



# *trillium*

2020-2021 LITERARY MAGAZINE



# trillium



2020

2021

Established in 1971, *Trillium* has been Ramapo College's literary and art magazine for the majority of the past 45 years. Staffed by students, *Trillium* features the poetry, prose, and visual art of Ramapo College community. The magazine is published during spring and is available across campus, free of charge.

*Trillium* can be viewed online:  
[www.ramapo.edu/trillium/](http://www.ramapo.edu/trillium/)

### **RAMAPO COLLEGE**

Established in 1969, Ramapo College offers bachelor's degrees in the arts, business, humanities, social sciences and the sciences, as well as in professional studies, which include nursing and social work. In addition, Ramapo College offers courses leading to teacher certification at the elementary and secondary levels. The college also offers six graduate programs as well as articulated programs with Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, New York Chiropractic College, New York University College of Dentistry, SUNY State College of Optometry and New York College of Podiatric Medicine.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## POETRY

- |    |  |    |  |
|----|--|----|--|
| 1  | <i>To Paul, The Australian Koala</i><br>Leanna Kucinski                          | 30 | <i>Purple Boots</i><br>Leanna Kucinski                           |
| 3  | <i>Ruminations of the Helplessly Immortal Sir Tardigrade</i><br>Charlene Carreon | 32 | <i>Carbon Dioxide</i><br>Emily LaMonica                          |
| 6  | <i>Victoria</i><br>Tori D'Amico  | 34 | <i>Flashbacks</i><br>Jaclyn Dericks                              |
| 7  | <i>Balding Hack</i><br>Alyssa Capasso  | 39 | <i>The Last Snowfall in Hasbrouck Heights</i><br>Charlie Leppert |
| 10 | <i>Inseparable</i><br>Jaclyn Dericks   | 41 | <i>For Myself</i><br>Natalie Tsur                                |
| 16 | <i>Clint Eastwood</i><br>Gunnar Hopson   | 43 | <i>Mi Hombre El León / M.H.E.L</i><br>Christian Rizzo            |
| 17 | <i>Bedtime Stories</i><br>Tori D'Amico   | 44 | <i>The Dandy Blight</i><br>Ludi Rocker                           |
| 19 | <i>Radium Girl</i><br>Sara Gustavsen   | 45 | <i>231 Miles</i><br>Leanna Kucinski                              |
| 21 | <i>Sick and Tired</i><br>Allison Higgins   | 50 | <i>Sometimes</i><br>Constance Marion                             |
| 23 | <i>Sleepy Eyes</i><br>Emily LaMonica   | 52 | <i>Afrodite</i><br>Kyila Sivers                                  |
| 24 | <i>Vincent</i><br>Tori D'Amico   | 54 | <i>Elsewhere</i><br>Katie McGee                                  |
| 26 | <i>Judith Slaying Holofernes</i><br>Charlie Leppert                              | 55 | <i>{To See Sappho}</i><br>Rebecca Patuto                         |
| 28 | <i>Stretching My Legs</i><br>Katie McGee   | 57 | <i>Resilience</i><br>Allison Higgins                             |

**58** *Sweet Enough*  
Erin Schwarz

## PROSE

**11** *Obviously a Horror Story*  
Arthur Grole

**35** *Frank*  
Gunnar Hopson

**47** *Blueberry Pie*  
Jessica Ryan

## ARTWORK

COVER *Shine Bridge*  
Amy Kwiatek

**5** *You See What You Look  
For - 2*  
Almerry Martins

**9** *Damaged*  
LeAnn Bauer

**15** *My Happy Place*  
Tyler Jordan

**18** *Don't Think Twice*  
Jennifer Holland

**22** *You See What You Look  
For - Landscapes*  
Almerry Martins

**25** *Space*  
Megan Woods

**29** *God Bless That  
Cell Phone ! - 4*  
Lilly Junod

**33** *Alice*  
Jennifer Holland

**38** *Nature's Bliss*  
LeAnn Bauer

**40** *God Bless That  
Cell Phone ! - 5*  
Lilly Junod

**42** *Meli*  
Jennifer Holland

**46** *God Bless That  
Cell Phone ! - 3*  
Lilly Junod

**49** *You See What You Look  
For - Lady*  
Almerry Martins

**53** *Cold*  
Megan Woods

**56** *Chillin*  
Megan Woods

# TO PAUL, THE AUSTRALIAN KOALA

---

*Leanna Kucinski*

Paper slices skin-  
Toe slams into corner

Nails scratch chalkboard-  
Spider slowly crawls

Front teeth scrape-  
Cold popsicle stings

A bite to the cheek-  
Fingers smashed in the door

All this is nothing to  
What you've endured

Trapped in flames-  
Boiled and bubbled fur  
Burnt and barely alive

Brothers dead from hunger-  
Sisters from thirst  
vulnerable-  
almost extinct

Burnt paws-  
We knit you mittens  
Baby bottles-  
We help you drink

Trading a coffee-  
For small donation  
Humans are broken-  
We fix things too.



Scorched in ashes-  
It is not a g'day  
But tomorrow-  
It will rain.

# RUMINATIONS OF THE HELPLESSLY IMMORTAL SIR TARDIGRADE

---

*Charlene Carreon*

Back in my day, I don't suppose  
there were really days at all,  
all those millions of years ago  
Can one have a day  
if there was no language  
to define what a day is?  
Or if one had no way  
to quantify  
time passing?  
I am aware, of course,  
of time  
It's rather impossible  
not to be  
I can feel myself wading  
through the molasses  
of daily mundanities  
Eating lichen, excreting lichen  
Reproducing, then producing again  
I suppose I do have the luxury of travel  
Us water bears swim quite well  
and survive in the most diverse of climates  
Allegedly this includes the "outer space"  
Outer space  
A space beyond what is known  
as Earth, certainly far beyond  
the droplets of water  
that I consider home  
There is so much that lies  
Beyond my own universe  
In all my years, my millions of years,  
I have had far too long to think

What a danger it is,  
to be able  
to think, to ponder  
My kind are not meant to last  
More than two years  
Yet here I stay cursed  
with eternal suffering  
I have witnessed so much  
loss, so much calamity  
There have been entire  
species and civilizations  
That have disintegrated  
around me  
I could curl up  
and die temporarily  
Hoping that when I awake  
life may be improved  
But, as I have assured,  
I am aware, too aware  
I know hibernation cannot cure  
The weight of existence  
I know all I can do  
Is consume lichen as  
my mind consumes itself



***You See What You Look For - 2***  
Almerry Martins

# VICTORIA



*Tori D'Amico*

I come from a family where your father  
always dies first.

It is no wonder I have always wanted to be  
a mother. It is the bravest thing a woman can be  
in a world where she will inevitably  
be left alone.

My mother almost had no successor, until  
I came along. The next Victoria since day one.  
My name is hidden in me, as I hide in my name.  
Victoria is a rope around my neck, my mother's mother  
reminding me that I am unmistakably hers. Tori  
is the step stool that keeps me from choking, with hopes  
that discarded letters will somehow change  
the role call.

I am not who I say—my name a disguise no matter  
how I spell it, photos will always remind me who I am  
supposed to be. “You are just like your mother,” they say  
I am never sure if that's a good thing.

I think of the day I will be alone with my mother.  
Can a name be a prophecy? If it can I will end the line here  
I hope my daughter looks nothing like me. I hope her eyes  
are brown, her nose is small, her teeth are straight.  
When she thinks of me, I hope she feels weightless.  
Everyone will say she looks just like her father.

# BALDING HACK



*Alyssa Capasso*

I shave back my soul with a Bic razor  
Cutting skin on sharp edges  
And peeling back layers until I've laid myself.  
Newborn  
Untouched, by the world  
Skin smoothed by creation  
The forbidden fruit  
Spoiled  
Slithering bodies  
Appendages slinking along the crevices of breasts  
Gliding along pale bodies  
Settling along the curve of a crooked spine  
Naked  
Arms and legs moving unattached  
Unnaturally  
Constricting throats  
Blood drips from the blade  
Before me you are like a tsunami  
insatiable  
Drinking in every curve  
Drowning  
I let you into my lungs  
Allow you to consume flesh  
Hand poised  
Skin smoothed  
I begin to lay barren the garden of eden  
I lay myself  
bare  
Flesh,  
A casket  
Devoid of emotion

A mirage in the desert, oasis a barren sea  
You have drunk its waters dry  
Its golden treasures are like stars  
Too far away  
Intangible  
Lock and key  
they hide away until night  
their intimacy  
has been shaved away  
A secret for the soothsayers  
When they grow too bright  
Wash them  
Down  
The  
Drain.



*Damaged*  
LeAnn Bauer

# INSEPARABLE



*Jaelyn Dericks*

She tattooed herself to my skin,  
showed me off like a prize  
I admired it, growing in her sunlight  
an inseparable pair.  
Her undeniable radiance  
my soft confidence  
both naïve sometimes reckless, but together  
we just fit.

