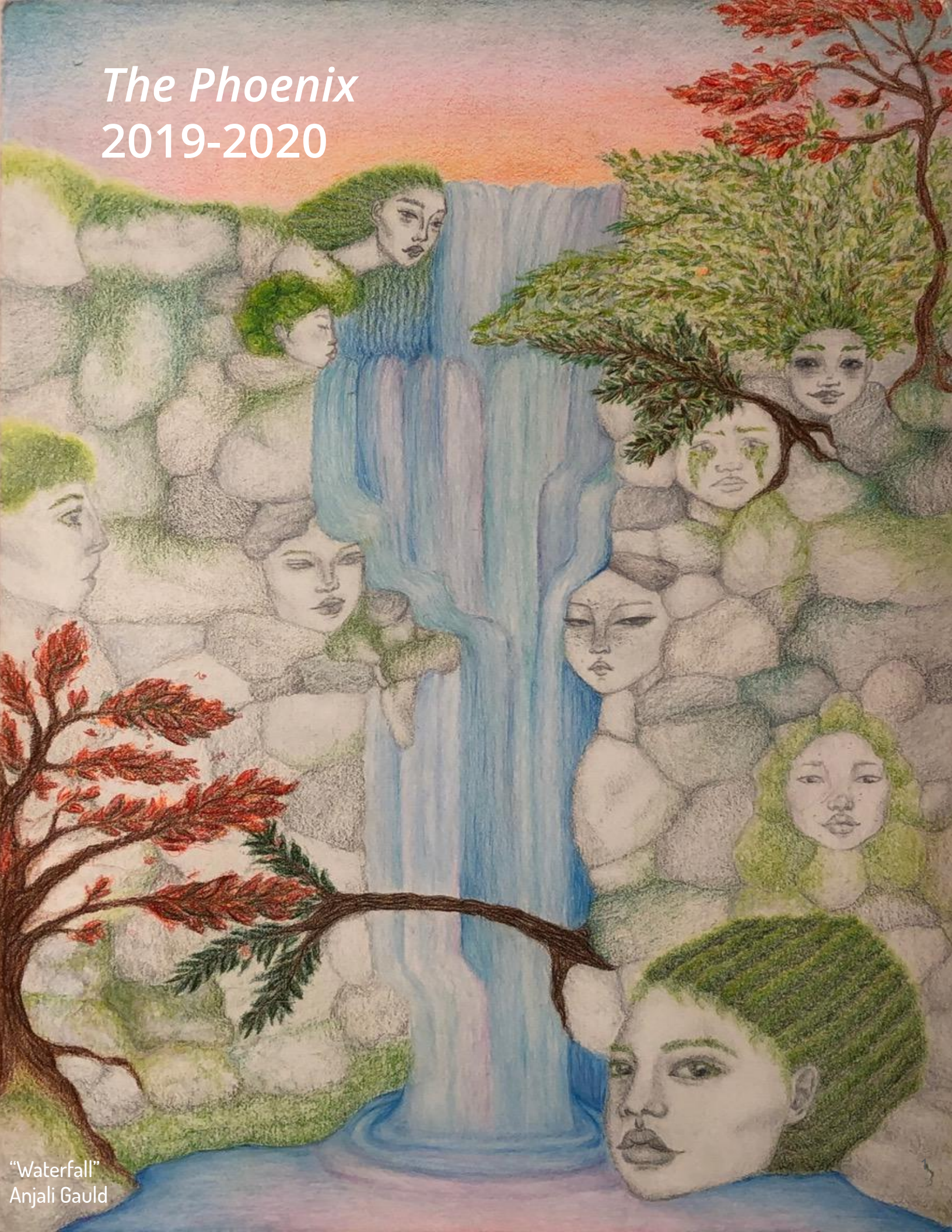


The Phoenix
2019-2020



"Waterfall"
Anjali Gauld

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A Thank You to the Manhasset Staff

The Phoenix would like to thank the teachers and administrators who have supported our efforts and helped to foster the creative spirit of Manhasset Secondary School.

