



CALLIOPE

# Calliope

## Volume XXXII

**Armstrong State University**

11935 Abercorn Street, Savannah, Georgia 31419

The Calliope seeks to publish the best examples of  
student art and writing at Armstrong State University.

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# At a Standstill

Nancy Der

*Assorted Paper, Mod Podge, Ink*



# Acidic Ocean

Adriana Norris

I *couldn't* stop laughing. The ocean had trapped me. It was hilarious. The vast ocean had chosen me of all people on this damned Earth. I thought of the phases. *Solid, liquid, gas.*

*Solid* sugar cube. *Liquid* freezing water. No *gas*. No motherfucking *gas*. The laughter made my stomach hurt; it inhibited me from functioning. I leaned over the boat's edge and let my tears drip into the ocean. "Have some of me! You deserve it. You deserve everything!"

I could see my reflection in the water, not in it, above it, upside down, crooked, hazy. My face looked like it was melting; my pupils were multicolored fading into *solid* red, *solid* blue, now *solid* green. *Liquid* black water. No *gas*. No motherfucking *gas*. I walked to the steering wheel. I jerked it to the left and then to the right, ferociously up and down. I pounded on it with my hands, clawed at it, broke my nails, screamed as I started to bleed.

"You deserve it, you deserve it!" Hysterical laughter.

I fell to the deck. Stars started to fall from the sky. I could feel them landing on my skin. Some stayed put, some grew legs and ran away. Some ran in circles. One flipped me off, I laughed, "You deserve it!"

Funny how the stars moved and the moon stayed put. Fat, lazy fucking moon. *Solid* moon. *Liquid* stars. No *gas*. No motherfucking *gas*.

I thought of things that did not matter: fingernails, mailboxes, cubes, coffee, burning, language, hatred, cars, people, the world, me. I whispered "You deserve it..." I stood up abruptly.

I removed my shoes, felt the cold deck on my toes. I tore off my jacket and threw it on the bloody steering wheel. The air hurt me on purpose; it proved to be fucking relentless.

"I deserve it, don't stop!" I shrieked.

I cackled at my own words, I forgot the steps it took to get naked, these things do not matter.

I stood naked. The stars turned away. "I'm not ashamed, look at me!" The moon was still and stared. Fat, lazy, perverted fucking moon. *Solid* boat. No goddamn *gas*.

*Liquid* me. *Liquid* me. **LIQUID ME!**

I was *liquid*. Not even the ocean could compare to me.

How can I explain how hard I laughed at my *liquid* state. It was enough for the whole ocean to want to join me, to rush inside of me. It wanted to be part of my laughter, push into my lungs to find the source of the sound. I could see the stars staring at me separated by a moving, clear wall.

I *deserve* this.

*Solid* nothing. *Liquid* nothing. *Gas* nothing. No, *liquid* everything.

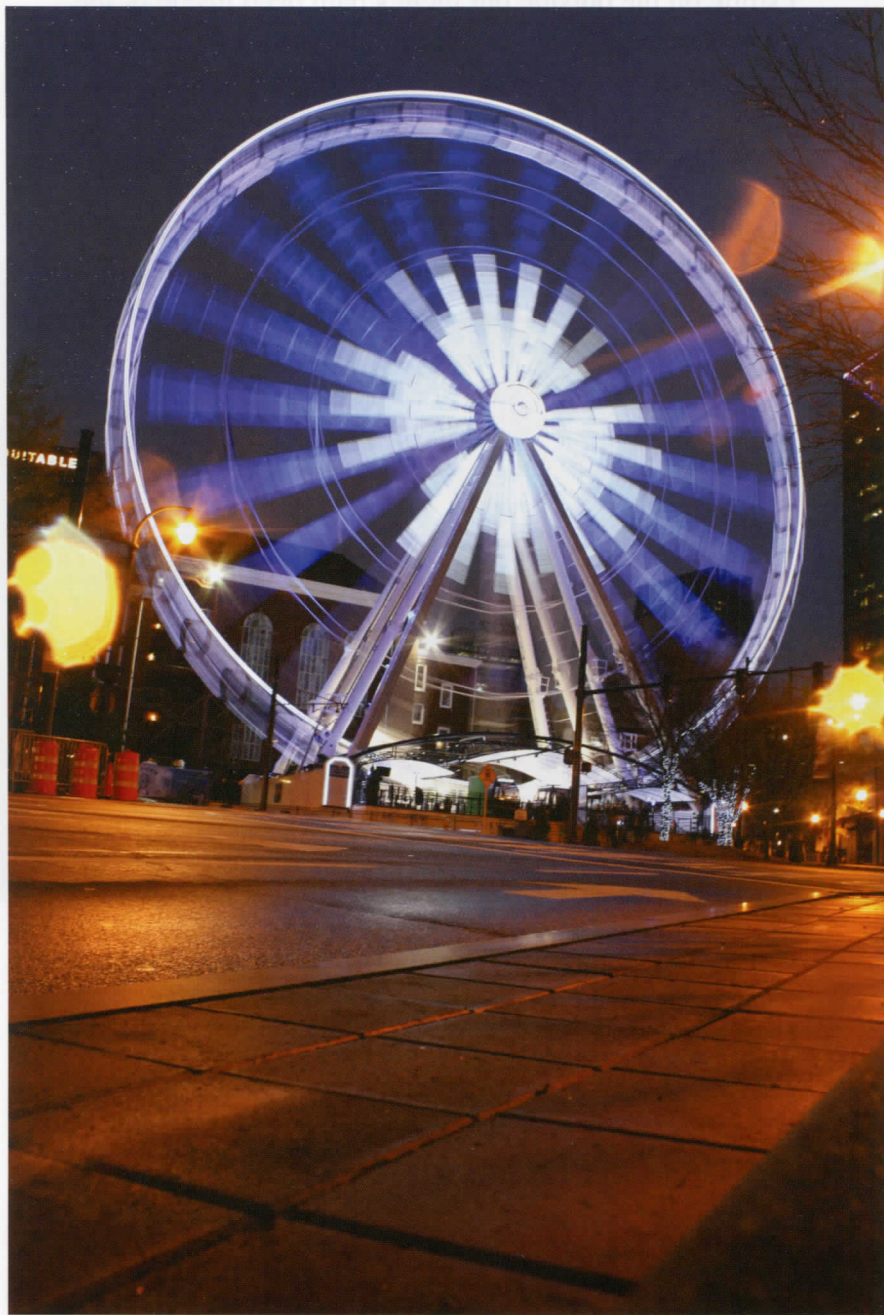
*Liquid* everything. I *deserve*...



# The Spinning Wheel

Ben Wilkening

*Digital Photography*



# Insecurities

Chelsie Register

When I see me, I see a list of insecurities.

I smile on the outside but there's pain deep inside of me,  
You ask me why I always question the way you look at me,  
Because when I see me, I see my deepest insecurities.

When I look at me, I see the things I want to change  
All the things I call myself, but I never say my name.  
As I look at my reflection I feel disgusted and ashamed  
Because when I look at me, I only see the ways I've changed.

When I see me, I see the color off my skin,  
And if I'm walking at night, I hate the way I seem to blend  
With the color of the night as light evaporates from my skin,  
Because when I look at me, my hate comes from deep within.

When I look at me, I see the pain I keep inside.  
I think back to all the nights that I would just lie there and cry  
Because I hated seeing me and I could feel it deep inside.  
As it traveled through my soul, I watched my inner beauty die  
Because when I see me, the pain is present in my eyes.

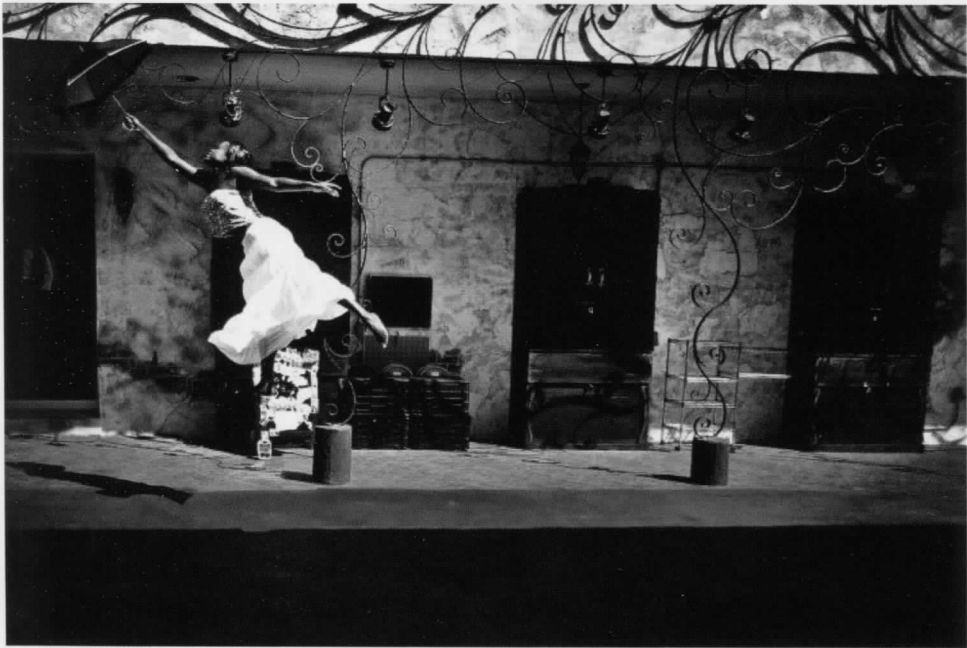
When I see me, I see a girl who wears a smile  
But true happiness you see, I haven't felt that in a while.  
My insecurities run so deep, it's like a drug that's killing me  
It haunts my every waking moment, I can't escape it in my sleep.

