

Hemetera 2020

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New York Alexandra Keane '20	
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Editors' Note:

To our Regis College student body, alumni, faculty, and staff, we proudly present to you the 2020 edition of *Hemetera*, Regis College's literary journal. Even before the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic, *Hemetera* went through some changes this year, including adding new members, a new faculty advisor, and an online version of the publication. Of course, beginning in March, *Hemetera*, Regis College, and, indeed, the entire globe, faced the unprecedented challenge of the pandemic.

Our worlds have been turned upside down and, as a staff, our time to congregate and develop this collection was sadly cut short; however, we walked onward and finished the work over video chat and email.

We did so with the knowledge that, during these trying times, we need unity in the form of art. And that's what we hope to have achieved with this year's edition of *Hemetera*. Though we were tossed into the world of technology, the humanity and vulnerability behind all of the writing within these pages was unaffected. With photography, nonfiction, poetry, and fiction pieces from our community, we hope our readers can relate to these stories of heartbreak, success, and identity—to name a few of the themes that this year's contributors explored.

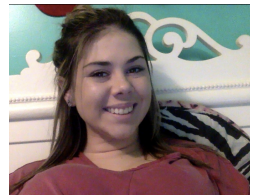
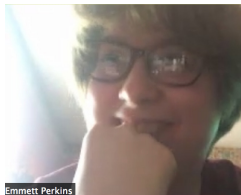
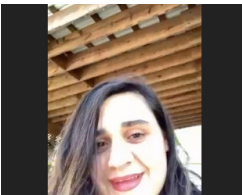
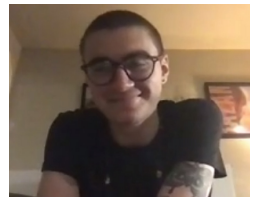
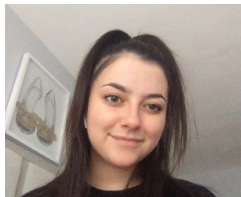
We would like to thank all of those who supported us, and all those who will come to read this collaborative work. Additionally, we would like to thank Professor Fitzgerald for his tireless efforts to help us overcome digital challenges.

Finally, we would like to dedicate this year's edition of *Hemetera* to the Class of 2020, who have sacrificed so much this year, recognizing especially the seniors on our staff: MacKenzie Casey, Emmett Perkins, and Molly Perkins.

Masthead

MacKenzie Casey '20
Rosa De Martinis '22
Melanie Francisco-Morel '22
Karina Gomes '21
Heather Jordan '21

Jacob Pardo '23
Emmett Perkins '20
Molly Perkins '20
Noah Walsh '23
Dr. Jonathan D. Fitzgerald (Advisor)



Nonfi

ction

Strings

6

Sarah Michaud '21

How do we cope in a world so full of clutter where hate is spoken too loud and love is spoken too soft? We are all tied up inside, but the question is — how can we untangle the strings? In this world, we are too often held together by those tangled strings. The madness, the chaos, and commotion of everyday life are the things that we lose ourselves in. We get lost in the smaller moments that might not mean anything to us in one year, one month, one day, one hour. We too often let societal bounds control and restrict our internal selves. Instead of looking at mistakes and failures as commodities fueling growth, we refuse them as reality causing more internal knotting. These occurrences are normal, a healthy part of what it means to be human. Society says that failures and mistakes are wrong, that you should not praise them, that you are not good enough if you experience them. The world turns something completely natural into a negative and unspoken subject that people are burdened with. We do not face them in fear of being judged or looked down upon. They become the unwanted weights on our shoulders, the pits in our stomachs, and the twisted strings that we can never untangle.

What would happen if each of us started looking at ourselves as individuals? What if facing mistakes and failures became something universal, and became something we looked at as a necessary action? The truth is, we cannot go where we want to or become who we want to be if we do not accept the imperfect parts of ourselves. To understand the unfavorable is to discover our pathway to growth. Failures and mistakes are advantages to each one of us. Nothing in this life will be easy. We will cry, and laugh, and scream, and even be silent. What we do to get over these walls is what defines us. We learn after hard times what it means to love ourselves, to mature, to know that we are good enough. We are not mistakes.

What if building each other up instead of breaking each other down became the new normal? We as people, as individuals, share more of a similar experience than we truly think. This is not to say that everyone's life is the same because that's simply not the truth. However, what we all experience, is the sheer pain, and fear, and doubt about the unknowns in our individual worlds. This is what we all go through to reach the ultimate goal of joy, and peace, and love. It does not matter where we come from or where we end up because we are all intertwined like strings — tangled up in our own small worlds and our complicated selves, too busy to see the bigger picture. Maybe it's because we are too narrow-minded or inattentive, but our world as a whole is built on nothing but growth. We must untangle the knots in ourselves — embracing the unknown, all the pain and fear, accepting failures and mistakes, to achieve the ultimate peace. Once we begin this unfolding, is where we will find that these strings can become something as flourishing as a beautifully intertwined vine of flowers — where each new blossom contributes to the beauty as a whole.

Iqrat

Safiya Hazarika '23

In the cave of Hira, the Quran was initially revealed to Prophet Muhammed. An angel (Jibrel or Gabriel) appeared before him. The angel commanded the Prophet to read. “Iqrat” he commanded. The Prophet responded “maa ana bi qari (I do not know how to read).” The angel persisted, and commanded him again to read (iqrat). The angel continued, “recite in the name of your Lord who created—Created man from a clinging substance. Recite and your Lord is the most Generous—Who taught by the pen—Taught man that which he knew not.” The first five verses of Surah Al-Alaq (Chapter of “The Clot”) empathizes the importance of reading and understanding the Quran. In its pure form, the Quran holds so much meaning as it conveys the words of God. My parents embraced this message in the first five verses of the Quran by making it their top priority to teach my sister and I how to read the scripture.