Administrators

Dr. Dean Schlanger, Principal

Ms. Laurie Lauria, Coordinator of Extra-Curricular Activities

Dr. Rebecca Chowske, Coordinator of English Language Arts

Dr. Christopher Hale, Coordinator of Fine and Performing Arts

The English Department

Anthony Blyskal

Nikki Buckley

Matthew Coleman

Diana DiPaolo-Caputi

David Dubin

Angela Ferguson

Candyce Kannengieser

Michael Koondel

Laura Lembo

Tara Lyons

Eileen Madigan-Behrmann

Michael McDonough

Robert Novak

Lori Pellegrino

David Romero

Loretta Schuellein-McGovern

Eric Shapiro

Leslie Skolnik

Annie Thornton - Teacher Assistant

The Art Department

Sharon Bogolubov

Paul Johnston

Danielle Macumber

Natalya Panullo

Lori Oldaker

Library Media Specialists

Karin Greenberg

Ed Vasta

Irene Moody

Phoenix 2020 Staff

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Gwendolyn Seto

Art Editor

Anjali Gauld

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Eunice Choi

Staff

Mychal Duffy

Lilian Espinal

Kevin Gauld

Kiki Lee

Rita Lee

Ava Shu

Ivan Vuong

Nitya Wanchoo

Letter From the Editor

Elizabeth Wu

Dear Staff, Writers, Artists, and Readers,

Starting a few months ago, our personal and professional lives have been profoundly impacted by the COVID-19 outbreak. Consequently, this is the first electronic publication of *The Phoenix*, and it has been an honor to review so many high-quality pieces in spite of the ongoing crisis. I'm also immensely grateful to all *The Phoenix* staff for their hard work through these difficult circumstances, ensuring the quality of this year's publication is as high as ever. The unwavering guidance and support from our advisors, Mr. Novak and Mrs. Greenberg, has made all of this possible.

When we chose the theme *catharsis*, the sensation of the crashing wave—the rustling of sand and water away into the ebbing ocean—came to my mind. I am heartened to see that many of our school's writers and artists have embraced this prompt as well. Four years ago, I first joined *The Phoenix* as an awestruck freshman with deep admiration for the talented artists and writers in Manhasset. Growing closer to this virtuosity, I not only gained greater appreciation for others' creative abilities, but I also became more confident in my own creative expression. This is a beautiful rite of passage for artists and writers: to be able to brush away the self-doubt and self-consciousness, to look at your finished piece and think, *I want to show this to the world*.

Even though we are physically separated, through cooperation and communication, we are stronger together. The impressive influx of submissions this year proves that our desire to confide in and listen to one another cannot be extinguished. The ongoing pandemic has brought enormous tragedy to our lives, but I hope that this year's publication will serve as a reminder to you about the mythological phoenix's story of continued endurance and renewal.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Wu

Editor-in-Chief 2020

The Karie Sit Art and Writing Contest 2020

Karie Sit was a beloved member of Manhasset High School and was part of the class of 2015. *The Phoenix* was one of her favorite clubs, where she enjoyed expressing herself through creative writing. Her compassion and creativity continues to inspire others. Karie's last piece was a touching requiem that was the basis for the 2016 edition of this magazine.

After her passing, the Karie Sit Award was created in order to encourage other writers and artists to see the same beauty in self-expression that she did. *The Phoenix* is incredibly grateful for the Sit Family's continued support for this contest, and will continue to honor her memory through promoting creativity in art and writing at Manhasset.

Every year, the staff of *The Phoenix* chooses a theme for the contest. One writer and one artist in the high school and middle school categories are selected as winners. This year's choice was "catharsis", the release and purgation of emotions. We are honored to announce TJ Roszko and Leslie Aboyoun as the winning high school and middle school artists, and Caroline Egan and Jordan Aboyoun as the winning high school and middle school writers.



