

FRESH INK

2018

The Literary Journal of

NAUGATUCK VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Waterbury, Connecticut

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NATURE WOMAN
Emily Mansi*

Dear Reader,

Thank you for supporting our project; I hope you enjoy this year's edition of *Fresh Ink*.

As I am completing my second year as *Fresh Ink* advisor, my appreciation for the contribution this publication makes to the overall NVCC community has grown. This year we are proud to display a diverse collection of student art work, poetry, and prose along with the creative works of faculty and alumni, family members and friends. It is a delightful assortment.

Another thought that crossed my mind this season as I struggled to meet the publication deadlines along with my other duties as English teacher, FYE web page creator, community member, advisor, and parent, was that much of what faculty and staff do at NVCC is behind the scenes and could be overlooked. For the record, I am aware of the unwavering commitment made by all the previous editors who have kept this small, but important, publication alive at NVCC for almost 50 consecutive years. That is a testimony to the dedication of our faculty and staff.

This edition of *Fresh Ink*, like all those issues that came before it, was made possible by an editor and editorial staff, and the collaborative efforts of NVCC students, alumni, community writers and artists, and faculty, full and part time. Financially, we are supported by generous contributions from both the NVCC Student Government and the Liberal Arts and Behavioral and Social Sciences Division. Without their support, we would not have been able to showcase these creative works. Thank you.

The Editorial and Design Boards this year consisted of emeritus advisors, alumni, faculty and NVCC students. Their work is the foundation of this publication and their insights during the review of the submissions made this an engaging, enlightening experience for me. A specific "shout out" needs to go to NVCC student, Jarrett Hyde, for his steadfast commitment to assisting in the design of this edition and his professional approach to its layout and editing.

In closing, I need to reiterate that next year, 2019, marks the 50th anniversary of *Fresh Ink* at NVCC. In light of this important milestone, I am, hereby, formally lighting the first signal fire calling out to all the editors, advisors, writers and artists of years past so that next year's journal, in addition to publishing current works, might also celebrate their work as well.

Sincerely,

Jeannie Evans-Boniecki, PhD

Faculty Advisor, *Fresh Ink* 2018

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* indicates NVCC student submission



THE CHILD 2
Beth Edwards*



SECRET STONE

Chris Gordon*



Light brown, which is what anyone with sight would notice first. Smooth as glass, soft as wood, but neither of those things. Older than time, it must have been, but what could it have seen in all that time? The start of life? The end of life? Maybe all of these things, maybe none. It fits perfectly in the palm of my hand, as if it was made specifically for this purpose. Usually it sits in my pocket, I carry it with me sometimes, in case of stress, which is after all its function. I don't know what purpose it will serve once I am done with it, but until then it will remain my worry stone.

The stone rests easily in my palm as I walk the street, "admiring" all that human minds and hands create. Cars of all sizes and functions race past, the blank faces of passengers and drivers a blur. They speed along on tasks which remain pointless to me... as my errands must be to them. The smell of exhaust lingers as one particularly unkempt automobile drifts by. Noise, I assume this driver thinks it's music, exudes from the vehicle, drowning out the roar of the pathetic engine hidden behind shabby metallic paint. I wonder why the fool behind the wheel deciding to annoy everyone around him was a better investment than an engine tune up. It turns out I don't actually care. I mutter "asshole" and continue with my day.

There is sympathy for the usefully but obsolete objects treated with scorn during our rush to compete in this painfully modern life. *Something* that no longer has meaning, *something* that is no longer useful, confronts me even as it is forgotten by everyone else. It is nothing important, at least not in the grand scheme of the universe... but for this one moment, it is the entirety of the universe. It is the remains of a baby bird.

It's tragic to think that here is one of Mother Nature's immeasurable failures. Wings spread one last time to tame the wind, soft grey feathers slightly fluttering from the breeze created by yet another noise spewing disaster. It is a reminder of all that could have been, but will never be.

I walk past the dead, the living, and whatever happens to be in-between. I grasp the worry stone once more, and caress the glassy surface absently. Human hands have done terrific things across uncounted eons, brilliantly despicable tragically beautiful works. Nothing will remain of these thoughts and moments, the sights and sounds forgotten... almost as if I was racing in a car, music as loud as I can make it, across the landscape to defy helplessness.

The worry stone isn't revealing its secrets. I don't think it respects my curiosity, so I continue to move along looking for my own.

SUTURES

Amanda DiFederico*

Stitches take time,
 She pondered as she worked.
 Hunched over a limb,
 attached to a person,
 she had long stopped paying attention to.

She's lost in the rhythm and pull,
 of a needle and thread
 through the resistance of flesh.
 Pulling, pulling.

This cut will heal as most others she's seen.
 The raw, angry edges will form tendrils
 as they mend and mesh together.
 The only evidence there was damage done
 will simply be the ghost of what was.

With steady hands,
 she closes the sutures,
 wondering why some wounds
 were easier to close than others.



ALTERNATE ENDINGS

Benjamin J. Chase

When light leaves this day
 and these neighborhoods sink
 beneath shadows and sleep,
 all colors collapsing into black,

then you might see those silent specks
 so unimaginably far away,
 blazing across the distances
 like alternate endings.



THE STREAM
Svetlana Sjoblom*



VOICELESS

Danielle Jacovino *

i love to write. i love to write because all too often the words of my mouth cannot form as fast as the words of my mind and fingers. i love to write because it allows me to take control over the words that will eventually form from my face. if i allowed my mouth to speak before my fingers everyone around me would be lost. it is impossible for many to understand me now but without the work of my fingers it would be devastatingly impossible to configure any understanding of the words my stupid mouth tries to share.

but i realize now that it is not really my mouth causing problems. it is my throat. it is the burning in my chest that rises ever so slowly to the cusp of my gasping throat. it is the words i hope to scream but the words i cannot put together. it is my fear of hurting another human and my willingness to hurt myself. my throat. the only area of my body that wakes me up at night tight confined and blocked as if i would never breathe again; never speak for the first time in my life.

i love to write. i love to write because it is an escape from the pain i feel in my mouth. in my chest. in my throat. it is a way for me to vomit my trapped words onto a surface that is no longer my mouth. chest. throat. it is my scream. the scream that i never had. not even as an infant. it has been my cry for help my exploration of happiness my ability to reason with the words my mouth wanted to say. it allows me to speak without opening anything but my mind.

i love to write. but oh how much i would love to scream. release that beast of a fire in my throat and chest and mouth. but i do not

MY FATHER'S FACE

Alexis Paterson *

My Father's face is a monument carved
 Into brazen wood.
 His facial mole is like a hard rock,
 Surrounded by a forest of prickly facial hair.
 His lips are chapped due to the harsh winters,
 And his mouth is filled with profanities.
 His nose is straight as the needle in a compass,
 And this leads him further away from his children;
 And his eyes are closeted by sleep himself.



REBIRTH OF LIFE:
Jade Liu



WINGS OF BUTTERFLY



NOSE OF SLOTH



EAR OF ELEPHANT

AN UNEVENTFUL DAY

Alexis Morrell*



I stare down at my plate. The sun throws melodramatic beams onto the cheap grey plastic disk and its humble contents. Oh, I'm starving, this is horrible. Five almonds and half of a banana is such a paltry meal. I look over at the digital clock on my oven; 7:15. It's Sunday, and I have to go somewhere soon. I mean, I don't really have to go anywhere; when someone says they need to go somewhere there's that implication that there's someone else waiting at their destination. After all, no one wants to impress themselves with their timeliness, or fashionable lack thereof. When your hands are gripping that wheel, and you have no passenger waiting, your drive can be thirty minutes or thirty days. No, I'm not meeting anyone. I just don't want to be here too long.

Where is here?-my house, of course. Well, calling it my house is more than a bit dishonest. It's my parents' house. Yes, those are the two figures at the other end of the equation. I need to leave because the house isn't empty, they are here, and will continue to be here all day. Dad watches football and mom watches reality television a few feet away from him on the couch. They aren't the villains here, though. They haven't done anything wrong, lately. I just don't want to be around anyone, and they are part of that big sea of "everyone".

