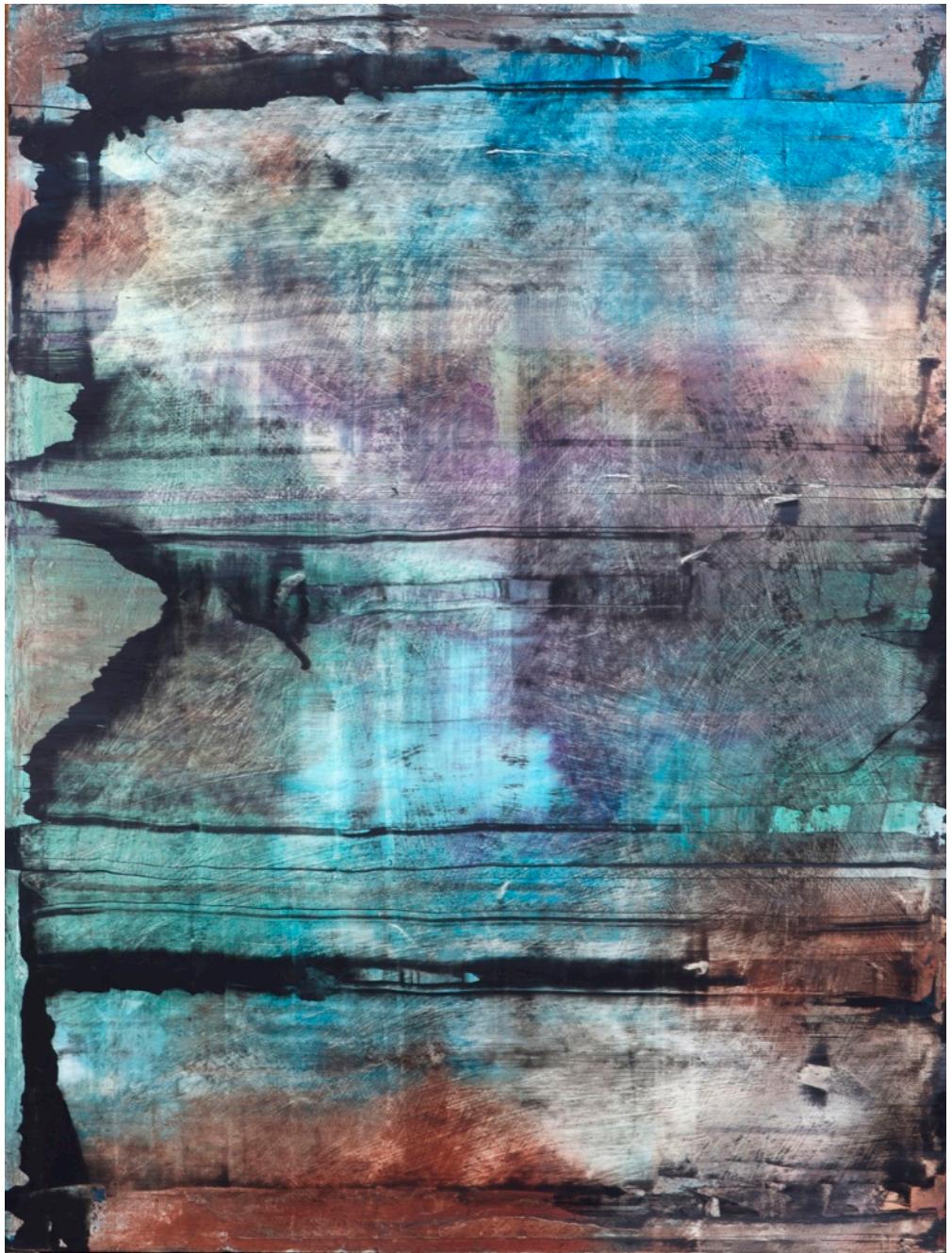


haywire

**A Magazine from the
John-F.-Kennedy School in Berlin**



ISSUE NR. 1 / SPRING 2013:

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CONTENTS

| | |
|---|----|
| PUBLISHER'S NOTE by Lee Beckley | 3 |
| SHORT STORIES | |
| GIRL'S BEST FRIEND by Anh Tho Tran | 4 |
| NORTHERN DOWNPOUR by Milena Kula | 6 |
| POETRY | 8 |
| by Amanda Carrico, Ann Sofie Felisiak, Laura Lyn Bamberger, Milena Kula, Emma Smith | |
| CRITICAL ESSAYS | |
| UNRELINQUISHED PAST by Imke Hinrichsen | 12 |
| THE DUCK POND by Michael Alber | 15 |
| THE TERRIBLE KIND OF FALL by Theo Ringmayr | 18 |
| WAR-RIDDLED RELATIONSHIPS by Chu Thuy Duong | 21 |
| ART TALK | |
| INTERVIEW WITH LUKE WUNSCH- EDWARDS by haywire | 24 |
| POLITICS AND OPINIONS | |
| THE MEAT INDUSTRY by Zachary Wakefield | 31 |
| RUSSIAN SOCIETY, PROTESTS, AND FUTURE by Chu Thuy Duong | 34 |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS | 37 |
| MASTHEAD | 38 |

Publisher's Note

Who We Are

By Lee Beckley

The act of baling hay could seem like an innocuous task. But it is out of this tangled mess and contortions that our story derives.

We celebrate the cultural hybridity of Berlin's John-F.-Kennedy-School, but are often too rushed, exhausted, and without the words or medium to appreciate it. Emerging from this dizzying pace, the English Department expressed a desire to publish and compile the array of student writing talents in our classes.

The act of creating something out of nothing requires a restless spirit. It is often when things in our lives malfunction that we realize our need to express. So it becomes a will of time to act on our elusive inspirations: and create. This fleeting, erratic nature of creation

remains mysterious in our text-saturated world.

In this spirit, this collection of

haywire | 'hā,wīr |

adjective, informal
erratic; out of control:
imagination had gone haywire.

ORIGIN early 20th century (originally U.S.):
from hay + wire, from the use of hay-baling wire in makeshift repairs.

works serves to highlight JFK's student creativity and originality through poems, essays, stories, and

visual art. Chosen by a panel of teachers, professionals, and students in grades 7-12, the works herein stood out to us with special significance in our search for intertextual relationships.

Publishing is messy but fun. No editor is an island; working on this magazine required patience and understanding in working with others. We hope you relish the art.

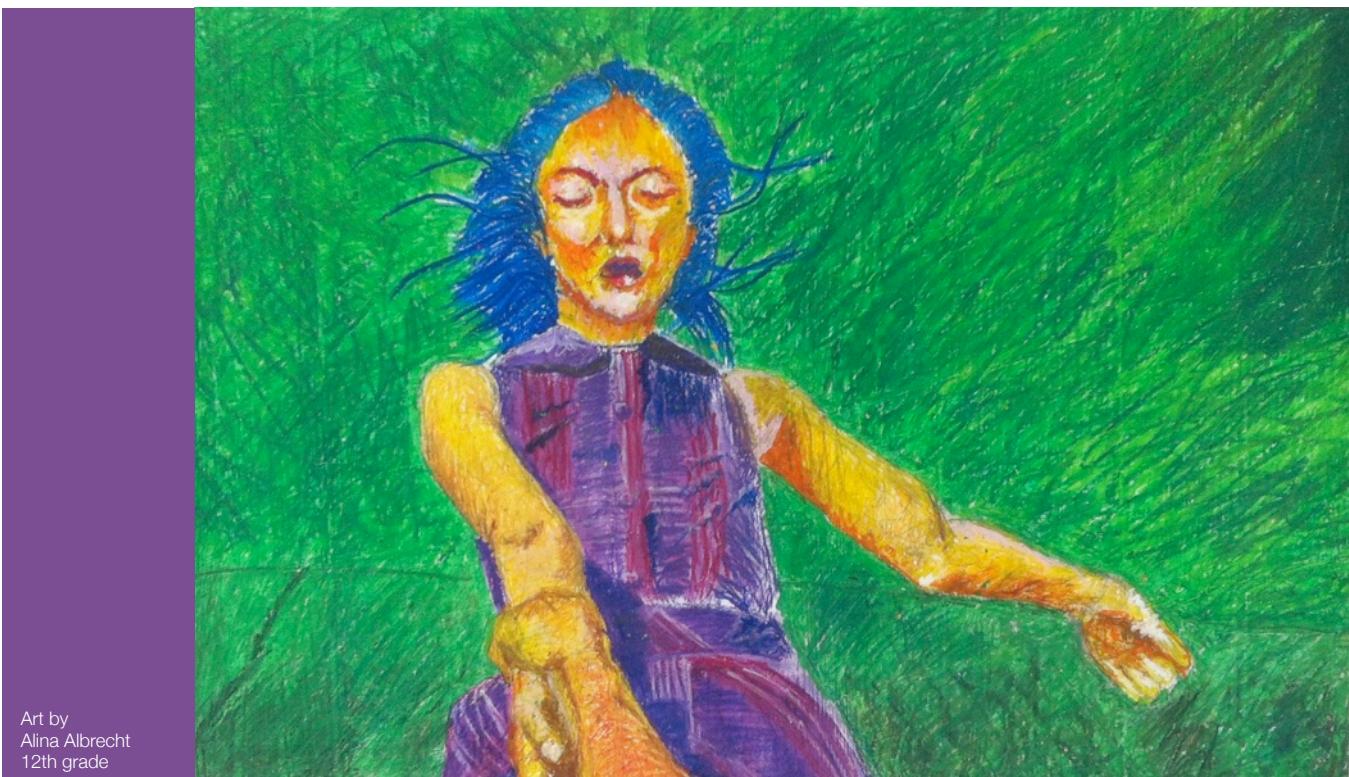
If you appreciate our debut magazine, please consider contributing to *haywire*. We are looking for original work including creative essays, art, poems, photography, or any other medium you deem worthy of others looking at.

Send submissions to:
haywirejfks@gmail.com



Drawing by Alex Guete, 12th grade

SHORTFICTION



Art by
Alina Albrecht
12th grade

Girl's Best Friend

By Anh Tho Tran, 12th grade

Standing up, my friend is a good 70 inches. He is covered in gold-brown fur and is bow-legged. He is a bit egocentric though affectionate – he naps the day away in a corner yet always manage to find the time to enjoy a nice cup of yogurt and some Oreos with me. My friend is a mutt – with the strangest parentage, if his behavior is to be the judge.

There are a couple of rules in my grandmother's house. But one that always applies is never, ever, under any circumstances, let Roi out. Once he's out, my friend bolts for the signposts, the cars, the trees. I call it "checking email". He comes back after a while, but sometimes I have to run after him myself. And what a sight we make too, me sprinting and screaming at him to go home, him bounding like some kind of mutant jackrabbit every which way.

Usually, he brings nothing more home than a satisfied grin and some fleas, but on that day, he brought home something quite unpleasant.

Did I tell you that my friend is an avid hunter? Flies, mosquitos, rats, he catches them all. Then he sits and smiles. The self-satisfaction simply radiates off him. I swear he knows the meaning of his name, and basks in his glorious conquest of anything invading his domain.

