with breast cancer, or so the mammogram suggested. The estrogen modulator and chemotherapy made her numb & delusional, and her Facetime calls with her daughter in a foreign land made her feel nostalgic.

A month later, her doctor yawned opened a white envelope stating the chemo was not working. That night she had wondered if having sex with her therapist a little earlier would have meant no cancer and no hospital.

The following day, the therapist had come to her, presenting her with tulips. She thought if he'd come to finish off what he had once started. But his mustard turtleneck t-shirt had made him less seductive and more wary and self-aware that he had come to *meet* her at last. He gave her the news of her father's sudden demise.

He had brought her a picture puzzle to solve, and she had obliged to open it right away. So they sat on the phenyl-washed hospital floor and laid down the puzzle pieces as if they were tiny cards that they needed to carefully place at the correct intervals as if their life were entirely dependent on it. After putting together the sublime picture of a roaring beast, her therapist took six pieces that made the beast's tail and placed it on her nightstand along with the medicines whose names he found hard to pronounce.

Perhaps that's how it was meant to be.

**BIO:** Harsimran Kaur is a seventeen-year-old author of *The Best I Can Do Is to Write My Heart Out*, *I am Perfectly Imperfect*, and *Clementines on My Poetry Table*. Her work has been published (or forthcoming) in *The Book of Matches Literary Mag*, *BULL Magazine*, *Cathartic Literary Magazine*, *Trouvaille Review*, *KNACK Magazine*, *Indus Woman Writing*, *VOV Takhte*, *StoryMirror*, *TeenInk* and elsewhere. When she's not writing or reading, she can be often seen teaching invisible students. You can know more about her ventures at [www.harsimranwritesbooks.com/](http://www.harsimranwritesbooks.com/). She is currently a senior in a high school in India.

## Mrs. Arya's Imaginary Boyfriend

Mrs. Arya loved her husband, but that didn't stop her from wanting to cheat on him. He was a nice (sometimes even kind) man. When their daughter lived with them, he would take them on long drives to the zoo in Colorado Springs, the one where you could feed the giraffes. He lifted the little girl up onto his shoulders so that a giraffe could stride over and she'd be face to face with it.

In one video, the little girl shrieked as the animal's long blue tongue touched her hand, and Mr. Arya giggled as he shushed her. In another, the camera was being jostled around violently and you could hear Mrs. Arya complain loudly, "HOW DO YOU TURN THIS THING ON?" On the screen, Bhavya took her thumb out of her mouth and asked, "Mommy, do the animals ever go free?"

"Do you want them to?" Mrs. Arya asked. To her surprise, Bhavya's face darkened. "No," she growled.

"Why?"

Bhavya looked up past the camera, at her mom. "Because then, the giraffes will be in the wild, and there will be lions, and the lions *eats* the giraffes, but in the zoo there are walls so the giraffes can't *see* the lions and--"

"GOT IT!" Mrs. Arya announced, and the recording stopped.

Sometimes Mrs. Arya rewatched these videos on the TV and replayed certain moments over and over, like the part where her husband shushes Bhavya or when her daughter stutters. Her daughter was in college by then. But not *just* college, as she always told her friends, *pre-med*. She was getting all kinds of A's while saving lives. An Asian parent's dream.

Mrs. Arya didn't mind being left alone with her husband. She had her own system of dealing with his craziness, which had intensified ever since Bhavya left. He worked late and was obsessed with getting thin, always running out for jogs or going on strange diets. He criticized her when she chewed with her mouth open or drove too slow. Mrs. Arya's system had two parts: first, tune him out, and secondly, forgive him. She would give herself all day to forgive him. Sometimes when he was particularly picky or fussy she would ignore him and seethe in her own quiet rage all day. But always, at night as brushed her teeth, she let her grudges wash down the sink drain so she could go to bed loving her husband again.

Her Bollywood movies were all about love and sex and, though she recognized a certain passion that her own marriage lacked, she decided that she was happy as Mrs. Arya, not Deepika Padukone. She had a normal person kind of love for her husband, blossomed from the promises they made and the decades they spent together and the perfect child they'd made. At times she went so far as to think it was even better than the movies. For example, her husband had never truly been handsome, not like Ranbir Kapoor or SRK or



Hrithik Roshan. But she wasn't repulsed by the sight of him. She thought this made her a very good wife, because she liked her husband just the way he was.

But one night he came home from work as she was on the couch with raita and coffee, watching her favorite movie, and as he passed behind her in the dark he muttered, "Romance movies again. Why don't you read books? That's smart. But movies? So stupid." As Mrs. Arya swallowed, he went into the kitchen and took leftover raita, then came back into the living room, sat in his armchair, and switched the channel to football. She clutched her ceramic bowl and imagined throwing it at his head.

Later, as she got ready for bed, she watched the bubbles swirl downward in the sink and imagined that scene going down with them. But it didn't feel right. When he came into the bedroom she glared at him, and when they settled into their opposite sides of the bed, she didn't fall asleep for a long time. When she woke up she was still mad. It was one thing she couldn't forgive, no matter how hard she tried.

For a long time she considered her husband's craziness. She imagined that he was cheating on her, burdened by his own guilt and his fading affection for her. That would be fair, she thought. For years and years she'd wanted to cheat on him with the white man next door. Then Mrs. Arya decided that maybe she would have an affair, and it would be just like her movies. She would march over next door and seduce her neighbor with a hot pink sari and a coy smile.

Only, this never happened. Mrs. Arya forgot about it for a week and thought about other things.

Then their mail got mixed up. She went next door and rang the doorbell, and the white man appeared. She introduced herself and learned his name was Christian. "Dear God," she thought to herself. He told her he was a plumber. On a whim, she made an appointment for him to finally fix their basement sinks, which had been gurgling for more than a decade.

On the day he was supposed to come, Mrs. Arya excitedly straightened her hair in the mirror and applied a darker shade of lipstick. "I'm doing it!" she whispered to herself. "I am cheating on my husband!"

He arrived a little late and she showed him the sinks downstairs. He bent down to get to work and she stood there for a minute, wondering when they were going to talk and flirt. He seemed to have forgotten she was there. So she ran upstairs and turned on the TV.

The next day her husband told her he'd be working late again. She decided she would follow her husband to "work", catch him with another woman, and have reason to leave him for her new boyfriend Christain. She jumped up on the couch in front of the window and peered through the blinds until her husband had backed out of the driveway. Then she ran to her own car and sped out, feeling very much like the middle-aged Indian housewife version of James Bond. But then she saw Christain's car on her way to her husband's workplace, and she started following him instead. She made sure to stay far enough behind so he wouldn't see her. He led her to a coffee shop, where she parked in front and watched him through the windows.

He met a woman there, and kissed her on the mouth. She was definitely not his wife. In fact, she was Indian!

Mrs. Arya laughed at the irony inside her head. She sat back and watched the couple drink their coffees and have a normal conversation. She started thinking about an affair again. If all the men around her were cheating, why couldn't she? Why did she have to be such a boring, stupid immigrant housewife?

So driving back home, Mrs. Arya adopted an imaginary boyfriend. He looked like a mix of Ranbir Kapoor and SRK and Hrithik Roshan. But he was a little soft in the middle, just like her, and he was funny and kind, and he didn't have a wife. She was his only woman. And he liked her just the way she was, and he told her this every day.

