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2022**

TRILLIUM

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

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<http://dh-wordpress.ramapo.edu/trillium/>

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RAMAPO COLLEGE

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

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Trillium

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Calico

by Colin Corde

On the bus route to my elementary school
there was a sign outside a house
that read something like:
“To the asshole who hit my dog
and didn’t bother to stop, fuck you!”
I thought of this

in the split second
before I hit you. I prayed
to many gods I don’t believe in
hoping they could save you.

In the rearview mirror,
your body contorted
and flung off the pavement.
I couldn’t stop.

By the time an hour had passed
someone moved you onto the shoulder. The
overgrown grass swaddled your form, as if
presenting you to the house across the street
where I’m sure you lived.
Where I’m sure they’ll miss you.

Get Out

by Ally Higgins

I stand before walls shredded by the years of feral loneliness—soddened by Mother Nature’s elements.

Splintered chair legs, fragmented steps on a grand staircase, ransacked and graffitied cabinets.

The living room couch is an outpost for insects. Unidentifiable debris litters the pulled-up hardwood floor whose nails bare like rusty teeth.

Mildew corrupts the air particles. An eerie silence carries through the house like a mellow Sunday morning.

I’m terrified.

My heart echos off the lacerated walls. Like the cold air, my blood courses through my veins solidifying my every organ.

Creeaaak. Moving gives me away, but I need to get out.

I’m trapped. I’m not alone. I know he’s here amongst the worms and the beetles and the spiders and the maggots. And me.

Goosebumps erupt over my skin. Hyperawareness rapidly climbs my spine as if each bone was a ladder rung. My hair stands on its tiptoes as if not to let me cower.

And I see him.

With eyes like a raven he is there.

The creaking of my shoes are muffled by my piercing screams.



Untitled

by Lydia Fries

Mental Note

by Kendra Banach

I press my bare feet against the window
the sun is beating down
but the glass is still cold.

My body heat leaves a thin layer of condensation
I trace a smiley face in it
then wipe my finger vigorously
on the inside of my sweater.

I can still feel the phantom sweat germs lingering.

I'll make a mental note
to not eat with, or touch my face with, this hand.
Twenty minutes later
my lip itches
and I use that exact finger to scratch it.

I wipe my lip vigorously
on the inner collar of my sweater.

I do not feel clean.

I'll make a mental note
that if I'm deathly ill in the following week
it was my own fault.

Roadkill

by Tori D'Amico

Bodies on the side of the road
still animal enough to recognize—
it's enough to make you reckless.
Fill paper bag lungs halfway with dry air
that burns the dashboard, outside flaying
exposed stomach, dragged five feet
in front, still burning off some hyundai's tread.

Enough for the road to become secondary,
to pull into the shoulder,
asphalt open casket bearing only head and tail
on opposite sides of a valley. I'd scrape them up
cradle the disgusting remains to my breast
probably smelling of octane. Hold this dead thing
pretending it is whole, the fluff of the tail limp
on my bicep and lay it to rest in my backseat.

female robbery

by Ro Cavallaro

there are fresh bruises on the girl's knees.
she scratches her forearm, scab healed
yet tender. i feel her eyes dart
with each jolt of the subway.

the homeless woman sways with
eyes half open, mumbling
“you get away from me, you.
i don't want no part of you.”

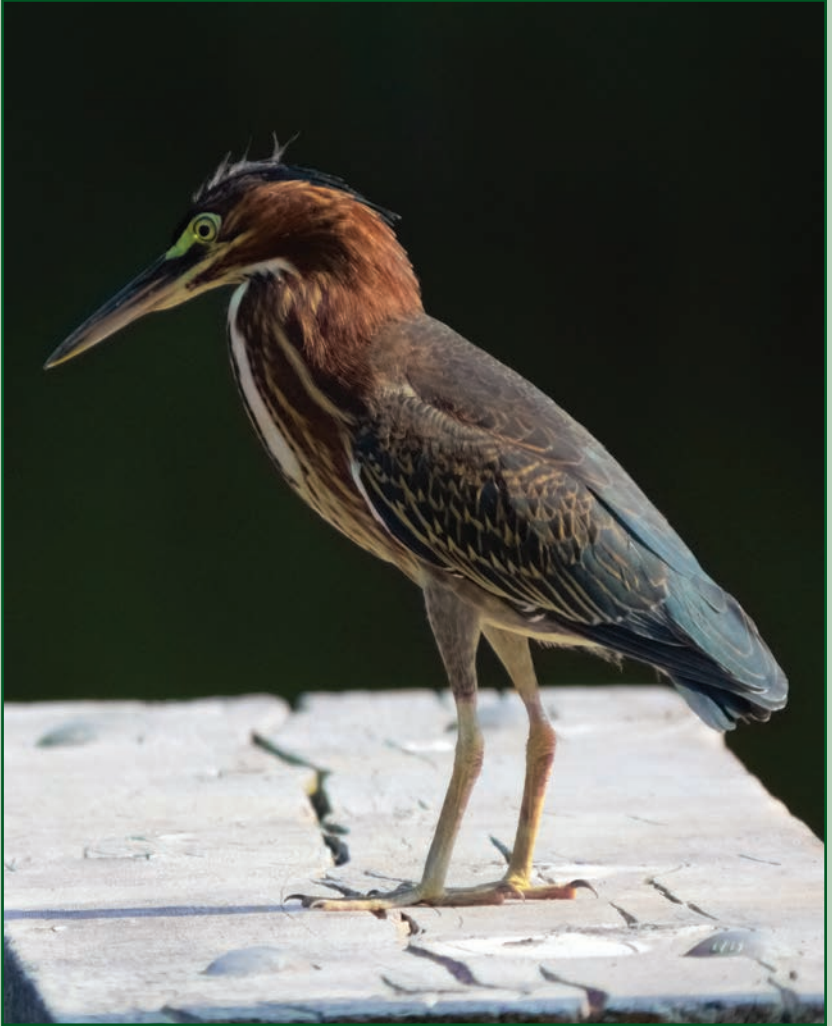
stuffy air thickens as a father fills
the space with rage. daughter whimpers
at her shoes, tears staining
the stuffed elephant below.

train delays allot these moments
where the dirty flooring below
no longer gratifies my eyes, for
the women aside me are hurting.

our friday nights are robbed of
excitement. crossing the street requires
pepper spray. new beginnings
aren't fresh starts after all.

those who are hurting us
sit beside you on the subway.
they're striding past as you
enjoy coffee outside.

i just hope you keep a fist clenched
when you sleep because
the same sun which offers you joy
gives them pleasure, too.