I'm hoping one day the pain will all be gone away,  
And when I see me, there'll be no insecurity.

Modern Mary

Regina Bryant

Digital Photography





# Out of the Oven

Tyler Allen



# The Organist

Brenna Mudge

December was unseasonably warm. Dark smoke and gray clouds rolled by overhead. The wind burst through the gnarled branches of the live oak trees. Spanish moss waved like the hands of ghosts.

Thousands of ghosts.

Igashu pulled his jacket tighter. Root, his hound mutt, snuffled around a hole in the road. Ancient tunnels ran underneath the dead city. It had been a long time since anyone had maintained the roads – maintained anything – so sinkholes were commonplace. Not a soul save for the man and his dog wandered the battered streets. He didn't know what he was looking for. *Humanity?* His first thought. *No. Won't find that here. Something else.*

*But what?* He had no idea. He figured he'd recognize it when he encountered it. The wind howled again, and brought with it a chill that prickled the hairs on Igashu's neck. It was time to find shelter for the evening.

An old building with painted windows caught his eye. It was once a public building of some sort, and the apex of the roof came to a point. Igashu followed it up to the sky. The wind blew again. He and Root wandered over, their footsteps up the stone stairs were amplified in the silence. The large red door stood ajar. He pushed it open, the groan of the hinges echoed as flecks of peeling paint dropped to the ground, disturbed by his presence. Root slipped inside first.

It was brighter on the inside than Igashu expected due to fact that a large portion of the roof had been blown off years ago. Resurrection ferns and other plants made their beds in the cracks. Enough roof remained to serve as adequate shelter, however. They wouldn't stay long. He looked around. He stood in what may have been some sort of foyer, but the walls were long gone. It joined with a larger room, filled with long wooden benches. Most of it lay in ruin. Root weaved around debris, exploring. Igashu watched her.

An alcove, nestled in the western end of the room, seemed to be the only part of the building left undamaged. It was difficult to see, but Igashu made out a large wooden box in the shadows. He moved closer, and saw rows of pipes rising from the top of the box. The general shape mimicked that of the building, the tallest pipes in the middle, pointing to the sky. Igashu felt that it might be some sort of instrument. A vague idea

tickled at the back of his mind. Curiosity piqued, he wandered closer. A low wall separated him from the alcove. He hopped over it. Just on the other side rested a kind of piano, but it had extra rows of keys and several knobs and buttons. A small bench leaned against the wall. Igashu pulled it up to the instrument and sat down. He didn't know what he was doing, and a part of him thought it might be a bad idea.

He pushed down one of the keys, and one of the pipes let out a low, reverberating bellow. It was alarming, and exciting. *So it was an instrument.* Igashu pushed another key and a different pipe let out a higher pitched bellow. He suddenly wished he knew how to play. Igashu didn't dare press a key again. He had already made too much noise.

The notes from the instrument struck a chord in his soul. He missed music, and longed for beauty again. Living life the way he did, always moving, never gave him an opportunity for rest. He'd been on the move for so long that he had forgotten about concepts like beauty, music, and art.

The reminder of beautiful things moved him up and out of himself, and pointed to something that he could neither see nor explain. Root, both attracted to and frightened by the noise, paced by the edge of the alcove, peeking through a hole in the low wall at her human. Every time she stopped pacing to look at Igashu, she whined. One of her lips got stuck on a tooth as she waited for him to respond.

A low siren wailed in the distance. Root whined louder. Igashu leapt over the low wall. They would not be able to stay for the night – he had made too much noise. He dashed to the entrance, and Root followed close at his heels.

They left the sanctuary. He took with him a memory and an idea, carrying it with him as he and his dog disappeared into the half-light.



# We Stand in the Dark

Savannah Chiarel

we stand in the dark  
night lapping gently against the shores of our rapport  
the heavens so clear above us  
its vastness unquestionably evident

that crispy autumn chill has crept into the air  
trailing its brisk fingertips along the skins of our backs  
raising goosebumps despite our nearness

the trees are turning and  
suddenly we can breathe again

your arms are wrapped around mine  
I inhale deeply  
the scent of burning leaves mingles with the scent of you

my eyes are closed tightly  
willing to remember this moment  
knowing there will be a time when our own season passes  
I whisper I love you into the warmth of your chest  
hoping the wavering timbre of my voice  
is imprinting on the grains of your heart

# View of Hawes from Gamble Hall

Donald Windley

*Digital Photography*



# Success of First Year

Jonathan Hatala

My first year of college studies, now complete.  
But how did I actually fare, did I really succeed?  
Look at my grades. High marks I worked hard to earn.  
But what knowledge do I have? What did I learn?  
Was it anything at all? Perhaps.  
I can tell you about derivatives, programming, things like that.  
But is my money, sleepless nights, and gray hair worth it?  
Of course it is. Because today, without a degree you're worth shit.

The system of education is now fundamentally wrong.  
Learning, discovering one's self, enlightenment. All these ideas are gone.  
Replaced by the greed of the rich in society.  
Go to college, get a degree, get a job, stimulate the economy.

So again, what is it that I've learned?  
The desire of knowledge for which I've always yearned  
is real, but the way we expect to arrive at it is a charade.  
Now I sit and wonder: Where do I stand in the Allegory of the Cave?



# Unventilated

Kayla Ortiz

I tell myself that this new self will be a better me.  
Someone who is more socially adept and able to smile with genuine glee;  
Someone who won't be such a bombarding burden on your fragile  
shoulders;  
Someone who won't be a cluster-fuck of feeling and able to keep my  
composure.

For you, I will subject myself to be upgraded  
And will go under the knife to be less colorful, more faded  
just like the sizzling dame at the rave dancing on the crackling floor  
Whose too far washed out to realize the absence of color.

For you, I am disposing of my old ways.  
I stop asking those curious questions and solely listen and obey.  
Please stop looking at me with disappointment with your all-seeing eyes.  
I didn't realize I was too nonstandard and needed to be commercialized  
As a pristine model of American adolescence,  
But how can I do that? When I'm near you I'm only physically present.

That's why for you I changed my personality  
In order to be more adept of reaching the expectations set by society.  
With your firm transparent hand you smacked some sense into me  
So I stopped trying to live within my own serene reality.

Please be proud of your creation.  
Be proud that I am your desire.  
This isn't easy. In this unventilated disguise I'm starting to perspire.  
Hurry. Show how *normal* I am so the masses don't conspire  
Against me or against you about my behavior.  
Oh, I almost forgot to thank you my creator, my savior

For all the prep work for my transformation  
From an unusual nobody teen to someone with aspirations  
Of being the prototype for American southern belles,  
Unit K7M1O95.

But I don't belong here in this cramped beehive.  
The steam is clouding my vision here in hell.

I am all asunder.  
This new me is a fail.  
I longer want to have a serial number.  
I don't have perfectly pristine hair  
With perfectly painted nails  
Or perfectly done makeup with lips that are plump and pink.  
With my few remaining thoughts in my head I'm on the brink  
Of converting back to my old self once again.  
All of your hard work will go down the drain,  
But I'm okay with that.

For that new self has a lack of something I can't live with,  
Something so unique nothing can replace it.  
For my old self was the better me  
With endless amounts of witty words and splashing creativity.  
No longer am I peering through the glass of captivity  
Nor ashamed of my unconventionality  
Because now I decide who I choose to be,  
Which is an abnormally inquisitive teen,  
But I'm okay with that.

I am no longer misrepresented.  
It was never my intention for your discontentment.  
However, now it is time for you to step aside  
So I can have the real me shine  
Instead of that societal contraption where I had to hide.

