Full Issue

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About Digressions

“Digressions” are temporary departures or instances of divergence from a main theme, so it makes sense that this journal invites students to move away from the rigidity of academia and scholarship. As D.J. King—our first editor—said in Volume 1 in 2004, Digressions encourages students to “take a break from ‘Works Cited’ and turn inwardly to work sighted.” At the Digressions Literary & Art Journal, we strongly believe that everyone is capable of creativity, and should be presented with the opportunity to express themselves, even while pursuing the more fact-oriented fields that Nova Southeastern University has to offer; but we digress.

This year, as we publish Volume 17, we examine our various thoughts and experiences in contrast. The beauty of the urban and the natural; the power and intensity of love and hate; the necessity of peace and chaos; and the presence of light and dark. We examine the universal applications of Yin and Yang.

Life exists in contrast. The mere existence of the Digressions Literary & Art Journal within a science-focused school speaks to this. So, we encourage current and future readers to explore the depths that these pieces present, to look at the art, photography, poetry, and narratives with an appraising look, and, above all, to share your own digressions with Digressions.

Want more Digressions? Check online for access to multimedia content such as interviews with the contributors, past issues, readings, and more. You can even submit your own work for our next issue!
Staff, 2019-2020

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Director’s Note

The *Digressions Literary & Art Journal* is a place of promise for students, readers, creators, reviewers, and editors alike. It is a place for students and readers to observe new and unique ideas, some which bring about new ways of thinking and some which prove that they are not alone. Creators are given a place to show themselves and their work outside of the classroom. Reviewers are able to put into practice their understanding of unique viewpoints and ways of expression in order to shape *Digressions*. Finally, editors are able to show their understanding of idea forms and bring the ideas of multiple individuals into a cohesive unit to be enjoyed for years to come.

I started at *Digressions* as a reviewer before coming on as a director and creator. Seeing how this publication comes together from multiple perspectives has given me a strong sense of pride in the long-term project. There is no better feeling than seeing something enjoyable to many come out of empty space, be it the empty space on a document or canvas, the empty space in our inbox before the appearance of submissions, or the empty pages that would be placed through a printing press, in honor of the empty spaces that came before them.

As such, this publication would be unattainable without the passion and dedication from our brave submitters and creators, our committed reviewers, our hard-working editorial and marketing staff, and our diligent staff advisor. Additionally, a special thanks has to go out to Gena Meroth (who was able to quickly help us resolve any issues on the digital end of production), Dr. Mason’s Editing, Layout, and Design class (who helped organize and format the content for the most enjoyable reading experience), Dr. Piskel’s Graphic Design class (who created wonderful cover submissions to choose from), and, finally, a thank you to both the School of Communication, Media, and the Arts and the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences for supporting this project.

We hope that the future will not only bring new submissions but also an expanded readership. It is with this latter goal in mind that this year we developed new partnerships and events, as well as a campaign to include social choice pieces voted on by our followers on Instagram. Stay tuned as we continue to strive to imagine, create, and inspire.

– Athena Edwards, *Digressions* Director
Let me tell you
Of what I have learned through poetry:

Sometimes,
The simplest words have the most power.

They’re the ones that stay on your mind
And pull at your heart.

They’re the ones that give you chills
And start movements.

When you think about it,
It really comes as no surprise.

It is, after all, the smallest seeds
That travel the furthest,

And the smallest droplets
Which form a rainbow.

It doesn’t serve to clutter the page
With long, dense sentences –

When the most power is held
Within the untouched spaces
Found between the smallest words.
Who’s to stop this two-ton machine from
speeding up the road ahead opens like the
blinds in my rose-pink room when I was little
the sun enveloped me flecks of dust
distributed themselves around the room like
waltzing figures in an open ballroom watched
the edge a of sun patch ooze its way to the left
spilling its concentrated self over dingy carpet
and dropped dna I sat there in my assigned
room it was a gift from my parents I stretched
toward the windowsill facing the outside like
I am now gripping onto the wheel
whatever road ahead of me a dusty dashboard
it’s a reminder to not settle too soon who’s to
say I can’t keep going
THE BEAUTIFUL SOUTH FLORIDA

FERRAN RIVAS
CHARACTERS:
   PATTI – Female, late 40s, educated
   DR. PLAINFIELD – Male, 60s, unfazed

PATTI is sitting on an examination table wearing a paper sheet.
DR. PLAINFIELD enters the room while examining the chart.

