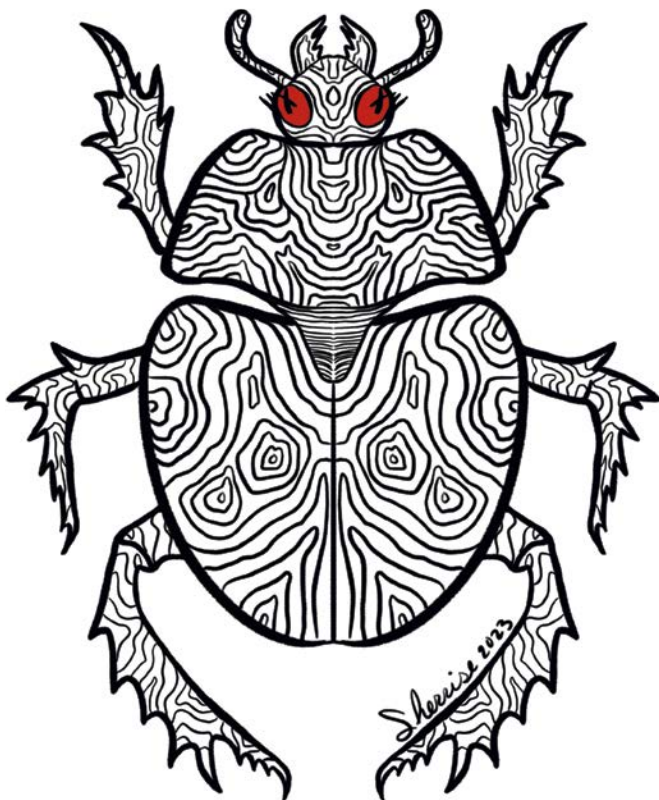


ALBANY STATE UNIVERSITY

The Pierian

Literary + Visual Arts Journal



2023 Edition

The Pierian

Literary + Visual Arts Journal

FRONT COVER

Sherrise Stover is a senior Visual Arts major at Albany State University. Their work has been featured at the Albany Area Arts Council and in the *Bridge the East* exhibition. Visit their solo exhibition in the Arthur R. Berry Gallery in the ASU Dr. Joseph W. Holley Fine Arts Center during March/April 2024.

* * *

Contact information:

The Pierian Journal
Fine Arts Center/Arts + Humanities
Albany State University
504 College Drive
Albany, GA 31705

Email: thepierian@asurams.edu

Website + Submission Information: <https://www.asurams.edu/academic-affairs/college-of-arts-sciences/arts-and-humanities/eng-ml-mc/the-pierian/>

The Pierian: Literary + Visual Arts Journal is the property of Albany State University and published by the Department of Arts + Humanities. All rights are reserved.

Albany State University is an Equal Opportunity Employer. It is the policy of the University to act Affirmatively to recruit, hire and promote for all jobs, classifications and positions without regard to race, religion, color, national origin, age, sex, handicap or veteran status.

ALBANY STATE UNIVERSITY

The Pierian

Literary + Visual Arts Journal

2023 Edition

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Ansley Simmons

ASSOCIATE EDITORS
Ulf Kirchdorfer
Scott Marini
Brian McAllister

LAYOUT + DESIGN
Ansley Simmons

The Pierian is a literary and visual arts online journal. In the tradition of the mythological Macedonian spring believed to be a fountain of knowledge inspiring all who drink from it, The Pierian publishes visual arts, poetry, flash fiction, short fiction, and nonfiction by local and national emerging and established authors and artists.

Emerita Professor Dr. Velma F. Grant established the Pierian Club for English majors at Albany State University in 1967 and later founded The Pierian Journal. Beginning in 2023, The Pierian will be published by ASU professors from the divisions of English and Visual Arts within the Department of Arts + Humanities.

The Pierian

Literary + Visual Arts Journal

RYAN ADRICK	<i>Renewal</i>	10
CHRISTIAN ANDRADE-HERRERA	<i>The Mexican</i>	11
DEZMOND ARD'IS	<i>Chroma Dedication</i>	13
COURTNEY BAILEY	<i>Soul Tie</i>	14
CASAUNDRRA BEARD	<i>Domestic Duties</i>	15
	<i>Good Moms Need Help</i>	16
JON BOLLES	<i>Barstow Street</i>	17
TAMLA BOONE	<i>Ash Sculpture</i>	18
	<i>Deep</i>	19
	<i>Frog Quilt</i>	20
MEISHA BRADY	<i>I'm Not a Poet</i>	21
JERRY BRADLEY	<i>Ice Cream for Breakfast</i>	22
	<i>The Wreck of Our Life Together</i>	23
CRAIG BRASCO	<i>Alone</i>	24
CHRISTOPHER BURDETT	<i>Fortune Teller</i>	25
CAMERON BURNAM	<i>Neon Planets</i>	26
JEANICE TRIBUE BURNETTE	<i>Water, Gas, & Light Commission</i>	27
ERIN BUTLER	<i>The Shadows</i>	28
SUZANNA CHRISTIAN	<i>Neighborhood in Puddles</i>	29

JEREMY COLBERT	<i>I Can't Breathe</i>	30
	<i>Where the Spirit Meets the Bone</i>	31
JERRY CRAVEN	<i>Ariadna of Stars</i>	32
	<i>The Day Our Marriage Ended</i>	34
JACQUI CUMINGS	<i>Untitled</i>	35
JOSHUA DAVIS	<i>Cafe & Soul Food</i>	36
ABIGAIL DUNN	<i>The Red Cloak</i>	37
BROOKE EVANS	<i>Little Waves</i>	39
RICHARD FOREMAN	<i>The Mistake</i>	43
	<i>Vati</i>	44
PHIL GLEASON	<i>Halls of Knowledge</i>	46
ANGELA GORDON	<i>Ceramic Candle Holder</i>	47
A'LEJAH GORE	<i>The Girl with Perspective</i>	48
OLIVIA GRAVENESE	<i>Arcadia</i>	49
JESSICA HINES	<i>#75</i>	50
	<i>Southern Stories: A Memoir</i>	51
KATHERINE HOERTH	<i>If Babies Grew as Readily as Ears of Corn</i>	55
	<i>Pandora in 2020</i>	56
	<i>Pandora in Omaha</i>	57
BOB HOWARD	<i>Porto Della Città Vecchia</i>	58
SAMUEL JAMES	<i>Gold Dust in the Lamplight</i>	59
MICAH MARIE JOHNSON	<i>Alter Ego Mythology</i>	66
	<i>Upon Seeing an Apparition</i>	67

VIRGIL KNOX	<i>Jayko</i>	68
	<i>Untitled</i>	69
CRISTALYNN LEE	<i>Unspoken Love</i>	70
BRET LEFLER	<i>Cholla 2</i>	72
	<i>Leon</i>	73
AUDREY MILKS	<i>Royal Hearts</i>	74
RAYMON MITCHELL	<i>Discrimination</i>	75
LAURENCE MUSGROVE	<i>Drink It Up</i>	76
	<i>Luna</i>	77
	<i>Offline</i>	78
TRAVIS PECK	<i>Under the Pier</i>	79
JAYLAN RAWLINGS	<i>Check Up</i>	80
DANIEL SHAVER	<i>Frosty Morning</i>	81
SHERRISE STOVER	<i>Insecticide</i>	82
COREY THOMPSON	<i>Peace of Mind</i>	83
CLINT WEATHERS	<i>Best Prom Ever</i>	84
	<i>Mural</i>	85
JOANNA WHITE	<i>Underbelly Armor</i>	86
CHARLES R. WILLIAMS	<i>Kaleidoscopic</i>	87
JOHN WILLIAMS	<i>Unchurched</i>	88
TIMOTHY WILLIAMS	<i>History of My People</i>	94
	<i>Loneliness</i>	95
	<i>Man of Loneliness</i>	96
TYGEL WOOTEN	<i>Reaching</i>	97

RYAN ADRICK

Renewal



CHRISTIAN ANDRADE-HERRERA

The Mexican

I am Mexican.

The pride of my people

The horror of the conquistadores

Like Baldwin's notes of a native son

In a country that has raised me

Yet systemically oppressed me.

I'm the son of the bean plant

Raised entangled in the corn

Taken to concrete-filled lands

Uprooted from the ground, transplant

My childhood, my innocence, I mourn

Dirty callused hard-working hands

Mexicans toil

I'm Mexican

dark red like clay

Brown, like the fertile soil

I'm mestizo.

Scratched, pulled, polished by the American system

And the color of my skin became ashy

From ash comes rebirth

Like a Phoenix

Yet I'm colorful

Like the hummingbird

With a voice demanding to be heard

I am the crop and the harvest

Trying my hardest

I'm Mexican

With a heart of Cactus fruit

Full of prickles

My mind in a dispute

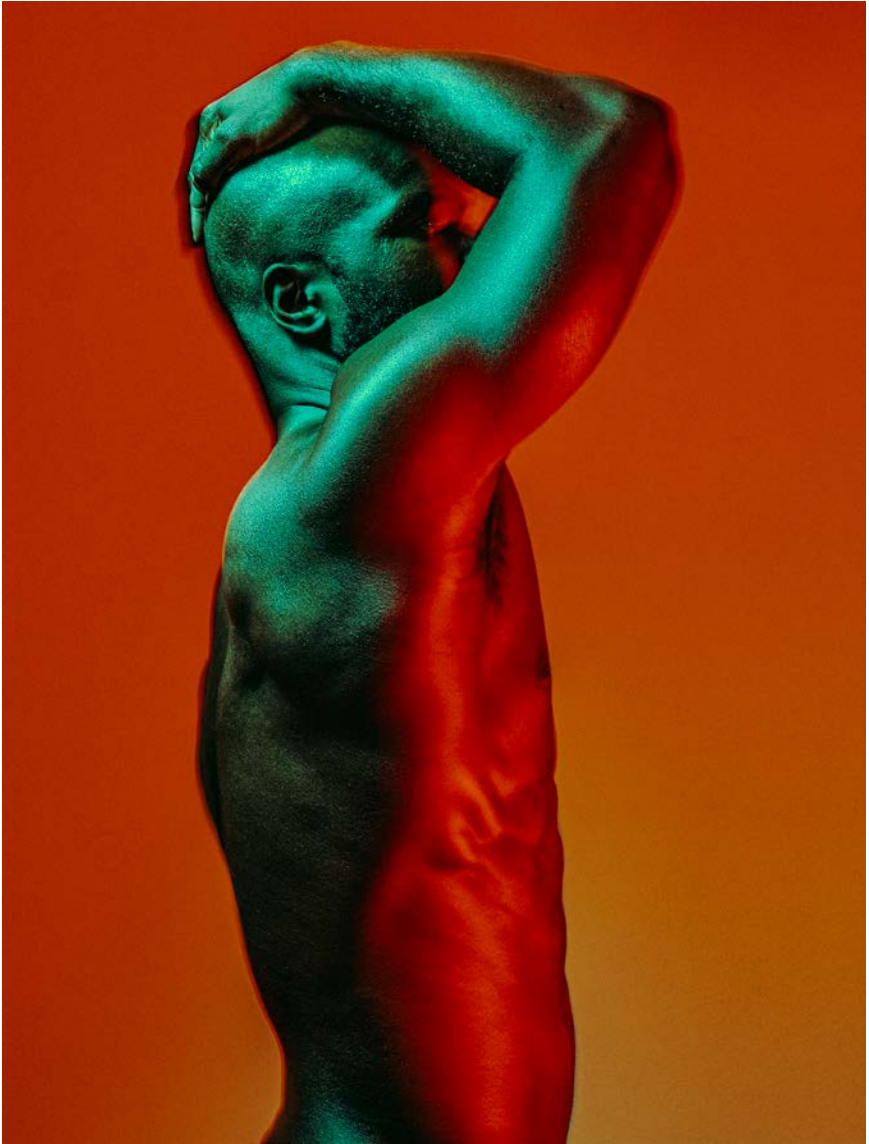
Am I Mexican enough?

