

From My Hands, Beloved

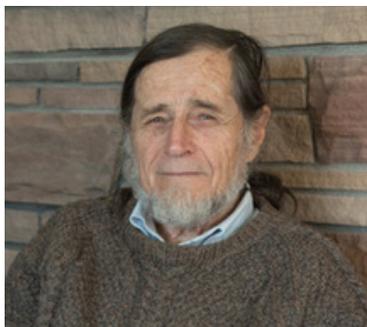
Carl Cherry Center for the Arts
Poetry Anthology

The Elliot Ruchowitz-Roberts
Monterey County High School
Poetry Awards 2023

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	iv
Introduction.....	vi
Maram Haddad.....	3
Sarah Nannini.....	4
Shantal Mendoza Cervantes.....	5
Briar Spungin.....	6
Dia Gupta-Lemos.....	8
Hailie Atkinson.....	9
Luisa Franco-Garcia.....	10
Rafael Martinez.....	11
Sophia Kemmerly.....	12
Ruby Myrold.....	13
Charlee Riddle.....	15
Jesus Ortiz.....	16
Elizabeth Chan.....	18
Kyra Sullivan.....	19
Trinity Becerra.....	20
Magnolia Woodruff Lyons.....	22
Nataly Zamora.....	23
Maura Guzzi.....	24
Nicolas Fender.....	25
Iris Rodriguez.....	26
Samson Jenner.....	27
Ruby Pacheco-Perez.....	28
Jesse Mendez.....	29
Aarna Desai.....	30
Isabella Bony.....	31
Lilyana Swann.....	33
Alyssa Moore.....	34
Diego Valladares.....	36
Allie Batres.....	37
Ava Ghio.....	38
Isiah Ragnel.....	39
Amanda Findley.....	40
Maddox Zarazua.....	41
Madison Waroff.....	42
Yunah Baek.....	44
Sebastian Danielson.....	46
Alanna McNamara.....	47

Acknowledgements



The Carl Cherry Center for the Arts gratefully acknowledges Elliot Ruchowitz-Roberts, whose twenty-five year tenure with the Robert Campbell Monterey County High School Poetry Awards provided inspiration and writing instruction to thousands of local high school poets.



The Cherry Center would also like to acknowledge our new Poet-in-Schools and contest judge, Patrice Vecchione, for promoting the art and craft of poetry to students across Monterey County.

This year's poetry awards anthology was made possible
through support and funding from:

Supervisor Mary Adams, Supervisor Luis Alejo

Supervisor Chris Lopez, Supervisor Wendy Root Askew

Supervisor Glenn Church

Carmel Councilmember Jeff Baron

Arts Council for Monterey County

Carmel Woman's Club

Carmel-by-the-Sea Rotary

Community Foundation for Monterey County

Gibson Family Foundation

Hazen Family Foundation

Monterey County Board of Supervisors

Monterey Peninsula Foundation

Monterey Peninsula Volunteer Services

Monterey Public Library Friends & Foundation

Pebble Beach Company Foundation

Nancy Buck Ransom Foundation

Volunteer Services for Monterey County

Yellow Brick Road Benefit Store



Introduction

The poems that form this collection, *From My Hands, Beloved*, come, of course, not only from the hands, paper and pencils of these young poets but from their hearts and minds, and yet these poems are offerings no different than anything we might offer another from our hands. Like something to eat or drink or like a pinecone found in the forest or a shell from the beach, this writing is a form of sustenance for both the writers and us, the readers. Here you'll find the forest and the beach, longing and loss, anger, and forgiveness. These poems will feed your heart and soul and, if you let them, they'll even help guide your future.

It has been a privilege to be the teaching poet this year for the Carl Cherry Center for the Arts Poetry Program. My gratitude to Robert Reese, Cathy Kobre, Elliot Ruchowitz-Roberts, the Carl Cherry Board of Directors, and the many high school teachers and students who welcomed me into their classrooms. Each student received a copy of my recent book *My Shouting, Shattered, Whispering Voice: A Guide to Writing Poetry & Speaking Your Truth*, with thanks to my publisher Seven Stories Press. Thank you also to the many supporters and funders of this project.