DR. PLAINFIELD
Welcome back to Memorial Pembroke, Patti. I am glad to help you through the process of dealing with your diagnosis.

PATTI
Well, I can’t really say I wasn’t a shock about it, Dr. Plainfield. I was just kind of told over the phone. But after doing some research on the survival rate of breast cancer patients, I feel a little better. I mean a 98% success rate isn’t too bad.

DR. PLAINFIELD
Exactly. And I just want to let you know, as I let all of my patients know, breast cancer is not a death sentence. It can even be a lot of fun.

PATTI
Excuse me?

DR. PLAINFIELD
What you have, Patti, is a chance for a new beginning.

PATTI
Oh yeah, I heard a lot of other people end up taking up healthier lifestyles as a way to stay strong during treatment. Some women have even gone on a completely raw or vegan diet.

DR. PLAINFIELD
[Chuckling] We’re talking about modern medicine. There’s no need to worry about eating the right thing or getting proper exercise. We’re going to give you new breasts.

   Beat.

PATTI
So you’re suggesting that we go through total breast removal by double mastectomy. I heard there is a really high success rate. Most women opt in for it.
DR. PLAINFIELD
Of course they do. What woman hasn’t gone through life wishing they had a bigger cup size?

PATTI
Oh! You mean I should talk to the plastic surgeon about restructuring my breasts in a way that makes me more comfortable with my breasts post-surgery.

DR. PLAINFIELD
I mean you can talk to the plastic surgeon about having really, really big boobs.

PATTI
I am really having trouble understanding how having bigger-sized breasts is going to help my breast cancer. Isn’t the point to have less breast for the cancer to latch on to?

DR. PLAINFIELD
Oh, Patti, what fun is that? Besides, a recurrence is nothing to worry about.

PATTI
That’s the thing, I read women are led to believe a double mastectomy will totally eradicate the cancer. And it does to begin with. But then they become too comfortable to continue getting checked for recurrence. By the time they discover that losing their breasts doesn’t mean that they lose all chance of getting breast cancer, it’s too late.

DR. PLAINFIELD
Patti, please calm down. Look at it this way. You’re at home after the initial surgery. You’re looking in the mirror. But instead of focusing on all the scars and all the pain that went into your survival, you see two beautiful, round, voluptuous, enormous, breasts.

PATTI
Do you have any idea how that makes me feel as a patient? Like what if I told you, you had testicular cancer. Would you just start feeling better about it all once I told you I could give you bigger balls?

DR. PLAINFIELD
You know, a lot of patients feel better once they visualize what I’m talking about.
DR. PLAINFIELD
Takes out an iPad and starts swiping through the pictures.

PATTI
Wow. . .

DR. PLAINFIELD
I know, right?

PATTI
I can’t believe this.

DR. PLAINFIELD
All real – well, except that they’re not.

PATTI
Jesus!

DR. PLAINFIELD
I have been known to perform some miracles.

PATTI
You know what? I’ve heard chemo treatment has really improved after the last five years. I think I’ll just opt in for that.

DR. PLAINFIELD
Great. And with the proper insurance we can find a chemo treatment that won’t make you pack on too many pounds. Wouldn’t want that, would we.

PATTI grabs her things in an effort to leave.

DR. PLAINFIELD
What are you doing?

PATTI
Oh, I’m leaving Dr. Plainfield. While you have some time, I highly suggest you look into that testicular cancer. It could lead to reduction. Wouldn’t want that, would we.