I eat slowly, so as to savor what little I have. This self-imposed scarcity does feel ridiculous in a kitchen where the cabinets are filled with bread and cereal and pasta and soup. I imagine the little mustachioed head on the Pringles can to my left is scowling at me. "Eat me, eat me, eat me already!" he pleads in a stern baritone like Dad's. I give him my smuggest smile and take a tiny bite of banana. He sighs and retreats with a forlorn expression. "Okay, but don't tell me you're hungry later." What a Dad thing to say.

I painfully finish my meal and grab my coat. I snatch my keys off the counter and look downstairs at the basement. My parents will be down there later, going about their Sunday ritual. They'll probably eat all those Pringles too. I hope they do, anyway. I hope they eat all the food in this house so I never have to look at it again. The thought makes me feel more and more embarrassed as it sits in my skull; there are people in this world that want more and I want less. I rush out the front door hoping that the guilt will get smacked in the face behind me.

I drive a few miles away, to this hiking trail I usually haunted on weekends. It's Sunday and it's 8:00 A.M., so I figure I'll be the only adventurer there. I'm wrong. In fact I'm quite wrong; there's four other cars there in the parking lot when I arrive. I park way out in the back, far from where the trail starts. They've parked so close to the trail that they don't have to waste more than a minute getting on it. They all packed in close to each other like sardines, and as they emerge from their vehicles it's clear to me that they're all friends. They converge in a circle behind

their cars and begin chatting. Laughter and smiles abound as they stand there and interact as humans typically do. I suddenly remember a scene from my own life a few months ago, where I was one of those smiling faces. Harold, Jake, Amanda and I had decided to embark on this trail, and we all agreed it'd be the first of many such adventures to come; we all missed each other since we went off to different colleges, and that was our opportunity to become a four-man band again.

I haven't seen even a flash of them since then, in real life at least. On social media they all happily posted pictures of them and their college friends going on the journeys we promised each other we'd make. I'd say it felt like a betrayal if it wasn't such an obvious outcome.

I sigh and turn the keys in my ignition again. I have to go somewhere else. Those rain droplets of "everyone" have splashed down onto my first choice, so now I must seek shelter in a dryer area- figuratively speaking of course, as my second choice is a beach.

I leave my car in the back of the empty lot and make the slow march towards the shore. I look up and notice that the sun was setting already. Seeing that warm pink stream flow so freely comforts me. It's telling me that I've finally found what I wanted.

When I reach the shore there's not a soul to be found. I contemplate leaving my shoes behind and diving into the water, but then there's that nagging thought in the back of my head, the inner Dad that tells you that you'll regret that decision later. "If you get your clothes wet, you'll get pneumonia!" It's also around this time that the hunger pangs in my stomach get difficult to ignore. I plop down onto the sand, legs folded into each other. As I stare out at the boundless sea the realization hits me that I haven't thought about what I'd do, when I'd gotten to the place free of "everyone".

The silence is painful. The hunger is even worse. On top of it all is that knowledge that this is all my doing; it weighs down on me like so many stones. And I, like the masochist I am, silently demand "more weight!" as I stay seated, gazing at nothing. I can at any point get up, get in my car and go somewhere where there'd be noise, smiles, talk. My own will chains me down to the beach. I idly rub my aching wrists and wonder why I do this to myself.

A guest has been watching me for a while. I only just notice them now in my peripheral vision; they're staring at me curiously, head tilted. They peck at a nondescript mound of sand and bound over to where I'm sitting. They snatch a soggy piece of bread a foot away from my leg and gulp it down greedily. I decide to acknowledge them.

"Hey there." I say to my small intruder. Raising their sleek white head to meet my gaze, they seem to understand. The wings being held so stiffly at their sides begin to twitch. I lower a cautious palm onto their head and give them a few ginger pats. In response they close their eyes and I take that to mean they enjoy it.

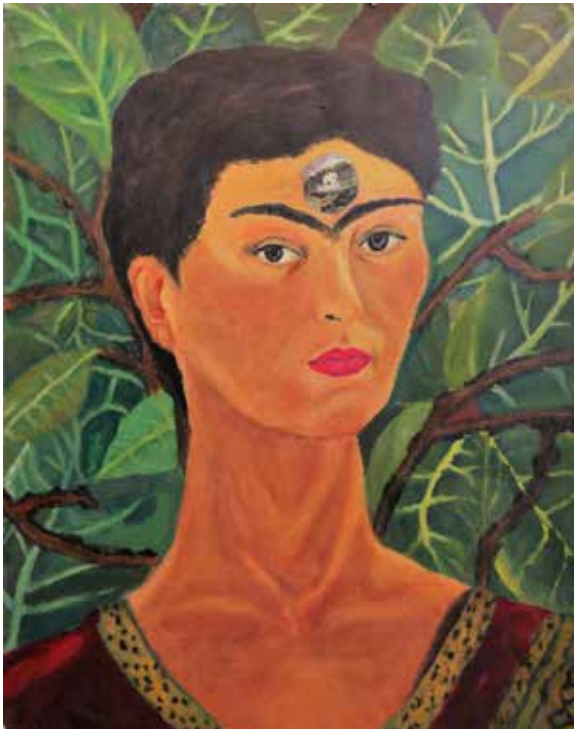
"You're so hungry, aren't you? That's why you're bothering me." I tease my new friend. They fluff their feathers and trot in place a bit. I stroke their

soft head again. “You wouldn’t want to come home with me, would you?”

It’s like something out of a cartoon; right after I gave them that quiet plea, they waddle away past me, and I watch their lithe feathered figure wobble off into the distance.

I look back at the sunset one last time and walk away. Today was uneventful, as are most days.

My last thought as I enter my car, is whether I should’ve brought those Pringles with me. That seagull would’ve loved them.



REPLICATION OF “THINKING
OF DEATH” BY FRIDA KAHLO
Philicia Matturie*

DEFINED

Chris Gordon*



I sat as far into the corner as the folding chair would allow, every textbook I owned piled on my lap. I would say I was nervous, but that seemed an oddly ill-fitting adjective for the emotions making my mind blank. The room was talkative as Rebekah, the editor of the newspaper, took the opportunity to introduce everyone for the benefit of new members... notably me. I didn't recognize it at the time, but I was about to experience one of those rare moments in life where opportunity finally knocks.

There were a round of greetings and names, all of whom I remember clearly. Advisor John, Editor Rebekah, Senior Writer Eric and so many others, all accomplished writers. The round of hellos finally found its way into my bunker of books. "Hi, I'm Andy, and I don't know what I am." This produced a laugh around the conference table, and for a brief second I felt something I hadn't felt in a long time, a sense of ease. It was an apprehensive ease, but that is a marked improvement for someone with Autism in a room full of strangers.

I feel like I should go back in the narrative a bit, introduce a bit of context for you. Before opportunity knocked that fateful day I was merely a first semester college newbie. I went to class and then I went home. That was mostly what I thought I could handle at the time. New to college, taking a full course load, and Autistic, I was really pushing boundaries. I was also eager to prove my capability and refused to score less than an A in any of my classes, one of which made attending campus social events a part of the curriculum. It must have been fate that prompted me to procrastinate in my assignment, which left only time for one last occasion, the Club Expo. Large crowds and loud music are pretty good adjectives to describe any Club Expos. I truly considered taking an F for that project.

It is about at this point where my story gets a bit fuzzy. Not because it is hard to tell for me, but it was hard to experience that first time. Autism has left me with a bit of an aversion to noise and crowds, and as I bravely walked into the Café West my senses were bombarded like never before. Incredibly I made it to a table and got some information before the sensory overload drowned out my rational thought. I don't what else I might have done, but when I started thinking again I had proof in hand, proof I had done the impossible, proof I would get my A.