Poetically Yours,

Patrice Vecchione
patricevecchione.com

An Apology to My Grandmother

Tata,
my grandmother,
what language do you speak?
and how do I learn it?
How can I hear it
and understand every word you say?

How can I tell Tata my stories,
with my mother as my translator?
If I do, are they even my stories anymore
if they're interpreted in a way I can't understand?

“Ena behebik Tata” and “mishtatick ecteer.”
(I love you, Grandma) and (I miss you so much)
are phrases I know, although,
do they really mean anything if
I can't say anything else at all?

My dear grandmother,
who makes gadge ou farouge (chicken and potatoes)
and my favorite warak eneb (grape leaves),
how can she understand my gratitude
if all I can say is “shookran” (thank you) and leave?

“Min eedi, habibti” (from my hands, beloved)
she tells me with twinkles in her eyes.
It's as if she sees herself through me.
She has the biggest smile I've ever seen.
It's scary that I can't see myself back.
I'm scared I won't be able to smile back,
or show the same twinkle in my eyes,
or appreciate the way she speaks,
or the food she cooks.

I can't disappoint the culture I represent,
with small phrases and ties.

“Asphe, ya Tata.” (I'm sorry, Grandma.)

Maram Haddad
Pacific Grove High School
First Place

This is Not a Slam Poem

it's a fall
asleep, shut the door
quiet so you don't wake up poem

it's not a hefty boots
up the steps, stumble
to the stage poem
it's a pen
under a soft hand
dance
 across
 the
 page
 poem

not a nervous laugh,
crisp voice, feedback
from the mic poem
but a scribble,
whisper, sing-song,
glad you're in my life poem

not a rustle in
the crowd or applause
from out of town poem
it's a thumbs up, or
a smile. it's a
simple settle down poem

it's not a heavy heart,
hidden meaning, hope
that you catch on poem
it's a thanks
 for staying
 with me after
 everybody's gone home

Sarah Nannini
Monterey High School
Second Place

Healing

Meeting you was so unexpected
At an unexpected time
At an unexpected place
Under unexpected circumstances

I wish I knew back then
Everything that I know now

Maybe I would have avoided
The time
The place
The circumstances

Shantal Mendoza Cervantes
Rancho San Juan High School
Third Place

Absent from You

We scattered her ashes in a valley
leading to the sea where lilies grew wildly.
I could still hear her feet slapping the mud as she ran
to the very edge of the shore before stopping
just enough so that the water wouldn't touch her toes.
When we threw her back to the sea,
she rose in the sky with the wind, swirling through the air
dancing magnificently before us.

The wooden table in the dining room is empty,
naked without your chair,
but I swore I saw you the other day,
peaking at me kindly through the jars
of pickled goods and jam
you used to love to dig your child hands into,
deep purples and reds sticking
across your face from your mouth,
the same color that now consumes
your mothers at dinner

While we ate we talked of you
and the last light you'd made in this house,
how your bed sheets haven't been changed
since late August of that year,
how the drawer of baby-doll dresses
you hated to wear on Easter still smelled like you,
like powder and chamomile and lilies.

After we drew together our eyes, we stopped talking,
each of our glasses now empty and stomachs now warm,
but throats locked.

We put our hands together and wept,
crying for you, for one another,
for lost childhood and wiped away time,
time that we agreed belonged to us by right,
time in your hospital room, lying beside you as you slept,
time saying goodbye that I was never handed, never offered,
and this now consuming grief.

This urge to again feel what I had not understood
until it was sitting in front of me grasping my thumb
until it was no longer beside me at the dinner table,
was finally the release I realized you wanted for us,
not to forget your scent or the pounding of your run
but the togetherness and love you understood
we could only give to one another,
absent from you.

Brian Spungin
Carmel High School
Fourth Place

Lady Liberty, Fall

“Hogar.”

Breathe freely.

Run and whoop, one hand on the wind,
the other on century-old roots.

Feel the rich soil of memory.

I’m sick,

Breathing someone else’s air.

Hand bloodied,

Clinging to barbed wire.

“Home.”

Lunar Voice

My voice is the sound of the moon.
It looms above, with millions of stars beside it.
Among obnoxious cries of sirens,
It sits in silence.