Mrs. Arya went all kinds of places with her imaginary boyfriend. First they went to the mall, and he provided very helpful insight on which blouse to buy. He waited for her patiently while she was in the dressing room and then the bathroom, and then he bought her a pretzel with cinnamon and sugar (though the money came out of her own account). On the way home, they ranked Bollywood music videos from end-of-the-world dramatic to merely overkill. He cooked rice as she made the rest of the dinner. Then they called Bhavya, and were equally disappointed when nobody picked up.

With her imaginary boyfriend, there were no mistakes to forgive at the end of the night. He did not have to go to work. He never judged what she ate, or what she spent her time doing, or what she talked about. Mrs. Arya felt like this was what love should be: peace.

They went to the Colorado Springs zoo one day. They fed the giraffes and walked around holding hands, looking at all the animals in a comfortable silence, and then had cotton candy and popcorn. They went on a sky tram up the mountain and looked out at the city in perfect happiness. One day, Mrs. Arya resolved, she would take her daughter back here and maybe even some grandchildren. This time she could properly record all those timeless moments.

That afternoon her imaginary boyfriend told her he loved her as they drove home. But Mrs. Arya wasn't listening, because right on the sidewalk, her husband was embracing another woman.

The woman was white, with light brown hair and a few wrinkles on her forehead, dressed in jeans and a black and white polka dot blouse. She said something casually, and they both laughed.

She stared until they disappeared inside the house they were in front of. Mrs. Arya drove on. "So stupid," she muttered.

As she got home she began washing the rice. She watched the milky water go all the way down the kitchen drain. She decided that maybe she didn't want to cheat on her husband after all, because she would never betray him like that.

BIO: Satori McCormick (she/her) is a junior at Castle View High School in Colorado. Her work is upcoming in *805 Lit + Art*, *Paper Crane Journal*, and *The Augment Review*. She's crazy obsessed with all things literary, and has based her entire personality on this. She's a devout LOTR fan. Her favorite character is Gollum.

## Lottery

I count pennies and paystubs instead of sheep to sleep —

Five hundred and forty-nine away from lemon bliss in plastic cup; an infinity away from the childhood where my mother chastises my stubborn self for not finishing my bowl of rice.

The chasm formations on my mother's face are birthed from the way she scours each receipt, making sure they scanned her coupons and not the box of cereal twice. She ignores "the look" as they ring up the total on our CalFresh card, but she doesn't dismiss the Camel I casually slipped into the cart when she wasn't looking. Her eyes pierce her retired fire into me, and I am ridden with volcanic shame. I exhale cigarette smoke, and with it, this extrinsic heat.

\*\*\*

Gas stations transformed from rest stops to pagodas beaconing our prayer; the small dream of a lottery ticket swallowed my childish propensities — I press hair against my mouth, still and silent. Playing with numbers was my father's haunted religion, he embeds his sacrilege into my birthday, giving meaning to the meaningless. My mother winces: my blood trampolines and reaches a new low — two duds.

Our rundown car, fertile ground for preservation. poverty takes flight in my head — swathing neurological function aside — nesting in the frontal cortex, hunting in the amygdala. With lavish elongation of wingspan, I hollow.

The heat heaps marmalade onto our bodily husks — we are amber — fossilized under the berating sun. We are suffocating yet still breathing.

## Yellow Yoke

If the delay of an echo is proportional to the distance traveled, Perhaps that explains why retrospection comes on its own time.

Is America's red a serenade to pickled freedom or is it the phantom of a bleating child?

My buttered fingers pinch the ends of honeysuckle,  
Praying for the drop of golden ambrosia to permeate my tongue. Sustenance sizzles like an egg.  
I work so hard to squeeze the sweetness out of anything.

Splicing silk threads together, my heaving body  
Gasps & rises up after a day of living through antecedents. My pants are stained saccharine by the unabating sun.

The greenery looks tired in this heat;  
A clammy kind of foliage suckles on the sunlight — I was raised in wispy illusions of liberty  
And in fruitless pursuits of the elusive happiness That freedom whispers in my mother's ear. "*America is good,*" she says.  
Like the cascading sea waves Uprooted by the cakey moon,  
I perpetuated an ancient cycle of self-destruction.

Eventually, there won't be any chickens for me to steal eggs from. I stand on the land of packed eggshells,  
Where the yolk was never yellow

BIO: Taeyeon Han is a student in California. His writing appears or is forthcoming in *The National Poetry Quarterly*, *Eunoia Review*, and *American Library of Poetry*. Besides creative writing, Taeyeon loves to read historical fiction, sing at karaoke, and find new restaurants.

## Lake

Twenty paces from the hillock where Mother and I are sitting,  
the lake is the smooth surface of the moon surrounded

by slabs of limestone, like bare bones white from the wind.  
The mist of dusk veils us, the way cupping palms

around a match shielding a flickering flame, making us feel safe.  
Mother's eyes are fixed on the silvery water

and her face is as serene as the water. Her hand tightens around mine,  
the slender scars on her arm like curling and crawling worms.

She shows no sign of pain, no hint of expression.  
I seek out words but only realize they've withered in my parched throat.

We remain silent and blink at the glinting charm of the lake,  
trying to forget the crushed flowers and dead trees underwater.

## *The Square Hedge*

reminds me of the neatly-cut  
matcha cake, except with an  
accent of sadness. I often  
imagine a branch sticking out  
then being cut by a chainsaw  
to maintain perfectly unified  
beauty. I guess beauty is at  
a price someone has to pay.

When well-meaning adults  
tell me to stop asking stupid questions,  
or arguing back, I know they  
are thinking of the square hedge. I  
swallow down my words and image  
a fallen branch decaying like rust.

BIO: Allison is a current sophomore at Walter Johnson High School in Maryland. Her work has been published in *Germ Magazine*, *Secret Attic*, *50-Word Stories*, *Bourgeon Magazine*, *The Weight Journal*, *Cathartic Literary Magazine*, *Ice Lolly Review*, and several anthologies. When she's not writing, she enjoys reading, swimming, and playing with her beagle

## Oak Tree

Teach me how  
for so long  
you stand, changing  
rust brown  
orange dripping sunsets

The crisp awakening  
breaths of my parents'  
eyes resemble you

Cracking twigs  
in my hair  
back pasted  
with dirt and grass  
My hand still feathers  
the same bark  
Your branches still turn  
the same way  
crooked  
in their angles

My neck stretches  
like yours  
not as tall  
not as old  
or young as I'd like to be

I can't recall what  
clothes I wore  
the first day  
I chose apples over  
chocolate milk  
T-shirts over  
fairy wings

Winter 2022

clocks over  
sunlight over  
moments over  
bees counted over  
grilled cheese sandwiches

I need you to  
remind me that  
everything now  
is all we have

BIO: Gracie Yaconelli is a seventeen-year-old high school senior living in the foothills of the Cascade and Siskiyou mountain ranges in Ashland, Oregon. She is a musician, songwriter, avid trail runner, and parent of two elderly Abyssinian guinea pigs. Gracie currently serves on the national Youth Advisory Council for Inward Bound Mindfulness Education. As founder and president of the Ashland High School Writers and Poets club, she leads weekly workshops for aspiring young writers. Her short story, *Desperate*, is featured in *Cathartic Youth Literary Magazine*.



