Intertext

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2019

Intertext 2019 — Complete Issue

INTERTEXT

2019 | SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY

Intertext is a publication of the Department of Writing Studies, Rhetoric, and Composition at Syracuse University. It features the work of undergraduate students and represents the quality and variety of writing produced in its courses.

The Louise Wetherbee Phelps Award recognizes excellence in writing in department courses. Submissions are evaluated on depth, complexity, technical control, emotional and intellectual appeal, and how well they reflect the goals of the department. The 2019 winners are Amelia Lefevre and Ryley Bonferraro.

Introduction

Well-written words have the power to bring about tremendous change—to touch hearts, share experiences, and inspire action. In a powerful culmination of eloquence and emotions that are characteristic of today's sociopolitical atmosphere, the student editors and authors of *Intertext* 2019 have created a publication that expresses acceptance, change, and community.

Intertext seeks to showcase the excellent work that students have produced in the Department of Writing Studies, Rhetoric, and Composition. Offering a plethora of engaging courses that cover many different genres, histories, and theories in the art of rhetoric, the department encourages students to create a broad range of work. Very often, students find—sometimes to their own surprise—issues that ignite a passionate flame within and an expressive voice to speak with. These pieces transcend their original purpose of being submitted for a grade and deserve to be recognized for their merit and the conversations they have the potential to spark.

From explorations of culture and individuality to calls to activism fueled by indignance and fury, this 2019 edition offers rich and distinct perspectives on a multitude of topics. Some stories chronicle accounts of personal growth, while others weave tales of heart-wrenching grief and vehement anger. Many candidly approach delicate issues that are infrequently addressed in everyday conversation due to the discomfort they may cause.

We at *Intertext* ask that you approach these pieces with an open mind and heart—it took a lot of courage for these authors to share their work. The hardships that our

peers overcame helped them become the remarkable people they are today. We hope that these chronicles of adversity and controversy are able to spark discussion of important topics and inspire action, reminding you that difficult times can pass.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank, firstly, the authors, artists, and photographers who have sent in work for the 2019 edition of *Intertext*. Regardless of whether your submission was included in the final publication, the fortitude it takes to submit your work to the Syracuse University community is admirable.

Of course, we would also like to thank Professor Patrick W. Berry, who facilitated the editing and assembly of the issue itself. With limitless patience and immense diligence, he taught us the process of creating a publication, imparting with us knowledge that will help us greatly in our academic and professional careers.

We are grateful to the College of Arts and Sciences and its iLEARN program for its support of this work.

A huge thank you to Benay Bubar for providing her wealth of knowledge and experience in a field that many of us have only begun to explore. Special thanks also go out to the judges of the Louise Wetherbee Phelps awards for best writing: Rusty Bartels, Ellen Fallon, Margaret Himley, and Jason Markins.

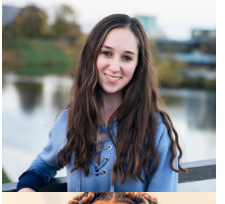
Finally, we would like to acknowledge each and every aspiring writer here at Syracuse University. We hope to someday see your work published in *Intertext*.

—Jennifer Bancamper, Taylor Parks,
Annie Shi, and Josh Sholes

Layout and photograph by Josh Sholes.

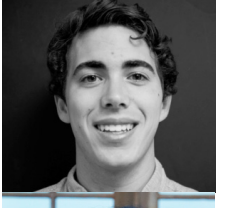
Abby Boglioli, Major: Stage Management
"Trump's Department of Interior Prioritizes Extractive Industries, Systematically Disarming Environmental Protections," written for WRT 105 (with Andi Voigt)
This news-style story explores the land battle currently going on in Minnesota over the Boundary Waters and how the Trump administration is trying to eradicate its environmental protections.

Thomas Samuel Benko, Major: English & Textual Studies
"Cafés are for Writers," written for WRT 105
This piece is about a young man's reflection on what it means to be a writer—exploring the construction of his identity.



Ryley Bonferraro, Major: Writing & Rhetoric and English & Textual Studies
"Spinning," written for WRT 422
"Spinning" depicts the grief of experiencing an unexpected loss—in the form of losing a close friend and how that never really leaves you.

Rahel Demissie, Major: Computer Science
"Down with the Derg!" written for WRT 114
This piece tells the story of the political and social change that the Derg, officially known as the Provisional Military Government of Socialist Ethiopia, brought to Ethiopia through her mother's personal anecdotes.



Ryan Dunn, Major: History
"The Last of the Hibakusha," written for WRT 205
This piece frames a conversation with a survivor of the 1945 U.S. bombing of Hiroshima near the end of World War II within the ongoing international struggle surrounding nuclear proliferation.

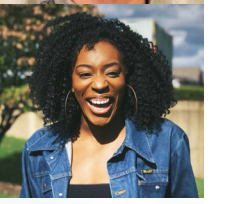
Lia Figurelli, Major: Undeclared, College of Arts & Sciences
"Just Some Respect," written for WRT 114
"Just Some Respect" describes women's experiences during high school and college years, reflecting on the everyday sexism and sexual harassment that women face in the United States.

Jennifer Jeffery, School of Information Studies, Library and Information Science ('17)
"A Second Message to Frank O. Strailman, Wherever You Are," written for a SU Veterans' Writing Group reading
This essay responds to a man's misogynistic argument that women aren't fit to serve in the military.

Amelia Lefevre, Major: Writing & Rhetoric
"New Symbols for the Environmental Movement," written for WRT 255
Amelia is currently researching how healing our connections to the places we inhabit can contribute to lasting social justice.

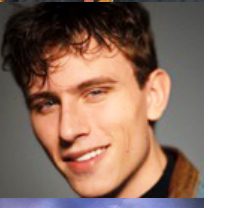
Ian Manzares, Undeclared, the College of Arts & Sciences
"0 to 128 mph," written for WRT 114
This piece is a snapshot of personal battles, both external and internal, showcasing how quickly normalcy can cease to exist. The author aspires to use what he has learned from his life's hardships to become successful in everything he sets his mind to.

Sage Okolo, Major: Film
"Emma," written for WRT 114
"Emma" is the story about the day an adolescent girl's friend convinced her to stop eating.

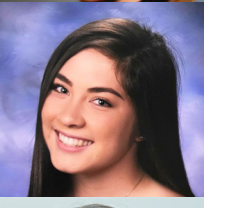


Jazmine Richardson, Major: Biochemistry
"The Duality of Blackness in America," written for WRT 105
This piece reveals African American identity in white America through the lens of professionalism.

Euzebiusz Wasowicz, Major: Communications & Rhetorical Studies and Writing & Rhetoric
"Seven-Hour Love," written for WRT 422
This piece describes a young man's fleeting love affair with a young French woman on an airplane. The author hopes this piece brings you as much joy as it does sorrow; sometimes all we really need is that "what if" to feel content.



Crisanta Wadhams, Major: Biotechnology and Writing & Rhetoric
"South City to My Own Anything," written for WRT 114
The piece is about a good person in challenging circumstances trying to navigate his way through young adulthood.



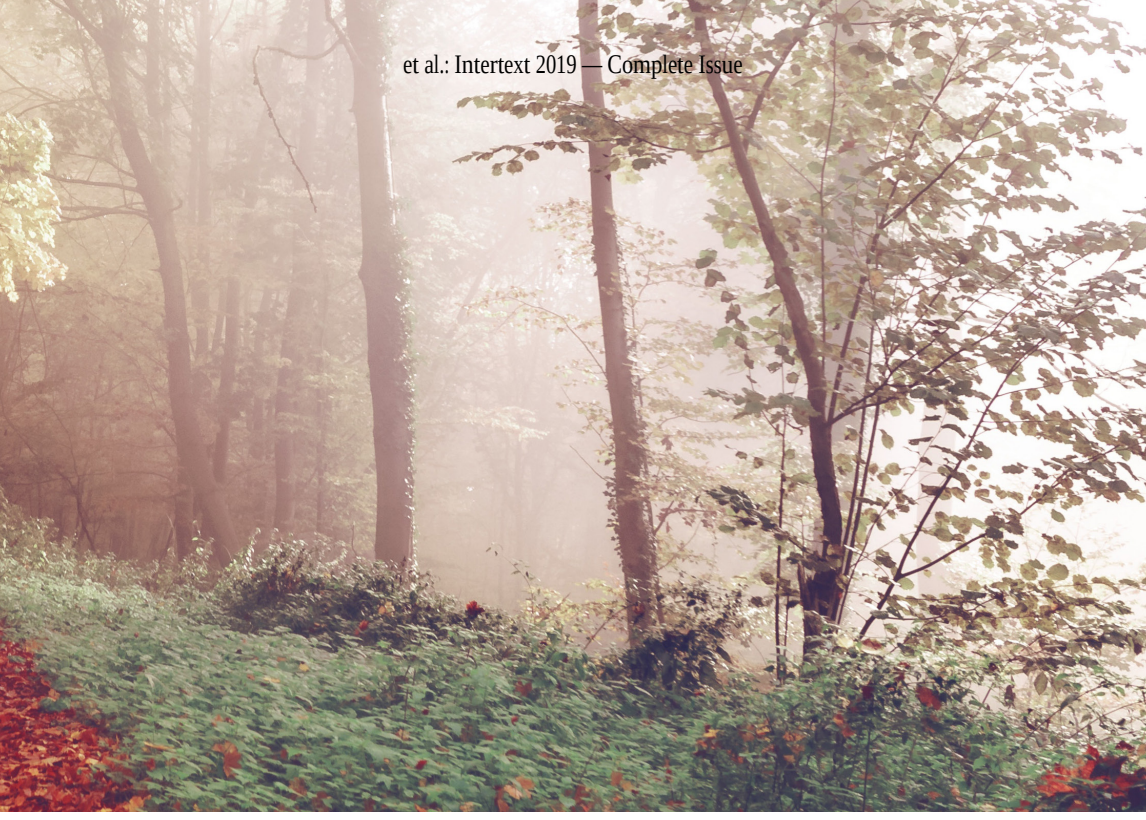
Andi Voigt, Major: Stage Management
"Trump's Department of Interior Prioritizes Extractive Industries, Systematically Disarming Environmental Protections," written for WRT 105 (with Abby Boglioli)
This news-style story describes the current administration's disregard for national wilderness areas.

Section Intro: Lost & Found

When things disappear, are they always easily found?
In the act of losing, sometimes, the most can be found.

Loss is an unceasing, steadfast constant in the human journey. No one person is able to escape the kind of heartache or anguish that seems to swallow one whole, pulling one's life apart. While everyone handles grief differently, the difficulty of pulling yourself back together is indisputable. The authors in this section were forced to address their loss to accept an uneasy reality. They have found solace in their loss by letting their stories out and sharing them with us, allowing storytelling to act as a beacon—its light guiding both its writer, and its readers, to the realizations that *not until we are lost, do we begin to understand ourselves.*

Many of the pieces recount personal perspectives explored during an important time in the lives of the storyteller. They showcase the characters' search for healing amongst battles of pain as they delve further into moments often kept private. In "Spinning," Ryley Bonferraro explores the unbearable desolation found in the death of a loved one and childhood friend. In "Seven-Hour Love," Euzebiusz Wasowicz explores a different kind of heartbreak: the impassioned turmoil of falling in love, and irrevocably losing it. These pieces travel through the past and present, reminding us that there



Layout by Peter Conway. Photograph by Sebastian Unrau: https://unsplash.com/photos/CoD2Q92UaEg.

is no time frame for dealing with loss. In "Cafés are for Writers," Thomas Samuel Benko details his personal growth in a self-reflective examination in a café where he spent much of his time trying to interpret his calling in life. In "South City to My Own Anything," Crisanta Wadhams incorporates the experiences of a close friend in exploring the struggle of retaining one's identity, culture, and family throughout the pursuit of exceedingly ambitious goals.

Finally, in "Down with the Derg!" Rahel Demissie, narrating her mother's experiences in tumultuous Ethiopia, offers a raw and poignant story of cultural upheaval and redemption. All of these pieces provide an emotionally charged narrative of second chances, restoration, and hope—even when it seems perpetually out of sight.

This section unabashedly acknowledges that sometimes we will encounter hurdles and hindrances that we cannot expect. Sometimes, these obstacles incapacitate us for a long time, leaving us feeling helpless and alone. But, at the most unexpected times, people, experiences, and family can help you find yourself. It is our hope that some of these stories will help you get through your own losses as they show you that no matter how bad things may be, communicating your story is the first step in finding a solution. And, perhaps along the way, you will even find the courage to share your own stories with us, too.

—Juliet Dore, Peter Conway,
Elle Ross, and Annie Shi

Euzebiusz Wasowicz

I fell in love for the first time two summers ago. It was probably sometime in July, but seeing how all of the long and hot summer days tend to mold into one, I couldn't be sure. I don't remember how warm or cold it was. In fact, I couldn't remember many things at all. I was lost. Lost in the girl who sat next to me in seat 27B.

I was sitting in 27C, which was the window seat. I always hated the window seat. It was often too small, the walls would make my headphones vibrate when I leaned my head on them, and the small fear of something cracking and sending me out the window at forty thousand feet was always present. But not today. Today, that wall was my friend, a friend and a wingman, no pun intended.

If this were a normal flight, I probably would have spent the entirety of the airtime with my neck bent over, leaning on the dining board or leaning on the person next to me. But no, this wasn't a normal flight. I was awake, I was involved, and I was in love.

Thankfully, the flight was early in the morning, so no sleep was necessary. It was a flight from Bordeaux back to New York. Luckily, Air France tends to underbook their flights due to pricing, especially during the summer, so seat 27A was up for grabs. Usually, I wouldn't resist hopping at the opportunity to get as many open seats as possible. However, I knew my hooligan ways weren't going to *fly* today. I had this girl next to me who had me wrapped around her finger, and she was oblivious to it. She was my puppeteer, and I was the loose toy begging for mercy, yet simultaneously falling deeper in love with every string she pulled.

I swear, I don't think I've sat up straighter in my life. I tried to construct a plan of how to get the empty seat in my possession: Should I ask her to slide over? That would be rude, and she might think I wanted her to sit further away. Maybe ask if she wanted the window seat? No, that wouldn't work, seeing as my profusely sweaty body had already managed to drench the entirety of 27C.

I was so lost in thought that I failed to notice that the girl had already moved over. I stared at her, motionless for what seemed like forever. She caught me, but instead of awkwardly redirecting my observance of her, she just stared back, and soon enough, we were both grinning.

She moved over for the extra spot…. *Shit*, I could marry this girl right now.

As the plane crept out the gate and approached the runway, I was desperately looking for an icebreaker that would initiate a conversation with this girl. The shaking of the cabin was sort of helpful, slapping me back and forth into reality. Finally, after twenty-some minutes of spastic speculation, I cultivated the greatest icebreaker of the modern teenage Casanova:

"Gum?"

After milliseconds of hesitation which felt like minutes, she reached out to grasp the piece of gum. "Oh—thank you!"

The anxiety that had filled my chest finally stabilized. I was in, or so I thought. Yet as moments passed and her attention shifted back to the small screen in front of her, all hope seemed to be tossed out the window at the altitude of thirty-something thousand feet, like a DM that was responded to but in such a way that clearly said "thanks, but no thanks." Just like that, the moment of reminiscence about our future lives, filled with our kids and country house weekends, was gone.

Cruising altitude.

"You know, I was looking for uh…gum at the airport, but I couldn't find it?" She finally pushed the much-needed words back to me. Naturally, I reacted and tried to force the conversation further.

"Really? That sucks! Maybe the airport didn't have it. I was in Hawaii this summer and on my way back, I was looking for gum too, and one of the women who worked at a store said that the whole airport banned selling gum. Isn't that crazy?"

"Whoa, no gum at all? That's really uh. Strange. How was Hawaii?"

Through this halting conversation, I learned more about her. She was French on her father's side, but her mother was from Manchester, and she lived with her most of the time. So, she spoke English with an accent, and French, the sexiest language in the fucking world. She had this habit where, for a moment, she wouldn't know a certain word in English, so she would replace it with a French word until she remembered it. Seeing her struggle was both cute and amusing. It got to the point where I would completely understand what she meant to say, but I would rather let her figure it out on her own. Sometimes I would even start chuckling a little, which she would roll her eyes at, nudging me.

That nudge was what got me. It was the only time I fell out of focus, and that's because I was overcome by those same visions of our future intertwined lives. We would talk about other planets that we managed to remember from failed elementary school days, life after death, our ambitions, and our biggest fears, some which we've both experienced already, like why her last boyfriend beat her.

I come back down to Earth.

"I didn't know why he would hit me," she said. Hearing that infuriated me. No one should ever have to be in a position to figure out why someone you love would beat you. I was disappointed that someone in this world had the audacity to place his hands on this girl in any other way than lovingly.

I've only known this girl for a couple of hours now, and she's already trusted me enough to tell me about something so personal.

"He didn't deserve you; he never did."

"I know that….*now*. Just a little too late, you know?"

"Sometimes, we don't know why things happen the way they do, or why they take the time they take." I tried to comfort her. Nevertheless, an unnatural silence now filled row 27. Neither of us knew what to say after that. Instead, I placed my hand on her shoulder, courteously patting with four fingers. I didn't know if that was the right thing to do, but it felt right.

She raised the armrest and slid next to me, lifting my arm around her as she fell onto my chest and back into seat 27B.

"At our age, everything feels like the end of the world," I added after a while. She stayed silent for a bit before she deflating her chest, falling further into the crest between my underarm and rib cage.

"I feel safe," she said. "For the first time in a long time, I feel safe."

And for the first time ever, I felt real love.

After fifteen minutes, she sat up. Neither of us could sleep; she was surely rested from the previous night, and I was overcome by hundreds of new emotions that would never let me close my eyes. That's the way she made

Photograph by Sam Truong Dan: https://unsplash.com/photos/ju2NgSoR6pA.

me feel—as if I would never sleep again.

