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TROY HIGH ORACLE | LITERARY MAGAZINE | 22 JANUARY 2016

*Dedicated to the teachers and staff,  
who foster our creativity and our imaginations.*

*The Oracle would like to thank all of the  
contributors to this year's literary magazine.*

**LIT MAG TEAM**

*Leanne Ho  
Sarah Lee  
Adrika Chakraborty  
Sarah Kremer  
Kyle Patel  
Yannie Hoang  
Adrija Chakraborty  
Nicole Kuntjoro  
Yuri Ceriale  
Angie Won*

**COVER ART BY**

*Katrina Chen  
Alex Vazquez*

## That Night

▼ Kelly Chen, junior

Within the shrouds of the night, the girl ran.

What she was running from was trivial at the moment, a faint memory amongst the shining terror blinding her thoughts. The dark, looming shadows reminded her of other shadows-- the ones lurking in her mind, dark memories from her past, from then...

It started as a normal day. Her father was being civil; her mother, gentle as always. The three of them had a picnic for brunch. They had fun in the woods near their home; she had played soccer with her father. Then they had spent a quiet afternoon reading. Her mother had been baking something in the kitchen. All seemed well; but all was not.

At dinner, her father frowned at a small piece of overcooked meat. Then the arguments began, a routine now in their lives. The girl ate on in silence as her parents began with civil criticism, which led to harsh invectives, then full-out screaming and yelling. Silently, the girl excused herself and went into her room to play with her dolls. The yelling became white noise in her mind- the hard, harsh, violent voices- fading into static normalcy.

"I'm used to this." The girl bravely told her white bunny doll. The doll gazed back with impassive eyes. "No, really," she tried to reassure her inanimate friend, "I'm perfectly fine. I can handle this."

Suddenly, there was a change in the atmosphere. A single scream sliced through the peace of the yelling, and a silence worse than the white noise followed. Slowly, cautiously, the little girl stood and headed downstairs.

"...please get an ambulance here as quickly as possible. My wife had an accident and now she's bleeding. God, she's bleeding. Please, help..."

The living room where the girl had enjoyed a nice novel that evening-- Sense and Sensibility-- was red. Red, everywhere; the carpet was red; her motionless

mother on the ground was red; the knife on the ground was red; the walls were red; her father's eyes were red. Red.

"Darling, I'm so sorry..."

The girl silenced her father in her mind, turned tail and ran. Ran through the darkness of the night, her life-- she ran for dear life.

She didn't know how long she had been running-- for minutes, hours, or days-- but finally she fell face first onto the ground and got a mouthful of dirt. She remained prostrate-- shoulders shaking, heart pumping-- before turning around on the dead leaves, and gazed up at the bright moon above her.

"It's over." A voice seemed to whisper.

No, it's not.

"Go home."

No, she can't.

"Family first."

