

Glacial Rebound

By Cooper Gregg – Walt Whitman High School

Glacial rebound is the recovery of land that was depressed by large glacier sheets. Many of Alaska's great cities are brought forth from the snow-fields now whittled down with time. These glaciers carved the complex peaks and valleys of the last frontier's mountain ranges, plummeting 10,000 feet of ice to the tops of the sleeping giants we see today. But as centuries pass since Earth was frozen over, these heavy celadon blocks pour out of valleys and melt back into the sea. Giving way to the coastal towns. In the past few hundred years, though, it appears that ice-packed earth has begun to bounce back towards the sun. At almost 0.76 inches each year, the ground forgets a little less and heals a little more. Still molded by weight it once held, our mountains are the product of colder years; dizzy summits forged by ice still lie like piles of blankets sweeping across the shore.

The night before we left, all six of us piled under my duvet. Our last few hours together for the indefinite future, after years attached at the hip. Tied in knots beneath technicolor quilts; all we could bring ourselves to say was "I love you" and "I wish we didn't have to go." We melt into one another as we sleep. By morning, one by one, we spill out of the house, bodies still begging to stay intertwined. Slipping away until the bottom bunk sits empty again. My apartment, hollowed from the loss of five other sleeping figures, aches in the shape of the dent in my mattress still carrying the memory. The topography of my room bares their absence, draped in strewn clothes, an ecosystem weighed down with mourning.

Many essays written on the subject say that Alaskan mountains once carried so many tons of ice, scientists couldn't predict how long until the coastlines would return to their previous levels, or what that would look like. Sometimes there are questions only time can answer. It is now known that certain areas of the tundra landscapes will take over 10,000 years to heal. It's unsure what this could mean for the homes that have settled in the mountains' curves. If the ground will rise up and push out the leavetakers who dig their heels in a land meant to be inhospitable. Will whole communities be swallowed up or eroded into the sea like the glaciers all those years ago? Does to move on mean to destroy the life that came before? What does normal look like after so great a loss?

It's been a long time since I lay nestled between those girls or, let alone, seen their faces. The people who most molded the landscapes of my heart. Having lost the girls who I grew wild and weedlike with, the hurt left a dent in me. I will grow up, move on, get taller, but the rough grooves of my being stay cast by their love.