Digressions

Nova Southeastern University
College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences
Department of Writing and Communication

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“Tell your own story and you will be interesting”

Louise Bougeois
About Digressions

It’s easy for us to become trapped in our own minds. As we find ourselves surrounded by challenges, we may sometimes forget that we are not alone in feeling pain. It is through this pain that we grow and it is through dissecting these events that we learn from our struggles.

In this 16th volume of *Digressions*, you will find a juxtaposition of pain and happiness. In these pages is a collection of personal experiences, and each piece of expression is as unique as its creator. While every contributor’s story is different, their words, photography and artwork reflect what we all have in common. Each of us is on a journey of highs and lows that is distinctly human with its growing pains. We continually encounter new battles, but we also continually face them and learn to find strength in the end.
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Editor’s Note

I became a part of Digressions my sophomore year, not expecting to be as involved as I am today. I started as a reviewer, spent some time focused on design and layout, and finished off this experience as Director. While this journey was unexpected and at times stressful, I am glad it took the path it did. I’ve enjoyed being a part of Digressions and experiencing the teamwork that goes into successfully creating this publication year after year. As always, this year’s volume would not have been possible without the help of our faculty advisors, staff, and contributors.

The guidance of our faculty advisors, Professor D’Agostino and Dr. Molly Scanlon, was essential in keeping everything on track. This is especially true since we implemented changes including a name change from Digressions Literary Magazine to Digressions Literary and Art Journal and decided to switch up the entry and review process for submissions. Their help is greatly appreciated as they were nothing short of supportive throughout the entire process.

I want to thank Jenna Kopec, our Associate Editor and Event and Social Media Coordinator, for her countless hours sifting through submissions and reviews and planning events. More importantly, I want to thank her for being there in the most stressful parts of putting this volume together. She was not only a great partner, but an incredible friend. The both of us were also very happy to have the help of Bridgette Boodoo, our energizer bunny of an Event Assistant. Sanya Rashad’s help as PR Coordinator is also appreciated. Monique Cole also went above and beyond in providing us some extra assistance in promoting Digressions and in creating content for Social Media to help us promote our events. We were also happy to have Shiloe Gardner on our team as Design and Layout Manager, and thankful that she was able to provide us with her time and creative eye to design a stunning volume this year. Our reviewers are also deserving of recognition. It is their combined effort to critique submissions that makes the review process fair and efficient. Thank you for helping Digressions be the best it can be.

Last but most definitely not least, I want to thank everyone who submitted to Digressions. As an artist myself, I understand how personal creative work can be, and I understand that it isn’t always easy to share it. I am thankful that our contributors were eager to share their work with us despite this. They are the heart and soul of Digressions, and, ultimately, reason we exist.

Thank you,

Logan Stewart
Director
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* indicates staff favorite
^ indicates faculty favorite
What We Hope For
Jenna Kopec

I hope
From the deepest recesses of my core,
With the worst version of myself
That your chest aches
At the thought of me

When your ribs suffocate your breath
And the wind rampages
The hollows of your stomach
I pray
It is because of me

I hope
Your friends start wondering
What’s wrong with you,
Why your footsteps
Do not sound the same

I hope
They learn
My name
When you realize all is well
But everything is wrong
When regret carves holes
In your appetite
I pray
I am the reason

When you lay your head to rest
I hope
You dream of me
Until salt burns your skin and waves
Wash away the night

I hope
When you seek comfort
And stumble upon my face
In the closets of your mind
You feel worse

I hope
That when my chest aches
At the thought of you,
I am not suffering
Alone
The one word linking together the sisterhood.

Honour. Drenched with the blood of many.


Tainting their endeavours, their passion, suppressing their desires and hopes. Honour.

Imprinted in their minds, drilled into their identity. Honour.


Charged with brutal demise of many, and the tortured existence of battered spirits.

The fate of the sisterhood sealed with one soul crushing word.

Honour.
Venom
Sarah Goltsman
Crude and Cute
Logan Stewart

^faculty favorite
Standing poised and tall, ready for the day.  
Prepared to ignore what anyone has to say.  
Staring herself down in the mirror,  
Her goals have never been clearer.

With multiple degrees  
Dressed in dignity, she would agree  
Every milestone is masked with inferiority.  
When did male become a synonym for superiority?

Independent with a reserved attitude.  
Forced to defend her stature drenched in verisimilitude.  
Strengths disintegrated in male dominance.  
When did oppression become prominent?

In permanent vindication from the patriarchy,  
She is at the top of the success hierarchy,  
Single-handedly operating her own business.  
Society is victim to the greatest sickness.

Women persecuted by slander.  
Every man choosing to be a bystander.  
“You cannot have this career.”  
She questions, “then, how did I make it here?”

She moves through her day with haste.  
Booked for months, there is no time to waste.  
“CEO jobs are exclusively for men.”  
If they were, why is she working until ten?

Black slacks, black blazer, and a blouse,  
She refuses to be restricted to the house.  
Her army of women and precisely defined purpose,  
Must address the issues beneath the surface.