End.
Is fate so fickle,  
That one’s whole tale is written upon a string?  
My whole life,  
But a bristle on Fate’s tapestry?  
My existence,  
But a knot in the invisible red string of fate?

That’s a notion as well.  
Invisible, red.  
How can something invisible have color?  
How can something feeble be final?  
Invisible and red.  
Indeed.

Who’s to say though,  
That I don’t cut it up right now?  
Patch it up with my own colors,  
Knot it around the people I choose?  
Who’s to say,  
That my destiny is even inlaid on a string?

Maybe my life’s design is contained  
Within the neurons of my own brain.  
Flexible and electric,  
Determined by nothing else,  
Than my own self.  
Is fate so fickle?
She walked down the path by her house
She doesn’t care where she’s going now
She’s happy just to be close to the ground
The earth
The grass
Her arms
The mother of us all
She opens her hands
Hoping to take in the land
And feels it pulsate through her
Does she feel something
Or is her mind playing tricks on her again
In the darkness she feels at home
There is something about it
That makes her feel more calm
She looks around
More buildings than before
And more to come
What happened to the land
People take more pleasure from being confined
Building a reality that wasn’t there before
The grass is less
And will continue to go away
When she returns to her own home
She drifts
Putting on the headphones
Just to go away
Again
From her own space
What she hopes to find she doesn’t know
She doesn’t care
Just go.
IF WE MUST IDENTIFY¹

RE’NYQUA FARRINGTON

If we must identify, let us strip
the hurling insults of the past that tear
through our Negro souls; the insults that rip
apart the armor we built around fear.
If we must identify, let us dance
at night without judgement during the day;²
free to paint our face, sans a sideways glance
or a worry about what they will say.
If we must identify, let us kiss
away the white injustices that hunt
for dark flesh and embrace our lover’s bliss
during combat without special affront.
If we must identify, let us be,
be free to name our own identities.

¹ In 1919, McKay published “If We Must Die,” the
poem often considered the “inaugural address” of the
Harlem Renaissance.

² In his Crisis magazine book review, W.E.B. Du Bois
critiqued McKay’s novel, Home to Harlem, for his
morally deficient portrayal of African Americans.
I love you truly. Truly I do.  
Everything about me loves everything about you.  
The flick of my manicured middle finger loves you.

The twisted way I sit in the passenger seat in your freshly washed Volkswagen loves you.

The clicking sound of me typing on my laptop loves you.  
Every upbeat song I sing offkey loves you.

Shocker! I love you.

The sticky green gummy bear that I’m chewing  
With my molars, right side, loves you.  
The plastic, neon-yellow bead necklace I won as a prize  
On our first date at glow-in-the-dark mini golf loves you.  
The bittersweet iced caramel macchiato I sip slowly loves you.

My cheeky smile as you explain aviation and gaze  
At every single departing airplane in the puffy clouds loves you.

The dilation of my pupils loves you.

My rapid and irregular heartbeat, pounding out of my chest, loves you.

My shy belly button peeking from underneath my heather gray crop top loves you.

Also my high school friends.

My closed bedroom door is both a closed door and a symbol  
Of how much I love you.
My soft, whiny baby voice when I crave your warmth: love.

My hesitation when I sneak out to see you for a midnight drive: love.

My pleasant “hi” and “goodnight” on the phone: love.

My delicate touch as you pull my cold hands onto your stubbled face: love.

You know how when I’m exhausted from studying chemistry for 10 hours

I lay my head on your chest? Love.

My long, silky dark chocolate locks all tangled up in your mouth like chihuahua hair: love.

My short legs lounging in my tight black leggings 24/7 love you.

Layers of love, a stack of overmixed cinnamon roll pancakes. Hours after being with you, blissfully indulging in your strong arms,

I count all the green specks in your ocean eyes, so that I might love each one individually.

My lungs, a pair of attached souls, rise and fall

After each whiff of your woody cologne, which can never be too much.

