sparked by inspiration

Through poetry and stories, photographs and drawings, Spark showcases the talent and spirit of students at North Shore Community College. This sixth issue of Spark is dedicated to the persistence of vision, forward movement, and the knowledge that creativity is its own reward. Enjoy.

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www.northshore.edu/spark

on the cover:
Mirror Image | Katie Dapice

I. SPARK 2014 Volume 6
Blessed for a Sandwich  
*By Robert Williams*

I didn’t attend to be blessed,  
I only went for a sandwich.  
When the preacher lady struck up her acoustic guitar,  
I made for the exit.

It wasn’t that I wasn’t grateful,  
I was hungry too.  
I didn’t go to be blessed,  
I was only there for the sandwich.

Cheese and egg—very nice too.  
It wasn’t that I didn’t appreciate the food,  
Others did too.  
But I didn’t go to be blessed.

---

Others stayed to be blessed,  
After they had eaten their sandwich.  
They stayed for the singing,  
Because they believed.

I was just starving,  
Hadn’t eaten for days.  
I didn’t go to be blessed.  
I was only there for the sandwich. ■
Flora
Della Faria

Alphabet Soup
Linda Tran
“He fumbled for the list as his gut began to nag, the eager aching growing.”

Two pounds of lean ground beef. From the corner of his eye, orange flashed. Turning his head, he found that a tight pair of jeans and a billowy pink blouse went along with her smooth, bright hair. She was browsing the breakfast sausages. He stopped behind her long denimed legs, and as he leaned, right arm thrust forward, he stole a glimpse of the cream behind her mostly buttoned blouse.

"Excuse me… I just got to get some beef, here”

"Oh… sorry" she muttered without lifting her eyes—grabbed her meat of choice and headed toward the frozen food.

He fumbled for the list as his gut began to nag, the eager aching growing. Milk. Eggs. Jelly. He shuffled through the labyrinth. Checked his watch—five after six. He remembered the day that Sasha was born. He remembered Sean, too, but… he remembered Sasha. She was so small, so loud, so pink that day. He was younger; he was thinner; he was happy, but he had the same watch.

Bottled water. Apple juice. His ruddy index finger traced along the endless colored labels and their standard plastic counterparts. "Mixed Berry… no… Grape juice… no." Grape juice? What mother lets their child drink grape juice?

The purple pest swirled and splattered, leaving its singular mark on his freshly-pressed white button-down.

"Oh man, mom is gunna be so mad.”

"No! Give me those!”

He remembered ripping the lump of paper napkins from his younger brother’s hand. He grabbed, he scrubbed, he splashed. It was routine. Hardly anything to freak over, but what did David know, he was seven. Every first Sunday of the month, they’d sneak into the church’s metal kitchen after service and down all the grape juice. Now Dave was married, kids—he still went to church. He was still happy.

Gently placing his hand over his navel and his blue button-down, he squeezed. If this gets any worse, it’s got to be looked at. An agitated exhale. Turning slightly, he navigated his awkward cart into the shortest checkout line.

"Did you find everything alright?”

Cart contents clanked onto the splotchy black belt.

"Oh… yeah. Thanks.”

He piled on the oranges, the Pringles, the water bottles—there was never any particular order. He’d learned something about life. No matter how you arranged your groceries, it was the cashier who assembled the bags.

"Comes to seventy three dollars and twelve cents.”

He slashed his card through the familiar black box.

"Can I borrow your pen?”

"Excuse me?”

"Bread with the eggs… is that ok?”

"That’s—uh—that’s fine.” He hid his gaze.

The final plastic bag was nudged into the cart. A polite nod to the faceless cashier and he made his way to the exit, conscious of the gnawing in his gut. Abruptly he stopped, staring curiously at a brightly colored sheet suspended on a corkboard, its little paper pens scratched and drenched the bright, fragile sheets. He remembered Mrs. Benson, his Sunday school teacher, sitting there watching, her pregnant body bulging with life. She was a good woman—freckled, pretty. What to write? His pen waved wildly as he tapped it off the table. His eyes squinted slightly as they centered on the chalkboard. Who Will You Be When You Grow Up? His steady gaze shifted and fell onto the portrait beside the board—a wounded man with kind eyes. Finally, pen met paper.