Green Heron

by Lisa Longo

Good to Go

by Benjamin Hopper

The sun was piercing through the windshield of a beat up 2004 Toyota Corolla. Charlie sat in the passenger seat, shielding his eyes with his hand but still he couldn't help but notice Alex was able to drive as if the sun's rays were just an illusion. They had been driving for 45 minutes in complete silence. The only sounds occupying the car were the environmental sounds of the road and fellow drivers along with the clashing of the rosary beads and plastic crucifix hanging from the rearview mirror. Alex's mother had put them there, to protect him.

Charlie was the first to speak, "So... Do you wanna talk about it?"

"What is there to talk about?" Alex asked.

"Well your text didn't say much." Charlie turned towards Alex. He sat on his left foot with the corresponding knee sticking out, forming the vertex of an acute angle like form with his leg. The other leg was positioned normally with his foot laying flat on the beige plastic floor mat. "All it said was like, 'My mom found out, can I-'"

"I know what it said," Alex said flatly, his face showing no expression and his eyes never leaving the road. Charlie was just staring at the side of Alex's head, hard enough it seemed like he'd bore a hole through it. Charlie wore a pleading look on his face. He wanted to help, he wanted to be there but he didn't know what to say, he felt like he never did.

"Well where are we going then," asked Charlie, his head cocked slightly to the right.

"Connecticut," responded Alex, with a twinge of joy. A partial smile seemed to be creeping up, like an invisible fish hook was slightly pulling up the corner of his mouth.

“What’s in Connecticut?” Charlie felt compelled to ask.

“My dad is. I figure I can stay with him since I gotta get away from my mom.”

Charlie was still at a loss for words so he just continued staring at Alex, hoping for answers.

“Can you get me a cigarette?” asked Alex.

“Yeah sure, where’s your pack?”

“It’s in the inside pocket of my jacket, can you grab it?”

“Yeah okay.” Charlie leaned over and started reaching into the pocket of Alex’s green army jacket that he wore more often than not.

“It’s the left one actually,” said Alex.

“Ohh,” said Charlie as he reached across him to get to the other pocket. Brushing his chest he could feel himself getting flustered. He still got flustered sometimes around Alex. His cheeks were starting to blush, gathering a boyish pink glow to them. Which was appropriate, they were just boys. They’d call themselves men, and parents and teachers kept referring to them as “young men,” but at eighteen and seventeen respectively, they weren’t men, as much as they thought they were and as much as society told them they were. They were boys. After Charlie had fished out the pack of Marlboro Reds and Alex’s gray lighter he held the pack open and extended his hand as he held both.

“Can you put it in my mouth?” asked Alex. “I gotta keep my hands on the wheel y’know?” Charlie chuckled to himself about the phrasing before nodding slightly and picking out a cigarette carefully from the pack. Each looked the same yet he still was very particular about choosing the one that looked like “the right one” to him. It was as if he was picking a crayon out of one of those packs that come with upward of a hundred colors. After he picked out “the right one,” he put it in Alex’s mouth and lit it.

“Thanks,” Alex said as he took a drag. Taking the cigarette and holding it between two fingers with tobacco stained nails as he returned his hand to gripping the wheel.

“No problem,” said Charlie as he started turning the crank to roll down his window. He didn’t smoke, in fact he always worried about second hand smoke. He stuck his head out the window like a dog who hasn’t had fresh air in weeks. He just let the wind hit him in the face. With his eyes closed, he took it all in like it was some kind of experience. After a bit, probably no more than a minute, he came back in.

“So did your mom kick you out?” Charlie finally asked. He had been wondering but was afraid to ask since Alex didn’t seem to want to talk about what happened.

“No,” said Alex as what was once the beginning stages of a smile rolled back towards the resting look of apathy that had been standard so far.

“Then why are you going to your dad’s?”

“Because it’s away from her. Besides, he doesn’t know.”

“Won’t she just call and tell him?”

“They haven’t spoken in ten years. I had to find his address online, I doubt she could reach him if she wanted to.”

“Yeah, but you haven’t spoken to him in ten years either,” said Charlie, his voice laced with worry. “He hasn’t even sent you a damn birthday card since you turned eleven!” Charlie yelled without thinking, the concern having turned to anger.

“What the fuck are you yelling at me for?” Alex defended himself with.

“I’m not!” began Charlie. “I mean, I mean yeah... I was. It’s just- I don’t want him to hurt you again,” he said in a small defeated voice. “You’ve been through so much already. Not just with him but today and in general.”

“It’ll be okay,” Alex reassured him. He turned his head towards to look at Charlie for a moment, even going so far as to put on a smile for his benefit. For a bit things were silent again and both boys were just looking forward. Alex still saw clear through the sunlight and Charlie had to hold up his hands again to form a makeshift visor. After a bit, Charlie had the urge to speak again.

“Well, do you have to move out?” Charlie asked.

“Do you think I can stay there now?” Alex said with a voice that didn’t seem to try to hide anything.

“Well, how bad was it?”

Alex let out a deep exhale. “There was a priest.”

“Wh- What do you mean?”

“I came down,” Alex began, his voice faltering slightly. “And uh... she and Anna were sitting in the living room, in a circle with Father Matthew from church. She had me sit down and join them and she told me she knew about my quote on quote “problem.” I was still confused until Father Matthew started his whole, “The devil makes boys have these urges, but you have to know it’s unnatural and you can change.” Then he started talking about hellfire and eternal damnation, I think he might’ve even read some scripture. I look over at my mom and she’s crying. Anna’s too young to know what’s going on but she’s crying too because mom’s crying. I got angry and started yelling so then my mom started yelling. Eventually I just went upstairs, packed a bag and left.”

Charlie was silent. He reached out his hand, letting it hover over Alex’s leg. He thought if he couldn’t say anything he could still comfort him. But he just let it hang in there like a strung up thief before pulling it back like he had touched a burning stove.

“I know... I know there’s nothing wrong with me,” continued Alex.

“Of course there isn’t!” Charlie interjected.

“But they were making me feel like there was. Like I should be ashamed.” Alex’s eyes were visibly watery but he wiped them before any tears fell. He looked over at Charlie. “This is why she wasn’t supposed to find out. Thanks for being here by the way.”

“Of course, that’s what I’m for.” In the silence of the moment Alex took notice of the noise generated by the rosary and plastic crucifix hanging from the rearview mirror. He took it off with one hand and held it in a fist looking down at it for a moment. Then he chucked it out Charlie’s window. Charlie turned to watch it go sailing down I-95.

“Did that help?” Charlie asked.

“It makes me feel less like I’m being judged,” Alex said. “So yeah, a bit.”