Breathlessly and deeply close, like two twinkling stars aligned in the ever-expanding universe.
SHINE ON ME  JONELLE BOLTON
DOWN BY THE SEA  MONIQUE COLE
CHARACTERS:
  ADRIAN – Street beggar, desperate for money
  ALEX – Auctioneer, quick on feet, likes the performance
  TATIANA – Bidder, wants to add to her collection
  BILLIE – Bidder, relishes in the gore
  ANDY – Bidder, searching for excitement

ALEX and BIDDERS are assembled for an outdoor auction of murder regalia. ALEX is standing on a platform. ADRIAN sits in corner with a sign reading “Save a Life, Give a Dollar” and a cup.

ALEX
Welcome to the Chicago Murder Mob’s first public auction. Today we will be auctioning off some items highlighted in our monthly magazine, Blood, Fret, and Tears.

ADRIAN approaches the group. Walks to Tatiana.

ADRIAN
Please. Just a dollar.

TATIANA
I’m sorry. I only have a credit card.

ALEX
Our first item is the knife from the collection of Ed Gein. The real-life killer and cannibal who inspired none other than the horror film that kept young women from showering since 1960 – PSYCHO! Do we have a starting bid?

TATIANA
Ahh! That would be the best addition to my Movie Killer Collection. 50!

ANDY
75!

BILLIE
78!
TATIANA

100!

ALEX

100 once, twice, SOLD!

ADRIAN approaches BILLIE.

ADRIAN

Please, just a dollar.

BILLIE

I’m sorry. Not today.

ALEXA

Next up is no doubt a piece which has been associated with one of the bloodiest holiday in history – The Saint Valentine’s Day Massacre. The item? One surviving brick from a garage torn down, but whose bloody history has never been forgotten. It’s said that the five murdered on this day were nearly split in half by the bullets. Do we have a starting bid?

BILLIE

Oh my bloody valentine, that’s horrible. 500!

ANDY

550!

BILLIE

650!

TATIANA

700!

BILLIE

EIGHT HUNDRED AND FIFTY DOLLARS!

Beat.
ALEX
We have 850 going once, twice, SOLD!

ADRIAN approaches ANDY.

ADRIAN
Please, just a dollar.

ANDY
No.

ADRIAN
Please.

ALEX
Sir, we are trying to hold an auction.

ADRIAN
Just a dollar . . .

ALEX
We don’t have money for you.

ADRIAN
Fine. How’s this?

ADRIAN pulls gun and shoots ALEX. All is still for a beat. Then, the bidders clap.

ANDY
That was incredible!

ADRIAN looks down at gun. Then makes way to the podium.

ADRIAN
Do we have a starting bid?

End.
My body is a temple. Coveted knowledge etched in its walls, Stunningly sacred secrets Ingrained in me by strong black mothers. The beauty so irresistibly mysterious, Men cannot help but to pillage - Grasping for the precious treasure Hidden within.

But I will not make it easy – The velvet curtains draped Obscure the waiting porcelain spikes Dripping with venom, Eager to pierce and poison The flesh they dare to press into me.

They foolishly think It will be a simple mission: In and out, Come and go. But my stone skin Traps unwanted visitors Inside their undiscovered worst nightmares.

I hold stories of women in a hall of horrors One about A little black girl Who was nearly killed by her father In the only sick display of lustful love he ever showed her.
But all the town did
Was look down on her with shameful,
avoiding eyes
And gossip behind closed doors
About the daddy who couldn’t help himself.
Clicking their tongues and shaking their heads.

My heart shatters
At the fact that we must teach our daughters
To protect themselves against any and all men
Or risk being ruined for life
In the land that is only safe
For the dangerously free White Man.

So to the men who dare to disturb me,
I tell the stories of scorned women who society
forgot.
They can try to run,
But the never-ending hallway loops.
And they can scream,
But the women scream louder.
And they will cry,
Drowning in the tears shed silently by women
for centuries.
TRILLIUM GRANDIFLORUM

HELEN PROKSH
In my mind,
I have already organized an entire argument,
Detailing how I feel.
But aloud,
I say nothing.