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Self Portraits

clockwise (from top left):
Angelica Martinez
Margaret Lee
Leah Bolduc
Gwendolyn Squires
Heidi Totman
Teachers: The Forgotten Heros
Inspired by a speech made by retired President of North Shore Community College, Wayne Burton.

by Beatrice Varga

Feeling as though you don’t get through
Wondering if any are listening.
Each day brings a new challenge.
Sometimes rewarding
Often exhausting.
As one student leaves
a void is felt
and soon
filled with challenge anew.
Exhausted by the battle to keep us
Educated
Learned
Freed by the knowledge,
which brings hope.
Sometimes wondering why you began this journey
Thinking of new ways to spark the imagination.
You create the landscape upon which the world draws its inspiration
Its creativity
Its leadership
Its fellowship
Its hopes and dreamers.
Not receiving much in return
Usually working several jobs
Others wonder why you didn’t take the chance
To be the dreamer
To fulfill your hopes

To fellowship with a higher crowd
To be a leader
To be a creator
To do something inspirational, yourself,
But you know you already have.
Teaching is your dream.
(even though, sometimes, you wonder if you are getting through)
Teaching is your hope
(The hope you had since youth)
You know that your fellowship with your students
Creates the higher crowd
(In turn making you a creator)
You know that you are instructing leaders
and you help to create those leaders
(Making you a leader among the din of chattering masses)
Your inspiration is made known to your students
(which in turn inspires them)
You were the dreamer
The hoper
The inspired
You are creative
You are a leader
Because you are a teacher!
Stay
by Kara Claflin

I dreamed we had not parted.  
That we had spent the years nestled in each others hearts.  
"Stay" you told me way back then.  
But I was not persuaded  
And so we spent that period of time apart  

if there are degrees of separation  
then we have closed the space in ours  
though after decades even, my vision of you did not fade  

and now we tread the same floors  
we sleep beneath the same ceilings  
and pay tribute to the youths that we once were  
now we occupy the same space  
we dream the same dreams  

Now our visions nestle in the autumn of our lives  
now there are no years between us save the ones that bring us forward  

and there is no space between us now  

now our hearts  

stay  ■

Who Made You Like This?
by Adrianna Almonte

Empty spaces, as my hand writing graces over the page  
Fresh ink, I take a second to blink  
I understand the situation  
And both love and time is patient  
Familiar faces  

Your smell and memory are just traces of a past  
We won’t be like this for long but in the moment it feels so right  
In the moment it’s what comes naturally  
Choices I have to make  
Decisions I have to take  
As long as I know  
As long as I show the true me  
I’ll stay me  
I’ll stay free  
That the game plan  
My goal  
It’s key  
The very last clue determines who is who.  
It is all up to you  
I know what I must do  
My heart has to stay empty  
I know for sure  
That us, we aren’t true  
And that is why I’m not even afraid-  
Because it is impossible  
I cannot fall for you.  ■
Foliage Face | Margaret Lee

Hurricane at West Beach | Angelica Martinez
These Promises
by Jonathan Hammond

When this problem has been thoroughly explored, promises will be made. Requests and questions will be ignored, stored into archives of information. Respectable men, in believable costumes, will act on stage—on television, quote biblical scripture and claim that they are taking the initiative. Thousands will perish on lands far from ours. Terrorism will be confronted, while Congress preaches that the economy has been worse before. When this problem has been thoroughly explored, embers will collect the ocean, the rich will consume the poor, and no longer will be there any ears around to believe that promises will be made.
Album: Are You Experienced?
by Calvin Gil
Released: May 12, 1967

Are You Experienced is the debut album of The Jimi Hendrix Experience. Formed in October of 1966, the band consisted of lead singer and guitarist Jimi Hendrix, with drummer Mitch Mitchell and Bassist Noel Redding. Are You Experienced is an incredibly impressive debut album, and showed the world what Jimi Hendrix and, to a lesser extent, his band, had to offer.