My voice is the sound of a cold winter day,
The sound of a hollow grave.
It counters the piercing chirps of birds.
It says the most through no words.

Your voice, your voice is that of the sun.
The resumed light after the darkness is gone.
It calms the sirens and the trees,
And sings every tune the birds sing.

Your voice replaces mine when it speaks.
My voice hides in the comfort of its secrecy.

But for that brief moment,
When the sky is half yours and half mine,
I wish my voice was loud enough
To also bask in the shine.

Hailie Atkinson
Pacific Grove High School
Honorable Mention

Is Reality Better or Digital You?

I don't know who I am.
I am trying to find myself
in the bathroom mirror,
but the shower's running
and the glass is foggy.
I've spent so much time
trying to become who I should be
that I lost myself on the way.

Luisa Franco-Garcia
North Salinas High School
Honorable Mention

One With

Become cog,
Become rotor,
Become spring,
Become one with the machine.
One with robotic,
Or not at all,
Not half.
Become efficient,
Become tactile,
Become useful,
Become one with all.
One with society,
Or not at all,
Not half.
Become unfeeling,
Become bland,
Become cruel,
Become one with the collective.
One with all,
Or not at all,
Not half.

Rafael Martinez
San Juan High School
Honorable Mention

The Impact of Numbers

Up before 5:10
and to bed by 1:00.
The cycle of each week has become one in the same,
and I have learned to just follow my feet forward.
I chip away at my assignments slowly
like this poem which I have written over 3 times.

Assignments take the majority of my time.
What I do not finish in the 8 hours of school
I can surely finish in the 7 hours I have at home,
except those 7 hours are far too short
when you need them to be longer.

I used to watch at least 2 episodes of television
with my family each night.
Now I watch the words of my textbook
tell me about the spread of Christendom in the 15th century.
If I listen close I can hear the TV in the room over,
but only if the pounding headache is quiet enough.
Eating dinner at your desk every night
is better than getting a 3.0, right?

8 hours at school plus working 7 at home.
 $8 + 7$ is easy, it's simply 15.
So why is it not so simple
to calculate that students simply need a break?

Sophia Kammerly
Carmel High School
Honorable Mention

The Untold

Grandma used to tell me that God would look out for me.

Mom told me the universe had a plan.

But if the Universe had a plan why am I a 16-year-old
with a decades-old soul?

If God was truly looking out, why did he let me fall?

He let me fall on this earth with broken wings and too-big of a heart.

If I was truly looked out for, why couldn't the Universe, God, Buddha tell
me?

Tell me, that at 7 I would have already mastered the art of a smile,
the trick being, to not only smile with my mouth but my eyes.

Tell me that after Mama's drink burned down my throat,

I would be taught to sniff and ask because Mama's "water"

was not my water,

that aunt Amy's number was 241-765-3198.

Just in case.

Why wasn't I warned that weekends would be spent alone

staring at the door, counting the hours to see

when Mama and Dad got home, thinking that dad went vroom

right off Laureles Grade,

wasn't warned that I would shut off completely,

that feelings are either forced or unleashed?

Why couldn't I be informed

that my title as sister would turn to mother,

be informed that I would still have the burns

from making Saturday morning pancakes

because mom was too hungover to feed herself,

be informed that parents don't wake up at 12,

take a nap at 3 and go to bed at 4 a.m.?

Why wasn't I told that it would take Mom overdosing
to realize that she wasn't healthy, told
that Dad losing his family would finally make him clean?
Why wasn't I told that stepping back would be so much harder,
that sometimes, I think the present is a dream?
Why wasn't I told that my brother coming to tell me he was hungry
would keep that knife from hitting my throat?

Ruby Myrold
Carmel High School
Honorable Mention

Step Stool of Youth

Out slides the step stool
Onto the step stool she climbs
Facing the mirror she smiles at her reflection
But now a different person stands there
Who is this little girl looking back at me
Well yeah, it's been 10 years
But this little girl has disappeared
Now she clears the sink
Step stool placed in the back of the closet
To sit there and think
And sure she no longer needs it, but why
Now she can stand there and pry
With no help, not even a blink of an eye
With endless reasons to cry
To deny the reason why all she can do is stand there and stare

Stare for a little longer
five minutes turn 30
30 turns to an hour
Now I have to shower
But then a glimpse of a familiar face appears
Though hers isn't in tears
Hers is young and naive
Face full of joy
For now she has a reason to believe
This person staring back is not the same
It's almost like I know her name
For now she's looking at me I feel all alright
How can you pry at someone that's so full of light
So I'll dig up the step stool from the back of the closet
Wipe off the dust
Sure I don't need it anymore

Charlee Riddle
Carmel High School
Honorable Mention

Time Consumption, Life Consumption

I live in a world where time is spent without hesitation.
I live in a world that has people with no self-control.
I live in a world where people neglect their responsibilities.