Not Mexican enough
for the Mexicans
Not American enough
for the Americans
But I'm Mexican
My soul is in a chain
Yearning to fly home
I live in a place of abstract borders
Confined by labels and imaginary lines
An immigrant
A wetback

But I am Mexican
The pride of my people
The horror of the conquistadores

DEZMOND ARD'IS

Chroma Dedication



COURTNEY BAILEY

Soul Tie

I'm free from you

I thought I would never see the day

I'm free from you

It feels so liberating to say

I'm free from you

I shut myself out from every man but now

I'm free from you

I started to look for love again

I'm free from you

I found love and even if it's short lived, I proclaim

I'm free from you

My journey and purpose begin because now

I'm free from you.

I tore myself down and found myself again

I'm free from you.

I almost went on the deep end

I'm free from you.

Your control, your anger, your hatred towards me

I'm free from you.

You no longer are tied to me

I'm free from you.

Thank you, Jesus, for setting me free.

I am free from you...

CASAUNDRAS BEARD

Domestic Duties



CASAUNdra BEARD

Good Moms Need Help



JON BOLLES

Barstow Street



TAMLA BOONE

Ash Sculpture

If you gather, collect, scoop
up the ashes from the
damage
collateral, stinging, smoking
steam rising-singe-
scoop gather-smooth over
the hard surface
left hand pull to center
right hand grab tender
to center
pile up, pick up
dust
Pile of ashes= hill, mountain
mound of arson
Pat at a top to even=
then squeeze add...
what does it create
add water to make a clay
sludge blow dry
fingers to squish, roll build
what kind of sculpture
comes from the ashes
you
make beautiful things from ashes

TAMLA BOONE

Deep

Where does my deep call to deep

Who would answer

Would you?

Would you hear my sigh

my foot steps

The rhythm of my path in

flip flops

bare feet

wet arches

sweaty toes

sand cracks

sigh

my deep calls for air

a hug

a kiss

a longing

for breath

peace

love

Unconditional love

sweet love

a scent

familiar

It calls for justice

fairness

a cause

a rope to tie me together

with another's deep?

TAMLA BOONE

Frog Quilt



MEISHA BRADDDY

I'm Not a Poet

I'm not a poet but here I am,

Sitting in my living room writing

I've been dreaming about writing poems again, so I said why not.

Why not give it a shot

Why not let out all my frustrations and tribulations on paper

Why not write about dreams and love or what I dream love is like

I'm not a poet but I'm excited to start writing again so when life get tiring,
I can always just pick up a pen

And let it flow like how the wind flows through the leaves or

How a cool summer breeze flow across your cheek

Trust me, I'm NOT a poet but here I am writing

Hopefully this time it sticks cause I need an escape for when
I want to cry but cant

And for when I want to yell and scream, but have no voice

Or when I just simply have no choice but to write

So, I really hope this sticks.

I'm not a poet, but here I am.

JERRY BRADLEY

Ice Cream for Breakfast

formal as dessert
the peaches
now as frozen as a priest's collar
were fresh yesterday
like the ache
between my thumb and forefinger
and my one elbow's complaint
brought about by a half-hour's cranking
the runty old churn

this week brought a baptism
and a funeral – two days
of neckties and jackets
and other reminders of heaven
returned like misdelivered mail

in service I was uncomfortably warmed
by homilies and hymns
but what I placed in the collection plate
is surpassed by what's now in my bowl

JERRY BRADLEY

The Wreck of Our Life Together

"I drink to the wreck of our life together." Anna Akhmatova, "Last Toast"

he orbited the Dairy Queen several times
before he caught her eye
the signals he got in their first kiss
were stronger than late-night radio

one usually forms good habits
and falls into bad ones
so they waited as fast as they could
and two year later wed

he told friends he'd married her for her looks
but not the ones she'd been giving him lately
and a lot of personal history is not fit to repeat
though he never got lost in his own tears

tonight he notices the run in the night's stocking
how the wind sings at every crossroad
but no matter whatever edge he crosses
it's a place where he never seems to have the right of way

CRAIG BRASCO

Alone



CHRISTOPHER BURDETT

Fortune Teller



CAMERON BURNAM

Neon Planets



JEAUNICE TRIBUE BURNETTE
Water, Gas, & Light Commission



ERIN BUTLER

The Shadows

It eats at you like a thriving cancer
in a child's body.
Sucking all the life from inside of you,
spitting you out
like the whale did Jonah.
Day, after day, after day.
I scream internally.
I can't touch it, or smell it, or taste it.
I feel it.
It crawls into your skin,
burrows in your body,
claiming its home.
It feeds on your thoughts and emotions.
Disappointment, worry, and sadness
bring it joy.
It glides inside of you,
waiting. It feels like knives
cutting and gashing into your chest.
I look down.
I can see
the fast pulsating of my heart.
In and out, in and out, in and out.
I say it over and over
in my mind. Lurking in the darkness,
It cackles like Jack Torrence.
I run for the brown paper bag
that gives hope to my panicked soul.
The whole world around me fades
away.
It's just me
and my shadows.
Day, after day, after day.

SUZANNA CHRISTIAN

Neighborhood in Puddles



JEREMY COLBERT

I Can't Breathe



JEREMY COLBERT

Where the Spirit Meets the Bone



JERRY CRAVEN

Ariadna of Stars



Pause here beside Ariadna
and her cosmos, judge, if you dare
in your scrap of time, and declare
her art pretty.

But for now
listen, look at the oval galaxy afire
clutched by that black dot
ordering stars to orbit

in perfection, stars always obedient,
and a galactic tail flaming a ring
above this speckled moon.

Here might you consider how
the woman on floating rock
can know in art's small
forever a truth beyond pretty,
beyond any momentary pause?

If we could see them, might Ariadna's eyes
be startled with realization of how
stars on a moon sing
light in dangerous breath,
or maybe not stars but sugar sand
building toxic confection on an altered moon,
sugar crystals huge, white,
tiny, directing final death
even within ageless, painted art?

Might she teach us to feel how vital,
most holy beauty of new light
in the butterfly, the sombrero, the oval orange,
the spiral and other galaxies unnumbered
stirs stardust into creating life?

And what though all stars
be doomed to sagging orbits beyond birth
into death with eternal black
dots waiting, waiting?

Here on the wall sits Ariadna
pegged in silence, watching
in a forever of alive and dying art:
how can her eyes not nudge
us into finding beauty in the truth
of starlight and its black
counterpart, dark and rough—
how can her hidden eyes not
teach why simply pretty
in art must never be enough?

JERRY CRAVEN

The Day Our Marriage Ended

My words for her
are sweet mango juice
and acid lemons.
Some words fall like dead trees,
hard as oak,
and I cannot feel my heart.
She hears little, it seems,
then speaks salt words,
painful words tasting of dust
and with the tenor of indifferent cats.
When I say I must leave forever,
her eyes are dry as sawdust,
her lips are sour cherries,
dead apples,
and I cannot understand her heart.



JACQUI CUMINGS

Untitled



JOSHUA DAVIS

Cafe & Soul Food



ABIGAIL DUNN

The Red Cloak

A chilly gust of wind whipped through his snowy white beard. Putting one wobbly foot in front of the other, he hobbled his way quickly down the dirt path. His breath was heavy and wheezing with every step. The crunch of his tired feet echoed through the mountains. Clutched in his weathered hands was a small brown package.

Mr. Thomas had finished putting up the donkey, and was settling in, when a knock sounded at his door. “Blast it!” he muttered with a scowl as he fetched his gun from the mantel. He swung open the door preparing to shoot. In front of him stood a wizened old man, his cloak the color of strawberries in springtime. The man gave a slight nod of his head. Without a word the door was opened wide, and Mr. Thomas invited him in with one short phrase, “It’s time then.”

The sun rose, lighting up a pathetic dirt trail and the small shack beside it. Mr. Thomas exited his rotting habitation wearing his worn travelling clothes and headed towards his animal. The donkey swung her tail, idly munching grass, already saddled up well before dawn. He turned as the aging man made his way towards them. In the daylight his wrinkles cast deep shadows across his face. Mr. Thomas gestured to him to take a seat. Within moments they were off, the donkey moving down the trail and Mr. Thomas leading the way.

It was midday. Below the travelling trio was an aquamarine sea, across, a range of icy mountains shrouded with fog. Not a word was uttered between them, until suddenly, both faces paled. Thundering hooves were fast approaching. The two sped up, the cloak billowing as they rushed towards a dark cavern in the distance. Muttering mystically the old man turned, releasing a large black crow. It flew across the swirling wind, swooping dangerously towards a dozen soldiers emerging from around the bend. Chaos ensued. The soldiers shouted as their horses shuffled and neighed frantically. The trio slipped away unnoticed. The bird cawed, laughing as it flew away.

In the safety of the cavern the two men paused silently. Beyond the mouth of the cave, orders to march on could be heard. With the danger past for now, Mr. Thomas felt the need to speak. “I was informed

that the king's men would be several days behind us." The old man said nothing. "We must leave post haste lest they return." Again, nothing. "Surely we must get to the destination before it is too late." Silence, until finally he croaked, "They will be back, and we will wait." It was not until late that night, still in the cave's darkness, that he spoke again, "You alone know the importance of this mission."