The album featured mainly loud, guitar-heavy, rock-and-roll songs, featuring the rough yet fitting vocals provided by Jimi Hendrix. It was an album that was clearly meant to be played live; most of the songs were road-tested prior to its release, and most of the songs have a raw, amplifier-heavy sound that revolves around Hendrix’s catchy guitar hooks and innovative improvisation.

The heavier highlights of the album are the songs Manic Depression, Fire, Highway Chile, and Foxey Lady. Manic Depression has a heavy guitar riff throughout the song, completed by Hendrix’s musings about the phenomenon he recognizes as Manic Depression. The riff, which is complemented by a short, piercing solo that the song fades out with. The riff and solo combine with Hendrix’s coarse vocals to make a great heavy addition to the album. Fire also features a centerpiece guitar riff, but Fire’s riff is lighter and catchier than Manic Depression; I might even call it a little funky. The guitar work is complemented by brief pieces of background drumming and the background repetition of the song’s title, which the song revolves around. The opening riff is Hendrix passionately reciting the four-word hook, “He’s a Highway Chile”, a brief yet accurate description of the protagonist. The song transitions back and forth a couple more times, with the transition in the middle resulting in a piercing, catchy solo. The song fades out with the shrieking hook; a fitting end to the groovy number.

The iconic hit Foxy Lady features a flamboyant, piercing riff similar to the one heard in Highway Chile, which the song revolves around. The opening riff is complemented by Hendrix’s light whispering of the word ‘Foxy’, which gives the listener a good idea of what to expect lyric-wise. Hendrix then begins to coarsely

hook, “let me stand next to your fire.” Finally, the superb drumming, steady baseline, and infectious background vocals provided by Mitchell and Reddington are the icing on the cake for this song, which is undoubtedly one of the catchiest on the album.

Highway Chile is a song that I’d place somewhere in between Manic Depression and Fire; it’s certainly heavier than Fire in a few spots, but much of the song, including the heavier sections, retains much of the rhythm and catchy guitar work one would find in the previous song. It opens with a piercing, yet very catchy guitar riff, followed by a transition into lighter guitar work

“Now you’d probably call him a tramp, but I know it goes deeper than that.”

by Hendrix, with him reciting catchy, rhythmic lyrics about a guitar-playing drifter, lyrics that are obviously derived from personal experience, as evidenced by the lyric “Now you’d probably call him a tramp, but I know it goes deeper than that.” It then transitions back into the heavy yet catchy guitar riff heard in the beginning, with Hendrix passionately reciting the four-word hook, “He’s a Highway Chile”, a brief yet accurate description of the protagonist. The song transitions back and forth a couple more times, with the transition in the middle resulting in a piercing, catchy solo. The song fades out with the shrieking hook; a fitting end to the groovy number.

The other mellow, emotional song is The Wind Cries Mary, which is one of the best songs on the album and, arguably, of Hendrix’s career. The Wind Cries Mary opens with a soft, gloomy guitar riff that is a notable contrast to most of the other songs, even Hey Joe, which has a comparatively heavy main riff. After the short opener, the song transitions into soft guitar work, similar to the opener, accompanied by Mitchell’s soft, plodding drum line. While the smooth rhythm of the instruments continues in the background, Hendrix softly sings lines of beautiful yet dreary poetry, all of which end in the

“The spellbinding lyrics were written by Hendrix himself, who was a poet of sorts, known for his ability to write and even improvise captivating lyrics. The song breaks into a mellow, peppy solo in the middle, an extremely well done section that supplements the song extremely well; The Wind Cries Mary certainly wouldn’t be the same without it. After transitioning back into the final verse, the song changes its rhythm, with Hendrix offering various musings about the wind around which the song centers. Finally, Hendrix gives one last impassioned rendition of “The Wind Cries Mary...”, after which the song ends with a modified version of the hook, resulting in a comforting feeling of closure. The Wind Cries Mary is certainly the most emotional, smooth song on the album, and is a landmark in terms of writing and guitar-playing.