Eventually, the beverage cart reached our row. The stewardess reached down and locked the cart.

"What would you like to drink?" she asked me, the furthest seat first.

"Just a water please," I replied.

"I'll have a Cabernet Sauvignon."

For a minute, I was confused. As she reached out to the stewardess, handing over a beat up red passport, I couldn't fathom the idea that this girl was over twenty-one. Yet, the little red booklet was handed back to her without fuss, and the wine was placed on her table. I noticed her giggling, looking straight forward as she took a sip of her red wine.

"Works every time." She handed me the passport as an explanation, which was open to the main page. The photo loosely looked like her but was clearly someone else. "It's my sister's. She lets me use it when I fly and she doesn't."

She was as slick as she was witty, and the fact that she was bold enough to order a drink on a flight was beyond me. I low-fived her as we giggled. She handed me the plastic cup for a sip.

As the hours flew by, so did our conversation. I learned that she wasn't stopping in New York; she was going to California to visit her grandparents in Vichy Springs, near Napa Valley. We talked about the stars and our favorite fruits. She told me she would leave this planet if she could, alone forever, heading into the stars. She called it her "voyage de rêve." It meant her dream trip. We talked Sartre, Nietzsche, Hemingway, and Camus, both agreeing that "The Myth of Sisyphus" is one of the most important writings of life itself.

Soon enough, she asked me about my life. She asked me about deeper things, things that I struggled with, about love, and everything in between. So, I told her everything—about the lack of love in my life, and how it's something that I haven't yet experienced. I told her what it's like to be alone and how beautiful it can be, yet how solitude is also a cancer, slowly filling your body with self-neglect.

Time flew and before we knew it, the pilot announced our descent into JFK airport, and everyone began to stir, adjusting their seats and bags. We didn't. We managed to stay in the same position for what seemed like forever. It wasn't until the stewardess asked us to fix our seats that we actually snapped out of our euphoric daze.

Five thousand feet.

Before I knew it, she was explaining where she planned on spending the rest of summer and when she'd head back. She spoke quickly—a reminder that our time was coming to a close, and we both knew it.

Three thousand feet.

She asked where I lived in the city. I explained why the East Village is the best location in the world, which she laughed at. I told her that she had to visit at some point to let me show her around.

Two thousand feet.

We didn't say much for a minute or so. Maybe it was because we were excited for our plans, but we also knew how hard it would be to actually see each other again.

Five hundred feet.

We both looked out the window. The sky seemed to be rising as the plane was ready to touch down. The sun was half hidden behind the Freedom Tower.

Touch down.

We finally landed to the sounds of old folks clapping in celebration. We laughed, knowing it was the last laugh we'd share for a while. Everyone was struggling to get up and grab their bags as soon as possible. We both knew this wasn't necessary and sat back for the time being. She said her connecting flight wasn't departing for another couple hours, so she had time to spare, whereas I was already home. We were motivated to extend our stay in row 27 for as long as possible.

Finally, we came across the topic of when we could see each other again. I told her that I would be here for the rest of the summer, running around, and getting into trouble with friends. To my surprise, she said she was willing to visit that summer and stay for a bit on her way back home to France.

Immediately, I felt as though I was falling from the altitude we were at an hour ago. I

hesitated as I tried to get the right words out.

"Y-you can stay with me when you come here, it's no problem! You can stay for a week or even longer if you wanna." I felt bolder than ever—she had rubbed off on me. We both smiled.

"I would love that." At this point, most of the aisles were cleared, and we figured it was time for us to go, as hesitant as we were.

Entering the airport, we were greeted by bright daylight. I could only imagine how I looked, cringing against the harsh light, yet the short glimpse of her in this bright light just made her that much more beautiful. Our steps got shorter and slower until we finally came to a stop.

"Well, hey, I'm so happy I met you on this flight. You really made my summer."

"Yeah, you too, this was really fun," she replied, looking down at her feet, smiling.

To my surprise, she snuck under my chin for a hug, with her arms wrapped tightly around my neck. It was the first time I actually noticed her height, a little more than a head shorter than me. As I felt her head slowly decompressing from my white tee, I felt the warmest, most gentle sensation imprinted on the left side of my cheek. As we both stood there, I felt her fingers reach for my left hand, spread my clenched palm open, and place what felt like a small, dry piece of paper. Then she picked up her bag, grinning, and walked towards the connecting gate lane. I waved in a very nerdy way, waiting until she was out of sight before I opened the piece of paper.

It was the gum wrapper. Her phone number was scribbled in cursive inside it.

Joyfully, I picked up my carry-on and headed towards baggage claim, stuffing the gum wrapper in my wallet. The ride home was one big blur. My attention was lost in the lightness of the blue sky, soaking the sun and the wind in its fullness. My eyes were closed, and I could feel every part of nature's beauty. Every sensation felt clearer and purer than it had ever felt before. I was again lost in this girl, this time infatuated with the last seven hours I had spent with her—and the countless hours we would spend together soon enough.

Twenty minutes later, I finally got to my block. The cab ride was forty bucks. I reached into my pocket.

The wallet wasn't there.

For a minute, I couldn't believe it. I looked through every pocket on my body in a panic, as the sinking feeling got stronger and stronger. It was truly gone.

I couldn't have cared less about the wallet. Its contents would have been replaced by the end of the week, but the chances of seeing this girl again were gone forever. At that moment, I realized that we never actually exchanged names or anything else. I wouldn't be able to find her even if I tried. How fucking stupid was I to not ask for more ways of reaching each other?

That regret didn't fade, and I don't think it ever will. The universe dragged us apart quicker than it brought us together. In my attempts to understand, I reflected on the belief that everything happens for a reason—that is until you're the victim yourself.

I unintentionally hurt both of us. But maybe she didn't think much of it after that. Truthfully, I can only hope. Yet feeling what I felt, I can only assume she felt the same way.

She waited for a phone call that never came.

Who knows, maybe she still is.

Art by Annie Shi.

Spinning

Ryley Bonferraro

The first thing I feel is disbelief. I almost laugh. There's absolutely no possible way that it's true. None. My brain works overtime trying to make sense of it—and fails. So I shake my head. *No*. Not possible.

It's three o'clock in the morning, and you read it on Facebook, I think to myself, except I meant to say it out loud. But my voice isn't working. *No way*.

Sierra does laugh. "No, he's not!"

"*Yes*," Shawn insists. He's not laughing. "Go look!" He looks at me. "Ryley, *yes*."

I realize then I've been repeating the word *no* over and over. I pull my phone out and open Facebook. It's the first link that pops up, a syracuse.com article shared by three, four, five of my friends already. "*Man dies in Camillus crash after motorcycle crosses lanes, hits embankment.*" That's all it says. It could be anyone. But it's not. His name is tagged in each post, over and over.

Jared Rogers.

Not possible.

I click the link. The words all blur together and I can't understand them. It's too late; I'm too tired. Too scared. *Lost control*, it says. *18-year-old man rushed to the hospital* and *not identifying the man until family has been informed,* and for a moment, I think yes, it's a mistake, everyone just thinks it's him but it's not, how could they know? *Where he died.* It says that too. I can finally make sense of that sentence, can read the whole thing. "*The man was rushed to Upstate University Hospital in Syracuse where he died.*"

"How do they know?" I whisper. "It can't be him."

Shawn just looks at me. Sierra is still vehemently denying it. As much as I want to keep arguing, it's slowly starting to sink in. I'm seeing how many of his family members are sharing the link, saying they'll miss him, saying he's too young. Saying they hated his motorcycle. Saying it's not fair. And that's what I'm thinking too: *It's not fair. It's not fair. It's not fair*.

"Sierra," I say. "I'm going to bed."

Shawn takes the hint. "I'm leaving. I just… I can't believe it. I'm going home."

He leaves and Sierra closes the door behind him. I haven't moved since Shawn first said it, first opened Facebook in the break in our conversation and gasped. "Guys… Jared's dead." That's what he said. It sounded like a question, like he wanted us to tell him no. Like he was still unsure. But it also sounded like he knew, like an exclamation, like he was hoping he could just say it and then we'd all move on. Not possible.

I still haven't moved. I've been sitting on my bed in my tiny new dorm room with my high school friends, and suddenly it feels big. Empty. But I feel like I can't go anywhere else. I'm drained, exhausted. I lie down in my clothes, makeup still on, on top of my blankets. I'm finding it a little hard to breathe. My earrings stab me behind the ears; usually I take them out, but right now I don't mind—the pain keeps me present. I don't think I would have fallen asleep if it wasn't so late, if I wasn't already so tired. But I think my mind was happy for the escape, for the chance to dream and pretend everything was still okay.

When I was a kid, I played this game with my brother and cousin where we would stand in the middle of a room and spin around and around in circles until we got so dizzy we couldn't stand, and then we'd collapse. We thought it was so fun to lay there and stare at the ceiling and watch it twist and spin until the dizziness finally faded. That's what it feels like when I wake up and realize everything I heard last night wasn't a dream. It feels like the whole world is spinning, and no matter how long I lie on the ground waiting for it to stop—it won't.

It feels surreal, just like anything that happens when you're so tired you can barely think straight, like you're not even sure it happened. I pick up my phone and open Facebook, because I have to know, to confirm my bad dream, to drill it into my brain. I immediately wish I hadn't. Post after post, comment after comment, people who barely knew him talking about how great he was, how much they'll miss him. There's an angry urge in me to shout back, to write all over their posts. *You didn't know him! You haven't talked to him in years! You won't miss him like I will!* It's like they want their own sympathy, they want attention. They want people to know that someone they knew died.

But I wish I would never have to tell anyone. I don't want people to know, don't want to see the looks on their faces when I tell them that my best friend of nearly fifteen years is gone. I vowed then and there that I wouldn't share anything online. My grief over losing him is mine and mine alone.

I close Facebook and open my messages. I scroll down to his name and touch it. The last message Jared Rogers ever sent to me said, *"I miss you, we totally have to hang out soon!"* My reply was, *"We definitely do!"* I toss my phone

Layout by Sean Murphy. Art by Emily Gunn.

away. My body feels heavy, like I swallowed a handful of rocks and now they're pinning me down, rendering me immobile. I'm still so dizzy.

I don't go to my first class. I stay in bed in yesterday's clothes, waiting for the spinning to stop. Sierra doesn't bring it up. She didn't know him nearly as long or as well as I did, and she probably doesn't want to upset me more than I already am. When I finally work up the energy to stand up, the spinning gets worse. I lie back down and miss another class. I can't even cry; it's like I'm numb, unfeeling—in shock. It still just *doesn't make sense*.

The tears do come though. Later, when I'm sitting with Sierra on the stone outcropping in front of the building where my last class of the day is, she says, "I can't believe it," and then I can't hold them back anymore. She hugs me while I sob in the middle of campus, and I think: *This is the worst I've ever felt. What a way to end my first week in college*.

• • •

"I'm so sorry." I don't doubt Nickie's sincerity, despite the fact that she's my newest friend.

But there's nothing I can say back. Not just because "it's okay" isn't true or because I don't appreciate her sentiment, but because I can't speak.

Poor Nickie. I've known her for exactly one week, and she already has to deal with my emotional breakdown. She comes over and gives me a hug. "If you decide you want to talk about it, I'm here," she offers. I look over at Sierra, who's only crying because I am, and then back to Nickie, who'll give me space if I ask her to. And then I start talking.

"He used to steal my brownies," I blurt out with a hysterical giggle. Nickie smiles and makes an *aww* sound. "In elementary school, he loved those little Cosmic brownies, with the sprinkles. He'd always try to trade me for them. He'd trade his whole lunch for that brownie if I asked him to." I sniff and smile at myself.

"The only time I ever got in trouble in school was his fault. We were in second grade, and he was talking to me when we were supposed to be quiet. Our teacher wrote both our names on the board." Now that I've started, I can't stop. Someone has hit play on the tape that holds these thoughts, and I can't find the pause button by myself.

"Sometimes he'd just show up at my house in his rollerblades, and it would take him five whole minutes to get up the porch stairs to ring the doorbell while he was wearing those things. And my mom would open the door and he'd say, 'Can Ryley come play?' But I didn't have rollerblades so instead she'd invite him in, and we'd play hide and seek with my siblings. He always lost because he was so tall, and every time my mom heard him say 'crap' she'd tell him to watch the language in front of Kabrey." I wonder if my words are even coherent through my tears, but either way, I didn't stop. "We'd

I'm babbling now but it's helping; I couldn't hold it in even if I wanted to.

always have mac and cheese or ramen for lunch. He taught my sister how to hold a noodle between your fingers and swallow, and then pull it back out and say "doesn't it feel cool?" It drove my mom crazy, but my brother and I thought it was hilarious. His grandparents lived around the corner from me, so whenever he was there, he'd rollerblade over to me, or I'd walk to him, and we would play all day."

"How old were you guys?" Nickie asks gently.

"I don't know, maybe fourth grade? Sixth? Possibly all the way through both. It's hard to say because he was just always around." *Keep talking about the memories,* I tell myself. *It helps ignore reality.* "In middle school, we did these skits for our Spanish class where two of my friends and I gave ourselves Hispanic boy names and Jared named himself 'Juanita.' For one of the skits, he was in a coma, and we woke him up with peanut butter; in another, we were all in the mafia, and we got to bring nerf guns to school that we shot each other with. Not sure how our teacher let us do that, but we got the best Spanish grades of the year. In high school, he went to a different school than I did, so I didn't see him as much, but he always talked to me. *I'm talking so fast I don't think I'm breathing.*

"He'd tell me how happy it made him to talk to me, how he loved making me smile, how he had a crush on me when we were little and implied that he still did. He'd send me texts with hearts and say he's so glad we're best friends—that he missed me so much. He never ever missed one of my birthdays, and I never missed his. They were exactly a month apart; mine on the last day of April, his on the last day of May. We had so much in common!" I'm babbling now but it's helping; I couldn't hold it in even if I wanted to. The memories keep filling up my brain, and to empty them, I push them out through my lips: "We loved listening to thunderstorms, and we loved cotton candy ice cream. We hated pointless conversations, and we hated history class. But we both loved math. He wanted to be an engineer." *Now he never will be.* I take a deep breath. "We were always on the same page—alike in so many ways." *He was my soul mate.* I almost say that out loud, but I can't because I think I might choke on the words. If I say it out loud that makes it true, and I can't bear to make that real—it already hurts enough to breathe. "We'd talk so late into the night. About everything. He promised," I say suddenly, and it's getting too hard to talk through the tears, my throat is closing up around my vocal cords, and the pain is squeezing my lungs. "He promised he'd always be here for me, but he's not. He promised me always."

Uncontrollable sobs overtake me now. Nickie gives me another hug; Sierra slips out of the room. She, for one, is over my breakdown. "He's still with you, Ryley," Nickie tells me. "As long as you keep remembering those things, he is."

• • •

One, two, three, four. One, two. One, two, three. I count every single one, every single photo I see myself in. One, two. There's a photo board propped up on a stand every ten feet or so. They distract me as we wait in line to see him. One. From kindergarten birthday parties, through eighth grade graduation—at least fifty different pictures of the two of us. One, two, three. Pumpkin pick-

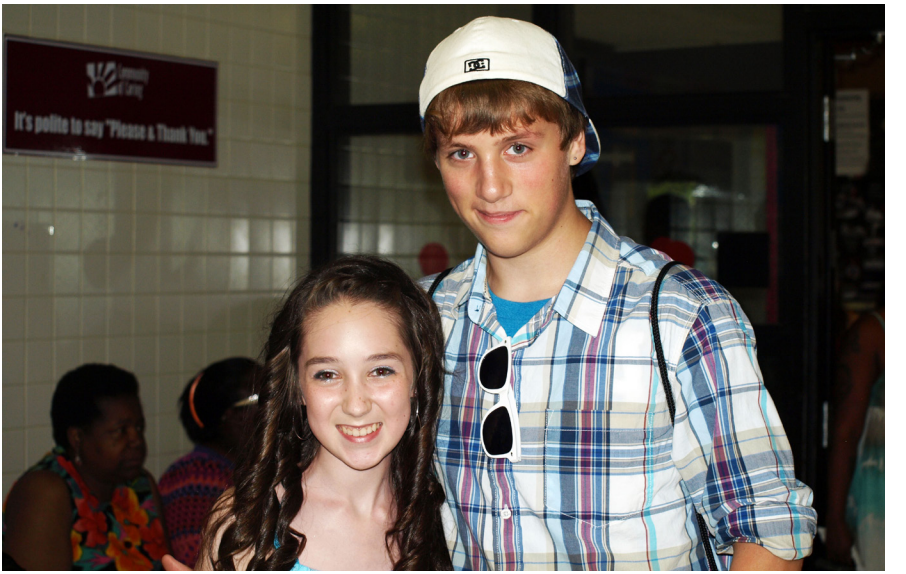
ing in sixth grade. School play in fifth. After-school dances in seventh. The time he was the one friend I invited to my family-only birthday party. One, two. Everywhere. I'm everywhere. I wonder why his parents never gave some of these pictures to mine. One, two, three, four. They make me smile.

Sierra came with my parents and me. I don't think she realized until this moment how much and how long I had been in his life. Not always at the center of it, but always close, always constant. He was my best friend when I was young. My crush—as I was his—as we grew up. Almost—but not quite—a couple in high school. Someone to count on, *always*.

His family is waiting for everyone at the front of the line, right next to him. The girl he'd been dating stands with them—I can't help but resent her. If anyone has the right to that spot, to claim that piece of his heart, it's me. She's known him for less than a year, but she gets to accept the most sympathy for his death, and I hate it. *I'm* the one he called in moments of need, and *I'm* the one he confided in. But "girlfriend" means more to everyone than "best friend," as if those labels signify the depth of a relationship. People automatically hold the former above the latter. No one knows that I'm in so much more pain than she ever will be.