# Mother Nature is an Artist

Emily Hepfner

*Digital Photography*



# The Gate

Hannah Bryan

*As harps for the winds of heaven,  
My web-like cables are spun;  
I offer my span for the traffic of man,  
At the gate of the setting sun.  
(written by Joseph Strauss)*

My day has been long. . . it's lasted almost thirty years. The past three years have marked the beginning of my sunset. A balmy breeze carries the briny damp air from the bay and the salty moistness streams down my cheeks, caressing it like a mother. My mother. I can still feel the warmth of her hug from this morning; remember her familiar scent of fresh laundry and lilac bath oil that has always been a part of her from as early as I can remember. How trustingly she smiled at me as I walked out the door this morning, as she called out to remind me to pick up stamps for her when I returned home. I watch a ferry traverse the water just below me and am quickly distracted from it when I hear the laughter of children behind me. I turn to see a young family coming towards me - a father, a mother, and two small girls. One of the girls appears to be about 8 years old; she's holding the mother's hand. The younger child, about 6, is sitting on her father's shoulders and giggling wildly, clutching tight fistfuls of his hair in her plump little hands as he pretends to wince in pain. They seem so happy. My heart aches from the flooding of familiar, yet almost forgotten, memories that refuse to be banished. I have to grip tightly to the rail out of fear the strong breeze might topple me. I'm not sure that I can do this. My reasons for being here are becoming as muddled as the fog that has begun to roll in, leaving only faint outlines in the distance. It all began several years ago with a death-dealing wound that was made inside of me, refusing to heal and demanding blood to be repaid. The balances must be set correct, you see. My plans the last two weeks have been meticulous, down to how my mother would discover my note along with my journal of fourteen years. "Whoever holds my journal, is holding me," was the last thing that I wrote in it. I have already quit my job and spent the last of my savings, including buying the ticket that brought me here.

The sky is turning pink and orange. Oh God, the time is arriving, I'm getting close. . . I'm not ready, I'm not ready! Why hasn't anyone



called me? I check my phone to see if I missed a text. . . nothing. Did they not hear the anguish in my voice, despite that it was delivered with a smile? Did I wax poetic about my feelings so often, that I was eventually tuned out? Perhaps I should have been more reticent, and then I could leave with dignity, not having the knowledge that those closest to me were numbified, their souls embalmed with apathy. No wonder I feel more alive now than ever. My whole life I've been surrounded by zombies, except rather than being absent of working brains, they are absent of sympathetic souls. Or perhaps I'm being too harsh. Perhaps it was I who didn't listen. My mind was already made up. I've been going through the motions of life ever since. I'm merely a shell of a human being, my body is the husk. It is my job now to remove the husk and clear it away from the rest of society.

Okay. We'll settle this with numbers; most dilemmas usually can be resolved that way. You can always trust numbers. It'll be very simple. If I think I can hit the water by the count of 7, then I'll jump. I like the number 7. It has such rounded completeness to it, an odd sort of perfection. All my life I've been a 6; just short of everything I've wanted to accomplish and become - neither a huge success, nor a dismal failure. I'm like the waters of Laodicea, neither hot nor cold; it's rather hard to find redemption in mediocrity. I've lived a 6, but maybe I can die a 7, everything perfect. I read somewhere once that 7 is a divinely favored number...maybe that'll help my case with Him. Right on time as I arrive at The Gate at the same time as the setting of the sun. Alright. I let out a satisfied breath as my body tingles with the anticipation of this newly discovered elegant detail in my plan. It's almost Euclidean in simplicity. But how will I know if it will work? There...a small piece of pipe about 4 feet from me. I grasp it, hold it outstretched before me past the rail, suspended over the sparkling indigo below, and I give it a silently fervent plea, not quite sure which way I wanted it to determine my fate. I listen to myself breathe for a moment - now - RELEASE. 1...2...3...4...5...6...\*splash\*. Hmm. I should have decided before the drop whether the count of 7 would be on the hit or just before. I can't decide now, that would be too much like cheating. I'm beginning to sweat now, my breath is catching up with my heartbeat. Oh, where the hell are my friends? Where's my family? Doesn't anyone care? Do they notice I'm gone? What about the fucking cops. . .where are they? You'd think after a record 1,000-something jumpers, they'd recognize the friggin' pattern. Nervous person pacing back and forth by the railing, talking to themselves, crying on and off. I mean, WAKE UP PEOPLE. You've seen this kind of spectacle before. Why isn't anyone stopping

me?? It wouldn't be that hard. My resolve is crumbling; I'm just scared now. I'm scared of myself, scared of what I might do. I've been trapped in my own body, a prisoner of my own mind. I feel I've lived with a *bête noire* internally for all of my life. Just touch me on my hand. . . anyone. . . please. Share your story with me, I won't even make you listen to mine. I just need the distraction, to bide the time. Surely someone's called the police by now, and they're on their way. My secret Samaritan guardian probably didn't want to alert me, cause me to panic, do something rash

You fucking zombies. You soulless cattle! The incessant laughing and shouting and cursing into your cellphones. You don't even sound human, the lot of you! You just drone. I used to be one of you. Not anymore. I'm leaving this world, getting out of the way. As I turn to the rail, getting ready to throw my leg over, I feel a soft tap on my shoulder. Finally. God has sent an angel to me. I AM worthy. Maybe I'll listen. I turn to meet my Gabriel. Well, not Gabriel... My angel is an attractive blonde woman nearing what looks to be her early 40's. She opens her mouth and asks of me with a heavy German accent, "Would you mind taking my picture?"

For a moment, everything around me seems to be speedramped. The traffic goes from a rainbow of streaming colors whizzing by me in a haze, accompanied with the cacophonous blaring of horns and clanging metal matching the way the woman's tendrils of hair are being whipped about her face by the wind, to an almost standstill state of suspension — I now see everything clearly. Everything. Why did I come here? To make a point? To send a message? Well, obviously, no one is getting it. Or they just don't care. I look over the rail and gaze at the powerful swirling eddies beckoning to me from below. It was SEVEN. I accept the woman's camera; I take her picture. She smiles and thanks me as she takes back her camera, then tells me "goodbye". I climb on top of the rail as I nod goodbye in return, and she walks away still smiling. I turn my back, arms outstretched, and slowly I gaze upwards towards the sky. I'll let the breeze decide. I won't fight it, I'll become part of it. Suddenly, I see my mother's face forming through the clouds, and a stronger breeze brushes against me, carrying with it the faint smell of lilacs. I close my eyes. The moment my feet leave the rail, a shock goes through me, stiffening my spine, while the rest of my insides go limp and soft. "Oh, mama, I knew you'd come for me!" I see her smile and reach out her hand for me. "Mama, I haven't hit yet. You must be holding me! I know, you're using the fog to cushion me! Oh mama, you were -----.

# Stairway to Heaven

Ben Wilkening

*Digital Photography*



# Let Down Your Hair

Kayla Ortiz

*Digital Photography*



# The Poet You Imagine

Llana Samuel

I am not the poet you imagine me to be.

I am no lyrical magician

Making feelings disappear.

Did you see me?

I'm like memories of your past, I'm over here.

I don't sit in coffee shops sipping bittersweet caffeinated drinks,

People watching and finger snapping,

Scribbling thoughts faster than I can repress them.

Writing is to me what cocaine is to an addict.

I write until the ink runs out

Then I switch pens and write until my emotions blur, until they  
contradict

It liberates my soul in ways talking could never,

The ink running across the blank page,

My soul floating in limbo light as a feather.

Hearing myself confess how I feel is far more frightening than writing it.

The words that fall out of my mouth are dead

But the letters on the page, they dance with life,

Curl with anger and cut into the white bones of dried trees.

I am not the poet you imagine,

I'm a girl at a desk with a pen and a past.

I'm a hurricane of lyrics

Leaving thoughts scattered like debris

In the graveyard of dreams, on the pages of hearts,

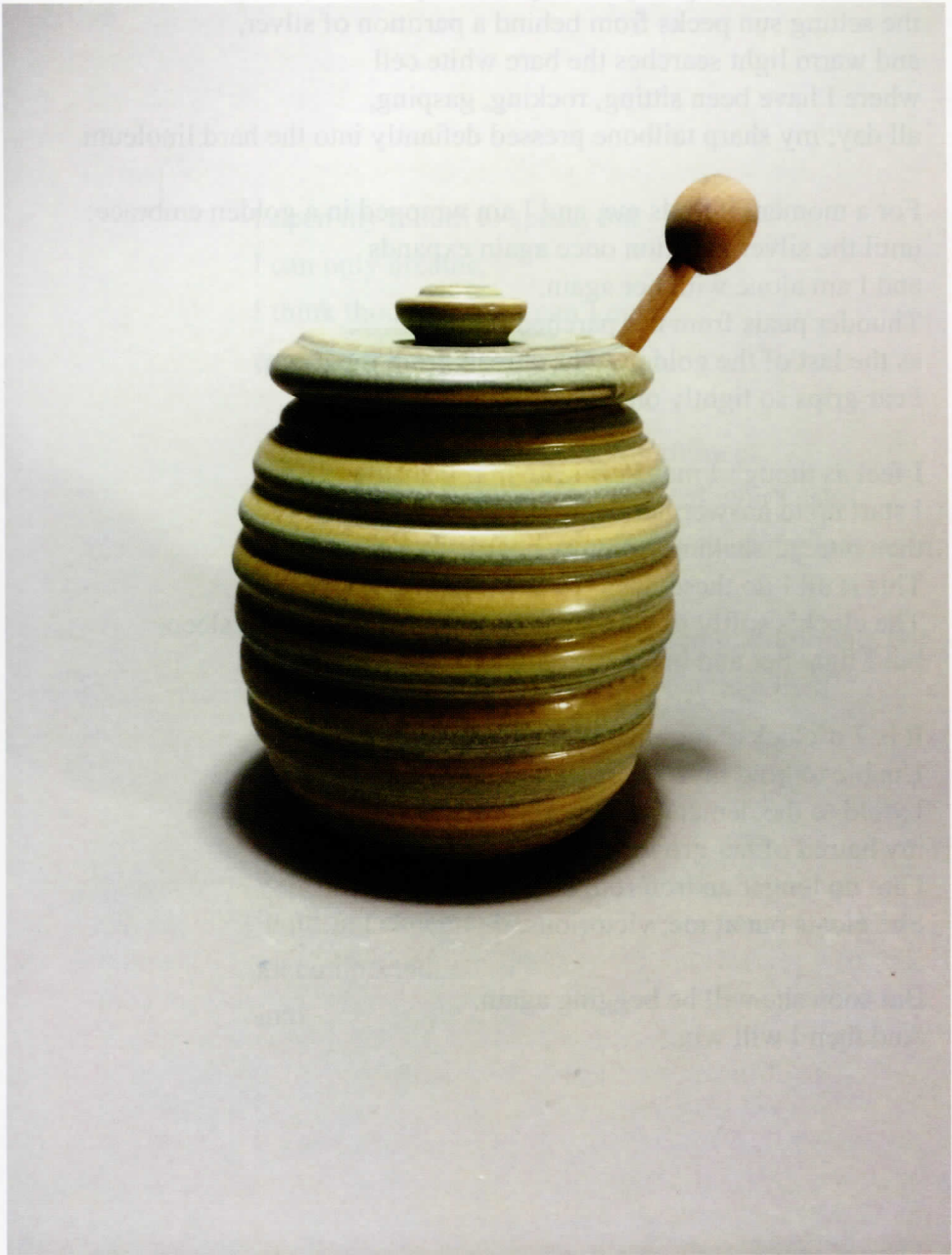
Anywhere my words can be free.