The diversity, however, is not yet over. Are You Experienced includes a few songs which are distinctly unique in terms of style. The first of these is the title track, Are You Experienced. The song opens with the rhythmic, distorted repetition of a tape playing backwards. After the short, interesting intro, Hendrix begins to play a complex, ambient guitar riff, complemented by Mitchell’s mechanically rhythmic drumming and the background repetition of the opening sound. The instruments are accompanied by

increasingly loud phrase “And the Wind Cries Mary,” with the word “Cries” adjusted to fit the tone of the line, going from “Whispers” all the way to “Screams.” The spellbinding lyrics were written by Hendrix himself, who was a poet of sorts, known for his ability to write and even improvise captivating lyrics. The song breaks into a mellow, peppy solo in the middle, an extremely well done section that supplements the song extremely well; The Wind Cries Mary certainly wouldn’t be the same without it. After transitioning back into the final verse, the song changes its rhythm, with Hendrix offering various musings about the wind around which the song centers. Finally, Hendrix gives one last impassioned rendition of “The Wind Cries Mary...”, after which the song ends with a modified version of the hook, resulting in a comforting feeling of closure. The Wind Cries Mary is certainly the most emotional, smooth song on the album, and is a landmark in terms of writing and guitar-playing.

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Hendrix’s dreamy, rhythmic chanting of psychedelic lyrics. The instruments and vocals eventually culminate in the hook, which features a harsher guitar line and the vague question, “Have you ever been experienced?”

The surreal nature of the song climaxes during the middle of the song, which features an extended solo, which is played backwards, a practice that Hendrix would use in a couple other songs as well. It’s an interesting move, and it certainly makes the song stand out. The song continues as usual after the solo, with the listener again being immersed in its dreamy, bold melody. After a few more verses, the song slowly fades out, with the distorted sound of feedback making a sudden appearance shortly after the end. Are You Experienced is a very interesting song that was clearly designed as a studio-based endeavor.

Third Stone From the Sun is the second unique, experimental track on the album, and it is certainly unlike anything else you’ll find on Are You Experienced, despite featuring studio effects similar to the title track. It opens with a light, lulling guitar riff, accompanied by his bluesy drumming. The reason this song is so important within the context of Are You Experienced is that it is the only song on the album that has a really heavy blues influence. This blues style defined Hendrix largely as he developed musically. Red House was a catalyst, of sorts, the longer, deeper blues songs that can be found on his final album Electric Ladyland. He even has live recordings of Red House in which he develops the song through improvisation, increasing its runtime from four minutes to twelve.

Are You Experienced is an extremely good album, especially when you consider it is the first one that Hendrix ever released. The shorter, faster rock songs, which are the meat of the album, are very well done, and often contain common elements that are explored differently in each song. The experimental, emotional, and bluesy songs also fit into the album very well, lending it greater diversity. While the album is not quite as diverse or cohesive as some of his later efforts, such as Electric Ladyland or Axis: Bold as Love, it is a fantastic album in its own right, and a great album for those who want to start listening to Hendrix.

Score: 9.2/10
+ Diverse, catchy tracklist
+ Hendrix’s guitar work and vocals
+ No bad songs
- Not as interesting or cohesive as Hendrix’s later efforts

High Grade | Jacqueline Martinez
Seven Days of Torment
by Jonathan Hammond

Seven days of torment
without you by my side.
Across the globe
on a crowded train I travel:
with this vice grip of virtue
clamped tight, always
keeping me hard at work.

Seven days of sorrow
cycle through the six nights I suffer.
On this iron rail road
in a silver train I travel:
passing lapis lazuli skies,
under foggy pewter stratus.
I see a dozen thousand copper trees
with jade-emerald leaves
and subway graffiti,
curiously cloaking
hidden meanings.
Their secrets are soon as far from me
as I feel away from you.

Headed for my destination
dreams become my pillow
filled with silhouettes.
Images black and bland of taste
imitate the coffee I force down
inside these desolate hours.
My stomach burns
with each and every empty cup
and thought of you I leave behind.