Although, maybe his family can tell. They know. His grandmother sees me first, wraps me in a hug. "Oh, Ryley," she says, and my tears are encouraged by hers. His dad asks if I saw all the pictures, if I remember taking them. I nod yes. His mom can only give me a small smile as she hugs me. Everything else I've been feeling is replaced abruptly by awful, unbearable grief.

And then suddenly I've changed my mind— I don't want to see him lying there,



can't bear to be in the room another minute. Part of me runs out the door, refusing to believe what it knows it will see. The part of me left behind is still spinning.

Maybe it's the spinning that blurs my vision. Maybe it's the tears. Either way, my eyes have trouble focusing on him. *Not possible*. He looks the same, but he's not there, never will be again. *It's not fair. It's not fair. It's not fair.* This is just *not* possible.

I can't stand there long. On the way out, his parents have a little table set up with paper and different colored pens on it, and a family member tells us it's so that everyone can leave a memory of Jared with them.

"I have to," I say to no one in particular as I lean over the table. I pick up the purple pen and then freeze, realizing I have no idea how to start. What to say. How do you sum up fifteen years of friendship in one piece of paper?

You don't.

But as soon as my pen touches the page, the words come.

• • •

It gets easier over time. Sometimes I see a motorcycle on the road and have the urge to burst into tears, but I've gotten better at holding them back. Sometimes I still find myself taking out my phone to text him, only to slide it back in my pocket with slightly blurred vision or shaky hands. Sometimes I wake up thinking about him, thinking how horrible it is when you lose someone so soon, so unexpectedly. I'll cry myself to sleep and think about all the things I never said to him, things that now I never can. Sometimes I wonder what would have happened if either of us had acted on how we really felt about each other, if maybe, just maybe, everything could have been different.

I'll never know now. And sometimes I still notice that part of me that's always spinning, always getting too dizzy to stand. Sometimes I collapse with it. Other times I remember that I can slow it down.

One, two, three.

Sometimes it's too hard to dwell on the memories. Other times I feel like it's necessary, like if I think about them enough, they'll be ingrained in my mind and I'll never forget a word he said, nor a moment we spent together. The more recent ones are easier to recall; like the time I told him I was sad, and he told me to blast Taylor Swift and dance around my room until I felt better, or the time he snuck up on me and my brother at the New York State Fair and spent the rest of the day with us. I remember my brother and him getting their black belts in karate together. Other memories are harder, they come in bits and pieces. I remember going pumpkin picking, and I can't bring back any of the words he said, but I do recall how our parents noticed that he kept picking up the pumpkins for me, trying to show off. Even they thought we'd end up together someday. We went back to that pumpkin patch for the first time this year.

Sometimes I go back and read through our old text messages, so I can remember how it felt to talk to him. But most importantly, I remember him being there, every single time I needed him. We loved each other, even if we never said so. I'll always miss him.

And I'm allowed to miss him; I'm allowed to be sad that he's gone. Because I've finally shouted it at my brain enough times that it understands. He *is* gone.

But he'll always be my best friend.

Cafés are for Writers

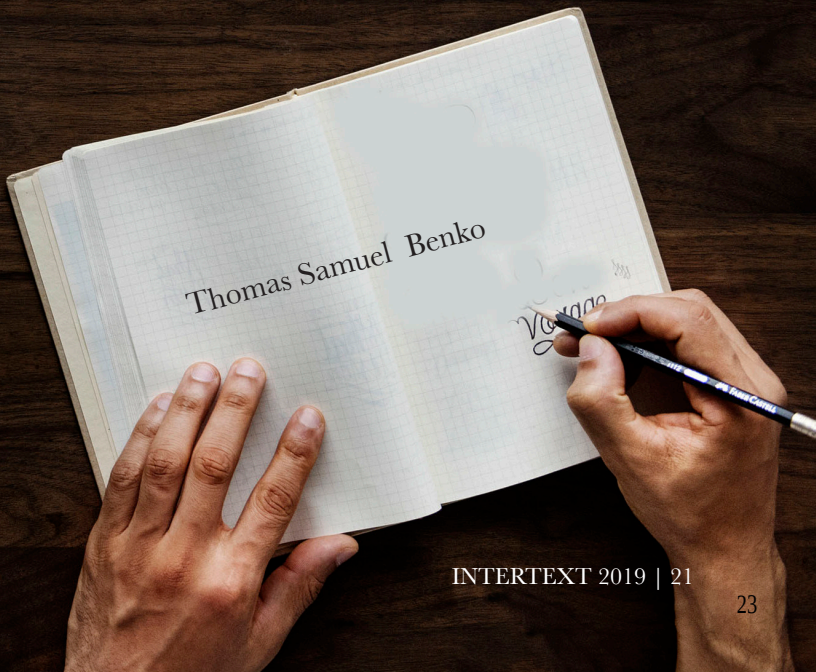
Yes, I was the person who would sit in a not-so-popular café in downtown Budapest, listen to jazz, and pretend to be the next Hemingway in the making. I tried my hardest to personify the vintage, coffeehouse author, as the wooden floorboards, smell of coffee, soft murmur reminiscent of a library, and muffled sounds of the outside world all contributed to the microcosm that I created for myself in that coffeehouse. That very microcosm, in turn, created me as well.

The winter accentuated this feeling. It felt like my shelter, sitting next to a radiator and watching the snow fall outside. A shelter where I could feel safe in facing my thoughts. I would visit this coffeehouse every day after school, where I would work on my studies and then work on myself. The quiet, almost detached environment that I favored urged me to reflect. I tried to make myself think and look like the next great author of our age, and so, donning a turtleneck to look the part, I made it a point to think philosophical thoughts. At some point, this became more habitual, and thus, I found that the café began to color the recesses of my mind.

This café that I frequented changed my way of thought. When I first started going there, I came with the belief that I would force myself to become an acclaimed writer. I came in thinking about and for myself. I am reminded of the scene in *Dead Poet's Society*, where the students stand on top of desks and look around the classroom to see it from a different perspective. The café was my desk, the outside world was the classroom, and I came to perceive and imagine the world from another point of view. My thinking changed from "I want to be a writer" to "I want to write." It changed from wanting to own a title to wanting to communicate in the way I knew best.

My then partner first encouraged me to meet her there whenever our schedules permitted, as we attended different schools. An aspiring therapist, she would interrogate me every time we met, and I would do the same. Sitting in our favorite spot, sipping on mediocre coffee, we would ask each other questions that sparked deep thought. Being my best friend, she made the atmosphere of that café very comforting, and it soon became a place where I found it comfortable to face and develop my own character.

I walked into that café with high hopes of becoming successful; however, my definition of an accomplished writer changed. I came to realize that there is no success in being a good writer if that writer cannot understand himself. Even today, I remind myself of that café whenever I can, so that I may reflect on why I want to write—and why it is a large part of me.



Layout by Elle Ross.


South City to

My Own Anything

Crisanta Wadhams

"I work in South City," he said, eyes cast downwards.

That wasn't what I meant when I asked where he worked. South City, like many suburbs of San Francisco, is covered in a blanket of second-hand fog and smoke. White and dreamy man-made clouds dance with the skyscrapers but somehow turn gray as they travel south. In fact, everything turns gray as you move south. The building facades of South City are nothing like the walls of Mission Street. The magic of the Marina District is lost in the current; even the local faces lose pigmentation with every mile. That's where Jose is, far from where he wants to be.

"No, no, no. I meant what do you do in South City?"

His eyes float to the top of his head as if he's searching for the answer somewhere in his mind. But I know it's not the answer he's looking for, rather a way to make the answer sound more like what he wants.

"I work in a warehouse…basically packaging truffles. The nice ones."

Jose Avina Lopez was born in the United States, but long before he could read, talk, or even walk, his family moved back to Mexico. He spent the first five years of his life in Guadalajara, living with his grandparents and many cousins, but in 2005, his parents decided to move back to the United States. He left the United States at a time before he could remember, and because of that, Jose spoke no English. He left Mexico before he was old enough to go to school, and therefore could not read or write. He was suddenly a Spanish-speaking child in the United States who could not even read or write in his own language. Jose explains that this kind of situation is normal among people like him who have parents who grew up in another country where English is not spoken. In fact, many families struggle to choose between the comfort of their home countries and the opportunities available in the United States.

A daunting 27% of the United States population is composed of those who speak a language other than English in their household. Of this already-staggering statistic, 45% speak Spanish within their households. This means that Jose is far from alone in the adversity he's had to face. Maybe this is why he never acknowledges his obstacles—because he feels that he is part of a larger group of people all fighting the same battle.

Jose explained that where he lived never had any significance to him. Amongst all the inconsistencies and changes within his childhood, he acknowledged that his family was one of his only constants. His father's dedication to supporting his family, the early mornings when he would crawl back into bed smelling like fresh grass cuttings and motor oil, reminded Jose of this fact. He worked as a landscaper, crossing El Camino Real every morning, the back tires of his truck jolting him out of his seat as they flew across the train tracks.

Layout by Antonia Green. Art by Emily Gunn.

His mother's love for him and his siblings was shown as she walked them to school, her hands soft from coconut butter and holding tightly onto his own. They too had to cross El Camino Real to reach their destination, the elementary school laying just beyond the busy street. "Cuidado," she reminded Jose every morning, "Cuidado!" But just as Jose relied on his parents, his younger siblings relied on him. He laughed as he imagined the legitimacy of his family "tree," the trunks connecting to a branch that held onto the twigs. His family was the only defining characteristic of "home," and as long as they were together, it didn't really matter where they lived or how much of an outsider he was.

In our kindergarten classroom, different corners of the room were set up to be different areas to play. One corner housed two tiny play kitchens where the girls prepared plastic eggs, plastic hamburgers, and wore pink play aprons. Another corner had wooden building blocks where I would spend most days stacking them up as high as I could before they all came tumbling down. There was also the boys' corner with small plastic trucks, cars, and various types of hats: firefighter hats, policeman hats, and construction hats.

Jose was always in the last corner. This was where kids who wanted to take naps could sleep, but Jose never slept. The last corner had an alphabet rug, each square meant for one student to sit in to keep the kids organized during storytime or other learning segments of class. But each square had a letter and word beginning with that letter. "A." "Apple." "B." "Bike." "C." "Cat." Jose spent his free play time on that rug, rolling over the different squares and trying to find the meaning within them. Some days he would join most of the other boys in the cars and hats corner, taking turns pushing the big truck from one side of the corner to the other while wearing a cowboy hat.

On Tuesdays, my mom came in to read with Jose. They sounded out the letters Jose had been reading on the alphabet rug. As the weeks went on, the letters were strung into words, and the words became sentences. Jose began coming over to my house to spend extra time with my mom, his voice sometimes overpowering the noise of my after-school cartoons. Somewhere in his lessons with my mother, he must have misunderstood the meaning of the word "mom" because that became the word he used to address her.

As the years went on, and he developed a more accurate understanding of the word, he decided to continue calling her that and to adopt me as "hermana." But I wasn't his only sister. In fact, he has two younger siblings, Herman and Euria, whom he felt a special obligation to. He explained that once he was old enough, he could feel like one of the leaders of his family. He alone had gone through the United States school system and had learned how to speak perfect English. He knew how to succeed in a world that his parents were unfamiliar with, and he understood that he was in a position to help his younger siblings. He explained that in his eyes, there is no such thing as "friends," only family.

Jose hoped that his friends would be as consistent in his life as his family was—and only let himself become close to those he believed would.

One day Jose came to school wearing a new pair of glasses. His hair was slicked back with some new type of gel, and he looked as if he had been reborn. When I

saw him, I cocked my head and he laughed, asking, "What's wrong?" His voice still carried the same sweetness, but it seemed like confidence had been added to the normally one-dimensional tone. That week he bought his first suit, the first of many. It was navy blue, so dark that it appeared black. I only noticed it when he bent his elbow and the light jumped off the crease, revealing the blue pigmentation. Seeing him in the blue suit with the glasses and the meticulously neat hair, it felt like he had discovered himself and that his vision was finally in sync with his facade. Jose had become what he always wanted to be. As a kid, he might have said a professional skateboarder or a boxer, but today he would say that he wanted to be his own boss.

"Do you mean you want your own company?" I asked, confused by the vague nature of his response.

"My own company, my own brand, my own anything. I just don't want to rely on anybody anymore."

In 2016, Jose's parents separated. While inconsistency and adversity were never unfamiliar to him, it was difficult to imagine that something like this would happen to his family. They were the reason for all his hard work, and he always saw them as unbreakable. He always felt like the worst was behind them and that every day was movement away from the difficulty of the past. Jose will tell you that the separation was a result of his family's financial issues, but what he's hesitant to admit is that the money problems began because of his father's growing problem with alcohol. The alcohol was only the beginning of the abuse. Jose would argue that although his father never physically hurt his mother, he rejected every effort his mother made to help him. "She told me she couldn't handle it," he said quietly, "She was going to go live by herself." With all the financial burdens Jose's mother already carried, she realized that the only way she'd be able to afford living apart from her husband was to find another partner. "I guess she got along with the other person, and they had a kid," Jose explained. His youngest brother, Ryan Caleb Lopez, was born in the middle of Jose's senior year of high school, but all the love Jose has for his other two younger siblings is somehow missing from his relationship with Ryan. He's the type of person who gives love naturally, but as he called his baby brother "a kid," it was clear that his family was broken in his eyes. His one constant was gone, but Jose didn't seem broken.

"My biggest fear? *Shit*…I don't know. I feel like I'm going to separate from a lot of people." Jose admits, hesitantly. He bites his lip to keep any more words from escaping, but he's already said enough. His success is inevitable. For his entire life, he thought that the thing he depended on was his family, that his mother and his father were his crutches and that his siblings were his bandages.

But even as his crutches were taken away, he remained standing, which means that his constant was never what he thought it was. It wasn't his family that he was reliant on, it was himself, his own aspirations, and his own character that were responsible for his vision.

"You think I'm crazy, but…I'm not. Some people think I'm crazy but they have not seen what I've seen. There's a quote: 'Don't expect others to understand your path when they're not given your vision.'"

DOWN WITH

Where is home? A question that my parents and tens of thousands of other Ethiopians had as they left the only place they had ever known. Many left their parents, siblings, cousins, and friends behind to restart their lives in new homes across the world. They attempted to leave behind the scars that the vicious political regime of the 1970s had marked them with.

My mother, Aster Selassie, loved Ethiopia but had to leave for survival. "It is a beautiful place to live, but there is a little problem because there is a war," she says reminiscing on her life in Ethiopia. Her neck is always adorned with a golden *meskel* (cross in Ge'ez) that represents her intense spiritual connection to both God and her Ethiopian background. My mother would always remind

THE DERG!

RAHEL DEMISSIE

Layout by Peter Conway.

me, "Meskelishin argi!" ("Wear your *meskel*!") so that I, too, would hold these spiritual connections close to my heart.

After her mother died from influenza, Aster lived with her great-aunt, Fital, in Gullele, one of Addis Ababa's sub cities. She was just one-year-old when she moved in with Fital. Her great-aunt, who did not have children of her own, was eager to raise her. My mother's childhood was limited to only religious and educational affairs. Fital was notorious in Gullele for being extremely strict.

> "I used to go to church… I used to go to school. [Those are] the only things I [would] do. Other than that, she would beat me [Aster laughs]."

As my mother stiffly braided my tangled curls, she would recount stories of her great-aunt's sternness. I remember her telling me about the time one of her friends gave her earrings, but Fital threw them away because she was not allowed to get gifts from others. Although Fital was decidedly stringent, Aster was understanding of her harshness. She would say it was a form of tough love that she had learned to accept.

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During the early 1970s, Ethiopia entered a period of political, social, and economic development, which was accompanied by constant violence. Emperor Haile Selassie's reign met much opposition in the last decade of his power. The Ethiopian famine of 1973 was the catalyst for the violent demise of Emperor Selassie's feudalistic reign. Following the Emperor's fall, Jonathan Dimbleby helped kick-start a macabre dictatorship. Dimbleby, a British broadcaster, author, and historian, gained the public's attention after his coverage of the 1973 Ethiopian famine in an ITV film called *The Unknown Famine*. This film focused on the mass starvation and its relation to the collapse of the Ethiopian Empire.

A group of rebel army officers obtained a copy of *The Unknown Famine* to which they intercut images of the Emperor attending a luxurious wedding feast. This film, renamed *The Hidden Hunger*, was repeatedly broadcasted prior to the brutal coup d'état. The film enraged not only the military forces, but also the peasants, the urban middle class, and students. "Land to the Tiller" was a phrase often used by students, including my father, Demissie Habtemariam, during demonstrations against the feudalistic and unjust disposition in Ethiopia. This public enragement supported the growth of a militaristic dictatorship called the Derg. This group was led by Mengistu Haile Mariam, who was inspired by Lenin's and Marx's doctrines—"the evil people," as my mother would call them.

Aster was in the sixth grade during the start of Ethiopia's political revolution in the 1970s. She was falling behind in school due to a lack of educational support from her family. "They are not educated. They [didn't encourage me] like we [encourage] you," she says, when I ask her why she got held back for two years. On the other hand, my father was in his second year at Addis Ababa University at the age of eighteen. Both of my parents went through several tribulations during this time.

The beginnings of Mengistu's ruthless dictatorship was marked by the execution of sixty government officials by firing squad. My parents remember discovering the news from local news reporters on the radio. They remember hearing the sounds of a marching band, followed by a statement naming each person executed and the reasons for their execution. "We [would] always [be] listening because we [were] expect[ing] something to happen," explains Aster, recalling the angst that consumed many Ethiopians during this time.

Ethiopia was split. Some agreed with the decisions made by Mengistu and thought it was best to work with him. Others were opposed to his actions and his hunger for power. My father mentions that many originally supported Mengistu because of the "confusion at the time." Mengistu's socialist dogma aligned with many Ethiopians; however, his brutal methods did not. Those who were known for opposing him were either put in

Aster (age 28) at Addis restaurant in Piazza.

jail, tortured, or executed.

The Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP) was a clandestine student movement that was organized against Mengistu and his dictatorship. Those in the EPRP would use red ink, often on their clothes, to write messages such as "Down with the Derg." My parents were not very involved in the EPRP. Aster attended one meeting where the group tried convincing her to join, but she was aware of the danger in being involved.

Demissie was a member for nearly a month before he realized the danger. He would meet with other university students to prepare slogans on articles of clothing, which they would throw on electric wires. Demissie describes the day he realized the risk in being a member: "One day, our group gave us papers to distribute. It is a paper prepared by the EPRP [that] we carried and began to throw everywhere…while I was walking, a military jeep came [toward us] with machine guns on it, and we thought that they saw us. I thought they were gonna fire on us."

Afterward, Demissie was no longer an active member of the EPRP. However, his brother, Getachew, was. Getachew was the manager for a government-owned printing company called Artistic Printing Enterprise. Occasionally, Mengistu would call Getachew requesting printouts for propaganda banners. Getachew would have to supply these demands to avoid both suspicion and execution.

Getachew's home was often filled with those who were hiding from the Derg. One of the several in hiding was a military official associated with the EPRP. He was in hiding because he stole guns from a military camp. One day, the official was arrested by the Derg while he was roaming the streets. They forced him to disclose the names of those who were working with him. Getachew was one of the names disclosed. Thus, the Derg captured and tortured Getachew, until

they killed him. Demissie learned about his brother's death from his cousin, Tibebu, an Ethiopian ambassador in Washington.

> "You are not even allowed to CRY! We cannot cry because [we will be seen as] anti-revolutionaries. They don't let us. If we cry, they come [to] our house and take you. They don't care," Demissie said.

My mother recalls the time she found a dying boy in her backyard and saved him. There was a group of students who would meet for EPRP meetings in the area called Abakoran. One day, the government ambushed them. Some members were shot and killed, while others were able to get away with injuries. While this was occurring, Aster was using the outhouse when she noticed a boy bleeding under a bush from a crack in the door. The military officers were running around looking for him. As he was attempting to get up from under the bush, Aster noticed an officer near him and told him, "STOP…Stay down. Stop!" He listened. After the officers left, she retrieved him and brought him to the house. Aster wrapped a *gabi* (blanket) tightly around his back to stop the bleeding from the bullet wound.

Aster asked her Aunt Aleme, who had a few children in turmoil at the time, for some assistance. One of Aleme's children was in prison and the other was hiding amongst the farmers in the rural area to protect himself from the Derg.

They decided to cover the boy with piles of hay in the backyard cowshed, due to the constant house searches by the military. Aster asked the boy if he knew anybody who could help him. He gave her a name and an address, and she went there to tell them what happened. They sent a doctor to the house to take care of the bullet wound. The doctor was a man dressed in women's clothing to mask his identity and medical equipment. After the boy was treated, Aster took him home.

The Kebel, the revolutionary guards of the Derg, knocked on my mother's door a couple of days after. Aster was not there at the time. They told Fital that Aster must go directly to the Derg's office when she arrives home. Once she got home, Fital told her, "Just give yourself up, nothing will happen if you didn't do anything."

My mother describes her emotional state as she walked to the office: "My heart was afraid a little bit, but my mind told me just be strong…. I didn't even pray to God. I used to be very Christian and used to go to church and everything."

Aster was immediately sent to a prison camp, which was filled with hundreds of people of all different ages and genders. "We were all in the hall laying down in our *gabis*. There were men and women, young and old. [There were] serious EPRP, people who [didn't] know much…like me, and those who [didn't] know anything at all." Aster stayed in this camp for six months.

Aster would hear officers grab four or five people every night, as she concealed her face within her *gabi*. She could hear the sounds of the rampage. Of bullets executing them. The prisoners never knew who was going to be next. Aster survived.

After those six months, she was transported to Sebatenya, another prison about thirty minutes away. Sebatenya was a stricter prison where people were tortured more often.

A childhood friend told her, "Don't say anything. Don't tell them anything. They won't do anything to you. They will only torture you. Even if they kill you, don't say anything. Be nice."

One by one, prisoners were being "questioned." As they were lined up for questioning, people left the room with bleeding backs and feet—tears in their eyes. One by one, the prisoners were questioned, until it was Aster's turn. Recounting the painful experience, she says, "He beat my back as I was naked up from the top. He beat me several times. He beat me with a Gumare (a leather whip)." She took her friend's advice to heart and didn't share anything with the officer. Her persistence let her off with relatively light torture. Comparatively, her friend had his back burned by lit newspapers as he was hung by his legs. Another six months passed and Aster was released to her family.

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After her release, she stayed in Ethiopia for another two years to finish high school. Aster was not fond of her life in Ethiopia. Both the emotional and physical harm that she endured had taken a toll on her. Her cousin, Zelekash, took her to Ghana to babysit her children. In Aster's eyes, Ghana was a beautiful country with extremely hot temperatures. She stayed there for nearly three and a half years and made plans to move to the Ivory Coast.

Zelekash's brother, Asheber, thought it would be better if she went to Italy with him. Zelekash paid for her flight and gave her five hundred dollars for her relocation to Italy. Aster stayed in a Catholic hostel, which provided her with a room, clothes, and food for roughly six months. After those six months, she had no money to her name. She decided to get a job as a babysitter for an Italian family in Rome. Aster and Demissie met in their biweekly café meetings in Rome, nine years before getting married.

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During the Reagan administration, they passed legislation so that those who have family members in the United States can apply for immigration. Aster was elated because her sister, Amsale, lived in Boston. Amsale and Aster worked together, signing the legal papers. She began to make her journey to Boston, nearly a year after she moved to Italy from Ghana.

As my mother moved from country to country, thoughts of home were constantly floating in her head. Ethiopia will always be the place she considers home. However, as she traveled, she realized that home can be found wherever she has family. Since her arrival to Boston in 1987, more and more family members have immigrated from Ethiopia to Boston. *Where is home for Aster?* you might ask. Both in the United States and Ethiopia, places where she has family.

Aster and her brother, Bizuneah, eating at their cousin's house in the Bole district of Addis Ababa.

SECTION INTRO

Someone just called 9 1 1. "What's the emergency?" a distant voice asks, but there is silence. Can you respond to that question?

Each call is met with an open mic, the ability to speak truths to ears wide open. Whether between strangers or amongst family, such calls reach into the depths of our personal and political lives—into our ways of knowing.

If nothing is done by many, maybe something can be done by one.

For some, hearing statistics might alter minds. For others, a moving video, a powerful speech, a testimony, or an admission on social media can be just as impactful.

They can reveal something that either was not previously known or was buried under seemingly more important issues.

The call can be in response to something personal or something systemic.

But this only means something if you choose to answer the call—if you choose to listen and take action.

The authors in this section offer honest

Layout by Brittney West. Art From https://www.moody.af.mil/News/Article-Display/Article/1327935/911-when-in-doubt-ring-it-out/.

accounts of personal and learned experiences, highlighting struggles faced every day that are too often ignored. Ryan Dunn writes about one of the last living survivors of the World War II atomic bombing of Hiroshima, as well as the growing threat of nuclear weapon use between America and North Korea today. Jennifer Jeffery openly and passionately calls out a man who does not wish for women, and especially lesbians, to serve in the military. She reminds us how fierce and capable women are. Amelia Lefevre draws connections between cancer and the environment, urging us to attend to the cost of environmental neglect. Student researchers Abby Boglioli and Andi Voigt show how Trump's Department of Interior is dismantling environmental protections and how the media is not discussing some key players. This section concludes with "Just Some Respect," in which Lia Figurelli lyrically and honestly describes the collective female experience of unwanted sexual advances, highlighting their frequency and the laws that surround them.

These authors offer us a space to learn and listen—and maybe to respond—to answer the call.

—Antonia Green, Sean Murphy,
Nicole Sklitsis, and Brittney West

THE LAST OF THE *HIBAKUSHA*

Ryan Dunn

Keiko Ogura stands before the assembled mass, her gaze greeting the audience with a calming warmth that belies the horrors her eyes have witnessed. She tucks an unruly strand of straight gray-black hair behind her ear and adjusts her rimless spectacles before beginning her address. English is not her first language, but she speaks with a slow, deliberate cadence that gives her a powerful aura amongst the gathered crowd. Her words echo throughout the auditorium, each one allowing the last just enough time to land, as though the weight of what they convey is too heavy for her not to give each its due. She isn't supposed to be here, after all.

Ogura was eight years old on August 6, 1945, the date that will forever be remembered as the day the United States altered the future of nuclear discourse by dropping an atomic bomb on her hometown of Hiroshima. All told, roughly 200,000 people—most of whom were civilians—perished as a result of the bombing (Yamazaki). The Ogura family—including Keiko, her younger siblings, and her parents—managed to defy astronomical odds and survive the greatest show of military force the world has seen.

Survivors of the Hiroshima bombing, along with those who lived through the

bombing of Nagasaki on August 9, have been dubbed *hibakusha*—literally, "those who were bombed." The UCLA Asian American Studies Center estimates that there are approximately 225,000 officially certified *hibakusha* living in Japan, though that number is beginning to dwindle as the survivors age and eventually die (Yamazaki). Ogura, not blind to that fact, delivers her message with pressing resolve.

Throughout the latter part of her life, Ogura has served as the Hiroshima Peace Culture Foundation's official English-language storyteller, an appointment that calls for her to relate the story of the bombing to audiences around the world. It is a mission that she fulfills with grace, dignity, and a solemn caution: *Never again.*

That message has now brought Ogura to a midsize lecture hall on the campus of Syracuse University, nearly 7,000 miles from her native Japan. She will spend the week giving a series of lectures that detail her experience as a survivor and advocate for nuclear nonproliferation. She wastes little time before delving into the stirring, yet understandably horrific, details of the bombing.

"All of a sudden there was a flash. The flash was tremendously white. All of a sudden everything turned to white. I couldn't see any color. I was beaten to the ground; at the same time, the blackness came on me and I became unconscious."

That the Ogura clan was safely stationed in an underground bunker when the bomb fell was the result of a provident premonition felt by Keiko's father. "All of a sudden my father said, 'Keiko, you shouldn't go to school today,'" recalls Ogura. When his daughter protested, the elder Ogura replied, "Today something might happen. I have a bad feeling."

Any endeavor to attribute this foreboding to some act of divine intervention would be ill-conceived: no God was present on August 6th in Hiroshima. "There were rivers of dead bodies," says Ogura. "They completely burned the bodies. They wanted to kill themselves, they were so hopeless."

Understanding the impact of an atomic bomb is akin to wrapping one's head around the size and distance from Earth to a celestial body; the scale is so immense that everyday units of measurement are rendered altogether useless.

Erika Gregory, a nuclear-reform advocate, explains that a nuclear weapon the size of a small latte would have the power to annihilate a city the size of San Francisco (Gregory). As terrifying as even that thought may be, nuclear weapons are, in actuality, much larger and much more powerful than Gregory's "nuclear latte."

In fact, the scope of devastation of which nuclear weapons are capable has increased at an alarming rate since 1945. According to Alexandra Bell, a senior policy director for the Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation, the bombs used in the attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki would now qualify merely as small-scale weapons in comparison to the larger, more destructive weapons that have been developed over the past half-century.

"The bombs used in Hiroshima and Nagasaki were both under 20 kilotons," Bell said in a recent interview with NPR. "Twenty and under is what we consider a low-yield nuclear weapon. So it's smaller than a lot of the weapons we have in our arsenal. But it is

still a city destroyer" (Bell).

As frightening as it may be in theory, a weapon of this magnitude could drastically alter the future of humanity as a whole if implemented in conflict. This is a commonly accepted reality, albeit one that has long masqueraded as an abstract, distant threat.

The world is currently in what scholars refer to as the "Second Nuclear Age," a period that began after the conclusion of the Cold War and the prolific arms race that accompanied that conflict, commonly referred to as the "First Nuclear Age" (Morgan).

The current state of nuclear affairs is marked by widespread nuclear proliferation by a variety of countries, nine of which have been definitively proven to possess nuclear arsenals (Davenport and Reif). Of those nine nations, only five have signed the United Nations' Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), an agreement reached by 191 countries in 1968 that calls for gradual disarmament of nuclear arsenals to prevent an all-out nuclear war (United Nations).

Worldwide, there are approximately 15,000 nuclear warheads, 9,600 of which were in military service as of 2017 (Davenport and Reif). Despite the fact that over 90% of these weapons belong to the United States and Russia, another party has recently caused global consternation by ramping up its nuclear efforts.

North Korea withdrew from the NPT in 2003, bringing the number of signees down to 190 and initiating a period of rapid nuclear development in the Communist nation. While the details of North Korea's nuclear stockpile are unknown and difficult to verify, some recent estimates postulate that the nation has somewhere between 15 and 20 currently operational nuclear weapons, with the

capacity to expand its arsenal to nearly 100 warheads by 2020 (Davenport and Reif).

This is a concerning reality, especially considering U.S. President Donald Trump's publically volatile relationship with North Korean Supreme Leader Kim Jong-un. North Korea recently announced that its nuclear testing program was on hiatus, though the length and legitimacy of this lull is somewhat unclear. The tenuous relationship between the U.S. and North Korea has raised considerable international alarm and was specifically mentioned by Keiko Ogura during her address.

"We repeat such a silly history again," Ogura said of the discourse between Trump and the North Korean leader. "A single bomb and thousands of nuclear weapons are the same. We cannot use single bomb to destroy everything. We pray that President Trump shouldn't react so quickly. He should wait."

Ogura's mission to elucidate the realities of nuclear warfare and warn against their future utilization is a powerful one, and if there is any hope for the avoidance of a future nuclear war, her warning must be heeded soon. People with her vital perspective will not be around to offer it much longer: Ogura recently turned 80, and the average age of living *Hibakusha* is approximately 75 (Yamazaki).

In the Syracuse University auditorium, speaking for over an hour, Ogura gives a rousing performance. The audience stands and applauds, and after the crowd has dispersed, I approach to ask a few follow-up questions for the coverage. In an interpersonal setting, Ogura is even more warm and affable than she was on the stage. Her response to my last question about the future of nuclear proliferation has such an impact that I feel no need to transcribe it; her words echo in my subconscious long after she speaks them: "We shall not repeat this evil. We are all human beings, regardless of borders. Nobody should have that experience."

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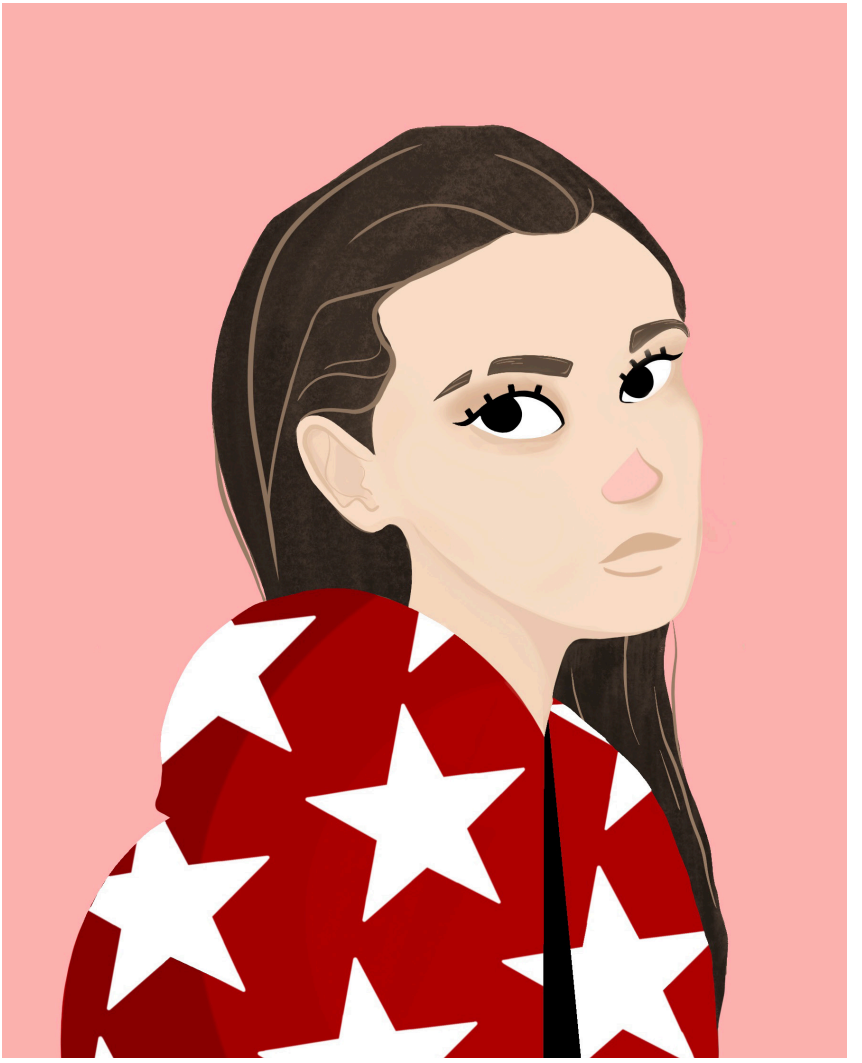

A Second Message to Frank O. Strailman, Wherever You Are

Jennifer Jeffery

I can't remember if it was me or my friend Shirley who came bursting onto the mess deck with a newspaper in hand. "Did you see this bullshit?!" It was a letter to the editor from a man describing "the kind of women who serve in the military" and the direction that our proud fighting forces were headed by allowing women in. He was arguing to keep the tough men in, the ones who were protecting "mom and the kids," and to keep the tattooed, lesbian feminists out (his words, not mine). What infuriated us was that he was repeating talking points that had been trotted out many times to demean and deny women's contributions to the military. It was evident that he—if he had served—had never served with women. We decided that this could not stand. So, we responded with a biting letter, saying that he didn't know what the hell he was talking about, and that he should keep his thoughts to himself until he had served alongside women in the military. Our letter didn't get published, but several other letters with similar sentiments did.