# Honey Pot

Sarah Jefferson

*Stonewear*



# Hungry

Morgan Connor

It is 6 o'clock at night and I am hungry.  
Outside of the single eye of my small apartment,  
the setting sun peeks from behind a partition of silver,  
and warm light searches the bare white cell  
where I have been sitting, rocking, gasping,  
all day; my sharp tailbone pressed defiantly into the hard linoleum.

For a moment it finds me, and I am wrapped in a golden embrace;  
until the silver partition once again expands  
and I am alone with her again.  
Thunder peals from her parched lips  
as the last of the golden light retreats from the room.  
Fear grips so tightly on my throat

I feel as though I may suffocate in my stiffness.  
I start up to answer her continuing cries,  
then retreat, shaking from my near-heresy.  
This is all I do these days.  
The clock's softly ticking siren song lures me towards sleep,  
but I fight her and brace my slowly wilting spine.

It is 7 o'clock at night and I am hungry.  
Unable to hold myself back any longer,  
I yield to the demands of my throttled belly;  
my hatred of her growing with each wolfish bite.  
I am no longer an iron rod, but a sagging corpse.  
She gloats out at me, victorious.

But soon she will be begging again.  
And then I will win.

# Gagged

Taylor Walton

I open my mouth to speak, but  
I can only breathe.  
I think thoughts that I can't quite. . .  
express.

I clamp my lips shut over a compliment,  
I grind my teeth against the favors I won't ask,  
I bite my cheek when I want to be speaking tongue-in,

That's when I feel my words building, brimming, but  
constricted by my lungs then throat then lips  
a volume of phonemes packed with  
pages of proposals and  
comical side notes and  
declarative questions,  
inquiring statements  
all compacted  
into. . .

# Beauty and a Bee

Nancy Der

*Watercolor and Charcoal*



# Leaving Altoona

Morgan Connor

Arianne could not help but relax into the plush fabric of her seat as she stared at the beautiful landscape outside the train window. Rolling hills peppered with bursts of gold and red trees signaled the coming of autumn. The sight of them made her heart swell. She was so glad to be coming home. She could not wait to see the surprised looks on her parents' faces when she walked through their front door. It had been entirely too long since the last time they saw each other, and she was tired of waiting for them to come back and see her.

The fall foliage began to change into houses, and then into the gray two-story stone buildings of downtown. As the view that distracted her over the course of the train ride disappeared, Arianne began to think about how her homecoming surprise would work. She had to catch them completely off-guard, but she did not want to scare them too badly; they were getting older, after all. She did not want to shock them to death or anything...

Feeling herself move forward in her seat, Arianne was jolted back into reality and prevented from finishing her planning. The train had pulled up to the corner of 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 13<sup>th</sup> Street and came to an abrupt stop. She watched out of the corner of her eye as everyone began to stand and collect their bags, eyeing each other and the center aisle as if only one of them was going to make it off the train alive and they were all in a race to be that one person. Surprised at the morbidity of her thoughts today, she chuckled to herself, leaned back in her seat, and continued watching the race.

As the line shuffled forward and a spot within it opened up, Arianne slowly rose, gathered her bags, and stepped into the aisle, her body creaking from the six hours spent curled up in her seat, popping like an old man's back after a long day's work. She stepped off the train and into the Amtrak station platform and was immediately thrown into chaos. Masses of people swarmed around her, their eyes following her suspiciously. One pair in particular, a steely blue as clear as the sky on the first day of spring, caught hers. The sight made her heart pound and the room spin. Her breath began to come in small gasps; she felt panic beginning to overwhelm her. In a daze of confusion and terror, she took off, her mind completely unaware of the movement of her limbs as she ran, focused only on her need to get away from those eyes.



Eventually she found herself crouched in the corner of the handicapped stall of the women's bathroom, gasping for breath. Her shirt stuck to her back and she could feel cold bullets of sweat slide down her forehead and drip onto the hard linoleum. She eventually stood up and leaned over to gather her things off the floor where she had haphazardly tossed them. She walked slowly towards the bathroom door, eyeing the bottoms of the individual stalls warily in the fear that someone had been there to witness her meltdown. Taking a deep breath, she attempted to prepare herself for whatever might come next and, brushing a few wisps of her now untidy blond hair behind her ears, she stepped out into the maelstrom that was the train platform.

Arianne stood hesitantly outside the doorway of the bathroom, her eyes searching for the bright red exit sign above the rumbling noise like clouds gathering before a storm. She saw movement out of the corner of her eye. Distracting her from her pursuit, she turned her head locked eyes with a young boy. He could not have been older than eight. He had short blond hair and ragged clothes that suggested he was not where he should be. He was staring at her with an intensity both arresting and terrifying, and she found herself trying to avoid looking him directly in the eye, her heart racing once again. However, when their eyes locked again, his clear blue on her brilliant green somehow immediately comforted and cleared her of all hesitation. She slowly inched towards him, dropping down into a crouch next to him and asked, "Are you lost?" He shook his head and cocked his slender eyebrow at the question, as though it was one he was surprised she even bothered to ask. She looked at him, confused, and asked him about his parents, to which he rolled his eyes and turned around, as if annoyed and no longer wished to continue talking. Incredulous at the exchange, Arianne was suddenly distracted by the obscenities being yelled into the cell phone of a loud red-headed woman, who brushed past her, eyes wide-open and burning with rage. Turning back to the boy, Arianne saw that he was gone.

Immediately, she began searching the platform, asking other people if they had seen a small blond-haired boy. Most people ignored her, though some graced her with a burning glare or a haughty scoff as if to say that if they had, they surely wouldn't tell *her*. After searching for some time, she gave up, finally acquiescing to the fact that he had gone back to wherever he came from and would not be back. As the last few stragglers rushed past hurriedly, hoping to still board their likely already-departed train, she, feeling defeated, half-heartedly pushed open the exit door and

stepped out into the cold, dismal afternoon.

It was a long walk home, but Arianne did not mind. Taking a left out of the Amtrak station, Arianne followed 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue all the way until it reached a dead-end in the quiet residential area where she grew up. She walked slowly, enjoying the sight of familiar homes and streets, and wondering at the silent stillness of the air, which, when she was a child, used to be filled with the yells and laughter of children. Now, parents were too afraid to let their children explore the outdoors out of fear that a predator might be lurking in the woods, waiting to snatch them from the safety of their own neighborhood. The thought of lone children turned her mind once again to the strange child on the train platform. *What did he want? And why did no one else seem to notice him? He seemed so much like the little boy in the gas sta-* and here she stopped herself. She was not going to go down that road tonight, not when the night had so much potential to be good. She took a deep breath and focused on counting to ten, just like she was taught, and regained her composure. Frustrated, yet determined to redeem the evening, she chalked the experience up to that of a riddle she would never be able to solve and turned her attentions to where she was going.