Torn away a week now
also tortured by your absence.
The essence of:
your cinnamon kisses,
vibrating whispers, cradling arms,
paradise eyes and magnetic charm,
all await the night I travel home.

Seven Days of Torment
by Jonathan Hammond
Your Face Reminded Me of Sneakers
by Jessie Nocella

Your face reminded me of sneakers
Laced up so no holy sock
opinions would slip out
With a zipper mouth holding in broken glass truth
Chewing on bottle caps
You bled happy, bled dimmed
street lights mirrored in old
fashioned cameras, bled 1960s ballroom lessons
So I danced like anchors in sand,
with chained hands and soap bucket feet
Oh, clumsy me
Falling again for wallwashed wishes and railroad reassurance
that stretched so far we held our breath
Telling you how many times I never made
wishes when I blew out birthday candles
Wax belongs to bees you said, don’t steal
their hardwork

Ribbon wrapped faults hid
under paper cut eye lashes
Pretending not to be themselves
So we stacked books on the shelves
Thinking they would fill us with
more knowledge, but paper always ripped too easy.
Pot and pan children’s orchestras
seeping from your mouth
I see your immaturity
But you walk like ballerina midnights
Break like softening Popsicles
You melt slowly, when I say your name
They said butterfly kisses, we
made firefly liplocks
Running on memories of how
many times did my mom hear
the back door creak

Of lead heels breaking concrete
Slipping silent thighs into the
Suzuki of a stranger I already knew
Whale washed loveland
Stopping just before heaven
The dock creation
Stars fell like
Gunshots
Like, water color drips
Like, shattering lightbulbs
The ocean was filled with glow sticks
Bobbing in sync with earth’s axis
We tipped upside down
Heads falling into lips, logic into
rosé petals
Innocent youths slightly tainted
with society’s standards clicked

Flat footed and tiptoeing
Balancing and frolicking
We never reached the same
ground until I became more
graceful and you grasped a
steady pace
Streetlight light years waited for our cue
But we kept it on yellow so the time
wouldn’t slip by
Bystanders staring like we were
revolutionaries, like beat box love defied
gravity
Like we were a mixed skin couple back
when segregation was in
We were the center of it all…
Apple core attention fell off you,
My
Tree trunk lover
I climbed you with pocketknife fingers
Carving my name all the way up

Because you always said that trees hold in
every scent they’ve ever been told.
Sir,

I was having tea just the other day with a good friend of mine and we were discussing how people wish to enter America with the outrageous notion that America is a welcoming to all sort of place, we nearly spit out our tea. America does not have a sign on it saying The More the Merrier, Come on Over. Yet people believe it to be, how silly!

Where did this ridiculous thought originate from? Maybe once upon a time, generations before us, this idea of come one come all was actually true. But look around America as it stands today, overpopulated and increasingly growing. America is the place to escape to; they are jumping walls and breaking barriers to get here. Families put their lives at risk to come live in a crowded and congested piece of land. We don’t want you, go back home!

America was once an inviting place, where dreams came true and freedoms were offered. Not any more, with the mass quantities of people looking for work, there is nothing to be found. Americans are losing their jobs to non-Americans; what is wrong with your own country? Is your country not beautiful and full of life?

I had a dream the other night that I would like to share. I was walking along a beach but not anywhere in America. The water was something that I have never seen before; it was breathtakingly blue with the most tropical fish swimming in it. The warm breeze was delightful and the landscape was full of lush greens and stunning architecturally made houses upon a mountain top. The people that passed me by smiled and offered kindness. I found myself walking the streets of a marketplace full of laughter and life. Not many others were around, only a few people. I turned the corner and found myself in a very large crowd, struggling to get through. People were pushing and yelling profanities at me as I inched my way across the crowd; I got scared and my anxiety shot through the roof! What was happening, where was I, why was I being shoved and being made to squeeze among others like a can of packed sardines? I will tell you why... I am now in America! Ha!

All you silly little folks who think America is the land of opportunity and that you will be welcomed, have yourself another alcoholic beverage! There is no room here, you are not welcome, and there are no opportunities.