Children, adults, you, me, whoever else it may be
all don't seem to see.
Yet we blindly walk into a deep black sea
where reality is abstracted
surrounded by social media's overfeed.

I thought I was done but yet addiction came back again.
Even if I don't want, it structs back again
Free thought and self-will are troubled again.

All my ideas and thoughts have been infected once again.
My phone is like a leech that is everywhere I go.
The life of these rectangular pieces of screen
seem to be more vital than our own.

But what hope relies on us
when most are dependent on others' opinions
surrounded by clouds filled with endless content?
Everywhere I turn there is more and more
to keep you and me entertained.

I am locked into a bubble, a capsule, a cell, a cage.
I tried and I struggled and I attempted
to escape the endless content,
yet I feel like a fly hopelessly struggling
to try to escape a spider's web.

The things we see,
the things we experience,
the things we have sown are not what they appear.

Our condition is made up by our media's
false lies and false statements.
Hypnopaedia is more active than ever,
awake during the night and day
causing the limits to my brain.

It was the calmest of times;
it was the guiltiest of times.

Jesus Ortiz
San Juan High School
Honorable Mention

Television

I saw the trap and walked right in.
speakers screaming,
lights are beaming,
what's the meaning?
Senseless, mindless, thoughtless din
no more thinking
can't stop drinking
am I blinking?
My life's become Bradburian
spend my waking
hours faking
bliss unbreaking
My escape is not a win
My escape cages me in
I can't escape the cage I'm in.

Elizabeth Chan
Carmel High School
Honorable Mention

A New Day

Open to a new day
Open those grudging arms
Welcome what awaits you
Don't look away

Keep your eyes open
Force those wretched lids
Look at it
Don't look away

Open your mouth now
Widen that stupid thing
Let it in
Don't look away

Your much too small
Open up
Soon it will feel familiar
Comfortable
Let it in
Don't look away

Kyra Sullivan
Carmel High School
Honorable Mention

Perfect Imperfections

When I was a little girl I saw many who looked like me,
Skinny, long haired, and goofy smiled.
But I was not prepared for what came next as a child.
In losing my vision, I also lost my confidence,
For I was the result of side effects.

People looked at me with disgust and said, I ate too much.
I was overweight. I wore huge, pink glasses. I had silver teeth.
People would call me names like pig and fatty and Dora.
I don't know if it was because I looked like a pig or felt like one.
I let those names get to me and cried every night
As I clutched my round belly.

I was tired of being told that beauty is skin deep
So I ran and ran and ran as if my legs could walk on air.
It made all the difference in my appearance,
But it wasn't fair,
For I was only seen when I was skinny and had long hair.
I was treated differently by society.

But I felt the same, the little girl curled in the corner
Clutching her belly.
But even when skinny I was treated like a nuisance
By my family.
They berated me and teased me.

So I ate and ate and ate
Until my hunger was satisfied.
I gained weight and yet again cried
For I believed that I would never be good enough.

My small clothes could no longer fit.
My mom had wasted a lot of money on them.
And it hurt when she told me to suck it in
I cried that night,
And slowly traced the stretch marks on my stomach.

I blamed my family.
I blamed my friends.
I blamed society.
But really I should have blamed myself.
For I let their imperfect, inadequate comments get to me.
Society makes you feel like you have to look a certain way.
But even with the perfect look
You will always feel betrayed.
But I have gone through too much
To not think that I am perfect.

Magazines do not define me anymore.
People's words do not define me anymore.
I have learned that beauty is not how you look
But what you make of it.
We should not have to hide our perfect imperfections.
Our pimples are beautiful. Our stretch marks are beautiful.
Our birthmarks are beautiful.
Where others see imperfection I see beauty.

