

3rd Place: Rebecca Araten
Ramaz Upper School (New York, NY)

Dear Magda

You are young enough to forget.

You can claim you were born the day the war ended,
That you're not a soul that needs to be mended.
Ashy gray skies were born in a dream,
You never heard the sound of your sisters' screams
All you heard were deathless wails, words will never follow –
An eraser cannot remove the sorrow.

You will hope to forget the all-consuming fears
The days as a child aged beyond her years.
The shards of glass,
the smoky haze
You'll still hear voices and they'll think you're insane
And even worse,
The silent pain
A helplessness too great to give it a name.
Keep some distance for your sanity,
Hide your scars in a box on the vanity.

Your tattoos are scars,
Your scars a tattoo,
Prominent and decorative, but never to you.
Your life is on display,
Can't beat the stench away
Of hurting hands and filthy cheeks
Of broken toes and worn physique
A price to pay, no faith to lose
You've become steadily more confused.
A challah cover's your only memento
Of life before the broken ghetto.
You want to remember, you want to forget
The casually malicious epithets.
You're walking in circles, you see the decay
It's okay to step
away.