Located in the corner of my living room there is a towering bookshelf that holds dozens of books stacked on it. The shelves are so packed that towards the center of the shelves bend slightly downwards. When I was around six years old, my mother called me over to the daunting shelf and told me to pick out a book. I looked upon a wide variety of bound paper stacks with absolutely no desire to read one. I had no idea what I was getting into when my mother told me to choose my book. Everyone in my house had their own designated book. As long as I could remember my dad had been using a green colored one with its binding falling apart barely held together by a fabric book cover designed with soccer balls. To a six year old, the only knowledge I had of these “books” was they just contained funny looking characters that my parents would recite in a sing-song voice. I would come to realize that the bookshelf did not just contain any books, they were Qurans. My parents had spent their lives accumulating Qurans that eventually found their home in the corner of my living room. Every single Quran contained on that shelf had its own backstory. Those paperbacks and hardcovers either traveled with my parents throughout the world, traveled through generations of my family, or were gifts from loved ones. As I stood in front of the tower of Qurans, I ended up choosing the pretty one. My first Quran was about the size and thickness of my chemistry textbook covered with a rose printed book cover. My mother smiled over at me when she noticed my selection and informed me that the Quran I chose belonged to her mother.

Everyday my mom and I would practice reading the Quran. We started with the basics, such as sounding out the letters of the alphabet, and then we advanced towards grammar, and then eventually I established a sing-song voice too. It took me so long to learn tajweed, which is essentially a set of rules that dictate how words are properly pronounced. Eventually my mom and I established a routine. We had a deal: I had to recite at least one page per day and then I could be free from my duties and run outside like a wild animal and play with my friends. At times I would get so frustrated because all I wanted to do was run around the backyard, or play games with my friends, but my mother was always there blocking the doorway to remind me of our agreement. “Quran first” she said sternly. However, there were occasions when I would feel genuinely excited to read with my mom. On these occasions, I would find myself mesmerized and would exceed my mother’s one-page requirement.

It took me a full year to finish the entire Quran for the first time. By this point I

read through 114 surahs (chapters) all with stories and lessons embedded within them. Finishing the Quran for the first time required a lot of motivation and persistence from both my mother and I. This meant I would drag my feet, kicking and screaming every day when it came time to read while my mom remained persistent. Although, I will forever be grateful to my mom for teaching me how to read the Quran. Without the Quran I think I would be deeply lost in my beliefs. Each chapter in the Quran taught me a new lesson which I was able to derive my beliefs from.

When I face fear, when I face conflict, or when I face loss, I find myself turning towards the Quran for guidance. In those moments when I feel lost in my beliefs, I find myself reading the Quran to seek answers. Although at times I may not always agree with the scripture or perceive the words the way it intended to, I still find my answers in the scripture. In those verses I find comfort and meaning. To this day, my parents continue to encourage me to read the Quran. “Just one ayah (verse) a day,” they say. “One ayah will provide you with knowledge and guidance in your life.”



Regis Sky
Skyler Libby '22

Silent Walls
and All
They Hear

12

Sarita Amoros Ferguson '23

Growing up I experienced many traumatizing events as a result of my mother's mental and physical health. They all end up blending together. I can never really separate these events in my mind. This changed the night that I awoke to the sound of my mother's panicked voice. It seemed to be bouncing off of the walls. The same walls that words have ricocheted off since the day we moved in, and that day that we disturbed the peace. They've witnessed everything, taking in all that we say, yet staying silent. I don't know how these walls do it; I don't know how they have not collapsed from the weight we throw at them. I stared at the ceiling for a moment and thanked it because I related to its suffering structure.

My mother was in the next room spitting on about the Lyme Disease that was shooting pain through her body. It's been a few years that she's been cancer free, but that didn't mean that she was free. It often seemed like pain and disease were addicted to her blood and flesh. Finally, she fell silent and I tried not to toss and turn as cramps crawled up my legs and waist, it was that time of the month. As I turned to my side to relieve some of the pain in my lower back, the bed squeaked, and mama let out a cry about wanting to die. "I don't want to live anymore. I just want to die, please, I just want to die," she cried out. Pushing my index finger to my temple I tried to put everything together. All of these things are normal, every family goes through things like this, but the thought didn't feel very convincing. I attempted to convince the jury of my mind that years of childhood sacrifices were normal. I even told the judge sitting in my soul, about the criminal that was tearing at my heart. But they had not reached a verdict in years. This night her sobs were so loud that all the melatonin seemed to disappear from my body.

Knowing that school started in a few hours I arose and let my aching feet carry me to the kitchen. I took a little bit of my Puerto Rican traditions, and brewed some coffee, not to drink but to brew a memory as my eyes shut and I took a seat on the kitchen floor. I imagined that it was 2006. I imagined it was 12 AM. I imagined my tios and tias in the next room as they laughed about the good old days. I imagined the safety of my cousins' bodies brought as we each sank into nighttime's arms. This I understood. My childhood had been bearable because of nights like those. Where mama was with loved ones, where I was with loved ones, and was free to be a child. When I was with these members of my family, there was no worrying about whether or not my mother would be getting rushed to the ER in the middle of the night, I didn't have to watch what I said out of fear that it would trigger something within her mental illnesses. In the mornings, one of my tios would pick me up and sit me at the table. Another would put one of my favorite white square bowls in front of me, then fill it to the brim with Lucky Charms. My tias would ready stools around the kitchen for me so I'd be able to reach the counters to help with dinner. My cousins would build forts out of entire rooms for us to sleep under.