Trinity Becerra
San Juan High School
Honorable Mention

Shouting at The Rain, Crying a Bit on the Inside

My brain is going insane
People think I lie
But the need to stay thin
To get faster times

Is an urge I am unable to resist
Because of my irrational, messed up mind
Who truly thinks that if I weigh ninety-five
I would suddenly be happy with my life

I know it doesn't make sense
Believe me, I've tried
To make sense of my
Broken, messed up mind

I did not truly expect
To lose myself completely
Or for no one to believe
That I have been struggling
Just because I refuse to show it on the outside

Wearing oversized sweaters
To try to hide
My too big
Arms, waist, and thighs

My mind tries to convince me
That a thousand calories a day are all I need
Add two hours of swim
And I will be set towards the goal of being
The tiny, perfect version of me

I really do wish that people would see me
Not the sweet young girl who gives off freshman vibes
But the real me
Who is shouting at the rain
Crying a bit on the inside

Magnolia Woodruff-Lyons
Carmel High School
Honorable Mention

Someday I'll Love Nataly

Don't surrender—you haven't seen your best day
Wake up and learn to take criticism in the best way
Always stay true to yourself no matter what one says
Never be afraid to tell someone the answer is not yes

They teach you how to solve for x
But yet you still don't know how to solve for success
Only if you could have a good job without the added stress
Along with a life without a sudden death

You constantly strive for approval
And the feelings you have towards yourself are nothing but cruel
Forever end defecting your identity
And maybe someday you'll learn to love Nataly

Nataly Zamora
Rancho San Juan High School
Honorable Mention

December 5th, 2021

On top of the concrete roof
The wind trickled through my hair
My jacket slipped from my shoulder
Your fingertips met mine at the corduroy collar

I admired your smile
You whispered that you had liked me for awhile
I told you I loved the view

It's almost as pretty as you

Your fingertips slicked my hair behind my ear
I clung to every word that escaped your flushed lips
Your chorus of compliments was enchanting
And that sparkle
The one that danced at the top of your pupil
It was even more scintillating
Than those stars that coated the sky we lie under

Maura Guzzi
Carmel High School
Honorable Mention

Lost in the Void

A man adrift in the vast expanse,
No light to guide him, no sound to hear,
Alone in the blackness, with no chance,
Of finding his way back, no hope to steer.

The stars all around him, shining bright,
Yet they offer no comfort, no aid,
He gazes upon them with no respite,
His mind lost in thoughts, his heart afraid.

The void before him, so empty and cold,
No warmth to be found, no familiar face,
He wonders how long he can uphold,
His spirit in this desolate space.

Memories of home, of love, of joy,
Haunt him relentlessly, like ghosts,
He longs for the embrace of a familiar toy,
The comfort of someone he loves the most.

But here he is, lost in the great unknown,
In a world so vast, so indifferent,
With nothing to call his own,
Except the fear that is so persistent.

He tries to hold on, to remain sane,
To find a way out of this abyss,
But the darkness is driving him insane,
And he wonders if he will ever find bliss.

And so he floats, in this endless void,
A man lost in space, with no end in sight,
No hope to hold on to, no joy to be enjoyed,
Just a lonely existence, in perpetual night.

Nicolas Fender
Gonzales High School
Honorable Mention

Falling Again

I really told myself that I wasn't gonna fall.
I wasn't gonna fall for another girl,
A girl that didn't treat me right,
A girl that treated me like I'm worthless,
Or just a girl that saw me as an object.
I told myself that I wasn't gonna fall for any girl in general,
Even if it meant that this girl treated me gentle,
Even if this girl made me feel special.
I told myself I wasn't gonna fall,
Because if I would,
It'll be another heartbreak,
But now I'm over here falling,
Falling for someone that makes me smile ear to ear.
Falling for someone that has me kicking my legs back and forth
As if my inner child is out again.
Falling for someone that gave my spark back.
I'm falling.
Falling for someone that I'm not afraid of being myself
When I'm around her.
Falling for someone that makes me smile,
Even by the simplest thought of them.
Falling for someone I'm not afraid to let my walls down with.
I'm finally falling for someone that I can trust now,
I really told myself I will never fall again,
But here I am falling for her.