Later that night I was excitedly bragging about my accomplishment to my sister. Being older and wiser, she did what any good sister should do... remind me that joining a club focused on writing might be a good thing for me. Did I mention my sister is also a really good lawyer? She certainly proved it that night as she rebuffed and refuted each argument I put forward why that would not be a good idea.

Back to my first day in the newspapers office. I had just introduced myself and felt free to quietly observe my surroundings. The quality of the discussions, the professional atmosphere, and the general sense of being a team really impressed me. To return to a previously used metaphor, opportunity was knocking, and I felt inclined to answer.

And so I started to attend regularly, offering my ideas, and then my words for print. I enjoyed the challenge and soon was one of the accomplished writers I was impressed by. I offer deep felt and appreciative thanks for the services and people who, like I sometimes felt, didn't get the sort of recognition they deserved. Without realizing what was happening I had found the basis for "what I am."



LIGHT

Sevastian Volkov*

AFTERLIFE

Robert Bonita *

I wonder what happens next,
after we breathe that final breath.
Will we float up to a paradise,
hidden amongst the clouds
where every desire becomes reality
while others descend to a fiery nightmare
cursed to endure eternal suffering
where the whips and slashes never end?
Will we be reincarnated,
given a new body
to once again take another breath?
Or will it simply end with nothing?



SELF PORTRAIT OF A
FRACTURED PERSONA
Jason Boldogh *

ICHIBAN

Chris Gardner

In spring, sunsets come
Scattering poems in the
Sky, not to be read.



REFLECTION
Svetlana Sjoblom*

RUN ANY OF US SILVER SNEAKERS

Jeannie Evans-Boniecki

It doesn't matter what "Stage" it is in:
The potato knows
Once its skin is cut
It's no longer perfect.

The illusionist's stab,
isolates the tater's soft tissue
surrounding an embedded eye
to dislodge the blemish
metastasizing to healthy tissue.
To restore perfection
we destroy.

The layer cake, its batter flowing too heavy to one side
Knows as it makes its Debut
it's propped up by pudding
and toothpicks to cantilever the edge.

To restore the illusion of perfection
we destroy perfection.
Run any of us Silver Sneakers through an X-Ray
You'll see titanium, silicone, colloidal silver.
Even fully clothed, buffed to a glamor,
we know our soft spots.

Even the day old broccoli floret
served by the Executive Chef
Vibrant green, par boiled to its peak
-Brown decay already razed-
Knows in its heart
it's lost its stalk.

WINTER NIGHT ON THE RIVER

Jacob Budris*

The night is dark and silent
Snow falls slowly with grace
Moonlight outlines the water
The rod thumps
The drag slips
The beholder grins
The silence is broken

BURNT PARSLEY

Jennifer Boucher

John Peter didn't feel like eating, but he still had to cook.

Oh, he *tasted* everything okay. He could still tell when an onion was taken off the heat too soon, before it was fully caramelized and reduced to a tangy sweet pulp or when a loaf of bread suffered from a tight-fingered sprinkle of salt instead of a luxurious, full-thumbed pinch.

But when it came down to a plate of food, he was a no start. He made all the necessary preparations - the napkin elegantly laid against his worn chinos, the wine glass filled with the best cabernet he could afford (not great stuff but far from vinegar), the knife and fork placed in the strict arrangement deemed a requirement for civilized dining, the food plated at precise angles and striped with *demi-glacé* as thoughtfully as a teenage girl applies liquid eyeliner.

He speared the first bite, held it to his lips, warm and hinting of garlic or thyme or oregano, placed it on his tongue with as much reverence as a priest offering salvation through the sacrament and then ... nothing. He could eat no more.

He dropped a hefty slab of butter (the word 'margarine' was not in his vocabulary) into a warming skillet and watched it relax into a foamy puddle. The heat of the gas burner dampened the inside of his wrist with sweat, but he didn't mind. He found the feeling comforting.

Every chef has a signature dish and he established his reputation as an omelet man early on, back when they were still learning the proper form for whisking (thumb and forefinger loose, elbow down) and what the burr on a knife blade was.

Katie always mastered the technique classes. That's one of the reasons he noticed her. There was something undefinably sexy about a woman whose chopping skills bordered on being preternatural. She could turn a jalapeño pepper into confetti in less than a minute, staring you in the eyes while she did it.

"It's easy, JP," she'd laugh, her sleek blonde bob curling under at the ends like peaks of softly whipped cream. "Just takes concentration."

In the beginning, he didn't mind that she called him JP. He preferred John Peter, it was his father's name, but he was willing to trade his preference for the easy intimacy the nickname created. By the end though, it irked him.

He finished whisking the eggs and water (just a splash, mind you) together and poured the mixture into the skillet, the muted hiss from the pan assuring him the heat wasn't so strong as to startle the eggs and toughen the omelet.

He placed the glass whisking bowl on an unused burner to the left of the skillet and noticed Katie's tea pot. Not that it was hidden. It was perched on the back corner of the stove, a green

(‘mint’ according to Katie) blob, with an obnoxiously upright, black handle that screamed, “Damn you aesthetics! Safety first!”

He was surprised she didn’t take it with her when she left. She knew he had no need for it. He was more of a coffee man, drank it black and unsweetened, saving his milk and sugar for greater things.

Laird — that was the new guy’s name — had edgy tattoos, tightly groomed facial hair and painted on black t-shirts. He specialized in retro foods like meatloaf and liver. John Peter thought his cream sauces to be heavy and bland. He was Irish though, which meant he probably had a tea pot of his own and Katie could afford to be magnanimous with this one.

On a whim, he grabbed the oversized handle and gave the pot a shake. Water — enough for a cuppa — sloshed in the bottom. John Peter flicked on the burner. The flame attacked the bottom of the kettle and the water rumbled in response.

It was time to add the salsa. He and Katie had made it standing side by side at the scarred, wooden butcher’s block, her dicing and balancing handfuls of cut vegetables on the side of the knife as she dumped them in the bowl, him salting and seasoning, relying on instinct and a few taste buds on the tip of his tongue to guide him. He was always in charge of seasoning when they cooked together. He supposed the Irish ink blot would be taking on that duty now.

He picked up a rubber spatula and gently pushed at the sides of the omelet, testing to see if the edges were set. When he was satisfied, he dumped the salsa in the middle, noticing for the last time, the perfect angles of Katie’s chop.

The omelet let out a low whine as the water turned to steam and trapped air in the eggs. John Peter placed his hand on the switch for the burner, knowing he would need to cut the heat in a few more seconds.

The salsa settled into the bed of eggs. He smelled the faintly soapy scent of cilantro rising from the pan. He twitched to turn off the bur—

Pop!

A chunk of tomato exploded out of the omelet pan and landed on the tea kettle. The red protuberance, small but jaunty, sat high up on the teapot, reminding John Peter of one of those flags planted at the top of Everest by wind-tossed climbers.

You added too much chili powder. Remember, a spice should complement, not control.

The tomato started to brown and wrinkle, surrendering to the glossy green enamel. Katie’s tea pot chuffed in victory, steam escaping from its spout and blowing out beads of boiling water that landed in the skillet, raining down on the tender edges of his omelet.

I didn’t add too much! Just what it needs! I like to taste my spices, for Pete’s sake!

He reacted to the assault on his eggs by switching off both burners. He had some freshly chopped parsley. He would sprinkle some on the omelet as a kind of balm, let it soak up the offense. Later, after the kettle cooled down, he would hand wash it and remove the burnt insult from its shell.

As he raised a palmful of the conciliatory parsley, he bumped his elbow against the glass mixing bowl left on the stove. The herb scattered as joyfully as rice at a wedding, showering the tea kettle in a green a little more in tune with what nature intended.

You shouldn't taste the spice! You should just know it's there — like a...like a... afterthought!

The parsley shriveled and slid down the sides of the kettle and the smell reminded him of burnt hair.

Afterthought? Why don't you just say what you're thinking? Why don't you just admit it? You hate my cooking!

John Peter smiled and plated his omelet sans parsley. He sat down at the table, setting for one, and took a bite.