Revealing truth through every journalist,  
Her corporation proudly called feminist.
I give up the brokenness of my past
Sexual tragedy enters into my life at the age of 8
Sexual immorality took over my mentality when I was the age of 10
age 11 to age 16 I entered into sin

I was never under covers
But I was an undercover brother
Lusting in the wind
Trusting in the skin
Hurt and confused by the hands that touched me
When I was the age of 8 through the age of 10

Again and Again

My freedom didn’t yet come until after college
In the midst of my undergrad I was still healing
Being trapped in silence
Spiritual giants
Goliath
I am praying blood in the garden
Take this thorn from my flesh
Should I live in singleness?
Feels like my heart just stopped
Beating in my chest

I confess I long for not the suffering that past like mine bring
Was on the verge of insanity before God healed my brain
I could not walk, I was lame, praying for the Lord’s hands to snatch me
Like grass engaged by flames

Currently I still battle but I am free
40 broken deep wells in the ground
I love now but my conscious is pure now
I am free.
I hate you.
Because you’re perfect.
But you also make me feel like I’m not worth it.

I love you.
But out of fear.
I only say it ‘cause that’s what you want to hear.

I hate you.
Because you beat me.
You always make me feel like I’m too needy.

But I love you.
You’re always there.
Especially when you pretend to care.

I hate you.
You say I’m ugly.
You put every other girl above me.

I love you.
Because you buy me flowers.
Even after cursing me for hours.

I hate you.
You complete me.
And I love you.
But you don’t need me.

I hate you.
Because I can’t leave.
I love you.
Because I can’t breathe.

Without you.
And with you.
And that’s why.
We have a love/hate thing.

Love/Hate Thing
Breanna Jones
Look Me in the Eyes and View My Faith

Alonzo Williams
No alarm, but she wakes with worry. Light seeps in, but she moves without hurry. For a moment, she thinks, the world still looks blurry, but give it two blinks and here comes her enemy, Maturity.

That bitch brings all the fury. Maturity encourages a blasphemous worship to conformity. Antagonizing her ‘til thy kingdom come, Maturity continues ‘til she becomes undone,

making her feel like she has nowhere to run.

Before her day has begun, the damage is already done. Maturity, that bitch, has won, making her awaken like a fugitive on the run.
Brokenness is not ugliness,
Every wonderful thing suffers a degree of imperfection.
For all things must go through a trial of fire,
To become what they were destined to be.
At times, the fire consumes and defies us,
But it also reveals what we have always been:
Champions.
Your flaws do not define you.
Your mistakes do not define you.
Your insecurities do not define you.
You define yourself.
So when you break,
When you shatter into many pieces,
Realize that this is your moment of healing,
A moment of growth.
There is no need for shame,
Since everything must break to be able to appreciate being whole.
Your damage does not opaque you,
It adds worth.
Do not be afraid to fill your broken parts with gold.
Pour pure gold into every heartbreak, every loss, every disappointment, and
Every battle.
Let those golden streaks remind you that your brokenness has not merely scarred you —
It’s made you beautiful.
Like looking across a night sea.
Like a black hole’s gravity.
It is an abyss to which I am pulled.
Yet I stand at a distance, looking in.
Is it filled with good or with sin?
An empty hole or filled with treasure?
I have no tools to measure
the depth of her soul.
It cannot be taken,
Only given,
spilled like a jar.
For now, I observe her Oblivion from Afar.
Jellyfish
Sarah Goltsman
Discovery
Benjamin J. Cummings
While I Am a Woman
Nicole Chavannes

While I Am a Woman
While the choices I make
Are subject to your scrutiny,
While the clothing I wear
Dictates your views of me,
While the curls of my hair –
Which grow from the root, naturally –
Are judged as lazy and trashy,
While the blood I lose monthly
Is deemed dirty and disgusting,
Corrupting my judgment and leaving
Me unworthy,

I am not your equal.

Speak you to me of equality?
Honey, you don’t know the meaning.

But I won’t stop choosing,
and wearing,
and curling,
and bleeding
until I’m sure that you do.

I’ll choose my words carefully –
Making sure not to bruise
that delicate ego you hold so dearly –
With the fire that burns beneath my simmering tongue

I’ll wear down your prejudices,
Like the salty waves that slowly but surely
Erode their stony oppressors,
A constant barrage of knowledge to combat
Your hateful resistance to change.

I’ll curl around you like smoke,
Make you breathe me in like the inescapable
Atmosphere I am
Fill your lungs with my fragrant essence
Until I am all that pervades your thoughts

And I’ll bleed for my place on this Mother
Of all mothers.
I’ll bleed, and I’ll burn like
you’ll never have to
Until we finally understand one another.
A Grocery Shopper’s Guide to Bird Watching in South Florida
Ricky Finch

Summers in South Florida are hot, humid, even early mornings. I step out onto the back deck to gauge the day and notice the sky seems bigger than I remember. The sun shines and the ever present storm clouds polka dot the sky. Each morning the neighborhood chickens sing a foul song, Cluck cluck screech cluck cluck. This morning the clucks are entrancing, my cigarette burns down to the filter singeing my fingers. “Ouch,” I yelp, interrupting the concerto of clucks.

