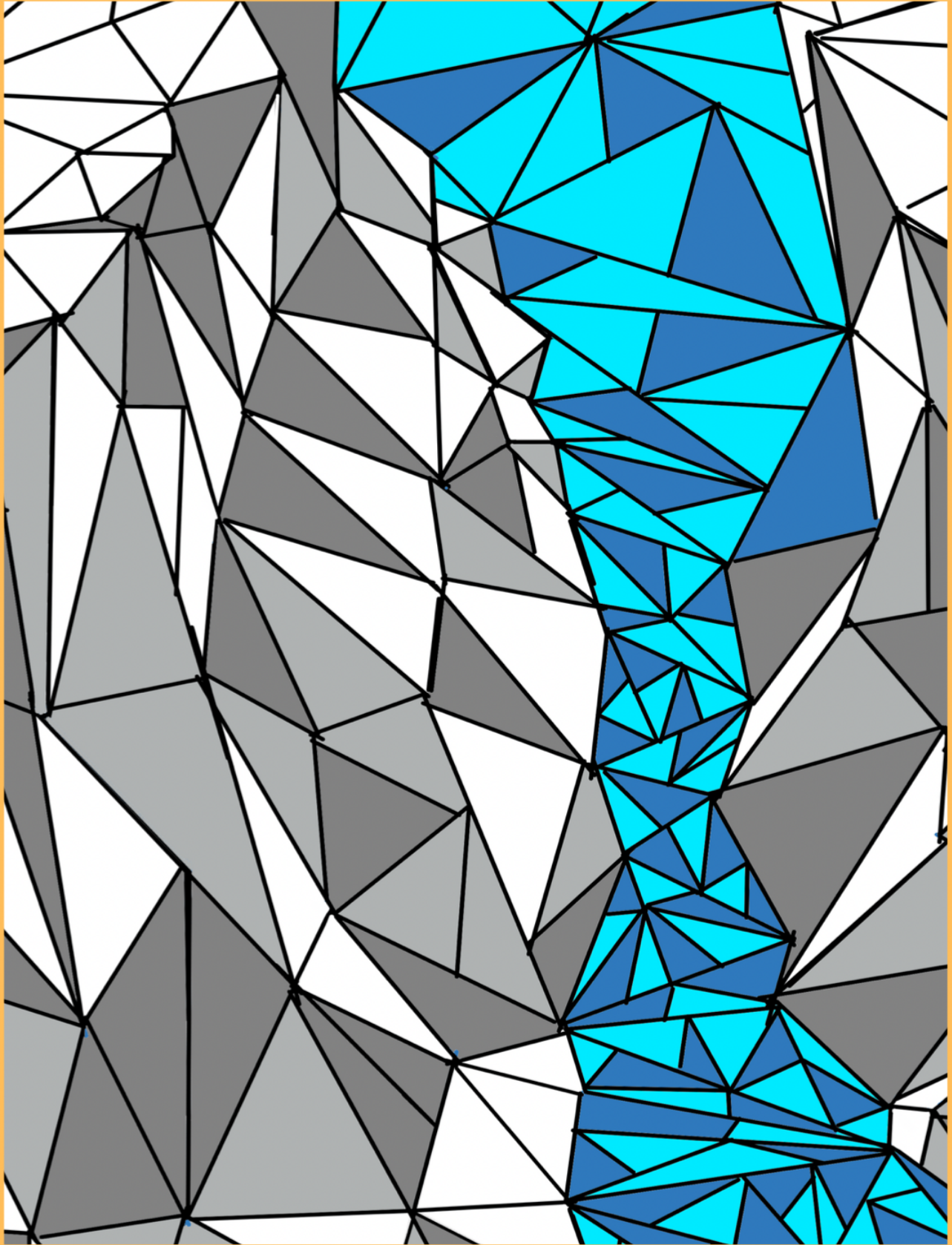


The Inkwell



Boundaries
Spring 2021

The Inkwell

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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NOTE FROM THE STAFF

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, The Inkwell has suffered a drought of new writers and staff in the 2020-2021 academic year. This edition represents the continuing effort of The Inkwell's staff to provide Fairfield University with an outlet for creative writing. The Inkwell remains open for more members for the next semester in contributing works!

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“Draft 23” | Amanda Lupinacci ‘21

It’s a cycle:

The scratching of a ballpoint pen scribbling in a notebook
The screeching of pages as they’re frayed from their metal spine
The crunching of paper by a single sweaty palm
Fulfilled by an inevitable clunk onto the hardwood floor

Twenty-two times over
Until excellence is achieved

“Raised by a Screen” | Amanda Lupinacci ‘21

Gone are the dotting childhood memories of romping around the playground:

The tag playing,
The knee scraping,
Imagination

Current are the dotting childhood memories of sedentary gameplay:

The Minecrafting,
The screen staring,
Digitization

What will happen to the generation raised by led screens?