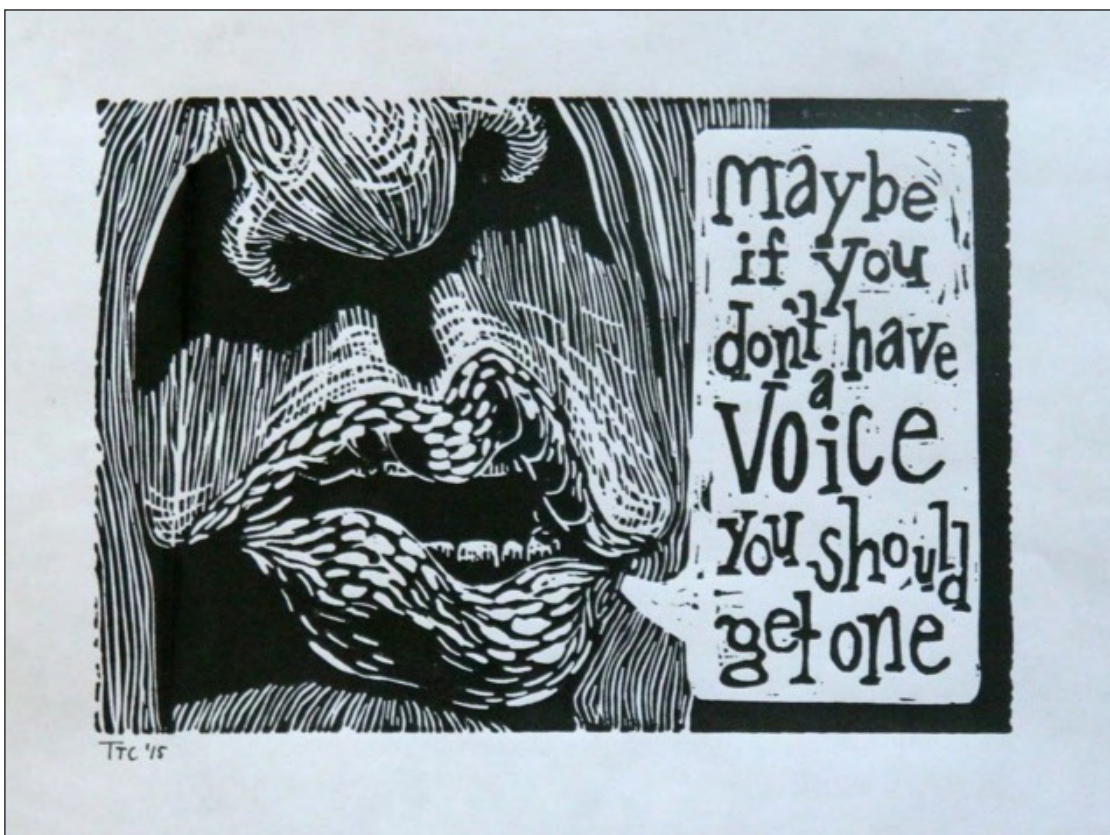
Her mother had drilled that into her mind when she was young. Her mother was dead, or close to death. Her heart squeezed and seemed to be shrinking in size, causing her immeasurable pain. She tightly squeezed her eyes shut and held her breath, trying to keep it all in-- but it was no use.

Silent tears finally cascaded from the corners of her eyes, and she released a slow, ragged breath. She could not make noise even if she wanted to; her voice had long since been silenced by her circumstances. For too long, she had faked a happy smile for friends and relatives; for too long, she had been forced to finish homework to the faint cacophony of screeches and yells that drifted up from downstairs; for too long, she had overlooked the wounds that appeared on her mother's body-- a bruise on her forehead, scars on her arms-- that were easily covered with hair or clothing. Fifteen years was simply too long.

In her anguish, she did not notice the trees that stood around, whispering to each other about this miserable girl lying in their midst. Some

clouds heard the rumor and slowly drifted in front of the moon, as if to see what was the matter. An owl continuously asked "Who? Who? Who?"

The girl did not care for their curiosity. She just laid there in the dark and cried herself to sleep.



▲ Teegan Carthew, senior



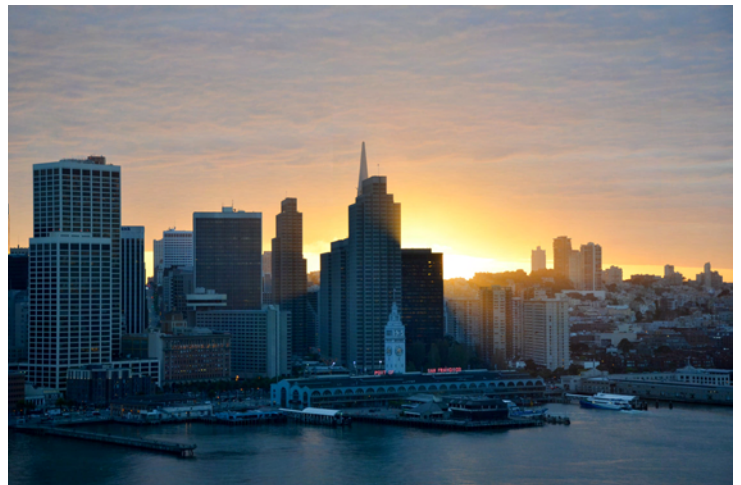
▲ *Guilherme Jurgensen, senior*

**the new new colossus (or, street talk with no angels).**

▼ *Yujane Chen, senior*

THE CITY:

take these people, these hissing and singing dialects of an apartment building, these yelling neighbors on a Sunday morning, these faded Lakers jerseys tossed in the back of a bus, these bright eyes, small hands of a UCLA dreamer, these nine white letters on a hill that spell silver screen love, these seventeen-minute-late Amtrak trains that shoot and whistle against the backdrop of commuters waiting their way out of faith, these humming street-lights on every corner, these chipped pieces of asphalt scrawled over in cracked pavement stories, these spray paint walls that are realer than any museum on Miracle Mile, these flat tires leaned up and deflated against a handful of broken glass bottle dreams, these laughing babies that wear streaks of soot like fairy dust, these drifting plastic bag whispers that swirl around bottle cap alleys on a prayer and two nickels, these honking cars piling up into a never ending boulevard of urban wasteland, these huddled throngs of souls in the city without one, these grimy buildings



▲ *Kevin Kuntjoro, senior*



▲ **Of Flowers and Lies.** *Janine Zhu, junior*

and streets that sing and rattle and explode with a rainbow of sounds  
in this city

this city

city

city

and swallow up every last one of these, still alive but barely breathing,  
lifting reflecting rear window mirrors and lit lock screens and  
whirring incandescent stoplights against the golden coast.

ME:

can I, may I

just have one moment where I'll stand at the center of seven intersections and on top of thirteen skyscrapers all at once, taking in the sights and the sounds until the pulse of the city stops suffocating  
glinting crashing breaking shattering, starts breathing glowing living  
beating beating living, and becomes

me?

## ▼ Anonymous

LA you are sprawling Hollywood woman on her back, legs wide open  
 LA your wavy locks are always in the sky, how else do you let all those  
 little men drive up and down your thighs LA you are golden girl eyes  
 shut mouth glum like you are expecting something that will never come



▲ Guilherme Jurgensen, senior



▲ The Magician. Chiara Dane Villanueva, junior



▲ Love Me Right. Sydney Trinh, senior

## ▼ Anonymous

Your body is a foreign language  
 my tongue unfamiliar with all your crevices  
 your body is gold shining  
 so bright my eyes melt away as they alight  
 on your's but baby you are dangerous  
 I bet you hide needles underneath all that skin or why else  
 would they stand end on end  
 when it gets cold  
 when I touch you  
 ?  
 Honey,  
 you warm me up like a smokin' gun  
 and when I see you my pulse  
 runs and runs  
 wild like an animal out of its rib-cage  
 lungs heaving, these bones can't contain me no more  
 Baby, you define this dust into a glowing lust and I can't  
 stop-

Bleary, I am bleary  
 Sprinting through fog in my head weary  
 Dry runs through my blood  
 Can you help me forget?  
 and maybe,  
 I'll fall in love with you again



## The Phoenix

▼ *Alisha Sehgal, sophomore*

The bird lifted itself into the air.  
Its wings flapped, but nobody knew to where.  
Its gentle manner took away at last,  
And the journey was long but it travelled fast.

The flight found a new meaning,  
Only to find it as a new beginning.  
The travel although harder is endured,  
Any problems along the way cured.

Once again in the flames the bird goes,  
Ending a successful adventure as it glows.  
Then out of its very own ashes,  
Reborn it rises and to another journey it dashes.