Glancing skyward, I notice in wonderment the painted blue sky with big puffs of hanging white clouds mixed with the perfect shade of gray, when lingering burning bacon mist intrudes my thought. The smoke alarm screams in pain. I hurry through the door and turn off the stove and turn the ceiling fan on. The ceiling fan spins fast enough to dislodge small chucks of plaster along the base mixing tiny particles with the floating greasy mist. The fan sucks the smoke up and spits the toxic concoction back in my face. The neighbor’s hen walks by the open door, head cocked to the side taking in the sight of flailing arms and deep exhaled futile breaths, watery eyes and the charred skillet still in my hand.

Cluck, cluck screech cluck,

“Are you making fun of me?” I say while hopelessly swinging through the smoke.

Cluck cluck screech,

“This isn’t funny!”

“This is normal,” I say.

She wanders off, pecking at the ground, back over the fence, the cadence of clucks and screeches fading into the field behind the house.

Normal. Since moving to South Florida life has not felt normal.

I walk across the street to the grocery store to buy soap. The chicken won’t clean up the congealed bacon grease, so I must. I turn right through the automatic sliding doors, dodging a pyramid of chips and salsa, fresh baked breads and cakes lingering in the air, and the deli. The deli display is filled with hams, turkeys, buffalo chicken and every cheese imaginable. I browse the display for a moment and consider picking up something to make a sandwich.
At that moment, an electric motor growls, and a pain crushes my thigh. I tumble to the ground, my body bouncing off the tiled floor. A tiny elderly woman in a scooter glares down at me.

“Did you take a number,” she squawked.

“What are you talking about” I ask.

She lurches forward, “you didn’t take a number,” pointing at a small red dispenser with the number 42 hanging like a tongue.

Brass Knuckles Betty was not alone. A gaggle of scooters moved swiftly surrounding me on every side. I have never encountered squealing scooters and silver haired misfits in the deli before. I spring to my feet and hurdle Sidecar Susan, looking back only for a moment then smacking into the pyramid of chips and salsa, I tumble to the floor, Betty’s cackle ringing in my ears.

I want to think the ladies meant me no harm, though Betty’s actions would say differently. As I sat covered in salsa and salty chips trying to remember why I had left the house today, I felt isolated. It is not easy connecting with a new city. The street names are strange, the television channels are all different, the trees are palms and where are the squirrels?

People here are polite in a local kind of way.

A way I don’t understand. The Cuban culture is vibrant, interesting, present all around, but I cannot find any Cuban food. My neighborhood is quiet and friendly, I think, I really don’t know, they all hurry to get inside when I wave hello. And the grocery store deli has complex protocols I never imagined existed. I wonder, for a moment, if it would be easier to just go home. Buy a one-way ticket back to cozy and enjoy a belly full of disappointment on the flight. An angry red-faced man with a clipboard hovers over me, pointing towards the restrooms in back.

The salsa left a red stain on my white shirt. Leaving the restrooms, I turned right down the automotive aisle, around a corner, then smack. Off my feet again, except this time I was greeted with a smile and a hand reaching down to help me up.

“I am so sorry,” the lanky fellow with big brown eyes said.

His soothing tones and friendly gestures confused me. “Are you ok?” he asked.

“Yes, I am, and excuse me, I did not see you coming.”

“It’s ok” he responded. Placing his hands on my shoulders, he dusts away left over tomato and onion bits. I look at his featureless face.

He moved me to the left, “Duck” he said,

“Quack,” I replied.
“What?” he asked quizzically like the chicken looking at me this morning.

“Never mind, nice to meet you,” he said.

He turned and looked down at a shelf, picking up a large box containing a mobile generator, he gave me a wink, “thanks buddy,” he said waddling away from me with the big box hanging from his arms. The manager walks quickly in our direction, his face red as salsa. Sirens explode in my ears, I see the back door flapping back and forth. Oh...oh my...oh bloody hell. I tuck my chin to my chest and make haste to the exit disappearing out the front door before red face manager sees me.

The parking lot buzzes. Shopping carts synchronized to just miss moving cars, carriages carrying babies with stains on their shirts like mine, and Betty’s gang zooming down a lane in a V formation, her cackle echoing, and me standing on the corner looking out at a small pond adjacent to the building, a car speeds by with a box hanging out the window. The sun shines except for the singular rain cloud hanging out at my corner. I walk a hundred feet to the left, it follows. Laughing rain drops wash the salsa from my pants and hair, then seep into my shoes so every step squelches.

I walk home, wet and squishy. The chicken’s song sings in my head. *Cluck cluck screech cluck.* What it must be like to be a bird, with wings to take you skyward, never knowing where one might land. I landed in South Florida, awkward and searching for my place. So far outside the comfortable I have always known that each day brings a new set of uncomfortable. It is maddening this city in the sun. I want to scream but I know it won’t help. My phone dings, a text from a friend back home. She writes, “Now when I feel myself falling upward to the Cosmos, I tighten my shoelaces, and remind myself the world is right-sized.”