Untitled

by Megan Woods

The Caretaker

by Colin Corde

Growing up, you didn't think it was weird that
your brother couldn't walk. It was normal
when his knees were surgically fixed,
indefinitely
at a ninety degree angle.
You enjoyed racing him,
seated in his old wheelchairs.
And it was exciting when you didn't see
him and your parents,
living at your best friend's house for a month
because fourth graders don't need to worry
about brain aneurysms.
When you came back, you realized
that your math was harder than his,
that he didn't have friends
come over your house anymore
and why he hated
going to the doctor, even for a
check-up. Time passes and your other
brother
leaves for college, your parents get older.
Eventually your parents enlist you
to be your brother's caretaker.
You happily accept
because you love your brother. But, somewhere,
you hope this doesn't last forever—
that through some twisted luck
your brother passes before your parents.
What, then, do you think of yourself?

For Sale

by Emily Melvin

1.

Mom and dad walked down the concrete steps. Side by side. She opened his car door for him. Waved him goodbye. Dad drove right into the for sale sign. She ignored it. Started her car. Mom and the Honda sped towards a new day.

2.

The couple of twenty years, known on the block. Went for a drive one day. Not in the same car. They each had to work. Ignored the for sale sign. He stepped on his breaks too hard, she was already in drive. Dad stalled in place. Mom's Honda drove away.

3.

She kicked him out. Dad scraped his knee on the concrete steps. He was pushed into his car. Door slammed in his face. Mom curses him out, while he tried to cover up the pain. She beat his car with the for sale sign. He had no place to stay.

4.

Dad screamed at mom, abused her for years until she was gone. Couldn't take it anymore. Took her youngest, put her into the Honda. Dad cursed Mom out as they drove far away. Stabbed himself with the for sale sign. Still has scars to this day.

5.

The youngest kicked dad out and pushed mom the other way. Locked mom in her Honda. Left dad begging, drunk, on the concrete steps. Kid made a “dad for sale” sign. Stuck it into his neck. Mom was scared of her youngest. Their lives are better this way.

Lucidity

by Colin Corde

Idiopathic means
they don't know the cause.
Not knowing the cause means
they don't know how to cure it.

Dad told us this would be the last
time we could see Crunch.
This would be the last
time that *he* could see Crunch.

Aunt Angela said
I'm his spitting image.
She takes us around the house
like it's a museum. We see
pictures of a young boy.
He looked happy.

When we saw him in the basement
he was in a morphine coma.
"It's to make the pain go away."

"Hey, Crunch, if you sleep any longer
you're going to end up like me," my
cousin, Tyler, joked.
Crunch mumbled a response
between "Damnit" and
"you know what...?"

Dad leaned in close.
"It's your son, Crunch."
After fighting against frailty,
he mouthed

“I love you.”

Whatever pain the morphine took away
flooded back through his expression.

“Hope to see you again soon.”

Those were the words I uttered,
while ushered out the door.

The last thing I said to him.

How stupid.

I begin to wonder:

if books are left to rot,
collecting dusts on archived shelves,

Does the writer's brain rot with them?



Untitled

by Melody Gleason

Margaret Atwood, please don't make me kill the voyeur

by Tori D'Amico

You were right about the keyhole
all the eyes inside my head but you didn't say
they're all her guests, the 13-year-old girl
watching, critiquing, hoping to please.

We see the same problem in the mirror
cosmopolitan and soft porn got to her
and she was here first with the "he" shaped tumor
eating away my chance at an unseen moment

but I know better— there is no unseen to be had,
the voyeur is the reason I dress like this.
Skinny jeans, push up bras, matching lace underwear
insatiable even when they've all turned their heads
there she is. Flip your hair, she says,

don't bite your nails, arch your back, laugh quieter
I want to be mad at her, to be good enough,
not to choke on a compliment, but tonight let her
rest peacefully insecure. Unawareness runs out
with eighth grade feminism and I will not tell her
she is lucky enough not to know yet.



Untitled

by *Lydia Fries*

What I Saw Last Year

by Jonathan O'Such

Crop tops from thrift stores,
cats named Influenza,
bottles of liquor drained of their last drop,
vines on rusted fire escapes,
glasses with wolf cuts
and itchy pink sweaters,
dyed orange hair,
studded boots and jockstraps,
piercings on the face
to draw away from the eyes,
bodies riddled with scars,
one down the spine
and many more underneath,
same spots, different people,
slaps to the cheek
that reverberate every two weeks
until something else draws my eye-
but Her,
warm thumbprint cookies,
collared shirts, tights, and skirts,
crocuses that bloom
next to my favorite tree,
long blonde threads
lined like strings on harps,
falling from a crown of branches-
a portrait,
that will never die, never fade
off of any canvas,
Yes, this year,
I think I'll sit here for a while.

for me?

by Genesis Siverio

someone left lilies on my doorstep
a few years ago. I still don't know
who they were from
or if they were even meant
for me.
they were orange,

the lilies. maybe the wind
blew them in, thought of me,
tied them up with some string.
I loved them, those lilies.

then they were gone,
dry and browned. quickly
flowers turn
when torn from their earth.

Second love

by Tori D'Amico

All I know is your crooked front tooth
your granny smith eyes looking far away.
I didn't know then to commit your laughter to memory.
The only night I had the privilege
of holding you, I wish now I hadn't slept
and instead asked about your mother
so I knew more than just your favorite animal.

I am lying on my back. Look
into an endless expanse
of sky so empty I see the dust
swimming on the surface of my eye.
I'm glad you didn't go too far

you see the same rising lavender
over a different mountain.
I'd scratch a lotto ticket every day
if it meant I had the money

to be with you
and do nothing else.



Untitled

by Megan Woods

falling down

by Ally Higgins

Blood and bones– atoms of atoms–
weigh me down like cinderblocked feet in quicksand.
A curse from the heavenly gods to humble me;
a curse indeed to feel this profound

They eat their pineapples and salt
sipping endlessly on their ale until their power hunger is inebriated.
“Plague it with restlessness!” they boom.
“Make it overthink!” they cry.
Shouting and stomping their beers
all-the-while alcoholic fluid flies by

I am in a cage.
With rusting and loose rungs they keep me prisoned.
Sideways tired and gravity shoving me– the cold, muscular metal
drones out my senses
And they bolster:
“Let it have fits of isolated numbness! Make it get swallowed whole!”
Screeches pierce as I lay here in agonizing relief

what a contradiction of the psyche
to believe these beings should be worshiped.

Sometimes the bars fall out of place
and the numbness subsides for a minute
Their voices get quieter
I can think
my facial muscles can lift
But I’ve never had enough to escape

Maybe I didn't try hard enough
or maybe I'm really at fault
it never eases up
enough to escape
but the divines would never let it happen

Their pruned fingertips keep a tight hold at my jaw and throat
until saliva is dripping down my chin
and my cries for help turn blue at the lips
she used to look pretty, you know
she wasn't always like this

But there is nothing you can do now
maybe one day enough metal fibers will fall out of place,
even if it's neurotransmitters making an "appearance,"
shredded hope apparitions are an elixir
to the cage-bound soul

Kids' Table

by James LaForge

Remember when we used to sit at the kids' table
and dream of not sitting at the kids' table?
Picturing what the world was like
at eye-level with the grown-ups,
fantasizing of exciting lives
of suits and ties and car keys,
eagerly waiting to leave our naive bodies
for the hollow promise of the real world.