The words we use to talk about each other are important. They tell a story about the world. This man's story was that women in the military are "unnatural." I'm not sure who appointed him the police of social norms, but there are so many different lived realities of women that trying to fit us all into a single "norm" is impossible. Shirley and I were single mothers serving in the Coast Guard at search and rescue small boat stations. We were focused on our kids, and we were part of a team of professionals who guard the coasts and inland waterways of the United States.

Women serving in the military, whether officially or not, is not something new. There are many examples of brave women, stories we don't know because those narratives often die with the women who lived them. One story from the Coast Guard that I like to tell is that of Ida Lewis. In 1872, she was officially appointed as the keeper of the Lime Rock Lighthouse in Newport, Rhode Island when her father died. She was just sixteen. A year earlier, while she was taking care of her ailing father and maintaining the lighthouse, she had made her first rescue. She single-handedly saved four young men who had overturned their sailboat in rough water. She went on to serve in what was then the U.S. Life Saving Service for thirty-nine years and saved eighteen lives.

Dear Frank O. Strailman, I hope that over the years you have gotten to know some of the women who have served. I hope you have become more tolerant of other people's lived realities, whether they be military women, lesbians, feminists—with or without tattoos—or any combination. I hope that you see that the narratives we tell impact the world we create together. On a large scale, they translate to the policies and laws that shape society. On a small scale, listening to and acknowledging only dominant or distorted narratives can silence important parts of our collective history. And perversely, I hope that someday you are stranded on the inland waterway and an amazing, strong, tattooed, lesbian feminist from the U.S. Coast Guard is part of the crew that comes to rescue your marooned ass, and I hope she doesn't recognize you for the limited man you are.

Layout by Hanna Martin. Art by Emily Gunn.

New Symbols for the

The tumor was the size of an orange by the time they found it wedged between Jon's heart and lungs. He had gone to the doctor with symptoms that seemed like pneumonia, but it was quickly realized that his prospects were far worse. He told me the rare lung cancer he was diagnosed with had a 9% survival rate. That was in February 2012. He died three months later, on Mother's Day. He had just turned 26.

Jon was the heart of our house at 560 Allen Street—a three-story, ten-bedroom collective house, founded by environmental activists and filled with non-conformist twenty-somethings and larger than life murals. Whether he was organizing a house dinner, a group acid trip, or a homemade paper-making party, Jon was always bringing people together around something joyful and beautiful.

Shortly after I met him, I climbed on the back of his motorcycle and took a short ride to Clark Reservation just outside of our city. He showed me a cave in the rocky cliffs above a trailer park and I-481. We squeezed down and through several "rooms," as spelunkers call them, and huddled together in the deepest accessible space while bats flew around us. We recorded our names and a greeting in a notebook that stays there in a plastic bag.

Everyone who knew Jon had seemingly shared at least one similar adventure. When news of his sickness was shared among friends, we all stepped up to support him. A

Environmental Movement

Amelia Lefevre

roommate took charge of his nutrition and his social schedule. He was in and out of the hospital that spring as he underwent chemotherapy to try to get the tumor under control. I spent several evenings in St. Joe's one-on-one with Jon and with other friends. We sang for him, brought artwork for his walls, listened, talked.

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When Rachel Carson wrote about the dangers of pesticides in the early 1960s, she looked at childhood cancer rates as an indicator of the toxicity of these chemicals. She reasoned that children don't drink, smoke, or engage in other behaviors that expose them to higher risks of cancer, so drastic increases in childhood cancer rates must be attributable to something more general in our lifestyles. I think about her line of reasoning in relation to Jon's case. Jon wasn't a child when he was diagnosed with lung cancer, but he was a twenty-five-year-old who had never smoked. What could explain the development of cancer in his body?

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On Mother's Day in 2012, there was a grand party at 560 Allen Street. I was no longer living there, but many of Jon's friends and people from the community came to celebrate him, listen to live music, and raise money to support him. It had been planned a few weeks prior and there was no way of knowing how he would be doing when the day came. The party was stopped short midway through the

Layout by Nicole Sklitsis.

afternoon. Everyone who did not live at the house was sent away. Jon was coming home. It was his wish to die at 560 Allen, our beloved house, and that is what he did.

The funeral came a week later, on my partner Seth's birthday. We took his children to stay with their grandparents and drove twenty minutes out of town to the church Jon had been raised in. The auditorium was filled with at least 100 people, probably more. I had never been in a room where so many people were openly crying all at once, and I was one of them.

During one part of the service, people stood up and shared stories about Jon. Seth stood up and spoke about the Fukushima meltdown in 2011 which was, over a year later, still spewing radioactive waste into currents in the Pacific Ocean and the atmosphere that were traveling toward California, the "salad bowl" of the U.S. He asked, "What are we going to do about this?"

At the time, I worked for the local chapter of Peace Action. Our chapter focused exclusively on lobbying against nuclear power because of the dangers it poses to human health. When I got the job, the year before Jon's illness and funeral, a board member interviewed me for the organizational newsletter. One of her questions was, "What gives you hope?" I didn't know what to say. I didn't think I had much hope. I simply felt called to be doing work for good. It was important to me to be engaged in a process that was moving things in the right direction, even if I couldn't see immediate effects or know for sure that I would be successful.

When Seth and I drove back to pick up his kids, we sat in the car talking outside of his father's house. I felt a hopelessness about the state of the world that I had never felt before. I thought about what he had said at the funeral—about all the nuclear power plants in the world and all the nuclear waste they had already produced. I realized that even if nuclear power stopped that day, even if the waste could be safely stored for the next thousand years, there was already a huge amount of radioactive pollution in the world causing cancer that no one could stop.

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In the fall of 2018, I visited a friend whose son's story was different but all too similar to Jon's. Last fall, Shay had gone to the doctor with pneumonia-like symptoms, and a large tumor was discovered wedged between his heart and his lungs. I thought about Jon but did not share my thoughts with Shay's parents.

He initially responded well to the chemo, but a few months later, he and both his mothers moved to New York City to be near the most advanced specialists. He'd had a bad reaction to one treatment, but there were other options. His health was never really the same, but as summer approached, he considered the possibility of returning to college the next fall for the senior year he'd had to skip. He died in July—another funeral service in a crowded room with heart-wrenching stories of a wise, warm soul whose life had ended too soon.

When I visited my friend Carole, about a month after the funeral, she asked me, "Why isn't this at the forefront of the environmental movement?" She continued, "I know the information is out there. Someone needs to put it together in an appealing way and galvanize people. It's not going to be me though."

• • •

Jon wasn't the first person I had seen die from cancer, but his death was the first one that shocked and terrified me—the first that made me look at the world in a new way. Just the year before he died, I watched my maternal grandmother decline due to lung cancer, but nothing was shocking about that. She had smoked and drank heavily for sixty years. It was almost laughable to me that she quit smoking when she was diagnosed, about a year and a half before she died—as if quitting would save her then.

More shocking and heart-wrenching cancer deaths would soon follow. My mother-in-law fought a good fight against metastasized breast cancer for at least two years before finally succumbing to its grip, when my first child was eight months old. Unlike the other cancer patients I have known, my mother-in-law Marcia opted out of chemotherapy and did quite well for a time with a robust protocol of nutritionally-based and other alternative treatments. But when the cancer came back, it came back strong, and her health deteriorated quickly.

One beautiful spring day in April, close to her birthday, she was feeling better than usual and ventured out of the house by herself. She told the friends caring for her that she was going to the grocery store, but she didn't return and no one could get in touch with her all day and night. She'd gone to a hotel and tried to kill herself by swallowing all of the prescription pain pills she had in stock. She didn't want to endure, or have her family and friends endure, the slow and painful death that cancer often deals.

The overdose didn't do her much harm. The following evening, I was at her house with my partner, his brother, and Marcia, who was still quite loopy. She asked me to take my daughter to a psychic friend of hers to talk to her after she died. A few weeks later, she was in hospice care.

Add to this list Seth's cousin's wife—a mother in her thirties who left behind a two-year-old son—and a friend of our family who was close to Marcia's age. These are the deaths. There are several others in my life who are fighting the disease right now.

When I got the news of the most recent friend, in her late sixties, to be diagnosed with an advanced and aggressive cancer, I couldn't help but think, *This is not right.* I cannot help but wonder, *if this is how many people I have seen die prematurely from cancer at this point in my life*—thirty years old—*how many more will I lose by the time I reach old age? Will I even reach old age? Will my children's father be struck? Will I bury my own child like Carole did?*

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Beyond the questions of *who* come the questions of *why*. Why is this happening? Some will say that it is simply due to more advanced cancer detection methods. Some will say that we get more cancer because we live longer. Some will say environmentalists who point to culprits like industrial contamination, pesticide residues, and nuclear waste are alarmist, anti-business luddites who can't accept progress. But there is very strong evidence for looking at carcinogens in our environment.

First, take Rachel Carson's argument cited above. Children, who have experienced a spike in leukemia and brain cancer in the past century, are not older than children in prior centuries, and improvements in detection can't account for the increase in incidence rates. What is different in the past cen-

tury is the forward march of industrialization reaching every corner of our lives. We know that many chemicals involved in industrial manufacturing and food production either cause cancer or make cells more susceptible to damage from carcinogens. And we know that cancers whose prevalence have increased most sharply in recent decades are tied to specific, known carcinogens.

Now, look at how cancer rates change for individuals as they move around the world. In her landmark work *Living Downstream*, Sandra Steingraber cites statistics showing that when an immigrant moves from a less industrialized country to a more industrialized one, their chance of developing cancer will soon match the population they have moved into. This dispels the idea that cancer rates are somehow intrinsically tied to race or ethnicity. The same goes in the other direction—move to a place with lower cancer rates and you will reduce your chance of developing cancer. What can explain this except that there is a link between the environment you are in and your chances of developing cancer?

Known carcinogens, in the form of both commercial and home-use pesticides, industrial chemicals like degreasers and solvents, commercial products like dry-cleaning chemicals—and the list goes on—are entering the waterways where we get our drinking water, evaporating off of fields and entering the atmosphere, staying locked in the soil for years, and entering our lungs as specks of dust from dried up soil. Our exposure to these chemicals is constant, unmeasured,

and all mixed up. That makes it virtually impossible to prove a definitive causal link between any of these individual chemicals and any particular form of cancer.

Steingraber compares this situation to the time before tobacco was confirmed to be linked to lung cancer, which was quite recent. She argues that there was reasonable and strong suspicion of the link decades before it could be proven, and society benefited from the collective decision to begin curtailing cigarette smoking in public spaces. Think of how many people's health was protected by that precautionary action, she instructs us. She asks us to take the same approach to carcinogenic environmental contamination.

Steingraber also traces the life and work of Carson who, like herself, was a scientist, a writer, and a cancer patient. Steingraber writes that Carson was an extraordinary human being but an ordinary victim of breast cancer. On average, breast cancer cuts a woman's life short by twenty years, and Carson died almost exactly twenty years before reaching the average life expectancy for her time. My mother-in-law, Marcia, died at 59. The latest data, from 2015, pegs life expectancy in the U.S. at 79. So, she was ordinary in that way, too. Still, I can't say how many times I have wondered what it would have been like for my children to have had their grandmother for another couple of decades.

• • •

Onondaga Lake, at the heart of what we now call Syracuse, was the most sacred site for the Haudenosaunee people. Today, bald eagles are starting to roost on its shore again. The bald eagle, the national symbol of the U.S., was also a national symbol of pollution when DDT contaminated waters and collected in the flesh of fish. When bald eagles ate the contaminated fish, DDT inhibited the hardening of eagle eggshells, preventing the next generation of eagles from developing. At Onondaga Lake, the return of the bald eagles is similarly an auspicious symbol for the health of the environment at a site which was once one of the most polluted lakes in the country.

Yet Murphy's Island, a small area of shoreline near the mall, is still classified as a Superfund site by the EPA, meaning it is full of extremely toxic compounds. The Onondaga used to survive eating fish from the creek and the lake. Today, it is not safe to eat fish out of the lake because of mercury still circulating in the water despite the dredging project.

We don't eat fish out of Onondaga Lake because they are considered too poisonous, but what about produce grown with pesticides? What about just about every processed food product that has wheat, corn, or soy in it that has been drenched with Round-Up? One of the most potently harmful pesticides—DDT—has been banned, but myriad other poisonous pesticides are incorporated into the food we eat and contaminate the surrounding land, water, and air. Today, we don't have the weak eagle shell as a symbol, and the people on the growing list of those I have loved who have died too early are not as galvanizing a symbol. But they need to be.

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Trump's Department of Interior Prioritizes Extractive Industries, Systematically Disarming Environmental Protections

—Abby Boglioli and Andi Voigt, Researchers
—Jeff Simmons, Faculty Advisor

Professor Jeff Simmons, who has been working in various capacities at Syracuse University since 1990, has found it useful to create writing assignments that encourage students to investigate truth in media. Working with *Project Censored*, a publication that investigates the necessity of a free press, Simmons and his students have been creating pieces for publication for the past seven years. In this piece, Syracuse University students Abby Boglioli and Andi Voigt worked with Jeff to explore the failure of the Trump administration to prioritize environmental protection. In reflecting on the experience, Simmons writes: "I began using *Project Censored* as a topic of inquiry around eight years ago. It seemed to me to lend itself to the department's evolving focus on genre as rhetorical situation. After that, I began offering a "wild card" for the Unit 3 assignment, where students could unearth their own "validated independent news stories" and submit them. It is a great chance for students to experience seeing their work published online, often experiencing along the way what it is like to have one's beloved work edited. I wasn't surprised that there were very few edits in Andi and Abby's piece."

Katherine Benedetto, a senior advisor for the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) under President Trump's Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke "scheduled roughly twice as many meetings with mining and fossil-fuel representatives as with environmental groups, public records requests have revealed." According to Jimmy Tobias, writing for *The Guardian*, "many of these meetings were followed by official decisions that benefited the private companies or trade groups in question, as in the case of Twin Metals Minnesota, a company that has long sought to build a copper and nickel mine near the famed Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness in Minnesota."

At the end of Barack Obama's presidency, his administration did not renew Twin Metals Minnesota's lease on land connected to the BWCA, opting instead to review the necessity of mines in that protected area. In December 2017, Twin Metals Minnesota proposed the mine and, in the same month, the Trump administration granted access to part of the area. This directly contradicts BLM's mission statement: "The Bureau of Land Management's mission is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations."

This prioritization of corporate interests over environmental concerns is not an isolated incident. "Evidence suggests that [Ryan Zinke] has used his public office, and taxpayer dollars, for private gain on multiple occasions," and he has "dutifully and actively worked to hollow out the [Department of the Interior] to make it easier for his industry sponsors to operate

on public lands," reports Joel Clement for *The Guardian*. For example, Ryan Zinke recently "reassigned" Dan Wenk, the superintendent of Yellowstone National Park, to Washington, D.C. George Ochenski, reporting for *The Missoulian*, suggests that the reason for this reassignment has "everything to do with bison, grizzly bears, wolves and science—and implementing the Trump administration's priorities of placing special extractive interests over the nation's rarest wildlife resources." Wenk, a 43-year respected veteran of the National Park Service, announced that he preferred to resign. Wenk had been a vocal critic of the Interagency Bison Management which claimed that Yellowstone's "carrying capacity" for bison should be capped at 3,000. He spoke out against "delisting grizzly bears or wolves from Endangered Species Act protections in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem" and strongly opposed reinstating the practice of hunting them in the park's surrounding states of Wyoming, Idaho and Montana."

The problematic leadership under Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke is consistently revealed in independent media. Ben Lefebvre and Nick Juliano reporting for *Politico* demonstrate links between Zinke and Halliburton, one of the world's largest oil field service companies. "A group funded by David Lesar, the Halliburton chairman, is planning a large commercial development on a former industrial site near the center of Zinke's' hometown of Whitefish, a resort area that has grown increasingly popular with wealthy tourists. The development would include a hotel and retail shops. There also would be a microbrewery—a business first proposed in 2012 by Ryan Zinke and for which he lobbied town officials for half a decade." In 2014, Lesar, along with his wife Sheryl, donated more than $10,000 to Zinke's first House campaign.

While independent media consistently demonstrates links between corporate interests and changes in the Department of Interior Policy, corporate news sources direct the focus onto Trump himself. The *New York Times* published an opinion piece that opposed mining in the protected Boundary Waters, but that story did not receive significant coverage. *The Washington Post* offered similar coverage, with just one article that skimmed the surface of what is happening to the BWCA. Without directing more attention to how the government is hurting nationally protected lands by neglecting to acknowledge the biomes that are affected by mining, corporate media will not be able to fully cover the issue at hand.

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Layout by Brittney West. Art by Emily Gunn.

Just Some Respect

Lia Figurelli

And then she says
that if a guy doesn't clean you up afterwards,
then he doesn't care.
He told her this.
But what we know now is that
although he told us he was a senior in college,
he graduated two years ago and is actually twenty-four.
If Emma had been only a year younger,
it would have been different.

But not illegal.

According to the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network, in New York, individuals who are sixteen years old or younger are unable to give consent to sexual activity ("Consent Laws New York"). Thus, when a person over the age of twenty-one has sex with a person under the age of seventeen, it is considered rape in the third degree and is a class E felony ("Sex Crimes: Definitions and Penalties New York").

For Allie, it was.
Hands restrained behind her back,
and she didn't like it.
College dorms, small cars, fraternity houses,
dark spaces, and older guys who don't want the manacles of a relationship,
who don't want to engage in conversation,
who don't want girls like her coming up to them at parties because she is
too young.
too young.
too young.
she's still too young.

According to the National Sexual Violence Resource Center, one in three women in the U.S. have "experienced some form of contact sexual violence in their lifetime" and "one in five women will be

raped at some point in their lives" ("Sexual Assault Statistics"). Fifty-one percent of female rape victims report being raped by an intimate partner and almost forty-one percent report being raped by an acquaintance ("Sexual Assault Statistics").