“A Word’s Journey” | Amanda Lupinacci ‘21

It all starts as a thought. Then it vibrates out of the speaker’s mouth, supplemented with a face of wrinkly fury. Having made it through the speaker’s teeth the word flies through the air with the destruction and hurry of a bullet. Already entering the listener’s outer ear, it meets the eardrum with a boom. The message is shipped off to the brain to be processed. The words comprehended by the listener who stiffens and tears up. The word’s journey is complete yet its impact will live on.

The Blue Menagerie | Brandon Robles '22

And I walked away from the ship
Because there had been nothing else to see
In the Garden of Sea
So I walked to the entrance, the gates
of the Blue Menagerie

Blue cats, blue dogs
The menagerie was strange
Blue squirrels, blue possums
And the cages kept going

Blue weasels, bluefish
I had only now felt the water
Blue beetles, blue bees
Now my clothes had been drenched

Blue walruses, blue camels
I had only felt the weight of the water
Blue jays, blue penguins
And I realized what they needed

Blue unicorns, blue leprechauns
The most mythical creatures of all
But not as unreal
As the blue man in the menagerie

How to Break a Rut | Nathan Schmidt '21

Step 1: Freshen up the house. Buy a cute decoration that compliments your living room's colors.

Step 2: No money for decorations? Get together with your friends on Zoom and use a virtual wallpaper.

Step 3: No friends online? Kick up your exercise routine a notch. Go for a short walk today — and try to walk at least as far tomorrow.

Step 4: Low energy? Focus on your sleep schedule. Limit your phone time before bed.

Step 5: No money for a smartphone? Save on money by cutting all that avocado toast out of your diet.

Step 6: No money for avocado toast? Try being a little less smarmy. Your parents raised you better than this.

Step 7: No parents? At this point, there's a non-zero chance that you're Batman, in which case you should have plenty of money to spare.

Step 8: No sense of self-identity? This particular problem is unsolvable. Stick with being Batman.

Step 9: And you're done! Enjoy the new, rut-free version of you!

Land of Golden Slumbers | Brandon Robles '22

Awaken, stranger
Who does not walk like us
And lays in our land
of Golden Slumbers

Why you have slept here
Is strange, for you and your
kind have spent so much time
together

You speak of a
Disconnect, as if there
Was nothing to connect
to at all

I am sorry, we've been
So tired as of now
We've been sleeping like the lot
Of you wide-awakes

The Edge | Elani Gordon '24

A moment we take within our gazes
Empowerment and defiance blazes
Leaves whisper a hushed serenade sweetly
The windfall bids us kisses to welcome
Earnestly each of our being may spring
As our truth purrs back deep rung in our throats
Legs hunched and wings cocked standing firm on this
Edge between the cages at our backs and
Onward
Surging water a deep teal blanket over glittering knives
Onward
Black eyed susan and
Poppies grow in highs
Toward their lights
No longer rooted to chain and stone as
A tree is to dirt and rock bound to idle
No iron bars to hold us to despair
No titles and behavior to compare
So our wild calls
So we plunge Fear and all
Onward we haul
To Freedom and Fall

- E.

The Dreadful Experience of A Mad Pahsghetti Connoisseur | Brandon Robles '22

The noodle was dripping with
marinara sauce, moistened with
the liquidness of tomato innards.
Slowly the mad doctor slurped up
what could very well have
been the shreds of
some poor soul's humanity.

The sprinkled shreds of aged milk
Littered the dish like a recent snowfall.
However peaceful the scene felt,
all beauty tarnished within an instant
from the consumption of shredded souls.

The compacted spheres of flesh,
two to be precise, had no life yet tasted
as though there was something living still.
Nevertheless, all matter cannot be
destroyed or some such.

Tears washed down the
canvas of his facial features,
Pouring over the recently deceased
dish as the waiter asked if he was done.

The Mean Machine | Brandon Robles '22

Arnold could not take his eyes off of the flying spaceship hovering around him. He needed to take out his iFlip to make sure everyone in the neighborhood could see it, too. He cursed the companies that decided to cash in nostalgia for a useless phone that couldn't access the internet in a stable manner. It didn't matter since at least the Samsung 50-60 Vintage Maestro was reporting everything happening.