◀ *Teegan Carthew, senior*

## Mirrors

▼ *Katherine Truong, senior*

I hate her. I hate her so much. She stares at me silently like a dumb animal. It takes all my self-control not to snort in disgust.

For years, I've tried to find something redeeming in her. Anything. Something that set her apart, something that made her unique, or at least normal. But after fifteen years, I've found nothing.

I look into her mud brown eyes. They're sunken with dark rings around them. They look like the eyes of someone who hasn't slept in days. She truly looks like a psychopath.

"You're worthless," I spit.

She doesn't say anything.

Finally, my anger explodes and I lash out. I slam my fist into her wide eyed face. She doesn't have time to react. The glass gives a loud crack. I jump back in pain, grabbing my hand. It's bleeding.

I regret losing my temper, but I can't help but feel a tiny bit of satisfaction looking at my enemy. She's taken some damage. Her face is distorted and cracked. A mixture of eyes, noses, and mouths repeating in a hideous pattern.

"You actually look better this way," I snort.

I walk out of the bathroom feeling somewhat pleased. However, the pleasure quickly fades when I see her following me.



▲ *Bloody Kai. Sydney Trinh, senior*

## The Paper and the Crane

▼ Jenny Ji, freshman

They are one, yet with separate identities.  
Different cravings, different dreams

The paper believes:  
Once before, I could soar.  
But now with wings, I plummet to the ground.

The crane thinks:  
Fold and creases, all the same.  
For once I become a crane, people would praise.

The paper yearns:  
I watch the earth, suspended from the ceiling.  
Memories plaguing, laughter haunting.

The crane learns:  
A piece of paper, a piece of trash.  
At least there would be hesitation to crush a crane.

The one mind battles back and forth.  
Now tell me please, if you can.  
Am I the paper or the crane?

▼ Koi. Sydney Trinh, senior



▼ Sugar Plum. Bernice Wang, sophomore

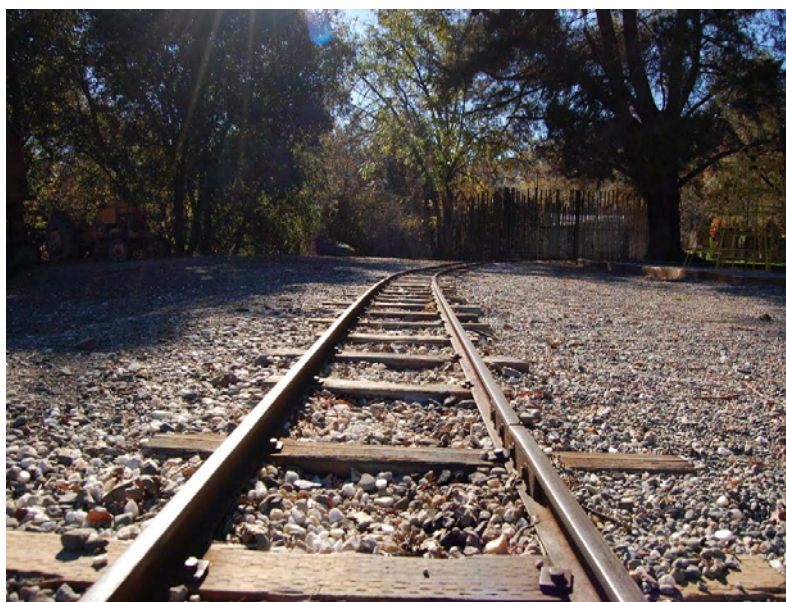


## Being Different Explained (with a Pile of Cookies)

Tom Powers, sophomore ▼

Little John wanted to make some sugar cookies for his birthday, so he asked his mom if they had any cookie cutters. When he was shown the cookie cutters, the circle, square, and triangle, he frowned, and asked his mom, "Are these the only ones we have?" His mom, understanding the situation, simply replied, "Yes, but not all shapes are accounted for. Most of the time, a lot of people are happy with these simple shapes. Though sometimes, it's those that are out of the ordinary in shape that make the best shapes."