"Feathers"
TJ Roszko
Karie Sit High School Art Winner



“Explosion”
Leslie Aboyoun
Karie Sit Middle School Art Winner

Shasta Daisies – Karie Sit HS Writing Winner

Caroline Egan

When Shasta daisies bloom at your feet;
Blue Bells chime, and ring in your ear
Water lilies flood my dreams
Lost in a sea of Freesia, a path of plush petals guide you home
Breaths of honeysuckle serenade the air, and Hyacinth flutters rosy cheeks
Dandelions arise
in somber sunshine.

A blissful notion, a quiet tear
Frail hair and skin of paper
Pale blessings, shall I, too, care to dare my tranquil?

The heavy stream of sorrow ridden, white waters
Sent with a whirl of sanity, none do I bare, with white water.

Above his Japanese maple, your home now I call my own, forgiveness feels distant and grants a frigid touch.
I can't aid the grief of all who grasp knowings, of deep nostalgia and utter bliss
Though Shasta daisies have their will,
and desolate perceptions and sparing drops of dawn,
Sparrows hop, and evening breezes left still in wonder, of what is no longer
The rarity that is you, Shasta daisy
None is left to parallel the beauty, wondrous daisies, fragile and light
Airy and supple springtime, I raise, the daisies that joyed you

The daisies planted, by a once bountiful hand, palms in endless morning blue skies
Weeds plucked about, with dirty fingers bearing freshly cut hydrangeas.

The pond floods in April and I toss a bitter chance, a love that I wished for.
Content with your gifts in May, bouquets of Queen Anne's Lace and a Tulip parade.
I know that I miss you, because your daisies bloom everyday.

Piano Mother – Karie Sit MS Writing Winner

Jordan Aboyoun

taking a long, sought-after break she shuts her weary
eyes

tired from the work of the day

amidst the chaos around her she plays a single
note

it cuts through the noise, silencing

her mind rings free, her heart true a symphony of one

the children listen, awestruck

her built-up feelings of the day – frustration, heartache, sorrow they sit in the

audience, waiting

slowly taken one-by-one and released through an explosion of
song

the piano plays louder, it's expression lifting

the grim, dreary and wilted they raise their heads and sing no composer could ever compare, would

ever know

what joy is found in her performance as all her emotions rush upward and

suddenly they combust

in a brilliant beam of light as her last note
resonates.

Flying Words

Liliana Espinal

An open book, nothing to be shared
For everything is already known
Or so they think
Just a flip of the page
And there's something completely new
Something released

The Void

Elizabeth Cruz

A sense of relief but a sense of unsafety
I tell you the truth praying one day it won't break me
All alone in my thoughts with nothing to convene
Wondering if this side of me will ever be seen
The void has been an empty place
Sometimes it's as if there is no space
Compacted with memories and pictures of the time
That will never be forgotten and always be mine
On the way out I take some souvenirs
Of the place where I stayed nearly for years
But this time I forget one thing on purpose
The weight that's been pulling me down from the surface

The Shore

Ivan Vuong

Sea wash upon a gray shore, but the waves seem to lie still. When the wind is stagnant. The world has stopped moving here, but The Girl You Can't Quite Remember is still there, by the lamp-post. She's been waiting for a long time.

Time.

Look,-----,
The water isn't moving.

That's because you're not looking back.

Do you want the water to move?
We can make it move.

...We can?

Just hold my hand.
...Your other hand.

Can't find the lost pieces that float away on the quiet sand. Gray sun trickles over the ripple, bathes the skin with barren chill, missing warmth. It's missing, it's missing. But it's not forgotten. Can't find it all. Still missing, Missing. Where is it? Where do we go now? I want to know, I really miss you.
The moor swings—ding—the ocean is deeper now. It's a harbor that carries its current with its rocking creaks, Pressing on weakening floorboards deep below.
And somehow the breeze. The breeze.
It's so familiar, as the ash start raining.
Lean into it.
Become carried away into the muted frays.



The Open-Air Market

Elizabeth Wu

Somewhere between the makeshift stalls assembled out of old burlap and hoarse cries of vendors clamoring for customers, I spot her through terracotta-colored clouds of dust and stirring heaps of emaciated ribcages clothed in rags.

On her head, she's wearing a garland of red spider lilies.