Iris Rodriguez
Gonzales High School
Honorable Mention

Strawman

I killed every trace of you the day that you left me,
A field of flowering plants and a can of gasoline.

Standing on the tilled ground,
I set them all alight.
I watched our flowers wither down
While the crops burned and died.

At the end of the field, the scarecrow we made
Stuffed with straw was excellent pyre,
Its smile was eaten alive by the blaze
And it turned skeletal in the fire.

The ash stained my skin for days.
The smell hung around me for weeks.
You haunted me like the stench of soot in my clothes,
And the terrors in my dreams.

The burnt scarecrow is still and eyesore
On the horizon of my mind.
Our meadow has been scorched,
And it's your fault, not mine.

Samson Jenner
Pacific Grove High School
Honorable Mention

Blackout Poem

Pressed the trigger,
the children, frightened.
heavy household.
People nearly shot,
too poor to live
had suffered.
But love was strong
and bare.

Ruby Pacheco-Perez
North Salinas High School
Honorable Mention

Pressed

He pressed
the trigger
of his
gun.
The women,
very much
shaken
and frightened.
He offered
to protect
them.

Jesse Mendez
North Salinas High School
Honorable Mention

The Lovers of Valdaro

A mere pile of bones lay in the barren fields of Italy
Two cadavers at peace within the soot-covered land
These relics who once had life and love
pervade their bodies
Now locked in eternal embrace

Limbs intertwine as representation of their unspoken vows
Fear to release from the others' skeleton clutch
with intimacy unbeknownst to most whom trample above
No thought in shallow minds
as to what true beauty has triumphed below

Though dearth may exist of tangible affection in modern times
these lovers never wavered throughout the centuries
By achieving impossible and defying
the harsh reality we titled time
For not even death could do them part

As one rests with their mouth parted open
perhaps to utter "I love you" as a final goodbye
the other possibly tilted their head to reach fire-ignited eyes
a look, a promise their love would amount
to more than their finite lives ever did

Aarna Desai
Carmel High School
Honorable Mention

Flying Back from France

I couldn't help but cry when I saw my home
for the first time in what had been three weeks
of blissful vacation.

And as angry as I was at the United States,
for its forfeiture of women's rights,
for its inadequate gun laws that cost thousands of people their lives,
for its inability to provide equal rights for all, despite its promise.
Despite all of these things,
I couldn't help but choke up and tear up at the sight of my home.

The Golden State of California,
truly golden with the final illuminating rays
Of another day of life in the US of A.

I saw the Sierra Nevada mountains,
I looked over the California Coastal Range,
but when I saw the iconic San Francisco Bay,
I knew that I was home without having to step a single foot on its soil.

I saw the Bay Bridge crossing the gray water with
ripples of the reminiscent wind.

I saw the low-hanging clouds hugging the coast so familiar
to my California eyes.

I saw the red hues of the Golden Gate Bridge
which was more reminiscent of rusted, withered iron
then the glittering gold which had once graced our rolling hill.

And then I saw the Pacific.
The truest marker of home
with deep blue waters frigid as ice,
with frosted coastlines glazed with foam.
They spoke of what had been missing from me, my home.

I saw the forests of the Santa Cruz Mountains
with the woodsy green hues of healthy trees,
meeting not a wisp of fire while I wasn't with them.

I knew that beyond that forest was home.
Beyond those trees was Carmel.

And that thought choked me up even more.
The thought of my grandmother, my mother, my father, my friends.
The second home I had found in France could not beat the original
where nearly everything I'd ever known remained.

And now my home was welcoming me back
with twinkling lights and overcast skies.
I cannot ask for anything more.

Isabella Bony
Carmel High School
Honorable Mention

Siren Singing

My father tells me my singing's a train

That wrecked suddenly on its track.

My sister says it hurts her ears

My mother turns her back.

But I just laugh and step into

A sunny summer's day.

Beneath a bright, happy sky I dance

And sing my blues away.

Do I have the voice of a gull? I do.

But that's alright with me.

'Cause the gull sings like a broken siren

But does so happily.