## *writing over*

you were:

break every notion of who you are but don't be too brusque,  
acronym responses foster disinterest, reciprocation  
must be merited with melted caramel suggestions  
must be rewarded with another embarrassing anecdote,  
sentences should reek of soft girlish smiles  
which beg to be mirrored.

make yourself beautiful but don't be too bold,  
never ask first until the second time, weigh  
risk and reward of your losing game, even a farce of love  
must be dignified with hours of precursor, every distracted text  
must fester for at least two minutes before  
your groping responses  
must warm slowly or the frog will jump ship.

write out every novel scene in your mind but don't be too smart,  
long words speak to pretentiousness, philosophy  
must only be used for romantic platitudes, purpose  
must be worn on the sleeve, images of sincerity  
trump notions of complexity, intelligence  
waxes toward naive arrogance, and your eye-roll  
inducing identities are nothing more than quirks.

daydream often but don't be too ditzy,  
no inadvertently intentionally brushing the face,  
use restraint to fester desire, humorisms must be served with a hint of  
intellectualism, add hair blowing and reading under a tree to the sunshine-glossed  
photo album uttering vague quotes about subjectivity  
to be remembered until the scars fade.

hone the truth in varnished gold but don't be too honest,  
always write in second person so that the sucker won't be

Winter 2022

me but *you* and simmer your explanation of *it was dramatized and months ago*  
for the eyebrows raised at your litany of “love”  
poems and cringe preemptively because  
god forbid anyone (or rather someone) sees this and sees  
you for who they think you thought  
you are

but you aren't...

the word *you* is an adolescent metaphor for gravelly voice and giddiness,  
still not as presumptuous as  
*me* right now is nothing but cold air and caramel love songs,  
and the empty space where *was* fades into somewhere wanting  
like the sound of *i*, more open, questioning?

in five minutes when *i* goes takes off that memory stained dress and looks at her body in the mirror and  
feels lemonade steam against her scalp,

*she* –distant bitch *this* you once thought *defied subjectivity*–  
will grope at my discarded humanities, create me on floating impressionist puzzle shards,  
an exhale away from falling back in the now-boiling pot.

the me who still rolls her eyes when you're mentioned in conversation  
the me who still wants to end your poem and have it feel beautiful  
the me who still won't step out of the shower for fear of the cerulean cold

this me would say without intention except fanciful habit that *she* was wrong, that this me  
once loved your story most of all.

and I?

tonight *i* could finally sing songs with mindless gusto–  
the ones that used to make me cry–

and tomorrow *i* think *i* won't know what to write about anymore.

## what you really mean when you say my poems about you sound girlish

to be girlish is to be laughed at–  
I can't imagine anyone in their right mind being so melodramatic.  
If you cannot learn to be logical, at least learn to be silent,  
we need not exaggerate the bloody parts of ourselves.  
Or at the very least cover yourself in eloquent language,  
that your stanzas spin tantalizing enough to please,  
that nobody can pass judgment on your sentiments.

To be girlish is to be single minded–  
can't you see from more than your own petty perspective?  
It was just a touch, what's a touch?  
A momentary trigger of synapses, nothing without your stories behind it.  
A touch is not painful, but if it were,  
I'm sure you could write the prettiest stories to make the pain into  
pleasure under that never-washed cardigan you call meaning.

To be girlish is to play the blame game–  
don't you know you didn't have to obsess about my intentions,  
that I, like you, was just figuring out what felt better,  
that three hours and two chances at hitting my sensitivities daily should have been enough,  
that you should have noticed how i always apologized first?

To be girlish is to be overly emotional–  
why were you upset when I clarified that I didn't like you?  
Where are the tears in waiting six more months until I'm certain?  
That dastardly person you're painting isn't me, because  
I, unlike you, realize that subjectivities exist,  
and I can live with them while you tell all your friends and call me *idiot*.  
You say I can't have it both ways (i don't know which two ways you're referring to anyway),  
but you still want everything, every way there is under the sun,  
and even still I respected your opinions.

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And yes, to be girlish is to be lovable,  
once you finally forget the past and put on a dress,  
god your eyes are gorgeous, and I'll admit that if the conditions are right,  
as long as you promise to stop writing those stupid poems about me,  
because even if you think you're self aware, you'll stumble  
around what you really think, if there's anything you think at all,  
and your only impact on me will be  
making me cringe a little before i fall asleep.



After living in Korea and the Philippines, Hyunseo realized that one's economic status and the country of origin, one comes from, and whether it is developed or less developed, play a big role in not necessarily how one views oneself but how one is viewed by others. Since he had the privilege to experience a wide spectrum of communities and cultures, he wanted to continue uncovering 'different perspectives' people have of others from different cultures.

## when

when the breeze brings in a fever sweat,

the detergent-scented sunlight resting  
golden on my hand in your hair might drown in grease and iron smiles,  
only skin-soft eraser scrubbings left from the songs  
i'm still humming under my breath,  
sinking into metaphor and vision clouded in the sidewalk's dandelion  
white will find somewhere to land,  
some soil beckoning my roots to keep living under the lucidity of  
tomorrow.

and I won't be scared by slamming doors.  
and those tears i borrowed from that movie will dry into gloss for my memories painted amber  
and i'd forget enough of the lyrics to remember your face across from mine as  
i sang *i'm in love*.

when the pick-your-own blueberry farm we went to is closing,

i'm going to maine and looking pretty and getting drunk on blueberry soda in this miniskirt  
i bought because *you said i was beautiful*  
in the yearbook too, although with you i wasn't that girl in the wine striped white shirt  
i'd deemed too childish two years ago but still wore because it  
made me feel small like that bone colored butterfly  
with serrated wings still lurking by my bedroom window last night  
might be dead  
when i get home,  
maybe poems will be a childish travesty to my ears,  
maybe the silvery refrains will wrest back their mindless charm.

and no more seeing your name on the phone at 4 am.  
and no more almost knowing you were also rereading—  
were you also trying to retrieve a poem and a cry  
from those 2,000 pages of our best dressed insanities?

when hello feels more special than i love you ever did,

the too blue sky won't fall, and i'll start with stupidities like  
*the sun doesn't make me happy as much as it makes me sadder in the*  
rain like goosebumps on the window of the coffee shop where we didn't drink coffee—  
you got me to love wet hair and sheer cloth before the camera faded to  
black type built my *love* into nothing more than the prettiest dress in the  
whole wide world for me to draw and draw until inkblots bleed through my  
printer cold paper tells your story in all its original maybe lies:

we weren't kids too important for the sunset i played out ten times in my mind  
otherwise *you* are just an impressionism of someone unimportant  
and my smile stays on when i get home  
after still laughing with you like nobody else.

when will i get home?