Even now I see the lack of motivation within her. It's almost as if her mind doesn't remember how to be whole on its own. Mama was unable to be a proper mother for years, but it was not all her fault. She had experienced parts of her body literally being removed from her, and when that happens, a piece of your soul is taken with it.

One of the hardest things as a child is learning to be a caregiver when you're supposed to be learning how to be cared for. Now that I find myself in college, the experiences

from my childhood are still affecting the way I interact with others and how I accept their empathy. Giving has never been a challenge for me, but I struggle with guilt when receiving attention. It's something that I fear in every conversation, and something that I hold close in and every relationship I form. I don't know when or even if that fear will go away. That fear is so normal now that I often think that I don't want it to change because that means letting my guard down. I don't want to end up like my mother, constantly building up walls and hiding. So, I'll force myself to trust when I shouldn't. Force myself to accept compassion when I don't want to. I will force myself to stop burning perfectly sturdy bridges.

I watched my mother go to war with her own mind, then tried to do the same to my own. Impressionable. That's what I was. I have been a mini-reflection of her, running from anxiety, seeking approval, surfing the waves of depression, and running from everything I do not understand. I want to understand and get out of the dark. I am learning self-love. I am learning that a mind like mine should not be in bed with the shades down. A mind like mine needs to speak for those who collapsed at the void and never had the courage to speak for themselves.

I opened my eyes and walked back to my bed. I caved back into my pain killer, my Puerto Rican traditions, my coffee, and I whisper to myself, your mother's whimpers are family laughter. The smell of coffee is welcoming its way through the room and your cousins are filling in the empty spaces around you.



Untitled

Sean Toomey '21

Letter to
You, Never
Sent

16

MacKenzie Casey '20

Dear You,

I missed you. The day you left I laid in my bed and watched *Dear John* on repeat. It's a horrible movie. I thought it would remind me of you, help me realize that sometimes there are life long love stories. But as I watched it, I realized ours wasn't.

You taught me so much. That it was okay to be me. You once told me you planned on making fun of my insecurities and doubts every day until I could laugh about them with you because all you saw was perfection.

You told me you loved me. Sitting by the gas fire pit in my backyard drunk off of too much wine from our date in the North End. I was crying, because I didn't know what I was going to do when you were gone, how I would last three months with only letters from you every few weeks, whose hand I would hold when I was scared, who would beat down my insecurities, lay on the couch with me all day, impress my mother, and corrupt my little brother.

You hugged me, and whispered, I love you, I'm in love with you, and I don't care if I come back to you being with someone new. I will wait. You had to tell me again the next day because I thought it was a drunken dream — I made you say it first because I was terrified you didn't mean it.

You were crazy. We laid in bed one day — it was a snowstorm and you came to get snowed in with me. You told me you were bipolar and schizophrenic. I was scared and let go of your hand at first. I saw the good in you — the person not the diagnosis. You told me you had been abused, kicked out, forgotten. I wanted you to know someone loved you for you. The real you.

But the real you hurt me. My parents were away and I had a party. We had a fight, over something small and so insignificant I can't remember now. You wanted to leave and drive home, but I loved you too much to let you go. You fought with me more, told me to get out of the car or something bad was going to happen, something neither of us could forgive.

I forgave you. The look in your eyes that night was terrifying, crystal blue and inviting like a riptide that sweeps you under and under until you finally realize you're drowning and it's too late. You left two weeks later. Never wrote, never called, never looked back. All I had of you was Facebook posts from your family, and one, singular Instagram post sent to me by a friend put up by a girl, kissing you on the cheek, saying goodluck my soldier i'll miss u.

You texted me two days ago, "I'm finally back."

Finally?

What you don't know is, I've learned to swim, keep my feet out of the slippery sand — the water may look inviting, but you are a riptide waiting to sweep me back into the rocks and out to sea.

Where Is He?

18

Julie Getchell '23

The doctor kept her hand on my neck at my checkup appointment. My ten-year-old self wondered if she was trying to strangle me or just really happened to like my neck. Once she pried her cold hands from my neck, she turned to my Mom and told her that she wants me to get an ultrasound. I thought that this was weird, but I was excited because I was going to get an ultrasound. Most people got ultrasounds when they were pregnant, but I was in fourth grade and I got to get one, for my neck! When I got to my ultrasound appointment, they put warm gooey stuff on my neck at first. Then, they started rubbing this controller type thing on me, they were a little rough, but I wasn't going to say anything. It was over before I knew it and I was going home. They told my mom and I that we would hear from the doctor in the next week.

Within a week, I was situated in a doctor's office at Children's Hospital. She told my mom and I that I had a growth in my thyroid, which was the specific medical term for my neck. Once the doctor had informed us of the growth, the room had gotten all serious. The doctor sent my mom and I to a different hospital so that way I could get a "biopsy". I had no idea what that was, but my mom seemed nervous, so I got nervous. Was this something like getting my blood drawn? I prayed that this was not the case, as I have a lot of experiences with needles, but none of them could be considered "good".

Three years prior, when I was seven years old, my mom picked me up from school early. I could barely contain my excitement, I was able to leave my first grade classroom early AND I got to hang out with my mom. Much to my surprise, I was not just hanging out with my mom, I was going to the doctors. My teachers had expressed concerns about me leaving class frequently to go to the bathroom and it was not because I just did not want to be in class but because I legitimately needed to go to the bathroom due to the fact that I was frequently thirsty.

The doctors told me that they would have to "prick" my finger. I immediately began to panic; needles terrified me. The last time I remembered going to the doctors, I had four nurses pinning me down on the bed while they gave me my shots. Fear pumped through my veins, the very ones that they were going to take blood from. Eventually, the nurse had pricked my finger and tested my blood.

