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POETRY & WRITING

Children's Edition

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CLAUDINE NASH
WHAT MATTERS MOST

COVER ARTWORK BY IRISH ARTIST EMMA BARONE



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Om Shanti Shanti Shanti Om

Mark Ulyseas
Publisher/Editor
markulyseas@liveencounters.net

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CONTRIBUTORS

CLAUDINE NASH

IRIS MILLER

ADELA BLAUSTEIN

ELLA SKYE HACKNEY

MIRANDA CARLSON

ZOE

ELIZA

MAX KURANT

KUNCHAKA FONSEKA

SHIVANI PERSAUD

ASHLEY

Claudine Nash is a psychologist and award-winning poet whose collections include *The Wild Essential* (Kelsay Books, 2017), *Parts per Trillion* (Aldrich Press, 2016) and the chapbook *The Problem with Loving Ghosts* (Finishing Line Press, 2014). She has also edited three anthologies of poetry, most recently *Epiphanies and Late Realizations of Love for Transcendent* Zero Press (2019). Widely published, her poetry has earned numerous literary distinctions including Pushcart Prize nominations and prizes from such publications and artistic organizations as Artists Embassy International, Thirty West Publishing House, The Song Is... and Eye on Life Magazine among others. www.claudinenashpoetry.com



Claudine Nash

CLAUDINE NASH WHAT MATTERS MOST

If there is one theme that connects all the poems in the July edition of *LE Children Poetry & Writing*, it is that of connection itself.

Now more than ever, our minds and senses are oversaturated with a steady stream of distractions that prevent us from being fully present in our lives. Living in an era where electronic screens draw attention away from the living beings before us, where we spend our days in overcrowded urban settings far from the soothing silence of the natural world, where fear and division are used as political tools to separate us, we may feel harried and disconnected. Detached from nature, from each other and from our authentic selves, we may find ourselves feeling isolated or lost.

As research professor Brene Brown has stated, “Connection is why we’re here; it is what gives purpose and meaning to our lives.” On the pages that follow, we will meet several young poets ranging in age from nine to eighteen who have much to teach the adults of this world about the value of living a fully connected life.

Adela will reconnect us to the natural world through her story of a wild fox “who sees it all” on her journey. Iris will treat us to a “river” of “feelings, hopes and dreams.” Ella will remind us to share our beauty and voices with each other while Eliza and Kunchaka will embrace our origins and acknowledge our dark sides as well the mistakes and imperfections that are part of the human condition. Max, Ashley and Zoe will draw us back to our birthplaces and family, to our grandmothers’ hands “that project love into emptiness” and reach out “to hold and to be held.” Honoring her authentic self, Shivani will show those who doubt her “just how stars shine.”

We thank the staff of *The Phoenix*, the literary magazine of Townsend Harris High School in New York, for contributing their poems to this issue as well as our younger contributors for sharing their voices and visions with us. Collectively, their work grants a moment of true connection and an essential reminder of that which matters most.

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Iris Miller is 11 years old and lives with her parents, sister, and brother in Corvallis, Oregon. Iris enjoys reading, writing, and running/walking.



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WATERFALL OF WORDS

At first
Just a trickle
Names, places, things.
Soon
A river
Feelings, hopes, dreams,
All pouring into
A waterfall
Of
Adventure, climax, plot.
What once
Was a trickle
Now so much
More:
A story.

Adela Blaustein, age 9, loves foxes, and loves to read books and play the piano. She lives with her family and two cats in New Rochelle, New York.



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THE FOX'S JOURNEY

Running softly through the forest
Orange, black, and white go by
Her fur stands out against blue skies.
Past the oak trees and the old stone wall;
The wild fox sees it all.
Golden sunset through the trees.
Yellow flowers. Bumblebees.
The wild fox walks across the street.
The lights go out, one by one.
It's getting dark from the sinking sun.
A beautiful night has just begun.
Through the forest once again.
Light of moon, not light of sun.
She sees where her small bed lays.
The fox's journey is now done.