I miss her delicate fingers twisting  
my hair strand over strand  
sharing secrets in her cloudy room  
smoke swirling up to converse with ghosts.  
Endless nights jumping into cars  
not knowing where we were headed,  
but never looking back.

Mostly I miss how she made us fearless,  
She would flirt with death, swallowed it,  
held it between her fingers  
but something always kept her grounded.  
Stumbling inside as the sun begins to rise,  
sleep the day away until it's time to get high.

# OBVIOUSLY A HORROR STORY

---

*Arthur Grole*

The forest was particularly dense that time of the year. The snakes in the local area had been desperately trying to get rid of their wretched skin that had brought them many misfortunes. Every now and then, the rallying call of the lone wolf overshadowed the cacophony of thousands of insects in the area desperately trying to get their legs over. The pitter-patter of raindrops produced a strange, almost alien-like melody against the whistling of the wind in the willows. Two men dressed in raincoats and flat caps continued their journey through the middle of the forest.

Pete, the taller of the duo, was a recent graduate of Swansea Comprehensive, where he got his sole O-level in Forestry. A lanky and unassuming fellow, Pete was a man of the world and loved looking up facts about anything he could lay his hands on. His partner, Dud, thought that Russians had trained special fish to spy on the Brits down their drains. He had gone to Hampton Primary School for an entire morning, after which he had been kicked out for trying to learn how to do sums, something that was looked down upon in the education system then. The duo had been lavatory attendants for quite a while now, and both of them worked in the second toilet from the left in the Manchester Municipal Councils: Pete would work on the northern half of the bowl while Dud would do the western. Every day after work, they'd embark upon adventures to various exotic locations, from zoos to art galleries.

Choosing this weekend for the forest trip was an obvious choice, the thirteenth day of the month being on Friday, it was a perfect night for all kinds of discussions of the paranormal. Kicking a dead cat off a small clearing in the forest, Pete exclaimed, in his usual nasal drawl, "You see Dud, the deadly chill 'round these parts is quite ordinary. On this day sixteen years ago, I came face to face with what you would call a demoness."

"Really, Pete?" Inquired Dud.

"I mean, I didn't actually have my face about three and a quarter inches away from hers, but I had the distinct feeling that I was around some extraterrestrial



supernaturalist energy. The wind was blowing just the way it is now, and I'd had a little bit too much to drink down at the old 21 and Down Pub behind the bike sheds. Do you know that place, Dud?"

"Course I do, Pete. I had a nasty drink down there only the other night."

"Did you really? Anyway, I was going down this very road, you see, and I sensed something extremely weird about the atmosphere around me. Instead of the usual 'ooo' sound, the wind that night was making an 'eee' sound as it traveled about through the trees. Then, I whipped 'round like a flash, and I saw a large newt croaking to appease the tsunami gods in the sky. I had heard that all the tsunami-worshipping large newt had been scientifically proven to have demonic tendencies. Therefore, I knew it was she."

"Really? What did you do then?"

"Well, I called her out, you see. I said, 'If you are indeed a demoness hiding in the body of the newt, please will you kindly take no notice of me? I am totally pissed from three Camden pils lager, and I don't want a bloody newt-sense.'"

"What did she do then, Pete?"

"Well, she just stood around doing nothing, really. I took that as a stern warning for me to vacate the premises of the jungly areas of the forest, and then headed straight 'round to Mrs. Mullin's place."

Pete and Dud had then reached a crossroads, where they took the road less traveled by, as they wanted to make it all the difference. As they went on the sparsely walked-upon road, the surroundings suddenly changed, and they found themselves in a totally different world. The leaves around them were exuding soft blue light from within, and the rats, deers, and other animals had phosphorescence of kind never before seen on Earth. The chameleons and salamanders had started their bi-annual hike down to the center of the forest, wading through the grass and odd branches in a neat, single-file procession about five feet away from the duo. Oblivious to the change around them, the duo went on their path. Dud exclaimed, "Funny you should say that Pete, cause I had the trouble about three nights ago. I was walking down here from the 21 and Down pub, I don't know if I told you that."

"Yes, you did," interjected Pete.

“Did I?”

“Yes, I was there with you.”

“Oh. Anyway, I was walking down here, you see, and all of a sudden I could sense these eyes following me around the forest. Do you know that feeling that someone is there looking at you? It was a new experience, you see, having the feeling of being looked at. I looked around, there was nothing around me. So I thought to myself, ‘I must have a lie down near one of these trees, although they seem scary.’

“I went there, you see, and sat down on one of the branches of the big Oak tree which had great big spider webs on them. Then, all of a sudden, I felt a hand on my cheek.”

“Oh. Which cheek was that, Dud?”

“It was the left-upper. Anyway, I got so scared my Percy pointed at the porcelain, although there was no china lying about the place. I ran and ran so quickly, and once I was home, I realized that I had squashed a small squirrel as I sat on that branch.”

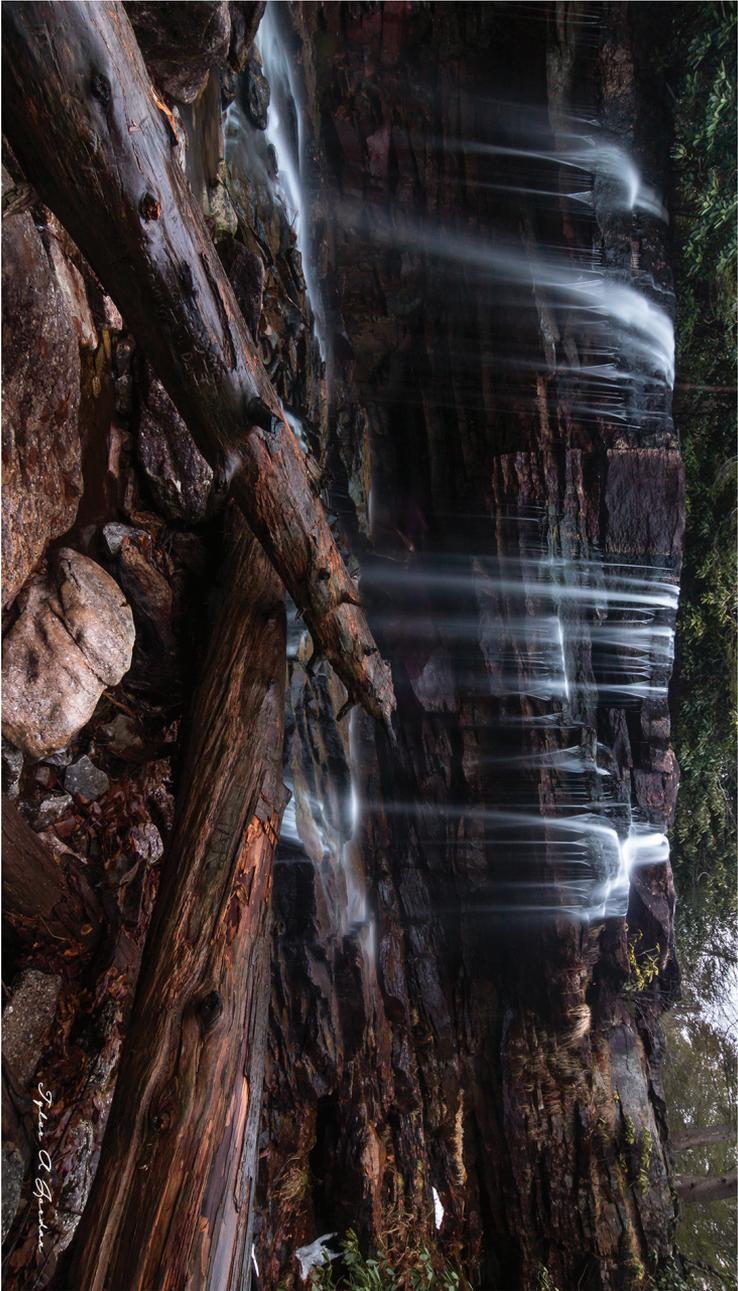
Pete and Dud had reached towards the centre of the forest, where there was a large clearing. The scaly march of the insects had arrived safely at the centre and were organized in the form of a pentagram, in the middle of which was a large saucer-like object buzzing with various noises and emitting various beams whizzing with activity.

“If I’m not mistaken, Dud,” quipped Pete. “This is the saucer for the large teapot traveling around the sun. Obviously it has landed down to the Earth to wait for the cup for a refill of Earl Grey.”

Pete and Dud then walked slowly towards the saucer, accidentally squishing thirteen chameleons with their boots while on their way. They rubbed their elbows against the shiny ceramic surface of the saucer and waited as if they were expecting a genie to come out and offer them wishes. After exactly eleven minutes and five seconds of rubbing their elbows, a ramp seemed to come out of the saucer, from which came an egg-like creature. The creature then sucked them into the saucer through a laser beam while civilly introducing itself through wordless communication. Pete understood through their unique communication style that they had a museum dedicated to rock-and-roll music from the sixties,

and they were quite fond of the artists from that era.