On that day though, I had accidentally opened the door, and like an eel, he slipped past me and into the streets. If I didn't care what my grandmother would say upon seeing her precious out in the streets, or that the idiot would get himself ran over, or that he would have made it into the cooking pot as the local delicacy, I wouldn't have followed him. But, like such an obedient granddaughter, and such a caring friend, I followed.

When I reached the corner though, I realized that I shouldn't have wasted my breath. His royal furness himself was charging down the streets towards me.

"You stupid dog!"

I wasn't going to let him out of my sight again. We were so close to the gate after all,

just a couple more steps and he'll be back in the house, and the Amazing Race would be over. He braked suddenly, nails screeching on the cement, and sniffed at the neighbor's nearby flowerpots.

Then, he lunged. It happened so quickly it was over before I knew it. I heard a terrified squeak, an ominous cracking of something that wasn't pottery, and then my friend was hightailing it for the house. With something black in his mouth.

"Damn."

Those words didn't exactly convey my utter dismay at his lovely present. He caught a sewer rat! And he was now in the house, dragging its corpse around with goodness knows what else trailing behind him. I managed to close the gate at the last minute, and watched with a horror-struck face as he circled the house with the thing clasped inside his mouth, showing it off like a star on the runaway. If it got on my bed, I would kill him – girl's best friend or not.

Luckily, it didn't. Roi had the courtesy to deposit the stinking rat

in the kitchen, smiling crookedly, evidently pleased with himself. Me? I wondered if he wanted me to cook it, after all, he'd watched with avid glee when I fried dried squid. Most people would be sick looking at dead creatures – particularly if it had been alive only minutes before, but I thought that this was a once in a life time opportunity to have an up-close experience of Animal Planet. Plus, I've always had a rather morbid curiosity, so I bent down to have a look.

Have you ever seen a rat up close? No, not those white pet rats, the sewer rats.

This one was definitely no beauty. I could see its ragged teeth, and the shocked expression on its face. I estimated it to be about the length of my arm, tail and all. For a rat, it was quite well-fed. Then again, its big stomach was probably the reason why Roi snapped its spine so easily.

Though I was now faced with a dilemma. How do I dispose of the rat? If my dad, mom, grandmother, or aunt was at home, I would have

demanded the immediate removal of the vermin at once.

They weren't though.

So I decided to discard of it myself. I was going to do it CSI style – minus the latex gloves. Contrary to what people believe, sewer rats do not smell, they do however, feel a bit like a broken rag doll. A broken, bloody, slightly warm rag doll. Roi watched the process with fascination, clearly wondering why on earth wasn't I frying it in the pan. I thought I saw him cast a disapproving look when I threw the plastic bag containing the rat, and the two plastic bags that I had covered my hands with, in the trash.

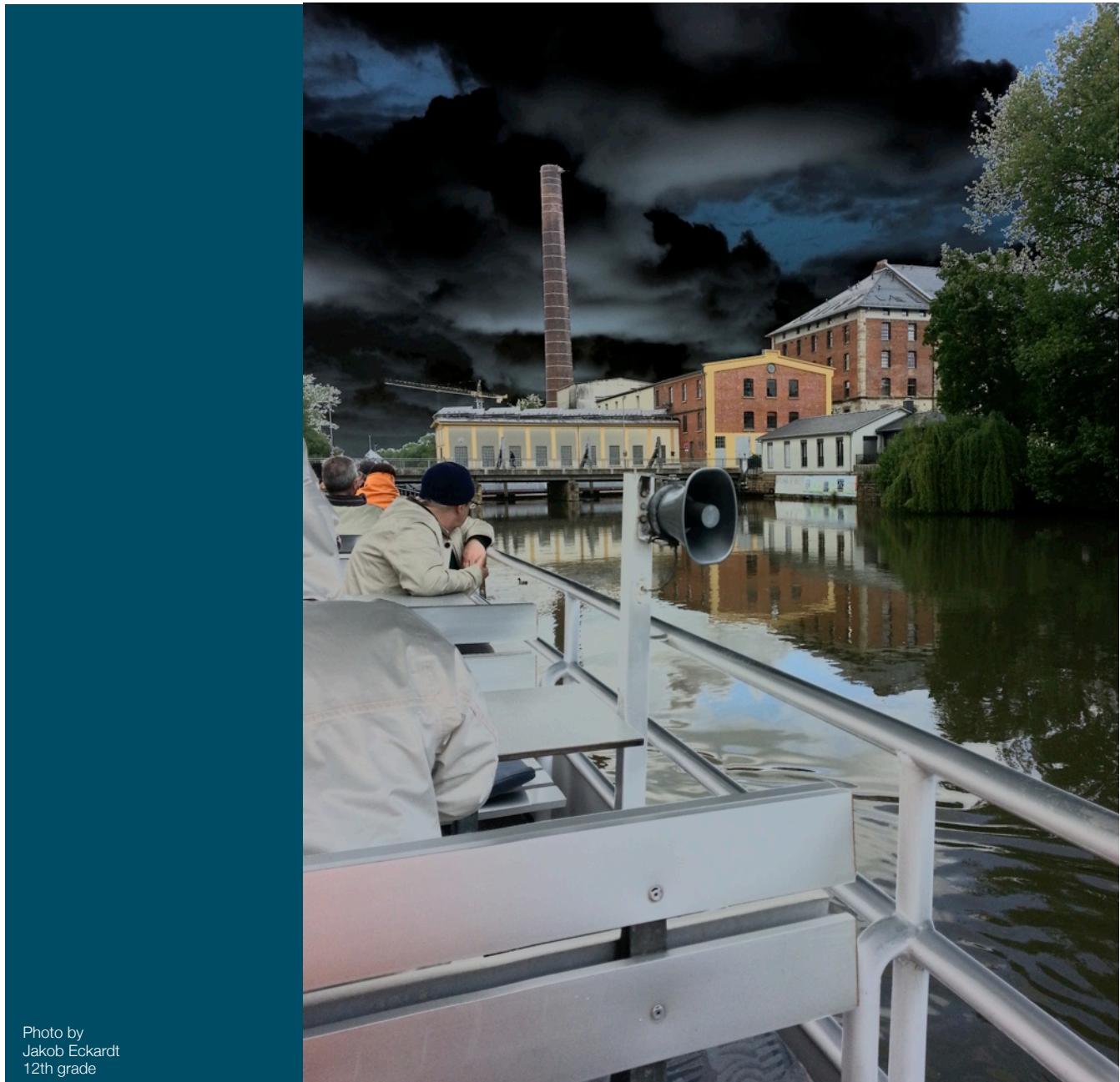
"You stupid dog." I said finally, glaring at him.

He stared back, one ear perked up curiously, mouth in a peculiar half-pout.

"You ruined fine cuisine!" he seemed to say, "Why?"



Drawing by
Alex Guete
12th grade



Northern Downpour

By Milena Kula, 12th grade

The house was empty except for me because Daddy was away at work and had left me at home to play until the Nanny came. I was bored. The sky refused to let the sun through because it was covered with clouds as thick as cushions and so I was stuck in the huge empty house unable to go outside.

My room extended no beckoning finger to me to play with all the myriad toys within. I walked to the living room but it too was empty; the sofa looked too large to lay oneself on without sinking into it like the sea.

When I came to the kitchen to get a cup of milk, something was lying on the side board that caught my attention. It was glistening through the light of the lamp. It looked ... like diamonds, real diamonds.

Diamonds! They must be, I thought. Forgetting all about the milk I wanted to get, I frantically tried to reach up to grab them, but they were too high. How unfair, I thought, all I need is to grow a few more inches. Why couldn't I just be taller? Why couldn't Daddy just quickly come from work to pick them up for me? Or why couldn't Nanny just come a little earlier?? It was so stupid.

Being only six was sooo unfair. I tried pushing a chair from the dining room table into the kitchen to climb onto. But the mahogany wood (a new word I had just learned!) wouldn't budge. I tried to get to the ladder that usually was in the basement and that was just about okay for me to drag over the floor, but the cleaning lady had locked it into the cupboard. And so I

helplessly sat down on the stone marble floor in the kitchen, trying the useless hypnosis that I had read up about in a big large book a week ago. But the diamonds would not budge. The pretty things wouldn't budge! How I wanted them! How I wished for them! I was glued with my eyes to their lovely color. They were exactly the ones I had always wanted. What I've always wanted; since the day I was born 6 years back was to be an actress.

But, as my Daddy's friends had told me, the only way I could become an actress was if I had talent and money. The talent part was easy; I already have it. I read all plays and acted out each character from theaters and films I had found in my Daddy's big library. I loved doing it; I acted all the time to keep me from being bored. Sometimes, just to make life more interesting, I pretended to my Nanny that I had been hurt, and she always believed me. Then I would try harder things, for example suddenly pretending I was absolutely devastated that my mom had disappeared when I was 4 (even though I couldn't remember her at all) and crying my eyes out about it.

But I still missed her, because I had no one to call Mommy when I was sad at the night. And above all things, she was an actress! And Daddy thought that I couldn't be an actress because Mommy had disappeared because she acted. And so Daddy said to me I couldn't have any money for something called acting classes or to go to a real acting school where there's a stage! And so if I had the diamonds, I could go to a jewelry shop and get some money for them. Then I could keep some just to look at and the rest for the acting school around the corner where Madame Crousse

teaches Drama, because now she couldn't refuse!

You see, even though I looked younger for my age and was shorter than most other 6 year olds, my Daddy told me I was much older in my mind because I knew long words such as the word "beautiful" and "passion". He said that I was very passionate in being bossy, but I never knew exactly what that meant.

I looked at the diamonds again and felt like skipping and singing my favorite song from Annie because finally my dream would come true. Finally, I could be happy! Finally, I could show Daddy what a wonderful actress I was! Finally, I could do the one thing I loved in the entire universe and show the world that I could do it, that I was talented, that I would be wonderful. And maybe, when Mommy saw me on screen, she would come back to us. And so I sat there and I dreamed and dreamed and waited for someone, anyone taller than me to pick up the diamonds for me, so I could finally be an actress.

After waiting half a million years later, the Nanny came in to clean the house. She was late, as usual, and came in hugging and puffing like a steam engine (and she looked like one, too). But instead of telling her off (like I usually would), I ran up to her and exclaimed in a honey-sweet voice:

"Nanny, it's so good to see you at last!"

Nanny, surprised at my answer, closed the door stoutly and hung up her jacket before answering.

"It's good to see you too," she replied in her booming voice. I now had to think of an easy way to get her to pick up the diamonds.

You see, I was never really nice to Nanny because I much rather wanted to play with Daddy than her.

She was so boring and always wanted to clean everything straight away. But then I thought I could just straight out ask her.

"Nanny, could I ask you to do something for me? Will you promise to do it?" I questioned. She said "Yes," and inwardly I jumped with happiness.

"Daddy put something on the side table in the kitchen and I can't reach it. I really want to have it though. Can you get it for me?"

She came downstairs with me and I pointed at the diamonds lying on the round high table. I was excited; finally I was reaching my goal.

"Right there, Nanny, can you give them to me?" I said in a rather uncontrolled voice. I was practically kicking the air with joy and anticipation. Nanny peered at the diamonds as if she were looking for something.