"The armed men that passed by seemed to know the importance just as well as I."

"They only know how valuable what I possess is. That it may lead to the downfall of their spoilt king. Nothing more." Again, the two fell back into silence. Only the occasional grunt of the large mule and the sound of nightlife outside the cave broke the quiet.

The sound of a slow-moving trio fought with the chirping of birds at dawn the next morning. Mr. Thomas hurried the poor mule along; their destination was getting close. "Stop." The old man's ancient voice rang out. He crawled off the back of the donkey. Through the stumps and dying trees he walked, until reaching a stream rushing through the mountains. Pulling the package from beneath his cloak he painstakingly unwrapped a simple blue vial. Uncorking it with his shaking hands he poured an enchanted liquid into the stream. "It is done," Mr. Thomas said grimly.

In the valley below, a guard rushed into the throne room. "Your majesty," he dropped to his knees, "the nobles in the village are dying off." His lips trembled; his brow sweaty. "They have traced it to the water, but I fear.... It may be too late." The king rose, his whole person adorned with jewels, with a solemn face he removed his crown. "The resistance has won then." He turned his back and left the room.

High in the alps, was a small shack, a well-fed donkey to the side. Inside was a roaring fire and two men, one ancient and one less so, enjoying a dinner of momentous size. Hanging on the doorway, bright in the dark, was a large red cloak.

BROOKE EVANS

Little Waves

Have you ever noticed how calm and magical the movement of the waves could be? The loveliness of the crystal blue color is portrayed to the human eye. That's all I have ever seen my entire life. My father and I have been close to the waters ever since my mother disappeared while she was in the ocean. Nobody knows, not even my father, knows how she ended up out there nor where she went. Some say she drowned, and the body was too deep in the water to find her. Others say she just kept swimming because she was mentally unstable, and she thought she could swim all the way to the city of Atlantis without being tired. The last conclusion made me think because my mother used to study mythical creatures that live in the waters of the earth. She would try to make me believe in those types of things like her, but I respectfully refused to do it.

She was obsessed with the ocean and its creatures so much that she would always go to the beach almost all day to either scope out or go swim in the water and not come back until dark. I actually thought of the possibility of her being a mermaid or something like in those Greek Mythology stories. She disappeared when I was thirteen years old. It has been almost 5 years. Words cannot describe how much my father missed my mother. My name is Aalto Colors. I am eighteen years old and today is the anniversary of my mother's disappearance, June 22, 2018. I live in sunny Maui, Hawaii. Today my father Kai and I are going to go out on the water on our boat to admire the water at the exact coordinates where my mother disappeared on this exact day.

We prayed every day she would come back because it was never confirmed she died. "Father, do we have any food I could have for a snack, please?" He handed me something out of the cooler. This specific treat was my mothers' favorite, a giant sugar cookie. I was about to eat it when all of a sudden a gust of wind blew on me and knocked the cookie out of my hand and onto the water. I was very disappointed, but I grabbed another one and held onto it tight. I noticed something very strange in the water. The cookie was still floating, like another force was keeping it up and then, *plop!* It got sucked down into the water. I was so shocked I moved away from the edge of the boat and ran to father.

“Father, come quick!” I yelled. I told him something was very worrisome about the water. He looked at me and said “Aalto, you’re starting to imagine again. We’ve talked about this.” He walked away. I screamed, “Come on, Father! I will prove it to you.” I took off the necklace my mother gave me before she disappeared. It was a Ying Yang but instead of the black and white parts it was the two Pisces fish. She told me to never take it off, especially if I go in the water. “Whoa, Aalto, don’t throw that in the water. That’s the last connection you have to your mother.” I said, “She told me this symbolizes the water and it would protect me.” “Are you actually going to believe that nonsense your mother told you,” he questioned. I looked at him so angrily. I just looked away and put the necklace back on. Father looked at me with a face of relief. As he turned away, I looked down at the water and I don’t know what came over me, but I jumped into the water without hesitation. My father ran over to try to save me, but I was already deep underwater.

As I was down there the necklace started to glow and I felt a tingling sensation. It was like my legs were disappearing. I never really learned how to swim, but I did learn how to sail. For some reason I wasn’t freaking out. I felt comfortable. Then out of nowhere I opened my eyes and saw a shadowy figure come toward me. For some reason, this figure looked really familiar. As it approached me I had an assumption this was my mother because it had her face, eyes, body, and hair except it was multicolored instead of her usual black. Then I had an epiphany. This creature was my mother. Now I finally knew the truth of where she disappeared. I ask her “Mom, is that you?”

She shook her head yes at me and I could not stop smiling. As long as I was happy to see her it made me forget the fact that I was underwater. Once I snapped out of that I started to freak out. I tried to swim back up to the shore, but my legs were transformed into a mermaid tail. Now I was really terrified and wondering what father must be doing above the surface. Mother saw me panicking and came over and hugged me and said, “My Little Wave, it’s ok, I’m here now.” I hadn’t heard her voice in so long, it was so comforting. She let go and told me to follow her, so I did.

I had all sorts of questions to ask her, but I had just gotten her back so I decided to save that for later. I was having a little trouble adjusting to this new tail and all, but I soon got the hang of it as we reached further down into the ocean. We came upon this sea cave and

I saw a light above the water. Mom climbed out the water and as she shook the water off her tail it transformed back into her legs. I did exactly as she did and it worked. She told me to sit down on the cold ground so we could talk. The cave was so beautiful with all the shells and the light sparkling all around us, it was absolutely breathtaking.

“Mom, why did you disappear like that? You had father and I very worried. We were thinking the unimaginable,” I shared. “Little Wave, I had to leave because my family down here wasn’t doing very well and I had to come down to support them. You see I’m not just any mermaid, I’m a princess of the underwater land of Atlantis and I have my duties. I couldn’t tell your father because he doesn’t believe in this stuff and I know you like to follow his example. I travel through a portal on the ocean floor to get there and here. I sneak away so I can come to see you on the boat every year,” she said.

“Mom, you need to come to explain this to him. He will understand. Plus he really misses you,” I pleaded. “I know he does. I come to the same spot every year to come look at him and see how you’ve grown up. Your father doesn’t have powers so he can’t come down here with me, but you can,” she shared. “Please come to the surface with me and explain to him what is going on. He’ll believe you if he sees you in person with these powers,” I begged.

“I can’t do that, Little Wave,” she sighed with a crack in her voice.

This made me want to cry. I finally have my mom back and she won’t even come up to the surface to see the love of her life. It filled me with this unstoppable anger and confusion. I was so full of mixed emotions that I got up and walked toward the water. “Little Wave, please don’t leave. It’s nothing personal toward you or your father,” she said in a crackling tone, trying not to cry. “If you loved us, Mom, you would come with me to see Dad and explain. He’ll understand because he loves you and, apparently, you’re having self-doubt about it, but it’s been 5 years, get over it.” She looked at me shocked as I jumped back in the water and swam back the way we came as fast as I could. My father, up on the boat, was crying and panicking because I haven’t come up in a long time.

Once he heard me gasp for air, he lowered the back of boat so I could climb up, but I forgot one thing. I still have a tail. I tried to go back in the water, but it was too late. “Oh God, what happened to your legs,

Aalto!" I told father to calm down as I shook my tail to get the water off and let it transform back. My father was in complete shock that I had a mermaid tail. "Explain now!" I said to him, "I saw mother, she is a mermaid, and she was telling us the truth the whole time. I tried to convince her to come up here and explain it to you. But she wouldn't budge, she thought you wouldn't understand." He looked at me like I was crazy at first and almost looked like he was going to yell, but instead he gave me a hug and just thanked God I was ok. "Let's go back to shore, Aalto."

I shook my head and walked over to a seat. As we sailed away we saw the water sparkle and then, *BAM!* My mom leaped out of the water like a killer whale. Her tail and multicolored hair shone in the sunlight. She shook her tail and her feet appeared just in time for her landing. My father's jaw dropped to the floor and so did mine. "Hello, Little Wave, and hello, Kai. It's nice to see you both again." We didn't even care about the circumstances at the moment. We just ran up to her and hugged her and didn't let go. "You were right, Little Wave, I had to come see you and explain." That is exactly what she did.

I finally had my mother back.

RICHARD FOREMAN

The Mistake

A haiku.

I walk lone in snow

Searching for love I let go

Paradise lost – is.

RICHARD FOREMAN

Vati

Daddy,

Do you remember the things we used to share;

And daddy,

Do you remember how much you used to care?

Was I conceived in love?

Has it been so long,

Has the memory faded?

Can we please make up?

Have I changed that much;

Are you so frustrated?

I still recall, your carefree smile,

And the sound of your laughter.

How when I was young

The way you shared your love;

All our travels together.

Where have you gone?

We're right next to each other,

Yet we're all alone.

What, I ask;

What can I say?

I hear your voice,

Your voice,

But your thoughts are a million miles away.

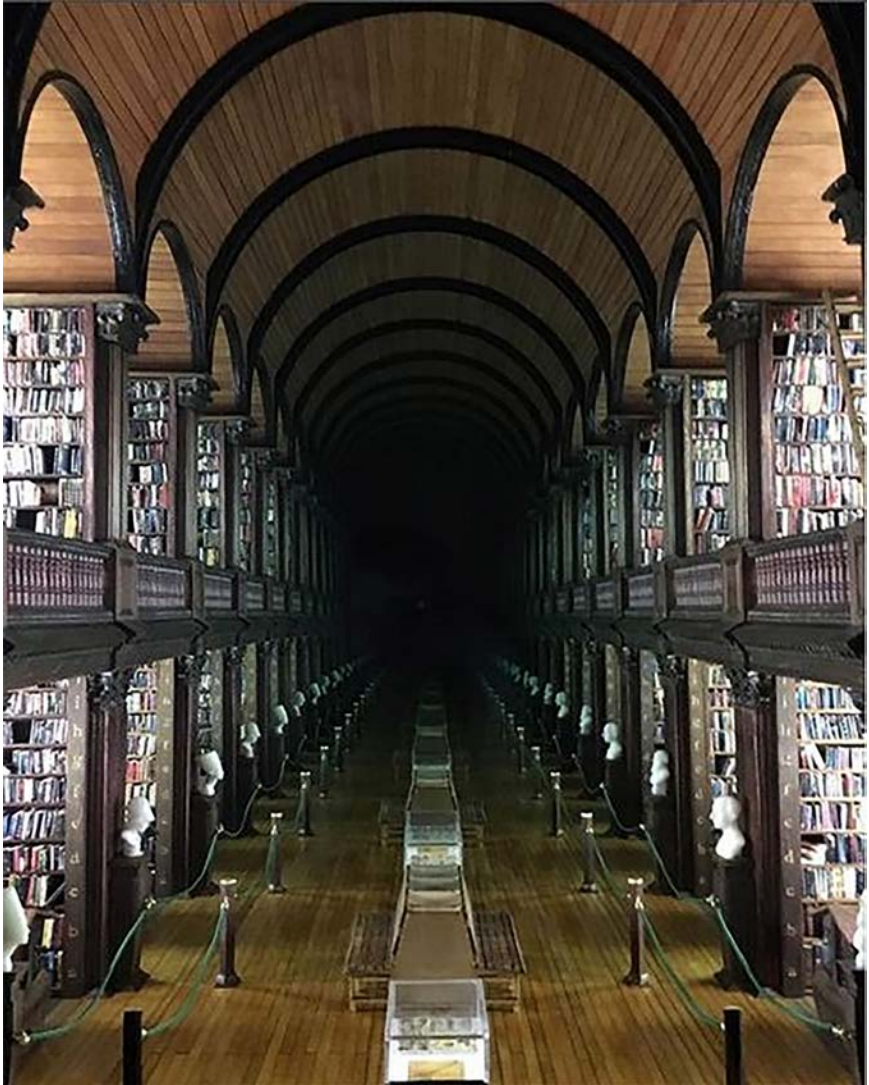
Daddy,
Don't be silent, please don't shut me out;
My only daddy,
Sometimes my love for you makes me want to shout!