He ate the whole thing. It was perfectly seasoned.



TEXTURE SELF PORTRAIT

Andrew Roy*



PROUD RED

Dominic Narducci, III

SONNET TO MY '98 HONDA SHADOW

After Shakespeare's "Sonnet 130"

Benjamin J. Chase

My bike's high beams are nothing like the sun.
Midnight is deeper black than her fading paint.
If leather lasts forever, her saddle is faux leather.
If rust be a problem, why then she has problems.
I have seen many cycles fully chromed out,
but much less luster see I in her cylinders;
and in some custom pipes is more delight
than in the stock exhaust my baby fires.
I love to hear her idle, but I know
most Harleys have a more sought-after sound.
I sure don't own a fuel-injected ride;
my Honda, when she runs, runs carbureted.
And yet, by Bud Light, I think my girl as rare,
as any in the lot that might compare.

MEMORIES FROM WAR

Jenna Coladarci*

As I lay next to you
 You describe to me what you saw
 When you were at war, fighting on the front

You said smoke filled the air
 All you could see was white powdery dust
 Fellow soldiers stood among you
 Gunshots rang like a bell
 The fog of war had just begun
 And there was no turning back

It was then you realized something
 It's not a fair game
 It's not whoever is more skilled stays alive longer
 It's luck
 If you have the instinct to duck
 You stay alive
 If you don't duck
 You die

You are finally given a leave
 You can come home and see us
 But when you get here you feel like you don't belong
 This isn't home anymore
 War changes people
 And it had changed you

Once you get back
 You realize that your luck has died out
 You don't have that instinct to duck anymore
 One by one
 All the other soldiers die off
 Some of which were your closest friends.
 Suddenly a bullet hits you
 Right in the shoulder
 It just missed your heart
 But you stand up and keep fighting
 Pain fills every inch of your body
 But you kept fighting

You said all that was running through your mind was me
 I motivated you.
 You wanted to see me again
 You wanted to grow old with me





LET 'EM IN
Forrest Fee*

I DREAM LIKE A BIRD WITH A BROKEN WING

Karen Connell

Looking up
I can see my friends
silhouetted against the steel-blue sky.
A cold wind ruffles my feathers as I slowly walk in their direction.
I try once again to reach out to it,
Let it wrap around me like a long lost friend
Pick me up in flight....
It is useless.
I am useless.

What am I if I cannot fly?
An outcast, alone and broken, no longer fitting in.
Am I so different?
Will I ever be whole again?

Up ahead a highway unrolls endlessly before me.
The rough crags of the silent mountains
pierced the now dimming sky.
I hear a loud rumbling noise rush up behind me.
Running beneath a patch of underbrush, I huddle.
My heart beats faster.

I listen to the sigh of the night wind...

Left to die?

THE PINK CHAIR

Alexis Paterson *

The pink rubber felt foreign
As she ran her hands on its smooth surface.
The legs were home to dirt and dust.
Her initials written in jumbled handwriting marked the chair;
The small seat symbolized how much she had grown.
The chair although old
Shined with an astounding youth,
That she no longer had.



ISLA DEL SOL
Sarah Kushwara *

BORN OF A STAR

Mary C Verdosi

Born of star
I am stardust
Particles of a great explosion
Blowing and whirling
In the cosmic sea.

When the stardust of my being
Touches the stardust of another
We begin to form and take shape
As together we enter
The cosmic dance of evolution.

In the dancing
There is a rekindling
Of the fiery spirit
Hidden deep in our darkness
A spirit that longs to burn
That remembers burning brightly
When we were one with the stars.

ITALIAN-AMERICAN GOTHIC (Crucifix)

Kenneth DiMaggio

Silver and as heavy
as a Colt .45 caliber
revolver and hanging
on the wall above
my parents bed
where Mom put dolls
wrapped in plastic bags
on the pillows

It's a miracle my parents
made me with that
pistol-size crucifix that
always seemed ready
to leave the wall
to rap their knuckles
or spank them

And like a locked
& loaded weapon
in a Cape Cod house
large enough to fill
with plastic covered
furniture you could not
sit on and velvet paintings
of The Last Supper
and gladiators about
to slaughter each other
in the Coliseum

Jesus was there
to protect us
against a civilization
we could never trust
the way we could relatives
parents & siblings
even when it seemed
like we were trying
to kill each other

THE IDEAL WOMAN

Alexandria Miller*

There she sits
Mute, death, blind, and blonde
As beautiful as can be.
She does not speak
Or hear
Or see
Or judge
Or even think.
Nothing makes her sad or mad;
Her smile says she's always glad;
Never being anything bad;
Sitting there in elegant clad;
As beautiful as can be.
Yes, there she sits:
Sitting, never standing
Tall and small,
Dainty and dateable,
Given and taken,
Saved and forsaken;
As beautiful as can be.



LADY BLUE
Kyle Herrick



THE DOG
Forrest Fee*



HONESTLY LYING

Amanda DiFederico*

Honesty is deceitful
because truthfulness is
measured similarly to
our headlights' ability
to illuminate the dark.

It is as confounding
as the irony of a vlogger's
unflinching vulnerability
under the magnification of their lenses
with the certainty of post-production filters
to smudge evidence of the commonalities
they share with an equally mundane audience.

It is fostered using
the backward logic
that tells women
how to wear makeup
before they learn
how to wear their cleanest skin.

It is practiced
with the same caution
used to climb creaky ladders,
because the risk is worth
evading rising waters,
in search for higher ground.

It is finicky
and elusive,
just about unattainable
as ambiguous as clustered metaphors,
and deceitful in nature.

LOST COURAGE

Alyssa Katz

I must break free of these chains,
but I'm too afraid to fight.
Once upon a time he loved me,
now he's infatuated with his booze.

I'm too afraid to have courage,
his abuse is his pleasure.
He skis a slippery downhill slope,
my puppet strings drag behind him.

His abuse cost me a child,
and I've let him, like the coward I am.
I want to cut these strings loose,
I must break free of these chains.



BALANCE

Alyssa Katz

ITALIAN-AMERICAN GOTHIC

(Wooden Cooking Spoon)

Kenneth DiMaggio

Like our pewter pistol-size
crucifix
our wooden cooking
spoon the size of
a goose egg
had its own space
on the wall in the
kitchen

If one of the brats
like me tried to have fun
by trying to stick
the dog's tail
into an electrical socket
Mom was always ready
to beat me with the utensil
used to cook spaghetti

It would take years of therapy
to untangle the vermicelli
from the smacks of a spoon
with its own wall space
in our home just like
the crucifix

And just like the Sunday
Church mass and
the big tribal feed
that followed it:

The religion
The beatings
Mom
The Virgin Mary
--they were all part
of the same meal

REMEMBER WHEN

Jessica Eller*

Remember when
we were all artists?
We could make
a mess
love it
Now, messes
are work,
Irritation.
Once it was simple
sensory
pleasure
a hand sliding through red
to break the boundaries of blue,
purple gathering power.

A butterfly in a fold of paper,
creation still wet on your fingers.
Tempura and bubble wrap
metamorphosed
into kelp green circles
flowing into sea glass blue.

Pure freedom of color
Splashing goldfish-orange.
The final impression
a pattern of piscine scales
across a white paper beach.

WHAT A TERROR

Danielle Jacovino*

The ceiling and the sea
Have a hold on me.
I cannot see up high
As hard as I try.
I look up and up,
And see only gray.
I cannot travel far
Because the sea cannot be crossed by car.
I can swim for a while,
But there will always be another mile.
I look out and out,
And see only gray.
Every window is a tease,
An attempt to displease.
Every boat that stops
Is only looking to mock.
What a terror it is to look up and out.



CHOLITA OF THE ANDES

Sarah Kushwara*

TILL WE MEET AGAIN

Alyssa Katz

A young girl was walking on the blacktop at school when she stumbled over this boy's chalk drawing; he squawked at her for smudging his drawing. When she asked what it was, he said, "It's a buffalo." She was confused by what a buffalo was, but was intrigued by the boy, so she sat down next to him. The boy drew some more shapes resembling animals, and he told the girl what they were. He was more surprised when she didn't leave.