If you want to, why don't we make our own cookie cutter?" So, with some clay wrapped in tinfoil, a new cookie cutter was molded, and little John, proud of his new cutter, enjoyed his fresh J-shaped cookies.



Loraine Ho, sophomore ▲



▲ **Walking In the Stars.** *Bernice Wang, sophomore*

## Being Fictional

▼ *Anonymous*

I'm sitting in a metaphorical coffee shop sipping  
not-metaphorical tea, wavery light casting  
metaphorical-like  
shadows into my eyes, fingertips burning with  
metaphorical  
heat seeping through the cup while I contemplate and  
consider the  
metaphorical  
you  
sitting across the table with a wobbly tilt to your head,  
peering through  
respective glasses into closed windows with  
sheer curtains drawn tight under  
dark eyelashes, except  
you  
are not really metaphorical,  
I just like to think you are  
or maybe you actually are and  
the heat scorching my hands is  
just creating steam and  
mirages and  
maybe metaphorical things have no business  
taking up table space in my little corner of the  
coffee shop.

## Screaming Color

▼ *Anonymous*

you are  
RED. attractive, spIrited, and full of  
bad jokes  
ORANGE. awkwaRd, intelligent,  
witty and comical  
YELLOW. fatherly, bright, albeIt gruff and  
difficult to approach  
GREEN. a nurturer of growth,  
strict but experienceD  
BLUE. sweet, friEndly, with  
playful jests and knowing, wise eyes  
INDIGO. lively, sharp with  
sarCastic remarks and dark humor  
VIOLET. patient and kind,  
bottlEd with surprises

you are each  
a colorful aspect of Troy High  
painting a rising generation's possibilities  
vibrant, unique, special

you are all  
\_ \_ \_ \_ S \_ \_ N \_  
and beautiful.

~Anonymous

(IRIDESCENT)

Fall. *Michelle Guo, senior* ▼





▲ Japanese Cherry Blossoms. Kevin Kuntjoro, senior



▲ Waterfall. Kevin Kuntjoro, senior

## Invisible Tattoo

▼ *Manon Andre de St. Amant, senior*

I traced a memory of your birthmark  
Into the skin above my chest.  
I memorized it; canonized it,  
Dreamed it, loved it, lived it.

I disappeared into your eyes  
And evaporated in your arms  
That held me only when I begged them to.

I asked you so many questions  
That I forgot everything but the tone  
Of your voice when you answered them.

I made you laugh so many times  
That I didn't care that you were laughing at  
my expense;  
I took my guard down, drained the moat  
And told you how to take apart my weapons  
of defense.

I opened every door, and lead you down the  
halls,  
I showed you to the attic stairs,  
And gave you my spare key.  
I begged you not to open it  
But I would let you if you tried to see.

I opened every treasure  
I had in my soul to give.  
I cared not if you emptied me,  
Because I loved you as I live:

And like every lover, all my soul  
Is fashioned like a sieve--  
Forgetting every memory  
But the pieces that you give.

## How You Lose Her

▼ *Yujane Chen, senior*

She comes from a family of quick goodbyes.

Three hours before her flight, she tosses mismatched socks and unfolded clothes into a suitcase flung wide open. Used paperbacks lie strewn across the floor: Barbara Kingsolver, Haruki Murakami, Junot Diaz.

You watch her pack frantically from behind the door because you know that no matter how many times you offer to help, she will turn you down, and you must leave her be.

*Don't go, you think. I'm someone, too. I'm here.*

It pains you to see that she has to leave. And you must stay.

You want to tell her so badly that even though you're here, and she's there, and even though there are thousands and thousands of miles of telephone poles and bad Skype connections between you, there will be nothing that can really keep you apart—but when it's now, when she's still here, there are no words to be said.

You have her number on speed dial. You watch your fingers throb, then still, then stop hovering over the digits.