## *i'd say you've got me tongue-tied but*

Two tongues jolt, up and down, touching the same teeth to  
mouth the same tired tropes, slugs cartwheeling  
in their red shoes, folding the wax on your icarus wings to the  
talons on mine that our words might soar when intention seals shut,  
waiting for your voice to catch me before i drown in smooth waters

Two tongues wobble, stretching out our palates to weave  
the most delicate labyrinths, monsters in red-threaded sin  
spin endlessly awaiting the capture, beguiling smiles smiling  
like toads slurping down each hard won admission,  
talk is cheap so i wear my nicest dress and say i love you as a joke

Two tongues lap, at each joke with a gurgle and a wink, larval  
cannibals already licking every scar with feather soft strokes, bullheaded  
belief glistening in wet streaks across the stomach still  
sun warmed when you plummet us to seawater, our friends all laughing,  
our eyes saw the most mellow melting smiles before you had to say it

Two tongues interlock, fins flailing on bleach white sand,  
fish hearts pounding in tandem as lips like gills suck guilty  
air, saliva slobbers into the throat, phlegm-filled paroxysm of  
two fish fighting waist deep in the ocean, asphyxiating in summer air,  
losing all the time as we pretended we were making up for lost time

Two tongues jab, snakes piercing and forked with saccharine venom,  
gluttonous bodies of tangled rope slithering like your hand through my hair,  
better to keep it where it is because stepping back means striking harder,  
delighting from your screams as they try to shoot us down,  
until 3 am, when "couldn't care less" crumbled into kingdoms to be forgotten by morning

Two tongues heave, panting and so high that your silhouette looked like a god,  
you were my own perseus to sculpt, you were talos at the acropolis,  
wide glittering gaze on the city like we were kings; when you  
pulled and i pushed, i cried not over you but your name,



i called you melodrama and literary fodder and narcissist and darling

Two tongues lie, pink and blue and white, flesh and bruise and fabric,  
misshapen naked worms jittering in their feather bed incubator,  
sighing with mock tranquility and squirming in discomfort  
at being mere humans drunk on dried syrup words,  
but you pick up on the first ring and my giggles ring like the first time

Still speaking gibberish and ripping at the seams,  
ask me how do you like it one more time and i'll answer  
only metaphorically

BIO: Ziyi Yan is a fourteen year old writer who goes to Greenwich High School, in Greenwich, Connecticut. She has been devoted to writing since she was very young. In her free time, she enjoys drawing, singing, and rereading her favorite Nabokov novels. Her work has been recognized by the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards.

## *Blue Sharks Bite Each Other to Bleed and Show Romantic Interest.*

the tenacious weed  
the traitor,  
i tear it out  
i rip it apart,  
but all it ever does is grow.  
its brilliant light ignites  
and burns me,  
leaving me hollow.  
because i know i'd only bring you pain  
i'm always there to rain on your parade.  
if only this heart  
could just try and earn  
your loving comfort offered so gently  
that i deny at every turn.

## *Best Misled the Best*

To Saturn.  
a bore. sandblasted  
                    crater-pocked,  
                                    lovely hellish,  
sulfur-smelling  
a blue marble, dried-out ubiquity.

All shock, all bully.  
Beast to beauty,  
forever my unworldly mystery.

Original sense in its antiquity.  
Sun's first dawn sculpted into 4 billion years.

A tantalizing detail, unseen it seemed.  
razor edge-on, so surprising.

Shredded in childhood,  
diverse new worlds in the course of exploration.

So many memorable favorites,  
crumpling under the mounting pressure.

frosty  
    white  
        richest  
the moon so intrigued with streams reminiscent

Stirring wisps compared to the greatest promise,  
shimmering beyond the universe at large.  
Sent of mind, permutations, unknowable see so little.

slowly pulled,  
                    swallowed.

But not a moment before,  
I'm alone on streets under streetlamp.

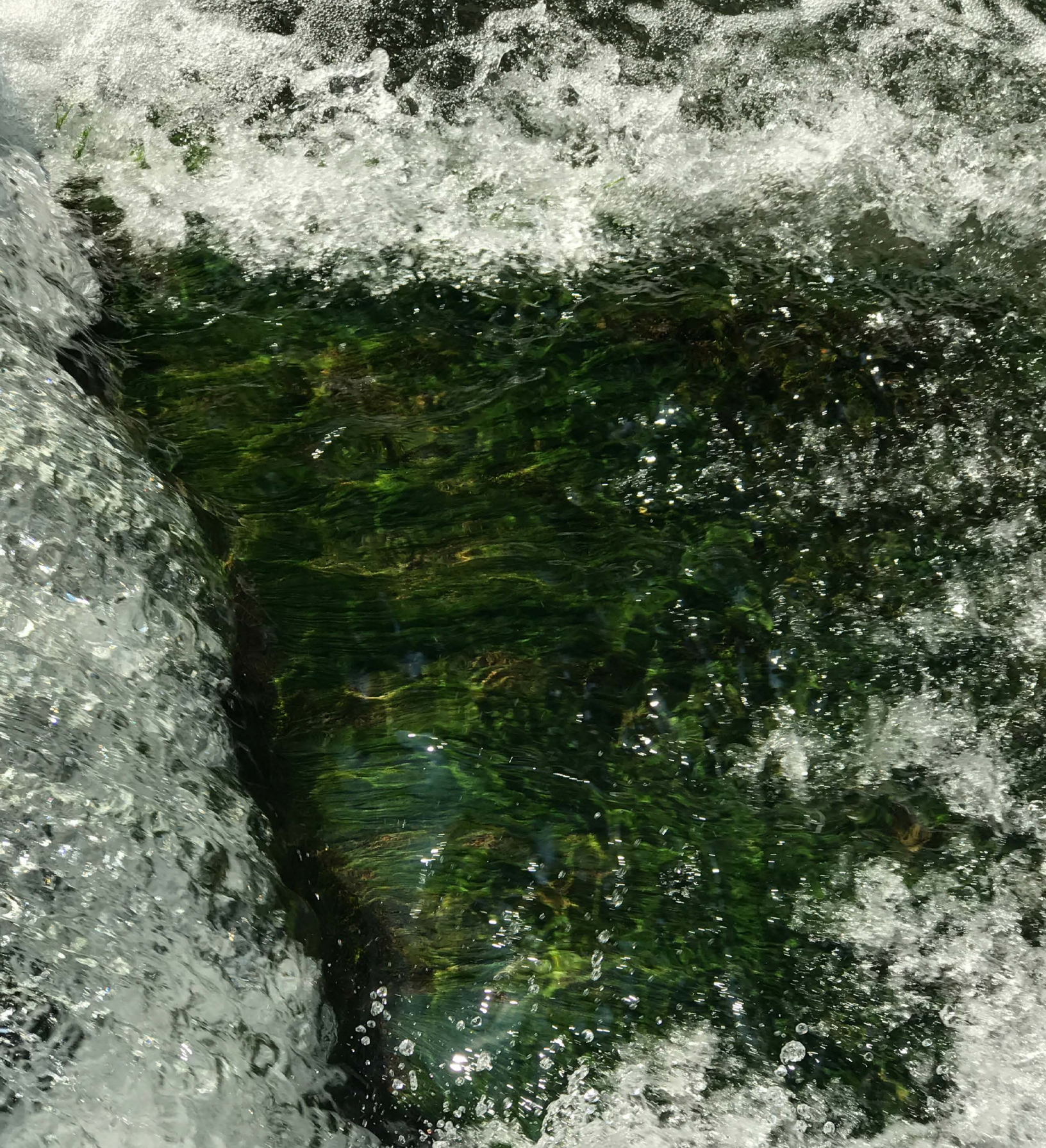
6:00 pm

i crouch underneath  
the slide of the playground  
across from my house,  
it's my makeshift home.

every drop sits on my skin  
like a puddle.  
and there is comfort  
in predictability.

but I sometimes wonder  
what if the sun broke through  
the clouds?  
what if each drop sparkled  
with light?  
would the warmth seep in through  
and bring along something new?  
because  
i think i'd like that.