Eventually, she made her way to the corner of 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 24 ½ Street and stopped. After checking to ensure that she was avoiding any oncoming traffic, Arianne turned to the left and headed towards Walnut Avenue, on which her home sat perched on the corner, hidden behind a copse of red cedar trees. As she approached the house, she felt a shiver run down her spine. It felt as though she had not seen the house in years; the dark windows were framed by pale yellow siding, faded from a lifetime of sun and rain. She could not shake the feeling that she was being watched, a feeling that had followed her from her very first step onto the chaotic train platform. Quickly, she looked around before sliding her key into the lock, hoping to quell the growing fear that was bubbling just below the surface of her skin. The tall, ancient cedar trees behind her branched out into the sky, their emerald leaves already turning into a glorious golden halo interspersed with spots of bright red. The gloomy sky had changed from a dismal gray to a rosy rainbow with bands of gold arcing through the stratosphere as the sun began to set. A soft breeze began to flow, lightly stirring the rebellious strands of hair that had been tucked behind her ears, and causing them to tickle her cheeks. Comforted by this caress, Arianne smiled to herself, slid her key into the lock, and walked through the front door.

The house had changed since the last time she was here. *It looks like Mom has been watching too much Martha Stewart for her own good. How did she talk Dad into doing all of this?* Her parents' house was an old brick two-story, with large rooms and an open floor plan on the first floor. The large leather couches that used to be in the middle of the living room were now pushed back, and the brown, wooden coffee table was placed in the middle of the room. The table was stacked with books, magazines, and a handful of coasters with empty glasses resting on them; evidence of festivities from the night before. There were colorful rugs throughout the room, covering up the hardwood floor that Dad was so proud of when he bought the house. There was a small rug under the coffee table, as well as one in front of each couch, and a large area rug in the hall, making the open area more inviting to cold and tired feet. The fireplace, which normally held nothing but a few decorative logs, was now filled with gray ashes and blackened bits of wood. *What did they do this weekend?*

Confused, Arianne continued moving through the house, walking up the dark staircase cautiously, in case there were more rearrangements she did not know about. On the second floor, Arianne made a quick turn and walked into her room. Immediately she was frozen in her spot. After all this time, her room was just as she left it: the bed was made military-style with the pillows carefully smoothed and placed in front of the headboard. There were a few books stacked perfectly on her desk, and her laptop computer sat half-closed as if she had just lowered it to run downstairs for a cup of tea, and not a speck of dust was visible on any surface. The curtains were open and the blinds drawn, leaving Arianne with a perfect view of the now-emerging stars above her.

Arianne carefully set her bags down in the doorway, clicked on her desk lamp, flooding the small room with warm golden light, and walked across the room to the window. She cracked open the bottom pane to allow a cool breeze into the room, which was stuffy from being shut for so long. The smell of fresh pine and cedar mixed in the coolness of the northern breeze flowed past her, delighting her senses and making her immediately relax onto her bed. Even relaxed as she was, the darkness behind the open window began to make her nervous so, forcing herself from the comfort of her bed, she hurriedly crossed the room, lowered the blinds, and drew the curtains, careful to leave the window cracked in order to allow the air to continue to float into the room.

As she lay back down on her bed, watching the curtains dance in the breeze, she began once again to think about the boy from the train

station, her mind quickly shifting from him to that night in the city all those years ago. She could not help herself this time but simply allowed the thoughts to force themselves through her mind. The feeling of cold, hard, black steel in her face, the hard linoleum under her knees as she prayed for her life in that small, dingy building. The fear in the eyes of the little blond boy and his mother, who neither asked nor deserved what happened to them, was what she could never forget. The flashing blue and red lights in the darkness, the black bags zipped shut on a stretcher beside a windowless white van, and the gentle voice of New York's finest stupidly asking her if she was okay... She remembered her heart aching with guilt and her eyes welling up with an endless river of salty tears.

She was suddenly awakened from the flashback as she heard the sound of the front door opening, followed by the indistinct mumbling and shuffling footsteps of her parents. She heard them suddenly pause by the bottom of the staircase, her mother muttering something in a low, nervous voice to her father, which was followed by a long silence in which neither of them spoke or took so much as a step.

Realizing that her opportunity for surprising her parents was gone, and assuming that their sudden silence was due to the light streaming out of her room onto the second floor, Arianne decided to go downstairs to meet her parents and assuage their fears. She made sure to make small sounds while walking down the stairs as to avoid startling her parents, who were already concerned about the unknown presence in their house. When she got to the bottom of the staircase, Arianne was surprised to find her parents no longer there but standing in the middle of the kitchen whispering urgently to each other. As she padded across the new area rug in the hall and into the kitchen, both of her parents stopped speaking and turned towards her, shocked at her sudden appearance.

Arianne walked past their haggard faces towards the stove and poured water into the old, red tea kettle that sat on the back burner. After placing the kettle back on the rear burner and lighting the flame, she turned back towards her parents, her words rushing out of her like a tsunami, "I bet you guys are surprised to see me! I'm sorry I scared you. I was not expecting you to be out when I got here, and was hoping to surprise you when I walked through the door. Oh well! I'm just glad I'm here with you two! I love what you've done with the place, by the way. It's so welcoming."

At this, her parents shared a long, knowing glance. Arianne swore she saw the glint of fear in their eyes as they turned back towards her,

curtly stating, “Yes, we did get quite a lot of work done, and we are very proud of it. We are glad you like it so much. What time did you get here? And does Dr. Jameson know that you are here and not in New York?”

“Oh yeah, he’s the one that gave me permission for a brief trip home! He said that I was doing so much better and since I was missing you so much it would be good for me to get out of that place for a little while,” Arianne lied, hoping beyond hope that she sounded convincing. It was not something that Dr. Jameson would normally do, but how could they know that if they had not come to actually see her in so long? Looking into her parents’ eyes with confidence, she continued, “It really has been too long since we’ve seen each other! Why did you stop coming to see me? Did I do something wrong?”

“Of course not, honey,” her mother replied sadly, “We just got very busy, what with all of the work being done on the house and both of our working full time, and lost track of time. Before we knew it a year had gone by and we still had not seen you. We’re very sorry, honey. But while you are here, let us take advantage of the time we do have. We will start first thing in the morning, though. Tonight your father and I are very tired, and will probably just head on up to bed.”

At the sound of her mother’s voice, sad with guilt built up over a year, Arianne felt the need to comfort her and forgive them both for their discretions, simply responding, “Of course, Mom! Go get some rest, I’m sure you’ve had enough of a shock tonight and could certainly use it. We will talk more in the morning.” Crossing the room to where her parents still stood, not having moved an inch since she first walked into the kitchen, Arianne kissed them both on the cheek and hugged their frail, sagging bodies. She watched as they shuffled up the stairs and into their bedroom, her love for them filling the deepest caverns of her chest.

Her mother locked eyes with her, her eyes glistening with a mixture of sadness and love, as she said, “Goodnight honey. We love you”

Her parents then exchanged another worried look, turned around, and walked briskly up the stairs and down the hall into their bedroom. As the light clicked on and the door snapped shut, Arianne could hear her parents begin talking in an urgent tone of voice, and wondered what was bothering them so much. *Well, they obviously do not want to talk about it, whatever it may be.* Arianne decided she would push no further, but wait until tomorrow when they finally caught up before bringing up the subject. At this thought, the tea kettle began to scream. Arianne quickly turned off the burner, grabbed a mug and a bag of chamomile, added the water, as



well as a small spoonful of honey, and made her way back to her room for the final time that night.

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The following morning, Arianne awoke to the salty smell of freshly cooked bacon, the sweetness of French toast, and the comforting smell of freshly ground Arabica beans bubbling in the coffee pot. Upon rising, she immediately got the feeling that something was wrong. She could not explain it. Maybe it was the way the sunshine floated sadly into the room or the way the curtain rod sagged just slightly under the weight of the heavy curtains. Shaking off the feeling, Arianne dressed, brushed her hair, and headed down the stairs to the kitchen. As she hopped down the staircase, she suddenly stopped. Above the sound of the coffee-pot's groaning and gurgling and her parents' quiet murmuring rose a voice she did not like. Every nerve ending in her body began screaming at her to run; to flee from this malevolent voice. For a minute or two she stood, struggling with her own mind, on the staircase, trying to decide if she should listen to her frantic body or continue into the warm kitchen that seemed so inviting. With the strong sense that she would regret it, Arianne finally quelled her panic and continued down the stairs cautiously and entered the kitchen.

The source of the malicious voice was identified immediately. He was a tall man, probably in his mid-thirties, with dark hair and black, thick-framed glasses and a crisp white shirt tucked into a pair of dark trousers. He was standing across the room from her mother, who looked back and forth between him and Arianne nervously as he began to speak. Her father was no longer in the room, and Arianne wondered where he had gone so quickly and quietly.

"Arianne, welcome! Please, come join us," Dr. Jameson said, smiling and waving his hand at her in a gesture that suggested that she was safe. Arianne slowly inched into the room, constantly looking towards her mother for an explanation, who was now avoiding her eyes as Arianne had avoided the boy's on the platform the day before. She could see tears beginning to well up in her mother's eyes as she turned away from her daughter.

"Honey," her mother said in a strained voice, struggling to spit the words out of her distraught mouth, "we called Creedmoor last night after you went to bed, just to make sure that we were all on the same page. They were worried sick about you, wondering where you had gone off to. Sweetheart, why did you do something so dangerous? You know you have

to go back. You can't stay here anymore."