Ode to Others

I stand here before you and you ask me to bear my heart,
You ask me to show myself to you
As if I am the only thing that matters.
I am the only thing that has mattered for a while now,
But what about those who surround me.
Those who surround me are just as important
And intriguing and thought-provoking as I am.

Are they not?

To not celebrate oneself,
To marvel in the beauty around instead of within,
To be one with another and live.

This world, there is so much *me* and *my*,
Why not rejoice in *we*?

We gather ourselves into groups of people we can trust,
Protect,
Provide for.
Progressively,
People have been able to widen that circle,
Learn to love more than just their family,
Learn to care for our community.

We are a clock.

Relying on each component to keep itself running,
Every individual just as important as the other.
A working machine that doesn't falter,
Love and cooperation that fuels
And greases the mechanisms.

But then the ticking of time begins to slow,
And that peace that has held us together begins to rust.

We forget that at the end of the day, we are all one.
We forget that everyone is special.
We forget that we are just ordinary, but together,
We are extraordinary.

So do not ask me,
To become a surgeon,

Dissect myself piece by piece
And display it to you.
For this is not a song of me,
But an ode to others.

Alyssa Moore
Carmel High School
Honorable Mention

Lone

A staple of her region,
She sits there alone,
Away from land-dwellers,
The beach is her home.
She's been secluded for centuries,
Only seen from afar.
Untouched but not unnoticed,
What difference does it make?
They see her as an object of pure beauty,
But an object nonetheless.
Her isolation perceived,
But her loneliness not understood.
Clearly physically alone, but in heart and soul too.
She yearns for company, all she has are the waves.
Despite her strong and sure look,
the Lone Cypress sometimes sways.

Diego Valladares
Gonzales High School
Honorable Mention

A Feeble Ray

The moon can never triumph against the sun

Its light is but a feeble ray

Before the sun's radiance

And to compare the two

Would be to compare

A drop of rain to a

Thunderstorm

Allie Batres
North Salinas High School
Honorable Mention

Long Run

The sun peeks from the mountains
The cool air brushes against my face
My heart beats slowly
I admire the small bird in the nest
Now only 9 more miles but I am on a quest

I cross a path with tall redwood trees
And I begin to wipe sweat off of my face
My mind releases all of my thoughts
Only then did I become focused on running
A river rushes to the west
And I pick up the pace at 7 miles for the best

My legs begin to burn
But excitement pumps through my veins
I gasp for air as each second passes
I continue
For I only have 0.5 left

My knees scrape the gravel on the ground
My heart beats out of my chest
I scoff at how far I have gone
It seems I have 0.001 of a mile left

Ava Ghio
Carmel High School
Honorable Mention

Ode to the Night Sky

Oh night sky, how you sparkle and shine,
With stars that twinkle and glow,
That reminds us of our past and where we come from,
A canvas of black, so vast and divine,
A sight that fills me with awe.

Your constellations tell a story,
Of myths and legends,
Of gods, and tales of glory,
In tales that will never grow old.

You are a reminder of our place,
In a universe so vast and grand,
Of our smallness, in a cosmic space,
Yet part of a plan so grand,

In a universe so wondrously beautiful,
We realize how minuscule we are,
But in this realization, there's a comfort too,
For we are not alone, in this cosmic view,

You inspire us to dream and wonder,
To reach for the stars up high,
To strive for greatness and never ponder,
On limits that we might encounter.

Oh night sky, you are a beacon of hope,
A reminder that amidst life's trials we can cope,
With each twinkling star, a promise of light,
That even in darkness, there's a reason to fight.

Isiah Ragnel
Palma High School
Honorable Mention

Elpis

The fear of sickness, the hopefulness of medicine,
the ulcerating needles of unaffordable medicine,
the empty oxygen tank of overpriced essential medicine,
greedy filled drug companies haunt,
harass and even hurt your family and friends

When your own mother's skin starts to turn yellow,
when her tiredness overwhelms the day,
taunted by dusk and tortured by dawn,
burdened by the reality that you are a patient's daughter
Starting to have weekly visits
to the Stanford hospital up until the day,

the day my mom's agency was taken over by a stranger
That stranger had agency over my mother's life for 12 hours
while I was in the waiting room with my voice
vandalized and pulse pounding,
in the waiting room, having no agency
over the constant tears coming out of my eyes,
the eyes that remind me of my mother's,
the color of acorns dropping onto a pile of newly dead leaves