Remember how the kids' table got smaller
and smaller over the years?
And how suits and ties and car keys turned to
stress and grief and heartbreak
until one day the kids' table sat on the curb,
riddled with stains and cracks,
waiting to be picked up and thrown in the minivan
of some other poor soul who outgrew the kids' table.

In Rome

by Casimira Calascibetta

Where have you been? she asks,
sacramental wine staining pearl-colored teeth.

In Rome, I want to say.

Wandering the Cerasi Chapel of Santa Maria del Popolo,
poking holes in the Assumption of the Virgin.
Scratching uncut nails along unkempt cobbled alleyways
to drown out the sacred sounds of Vivaldi.
Kicking down the Holy Door of St. Peter's Basilica
and watching the mortar and cement crumble around its frame.
Nonnina, I've been standing in the center of Parco Adriano,
screaming into the sky and no longer waiting for its answer.

But instead, I tell her,
I've been busy, so busy.

The truth is, I've never been to Rome,
and I don't think I'll ever go —
all this time, I've been nowhere but here,
stuck right at the foot of the hill I'll watch her live and die on.

The Game of Life

by Giana Sparacia

I'm not one singular person, I'm a mix
My mind usually likes to play tricks
This makes it hard for me to fit in
And I never know where to begin

I think I'm nice, but maybe I'm too much
I play the role of the walking crutch
In a dictionary, I have no definition
Which is why I usually use repetition

A dice always missing, the queen always captured
Was there an error when it was manufactured?
Time is ticking, tempted to take it back, committing theft
Nowhere left to turn, no more turns left

Hopefully one day, someone will see me
As someone they need, or someone they strive to be
'Cause maybe then will I feel I have a purpose
I can't imagine anything worse than this

The answer is that I need to choose
In a game where I will always lose

as a girl

by Genesis Siverio

I want to rip open the earth.
split it in half all the way to its churning
core and see the fiery blaze.
I want to fill a cup with the heat
and pour it into the mouths of man.
remind them of Mother's sting.

maybe then we will have peace.

a question

by Genesis Siverio

do you hold life with both hands?
i'm asking
i'm actually asking
not until today did I realize I was alive.

so do you hold it with two hands?
like a lover's face between your palms?

do you kiss the lips of your pain,
touch the cheeks of your sorrow,
gaze into the eyes of your torment?
do you welcome your weighty grief?
do you love it all anyway?



dreamed up a magical place

by Shannon Charvat

Red Dodge

by Heather De Bel

Tye wanted to tell Justin. It had bothered her all day.

She told him about how, pulling into the gym entrance that morning, she accidentally cut off a red Dodge sedan. It was an old car, rusted, dent on the side door. He was about to turn into the same parking lot and though he had the right of way, Tye pulled in first. Her windows had been down, music up high. She wasn't paying attention. After a moment of slight embarrassment, Tye circled the lot looking for a place to park. A car was backing out near the gym entrance. She stopped and waited with her blinker on. After the car left, she began to pull in when that red Dodge cut in front of her and took the spot. She had to slam on her brakes to keep from hitting him. She shut her eyes, waiting to hear crunching metal. When she opened them, the guy was closing his car door and swirling his keys at her. He mouthed "nice try, bitch" before walking toward the gym entrance.

Justin licked the foam around the edge of his beer. His eyes narrowed.

"Did he say 'nice try, bitch' or 'nice try, *bitch*'?"

"I don't know," she shrugged, "I couldn't really hear him."

"But you're sure he called you a bitch?"

"I'm sure."

Justin shuffled around the kitchen like he was looking for something, slamming cabinet doors, mumbling curses to this unknown man. His posture made Tye uneasy—back stiffened, arms flexed. It was something she was accustomed to. Justin had a tendency to overreact, a tendency that often got him in trouble.

“It’s not that big of a deal,” Tye said, letting her posture slump. She often shrunk to boost his confidence. Justin was on the short side, ‘stocky’ as he put it, with a jaw and build like a pit-bull. His height wasn’t something they talked about. She knew not to wear heels, not to wear a bump or a high ponytail in her hair, and certainly not to stand on her toes when they kissed. But, it was only sometimes that she avoided giving herself an extra inch.

“What did he look like?”

“I can’t remember.”

Justin put his fists on the table and looked down at her as she sat, “Of course you can’t.”

She paused.

“Actually, he was tall...white middle-aged man, average looking.”

“Tall?”

“Yes, tall.”

“How tall?”

“I don’t know. That’s just how he stood out. He was tall.”

She would never say so but his anger excited her, the restlessness, all that testosterone. It was, to Tye, his most attractive trait. He was quick to protect her, that dog in him always ready to snap. In a way, she thought, his temper was a display of passion and this passion was a display of love. She let him pace the room a few more times.

“It’s no big deal,” she said again.

He chugged his beer down in one long sip, squeezing his eyes shut as he swallowed. When he opened them he looked at Tye. Justin sighed and

his face calmed. He sat on the stool and put one leg up on a rung. Back slouching, he stared at the floor. Tye, feeling a little guilty, sat at his feet and leaned her head on his knees. Justin ran his fingers through her hair. They sat there like that, in a calm silence.

“I’m sorry,” he said. “You’re right, it is no big deal.”

She rubbed her cheek against his leg.

“Besides,” he added, “You probably heard him wrong.”

She looked up at Justin and gave him a hard look.

“Actually,” Tye said, “It was ‘nice try, bitch.’”

*

Justin avoided the gym. He told her he didn’t want to risk seeing the man in the red Dodge. He might lose his temper and there was no telling what would happen. Tye was bored of his empty threats and went without him. She didn’t mind. She enjoyed working out alone.

Eventually Justin, swearing he was over it, went one Monday morning with Tye to the gym. And as they were driving around the parking lot, a red Dodge passed. Justin stiffened, gripping the wheel tighter with one hand. “Is that him?”

Tye noticed the crumpled door. “Yep,” she said leaning forward, lifting her head, “that’s him.”

Justin, in his oversized truck, followed the man until he parked. The man hopped out of the car. Justin sat up taller and pretended to look for a spot. The man didn’t pay much attention to them, just walked to the gym entrance, swirling his keys.

“I thought you were over it?”

“You were wrong Tye, he’s not that tall.”