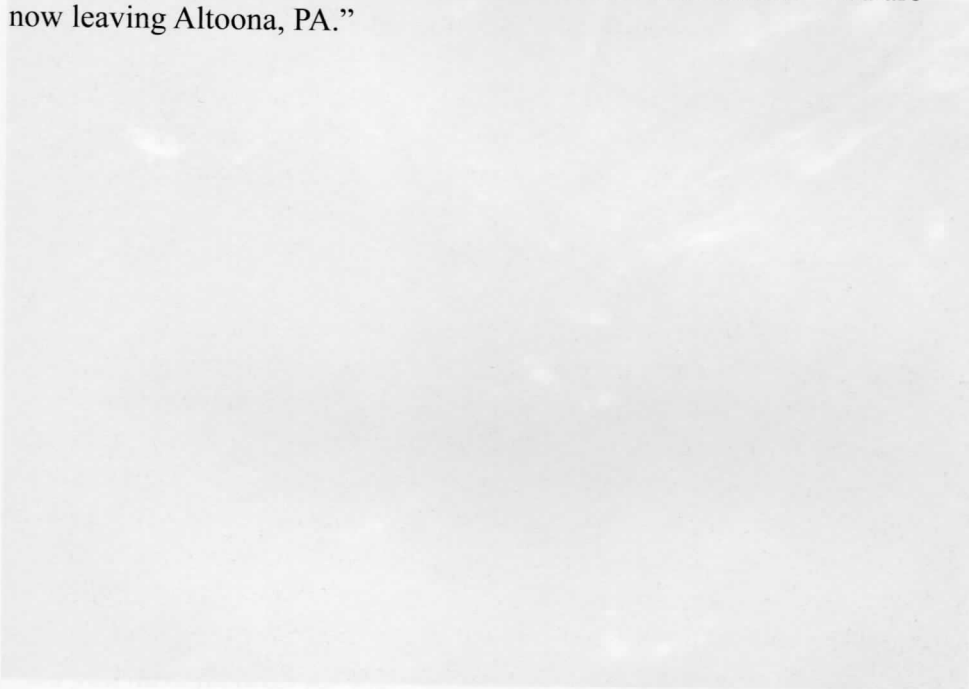
Arianne's head began to spin, the images of her mother and Dr. Jameson starting to swim in front of her. Thankfully Dr. Jameson seemed to expect her reaction, and moved swiftly as her legs buckled under her, catching her before her head could smack into her father's beloved hardwood floor. As she was gently placed on the couch, her mind began to race, and memories of dark hallways, therapy sessions, and the pills she hid under her pillow began flooding back to her. She suddenly did not recognize where she was or remember why she was there. Outside of her haze, she heard her mom moan to Dr. Jameson through her tears, her voice tinged with anger, "It's happened again. It's been five years since that weekend! I thought you said that everything was going smoothly; that she was getting better!"

"I am so very sorry, madam," Dr. Jameson replied, "If I had been made aware of the fact that she was not taking her medication I would have put in place extra precautions to prevent her from escaping again. I will take her back immediately while she does not know what is going on. It will be easier on all of you, and I will ensure that it never happens again."

"Thank you very much, sir," her mother answered curtly, dissolving into tears and running up the stairs into her bedroom. Dr. Jameson followed her, and Arianne found herself alone in her parents' living room. Without thinking, she immediately sprang up from the couch and ran towards the front door. Opening the door she ran head-first into her father's chest. For a split-second she caught his eyes. Her heart almost burst at the sadness she saw in their depths before she pushed past him and into the front yard. Once outside, she ran. She did not pay attention to where she was going or what she was doing; her body moved of its own accord, muscles straining and breath heaving with every frantic step. She heard the yelling and footsteps of sanitarium guards behind her. The ones who were standing in her front yard outside of a black Crown Victoria when she made her flight from the house. As the yells began to get louder and louder, she ran faster, pushing her already exhausted body even further, until suddenly she felt a tiny pinprick in her shoulder and lost control of her legs, tumbling through the leaves and bracken of the floor of the forest she darted into just a few moments before. She reached behind her and felt the soft feathers of a dart sticking out of her back. Just before the world went dark, she let out a moan to rival those of the gray wolves that frequented the woods around her parents' house, letting all of her

disappointment and heartache leave her body in one final expression.

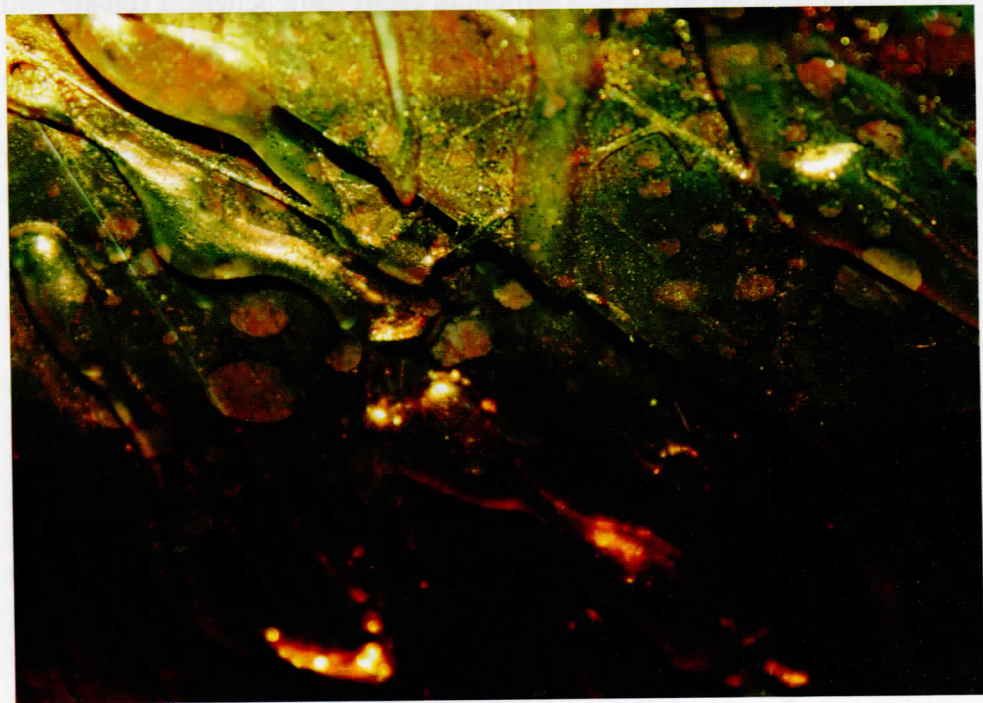
When Arianne opened her eyes, she was alone. Her arms and legs wrapped in a white blanket under the red straps of the gurney that were holding her still. She listened to the soft hum of the sanitarium ambulance's engine, staring at its painfully white ceiling with the lime green CRS logo imprinted in the center, mocking her. Frustrated and trying not to succumb to the tears that were forcing themselves up from behind her eyes, she slowly turned her head and looked out of the small square window on the ambulance doors. They were just leaving town, and Arianne could not help but release one final moan when she saw the bright green metal sign, on which was written in clean white letters: "You are now leaving Altoona, PA."



# Leaf Texture

Emily Hepfner

*Digital Photography*



# Unspoken

Michelle Ramos

## Her

The pause fits in a heartbeat,  
and yet I'm turning gray waiting.

*Listen, I just need to know.*

An ocean of silence churns between us,  
and I watch your honey eyes turn bitter.

*Some people, they've said-*

I regret ever asking the question.  
No answer will revive the cat.

*It's a silly question, but I need to know.*

Hearts burn like flash paper,  
and my equilibrium is punctured.

*Okay, um. I'm sure the answer is no, but-*

My eyes and nostrils fill with smoke;  
every second makes the vertigo worse.

*Do you have feelings for me?*

## Him

Why would she ask such a useless question?  
What could she hope to accomplish?

Do I have feelings for you?



All of the memories flash,  
like the lights in a highway tunnel  
when Mom is hitting the gas.  
Two years of inside jokes,  
and conversations never spoken.  
I can feel our heat.  
It bubbles and burns and combusts.  
Our friendship will be cigarette ash.

No.



# Fighting with Love

Loretta McKee

\* \* \* \* \*

“Help! Help! This soldier needs to be restrained!” Eleanor cried out to the other nurses. She was in one of the rooms of a wounded soldier. The soldier was skinny, but quite strong. He had piercing, blue eyes and long limbs. He was missing his left leg.

“Stop, you witch! Just let me die!” The soldier cried.

He was lashing out and crying hysterically. He looked from every corner of the room trying to find something. Eleanor was trying to hold down the man’s arms when other nurses who heard the shouting came into the room. They all tried to pin the soldier down as he tried to get up from the bed. His arms flew around wildly, and his head was spinning about.

“Stop all of you! Can you not see I am lost! Let me die!” The soldier cried louder and thrashed about.

“Someone, bring the sedative!” a nurse cried.