"Why are you still here?" asked the boy.

"What do you mean?" she responded, puzzled.

"I don't really play with others."

"Why?"

He seemed ashamed. "They think I'm weird. They say I talk funny, and make fun of my glasses." She studied him, but saw no faults in him.

"I don't think you're weird."

The boy was relieved. He had finally found a friend.

"Do you want to go play on the swings?" she asked him. He nodded in agreement and they both stood. He took hold of her hand, apprehensive he'd scare her away, but was more relieved when she didn't run.

They held hands as they walked like they'd done it dozens of times before. They were so in sync, it was like they'd known each other for years. Not many words were exchanged, yet it was almost like there didn't need to be any. From the swings to the slide to the monkey bars, they played, content with each other's company.

When recess ended, children were being herded into lines by their teachers so they could head back inside. They each saw their classes were going in different directions. Each of their teachers called them, waiting to return indoors.

"Will I ever see you again?" asked the boy, not letting go of her hand.

"Yes. At recess tomorrow?"

The boy smiled. "Yes, recess tomorrow."

Their teachers called them again, the two of them not wanting to say goodbye, but knowing they had to. Letting go of each other's hands they travelled towards their classes. The boy called to her as they were parting, "See you later, Daisy!" He'd heard her teacher call her that.

"See you later, Austin!" She heard his teacher call him that. They waved goodbye as they walked back inside with their classes. They knew they would see each other again. Tomorrow, at recess.

*

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Following the next days, months, and years, Daisy and Austin remained at each other's sides whenever possible. They were each other's rocks, their shoulders to cry on, someone they could share their deepest secrets with. High school tested their friendship as they both shared hard times. Drama and peer pressure almost tore them apart, but they managed to always stick together. Leaving high school as sweethearts, it would seem Austin and Daisy would be together forever.

But life happened. Different colleges, new friends, new crowds, new experiences. Their friendship drifted apart, and they both regretted letting the other go. Now ten years later, their high school reunion is tonight, and both will be attending. What will their reunion bring for these friends everyone, including themselves, thought would be together forever?

Daisy smoothed her dress and checked her makeup one last time before entering the ballroom. She was riveted to see her old friends again, some of whom she kept in contact with since graduation. Though enjoying reminiscing with her old friends, Daisy's eyes kept drifting about the crowd, searching for the one person she really wanted to see.

Austin searched the ballroom for Daisy, hoping she showed up tonight. Pushing his glasses up the bridge of his nose he scanned the many faces of old classmates. At long last he spotted her, looking even more beautiful than she had ten years ago. Age had treated her well. Daisy looked over in his direction and their eyes locked. Pushing their ways through other classmates, they faced one another. Suddenly, both of them were nervous to be standing in front of each other again.

"Hi," Daisy spoke first.

"Hi," answered Austin. "You look great." He tried to hide how nervous he was.

"Thank you, so do you. You haven't changed at all." She smiled softly.

"Neither have you. Though you look even more beautiful than you did ten years ago."

She blushed at that, but he was unsure if that was because she was flattered or embarrassed. Austin glanced at her hand and noticed a shiny ring decorating her finger. His heart sank.

He gestured to the ring. "I take it you're married?"

"Oh—No, I'm not married. This is my mother's ring, I always wear it now since she passed away."

"Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't know."

"It's ok."

Awkward silence surfaced. They used to be able to speak so effortlessly, but it'd been so long since they'd seen each other.

"Are you married?" Daisy attempted to divert the subject.

“No, I’m not married either. I’ve dated other girls, but could never commit to any of them.”

“Yeah, same here... I don’t know if I want to admit this, but, since you and I drifted apart, I’ve felt there was a piece missing from my heart. And none of the guys I dated were ever able to fill that piece.”

Austin’s eyes sparked with understanding and relief, for he felt the same way. How good to hear from Daisy that she, too, felt the same way he has all these years.

“We used to tell each other everything; it sucked when we took different paths.”

She took his hand. “I agree. It hasn’t been the same.”

They both looked around at their fellow classmates, chatting, dancing, and eating. With a tilt of his head, Austin suggested the two of them leave to have their own kind of reunion. Heading inside Austin’s car, he drove them both to a location very special to them. Stepping out of the car, breathing in the crisp evening air, they took in the place where they first met. Sitting on the blacktop, Austin pretended to draw with some chalk and Daisy stepped on his imaginary drawing. Squawking at her like the day they first met; this time Daisy couldn’t help but laugh.

“What are you drawing?” she asked kneeling down next to him, trying to contain her laughter but failing.

“It’s a buffalo.” He smirked at her, raising his eyebrows.

“I know what a buffalo is now.” She laughed.

“Wanna go swing on the swings?” Austin asked as he stood, offering his hand to help her up.

“I’d be delighted. Though we’re too old for those swings.”

“It’s still just as meaningful like that first day.” He smiled, and she smiled back; Austin noticing the moonlight accentuated her features.

Playing on every single piece of playground equipment they could still fit on/into, they laughed and reminisced of their childhood, and the blossoming of their tight-locked friendship; at least what it used to be.

“I’ve really missed you, Austin.”

“I’ve really missed you too, Daisy.”

Nervously he took her hand, feeling relief when she didn’t let go. Leaning her head on his shoulder, they looked up at the stars in content silence. After ten years, it was as if Austin and Daisy picked up where they left off. It was as if nothing had changed, and they vowed to stay together, forever. Never again would they lose one another no matter what path they went down. As long as they headed on the same path together.



LIGHTHOUSE STORM

Andrew Roy*

PILLS

George Ramirez*

In the heat of the summer
You look at me like no other
You're over there with those boys, those boys you call brothers.
Smoking weed, doing drugs, living up the moment
Like a bunch of dogs, barking at one another
And I'm all alone, all alone with nothing but my homophobic mother.

You know, in the heat of the summer
You should be with me, in my pool, playing with one another.
But you're with her, and looking deep inside her
For something, that she doesn't have
So why do you bother?

It's 90 degrees
Late at night
And I'm wearing shorts and yellow vans
No shirt on, nobody can see me
So why bother.

But I see you peeking
I see you in the bushes, stealing
Catching glances and views, of what you secretly been chasing after.
You're such a bother.

Oh, you broke up with her?
And you lost your friends?
And you tiptoed into the night
To come find me?

Well, my pool is still open
And we both, strip down
Now we can see one another
Now, we're just looking at each other
You look so strong, how can you be so frail on the inside
Your abs tell one story, however your eyes tell another.

You tell me how, what happened to those brothers
Told your girlfriend what you truly are
Closeted, strong, motherfucker.
And what you wanted out of me, wanting to be more than just lovers.

But instead of walking closer
You run straight into the pool
Gargling foam, and your eyes are bloodshot.
I see the bottle on the floor.
Pills come out the bottle, onto the floor.

And I chase after you
But you're, you're already gone
You went chasing
Chasing, after your brothers.
I hold onto to you, and watch you close your eyes
You're moving uncontrollably, you whispered to me before you leaped
"I'm moving onward"
The water is so cold.
The body floats like no other.