I play the scene a thousand times,
every single possibility.
No matter what I say,
you will never listen.
You will always be the victim.
You will always be the victor.
For once, this is not about you.

This is about me swallowing my pride, and
this is about me backing away from the truth
because
I do not think you can handle it.
I would rather silence my voice than reach out
to you.
I do not trust you with my feelings.
I do not want to do this anymore.
You could never understand why.

In my mind,
I have already orchestrated a symphony,
Detailing the truth.
But aloud,
I say nothing.
TAKE TIME TO SMELL THE ROSES

SABRINA LOUISSAINT
I’m covered
from wrist to toe,
black shapeless sweatshirt—
no cleavage to show—
and opaque leggings
dotted with lint
that sprinkle the top
of my knee-high boots.

Still, he scans me
like a register
ready to buy me.
No, actually,
he already owns me.
The look he gives me
suggests I’m only
renting my body.

He starts polite
and says, “Hi,”
I think, “How nice,”
and offer a smile.
He snatches my grin
and morphs
it into a sneer
and after

he sucked his teeth,
I knew he would
take it there.
He calls out,
not to me,
but to his friends
too cowardly
to address me
with his baseless epithets.

Nonetheless,
he and his homeboys
unabashedly continue
analyzing my body,
scanning it all
over again.
They whistle.
They mumble.
They probably think
(and believe)
they mean no trouble.

I walk past
their jeering
and suggestive staring;
ignoring their perusal

and swallowing my disapproval.
bare legs
against a white cotton duvet
is my favorite prayer

today, I pray hard
I would like to leave you behind -
but only if the soft parts
that make up memory surrender

the sound of your keys
being set on my nightstand
get in these sheets
eight o’clock at night

the sun shed
pink light that filled the room

summer was a time
measured only
in your breaths

crooks in your arms and neck - evidence we collected
through a cracked window, we heard bikes whiz by

neighbors’ voices blended
into cicada sound
the ceiling fan
was the only one inside

I cannot forget
this kind of silence
it seems so loud now
let’s count our bodies
one here
and yours there
my prayers usually
start with
i am sorry
today i smiled
at a squirrel
on a telephone wire
tomorrow on my knees
i will ask again
if i am good
sometimes
i don’t listen
for an answer
sometimes without asking
someone
tells me i am forgiven
i wonder how
it feels to be
high up balancing
on a wire
not able to count
i wonder how
it feels to not be sorry
Contributor Biographies

JONELLE BOLTON ▪ SOPHOMORE; SOCIOLOGY
Jonelle is from the island of Jamaica and enjoys monochromatic photography.

DENISSE CARRANZA ▪ ART AND DESIGN WITH A CONCENTRATION IN GRAPHIC DESIGN
In designing the cover, Denisse used a simple abstract 2-d graphic approach using varying line weights and colors to reinforce the issue’s theme of “contrast.”

MONIQUE COLE ▪ GRADUATE; COMPOSITION, RHETORIC, AND DIGITAL MEDIA
Monique is a graduate student pursuing a career in communication and higher education. She is a strong advocate of Eleanor Roosevelt’s notion that “the future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.”

VIVIAN DANG ▪ SOPHOMORE; CHEMISTRY
With the goal of one day repaying her hardworking Vietnamese immigrant parents, Vivian aspires to become a pharmacist. Despite this goal and her passion for chemistry, she acknowledges that she would much rather write poetry in her free-time than study for her Organic Chemistry tests.

ADAM DEROSS ▪ GRADUATE; COMPOSITION, RHETORIC, AND DIGITAL MEDIA
Adam has been a radio DJ for 6 years and is known for being a lover of all things weird.

ATHENA EDWARDS ▪ SENIOR; MARINE BIOLOGY
An aspiring editor, Athena loves the expression of ideas, in whatever form they come in. When not consuming some book, movie, or artwork, you can find her at the nearest swimming hole.