But you're seldom there for my love or anger;
You're somewhere hiding.
I still hope you care, that you'll leave the place;
Where you're residing.

Where have you gone?
We're right next to each other,
Yet we're all alone.
What, I ask;
What can I say?
I hear your voice,
Your voice,
But your thoughts are a million miles away,
Your thoughts are a million miles away,
Your thoughts are a
Million
Miles
Away.

PHIL GLEASON

Halls of Knowledge



ANGELA GORDON
Ceramic Candle Holder



A'LEJAH GORE

The Girl with Perspective

Sarah-Jane Friedman

Gorgeous for a white girl

Tall with long brown hair

Smart and funny

Lacrosse captain

Future valedictorian

Justyce's debate partner

"Women still aren't treated as men's equal"

"It's been over two centuries, and African Americans are still getting a raw deal"

"You really think one example proves things are equal?"

"This country is headed to hell in a handbasket"

"You should consider your starting point versus someone else's"

She's Jewish; It's different

I'm not hooking up with SJ

NPR and Carrie Underwood

"Come onnnnnn, Jussy"

Justyce's girlfriend

OLIVIA GRAVENESE

Arcadia



JESSICA HINES

#75



JESSICA HINES

Southern Stories: A Memoir

The sound of voices wafts in from an open window: unfamiliar deep Southern accents. "Kilmer?! Kilmer! You go'in carry me to the store?" Newly arrived from a northern city and surrounded by my belongings, I forget that I am no longer at my previous home. No, something is different. Jolted back to reality, I remember. I have moved to South Georgia, alone, to take a job as a professor.

Through the same open window drifts a strange and unfamiliar smell. Inexplicable. With time, I learn that the smell is emanating from a paper mill about 50 miles away. Distance did not much dilute the strong odor so the early months that turned into years, were lived with the windows shut. Eventually, environmental laws changed and the smell went away, my windows opened up again, and in springtime, the scent of Wisteria filled my rooms, inspiring the feeling of a fresh start.

The Southern United States and I were about to begin a tumultuous affair. The place would become a part of me, steeped in my blood like tea. But not sweet tea.

Peculiarities.

August. First invitation. Arrival at a housing project. Neatly manicured rows of look-a-like apartments behind a chain link fence. Poverty. The parking lot shimmers in the heat sending wavy optical illusions to further instill the mirage that I might somehow be lost and alone in some distant desert or perhaps lost in someone else's dream. When I open the car door, enveloped by the thick steam bath of humidity hanging in the air, I wilt. Grounded once again, I realize that, yes, I have moved to the Deep South.

Pouring into a clear glass pitcher goes a partial bag of white sugar, dispensed 1/3 of the way up the sides. My hospitable hostess adds: water, tea, and ice. I watch her hand stir the swirling cloudy brew until the sugar dissolves, clear. We have iced tea. On the sweet side.

September. At the grocery store, my young 25-year-old self is called ma'am for the first time and I am asked if I need help taking my groceries to the car.

I discover the local wild, sweet, and tough Scuppernong and Muscadine grapes that appear on store shelves in September and October with the promise that the summer's blistering heat will one day give way to cooler weather. Until then, seeking remnants of shade, I take note of large billboard signs on parking lots, gauging the trajectory of their shadows so that I might park my car in a cooler spot. I time myself so that my natural parking meter of moving shadows does not run out.

October. Nighttime. On the outskirts of town. The parade is over. Proud girls waving from floats of hay-stacked tractors, the happy hat-wearing men driving their spit-shined cars have now moved on to the county fair for the evening. So have I.

With the certainty of clockwork, the fair's autumn opening is a marker of time. Another year has passed. Traffic backs up in both directions, almost all the way to City Hall – car headlights recede to the horizon line. Police lights flash blue onto the faces of high school kids, decked out in their fair-wearing best, hoping they'll be noticed. In the dark, cars are directed into an open field, lines of rope cordon off parking spots in an otherwise empty field, and in the headlights, dust billows skyward. Stars burn through sheets of clouds, white fire, but are dimmed by the glare of the Ferris Wheel and the blinking lights of the Tilt-a-Whirl. The hum of electricity and exuberant voices mix in the air.

Cotton candy is whipped fresh under fluorescent lights. Spun air-light, pastel pink sugar tufts are finger picked off paper cones. Hot boiled peanuts, soaked in saltwater and sold fresh by the brown paper bag sit next to vats of oil frying up pork rinds – right there in front of my eyes – I watch as tiny hard pieces of dried meat explode, sizzle and spatter into light crispy chips the size of watermelon slices. A macabre magic.

Women sit in a dark semi-circle around a boiling black cauldron of a bubbling mystery substance – the ingredients for lye soap. Sliced like pieces of white oily pie, they are set on the grass to rest cooling in the night air. On this cold night, cane syrup steams up from yet another boiling cauldron, the rim lined with stained cloth rags. A man keeps watch, scooping off rising gray foam. An announcement booms loudly:

the number of minutes until the next pig race. The fastest pig wins: Oreos. Walking in the dark, my eyes adjust to the intense light of bare bulbs underneath a circus tent. A woman walks on broken glass, a light bulb glows white in her mouth. "See the World's Tiniest Woman", reads a sign. I remember the Elephant Man - my thoughts turn sad.

December. The leaves begin to change color but deciduous trees are uncommon here and I relish the color I find. It is time again for the pines to release their straw to the wind, spiking the blue air and matching blue shadows with orange dotted lines. Fields light up white -- suddenly - cotton bolls ripen, open under a warm sun. Christmas comes to town: southern "snow".

March. Saving turtles crossing busy roads. I learn not to pick up the largest ones, the Snapping turtles. I remember the one that ran underneath my car and stayed while I inadvertently and unintentionally held up traffic. But who can allow a turtle to be crushed in the road?

Night falls. In the small kingdom, frog choruses roar. Just as suddenly, the chorus quiets, when all at once again, as if conducted by an invisible ghost, the song begins, all bellow in unison. The deep woods behind my house vibrate with sound, fade to black, and are punctuated by the synchronous blinking of fireflies.

The night wears on and the hour dictates the song. I need not look at a clock. As I awaken in the middle of night, the frog prince calls out the time.

April. The wetlands. Watery springs of life well up from earth's nursery. Life births new forms from the microscopic, to the dragonfly, to the tail slapping beaver, the towering pine -- all surround my house. Evolutionary history could tell campfire stories about their origins, could whisper the names of their common ancestors. I imagine my space millions of years prior, before the dinosaurs walked here, when trilobites skirted the water's edge. Now, the white-tailed deer traverse the swamp with babies following on shaky, spindly legs, white spotted coats. The deer children grow with confidence by the day. Like all children, they race through the water, jumping and playing -- laughing, too, I imagine -- falling down, getting lost. Found again.

Late at night, the scream of a human/bird/cat lets loose right next to my front door. I sit bolt upright. I can see nothing in the night from the window and don't dare open the door. I have no hint of what could possibly make such a haunting, disquieting shriek. Years would come to pass – probably a full decade -- before I spotted “The Creature”, as we called it. One morning, howling like a banshee under my bedroom window, there, at long last it was: a fox. A beautiful, lovely fox makes the most outrageous and cryptic sound I've ever heard.

All the world, it seems, is waking up, and all of it is moving about in the water, clear and freshened by rain, and traversing on land beside the budding of new green leaves.

The sky darkens. A storm moves in with a gust of wind – green wind, thick with pollen shaken loose from the pines, green powder seeps into every crevice, natural or otherwise, setting life into motion. Storks make their way, heads down, feet stirring up the water, picking up supper with bills, long like chopsticks.

Night falls. The sound of screeching monkeys outside my window turns out to be a pair of Barred Owls calling to one another across the water. Daybreak. Overnight, time closed an eye to human perception, slow as it might seem, and allowed the flowers to open suddenly into a shockwave of color – Azaleas, Dogwoods, Wisteria, and the wetland shines in its yellow glory with the carnivorous Bladderwort. Awareness: the mystery of life. I am in ecstasy.

May. Driving down Main Street, I see the faces of strangers in the occasional oncoming car. Gesture: the finger wave and nod -- the index finger – sometimes the whole hand rises up in a friendly wave of acknowledgment: “You are here and I am here. Greetings.” It happens often. It seems that every other car is inhabited by a nodding, finger waving, friendly soul.

July. Driving on the highway, I encounter the Georgia wall-of-water-whiteout rainstorm. Traffic comes to a near standstill. Nothing is visible save but a few feet in front of my car. Within minutes, I drive out from underneath the thunderous deluge onto a perfectly dry pavement. The rain stops as suddenly as it begins. Surprise. I look in the rearview mirror to see the wall-of-water receding into the distance, into a dark gray cloud, the horizon line gone missing. ~

KATHERINE HOERTH

If Babies Grew as Readily as Ears of Corn

A field of corn, Nebraska's open prairie,
the body with its rows, the stalks erect
like gooseflesh as the last of winter's wind

blows through. What if these stalks could carry more,
first felt the fluttering of flesh within
their buds while basking in the summer sun?