Ella Skye Hackney is 9 years old and lives in New York with her parents and dog Owen. She loves ice skating, graphic novels, and political activism.



Aretha Franklin performs on stage c1968.

BEAUTIFUL

For Aretha Franklin

Beautiful is something you hear.
Beautiful is something you share.
Beautiful is in our sound.
How about we share it with everyone?
Why don't we all get out of the body-size box?
Show yourself,
be heard.
Let everyone stand up,
and show that you're really beautiful!

Miranda Carlson, 8 years old, Dudley Elementary School, Dudley, Massachusetts, USA.
(written when in second grade, will be entering third grade)



Photograph Pixabay.com

SUNFLOWER

The day I found a sunflower
it was pretty and yellow
it was cool and he is going to be my fellow
it was fun having him in my house
but a few days later he was acting weird
he was the color brown
like he was from a town!
He was crumbled and his petals were falling off
then I remembered they need water!
But now I know how to take care of a sunflower.

Zoe is Townsend Harris HS Junior, Insta-poet and avid volleyball player and competitor. She was the First place winner in *The Phoenix's* annual writing contest.

YIAYIA'S HANDS

Yiayia's hands are heavily creased,
Worn, as the hands of any elder would appear.
Yet their touch,
their naturally geriatric qualities
That project love into emptiness,
Are superbly ethereal.

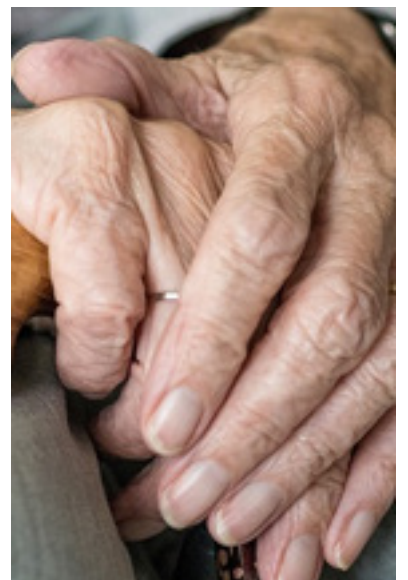
These are the hands that blessed the marriage of my parents,
Although the colors of their skin juxtaposed
During a time where a commitment between opposites like this
Was far from a plotted limerence.
Still, these hands reached out,
With the option to repel,
Still these hands reached out,
To hold and to be held.

These are the hands that touched the hospital doors,
And extended to meet their firstborn, premature granddaughter,
Fragile, aquiver.
Bombinating a mellifluous wail,
giving life to the soul who would grow
to be just as strong as the woman she was named after,
And do that name justice
By thriving in her living masterpiece
When the world was a blank canvas.
They're the arms that changed my diapers
Despite the atrociousness of my cries that turned into screams,
Stretches that turned into kicks.
Still, these hands reached out,
With the option to repel,
Still these hands reached out,
To hold and to be held.

These are the hands that sewed my graduation dress,
Producing excruciating calluses and dribbles of blood along the way.
It was worth repairing the rips and holes...
...I couldn't do so myself.
And still, these hands reached out,
With the option to repel,
Still these hands reached out,
To hold and to be held.

These are the hands that have pulled me close
And reinforced the amount of affection one could feel.
They dissolve the nefarious thoughts
And bring out a vulnerability
That is unbeknown to ones who
never let it in.

I desire to interlock her wrinkles with my crevices,
to hold Yiayia's hands
until the day she lies supine,
And I can't hold them anymore.



Eliza is a Townsend Harris High school Sophomore and alumna of The New York Times Summer Journalism Workshop. She won Honorable Mention in *The Phoenix's* annual writing contest.



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CREATION

A blank canvas
Broken edges of a cream
Dusty china teacup
Line the horizon

A shout
Terror pierces the mosaic
Irreplaceable
Unrepairable

The heavens are thrown
Upon our loved ones
Upon us
Upon our dignity

Mistakes
Flow freely
The fruit is not whole
The canvas is no longer blank

Max Kurant is a member of the 2019 Townsend Harris High School graduating class and will attend Binghamton University in the fall. He is the Literary Editor of *The Phoenix*, President of THHS' Student Wellness Council and the recipient of the NYC DOE School Wellness Student of the Year Award 2018-19.