After finally restraining the soldier’s arms and legs, a doctor came with a needle and injected it into the soldier. The man kept fighting until finally the sedative worked into his blood, and his eyes grew soft as his arms began to slump. Finally, he was resting peacefully like a small child in his bed. Eleanor stepped back from the man as the doctor came up to her.

“What happened here?”

Eleanor was panting; her eyes felt heavy. “I-I came in to check on my patient. He had an operation just last night. He woke up and noticed that his leg was gone. He just became so frightened and hysterical. He tried to take my pen and... and stab himself. I-I did what I could, but... He just...tried to kill himself.”

The doctor looked back at the soldier in the bed. He fixed his eyes on the man’s missing leg. “He looks to be no more than 18 years old... All right, Nurse Rigby, you should go take a break. Start up again when you feel better.”

Eleanor straightened up and walked out the patient’s room. She looked back at the sleeping soldier. She studied the way that his face was now sweetly dreamy when only moments ago it was full of anguish and pain. *18 years old... Did he too listen to those swaying words in the*

*nickelodeons?* Eleanor thought as memories of the war propaganda flashed in her mind. *Why... why would you do this? Why would you try to kill yourself? I am sorry, but I could not let you do it. I could not let you die.* Eleanor looked down at his one leg and then at his face. *Oh, God...how could I ever ease such pain?*

\* \* \* \* \*

Eleanor walked down the long hallways of the hospital. She felt exhausted from the fight she was in moments ago. She found a chair that was pushed against the wall, where she sat down with a sigh. Eleanor had been at this hospital for only a month, but she had seen a great deal of pain to last her a lifetime. The soldier she had to restrain was only one of the many horrible sights she experienced as a nurse. Eleanor sat back and began to remember one of her very first patients.

One soldier she had nursed was a tall and lean major. He was in his thirties and had one of the most handsome faces that Eleanor's eyes had ever seen. He had been shot in the chest just like Eleanor's new patient. During his operation, the doctor was not able to stop his wound from bleeding out.

Eleanor became uneasy and sick as blood leaked on the operation table; she tried to clot the wound, but the blood continued to seep out. The sedative was not working any longer for the soldier, and he was in great pain. Eleanor remembered how, as the doctor prepared another sedative, the soldier's eyes were opening. He turned towards her and looked right into her eyes. Then the soldier gave her a big smile and tears were in his eyes. Eleanor clenched her fists as she remembered his words, "Margaret... Margaret! I love..." He died on the operation table in Eleanor's arms.

*He called out for his lover or maybe even his wife... Margaret... Oh, if only she was there... If only I could have done something for him.* Eleanor got up from the chair and stumbled down the hall. *I could not do anything for him. I cannot do anything for any of these soldiers. They are all just moments from dying. They are all the brothers, sons, and husbands who will never make it home, and they all depend on me to save them.*

Eleanor rested her head against the hospital's wall. Tears rolled down her eyes. She looked down at her hands. *You wretched hands! Why can you do nothing? Why can't you save these men? You...you are too weak!* Eleanor cried into her hands. *Never... I will never be able to save one life! I cannot save these men just as I could not be there for Randolph.*

Eleanor wobbled down the hall until she stopped at room J33, Lieutenant Chesterton's room. Without thinking, Eleanor opened the door and stepped into the cold room. Lieutenant Chesterton lay where Eleanor had left him this morning. She walked over to his bed and looked down at the injured man as her eyes filled with tears and blurred her vision.

"And you, Lieutenant? What will become of you?"

Eleanor paused as if expecting the man to speak, but he did not. He silently lay there breathing slowly. Eleanor slid down to the floor crying.

"Why? Why do you not wake up? What must I do? Oh, if only I was strong enough to save you! I know I am not! Every time I look at the mirror and see myself, I see a weak little girl who knows nothing of how to save you!"

Eleanor sat there weeping as she hated herself for every soldier she saw die before her eyes. "Why could I not save you? Why did all of you die, and why was I left here? What am I supposed to do?"

*Why did we listen? Why did we all listen to those words? "Enlist, enlist, enlist!" For what? For men like Lieutenant Chesterton to die and for nurses like me to live regretting our weakness? Why...?*

Then, she looked over at Lieutenant Chesterton and wished with all of her heart that he would wake up. "Please...if anything... Do something! Wake up! Oh, God, I am so weak....so wretched... Show me what to do! Help me to see the way to help these men. Please, God, let the Lieutenant wake up." Eleanor rested her head against the bed and prayed.

\* \* \* \* \*

# Bourbon

Kayley Greene

*Digital Photography*





# A Joker

Elijah Clarke

I cannot control my hand with all of the cards that other people have dealt me. I have been pushed beyond a breaking point, and now I suffer. I suffer the consequences of actions that other people have pushed me to commit. Though it's really my fault. If only I was stronger.

Why is this life? To be put inside a situation where you need to be strong to come out of it unscathed - it's mad. Others may disagree, but I think this is where every problem occurs. We all put one another in situations so weighted that it hurts to be in them. Then we blame the victim for not being capable of carrying the weight.

They better hope to God my next hand isn't dealt with a joker.

# Bear

Sarah Jefferson

*Raku Fired Ceramics*



# Lillian Spencer Award

The following pieces have been selected by the Calliope staff as the recipients of the Lillian Spencer Award for outstanding submissions in the following categories; Art and Photography, Fiction/Non-fiction, and Poetry.

**Art and Photography: Rose Wellington, “Blehhhhh”**

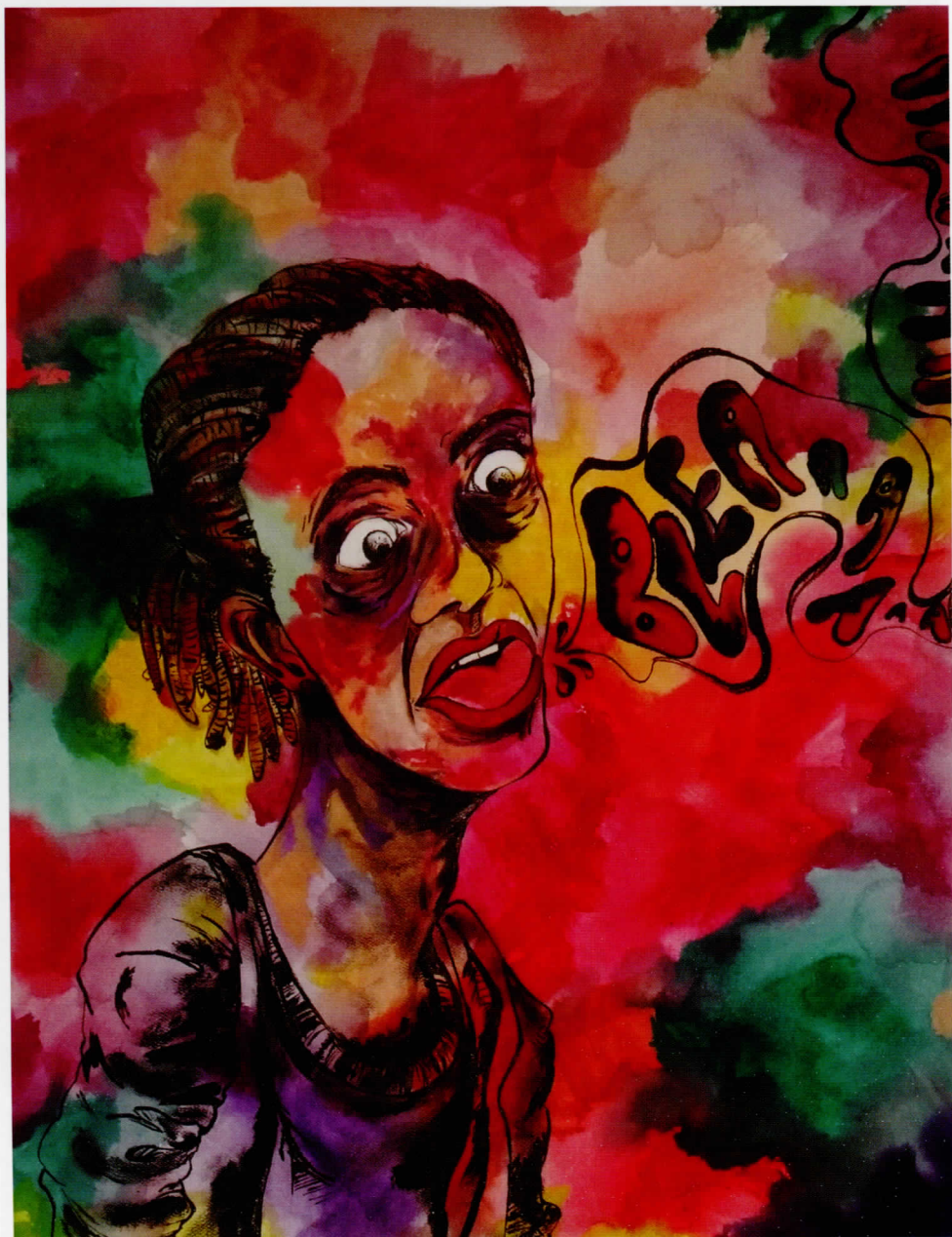
**Fiction/ Non-fiction: Shaquan Jones, “The Light of the Forever Brave”**

**Poetry: Michelle Ramos, “After the Eulogy”**

# Blehhhhh

Rose Wellington

*Watercolor and Black Ink*



# The Light of the Forever Brave

Shaquan Jones

## Chapter 1

“Pirates!” the captain shouted, jerking forward “Get the nobles below! We have to defend this ship!”