Unable to look away from her sanguine halo, I wander closer to her, hoping to purchase a lily of my own as a souvenir for my visit to Thailand.

Tilting her head upwards to face the passing crowd, she intently eyes every tourist with an unwavering stare of longing.

As I approach her, I notice the smudged kohl on her eyelids and the crimson lipstick feathering at the corners of her lips. I realize that she must be no older than eleven and her parents must have made her up.

Then, her steady gaze meets mine, and I see the widest, most anguished look of despair beneath the crown of flowers on her forehead.

That's when I also realize that she isn't selling flowers.

the seven deadly sins are not, in fact, sins

Gwendolyn Seto

the rebellion had begun
and his chest was a numb fire-
mind hazed with the kind of epiphany that
only comes when he is ready to fall asleep
he drowned in his mental path, flailing limb to limb
air! he gasped with a heavy desire, but alas,
unsuccessful, only finding clichés as his mind
touched unconsciousness.

I. pride.

he was spanked across his chest by her fists
and he stumbled under her heavy gaze
to retreat wounded, bloodied at the core.
a dozen and a half trips around the sun
had been snatched, like a vulture to its carcass,
until he decided to let
her arrows pierce his skin
but not the soul underneath.
“she can’t hurt me,”
he mused, under his breath,
“i am no coward”

II. greed.

it was the candles that she had given him
as a birthday present while he was at college.
he intended to toss them (plain old trash,
she doesn’t care anyways)
but out erupted the sickly scent of youth.
before he could stop the wafting odors
he flinched at the mere idea of childhood
because he once thought
that things needed to be fair.
but some people take too much and others
take too little and he now knew that it is so much
better to be in the former group

III. lust.

she laughed with sadistic tears
dripping down the sides of her cheeks, two-by-two
her voice huffing out in wisps (*mom, come on.*)
was everything he said a witty joke? buffoonery?
a stunt? perhaps he craved companionship
because there was none
at home

IV. envy.

there's luck, and he would be a liar
to say that he was not filled to the brim with it
except for her.
in which he could do nothing to amend his case
and thus he lamented in desperation.
oh, sweet craving

V. gluttony.

to feast on the intangible. not food
but rather emotions in the raw,
that dance in the mind like
sugarcane does on the tongue.
the uncanny bliss of being able to
feel pleasure in her pain

VI. wrath.

the horses of war
galloped nearby, and he felt the strong current
of blood seep through
as they approached. piercing eyes
met wayward gaze
"i'm sorry." he said, during a reunion,
though meant none of it
instead curling his lips to a wry grin
behind her back

VII. sloth.

the slumber was rising again, the tide was pulling away
all he could think about was that
he'd rather drown in plain-speech lamentations
than in her embrace



"Dolly's Wings"
Emily Sontag

Lifted

Sophia Stefanakis

Not too long ago
She found fault with it all
She walked with her head hung low
She thought others were unkind
Laws unjust
Every day a different grind
She was a hard worker
They called her a trooper
Yet as a single mom of three
There was no opportunity
She carried all of her woes
Quite privately
It took time to realize
The burden she bore
Would one day
Come to pass
And there would be hope at last
As the children grew
Into respectable young adults
Her weight lightened
With shoulders relaxed
She sat back and prayed
For quiet moments of hope
And a future with relaxed, lazy days

Purple vs. Yellow

Serena Mancuso

i am a lilac in the sea of your sunflowers
taken root in the garden of your heart
impatiently i wait
for someone to pick me out,
and blow me away
far, far
away from here

the soil drowns in a storm of tears
growing you taller and taller
larger and larger
engulfing the sunset of your burning eyes

lost then never found
i am stuck in your golden petals
slowly as they grey my hue away
like the pale color of the distant moon
far, far
away from here