You want to tell her that it's okay that it's not okay. That you don't know if it'll be okay in the end.

You want to say *I love you*. She knows it already, as do you.

The car ride to the airport is silent.

She never opens her arms for a hug, never turns her cheek for a kiss. She isn't easy to love. But you do.

Right as she turns and leaves, you just think to yourself:

*Forget Junot Diaz. This—this is how you lose her.*

## Two Minute Meditation

▼ Yujane Chen, senior

We are human.

We feel, we breathe. We live.

We are inhalations and exhalations, contemplations and meditations. We don't know and can't know everything in the world, which scares us to no end. We are haunted by ghosts and fears of judgement, failure, loneliness, nihilism. We are, we are, we are.

We exist. We love, we worry, we fear. We all feel too much sometimes. When people ask, "How are you?" we sometimes lie and say, "Good." We carry the weight of the world on our shoulders and don't always tell the truth about how we feel. We are so anxious to figure out how the story begins and ends that we forget how beautiful it all is in the middle.

What we don't always realize is that we are human beings who all feel the same things in the same way. We know some things instinctively: the warmth of a child's smile, the soft crinkle of laughter, the slow ache of waiting for an arrival. We know what it feels like to have our backs stabbed, our hearts broken, our heads stuck in the clouds. We open our fists like flowers and untie our tongues and let silence roar over us in waves. We step into our shoes each day with lungs of steel from breathing in spoonfuls of air and live through our doubts and uncertainties until they become clear.

We are people. We are elbows and shoulders to lean on, whispered good mornings, passersby at a subway station. We are texts throughout the day, spaces at tables, and gentle hand squeezes before a departure. We are students and bankers and lab technicians and street sweepers. We are nurses and teachers and gardeners and poets and dreamers.

We are here. We are trying. We are still here. We are going to school and going to work and forgiving ourselves for losing our homework, our keys, or forgetting to call the doctor's office. We are eating avocados with eggs for breakfast and planting flowers and checking out books from the library. We are humming quietly with our eyes closed to the songs stuck in our heads. We are taking walks on the weekends and listening to each other on the phone and talking, really talking, to each other more often.

We are learning that maybe there's a meaning to all this or maybe there's not, but no matter what we believe, this is going to be good. We are learning to more than just say that we're good. We are learning to be good, and on the days when we don't feel that we are, we're learning to be honest with ourselves. We are learning to be unafraid.

We know a few things: Today is good. Tomorrow will be good.

We're going to be good.