I do not remember what the doctor had said when he first came back in. However, I do remember being escorted out of the room while my mom broke down. I got to pick a bunch of stickers and when I was finished, my mom was waiting for me with my coat. I made a big deal about how sore my finger was, little did I know that was the least of my worries.

While I sat in the backseat of the car, I gazed out the window at the city. My mom was on the phone with my Dad. I overheard her telling him that we had to head home, pack a bag, pick up my sister, and then we would head in. Maybe this was a vacation!

Well, it could be considered a vacation if you believe that Mass General is the new Disney World. I got this cool bracelet that had my name and birthday on it. Then, a few nice ladies laid me on a table and opened up the I Spy book and we began to play. They had distracted me so they could stab me in my hand with a needle. They told me it would put medicine in my system to make me feel better. I felt betrayed by the nurses, they let other people put a needle in me while I was not paying attention. My dad, in attempts of making up for it, went and got my sister and I, a happy meal from McDonalds. Finally, something good was coming out of this trip, until a nurse came

in demanding that they had to prick my finger and give me a shot before I could eat.

That was how my life was going to work for the foreseeable future. I had been diagnosed with Type One Diabetes. I would now have to prick my tiny delicate fingers ten to twelve times a day. On top of that, I would have to do injections around the clock to make sure that I would stay healthy. All aspects of my life were no longer the same. I did not look forward to eating because I would have to do an injection. If I wanted to go enjoy a movie, I would either have to do an injection for movie snacks or not eat there at all. I was no longer invited for playdates because other parents at the time were too nervous to have me on their watch. I was ostracized from other kids because of a disease that I had no control over. Why me? God, what is your plan?

I followed my parents lead and trusted in God's plan. He would not have given me this disease if he did not think that I could handle it.

Then, three years later, I was ordered to get a biopsy on my thyroid. This biopsy, was nothing like getting my blood drawn. In fact, it was much worse.

The room was dim when the young lady led my mom and I in. I had asked her to turn the light on but apparently the lights needed to be this way for the procedure. She had me lie down on my back and did another ultrasound until the doctor came in. Everything took a turn for the worst as soon as the doctor walked in. She was no longer the friendly doctor I had met at Children's; she was all business.

"Don't move, don't talk, don't swallow, and don't cry." She told me as she leaned over me. Don't swallow? That seemed weird, up until she jammed a needle into my neck. I couldn't possibly swallow. It hurt but I was tough, and it was over. Or so I thought. As I cried, the doctor proceeded to tell me that, the shot was only for numbing- they hadn't even done the biopsy yet. 'God help me' I thought as she got ready to start up again. I felt the needle pierce through my neck again. This time, I couldn't hold it in. I cried. I cried because it hurt. I cried because I was petrified. I cried because my Mom couldn't stop the doctor. I cried because I felt betrayed by God, why me? What plan is this? I was hysterical, they could not even take another sample for the biopsy even though they were supposed to get five. The doctor told me that kids younger than me did it easily, with no problem. I was convinced that she was the devil, for not only torturing me physically but mentally as well.

When my parents took me back to Children's the next week, I did not want to be in there any longer than I had to be. It was relatively quick; she said the growth was benign. They told me this meant that my growth was not bad and that was a good thing. Tears sprung from my parents' eyes and they were thanking God. Why were they thanking God? HE did nothing deserving to be thanked. HE was the one who put me through this. HE was the one with the supposed plan for me. Is he even real? How does a person with so much power allow suffering in the world? If there was a God, there would not be any pain or suffering.

I was so confused by the aspect of God, well, more like the absence of God. I began to rely on myself for my well being, after all. I prick MY fingers multiple times a day so that I could make sure MY blood sugars were in range. I administer MY injections for any food that I ate. A few months ago, I underwent surgery to remove part of MY thyroid, so I would not have to worry about if that growth would ever become cancerous.

I do not know what God's plan is, or where he is, but I know that I am here and my plan is to live for as long as I can and be as healthy as I can be.

My Mother
Dislikes My
Sister and
That's Okay

22

Amy Cincotta '23

A person can only take so much before their heart shatters, just like the back windshield did when my mother smashed it before she said she no longer loved my sister. The sounds of my mother storming up the stairs and slamming the door echoed throughout the still house. Across the kitchen table, my dad's emotionless eyes stared at my sister as my brother and I, sitting on either side of her, squeezed her hand tightly. My sister knew she wouldn't be accepted by my parents; however, their opinion was not her reality. This pivotal moment in my life started my struggle with respecting others' opinions even if they don't mirror mine.

Growing up, my mother was intense about Christianity and never gave my siblings and I a choice to decide for ourselves what we believed in. She reminds me of the mother from Carrie with her intense religious speeches and believing everything is the Devil.

As I grew older, I started interacting with different people, cultures, and beliefs; and I began developing my own opinions. When I expressed these new ideas to my mother, she would scream how wrong I am and to not listen to anyone else but her. I vowed to myself that I will never be like her; forcing people to believe in something they can't.

Most of the time, it was difficult to keep that promise, especially that day when my sister came out. It took restraint to not yell at my mother that she was in the wrong and to accept my sister for who she is. No matter how hard I tried, she never changed.

As time went on, I was still angry at my mother. My sister, on the other hand, was not. I didn't understand it, but the more time I spent with my sister, I soon realized that she didn't let my parent's opinions define who she is or affect her self-worth. Friends and family say that my mother will come around. However, I've accepted that she won't and that's alright. I had to learn that not everyone, including my mother, will understand different views or change their own to accommodate others. Needless to say, even if you do not believe in the same things or agree with other's opinions, I believe you must respect and accept their reasonings.