Bio: Yoon Park is a 9th grader attending Seoul Academy in Seoul, South Korea. When she is not busy writing, she loves to play the piano.



Ray Zhang is a rising junior in high school and he loves to write. Previously, Ray's works have been recognized by Teenink, Scholastic, and Bow Seat Ocean Awareness. In his, free time Ray loves to read novels and learn to cook new dishes



## Cloudy Eggs

Eggs are delicate creatures,  
a chef once whispered to me,  
Fragile white ovals,  
not unlike limestone.  
Swift careful blow  
amber yolk oozes.

Eggs fill my heart with joy,  
yolk unscathed, sunny side up.  
Scrambled, golden, white,  
soft as a candle's flame.

Yesterday's broth, left to fade,  
a perfect base for eggs.  
Two perfect yolks, a strong twirl,  
turned lemon white - egg and broth met.  
Gently, silvery spoon whirled with rust,  
kissed the caviar bubbles,  
removing eggs within eggs.

Water simmers  
The eggs plop in.  
Steam whirls around my cheeks,  
droplets ran down the lid.  
Sprinkle,  
dash of sesame oil,  
slices of cilantro,  
a blooming flower bed.

In arid summer heat,  
blades of grass danced  
around my bare feet.  
I sat with my bowl of sun.  
A mouthfuls of eggs--  
salty, sweet, creamy, and silky.

BIO: Ray Zhang is a rising junior in high school and he loves to write. Previously, Ray's works have been recognized by Teenink, Scholastic, and Bow Seat Ocean Awareness. In his, free time Ray loves to read novels and learn to cook new dishes.

## *Within a Sea of Yellow*

They endure amidst billows of gas  
on routes feet used to saunter,  
raising as yellow umbrellas blossom.

The promise of rubber firearms,  
not unlike viceroy butterflies fluttering  
among their monarch counterparts,  
metal bullets ricochet off crumbled walls.

Masks conceal boyish youth,  
the point of no return is never known  
until retrospect.  
Trails of murky blood into  
a sea of crumpled umbrellas.

Streets were once paths toward home--  
now, tainted with pepper spray and water jets,  
metamorphosed into a battlefield.

*Bauhinia*, it's petals,  
created upon the flag  
a sterile hybrid, like Hong Kong  
infertility settles, stills.

Branded as rioters,  
voices taken fugitive,  
tears being silenced.  
*How can caged birds fly,  
when their wings are clipped?*

1898 is the year of giving and trading.  
A small fishing village reshaped  
into the center of international trade.  
Now, "Fragrant Harbor," no longer tangible,

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rancid tear gas smothers lips.

The world watches from afar,  
history unraveling, recollecting 2019.

Once more the *Oriental Pearl*  
crushes into fine powder.

Fragile umbrellas snap.

Shackles again,

bind back upon

Hong Kong's heart.

*Inspiration for this poem:*

*This year, in the midst of a global pandemic, hundreds of thousands of Hong Kongers flocked to the streets, protesting against a horrendous extradition bill passed by China. This bill only further emphasized the iron grip China held over Hong Kong. Enraged, Hong Kong citizens took to the streets, rallying with yellow umbrellas. What was once an everyday object used to shield Hong Kongers from the scorching sun, became not only a way to defend against pepper spray, but also a symbol of resistance.*

*In this poem, I hope to capture the experiences my relatives in Hong Kong had to endure. I heard stories of armed police officers firing rubber and -live- bullets into crowds of protestors. I saw photos of tear gas engulfing students in the streets. Yet most importantly, I witnessed the beautiful city of Hong Kong lose its freedom.*





Natalie Kwon is a 15-year-old 10th-grader attending St. Stephen's Episcopal School in Austin, Texas. Besides creating artwork, she enjoys playing golf and the trumpet in the school orchestra.

## “How the Geographical Region and Culture Influence the Feminist Art Movement in Latin America and Africa”

By Isabella Kim

### *Introduction*

The feminist art movement refers to the utilization of art as activism (Agerstoun, 7), where artists produce art that reflect women's experiences, perspectives, and lives in order to change the foundation of contemporary art and social norms. As an international movement, women from different geographic regions joined, most prominently during the 1960s. With the rise of new social theories such as the postmodern theory, women artists started shifting away from modernism and cultivated a new feminist idea: “a freedom to respond to life,” undisturbed by the patriarchal society (Hirschmann). The mainstream feminist movement, predominantly started in the United States, led the feminist art movement, advocating for the equalization of men and women, more recognition of women in the art industry, and abolishment of gender stereotypes. Although consolidated under the name of the “feminist art movement,” international artists from different geographic regions (“Feminism Claims to Represent All Women; So Why Does It Ignore So Many of Them?”, Kendall), affected by the culture and social norms, had different experiences and motivations regarding the issue, which led to slight differences and conflicts. As the theory of intersectionality emerged (“What Is Intersectionality”, Coleman), there became a clear division between white and black feminist artists. The theory of intersectionality connects gender, race, and class as factors of oppression and marginalization towards women, especially for colored women. With this difference, different styles, techniques, and use of materials emerged from areas such as Latin America and Africa. These feminist artists chose to not follow the mainstream movement established by North American feminist artists, but to start their own campaign using their own experiences and setting their own goals (“The Other Art History: The Non-Western Women of Feminist Art,” Hochberger).

**Although feminist artists had similar goals of gender equality, cultural, social, and political differences of geographical regions contributed to the contrasting methods and messages of each feminist art movement; whereas Latin American feminist artists focused primarily on making sociopolitical critiques against the government and patriarchal societies, African feminist artists emphasized the intersectionality of race and gender and the need for recognition and justice for African women.**

### *North America*

Inspired by the second-wave feminism of the 1960s, female artists in North America started working towards gaining recognition for themselves but also to make social changes. Whereas the first-wave feminism focused mainly on suffrage and making legal changes for gender equality, second-wave feminism broadened its spectrum to social changes as well, attempting to solve issues such as domestic violence, stereotypification, women objectification, sexuality, workplace obstacles, and family. The movement

focused on critiquing the male-dominant society that supported and encouraged the growth of patriarchal institutions and cultural practices (“The Second Wave of Feminism”). With New York City being the center of activism, female artists, largely concerned with equal representation in art institutions, established a variety of women’s art organizations such as the Women Artists in Revolution, Art Worker’s Coalition, and Feminist Studio Workshop that specifically addressed feminist artist rights. During this time period, female artists explored new mediums and concepts, some of which were perceived as radical (“Women Artists in Revolution,” Swartz). Body art, performance art, conceptual art, installation art, and embroidery, which male artists dismissed as “women’s art,” were heavily used by female artists during the 1970s and 80s to challenge the systems in place. One of the most iconic works of this time period that single-handedly represented the feminist art movement would be Judy Chicago’s *The Dinner Party*. *The Dinner Party* was an installation artwork with 39 place settings arranged along a triangular table, with each piece holding an image of a mythical or historical female figure, symbolizing the greatness of women in the history of Western civilization (“Doing Gender in Media, Art and Culture,” Buikema).