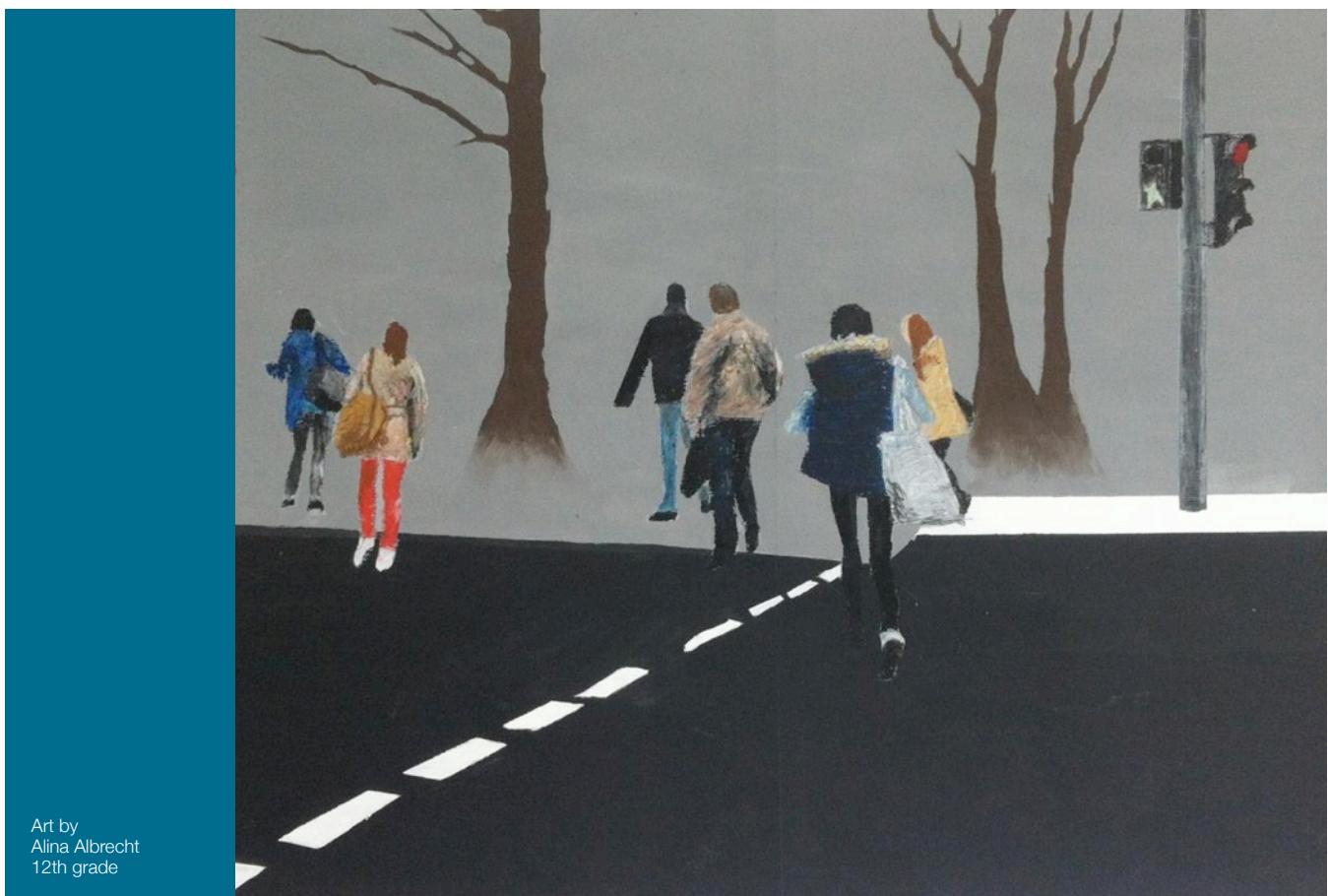
"The diamonds there!" I say frantically, very sure they were not only in my head. They had to, had to be real. "Right there," I added, pointing again. Why did she leave me waiting? I wanted to be an actress! Nanny started chuckling, then laughing right out loud like the loud engine of a car driving at 140 km per hour.

"What?" I said, curious and confused by her strange reaction. Didn't she see them? Did she need glasses for everything like my Daddy needed them?

"What is it?" I repeated, when she continued laughing. She looked at me with a sad, poor look on her face. It was not the nice look you got from adults. And then she said:

"My dear girl, there's only broken glass!"

NEW POEMS



Art by
Alina Albrecht
12th grade

HIDDEN TRUTH

by Amanda Carrico, 12th grade

I thought the truth was hidden in me,
when truly it was right in front of me.
All the pieces started to unfold,
revealing their true colors.
Answers were there.
Answers that I so longed for.
All of it
was right in front of me
So,
so why,
why could I not see,
the truth hidden in front of me?
The truth hidden in the enemy
that I do not know
for that is another story.

EVERYTHING

lost souls
lost hope
losing the only sanity left
trapped, caged
no way to escape
everything
everything looks the same
always
always
the same
Dull are the colors
Dull are the walls
everything
everything
lifeless
everything
everything
Gone

LISTEN

Listen.
Listen,
when you feel something's after you.
Just listen,
listen,
and you'll hear
my name.

S BAHN

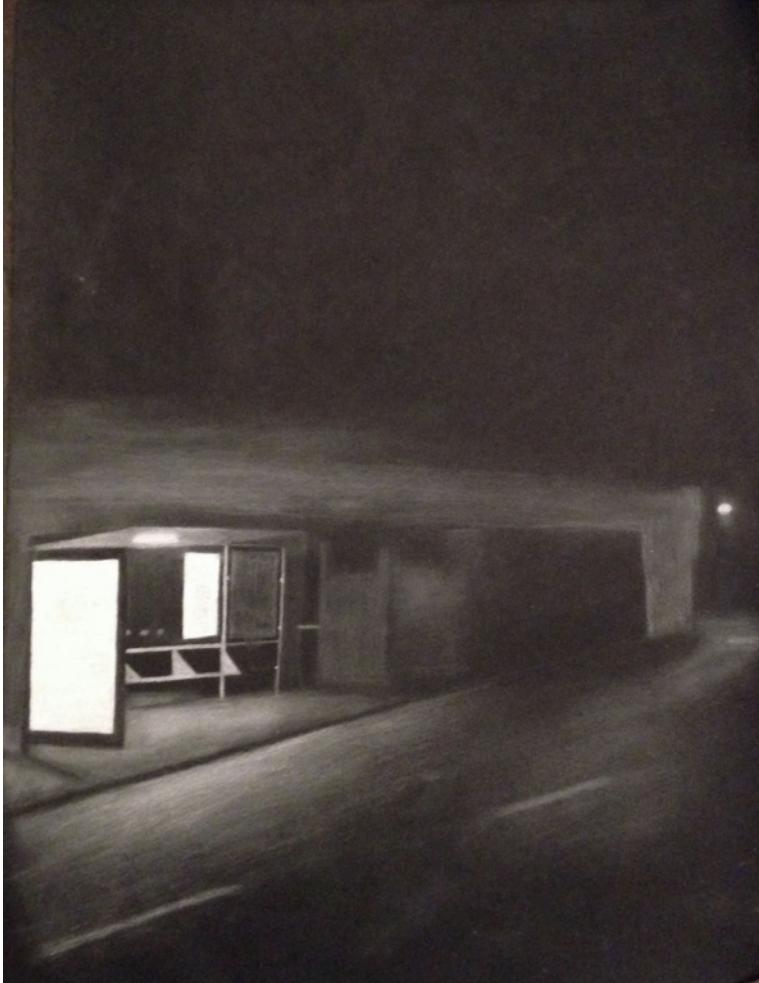
By Ann Sophie Felisiak, 10th grade

I sit and wait
in the frigid darkness,
the shadows lurking among the trees.
I see a dim light behind all the black.

It's so quiet out here.
I look at my watch.
Already so late?
I hear a noise.

The creature creeps along the dark,
like an ugly worm in the rain.
The enormous beast ceases in the shrieking pain.
It widens its jaw.

I go; stepping into the bright lights.
I sit down; look at my watch.
The S-Bahn was too late.
I had to wait.



ALONE

By Laura Lyn Bamberger, 10th grade

Reaching out,
grabbing hold of nothing.
Verbalizing thought,
but not heard.
Wilting inside
without nourishment,
of love,
care,
devotion.

Art by
Brooke Coskuner
12th grade



THE PIANO IN THE BACK ROOM

by Milena Kula, 12th grade

Sometimes, I need to get away from people. I need time on my own.

All that talk, all the smiles, all the laughing.

All the loudness.

Sometimes, I want to listen to myself. I need to listen to what it's saying to me inside.

Hello? Are you there?

Sometimes, it gets so far away, the inside of me, I'm scared I'm going to lose myself.

Forget who I am.

Hey? Where are you?

I run away from people, to forget who they are, to see who I am, to find back to the voice.

It's not too hard to get away, but not all places are good. Not everything suitable.

There are two places in the world where I know I'll find my voice again.

A Piano

A piano makes a room speak, feel alive, so alive if think I can touch the air with my fingertips and brush through gently. A piano gives a room a fragment of flavour from another world, one I cannot grasp.

A piano brings a certain silence, a silence that awaits the touch of a hand, a hand to press a key and make- music. This is me. The rhythm. In me.

Can you hear it?

Nature.

I need a tree. Or a leaf. Or a flower. Or the sky.

A place where I can look up at the sky and see the vastness of it, see the deep inexorable beautiful blue.

This is me. The wind. The breath. In me.

Can you hear it?

Hey! There you are.

My voice has been found.

I've come back to who I am.

I see the clouds, I see the stillness, I see the being of the world.

And nothing to distract me.

It's the stillness.

Can you hear it?

Hey. You're there. That's good.



Art by
Nik Sweetwood
12th grade

THE FIRE

By Emma Smith, 10th grade

There is but one key to life's strong lock,
and this key is made of steel.

The only thing to melt the key, as an angel said to me
is not by force or words or sword, but the fire of our wills.

And so I'll lock my white hot heart inside a green-stained jar,
and I'll bury the jar deep in the land of what will never be.