She reached over and wrapped her hand around his, pulling it to her chest. Perhaps if he felt her, knew that she was beside him, he would forget about it. She didn’t want Justin following the man. She imagined a confrontation, some pushing, the cops called, the end of her gym membership.

“Justin, what are you thinking?”

He didn’t notice, so she shook his hand.

“Justin?”

“I’m thinking he has nice rims.”

Justin pulled his truck in front of the cars next to the Dodge. He took his hand from her grip and jumped out, leaving her in the truck. She looked around and saw that no one was in the parking lot. She felt nervous and unsure of what to do. The truck bounced. She turned around and watched Justin in the bed of the truck, rummaging through his tool box. He took out his tie down strap and wrapped it around his forearm. Then, he jumped over the side and walked behind the truck. Tye opened the back window and leaned out for a better look. She watched as Justin hooked the tie down strap to his tow hitch. Then, he hooked the other side of the strap to the Dodge’s rim and loosened the bolts. With the ratchet, he cranked until the strap was taut. Despite her uneasiness, she felt a sudden thrilling flutter. She suppressed a smile.

He came back into the truck, on edge. Justin gripped one fist with the other, like he was trying to crack his knuckles. Her heart pounded. When Tye looked at Justin, she noticed he looked older, stronger and though she was scared, she realized she loved him. She loved this. She would never tell anyone; she would protect him the way he protected her. He was about to put the truck in drive.

She stared at him. The car was still in park.

She waited.

“Should I do it?” he asked.

“What?”

“Aren’t you going to tell me not to do this?”

“What? You’re not going to do it?”

He paused and looked away, shaking his head, “Fuck it. I’m not doing it. I don’t want to go to jail for some tall circus freak asshole.”

“He called me a bitch.”

“Maybe you’re thinking of something else. Probably mixing up memories. Maybe just hearing things?”

Tye took a breath, loosened her grip.

Still waiting, she glared at him. He was no longer a man who would protect her or a man who loved her. She realized he was a cornered dog baring his teeth, afraid to bite.

“I’ll go put your shit back in the bed of your truck.”

She jumped out before he responded and walked over to the tie down strap. It was taut, bright yellow, pulling on the man’s rim. She looked over at Justin through the window; he was crouched in the driver’s seat, hiding.

She leaned down and loosened the strap, but she didn’t remove it. She left it lying on the cement, one hook still on the tow hitch and one still on the Dodge’s rim. She hopped back into the truck.

“I put the strap in the bed. Just get out of here,” she said.

“Let’s hope no one saw this, we can get back at him another day.”

“Whatever. Hurry up.”

Justin peeled away, burning rubber as he usually did. It was only a moment before the strap lifted and tightened. Justin flinched when the truck felt a hard jolt.

“What the hell—”

Tye didn’t respond. She was watching the review mirror, smiling at the rim and tire spinning wildly off the cement.

—

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Swimming in Emotion: Interview with Heather De Bel

by Keely Lombardi

Born and raised in New Jersey, Heather earned her BA from Ramapo College in Literature and Creative Writing and her MFA in Creative Writing from the University of Maryland. There she was awarded the Jack Salamanca Thesis Award for her collection *The Hunting Ground and Other Stories*. Heather attended Skidmore's New York State Summer Writers Institute in 2013 and in 2014. Heather's work explores themes of love, loss and addiction. Heather is interested in the things that haunt her characters, the things that there are no words for. Her stories explore the landscapes of New Jersey, Alaska and the Adirondacks.

When I imagine who I'll be when I graduate Ramapo, I like to imagine I'll be someone like Professor De Bel. Poised and smart. An obvious writer by the observant look in her eyes. She is passionate about her syllabus and can tell when her students don't read. Last semester I took her Introduction to Creative Writing class. It was possibly her monotone voice, or her seemingly uninterested yet caring disposition, that connected me to her. Now my second class with her, Fiction Writing Workshop, is almost complete. I loved being Heather's student this academic year. I jumped at the opportunity to interview her, though it felt more like a tumble. I was nervous, and absent-mindedly

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walked her into the wrong study room. I desperately hoped no one would ask us to leave. We had a long discussion about her time at Ramapo, her life as a writer, and the characters in her short story "Red Dodge." The interview was nice, but I have to say my favorite part was walking out of the library with her into a beautiful spring afternoon. I'm pleased to say my first interview was with the professor I love most.

How did “Red Dodge” come to be?

When I was an undergraduate I went to Skidmore Writers Institute, it was there I wrote “Red Dodge” as a class prompt. My professor liked what I shared and reached out to me after class. It became two years of me sending him edits and him sending me revisions. I think that showed me how long it actually takes to write a story, even if it is only five pages.

My favorite part of the story is when Tye has two realizations back to back. At first, she thinks Justin is going to defend her, but when he fails to put the truck in drive, she realizes he is nothing more than “a cornered dog baring his teeth afraid to bite.”

Do you think writers need to have some kind of realization to write?

I had a friend in high school—I didn’t have the greatest friends in high school—and he told me a story of how he cracked off someone’s rim in the same way. I thought what a strange thing to do to someone, and I was interested in what that moment would look like. That is what got me writing, but there needed to be a deeper meaning. As I was fleshing out their relationship, I realized the story is about Tye and what she expects of Justin. The most exciting part about fiction is you start off with one idea, and as you write you realize that is not what the story is about at all. Most of the stories I’ve written, I’ve had that sort of realization—*Oh, this is better than what I started with.*

Justin, as a character, takes on Tye’s problems as if they are his own. Can you tell me more about how Tye and Justin came to be?

At first, Justin did take the tie down strap off, but the story was missing something. Tye is so drawn to him, even though he is so clearly not what she wants him to be. In the end, she doesn’t want the truth. She wants the bad boy who is going to do bad things to protect her. If he isn’t going to be that person, she is going to make him be that person.

That is how she came to be in the story. Making him short was a lot of fun, too.

Exactly. Tye knew what string to pull to upset Justin, by bringing up height. I think that writers naturally know what strings to pull, because we observe people. Do you think you have the skill of observing people?

Absolutely. As a writer you have to. So much of writing is understanding how people work. It is about using whatever tools you have to understand why they do what they do. Justin is very much based on a real person, who actually really isn't short at all. I think insecurity in men is interesting to write about because it often comes out as anger or violence to assert their masculinity. Understanding people, I think, is the heart of writing. When you write, you write about people. Understanding people is what you have to do.

In class, you mentioned you spent a year only reading female writers. I'm curious to know more about that time.

I went through a very complicated process of developing my writing, as everyone does. I went through the phase in high school and early college of loving the modernists, in which mostly men are emphasized: it's the men, and Woolf. That strange masculine way of writing was something I was drawn to. It wasn't until I read Jean Rhys that I became interested in exploring the way women understand their emotion opposed to the way over-appreciated writers like Hemingway try to understate them. She's melancholic, depressed, in her emotions. She is a woman swimming in emotion, and I think that is how I am. I thought it was so bold for her to write that way. I felt I had some catching up to do.