Moreover, art critics in favor of the feminist art movement contributed to the appreciation for female artists by calling out the canon of the Western art for omitting women from the male-established criteria of art. Most prominently, Linda Nochlin, critic of the ARTnews, published an essay called, “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?” discussing why female artists have been excluded from the list of “great artists” in the art history canon. This essay essentially created the term “feminist art,” inspiring many more provocative essays to be published advocating for the recognition of feminist artists. These types of provocative essays initiated the feminist revision of art history that led to the inclusion of female artists in art history and education. Nochlin and some others even held female artist-only exhibitions to familiarize the public with 400 years worth of female artists’ artworks that had gone unnoticed or ignored throughout history (“From 1971: Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?,” Nochlin). With peaceful and somewhat subtle resistance coming to a halt and the conservative Reagan and Thatcher administrations pressing female artists, an era of radical idealism in the feminist art movement emerged during the 1980s. This contrasted significantly to the prior years of feminist art; although the movement of the 1970s helped female artists gain recognition from the public, it was nowhere close to equal representation.

Furthermore, female artists, introduced to the ideas of psychoanalysis and postmodern theory (Zaretsky), started fading away from embodied female experiences and social trends that dominated the art of the 1970s and used observations and personal experiences to more freely express their needs and wants. Because there were no aligning feminist movements at the time, it allowed feminist artists to truly reflect on their personal needs and wants, rather than following the general trends of feminism. With these more liberal and expressive ideas, the era of radical idealism allowed more feminist artists to speak out against the government and powerful organizations that framed the male-dominant social precepts (Willis). A group known as the Guerilla Girls spawned during the 1980s, best known for wearing gorilla masks and using pseudonyms while fighting against sexism to hide their real-world identities. The Guerilla Girls expanded the scope of feminist art by plastering posters with graphics and slogans all over New York City and renting advertising spaces in magazines and public buildings for mass communication (“Guerilla Girls”). Their slogans were directed towards the government, attempting to make political changes, often

very controversial statements that degraded the feminist art movement as a whole. They also protested at various venues, speaking out and highlighting the discrimination of men and women; one of the artworks the Guerilla Girls published around cities was called *Women in America Earn Only 23 of What Men Do*, confronting the gender pay gap in jobs, especially the art industry, and urged big businesses and the government to initiate changes (Manchester). With the Guerilla Girls epitomizing the era of radical idealism, artists such as Barbara Kruger and Jenny Holzer (“Jenny Holzer,” Bailey) also used graphic designs, political messages, and mass communication in their artworks. For example, Barbara Kruger’s “It’s a small world but not if you have to clean it,” or “Your body is a battleground,” are artworks that use humor to illustrate the problems of sexist notions in society.

In “It’s a small world but not if you have to clean it,” Kruger addresses the traditional roles of women within the household, how women are obligated to the household chores. By using personal pronouns like “you,” Kruger victimizes and villianizes certain people in society, forcing the viewer to look at the issue from a more personal perspective (O’Grady). Unlike other geographic areas, North American artists had a relatively smooth road to success. With new social theories in place, North American feminist artists worked towards gaining recognition and re-identifying gender roles and expectations.

### ***Latin America***

In contrast to feminist artists in North America, Latin American feminist artists had a more difficult time producing and publicizing their works. Most Latin American countries continued a history of military governments and dictatorships, oppressing and executing artists in general (Loveman). However, feminist artists were especially oppressed as most feminist artists tended to make sociopolitical critiques and controversial statements regarding gender equality. As minorities who experienced extreme political and social oppression, they started speaking out for themselves which was seen as an act of rebellion by the government (“Latin American Art On The Eve of Independence”). Additionally, many artists struggled financially as there were no funds, sponsors, or markets to provide them with incentive or supplies. Because of these restrictive conditions, artists sought new artistic methods and opportunities to enact resistance, using mediums such as street murals, conceptual art, and photography. Many also created their own exhibition opportunities and galleries by renting self-managing spaces to display their works. The phrase, “art despite its difficulties” emerged here, where Latin American artists circumvented the lack of opportunities and materials using unprecedented and unique methods (Jimenez).

Latin American art first reflected off of European styles and techniques during its colonial period, which continued throughout the years. However, as they continued to undergo revolutionary cultural and political changes, art became centralized as a form of activism, colliding with the ongoing independence movements. They searched for their own indigenous, traditional form of art, discarding many of the superficial aspects of American and European styles they had previously adapted (McGivern). They also started going against the wealthy aristocrats and governments; whereas in the earlier years, artists mainly served to create commissioned artworks by the wealthy, they started mocking and criticizing the caste system of Latin America through their artworks. Many artists often sacrificed themselves in the independence movement after finishing their last pieces of artworks (“Indigenous Art At The Time of

Conquest”). Although many caste systems in Latin America were based off of ethnicity and wealth, artists of different ethnicities came together during the 19th century independence movements, creating an ethnic and cultural mixing of art which later united and mobilized Latin American female artists to start their own form of feminist art.

Latin American artists who are now labeled as “feminist artists” did not characterize themselves as “feminist” at the time, not only to avoid government interference, but also because their anti-imperialist and anti-American values led them to think being “feminist” was adapting to American culture. Combining their anti-American, anti-government, and feminist sentiments, Latin American feminist artists produced much more radical and controversial artworks compared to feminist art elsewhere (“Radical Women: How Latin American Artists Rebelled With Their Work,” Sayej). The most well-known and influential feminist artist of Latin America would be Frida Kahlo, a Mexican feminist artist pushing for female power. Her works reflect on her personal experiences which are often connected to sociopolitical issues of the time such as the Mexican Revolution (Kunzie, 110). For example, the self-portrait “The Broken Column” depicted herself as a helpless and isolated character, stranded in a stark area with nails and metal straps covering her body. This implies the extreme oppression and discrimination she faced as a woman (“Through the Lens of Frida Kahlo,” Gatleyme). However, she also illustrates herself as very manly, with a slight mustache and thick eyebrows (“Surrealism: The Art of Frida Kahlo”); by doing this, she “embraced her masculine *and* feminine side, which helped break down barriers surrounding gender stereotypes. Her gaze also remains fierce and defiant, demonstrating how she considered herself an independent individual and went against social norms of the time. These graphic and somewhat violent designs spurred much controversy, as the message of gender equality and government resistance was perceived as intolerable in the oppressive, male-dominant societies (“Frida Kahlo de Rivera”, Zelazko).

Some artists more directly and strikingly addressed the sociopolitical issues in Latin America; for example, many accused government implication for gender and racial

discrimination, social violence, and minority injustice. These artists often employed their first-hand experiences of discrimination and injustice to spur more controversy and publicity for the issue, encouraging the public to join in the movement. Additionally, most artists, especially female artists, experienced extreme poverty and violence from the continuing civil wars and domestic and governmental violence (Fox-Genovese, 7). This led them to not only speak up for women’s rights, but for the citizens in general against the “criminal dictatorships” and high-class aristocrats (Ades, 154). Regina José Galindo, a Guatemalan visual artist, was one of the many female artists who initiated government resistance and the feminist movement in Guatemala. She investigated the physical and psychological violence caused by unbalanced power relations of the government and social classes, often volunteering herself in extreme situations that demonstrate the “interdependencies of gender, class, and government.” From a lower-middle class household and born in the midst of a civil war, Galindo did not have access to information of politics nor art, but witnessed hundreds of incidents of violence and injustice. Using these first-hand experiences she created performances, poems, and paintings without any financial assistance to advocate for gender equality. Her most famous performance artworks include *¿Quién Puede Borrar las Huellas?* (translated:

“Who Can Erase the Traces?”), *Mechanisms of Power, Perra, and Himenoplastia*, where she demands that the government provide restitution of the memory and humanity of victims of Guatemalan violence. Furthermore, she initiated many controversial protests for women’s rights against the government and to commemorate the victims of government violence (“Mechanisms of Power,” Nori). In particular, she spoke up against the Guatemalan dictator, Jose Efraim Rios Montt numerous times, holding him responsible for the ongoing massacres and advocating for his punishment. She walked from the Constitutional Court to the National Palace with her bare feet dipped in human blood to represent the government violence against the indigneous population of Guatemala. She also created a sculpture with the quote “ESTOY VIVA” (translated: I AM ALIVE) in front of the entrance hall of the FKV as a way to speak up against the female genocide and discrimination in the country (“Regina José Galindo: Mechanisms of Power”). The term “femicide” was popularized then to label the gender discriminations and violences in Latin America (“The Invisibility of Latin American Women Artists,” Fajardo-Hill). Following the lead of these prominent artists, Latin American feminist artists sparked rather controversial and unforeseen political activism through art, attempting to gain more legal rights against totalitarian government organizations.

### *Africa*

The African feminist art movement, often considered the most distinctive feminist art movement, diverged from the mainstream feminist art movement in many ways (the mainstream feminist movement refers to the white feminist movement in areas such as North America and Europe.) African feminist artists focused on the theory of intersectionality, where they examined how factors such as race, gender, and sexual orientation affect the systems of oppression and discrimination (“Black Women in Art,” Mabaso). This was a point of view that was completely disregarded in the mainstream feminist movement. Whereas the second-wave feminism and the feminist art movement primarily served the interests of white, middle-class women around the world, the Black Feminist Movement (Smith, 4) used the perspective of black women who advocated for role integration, recognition of black women, patriarchal authority, and other conditions necessary for African women (“The Reception of African Art in the West,” Klemm).

In colonial years, African artists often created artworks that served as a specific function, for example wooden vases or prestigious clothing. European explorers, who regarded African artworks to be souvenirs or purely utilitarian objects, often traded cheap goods for African artworks (Clemens, 9). These works were not appreciated in European culture, especially with the framework of Social Darwinism that clouded European societies. These social theories justified racial hierarchies, setting European, white culture as inherently superior and African culture as primitive and undeveloped (“Abundant Evidence of Black Women Art,” Butler). Because Africa itself was considered to be “the least evolved,” their artworks were also disregarded from the art world. However, in the early nineteenth century, African artworks were appreciated as an embodiment of culture, aesthetic preferences, and creativity. Nevertheless, certain forms, styles, and inventions of African artworks were copied and marginalized in Western cultures; even further, the idea of expressing modernity as abstraction strongly influenced many Western artists such as Picasso or Mondrian, yet were still not given credit for African tradition-based styles of art (“African Art and The Effects of European Contact and Colonization,” Klemm). Because of this, an anti-white sentiment emerged in Africa, due to the long periods of marginalization and undermining of African art. This pushed

African artists to continue their tradition and culture based artworks that represented a different set of aesthetics, inner virtues, and beliefs, rather than adapting Western, “modern” techniques. With race being an ongoing central issue for African artists, African feminist artists incorporated race and gender while using art as a form of activism for rights (Belkhir and Barnett).

Black feminist artists sought to disrupt the mainstream feminist movement and initiated black feminism that spoke up for black women and only black women (Miranda). In particular, many black feminist artists were critical towards the mainstream feminist movement and white feminist artists who tacitly agreed to the exclusion of black women; these anti-white sentiments, combined with the feminist and anti-capitalist sentiments, provoked black feminist artists to take a unique stance against the issue of gender equality. The aforementioned theory of intersectionality framed black feminism in a way that embraced their diverse backgrounds and culture and personal experiences (Atewologun). The term was first coined in 1989 by Kimberle Crenshaw, where she states that black women do not classify as black or women in terms of oppression, but that the two identities reinforce one another to silence the voice of black women. It states that because black women tend to address either gender or race, but not both at the same time, resulting in the marginalization of black women (“Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color,” Crenshaw). Some take this idea further to apply it to the whole of women, arguing that intersectional systems such as race, gender, class, ethnicity, and sexual orientation create cultural patterns of oppression on women (“Arts and Politics,” Clarke). Crenshaw describes this as the “interlocking [of] social institutions [that] have relied on multiple forms of segregation... to produce unjust results.” In many ways it also criticized white culture, though, implicit. Many black women believed that the silencing and marginalization of black women came from white culture where white women, in particular, attempted to merge the white and black feminist movement for the unanimity of the feminist movement. In this process, however, the voice of black women were suppressed and ignored in many ways, and black women started striving for a completely new feminist movement that addressed the needs of African women using their distinct background and experiences.

As a result, many African feminist artists produced unique and independent artworks that represented their own conception and perspective of feminism. While white feminists often addressed issues of sexism more directly, many African feminist artists “explored the unity of the Black [African] family, the ideal of the black male-female relation, and other issues relating to social conditions and African traditions” (Riesman). For example, Billie Zangewa, a half Malawian half South African artist, portrays African women as free, unapologetic, and independent in her artworks to defy stereotypes set for African women. Her artworks are mostly tapestries and silk fabric works where she uses torn and reassembled pieces of silk and fabric

to create images of African women (“Billie Zangewa- The Fierce Feminine,” McDermott). Because fabric and silk are usually associated with femininity, she intentionally uses fabric to illustrate how women are free and strong, even when conscious of their expected status and role in society; instead of advocating for full equality and representation, African women, like Zangewa, advocated for a new image of African women as being confident and strong while embracing their history and role in society. She often embroiders

images of African women's bodies, historical photographs, and memories from her experiences into the backdrops of her artworks to input her personal experiences and narratives as an African woman into her artworks ("The Textile Artist Who's Always Known How to Care for Herself: Billie Zangewa On Strength, Femininity, and The Healing Nature of Domesticity," Okoro). She also works on sculptures, photographs, installations, and jewellery to create more graphic and realistic depictions of the violence and oppression towards African women ("Ethnic Identity," Picton). Similarly, Lubaina Himid expresses these ideas through her artworks using historical events and experiences of African women ("Lubaina Himid RA Elect"). From Zanzibar, a (then) British colony, she experienced segregation as an African, nonetheless experienced extreme oppression as a woman. She brought her personal experiences and historical events to contemporary contexts where white, patriarchal hierarchies and societies are questioned. The figures in her paintings often reflect upon Bubain physiognomies and classical Greek culture, European history that gradually denied and erased African influence from, to highlight the importance and significance of African people. She also takes influential black women from African history to illustrate the visibility and strength of black women in determining their power ("Lubaina Himid: Navigation Arts").

Because African feminist artists were working on intersectional activism, they faced more adversities than artists from other geographical regions. They implemented traditional materials and ideas to fight against racial and gender discrimination that marginalized and disadvantaged them in the art industry throughout history. They also used historical references and personal experiences in their artworks to publicize and criticize the mainstream feminist artists and black rights movement that excluded black females in general.