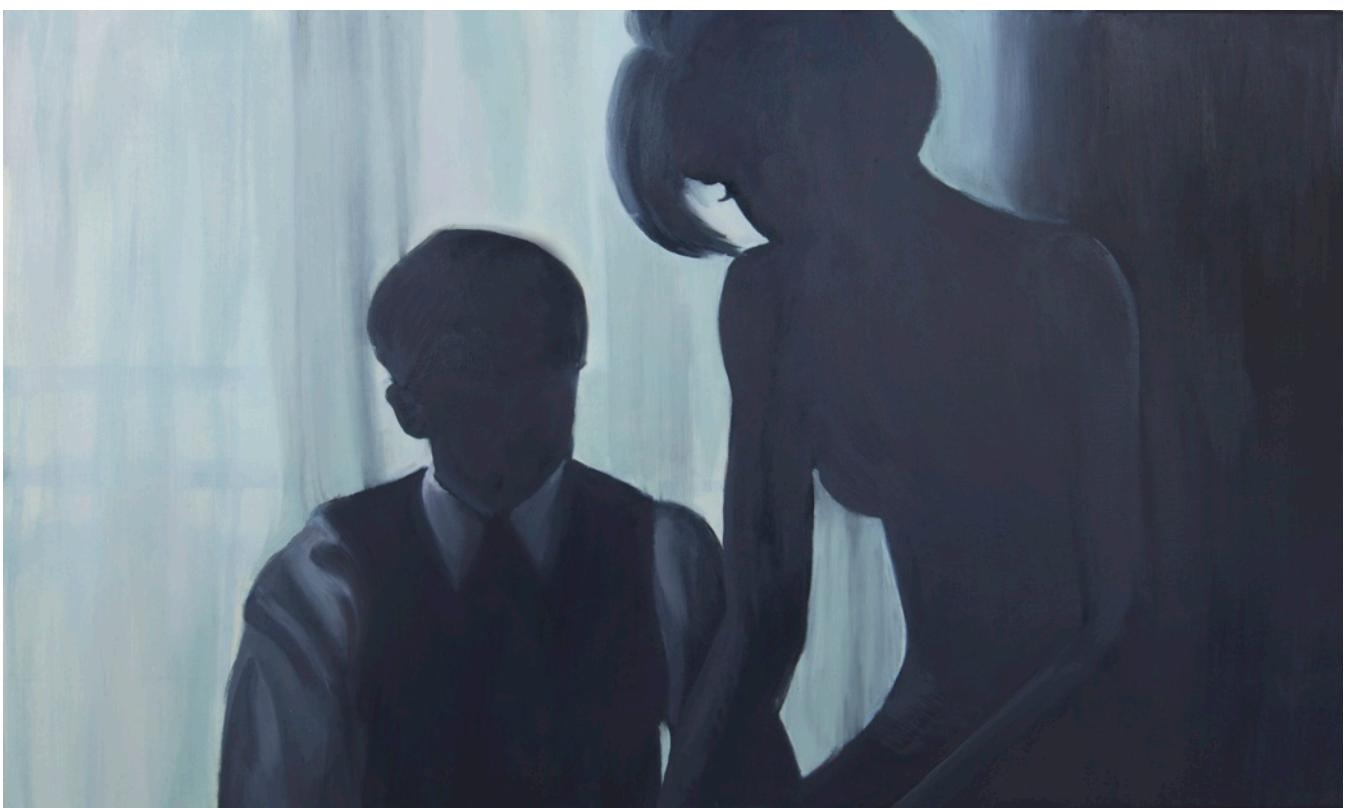
Now, the only thing that haunts my dreams,
is the fear the fire will ignite and forever melt the key.

And so my soul must hide away in the ever rushing waves,
in the land of broken hearts and the land of shallow graves.



Digital Art by Olivia Gallup, 8th grade

CRITICAL ESSAYS



Painting by Ericah Lewis, 12th grade

Unrelinquished Past

The Function of Time in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*

By Imke Hinrichsen, 12th grade

Whether time passes in a flash or in a burst, sways along unobtrusively, or gravely drags the hands around the face of a clock, its onward motion never ceases. Time determines our life in every detail; the past shapes our present, yet we frequently recognize ourselves caught in reminiscence against the invincible forces of time – we dream to relive the past.

With dramatic exaggeration literature illuminates this theme – characters who lose their grasp on time tumble through its turbulent currents while

attempting to control it. F. Scott Fitzgerald exemplifies such a destitute protagonist throughout his 1925 novel *The Great Gatsby* in the title figure himself. Due to Gatsby's time disorientation and ignorance for its inevitable and irrevocable passage, he attempts to recreate an idealized version of his past, constructs his life on false aspirations, and finally, is violently murdered.

Unconcerned of the past's invariability, Gatsby invents various myths about his heritage since he is unsatisfied with his true

origins. Not only does the young man pretend to descend from an affluent family in San Francisco and to have inherited his wealth, he further claims an Oxford education and considerable heroism during World War I. Although he declares it as "God's truth" before the narrator Nick, Gatsby "hurried the phrase 'educated at Oxford', or swallowed it, or choked on it" (96). Due to the uncertainty expressed in this evident lie, his entire statement "fell to pieces" (96). He shows an Oxford picture or a medal as

evidence, but even these leave ambiguities about Gatsby's true past. Hence, it soon becomes clear that even his current name, Jay Gatsby, is false. He had been born as James Gatz to "shiftless and unsuccessful farm people" in North Dakota, and, unwilling to accept the unchangeable circumstances of his childhood, he "invented" his idol Jay Gatsby, a "conception [to which] he was faithful to the end" (63).

Sinister facts about Gatsby's previous life are soon revealed by his antagonist Tom. The actual source of his wealth consists of bootlegging, and he has "sold grain alcohol over the counter" and has tolerated the imprisonment of a co-worker in his place (85). Moreover, Gatsby only spends five months at Oxford due to an obligation by a military program. Since his past is unimpressive and does not accord to Gatsby's ideals, he believes it is possible to promote a different image of it through lies and heroic stories.

Gatsby fails to realize that his past will eternally remain imprinted in his personality – his insecurity and graciousness do not comply with the blind arrogance and self-centeredness of the wealthy, aristocratic society in which he strives for acceptance. His tales can never truly conceal the truth, but nevertheless Gatsby clings to them in his superficial ambition to change his past. Not only do false illusions surround Gatsby's mourned history, but he also builds his daily life around superficial aspirations for the immediate future.

The futile hopes to regain the lost love of his youth Daisy dominate Gatsby's entire life, and he refuses to recognize the past as terminated. Since Gatsby returns from his military service in World

War I, which initially separates him from Daisy, he undertakes every conceivable approach to her. His house faces hers across the bay, he worships the green light at the end of her dock, he hosts flamboyant parties at his house as he awaits Daisy's visit, and finally demands that Nick arrange a meeting with her. However, during his absence Daisy cannot withstand her loneliness in a world of desire and marries the wealthy athlete Tom; both soon have a child.

Although Gatsby is very well informed of this shortly, he aims to recommence the relationship from where it broke off. He is incapable of comprehending the irrevocable passage of time and the impossibility of ignoring incidents of the past whose consequences gravely alter the present. As Nick attempts to clarify this to him, Gatsby comes undone: "Can't repeat the past?", he cri[e]s incredulously, 'Why of course you can!'" (70). Gatsby's conviction to "fix everything the way it was before" pressures torn, guilt-ridden Daisy into exclaiming "I can't help what's passed!," but even this desperate affirmation remains futile (71, 84).

Additionally, the young man feels obliged with meticulous precision in his constant attempts to control time. Already as a child, Gatsby sets up schedules for his entire day. As an adult, he knows that Daisy was apart from him "five years next November" (56). When meeting her again for the first time at Nick's house, Gatsby affirms he had previously met Daisy while standing stiffly against a mantelpiece. "At the pressure of his head," the clock on the mantelpiece falls into Gatsby's "trembling fingers" (55).

When Nick assures him it is an "old clock," its symbolism of the

past and Gatsby's lack of control over it is evident (56). Gatsby's mind – his head – feverishly attempts to approach the past and to recreate it; however, the old times cannot serve this purpose and the clock falls. Subsequently, Gatsby is unable to enforce his will on the past and thus fully loses his grasp on it. His main motivation for ignoring the irrevocability of the past is, nevertheless, his survival instinct. Gatsby builds his entire life around the illusion of a continued relationship with Daisy and if this hope diminishes, so does the purpose of his self-constructed life. This inability to accept unalterable changes further directs Gatsby's last, significant actions.

Gatsby's ignorance toward the passage of time contributes to his early, unconventional, and quite macabre death. After Daisy unintentionally runs over and immediately kills Tom's girlfriend Myrtle in Gatsby's car, Gatsby is apprehensive about her situation. He holds vigil in front of the house the entire night to protect her, declares his willingness to take all blame for the lethal accident, and persistently awaits a call from Daisy. The young woman, however, already leaves the state with Tom.

As a symbol for the final separation of the two, fall, the season of transition, approaches. Refusing to acknowledge this shift in the season and therefore the passage of time as well as in his prospects for a relation with Daisy, Gatsby bathes in his pool, as to affirm to himself that it is still summer and that his chances are not yet lost. Nevertheless, as Gatsby lies in the pool and "shiver[s]" at the sight of "an unfamiliar sky" with, to him, "frightening leaves," he comprehends "what a grotesque thing a rose is" (103). It is thus in his final moments that Gatsby

escapes his illusions about the reality of his love for Daisy; however, this enlightenment occurs too late, and thus remains ineffective.

At this point, two consequences of Gatsby's incapability to recognize the passage of time fuse into one severe result: as Gatsby lies in his pool, pretending to relive the past season and eventually concluding in its impossibility, he is defenselessly exposed to the gun of Myrtle's vindictive widower.

Fitzgerald justifies Gatsby's death in his final lines – he asserts that mankind is "borne back ceaselessly into the past" and how, due to this entrenchment in reminiscences, "the future recedes before us" (115).

As he continuously disregarded the invariability of time's passage, Gatsby hides bashfully behind his false heritage, bases the sense of his life on vacuous hopes to return to the past, and finally loses his future as a consequence of these unrealizable aspirations.

Gatsby was imprisoned by his futile aspirations that the past would return to him and is thus deprived of any perspectives for the future – he is too fixated on the past to even consider multiple ideas for a future.

What would have become of him had he lived on? A purposeless,

dismal life would afflict Gatsby until its emptiness would have most probably resulted in a suicide, hence, in all ways, a bitter end for the over-nostalgist.

The case of *The Great Gatsby* advises us to live in the present in order to provide for a promising future, whereas strong emotional identification with the past and nostalgia are unprofitable for our advance. It is only then that we may use an objectively evaluated past as a guide for our present and future.



Painting by Ericah Lewis, 12th grade

The Duck Pond

The Struggle for Maturity in J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*

By Michael Alber, 9th grade



Painting by Rebecca Percoski, 12th grade

Youth. It is a short, wonderful period of time that one often looks back with melancholic regret when it is gone. No matter how desperately one tries to grasp it – to remember – it slips through one's fingers like water. The protagonist Holden Caulfield in J.D. Salinger's novel, *The Catcher in the Rye*, tries to defy the impossible by doing so. Holden is reluctant to have his childhood evade him and attempts to escape adulthood by taking a trip to New York.

This journey is rather unsuccessful and certain symbols emerge, revealing Holden's conflict with his coming of age. Holden's difficulty to accept adulthood causes his negative outlook on life and his lack of

motivation. The author illustrates Holden's struggle to mature with symbols, such as the red hunting hat, the duck pond, and the museum as sources of his depressed, unmotivated attitude.

Holden uses the red hunting hat to shut out the world with its problems surrounding him, which hinders his growth and thus impeding his ability to mature. "What I did was, I pulled the old peak of my hunting hat around to the front, then pulled it way down over my eyes. 'I think I'm going blind,' I said in this very hoarse voice" (21). In this excerpt, Holden is only, as he puts it, "horsing around," but he uses the hunting hat to escape the real world and live in his own fantasy.

After seeing Holden's antics, his roommate, Ackley, responds with "for Christ's sake, grow up," revealing that people around Holden perceive his immaturity (22). Furthermore, Holden wears the red hunting hat because it reminds him of his deceased brother, Allie, who had red hair. "I'd see Allie [...] sitting there, about a hundred and fifty yards behind me, watching me tee off. That's the kind of red hair he had" (38). This shows that Allie had very bright, red hair, making it a dominant characteristic of his and therefore enabling a relationship to be established between Allie and the red hunting hat.