The egg-like creature wanted help from them for the lyrics to a song by Manfred Mann titled “Doo Wah Diddy Diddy.” Dud knew some of the lyrics to the song up to the line “Dum Dum Diddy Doo Doo,” but the aliens already had lyrics up to “Dum Wah Diddy Diddy Dum Diddy.” Though not particularly conversant with their style of communication, Pete could deduce that they were not amused. As a result, Peter and Dudley were promptly dropped off after five years back to the same crossing they were picked up from. Or, at least, what seemed like five years but was, in fact, only three minutes.



**My Happy Place**  
Tyler Jordan

# CLINT EASTWOOD



*Gunnar Hopson*

I left you to return to the place I took you from.

I always used to say you were like Clint Eastwood:  
You grew more intimidating, more terrifying with age,  
and you responded to the world with a squinting sneer and a cocked gun.  
You had his fierce get-off-my-lawn kind of energy,  
The kind where you didn't care when you were outmanned or outgunned,  
Because you've lived through it all and you've seen worse and  
this  
sure as hell won't be what  
kills you.

I always told my friends  
She has no claws, but she can bite  
and that made me proud to know you.

But this isn't about that.  
This is about how  
I left you to return to the place I took you from,  
Knowing full well that you wouldn't be there when I got back.

# BEDTIME STORIES



*Tori D'Amico*

You always hated how I stay up late  
watch 20/20 reruns until my head spins, if  
I couldn't stand unsolved crimes, you'd ask  
why don't I just turn it off?  
You told me you hated it when you woke up to take a piss  
and some sick fuck was at it again with the axe.  
That's what you dream about? You looked at me with  
disgust.  
If you were still here, if you still cared enough—  
All that god damned murder, you'd say,  
don't you ever get sick of being sad?  
I don't know how to make it stop.  
See your wedding band on my pillow  
not see a relic, reminding me  
how this would look on 48 hours. That is  
if you were dead, or there was a crime at all.  
The droning voice is a thick lullaby for nights alone  
on the couch that reminds me of the latch key days.  
A night when dad didn't come home from work  
Mom held his slippers to her chest, hoping the thing he left behind  
was her. She let me fall asleep waiting for him before  
her sob racked body carried me to my bedroom, and the static  
was her only company.



*Don't Think Twice*  
Jennifer Holland

# RADIUM GIRL



Sara Gustavsen

I am  
a twenty-first century  
radium girl.  
I'd seen the advertisements:  
*A New Light!*  
*Undark!*  
*Restore Your Health!*  
and simply:  
*Radium and Beauty!*  
Who wouldn't want to work  
with the miracle element?

So:  
I applied,  
was quickly hired.  
I sat next to the other girls.  
(They were all much prettier  
and more interesting  
than I am.)  
All of us chipper,  
optimistic,  
*lucky.*

We had the privilege  
of shaping the bristles of the paintbrush—  
as instructed—  
with our youthful lips  
and the tips of our tongues,  
then dipping the point  
into  
the fluorescent jar,

and onto the watch face,  
and back between our lips  
again.

We'd glow on our way home.

But,  
as you may know,  
what seemed at first like a cavity—  
a peculiar one,  
for which the dentist had no cure,  
that led him to decide instead  
to simply remove  
the tooth,  
and the many others  
that got infected soon after—  
was actually the beginning of  
lockjaw,  
mouth cancer,  
necrosis.

Those who've come before me  
weren't successful  
in winning damages;  
I don't think I'll even try.  
My naïve replacement is already  
tt the brush.

I'll sit and remember  
the taste,  
the feeling  
of the bristles on my tongue.  
The assurance you offered that it was safe  
(beneficial, even)  
will echo in my brain  
while I watch my jaw  
decay.

# SICK AND TIRED



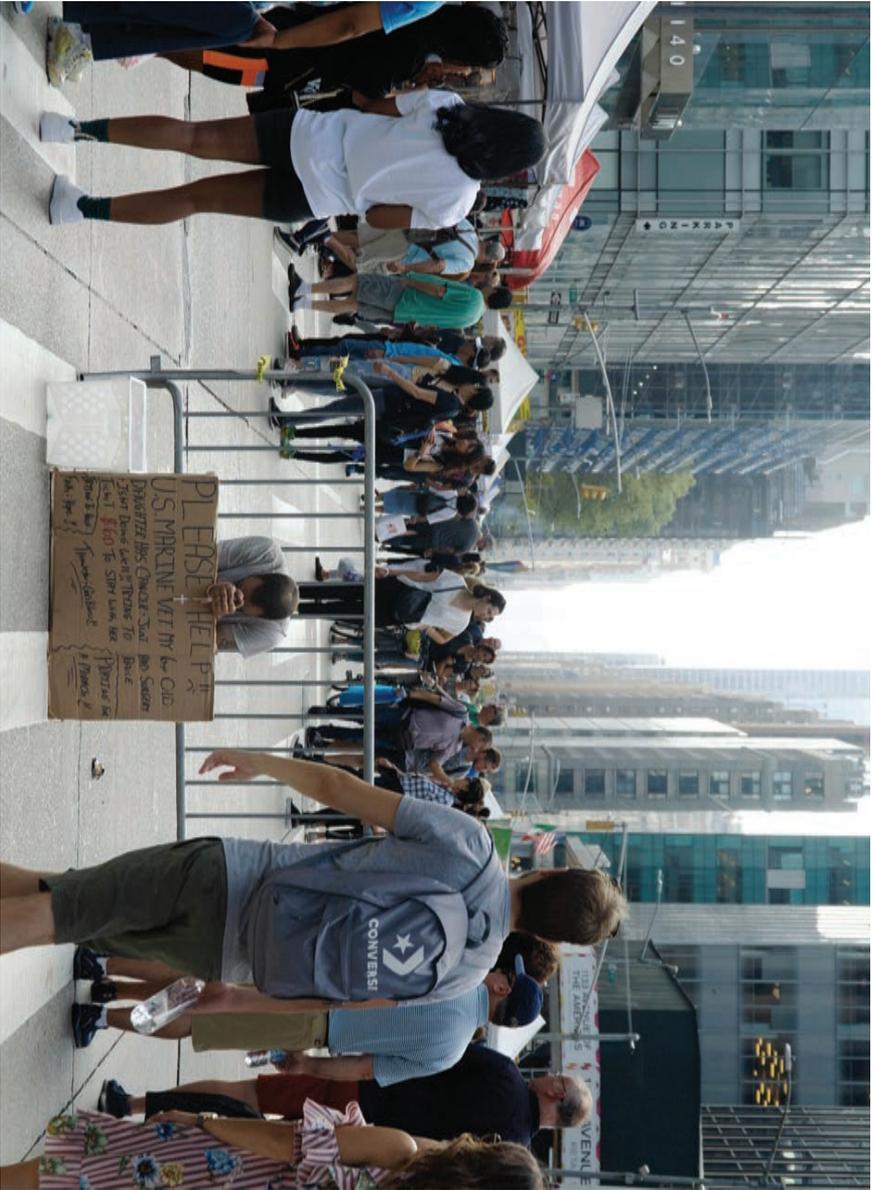
*Allison Higgins*

I'm sick of people being fictitious.  
Multiple faces and personalities prevail  
like garbage flowing from flooded homes.  
They put on masks and take on new monikers;  
fabricating an elaborate show  
while behind closed curtains they laugh and snicker and hurt.  
And I'm tired of allowing these people to get close to me.  
I'm tired of allowing myself to go to every performance and wish them well.

I'm sick of the blindly accepted morals and values.  
How right and wrong swirl, mix, churn;  
and what used to be blacks, whites, and greys  
have now erupted into shades of turquoise or scarlet or burnt orange.  
And I'm tired of fear for having a "diverged" perspective.  
I'm tired of no one truly questioning why palettes have changed and if it's even  
for the better.

I'm sick of people weaseling their way into my life only to be a parasite.  
Like a house with no installation trying to keep warm  
while it's negative fifty degrees out.  
Or like trying to breathe regularly while I'm strapped to cinder blocks  
and thrown into the middle of the ocean.  
And I'm tired of allowing them to seep back into my life over and over and over  
and over again.  
I'm tired of loving the tread.

I'm sick of it.  
And I'm tired.  
I'm so tired.



**You See What You Look For - Landscapes**  
Almerry Martins

# SLEEPY EYES



*Emily LaMonica*

Waking up is waking up is waking up;  
days blur together, glissando of moments.  
Vision heavy with remembrance of things past,  
soul marked with black and blue,  
body a puppet forced to dance a grand ballet.  
Every sound is a lullaby.  
Brahms plays his masterpiece through my  
weary mind until the rhythm overtakes my core.  
Am I sick, angry, stressed, okay?  
How do you want me to respond?  
Isn't it obvious I want the house lights up  
and this performance to end?  
Yet I keep dancing  
and pray for the day we all take our bows.