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GOODBYE, NEW YORK

I've written tributes to all I love
 For when I leave this city of stars
 I'll be leaving all my loving
 To those who have given me all my believing.
 Most of all
 To the city that has given me all:
 Given me a life worth living,
 Attributed to my success with attributes no other can surpass.
 Boston
 LA
 Even cities of gold
 Can't ever raise me like this Empire State has
 Because you've placed me 102 stories up,
 Allowed a story to be told.
 With eight million ears as an audience
 You've birthed a voice so loud,
 So bold.

I'd say you will be missed,
 But you and I both know I'm never really leaving:
 Never leaving the gleaming lights peering through
 the night sky
 Never leaving the night sky's cool air after late
 days lived above ground level
 Never forgetting the level of life you've laid upon me

Thank you
 To the city that can withstand anything
 And has raised me that way,
 Too.
 Thank you
 To the city that never sleeps.
 I'll never sleep another night
 Not thinking about you.

Kunchaka Fonseka is a graduating senior at Townsend Harris High School and will attend Northwestern University in the fall. He is the Sports Editor for The Classic, Townsend's critically-acclaimed newspaper. He is a learned bass guitarist as well as a member of the THHS Jazz Ensemble.

A DEMONIC GRACE

A monologue from Satan in his bathtub surely engulfed in salt and smoke.

I am surely of sacred matter,
 Behind you, your grandest desire,
 A shell laden beetle, I slither by your heel.
 Your fear, it loans my life
 The day of rest I profess, possess- enliven
 Shake my pawns and pour the drink higher
 Mind a bite, drink and kneel together
 Don't think, don't breathe- we are joined by internal arteries
 I am the octopus' wreath- a love untold
 The grand organ and chains chime in unison
 Revering severed feet and toes once moisten.
 At dusk, untossed sheets paused, you pray
 For saviors and merciful who wane in the dark.
 In my scepter is love, a fiery ball in your heart
 And you will be pleased for I am all,
 in me you find similarity.
 I, the, wolf whose path the master avoids yet tracks
 Now see, that boy is my goat forged on sour vine.
 Most my followers are all five adept
 A demonic grace in air and blood combined
 Dreams do not circumvent me nor do vices.
 Accolades to souls and laborers eternal, I lay watch.



Photograph Pixabay.com

Shivani Persaud is 2019 Townsend Harris High School graduate and will be attending the University of Central Florida in the fall of 2019. She is Editor-in-Chief of *The Phoenix*, an Indian classical musician, and recipient of the NYC DOE Hackett Medal for the Humanities and Scholastic Gold Key for her *A Love Note to Origins* Writing Portfolio.