When Holden wears the hat, he also wears it to be like the intelligent, beloved Allie and thereby evades the high expectations set upon him. In other words, when Holden wears the hat, he drifts off into his fantasy world. The fact that Holden still constantly thinks about Allie exposes Holden's inability to move on from Allie's death and mature, as the red hunting hat is a constant reminder of Allie's death.

The second symbol, the duck pond, generates the theme of Holden's struggle with maturing, since it reveals how lost he is. During a conversation with a taxi cab driver, Holden asks, "You know those ducks in that lagoon right near Central Park South? That little lake? By any chance, do you happen to know where they go, the ducks, when it gets all frozen over?" (60).

This question of where the ducks go represents the real question of where should Holden go. Holden does not know what to do or where to go and has no idea of what lies ahead of him. This question has been aroused inside of him, since his "lake," the boarding school Pencey Prep, has "frozen over" by expelling him.

Holden now does not have a place to stay nor go to, since he left the school earlier than was allowed and therefore has to wait a few days before returning home. Moreover, he has another question regarding the ducks and wonders whether "somebody come[s] around in a truck or something and take[s] them away, or do they fly away by themselves – go south or something?" (81).

This question embodies Holden's speculation of whether he can "fly away by himself," that is, mature and live on his own, or whether he needs "somebody in a truck to take him away," a person to take care of him.

The confusion over where to go or whether he can survive on his own is a reason for his depression that is mentioned throughout the novel. Resulting in anxiety and a negative attitude, the duck pond makes Holden's struggle with maturing evident.

The final symbol, the museum, a favorite place of Holden's, represents his objection to becoming mature, since he values its unchanging state. While Holden fondly describes the museum, he mentions how

"By any chance, do you happen to know where they go, the ducks, when it gets all frozen over?"

everything in it stays the same: "The best thing, though, in that museum was that everything always stayed right where it was" (121).

This statement indicates that Holden mainly appreciates the museum because it does not change, which illuminates that he dislikes change that would threaten his identity. Not only does Holden fear his own change, but he also wants other people to stay the same, too.

This becomes clear in the following passage: "I kept thinking about old Phoebe going to that museum on Saturdays the way I used to. I thought how she'd see the same stuff I used to see, and how she'd be different every time she saw it. It didn't exactly depress me to think about it, but it didn't make me feel gay as hell, either" (122). Holden clearly does not cherish the change occurring in his sister, Phoebe, as he cannot deal with changes arising in other people. Holden needs his surroundings to remain the same and this is an obstacle to growing up.

This need also explains his lack of motivation to accomplish anything, because this would result in change – something he wants to avoid at all costs. The museum displays Holden's difficulties with maturing, and by exposing his desire for an unchanging environment and it unveils the basis for Holden's unmotivated mindset. Holden's struggle to mature is due in part to his depressed and unmotivated attitude, represented by the red hunting hat, the duck pond and the museum.

Putting on the red hunting hat makes Holden struggle with maturing, since he uses it to escape his problems and live in his own fantasy. The duck pond also reveals Holden's difficulties with maturing, by making clear how lost he is. Holden's lack of motivation is also due to the museum's facade of an unchanging environment.

For Holden to mature, then, he must resist the urge to desire the impossible, a lesson we all face on the road to adulthood.



Painting by Rebecca Percoski, 12th grade



Collage by Louisa Schnalke, 12th grade

The Terrible Kind of Fall

Teacher Figures in J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*

By Theo Ringmair,

In J. D. Salinger's novel *Catcher in the Rye*, Holden Caulfield, a sixteen-year old boy, retells his experiences from the past year, revealing his highly judgmental and pessimistic attitude. After being expelled once again from prep school, Holden finds himself in a struggle to resist maturation due to his fear of becoming a hypocritical and shallow adult. Because of his academic failure he receives guidance from different characters throughout the story, who each in different ways help Holden in determining a path for his future.

When examining the theme of education, specifically the encounters with Holden's teachers, Mr. Spencer and Mr. Antolini, the reader recognizes their quasi-parental function for Holden as they attempt to provide guidance for his academic and future success. Through the lessons they try to impart on Holden, the author underlines the importance of having and pursuing interests for Holden's future.

As his history teacher for one year, Mr. Spencer or "Old Spencer" has gotten to know Holden well and seems to understand Holden's incapability to make decisions and his pessimistic outlook. He feels compelled to not only teach his student academically, but also to provide advice and guidance about independence and Holden's future. Spencer refers to it as "(put)ting some sense in that head of yours, boy" (14). He sees how Holden's indecisiveness, cynical perception and recklessness affect and limit his options for his future. Thus, Mr. Spencer feels concerned about his student's development and attempts to make Holden appreciate the gravity of his problems.

During the course of their conversation, Spencer describes "life as a game that one plays according to the rules," meaning that Holden must adapt to his environment in order to succeed (14). Sadly, Mr. Spencer fails to prove his argument with this metaphor,

since Holden, quite ironically, believes that his life is the exact opposite of a game: Holden views life as biased and favoring the so-called “hot-shots” (14). On the contrary, Holden sees himself to be on “the other side,” feeling victimized and alienated by society.

Furthermore, throughout the development of the discussion, Mr. Spencer evokes the inevitable question about Holden’s hopes for his future, and after Holden reveals that he has no concrete plans, Mr. Spencer warns him by venturing the prediction that Holden will recognize the seriousness of his seemingly hopeless situation only “when it is too late” (15).

This statement is meant as a warning to Holden, and as a motivation to shape up and to improve his attitude towards life. But Holden is unwilling to accept the teacher’s advice because of the setting in which this lecture is delivered – Mr. Spencer is a sick, elderly man, and Holden is depressed by the surroundings.

Holden is overly prone to finding faults in the physical appearance or the behavior of others. He is incapable of accepting and cherishing his teacher’s advice precisely because one of his own faults; his judgmental nature.

Holden’s dream for his life is to play the role of the “catcher in the rye.”

Quite ironically, Mr. Antolini, Holden’s former English professor and close, caring friend serves this very role for Holden. Holden is able to relate to him and considers his English teacher to be one of the few people who are trustworthy because of Mr. Antolini’s unconventional behavior.

After Holden leaves his sister Phoebe, Mr. Antolini generously welcomes him into his home and shares intimate details about his

personal life. In a discussion about Holden’s future, Mr. Antolini warns him that he is on the verge of plunging down a cliff of failure and resignation:

“This fall I think you’re riding for – it’s a special kind of fall, a terrible kind. The man falling isn’t permitted to feel or hear himself hit the bottom. He just keeps falling and falling. The whole arrangement’s designed for men, who at some time or another in their lives, were looking for something their own environment couldn’t supply them with. Or they thought their environment couldn’t supply them with. So they gave up looking. They gave it up before they even really got started” (187).

The “fall” relates directly to Holden’s vision of the cliff of which the children fall off and are caught by the so called “catcher” who guides the misfits in life.



Painting by Josh Kim, 12th grade

Mr. Antolini catches Holden from falling by recognizing that Holden feels uncomfortable about the “phoniness” of his environment and because of his continuous failure and the absence of purpose. In order to prevent such a fall, Mr. Antolini emphasizes the importance of education.

He stresses education as the basis for a positive future and advises Holden that “once you have a fair idea where you want to go, your first move will be to apply yourself in school” (189). Above all, Holden is supposed to have at least a vague plan or general interest which he can pursue so that he has a direction in which he can move. Secondly, in order to reach his goal, he must improve his academic performance.

Yet, Mr. Antolini introduces a more attractive aspect of learning and becoming educated to Holden by claiming that “educated and scholarly men, if they’re brilliant and creative to begin with [...] tend to leave infinitely more valuable records behind them than men who are merely brilliant and creative” (189).

Clearly, this argument speaks strongly to Holden: by applying himself academically he may be able to develop a unique voice, something that will separate him from other common people and thus combat his fear of becoming a “phony.”

The two teachers function as counselors and are the devices with which the author creates a complex relationship between teenager and teacher: the reader understands that adolescents are in need of guidance and patience in the process of defining their role or function in society.

Holden’s situation demonstrates a realistic problem which commonly occurs today. Indecisiveness and poor attitude towards education prevent many young adolescents from succeeding in life. Therefore it is necessary to develop and pursue specific interests, and to accept guidance from experienced and trusted people – parents, good friends, and teachers.

Holden largely ignores his teachers' advice provided throughout the story, and even after he is hospitalized he is still unsure of his future: "A lot of people, especially this one psychoanalyst guy they have here, keeps asking me if I'm going to apply myself when I go back to school in September. It's such a stupid question in my opinion. I mean how do I know [...]?" (213).

Holden has still not fully understood that teachers – in the widest sense of the word – really do have something to teach him, things that he may yet have to learn, and not only academically, but also about life.

Using teachers as Holden's most trusted people in the story, the author emphasizes the significance of learning as the basis for a

successful life. These two teachers, Spencer and Mr. Antolini, to a degree take the place of Holden's parents and attempt to direct him through life. While Mr. Spencer stresses the significance of playing the game of life by the rules, Mr. Antolini emphasizes education as a means for Holden's development.

Through these wise characters the author expresses the importance of aiding an adolescent in search of their interests and function in society, in order to prevent a situation similar to Holden's.



Collage by
Louisa Schnalke, 11th grade



Drawing by Nick Sweetwood, 12th grade

War-Riddled Relationships

On Moral Values in Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*

By Chu Thuy Duong, 12th grade

From uprisings in former eastern European nations against the suppressive communist governments to current demonstrations in the Middle East against the authoritarian regimes, radical changes, accompanied by military involvement and violence, often result in unpleasant consequences, ranging from bloodshed to economic stagnation.

Throughout *The Kite Runner*, Khaled Hosseini emphasizes the impacts of the Soviet Union invasion and the Taliban domination upon lives of Afghans.

Some abandon their relationship with others, some get trapped in the aftermath of war, and some forget about the future generation; their submission to authority, therefore,

fosters the growth of tyranny in the sick society.

Mutual trust builds the foundation for a healthy community and a functioning government; however, the conflict with Russia hinders the formation of such relationship within Afghanistan society, leading to numerous unprecedented outcomes.

The protagonist caustically criticizes the widespread paranoia in the population, "You couldn't trust anyone in Kabul anymore – for a fee or under threat, people told on each other, neighbor on neighbor, child on parent, brother on brother, servant on master, friend on friend" (98).

Several Afghans, who in peacetime would be otherwise

reliable, forego their principles and expose their acquaintances to gain benefits or protect themselves in chaos. Traditional values such as friendship, kinship, and fidelity no longer dictate the order; instead, spying, suspicion, and treachery regulate the behaviors and actions of individuals.

The rotten society breaks down from the inside. Through domestic espionage, the government isolates citizens into vulnerable targets by distancing them from one another and debilitates morality by establishing a world of liars and betrayers. Government's spies infiltrate into society, transforming it into a battleground where the most diminutive complaints can cost one's life and freedom.