I spend the afternoon cleaning up this mornings mess and drying out my shoes. The chickens cluck and screech in the field. The hen walks by the door, stopping to admire my cleaning work. I walk outside, my friends’ words reverberating. The rain clouds dissipate into the big blue sky just in time for sun set. It is romantic, the South Florida sunset, peering through towering palm trees.

**The reds, oranges and blues mixing together to say good morning to the stars.**
Spunky Duckling
Amanda Barrera
The Marina
Logan Stewart
His tire had gone flat that morning. He was late to work because of it, but his boss did little more than cast him a flat look of his typical disappointment when he strolled in. He knew the look all too well; his parents often wore it when they thought he wasn’t looking. He shrugged. Internally, he told himself that it didn’t bother him anymore.

That morning, his wife had asked him to pick-up bread after work. On any other day, he would have—gladly—however, because of his tire, he took a cab straight home. No, he did not fetch the bread from the store that evening. When he returned home empty-handed, her warm and welcoming smile cracked just briefly to reveal that same look of disappointment as his employer, though it was immediately masked with a cheery expression. He told himself that it didn’t bother him anymore.

That night, his wife made love to him. While she moved into euphoria, he looked blankly into the ceiling, memorizing every miniscule crack in the chipped paint. Once she finished, she fell into a deep sleep and he crept quietly out of their bed and into the bathroom. He caught a brief glance of himself in the mirror. He wore a faint, disappointed expression that came all-too-often when his wife needed affection. Her constant need for physicality alluded him since the early days of their marriage, and, a decade later, gave him little satisfaction of his own. Still, he told himself that he loved his wife. It didn’t bother him anymore.

Leaving the bathroom, he walked past his wife’s sleeping form and into their shared closet. He stood there, taking deep breaths and counting quietly to himself. He’d hoped to will himself into a peaceful state there in the confines of that small, squared space. He’d hoped to find solace in the scent of his wife’s dresses and his perfectly ironed shirts. And so, he remained there, in the closet and he counted—from one to one thousand—with the faint sound of his wife’s snoring pacing his rhythm.

One…two…three…

After some time there, counting, he found himself on the floor of the closet. Suddenly, he felt compelled to move himself to the far-right wall of the small space. On his knees, he crawled to the small black box that his wife despised. He caressed it, the cool feeling of the box exciting him. He could feel his heart rate quicken as his fingertips moved sensually over the edges of the box. Abruptly, he heard his wife’s snores falter—he froze, sucking in a quick gasp of air. Soon, however, her breathing returned to its same peaceful pace and he released the breath he had been holding. He looked down at the black box in his lap. Logically, he knew that he should return it to the safe place in which he kept it. He also knew that his wife would redden with unwavering frustration if she caught him there. He didn’t like to upset his wife. Nevertheless, he sat there, caressing the box and relishing in the coolness of the feel under his fingertips. On a usual night, this was enough; he could sit silently with the box in the closet and the next morning his wife would greet him with a loving, unknowing smile and gentle kiss. On a typical night, he could convince himself that it didn’t bother him anymore.

His Secret
Sara Gorman

*staff favorite*
Tonight, however, he needed more. He stood, in nothing more than his night-pants and a plain gray t-shirt, deciding that tonight he would finally leave that closet. In his left hand, he grabbed a pair of shoes; in his right hand, his fist was clenched tightly around the handle of the black box. He moved swiftly down the steps and out of his house unconsciously grabbing his wife's keys.

It was as if his body was leading him tonight. It was as though he was a famished man who had not eaten in days, and what he maniacally craved was nothing but what was sat inside of that small, black box.

Somehow, he found himself in the parking lot of a supermarket that stayed open for 24 hours. Despite the late hour, he saw several people rushing inside, undoubtedly to pick-up items such as bread and milk that had been forgotten earlier in the evening. He decided that he too would go inside to retrieve the bread his wife had asked him to purchase. First, however, he looked to the small black box in the passenger seat. It was time.

He reached for the box, his hand trembling as though he were reaching to touch a woman for the very first time. When his fingertips connected with the cool feel of the box's hard material, he sighed. One hand became two, and soon he was caressing the box with both palms. Still, he needed more. He opened the box and released an audible whimper. Yes, he was as afraid of what lay inside the box as he was enkindled by it. With a shaking hand, he reached for it. When his fingers finally connected with it, he thought he may burst with excitement. He looked to the ceiling of his wife's car but struggled to see beyond the stars of ecstasy that now clouded his vision.

Suddenly, he was jolted out of his state of jubilation by the sound of laughter. It came from a young woman, probably twenty years of age. She seemed to be laughing at another woman who had dropped a container of eggs onto the concrete of the parking lot. He sighed at their foolish scene and grumbled to himself. He supposed that he should go inside and buy that loaf of bread, finally. As he reached for the handle of the car door, he looked down at the treasure in his lap. Logically, he knew that he should return it to its box. He had obtained his fix, and that feeling that overcame him should not have eaten at him anymore. However, he could not bring himself to put the source of his veneration away just yet. To do so would feel like rebuffing a woman after a wonderful date. Thus, he made the decision to place it inconspicuously into his pocket. There was no harm in bringing it with him, just this once.