There's a difference between expressing your opinions and being rude. If someone has an opposing view to yours, you don't have to walk away, you can have a debate. Debates help people communicate different ideas; however, a debate shouldn't contain words of hate or threats. In this day and age, everyone is offended by everything and I'm offended. Why can't we all just talk through our differences, accepting them and moving on. Don't waste your breath making someone change to satisfy your views or force someone to believe in something they can't. Give your points. Give your reasonings and move on. The world is changed by your example, not by your opinion.

I Have
Hope, Not
Faith

Grace Phipps '22

“Linda, can I call you my step mom?”

“Now, why would you do that?”

“Because I look at you as my second mom.”

“I would love that, sweetie, but I’m not married to your dad anymore.”

My brother’s mom was my best friend growing up. If she didn’t see me for at least a month, she’d call my father and ask if she could babysit me for an entire day coming up. We would make homemade iced tea and Italian wedding soup together, watch movies for eight hours straight, and go on many car rides to the local shopping mall to spend more money than we probably should’ve. She’d tell me I was the daughter she always dreamed of having, and that my mother was very lucky to have been blessed with one like me.

My brother’s mom was diagnosed with ovarian cancer in 2012. It was a violent, harsh, slap in the face that I didn’t see coming. No one saw it coming. I remember when my dad sat me down to tell me she was sick, and I remember when my dad sat me down to tell me she passed in July of 2013. There are some deaths that do or don’t make sense, there are some deaths that bring peace, there are some deaths that you knew meant more good than bad. This death was one that left me in shock, my heart unable to feel the pain because it was too deep to even bear. My body shut down for days, even crying felt almost impossible. Her death felt impossible.

When Linda was diagnosed, I automatically turned to praying. I was introduced to the Bible when my parents separated, my father and I read it to each other before bed every night. He told me that praying would help my mother overcome her alcoholism, and I believed him entirely. Being so desperate to save Linda in any possible way, I prayed for her too. “God, please heal her. Please save her. Please do anything to take this pain and sickness away from her.” It was often, two or three times a day, I would sit down with my hands pressed so tightly together, eyes squeezed shut, and I would just mumble anything that He could hear. Maybe He would answer me, maybe He would cure her, maybe He would give her more time. She was running out of time so quickly, it was terrifying.

There was a brief moment, around a month before her death, that everyone thought Linda was getting better. She was moving around more, she looked healthier, she was gaining weight. It was a miracle. I thanked God, over and over and over again, for answering me. He did what I asked Him, begged Him to, so I stopped praying.

Then, after that month was over, she passed away in the comfort of her home, surrounded by all the family who loved her. Linda’s funeral was in this beautiful church, with these huge gorgeous stained glass windows she talked about often. My dad told me she was in a better place, but what is that better place? My sobs were loud, but my screams were even louder. I blamed God for it all. I blamed Him for her diagnosis, I blamed Him for her death, I asked Him why He needed her when I needed her more. It didn’t make any sense. My faith was slipping away from me, everything I might’ve believed in once, I did not believe in anymore.

Maybe that is what took her life. If only I had kept praying, maybe she’d still be here. There are so many questions and thoughts I still have. My anger towards God didn’t go away for a while, not even until recently. I lost my faith as soon as I lost Linda, but as I grew older and I learned to understand death more, I realized that He is not responsible for diagnosing people with cancer, or any illness for that matter. He is not responsible

for how much time one with cancer has left in this world. He is not in control of that, but He did need Linda more than I did. I realized that sometimes people are better angels than they are human beings. While I am still angry, and am still questioning my faith and struggling with it everyday since that July of 2013, I gained something else that I need more than faith when it comes to Linda, and everyday life.

Hope. I have hope that Linda is in a better place, that she looks down on me everyday with a huge smile on her face. I have hope that Linda judges me for eating Italian wedding soup out of a can, and not making it myself. I have hope that one day, when it's my time, Linda and I will reunite and it will be one of the most beautiful things. I have hope that Linda was at my brother's wedding when he married his husband, and that she was there for many things before and after that. I didn't want to be angry anymore. I was tired of being angry.

And while faith can make me angry, hope can give me clarity.



Untitled

Dr. Joseph Draper

Associate Professor, Humanities

Losing Faith

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Jacob Pardo '23

I think I was only nine or ten years old when my little sister was taken to the hospital for the first of many visits. It all started when she was watching cartoons, and complained that she was seeing two of every character. When the optometrist couldn't find anything wrong with her eyes, she was taken to the hospital. That's when they found the tumor.

We were lucky to find it so early, they said, because we got the chance to spend more time with her. I don't actually remember the first time I heard about the tumor—I think I was too young to understand the significance of it. Yes, she was sick, but the doctors were seeing her and she was going to get better, just like any other sickness. Most importantly, I remembered, I had faith that she would recover.

Something changed, though. Soon the tumor was called cancer, a word I knew was scary even back then. And my sister was changing—not only was the tumor pressing on her brain more and more, causing her to move unstably and slur her speech, but the chemotherapy and radiation were also beginning to take a toll on her body. She went through a total physical change, losing a lot of her hair, growing weaker, becoming less coherent and mobile by the day, and by some point the sassy, active, loving little girl I once knew had totally transformed. Even back then, I felt that cancer was taking my sister away from me.

This was when even my parents started to scare me with how desperate they were. At some point, they were even looking into stuff like “natural medicine” and voodoo dolls just to try to get their daughter back. This is when I doubled down on faith, praying constantly because I had been taught that God could perform miracles, that all things were possible through him. That's the strongest I've ever believed in him in my life, because I was taught that if I believed hard enough, he could save my sister.