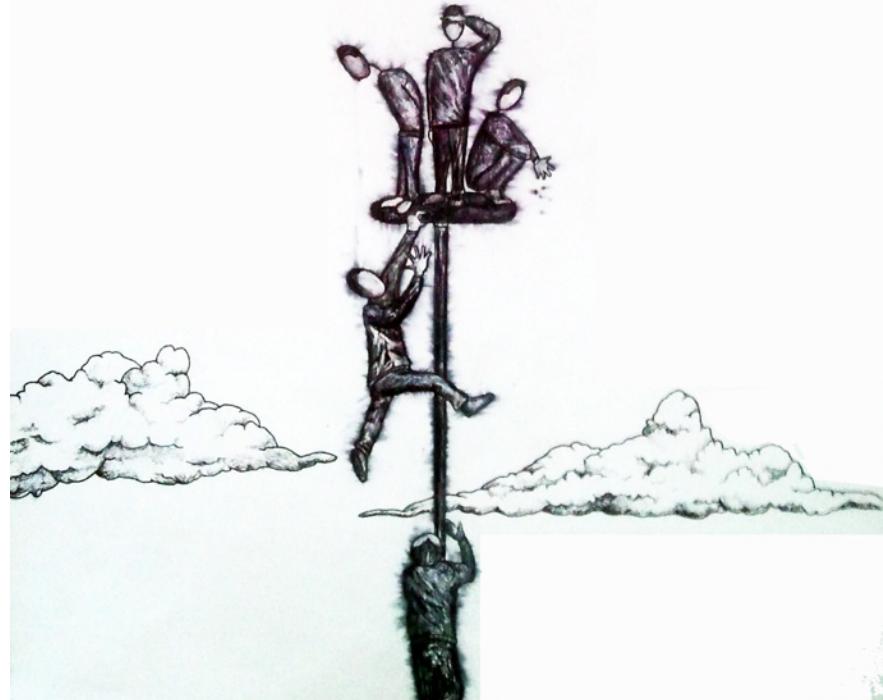
After a military invasion and under a ruthless government, economic impoverishment reigns over Afghanistan, making life a constant battle to survive while causing the demolition of the educated class. Destitution leaks through destroyed buildings and cracked roads, indiscriminately eating up the spirits of the people.

The author employs vivid visual imagery to depict the reality through the narration of Amir, as the protagonist reveals his impression on his home country after many years abroad, “chains of little villages sprouting here and there... children dressed in rags” (203). The painful truth shocks Amir, as he cannot visualize his once beautiful home changing so dramatically. Dilapidated infrastructure creates thousands, perhaps millions, of refugees and vagabonds who fight against the phantom of hunger on a daily basis. Food crisis haunts them like a nightmare, evoking the urge to live. Many Afghans cannot afford to satisfy the ravenous stomachs of their children, similar to Amir’s host family. Despite their economic difficulties, they preserve hospitality and amiability towards guests.

Nonetheless, as poverty escalates, honor, respect, and safety start to lose their significance for several characters. Some adults begin to relinquish their self-esteem and virtue to win the battle against death. Upon his arrival in Kabul, Amir encounters a university professor who feeds off the sympathy of strangers on the street because the Taliban forces him to abandon his post.

As a representative of the academic class, he shows his remorse and regret towards the glory of the old days. The very same society, which hails them for their contributions, he points out, now belittles and diminishes their roles. The professor warns Amir of the danger the Taliban poses, “The dog feasts... there is always random violence... You saw those young men in the truck. What value do you think they see in Sufism?” (217).

The speaker exhibits disdain and contempt towards authority, yet he and other experienced individuals do not wage a fight against the callous and inferior



Drawing by Nick Sweetwood

regime. They could have become the leaders of Afghanistan, showing them the way out of the labyrinth laid by the Taliban. Their weakness essentially lies in their inability to resist, to lead, to act, and to inspire.

In *The Kite Runner*, Hosseini depicts the reality of Afghanistan through stories about her people and their fights to live with sadness, indignation, and disappointment. Poverty changes their principles and challenges them every day. Pauperism, nevertheless, impacts children the most; in some cases, it completely alters the lives of these unfortunate souls.

Unlike the grandiose vision of several international organizations, the future generation of war-torn nations generally does not enjoy suitable conditions to learn and benefit themselves and their countries; Afghan children, similarly, possess no time to think of their future, as they struggle to live through the day.

The director of one orphanage elaborates on the youth, “What I have in ample supply here is children who’ve lost their childhood” (222). Maimed by weapons, some become crippled and helplessly bow to their fates.

Others, more physically healthy, risk their lives by selling illegal products to earn a living. Their hopeless and hard lives push them to accept the cruel punishments for their actions. The morality of one generation disintegrates, fostering the continuum of a violent circle. Their mothers, with husbands dead in the war and unable to work legally, ultimately send their sons and daughters to orphanages, hoping in vain that they receive a better life.

"Hosseini describes the reality children of Afghanistan face to show how wars and suppressive regimes can change the lives of people."

Growing up without their parents' instruction or the love and connection within, they inescapably suffer emotional fragility and encounter difficulties integrating into society. Nonetheless, many of them become more than just targets for physical separation: their vulnerability and dependency on adults make them favorite victims for sexual harassment.

Sohrab, the son of Amir's best friend and half brother, unfortunately suffers the shameful crime. The man who reluctantly

sends him to the death trap confesses, "I'm broke because I've spent my life's savings on this orphanage... I stayed because of them... I swallow my pride and take his goddamn filthy... dirty money" (225).

In spite his love and sympathy for the children, the director cannot overcome the hardship imposed by poverty. Knowing his incapability to protect each child, he turns his back to the wrongful actions of the Taliban and sacrifices some children to save much more. His indecisiveness and failures deserve condemnation; yet, they hold in them greater purposes and nobility in their causes.

Hosseini describes the reality children of Afghanistan face to show how wars and suppressive regimes can changes the lives of people.

The submission of people also allows tyranny to blossom. Low ranking officers rape women and abuse their power. They stone people to death. They carry out massacres and commit crimes against humanity.

Ironically, the author names the leader who later appears as Assaf, the leader of the crime and Amir's foe, "John Lennon" (217).

By juxtaposing the two opposing individuals, the author highlights the nature of the world and the existence of horror in a superficially peaceful world and explains the reasons, "Public justice is the greatest kind of show... Drama. Suspense. And, best of all, education en masse" (242). The regime employs terror and fear to control the population.



ART TALK

Looking at Jesso Layers An Interview with Luke Wunsch-Edwards



Nicknamed “bruises” and on display in Luke’s living room, the untitled cover art of haywire’s debut issue depicts a layered, amorphous, and violet haze that simultaneously draws-in and repels the viewer. We had a chance to swap emails with the artist who is currently in Istanbul.

HYWR: *The blending blue hues in this painting are quite hypnotic. How did you achieve this affect?*

LW-E: I used a technique that can be found quite often in my work where I first put down flat fields of color, let it sort of half-dry for an hour or two and then continue painting. In this case, the blues are veiled underneath the rest of the piece – a painting underneath a painting. The layering used gives this piece an indescribable unity, where all parts of the abstract seem to work together. The viewer can’t pinpoint why that exactly is, seeing the piece as sublime or amorphous...

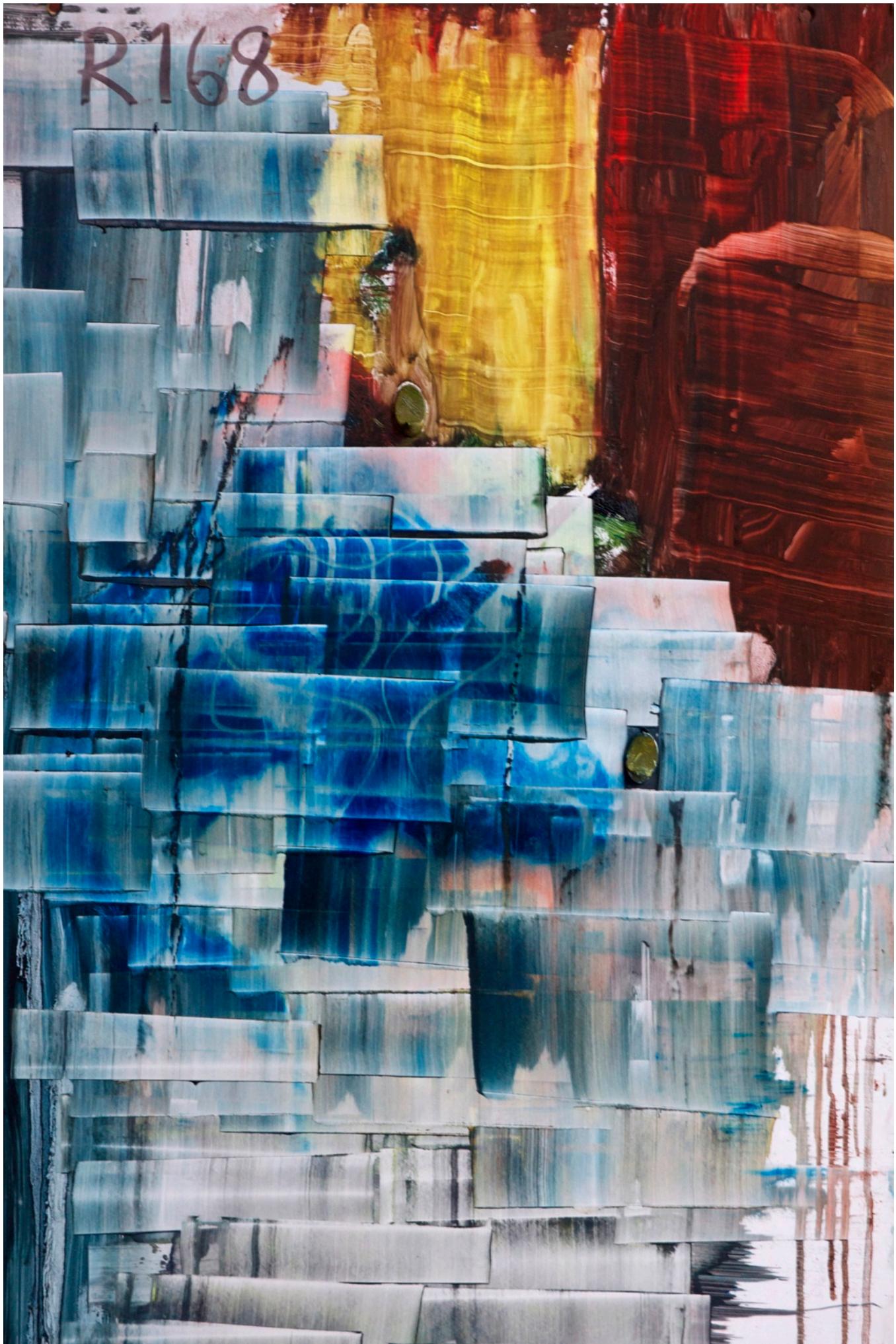
HYWR: *We often think that art needs to have meaning, is that the case with this abstraction?*

LW-E: Most of my work does have concept behind it, although this piece does not. I guess this abstract was influenced by the mood I was in while painting that day, but other than that, this untitled work is nonrepresentational.

HYWR: *There appears to be a vague sense of movement in this painting, is this intended?*

LW-E: Yes, this is intended. I think it is important to have the viewer looking into a painting and not just at it. What I mean by this is when your eye moves while enjoying a painting, it should always have something to follow. Some part of the painting should keep the audience interested. Two parts of this piece are “moving,” first being the horizontal streaks of gray. They make the painting a little stable, and give the eye a point to always go back to while





exploring. The second element that inspires movement here are the rough brush strokes of Jesso.