"Uh, yes? That's the blinking light, right? Damn, technology," muttered Dana Wagoon, "Um, I'm not sure if we're on now, but there have been reports of a flying spacecraft hovering over New Roanoke. It seems to be some actual futuristic technology unlike this sh-"

The transmission was interrupted to make way for a new set of Cuban Crisis vape cigars, which would contain "twice the excitement, twice the hype". Arnold just shut off the radio and walked outdoors where people got results done.

Making his way to the pier where the spacecraft halted, Arnold jumped off the Uberaxi Service car and walked down. People were taking selfies with Polaroid+ 2050 camera, wobbling as people ended up breaking them with a heavy-duty selfie stick. Someone was talking about starting "the Newer-New Silver Beatles" and some other guy wanted to make another teen spirit song. Arnold continued on in a hurry.

There were forces attempting to get to the pier, but the army's cash-cow of advertising newer and robust car models was horribly slowing them down. Arnold walked onto the edge of the pier where what was most likely the hull began disassembling into strips of metal. The chrome shards began reconstructing themselves into a walkway for a tall, pale humanoid figure. With four fingers and pure blue eyes, the bald alien walked down to Arnold in loose velvet robes.

"Hello, terranean-789," it greeted, "I am here to assess the technological state of your planet. It could be you and your race that could help the universe in massive ways." Arnold seethed through his teeth, aware of what was going to happen. Trembling, he placed his iFlip onto the alien's hands. It looked at the phone in curiosity before opening it up.

Disappointment was really the only thing Arnold could say he was looking at.

"What-," the alien began to ask, "You haven't moved past the primitive state?"

"Blame the tech companies that wanted to get all retro for cash," Arnold replied without a beat."

The alien simply placed Arnold's phone back in his hands and walked back up the stairway. Its hull reassembled and sped off without so much as a small sound.

Arnold looked at his phone and sighed. At least she didn't open up the uranium battery case, he thought to himself.

DST | Nathan Schmidt '21

Spring forward, fall back.

In other words, on March 14th, everything crashes.

I'm a zombie. I drag myself out of bed, smearing my face over my breakfast, slouching into my clothes, crawling out the door. The light is too bright, the ambience too loud. I want to grab a singing bird off its branch and scream, "Why? Why do I have to wake up an hour early and not you?" But it's pointless. I sit in my car and think of all the ways I could crash on the way to campus.

Then my alarm rings, and I wake up.

Mr. Hatchets and The Mangy Mangled Mutt | Brandon Robles '22

There had been sightings of many weird animals around Wyoming. There were cats in top hats, planes driven by dogs, and one occasion proved how crazy a duck could really be. Nevertheless, there had been a source attributed to the sudden influx of these creatures. That, of course, was the empty town of Buford, having absolutely no one living there.

I had been tasked with finding out what transpired that attracted the oddities to the state, for I had already hunted down a bear smarter than the rest of its kind. Hunting down whatever game was my specialty, and when an esteemed gentleman presents you a thousand dollars as a reward, it's reason alone that he's very serious.

The town itself seemed barren of life from what I had seen. No one was living there as the boarded windows proved no one would live there. Ever the brave hunter, I began investigating my surroundings.

The remains of a roadrunner laid next to a crashed truck, which had the skeleton of a coyote underneath. Walking past that I noticed a hole in the ground, almost like a burrow. As I approached it, a large rabbit emerged, sporting yellow gloves.

It was about to say something, but I had fired first. My instincts kicked in just as it had in Rhode Island against a violent chicken about as large as I. The burrow itself was large enough for me to crawl into. The rabbit itself seemed to stretch out into the tunnels rather than emerge entirely. Following its elongated body, I discovered a large cavern with an odd canine.

It could walk on its hind legs, albeit with short stature. It had dull brown fur and made wheezing chortles every so often. It was simply resting in the fossilized wreckage of a biplane next to a skeleton with purple and red clothing I would assume belonged to an eccentric man.

I wished I had not taken this task, for I felt this entire situation was wacky enough as it was.

Onion Skin | Nathan Schmidt '21

I have never seen a book this dense. The pages are impossibly thin, the text small enough for ants. But the words defy reality — literally. I dive in, and I get lost in another world.

Beautiful stories. Places I'll never see, people I'll never meet — I know them all like my own two hands. The toil is hard, but the rewards are manifold. What hidden wonders! The story is my playground, and the authors my playmates across space and time. Behind this onion-skin veil of words, I am safe. A pity, then, that I have to come back.