Our last day together is like a blur in my head—I think my mind tries not to go back there just as a defense mechanism. I can remember a few things about it though, like that my whole family was there, that it was the only time I've seen my father cry, and that she kept fighting to live even to her last breath. The wake and funeral are just as fuzzy in my head, I think for the same reasons.

It was only when the whole thing was over that I realized, my prayer had done absolutely nothing. Our whole family had hoped, and believed, and prayed so hard, and God did nothing—we were just as well off with the voodoo dolls. How could an all-loving God allow a child to go through that, to be painfully destroyed from the inside out while her family could do nothing but pray? If he could perform miracles in my religion class, why not for his faithful?

At first I quit the church out of anger, but then I quit it out of necessity. After all, people would tell me that her death was a necessary part of God's plan, and how horrific would it be to believe in such a cruel God?

I will never meet a braver person than Kaylin Grace Pardo. She was only six years old—barely old enough to understand the disease she had, and definitely too young to grasp the physical and mental changes she was going through. The constant visits to the hospital, being around all the medicine and machinery must've been terrifying, especially since parents aren't allowed in the room for radiation treatments. She saw her whole family so desperate and scared for her, but she kept fighting until the very end. She must've had the most faith of all of us.

We were lucky to be able to spend time with her—I will never forget the generosity

of the Make-A-Wish Foundation and Give Kids The World Village, who allowed us to make the most of our last year with her. When it was over, my mom asked me (not sure herself) whether it would've been better for Kaylin to have never existed or for her to have existed but died so young. It might be selfish, but I wouldn't give up the good memories I had with her.

Even so, my relationship with God was permanently severed after that. Could you blame me? To a child, the only lessons learned would be that bad things happen to innocent people, that God doesn't help dying children, and that prayers offered in faith do nothing. Even if I did die and end up meeting God, I wouldn't know what to say to him. My mom once told me that she would curse him out, I think I'd ask him if I just didn't pray hard enough.



Asphalt Garden
Nicholas Pastore '22

Interview with Juliet Grames

Shelagh O'Neil '20 and Hope Winkin '21

Students Shelagh O’Neil and Hope Winkin conducted an interview with Grames to not only discuss her novel, but also her writing process and any advice she would give people who are interested in writing their own novel one day.

When asked about the writing process and how long the novel took to complete, Grames stated that her process involved a lot of note taking, the pre-plotting of each scene before writing, and then researching and conducting numerous interviews starting in 2011. Another key component in completing this story involved traveling to Ellis Island, Italian ghettos in Hartford, Connecticut, and living in Ievoli, Italy, the first location of the story. By going through this extensive writing process, Grames knew that when her story was completed, she did everything in her power to tell the story of her grandmother.

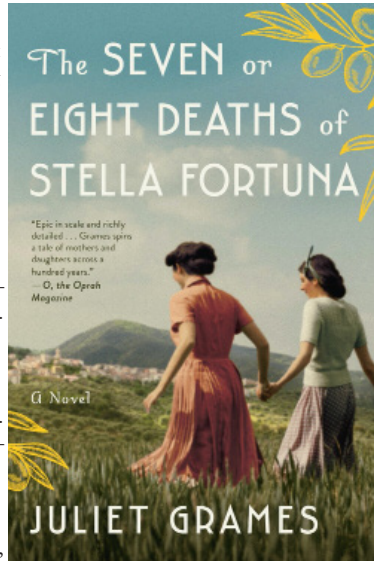
After discussing her writing process, Grames touched upon the importance of this story and how completing it with every detail, including some that talked difficult subjects like rape, was necessary. At one point in the novel, Stella is raped by her husband in the bathroom while on their honeymoon in Canada. Grames expressed how difficult it was to write and talk about the sexual abuse of her grandmother, but without these tough moments in the novel, she stated, “I do not think the book could have survived without it.” By including these moments, Grames knew that she would not only be defending her grandmother who experienced a tragedy that was viewed as nothing during this time period, but she also wants to defend other women who were abused in this same way and express the wrongfulness of this abuse.

“Abuse is passed down through generations and victims are made. Their damage can be passed on if you do not talk about it which is why I knew I needed to include this in the novel.” -Juliet Grames

Juliet’s concluding thoughts and advice

By the end of the interview, Grames expressed the great joy she had towards her story and that there was nothing that she would change about it. To conclude our discussion she provided advice for any aspiring writers:

“Editing is everything for new writers... edit edit edit. Just don’t give up, it is a lot of work and it is hard, but always write.” -Juliet Grames



Poe

try

An Unbearable Letter of Honesty

Rosa De Martinis '22

I'm sorry.
I can not change how I feel no matter how much I desire to substitute it with
dullness.
I am no longer guarded by my thorns, but blessed with the perfume of my petals.

I am the strong elm and you are something I can not shake off my branches.
no matter how hard the wind blows and my imagination and reality collide, my stub-
bornness holds you ransom.
You stay here. It seems as if you have always resonated in me.
The vision created in my mind was brought to me in real life. But there are things in
this life that are not what they seem.
They seem beautiful but are rotten at the root.

It appears that I can't escape from you in my heart and head. Even when my eyes are
closed, my mind still sees. Your unknown spirit haunts me and all things are covered
with fingerprints from your ghost.

Relieve me!

Dear saint please depart from me or enter gently into my state.

Yet, I am so happy to be unhappy; to feel is a pleasure. Even though I am saddened at
times, I feel solace in my little shell of wonderment. I desire not to break it with the
reality, for ignorance is bliss.