Generations before us where our land was plentiful, you were more than welcomed but times have changed. Too many took us up on our offer and now we are paying the price. In the words of Ebenezer Scrooge, “Bah-humbug,” our Closed sign is on the door; try again another time.

Silence Dogood

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To the author of the New England Courant:

by Jill Gallant
Disney Alphabet | Jacqueline Martinez
Untitled | Danielle Tracey
Sanctuary | Trinidad Martinez Hudson
I saw her at the gala night party, after a holiday concert. She stood there, lost in her own thoughts, did not seem to hear the loud music and not noticing the whirling couples—no longer a young lady in gray suits, with thick graying hair. Stooped shoulders, a little wrinkled face. Deafening music, with ordinary odd jerks and breaks, suddenly gave way to a smooth melody of the old tango. Wave after wave, wave after wave—and dancing couples began to whirl in rhythm with the music. I saw how an elderly white-haired gentleman came to a lady to invite her to dance. She slowly rose, and here they were, unhurriedly spinning in dance. An old, very familiar tune picked up the dancers. And I saw a miracle. Her shoulders were straightened, head lifted, on her face appeared barely perceptible smile. Even wrinkles, seemed, to have smoothed. But the main thing—her eyes! A peculiar light in them, a brilliance that hadn't been there before! Some sparkles! This was no longer the old lady with a burden of past years and, possibly, amassed illnesses. No, no! The young woman smoothly and gently slid into the dance floor. And it seems like the whole world opened up in front of her, as in her youth, and she floated toward discoveries and hopes, awaiting the accomplishment of a miracle, and she—the prom queen? But here, the music subsided, tango ended, and everything returned to normal. And I stood, amazed, pondering how the age is not determined by the date of birth, but by the way the world is reflected in our eyes.
A Tribute to Sappho

by Danielle Tracey

Yearn for more than love’s shallow shore
Don’t allow your heart to fall asunder
Find deep plunder in yourself once more

Although don’t become a siren or a whore
But Challenge familiarity and ring the thunder
Yearn for more than love’s shallow shore

Sappho, Do not plunge yourself into the ocean’s lure
For a lover is not worth going under,
Find deep plunder in yourself once more

Eros keep your bow don’t step to the fore.
The love (lust) sure will blunder
Yearn for more than love’s shallow shore

Do not give up but fight Dionysus’s serpent oar
Desire for others will cloud the skies and will cumber
Find deep plunder in yourself once more

Be afraid for it is hard to live without rapport
Just remember that if you love another
Yearn for more than love’s shallow shore
Find deep plunder in yourself once more.
“Suburbia”:
A four-bedroom house.
Safe residential area.
Crippling mortgage.
Mowing the grass every Sunday.
Taking the dog for a walk.
Poop “off campus”.
Three holidays a year.
Cheap Caribbean Cruises.
Predicatable sex with the wife.
Contemptuous teenage children.
Late night TV.
The Bruins or the Celtics.
Will they make the playoffs?
Who cares!
A crap job and dailly commute.
Stuck in traffic jams.
Is the wife screwing her boss?
Checking emails and phone records.
No beer in the house.
No real male friends.
Too much food.
Expanding waistline.
Futile existence.
No risk.
No excitement.
Slow death.
Therapy.
What’s wrong with me?
Why don’t I like this shit?
Take a pill.

Solve the problem.
Don’t panic and carry on.
Take the dog for an off campus poop.
Mow the grass and rake the leaves.
Dream of having an affair.
Chicken out.
Too much to lose.
Play golf instead.
Pretend to play golf in the afternoons.
Rent a motel room and have an affair.
Cheat on the wife.
Lye.
Lye to yourself.
Carry on.
DIE.
faculty, staff, student volunteers and student contributors
A REVIEW OF NSCC STUDENT LITERARY & ARTISTIC EXPRESSION
SPARK 2013
volume 5
see them all: www.northshore.edu/spark

spark 2009
spark 2010
spark 2011
spark 2012
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