In the stubble of September, you
walk into a field and stroke the silk
like a newborn's hair, the scent of earth

arising with the morning dew. You harvest:
bundle up the sheafs and tuck them in
a bassinet, your arms, your heart, both full

of golden joy at last. How rich you'd be,
and all the other farmers on the plains
with yields like this more valuable than gold.

You peel the husk and kiss the perfect ear.
You thank the Lord for every single one,
the first, the second, then a thousand more,

as plentiful as grain. The giving season
ends. The earth slips on her gown of frost
and settles in for months and months of sleep.

KATHERINE HOERTH

Pandora in 2020

Years have passed. She holds her empty box
and the weight of chaos on her chest.

She recalls the rip, how all the clocks
seemed to stop at once, how all the rest
is myth: the lid slipped off and everything
flew out of darkness like a ragged cough
into the sky's voracious maw to bring
the law of entropy, to set it off

upon our messy world. Today, she knows
countless others share her burden, heavy
in the lungs, the heart, the pit. The nose
contains a thousand droplets, each one ready
to be sent into the world, to drift,
and open like an unexpected gift.

KATHERINE HOERTH

Pandora in Omaha

Some nights, I see Pandora in my dreams.
She opens up my body like a box
and out flies everything I am. I wake,

wondering if it's another nightmare
or a reverie of what's to come.
In the milky dawns, I see her sometimes

at the park, especially in spring
planting pansies in flowerbeds,
her body stooped, her bare hands in the earth,

or sitting on the bench, an empty bottle
at her side. She asks for change, for me
to unzip my purse, but I refuse.

While driving down the highway, I imagine
her in the fields of corn, between the rows,
opening the ears to glimpse the gold.

I hear her voice beneath the prairie wind,
Don't you want to know what's trapped inside
your husks? And yes I do, but no I don't.

BOB HOWARD

Porto Della Città Vecchia



SAMUEL JAMES

Gold Dust in the Lamplight

The little girl stared into the atmospheric puddle of gold. She wondered if the rain that it offered so little of was the sky's way of hiding minerals deep in the ground, waiting for the little miners to find it.

Or, perhaps, the sun was beginning to close its eyes, with its droopy eyelids coating everything in orange. It did make her feel drowsy.

Today, she wondered at every little detail of the saturate landscape in her small desert neighborhood. She had it all to herself, since nobody was ever outside.

The dried-out grass tickled her skin like a pet's fur as she hugged it as she would her puppy. She wished that her dog would come outside with her too, but he would only run away from her. So she embraced the outdoors instead.

The sounds of nature were like movie-sounds, she thought. Sometimes it was even close to music. The birds were like the singers that weeped their songs into the wind, and the crunching tumbleweeds flurried like the guitarists.

Her brother would complain that their home was too dry, like a wasteland. But she thought of it as a colorful, crisp place to wake up. The sharp dust of the ground felt good to excite her throughout the days of life.

She sometimes wondered where her brother had gone. She had not seen him in several months.

She cozied around the tall blades of grass as if she were in a crowded group of people. Of course, they were not people, so she did not speak to them. However, she imagined their soft crumple to be the quiet whispers of many different conversations.

If she peeked down low to the ground, where the salty dust of the ground coated the inside of her nose, her little old clay house seemed larger than the highest mountain.

And that tiny warehouse across the street seemed like a distant hill, like a blemish upon the horizon. She wondered if someone would stick their head out again. She could not quite recognize who had done so the last time, but the face looked familiar... It had been around this time of day too.

There was a stick on the ground. She smiled and wrapped her dusty fingers around it, pretending to absorb it into her own limb. The branches were her new fingers, and the remaining bristles drooped like hair around it.

The door opened.

Maybe the grooves of the dried-up branch were the fingerprints of her new fingertips.

She never had such beautiful fingernails before!

The face peeped through the crack in the door.

She accidentally scratched her hand with the coarse twig.

“Ouch!”

She looked at the man. She studied the face. It did seem familiar to her, as if she had known this face very closely once before.

It was Carlos! He hadn't gone far, after all!

She eagerly waved at her brother from her front yard. He waved back at her, and maybe smiled as well.

But that was not his normal smile. His smile was toothy and crooked, like a chalkboard marking. Now, it was closed off and polite.

She didn't feel comfortable with that. Something was different.

Nonetheless, she tried to feel happy that he was nearby.

* * *

When he opened the door, the only thing he saw was the bright beam of the room spilling into another wall. On either side of him was a thick, syrupy blackness that filled either end of an endless hallway.

Shame tugged on his stomach. He thought he could trust these people. He thought they needed him.

They still do, he thought.

He began down the left path as quickly as he could, even if his heels felt like they were full of spurs and his heart seemed to swell into his throat.

* * *

Carlos retreated behind the door just as promptly as he appeared. The golden air seemed to return to Maria's grasp, though, when she was alone again.

However, she could not convince herself that she was truly alone. She decided to go inside and tell Mama and Papa.

* * *

"Oh!"

Carlos didn't realize he shouted until his head wrapped around his eyes like a snake and squeezed several pikes into his head.

When his head slammed into the door handle, a sharp ringing split his body in half from top down. Every nerve in his body pulsed with pain, slightly out of sync with his shrunken heartbeat.

He attempted to wrap his fingers around the handle. It had to be somewhere in this corridor of ink.

The handle's bright, cold metal flashed his vision for a moment, as he leaned his body weight backwards to pull it open.

When it did, he swallowed a mouthful of smoke.

* * *

“NO! That was not him! When I tell you to stay inside, I mean it! There is no good outside, NO GOOD!”

“But Mama, it is beautiful, like gold!”

“It is dangerous and disgusting, like an evil lizard’s tongue! Do not go back out to see that man. He was not your brother.”

“Who could it be, then?”

“A demon! A fallen angel! Evil of all kinds that impersonates and tries to lure an innocent young girl like yourself into a hole.”

“But how do you know that is not Carlos, but changed? What if he has been made new?”

“Your brother will always smile like a donkey, not a person! That was not him. If I have to tell you again to stay inside, you will be punished.”

Maria wept. How could that not be her brother? They did not understand that Carlos might be in danger himself! Maria could help him come back and become normal again. They could play games again, and be brother and sister once again!

But Mama’s promise of punishment was more frightening than Carlos’ differences. Maybe it would be wiser to preserve her own well-being so she could assist him as well as she was able.

Mama’s promise of impersonation, however, did not convince Maria. She knew that people could change, and that Carlos had been gone for a long while. That was plenty of time for this to occur.

Before, Maria had deduced that change might be a good thing for him. But if there was danger he could be in, she believed that impersonation was not the answer, but influence.

* * *

The glass vial shattered in his hand as he jabbed it deeper into

the chemist's neck. He pushed all his strength through his arm to make sure the man would stay silent.

When the breathing stopped, he released his red-stained hands and tried to cry, but his tears were drained.

He stared at the death he had caused. This is what it came to, he thought. These are the consequences for his actions.

He had to leave.

Carlos tried to stand up, but the ringing split him apart again, and his kneecaps crumbled. His hip smashed into a table of glass containers, full of liquids, which caused their contents to dump all over the smooth stone floor.

Carlos's brain felt as if it would evaporate completely any second now, but he could see the elevators from here. He knew where he was. He had to leave now.

* * *

Maria could spot the warehouse from her bedroom window. Maybe he would show his face before she could go outside again. She felt like crying. He needed her.

* * *

Ka-thunk. Ka-thunk. Ka-thunk.

"Please! Hurry!"

The elevator had to go up three stories, and it did so with a sputter every several seconds.

* * *

"Maria, come with me, now. Get away from the window."

Mama sounded serious. Papa was with her too. What was wrong?

She dragged them all into the bathroom and locked the door, without the lights on.

“Be very quiet, dears.”

Papa had a bat. Mama had a knife.

* * *

The dull metal doors inched their way open, and he darted out as fast as his twinkling vision and adrenaline could take him. Surely this door ahead was the exit! It had to be! He slammed his entire body into it and it swung open.

* * *

Mama sang to her. She never did that.

“The sun is shining, my dear, don’t you worry...”

It was barely a whisper, but it seemed as loud as thunder to Maria.

Maria loved the thunder.

* * *

The golden, sleeping sun filled his nostrils and his eyes, but he kept sprinting towards his home. His eyes found tears again, and they thoroughly blurred his vision.

The dry grass felt so real to his bare feet. He thought of Maria, and how she loved to call it “crisp”.

He slammed his shoulder into the front door, and he hoped to see his parents sitting and talking in the family room. But he felt something just as wrong as the warehouse in this place.

He felt as if this house was no longer his own, like something had claimed it.

He didn't think his family had moved away...

He smelled salt.

It became hot as he stepped deeper into the house. He thought to check Maria's room.

* * *

There was someone directly outside the bathroom door. Mama fell completely silent.

The voice spoke, "Maria? Are you hiding from me? I have come to see you again."

Maria gasped.

* * *

Carlos opened the door to the back hallway. He had heard someone speak, whom he assumed to be Papa.

As he opened the door, he did see Papa.

But Papa was dead.

Carlos was standing above him with a knife.

It was Mama's knife. She was lying next to Papa.

And Carlos could only watch, as an ugly, warped version of himself took the knife to Maria's soft, golden throat.

MICAH MARIE JOHNSON

Alter Ego Mythology

He says that his feet have wings.

Here outside the city of Rome, Miami is 5,179 miles away.
Mercury, at the highest heights
Savors the speed of his endeavors-
The way he will make time stop inside of her:
 The Nymph or the nympho.

Shaking, weak in the knees,
Enamored with her preternatural beauty and seductive charm,
Mercury arrives while she is an undressing larva.

Tired of affairs with mortal men,
Her wings slit out to butterfly
Voluptuous, rounded edged thigh without gap.
 Her breasts like overpasses.
 Her legs swaying palm trees.
 Her hair, orange milkweed.

Used to driving mere mortals insane with her unusual desires,
The nymph instead just smiles,
Bites her tongue before it can be cut out.

Mercury, unaware that an offering should be present,
Holds books and his hard caduceus
And begins gyrating, ignoring the ticking of his pocket watch.

He isn't here to take her to Pluto or it's moons
He is smitten and wooing and is unbraiding her hair
To lead her to the depths of tangled emotion,
 To feel something for an eternal moment,
 To escape the underworld, the hidden cottage,

 The city and boundaries,

Until the excess feels like insects escaping a chrysalis,
 Until desire looks like a passion flower blowing and bursting open,
 Until the clock hands slow down and the tempo is just right.

 The Nymph closes the door and Mercury flies out of sight.