Best Friends

Gwendolyn Seto

she was my Best
friend but now she's Sick
with
this town country america earth
earnest craving
for somewhere else, anywhere else
footsteps carelessly pound, fostering ripples through
time,
new life citizenship rebirth renaissance

loneliness because i was her
Best friend but now i can't
talk at all with a mouth
clasped shut, with a tossed-away
needle and binding crimson thread
and hot glue dripping down
the sides of my cheeks
i can't get mouth open can't
do it even though she's
basking in isolation and she was
my Best friend

the Sick was inside her, writhed his coy little
hands to clutch at her heart and tug
tight against it like a fond
lover, except the Sick knew nothing
of restraint and seized and seized and seized
i stumbled over my own
mind matrix, craftily designed like an
endless corn maze, with heavy thoughts of
need to do something need to do something
need to do something
my hands grazed over the
keyboard at 7:02 PM
and send her texts—she brings
silence but she's still awake

i didn't know if Sick
was like Temporary or Death (it
was Death). she was
my Best friend but i had to
ask her Other friend
what is the Sick

“ d e p r e s s i o n “
blindfold ripped off my head and
i traced the letters
in the air, the name of the Sick,
bleary she still wants to
leave my town wants
emigration no hesitation to
leave me (a Best friend) behind left in
the pounding downpour no
good-byes just catch the next
metro or maybe
stand in train tracks instead who
knows i didn't
i never knew that the Sick had woven
himself tightly bound across
her soul all
these years i
was the personification of
naivité when calendars fell off
their hinges and she refused to go
to school (and instead proceed
to the hospital) (it was
not Death, not this time,
the medic said) (new
pills to make chemical
happiness) (perhaps heal
the broken Sick)

i watched her toss overboard
empty promises in bottles, let them sink
down to the jet-black ocean floor
where the glass shattered and ink flooded and
bubbles floated to the surface, reminiscent of her tears
that shone pearly under her chin and
at that moment i knew that
she was *my* Best friend
but i wasn't hers



"Grief"
Jordan Aboyoun

Heart-Shaped Balloon

Serena Mancuso

Sometimes when I look to the sky
I let my heart go

I tie my passion to a string
And watch it float across oceans all the way to the burning sun
But even Icarus could never succeed
His wings too thin that they began to bleed
Red
The color of Eve and her desire to leave
Paradise.

I use clouds as stepping stools now
To recapture the memory of your vivid voice bouncing off of my skin
But even the silver dollar moon could never suffice
A mural so dim yet far too concise
Is your smile
Melting away just like thin ice
But still it will never fail to ever entice
Me.

Deep within in the space of countless stars
I wish to count-less days with you
There is my passion, tied to a string,
Floating across oceans and nearing the burning sun
Eventually, it will pop and rain down with shards
But for now, at least all I can say is that
I've let my heart go

Don't Think About Tomorrow

Ralph Matamoros

We had a lockdown the other day
We huddle in a corner, our knees pulled up to our chests like a set of bowling pins
If this is for real
We hope he doesn't get a perfect strike

Light-up sketchers lie in Payless shoeboxes, undisturbed
Worn once
After the first lockdown drill kids stop wearing them
They realize that the shoes give away their location
Some kids already got spotted
In another school
In another town
In another state
But it didn't happen here
so we forget

We don't forget the number of casualties
The shooter
The shooter's gun
The manifesto on Facebook
We forget the innocent
We forget their families
We forget the pain that a bullet has carved through their town and through their hearts
Because the news doesn't want that
They want blood and crying families holding each other on national television
Because the news cycle is a devil in a pinstripe suit who doesn't care about anything but money

We lose more people to police shootings every year
Death rides in on a white horse
Baton, pepper spray, and gun at hand
Trained to believe that everyone is a threat
That's the major lesson learned after a couple months of training
It takes longer to become a hairdresser in some states

After another unarmed black man is killed
The gymnastics begin
If you have nothing to hide you have nothing to worry about
T-shirts are sold with the saying
Follow the law and breathe easy
Fox News advises brown and black parents to stop sending their sons to school in hoodies
Because a hoodie is a symbol of gang culture
More direct action is taken after a dog is shot
Because in our country
Dogs are given more respect than black and brown Americans