We're Talking Bird Captialism | Brandon Robles '22

“Finally,” said Senator Frederick Ergison, “the government’s finally changed.” Walking up to the Capitol building, Ergison began to stroll his way into the chamber. Many thought that it seemed impossible but after 30 years of bungled politics, the American Dream had finally rested into the palms of his hands-

“Hole!” cacked a small bird-headed man in an Army uniform, “Wat you got?”

Ergison took a while to register what was happening before him because there was no possible way that a birdman was interrogated him. He stood there and smiled like it was all a dream.

“Ack!” It barked, “You no have cred-essentials, You no pass!”

Ergison took out his wallet and showed his license. However, the birdman took his wallet and pulled out the dollar bills.

“Wat is dis?” the birdman interrogated Ergison with a stern gaze.

“Money. Can I-”

The birdman screeched as it tore up the dollar bills in front of him. All the former presidents were reduced to flecks of green paper on the ground.

“You no have money! You no got new pretty money!”

It pulled out a \$5 crisp dollar bill, except it had a picture of a robin on it.

“Give you dis, chair-tee case. Now go!”

Ergison walked into the chamber to see the rest of the senators listening to the new Cack Committee of Choices.

“Sit! Upsy-downsy!”

Through The Fog of Time | Nathan Schmidt '21

Outside my window, life goes on. Sun shines. Birds sing. Amazon vans squawk horribly while reversing. People walk too close together. Seasons change, spring to summer to fall to winter and back around again.

I put my hand on the glass and feel the heat. I imagine what's out there. For a moment, my heart wells up. Through the fog of time, yesteryear seems so simple.

The moment passes. I grab some spray to wipe the handprint off my window. Then I remember that I wasn't going out anyway, and I fire up the computer for some top-quality video games.

Morgenstar | Eden Marchese '21

155,000 storage units are auctioned off each year according to the Speaker. Not everything that the Speaker says was expected to be believed, but the Listener decided to take the Speaker up on his statement. The metal catches as the unit is opened, the cold biting into any piece of skin the Listener wasn't able to protect. The Listener wonders if they should've let this unit go to auction.

The overhead lights buzz yellow-brown as the Listener closes the metal door to keep the cold out and hooks the key back onto their belt buckle. The unit is not as large as they expected, but not as small as they remembered. Along the three walls stood shelves stacked to the ceiling with picture books and boxes. The Listener's eyes were on the table in the middle of the room, a single box holding its arms out to them. In yellow crayon, the only thing the Listener and their boyfriend had to write with back then, "Morgenstar" winks at them. They press play on their phone and hope the music can be strong enough to keep them tethered to the ground. The guitar whispers around the shelves and boxes, weaving through the memories that hang in the room like an ocean.

Light sticks to the Listener's feet as they move towards the box, their fingers kissing the cover. They toss the cover towards one of the many shelves and wince with the sound it makes. The Listener pulls out the pink blanket that rests on top of the other items, forcing themselves not to turn away and run. In the yellow-brown light, they hear the Lamb giggle as she runs around the house. She yells to be thrown into the sky higher! Higher! and cries when she can't reach the moon. The Listener wraps the blanket like a scarf and kisses it gently to steady their breathing. They allow themselves, for a moment, to imagine what it'd be like to feel one of Lamb's hugs again. They imagine her laughter and crazy ideas about the world. About how Lamb believed that the meaning of life could be found in pancakes.

The moment passes. The music stops.

The Listener presses play again, waiting for the soft hue of the guitar to play against the yellow-browns of the space. They pull a picture frame out. The Listener's boyfriend smiles up at them and dares them to cry. Dares them to be anything but the stone the Listener pretend to be their whole time together. The Listener doesn't give him the pleasure. If they had more time, the Listener knows they would've opened up. Lamb was the one who made the stone crack the most. The Listener's boyfriend believed the meaning of love was found in maple syrup. Never any old maple syrup, though! the Listener can hear them say, It is only in the special kind made for you! and Lamb would giggle in response. The Listener would sit and watch their boyfriend and Lamb play this scene out every morning before school, almost like a script. No matter how often they would say the same things, neither of them got bored of the game. If anything, it only proved both of their points.

Now, the Listener pulls the picture out of the frame and folds it with the care of a mortician and places it in their back, left pocket. The Listener eventually sits and lets the

music grow in the room until there's only the music and their memories. They sit and watch years pass by against the cold metal of the door. They laugh along with Lamb and their boyfriend's jokes; they cry when either of them is upset. They listen long after the silence has taken back its throne.