MICAH MARIE JOHNSON

Upon Seeing an Apparition

Angels are devils depending on who you ask,
And sea glass can still become sharp again
No matter how smooth the sea has made it.

Today you reappeared as a wave first, then
A presence from beyond.
Your wings began extending beyond your form.

I've metamorphosed,
Transformed, restyled, grew, and thrived, yet I still
keep plucking your feathers from my skin.

If you are just a memory then you must be a specter
If you are a messenger then you must be a warning.
If you are a siren then I must still be listening to your song.

If you are reading this, don't worry
I haven't moved on.

VIRGIL KNOX

Jayko



VIRGIL KNOX

Untitled



CRISTALYNN LEE

Unspoken Love

I can't help but love the way I feel.
But loving you is dangerous and so unreal.
My skin as smooth as chocolate
Yours as pure as a dove
I can not sustain our unspoken love.

"You don't know nothin' about love." - Mama

But I do
I know that terrible feeling I get sometimes in my wrist.
But if I lose her
I have nothing else but this ... our unspoken love.

"If it looks white, its white in this world." - Mama

So, if it looks brown you consider that a squirrel?
I didn't think so Mama.
Now back to my point
African, Jamaican, and Haitian are not the same
Or Korean, Asian, and Latinos a few I can name.
I love a Jew might I add, my ***unspoken love***...my other half.

I can never speak highly about our love.
All because you're as white as a dove.
We are trapped in a time warp; one I hope to escape.
Because the fear of losing you is one, I can't take.

“Can we agree not to be that stupid again?” - Sarah-Jane Friedman

Sounds like a plan to me wherever we may be.

If loving you is wrong I don't want to be in this place

I want to go somewhere up north where the biggest factor is not race.

“You trippin’, man. SJ’s a gorgeous girl AND she’s perfect for you.” - Manny

Dawg you knew all along you knew the truth.

If anybody can see clearly through the naked eye it's no one else but you.

You didn't see race.

All you saw was the love between and brown and white face

Maybe its because you grew up in this place.

You always had white doves in your face.

But you knew you always knew of our ***unspoken love.***

“Be like martin” - Justyce

A hard goal to reach.

Whereas I have to fight for something I may never reach

Our unspoken love.

BRET LEFLER

Cholla 2



BRET LEFLER

Leon



AUDREY MILKS

Royal Hearts



RAYMON MITCHELL

Discrimination

There are no more “colored” water fountains
A black teen in a hoodie with a white girl
Sitting on the concrete in too-tight cuffs
Coming to the realization that violence is not just in video games.
Being mocked by people who refuse to admit there’s a problem.
Twenty-year veteran cop made a snap judgment based on skin color.
People will always look at me and assume wrong
Everything being repeated starting to feel cloned
Turn on the news, another black man slain
Struggle with standardized testing because of stereotype threat.
“Look at this funny picture of Obama in a noose”
“Put away that race card it ain’t 1962”
There’s no escaping the Black Man’s Curse

LAURENCE MUSGROVE

Drink It Up

When my wife asked me to taste
The tea she had just made with
Raspberry leaves from Ukraine
And Himalayan goji berries,
I asked, "What are the intended effects?"
She said, "It's good for immunity."
But I thought she said, "It's good
For community." And I thought,
"Wouldn't that be a nice sip to take?"

LAURENCE MUSGROVE

Luna

When it was captured by Earth,
the Moon sobbed oceans.

Now, every wave falls down
before it can make it home.

LAURENCE MUSGROVE

Offline

You know the worry of your attention
As it looks for a soft and protected
Place to sit with a view of the world
That offers its friendship and calm,

Like this little dog who follows me
Each morning of my daily waking
And wandering, waiting for me at last
To sit so he can get some peace, too.

TRAVIS PECK
Under the Pier



JAYLAN RAWLINGS

Check Up



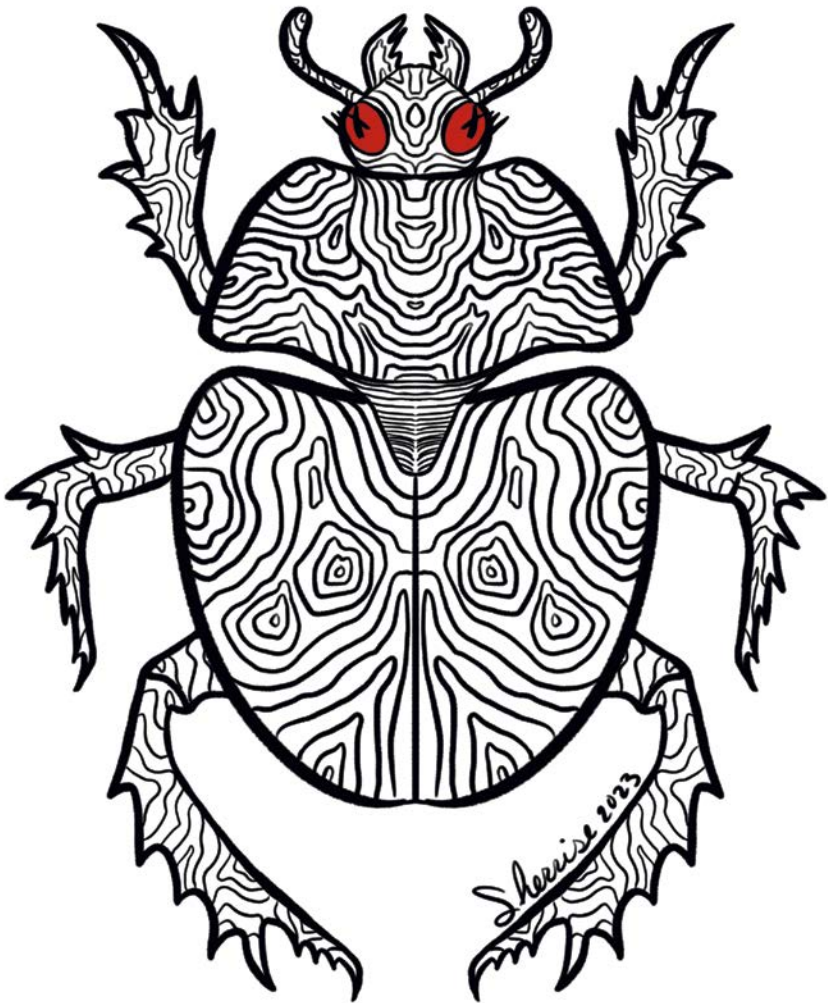
DANIEL SHAVER

Frosty Morning



SHERRISE STOVER

Insecticide



COREY THOMPKINS

Peace of Mind



CLINT WEATHERS

Best Prom Ever



CLINT WEATHERS

Mural



JOANNA WHITE
Underbelly Armor



CHARLES R. WILLIAMS

Kaleidoscopic



JOHN WILLIAMS

Unchurched

“Junior, how was work this week?”

“It was cool, Pop. I had some issues with a coworker who is a jerk, but other than that, I just keep pushing.”

“Well, son, just remember to pray for protection and that coworker won’t be a problem. God got ya.”

I smiled briefly as we continued our dinner. Truth be told, I didn’t really want to be here for family dinner. We never grew up with that kind of dynamic. But my Dad had been pushing for us to spend more time as a unit, and to make up for the times we didn’t really spend during my youth. While I was raised by both my mom and my dad, we all had schedules that seemed to take priority over our togetherness. The love was always there, but we just weren’t the Bradys. And that’s okay.

“Speaking of praying, you know you need to bring your wife and daughter to church. Your mom and I would love to see you all back in the fold. At least let your daughter get connected with the church so she can grow up like you did.”

“Well, Dad, I feel you. We’ll see. I’ll talk with her mother about it. You know, however, you don’t need me to be there if you want to take her.”

“This is true, but I would prefer you to be there. You know how long it’s been since you’ve sat in a good service.”

“That’s what online service is for, Pops.”

That was not the response my father wanted to hear, but by now, he knows how far to push. Ever since he got baptized last year, he has been acting as if he is God’s right-hand man. Now granted, prior to his baptism, he led a rough life. And in our town, he was always known as a hellion of sorts. But he always had a good heart, and I think that is what I loved about him the most. He was always willing to help others, and he would go out of his way to be there for those in need. A walking contradiction of terms, and his reputation in our small town was split between thug

and neighborhood saint. I like to think that I got the best of his traits, and mom gave me the rest.

“J ... we are planning to go see the movie Fences. Do you and your wife want to come with your father and me? Your cousin will babysit if you'd like.”

“Nah, Mama. I think we will stay home and stream something. But have you read Fences before?”

“No, but I hear the movie is great.”

In the back of my mind, I wanted to warn her about the movie and its plot. So many of the movies action parallels with my mother and father's marriage. Not quite as tense as depicted in the book, but the story is one that plays out a lot in the community and, to an extent, in our household growing up. I didn't want her to be surprised. But to be fair, my dad seems to be different nowadays, so I guess I'll let them sort out any feelings after watching.

“Let me know what you think of it after you finishing watching.” I hugged mom and dad and started heading for the door.

“We love you, Junior.” Pops said with such softness in his voice. “And more importantly, God loves you.”

“I love y'all, too.”

In my mind, I couldn't roll my eyes hard enough. But at least the sentiment was nice, so I couldn't complain. Again, he's in a much better place in life, so this is part of what comes with that newfound faith. But man, it sure was annoying.

I got an email at work the next week. It was from my upper division boss, so I figured it must have been important. However, when I opened it, I couldn't believe what I read. That coworker was actually filing an investigation against me! He accused me of slandering his name with other colleagues, but I never said anything about this guy! I felt the anger raging inside of me. Instantly, I went to my manager's office and

asked to be excused for the day. I don't remember what I told him as an explanation, but I know I needed to leave before I said or did something drastic, but that I wouldn't regret.

With almost divine precision, my father called me. We usually spoke everyday anyway, which has been a habit all of my life. Maybe it was our way of making up for the missing in-person time. But never was his timing this impeccable. It was almost as if he knew something was going on, and to be honest, I was kind of glad he did.

"Son, how's it going?"

"Pop, this no-good bastard has filed a complaint against me and I am under investigation! I don't know what I am going to do?"

"Well, you know the first thing you have to do, right? You need to pray to God and ask for protection and guidance. We will be praying for you, but you gotta pray for yourself"

In a flash, the rage I felt took charge. I don't know what I wanted to hear, but this was not it.

"Look, Pop ... I am not in the mood to hear that sh*t today! I know you found religion and you are perfect and all, but I am not in that space right now!"

"But Junior, I..."