While he moved through the market, he felt incredibly devilish. He felt as though he were carrying around a secret to which no one else was privy. The thought aroused and excited him. He felt as though he were on fire. When he found his wife's favorite bread, he walked to the check-out line and was faced with a shocking number of other patrons. Only one cashier was working the night shift. He groaned silently to himself, anticipating an hour or so of standing in line to buy a single loaf of bread.

Just as he had earlier in the evening, he suddenly felt that familiar compulsion to reach for that small black box. He ached to caress it, to feel the coolness of the box. Unfortunately,
he realized that he had left the box in his wife's car. The content of the box, however, was just inside the pocket of his sleep pants. Attempting to move as discreetly as he could, he placed a hand into his pocket and felt his secret. Again, he was renewed with excitement. He wondered to himself, what would happen if—just for a moment—he pulled it out of his pocket. He pondered if anyone would notice or if they would remain absorbed in their own worlds. He figured they wouldn’t—oh no, but he shouldn’t!

He decided to count to himself to calm down; he was beginning to become illogical. He closed his eyes and focused on the beep of the conveyer belt.

One...two...three...

On a usual night, he would never have been this daring. On a typical night, he could have convinced himself that it didn’t bother him anymore. He could have deluded himself into believing that caressing the cool steel of his secret was satisfactory. Tonight, however, he needed more.

He reached into his pocket and pulled out his secret.

No one seemed to notice.

He placed it just behind the head of the person in front of him. He heard a loud gasp from some direction. Perhaps someone knew what was coming, perhaps they even tried to stop him. Unfortunately for everyone, it was already too late. He pulled the trigger. The scene erupted into chaos. He heard screams as people threw themselves to the ground.

**He pulled the trigger again...and again...and again.**

It felt orgasmic. He smiled.

In the distance, he heard the sound of his wife lovingly calling his name.

And then, alas, in his closet, he awoke.
My morals:
A joke.
Under pressure:
I choke.
On social media:
I’m woke.
But in real life:

I probably misspoke.

So don’t quote
what I say,
life tests me
every day.

Or maybe it’s God
pushing me
to the best
because
my suffering follows
three days
of rest
before I must
rise to
the test.

But really
life is
less black
less white,
and more gray.
Finally, I’m realizing
that it’s okay.
You Have Been a Hope
Alonzo Williams
Baked, 
and exhausting 
a trail of steam
in the kitchen, 
no, she won’t 
eat it, 
my mom warns.

It needs grease, 
skip the pepperoni, 
she only wants cheese, 
fast and cheap, 
preferably delivery.

Little Caesars, 
Pizza Hut, 
but never Domino’s, 
the only exception, 
Digiorno’s.

Her stubby hands 
on a ravenous pursuit, 
ungluing the cheese 
from its tomato groom, 
licking and chewing, 
the pieces torn away, 
destroying everything, 
but throwing the crust away.

Finishing the slice, 
looking me in the eye, 
and asking, 
sister,

do you have 
more yummy?

Yummy
Re’Nyqua Farrington
Form
Breanna Jones

Form.

Form is defined as “the visible shape or configuration of something.” The shape your lips make as the corners are pulled up: your smile. Your piercing, brown eyes staring into mine, round like a ball. And as your gaze falls, I notice your eyebrows: a perfect arch. Your freckles are like the dots I write to end my thoughts. The length of your eyelashes, like little slashes on paper. I wait for you to look back up at me so I can see every inch of your beautiful face.

Form is defined as “bringing together parts or combine to create (something).” Bring your lips closer to mine as our fingers intertwine. We could lay here forever and I swear I’d never get tired of being this close to you. You can hear my heartbeat when our eyes meet. If you get any closer I think the world around us will disappear. I fear this moment won’t last but I hope it does cause you’re all I have.

Let’s form a bond that will never be broken.
there is one truth that often goes unsaid,
it lies so dormant in society, that it can pass off for dead.
and that is that you were painted golden since the day you arrived,
and that you are much more than the battles that you have survived.
when you find yourself breaking, know there is healing in the art of falling apart,
the beauty of mosaics is that the fragmented pieces must come together to create art.

do not be ashamed of your scars, imperfections, and flaws
to err is to be human; that is the foundation of all laws
when you are at your loneliest hour and cannot see the light
know that morning is coming; do not give up the fight
yes, loneliness takes different forms, all forms felt by all,
you are not alone in your battles, for even Eden came to fall.
And when your lungs are inhaling dirt from being driven into the ground, exhale flowers on the surface to prove to the world that you’re still around. and when you’re drowning in the depths of an ocean of grief and pain, know that the waters cannot silence your spirit and that your struggles are not in vain. if it takes you one thousand and ten nights to escape the Darklands and dispose of old sorrow, take pride in the thought that hope is never lost but that it is found in every tomorrow.