Once was menacing clouds of hopelessness
in her gifted imaginative heavens,
now was auspicious storms of hopefulness

Amanda Findley
Rancho San Juan High School
Honorable Mention

Remember

Every time I walk into the room
I look at the cold-hearted floor
And remember
When I used to sit with him

I peek outside the window
And see the church bells ringing
I go to him
To retrieve his medicine

I sit down and read
The newest articles and stories
Despite he can barely hear
He still remains in a laugh

Now I look back
And stare at the chairs
Where we used to sit
And cherish that smile
He used to once have

Maddox Zarazua
Carmel High School
Honorable Mention

Remembering My Dad: Petro Waroff

September thirteenth, 2014,
A Small town in California
Facing a rude awakening.
Luckily for them, it was only that.
Not for me though.

Age seven,
Waking up to my neighbors in my bedroom,
Trying to wake me up and separate me from the situation.
After all, I was far too young to see you in this state
My sister did, though.

Age six and a half
She just wanted to say good morning to her dad
But he wasn't there
Although his body was there
His soul was not
Gone into the hereafter I would like to assume.

Lying in bed,
Lifeless.
Sometimes I wish it was me instead of you
The flashing lights,
Ambulance,
Police cars.
I can still picture it all.

I never got to see you.
Often I wished I had,
Even if you were not alive.
I don't remember too much
after I was swept off to my neighbors
Just looking out the window scared
wondering where my dad was and where he was going.

Although you are gone, you're not really.

You live on throughout your memory,
the flannels I keep finding,
CDs I blast when I think of you
Petro James Waroff

I miss you more than words can express
I live this life for you.
Trying to do everything you couldn't
in your short forty-five years.
I would do anything to erase what happened
on September thirteenth, 2014.

Madison Waroff
Carmel High School
Honorable Mention

Scylla and Charybdis

I. Scylla

Here in this dark cave,
we hear a ship
Through the fog we see
men rowing fiercely,
a jeweled mortal
at the helm,
sticks fisted

Our heads bob and weave,
beckoning them closer
We are all so hungry
As hungry as if a vindictive god stole our stomach
and replaced it with Tartarus

They pass insatiable Charybdis, sailing closer to avoid
her yawning mouth

A grave mistake

Spittle drips from our stalactite teeth,
the anticipation rousing Tartarus
with a vengeance

Mortals fear me
The gods bore me
I am Scylla

II. Charybdis

Like a whale,
hunting for krill,
I swallow and belch
the ocean
My victims caught,
lungs filling
Helpless fish in a net

One mortal escaped, clever and cruel,
he sacrificed six to
ravenous Scylla
then returned again

Alone

Lonely on his raft
I wanted to
reunite him with his men
who gasped for breath,
screaming his name

Now skeletons
under the waves

Under the fig tree,
I whirl
An ever-present void
I am Charybdis

Yuna Baek
Santa Catalina School
Honorable Mention

Useless Hate

When you die for nothing like Khemerich
 what is the point?
Or when you get shot like Katzinsky
 in the knee joint?
Or when you die in the very end like Paul
 in the very quietest moment.
 Or get a pair of boots
 as a bestowment.
 Or laugh like Tjaden
 at others suffering
 Or hide like Himalstoss
when the bombs are buffering.
 I can almost hear
 Paul Baumer half joking:
 “Isn’t all this useless hate
 just great.”

Sebastian Danielson
Carmel High School
Honorable Mention

The Stone Breakers

The dark and gloomy sky looms over the dry, barren fields

Two men labor endlessly
Dust swirls in the air as they brush off the dust covering their beige cargo pants

Dry foxtails brush up against their ankles

Metal strikes stone

Red, chapped hands

They struggling to meet ends meet

Their names will be lost to time

Their labor will be long forgotten

The world continues to spin

Alanna McNamara
Carmel High School
Honorable Mention



"Pearls"
Lauro Borquez, Monterey High School
Honorable Mention



Untitled
Isaac Barnett, Seaside High School
Honorable Mention



"The Mask"
Savannah Totaan, Chartwell School
Honorable Mention