This painting is done on a piece of thin Masonite, and to start the painting off on a white surface, I used Jesso. I kept the brushstrokes with this medium coarse so that the painting would have a gritty texture to it. I always look at this texture as the static of a television, which is where I see the movement.

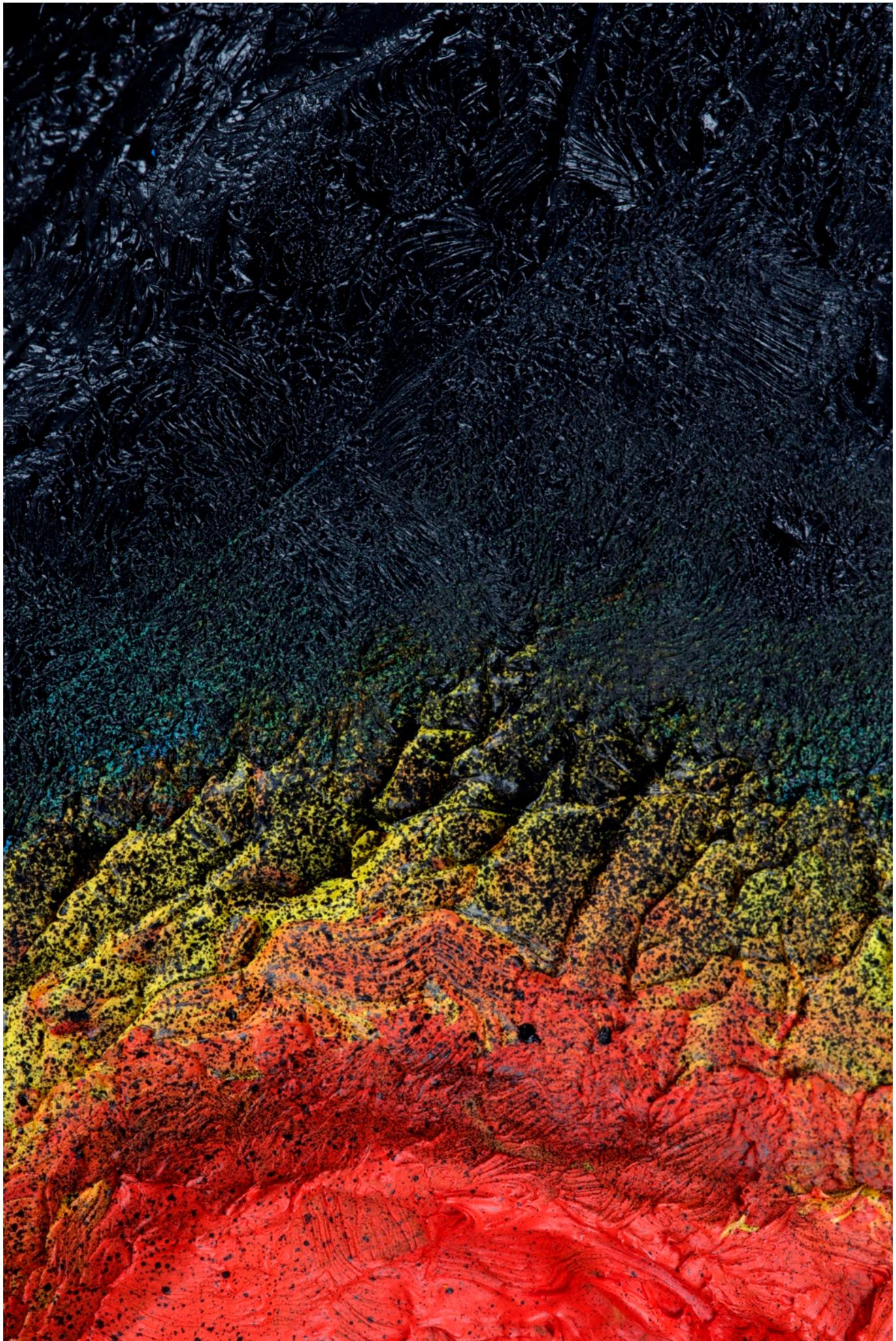
HYWR: What inspires you to create?

LW-E: I'll admit that I have neglected to study the work of many famous artists (that's what college is for anyway, right?) resulting in little inspiration from them.

What inspires me are the textures urban environments provide like dirt, pavement and smog. Another thing that inspires me to make art is the freedom of creating. Nobody can tell you what you can and cannot do with your work. It's entirely your own thing, and that is a special quality that not many hobbies possess.

Luke Wunsch-Edwards is attending Massachusetts College of Art in Boston next year. While planning on majoring in photography, Luke is still eager to paint more in the future. He looks forward to being surrounded by creative people every day of the week and couldn't imagine himself going to college for anything else other than art. Send inquiries to lwunscheds@hotmail.com.









I think it is important to have the viewer looking into a painting and not just at it.



POLITICS&OPINIONS



Drawing by Alex Guete, 12th grade

The Meat Industry

Why You Might Not Want To Take Another Bite

By Zachary Wakefield, 7th grade

You are going on a trip to the rainforest. When you get there, you expect to see a jungle, buzzing with life. Instead, you see a smelly slaughterhouse. When you ask where the trees and animals have gone, you find out that McDonald's owns the new slaughterhouse, and, in the process, has bulldozed away the rainforest. Suddenly, you realize that the meat industry is destroying our world. Read on to discover more faults of the meat industry and find out how you can help.

Have you ever read a book with a really evil villain? A villain that you just hate? Well, though they are a bit more complicated, the evil villains in real life are the corporations and industries, especially the meat industry. Since I can't list all of the faults of the meat industry, I will do my best to get to the main points, namely the ones that affect you. The most affected victims of our villains are the animals that are kept prisoners before being slaughtered.

Do you have pets? If you do, you probably like animals. Some of the kindest animals are cows. When you think of cows, you think of smiling, black-and-white creatures, grazing lazily in green meadows and under blue skies. Sadly, my description of a cow in a meadow is not a reality for the majority of cows on our planet. But, when you take a bite out of a hamburger, you don't really care about the fact that you are eating an animal that was murdered, because you believe that it had a good life before it died. Try to take another bite after I discuss cow farms.

Cows have hard lives. They are kept in close quarters, where they are usually kept waist-high in their own poop! When a cow is uncooperative, it is scalded with a hot iron. Every year, because of meat eaters like you, forty-two million cows are murdered by the meat industry. Due to public outcry, some corporations are moving their cows to open, grassy

fields, but this has its disadvantages as well. No matter how nice they may be, cows are bad for the environment. They fart out a greenhouse gas called methane, which is responsible for twenty percent of global warming. However, the real reason that cows are environmentally unfriendly involves a different greenhouse gas called carbon dioxide, responsible for seventy percent of global warming. Rainforest, which are valuable for reducing carbon dioxide, are chopped down to make way for cow farms. So by eating beef, you are contributing to global warming.

Now, let's look at some chicken farms. Chickens could very well be the most abused animals on the planet. Though two-thirds of all Americans say that they would support a law preventing the abuse of chickens, laws that protect chickens have yet to be enacted. Before the age of two weeks, chickens are shipped off to massive factories where they are crammed together, leading to illness and death. The chickens often would have to step over the dead bodies of their brood-mates to get to the food tray. Then they become meat products, such as McDonald's Chicken McNuggets.

Turkeys are treated almost as badly. They are socially intelligent in ways that even we are not. In the wild, turkeys can live long and happy lives of five to ten years. However, in captivity, this is not the case. Turkeys are kept inside, and, as is the case with ninety-eight percent of all turkeys, will not feel the sun until they are on the way to the slaughterhouse. Then they are murdered at the age of five to six months.

Did you know that Louis Pasteur invented antibiotics in the late 1800s? Now, we use them whenever we are sick with a bacterial infection. Unfortunately, bacteria are developing immunities, making our antibiotics ineffective against them. The more antibiotics we use, the higher the chances are that bacteria will develop immunities against them.

As I have discussed, cows and chickens are often crammed close together in unhealthy conditions, leading the meat industry to stuff them with antibiotics to protect them from diseases. As a result, we will face deadly diseases in the near future that we cannot defend ourselves against.

If there is just one more example of the meat industry's many faults, it is the fast food industry.



Digital Art by Olivia Gallup, 8th grade

Meat is unhealthy because it is a transmitter of infectious diseases and it also increases the risk of heart disease and diabetes. There are healthier alternatives, such as using soy, which do not involve animal cruelty and are environmentally friendly.

Now you know about the mistreatment of animals in the meat industry. We have learned about the bad environmental principles they practice. You also know that by buying meat at the store, you are ultimately destroying yourself, whether it is by indirectly creating a disease that will wipe out your species, or whether it is by giving yourself a heart attack. So why do people disagree with becoming vegetarian when faced with such evidence?

There are many objections people have to becoming vegetarian. One concerns nutrition. It is true that humans have been surviving on animals since prehistory. However, contrary to popular belief, it was not just the meat that helped our brains develop. It was the protein in the meat. There are different sources of protein, such as in beans, soy, dairy, and eggs. (Soy can be bad if you have a high risk of breast cancer.) I will not argue with you if you have religious beliefs about God putting animals on our planet for us to eat

them. Some people believe that it is part of the cycle of life for us to eat meat.

However, it is not part the cycle of life to mass-breed and butcher animals in factory-like facilities as if they weren't living beings. So if you truly believe in the cycle of life, go and hunt your own animals.

Some people say that when you eat meat from the store, you aren't the one killing the animals; you're just buying them. However, you are the one causing them to be killed. They are killed for you so that you can buy them from the store. At most supermarkets, specialized people come to see how many products were bought in the last day or week.

According to people's demand on that product, they pre-order a certain amount of it for the next day or week. So by buying meat, you contribute to this supply and demand number and cause more animals to be murdered. You promote the killing of animals in the slaughterhouse, and you promote the production of more animals on farms. Consequently, you promote more animal cruelty.

When you buy meat, it is all a gamble – a lose-or-lose gamble: you could be buying beef from a farm where the cows are treated badly, or from a cow farm in a former

rainforest. You could be promoting the killing of more animals, or promoting animal abuse the mistreatment of more animals. However, the truth is the same: you are hurting the environment, and you are hurting yourself. We just can't keep up this lifestyle for much longer.

I dream of a future in which my essay about the meat industry will be just a story. “There was a time,” I will say, “when we abused and slaughtered animals for food, when there was an industry specialized in killing as many animals as possible to feed an insatiable demand. There was a food called ‘meat’.”

By promoting this future, you will heal our planet. What are you waiting for? Go vegetarian!



Drawing by Alex Guete, 12th grade

Russian Society, Protests, and Future

By Chu Thuy Duong, 12th grade

After a decade under Putin's authoritarian rule, Russia is starting to show resistance and resentment towards Putin himself as well as the government and United Russia as a whole. After a series of demonstrations commencing in the summer of 2011, the slow development of civil society, and the loss of support from Russian people have weakened Russia's governmental legitimacy. However, due to the volatile nature of Russian political culture, Putin's charismatic character and legacy, underdeveloped civil society, and the lack of strong opposing forces, Russia is not entirely prepared for the transition phase to democracy and a "Russian spring."