▲ Blood Moon. Sydney Trinh, senior

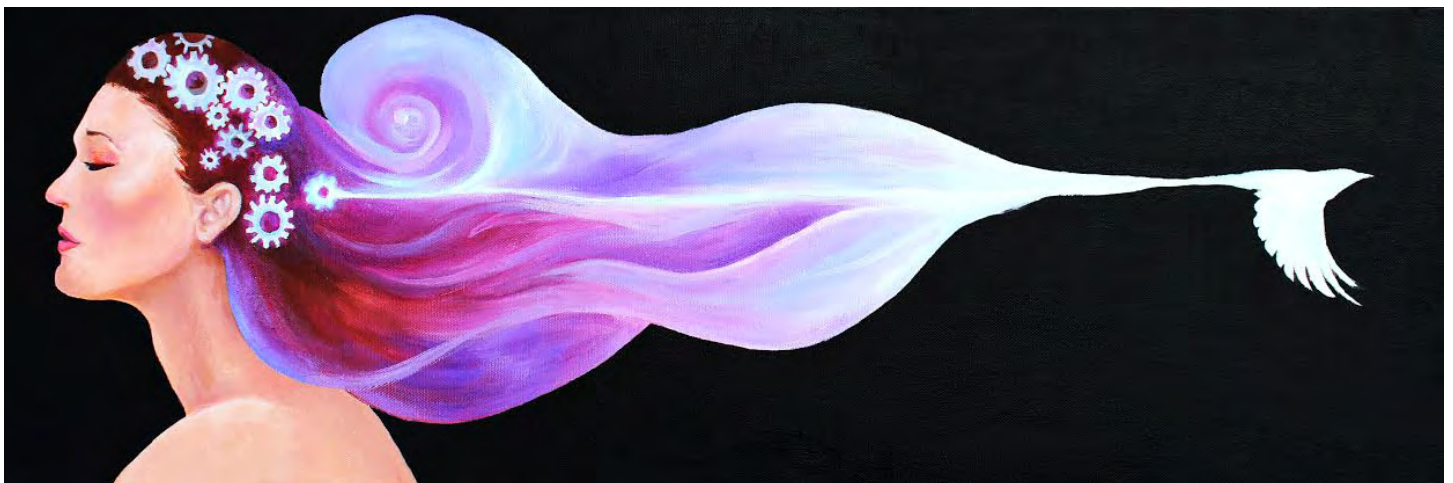
▼ Anonymous

Sometimes I feel the quickening like a stolen horse  
(Except horses are never stolen, at least in my head they aren't, because it reassures me to believe that no one ever owns them in the first place)

I make my lungs move as the breeze makes the trees collapse, then heave

(And the leaves at the edges of these branches twinkle as if everything is forgiven and forgotten, as if we are not wretched and we are still so deserving of love or a second chance from something, somewhere, or so I'd like to think, sometimes)

▼ Janine Zhu, junior



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- Stanford University
- Honorary Alumni, Management Science
- Korea University - Business Major
- 2006 Edyth May Sliffe National Award
- MAA (Mathematical Assoc. of America)

### Miki Kwon, Esq.

- U.C. Berkeley - B.A. in English
- J.D. (Juris Doctor) - Attorney At Law
- American Bar Association Member
- California Bar Association Member
- Full I.B. Diploma-Henry Foss H.S.
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photo by Justin Park



▼ Floor 73. Marvin Paguio, senior

## Leaving the Pond

▼ Justin Chang, junior

Swimming past the borders  
Leaving the pond  
No more school of fish to play with  
No more seeing, only remembering  
Swimming

Swimming through the rivers  
Exploring new places  
Meeting new fish  
Relaxing through the calm  
Unaware of what's ahead  
Swimming

Swimming past the rocks  
The sharp, darting turns  
Faster the water advances  
Faster the rocks come  
Alone and without help  
Panicking

Swimming to the end  
Water rushes ahead  
The drop comes  
Almost there  
Praying for help  
I'm there  
I fall  
A light-white  
Death.