see that the legends of perseus, hercules, and odysseus pale in comparison of your glory, you are brave, you are strong, you are wise… realize that you are a hero for merely telling your story.
the architecture of your bones was constructed by warriors, conquerors, and kings you are not a failure or a mistake—you are the greatest, the most beautiful, creation to exist in the grand scheme of things.
A boy filled with fear in his eyes. Those eyes of a copper, tarnished color opened a door to his pain. He was a straddled, thin young boy trying to be just that. To have lived in constant fear of his family forced an intense introversion and cautious nature about him. As the years went by, he was turning into quite a respectable young man, and from a distance the pain and distress in his eyes became evident to his empathetic cousin. He learned to trust her and could approach her in small steps—she became the light in his darkness. Strength and courage became his virtues, and the kindness and care he gave her turned him into a man capable of love. The pain and fear slowly melted away and his confidence began to rise from the shadows. He began to stand up straight and that made him taller. His head shot right up—he was truly experiencing the world for the first time. A smile gleamed from ear to ear, and his eyes pronounced a happiness that was uplifting and freeing. For the first time, he embraced his whole being and even showed those teeth that were a bit crooked but when paired with a bounteous laugh, that was sweet and crisp, allowed him to finally escape his mental prison. He was my best friend and we both became each other’s light.
It’s the cycle of the seasons.
I know it’s Fall, not because of the leaves,
But because I can feel it coming.
It feels like love and loneliness.
Like a soothing pain that I have become intimate with.
It comes regularly with the Fall.
I meet a girl, and begin to fall towards her
Just as soon as she begins to fall away from me.
It is the push and pull of the seasons.
The fall breeze flows across my skin
It wraps me like a blanket in its comforting familiarity of sadness.
It is becoming the pattern of my existence.
The poetically tragic irony of my life’s synchrony with the fall season.

Fall
Kyle Boltson
Your Ghost
Dakota Chabot
To covet is to sin  
And to sin is to die.  
Yet, I drink the poison.  
Satisfied; in that I want all that I have.  
Aching; in that I crave all that I don’t.  
They are not cars.  
Her parts cannot be exchanged and swapped with others.  
My aesthetic ideals are constantly morphing, Bombarded by media.  
No one could ever match the unstable image retained in my mind.  
I am content with her when we are alone together.  
But with temporary separation, I compare.  
I want what I compare her to and I want what I have.  
I drive the needle and flood my veins with envy and greed.  
I irradiate my bones with a multitude of my desires.  
I allow this cancer of my soul to metastasize.  
I know the final result of this.  
I covet the end of this.
Travel, Clusters
Sarah Goltsman

*staff favorite
She’s Just Like a Lock
Breanna Jones
She raised her eyebrows and paused as she stared down at the piece of paper in front of her. As she hesitated, a look of confusion, panic, even, slowly spread across her face.

“Well I’m gonna butcher this one. I am so sorry if I mispronounce it.”

The young boy at the back of the class with oil-slicked hair, glistening, polished shoes, and an expertly ironed buttoned shirt and pleated trousers, shifted in his seat, already prepared for what would come next.


The boy raised his hand.


A collective chuckle was heard in the classroom. Even the teacher held back a smile as she looked up at the page after re-reading his name. Shamsuddin shifted in his chair once more, slumping down a little to avoid eye contact with the students around him, who of course, stared at him now, having all turned towards him at the sound of his name.

“Shums-uth-deen, miss”

“Oh, I’m so sorry about that, Shums-ud-deen. It’ll take me a while before I get used to everyone’s name.”

She repeated “Shams-ud-deen” several times under her breath, nodding her head and trying to memorise the name she would undoubtedly forget in a few moments. She moved onto the next name as she continued taking attendance.

He found the trouble his name gave his teachers quite perplexing. He had heard all day how perfectly some teachers would pronounce “Ngyuen” and “Usnavi” and “Xavier,” and was surprised to hear how effortlessly they managed to get “Meghan,” “Megan,” and “Megyn” all correct.

Some of the older teachers would flow through the list of names like skilled poets, rhythmically moving down the list, adding flavor and texture and character to each name. But for some reason, all of their showmanship ended when they reached his.
Shamsuddin Butt, son of Muhammad Irfan Ali Butt, grandson of Haji Muhammad Ali Butt. His parents gave him a “modern” name by their own standards, much to the dismay of his grandmother, who preferred “Muhammad Moiz” instead. But that modernity was of no use here; his name could have been anything. His name, like a foreign object, would always get stuck in his teachers’ throats.

He was proud of his name. The “sun of faith,” one who sheds light on truth and justice and all that is right and fair in the world. He always felt that his name came with a responsibility to be virtuous, and he tried his best to live up to it. As a child, when the schoolboys would tease him with “Shammo, Shammo, girls’ branch is on the other side,” he ignored the fact that they called him by a girl’s name. He would correct his classmates. “My name is Shamsuddin, not anything else.” Even from his early school days, he was patient and mature, and never gave them the satisfaction of seeing him upset.