White supremacy festers in the top soil until it leaks into our reservoirs
It travels through the pipes until the most vulnerable children get a taste
The old-school white supremacy is dying out
The old white supremacy stands tall with its pot belly and liver spots shouting
Go back to your country!
It raised the modern form
The polite form
The one that worries about property values and gang activity
The one that mentions how black people make up 13% of the population and commit 50% of violent crime
The one that mentions how 40% of transgender individuals attempt suicide
I wonder if the disenfranchisement of minorities and the harassment against the LGBT community has anything to do about it
The polite white supremacy denies it
It whispers that we need to debate the alt-right in the “marketplace of ideas”
Yes, of course
Because we can debate literal Nazi supporters who would rather see us dead
because that is what will lead lead to world peace

It starts small
It starts with jokes about exchange students carrying the coronavirus
It starts in the workforce where natural hair is a no
It continues with money being taken from inner city schools until they can get their grades up
It continues when white people are praised for owning weed dispensaries while black and brown people lie in prison
Doomed to float in and out of jail like the ghosts of hopes and dreams
It peaks with a racist police force
It peaks with a man buying a gun and walking into a school
It spikes in ignorance and fear
Will we ever get it to end?

Voice Heard Across Generations

John Sullivan

I pledge allegiance to the flag

When we stormed the beaches of Normandy on June 6th 1944

Jumping out of the landing crafts hoping we would at least make it to the beach

Of the United States of America

Seeing the sunrise over the beautiful beaches that morning of December 7th, 1941

The smell of the sea was replaced with screams and a fiery blaze

And to the republic

Hitler making his last attempt on the American front line

Causing a bulge for several days until clearing a path straight to Germany

For which it stands

A small peaceful outpost, now covered in flames

With planes buzzing like flies over the Pacific

One nation

Panzer's and Tigers and Sherman's oh my

Rolling throughout the desert, battling for dominance

Under god

We asked them to surrender or face the consequences

They denied, and faced the heat of a man made sun not once but twice

Indivisible

Hearing the Soviets fighting off their oppressors "Forward, not a single step back!"

Protecting the motherland named after their leader

With liberty

Hitler's on the ropes

Hiding in his underground bunker in Berlin when suddenly a single shot is heard

And justice

A six year war coming to an end

Boys return home, and are now men

For all

Thorns

Siri Craven

the thorns scrape against my skin
the more i push back
the more they dig in
and slowly winding from my feet
up to my tender chin

i said how i felt
but you gagged me again
took away my voice
my paper and pen
and convinced me that
they wouldn't listen

i just wanted
my thoughts to be heard
you bound me to silence
i never spoke one word
until you told me
i shouldn't be deterred

release my feelings
spill my dreams on the page
no longer hold back
break out of my cage
free my joy
let out my rage

you don't have to be silent
you can say how you feel
your point of view matters
your emotions are real
and cuts from the thorns
will one day be healed



"Still Life"
Ivan Vuong

Night

Ava Shu

I lay my head down and cried
Because she lived, Because she died
Words float past me
I don't understand
What did I do wrong?
Why am I here? In this position?
There are sounds
Screams that only I hear
Echoing in my mind
Never seeming to stop
They ask me why?
The question with no answer
I look up at you
And wonder the same

She was saved, I was shattered
I lost you, she was given everything
Without you, what I have doesn't matter
With everything, she doesn't need anything more
But she's gone and I am born
She was who I was before
But I can never be that girl again

Where's the light at the end of the dark?
The light that won't come rescue me
You're supposed to be the star
And illuminate my darkness
But you're just looking on
Expecting me to save myself
Are you not dreaming my tears,
Watching me fall endlessly into the dark?

And I sit, losing track of time
Staring into nothing, blurring all colors
Clawing my way through a door that never opens
Through locked windows
Tiny moons shapes my palms, I don't feel a thing
Numb, I sit and wait for answers
That won't appear

I wish that I could fly
Like you, and find you
And never look back,
never having to say goodbye
Everything I do, is wrong, without you
I need to leave this place
That brings me pain
All my days trapped in the calm storm
That I can't escape
Blank stares meet my eyes
Don't they feel anything?
I'm waiting for a chance, a glimmer of hope
That you're here
Before I'm taken away

My days bleed together
I lose all concept of time
You thought you saved me
But my soul is dying by your hand
You say, you'll always be waiting for me
But why are you on the other side?