RESIST: PRINTMAKERS
DO IT WITH PRESSURE
Beth Edwards*

ONLY THE GOOD

Joe Steele *

Salem is dead ((what a pure soul))

Salem never complained ((she was the good one))
 She always took all her vitamins ((never missed a day))
 She never slouched or sulked ((always in such a good mood))
 She had exceptional table manners ((you raised her right))

Salem always washed her hands ((good hygiene is important))
 She never played in the dirt (((in fact she rarely went outside)))
 She never lied to her parents (((only her guidance counselor)))
 Or broke the house rules (((she was assuredly housebroken)))

Salem never took foolish risks like other girls ((perfect examples of bad parenting))
 She never got into cars with rowdy boys ((that's how you get raped))
 She never went out partying with friends (((she didn't have many friends)))
 Only family parties and birthdays (((sometimes she threw parties for her dogs)))

She went to church every Sunday ((the Lord bless her and keep her))
 Salem never swore, not even once (((such a timid girl)))
 Salem never dressed promiscuously (((like those godless hippie skanks)))
 Or indulged any lustful urges (((good thing she died a virgin)))

Salem always got good grades in school ((such a bright future cut short))
 She never smoked or drank or did any drugs ((that stuff kills you))
 She never went online without her parent's permission ((it's all just porn and propaganda))
 And never strayed from God's light (((she was too good for this world)))

Salem was killed by the witch girl
 Everyone in town says so
 It kidnapped and brainwashed her
 Then the devil made her go mad
 And jump off Misty Peak
 It's so sad because
 Salem was ((always such a good girl))

Salem did run away once when she was little
 When her parents asked why
 She said "I wanted to see what was out there"
 For this Salem was punished severely
 And Salem never did anything bad ever again



ONE BIRD
Sandra Eddy

SECRETS OF A SHY GIRL

Jenna Coladarci*

Her classmates describe her as shy
 She likes to keep to herself
 But, when you need something she's there.

When you need to talk to someone about your recent breakup
 She's there
 When you need to complain with someone about that hard test the teacher
 just gave
 She's there
 When you need a partner for that class project because your friend is missing
 She's there

But here's what they don't think
 Here's what they would have never guessed

She comes home after school every day
 Stares at her reflection in the mirror
 And cries
 Because she doesn't have that perfect body
 Because she doesn't have those blue eyes
 That make you feel like you're looking into the sea
 Because she doesn't even have smooth shiny hair
 It's dry with split ends.

Because when she wants to talk to someone about these thoughts
 Nobody's there
 Because when she wants to complain about that mean comment someone
 made
 Nobody's there
 And when she needs a partner for a class project
 Nobody's there

They would never even consider the possibility
 Of her asking herself
 If I disappeared would anybody even care?
 Would anybody even notice?

Meanwhile her classmates will never know these thoughts
 She appears fine on the outside
 She always has a smile on her face.
 She always has something nice to say
 So everything must be fine
 Right?

SEASONS IN SHAMBLES

Alyssa Katz

The annual quarterly meeting between the four seasons: Winter, Spring, Summer, and Autumn, had not gone off to a good start. 2016 started out rough due to the fact that each season barged into the other upsetting the natural balance.

“I’m unhappy because you took away from my season, Spring. It was so warm I thought I was going to melt. And that’s not supposed to happen during my time!”

“Oh stuff it, Winter. You got your revenge on me for that. Some Land Dwellers were seriously wearing sweaters in May!”

Autumn just rolled her eyes as she watched Winter and Spring bickering. Even though they’re the Four Seasons, they don’t have much control over the weather. They were only around to make sure each season transitioned into the next, continuing the cycle.

“Must you fight?” spoke Autumn.

“We’re upset, Autumn. There’s never a problem with your season, so you don’t even need to be part of this conversation.” Spring was quite upset.

“Is it really either of your faults, though?” asked Autumn.

Winter and Spring looked at her and then at each other. Then, pointing an accusatory finger at Summer, Winter said, “This is all your fault, Summer!”

Summer was relaxing in her lounge chair without a care in the world. She lowered her sunglasses at the mention of her name, then pushed them back up.

“Must you always blame me?” she asked, taking a sip of her drink.

Yes, as a matter of fact, we must,” exclaimed Winter. “Because of Global Warming—”

“Or Climate Change,” chimed in Autumn.

“None of us have had the allotted time our seasons are supposed to run.”

“If you started blaming the Land Dwellers like I do then you wouldn’t be pointing fingers at me all the time.” Summer took another sip of her drink.

The other three seasons were always annoyed by Summer’s relaxed nature. Her bleach blonde hair and golden tan also added to her beach fandom. She used to wear a bikini to the quarterly meetings, but the other seasons took a vote and told Summer to wear more appropriate clothes. So instead she wore a summer dress of tropical colors that matched her name and island she resided on during the year.

Autumn tended to be the peace keeper between the four. Her leaves of brown, yellow, orange, and red around her collar complimented her earth-toned sweater and pants. Often or not, her season was generally not messed with, unless Winter barged in early, which happened a few years back.

Spring, though his real name Vernal, was usually in the same boat as she. But his patience was very short and was quick to anger when things weren't running on schedule or according to time. Lovely blooms grew out of the green-leaved wreath he wore around his head. His suit was decorated in pastel shades of pink, yellow, blue, and green.

Winter was not the easiest to get along with either. Unlike the other seasons, Winter could not stand warm temperatures. He often had to have a snow cloud hovering over his head when travelling to the other seasons' areas for the meetings. His fitted ice blue parka matched his boots and complimented his dark blue thermal pants and mittens. The warm temperatures usually left him irritable, and he was often upset about global warming/climate change, which was taking away from his season.

"The problem, Summer, is that you continue to take away from our seasons," started Winter. "You bombard Autumn with crazy storms and too warm temperatures; Spring feels cheated because you choose to come early; And me, most of all, who is robbed of it all."

Summer sighed. "Didn't I say just blame the Land Dwellers?"

The Land Dwellers, or humans, were the ones to truly blame for the shift in seasonal balance. But Winter, Spring, and Autumn see it more as a shift in power, which is why the finger often gets pointed at Summer. They are supposed to be equals, and it seems very unfair that Summer gains most of the power while Winter, for instance, is the least powerful.

"We should have a designated fifth party to keep us in check during these meetings," Spring muttered under his breath.

Every meeting was like this, often getting off-topic, which in turn bothered Spring because they were running behind schedule. And it was usually wasted time spent on no progression.

"We do just fine on our own thank you, Spring," retorted Autumn.

Spring rolled his eyes. "You have nothing to complain about, Autumn. It's your time now and everything seems to be going smoothly for you, as always."

Summer stood from her lounge chair, separating Spring and Autumn before the conversation could turn into a nasty argument.

"The Land Dwellers are the real causes of our seasons being out of whack. They litter which contaminate oceans and harm animals. They burn fossil fuels which is bad for the atmosphere. They are very wasteful creatures."

"Well how can we stop them?" Winter asked, stepping forward.

"We can't eliminate them if that's what you're thinking—they're a superior race."

Summer spoke of ways that they could encourage the Land Dwellers to help the environment instead of harming it. By them all cooperating, it could reverse the damage, and thus, the seasons would return to normal.

“How do you know all of this?” asked Autumn.

“Because I travel more than you three do. I travel the world and see what’s going on. It’s better to know what’s going on than say, snuggling with your penguin friends in Antarctica.”

“Hey!” Winter was offended. “I do not snuggle with the penguins. I will occasionally swim with them, but I do not snuggle with them.” Summer simply ignored his defensive comment.

“Do you really think it will work?” Spring asked uncertain.

“If we don’t try we’ll never know.”

The others nodded their heads in agreement. If they didn’t do something, there would never be balance with the seasons ever again. By pitching in to get messages out to the Land Dwellers, they will see the destruction they’ve caused over the centuries, and will want to help themselves by helping the planet.

“Thank you Summer, for making us see the real trouble. I am sorry for constantly accusing you.”

“It’s ok Winter, I forgive you.”

“Alright then,” spoke Spring. “Since we are all in agreement, shall we adjourn this meeting?”

The other three nodded in agreement.

“Alright then, meeting adjourned. See you all at the next one in Winter’s domain.”

The Four Seasons gave their goodbyes and went on their ways around the world to spread the message to save the Earth. Like Summer had said, they won’t know if a difference will be made if they don’t try.