“To grasp something new, you have to let go of what you are holding.” Chacha had told Shamsuddin this in the morning at the breakfast table. Shamsuddin thought about what he had said as he finished his breakfast and left his house. He had thought of Salloo and AB and Beeba as he stood waiting for the school-bus. They were friends since primary school. Everyday they would be dragged to school by their mothers, who chatted and laughed as they gripped their little sons’ even smaller hands, making sure they didn’t try and turn around and run back home in their dread of school. Over time, they were allowed to walk alone, but had to hold each others’ hands, immediately pushing each other away and racing each other down the street once they turned the corner and were out of their watchful mothers’ sights. Eventually, their hands were large enough to grab the steering wheel of Shamsuddin’s car. He used to pick them up one by one in the morning, and the four of them would all ride to high-school together. These memories all swirled through his head as the early morning breeze ruffled his clothes and danced through his hair.

He shifted his weight from one foot to the other nervously as he wondered how they all got to school that morning. He looked down at the bus card he was still holding to make sure he was at the right stop. The bus was supposed to arrive at six-thirty. He glanced at his wristwatch: six thirty-five. The other children talked amongst themselves as he watched on.

Shamsuddin caught himself wandering off in his own thoughts and he shook his head to try and focus on the teacher in front of him. But she was explaining how to find the slope of a line, which he had already learned two years ago. This happened to him throughout the day, whenever he was not being spoken to, or he felt whatever was being taught was unimportant, he let his memories run away with his attention. The other students would whisper to each other, and he wanted to speak to them too, but wasn’t sure what he would even say. Where would he start? They couldn’t even say his name. As of now, he had sat through 6 class periods so far, and had heard six different pronunciations of his name, some that even he found a little amusing. But after hearing the laughter of his peers with his glowing, embarrassed red ears, he began to think that maybe “Shamsuddin” was overwhelming. He sat up in his seat, listening to the teacher explain “rise over run,” but stared down at his notebook. He looked harder and harder at the name written across the top of its cover. He thought of a quote his qari-sahab would often say: “If man cannot look up at the sun, how can he think about seeing God?”

Maybe the “sun” was all that they could handle for now, and the faith would come later.

He crossed off the “-uddin” at the top of his notebook. Maybe a better introduction would help, he thought to himself. His lips moved silently as he began rehearsing his new name. If someone ever asked him what his name was, he’d smile, look at them in the eye, and say: “Shams.”
Just a Guy
Angelica Scott
And undoubtedly, when I see you, 
I see Atlas. 
Overburdened and trapped under the weight 
Of a world that you never asked for. 
For the burden of a world on both 
Your mind 
And 
Your shoulders, 
Can make your knees bend, 
Your arms tremble, 
And your back ache. 
But, 
What the legends fail to acknowledge is 
That Atlas has not succumbed to his punishment. 
What escapes the storytellers is that they only 
Take into account the strength of his might, 
And not the strength of his heart. 
They overlook the steel in his will, 
The fire in his bones, 
The determination in his soul, 
And 
The perseverance in his mind. 
You, in the same manner as Atlas, 
Must know that you are not defined 
By the weight you hold up. 
But by the strength in your spirit to still stand. 
And as Atlas has persisted, 
You will, too.
Paradise in the Quarter
Nikki Chasteen
You hold my tiny fingers steadily, with a seemingly soft yet firm grip. Carefully placing my feet over yours, mimicking little footsteps, my arms stretch artlessly to reach yours. Tiny giggles fill my tummy as I look up, my arms suspend up in the air while trying to match your gait. My eyes lock into yours, entirely enamored and bewildered by your sheer strength and size. You utter encouraging words to me, and I open my eyes infinitely wide, trying to soak in every word you float into the air. In this very moment, I promise, I have made up my mind. I want to be just like you when I grow up! Trying to process every detail around me, I neglect to follow your next step, my foot slips and my muddied shoe stamps the leg of your pants, I ungracefully lose my balance. Instantly, your brows furrow and your eyes narrow into slits. What I understand as love takes on a new form. Without thought, you let go of my hands as I crash onto the marble floor. Your face starts to become blurry. My mind struggles to process you, and my eyes still desperately search for comfort. Your voice gets ferociously loud, and your message is clear. Take her away from me, clumsy fool, she's just like her dumb mother.

You speak at me. You see, I can hear you...yet I fail to understand precisely what you’re saying. You snap your fingers at me. Hey! Are you even listening?! You kiss my forehead and slide your slender fingers into mine. I laugh nervously, you’ve always been my childhood crush. Now crouched on a bench, your eyes flicker in the moonlight, and the warmth of your body radiates on mine. The feeling is strange yet I somehow recognise it as I rest my head on your shoulder. A shadow appears from the darkness, a face with features matching mine. I push you away, but it’s too late. We’ve been caught.

Pulled by the hair, I’m dragged all the way home. Let me go. Stop, I can explain. Clumps of my hair in your hands, you throw me into the house. Out of sheer instinct, I squirm into the corner, closing my eyes tight, desperately seeking to escape. The screams follow predictably, my thoughts are silenced by your fists, my voice struggling to crawl out of my throat. I’ll explain, please, I swear. Finally exhausted, you turn your back to me, you decide every single being must know. You pry the door open, screaming into the night. I’m a disgraceful whore.