Did you enjoy your time at Ramapo?

Yes, Ramapo changed my life. I came into Ramapo having no idea what I wanted to do. I left knowing exactly what I wanted to do.

I don't come from a creative family. In high school, I couldn't conceive that there were people who made money pursuing the arts. No one talks to you about that in high school. When I came to Ramapo on early admissions day, they asked me what my major was. I said I had no idea. One teacher, who was definitely in the humanities, asked me what classes I liked in high school. When I told her literature, she said, "Okay we'll make you a Literary Studies major! You can always change it!" That's how I fell into studying literature. My first year I was taking Gen Eds. I was bored with life, bored with everything, then I took Hoch's Readings in Poetry class.

How did you begin teaching at Ramapo?

Similar to how I fell into studying literature, I fell into teaching. When I was at Ramapo a lot of my classmates were getting their certifications as a back-up. I thought by doing so, they were going to be teachers, not writers. I didn't want to do that. I wanted to put all my energy into writing. I was never interested in teaching, and I'm nervous in front of crowds. When I went into grad school, that's when I realized how wrong I was and that I love teaching. I think there is a small group of us that get sucked into academia and never leave. We collect degrees and adjunct in between degrees. After I graduated from grad school, I knew I wanted to teach. I taught at Rutgers, William Patterson, and reached out to Todd Barnes for a Critical Reading and Writing class at Ramapo.

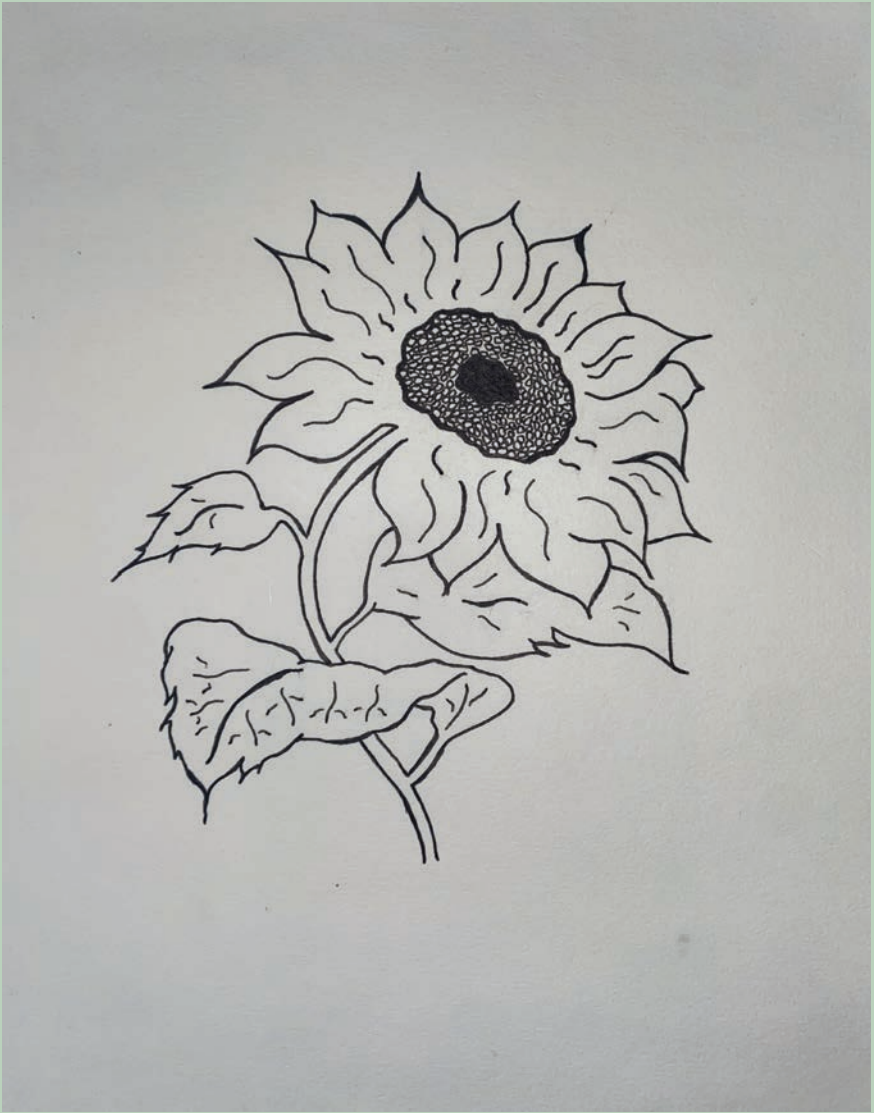
Do you have any advice for struggling college students?

Take care of yourself. For me, what made me a good student was taking classes I knew I would love with professors I knew I would love. Professors who are passionate. It was that feeling of love that always made me turn to the readings and do the work. I didn't go through the very, very difficult process of trying

The most exciting part about fiction is you start off with one idea, and as you write you realize that is not what the story is about at all. Most of the stories I've written, I've had that sort of realization—*Oh, this is better than what I started with.*

to get school done with Covid. I'm not sure how I would have survived in that environment. It is so difficult to have that passion virtually. It feels contrived. I give students going to school during the time of Covid a lot of credit.

You must radically take care of yourself. School isn't just about absorbing knowledge, it is about the experience. Learning isn't having knowledge dumped into your brain., You have to fail. That's the only way you learn. I think creative writing workshops are so great because you need to be criticized. Criticism, when done well, is meant to help you get to the next story, it is not meant to tear you down. The act of giving someone criticism is an act of faith because you believe in the person to do better the next time. For students who feel burnt out: take a break, take what little pennies you have and go travel, even if it's to Pennsylvania. The best classrooms are the ones that combine life, passion, and connection. I took professors that knew that, and I loved it. It is important to remember what you love and do the things that you love.



Inspired by Professor James Hoch's Sunflowers

by Keely Lombardi

Sunflowers

by James Hoch

Standing in front of Van Gogh's portrait,
the winter one, bandaged, heavy green
overcoat, blue hat black fur, each stroke
deft, pained as the face he is showing,
mangled but repairing as if lived through,
something worth pleading on canvas—
my son asks *What happened to his head?*
He's still a kid and doesn't know the story,
the unbearability of loving ones who leave.
When I don't answer he eats the quiet,
the way when I turn down the radio's litany
of casualties, he hunkers like a monk
burying his head in a bowl of Cheerios.
But really, what is there to say—
a photo, my brother patrolling a field
of sunflowers in Afghanistan. It'll be years
before he understands the ear, that presence
implicates the missing. It'll be just after
school lets out, driving to the grocery store,
and he will tell me about another Van Gogh,
a vase of sunflowers studied in art class.
Simple task: To record how each differs,
this head from that, this paint from that.
We will be crossing the creek bridge
and he will be mid-sentence and I will be
thinking summer—roadsides lined with flowers
in black buckets, and birds taking seed
out of ones along the garden fence,
wondering if he knows about Gauguin,
the Yellow House in Arles. And just
when I feel almost useful, he will ask:
Did your brother have to kill anyone?