I'm holding you, knowing that
I would never be able to again
I tell myself that my heart would find you, even in the dark
But I can't
Memories play in my mind
But I'm scared that they will fade in time
So I'm holding on
But it's cutting me like a knife
I don't want to forget
But your absence makes my heart forgetful
Why did you go?
Do you not remember the times we had together?

You said goodbye
Before I gained consciousness
Can I bring you back?
They say that it's impossible
Forbidden to interfere with fate
But possibilities await those who wish hard enough
I can have you if I
sacrifice everything else for it
But dreams are dreams
Only in them, can I be with you
When I can't in reality
Being without you forever
Is as long as never

Some moments I see you
Legs swinging off the cliff, smiling happily at me
The moonlight lighting up your skin
Is it the tolerance of fate
Or another malicious joke?

But then you disappear
If that's the final outcome
Why can't I forget? Why can't I move on?
Times changed, others moved on
But I stay, being punished for my faith in us
Being too naive, thinking that you'll be back
This is the way of my life,
My destiny to never see you
Waiting for you from then to now
Yet still impossible

I forget the sound of your voice
Except the one moment
When you tell me to slow down, to hear you out
But I wouldn't listen
The voice of you telling me your favorite stories
But the fairy-tales were all lies
There is no magic, no fairies to grant wishes
Or you would be here

You don't understand
With you, every star in my world grew brighter
I had a purpose of loving you
I want this to be a fairy-tale
For me to be your angel, to extend my wings
And protect you from that night
To remake that decision
You have to believe in me
Believe that I'm sorry
That I never wanted us to end like this

That night, I should've stopped, shouldn't have blamed you
You were trying to help me
But I was too stubborn
I couldn't stand that you betrayed me
I thought that you would be safe
I thought that you would stay behind
That you wouldn't have followed me
But you did
You followed me up the slippery rocks
All the way to the edge of the cliff
Where the winds blew peacefully, lightly ruffling our hair
I screamed for you to stay away
Tears streaming down my face
And took steps back, as you walked closer
Saying sorry over and over
Before I knew, I slipped
And you raced towards me
Pulling me back to safety, as you fell
To the crashing waves and rugged rocks
I ran down, finding you
Resting with your eyes closed, A smile at your lips
"I love you"
You whispered before leaving
I pressed my hands to your heart, looking for the reassuring beat
I gasped as I saw tinted pink running through the water, from the back of your head
It should've been me, It Should've been me
I screamed
It was too late

The night started magical
I met him at midnight
He looked at me like I was the fireworks
Against the dark sky
The most beautiful thing in the world
In his eyes, I saw freedom
But it changed
Stern glares awaited my arrival
Your guilty yet innocent face hid on the staircase
In anger, I tore out
Looking for the escape, for the hideout

Till I lost you
Now I sit, on the cliff
Alone under the moon
Clothes drenched in tears
In some instants
My heart goes soft, remembering you
The wind passes and rests on my shoulder
Telling me that our time passed too fast
I'm trying to slow down the feelings I get when I think of you
Knowing that I will soon end up in tears
Those pointless problems that I once felt sorrow for
Are now my happiest possessions of memories
Our time with each other were like fireworks, or a short lived dream
But I'm glad I experienced it
Maybe goodbye is a promise
But even a thousand goodbyes would not be enough
To lessen the pain
I would always miss you
The silhouette of you waving and smiling at me
Even now, I still remember
The most beautiful words are the ones never said
As we have forgotten the promises

Gone, was our lifetime of love
With one fleeting glance, you left
and I never got the chance to value our times
Be it with love or hatred
I only wanted you with me
Light rain falls ceaselessly like my sorrow
I await the dawn
Hoping that you will stop by throughout the absence of light
Even if I'm only dreaming
I'll rather have you in dreams, than not at all
Love is affectionate yet ruthless
In the end, we have to part
You left a mark on me, a handprint on my heart
No matter how far you are
In my thoughts, you never stray far