My soul is already yours. For what is the reason that you already have possession of
it? I truly don't know. I gift it to you with open hands and an open heart.
It is. It just is.

For I am not in love with you, dear saint.
I am in admiration and in curiosity.
For your spirit has bewitched me and I can no longer pry my eyes nor mind off of
you.
I don't wish on stars; they do not know what I want.
But I do confess to the moon; she knows how I feel.
Even if I am proven wrong, my heart is grateful to have rhythm again.

And with that being said, my neighbor, I beg of thee to open your eyes like you have
done to mine.

Metronome

Sean Toomey '21

Drip.

The sound of the water falling into the sink slowly intensifies.

Drop.

Like a metronome setting the mundane pace for the rest of his life.

Nowhere to go, no one to be

To the naked eye the sink is pristine, nothing concerning except the occasional

Drip.

Those who can truly see him know a different story.

It's clear that more water wants to escape, but nonetheless, the sink never alters the hypnotic pace of

Drop.

A faucet condemned to the duty of a dam

One so thick that it seems like water will never flow from that sink again.

A Profound State of Unease and Dissatisfaction

Adrianna Kinney '20

Fear the body in front of your eyes
All flesh, bone, muscle, blood
What is a body if not so
No sentiment, feelings, desires, fears
A lonely vessel going on and on and on and on
But it gets too close to the soul
And you want to change, fix, join, tear
A reminder of everything wrong
But you remain the same, stationary, fixed, broken
An aimless soul without a body to shape
Body and soul, body and soul
Together always and always at odds
How else to ease the divine error made?
Embrace the body you already have
All ridges, curves, wounds, scars
What is a body if all you have
Every spirit, energy, temper, force
An endless expanse if ready for metamorphosis

I Hate You

Alexandra Keane '20

I hate you
The way my dog hates his toy
But can't go anywhere without it.
I hate you
The way my brothers hate me when I tease them
But still hug me at the end of the day.
I hate you the way teachers hate their students when they act up
But forgive them and move on.
I hate you the way some people wish they would just die
But then realize that they have more to live for.
I hate you
The way a girl hates the guy who broke her heart
But doesn't want to lose him.
I hate you when you lie
But I love you when it's just me, you, and the truth

Respect

Mary Christine Costantino '20

Respect
something I ask myself if I will ever receive

treated differently because of who I am
and the things I do

Respect
I wonder, how come I never obtain it?

Is it because of my “crazy” personality?
or because I am “slow” with learning?

Respect
in order to acquire

I'm going to have to give people what they want
but how will I do that without changing who I am?

Respect
is one thing I never really sense from others

the only time I witnessed it...
was when my mom passed away

Respected
because of what I was going through
helping out as much as I could
and being as independent as possible

Respected
because I had to grow up faster

I had to do things others didn't have too
it was like I was beginning a brand new life

Respect
I am looked at one way but not the other

oh how people can be so demeaning
causing so much pain

Respect
try looking at me with a different set of eyes

a set that reaches my soul
so you can see all that I have been through

Respect
do you now realize?

do you now see why I am so frustrated?
when you look at me like I am less than you

Respect
is something we all deserve
because everyone has a story
and something they are currently battling

Respect
because of how I've been treated.....

I hope to always respect others
to make them feel nor smaller nor greater than me; but equal

Respect

People See Me Emmett Perkins '20

Do you ever feel like your brain is ever-changing?
The connections I harbor between body and brain, and mouth and brain, ears and brain, eyes and brain, face and brain — they weaken and strengthen; they ebb and they flow like tides, crackling under the water, not like the steady-strong copper-coated cables of my peers.

A new day, a new symptom, a new adaptation.

Yesterday, body staunchly refused to listen to the commands I barked at it through brain. Fingers twist; legs go limp. I bump into a trashcan.

I reach for the computer mouse, and I knock an item off the desk.

I trip, I fall, I sprawl.

I resort to crayons and paper to draw what my body feels like — corkscrew limbs and a frown on the stick figure face.

Today, it's my mouth motor that's failed — I stutterstumble and hmm and um, nothing like the eloquent young man of yesterday who could talk your ear off a mile a minute.

I search for words and come up gasping.

Tomorrow, it could be a bad brain day. A bad body day. A combination of the two is most likely.

I know I'm disabled — it just shows some days more than others. I am lucky enough that people see me, hear me, when I'm well —

It halfway makes up for the confusion when I am not.



Roses in June
Rosa De Martinis '22

American Made Karina Gomes '21

But summer shades farther away.
My mind knows my mother tongue
as thoughts flow freely here.
My head is lightweight
like it has finally touched down on earth again
3,000 miles away, I count the stars
in the back seat of the rental car
under the coordinates from my home away from home.
A piece of me feels missing there,
it longs for the place my blood knows.
But here, they see right through me,
with white stars and red stripes painted
across my forehead
And still, as the stars look down at me,
the glistening gypsies of the Milky Way,
I find comfort that I may leave home
but the moon will follow me.

Fuji

Rosalie Beith LLARC

A California farmers' market
Sunday morning,
My young daughter for company.
A Fuji apple
Perfectly firm
Red with dappled yellow.
One bite, and I am filled
with the taste of mist
hovering over the mountainside
In the early dawn light.
A Japanese wood-block snow-capped image,
Soul-satisfying sweetness and
The radiance of pure love —
A flawless dream.

I Keep Growing To Want Less

Noah Timothy Walsh '23

People dream dreadfully large,
Please daringly digress,
I Plead you to
Reconsider

It's about alcoves babe,
Never been about,
Pleated Pants or over-tight-ties,

Their future lies in handshake-scrolls and
Wailing White Whales
Some hollow hulls
For American Dreams

My hope lies in Nooks and Crannies
Not breakfast, but
The little things

Coffee cups to leave out
One-room apartments to stroll about
A partner to join in terrible cookouts

Most Importantly,
A peaceful-love to shine throughout,

And alcoves too, without a doubt.