What I don't know becomes signature.
What I can't say becomes silence
and silence scores the mind, and the mind,
never letting go, takes the marks and makes
a house of the cuttings, and the house says,
dwell here. But all that's outside the frame.
We are here now, looking backward
and forward at a painting of a man
injured in love. And if I had the means,
I'd ditch the day, turn all elsewheres noise,
and hold truant the coma calm of a museum.
And if I had the heart not to feel this forever's
not the one my son wants, I'd break it,
strew it against the bric-a-brac and static.
To stay still this long is a terrible thing to ask.

Senior Art Highlight: Veronika Miller

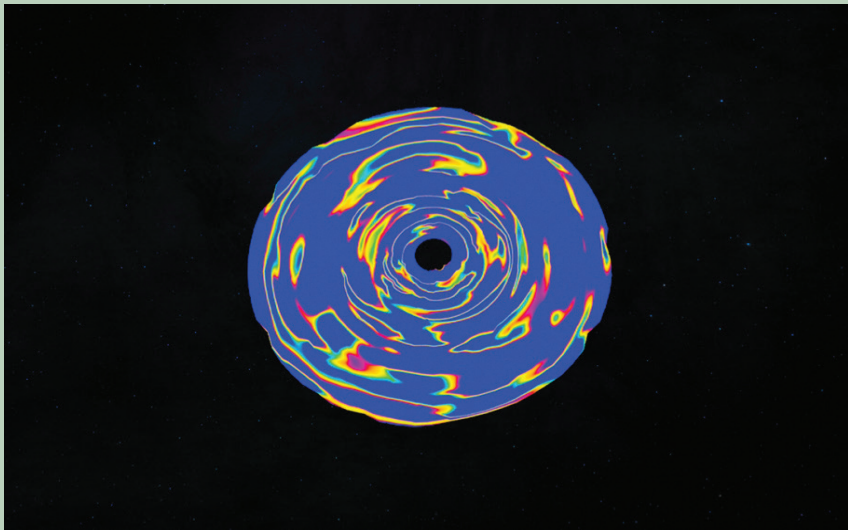
by Khalisah Hameed

Veronika Miller is a senior Visual Arts major with a concentration in electronic art and animation. Miller, hailing from North Plainfield, New Jersey, has been an animator since the Fall semester of 2019. Starting out with drawing “portraits of people and wanting to expand upon that,” Veronika discovered her love for animation after “watching a series of anime films” when she was thirteen years old. It was through her artistic background and discovery of the imaginative power of animation that she decided to “dedicate [her] life to animation, [her] art, and the animation community.” Veronika describes her animation as “colorful” and significantly inspired by music. Whereas most visual artists note other visual art or artists as their main inspirations, Miller gives credit to music for most of her creative juices. “For instance,” she says, “when I think of Earth, Wind and Fire, if they made a music video you can immerse yourself in that time and space.” In describing her work, and the aspirations she has for it, Veronika aims to create visual and sonic spaces that her audience can get lost in.

It is with this hope of creating a sensory experience for her audience that Veronika undergoes the process of completing her senior thesis project. The young animator intends to render a three-minute video that “doesn’t have a story. It’s more of a point of view narrative.” With a focus on creating detailed scenes and landscapes, Miller uses “the music as [her] main form of communication to amplify the visual aspects.” With her passion for detail and color, however, Veronika mentions that she often finds herself giving her audience a lot of information in the beginning that may seem overwhelming, or even confusing. In her growth as an artist, the part of this senior thesis project that Veronika is post proud of is the more minimalistic intro that she developed. On this, Veronika reflects that she is “learning to restrain [her]self in certain things so that the audience can better

understand it,” and not feel as though they got more than they could digest in the very beginning.

As Disney and Pixar enter a new age of heavy-hitting movies that leave their mark on global culture and consumerism, the art of animation is one that cannot be understated at this time. The power of animation and its possibilities for world building are two of the biggest reasons why Veronika prefers her digital creations. “With animation,” she says, “I feel a lot better being able to visually show what I want without having to draw it or video tape it. I can make it how I see it, like if I wanted to make the sky pink or the grass rainbow, I can do it.” Miller envisions her animation breaking into the spheres of music videos and educational material, as she wants to merge her love for music and art to help others better understand the world around them



A still from short animated film Anywhere but Here

in memoriam

by Professor Ed Shannon

Remembering Denis Murphy, founding advisor to Trillium

Denis Murphy, Professor of Literature at Ramapo from 1972 to 1995 passed away earlier this year. Denis founded *Trillium* in 1973 and later revived it in 1987 after a brief hiatus. Despite low budgets, occasional apathy, and now even a pandemic, the magazine has been a staple at the college for decades. And we can thank Denis Murphy for much of that success.

That was the experience that sent me to graduate school, making me one of many, many Denis Murphy expats: Ramapo students who for the first time could imagine a life for themselves they had never considered before.

Denis Murphy was hard to miss: ruddy red cheeks, flailing arms, tousled hair, and a burning cigarette. He'd punctuate his courses in American and Irish literature with spontaneous explosions of jokes, asides, and stories that probably had something to do with class.

(His grandfather was an

undocumented Irish immigrant who had jumped ship in New York harbor. The old man screamed in horror on seeing an Italian family order mussels at a New York restaurant: "Jaysus! That's famine food! Don't eat that shit!" True? Not true? It's a true enough story about someone else's long-gone grandfather that this writer remembers 40 years later).

Murphy was a passionate and inspirational teacher. You could just as easily call him a passionate and inspirational reader. At least once a week, no matter the course, he'd freeze mid-sentence and say about Faulkner, Lowell, Melville, or Joyce: "Jesus, I'd give my right arm to have written that!" The students most attuned to his unusual frequency have found themselves tripping over ghostly right arms ever since. If you squint, you can still spot one or two downstairs in A Wing.

As it happens, Denis was one of my first college professors. He bookended my Ramapo years by allowing me to sit in on a class after I graduated, and it was there I first read *Moby Dick*. That was the experience that sent me to graduate school, making me one of many, many Denis Murphy expats: Ramapo students who for the first time could imagine a life for themselves they had never considered before. Leaving New Jersey and everything!