I’m escorted into the room by your mother, who hugs me tightly before excusing herself. My age has come, I bid farewell to my family, and I now sit on a stranger’s bed, with flowers practically filling every inch of the room. I’ve given up my last name for you, and you barely even know me. Your arrival is grand, you carry yourself in a confident way. It’s handsome, I admit to myself. A voice in my head interrupts me: Good girls look down, good girls stay meek. You sit cross-legged on the bed, reaching out for my hand. I place it in yours, and you pull out a ring, sliding it onto my finger. You search my face for an appropriate reaction, but it’s not as you expected. The sudden kindness in your eyes fades, as you throw my hand away. You extend your arm behind your head, whipping it across my face. My cheeks are stinging and my heart is pounding. A sense of relief rushes through my body. Soothing tears pour down my face, your features distorting as I stare into your eyes. A smile crawls up the corners of my face. A familiar giggle rushes its way out of my throat. The roar of my laughter fills the haunting silence. I want to be just like you.

Keh-Kahe
Wamika Mansor Shoukat
Staff & Contributor Biographies

Alonzo Williams | Contributor
Graduate Student | Program: College Student Affairs
Alonzo Williams is a choreographer, poet, photographer, and a curator of many artistic disciplines. He is a current graduate student of NSU; with a B.A. in Dance. Alonzo continues to advance his career as a Hip Hop/Urban Dance local South Florida choreographer and creative director of the AlonzoWill brand.

Angelica Scott | Contributor
Major: Biology | Sophomore
Although Angelica is aspiring to become a Physician Assistant, she loves to draw and take commissions whenever she has the time. Art provides a way for Angelica to relax after dealing with her strenuous classes.

Athena Edwards | Reviewer
Major: Marine Biology | Junior
I am in the process of pursuing a career in writing and editing. It’s exciting to me to see the ways an idea can be formed and shaped for others to enjoy. Because of this interest, I am extremely eclectic in my hobbies - dabbling in science, novels, poetry, television, games, music, art, and photography.

Austin Shutov | Reviewer
Major: History
Austin Shutov is a sophomore History major at NSU pursuing a career in law. He was born in New York City and now lives in Miami. His wide range of interests include music, film, literature, art, languages, and politics.

Bridgette Boodoo | Event Assistant
Majors: Legal Studies, Criminal Justice
Bridgette is a senior graduating this May with majors in Legal Studies and Criminal Justice. She got involved with Digressions because of her friend, Logan, who is the Director. She was happy to learn that Digressions was such a cool opportunity for students at NSU to express themselves because she was unaware of it before. She also likes arts and crafts.

Mariah McCauley | Reviewer
Majors: Art and Design, History
Mariah is a Sophomore at NSU and is an avid reader and lover of all things creative. Her passions include studying the intersections of art, history, fashion, literature, and design and hopes to become a museum curator and professor. Outside of class, she enjoys her time working at the Alvin Sherman Library.
Monique Cole | Reviewer & Contributor  
Major: Communication  

Monique is a senior communication major and public health minor at NSU. She is working towards a career in health communication and higher education. / “Never confuse a single defeat with a final defeat.” – F. Scott Fitzgerald

Nicole Suarez | Contributor  
Major: English Literature | Senior  

I am originally from Bogotá, Colombia, born in San Francisco, California, and raised in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. In the summer of 2018, I studied abroad in Galway, Ireland and London, England. Here is where my passion for writing was cultivated and I began to find my voice, freeing her through the art and power that words emit. “I declare after all, there is no enjoyment like reading!” – Jane Austen

Nikki Chasteen | Reviewer & Contributor  
Graduate Student | Program: CRDM  

Nikki is student in the Master’s in Composition, Rhetoric, and Digital Media program. She received her B.A. in Communication from NSU. In her free time, she enjoys traveling and photography.

Nicole Chavannes | Reviewer  
Graduate Student | Program: CRDM  

Nicole has lived in South Florida her entire life and completed her undergrad at NSU, clearly, she loves change and yes, she still complains about the weather. Some of her passions include reading, writing, defending the Oxford comma, and critiquing unsatisfactory book-to-movie adaptations.

Re’Nyqua Farrington | Reviewer & Contributor  
Major: English Education  

Re’Nyqua started out as a reader, stuffing her nose in every book possible and falling in love with stories, until one day she decided to write her own story. The story still has not ended and she plans on writing until she has nothing left to say. Though, she dreams of having her name across the front cover a published book, nothing is more important than inspiring readers and writers through her stories.

Ricky Finch | Reviewer & Contributor  
Graduate Student | Program: CRDM  

Ricky Finch is a graduate student in the Composition Rhetoric and Digital Media program. He is originally from Nashville and has a BA in English from Lipscomb University. Ricky enjoys writing, wood carving and is an avid cookie enthusiast.

Wamika Shoukat | Contributor  
Major: Biology | Sophomore  

Wamika Shoukat is a sophomore majoring in Biology, with interests in political science, writing, and photography. Her writing is most influenced by her experiences growing up in Pakistan, and she tends to explore social issues through the medium of writing."