C'mon, love, he says
hushed in the dark, light like feathers.
But he wants you to bend over for him,
do things you don't want to do,
and not use a condom.

Hungry for virginity,
as if it is a prize to be won.
He wants to win, as if to feel
like he has a part of you,
like you're one of his possessions,
and yet, after, he complains about the blood.

He wants to leave a mark,
he wants to feel something.
But through the grabbing,
and choking,
and slapping,
and biting,
you wonder if he has forgotten that there's a person,
a beautiful mind inside the body that he's using.

A part of you wants to understand him,
understand the science behind the evil.
Maybe it's gender formation,
how our culture promotes aggression in boys and submission in girls,
the violence our children see in the media.
But the other part of you doesn't want to understand.

He lost his mother at a very young age.
He's never had a female figure in his life.
There's nothing wrong with calling other people ugly; it's just an opinion.
You're the one who dresses like a slut, you ask for it.
He can grab whatever he wants; he doesn't need your permission.

Layout by Grace Richardson. Illustration by France Corbel.

You wonder about these boys,
the ones other people make excuses for.
The boys that grab your ass at parties and call you a tease,
the ones whose hands you can feel creeping up under your skirt,
like spiders,
while every muscle in your body tightens.
These boys who rate the appearances of women,
who aren't afraid to call them ugly,
are ignorant of how that might make these women feel.

Tucker, Taylor, Tommy, and Dylin.
Will, Jacob, Mohammed,
Matt, Brad, and Brandon.
Nick, Nate, Carl, Achilles, and Adam,
where did we go wrong?

All the names are blending together,
adding up,
but the feeling never leaves and you're only seventeen.

It's in psychology that you learn reaction formation. "A boy will sometimes react against the strong sexual attraction that he feels toward girls by becoming a confirmed 'woman hater'" (Kellog).

How ironic,
but it's not.

You're a junior in high school and you don't like the way this boy from school is talking to you,
so you stop talking to him.
But months later, he messages you,
telling you how his father is verbally abusive.
You almost forget about all the things he has said to you,
because of this one moment.
This moment where he wants to open up to you,
says he wants a relationship with you.
You ask if he's okay,
he's not.
Can I help you with something?
You could send some pics of your tits, ass, pussy.
Despite this, you don't cut him off completely.
This isn't the first time a guy has wanted something from you,

and usually it's worse.
You do cut him off when you realize that the messages he has been sending to you,
he has also been sending to two other girls you know.
You ask yourself how stupid could you be,
why you still feel bad about a guy who you don't like that much.
Later, you learn that he has been bad-mouthing you to other guys,
telling them what a

"bitch"

you are.

Can you help me with something? the message reads,
sent over Snapchat from a boy you don't know well.
Ya, what's up?
A photo of his genitals.

In a nationally representative poll of 1,000 children and adolescents conducted by Plan International USA (The State of Gender Equality for U.S. Adolescents), 81 percent of girls ages 14 to 19 reported having at least one friend who had been asked for a sexy or nude photo (Miller).

Dance for me.
Sit on my face.
Don't wear panties and flash me in public.

No, I will fucking not.

Women just take and take, man,
they always want something from you.

Just some respect.

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Intertext, Vol. 27 [2019], Iss. 1, Art. 1

The Conversations

In this section, the boundaries of comfort are pushed as we transcend the realm of social acceptability by sharing personal and societal truths. Some of these realities are not shared. They may be too hard for us to face—the truth of an unforgiving world being too much to bear. We may not be affected by them, and therefore do not think about the pain that others endure. Or perhaps we just do not want to realize that our beliefs may harm others.

When we share difficult stories, such narratives can pierce our souls and force us to think about that which we fear most. The pieces in this section force us to face our mortality, the discrimination of members of our community, and even our own contributions to injustice. We are forced to think, reevaluating what is most familiar to us.

Each contribution reveals discomposure rather than idealism, breaching subjects such as war, mental illness, racial prejudice, and the loss of life. In "The Duality of Blackness in America," Jazmine Richardson reminds us that racism persists, shaping the standards of professionalism. She shows how biases occur right before our eyes and how they can undermine an individual's sense of self-worth. In "Emma," Sage Okolo describes her own battles with self-image, chronicling her struggles with an eating disorder. "Prayer to God" takes a look into the pain that combat veterans experience, highlighting the fragility of the human mind, while Ian Manzares in "0 to 128 mph" comes to terms with the fragility of the human body through

Layout by Wallace Burgess. Photograph by Hanna Martin.

We Don't Have

his fight with cancer. The section concludes with "The Conversations We Won't Have," in which the author describes her relationship with her parents and the taboo aspects of growing up.

When we share our personal experiences and in turn listen to the narratives of others, we are forced not only to recognize the marginalized voices and conversations in society, but also to realize the parts of life that make us uncomfortable. Whether we are the oppressed or the oppressor, recognizing this discomfort allows us all to grow.

—Wallace Burgess, Hanna Martin, and Grace Richardson

THE DUALITY OF

BLACKNESS IN AMERICA

Jazmine Richardson

American society praises black culture—music, food, and language—yet too few stand up against the injustices that persist in today's society. White Americans have appropriated black culture without adequately showing respect to the individual. African Americans are vulnerable to many stereotypes that tend to mold us into something that we are not.

Despite their popularity, numerous aspects of black culture are perceived as *unprofessional*, *ghetto*, or even *hood*. In America, black females who wear large earrings, long acrylic nails, or any type of colorful hairstyle (including braids) are often considered ghetto or unprofessional. Recently, large hoop earrings and long nails have become a big trend among white people. However, rather than being labeled as improper, as a black person would have been, they are often praised for making a *fashion statement*.

In Jacqueline Jones Royster's essay "When the First Voice You Hear Is Not Your Own," she recounts the time when she recited a passage from a novel that, she says, "required cultural understanding" (36). While at an academic conference, Royster changed her voice to fit the characters who were from her native continent. When she was done with the excerpt, an audience member and colleague responded: "You sounded 'natural.' It was nice to hear you be yourself" (37). What the audience member failed to understand is that Royster possessed multiple ways of speaking. All her voices, including her academic voice, were real.

While Royster's experience is just one example, many African Americans are questioned about their voice—whether it's perceived forced or natural, white or black. When a black person begins to use "white English" and enunciates their words more clearly, they are often perceived as well-spoken, well-educated, and ultimately professional. However, when they fail to do so and use slang, they are perceived as ignorant or unprofessional.

The shapeshifting that many African Americans have to do between their professional and casual selves is a survival mechanism necessary in today's society. W.E.B. Du Bois explores this concept of a dual identity in *The Souls of Black Folk*. Dual identity revolves around the experience of black Americans and the double consciousness they possess when treading amongst their white counterparts. While none of us literally change our bodies into different forms, it often feels like we do as we attempt to contradict the stereotypes placed on us. We have to keep up more than one identity.

I personally adapted this duality when I transitioned from a predominantly black elementary school to a mostly white high school.

Layout by Jennifer Bancamper. Art by Dylan Rose Rheingold.

Attending that school granted me the opportunity to grow beyond my city's poor education system and reach the predominately white, Catholic, all-female, elite private school known as Sacred Heart Academy.

Walking through the halls, I no longer felt comfortable using the common slang spoken in my neighborhood. The use of slang—or any other colloquialisms—resulted in harsh glares that penetrated my soul. These ruthless stares often made me feel like the elephant in the room. I could not pass off the term "was'gud" to my white counterparts without being mocked or jeered at by staff members. I then understood that I had to develop a new mode of communication. This new mode almost always resulted in the question "Why do you sound so white?" when returning back to Hazelwood Estates. When speaking with my white classmates, I often chose to wear a second identity as a mask so that I could feel as if I belonged.

I left behind the attitudes accepted at home and eventually developed an aura of professionalism. Catching the germ-infested public bus to and from the elite private school felt like living a double life. At school, I would find myself adopting certain phrases, such as "pardon" or "likewise," to fit in with the white majority. This adaptation isolated me from my black peers and caused them to label me as "too white" or "not black enough," which then led me to revert back to my common slang.

Going into any type of profession, there are always going to be expectations. Yet such expectations tend to shift when applied to black women. Some may imagine the typical professional female as a petite, unshapely white woman, but this unrealistic image disregards black women. A few years ago, controversy arose because of the attire of an African American fourth-grade teacher, Patrice Brown. This young teacher wore a conservative, fitted knee-length dress that led her to become the next trending hashtag on Twitter: #TeacherBae. Because of her curvaceous body, Brown's fitted dress was considered wildly inappropriate—a criticism that would not have surfaced had she been white. Brown was reprimanded for her seemingly unprofessional attire and was required to delete pictures of her classroom from social media.

In her article "Why Is 'TeacherBae' Being Shamed for Her Curvy Body?" Zeba Blay provides an image of the original dress Brown ordered. Blay includes a screenshot of the dress on the original website and, of course, there are white women modeling it. The white models, wearing the same dress as Brown, have in no way been ridiculed or questioned for their outfits. If those white models were teachers, they most likely would not receive any harsh criticism. Yet, because of Brown's curves, she was condemned and viewed as inexperienced. After more research on Brown's social media, it became apparent that her regular attire was almost entirely conservative. Her wardrobe was mostly comprised of turtlenecks, long skirts, and dresses with sleeves. Even though Brown cannot control her natural curves, society expects her to hide them and suppress the parts of herself that do not match white expectations.

Despite professionalism being a universal term to describe a person with specified skills, it comes with many implications. White Americans need to better understand the nuances of the black identity and how we are directly impacted by their expecta-

tions. Our adoption of a double consciousness has become necessary for surviving the white majority. That is exactly what Du Bois meant by having a dual identity. Although many other black people perceive this as being fake, it is the reality of America. Du Bois emphasized this concept to motivate the black individual to exceed the expectations placed on the "typical" black person. Instead of perpetuating such expectations, white Americans must grant us the space we deserve and recognize dual identity is both problematic and unnecessary for African Americans.

Art by Dylan Rose Rheingold.

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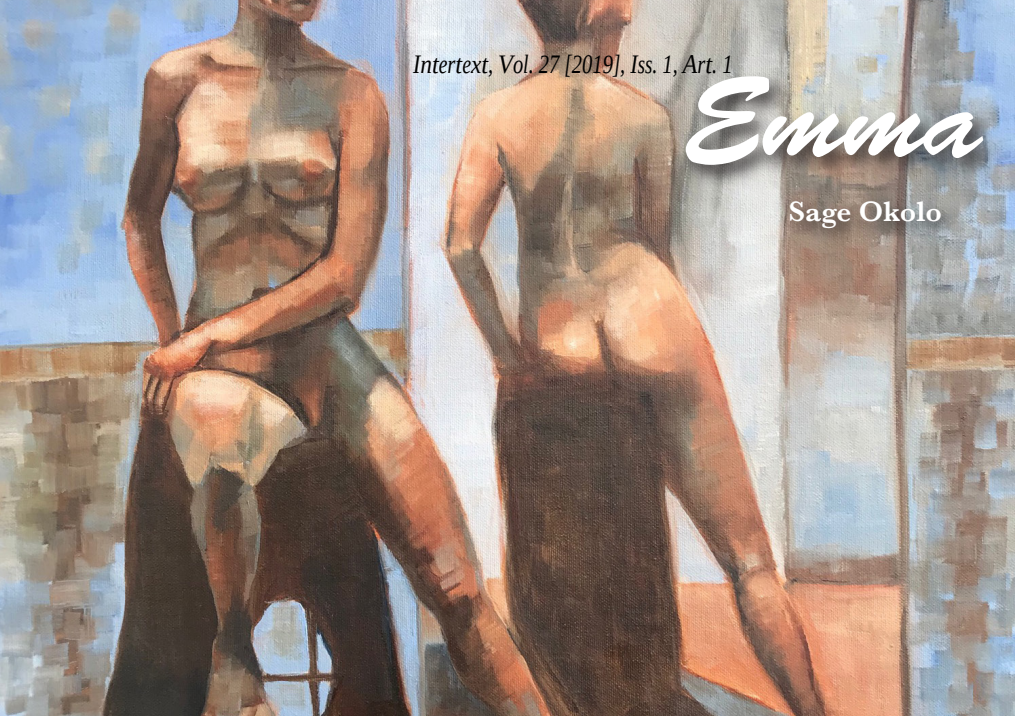


Emma

Sage Okolo

There is a point in time when your own memories do not belong to you. They're too tangled up in someone else's thoughts and words to be your own. When you speak about it, it seems to speak for you, ready to remind you of what happened. Every little thing reminds you of your stolen memories: the way the heat presses against you, the beads of water sweating on the outside of your cup. None of those memories belong to you. You don't own them. You don't own anything from that day. You will sit in your bed, in your dorm, lying awake thinking about the way she would brush up against you and poke and prod at your stomach.You will remember the way the cherries felt bursting on your tongue, rolling the pit around your mouth, the heaviness, the bitterness, somehow fixating and mirroring what you'd feel soon. You will remember the way the sun beamed down on you. You will remember that this was the last time you thought you were a kid. As you sit on a plastic lawn chair on the roof of your best friend's house, listening to this new singer, Halsey, you will notice that your best friend, Emma, has stopped looking you in the eyes. With her collarbones, brown hair, and brown eyes, she will walk away from you. She will have her arms folded, and the vein in her forehead will pulse as it does before a chem test.

"What's the problem?" you will ask. Your teeth will be stained a dull red when you smile. In certain lights, they look brown, a little rotten, a little bitter. Your braces will catch bits of the juicy redness. The music will stop, and you will be left alone in the silence it leaves.

"We're the problem," she'll whisper, her tone very casual, almost like she's asking you to pass the rolls at dinner. "I think we eat

too much. I think we're getting too big." She will press her hands into her stomach before using them to cover it again.

"I think we're fi–"

"Look at yourself. Tell me you feel comfortable walking around looking like that." She will poke you hard in the stomach, so hard that her fingernails will leave faint little crescent moons in you. You will bite your tongue. "I don't feel good as me anymore…I don't want…" She falters through. She will grab your hand and you, still fazed and numb, will follow her. You follow her off the rooftop, your shirt and shorts feeling too tight against your body, past her kitchen where her mother will have Costco cookies laid out for you two. She will take you into her room, which will feel dangerous when you cross the threshold, and you will sit on her bed. Follow her. It will be hostile, the takeover of your mind. It will be a virus, hijacking your heartbeat and stomach; your body will never be your own again. Emma will keep you. She will keep her hold on you even after she moves out of state in the eighth grade. She will keep you at your junior prom. She will keep you on your first date. She will keep you on your first kiss. She will ruin it all for you.

Emma will pat the bed, telling you to sit and stay, and you will obey. Got it? She will pull out her laptop. She will show you what we're supposed to look like. She will show you how to be a better you. She will hand you the first toothbrush. It will be orange and white and from Rite Aid. You will get one before your freshman winter formal (blue and red), one before prom (purple), a new one after a late-night rehearsal (orange and white again), and there will be a clear one from an American Airlines flight when you can't handle the peaks of pudge from your seatbelt. You will take it to school and use it in the basement bathroom. No one will ever be there.

Emma will show you YouTube videos on how to pretend to eat, how to trick people at meals, how to mush and toil around your mashed potatoes and peas, telling your mom how good it is. Emma will help you the first time in the bathroom, playing the same song you did that day on the rooftop. That song will cover up the sound of heaving and throwing up over toilets, of locking bathroom doors, and of food going down the garbage disposal. It will cover up the sound of the mirror you break in tenth grade and of the torrential tears you cry when you give up. You will hate that song when it comes on during prom and be sick when you think of the food you just ate—you're a year strong but that song will ruin you; it will restart the download of the virus.

When you are seventeen, Emma will send you three letters from her comfy hospital bed in Atlanta. Only one will be loving. The rest accuse you of being lazy and unfaithful in your joint crusade of perfection. You will read them in your own bed with your parents above you, who will never know why that song will blast after dinner, why the mirror has been moved into the trash late at night, or why you cry after the mail comes. When you look in the mirror, it won't be you. Your clothes won't fit you right ever again. You will always find fat pooling out of your shorts and skirts and dresses and crop tops. You will always find something wrong with you. Even when you try to hold onto an air of confidence, it will always fall, slipping away in the gusts of wind.

Layout by Hanna Martin. Art by Amanda Lee.

PRAYER

This anonymous piece is a reflection on a video this student produced in WRT 205. The video can be found on the *Intertext* site: http://wrt.syr.edu/intertext/XXVII/media.html.