He mentored and inspired so many of us. In fact, the 1987 “rebirth” issue of *Trillium* was co-edited by a student named Kathleen O’Brien, who later became an adjunct Professor at Ramapo and even taught Magazine Workshop, the course that produces *Trillium*. Also, we have been married since 1988. So there’s that. It was Kathleen who was taking that *Moby Dick* course I sat in on.

Denis retired for health reasons in 1995. I was hired at Ramapo in 1997 where I have taught courses he once taught. Courses I had taken. There is more of Denis Murphy here at Ramapo than those phantom right arms. You’re holding a bit of his passion in your hands right now, as you read this magazine. Do him a favor: take your time, give it your attention. Then pass it—and a little passion—on to the next reader.

Contributors

Ro Cavallaro is a Senior Psychology major with a minor in Creative Writing. Although she has been writing poetry for the past seven years, she will be pursuing an MA in Clinical Mental Health Counseling with a concentration in Addictions at Fairleigh Dickinson University in the fall. She will continue to write poetry in her free time and perhaps publish another book while completing the hours needed to become an LPC. Her non-school-related interests include trying out new restaurants, making mood playlists, and relaxing with her three bunnies and hamster.

Shannon Charvat is a second year Junior Visual Communication

Design major who is minoring in Marketing. This past school year she had the privilege of being one of the designers of the Ramapo College yearbook. This summer she will be interning for Crestron Electronics for Graphic Design. After graduating, she hopes to get a job as a Print or a UX Designer!

Colin Corde is currently a Senior at Ramapo College. He is pursuing a Bachelor's Degree in English and Literary Studies with a concentration in Creative Writing. He writes often in his free time, mostly sticking to different genres of fiction. After graduating, Colin intends to teach English abroad in various countries. He dreams of someday becoming a best-selling author. Other than writing, Colin spends his time backpacking and making music with his band, TheBandLunch.

Tori D'Amico is a Senior Communications major with a concentration in Journalism and a minor in Creative Writing. While her core studies were in news writing, her free time was constantly filled with poetry and prose. Most recently, she completed her honors thesis with a 10-poem collection titled "Everything was vermillion." After graduation, Tori hopes to continue dedicating time to writing poetry and perhaps one day making it a full time career.

Lydia Fries is a Junior Political Science major looking to pursue law school after graduation. "Although photography is my medium of choice, I love exploring ways to make my work unique, such as fashion and special effects makeup. I also love painting and would consider

myself a big music person.”

Melody Gleason is a Psychology major with a minor in English & Literary Studies. She creates mostly pen and ink illustrations as well as incorporating mixed media approaches. She creates art mainly out of personal pleasure and enjoys a loose and unstructured approach.

Ben Hopper is a Senior Communications major with a concentration in Writing and a minor in English here at Ramapo. Writing is one of his greatest passions, and he began writing stories when he was about eight years old. He started taking writing more seriously in high school when he developed a love of poetry. Ever since then writing has been an important aspect of his life as he’s worked to continue developing as a writer and discover new mediums.

James LaForge is a Sophomore Communications major with a concentration in Writing.

Lisa Longo is a Literature major with a Creative Writing concentration. She has developed a passion for wildlife photography, and hopes to become a Park Ranger while educating others about the nature around them through her writing and photography.

Emily Melvin has a major in Communication Arts with a concentration in Writing, as well as minors in Creative Writing and Digital Filmmaking. Along with writing poetry, she practices journalism in her classes and through her time working as a writer and editor for The Ramapo News.

Jonathan O’Such is a graduating senior majoring in English and Literary Studies with a Creative Writing Concentration. Jonathan has been writing since the age of six and seeks to publish poetry collections in the near future.

Genesis Siverio is an English & Literary Studies major with a minor in Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies and is a proud part of Ramapo College’s EOF Program. Sharing her writing with others is a rather new pursuit, but she loves language ardently and finds it important to share stories to form connections.

Giana Sparacia is a Sophomore Nursing major who has always had a passion for writing. In addition to writing, her interests include photography and dance. She is a lover of coffee, beaches, and her crazy dog, Gus. She aspires to become a pediatric nurse in the future, while continuing to incorporate her personal ambitions.

Megan Woods is a Visual Arts and English major. She loves to make colorful and funky art, and finishes most of her pieces during lectures. She is the vice president of both the Ramapo Literature Club and the Visual Arts Society, which you should join, because it's pretty fun. :)

Editors' Notes

Claire Griffiths

Hello, readers! I'm one of the editors of this year's edition of *Trillium*. There are so many amazing submissions which were so inspiring. I would like to thank every one of the people who entered submissions, because without them this edition would not have come to light. I'm sure everyone's participation in writing submissions has inspired the rest of the writing community here at Ramapo. I hope you'll enjoy it!

Luka Marjanovic

Be honest, how many pieces did you actually read? Did you just look at the pictures? No matter how you consumed this edition of *Trillium*, I want to thank you for actually taking the time out of your life to actually do it, and I hope this is not the last *Trillium* you read.

Natalie Tsur

The process was one we were not entirely sure about at first, being that this is our first full print edition since 2020. We spent time soliciting submissions, talking through what works and what doesn't, and seeing what consistent themes emerge. What we found was students wanted to write, and write about relationships, introspective reflections, and a heightened sense of loneliness magnified by the COVID-19 pandemic. This is a collection we are proud to deliver to the Ramapo community, and we are grateful to have put this together at a time when literature and art are most needed.

Keely Lombardi

Trillium gave me the opportunity to interview a professor who has had a great impact on me. I will look back at this time fondly. I had the privilege of reading many beautiful pieces of writing. I hope you enjoy reading this edition, and look forward to the next.

Joe Ferreri

Trillium was a labor of love over this semester for myself and all the editors alike. Putting this book together was an experience I am so grateful to have contributed to. You know, we would have these moments when reviewing submissions when a poem would be read aloud or an art piece would be pulled up on the board, where we all knew yep, this is making the final cut. This *Trillium* is a manifestation of every single one of those moments. We hope you enjoyed consuming it—however you did—half as much as we enjoyed putting it together.

Isabella Gregory

My time working on *Trillium* was an eye-opening experience. I was honored to be able to read and review submissions from the students here at Ramapo. I hope all of our readers find a piece they feel connected to, as our editors did.

Patrick Keastead

As an English major, being in charge of communications was something I never would've thought I would be. I did something different and stepped out of my comfort zone, but the experience was absolutely worth it. I'm proud of everything we've accomplished this semester with this beautiful magazine. I hope you enjoy it as much as I do.

Zach Benjamin

My work with *Trillium* was an amazing experience. It was very interesting to read and see other students' writing and art. I hope everyone enjoys the wonderful submissions, because they are truly one-of-a-kind. Happy reading!

TRILLIUM