I hung up the phone. It was the first time I'd ever disrespected my dad. It helps that I was on the phone rather than in person. I mean, baptized or not, old habits die hard and I wasn't sure whether his ol' school ways were completely gone. For now, at least I know he couldn't grab me. About ten minutes later, my mom texted me.

READ: J, I am going to meet you at your house. We need to talk.

I pulled up to my house and there was my mom, waiting on the porch. I could see my wife and daughter sitting outside with her, chatting as normal. But as soon as I opened my door, my wife and daughter scurried into the house and closed the door. I could see my daughter peeking out of the window as if she was waiting for something to happen; she gets

that nosiness from her mother.

“Your daddy told me what happened today.”

“I know, and I think I am going to quit my job because of it.”

“Naw, that ain’t what I’m talking about. You cussed at your dad AND hung up on him? Now, I know we raised you to be respectful, and I am concerned about how you addressed your father.”

“I know I was wrong but I get tired of his piety. He just found God last year and acts as if he’s perfect. That sh*t is annoying.”

“Boy, watch your mouth! Now, I know I’m not your dad, but I still do have a swift backhand. Now calm down and let’s get to the root of the problem.”

“I’m sorry. Honestly, my work life has been hard and I simply haven’t figured out how to handle it all.”

“Well, have you prayed? I mean, I know your dad and I may seem like we are a bit churchy, but have you done at least that?”

“Truthfully, no. I haven’t done much of anything to process this. And whenever I speak to Pop about things and he brings it up, I have a hard time taking it seriously. I mean, look at all he’s put you through. Look at his history. Do you think this is really him? It just seems hypocritical when for years, we were the ones praying and he was out there doing God knows what. I just want to tell him that he can keep the self-righteousness cause it doesn’t feel real to me.”

Tears began to well up in my mom’s eyes, and my heart sank. The one thing I didn’t want to do was hurt my mother, and yet, here we were.

“Son, your dad is a human, and man is not perfect. I stuck by him through all of the things that he put me through, and yes, it was unimaginably difficult to do so. But, I loved him. And I still love him. And while it may have taken years, he’s finally in a place where he is being the husband that I knew he could be. That’s called grace, and I don’t regret extending grace to him one bit. And it wouldn’t hurt you to do the same.”

I couldn't help but to hold my head down as she continued to read me in the most loving way possible.

"Honestly, J. I think part of you is also jealous. Could it be that you hold some sort of animosity towards your father because he has grown closer to God while you seem to have moved further away? Because the same joy he is showing now is the same joy you used to have when you were more connected to your faith. Maybe it is hard to believe that he deserves the chance to be better, but he does. And you also have the time and opportunity to be better as well. Now let me ask you this ... do you love your Dad?"

"Of course, I do. I mean, I have always loved him. And I know he loves me. That's never been in question."

"So if you love your father, and you see the peace that he has been in for these past few months, why would you want to take that away from him? Regardless of how little you may believe in his believing, you shouldn't want to take away the joy he seems to be experiencing now. Religion or not, if you truly care for someone, you should want the best for them. This is what is best for him. I need you to think about that and I think you know what you need to do next."

My mom kissed my forehead and left me on the porch. She was right. Dad had become a more pleasant father and husband, and I was truthfully a bit jealous. I'd gotten so used to trying to control everything in my life that I hadn't allowed my faith to carry me. He wasn't being a nuisance; he was being a messenger.

I waited for a few hours just to process what I needed to say. Then, I called my Dad and apologized to him for everything I'd said and my attitude. Without missing a beat, he told me that he forgives me, and that he just wants the best for me. He also told me that he's not perfect, so I better watch my mouth moving forward. I was waiting on him to laugh, but it never came. Instead, he asked me to come by their house so he can get a hug.

As I pulled up into the driveway, the front door was open with the screen closed in. I could hear them talking, so I decided to be nosy before I walked in.

“Babe, Junior apologized and he’s coming over soon. After we got off the phone earlier, I prayed that God would speak to his heart and bring him some understanding. And that’s exactly what he did.”

“Well, also went and talked to him about it, so I am sure that was a part of it.”

Through the hallway mirror, I could see my dad, sitting with the biggest grin on his face. “God works in mysterious ways. But won’t he do it?”

As my mother rolled her eyes, I couldn’t help but laugh as I walked through the door.

TIMOTHY WILLIAMS

History of My People



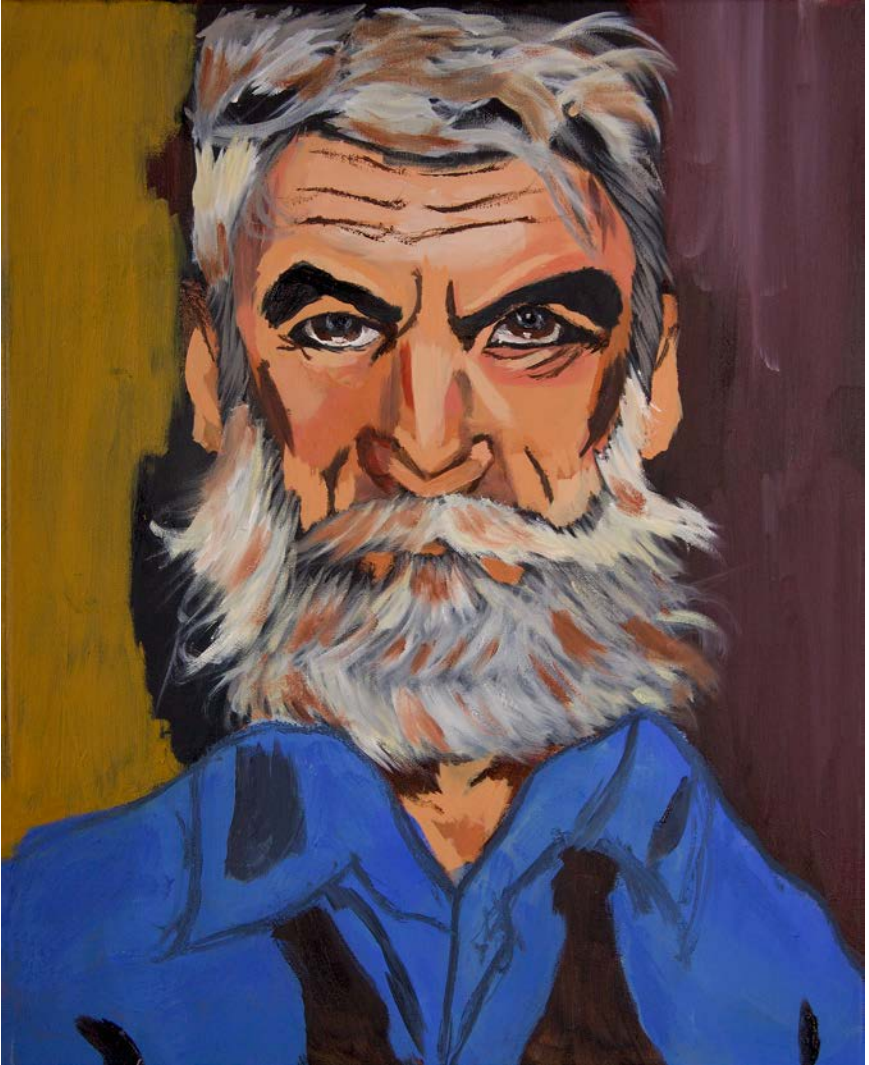
TIMOTHY WILLIAMS

Loneliness



TIMOTHY WILLIAMS

Man of Loneliness



TYGEL WOOTEN

Reaching



NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

RYAN ADRICK was born in Jacksonville, Florida. Ryan's artwork explores the relationships that we form with those around us, the environment, and with oneself. His artwork has been shown regionally, nationally, and internationally. He has also received a number of teaching, scholastic, and artistic awards.

CHRISTIAN ANDRADE-HERRERA is a first-generation Mexican-American immigrant born in San Luis Potosi, Mexico, and raised in Georgia. They love baking and spending time with their family and dog. You can find them with headphones listening to music, and their nose buried in a book when not busy.

DEZMOND ARD'IS resides in Tallahassee, Florida. A city where he calls home and loves to practice portrait photography. His love for photography started since seeing the work of Sharon Farmer. He did not choose art in academia in his undergraduate studies but he went after an art minor in which he was introduced to darkroom process in development and printing and digital scanning process. Dezmond Ard'is works as an intern architect for an architectural firm in Tallahassee, Florida.

COURTNEY BAILEY is a business management major at Albany State University. She an evangelist, leader and entrepreneur. She owns a Christian Clothing Brand called "FreelyJael". Her interest in literature began at a young age but she did not begin writing until her sophomore year of college.

CASAUNDR A BEARD's artistic practice is interdisciplinary using a wide range of materials such as fibers, found objects, and digital media to create sculptures and installations. Her work is centered around her struggles with anxiety and how that interacts with her everyday life, specifically the challenges of domesticity and motherhood.

JON BOLLES is an artist based in Cranston, Rhode Island. He studied art at Lyme Academy of Fine Arts, Quinebaug Valley Community College and Montserrat College of Art. His work has been shown in galleries across New England. He teaches drawing classes for various institutions on Boston's North Shore, including Montserrat College of Art, Rockport Art Association, Rocky Neck Art Colony and Raw Art Works. See more work at jonbolles.com

TAMLA BOONE uses creativity with various mediums to develop engaging visual art. Her pieces may involve ceramics, paint, wood, metal or glass. Tamla is an Art Educator to students of all ages in various venues.

MEISHA BRADDY is a twenty-one year old senior Biology major at Albany State University. She plans on becoming an OBGYN. She's from Augusta, Georgia and she writes poetry and paint as a hobby.

JERRY BRADLEY, born in 1948 in Jacksboro, Texas, is a prolific author of nine books, with over 300 poems and 100 articles. A distinguished scholar and poet, he served as a university professor and administrator. Bradley earned acclaim for his poetry collection "Simple Versions of Disaster" and received numerous awards, including the Leland Best Distinguished Faculty Fellow Award in 2018. He remains an influential figure in literary circles, contributing as a poetry editor and receiving accolades for his leadership and excellence in education.

CRAIG BRASCO is the Assistant Director of the School of Art and Design at Kennesaw State University in north Georgia. He teaches illustration and animation at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Craig is published in various fantasy and sci-fi roleplaying game books and zines.

CHRISTOPHER BURDETT has excelled in designing and illustrating monsters for entertainment and gaming for over 2 decades. Beginning in television and film with iconic shows like Buffy the Vampire Slayer and Firefly, he has extended his expertise to the tabletop gaming industry, contributing to renowned franchises such as Magic the Gathering, Dungeons & Dragons, and Star Wars.