Now, memories are the continuation of our love
Evidence that we can't be together
But if one day
We do meet and not lose each other
it will be for infinity



“Lilies of Death”
Rachel Ho

Our Members

Eunice Choi, a junior, is incredibly proud of *The Phoenix* for living up to its name and rising from the ashes amidst a global pandemic to produce yet another successful edition. She'd like to thank all the seniors for their consistent hard work throughout the years and wishes them good luck :-)

Mychal Duffy, a 7th grader, is a dedicated member of *The Phoenix*. He is inspired by all the creative writers, those who just write what they think and express their creativity. He would like to thank Mr. Koondel who introduced him to *The Phoenix* and creative writing. *The Phoenix* is a great place full of great and passionate writers who worked day and night to put together this magazine even in hard times like these.

Liliana Espinal, a 7th grader, is proud to have worked on her first publication with *The Phoenix*. She is inspired by writers such as Rupi Kaur and Kevin Henkes, with their heavy use of symbolism and metaphors. She hopes to also use symbolism to speak out about heavy topics, so that all people can interpret and become aware of them.

Anjali Gauld, a sophomore, has been a member of *The Phoenix* since she was in eighth grade. She could not be prouder of *The Phoenix* staff and the hard work they have put into producing an incredible hub of Manhasset Secondary School's artists and writers. The fervor and talent of the staff and students whose work is a part of *The Phoenix* never fails to amaze Anjali, and she hopes to continue in the footsteps of past and graduating members in curating *The Phoenix* for years to come.

Kiki Lee, an 11th grader, is a passionate member of *The Phoenix*. They're inspired by all sorts of media—anime, manga, light novels, fanfiction, art, memes, etc. Their mind is always taken up by various stories and character analyses, as if their brain is an overworked bulletin board full of thumbtacked photographs, rainbow yarn, messy post-its, and thick documents.

Serena Mancuso, an 11th grader, is an active member of *The Phoenix*. She is inspired by all types of music and the endless interpretation of song lyrics. She enjoys writing poems and short stories dedicated to her own personal experiences with love. In the future, Serena hopes to become a source of inspiration for people through her writing and way of thinking.

Ralph Matamoros, a senior, is proud to have worked on his fourth and final publication with *The Phoenix*. Inspired by writers such as John Steinbeck and Carl Sandburg, he hopes to make poetry accessible to a wider group of people by writing about subjects such as the environment, gun violence, and race relations in our country.

Ava Shu, a sophomore, is a proud member of the Phoenix and grateful for the support she was given among the talented artists and writers. She is inspired by the creativity and passion demonstrated by her favorite authors and musical artists. She is always caught staring out the window daydreaming or humming under her breath, blocking out reality and living in her own world, and of course developing a new story.

Gwendolyn Seto, a junior, has been a proud member of *The Phoenix* since freshman year. She genuinely appreciates literature and has a passion for reading and writing poetry. In her spare time, she enjoys rock collecting, drawing cats, and creative writing. She hopes that this year's publication of *The Phoenix* will inspire others to write and draw their own original works.

Ivan Vuong, a senior, is pleased to have worked on his first and final publication of *The Phoenix*. Not a day passes when he is not grateful to his peers at every Thursday meeting. He writes the unwritten notes of music and the visceral parts of existence. One day, he hopes to be able to write down the world in his head--in the most authentic way possible.

Nitya Wanchoo, a freshman, is proud to have worked on this year's publication of *The Phoenix* alongside a group of amazing writers and artists. She is inspired by many different musical artists and enjoys reading YA novels in her free time. She hopes to one day make a difference by writing about and bringing light to topics such as health care, civil rights, and educational issues.

Elizabeth Wu, a senior, considers it to be an honor to review the 2020 publication of *The Phoenix*, after having admired the incredible virtuosity that flourishes in the club as an editor for four years. She reads voraciously— from nonfiction journal articles in *Scientific American* to Junot Díaz and everything in between— and seeks to raise awareness of scientific and social issues in her creative writing.