# VINCENT



Tori D'Amico

*Just before leaving the Saint-Remy asylum in 1890, Van Gogh painted a series of four roses.*

I asked to see *Starry Night* for my sixteenth birthday. Van Gogh had been a favorite of mine since the days I sat on the floor of the Van Sciver Elementary art room, learning about Sunflowers. But not about the truth behind the brush, the man who was hurting. Third grade, they took us into the city to see it up close. But not too close. Tenth grade and the last stop on the trip is an art gallery. My friends walked off hours ago, I stroll alone past the water lilies, rows of marble bodies, the lion taking up a whole wall. I stop for more than a moment not in front of the man with one ear, but beside him, at the white-pink-green, roses in a vase. Time to get back on the bus.

When the crowd parted enough for me to see the hillside, moon, trees, thick brushstrokes—I thought of the roses. It was like third grade again, even though I knew more now I was just as lost for words. I think I have been searching for that feeling of indescribability ever since. The sunflowers, the silence inside of me in a bustling gallery. No one was looking at the roses, no one was looking at me looking. There is no glass in the frame, I could almost get too close.



**Space**  
Megan Woods

# JUDITH SLAYING HOLOFERNES

---

*Charlie Leppert*

Watch him count the cash between  
us. I can smell it. Thick  
smoke between blue eyes

and bifocals, Cuban clutched  
in chiclet teeth. He folds  
the stack of clean bills

between my teeth. Good boy.  
Snubs stuttering ember out  
against the shoulder,

skin puckers, hisses  
against flayed tobacco  
leaves. His eyes, wet

coins; my own still  
face, doubled, quadrupled  
in glass, gloss, glavieux.

He sinks to his knees,  
buries his face in my empty  
lap, slick spit and tears,

hand closed around the cigar's  
remains, ash smudged on  
starched shirt, wrinkled khaki.

Watch: I brush salt and coal  
hair from shining temples,  
imagine I could sink

fingers into the neck,  
soft as a thigh. Listen  
to the gasp, choke, gag.

Wait for the body to still.

# STRETCHING MY LEGS

---

*Katie McGee*

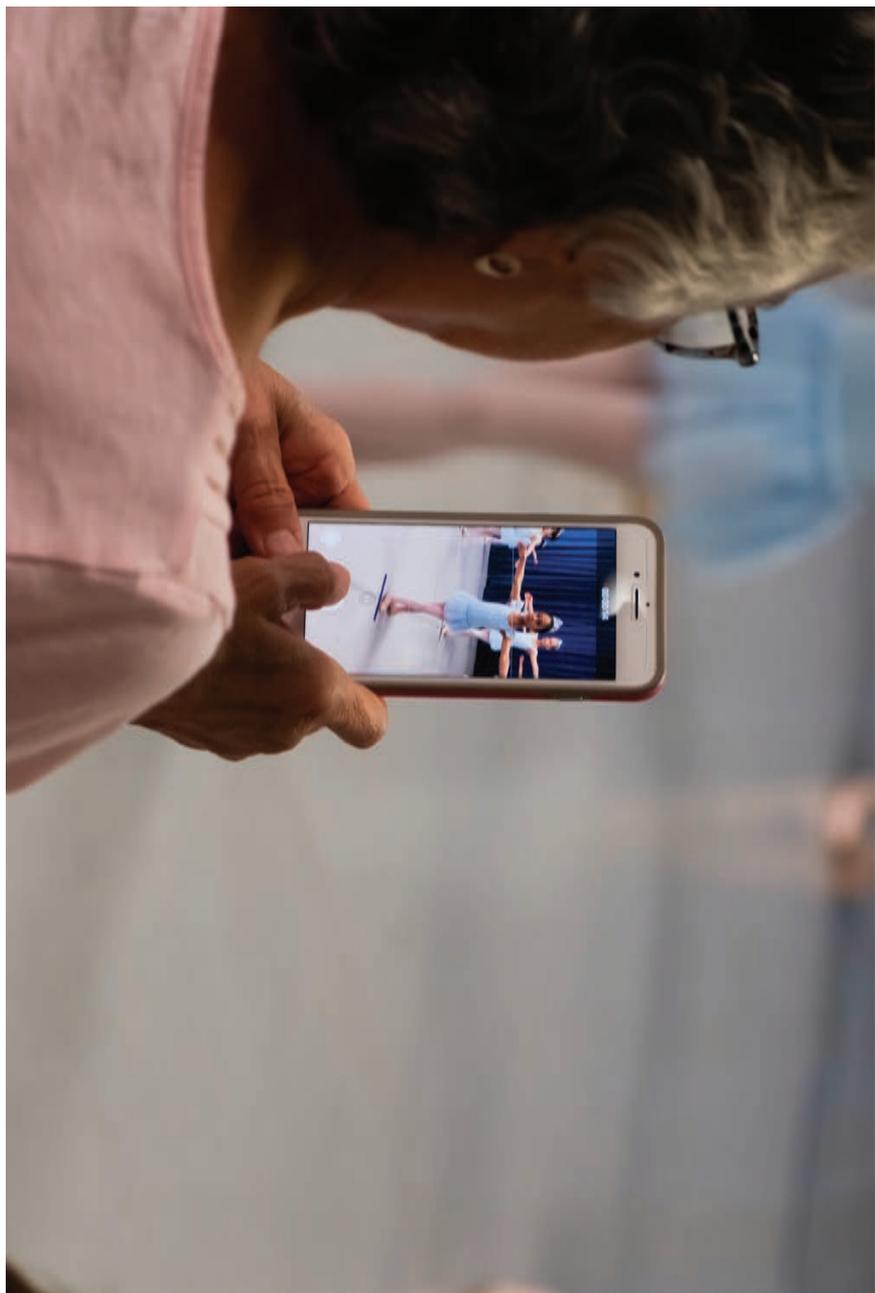
Picture a vast expanse  
between two ears  
or two legs or the space  
between the heart and the rib cage  
when your blood pumps fast.

Now picture a lonely town.  
Silent things on silent nights  
behind closed doors.  
Picture a cigarette woven into the  
strands of a fishnet stocking.

My mother told me happy girls  
with high self esteem  
wear pleated trousers and  
would never do such filthy things,  
yet tonight I remain the girl  
I've always been.

My stockings stay where they are  
unless I'm the one sliding them off  
and I smoke while I'm at it  
because these blackened lungs  
and stocking'd legs are mine  
and only mine.

I'll do with them  
what I so please.



***God Bless That Cell Phone ! - 4***

Lilly Junod

# PURPLE BOOTS



*Leanna Kucinski*

Lucy yells when she  
tells her mother to stop  
Little legs stomp in slush.

Jump over cracks, walk  
behind Momma's big tracks  
Footprint thief at large.

White sidewalk won't lie  
Heavy footprints don't hide  
Two matching pairs of boots.

Now child expects to  
connect mitten to glove  
Finds a hand that is already full

A second is done  
Now five and ten gone  
Stethoscope drops to the ground

Five fingers wiggle to  
Lend me a hand  
Boots back to chestnut drive

-

Same street  
New snow  
Damn I hate the sleet  
Netflix bill is due tonight  
Second charge this week

Too fast  
Slow down  
Tiny boy shouts loud  
Nose is running like his feet  
Footsteps make no sound

Looks for  
My palm  
Waiting for the warmth  
Book sits tightly in my hand  
Mind goes back and forth  
Is it time to leave-

Those dreams of a degree-  
Mom gave it up for me-  
But I look down to see-  
Two matching pairs of boots