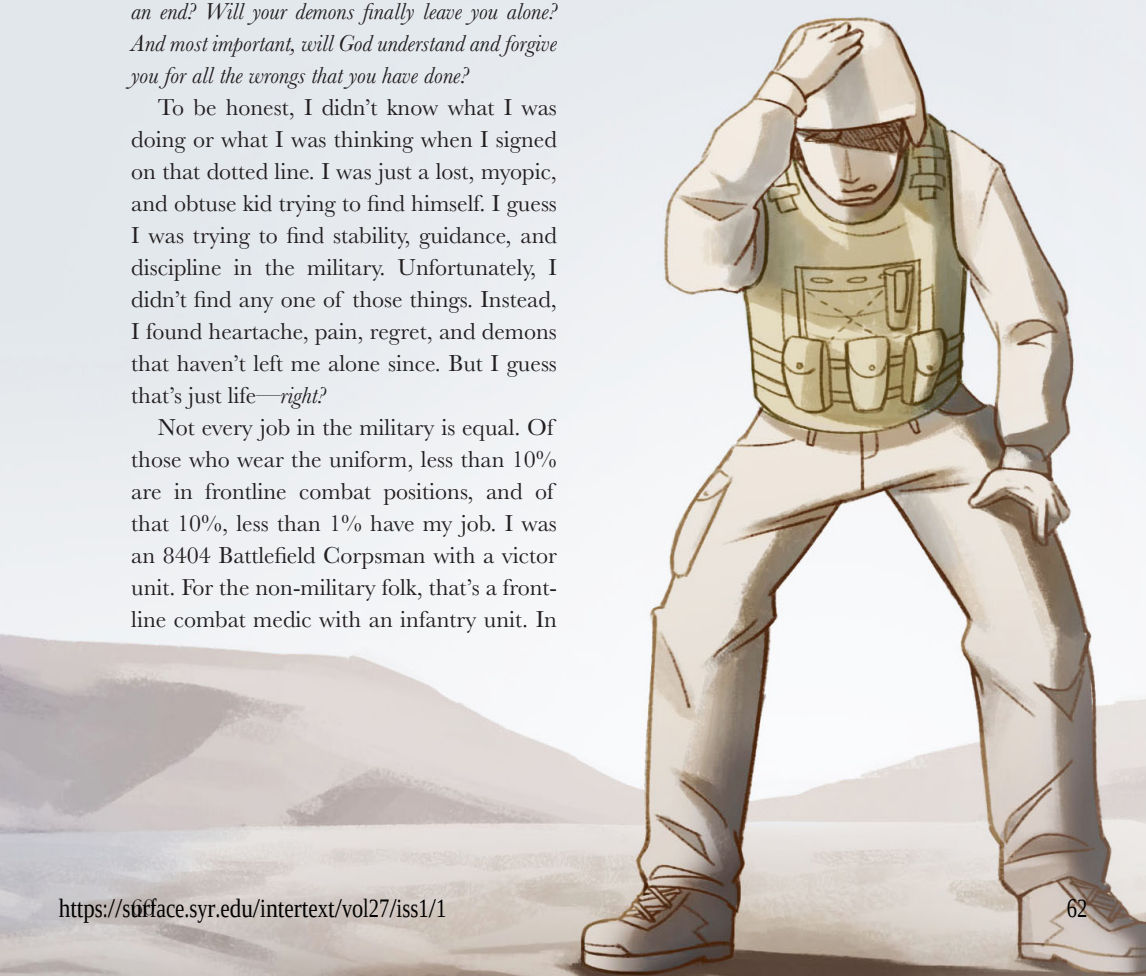
Have you ever imagined what it would be like when you squeeze that trigger—and what you would feel at that moment of impact? When that bullet makes instant collision with your skull, will you find peace of mind? Do the hurt and pain finally come to an end? Will your demons finally leave you alone? And most important, will God understand and forgive you for all the wrongs that you have done?

To be honest, I didn't know what I was doing or what I was thinking when I signed on that dotted line. I was just a lost, myopic, and obtuse kid trying to find himself. I guess I was trying to find stability, guidance, and discipline in the military. Unfortunately, I didn't find any one of those things. Instead, I found heartache, pain, regret, and demons that haven't left me alone since. But I guess that's just life—*right?*

Not every job in the military is equal. Of those who wear the uniform, less than 10% are in frontline combat positions, and of that 10%, less than 1% have my job. I was an 8404 Battlefield Corpsman with a victor unit. For the non-military folk, that's a frontline combat medic with an infantry unit. In layman's terms, we have a very high death ratio.

When I started my training, preparing to go into the Fleet Marine Force, my very first Marine instructor was a battle-hardened man named Staff Sergeant William Bee.

When I looked into his eyes for the very first time, I could tell that he wasn't scared of



TO GOD

any man. He always seemed ready for combat at a moment's notice. He carried himself in such a manner that when he spoke, I took his words to heart.

Many years later, I learned that he suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) from his deployments. This was my introduction to PTSD. Since then, I've been slowly familiarizing myself with this difficult subject that is hard to grasp unless you've actually experienced it firsthand.

I chose this artwork in the style of anime with its overexaggerated, distinct features, including huge eyes, a small nose, and funny dialogue. These features, common to anime, help to create a lighthearted form of youthful entertainment. I wanted to take an art form with elements of innocence and cuteness while illustrating the pain and hurt of PTSD. I chose anime because I always try to be different in a society that accepts nothing but the ordinary.

For the animation process, I drew up some sketches and worked with the only artist I knew who was capable of animating the project the way that I wanted. This artist specializes in anime, so it was a relatively easy process. My main goal for each frame was to ensure that all the cute, stereotypical characteristics of anime remained intact until the end.

I chose the narration between the protagonist and God simply due to my own faith and the paramount position that God occupies in my life. If I were to ever find myself in this situation, God would be the last entity to hear my voice.

The music is royalty- free and used with permission from Mattia Cupelli. I chose this piano music because I felt that it matched the light tone of the anime while also foreshadowing tragedy. The voiceover was done in two takes and recorded on an Apple iPhone. I didn't even put pen to paper when it came to the narration—I just visualized myself as a person going through PTSD and what I would say to God before the pain was too much to handle.

I created this piece to channel my own pain and hurt into an art form. I've lost a few brothers recently—two of them are shown at the end of the video. Ivan Gonzalez Jr. took his own life in November of 2018 at age twenty three, and Mario Griffith passed away at age twenty four in August of 2018. Both men were in my unit, and Griff was in my squad. I just wanted to honor their memory in some way.

What's the message behind this artwork? Refer back to the second paragraph…. Or better yet, let me write it again:

To be honest, I didn't know what I was doing or what I was thinking when I created this artwork. I was just a lost, myopic, and obtuse man trying to show the world that PTSD is real—and that it hurts. And maybe He heard my prayer and helped me create this artwork so others know that they're not alone. Because this pain isn't imaginary—it's real.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255

Layout by Taylor Parks.
Art by Veerle Zandstra.

0 to 128 mph

Ian Manzares

The comfort I got from my head reaching for the feathers below the warm fabricated surface was indescribable. Any person can understand this when they are tired or bored, but for me, it was different. If I got up the entire world changed. My head felt like lead, and the only way to manage its weight was to put it on the only thing that seemed to hold it up—a pillow. A parent's worst nightmare—their kid becoming lazy. Well, that's what my parents believed was happening to me.

"GET UP AND GO TO SCHOOL!" they screamed. I was convinced the next-door neighbors heard them and may have even jumped and prepared their elderly selves for school. The mere sign of laziness made my parents question my immobility and diminishing self. I thought if I listened to their yells and pushed myself to get up and go, I would eventually find the cure to this seemingly nonsensical dilemma. So I jumped up, and the light seemed to shut off. Maybe it was just a delusion? Maybe the feelings I was having in my legs and arms were due to my loss of motivation? Well, the lights came back on, but it wasn't immediate. Imagine the lights in a movie theater finally powering on, yet the surrounding darkness wills itself to stay alive, fighting back with stars and white spots until it has lost. Except this time, the darkness seemed to fight for much longer. Eventually my vision became clear again, but my thoughts seemed to be encompassed by a blockade. Every action I had to think about, every right answer was struggling to make its way through the thick walls.

• • •

No, don't do it. Don't give in. Have fun with your friends. Let yourself enjoy the time you're having without allowing fear to take control. Everyone else is doing it, and they are coming off alive; their faces are full of enjoyment. That'll happen to you too. I promise.

A voice screamed in my head. I couldn't control the cyclical nervous rambling. It went on and on….

But what if I don't make it? What if the one time I go on King Da Ka, it breaks, and I go flying off. Then what? Then what will be said?

• • •

The nurses all stared at me. I wasn't feeling well, which is expected of someone who had just undergone rounds of chemotherapy. My typical day involved throwing up at least ten times and laying in bed, staring into nothingness as I waited and waited for the dreadful feelings to abate. The oncologist had said this was some of the worst chemotherapy in existence, and I was enduring it and feeling its full brute force. Yet, they still stared at me with a worried look on their faces. I could see it was different. With every quick glance over the shoulder, I felt the negative energy emitting from their facial expressions.

Originally I didn't want to admit to how awful I had felt while I was sitting in my house. I explained to my mother how my growing fever and inability to move were the normal conditions I experienced after every round of chemo, but she inevitably rushed me into the city to be given some fluids and antibiotics just for precautionary measures.

Layout by Josh Sholes. Photograph by Jennifer Bancamper.

As I sat in the clinic chair that I had grown oh-so accustomed to, I grew talkative and just couldn't wait to be released to go home. I had fluids coursing through my veins, but all I could feel was the rush of adrenaline that was increasing as the bag grew closer and closer to becoming empty. One obstacle still stood in my way: I had to go to the bathroom. For some reason, the short walk to the bathroom didn't seem possible. So, I sat there, waiting, until…

• • •

I willed myself to do it. My parents were happy to see me entering the bus, but I was fighting an internal battle that no one else could see. As I got to school, I tried to go through my daily routines except the board seemed so far, and the words didn't make much sense. Math, a subject which I normally excelled in, seemed impossible to understand. The difficulty level had risen in every aspect of life, slowly creeping up until I couldn't handle it any longer. I was a seventh grader and I couldn't wait to meet more people and grow even stronger friendships, but my physical battles were hindering my every move, my every goal. I couldn't handle it anymore, and I felt that every second of the day was useless, as I was retaining no information. The struggle I faced trying to get from class to class was tremendous. When I got home that day, I laid down on the couch and from that moment forward I felt dead inside. The only times I moved were to go into a different room, which was one of the hardest challenges. Every time I would stand, I would nearly pass out. I never would have expected this to have happened to me. It seemed I woke up one day to a recurring illness, one that I had no name for and no idea how to remedy. So, I went to my pediatrician.

• • •

I hadn't ever been on a large rollercoaster before, just some small wooden ones that I would force my dad onto. I would always manage to find the wooden rollercoasters at amusement parks and rush him into the line. He would ultimately agree, after trying to find a way out of it, but in the end we always had fun. The comparison between a mere wooden ride and the enormous ride in front of me was hard to make. I was about to enter the lion's den, about to undergo everything it could give and just pray that I ended up alive. Praying that I wouldn't be eaten alive and thrown out like nothing ever mattered.

Three of my friends and I stood in the menacingly long line to board the ride. Standing next to a sign that said "3 hour wait" showed just how dedicated my friends were to get onto the ride, so I stood there with them, knowing that the longer I waited and the deeper I got into the line, there was no turning back. The worst part of it all was that the ride was visible throughout every inch of the line. I was able to see every person that got on, their hands clenched across the handlebars, some crying, some showcasing their excitement through the whites of their teeth. The fifty seconds that every ride took sent a shock through my brain. My desire to back out became increasingly noticeable to all my friends, but I knew there was no way I could turn around.

• • •

After the mountain climb to the bathroom, I sat down and prepared myself to get ready to go home. My mother and grandmother were by my side, and I had them call over the nurses to alert them about the emp-

ty bag above me. The nurse walked over, unclipped my bag, and took my blood pressure one last time before releasing me. My mom went to another room to call my dad before the hour-long ride home to let him know everything was okay.

That's when the look on the nurse's face drastically changed from calm to fear to alarm. My blood pressure had dropped and was continuing to drop. My expectations had risen prior to this experience and then had just been dumped on the ground and left for dead. I didn't know how to react. All these nurses were suddenly rushing to my side, yelling things to each other. Every patient, every sick person whom I could normally relate to, was now staring at me—they no longer had concerns over their own ailments but rather were focused on mine. Having all this attention was awful.

The crash team was called as I was laid down on a bed where I instantly had medicine and fluids rushing through my veins with ten to fifteen doctors by my side. Heart rate monitors and blood pressure cuffs were now attached to every extremity, all working to get me stable again as I was carted to the Intensive Care Unit (ICU).

My mom, throughout a lot of this, was still on the phone in the other room. Imagine coming out and expecting to go home, expecting to have your son back in the car in less than 10 minutes and then having all that blow up in your face. She came out to see me being dragged away on a bed with increasing speed. The only explanation that could be heard through all the yelling was a single word. That word was "sepsis."

I had no control of my movement. All I could do was try to crack jokes and enjoy the ride; the doctors were surprised by the way I was acting. I didn't seem afraid and didn't act sick, but they knew that what was happening inside me could kill me.

• • •

"He seems to have depression," the pediatrician quietly told my parents. "I consider it to be school phobia." School phobia…my parents didn't know how to react. Their son, who was telling them he was sick, appearing to be immobile, not being able to attend school, showing signs of something being wrong, is now being diagnosed with something that made no sense.

I loved school. I couldn't wait to attend, looked forward to it during the summer, and now I had a doctor telling me I was lying. Telling me that the feelings I had were due to the way I perceived school and the way my brain was working. I physically felt sick and had no one to run to. No one who understood me, no one who had any idea of what was going on. I was lost. Flying up and down with emotions and fighting an internal battle. Every comeback I had, every rebuttal was shut down by someone I was taught to trust since I was a kid—a doctor. A doctor I had known all my life. *How could I fight that?*

From then on, I fought with my parents every day about the reality of feeling sick. Every day was an uphill battle. Every day there was a new obstacle. A cough had even developed. A cough of a seal. No one could explain why I was coughing. We went back to the pediatrician who had ruled out whooping cough and other illnesses that it could have been related to, but once his book of information was empty, he resorted to saying that I was forcing the cough to happen and that there was no real cause other than it being habitual.

After that, my parents and I prepared ourselves for the ride of our life. We had to find an answer.

• • •

Counting down in my seat as I stared at the gigantic ride in front of me, I tried to ease my anxiety by telling myself that the ride would only last fifty seconds, but that didn't seem to help. My friend sat next to me, and I watched as his excitement turn to fear. The same kid who had been telling me all about how awesome the ride was now sat next to me, clinging to the handlebars like his life depended on it. The ride took forever to launch. It's all intentional. They make you stare at the gigantic, straight path that follows until you think yourself out of wanting to do it anymore. Once you've had enough and want to get off the ride, you are surprised with a jolt of energy as the ride goes from 0 to 128 mph and sends you flying.

When it finally launched, I didn't know how to react. My stomach immediately became nonexistent and I could hardly keep my eyes open. The force of the wind made it nearly impossible to see where I was going. All I could do was feel. I could feel myself climbing straight up. I could feel the momentary pause at the peak. A pause in life. A pause that made everything below me feel worthless, for that moment. Suddenly, I knew that I would make it. I knew that whatever came next would be exciting, and that all my fear had been for nothing. Once I overcame the top of the ride, the downward portion was an amazing thrill. I could feel myself spiraling and felt so much relief when

we came to the average rollercoaster level again, which ended with a gradual slow in speed. I had done it, I had overcome one of my biggest fears, and I couldn't wait to do it again.

• • •

In the ICU, I was treated with extreme caution. I didn't realize it beforehand, but I was acutely sick. Every action that a person normally does, I suddenly was no longer able to do. The nurses helped me with everything. I was constantly on blood pressure medicine to stabilize the way my blood pressure was reacting to sepsis, an infection of the blood. Having sepsis as a cancer patient is extremely life threatening, because I had no white blood cells to fight off anything. It took days before my blood pressure stabilized without any medicine, and throughout this time I was the sickest I had ever been in my entire life. I had never relied on the care from a nurse more than I did in that moment. Every part of my body was useless, and all I could do was pray that I would end up okay.

When I was finally released from the ICU, I was put into a normal hospital room to finish recovering. I sometimes imagine what would have happened if I had crashed at home instead of in the hospital, where doctors and nurses could react immediately. My life was in the hands of the decisions that my parents and I made that day.

• • •

Almost every doctor I had seen had dismissed my illness. They all pushed me to the side, told me to try other doctors, other specialists, and that they inevitably thought it was all in my head. So many doctors, who I trusted with my life, told my parents they had no idea what was wrong with me. That is, until I was pushed into the direction of a cardiologist who specialized in a syndrome called "P.O.T.S." (Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome), a syndrome where a person's heart rate and blood pressure can no longer regulate themselves and their immune system no longer works properly. I was put through many different tests to prove that I had this syndrome. The main test was called a "Tilt Test," in which I would lay down on a bed and the bed would tilt up and down. Throughout this process, it was observed that when the bed was tilted upward, my heart rate increased from 90 to over 200 beats per minute. The table had to be lowered to prevent me from passing out.

The results were positive, and after six months of searching, my family and I had ridden out the waves of false diagnoses. I was officially diagnosed with P.O.T.S. There is no "cure" for the syndrome, but there are a few different medicines and treatments that proved to be beneficial. I was given a blood pressure pill and after a few weeks of taking it, all my symptoms, including the seal bark of a cough, gradually went away. The doctor who looked past his book and looked at me as an individual saved me.

• • •

The ups and downs of life, like the ups and downs of a rollercoaster, are all combatted by the end result, where we can look back and acknowledge what we have achieved. Someone may ride a rollercoaster many times throughout a lifetime, and each time it will prove itself to become easier and easier. Every ride in life, good or bad, shows that what is unexpected sometimes proves to be what makes it all worth it in the end.

The Conversations We Won't Have

Make a right at the Stop & Shop. Park a safe distance away. Keep your head down when you walk in, but make sure nobody you know sees you. Ask the woman at the front desk to make sure it will not show up on the insurance bill. Pay in cash. Hide the prescription. Hide the pills.

The little white tablets lived underneath folded clothes in my sister's dresser. My mother never questioned it when my sister would ask for more money. This should not be mistaken for acceptance. "Put these away before your father sees," my mother hissed, the disgust dripping from her lips. That's all she ever said about it.

I do not know if my father ever found out about the birth control, or that my sister's asking to borrow the car for 30 minutes tops would take her to the local Planned Parenthood and back. Any knowledge of this, I presumed, would result in silent denial, maybe crankiness for weeks on end.

Ever since I could remember, my Sundays had begun with a gentle knock on my bedroom door. I would spring up from bed at my mother's request and match black ballet flats with one of my most conservative blouses. My neck failed to keep my head from swaying side to side as my eyes closed during the priest's homily.

Strangers would have guessed that the right corner of the second pew was reserved for my grandmother, as she arrived ten minutes before each Mass, saying her hellos before sitting back and saying a thoughtful prayer.