Blank Slate
Spencer Gagnon '23

Fict

ion

The
Cracked
Seed

50

Jacob Pardo '23

Once upon a time, in the long ago when tall creatures walked in herds among the earth, a small seed fell from his mother tree and landed upon the ground. Before he could take root, he was trampled underfoot, and left cracked where he landed. Although he was small, and although he was left cracked in the footprint of a giant, the seed knew that he could one day grow tall, taller than the creature that had so carelessly stomped on him, and taller even than his mother tree. He knew he would, because he knew he could.

Mustering up all his strength, the cracked seed took root—he buried himself in the soil, sipping up some refreshing water and cozying up against the roots of his mother tree. In a matter of weeks, the cracked seed grew up into the small seedling. Although he was small, and although he was not nearly as tall as the stomping creatures, he stood proudly, knowing that he would one day tower over all the forest.

But life was not so simple for the short seedling; when he was only a few weeks old, the clouds blotted out the sky, and it began to rain. A welcome sign, he thought, as water was the source of life, and the more he drank, the taller he would grow. But the rain did not stop, it kept on for many days and many nights until it flowed past him in rivers, and the soil began to lift up, threatening to leave hold of his roots. But the short sapling held on tightly, grasping onto the roots of his mother tree, knowing that one day the rain would stop, and he could grow taller than the cleansing streams. One day, he dreamed, he would grow taller even than the clouds.

When the clouds gave way to the sunlight and all the puddles had dried up, the seedling was once again free to grow. In a manner of months, the small seedling grew into a proud sapling. Although he was not yet a tree, he reveled in how much he had grown, and in how the ground he had once been so close to was inching ever farther away. But growth was only just beginning for the small sapling, and he was not yet free from the dangers of the earth. As the months went by, it seemed that rain was becoming rarer and rarer, and the sapling rejoiced, eager to soak up the sunshine and wary of the rivers which threatened to wash him away. But, the longer the sun stared down at the sapling, the dryer he began to feel. It was not long before he shriveled up in want of water, and the ground around him began to crack and split like hard clay. The sapling thirsted, shriveling up in the hot sun, but still clung to the earth, knowing that he would one day be allowed to taste water again.

It was then that the sapling was caught by surprise—his mother tree began to pass on what was left of her moisture to him through her roots. The sapling felt sad, as he knew she needed the water as much as he did, but was still relieved not to suffer so much in the hot sun. Eventually, after months of waiting, the sky gave way to clouds, and the rain fell again.

Once he had perked up again with water, and once he felt that his mother tree was also drinking her share, the sapling was once again free to grow. In a matter of years, the sapling grew and grew, until eventually he became a tree. And the tree grew and grew, until one day he was half the height of his mother tree. Although he was not the tallest in the forest, he still rejoiced, as he had outgrown the careless creatures who had trampled him all those years ago. The tree knew that he would continue to grow, taller than his mother tree, taller than the clouds, and one day, he dreamed, taller than the sky. He was already too tall to get trampled, too rooted to be washed away, and big enough to hold water through the summer.

But the perils of the earth would not be outgrown so easily. Although he did not know what had started it, and although he did not know what to do about it, the tree recognized the feeling of fire. He could feel the pain of the forest around him, he could sense the smoke of his fallen siblings, and, as he grasped his mother tree in fear, he once again felt as vulnerable as a little cracked seed. But his mother tree was not afraid—even as she fell, she knew that she would block the path of the flames, sparing her little tree.

After the flames had died, and the rain had washed away the ash, the tree stood lonely in the forest. Although he was sad, he knew that he would one day sow seeds of his own, and that he could one day spare another sapling's life.

Now the tallest tree in his vicinity, the tree was left free to grow. And in a manner of decades, he grew tall—taller than the creatures who had stomped him, taller than the puddles, taller than his mother tree and even taller than the clouds. The tall tree stood proudly in the forest, thinking of being cracked, of being nearly drowned, of facing the first dry summer, of the sacrifices made to allow him to grow, and he felt happy. He had grown up strong because he knew he could, and he knew that one day, his saplings would grow strong too. The tree knew that he could accomplish anything, and began to reach toward the sky.

And then he got cut down to build a parking lot, the end.



Look Up
Coriander Tighe '23

The Chauffeur

Noah Timothy Walsh '23

Sighing along the cobblestone bricks, the streetlamps bow humbly. Her plaid skirt and slick peacoat appear somber from a distance — a testament to an uneventful evening. I unlock the car, check the cleanliness of the bench, and take my last deep breath of the shift — almost forgetting to stuff the cigarettes I had rolled into my pocket.

The unhappy drop of her body onto the leather is not an unfamiliar sound.

Drive. Keep your eyes on the road. Do not ask questions. These are the conditions of our partnership. I follow rules well.

“There is still enough time to stop on the way for a film tonight, isn’t there?” Her only words rolled across the floor.

“Yes,” I respond shuffling my feet beside the pedals.

I do not flinch when her rings sting the back of my neck.

“...Ma’am”

I have always disliked questions that already have specific answers.

Sometimes I can leave the property. As long as she is busy, I can read the paper and smoke. I do not get out much as I am not paid often, if ever. I guess that she is an okay boss — I have had worse.

“I just thought that love would be different...sorry to weigh you down, William...I appreciate your listening...Goodnight.” I hung up the phone. The absinthe sleeps beside her at the foot of the lamp.