Memories of January | Nathan Schmidt '21

That first spring semester morning, the grass was pale with frost, my breath misting before me. I shouldered my backpack and walked through snowy streets, trudging uphill under the weight of leather and electronics. I met the campus gates like the doorway of my own home, eager to pick up just where the fall had left off. Anticipation loomed large, electrifying my senses, as my first class awaited.

I remembered that morning three years later as, fruitlessly, I waited in my bedroom for Zoom to stop lagging out the day's first lecture. I'd never known how much I would miss.

So Close to the Door | Nathan Schmidt '21

It has been years since the time I was trapped here. I may be a wild animal — a grizzly bear, specifically — but my memory is keen, and I recall the incident like it happened yesterday. I recall those fateful steps on this very sidewalk, heading into the local Trader Joe's in the busy part of town. It was a painful time having my paw caught in the trap's jaws, but also quite the silly one.

Now I am back. Granted, I had to escape bear jail after I got in trouble for mauling someone who laughed at me in my predicament. But the Trader Joe's is mine now to behold. And their organic honey and dried cranberries will be mine to eat. Bags and bags of non-perishable trail mix, enough to last half a dozen winters. I've collected a large mouthful of bright green leaves, which I understand the humans use as a sort of flat foldable trade good for the food items. It should be enough to pay for pretty much everything in the store.

But when I arrive, something is wrong. There is a line of people waiting outside the door, all six feet apart on crossed pieces of tape. The line stretches past storefront after storefront, practically as far as I can see.

It's confusing. Perhaps not a concern for a bear like myself. But as I approach, a man holds up his hand and says, "Wait!"

I growl in annoyance and prepare to throw him aside.

"You need to wait in line like everyone else, ma'am. I'm sorry for the inconvenience. We're in a pandemic."

I'm not sure what this means. 'Pandemic' sounds like something that one might spread on toast. As in, 'Would you like some fresh-roasted pandemic with that?' But I am taken by the man's persuasive rhetoric, and I lumber to the end of the line, a process that takes me several minutes.

There are so many people in line. They eye me warily, but they do not move, seemingly rooted to their spots. Most have empty bags in their hands. All of them have strange cloth masks over their faces. It is curious. On the way, I find an empty paper bag and place it over my snout in order to fit in with the fashion trend.

Eventually I find an unoccupied cross of tape, and I sit down to wait. It is a pleasant day outside. The breeze is calming. But my mind is in the future, on the organic honey and

the dried cranberries. I want them. Soon, I will have my turn, and I will frolic in the aisles until I have explored the multitudinous joys of the Trader Joe's retail outlet.

But the line moves so slowly. It feels like a lifetime before everyone moves up by one cross, leaving empty the position behind each shopper as they move in sequence. I would take a nap, except then someone might grab a position ahead of me, and where is the rightfulness in that?

Hours pass. The sun lowers slowly in the sky. Afternoon turns to evening, which turns to twilight. Spot by spot, the line progresses, and I can see shoppers departing from the store with bags full of merchandise. I wonder to myself if they are making off with the very organic honey I was after. Still, the process is inexorable. I will eventually make it there.

And soon, the door is within sight. Soon after, there are only two people ahead of me. Soon after that, only one person. Excitement fills me to the brim, electrifying my nerves. I wish to eat the honey. I will make it happen.

Then just as the person immediately ahead of me moves inside, something else happens. A different man from before is turning a sign on the inside of the glass door. I cannot read what it says, because I am a bear, and I don't know what reading is.

"Sorry," the man says. "We're closed. You'll have to come back tomorrow."

I roar in dismay, splitting open the paper bag from around my face. I've gotten so close to the door — but I'm so, so far. It's not fair. I deserve something for all the time I spent waiting.

Desperation races through my veins. I gaze through the doors at the aisles full of high-end store-brand foodstuffs, and I make a decision. Lowering my head, I charge forward and crash straight into the glass door, bowling the man over and shattering the single glass pane, letting the shards fall away from my fur without effort. The vestibule is filled with shopping baskets — I will not need one.

I ignore the man's feeble protests and step deeper inside. But just as the inner automatic doors slide open for me, there is a terrible snap, and a jolt of pain.

Slowly, I look downward. My paw has been caught in another bear trap. They moved it indoors this time.

Next time, organic honey. Next time.

The Inkwell

SPRING 2021 - "BOUNDARIES"

We accept submissions of: Poetry, Fiction, Creative Nonfiction, Essay, Comics, Graphic Literature, Original Lyrics, and more!

Check out our weekly section in Fairfield's campus newspaper, The Mirror! For more information, send us an email at inkwellliterary@gmail.com! Thanks to all of our readers and writers!

-- THE INKWELL STAFF

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