CAMERON BURNAM is a recent graduate of Albany Sate University, located in Albany, Georgia. Cameron was a Visual and Performing Arts Major with a concentration in Visual Arts. He is considering attending graduate school after he graduates which he plans to have a focus in Graphic Design. He is also a 2022 winner of the Target HBCU Design Challenge .

JEAUNICE TRIBUE BURNETTE is a photographer, who seeks to look at the familiar with fresh eyes. Her work captures the classic beauty of the American South. She is a senior at Albany State University, where she is majoring in Visual and Performing Arts, with a Concentration in Visual Arts.

ERIN BUTLER is a senior English major at Albany State University. Awarded the Martha F. Bowden Teaching Prize, she presented at the Southern American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies. Erin plans to pursue a Master's at Valdosta State University, driven by her passions for writing, music, photography, reading, and travel. Hailing from Camilla, Georgia, she envisions exploring more of the world in the future.

SUZANNA CHRISTIAN is an artist and educator from Virginia who creates art using many different mediums including printmaking, collage, photography, and digital art. She has a bachelors in graphic communications and a masters degree in education. She is fascinated with printed processes and capturing scenes, as well as creating within the confines of the specific processes that accompany photography and print.

JEREMY COLBERT was raised in southern Oklahoma, amidst nature's beauty, and proud of Chickasaw heritage. He earned a Fine Arts degree from Southeastern Oklahoma State University in 1999. Following an MFA in sculpture and ceramics from Florida State University in 2002, he taught at FSU, University of South Alabama, and is currently at the University of Kentucky, specializing in Sculpture, Ceramics, and Foundations.

JERRY CRAVEN's 33 published books include poetry, novels, and nonfiction. His ekphrastic poetry has appeared in literary journals and two anthologies: 'Magic, Mystery, Madness' and 'Writing Texas.' His upcoming book is a collection of ekphrastic poetry. In 2022 he was inducted into the Texas Literary Hall of Fame.

JACQUI CUMINGS is an Art Education major at East Carolina University. Her love of artistic expression began as a child and was dominated by the natural world around her. She has explored many facets of the art world with her favorites being mixed media, ceramics, movie production, painting, and drawing. She enjoys sharing her love of art and positive energy with others.

JOSHUA DAVIS, from Atlanta, Georgia, is a Senior at Albany State University. Majoring in Visual + Performing Arts, and minoring in Mass Communications, Joshua uses his work to show the outside world a little of what goes on in his mind and soul, presenting an array of Egyptian style pottery and closer to the heart meaningful pieces.

ABIGAIL DUNN is a Dual Enrollment student at Albany State University.

BROOKE EVANS, a 23-year-old senior at Albany State University, hails from Greensboro, Georgia. Her passion for writing, cultivated since middle school, extends beyond stories to lyrics, poems, speeches, and plans. Energetic, talented, and kind, Brooke aspires to share her creativity with the world, envisioning a future career in graphic novel writing, song production, poetry publishing, editing, ghostwriting, and engaging with social media for positivity.

RICHARD FOREMAN is a Professor of Biological Sciences at Albany State University. He is the father of four children and enjoys writing songs in his spare time to express his creative side, thereby maintaining his sanity – for the most part.

PHIL GLEASON, born in 1978 in Austin, Minnesota, is a Tallahassee-based sculptor with an MFA from Florida State University and a BFA from the University of Minnesota. As the Studio Manager at FSU Master Craftsman Studio, he teaches Sculpture at FSU and manages diverse commissions. Gleason's illusion-focused sculptures challenge visual reality using lights, mirrors, magnets, and balance, aiming to momentarily unhinge the audience's perception.

ANGELA GORDON is a Visual Arts major at Albany State University and originally from Marietta, GA. Her main areas of creativity include both painting and ceramic art with occasional spurts of photography.

A'LEJAH GORE is a student at Albany State University.

OLIVIA GRAVENESE is a student at East Carolina University in Greenville, North Carolina. She's working towards her BFA with a concentration in printmaking. Her artwork incorporates provocative images addressing the female psyche and turning them into statements on modern feminism.

JESSICA HINES, an artist and storyteller, uses the camera's inherent quality as a recording device to explore illusion and to suggest truths that underlie the visible world. At the core of Hines' work lies an inquisitive nature inspired by personal memory, experience and the unconscious mind.

KATHERINE HOERTH is the author of five poetry collections, including *Flare Stacks in Full Bloom* (Texas Review Press, 2022). Her work has been published in *Literary Imagination* (Oxford University Press), *Valparaiso Review*, and *Southwestern American Literature*. She is an assistant professor at Lamar University and editor of Lamar University Literary Press.

BOB HOWARD, a Florida native, is an adventurer at heart with an insatiable passion for travel and the great outdoors. As a captain, the vastness of the sea becomes a canvas for his photography.

SAMUEL JAMES is a 17 year old musician and artist. He loves jazz music and collecting vinyl records, as well as playing all different types of instruments. In addition to music, he loves to write and produce videos. His main inspirations include Walt Disney, Duke Ellington, and Bill Evans.

MICAH MARIE JOHNSON, an upbeat artist and writer from Saint Augustine, Florida, brings introspective poetry with a touch of humor to Miami since 2013. As the Director of Development at Miami Poetry Club, Micah actively fosters community and supports writers. Their work appears in anthologies and collaborations, with a children's book, "Finding The Future," commissioned for The Cybrarium Library in Homestead, Florida.

VIRGIL KNOX, an Atlanta-based freelance photographer and cinematographer, discovered his passion for the arts in 2020, focusing on portraits. Committed to giving people a voice through participatory storytelling, he values making genuine connections and capturing priceless moments. With a constant smile, Virgil aims to spread joy and believes in the transformative power of pictures to tell meaningful stories, aspiring to use his camera and experiences to positively impact society.

CRISTALYNN LEE, a spirited Southern native from Valdosta, Georgia, embraces liberal arts and education. Drawn to the legacy of Historically Black Colleges and Universities, she thrives at the unsinkable Albany State University, where her passion for learning and cultural heritage takes center stage.

BRET LEFLER, originally from Fort Worth, Texas, has earned degrees from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Texas Christian University, and Florida State University. Bret currently works at Columbus State University as the Art Education Program Coordinator and Associate Professor of Art Education

AUDREY MILKS is an East Carolina University student studying art. She is originally from Greensboro, NC. At ECU, she is studying graphic design along with printmaking. Even though she hopes for her concentration to primarily be graphic design, she has found a love for printmaking.

RAYMON MITCHELL is a student at Albany State University.

LAURENCE MUSGROVE is a Texas poet whose books include *LOCAL BIRD*, *ONE KIND OF RECORDING*, and *THE BLUEBONNET SUTRAS*. Professor of English at Angelo State University, Laurence also edits *TEXAS POETRY ASSIGNMENT*, an online journal dedicated to championing Texas verse, community, and hunger relief.

TRAVIS PECK is a retired United States Coast Guard Helicopter Rescue Swimmer, originally from Lake Arrowhead, California. He currently lives along the North Carolina Coast, has a passion for landscape photography and enjoys the outdoors.

JAYLAN RAWLINGS, also known as Jay.Peg online, is a photographer and graphic designer. As the founder of Jay.Peg, he uses his skills as a creative outlet for him to help others bring their visual ideas into reality. His work is primarily a combination of real-life photos with graphics incorporated.

DANIEL SHAVER is an avid amateur photography who loves to capture the wonders of the world around him.

SHERRISE STOVER is currently a Visual Art Major at Albany State University. They enjoy drawing both digitally and traditionally as showcased in their work. And they plan to continue on to graduate school and pursue animation.

COREY THOMPKINS is a Junior at The Unsinkable Albany State University majoring in Visual Arts. He is from Columbus, Georgia with a passion for creating art.

CLINT WEATHERS is in Minneapolis. He likes big film, and dislikes talking about himself in the third person. These works are printed posthumously.

JOANNA WHITE was born in Missouri and grew up in Central Florida. She holds a BFA in Studio Art from Birmingham-Southern College, and an MFA in Studio Art from Florida State University. Currently, she is Professor of Art at Eastern Florida State College where she teaches Drawing, Painting, and Design.

CHARLES R. WILLIAMS is a Mixed Media Artist. The works are digital images of analog collages combining multiple perspectives of history, religion, and philosophy. The rough edges from cutting and tearing images remain extant, as these multiple perspectives do not always fit together neatly.

JOHN WILLIAMS is an Associate Professor of Biology at Albany State University. He is a native of Albany, Georgia and a graduate of Albany State University. As an aspiring writer, his work focuses on southern living and human connectedness.

TIMOTHY WILLIAMS is a Visual Arts major at Albany State University. His interests are oil painting, sculpture and game designing. He likes to explore death and other people culture in his work so he can have a better understanding. He is proud to represent his hometown, Albany, Georgia.

TYGEL WOOTEN, 20 year old, North Carolina-based artist, began his artistry in 2013. With specializations in watercolor, his art contains an insightful perspective that requires a deeper understanding of the world within oneself. His inspiration includes social experiences and life challenges, inciting a new way of thinking about worldly issues.

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

deadline April 1, 2024

ABOUT THE PIERIAN

The Pierian is a literary and visual arts online journal accepting submissions through April 1, 2024. We currently publish original, unpublished works (poems, short stories, one-act plays, personal essays, and visual art submitted in 2D format) by ASU students, faculty, and staff, as well as state and national contributors. The journal seeks work challenging us to look beyond the ordinary, think critically, and to consider universally shared human experiences. *The Pierian* is published by ASU professors from the Department of Arts & Humanities.

SUBMISSIONS

Submissions are accepted online through April 1, 2023. Submission guidelines are included. Each submission window allows for the inclusion of up to three individual works in one submission. Any combination of written works and/or visual arts may be included. More information and an archive can be found at <https://www.asurams.edu/academic-affairs/college-of-arts-sciences/arts-and-humanities/eng-ml-mc/the-pierian/>

The Pierian

Literary + Visual Arts Journal

ALBANY STATE UNIVERSITY

The Pierian: Literary + Visual Arts Journal is a journal exploring literary, visually artistic, and cultural expressions. It is an official publication of the Albany State University Department of Arts + Humanities. Emerita Professor Dr. Velma F. Grant established the Pierian Club for English majors at Albany State University in 1967. Originally called “The Little Magazine,” it came to be known as *The Pierian* and would serve as an outlet for creative expression of the written word for Albany State students, faculty, staff, as well as local and national authors. Beginning in 2023, *The Pierian* will be published by ASU professors from the divisions of English and Visual Arts within the Department of Arts + Humanities and this is the first edition to include the visual arts.