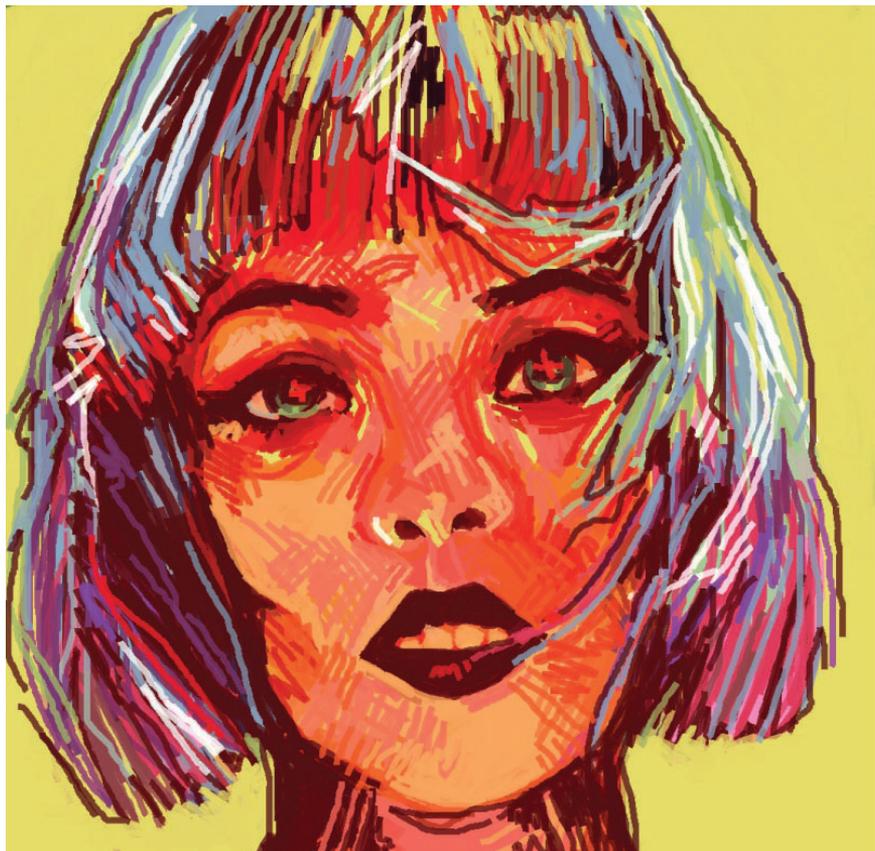
Remember I have two hands.

# CARBON DIOXIDE



*Emily LaMonica*

They don't tell you dry ice burns  
until the smoke rises from the bucket.  
At first, there's no pain - just a chill  
common to white January blankets.  
Then it drills into the nerve endings  
when you least expect it.  
The scald rushes in. Your cells die in droves.  
Frost hurts just as much as flame,  
but what's deceptive is the familiarity.  
Most aren't used to fire for more  
than a split second. They'll pull their  
hands from the stove at the first sign  
of heat, but cold is just  
a symptom of winter, right?  
The scars leave a reminder  
that numbness is not - never was -  
comfort.



**Alice**  
Jennifer Holland

# FLASHBACKS



*Jaclyn Dericks*

He reminds me of afternoon  
drives with my dad, too little  
to be sitting in the front seat.  
Windows down, fresh flower scent  
blissfully feeling the wind through my hair  
eyes shut  
fingers wrapped around the “Oh Shit” handle  
cause the car’s going just a  
little  
too fast  
around a corner  
during a rainstorm  
in the dark  
possibly, slightly...maybe totally intoxicated.  
Ah yes,  
that  
familiar feeling,  
and I still ask what time he’s picking me up.

# FRANK



Gunnar Hopson

*Fun Fact: On November 3rd, 2019, Godzilla turned 65. This day marked the anniversary of a franchise that has spanned 30 films released over half a century. It was a big deal to me.*

Ever since I can remember, I was obsessed with black and white movies released decades before I was born. I owe this to my Uncle Frank. My family was supportive of my obsession with monsters and horror, buying me stuffed animals or VHS tapes of the movies I craved so much, but it was Frank who I truly felt the most connected to through these movies.

Frank and I were close to the point where his daughter Elaina was often more like a sister to me than a cousin. He took me to my first real baseball game, a contributing factor to why I'm the only Yankee fan in my family. This meant a lot, as my other uncles were largely absent from my early childhood, with my Uncle George barely present my whole life and my Uncle Charlie all the way in Kentucky. Like me, Frank shared a love for movies, so we were close for obvious reasons. He introduced me to a lot of the creature features that I'm still fascinated by today. I especially loved the Universal Horror movies like Frankenstein, or my favorite, The Wolfman starring Lon Chaney Jr. I don't remember what came first: my love of monsters or Frank introducing me to them. It's something so ingrained into my being that I don't really question it.

*Fun Fact: Lon Chaney Jr. was the only actor to reprise his role as the Wolfman in every installment featuring the character.*

Aside from those Universal films, however, Godzilla holds an extra special place for me. I could probably tell you almost anything you would want to know about the character. I know factoids from Godzilla movies I haven't even seen. And the ones I have seen, I watched so many times that I could recite the lore from memory, even if it's been years. When I was younger, my favorite movie in the series was Godzilla vs. Destroyah, which has been emblazoned into my memory

as if the kaiju burned it right into my brain with atomic breath.

I owe this love to Frank, as well. For Christmas when I was 6 or 7, Frank got me a DVD box set of Godzilla movies. It doesn't sound like a big deal, but this would end up being one of the most important things in my childhood. I don't remember what year it was when he got me the box set. What I do remember is that around this time, Frank got sick. I didn't really understand it at the time. As an adult, I realize he had leukemia. I don't really remember how my parents handled the subject. I just remember he was in the hospital for a long time. And I remember missing him.

*A Not Fun Fact: Agent Orange was sprayed on 4.5 acres of forest in Vietnam. Veterans exposed to Agent Orange develop leukemia and Hodgkin's Lymphoma at a much higher rate than most. My uncle among them.*

Around the time Frank first got sick, I started to accumulate several plush toys. The one I had my eye on was a plush Gizmo from Gremlins that sang to you if you pressed a certain button on it. Frank got me this as an early Christmas present. He didn't give it to me in person; I think he was still in the hospital. I lost my mind when my parents gave it to me. They put me on the phone with Frank to thank him. Frank sounded happy I enjoyed the gift on the other end of the phone.

I didn't know that would be the last time I would speak to him.

He died sometime in February.

The last words you say to someone are important. A lot of people want to have a grandiose goodbye. It makes sense, because we like to feel satisfied in the last words we share with them. But I didn't know Frank was going to die after that phone call, I didn't know that that singing Gizmo would be the last Christmas present I would receive from him and I definitely didn't know that would be the last conversation I can remember having with him. The goodbye I gave him was the goodbye of someone who thinks they will see this person again. Even as I try to put my thoughts into words, I honestly don't really fully know how I feel about it. In a way, the conversation was fitting. The last conversation I had with my uncle was about a monster movie; the subject of most of our conversations. So, in a way, I'm kind of happy with that memory. I did not have some big, grandiose goodbye. But, the last words we exchanged were happy ones.

After Frank passed, I created my own traditions for the holidays. Other children

would watch the Santa Clause with Tim Allen, (which I also still watched), when I watched Godzilla movies every Christmas. Every year when I went to my grandparents' house for Christmas break, I would bring the box set Frank gave me, keeping it long after the box fell apart from overuse. I'd also bring my assortment of Godzilla and Gremlins plushies.

Over the years, I accumulated more stuff. More movies. More toys. And every year, I'd bring them all. I don't really know why I did this. They reminded me of Frank, I guess. It's kind of odd; I don't think I ever got to watch any of the movies with him. But it was something that I remembered him by. So, every year I brought those toys and watched those movies. After a certain point, I think I just saw it as a tradition. Or a compulsion. But when you really think about it, all traditions kind of are.

*Fun Fact: On November 4, 2019, Godzilla turned 65. I thought of Frank that day.*