The 2011 Duma election turnout alarmed the leaders of United Russia and foreshadowed significant changes in Russian politics. Although Putin's party won 49% of the votes, it was the only party that lost votes in this election. Meanwhile, the Communist Party (20%) and other smaller parties gained more votes and did relatively well. The result demonstrates the shifting support from United Russia to other political parties and the increasing involvement of people, especially the youth, in politics. Despite the fact that these young

people benefitted from the revival of the Russian economy, "...economic crisis, political stagnation and corruption has turned them against the regime" ("Viewpoint: Are Post-Poll Protests a Russian Spring"). Naturally, the turnout angered them and young voters demanded a recount of votes.

Russians have shown more indignation when Putin announced his intention to run for office in the 2012 presidential election. The announcement implied that Medvedev was truly a puppet in Putin's hands. He acted as nothing more than a temporary replacement while Putin held absolute power. Educated Russians are tired of the predictable election results, as well as Putin and United Russia's long domination. The "unexpected" reaction from the masses has led to various responses from the government.

During his two consecutive terms as President and one term as Prime Minister, Putin exceedingly increased Moscow's power and United Russia's political domination. He changed the method of electing regional governors to ensure loyalty, raised the threshold in elections from 5% to 7% to cast out several minor parties, and controlled all major TV stations.

Although Putin still receives remarkably high support, post-poll protests debilitated his legitimacy and placed him in an awkward position.

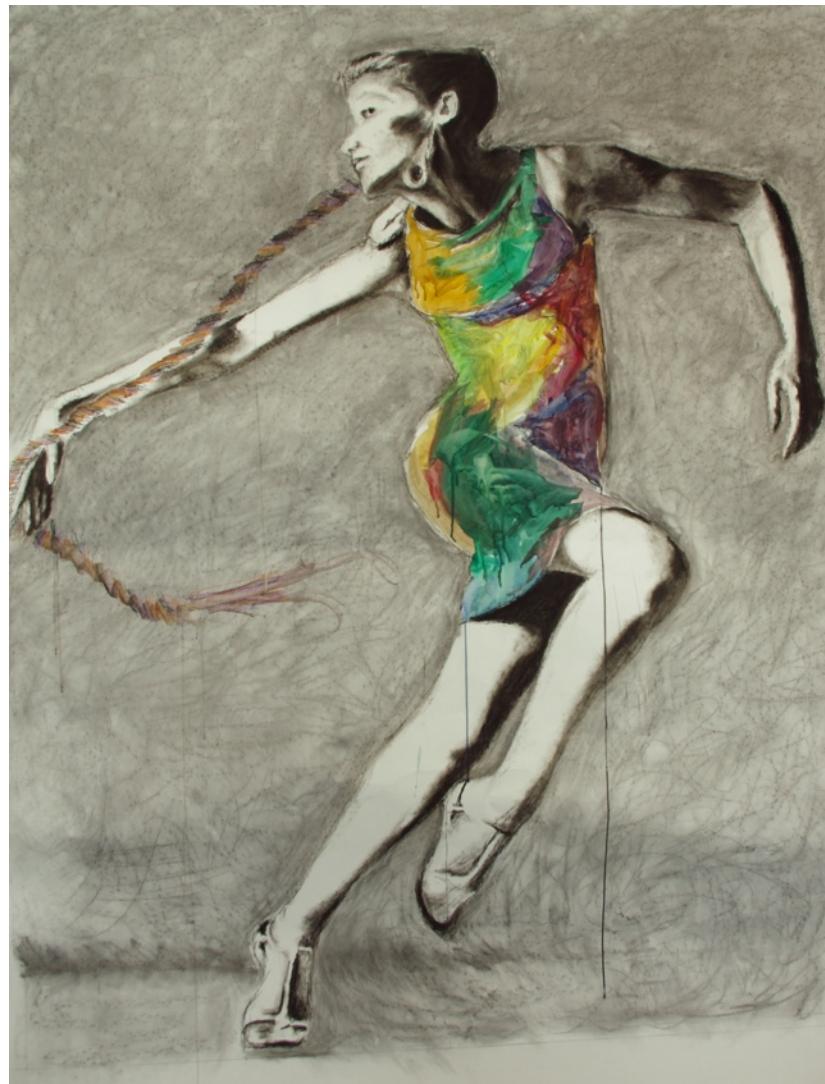
Putin found no perfect solution: crackdowns on protestors make him look like a frightened tyrant and ignoring them encourages growing dissatisfaction among the masses. In this critical situation, Putin cannot afford the loss of trust within his own circles. Nor can he prosecute protestors without kindling another wave of hatred and frustration.

Meanwhile, his “student,” Medvedev, quickly proposed political changes to ease the intense situation. He proposed the return of direct election of governors and the establishment of an independent public TV station. He stated that “all active citizens should have legal opportunities to participate in political life.” However, he has been under Putin’s shadow for so long that he, as Dmitri V. Trenin, director of the Carnegie Moscow Center says, “might have missed his chance as president” (“At Presidency’s 11th Hour, Medvedev Proposes Systemic Change”).

During his term, no significant reform has been made. Contrary to many liberals’ hopes, Medvedev has not encouraged economic reform, initiated political and social change, nor has he become a “revolutionary” president who challenges Putin’s rule.

Although the president is merely a puppet, Medvedev’s proposals worry United Russia and threaten to destroy Putin’s efforts. If his proposals become legislations, the dissolution of highly centralized government is unavoidable. In addition, United Russia might lose its domination and end-up in a coalition government.

In “How Far Can Resistance to Vladimir Putin Go,” David Remnick portrays the challenges and health of civil society in Russia. Although organizations like Memorial exist and have slowly gained a valid reputation, they are dispersed and have no significant impact on the passing of legislation or governmental policies.



Drawing by Rebecca Percoski, 12th grade

The author notes one of Memorial’s officers, “in the past few years I have seen a proliferation of independent human-rights groups, media outlets, think tanks, academic departments, election watchdogs, and N.G.O.s not only in Moscow and St. Petersburg, but all over the country. Because their efficacy is so limited, so circumscribed by the Kremlin, they do not constitute a true civil society; rather, they are an archipelago of islands in a vast sea, barely connected to each other and ignored, at best, by the political élite.”

Anna Politkovskaya, a prominent journalist who reveals inhumane acts of

Russian government in Chechnya, Estemirova, an activist, and Orlov, the leader of the human rights department of Memorial are not exceptional cases in Russia. Brave writers and activists along with “dangerous” leaders of “dangerous” organizations have become targets of threat, abduction, kidnapping, and assassination.

Moreover, the government projects the image of “enemy to the people” upon them. Facing incessant difficulties, these organizations cannot develop properly.

However, recently, these small organizations have acted as catalysts that unite Russians “of different kinds to stand up

for their rights, and this influences other movements and other people” as Chirikova, the leader of Khimki Forest Defense Movement confidently and optimistically states. The government begins to recognize the potential “danger” from these potent civil societies. “The authorities are fully conscious of the fact that they are thieves, and they are not so sure of themselves,” she said. “Which is why they are scared of any protest. In August last year, we gathered thousands of people near the Kremlin. The authorities are afraid people will turn their heads to the Kremlin. They are ready to do anything they can to prevent people coming out in the streets.”

Putin’s government is slowly understanding that there is a force that can challenge it in the near future. Moreover, activists have not only gathered physical mass, but have also gained cyber support by using the Internet to transmit their dissident message to a wider audience. “Kremlin Russia” is an example of young people effectively using social networking as a means to fight against a ruthless government.

Similar to the Arab Spring, the ongoing movement is increasingly powerful as more and more Russians have access to the Internet. Sooner or later, leaders on the Internet will be able to gather a real group of supporters. At the end, Remnick concludes that, in spite of difficulties, civil society in Russia does have a great potential to blossom and become a major force in Russian politics.

Although demonstrations in Russia might eventually lead to changes in politics, they are not strong enough to remove Putin and United Russia completely out of the picture and put an end to Putin’s era.

First of all, Putin’s legacy as “the savior of Russia” still remains. His achievements in reviving Russia’s economy are undeniable. He stabilized Russia in the midst of desperation; even after Yeltsin’s failures. In addition, Russia’s diversity and geographical expanse demand a strong character to unite the country. At this moment, no politicians are capable of taking over Putin’s role as Russia’s charismatic and sometimes brutal, but widely supported leader. His iron grip ensures Chechnya’s loyalty and other rebellious regions remain quelled.

Secondly, no party in Russian politics can take over the conflicted country’s domination except the Communist Party. However, most Russians tend not to support this option in fear of a return to the Soviet Union’s unique form of oppression. Smaller parties have not yet emerged from the background as potential candidates.

Thirdly, Russia does not possess a history of democracy. Therefore, it is very difficult to convert subjects in Moscow and Siberia into active participants. Unlike Middle Eastern nations, Russia’s population spreads out over 11 time zones. To unite the whole nation and ensure that United Russia does not win the majority is an arduous geographical task.

Additionally, because Moscow holds so much power, the sudden change of power could cause mass confusion. The struggle for power through leadership will exacerbate the instability.

Finally, as long as United Russia dominates Russia’s politics and Putin reigns, very few Russians will be ready to sacrifice their safety to participate in a fight that does not necessarily bring them benefits. As Remnick writes, “the middle class is still more interested in prosperity than in law or democracy.” Modern Russians are entrenched in the ways of the past system in which they are instructed and given benefits at the expense of their freedom and their loyalty. The risk of being prosecuted is too great to bear for the majority of Russians.



Art by Rebecca Percoski, 12th grade

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank all featured students for their texts and artwork. We are very much looking forward to new submissions for the Fall 2013 issue!

The *haywire* editors also wish to thank

Mr. Cole and Mr. Beckley from the English Department

Mr. Rubloff from the Art Department

Mr. Becker from the IT department

The team of *The Berlin Journal of the American Academy in Berlin*
(Editor R. Jay Magill, Designer Karen Schramke, Managing Editor
Johana Gallup)

PUBLISHERS AND EDITORS

SPECIAL TRIBUTE

Our deepest gratitude goes to Johana Gallup for her expertise and unflinching dedication to see this first *haywire* issue through to completion. Her vast experience as a Managing Editor guided us in those precarious moments when it might have been easier to delay our publishing deadline. Her collaborative spirit allowed each member of the editorial staff to have their opinion acknowledged and, from this openness, she helped to create the magazine you are now reading. She has moved our team forward with checklists, timetables, and strong advice, as the situation required. Johana's friends and co-workers from the *The Berlin Journal of the American Academy in Berlin* came to speak to our editors regarding graphic design, layout, and a multitude of other details too lengthy to elaborate upon. To them we also offer our sincere thanks for taking the time to help and their willingness to share their knowledge. It is through our John F. Kennedy Schule parents that we, as a school, are capable of creating unique experiences for all of our talented students. Johana expresses the type of commitment that makes our school so very special.



Collage by Louisa Schnalke, 11th grade

A Literary and Arts Magazine of the
John-F.-Kennedy School
High School
English Department and Art Department
Teltower Damm 93 – 97
14193 Berlin
Germany



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Steve Cole, Lee Beckley / English Department

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Published in Germany
Issue Nr. 1, Spring 2013 (publication date 24.6.2013)
Digital edition can be downloaded from <http://jfks.org/haywire/>