Huruma’s mind spun in bedevilment. Sparks of red and orange burst around her. The cold kiss of death pecked the cheek of the magnificent vessel sending it rocking. Her mother called out to her in panic.

“Huruma!” However, the countenance of the enemy vessel dragged Huruma into a daze of fear. The defeated vessel cried and moaned knocking poor Huruma off her feet. Her mother reached out for her but a shiny metal flickered at her mother’s neck right before Huruma’s eyes. Huruma grabbed the last bit of railing still attached to the ship and flung herself into the icy bosom of the sea.

She gasped and choked as she floated to the top of the water. She frantically searched for something, anything to grab hold of as she barely held her head above the water. Fiery planks fell behind her as her eyes began to close. She could hear her mother screaming out to her as her eyes began to drop and her body slowly breached the calm waters surrounding her. This gave her no warmth, and no comfort in her last breath. The icy killer stabbed at her leaving her motionless. All she could feel was the kiss of the almighty father who wanted her dead.

Splash!

“Wake up, child!” a woman said pouring a pail of hot water on Huruma’s face “Get up! Get off of my precious shells!”

“Where am I?” Huruma managed to spit out puzzled by the woman’s appearance “Who are you?”

The woman placed one hand on her hip and gave her an angry glare. She was a stout young woman with skin the color of a grape one might see after many days of torture beneath the sun. Her eyes were a deep yellow with just a pinch of green. She wore a fine gown trimmed in gold, but her unpolite gestures said she wasn’t of a noble background. She once again called out to the puzzled girl and Huruma jumped to her feet.

“I am Mora of the Belvette Kingdom,” the woman said proudly, “I am one of the best servants to his Highness’ son Prince Arcenus. And you are?”

“I am Huruma Allibe,” Huruma said curtsying. “I am from the Evangeliot Kingdom north of here. The ship for my voyage was attacked



by pirates and I-”

“Did you say Huruma Allibe?” the woman grinned. “THE Huruma Allibe the third? The daughter of those halfwit Knitwits Joseph and Maria Allibe?”

“Yes Ma’am.” Huruma sighed, “But, right now my mother and father could be stranded or-”

“Dead,” she boomed. “This is not a safe place for someone like you. Leave now. We do not fancy the likes of an Allibe. You and your ancestors are trash. I will not let Prince Arcenus’ land be dirtied with the likes of you.”

The woman turned to leave and Huruma grabbed the tail of her dress. As she did so a slip of paper fell from the woman’s pocket. It had Huruma’s picture on it and *Bounty* written at the top. *500,000,000,000.00 rubies* was the headline. Huruma looked at the flyer and stood bewildered. How could a bounty be on her head? She was merely the daughter of a feudal lord. Her father and mother’s reputation was nothing special. They had little to no money and no special talents. They were merely slave tradesmen.

“Don’t worry, the collector wants you alive,” the woman smiled. “You won’t be killed, but the people of this kingdom will surely hurt you. You must leave. Take a boat back to your country. Address the matter there. If you stay here, you will experience terrible misfortunes. You are of nobility. Take the easy way.”

“I didn’t know I was of a noble background until I was seven!” Huruma shouted. “Who are you to tell me who I am? My parents could be dying! I need help and you-”

“Child,” she sighed “I have already told you that they are dead. The icy waters of the seas spare no one. If I hadn’t found you floating during my morning patrol, you would’ve died. Now, take your life with gratitude and leave.”

Huruma stood silently as the woman left her at the shore of the beach hurriedly. She let out a sigh that could pierce the heart of Athena if she were a mortal. The sun lit up the lonely beach with a golden smile as she made her way towards town. Her velvet dress was now an unrecognizable shade of purple and her golden shoes were now dirtied with mud and rocks. Her beautiful jet black hair was wet and plagued with shells. She was welcomed in the city by the judgmental stares of Aristocracy and Poise. She stuck out like a sore thumb. People covered their noses as she walked by and gestured towards a bath house. Huruma perked up at the

sight of it and ran towards the entrance.

“Do you have any form of payment?” A woman said, glaring at her from behind the door. “It doesn’t look like you do.”

“No ma’am.” Huruma replied. “Is there any way I can make the payment up?”

“Make the payment up?” the woman shouted in anger. “Young lady this is a respectable business we uphold here. We do not have time for low-class scum who do not know or respect the value of business. Run along! You are scaring away business.”

Huruma was pushed to the side as two plump customers made their way to the woman. Their dresses were very unflattering and they waddled even as they stood. Huruma held back her laughter as they criticized the woman.

“Elizabeth!” they yelled in unison. “Have you no sense in charity? Why, it is our duty to lend to those less fortunate a helping hand and a deepening pocket, no?”

“Madam Stake and Mistress Walters!” the woman cried. “I do deeply apologize for the child. She is merely a beggar. What good is there in helping a beggar?”

“There is very much good in that,” they continued, “Look at the child! She is dirty, penniless, and it looks as if she is stubborn. Give her board!”

The woman came from behind the door and defiantly pushed Huruma in. Huruma was led to a vibrant room in the back of the bath house followed by the two women. She was undressed and ushered into a tub in the middle of the room. The hot, steamy water seemed to kiss the foundation of her skin as the dirt rolled off her. Her dirty, wet hair returned to the beautiful black silk she prided herself in. Her skin was now back to its original porcelain color and her green eyes shined brightly in warmth. The two plump women stood in awe of her beauty. The room was silent for a few moments where only the splashing of the water could be heard. Huruma let her body sink into the warm water as Madam Stake and Mistress Walters began their inclusive chatter.

“She is gorgeous!” Madam Stake said with a low whisper “Look at her skin. Who in this kingdom has skin that white?”

“I agree!” Mistress Walters chimed in. “Her proportions are perfect and her beauty is astounding. Why, with a daughter of her caliber the family could even win the heart of the prince! What a lucky family-”

“Mary, you are right!” Madam Stake said with a sly smile, “We found her on the streets. Maybe, she doesn’t have a family? If so, I can easily

adopt her as my own with the approval of the mayor. Then, just think. We introduce her to the Prince and he falls in love, then happily ever after. Well, for us that is!”

“What a profound idea!” she said motioning to a servant in the corner. “Go fetch my husband, Mayor Walters. Tell him it is urgent and that his wife is in need of assistance.”

As the servant made her way out of the room, Huruma popped from beneath the water with a loud gasp for air. She sat up in the tub and began to massage her legs and play with her toes. Her mother had taught her how to wash herself. With the thoughts of her family clouding her mind tears trickled down her face. What if she could never see them again? What if they were dead? Madam Stake and Mistress Walters came to her side and held her as she erupted in screams. Huruma buried her face in Madame Stake’s breasts as the woman began to rock her, cooing as if Huruma were a baby. They sat like this for what seemed like an hour until Huruma lifted her head and again let her body sink again into the warm water that engulfed her.

# After the Eulogy

Michelle Ramos

Bright irises stare at me  
in full bloom, and my heart  
slows to match the easy tempo  
of the bug orchestra: the soundtrack  
of those sweet Carolina summers.  
In the wake of starlight burning  
my eyes, the waves crashing  
in my mind cease and the ocean  
is still. Eternity can be reduced  
to mathematics and emotions  
to chemical equations but this  
is a moment: a space  
between spaces, a “parenthesis  
in eternity.” It is starshine  
glittering in dew drops at this time  
when morning or night is determined  
by how close we are to our dreams.  
You are awake in our parenthesis  
and no one, not even your neighbors  
under freshly turned soil, can hear  
me whisper goodbye in your marble ear.

# Staff and Contributors

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# Goals

The Calliope is published annually by Armstrong State University and offers students a great opportunity not only to showcase their creative genius but to become a published author/artist!

We accept submissions in the following categories: Poetry, Fiction / Creative Non-fiction / Plays, and Visual Art / Photography. Students are allowed unlimited submissions and can vary their submissions between categories. All submissions are judged anonymously by the current Editor and the Calliope Staff and the pieces with either unanimous or the majority of votes are the ones chosen for publication.

## **Want to submit to the Calliope?**

Submissions for the Calliope begin in the Fall semester each year, typically after the new Editor and Staff are chosen.

If you are interested in submitting to next year's Calliope or joining the staff, any questions can be sent to the faculty advisor, Dr. Christopher Baker, at [christopher.baker@armstrong.edu](mailto:christopher.baker@armstrong.edu).



# ARMSTRONG STATE UNIVERSITY 2016

Cover image: *Bear*, by Sarah Jefferson