RE’NYQUA FARRINGTON ▪ SENIOR; 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. Although she dreams of having her name
across the front cover of a published book, nothing is more important to her than inspiring readers and writers through her stories.

MARINA HANDAL □ JUNIOR; BIOLOGY
As an aspiring physician, Marina looks forward to a career that offers the opportunity of life-long learning in a team-based setting. At the interface of medicine and her passion for photography lies a tremendous parallel: it has taught her how to analyze the bigger picture and capture the smaller details at the same time. Much of her inspiration comes from vintage film clips and historically significant landmarks as well as her family, friends, and the places where they’ve shared nice moments together.

LOREN HERROLD □ FRESHMAN; EXERCISE AND SPORTS SCIENCE
From a small town in Pennsylvania, Loren enjoys exploring beautiful Fort Lauderdale and spends her free-time being active in nature or in the gym.

SABRINA LOUISSAINT □ GRADUATE; COMPOSITION, RHETORIC, AND DIGITAL MEDIA
From Sunrise, FL, Sabrina enjoys engaging in the creative opportunities at NSU such as Digressions. After she graduates, she would like to pursue a career in marketing and communications. She has always been interested in photography and finds beauty in the things that are not always eye-catching. In her free time, she likes to adventure to new places and binge Netflix.

DYANE OLIVA □ JUNIOR; ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE
With minors in graphic design, studio art, and research, Dyane finds inspiration in the natural world. Her works often reflect elements of organic forms. In her spare time, she can usually be found in a park, birdwatching.

JOY ONI □ SENIOR; SPEECH, LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION DISORDERS
Currently a resident assistant at the Mako Residence Hall and a researcher within the Writing and Communication Center, Joy is very active on campus. She can also be found in the Ablaze Campus Ministry, Razor’s Edge Research, and the Wyrd Book Club.

RUBY PENDAS □ SOPHOMORE; PARALEGAL STUDIES
Born and raised in Cuba, Ruby moved to the United States at the age of seven. She’s a true believer in the notion that beauty is in the eye of the beholder and loves to take pictures of whatever catches her attention.
HELEN PROKSCH ■ GRADUATE; MARINE SCIENCE

MEGAN PROVENZALE ■ GRADUATE; COMPOSITION, RHETORIC, AND DIGITAL MEDIA
During her time in undergrad at Lipscomb University in Nashville, Megan rediscovered a love for poetry after taking an Intro to Creative Writing course. Many of the pieces she has written are inspired by her experiences maturing and growing in a city that she says is technically “not my home, but feels more like it than my real one.” When not working or doing school work, you can usually find her planning the details of an upcoming adventure or turning her apartment inside out in the hopes of redecorating it.

TYRIANNA RICHARDS ■ SENIOR; ENGLISH
Tyrianna aspires to teach English and travel the world. When not pursuing these goals, she enjoys writing poetry, scuba diving, and doing yoga.

FERRAN RIVAS ■ JUNIOR; EXERCISE AND SPORTS SCIENCE
Ferran aspires to become a physical therapist. Nonetheless, he has a passion for photography, as it acts as a valuable form of self-expression and helps others to see the beauty behind the lens.

LINH TRAN ■ FRESHMAN; STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION
Coming from Vietnam, this international student aspires to become a multicultural “artist.” The piece here is a portrait of his older sister who has devoted herself to help Linh complete his American dream.

DANIELLE WILLIAMS ■ JUNIOR; ART AND DESIGN
At a young age, Danielle learned that she was at her happiest when she was able to make others happy. Once she discovered a passion for art, she began to use it as a way to spread positivity. As a photographer, she aspires to show people how beautiful the world is. As an illustrator, she aims to make people smile. And, as a designer, she hopes to communicate ideas that inspire.

ANGELICA ZADAK ■ GRADUATE; COMPOSITION, RHETORIC, AND DIGITAL MEDIA
Angelica Zadak is currently pursuing a Master’s degree after obtaining a B.A. in Humanities and Theatre from NSU. She is the founder of This Is Improv, knows her way around balloons, and has two goats.