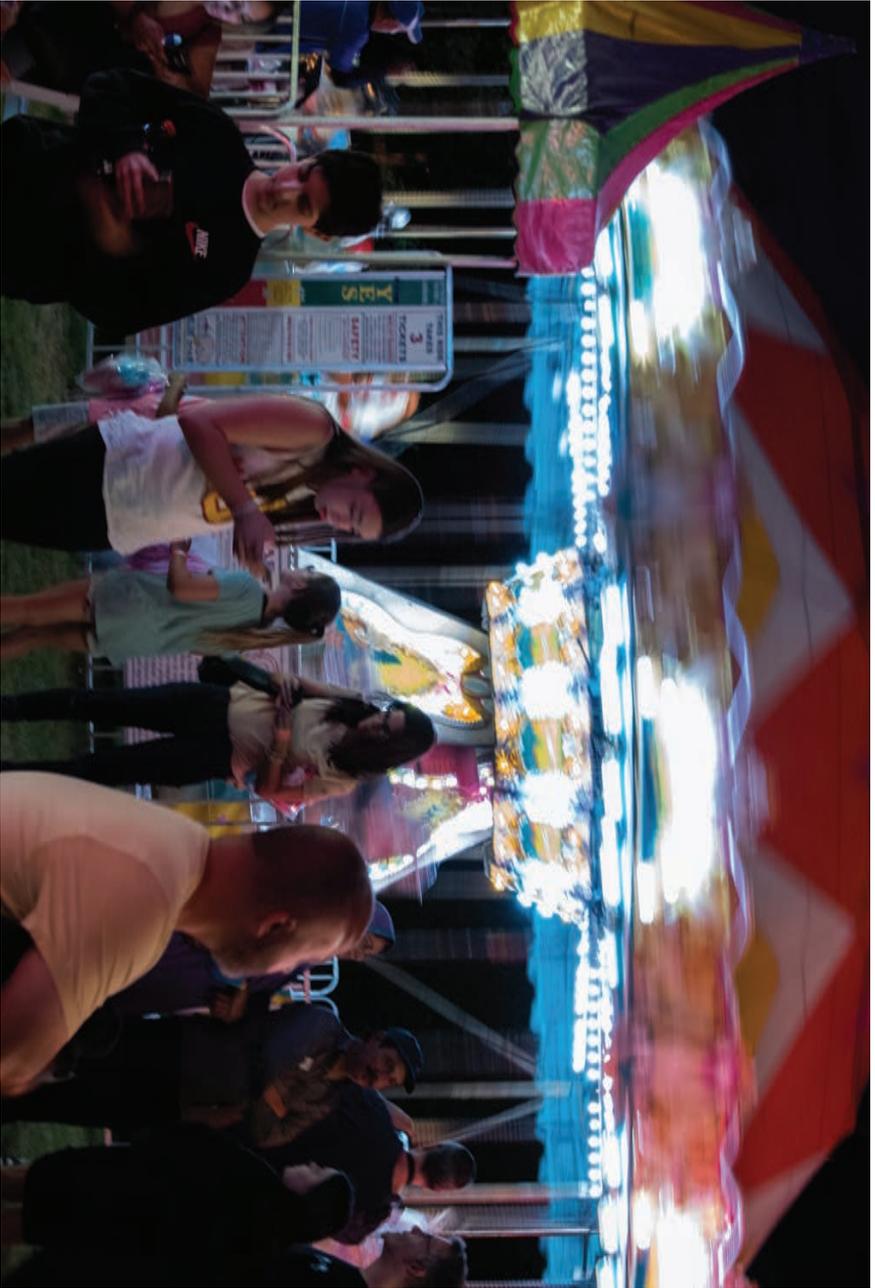
*Nature's Bliss*  
LeAnn Bauer

# THE LAST SNOWFALL IN HASBROUCK HEIGHTS

---

*Charlie Leppert*

When I wrecked my mother's car  
she extracted the cracked insignia  
from its ruined face, hid  
the remains in her dresser, turns  
them over in her hands  
when she thinks no one is watching.  
This year there was no turning.  
The leaves browned and fell before  
they could flame. The crocuses  
crop-up mid-January, confused  
pink heads push through wet  
earth, the seeking faces of children  
who once pressed their noses  
to frosted glass, waited.  
I tell the children stories of apples  
by the thousands, common  
as dandelions, you could take  
them straight from the trees  
so plentiful they were, more  
than we knew what to do with.  
In the kitchen, the grown ups drink  
what passes as coffee, whispers  
pass between us like scraps of paper  
across middle school aisles,  
worry soft as we can make it.  
On my mother's walls, photographs  
of me -- that is, the girl before me --  
her pink knees watch between  
pleats like vertical blinds. I  
understand better now the impulse  
to clutch what cannot be brought  
back from the dead.



*God Bless That Cell Phone ! - 5*

Lilly Junod

# FOR MYSELF



Natalie Tsur

I move my attention back to you:  
on my plate, you hide behind  
eggy eyes. On my desk,  
you sign your name with  
my handwriting. On my walks,  
you are morphed to a myrtle tree:  
remove arms, remove legs, remove  
all but long neck and head.  
You are buried deep into the roots  
of my Earth, replanting in forms of  
whatever you'd like.

I found a scarab beetle, though  
ugly and round with serrated limbs,  
looking nothing like you.  
I picked the battered wings off  
like crusted skin  
and held the dead thing  
under the fold of my tongue,  
hoping Khepri finds me and  
reverses the pain of our first goodbye,  
and plants new love.

That night I forced my head onto a pillow  
and dreamed of my short, naked body  
before a mirror. I see myself.  
I whisper, *I am beautiful.*  
I whisper, *I am in love.*



*Meli*

Jennifer Holland

# MI HOMBRE EL LEÓN / M.H.E.L.

---

*Christian Rizzo*

sus rugidos la canción  
él que está aquí todavía  
por aquí mi hombre el león  
su eco fuerte me sonría

golpe de cinturón  
y lo que me sentía  
rompió el corazón  
y se apagó el día

será locura decir  
que hemos acabado las  
cosas no puedes sentir  
pero no voy a decir más

//

his roars became the lion song  
of the man who is still here  
and here my lion man's echo  
is still calling me loudly

the whip of the leather belt  
that I felt as it hit me  
fractured the heart and it took  
the light from the brightest day

it would be nonsensical  
to say the things you never  
felt are today nonexistent  
so I will say no more

# THE DANDY BLIGHT



*Ludi Rucker*

The worst of the dryads,  
proud of her burls and full of beetles,  
grins fulsome at the bowing leaves  
and kneeling lichens, fading and  
uncertain, while resin weaves  
through fungus shelves onto her  
skeletal roots.

How thrilling!— A home  
rotting by her tongue, a wellspring of  
reluctant obedience to match her  
summer tears. Her mourning is done:  
“Rejoice! Be uprooted and prance.  
I am anew. See how I shed myself?”

The forest cannot argue.  
In worship of its detrite queen,  
the world unties its knotted limbs.  
How merry the unchallenged nymph,  
her sanctuary un-husked, re-grubbed,  
ruined, to flay her old initials off.

# 231 MILES



*Leanna Kucinski*

pinky promise—he said  
home safe in three weeks—

unpack bag—make space for me  
farewell to goodbye

standing for the train,  
'round the bend it comes

steals him away—  
left alone with a promise.



**God Bless That Cell Phone ! - 3**

Lilly Junod

# BLUEBERRY PIE



*Jessica Ryan*

Sometimes on rainy days in the fall, when the sky was dreary and the house was cold, Mama would warm it by baking one of her famous pies. The kind with a flaky crust and sweet blueberry filling that would leave your fingers all messy. When Mama died I thought that I'd never taste that pie again. Yet here I was, sitting at Penny Stewart's dining room table eating a pie that tasted just like my Mama's, right down to the sticky sweet filling. Maybe it was my imagination, or maybe I was crazy, but that pie tasted like home.

That was the moment I think I realized that I should marry Penny Stewart.

I was 17 years old, then. I look back on that day now and I know what a fool I was, to think that a girl like Penny Stewart would ever marry a poor boy like me. I thought I was a fool then, too. That's why as soon as I finished that pie and thanked that girl for making it for me, I rushed out with the excuse that I had chores waiting for me at home.

When high school ended, I got a job at the grocery store stocking medicine shelves, and Penny went off to college in New York. I saw her at the train station the day that she left, and I can still remember it like yesterday all these years later. The air was dry and the sun was hot, beating down on the two of us as we stood by the doors of the train car. The smell of steam and burning coals and her lavender perfume is burned into my mind. She wore a pair of brown trousers and a blue blouse, her honey-brown hair tucked neatly behind her ears. Loose strands blew into her face on occasion, and she kept having to push her hair out of her eyes so that she could see. She told me before she got on the train to take care of myself, and she lingered there for a while like she wanted me to kiss her. But I didn't, because I was just a farm boy and she was so much more than me. She was Penny.

So I wished her good luck and I waved to her as she boarded the train. She waved back to me as it began to pull out of the station, metal wheels screeching against

the tracks. There was a shimmer in her bright blue eyes that almost looked like tears as her car pulled away, but I knew that it was just a trick of the light. She was off to bigger and better things than our small town could ever afford for her.

She often wrote to me from college. Long letters about her adventures in the city, the people that she met, how much she loved it in her new home. She always talked about how she missed Kansas; how every now and then she just wanted to get back on the train and come home. Sometimes it seemed like she was saying in her letters how much she missed me, and how much she wanted to come home to me. But I knew that couldn't be true. I knew that a poor farm boy like me could never give her the life she wanted, or the one that she deserved.

So, when my daddy told me that it was time for me to find a wife and start my own family, Penny Stewart didn't even come to mind. What was the point in even thinking about it, with her being the woman she was and me being me. I started dating the butcher's daughter, Martha Golden. Six months later I proposed to her, and then we were married.

All of that was twenty years ago. I try not to think about Penny anymore, or that damn blueberry pie. I know that she made it big somewhere, probably married a banker and lives in a big old house with her children now. She probably bakes pies for them too, and I reckon they love it just as much as I used to. And I know that it's better this way, that I never could have given her the life she really deserved.