### **Black America**

For decades, Black women have been severely oppressed and marginalized in their societies, not for their race but for their gender. In the 60s and 70s, dramatic changes occurred for Africans in terms of social and political culture, as well as, the art industry. Black women were often the advocates on the political front, holding positions of responsibility and prominence in the Civil Rights Movement ("The Civil Rights Movement," Carson) and Black Nationalist movements ("A New African American Identity"). With women such as Ella Baker, Septima Clark, Elaine Brown, and Kathleen Cleaver leading and operating the most essential works of training and organizing the movements, most of their efforts went unacknowledged, whereas their male counterparts were praised for their efforts ("Women in the Civil Rights Movement"). Throughout history, women have long been the activists to acknowledge that race and gender are mutually constitutive to the social hierarchy and culture, attempting to vocalize the inextricable relationship between patriarchy and racism. However, men, with more social power and dominance, have often relegated women to the roles of child-bearing and housework, forcing them to ignore misogynies even within civil rights movements and capitulate to the male dominant society. This is comparable to the art world. In many cases, Black women's works were often distorted and plagiarized by Black men and were intentionally excluded from the art canon and records ('Pro'Sobopha, 12). Black women were not even considered as professional artists, despite being ahead of Black male artists in Africa in expanding the range, genre, and materials of art. During the Harlem Renaissance, the works of Black men have been praised and appreciated by society and the media, despite the contributions of Black women ("A New African American Identity: The Harlem Renaissance"). During the 1920's, women attempted to establish a more defined role for Black women in



the art and entertainment realm through writings and artworks. Black women's works revealed truths about the people, time, society, and their experiences that only Black women could experience; some pieces were extremely controversial and were even hidden by other Black male artists who believed it would spark too much controversy (Henderson, 36-41). Nevertheless, it provided a foundation for future black women artists to stand in the art and writing field that studied, uplifted, and understood the social and historical importance of African American women in society (Berlant, 59-61). This trend continued till the late 1900's, where a group of black women artists organized "Where We At" in 1971 to provide opportunities for themselves. Marginalized by the Black Arts Movement and the mainstream feminist movement, they shared their experiences, concerns, and needs through this organization. For being Black and women, their challenges were doubled, most times denied exhibition opportunities and demotivated by

Black male artists. Nevertheless, they continued to expand the scope of their artworks, shifting from romanticized images of Black lives to more realistic and reflective of their true experiences (Henderson). They used traditional paint, printmaking, murals, photographs, performances, sculptures, and many more mediums that were not yet utilized in Africa. They were heavily criticized and disregarded by Black male artists, but pushed through with the belief that they could empower themselves for economic, social, and political equity through art activism, that gender and race came intertwined. They believed that the patriarchal society of America would come to the realization that racism does not come singularly, but together with sexism; in the long run, many male Black artists acknowledged the works and dedication of female artists and started accepting them as professional artists.

Although geographically located in North America, African-American feminist artists had similar perspectives and conceptions regarding gender equality. African-Americans, due to the assimilation in culture, were more accepting of the mainstream feminist movement ideas, yet still believed that race and gender intersectionally led to the oppression and marginalization of black women. For example, African-American feminist artists such as Betye Saar, Howardena Pindell, Carrie Mae Weems, Kara Walker, and Lorna Simpson, used historical and symbolic representations of Africans and African-Americans to advocate for racial and gender equality together, rather than separately ("The Overlooked, Radical History of Black Women in Art," Keller). These African-American artists participated in the "We Want A Revolution: Black Radical Movement 1965-85" art movement during the second wave feminism where the mainstream feminist art movement emerged. Instead of joining in the movement with white feminist artists, these artists created a separate movement that would better advocate and voice their experiences and needs, sparking debates on intersectional feminism in America (Miranda). Howardena Pindell's works most vocally expresses her personal experiences growing up in America as an African-American woman; she speaks on the discrimination, sexism, and racism that is prevalent till this day. In one of her film works, "Free, White, and 21," she accounts for her job rejection and workplace mistreatment where many white coworkers told her, "you don't exist until we validate you." This drove her to create more artworks speaking up against the poor treatment of African-Americans in the art industry (Kambhampaty). Similarly, Carrie Mae Weems uses her personal experiences to publicize the extremity of racism and sexism in America. Instead of using conventional ways of speaking against racism and sexism, she implements white folktales

and sexist jokes in her artworks and re-interprets the meanings from an African-American woman's perspective ("6 Black Radical Female Artists To Know Before You

See: We Wanted A Revolution Black Radical Women"). This encouraged many Americans to approach their culture from various viewpoints and question the ongoing racist and sexist notions in the country. Her work satirizes American culture by rebounding upon the impotence of the genre of the traditional folktales and jokes commonly told in America (O'Grady). Somewhat similar to the African feminist artists, African American feminist artists focused on fighting the intersectional discrimination they faced, eventually gaining recognition and appreciation from white, male-dominant societies for their influence on the feminist movement and black rights movement.

## Conclusion

Throughout history up to present day, feminist artists from different geographic regions have been using art as a platform of activism to fight for women's rights socially, politically, and economically. With North America and Europe sparking the feminist art movement, other geographic areas followed, each focusing on a different aspect of gender discrimination in their art. Factors such as race, culture, politics, and historical backgrounds determine the central trend of each geographical region, some focusing more on social recognition, whereas others focus more on political changes. With the second-wave feminism large in North America, North American feminist artists became more vocal and upright with their messages, working towards gaining recognition for female artists, re-establishing gender roles and expectations, and earning credit in art canons. Because the feminist movement was rather supported by the public and the government, North American feminist artists typically did not include radical messages as it was unnecessary to initiate conflicts between men and women. Juxtaposed to the rather smooth-sailing feminist art movement of North America, other geographical regions faced countless obstacles, often dealing with intersectional discrimination where they were pushed to call out more than one element of gender discrimination. Latin American artists, severely oppressed by the government, had to centralize art as a form of activism rather than producing art for art itself, criticizing and satirizing the totalitarian military governments that violently and indiscriminately shut down the production of art. Latin American feminist artists sought to make political changes rather than sociocultural changes, which drove them to incorporate more radical and controversial messages in their artworks. Similarly, African feminist artists dealt with intersectional discrimination between race and gender, where they believed the white-dominant mainstream feminist movement worked to marginalize and exclude African feminist artists. They

alluded to historical figures and events where African artists have been discriminated in the industry and also incorporated personal anecdotes that disclosed their experiences and voices regarding racial and gender discrimination. To further prove their point, they continued to use traditional methods, ideas, and materials to produce artworks that defied new, Western trends that indirectly oppressed their culture. These conceptions of African feminist artists existed in Black American feminist artists as well, which sparked a separate feminist art movement in America that voiced their experiences and needs more clearly. The misconception that discrimination and racism is only in the past was prevalent, and Black American feminist artists sought to advocate for themselves that racism and sexism is widespread till modern day; the misconception that gender discrimination is just in the past, or the misconception that gender discrimination solely comes from "gender" itself, is still common althroughout the world. Gender discrimination, especially in the art industry, is not generated by gender only, but rather an accumulation of many factors such as political oppression, race, and wealth, as can be seen through countless incidents in history. Even so, it is difficult for feminist artists to voice their opinions and gain recognition for their

contributions in the past. Because artists believed that the way to equality and appreciation was to confront all the components that reinforced gender discrimination, they often worked against multiple political and social theories simultaneously in hopes of change. Although feminist artists around the world had a common goal of gender equality and female recognition, the culture, social structure, politics, and history of each geographic region has a significant impact on the central messages and development of artworks.

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