▼ Prince Wang, freshman

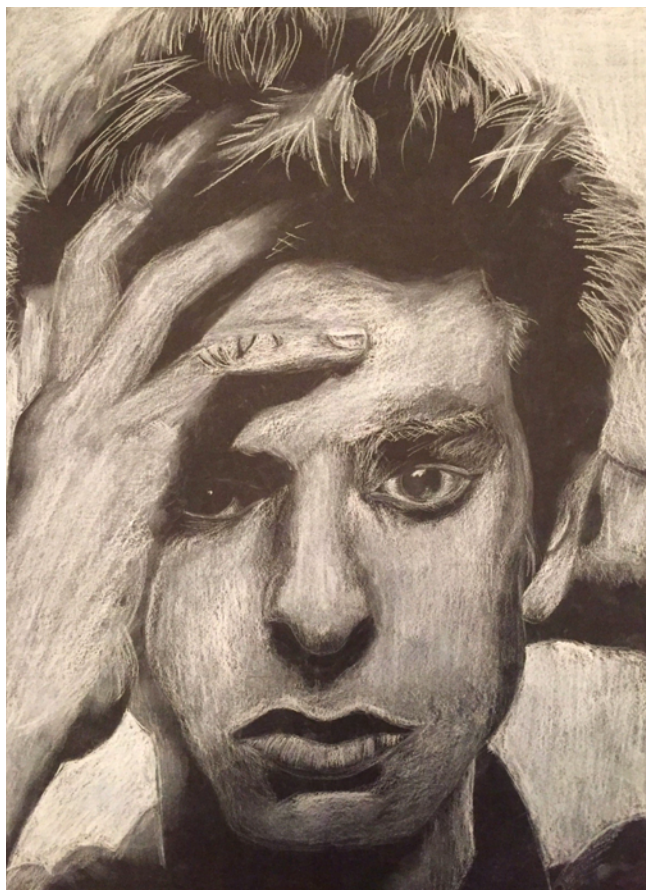


▼ Junyu Yang, senior

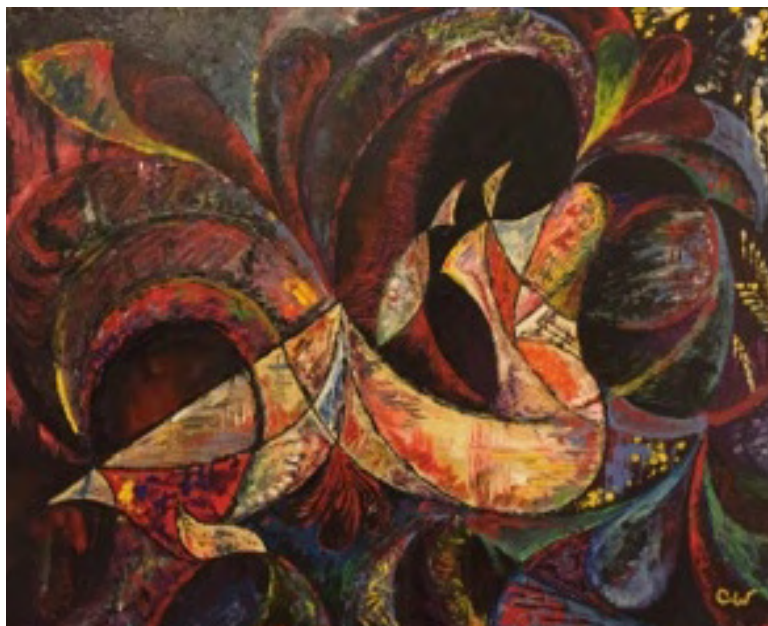
Anonymous

call me Dove I am  
cut and dry here but  
warm and wet under your seeking touch  
use me up no such luck to find  
someone better to slip by  
suds will settle in my hair I sink  
barely daring to blink breathe I am  
soap bar dropped on the floor don't bend to  
pick me up pick me up  
you emerge clean again,  
dirt free my white body  
covered in new stains.

▼ Shirley Liu, sophomore



▼ Catherine Wang, junior



▼ Anonymous

The world is weary so he seeks release  
 The world is wrong so he flees and the undergrowth whips his legs with  
 a vengeance  
 The world is seething; it boils over and he crumples i  
 Stumble as well  
 The world is spinning– all tops and one day it will stop but until then we  
 will keep crying, dying, hiding

▼ Janine Zhu, junior

## Bees to Honey

▼ Anonymous

She attracted the broken ones like bees drawn to honey  
 And of course, the splintered glass and ragged edges nicked her flesh  
 But she gritted against the pain and held on tighter, letting the agony dig into her palms  
 And, if by accident, she should let one piece slip to the ground, they would shatter  
 It didn't matter if it was a mistake, she was to blame and she was to condemn  
 Never mind the gashes on her own hands, disregard the cuts on her fingers as she  
 trembled to pick up the debris  
 And no, she wasn't a saint or an angel,  
 But neither was she a criminal who stole you away from a perfect life  
 She was only human, and yet you tried to gouge out her humanity  
 That was your lofty burden, your cracked glass, your fragmented story  
 And because she carried it, shared it, and tried to mend it  
 She too, began to crumble  
 All she did was attract the broken ones like bees drawn to honey



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