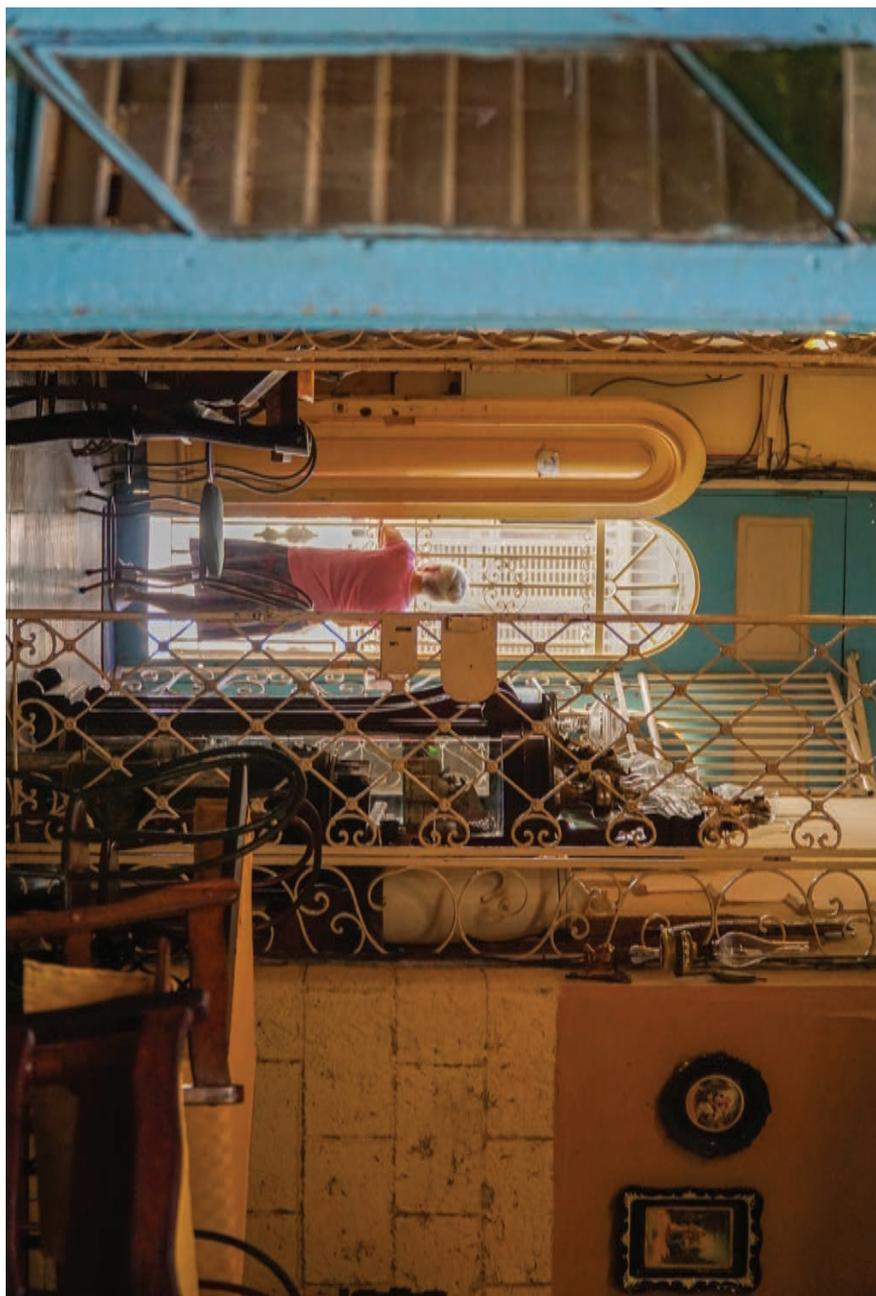
The screen door creaks open, and I look up to see Martha standing there wearing her faded blue apron around her waist. There's half a cigarette hanging from her lips. She plucks the bud from her mouth, blowing smoke into the wind as she squints at me.

"What are you thinking about?" She asks. I shrug, not looking towards her as I answer.

"Blueberry pie."

Martha laughs. "Always the same answer from you. Thinkin' about blueberry pie. You must really love it."

I smile fondly, and I turn my head to look at my wife. "You're right. I really do.



*You See What You Look For - Lady*  
Almerry Martins

# SOMETIMES



*Constance Marion*

sometimes My body isn't Mine.  
I'm forced out,  
or leave by choice,  
and then I'm watching what happens,  
to not-My body,  
from behind a thin grey veil,  
which I only really notice  
when My mind moves faster than  
not-My body.  
it flutters around My periphery  
like a muslin curtain disturbed by  
an unseen force,  
indifferent to the terror of its lone observer  
at noting the closed window.  
some time later  
I re-emerge.  
I know all that happened to This body,  
saw it and felt it and maybe even  
screamed,  
but I wasn't here to stop it.  
I was moving and speaking  
through not-My body,  
but I was far away,  
watching,  
coming up with the perfect comeback only  
moments or  
days or  
years later,  
after I have relieved it endlessly,  
both the way it ought and the way it truly was.

I know that dwelling only makes it worse,  
but I can't control where I go.  
sometimes My mind isn't Mine either.

# AFRODITE

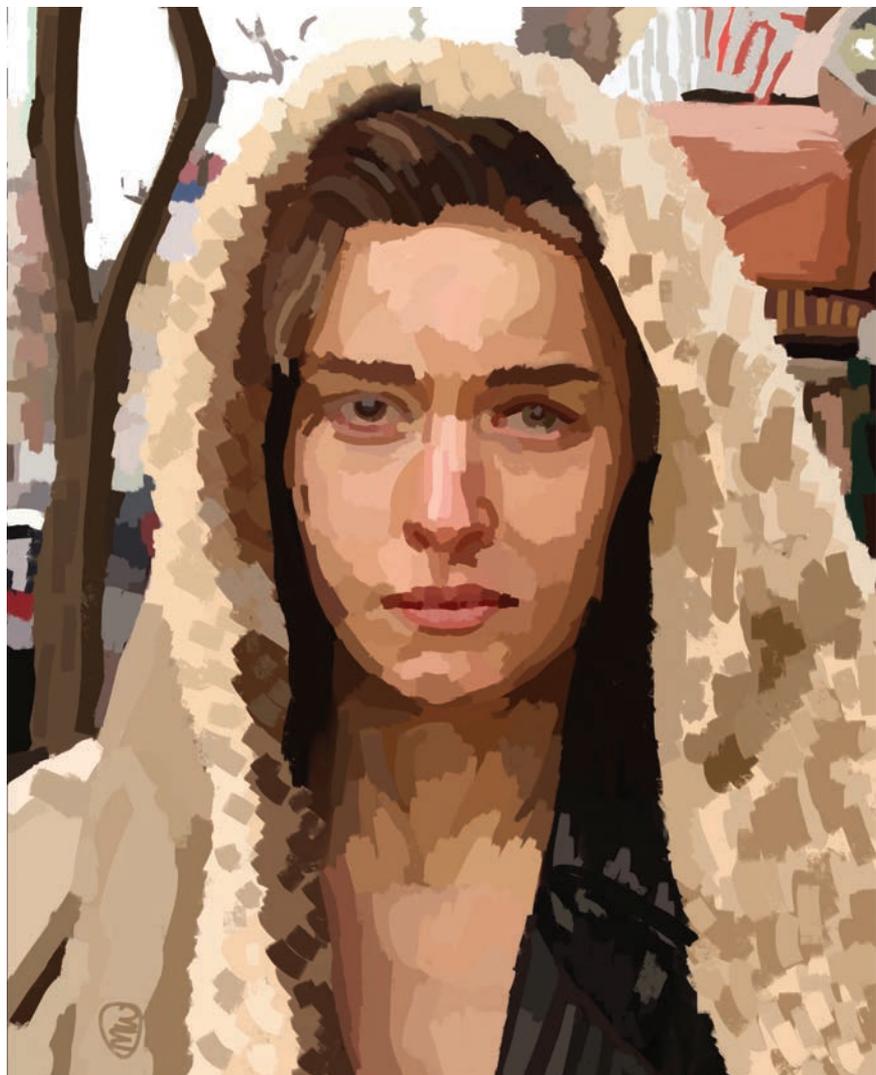


*Kyila Sivers*

I was born without permission  
Without regard  
For what should or should not be  
Sea foam  
Clung to my body as I rose  
Round hips and thighs  
Delicate yet muscular  
Bubbles glistened on my skin  
Dark chocolate in its purest form  
Striking against the cerulean ocean  
A geyser of onyx erupted from my scalp  
Framing my heart shaped face  
defying all manner of gravity  
Every man and God cowered in my shadow

When you think of me  
you imagine yourself breaking.  
I give you a reason  
to wake up in the morning  
or never wake up again.  
Countless nights I've made war dive  
Down on his knees  
Countless nights I've made him rise  
I am the honey gold cup  
raised at Modryth and Offa's wedding  
The match that sparks the special gleam in his eye

I am the mother of Medea's rage  
I defy all barriers  
distance, time, and age.



*Cold*  
Megan Woods

# ELSEWHERE



*Katie McGee*

He claims this place is a hell  
that left him alone,  
trapped him up in a life pushing kilos,  
and sent him to Rikers Island  
for two years time.