I spent most of my childhood too nervous to question any beliefs my family had, especially when it came to religion. My grandmother taught Christian doctrine to kids in Cuba during a time when such an act could get one jailed. *Who am I to doubt the God that*

my abuelita risked so much for? It was not until years after her passing that I finally gained the courage to ask questions. When I did, it was welcomed, and I was even urged by my mother and *tias*, who adopted the same fervor for religion as my *abuelita*, their mother, to come to them with anything I did not understand.

This newfound openness in my family reinforced my inquiring nature. They started teaching me about Christianity in ways that made more sense than my white-haired CCD instructors with unflattering skirts ever could: "I have faith in God like I have faith that you will score a goal by the end of the season." I started to understand what my mother meant, and I allowed our question-and-answer sessions to define our relationship: candid.

I paced around the room stunned when my mother explained to me that my cousin did not come around on Christmas or Thanksgiving because he was struggling with depression. She did not wince when telling me that her grandfather had fathered a son with her grandmother's sister and about the pain this had brought her grandmother before she ultimately took him back. Family secrets seemed to come into the open, and I learned more about my faith than I could have imagined, but I knew to keep my questioning within this scope.

I guess my parents relied on health class to teach my sister and me about sex. Maybe they thought the preachings of abstinence in my Catholic high school would silence my questioning. I labeled a diagram of sex organs, studied PowerPoints of sexually transmitted infections, and paid close attention when my instructor graphically defined diseases and their symptoms.

Pairing up in class to write a list of 100 activities nonmarital couples could partake in other than sex did not deter my first boyfriend and me from fumbling around topless in the backseat of his parents' Alpine Green minivan.

39. Count the stars in the sky.

40. Write your names out in the sand of a local baseball field.

41. Create an iPhone app.

My friends and I, sixteen years old, scribbled ideas onto our lists between hushed giggles. It did not matter if our teacher was going to tell us about sex—or our parents, for that matter. We were determined to find out for ourselves.

"Did you know I just went up a cup?" my best friend said, unfazed, shifting her angle in the mirror. I nodded. It did not matter that she was having heinous mood swings, crying to her boyfriend every night before breaking up with him for three days. It did not matter that she had multiplying blackheads on her forehead. It did not matter that she had a major sweet tooth and cravings throughout the day. It did not matter because she had what I wanted: She had birth control. She had a mom who was willing to talk to her about the realities of being a teenage girl. I realized then that my relationship with my own mother was not as candid as I had thought.

Instead, I would have to sit a few inches away from my boyfriend on the black leather couch whenever he and I occupied the living room to watch a movie. Maybe I would sneak in a kiss or two, rebelliously testing my parents' boundaries. All parties would feel slightly uneasy due to this decision of mine, but I wanted to challenge my parents' denial

Layout by Wallace Burgess. Art by Amanda Lee.

of sexuality.

My boyfriend's mother was even more devoted to her conservative nature and Catholic values than my mother was. Even so, she never stopped him from whisking me upstairs to his locked bedroom as long as we put our plates and utensils in the dishwasher after her carefully crafted family dinners. *Boys will be boys*, I would think to myself, wondering why she would not allow her daughter, two years younger than I, to do the same with her visitors.

I was drunk. I spent the night hazily ordering sour tequila shots from the open bar in the ballroom of the hotel for my date and me. I felt pressure to make sure he had a good time; I gulped hard, pressing a lime to my teeth, allowing any awkward small talk between us to vanish. It worked. He guided me around the dance floor with squinted eyes, introducing me to all of his friends. He would realize later on that his friends were leaving, and I would drag my feet, sore in their heels, across the lobby. A girl I had met a few months earlier offered to split an Uber back to downtown Montreal where we were staying. My date was outside blowing cigarette smoke into the brisk air when the Uber arrived. He sat in the front.

Boys will be boys, I repeated to myself, sitting as close to the window as I could. I choked back disgust and followed the lights of the city. I cannot remember the music the Uber was blasting. I sat back in my seat, adjusted my dress, and folded my arms to feel a little safer, to feel a little more in control.

His hands moved in slow motion across my lower back before traveling to my inner thigh and then under my dress. I moved his hand once time caught up to my spinning head. "Sorry," the boy flinched at me. I don't think I let it last for long. But I didn't *let* anything happen.

I don't know how long the drive was back downtown. I ducked out of the Uber and reached for my date's arm. "Goodnight!" I giddily hollered as we pushed through the revolving doors to our elevator. I felt my consciousness go in and out. My eyes still squinted as I changed into pajamas. The ceiling lights spun in circles as I explained to my date what had happened in the Uber.

The hands were nameless before I told him. My date assured me he would talk to the boy. I'm not sure what I wanted him to do, but when the boy waved at me the next day, I felt my eyes widen and the hair on my arms raise in fear. I figured I would be okay with it.

My date told me that the boy was sorry and wanted to apologize. "I told him never to talk to you again," he told me sternly. I went on with the weekend, then with the semester.

I texted my best friends, allowing their horrified reactions to validate the reality of the assault. I hesitated on the phone with my sister. I didn't want her to worry about me. Her voice cracked when she offered her heartfelt support. She would check up on me periodically. I would call my mother, but only to tell her through a pursed grin about the clothes I had bought and the poutine I had tried.

Over time, it started to matter less to me that I couldn't tell my mother or my father what had happened. I was still hurt that our relationship could not be more candid, more open, but I knew that if I told them what happened, we would cross a boundary that we were all fearful of crossing. If they had denied the possibility of me being sexually

active before, I could only imagine the embarrassment and discomfort we would feel if I told them of a nonconsensual experience.

That weekend faded a little in my mind. By the end of the semester, as we moved into the summer, I could act around my parents as if I didn't have a painfully burning secret, reminding myself that a hug from my mom couldn't take away the violation. I could strap on my seat belt and drive to the dark, vacant parking lot of the post office, where I would climb into the backseat of my ex-boyfriend's parents' Alpine Green minivan, reminding myself that my mom wouldn't want to know anyway—*our relationship isn't that open*.

It could have been a harmless glance to him, but to me it felt like more like a stare, demanding that I pay attention to him. My eyes shifted in a quick, obvious fashion, continuing my conversations at the long table in the café.

He didn't take the hint. He walked over. Some how-was-your-summer's later, it was time for class. We walked side by side awkwardly as I squirmed to make conversation out of uncomfortable politeness. He held the door open for me as I walked to a seat as far away from his as was available. I wouldn't take any notes. He would repeat this routine before every class.

I'd confide in my friends, and we'd outline the conspiracy that he was trying to assert some sort of sick control over me. Maybe our clumsy small talk from the café to the classroom door was his way of reassuring himself that he couldn't be that bad a guy; if he were, wouldn't I just run away? Not talk to him at all?

I hugged the stoop outside the dining hall. Enthralled with the funny texts my friends were sending, I hardly heard his weak "Hey, can we talk?" I scanned my surroundings, hoping the friend I was meeting for lunch would appear behind him.

"Sure, what's up?"

He explained how sorry he was for what had happened last semester. That he was never going to do it again. To anyone. To me. I gulped hard, practically tasting the sour mixture of tequila and lime. "Thanks for saying that." We looked at each other blankly before he advised me, "You really don't have to say anything if you don't want to." I knew that. He reminded me again how sorry he was, clearly hoping I would tell him it was okay. I refused. I didn't allow myself to be as uncomfortably polite with him as I had during our walks to class. It wasn't okay.

I dug my fork into the teriyaki chicken, exchanging jokes with my friends around a circular booth in the dining hall. I went back to my room as soon as I could. The CNN updates on the Brett Kavanaugh case lit up on my phone screen, helping me understand why the boy might have picked this day to apologize to me. Holding my tearstained blanket closer to my chest, I texted my best friends. I called my sister.

I'm forced to wonder whether telling my mom would make us closer—or make our relationship more candid. I wonder whether telling her would make way for whispered question-and-answer sessions about my sexual history, each discussion probably growing more embarrassing, with my being able to sense her disgust. This fear ultimately overpowers any desire I have to open up to her. I remind myself instead: *Talking to my mom about what happened wouldn't erase the foggy memory of helplessness. Our relationship isn't that open.*

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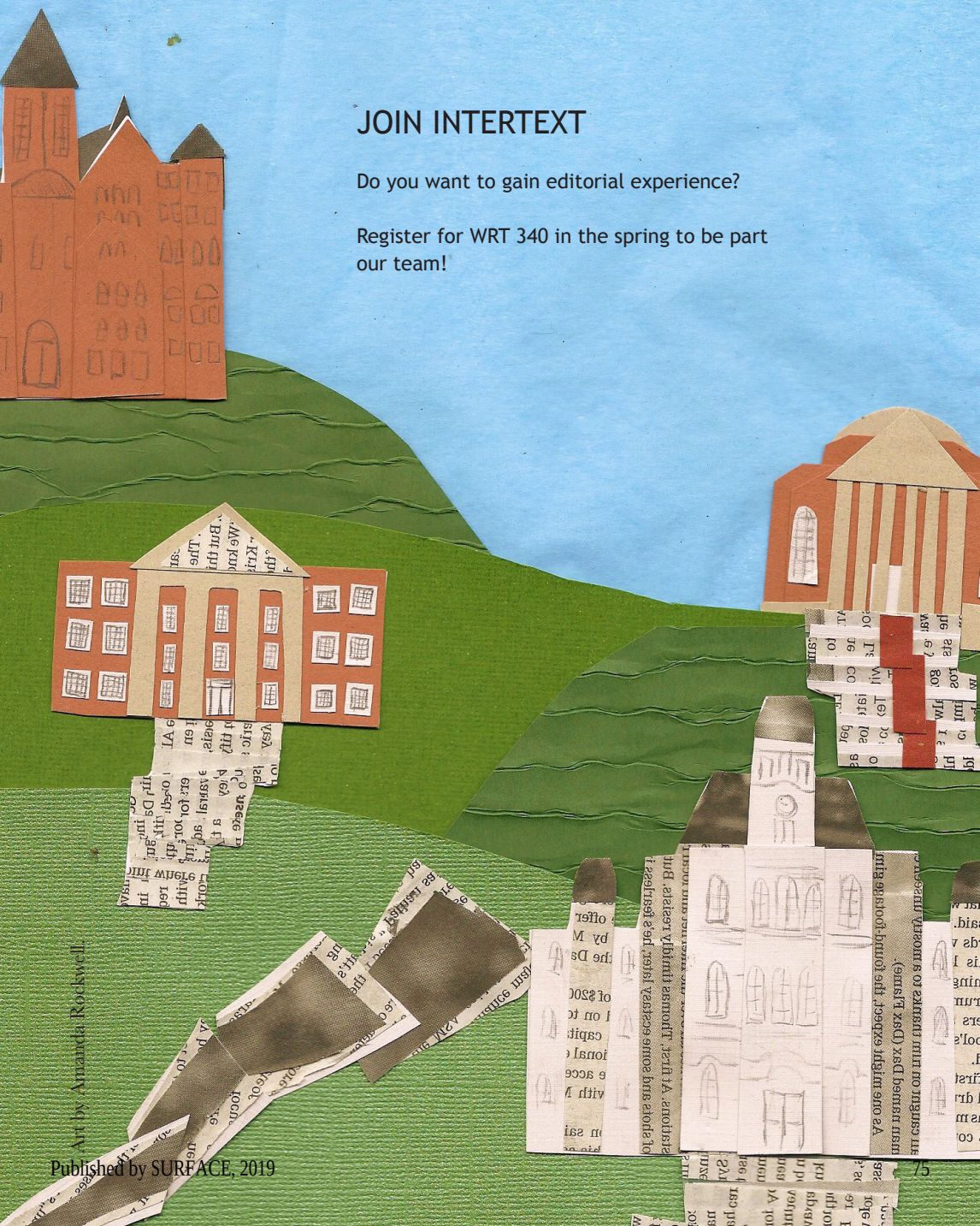
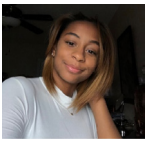


Art by Amanda Rockwell

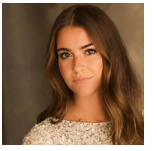
Editors



Jennifer Bancamper | *English & Textual Studies*
Raised in New York City, Jennifer has a deep appreciation for visual arts and creative writing. She loves animals, breakfast food, R&B, and reading government conspiracies. Born with a great curiosity about the world, she aspires to travel and let her experiences seep into her writing—whatever kind of writing she finally decides to do.

Wallace Burgess | *Sociology*
Born in Burlington, Vermont (described by some as "basically Canada"), Wallace listens to music more than his common sense, but had enough sense to enroll in a writing class that will prepare him for a possible future in publishing. McLovin jokes are OK. Wallace and Gromit jokes less so.

Peter Conway | *Writing & Rhetoric* and *Television, Radio & Film*
Peter enjoys writing analytically and creatively, and is open-minded about his post-graduation pursuits. Being from Westford, MA, he is an avid Boston sports fan. In Peter's free time, he finds peace in discovering new and old music. His favorite spot to vacation is the sweet Drakes Island in Maine where he spends time with his large family and friends.



Juliet Dore | *English & Textual Studies*
From West Bloomfield, Michigan and having already been to 23 countries and counting, Juliet enjoys travel, reading, and anything that has to do with water. Her favorite foods are mashed potatoes and cotton candy, and she will probably laugh at any puns you tell her. Upon graduation, she hopes to work for a large book publishing company in New York City.

Antonia Green | *Writing & Rhetoric*
Hailing from the San Francisco Bay, Antonia enjoys music, travel, food, and movies. She likes her personal stories and adding creative twists and turns to them. One day she hopes to find a career in which she can eat, travel, listen to music, and write all about it (while getting paid, of course). Or she can turn her creative writings into movies, mini-series, or even graphic novels.

Hanna Martin | *Writing & Rhetoric, Magazine*, and *Citizenship & Civic Engagement*
Although she was raised on a small goat farm in Pennsylvania, Hanna thinks big. In fact, she hopes to travel the world and record her experiences—to share her passion for writing, journalism, and exploration. Hanna can often be found binge watching Netflix in order to hide from the next big Syracuse snowstorm.

Sean Murphy | *Writing & Rhetoric*
Sean is a passionate Boston sports fan from Exeter, New Hampshire. In addition to supporting his favorite teams on their championship-caliber runs, he likes to read, write, and listen to music, as long as it is not country. He can also be found watching reruns of *The Office* and hanging out with his closest friends. After graduation, Sean aspires to work full-time in Boston in sports marketing.

Taylor Parks | *Communication Sciences & Disorders* and *Writing & Rhetoric*

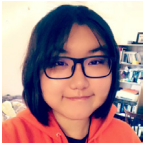
Born and raised in Forestburgh, New York, Taylor expresses enthusiasm for writing, travel, and Netflix. She searches for passion in all that she does; from working as an EMT, to puzzles, and everything in between. She is interested in continuing her education in audiology and is currently writing a book of poems.

Grace Richardson | *Writing & Rhetoric*

Raised in the heart of New York City, Grace has always been surrounded by creative inspiration. The things she enjoys most are cooking, traveling, and writing. After graduation she plans to work in PR, but in the meanwhile can be found in her Euclid Avenue apartment cooking up a storm, or planning her next trip!

Elle Ross | *Writing & Rhetoric*

From upstate NY, Elle is passionate about the world of communication and technology—complimented by a fascination with fashion. Interested in the creative expression behind these mediums, she plans on moving to the Big Apple upon graduation to pursue a career in digital marketing within the fashion realm.



Annie Shi | *Writing & Rhetoric*

Raised in South East Asia and having lived around the world ever since, the biggest constant in Annie's life has been her passion for the written word. With an array of interests from playing the ukulele to video game design, she's not quite sure what she wants to do yet—but she intends to use writing as a tool to leave every place better than when she came.

Josh Sholes | *Writing & Rhetoric*

Born in Rhode Island, Josh was raised a wicked big Boston sports fan. His passions range from film and music to photography. Josh's involvement on campus includes writing for *20Watts*, Syracuse University's premier music publication, as well as maintaining a long time position as host of the show *Auditory Arousal* on WERW, Syracuse University's only freeform radio station.

Nicole Sklitsis | *Public Relations* and *Writing & Rhetoric*

While having lived in the suburbs of New York City her entire life, Nicole has a passion for music, photography, and fashion. After graduation, she hopes to live in New York City with a job in the communications field.

Brittney West | *Writing & Rhetoric* and *History*

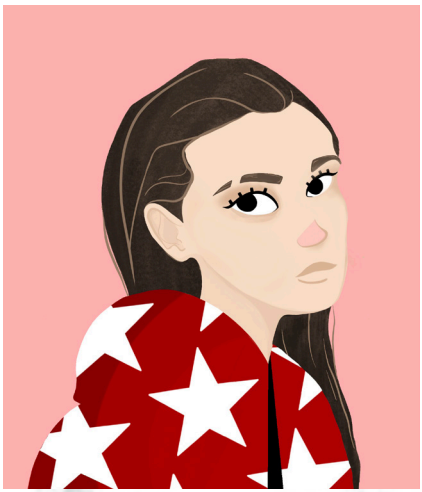
Brittney feels most at home relaxing on a California beach with an arm ache from holding her next favorite book. After graduation, she plans on using this passion to pursue an editorial career at a publishing house. Meanwhile, she can be found passionately yelling at her favorite sports teams, singing at the top of her lungs, or cracking a sarcastic joke.

Layout by Elle Ross.

ARTISTS

Darcy Feeley is a designer, art director, and painter from Boston inspired by music, words, history, and what makes us human.

Emily Gunn is a junior studying Illustration at Syracuse University's College of Visual & Performing Arts. She is interested in mark making, pattern, and digital art. https://emgunnillustration.com/



Amanda Lee is an artist who has always been attracted to the human figure and portraiture, focusing on the aspects of each that interest her the most and make her feel connected to her work.

Dylan Rose Rheingold is an Illustration major in the Visual and Performing Arts school with a heavy interest in the areas of gender equality, diversity and disorders.

France Corbel is from Bretagne, France. She is a tumblr addict, art lover, bookworm, series junkie, feminist, and ravenclaw. http://traitspourtraits.tumblr.com.