WATER LILIES

Emily Mansi*



SKAYAKING

Andrew Roy*

THE LINGERING GLOOM WHEN SHE LEFT

Vanessa Mellilo

Everything reminded me of her
The last drops of running bath water reminded me of her
The lingering gloom when she left

The city buildings silhouette
The single lit lamppost at the railroad tracks down the street
The sunny days with no clouds above the city
The grey skies with wet streets and dewy newspapers

As fall always gives way to winter, so memories move on
Memories that leave my soul and crystalize into the streets as night wears on
Cigarette after cigarette, light after darkness
Bad times alternate with less bad times

COLORS

Belinda Dupre *

My past is a journey of many different colors.
When I get to the point of the future, it's hard to grab hold.
I tried shaking the pain off and I am still left with nothing
For all the different colors I mentioned start fading into circles.
My mind is wondering constant on what to do next because
My past isn't done yet. I carry it to the next.
I wonder sometimes if it was worth the fight.
I cling for dear life and capture each moment to change
Color to light.
Life is a big path we all have to walk and the division
Starts at the point you start walking and can't seem to get
There for I have chosen a path of "I dare."
My load is not hard to carry just a few steps.
There I cross a bridge and settle here.
So, with this in mind,
I strive for success and prepare a new road of tolerance and rest.
My colors are few now, and came with no instructions
But soon will give new meaning with no distractions.
I'm quite well and comfortable in my spot
Now I live a life with all the colors around.



RAVEN HEAD

Beth Edwards *

A POET I THINK I'LL BE

Mary C Verdosi

I once thought
I had something
Significant
To offer humanity.

So I said to myself,
With reverence,
A poet I
Think I'll be.

I will put into verse
For all to see
My views on life,
My philosophy.

I will write odes
To flowers
Epics of war,
Even an apostrophe.

I hope
The product of
My flourishing pen
Will gain popularity.

For though one cannot live
On bread alone
Perhaps I can live on
Poetry.

So with great expectation
I present
My work
Quite illustriously.

And with a hopeful heart
I await your praise
As I wonder
How profitably?

But, your reviews
I find quite
Ludicrous
You criticize relentlessly.

Of my ego
You say
it's absurd
Inflated enormously.

Of my poems
You assume
What you cannot comprehend
To be profanity.

The working of my mind,
You contend,
Borders on
Insanity.

I bow to your allegations
And retreat
Though quite
Contemptuously.

Never more to write odes
Nor epics of war
A plumber
I think I'll
Be.

DRESS SHOPPING IS HELL

Kayla Reilly*

I stand in the dressing room,
With the door closed.
My face, as stark white as the 8 ton dress engulfing my 5 ft 3 frame.
Taking one last breath before the final inch is zipped
Opening the door, I present myself
To the panel of judges long awaiting this moment.
Dress number 35.
The conclusion: unflattering, I could do better.
Yanking up layers of tulle, I shuffle back to my bridal prison.
I peel myself out just in time
For someone to toss an off-white beaded snare over my doorway.
Sigh
Knowing this isn't how this should be going,
I march past my panel, and ruffle through the never ending alleys of dresses.
Chiffon, taffeta, satin, tulle
Steaming
Until I brush against a quaint, lace sleeve, of an ivory gown.
I feel a fire rush to my knuckles, as I wrap my fingers around the hanger.
I shut myself in my dressing room and pull on the dress.
The Dress.
I walk out onto the pedestal of the bridal shop, beaming.
Silence.
For the first time, my critics have nothing to say,
Because they aren't looking at the dress, but they are seeing the whole
picture.
They see the bride within me.
And that's when I say
"Yes."

SURVIVOR

Kylie Donoghue *

Beer bottles dripped on to the floor
Her head bruised and bleeding.
"I'm sorry,
It'll never happen again."
She looked at him with swollen eyes and whispered,
"Not to me."

SELF-ESTEEM

Darren Kirby*

Sometimes I find myself wondering what they'll say at my funeral.
You can't badmouth a dead guy after all.
It's always the good things they talk about.
But what's there to say about me?
It's all lies.
What have I done?
Nothing.
What am I good at?
Nothing.
If I am, there's someone better, and not far away.
They say there's always someone better.
They say I am important.
But they're lying.
They might not know it, but they are.
They've said I'm humble, but they're wrong.
I just haven't done anything.
I'm clumsy.
I can't speak clearly.
I can't speak to strangers at all.
I always miss the details.
I'm never right.
I hate it all.
I hate being useless.
I've never told anyone, because I know what they'll say.
They'll pull out their typical comforting words.
They'll tell me I'm wrong, that I'm worth something to them.
But that's not true.
If I died tomorrow, nobody would care.
Maybe at first.
They'd all go to my funeral and cry and everything else.
But then?
They'd move on.
Just like they did last time someone died.
And it's times like that when I wonder.
Is there anything good to say about me?
What did I do?
What will they say at my funeral?



WOMAN IN A DRESS
Philicia Maturie*

SMOTHER ME LIKE A FIRE

Kimberly Soboleski*

I am your tea light.
I just want you to hold me.

Let me guide you through your storm.
But really, be captivated by my light.

My beating heart, you follow.
It's always you, rain like staccato.

Like clockwork I am singed, you are evaporated.
I was the cherry to an ember.

You break into thunder.
My flame dances, as the silhouette chases.

You roar, I crackle.
We rage, we dance.
Our chaos gives off the impression of a romance.
Until we find it setting a fire to the bridge between us.

We don't know, but we love the feeling.
We both burn until our demise sees us.
Nothing but smoke and steam.

It was never meant to be.
It was never what we'd need.

But I will ask you every time,
"Smother me like a fire."

SOCIAL RULER

Gwenydd Miller*

How do you measure what someone is worth?
Do we determine based on their date of birth?
Do we judge them by race, or by gender?
By size: how large or how slender?

How do we calculate who has lost and who has won?
Do we look at the deeds they have done?
Do we observe how much they have paid?
Or do we consider the choices that they have made?

How do we measure who's strong and who's weak?
Why should we care about what languages they speak?
Do we judge them by the way that they dress?
Are the slobs really worth that much less?

How can we really decide how good we are?
Can we gauge it on how fancy their car?
How can someone be worse than a pictured ideal?
When the ideal that they're less than isn't even real?

How does anyone measure up to somebody else?
Shouldn't we just let them be themselves?
Why do we compare when no meter has been set?
In this world everyone's social ruler reads different.

SEASONAL AFFECTIVE DISORDER

Chris Gardner

Transient beauty;
Crimson and auburn fades to
White oblivion.

THE CLOCK

Jonathan Steeves*

Is that clock broken?
I just looked away
And it's quarter to three.
Was it not just seven?
The clock is always ticking,
Never resting a second.
All work and no play is not good for anyone.
The hands keep moving
Around and around
The ever-winding mystery
Of the workers who never sleep.
Holidays, birthdays, and Sundays too
Why don't you rest and take a few days
To breath, to sit, and stay quiet and still.
The clock is not wrong. How could it be?
If it never stops, it must always be right.
People live by it, breathe by it,
And sleep by it too.
But what if it's wrong and it's just for show?
If everyone lives by the dancing of its hands
What if it's playing with our lives, our feelings and fears?
Just once I'd like to see what makes it tick.
Is there really anything in there, or is it just empty inside?



TURTLES

Eileen Westgate*

THE ROARING CONSTANT

Kimberly Soboleski*

In this land where everyone wants to be a part of something bigger,
unison, and deep.
They all throw themselves in the ocean, one by one.
The waves welcome them and carry them along.
Does that make them transparent as the waters that become them?
They are now one with the current, together and accepted.
The riptide is relentless, but I do not shift.
My feet are in the sand, the option is endlessly in front of me.
For a second, I ponder
What it could be to be warmly welcomed as they have been.
To be part of the waters, would I swim and be?
Surrounded by the captivating hold,
The waves would carry me in safely and collected.
So, this time I try.
I throw myself into the water as everyone has done before me.
But as it turns out,
Throwing myself out
Into the deep unknown
Was never worth being afraid of.
It was throwing myself out to the carnivorous sharks
To be spit out ashore.



KARACA CALLING

Sarah Kushwara *

PAIN MAKES ITS DAILY VISIT

Lynette Melendez*

Pain

The kind where it feels like it'll destroy you.
Perhaps it did, but it was just reconstructing your being

Pain

Where it feels as though every

Tissue

Is being torn

Inside

You.