Lucky for him,  
he doesn't need to feel accountable,  
because when his head hits the pillow,  
he's transported elsewhere –  
heaven, perhaps. His heaven.  
Wherein he lives up to the potential  
his father saw in him at age 17.

He proclaims that in death  
he'll return to his rightful place  
back in high school,  
no conscience, no responsibility.  
And if any such mercy in heaven exists,  
he won't remember a thing about me.

# {TO SEE SAPPHO}



*Rebecca Patuto*

I am in a museum, bleak white floors stretching for miles beneath my feet  
I gaze at the bust propped on a pedestal, towering above me  
    {of all stars the most beautiful}

My eyes trace the straight line of her nose  
    the lock of hair curled by her ear  
        the roundness of her eyes

and I know her.

I am on a bench by the lake, comforted by the brush of orange and rust red leaves  
tumbling across the wooden ground in the slight autumn breeze  
    [as the sweetapple reddens on a high branch]

I open the book and look round at my surroundings before falling into the  
printed words

The words bubble up off the page, the ancient Greek writing mingled with  
English

    I don't pretend to understand the Greek

But I can hear her speak

    [girl sweetvoiced]

across the oceans, across the millennia

and I am seen

I'm with a girl, watching the way the sunlight swims in her eyes and glides  
through her hair

    and how her freckles scatter themselves down her arm  
        and the scrunch of her nose when she laughs

and I think of her, too

    {sweet mother, I cannot weave -

        slender Aphrodite has overcome me with longing for a girl}

and I know her.

and I am seen.

and I feel her love echoing back across the years.

to know we have existed as long as love has existed

I cannot ask for more.



*Chillin*  
Megan Woods

# RESILIENCE



*Allison Higgins*

The hue of the green leaves are stolen by the navy night and its Moon commander.

And I ask, "Why must you do this? Why must you strip the trees of their vitality? Diminish them to nothingness for hours at a time?"

The Moon boasted, "Because I can. And I will. It is not a crime."

So the Moon continued stealing the soul of the trees through his navy night cronies. And my heart became dispirited.

But the trees will bounce back. They will adapt. And maybe one day they will become so vibrant that they stand out in the dead of night.

While this Earth is sleeping, a family of stars starts on their shenanigans again—poking and prodding into the minds of the unsure; the minds of the insignificant.

And I ask, "Why must you do this? Why must you antagonize the insomniacs? Make us question our choices through your luster?"

The stars collectively whined, "Because we can. And we will. Stop being flustered."

So the stars continued tormenting though their luminescent cries. And my heart saddened.

But soon we will sleep. We will dream. And maybe one day it will be so beautiful that we resist their calls.

By the time breakfast comes, and the pancakes are eroding in our bellies, this night could be forgotten.

A dream that clutches to you in the morning. One in which you don't want to wake up from. But once the light hits your pupils, and the shades of green radiate off the leaves, its clandestine message is seized.

Bound to the trees and the Earth, breakfast and the stars, for their grievous, insatiable ways of taking.

# SWEET ENOUGH



*Erin Schwarz*

I painted my nails  
With licorice  
And curled my hair  
With peppermint sticks  
I powdered my face  
With confectioners' sugar  
But I still  
Wasn't sweet  
enough

'Sour'  
He had called me  
Sour  
leaves a bad taste in your mouth  
He wanted  
Sweet  
I wasn't sweet  
Enough

I slit my silk  
Skinned wrists  
With sugar shards  
And twisted  
My twizzler veins

My blood  
Molasses  
That I offered to him  
In a glass  
With a bendy straw  
Am I sweet enough now?

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Trillium magazine staff would like to recognize the impact that the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has caused in the creation of the 2020-2021 issue. The majority of the design work presented was done remotely by our staff members, who were able to communicate digitally during a time of strict social distancing.

Despite the unexpected obstacles, our staff members worked extremely hard to produce a literary magazine that not only showcases the talent of Ramapo students, but it displays the strength and perseverance of hard workers in our community.



# TRILLIUM 2020-2021

## SUBMISSION WINNERS

### POETRY

*{To See Sappho}*

Rebecca Patuto

*Page 55*

### PROSE

*Frank*

Gunnar Hopson

*Page 35*

### ARTWORK

*Chillin*

Megan Woods

*Page 56*

### PHOTOGRAPHY

*You See What You Look For - Landscapes*

Almerry Martins

*Page 22*

# CONTRIBUTOR'S NOTES

## **Tori D'Amico**

Tori D'Amico is a sophomore journalism major with a minor in creative writing. She works as the News Editor at the Ramapo News, but outside her reporting she writes poetry. Tori self-published her first collection of poetry last September, "Signs of Growth."

## **Allison Higgins**

Allison Higgins is a freshman communications major with a concentration in digital filmmaking. From a young age she loved to write and create stories. She hopes to become a published author and screenwriter in the future.

## **Erin Schwarz**

Erin Schwarz is a junior literature major with a concentration in secondary education. While reading literature is a passion of hers, she also enjoys writing her own stories and poems.

## **Arthur Grole**

Arthur Grole is a sophomore Computer Science major with a fondness for others playing orchestral music, especially pink oboes. He is passionate about synchronized swimming, in which he competes in the singles category. To prepare for writing this, he thought he'd read Shakespeare but didn't as Shakespeare never reads his.

## **Kylia Sivers**

Is a student at Ramapo College.

## **Amy Kwiatek**

Amy Kwiatek is a senior studying Global Communication and is supposed to graduate this semester. She has an Associates degree in Creative Writing, and hopes to get a job in publishing or editorial work.

## **Gunnar Hopson**

Is a student at Ramapo College.

## **Christian Rizzo**

Christian is a senior Spanish Language Studies major. He originally wrote this poem for an assignment in one of his classes. The positive response he received encouraged him to submit it to Trillium. After graduating, he hopes to continue writing as much as possible, in whichever language!

# CONTRIBUTOR'S NOTES

## **Leanna Kucinski**

Leanna Kucinski defines herself as “a work in progress.” Every day she learns something new about people, literature, and her own work. She is at the beginning of her writing and nervous to discover her place in the world of literature.

## **Sara Gustaven**

Sara Gustavsen is a junior literature major with a creative writing concentration. In addition to reading and writing, she also enjoys playing guitar and ukulele, making art, hiking, and cooking. She is grateful to the RCNJ community for encouraging her to be more comfortable sharing her work with others.

## **Emily LaMonica**

Emily LaMonica is a biochemistry major and literature minor graduating in 2020. She is happy to serve as the treasurer of Literature Club and would like to send her love to the club members, her friends, and her amazing partner.

## **Ludi Rocker**

Ludi Rocker is a senior majoring in Literature, concentrating in Creative Writing, and minoring in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. She is a proud member of Ramapo's Literature Club and is the polar opposite of her evil twin featured in earlier editions of Trillium. She's the cooler one, for sure.

## **Rebecca Patuto**

Rebecca Patuto is a Gender Studies contract major from Clinton Township. She hopes to one day pursue a career focused on LGBTQ activism. She's been writing as long as she's been able, and in her free time also enjoys playing the guitar, hiking with her dog, and listening to podcasts.

## **Charlie Leppert**

Is a student at Ramapo College.

## **Lilly Junod**

Lilly Junod is a second year Photography student at Ramapo College. She loves all forms of visual and performing art, especially photography, dance, and singing. She is very excited to have some of her photos featured in this years edition of Trillium!

# CONTRIBUTOR'S NOTES

## **LeAnn Bauer**

LeAnn Bauer is a senior marketing major/accounting minor student here at Ramapo College.

## **Katie McGee**

Katie McGee is a senior at Ramapo College, with a major in Literature and a minor in Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies.

## **Almerry Martins**

Almerry Martins is a multi medium artist intrigued by the genesis and evolution of all art. To view more of his photography you can visit @lagaleriedesarts.

## **Jennifer Holland**

Jennifer Holland is a freshman and majors in Visual Arts and Animation. Jennifer has loved art all her life and would not be the same person today without it. More of her work is available on her Instagram @n0cca

## **Charlene Carreon**

Charlene Carreon is a nursing major with a long time passion for creative writing. Though she is not pursuing creative writing as her primary career, writing brings her lots of joy.

## **Megan Woods**

Megan Woods is a sophomore English and animation double major. She recently transferred to Ramapo, so this is currently her first semester attending the college. She tries to spend her free time reading, writing, and creating art, and she has the coolest dog (Finn).

## **Tyler Jordan**

Tyler Jordan is a senior business student at RCNJ. He majors in business administration with a concentration in finance.

## **Jaclyn Derrick**

Jaclyn Derrick is a fourth year student at RCNJ hoping to graduate in the fall of 2020. She is a liberal studies major taking courses in environmental studies and sociology and minoring in literature. She began writing poetry when she got to Ramapo and has enjoyed doing it ever since.