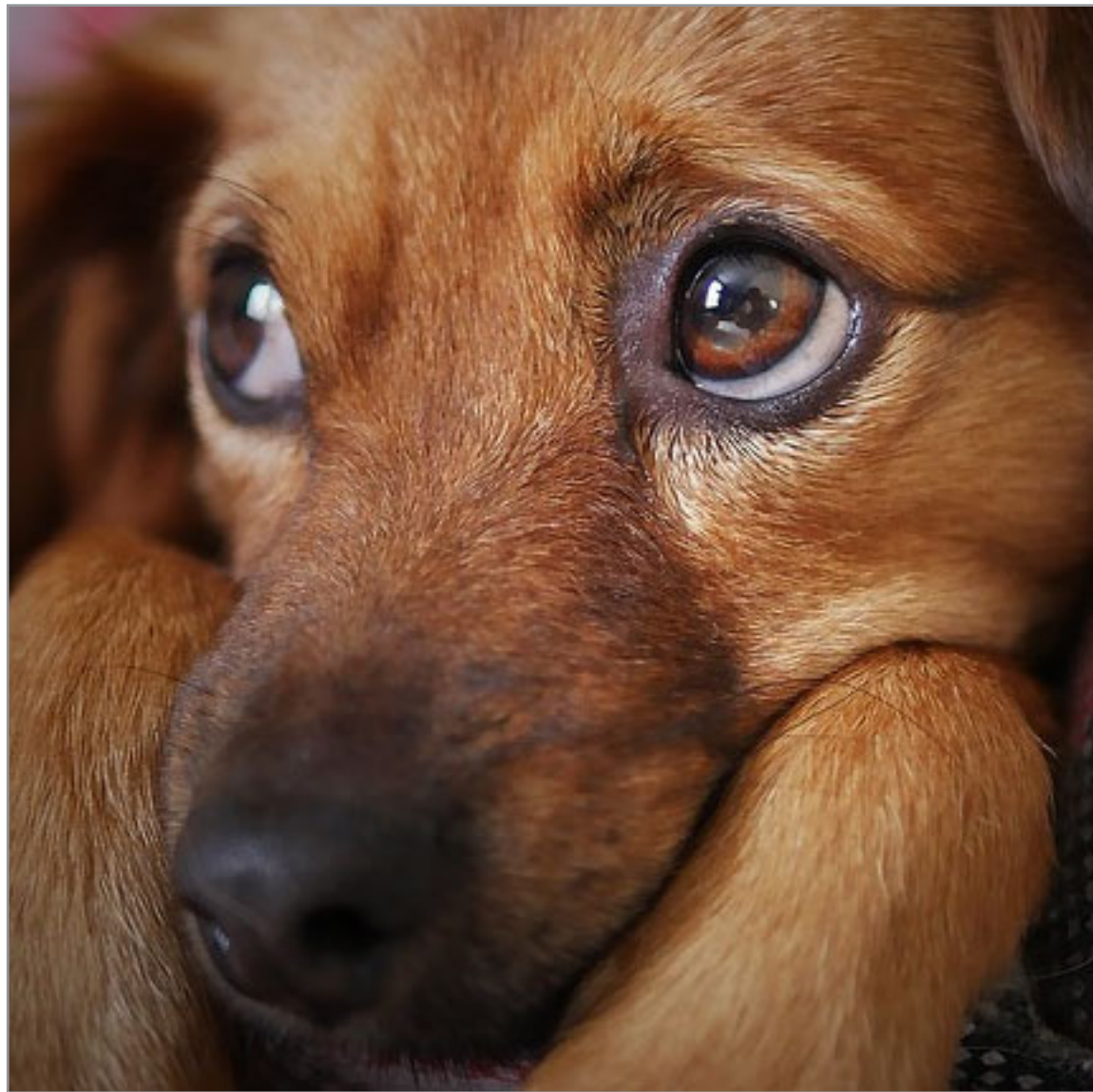


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RAW

Call me inorganic one more time
I'll rip apart my skin
And show you
Just how stars shine

Ashley is a Townsend Harris High School Sophomore and Member of *The Phoenix's* writing staff.



Photograph Pixabay.com

SUBSTITUTION

When your heart breaks
You look down at your hands, and you see hands
But when you look around you see everything
Created was created by hands
So why do we need hearts?

If their hands sculpted the nation
then why can't we build new creations?
Every other damned human fixation
in this cruel world is nothing but a substitute for human relation.

Focusing our energy into projects, into schemes, creating that drive,
So maybe one day the moment arrives
Where we feel fulfilled-and the sky
will once again be clouded with lies,
That we are loved, when we are really only satisfied.

Take your pills to prevent you from going insane
Because at the end of the day,
you don't know the games
Being played inside your own brain
Where your satisfaction turns into not even a fraction of what is used to be-
you *will* find that pain.

Because the only remedy in this maddened world
is not a distraction to cause satisfaction,
Not a waste of time to give you a run for your money,
Not a use for your hands when they aren't wrapped around another,
The only cure for a broken heart is love.

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