The motor that keeps you from dying

Increases

Rapidly

And it's scary

because it feels like you'll overheat.

It's the pain that keeps you from sleeping

And aches

When you make any move

The pain that makes you cry

So much

That you

Dehydrate.

It's the pain that makes you block

Every

Human

Existence

Because you don't want

To hurt

Again

Pain

Why does it love to visit me?

It loves to see me suffering

In silence

Meanwhile my shattered

Heart

Cries

For help.

I start to question,

If this so-called pain

Does make you grow.

I suppose they are right,

Pain does make you grow

Bitter...

Fresh Flash Contest Winner!

LIKE CLOCKWORK

Sheena Orten*

“I saw her every morning standing next to me at the mirror in the third floor bathroom. She combed her hair, brushed her teeth, adjusted an auburn wig under which swirled tendrils of ash blond.

Then, like clockwork, she would adjust her cell phone to selfie, look one last time at her reflection, and pose with a flashing smile, crowing “Say cheese”. I would know then our work day had begun....” (Evans-Boniecki)

Or at least that’s what I tell myself. To be honest though, there is no new day. It’s the same old, same old, with nothing ever changing. I can’t help but roll my eyes at her as she hums to her phone, checking the picture she took.

Only to jump as one of our co-workers bangs on the door to the bathroom. “What the hell are you two doing? Hurry up!” While she scrambles out the door, I walk calmly. What’s the point of me rushing? This is simply a pattern with me running through the motions.

I know the moment I head down the hall I’m going to run into an individual who smacked his head on the top of the door because he’s too tall. “Oh jeez Frankie, you alright?” I don’t even have to look at him at this point to know he’s waving his friend off. “I’m fine, I’m fine.”

This felt like an endless loop, one that only I could see and deal with. But the question was...why? Why am I the only one bothered by this? Am I going crazy, or do the others just not realize it yet?

The date changes, the times of day goes about the same pace, and yet everything is still the same! Why aren’t things any different from the previous!? “Hey mister...would you like to buy a cookie from me?” What? It’s a little girl, smiling. I’ve never seen her before. “What’s the matter, sir?”



PEN AND INK SEASCAPE

Eileen Westgate*

HUMAN FOREST

(A reverse poem)

Jayanne Sindt

People
 Standing
 Tall
 Strong
 Outstretched
 Reaching
 For the sky
 Shading
 From the light
 Rooting
 In the ground
 Being
 Trees



GAZE UNTO INFINITY

Jason Boldogh*

HER GOLDEN RINGS

Alexis Morrell*

Long, pale fingers, embraced each
 by golden rings
 A crown only needs one
 Head,
 Yet her hands were so adorned.

Yellow threads, woven into a curtain
 from her scalp,
 A golden shroud covering her
 Head,
 Frayed curls like broken ropes.

Bright, audacious car she drove
 in that city,
 Loudness to drown the voices in her
 Head,
 But the engine went quiet.

Gilded sequins on a withering body,
 at that party
 False happiness pooling in her
 Head,
 Diluted by cheap beer.

Those brass bells finally rang,
 at her death;
 A beautiful sound in her
 Head,
 She was freed too late.

ON YOUR 50TH

Mary C Verdosi

I wanted to get you something unique
To honor this special day
Something that screamed **50** in a special way.

I looked far and wide, I looked up and down,
I searched **50** shops all over town.
Nothing was right, nothing was you
Such ordinary stuff, it just wouldn't do.

So I went to the beach to meditate
After **50** minutes I thought
Why not create.

Perhaps I could gather **50** stones for a birdhouse
Like I saw in one shop.
But **50** stones were too heavy oh my aching back
I thought I would drop.

I tried **50** pebbles to look like sky and sea
But when I was finished
It looked like a Rosary.

Maybe I could create something
Using sand on glass.
Did you ever try to count **50** grains of sand?
it's a pain in the ...

So, with a sigh and a heavy heart
I let go of the idea
of creating **50**'s art.

I realized it was time to think outside of the box.
I wondered if you would like **50** socks.

50 socks after all are only twenty-five pair.
So I went to TJ Maxx
But they didn't have enough
Of the kind that you wear.

50 jokes about turning **50** weren't funny enough
It looks like celebrating your **50**th
Was going to be tough.

I counted **50** sheep before going to bed
 And awoke with **50 X 50** going round in my head
 Such a dilemma, what should I do,
 If I can't find **50** something of **50** for you.
 Desperate I searched **50** times on line
 For **50** math formulas that equal **50**
 But I found only nine.

Then I searched **50** times more hoping to find
50 equations of **50** or at least **50** words
 Understood only by mathematicians,
 Smart people like you and nerds.

50 stories about **50** great women seemed apropos
 But it was more than **50** pages to copy
 So I decided, no.

I thought **50** songs from the **50**'s would be too long
 Besides, only those of us over **50** would know the words
 And sing along.

50 Dollars, **50** Quarters, **50** Nickels, **50** Dimes
 I was getting desperate and running out of lines.

I thought it was time to give up this lark
 Since I couldn't find a **50**'s theme
 For your **50**th Birthday
 I would have to go to Hallmark.

There I read **50** cards, **50** posters and more
 After **50** minutes I had to get out of that store
 My feet were tired, my spirit so weary
 Hallmark's **50**'s Over The Hill line was too dark and dreary.

I really think birthdays should be happy and fun
 No matter if you're turning **50** or even 51.

Now that I have reached this point in my story
 I have to say **50** times over, I am really sorry
 That I couldn't find **50** of something **50** for you.
 To celebrate your **50**th this poem will have to do.

It is rather special and unique like you,
 It's not dark and dreary, it even rhymes
 In it I have used the number **50 ... 50** times
 And I written over **50** lines. (count them)

THE ROOT OF ALL EVIL

Joseph R. Adomavicia*

If money is the root of all evil,
then what about the people that use it daily?
If guns are the root of senseless shootings,
then what about the individuals behind the guns being used?
If religion is meant to be a source of faith in
concurrence of what is and what was holy,
then what about the wars caused by the difference of religion?
If politics are to govern, create order and exact justice,
then what about the politicians who run it,
ruining the principals of justice and law before conception even occurs?
If Mother Nature is the cause of the earth's natural disasters,
then what about people's careless pollution of the planet?
And that's just it,
people
have polluted the world
yet, deem everything else evil
except for the darkness
that resides in the hearts of many.



TREES

Sevastian Volkov*

Submit to:

***Fresh Ink: The Literary Journal
of Naugatuck Valley Community College***

Who: Anyone may submit. (Only NVCC students are eligible for awards.)

What: Previously unpublished work in three categories - poetry, prose, and graphic image - will be considered. (We will consider submissions that are in any subgenre of these categories: flash fiction, memoir, nonfiction, comics, photos, etc.) Pieces may consider any theme or topic. Simultaneous submissions are allowed, but notification of acceptance elsewhere is required.

- You may submit no more than five total pieces.
- You may submit no more than three pieces in any single category.
- Prose submissions are limited to a TOTAL word count of 1500.

When: Rolling submissions (anytime) but annual deadline of March 1, 2018.

Where: Email to freshink@nv.edu

How: All submissions must be emailed as separately attached files. In the email, include your name, address, email address, and phone number, as well as titles of submitted work(s). NVCC students must also include student ID numbers to be eligible for prizes. Files should be formatted as such:

- Text files should be Microsoft Word or Rich Text Format files.
- Only title and text should appear in document itself - no names or contact information.
- Graphics should be in high resolution .jpg or .pdf format.
- File names should match titles.

Improperly formatted submissions may not be considered.

Fresh Ink reserves the right to reformat/edit submissions as needed.

Student Prizes: Any current NVCC student who provides student ID is eligible for awards in each of three categories.

For more information contact Jeannie Evans-Boniecki at
203-596-2110 or JEvans-Boniecki@nvcc.commnet.edu